

St. James Town West Park Redesign

Community Vision Questionnaire Summary

March 2021

1 Introduction

St. James Town West Park is a 1-acre public park located between Sherbourne Street, Bleecker Street, and Howard Street. Most of the land is currently leased to the City of Toronto by Medallion Developments Inc. who owns the parking garage that lies beneath it.

Medallion will be redeveloping properties at 591-601 Sherbourne St. and repairing the parking garage roof below the park. Due to this work, most of the park will be removed, creating an opportunity to reimagine the park to better meet the needs of local communities.

This document provides a summary of the feedback received through a Community Visioning questionnaire on the redesign of St. James Town West Park. The online questionnaire was available from March 1 to March 22, 2021 and received 425 responses.

2 What We Heard

This summary is organized by feedback on respondents' experiences in St. James Town West Park today, and their vision for the park in the future.

2.1 St. James Town West Park Today

The following section provides a summary of how questionnaire respondents interact with St. James Town West Park today.

Overall, participants indicated that they primarily travel to the park by walking or taking their bike. Many participants visit at least once a week, and when they do, they often visit alone or with a spouse or partner. St. James Town West Park offers many uses for its visitors, however most participants identified that they use the space to relax, enjoy and observe nature, sit, eat, and take time alone.

Overall, many participants are currently dissatisfied with the park's current design.

2.1.1 Travelling to St. James Town West Park

Questionnaire respondents indicated that they predominantly walk to St. James Town West Park when they visit, however many also arrive by bicycle and public transit. Fewer respondents indicated that they visit by personal vehicle, mobility device, or with a stroller (Figure 1).

When you visit St. James Town Park, what method of transportation do you use? (Multiple Choice)

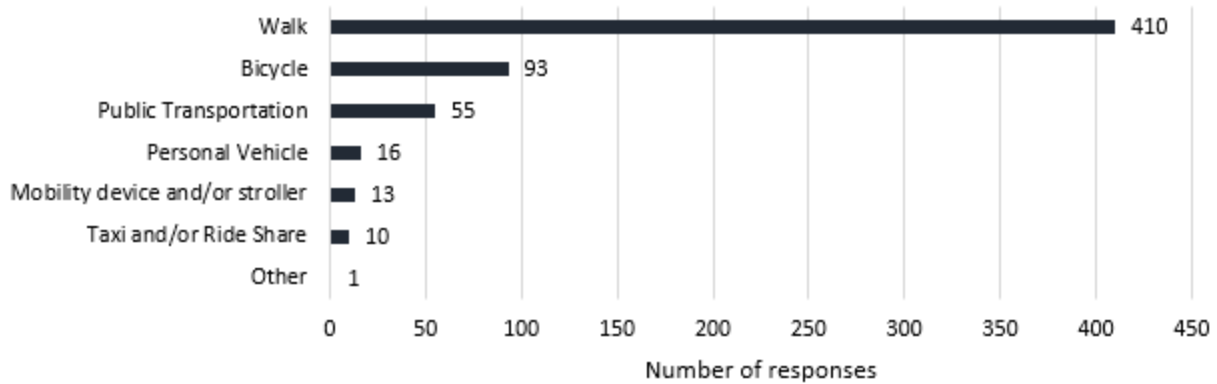


Figure 1. Chart showing what method of transportation visitors to St. James Town West Park use to travel to the park (425 respondents).

2.1.2 Visiting St. James Town West Park: Frequency

Questionnaire respondents displayed a range of responses in how frequently they visit St. James Town West Park. Just over half (53%) of respondents indicated that they visit the park once a week or more (Figure 2).

Prior or during the COVID-19 pandemic, how frequently would you visit St. James Town West Park?

