

# Dog Off-Leash Area Survey Summary Report

Barbara Hall Park Vision and Improvement Plan  
Phase 2: Exploring Design Options

City of Toronto – Parks and Recreation  
August 19 to September 8, 2025





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# Introduction

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The City of Toronto is working with the Church-Wellesley Village community to revitalize Barbara Hall Park into an inclusive, welcoming, and highly accessible space that serves as the green focal point of this neighbourhood. The improved park will be a place to gather, celebrate, and heal, balancing everyday use with calm spaces for reflection at the AIDS and Trans Memorials, while also celebrating 2SLGBTQ+ community history and resilience through art, culture, and heritage interpretation. Improvements will enhance safety, accessibility, and programming, ensuring the park is a vibrant, year-round destination for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Community consultation has been very important to developing the design, features, and experience of the Barbara Hall Park Improvements project. The detailed design and engagement process for the park improvements is following a three-phase approach:

Phase 1 ran from Spring 2023 to Spring 2024 and focused on creating a new community-led vision, guiding principles, and big moves to guide the design.

Phase 2, the current phase, is running from Summer to Fall 2025, focused on sharing and refining three draft design options based on the feedback from Phase 1.

Phase 3, which will be from Winter 2025 to Spring 2026, will focus on setting the direction for the Barbara Hall Park preferred plan.

## How We Reached People

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### Print media

### Signage on-site

Notice boards placed near the park displayed information about the project, detailed instructions about participating in the online survey and guidance on accessing additional information on the project webpage.

## Digital media

### Project webpage

The survey was available on the [Barbara Hall Park Improvement webpage](#) between August 19 and to September 8, 2025.

### Email blasts

Email notifications were sent to project update subscribers and stakeholder lists. The correspondence provided survey dates and included a hyperlink to access the survey.

### Social media and digital ads

Paid and organic social media content were promoted on Parks and Recreation Facebook and Instagram accounts. The campaign was active from August 19 to September 8, 2025.

### E-flyers

Digital flyers were distributed through email blasts to our subscriber list, Community Advisory Committee and local community groups. The e-flyers included interactive links to the project webpage and the online survey.

## Survey Overview

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This report summarizes the findings from the Barbara Hall Park Improvements Off-Leash Area (OLA) Survey, which was conducted between August 19 and September 8, 2025. A total of 273 respondents participated in the survey.

The survey was designed to engage park users and local residents in exploring design options for the OLA, focusing on gathering detailed community feedback related to preferred features and priorities for future improvements. The majority of participants found this survey through the City of Toronto social media accounts, while others from word of mouth and emails from City Staff members. Survey questions addressed topics such as fencing types, seating preferences, dog agility elements, tree protection, amenities, and park safety, along with open-ended opportunities for respondents to share their broader needs and perspectives.

# About this Report

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This report was written by DIALOG, the design consultants leading the City of Toronto's architectural design and community engagement on the design of Barbara Hall Park Improvements.

For questions where qualitative feedback was requested in the survey, this report captures the range of feedback provided by the respondent. It uses the words "many," "some," "few," and "one" to provide a sense of the proportion of respondents sharing a given perspective.

## Feedback Summary

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### OLA features

When asked to rank the top four seating types, respondents ranked the options in the following order:

- bench seating (35 per cent)
- circular benches (30 per cent)
- armourstone benches (19 per cent)
- muskoka chairs (16 per cent)

When asked if for feedback on the preferred style of fence:

- 79 per cent of respondents preferred metal fence.
- 21 per cent of respondents preferred post and paddle wooden fence with wire mesh.

When asked to rank ranked dog agility features from most preferred to least preferred, respondents ranked the options in the following order:

- low mound with an artificial turf surface (27 per cent)
- bounders (25 per cent)
- step sculptures (17 per cent)
- loop structures (14 per cent)

When asked to rank tree protection types from most preferred to least preferred, respondents ranked the options in the following order:

- tree guards around tree base (42 per cent)
- berms around tree base to protect the roots (37 per cent)
- protective shields around the tree base (21 per cent)

When asked to rank the features to be prioritized in the OLA, respondents ranked the options in the following order:

- drinking fountains and bottle filler with a fountain for dogs (40 per cent)
- natural play elements like bounders or low mounds (27 per cent)
- seating (23 per cent)
- agility features (10 per cent)

When asked how likely they are to use the improved OLA:

- 72 per cent of respondents said they are more likely to use the OLA after improvements.
- 14 per cent of respondents said they will use the OLA the same amount after improvements.
- Two per cent of respondents said they are less likely to use the OLA after improvements.
- 12 per cent of respondents said they are not sure or preferred not to answer.

## **Community spotlight: Gender-diverse and Two-Spirit people**

This section highlights underrepresented perspectives. These viewpoints have been highlighted in an effort to ensure the park design reflects a diversity of lived experiences, cultural knowledge and community values. The project team analyzed responses from different user and demographic groups to identify where their feedback diverged from overall survey results. By highlighting perspectives that differ from the majority, we aim to support a design approach that is inclusive, representative and responsive to the needs of all communities.

Of the 27 survey respondents who self-identified as trans, gender-diverse and/or Two-Spirit, 41 per cent visit Barbara Hall Park daily, followed by 19 per cent visiting a few times a month.

