

# What We Heard Report

## Public Washroom Strategy

[edmonton.ca/publicwashroomstrategy](https://edmonton.ca/publicwashroomstrategy)

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

**CITY-OWNED AND MAINTAINED PUBLIC WASHROOMS LOCATED IN PARKS, CITY BUILDINGS, TRANSIT HUBS AND OTHER PUBLIC SPACES ARE CRUCIAL TO ENSURING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE URBAN ENVIRONMENT IN EDMONTON.**

Since 2016, the City of Edmonton has been working to improve access to public washrooms by implementing a City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy that will enhance inventory management, expand access through temporary facilities and develop permanent washrooms.

As a key component of the City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy, interested parties and members of the public were engaged to understand where new washrooms should be located, and how facilities should be designed and managed to best serve Edmontonians.

The results of this public engagement will be used to inform the priorities and strategy for providing both temporary and permanent public washrooms throughout Edmonton.

## Engagement at a Glance



**PUBLIC SURVEY:**  
4,845 Responses



**INTERACTIVE MAP:**  
71 contributors, 121 points placed on the map



**IDEAS TOOL:**  
5 contributors, 5 ideas, 2 "upvotes"



**INTERESTED PARTY WORKSHOPS:**  
3 workshops, 64 participants

# **ENGAGEMENT APPROACH**

## HOW WE ENGAGED

The City of Edmonton's public engagement spectrum defines the public's level of influence in engagement processes. The role of the public during this engagement was at the ADVISE and CREATE levels on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum. The public advised where there are gaps in the provisioning of public washrooms and what design features would be most useful to them in a public washroom. The public helped create priorities for new public washroom facilities when they told us where it is most important for them to have public washrooms.



Visit [edmonton.ca/publicengagement](http://edmonton.ca/publicengagement) for information on the City's public engagement policy and practices.

## WHO WE ENGAGED

Engagement was conducted with members of the public and key interested party groups. Participants were asked to share how they currently use public washrooms, their perspectives on the types of places that need more public washrooms, and the features and amenities they would like to see included.

Throughout engagement activities, members of the public and interested parties shared their feedback and perspectives on public washrooms to ensure that, beyond convenience, facilities meet the needs of users, including families with children, visitors, people without stable housing and individuals with medical needs.

The intent of the public and interested party engagement was to collect feedback to inform priorities and strategy for providing both temporary and permanent public washrooms throughout Edmonton, as well as to establish baseline results that can be revisited in future engagement to measure progress in improving public washroom access.

## Engagement Tactics

The project team collected feedback from members of the public through an online survey, an interactive map and an Engaged Edmonton discussion page between January 10, 2024, and February 16, 2024.

Workshops were conducted with interested parties throughout the engagement period to capture experiences of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), City Staff, Community Organizations and Service Agencies.

Each of the engagement tactics are described in more detail below.

### Public Survey

The survey asked questions about public washroom usage, perceptions of supply, location priorities, user experience, design features and optional demographic questions.

The survey was distributed to the Insight Community citizen panel and promoted through City of Edmonton social media channels and website. Surveys were collected both online and in-person to ensure the City of Edmonton heard from a broad range of people with varying backgrounds and identities.

### Pop-Up Events

The project team conducted pop-up engagement sessions in a range of public locations where they promoted the survey with posters and QR codes, and collected survey responses in-person, with verbal, printed and tablet submission options.

The pop-up engagement sessions took place at the following locations:

- + Stanley Milner Library: January 16th, 2024
- + Jasper Place Public Library: January 17th, 2024
- + Clareview Recreation Centre: January 17th, 2024
- + Clareview Public Library: January 17th, 2024
- + Meadows Recreation Centre: January 18th, 2024
- + Churchill Square: February 3rd, 2024
- + Old Strathcona Public Washroom: February 3rd, 2024

Pop-up locations were selected at district or City-level amenities to hear directly from people across different parts of the City.

## Engaged Edmonton

A project webpage, hosted on Engaged Edmonton, provided two additional ways to participate. Participants were invited to share a location on the map where they think a public washroom is needed or share an idea for the public washroom system.

Feedback through the map and ideas tool was collected at:  
**[www.engaged.edmonton.ca/publicwashroomstrategy](http://www.engaged.edmonton.ca/publicwashroomstrategy)**

## Interested Party Workshops

Interested parties were invited to participate in facilitated workshops to better understand their specific concerns, expectations and priorities with respect to public washrooms. This consultation also provided an opportunity for interested parties to share their perspectives on partnerships, including current efforts and prospective future opportunities.

Three online interested party workshops were held:

- + Business Improvement Areas (BIAs): January 30th, 2024
- + Internal (City Staff): February 1st, 2024
- + External (Community Organizations and Service Agencies): February 7th, 2024

# ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

## KEY THEMES

Throughout engagement with the public and key interested parties, several key themes emerged that highlight Edmontonians' preferences to have access to safe and clean washrooms that are designed and programmed to suit the context and location. Many wish to see the implementation of new public washrooms be expedited—opportunities to improve efficiency and affordability in design are welcomed.

The following key themes emerged from engagement conversations, which are explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

### **Safety and cleanliness are essential**

Public washrooms will not be used by members of the public who feel unsafe entering the facilities. Design and staffing considerations to improve safety and ensure standards of cleanliness can be maintained are considered a top priority. However, there are concerns that some of these elements may inflate costs or reduce feelings of privacy.

### **There shouldn't be a one-size-fits-all approach to design and implementation**

Interested party groups and members of the public recognize that there are broader social challenges that influence many peoples' ability to feel safe and welcome in public washrooms. While people are open to additional resources directed to areas of need (e.g., increased staffing, maintenance or attendants; shower facilities), this does not need to be a blanket approach to all public washroom facilities.

### **Function over form**

Public washrooms should be simple, easy to clean, and well-stocked with supplies. Edmontonians are not overly interested in highly-designed public washroom facilities. Survey respondents indicated that they would prefer to see the City implement more public washrooms, rather than fewer washrooms with additional features and amenities. Recommendations included having a few standard designs that can be replicated in multiple locations to increase efficiency in implementation and keep costs down so that more public washrooms can be provided.



# PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

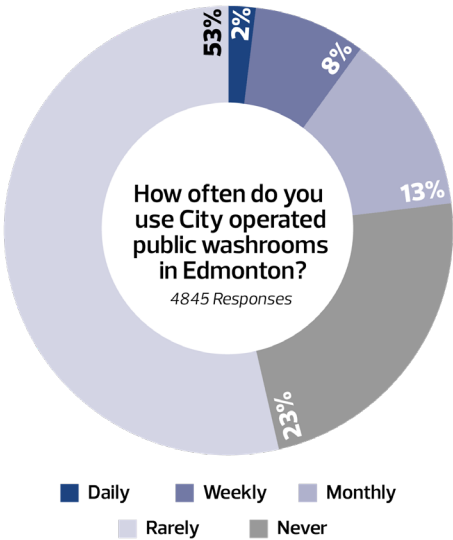
An online public survey was open to Edmontonians between January 10 and February 16, 2024, and received 4,845 responses. Participants were asked to share how they currently use public washrooms, their perspectives on the types of places that need more public washrooms, and the features and amenities they would like included.

## Section 1: Public Washroom Use

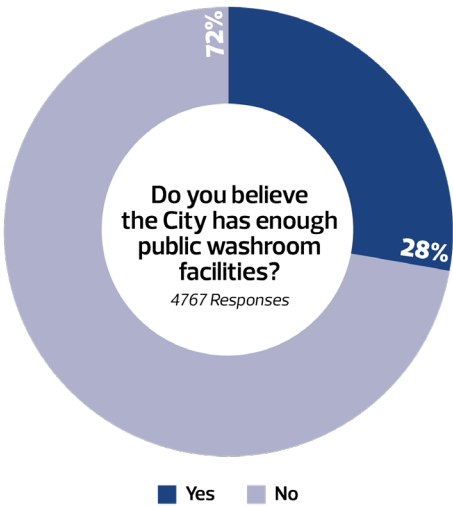
**Survey respondents rarely (53%) or never (23%) use public washrooms;** however, they believe that public washrooms are a necessary component of the urban environment.

Public washrooms are viewed as essential amenities in the City of Edmonton, although many residents acknowledge that there are not enough washrooms and that, where they do exist, they do not feel comfortable, clean or safe enough for them to use.

Access to public washrooms enable people to spend time in public spaces longer. Seniors, children, pregnant women and those with medical conditions were identified as key demographics that should have improved access to public washrooms to meet their specific needs.