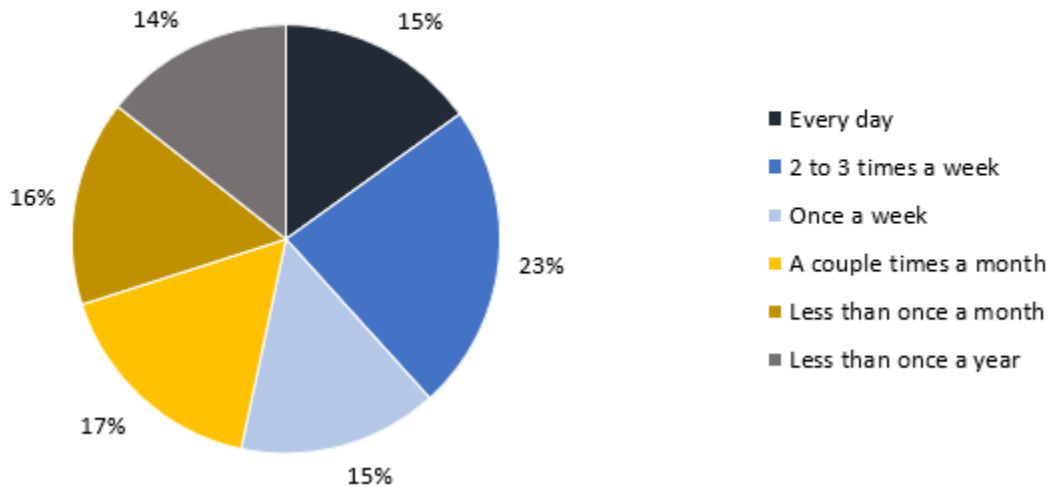


Figure 2. Chart showing how frequently respondents visit St. James Town West Park prior to or during the COVID-19 pandemic (425 respondents).

2.1.3 Visiting St. James Town West Park:

Questionnaire respondents indicated that they mostly visit St. James Town West Park alone or with their spouse or partner (Figure 3).

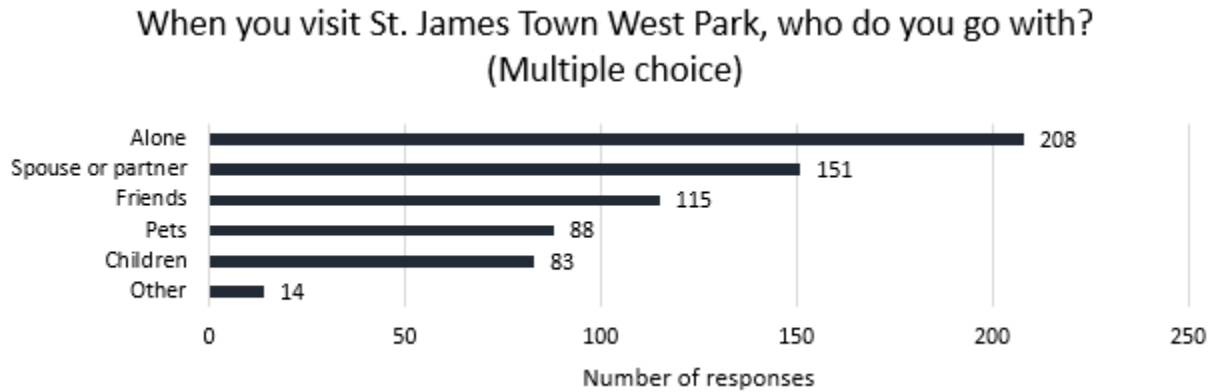


Figure 3. Chart showing who respondents visit St. James Town West Park with (425 respondents).

2.1.4 Current Uses of St. James Town West Park

Questionnaire respondents identified relaxing, enjoying and observing nature, and sitting and/or eating as their top uses when they visit St. James Town West Park currently (Figure 4). Participants also indicated that they use St. James Town West Park to walk through for leisure or as a shortcut into the neighbourhood or to Sherbourne Street.

