



# GEORGIAN BAY COMMUNITY OUTREACH SURVEY



October 2024



# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH SURVEY?



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Photo credit: Mark Zelinski



# HOW DO PEOPLE EXPERIENCE AND THINK ABOUT GEORGIAN BAY?

- ✓ Heard voices from residents, cottagers and visitors around Georgian Bay
  - ✓ Robust sample that is diverse by geography and age with long time residency and visitation to Georgian Bay
- ✓ Nature-based recreation as well as experiential activities with businesses are prime outdoor pursuits
- ✓ Georgian Bay is a special place – 8.6 score out of 10
- ✓ Conditions of Georgian Bay perceived as good; however, there are concerns about public lake access, protection of wetlands and opportunities to learn about Indigenous traditions and culture



Photo credit: Mark Zelinski



# HOW DO PEOPLE VIEW TOURISM AROUND GEORGIAN BAY?

- ✓ Half consider level of tourism “*about right*” and a third stated the level of tourism to be “*more that they would like*” or “*too much*”
- ✓ In terms of types of tourism, more respondents would like to see MORE *nature-based, experiential, cultural and heritage and Indigenous* tourism opportunities and LESS of large group and non-nature-based tourism
- ✓ Strong agreement regarding
  - ✓ *Residents more involved in the types of decisions around tourism*
  - ✓ *The wear and tear of tourism is taking a toll on the infrastructure of Georgian Bay and the watershed*
  - ✓ *The types of tourism in Georgian Bay and the watershed match the natural features of the region*



# UNESCO FAMILY OF AREAS AND SUPPORTIVE OF GB GEOPARK?

- ✓ ~2/3 have had some exposure to UNESCO
  - ✓ Of those, 75% were somewhat familiar with UNESCO and what it does and 7% were very familiar
- ✓ Nearly two-thirds of the community were aware of World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves in Canada and 46% were aware of Canadian Geoparks
- ✓ After an explanation of the Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark and global examples three quarters of the community were SUPPORTIVE of the Geopark initiative (rating 8.1 or higher on a scale of 1-10)
- ✓ People were passionate about the future of Georgian Bay with 840 offering comments, mostly positive, about the Geopark initiative.
  - ✓ About 100 stated concerns about the initiative related to the need for more information regarding governance and funding.
  - ✓ Some people questioned the need for another UNESCO designation when there are two Biosphere Reserves.
  - ✓ In addition, some people identified that this initiative should Indigenous centred, led by Indigenous communities with support by non-Indigenous





# GEOPARK STRONG SUPPORT WITH SOME CAUTION

## 1000 Voices

- Over 1000 residents, cottagers and visitors shared their voices about the future of Georgian Bay many of which have been or visited the region for over 20 years and many generations
- They live and visit Georgian Bay for the pristine waters, natural environment, the peace and quiet in rural Ontario
- However, urban development in wetlands, water pollution, over tourism and activities not aligned with natural assets were some of the community concerns.
- **When explained the Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark initiative, three quarters of the community were very supportive (rating 8.1 out of 10)**
  - *“This would be a fantastic development It would improve the sustainable development of the region It would be a valuable, international “badge“ for the region attracting the kind of tourism that is good for the region. It would be good for local residents and employment. It would be a long-term boost for the region and help stop damaging development”*
  - *“A Geopark would protect Georgian Bay while allowing for a collaborative approach for stewardship between the local residents and UNESCO expertise and knowledge that would make Georgian Bay a world class destination.”*
- Support comes with caution about coordination the activities and initiatives of the Georgian Bay associations and organizations, ensuring a focused agenda for the Georgian Bay and the community.



Photo credit: Georgian Bay Geopark

# DEEPER DIVE GEORGIAN BAY COMMUNITY OUTREACH SURVEY



Photo credit: GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL/  
MMARTIN LORTZ

# OUTLINE



- Who were heard from?
- Key Results
  - Connections to Georgian Bay and the Watershed
  - Perceptions of the Conditions of Georgian Bay
  - Awareness of UNESCO & Types of Sites
  - Introduction and Reactions to Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark
- What we learned?
- What is next for the Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark?



Photo credit: Mark Zelinski

# WHY THE GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK & THE RESEARCH



- Georgian Bay is a special place...a unique North American ecosystem that reflects its diverse geology and landscapes that record the last 2.4 billion years of Earth history.
- Establishing a prestigious UNESCO-designated Geopark in Georgian Bay will ensure the Bay becomes a robust 'territory of resilience' providing exciting opportunities for regional geotourism, public education and ongoing fundamental research into its rocks and landscapes, and the many cultures that call this unique place home.
- The Aspiring Geopark represents a significant opportunity to target new high yield growth markets, create compelling new tourism experiences around the geological and cultural stories of the 8 chapters of Deep Time around the Bay, to create innovative Geoproducts and GeoFoods and to establish a strong identity for the Bay as a unique and compelling tourism destination.
- Georgian Bay is home for Indigenous people for 10,000 years and the region has 12 national and provincial parks and two UNESCO biosphere reserves. It has played a significant role in shaping the lives for people around the bay. There is strong interest of all these people regarding the future of Georgian Bay.
- The Geopark Team needed to hear from the many people who live, work and play in the Georgian Bay watershed regarding their perceptions and attitudes of the current state of the Bay and its future management.



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Photo credit: Mark Zelinski

# RESEARCH PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

## Research Purpose:

- Conduct a Georgian Bay Community Outreach survey to residents, cottagers and visitors. We refer to sample as the Georgian Bay Community in this report.

## Research Objectives:

- Document current recreational uses of Georgian Bay region
- Identify perceptions and attitudes towards the state of the environmental and tourism around Georgian Bay
- Benchmark awareness of UNSECO and types of sites
- Measure degree of support for Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark initiative
- Characterize respondents

## Project Partners:

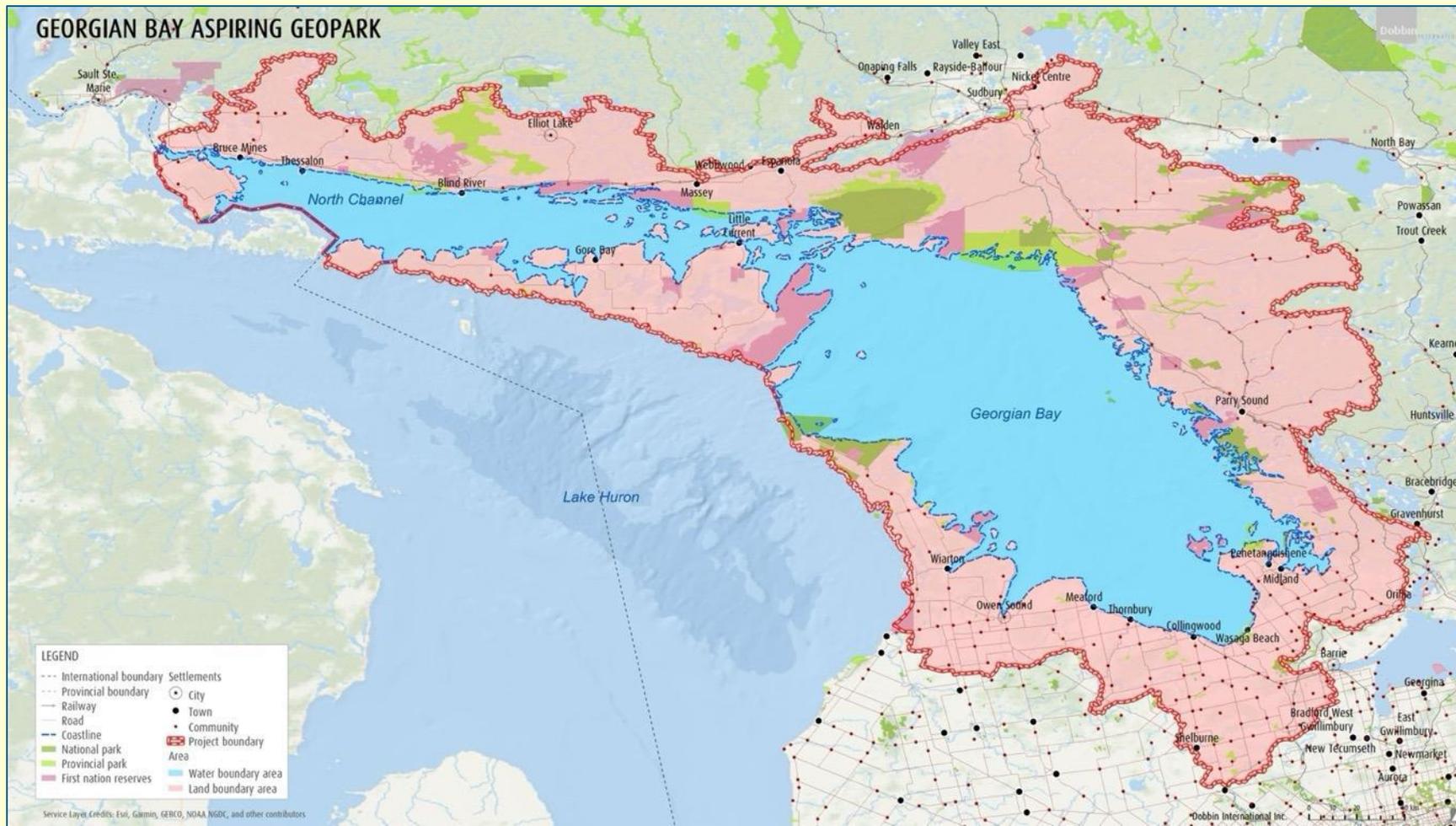
- Research volunteered by RMCG Inc and The Environics Institute
- Field work by The Logit Group with assistance from Georgian Bay Association, Escarpment Corridor Alliance and Georgian Bay Institute



# GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK WATERSHED AND BOUNDARIES



We introduced the boundaries of the Georgian Bay Geopark.

