

Urban Forest Management Strategy



What We Heard



Engagement Summary

From November 2023 to June 2024, City staff engaged with the community, including local organizations and interest holders, on the current and desired future state of Coquitlam's urban forest in order to support the development of an Urban Forest Management Strategy.

This report provides a summary analysis of key insights and input offered through the community engagement period. Additional project information is available at [LetsTalkCoquitlam.ca/UrbanForest](https://lets-talk-coquitlam.ca/UrbanForest).

During this engagement, **over 780 participants** shared their perspectives on Coquitlam's urban forest, including the benefits they value most, their top concerns about urban forest vulnerability, and their level of satisfaction with the number of trees in their neighbourhoods and with public tree management services. Participants identified where they feel improvements are needed, and the challenges and barriers they face, relating to trees or urban forest stewardship, and potential solutions related to trees on private property. Finally, participants were asked to describe their vision for the future of Coquitlam's urban forest, offering ideas on how to protect, manage and grow this valuable resource.

Details on engagement activities and who we heard from are included on page 9.

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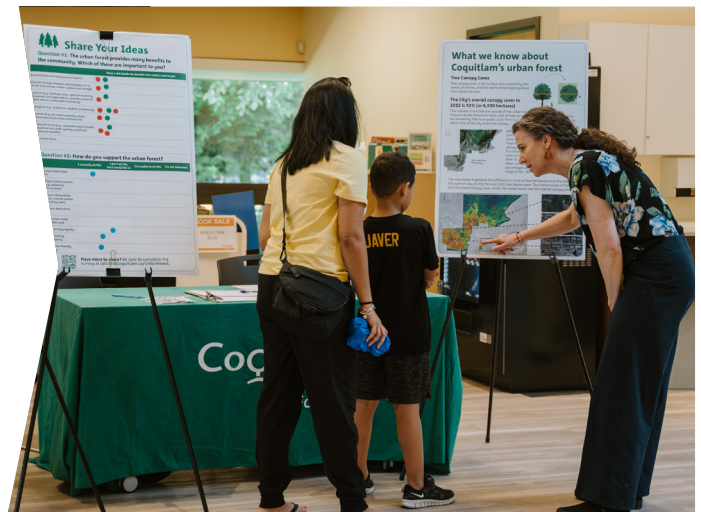


What We Heard

Key Insights

These insights will help inform decision-making for the development of an urban forest vision and the Urban Forest Management Strategy goals, and guide the prioritization of actions and allocation of resources to ensure the Strategy meets the needs and expectations of the community.

- **Strong Community Support for Urban Forest Protection:** There is a clear consensus among participants that urban forests are vital to the city's environmental health, the well-being of residents and quality of life overall.
- **Concerns about Development Pressure and Climate Change Impacts:** Many are concerned about how urban development and climate change are affecting the urban forest.
- **Desire for Clearer Regulations and Enforcement:** The findings show that respondents would like to see stronger, clearer and more consistent regulations and enforcement to protect and replace trees.
- **Importance of Public Engagement and Education:** The findings show that the respondents believe there is a need for better public engagement and education through the City's promotion and outreach efforts.
- **Solutions to Addressing Barriers for the Community:** The findings reveal barriers to engaging in stewardship programs, including limited space to plant trees, strata and property management rules, and maintenance concerns. When asked about solutions, survey respondents suggested the City could provide free or discounted trees, education on planting and care, tools and support for residents.
- **Satisfaction with Current Levels of Services:** Overall, participants are satisfied with current City urban forest management services but are less satisfied with the level of tree protection during development, tree planting and replacement, and public education.
- **Urban Forest Vision:** There is a shared vision for a growing, connected and resilient urban forest that is easy to access by all. It is viewed as an important asset offering ecological, social and economic benefits.