Intersectionally, 48 per cent of those who self-identified as trans, gender-diverse and/or Two-Spirit also self-identified as having a disability. A respondent shared, “I am happy

to know this OLA will be improving the surface. I am confined to a wheelchair and I cannot currently use the OLA. I pride myself in my ability to pick up after my dogs with a collapsible pooper scooper. For that reason, I have not gone to that OLA, but I will when it is finished.”

These respondents emphasized that design elements should address the diverse needs of the community by being culturally sensitive and prioritizing inclusive seating and accessibility.

Seating preferences in these groups were in alignment with the overall survey results, with:

- 36 per cent ranking benches as the most preferred seating option
- 27 per cent ranking circular benches as second most preferred
- 19 per cent ranking armourstone as third most preferred
- 18 per cent ranking muskoka chairs as the least preferred

Respondents also elaborated that improving physical comfort in Barbara Hall Park requires a combination of both environmental upgrades and social strategies. Overall, 70 per cent said that they would be more likely to use the OLA in the future, after the improvements have been made.

## Other feedback

139 respondents provided additional feedback on the proposed OLA improvements. The following themes emerged through this feedback:

### **Community stewardship and ownership**

Some respondents highlighted a strong desire among park users for shared responsibility in the stewardship of the OLA. To support this, strategies like co-design workshops, volunteer stewardship programs, and community-led maintenance initiatives could be implemented to foster deeper engagement.

### **Desire for improved comfort and well-being**

Many respondents expressed concerns around comfort was a recurring theme, linked to drug use, homelessness, and mental health issues in the park. Respondents expressed avoiding the area for these reasons and expressed that physical improvements alone will not address these challenges. Respondents noted that improving physical comfort in Barbara Hall Park requires a combination of both environmental upgrades and social strategies. Respondents recommended increasing communications regarding park by-

law enforcement and suggested coordination with social services to achieve a holistic approach to park comfort and well-being.

Continued investment in high-quality seating, accessible paths, lighting, and dog-friendly amenities will address many core community comfort needs, as indicated by the strong preference for more benches, shade, lighting, and water fountains for both people and pets.

### **Increasing activation in the park**

Some respondents suggested that underlying social concerns such as those related to drug use, homelessness, and mental health cannot be resolved by infrastructure improvements alone. To address these persistent issues and foster a stronger sense of security and belonging, it is recommended to implement park activations, such as increasing the frequency and diversity of community-led events, seasonal festivals, and volunteer stewardship programs that draw more people into the space at different times of day.

Coupling physical improvements with regular programming and dedicated outreach, especially in collaboration with local organizations like The 519 and neighborhood associations, will help address feelings of discomfort shared by OLA users in the survey, and create a more resilient, vibrant park environment for everyone.

### **Design elements**

Many respondents emphasized the importance of prioritizing improved comfort and cleanliness by enhancing park maintenance practices. Design elements should address the diverse needs of the community by being culturally sensitive and prioritizing inclusive seating and accessibility. Preferred physical improvements included installing a metal fence, providing more durable and accessible seating options, adding drinking fountains, and ensuring appropriate ground cover throughout the park and OLA.

## **Who We Heard From**

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### **OLA use**

When asked how far they travel to get to the Barbara Hall Park OLA:

- 67 per cent of respondents travel 0 to 0.5 kilometers
- 19 per cent of respondents travel 0.5 to 1 kilometers
- 15 per cent of respondents travel 1 to 5 kilometers

When asked how often they visit the Barbara Hall Park OLA:

- 43 per cent of respondents visit daily or several times per week
- 38 per cent of respondents visit rarely or no usage at all
- 9 per cent of respondents visit a few times a month
- 6 per cent of respondents visit once per week

When asked how many dogs they visit the Barbara Hall OLA with:

- 98 per cent of respondents use the current OLA as an individual pet owner caring for one or two dogs
- Two per cent of respondents use the current OLA as professional or commercial dog walkers

When asked the size of dogs they visit the OLA with:

- 52 per cent of respondents visit with medium-sized dogs.
- 29 per cent of respondents visit with small dogs.
- 23 per cent of respondents visit with large to extra-large dogs.

## **Age**

- 63 per cent of respondents were ages 30 to 55
- 15 per cent of respondents were ages 56-64
- seven per cent of respondents were ages 19-29
- six per cent of respondents were ages 65-74
- three per cent of respondents were 75+
- Some respondents preferred not to disclose their age.

## **Preferred language**

- 96 per cent of respondents preferred speaking English
- two per cent of respondents preferred speaking Spanish
- one per cent of respondents preferred speaking Indigenous – Mohawk
- one respondent preferred speaking Armenian
- one respondent preferred speaking Assyrian Neo-Aramaic
- one respondent preferred not to answer

## **Indigenous to Canada**

- 82 per cent of respondents are not Indigenous to Canada
- six per cent of respondents are Indigenous to Canada
- 12 per cent preferred not to answer

## **Race**

- 59 per cent of respondents identified as White
- seven per cent of respondents identified as Latin American
- four per cent of respondents identified as East Asian
- 17 per cent of respondents preferred not to disclose their racial background

## **Disability**

- 59 per cent of respondents identified as a person without a disability
- 22 per cent of respondents identified as a person with a disability
- one per cent selected “don’t know”
- 18 per cent preferred not to answer

## **Gender**

- 38 per cent of respondents identified as a woman
- 38 per cent of respondents identified as a man
- seven per cent of respondents identified as gender non-binary (including ender fluid, genderqueer and androgynous)
- three per cent of respondents identified as trans
- two per cent of respondents selected “not listed, please describe”
- 12 per cent of respondents preferred not to answer

## **Sexual orientation**

- 32 per cent of respondents identified as gay
- 28 per cent of respondents identified as heterosexual or straight
- eight per cent of respondents identified as queer
- five per cent of respondents identified as lesbian
- five per cent of respondents identified as bisexual
- one per cent identified as Two-Spirit
- one per cent of respondents selected “don’t know”
- three per cent of respondents selected “not listed, please describe”
- 19 per cent of respondents preferred not to answer

## Housing situation

- 53 per cent of respondents are renters
- 35 per cent of respondents are homeowners
- one per cent of respondents are permanently living with parent(s) or other family member(s)
- two per cent selected “not listed, please describe” listing co-ops as their housing situation.

