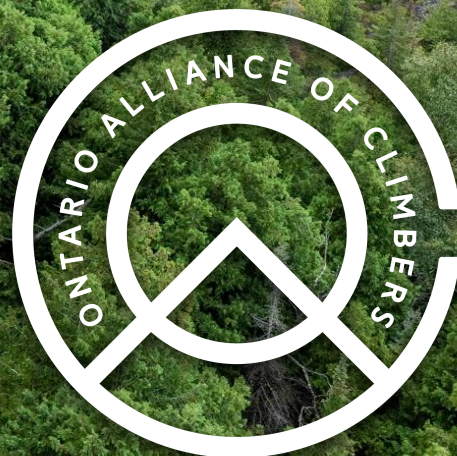


# Ontario Alliance of Climbers 2019 Climber Survey



Results Summary



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to the climbers who took time to answer our questions, and to everyone who has supported the OAC in any way they could over the years. We would also like to thank Clifton Kartner for putting together the initial graphs for the OAC's 2020 AGM.

## **SURVEY DESIGN**

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## **PHOTO CREDITS**

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## **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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## **QUESTIONS & COMMENTS**

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ONTARIO ALLIANCE  
OF CLIMBERS

# 2019 CLIMBER SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Climbing Background & Behaviours .....	04
COVID-19 Impact .....	10
Memberships, Events, Communications .....	14
Attitudes, Beliefs, Concerns .....	17
Demographics .....	24

## BACKGROUND INFO

The OAC has distributed the Climber Survey since 2012. This year we saw a record number of responses, and we look forward to continue to represent the Ontario climbing community.

## SURVEY METHODS

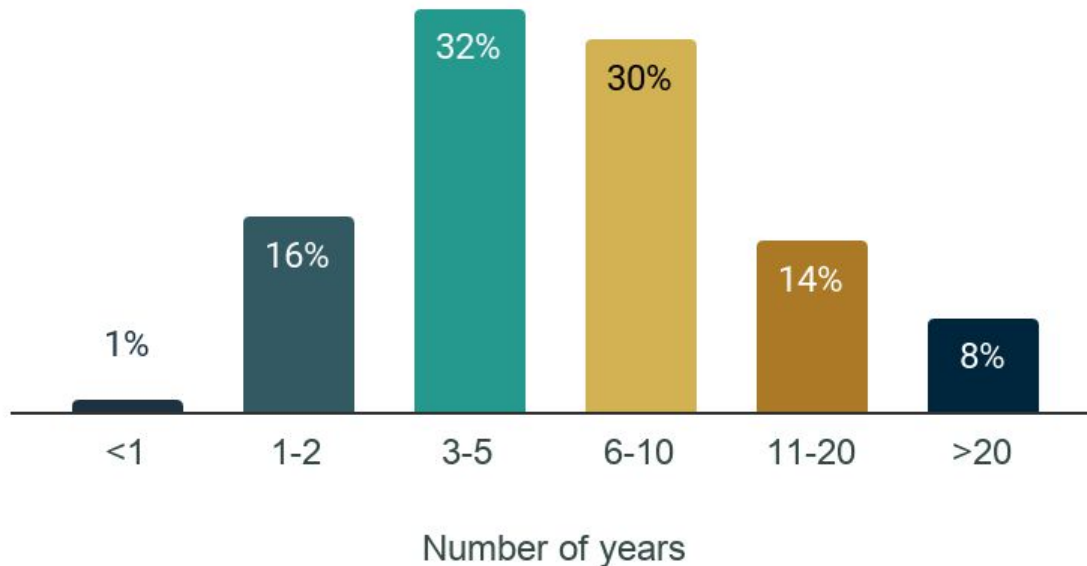
Survey responses were crowdsourced via email, social media, and online posts from June 23 to July 19, 2020. (Data of this nature may under- or over-represent some groups, so these survey results may be not be generalizable to all climbers in Ontario.) We received 418 responses, of which 368 were complete. Respondents were entered into a draw for 1 of 4 prizes (two \$50 MEC gift cards, two sets of branded t-shirts). Unless stated otherwise, questions were multiple-choice.

## OAC MISSION

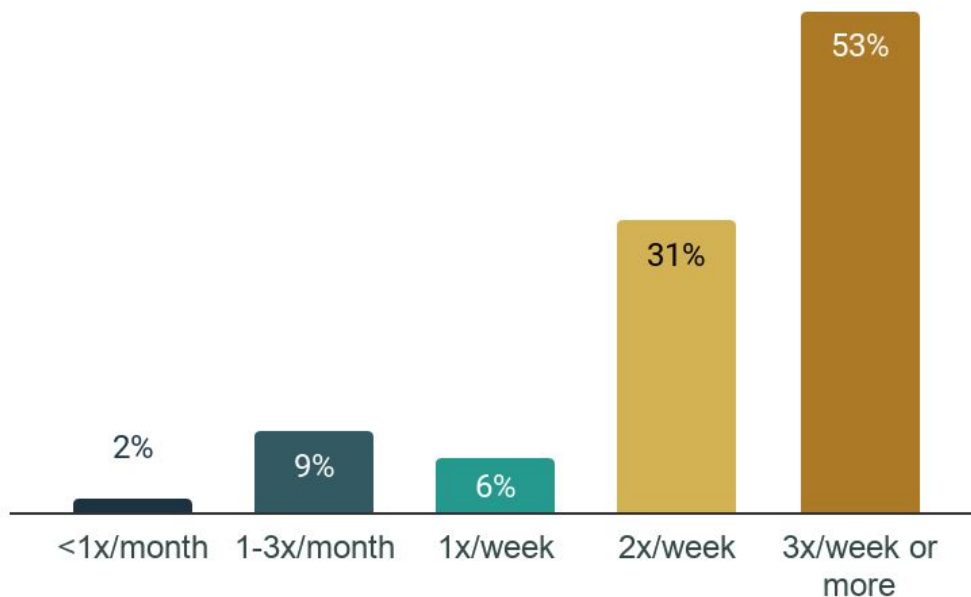
The Ontario Alliance of Climbers is an independent, provincial, volunteer non-profit organization that works diligently to keep climbing and bouldering areas open. The OAC seeks to resolve access issues as they arise by proactively engaging with and educating the climbing community.

# Climbing Background & Behaviours

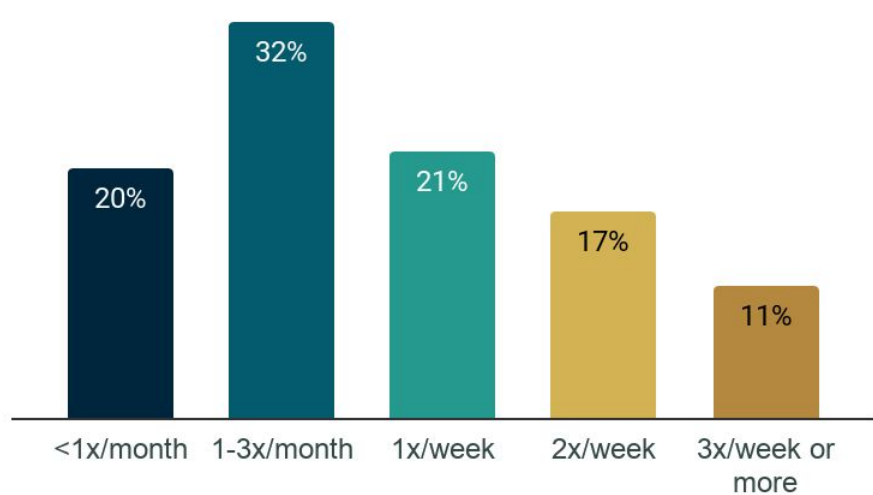
1. How many years have you been climbing total (including gym climbing)?



