

City of Vancouver Housing Survey Results: Displacement & Exclusion

2021



Survey Purpose

We've heard from residents in recent years about their housing challenges in the city. Residents face challenges being able to afford to live in Vancouver, including high costs for housing, childcare, transportation, food, and other necessities. Some people feel excluded or fear having to leave the city because of rising costs and a lack of affordable and suitable housing options. We hear from many renters that they are concerned about displacement. Vancouver is a city of renters with 53% of the households renting and 76% of the household increase between census periods made up of renters.

In winter of 2021, a survey was launched as part of the Planning Vancouver Together process to help us better understand residents' needs and priorities around housing costs, residential displacement, exclusion, and homelessness.

This document summarizes the results and provides an initial overview of the input gathered through the survey.

Survey at a Glance

The survey was hosted through the City of Vancouver's TalkVancouver survey platform from February 24 to March 22, 2021. We raised awareness through the City's various digital and social media channels, paid advertising campaigns, Vancouver Plan and Housing Vancouver list serves, and through the ShapeYourCity page.

2,451
completed surveys

3,760
total responses

11,637
comments

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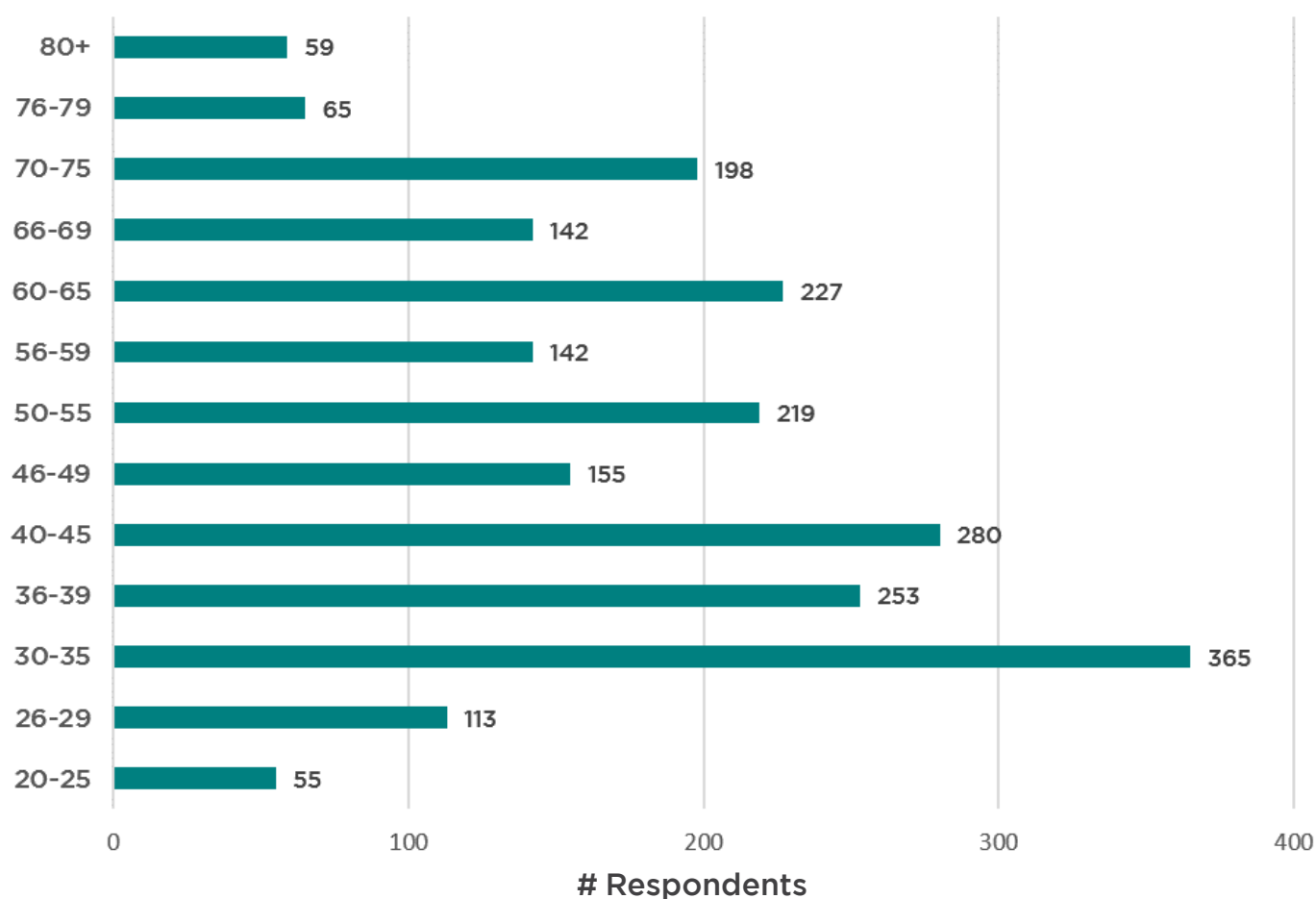
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Who We Heard From (n=2,451)

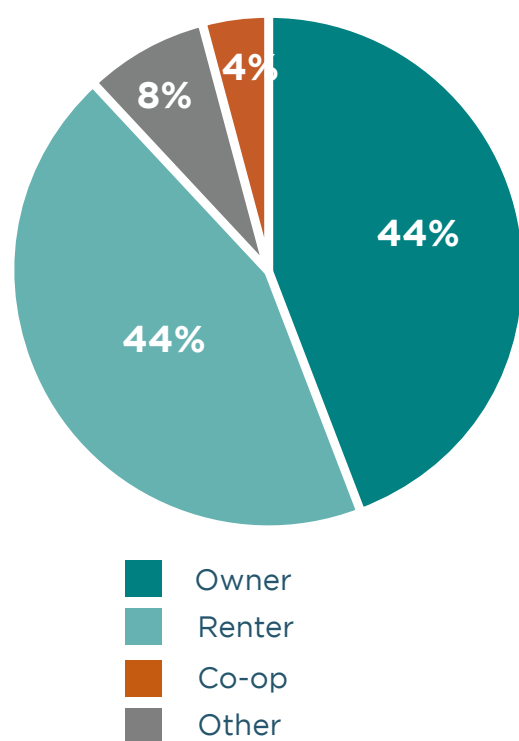
TALK VANCOUVER is the City's online survey tool and public engagement panel, consisting of over 15,000 people who live, work or play in Vancouver, and have agreed to share their opinions with us.

In general, survey respondents were evenly split between renters and owners. The most-represented age group were those between 30 and 35. Higher household incomes (\$150k+) were the most represented income group. There was an observed overrepresentation of white respondents (70%) as compared to city wide figures (48%). Other ethnocultural identities were much lower than the make-up of the city indicating a need for further outreach out to specific communities so that we get a representative picture of public views.