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What We Heard

What We Learned – Public Survey Findings

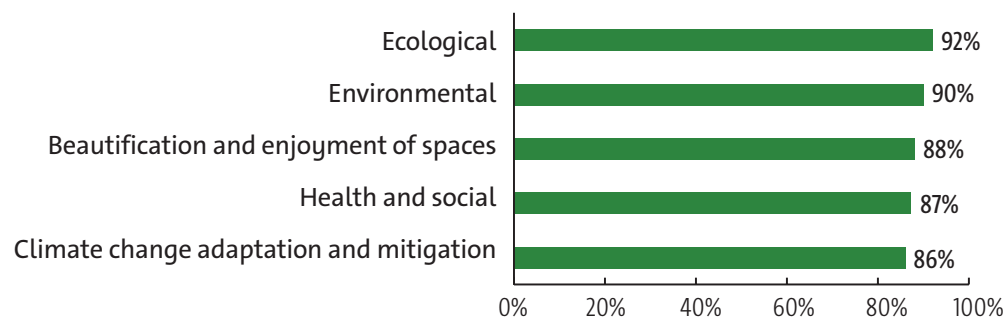
Survey results revealed an engaged community that is informed, connected to and concerned about its urban forest. A significant **93%** of residents* reported awareness of what an urban forest is and its benefits.

Key Highlights:

- **Engaged Voices:** There was a significant amount of open-ended feedback received, indicating that respondents have a passion for, and interest in, urban forestry.
- **Active Participation:** **86%** of residents have participated in at least one tree-related activity in the past five years, reflecting a strong commitment to stewardship.
- **Desire for More:** **83%** expressed interest in engaging in additional tree-related activities, eager to deepen their involvement.
 - In particular, participants are interested in taking part in stewardship efforts to nurture, preserve and enhance the urban forest, including providing hands-on care, such as watering public trees.
- **Learning Opportunities:** Participants (**53%**) indicated a desire to learn more about trees and the urban forest, about City initiatives like the Tree Spree program, and what they can do to help.

Benefits of the Urban Forest

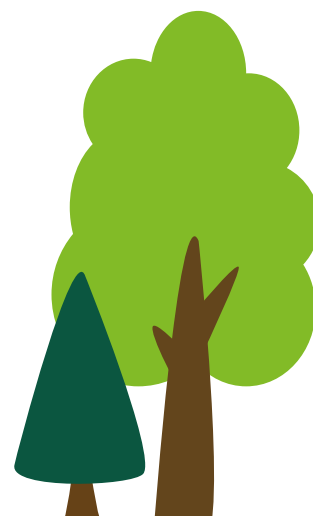
Participants identified the top benefits they feel the urban forest provides as:



Urban Forest Concerns

- Private property development (**79%**)
- Climate change (**79%**)