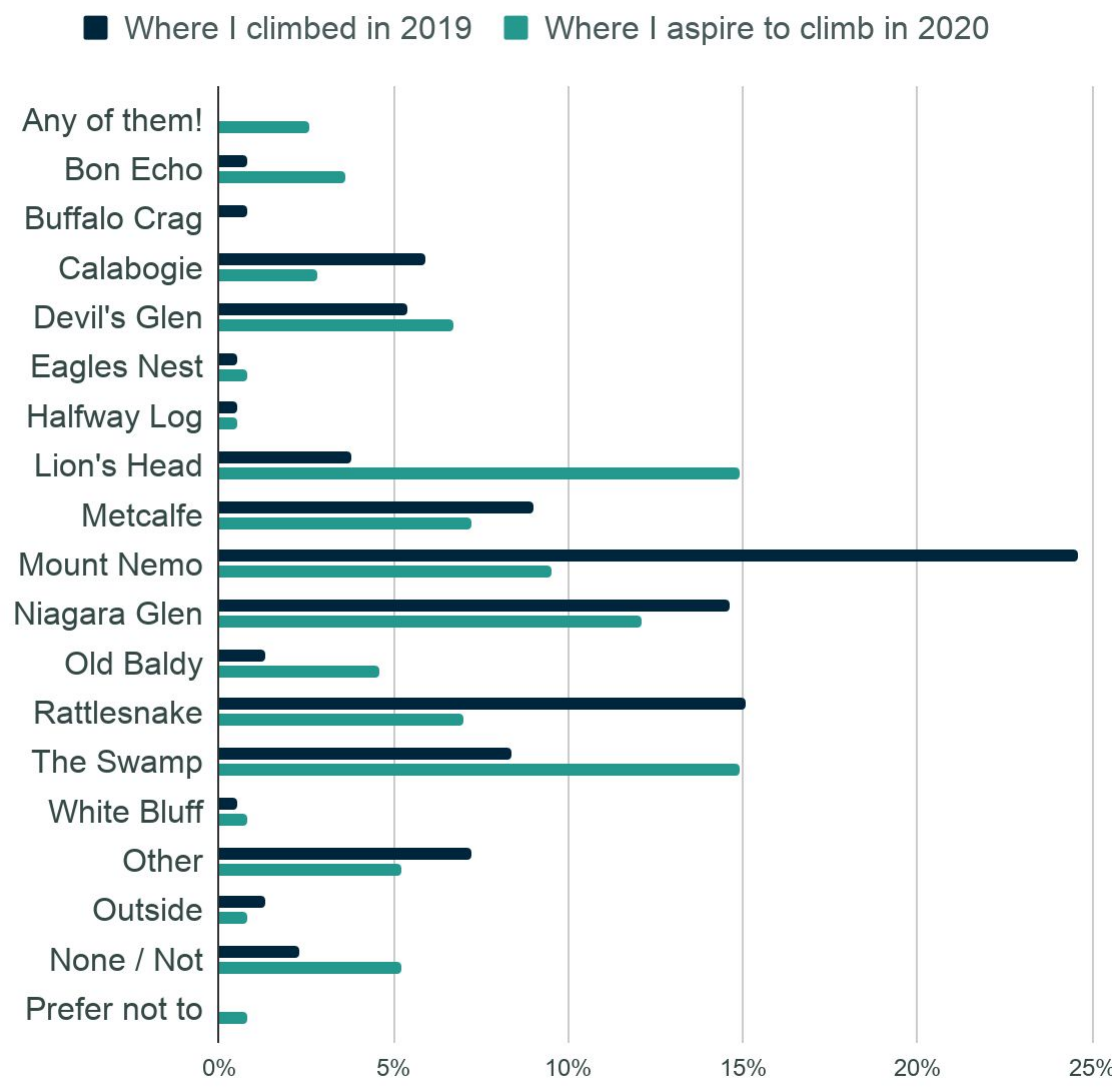
2. How often did you climb in 2019?



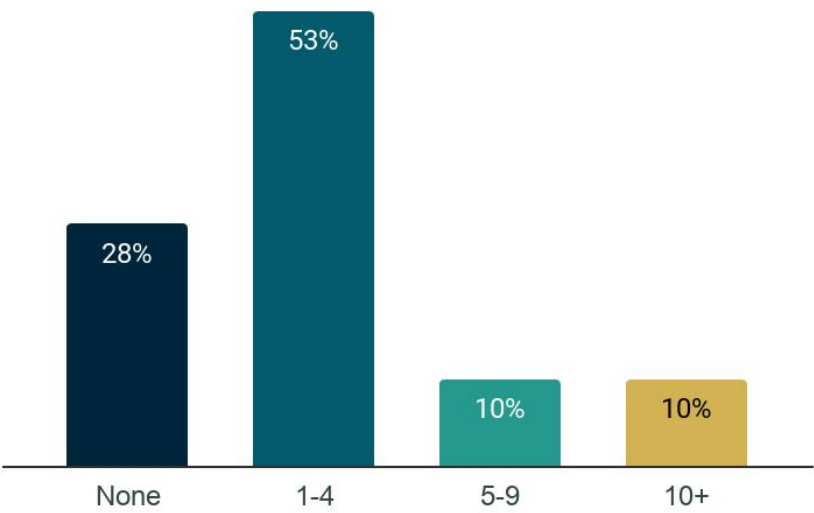
3. In your 2019 climbing season (the time of year when you climbed outside the most), how often did you climb outdoors?



4a. In 2019, which Ontario crag did you climb at most often?  
4b. In 2020, which Ontario crag do you aspire to climb at the most?



5. How many climbing trips outside Ontario did you make in 2019?



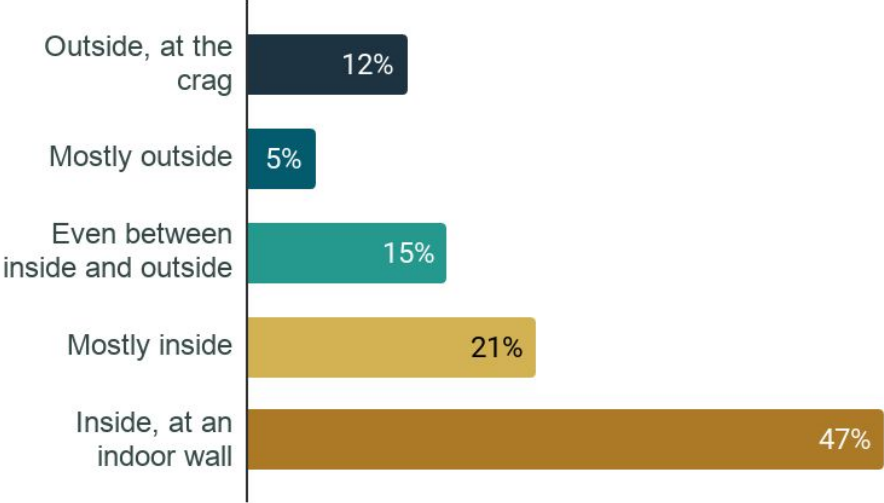
6a. Which gym did you climb at most often in 2019?

6b. Which climbing gym(s) did you have memberships at in 2019?



**Note:** Only the top 10 gyms are displayed. Climbers listed 30 different gyms in Ontario, and held 454 memberships between 343 people ( $M = 1.16$ , max.: 5). Of those that answered the question, 47 climbers said that they didn't have a membership at any gym. This question was open-answer, not multiple choice.

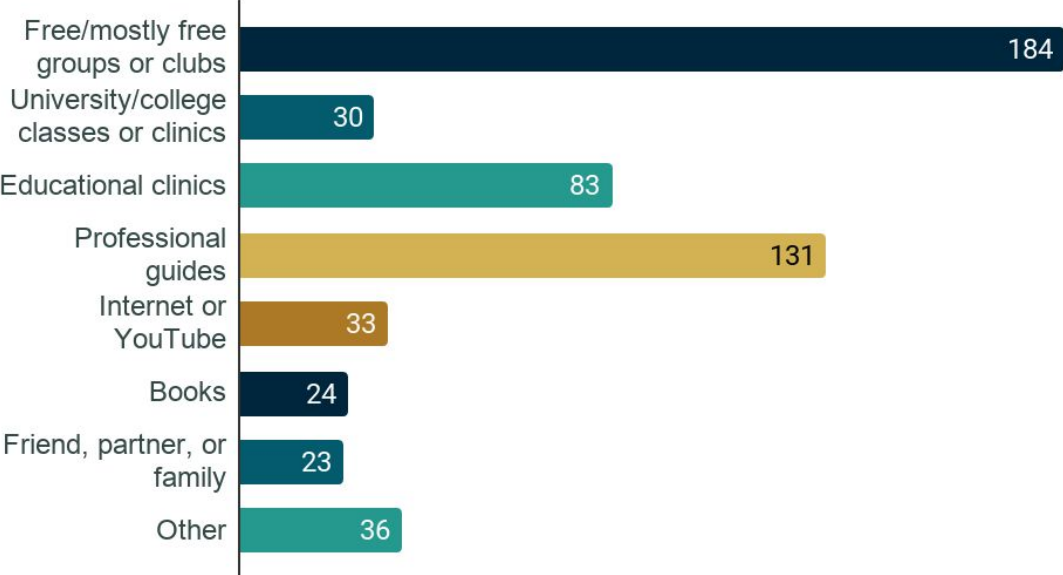
7. Which of the following best describes where you first learned to climb?



