Making Streets for People
Survey Results



Prepared by Engineering Services, City of Vancouver
October 2020

Making Streets for People during COVID-19

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing guidelines, Council directed staff to temporarily reallocate road space for public use to help residents physically distance and mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in our communities.

Normally, installing public plazas, designating Slow Streets, and amending the bylaw to allow patios on the widened sidewalks or curbside spaces, would be done following consultation with communities. In this case, we needed to move quickly to respond to the pandemic and physical distancing public health guidelines. We used a try, learn and adjust approach. Along the way we worked with Business Improvement Associations, businesses outside of associations, nearby residents, special interest groups and the City's advisory committees to help us learn and adjust as we went.

Given the need for physical distancing, this also meant that our engagement options were limited. In mid-August, we opened a city-wide online survey to learn about people's experiences with the various mobility and public life initiatives and supplemented this with focused surveys on specific initiatives like Pop-Up Plazas, Slow Streets, Temporary Patio Program, and Beach Avenue-Room to Move. You can learn more about each of these programs and the focused survey results by visiting their website (linked above).

Feedback from these surveys will inform improvements and longer-term re-purposing of road space. An overview of the mobility and public life initiatives and survey results were presented to council on October 6.

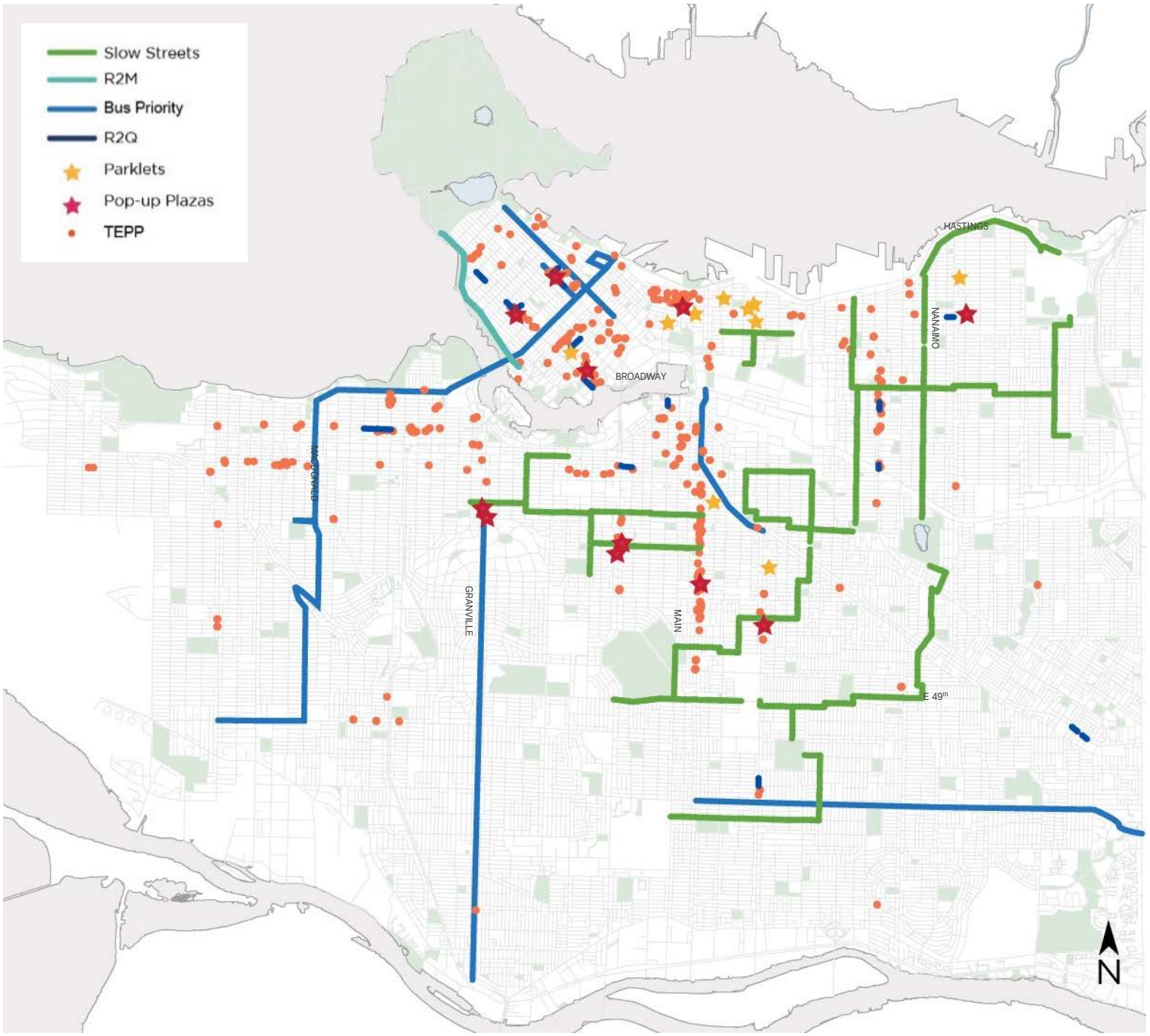
The mobility and public life initiatives captured in this survey included:

- **Pop-up Plazas** – creating pop-up plazas so people can meet outside
- **Temporary Patios** – approving temporary patios so people can dine outside and businesses can serve more customers outdoors
- **Sidewalk Widening** – making more room for walking and queuing along busy streets
- **Room to Queue** – making more room to line up and board buses at some key bus stops
- **Slow Streets** – calming traffic to make 'slow streets' more comfortable for people walking, rolling and cycling
- **Room to Move** – repurposing streets space for more walking, rolling, and cycling along Beach Avenue

