

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

National Capital Greenbelt Master Plan Review

Consultation Report
Round 1, Spring 2026

Canada

www.ncc-ccn.gc.ca

100 – 12 rue York, Ottawa (Ontario), Canada K1N 5S6
Email: info@ncc-ccn.ca • Fax: 613-239-5063
Telephone: 613-239-5000 • Toll-free: 1-800-465-1867

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Table of Contents

Background 2

Public Consultation Activities 3

Feedback on the Vision 5

Comments on the Guiding Principles 6

Greenbelt Use and Visitation..... 11

Appendix 1: Methods of Analysis13

Appendix 2: Demographic Data14

Background

About the National Capital Greenbelt

The Greenbelt dates back to 1950 with the Gréber Plan, developed by the French architect and urban planner Jacques Gréber. The Gréber Plan has shaped the style and layout of the National Capital Region for more than half a century. The plan led to creating the Greenbelt, which was designed as a tool to limit urban sprawl, protect scenic landscapes, connect continuous natural areas and accommodate major public and federal institutions.

Today, the Greenbelt includes an extensive network of sensitive natural areas, farmland, research sites, forests, bodies of water and recreational areas. It embodies the diversity and richness of Canada's landscapes while contributing to the quality of life in the Capital Region. It is the largest publicly owned greenbelt in the world and comprises more than 20,000 hectares, nearly 15,000 of which are under the stewardship of the National Capital Commission (NCC). This accounts for about 75% of its area, with the remainder belonging to other federal agencies. The Greenbelt is particularly important because of its location, size and defining role in the region.

About the Master Plan

The current Greenbelt Master Plan, which was last approved by the NCC Board of Directors in 2013, is the strategic framework that guides the long-term planning, management and land development of the National Capital Greenbelt. It also guides decisions about conservation, agriculture, recreation and infrastructure within the Greenbelt.

About the Master Plan Review

The NCC is reviewing the Greenbelt Master Plan to update its directions in response to current and emerging issues. This is to analyze the Greenbelt's functions to better consider its current context, use and needs. The review will identify key themes, as well as key planning and design concepts and opportunities, to help the NCC manage these lands in the years ahead. It will consider new environmental, social and economic realities, as well as input from the public, Indigenous communities and stakeholders. A separate consultation plan for Indigenous communities is being developed independently of the public consultation process.



Public Consultation Activities

As part of the first round of public consultations on the future of the Greenbelt, the NCC held several consultation activities to gather public input on the draft vision and proposed guiding principles.

Open Houses

May 20, 2026

Nepean Sportsplex; 80 people

May 21, 2026

St. Laurent Shopping Centre; 302 people

May 26, 2026

Richcraft Recreation Complex; 208 people

Format: Members of the public could view the descriptive panels explaining the historical context, areas and features of the National Capital Greenbelt, as well as the plan's draft vision and guiding principles. They were also invited to speak with NCC specialists and leave comments and suggestions on sticky notes.

Booth

May 31, 2026, 12:00 to 3:00 pm

Lansdowne Market; 93 people

Format: The booth at the Ottawa Lansdowne Farmers' Market featured one descriptive panel explaining the historical context of the Greenbelt and another detailing the various stages in the master plan review process. Members of the public were invited to complete an online survey and speak with NCC specialists.

Online Survey

May 20 to June 8, 2026

QuestionPro; 934 surveys completed.

Format: The online survey included five questions about the draft vision and guiding principles and nine questions on topics such as issues, values, recreation, accessibility and agriculture. The survey ended with six questions to get a better understanding of the respondents' demographic profile.

Public Advisory Group

A public advisory group was set up, consisting of representatives from community organizations who had demonstrated an interest in the Greenbelt through their activities or endeavours.

The group met in April 2026 to learn about the historical context of the Greenbelt, the role and direction of the Master Plan, and the plan renewal process. The roles and responsibilities of the public advisory group were also discussed.

The group met a second time in May 2026 to discuss the draft vision and guiding principles and to comment on the consultation material presented to the public during the May 26 consultation activities.

Feedback Received

The NCC documented all feedback received from the public and stakeholders to better understand their priorities and guide the Master Plan Review. Feedback from the survey and in-person consultation activities were analyzed and grouped into key themes. A total of 934 people completed the survey, and nearly 300 comments were collected during the inperson consultation activities. More information on the methods used to analyze the feedback is provided in Appendix 1.