8. How important was mentorship from one or more mentors when you were learning to climb?

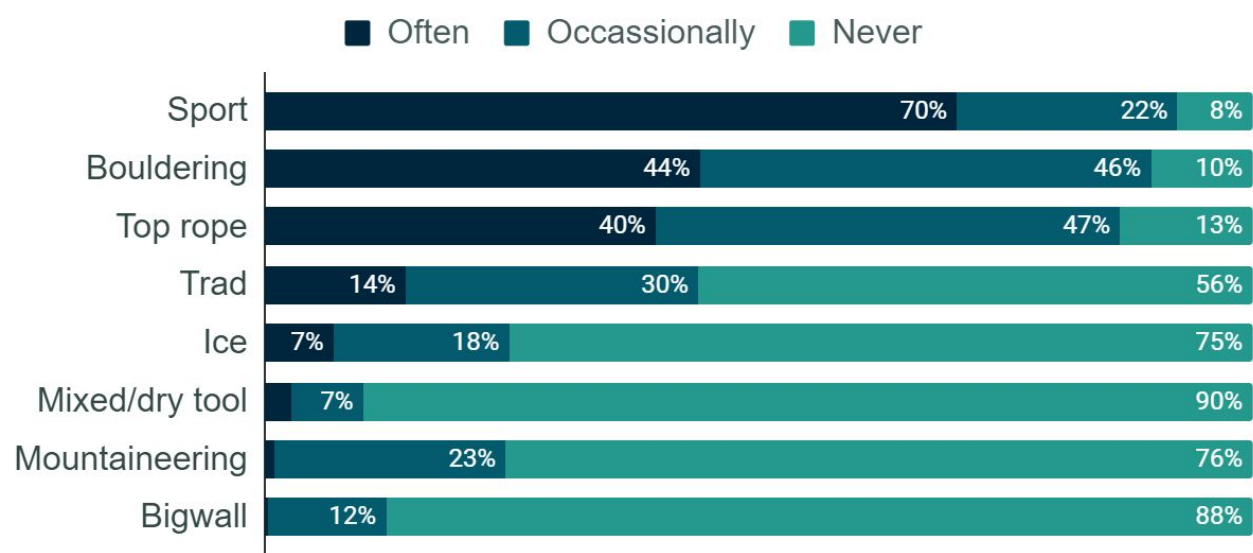


9. What other education or mentorship sources helped you learn to climb?

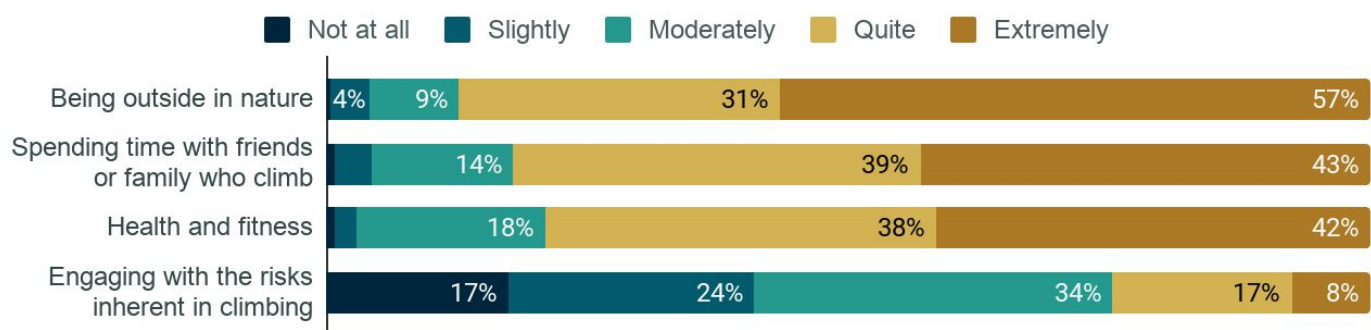


**Note:** Respondents were asked to indicate “Yes” or “No” for each resource, except for “Internet or YouTube”, “Books”, and “Friend, partner, or family,” which were counted from answers specified under “Other”.

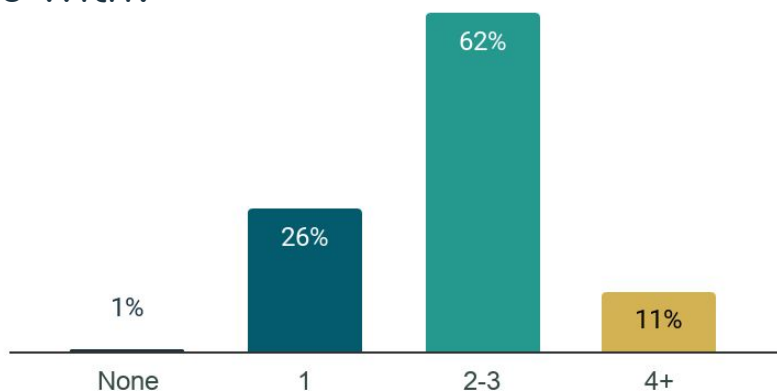
10. How frequently do you engage in the following types of climbing?



11. How important are the following motivations in your decision to climb?

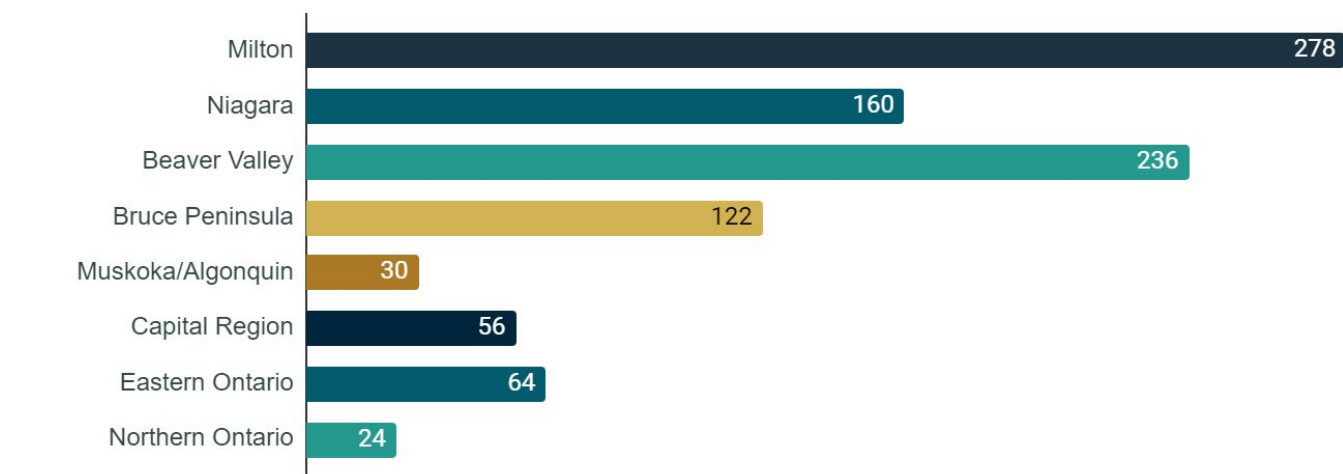


12. When you climbed outside in 2019, how many other people did you typically go with?

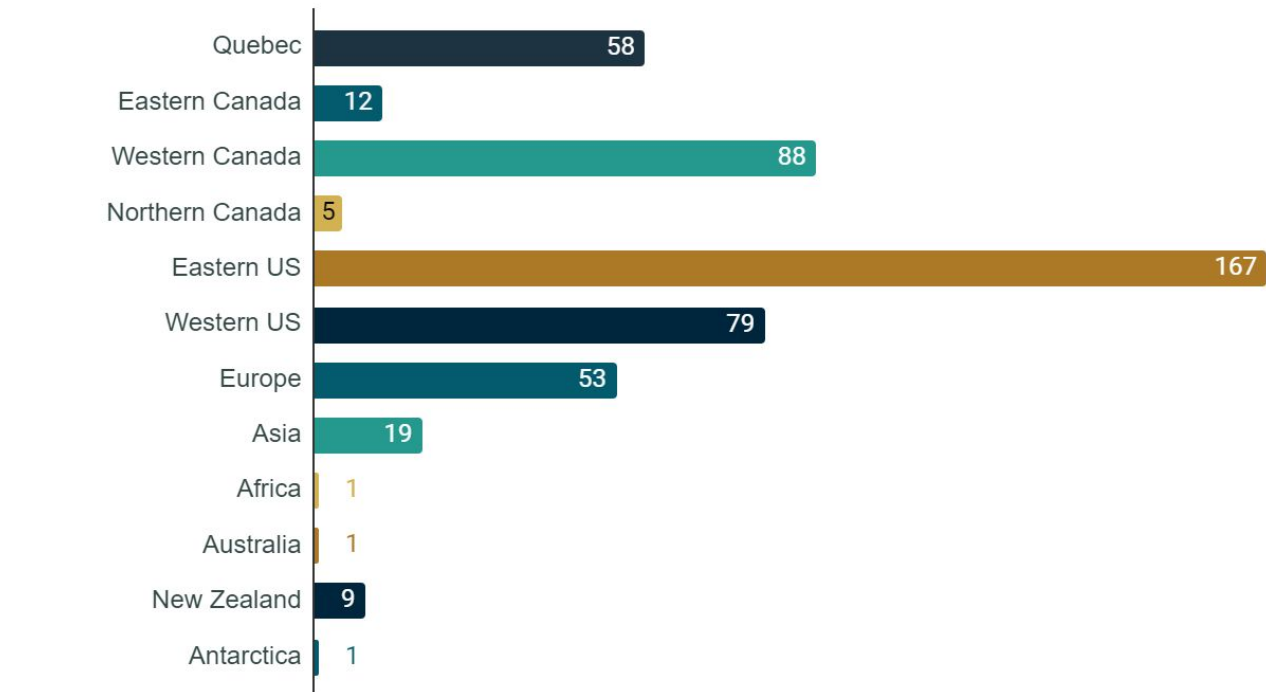




13. In 2019, in which Ontario regions did you climb outside?



14. In 2019, where else did you climb outside (outside Ontario)?



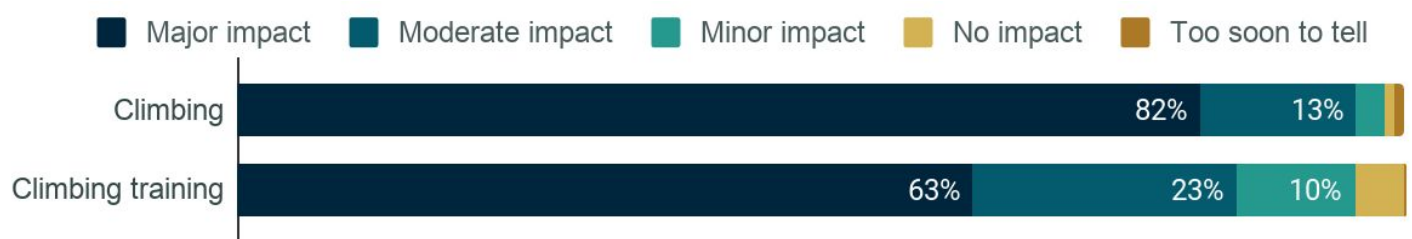
15. How important is access to climbing in your decision to live in Ontario?