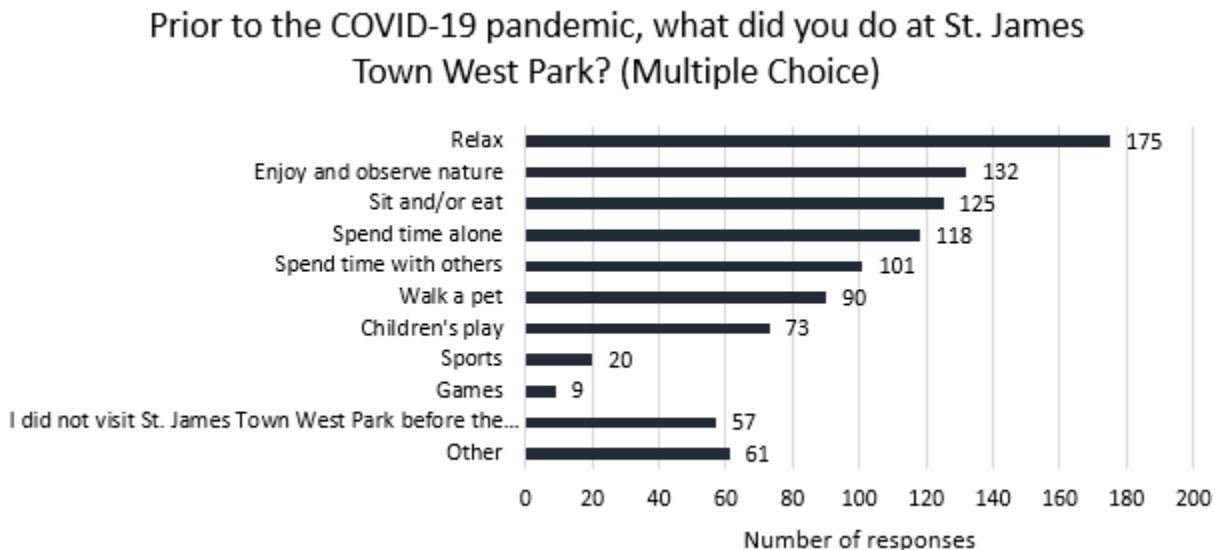


Figure 4. Chart showing what respondents do at St. James Town West Park (425 respondents).

Overall, 55% of questionnaire respondents indicated they are either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the current design of St. James Town West Park (Figure 5).

How satisfied are you with St. James Town West Park in its current design?

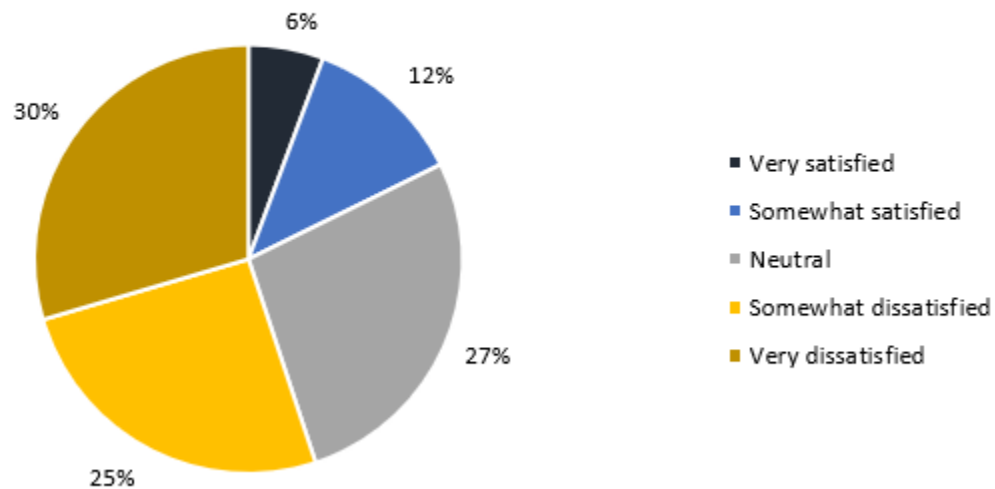


Figure 5. Chart showing respondents' overall satisfaction with current design of St. James Town West Park (425 respondents).

2.2 Visioning: The Future of St. James Town West Park

The following section provides a summary of how questionnaire respondents envision using St. James Town West Park in the future. Participants were asked to identify how important the following potential park features are to them and their household:

- Open grass and lawn area
- Seating
- Drinking fountain/bottle filler
- Picnic areas
- Space for community/cultural events
- Bicycle parking
- Children's playground
- Planting/garden area
- Sports and fitness
- Passive recreation

Except for sports and fitness, and passive recreation, over 50% of questionnaire respondents indicated that the potential park features are either very important or important to their household when considering opportunities for the design of the new park (Figure 6). Additionally, 60% or more questionnaire respondents indicated that the following potential features are very important or important to their household:

- Open grass and lawn area
- Seating

- Planting/garden area
- Drinking fountain/bottle filler
- Picnic areas
- Bicycle parking

How important are each of the following potential features to you and your household when thinking about the new park design?