Note: The percentages below are based on the total number of comments analyzed. Because a single comment may be associated with multiple themes, the percentages are not mutually exclusive and may not add up to 100%.

Feedback on the Vision

Draft Vision

The National Capital Greenbelt is an urban park that protects vital ecosystems, sustains local agriculture and offers diverse experiences in the National Capital Region. It is stewarded as a public asset of national significance and is a living legacy for present and future generations.

A total of 596 substantive comments were received on the draft vision for the Greenbelt. Most respondents (51.9%) provided no additional comments on the draft vision. While this lack of feedback does not indicate explicit support, it suggests that the proposed statement did not raise major concerns for nearly half of respondents. Overall, the comments show general support for the proposed vision while expressing several expectations regarding its clarity and scope.

About 25% of comments called for the vision to state more clearly the commitment to protect the Greenbelt from development pressures, fragmentation of natural areas and the gradual erosion of their boundaries. Several comments called for more explicit safeguards to be put in place. About 23% of comments emphasized that protecting biodiversity, natural habitats and ecological corridors should be established as the top priorities.

A recurring theme, found in about 20% of comments, concerns recreation and public access. Some comments (about 9%) considered the phrase “offers diverse experiences” vague and recommended more explicit references to outdoor recreation, access to nature and health benefits.

Some comments (about 18%) expressed reservations about the term “urban park” or asked that it be better defined. According to the respondents, this term does not fully represent the variety of the Greenbelt’s functions.

Lastly, comments about agriculture (15%) reflected a range of views. Some strongly support preserving agriculture and want a greater focus on sustainable farming practices, while others questioned agriculture’s place in the vision or asked for its role to be better defined.

Overall, comments on the vision also reflect concerns about the Greenbelt’s future. The results from a question in the survey show that several issues are of significant concern for its future. Urban growth and land-use pressure were the top concerns (80.5%), followed by housing development (71.2%), infrastructure development (58.9%) and climate change (51.0%). These results show considerable concern about pressures that could compromise the Greenbelt’s protection and integrity over the long term.

“The Greenbelt also gives many opportunities for Canadians to connect with nature. The draft vision refers to this indirectly, but I would recommend pointing it out clearly.”

“I think the vision should better highlight the importance of Greenbelt stewardship for conserving rare and threatened species in the National Capital Region, as well as on its importance for everyone’s well-being.”

Comments on the Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles (Draft):

Responsible Leadership

Strengthening proactive collaboration with federal, provincial, municipal and Indigenous partners, community organizations, and farmers is essential to ensure long-term stewardship.

A total of 577 substantive comments were received on the guiding principle concerning responsible leadership. Note that most respondents (51.2%) provided no comments. Overall, the comments expressed support for the principle's general intent of fostering collaboration among different partners to ensure the Greenbelt's long-term stewardship.

However, the most common theme, mentioned in about 27% of comments, was a lack of clarity around the concepts of "proactive collaboration," "responsible leadership" and "long-term stewardship." Respondents considered these concepts to be too vague and asked for more details on the proposed collaboration mechanisms; roles and responsibilities of partners; and transparency, accountability and long-term monitoring measures that would enable implementation. Some also suggested that the principle should focus more on collaboration or stewardship than on leadership itself.

About 17% of comments emphasized the importance of explicitly including the public, neighbours and people who use the Greenbelt in the collaborative process. Many comments also called for the list of partners to be expanded to include recreational groups, environmental organizations, community associations and conservation groups.

Guiding Principles (Draft): Ecological Integrity

Protecting the natural environment in the Greenbelt is essential to ensure the sustainability of important habitats and ecological links and provide important ecosystem services for the broader area. The health of these ecosystems is an intrinsic part of the Greenbelt.

A total of 598 substantive comments were received on the guiding principle concerning ecological integrity. While 49.5% of respondents provided no comments, those who did placed particular importance on this principle, often viewing it as one of the Greenbelt's key functions.

One quarter of the comments (about 25%) indicated that conserving natural environments and protecting ecosystems should be top priorities in future decisions concerning Greenbelt development and management.



A recurring theme, found in about 15% of comments, concerns the need to move beyond simply protecting natural areas, including concrete actions to restore and enhance ecosystems. Respondents called for targeted measures to restore degraded areas, improve ecological connectivity, control invasive species and strengthen ecosystems to be more resilient to the effects of climate change.

