



# DRINKING IN PUBLIC PLAZAS PILOT

2021 Engagement & Monitoring Summary  
Engineering Services

[vancouver.ca/drinking-in-public-plazas](https://vancouver.ca/drinking-in-public-plazas)



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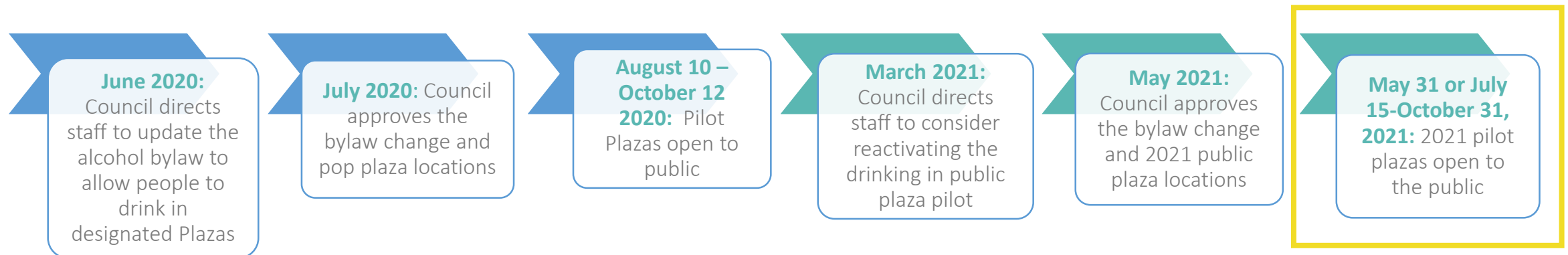
# Background

The first Drinking in Public Plazas Pilot was created in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to support:

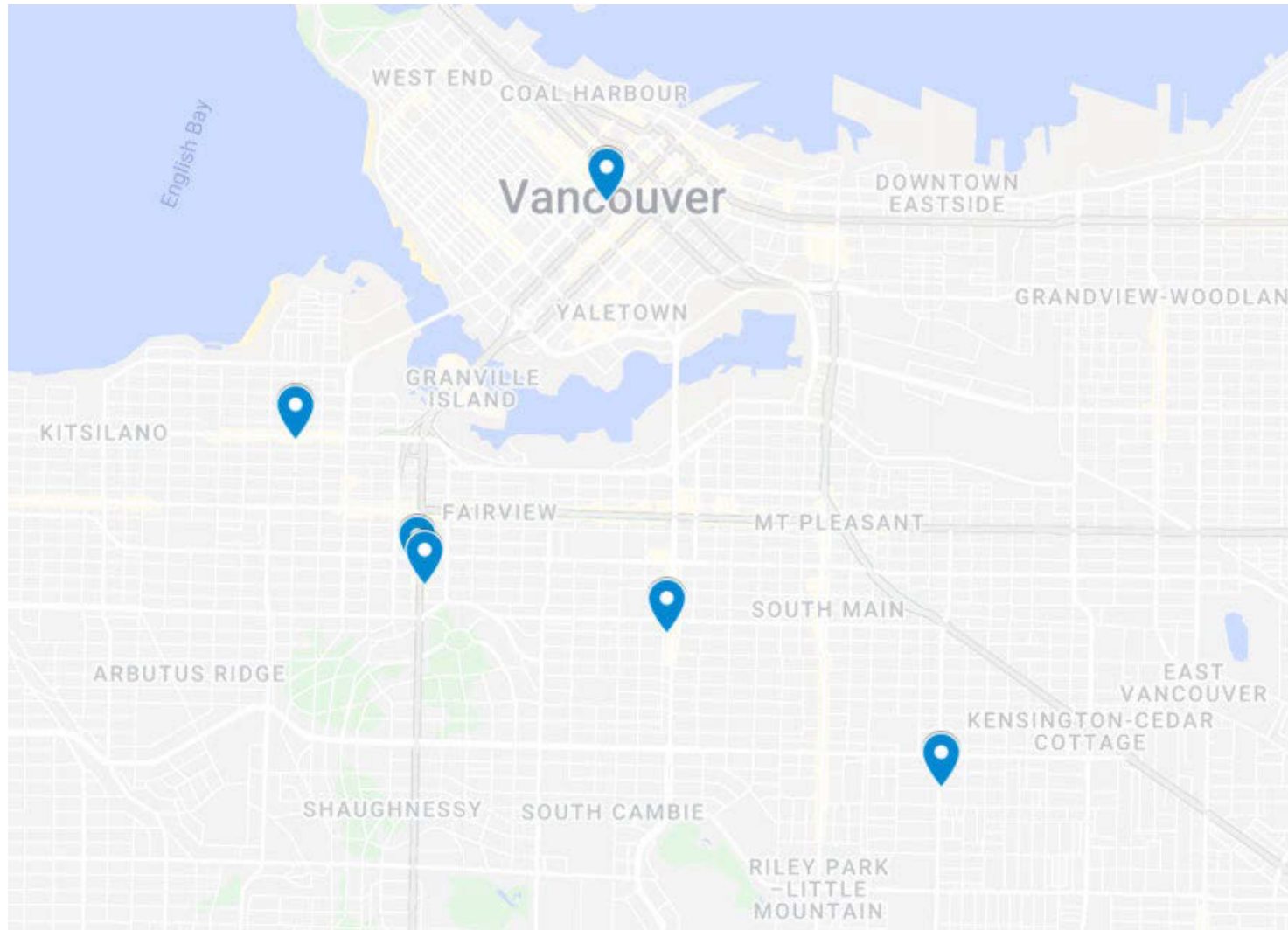
- Businesses and residents during a time where businesses had reduced dining capacity
- Residents seeking outdoor spaces to connect and safely socialize with each other

