

YORK REGION GREENING STRATEGY REFINEMENT WHAT YOU SAID REPORT



FEBRUARY 2022

The York Region Greening Strategy Refinement Survey was conducted using the PlanLocal™ public engagement service developed by Civicplan.

About Civicplan

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1.0 Introduction

The Regional Municipality of York's Greening Strategy is the blueprint for on-the-ground action; it creates and maintains healthy natural environments that foster sustainable communities now and for the future. The Strategy outlines programs and activities such as tree planting, stewardship, education and conserving natural lands with a focus on partnering with local organizations and residents to make York Region's communities greener.

York Region's Greening Strategy— first developed in 2001 and updated in 2012 – was identified for a 10-year refinement to assess the effectiveness of its existing programs, identify opportunities for new programs or enhance the existing ones and ensure it remains aligned with York Region's strategic direction. This update will also ensure the Strategy continues to reflect the goals and values in Vision, Regional Official Plan and other corporate strategies.

An online survey was conducted as part of the Strategy refinement process. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Gather information about current levels of public understanding and awareness of the Strategy
- Improve public understanding and awareness of the Strategy action areas, associated programs and activities
- Consult with York Region residents regarding their opinions about the current Greening Strategy programs and what they would like to see over the next 10 years

This report begins with a summary of highlights from the online survey. It then outlines the survey respondent demographics with the next section addressing environmental awareness and participation. This is followed by specific questions about the Strategy and its action areas. The last section summarizes comments and suggestions shared by respondents about the Strategy and its future directions.

1.1 Survey Notes

The Greening Strategy Refinement survey was conducted online from October 13 to November 3, 2021. It was promoted through various channels including Region e-newsletters, web advertising, social media and print media.

The survey was open to all residents of York Region wishing to share their views about the future of the Strategy. A variety of questions were asked in the survey regarding respondent demographics, environmental awareness and participation, Strategy action areas and program and activities. There were also opportunities for respondents to learn more about the Strategy, share their views and prioritize future direction for the Strategy.

2.0 Survey Highlights

The following summary of results from the Greening Strategy Refinement survey provides insight into York Region residents' awareness of the Strategy and its programs and activities. Some key highlights include:

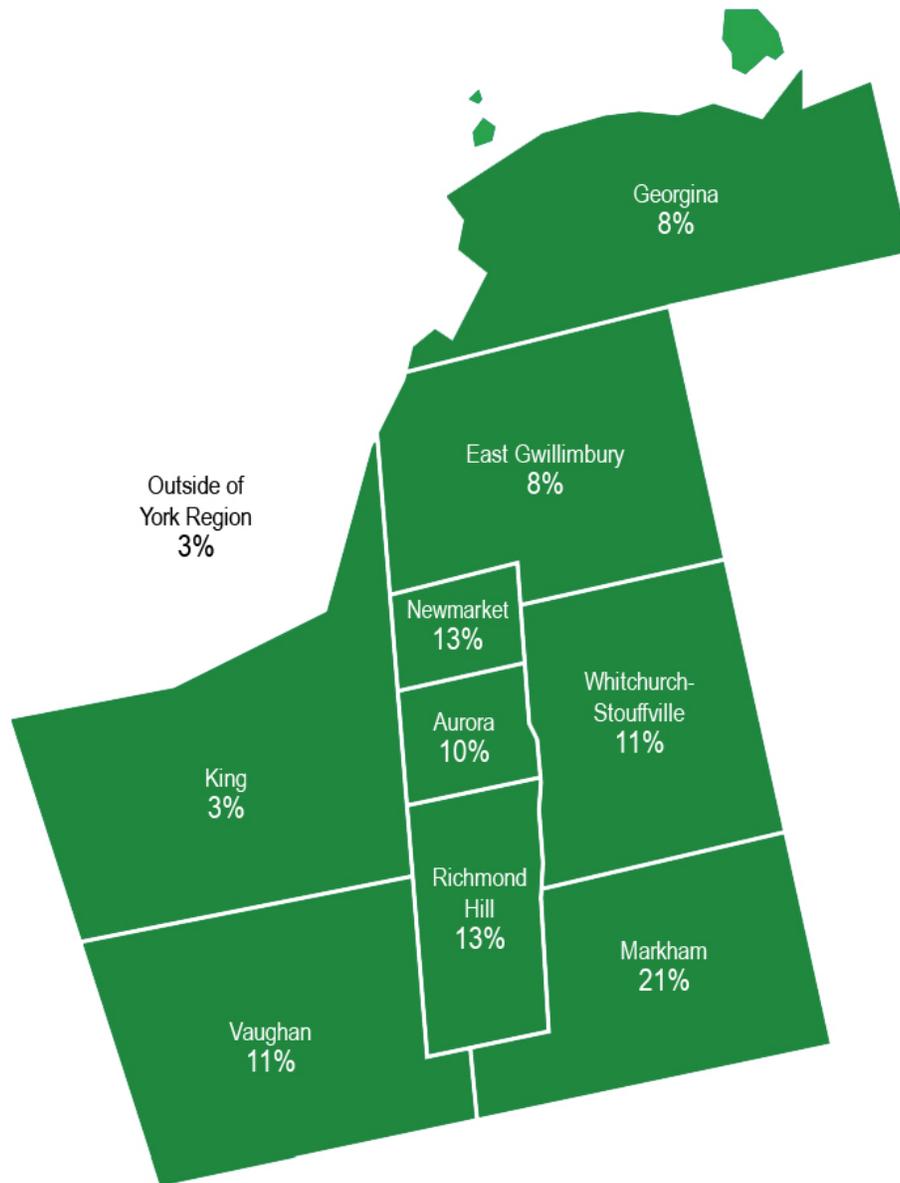
- 96% of respondents indicated it is very important for York Region to invest in protecting and enhancing its natural environment
- While the majority of respondents have not participated in planting or education programs offered by York Region over the last five years, a majority indicated they were likely or very likely to participate in some of these programs over the next three years; specific types of programs highlighted included tree and plant sale events, front- and back-yard planting programs, community tree-planting events, as well as in-person walks, events, and virtual events
- 68% of respondents had never heard of the Greening Strategy prior to taking the survey
- A majority of respondents indicated they wanted York Region to do more in all program areas for:
 - Action Area 1: Enhancement and Rehabilitation – the top program areas were naturalization plantings on York Region-owned and other public lands
 - Action Area 2: Stewardship and Education – in particular, respondents want the Region to prioritize programs that provide opportunities to experience natural areas
- In Action Area 3: Protection and Preservation, respondents indicated their top priority is for York Region to secure land to protect existing important natural features, such as old forests, wetlands, and significant habitat
- For Action Area 4: Leadership and Innovation, respondents indicated their top priority is for York Region to collaborate with other municipalities, organizations, and institutions to share knowledge and develop coordinated efforts
- Respondents shared further comments and ideas about York Region's Greening Strategy; many of these comments related to a desire for improved communication and promotion of York Region's existing programs and concerns about the impact of urban sprawl on our natural environment and farmland

3.0 Who Participated

In total, 935 people participated in the Greening Strategy survey. The following information provides more details regarding respondents' demographics.

Respondents were asked where they live in York Region. Figure 1 below displays the percentage of responses by local municipality. There was participation from all York Region communities, with the largest segment from the City of Markham (195 responses).

Figure 1: York Region Community Participation, by Percentage



Please Note: Two respondents selected Prefer not to Answer

The majority of respondents (66%) were women and 44% of respondents were between 45 to 64-years-old.

