

City of Vaughan

Tennis and Racquet Sport Study

Public Engagement Phase 1: What We Heard

April 2024

BEAM GROUP



Executive summary

In September 2023, the City of Vaughan began a Tennis and Racquet Sport Study to assess how well its existing facilities meet current and changing community needs. The study will help to answer important questions, such as:

- How often, where and when do people play racquet sports?
- What kinds of racquet sports do people like playing?
- How can we encourage more racquet sport play in the City of Vaughan?

Once complete, the study will help improve access to racquet sport facilities – including the number, location and types of courts. A timeline of key activities is included below.

This report documents key insights from the first round of community engagement, which was conducted in November 2023. It includes two key sections summarizing feedback collected through: a public survey and community “pop-up” events that were held across Vaughan.

In total, 1022 people participated in these methods of community engagement. The feedback provided will help the City to identify key preferences, challenges, and opportunities, which will be built upon in future phases of research and engagement.

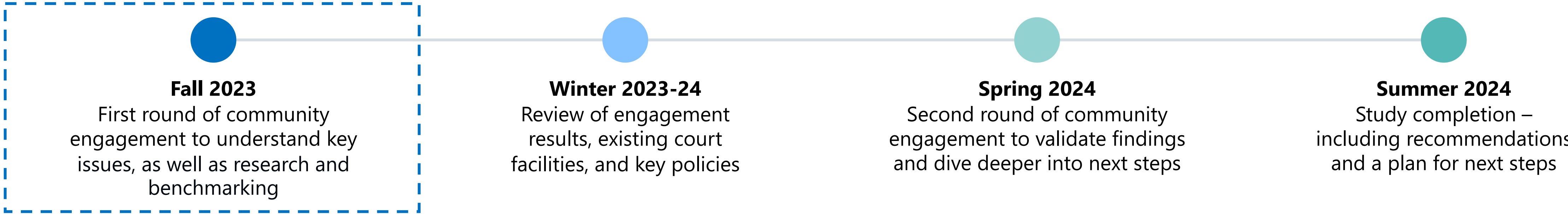


Table of contents

Section		Page
Public survey	Approach	5
	Key insights	6
	Detailed insights: Current usage	10
	Detailed insights: Satisfaction	17
	Detailed insights: Options for the future	20
	Detailed insights: Demographics	28
Community Pop-ups	Approach	34
	Key insights	35
	Exercise 1: Ranking preferences	38
	Exercise 2: Mapping activity	41
Next steps	Next steps	44



Public survey

Approach

An online survey was distributed by the City of Vaughan from November 3 to December 1, 2023. In total, **814 people responded to the survey.**

The survey collected feedback from Vaughan residents in four key categories:

- 1 **Current usage** of tennis and racquet sport courts
- 2 **Level of satisfaction** with existing City facilities
- 3 **Options for the future**, including how to encourage and support more racquet sport play
- 4 **Demographics**, to understand who typically uses tennis and racquet sport facilities

This section includes key insights and detailed results from the survey, which will help the City to identify challenges and opportunities, which will be built upon in future phases of research and engagement.

Key insights

1

Current usage

1. Over 90 percent of survey respondents currently play tennis or pickleball, with more tennis players overall (63 percent and 49 percent respectively).
2. 81 percent of survey respondents prefer to play racquet sports informally, at City-owned courts. Members-only racquet clubs and City-organized drop-in leagues were also popular choices (42 percent each).
3. While there is a preference for weekday evenings and weekend mornings (66 and 64 percent respectively), respondents play racquet sports at all times of day – typically for one to two hours.
4. Almost 70 percent of survey respondents play across municipal boundaries, including at public facilities in neighbouring cities such as Richmond Hill, Toronto, and Markham.
5. 50 percent of all survey respondents told us that they play at a racquet club. Of these, 18 percent indicated that they play at Kleinburg Tennis Club and 7 percent at Thornhill Park Tennis Club. A further 25 percent told us that they play at other clubs – including examples such as Veneto, Trioplex, Premier Racquet Club, and Blackmore Tennis.



Key insights

2

Satisfaction

1. Survey respondents are satisfied with a range of topics, including:
 - Location of courts: 41 percent somewhat or extremely satisfied
 - Nets being set properly: 40 percent somewhat or extremely satisfied
 - Lighting: 35 percent somewhat or extremely satisfied
2. Survey respondents also feel there are a range of areas for improvement. Areas that received a higher proportion of dissatisfied than satisfied responses included:
 - Number of courts: 58 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
 - Courtside amenities: 56 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
 - Wait times: 51 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
 - Wind mitigation: 51 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
 - Court surfacing: 49 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
 - Access to shade close to courts: 45 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
 - General maintenance: 34 percent somewhat or extremely dissatisfied
3. Over 60 percent of survey respondents have used the existing shared tennis-pickleball courts but would prefer dedicated facilities for each sport, citing a number of challenges. Examples included confusion between different lines, that the net heights are different, and that it increases already-high wait times at courts.

Key insights

3

Options for the future

1. Survey respondents' key priorities include:
 - Indoor or bubbled courts: 92 percent
 - More courts in new locations: 86 percent
 - More courts in existing locations: 84 percent
 - Improved surface conditions: 75 percent
 - Lighting to extend play hours: 74 percent
 - More City-run programming: 58 percent
2. Public sentiment on whether to grant clubs more access to City courts is mixed. When asked about their key priorities, 52 percent indicated that racquet clubs should be provided with more time at City courts, while 42 percent said that racquet clubs should have less time to increase the amount of public access.
3. There is a high degree of interest in a mobile phone app or website to reserve court time.
4. Most people would prefer to walk, cycle or drive to a court up to 20 minutes away. Few respondents would take transit to a court facility.
5. Over half of survey respondents said they would like to join a racquet club or City-led program. Of those not interested in joining a racquet club or City program, 84 percent said they are only interested in recreational play.
6. The key barriers for those who do not play racquet sports are lack of understanding of how to play and lack of information on programs. This was reinforced by suggestions to provide additional information on programs to teach people how to play.

Key insights

4

Demographics

1. Over half of respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64, and 60 percent identify as a man.
2. Over a third of respondents told us that they, or someone in their household, was born outside of Canada.
3. Almost a quarter of survey respondents had a total household income over \$150,000 in 2022.
4. Over 80% of respondents live in Vaughan. A further 13% live in Richmond Hill, Markham, and Toronto.

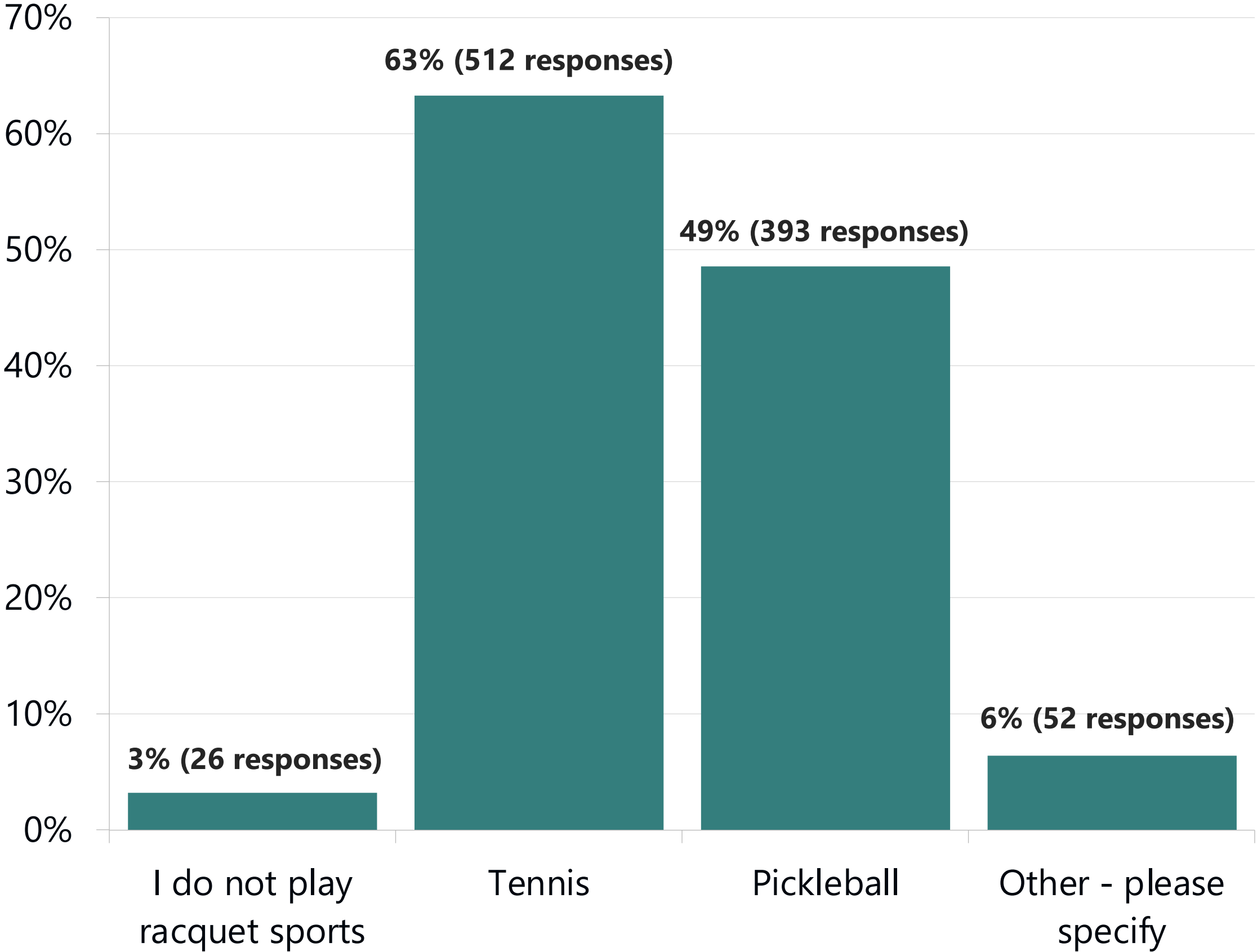


Current usage

Most survey respondents play tennis or pickleball, with more tennis players overall.



Do you currently play any of the following racquet sports (please select all that apply):



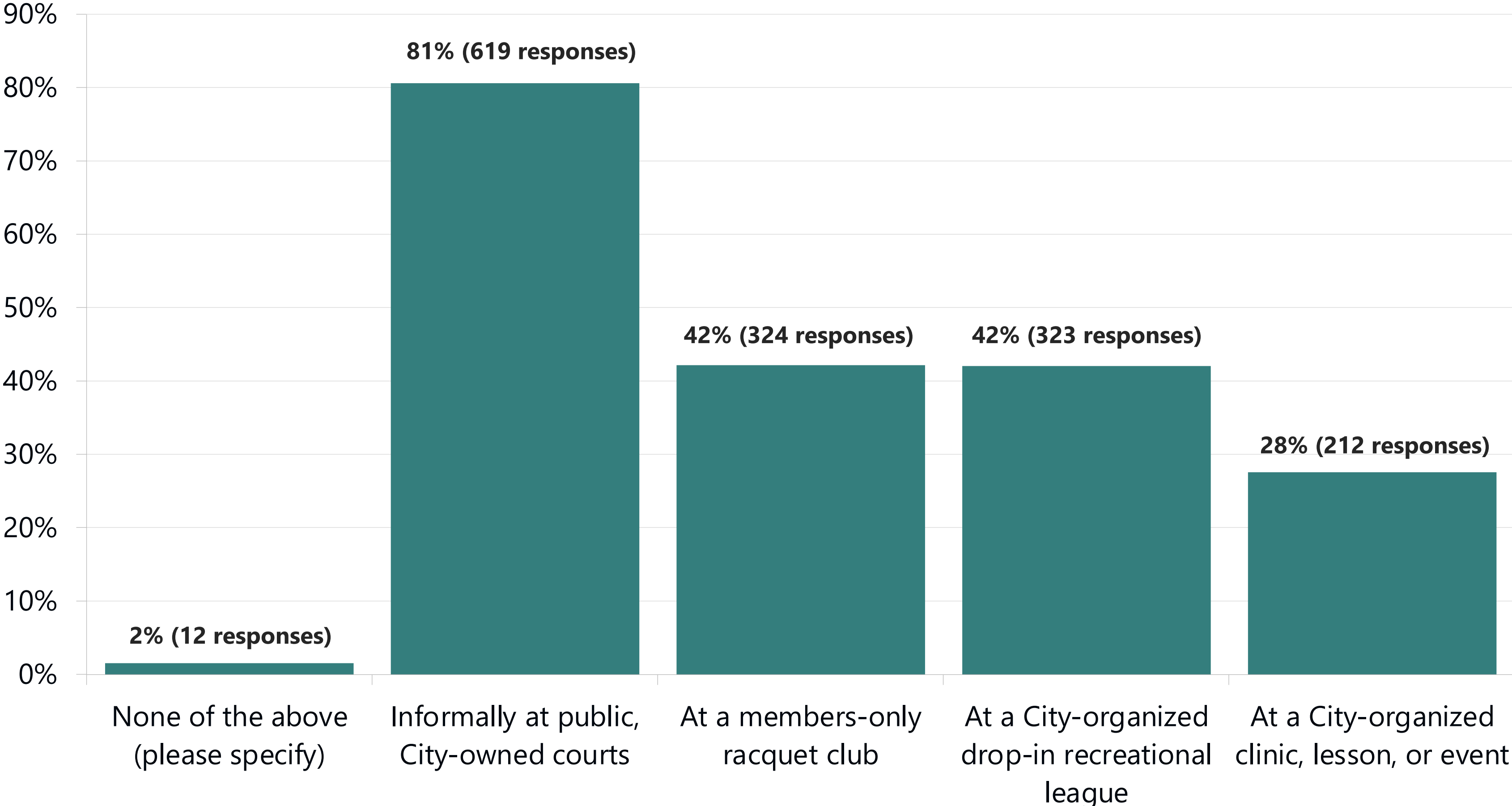
There were 52 survey respondents who told us they play another racquet sport. Of these,