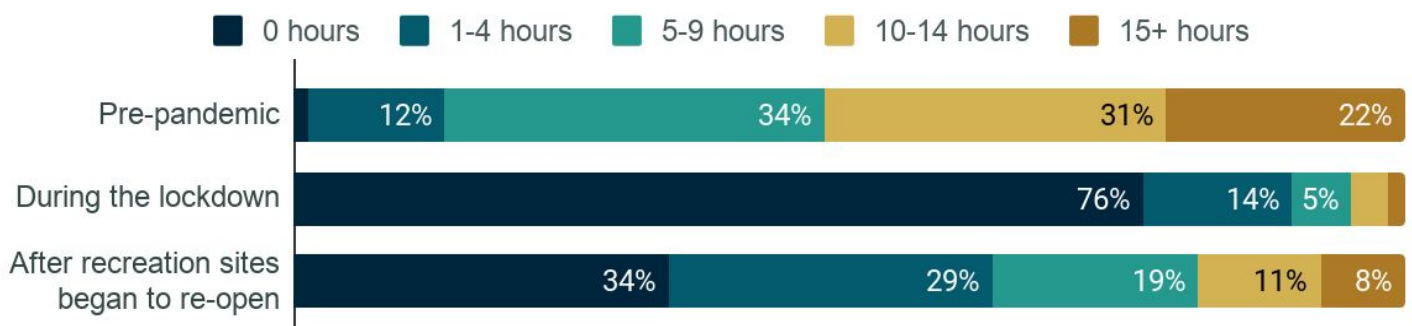
# COVID-19 Impact

On March 17, 2020, the Ontario government issued lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. The responses below reflect the state of climbing during the survey response period **(June 23 - July 19, 2020)**.

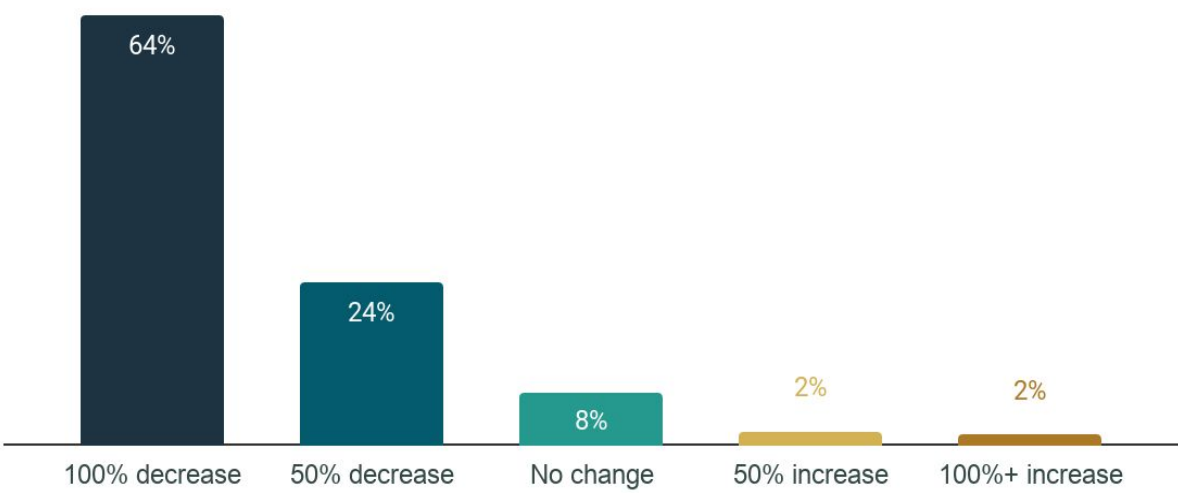
**16.** What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the following activities:



**17.** How many hours per week did you climb indoors and outdoors?



**18.** To approximately what extent (percentage increase or decrease) have you changed your participation in climbing since the start of COVID-19 restrictions in Ontario (March 17, 2020)?



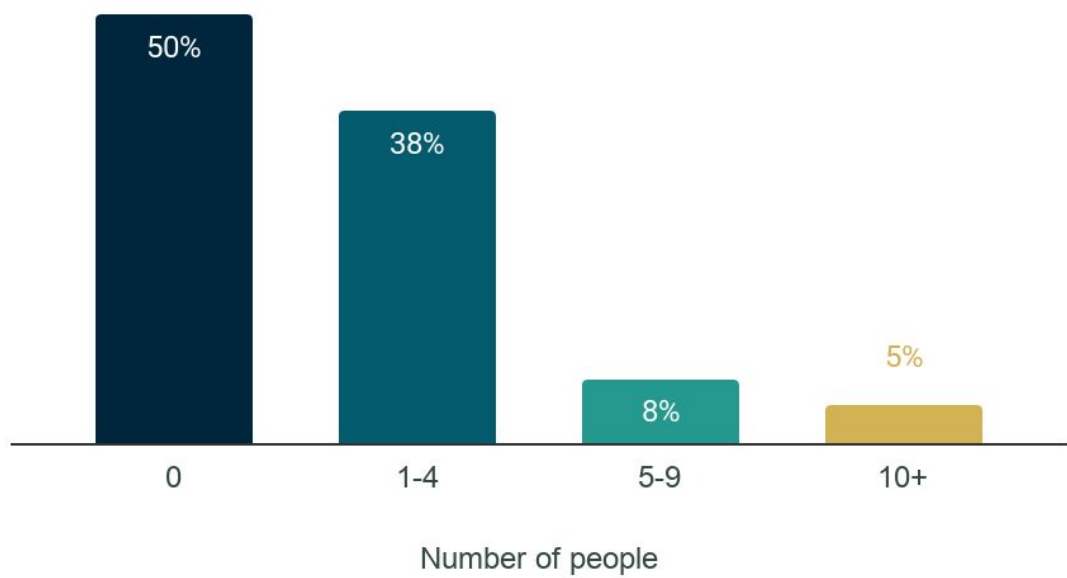
**19.** Have you climbed outside since restrictions were imposed on March 17, 2020?



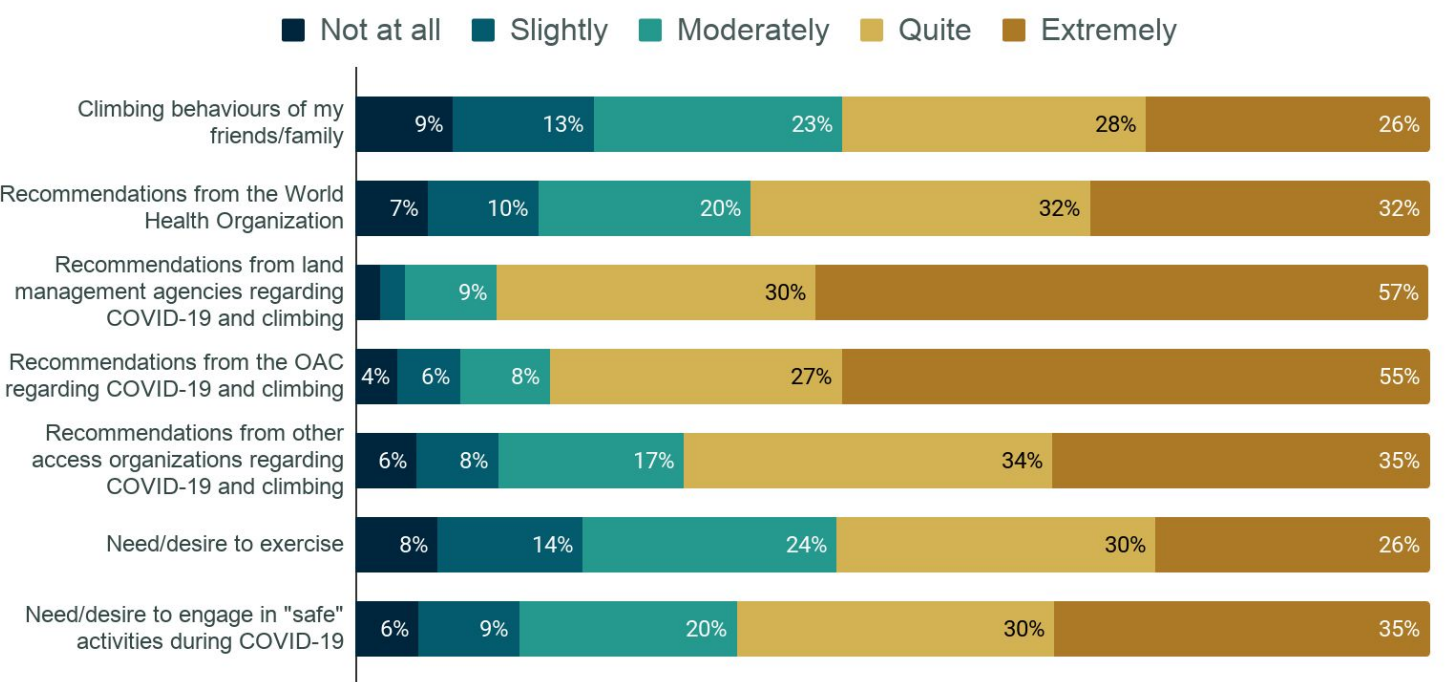
**Note:** Survey responses were collected from June 23rd to July 19th, 2020.