The second pilot in 2021 enabled:

- Deeper engagement with partners and stakeholders
- Refinement of management and monitoring plans
- Testing of new partnerships and new plazas in a wider range of neighbourhoods
- A longer time period for more public engagement and data collection
- Continued support for local businesses and safe social gathering



# Pilot Plazas: *2021 Locations*



- Maple St and 4<sup>th</sup> Ave
- Granville St and 13<sup>th</sup> Ave
- Granville St and 14<sup>th</sup> Ave
- 800 Robson St
- Fraser St and 27<sup>th</sup> Ave
- Cambie St and 17<sup>th</sup> Ave

# Overview: *Engagement & Monitoring*

## Notification postcards:

- Sent to residents and businesses within 2-block radius of each pilot site

## On-site signage:

- Signs and table decals installed at each pilot site
- Installation of signage was delayed at 800 Robson location due to presence of the residential school memorial site

## On-site monitoring:

- 30 minute monitoring shifts at all 6 pilot sites at different times of the day and days of the week. A total of 113 shifts were completed.

## Social media promotion:

- Organic posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

**Online survey:** 659 responses

**Emails from the public:** 16

**311 cases:** 6 inquiries



*Decals promoting the survey on furniture at all plazas*

# What we saw: *Monitoring*

City staff conducted on-site observational monitoring of the pilot plazas to understand how drinking activity was taking place between June – August 2021. Plazas were monitored in 30 minute increments on weekday and weekend mornings, afternoons and evenings.

- Of 113 monitoring shifts, 26 (23%) had observed drinking activity
- 80 people in total were observed drinking
- Nearly all were drinking quietly, with 4 counts of people being loud, and no observed disturbances, littering, or public urination
- Some non-pilot sites also had observed drinking activity



# What we heard: *Survey*

We collected feedback from the public through an online **survey between July – October 2021**. The feedback helped us understand how people felt about allowing drinking in plazas, how they participated in the pilot, and how the pilot impacted their experience at the plazas.

The survey had three main pathways: general feedback, site-specific feedback, or both. There were **659 total responses, including 567 general and 297 site-specific**. Some questions were only asked to respondents who had visited the plaza and some only to respondents who drank alcohol on their last visit.