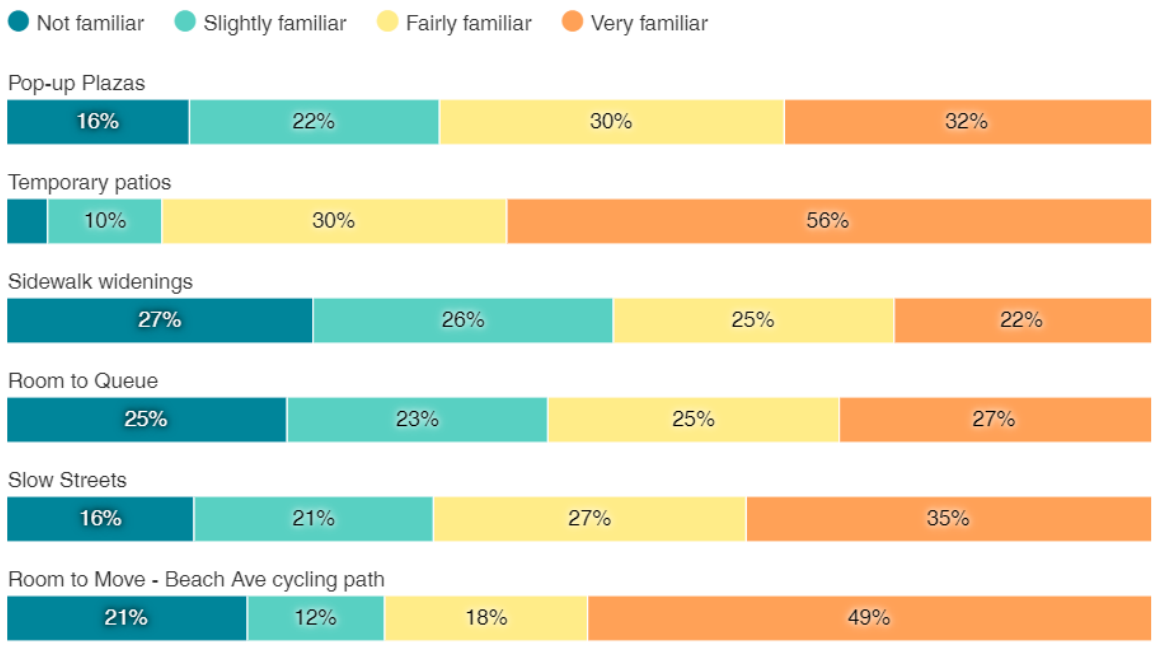
The survey was distributed through Talk Vancouver between August 19 and September 6, with a news release on August 19. The survey was also distributed to all City advisory committees, and through social media via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with an average of 2 posts per week on these platforms. We had 3,322 survey participants. The demographic information of survey participants is at the end the end of this summary.

What follows are the survey questions and a summary of the responses.

Map of Mobility and Public Life Initiatives



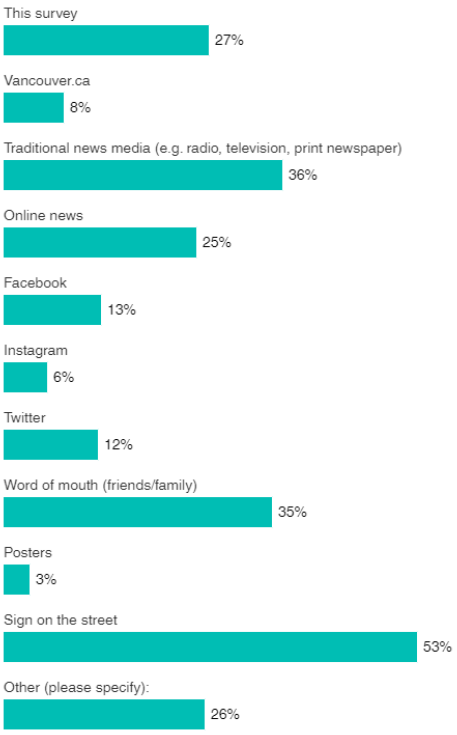
Before this survey, how familiar were you with these road space reallocation measures in response to COVID-19?



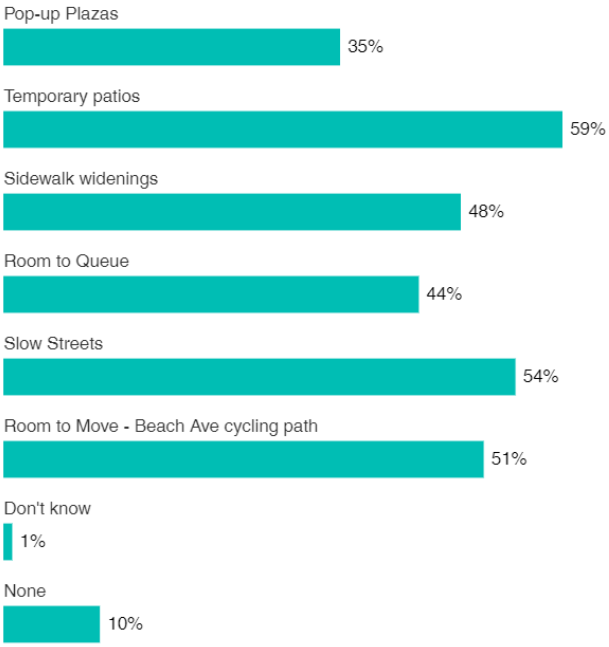
How did you learn about these programs?

Most people learned about the programs from signs on the street, followed by word of mouth, traditional news media and the survey itself. Social media such as Facebook and Instagram, was less effective in promoting the programs.





Which of these initiatives and spaces have you used?



For those initiatives that you haven't used, why haven't you used them?

Most people who had not used these spaces had not because they were staying home, avoiding crowds and worried about transmission in large groups.

A smaller amount of people expressed not needing to, some saying that they had backyards where they could physically distance, or weren't dining out.