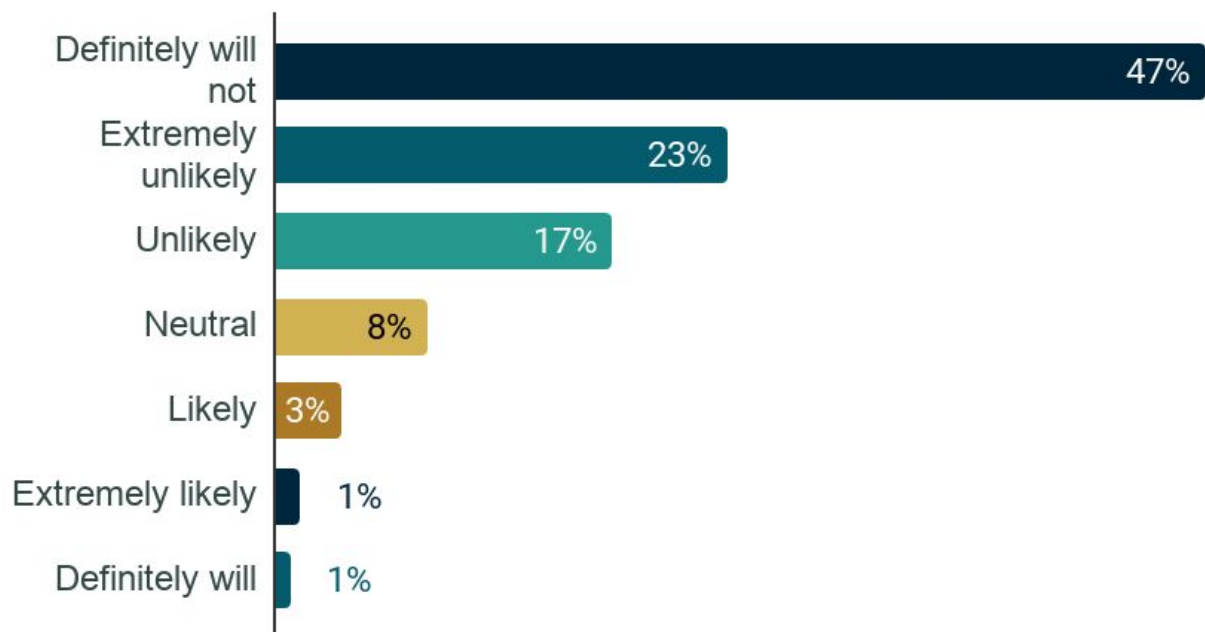
20. How many people do you personally know who went climbing outdoors during the lockdown?



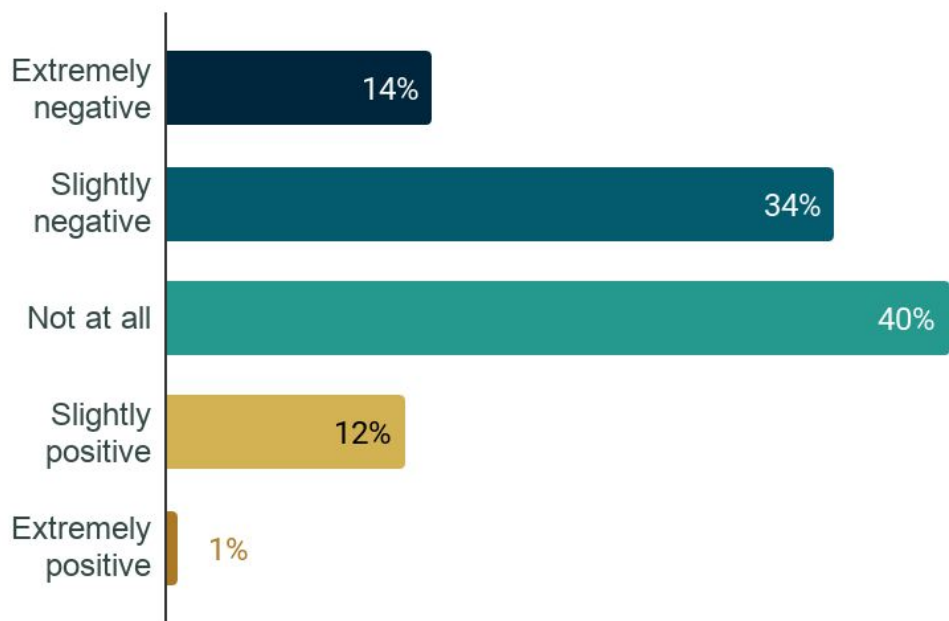
21. How important are these factors when making decisions about climbing activities?



22. If outdoor recreation areas continue to remain closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, how likely are you to access those areas even if they are officially closed to the public?