Figure 2: Gender of Respondents, by Percentage

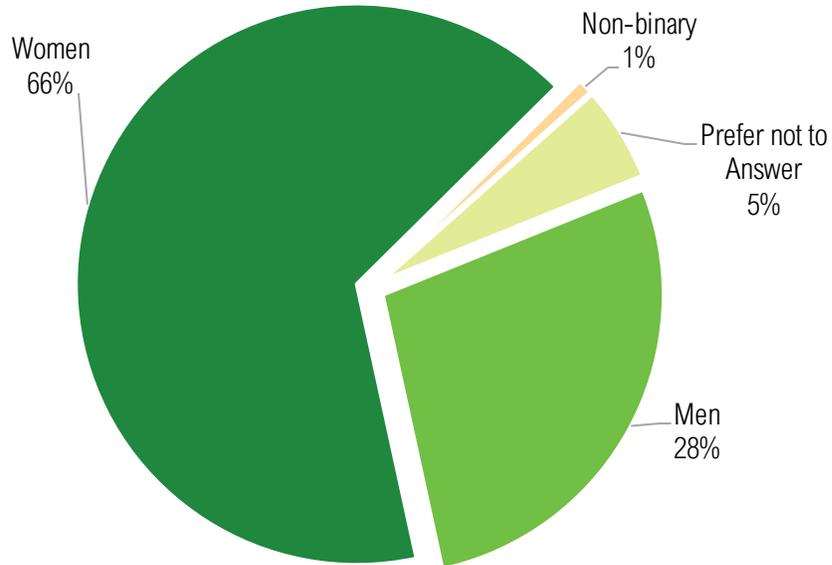
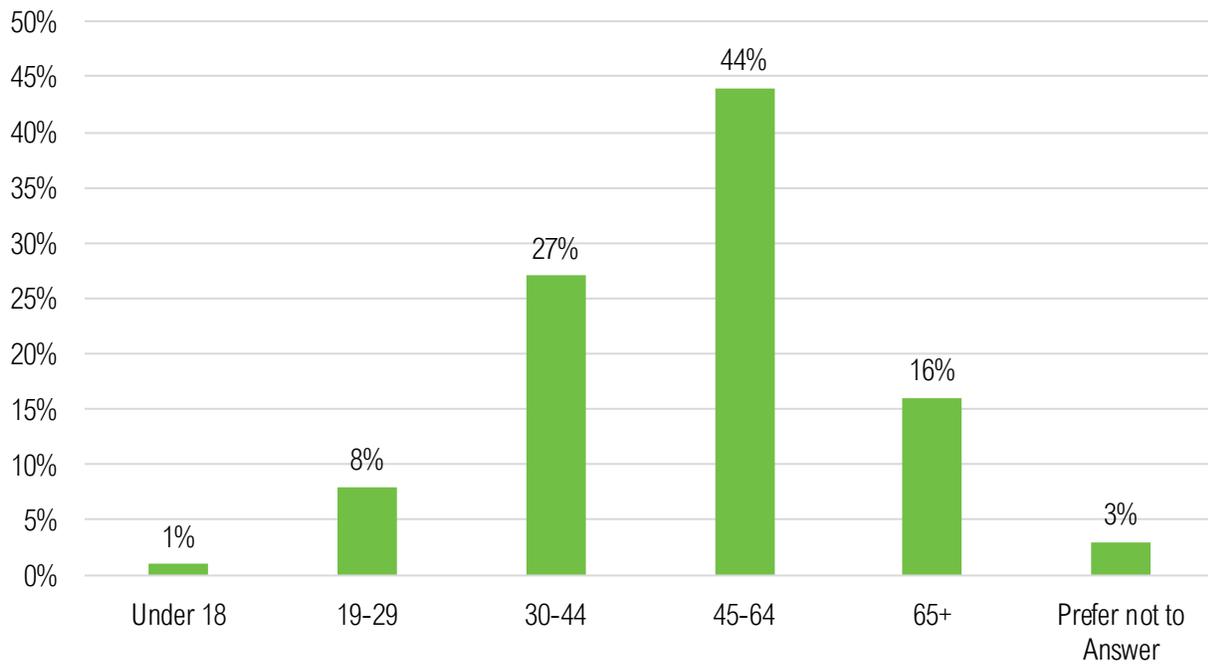
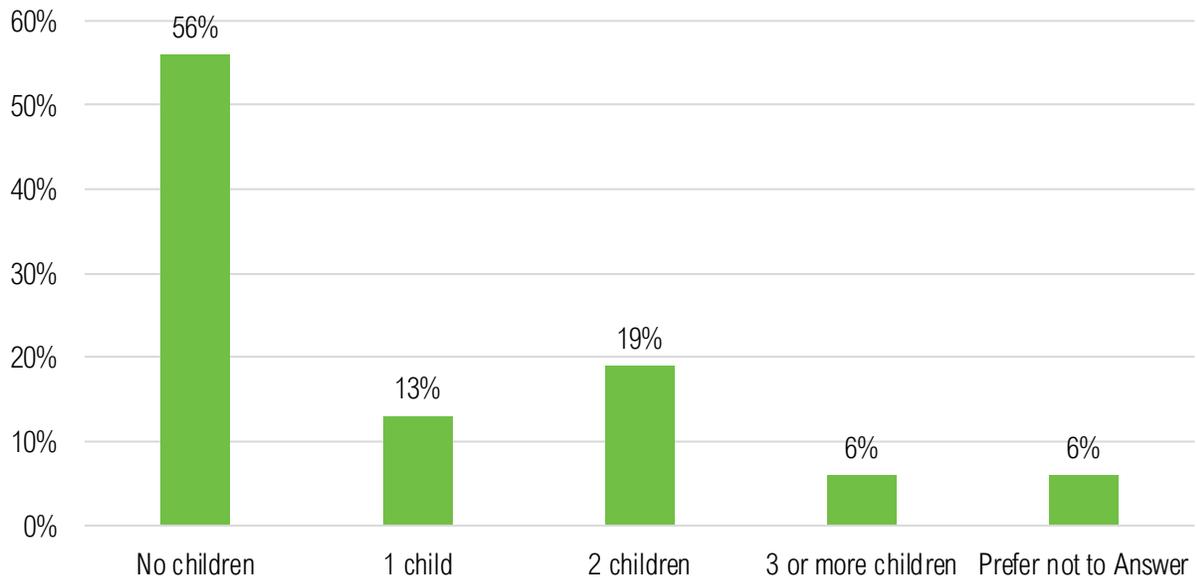


Figure 3: Age of Respondents, by Percentage



Respondents were asked if there were children in their households. The majority of respondents (56%) have no children, followed by 19% of respondents who indicated they have two children.

Figure 4: Number of Children in Household, by Percentage



4.0 Environmental Awareness and Participation

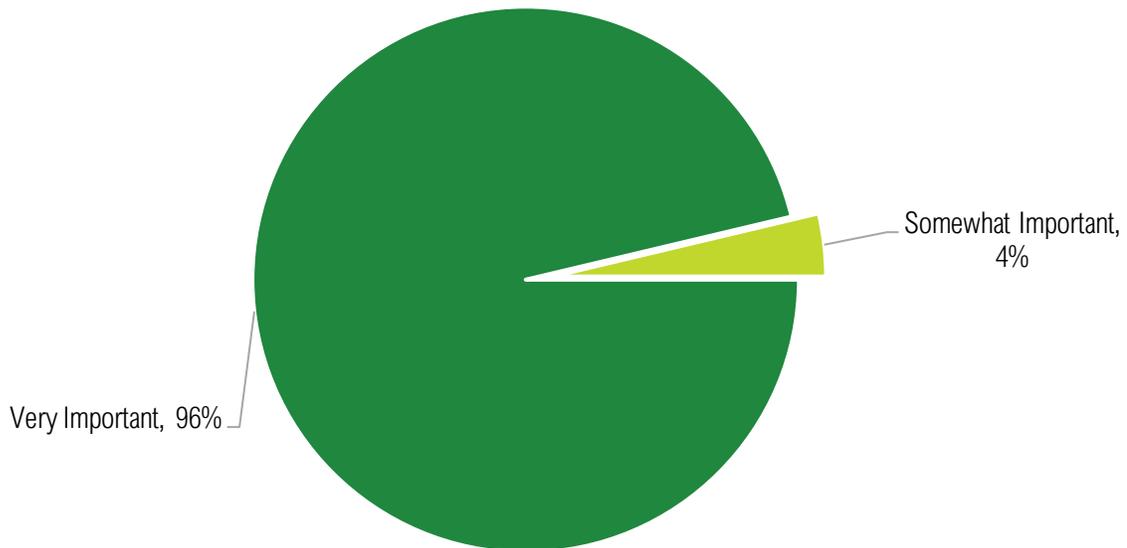
The survey asked respondents about their overall opinions on environmental protection and awareness and the Region's role in these activities. This was followed by questions related to past and future program participation.