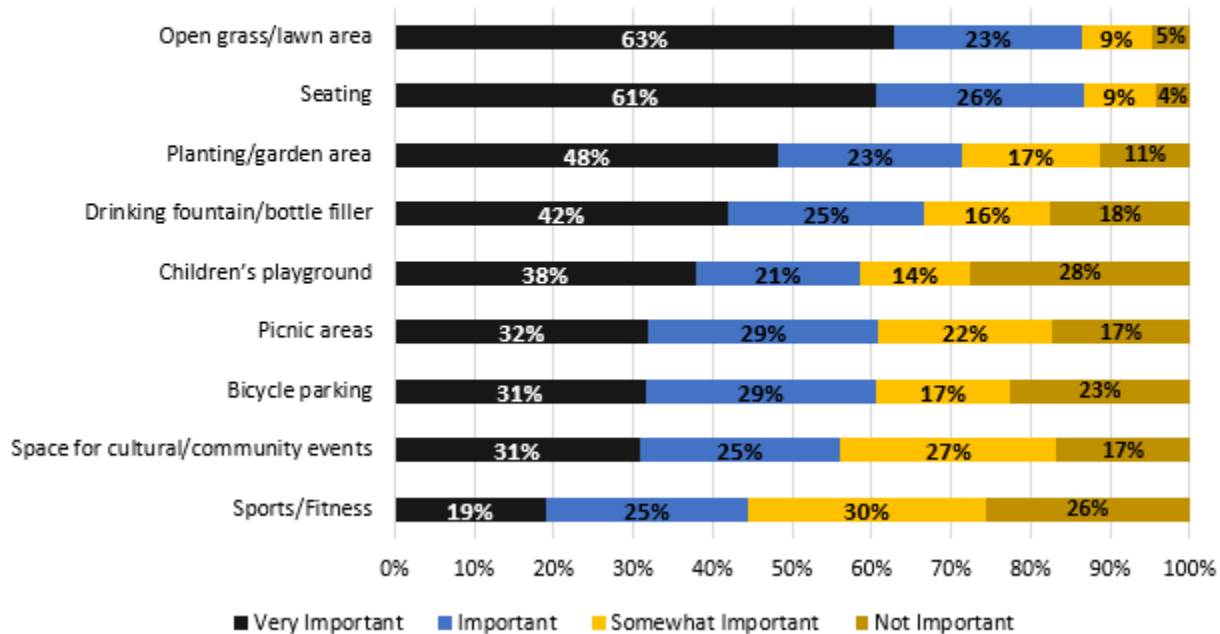


Figure 6. Chart showing how important potential park features are for respondents (425 respondents).

Questionnaire respondents provided comments elaborating on their vision for the future of the park. These comments are summarized by theme as follows:

2.2.1 Trees and Other Vegetation

- Preserve and relocate existing trees in the park where possible.
- Vegetation should contribute to the biodiversity of Toronto’s parks.
- If possible, consider reserving some space for future community garden initiatives led by community members.
- Consider plants that add colour to the park through different seasons.

2.2.2 Paths and Paved Surfaces

- Consider mapping out community “desire line” paths before laying out park features to avoid the formation of mud paths.
- Ensure the park maintains lots of green space as a natural reprieve.

2.2.3 Seating, Lighting, and Site Furnishings

- Provide a variety of seating opportunities that allow for visitors to sit alone or in groups.
- Benches should not include dividers in the middle.
- Seating options should include backs for people to rest.

2.2.4 Safety and Cleanliness

- The park should seek to address community safety concerns associated with the current park design through improved lighting and sightlines from Sherbourne Street, and more supervision by the community.
- Improve ongoing maintenance of the park to remove garbage and dog feces.
- Consider design elements that will deter pigeons from congregating.

2.2.5 Activities

- The existing playground is an important feature that should be maintained and enhanced.
- Consider a gathering space such as an amphitheatre or plaza that can be activated/animated by community members for arts and cultural events.
- Consider a small off-leash area for people who have pets to have a designated space.
- Consider incorporating a water feature.
- Consider recreation opportunities such as ping pong, surfaces amenable to skateboarding, life-size chess board, etc.

2.2.6 Overall User Experience

- The park should be accessible to everyone and treated as an open community space where everyone is welcome.
- Proximity to a busy street makes the space feel uncomfortable – consider some form of edge treatment that buffers the space without impacting sightlines and safety in the park.
- Continue to provide public access to open green space in a growing neighbourhood.
- Quiet meditative natural elements are important.

2.2.7 Overall Park Design



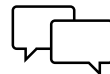

- Consider placing park features in areas that will receive the most sunlight during the day.
- The principle design elements should strongly consider the feedback received from Indigenous rights holders and communities.
- As a small park, balancing needs and creating opportunities for shared spaces is important.


