

Attachment "B"

What We Heard: Alcohol in Parks Pilot –
Community Engagement (November 2021)



NEW WESTMINSTER

What We Heard: Alcohol in Parks Pilot – Community Engagement

November 2021



Alcohol Allowed Zones



NEW WESTMINSTER

We recognize and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.



Alcohol in Parks Pilot Engagement Summary Report

November 13, 2021

Introduction

In May 2021, the City of New Westminster launched a pilot program enabling adults to drink responsibly within designated areas in seven New Westminster parks.

Alcohol consumption is permitted in Grimston Park, Hume Park, Moody Park, Port Royal Park, Queen's Park, Sapperton Park and Westminster Pier Park. Consumption is permitted between 11:00 am until dusk, seven days a week, for those 19+.

As the summer season came to a close, the City was interested in finding out from the community if they took advantage of the new program and how they feel the experience has been.

The purpose of this summary report is to share with City Council, engagement participants, and the New Westminster community:

1. [What engagement activities were completed](#)
2. [A summary of what we heard](#)
3. [Demographic information about participants & representation analysis](#)
4. [Next steps](#)

Engagement Process

The primary purpose of the engagement was to seek feedback from both community members and City staff about how the new Alcohol in Parks program went over the summer, and what people experienced. Engagement activities included an inter-departmental City staff workshop, a community survey and other feedback tools on [Be Heard New West](#).

Engagement Activities

- **Be Heard New West Project Webpage**
 - Launched September 29, 2021
 - 308 unique visitors as of November 13, 2021
- **Online Survey**
 - September 29 – October 27
 - 186 responses
- **Online Poll**
 - September 29 – October 27
 - 14 responses
- **Online Mapping Tool**
 - September 29 – October 27
 - 4 responses

- **Inter-Departmental Workshop with City Staff**
 - September 17 workshop
 - Facilitated by Manager of Public Engagement with participants from Engineering Operations, Parks & Recreation, Communications, Integrated Services (Bylaw), Building Services (Engineering).

The “Ask a Question” tool was also available on the Be Heard New West project page, but no questions have been submitted.

The opportunities to engage were communicated through the following methods:

- Email notification to various City email databases:
 - Be Heard New West subscribers
 - Parks & Recreation newsletter subscribers
 - CityPage online newsletter subscribers
- Social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- Notices in CityPage in the Record newspaper

Important Note: this summary of engagement input does not reflect a representative sample of the New Westminster community. The input captured here reflects the views of those who self-selected to participate, and may not be representative of the views of other community members and stakeholders. Please see section three – About Participants, starting on Page 22 – for some demographic information and representation analysis.

What We Heard

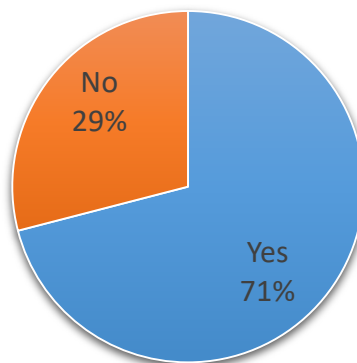
Online Survey

The online survey was open on Be Heard New West from September 29 through October 27 and received 186 responses. Below is a summary of the results.

Question 1: Did you take advantage of the Alcohol in Parks Program (i.e. have you consumed alcohol in one of the designated park areas since May 18, 2021)?

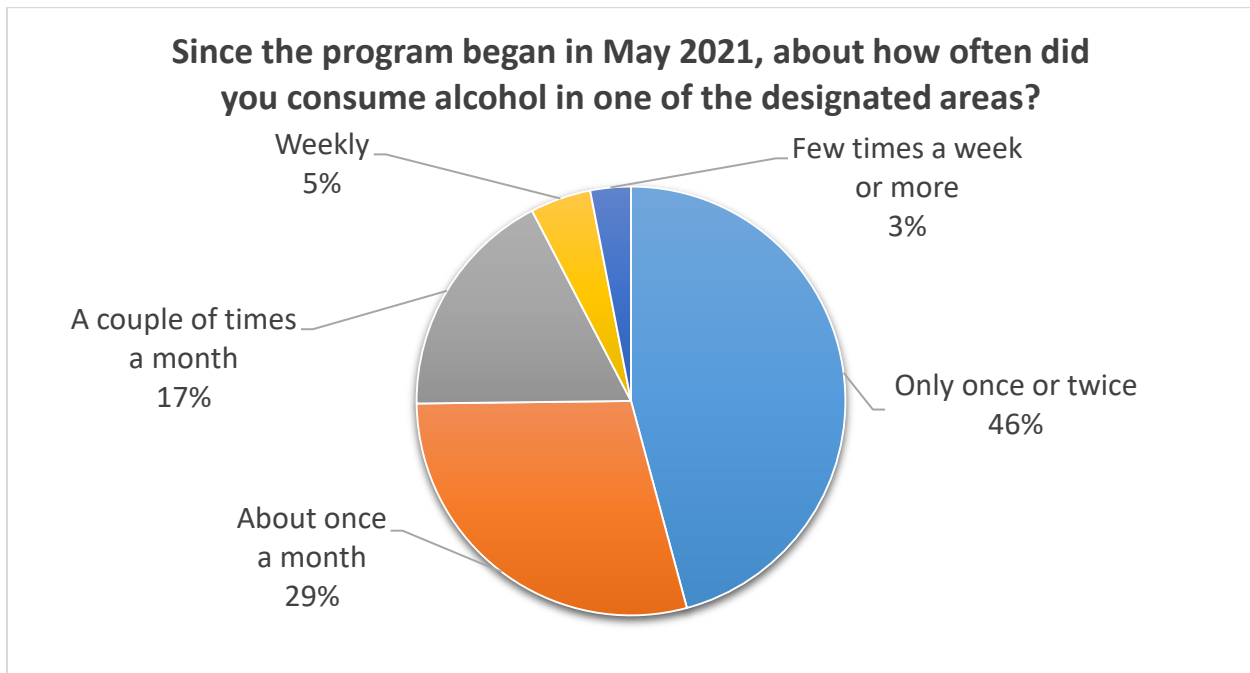
Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 186		
Yes	71%	132
No	29%	54

Did you take advantage of the Alcohol in Parks Program (i.e. have you consumed alcohol in one of the designated park areas since May 18, 2021)?