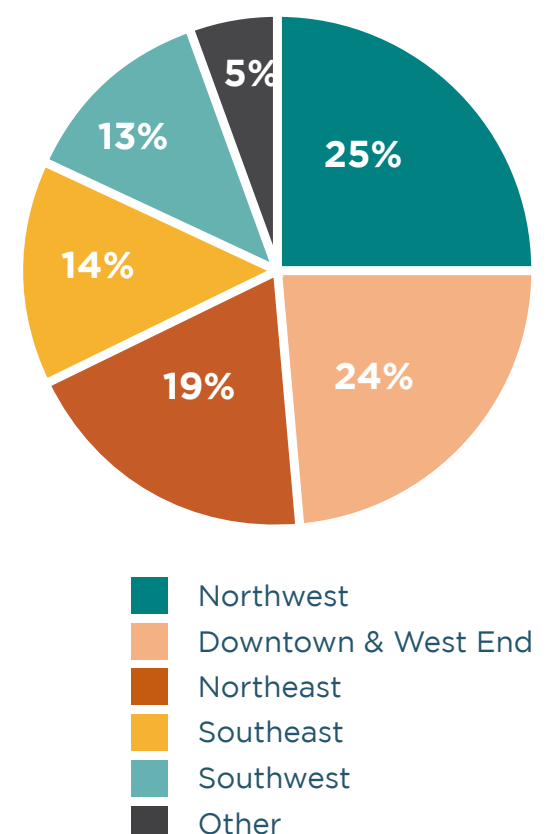
Q What is your age?



Q What is your living situation?



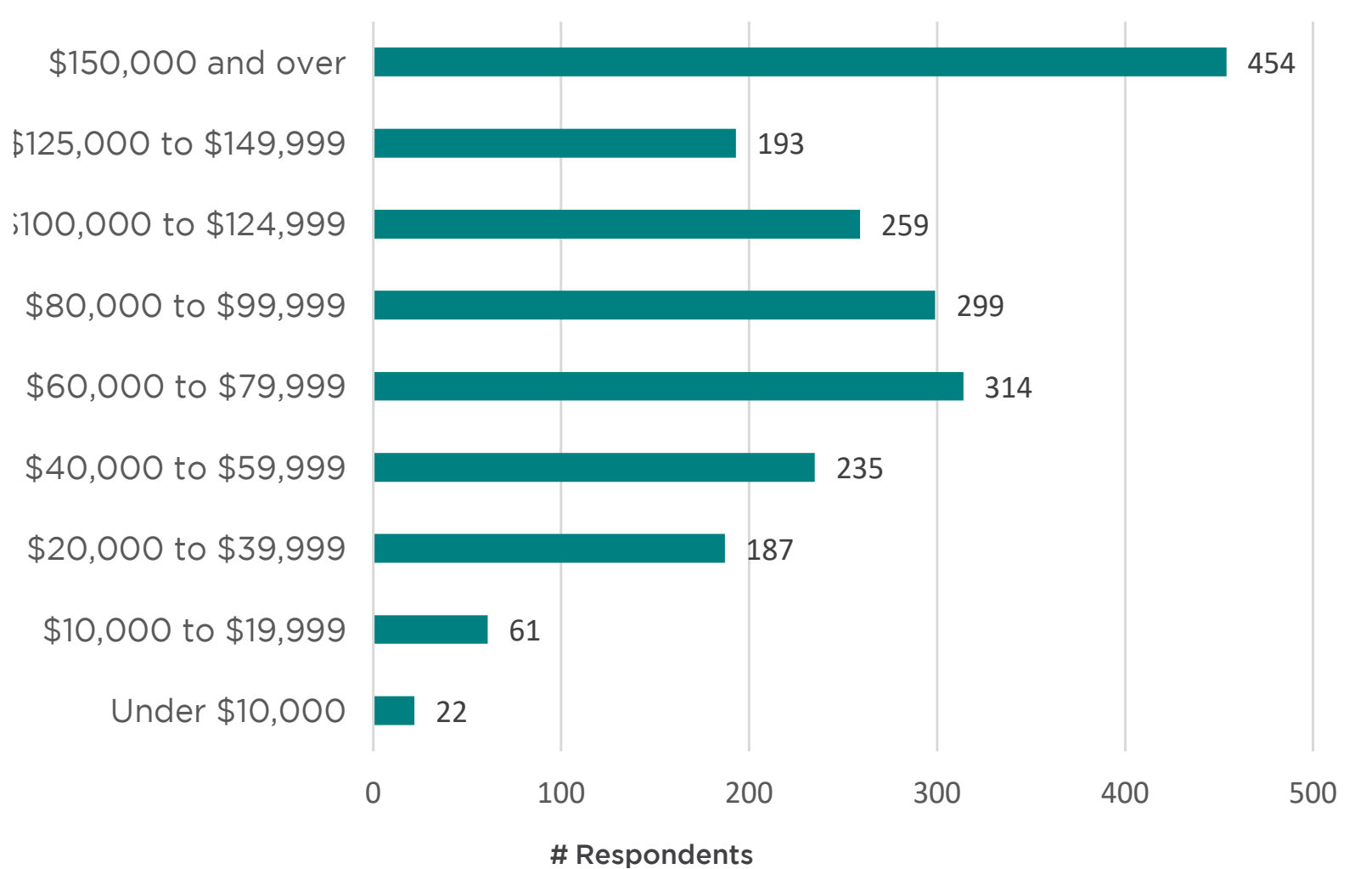
Q What is your postal code?



