PUBLIC SURVEY ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Survey Results

From Monday, Sept. 21 to Friday, Oct. 2, the City of Vaughan ran an online public survey to collect feedback on how the City engages with citizens of all ages and abilities, including community groups and associations, cultural organizations and businesses. The purpose of the survey was to understand:

- the current state of community engagement with the City of Vaughan.
- general viewpoints about the function and benefits of community engagement to support municipal decision-making.
- how the public typically engages with the City of Vaughan.
- ways respondents might consider engaging with the City of Vaughan in the future.
- any additional comments or ideas for the City on engaging the public.

The survey took approximately nine minutes to complete and had 188 respondents.

Q: Community engagement can be described as the process by which citizens and stakeholders learn together and work together on behalf of their communities and in collaboration with their local government to create and realize sustainable and future-defining visions for the community. In your opinion, and in one word, community engagement should be… (e.g. inclusive)?

This question was presented as open-ended and respondents were welcome to provide up to five words. More than 630 responses were collected and organized into nine key themes (in order of most responses):

- Accessible and Inclusive
- Open and Transparent
- Meaningful and Valuable
- Collaborative and Engaging
- Fair/Equitable
- Process
- Diverse and Representative
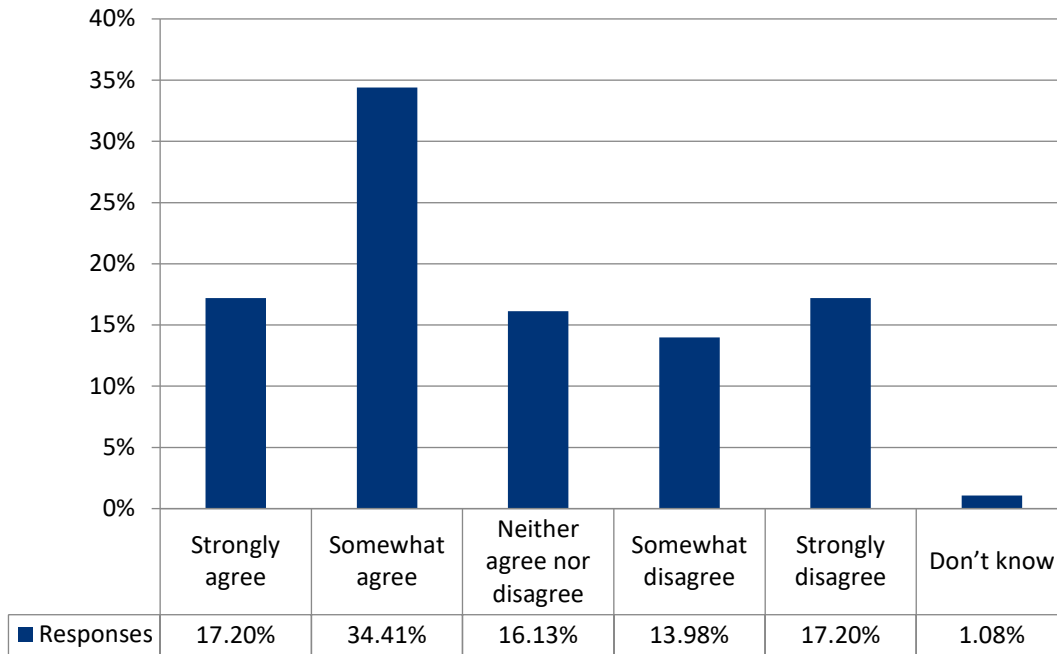- Informative
- Results Oriented

These key themes appropriately align with the City of Vaughan's intent to adopt the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics acts as a set of guiding principles that will govern the development and execution of engagement processes, help make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially impacted parties and serve to ensure the integrity of the City's community engagement. The following chart details each element of the IAP2's Code of Ethics and demonstrates alignment with the results of the survey.

IAP2 CODE OF ETHICS	RESULTS OF THE SURVEY
Purpose: The City supports community engagement as a process to make better decisions that incorporates the interests and concerns of affected stakeholders and meets the needs of the decision-making body.	**Process**: Many respondents highlighted the importance of process to ensure solid engagements that are ongoing, documented, focused, forward-thinking, well-timed, wisely managed and able to, in some cases, and where appropriate, achieve clear consensus. Respondents also indicated that good leadership and knowledgeable participants can make for a rewarding experience.

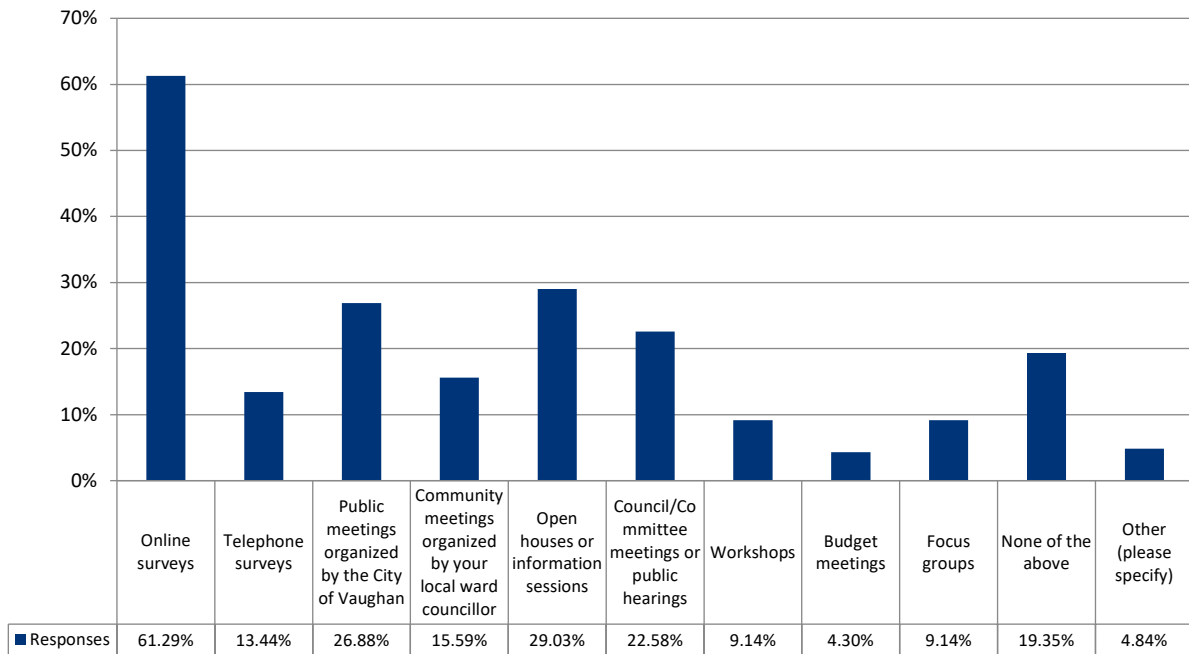|	
Role of Practitioner: The City will enhance the citizens' and stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.	**Meaningful and Valuable**: Engagement processes should be thoughtful, proactive and actionable, while providing an experience to participants that is genuine, deliberate and organic. Respondents also noted that engagement processes should be beneficial and remain topical to ensure a satisfying and fulfilling experience. **Collaborative and Engaging**: Engagement processes need to be interactive and constructive, while incorporating creative aspects to keep participants engaged. Respondents also noted the importance of building partnerships or having stakeholders work together as partners, and emphasized the need for two-way, deliberative methods.
Trust: The City will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the engagement process among all the participants.	**Open and Transparent**: This speaks to hosting engagement processes that are honest and clear with defined intentions and expectations. Respondents also noted the importance of all parties being accountable to their words and actions and the significance of non-partisan/ unbiased processes.
Defining the Public's Role: The City will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.	**Diverse and Representative**: A good portion of respondents felt diverse participation and representation of appropriate stakeholders was key for good engagement. They highlighted that engagements should be far-reaching and all-encompassing to involve the right people at the table.
Openness: The City will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.	**Informative**: Respondents indicate a desire for engagement processes to be informative. The use of storytelling was also mentioned.

