

# Parks and Natural Areas

## Citizens' View Panel

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# Background and Methodology





## Background and Objectives

Citizens' View is an online panel that encourages citizens to participate in shaping City of Calgary programs and services through surveys, discussions and engagement activities.

The objective of this research is to begin to collect some basic understanding of how Calgarians feel about Parks and Natural Areas, with the intention of proceeding with broader, statistically representative research in the future.

## Methodology

An online survey was conducted with Citizens' View panelists.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the survey was sent out to 2,823 panelists. Among the 1,379 who came to the survey site, 1,126 (40% of the outgo) panelists completed the survey by December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

The following findings are not considered statistically representative of all Calgarians. The work is exploratory as a result of the make up of panelists currently on the Citizens' View panel. The results should be regarded as directional and should not be projected to the larger population without research with a representative sample of citizens.

## Key Findings and Insights



## Key Findings and Insights

- Overall, panel members visit natural areas quite frequently, with two-thirds visiting once a week or more often in months without snow on the ground.
  - Visits are less frequent in months with snow on the ground, but still two-in-five panelists visit once a week or more often.
- Familiarity with the term “biodiversity” is almost universal among panel members, with just 2% saying they have not heard of it, and just 13% unsure of what it is.
- When asked for top of mind concerns about habitat restoration, almost one-in-five had no concerns or could not mention anything specific.
  - Of the concerns mentioned, the top mentions were weeds/non-native plants, and animal-related concerns (wildlife, insects, and rodents), and an unsightly appearance.
- When presented with some images of examples of restored areas, in general, opinions were fairly positive about having areas like these in their community.
- When looking at specific restoration activities, panel members are generally supportive.
  - The activities with the strongest support are those that add to natural habitats, like planting more foliage or improving or adding trails.
  - Doing less – mowing, weed control – is still supported, but more weakly.
  - Closing trails is not well supported.
- Almost all panel members (95%) support some level of habitat restoration, though the extent of support and the range of locations where they support it varies.
  - Support is strongest for habitats that already have some restored areas.
  - Support is weakest for medians and along boulevards.
- Attitudes about natural areas are overall very positive.
  - Less than one-third of panelists wish The City would mow and maintain natural areas more.

# Key Findings and Insights

## Continued

- Panel members are accepting of closures to park areas.
  - Signage explaining the reason for the closure is seen as a must-have.
  - Length of the closure should also be posted.
  - Generally, shorter closures are tolerated better than longer closures.
  - Whether the closure is to preserve plants or animals does not seem to matter.
- Interest in learning more about habitat restoration and its benefits is fairly high (85% 'very' or 'moderately' interested), but the strength of the interest is moderate (52% 'moderately' interested).
- Interest in volunteering on a habitat restoration project is much lower (57% 'very' or 'moderately' interested).
- When asked for best information sources, many panel members indicated they wanted a range of options and multiple information channels to be used.
- Three-quarters of the sample own a yard they can modify, and of those, two-thirds are 'moderately' (40%) or 'very' (24%) interested in restoration in their yard.
- Panel members would be more likely to try habitat restoration if they had more information on how to do it, there were financial incentives, or it was perceived as more acceptable by Bylaw Services and their neighbours.
  - Three-quarters of panelists would support their neighbours doing habitat restoration in their yards.
- Support for The City applying to become a Bee City is strong, with just 11% opposed.
- The majority (86%) of panel members is aware of pollinator population decline in Calgary.
- Potential extinction of pollinators is a concern for nearly all panelists (92% 'very' or 'moderately' concerned).



## Detailed Findings





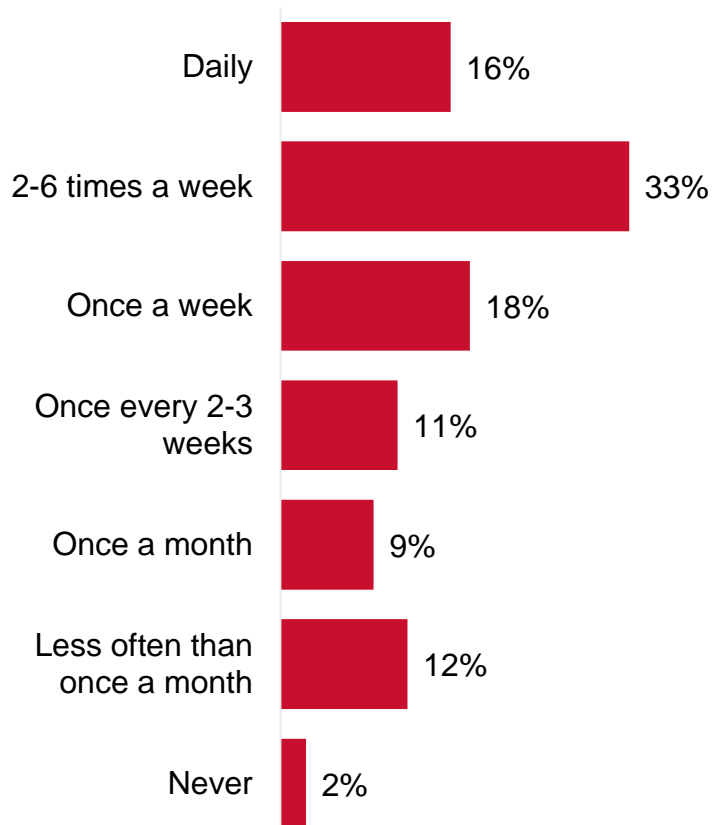
# Natural Area Usage and Features



# Natural Area Usage

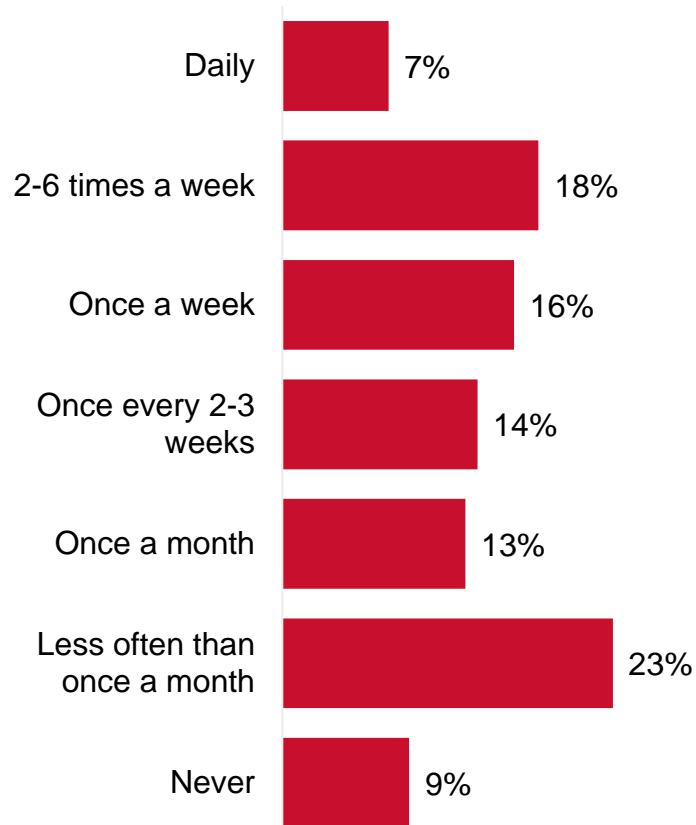
Overall, panel members visit natural areas quite frequently, although more often in months without snow on the ground than with.

## Without Snow on the ground



Base: All respondents (n=1,171)

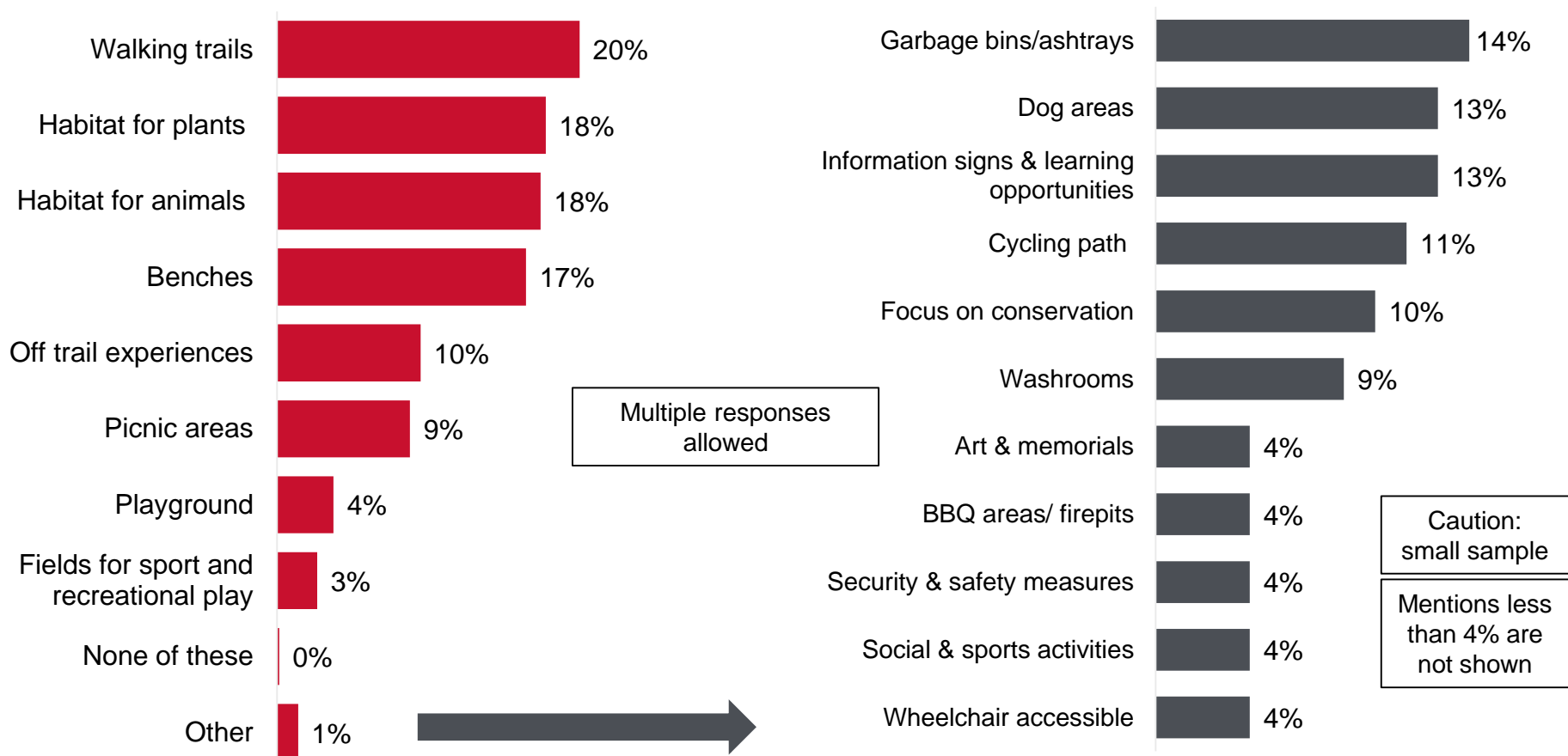
## With Snow on the ground



Base: All respondents (n=1,172)

# Features Expected of Natural Areas

When presented with a list of features of natural areas, the most selected features were walking trails (20%), habitat for plants (18%), habitat for animals (18%), and benches (17%). Additional responses written in included: garbage cans, off leash areas for dogs, and information signs.



