

A person in a suit is shown from the chest down, using a Braille display on a laptop screen. The person's hands are positioned over the Braille keyboard. The image is overlaid with a teal semi-transparent filter.

Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy

Public Engagement

**WHAT WE HEARD &
WHAT WE DID REPORT**

July 2019

Edmonton

Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy

Public Engagement

SUMMARY

Accessibility refers to the absence of barriers that prevent individuals and/or groups from participating, contributing and benefiting in all aspects of society. Accessibility is fundamental to the quality of life, well-being and engagement of individuals with disabilities in the social, economic, cultural, spiritual and political aspects of society.

The City of Edmonton's Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy, C602 ("the Policy") will integrate three existing policies into one encompassing policy to ensure people with disabilities are treated with respect, and have equitable access and opportunities to participate and contribute to City policies, civic engagement, programs and services, communications and technology, employee services and infrastructure.

The three existing City of Edmonton policies being integrated are:

- C463 Accessibility to City of Edmonton Owned and Occupied Buildings
- C466 Integration of Persons with Disabilities
- C589 Accessible Participation in Council Meetings, Committee Meetings, and Public Hearing Meetings for Individuals with Disabilities

Earlier drafts of the Policy were reviewed by internal stakeholders and external groups, including the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee and organizations supporting individuals with disabilities. The City of Edmonton engaged with the public to advise on the proposed Policy. In preparation for the engagement, the public engagement plan was presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee to solicit feedback on the approach and techniques.

Five public engagement drop-in sessions at accessible venues in each quadrant of the City, including downtown

FEB 26 2019 | 4:30 – 7:30 pm
West Edmonton
Christian Assembly

FEB 28 2019 | 4:30 – 7:30 pm
Meadows Community
Recreation Centre

MAR 05 2019 | 5 – 8 pm
Edmonton
Tower

MAR 07 2019 | 4:30 – 7:30 pm
Clareview Community
Recreation Centre

MAR 13 2019 | 4:30 – 7:30 pm
Terwillegar
Recreation Centre



112
Participants




One facilitated conversation with people with developmental disabilities


MAR 26 2019 | 4:30 – 6 pm
Self Advocacy
Federation |  **11**
Participants


Online survey

FEB 26 2019 – **MAR 24** 2019 | Open web link
(edmonton.ca/
accessibilitypolicy) |  **147**
Respondents

MAR 21 2019 – **MAR 24** 2019 | Insight Community
(Opt-in Survey) |  **493**
Respondents

Internal staff engagement

MAR 05 2019 | Drop-in session
at Edmonton
Tower |  **107**
Respondents

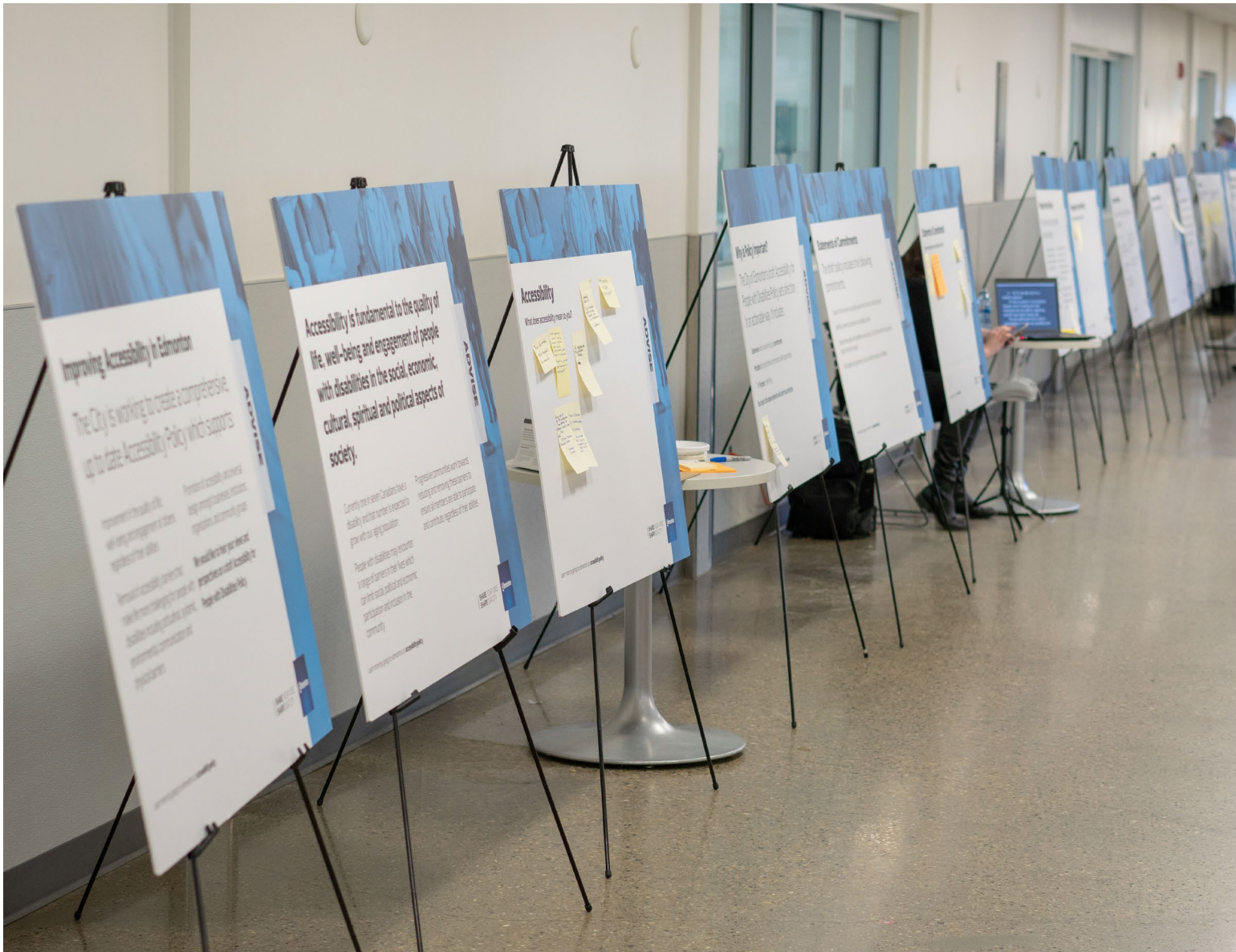
MAR 14 2019 – **MAR 22** 2019 | Internal
Survey |  **172**
Respondents



KEY THEMES

- 1. General Support** – Generally, participants were supportive of the Policy. Many people felt that it captured the key focus areas that were important to people with disabilities. Many participants expressed appreciation of the City's development of the Policy and felt that it represented a step in the right direction for creating a truly accessible society.
- 2. Use an Accessibility Lens** – For many participants, in order for the Policy to have an impact, it is crucial that the City of Edmonton view the world through an accessibility lens. Many participants said that internalizing a life as a person with a disability would go a significant distance in ensuring the realization of the commitments identified in the Policy. It is also acknowledged that ethical issues abound when trying to put oneself in someone else's shoes. This internalization went beyond physical barriers and included how the City of Edmonton staff "interface" with those who have disabilities.
- 3. Expand the Definition of Disability** – Repeatedly at our drop-in sessions participants called upon the City to broaden the definition of disability to include hidden disabilities as well. Many participants talked about "invisible" disabilities that nonetheless impact a person's ability to be an active and engaged participant in the community.
- 4. Create Levels of Accountability for the Policy** – The ability to deliver on the tenets of the Policy was raised. Participants approached this from different perspectives. Some focused on enforcement, indicating that it is needed to ensure that the Policy will be truly realized, whereas others felt that the best way to ensure the Policy's successful implementation would be through the City leading by example. Others felt that the success of the Policy would depend on sound accessibility plans, well implemented with appropriate accountability.
- 5. Impact of Lived Experience** – Participant's responses to the Policy were often deeply rooted in their own lived experience. Many people made specific reference to barriers related to physical access to buildings and services, the complexities of living in a winter city and their own frustration with Disabled Adult Transportation System (DATS). For many people, the Policy will be beneficial to the disability community only when challenges that impact them on a daily basis are improved.
- 6. Standards for Private Sector** – Participants felt that the Policy needed to be more explicit about how the City of Edmonton was planning to guide the private sector in creating a more accessible city. The City needs to serve as a model example for the community as a whole.