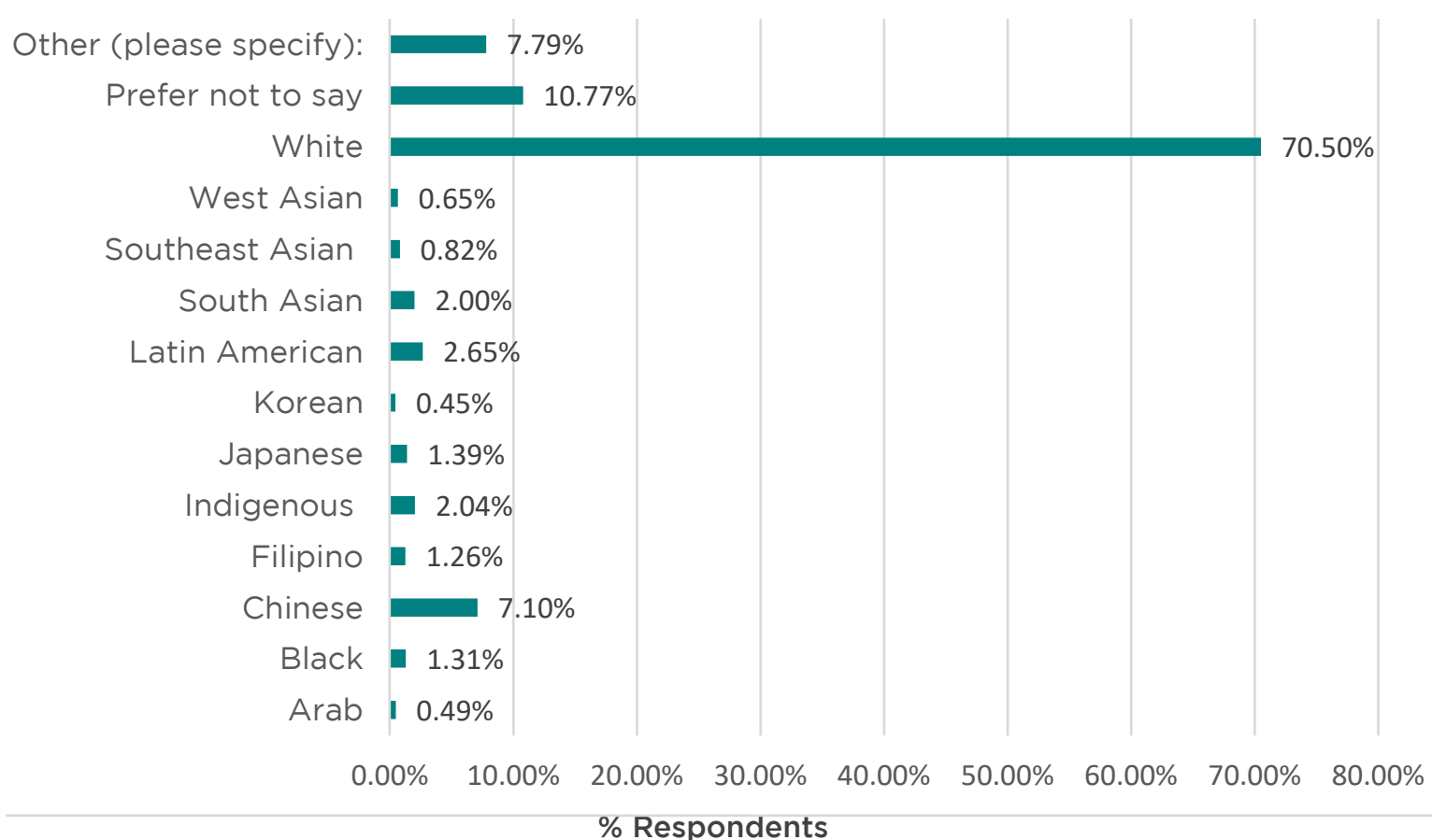
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Who We Heard From (n=2,451)

Q What is your household income?



Q How would you describe your ethnocultural/racial identity?

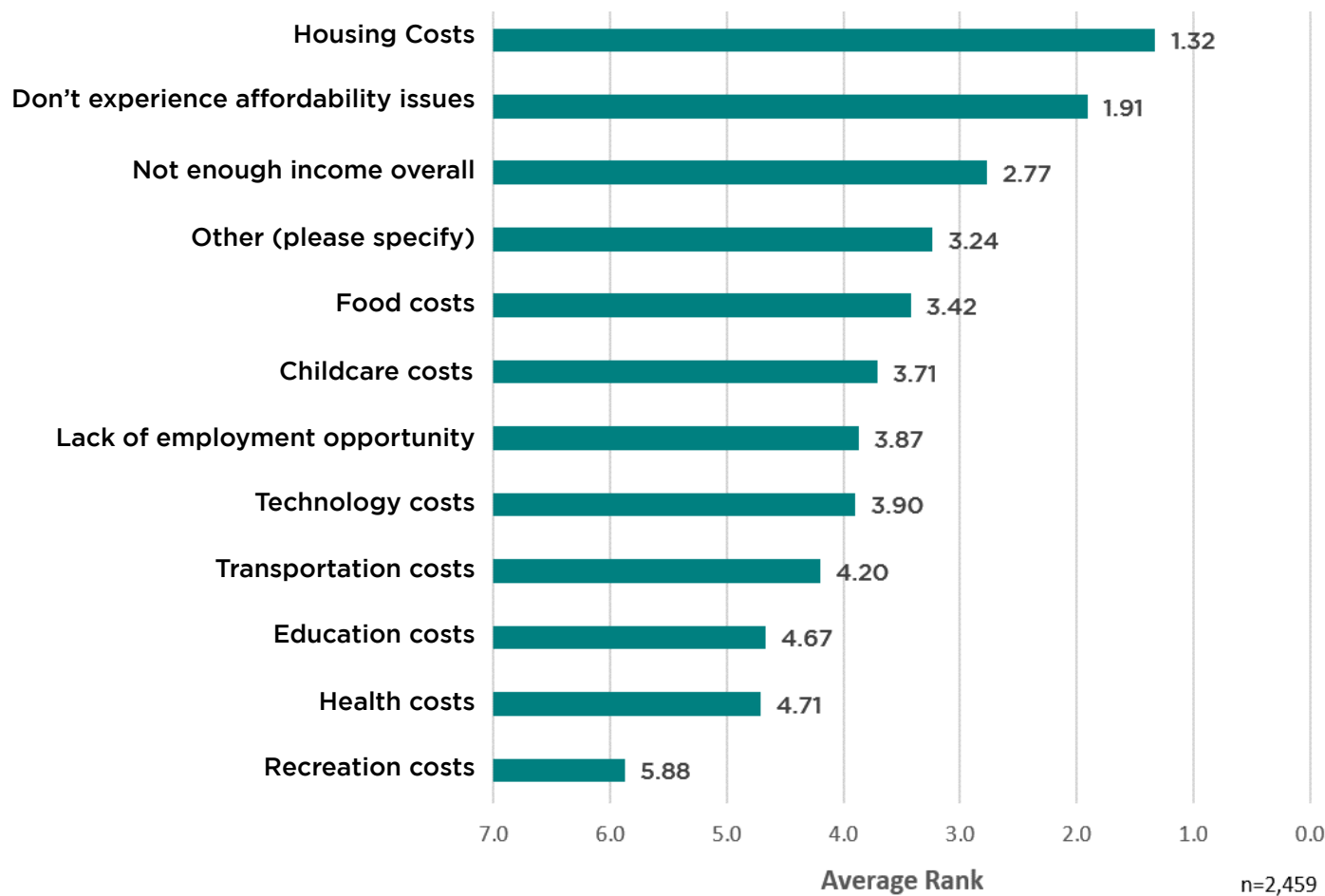


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Affordability

Q We know that a lack of housing affordability is one part of a broader affordability crisis. Thinking about the things that make it hard to afford living here, which of the following most impact your household?*



*Respondents were asked to rank from 1-7 with one being most important. The results show the average rank of each category

Quotes

“The cumulative effect of all these gradually erode livability (rising food costs, rising technology costs, rising taxes, etc)”

“I fear that Vancouver will be out of reach for working and middle class earners in the future and will be a City for the ultra wealthy. The cost of living has gone up too much in relation to incomes”

“As we approach retirement we fear that as costs increase and our income means we will not be able to afford to live here”

“If you own a house property taxes are extremely high and you need insurance which is also extremely high; all strata fees are very high as well. If you rent all those costs are passed on to you through the rental rate”

