

City of Vaughan Registered Ratepayer/ Community Association Policy Review

Summary of Public Online Survey Results

September 4 to 25, 2019

The survey was circulated by the City of Vaughan on corporate social media channels, e-newsletters, City Halls' electronic signs and emailed to currently registered ratepayer groups. A total of 84 participants representing all wards completed the public survey. An overview of participant responses is summarized and presented in this section. The survey began by asking general questions regarding the Policy, then allowed different types of participants to answer different questions. Therefore, the analysis below is not presented by the order of questions, but rather by presenting the results of questions asked of all participants, then separated by stakeholder group.

As depicted in Figure 1, when asked about the level of awareness of the City’s current Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy, most participants indicated that they were unaware of the Policy before taking the survey (57%). About one-fifth of participants were aware of the Policy and had read it before, and another one-fifth were aware of the Policy but had not read it before.

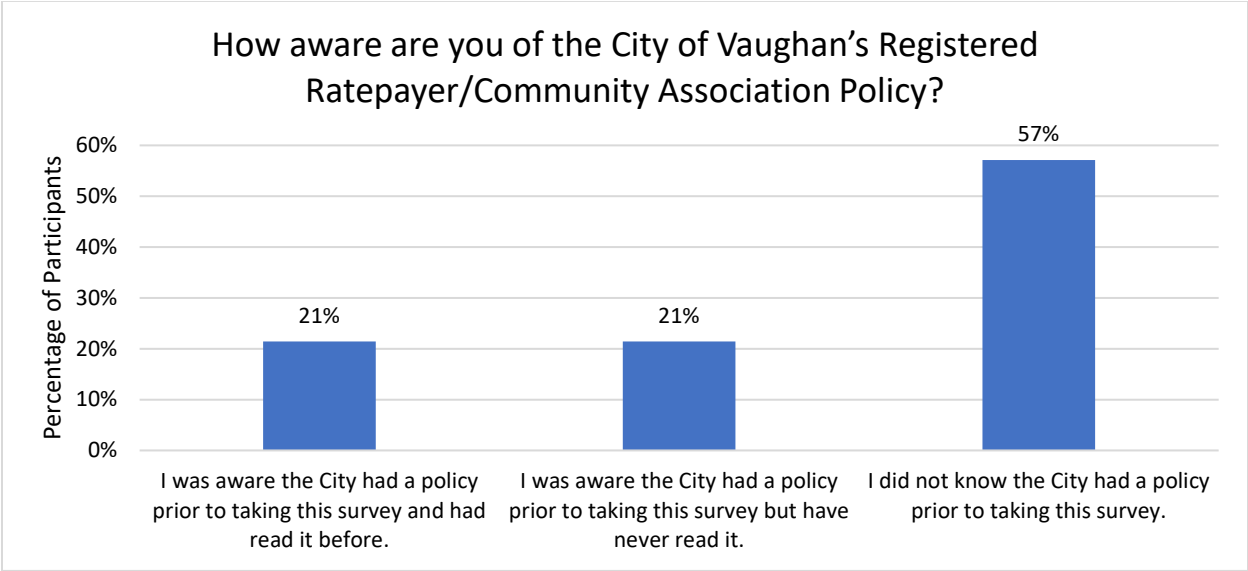


Figure 1: Graph of participant level of awareness of the current Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy. n=84

When participants were asked what their relationship was to registered ratepayer groups, a total of 27% of participants were currently members of ratepayer groups, 10% were past members of ratepayer groups (registered or otherwise), and 62% had never been a member of ratepayer groups (Figure 2, below). Throughout this report, those who indicated they have never been a member of a ratepayer group will be referred to as members of the public.

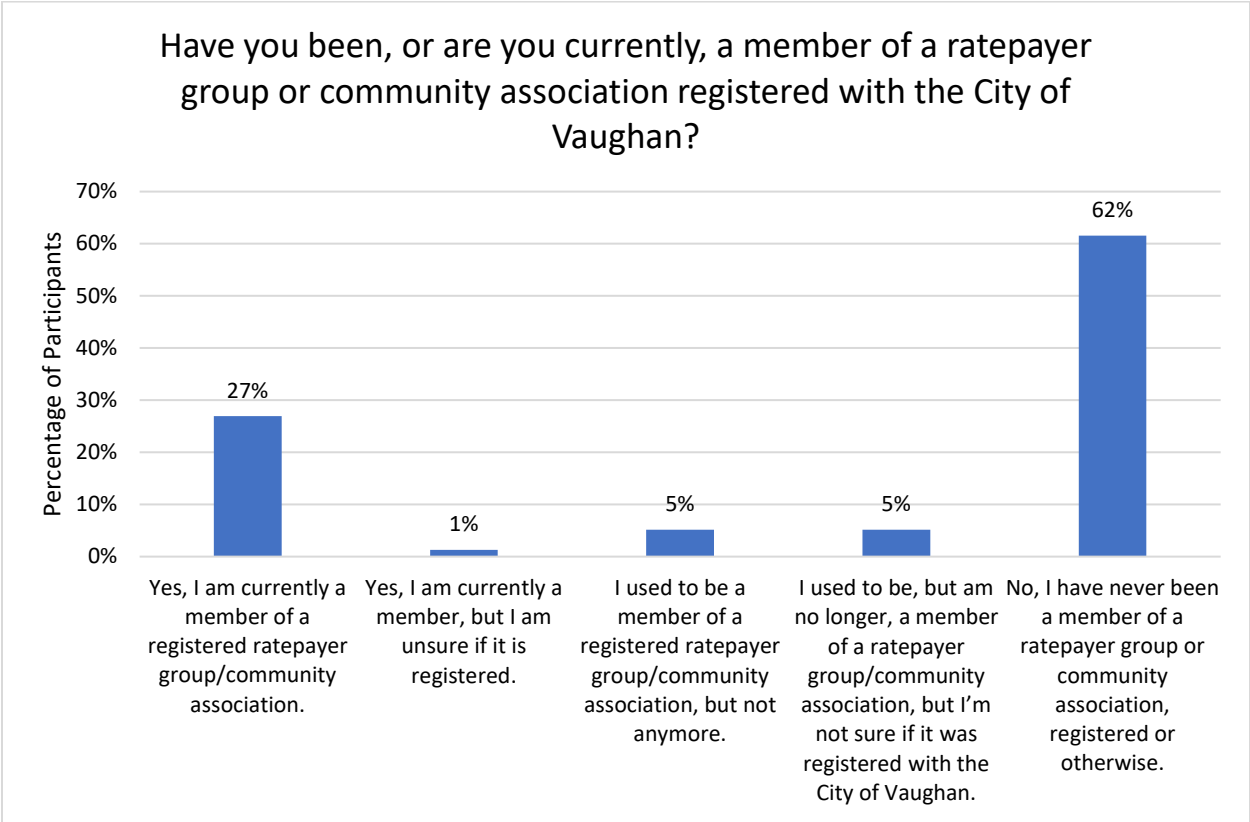


Figure 2: Graph depicting participant relationships to ratepayer groups. n=78

Following this question, survey participants answered different questions based on whether they identified as a member of a current ratepayer group, a past member of a ratepayer group, or a member of the public (never been a member of a ratepayer group). The key findings from the survey have been separated by these three participant groups in the sub-sections below.

Group 1: Members of Current Registered Ratepayer Groups

A summary of the registered ratepayer groups with members who participated in the survey is presented in the table below. No current members of registered ratepayer groups in Ward 4 completed the survey. Groups that are highlighted with an asterisk (*) have boundaries that are in more than one ward and are repeated in the table.

Ward	Registered Ratepayer Group Represented in Survey Results
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kleinburg & Area* • Mackenzie Ridge • South Maple
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying Place • Greater Woodbridge* • Kleinburg & Area* • Vaughanwood • Village of Woodbridge • West Woodbridge Homeowners
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Woodbridge* • Pinewood Estates • Vellore Woods
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Springfarm

When asked what position best describes participants' membership to their ratepayer group/community association, the greatest proportion of participants indicated that they were a general member (43%) followed by President or Vice President (38%), Secretary (14%) and Treasurer (5%). There were no participants that identified as a Chair or Co-Chair. These results are presented in Figure 3 below.

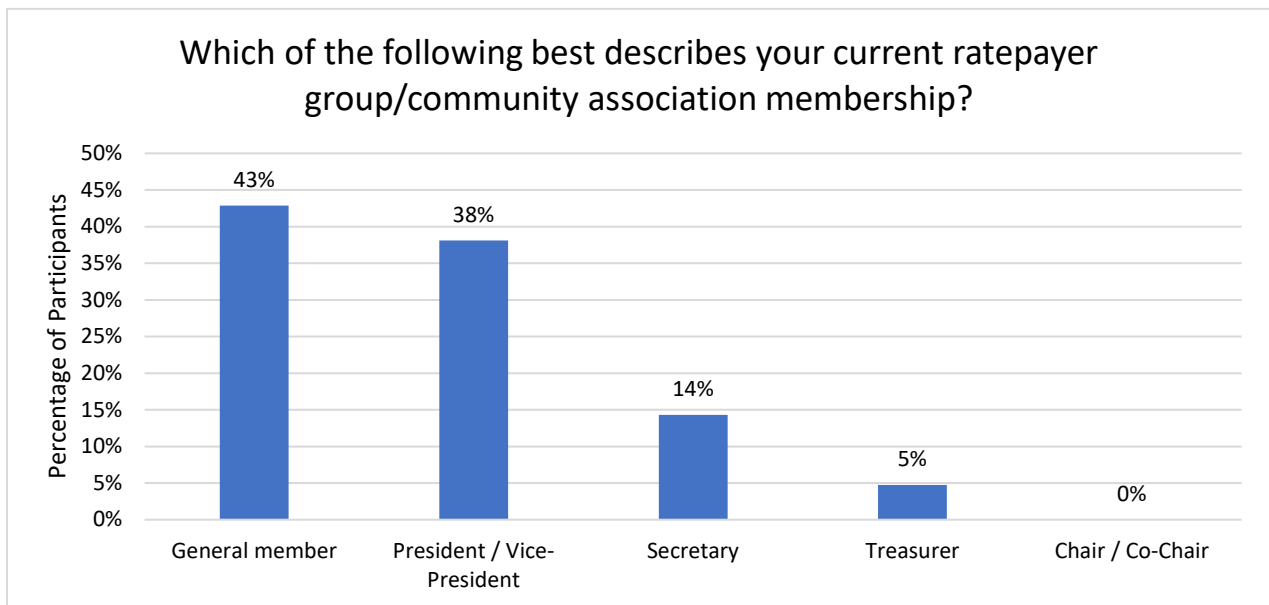


Figure 3: Graph depicting types of membership of current ratepayer group/community association survey participants. n=21

As seen in Figure 4, when asked how current members of registered ratepayer groups communicated with the City (with the ability to select more than one option), participant results showed that in-person meetings were the most frequent communication method (90%), followed by email (81%), phone (76%) and delegations/presentations at Council/Committee of the Whole meetings (71%).