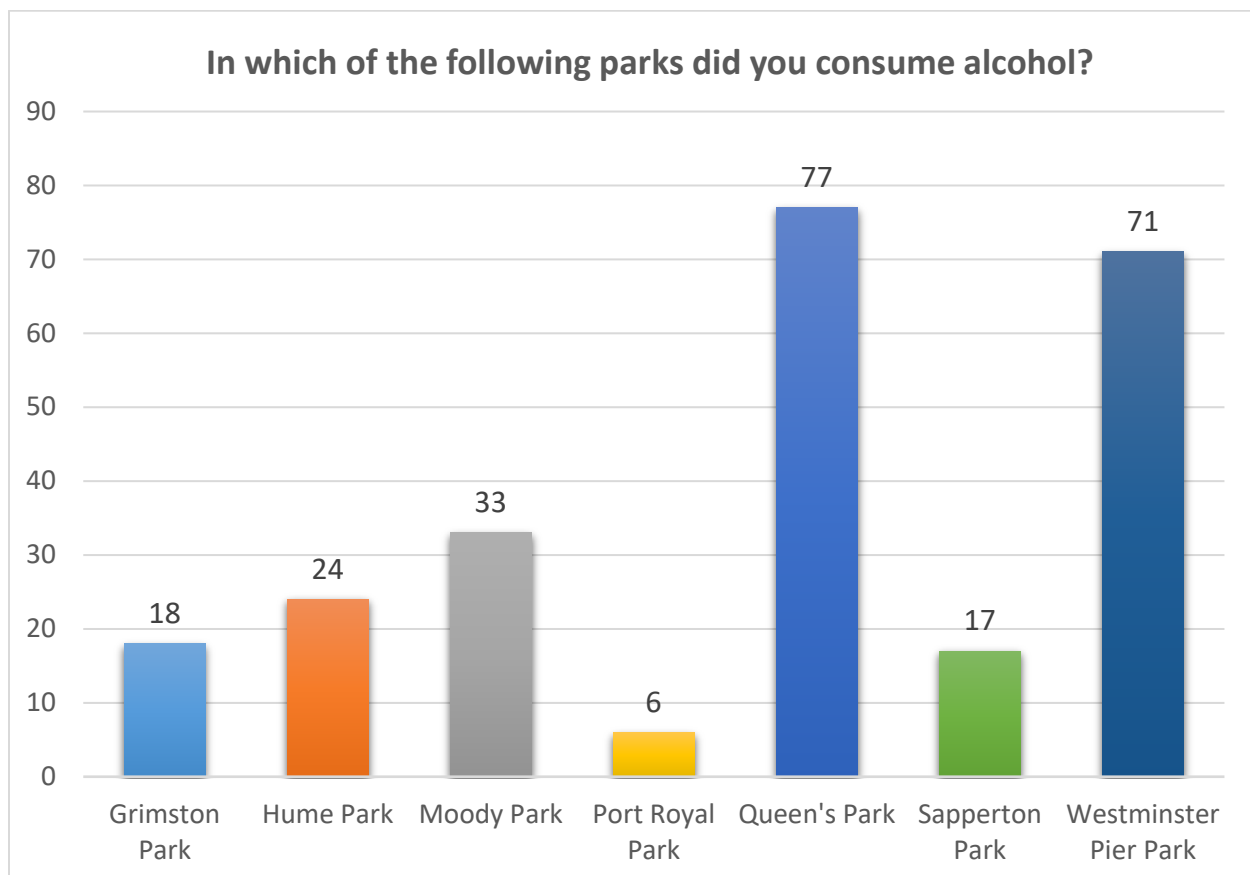
Question 2: Since the program began in May 2021, about how often did you consume alcohol in one of the designated areas?

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 131		
Only once or twice	46%	60
About once a month	29%	38
A couple of times a month	17%	23
Weekly	5%	6
Few times a week or more	3%	4



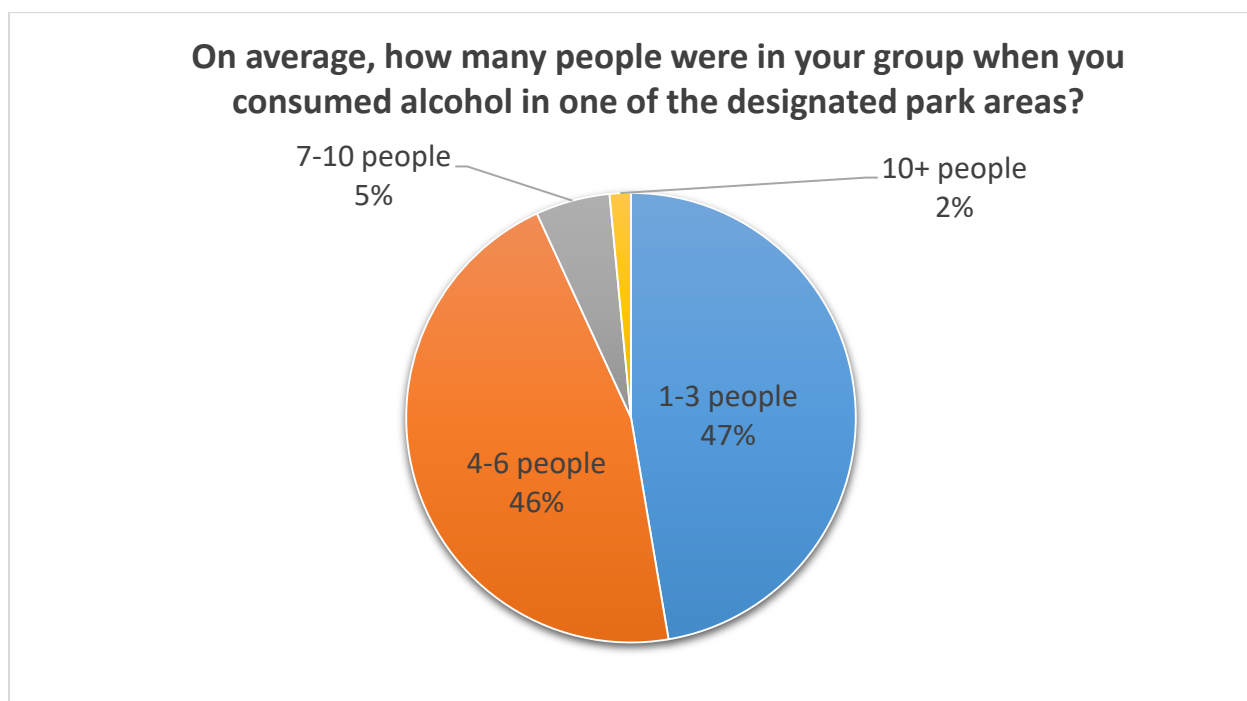
Question 3: In which of the following parks did you consume alcohol? (please select all that apply).