Base: All respondents (n=1,124)

Base: Respondents who selected 'Other': (n=70)

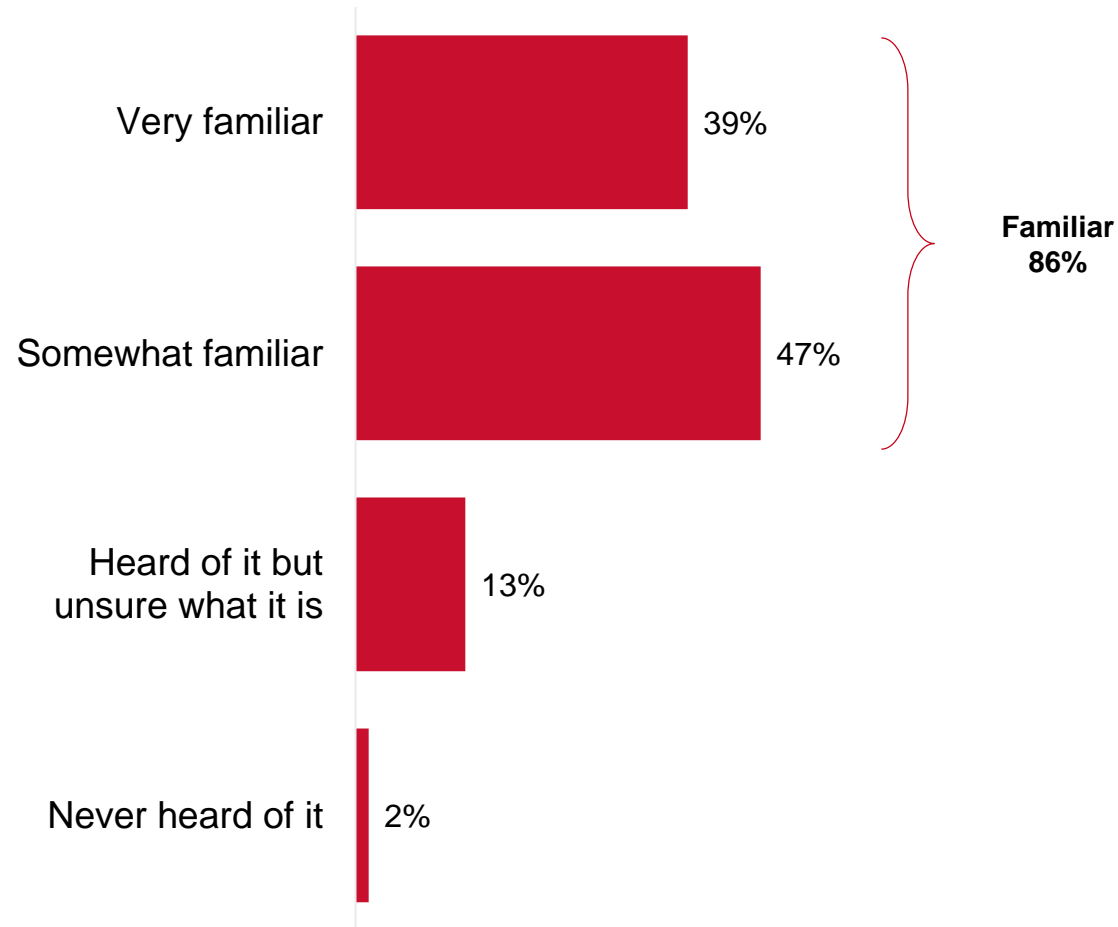


# Biodiversity and Naturalization



# Familiarity with “Biodiversity”

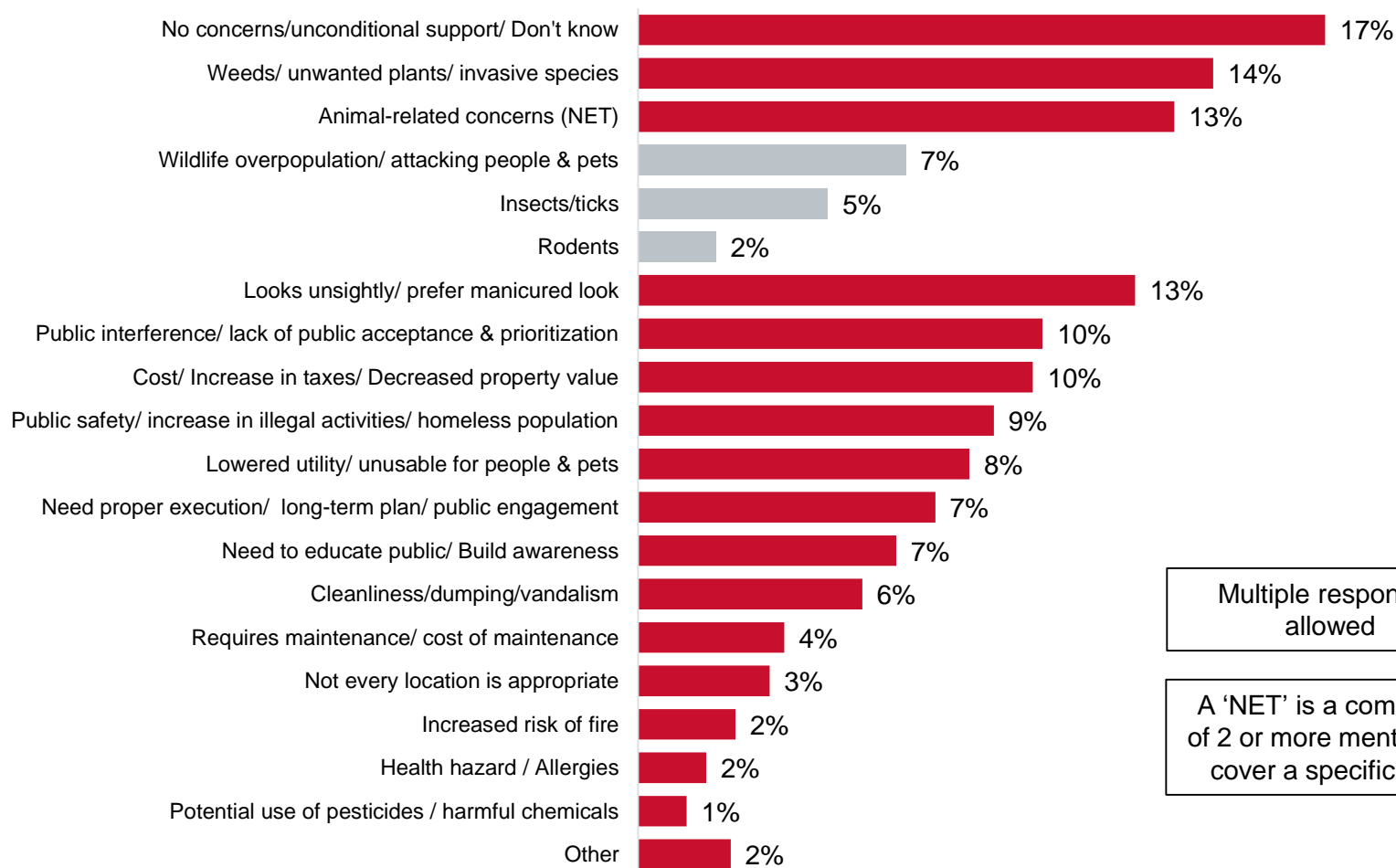
Stated familiarity with the term “biodiversity” was quite high among panelists. There was no follow up question to test actual familiarity.



Base: All respondents (n=1,166)

# Biggest Concerns

While panel members are generally supportive of habitat restoration, they have a number of concerns, including concerns related to non-native & invasive plants, animal-related concerns (i.e., insects/ticks, rodents, and wild animals), and unsightly look.