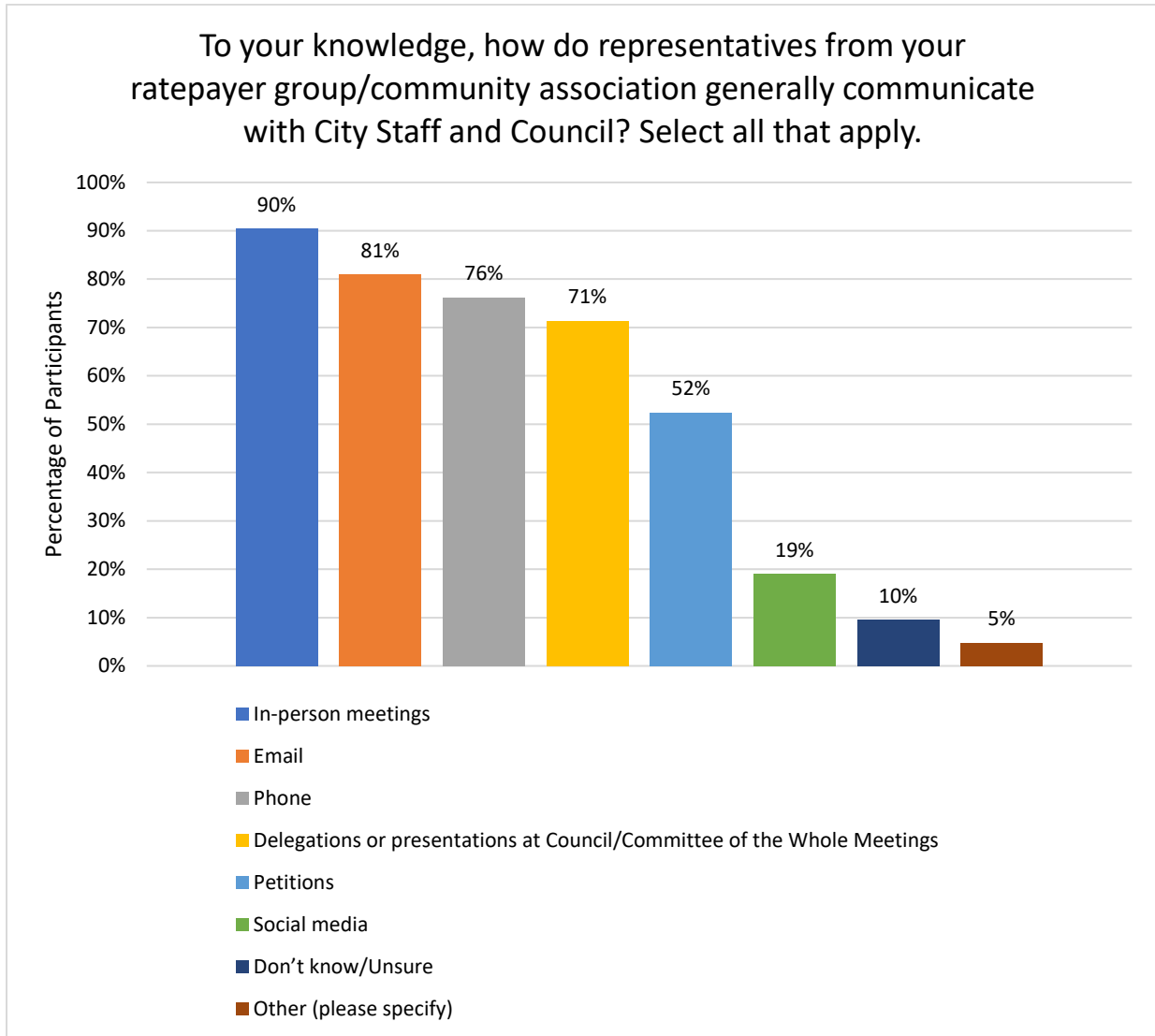


Figure 4: Methods of communication used by currently registered ratepayer groups to communicate with the City of Vaughan. n=21

Participants were also asked what the purpose(s) of ratepayer groups/community associations are from a pre-determined list of options and had the ability to select more than one option. The results of their responses are presented in Figure 5. Almost all participants felt that the purpose of these groups is to provide “effective, organized community representation” and facilitate “neighbourhood engagement and involvement” (95% for each). Eighty-one percent (81%) of participants indicated that the purpose of ratepayer groups/community associations is to provide “greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings”. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of participants indicated that the purpose of ratepayer groups/community associations is to provide “meeting others who share common ideas and/or concerns”. Ten percent (10%) of participants indicated that the purpose of ratepayer groups/community associations is to provide “other (please specify)”. No participants indicated that they “don’t know/unsure”.

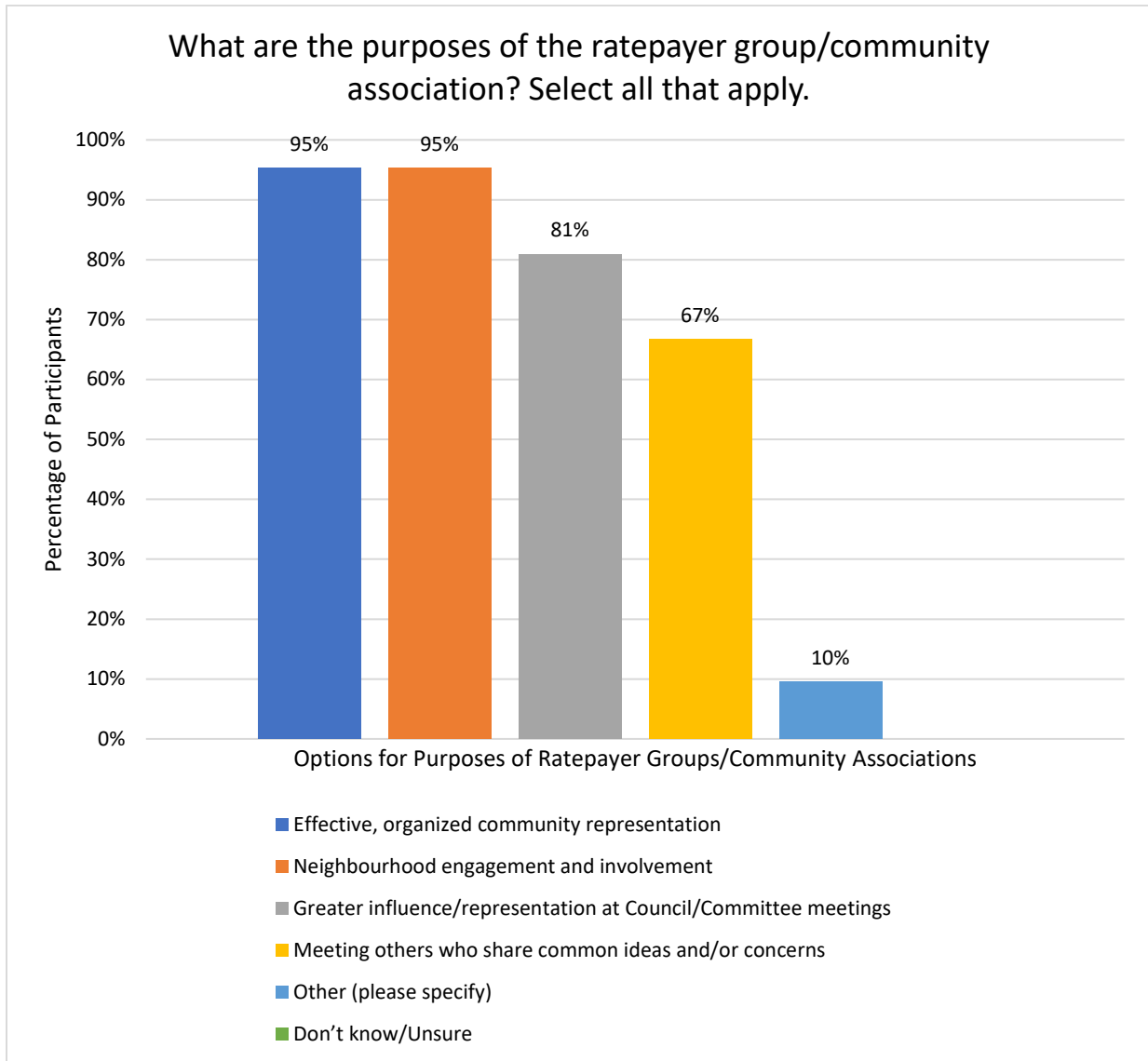


Figure 5: Graph of participant responses regarding the purpose of ratepayer groups/community associations. n=21

Next, participants were asked to respond to four statements on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The first statement was: “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/ community associations with securing effective, organized community representation”. The results are presented in Figure 6 below. Many participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (43% total). A total of 28% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed. 10% of participants neither disagreed nor agreed, and the remaining 19% of participants were unsure.

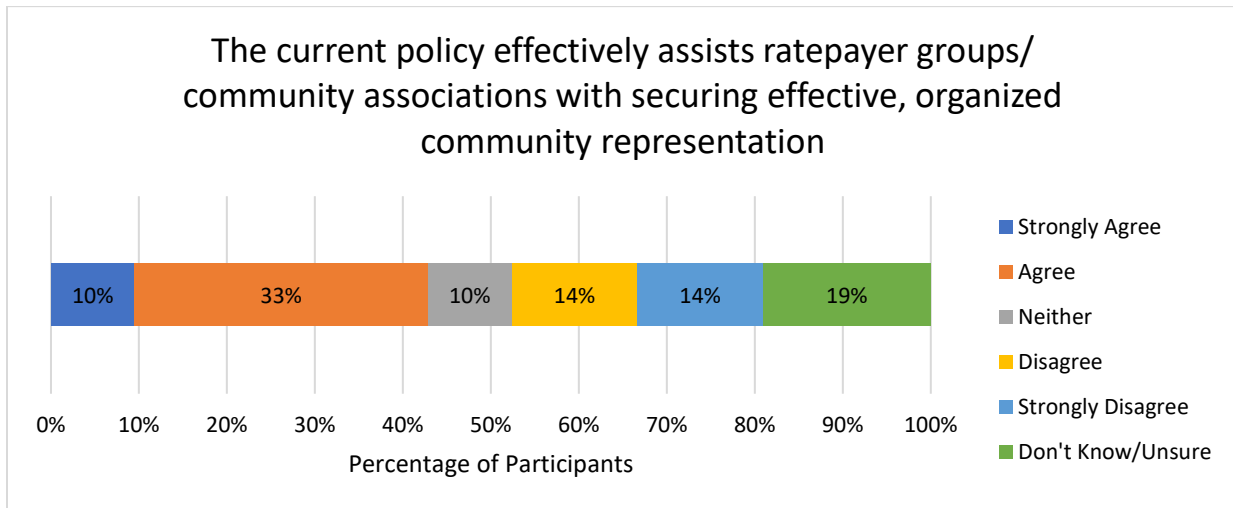


Figure 6: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement "the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/ community associations with securing effective, organized community representation". n=21

The second statement was: “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations with securing greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings”. The results are presented in Figure 7 below. A total of 43% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. A total of 34% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 19% of participants were unsure.