7. Cultural Transformation – For many participants, an essential requirement of the Policy is a cultural shift in how the City of Edmonton views accessibility. For many people, the Policy requires the City to address attitudinal and systemic barriers within the Corporation. For many people, the cultural shift means a commitment to education, modelling the use of the access design principles, changes to service delivery, and the presence of people with disabilities in both work sites and at tables where decisions are made in order for the Policy to be realized.



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

PROMOTION

Communication activities used to raise awareness and promote participation:

- Postcards
- Newsletters
- Posters
- Newspaper advertisements
- Media
- Public Service Announcement
- Email invitations to stakeholders
- Transforming Edmonton blog
- Social media including twitter, facebook and instagram

GOALS:

- Understand public opinion on the commitments, principles and purpose of the draft Policy document
- Determine if the draft Policy captures all aspects of accessibility
- Determine if the draft Policy addresses the accessibility needs of the community and the City of Edmonton workforce
- Gauge the overall support for the Policy

DROP-IN SESSIONS:

Large (3ft x 4ft) information boards were strategically placed in a sequential, circular flow, explaining key elements of the draft Policy with questions to encourage comments and/or feedback. Participants were provided the option of being accompanied by a City representative to have guided conversations at each board, or going through the drop-in sessions on their own. Feedback was captured on sticky notes and placed directly on the boards. City representatives assisted, as required, in capturing the participant's input.

To ensure minimum barriers to participation, the following tools and services were provided:

- Plain language explanation of the Policy
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)
- Sign language interpretation (ASL in English)
- Braille copies of the draft Policy
- Large printed copies of the boards
- Printed copies of the draft Policy
- Additional accommodations upon request including a Support Services Provider (SSP)
- Caregivers were involved when necessary to help capture the participant's feedback
- Limited distractions and alternative spaces for quieter conversations
- Additional time, where needed, to ensure thorough exchange of information
- Tables and chairs for rest, if needed, and for one-on-one feedback opportunities
- Children's activities to ensure opportunities for parents with children to attend and participate

FACILITATED SESSION:

A facilitated conversation was held with people with developmental disabilities, which differed from the drop-in sessions as it was a facilitated discussion and involved participants with varying abilities. This discussion was co-moderated through Gateway Association with a member of the Self Advocacy Federation, who helped guide participants through the conversation, and prompted for examples from their life experiences.

ONLINE SURVEY:

A survey was posted on edmonton.ca/accessibilitypolicy, which allowed citizens to provide feedback online. The survey was also made available to the Edmonton Insight Community, which is an inclusive and accessible online citizen panel made up of diverse Edmontonians who provide feedback on City policies, initiatives and issues. Members of the Insight Community were given the option to opt-in to this survey.

WHAT WE HEARD

DROP-IN SESSIONS

Majority of the participants were supportive of the Policy. Key inputs received from participants at the drop-in sessions and What We Did are included in the following table:

DROP-IN SESSIONS

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT WE DID
The proposed Policy captures the key focus areas that were important for people with disabilities.	Supports current direction of the Policy as presented.
Appreciation for the City's development of the Policy and that it represents a turning point in building a more thoughtful approach to supporting people with disabilities in Edmonton.	Supports current direction of the Policy as presented.
There was a level of skepticism about the ability of the proposed Policy to be fully realized. More specifically, concern that it would not necessarily provide a guarantee that positive changes would occur for people with disabilities.	To guide implementation of the Policy, an Administrative Directive and Procedure have been drafted for City Manager's approval. This includes developing, implementing and evaluating a three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan, which will assess current state, identify barriers and establish priority actions to remove barriers.
Other challenges faced by people with disabilities and their families were identified by many participants. There was a need for them to discuss experiences they or their family member faced on a daily basis in order to provide meaningful feedback on the proposed Policy.	The examples provided by participants of their lived experience confirmed the impacts that barriers have on daily life. This information will be used in the awareness and training of City staff.

Specific references to physical barriers to buildings and services. Participants acknowledged that governments have made improvements in designing spaces for people with disabilities. However, they felt that this was not the case for private organizations and asked that the City be more invested in guiding the private sector in using universal design standards.

The Policy does not apply directly to the private sector. However a commitment in the Policy is for the City to be a model for accessibility that encourages businesses, institutions, organizations, and community groups to incorporate accessibility and universal design in their policies, goods, programs, services, communications, technology, and infrastructure.

Questions about what types of accountabilities would be put in place in order to ensure that the Policy commitments would be fully realized and to ensure enforcement.

To guide implementation of the Policy, an Administrative Directive and Procedure have been drafted for City Manager's approval. This includes developing, implementing and evaluating a three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan, which will assess current state, identify barriers and establish priority actions to remove barriers.

Many participants talked about their frustration with public transportation services in Edmonton. This included the impact that transportation has on improving their quality of life and in ensuring a level of independence for themselves, and how lack of sufficient trips at high demand times (DATS) often left them feeling frustrated and angry. Conversations about DATS often dominated the sessions.

Feedback will be shared with Edmonton Transit Services.

Complexity associated with having mobility issues in a winter city and how snow and harsh temperatures impacted their ability to get around. Participants frequently asked that the City place greater emphasis on ensuring accessible pathways are maintained in winter so that people can navigate irrespective of their physical ability. Participants talked about how isolating winters can be for people with mobility issues because the streets and sidewalks are not cleared of snow and ice and how this reality greatly restricts a person's ability to access their employment, appointments or social activities.

Feedback will be shared with administration developing the "Snow and Ice Control - Pilot Update" Report CR_6851.

FACILITATED SESSION

Generally, all participants in the facilitated sessions were supportive of the Policy. Key inputs received from participants and "What We Did" are included in the following table:

FACILITATED SESSION

WHAT WE HEARD

Many participants spoke at length about their many life experiences as a way of addressing the proposed Policy presented. Repeatedly, participants said that if the Policy eliminated the many barriers they experience, they could be supportive of the policy's implementation.

Participants asked that the City of Edmonton look at everything they do through an accessibility lens and that by doing so, it would significantly improve the lives of people with disabilities.

WHAT WE DID

The City is committing to identification, removal and prevention of attitudinal, systemic, physical, communication and technological barriers. These are the five types of barriers to accessibility which are identified in current research.

Awareness and training about disabilities and how to be inclusive of people with disabilities will be offered to City staff upon Policy approval.

The group spoke about their many frustrations with DATS and how challenges with the City's transportation system undermined their independence, impacted their ability to serve as contributing members of society, and their overall quality of life.

Feedback will be shared with Edmonton Transit Services.

Barriers such as sidewalk dips, low volume bus, location announcements on transit, poorly demarcated street signs and intersections were frequently raised by participants and that cumulatively, these issues made living in the City difficult for people with disabilities. The group talked about how lack of retrofitting older buildings in the city was problematic and that greater priority needs to be placed on retrofitting both public and private buildings.

Feedback will be shared with Administration to be considered during the development of Department Accessibility Actions which will contribute to the Corporate Accessibility Plan.

Participants talked about the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities were involved in the decisions that affect their community. Specifically, participants talked about how crucial it was for the City to ensure that the City's public engagement approach was designed to accommodate everyone. Simple things, they said, make a huge difference in their ability to participate in meaningful conversations about things that they as citizens care about.

The City has been working with various external groups representing different abilities, including the Accessibility Advisory Committee, in preparation of the proposed Policy. The final Policy will incorporate what we heard from the public, people with disabilities, organizations serving these individuals, advocates, City staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council. Ongoing engagement with people with disabilities will be undertaken for development of the three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan.

The issue of employment was also raised by participants. Many felt that the City of Edmonton needs to ensure that people with disabilities have greater access to employment opportunities and that accommodation should be made to ensure people with disabilities are supported in the workplace.