- 25 people play squash
- 15 people play badminton
- 8 people play ping pong or table tennis
- 4 people play racquetball
- 3 people play padel

Current usage

Most respondents prefer to play racquet sports informally, at City-owned courts.

? Where do you prefer to play racquet sports? (select all that apply)

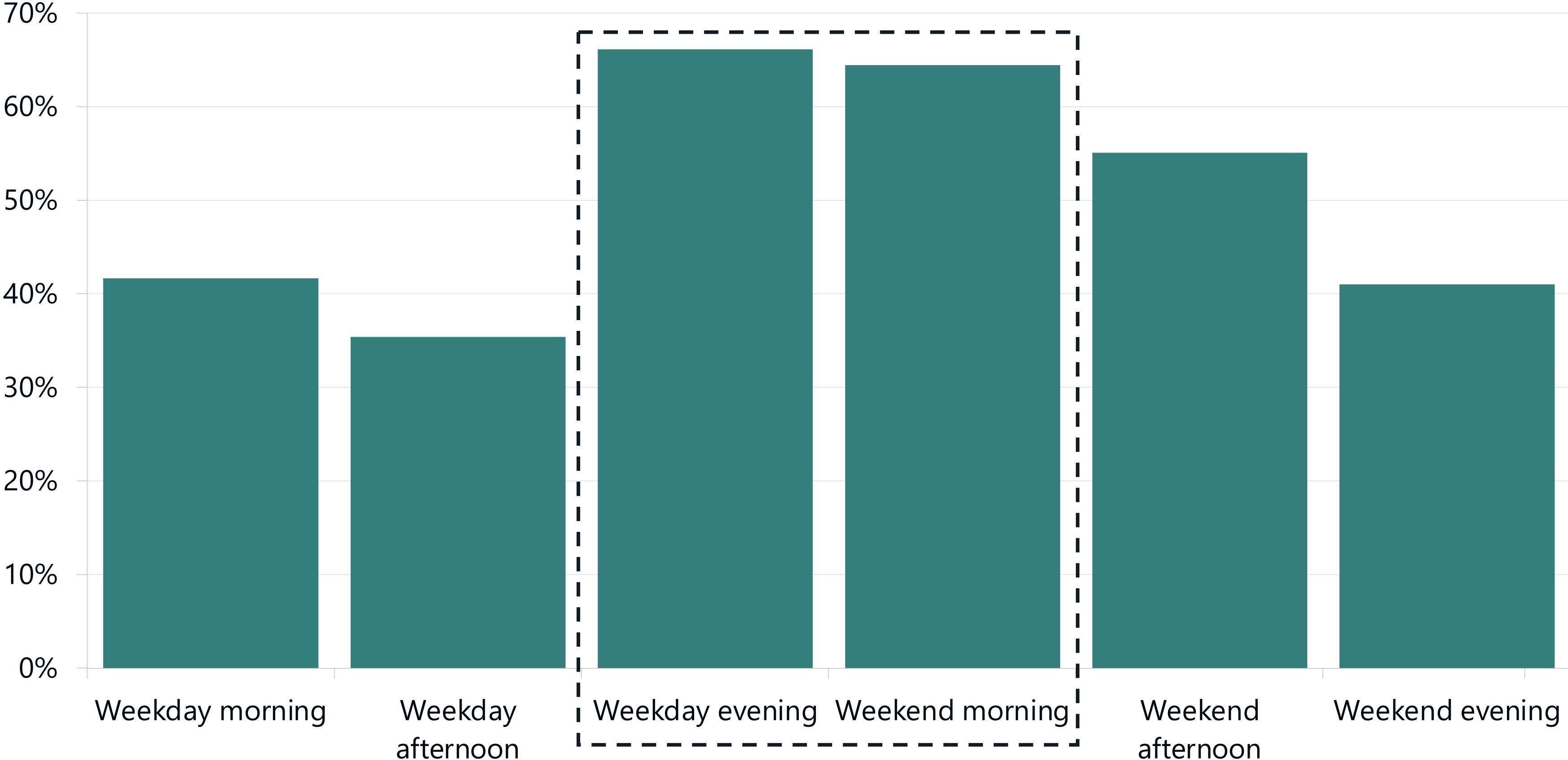


Current usage

While there is a preference for weekday evenings and weekend mornings, people play at all times of day.



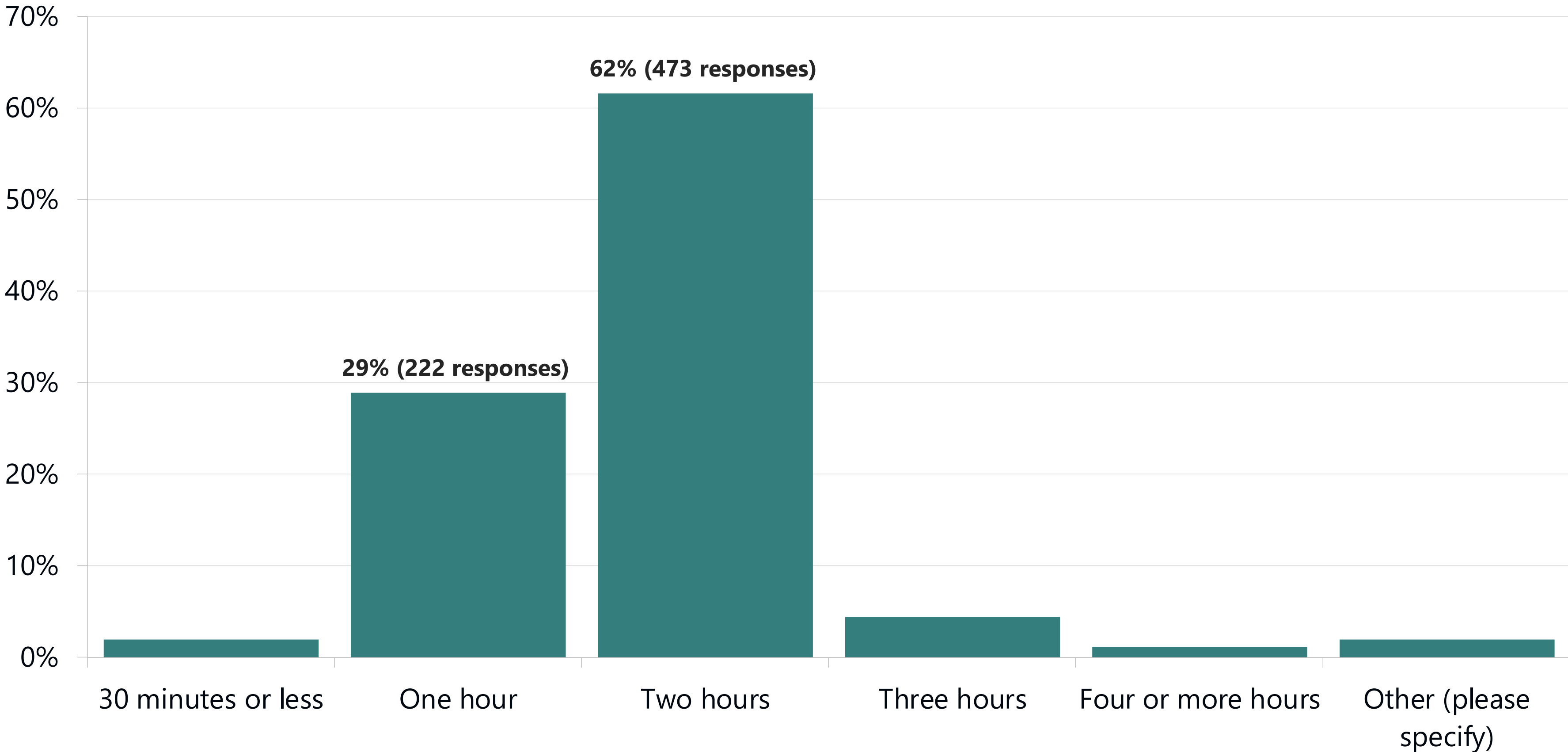
What time of the day do you typically play? (select all that apply)



Current usage

Most people play for one or two hours.

? How long do you typically play for?

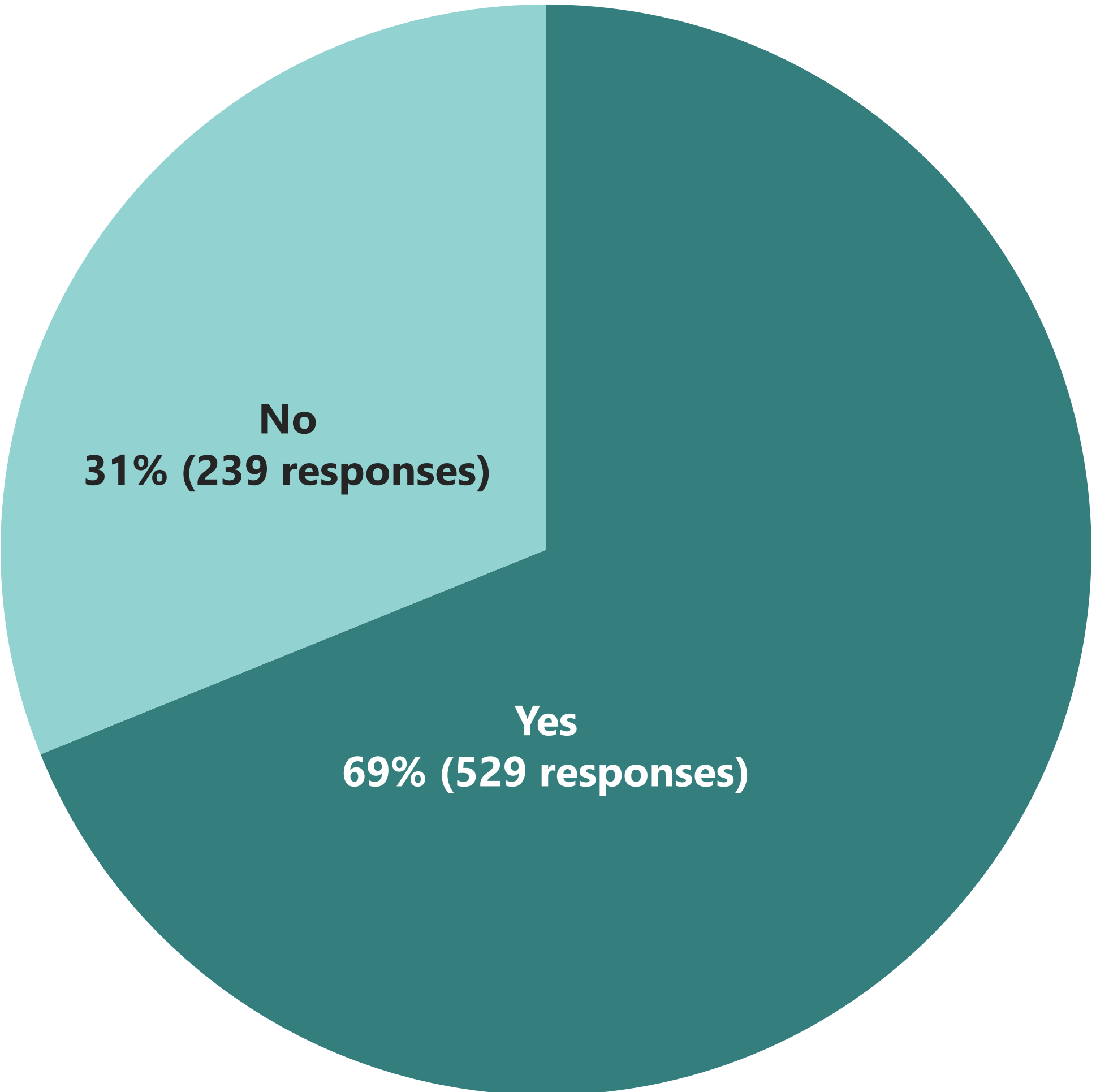


Current usage

Most people cross municipal boundaries to play at courts in neighbouring cities.