## Access to outdoor space

- 42 per cent have access to private outdoor space like a balcony
- 34 per cent only have access to public spaces like parks (I do not have access to private or semi-private outdoor space)
- 17 per cent have access to semi-private/shared outdoor space
- 12 per cent have access to private outdoor space like a yard
- 7 per cent preferred not to answer

# Next Steps

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The City appreciates all the community members who provided feedback through the online survey. Participant questions, insights, and feedback have been invaluable in refining our materials and enhancing the overall experience of the OLA, and Barbara Hall Park for all participants.

The City is currently in the process of coordinating with the external design team to update and revise the three design options for Barbara Hall Park from the feedback received to date. Additional refinements the design options will be made from additional collaboration.

Throughout this phase, additional engagement sessions will occur as follows:

- AIDS Memorial Design Option Workshop (September 2025)
- Trans Community Design Option Workshop (September 2025)
- Community Advisory Meeting #4 (September 2025)
- Public Online Survey (October 2025)
- Public Open House (October 2025)

Once Phase 2 is complete and all feedback is received, the comments will inform the design options and will lead to one draft design option for the engagement component during Phase 3.

## Acknowledgements

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### City of Toronto

#### **Parks and Recreation and Public Art and Monuments**

- Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator, Capital Projects Design & Delivery
- Daniel Fusca, Manager, Public Engagement Unit
- Celina Chong, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator, Public Engagement Unit
- Jose Marti, Coordinator, Public Engagement Unit
- Emily Ricketts, Conservator

### Consulting team

#### **DIALOG Design**

- Bryce Miranda, Partner
- Gabi Boucher, Associate
- Kav Wahdat, Urban Planner
- Xushan Liu, Landscape Designer

#### **Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting**

- Kingsley Strudwick, Founder + Lead Consultant, Ambit Gender Diversity Consulting

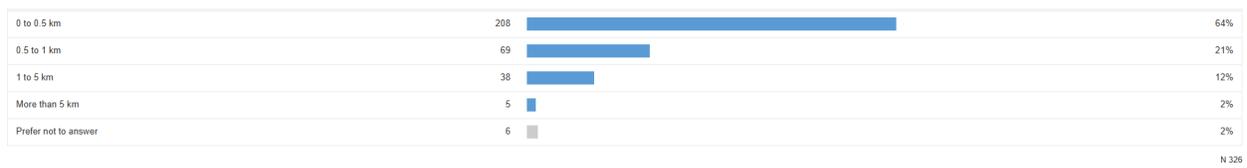
#### **GBCA Architects**

- Emad Ghattas, Principal, GBCA Cultural Heritage Advisor

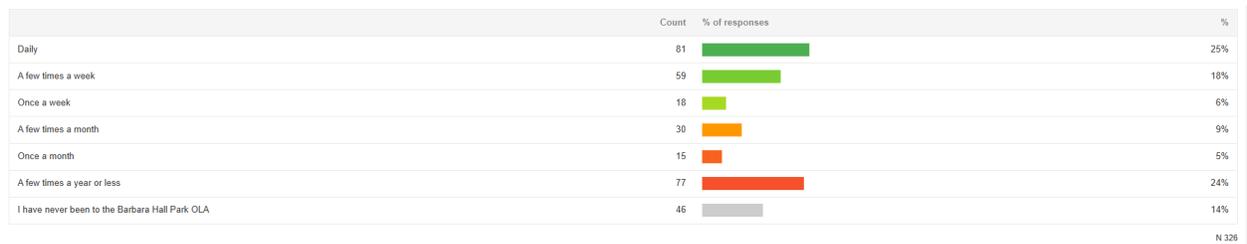
# Appendix: Survey Result Data

## About you

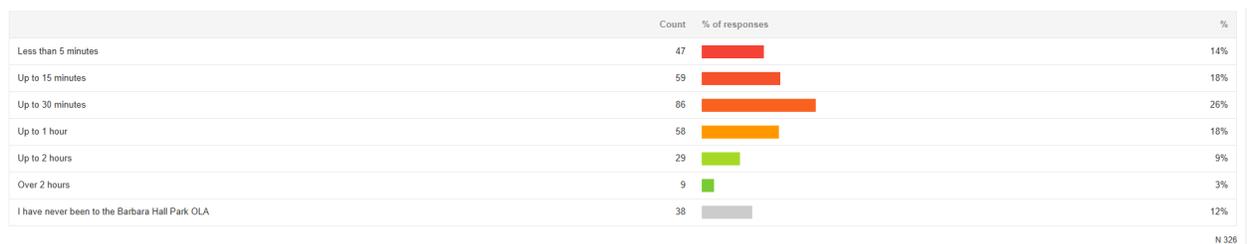
**Question: How far do you travel to get to the Barbara Hall Park off-leash area (OLA)?**



**Question: How often do you visit the Barbara Hall Park OLA?**

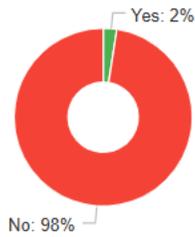


**Question: When visiting the Barbara Hall Park OLA, how long do you usually stay?**



**Question: Are you a professional/commercial dog walker?**

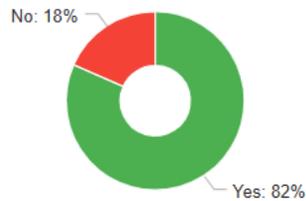
Are you a professional/commercial dog walker?