The City is committed to the representation, inclusion, and accommodation of people with disabilities in its workforce. One of the five commitments in the Policy addresses this: "As an employer, ensuring people with disabilities have access to employee services including employment opportunities within the corporation and employment policies and practices that ensure a duty to accommodate qualified individuals and current employees."

ONLINE SURVEY

Many of the open-ended responses are comments made to illustrate or explain the barriers faced by people with disabilities. They do not speak specifically to the Policy.

Question 1. Statements of Commitment

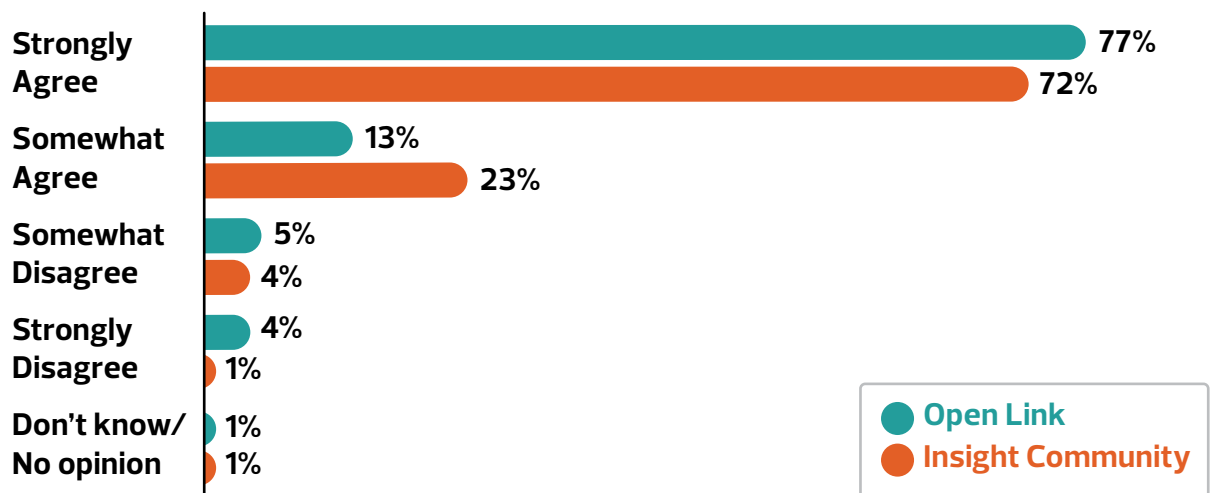
The City of Edmonton will:

- Ensure that everyone has equitable opportunity to access and participation
- Identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers
- Ensure that people with disabilities have access to City of Edmonton employment opportunities and support
- Encourage all organizations to be accessible to people of all abilities

Please rate your level of agreement for the following statement:

These four Statements of Commitment set the right direction for the 'Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy'.

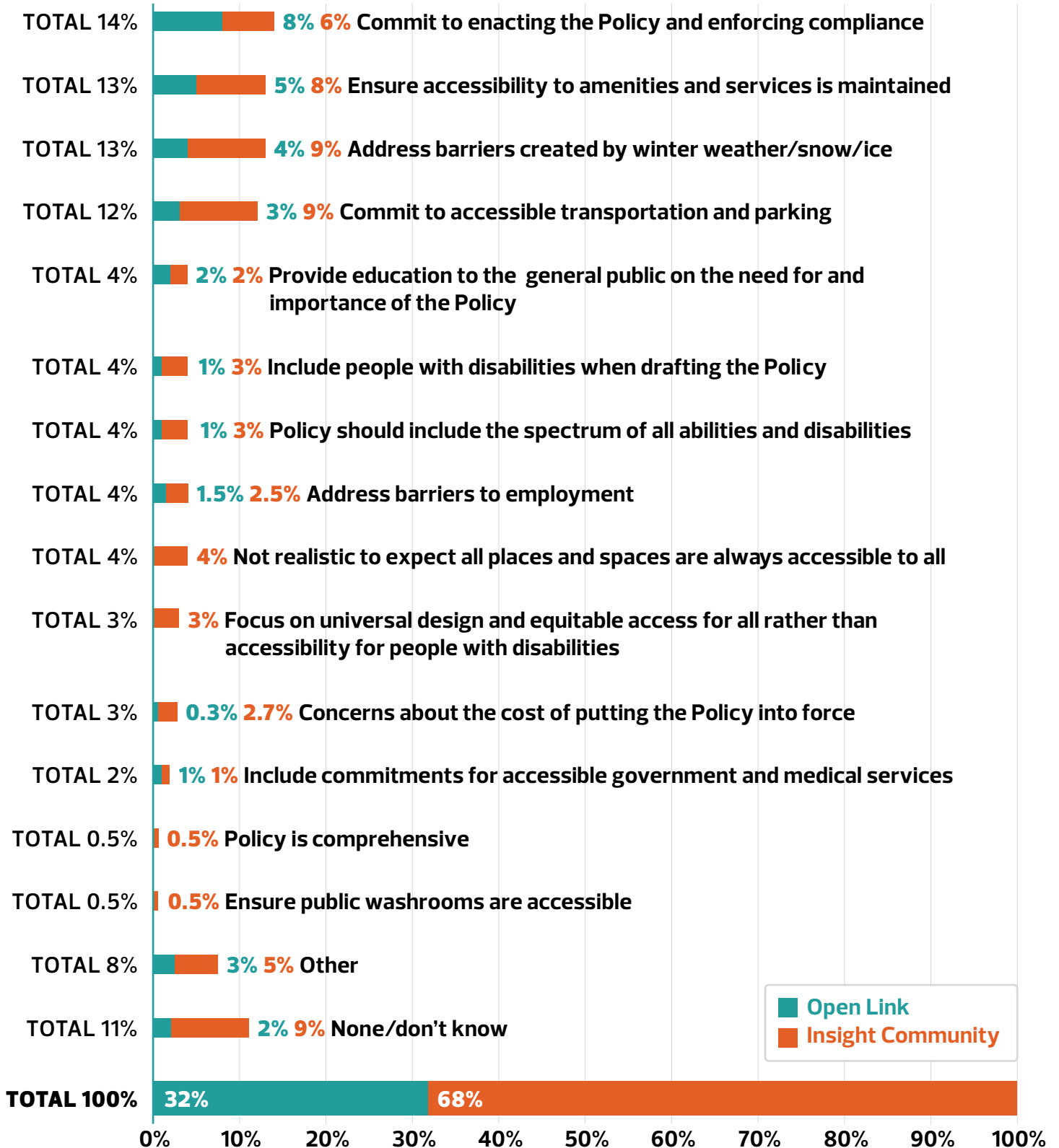
Responses: Open Link = 147, Insight Community = 493



Between 90% and 95% of respondents (Open Link and Insight Community respectively) indicated agreement or strong agreement.

Question 2. What other commitments, if any, should the City make in the Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy?

Responses: Open Link = 97, Insight Community = 208



QUESTION - 2

WHAT WE HEARD

Enforcement: In addition to establishing service and design intentions, the City should also commit to enforcing the Policy.

Winter: The winter environment exacerbates challenges for people with disabilities and the Policy should commit to addressing seasonal challenges and barriers.

Transportation: Accessibility and participation in everyday life can be negatively impacted by transportation options that do not fully serve people with disabilities. This includes the design of public transportation stations and vehicles, limited service offerings from transportation providers like DATS, insufficient and inadequate parking, and the public not respecting disabled parking spaces.

Education: The general public is perceived to have limited awareness of the challenges of living with a disability and the benefits of universal design for all. Respondents recommended that the Policy include a commitment to educating the public on the need for the Policy.

Unrealistic: Concerns are raised that the Policy is setting unrealistic expectations (i.e. making every space accessible for every different disability and level of disability) that cannot be reasonably accommodated.

WHAT WE DID

To guide implementation of the Policy, an Administrative Directive and Procedure have been drafted for City Manager's approval. This includes developing, implementing and evaluation the three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan, which will assess current state, identify barriers and establish priority actions to remove barriers.

Feedback will be shared with Administration staff developing the Snow and Ice Control Report CR_6851 as well as WinterCity Strategy.

Feedback will be shared with City Operations Department for consideration during the development of their Department Accessibility Actions which will contribute to the Corporate Accessibility Plan.