3 How We Engaged

The City of Toronto gathered feedback on the future of St. James Town West Park through an online questionnaire which was available from March 3, 2021 to March 22, 2021. The online questionnaire was available in English, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, and Tamil.

Due to COVID-19 and following Toronto Public Health's recommendations, the City engaged individuals using a mix of digital and print media to ensure appropriate physical distancing requirements were met to raise awareness about the Community Vision questionnaire. These outreach activities are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Outreach activities for the St. James Town West Park Community Vision Questionnaire.

Outreach Method	Outreach Activities	Reach
Project Webpage 	A dedicated webpage was developed within the City of Toronto's website to act as an integrated platform for all project-related information. Through the webpage, interested people could also subscribe to receive updates and information about the project.	Reached <i>Data unavailable</i>
Mail Out 	A postcard advertising the online questionnaire and website was delivered to addresses in the St. James Town neighbourhood.	Reached 11,835
Community Ambassador Outreach 	Five (5) local community ambassadors communicated information about the online questionnaire to their networks by email, text, and phone conversations. Ambassadors were able to assist participants who wished to provide their feedback in their preferred language by recording their input and assisting participants with completing the questionnaire.	Reached 310
Posters 	Two (2) public signs displaying information about the online questionnaire were placed in highly-visible locations at the main entrances to the park. Posters were also displayed by several local businesses, on community notice boards, and prominent locations within the community.	Reached 63+

Outreach Method	Outreach Activities	Reach
Social Media 	The online questionnaire was promoted through the City of Toronto's Facebook and Twitter account with additional outreach support from DTAH.	Reached 21,492
Total Reached		33,700

4 Who We Engaged

In total, 425 survey respondents completed the online questionnaire.

Online questionnaire respondents were asked to voluntarily provide demographic information about themselves to better understand who is participating and what groups in the community were missed as part of this engagement process. A full summary of the demographic information is included in **Appendix A**.

Respondents to the questionnaire self-identified as part of a diverse mix of backgrounds and were predominantly renters.

Compared to the North St. James Town neighbourhood profile, where the park is located, there were fewer renter households represented in the questionnaire compared to the neighbourhood population (90.9% renter households). The visible minority population of the neighbourhood was underrepresented in this questionnaire with only 47% of respondents self-identifying as South Asian, Indo-Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, Black, or Latino compared to the most recent census data where 67% of the neighbourhood population self-identified as a visible minority. The age distribution of questionnaire participants is close to the neighbourhood profile with many respondents identifying themselves between the ages of 19 to 55.

Community ambassadors assisted 6 people with completing the questionnaire in Arabic, Tagalog, and Tamil.

Most questionnaire participants indicated that they rely on exclusive access to a private balcony or parks and open spaces only for their outdoor space (Figure 7). This aligns closely with census information indicating that 92.6% of households in the neighbourhood live in apartments that are five (5) or more storeys tall.

What outdoor space do you and your household have access to?