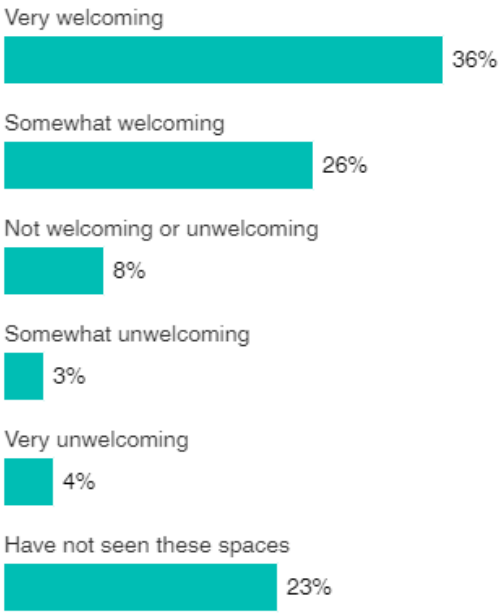
Other reasons for not using the spaces included: not being aware of them, and not living or recreating close to any of the programs or spaces.

A few people had limited mobility and found that the initiatives made moving around more difficult.

Some people expressed not liking the initiatives and felt they had a negative impact on the neighbourhood, often because of traffic congestion and removal of parking.



Did you find Pop up Plazas welcoming or unwelcoming?



For Pop up Plazas we asked respondents if these spaces felt welcoming or unwelcoming in addition to asking about their experience. Most respondents felt that Pop up Plazas were either very welcoming or somewhat welcoming (62%), with a handful of people feeling the spaces were not welcoming.

Most people had positive experiences in Pop up Plazas, helping them move around safely, connect socially, feeling that they:

- Provide outdoor seating and gathering spaces that reduce social isolation and improve mental health
- Strengthen and enliven the community, giving people a chance to connect with neighbours
- Support local businesses
- Provide more space for safe social distancing and for people to move around
- Provide traffic calming and are pedestrian friendly
- Created a safe, welcoming, clean environment

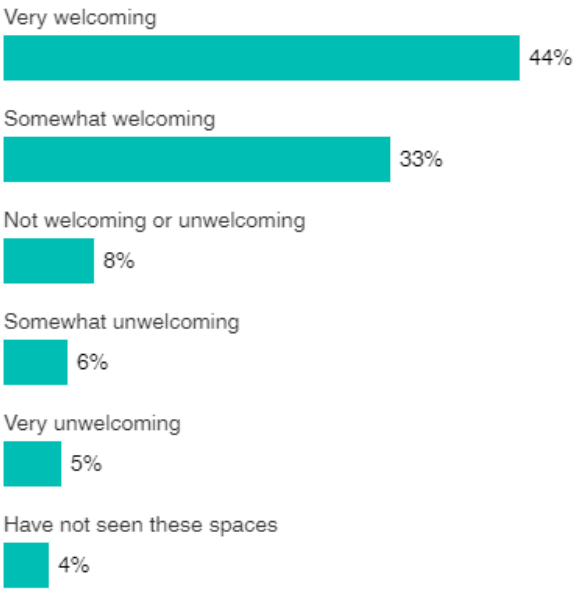
Some people felt their experiences could have been more enjoyable if the spaces:

- Were more inviting or welcoming with improvements to physical design and making it clear who the spaces are for
- Were more accessible for people with mobility issues
- If they were more comfortable, ensuring appropriate physical distancing, quieter, more removed from traffic, cleaner, with shade
- Some people felt unsafe in the spaces
- Others did not want the spaces to create traffic congestion

Some people feel Pop up Plazas have a negative impact on how they move around and socially connect with friends and family because they created traffic congestion, limit parking availability or limit access to services. There were also concerns about the amount of people, lack of physical distancing, closeness to traffic and uncleanliness.

Did you find Temporary Patios welcoming or unwelcoming?

For Temporary Patios we also asked respondents if these spaces felt welcoming or unwelcoming in addition to asking about their experience. Most respondents felt that Temporary Patios were welcoming (77%), with some people feeling that the spaces were unwelcoming.



The main reason people either had a positive or negative experience with the Temporary Patios was how exposed (or sheltered) they felt from moving cars. People shared more positive experiences if the patios were off of main streets, whereas patios located on main streets with lots of traffic created less positive experiences.

Elements that made patios more comfortable were:

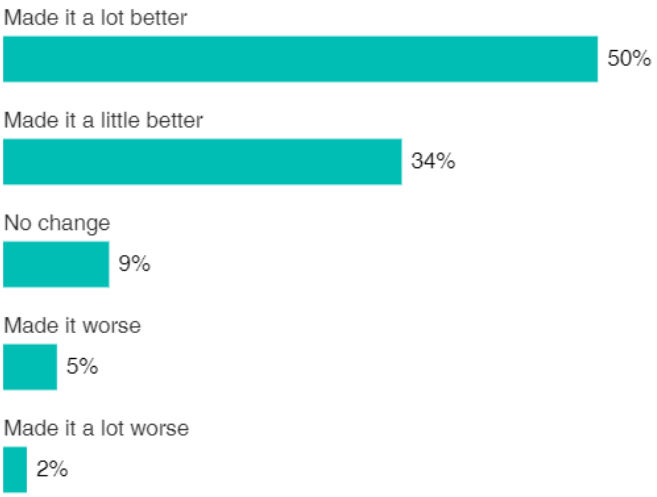
- Physical separation or distance from moving cars
- The community atmosphere
- Furnishings (plants, umbrellas, seating, decorations)

Elements that detracted from a patio's comfort included:

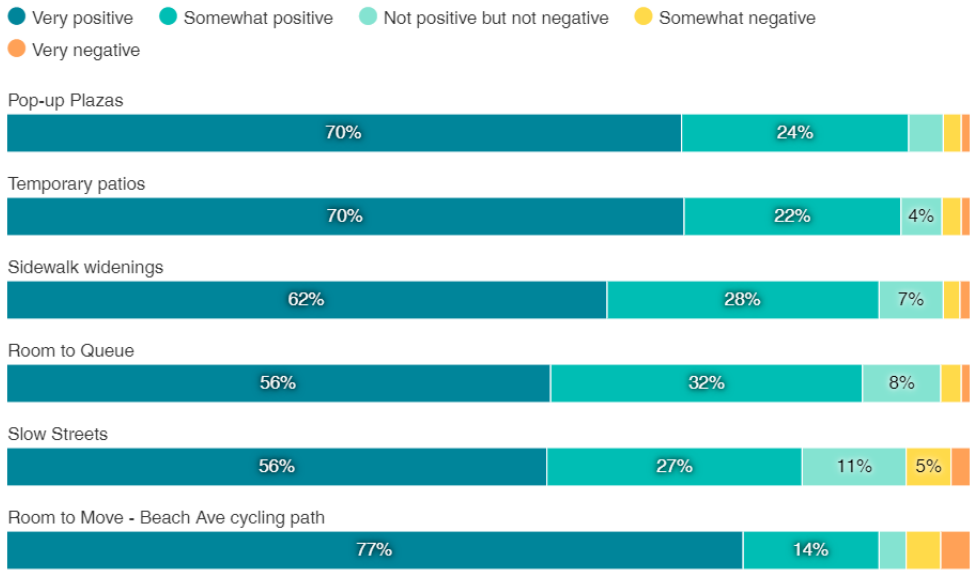
- Being close to cars with little to no physical separation.
- Crowds on patios, or passersby on a sidewalk closer than 2 meters away
- Requirement of being a customer to enjoy patio
- Lack of furnishings (plants, umbrellas, seating, decorations, etc.)
- Feeling in the way of sidewalk movement
- Poor microclimate (sun, shade, wind, etc.)
- Witnessing drug use

Other people shared negative experiences being concerned with street disruption such as loss of parking and traffic congestion.

How did these programs impact your ability to move around and be outside?



How was your experience using these programs and spaces?



Overall, people had positive experiences with the programs and spaces. Approximately 90% of respondents felt their experience using these programs or spaces was “positive” or “very positive.” What follows is a summary of people’s experience with each of the programs.

Sidewalk Widening

In the survey, sidewalk widening was intended to refer to Robson Street only. However, based on qualitative responses it became clear that many people equated sidewalk widening with Room to Queue, Temporary Patios, and Pop up Plazas, which is understandable as they all increased the amount of sidewalk space. This is how the results should be interpreted, broadly referring to all initiatives that widened sidewalks.

Most people had positive experiences with sidewalk widening or other initiatives, such as Room to Queue or Temporary Patios that resulted in more space to walk. Widened sidewalks gave people more space to move around outside, while maintaining physical distance from others. For many it made it easier to line up in front of stores and do shopping trips or go for walks with friends at a distance. Many people specifically mentioned that the widened sidewalks improved their physical and mental health with the ability to get outside, walk and spend time outdoors.

A number of people mentioned how it has improved mobility for people using canes, wheelchairs and strollers. Others were supportive but felt they could be improved. The main suggestions for improvements were:

- Separate the sidewalk and road to make walking safer from people cycling and cars
- Remove sandwich boards
- Create better signage showing people where to walk
- Use better materials
- Protect street trees

Although many people felt that the widened sidewalks helped to create physical distancing, some were concerned that people are not distancing enough and that the city should provide signage to encourage this more.

Others felt that the wider sidewalks made moving around more difficult by creating traffic congestion and removing parking spots.

Many people feel that sidewalk widening is generally needed across the city, beyond the pandemic. Some had suggestions for specific locations:

Grandview Woodlands
- Commercial Drive

West End
- Denman
- Davie

Kensignton-Cedar Cottage
- Fraser between 29th and King Edward

Strathcona
- Downtown East Side
- Chinatown

Downtown
- Mainland in Yaletown
- Powell
- Abbott & Carrall

Renfrew/Collingwood

Sunset
- South Main

Fairview
- South Granville

Kitsilano
- 4th Avenue

Hastings-Sunrise
- Lakewood/Semlin to McLean

Room-to-Queue

People are overwhelmingly supportive of the Room-to-Queue initiative. Many people note that it creates more space for people waiting in line, and for passing on the sidewalks. Many note that it feels safer to line up for essential businesses and the bus.

Many people noted that Room-to-Queue made them feel more comfortable and able to support their local businesses. This encouraged those people to visit essential businesses in person, likely freeing up delivery services for those most at risk and those isolating.

Some people felt that these spaces were not always accessible for people with disabilities or seniors with mobility issues and they needed weather protection. Others were concerned about being so close to moving cars.

Many people think that Room-to-Queue is necessary for the pandemic, but probably not needed once physical distancing is no longer needed.

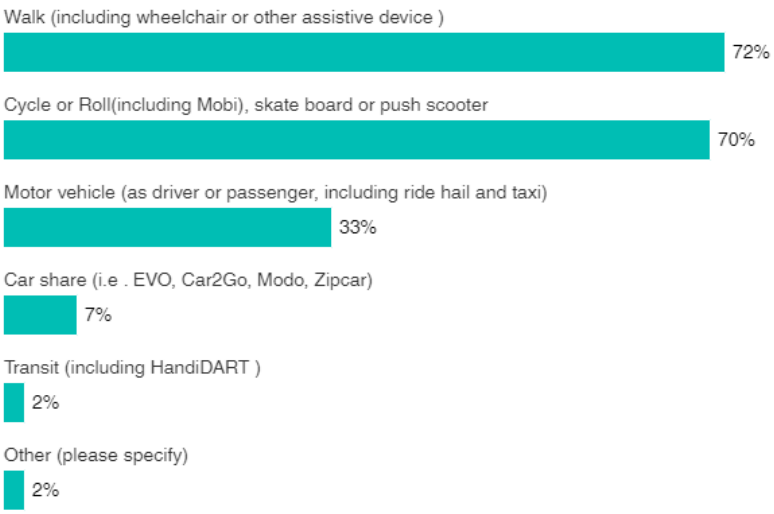
Slow Streets

Most people had good experiences with Slow Streets and reported walking and cycling more because of them. Others reported seeing other people cycling and walking more on Slow Streets.

Some people who supported the program felt that it did not go far enough and that the signage and movable barriers were not enough to slow cars. Some felt this created a dangerous situation where people may have a false sense of security.