N 326

Question: Do you have or care for a dog?

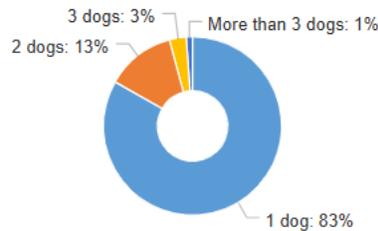
Do you have or care for a dog?



N 326

Question: How many dogs do you have or care for?

How many dogs do you have or care for?



N 262

Question: How big is your dog? If you have or care for more than one dog, select all that apply.

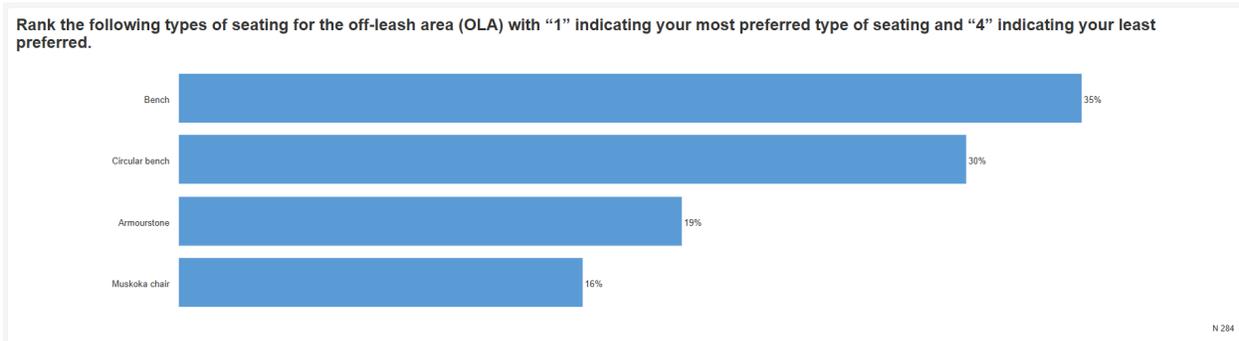
	Count	% of responses	%
Medium (20 to 60 lbs)	137		52%
Small (2 to 20 lbs)	77		29%
Large to extra large (60 to 100+ lbs)	61		23%
I do not have or care for a dog	0		

N 262

Question: How many dogs do you typically take to the Barbara Hall Park OLA at once?



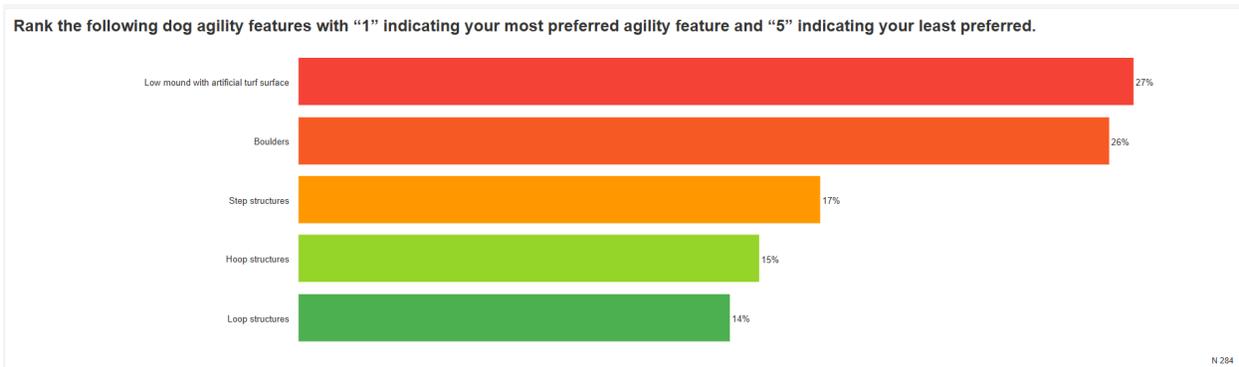
**Question: Rank the following types of seating for the off-leash area (OLA) with “1” indicating your most preferred type of seating and “4” indicating your least preferred.**