# Who We Heard From: *Demographics*

What **age group** do you fall into? (n=659)

<15	0.0% (0)
15-19	0.6% (4)
20-29	16.5% (109)
<b>30-39</b>	<b>34.4% (227)</b>
40-49	18.7% (123)
50-59	16.1% (106)
60-69	7.9% (52)
70+	4.4% (29)
Prefer not to say	1.4% (9)

What is your **gender identity**? (n=656)

*\*note: multiple answers permitted, so percentages may add up to more than 100*

<b>Woman</b>	<b>52.3% (343)</b>
Man	39.8% (261)
Non-binary	1.7% (11)
Prefer not to say	6.4% (42)
None of the above	0.1% (2)



# Who We Heard From: *Demographics*

What do you consider your **main ethnic origin(s), or that of your ancestors** (parents, grandparents, or older)? (n=654)

*\*note: multiple answers permitted so percentages may add up to greater than 100*

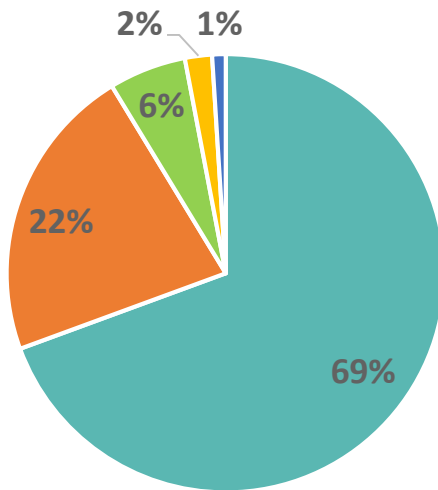
African	0.9% (6)
Arab	0.6% (4)
East Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese)	6.0% (39)
<b>European</b>	<b>72.2% (472)</b>
Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, or Metis)	1.5% (10)
Latin American	5.2% (34)
South Asian (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	4.0% (26)
West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Armenian)	0.6% (4)
Prefer not to say	9.6% (63)
None of the above	5.0% (33)

Which of the following categories best describes **your total household income before taxes**? (n=658)

< \$40k / year	6.8% (45)
\$40-60k / year	9.7% (64)
\$60-80k / year	15.0% (99)
\$80-100k / year	14.3% (94)
<b>\$100-150k / year</b>	<b>21.6% (142)</b>
<b>&gt; \$150k / year</b>	<b>19.6% (129)</b>
Prefer not to say	12.9% (85)

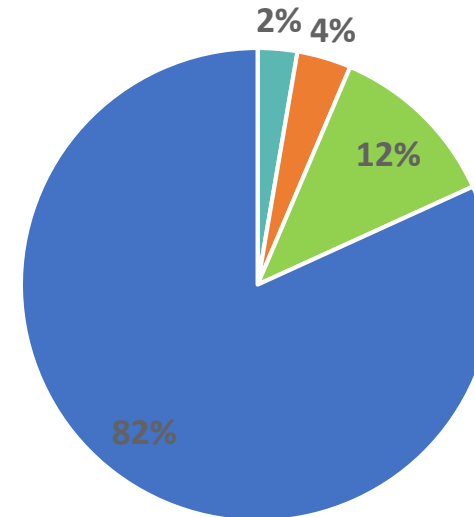
# Who We Heard From: *Live/Work Nearby*

Do you **live near** this plaza? (n=297)



- Yes, within two blocks
- Yes, in the neighbourhood (but further than two blocks)
- No, I live elsewhere in Vancouver
- No, I live in Metro Vancouver, outside of the City of Vancouver
- No, I live outside Metro Vancouver