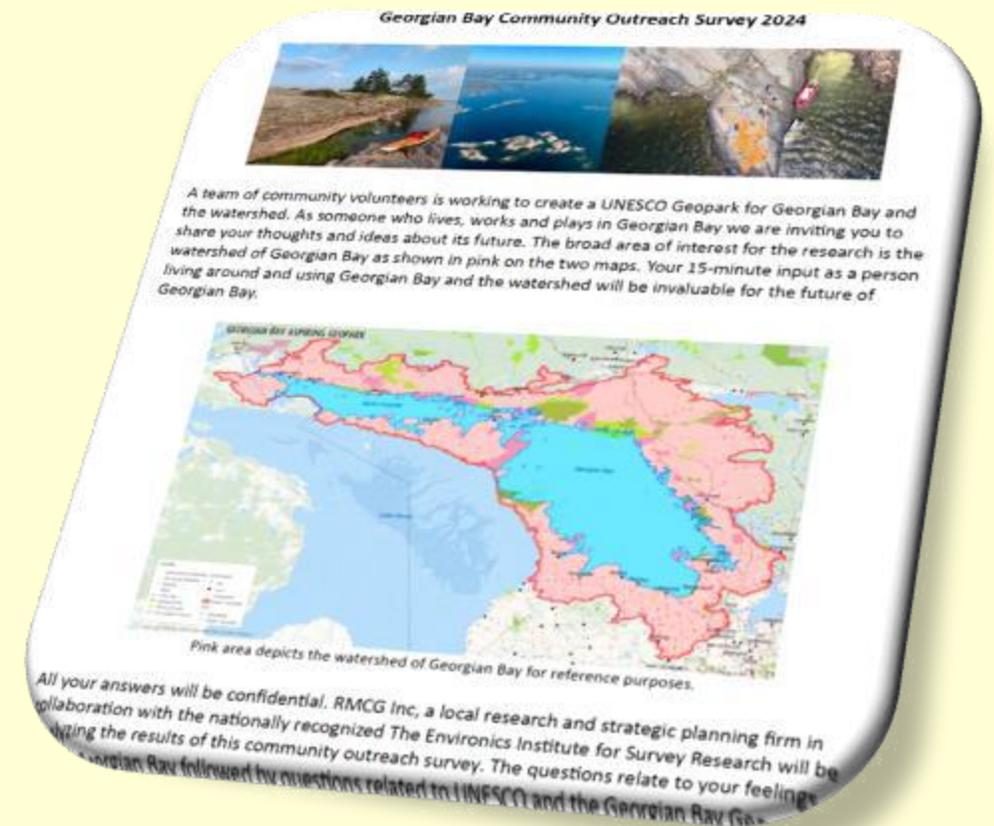






# QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

- Five sections:
  - Connections to Georgian Bay and the Watershed
  - Perceptions of the Conditions of Georgian Bay
  - Awareness of UNESCO & Types of Sites
  - Introduction and Reactions to Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark
  - Respondents Characteristics
- Design Challenges:
  - Reach people who live and play in Georgian Bay and the watershed
  - Introduce them to the Geopark initiative in a balanced way
  - Engage them to share their opinions and feedback





# ROBUST SAMPLE OF GEORGIAN BAY COMMUNITY

- Heard 1003 voices of the Georgian Bay Community
- Diversity by geography and age and with long time residency and visitation to GB
  - 600 online panel sample – LEO by Leger (400K panelists across Canada) & AskingCanadians by Sago panel (367K panelists across Canada)
  - 403 sample from followers of three associations: Escarpment Corridor Alliance, Georgian Bay Association and Georgian Bay Institute

## Sample by Regions compared to Census Population

Regions	TOTAL Respondents	% of Respondents	Residents & Cottagers <sup>1</sup>	% Residents & Cottagers	Census of Population <sup>2</sup>	% of Population
Southern Georgian Bay	591	57	473	62	286,067	73
Saugeen/Bruce Peninsula	106	11	89	12	15,823	4
Manitoulin Island	45	5	26	3	9,112	2
North Channel	57	6	36	5	54,564	14
Killarney – Parry Sound	204	21	139	17	26,171	7
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1003</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>763</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>391,739<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>100</b>

1. Filtering residents and cottagers from Panel and Newsletter samples  
 2. 2021 Statistics Canada  
 3. Population without Not Defined residents



# WHO DID WE HEAR FROM?



Photo credit: Ann Neary



# RESIDENT MIX AND VISITORS

- Reached a diverse sample of voices who live, work and play in the Georgian Bay region
- Three quarters of the community were permanent and/or seasonal residents
- Of the visitors, 11% stayed 15 days or more a year

Community Relationship with Region N=1003

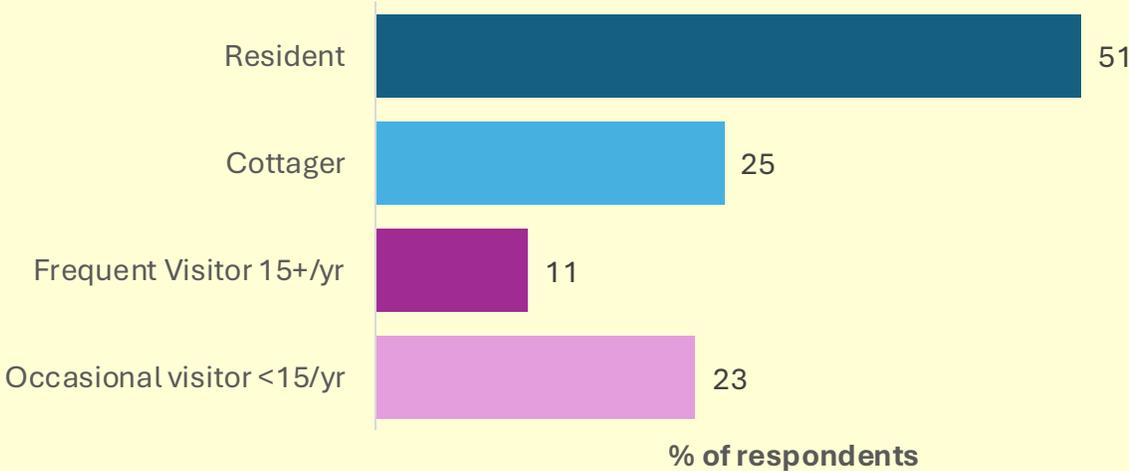
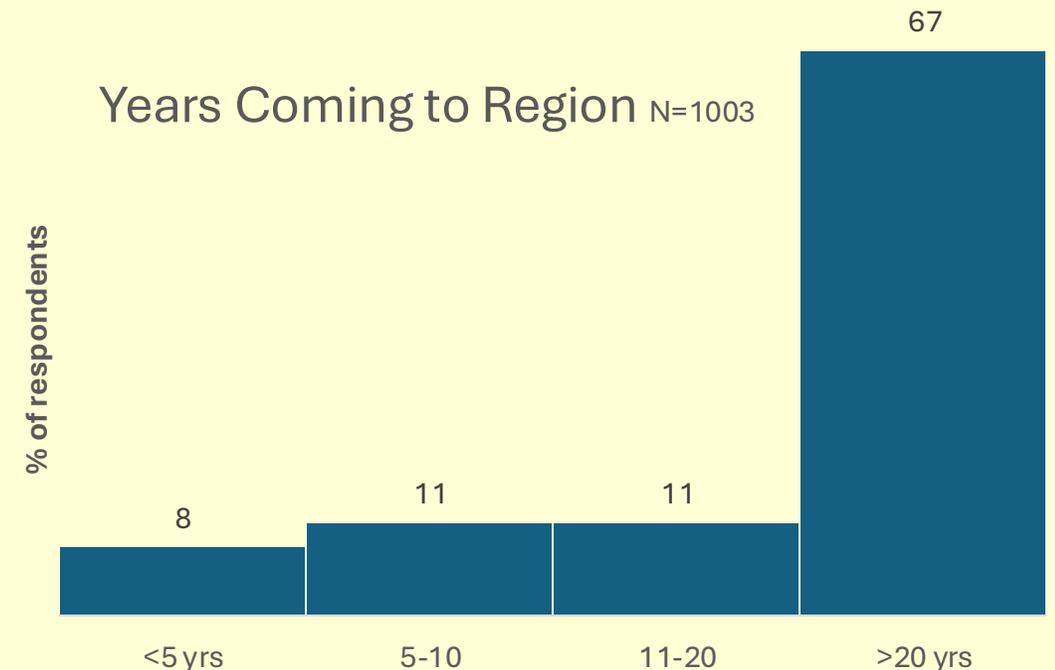
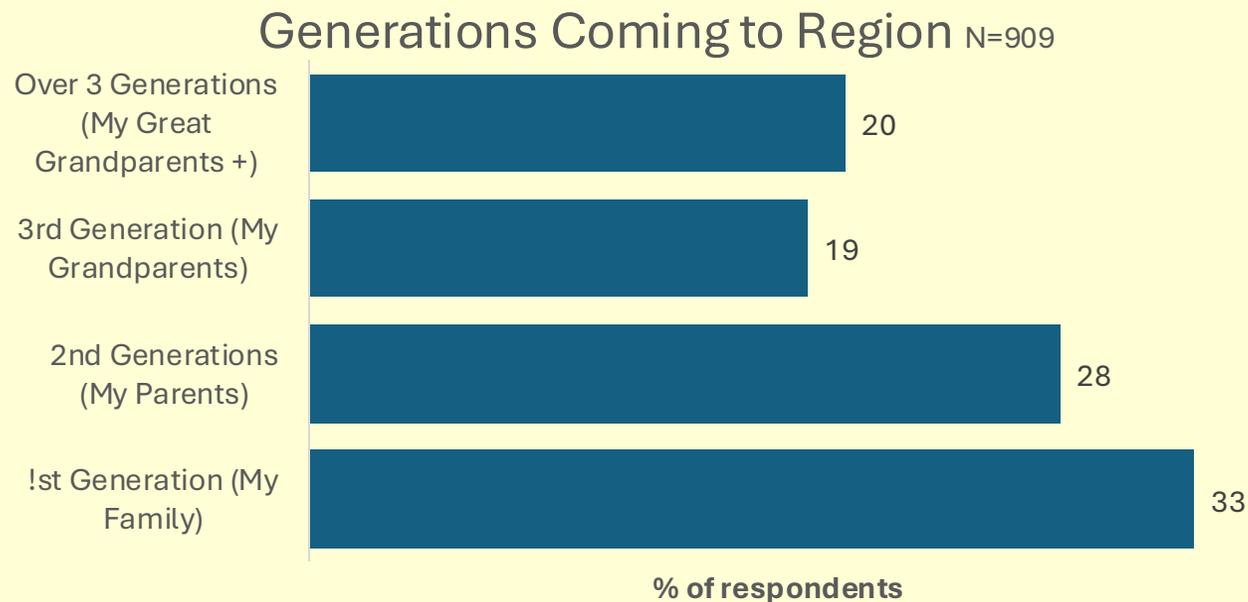


Photo credit: RMCg Inc.