“Other” Responses

- Debt (credit card, student loan) and debt interests
- Taxes and fees (e.g. property taxes, strata costs, insurance premiums)
- Hydro, gas and utility costs
- Unstable incomes in “gig economy” jobs
- Lack of affordable studio spaces for artists
- Speculation and competition for real estate
- Cost of moving due to renovictions and tenant insecurity
- Insurance costs

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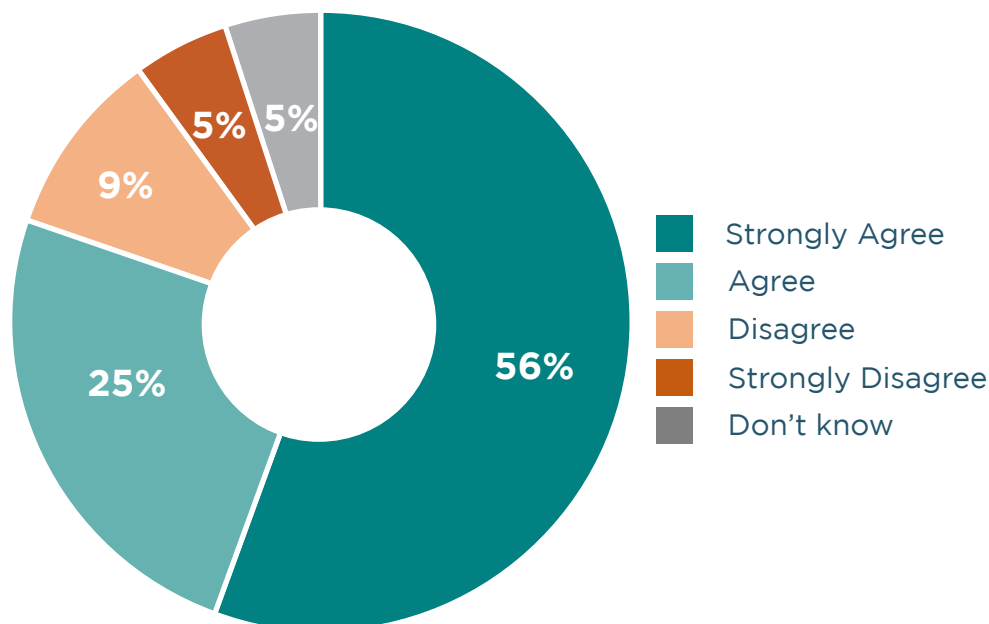
Residential Displacement

Q Do you agree or disagree with this working definition of residential displacement?

“The involuntary movement of residents from their current home (this does not include residents who choose to sell their homes or leave their rental unit). There are many different causes of residential displacement including:

- Physical (direct) displacement - i.e. having to leave your home because it is being renovated or redeveloped, is in an unlivable condition, or you have been evicted;
- Economic (indirect) displacement - i.e. having to leave your home because you can no longer afford rent or you can no longer afford or access your daily needs such as a grocery store; and
- Cultural displacement - i.e. leaving your neighbourhood because you can no longer afford or access your cultural needs such as culturally appropriate stores, spaces or services.”

81% strongly agree/agree with the working definition of residential displacement



Quotes

“As a renter in the last few years I've experienced both physical & economic displacement by a landlord who wants to do reno's and a landlord who wants to raise the rent up past what I could afford”

“There are other reasons like not feeling safe in your neighborhood anymore”

“I am a disabled senior. We need more accessible spaces. Hard to find appropriate housing that can accommodate the disabled. Having to move because your housing no longer works.”

Q. Why is that?

Key themes:

- General agreement that the definition is accurate
- The definition aligns with many respondents' personal experiences
- Speaks to the issue of displacement due to renovictions, increasing rents, and of affordable housing being redeveloped into less affordable housing
- There's no obligation for the City to provide culturally appropriate services and amenities as that's a market force that should be excluded from the definition.
- Broaden the definition to include displacement due to landlord harrasment/intimidation
- Broaden the definition to include displacement due to landlord unwillingness to maintain suitable living conditions
- Broaden the definition to include displacement due to changing household composition (breaking up; getting separated; elderly spouse entering an assisted living facility; starting a family)
- Broaden definition to include displacement triggered by physical impairment (aging; acquiring a disability)
- Broaden definition to include displacement due to lack of essential family services (daycare, before/after school-care)
- Concern over ability of youths to afford living in Vancouver
- Broaden definition to include future/current displacement of senior homeowners due to increasing taxes, and/or inability to maintain own homes
- The line between what counts as a choice or not is blurred
- Broaden definition to include displacement due to neighbourhood becoming unsafe/dangerous

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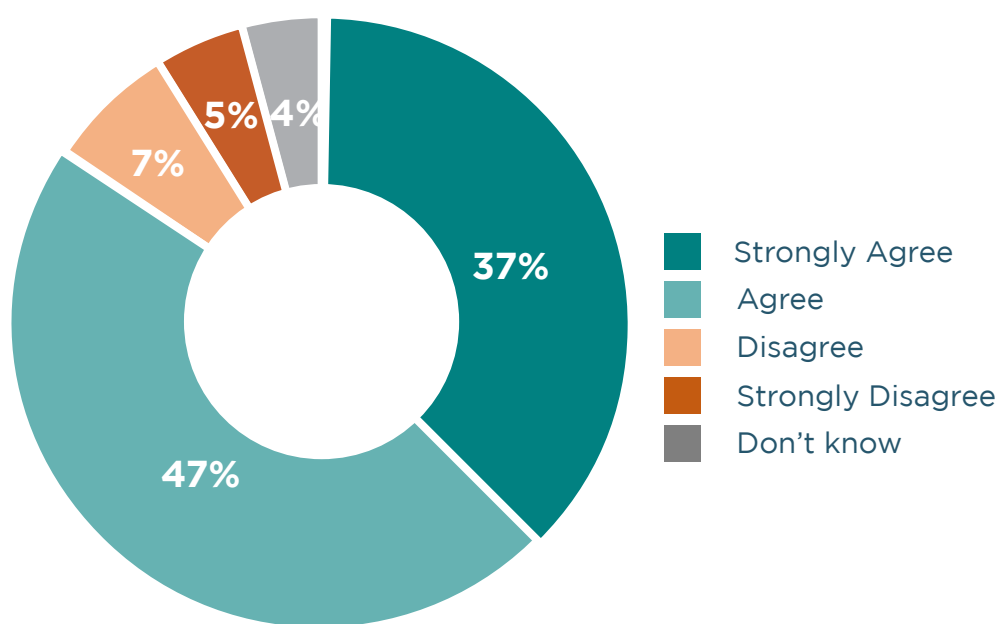
Residential Exclusion

Q Do you agree or disagree with this working definition of residential exclusion?

Residential exclusion occurs when current and prospective residents want to live in the City, or a specific neighbourhood, but can't because there is no available housing that they can afford, based on their income or other housing needs. Displacement and exclusion are related.