Choice	Count
Total Responses: 246 (from 129 participants)	
Grimston Park	18
Hume Park	24
Moody Park	33
Port Royal Park	6
Queen's Park	77
Sapperton Park	17
Westminster Pier Park	71



Question 4: On average, how many people were in your group when you consumed alcohol in one of the designated park areas?

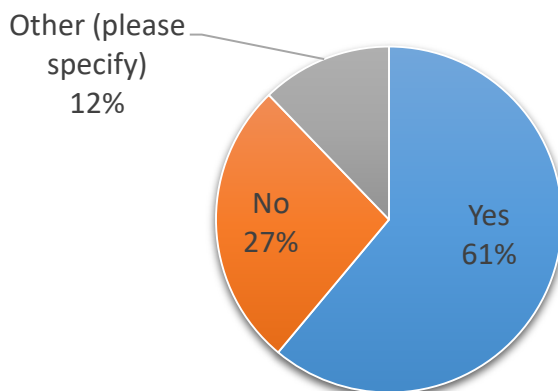
Fee Structure	Percentage	Count
Total responses: 131		
1-3 people	47%	62
4-6 people	46%	60
7-10 people	5%	7
10+ people	2%	2



Question 5: Was your decision to take part in the pilot influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic / public health orders? For example, choosing to socialize outdoors, limiting your indoor contacts, etc.

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 131		
Yes	61%	80
No	27%	35
Other (please specify)	12%	16

Was your decision to take part in the pilot influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic / public health orders? For example, choosing to socialize outdoors, limiting your indoor contacts, etc.



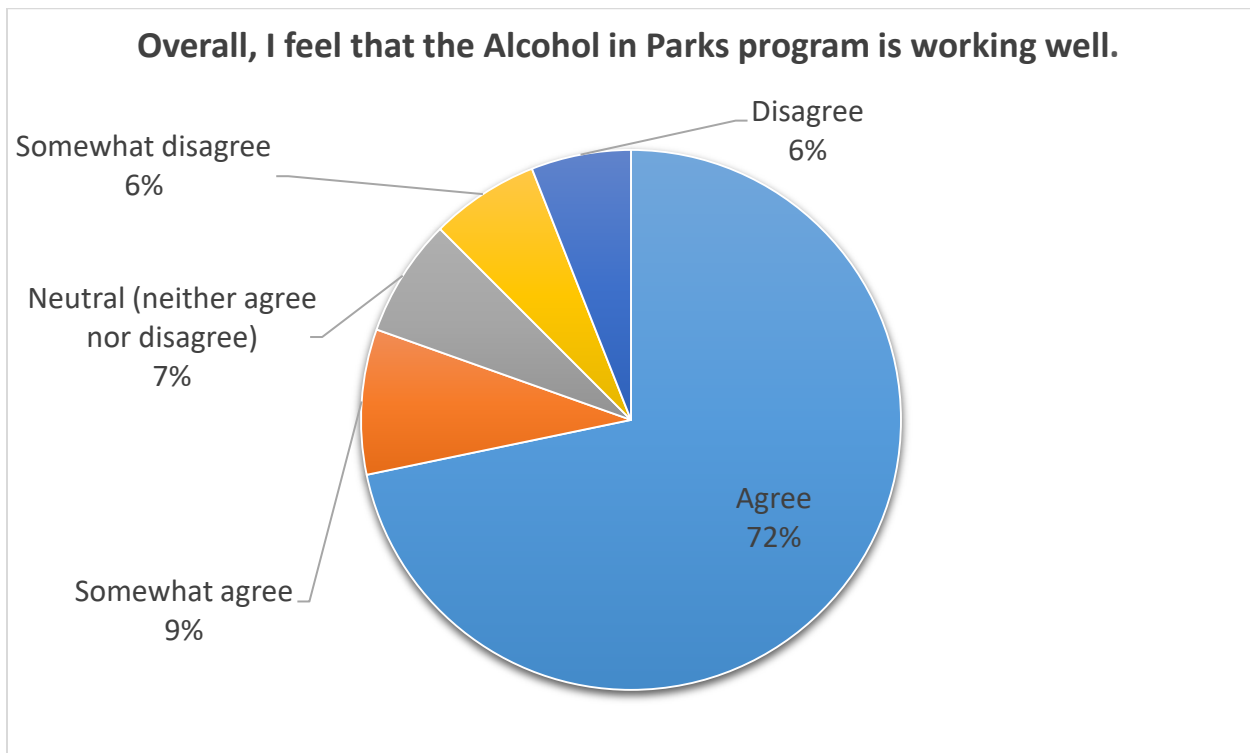
A total of 16 comments were provided by those who chose “other, please specify.” Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Yes and no	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Yes and no. Definitely limiting indoor gathering and picnics were a great alternative. But at the same time picnics and a drink are nice regardless.” - “yes to covid but also primarily on a nice day, why be inside? I thoroughly enjoyed the freedom. Thanks” - “Pandemic, but also it is nice to have a glass of rosé with your summer picnic, or in listening to music in the park.”
Enjoyment of the outdoors	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “It was both influenced by the pandemic but also just enjoying being outdoors in a park setting” - “Enjoy being outside in general.” - “I don’t have outdoor space (I live in an apartment)”