Do you play in public facilities in neighbouring / other cities?

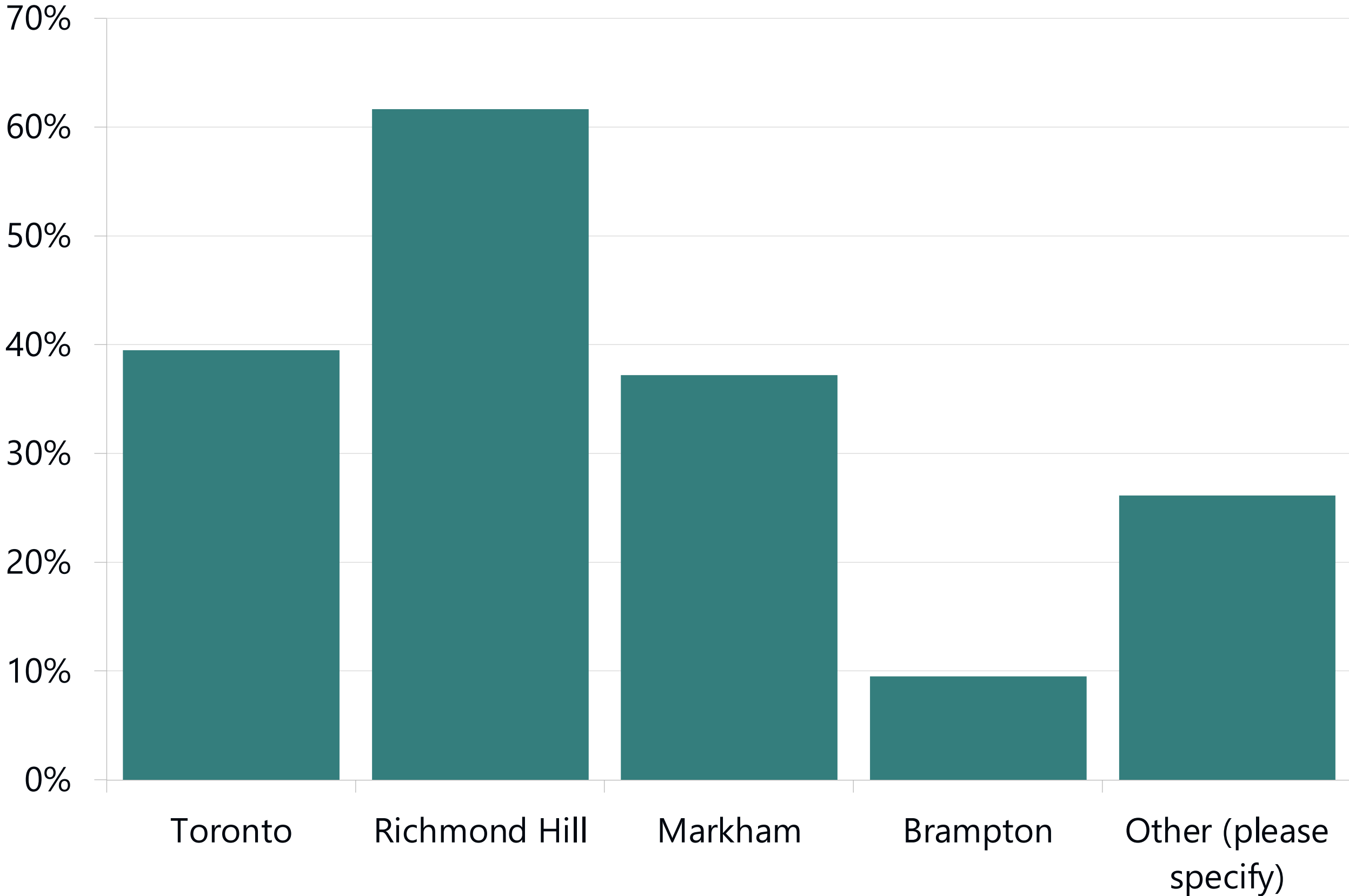


Current usage

Of those who play at courts in other cities, most people play in Richmond Hill – followed by Toronto and Markham.



Which neighbouring city do you play in? (select all that apply)



People told us they also play in a number of other areas – including Newmarket, Mississauga, Aurora, Stouffville, Bradford, Nobleton, King City, Guelph, and Midland.

Some people who specified “other”, indicated that they play in Vaughan. The proportion of people who play in Vaughan only may therefore be higher than 31%.

Current usage

Half of all respondents play at a racquet club. Of these, 18 percent play at Kleinburg Tennis Club and 7 percent at Thornhill Park Tennis Club.

? Which racquet club do you play at? (select all that apply)



A range of other clubs were specified. Examples included Veneto, Trioplex, Premier Racquet Club, Blackmore Tennis, Unionville Tennis Club, Racquet Guys, the Swing Centre, One Health Mississauga, Hillcrest Tennis Club, Gartner, Gore Meadows, Malton, and Midland.

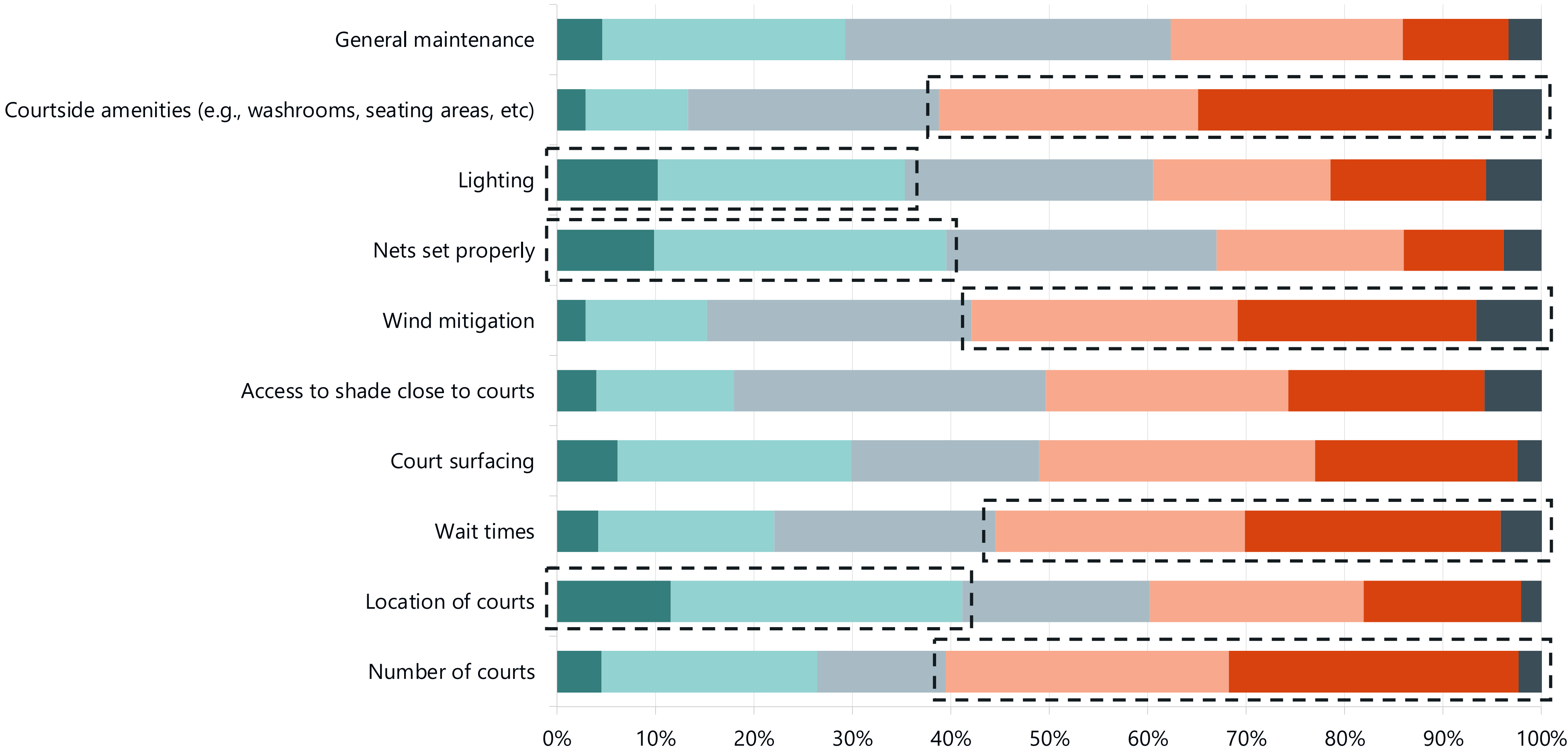
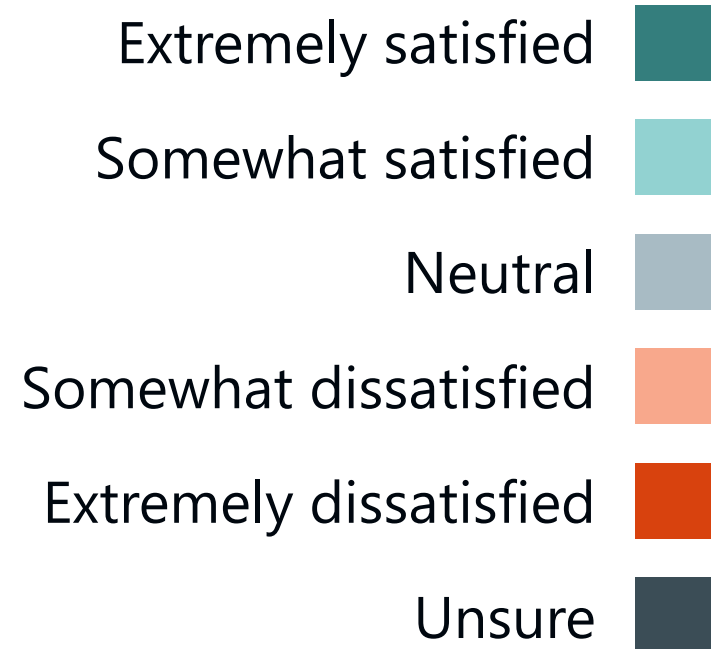
Note: Kleinburg Tennis Club has now been renamed "Vaughan Tennis Club".

Satisfaction

Respondents feel there is room for improvement – including a need for courtside amenities and more courts.



How satisfied are you with existing racquet courts in Vaughan?