# GENERATIONS COMING TO GEORGIAN BAY

- 67% of the community have been living or coming for over 20 years
- Nearly 40% of the community have been in the region for three generations or more

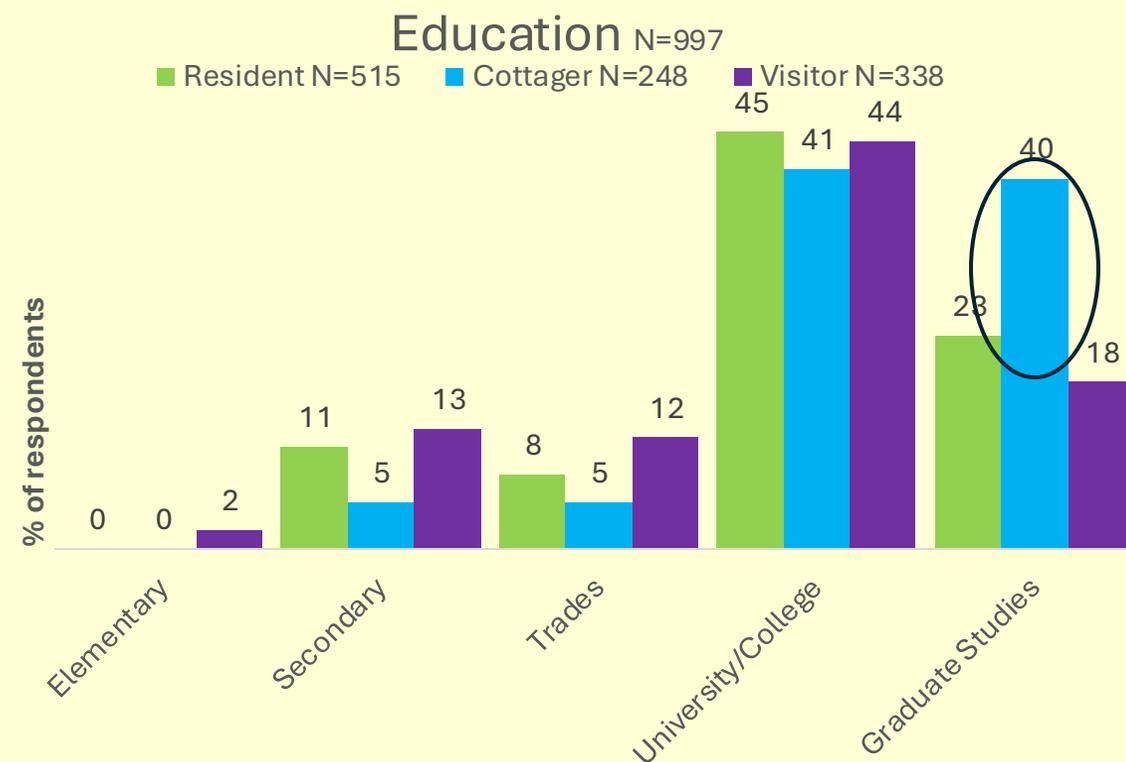
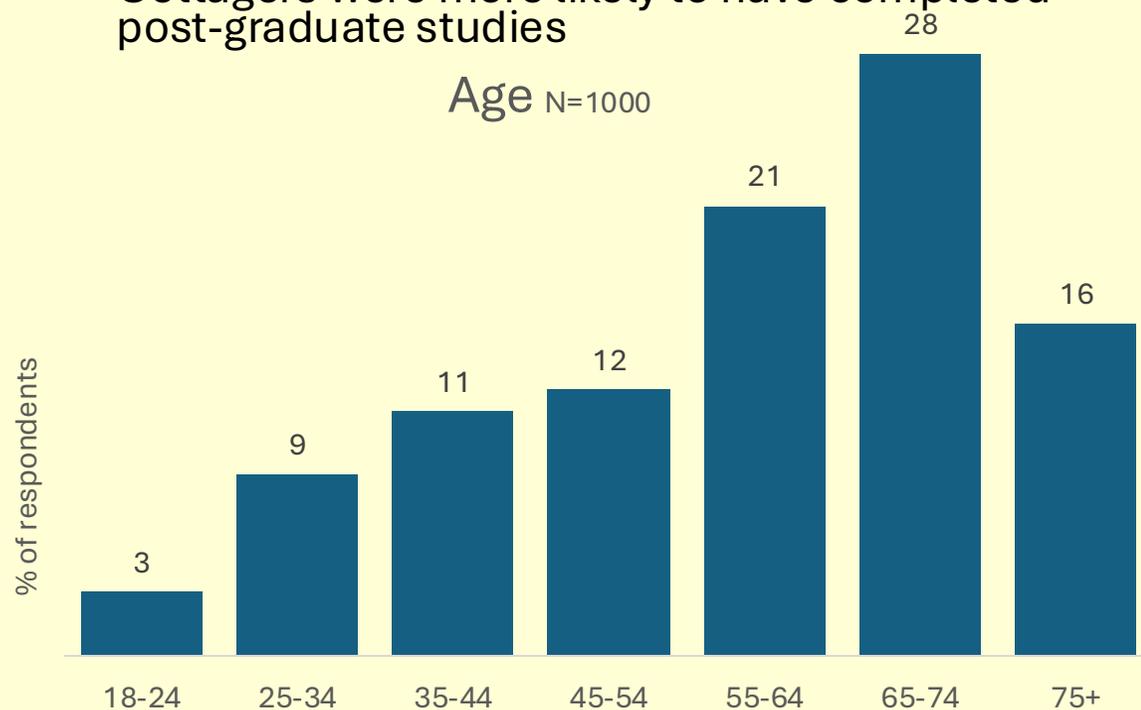




# COMMUNITY OLDER AND WELL EDUCATED

- 44% of the community were 65 years of age or older
- Cottagers were more likely to be older in age and visitors (<15 day/yr) were more likely to be middle age or younger
- Cottagers were more likely to have completed post-graduate studies

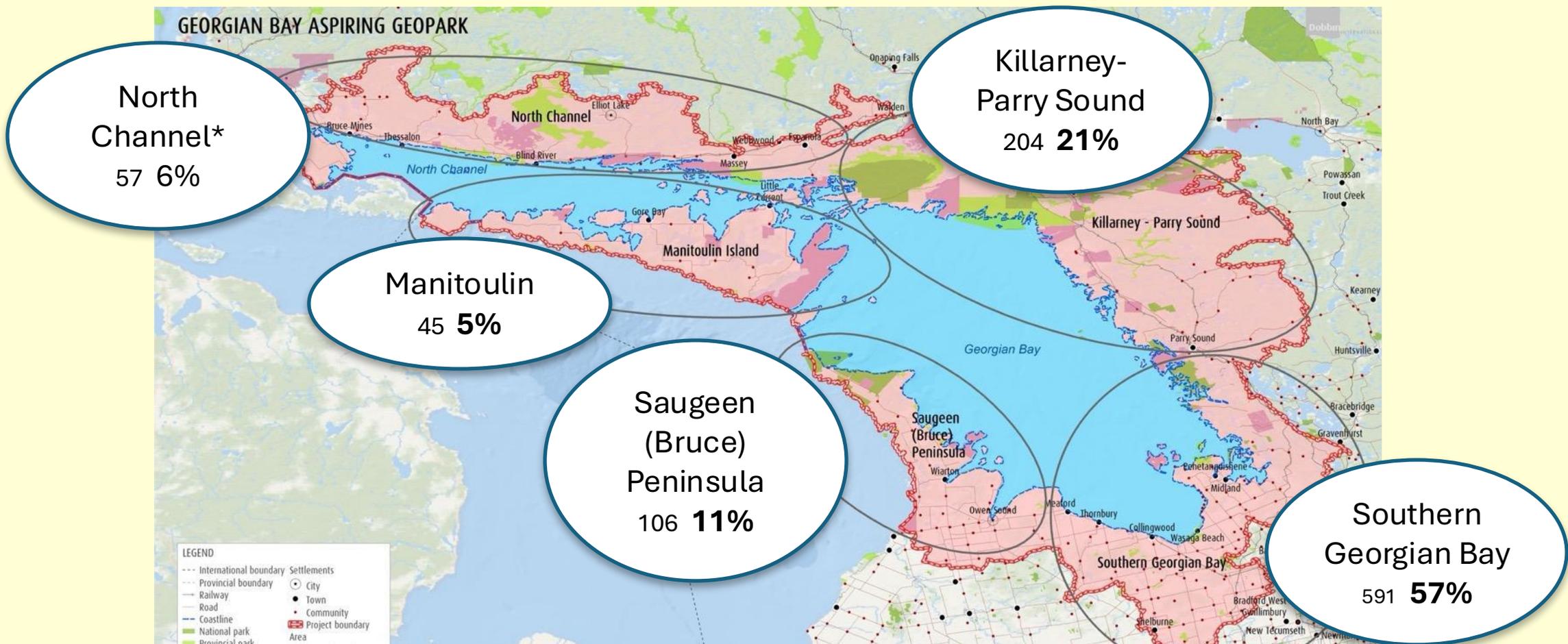
- 3% identified as Indigenous
- 87% born in Canada
- Of the Internationally born – ~65% lived in Canada for over 20 years





# REGIONAL RESIDENCY

*Using the map of Georgian Bay and the watershed, which region is closest to your residence?  
If you are a visitor, where do you visit most often?*

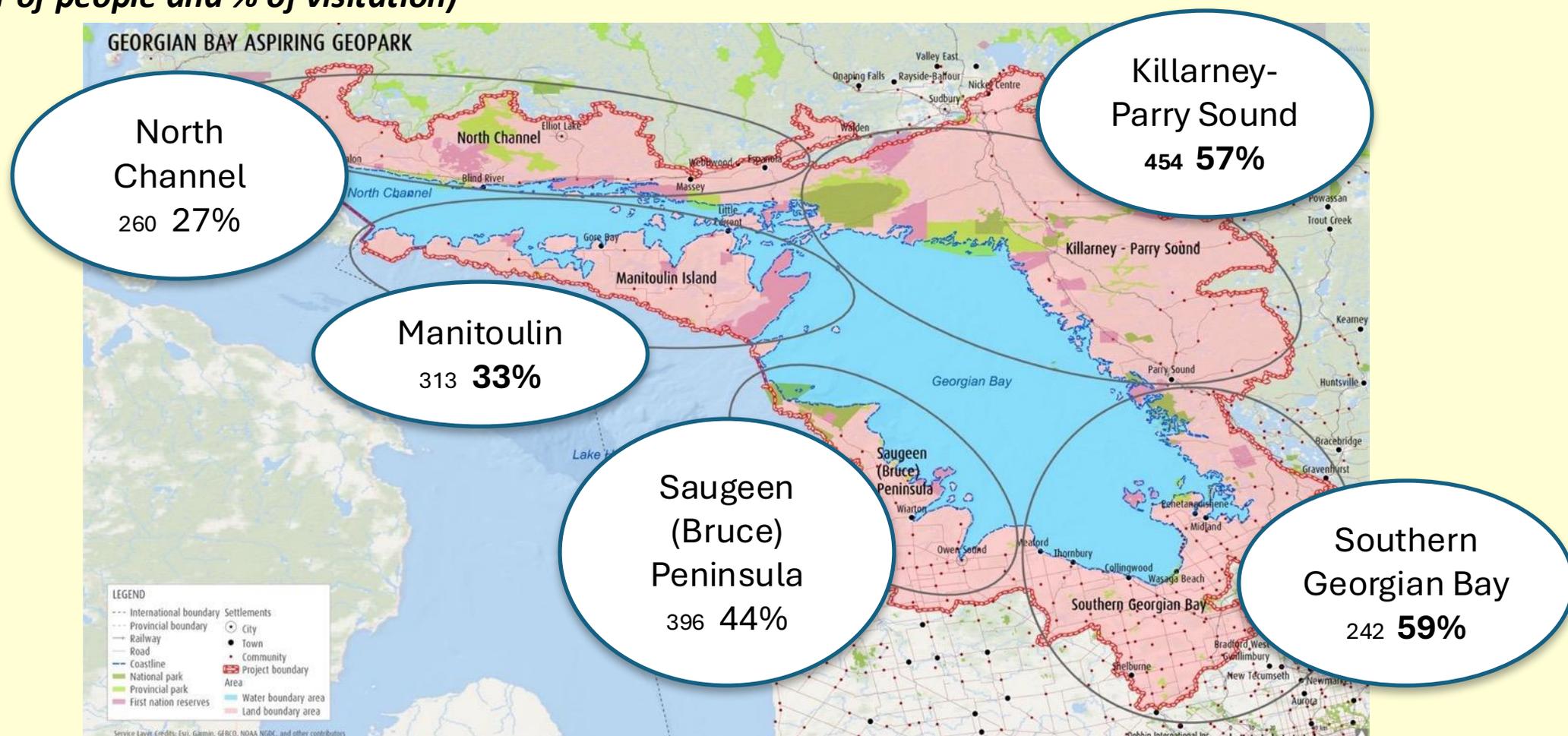


\*



# BROAD REGIONAL VISITATION IN PAST 5 YEARS

*Using the map of Georgian Bay and the watershed, which region(s) have you visited in the past 5 years?  
(number of people and % of visitation)*