A number of people reported that Slow Streets made driving more difficult and that the roads are busier with traffic congestion.

How did you travel on Slow Streets?



Room to Move- Beach Avenue Temporary Path

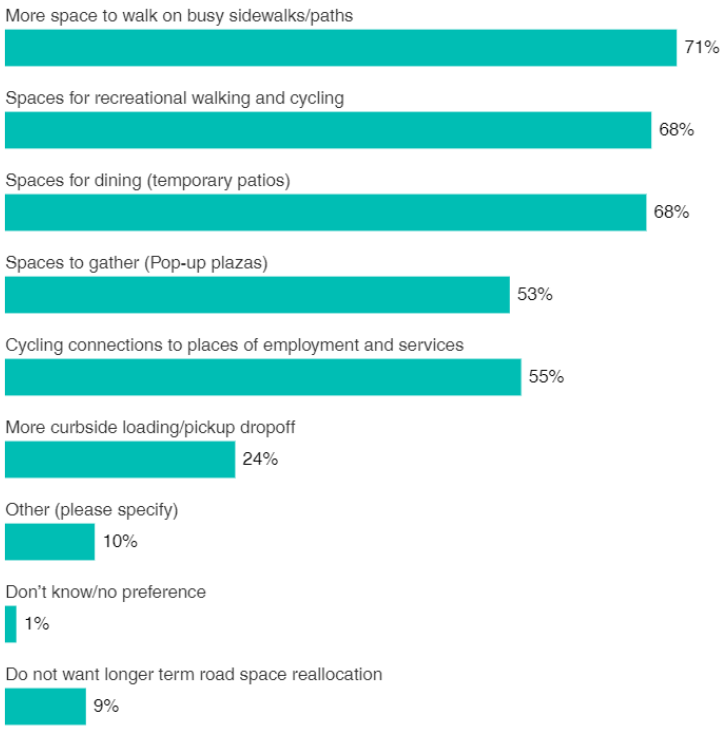
Many people felt the Beach Avenue temporary path made cycling and walking safer. Many people reported wanting this to be made permanent, some people liked the idea of it being permanent in the spring and summer while a few people wanted it removed and restored to its original design.

Many people felt there should be stronger separation between cycling, walking and driving lanes.

Some felt the temporary path created more traffic congestion, made it difficult to drive and blocked access to the electric vehicle charging station near Sunset Beach. Some people rely on cars to move around for essential travel, specifically people with disabilities and some seniors, and felt that the temporary path made it harder to move around. Some people expressed concern for the impact on bus route #23.

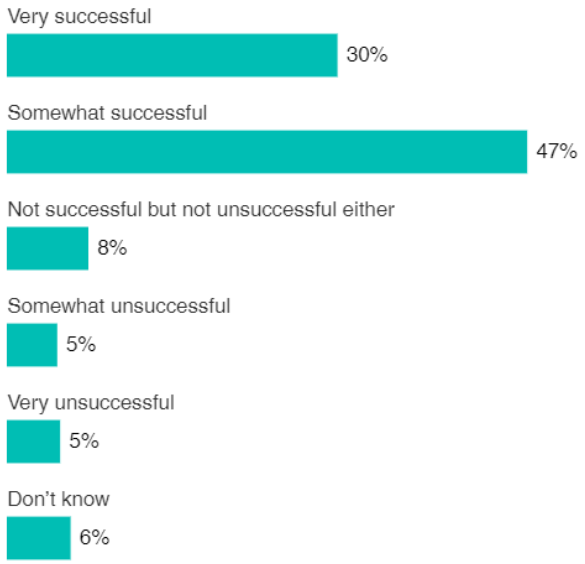
The survey focused on Beach Avenue, but many people provided comments on the seawall as well. While some people were pleased that the seawall was pedestrian-only, others asked that cycling be permitted on the seawall again. Some people commented that cycling on the seawall was easier for people than riding on Stanley Park Drive.

Over the long term, what would you like to see more of?

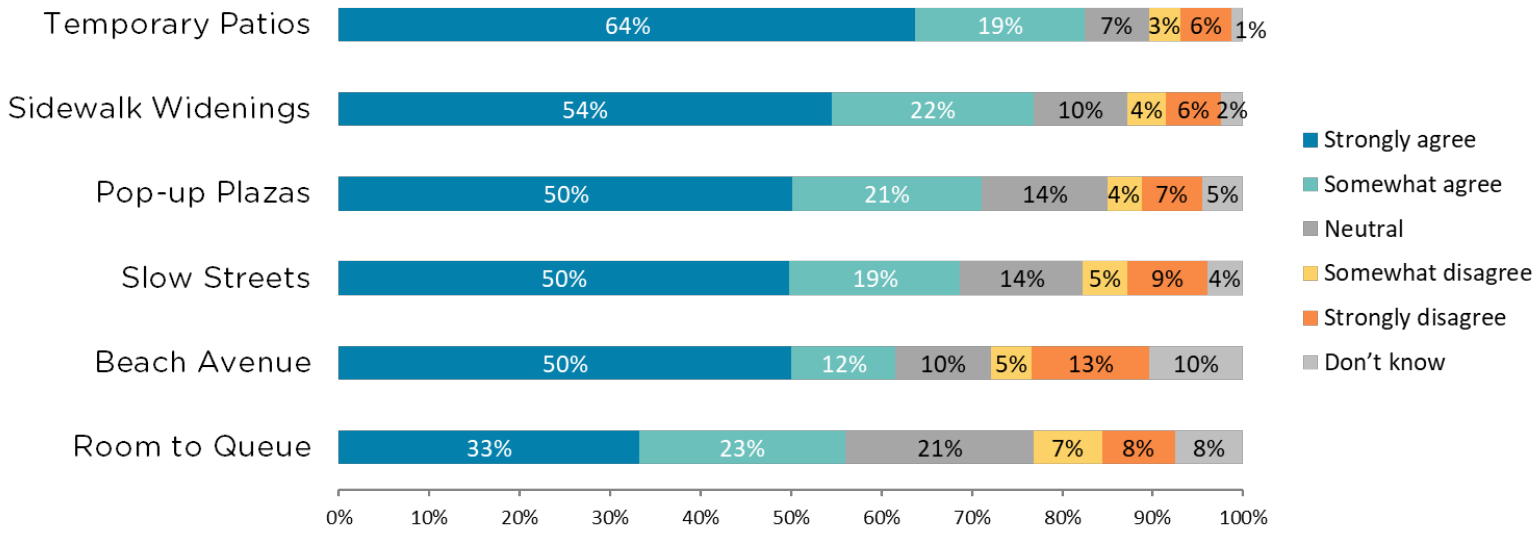


Was the program a success?