When people are involuntarily displaced from their home, they may be excluded from their preferred neighbourhood or City because they are unable to find replacement housing that meets their needs due to high rents and/or a lack of housing options.

85% strongly agree/agree with the working definition of residential exclusion



Q. Why is that?

Key themes

- Overall agreement with definition with many respondents having experienced exclusion based on the definition
- Market forces will cause displacement and it's not the City's jurisdiction to change or slow the market.
- The working definition is missing "social displacement" or having to leave your neighbourhood because you no longer feel safe in your home or community due to crime, assaults, or hate
- Definition doesn't address the economic causes of displacement, for example corporate greed, income inequality, stagnant incomes
- Definition doesn't address "accessibility" displacement - leaving your neighbourhood due to a lack of accessible housing units and amenities for people with disabilities or mobility issues
- Exact reference to "voluntary" vs "involuntary" has to be teased out - sometimes displacement can be voluntary because people no longer want to deal with the challenges of living in Vancouver.
- Add consideration for "senior" displacement - seniors can be displaced due to rising cost of home maintenance and property taxes while on a limited pension
- The City is not obliged to ensure that every resident can live in every neighbourhood just because there's a desire to

Quotes

"This is precisely what my family is experiencing. We have to continue living in a neighbourhood far from our work and cultural activities because moving into a similar apartment in our preferred neighbourhood would nearly double our rent."

"I don't necessarily think it's up to the City to solve. Vancouver has always been a more expensive area to live in the lower mainland - that is just a fact of life."

"My daughter is getting to the age where she's starting to think of her next few years of education and is lamenting the fact - at the age of 14 - she feels she'll never be able to live in the city. That's shockingly upsetting."

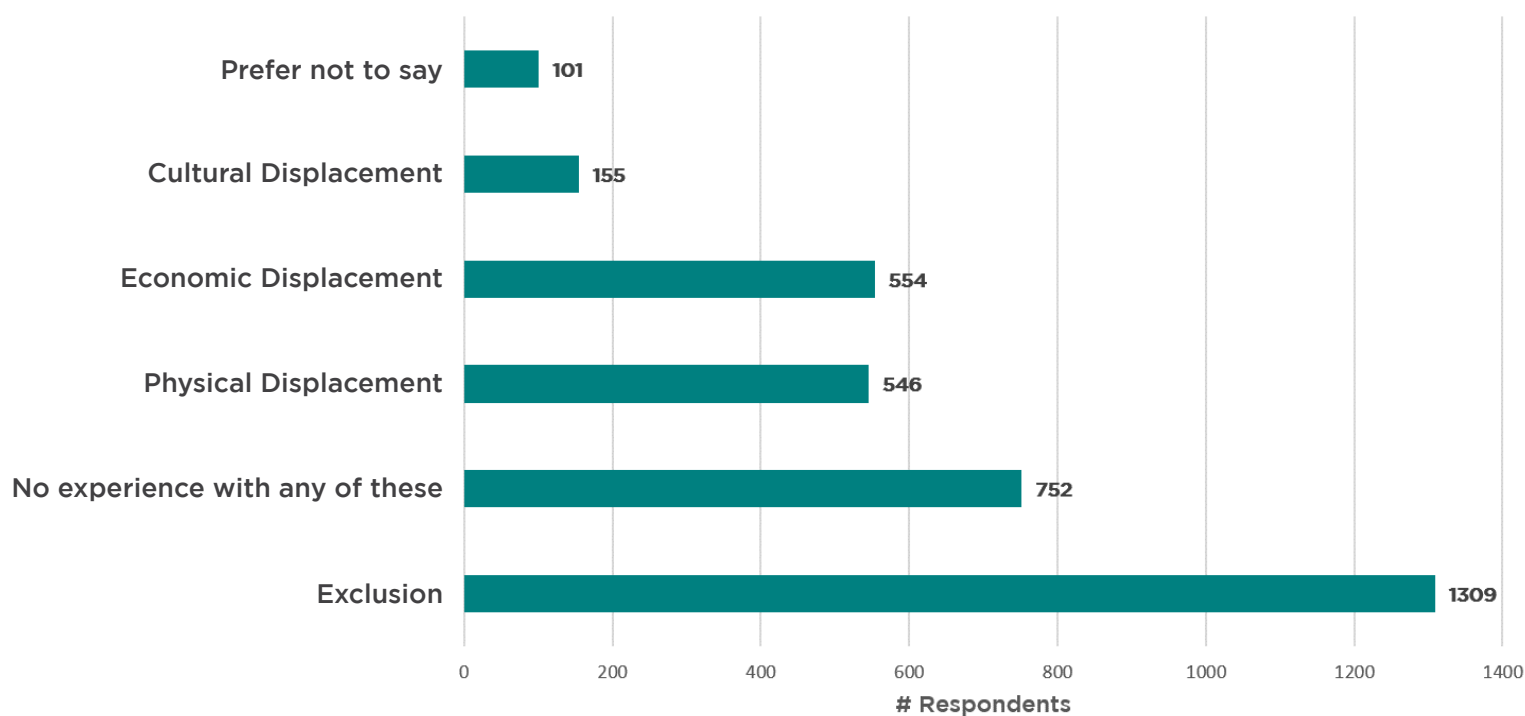
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Views on Housing Challenges

Q Have you experienced any of these situations?

- “Exclusion - i.e. being excluded from the City or a specific neighbourhood due to a lack of housing options you can afford;
- Physical (direct) displacement - i.e. having to leave your home because it is being renovated or redeveloped, is in an unlivable condition, or you have been evicted
- Economic (indirect) displacement - i.e. having to leave your home because you can no longer afford rent or you can no longer afford or access your daily needs such as a grocery store
- Cultural displacement - i.e. leaving your neighbourhood because you can no longer afford or access your cultural needs such as culturally appropriate stores or spaces.”



Quotes

“We have multiple times had to rent a condo just to have the condo owner sell from under us, forcing us to move and take a higher rent or a new place in another neighbourhood. A huge part of displacement is the lack of rental-only housing.”

“As an employer it is difficult to attract and retain staff due to housing costs. After years of employment and mentoring, they need to move far due to having a family and not being able to afford suitable housing”

“My partner and I were lucky to rent an apartment 9 years ago in Mount Pleasant, therefore our rent is affordable compared to many of our friends that live in this area. We’ve very much outgrown our space and would like to start a family but cannot afford rent for a 2 br. apartment”

Q. Do you have ideas to address housing challenges faced by renters?

- Optimize publicly owned land through housing redevelopments
- Legalize missing middle and apartment forms in low density areas
- Build and allow more social and co-op housing developments city-wide
- Simplify and speed up the development approvals process for social, rental, and co-op housing
- Incentivize below-market rental housing
- Allow for greater density and building height for affordable housing developments
- Implement rent and vacancy control throughout the city
- Enable more family-sized 2- and 3-bedroom units
- Speed up approvals for laneway and basement suite development applications
- Make it mandatory for pets to be allowed in all rentals

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Views on Housing Challenges

Q Vancouver is a growing city that is expected to continue to experience population growth over the long-term. What approaches to this growth should we take to make the City more inclusive (e.g. more social housing, more secure options for renters)?