As part of implementation, the City is looking at developing internal staff training and awareness material on accessibility and will explore opportunities for creating a public awareness version.

A key recommendation for the Policy implementation is that a three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan be developed. The intent is for the Plan to be developed. The intent is for the Plan to be incremental in nature, using a phased in approach that will build on current initiatives and with the primary objective of reducing and preventing barriers.

Cost: Concerns are raised about the costs involved in making all organizations accessible to people of all abilities. Cost implications may prevent the Policy from being achievable or may place too heavy a burden on business owners and taxpayers.

The Corporate Accessibility Plan will address budget implications as they review current and future considerations for change. A Commitment in the Policy is for the City to be a model for accessibility that encourages businesses, institutions, organizations, and community groups to incorporate accessibility and universal design in their organization's policies, goods, programs, services, communications, technology, and infrastructure.



Question 3. Principles of the draft Policy

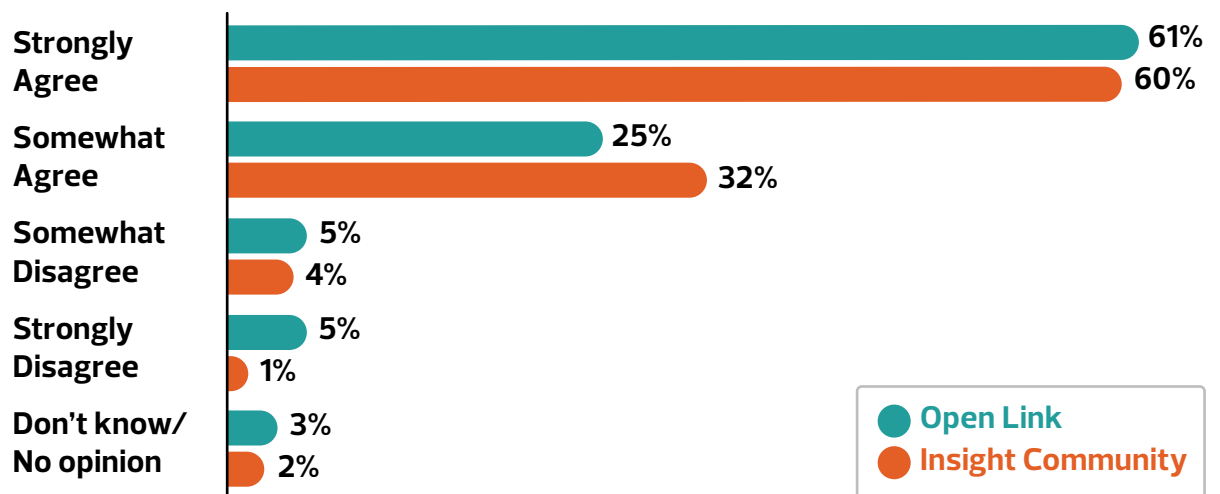
The City of Edmonton has adopted the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design principles, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the proposed Canada Accessibility Act to support the development and implementation of:

- City policies
- Civic engagement (public engagement, interaction with City Council)
- Programs and services
- Communications and technology (websites, 311)
- Infrastructure (facilities, open spaces and transportation)
- Accessibility principles are aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the proposed Canada Accessibility Act, which are to:
 - Promote, protect and ensure the full and equitable enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all people with disabilities
 - Promote respect for their inherent dignity
- Universal design is all about creating environments, products, services and information that is accessible to all people regardless of their ability. Some of the principles of universal design include equitable and flexible use.

Please rate your level of agreement for the following statement:

These principles will result in a City that is accessible and usable for everyone.

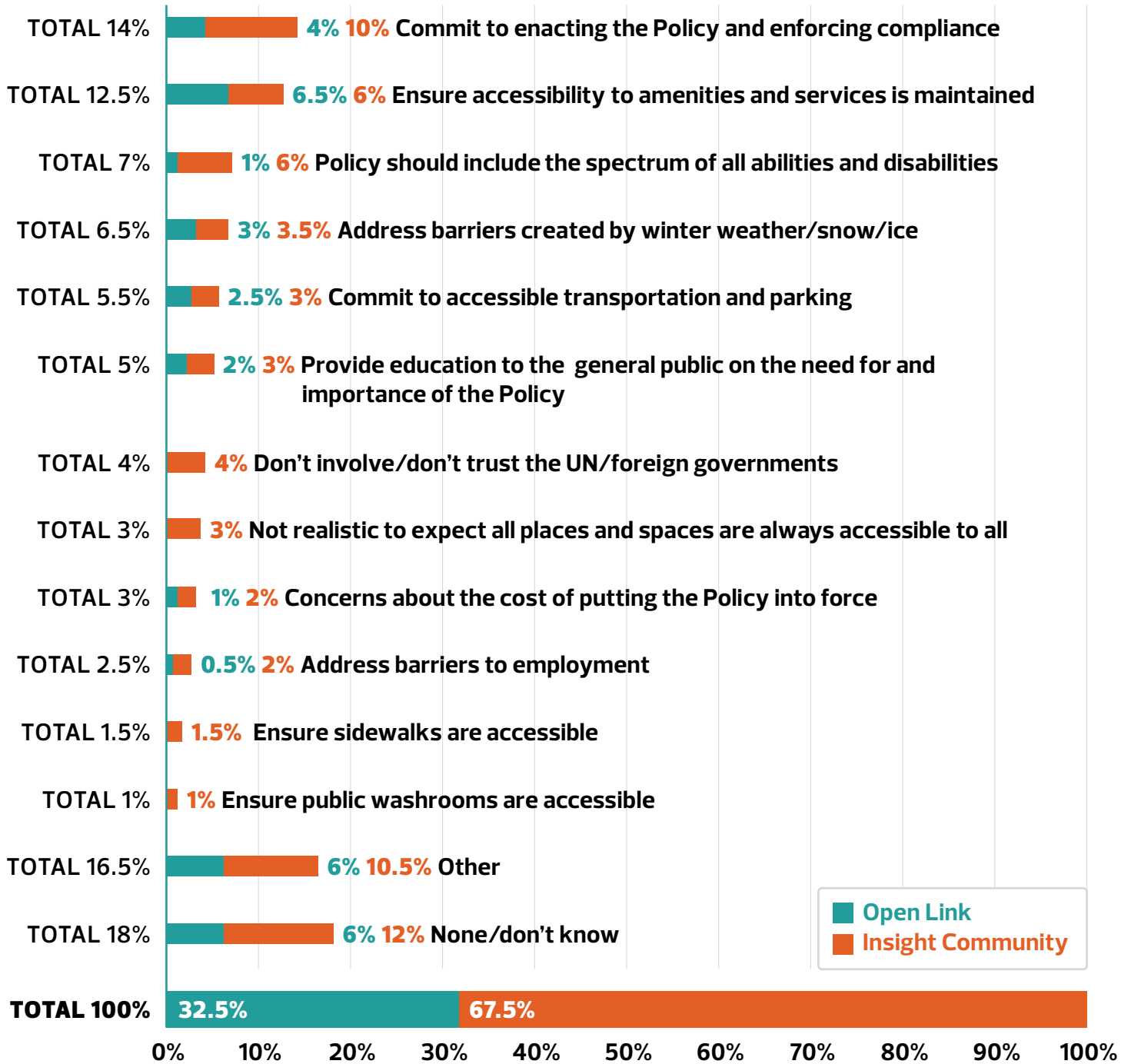
Responses: Open Link = 147, Insight Community = 493



Between 86% and 92% of respondents (Open Link and Insight Community respectively) indicated agreement or strong agreement.

Question 4. What other principles, if any, should the City include and why?

Responses: Open Link = 56, Insight Community = 116



QUESTION - 4

WHAT WE HEARD

Respondents shared positive comments about a universal design approach. However, concerns also continue to be raised about the ability to achieve a City that is “accessible and usable for everyone” and the costs that will be incurred.

WHAT WE DID

A key recommendation for the Policy implementation is that a Corporate Accessibility Plan be developed. The intent is for the Plan to be incremental in nature, using a phased in approach that will build on current initiatives and with the primary objective of reducing and preventing barriers.