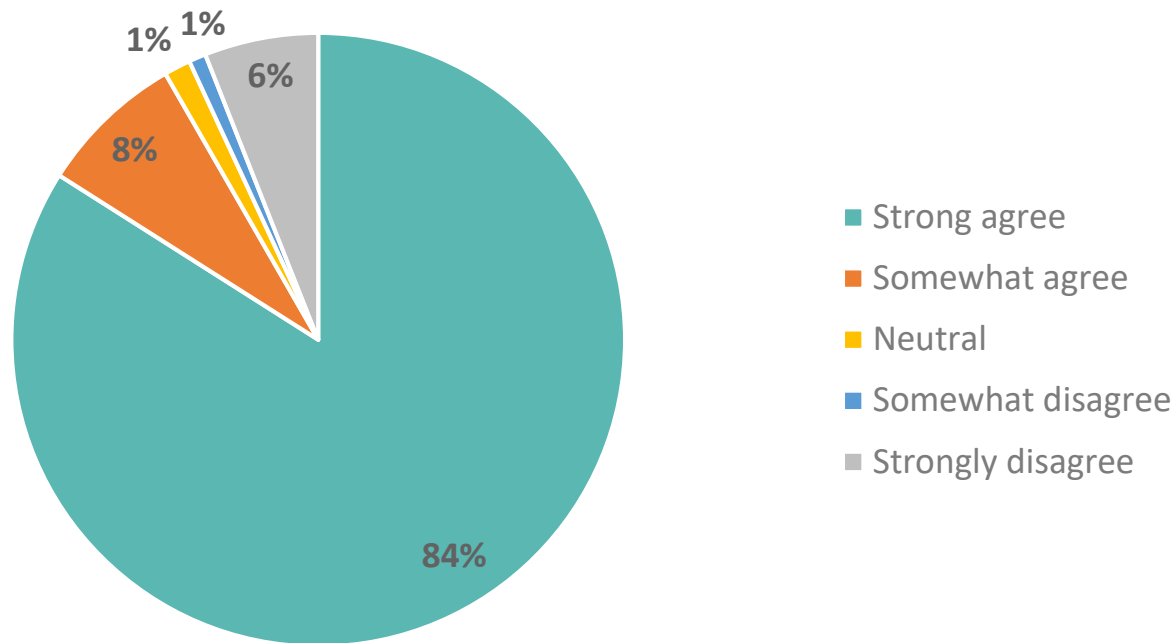
Do you **own or work at a business** near this plaza? (n=297)



- Yes, directly adjacent to the plaza
- Yes, in the same block, but not directly adjacent
- Yes, in the neighbourhood, but not in the same block
- No, I do not work at or own a nearby business

# What We Heard: *General Feedback*

Do you agree or disagree with **allowing drinking in designated plazas**? (n=569)



**91.7% OVERALL SUPPORT**



# What We Heard: *Benefits & Concerns*

What are the **biggest benefits** of allowing people to bring and drink their own alcoholic beverages in designated plazas? Top three choices. (n=569)

1. *More opportunities to enjoy the outdoors – not everyone has a patio or yard*
2. *More opportunities to enjoy takeout, picnic and food/beverages*
3. *More affordable and accessible than restaurant patios*

What are the **biggest concerns** of allowing people to bring and drink their own alcoholic beverages in designated plazas? Top three choices. (n=569)

1. *I don't think there are concerns*
2. *More waste and littering*
3. *People being loud, obnoxious, and creating nuisances*



# What We Heard: *General Feedback*

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## **Positive/supportive comments**

- People are already drinking in public
- Public drinking is normalized and accepted in other parts of the world – we can do that here too
- Treat people like adults, most people do/will behave responsibly
- Great for socializing outdoors, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and for people who don't have private outdoor space
- Adds to community and vibrancy of plazas
- Expand to more locations and/or parks, beaches and green space

## **Neutral comments**

- Operational needs – washrooms and waste/recycling bins

## **Negative/non-supportive comments**

- Anticipated negative behaviours or impacts
- Overall disapproval of public drinking

## **Equity / harm reduction**

- A few comments re: geographical distribution (i.e. affluent areas, none in DTES)
- A few comments re: pilot creating safe spaces and reducing stigma