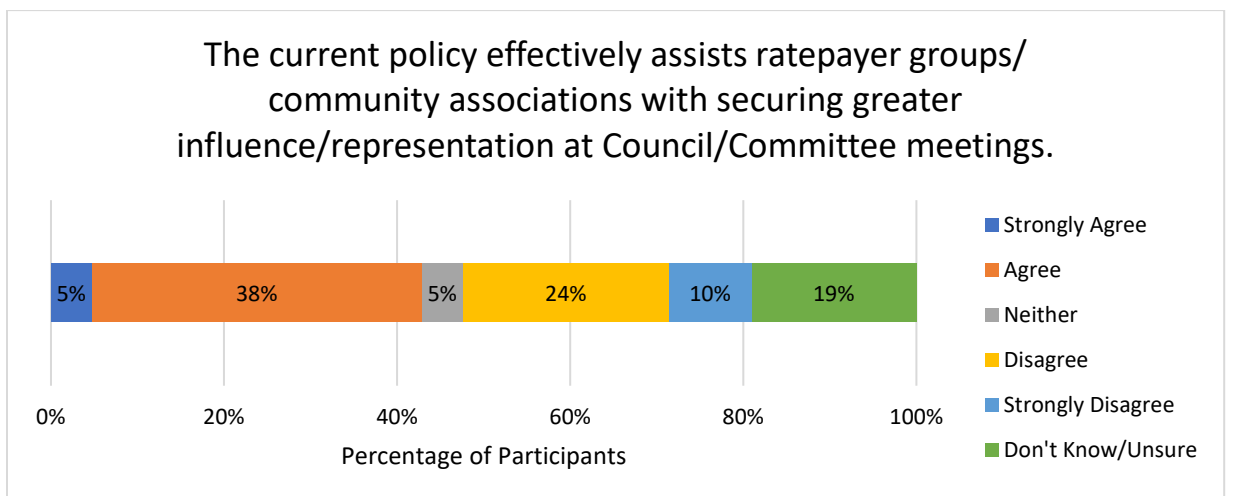


Figure 7: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement "the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/ community associations with securing greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings". n=21

The third statement presented to participants was: “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations by encouraging neighbourhood engagement and involvement”. The results are presented in Figure 8 below. More participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (43% total) compared to the number of participants that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (29% total).

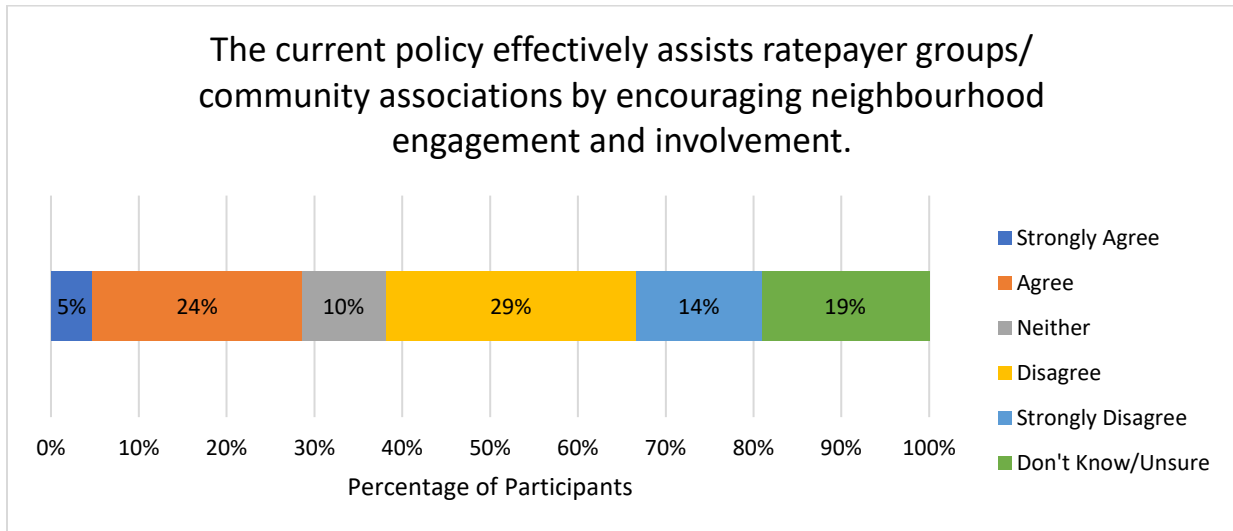


Figure 8: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement "the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations by encouraging neighbourhood engagement and involvement". n=21

The fourth and final statement presented to participants was: “the current policy effectively assists residents with meeting others in their communities who share common ideas and/or concerns”. The results are presented in Figure 9 below. Similarly, to statement three, more participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (43% total) compared to the number of participants that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (34% total). Again, 19% of participants were unsure.

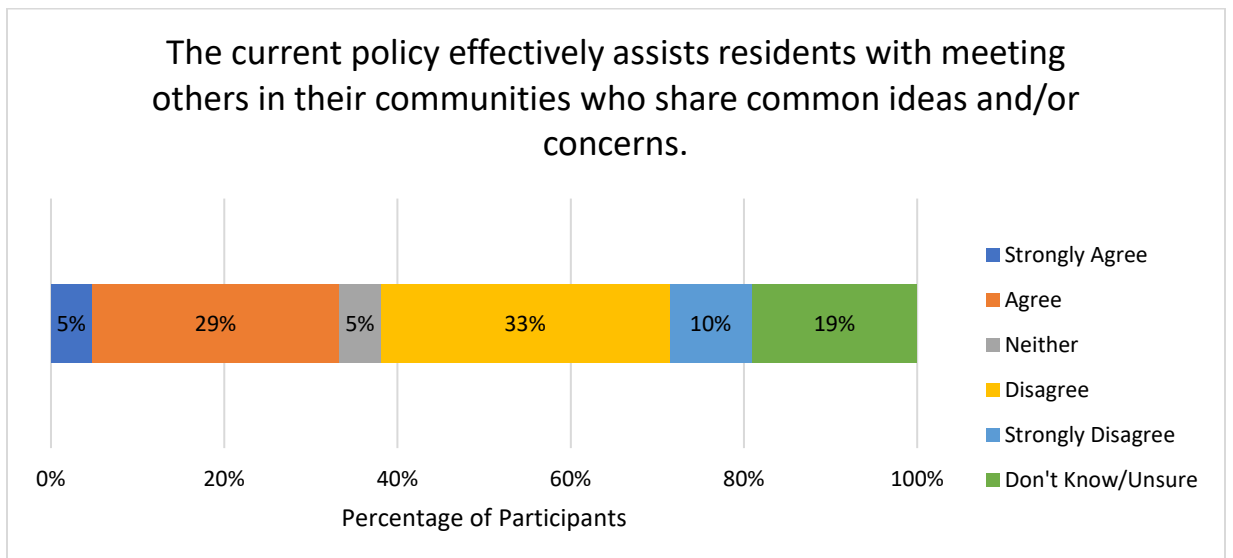


Figure 9: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement "the current policy effectively assists residents with meeting others in their communities who share common ideas and/or concerns". n=21

Next, survey participants were given the following context regarding the registration process:

According to the current policy, to register a ratepayer group or community association, the group must complete and submit a registration form along with a list of at least 25 members if in an urban area and 10 if in a rural area, including names, addresses and signatures. Registration requirements also include a statement of purpose and a copy of the association's Constitution and/or By-laws, as well as the boundaries of the geographical area the association represents.

When asked for their opinion on how effective the registration process is, almost half of the participants indicated that it is effective or very effective (47% total). A total of 29% of participants indicated that the current registration process is ineffective or very ineffective. Detailed results are presented in Figure 10.

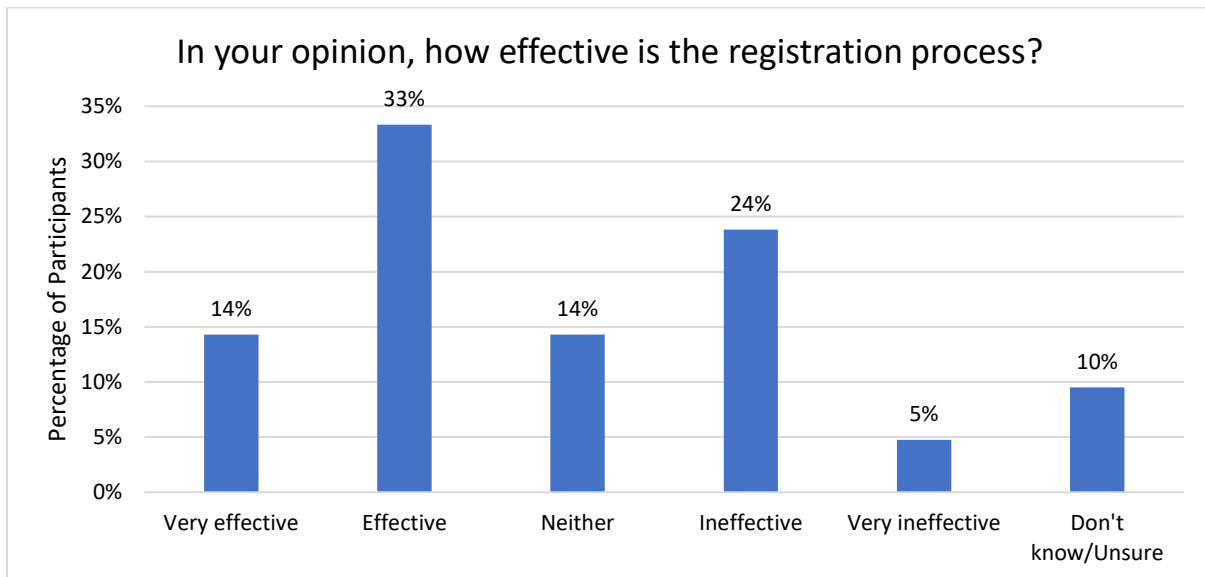


Figure 10: Graph depicting the level of effectiveness of the current registration process determined by participants. n=21

Key themes from participant comments regarding the registration process included that the registration process should be stricter (i.e. require more frequent general meetings) to discourage groups from forming for the wrong reasons, and to encourage more effective engagement. It was also suggested that registration be facilitated online moving forward.

Survey participants were provided with the following context:

According to the current policy, only one registered ratepayer group/ community association may represent a given geographic area.

When asked if in their opinion, should more than one registered ratepayer group/community association be permitted to represent a given geographic area, most participants indicated “no” (86%), with the remaining 14% indicating “yes” (Figure 11).