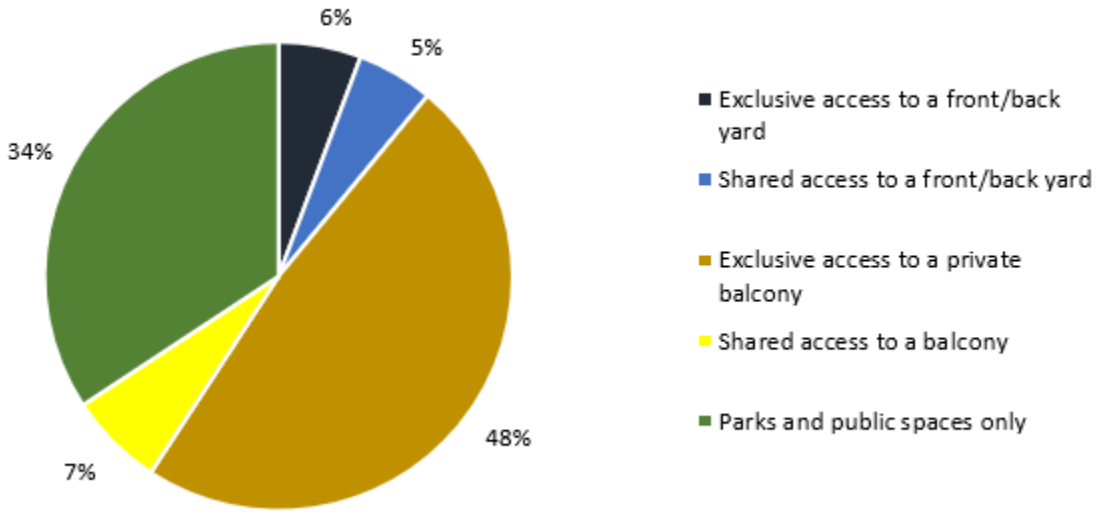


Figure 7. Chart showing respondent outdoor space access (425 respondents).

Most participants were informed about this online questionnaire by the mailer sent to their home or social media advertisement (Figure 8). Respondents also indicated that they were informed about the questionnaire through:

- Other websites (such as Urban Toronto);
- Communication from property managers, landlord, or condo manager; and
- Nextdoor app.

How did you hear about this survey? (Multiple choice)

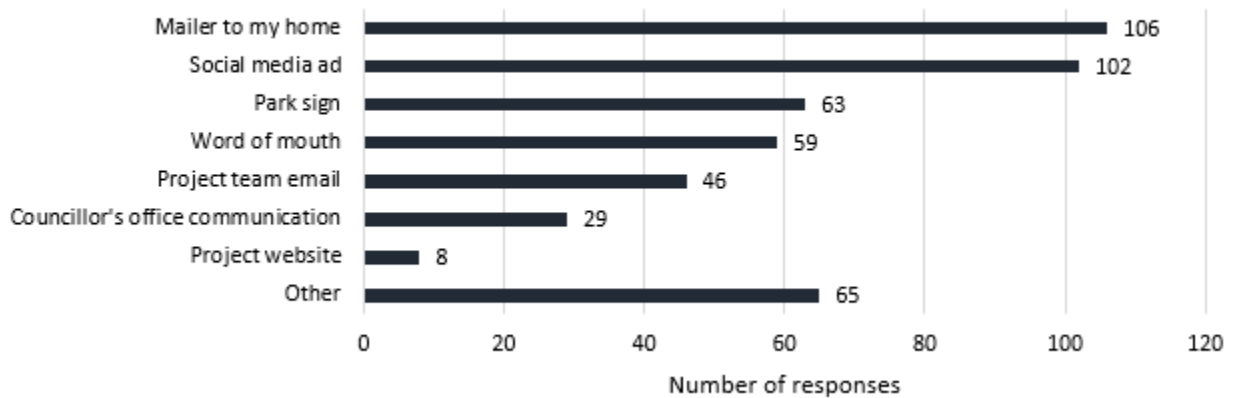


Figure 8. Chart showing how respondents were informed about this survey (425 respondents).

5 Next Steps

The feedback received through the Community Visioning phase will inform the development of design concept options for the revitalization of St. James Town West Park. The design concept options will incorporate feedback received through the online questionnaire as well as additional feedback opportunities including an Indigenous Community Sharing meeting, and Youth Resource Group meeting.