*10% of respondents use City-operated public washrooms regularly (daily or weekly).*



*72% of respondents do not believe that the City has enough public washroom facilities.*

## **Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)**

**The City of Edmonton leverages “Gender-based Analysis Plus” (GBA+) to evaluate how specific audiences’ lived experiences influences perspectives and responses to engagement activities.**

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical tool often used with the intention of advancing gender equality. The “plus” in the name highlights that Gender-based Analysis goes beyond gender, and includes the examination of a range of factors including, but not limited to, age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography, language, race, religion and sexual orientation. GBA+ is used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs or initiatives on diverse groups of citizens, taking into account gender and other factors. GBA+ helps recognize and respond to the different situations and needs of citizens.

The goal of GBA+ ensures that gender and other diversity characteristics are properly considered in all government programs and policies that affect citizens. That could include everything from how the City conducts consultations, to neighbourhood design, to the way it delivers services.

**Throughout this report, GBA+ considerations are included to highlight how some responses from equity-deserving communities vary from general survey results. For more information on GBA+ and the demographics of respondents to this survey, see page 38.**

## GBA+ Considerations: Public Washroom Use

Respondents who are regular users (daily or weekly) of City-operated public washrooms:



Respondents who belong to equity-deserving groups report increased use of City-operated public washrooms by the following percentages:

- +19%** respondents who are experiencing or have experienced homelessness
- +18%** respondents who are youth and young adults, 24 years or younger\*
- +14%** respondents who are Indigenous
- +13%** respondents who are gender diverse, are newcomers to Canada, have household incomes under \$30,000
- +5%** respondents who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children, are people with disabilities, and who support people with disabilities

Respondents who believe that the City does not have enough public washroom facilities:



Respondents who belong to equity-deserving groups report increased perception that there are not enough public washroom facilities by the following percentages:

- +17%** respondents who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+
- +14%** respondents who are gender diverse
- +10%** respondents with disabilities
- +8%** respondents with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$59,999
- +6%** respondents with household incomes under \$30,000
- +5%** respondents who support people with disabilities

### Note

\*Denotes data sets smaller than 100 responses. Caution should be applied when interpreting findings based on these results.

See pg. 38 for the number of respondents from each equity-deserving group.

## Section 2: Location Preferences

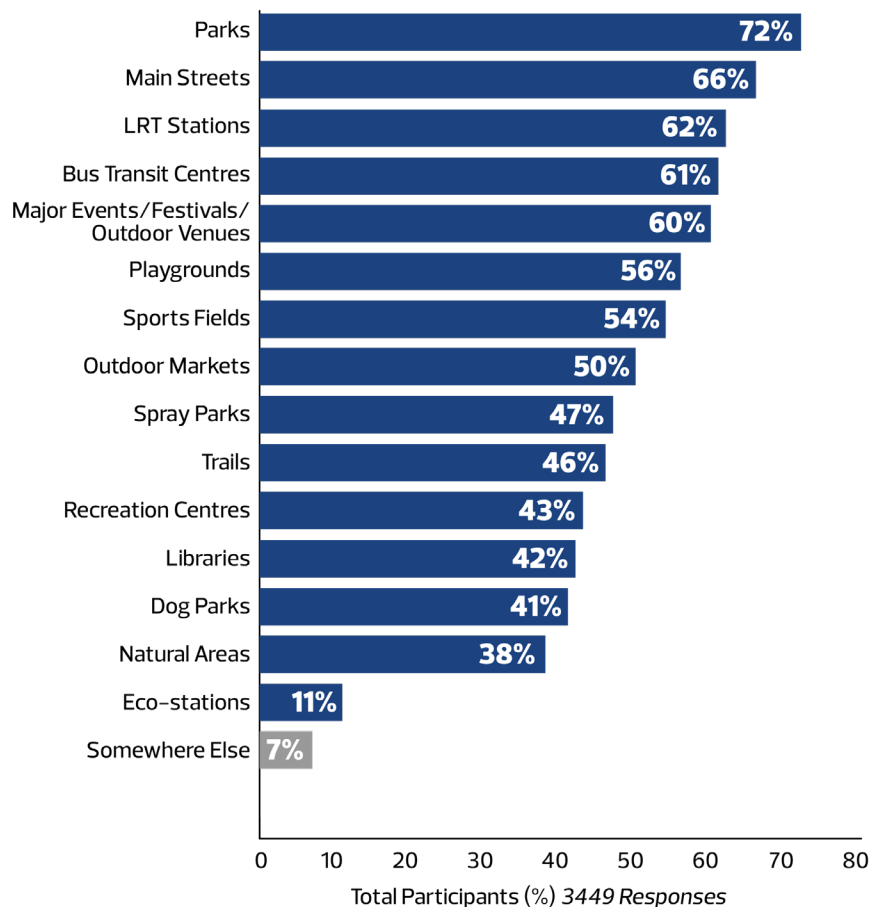
### WASHROOM NEEDS

Public washrooms enable people to gather and spend time in the public realm. **Many survey responses simply indicated that washrooms should be “where the people are”** – in essence, anywhere that people are expected to congregate, including civic buildings, green spaces, commercial areas and more.

*Many responses simply indicated that washrooms should be “where the people are.”*

Parks, main streets, LRT stations, bus transit centres, major events, festivals and outdoor venues, were identified as having the most significant need for more public washrooms.

**In what type of place in the City do you see a significant need for public washrooms? Check all that apply.**

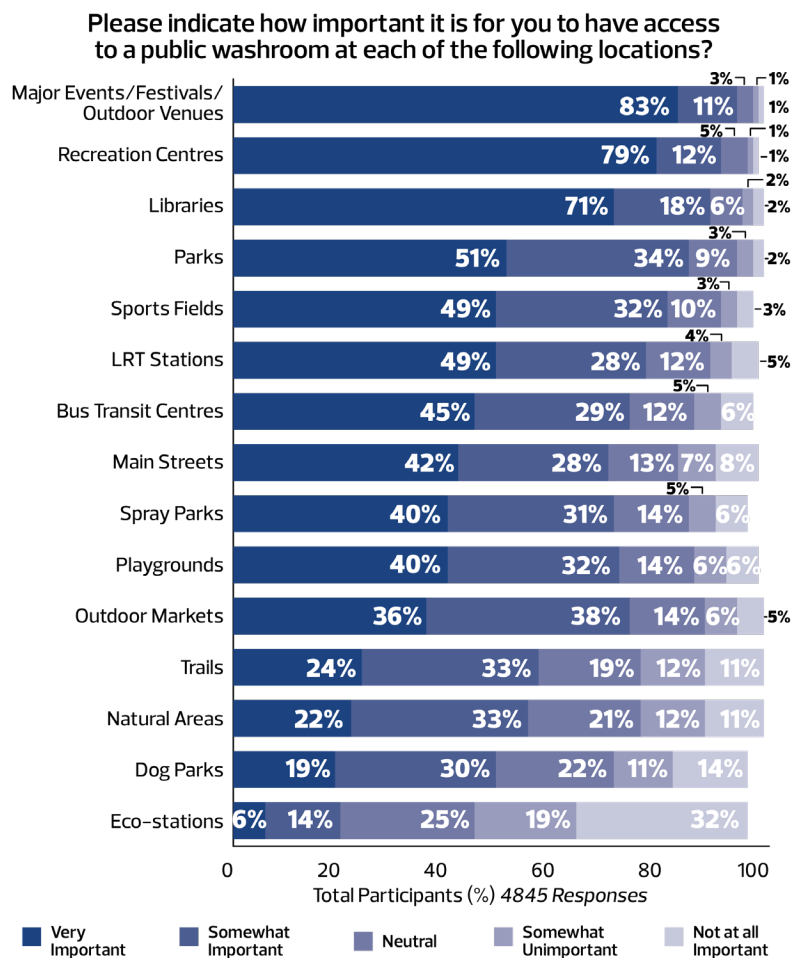


## WASHROOM ACCESS

Edmontonians believe it is important to have access to a public washroom at major events and festivals, recreation centres and libraries.

While washrooms are identified as important to have in places like recreation centres and libraries, they are not identified as being in significant need for more public washrooms, suggesting that desired levels of access are being met.

Respondents feel it is important to have access to public washrooms at major events, festivals and outdoor venues, as well as parks, which ranked highly on both perceived need and importance of access.



## LOCATION-SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

### Streets and corridors:

- + Places like Jasper Avenue, Whyte Avenue, 124 Street are busy destinations with no place to go.

### Transit stations:

- + Washrooms may exist but are often closed, poorly maintained or feel unsafe.

