

Attachment 3: Evaluation Report for the Alcohol in Parks Pilot Program, 2023

Policy & Strategic Planning
Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting on July 19, 2023, Toronto City Council approved a pilot program allowing personal consumption of alcohol in 27 parks from August 2 to October 9, 2023. The pilot was later extended into spring 2024. Staff were requested to evaluate the pilot and report back on the evaluation results.

The design of the pilot was underpinned by five guiding principles, which were used to evaluate the pilot. The pilot park selection process included (1) a data-driven review of all City parks against technical criteria, (2) staff review of eligible parks in each City ward to short-list the most suitable parks from an operational perspective, and (3) discussion with local Councillors on eligible parks in their ward. All pilot parks were confirmed by the local Councillor. Twenty-one of the 27 pilot parks selected were located in the Toronto and East York Community Council Area.

This report details the evaluation results for the period of August 2 to October 9, 2023, in the following areas:

1. Park use and access to the pilot
2. Park experience for visitors, surrounding community and businesses
3. Public health and safety
4. Park cleanliness
5. Communication of rules and guidelines
6. Future of the program

The evaluation integrated multiple data sources and methods, including two types of survey and data from CDX/311, Toronto Police Service and Toronto Public Health:

1. A [Park Experience Survey](#) conducted online during the pilot to gain insight on park visitor and community experiences with the pilot; participants of this survey are referred to as 'respondents' in this report (n=9,677)
2. A [Public Opinion Survey](#) undertaken by The Strategic Counsel before (n=800) and after the pilot (n=1,200) to understand the city-wide public sentiment about alcohol in parks; participants of this survey are referred to as 'Torontonians' in this report
3. 311 service request data for amplified noise, disruptive behaviour and overflowing recycling/garbage bins
4. Service calls made to Toronto Police Service for pilot parks
5. Hospital emergency department visits related to alcohol
6. City of Toronto staff observations at pilot parks during the pilot period, when available

1.1 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

People who visited a pilot park and responded to the Park Experience Survey were satisfied with their visit and felt safe and welcome. People who visited a pilot park often went there because it is their usual park and reported that those who chose to drink were considerate. There was minimal increase in 311 service requests (i.e., amplified noise, disruptive behaviour, overflowing or new recycling/garbage bins); police response was comparable with 2022 for the vast majority of pilot parks; and emergency department visits due to alcohol were comparable with 2022. People who visited a pilot park and responded to the Park Experience Survey strongly support the program, with 90% of respondents saying they would like to see the program maintained or expanded in some form. Findings from the Public Opinion Survey show that 53% of residents across Toronto would like to see the program maintained or expanded in some form.

Park Use and Access

- Based on the city-wide Public Opinion Survey, 35% of Torontonians said they visited an Alcohol in Parks pilot park, and among these, 28% consumed alcohol during their visit.
- Over 8,000 respondents to the Park Experience Survey visited a pilot park. Approximately 80% of these respondents live in Toronto-East York and primarily visited a pilot park because it is their usual park, as well as to socialize and enjoy nature.
- Park Experience Survey respondents accessed pilot parks by foot, bike or public transit (91% combined).
- For the 12% of respondents who did not access pilot parks, about half said it was because they had no time or interest, and 42% said because there was no pilot park nearby.

Park Experience

- Overall, experiences reported at pilot parks were positive. The concerns about allowing alcohol consumption in parks that were anticipated by Torontonians in the Public Opinion Survey included disruptive behaviour, increased litter, drinking and driving, underage drinking and excessive noise. These concerns largely did not materialize at pilot parks based on 311 data and Park Experience Survey results.
- Park satisfaction was high, and 82% of Park Experience Survey respondents said that the pilot enhanced their time at the park. It is important to note that respondents to this survey are more likely to be younger, White, Canadian-born and higher-income compared to the general Toronto adult population (see Appendix B for the socio-demographic profile of survey respondents).
- Some population groups, including respondents age 55 and older and families with children, were less likely to be satisfied with the program, and concerns were more common among residents in Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke York than in Toronto and East York.

Safety and Health

- Overall, pilot park visitors felt safe (92%) and welcome (90%), and 88% of park visitors said people drinking in parks were considerate.
- During the pilot period, police response was comparable with 2022 for the vast majority of pilot parks, and city-wide emergency department visits due to alcohol were also comparable with 2022.

Park Cleanliness

- The majority (90%) of park visitors who responded to the Park Experience Survey said parks were clean. However, continuing to ensure safety and addressing litter and cleanliness, including the provision of washrooms, is top of mind for Torontonians as per the Public Opinion Survey.

Communication of Rules and Guidelines

- Three quarters of Park Experience Survey respondents found the City's website information to be clear, but less than half said they knew where drinking is not allowed ('restricted areas') and when drinking is allowed.

Future of the Program

- While participants in the pilot expressed high levels of satisfaction, Torontonians' opinions about drinking in parks continues to be mixed, with 46% in favour, 23% neutral, and 30% opposed to allowing people to responsibly consume alcohol in parks.
- Based on the Public Opinion Survey, 53% of Torontonians said they want to maintain or expand the program in some form. However, one in three stated they are less likely to visit a park where people are allowed to drink. Torontonians from Toronto and East York were more likely to be supporters of allowing the responsible consumption of alcohol in parks than those from other areas.
- Support for the program is highest among those who visited pilot parks, with 90% of people who visited a pilot park and responded to the Park Experience Survey wanting to see the program maintained or expanded in some form.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE ALCOHOL IN PARKS PILOT PROGRAM

On July 19, 2023, Toronto City Council approved a pilot program allowing personal consumption of alcohol in 27 parks from August 2 to October 9, 2023. The pilot was subsequently extended to March 31, 2024. The pilot included 27 parks across 13 wards that were all confirmed by the local ward Councillor through a park review and consultation process.

The design of the pilot was underpinned by the following guiding principles, which were also used to evaluate the pilot:

1. Park use and access
2. Positive park experience for everyone
3. Public health and safety
4. Clean and well-maintained parks
5. Simple rules and clear communication

The pilot design is based on a “whole of park” approach, where responsible personal consumption of alcohol is allowed throughout each pilot park, with restrictions for safety/sensitive uses. Within the selected parks, the pilot program prohibits consumption of alcohol at outdoor swimming pools, within two metres of playgrounds, wading pools and splash pads, and at skateboard parks. In addition, 29 portable washrooms were added at pilot parks with no or limited permanent washroom facilities. Fifty-nine (59) garbage bins were also added to some pilot parks, as were 299 beverage container recycling bins, which were part of a separate planned pilot by Solid Waste Management Services division.

The pilot park selection process involved three steps. First, staff led a data-driven review of all parks against technical criteria. Next, staff reviewed the list for each City ward to short-list the most suitable pilot parks from an operational perspective. Lastly, staff consulted with local Councillors on eligible parks in their ward. All 27 parks in the pilot program were confirmed by the local Councillor. See Figure 1 for map of pilot locations.

Figure 1: Map of 27 parks selected for the Alcohol in Parks pilot program, 2023.



2.2 EVALUATION SCOPE

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the following outcomes of the pilot: park use and access, park experience for visitors and surrounding community and businesses, public health and safety, park cleanliness, and the communication of program and rules. In this report, 'pilot period' refers to the period of August 2 to October 9, 2023.

The sections in this report respond to the following evaluation questions:

1. **Park Use and Access:** Did people visit pilot parks? Were pilot parks accessible by walking? How did people get to pilot parks (transit, walk, drive, etc.)? Why didn't people visit a pilot park?
2. **Park Experience:** How did alcohol in parks impact experiences for pilot park visitors, neighbours and businesses? What were the benefits and drawbacks experienced? Were visitors satisfied with their experience?
3. **Safety and Health:** Did pilot park visitors feel safe or experience any safety issues? Were there any changes in service requests via 311 for park conduct, in police responses at pilot parks or in emergency room visits related to alcohol consumption during the pilot period?
4. **Park Cleanliness:** Did the pilot impact park cleanliness?
5. **Communication of Rules and Guidelines:** Were Alcohol in Parks program rules and guidelines easy to understand and clear? Were signage and web communications clear?
6. **Future of the Alcohol in Parks program:** What is the public sentiment about alcohol in parks and the future of the program?

2.3 METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

This evaluation used two types of public surveys, 311 service data, and additional data points to assess the outcomes of the pilot.

Park Experience Survey

The City of Toronto conducted a voluntary online survey to gain insight on how people experienced pilot parks. The survey was open from August 1 through October 16, 2023, to anyone 16 and older, including pilot park visitors, neighbouring residents and local businesses. A total of 9,677 respondents participated in the survey, and over 8,000 of those respondents said they visited a pilot park. The survey contained socio-demographic questions to better understand who participated in the survey and any differences in experiences. These questions were voluntary and included a 'prefer not to answer' option. Findings from the survey were examined by sub-population demographic of the respondents, and meaningful differences are reported in this document by age, sex, households with children, racialized identities and income.