Enjoyment of the freedom to drink outdoors	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "It's just a good idea to drink outside like in Europe" - "Should have had this all along so I took advantage of it been legal now." - "While it was influenced by the pandemic to an extent, primarily I believe out door drinking laws are archaic when people who will drink irresponsibly outdoors will do so regardless."
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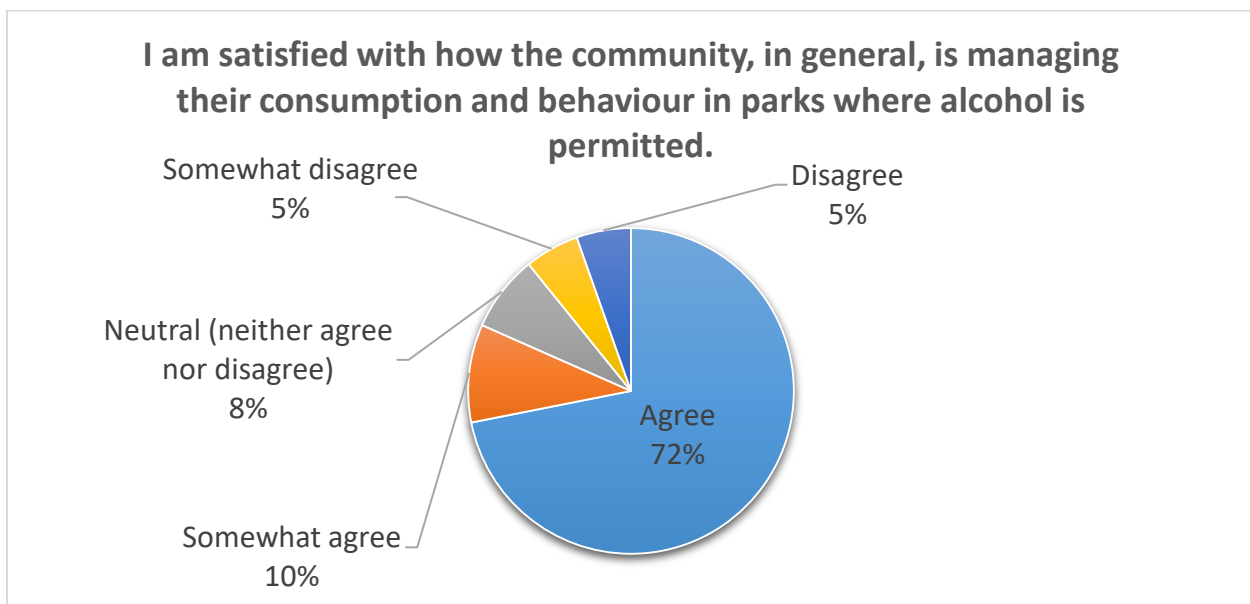
Question 6: Overall, I feel that the Alcohol in Parks program is working well.

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 184		
Agree	72%	132
Somewhat agree	9%	16
Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)	7%	13
Somewhat disagree	6%	12
Disagree	6%	11



Question 7: I am satisfied with how the community, in general, is managing their consumption and behaviour in parks where alcohol is permitted.

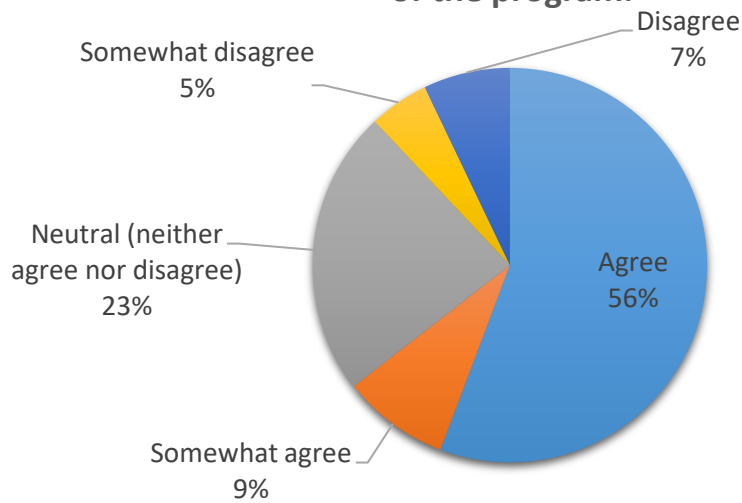
Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 185		
Agree	72%	133
Somewhat agree	10%	18
Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)	8%	14
Somewhat disagree	5%	10
Disagree	5%	10



Question 8: I am satisfied with the level of City enforcement and oversight of the program.

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 183		
Agree	56%	102
Somewhat agree	9%	16
Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)	23%	43
Somewhat disagree	5%	9
Disagree	7%	13

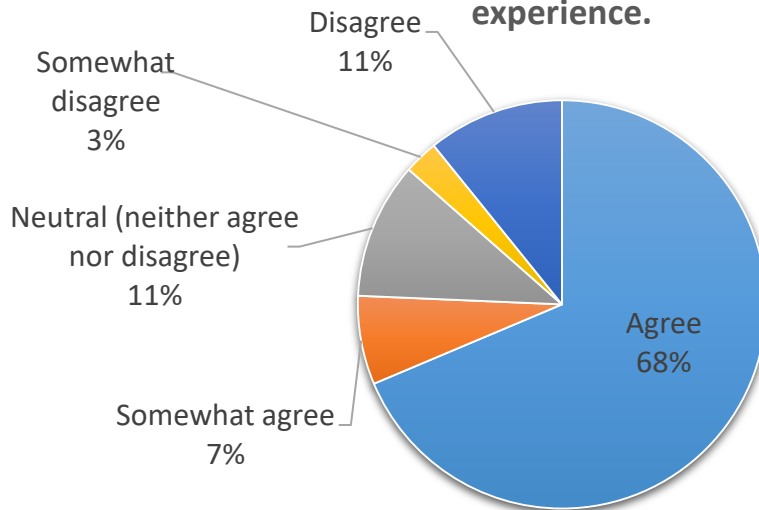
I am satisfied with the level of City enforcement and oversight of the program.



Question 9: This pilot program has had a positive impact on my park experience.

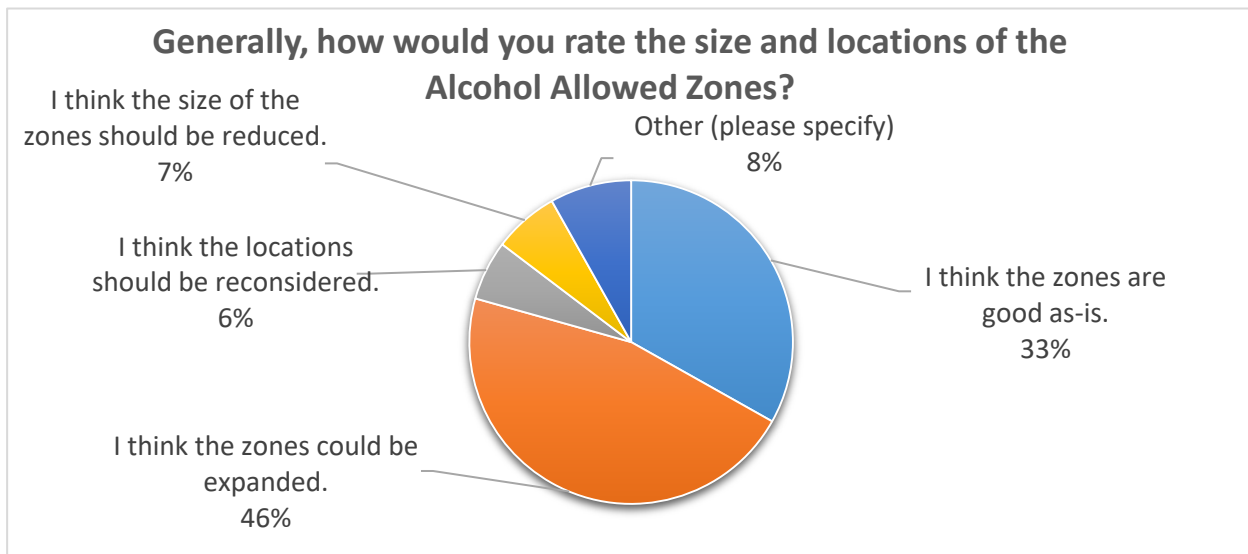
Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 185		
Agree	69%	127
Somewhat agree	7%	13
Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)	11%	20
Somewhat disagree	3%	5
Disagree	11%	20

This pilot program has had a positive impact on my park experience.



