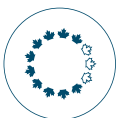


Parkway Planning and Design Guidelines

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

July 2025



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

Canada

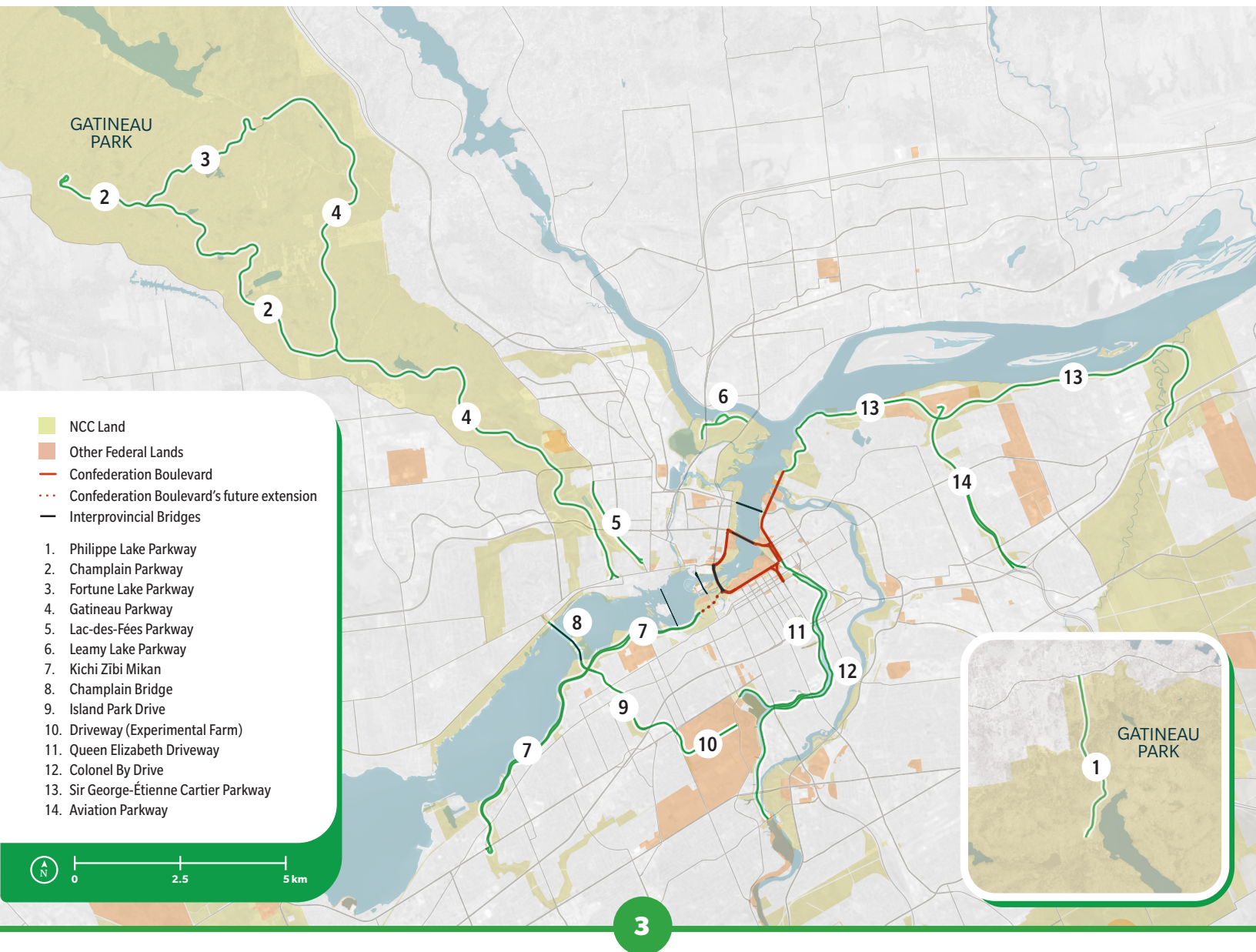
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Background

The National Capital Commission (NCC) and its predecessors have been planning and managing parkways in the National Capital Region since the early 20th century. The NCC's existing parkway network spans more than 90 kilometres. It enhances and connects a large number of waterfronts, parks and green spaces.

NCC parkways are distinct from municipal, regional and provincial roads. They have been planned to harmonize with their surrounding corridors and offer scenic viewpoints and heritage, cultural, ecological and environmental features. Many of them are bordered by multi-use pathways, which the public can enjoy and discover in both summer and winter.





The NCC is developing new guidelines for the National Capital Region’s parkways. This will help guide future planning and design decisions. The guidelines are intended to provide a new vision, guiding principles and supporting policies for the parkways and the adjacent natural corridors. The guidelines will consider the different contexts and functions of each parkway and will be aligned with the NCC’s recent plans and contemporary planning practices.

First, the project team held discussions with its partners, which included the Ville de Gatineau and City of Ottawa, to get a deeper understanding of their vision for the parkways. These discussions were held in spring 2024.

Second, the NCC has organized two rounds of public consultations to gather the public’s comments. The first round took place in September 2024, with the aim of gathering the public’s views and opinions on the values, issues, vision, guiding principles and supporting policies for NCC parkways. The goal of the second round, scheduled in 2026, is to gather public input on the draft guidelines before they are finalized and approved.

Public consultation process

In fall 2024, a first round of public consultations was held. Below is a summary of the activities that were organized.



Consultation with French-language community organizations

September 11, 2024

9 participants



Consultation with English-language community organizations

September 12, 2024

37 participants



Online public consultation

September 13 to 30, 2024

1,720 surveys completed

Meetings with community organizations

Dates: September 11 and 12, 2024

Location: Online via MS Teams

Participants

Nine people represented the following organizations in person in the French-language session:

- Federation of Citizens' Associations of Ottawa;
- Bike Ottawa;
- Relais plein air;
- Club Skinouk;
- Action Vélo Outaouais;
- Vélo Plaisirs;
- Société franco-ontarienne;
- Kingsmere Community Association.

Thirty-seven people represented the following organizations in person in the English-language session:

- Parkways for People;
- EnviroCentre;
- Heritage Ottawa;
- Greenspace Alliance;
- Kingsmere Community Association;
- Westboro Beach Community Association;
- Canterbury Community Association;
- Champlain Park Community Association;
- Old Ottawa South Community Association;
- McKellar Park Community Association;
- Centretown Community Association;
- Beacon Hill Community Association;
- Britannia Village Community Association;
- Queensway Terrace North Community Association;
- Island Park Towers Residents' Association;
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society;
- Westboro BIA;
- Ottawa Bicycle Club.

