



What We Heard Report

Accessibility Policy and Plan Engagement

Prepared by: Engage Resource Unit

April 29, 2026

Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, we appreciate and acknowledge that we live, work, and play on the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy, made up of the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The city of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Métis Nation Battle River Territory (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6). We acknowledge and give gratitude to the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations and call Calgary home.



Participant Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge and thank all participants, including members of the disability community, families, caregivers, advocates, support workers, service providers, advisory groups and organizations who generously shared their time, lived experience, and expertise to inform the Accessibility Policy Review and Plan. Your insights, stories, and suggestions are essential in helping us better understand the barriers people face when navigating City services and infrastructure and give us a better understanding of the changes needed to create a more accessible and inclusive city. This work is stronger because of your openness, trust, and effort towards advancing accessibility for all in Calgary.

About This Document

To ensure this document is easy for everyone to read, we used accessible formatting aligned with the City of Calgary's communication standards. The document features a user-friendly layout with readable size 12, sans serif fonts, plain language, and a navigation pane with clear, structured headings. All graphics and pictures within this document have alternative text added. These choices help make the document accessible to all readers, including those who use assistive technologies. Should you require an alternative format please contact accessibility@calgary.ca.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
1.0 Project Background	7
1.1 Project Decision	7
2.0 Engagement and Communications Overview	8
2.1 Engagement Summary	8
2.1.1 Purpose of Engagement	8
2.1.2 Audience	8
2.1.3 Engagement Objectives	10
2.1.4 Engagement Tactics	10
2.1.5 Accessibility Considerations and Accommodations	12
2.1.6 Timeline	12
2.2 Communications and Advertising Summary	13
3.0 What We Heard	16
3.1 What We Asked	16
3.2 Values and Priorities	18
3.3 City Programs and Services	20
3.4 Infrastructure - Mobility and Public Transit	27
3.5 Infrastructure: Parks, Public Spaces, and Facilities	33
3.6 Accessible Communications	40
3.7 Employment	45
3.8 Elections	49
4.0 Conclusion and Next Steps	52
Appendix A: Acknowledgments	53
Appendix B: Demographic Information of Survey Data	55

Executive Summary

The City of Calgary is reviewing its Corporate Accessibility Policy (CSPS003) and developing its first ever Accessibility Plan. This report summarizes feedback from engagement for the Accessibility Policy and Plan which took place from August 28 to December 15, 2025, and was focused on understanding the experiences and insights of people with disabilities who experience barriers when accessing City programs, services, and spaces.

Engagement and Communications Overview

The project team used a mix of several platforms and engagement opportunities to encourage broad and inclusive participation from members of the public who may experience accessibility barriers, people living with disabilities, their families, caregivers and support workers, and organizations that serve and support people with disabilities. Participants could learn more about the project and how to provide input by going to the project engagement webpage, engage.clagary.ca/APP, and participating in one of the many opportunities to provide feedback:

- an online survey which received **180 total submissions**,
- **10 public events** including pop-ups and open houses in various locations around the city held both in-person and virtually, and
- **16 community conversations** with several organizations in the accessibility sector held both in person and virtually.

In total, the project team **reached out to over 80 organizations, had conversations with approximately 800 people and had 4,320 visitors** to the engagement webpage during the engagement period.

What We Heard: Key Themes

Engagement participants were asked to provide input on how Calgary can be more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities and to share their perspectives and insights including on any barriers and challenges they face, positive features, and suggestions for improving accessibility. The key themes from their feedback are as follows:

Values and Priorities: The City's accessibility approach should be guided by transparency and accountability and focus on strengthening equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging. Priorities include training for staff, greater representation of disability diversity, the creation of strategic partnerships, and clear communication about accessible supports and accommodations.

Programs and Services: Feedback highlighted the need for The City of Calgary to lead by example through welcoming programs and services, supported by trained staff and inclusion

advocates, and respectful customer service. Key barriers include limited adapted programming, challenges with physical access and transportation to locations, the cost to participate in programs, and complex administrative processes. More information on accessible programs and services, accommodations that meet the unique needs of individuals, and more adapted programming for various needs and groups was highlighted.

Infrastructure – Mobility and Public Transit: Participants want to see more accessible and inclusive infrastructure across the city as well as more reliable public transit. Poorly designed and damaged infrastructure, such as missing or broken sidewalks, often creates significant barriers for people with disabilities and limits their ability to navigate the city independently. Infrastructure planning and design should be informed by consultation and focus on improving overall path connectivity. There also needs to be improved options for public transit including more bus routes, better frequency of buses, and snow and ice clearance around transit stops.

Infrastructure – Parks, Public Spaces, and Facilities: Participants identified significant barriers to accessing both public facilities and parks, including parks and facility locations, inaccessible washrooms, pathway conditions and maintenance, limited accessible parking, and a lack of accessible amenities, which limit comfortable use of these spaces. Accessibility must be more consistently embedded in design, operations, and policy, and supported by public awareness, education, and enforcement of City bylaws.

Accessible Communications: City of Calgary communication needs to be in plain-language and easy to understand. Key challenges include The City website being difficult to navigate to find information, design and usability issues, and lack of awareness of City services. City information needs to be distributed in multiple formats along with improved communication of accessibility resources.

Employment: The City needs to have more meaningful and inclusive employment opportunities for people through transparent employment hiring practices. Participants also want to see greater representation of people with disabilities across City roles. Barriers include fear of discrimination and uncertainty about available accommodations. Recommendations include disability inclusion training for leadership and staff, partnerships with other organizations, flexible work options, and consistent accessibility practices across internal departments.

Elections: Most participants reported few barriers to voting in recent municipal elections; however, those who did experience challenges identified difficulty getting to polling locations, long wait times to vote, proximity to stations, and transportation limitations as key issues. Suggestions for improvement were more proactive communication about available support and accommodations, placing polling stations in barrier-free buildings and locations, and having designated staff to support people with disabilities.

Next Steps

The review of the Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy and the development of the Accessibility Plan will be happening in 2026 and into early 2027.

1.0 Project Background

The City's Calgary Corporate Accessibility Policy (CSPS003), also known as the Accessibility Policy, details The City of Calgary's (The City's) commitment to creating a Calgary that is inclusive for people with disabilities. The Accessibility Policy sets the direction for inclusion and ensures accessibility is considered in all that we do at The City of Calgary.

Since the policy was first created, expectations, best practices, standards and language around accessibility have evolved significantly to reflect a broader and more nuanced understanding of disability, inclusion, and meaningful participation. The Accessible Canada Act, standards, and guidelines have strengthened expectations for accessibility and reinforced the importance of embedding accessibility into policies, planning, and decision-making.

To remain effective and accountable, The City is reviewing its Accessibility Policy and developing its first Accessibility Plan to continue to meet and reflect the diverse needs of the disability community in Calgary.

The Accessibility Plan is a multi-year roadmap to support the development of barrier free and inclusive communities. While the policy sets The City's commitment to access and inclusion, the plan identifies where barriers exist, outlines actions to remove them, and tracks progress so that we can be transparent and accountable in our reporting.

The Accessibility Policy also requires that corporate standards – the Access Design Standard – are applied to The City's built environment and infrastructure, The Access Design Standard, expands on the requirements of the Alberta Building Code and applies to the design and construction of all new and renovated buildings and public spaces that are constructed on City-owned or leased land, or are operated by The City of Calgary. For more information regarding the engagement for the Access Design Standards Update please visit engage.calgary.ca/ADSU.

1.1 Project Decision

To ensure the review of the Accessibility Policy and the development of the Accessibility Plan is informed by people with lived experience and members of the disability community in Calgary, The City conducted engagement on the Accessibility Policy and Plan in the fall of 2025. Feedback from public participation will be used as one source of input in reviewing the Accessibility Policy and the creation of a City of Calgary Accessibility Plan.

Decisions that inform the Accessibility Policy and Plan will also consider research, best practices, policies, and existing standards to ensure these guiding documents reflect the needs and lived experiences of those most impacted.

2.0 Engagement and Communications Overview

The following section provides an overview of the engagement and communications approach for the project, as well as the objectives, strategy, and timeline for the engagement process.

2.1 Engagement Summary

2.1.1 Purpose of Engagement

At The City of Calgary, decisions are made that impact more than one million people. Input from Calgarians and other interested and impacted parties help The City better understand the perspectives, opinions, and concerns of people affected by City decisions. Public input is collected, where appropriate, and considered along with other factors (such as legislation, budget, technical limitations, and long-term planning) before decisions are made. Because of its open and accessible nature, engagement is virtually never positioned as the sole source of input into whether The City should do something but helps to ensure City decision-makers have access to a range of ideas and feedback. Meaningful and proper engagement strengthens the relevance and impact of accessibility efforts while also building trust and accountability through transparent, community-informed decision-making.

Note: This feedback is not statistically representative of all Calgarians, and therefore in this report, participants will be referred to as participants or respondents and not Calgarians. All the input collected for this project should be considered through the lens of what will work best in the context of Calgary.

2.1.2 Audience

Outreach efforts included invites to the following groups to participate in engagement:

- individuals with a disability,
- family members of individuals with disabilities, caregivers & support workers,
- City of Calgary accessibility related advisory committees,
- and organizations within the disability and accessibility sector, including advocacy groups, service providers, and community partners with subject-matter expertise.

Engagement also included collecting feedback from members of the public to understand the perspectives of individuals who experience accessibility barriers, but who may not identify as having a disability, or who may be unintentionally overlooked or unable to participate in targeted engagement opportunities (e.g. individuals with hidden disabilities).

Recognizing that accessibility barriers can affect people in diverse and intersecting ways, targeted outreach included organizations serving urban Indigenous groups, women, seniors, and other equity-deserving groups, to ensure that intersectional accessibility perspectives and challenges were considered. Feedback gathered helps ensure that The City's accessibility initiatives are responsive to the diverse realities of the communities they will serve.

Figure 1: Display at a community conversation.



2.1.3 Engagement Objectives

These engagement objectives define the purpose of the engagement and the type of participant involvement and feedback the project team needed:

- understand the most pressing accessibility issues for people with disabilities to prioritize the most impactful changes that are within the scope of municipal government,
- identify gaps and barriers to accessing municipal programs, services and infrastructure with the goal of improving inclusivity,
- collect feedback and suggestions on how accessibility can be improved across the city,
- have materials be accessible and user-friendly by making sure documents are digitally accessible, in plain language, and, where needed, alternate formats and translations are provided,
- report back to participants on What We Heard during engagement as part of maintaining clear communication and transparency throughout the process.

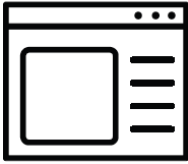
This project engagement was at the **Consult** level according to The City of Calgary Engage Policy (CP2023-05). At this level, participants' feedback is obtained through consultation to analyze issues and ensure their input and contributions are considered and incorporated in the decision-making process as much as possible.

2.1.4 Engagement Tactics

Consistent with The City's commitment to inclusive and accessible engagement, a mix of platforms and engagement tactics were used to encourage participation from several groups whose voices were important to hear from. Tactics consisted of multiple public facing engagement opportunities including a public webpage on the Engage portal with information about the project and how to provide feedback, an online survey, pop-ups and open houses in different quadrants around the city, and focused community conversations, including one-on-one interviews, with individuals and organizations in the disability sector.

The engagement period ran from **August 28 to December 15, 2025**. While the engagement period was originally scheduled to end on November 22, it was extended to December 15 to accommodate continued interest in community conversations. However, the survey closed on November 22nd as planned.

Below is a summary of the metrics related to each of the engagement tactics that were used for this project. For a detailed list of pop-ups and targeted sessions held see **Appendix A**.



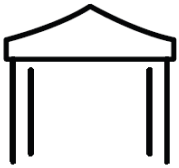
Online Engage Portal

- The Engage Portal webpage <https://engage.calgary.ca/APP> acted as the primary source of project information for participants and the public.
- Results: 7312 page views, 5770 visits to the page, 4989 visitors



Online Survey

- An online survey ran from August 28th to November 22nd of 2025.
- Results: 180 surveys submitted



Pop-Ups

- Pop-ups were held in various locations, dates and times across Calgary
- Results: 7 pop-ups and approximately 540 people interacted with



Open Houses

- One virtual open house and one in-person open house were held to build awareness, share project information and collect feedback.
- Results: 2 open houses and approximately 85 people interacted with



Lunch & Learn Information Session

- A virtual lunch and learn presentation to share information about the project.
- Results: 10 people interacted with.



Focused Community Conversations

- In person and virtual sessions were held with community organizations, City committees, and one-on-one with individuals upon request.

- Results: 16 community conversations and approximately 201 people interacted with. To see list of all the organizations and committees please see [Appendix A](#).

2.1.5 Accessibility Considerations and Accommodations

Where possible the project team implemented accessibility measures to reduce barriers to public participation, including:

- choosing accessible venues for various types of events across the city with consideration for differing abilities and all disability related barriers,
- using plain and simplified language when developing public facing materials,
- providing alternative formats of presentation materials including large font, printed, and with appropriate colour contrast in addition to digital copies,
- providing honoraria for individuals who participated in focused community conversations,
- providing support with public transportation including transit tickets if requested,
- having the translation tool on the Engage portal page which translates the information on the page into up to 15 different languages including French (Canadian), Chinese, Spanish, and Tagalog, and
- having the accessibility widget on the portal page to adjust how page information is displayed to accommodate several accessibility features and profiles including colour blindness, low vision, dyslexia, ADHD, motor conditions etc.

Additional accommodations for participants were also provided upon request. This approach supports the meaningful inclusion of historically underrepresented voices and feedback that reflects the diverse experiences, needs, and priorities of participants.