4.1 York Region's Role in Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Question: In your view, how important is it that York Region invests in protecting and enhancing its natural environment?

Respondents strongly supported the importance of York Region investing in protecting and enhancing its natural environment, as noted in Figure 5. Less than one percent of respondents indicated "Not Important", therefore it is not represented in the pie chart.

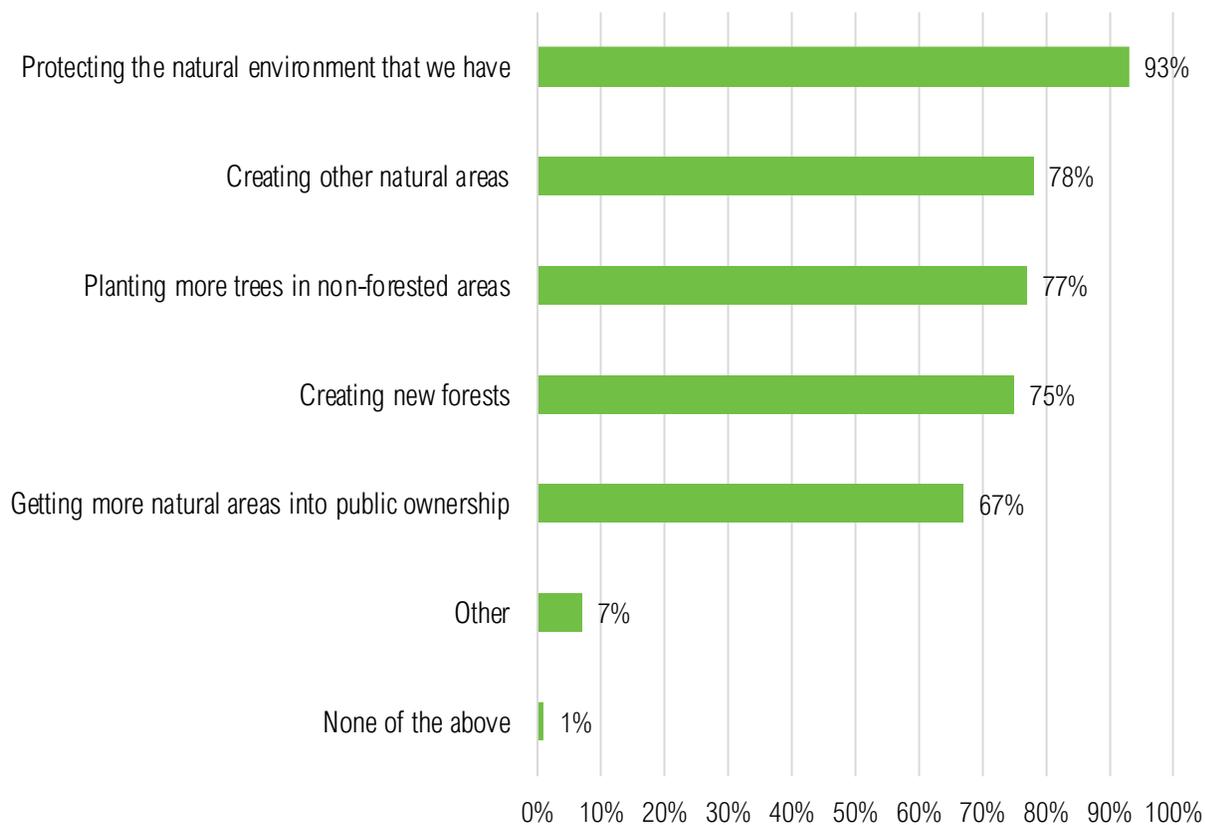
Figure 5: Importance of Investment in Natural Environment, by Percentage



Question: Which of the following should be York Region's role in protecting the natural environment?

This question allowed respondents to select multiple answers and in total there were 3,710 selections. Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of the 935 respondents who selected each option. The top three roles prioritized by respondents were “Protecting the natural environment that we have” (93%), followed by “Creating other natural areas” (78%) and “Planting more trees in non-forested areas” (77%).

Figure 6: York Region's Role in Protecting the Natural Environment, by Percentage



Additional suggestions left by those who selected 'Other' included:

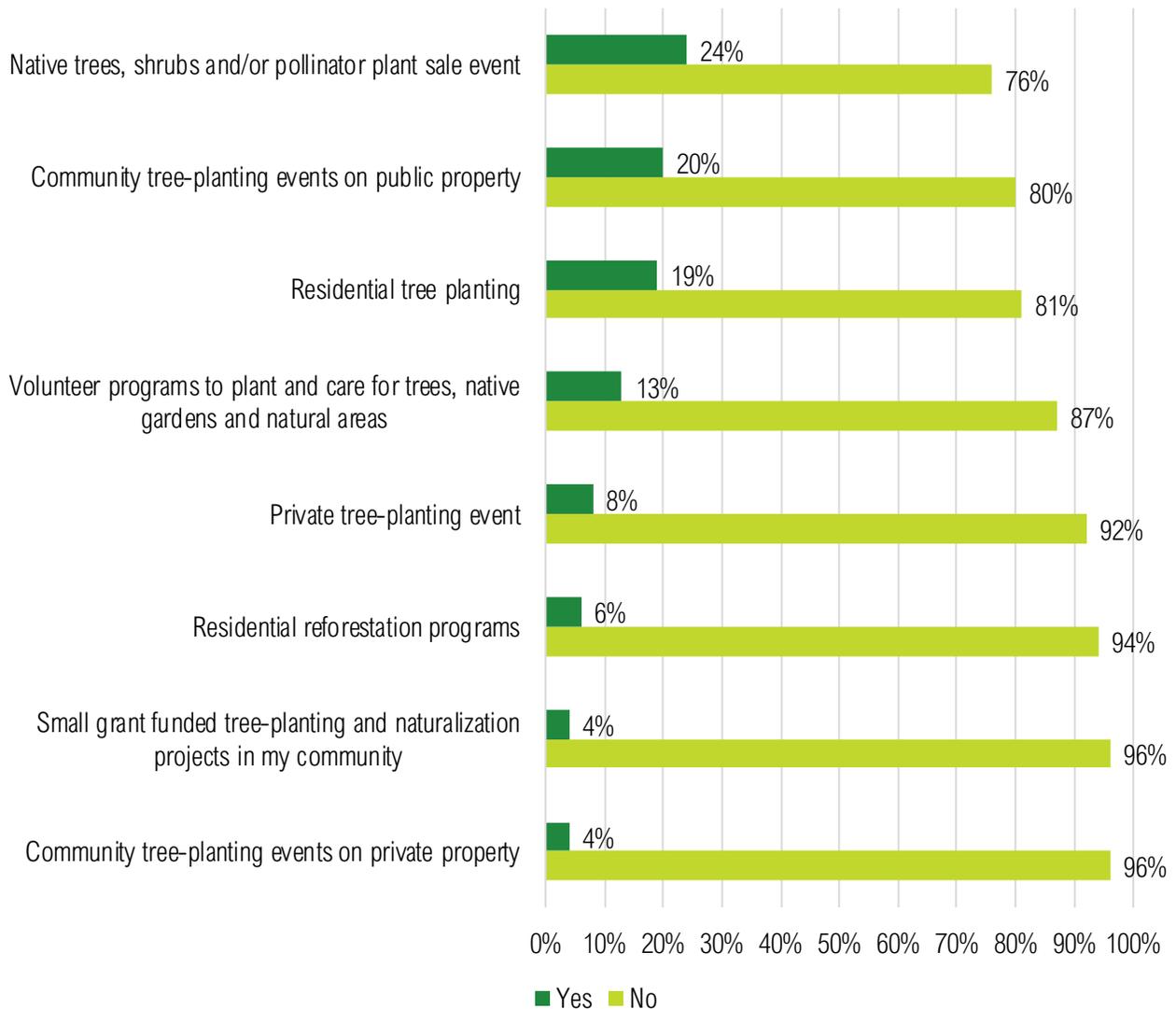
- Limiting urban boundary expansion and residential sprawl on green space and agricultural lands
- Continuing to improve educational efforts about green space and sustainable practices, such as recycling, the value of wetlands and other significant green space
- Addressing invasive species
- Naturalizing more public spaces