Multiple responses  
allowed

A 'NET' is a combination  
of 2 or more mentions that  
cover a specific theme

Base: Respondents who provided comments (n=815)

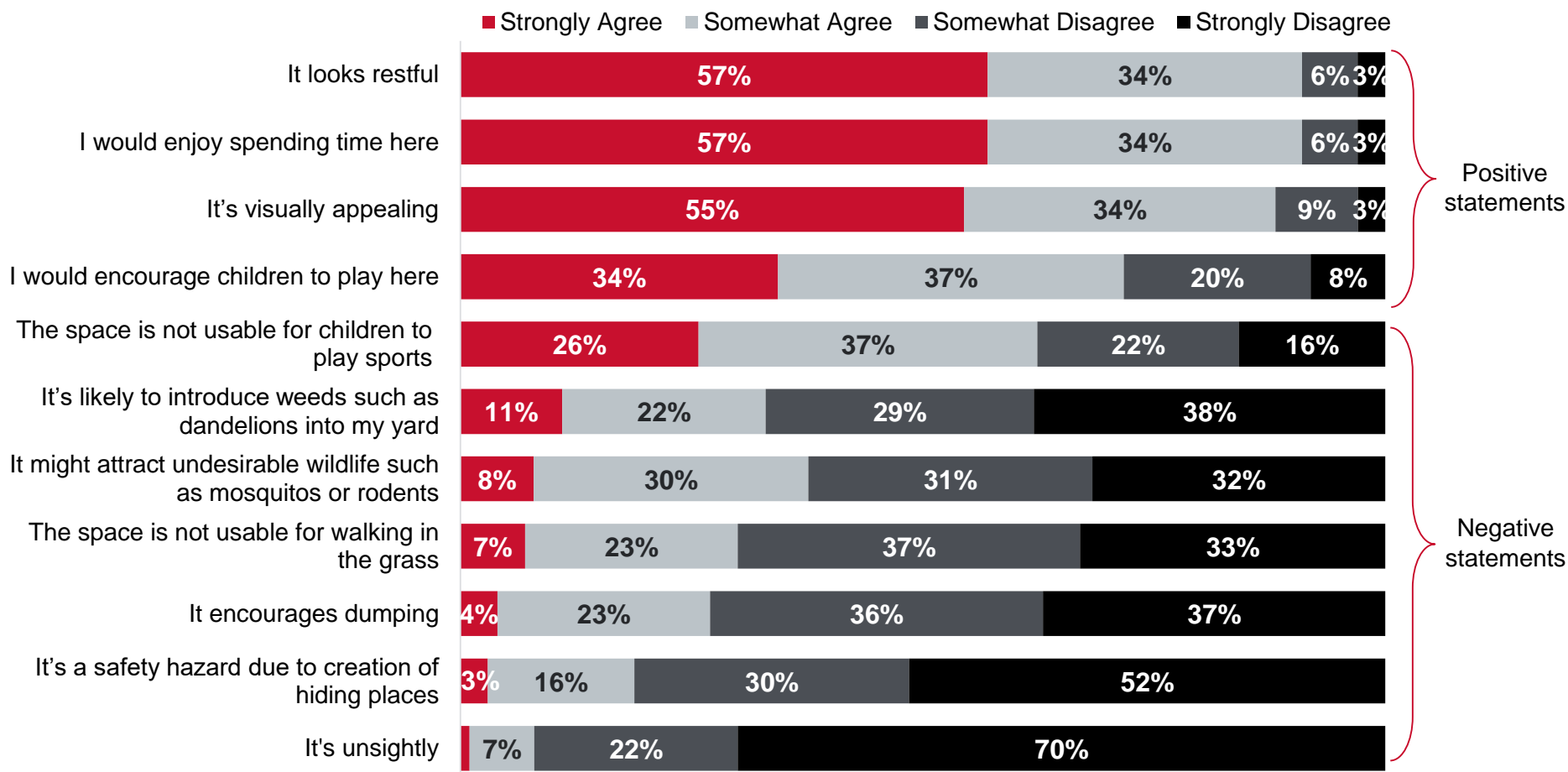


# Images of Naturalized Areas



# Opinions About Natural Areas

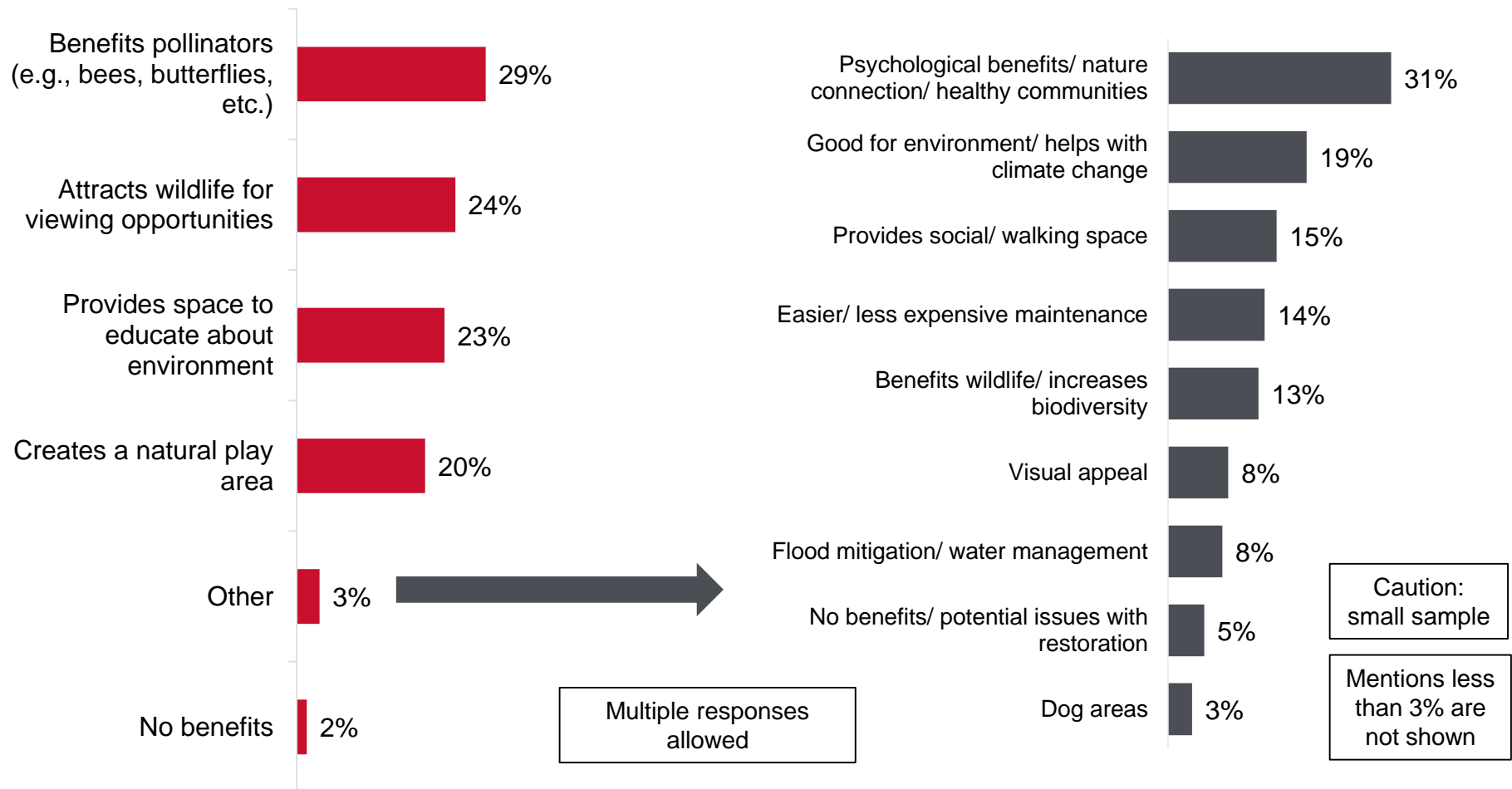
Panelists were shown images of areas that have been recently restored and asked to agree or disagree with a series of positive and negative statements if an area like this was in their community.



Base: vary from 590 to 671

# Benefits of Natural Habitats in your Community

Generally, panelists said that having areas restored to natural habitats in their community would bring many benefits. Among the “other” mentions were encouraging health and wellness, improving environmental concerns, socialization and exercise, and less expense to The City.



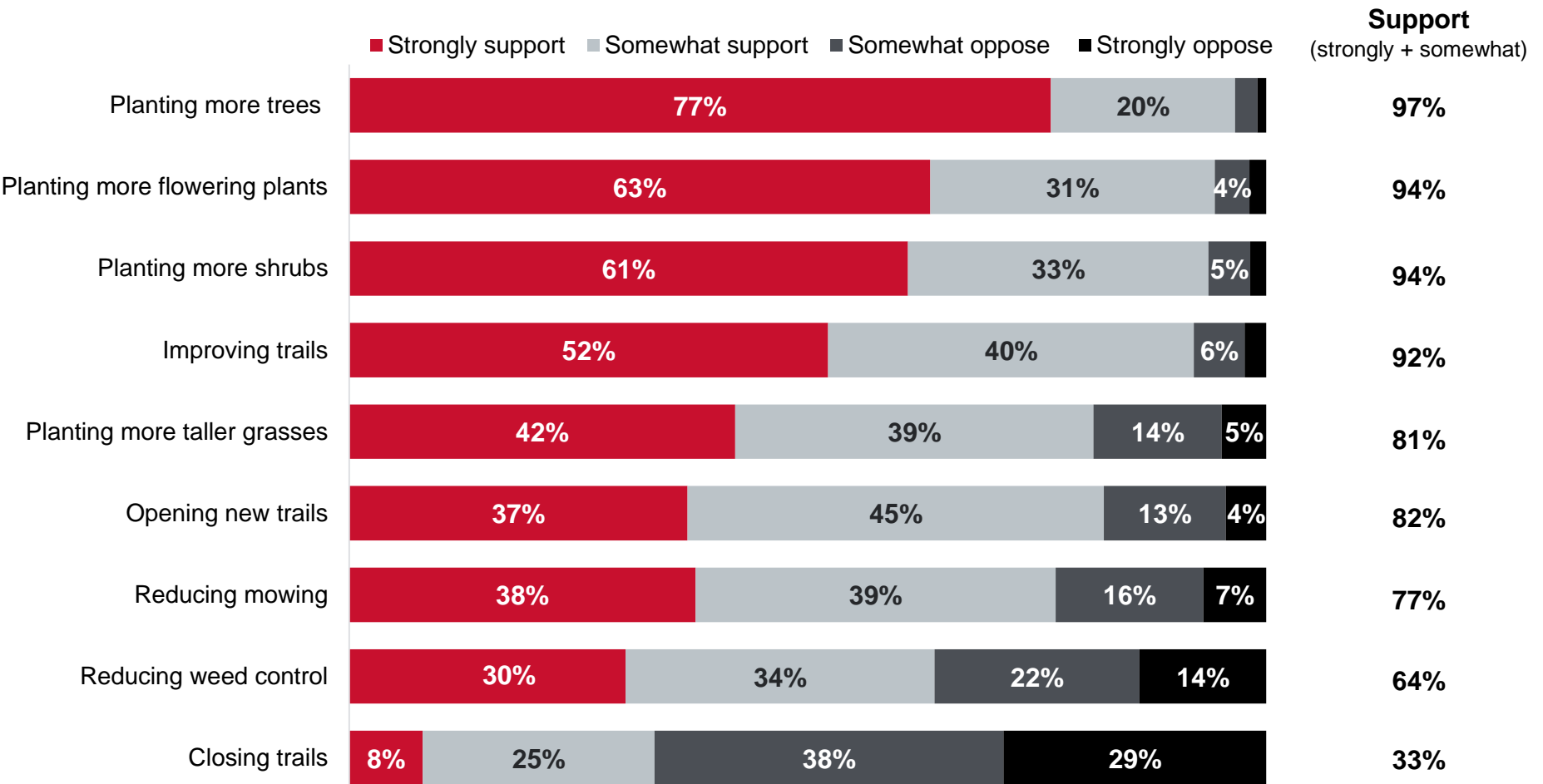
Base: All respondents (n=1,121)

Base: Respondents who selected 'Other' (n=118)



# Support/Oppose Specific Activities

Panel members support restoration activities that are perceived as “adding” to natural habitats, like planting more vegetation, and improving trails. Support was lower for restoration activities that appear to “take away” from natural habitats, like reducing mowing or weed control and closing trails.