# VOICES OF THOSE WHO LIVE AND PLAY IN GEORGIAN BAY



- Broad mix of residents, cottagers and visitors from all regions around the bay
- Depth of years by generations who live, have cottages and visit Georgian Bay
- Coverage of all age cohorts with higher representation by older age cohorts
- Well educated community especially among cottagers



Photo credit: Ann Neary

# OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES



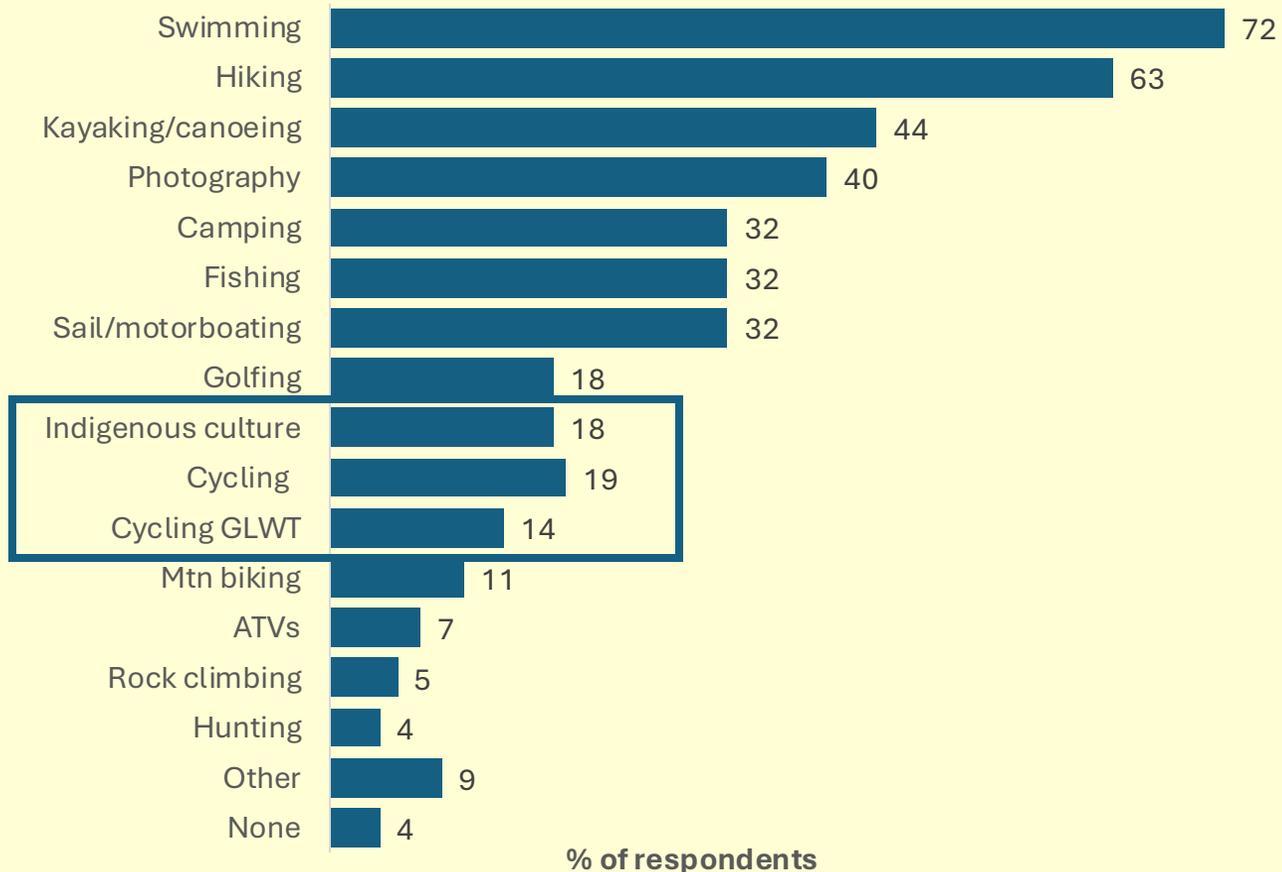
Photo credit: GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL//MARTIN LORITZ



# WARM OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

*What outdoor active recreational activities, if any, do you enjoy in Georgian Bay in the WARM season?*

Warm Outdoor Experiences N=1003



- Nature-based recreation as well as experiential activities with businesses are prime outdoor pursuits
- There are opportunities to grow cycling and experiencing Indigenous culture.



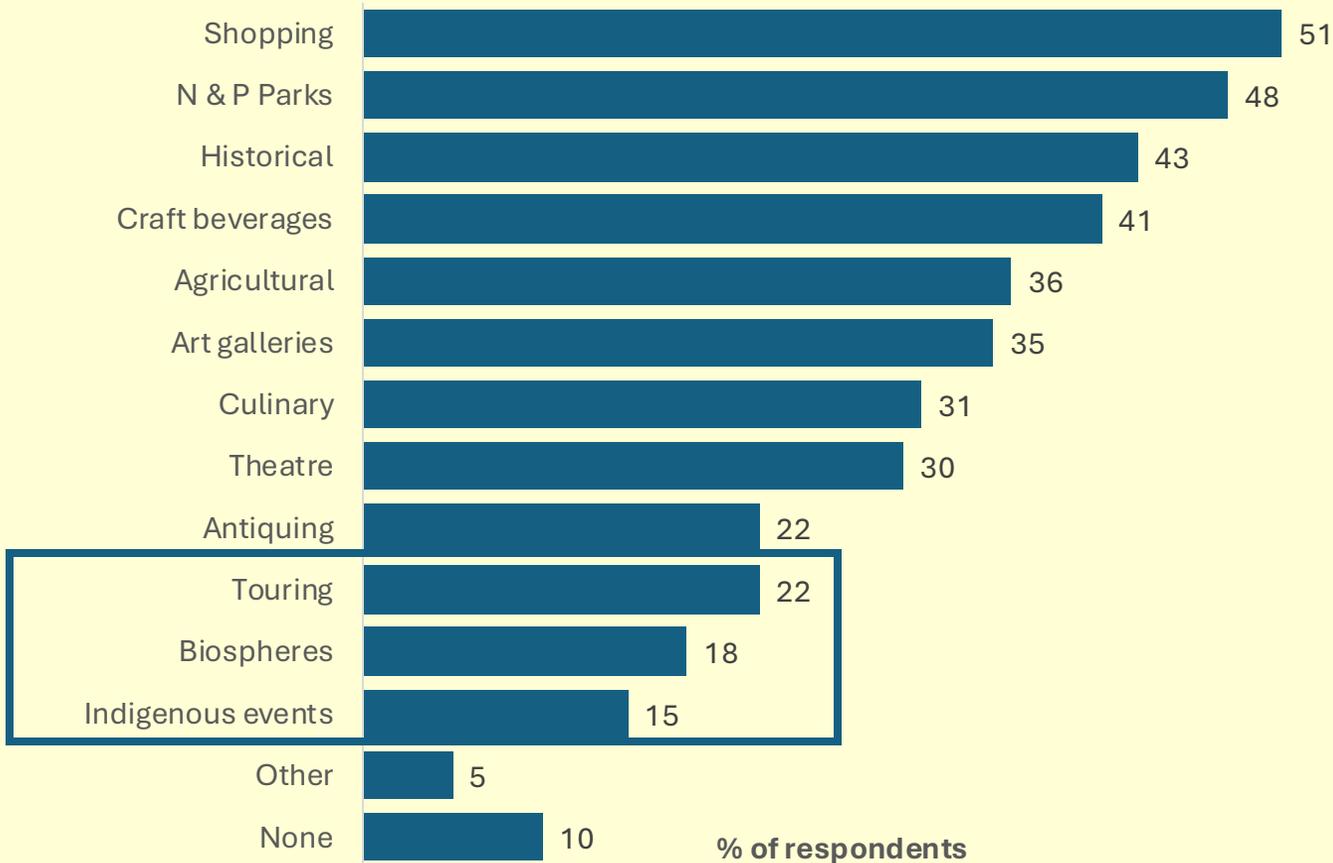
Photo credit: Ann Neary



# YEAR-ROUND & WINTER EXPERIENCES

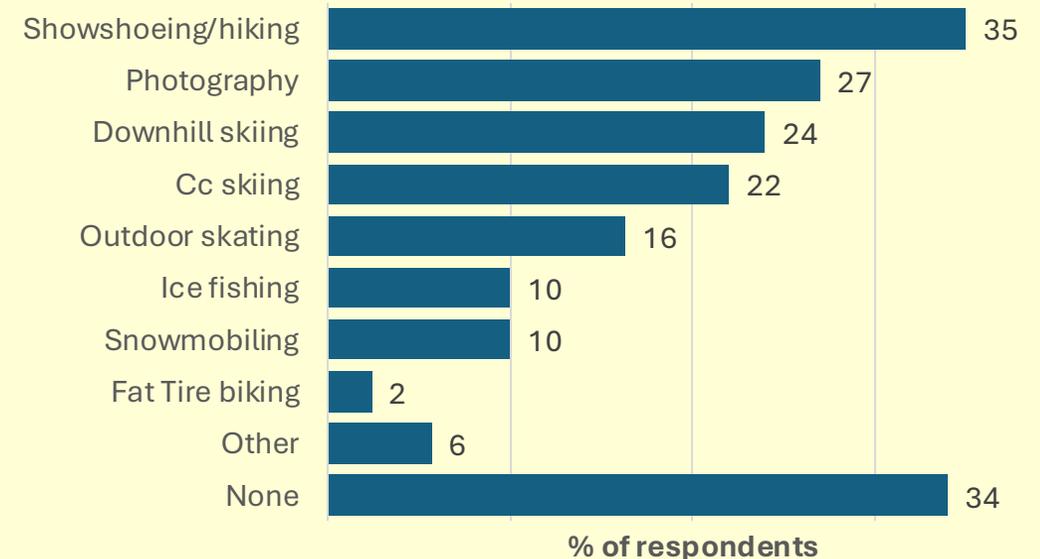
*What outdoor active recreational activities, if any, do you enjoy in Georgian Bay year-round and in the winter season?*

Year-Round Experiences N=1003



- There are opportunities to grow motor touring along the GB Coastal Route, visiting UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and attending Indigenous events

Winter Outdoor Experiences N=1003





# PERCEPTIONS OF GEORGIAN BAY



Photo credit: RMCG Inc.