# What We Heard: *General Feedback*

*“Being able to enjoy a drink in a park or plaza has been a great way to connect to people during a difficult time, especially as someone who does not have an outdoor space. There is a financial barrier to restaurants and bars, and it has been really lovely to see so many people enjoying the cities outdoor spaces.”*

*“I would only be concerned if there was out of control drunken individuals, but I haven't seen any of that at all!”*

*“Love to see us becoming a more fun and vibrant city that encourages connection and trusts that most adults will drink responsibly and respectfully.”*

*“Lack of even distribution of these patios/plazas throughout the city. This can be perceived as an equity issue.”*

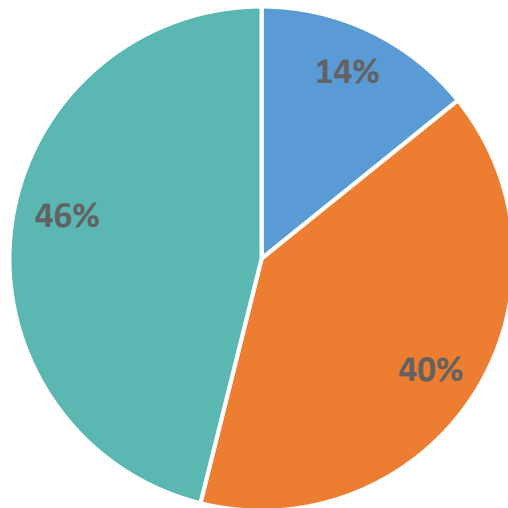
*“Having available washrooms are definitely an important consideration to make this work well.”*

*“Please have some respect for people who don't drink and don't enjoy being around people under influence when designing this policies.”*

*“Make sure that there are recycling bins located nearby.”*

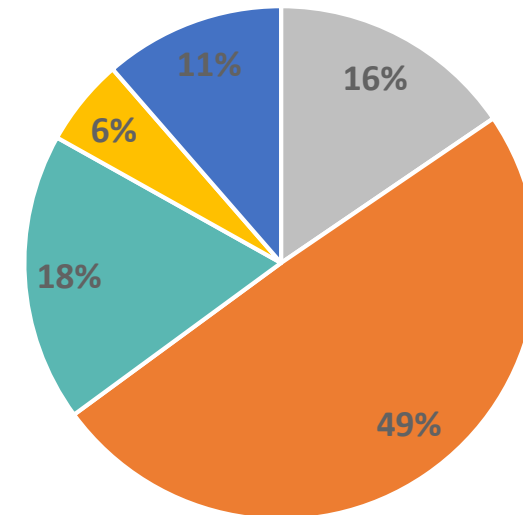
# What We Heard: *Drinking in Plazas*

What was **the purpose** of your last visit to this plaza?  
(n=219)



- I visited the plaza primarily so I could enjoy alcohol outside.
- I visited the plaza primarily for another reason, but drank alcohol while there.
- I visited the plaza for another reason and did not drink alcohol while there.

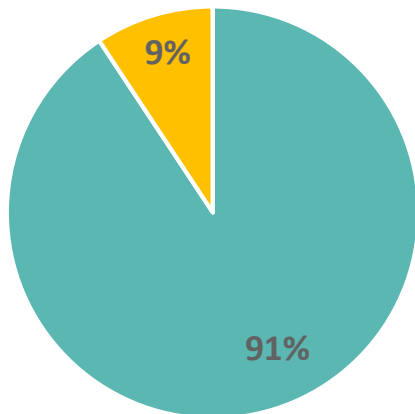
On your last visit to the plaza, **how many other people outside your group** did you observe drinking?  
(n=220)