4.2 Past Participation in York Region Programs

Question: In the past five years, have you or family members participated in any of the following York Region planting programs?

The majority of respondents indicated they had not participated in any of the planting programs listed over the last five years.

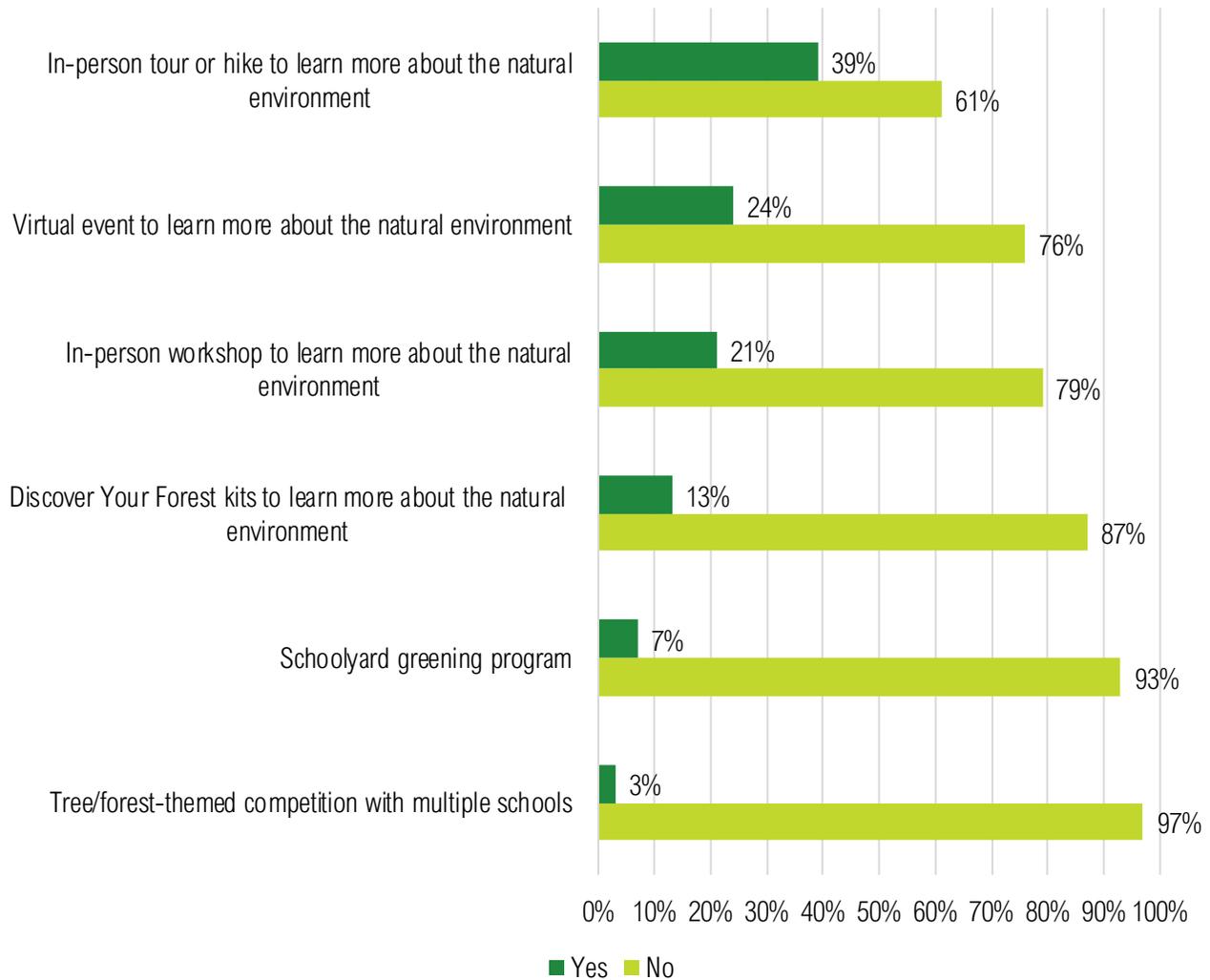
Figure 7: Participation in York Region Planting Programs, by Percentage



Question: In the past five years, have you or family members participated in any of the following York Region education programs?

The majority of respondents indicated they had not participated in any of the education programs listed over the last five years.

Figure 8: Participation in York Region Education Programs, by Percentage



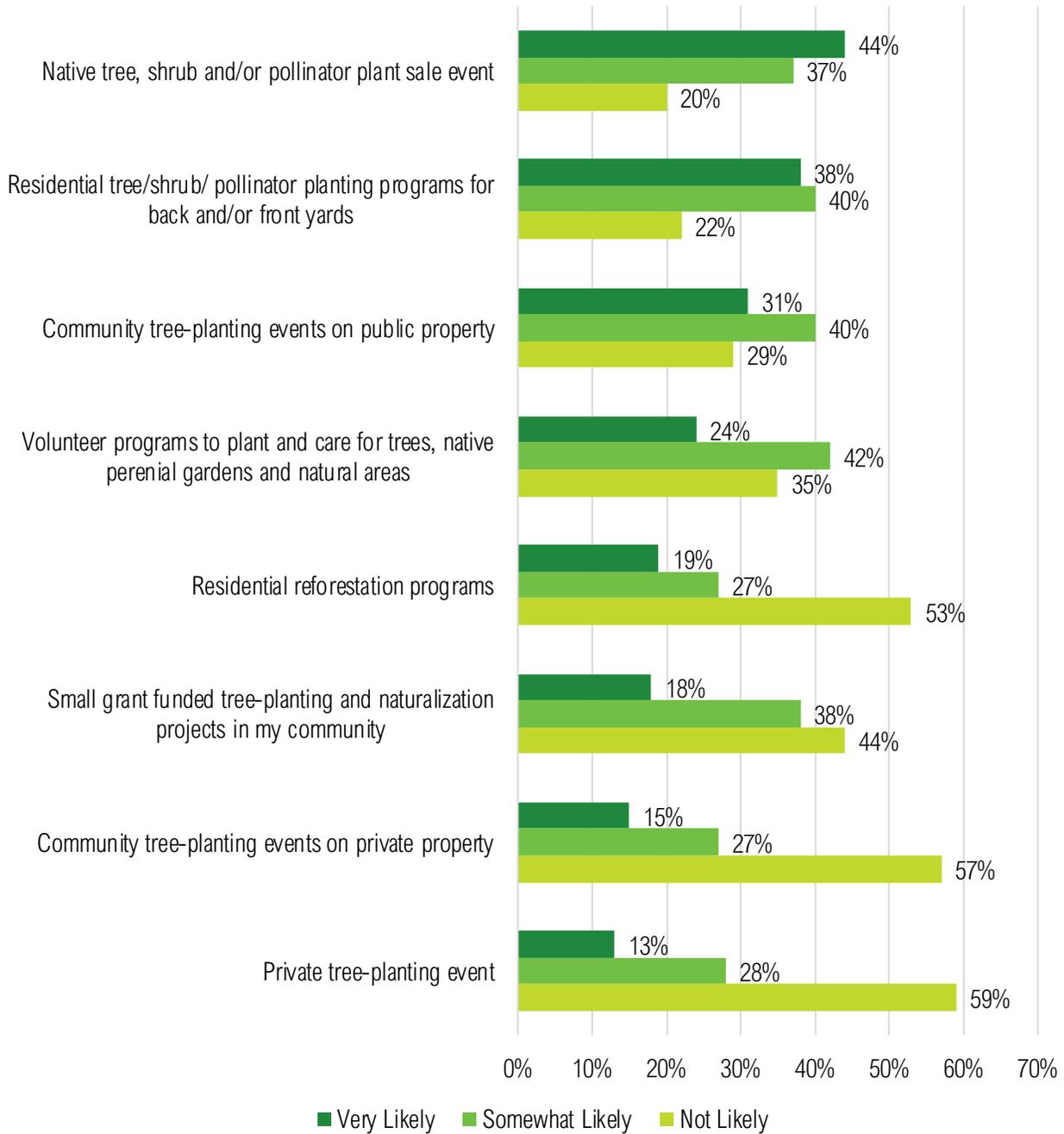
4.3 Future Participation in York Region Programs