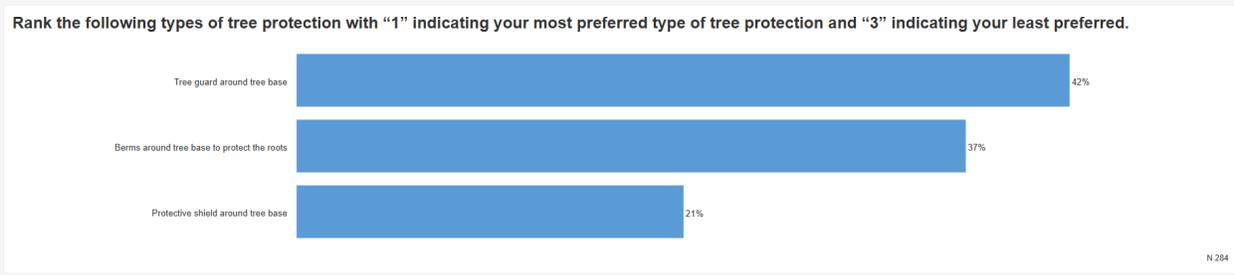
**Question: Which type of fence do you prefer around the OLA?**



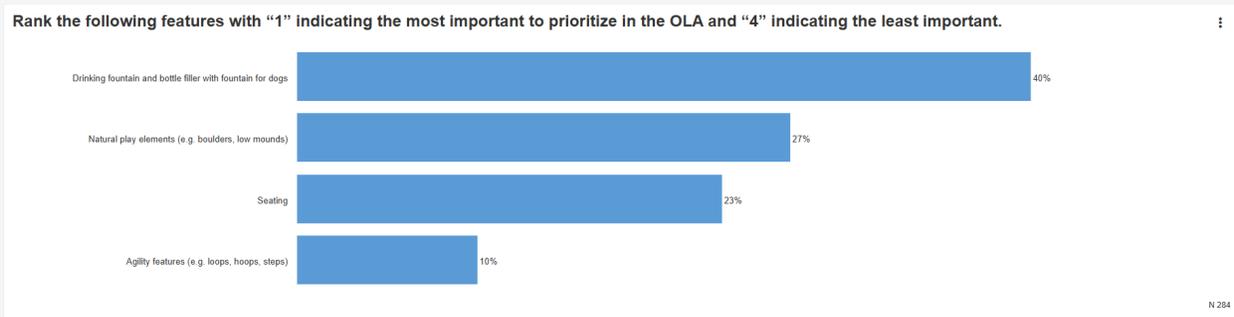
**Question: Rank the following dog agility features with “1” indicating your most preferred agility feature and “5” indicating your least preferred.**



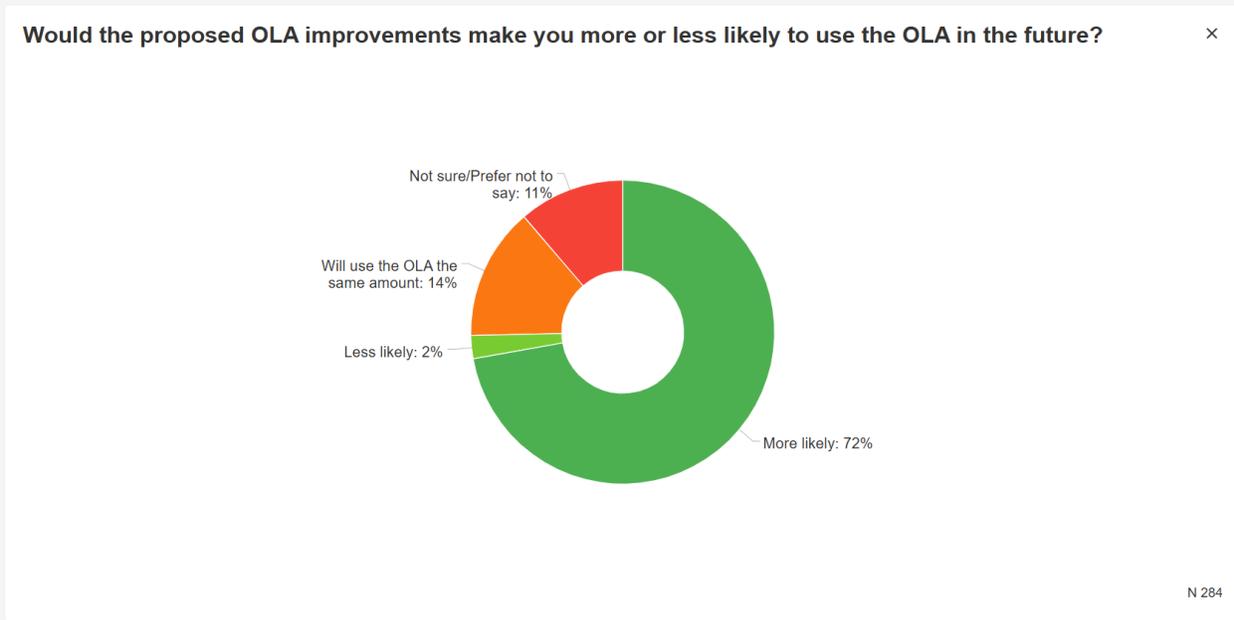
**Question: Rank the following types of tree protection with “1” indicating your most preferred type of tree protection and “3” indicating your least preferred.**



**Question: Rank the following features with "1" indicating the most important to prioritize in the OLA and "4" indicating the least important.**