Access to the Process: The City will ensure stakeholders have fair and equal access to the community engagement process and the opportunity to influence decisions.	**Accessible and Inclusive**: This includes ensuring opportunities to engage are far and wide, and considerate of participant's resources, needs and desires. Respondents also noted the importance of the process and materials being presented in a way that is easy to understand and broadly publicized to ensure the right people are notified about the opportunities to engage.
Respect for Communities: The City will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."	**Fair/Equitable**: This speaks to the need to ensure all voices feel heard and listened to, as well as welcomed into the process in a receptive manner. Respondents also highlighted the importance of respect and supportiveness during an engagement process.
Advocacy: The City will advocate for the community engagement process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.	N/A
Commitments: The City will ensure all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.	**Results Oriented**: Some respondents stressed the need for engagement processes to be results oriented or performance measured. Capturing meaningful metrics is a standard way of demonstrating whether a given engagement process was a success or not.
Support of the Practice: The City will stay informed of new developments and standards in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of community engagement.	N/A

Q: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe I can influence municipal decisions in Vaughan by participating in community engagement events (e.g. surveys, workshops, deputations to Council, open houses, etc.).

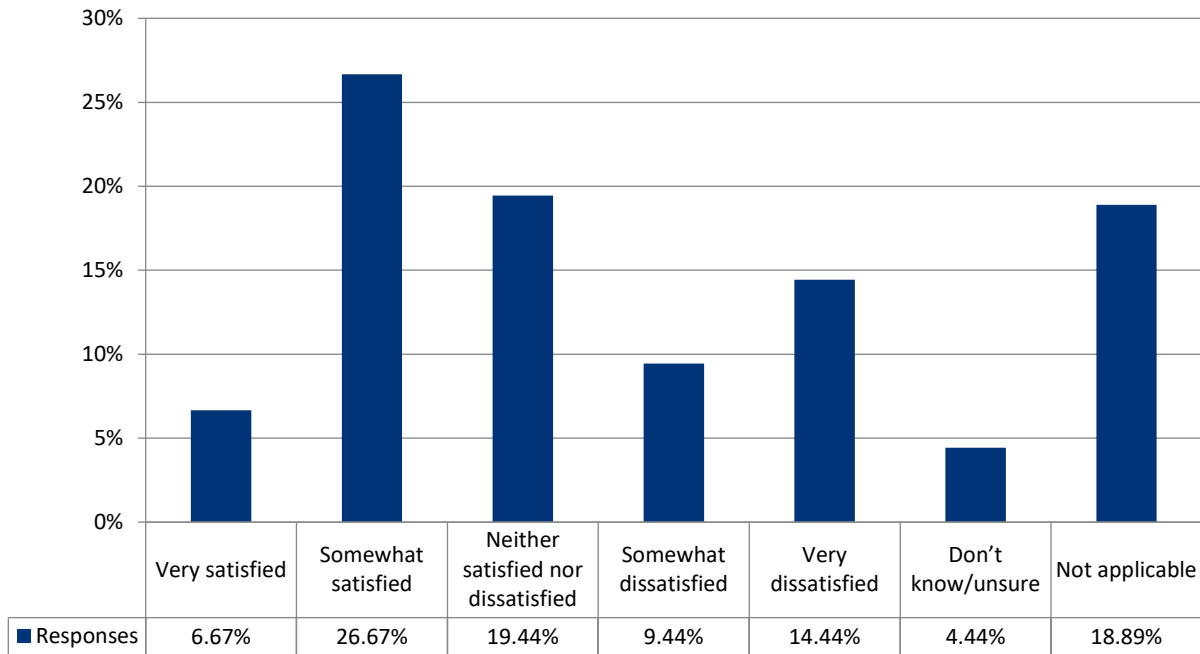|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
■ Responses	17.20%	34.41%	16.13%	13.98%	17.20%	1.08%

The same question was included as part of the 2018 Citizen Satisfaction online survey and the results were fairly similar. In 2018, half (51 per cent) of respondents said they strongly or somewhat believe they can influence municipal decisions affecting Vaughan by participating in public engagement events, while a similar proportion (49 per cent) disagreed with this view. In the 2020 public survey, 51 per cent also strongly or somewhat agree they can influence decisions, while 31 per cent disagreed. These results position the City of Vaughan to impact these results positively with a strong and consistent corporate approach to community engagement that is rooted in sound process and works to build trust and rapport with the public.

Q: In 2019, did you participate in any of the following community engagement events organized by the City of Vaughan? Please select all that apply.

	Online surveys	Telephone surveys	Public meetings organized by the City of Vaughan	Community meetings organized by your local ward councillor	Open houses or information sessions	Council/Committee meetings or public hearings	Workshops	Budget meetings	Focus groups	None of the above	Other (please specify)
Responses	61.29%	13.44%	26.88%	15.59%	29.03%	22.58%	9.14%	4.30%	9.14%	19.35%	4.84%

The same question was included as part of the 2018 Citizen Satisfaction online survey and, in comparison to the 2020 online survey, those results indicated that participation is generally on the rise. In 2018, online survey respondents were most likely to have participated in online surveys (24 per cent versus 61 per cent in the 2020 online survey), public meetings (24 per cent versus 27 per cent), open houses or information sessions (22 per cent versus 29 per cent) and Council meetings or public hearings (17 per cent versus 22 per cent). Half (52 per cent) of respondents did not participate in any of these processes, in comparison to 20 per cent in the 2020 online survey. These results position the City of Vaughan to impact these results positively with a strong and consistent corporate approach to community engagement that will encourage greater and more widespread participation.

Q: Thinking about the most recent community engagement event you participated in, can you please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you were with it?

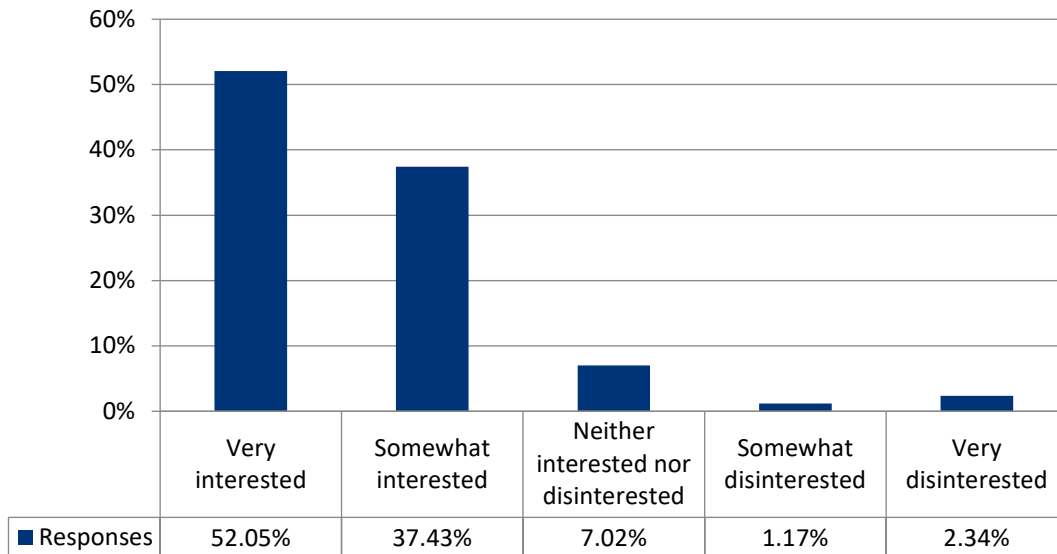|	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/unsure	Not applicable
■ Responses	6.67%	26.67%	19.44%	9.44%	14.44%	4.44%	18.89%

Only about 33 per cent of respondents indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied, with about 20 per cent selected neither and only 24 per cent were dissatisfied. When asked to provide comment on why respondents were dissatisfied with a recent engagement event they participated in, four key themes emerged:

- **Results not shared**: Some comments indicate respondents had participated in surveys for which the results were never publicly shared.
- **More promotion needed**: Some comments point to a need for greater and more widespread promotion of the opportunities to engage.
- **Community engagement as a checklist item**: Several comments reveal disappointment in community engagement processes that make participants feel like it's merely "lip service" and that public opinions don't really matter. Many feel like community and public meetings are merely a space for the public to air their grievances and to be appeased, even though the City has already taken a position on the matter.
- **Frustration with development planning matters**: Some respondents are frustrated in the development planning process, including the lack of opportunity for communities/citizens to work constructively with the various parties involved.
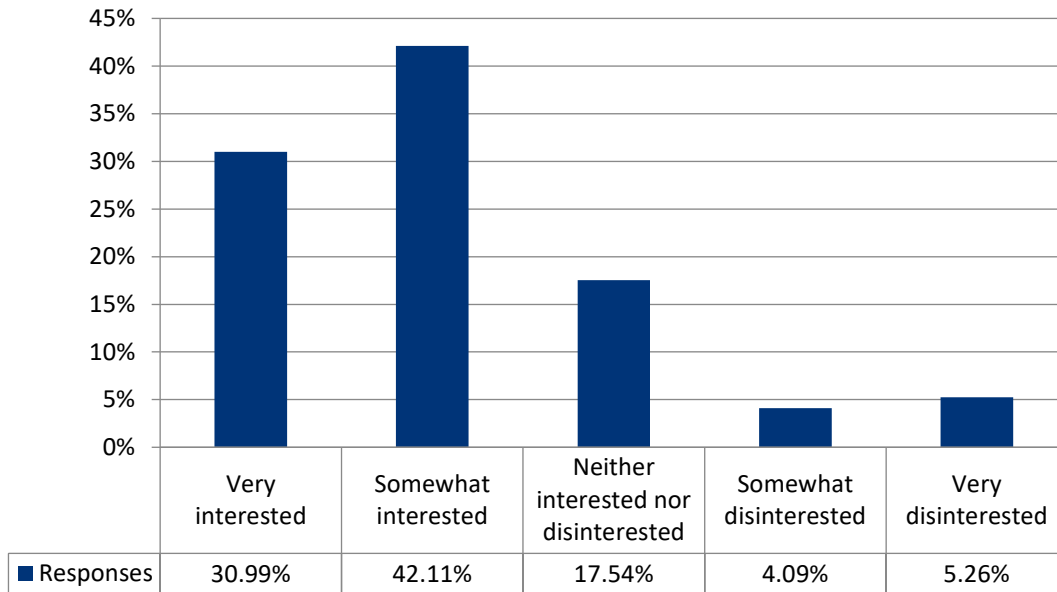
These comments provide valuable insight for the City of Vaughan in terms of being able to enhance these areas in need of improvement in a positive way through a strong and consistent corporate approach to community engagement that is not only rooted in sound process, but also speaks to the needs and desires of the public.

Q: COVID-19 restrictions aside, how interested would you be in participating in the following forms of online and in-person community engagement on a topic/conversation that would be of interest to you?

Completing an online survey or feedback form on the City's website.
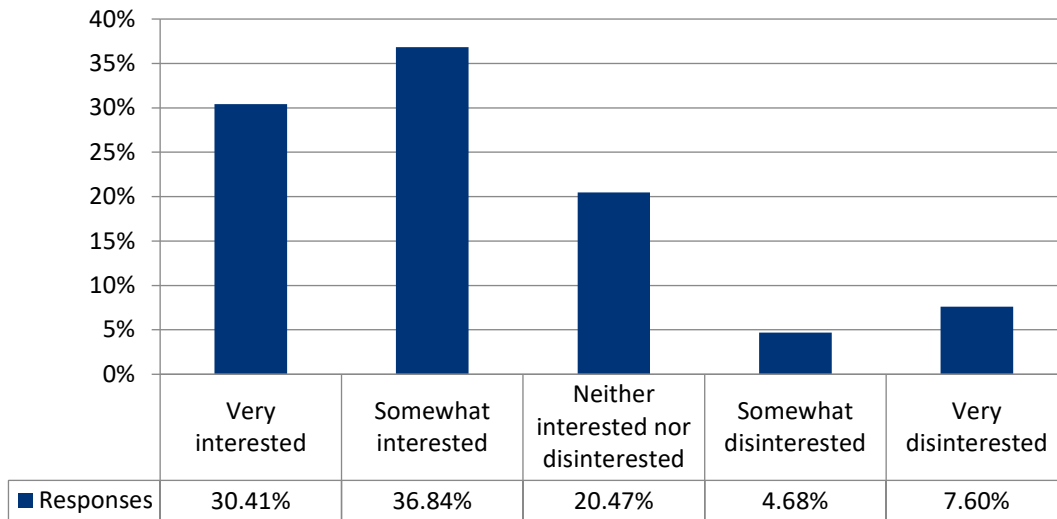
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	52.05%	37.43%	7.02%	1.17%	2.34%

Attending a small community focus group.

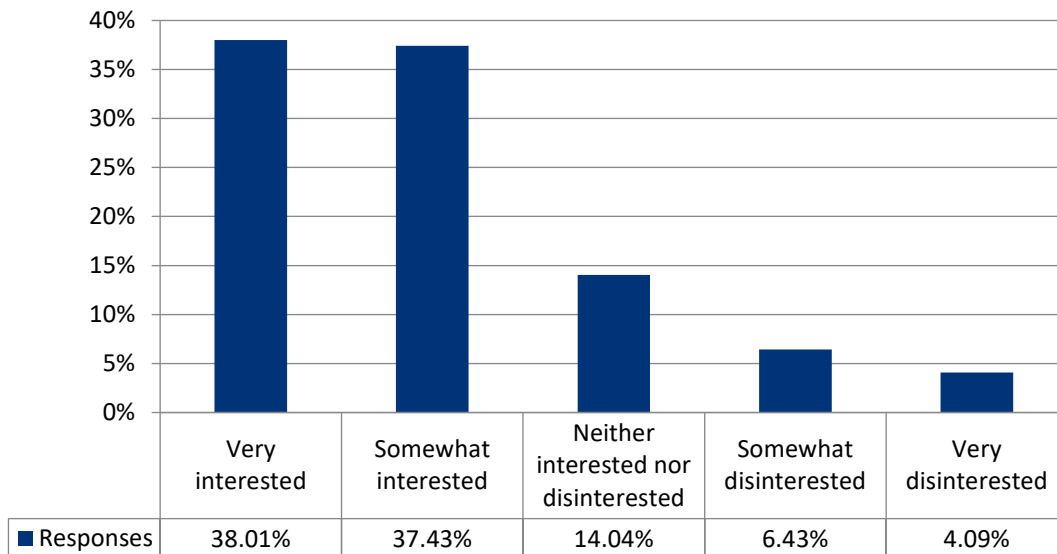|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	30.99%	42.11%	17.54%	4.09%	5.26%

Attending an open house where participants can observe and comment on information posted on display boards and ask questions of and leave comments with City staff.
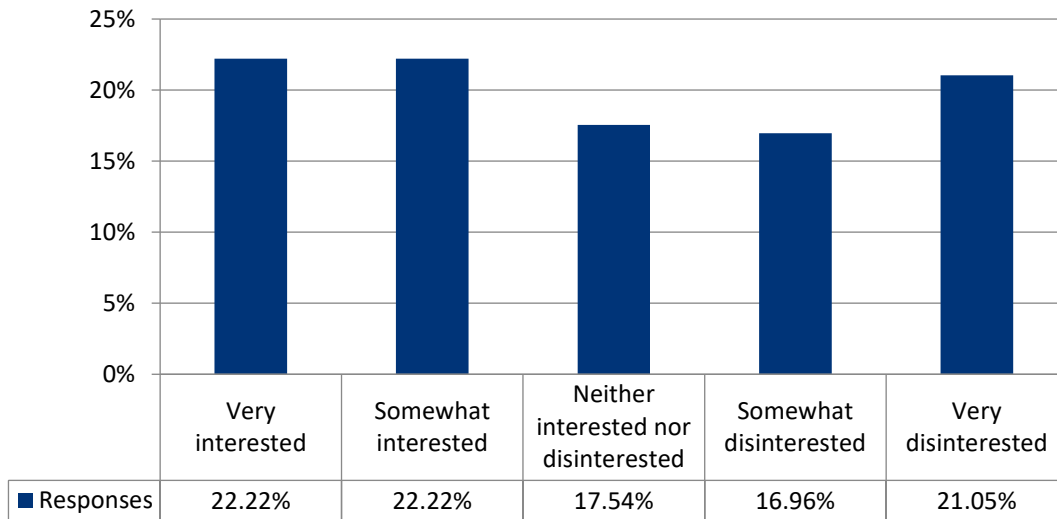
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	29.82%	36.26%	15.20%	9.36%	9.36%
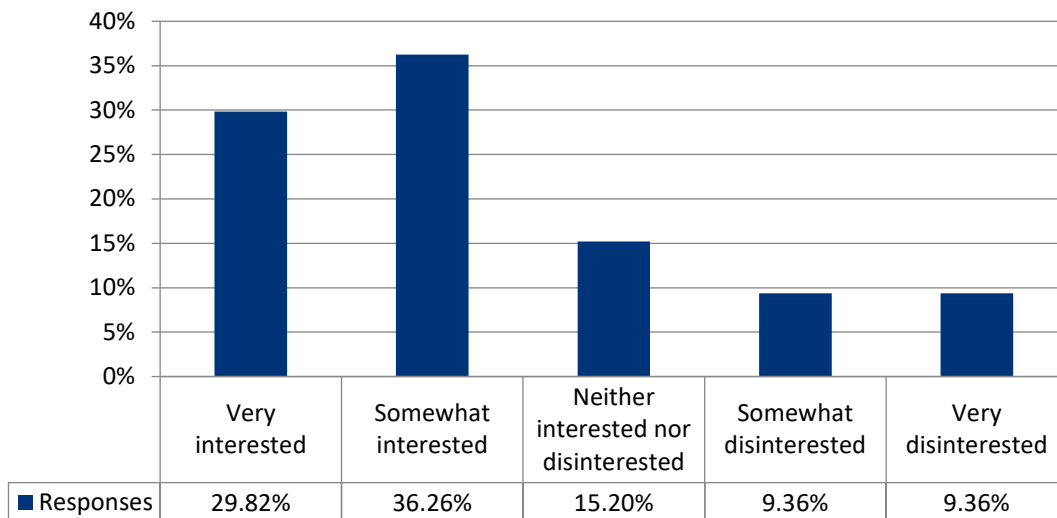
Participating in a collaborative workshop where participants take part in active and productive discussion sessions to achieve a desired outcome.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	30.41%	36.84%	20.47%	4.68%	7.60%