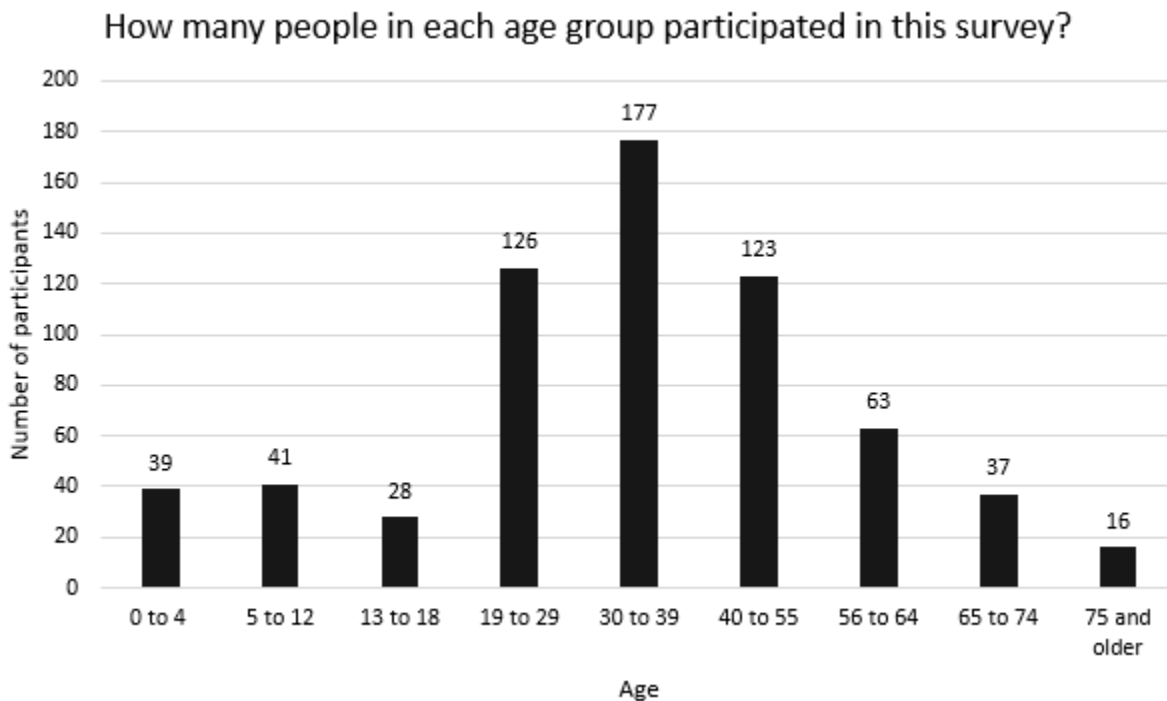
The design concept options will be presented to the community for feedback in Phase 2 of the project which will take place in April 2021.

Appendix A

Questionnaire Respondent Demographics

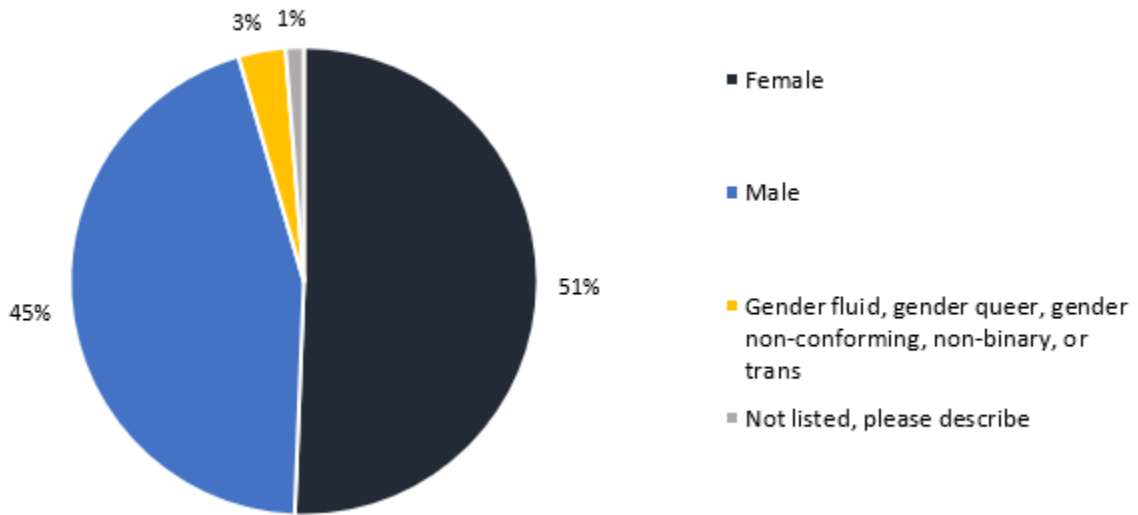
Online questionnaire respondents were asked to voluntarily provide demographic information about themselves to better understand who is participating and what particular groups in the community were missed as part of this engagement process. The following charts provide a summary of the demographic information received.