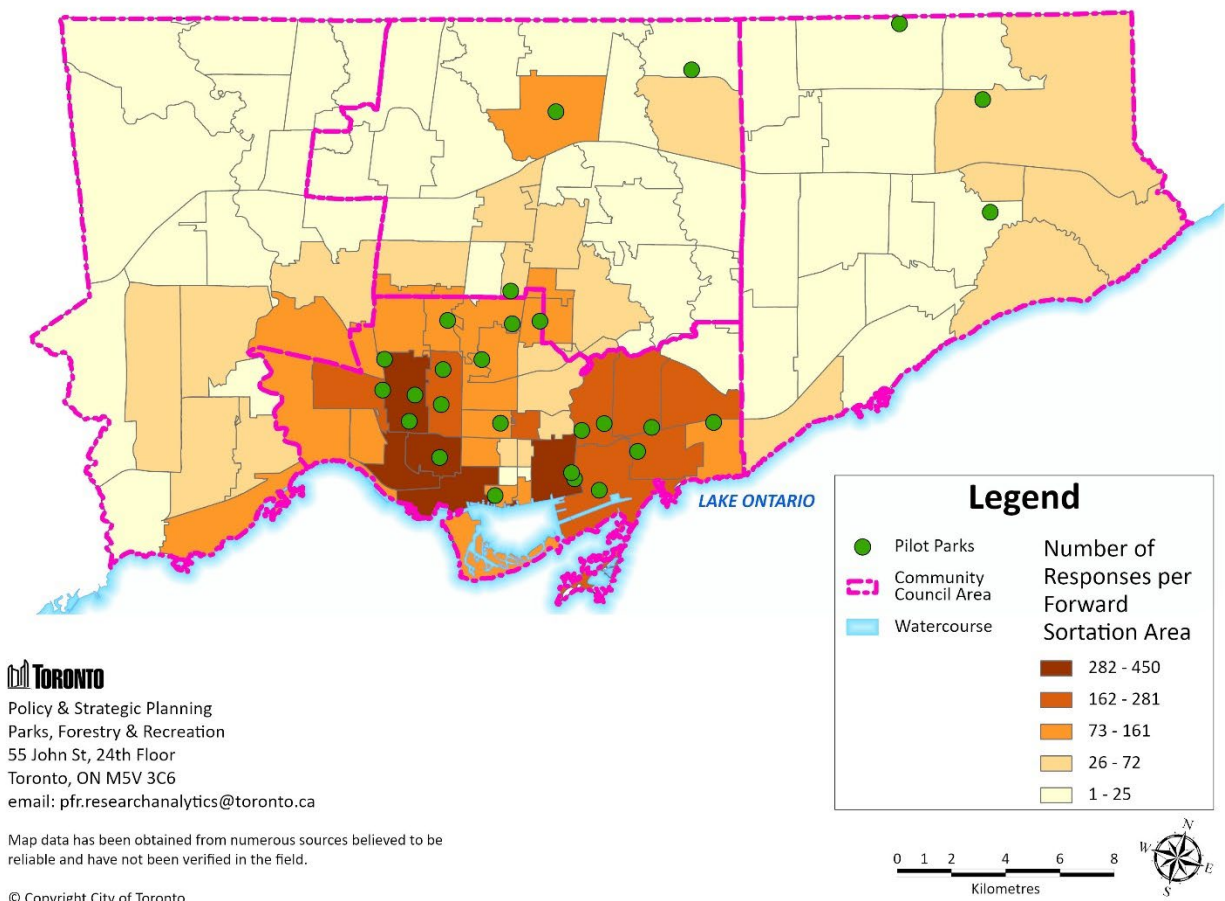
The survey was promoted on the City's pilot webpage, signs in parks, and through the City's social media channels. It was also promoted via a social media campaign targeting people living in, working in and/or visiting the park area.

Findings from this survey provide valuable data on the pilot program itself and how people experienced the pilot. A limitation to this survey is that it does not represent the opinions of all park visitors nor of residents across the city. Therefore, while the number of respondents to this survey is large, it does not reflect the socio-demographic profile of Toronto. People who identify as White, living in semi-detached dwellings, with higher-than-average income, born in Canada, and in the younger adult age groups (30 to 54) are over-represented (see Appendix B) in the survey. Also, because most pilot parks are located in Toronto and East York, and geo-targeted social media promotion was used, approximately 80% of respondents live in the Toronto-East York Community Council Area (see Figure 2).¹

Unless otherwise noted, all results presented here from the Park Experience Survey reflect the views of people who reported visiting pilot parks during the pilot period (85% of respondents). **To simplify terminology, we will refer to Park Experience Survey respondents who reported visiting a pilot park as 'survey respondents' or 'respondents'.**

¹ Based on respondents who provided the first three digits of their postal code (i.e., forward sortation area, or FSA).

Figure 2: Number of people who responded to the Park Experience Survey and visited pilot parks, by home location (based on first 3 digits of postal code, if provided)



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Map data has been obtained from numerous sources believed to be reliable and have not been verified in the field.

Public Opinion Surveys

Two Public Opinion Surveys were conducted by The Strategic Council using an online panel, quotas and weighting to obtain representative samples of Toronto’s overall population based on age, region and gender. The survey was conducted both before and after the pilot (see Staff Report, Attachment 4 for the October 2023 report). There were 800 respondents to the pre-pilot survey in January 2023, and 1,200 respondents to the post-pilot survey in October 2023. These surveys are used to better understand Torontonians’ overall sentiment about alcohol in parks city-wide. A comparison between pre- and post-pilot survey results provides insights on if there were any changes in public sentiment.

Unlike the Park Experience Survey, findings from this survey provide valuable data on Torontonian opinions on alcohol in parks more broadly across the city, not only in surrounding pilot park areas, and reflect the demographics of the population of Toronto. Because this survey approximates a random sample, differences in experiences based on age, gender or region can

be reported as statistically significant. Findings from the post-pilot iteration of the Public Opinion Survey are often broken down by Community Council Area in this report and include Etobicoke York, North York, Toronto and East York, and Scarborough (see Figure 2 above). **Findings from this survey are framed in this report as the opinions of ‘residents’ or ‘Torontonians’.**

Additional Data Sources:

The evaluation also included analysis of:

- Service requests received by the City of Toronto Customer Experience/311 division related to park use, park conduct and garbage and recycling bins;
- Service calls made to Toronto Police Service from in and around pilot parks;
- Hospital emergency department visits related to alcohol; and
- City of Toronto staff observations at pilot parks during the pilot period (Municipal Licensing and Standards; Parks, Forestry and Recreation; and Solid Waste Management Services).

3 KEY FINDINGS

3.1 PARK USE AND ACCESS

Thirty-five percent (35%) of Torontonians who responded to the Public Opinion Survey said they visited a pilot park. Park Experience Survey respondents primarily visited a pilot park because it is the usual park they visit, as well as to socialize and enjoy nature. Respondents accessed pilot parks, primarily in Toronto-East York, by foot, bike or public transit. About half said they did not access a pilot park because they had no time or interest, and about four in ten said it was because there was no pilot park nearby.

Use of Pilot Parks

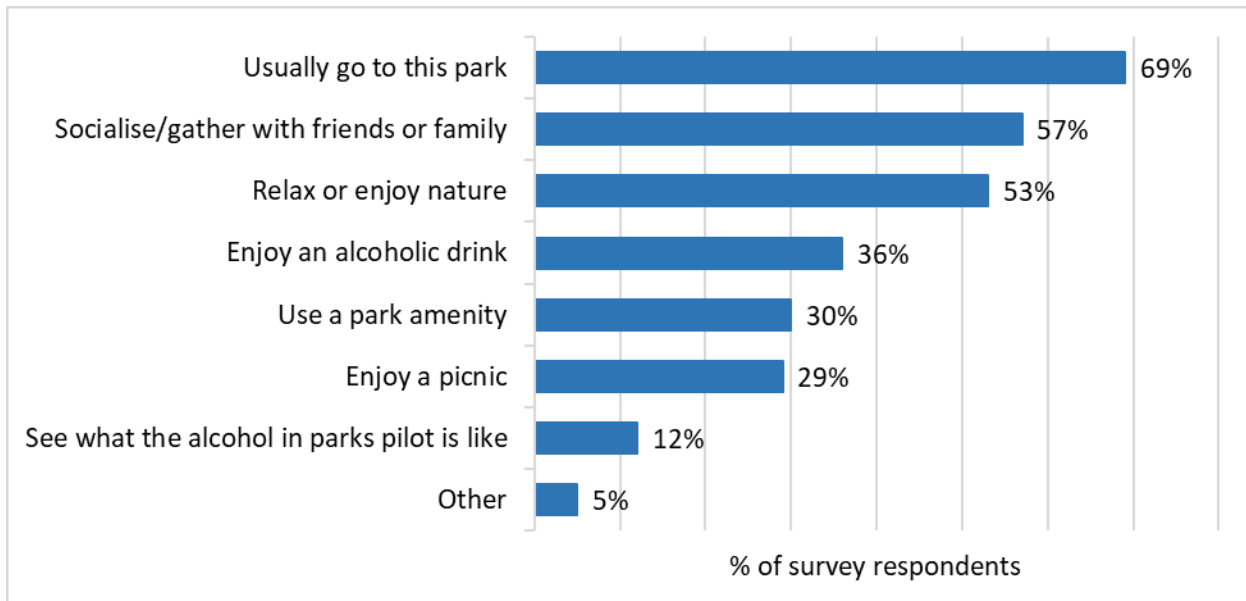
In the post-pilot Public Opinion Survey, 35% of Torontonians said they had visited a pilot park, and among these, 28% had consumed alcohol during their visit. People under the age of 55 were more likely to have visited a pilot park compared to older people, and men were more likely than women (39% compared with 31%). Findings from this survey better reflect use of pilot parks across Toronto compared with the Park Experience Survey because of the sampling method.