**Residents refers to survey participants who reported living in Coquitlam.*



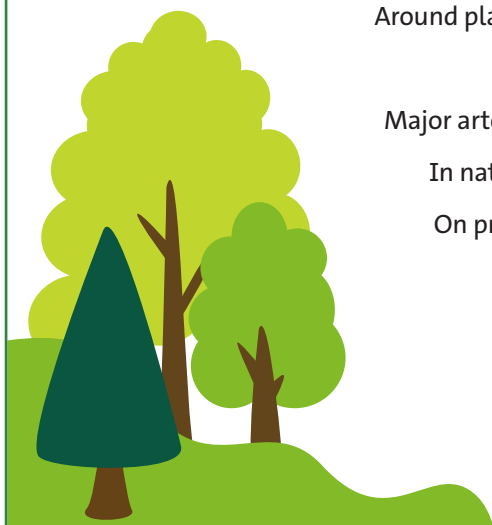
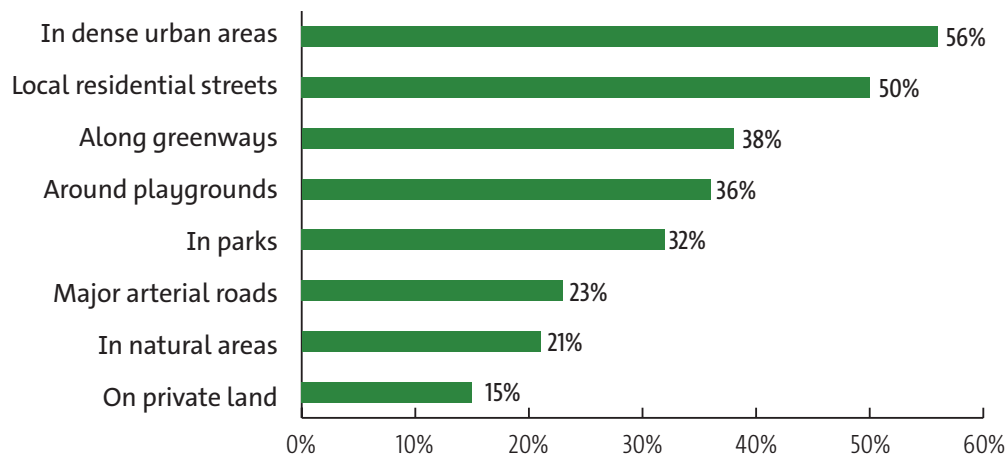
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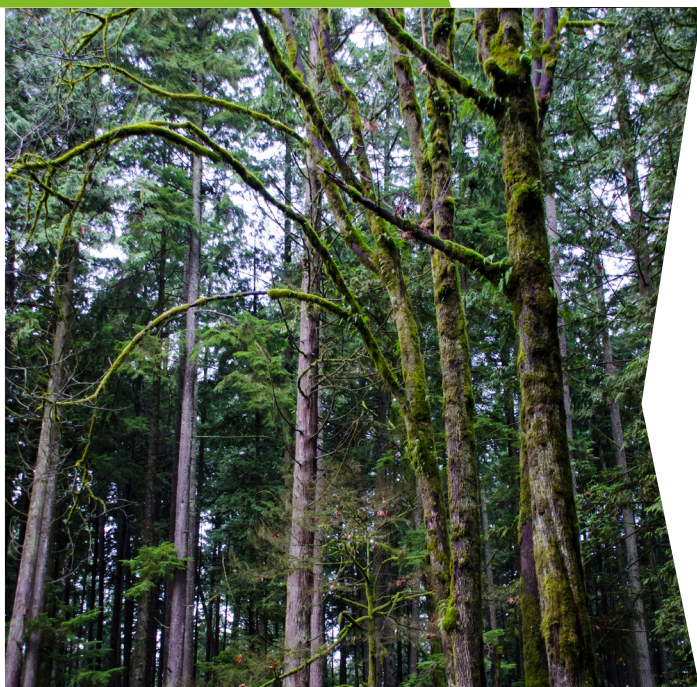
Top Locations for More Trees in Coquitlam

Participants were asked to prioritize their top three areas in the city for more tree planting:



Desire For More Neighbourhood Trees

65% of residents* reported wanting more trees in their neighbourhoods.



*Residents refers to survey participants who reported living in Coquitlam.

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What We Heard

Stewardship Activities, including Residential Tree Planting

Support for Tree Planting on Residential Properties

In addition to the **43%** of residents* who reported having planted a tree on their property within the last five years, **90%** of residents said that, if they could, they would or might consider planting a tree on the property where they live.

While less than half (**43%**) of Coquitlam residents reported some level of awareness of the City's Tree Spree giveaway program, **70%** of residents said that they would or might take advantage of the City's tree giveaways to plant a tree on the property where they live.

Support for Residents Experiencing Challenges and Barriers

65% of participants reported experiencing challenges with trees on or near the property where they live. Additionally, when it came to planting trees where they live, **43%** of residents reported experiencing barriers, with the top barriers being: not having space for trees (**45%**), their stratas, co-op boards, landlords, or property managers not being supportive (**41%**), and financial and/or physical barriers to planting or caring for a tree (**21%**).

Supporting Residents in Expanding the Urban Forest

To help residents facing challenges and barriers, the following potential City initiatives were identified by respondents:

- ✓ Provide free or reduced cost trees
- ✓ Low-cost expert tree assessments
- ✓ Guidance on proper tree planting and care to reduce risks
- ✓ Tips for sustainable leaf management and gardening in various conditions
- ✓ Information about the City's Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan
- ✓ Easy access to lists of tree management companies

Desire for Information and Knowledge-Sharing Opportunities

Throughout the survey, residents demonstrated a desire for more knowledge and resources, with nearly one-third (**32%**) of participants wanting more information on topics such as tree selection, planting, maintenance, pest management, and the overall value of trees. **27%** of residents specifically requested information to share with their property managers, strata, co-ops boards, and landlords about the benefits of trees, showing a willingness to take an active role in advocating for tree planting on residential properties.

