



# **ALCOHOL IN PARKS PILOT**

**2021 PUBLIC  
SURVEY REPORT**

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## Executive summary

From July 12 to October 11, 2021, the Vancouver Park Board launched the Alcohol in Parks Pilot, which allowed people to bring and consume their own alcoholic beverages at select park sites across the city.

The pilot provided a short-term opportunity for Park Board staff to study specific impacts of alcohol use in parks, and to gather public feedback. This data will be used to inform future decision making around alcohol use in parks.

As a whole, the pilot was successful. The Park Board recognizes that people consume alcohol in parks with or without this pilot. However, through the pilot, we learned about the type and scale of resources needed in parks should alcohol consumption be allowed in the future.

This report highlights key themes from what we heard in the 2021 public survey.

# Project background

The Alcohol in Parks Pilot was conceived from a direct motion from Park Board Commissioners in December, 2018, and was aimed to address the growing segment of Vancouver's population without access to private outdoor spaces for socializing with friends and family.

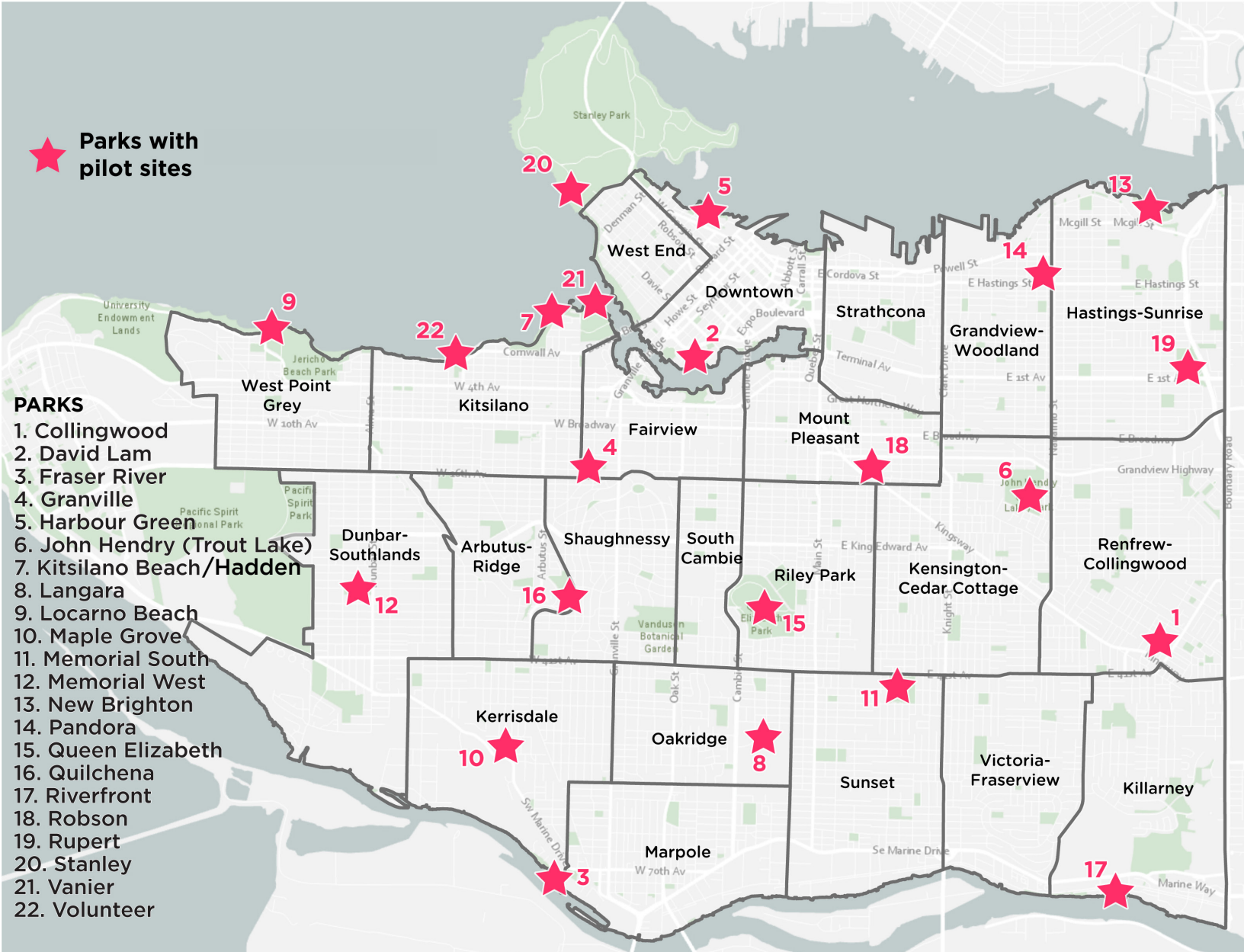
This motion directed staff to study and lead a pilot that would allow the public to consume their own alcoholic beverages at select parks. In summer, 2020, during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the rise in demand for public outdoor spaces for safer gatherings, 22 parks across the city were approved for this pilot, approximately one in every neighbourhood.