About 85% of Park Experience Survey respondents said they visited a pilot park. The majority of these respondents were White, aged 30 to 54, have higher-than-average household income, were born in Canada, and live in the Toronto and East York Community Council Area.

Reasons People Visited Pilot Parks

People visited pilot parks for many reasons, not solely to enjoy a drink. Among the 85% of Park Experience Survey respondents who said they visited a pilot park, the majority (69%) said they visited because they usually go to that park. Over half said they visited to socialize/gather with friends or family or to relax or enjoy nature (see Figure 3). Thirty-six percent (36%) said they visited to enjoy an alcoholic beverage. The majority (91%) of survey respondents traveled to the park by foot (63%), transit (15%) or bike (13%).

Figure 3: Reasons survey respondents visited an Alcohol in Parks pilot park

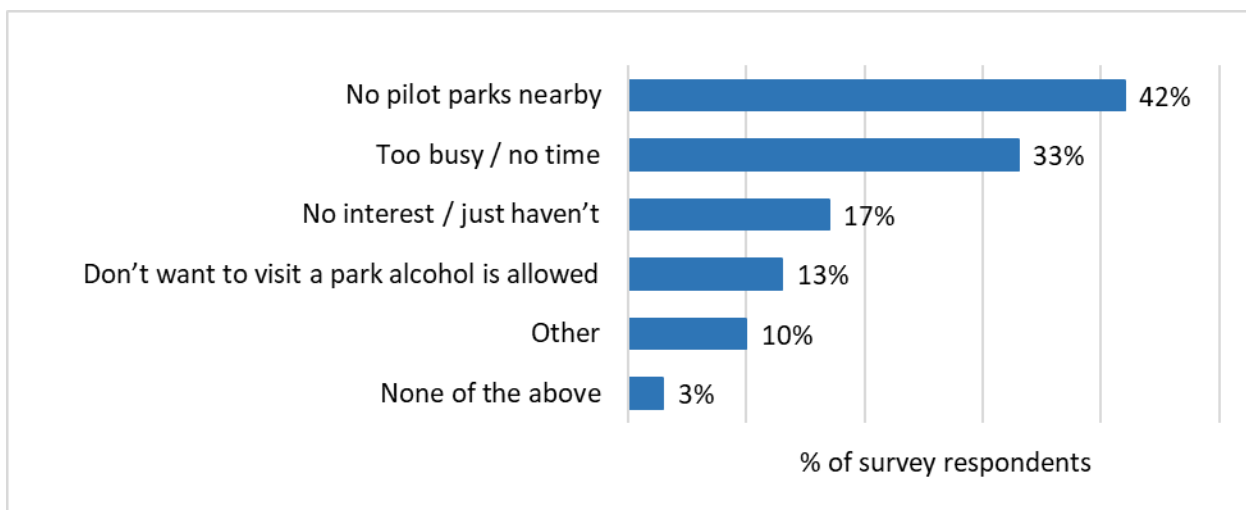


Q. Why did you visit the park? (select all that apply) (Park Experience Survey 2023, n=7975)

Reasons People Did Not Visit Pilot Parks

Among the 12% of the Park Experience survey respondents who said they did not visit a pilot park, about half said it was because they had no time or interest to do so (33% and 18%, respectively). However, 42% said they did not visit a pilot park because there were none nearby (see Figure 4). Not everyone necessarily wanted access to a pilot park. Thirteen percent (13%) said it was because they did not want to visit a park where alcohol is allowed.

Figure 4: Reasons survey respondents said did not visit a pilot park



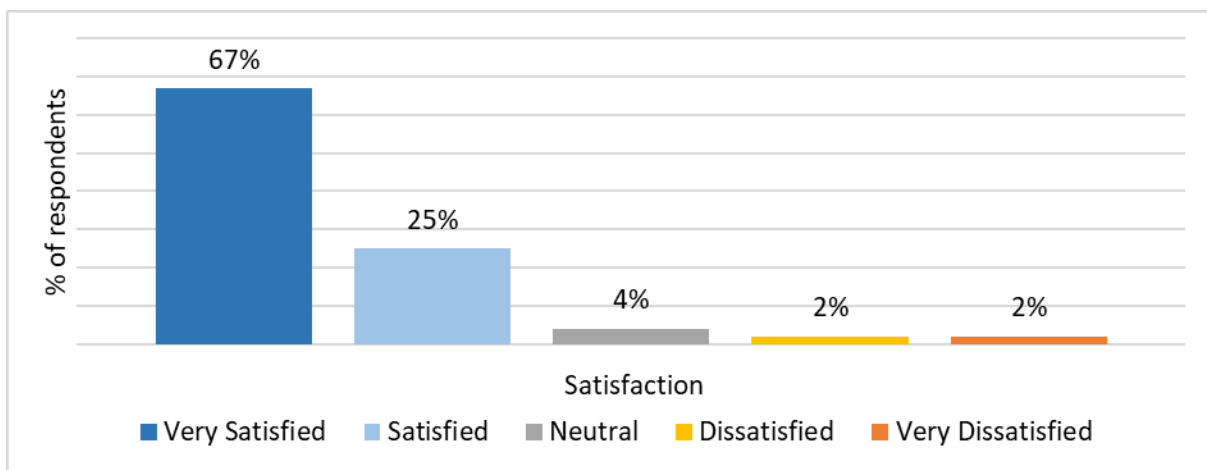
Q. Why didn't you visit a pilot park? (select all that apply) (Park Experience Survey 2023, n=1088)

3.2 PARK EXPERIENCE

Results from the Park Experience Survey show that satisfaction with pilot parks visits was high. Concerns with allowing alcohol in parks anticipated by Torontonians in the Public Opinion Survey included disruptive behaviour and increased noise, but these largely did not materialize at pilot parks. Park satisfaction was high, and 82% of Park Experience Survey respondents said that the pilot enhanced their park experience. It is important to note that Park Experience Survey respondents primarily live in Toronto and East York, where the percentage of Torontonians who had these concerns was generally lower than in other Community Council Areas.

Park Satisfaction

Figure 5: Satisfaction with pilot park visit



Q. Overall, how satisfied are you with your most recent park visit? (Park Experience Survey 2023, n=7212)

Ninety two percent (92%) of Park Experience Survey respondents said they were satisfied with their park visit, including 67% who were very satisfied (Figure 5). Four percent (4%) were dissatisfied. Satisfaction rates did not differ greatly by park, with most parks receiving a satisfaction rating of over 80% (see Appendix A).

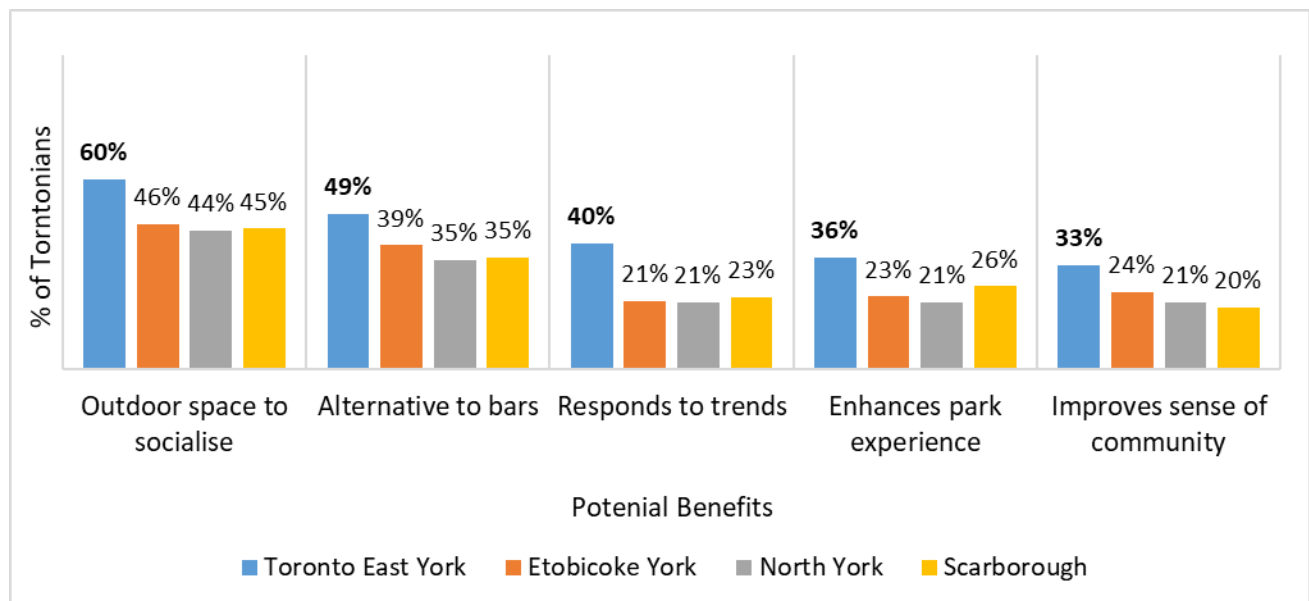
Households with children under 18 were less likely to say they were satisfied than households without children (82% compared with 91%, respectively). Satisfaction also decreased with age: respondents aged 55 and over were less likely to be satisfied with their park visit than those under 55 (82% compared with 93%, respectively).