Key themes:

- Work with senior levels of government and CMHC to build more affordable social, rental, and co-op housing
- Allow more apartment forms, missing middle housing, and higher density and heights throughout the city
- Normalize rental housing as a viable living option for families and young people, enable larger units (3+ bedrooms)
- Enable more mixed use developments to improve walkability
- Update the zoning by-law to enable more housing throughout the city and remove restrictive zoning
- Enable more housing for middle income households given that new market apartment rents are out of reach for many
- Speed up the development approvals process for social, rental, and co-op
- City should stop interfering with the housing market
- More protections for landlords

Quotes

“Shift all incentives so developers build rental, social, and co-op housing instead of condos”

“It makes no sense to have most of the city being single-family when so many are homelessness. Vancouver needs to transition to a mixed use kind of zoning. Commercial in the lower levels, residential in the upper levels.”

“Increase development of mid-range family sized units in apartments. So many condos that are currently being built are focused on luxury or are too small for families.”

Q Do you have any other comments about housing, displacement and exclusion in Vancouver?

Key themes:

- Affluent areas should incorporate a greater range of housing types/tenure
- Allow more density in single-family zones
- Neighbourhoods should be inclusive of all income levels
- We need to encourage housing closer to where people work
- Seniors and people with mobility challenges should be able to live near needed services
- The City should take bolder steps/initiatives to tackle these issues
- The City should take action and build more co-ops, non-market housing and more rental housing now
- More government regulation is needed to protect renters and curtail rising housing costs
- These are complex problems that are difficult to solve
- The City cannot succeed without the support of senior governments
- Neighbourhood crime and public safety are getting worse in the city
- We need to slow down the pace of development in Vancouver
- Change should be incremental
- The City’s priorities are misplaced, efforts should be focused elsewhere
- The City should consider policy impacts on homeowners too
- We don’t need more surveys or plans
- The City is ineffective at tackling these issues, let the market do its thing

Quotes

“The city should concentrate on zoning and supporting getting money from other levels of government. The city can not and should not do it alone, we need buy-in from the federal/provincial government.”

“I think the problem is that the city has a small footprint and are allowing too much development. In a few years, our air quality is going to be worse than it is now since the trees are all going and green space is being covered up with the concrete of new buildings.”

“We are a retired middle income couple who would happily have raised our family in Vancouver if we had been able to afford it; we are now happy living in the Fraser Valley but worry about our daughter and her husband who cannot afford to buy anything in Vancouver and pay rent there”

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Plan

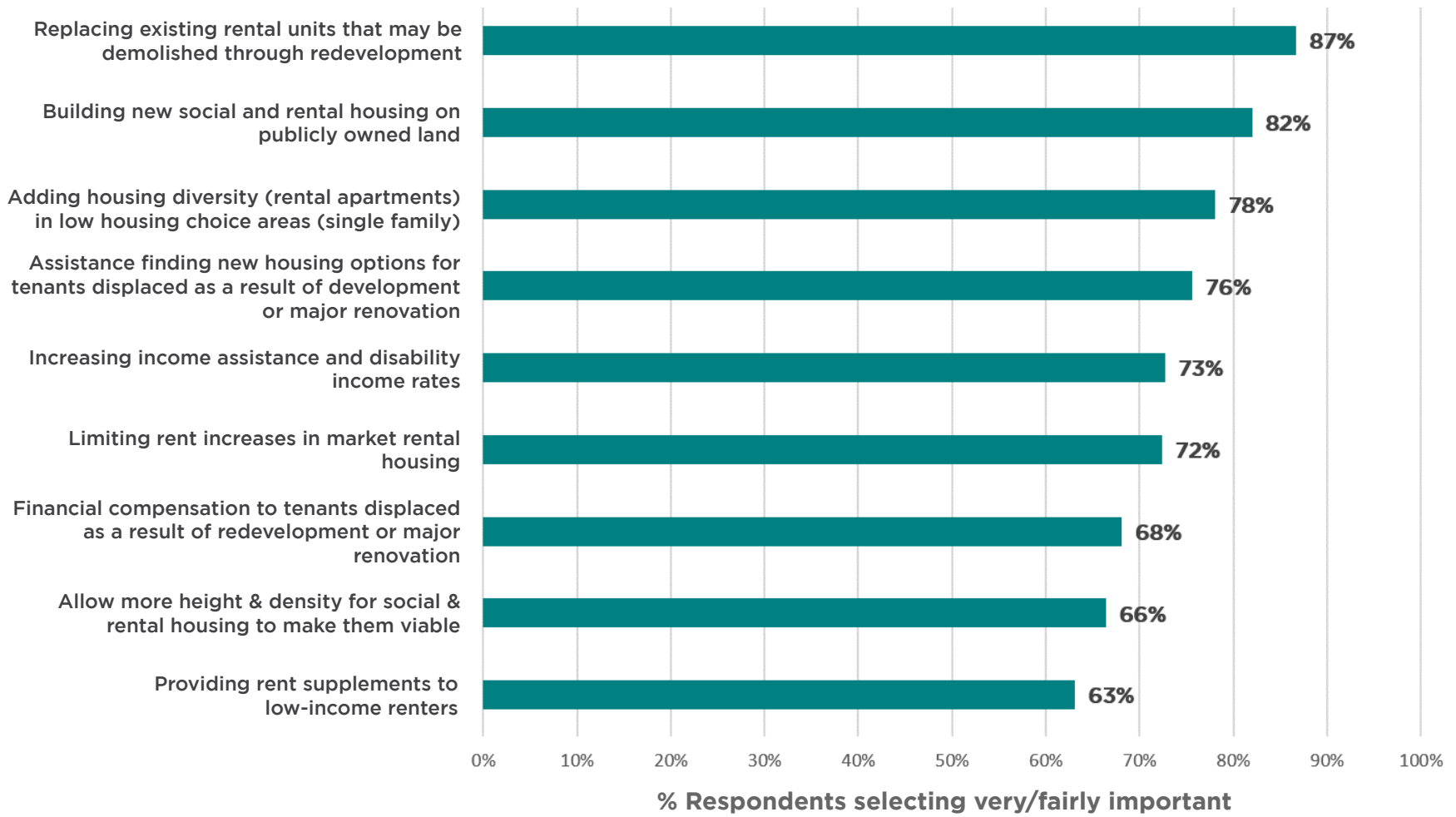
Housing
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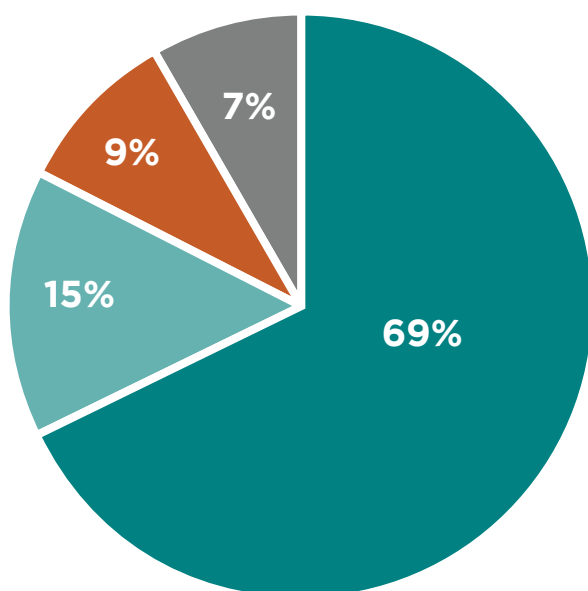
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Actions to Lessen Displacement and Exclusion