Lastly, about 10% of comments emphasized the importance of balancing ecological protection with the Greenbelt's other functions, including recreation and agriculture. In most of these comments, respondents indicated that these uses should remain consistent with conservation objectives and that protecting natural areas should guide decisions when there are trade-offs between different uses.

“Protecting the natural environment in the Greenbelt is essential to ensure the sustainability of important habitats, ecological links and ecosystem services that support the broader region. The health of these ecosystems is an intrinsic part of the Greenbelt. Outdoor education and sustainable recreation play a critical role in fostering public connection to nature, developing future environmental stewardship, and strengthening long-term ecological engagement and integrity.”

A multiple-choice question in the survey asked respondents to rank the most important aspects of the Greenbelt in order of priority. The results clearly show that protecting wildlife, plants and natural areas is the top priority, ranked first by 57.9% of respondents.

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6
Protecting nature and wildlife	57.92%	19.83%	11.80%	5.56%	3.35%	10.27%
Providing places and opportunities for recreation and outdoor activities	18.81%	23.90%	22.34%	18.61%	13.73%	10.27%
Being a large, living green space	12.86%	37.47%	24.34%	14.44%	10.16%	4.16%
Supporting local farming and food production	3.83%	10.96%	28.03%	34.12%	20.65%	9.54%
Limiting urban sprawl by acting as a boundary for city growth	1.81%	6.78%	11.70%	25.13%	47.88%	17.11%
Other (please specify)	4.78%	1.04%	1.79%	2.14%	4.24%	48.66%

The results are more varied for the other rankings. This distribution suggests that, while protecting the environment is widely agreed to be the top priority, expectations for the Greenbelt’s other functions remain diverse. Comments in “Other” focus mainly on environmental protection, opposition to development and the importance of recreational activities.

Guiding Principles (Draft): Agricultural Vitality

Agriculture remains a vital contributor to community well-being and the Capital’s food security and sufficiency. It is supported by responsible, sustainable, diversified and climate-ready models and farming systems that protect soils, water and ecosystem health. This principle recognizes the essential role of farmers, whose knowledge, livelihoods and financial viability are integral to sustaining the Greenbelt’s agricultural resources.

A total of 549 substantive comments were received on the guiding principle concerning agricultural vitality. More than half of respondents (53.5%) provided no comments.

Most respondents who commented supported the principle’s general intent. However, many (about 25%) emphasized the importance of moving agriculture in the Greenbelt towards more sustainable, diverse and regenerative models and those that are better aligned with environmental protection, biodiversity and climate resilience objectives.

A recurring theme, found in about 20% of comments, concerns the need to clarify agriculture's role in achieving food security and local supply objectives. Respondents want to better understand how Greenbelt farmland contributes to these objectives and what is included under "climate ready" and "agricultural vitality."

About 10% of comments questioned agriculture's place in the Greenbelt. Some respondents feel that some of this land could instead be used for other purposes, such as ecological conservation, access to natural areas or, in some cases, residential development.

"[...] there's a missing acknowledgement of the tensions between agriculture and environmental protection. Agriculture and ecology can be mutually supportive, but they can also conflict. This principle should clarify how trade-offs will be managed, that ecological integrity remains the primary lens and that agriculture must be compatible with conservation objectives..."

The analysis of the comments is also informed by the results of a survey question about agriculture. The data collected provide a more nuanced picture of public perceptions of agriculture's contribution to the Greenbelt.

Nearly 70% of respondents place great importance on access to locally produced food. A majority of 54.5% believe agricultural activities in the Greenbelt are beneficial, while 23.1% somewhat agree with this statement. On the other hand, 9.8% of respondents see no benefit to agriculture in the Greenbelt and 12.6% see little benefit.

A total of more than three quarters of respondents recognize at least some benefit from agriculture in the Greenbelt. These results show that, despite some reservations and requests for clarification expressed in the comments, agriculture generally receives a high level of support from respondents.

Guiding Principles (Draft): Capital Experience

The Greenbelt continues to serve residents and visitors as a distinctive Capital destination with meaningful, accessible and diverse experiences that connect people to nature, water, agriculture, culture and heritage while preserving its integrity.

A total of 663 substantive comments were received on the guiding principle concerning capital experience. Nearly 44% of respondents provided no comments.

Many respondents asked that activities be explicitly named in the guiding principle, including hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing and mountain biking. The physical and mental health benefits of these activities were also pointed out multiple times, as were opportunities to partner with regional organizations.