### Parks and green spaces:

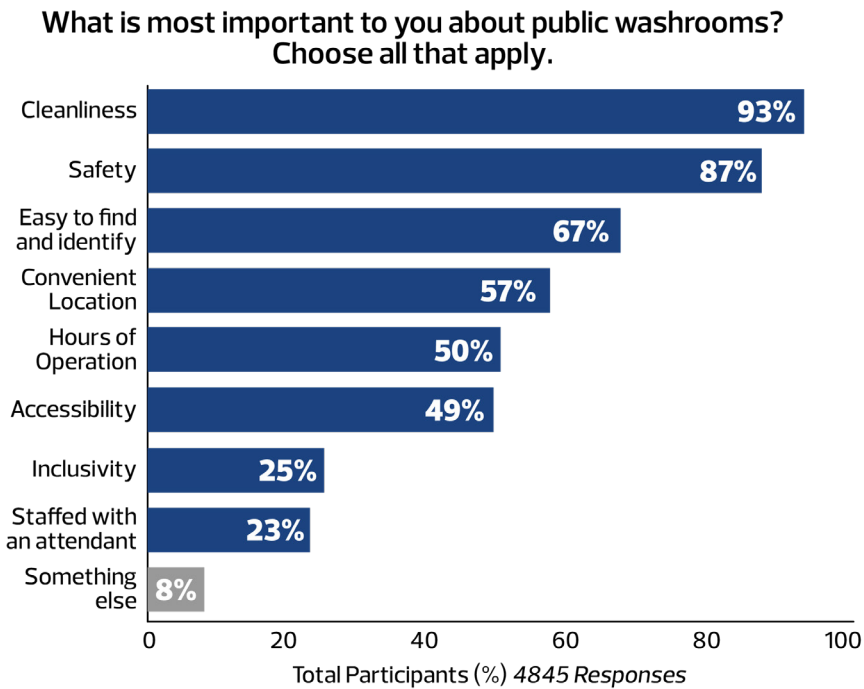
- + Sports fields (specifically soccer fields where youth play) were identified often as having no washroom access.
- + Playgrounds and spray parks often do not have washrooms, making it difficult for families to stay.

## Section 3: Features and Amenities

### MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES

The following sections detail responses to questions about features and amenities, categorized by theme. Each section includes responses to the multiple-choice question shown in the chart, as well as responses to open-ended questions that relate to each theme category.

*Respondents want access to public washrooms that feel clean and safe.*

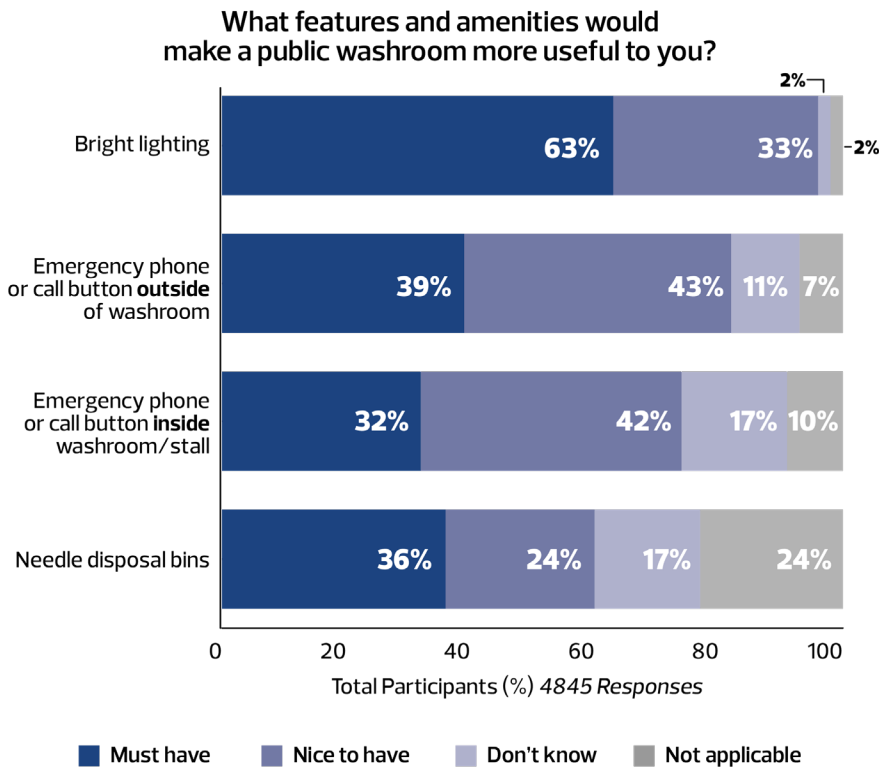


## SAFETY

People wish to see bright lighting (99% indicate that this is either a *must have* or *nice to have*) to improve visibility and feelings of safety. Access to emergency phones or call buttons are slightly more preferred on the outside of the washroom, rather than inside the stall itself.

While the components that contribute to feelings of safety typically vary depending on age, gender and other sociodemographic factors, survey respondents gave suggestions on what would make them feel safe such as: a buzzer to allow entry, cameras on the exterior of the washroom building and eliminating elements (such as interior seating and storage) that encourage people to stay longer.

*Safety is one of the greatest concerns for Edmontonians wishing to have improved access to public washrooms.*



## GBA+ Considerations: Safety

Most equity-deserving groups indicated that safety features are “must haves” more often than the average respondent.

Having an emergency phone or call button **outside** of washrooms is a must have for people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (48%), people who identify as having a disability (47%), youth under 25\* (46%), people who support someone with a disability (46%), people who are gender diverse (45%), people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness (45%), and people who identify as racialized (44%). This amenity option was less preferred by older adults and people who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children, 34% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

Having an emergency phone or call button **inside** washrooms or stalls is a must have for people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness (45%), people who support someone with a disability (43%), people who identify as having a disability (42%), people who are gender diverse (41%), people who are Indigenous (39%), people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (38%), and youth under 25\* (37%). This amenity option was less preferred by older adults and people who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children, 27% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

Needle disposal bins are a must have for 57% of people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, 56% of people who are gender diverse, 49% of people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, 48% of youth under 25\*, and 42% of people who identify as having a disability. This amenity option was less preferred by older adults, 28% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

### Note

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*See pg. 38 for the number of respondents from each equity-deserving group.*



## STAFFING AND MAINTENANCE

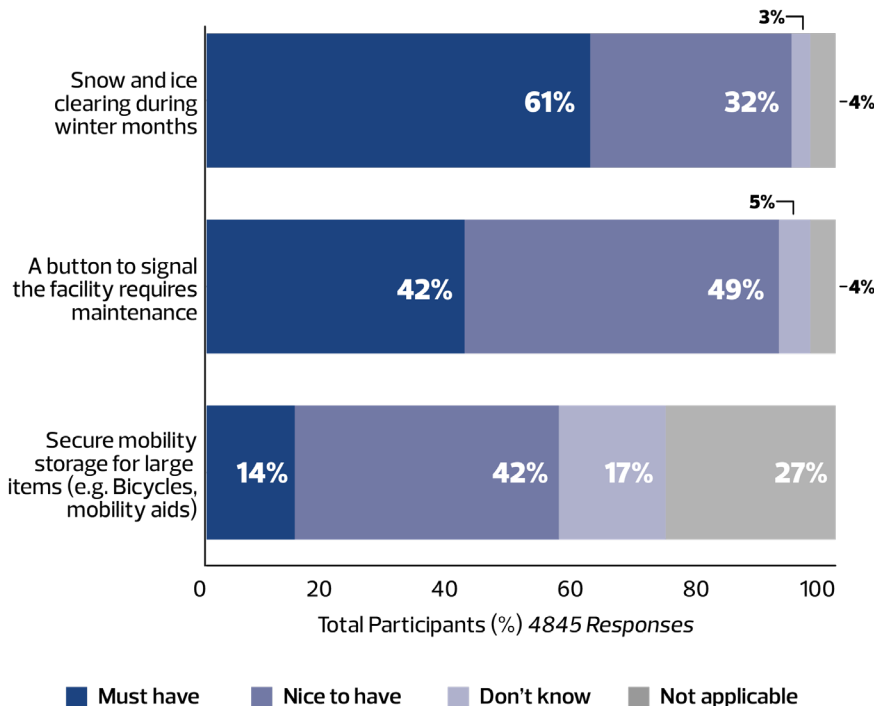
It was noted that operating hours should be consistent, or at least clearly communicated, since some respondents have the experience of visiting a washroom only to find that it is unexpectedly closed.