Question: Over the next three years, how likely are you or family members to participate in each of the following York Region planting programs?

The majority of respondents indicated they were somewhat likely or very likely to participate in five of the eight programs highlighted in the survey over the next three years, as follows:

- Native tree, shrub and/or pollinator plant sale events
- Residential tree/shrub/pollinator planting programs for back and/or front yards
- Community tree-planting events on public property
- Volunteer programs to plant and care for trees, native perennial gardens and natural areas
- Small grant funded tree-planting and naturalization projects in my community

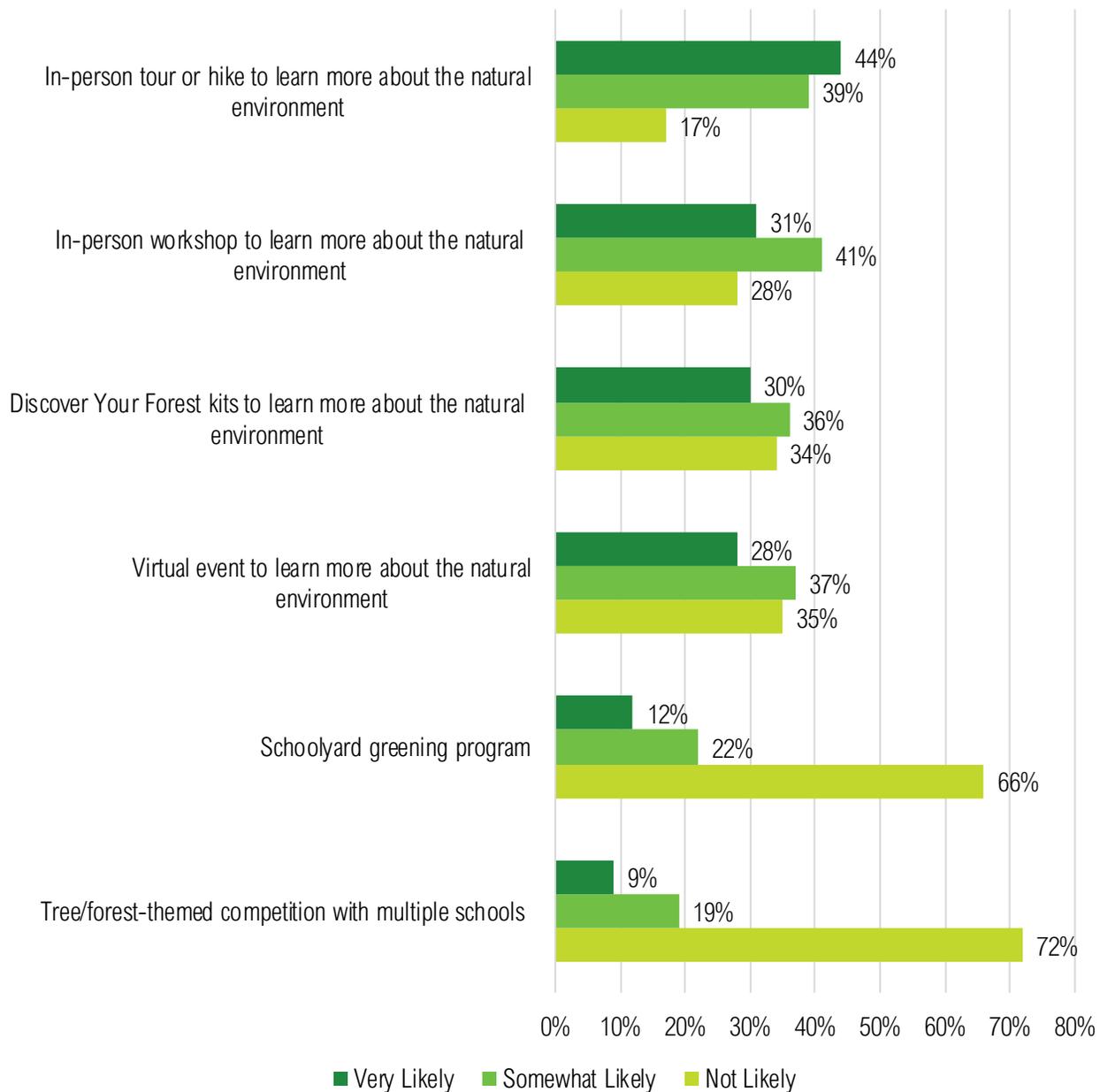
Figure 9: Future Participation in York Region Planting Programs, by Percentage



Question: Over the next three years, how likely are you or family members to participate in each of the following York Region education programs?

The majority of respondents indicated they were somewhat likely or very likely to participate in all listed York Region Greening Strategy education programs, except for those programs specific to schools.

Figure 10: Future Participation in York Region Education Programs, by Percentage



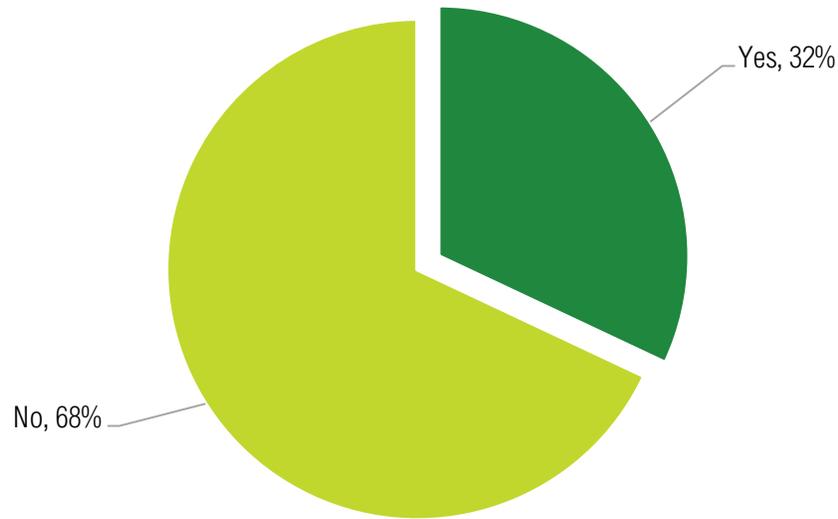
5.0 York Region's Greening Strategy

The survey asked respondents about their awareness of the York Region Greening Strategy and its different action areas, programs and initiatives.

5.1 Awareness of York Region's Greening Strategy

Question: Before taking this survey, had you heard about York Region's Greening Strategy?