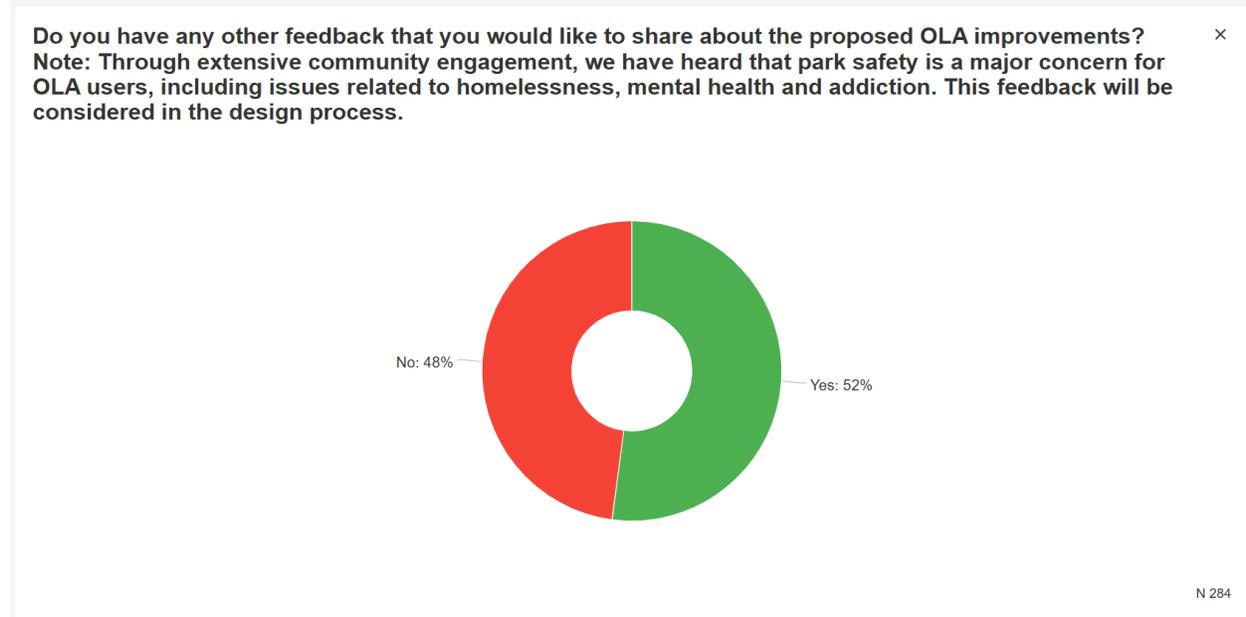


**Question: Would the proposed OLA improvements make you more or less likely to use the OLA in the future?**



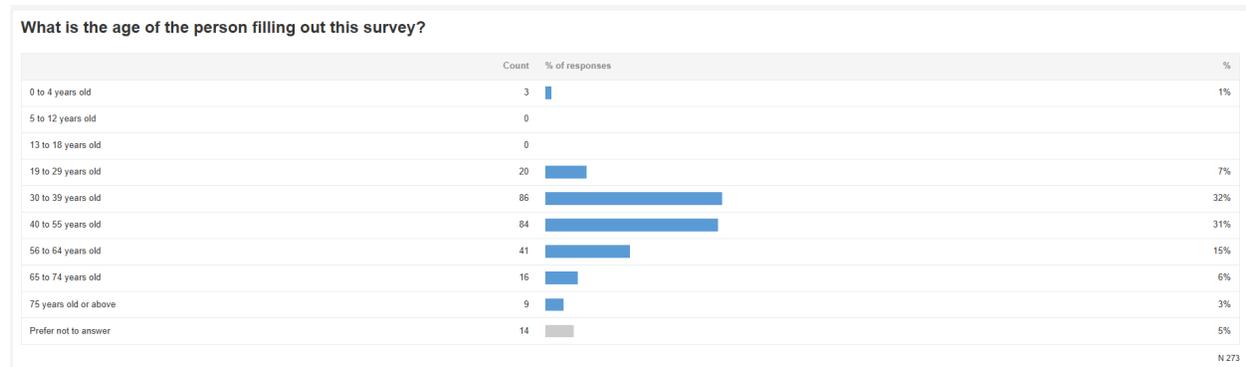
**Question: Do you have any other feedback that you would like to share about the proposed OLA improvements? Note: Through extensive community engagement, we have heard that park safety is a major concern for OLA users, including**

issues related to homelessness, mental health and addiction. This feedback will be considered in the design process.