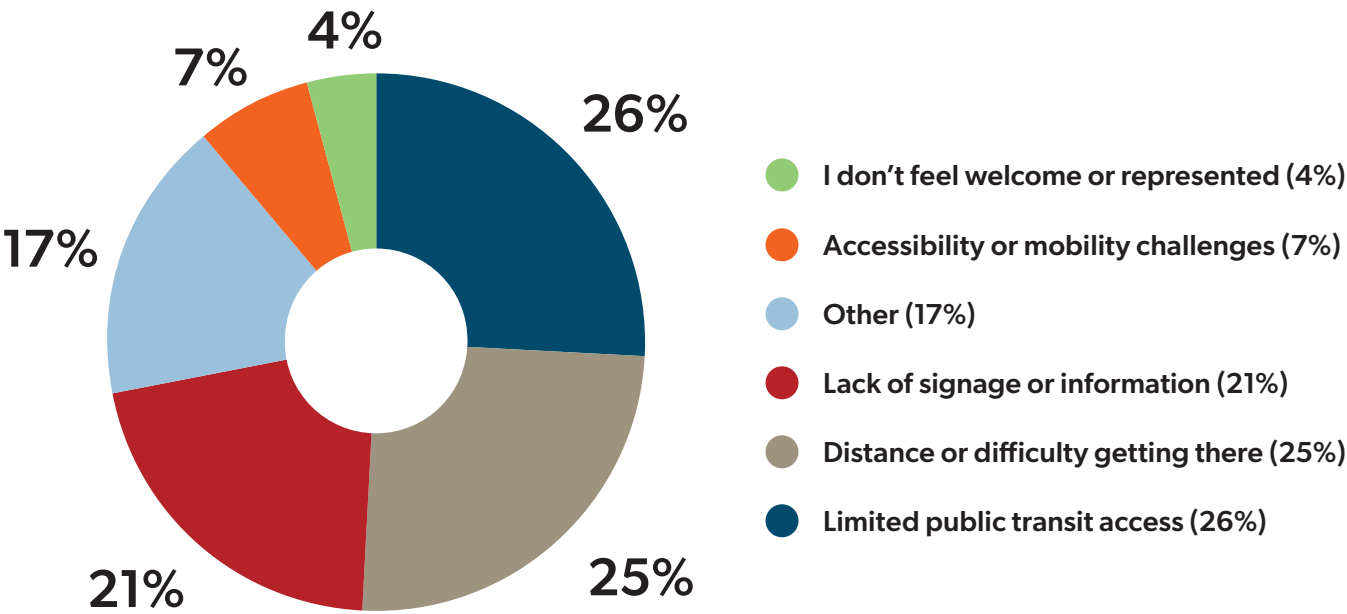
Ecological protection was a major theme and was mentioned in about 20% of comments. Respondents stressed that ecosystem conservation should remain the Greenbelt's top priority. This concern is often accompanied by fears that new development, commercialization of natural areas or overcrowding could harm its ecological integrity.

Nearly 19% of comments were on improved access and connectivity. Respondents emphasized the importance of making the Greenbelt easier to access and better connecting its different areas, both for getting there and travelling within it.

About 18% of comments also asked for clarification on some terms considered vague, including “distinctive Capital destination,” “diverse experiences” and “preserving its integrity.” About 11% of comments emphasized the importance of raising awareness of the Greenbelt, strengthening education initiatives and ensuring that the experiences offered are compatible with environmental conservation objectives.

“Some areas of the Greenbelt are not easy to identify or access. [...] It’s not always clear which areas are part of the National Capital Greenbelt, which makes it harder for residents to discover and use them. Some areas are also difficult to access without driving. I would like to see better trail information, clearer maps and signage, safer trails connections and improved access for residents in west Ottawa. Access should be improved in a low impact way that does not damage sensitive natural areas.”