Benefits of the Program: Enhancing Park Visits

The Public Opinion Survey asked Torontonians to weigh in on the potential benefits of allowing responsible consumption of alcohol in parks. Pre-pilot, the main benefits Torontonians cited were providing a space to socialize (50%) and providing an alternative to bars (40%). Just over a quarter said allowing alcohol in parks responds to current park use trends of drinking in parks and enhances park experience. Post-pilot, there is no significant change in Torontonians' opinions on benefits.

Opinions on benefits of the program differ across Community Council Areas. Toronto and East York residents were more likely than residents of the other areas to report benefits of allowing responsible alcohol consumption in parks, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Potential benefits identified by Torontonians after the pilot, by Community Council Areas



Q. If the City continues to allow people to responsibly drink in parks, what would be the benefits? (Public Opinion Survey, October 2023) *Bolded percentages indicate statistically significant differences between the Community Council Areas.

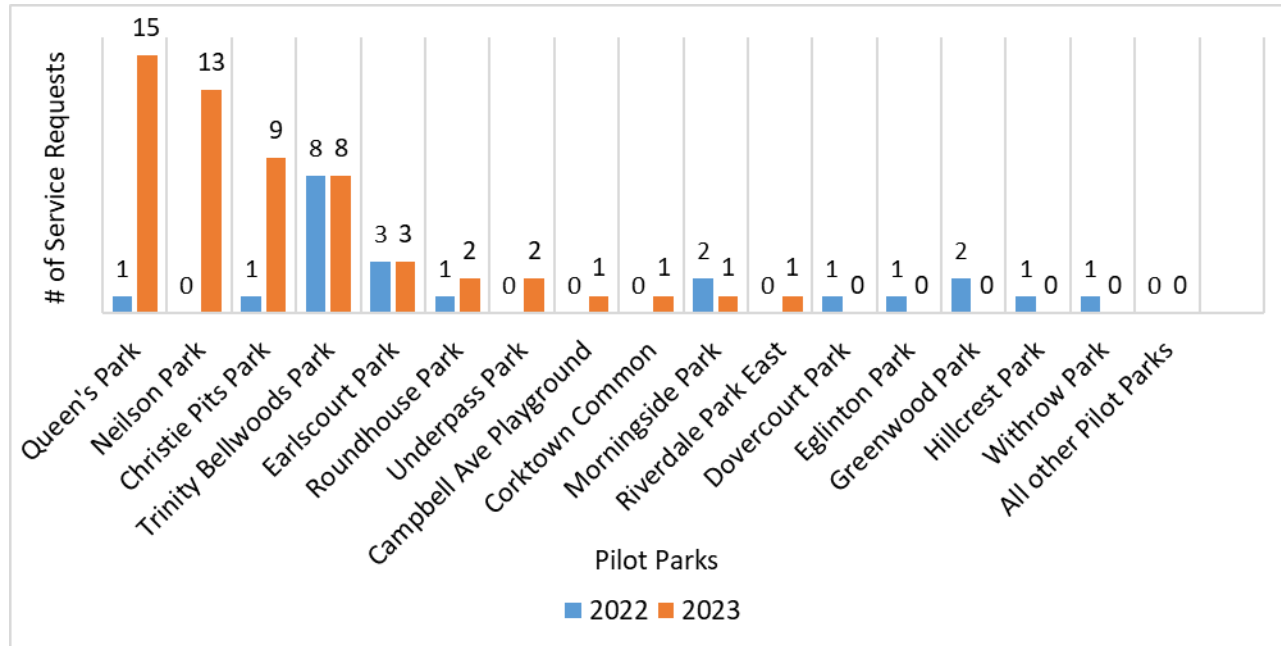
Park Experience Survey respondents – also primarily residents in Toronto and East York – said that they experienced these benefits: 82% of survey respondents said that being able to enjoy an alcoholic drink in the park improved their park experience. Respondents under 55 years of age were more likely to agree that the program improved their park experience than people 55 or older (84% compared 56%, respectively), and those without children were also more likely than those with children to agree (86% compared with 71%, respectively).

Concerns about the Program: Disruptive Behaviour and Noise

Pre-pilot, Torontonians were most concerned with disruptive behaviour associated with consumption of alcohol in parks (70%). Post-pilot, this level of concern decreased slightly to 66% of Torontonians. However, only 6% of Park Experience Survey respondents said that they observed disruptive behaviour in the park area of their community. In addition, there were only three service requests for disruptive behaviour in pilot parks during the pilot period. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of survey respondents said people drinking in parks were considerate, while 9% said that people drinking in parks negatively affected their park visit experience.

Excessive noise was another concern anticipated by 50% of Torontonians both before and after the pilot. However, only 5% of Park Experience Survey respondents reported excessive noise in the park area of their community. 311 data also show that noise issues were minimal. While the total number of 311 service requests for noise increased at pilot parks during the pilot period from 22 (in 2022) to 56 (in 2023), noise service requests for three pilot parks drove this increase – Queen’s Park, Neilson Park, and Christie Pits Park (see Figure 7). However, it is not possible to determine a direct correlation between service requests and the alcohol in parks pilot, as there are many factors that can influence the volume of visitors and service requests, including weather, special events and large unplanned gatherings. Also, most service requests for noise at Queen’s Park were in September, coinciding with protests reported in the media.

Figure 7: Amplified noise service requests for pilot parks during the pilot period (2023 vs. 2022)



Customer Experience/311 data, August 1 – October 9, 2022 and 2023

Impacts on Businesses

The Park Experience Survey was designed to identify potential concerns or impacts from businesses and adjacent neighbours in addition to park visitors. The number of business responses was small in comparison to the overall number of survey respondents. Forty-eight (48) respondents self-identified as a 'business owner.'

Satisfaction among business owners was lower (72%) compared to respondents overall (92%). Sixty-seven percent (67%) of business respondents said they did not see or experience any issues in the park area of their community. However, 21% said that the pilot impacted their business. Business owners also reported increased litter (18% vs. 8%) and excessive noise (15% vs. 5%) at a rate slightly higher than survey respondents overall. However, this is based on a small number of business respondents (33 out of 6,986 respondents overall).

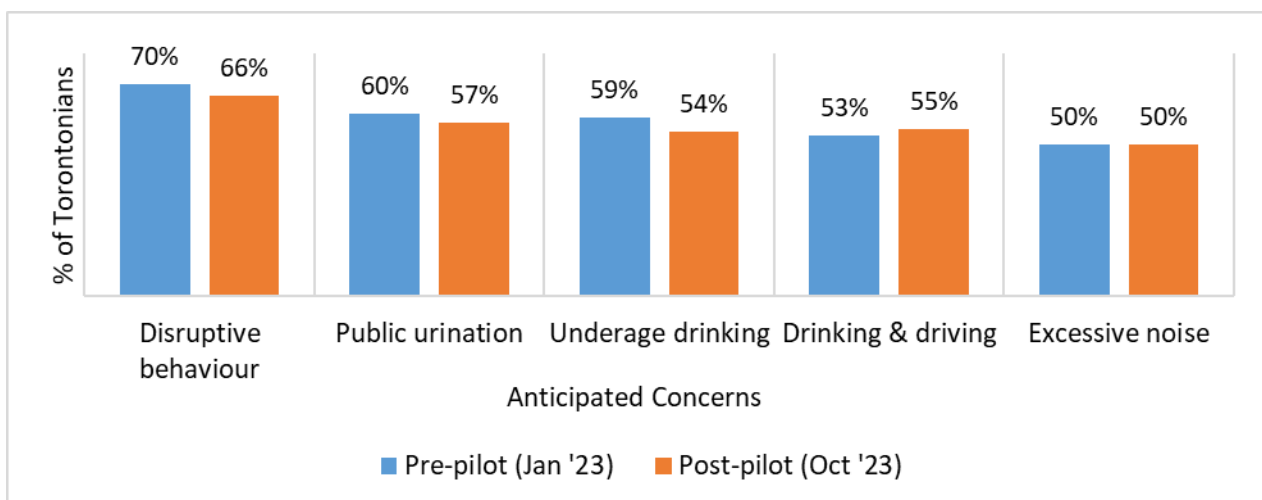
3.3 SAFETY AND HEALTH

Post-Pilot, Torontonians (67%) said ‘maintaining public health and safety’ is the most important condition for allowing alcohol consumption in parks. In both surveys, before and after the pilot, more than half were concerned with disruptive behaviour, drinking and driving, public urination and underage drinking. The Park Experience Survey, however, shows that respondents felt safe and welcome at parks, and that those consuming alcohol were considerate. There were few safety issues reported to 311 or Toronto Police Service at pilot parks, and across Toronto, emergency department visits due to alcohol were comparable with 2022.