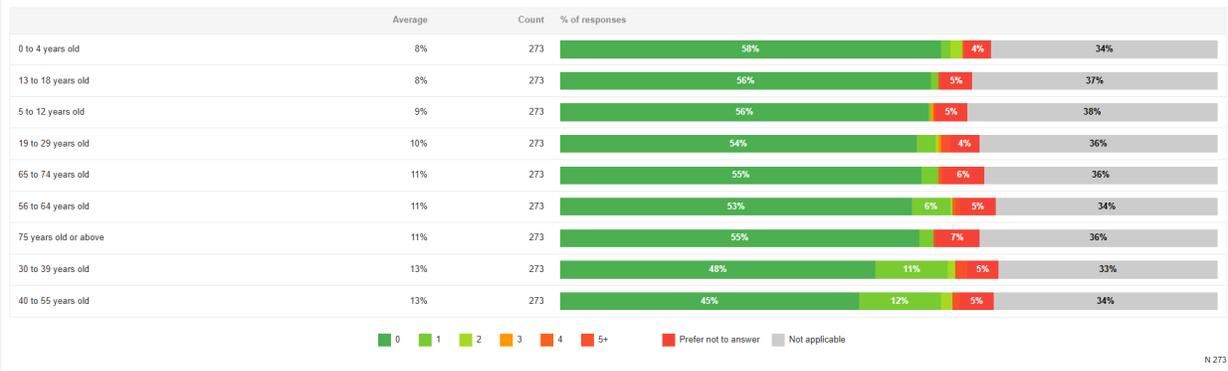
## Demographic Information

**Question: What is the age of the person filling out this survey?**

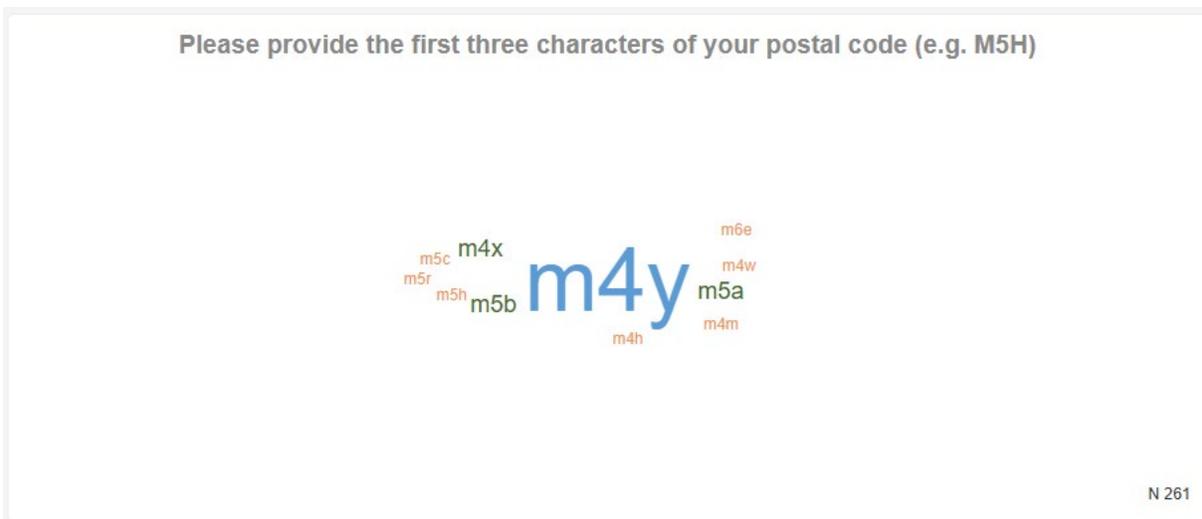


**Question: Excluding yourself, how many people of each age group participated in this survey?**

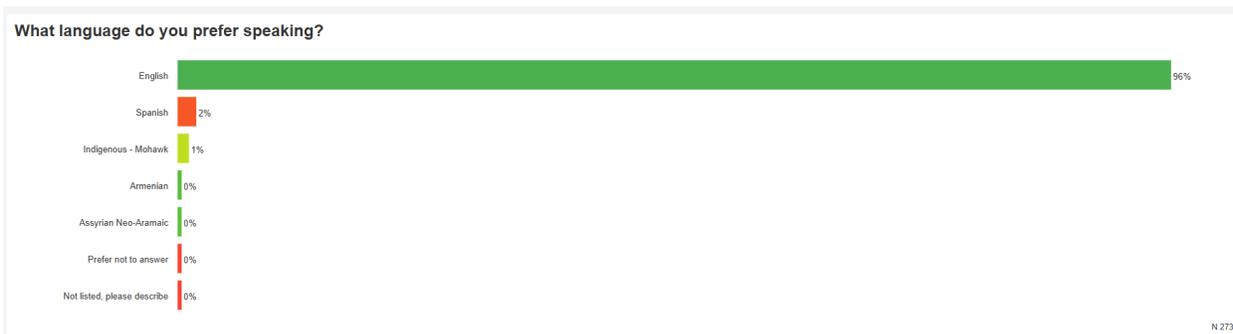
**Excluding yourself, how many people of each age group participated in this survey?**



**Question: Please provide the first three characters of your postal code (e.g. M5H)**

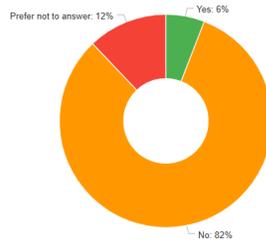


**Question: What language do you prefer speaking?**



**Question: Indigenous people from Canada identify as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian. Does the person filling out this survey identify as Indigenous to Canada?**

Indigenous people from Canada identify as First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit, Métis, Aboriginal, Native or Indian. Does the person filling out this survey identify as Indigenous to Canada?



N 273

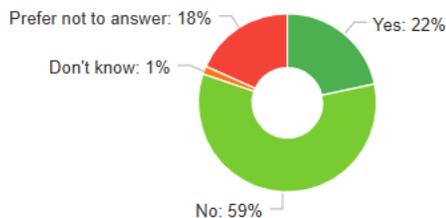
**Question: People often describe themselves by their race or racial background. For example, some people consider themselves "Black", "White" or "East Asian". Which race category best describes the person filling out this survey?**

	Count	% of responses	%
White (e.g. English, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Slovakian, Eastern European)	161		59%
Prefer not to answer	46		17%
Latin American (e.g. Brazilian, Colombian, Cuban, Mexican, Peruvian)	18		7%
East Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Korean)	12		4%
South Asian or Indo-Caribbean (e.g. Indian, Indo- Guyanese, Indo-Trinidadian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	11		4%
More than one race category or mixed race	11		4%
First Nations (status, non-status, treaty or non-treaty), Inuit or Métis	10		4%
Southeast Asian (e.g. Filipino, Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai, Vietnamese)	10		4%
Other, please describe	9		3%
Black (e.g. African, African-Canadian, Afro-Caribbean)	5		2%
Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian (e.g. Afghan, Armenian, Iranian, Lebanese, Persian, Turkish)	3		1%