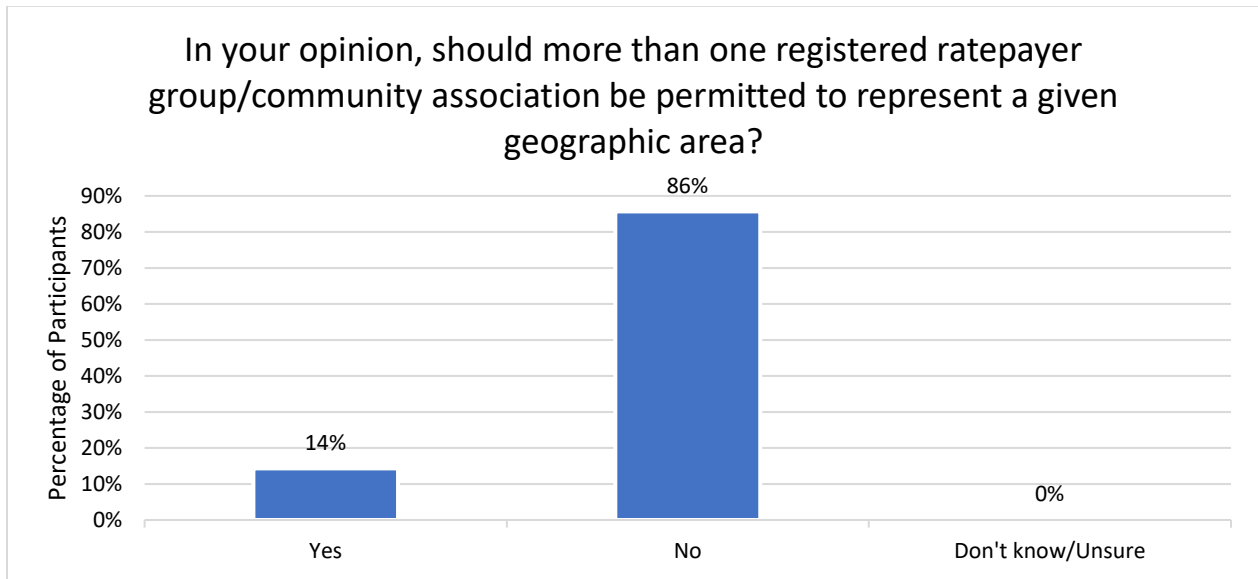


Figure 11: Graph depicting participant opinions on whether or not more than one registered ratepayer group/community association be permitted to represent a given area. n=21

Key themes from participants’ comments regarding geographic exclusivity were largely against allowing more than one group to represent a geographic area, warning that it would be confusing for residents to choose between groups, and could create challenges for dealing with common issues within the boundary (i.e. developments). Participants suggested including terms for reviewing/limiting the size of geographic areas, including those of existing registered groups, to allow for the most accurate and efficient representation for community members. One participant was largely against geographic exclusivity, sharing that their registered group did not represent their views or that of their neighbours.

As seen in Figure 12, when asked whether or not the City of Vaughan should continue to provide subsidized meeting spaces for registered ratepayer groups/community associations, almost all participants indicated “yes” (90%) with the remaining 10% indicating “no”.

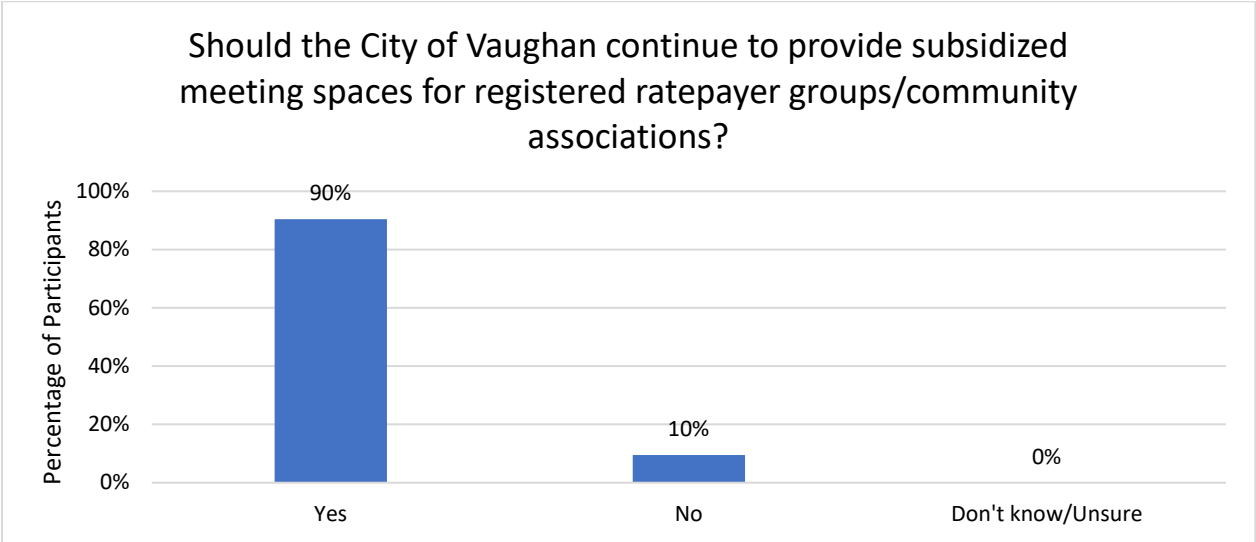


Figure 12: Graph depicting participant opinions on whether or not the City of Vaughan should continue to provide subsidized meeting spaces for registered ratepayer groups/community associations. n=21

Participant comments on the continued benefit of subsidized meeting spaces were all in agreement that the City should be providing free meeting spaces more frequently to registered ratepayer groups. Many participants shared the challenges with finding the funds to host regular meetings, even if the City offered subsidized rates.

Next, survey participants were asked how effective the City's current Policy is. One-third of participants indicated that the policy is neither effective nor ineffective (33%), followed by 29% of participants that felt it was effective or very effective. 20% of participants felt that the policy was ineffective of very ineffective, and 19% were unsure. The breakdown of the results can be found in Figure 13.

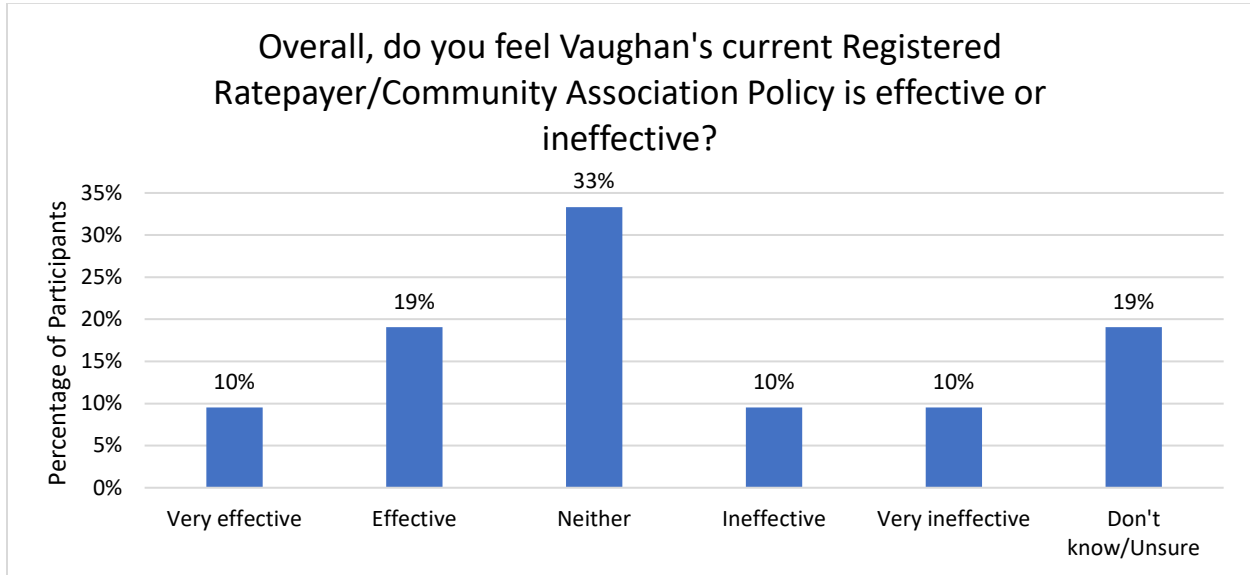


Figure 13: Graph depicting the effectiveness of the current Policy as determined by current members of Ratepayer Groups/Community Associations. n=21

Key themes from participant comments regarding the effectiveness of the Policy included expanding the current Policy to offer more clarity, accountability, transparency and support for registered ratepayer groups/community associations.

Group 2: Members of Past Groups / Unregistered Groups

Most past members/members of unregistered groups identified themselves as general members of their ratepayer group/community association. A total of 11% of participants identified themselves as Secretary and Chair/Co-Chair of their group, respectively. Figure 14 presents the detailed responses.

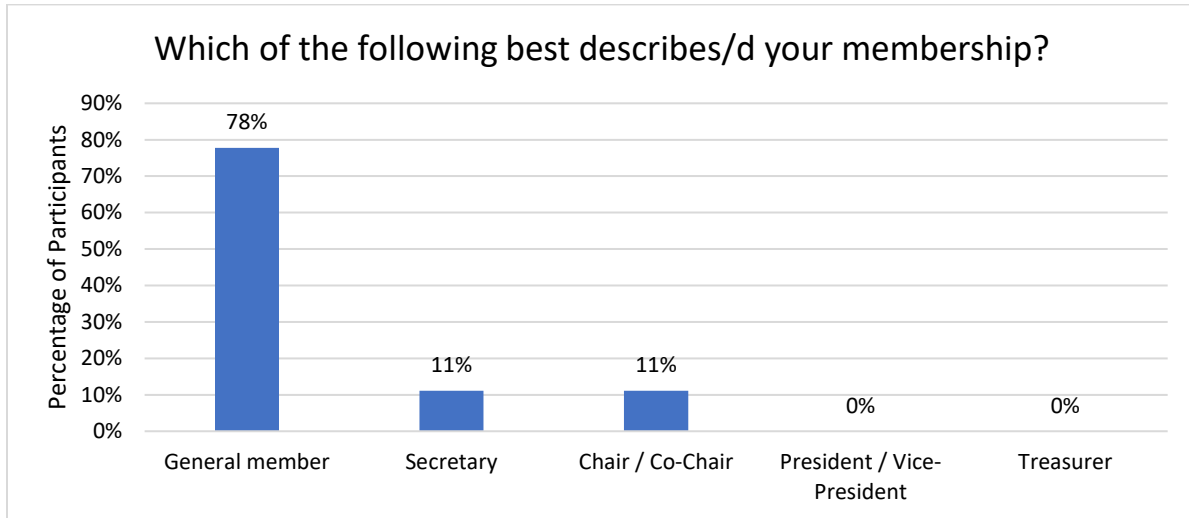


Figure 14: Graph depicting types of membership of past/unregistered ratepayer group/community association survey participants. n=9

As depicted in Figure 15, when asked how representatives of their past ratepayer group/current unregistered group generally communicate(d) with City Staff and Council, it was most unknown (56%). Of the participants who did know, the overall most popular communication methods included email (44%), followed by phone and in-person meetings (33% each).