Question 10: Generally, how would you rate the size and locations of the Alcohol Allowed Zones? (Note: for comments specific to one park or zone, please share your feedback using the mapping tool.)

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 184		
I think the zones are good as-is.	33%	61
I think the zones could be expanded.	46%	85
I think the locations should be reconsidered.	6%	11
I think the size of the zones should be reduced.	7%	12
Other (please specify)	8%	15



A total of 15 comments were provided by those who chose “other, please specify.” Below is a summary of the key themes across the comments. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times. Note that sample comments are not edited for spelling and grammar – they are reported exactly as entered by participants.

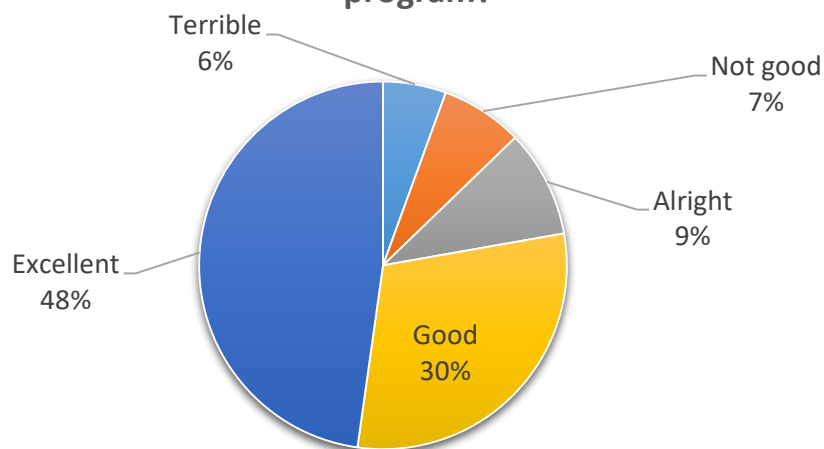
Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Not sure / don't know where the Zones are	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Not sure where the zones were.” - “Not sure, I imagine it remains to be seen? People/communities kinda organically interact with these things and redefine them in unexpected ways.” - “I have no idea what size the zones are. Was looking for another neutral option.”

Disagree with alcohol consumption in park	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I disagree with alcohol in parks" - "I don't think alcohol is needed in parks. If there is a party, rent a space and get a license" - "I don't think parks is appropriate location for alcohol consumption."
Remove the Zones	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I'm unsure why we need zones." - "Repeal zones and allow alcohol throughout City parks."
Other	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I do not believe this experiment has accomplished much of anything" - "I don't believe alcohol should be allowed by playgrounds" - "I think the Moody Park area should be expanded to include the area between the Pool and Century House." - "Queens Park have washrooms, which is great. I work next to Sapperton Park, and there are lots of consumption of Alcohol during the day/evening I am not sure if the washrooms closed at a certain time but I had to deal with feces and urine around the building which is next to the park. More washrooms/water fountain needed moving forward."

Question 11: Based on what you have seen and experienced in the parks and zones where alcohol is permitted, how would you rate this program?

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 180		
Terrible	6%	10
Not good	7%	13
Alright	9%	17
Good	30%	54
Excellent	48%	86

Based on what you have seen and experienced in the parks and zones where alcohol is permitted, how would you rate this program?



Question 12: Do you have any suggestions on how the Alcohol in Parks Program could be improved?

This was an optional open-response question and a total of 102 responses were received. Below is a summary of the key themes across the responses. In some cases, several themes have been applied to one individual response, based on the content; this means that a single response can be counted multiple times. Note that sample comments are not edited for spelling and grammar – they are reported exactly as entered by participants.

Theme	# of Mentions	Sample Comments
Expand the program to other parks / areas of the city (Note: this theme includes requests from five participants specifically to add Tipperary Park to the program.)	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Expand it to some other parks and plazas" - "Open it up to all parks and don't worry about zones" - "Expand consumption to the boardwalk area along the fraser river" - "Just allow it in all parks." - "Make it City wide!" - "yeah. make it legal everywhere in public. why restrict it to parks?" - "Tipperary Park needs to be included... but we need to get washrooms in there first I presume. Washrooms in Tipperary are sorely needed, outside of this program anyway."

Offer recycling bins	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "recycling bins in the parks where people can drink" - "We need to manage garbage/recycling facilities better. In many of these parks, I've seen beer cans or bottles sitting around in the morning. We need increased bins to ensure there is a place to put garbage, and increased city workers to pick it up." - "We need recycling bins so people can properly dispose bottles/ cans instead of throwing them in the garbage." - "more recycling totes and signage encouraging patrons to pick up litter"
General support for the program	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Great job" - "I feel as though we're finally becoming a civilized place, where adults can be trusted to have a beer or two. Awesome work on the program!" - "I haven't seen any issues - lets roll this out further." - "I think it's a great initiative. I didn't take advantage of it last summer but it would be a lovely thing to do to have a picnic and some wine."
Concerns about litter / garbage associated with the program	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Manage the garbage generated by those who won't carry out their empties and waste." - "Responsible adults have been drinking and parks for years unnoticed. What I'm seeing now are irresponsible Drinkers leaving their garbage everywhere and slowly pushing families out of the area. Pier Park in particular" - "The amount of bottles left or shattered near parks where kids play is ridiculous and there needs to be improvements in how parks will stay clean" - "I'm not impressed with the amount of empty bottles and cans left around at night time. I'm not sure if we need more recycling bins, or signage to encourage cleaning up after drinking."
Expand the existing zones	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Hume Park zone should include the picnic area in Lower Hume Park" - "I think it should be permitted in the entire park. For instance, the picnic shelter or even near the playground. I think the majority of people manage themselves. I am very used to a European type approach." - "As a parent, I am more likely to be doing a picnic dinner with the kids, which means we would want to be near the playground and in parks with playgrounds. I'd like to see the