**Residents refers to survey participants who reported living in Coquitlam, across all housing types and tenures.*



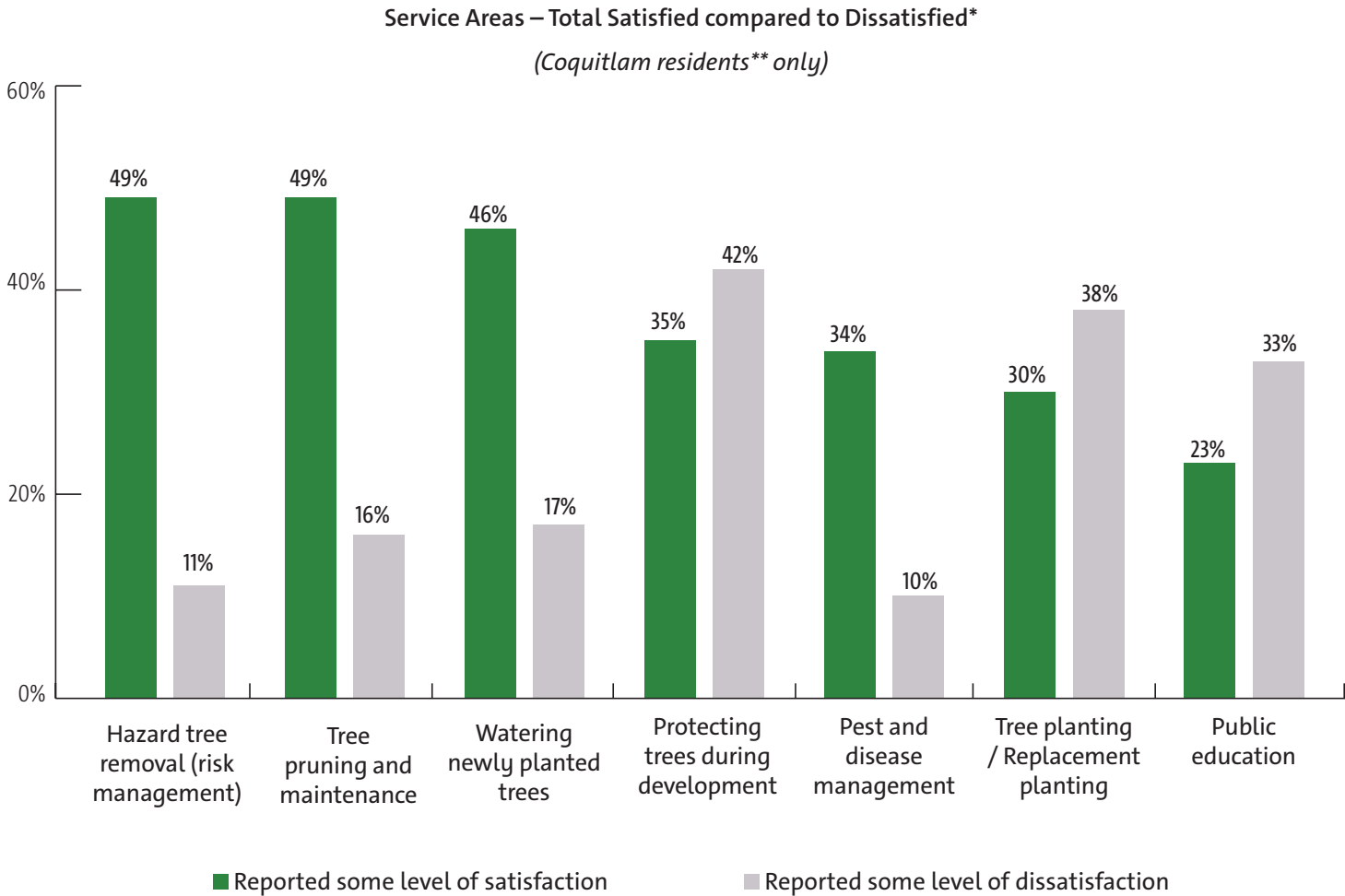
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What We Heard

Tree Management

Satisfaction with Current Level of Service on Public Land

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with the City’s current tree management services on public lands across seven service areas. The highest satisfaction ratings were for hazard tree removal, tree pruning and maintenance, and watering new trees. In contrast, satisfaction was lowest when it came to protecting trees during development, managing pests and diseases, tree planting, and public education.



*The chart above does not include the percentage of respondents who reported being neutral / neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, unsure, or having no opinion.