Opinions were mixed on whether on-site staff or attendants are a valuable feature, with concerns including privacy and cost. It was suggested that maintenance staff should visit washrooms more frequently to clean, restock supplies and check if there are any loitering or safety issues. This approach would be acceptable for most public washrooms, although in high-density areas, in transit stations or in locations near vulnerable populations, a full-time attendant is preferred to ensure safety and cleanliness. The attendant could additionally function as a point-of-contact for support services and tourism in the surrounding area.

Participants mentioned that plenty of hand sanitizer, soap and toilet paper should be provided and restocked often, and was frequently indicated as a staffing and maintenance consideration, though has clear implications on cleanliness and sanitation. Introducing a small fee (e.g., 25 cents, 1 dollar) to use public washrooms was suggested by 11 respondents as a way to prevent people from loitering or sheltering in washrooms; however, several more respondents indicated that washrooms must be free and accessible to the public.

*Respondents believe that public washrooms should be accessible to all, regardless of the season or time of day.*

**What features and amenities would make a public washroom more useful to you?**



## GBA+ Considerations: Staffing and Maintenance

Snow and ice clearing during winter months is more of a must have for 77% of people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, 71% of people who identify as having a disability, 69% of people who are gender diverse and youth under 25\*\*, and 67% of people who are Indigenous. This service option was less preferred by people who are new to Canada\*, 55% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

A button to signal the facility requires maintenance is more of a must have for people who are new to Canada (55), youth under 25\* (54%), people who identify as gender diverse or 2SLGBTQIA+ (52%), people who identify as having a disability or support someone with a disability (51%), people who identify as racialized (49%), This amenity option was less preferred by older adults, 34% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

Having on-site staff or an attendant is more of a must have for people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness (30%), people who are Indigenous (26%), people with household incomes under \$30,000 (24%), people who are gender diverse (23%), people who identify as racialized (20%), and people who support someone with a disability (19%).

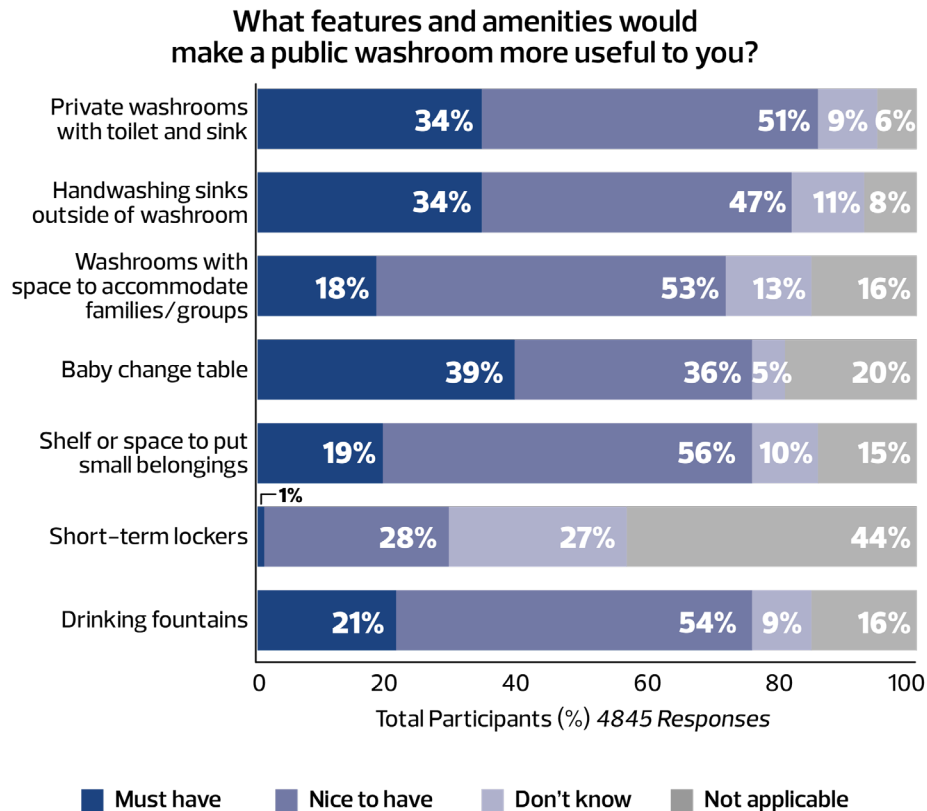
### Note

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## COMFORT

**Edmontonians want facilities that are simple and functional, with limited amenities.** Features such as baby change tables are considered a must have by many, with some respondents elaborating that these should be provided in men's or gender-neutral washrooms. Private or family washrooms are nice to have and may help address the request for privacy considerations and the need for gender-neutral washrooms.



## GBA+ Considerations: Comfort

Private washrooms with a toilet and sink is more of a must have for 46% of people who are gender diverse, 42% of people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, 41% of people who identify as racialized and who are Indigenous, 40% of youth under 25\*, and 39% of people who are 2SLGBTQIA+. This amenity option was less preferred by people who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children, 29% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

Washrooms with space to accommodate families / groups is more of a must have for 42% of people who are new to Canada\*, 34% of people who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children, 30% of people who are gender diverse, 29% of people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, 27% of youth under 25\*, 26% of people who identify as racialized, 24% of people who were born outside of Canada, and 23% of people who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and who are Indigenous.

Baby change tables is more of a must have for 63% of people who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children, 51% of people who are 2SLGBTQIA+, 50% of people who are gender diverse, 46% of youth under 25\*, 45% of people who identify as racialized, who were born outside of Canada and who are new to Canada\*, and 44% of women. This amenity option was less preferred by older adults, 26% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

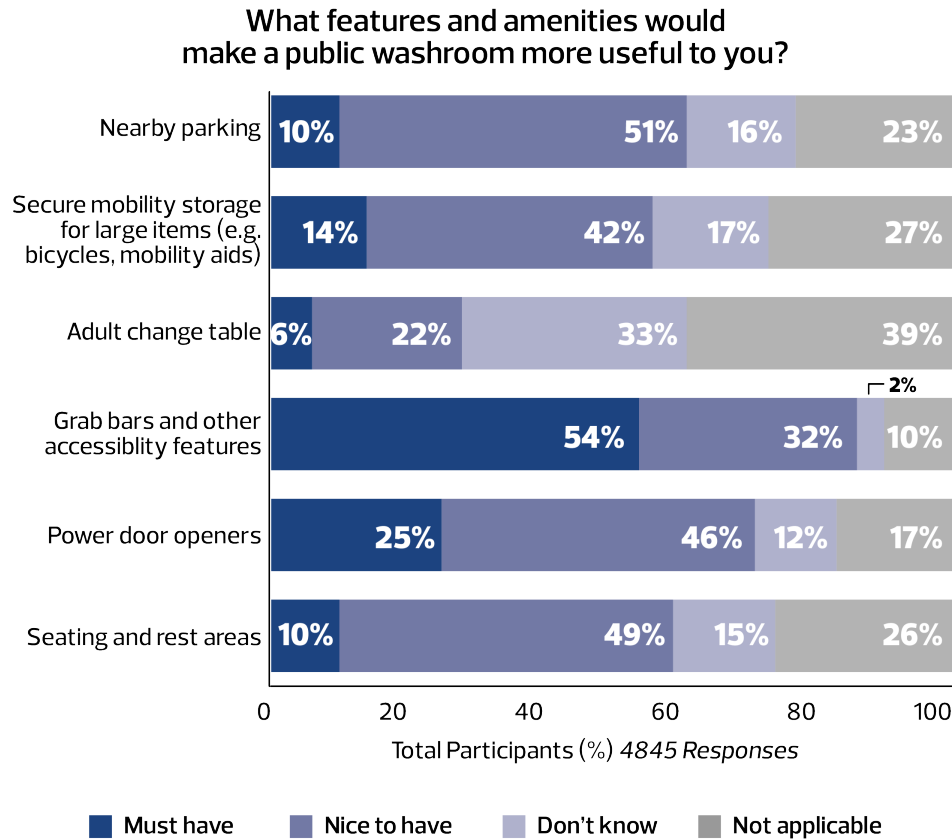
### Note

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*See pg. 38 for the number of respondents from each equity-deserving group.*

## ACCESSIBILITY

**Common accessibility features like grab bars and power door openers are considered must haves.** Features like mobility aid storage and adult change tables are more likely to be considered nice to haves, although in open-ended responses, some participants did not seem to understand the need for a few of these features.



