



# Natural Areas Trails Strategy

Initial Engagement Report  
September 2022



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this initial phase of engagement for the Natural Areas Trail Strategy is to collect input from a broad range of audiences and stakeholders to inform the development of a Natural Area Trails Strategy for the District.

Overall, there was high response to this engagement with the majority of online survey respondents identifying as North Vancouver residents. In general, respondents indicated that they greatly value the trail network and most use the trail network for several types of recreation activities. Most respondents were generally satisfied with natural area trails, and no topic of concern was mentioned by the majority of respondents. Topics most commonly cited for improvement include dog management, amenities (waste bins, washrooms, parking, signs), and trail quality (variety, maintenance, bike trails).

### Participation

One of the highest response rates to public engagement in the District in recent years, more than 1,900 respondents participated in the initial engagement for the Natural Areas Trails Strategy. Engagement opportunities included an online engagement survey, an intercept survey, and stakeholder workshops. All questions in the online survey were optional and not all respondents responded to every question. Many respondents used the open-ended questions to provide additional feedback. The intercept survey was conducted at key trailhead locations across the District. Overall, we heard from trail users, residents and visitors, local recreational, environmental, and community organizations, and land managers.

### Notification

The District promoted the engagement opportunities using the following methods: District of North Vancouver website, District of North Vancouver online engagement survey site, postcard mail out to addresses near trailheads in the study area and within the study area, social media posts, information signs at key trailheads, print and digital newspaper advertisements in the North Shore News newspaper, an intercept survey, and stakeholder workshops.

### Key findings and themes

Results for each question in the online survey and intercept survey can be found in Appendices A and B. The stakeholder workshops were more conversational in nature and are summarized in Appendix C.

Key findings from the online survey include:

- Over 80% of respondents engage in two to four types of activities on the trails
- Most common trail activities include walk/hike (96%), nature viewing (61%), mountain biking (58%), and dog walking (48%)
- Over 80% of respondents indicated the following qualities were important: trail variety, natural feel/character, ecosystem health, trail quality
- Over 80% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with trail quality, and natural feel/character
- Dog leash optional trails had the highest diversity of opinions expressed, including concerns about dog waste, environmental impacts, dog behaviour, and interactions with other trail users
- Comments about amenities included desire for more parking, waste bins, and washrooms
- Comments about signs included desire for more educational and directional signage
- Comments about trail quality included desire for better maintenance, environmental protection, preservation of natural character, and greater variety/diversity (such as level of difficulty).
- Comments about bike trails include desire for greater variety/diversity of bike trails, as well as concerns about safety, conflicts, and impacts.

Key findings from the intercept survey include:

- Approximately half of respondents visit a couple times per week or more (51%)
- Ease of access was the most frequently mentioned theme that intercept survey respondents gave for choosing a particular trail (40% respondents said near home or work/frequent trail user)
- Most respondents were on the trails for less than three hours (87%). Half of respondents indicated they would be on the trails for one to two hours (50%)
- Majority of respondents drove their own vehicle to the trailhead (65%). The next most frequent ways of travel were walk/jog/run (12%), and transit (11%)

### **Who we heard from**

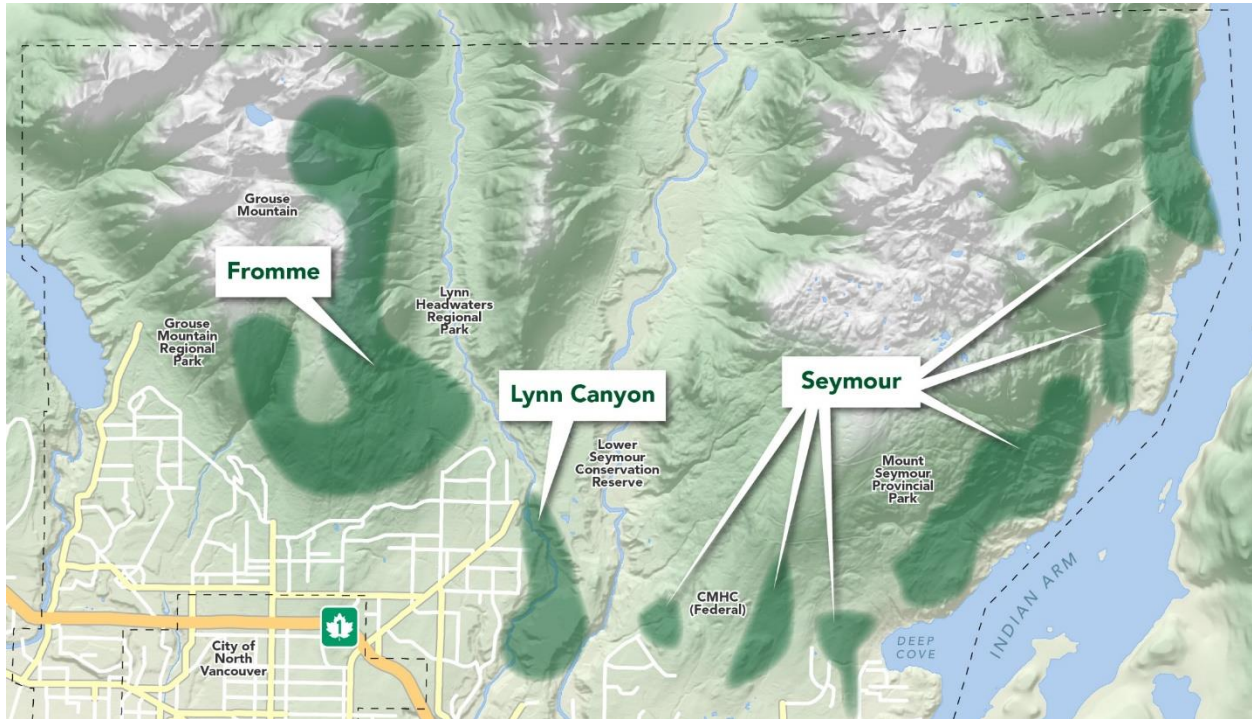
North Vancouver residents represented 83% of online survey respondents. For the intercept survey, 50% of respondents identified as North Vancouver residents (average of the survey locations). Refer to the demographic sections of Appendix A and B for further information.

### **Next steps**

Key themes emerging from this phase of engagement will be considered along with our background research and analysis as the draft strategy is developed. Further engagement opportunities will be available when the draft strategy is prepared.

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

The District is developing a Natural Areas Trails Strategy to guide the planning and management of trails in natural areas managed by the District (see study area image). To learn more about key community values, ideas, and opportunities, the District conducted public and stakeholder engagement in spring 2022. This report presents an analysis of the input collected through the engagement opportunities.



Study area

The process to develop the strategy is outlined below. This initial engagement took place in Phase 1.



More than 1,900 respondents participated in at least one of the engagement opportunities. There were several ways for respondents to share their input:

- Online survey: 1,638 respondents who answered at least one survey question
- Intercept survey: 239 respondents
- Stakeholder meetings and workshops: 31 participants

The following sections summarize responses and input received through these engagement opportunities. The District also reached out to Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN), Squamish Nation, and Musqueam Nation to provide opportunity for early input. The District intends to continue to engage with local Indigenous Nations through the development of the strategy.

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The engagement program to inform the community and collect feedback on the Natural Areas Trails Strategy took place in May-July 2022.

More than 1,900 respondents participated in one or more of the public engagement opportunities, which included an intercept survey at key trailhead locations, an online survey, and stakeholder workshops. Invited participants to the stakeholder workshops included local recreational, environmental, and community organizations, and land managers. Engagement with local Indigenous Nations is occurring separately.

The District promoted the engagement opportunities using the following methods:

### Notification

Method	Description	Dates
District of North Vancouver website	New page with project information and link to the online survey	Webpage launched on May 2, 2022
Online engagement survey site	Site including background information about the project and survey questions; 1,638 respondents answered at least one survey question	Engagement site open from May 2 to 23, 2022
Postcard mail out	Notification card with link to webpage and online survey. Postcards were mailed to 7,463 District addresses near study area trailheads and 159 non-District owned parcel owners within the study area	Postcards mailed on April 27 and May 2, 2022
Social media	Facebook and Twitter posts to promote the online survey. Total reach: Facebook 2,579; Twitter 2,495	Posts on May 4, 12, 19, 22, 2022
Information signs	Two 4' x 4' and 12 2' x 2' information signs posted near key District trailheads	Sign installed on May 5, 2022
Newspaper advertisements	Digital and print advertisements in the <i>North Shore News</i> to promote the Natural Areas Trails Strategy engagement	One ¼ page print ad ran May 4, 2022
	Digital ads targeted to District residents resulted in 21,683 total impressions	Digital ad ran on <i>North Shore News</i> website on May 2-23, 2022
Intercept survey	District Park Rangers conducted intercept surveys at five key trailhead locations (see map in Appendix B); there were 239 respondents	Intercept survey conducted between May 3 and May 22, 2022
Stakeholder workshops email invitations	An email invitation for stakeholder workshops were sent to local recreational, environmental, and community organizations; land managers; and partners. There were 31 participants (participant organizations listed in Appendix C)	Emails sent on May 2, 3 and June 16, 2022

## APPENDIX A: ONLINE SURVEY

To ensure no spam or bot activity skewed the data, responses were reviewed for repeating IP addresses with the same responses (qualitative and quantitative answers). While there were multiple repeating IP addresses, most survey responses were different. This is likely attributed to members of the same household completing the survey from the same IP address. Four responses were the same and removed from the analyzed dataset.