Recommendations for additional principles include the following:

Inclusion: The focus should be including, not segregating, persons with disabilities.

The intent of the Policy is to provide equitable opportunities for people with disabilities.

Autonomy: Including the voices of persons with disabilities during the development of the Policy.

The City has been working with various external groups representing different abilities, including Accessibility Advisory Committee, in preparation of the draft Policy. The final Policy incorporates what we heard from the public, people with disabilities, organizations serving these individuals, advocates, City staff and the Accessibility Advisory Committee of Council. Ongoing engagement with people with disabilities will be undertaken for development of the three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan.

Definition: Clarifying what constitutes a disability, barrier or limitation.

Definitions of both ‘disability’ and ‘barrier’, as well as descriptions of five types of barriers are included in the Policy.

Implementation and monitoring: Ensuring the Policy moves from goal setting to realization.

Implementation of the Policy will be incremental and is proposed to include development of a Corporate Accessibility Plan which will identify priority actions and will use a phased-in approach.

Education: Informing the public that accommodating persons with disabilities is the norm, not an exception.

Awareness and training about disabilities and how to be inclusive of people with disabilities will be developed upon Policy approval. There is also a website that will include the Corporate Accessibility Plan and any updates that the public can access.

Mental and cognitive disabilities: Perception that the current principles are geared more to physical disabilities and do not adequately address the unique needs of mental and cognitive disabilities.

Disability for the purposes of this Policy includes physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairments – or a functional limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, which, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equitable participation in society.

Question 5. Purpose of the Policy

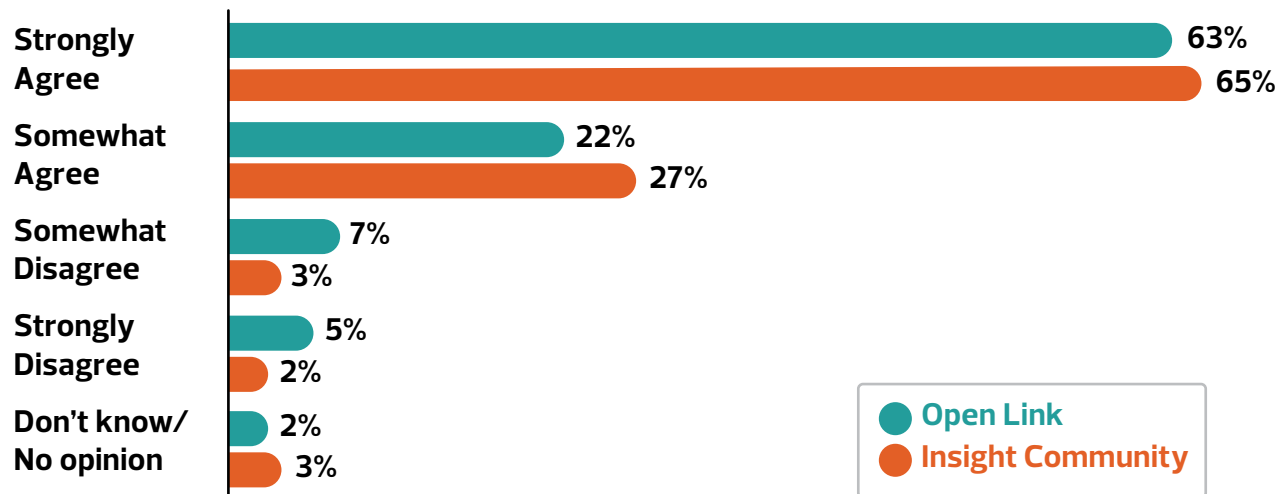
The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that people with disabilities:

- Are treated with respect.
- Are provided opportunities for civic engagement and are able to contribute to City policies.
- Have equitable access to City programs and services.
- Have access to communications and technology suitable for a range of abilities.
- Encounter environments, facilities, open spaces and transportation which considers use by people with a diverse range of abilities.
- Are provided full consideration of individual needs and diverse abilities.

Please rate your level of agreement for the following statement:

The purpose of the Policy will achieve the City's commitments to accessibility for people with disabilities.

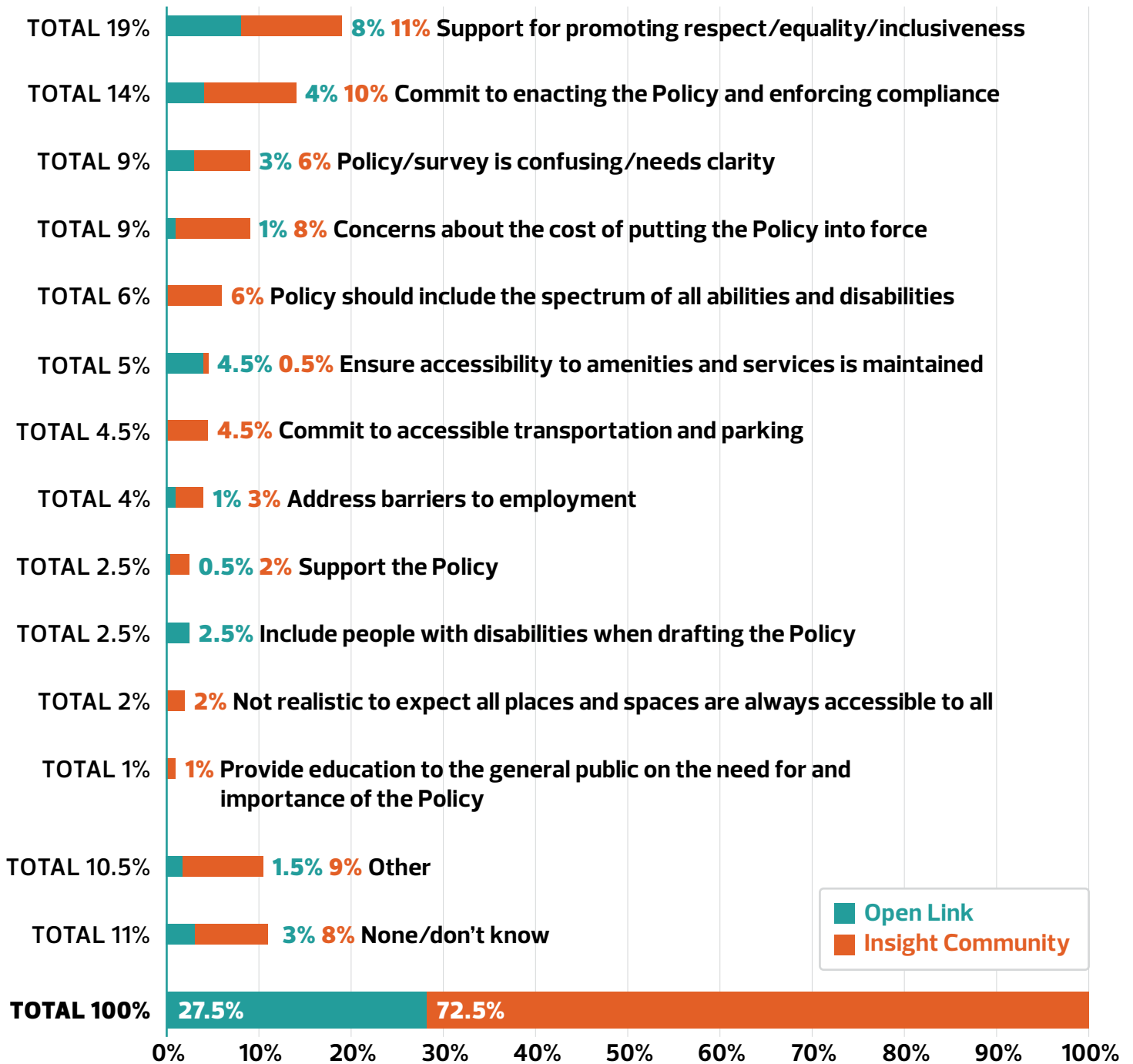
Responses: Open Link = 147, Insight Community = 493



Between 85% and 92% of respondents (Open Link and Insight Community respectively) indicate agreement or strong agreement.