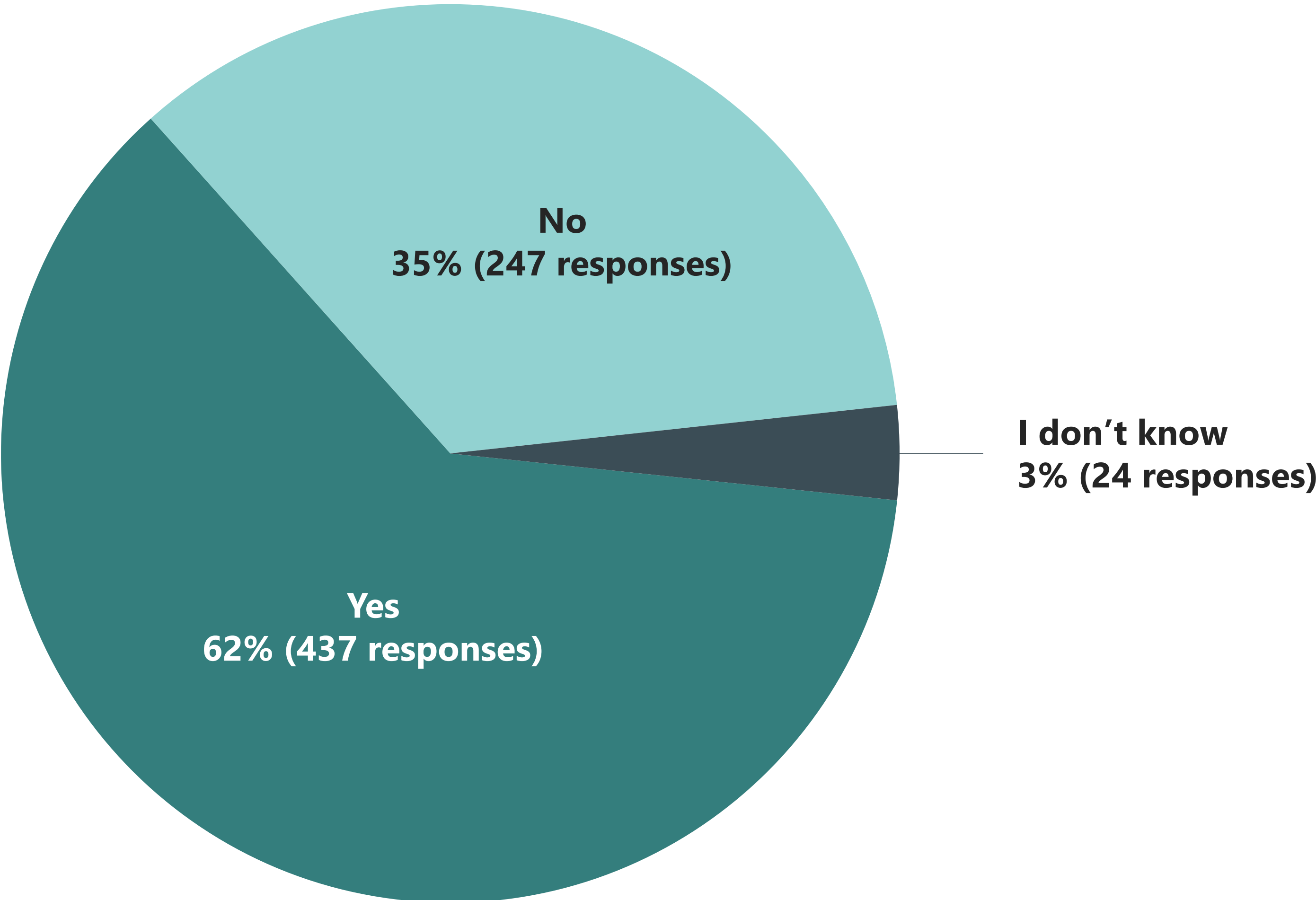


Satisfaction

Most survey respondents have used the existing shared tennis-pickleball courts.



Have you played on any of the existing tennis and pickleball shared-use courts (where both tennis and pickleball use the court at different times)?



Satisfaction

Many racquet sport players would prefer dedicated courts for both tennis and pickleball.



Do you have any comments based on your experience?



"It would be more ideal to have **dedicated pickleball courts** apart from tennis courts."

"**Dedicated courts with permanent nets** for [each] sport is best. For example, instead of 3 tennis courts, have 2 dedicated tennis courts and 2 separate dedicated pickleball courts."



"I am a tennis player through and through and find it very **confusing** playing on a court with shared lines."

Survey respondents told us that the key challenges associated with the shared-use courts include:

- The different lines are confusing
- Pickleball is too loud
- The net heights are different
- It increases wait times that are already too high
- Pickleball players still do not have dedicated courts
- It promotes conflict between players

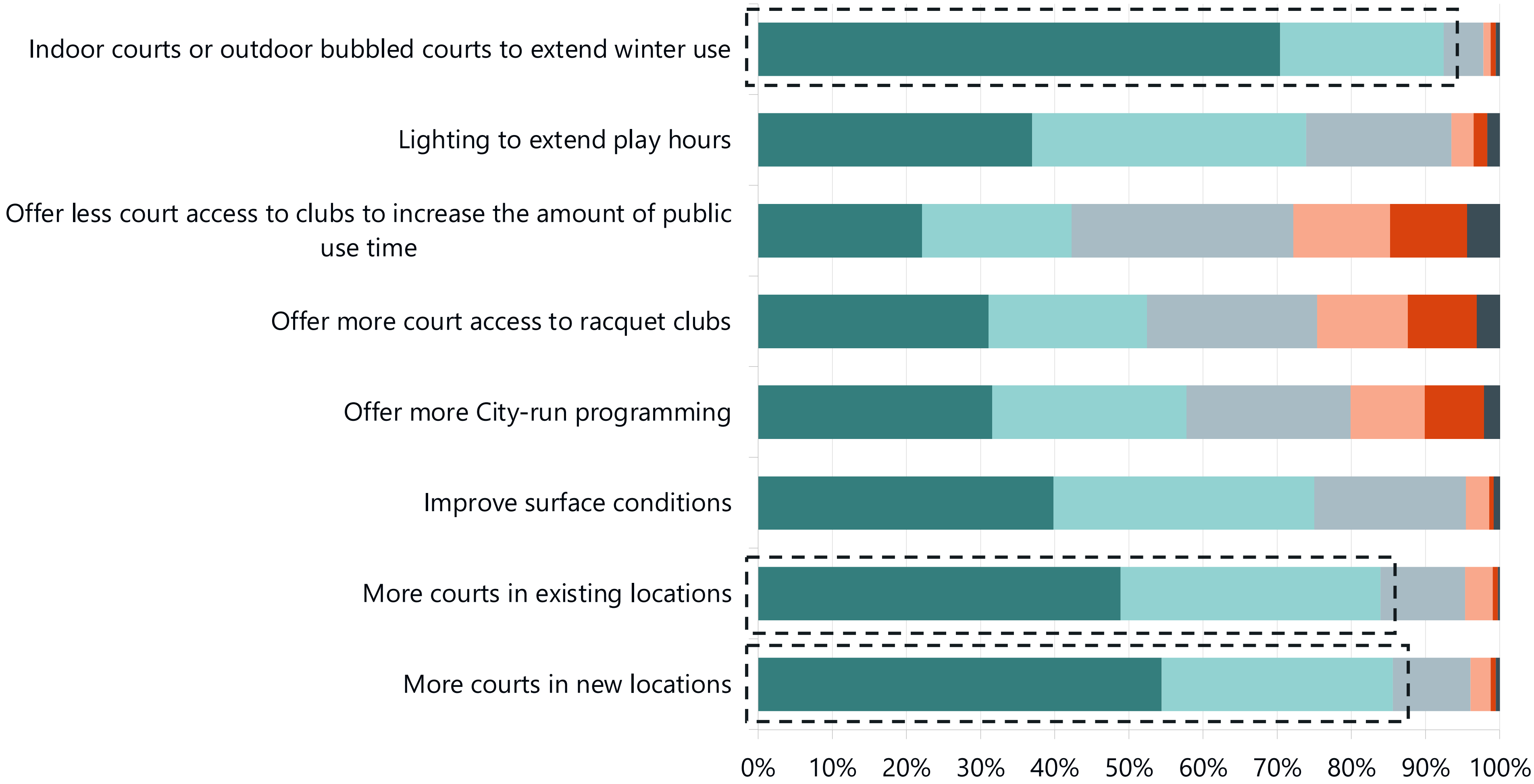
Options for the future

Respondents' key priorities include indoor / bubbled courts (92%), and more courts in new and existing locations (86% and 84% respectively).



From your perspective, what are the most important ways the City could help increase or improve your court use and access?

- A very high priority
- A priority
- Neutral
- Not a priority
- Not at all a priority
- Unsure

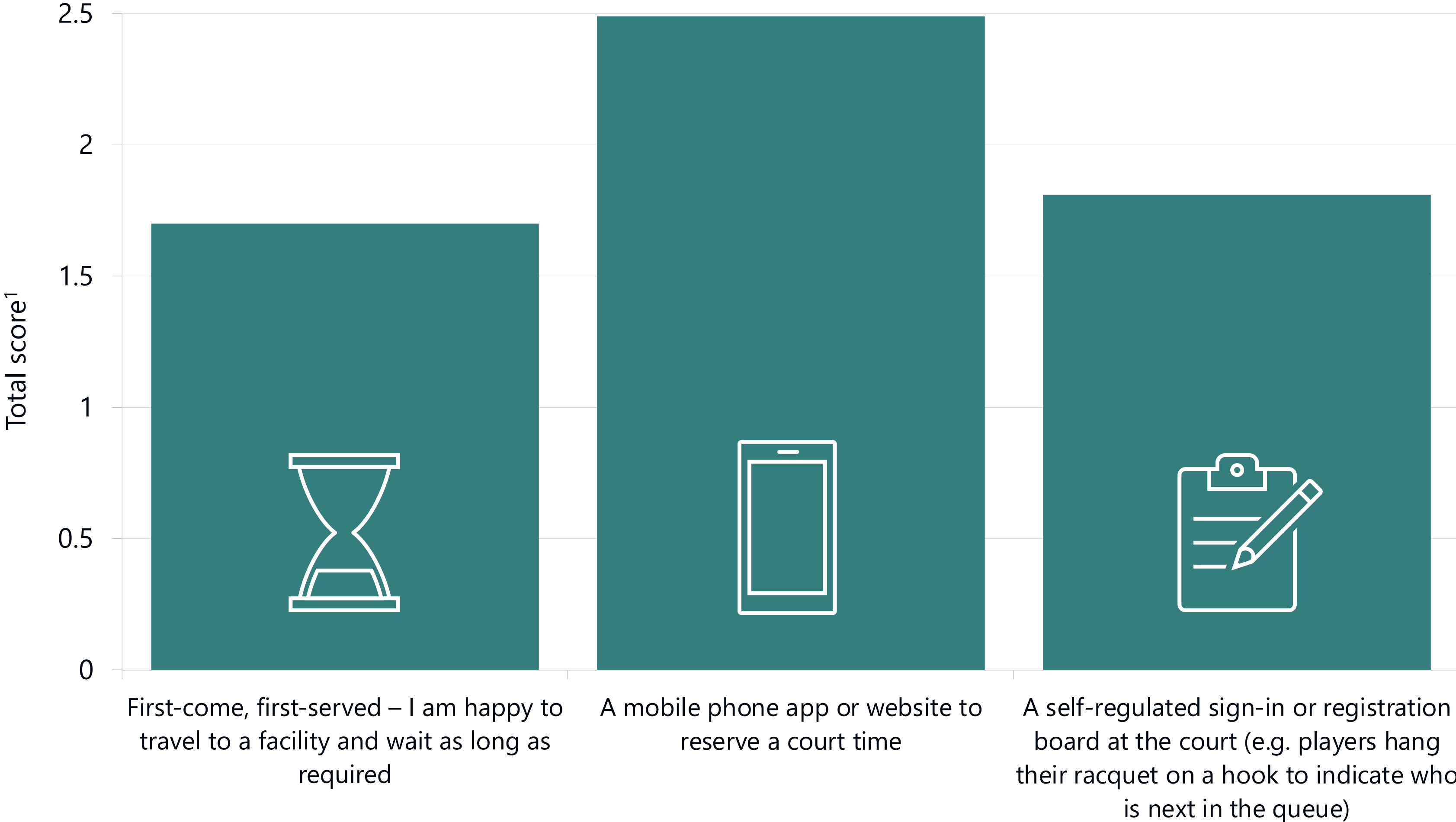


Options for the future

There is a high degree of interest in a mobile phone or website to reserve court time.