2.1.6 Timeline

Timeline	Project Milestone
August – December 2025	Outreach and engagement

	Gather feedback from members of the public as well as impacted and interested parties within the disability sector, to understand their insights and experiences.
Spring 2026	Report back What We Heard Report for engagement is published. The project team reports back to participants to share what we heard.
Spring – Fall 2026	Recommendation for the Accessibility Policy Draft development of the Accessibility Plan
To be determined	Approval of the recommendations for the Accessibility Policy and Plan

2.2 Communications and Advertising Summary

Accessibility and inclusion were a priority in all communication and advertising. During engagement, a mix of communication and marketing approaches were used to help people learn about the project, complete the survey, and attend engagement events.

Information was shared online and in-person using accessible formats, including postcards with a survey link and QR code that were distributed at engagement events. A promotional campaign launched on May 26, 2025, supported by a City media release, to raise awareness of the Accessibility Program and invite people to participate during National AccessAbility Week.

From May to November 2025, the City ran several advertising campaigns to encourage participation. These included ads on social media platforms (Facebook, Threads, Nextdoor, LinkedIn, Bluesky, and YouTube), digital banners, and YouTube videos. Information toolkits were also shared with disability-serving organizations so they could promote the engagement within their networks. A total of 20 lettered, street level signs were also utilized to promote the engagement event locations at Shouldice, Forest Lawn, Village Square, Southland Leisure Centre, Genesis Centre and the Calgary Central Library. Three to four signs ran during varying timeframes for each location between August 26 and September 22. Thirteen printed posters promoting the survey ran from November 7 – 20. Finally, approximately 2000 postcards were printed and distributed during the engagement period.

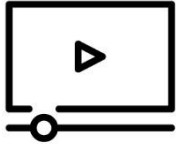
Below is a summary of the metrics for the digital campaign tactics.



Social Media

- Social media ads were displayed approximately 1.2 million times (a total of 1.2 million impressions), which resulted in 842 clicks to the survey portal.

YouTube



- The YouTube advertisement reached 131,810 people and were displayed approximately 354,106 times (354,106 impressions).
- The ad received 150 link clicks.
- For this promotion, pixels were used to track the ad conversion rate, which is the percentage of people who visited the landing page sometime after seeing the ads—whether they clicked on the ads or not. Users served video ads are there to watch the content, not click away from it, so the benchmark for video ad conversion rate is between 0.01% - 0.03%. The conversion rate for the YouTube ad was 0.01% (40 conversions), which is on the low end of our benchmark goal.

Digital Banners



- The digital banner ads reached 76,589 people and were displayed 239,330 times (239,330 impressions).
- The ads received 233 clicks.
- Pixels were also used to track the ad conversion rate of the banners (the percentage of people who visited the landing page sometime after seeing the ads). The conversion rate for the banner ads is 0.08% (184 conversions), which is within our benchmark goal. A benchmark for banner ad conversion rate is between 0.04% - 0.09%.

Website Conversions



- All campaign tactics drove to the campaign landing page at Calgary.ca/APP, which hosted the engagement survey and other useful information, such as the list of public events and how to request additional accessibility accommodations if needed.
- The landing page was launched in May 2025, and up to the end of public engagement, there were 5779 views (number of times the web page was

loaded) and 4,320 visits. This means that the campaign contributed to a 59% increase in views and over 80% increase in visits. ‘

- The traffic source metric shows that most people (67.8%) typed the URL to get to the landing page. This suggests strong campaign message recall and offline tactics like posters and signs were effective.

Figure 3: Postcard to promote



Figure 2: Bold sign promoting the survey



3.0 What We Heard

Participants were asked to provide feedback on their current experiences and perspectives on accessibility in Calgary, and specifically on topics that are within the scope of the City of Calgary as an organization, including:

- Programs and Services
- Infrastructure - Mobility and Public Transit
- Infrastructure – Parks, Public Spaces, and Facilities
- Accessible Communications
- Employment
- Elections

The City does not have authority over private business (e.g. restaurants, gymnasiums, coffee shops etc.) or landowners. Feedback on any services or infrastructure that are not City owned, leased or operated was not within scope for this project.

The specific questions asked and the key themes and considerations that emerged from participant feedback overall and within each of the key focus areas across all feedback inputs are presented below.

3.1 What We Asked

The specific questions that were asked of participants during the engagement period were tailored to the type of engagement tactic used. For engagement events (i.e. pop-ups, open houses, community conversations) where the project team focused on having conversations with participants, the main question that the project team asked was:

How can Calgary be more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities?

Participants were then invited to comment on their experiences with accessibility, including:

- **barriers or challenges they may face with City infrastructure and services**
- **suggestions for improving accessibility**
- **positive experiences with any accessibility tools and features; and**
- **anything else related to accessibility.**

Question prompts for discussion were:

- Is there anything the City of Calgary should start doing?
- Is there anything the City of Calgary should stop doing?
- Is there anything the City of Calgary should keep doing?
- How well is Calgary meeting your needs?

Event facilitators guided the conversation to understand experiences within the context of the six key focus areas: (1) programs and services, (2) infrastructure related to mobility and public transit, (3) infrastructure related to parks, public spaces, and facilities, (4) accessible communications, (5) employment, and (6) municipal elections. Participants were also invited to comment on any other topics that were not within these six key areas but that may be related to accessibility and that should be considered.

The online survey followed a similar format but asked more detailed questions within the six focus areas as well as demographic questions. A sample of questions that were asked under the programs and services section is described below.

For more details about the survey questions visit engage.calgary.ca/APP. For more details of the demographics of participants that responded to the survey, details are summarized in [Appendix B: Demographic Information of Survey Data](#).

Question	Answer Options
Do you identify or represent as any of the following? Please select all that apply.	A person with a disability A family member, friend or caregiver for a person with a disability A representative of an organization for people with disabilities Prefer not to answer None of the above Other [Open text field]
Section 1: Programs and Services Have you, or someone you know experienced barriers or challenges when accessing or participating in City provided programs and	Not sure which City programs or services are adapted or accessible Barriers to the registration process Choices were limited (i.e. not enough adapted programs or services) Worried about accommodations (i.e. how to ask for them and who pays)

<p>services. Please select all that apply.</p>	<p>Don't have disability related supports (i.e. can't get an attendance, aide or care provider)</p> <p>Programming is not inclusive for people with disabilities</p> <p>Facility is hard to get to or not accessible (i.e. too far away, no transit service, no ramps/elevator, no accessible washrooms)</p> <p>Felt unwelcome or had a past bad experience</p> <p>It was expensive</p> <p>Challenges due to the way the program is structured or managed (i.e. program procedures or guidelines)</p> <p>I have not experienced any barriers</p> <p>Other (please specify) [open text field]</p>
<p>Please tell us more about your answer(s) to the previous question.</p>	<p>[Open text field]</p>
<p>Please share any suggestions for making City programs and services more accessible.</p>	<p>[Open text field]</p>

The key themes and considerations that emerged from participant feedback within each of the key focus areas across all feedback inputs are presented below.

3.2 Values and Priorities

Through their feedback participants identified several core values and priorities they believe should guide The City's approach to accessibility. These values reflect the expectations of government, leadership and Council, and a desire to see these values incorporated.

1. Transparency and Accountability

Participants emphasized that transparency and accountability were key to advancing accessibility. They want clearer communication about what The City of Calgary is doing, ongoing programs and current accessibility considerations, as well as funding decisions and advocacy efforts. Being open about the constraints and limitations to advancing accessibility work was also seen as important for building trust and understanding with the disability community.

2. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Training and Education

There was strong support for expanded EDIB training for both City staff and members of the public. Specifically, participants stressed the importance of training and education that builds empathy, sensitivity, and a better understanding towards the spectrum of disability, including but not limited to invisible, physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities, as well as neurodiversity. Training should include education on the accommodations people with disabilities may need as well as how to interact respectfully and effectively with them. Participants noted that increased public awareness and understanding is essential to reducing stigma and improving everyday interactions. They added that if The City were to provide more robust training and education, it would reflect a greater commitment to inclusion and create more welcoming spaces and services. Participants called for consistent training and education for all roles across City departments and programs, especially for public facing services such as Access Calgary, Fair Entry, and recreational services.

3. Representation and Awareness of Disability Diversity

Participants highlighted the need for greater representation of people with disabilities within City employment, services, and programs, along with better understanding of how disabilities can present in different ways. Some noted that people with invisible disabilities are often assumed not to have a disability at all, which can result in social exclusion and misunderstanding, causing harm to the individual. Participants also urged The City to provide more accommodations for individuals living with disabilities in various City services including recreation programs and across the employment process.

4. Create and Expand Strategic Partnerships

Participants also encouraged The City to expand strategic partnerships to advance accessibility, highlighting the value of partnering with organizations already working in the inclusion space. Recommended organizations for partnership include but are not limited to the Calgary Adapted Hub, the Between Friends program, the Special Olympics, CNIB Foundation, Skipping Stone as well as other non-profits, and recreation facilities. Participants said these partnerships can strengthen The City's inclusive practices and ensure they include people with lived experiences. Participants also recommend referring to other cities and countries to learn more about accessibility initiatives and models for collaboration.

5. Improve Accommodations and Awareness of City of Calgary Accessibility Initiatives

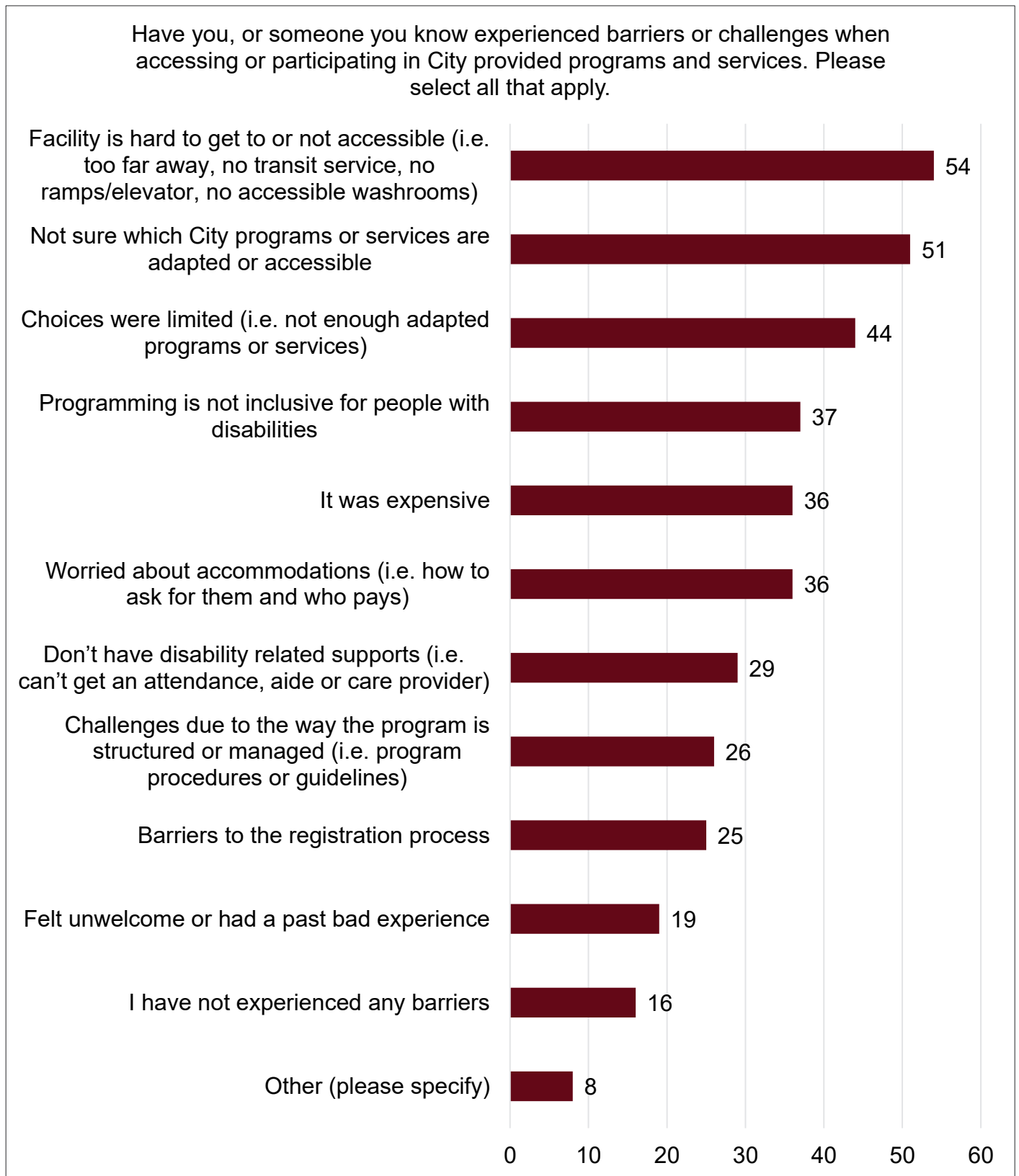
Across all focus areas, participants repeatedly indicated that they were not aware of the accessibility services, features, and initiatives that The City of Calgary offers and expressed a strong desire to see more public awareness and communication on what is available for them to access. Participants asked for more accommodations, especially for people who have cognitive and sensory disabilities or invisible disabilities. They wanted accessibility and accommodation information to be easy to find, presented in plain, easy to understand language, and offered in multiple communication formats to support diverse access needs.

3.3 City Programs and Services

Overall, participants said it was important to feel safe, respected and acknowledged in City programs and services. Participants want The City of Calgary to lead by example in creating spaces where people with disabilities feel welcome and that they belong. Participants strongly recommend that the staff delivering programs and services have training and education on disability awareness and inclusion. They want to see dedicated representatives or advocates for inclusion within departments and said this type of staff training and representation was important to improve customer service interactions in The City.

Of the 128 participants who responded to this question, the most common barrier to accessing City programs and services was that facilities were hard to get to or not physically accessible. Another common barrier was not knowing which programs are adapted or accessible. Participants also reported having too few adapted programs and services to choose from.

Figure 4: Chosen barriers to programs and services in the online survey.