The analysis of comments about Greenbelt accessibility and connectivity is supported by the results of several survey questions which provide an additional perspective on the needs and expectations related to access.¹

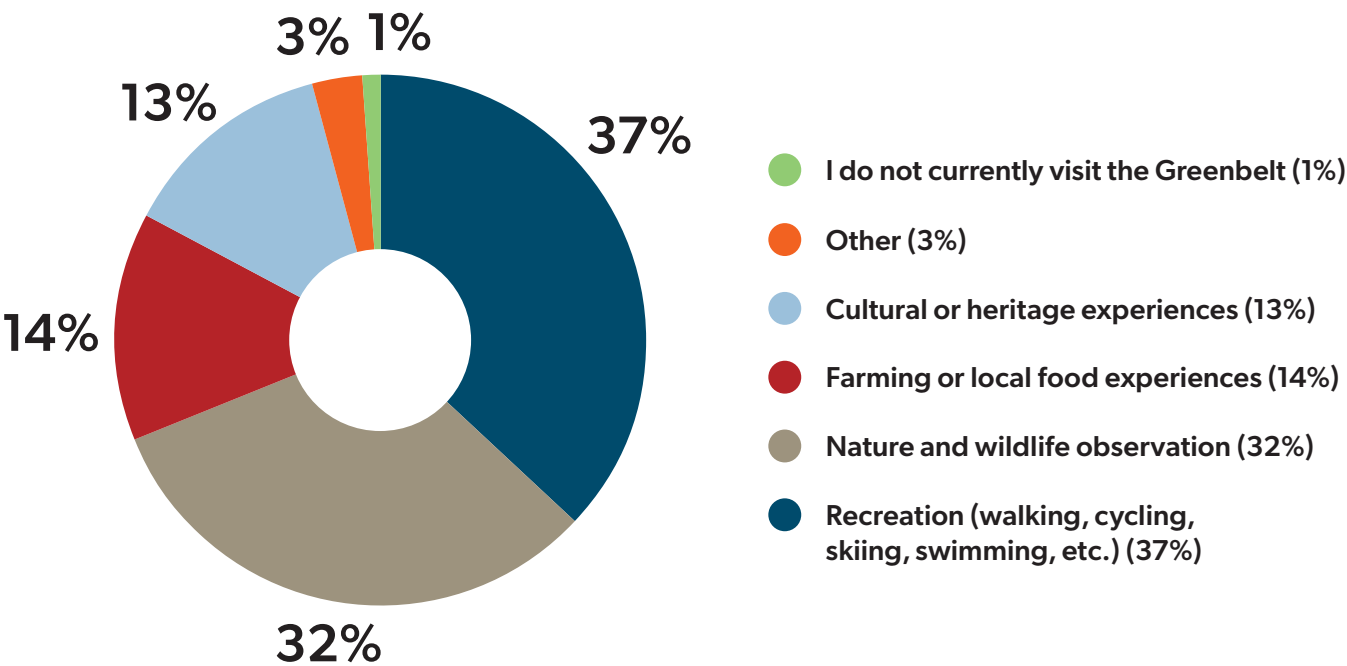


¹ Barriers reported in “Other” (17.4%) relate not only to access but also to the on-site experience. Issues related to parking, sharing spaces with others and infrastructure management all affected visitation rates and overall satisfaction.

Respondents said that limited access to public transit is the main barrier to using the Greenbelt (26%). When asked about improved public transit and active transportation, nearly two thirds of respondents (62.8%) expressed support for this idea. However, the results are more nuanced regarding the potential use of transportation services. Just over half of respondents (53.9%) indicated that they would be very or somewhat likely to use them, while 46.1% felt that they would be not very likely or not at all likely to do so. These results suggest that there is general support for improving access to the Greenbelt, even though intentions to change travel habits are more divided.

Greenbelt Use and Visitation

The questions in the survey provided a better understanding of how respondents use the Greenbelt, which areas they visit most often and which experiences or opportunities they would like to see more of in the future.



When asked to identify their favourite areas or places they visit most often, respondents mainly mentioned the Mer Bleue Bog (nearly 30%) and Stony Swamp, including the Jack Pine Trail, Lime Kiln Trail and Bruce Pit (30%). Shirleys Bay (12%) and Green’s Creek (11%) are also among the most visited sites. Trail networks were prominent among the uses mentioned, particularly for walking (45%) and cycling (30%). Many respondents also report visiting areas near their homes, emphasizing the Greenbelt’s role as a network of nearby natural spaces.

“I frequent all the areas surrounding Bells Corners, in every direction. I’ve walked, biked, snowshoed or skied every trail within 20 km of my home. My favourite part of the Greenbelt is the strawberry farm in the summer, the deer in the crops along Hunt Club, the turkeys along Cedarview, and the coyotes and foxes in my backyard at Bells Corners.”



Overall, these results demonstrate the Greenbelt’s value toward accessing nature and participating in outdoor activities. Visitation is based on both iconic destinations recognized across the region, namely Mer Bleue and Stony Swamp, and more routine use of nearby natural areas.