		drinking zones expanded to better allow for families with young children.”
End the program / general opposition	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Don't agree with the program at all” - “Yes, by ending this program! I have seen many people abusing this program in those areas, increasing the noise and even safety of those around. The police has better things to do than babysitting people who gets drunk in these parks.” - “Eliminate it. Adding alcohol to a park experience is not a positive thing. It is an addictive substance that causes and negatively affects families and society. If you want or need to drink in a park, rent a space and pay for a liquor license.”
Increase enforcement / monitoring	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “If you are going to have this continue you need much MORE police presence.” - “There are some groups at some parks (specifically Westminster Pier Park) that make the park feel unsafe. These are folks that I think consume alcohol there regardless of the alcohol consumption rules. Would like to see more security presence to feel safer” - “There should be monitoring or action on reports of abuse that triggers police monitoring to deter further abuse. There is a lot of teen/20's drinking that brings drunken behavior, litter, ruining the program for responsible adults (and families)”
Improve signage / add signage about not leaving litter	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Signage may be of assistance to ensure approved areas are clear for all park users.” - “Signage in the parks was ok but a pic of area better.” - “I'm not impressed with the amount of empty bottles and cans left around at night time. I'm not sure if we need more recycling bins, or signage to encourage cleaning up after drinking.”

Additional themes with six mentions each included adding more public washrooms in parks (again with several participants specifically naming Tipperary Park), and making the program permanent. Themes with five mentions each included comments that the zones are confusing/unclear, and that alcohol sales should be offered in the alcohol-allowed parks. A theme with four mentions was to add more tables and/or seating.

Online Mapping Tool

The interactive mapping tool was launched on the Be Heard New West project page as an opportunity for community members to provide feedback specific to the “Alcohol Allowed Zones” established for the parks included in the program. Participants were invited to place a pin on the map to share their feedback on the specific areas – blue pins were for general feedback (“comments”) and pink pins were for suggested changes (“concerns”).

The mapping tool was open on Be Heard from September 29 through October 27 and received four submissions. Given the small number of contributions, the verbatim comments and concerns are provided below. Submissions are provided exactly as entered by participants and have not been edited for spelling and grammar.

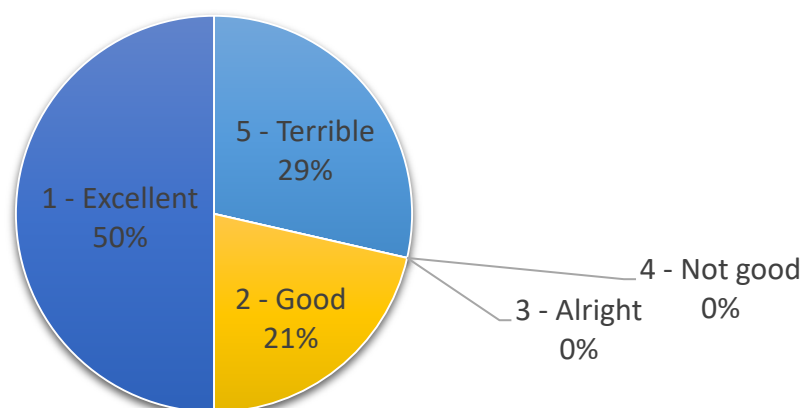
Pin Type	Pin Location	Comment
Comment	Westminster Pier Park Alcohol Allowed Zone	“I would support expanding the permitted alcohol area of the park to include all of the park except for the children's area.”
Concern	Westminster Pier Park Alcohol Allowed Zone	“In the summer I saw many people drinking responsibility while enjoying the park (the picnic tables have been a great addition). Since the weather has changed however, the only people drinking are hard core alcoholics who just sit and get wasted. I have seen more than one person passed out here since the alcohol in parks program began. I have also seen a very definite deterioration of conditions in the park. Used condoms and discarded clothing in the "trails", garbage everywhere (I met a woman in the summer who came to the park every morning and cleaned up the garage herself. Just a good Samaritan). I believe that the alcohol in parks program should be seasonal.”
Concern	Queen's Park Alcohol Allowed Zone	“Too small. No one wants to hang out at the rose garden simply to drink. We want to drink near the kids water park as we watch our kids and picnic.”
Comment	Moody Park Alcohol Allowed Zone	“Although I laughed out loud when i read the comment about a woman wanting to drink by the kids she is in a way correct. These areas are set up for people going to the park to do nothing more than drink. Which is good for Alcoholics, for Health and Safety reasons easier to monitor them if they don't have to hide. I work in Security (and Safety!) Also encourages rapid consuming before you go to the event you intend to attend.”

Quick Poll

A quick, one-question poll was launched on Be Heard New West to gather the community's first impression of the Alcohol in Parks Pilot program. The poll was open from September 29 through October 27, 2021 and received 14 responses. The results were divided, with 71% rating the program either “Excellent” or “Good” and 29% rating it “Terrible”.

Choice	Percentage	Count
Total Responses: 14		
5 -Terrible	29%	4
4- Not good	0%	0
3- Alright	0%	0
2- Good	21%	3
1- Excellent	50%	7

On a scale of 1 (excellent) to 5 (poor) how would you rate the Alcohol in Parks pilot program overall?



Staff Workshop

On September 17, 2021, an inter-departmental workshop was held with City staff, facilitated by the Public Engagement team, to understand how the program was experienced from a staff perspective, any operational impacts, and any concerns or suggestions for changes.

Approximately 10 staff members participated in the workshop, across different departments and operational responsibilities related to: parks maintenance, garbage collection, facility cleaning (including cleaning of park washrooms), bylaw enforcement, parks administration, programming and management, communications, and facilities management.

Overall, staff did not identify any major concerns related to the Alcohol in Parks program, and, despite worries when the program was introduced about potential operational impacts, staff did not report a large increase in workloads related to increased cleaning and garbage collection.

However, staff did not recommend expanding the program to additional parks, as additional staffing resources would be needed to increase cleaning and maintenance levels any further. Overall, participants in the workshop were supportive of continuing the program.