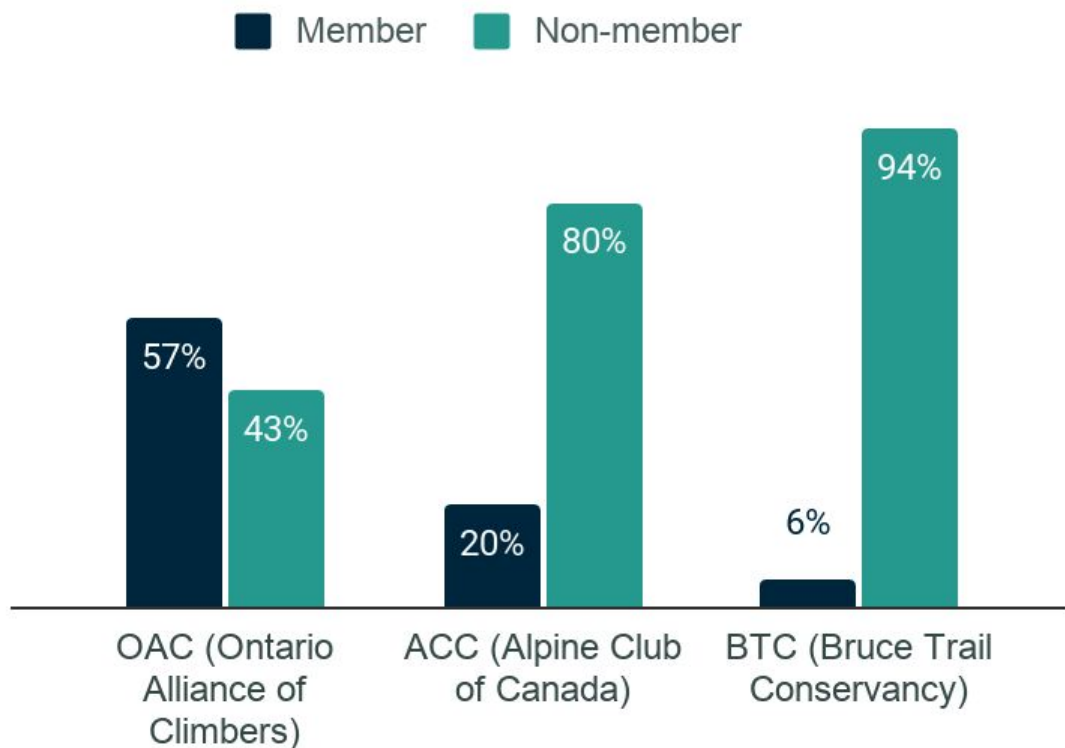


23. Which of the following best describes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your economic situation?

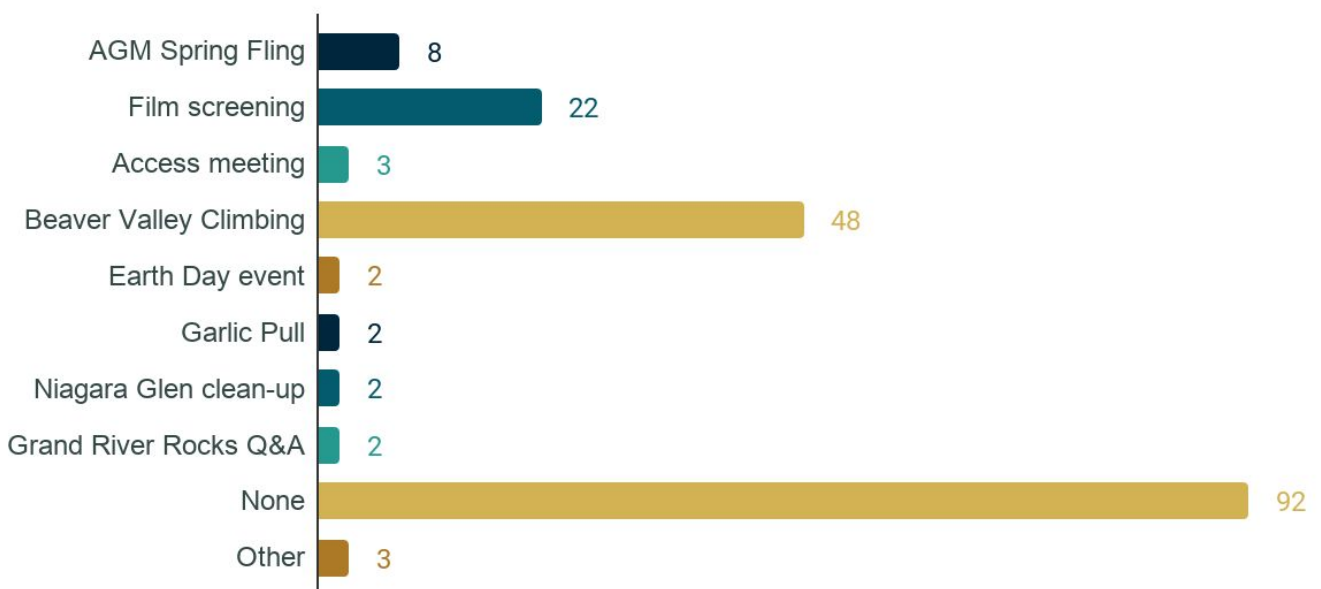


# Membership, Events, Communications

25. Are you a member of the following organizations?



26. Which OAC events did you attend in 2019?





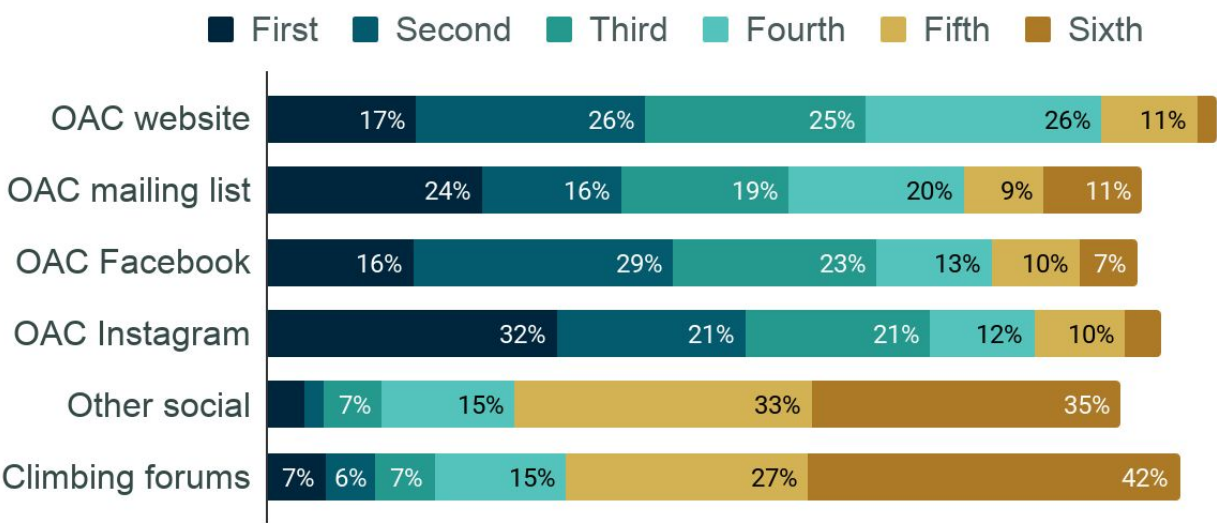
27. What would you like to see the OAC do more of in the coming year?

In response to this open-ended question, we received a broad array of answers. Overall, responses were positive, encouraging, and appreciative. The vast majority of responses fell into the following categories:

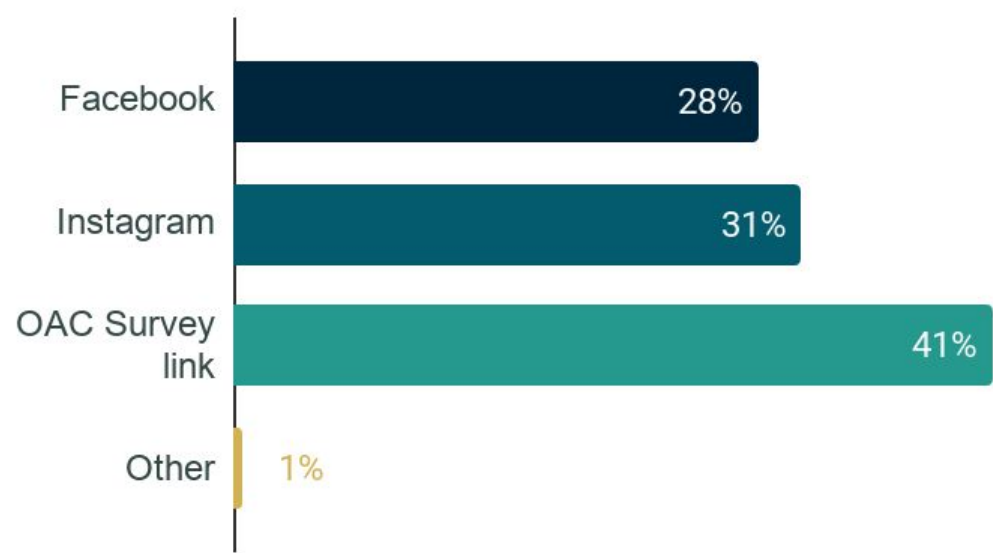
- **Community engagement** (especially in terms of events and education)
- **Mentorship and outreach to new climbers**
- **Access** (to new and closed crags, and improving relations with land managers)
- **Environmental initiatives** (crag clean-ups and sustainable crag development)
- **Diversity and inclusion** (especially for BIPOC and women)

Additionally, one person suggested selling merchandise as a way to spread the word and generate more funds for initiatives. There were also a few comments pertaining to improving OAC leadership and executive functions (including taking a firm stance on controversial issues, and demonstrating transparency in decision-making, respectively).

28. How would you like the OAC to keep you in the loop regarding local climbing access issues? (Ranked in order of preference.)