A. Lack of program availability

There is not enough adapted programming available to meet the wide range of disability needs. Some noted that current programs tend to focus more on physical disabilities, with fewer options that properly support people who are neurodivergent. Participants also described long waitlists for recreational activities, including swimming programs and pool access, preventing timely participation. A few described program environments as being overcrowded, with noise and other stimulation which can create sensory overload and make participation difficult.

Participants shared mixed experiences with City programs, often linked to uncertainty about who programs are designed to accommodate or what supports are made available. Some felt services were geared toward people with more complex needs, while others felt programs were better suited to people with fewer needs. Participants said clearer, more consistent communication about available programs and accommodations would help people better understand their options and decide whether a program meets their unique needs.



Participant Quote

“I would recommend providing more programs for children and adults that are a range of low to high stimulating without rigid rules. it would be also better to clearly label more accessible entrances and create wider and less steep wheelchair ramps”

B. Physical access barriers

Many participants said having reliable transportation to programs and services was a significant challenge. Common concerns were that transit often takes too long and requires multiple transfers even when facilities are relatively close by with a car. Some participants also described transit as unreliable or unsafe, and said program locations or venues can be inaccessible making the process of getting to programs not worthwhile. Other concerns raised about transportation were:

- long service times for Access Calgary, a lack of accessible vehicles, and pick-up and drop-off practices that are not always done safely, especially for people who travel to multiple locations as part of their daily routines,
- not having adapted programs and services that are near to their location – specifically, a few participants who live in the northwest and the inner-city area say they have to travel to the southwest to access the programs and services they need.

Participants overall had a strong desire for more timely, reliable, and flexible transit that accommodates diverse needs.

Participants also shared that it was difficult to navigate and use the buildings and surrounding areas where programs and services are held. Specifically, participants said:

- entrances to buildings are not always accessible, and some venues don't have ramps, elevators, or other accessibility features,
- some sidewalks and exterior pathways are poorly maintained or damaged which creates safety concerns and makes people hesitant to use them,
- snow removal and maintenance are not always consistent but are necessary,
- not enough washrooms and not enough washrooms with accessibility features like adult change tables or accessibility buttons

Participants want to see more accessible options at building entrances. These include having more ramp options for people using wheelchairs, proper curb cuts, reliable accessibility buttons throughout facilities, and more functional accessible features in washrooms.



Participant Quote

"I live in North Central Calgary and there are just no City of Calgary facilities nearby. I don't drive, so anywhere takes me an hour or more by transit. The nearest City rec facility is Thornhill. If you want the best access to City of Calgary facilities, you have to live in the SW."

C. Financial access barriers

The cost of programs is a significant barrier to participation. Several participants shared that it was too expensive to attend programs, especially for people who are in economic situations where they need to meet their basic needs first like groceries and utilities. In addition to program fees, there are added costs to participating in programs that create more barriers. For example, people with disabilities often have to pay for a support worker or aide to attend programs with them or pay parking fees at program and service locations.

A few participants said that getting funding to participate in programs and services is challenging. Participants say that financial support that is available to people with disabilities is not enough, particularly what they receive from the province and from the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program. Non-profit and disability organizations do not always have the funds to help subsidize the costs for people either. Participants also described it as demoralizing to have to repeatedly prove their disability to different systems, including The City of Calgary. Family income

was also shared as a barrier for eligibility for funding support since some individuals and families are disqualified from programs because of their family income, despite being unable to afford fees due to the rising cost of living.



“Troubles finding an aide to be able to attend city programs, or financial barriers when having to pay for an aide and price of program.”

Participant Quote



“Not every disability is obvious. Being confronted with doubts by staff over the validity of the disability is soul crushing. To have to fight those that are supposed to help is infuriating.”

Participant Quote

D. Administrative barriers

Participants identified significant challenges related to registering for City programs and services, particularly for those who don't have reliable online access. Information about programs is not always easy to find, understand, or written in plain language, and many people reported difficulty locating the accessibility information they need on The City's website. Many participants were unaware of which City programs and services are designed to accommodate accessibility needs, including for neurodivergent and other invisible disabilities. Participants noted that City programming staff are not always adequately trained or educated on how to best support the wide range of people with disabilities and how to best approach the individuals, making participation difficult without the support of an aide. They strongly recommend additional training for City staff to address this gap. In some cases, programs can't or won't provide necessary accommodation, such as interpreters, which further limits participation.

Across engagement opportunities, participants consistently asked for clearer, up-front information about what programs and resources are offered, who they are designed for, and what accommodation and accessibility features are available at program sites so that they can better understand in advance what The City of Calgary offers and how to access it.



Participant Quote

“I find bringing children I care for that have a range of disabilities, physical and mental, into public settings is extremely difficult. We have been unable to enter numerous public spaces due to inaccessible entrances or have been unwelcome due to verbal tics or stims. I find doing public programs that feature rigid rules and structure is extremely difficult to partake in and can cause disregulation in my kids. This is challenging as I am being trusted and asked by parents to take their children into the community to increase their socialization and life skills, but having many small bumps in the road does make my job difficult and it can be hard to convince my kids to attempt other public programs when they don’t always feel like they belong.”

Recommendations to improve programs and services

To make programs and services more accessible, participants gave the following recommendations:

- **Add more recreational programs:** Participants had a strong desire to see more adapted fitness programs for people with disabilities and made recommendations to include more programs overall including swimming lessons, day camps, mixed ability programs (where people with and without disabilities can interact), sensory friendly service options, more youth and kids programming, sports for women, low impacts sports, and more mental health programming. In addition to more programs, they suggested improving the delivery of programs by having smaller class sizes and better ratios of registrants to staff.
- **Neurodiversity specific programming:** Individuals who are neurodiverse or have cognitive disabilities often face social barriers to community participation. This includes stigma due to limited understanding of how cognitive disabilities may present and often results in a feeling of not belonging. Participants want to see more support for people with intellectual disabilities with a focus on supporting social connection.
- **Indigenous specific programming:** Some participants also expressed a desire for expanded programming for Indigenous children that reflect cultural practices and traditions, is inclusive of diverse needs, and is supported by sustainable funding.
- **Increase available accommodations:** There is a need to have more accommodations in programs. Suggested accommodations include interpretation and translation services (for example, American Sign Language support for deaf participants), City provided aides or support workers, and access to supportive and accessible equipment.
- **Invest in Fair Entry:** Participants across sessions strongly value the Fair Entry program and want it to continue, with one comment appreciating the lifetime eligibility; however, participants did say there were a number of issues including long lines and wait times at Fair

Entry locations, a complex application process with many forms, limited online support for applications, a lack of translators and interpreters, and too few physical locations across the city.

- **Increase awareness of programs and services:** Participants want The City to better promote the services and programs available to different groups of people and in different communication formats. This includes promoting adapted programs for people with disabilities and the Fair Entry pass for people with low incomes.
- **Make transit more accessible:** There needs to be more reliable and accessible transportation throughout the city, including for Access Calgary, so that people can get to their destinations in a timely manner.
- **Improve surrounding infrastructure:** Participants want the public buildings where programs and services are offered to be accessible. This includes having features like elevators, paths accessible for people in wheelchairs, accessibility buttons throughout facilities and barrier free washrooms
- **Co-design programs:** Participants want The City to lead the provision of accessible programs and services in Calgary and recommend The City continue to offer high quality programming by co-designing programs with community organizations, schools, and partners with lived experience, whenever possible.



“I would like more services for people that are shy or need support with making friends with an intellectual disability.”

Participant Quote

3.4 Infrastructure - Mobility and Public Transit

Overall, participants want to see more accessible and inclusive infrastructure design across the city, with a greater emphasis on pedestrian accessibility and everyday mobility rather than vehicle focused design. Participants said that infrastructure should be designed in consultation with accessibility specialists and with people who have lived experience so that it addresses a wide range of needs. Current infrastructure design is particularly challenging for people with physical disabilities (i.e. people in wheelchairs, seniors, people with vision loss) because it directly impacts their ability to independently move around the city.

Participants also believe that safe and reliable transit is important to allow people with disabilities to navigate the city confidently and to support their ability to participate in programs and services. The City overall needs to improve connectivity around Calgary through improved mobility and transportation pathways.

Finally, they shared the need to educate the public about disability, including how to interact and communicate respectfully with people with disabilities and the accommodations they may require. They noted that public awareness is critical to ensuring accessible infrastructure functions as intended and supports inclusive, welcoming shared spaces.



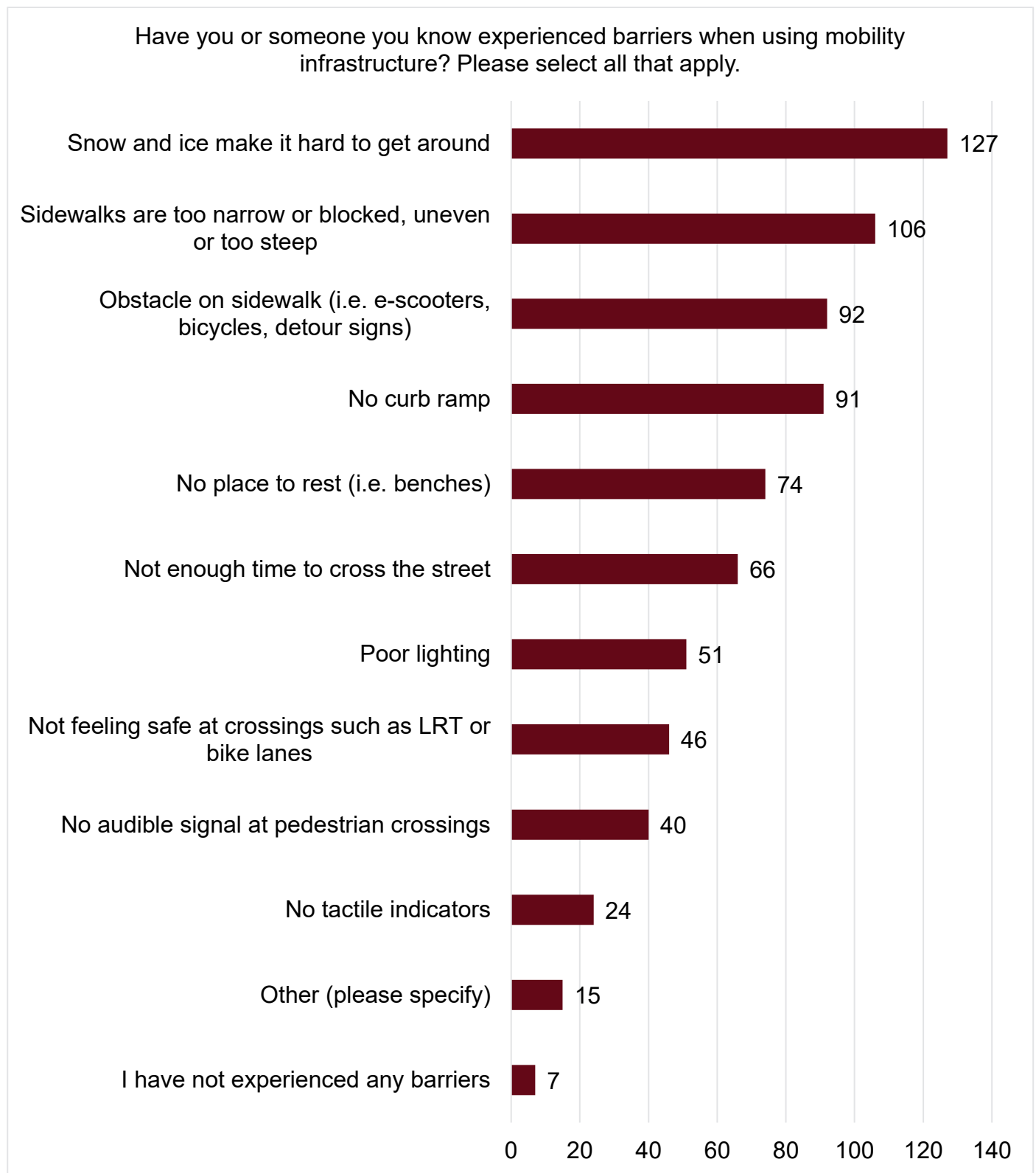
Participant Quote

“Walking is not accessible in Calgary overall. All roads are designed with cars in first priority, with walking routes simply being attachments to car routes which makes walking feel unsafe. Walking paths need to be designed in accordance with human needs and habits. Also rest benches are too close to the road.”

A. Mobility infrastructure barriers

Of the 256 participants who chose to answer the survey question about mobility infrastructure barriers, the most selected barrier was that snow and ice made it hard to get around. The next most selected barrier was that the sidewalks that are too narrow, blocked, uneven or steep followed by encountering obstacles on the sidewalk.

Figure 5: Chosen barriers to mobility infrastructure



Participants identified specific challenges when navigating pathways including:

- **Ramps and curb cuts:** There are often not enough curb ramps on the sidewalks, or the ramps are placed incorrectly, leading to issues for people who use mobility devices (wheelchairs, strollers) and walkers who need assistance. Curb cuts are also not always in good condition or not properly placed making it unsafe to use when crossing the street for example.
- **Sidewalks:** Many participants said the lack of accessible pathways is a significant barrier, especially the lack of or missing sidewalks around Calgary. Even when sidewalks are present, they are often too narrow to comfortably use with other pedestrians, particularly for people who use mobility devices. Sidewalks can also pose safety risks when they are not maintained or need repair due to uneven surfaces or obstacles blocking pathways (for example construction, e-scooter parking etc.). Detours need to consider individuals with disabilities and people with mobility devices when sidewalks are closed.
- **Pedestrian crossings:** Participants said pedestrian crossing signals do not always allow enough time for people to cross safely. Some also noted a lack of audible pedestrian signals, which creates barriers for people who are blind or have vision loss.
- **Snow and ice removal:** Many participants reported concerns about inadequate or improper snow and ice clearance on pathways and sidewalks. They shared that snow pileups on intersections can lead to getting stuck in the snow and getting blocked by snow when moving around. These obstacles can sometimes force people to use roads instead of sidewalks, leading to feeling unsafe when navigating pathways.
- **Road and pathway safety:** Concerns about behavior from other users, including drivers not being able to see pedestrians due to poor lighting or signage, drivers speeding on roads, blocking sidewalks with cars, improper street parking, and improperly using designated accessible parking.