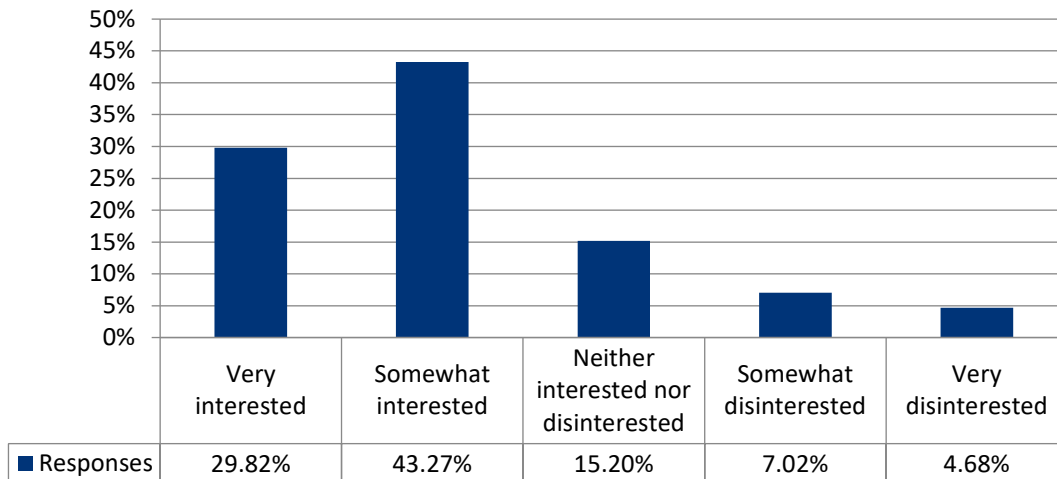## Participating in an online workshop where participants follow self-guided questions and activities at their leisure.

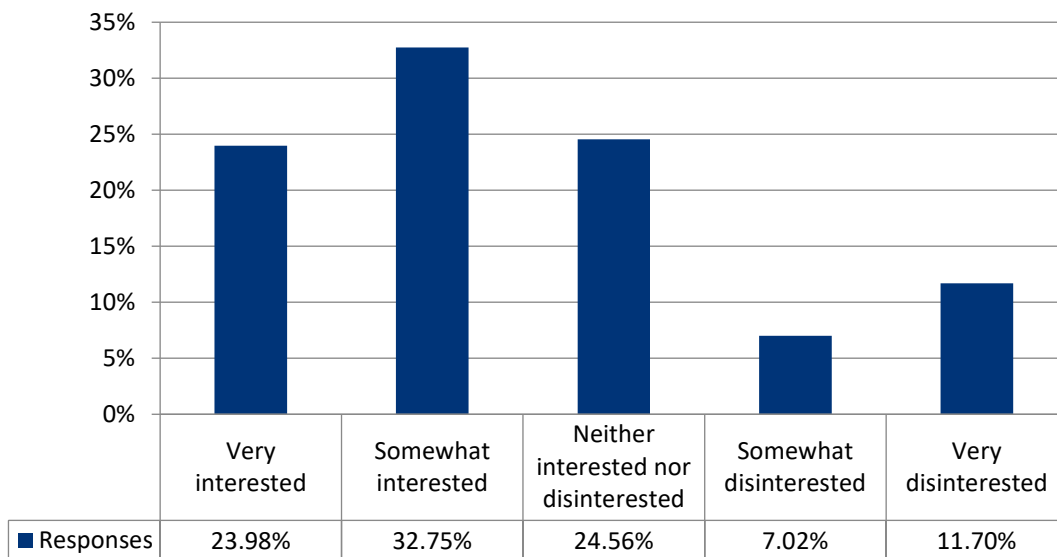|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	38.01%	37.43%	14.04%	6.43%	4.09%

Interacting on the City's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn pages (e.g. commenting on a post, filling out a poll, etc.).

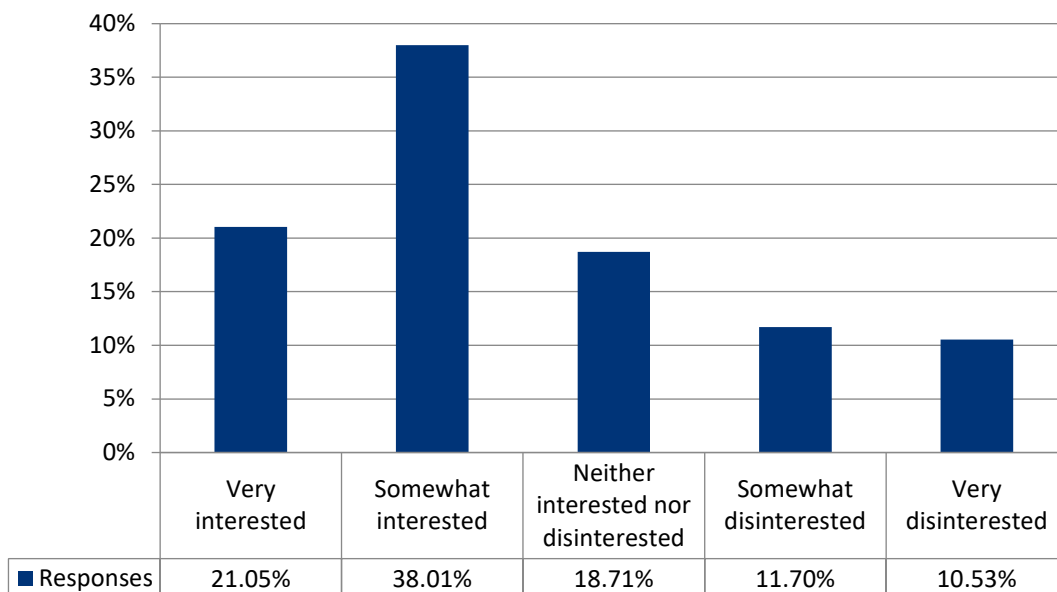|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	22.22%	22.22%	17.54%	16.96%	21.05%

