

Project Context



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Project Context

In 1999, the City of Toronto launched their first ever city-wide public poll on cycling. Intended to serve as a benchmark for public perceptions of cycling, the City of Toronto conducted similar city-wide polls in 2009 and 2019. These polls captured information on the incidence of cycling in Toronto, perceptions of cycling safety, and awareness of municipal active transportation programs and initiatives. Data from the polls has helped inform Transportation policy and decision making since.

Over the last decade, the City of Toronto has greatly increased the frequency of planning and installing new cycling infrastructure. As a result, cycling is becoming a more viable mobility option for many Torontonians. As the City undergoes these changes, there is an opportunity for the City of Toronto to revisit the city-wide cycling survey with the goal of tracking mode share shifts over time, identify perceptions of active transportation, and adopting a biannual model that is more in line with other leading cycling cities like Copenhagen, Helsinki, and Amsterdam. Such a model will help the City of Toronto track the health, economic, and social benefits of their active transportation infrastructure investments.

Based in this context, and building on the lessons and examples from bike surveys conducted both globally and within Canada, the 2023 Toronto Cycling Survey was designed to:

1. Track, over time, mode share across the city and compare to the City's Transform TO mode share targets.
2. Identify barriers to greater participation in cycling and understand how these barriers evolve as new initiatives are implemented.
3. Identify perceptions of cycling safety and how these intersect with age, gender, income, geographic region, and ethnicity.

Methodology



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Methodology

Overview:

The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) and the University of Toronto (UofT) developed the survey methodology in collaboration with the City of Toronto's Cycling and Pedestrian Projects team. TCAT and U of T engaged independent polling company Research Co. to manage the data collection and advise on the survey design and overall methodology.

Prior to developing the 2023 Toronto Cycling Survey, the project team conducted an online best practices scan of other areas conducting city or region-wide active transportation surveys, both globally and within Canada. Based on these learning and a thorough review of previous surveys conducted by the City of Toronto, the project team drafted an updated version of the 1999-2019 survey. The updated survey was divided into seven sections:

1. Cycling Ownership and Use
2. Travel Behaviour
3. Infrastructure
4. Motivation and Barriers
5. Satisfaction
6. Attitudes and Awareness
7. Sociodemographic Questions

During the design phase, the project team set a response target of 1,500 people, balanced across the geographic regions of the city (East York, Etobicoke, North York, Old Toronto, Scarborough, and York) as well as sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, income, sexual orientation, and racial identity. This would ensure that mobility habits and key perceptions were captured across diverse landscapes and communities.

Methodology

Survey Administration:

The online survey comprised of 40 questions, excluding screening and demographic questions. Administering the survey online allowed the project team to seamlessly show respondents maps and other cycling related images that were required to informatively answer the questions. Additionally, the online survey allowed us to screen through self-selecting panels that set minimums on geographic diversity, age, and gender.

The project team collaborated with Research Co. to administer the poll. The first round of polling was conducted between October 31 and November 7, 2023. A total of 1,502 responses were collected. Upon reviewing the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample, it was determined that an insufficient number of newcomers and those whose spoken language at home is something other than English were surveyed. An addition round of polling was conducted from November 25 to December 5, 2023 to rectify this, collecting another 320 responses from those two groups. In total, between the two polls, 1,822 responses were collected. Of those, 141 responses were removed from the sample during the data cleaning process due to irregularities in their answers, leading to a final sample size of 1,681 responses.

Note: Charts may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Methodology (1999-2019)

2019:

In 2019, Nanos conducted an online survey of 1,516 Toronto residents, 18 years of age or older, between May 13th to 29th, 2019. The sample is geographically stratified to be representative of Toronto. The research was commissioned by the City of Toronto and was conducted by Nanos Research.