The City is considering various ways to manage and optimize court use, including introducing a court reservation system to ensure fair access and reduce wait times. Please rank the following court reservation options in order of preference:



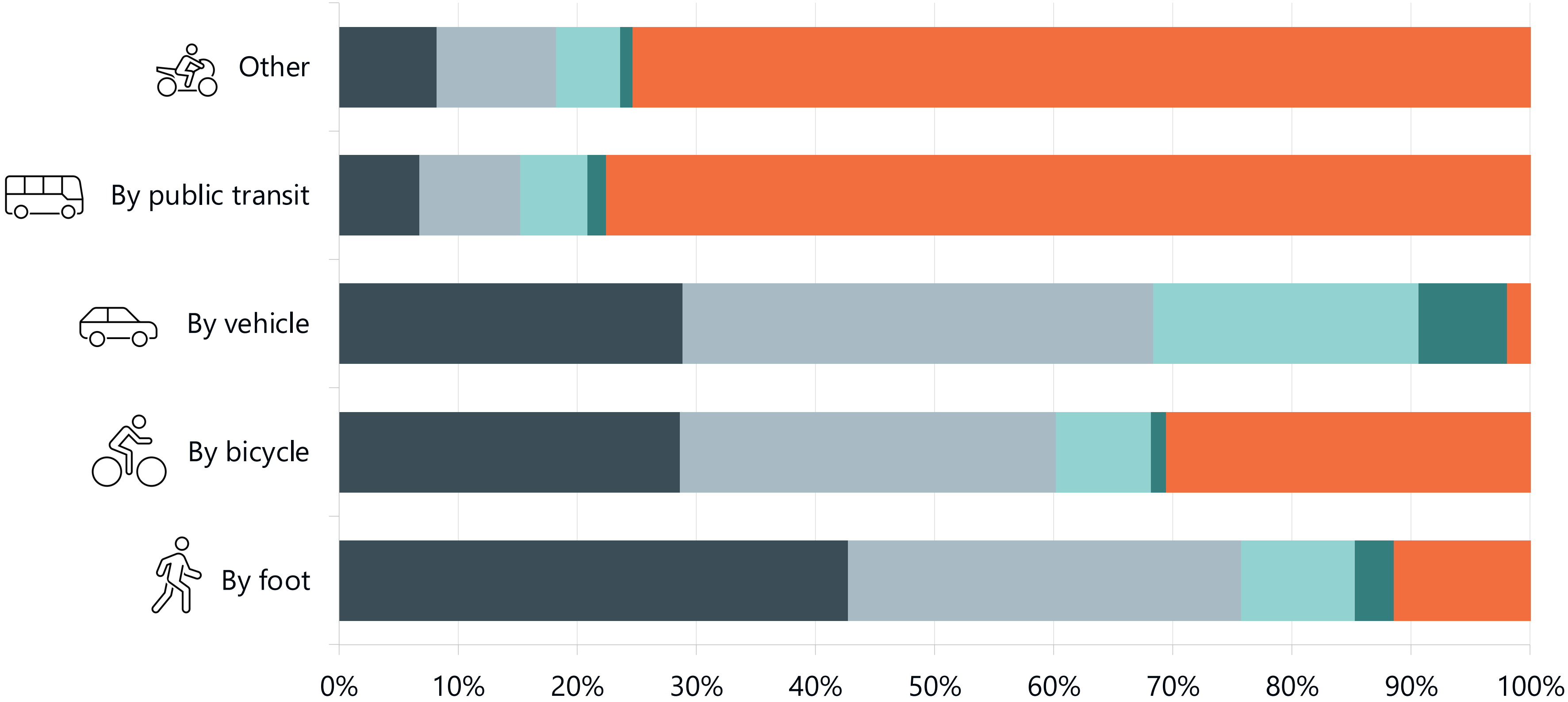
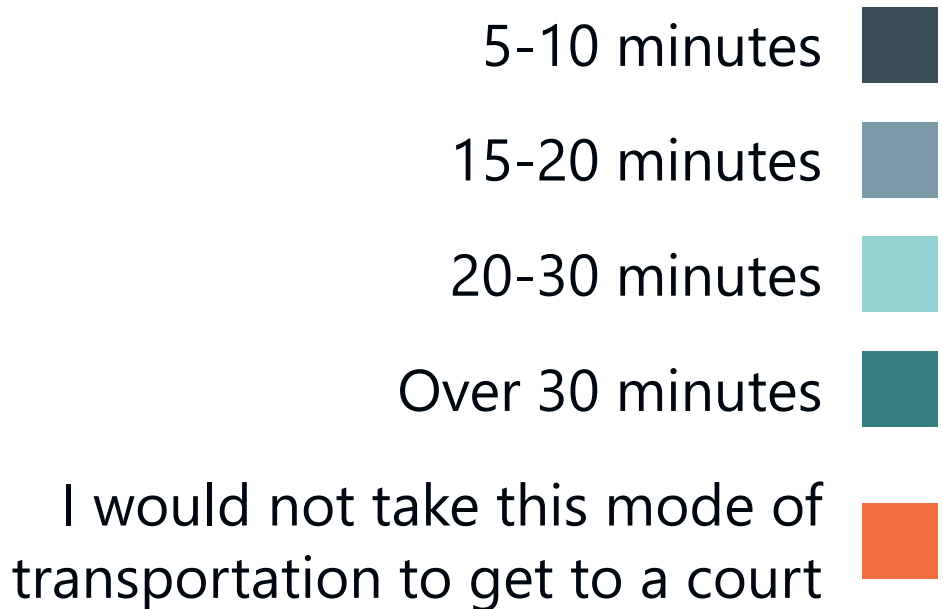
¹This score was calculated after asking respondents to rank the three options in order of preference

Options for the future

Most people would prefer to walk, cycle or drive to a court up to 20 minutes away. Few respondents would take transit.



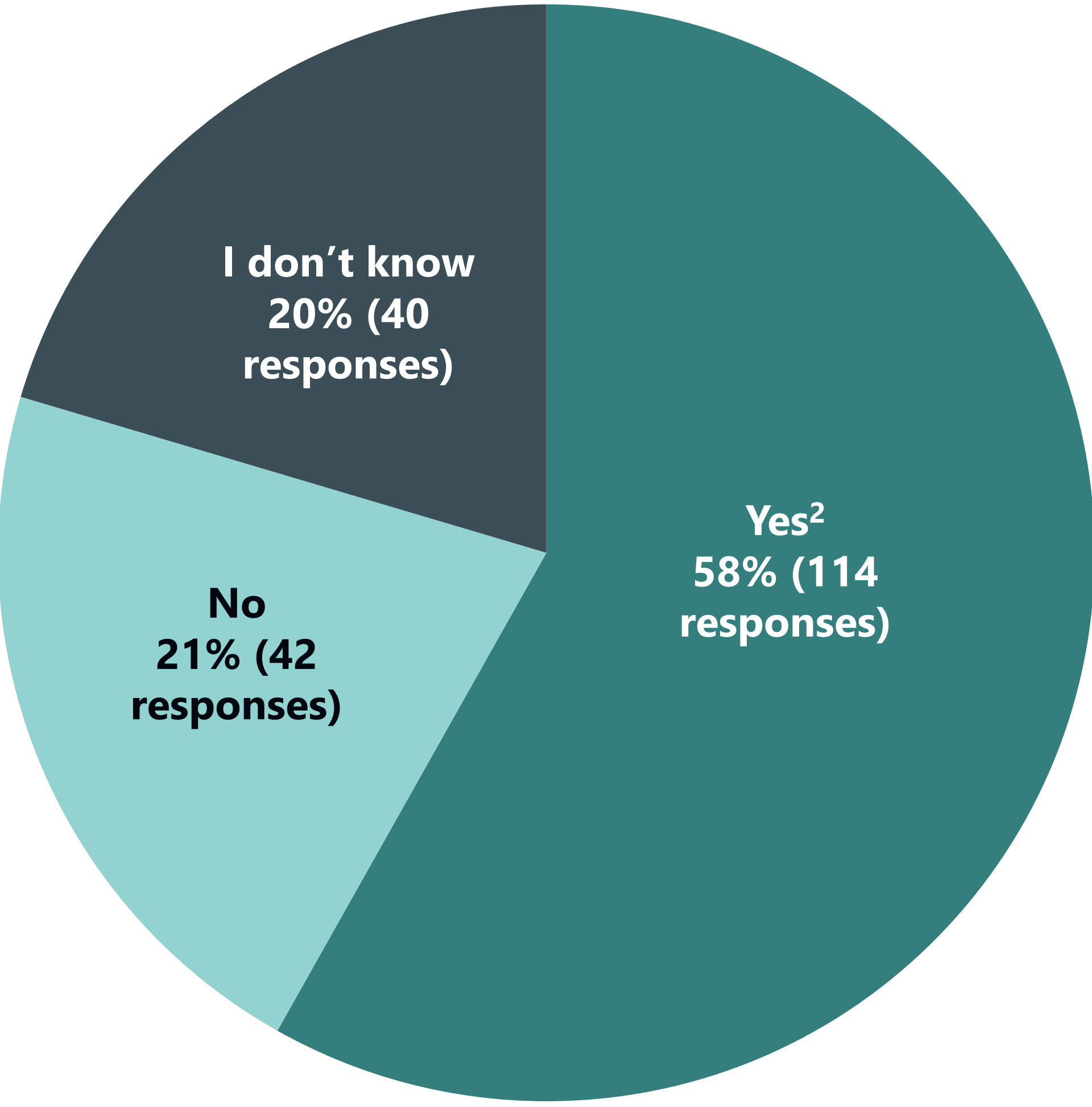
How far are you willing to travel to a racquet sport court?



Options for the future

Over half of survey respondents said they would like to join a racquet club or City-led program.

? Are you interested in joining a racquet club¹ or City-led program?



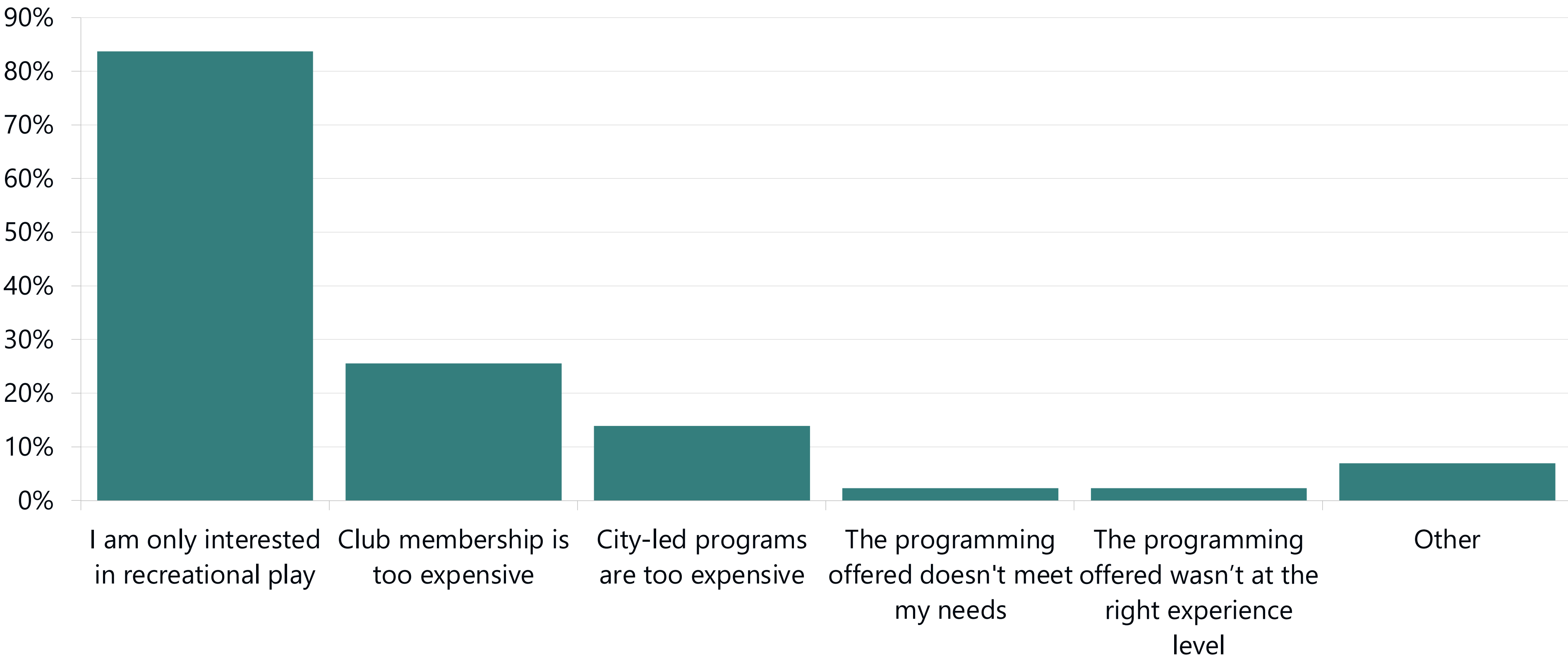
¹“Racquet club” may have been interpreted by respondents as a non-profit community club that uses City courts to operate, or a privately owned and operated club. Public preferences as to which type of club is most appealing and/or accessible will be examined in further detail during the next phase of research and engagement.