Q How important do you think it is to take the following actions to lessen the effects of displacement or exclusion on renters? (Very/fairly important merged)

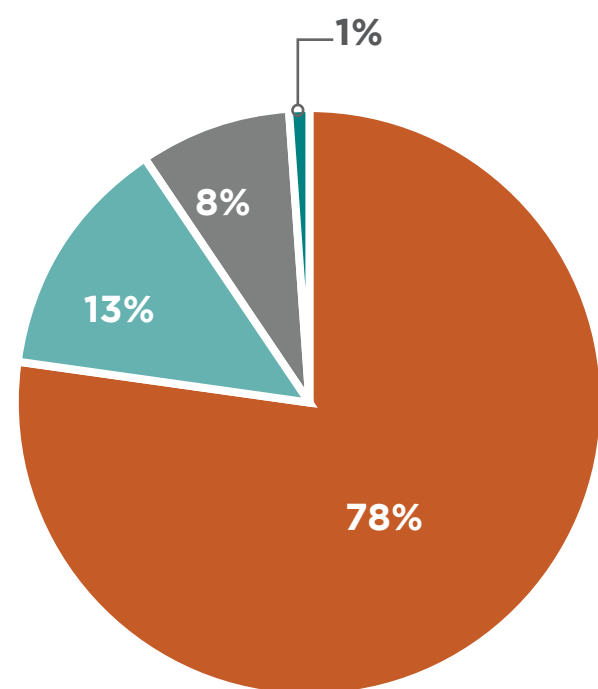


Q How much effort should the City put into improving housing and services for low-income residents and others experiencing or at risk of homelessness?



- More effort
- Same effort
- Less effort
- Don't know

Q Do you think homelessness is changing in Vancouver?



- It's getting better
- It's staying the same
- It's getting worse
- Don't know

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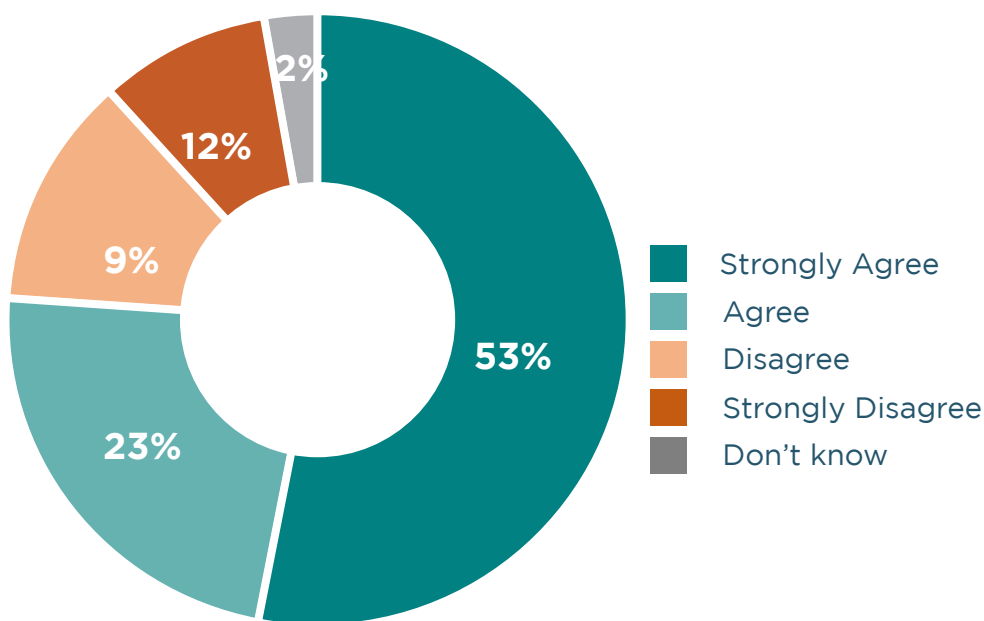
2021

Actions to Lessen Displacement and Exclusion

Q Do you agree or disagree with the following?

It should be a priority as part of Vancouver Plan to make neighbourhoods with housing costs too expensive for most Vancouver residents more inclusive to low to moderate income households (with annual incomes under \$80,000)?

76% strongly agree/agree that the Vancouver Plan should prioritize making neighbourhoods more inclusive to low to moderate income households



Q. Why is that?

Key themes:

- Neighbourhood diversity makes for a more equitable, healthier and stronger city
- More housing options are needed for residents
- Neighbourhood mix creates social cohesion
- Commercial areas need housing diversity to function and be sustained
- Greater diversity of housing types/tenure is needed to attract and retain a diverse workforce
- Lack of inclusive neighbourhoods creates concentrations of low-income enclaves
- We should not build a city where poor people are concentrated in some areas and wealthy people in others
- Low-density neighbourhoods comprise a disproportionate amount of the city's land
- Not every area of the city should accommodate low- and moderate-income earners
- Putting affordable housing in expensive areas of the city is economically inefficient
- Making neighbourhoods more inclusive to low/moderate income households is disruptive to local communities
- Neighbourhood change should not come at a loss of neighbourhood character/feel
- Governments should not intervene in the market

Quotes

"I think this is critical to create healthy, diverse neighbourhoods with strong social connections, as well as to allow people to live a reasonable distance from their work."

"Let the market decide. The City should not be trying to force low to moderate housing into areas."

"I feel that a neighborhood or community with a diverse population is much healthier for both its inhabitants and the city as a whole."