Figure 11: Awareness of Greening Strategy, by Percentage



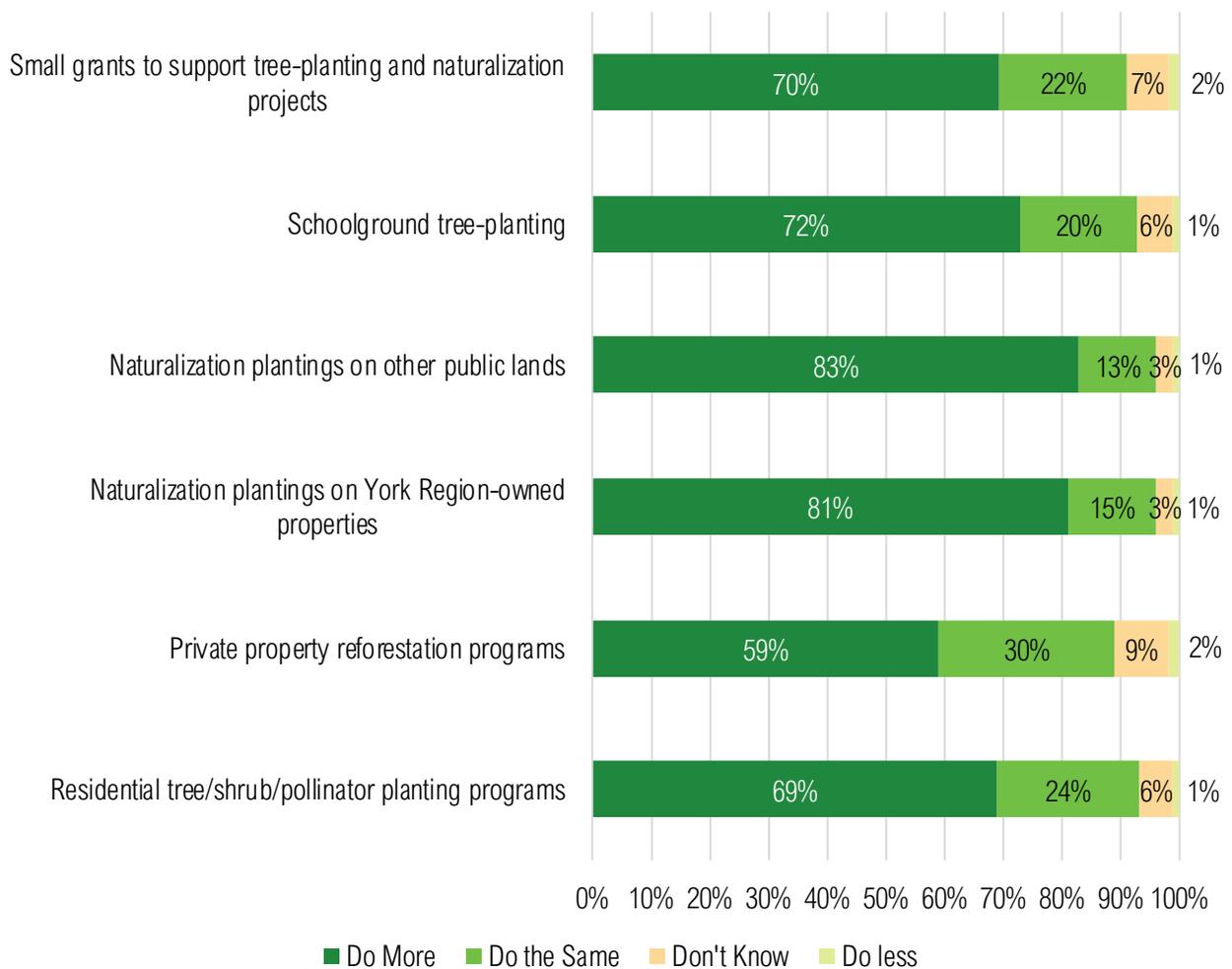
5.2 Action Area 1: Enhancement and Rehabilitation

Enhancement and Rehabilitation includes programs that focus on private land tree-planting, protecting species at risk and naturalizing public and Regional lands. Naturalization refers to the process of restoring natural elements to urban lands like lawns and boulevards.

Question: For each of the following Enhancement and Rehabilitation programs, should York Region do more, do the same, or do less?

A majority of respondents indicated they wanted York Region to do more in all of the Enhancement and Rehabilitation program areas.

Figure 12: Interest in Action Area 1 Programs, by Percentage

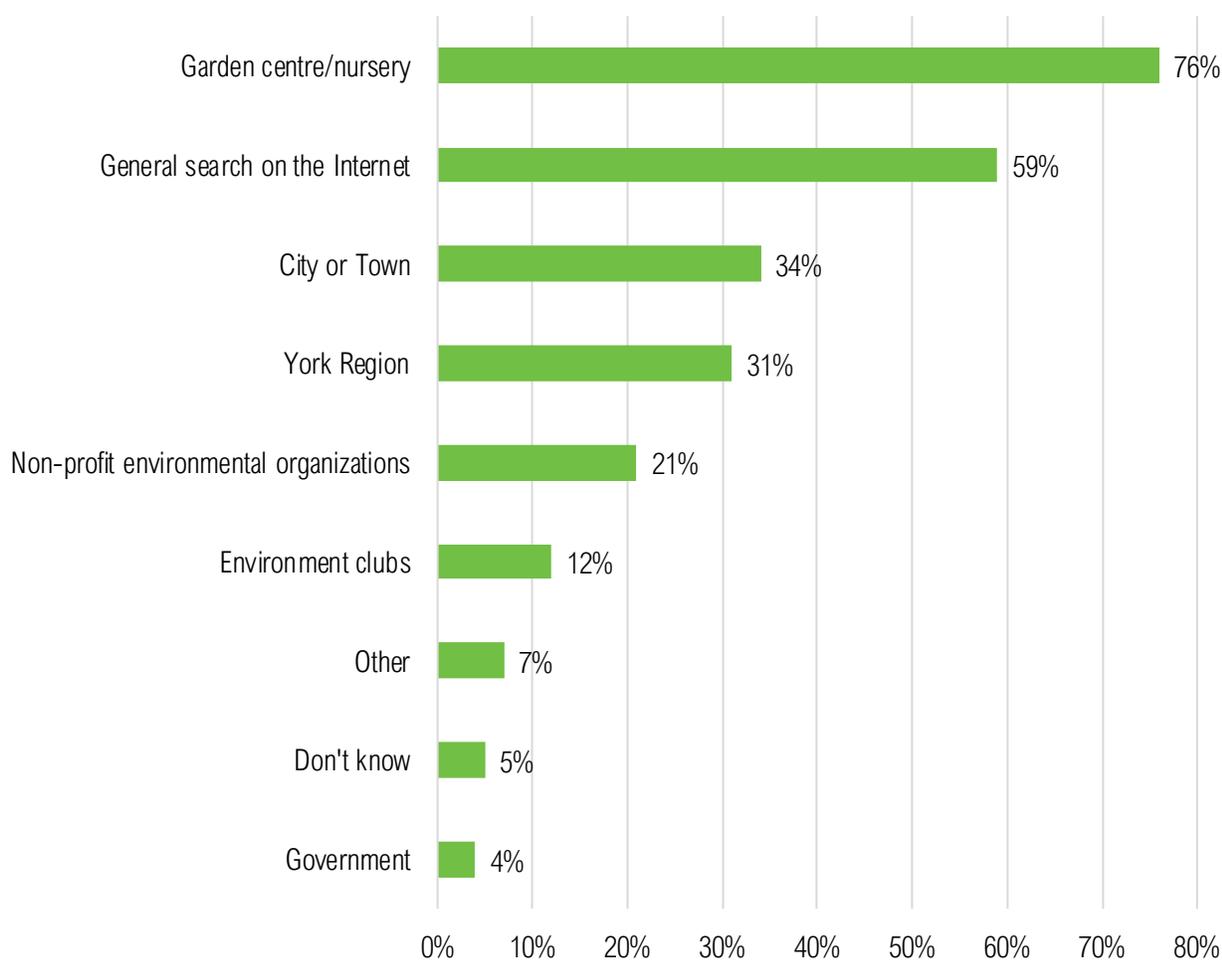


Question: If you were planting a tree on your property, where would you go for information?