- 0
- 1 to 5
- 6 to 9
- 10+
- I don't know/I don't remember

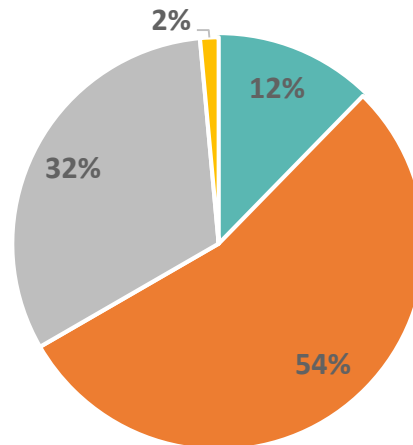
# What We Heard: *Feedback from Plaza Users Who Drank Alcohol*

If you drank alcohol on your last visit to the plaza, how many alcoholic **beverages did you consume?** (n=118)



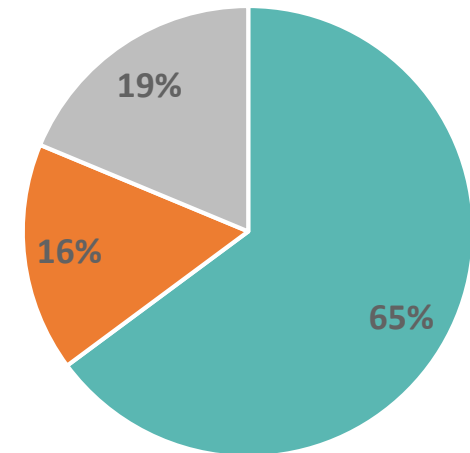
- 0 drinks
- 1 to 2 drinks
- 3 to 4 drinks
- 5 or more
- Prefer not to say

If you drank alcohol on your last visit to the plaza, where did you purchase your **alcoholic drinks?** (n=118)



- I purchased "off-sale" drinks from a nearby restaurant (within 2 blocks).
- I purchased canned/bottled drinks from a nearby liquor store (within 2 blocks).
- I purchased drinks elsewhere and/or brought them from home.
- I don't know/I don't remember.

If you drank alcohol on your last visit to the plaza, **did you purchase food** from a nearby business to enjoy with your drink? (n=118)

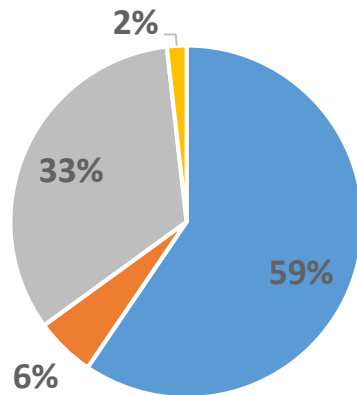


- Yes, I purchased take-out food from a nearby restaurant or café (within 2 blocks).
- Yes, I purchased food from a nearby grocery store, market, or convenience store (within 2 blocks).
- No, I did not purchase food from a nearby business (within 2 blocks).



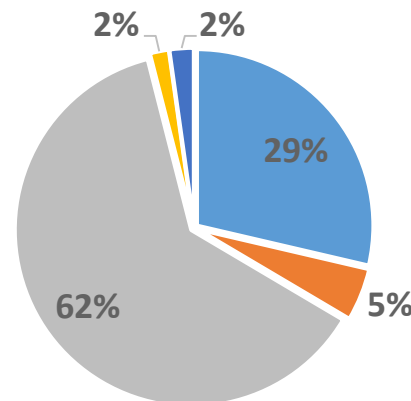
# What We Heard: *Welcomeness & Safety*

Now that drinking is temporarily allowed at this plaza, **how did that impact your experience** of the plaza on your last visit? (n=220)



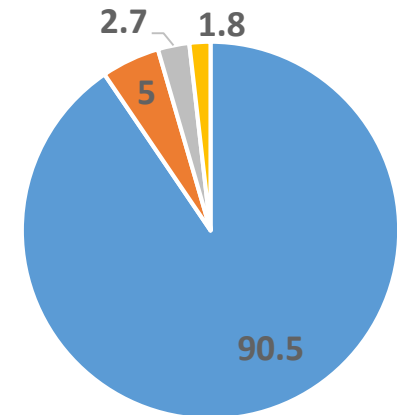
- It made my experience more enjoyable
- It made my experience less enjoyable
- My experience was the same as before (not more or less enjoyable)
- I don't know/No opinion