Torontonians’ Views

The Public Opinion Survey indicates that public health and safety were top of mind for Torontonians in relation to alcohol in parks. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of Torontonians said ‘maintaining public health and safety’ is the most important condition for allowing alcohol consumption in parks. As mentioned in the previous section, disruptive behaviour was a top anticipated concern. More than half of Torontonians were also concerned about public health issues such as public urination, underage drinking, and drinking and driving. Concerns about disruptive behaviour and underage drinking at parks decreased slightly post-pilot, as shown in Figure 8.

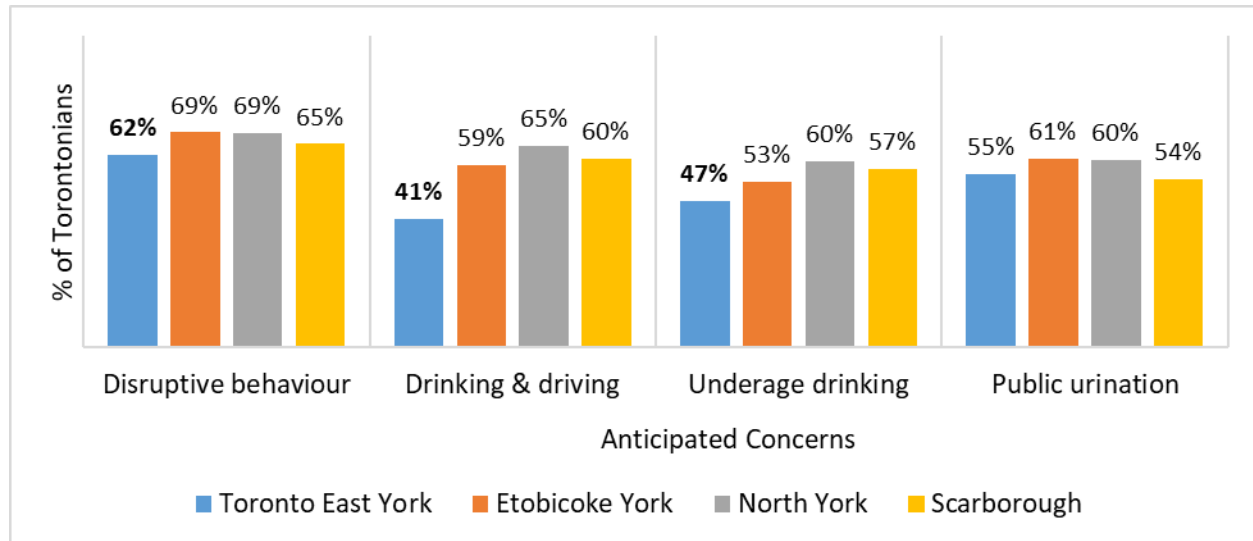
Figure 8: Top anticipated health and safety concerns identified by Torontonians, before and after the pilot



Q. If the City continues to allow people to responsibly drink in parks, which of the following are concerns would you have? (Public Opinion Survey, 2023) *Bolted percentages indicate statistically significant differences between pre- and post-pilot.

Post-pilot, Toronto and East York residents were significantly less concerned about drinking and driving, underage drinking and disruptive behaviour than residents of Etobicoke York, North York and Scarborough (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Top anticipated health and safety concerns identified by Torontonians post-pilot, by Community Council Area



Q. If the City continues to allow people to responsibly drink in parks, which of the following are concerns would you have? (Public Opinion Survey, 2023) *Bolded percentages indicate statistically significant differences between pre- and post-pilot.

Safety and Health at Pilot Parks

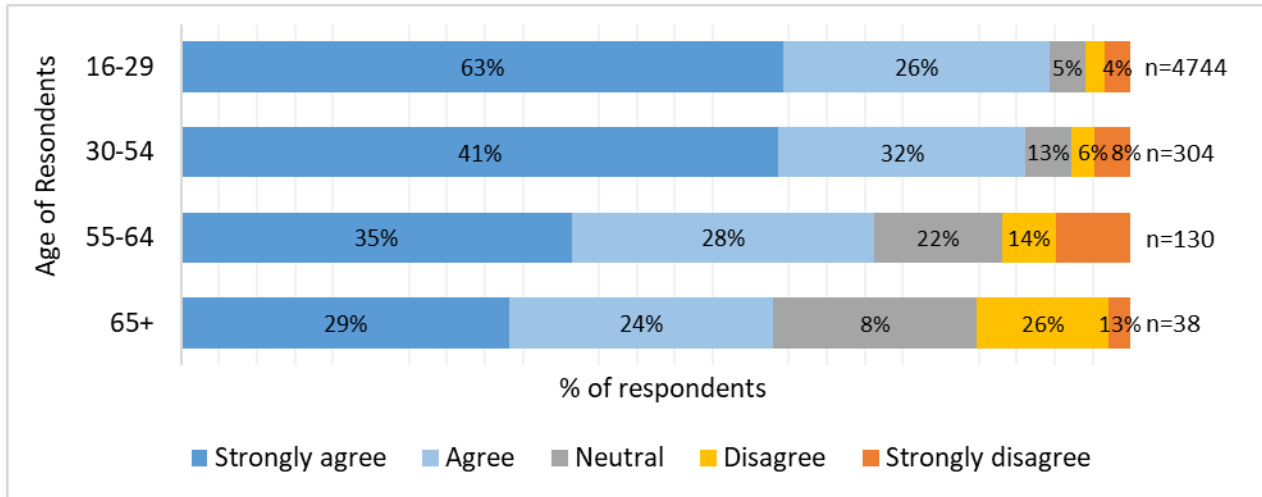
Torontonians’ safety and public health concerns outlined above largely did not materialize at pilot parks, based on findings from the Park Experience Survey. Ninety-two percent (92%) of survey respondents said they felt safe, and 90% felt welcome at pilot parks. The majority (89%) of respondents said they did not see or experience any concerning issues. There was no increase in underage drinking or drinking and driving reported by Toronto Police Service. Only 8% of survey respondents reported driving to the pilot park (most traveled to the parks by foot, bike or public transit).

Administrative data and staff observations support the Park Experience Survey findings: there were no notable differences between the pilot year and the previous year at pilot parks overall for safety-related 311 service requests or calls for service, arrests or tickets issued by Toronto Police Service. Across Toronto, emergency department visits due to alcohol were comparable with 2022 for the same period.

Some population groups who responded to the Park Experience Survey were less likely to agree with the statement that people drinking in parks were considerate. These included: people over 55 years (70% agreed) compared to people 16 to 54 years of age (89% agreed) and people with

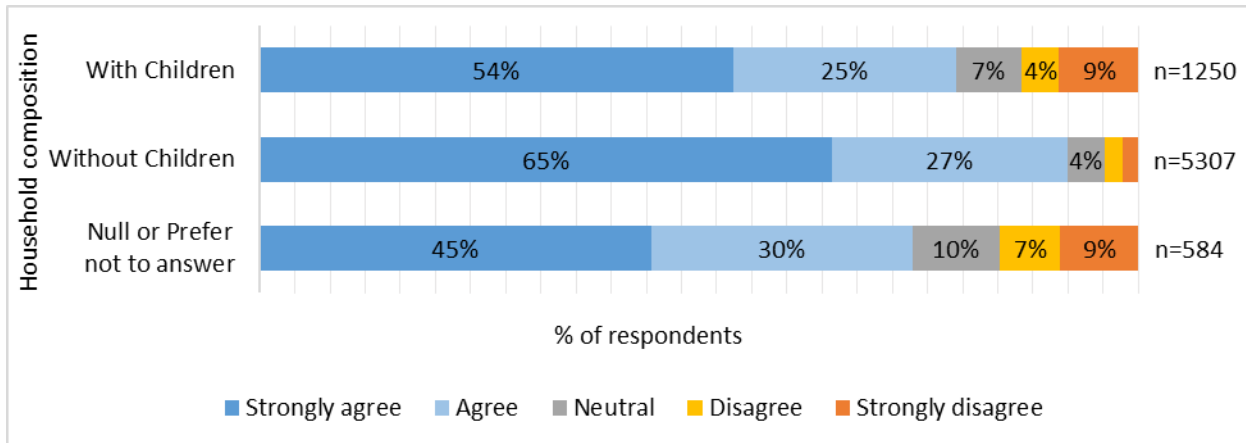
children (79% agreed) compared to people without children (92% agreed). See Figures 10 and 11, below.