B. Recommendations to improve mobility infrastructure

Many participants said that there needs to be better snow and ice clearance in winter with the priority given to sidewalks, streets and ramps. Participants want to see the snow removed within a few days of snowfall and not just piled up at a crosswalk, intersection, or bus stop especially in busy or high traffic areas. Snow, ice and other obstacles on pathways make it difficult for people with mobility devices to move around. Participants also overall want to see proper sidewalk maintenance by making sure that cracked, broken and uneven sidewalks are repaired and stay in good condition. Some participants suggested The City do more to enforce and encourage residents and business owners to keep their sidewalks clear and free of snow, ice and other obstacles.

Participants want The City to create more accessible and fully connected pathways around Calgary that consider pedestrian experience and safety. Participants specifically requested wider sidewalks and pathways so people with mobility devices and wheelchairs can pass other pedestrians and path users. Other commonly requested features include better lighting, more

benches and rest stops, more ramps and curb cuts at intersections, and tactile indicators for people who have vision loss. Participants also encouraged The City to consider accessibility needs when planning detours in construction zones.

Other recommendations include reviewing the length of time of crosswalk signals due to many participants reporting they are too short and did not allow enough time for safe crossing at intersections and adding audible crossing signals to crossings. In general, participants want to see more accessibility features across all mobility infrastructure in Calgary. These include more bus shelters and benches at transit and bus stops, accessible washrooms, and elevators at LRT stations.



Participant Quote

“There needs to be significant consideration placed on making infrastructure accessible. There are not a reasonable number curb ramps and often when a side walk is closed there is no consideration given to those with mobility needs”

C. Transit infrastructure barriers

Participants say that transit in Calgary is not reliable and don't always feel safe using it. They shared the most common issues to be:

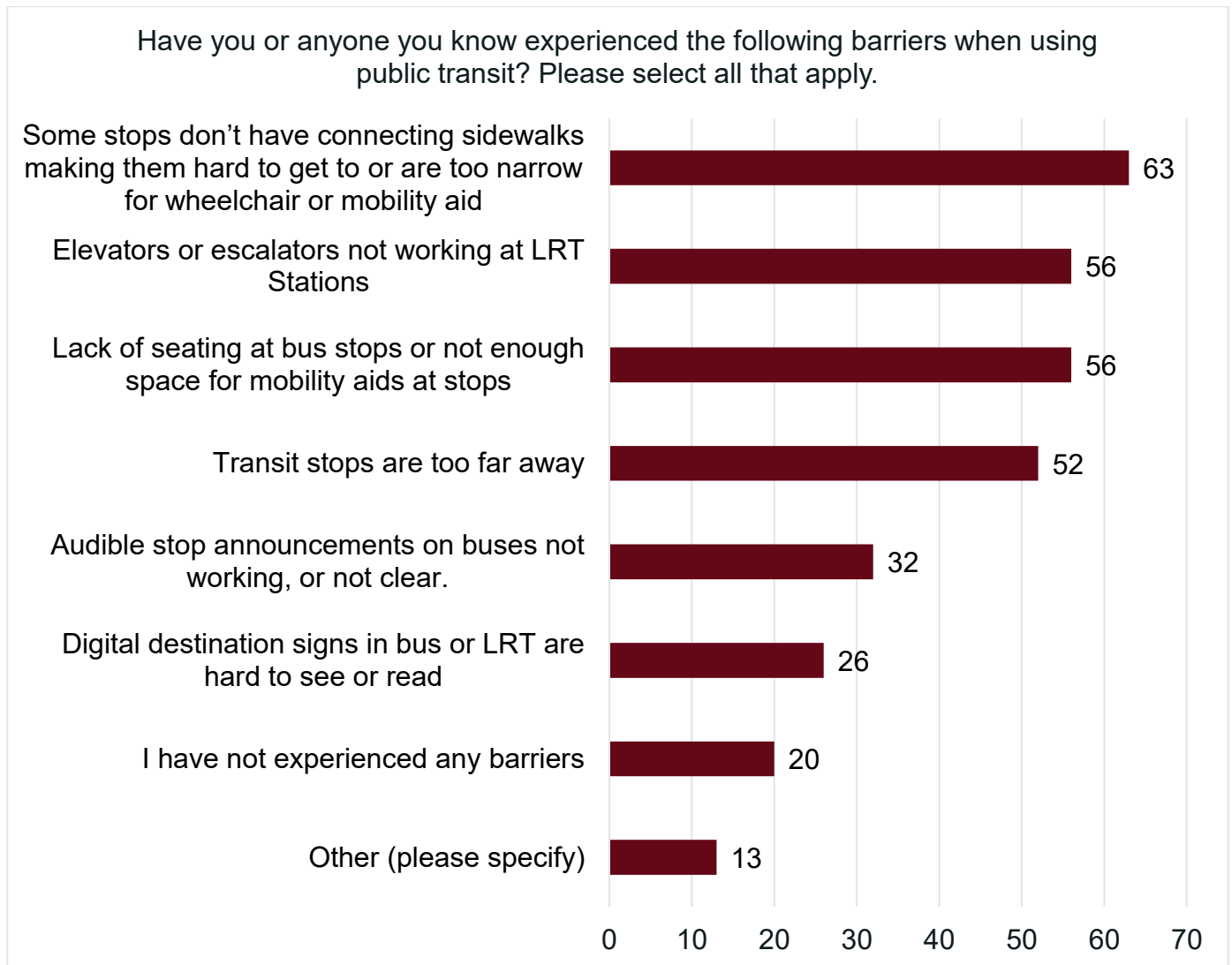
- infrequent buses,
- buses arriving late or being significantly delayed,
- missing or inefficient transit routes,
- the much longer time it takes to get to a destination with transit compared to driving (hours),
- transit stops locations being inconsistent with some stops being close to each other while others are too far to walk to.

Participants also shared issues with the public transit vehicles including narrow space on buses which are difficult for people with mobility devices and wheelchairs to maneuver through. Other concerns include poor circulation, and too small stop buttons. No proper audible signals also make it unclear when a bus stop is coming or when a door is about to close. LRT stations often have outdated signs and need more visual and audio communication to public transport users. A few participants also had concerns about public safety at transit stops due to unhoused populations, drug-use, and unsafe activity around the area.

In the survey, 141 participants chose to answer the question about whether they or someone they know had experienced barriers when using public transit. The most selected barriers included

stops without sidewalks or with inaccessible sidewalks, non-functioning elevators or escalators at LRT stations, and a lack of seating or mobility aids at stops.

Figure 6: Chosen barriers to public transit



Access Calgary

Multiple participants talked about Access Calgary as an unreliable and frustrating but necessary public transport option. Specifically, they say that Access Calgary buses often have long waiting times due to long routes and drivers needing to pick up multiple clients. The bus rides themselves can also be long sometimes taking hours to reach their destination due to poor navigation systems. Access Calgary is also not available at all hours of the day, which limits when it can be used. Participants also share they have had inconsistent experiences with drivers during pick-up and drop-off, and that drivers often don't understand or empathize with the needs of people with disabilities. A few participants also reported that Access Calgary was expensive to use with one comment noting they have to pay for themselves as well as an aide to use the service.

D. Recommendation to improve transit infrastructure

They said that there needs to be overall improvement in the reliability of public transit and specifically asked for:

- more bus routes and more efficient routes that reduce time between destinations,
- increased frequency of buses, including greater service during off-peak hours,
- more accessible locations for bus stops, such as near storefronts and residential communities,
- more staff to support people with disabilities onboard and offboard vehicles.

Participants want to see more accessibility features installed in both public transport vehicles and in the bus stops and LRT stations. For the vehicles, participants asked for more seating, wider doors and spaces between seats as well as more audible and visual announcements in the bus. At bus stops and stations participants asked for features like benches and seating that are in good condition, large, easy to read wayfinding signage, better lighting, heated shelters during winter, elevators and more information about transit schedules to be communicated both through audio and visual formats.

For Access Calgary vehicles specifically, participants want to have faster pick-up and drop-off experiences and an updated navigation system, with better tracking tools like an app for routes and wait times. Participants also suggested more training for drivers of Access Calgary and public transport vehicles in general to help improve the service interactions for people with disabilities. Partnering with third party transportation services such as Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) and Uber to provide transportation services was also a suggestion.

Other recommendations to help improve public transit include having more accessible pathways and sidewalks (including ramps and curb cuts) in the areas near bus stops and addressing drug use and disruptive behaviour at bus shelters to improve safety. Finally, some participants asked The City to simplify the process for getting transit passes and support. They also asked for the City to be more transparent and report back on infrastructure and transit related initiatives – specifically what work has or is being done.



Participant Quote

“Public transit is almost impossible to access for a wheelchair user. Too many obstacles: hills, no curb cut out, no elevator at ctrain station, too far to push to designated stop, snow/ice, scooters on sidewalks. The list goes on.”

3.5 Infrastructure: Parks, Public Spaces, and Facilities

Overall, participants identified important and ongoing barriers to accessing and using parks, public spaces, and public facilities. Common challenges included limited access to spaces because washrooms and change rooms were not accessible, poor pathway conditions and upkeep, limited accessible parking spaces, and a lack of appropriate amenities, such as playgrounds and equipment. Participants shared that many barriers are the result of the physical environment, design, or older facilities that do not prioritize accessibility or inclusive use, as well as issues with upkeep and operations.

They emphasized that addressing these challenges requires more accessible parks and facilities in different areas of the city, consistent use of inclusive design principles, improved safety, and wayfinding. They also noted that staff training, including greater attention to public awareness and education, enforcement of City bylaws, and engagement with people with disabilities were needed to ensure public spaces are welcoming, usable, and equitable for all.



Participant Quote

“My daughters sight is affected and can’t see anyone coming and passing her on the right side. Wider paths and/or designated paths just walkers and just cyclists would help make the paths safer for her.”



Participant Quote

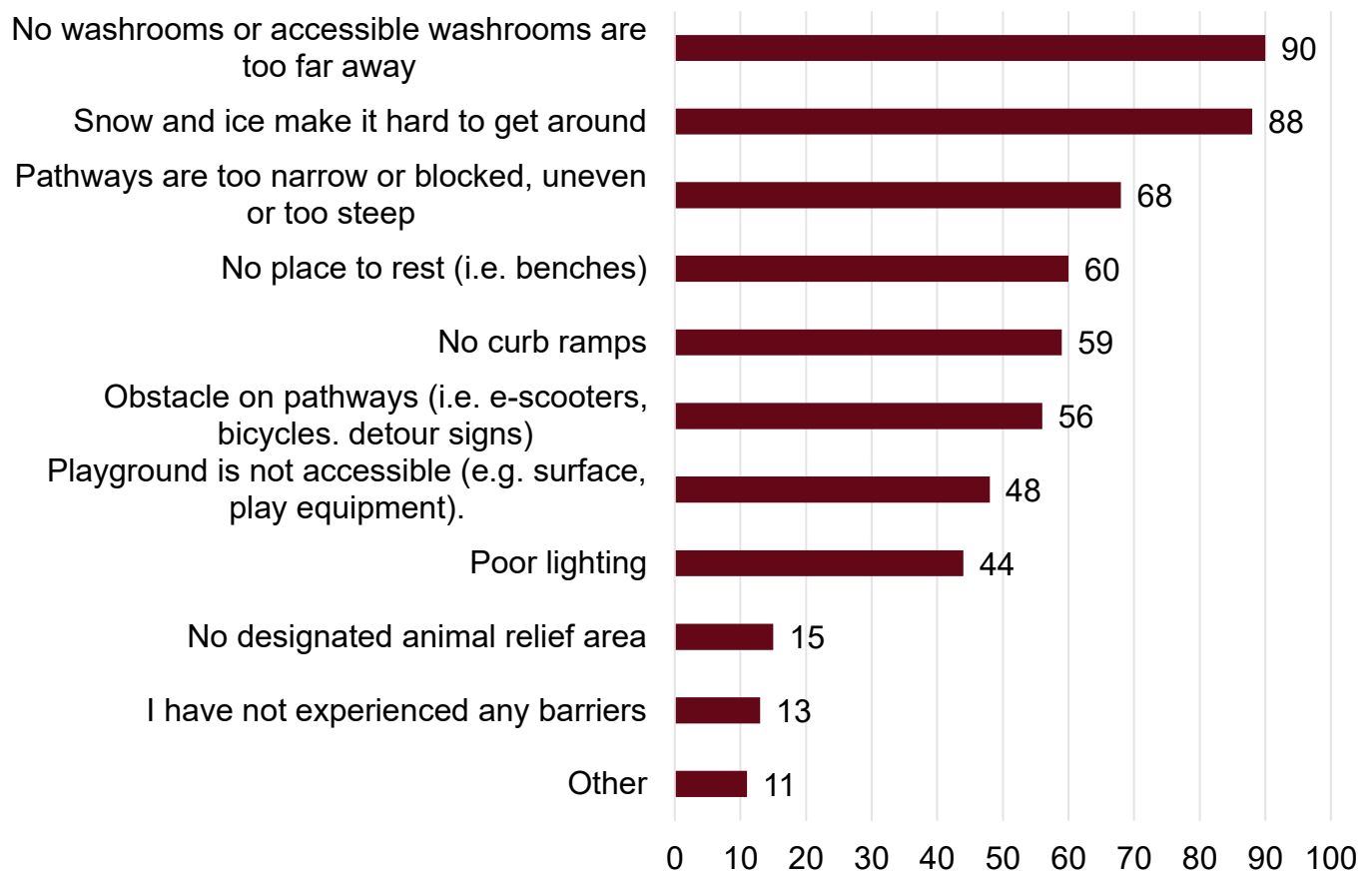
“[...] Washrooms should include an accessible stall everywhere there's a standard washroom. Portables don't cut it - give them a try in a wheelchair. Remember, most wheelchair users can't stand up to transfer. They must situate their wheelchair beside the toilet and use just their arms to transfer.”