The goal of Making Streets for People is the mitigation of COVID-19 risks in our communities through physical distancing enabled by the reallocation of road space. Do you think the program has been successful or unsuccessful in meeting this goal?



Overall, do you agree or disagree with continuing these public life and mobility programs on a longer-term basis beyond the COVID-19 pandemic?



Summary of respondent comments on continuing the programs:

Pop-Up Plazas & Temporary Patios

People clustered their Pop-Up Plazas and Temporary Patios responses together, having similar comments for both of these programs. People supported continuing with these programs longer-term and suggested improvements such as creating shelter from weather, improving accessibility for those with mobility challenges, and ensuring traffic is not impeded on main thoroughfares.

Sidewalk Widening

Sidewalk widening is generally seen as a means to address queuing issues in busy areas. People felt that wider sidewalks will facilitate and complement initiatives such as Temporary Patios and Pop up Plazas. Common suggestion that sidewalks to be widened throughout the city.

Room-to-Queue

The Room-to-Queue initiative is viewed mainly as a COVID-19 response, and not needed once the pandemic is over. Some people note that Room-to-Queue would not be necessary if sidewalks were widened throughout the city.

Slow Streets

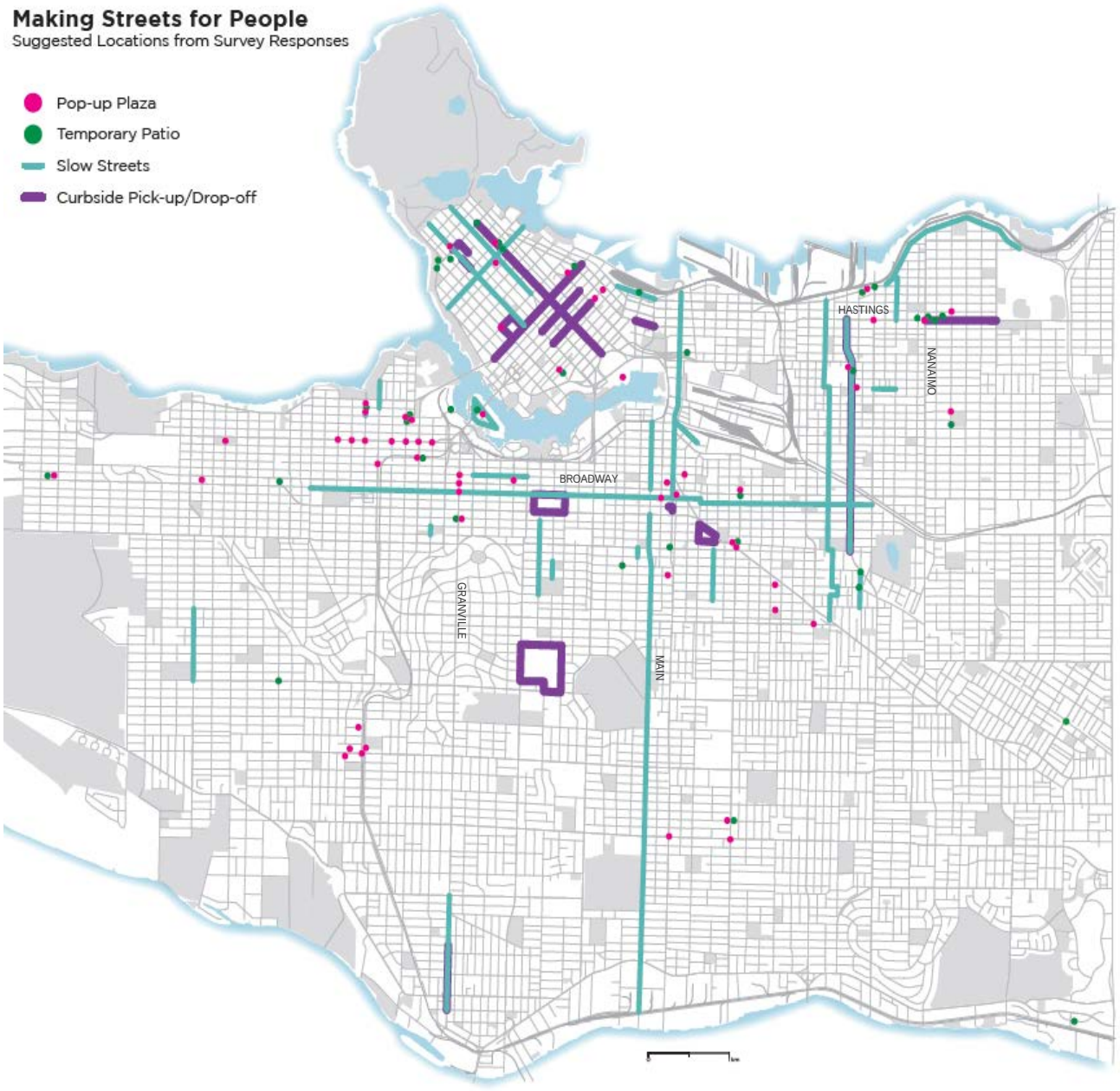
Some felt that if Slow Streets were to continue there should be clearer separation between cyclists, pedestrians and cars. Some felt that they serve to calm traffic in residential neighbourhoods so would be beneficial during and after the pandemic.