**There were a total of 1,638 respondents.** Respondents who answered one or more questions were included.

The following is a summary of findings from the online survey.

### Activities

The top four categories of activities identified by respondents are:

- 96% walk, hike, jog, or run
- 61% view nature or wildlife
- 58% mountain bike or cycle
- 48% dog walk

More than 80% of respondents do two to four types of activities on the trails.

### Importance

More than 80% of respondents said they visit the trails for the following reasons:

- Exercise and physical health
- To enjoy nature
- Relaxation and mental health
- Activity with family or friends

More than 80% of respondents said the following are important or very important:

- Trail variety
- Natural feel and character
- Ecosystem health and protection of environment
- Trail quality

60-80% of respondents said that the following are very important or important:

- Trail route signage
- Trail safety
- Amenities at trailheads

### Satisfaction

More than 80% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with:

- Trail quality
- Natural feel and character

60-80% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with:

- Trail variety
- Ecosystem health
- Protection of environment
- Trail route signage
- Trail safety

### Dissatisfaction

Of the trail features that respondents were asked to rate for satisfaction, no aspects had more dissatisfied respondents than satisfied or neutral respondents.

The following topics received more than 10% of dissatisfied ratings:

Dog leash-optional trails (14%)	Dog leash optional trails had the highest diversity of opinions expressed. Key themes in the comments about dogs include concerns about dog waste, environmental impacts, dog behaviour, and interactions with other trail users.
Trailhead amenities (13%)	Key themes in the comments about amenities include parking, more waste bins, and more washrooms.
Trail route signage (11%)	Key themes in the comments about signs include more educational signs, such as trail etiquette and preparedness; trail route signs, such as trail markers and maps; and types of users permitted on the trail.

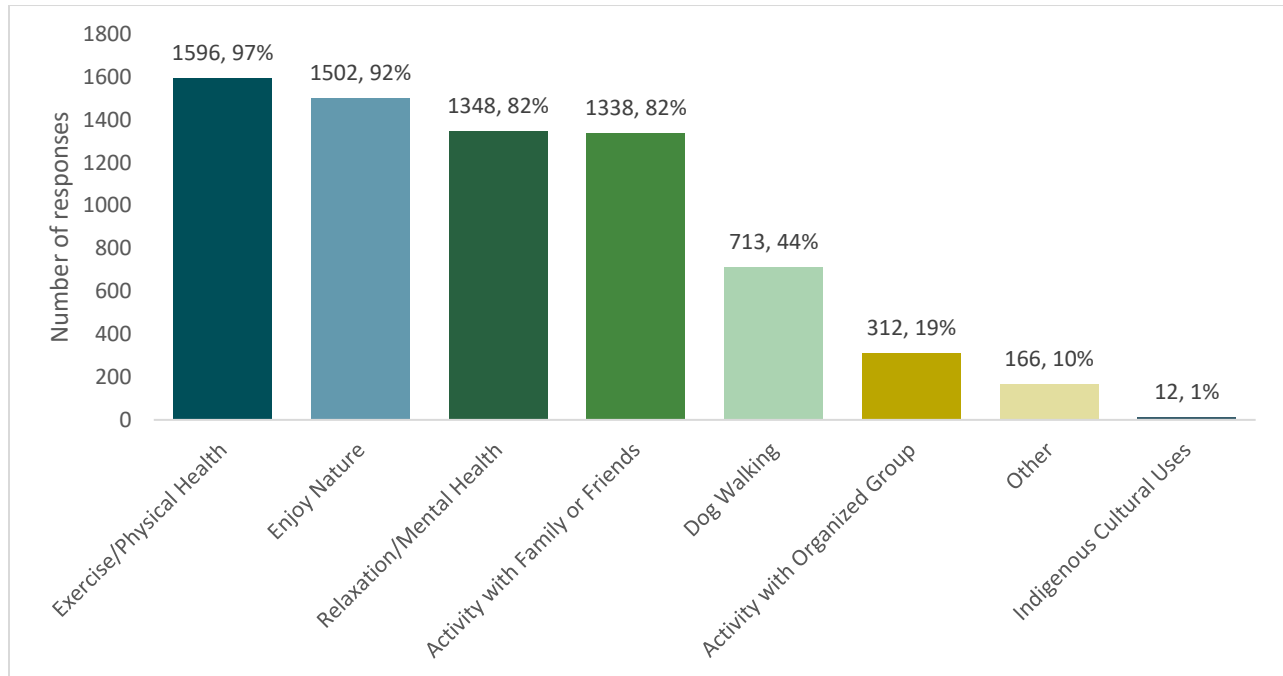
The following key topics about dissatisfaction emerged in the comments:

Trail quality and variety	<p>This was the most frequently mentioned theme in comments about dissatisfaction, 34% of comments. Note that when asked to rate satisfaction about trail quality in another question, trail quality was rated the highest satisfied aspect of trails by online survey respondents.</p> <p>Key themes in the comments about trail quality and variety include desire for better trail quality including maintenance, concerns about the environment, preservation of natural character, more trail variety/diversity (such as level of difficulty), and more trails</p>
Bikes & bike trails	<p>This comment about dissatisfaction was mentioned in 29% of comments; it is noted here as the other dissatisfied comment themes are mentioned above.</p> <p>Key themes in the comments about bikes/bike trails include desire for more bike trails and more variety of bike trails; concerns about safety, speed, and conflicts with bikes; and impact and damage concerns.</p>



## Q1. Why do you visit the trails?

Total respondents: 1,638.



Note: respondents could select one or more options.

“Other” response themes include:

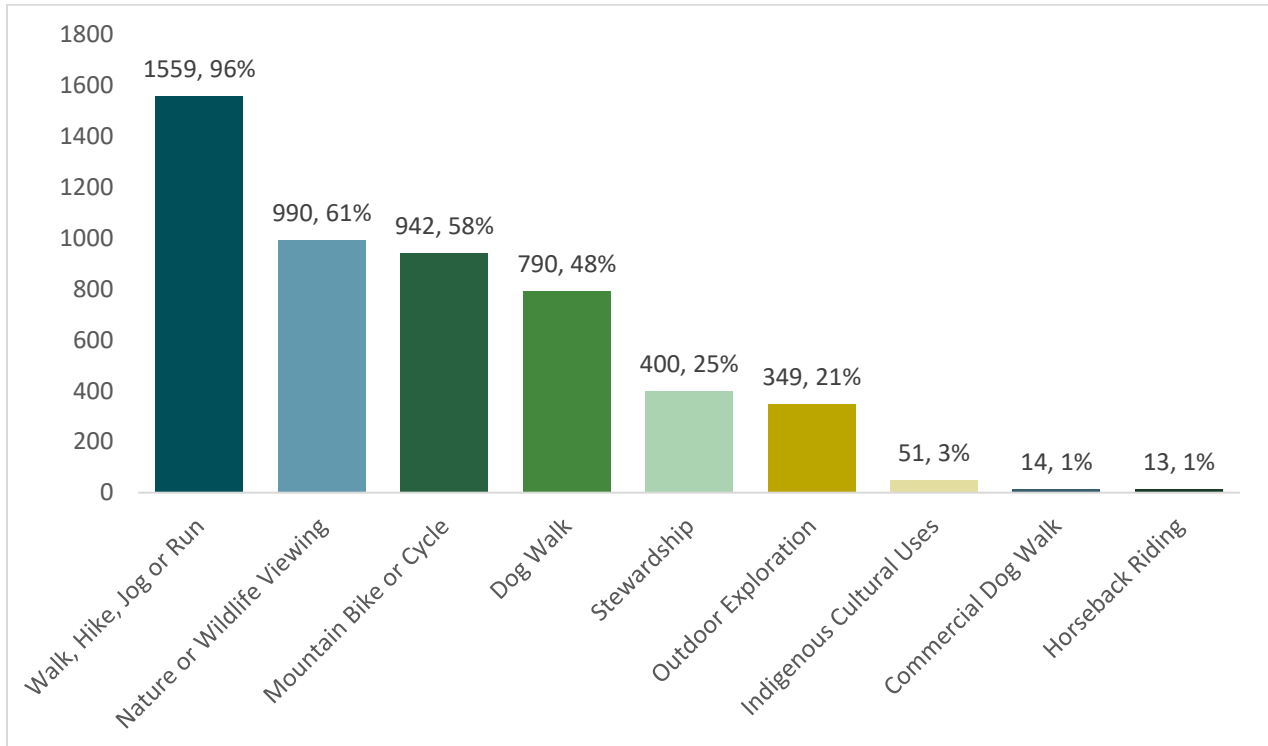
- Mountain biking (120)
- Nature education/foraging (12)
- Orienteering (11)
- Work or volunteering (10)
- Art (9)
- Travel, e.g. commuting, exploring (8)
- Miscellaneous activities (6)

## Q2. If you [do an activity] on District trails, which areas do you typically visit?

Total respondents: 1,632.