Format

- A review of the history of parkway planning, followed by a presentation of the draft of the new vision, guiding principles and supporting policies that will direct future decisions about the parkways.
- Question and discussion period to gather ideas and comments on the preparation of the guidelines.

Comments submitted via email

During the consultation period, these five organizations submitted written comments directly to the Public Affairs team:

- Fridays for Future Ottawa;
- Parkways for People;
- Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital;
- Heritage Ottawa;
- Champlain Park Community Association.

Online consultation

Dates: September 13 to 30, 2024

Platform: Online QuestionPro survey

Participation

1,720 surveys completed

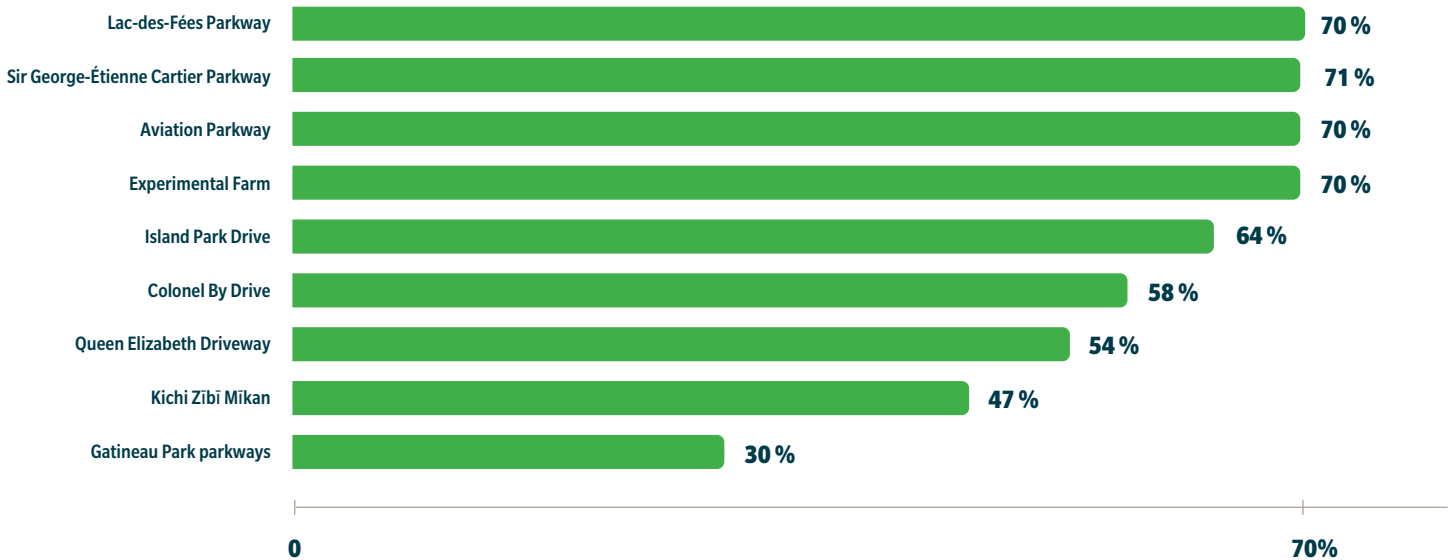
Format:

Twelve questions about the use of the parkways, frequency of use, and types of activities taking place on the parkways; request for opinions on the draft vision, guiding principles and supporting policies.

Feedback results

Respondents were invited to provide feedback and answer questions about their use of the parkways, what they liked most about the parkways, and any concerns.

NCC parkway use (Online survey statistics)



Participants could select more than one answer when asked about how they used the parkways and what activities they enjoyed doing.

Data analysis revealed that Gatineau Park parkways are often used to enjoy the scenery (79%), for exercise (78%), and for cycling on roads (65%) and multi-use pathways (50%).

The Kichi Zibi Mikan, Colonel By Drive, Sir George-Étienne Cartier Parkway and Queen Elizabeth Driveway parkways are popular for taking in the views (61% to 57%), getting to recreational destinations (57% to 62%), exercising (69% to 64%) and running errands (57% to 66%). Among these, the Sir George-Étienne Cartier Parkway is the only parkway that received a lower ranking for running errands (shopping) (38%). Activities on these four parkways take place mainly by car (68% to 62%) or by cycling on the multi-use pathway (69% to 62%).

Few people said that they use the parkways for public transit; this is due to the fact that most of the parkways are not served by the public transit system. The Kichi Zibi Mikan and Gatineau Park parkways are the only exceptions. OC Transpo runs on the Kichi Zibi Mikan (10%) and the NCC shuttle runs on the Gatineau Park parkways (8%). Island Park Drive differs in that it is primarily used by vehicles (78%) and for errands (shopping) (68%).

**Most popular uses for
NCC parkways**



Getting to recreational destinations



Enjoying the scenery



Exercising

**Most popular activities
on NCC parkways**

Driving



Cycling on multi-use pathways



On-road cycling



Respondents identified key themes that reflect what they value most about the parkways, showing a variety of uses. Key themes include:



Scenery/views (36%)

People enjoy being able to travel on roads or multi-use pathways with scenic views.



Opportunities for recreational activities (26%)

People enjoy physical activity, such as cycling, skiing, walking and jogging on the parkways.



Limited vehicle access (25%)

Participants appreciate the parkways and feel safe when engaging in physical activities, especially when traffic is limited.



Access to green space (19%)

People enjoy easy access to green spaces, especially in the city, due to the mental health benefits.

When asked about their concerns regarding the parkways, some people mentioned occasional traffic congestion on adjacent roads.



Road traffic (18%)

Preference for keeping the parkways open to vehicle traffic. There were many comments regarding the need for road access by residents for reasons of convenience, mobility and leisure.



Traffic congestion (15%)

Traffic issues for local residents and increased congestion in surrounding areas when the parkways are reserved for active mobility.



Speeding (13%)

Frequently driving over the speed limit and congestion on the parkways were cited as causes of altercations.

While some participants (18%) wished that there were fewer closures to traffic on the parkways, others clearly expressed a preference for active mobility on the parkways (26%) and would like to see these programs expanded.



In a more general sense, one of the community organizations that was consulted proposed the creation of a working group in which the municipal, federal and residential sectors would be represented and would explore possible solutions to traffic issues. This idea is a good example of the desire for cohesion among the different organizations (regarding roadway planning) that was also put forward by other respondents.