Question 6. What other purposes, if any, should the City include in the Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy?

Responses: Open Link = 49, Insight Community = 122



QUESTION - 6

WHAT WE HEARD

Respect and equality: While there is support for treating people with disabilities with respect, respondents question if this is a measurable outcome of the Policy. If it is not observable and measurable, some questioned if it belongs in the Policy.

Clarity: Some respondents indicated that the Policy objectives could be more clearly communicated and survey question structure refined to be less confusing. Respondents indicate they are unclear what the individual sections of the Policy are intending to achieve.

WHAT WE DID

Respect and equality are fundamental to the commitments of the Policy and the foundation for positive change. The Policy evaluation will look to measure if people with disabilities feel respected as part of the Policy implementation.

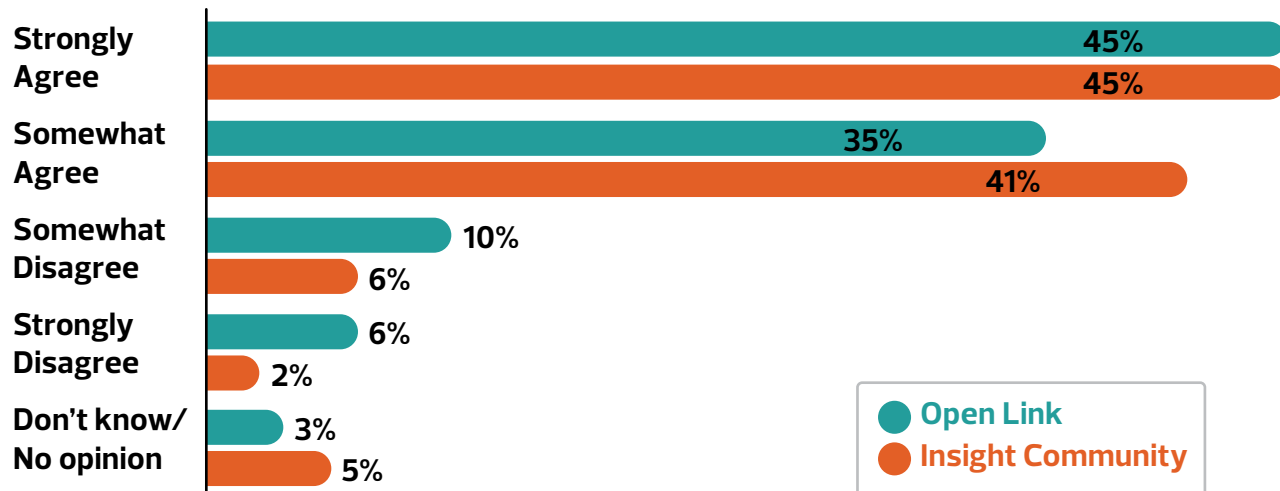
Noted as a lesson learned for future engagement and survey. Individual sections of the Policy states the Commitments, Principles and Purpose.

Question 7. Overall impression of Policy

Please rate your level of agreement for the following statement:

Having this Policy in place will make the City of Edmonton more accessible for people with disabilities.

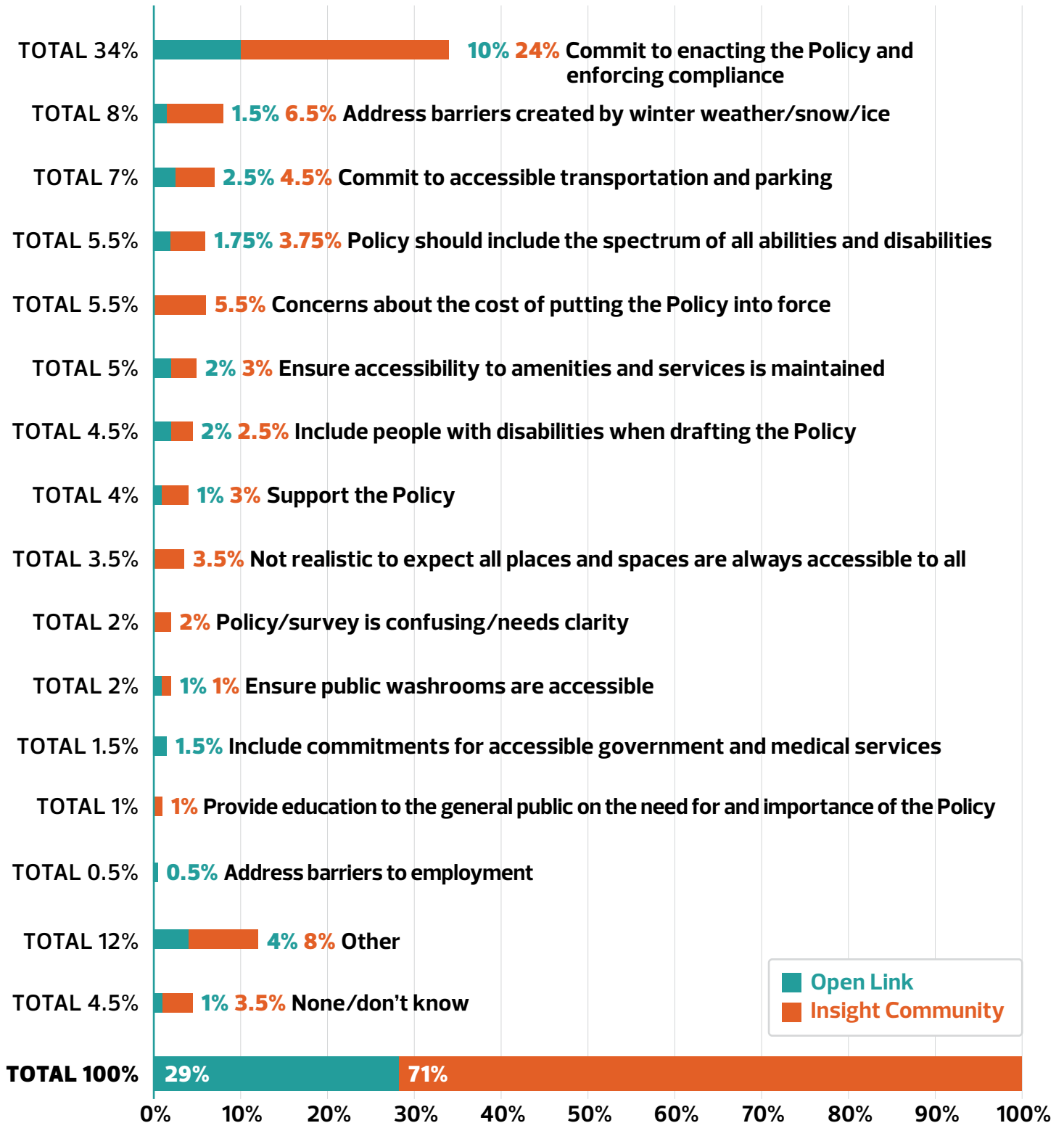
Responses: Open Link = 147, Insight Community = 493



Between 78% and 86% of respondents (Open Link and Insights Community respectively) indicate agreement or strong agreement.

Question 8. Do you have any final comments on the City of Edmonton's draft Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy?

Responses: Open Link = 80, Insight Community = 204



QUESTION - 8

WHAT WE HEARD

WHAT WE DID

There is strong support for the Policy and the most significant barriers to its successful implementation are perceived to be the following:

Monitoring and enforcement: Ongoing monitoring, engaging those who have not embraced the intention of the Policy, and working with them to bring services, opportunities and facilities up to the standards promoted in the Policy.

A key recommendation for the Policy implementation is that a Corporate Accessibility Plan be developed. The intent is for the Plan to be incremental in nature, using a phased in approach that will build on current initiatives and with the primary objective of reducing and preventing barriers.

Education and promotion: Ensuring Edmontonians are aware of and support the need for an accessibility Policy.