# GEORGIAN BAY IS A SPECIAL PLACE!



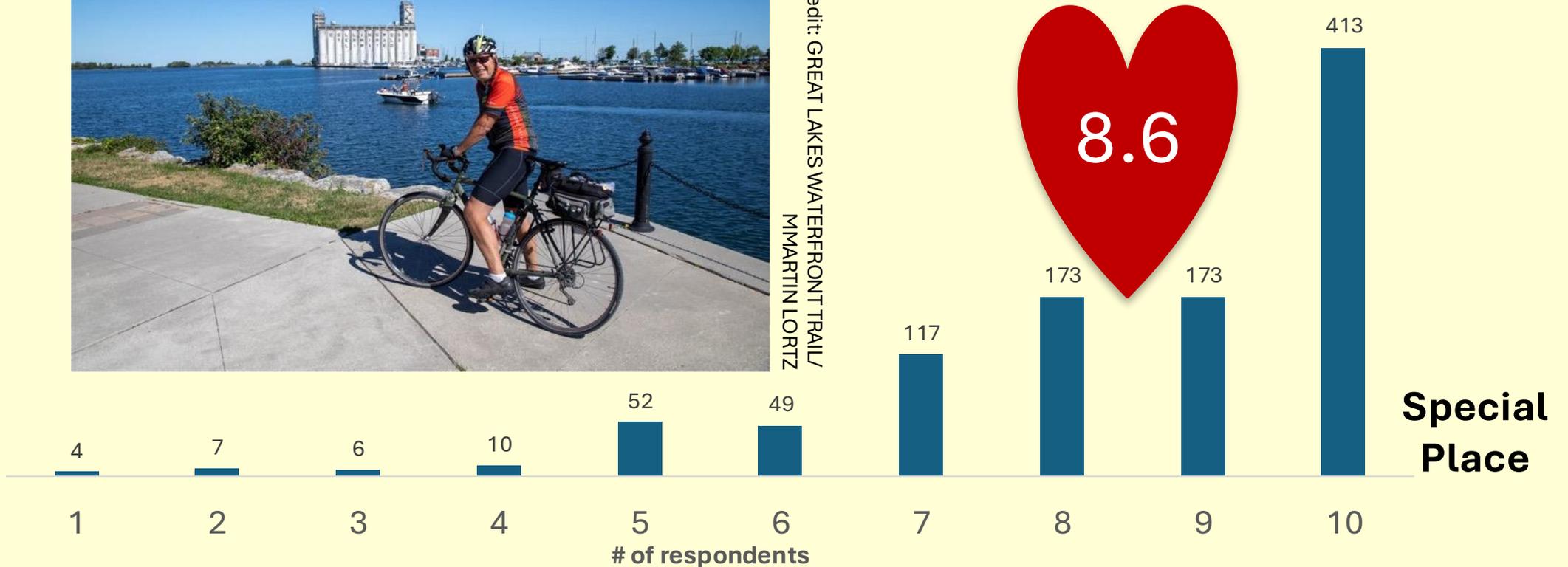
Do you think of Georgian Bay as a special place or mostly like other places you know? N=1003



Photo credit: GREAT LAKES WATERFRONT TRAIL / MARTIN LORTZ

- Cottagers, those living in Southern Georgian Bay and those with three generation ties rated Georgian Bay higher

Like  
Other  
Places



Special  
Place

# of respondents

# REASONS TO LIVE OR VISIT GEORGIAN BAY



*What would you say are the most important reasons you choose to live in or visit Georgian Bay and the watershed? N=960*

## **Special Unique Place of Natural Beauty, Scenery and Landscapes**

- The most beautiful, natural, fresh water, environment in the world.
- Its incredible natural resources Purity of water Vast un-tamed wilderness Unique viewpoints Glacial rock formations
- The water is crystal clear and cold, the Niagara Escarpment around the Bay is pristine, unique geology and woodlands.
- The trees, geology and all the lakes and rivers. I like the northern mentality so much more than the city life-style. I like the Great Lakes climate and the abundance of water. I like the many plants and their uses and am interested in the Indigenous uses of them. I like reading about the history of the region and I like eating fish. This is the 43rd place I have lived and is by far, the very best. We need to keep our environment clean and diverse.
- Beautiful landscape, quiet community, water is beautiful.
- There's something in the air, in the wind, in the rock, and in the water. It just pulls you back. It never lets you go. Doesn't matter how far and wide I travel around the world, the windswept, smooth rocky shore of Georgian Bay always remains top of mind.
- The absolute wonder and beauty of it, the sense of wilderness and freedom, the raw power of the wind and waves and rock.

# REASONS TO LIVE OR VISIT GEORGIAN BAY



*What would you say are the most important reasons you choose to live in or visit Georgian Bay and the watershed? N=960*

## **Quality of Life, Outdoor Recreation, Pace of Living**

- I am here for family but in the meantime absolutely cherish the natural surroundings. I love fresh air, clean water, nature observations especially seeing diversity in plants and animals. I LOVE wetlands. I love communities based on living harmoniously with the nature here.
- We retired to Collingwood to enjoy the biking, golfing, swimming, skiing and all the recreation availability it offers.
- Georgian Bay is spectacular; we are very grateful to live and sail in this great area. We just returned from 35 days sailing Georgian Bay and the North Channel. Except for family, there is nothing more special in our lives.
- Large areas of unspoiled natural beauty. Excellent hiking trails, including Bruce Trail. Provides relaxed environment where our family can get together for socializing and outdoor activities.
- It is where my family is from and where our family business is located. Outside of that I love the variety of what there is to do here. Between outdoor activities, living in a quieter area but the proximity to getting to bigger cities if I want to
  - Peace, away from city life, healing waters of the bay.

# REASONS TO LIVE OR VISIT GEORGIAN BAY



What would you say are the most important reasons you choose to live in or visit Georgian Bay and the watershed? *N=960*

## Welcoming, Community, Social Connections

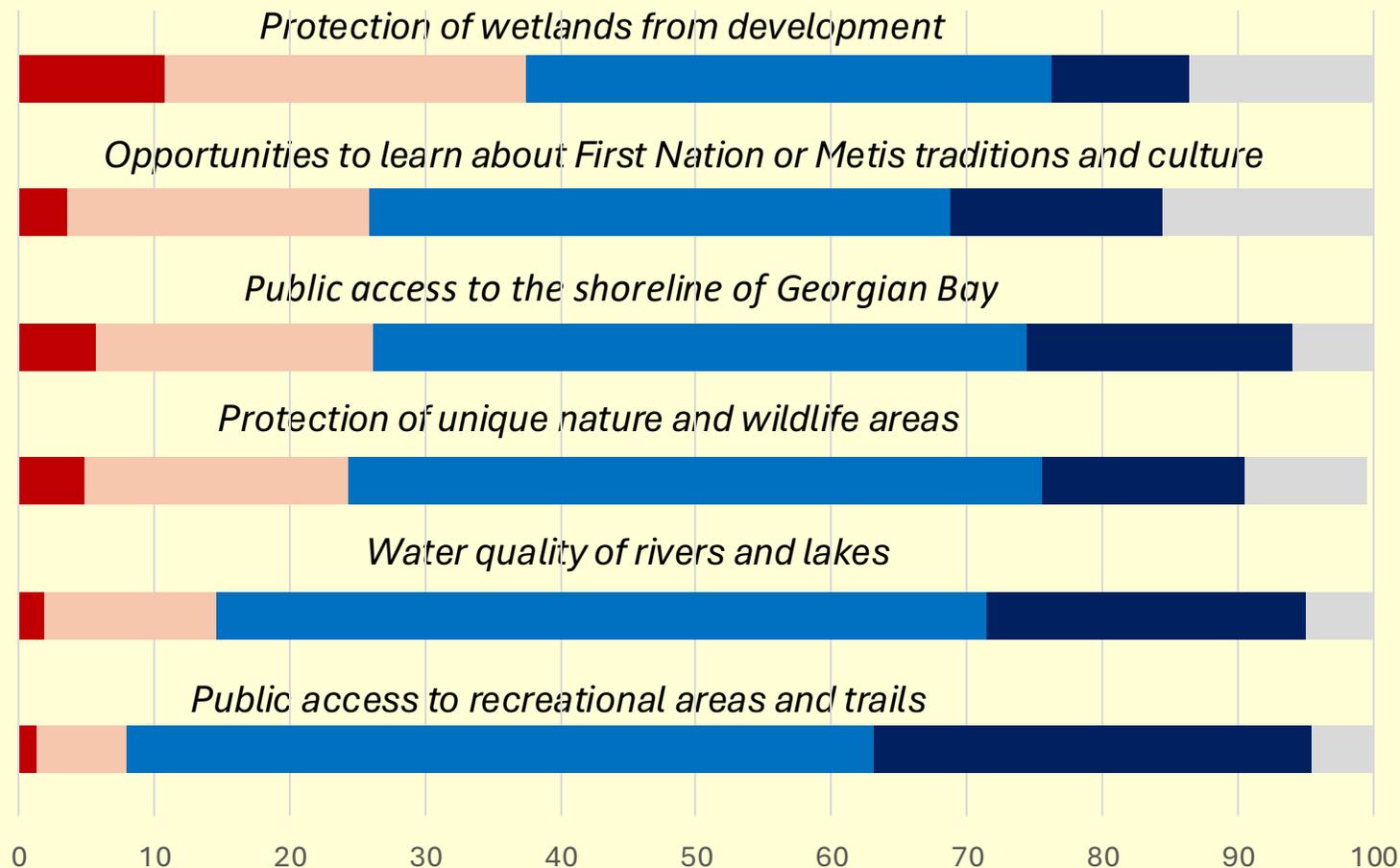
- Family connections to the region - both my aunt and uncle and my wife's family own cottages in the Southern Georgian Bay Region.
- It is my home landscape. I refer all other places to it. It is the benchmark for my sense of scale, and of light. It is the place where the stories of my family are formed.
- I was born and raised here, my great great grandparents settled along the waters of Georgian Bay and instilled in all of our family the importance of protecting the watershed and the beautiful Georgian Bay.
- Living closely with nature is personally restorative. My grandparents first visited Georgian Bay 100 years ago. Our extended family gathers together at the cottage, carrying on family traditions. The fifth generation of our family is now involved. We thrive on the natural beauty of the area, enjoying boating, fishing, watching the birds and animals, climbing the hills and exploring the forests. We achieve a great sense of peace from our surroundings.
- I have spent my whole life on or near the bay...skiing in Collingwood since childhood and cottaging near Pointe au Baril. The geology of the archipelago is like no where else on earth. The beauty is spectacular and unparalleled. The water quality in throughout the bay is crystalline blue, clear and as beautiful. There are unique species along the bay and it is a heritage that my great grand children deserve to share. As I have. It has shaped the person that I am.