On your last visit to the plaza, **did you notice a change in your sense of safety and/or how welcome you felt** (compared to previous visits before the pilot)? (n=220)



- Yes, I felt more safe/welcome
- Yes, I felt less safe/welcome
- No, I did not notice a change
- I don't know/No opinion
- It was my first time visiting the plaza

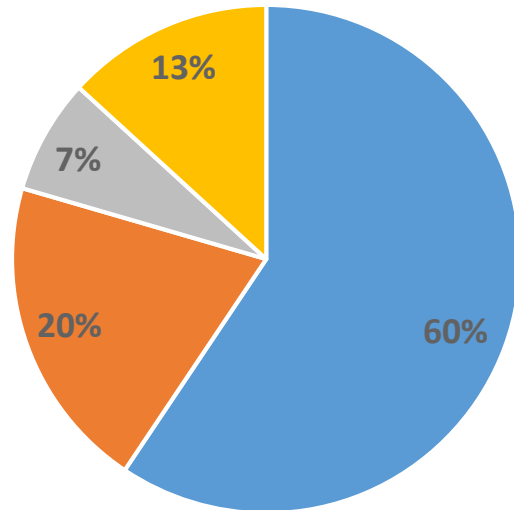
On your last visit to the plaza, do you think other people using and sharing the space **were being respectful and responsible**? (n=220)



- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- I didn't notice/I don't know

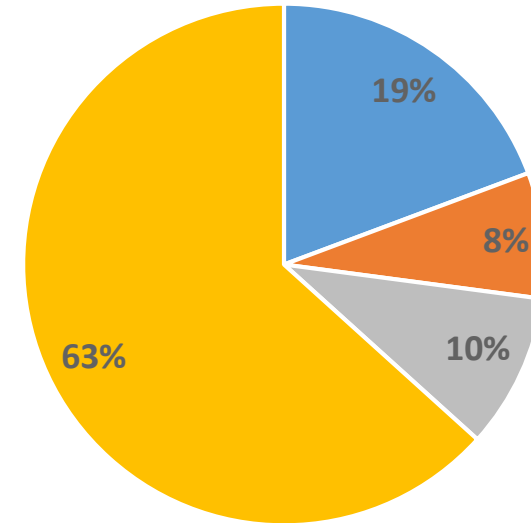
# What We Heard: *Resources & Facilities*

Signs were installed at this plaza to describe the pilot. **Do you think these signs are helpful and/or adequate** to communicate information about this pilot? (n=219)



■ Yes ■ Somewhat ■ No ■ I don't know/No opinion

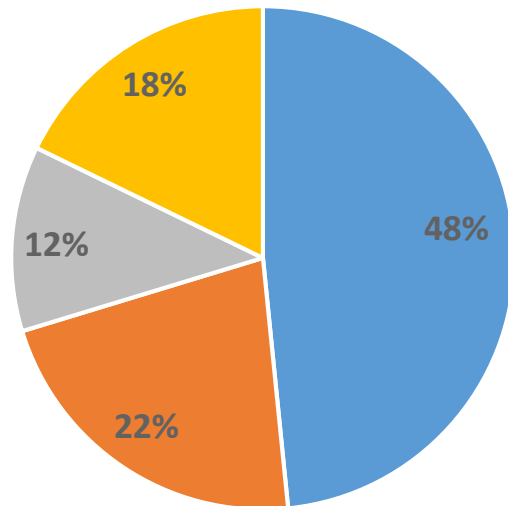
Were the available **public washroom facilities** at or near the plaza **well-maintained**? (n=218)