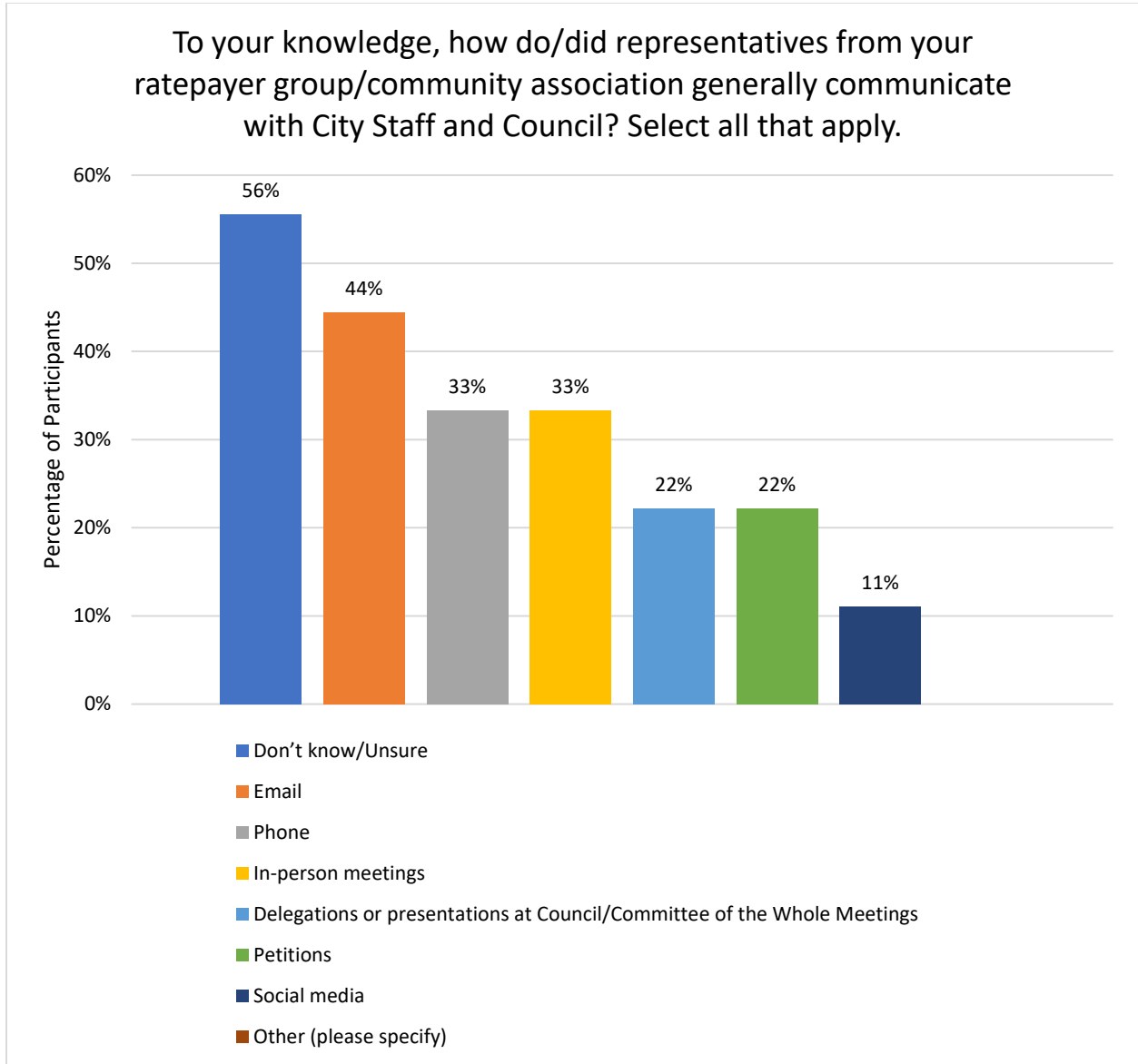


Figure 15: Graph depicting types of communication tools used by past/unregistered ratepayer group/community association survey participants. n=9

Participants were asked what the purpose of their ratepayer group/community association is or was from a list of pre-determined responses. Participants were encouraged to select all the responses that applied. The most popular response was to “meet others who share common ideas and/or concerns” (56%), followed by providing “effective, organized community representation and neighbourhood engagement and involvement” (44% each). A total of 33% of participants indicated that the purpose was/is to provide “greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings”. The detailed results can be found in Figure 16.

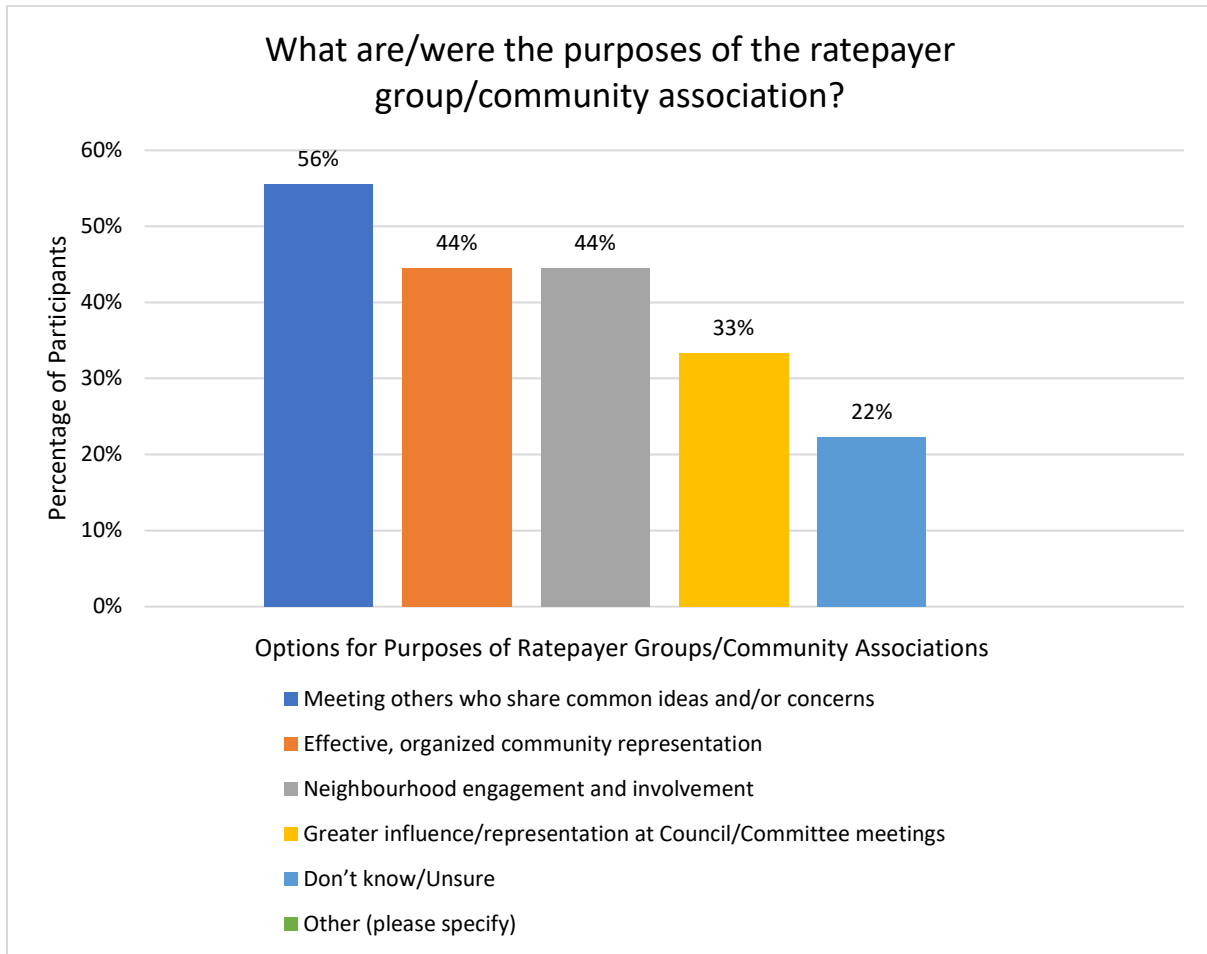


Figure 16: Graph depicting the purpose of ratepayer groups by past/unregistered ratepayer group/community association survey participants. n=9

Next, participants were asked to respond to four statements on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The first statement was: “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations with securing effective, organized community representation”. Responses are presented in Figure 17. Interestingly, 38% of participants agreed or strongly agreed, and another 38% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. A total of 13% neither agreed nor disagreed, and the same number of participants were unsure.

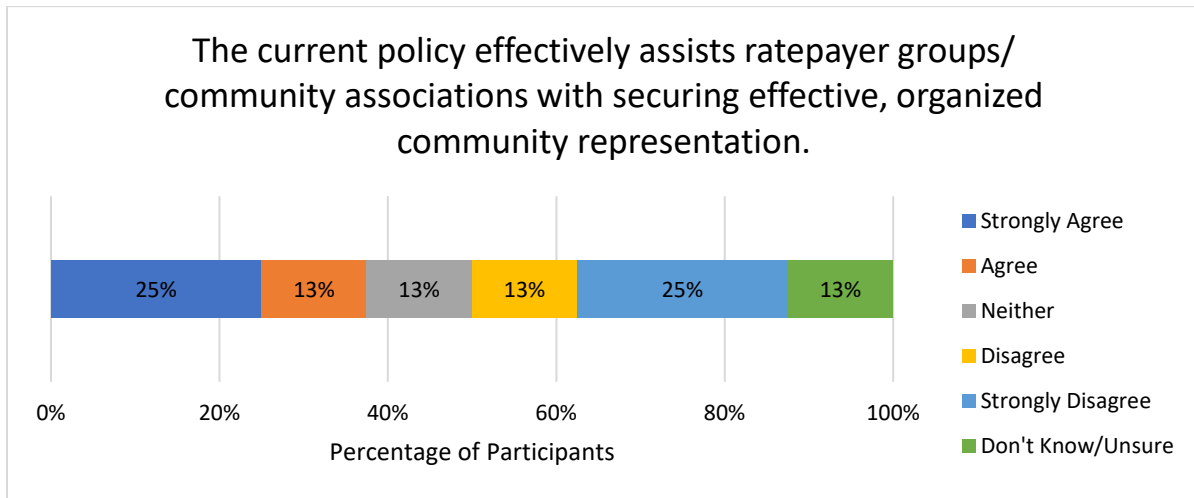


Figure 17: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations with securing effective, organized community representation”. n=9

The second statement was: “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/ community associations with securing greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings”. A total of 45% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. A total of 26% of participants indicated that they agree or strongly agreed with the statement. Detailed results can be found in Figure 18.