# GEORGIAN BAY CONCERN AREAS



How would you rate the current conditions of Georgian Bay using the following scale? N=1003

■ Poor ■ Only Fair ■ Good ■ Excellent ■ DK



- People perceived poor to only fair conditions for:
  - Protecting wetlands, especially in Southern Georgian Bay and the Saugeen Peninsula
  - Opportunities to learn Indigenous culture across the Bay and
  - Public access to the shorelines on Southern Georgian Bay and Manitoulin

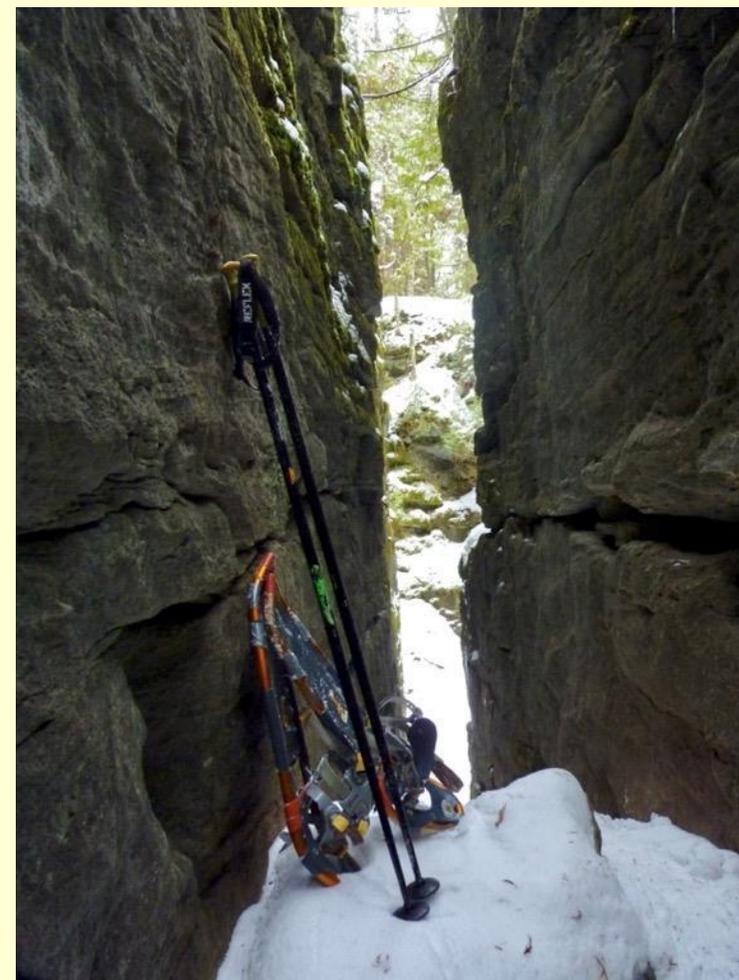
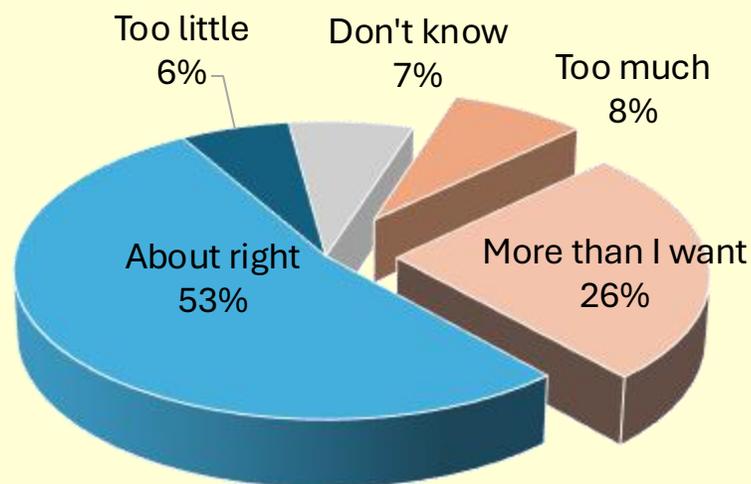




# GEORGIAN BAY TOURISM

*Thinking about tourism in your region around Georgian Bay, would you say there is currently ...* N=1002

- Half of the community perceived tourism in their region was “About Right”
- People located on the Saugeen Peninsula and in Southern Georgian Bay were more likely to feel tourism was “Too Much” or “More than They Want”. Those people were more likely to be residents than visitors or cottagers.



# TYPES OF TOURISM PREFERRED AROUND GEORGIAN BAY



Please indicate how much you would like to see of each of the following types of tourism: N=964-972

- Most people felt these tourism experiences were “About Right”
- However, they would like to see “More” opportunities to experience Heritage and Culture and Indigenous Cultural and Nature-based forms of tourism across all regions with the exception of Sauguen Peninsula where people felt the level as “About Right”.

■ Less ■ About Right ■ More

**Heritage and Cultural Tourism** (e.g. cultural, historical attractions and products, food, festivals and events)



**Outdoor and Nature-Based Tourism** (e.g. agritourism, boating, camping, cycling, wildlife viewing/birdwatching)



**Indigenous Cultural Tourism** (e.g. Indigenous events, cuisine, storytelling)



**Visiting Friends and Relatives** (e.g. family gatherings)



**Adventure Tourism** (e.g. whitewater rafting, dog sledding)



**Rural Tourism** (e.g. farm vacations, glamping)



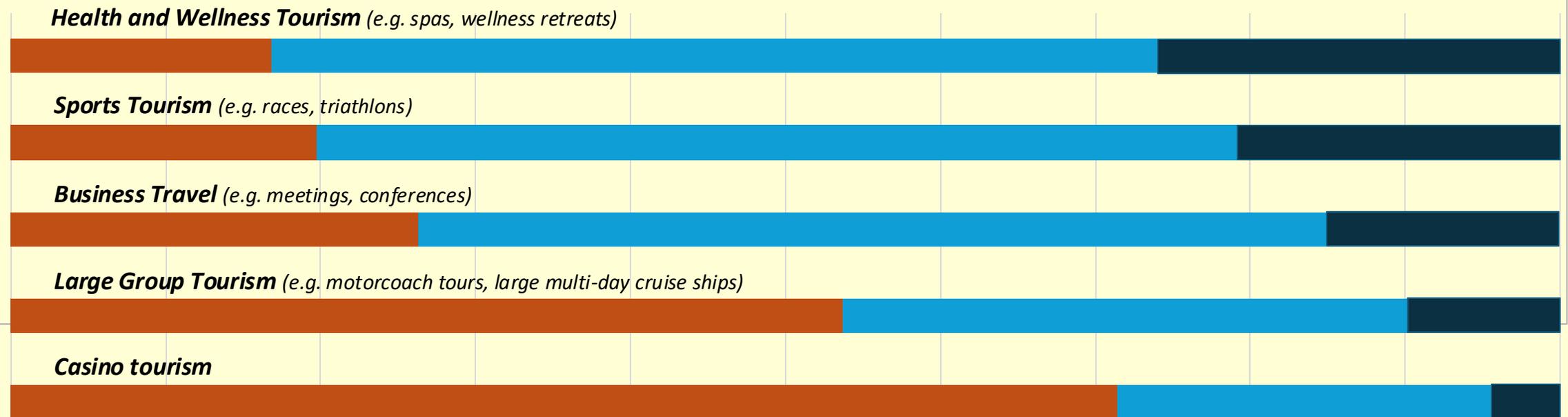


# TOURISM NOT PREFERRED AROUND GEORGIAN BAY

Please indicate how much you would like to see of each of the following types of tourism: N=964-972

- There was a greater percentage of the community that would like to see “Less” of these types of tourism experiences
  - For example cottagers would be more likely to see “Less” Casino Tourism (88%) compared to visitors (63%), older ( >65 years 79%) would like “Less” Casino Tourism compared with the 18-44 cohort (56%)
  - For Large Group Tourism, around 55% of respondents from SBG, Port Severn and Sauguen Peninsula would prefer “Less”.

■ Less ■ About Right ■ More

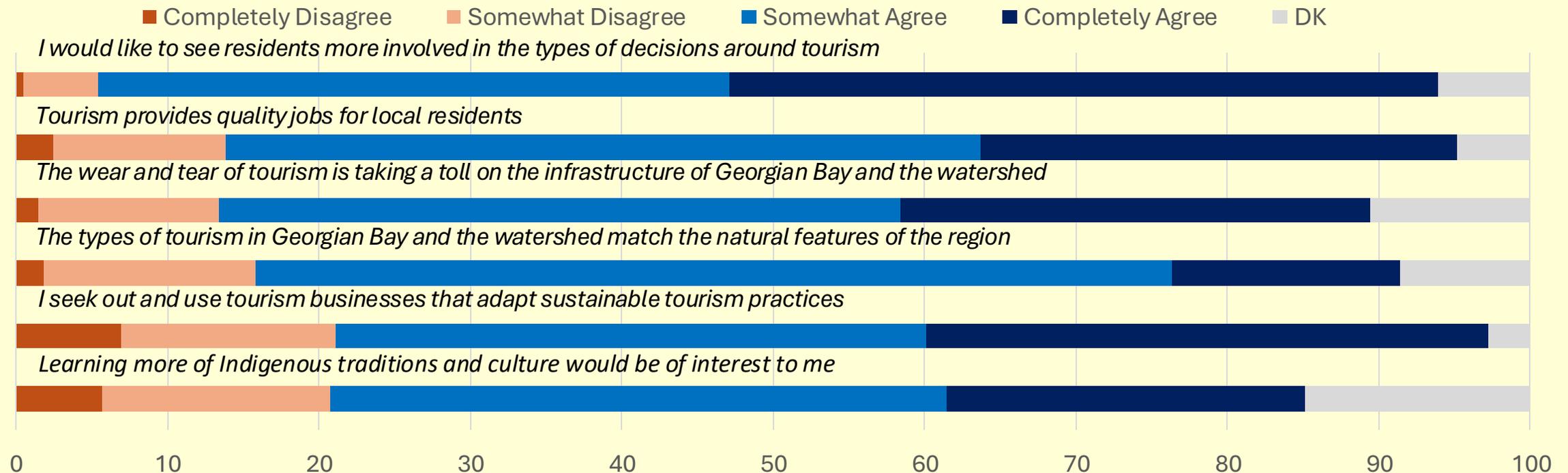




# PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES ABOUT TOURISM

Please share how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about tourism.. N=983-991

- The community was in agreement that residents should be more involved in decision making and tourism should match the natural features
- But Saugeen Peninsula people were less positive about the benefits of tourism

