



City of Toronto's Active TO Quiet Streets Executive Summary Report

Survey Period June 23 - September 30, 2020

Project Team

8 80 Cities

Project Lead:

David Simor, Senior Project Manager

Analysis and Report:

Candice Leung, Project Coordinator

Brandon Miles, Consultant

Funding Partner

City of Toronto



In 2020, 8 80 Cities led an evaluation of the Quiet Streets program, the results of which are outlined in this report.

Executive Summary

9,824 Total Survey Responses



In the Spring of 2020, the City of Toronto launched the Quiet Streets program as part of the ActiveTO initiative created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Quiet Streets were introduced across 65 kilometers in 31 locations to make it safer and easier for people to maintain physical distance while walking and cycling on local streets. This program was designed to enable trips to essential businesses as well as recreational access to the outdoors in the earliest days of the pandemic, when parks were closed and norms and standards of physical distancing and mask wearing were not yet established. Quiet Streets were installed in May 2020 and continued until mid-October 2020.

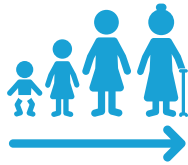
On these streets, signs and barricades were placed at each intersection along the route either in the centre of the lane or at the curbside, depending on the characteristic of the location. There were two signs facing oncoming traffic - one saying 'Shared Space' depicting a pedestrian, a person cycling, and a car, and the other one saying 'Local Traffic Only'. There was a third sign on the reverse saying 'Do your part, stay apart'. Routes were also designated as soft closures on digital wayfinding platforms (e.g. Google Maps and Waze). A few weeks into the program Google Maps introduced a designation called 'Pedestrian Street' and converted the code for all Quiet Streets to the new designation.

From June 23rd – September 30th, an online survey was open to gather feedback from users of the Quiet Streets. The survey was promoted with sidewalk stickers and decals on barricades. Ward offices were also encouraged to include the link in Councillors' newsletters. A total of 9,842 survey responses were collected. This report summarizes that feedback, first looking at the data from a program-wide perspective, and then breaking it down on a route-by-route basis.

Quiet Streets provoked a wide range of responses. The vast majority of survey respondents agreed with the goals of Quiet Streets. They wanted to see a reduction in vehicular speeds, wanted more space to safely physically distance, and wanted safer, shared streets. Where people tended to disagree was in how successful the Quiet Streets program was at achieving those goals. A small portion of respondents rejected the premise of the Quiet Streets program.

Some respondents identified and appreciated many benefits of Quiet Streets, most commonly the ability to safely distance from others, feeling safer while walking or cycling along the route, and reductions in non-local traffic. Less commonly identified, but still prominent benefits of the program include improvements to respondents mental, physical, and environmental health. Other respondents disagreed that Quiet Streets helped reduce non-local traffic or reckless driving, and expressed frustration with the quality of program materials, considering them to be too easily tampered with to affect change. The survey question about program benefits generated demonstrably more engagement than the survey question about program pain points, suggesting that the program was viewed more positively overall, with room for improvement.

The Average Respondent:



Was Between the Ages of

30-55

64% of Respondents



Was Predominantly

Female

52% of Respondents



Identified as

Not Living with a Disability

82% of Respondents



Traveled Quiet Streets by mode of

**Walking/
Jogging**

81% of Respondents



Lived in a Household of

**3 to 5
People**

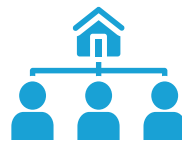
47% of Respondents



Lived or Worked on or within
3 Minutes of a

Quiet Street

67% of Respondents



Used a Quiet Street with

**Adult Members
of the Same Household**

69% of Respondents



Did not Rely on Parks or
Public Spaces for
**Access to the
Outdoors**

86% of Respondents

When reviewing the data on a route by route basis, it becomes even clearer how many respondents supported Quiet Streets in theory but were less satisfied with about how it was implemented. Many of the streets with mixed or negative responses to the program were not opposed to traffic calming in general. On the contrary, many communities would like to see permanent improvements to road safety on their streets and expressed negative impressions of the quality, durability, and overall effectiveness of the temporary materials used for Quiet Streets. As with the overall data, respondents from only a few Quiet Streets routes saw little or no value at all in what the program set out to achieve. There were more calls to improve Quiet Streets and make it permanent than to end the program entirely. Quiet Streets was conceived, planned, and implemented in a very short time frame amidst a global pandemic of a scale and impact unprecedented in our lifetimes. As a rapid response initiative, the program design did not involve any consultation with impacted communities, and was limited to the use of readily available materials. Overall, most respondents were eager to see traffic managed on local streets to make walking and cycling easier and safer by having traffic speeds and volumes lower, but not relying on very limited range of temporary interventions, basic materials, and limited community engagement. The survey suggested that while Quiet Streets may not have had a consistent or lasting impact on traffic management, the program was a valued aspect of the City's efforts to respond to COVID-19.