Participating in various interactive activities (mapping, idea sourcing, Q and As, surveys, etc.) on an online engagement platform that may require registration to participate.
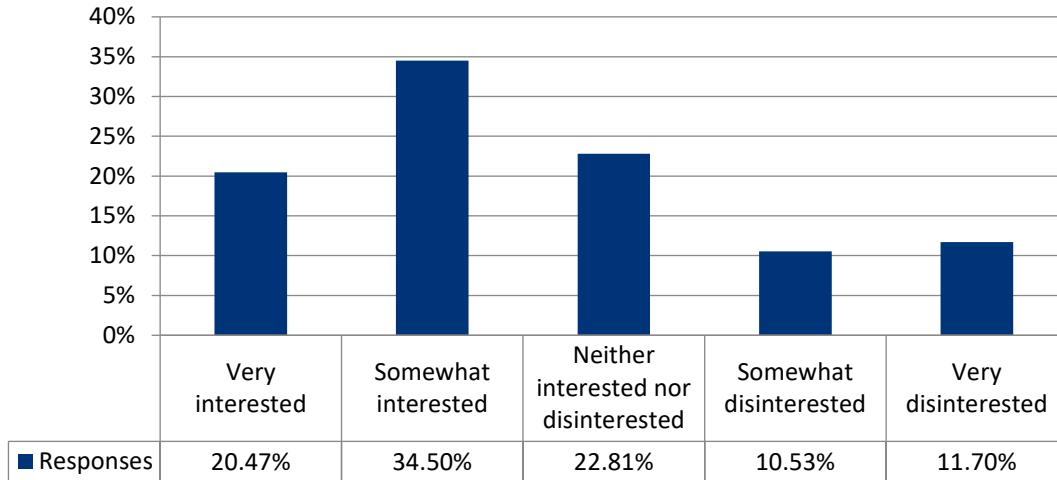
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	29.82%	43.27%	15.20%	7.02%	4.68%

Completing a digital or hardcopy workbook that is mailed or emailed back to the City of Vaughan.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
Responses	23.98%	32.75%	24.56%	7.02%	11.70%

Participating in telephone, in-person or email interviews.

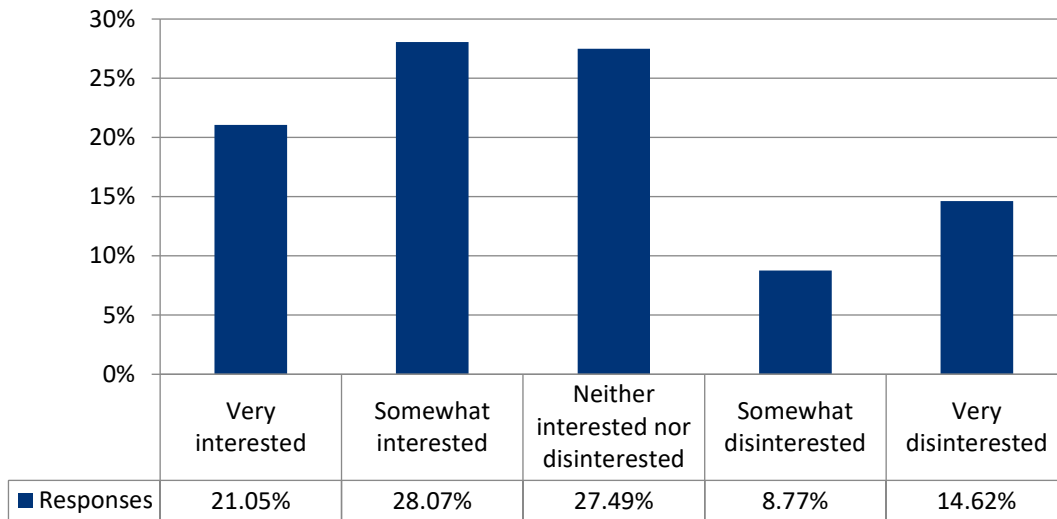|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
Responses	21.05%	38.01%	18.71%	11.70%	10.53%

Listening in to a telephone townhall where participants can call in to listen to or participate in discussions with Members of Council, City staff and possibly guest speakers on certain topics.

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
Responses	20.47%	34.50%	22.81%	10.53%	11.70%

Attending a site visit to physically tour and understand a location of interest for a given project.

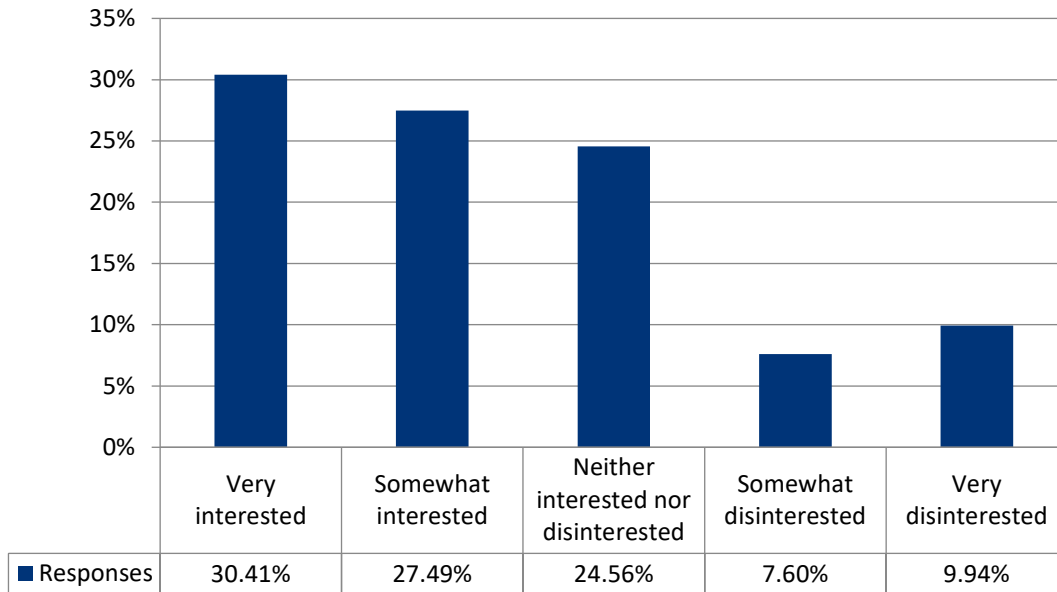|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
Responses	36.26%	35.09%	17.54%	2.92%	8.19%
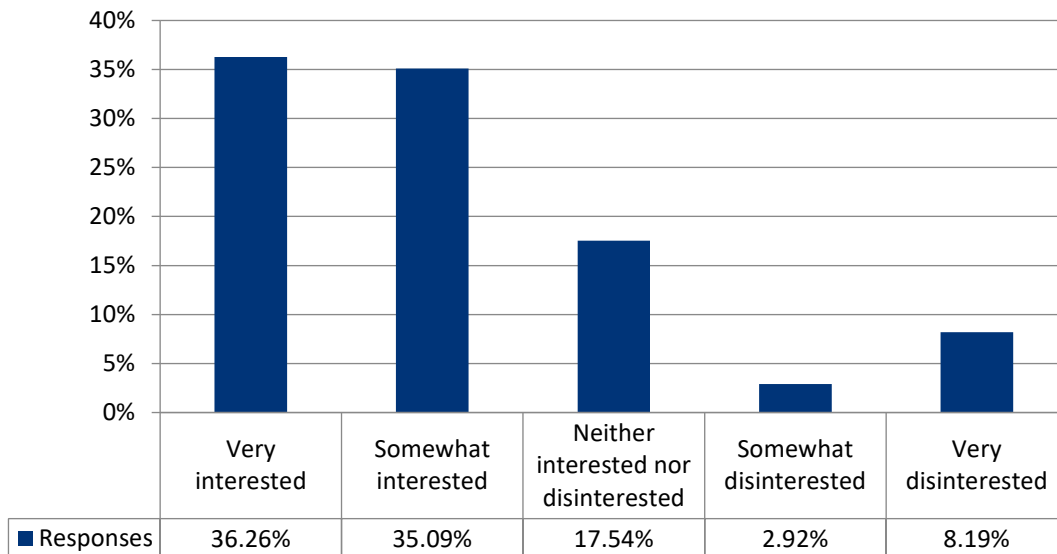
Participating in hackathons where participants come together to solve real challenges in a fair and friendly competition.