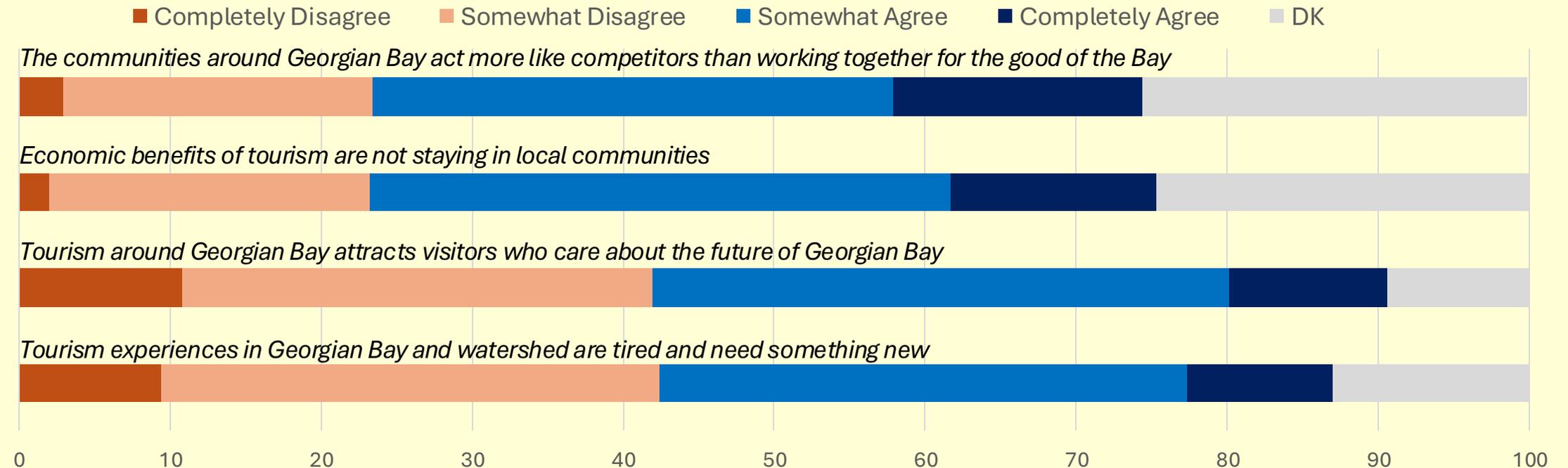




# PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES ABOUT TOURISM

Please share how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about tourism.. N=983-991

- People felt that communities were more like competitors rather than working together
- Some people felt economic benefits were not staying in the communities, especially in Manitoulin and North Channel and Saugeen Peninsula



# CONCERNS FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



*What is your biggest concern for the future of Georgian Bay and the watershed? N=955*

## **Protection of Natural Environment, Watershed Preservation/Water Quality**

- That the eco systems will be destroyed by overuse and people not following the leave no trace rule
- The thoughtless destruction of the natural heritage in support of urban sprawl and over development.
- Pollution - septic run off, old septic systems, people not maintaining them properly. Hazardous waste like old cars and boats, batteries paint and engine oil, etc. which people leave outside, in their boathouses or in their sheds - containers leak and crack or rust when they get old, high water floods and sweeps them away!
  - The lost of indigenous and biodiversity
- Manitoulin Island commercialization is a concern. I've also noticed over the years that there are more bugs and new species in the waters (zebra muscles etc) which saddens me
  - The recent destructive water levels — all time highs and lows in less than a decade Preserving the crystal clear water.  
Becoming too built up
- That it will be developed in the wrong way. Development is needed in accord with nature and healthy activities. More places to swim, sail, camp, walk trails, kayak, etc.

# CONCERNS ABOUT OVERUSE & EXCESSIVE TOURISM



*What is your biggest concern for the future of Georgian Bay and the watershed? N=955*

## **Overuse/resource depletion, Inadequate Infrastructure/Services, Excessive Tourism**

-Overdevelopment in inappropriate areas; over tourism; encroachment on natural areas

- Pollution and the increasing amount of boat traffic and city visitors that come up for a weekend and leave their messes behind
- Pollution from urban runoff and impacts on waters of Georgian Bay (like the water around Kilbear Provincial Park is not drinkable). That is not acceptable. Impacts of large cruise ships that leave no benefits behind for local towns, etc only pollution
  - As for Wasaga Beach, and the surrounding forests, both are in danger of overbuilding.
- Too many tourists who come and wreck the place. They seem to take over and push locals aside, they do not respect the beauty of the area
  - It's being taken over by people that aren't here with good intentions. Not to keep the land safe but to transform it into some tourist trap
- Great golf development on the mountain. And other housing developments that are not being forced to build to green standards to reduce carbon emissions

# CONCERNS ABOUT AFFORDABILITY & POLITICS



*What is your biggest concern for the future of Georgian Bay and the watershed? N=955*

## **Affordability/Cost of Living, Government Policies/Politics, Prioritization of Profit/Financial Gain**

-Crime, lack of housing , failure to effectively assist our mental health population

-I am concerned about economic opportunities for my kids and grand kids when they get to working age. This is their home not a tourist destination

-Too many uncoordinated conservation and environmental groups Too many municipal provincial and federal regulations

-Current agricultural properties being turned into recreational properties

-My biggest concern is that the waters will be spoiled by uncontrolled development and poor oversight. Also I don't want to see all of the wild lands surrounding the bay turned over to private concerns and keeping out those who just want to enjoy unspoiled and untamed nature. Keep the habitats for the animals.

-Regional governments believing they need to cooperate with developer to exploit the region, instead of preserving.

Already development is taking its toll. I'm afraid people don't appreciate the real jewel that they have. The roads have gotten busier, which will kill the enjoyment of cycling there if more infrastructure isn't built.

# TOURISM ABOUT RIGHT BUT OVERTOURISM CONCERNS



- Georgian Bay is a very special place
- Types of tourism experiences about right level with opportunities for more heritage and culture, nature-based and Indigenous tourism. But a greater number of people felt there should be less large group tourism and casino tourism.
- Finally, residents and cottagers would like more participation in the decision making, aligning tourism with the natural features, the economic benefits of tourism staying within communities
- Some regions were feeling the toll of tourism on their community infrastructure and felt the desire for more quality jobs



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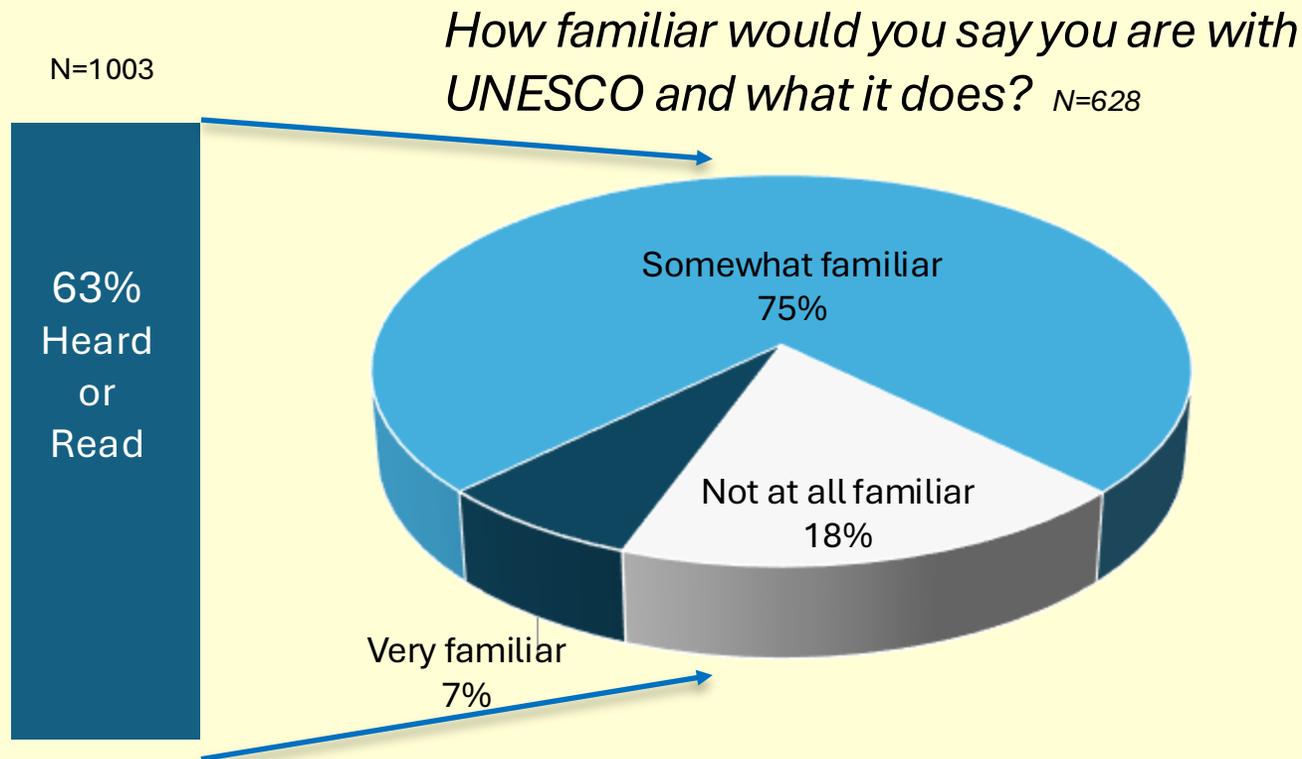
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# UNESCO AWARENESS

*Have you heard or read anything about UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)?*



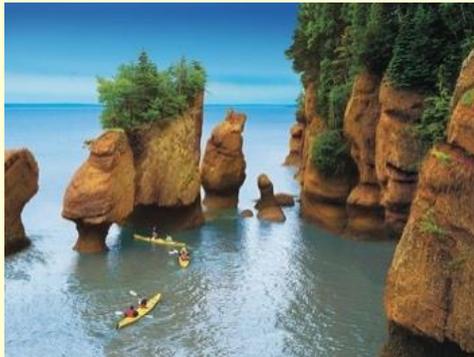
- Close to two thirds of the community had heard or read about UNESCO
- Of those, 75% were somewhat familiar with UNESCO and what it does and 7% were very familiar
- Highest awareness was in Southern Georgian Bay and on the Saugeen Peninsula, among older respondents and cottagers

# UNESCO AWARENESS: HEARD, READ OR VISITED?

Have you heard, read or visited any of the following UNESCO areas in Canada? *N=1003*



64% World Heritage Sites



46% Geoparks



65% Biosphere Reserves

- The UNESCO family of areas (e.g. World Heritage Sites, Geoparks and Biosphere Reserves) were introduced in the survey with global examples. Then questions were asked regarding people's awareness of these three types of UNESCO areas in Canada.
- Nearly two-thirds of the community were aware of World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves in Canada and 46% were aware of Canadian Geoparks