"This will allow more diversity in the neighbourhood and support low income workers, seniors, and others less economically secure"

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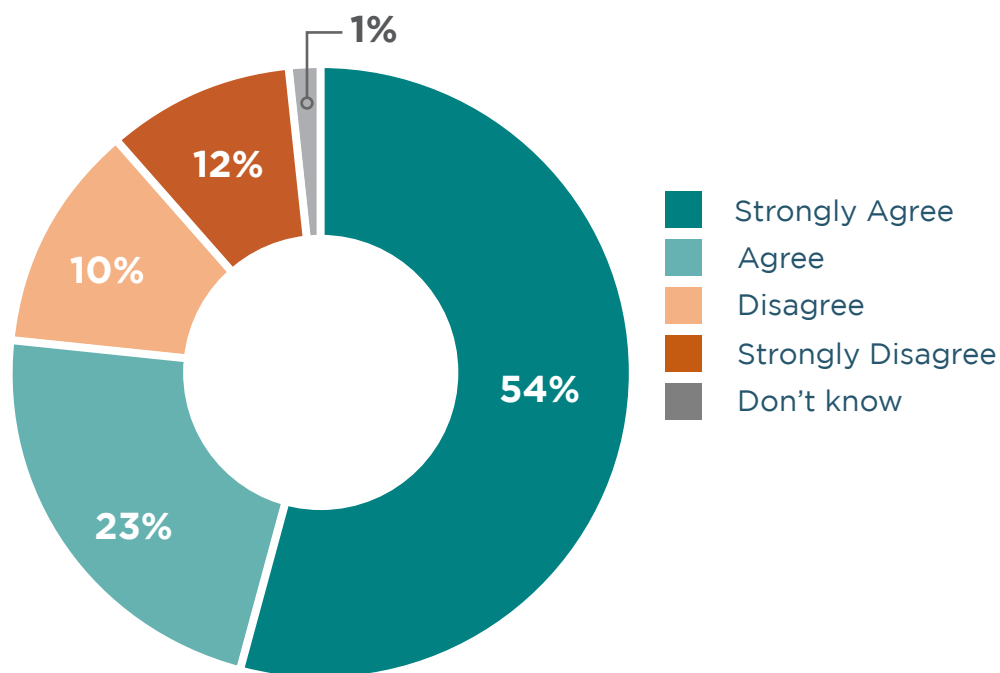
Actions to Lessen Displacement and Exclusion

Q Do you agree or disagree with the following?

Given increasing homelessness and the need for a variety of housing types and affordability levels to meet the needs of our diverse City, do you agree or disagree that all neighbourhoods should have...

- all types of housing (e.g. supportive, social, purpose-built rental housing apartments, condos, houses)

77% strongly agree/agree that all neighbourhoods should have all types of housing (supportive, social, purpose-built rental, condos, houses)



Quotes

“Only increase density to targeted areas that can handle it. Without the services and structure to accommodate a major jump in population (local doctors, space in schools and childcare, transit etc)”

“Diversity builds stronger neighbourhoods”

“We need to support each other and provide room to include everyone.”

“Affordable housing and services should be located where the most units can be provided for the amount of money invested.”

“The current amount available is insufficient. There has also been disastrous results with keeping folks to one area - having access to services while also destigmatizing homelessness in the context of nice neighborhoods is key.”

Q. Why is that?

Key themes:

- Broad agreement that all neighbourhoods should have all types of housing
- All neighbourhoods should reflect the diversity within Vancouver
- Providing housing options outside the DTES would give poorer households the option to live away from crime and drug-use
- Expanding housing options throughout the city must come with parallel investments in services and community amenities
- Changes should not come at the expense of neighbourhood character or public safety
- Concentrating the homeless population on only a handful of areas puts an unfair burden these neighbourhoods
- It is less important where the housing is built, that it is being built
- Target increased density only in areas that already have the needed services/ infrastructure to support people experiencing homelessness
- Expanding social housing in affluent areas is needlessly expensive and inefficient
- Homeless people should not be living near schools and parks

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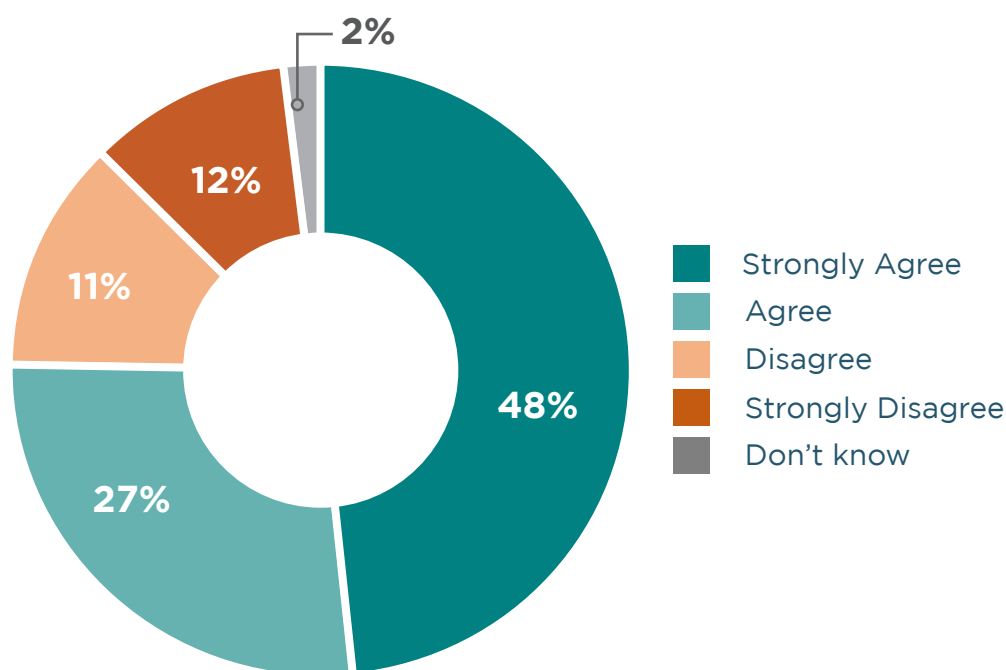
Actions to Address Homelessness

Q Do you agree or disagree with the following?

Given increasing homelessness and the need for a variety of housing types and affordability levels to meet the needs of our diverse City, do you agree or disagree that all neighbourhoods should have...

- social services (e.g. temporary shelters, warming centres, meal services, mental health and addiction services) available

75% of respondents agree/strongly agree that all neighbourhoods should have social services (e.g. temporary shelters, warming centres, meal services, mental health & addiction services) available



Q. Why is that?

Key themes:

- Broad support for locating social services throughout the whole city
- Having a city divided along affluent and poorer areas erodes social cohesion and leads to a more polarized community
- For this to work, senior governments and other municipalities also need to step up in providing greater services and housing options for marginalized populations
- Every neighbourhood has a role to play in providing services/housing for people of all backgrounds and income-levels
- This is a city-wide issue, as every neighbourhood has residents struggling with drug addiction, mental health and homelessness
- Such proposed changes will only bring crime into more neighbourhoods
- Increased density should be accompanied with services/infrastructure to support homeless people

Quotes

“Everybody should have access to their basic needs, including shelter, food, and health care. There is no excuse for a neighbourhood to be exempt from providing these to those who are at risk.”

“We need to see our homeless population as part of our community.”

“Every neighbourhood here has a homeless population whether the residents choose to recognize it or not. Ideally the homeless will have services and be able to get a home in the neighbourhoods where they live.”

“Affordable housing and services should be located where the most units can be provided for the amount of money invested.”

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