## GBA+ Considerations: Accessibility

Secure mobility storage for large items is more of a must have for 28% of people who are gender diverse, 24% of people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, 23% of people who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and youth under 25\*, 22% of people who identify as racialized, 20% of people with a disability, who support someone with a disability and who are Indigenous, and 19% of people who are new to Canada\*. This amenity option was less preferred by older adults, 9% of whom indicated that this was a must have.

Adult change tables is more of a must have for people who are gender diverse (23%), youth under 25\* and people who are new to Canada\* (15%), people who are 2SLGBTQIA+ (13%), and people who are Indigenous (11%). It is worth noting that people with a disability and people who support someone with a disability did not indicate a significantly higher than average preference for adult change tables in public washrooms (10% from both groups indicated this is a must have; 4% higher than average).

### Note

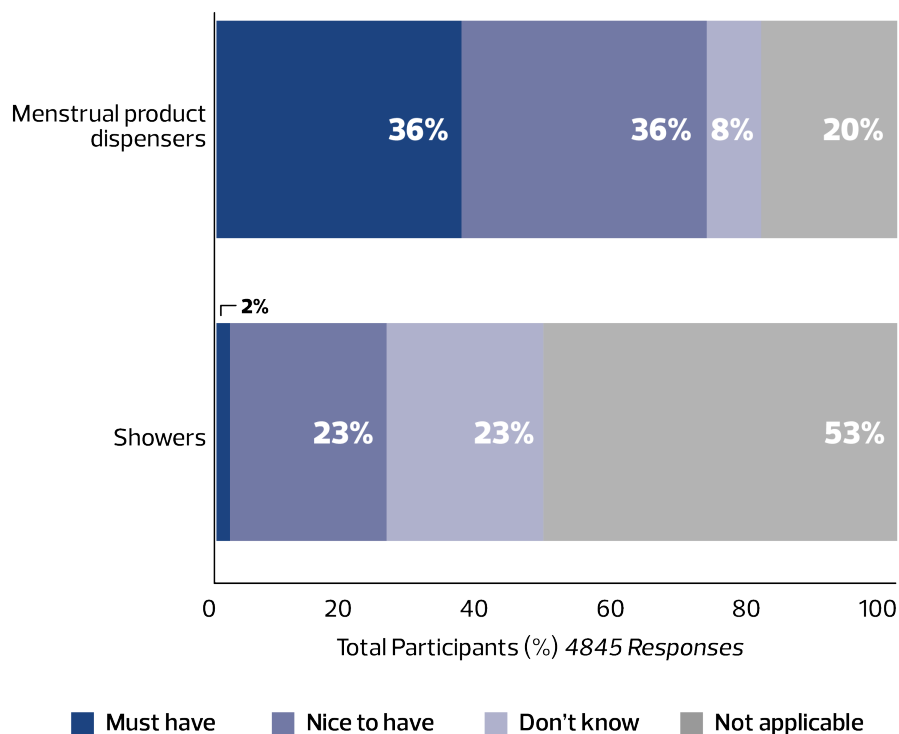
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*See pg. 38 for the number of respondents from each equity-deserving group.*

## PERSONAL CARE

While additional products such as menstrual product dispensers are appreciated by 72% of respondents, showers were not identified as a preferred feature for most. Facilities that provide additional amenities such as showers were identified as being needed downtown and where there are high rates of people experiencing homelessness or the presence of encampments. **People wish to see vulnerable populations have access to services and supports that are helpful to them, but suggest that these might exist separate from the public washroom system.**

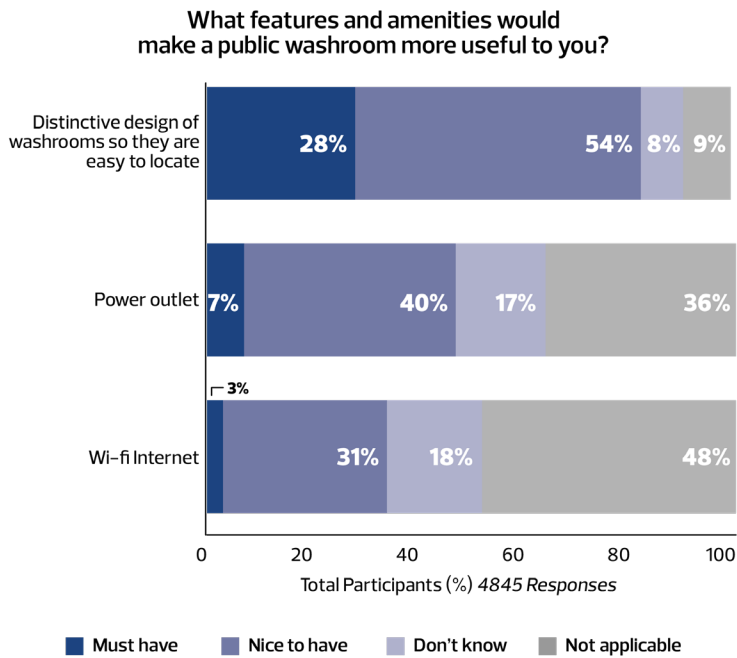
What features and amenities would make a public washroom more useful to you?



### GBA+ Considerations: Personal Care

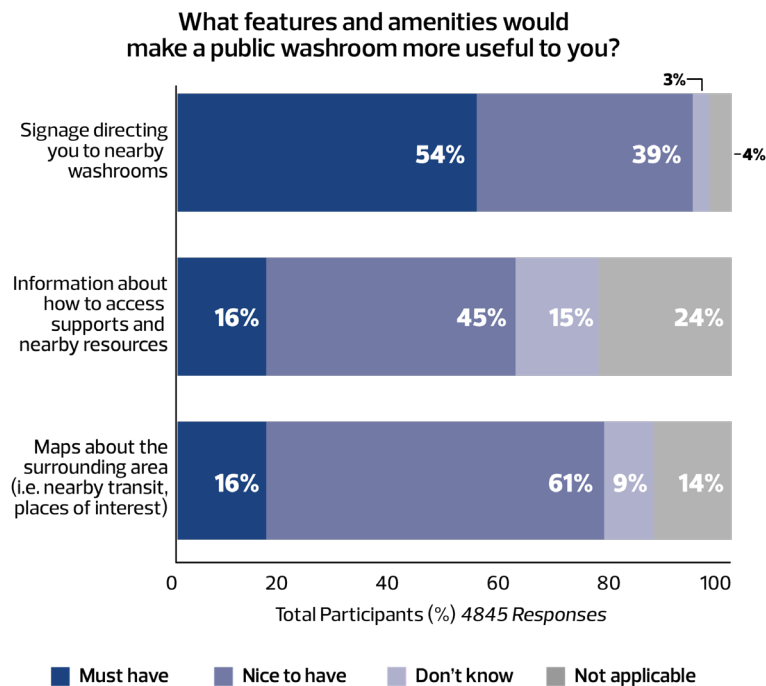
Adding showers to public washrooms is considered more of a must have for 9% of people who are gender diverse and 8% of people who are Indigenous. It is worth noting that people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness did not indicate a significantly higher than average preference for showers in public washrooms (5% from both groups indicated this is a must have; 3% higher than average).

## DESIGN



**Washrooms that are simple, low-cost and quick to implement are preferred by many.** Features such as distinctive design, power outlets and wifi are nice to have, but do not meaningfully address Edmontonians' desire to have access to washrooms throughout the city

## WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE



**Public washrooms that are commonplace throughout the City can become hubs for additional information.** Maps and information about nearby resources, support, transit and places of interest are nice to have.

Clear and simple wayfinding that directs people from transit stations, parks or trails and commercial areas to public washrooms is a must have for 54% and nice to have for 39% (93% total).



# PUBLIC WASHROOM IDEAS

The five community-generated ideas posted on the ideas tool reiterated common themes heard in the public survey. Each idea is paraphrased below.