■ Yes ■ Somewhat ■ No ■ I don't know/No opinion

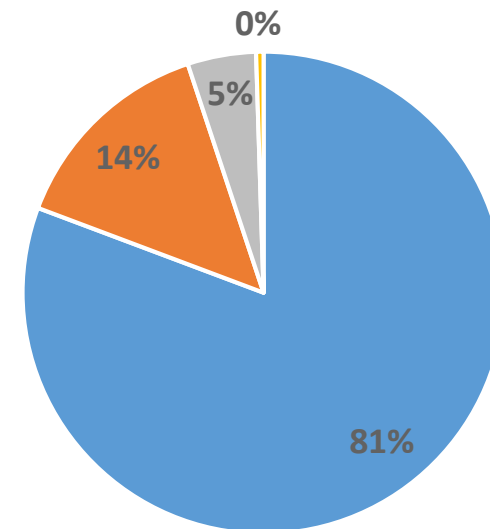
# What We Heard: *Plaza Maintenance*

Were the available **waste and recycling bins adequate and well-maintained**? (n=219)



■ Yes ■ Somewhat ■ No ■ I don't know/No opinion

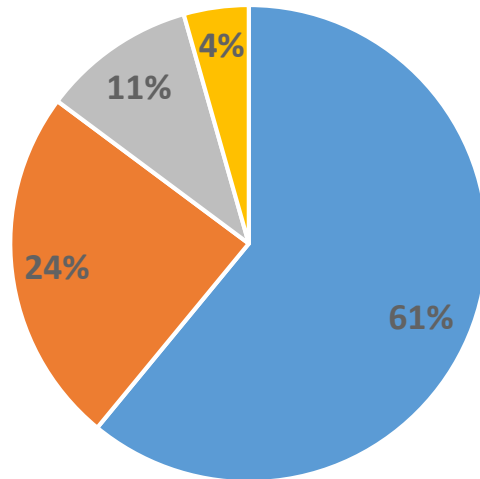
Did you find the plaza **generally clean and well-maintained** (e.g. free of litter and waste)? (n=219)



■ Yes ■ Somewhat ■ No ■ I don't know/No opinion

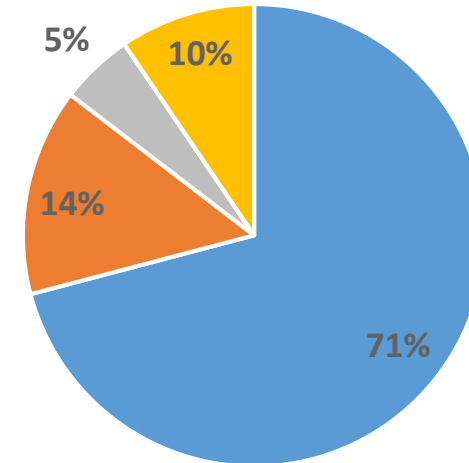
# What We Heard: *Resident & Business Impact*

What kind of **impact** do you think allowing public drinking in this plaza has on nearby **residents**? (n=297)



■ Positive impact      ■ No real impact  
■ Negative impact      ■ I don't know/No opinion

What kind of **impact** do you think allowing public drinking in this plaza has on nearby **businesses**? (n=296)



■ Positive impact      ■ No real impact  
■ Negative impact      ■ I don't know/No opinion

# What We Heard: *Health & Safety*



## Vancouver Police Department

- While overall public drinking has increased, no issues specific to pilot or sites were raised during the pilot
- **VPD calls for service at pilot sites did not show notable increases over 2019 and 2020, and some decreased** (with the exception of 800 Robson)
- Limitations: not all crime/safety issues result in a call for VPD service, surrounding radius not included



## Vancouver Coastal Health

- **No significant changes in alcohol-related Emergency Department (ED) visits during the pilot as compared to non-pilot periods**
- Limitations: analysis doesn't account for long-term impacts of alcohol consumption; cases with mild symptoms may not present at EDs

# Next Steps

Findings from the 2021 pilot engagement and monitoring are helping to support and inform the development of future policies for drinking in public plazas.

Please visit [vancouver.ca/drinking-in-public-plazas](https://vancouver.ca/drinking-in-public-plazas) for updates on our ongoing work.