29. How did you encounter the link to this survey?

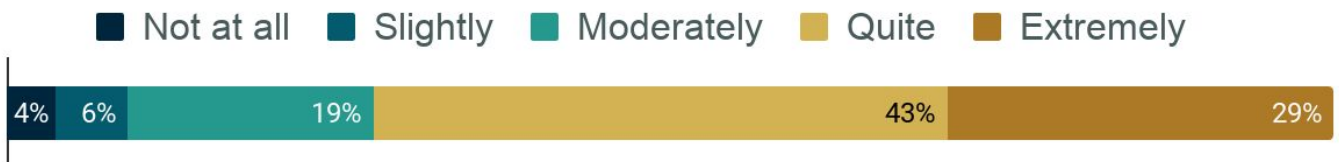


30. Did you receive the OAC newsletter?

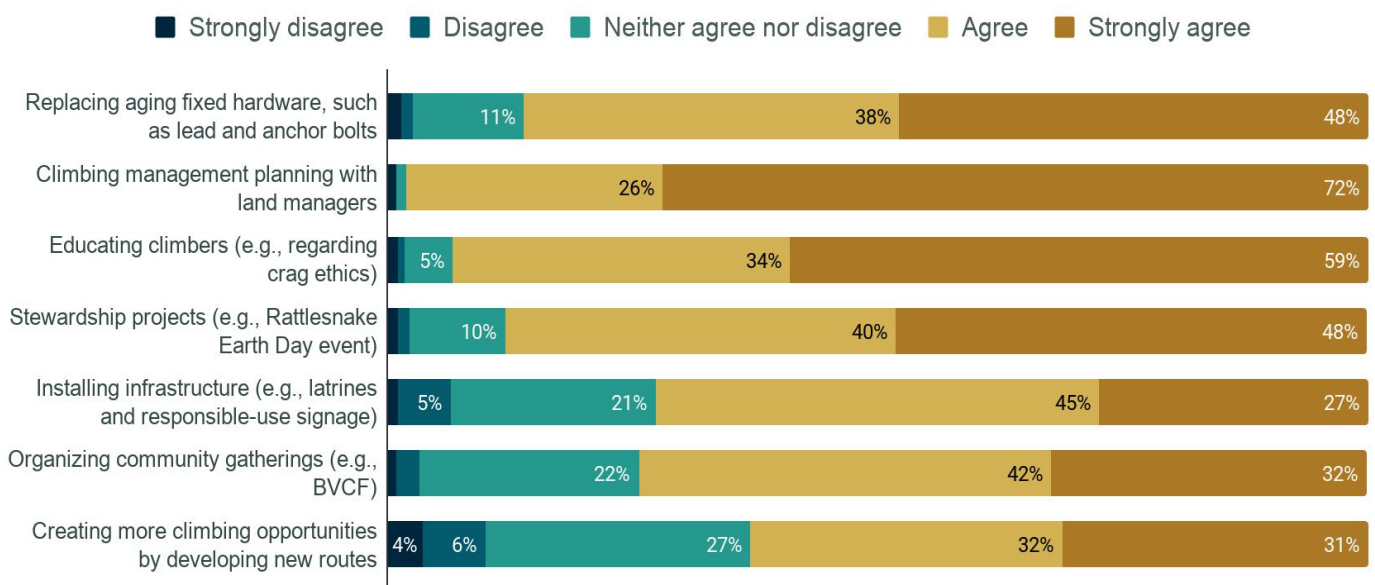


# Attitudes, Beliefs, Concerns

**31.** To what extent do you trust the OAC to pursue your interests as a climber?

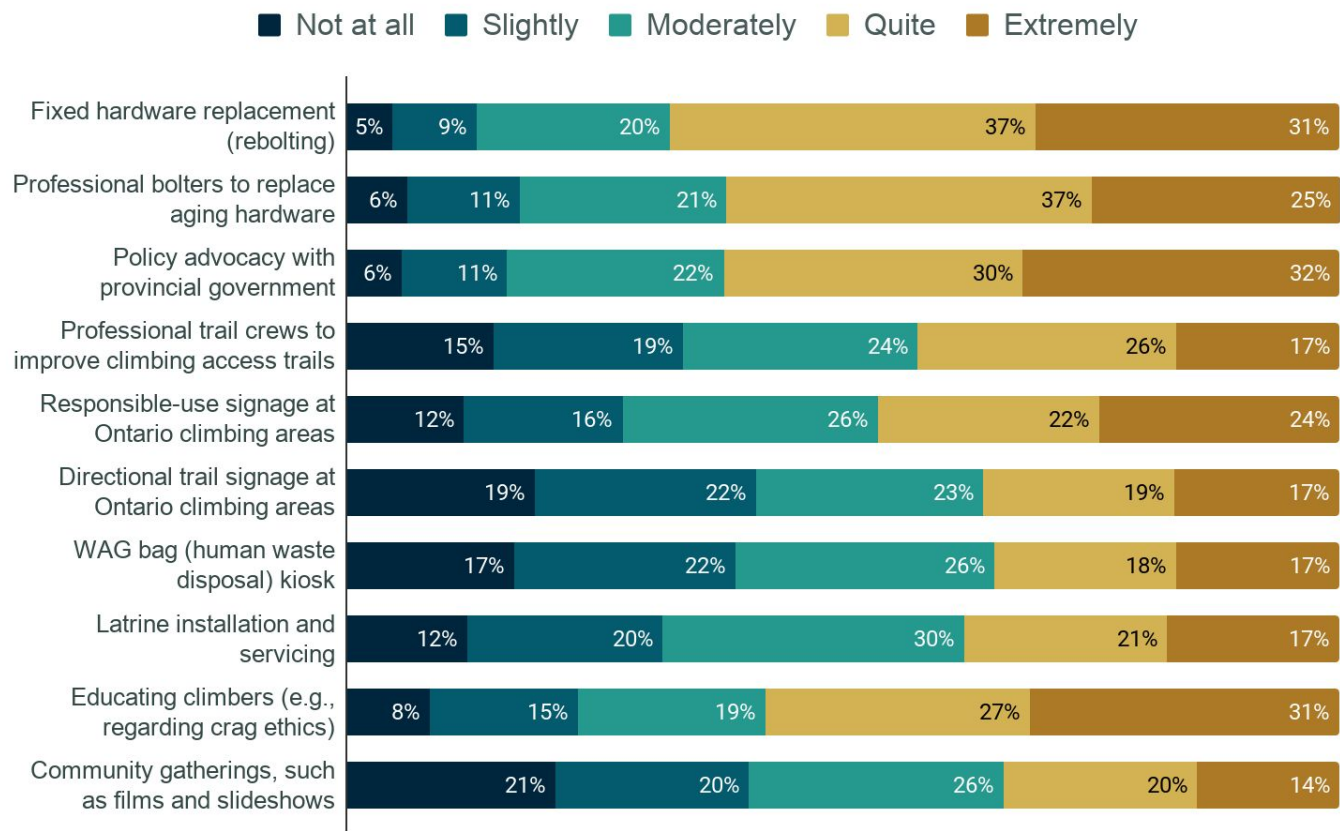


**32.** Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that local climbing organizations (such as the OAC) should carry out the following activities:

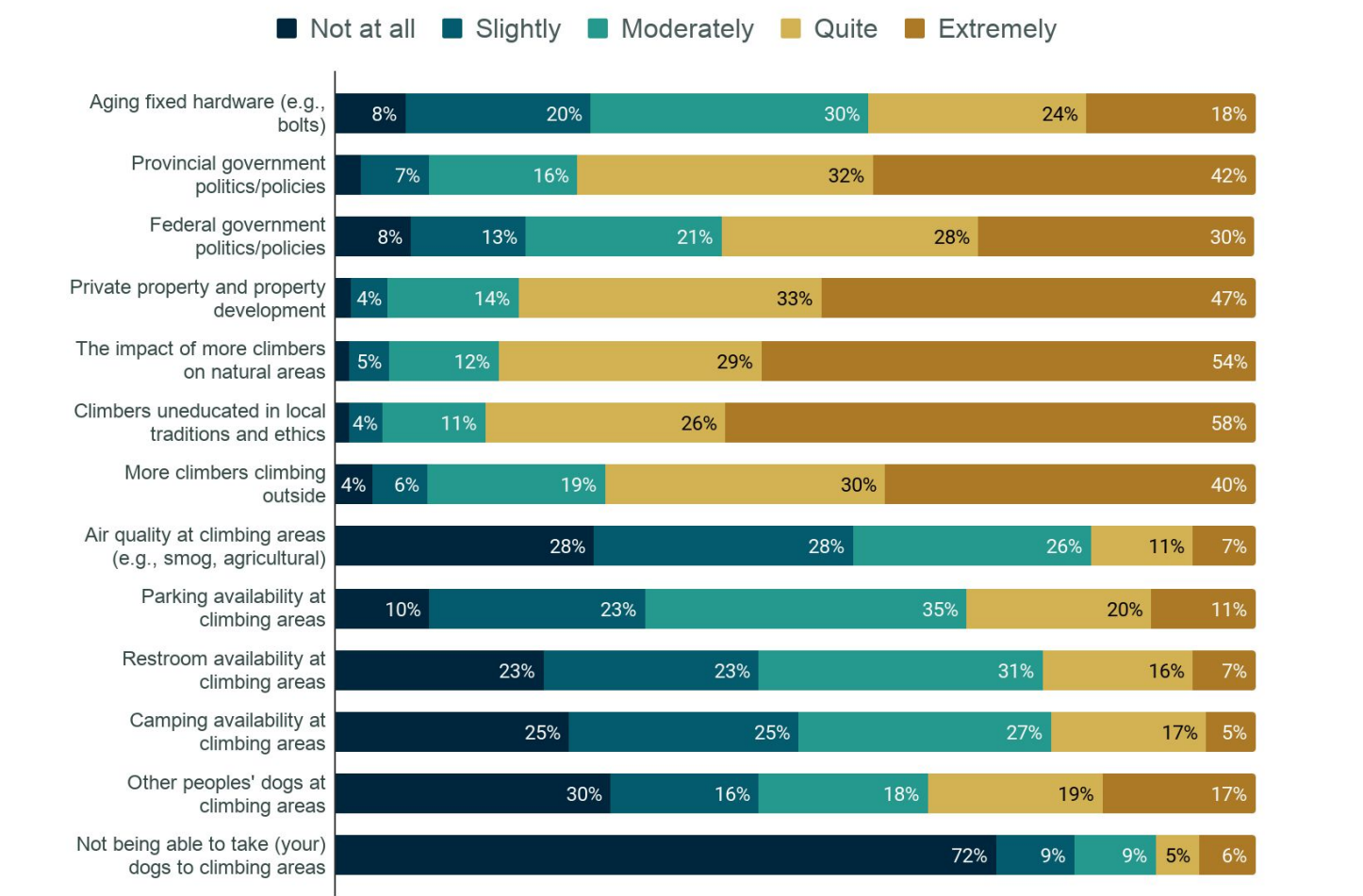




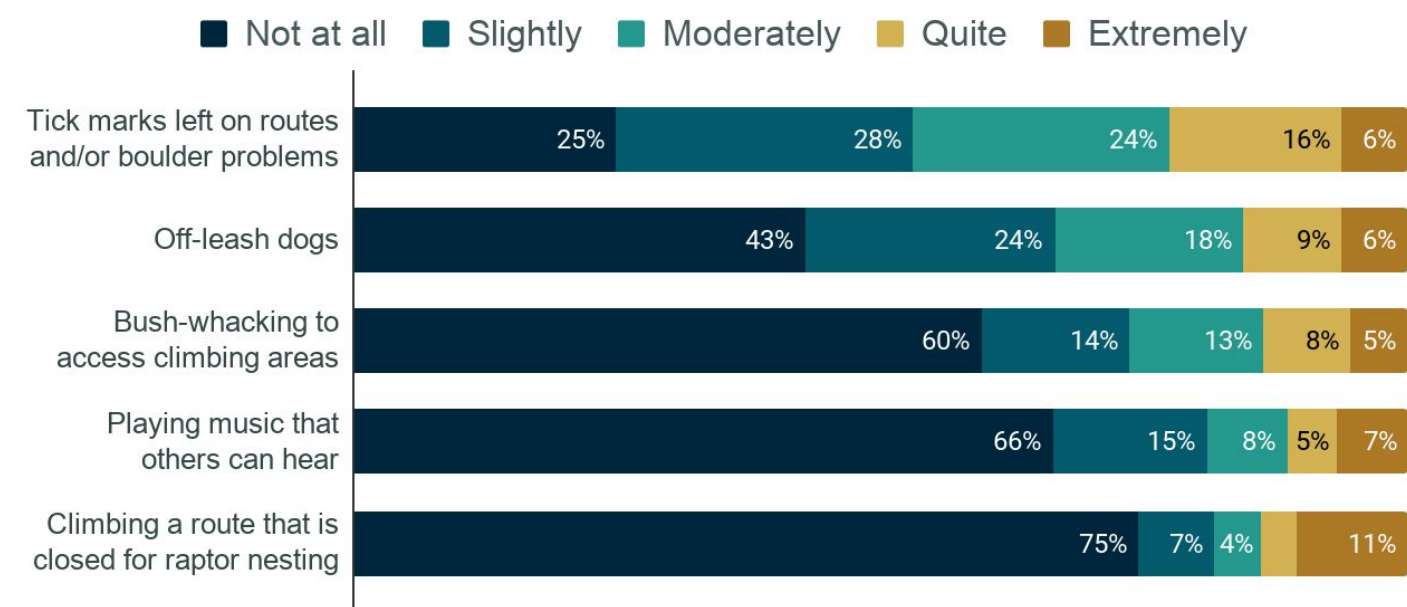
### 33. How likely are you to donate money to the following climbing stewardship and access initiatives?