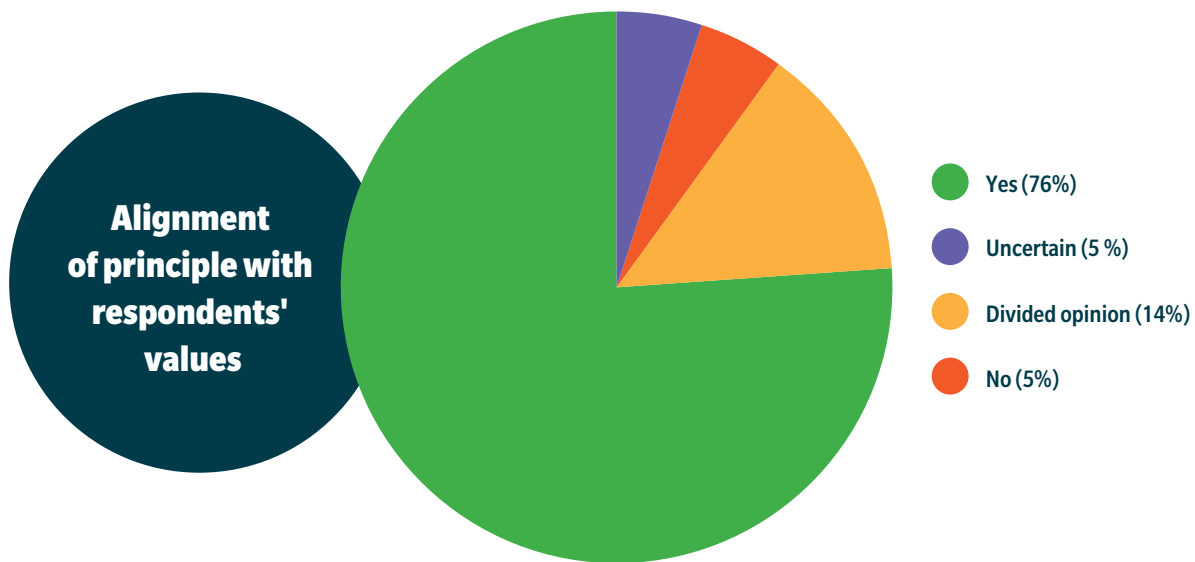
Comments about the guiding principles

During the various consultation activities, team members invited respondents to tell them whether the guiding principles and policies aligned with their values regarding use of the parkways. Question types varied, and therefore, responses ranged from a simple yes or no to divided or uncertain opinions. Many respondents gave more detailed answers about how they felt.



Guiding Principle 1 – Distinct Experiences, Views and Landscapes

Parkways are an emblematic feature of the National Capital Region that contribute to its unique picturesque and natural qualities and provide distinct experiences to residents and visitors. They impress the beauty of their surrounding green spaces, and the diversity of cultural, urban and natural landscapes, while offering views of the Capital’s scenic landmarks.



Online survey statistics

The first guiding principle received positive feedback; a large majority of respondents felt that it aligned with their values. Many respondents said they were grateful for nature and landscapes along the parkways. Others felt that the parkways should nurture a sense of belonging; highlight monuments and panoramas; and provide opportunities for learning about culture and heritage. Many said it was important for the parkways to retain their distinctive character and be treated differently than other roads. However, some respondents (5%) said that this principle did not recognize the importance of parkways as connector roads in the region.

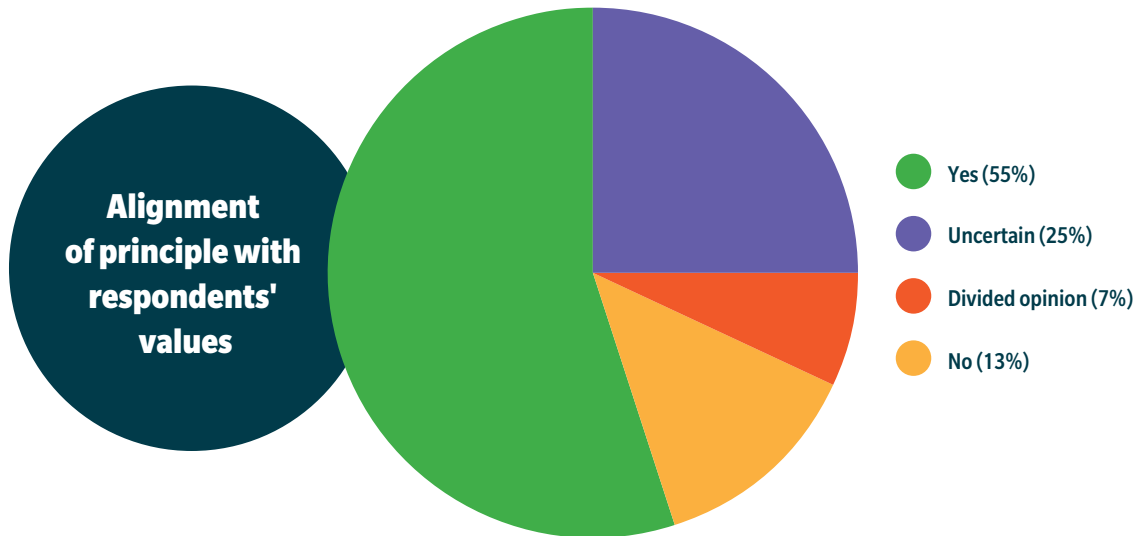
The majority of the community organizations that provided feedback liked that the guidelines were adapted to different contexts and to each parkway. Some suggested that more importance should be placed on enhancing, protecting and preserving green spaces, heritage and cultural property.

“There is a lack of information on the history of the region’s parkways from a geographical point of view. Would it be possible to create a way to discover this history? I believe this would help to build greater respect for the parkways and preservation of the region.”



Guiding Principle 2 – Sustainable Mobility and Active Use

Parkway design, policies and stewardship are focused on achieving federal, provincial and regional sustainable transportation targets by prioritizing walking, cycling and other forms of sustainable mobility. They also offer flexibility and opportunity for recreation and sporting activities to promote healthy and active lifestyles in the National Capital Region.