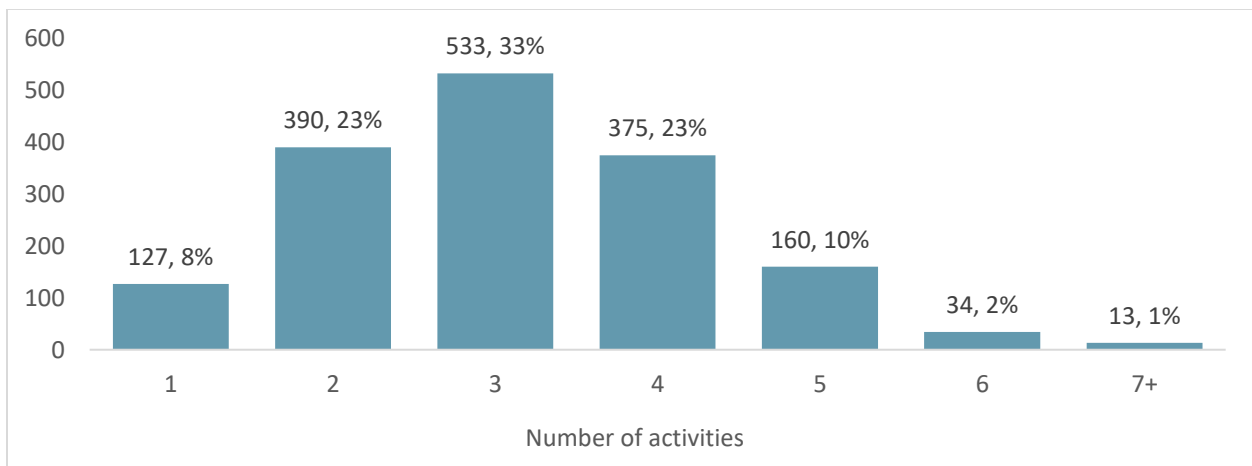
This question asked if respondents did various activities and where in the study area respondents visited for their chosen activities (Fromme, Lynn Canyon, and Seymour). The study area map was included in the survey to illustrate the three areas.

Types of activities:



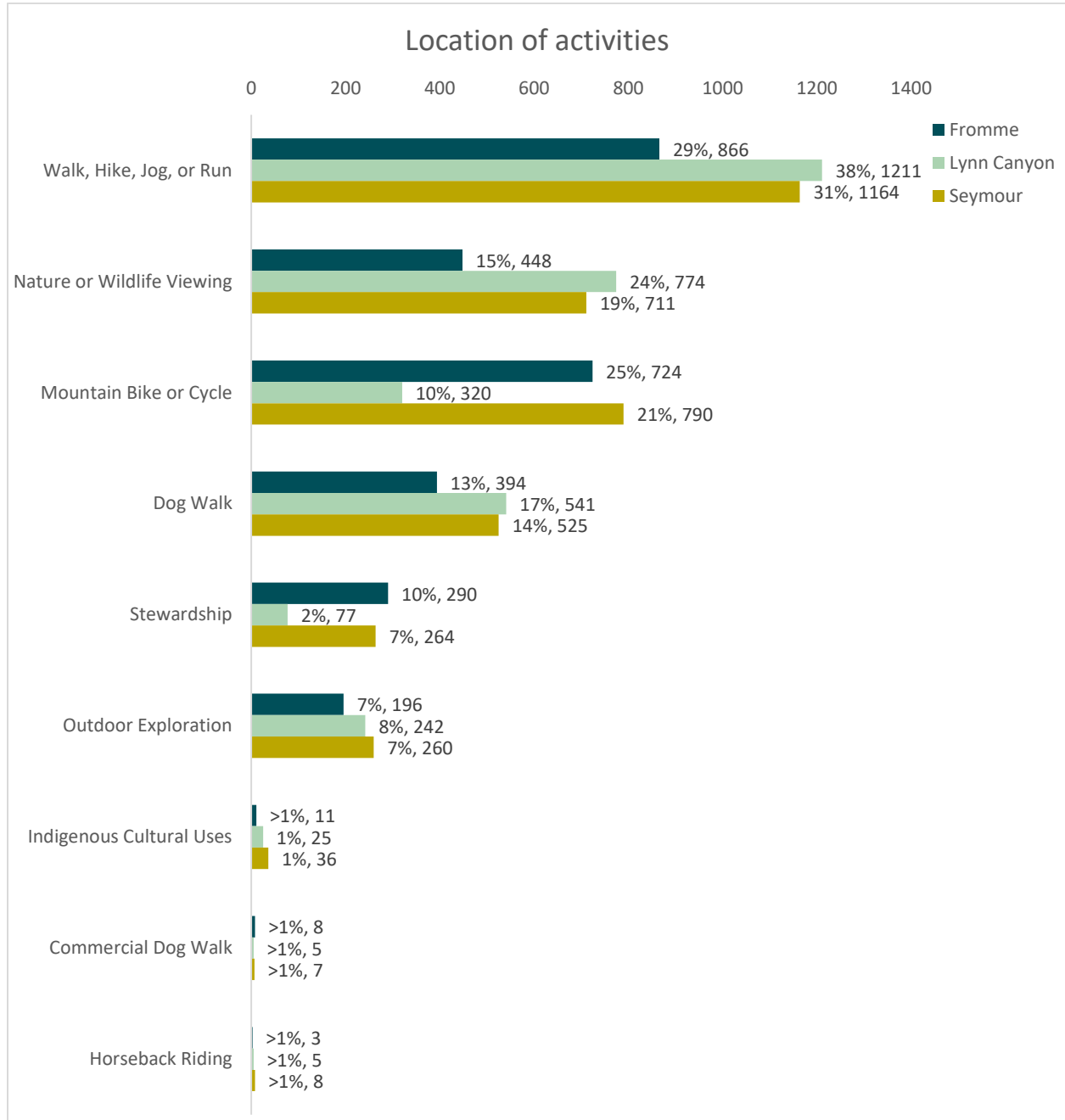
Note: respondents could select one or more options.

Number of activities per respondent:



Continued: Q2. If you [do an activity] on District trails, which areas do you typically visit?

Location of activities:



Note: respondents could select one or more options. Percentage by total responses by area. Total responses by area: Fromme 2,940, Lynn Canyon 3,200, Seymour: 3190.

### Q3. Did we miss anything? Tell us more about your activities and where you go.

Total respondents: 283. Respondents mentioned one or more comment themes. Themes with 20 or more responses reported below.