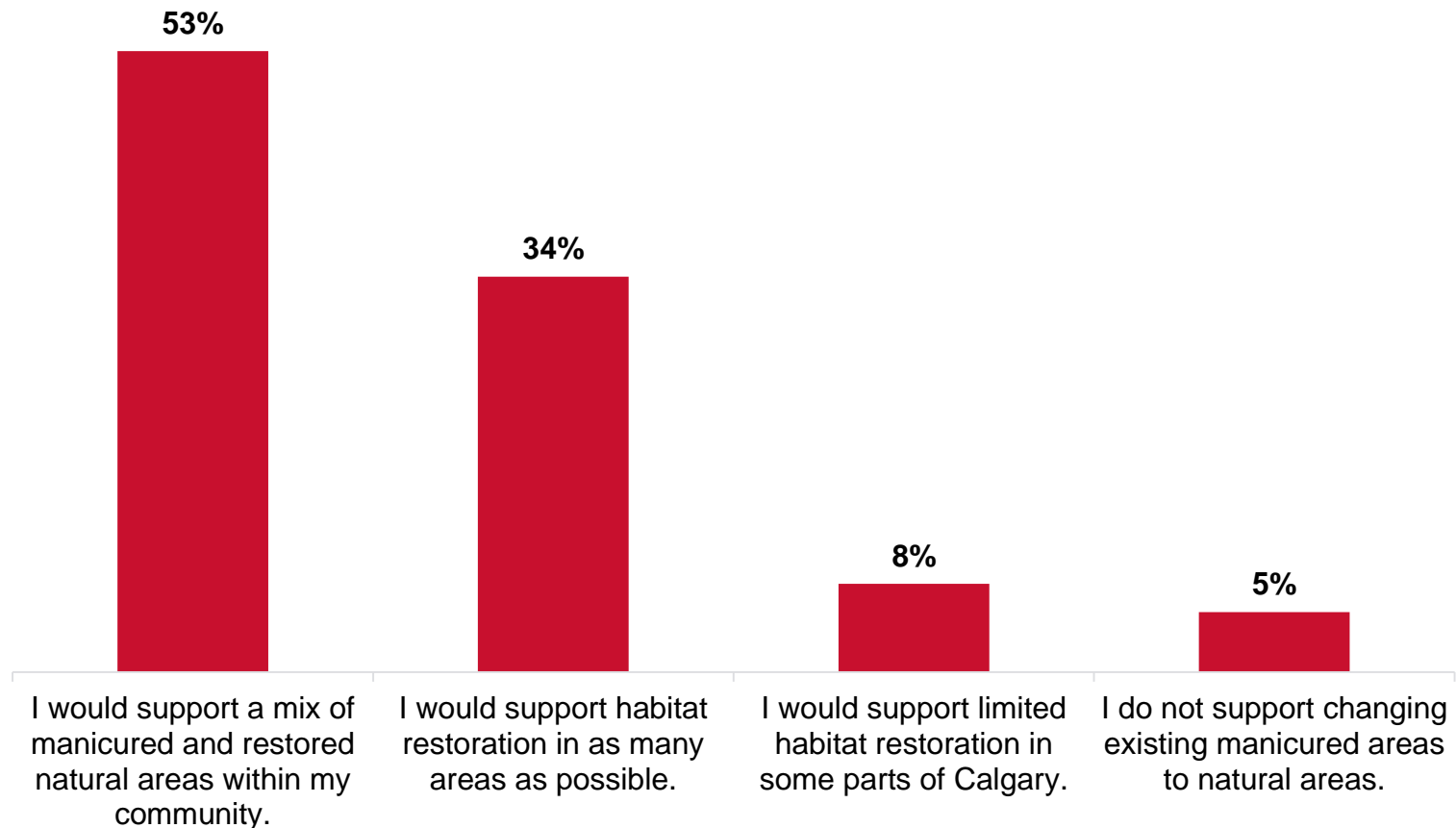


Bases vary from 1,096 to 1,149

To what extent do you support or oppose the following activities that help restore natural habitats in your community?



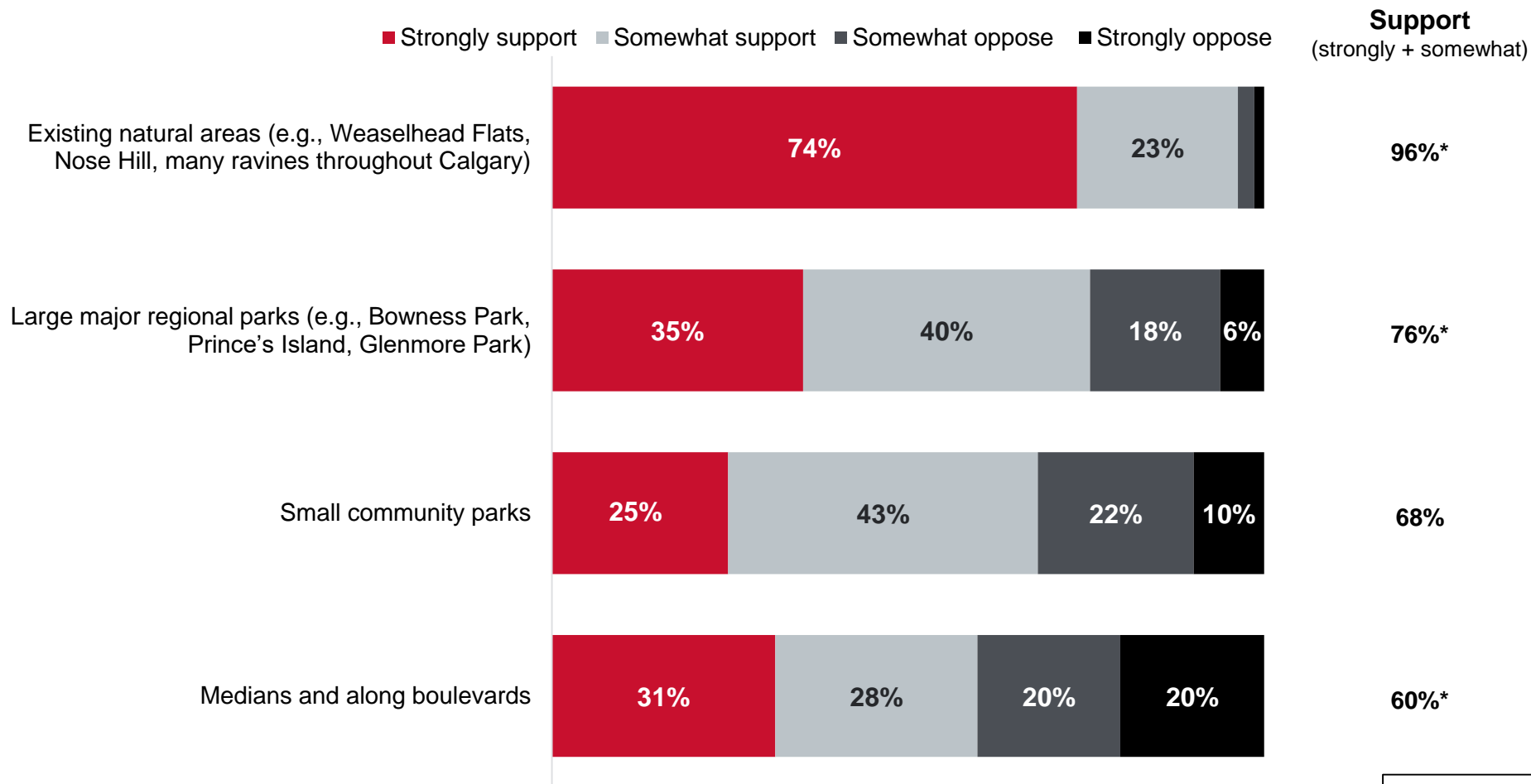
Almost all panel members (95%) support some level of habitat restoration, though the extent of support and the range of locations where they support it varies.



Base: All respondents (n=1,146)

# Support/Oppose Restoration in Specific Habitats

Support is strongest for habitats that already have some restored areas. More than half of panelists support restoration in all habitats; however, the strength of the support is lowest for small community parks. The greatest opposition is for medians and along boulevards.