Online survey statistics

Responses regarding the second guiding principle were more varied, although, overall, the principle aligned with respondents' values. Most of the respondents stated that they supported the active use program and would like to see more road closures, in winter as well, citing that it would benefit the environment, as well as people's health and safety. Respondents who answered negatively frequently disagreed with parkway closures for active mobility and expressed concerns about accessibility and traffic congestion. Some respondents suggested enlarging adjacent multi-use pathways instead of closing off roads.

Improving access to public transit and safety on the parkways for all users was frequently mentioned as a concern.

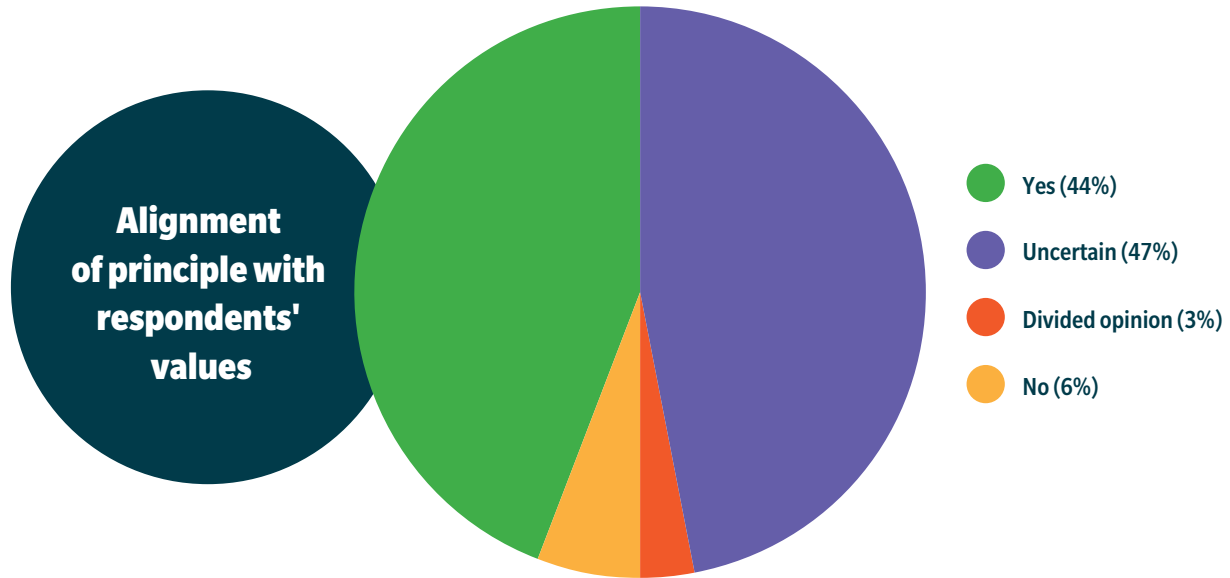
Some community organizations would like the guidelines to consider even more radical changes, in order to reform the outdated concept of car-centric parkways, leading to better ways of serving the public interest and fighting climate change. Participants also mentioned that programming seemed to focus on summer activities and that more thought should be given to winter activities (for example, skiing [trails], snowshoeing [trails] and other activities).

"It would be interesting to consider public transportation to the parks that are along the canal; for example, a tramway that would have little impact on walkers and cyclists."



Guiding Principle 3 – Safe, Equitable and Inclusive

Parkways offer safe, inviting, welcoming, equitable and inclusive access to all, irrespective of gender, age, ability and origin.



Online survey statistics

This guiding principle garnered a large number of responses that did not clearly indicate whether this principle was aligned with respondents' values. The need to reduce speeding and implement traffic calming measures to create a safe environment was emphasized, especially at intersections and pedestrian crossings.

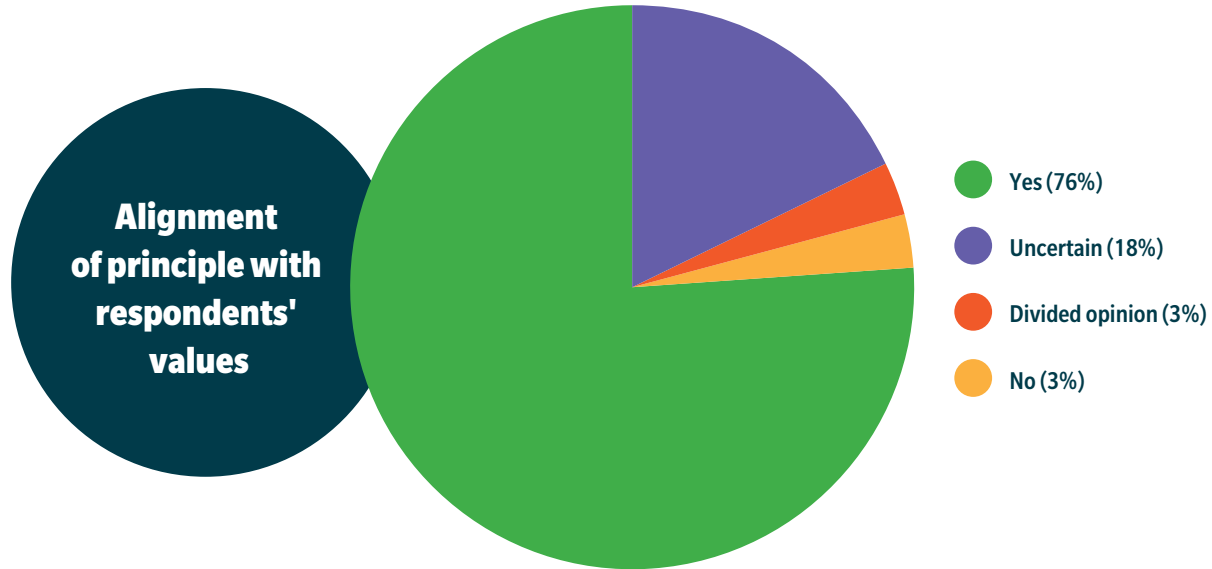
Additionally, many respondents insisted that parkways should not be the fastest way to reach a given destination. Suggestions for improving safety on the parkways included better maintenance, signage, better nighttime lighting and adding separate lanes for cyclists. Some participants were impressed with the principle's emphasis on accessibility, inclusivity and safety.

"My only criticism is that, even if the pathways are protected from traffic, some of them are no longer suitable for cycling or walking. The pathways along Queen Elizabeth Driveway and the Kichi Zibi Mikan are especially dangerous: they are very busy, narrow, and it's easy for speeding bikes to pass. We need separate pathways, like in Montreal."