#### Activity themes:

- Walk, hike, jog or run (103)
- Other activities (54): nature and wildlife viewing, relaxation, photography, water activities, volunteering, orienteering, geocaching, climbing, foraging, fishing, snow sports
- Biking (45)
- Dog walking/biking (27)

#### Location themes:

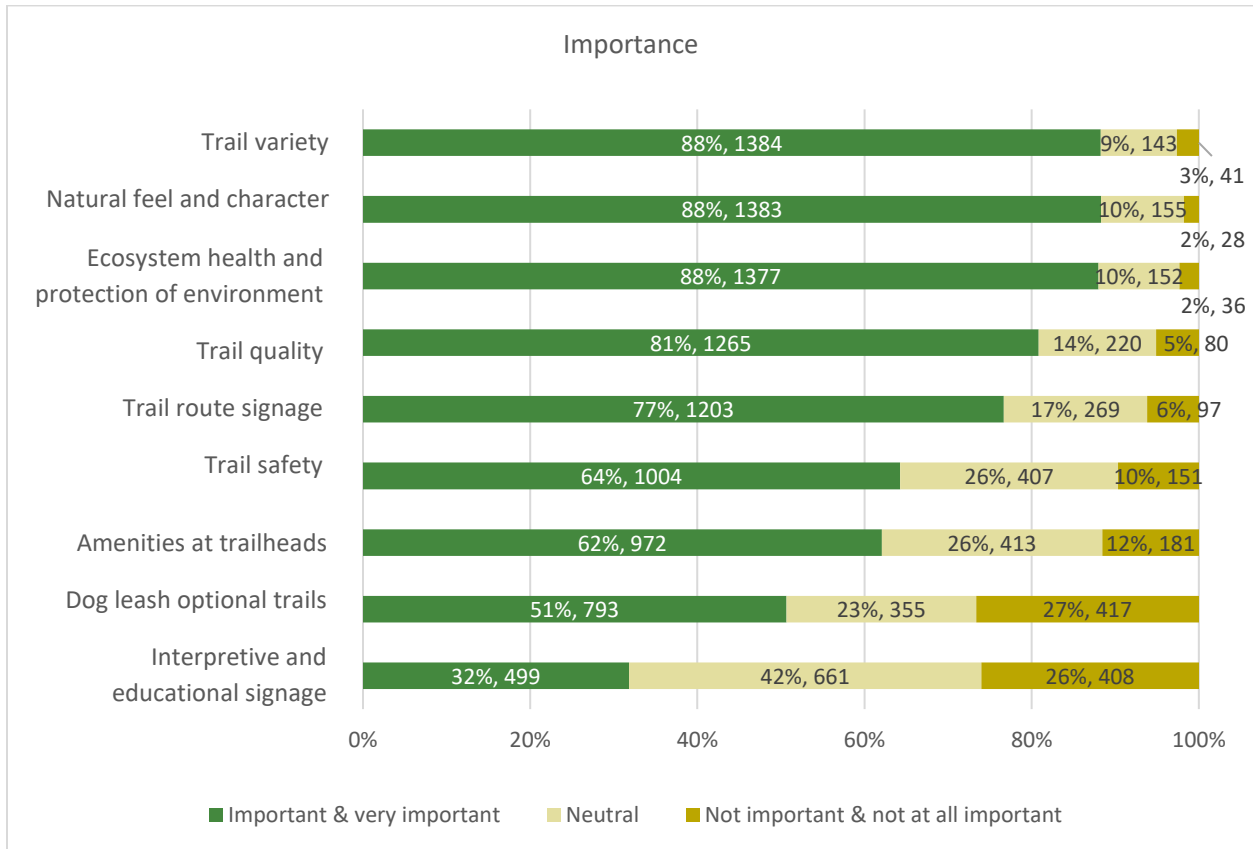
- Areas in survey Fromme, Lynn Canyon, Seymour (102)
- Other neighbourhood trails (76)
- Other North Shore land manager jurisdictions (58)

Themes about concerns and suggestions (note respondents were asked for concerns and suggestions in other survey questions):

- Biking (48)
- Walk, hike, jog or run (36)
- Dogs (32)
- Other concerns (22)

#### Q4. How important are each of the following to your use and enjoyment of trails in the District?

Total respondents: 1,562-1,569 per item.



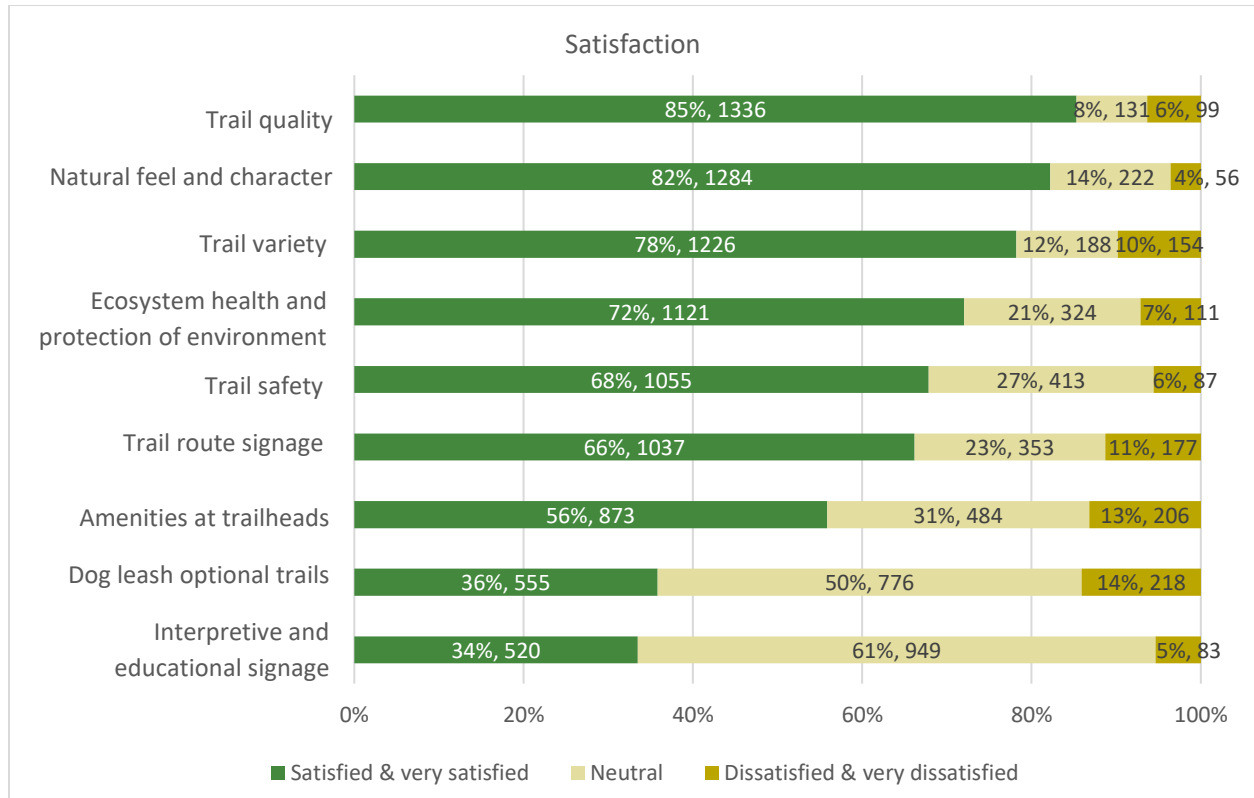
#### Q5. Are there other important elements to your use and enjoyment of the trails? Please explain.

Total respondents: 429. Respondents mentioned one or more comment themes. Themes with 20 or more responses are reported.

- Trail quality (133) e.g. natural character, maintenance, range of difficulty, environmental concerns
- Dogs (108) e.g. control/on-leash, waste, enforcement, education
- Bikes (97) e.g. more variety and quantity of trails; concerns about safety, speed, conflict
- Signs, education (96) e.g. shared/separation of uses, education, user type, directional signs
- Amenities (64) e.g. parking, waste bins
- Access (57) e.g. access for mobility levels, safety
- Other (51) e.g. comments on feeling busy or crowded, miscellaneous

### Q6. How satisfied are you with the following during your visits to District trails?

Total respondents: 1,549-1,568 per item.



### Q7. If you are dissatisfied with any of the above aspects of the trails, tell us about your suggestions for improvement.

Total respondents: 665. Respondents mentioned one or more comment themes. Themes mentioned by 20 or more respondents are reported.

- Trail quality and variety (223) e.g. maintenance, environmental concerns, natural character, more trails/variety, unauthorized trails, volunteer concerns
- Signs (194) e.g. educational, directional, user type
- Dogs (191) e.g. more control/on-leash, more off-leash, waste, interactions with bikes, impacts on users & environment, enforcement, education
- Bikes and bike trails (188) e.g. more bike trails/variety; safety, speed, conflict concerns; impact and damage concerns
- Amenities (139) e.g. parking, more waste bins, more washrooms
- Other (43)

**Q8. If you are satisfied with any other aspects of trails, we would like to hear about what is working well.**

Total respondents: 440. Respondents mentioned one or more comment themes. Themes mentioned by 20 or more respondents are reported.