Concerns

While no major concerns were identified, staff noted the following feedback from their teams and members of the public:

- People drinking outside the designated zones – particularly in Westminster Pier Park, Queen's Park and Sapperton Park.
- Increase in overflowing garbage bins, and recyclables ending up in garbage bins and vice-versa.
- Issues related to after-hours drinking, though it was noted this is a general issue that occurred before the Alcohol in Parks program began.
- Concerns around prevalent drinking in Hyack Square (not a designated zone and not recommended to add as a zone).
- Concerns specific to Queen's Park:
 - Public comments about the designated zone being too close to the playground.
 - Complaints from park goers when Queen's Park Arena washrooms were not available (after hours or during private booking).
 - Observed increase in events/gatherings of 15+ people where a permit was not obtained, and sometimes large, organized events such as a wedding with approximately 70 people. Staff noted that an increase in these types of events was observed from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but a further increase was observed when the Alcohol in Parks program was introduced. While no major issues were observed related to these events, an increase in garbage was noted.
 - Increase in booking requests for picnic shelters where alcohol is permitted.
 - Complaints about overfull garbage cans, alcohol cans left on tables, etc. in the picnic shelters.

Suggestions Moving Forward:

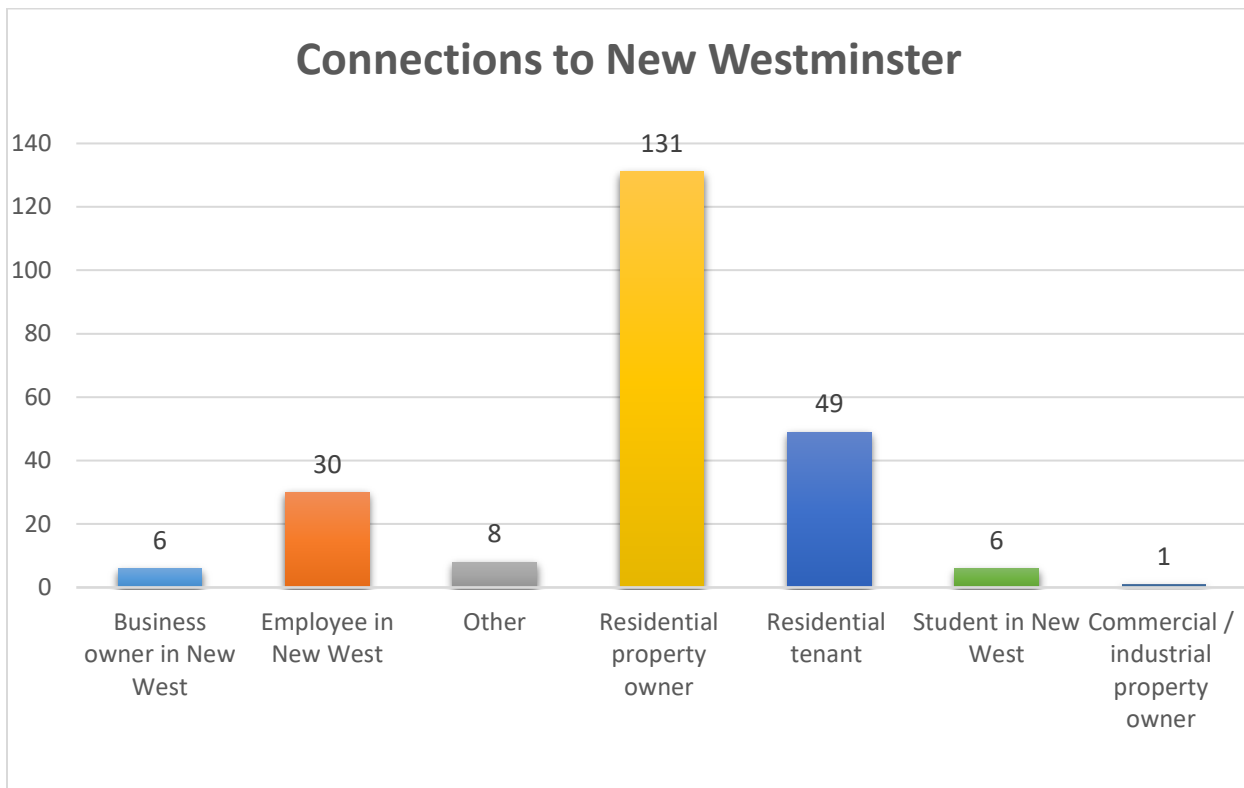
- Explore potential solutions for clearer / better separation of recycling and waste, such as trying different containers / container designs, etc.
- Continue to monitor garbage volumes in parks where alcohol is allowed, and increase pick-ups as needed / possible.
- Continue to monitor how the alcohol-allowed zones are being used for gatherings / events, and consider developing guidelines for staff and the public when it comes to larger gatherings in New West parks.
- Observe how use of the Alcohol in Parks program may change / need to adapt based on changing restrictions and behaviours related to COVID-19.

About Participants

Connections to the City *(select all that apply)*

231 responses from 186 participants

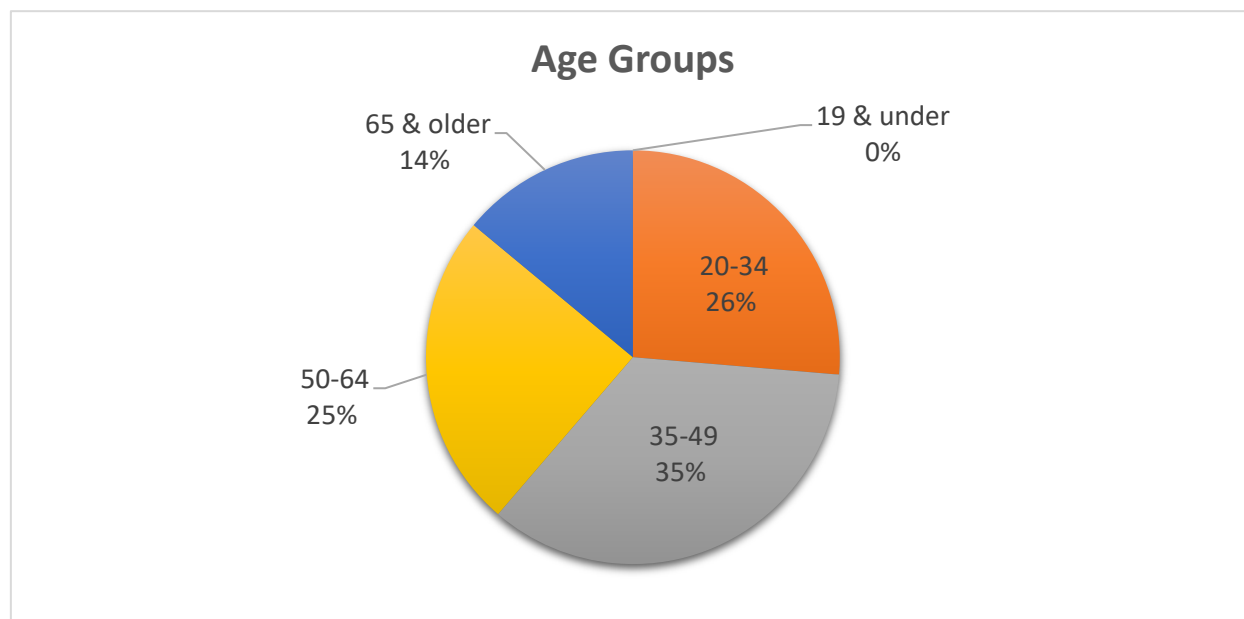
Choice	Percentage	Count
Business owner in New West	3%	6
Employee in New West	16%	30
Other	4%	8
Residential property owner (condo, townhouse, house, etc.) in New West	70%	131
Residential tenant (renter) in New West	26%	49
Student in New West	3%	6
Commercial (including rental buildings) / industrial property owner in New West	1%	1