A. Park and public spaces barriers

In the survey, 143 participants chose to answer the question about whether they or someone they know has experienced barriers when using parks or public spaces. The most commonly selected barriers were a lack of washrooms or washrooms that are too far away, difficulties due to snow and ice, and pathways that are too narrow, blocked, uneven, or steep.

Figure 7: Parks or public spaces barriers

Have you or someone you know experienced barriers when using parks or public spaces? Please select all that apply.



In addition to the barriers identified above, participants identified the following barriers relating to parks and public spaces:

- **Accessible public washrooms:** Participants mentioned specific issues with the availability and quality of washrooms, as well as challenges with usability and inclusive design, such as the need for accessible stalls in all washrooms with adequate space and adult change tables, the inaccessibility of portable washrooms, and washroom locations within parks that can be difficult to reach.
- **Accessible pathways:** Pathways present additional barriers since they may be designed without accessibility in mind and include steep inclines, stairs, or unnecessary curves that make them hard to navigate.
- **Access and connectivity:** The location of some parks, including the uneven distribution of accessible parks, presents a barrier for participants. In addition, gaps in accessible pedestrian infrastructure, such as uneven pathways and a lack of marked street crossings, limit people's ability to reach parks safely.

- **Safety and security:** Participants raised concerns about feeling safe in parks and public spaces, including personal safety, visibility, lighting and interactions with other park users, with one comment recommending adding cameras to help limit dangerous activity. Feedback included challenges related to shared pathway etiquette and behaviour, as well as safety concerns involving off-leash dogs.



“It is extremely hard to access parks/public green spaces by foot or transit (not including prince's island park) if you are from a neighborhood that is not directly connected to a park”

Participant Quote

B. Recommendations for improving parks and public spaces

- **Inclusive design:** Participants emphasized the need for parks and public spaces to be designed for a wide range of abilities, including invisible and cognitive disabilities as well as different types of mobility devices. Feedback also highlighted a preference for accessible features without hostile architecture, and the importance of inclusive gathering places that support social connection for people of all abilities.
- **Public washrooms:** Consistent approaches to design and service in washrooms were emphasized. Suggested areas for improvement include increasing availability and year-round access, ensuring washrooms are well maintained and clearly labeled for accessibility, and ensuring inclusive design features for all washroom users.
- **Pathways:** Recommendations ranged from addressing gaps in the pathway network, clear separation between pedestrians and cyclists, ensuring consistent curb ramps, ramps at overpasses, and ramped alternatives to stairs. Participants recommended improvements to pathway design by reducing unnecessary curves, fixing cracked or uneven pathways, and improving width or slope. Participants also emphasized the importance of pathways that accommodate different types of mobility devices, effective winter maintenance and snow and ice control, and the removal of obstacles along routes.
- **Playgrounds:** Improve the accessibility and inclusivity of playgrounds by expanding wheelchair-accessible and inclusive play options, ensuring play equipment can be reached and used by children with diverse mobility needs, and enclosed or fenced areas that support safety and comfort for children and caregivers.
- **Wayfinding and signage:** Opportunities to improve wayfinding in parks and public spaces through clearer pathway signage to support shared use, and improved accessible route

signage. Readable and inclusive signage design was highlighted, including large print and lower placement heights.

- **Park amenities:** Enhancing the availability, design, and maintenance of key amenities at parks including water fountains, garbage bins, public art, shaded areas, more adequate well-designed benches. In addition, participants identified parking-related barriers, including limited availability, challenges when exiting vehicles, and a preference for free or barrier-free parking options.
- **Engagement and consultation:** Participants emphasized the importance of involving people with disabilities more directly in the planning and design of parks and public spaces, recommending user testing that reflects lived experience and ongoing consultation with disability organizations.
- **Policy and regulation:** Participants identified opportunities to strengthen accessibility through clearer, more consistent policies and enforcement across the city. This included using 311 for support, requiring accessibility standards, enforcement of pathway rules, improved public and business education related to accessibility responsibilities, and enforcement of City bylaws.



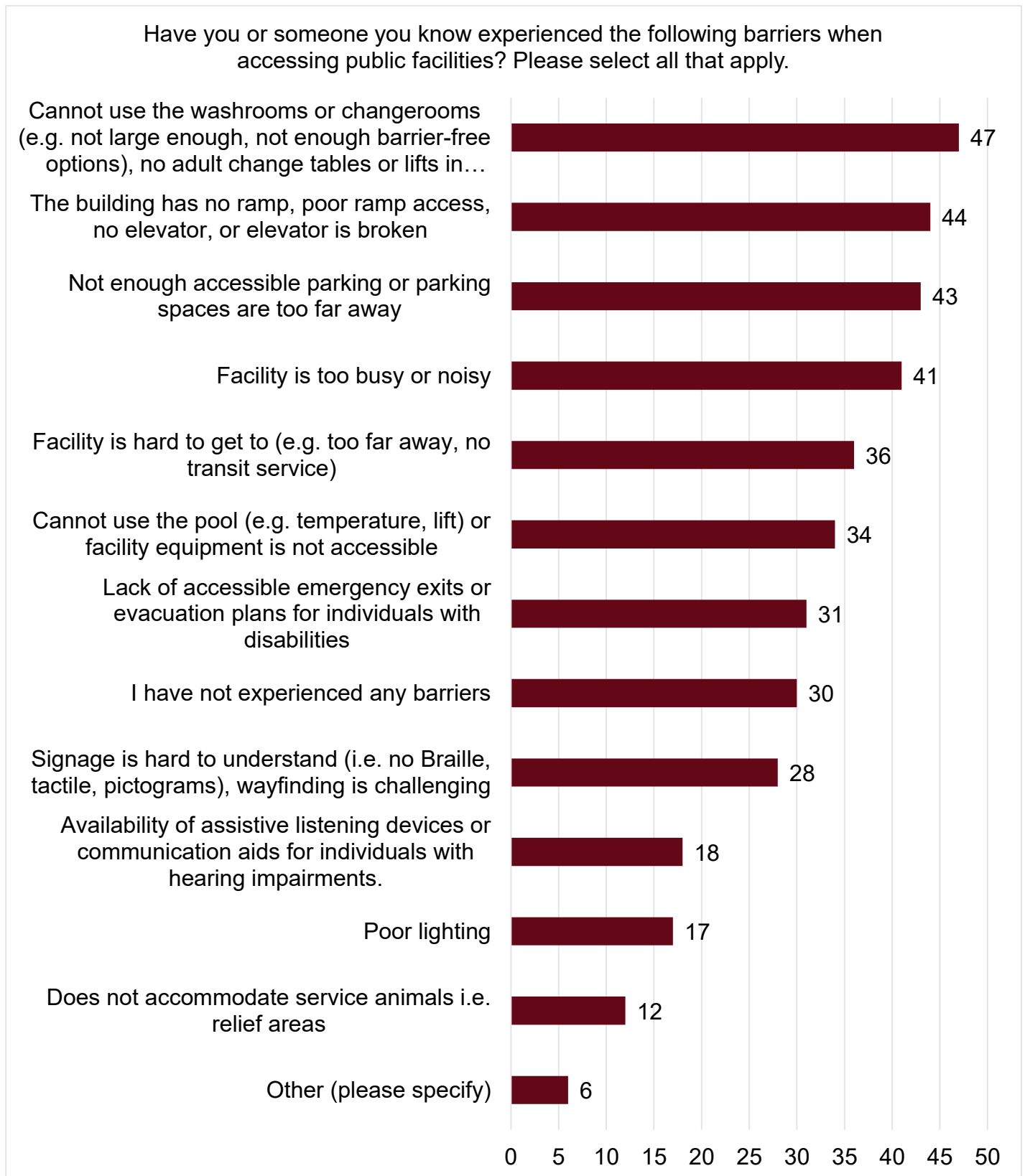
Participant Quote

“Some parks are randomly crowded so I think with some of the space you should make more room to park your car if you don’t park your car in the parking space your car could get towed. And more space for people with limited mobility can play on the playground to as they could add ramps so they can go on the playground too.”

C. Public facilities barriers

In the survey, 127 participants chose to answer the question about whether they or someone they know have experienced barriers when accessing public facilities. The most commonly selected barriers were washrooms and changerooms that cannot be used, lack of accessible ramps or elevators, and lack of accessible parking.

Figure 8: Public facilities barriers



In addition to the barriers identified in the graphic above, participants identified the following barriers relating to public facilities:

- **Number and location of facilities:** Participants identified barriers related to the limited number of public facilities, noting that some locations are difficult to access or too far away, particularly for people with mobility challenges.
- **Welcoming and comfortable spaces:** Feedback highlighted that some facilities feel unwelcoming, overly restrictive, or overcrowded, limiting comfort and usability. Participants also noted the importance of allowing guide and service animals and reducing unnecessary restrictions.
- **Safety and support:** Safety concerns included insufficient lighting, social disorder, and a lack of visible support within facilities, which can discourage use and negatively affect feelings of safety.
- **Sensory environment:** Participants identified barriers related to noise, lighting, and overcrowding, and emphasized the need for sensory-friendly environments and activities for people with sensory sensitivities.
- **Inclusive design:** Participants emphasized that many facilities were not designed with diverse abilities in mind, particularly invisible or cognitive disabilities, and for those that use mobility devices. Older facilities or those with hostile architecture were frequently noted as lacking appropriate accessibility features, such as wide doors or well-designed ramps.
- **Amenities:** Barriers related to amenities included insufficient seating, limited accessible exercise equipment, lack of bike storage, and missing or poorly maintained features that support comfort and usability.
- **Physical accessibility barriers:** Participants identified that public facilities are missing, or have poorly functioning accessibility features, such as automatic door buttons, lifts or adult change tables. Some equipment does not fit mobility devices or does not work as intended.



Participant Quote

“As an organization that solely focuses on recreation for people with disabilities, we are often required to bring our own lifts and adult change table to city facilities. That is if we can even use them as older city facilities often do not have the door width or ramp requirement needed. Additionally there is only one pool in the entire city warm enough to accommodate our members sensory needs. And those tiny one person elevators are often too small for an adult size power chair”

D. Recommendations for improving public facilities

- **Facilities:** Participants recommended building more facilities and locating them in accessible, well-connected areas, including transit, accessible routes to facilities, and better neighbourhood connections, alongside improved ongoing maintenance to ensure facilities remain usable, safe, and welcoming.
- **Physical accessibility:** Suggested improvements focused on removing physical barriers through features such as ramps, automatic doors, accessible seating, amenities and equipment, as well as ensuring facilities support inclusive use.
- **Inclusive design:** Participants emphasized applying inclusive design principles across all facilities to accommodate diverse mobility devices and a wide range of needs, including integrating sensory-friendly features or providing kits to users.
- **Safety:** Improving lighting, visibility, and overall safety features within and around facilities was identified as important to support comfort, confidence, and usability for all users.
- **Public engagement, education, and awareness:** Recommendations included consulting people with disabilities, improving public understanding of disability and social interactions, and providing training for staff to ensure services are supportive and accommodating.
- **Wayfinding and signage:** Participants recommended clear, accessible signage for services and programs, as well as visual cues such as ramps, rails, and visible lines to support navigation within facilities.
- **Pools:** Participants identified opportunities to improve pool accessibility through physical upgrades such as ramps, warmer water temperatures, and hours of operation that better meet diverse needs.
- **Public washrooms and changerooms:** Recommendations focused on building accessible and family-friendly washrooms and changerooms, with layouts that support caregivers, mobility devices, and a range of users.
- **Financial accessibility:** Participants noted that cost can be a barrier, recommending lower fees or more affordable options to ensure facilities are accessible to everyone.



Participant Quote

“Build recreation centres near transit or major bus hubs. The new recreation buildings being built now are with the YMCA which is way too expensive and not near the main public.”

3.6 Accessible Communications

Overall, participants said that all City communications should use plain language and be easy to understand, navigate, and use, while still providing all the necessary information. At the same time, they emphasized the need to raise awareness of the accessibility resources and information available from The City of Calgary.

Participants want to see more inclusive City communications including representation of people with different disabilities (visible and invisible) in the language and graphics that are used by The City. Additionally, many said it was important to have multiple formats when sharing information so that various audiences can receive and understand the information. Common suggestions for other communication formats include having sign language interpretation, visual aids with text, videos and braille. A few comments also said that City staff need disability inclusion training to improve how they interact with and support people when delivering services.



“Easy to navigate, easy to understand system that tells you what is happening and when without any corporate jargon.”

Participant Quote

A. Digital Barriers to Accessing Information

While some participants said they did not have issues with City communications, those who did have challenges mostly had trouble using the City website and the recreation program booking system. Specifically, participants say that the website is not the most user-friendly and it is hard to find the exact information they are looking for, especially information about programs, services and engagement opportunities.

Content is also not always written in plain language and sometimes hard to understand. A few participants said the way content is structured seems like it is set up for internal use rather than for people visiting the website. They also said the amount of information and the way that links and pages are laid out can be hard to navigate and sometimes overwhelming for people with disabilities and their caregivers. Participants said that these barriers can be especially difficult for people with low digital literacy. That is, people who do not or cannot use digital devices like computers or have limited access to the internet.