- Maintenance (169) e.g. trails, repairs, structures, fallen tree removal
- Appreciation for trails (89)
- Volunteer involvement (69) e.g. to maintain and build trails, events
- Trail variety (68) e.g. range of uses, range of difficulty, extensive network
- Signs (44) e.g. wayfinding, maps, wildlife notices, sufficient signage
- Ecosystem protection (41) e.g. riparian fencing, boardwalks, replanting, space for wildlife
- Natural character (34) e.g. natural materials, quiet, rustic, wilderness
- Access (31) e.g. easy, able to access by foot/bike/transit
- Dog off-leash (22) e.g. areas for off-leash, access to water

Themes about concerns and suggestions:

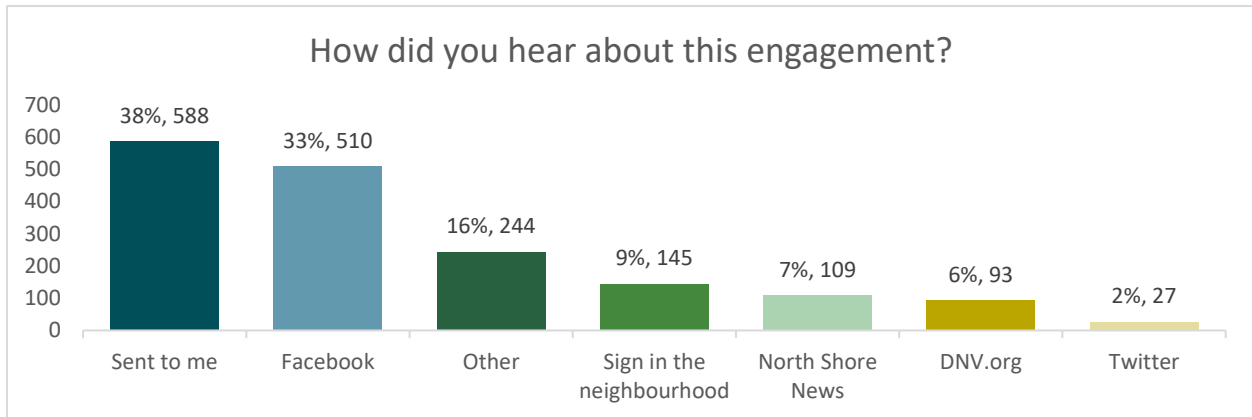
- Maintenance (450)
- Bike trails variety (29)
- Volunteer involvement (26)
- Variety of trails (25)

Who we heard from: demographic questions

The District asks respondents to share demographic information to help determine if the District’s outreach efforts are reaching a balanced and diverse range of populations in the District.

**How did you hear about this engagement? Please select all that apply.**

Total respondents: 1,554.



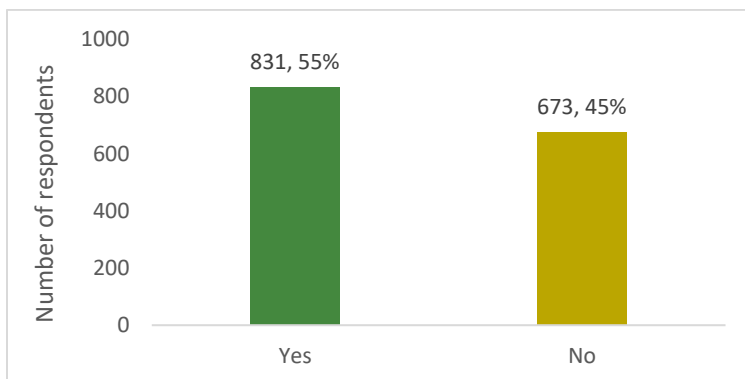
Note: respondents could select one or more options.

“Other” response themes include:

- Recreation group (e.g. mountain biking, orienteering) (77)
- Social media (46)
- Website, group forum, or news (48)
- Postcard (45)
- From a friend, relative, or colleague (40)
- On the trail (e.g. signs, word of mouth) (20)
- Trailforks (14)

**Do you live within a 5-minute walk of a trailhead near Fromme, Lynn Canyon, or Seymour areas?**

Total respondents: 1,504.

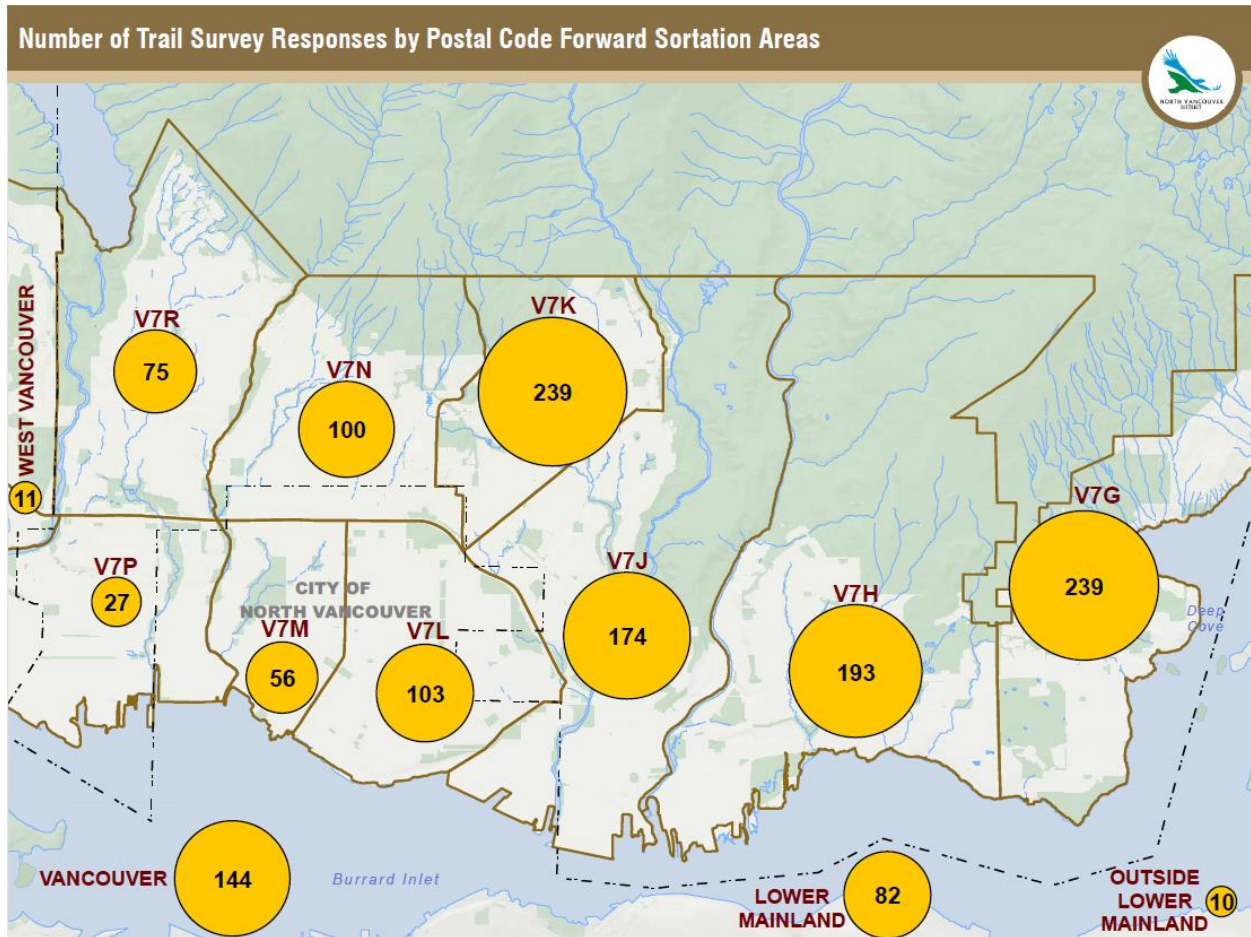




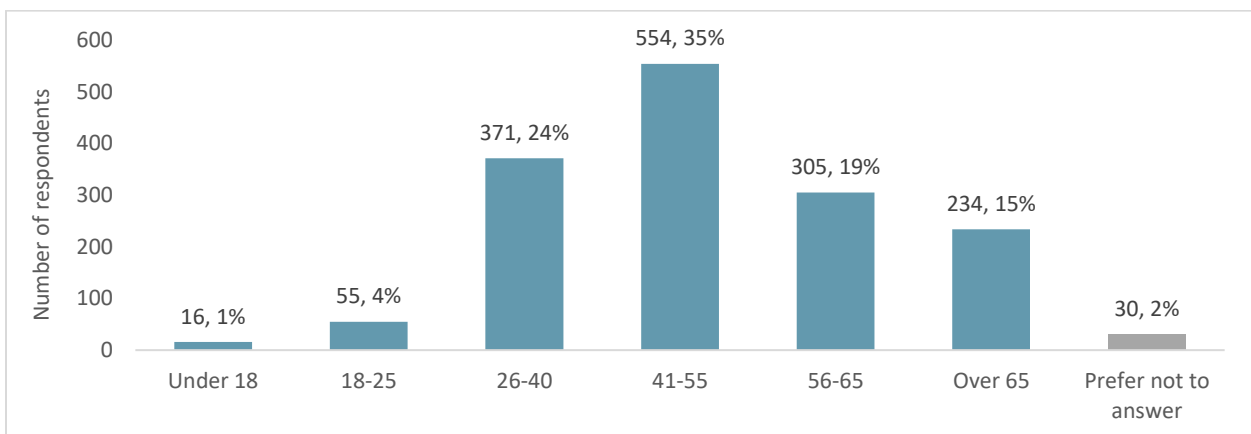
### What are the first three digits of your postal code?