Age Groups

186 responses

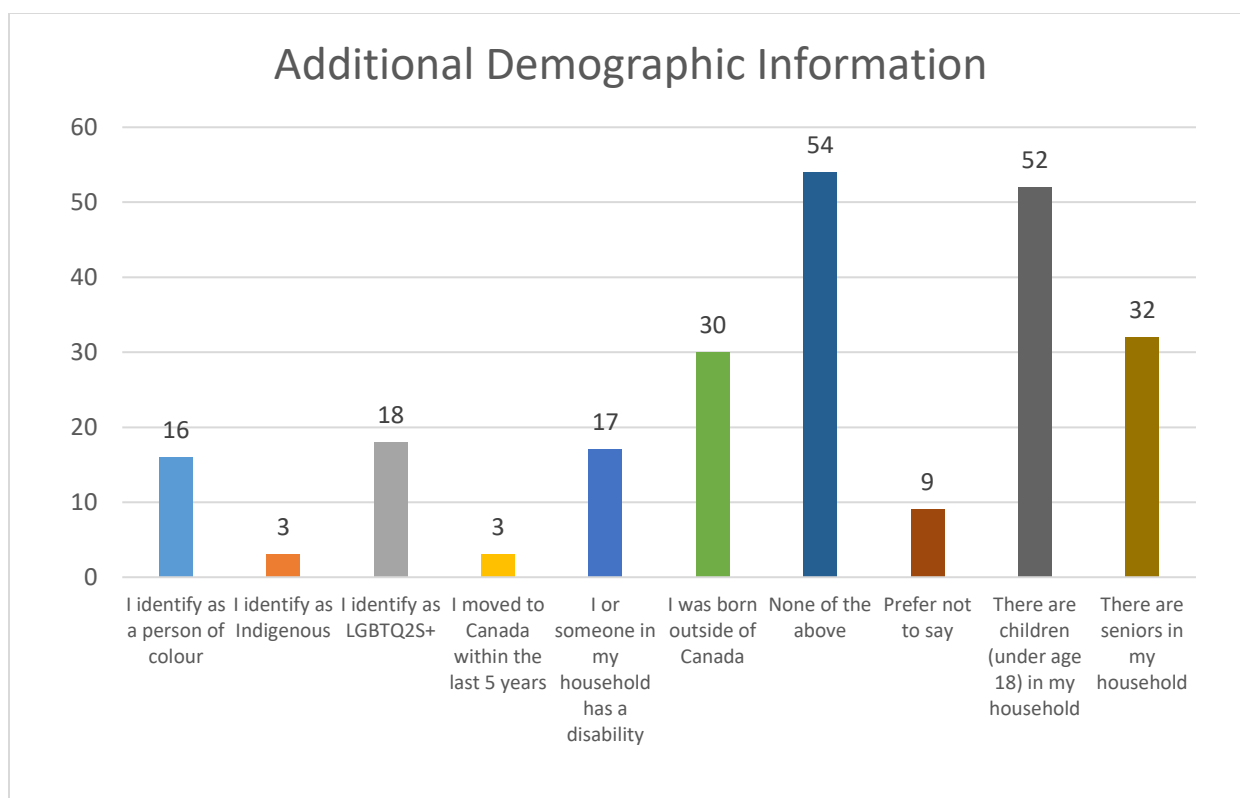
Age Group	Percentage	Count
19 & under	0%	0
20-34	26%	49
35-49	35%	65
50-64	25%	46
65 & older	14%	26



Additional Demographic Information *(select any / all that apply)*

234 responses from 186 participants

Choice	Percentage	Count
I identify as a person of colour	9%	16
I identify as Indigenous	2%	3
I identify as LGBTQ2S+	10%	18
I moved to Canada within the last 5 years	2%	3
I or someone in my household has a disability	9%	17
I was born outside of Canada	16%	30
None of the above	29%	54
Prefer not to say	5%	9
There are children (under age 18) in my household	28%	52
There are seniors in my household	17%	32



Demographic Analysis

As we see in most City of New Westminster engagements, residential tenants were underrepresented (26% of participants; 44% of residents according to Census), while property owners were over represented (70% of participants; 56% of residents according to Census). One hundred and fifty two unique New Westminster postal codes, and two postal codes from outside of the New West, were provided by the 186 participants on Be Heard.

For age ranges of engagement participants, there were no responses from residents age 19 or younger, so this age group was highly underrepresented compared to Census data. However, given the topic of the engagement, and in accordance with provincial liquor laws, no responses from those under the legal drinking age should be expected. Conversely, the 35-49 year old age group was overrepresented (35% of participants; 22% of residents according to Census). Other age groups (20 -34, 50-64 and 65+) were similar (within 5%) to Census representation.

In terms of other demographic information provided by survey participants, we can compare with Census data on Indigenous, immigrant, new immigrant (arrived within past five years) and visible minority proportions of the New Westminster community. Based on this comparison, immigrants and visible minorities were underrepresented among Be Heard participants. Indigenous people and new immigrants were similar (within 5%) to Census representation.

Next Steps

This engagement summary report will be provided to Council at its December 13, 2021 regular meeting, and shared on the Be Heard New West project page. Based on the input from both staff and the community, City staff will provide recommendations about the future of the Alcohol in Parks program for Council's consideration.