Base: All respondents who support some level of habitat restoration. Bases vary from 1,078 to 1,084

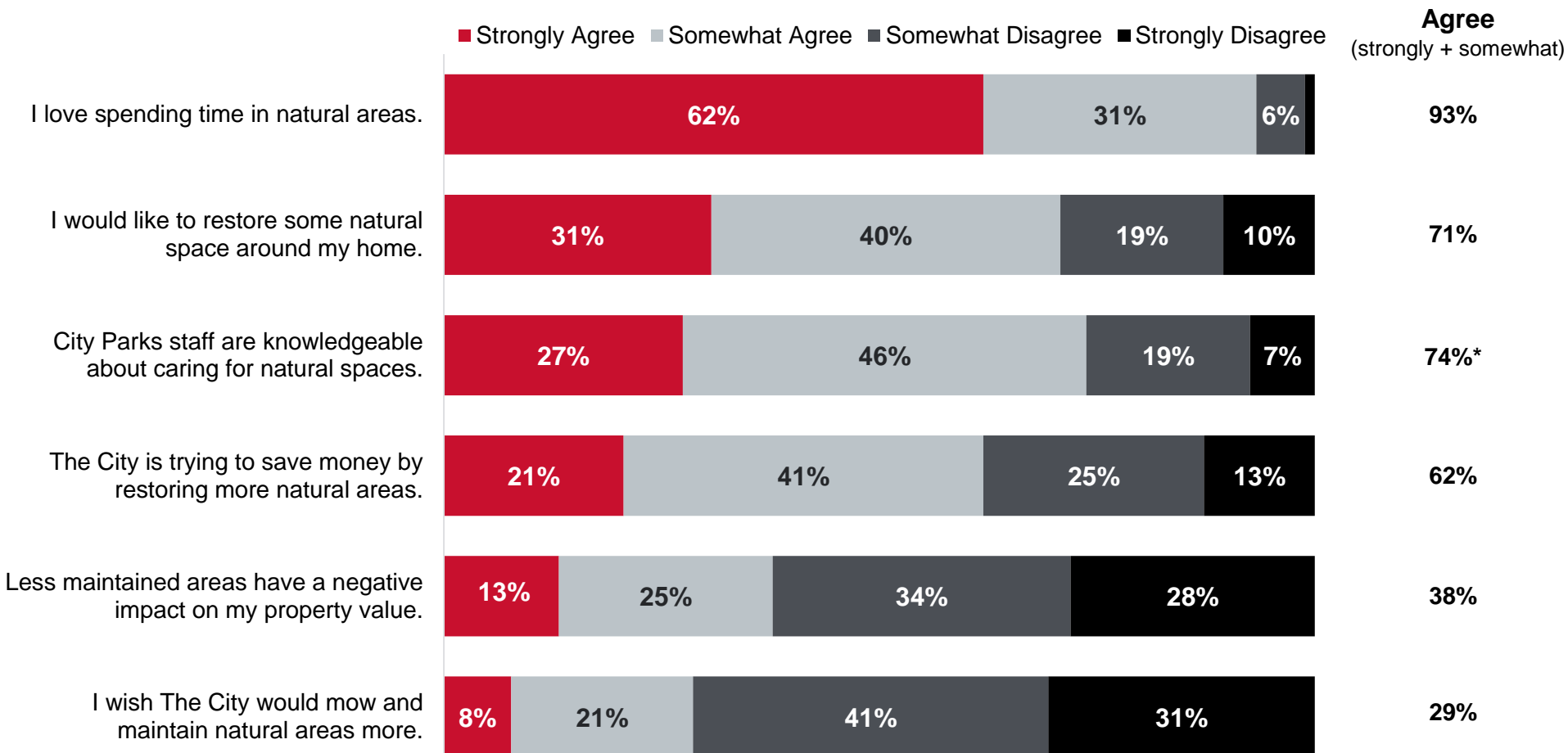
\*Rounding

To what extent do you support or oppose restoration to a natural area for the following types of habitats?



# Attitudes About Natural Areas

Overall, panel members agree with positive attitudes about natural areas. Just over one-third of panelists believe that naturalization negatively impacts their property value. There is an opportunity to strengthen the perception that City Parks staff are knowledgeable, with just one-quarter agreeing strongly.



Bases vary from 984 to 1,133

\*Rounding

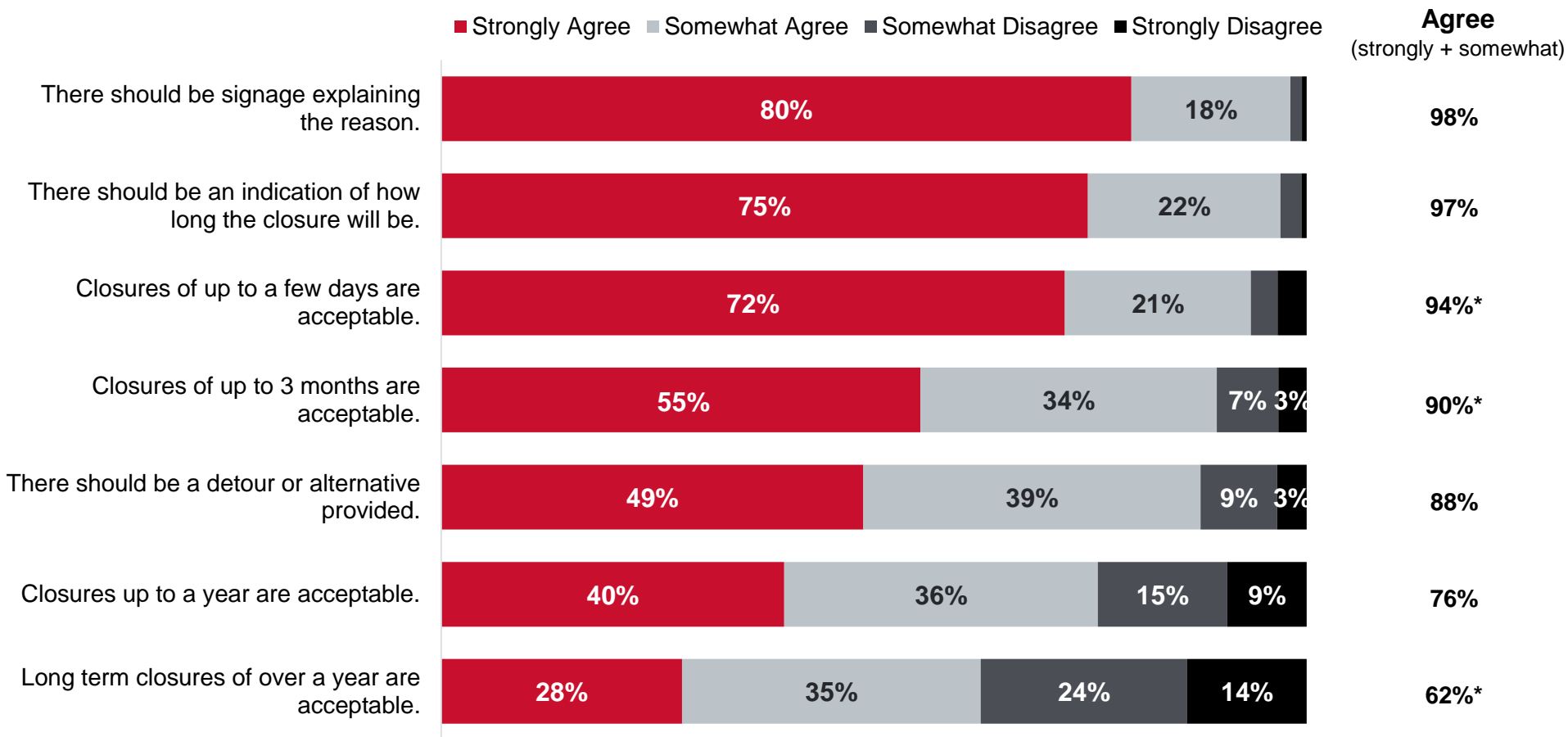
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

# Closures



# Closures for Plant Preservation

Panelists are very accepting of closures to park areas to preserve plants and habitats, as long as the reason and expected length are indicated. Shorter closures are more acceptable than longer closures.



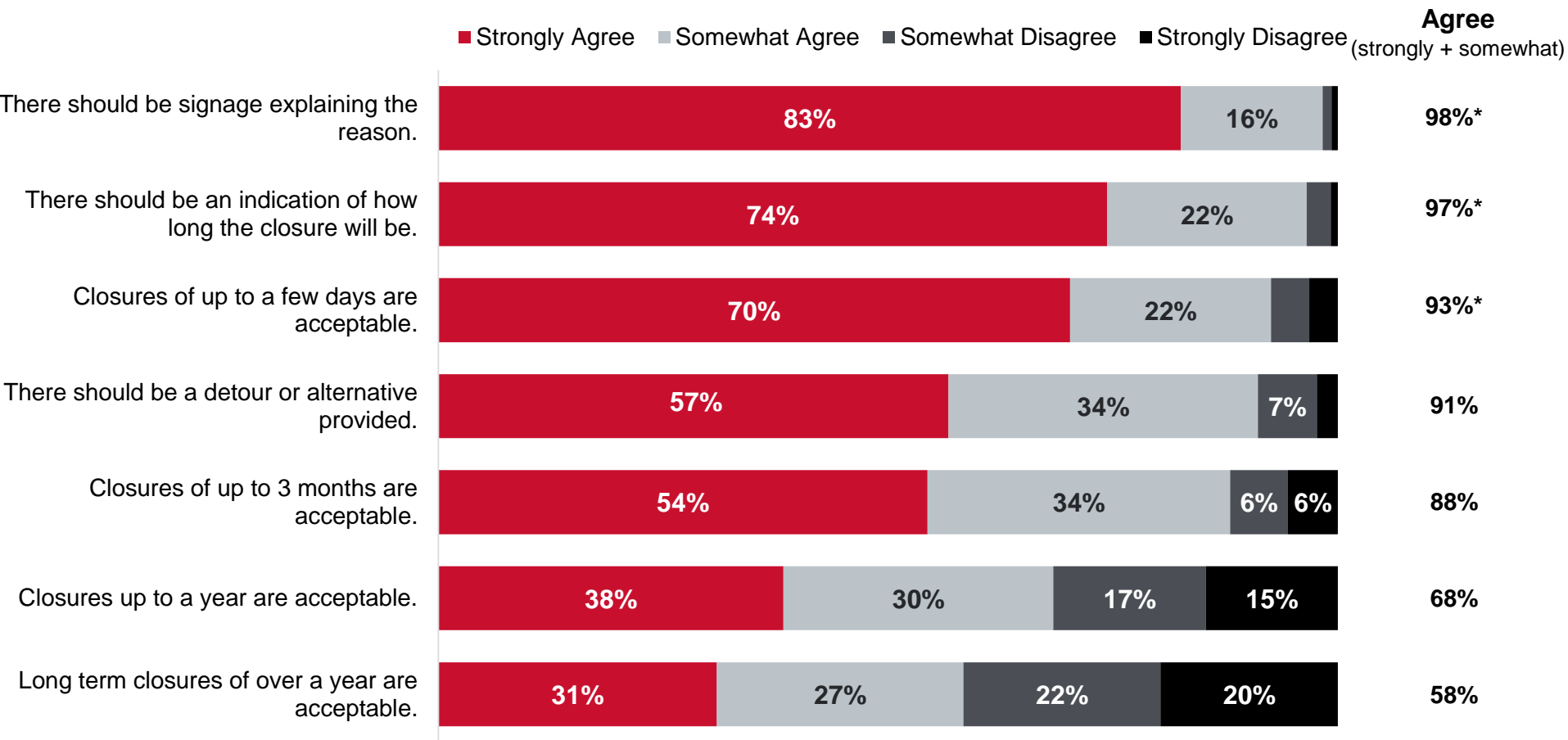
\*Rounding

Sometimes park areas are closed to the public in order to preserve plants and habitats (e.g., to allow for an area to regrow). Which of the following statements best reflects your opinion about this practice? Bases vary from 1,098 to 1,120