Total respondents: 1,453.

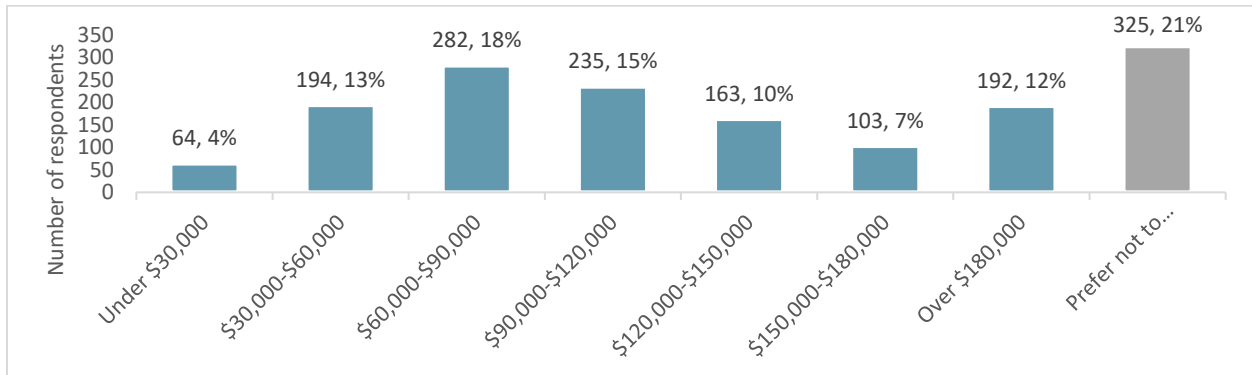
Total respondents from North Vancouver: 1,206 (83%).



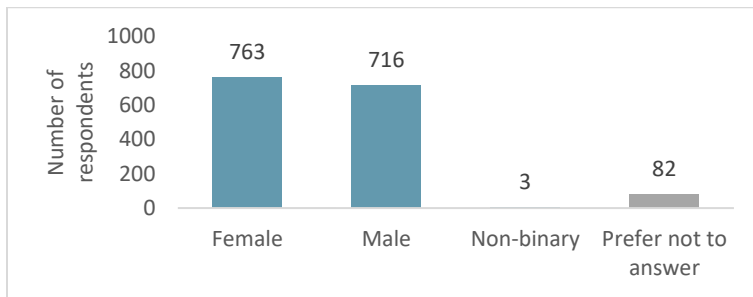
### What is your age? Total respondents: 1,565.



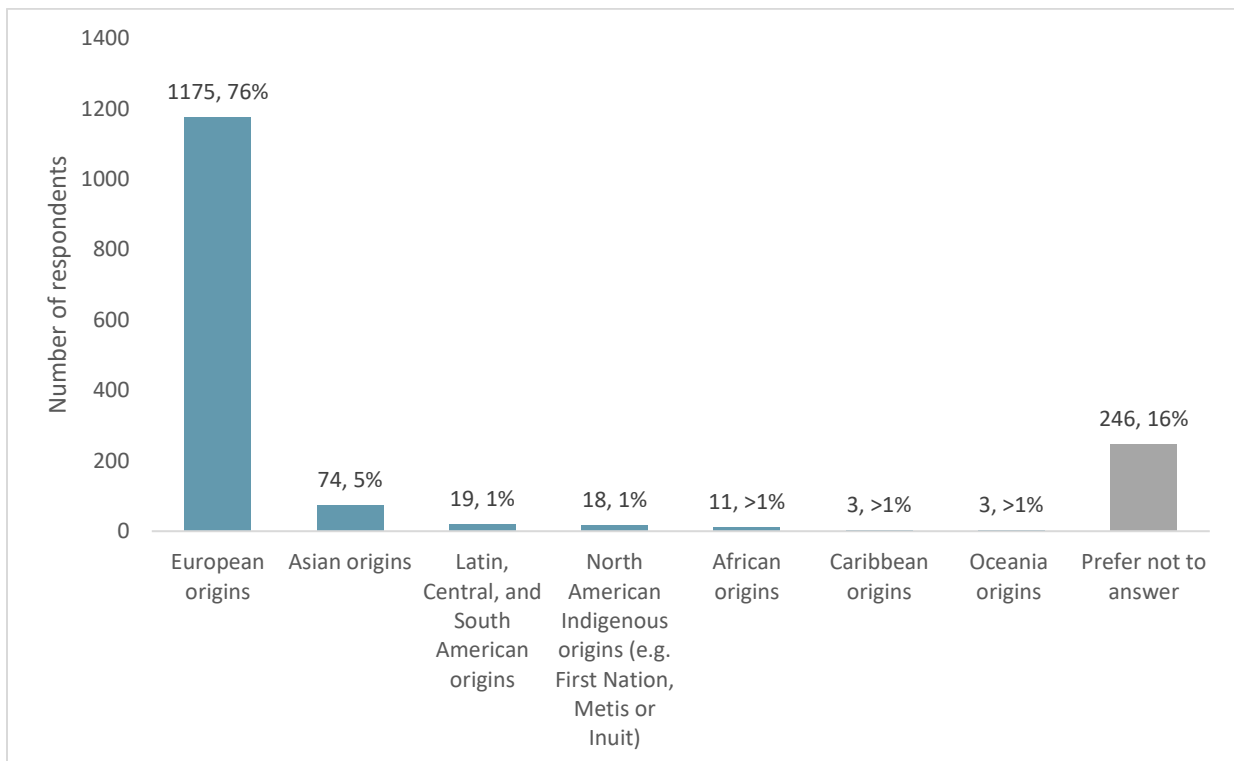
Which best describes your individual annual income? Total respondents: 1,558.



What gender do you identify with? Total respondents: 1,564.



What is your ethnic origin? Select all that apply. Total respondents: 1,549.



## APPENDIX B: INTERCEPT SURVEY

### Format & methodology

The purpose of the intercept survey was to collect trail use information on location in the District's natural areas. Questions sought to understand general trends of who, why, and how people are using the trails; it was not a count of trail users. Intercept surveys are intended to reach passerby audiences, which may result in hearing from different user types or demographics than other engagement methods. It is intended to complement the results of the online survey.

The intercept surveys were conducted by the District's Park Rangers from May 3-22, 2022 at select trailheads across the District. It coincided with the online survey and Park Rangers handed out postcards to promote the online survey as well. The selected trailheads represent well-used, maintained trailheads on District land and spread across the District. Note that Quarry Rock trail was closed during the intercept survey duration, so it was omitted from the survey locations.



Intercept survey locations

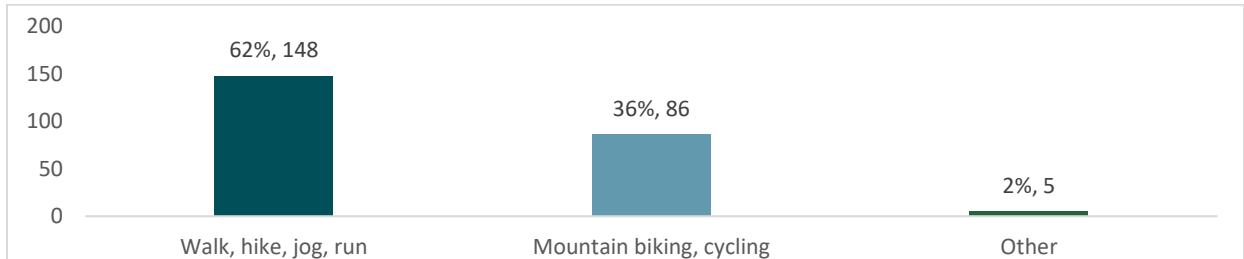
Each location was surveyed for approximately two hours each during a weekday and a weekend day. Efforts were made to conduct surveys generally during dry weather days to increase the likelihood of meeting the most trail users. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Park Rangers verbally asked the survey questions and recorded the responses.

Survey responses

A total of 239 respondents participated in the intercept survey.

**Q1. What activity are you doing on the trails today?**

Total respondents: 239.