Guiding Principle 4 – Ecosystem Preservation, Rehabilitation and Urban Resiliency

Parkway corridors are a vital source of urban resiliency and form part of the Capital green space network that must be enhanced and protected.



Online survey statistics

Three quarters of the respondents responded positively to this guiding principle, affirming that it is essential to preserve, maintain and protect nature while also considering the impact of climate change. Some people, even though they agreed with this principle, questioned the extent to which it was realistic for paved parkways to significantly impact protection of the environment.

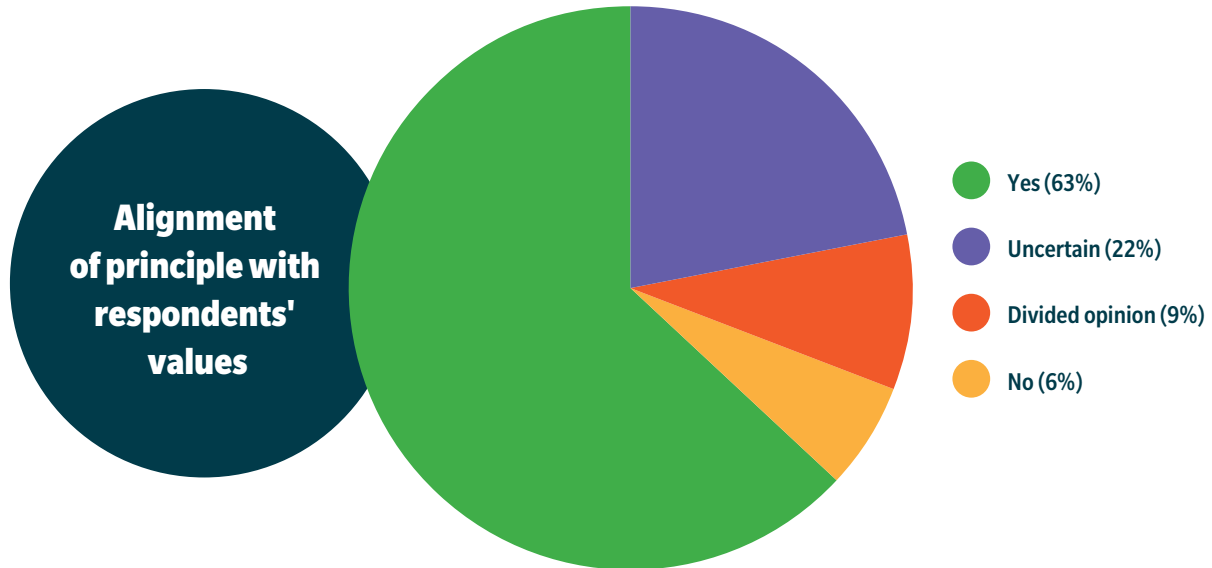
Overall, a large number of community organizations and individuals thought that the city needed more green space, especially in the downtown areas, to protect the environment and for residents to get out, relax and engage in recreational activities.

“Ottawa Centre does not have a lot of green space and also has a lot of concrete. The central parkways are places where people can breathe and are a welcome addition to the urban fabric.”



Guiding Principle 5 – Connections to Surroundings and Placemaking

Parkway corridors are designed cultural landscapes, intentionally connected to their surroundings through context-specific design and planning, while offering meaningful placemaking in harmony with their urban, waterfront or natural context.



Online survey statistics

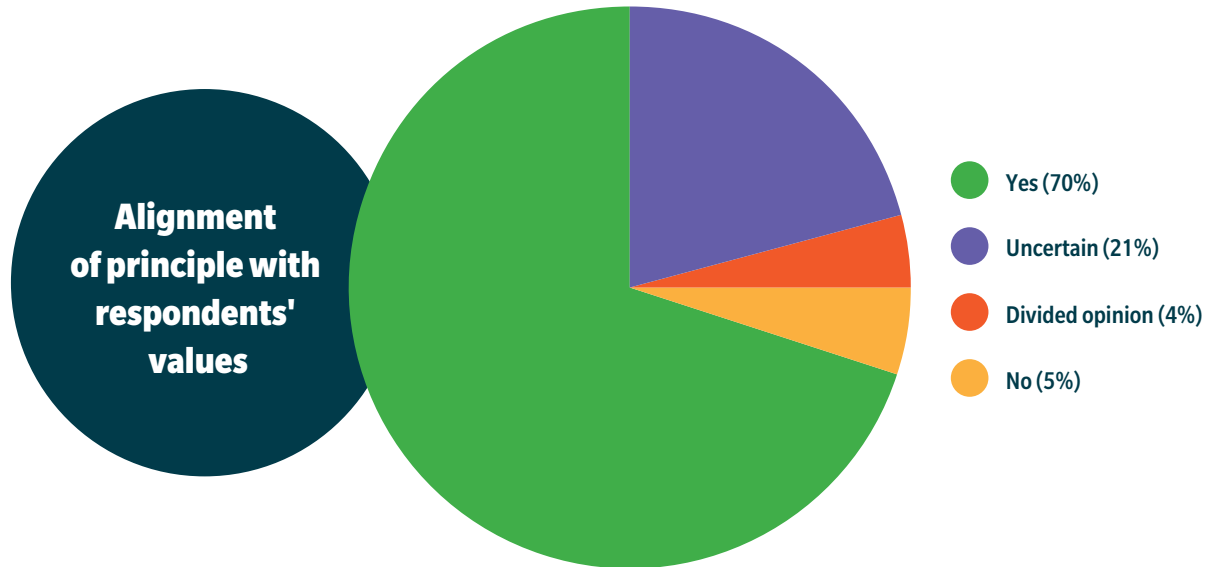
Even though some respondents said that the wording was too technical and confusing (especially the word “place-making” [creating quality public spaces] in the English sessions), they generally agreed with this guiding principle. The most frequent comments made were about the addition of animation and amenities such as washrooms, water fountains, restaurants and interpretive elements, giving people a reason to stop and enjoy the parkways in all seasons. Preserving and protecting nature also came up in the comments, with some people insisting that changes needed to be made carefully or that certain areas should be left in their natural state as much as possible, particularly in Gatineau Park. Others were confused about the possible relationship between culture and parkways.

“I like the idea of improving tourist attractions and facilities. If the parkways have no other purposes beyond driving or cycling, and if there is nothing to encourage people to take the time to discover the region, they will be nothing more than well-managed roads.”