Respondents could select multiple options for this question, and there was a total of 2,335 selections. Figure 13 illustrates the percentage of the 935 respondents who selected each option. The largest group of respondents indicated they seek out information through local garden centres and nurseries (76%), followed by a general search of the Internet (59%). Within those who responded 'other' a number of sources of information were mentioned, such as:

- Information from family and friends
- Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF)
- Horticulture or specialist websites
- Conservation Authorities
- Professional arborists

Figure 13: Source of Tree Planting Information in York Region, by Percentage



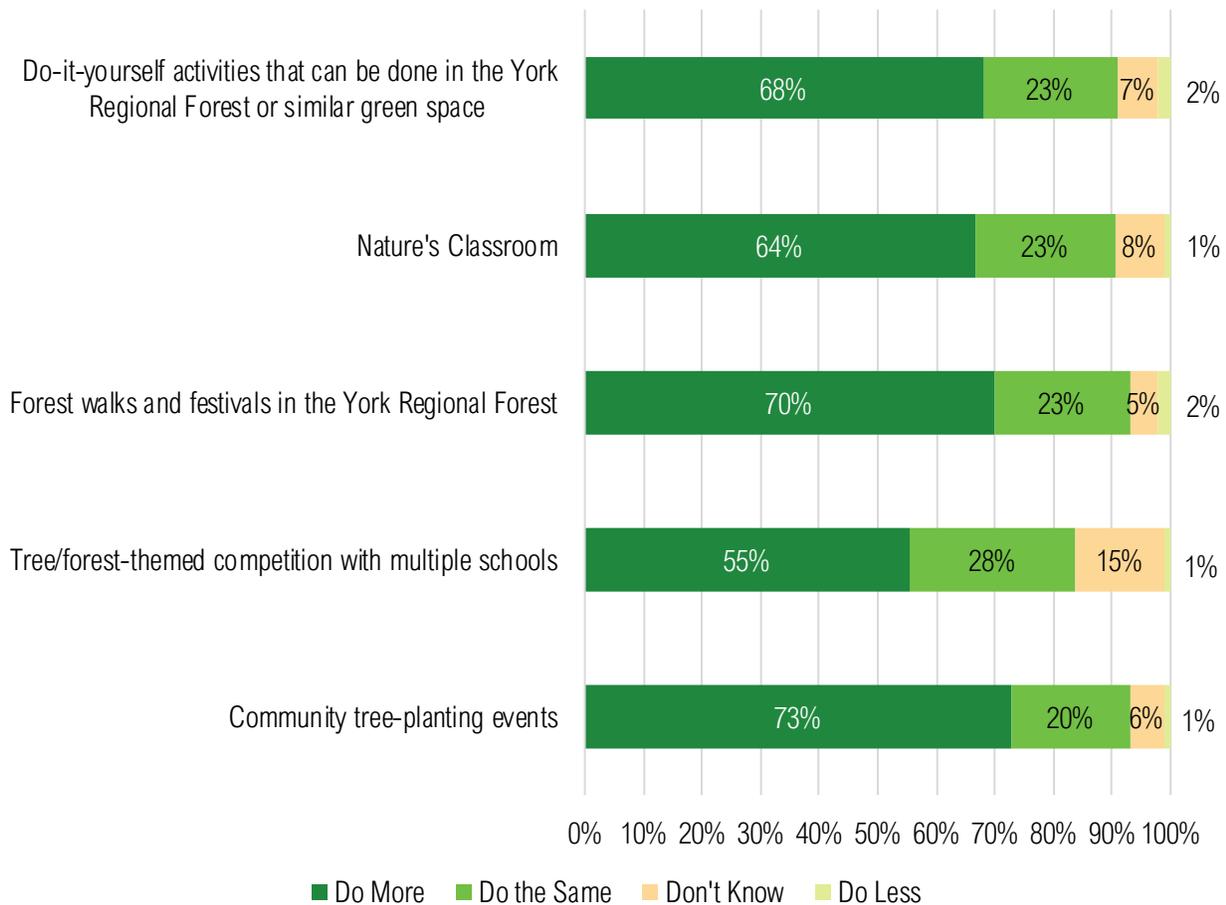
5.3 Action Area 2: Stewardship and Education

Stewardship and Education includes programs that focus on engaging York Region residents through educational programming, outreach events and general communications and marketing.

Question: For each of the following programs, should York Region do more, do the same or do less?

The majority of respondents (Figure 14) indicated they would like York Region to do more for all the programs listed.

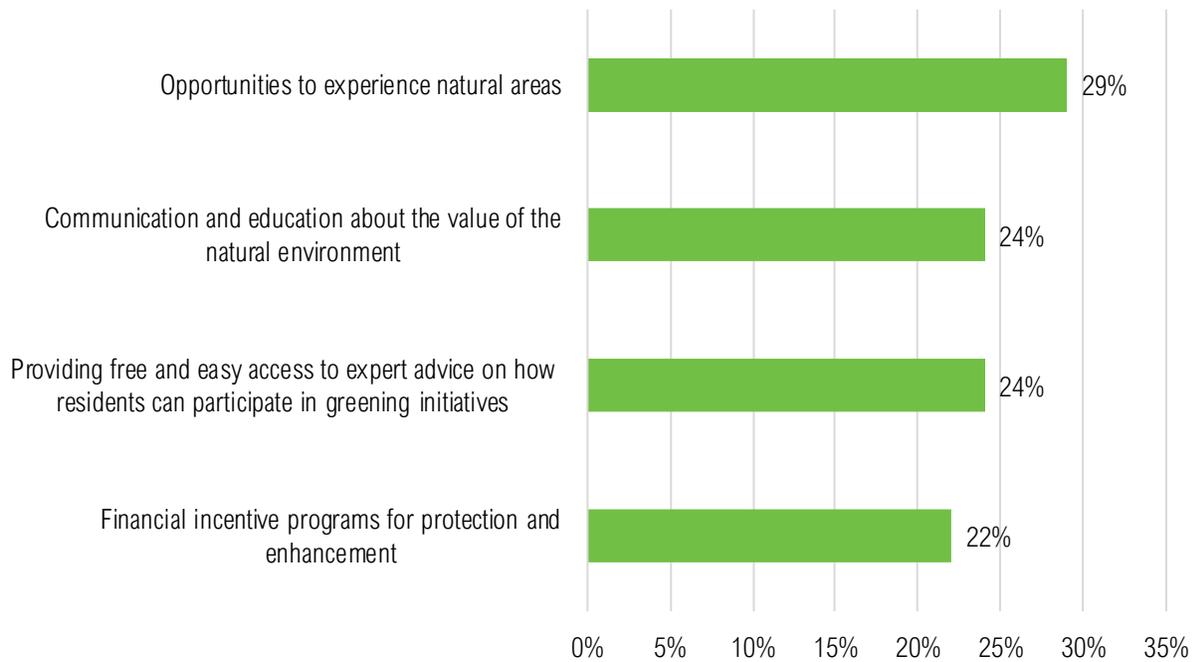
Figure 14: Action Area 2 Programs, by Percentage



Question: What programs or initiatives should York Region prioritize when educating and engaging residents in environmental promotion and protection?

Respondents were asked to order their preferences from top priority to lowest priority. As illustrated in Figure 15, 29% of respondents identified their top priority for programs and activities that create opportunities to experience natural areas.