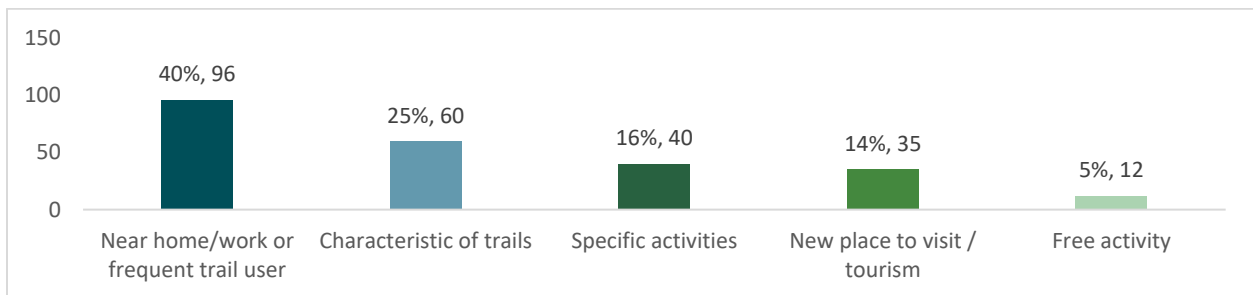


“Other” responses included commercial dog walking (3), tennis (1), and unicycling (1). Note Q7 captures respondents with dogs.

**Q2. Why did you pick this particular trail today?**

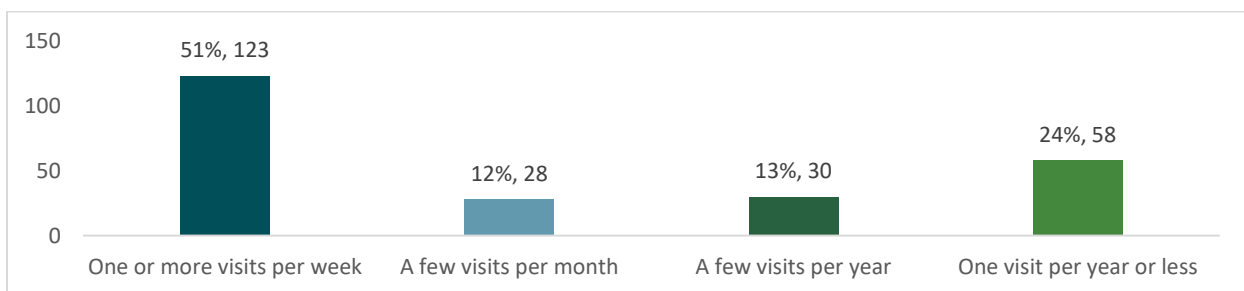
Total respondents: 243.

Respondents mentioned the following themes.



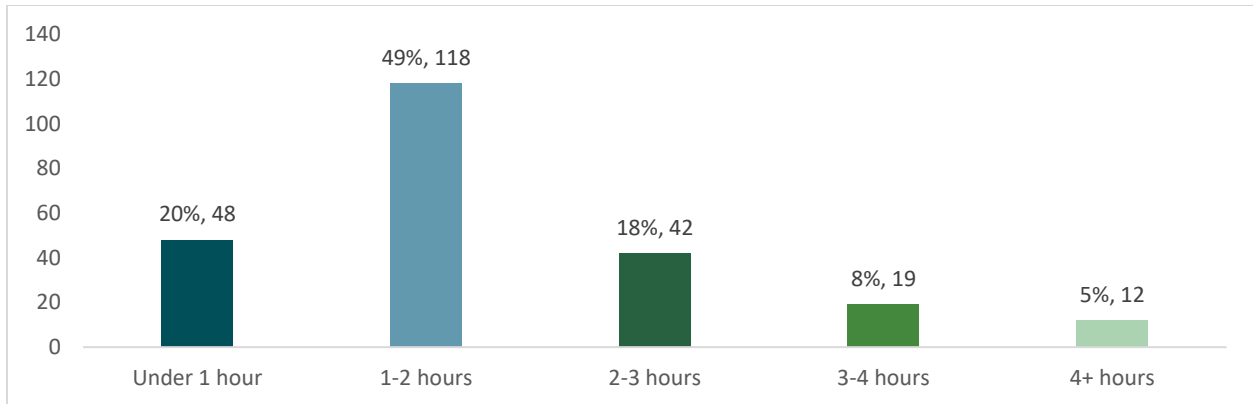
**Q3. In the last year, how often do you visit the trails in North Vancouver?**

Total respondents: 239.



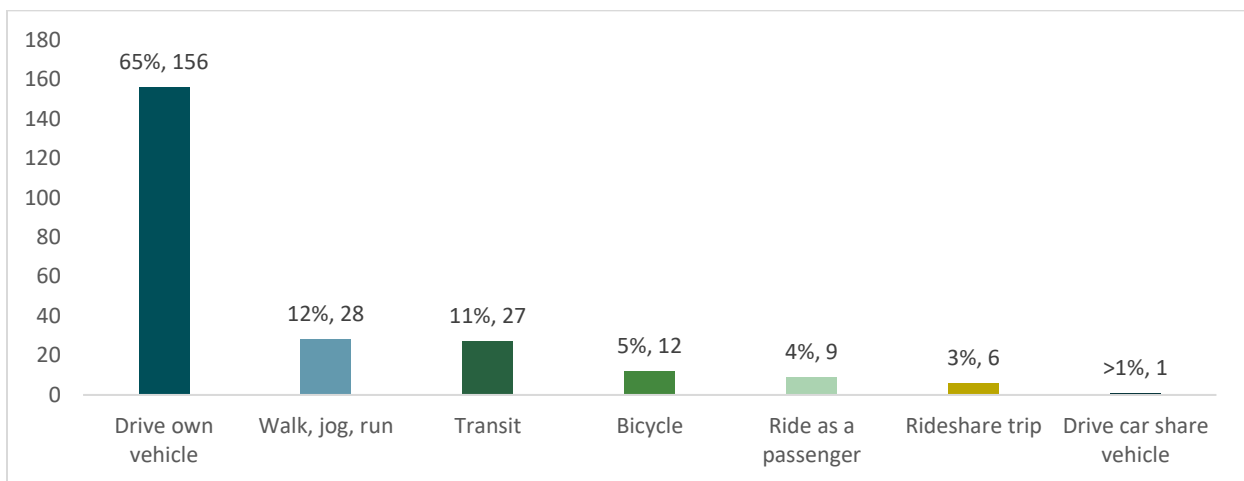
**Q4. How long do you plan to be on the trails today?**

Total respondents: 239.



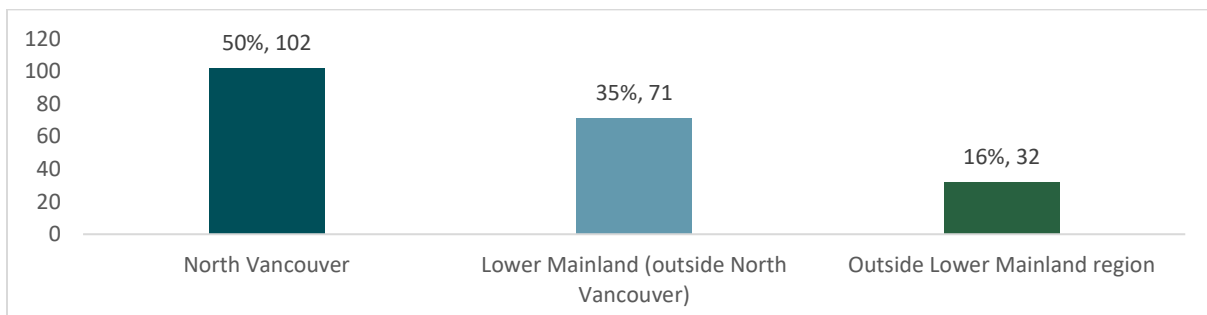
**Q5. How did you get here today?**

Total respondents: 239.



**Q6. What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?**

Total respondents: 205.

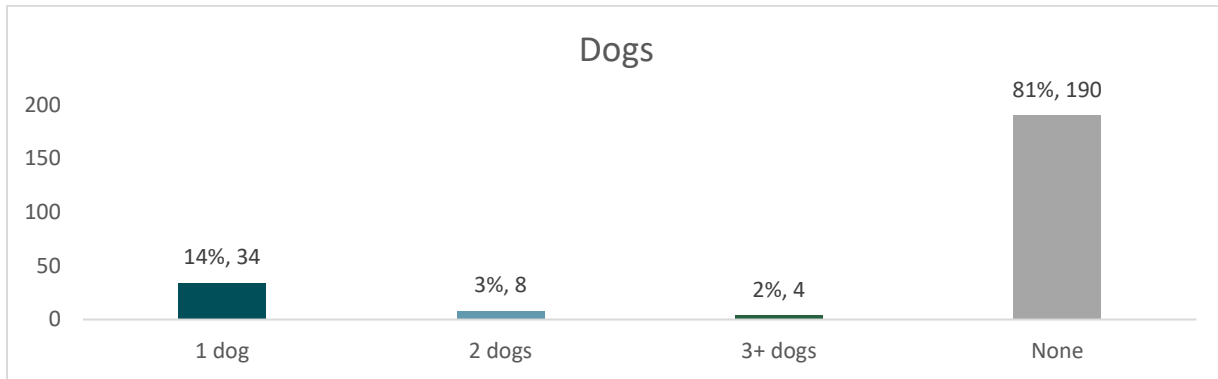


Who we heard from

These attributes were observed and recorded by the surveyor.