Approvals

Piloting





## Pilot sites

**Site selection:** These sites were selected based on a set of criteria that prioritized safety, proximity to complementary amenities, and distance from incompatible park uses – including highly visible and non-remote locations for emergency access, nearby washrooms and food and beverage services, and buffers from ecologically sensitive areas, schools, and playgrounds. For aquatic safety purposes, beach areas were not included in the pilot areas.

For the full list of site selection criteria, please refer to the [July 2020 Board Report](#).

# What we did

To prepare for the launch of the pilot, we published a news release and social media posts to communicate to the public about the pilot, including pilot duration, park user rules and responsibilities, pilot sites, hours (11:00 AM to 9:00 PM daily), and more. As well, on-site signage was installed at every pilot site and additional waste totes were installed in more popular destination parks.

As one of the main objectives of the pilot was to study impacts and gather public feedback, the pilot also included regular on-site monitoring and a public survey that remained live throughout the duration of the pilot.



Above: Examples of on-site signage

## Public survey overview

A public survey launched on July 12, 2021, and remained live until the pilot's conclusion on October 11, 2021. There were two versions available: a general and a site-specific version.

- A** The **general survey** gathered broad feedback on the public's level of support for alcohol consumption in parks.
- B** The **site-specific survey** gathered more detailed feedback on individual pilot sites, respondents' experiences, and their relationship to the park. Feedback from this survey helped us understand issues and opportunities at particular sites, and better manage sites during the pilot.

With these surveys, we were looking for feedback on:

- the **level of public support** for allowing alcohol in parks, and people's reasons for supporting or opposing it;
- perceived **benefits and concerns**;
- **site conditions**, including cleanliness and noise in the pilot sites; and
- **feelings of safety** in the pilot sites



## Public survey results



2,100+

people visited the Alcohol in Parks project webpage between July and October



589

survey responses received altogether

**Important to note**  
that participation was not representative of Vancouver's residents:

- Nearly 70% of respondents identified as coming from a European background
- Over half of respondents reported an annual household income of \$80k+



~70%

of survey respondents supported alcohol consumption in Vancouver's parks



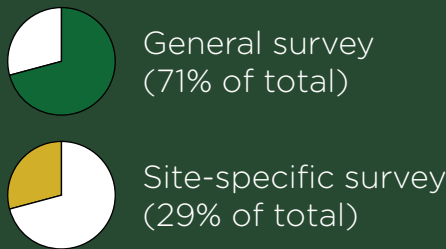
30-39 yr olds

made up majority of responses (40%), despite being 18% of Vancouver's population (Census data)

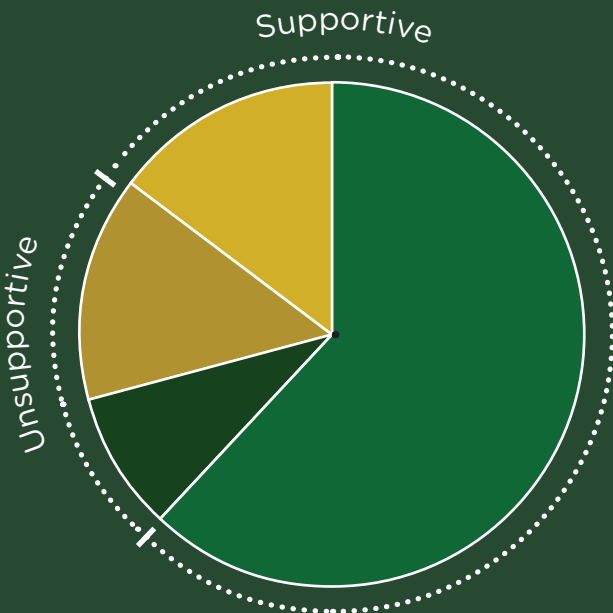
# Survey data at a glance



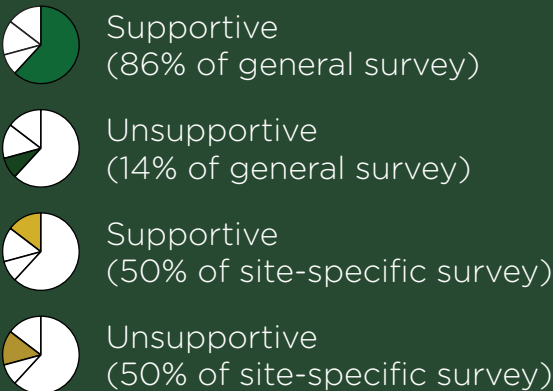
**Survey participation:** We received 589 survey responses. The general survey made up 71% of these and the site-specific made up 29%.