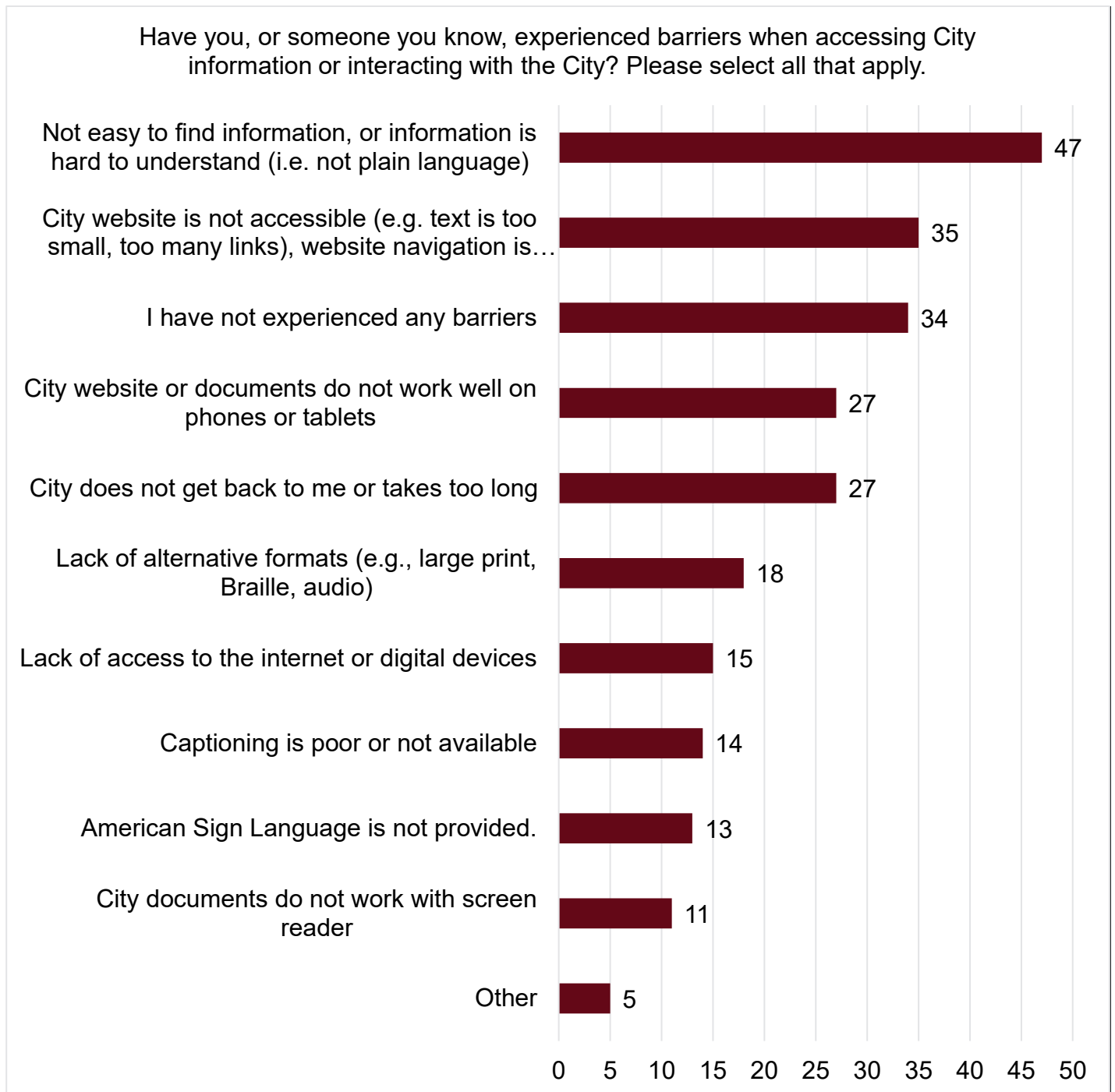


Participant Quote

"I limit my use of city of Calgary website. It isn't the worst site but it is t the most used friendly site, either. There are a lot of glitches that happen if I need to go back a page. Back button doesn't work very well for revisiting information I might need after accessing further pages/information. I have learned to carve out a half hour if time if someone says to go find something simple on CoC website. The 5 minutes I expect on many other sites usually takes 10-20 min for me to find and interact with the way I need to."

Of the 105 participants that chose to answer the question regarding barriers to City communication or interactions, the most selected barrier by respondents was that information is difficult to find or understand when asked about getting information or interacting with The City. The second most selected option was that The City website is not accessible. The third most selected option was that participants did not experience any barriers.

Figure 9: Chosen barriers to communications from the City of Calgary



Participants identified digital accessibility issues across City platforms, including the Transit trip planning app. Specifically, participants say that the Transit app does not have consistent real-time updates and can be confusing to use for navigation.

Other common formatting issues with The City's web platforms and tools include:

- broken or inconsistent website and document links,

- small text size on materials,
- no captioning or improper captioning on videos or social media advertisements,
- The City’s webpages and apps not being friendly with screen readers, particularly the engagement platforms,
- not all pages are mobile friendly.

Some participants also shared that the platforms used to register for programs and book spaces like the *Live and Play* webpage can be difficult to use when wanting to find more information about programs and services. Additionally, early registration opening times, such as at 5:00 a.m., are unfair for many families. These times create barriers for those with caregiving responsibilities, those who need support, or those who can’t be online at that time.

B. Other Communications Barriers

Other identified challenges with communications by The City include:

- **311 phone service:** a few participants commented that there were long wait times to talk to a representative and asked for more real-time support with issues.
- **Wayfinding:** there isn’t enough physical wayfinding signage that is easy to read at locations that are more difficult to navigate like Plus 15s and constructions zone detours.
- **Lack of awareness for City offerings:** many participants said they were unaware of opportunities for programs, services, and engagements that they can participate in and want to see more promotion and communication about these activities to build awareness.



“When trying to book greenspaces or plan events, the park specialists no longer have access to phones. Attempting to communicate with them in a timely fashion is not effective nor user friendly.”

Participant Quote

C. Recommendations to improve accessibility in City communications

Overall, participants want The City to improve access to information, with a strong focus on making digital communications more accessible. This includes having more user-friendly navigation features for The City’s website and digital platforms to share information. Additionally, content that is shared needs to be up to date and accurate as well as provided in simplified and plain language. Participants also gave the following suggestions for making communications more accessible across City services:

- make information on accessibility clear and easy to find, including accessible features in public buildings and spaces, and the accommodations available for programs,
- add more visual aids in webpages and materials, as well as captioning and video supports,
- make sure links and PDF documents are fully accessible and user-friendly,
- share information about City services and activities in multiple formats—written, spoken, and visual— so that more people can access and understand it,
- have more diverse representation of people with disabilities in visual aids and in language, including those with invisible disabilities,
- offer more language interpretation and translation across City services, and especially American Sign Language interpretation,
- offer more accessible communication supports across City services like live captioning, audible commentary, and videos to help explain information,
- have dedicated support staff for people with disabilities who need more help navigating information about The City, or City offerings and for people who may not have digital access,
- improve user experience of the Transit app by having a clearer design, real-time updates, and adding landmarks to support navigation,
- add more and louder audible signals on trains and buses and use more visual communication boards,
- have a dedicated line or person at 311 for accessibility issues, and offer an alternative to 311 for people who are hard of hearing,
- offer more wayfinding tools including physical and electronic maps, and clearer signage at locations especially around construction zone detours,
- improve communication features in physical spaces like buses and buildings by having more and louder audible signals for people who are hard of hearing, tactile surfaces for people who are blind or have low vision, and visual communication boards.

Finally, participants encouraged The City to partner with community organizations and representatives to help distribute information and inform more accessible communication practices.



Participant Quote

“Provide information in multiple mediums. Make sure information and processes are easy to understand and navigate. If a person needs help, ensure that staff give time for person to process information and reply. If need more time, ensure that they can reach same person so do not have to explain situation over and over to different people.”

3.7 Employment

Overall, there was a strong call for The City to be more inclusive in its employment and hiring practices. Specifically, participants valued meaningful employment for people with disabilities, where the roles offered match people’s skills and interests rather than token opportunities. Participants want The City workplace to be one where everyone feels welcome and included and especially want to see more people with disabilities represented in all areas of The City’s workforce.

Participants strongly believe the representation of people with lived experience of disability in Calgary paid roles, volunteer positions, and advisory or leadership capacities is necessary. Their involvement helps The City create and provide programs and services that are authentic, relevant, and trusted by the disability community. They also encouraged The City to collaborate with community organizations to create employment pathways such as practicums, internships, and adapted work experience programs.

Multiple participants said there needed to be more inclusion education and training provided to City employees, volunteers, and partners to reduce stigma around disabilities. Along with this, participants asked for more information to be shared about the accessibility supports and accommodations that are available for employees and candidates.



Participant Quote

“Educate staff as to how employing people with disabilities can and does work. Work with organizations to see what jobs could be filled with disabled candidates. Learn and think about accommodations that can be provided. Understand: people with disabilities want to and can work - but it might look different than what you are used to. Employing people with disabilities improves: workplace culture, creates opportunities and ingenuity, and increases productivity.”

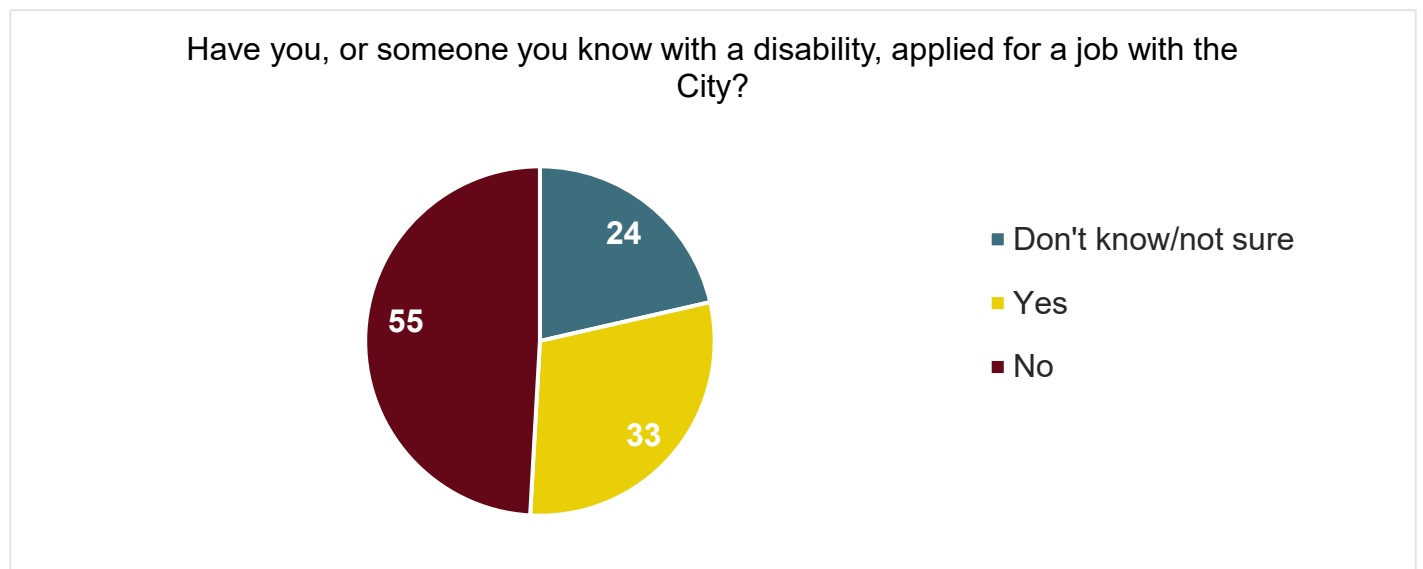
A. Barriers to employment at The City of Calgary

Some participants said that The City is not seen as an inclusive employer for people with disabilities. They say employers still believe that accommodations create more work even though having inclusive accommodations can benefit all employees. Multiple comments showed concern

about ableism in the workplace. That is, participants are afraid of disclosing a disability because it might result in prejudice or discrimination during the hiring process. Participants said employers' views on disabilities were a key concern throughout the employment process.

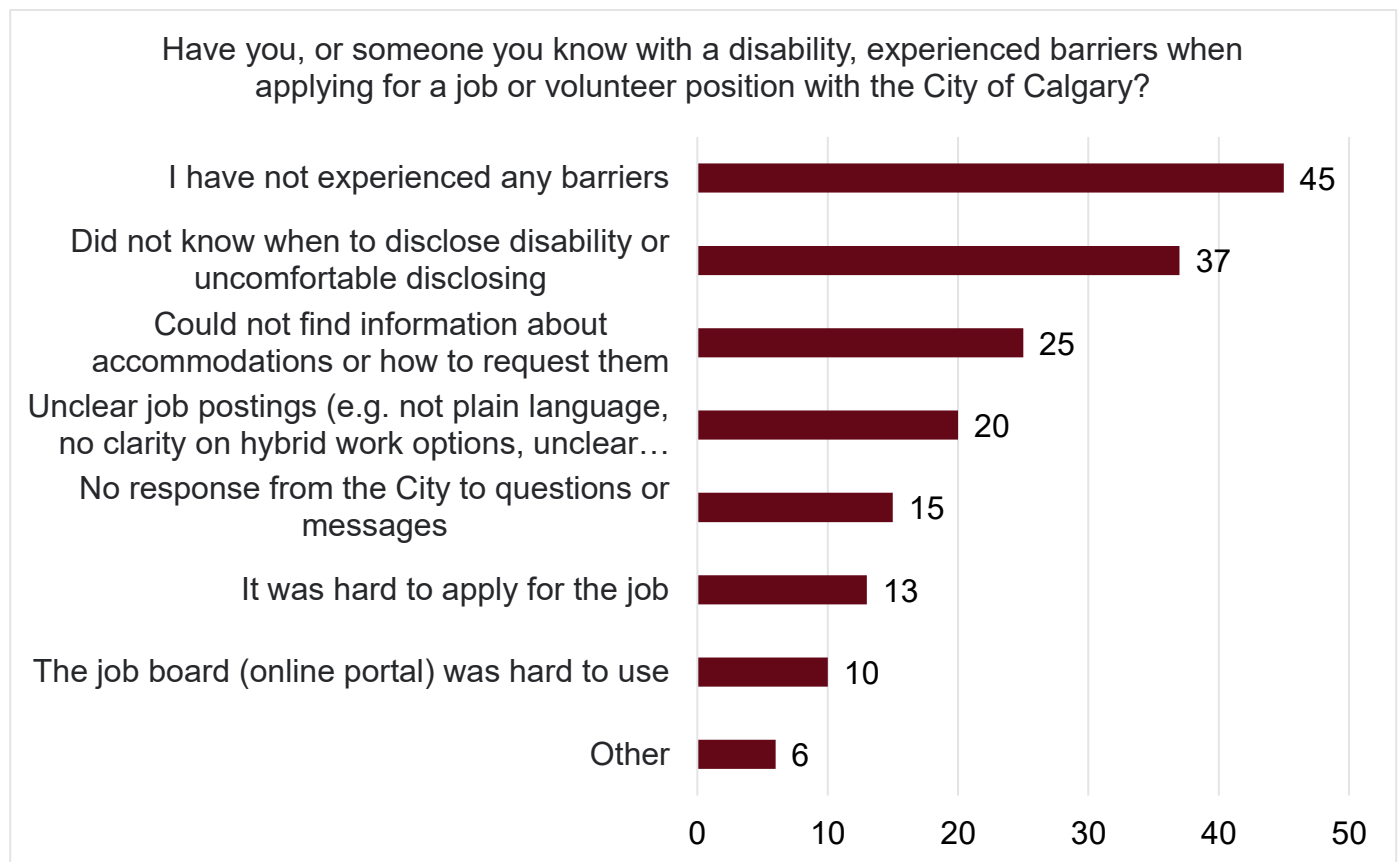
Of the 113 participants who chose to answer the question "Have you, or someone you know with a disability, applied for a job with the City?", nearly half of the respondents said they did not know anyone who had applied for a job with the City, while the remaining did know someone or were unsure.