N 273

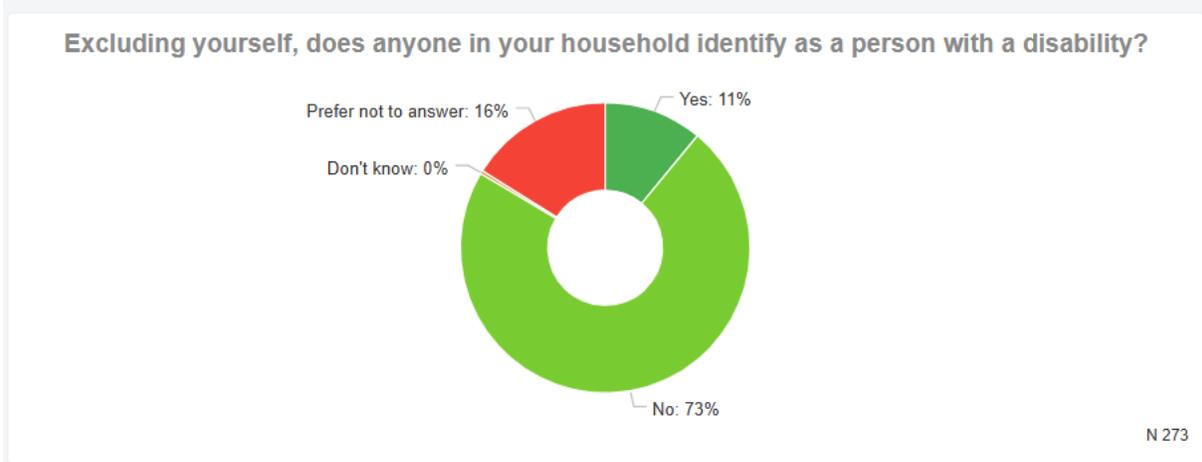
**Question: Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society. A disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic, and visible or invisible. Does the person filling out this survey identify as a person with a disability?**

Disability is understood as any physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, learning, communication, sight, hearing or functional limitation that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society. A disability can be permanent, temporary or episodic, and visible or invisible. Does the person filling out this survey identify as a person with a disability?



N 273

**Question: Excluding yourself, does anyone in your household identify as a person with a disability?**



**Question: Gender identity is the gender that people identify with or how they perceive themselves, which may be different from their birth-assigned sex. What best describes the gender of the person filling out this survey?**

	Count	% of responses	%
Woman	105		38%
Man	105		38%
Prefer not to answer	33		12%
Gender non-binary (including gender fluid, genderqueer, androgynous)	18		7%
Trans	9		3%
Not listed, please describe	6		2%
Two-Split	1		0%

N 273

**Question: Sexual orientation describes a person's emotional, physical, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to other people. What best describes the sexual orientation of the person filling out this survey?**

Sexual orientation describes a person's emotional, physical, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to other people. What best describes the sexual orientation of the person filling out this survey?

	Count	% of responses	%
Gay	87		32%
Heterosexual or straight	77		28%
Prefer not to answer	51		19%
Queer	22		8%
Bisexual	15		5%
Lesbian	14		5%
Not listed, please describe	8		3%
Don't know	4		1%
Two-Split	1		0%

N 273

**Question: What best describes your current housing situation?**

**What best describes your current housing situation?**

	Count	% of responses	%
Home owner	96		35%
Renting	146		53%
Permanently living with parent(s) or other family member(s)	3		1%
Temporarily staying with others (no fixed address)	0		0%
Unhoused (staying outside, in a shelter, in a 24-hour respite)	1		0%
Not listed, please describe	6		2%
Prefer not to answer	21		8%

N 273

**Question: What best describes you and your household's access to outdoor space? Select all that apply.**

**What best describes you and your household's access to outdoor space? Select all that apply.**

	Count	% of responses	%
I have access to private outdoor space like a balcony	114		42%
I only have access to public spaces like parks (I do not have access to private or semi-private outdoor space)	94		34%
I have access to semi-private/shared outdoor space	47		17%
I have access to private outdoor space like a yard	32		12%
Prefer not to answer	19		7%

N 273

**Question: What was your total household income before taxes last year? Your best estimate is fine. Please select one only.**

**What was your total household income before taxes last year? Your best estimate is fine. Please select one only.**

	Count	% of responses	%
0 - \$29,999	9		3%
\$30,000-\$49,999	13		5%
\$50,000-\$69,999	23		8%
\$70,000-\$99,999	49		18%
\$100,000-\$149,999	57		21%
\$150,000 or more	48		18%
Don't know	1		0%
Prefer not to answer	73		27%

N 273

**Question: How did you find out about this survey? Select all that apply.**

How did you find out about this survey? Select all that apply.

×

	Count	% of responses	%
Ad or post from a City of Toronto social media account	126		46%
Word of mouth (including non-City of Toronto social media account)	44		16%
Email from the project team	34		12%
I don't know/Prefer not to answer	31		11%
Park sign	24		9%
Councillor's Office communications	20		7%
The project webpage	8		3%

N 273