Figure 15: Top Priority Programs and Initiative for Stewardship and Education, by Percentage



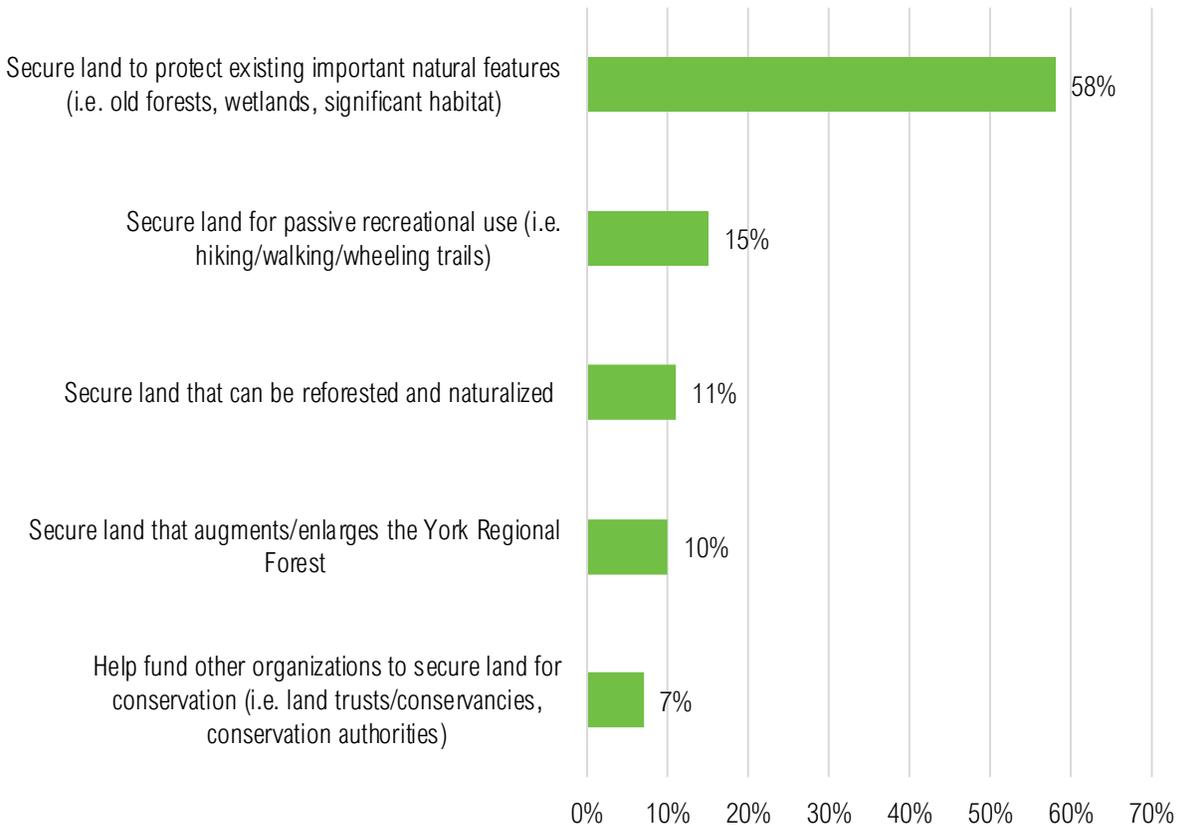
5.4 Action Area 3: Protection and Preservation

Protection and Preservation refers to programs, investments and partnerships that secure new protected land, add new connections and enhancements to existing York Region lands, and protect natural features on agricultural land.

Question: What approaches should York Region prioritize when securing land for conservation?

Figure 16 illustrates what respondents chose as their top priority approach. Specifically, 58% of respondents indicated their top priority for this action area is to secure land to protect existing important natural features, such as old forests, wetlands, or significant habitat.

Figure 16: Top Priority Approaches for Protection and Preservation, by Percentage



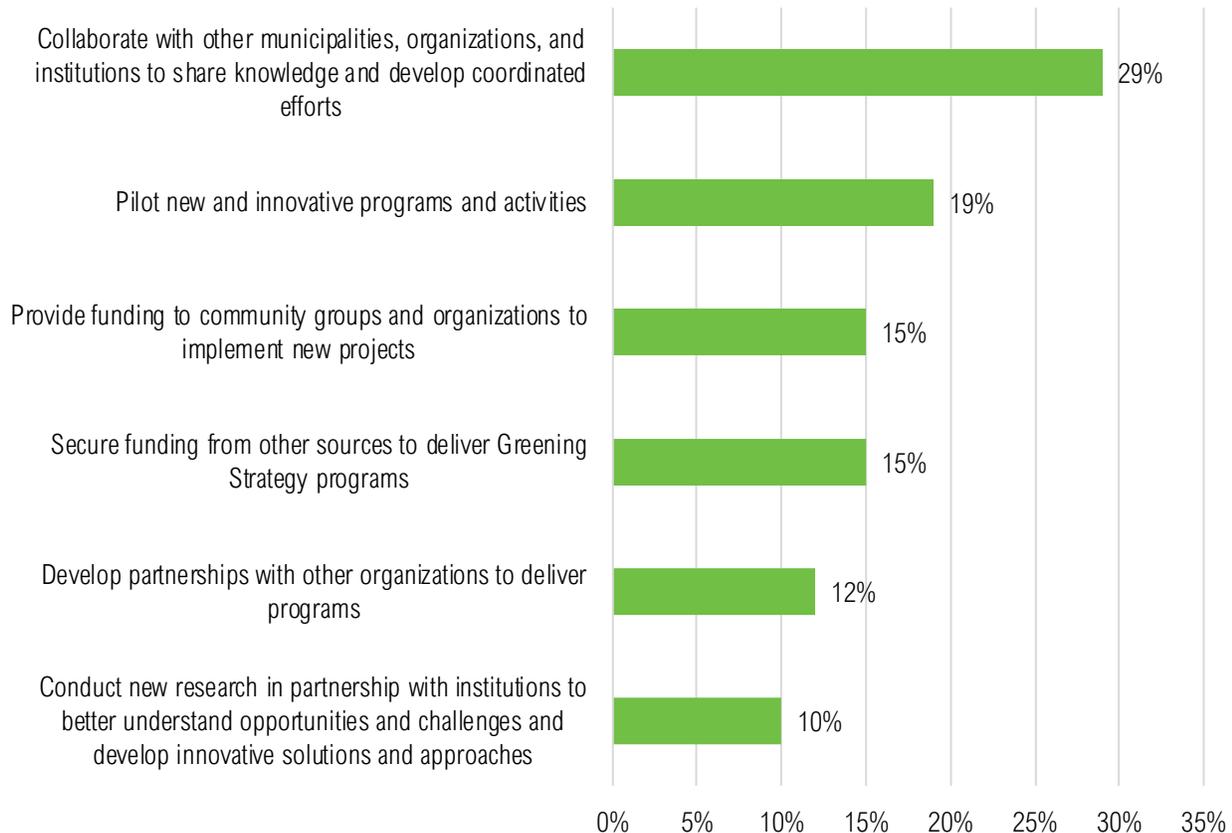
5.5 Action Area 4: Leadership and Innovation

Leadership and Innovation refers to programs and policies that use technology, innovation, and collaboration with partners to promote and protect the natural environment (trees, forests, wildlife, habitats, etc.) in York Region.

Question: What approaches to innovation and collaboration should York Region prioritize?

Respondents were asked to order their preferences from top priority to lowest priority. As illustrated in Figure 17, 29% of respondents identified their top priority as collaboration with other municipalities, organizations, and institutions to share knowledge and develop coordinated efforts.

Figure 17: Priority of Approaches to Leadership and Innovation, by Percentage



6.1 What's Next?

Feedback from this survey will inform a refined Greening Strategy to be presented to York Regional Council in Spring 2022.

Stay tuned for updates through our various media channels, including the Greening e-Newsletter. If you are not yet registered for the Greening e-Newsletter, please [sign up](#).