Figure 10: Applicants for a City of Calgary job



Of the 100 participants who chose to answer the question "Have you, or someone you know with a disability, experienced barriers when applying for a job or volunteer position with The City of Calgary?", most respondents said they never experienced any barriers. The most selected barrier, however, was that participants weren't sure when or felt uncomfortable sharing that they had a disability. The next most selected barrier was not being able to find information about accommodations or how to request them.

Figure 11: Chosen barriers to employment with The City of Calgary



Other barriers in the hiring process in The City of Calgary were:

- it is not always clear that The City offers inclusive opportunities – despite The City being one of Calgary’s largest employers it is often not top of mind for people with disabilities who are looking for jobs,
- youth, including Indigenous youth, experience challenges getting jobs because of long response times and background check delays,
- job scams when applying to tThe City,
- difficulty rejoining the workforce after being out of work for multiple years,
- lack of transportation to attend interviews,
- uncertainty about whether interview and job sites are accessible, for example whether the buildings are wheelchair friendly and have accessible washrooms.



“I feel afraid if I tell them I am deaf or want to have interpreters, they will reject me!!! I always want to work for City of Calgary, but do not know where to start and how or if I feel welcome”

Participant Quote

E. Recommendations for improving the hiring and employment process at The City

Participants strongly called for hiring and employment in The City to be more inclusive. They made the following suggestions to help improve hiring and employment:

- make sure human resource staff have disability inclusion training and understand different types of disabilities as well as different accommodation needs,
- be transparent about what accommodations are available and what additional information is needed to request an accommodation,
- have more flexible work arrangements, especially remote work options to allow those who cannot attend or work in-person to contribute to the workforce,
- create a job board or database specifically for inclusive jobs to make these opportunities more visible and easier to find in one place.

Participants made it clear that not all accommodations are physical. They also include supports like getting interview questions ahead of time, having extra time to do tasks, using assistive technology, plain-language materials, interpretation, and clearer communication. Knowing what accommodations are available for a role was seen as especially helpful. Participants representing Indigenous voices specifically said it was important for them to have culturally appropriate interview practices. This includes having knowledge of Indigenous history and the commitments to reconciliation.

Finally, participants said The City needs to use consistent accessibility practices across all employment experiences. They also encouraged sharing inclusion knowledge with other organizations and businesses and having inclusive policies and practices that support a wide range of access needs.



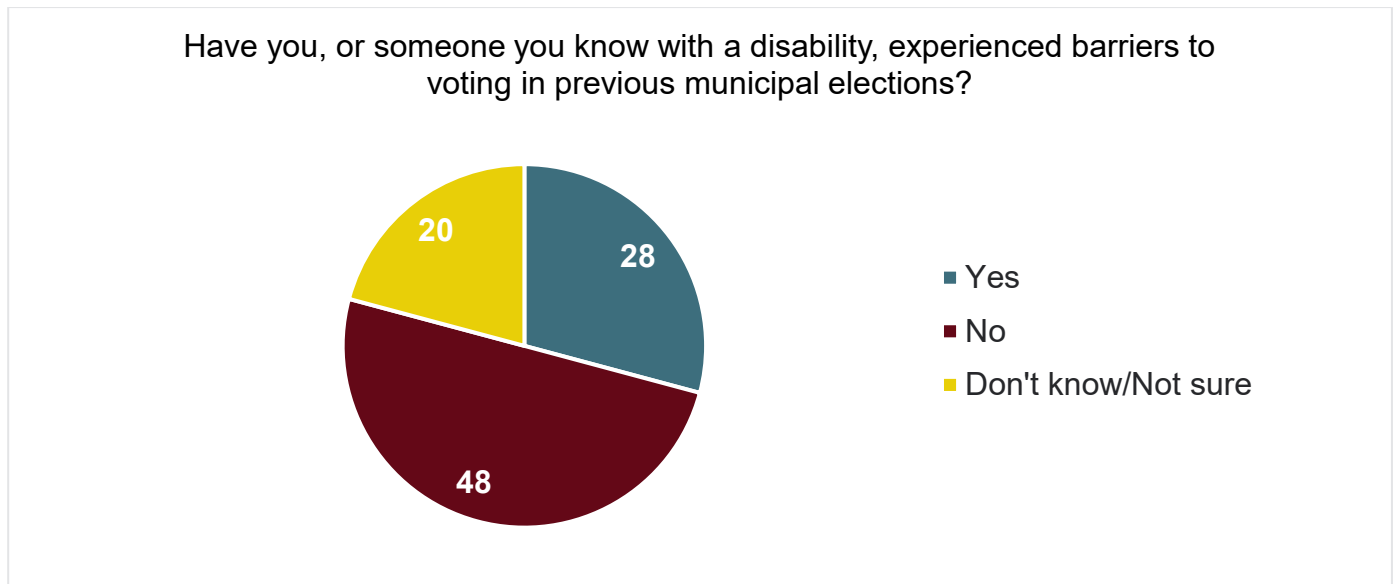
“Increase opportunities and accommodations. Increase advertising of jobs and update the website or have in person be an option”

Participant Quote

3.8 Elections

Of the 97 participants who chose to answer the question “Have you, or someone you know with a disability, experienced barriers to voting in previous municipal elections?”, many indicated that they did not experience any challenges or barriers when voting at the most recent municipal election. In the survey, half of the respondents said they did not experience barriers when voting in the previous elections. The remaining said they did experience challenges or were unsure.

Figure 12: Experience with voting barriers in previous election.



A. Identified barriers to municipal voting

Of the participants that did experience barriers, the most common concern for participants was long lines and long waiting times – sometimes hours – to vote. Along with long lines, there are not enough places to rest or sit down while waiting. This makes voting difficult for people who are older or who have disabilities, health issues, or other mobility challenges and cannot stand in line for a long time.

Another common concern was the location and accessibility of polling stations. Specifically, participants said that polling stations were too far away from them, especially for seniors and people living in long-term care facilities. In addition, using transit to go to voting stations can be difficult, especially in winter. Participants also said the area outside the polling station building was not accessible because of broken or narrow sidewalks, ramps that are too steep or not up to standard, entrances that are not accessible, and parking that was not adequate for people with disabilities.

Inside the polling station buildings, some participants said the routes to the voting booth can be confusing and have unclear directions. The paths can also be difficult to maneuver for someone using a mobility device like a walker, stroller, or wheelchair. Participants asked for polling station venues to be accessible for different mobility needs, including for people using wheelchairs.

A few participants said the recent ballots were difficult specifically for people who are blind or have low vision. They said the text was too small and needed to be larger and more contrasting, for example, be on a yellow background.



Participant Quote

“This previous election! No seating externally provided; lines were sometimes hours long and in the cold which is extra difficult for the elderly and mobility-limited folks; more polling attendants to help the line move faster and even temporary seating would have helped”



Participant Quote

“There wasn't enough public education about the available accessibility features put in place to ensure people of vary ability could vote. So I just stayed at home.”

B. Recommendations to improve accessibility for municipal elections

Participants overall asked for more support for people with various visible and invisible disabilities at voting stations. Many asked for more information in plain language about the municipal election to be given to them in advance of voting through both online and physical materials. Specifically, they want to know what they can expect at the voting station and how to participate in the election including:

- plain language summaries of the election candidates and their platforms,
- the types of accessibility features and supports there are at the venues for people with different disabilities,
- how long the lines and the waiting times to vote are,
- information for a first-time voter (similar to the information sent for the federal election), and
- what the building is like and directions to get to the polling station or nearby washrooms.

Other resources that participants said would be helpful to have at polling stations are:

- benches and rest spaces for people who cannot stand in line for a long time,

- alternative ballot formats and voting materials for people with diverse ability needs or assistive technology,
- a designated staff member to help people with disabilities (both visible and invisible) including helping them to read and understand the ballot if needed,
- a faster process or priority line for people with disabilities at polling stations,
- mobile voting stations that can be brought to voters who have difficulty getting to the polling stations,
- increased transit support during the voting period through public transit and Access Calgary.



Participant Quote

“Pre-load information about what to expect at voting station. Clearly identified staff. Maybe inclusion coordinators onsite that are wearing a special color or badge. Information about how long line is. How to be comfortable in line. If need to go to the bathroom or get out of elements, is a kind person available to help. Is the sensory environment comfortable (softer lighting, low noise, etc.).”

4.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall, this engagement shows a clear and consistent call for The City of Calgary to make accessibility, equity, and inclusion a part of everything that it does. While participants said there has been progress in some areas, they still face many ongoing barriers. These barriers include:

- not knowing what accessibility supports are available for people with disabilities,
- limited understanding from others on visible and invisible disabilities,
- difficulty getting around buildings, public spaces, and using City transportation,
- difficulty using online tools and resources, and
- the cost of participating in City services and programs.

To help address such challenges, participants said they want to see more communication on accessibility work from The City, more inclusive design, and more training for staff that considers the lived experience of people with diverse abilities. By being more transparent, prioritizing accessibility and working with community partners to find solutions, The City of Calgary can build trust and ensure all who live in Calgary feel welcomed, respected and can fully participate.

The review of the Accessibility Policy and development of the Accessibility Plan will be conducted in early 2026.

Appendix A: Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge and thank all participants including organizations who generously shared their time, lived experience, and expertise to inform the Accessibility Policy and Plan.

Session	Date	Attendance
Pop-Up 1: Shouldice Accessible Park	Saturday, September 6, 2025	35
Pop-Up 2: Forest Lawn Library	Tuesday, September 9, 2025	37
Pop-Up 3: Genesis Centre	Saturday, September 13, 2025	90
Pop-Up 4: Village Square Leisure Centre	Monday, September 15 2025	95
Pop-Up 5: Southland Leisure Centre	Wednesday, September 17, 2025	18
Pop-Up 6: Central Library	Saturday, September 20, 2025	210
Pop-Up 7: Seton YMCA	Saturday, October 25, 2025	55
Lunch and Learn Presentation	Tuesday, October 28, 2025	10
Public Open House	Saturday, November 8, 2025	83
Virtual Open House	Wednesday, November 19, 2025	2
1:1 Interview with Advisory Committee on Accessibility Member (Request)	Friday, September 12, 2025	1
Older Advisory Table Committee	Tuesday, October 21, 2025	11
Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre	Thursday, November 6, 2025	18

1:1 Interview with Calgary Adapted Hub Representative	Monday, November 10, 2025	1
Manchester Tower Apartments	Wednesday, November 12, 2025	12
SCOPE: Disability Action Hall	Thursday, November 13, 2025	15
Lacrossing Barriers	Monday, November 17, 2025	12
Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee	Tuesday, November 18, 2025	10
Advisory Committee on Accessibility	Thursday, November 20, 2025	8
Inclusion Calgary	Tuesday, November 25th, 2025	8
United Way of Calgary	Wednesday, November 26, 2025	12
Onward Homes	Thursday, November 27th, 2025	25
Prospect Human Services	Tuesday, December 2, 2025	19
Women's Centre of Calgary	Wednesday, December 3, 2025	17
Cerebral Palsy Alberta	Monday, December 8, 2025	18
The Sinneave Family Foundation	Wednesday, December 10, 2025	14