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What We Heard

Priorities for City Action

Survey participants were asked to prioritize a list of possible actions the City could take for properties undergoing and not undergoing (re)development.

Priorities for properties undergoing (re)development:

- 1 Require more tree retention, where possible (**82%**)
- 2 Explore unique ways to provide canopy cover in dense neighbourhoods (**76%**)
- 3 Require replacement trees on every development property (**73%**)
- 4 Developers provide financial compensation to the City's urban forest enhancement fund when tree replacement cannot match tree removal (**67%**)

Priorities for properties not undergoing (re)development:

- 1 Protect heritage trees (**70%**)
- 2 Protect trees where safe to do so (**66%**)
- 3 Protect trees over a certain size, where safe to do so (**61%**)
- 4 Allow the removal of trees at the homeowners discretion, but require replacement trees be planted (**38%**)
- 5 Allow the removal of trees at the homeowner's discretion, but require a cash payment to allow the City to replace the trees in the community (**22%**)
- 6 Allow flexibility for property owners to manage their trees with minimal restrictions (**21%**)

Urban Forest Management Strategies that the City Could Employ

Presented with six ways the City could manage its urban forest, survey participants were asked to rate the importance level for each. All of the presented strategies (listed below) were deemed important with **76%** to **91%** of participants rating each option as 'important' or 'somewhat important'.

- ✓ Improve success and health of trees on new developments (**91%**)
- ✓ Retain more existing trees on sites to be developed, where possible (**89%**)
- ✓ Plant more trees along roads (**88%**), in parks and natural areas (**87%**), and on or near schools (**85%**)
- ✓ Provide more information on the benefits and care of trees (**84%**)
- ✓ Provide incentives for residents to plant trees on their property (**82%**)
- ✓ Create more opportunities for residents to get involved in urban forest stewardship (**76%**)

Participants shared additional ideas including more education, incentives, stricter tree protection regulations (including penalties), urban planning approaches and development requirements, environmental and ecological practices, and opportunities to collaborate with community organizations, school districts, and other municipalities and levels of government.

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What We Heard

2050 Urban Forest Vision

60% of participants shared their vision for Coquitlam's urban forest in 2050, with the top visions being:

- A thriving, well-maintained urban forest focused on tree health, biodiversity, native species, and increasing canopy cover (85%)
- Major improvements, with more trees planted and existing trees protected (83%)
- Intentionally planned with sustainability in mind, including balanced growth and carefully chosen tree types (61%)
- Equitably distributed across the city, especially in dense urban areas, public spaces, and school grounds (59%)
- Resilient and adaptable to climate change (34%)
- Increased public awareness and appreciation for the benefits of trees (28%)



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What We Heard

About This Engagement

What We Did

Public survey



473
submissions

Online mapping activity



100
submissions

Council Advisory Committee
engagements*



41
participants across
two committees
with relevant
mandates

Eight in-person 'pop-up'
events across Coquitlam



engaging
188
people

Three small group
sessions



engaging
30
participants**

Visits to
LetstTalkCoquitlam.ca/UrbanForest



Over
1,900
visits



Over **32,000**
people reached via the City's
social media channels (Facebook,
Instagram, X)

**Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Committee, and Sport and Recreation Advisory Committee*

***The Community Working Group, Invasive Plant Advisory Committee, and Youth Council*

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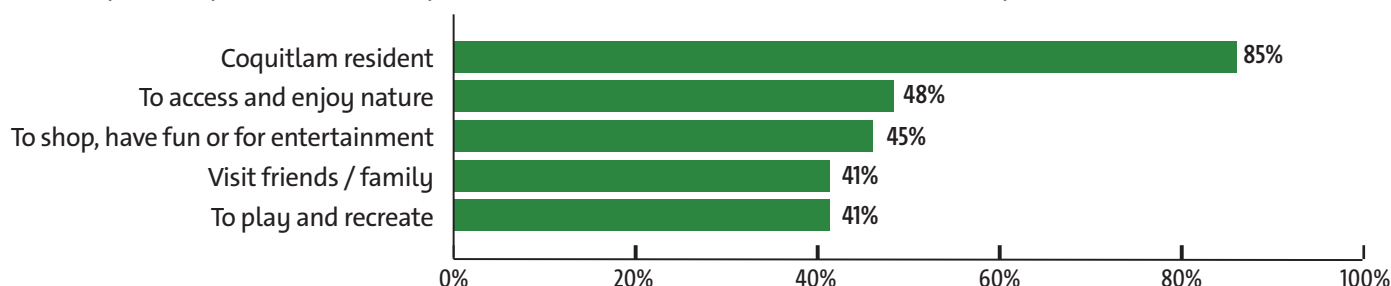
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Who We Heard From – Survey Respondents

The following demographics represent survey respondents, and do not include participants at engagement events and other types of outreach.