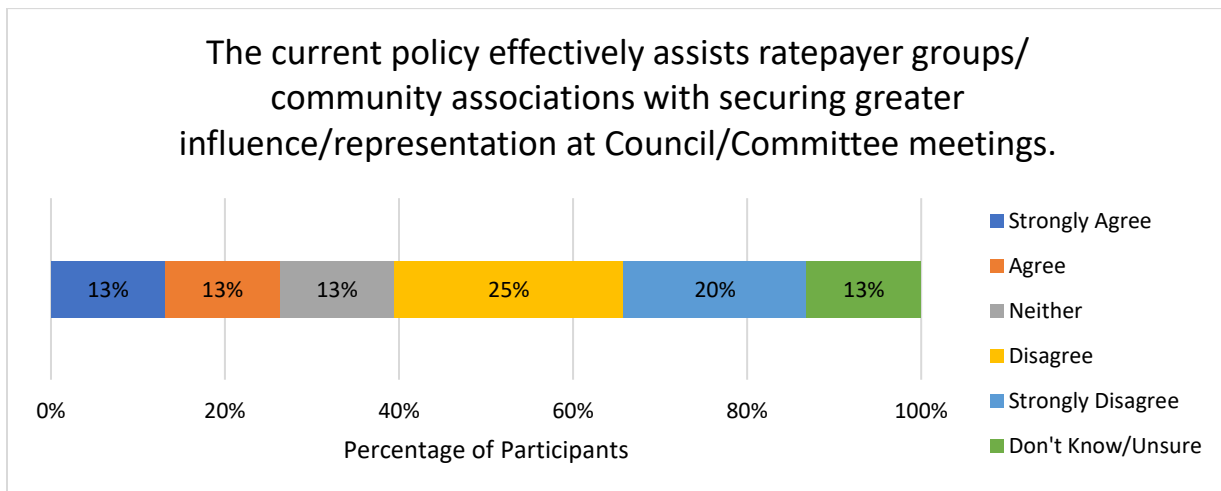


Figure 18: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations with securing greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings”. n=9

The third statement presented to participants was: “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations by encouraging neighbourhood engagement and involvement”. The results are presented in Figure 19. A total of 38% of participants indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, with another 38% indicating that they agree or strongly agree with the statement. The remaining participants were divided between unsure (13%) or neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement (13%).

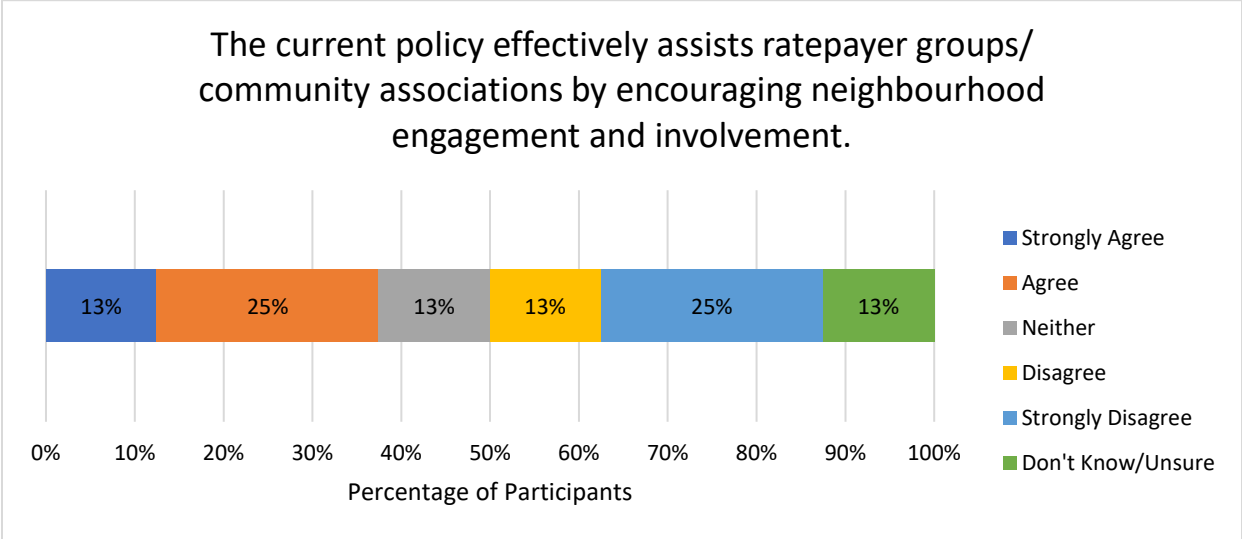


Figure 19: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement “the current policy effectively assists ratepayer groups/community associations by encouraging neighbourhood engagement and involvement”. n=9

The fourth and final statement presented to participants was “the current policy effectively assists residents with meeting others in their communities who share common ideas and/or concerns”. A total of 38% of participants indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement with another 26% indicating they agree or strongly agree. Twenty-five percent of participants shared that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Detailed results can be found in Figure 20.

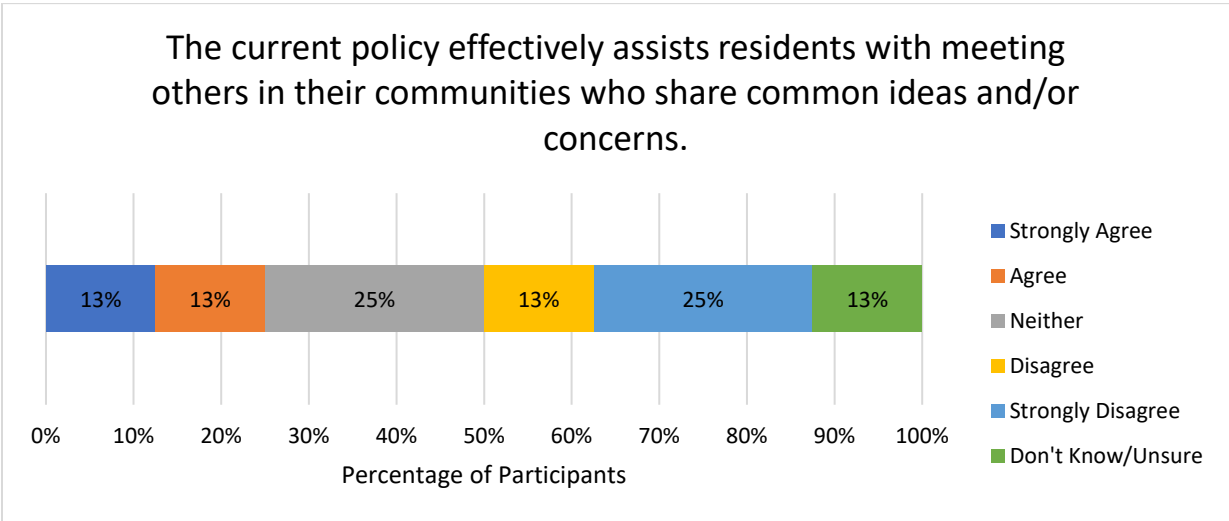


Figure 20: Graph depicting the level of agreement to the statement “the current policy effectively assists residents with meeting others in their communities who share common ideas and/or concerns”. n=9

When asked about the effectiveness of the current registration process, most participants (76% total) indicated that that is ineffective or very ineffective. The remaining 25% of participants indicated that the registration process is very effective. Detailed results are presented in Figure 21.

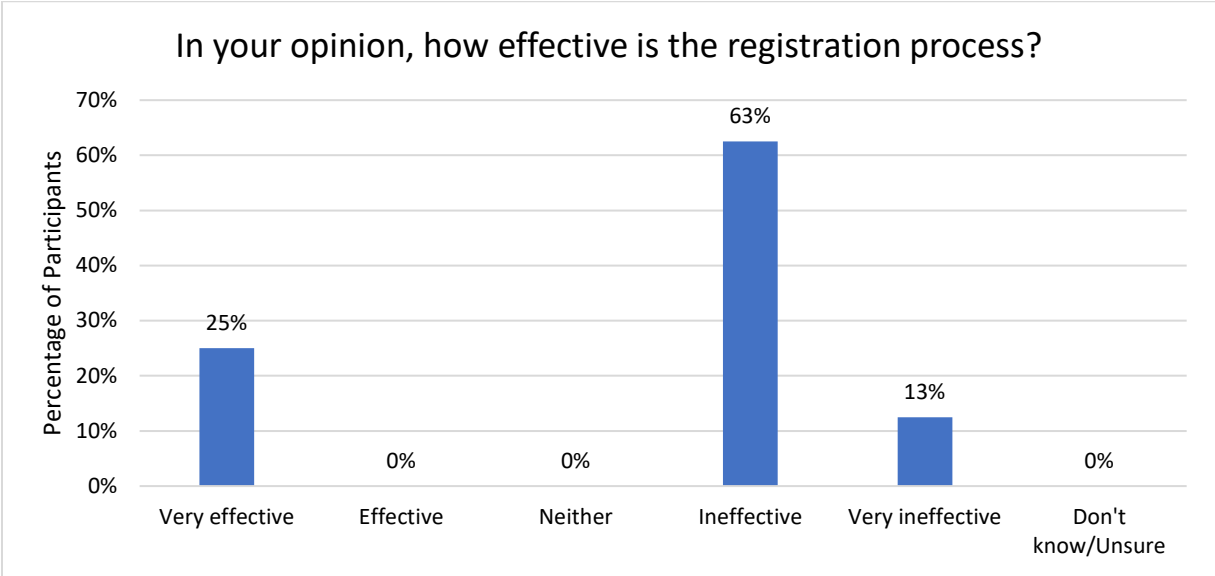


Figure 21: Graph depicting participant responses regarding the level effectiveness of the registration process. n=8

Participant responses on the registration process highlighted concerns over defining geographic boundaries (i.e. if an area is already claimed, one cannot register another group within the same geographic area), the barrier of paying fees to participate in meetings of the group, lack of transparency for groups and lack of interest in leadership/no term limits so leadership does not change.

Participants were asked whether or not more than one registered ratepayer group/community association should be permitted to represent a given geographic area. The results are presented in Figure 22. Participants were split on this idea – 38% of participants said yes, more than one group should be permitted to represent a geographic area and 38% of participants disagreed and said no. The remaining quarter of the participants were unsure.