²Those who responded “yes” to this question may be interested in either joining a racquet club or joining a City-led program – or both. This will be examined in further detail during the next phase of research and engagement.

Options for the future

Most respondents who aren't interested in joining a racquet club or City program said they are only interested in recreational play.

? Why aren't you interested in joining a racquet club¹ / City-led program? (please select all that apply)



¹"Racquet club" may have been interpreted by respondents as a non-profit community club that uses City courts to operate, or a privately owned and operated club. Public preferences as to which type of club is most appealing and/or accessible will be examined in further detail during the next phase of research and engagement.

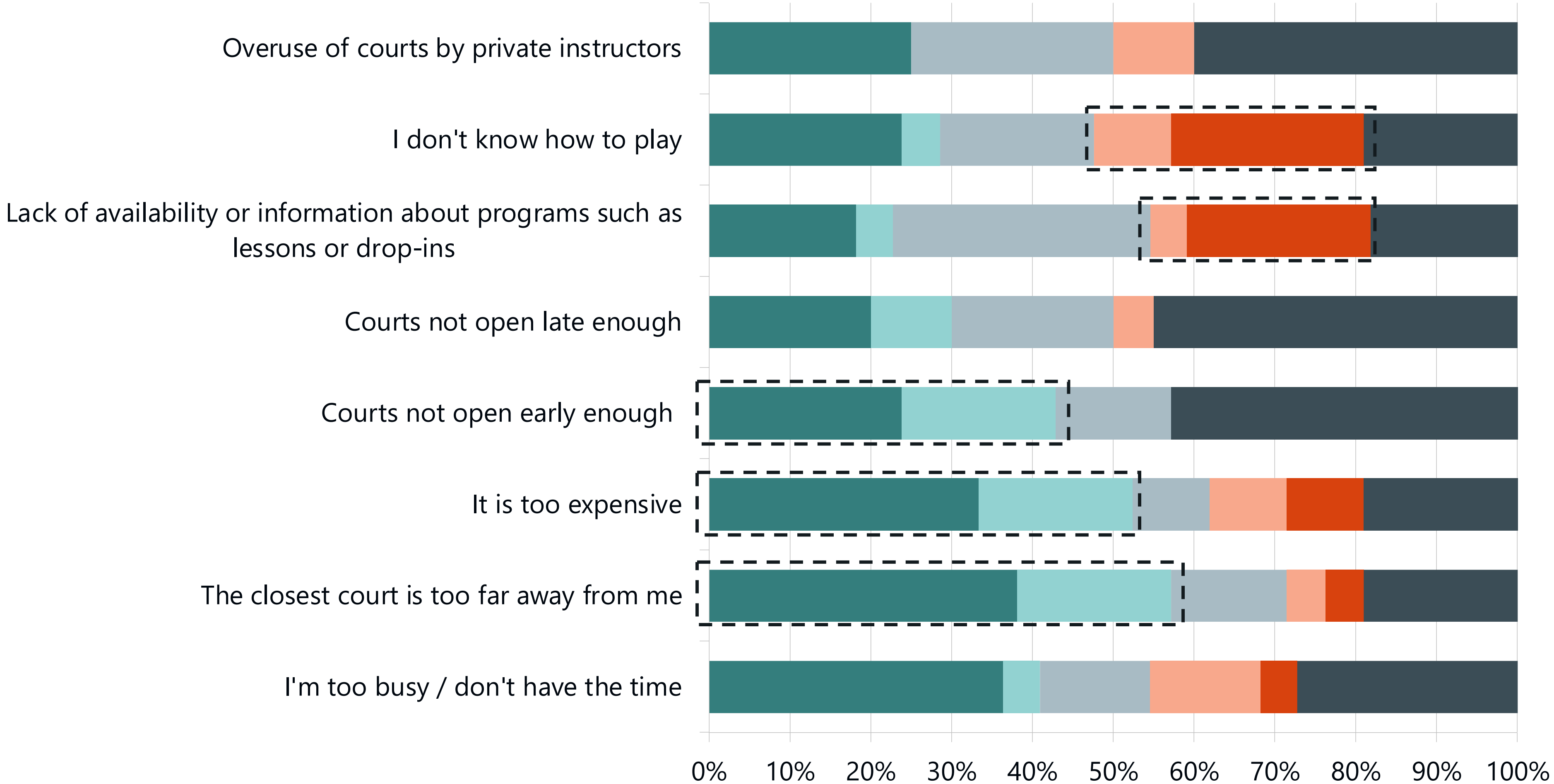
Options for the future

The key barriers for those who don't play racquet sports are lack of understanding of how to play and lack of information on programs.



Why don't you play?
(please rate the following potential barriers)

- 1 - Not a barrier at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – A very significant barrier
- Not applicable



Options for the future

Those who don't play racquet sports had a range of suggestions for the City about what might encourage them to participate.



What could the City do to encourage you to play?

Theme	Comments (these quotes have not been altered)
Additional information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise where one could go and take lessons or play. • Email campaigns, newsletters, more accessible information online, etc • Advertising • Easy to access info about lessons and opportunities
Additional courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more locations and weekdays evening slots • More courts • Make a court available close to Maple community centre
Additional programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pickle ball lessons during the day. • have instructor support • To get a list of potential partners that are in the same situation and to organize some strategy to contact them, for example calling for a meeting in alternative days ... and getting to know each other etc..
Improved facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vellore Village Facility needs improvement - lighting and court surface.
Less costly programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in costs are too high at abt \$7 per session. Annual costs amt to \$720 for twice a week play, for someone who is not sure of availing a membership • make it affordable
Enhanced waitlist management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build more courts with an online sign in process so not first come first serve and no restriction on time played - create pay as you play courts with on line sign on • online court booking
Indoor or bubbled facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bubbles in order to continue lessons and add pickleball indoor at nearby facilities year round
Gear rental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear rental maybe so I don't need to purchase the whole entirety of the gears needed before I try.

Options for the future

Other comments focused on support for the study, as well as a range of requests requests to the City.



Do you have any other comments you would like to share about the provision of racquet sports in Vaughan?



"The City of Vaughan needs **more designated pickle ball courts**. I hope we see that soon."

"**I'm generally quite satisfied** with how tennis courts are provisioned and maintained by the City of Vaughan."



"Increase **options for Winter tennis** and other racquet sports."

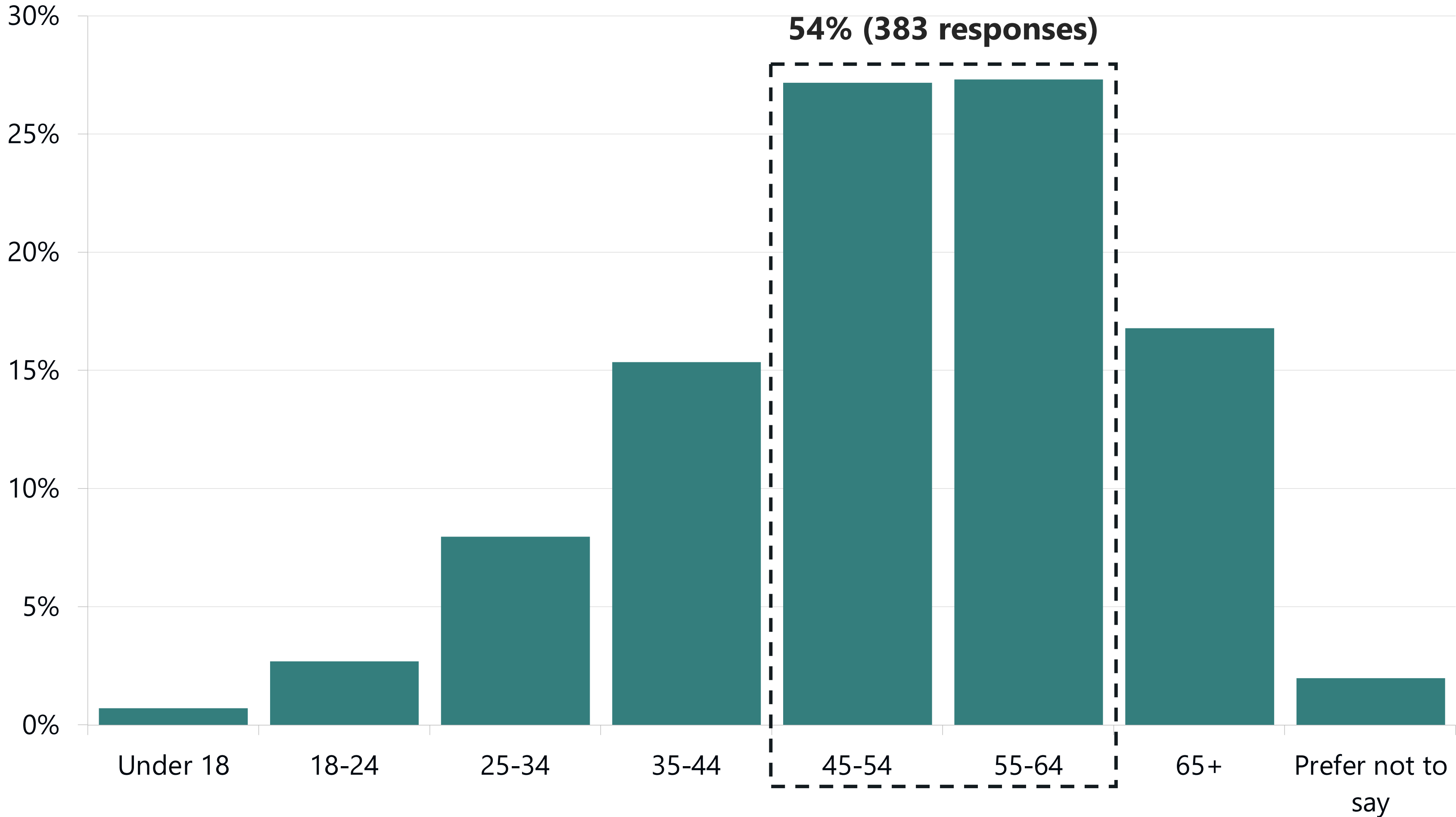
Key requests to the City included:

- More dedicated pickleball facilities
- Indoor or bubbled courts to support year-round play
- Better court maintenance
- Better amenities
- A court booking system
- More programming options, e.g., evening drop-in sessions

Demographics

Over half of respondents were between the ages of 45 and 64.

? What is your age?