Connection to Coquitlam

The top five responses to what respondents' (or their household's) connection to Coquitlam included:

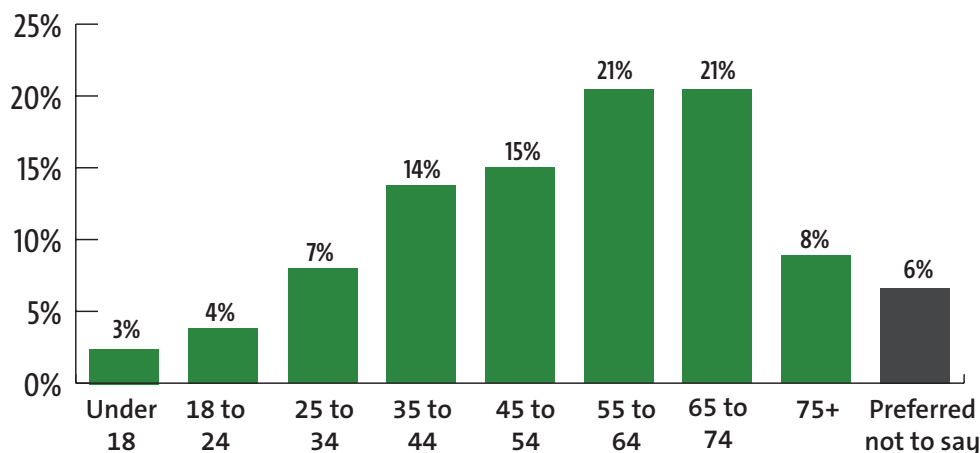


All Coquitlam neighbourhoods were represented with the top being:



Age

While we heard from people of all ages, participants were largely older with **65%** being 45 and older.

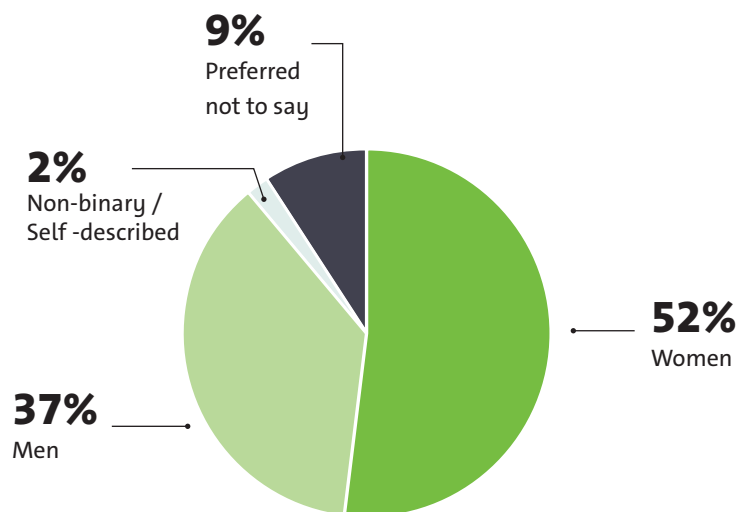


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What We Heard

Gender Identity



Housing

We heard from Coquitlam residents with various types of housing situations, including:

Homeowners (79%)

Single-family detached house dwellers (59%)

Apartment / condominium dwellers (19%)

Townhouse / rowhouse dwellers (13%)

Renters (10%)

Those who neither rent nor own (6%)

Owners of rental properties (6%)

Additional Identities / Lived Experiences

Participants came from diverse identities, backgrounds and experiences.

The most common categories among them and their households were:

- Long-time residents (10 or more years) (55%)
- Households with children / youth (18 years old and under) (19%)
- Those from racialized communities (14%)
- Single-income households (14%)
- Those living with a disability, mobility challenges and / or who are neurodivergent (13%)