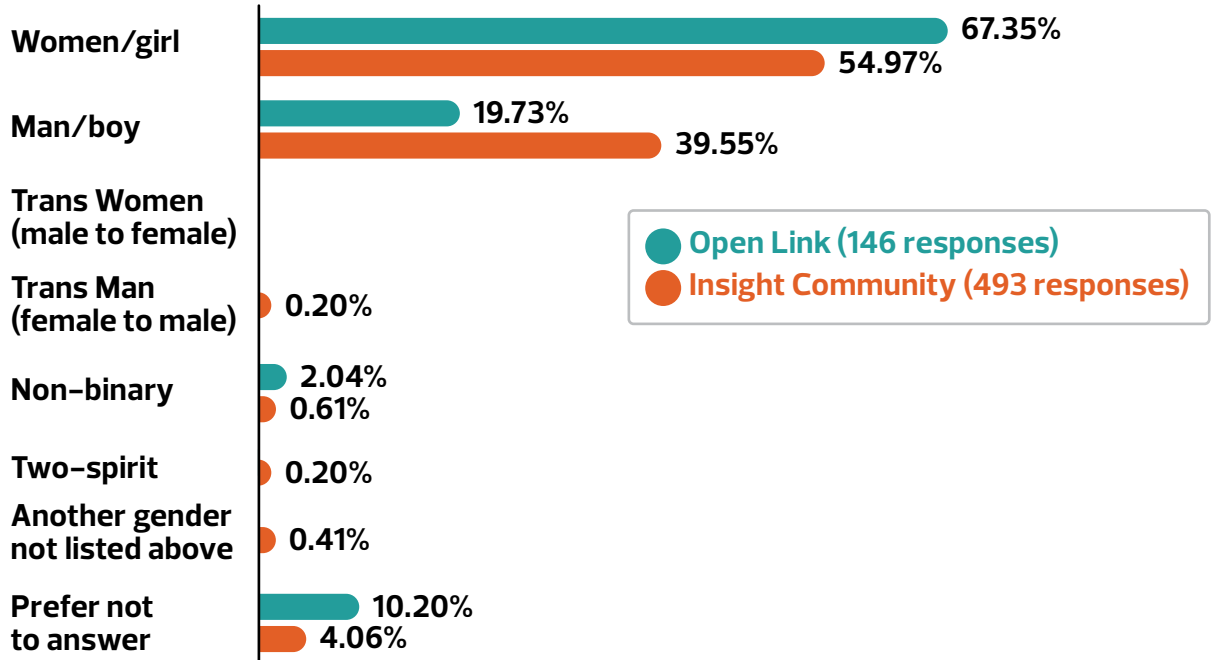
A Communications Plan to ensure awareness of the Policy is under development.

Cost: The expense of implementing a Policy of this breadth and depth is expected to be significant. There are concerns that costs will either become an unacceptable burden or will be a barrier to implementation.

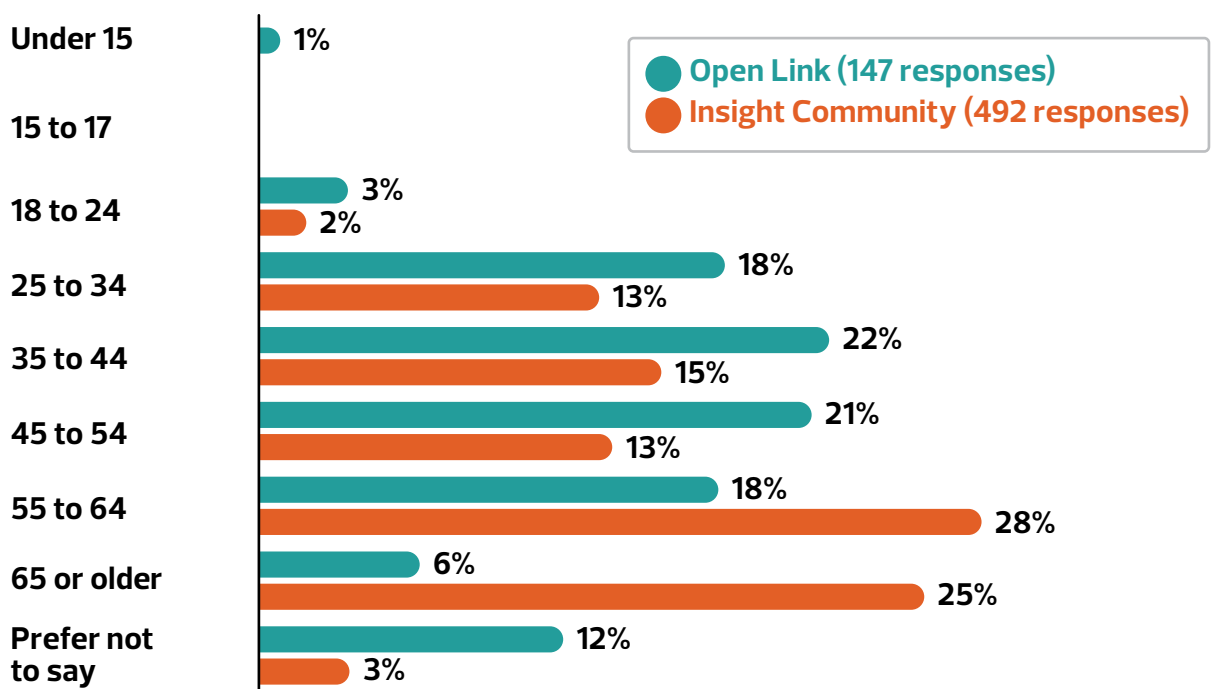
Implementation of the Policy is proposed to include development of a Corporate Accessibility Plan. The Plan will be incremental in nature with a phased-in approach. The Plan will build on current initiatives and work towards reducing and preventing barriers.