2009:

Results are based on a 15-minute survey administered by telephone to a random and representative sample of 1,000 Toronto residents, 15 years or older who reside in the City of Toronto. All interviews were completed between June 16th and 26, and August 19th to 25th, 2009. The survey was suspended during the labour union strike by City workers (July 2009) to avoid any potential bias of the results. It is also important to note that the survey was completed prior to a high-profile cycling fatality that occurred on August 31st, 2009.

1999:

Results are based on 1001 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) with individuals aged 15 years or older who reside in the City of Toronto. The sample excludes persons employed in marketing research, advertising, public relations or news media industries. The sample was divided equally among the City's four transportation Districts (Central Toronto, Etobicoke, North York, and Scarborough). All interviews were completed between October 12th and 21st, 1999.

Overview of Respondents



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Respondent Overview

To ensure a sample that was representative of Toronto's vast and diverse population, the project team used the 2021 Census as a benchmark for targeting adequate respondents across various geographic and demographic groups. Across all categories, the 2023 Toronto Cycling Survey sample represents comparable population distributions to that of the Census.

- **Geographical Location:** The 2023 Toronto Cycling Survey sample successfully accounts for all targeted regions: Old Toronto (31%), North York (28%), Scarborough (21%), Etobicoke (10%), East York (6%) and York (4%). In each regional category, any variations from the 2021 Census data are under 5%.
- **Age:** The age of survey respondents closely aligns with that of 2021 Census data. 10% of respondents identified as 18-24, 21% as 25-34, 16% as 45-54, and 14% as 55-64. The only age categories that differed with any notable significance are a higher representation of individuals 35-44 (6% difference) in this study versus the 2021 Census, and a slightly lower representation of older adults aged 65 or over (7% difference) versus the 2021 Census. These variations likely suggest that the 2023 Toronto Cycling Survey reached a slightly younger population overall, which is in line with cycling interest and usage more broadly.
- **Gender:** 52% of survey respondents self-identified as men and 47% as women. The remaining 1% selected other options including non-binary, trans, and two-spirit. This gender distribution is comparable to that of the 2021 Census.
- **Education:** Compared to the 2021 Census, the 2023 Toronto Cycling Survey captured respondents that have attained higher education levels in general, which is typical of surveys administered online. 80% of respondents had completed a degree or diploma from a college or university, or higher. Even still, 20% of the Cycling Survey sample specified that their highest level of education attained was high school or less.
- **Income:** The Cycling Survey sample is nearly identical to that of the 2021 Census when it comes to income representation, with percentage differences of less than 3% in each income range.
- **Sexual Orientation:** 87% of respondents identified as heterosexual or straight, 8% as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or two spirited, and 3% as other. The remaining 4% preferred not to answer.

Respondent Overview

- **Housing:** 56% of respondents own their home, 41% rent their home, and 3% prefer not to answer, which closely aligns with the 2021 Census, where 52% of people owned and 48% rented. When it comes to housing-type, the Cycling Survey slightly overrepresents people living in single-family detached houses and underrepresents those people living in high-rise apartments, with five stories or more. All other housing types are well-represented and consistently aligned with that of the Census.
- **Language Spoken at Home:** 75% of respondents specified that they speak English at home. Of the remaining respondents, the primary languages spoken at home were Mandarin, Cantonese, Tagalog, Spanish, and Portuguese, among others.
- **Place of Birth:** 59% of respondents were born in Canada while the remaining 41% were born outside of Canada. This represents a slightly higher proportion of people born in Canada than that of the 2021 Census.
- **Race:** 52% of respondents self-identified as white, 14% as East Asian, 10% as South Asian or Indo-Caribbean, 8% as Black, 6% as Southeast Asian, 4% as Latin American, 3% as Arab, Middle Eastern, or West Asian, and 2% as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis. This is largely in line with the 2021 census.
- **Ability:** 11% of all Cycling Survey respondents self-identified as being someone with an ongoing physical, mental, sensory, or learning impairment, which may result in a barrier to cycling.