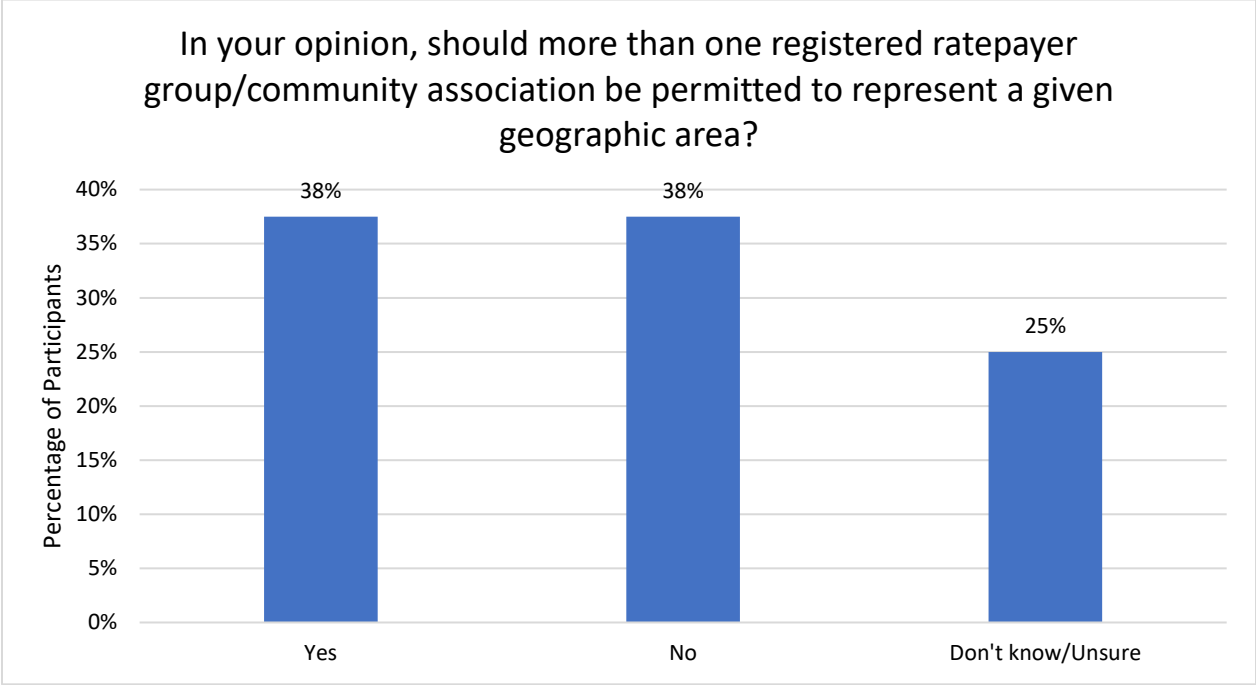


Figure 22: Graph depicting participant opinions on whether or not the City of Vaughan should permit more than one group to represent a given geographic area. n=8

Participant comments on the concept of more than one registered group representing a geographic area were widespread. One comment suggested that if a group does not re-register, the City should keep the area free of a group until the next registration deadline or allow neighbouring groups to claim the area. Another proposed allowing multiple groups to form if there is appetite and disagreement in an area.

As depicted in Figure 23, when asked whether the City should continue to provide subsidized meeting spaces for registered ratepayer groups/community associations, all participants agreed that yes, the City should continue this.

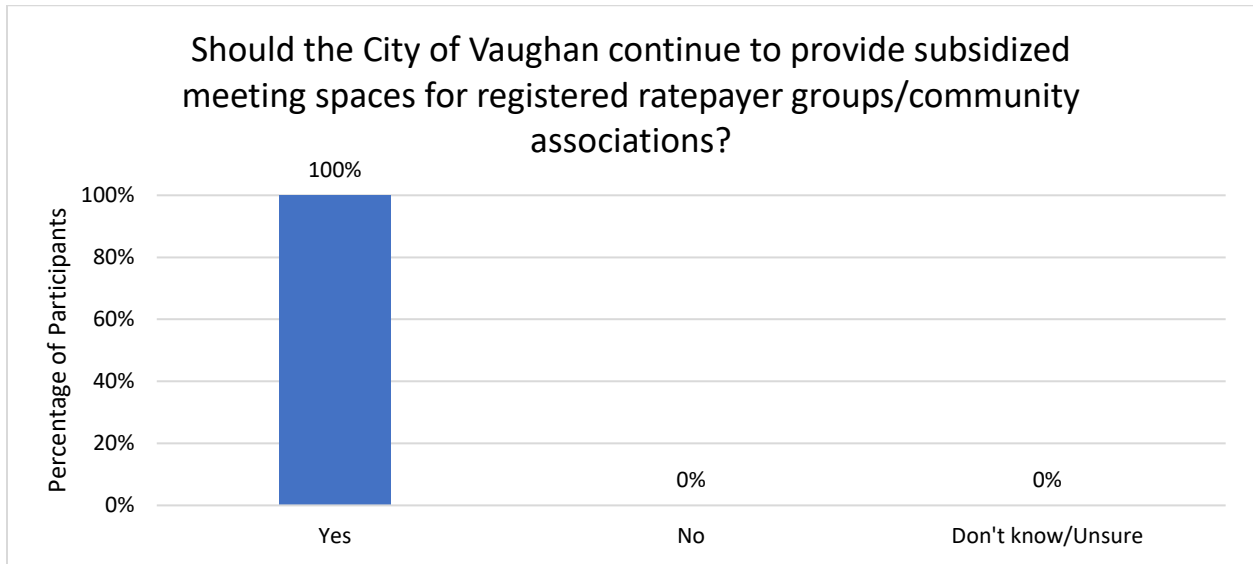


Figure 23: Graph depicting participant opinions on whether or not the City of Vaughan should continue to provide subsidized meeting spaces for registered ratepayer groups/community associations. n=8

Participant comments were supportive of subsidizing meeting room costs.

When asked about the effectiveness of the current Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy, a total of 26% of participants indicated it was ineffective or very ineffective, followed by 25% of participants that indicated it is effective. 38% of participants indicated that they feel the current policy is neither effective nor ineffective. The results are presented in Figure 24.

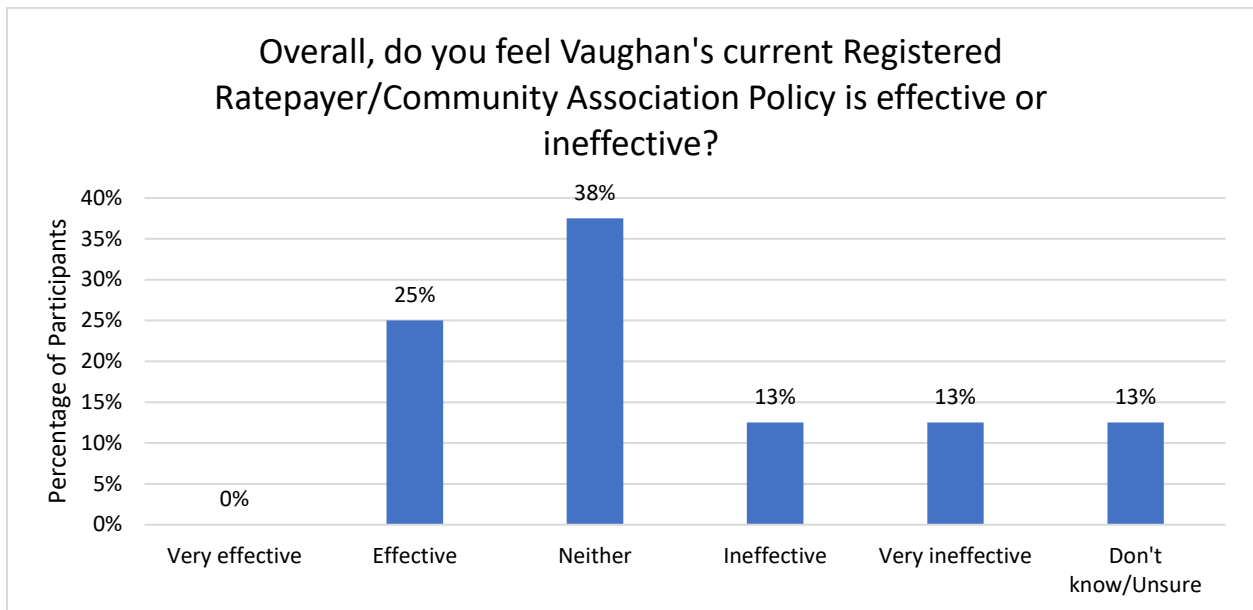


Figure 24: Graph depicting the level of effectiveness of the current Policy. n=8

Group 3: Members of the Public

Participants were provided with the following definition of ratepayer groups/community associations:

A ratepayer group or community association is an organization formed by a group of residents in a defined area who come together to address matters impacting their neighbourhoods. Some of the purposes of this type of community group include effective and organized community representation, greater influence/representation at Council/Committee meetings, neighbourhood engagement and involvement, and meeting others who share common ideas and/or concerns.

After reviewing the definition, participants were asked how interested they would be in joining this type of group. Their responses are presented in Figure 25. More than half of the participants indicated that they would be interested or very interested in joining this type of group (61% total), followed by 20% that indicated they are unsure.

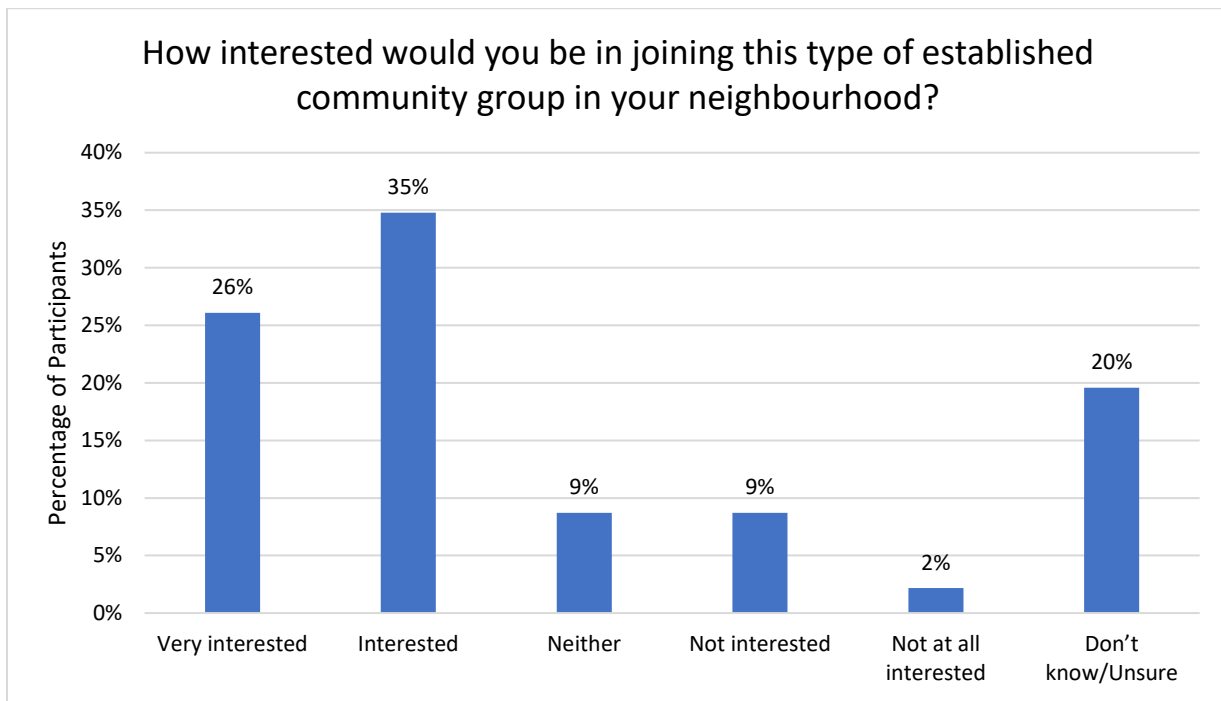


Figure 25: Graph depicting participants' level of interest in joining a ratepayer group/community association in their neighbourhood. n=46

After being presented with the definition, participants were asked about their level of interest in establishing a new registered ratepayer group/community association in their neighbourhood. They were asked this question twice- once before reviewing the registration requirements (blue), and again after reviewing the list of registration requirements (orange). The detailed results can be seen in Figure 26.