Appendix B: Demographic Information of Survey Data

Figure 13: Participant identity

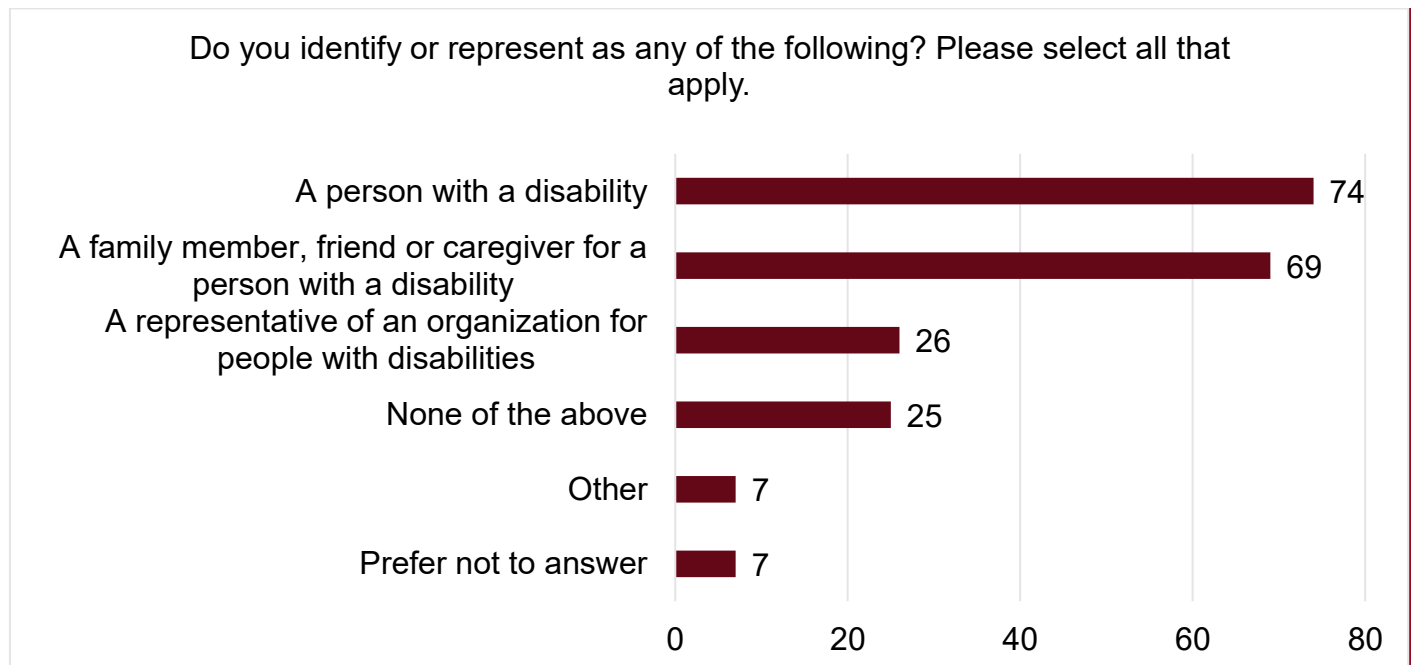


Figure 14: Disability Type

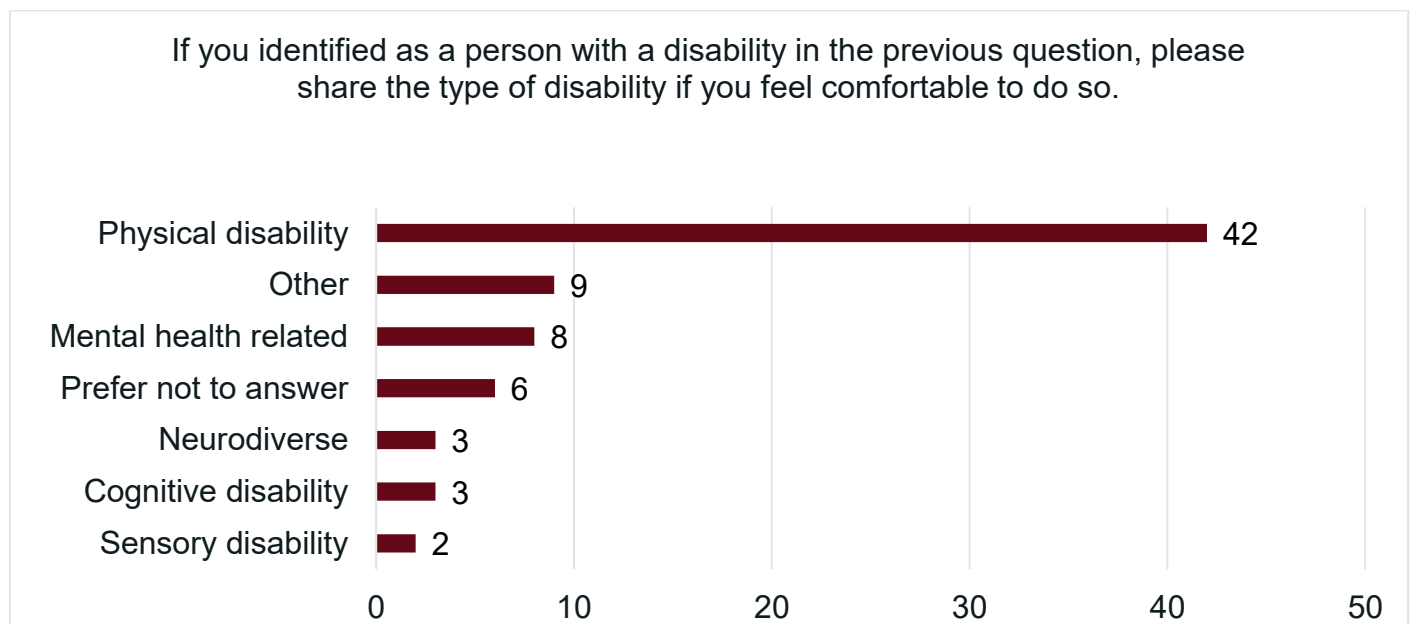


Figure 15: Please select all that apply

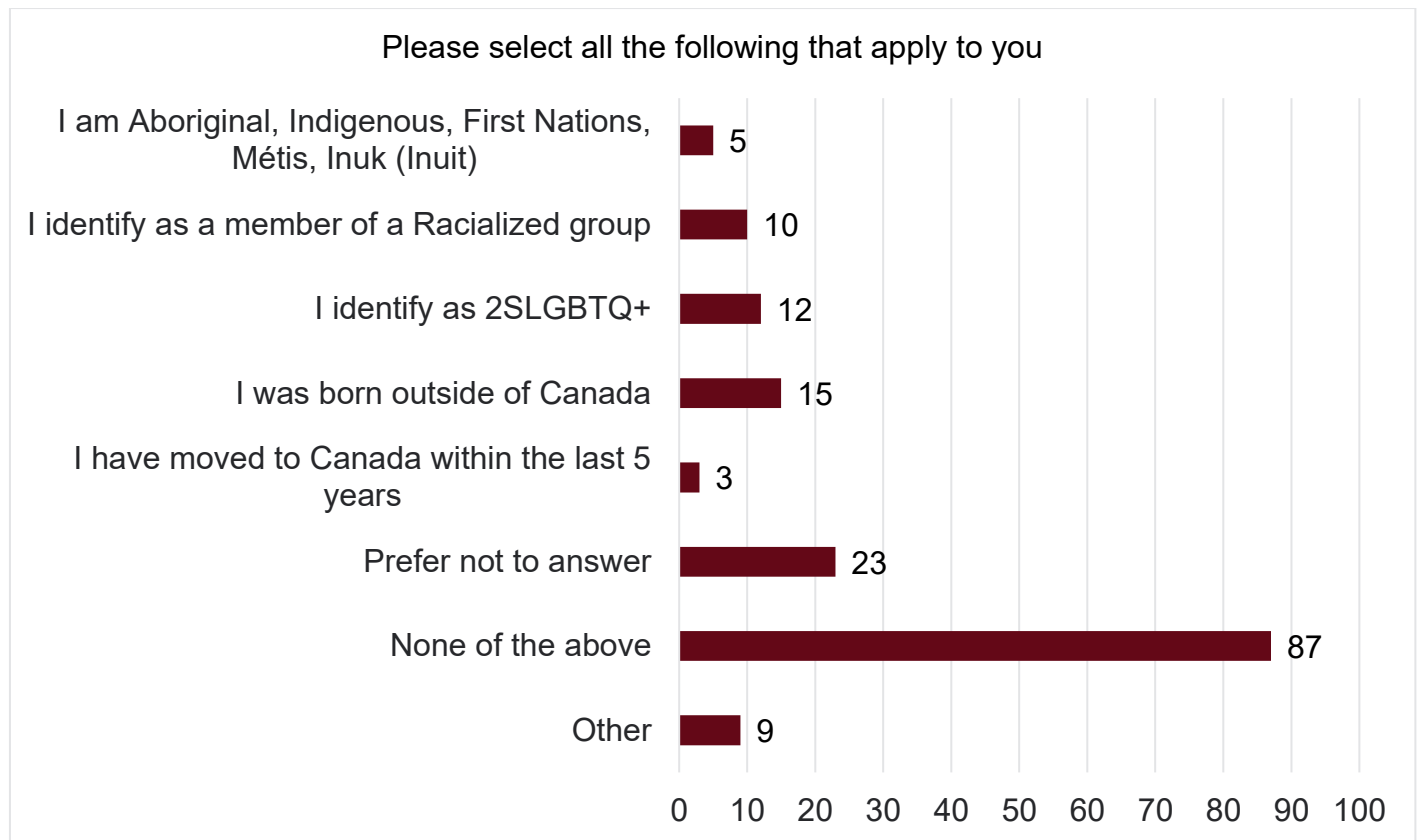


Figure 16: Gender identity

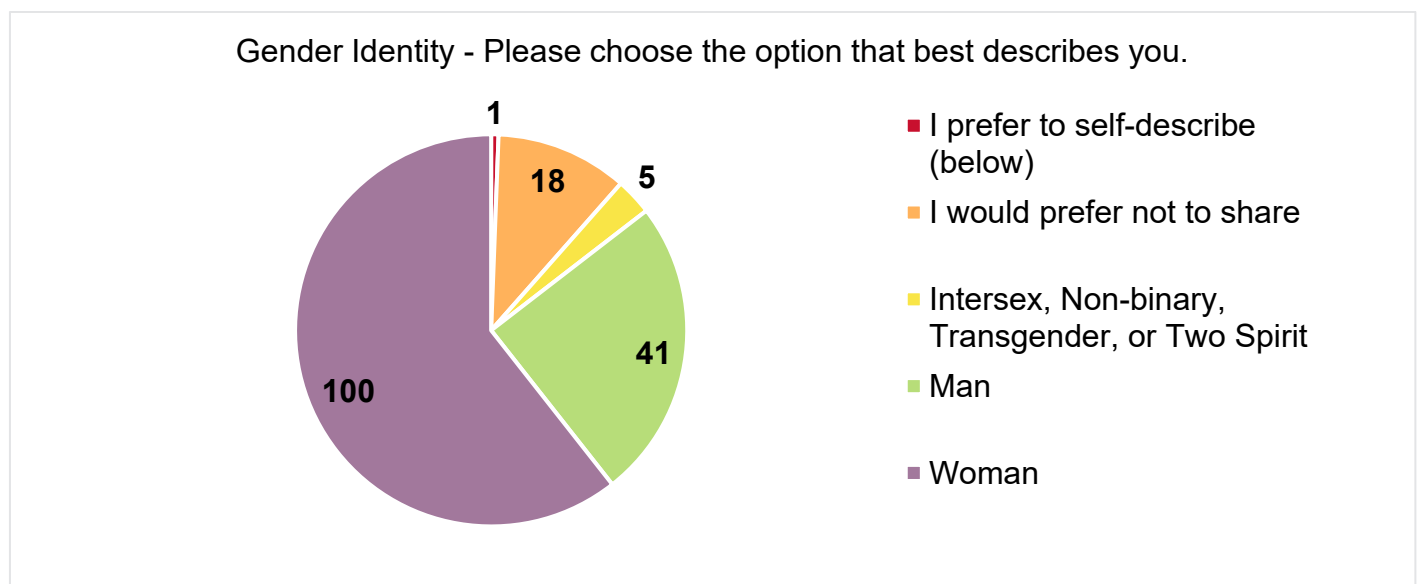


Figure 17: Location

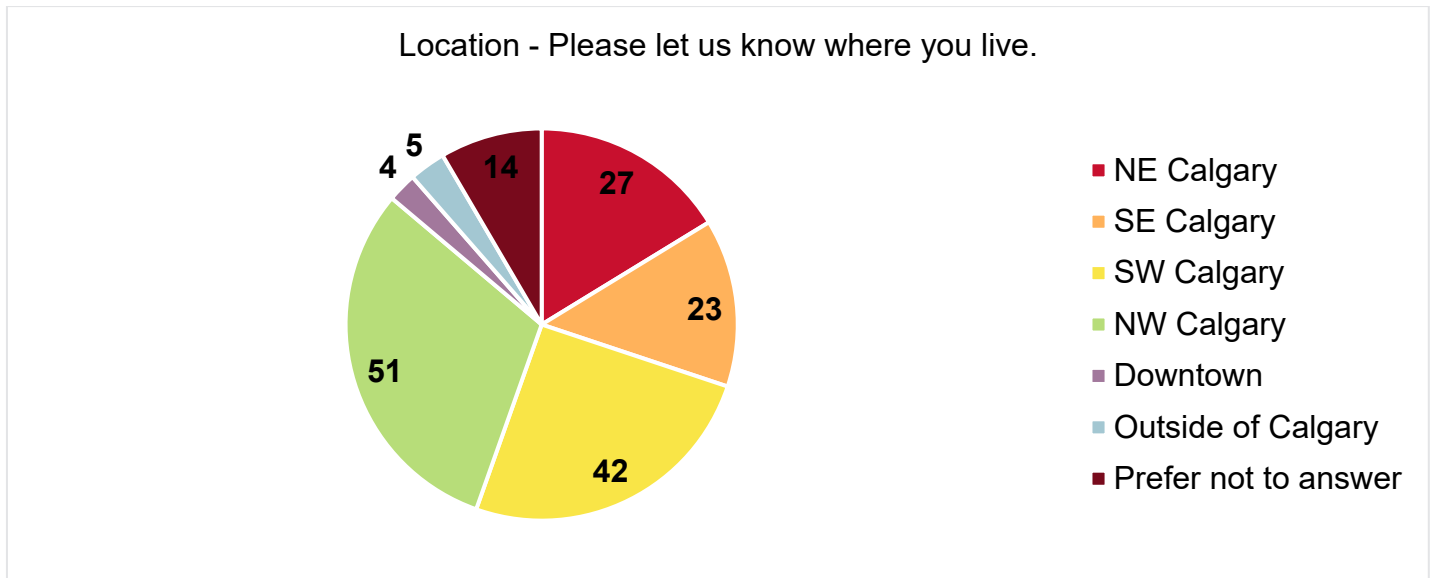


Figure 18: Age