Room-to-Move Beach Avenue

Room-to-Move Beach Avenue seemed to have strong opinions with some wanting this to be a long term program and others wanting it removed. People who supported the initiative were very supportive, mainly appreciating the safe riding conditions and connection to Stanley Park. Those who did not want this long term were most concerned about the impact on bus routes, curbside delivery, reduction in parking and managing traffic congestion.

Where would you like to see more of these spaces?

We asked where people would like to see more of these spaces and programs and to be as specific as possible. We mapped the responses below.



Other ideas for Making Street for People

Parks, plazas & places to gather

- Allow alcohol in parks and beaches
- More parks and parklets
- Remove tents city from Strathcona Park to enable access to amenities in the park
- Community exercise programs in the park
- Close street ends to make mini parks
- Make Pop up Plazas adjacent to parks
- Close and designate some roads as "play" areas
- Use alleys for gathering and moving
- Encourage courtyards around buildings
- Outdoor spaces with heaters in the winter

Covered outdoor areas

- Create covered outdoor gyms
- Cover patios
- Pop up gazebos in the fall/winter – six at a time, like a pie, put along Greenways
- Cover areas in plazas and parks

Outdoor services

- Ensure access to public washrooms
- Allow other vendors on street like food carts and florists

Performance and exercise spaces

- Re-open community centres (and the washrooms)
- Have socially distanced concerts outside
- Car Free Sundays
- Small stages for performances in parks
- Pop up drive in theatres (Olympic Village, Macmillian Space Centre)
- Use city lots as temporary outdoor performance spaces

Guidance for distancing

- More signs, enforcement, notice to residents about initiatives and need for distancing
- Chalk out direction on sidewalks, making each side one-way
- Chalk circles in grassy parks
- Public service campaigns on the need to practice distance

Walking & cycling connections and improvements

- Install more benches
- Automate crosswalk buttons so you don't need to press the button to cross
- More connected, separated bike lanes
- Make pedestrian and bike only zones in the city
- Even out pavement and better lighting along sidewalks
- More and better bike parking, including bike parking at the beaches
- Keep Stanley Park Seawall for walkers and runners
- Create more walking trails in the city

Who we heard from

Almost all respondents lived in Vancouver (96%), just over half worked in Vancouver (55%) and 11% of respondents owned a business. Some went to school in Vancouver (5%) and a small portion (3%) visit Vancouver.

It is important to understand the demographics of who we were hearing from through the survey. We know that gender, ethnicity, age and income are all factors that can influence how people experience public space: how safe they feel, how welcome, and how comfortable. In this survey we asked demographic questions related to income, where people lived, ethnicity, gender identification, and age. We compared the demographic results with 2016 Census data to see where there was over or under-representation in survey participants,

We found that there was an over-representation of:

- People living downtown and in the north/west and north/east areas of the city
- People of European ethnicity (75% vs 48% in 2016 Census)
- People with higher incomes ($80 – 150K plus)
- 30 – 65 + years of age

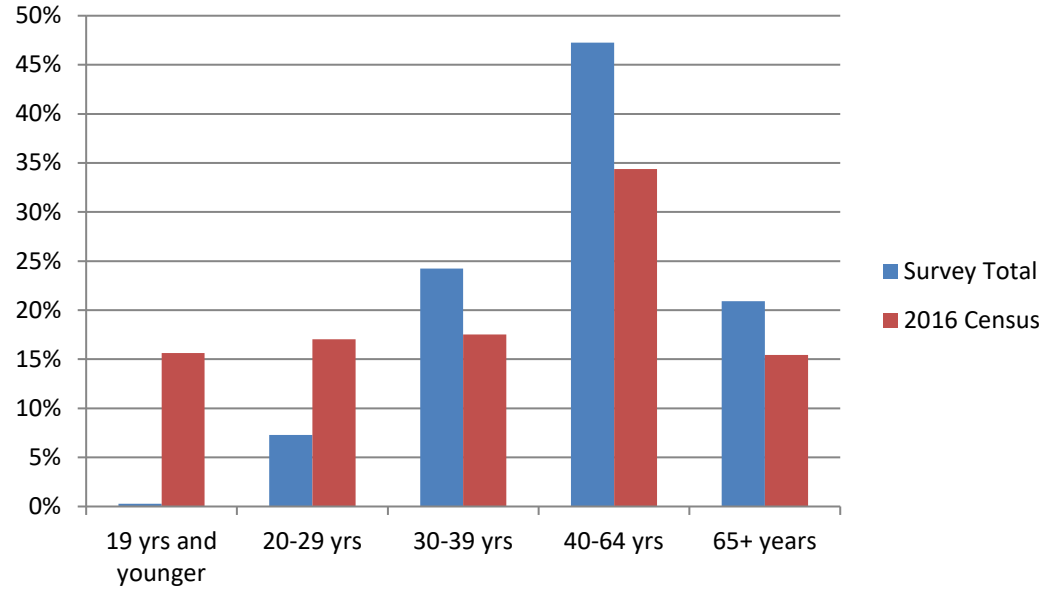
There was an under-representation of:

- South Vancouver residents
- People of Asian ethnicity
- Those with incomes under 60K, especially those with incomes under 40K
- People under the age of 29, especially those 19 and younger