## COMMUNITY-GENERATED IDEAS

- + Add murals or art work in public washrooms to make it more colourful and fun
- + Provide clearer information about operating hours; keep some facilities open later
- + Provide public washrooms in outdoor shopping areas and near business centres
- + Include shelves for people to place their personal items
- + Provide public washroom in areas around Whyte Avenue and Jasper Avenue

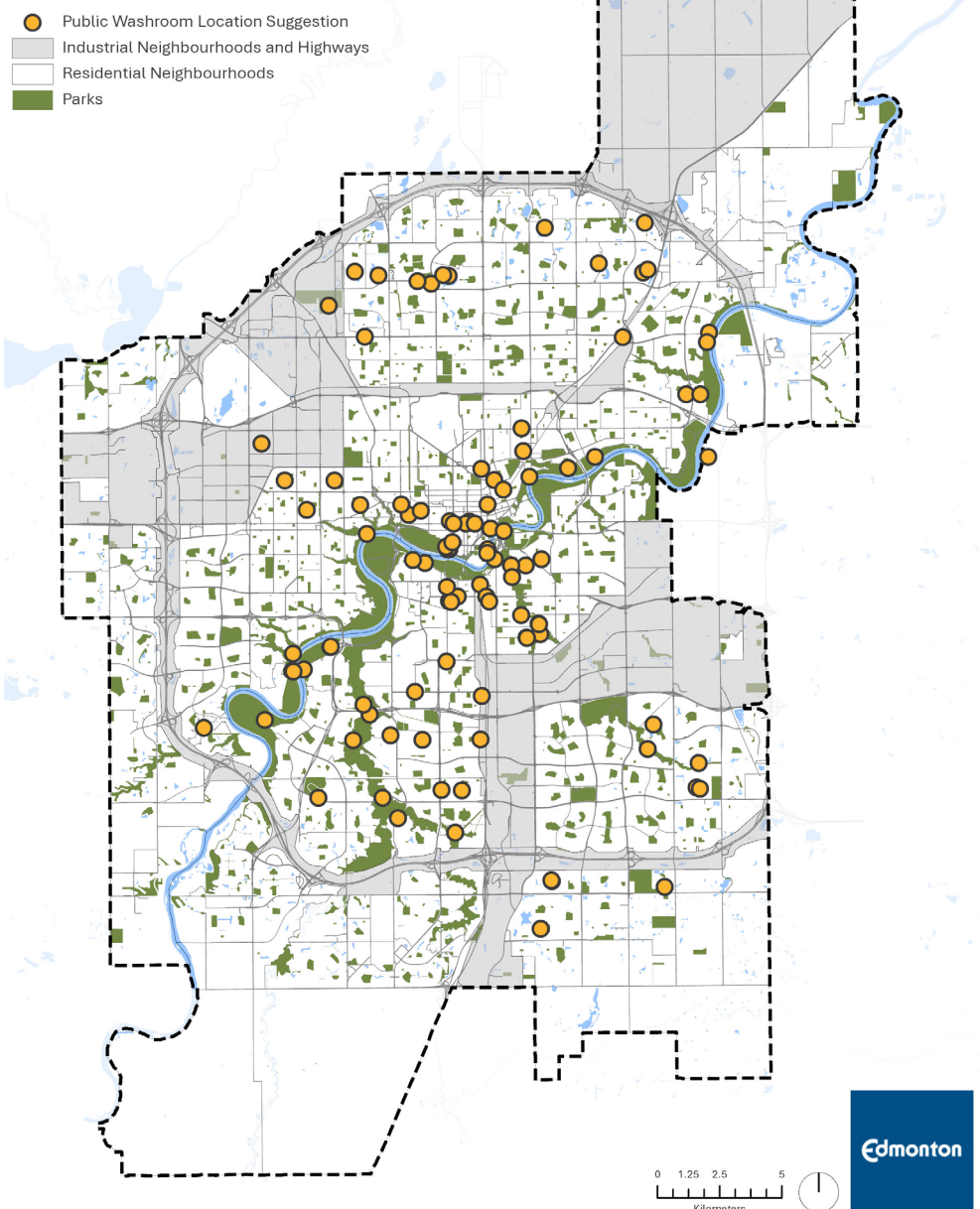
# INTERACTIVE MAP

Participants were encouraged to use the interactive map to pinpoint exact locations where they think a public washroom would be most useful. The locations identified on the map align with survey responses, centred primarily in the Downtown core, along the River Valley and in parks and public spaces.

The map below shows the locations of each of the 121 pins placed on the interactive mapping tool.

## City of Edmonton Public Washroom Strategy

### Result of Interactive Map Engagement Activity



# FINDINGS FROM INTERESTED PARTY WORKSHOPS

Interested parties shared their input on the development of the City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy to better understand how the City and other service providers could work together to improve safety, accessibility and availability of public washrooms in Edmonton.

Three workshops were organized with the interested party groups (Business Improvement Areas, City Staff, community organizations and service agencies) with each bringing different perspectives and varying levels of connection to the provision of public washrooms. Interested parties generally agree on many of the core requirements, location criteria and considerations. During these sessions, groups began to envision the roles that each of them may play in implementation and management of these community assets.

The following sections summarize the key points that emerged in each of the interested party workshops.

## Workshop #1: Business Improvement Areas

The first workshop focused on engagement with Edmonton's Business Improvement Areas to explore the opportunities for their involvement in the provision and promotion of public washrooms. Representatives from 12 of the 13 Business Improvement Areas attended.

This workshop highlighted the necessity of washrooms in supporting dignity, accessibility, and responding to community feedback. Issues like the need for attendants, maintenance, accessibility for people with disabilities, and the challenges of buy-in from property owners were discussed. It was clear that issues related to public sanitation and hygiene (i.e. public defecation) are a major issue in certain business areas, especially those with high populations of vulnerable people congregating at social service agencies.

While businesses want to see better provision of washrooms, not all want to see these facilities located near their business as there is a perceived stigma related to disorder that is associated with public washrooms. Some workshop participants suggested experimenting with new solutions like self-cleaning units and utilizing third parties to maintain the facilities. Workshop participants were emphatic in stating that the business community expects the City to provide these facilities and does not see itself as a provider of public washrooms, even when presented with grants and incentives.

Overall, the dialogue underscores the complexity of implementing an effective public washroom strategy that balances safety, maintenance, and inclusivity across the city.

**BIA perception of their role in the provision of public washrooms versus the City of Edmonton’s role:**

BIA ROLE	CITY ROLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Support buy-in and continued acceptance of public washrooms as a community asset.</li> <li>+ Enable partnerships to connect with social service agencies and enhance safety,</li> <li>+ Some BIAs expressed that their locations can serve as sites of experimentation and pilot projects (activation and research)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Provide public washrooms on City-owned lands and within City-owned buildings.</li> <li>+ Ensure equitable access to public washrooms as essential municipal infrastructure.</li> <li>+ Establish minimum standards for public washroom maintenance and operations.</li> <li>+ Refer to other cities for best practices and creative solutions</li> <li>+ Determine appropriate and feasible funding models.</li> <li>+ Enable creative partnerships and Public Private Partnerships (P3)</li> <li>+ Support small businesses in responding to challenging situations.</li> <li>+ Grants could provide an incentive but need to be substantial enough to cover liability and operational costs.</li> </ul>

**What we heard from BIAs:**

**TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS:** Implementing temporary public washrooms is urgent and critical.

- + A few BIAs are dealing with public defecation/urination challenges.
- + Trailer-style or portable washrooms are acceptable as an intermediate solution.
- + Consider pilot projects, such as a trial with attendants at temporary public washrooms to gauge effectiveness in specific neighbourhoods or locations.

**WASHROOM ATTENDANTS:** The use of washroom attendants or additional staffing is nuanced and place-specific.

- + General agreement that public washrooms could be operated, maintained and/or supervised by surrounding communities, especially through partnerships with local service agencies or organizations.
- + Hiring attendants within the community to provide work experience with the expectation that they can act as ambassadors for the area.
- + As an alternative, washrooms may be highly maintained and checked on frequently (e.g., hourly) to ensure a level of oversight with lower staffing costs.

**SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS:** Public washrooms cannot solve homelessness but they can mitigate some challenges and improve dignity.

- + Access to showers is necessary, but may not be adequately solved through Public Washroom Strategy.

## Opportunities, Challenges and Location Considerations:

### OPPORTUNITIES

- + Public washrooms could be introduced in connection to the Tourism Master Plan and can act as an information hub for the area.

### CHALLENGES

- + Businesses may push back against BIAs who support the introduction of new public washrooms and perceive them as unsafe and/or unwanted.
- + Adding permanent washrooms in BIAs where the City doesn't have any property may be difficult.
- + Public washrooms can be located in parks and public spaces, but it is harder to ensure equity for BIAs without sufficient public space for new locations.

### LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

- + Where people gather
- + Where there is density
- + Near transit hubs
- + In parks

## Workshop #2: Internal (City Staff)

The second workshop focused on engagement with 27 City staff from areas including City Operations, Community Services, Urban Planning and Economy, and Integrated Infrastructure Services. This workshop explored themes of accessibility, community needs, and maintenance. Three major findings emerged from this workshop:

1. The application of Universal Design principles was emphasized to ensure washrooms are accessible to a diverse range of users, including vulnerable populations, and are well-integrated with other public amenities such as transit centers and community halls.
2. The necessity of public washrooms is highlighted for improving sanitation and supporting hygiene in high-traffic urban areas, with additional features like water bottle filling stations and needle disposals proposed to enhance their utility.
3. The durability and strategic placement of washrooms are crucial, along with the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to ensure safety and visibility, requiring standardized, vandalism-resistant designs for easier maintenance and clear, predictable operating hours to meet community needs effectively.

### What we heard from City Staff:

#### EXPECTATIONS FOR FEATURES AND AMENITIES

**Availability:** Ensure public washrooms are available to all.

- + Available to people of all ages, families, disabilities, seniors, etc.
- + Coordinate with extreme weather response.

**Safety:** Prioritize safety through thoughtful design.

- + Manage safety concerns by addressing sightlines, providing enhanced monitoring/attendants, and including sufficient lighting. Include CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles.

**Accessibility:** Remove barriers to access.

- + Design public washrooms that are barrier-free by implementing universal design.
- + Eliminate any additional barriers to access.

**Maintenance and Staffing:** Improve access and safety through adequate staff presence.

- + Create and adhere to standards for maintenance.
- + Consider site-specific needs and limitations.
- + Provide longer and clearly-indicated operating hours.

**Design:** Implement design elements and amenities that support comfort and safety.

- + Ensure durable design that is resistant to vandalism.
- + Include amenities such as water fountains and sharps containers.
- + Hygiene hubs and showers may be required in some locations.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO CITY OPERATIONS

- + Leverage tools and tactics to offer community care and support.
  - Suggestion to use attendants at highest need locations as attendants.
  - Research and consider use of Brave Overdose Prevention technology.
  - Provide winterized washrooms to ensure year-round public washroom access.
- + Prioritize better tracking of use patterns and data, including continuous community engagement and collecting of feedback.
- + Determine how to keep locations unlocked and accessible for use by committing to maintenance and safety improvements.
- + Provide interim solutions by offering temporary facilities that can be moved to address specific needs throughout the City.
- + Create a few different typologies or designs to replicate throughout the City as an opportunity to improve efficiency in design and implementation.

## ENHANCING EXPERIENCE

- + Enhance the look and feel of public washrooms, making them nice spaces to use
  - Include art and culture components, placemaking opportunities.
- + Improve wayfinding by directing people to public washroom locations and making information accessible.

- Connect residents to other City services and community networks.
- Provide signage in multiple languages.
- + Create partnerships and synergies (i.e., partner with Community Leagues who are renovating to provide public washrooms connected to the building).

## **LOCATION CRITERIA**

- + Develop criteria for public washrooms based on park size, amenities and other factors; include standards for location and access.
- + Understand demographic data, use patterns and community feedback to place public washrooms in areas of highest need.
  - Gather input from 311, front line staff and other interested parties.
  - Engage continuously with interested parties, organizations, BIAs and others who are directly involved with service delivery.
- + Place public washrooms where they are easier to maintain.
- + Balance needs of different demographics, while providing dignity and safety.

## **Opportunities, Challenges and Location Considerations:**

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- + Recreation centre staff and social workers could partner with the City to provide safe, inclusive community hubs.
- + Generate community support for temporary or permanent public washroom installations through design and programming initiatives like student competitions, art grants, design by architecture firms, etc.
- + Incorporate sustainability features in washroom design and operation.
- + Consider creating a standard public toilet design that can be replicated in multiple locations.
- + Envision public washrooms as infrastructure for emergency preparedness.
- + Connect implementation of new washrooms with the development of new buildings or renovations of existing facilities.
- + Private sector is part of the solution – consider a tax to support and fund public washrooms in key areas.
- + Learn from other municipalities' success stories.

### **CHALLENGES**

- + A one-size-fits-all approach may not work for each community.



## LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS

- + Where people gather and spend time; event venues.
- + Where few public washrooms currently exist.
- + Where there is high social vulnerability or high rates of incidents (e.g., public defecation/urination).
- + In the Downtown core, Chinatown, and other high traffic areas.
- + In neighbourhood parks, playgrounds and spray parks; sports and recreation facilities.
- + At or near transit stations; align with new LRT station development.
- + Near existing community facilities and amenities.
- + Consider suburban areas of the City.

## Workshop #3: Community Organizations and Service Agencies

The third workshop focused on engagement with community organization including Boyle Street, Hire Good, EFCL, EPSB, and the Downtown Business Association. The workshop was attended by seven participants.

This workshop emphasized the need for inclusive, accessible, and well-maintained facilities that serve the diverse needs of the community. Key points discussed included the employment of well-trained attendants from diverse backgrounds who not only maintain the washrooms but also ensure safety and provide necessary services such as overdose and emergency response. The workshop also highlighted the importance of physical accessibility, the availability of amenities like needle bins and menstrual supplies, and the strategic placement of washrooms to enhance public utility and safety. The integration of these elements into the urban landscape will help create a welcoming and dignified environment for all users, reflecting a comprehensive approach to public health and safety management.

## What we heard from Community Organizations and Service Agencies:

### EXPECTATIONS FOR FEATURES AND AMENITIES

- + Safety: Improve safety through design features and amenities, such as improved sightlines and emergency call buttons.
- + Accessibility: Design washrooms to be accessible to everyone (e.g., children, families, neurodivergent individuals, trans community) by creating barrier-free, universal washrooms.

- + Maintenance and Staffing: Hire attendants to support safety and offer longer operating hours.

## **ENHANCING EXPERIENCE**

- + Consider the use of attendants, who could:
  - Act as a community resource and source of information.
  - Encourage proper and respectful use of public washrooms.
  - Be trained to support vulnerable populations (e.g., overdose training).
- + Shift the narrative around who uses public washrooms to make them places for everyone regardless of background.
  - Consider design to support dignity for vulnerable community members.
- + Adult change tables and lifts would be welcomed in some locations.

## **LOCATION CRITERIA**

- + Use data to understand hotspots in need of additional public washroom locations:
  - Based on pedestrian traffic, mobility network, age composition, etc.
  - Based on complaints and incidents.
  - Based on social vulnerability index.
- + Consider longer operating hours to support nightlife, especially near public event and festival spaces.
- + Consider locations that allow the City to provide universal washroom options, avoiding constrained sites.
- + Consider locations in areas with high traffic and along travel routes where people are walking or cycling.
- + Address some location or community-specific needs with mobile or temporary public washroom services.
  - Certain communities need access to showers, laundry, etc. in addition to public washrooms.

## **LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS**

- + In the Downtown core, Chinatown, and other business areas.
- + In parks, public spaces, plazas and trails; sports fields and courts.
- + Near schools.
- + At transit stations.

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

## CONCLUSION

Access to public washrooms is an essential component of safe and inclusive spaces in the City of Edmonton. The forthcoming City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy will guide the City of Edmonton in growing and maintaining the network of public washrooms to ensure access for all.

The development of the City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy will support many of the City's existing strategies and goals, including the Community Safety & Well Being Strategy, which outlines public washrooms as an action to improve safe and inclusive spaces.

The results of engagement described in this report support the swift implementation of a broader public washroom network that feels safe, clean and has the right mix of features and amenities to support inclusion. While participants underscore the need for immediate access to public washroom facilities, the importance of cost-savings and a focus on functionality was highlighted. Participants wish to see a balance between implementation of the City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy, while not overspending on features and amenities that may not improve user experience.

These findings will inform the development of the City-Wide Public Washroom Strategy, including recommendations and policy directions.

## NEXT STEPS

Based on valuable stakeholder input, the City of Edmonton will formalize a public washroom strategy. This strategy will guide the deployment of permanent and temporary washrooms to meet the diverse needs of both the community and visitors. It will prioritize accessibility, safety, sustainability, and inclusivity.

The strategy will include a framework for prioritizing locations and design guidelines for new washrooms. It will detail implementation tactics, budget considerations, partnership opportunities, operations and maintenance, governance and evaluation, as well as success criteria to ensure effective execution.

The report's appendices will include a spatial analysis identifying areas most in need of washrooms, based on land use, urban vibrancy, demographics, and population density.

# APPENDIX

# DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The City of Edmonton takes care to consider equity in delivering services and amenities to the public and uses Gender Based Analysis + (GBA+) to identify opportunities to create a more equitable and just community.

The survey asked respondents *optional* demographic questions. This portion of the survey also asked respondents to tell us about their experience with homelessness. The survey received 4,845 responses overall.