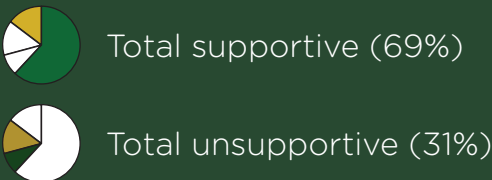
**Levels of support:** In both surveys, we asked participants whether or not they are supportive of the pilot and of alcohol in Vancouver parks.



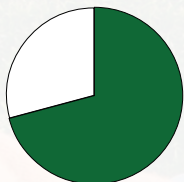
## Breakdown by survey type



## Total combined between general and site-specific surveys







## General survey | key findings

### Top 3 benefits for allowing alcohol in parks (by count):

- 01 “More opportunities to enjoy the outdoors - not everyone has a private yard or patio” (296 counts)
- 02 “More opportunities to connect with friends and family” (218 counts)
- 03 “More opportunities to enjoy take-out, picnics, and food/beverages” (181 counts)

### Top open-ended responses in support of alcohol in parks (by count):

- 01 Suggestions to expand the pilot to more parks or make it a permanent use (41 counts)
- 02 Allowing alcohol consumption in parks as more equitable and progressive (40 counts)
- 03 Alcohol in parks made for a more enjoyable social atmosphere or improved sense of safety and wellness (38 counts)

When asked about their **concerns** for allowing alcohol in parks, most respondents said **“I don’t think there are concerns”** (191 counts).

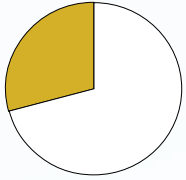
Where people did voice concerns, the **top 3 concerns** for allowing alcohol in parks included (by count):

- 01 “More waste and littering” (179 counts)
- 02 “People being loud, obnoxious, and creating nuisances” (141 counts)
- 03 “Increased washroom usage and cleanliness issues” (85 counts)

### Top open-ended responses voicing concern for alcohol in parks (by count):

- 01 Concerns about disruptive behaviour (35 counts)
- 02 Concerns about enforcement, regulation, or communication of rules/responsibilities (32 counts)
- 03 Concerns about cleaning, litter, or trash and recycling (20 counts)





## Site-specific survey | key findings

In the site-specific survey, we asked **people if other park users were being respectful and responsible:**

- **63%** of respondents said 'yes'
- **18%** of respondents said 'somewhat'
- **18%** of respondents said 'no'

When asked if the pilot **changed their feelings of personal safety at particular sites:**

- **61%** responded there was **no change** in feelings of personal safety
- **27%** responded that their feelings of personal safety **decreased**
- **9%** responded that their feelings of personal safety **increased**

We asked if people could provide more detail on **why their feelings of safety decreased**, and the top 3 reasons included:

- 01** disruptive behaviours, or behaviours that violate pilot rules;
- 02** threatening behaviour, including gender, race, or age-based threats; and
- 03** general disruption to 'family friendly' environment

The parks that received the **most survey responses were Kitsilano Beach/Hadden Park, David Lam Park, and John Hendry (Trout Lake) Park.**

These parks also received more "supportive" responses (57-64%) respectively, compared to the 50% average levels of support across all other parks.

Survey respondents also reported more large groups of people drinking.

The above points suggest that these three parks functioned as popular "destination parks" during the pilot.



**Other public feedback:** We also collected public feedback through 3-1-1 calls and our Alcohol in Parks Pilot project inbox. The volume of feedback received from these channels was low, and mirrored the key opportunities and concerns presented in the public survey results.

Additionally, we received a community-led petition that voiced concern about alcohol consumption in parks and potential human impacts to ecologically sensitive areas - namely Vanier, Kitsilano Beach, Locarno and Volunteer parks. Going forward, establishing wider buffers from ecologically sensitive areas could help address some of these concerns.



## Key takeaways

The pilot demonstrated that allowing alcohol in parks is generally a well-supported initiative from the public, and that park users were largely respectful and responsible. It is seen as something that is progressive and responsive to people's needs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when people feel safer and more comfortable being outdoors.

Public feedback during this pilot has revealed several key improvements that people would like to see, including:

- **increasing maintenance and servicing** of parks to better manage litter, waste, and recycling;
- **greater desire for more on-site monitoring**, to better manage disruptive public behaviours and mitigate safety concerns; and
- **greater clarity** on where and when people can and cannot consume alcohol on site.

**Next steps:** In December, 2021, staff reported back to the Board on pilot findings, opportunities and concerns, and learnings for consideration. Information on the future of this initiative will be available at a later date at [shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot](https://shapeyourcity.ca/alcohol-in-parks-pilot).





**Vancouver Board of Parks  
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