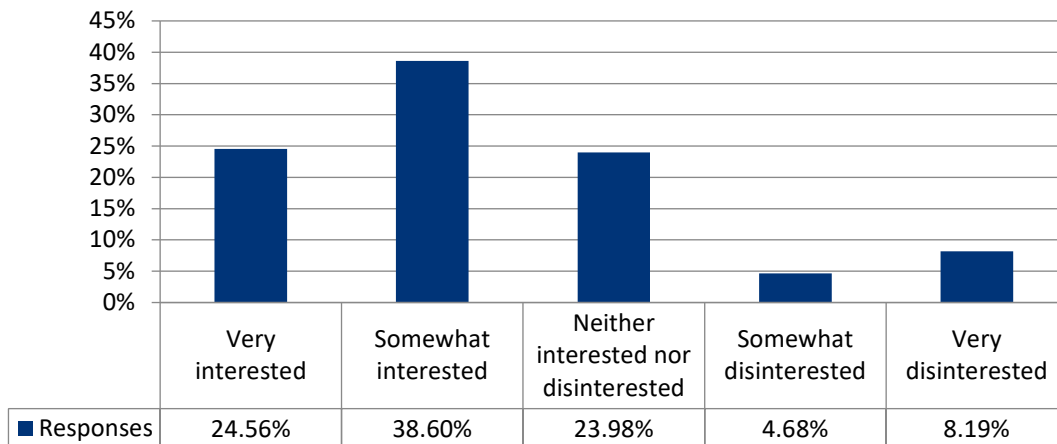|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	21.05%	28.07%	27.49%	8.77%	14.62%

Participating in design charrettes where participants gather for a collaborative meeting to explore ideas and develop design sketches for projects or challenges (for which no experience would be necessary).

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	21.64%	30.99%	23.39%	10.53%	13.45%
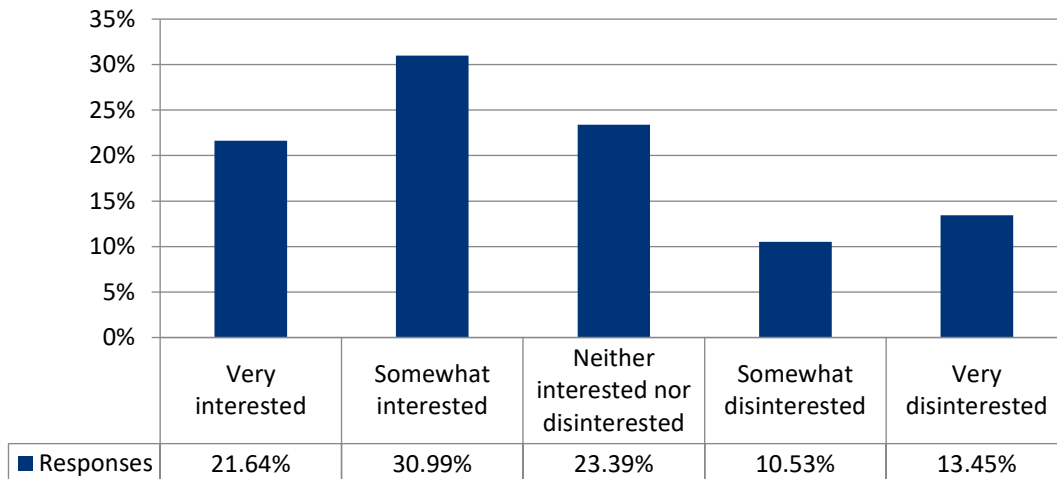
Sitting on a citizen task force.

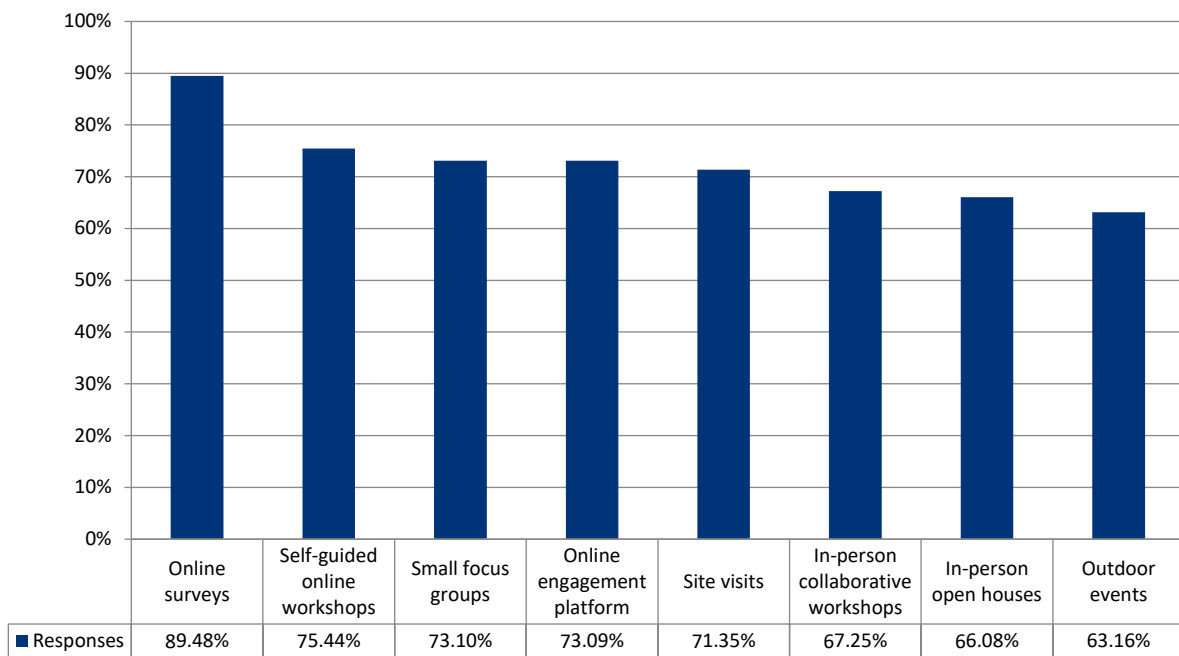|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	30.41%	27.49%	24.56%	7.60%	9.94%

Attending an outdoor event where participants can connect with City staff and Council to provide feedback on municipal projects, initiatives and decisions, and attendees will receive a free lunch from participating food trucks in exchange for their feedba

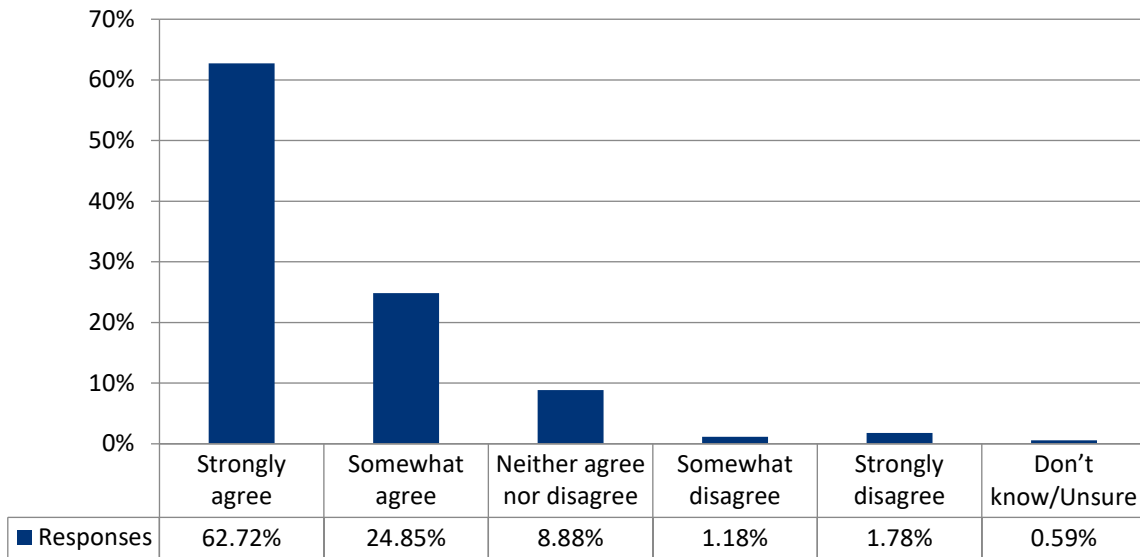|	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Neither interested nor disinterested	Somewhat disinterested	Very disinterested
■ Responses	24.56%	38.60%	23.98%	4.68%	8.19%

When looking at all 15 forms of online and in-person community engagement together, the majority of respondents are most interested in participating in online surveys (89 per cent), followed by self-guided online workshops (75 per cent), small focus groups (73 per cent), an online engagement platform (73 per cent), site visits (71 per cent), in-person collaborative workshops (67 per cent), in-person open houses (66 per cent) and outdoor events where participants can connect with City staff and Council to provide feedback in exchange for a free lunch (63 per cent). Responses that received less than 60 per cent included interviews (58 per cent), sitting on a task force (58 per cent), workbooks (57 per cent), telephone townhalls (55 per cent), charettes (53 per cent), hackathons (49 per cent) and social media (44 per cent).