Before being presented with the registration requirements a total of 39% of participants were interested or very interested. That number dropped to a total of 26% of participants after learning the registration requirements. All other response choices increased after being presented with the registration requirements. The total number of participants that were not interested or not at all interested increased from a total of 24% to 31%.

Based on the decrease in interest from participants after learning about the registration requirements, the registration requirements may be a deterrent for beginning a registered ratepayer group.

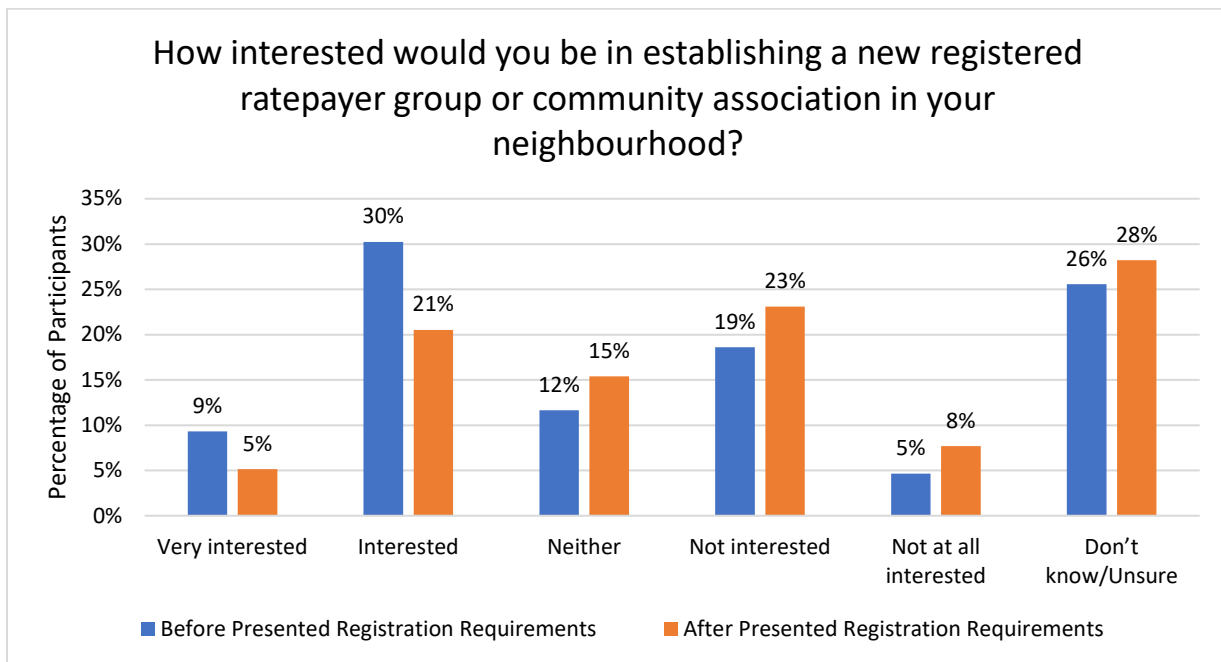


Figure 26: Graph depicting participants' level of interest in establishing a ratepayer group/community association in their neighbourhood before and after being presented with the registration requirements. n=43

Participants were also asked what they felt the level of importance was for the City of Vaughan to have a Registered Ratepayer/Community Association Policy. More than three-quarters of participants felt that it was important or very important that the City has a policy for these types of groups (84% total). A total of 8% of participants indicated that they thought it was not important (3%) or not very important (5%), and the final 8% of participants were unsure. Detailed responses can be found in Figure 27.

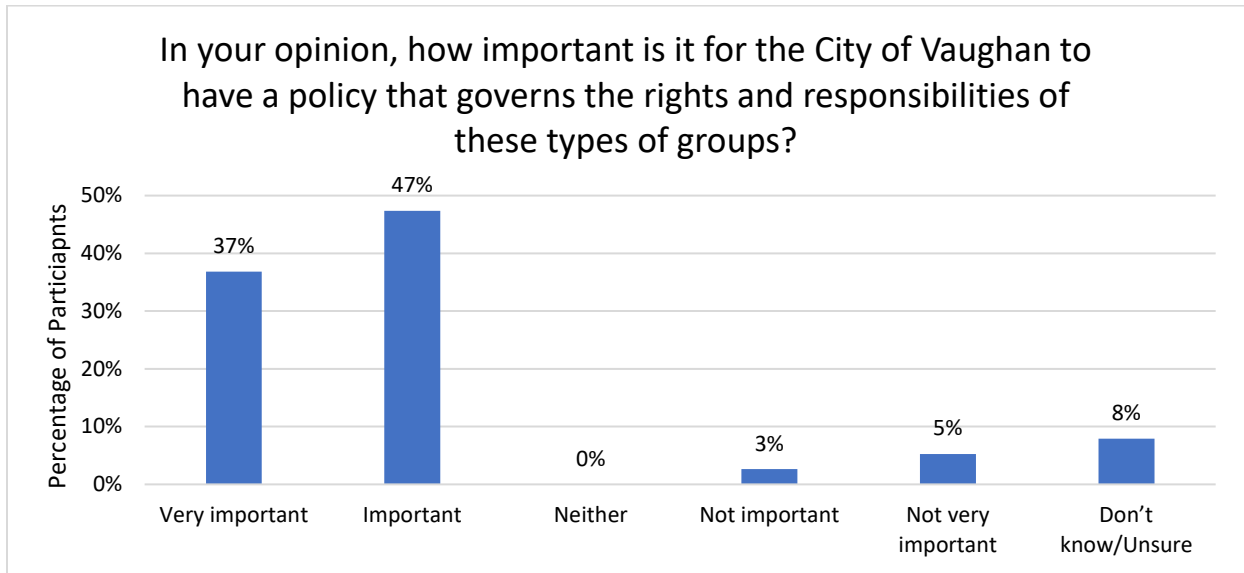


Figure 27: Graph depicting the level of importance for the City of Vaughan to have a policy for ratepayer groups as indicated by survey participants. n=38

When asked about geographic exclusivity, members of the public were split. A total of 37% of participants felt that more than one registered group should be permitted to represent a given geographic area, followed by 34% who disagreed, and 29% who were unsure. These results are presented below in Figure 28.

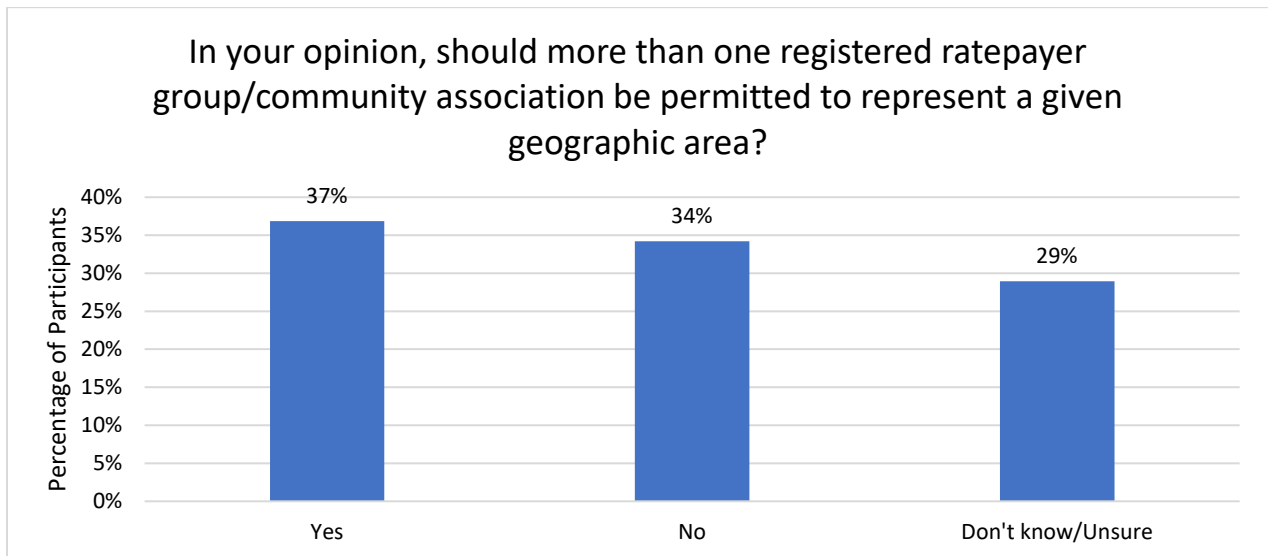


Figure 28: Graphic depicting participant opinion on whether or not more than one registered group should be permitted to represent a given geographic area. n=38

Participants were also asked whether or not they thought the City should continue to provide subsidized meeting spaces for registered ratepayer groups. Most participants indicated that yes, the City should continue to do this, followed by 11% who were unsure. The results of the question are presented in Figure 29.

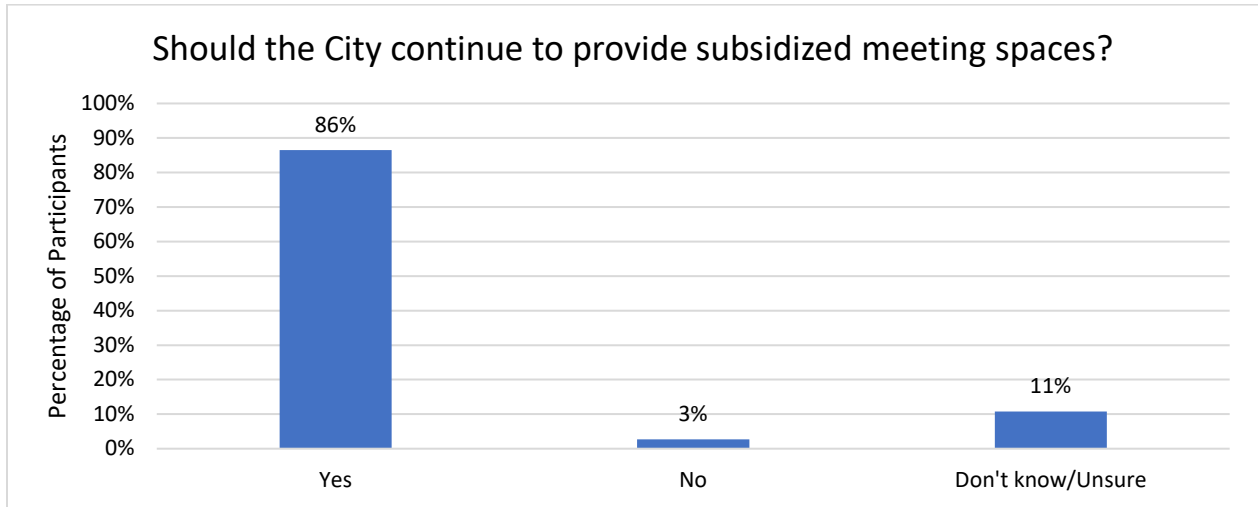


Figure 29: Graphic depicting participant opinion on whether or not the City should be providing subsidized meeting space to registered ratepayer groups. n=37

Participants were also invited to share other comments. Key themes from their comments included general support for registered groups, support for increasing their resources, and some concern for the size of the geographic boundaries and motives of existing groups.