DEMOGRAPHICS

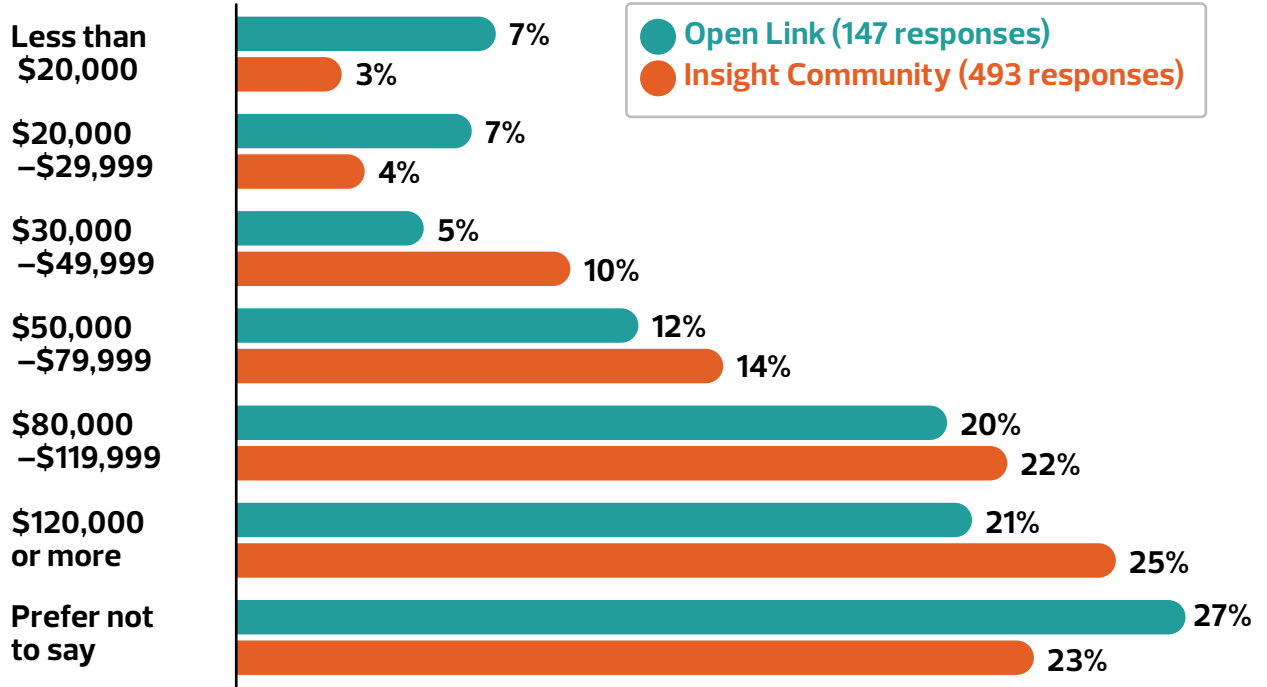
Gender



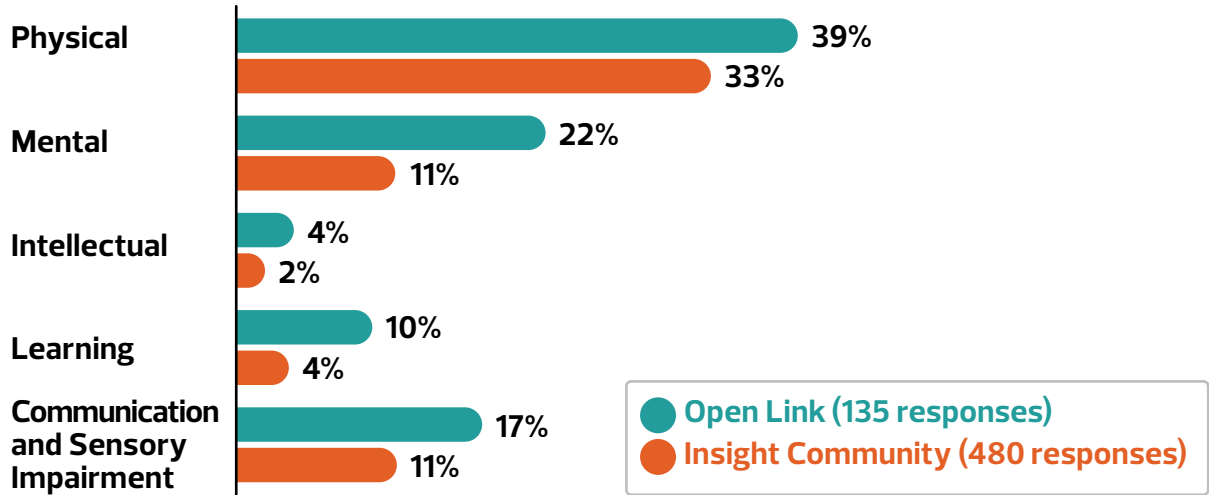
Age



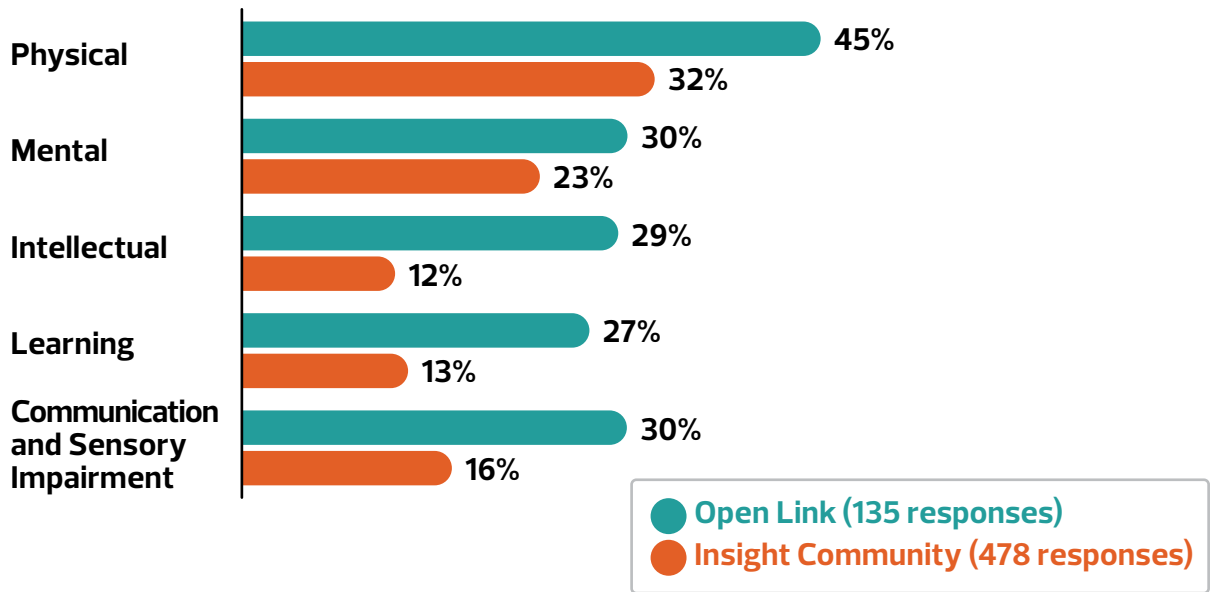
Household Income



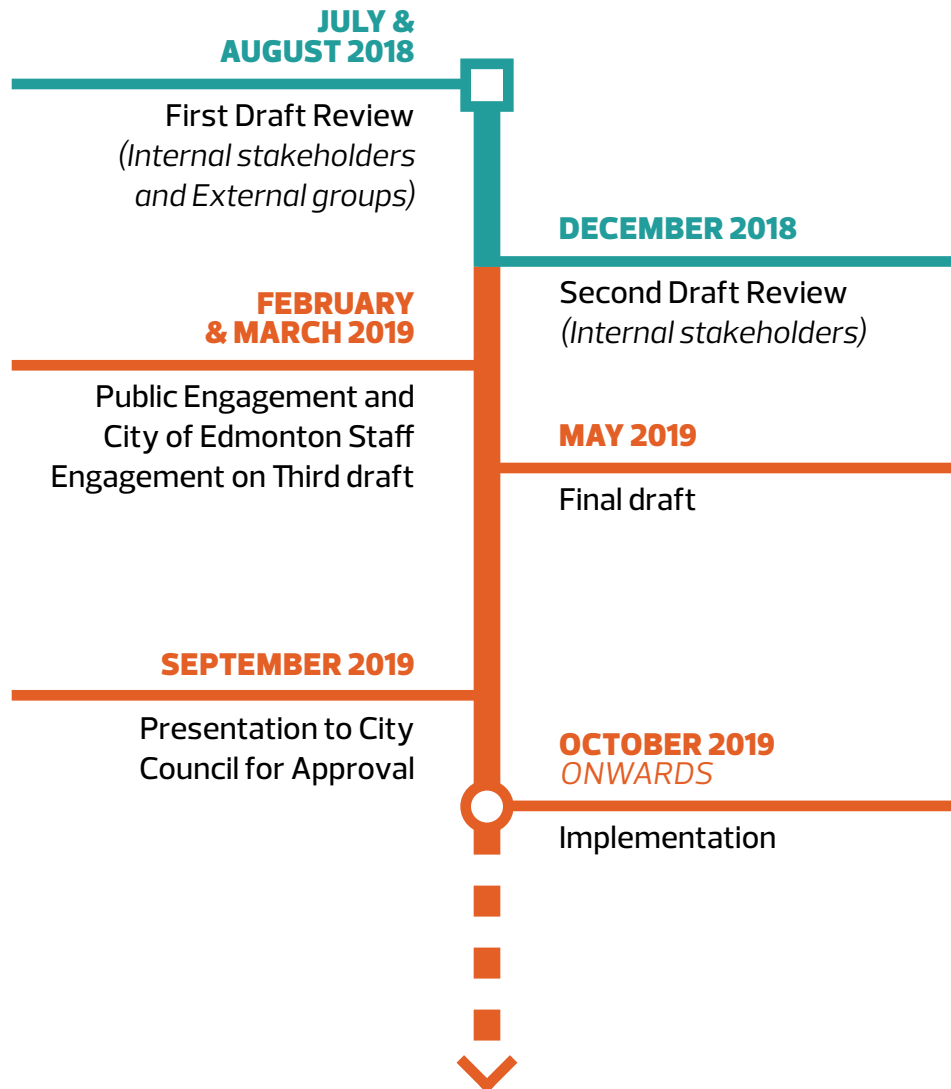
Personal Identification with Disability



Caregiver of Person with Disabilities



TIMELINE



For updates on the Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy, visit edmonton.ca/accessibilitypolicy.