The diversity of respondents is described in the data tables below. These data were used throughout the survey to better understand different demographic groups' experiences of public washrooms in Edmonton, as well as how future washrooms can accommodate a range of specific users' needs.

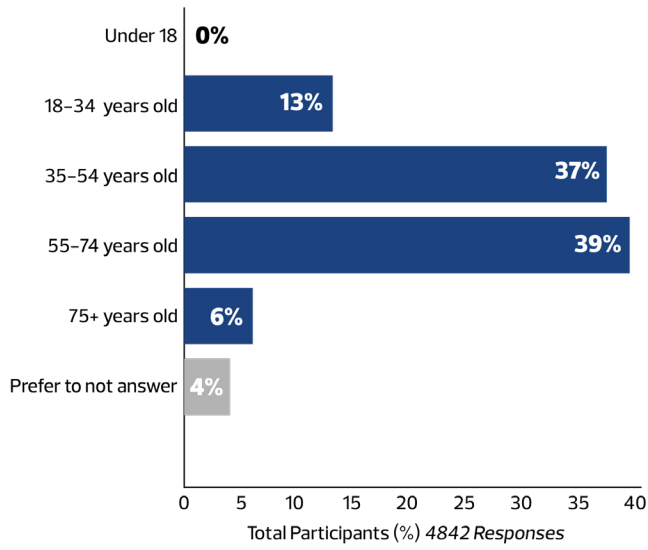
## How was data analyzed?

Survey responses from equity-deserving groups (e.g., women, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, people with disabilities, people who have or are experiencing homelessness, and more) were compared to survey results from all respondents. Throughout the report, the GBA+ Considerations sections highlight examples of where responses from equity-deserving groups differed by 5% or more from the results from all respondents.

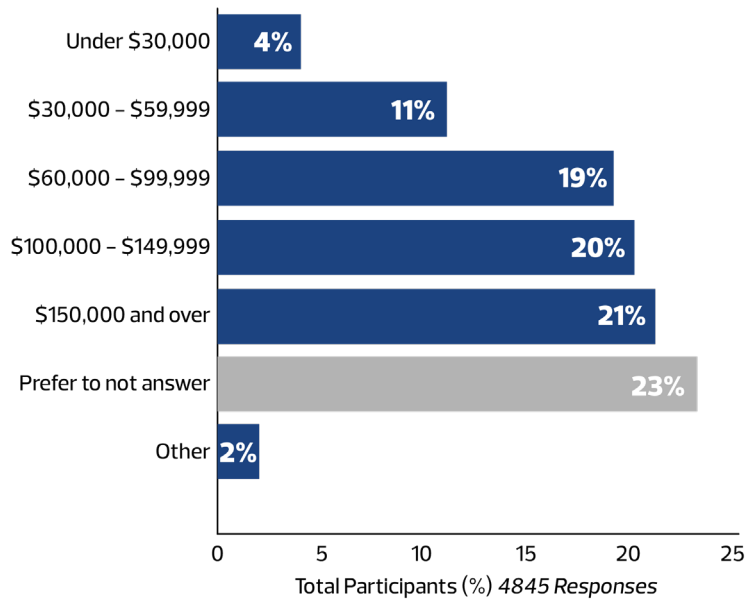
The table below details the number of respondents from each demographic category or equity-deserving group that responded to the survey. The categories listed are those that are included in GBA+ analysis throughout the survey results section of this report.

Demographics	Number of respondents
People who are or have experienced homelessness	152
Youth and young adults, 24 years or younger	81
Older adults, 65 years or older	916
People who are Indigenous	156
Women	2,014
People who are gender diverse	104
People who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+	424
Newcomers to Canada	53
People with household incomes under \$30,000	163
People with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$59,99	383
People who walk with a stroller, wagon or small children	408
People with disabilities	632
People who support people with disabilities	356

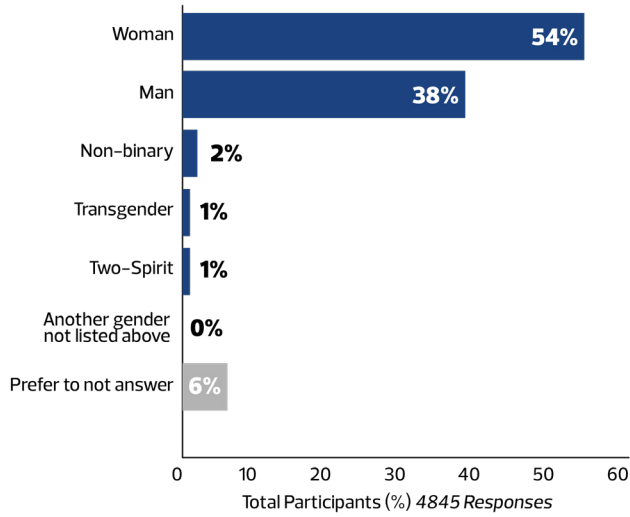
## AGE



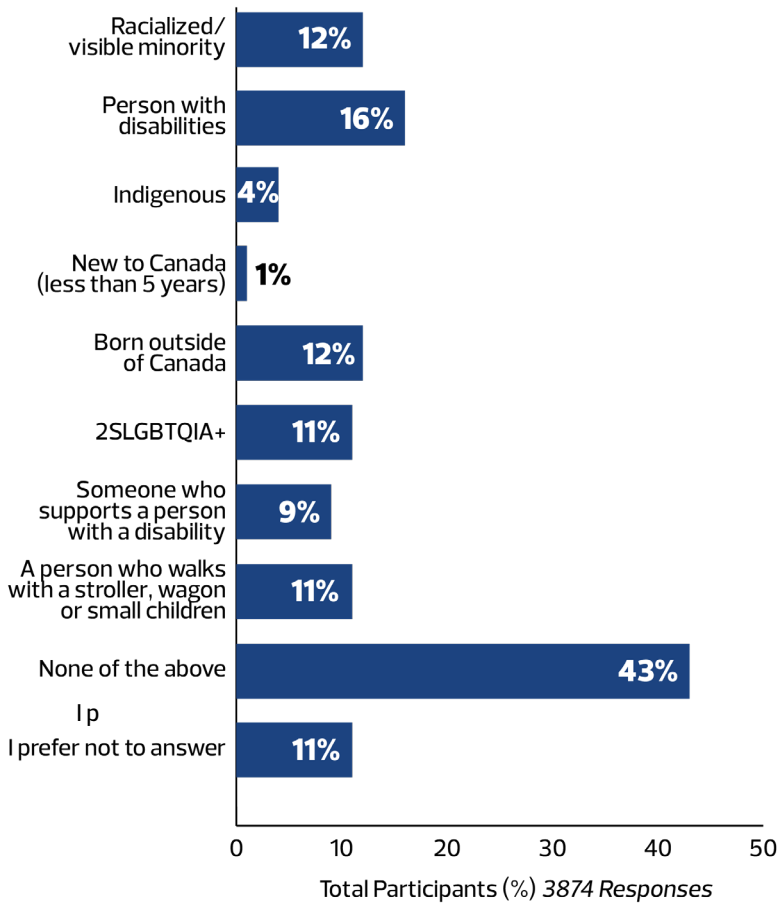
## INCOME



## GENDER

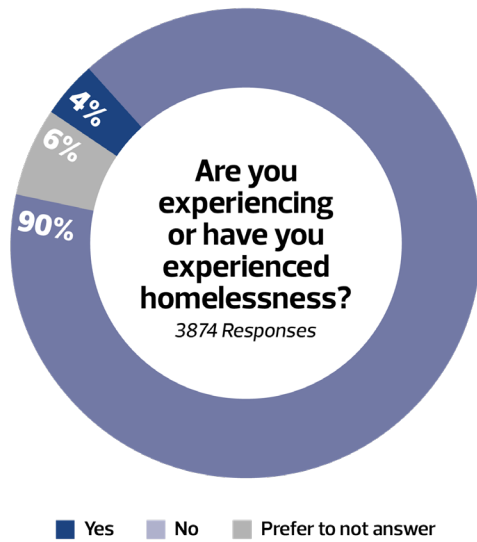


## OTHER IDENTITIES





## HOMELESSNESS



### Discriminatory Comments

Survey participants provided comments that were discriminatory to people experiencing homelessness, people experiencing substance use disorders, and transgender or gender diverse (e.g., nonbinary, genderqueer) people. Repeating harmful language and rhetoric does not abide by the City's GBA+ objective to reduce harassment and discrimination, so open-ended public comments will not be repeated verbatim in this report.

You can learn more about the City's Diversity & Inclusion Framework in [The Art of Inclusion](#).