Figure 10: Percentage of respondents who agreed/disagreed that ‘people who were drinking in parks were considerate,’ by age



Q. Thinking about your most recent park visit, do you agree or disagree with the following? - People who were drinking in parks were considerate (Park Experience Survey, 2023)

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents who agreed/disagreed that ‘people who were drinking in parks were considerate,’ by households with and without children



Q. Thinking about your most recent park visit, do you agree or disagree with the following? - People who were drinking in parks were considerate (Park Experience Survey, 2023)

3.4 PARK CLEANLINESS

Torontonians were concerned with impacts on park cleanliness. However, nine out of ten pilot park visitors said the park they visited was clean. Addressing litter and the availability and maintenance of washrooms were considered priorities, even for respondents who were satisfied with their experience.

Litter

Sixty-one percent (61%) of Torontonians were concerned, pre-pilot, that allowing alcohol in parks would increase litter. The vast majority of Park Experience Survey respondents (90%) agreed that the pilot park they visited was clean. Respondents also noted that addressing litter and recycling continues to be important to them. At five pilot parks, there was only one 311 service request during the pilot period related to overflowing garbage/recycling bins (Queen's Park, Earlscourt Park, Greenwood Sir Winston Churchill Park, Withrow Park, and Trinity-Bellwoods Park), and two at Monarch Park. Riverdale Park had three calls. Solid Waste Management Services responded to each call within 24 hours. At the remaining 19 parks, no 311 calls related to garbage/recycling bins were received.

Washrooms

Among the 22% of Park Experience Survey respondents who answered an open-ended question about program improvements, access to clean washrooms was a prevalent theme. Respondents said they would like to see more washrooms that are open for longer hours and are well maintained. Notably, most of this feedback came from survey respondents who were satisfied with their park experience and supported expanding the program to all parks.

3.5 COMMUNICATION OF RULES AND GUIDELINES

While the majority of respondents found the pilot website clear and knew how to find information about pilot parks, just under half were clear on the rules and guidelines of the pilot.

Signage and Communication

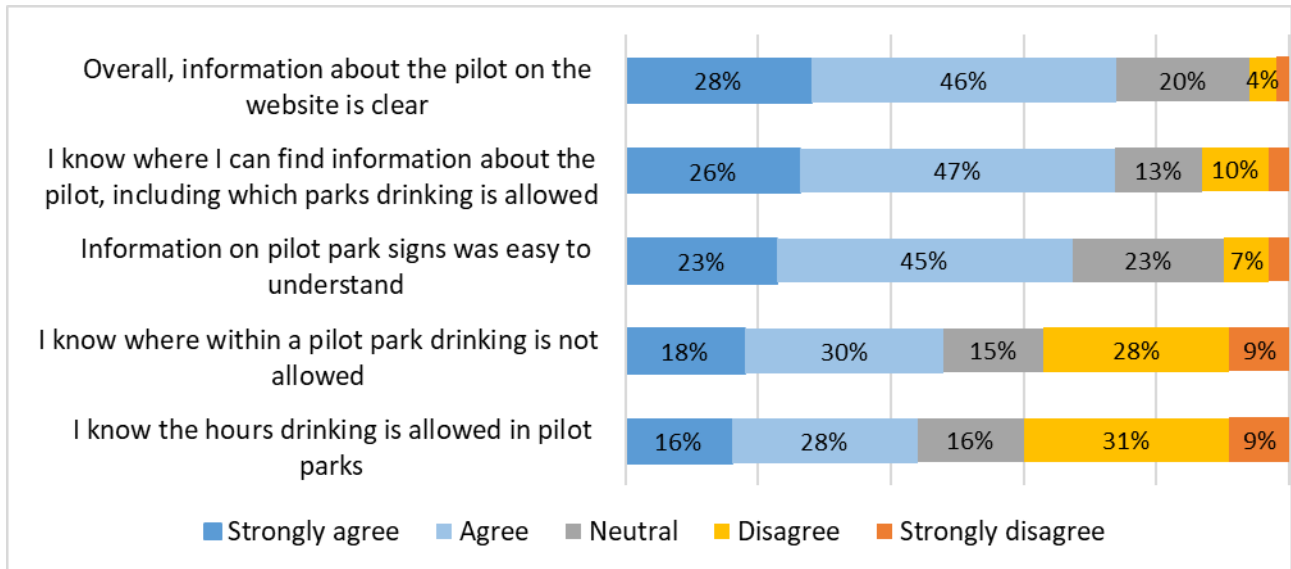
Signage and a City of Toronto webpage were developed to communicate information about the pilot program. Public health information and educational messages were included on the webpage and signs and posted to City of Toronto social media accounts.

Survey respondents said the website and signs clearly communicated information about the pilot and inclusion of parks: 74% of respondents agreed information on the website was clear, and 73% said they knew how to find information about the program and pilot parks. Sixty-eight percent (68%) said information on signs was easy to understand, while 10% disagreed (see Figure 12). Upon request, 54 large signs in 21 parks were replaced with 46 small signs. Some survey respondents said signs should be smaller and simpler.

Rules and Guidelines

Although the website and signs were found to be effective in communicating about the pilot, survey respondents did not express certainty about the rules regarding where and when alcohol was not allowed in the pilot parks. Only 44% said they knew *when* drinking was allowed in parks, and 48% said they knew *where* within pilot parks they were not allowed to drink (i.e., maintaining distance from playgrounds, etc.) (see Figure 12). However, by-law enforcement officers only noted six instances of visitors drinking near a playground, splashpad/wading pool, or skateboard/BMX bike area. By-law enforcement officers noted that visitors assumed it was the whole park or found it difficult to judge the two metres distance.

Figure 12: Respondents' opinions on the clarity of Alcohol in Parks program information, rules and guidelines



Q. Thinking about what you know about the alcohol in park pilot program, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following? (Park Experience Survey 2023, n=7138 – 7914)

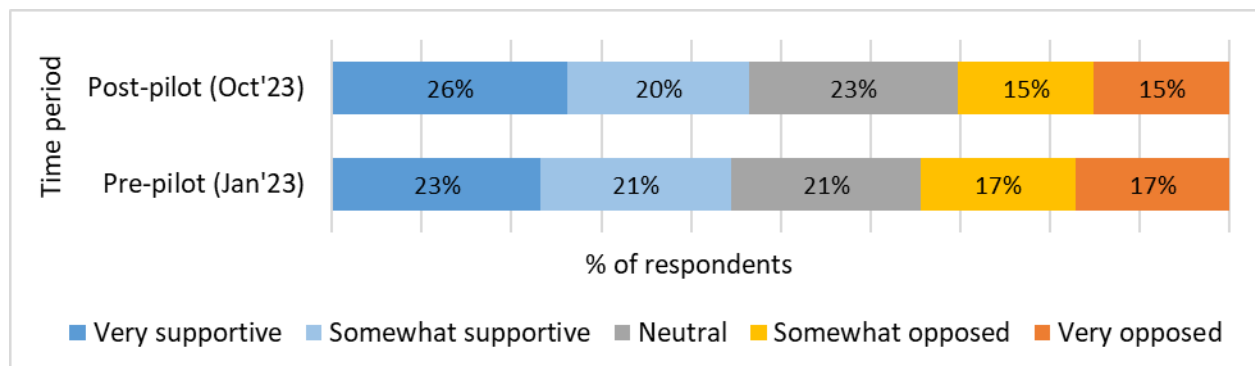
3.6 FUTURE OF ALCOHOL IN PARKS

In general, people who experienced pilot parks were more supportive of allowing responsible consumption of alcohol than residents across the city. Pilot park visitors who responded to the Park Experience Survey strongly support maintaining or expanding the program (90 per cent). Just over half of Torontonians (53 per cent) who responded to the Public Opinion Survey, and may have not experienced a pilot park, support maintaining or expanding the program in some form. The level of support was highest in Toronto and East York, an area that had the largest number of pilot parks.

Level of Support for Allowing Alcohol in Parks

There is little change in public sentiment about allowing people to responsibly consume alcohol in parks following the pilot. The second Public Opinion Survey shows more Torontonians are in favour (46%) than opposed (30%), with 20% neutral (see Figure 13).

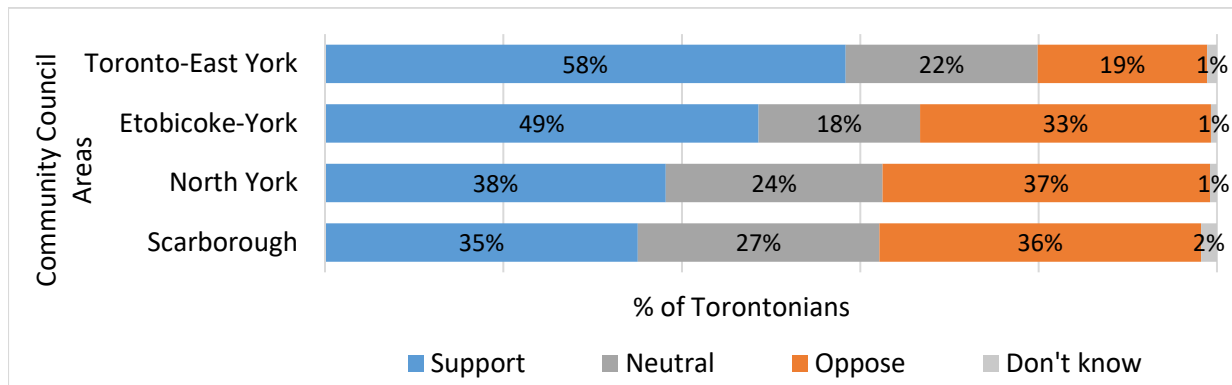
Figure 13: Support among Toronto residents for allowing responsible consumption of alcohol in parks, before and after the pilot



Q. If the City of Toronto allows people to responsibly drink in parks, how supportive or opposed would you be to this change? *Pre-pilot phrasing: Q. The City of Toronto is considering allowing people to responsibly drink in parks. How supportive or opposed would you be to this change? (Public Opinion Survey, 2023).