# Closures for Animal Preservation

Similar to opinions about closures for plant protection, closures to park areas to preserve animals are very well tolerated, as long as there is information provided and the duration is as short as possible.



\*Rounding

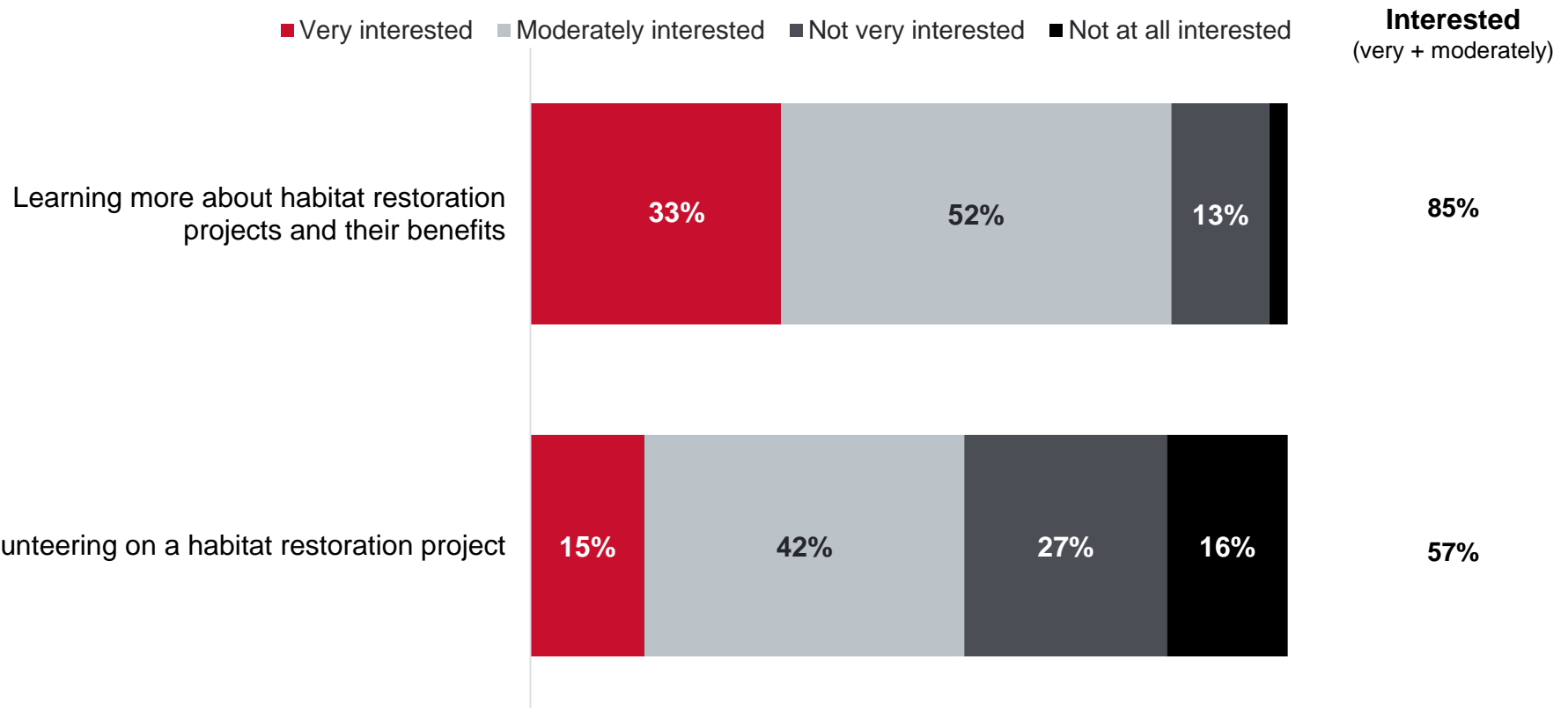
Sometimes park areas are closed to the public in order to preserve animals (e.g., to allow coyotes space with their pups). Which of the following statements best reflects your opinion about this practice? Bases vary from 1,101 to 1,119

# Learning and Doing



# Learning and Volunteering

Interest in learning more about habitat restoration and its benefits is fairly high among panelists; but interest in volunteering on a project is quite a bit lower.



Bases vary from 1,098 to 1,118

# Information Preferences

Panel members prefer a broad range of information sources, and most panelists selected multiple channels (respondents selected on average 4.6 sources of information).



Multiple responses  
allowed

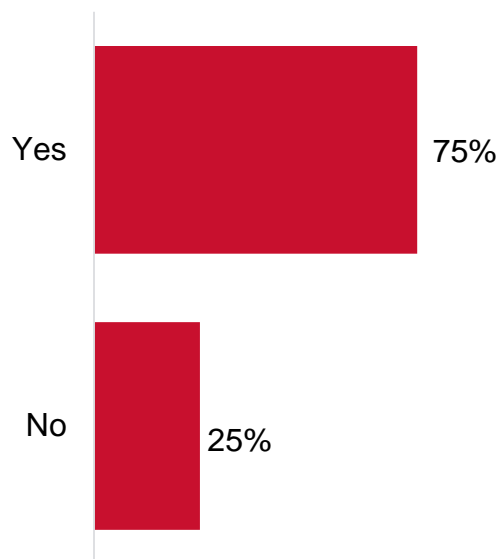
Base: All respondents (n = 1,125)



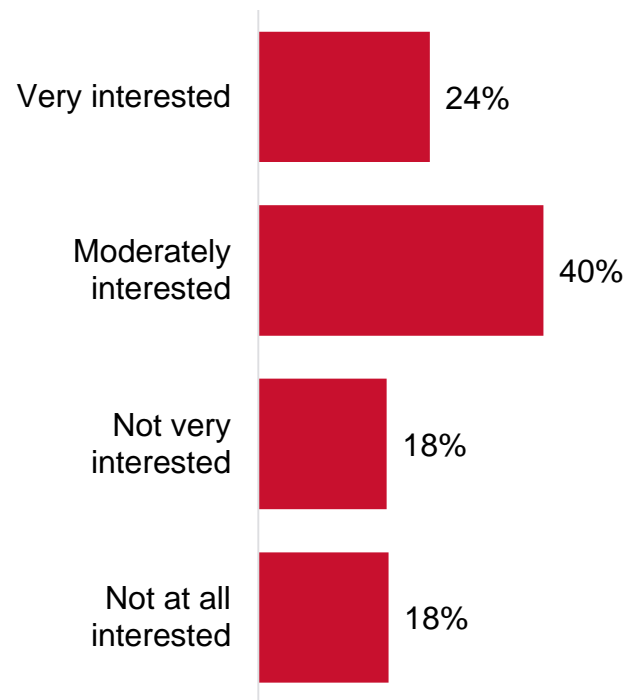
# Interest in Attempting Habitat Restoration in Their Own Yard

Among panelists who own a home with a yard they can modify, approximately two-thirds are interested in doing some habitat restoration at home; however, just one-quarter are “very” interested.