Conclusion

Overall, the feedback collected shows the public’s strong attachment to the Greenbelt and general support for the proposed directions. Protecting natural areas clearly emerged as the top priority, along with recurring concerns about urban growth, development and climate change. Respondents also want more explicit commitments to long-term protection and emphasized the importance of maintaining access to nature and outdoor activities. The emerging vision is of a protected, accessible and resilient Greenbelt, where recreational, agricultural and educational uses remain compatible with the objectives of protecting natural areas.

Next Steps

The results of this consultation will help guide the development of the next National Capital Greenbelt Master Plan. A second phase of public consultation is planned for spring 2027 to gather feedback on the proposed policies and plans for the area. A draft master plan will then be presented to the public and stakeholders one last time before being approved by the NCC Board of Directors.

Appendix 1: Methods of Analysis

The analysis focuses on qualitative comments submitted during in-person public consultation activities and through an online survey from May 20 to June 8. A total of nearly 300 comments from the in-person consultation activities and 934 completed surveys were received and analyzed.

Public Advisory Group Feedback

Feedback from the public advisory group meetings was reviewed and analyzed using the same themes and assessment methods that were used for public feedback. Relevant comments were identified in the minutes. While these observations contributed to the overall analysis, they were not included in the total comment count, which reflects public feedback only.

Categorization by Theme

Each comment was reviewed and categorized under a primary theme according to its content. The themes correspond to the public's main areas of interest and concern. Organizing by theme supported focused analysis and helped identify recurring trends.

Keyword Extraction and Analysis

Key terms and phrases were extracted from each comment to identify the most frequently mentioned topics and recurring concerns. The keywords were counted to determine their frequency and then grouped by theme to understand their contextual relevance.

AI-assisted Analysis Disclosure

Some stages of the feedback analysis, including keyword extraction, were completed using AI tools. In accordance with Government of Canada guidelines, all results were reviewed and validated by members of the project team.

Appendix 2: Demographic Data

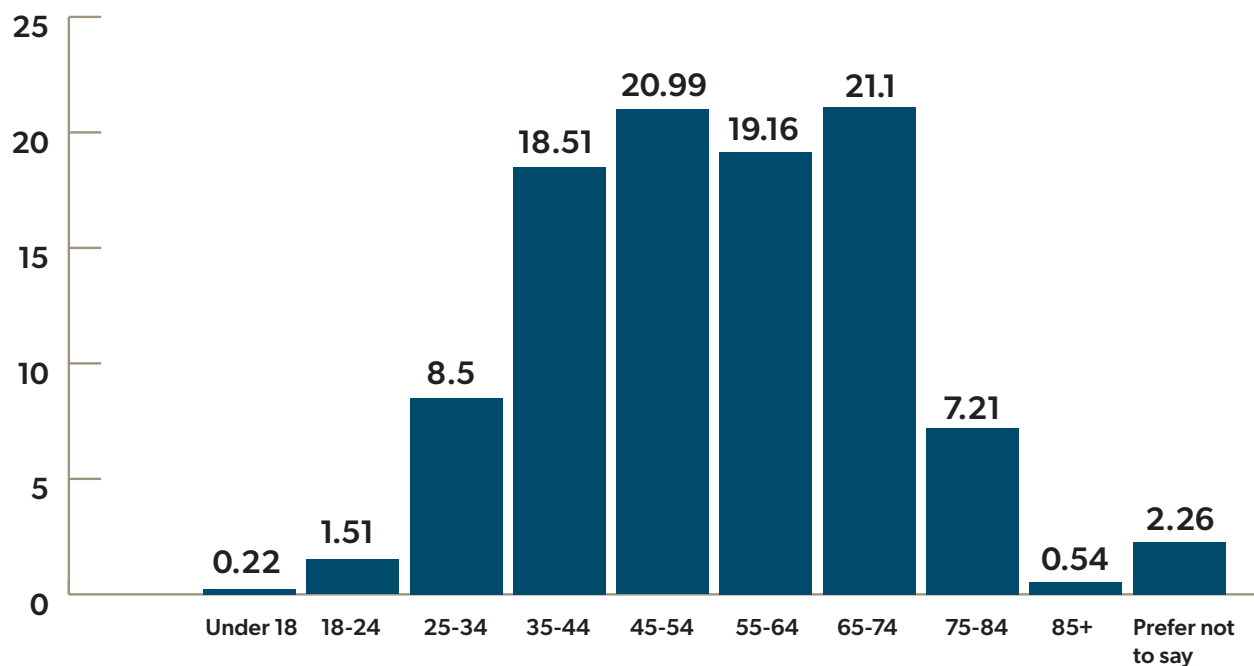
THE SURVEY COLLECTED DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ABOUT RESPONDENTS.