White residents were more likely to be supportive of allowing responsible consumption of alcohol consumption in parks than those who identified as coming from a racialized group (56% compared to 36%). Residents living in Toronto and East York were also more likely to be supportive of the program compared to those in other Community Council Areas, with those in Scarborough being the least supportive (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Support among Toronto residents for allowing responsible consumption of alcohol in parks after the pilot, by Community Council Area



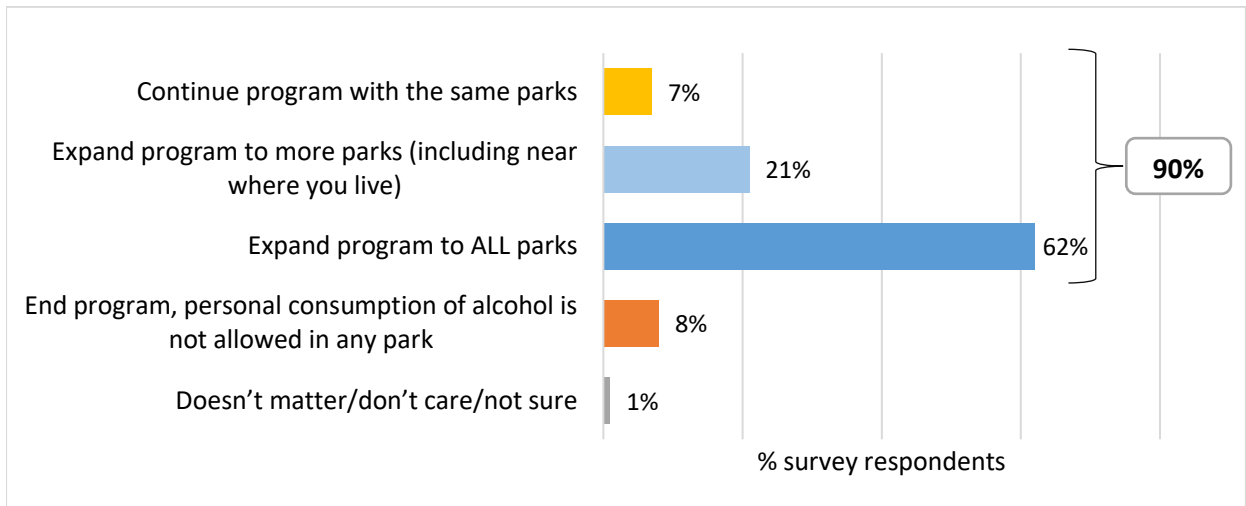
Q. If the City of Toronto allows people to responsibly drink in parks, how supportive or opposed would you be to this change? *Pre-pilot phrasing: The City of Toronto is considering allowing people to responsibly drink in parks. How supportive or opposed would you be to this change? (Public Opinion Survey, 2023).

Future of Alcohol in Parks

Park Experience Survey

Among pilot park visitors who responded to the Park Experience Survey, 90% want to maintain the alcohol in parks program in some form – either with the same parks in the pilot, additional added parks, or all City parks (Figure 15). Only 8% of respondents would like to see the program end and for personal consumption of alcohol to no longer be allowed in any park. Seven in ten said they would likely use the program if it were expanded to the winter season, with 42% saying they would very likely do so. Households with children under 18 were also more likely to say they would like the program to end than households without (17% compared with 6%, respectively).

Figure 15: Park visitors' preferences for the future of the Alcohol in Parks program

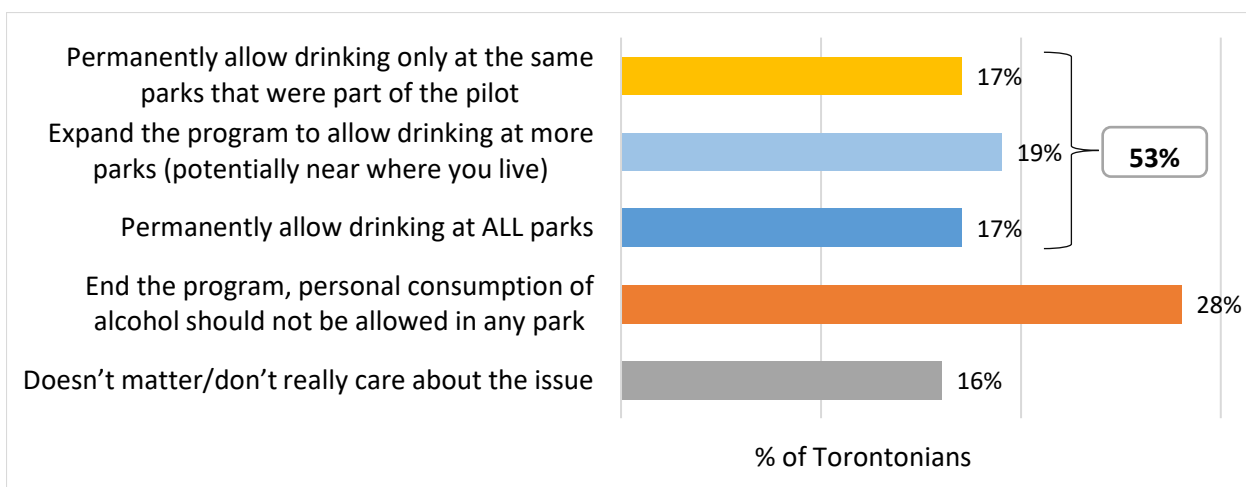


Q. After the trial period allowing personal consumption of alcohol at select parks ends, what would you like to see (please select one)? (Park Experience Survey 2023, n=7192)

Public Opinion Survey

Fifty-three percent (53%) of Torontonians want to maintain the alcohol in parks program in some form – either with the same parks in the pilot, additional parks or all City parks (Figure 16). Support for maintaining or expanding the program was higher in Toronto and East York (63%) and Etobicoke York (61%). However, 31% of Torontonians stated that they would visit parks less often if the City allows people to drink responsibly in parks (including the park they visit most often). Eleven percent (11%) said they would visit the park more often, and 48% suggested there would be no change.

Figure 16: Torontonians' preferences for the future of the Alcohol in Parks program



Q. What would you like to see happen with the "alcohol in parks" program in 2024, after the pilot ends (please select one response category only)? (Public Opinion Survey, Oct 2023)