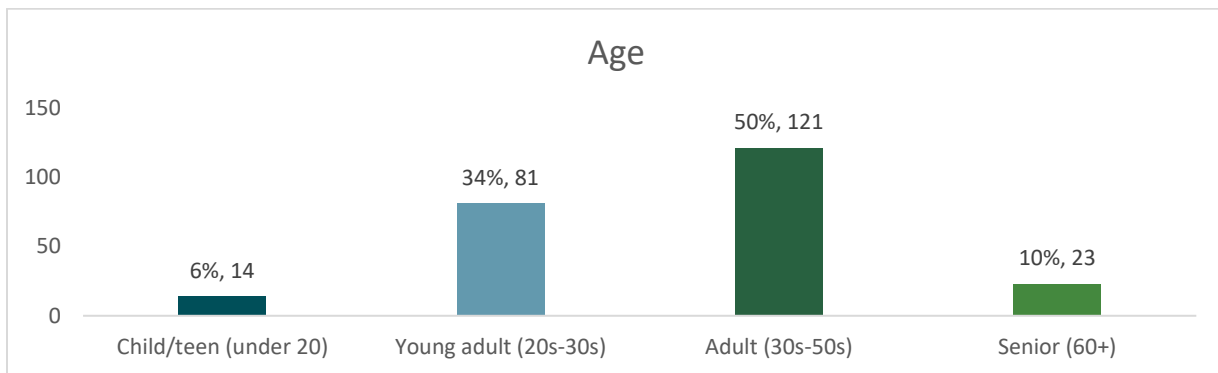
**Q7. Dogs present**

Total respondents: 236.



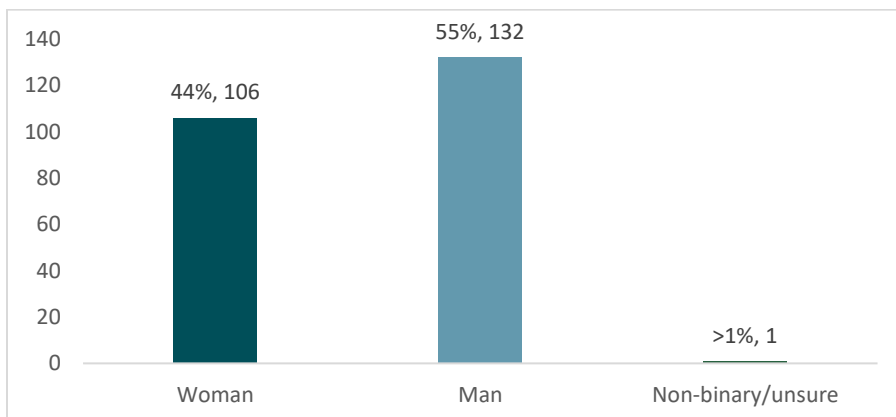
**Q8. Age**

Total respondents: 239.



**Q9. Gender**

Total respondents: 239.



## APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS & INDIGENOUS NATIONS ENGAGEMENT

### Format & who we heard from

- Community stakeholder workshops were held with representatives from community groups, local recreation organizations, local environmental organizations, and the District's Parks and Natural Environment Advisory Committee. Workshops and meetings were also held with adjacent land managers and service partners. The format of the sessions included an introductory presentation about the Natural Areas Trails Strategy, followed by facilitated discussion. Overall, 31 participants attended the virtual workshops and meetings. Parks and Natural Environment Advisory Committee – February 23, 2022
- Community stakeholders – June 14, 2022 (6:00 pm to 7:30 pm) & June 16, 2022 (12:00 pm to 1:30 pm)
  - Blueridge Community Association
  - Inter River Community Association
  - Lynn Valley Community Association
  - Maplewood Community Association
  - Seymour Community Association
  - Elders Council for Parks
  - Greater Vancouver Orienteering Club
  - Golden Age Hiking Group and Nature Vancouver
  - North Shore Black Bear Society
  - North Shore Mountain Bike Association (and additional meeting on June 22, 2022)
  - North Shore Streamkeepers
  - North Vancouver Outdoors Club
  - North Vancouver Save Our Shores Society
- Adjacent land managers – June 2, 2022 Metro Vancouver; June 22, 2022 Grouse Mountain Resort
- North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Commission – July 12, 2022
- First responders and emergency preparedness (North Shore Rescue, RCMP, North Shore Emergency Management) – July 14, 2022

District staff met with Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN) on September 15, 2022. Staff heard initial input on topics of importance and areas of concern about natural areas where recreational trails are located.

### Summary of main themes

This is a summary of the main themes heard from community members in the workshops. The themes are not presented in any particular order.

#### **Feeling and experience on trails**

Participants generally expressed pleasure to describe their feeling or experience on the trails in the District. Main themes include:

- Enjoyment, gratitude, and love for the trails
- Experiencing nature
- Social connections

## Values

Participants valued many aspects of the current trail network in the District. Main themes include:

- Physical and mental health benefits
- Characteristics of the trail network:
  - Easy access
  - Extensive and interconnected trail system
  - Well-built and maintained trails
  - “Backcountry” character (e.g. narrow trails, quiet, not an overabundance of signs, navigation sports ability to go off trail)
- Environmental qualities:
  - Balance and co-existence of wildlife and recreation
  - Wildlife and habitat conservation
  - Ecosystem services
- Variety of trail uses:
  - Opportunities for many trail uses (e.g. physical/sport activities, dogs, nature observation, education, seeking solitude)
  - Socializing (e.g. friends, family, visitors, organized events)

## Challenges

Participants discussed several challenges facing the current trail network. Main themes include:

- Amenities for trail users:
  - Waste (e.g. garbage, dog and human waste, dumping)
  - Parking around trailheads
  - Lack of washroom facilities
- Environment:
  - Concern about vitality of ecosystems
  - Concern about balance of recreation and conservation
- Occasional trail user conflicts:
  - Descent bike trails and pedestrians
  - Behaviour of off-leash dogs
- Signs:
  - Balance the need for signage with overabundance of signs
  - Maintenance of existing signs
- Trail maintenance (e.g. erosion, drainage, invasive species management)
- Few new trails
- Increase in number of trail users and its impacts
- Local Indigenous inclusion or involvement not apparent



## Opportunities

Participants discussed several opportunities facing the current trail network. Many of these represent the flipside of the challenges mentioned above. Main themes include:

- Amenities for trail users:
  - Washroom facilities
  - Parking
  - Dog waste bins
  - Viewing platforms
  - Orienteering course markers
- Protect ecologically sensitive areas, and providing conservation areas
- Signs (e.g. wayfinding, interpretive, to aid conservation efforts, consistency)
- Trail maintenance (e.g. collaborating with community group resources, invasive species, consistency for trails that traverse different land managers); at the same time, it was mentioned that maintenance has been generally well done.
- New trails and access points:
  - Consider other trailheads to spread out access and parking
  - Easy/beginner/accessible trails
  - Connections between communities
- More collaboration (e.g. other land managers, community groups, schools, local Indigenous groups)

## Opportunities & suggestions from the North Shore Mountain Bike Association:

- More new trails, including more novice (“green”) trails, and more difficult (“black” and “double black”) trails
- Consider developing a transparent process to consider proposals and applications for new trails
- Consider bringing existing or old unofficial trails into the official trails network
- Suggest spreading out access points to the trails system to help spread out parking and users at existing trailheads
- “Attractors” at parking lots further from trailheads could help draw people to park in these areas to reduce impacts at trailheads (e.g. interesting access trail/route, bike wash, tools, washrooms, etc.)
- Support for signs such as trail markers, use, and priority on trails
- Generally support multi-use trails except in certain contexts
- Suggest dog regulations shown by areas, instead of by trail, where dogs are permitted/not permitted (e.g. Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve example)
- Support health and protection of ecosystem

## Key themes from service partners (first responders, NVRCC, adjacent land managers):

- Willingness to collaborate and coordinate on trail system (e.g. signage, trail markers, maintenance information)
- Support for trail rating system and trail signage for wayfinding, safety, and emergency preparedness
- Support for opportunities for accessible trails for all ages and abilities
- Support continued maintenance of trails
- Suggest updating District’s corporate policy on Community Events in Parks and Public Open Spaces (2001)