## Own a Yard You Can Modify

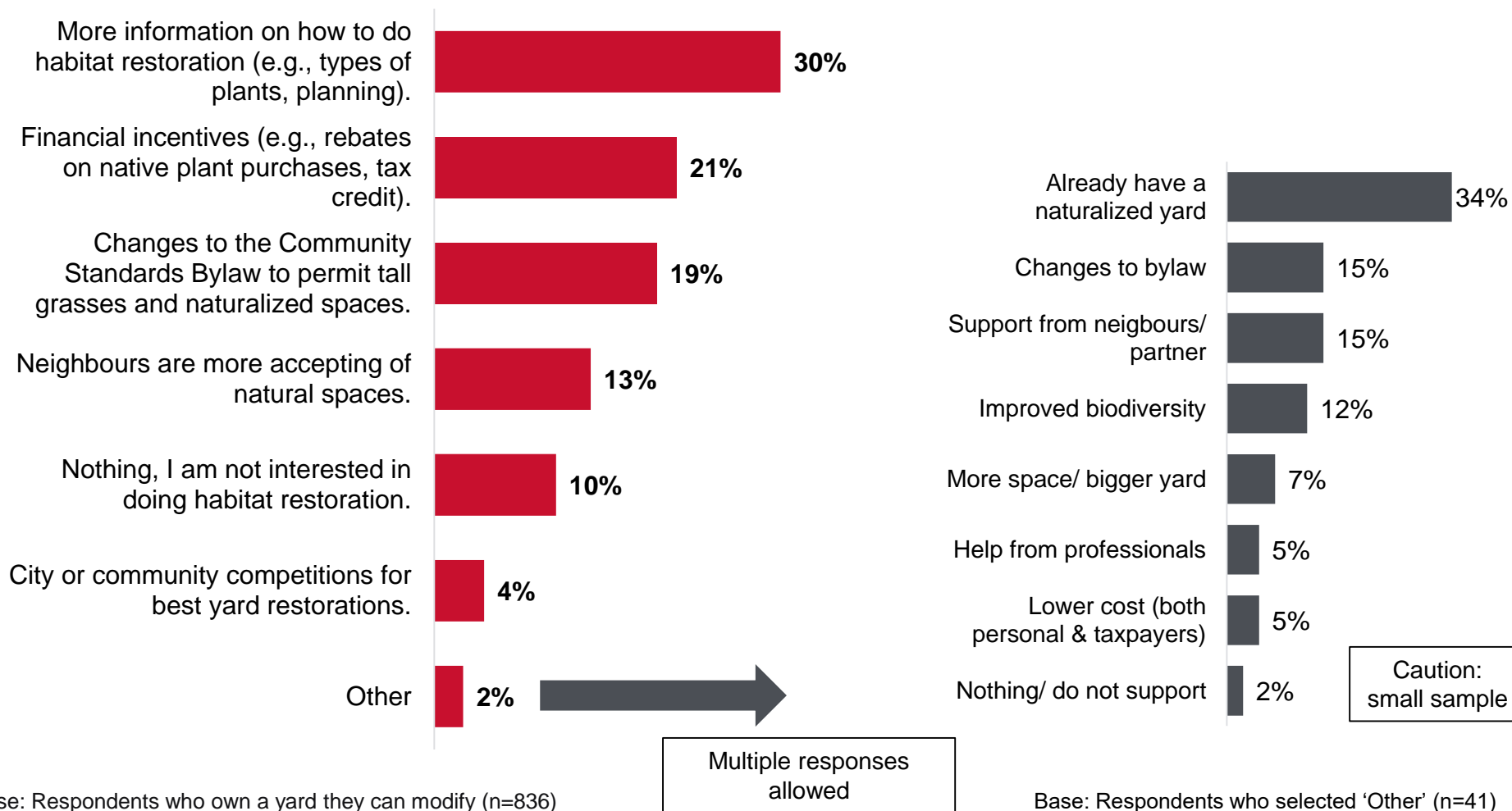


## Level of Interest



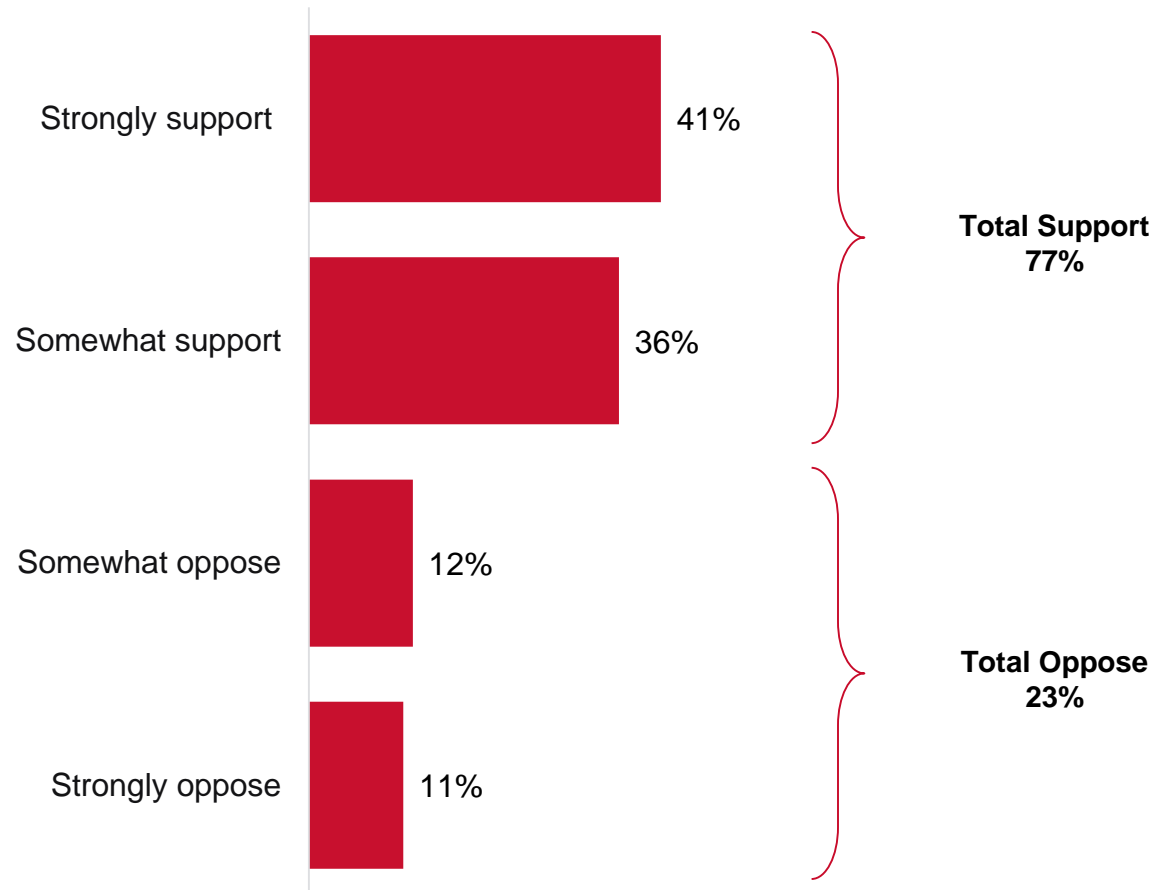
# Incentive to Try Habitat Restoration

Most panelists need more information on naturalization, aside from very few that either already have or are planning to start. There is a perception that it would cost a lot to make a change from a manicured space, so financial incentives are appealing.



# Neighbours Restoring Their Habitats

Fewer than one-quarter of panel members are opposed to their neighbours undertaking habitat restoration.



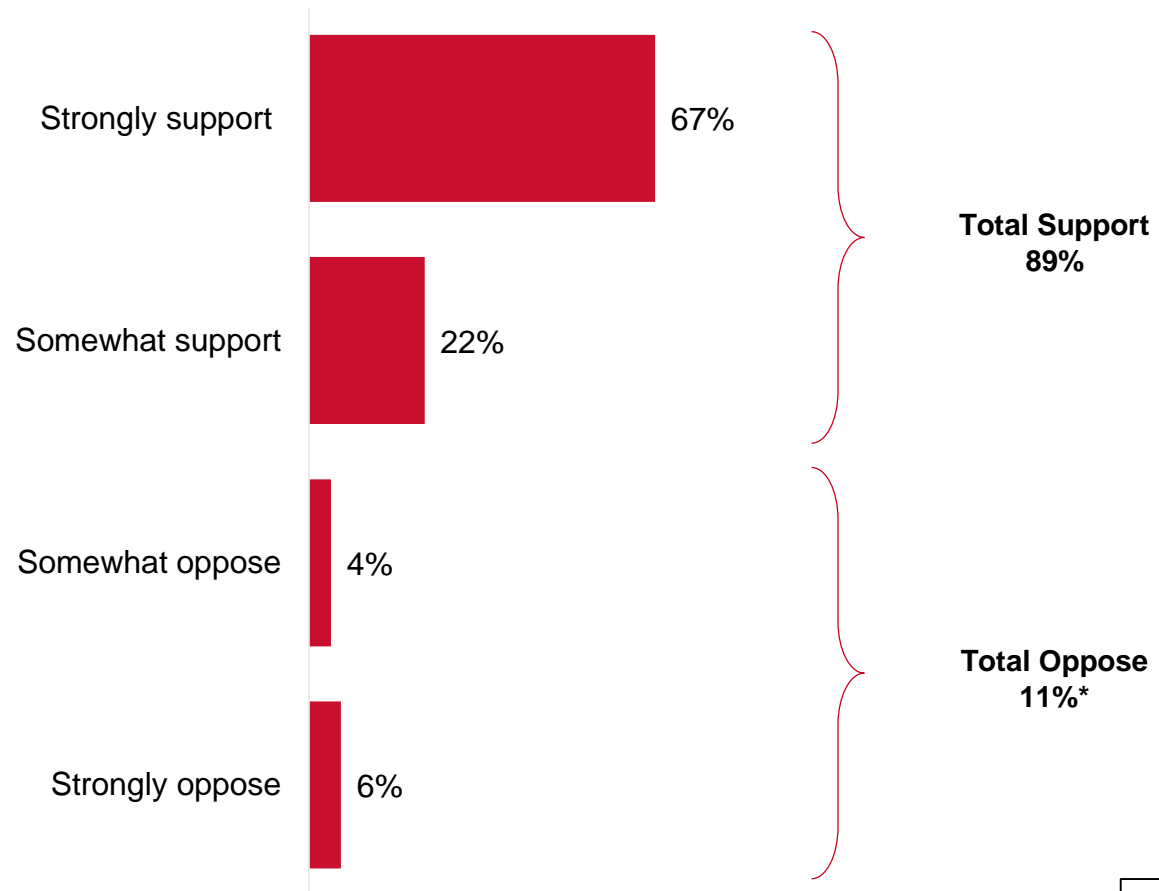
Base: All respondents (n=1,093)

# Bees and Pollinators





Only one-in-ten panelists oppose The City's application to become a Bee City.