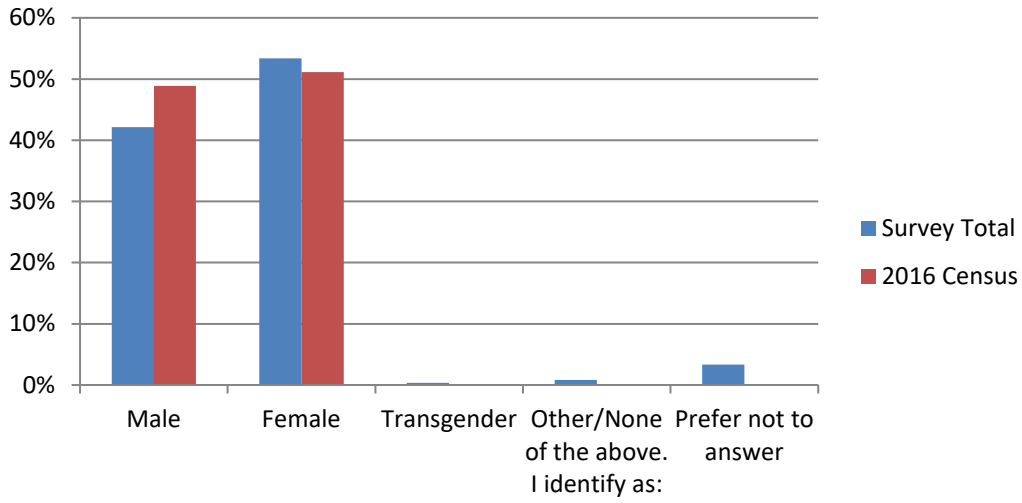
As we continue to refine these programs and assess potential long-term strategies for these spaces, including expanding programs in more locations, we will do targeted outreach to under-represented groups in this survey to benefit from their experiences and feedback on these programs.

Survey Demographics

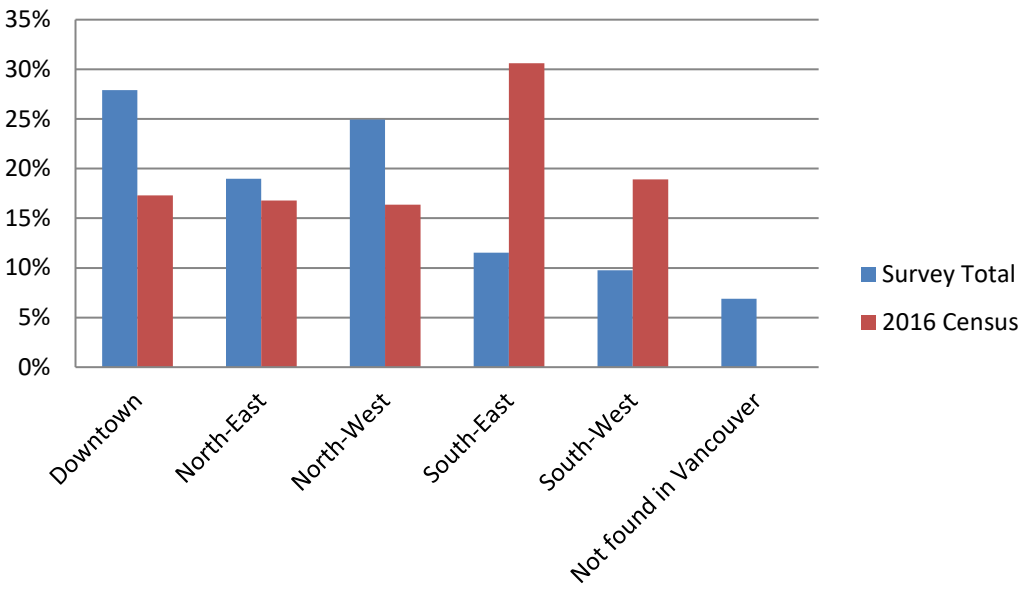
Age



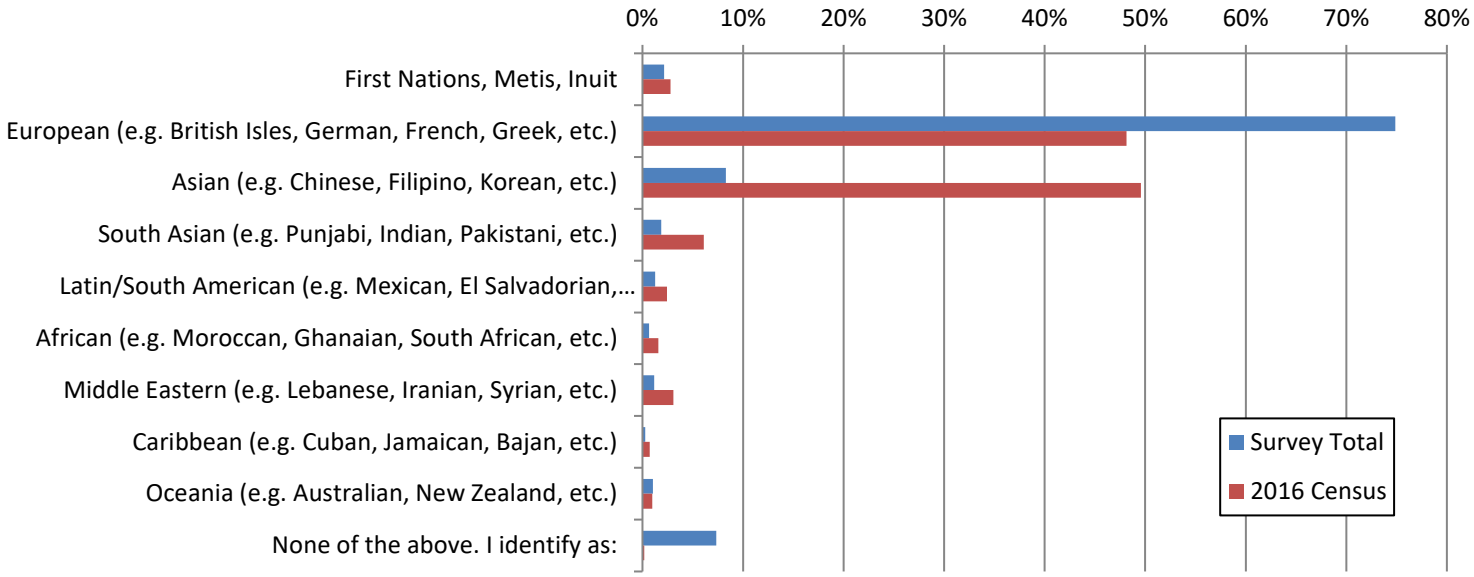
Gender Identification



Area of the City



Ethnicity



Household Income