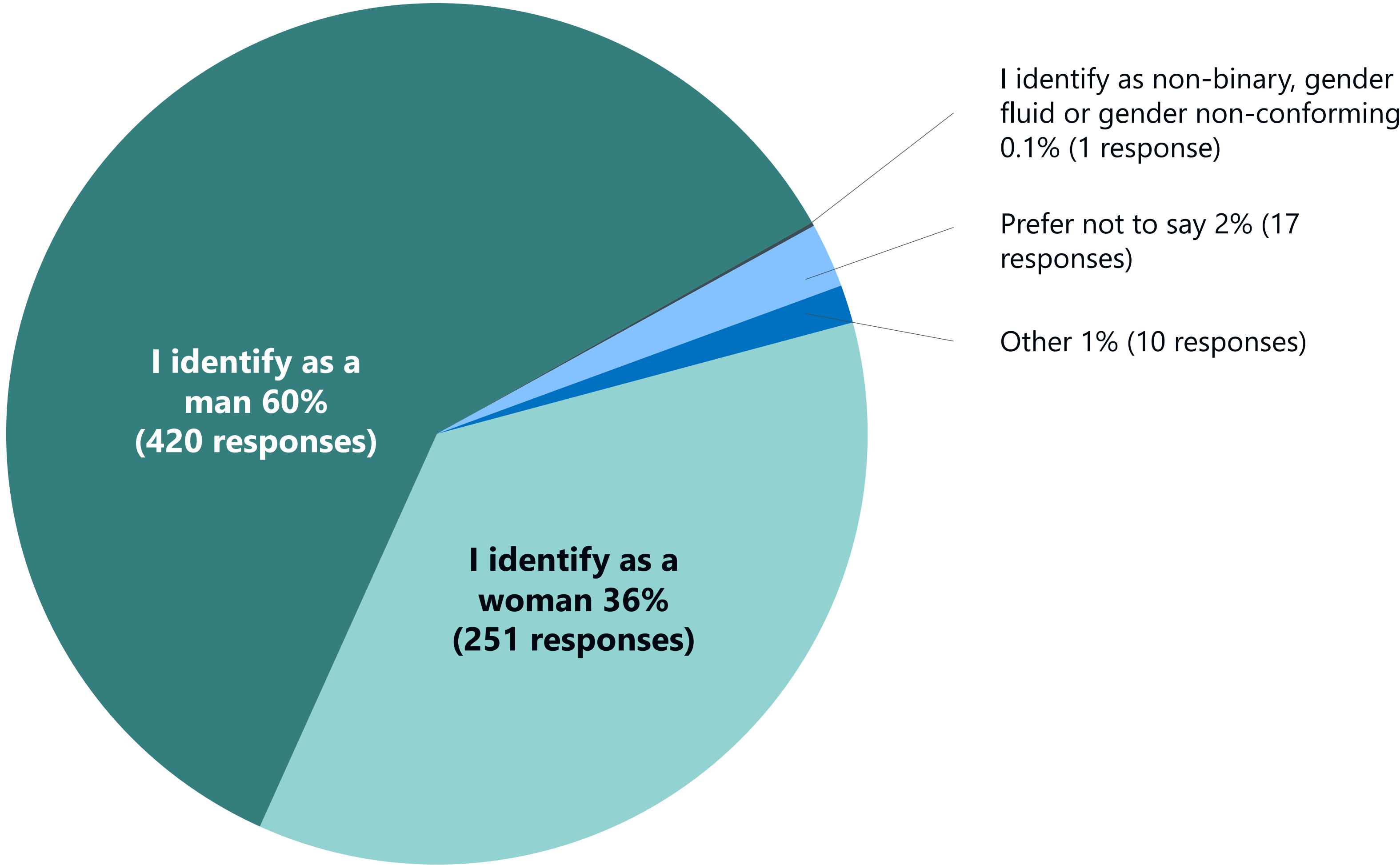
Demographics

Most people who responded to the survey identify as a man.



How would you best describe your gender identity/expression?

The Ontario Human Rights Code defines gender identity as a person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum

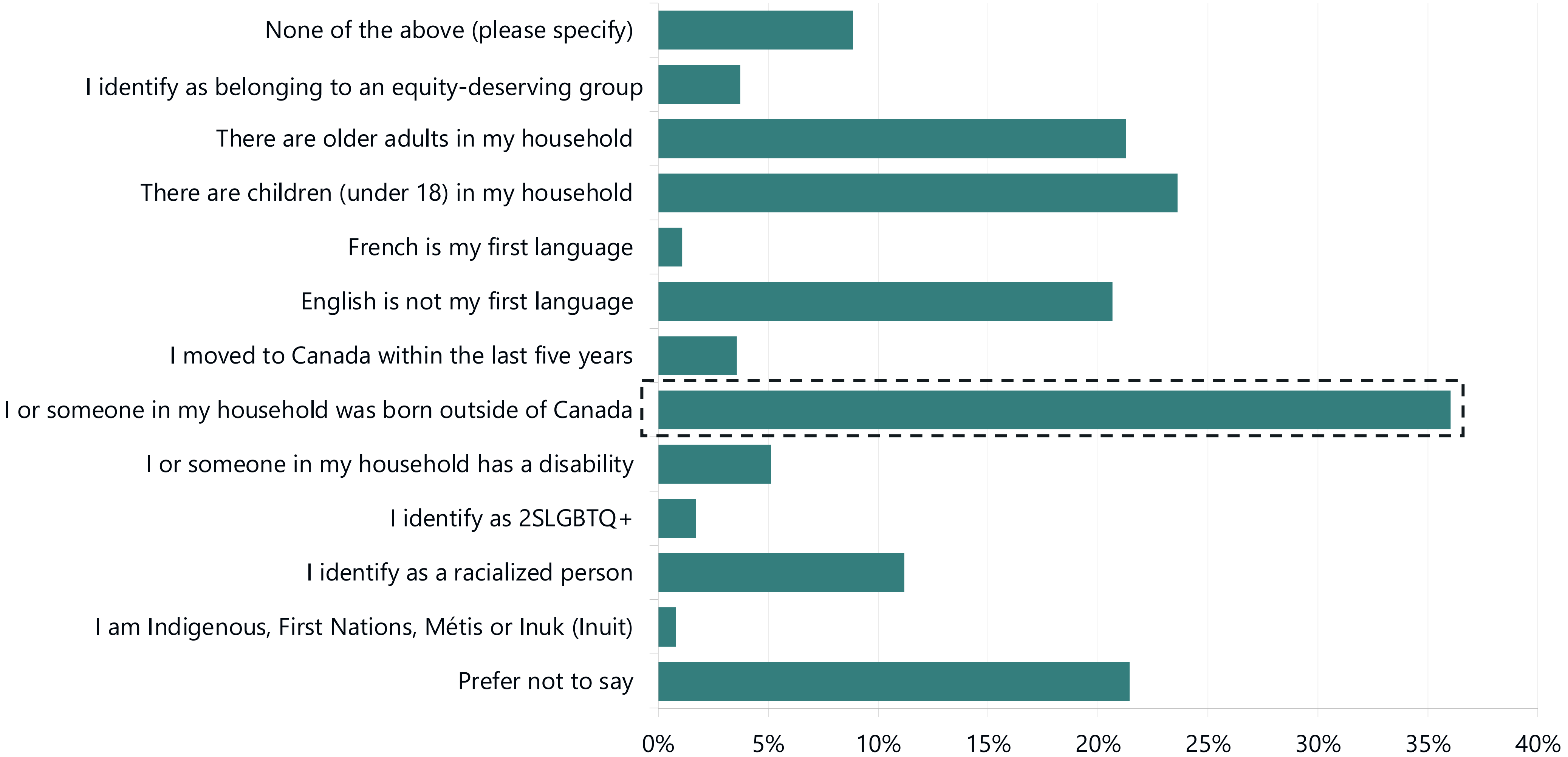


Demographics

Over a third of respondents told us that they, or someone in their household, was born outside of Canada.



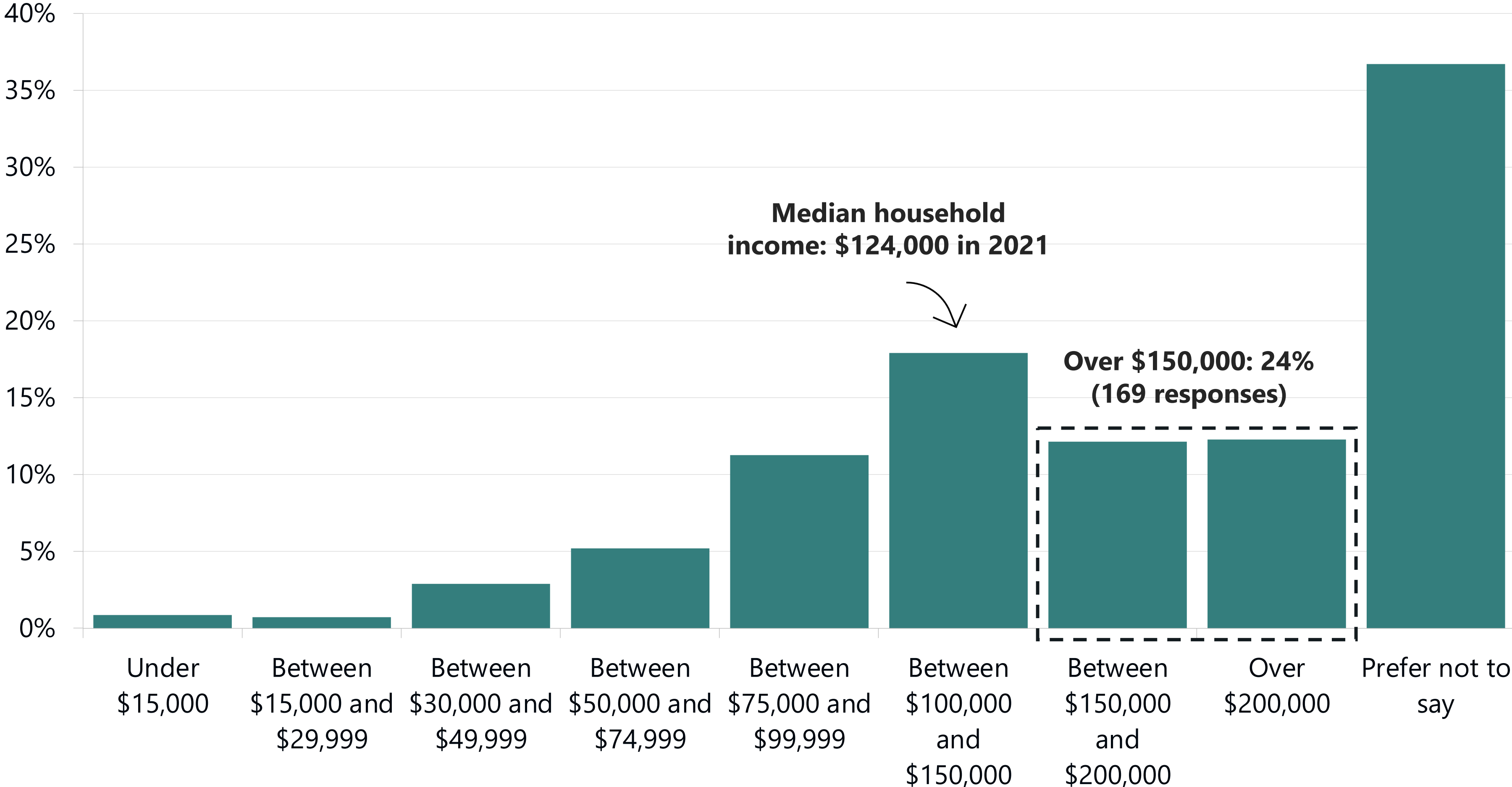
Please select any of the following that apply to you



Demographics

Almost a quarter of survey respondents had a total household income over \$150,000 in 2022.

? What was your total household income before taxes last year (2022)?



Demographics

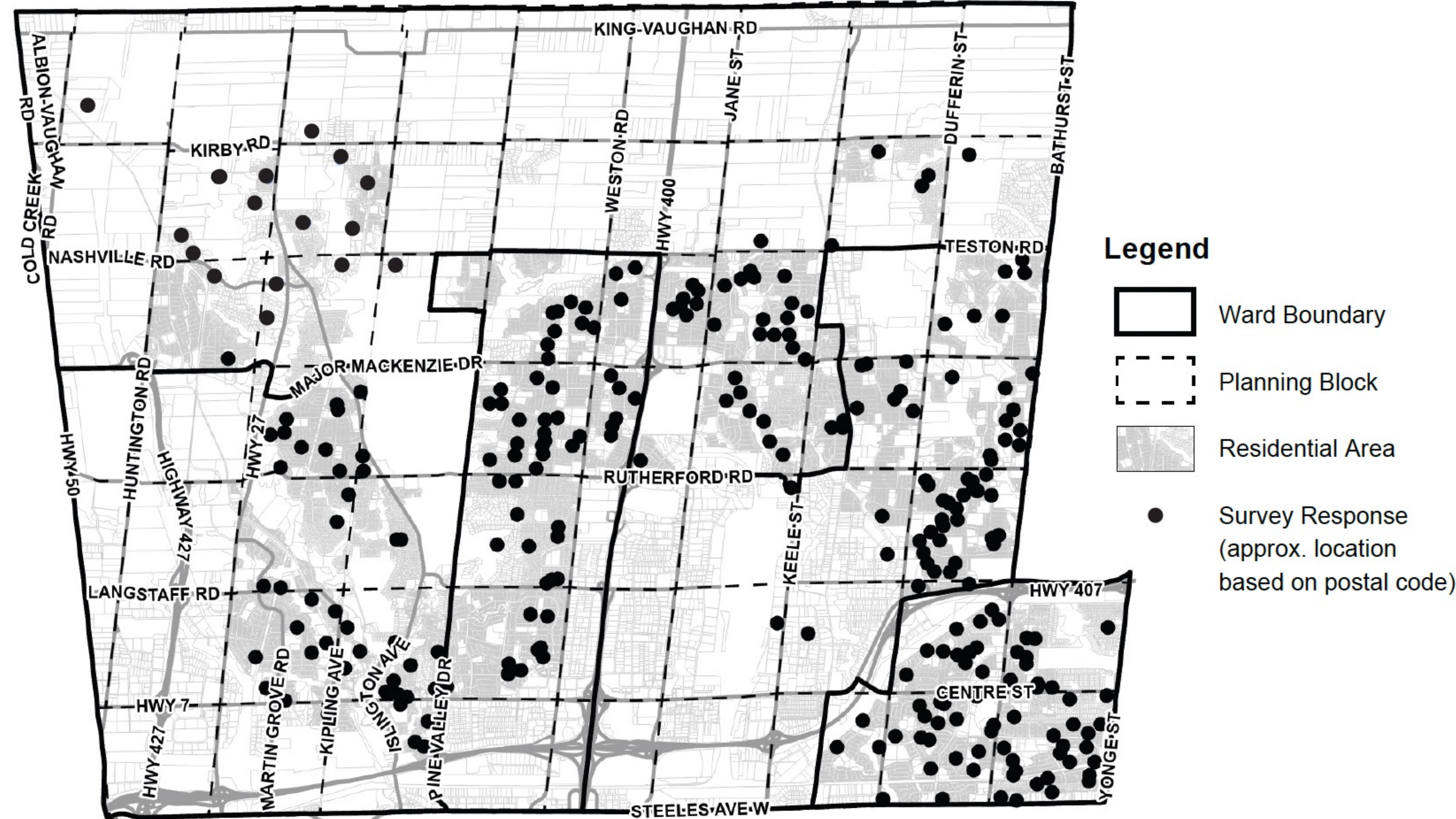
Over 80% of respondents live in Vaughan; a further 13% live in Richmond Hill, Markham, and Toronto.