Guiding Principle 6: Sustainable Stewardship

The Capital parkways and their corridors are planned, designed, owned, managed and maintained by the NCC in a durable, prudent and financially sustainable manner. They are planned and designed in a collaborative, multi-disciplinary manner that involves a wide range of subject matter experts to ensure design excellence.



Online survey statistics

The majority of respondents supported this guiding principle and some of them felt that sustainability could be achieved by maintaining and improving the parkways and pathways for future generations. Recurring themes included the importance of consulting with Indigenous peoples, the Ville de Gatineau, the City of Ottawa, and local communities, and collaborating with these partners. The importance of working with the municipalities to ensure the long-term integrity of the parkways in the urban fabric of the city sparked lively discussions in meetings with community organizations.

Some respondents felt it was important for the parkways to remain under federal jurisdiction to avoid conflicts between urbanization and preservation.

“Urban planning should aim to create inviting destinations along the parkways that meet the needs of the surrounding neighbourhoods; for example, bistros, to encourage active use of the parkways, and recreation, to enjoy nature while you are there...”



The first consultation revealed that respondents had several practical suggestions for improving parkway usage, including the addition of amenities and attractions along the parkways that would improve their active use. Some of the more popular suggestions included washrooms, water fountains, shaded areas, nighttime lighting and secure bike parking, and easier access to the water and waterfront activities.

Active use safety issues were brought up many times. Requests for planning separate walking, cycling and traffic areas, as well as ways of facilitating the maintenance of the infrastructure, came up frequently.

Next steps

Analysis of the comments reveals that, overall, the vision and guiding principles are aligned with respondents' values. However, a careful reading of the comments revealed the need to clarify some of these principles to make them easier to understand.

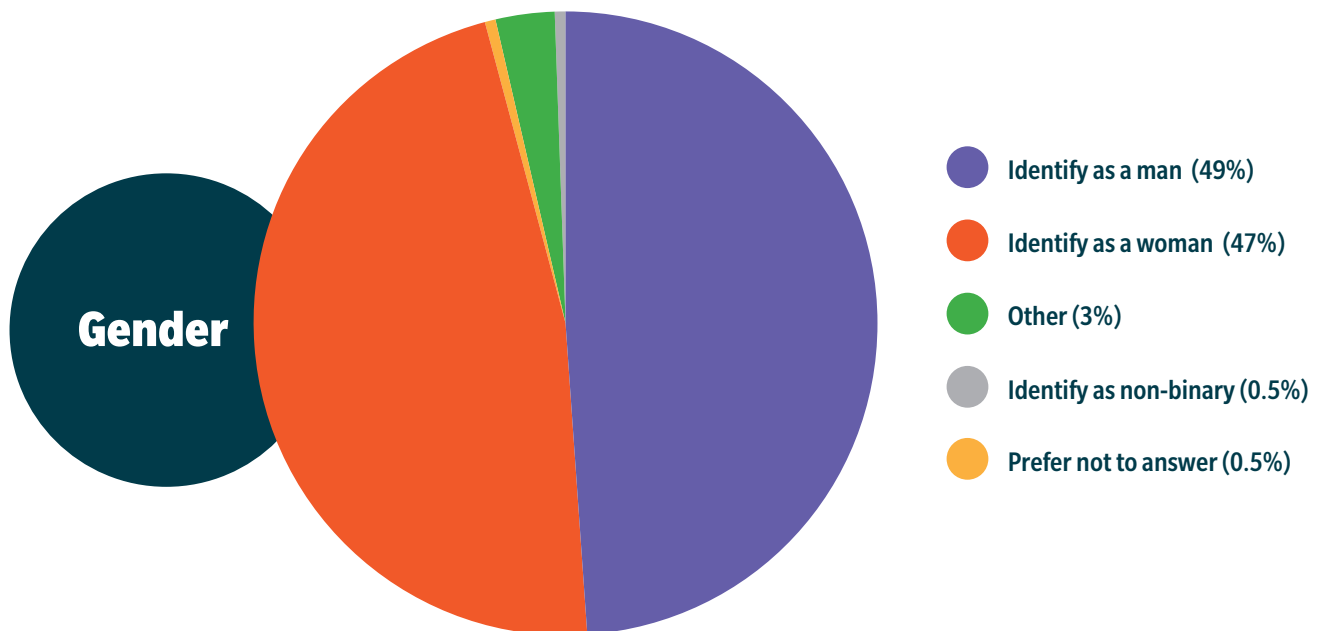
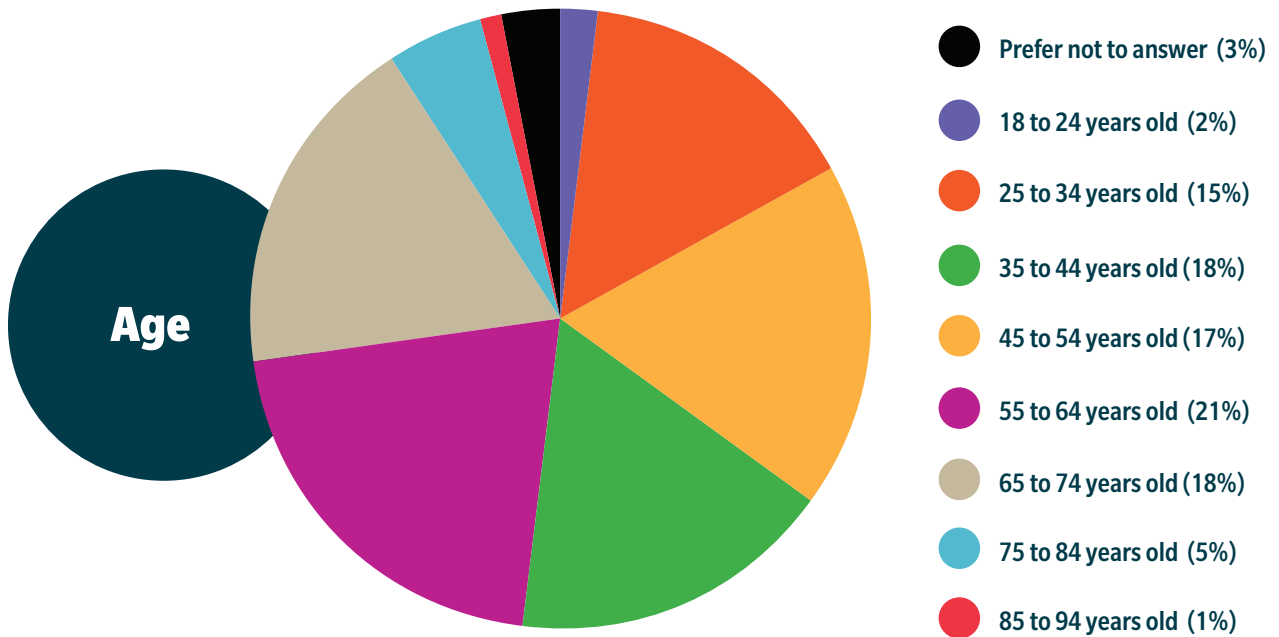
We noted a variety of perspectives about reserving the parkways for active mobility. Many people wanted to see this program continue, and even expand, while others feared that it would increase traffic congestion in their neighbourhoods and would like to find solutions.