4 CONCLUSION

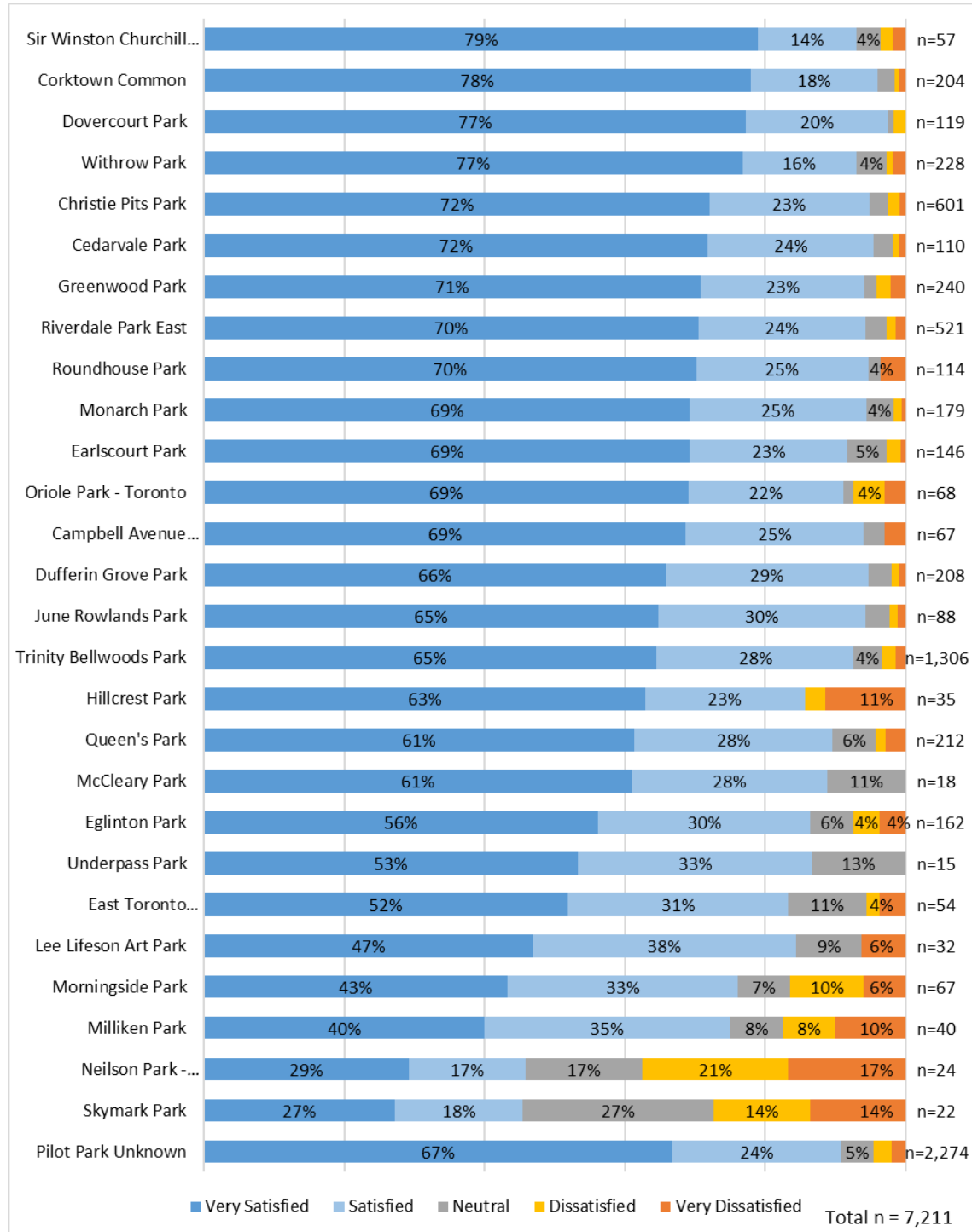
Parks, Forestry & Recreation conducted a rigorous evaluation to examine the outcomes of the pilot in relation to the guiding principles underpinning the design of the Alcohol in Parks program, which aimed to ensure a safe and enjoyable park experience for all. Multiple methods and sources of data were used, including 311 data, data from Toronto Police Service and Toronto Public Health and two types of surveys. First, a Public Opinion Survey with a representative sample of Torontonians provided insight into residents' perspectives on allowing responsible consumption of alcohol in parks before and after the pilot. Second, an online Park Experience Survey was designed to understand park visitor, community and business opinions on their park experience and the pilot.

As seen in other Canadian jurisdictions who piloted an alcohol in parks program, few issues emerged during the pilot despite concerns identified pre-pilot by residents. Park visitors were satisfied overall, there were few safety issues identified and park cleanliness did not appear to be impacted by the pilot. The majority of respondents who visited a pilot park did so because it is the park they usually visit, and more than half went to socialize or to relax and enjoy nature; about a third of respondents also visited to enjoy an alcoholic beverage.

In general, people who experienced pilot parks were more supportive than residents across the city. Pilot park visitors who responded to the Park Experience Survey strongly support maintaining or expanding the program, whereas just over half of Torontonians who responded to the Public Opinion Survey support maintaining or expanding the program in some form.

5 APPENDICES

5.1 APPENDIX A: SATISFACTION WITH PILOT PARK VISIT, BY PILOT PARK (PARK EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2023)



Note: some of the park-specific satisfaction and dissatisfaction ratings are based on a very small number of respondents and should be interpreted with caution.

5.2 APPENDIX B: TABLE OF DEMOGRAPHICS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS, PARK EXPERIENCE SURVEY (2023)

Socio-demographic variable	% of respondents
Have a backyard or outdoor space	
No	32%
Yes	67%
Total number of respondents	7906
Housing Type	
Apartment or condominium	51%
Single-family semi-detached, townhome, or row house	20%
Single-family detached	17%
Duplex, triplex, or rooming house	9%
Other	1%
Prefer not to answer	2%
Total number of respondents	7982
Age	
16-29	27%
30-54	66%
55-64	5%
65+	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%
Total number of respondents	8112
Born in Canada	
Yes	74%
No	23%
Prefer not to answer	3%
Total number of respondents	7991
Household composition: children under 18 in household	
No	78%
Yes	20%
Prefer not to answer	3%
Total number of respondents	7979
Indigenous Identity	
No	92%
Yes - First Nations (examples: Ojibway, Cree, Mohawk, Mi'kmaq)	1%
Yes - Métis	1%
Yes – Inuit	0%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Total number of respondents	7895
Racialized Identity	

White (examples: English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Slovakian)	64%
South Asian or Indo-Caribbean (examples: Indian, Indo-Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	5%
East Asian (examples: Chinese, Japanese, Korean)	4%
Latin American (examples: Brazilian, Colombian, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian)	3%
Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian (examples: Afghan, Armenian, Iranian, Lebanese, Persian, Turkish)	2%
Not listed, please describe:	2%
Black (examples: African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean)	1%
Southeast Asian (examples: Filipino, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, Vietnamese)	1%
More than one race category or mixed race	7%
Prefer not to answer	11%
Total number of respondents	7952
Gender Identity	
Man	45%
Woman	43%
Gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous)	3%
Not listed, please describe:	1%
Trans woman	0%
Trans man	0%
Two-Spirit	0%
Prefer not to answer	8%
Total number of respondents	7954
Income	
0 - \$29,999	4%
\$30,000-\$49,999	6%
\$50,000-\$69,999	10%
\$70,000-\$99,999	15%
\$100,000-149,999	20%
\$150,000 or more	30%
Prefer not to answer	14%
Total number of respondents	7936

5.3 APPENDIX C: DATA NOTES

Park Experience Survey

- The Policy & Strategic Planning branch at Parks, Forestry & Recreation conducted an online survey from August 1 through October 16, 2023 using CheckMarket (as of February 5 2023, CheckMarket changed its brand name change to Medallia Agile Research). This survey provides data on park visitors' experiences and perspectives on the pilot.
- The survey was voluntary, based on self-selection (i.e. convenience sample), and was highlighted on project webpage, pilot signs, and corporate social media channels.
- Two social media campaigns were used to promote the survey: September 1 to 8, and October 6 to 13, 2023. The campaigns targeted postal codes around the pilot parks to ensure residents and businesses in the communities with pilot parks had an opportunity to provide feedback on the pilot.
- Questionnaire included 20 survey questions and nine sociodemographic questions, which were at the end of the survey and voluntary. The inclusion of sociodemographic questions followed the City's Data for Equity Strategy and guidelines.

Public Opinion Survey

- Please refer directly to the Public Opinion Survey report deck from The Strategic Council for details about the methodology (Staff Report, Attachment #4).

Customer Experience Division / 311 service request data

- The Customer Experience Division (CXD) / 311 receives calls from the public via phone, email, website, and the online app. Once calls are processed, a service request is forwarded to the appropriate division for follow-up.
- Service requests are forwarded to Solid Waste Management Services division and Municipal Licensing & Standards division through an integrated system and are therefore tracked by those divisions, whereas service requests for Parks are forwarded directly to the area supervisor via email or phone.
- The evaluation focused on analyzing service requests (as available) identified in the Public Opinion Survey by the public as concerns with allowing responsible consumption of alcohol in parks.
- 311 data obtained and analyzed for this evaluation includes service requests related to park use and conduct: overflowing or new recycling/garbage bins, amplified noise, disruptive behaviour.
- CXD also tracks calls for "general inquires on alcohol in parks, drinking alcohol in parks."
- As noted in the evaluation, service requests cannot be directly correlated with alcohol consumption or the program. There are many factors that can influence the volume of visitors and service requests, including weather, special events, and large unplanned gatherings.

Toronto Police Service data

- Toronto Police Service collected data from the Toronto Police Service databases to explore the impacts of the alcohol in parks pilot on Calls for Service Attended (CFSA), Tickets, Liquor Licence Act violations, and Arrested-Charged Persons within the boundaries of the identified pilot parks.
- Data for the period of August 2 to October 9 of 2023 and 2022 was used to compare the impact the pilot had on occurrences within and closely outside the boundaries of pilot parks. To capture this data, the park boundaries were manually extended to the centerline of the streets surrounding the parks.
- The tickets data included Highway Traffic Act (HTA), Compulsory Automobile Insurance Act (CAIA), Safe Streets and Trespass to Property Act (TPA). The CFSA data included Disorderliness, Check Address, See Ambulance, and Unknown trouble.

Emergency Department Visits for Alcohol

- Data on emergency department visits due to alcohol was obtained from the Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance (ACES) system for August 2 – October 9, 2023; August 2 – October 9, 2022; and August 2 – October 9, 2019 (pre-Covid year).
- The Acute Care Enhanced Surveillance (ACES) system is one of the most current sources of information showing recent trends in health care utilization at public hospitals in Toronto that can be used for monitoring.
- ACES classifies emergency department (ED) visits into “syndromes.” The syndrome for alcohol-related visits includes visits that maybe due to intoxication, complications, addiction, withdrawal, and organ damage from alcohol use.