This feedback provides the City with valuable insight into some of the preferred methods of engagement and how and where the City should direct its efforts.

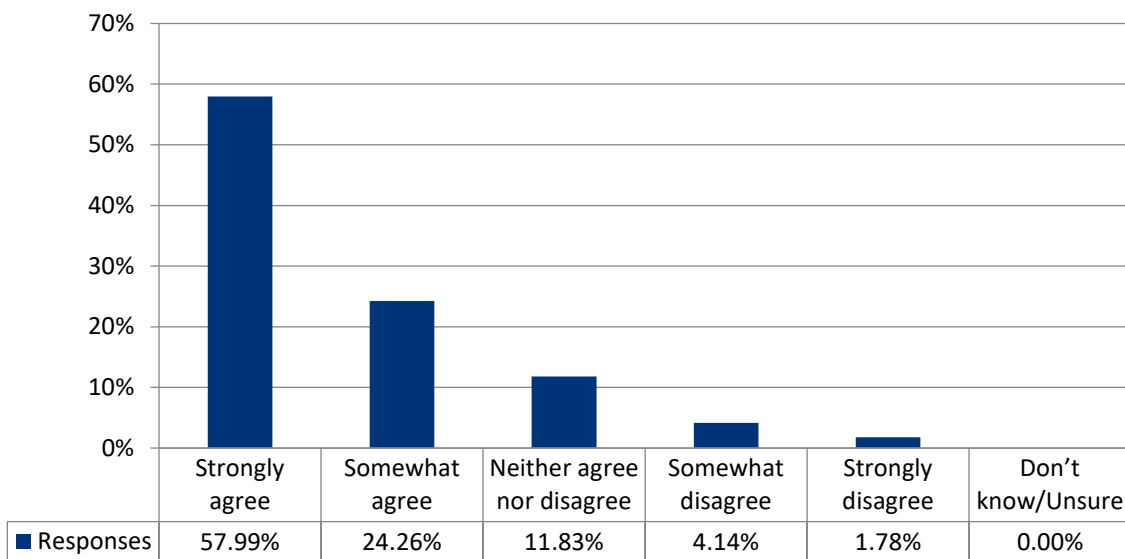|	Online surveys	Self-guided online workshops	Small focus groups	Online engagement platform	Site visits	In-person collaborative workshops	In-person open houses	Outdoor events
■ Responses	89.48%	75.44%	73.10%	73.09%	71.35%	67.25%	66.08%	63.16%

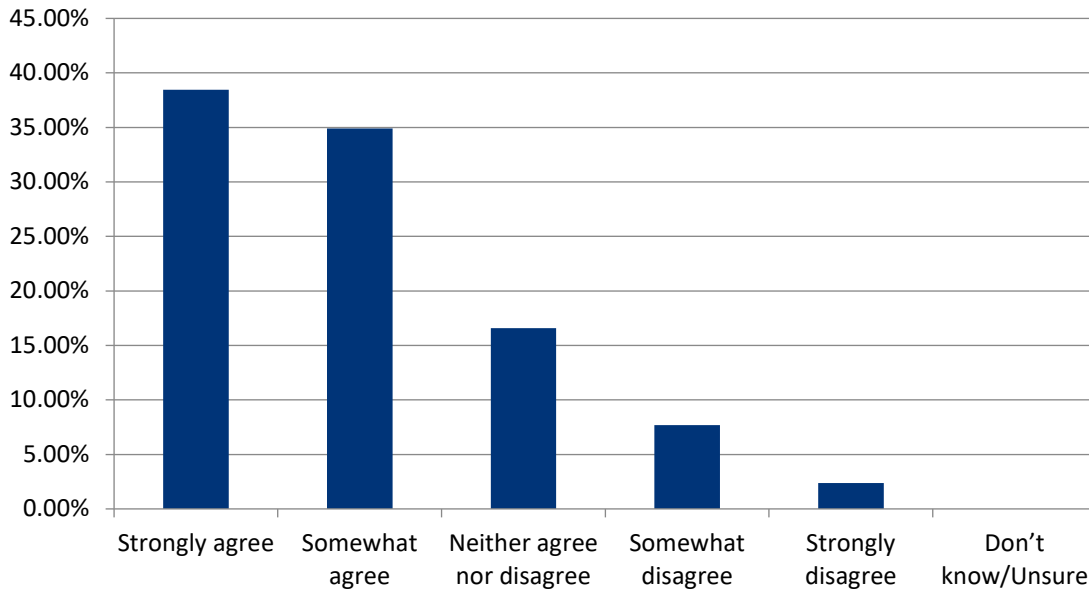**Q: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

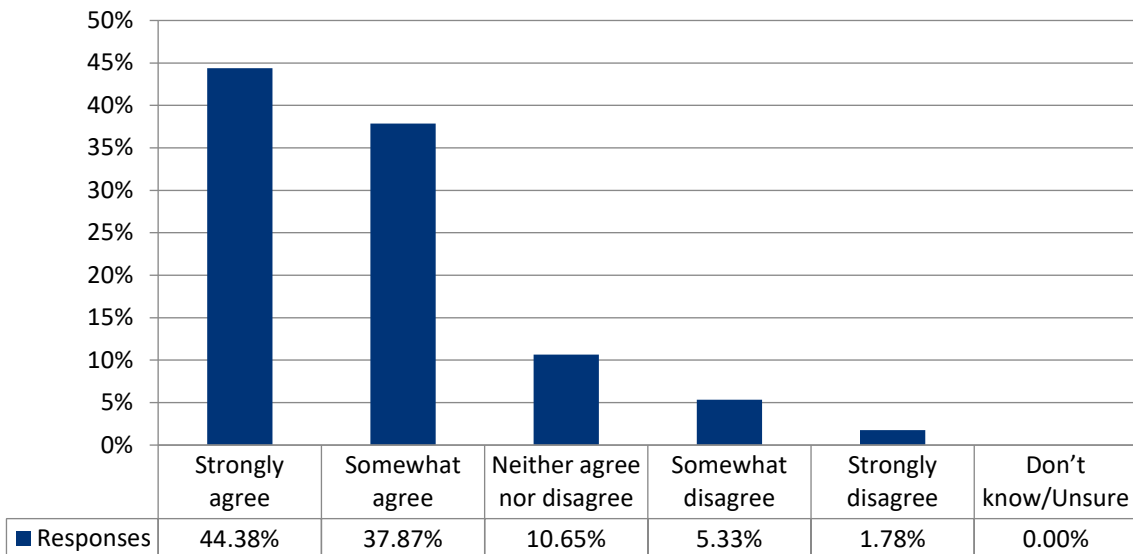### Good public engagement builds community ownership of decisions, proposed plans and recommendations to Council.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/Unsure
■ Responses	62.72%	24.85%	8.88%	1.18%	1.78%	0.59%

Good community engagement improves the public's confidence in the City.

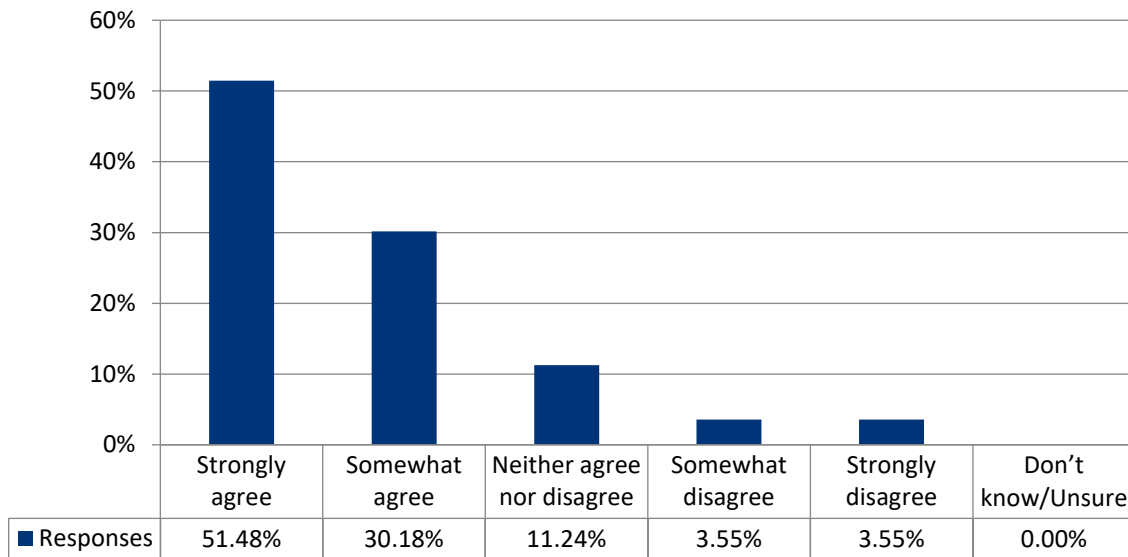|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/Unsure
■ Responses	57.99%	24.26%	11.83%	4.14%	1.78%	0.00%

Good public engagement minimizes community discord.