1. How many people of each age group participated in this survey?



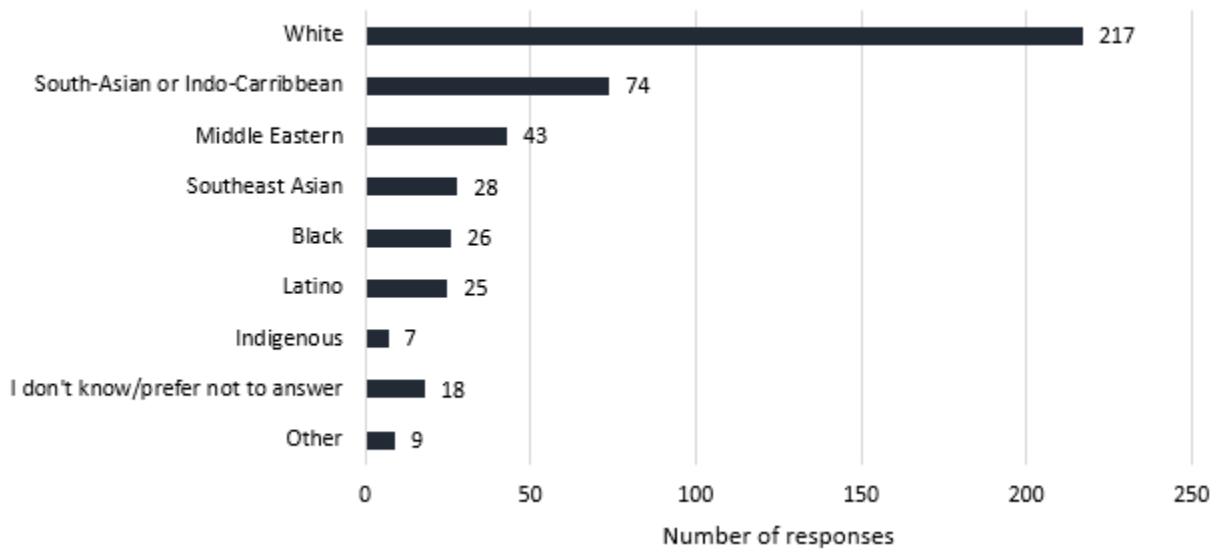
2. Gender identity is the gender that people identify with or how they perceive themselves, which may be different from their birth-assigned sex. Gender identity is linked to a sense of self, the sense of being a woman, man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum (non-binary). What best describes your gender?

What best describes your gender?



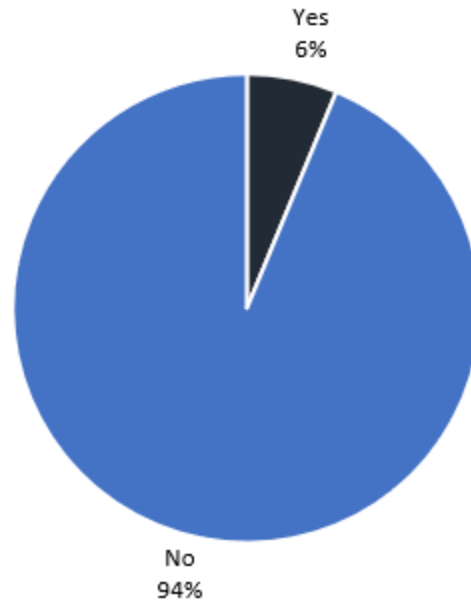
3. Please select the racial backgrounds that people who completed this survey identify with. Select all that apply.

Please indicate any racial background(s) you self-identify with.



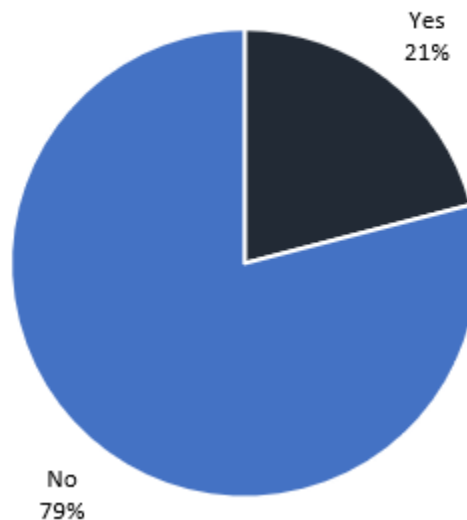
4. Indigenous people residing in Canada are those who self-identify as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian. Does anyone participating in this survey identify as Indigenous to Canada?

Do you identify as Indigenous to Canada?



- 5. Disabilities, both visible and invisible, include physical, hearing, seeing, developmental, learning or mental health conditions, chronic illness and addictions. Disabilities may be from birth, caused by injury or accident, developed over time, or result from the combination of a person's condition and barriers in society. Does anyone participating in this survey identify as a person with a disability?

Do you self-identify as a person with a disability



- 6. Do you rent or own your home?

Do you rent or own your home?