The project team will review the public's comments and suggestions in detail. This information will be used to guide NCC parkway planning and design guidelines.

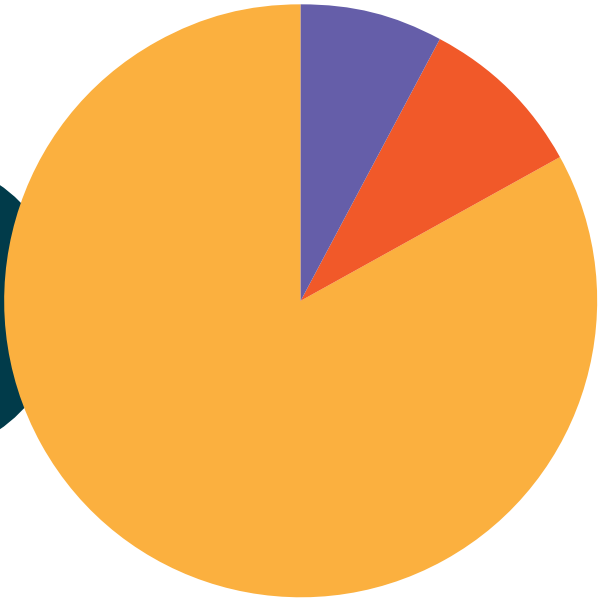
A second public consultation phase is planned in 2026 to gather feedback on the draft of the guidelines. The comments received during this phase will allow the team to draft the version that will be submitted to the NCC Board of Directors for approval.

Demographic information from the survey

A higher number of people over the age of 55 answered the survey, while people under 25 years old were underrepresented.