Please provide your postal code

A breakdown of where survey respondents live is provided below:

- **Vaughan:** 437 respondents, 83%
- **Markham:** 15 respondents, 3%
- **Richmond Hill:** 36 respondents, 7%
- **Brampton:** 4 respondents, 1%
- **Toronto:** 16 respondents, 3%
- **Other :** 17 respondents, 3%





Community

pop-ups

Approach

One virtual community engagement session and five in-person “pop-ups” were held at community centres across Vaughan from November 18 – 30. The two-hour in-person sessions were held at various times of the day, and were located at:

- Vellore Village Community Centre: 33 participants
- Maple Community Centre: 25 participants
- Dufferin Clark Community Centre: 52 participants
- Al Palladini Community Centre: 28 participants
- North Thornhill Community Centre: 70 participants
- Virtual session: 17 participants

In total, **225 people attended** the pop-up engagements and provided input on two key activities:

- **Activity 1:** Ranking of the highest priorities for racquet sports. This exercise focused on gathering feedback on options for increasing access and improving the quality of racquet sports in the city.
- **Activity 2:** Feedback on which facilities are being used and opportunities for improving existing courts or providing new courts

The results of the engagement will help the City to assess how well its racquet sport facilities meet current and changing community needs. The following pages provide **a summary of key themes as well as the results of the two activities.**

Key insights

1

Participant profiles

1. There were **high levels of engagement**. There were more than 200 attendees which provided input across five community centre facilities as well as one virtual session.
2. There were a **wide diversity of views** with a range of participant profiles. This included:
 - Busy people (commonly parents) who reported that they would like to play a racquet sport but don't have time to fit it into their schedule.
 - Pickleball players, often who were often very passionate and had just finished (or were on their way to go) play and were focused on increasing the number of courts available to them as well as the availability of pickleball programs.
 - Tennis players who were concerned about keeping pickleball and tennis separate and increasing the number of courts available to them, including through bubbling.
 - People who were engaged in other racquet sports such as squash, racquetball and badminton who are interested in having the City undertake a study dedicated to their needs.
 - People who had limited experience and interest in playing the sports but were intrigued and interested in providing feedback.

Key insights

2

Tennis-specific comments

1. **More tennis courts** – participants reported that there are not enough courts and they are often too busy to use. There was a strong interest in increasing the number of courts including with the use of bubbling.
2. There was strong interest in providing **indoor courts or outdoor bubbled courts** to extend winter use.
3. Keep **pickleball separate** – tennis players reported that the sound and competition for available courts requires separating pickleball from tennis.
4. There was interest in **more community clubs** – particularly in underserved areas of the city.

3

Pickleball-specific comments

1. **More pickleball courts** – there was a strong interest in increasing the number of dedicated pickleball courts available to the public at both indoor and outdoor facilities.
2. Participants emphasized the **inclusive nature of pickleball** with the low impact to the body and highly social nature of the game.
3. **Improve the booking system** – participants reported that the system currently allows users to double-book indoor courts during drop-in times, which sometimes results in double the number of people the courts can accommodate.
4. **More night-time programming** – There is an interest in providing **more nighttime pickleball** as many of the drop-ins are currently during the day difficult to attend for people who work during the day.

Key insights

4

Programming considerations

1. There was **significant interest in programs** that could be made available for residents. This included:
 - A focus on children that can be done through summer camps, after school initiatives as well as in-school programming. It was noted that leading racquet clubs have initiatives that focus on three racquet sports (tennis, squash and badminton) to provide a more comprehensive and responsive approach to children's interests.
 - Increasing the availability of lessons, particularly for beginner and intermediate levels.
 - Strengthening awareness and communications of the availability of tennis and pickleball programs, particularly drop-ins.
 - Improving the indoor drop-in booking system to create a more responsive system.

5

New ideas

1. Participants identified **a range of innovative opportunities** for the City to consider, including:
 - Introducing tennis walls ("backboards") that allow players to hit the ball by themselves or with a partner.
 - Developing a facility for ice tennis (where players use skates on an outdoor tennis court covered in ice).
 - Using acoustic tarps at pickleball courts to reduce noise.
 - Using wind shields for tennis to reduce wind.
 - Creating pop-up or temporary tennis courts using floor tiles, for example in underused parking lots or empty lots where development will occur.

Activity 1: Ranking preferences

Explanation

We asked participants to rank their first, second, and third preferences across a range of options:

- More courts in new locations
- More courts in existing locations
- Improve court surface conditions
- Offer City-run programming
- Offer more court access to community racquet clubs
- More lighting to extend play hours
- I want to join a community or private racquet club
- Offer less court access to racquet clubs to increase the amount of public use time
- Indoor courts or outdoor bubbled courts to extend winter use



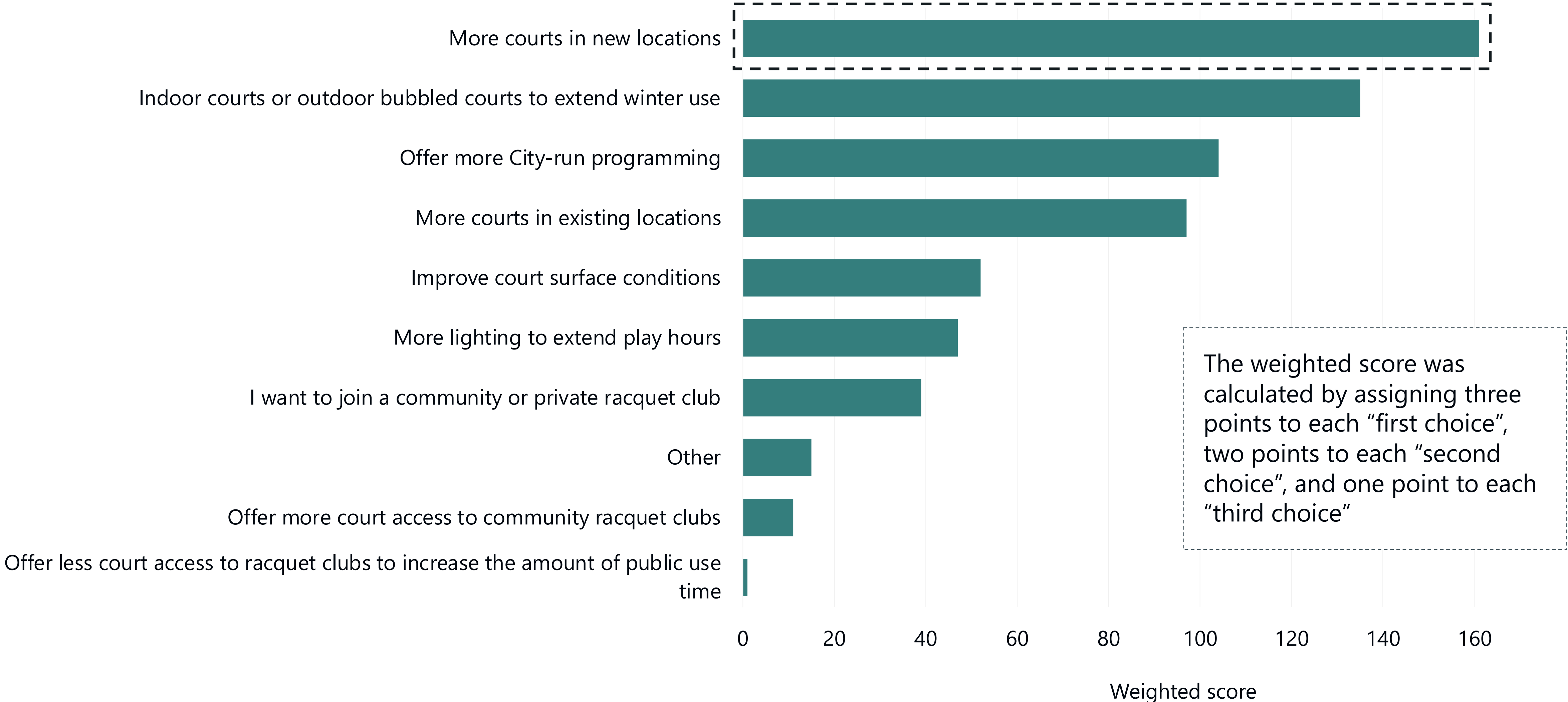
Activity 1: Ranking preferences

Unweighted scores (highest number of votes)



Activity 1: Ranking preferences

Weighted scores (by first, second, and third ranking)



Activity 2: Mapping activity

Explanation

We wanted to know which racquet sport facilities you already use, and where participants might want new ones in the future. We asked them to place coloured sticky dots on a map of Vaughan:

- Place a green dot where you are happy with the existing racquet sport facilities
- Place a red dot where you are not happy with the existing racquet sport facilities
- Place a blue dot where you would like additional tennis facilities
- Place a yellow dot where you would like additional pickleball facilities



Activity 2: Mapping activity

Themes

26

Place a green dot where you are happy with the existing racquet sport facilities

- Key clusters at Dufferin District Park, Velmar Downs Park, Chatfield District Park, Maple Community District Park, Oakmount Parkette Marita Payne Park, Glen Shields Park, and Thorndale North Park

13

Place a red dot where you are not happy with the existing racquet sport facilities

- Key cluster at North Thornhill District Park

15

Place a blue dot where you would like additional tennis facilities

- Key clusters at Father E. Bulfon Park and Downham Green Park

10

Place a yellow dot where you would like additional pickleball facilities

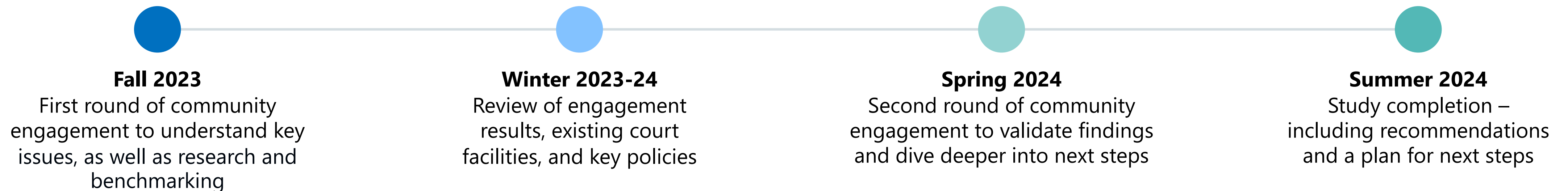
- Key cluster at Civic Park



Next steps

Thank you for your participation!

- **Thank you again to everyone who completed the survey or participated in the public pop-ups!** We appreciate your feedback and interest in this project.
- **We will continue to explore the themes and suggestions that were provided in this phase of public engagement.** This will include gathering additional information required to develop potential options for the City to consider.
- **A second round of public engagement will be held in the spring.** The purpose will be to gather specific feedback on a range of potential options – including on the choices and trade-offs the City will consider.
- **Stay tuned for further information** – we'd love you to stay involved!



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