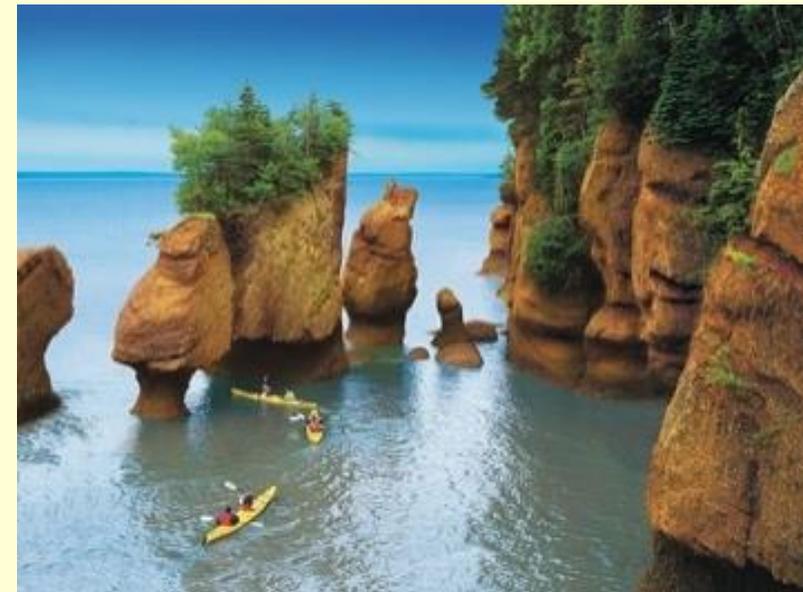
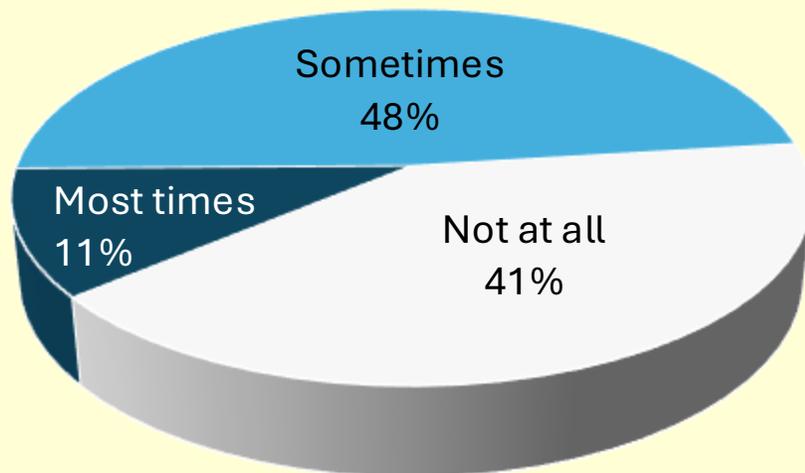
# UNESCO AREAS WHEN TRAVELLING

*When you travel (domestically and/or internationally), do you seek out destinations with international recognized UNESCO areas? N=1003*

- 48% of people would “Sometimes” seek out UNESCO areas and 11% would do that “Most Times” when travelling

Attraction of UNESCO Areas

N=1003



# GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK INITIATIVE



An explanation of the Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark was provided with a global geopark example, The Barren and Cliffs of Moher, on the west coast of Ireland, before asking about their thoughts of the Georgian Bay Geopark.



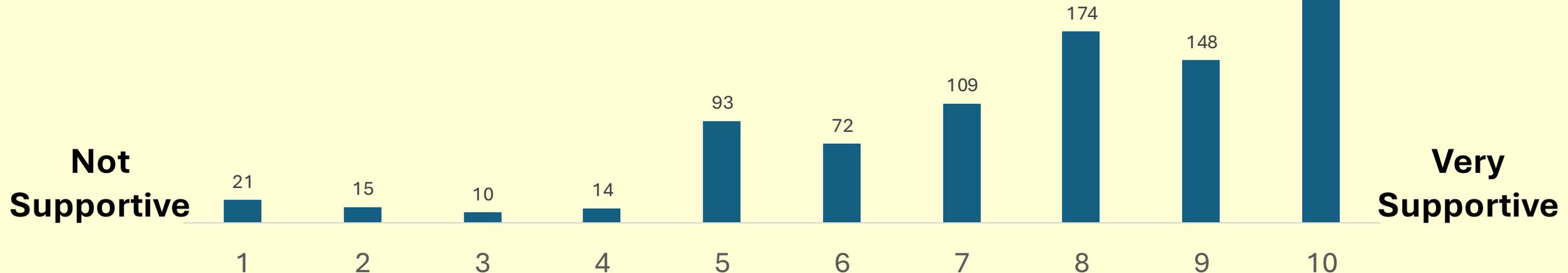


# VERY SUPPORTIVE OF GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK

*How supportive are you of Georgian Bay Geopark initiative using the sliding scale where 1 is Not Supportive and 10 is Very Supportive? N=1003*



Photo credit: Georgian Bay Geopark





# THOUGHTS ABOUT GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK

*Please share your initial thoughts regarding Georgian Bay and watershed as a UNESCO Global Geopark.*  
N=840

## Perceived Positive Benefits

**840 people shared comments, mostly positive**

- It would be great for all the Georgian Bay communities to work together to preserve and promote this area.
- If it involves locals in decision making and also helps advocate for maintenance of the natural beauty of the area, I'm on side.
- This is an exciting proposal. It actually seems to be the next logical step. There are so many unique features geologically in this area, and so many unique species here that this habitat needs to be designated important. A Geopark listing would be absolutely fantastic in this regard! It will help bring awareness to the fragility of the area and the huge importance of the wildlife here. 😊👍😊
- Exciting, needed, requires sponsors locally as well as educational support and primary funding through existing government and international agencies. Linked to education and local tourism important for longevity to forge long term success Marketing key based on other Geoparks visited
- This would be a fantastic development It would improve the sustainable development of the region It would be a valuable, international “badge“ for the region attracting the kind of tourism that is good for the region. It would be good for local residents and employment. It would be a long-term boost for the region and help stop damaging development
- Sounds fantastic! Protects and elevates the area



# THOUGHTS ABOUT GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK

*Please share your initial thoughts regarding Georgian Bay and watershed as a UNESCO Global Geopark.*  
N=840

## Perceived Positive Benefits

- I love this idea! I think this is exactly what Georgian Bay needs to protect it. I fully support this idea in everyway.
- UNESCO status will definitely light up importance of the Georgian Bay region. Will encourage all parties involved to care about it and eventually to save it for future generations.
- It sounds like a great initiative that would increase sustainability of existing tourism initiatives and bring new sustainable tourism opportunities
- A Geopark would protect Georgian Bay while allowing for a collaborative approach for stewardship between the local residents and UNESCO expertise and knowledge that would make Georgian Bay a world class destination. It would bring the right kind of tourists who will hopefully help support the local businesses and economy.
- I like the idea so far, but much more research would be needed for me to get fully behind it. I worry about the future of our unique small towns -each time there is a tourism boost on our areas, it prices locals out of being able to afford their lives year-round. In "prime tourist season" the locals have a hard time accessing our own services due to pricing and crowds and increased costs of services. In the off seasons there is lower demand, so we can take advantage of these great areas; however, the tourists have left with their money and locals face layoffs. There needs to be balance for locals and tourists -as well as our natural spaces- for these plans to work.

Let's go.

# THOUGHTS ABOUT GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK



*Please share your initial thoughts regarding Georgian Bay and watershed as a UNESCO Global Geopark. N=840*

## **Protection of Our Natural Assets**

- Maybe this area will be better protected if we get this designation, it is already an Ontario Heritage Coast and a UNESCO Bio sphere Reserve- the more recognition the better.
  - I think it would be great, and tourism that is more natural and agrees with the land would be beneficial.
- The more awareness we have about sensitive natural areas and the need to protect our waters as well as the focus of educating visitors around stewardship practices the better - together with community we are stronger and can collaborate to enhance visitation and Indigenous opportunities without endangering our environment
- I think it would bring more awareness to the unique area and help us inform tourists to be better at conserving this beautiful area. It would also allow for more sustainable and controlled tourism opportunities (instead of people doing things that could impact our waterways negatively)
- Not unlike the National Park it would attract visitors with common interests. Visitors tend to be very particular about treating the area with respect. It would be good for the area.
  - Cautiously supportive
- Seems like a good idea, but unlikely to happen



# THOUGHTS ABOUT GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK

*Please share your initial thoughts regarding Georgian Bay and watershed as a UNESCO Global Geopark*

N=840

## **Concerns- Overlapping Agendas**

**99 or 12% shared concerns**

-There are other Georgian Bay organizations - GB Forever, Lake Partner Program and the State of the Bay group who already work to preserve GB Biosphere and that is already called a UNESCO site. So I am confused. These other orgs. seem to focus on the east side of GB. Their work and reports ignore the west side or Southern GB and Bruce Peninsula. All need to work together on the whole of the Bay. Certainly, the cultural and environmental features of this area and its settlement history must be included.

-There are already two Biosphere reserves on the coast of Georgian Bay doing similar work. A Geopark is also a very misleading name. This appears to be a 'make work' project with little value. The proponents should be working more closely with the current stakeholders on the coast. The references to cultural tourism opportunities in this survey alone are worrisome, respectful relationships must be built and these types of activities should come from the communities

-We don't need another organization to do what these organizations are already doing. It is not clear as to whether this new organization is focused on bringing more development and tourism to GB under a UNESCO label, which is unsustainable, or it is interested in protecting the GB environment?

-I would be concerned about possible conflicts with the existing Georgian Bay Mnidoo Gamii Biosphere which was created by everyone associated with the Bay - First Nations, municipalities, boaters, cottagers and other associations. It deals with many if not all of the questions raised in this survey and is serving the Bay's many users well !!! Do we need another UNESCO organization on the Bay? - Perhaps more support for what we have already !!!



# THOUGHTS ABOUT GEORGIAN BAY GEOPARK

*Please share your initial thoughts regarding Georgian Bay and watershed as a UNESCO Global Geopark.*

*N=840*

## **Concerns about Governance**

-Do we need a global organization to help with regional perspectives on regional issues and concerns?

-Need to ensure that initiative is well managed and appropriate for area- avoids over development

-Would be a good thing but I fear governments would clash with each other and in the end, it would be a disappointment

-Sounds like a big undertaking to get all the associations and community members onboard.

-I am with the SSEA and am very concerned that this is being developed in isolation of existing organizations

-The Bay is not thought of as a unit so marketing the whole is not a cohesive presentation.

I think you should be sure you are doing it for all the right reasons and not for prestige or awards. People don't care about those things. They care about the environment, and sustainability, supporting businesses and residents to have healthy lives that come with living in nature.

-Designation seems more so symbolic than anything.

-I believe many good things can come from designation. However, I think it should be Indigenous centered and led with support from the non-Indigenous communities as required by Indigenous communities. A designation such as this must be made with respect to the land and its traditions and should not be sought with by settler/colonial rooted communities. The various First Nation communities that call these lands their traditional homes should be the drivers behind a designation process such as this, with others playing a supporting role. Designation could be good; or, it could be perceived as a further erosion of traditional lands and colonialism.



# COMMUNITY VERY SUPPORTIVE OF GBG INITIATIVE

## Georgian Bay Geopark

- protection of Georgian Bay natural assets for future generations
- coordinated management of tourism in a conservation economy with regional GB associations, First Nations and municipalities
- Over 1000 people who live and visit shared their views of Georgian Bay
- Rate Georgian Bay 8.6 out of 10 as a special place
- Nature-based recreation as well as experiential activities with businesses are prime outdoor pursuits
- Conditions of Georgian Bay perceived as good; however, there are concerns about public lake access, protection of wetlands and opportunities to learn about First Nations traditions and culture
- Three quarters of the people were very supportive of the Georgian Bay Aspiring Geopark initiative.



Photo credit: Georgian Bay Geopark

# WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE GEORGIAN BAY ASPIRING GEOPARK?





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