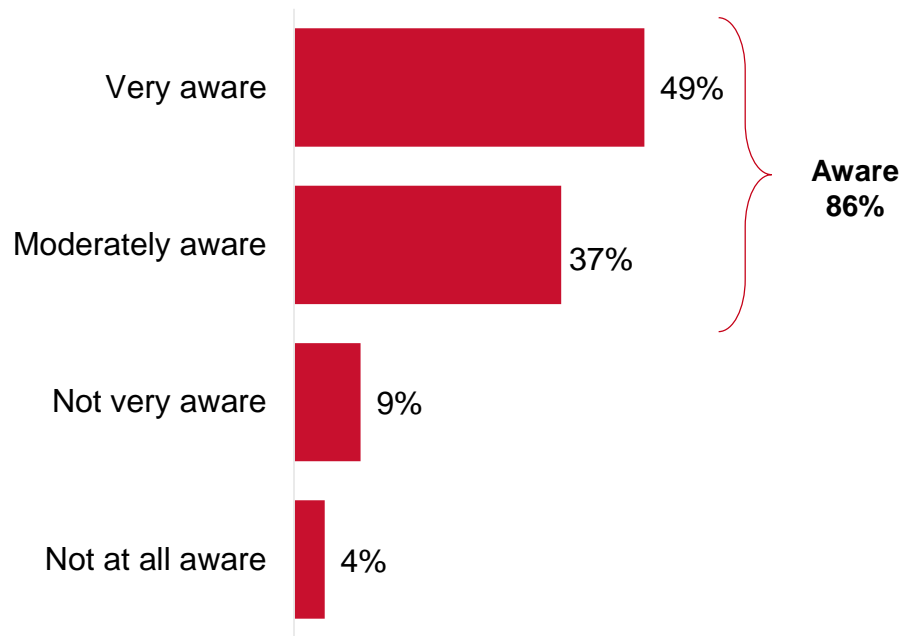
\*Rounding

Base: All respondents (n=1,110)

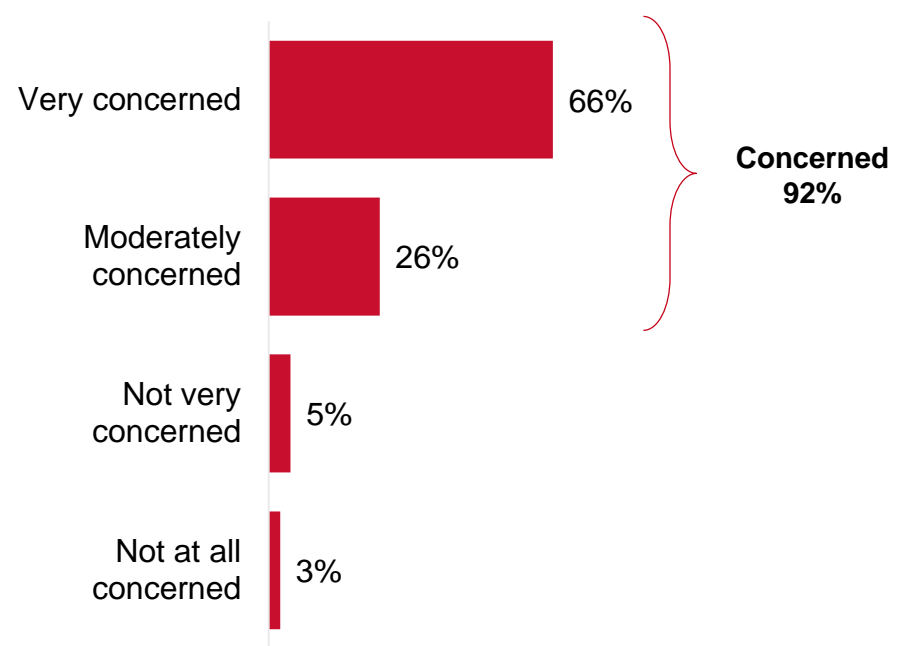
# Awareness and Concern About Pollinators

The majority of panel members has some awareness about pollinator population decline in Calgary.  
Potential extinction is a concern for nearly all panelists.

## Aware of Population Decline



## Concern about Potential Extinction



Base: All respondents (n=1,118)  
Are you aware of any decline in populations of pollinators' such as bees, butterflies and other species in Calgary?

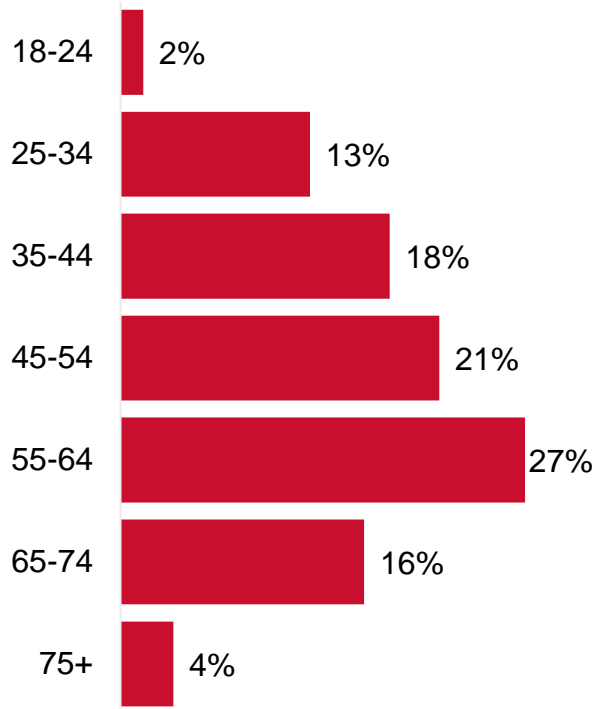
Base: All respondents (n=1,116)  
Are you concerned about potential extinction of some pollinators (bees, butterflies, etc.) in Calgary?

# Demographics

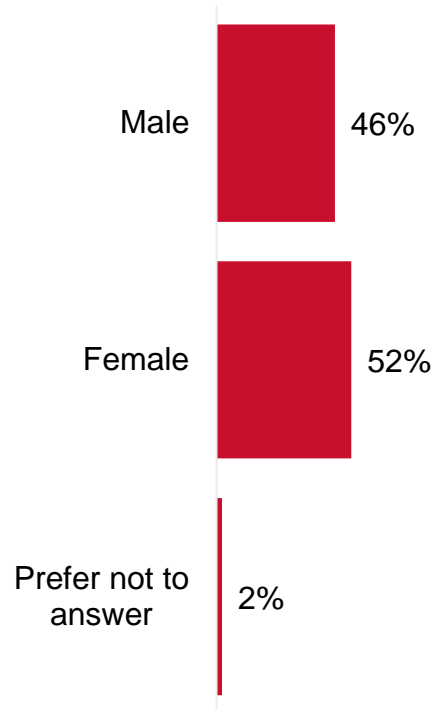


# Panel Demographics

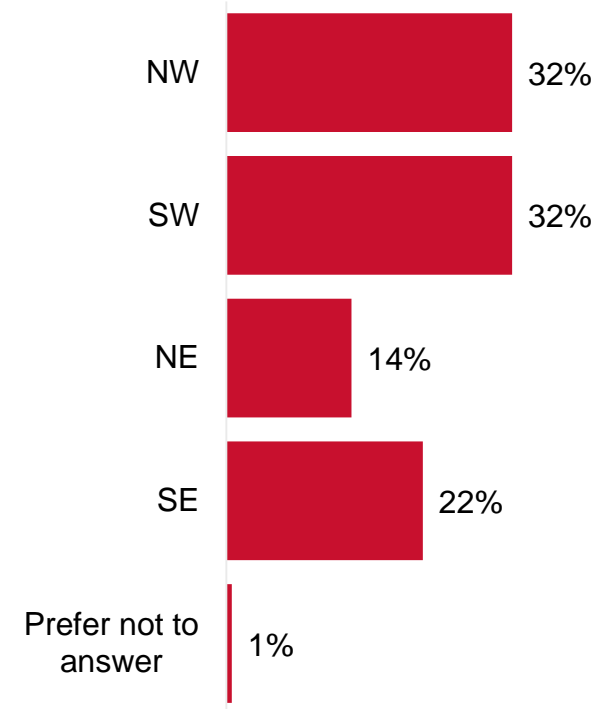
## Age



## Gender

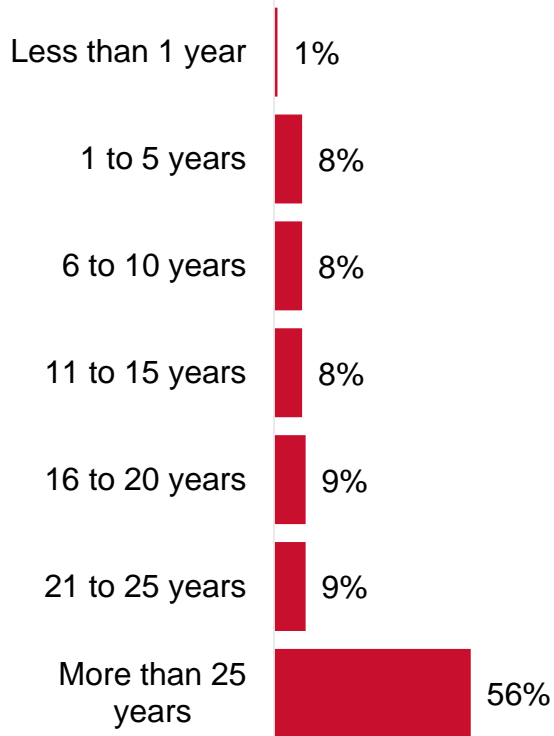


## Quadrant

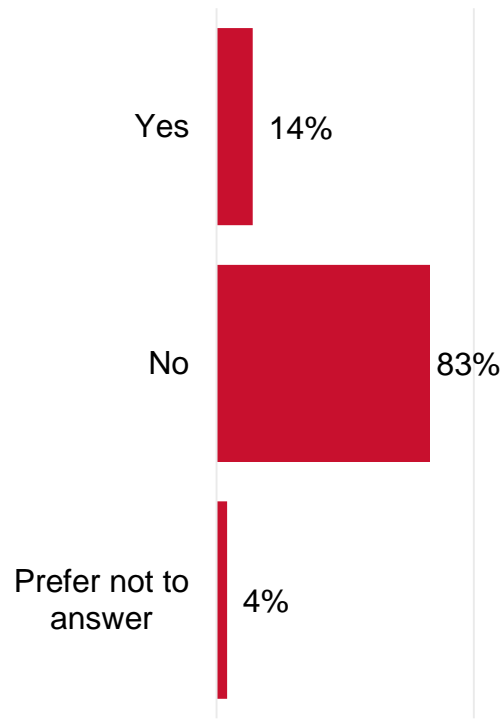




## Years in Calgary



## Visible Minority



## City of Calgary Employee