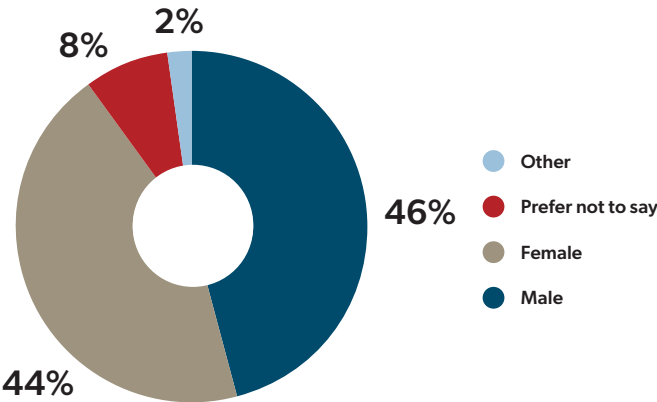
Age

The age distribution is shown below. Most respondents were between 35 and 74 years of age.

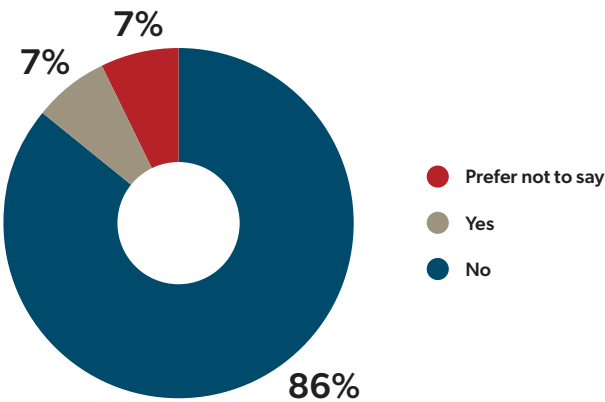
Results in percentage



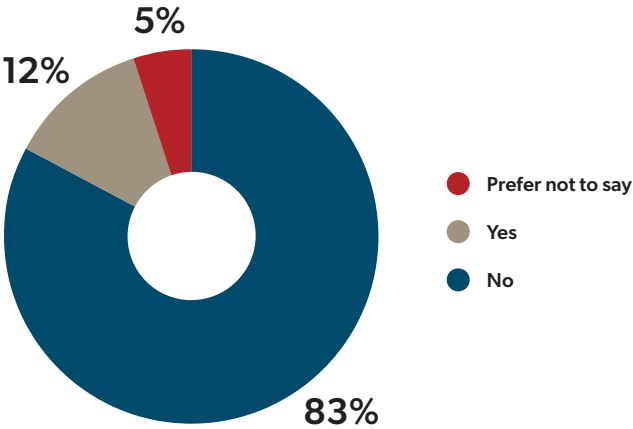
Gender of respondents



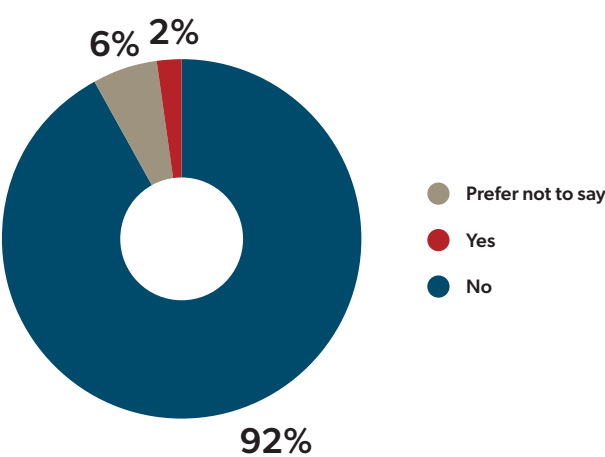
Respondents who identify as a member of a visible minority

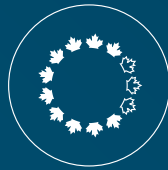


Respondents who identify as a person with a disability



Respondents who identify as an Indigenous person





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