Good public engagement maximizes community buy-in (i.e. alignment with an idea, policy, approach, etc.).


	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/Unsure
■ Responses	44.38%	37.87%	10.65%	5.33%	1.78%	0.00%

Good community engagement creates trust between the City and the public.

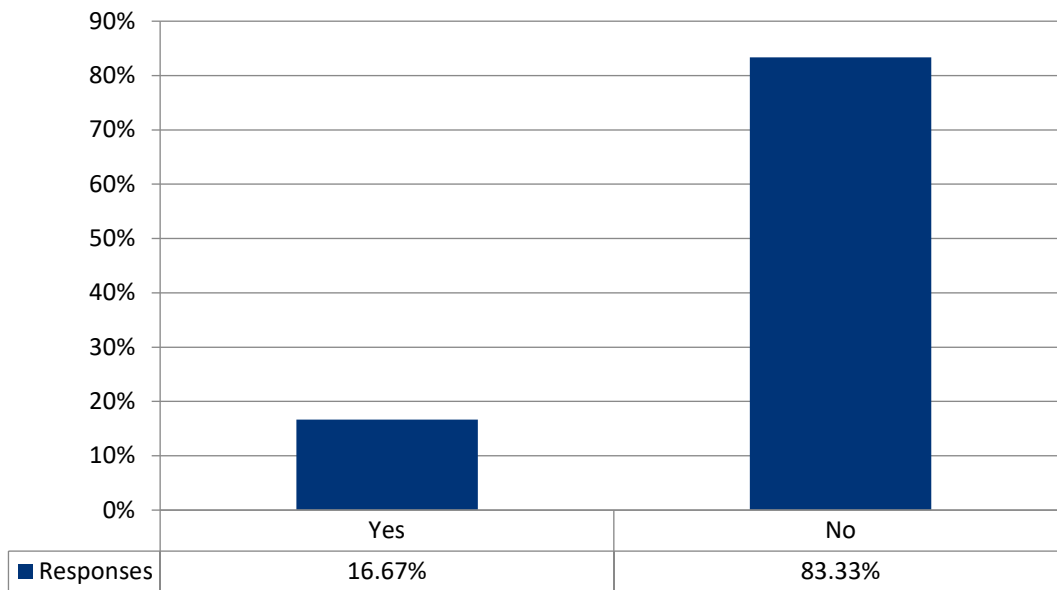|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/Unsure
■ Responses	51.48%	30.18%	11.24%	3.55%	3.55%	0.00%

This feedback validates that the City and the Vaughan public are on the same page in terms of desired outcomes for good community engagement. The above-noted statements are all long-term public relationship-building goals the City will aim to achieve with a strong and consistent corporate approach to community engagement that is rooted in sound process and seeks to work collaboratively with the community.

Q: Do you currently belong to a youth group, seniors' group or community group/ association in the city of Vaughan?

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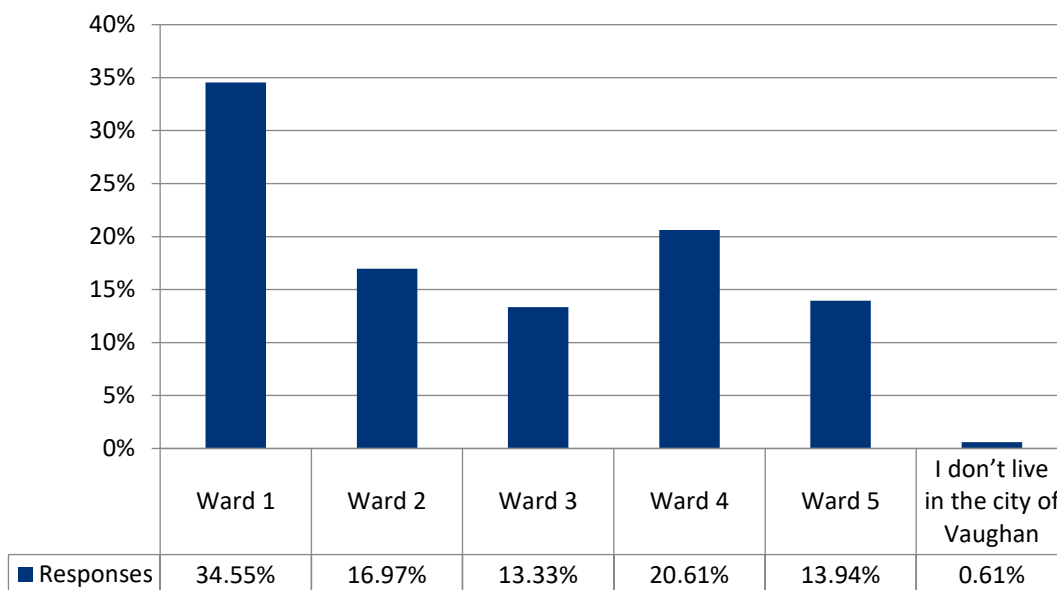|	Yes	No
■ Responses	21.43%	78.57%
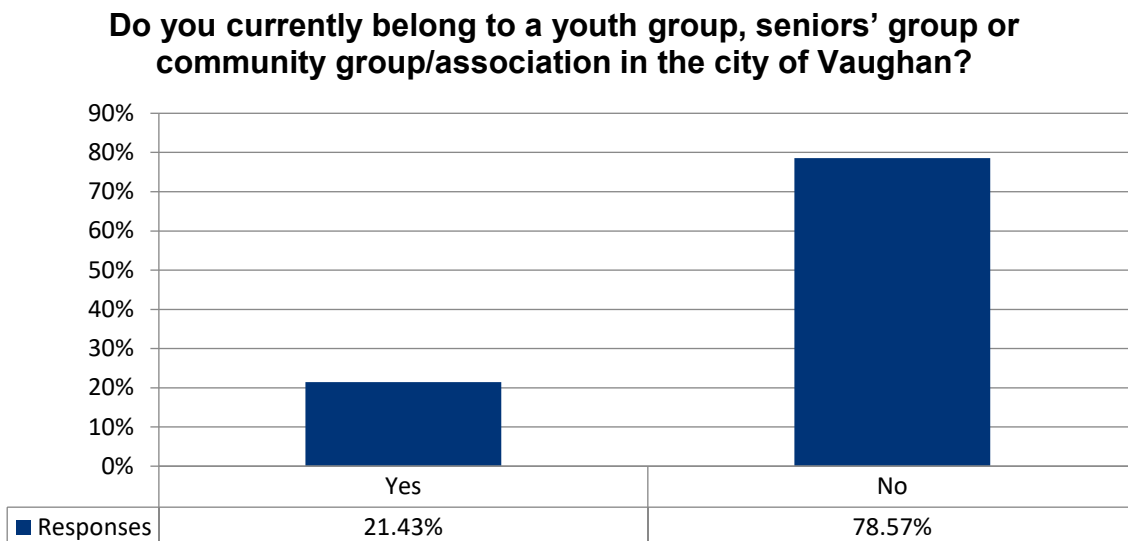
The survey respondents were made up of an array of citizens who are representatives and/or members of various community groups and associations, including registered ratepayers' associations, faith-based institutions, arts and cultural groups, sports and athletic communities, environmental/horticulture/agricultural organizations and community health and support groups.

Q: Do you currently own or operate a business in the city of Vaughan?

	Yes	No
■ Responses	16.67%	83.33%

Q: Which ward do you live in?

	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	I don't live in the city of Vaughan
■ Responses	34.55%	16.97%	13.33%	20.61%	13.94%	0.61%

Q: What is your age?

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
■ Responses	3.64%	6.67%	25.45%	16.97%	23.64%	23.64%