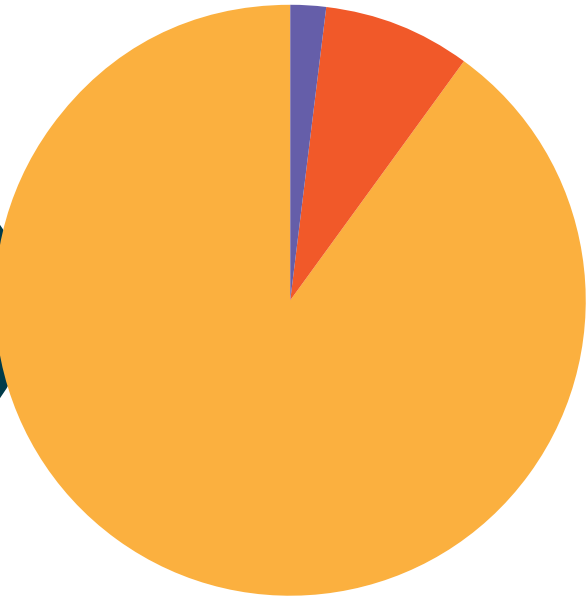


**Race,
ethnic
origin**

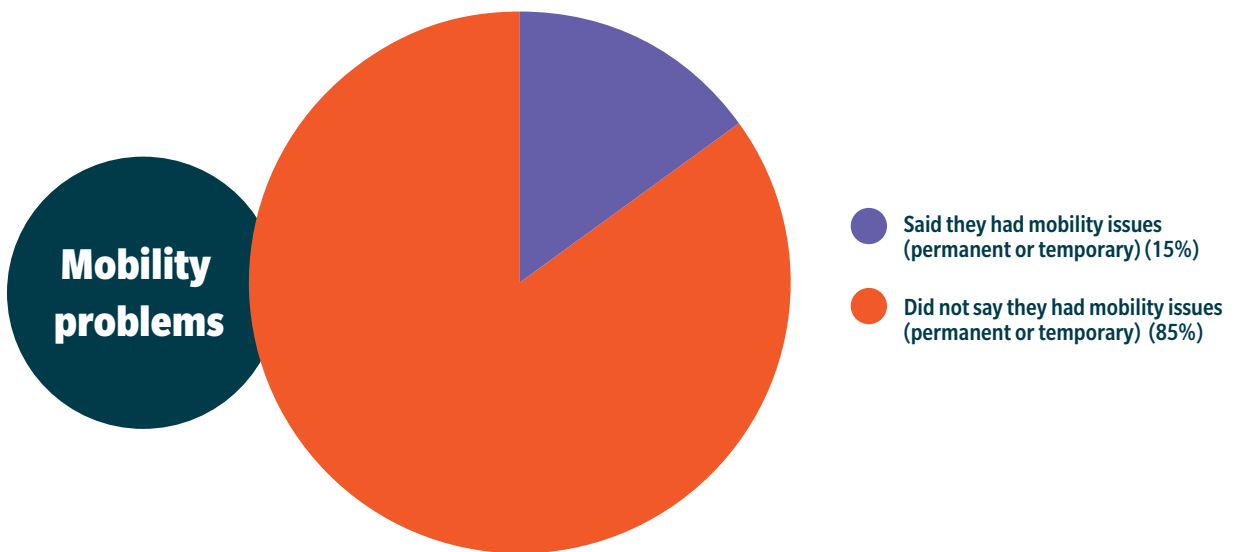
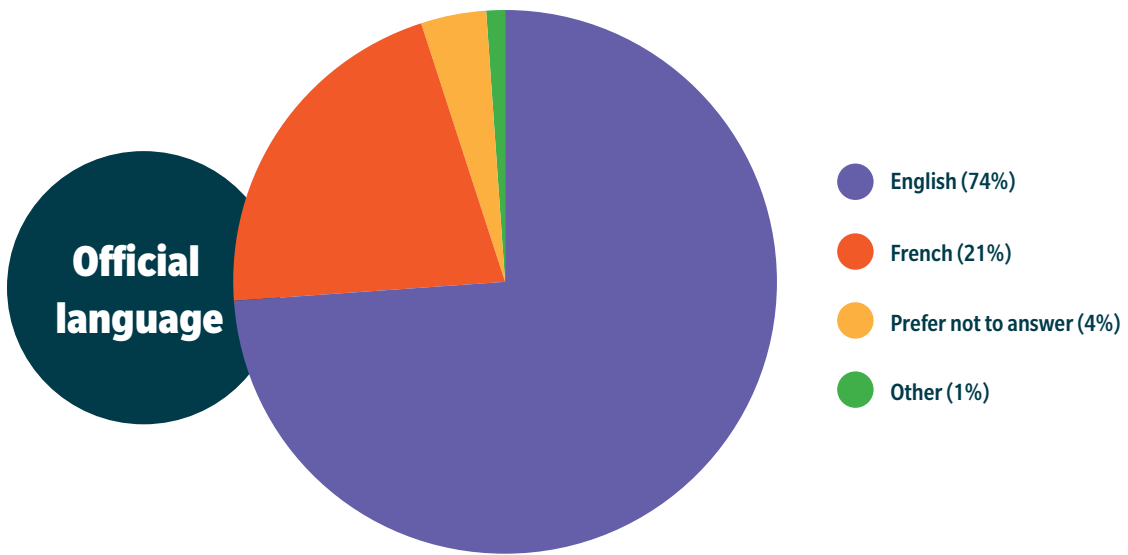
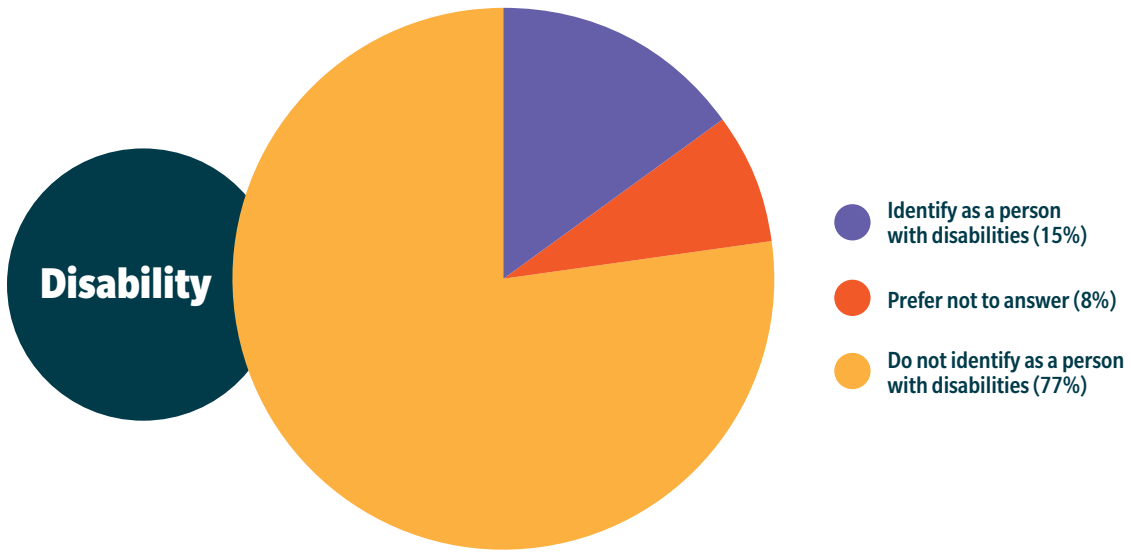


- Identify as a member of a visible minority (8%)
- Prefer not to answer (9%)
- Do not identify as a member of a visible minority (83%)

**Indigenous
identity**

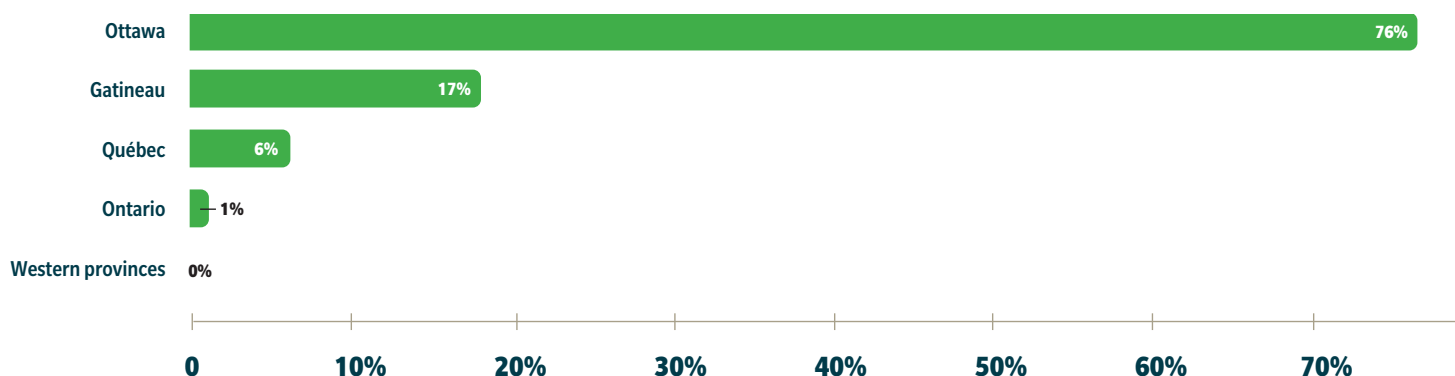


- Identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis or Inuit) (2%)
- Prefer not to answer (8%)
- Do not identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Metis or Inuit) (90%)



Origin

In 2021, the population in Ottawa-Gatineau was 1,488,307; 76.26% of people resided in Ottawa and 23.74% in Gatineau. The respondents' origin indicates a similar percentage.



Appendix 1 – Promotional Strategy for the Consultation

Internet

- Project's bilingual webpage
 - » **665** views on the French page
 - » **4,390** views on the English page

Media coverage

- *CityNews* [NCC developing new policies to enhance Capital Region's parkways](#)
- *Centretown Buzz* [NCC envisioning new parkway policies](#)
- *LeDroit* [125 ans à bâtir la capitale](#)

Newsletters

- **September 13**: targeted email sent to stakeholder list
- **September 24**: targeted email sent to stakeholder list
- Five newsletters sent, usually combining two topics, to the NCC's general mailing lists.

Social networks

- **11 posts** on social media networks (Facebook and X)
 - » **13,724** impressions
 - » **459** engagements



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