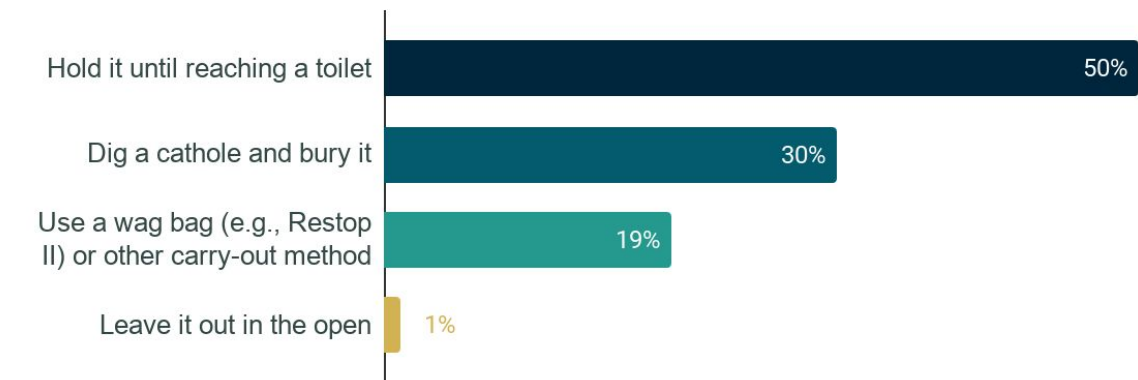
### 34. How concerned are you about the impact of the following factors on your future climbing experiences and climbing access in Ontario?



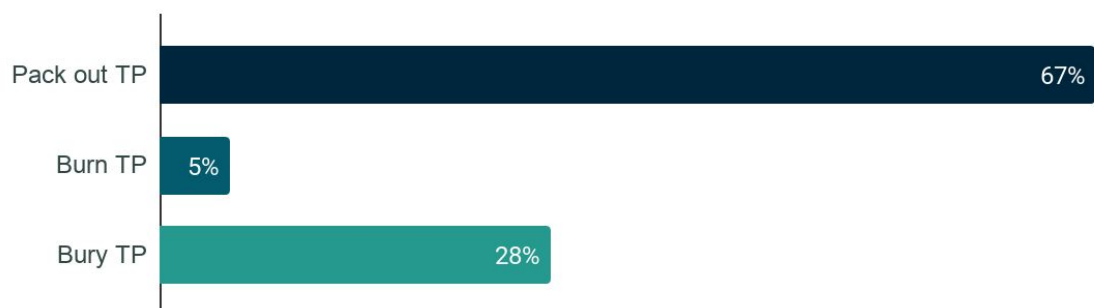
35. In your opinion, how acceptable are the following behaviours at climbing areas?



36. How do you dispose of human waste at Southern Ontario climbing areas?

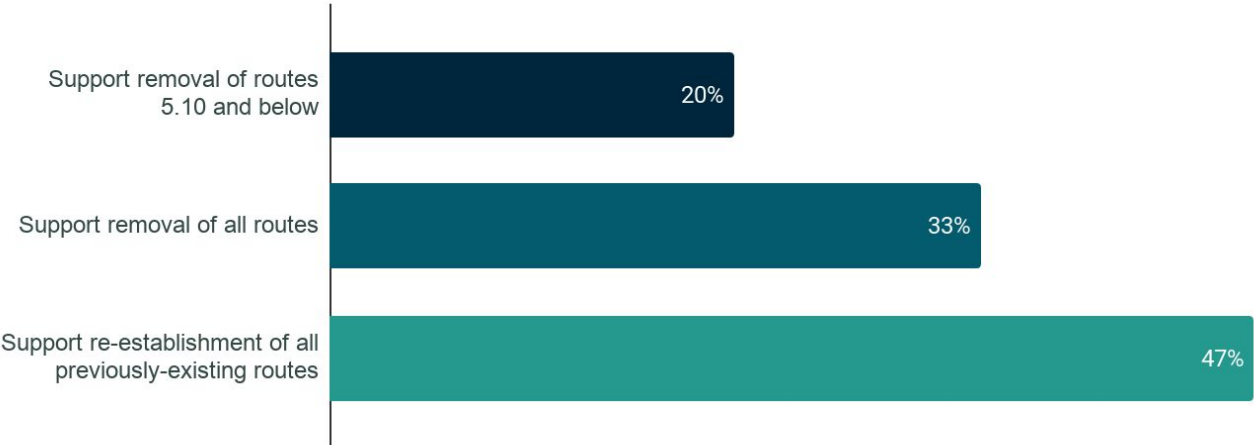


37. How do you dispose of toilet paper?

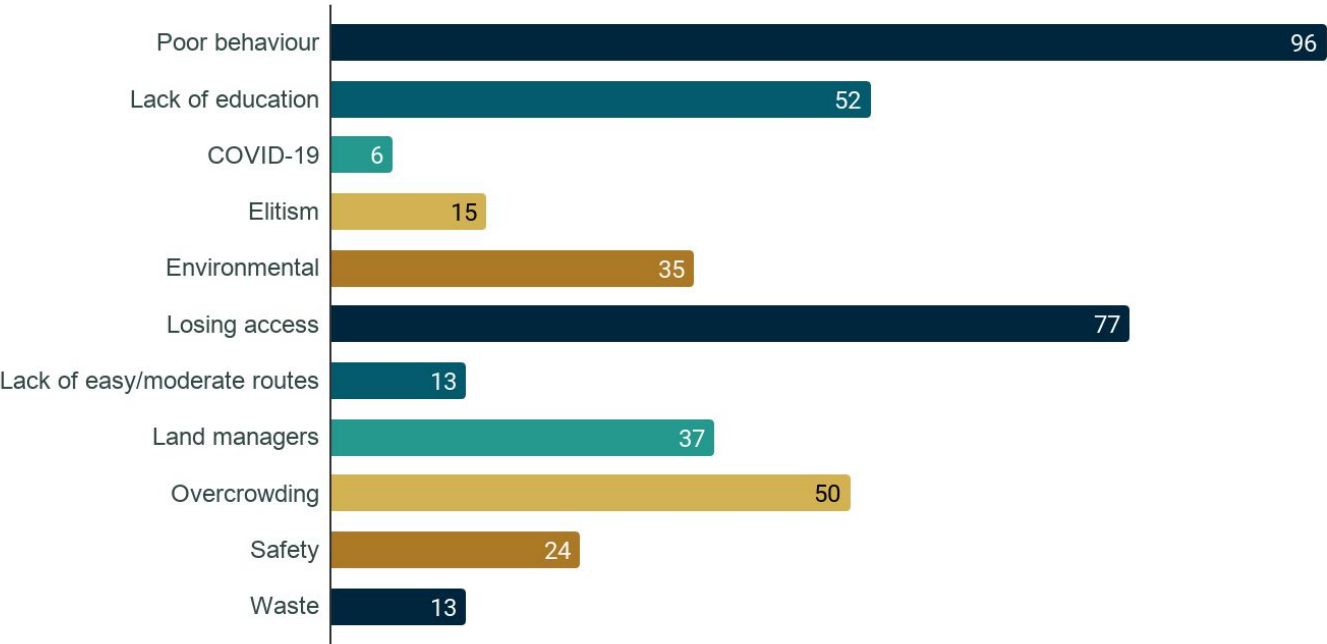




38. What is your opinion about rehabilitation efforts at Latvian Ledge (Lion's Head)?



39a. What is your number one access concern?



### 39b. What is your number one access concern?

**We received 256 responses to this open-answer question. Responses were grouped by content and theme.**

Responses to this question varied. Not surprisingly, many were concerned with access: losing access, maintaining access, and increasing access. As seen on the previous page, respondents were largely concerned about losing access due to the number of climbers demonstrating **poor behaviour regarding outdoor etiquette and climbing practices** (n = 96).

It was assumed by most respondents that this ‘poor behaviour’ is being exhibited by new, uneducated climbers (n = 53). Although, one respondent expressed frustration that older, more experienced climbers can also engage in risky behaviours like “drinking, no helmets, and sketchy trad” (Respondent 160).

It was also evident that respondents were concerned that access is being jeopardized by **the growing number of climbers accessing outdoor areas, which is leading to overcrowding** (n = 50), **environmental degradation** (n = 35), and **increased litter and human waste** (n = 13).


There was some consensus that this overcrowding was related to a lack of crags with moderate routes, and also to a lack of infrastructure at the existing ones (e.g., access to safe parking and camping).

We also received **opposing responses** to this question. Some respondents felt that as moderate climbers, the OAC didn’t represent their interests, and there were some participants who expressed this sentiment by indicating that they would like **access to more easy-to-moderate climbs** (n = 13). In contrast, 10 people indicated that **losing access to Lion’s Head** (an advanced crag) was their biggest concern. Thus, member interests are diverse and varied.

**Elitism** was also identified as an emergent concern (n = 15). Respondents lamented the ingroup fighting, the contempt for new climbers, and the removal of moderate routes at Lion’s Head. In contrast, 52 respondents expressed discontent with “uneducated” climbers, however, many of these climbers also indicated support toward **addressing the mentorship gap and offering friendly advice to new climbers**.

Only 6 comments indicated **concerns about COVID-19**, and 24 indicated **concerns about safety**, but mostly in reference to being worried about the unsafe practices of others jeopardizing access for everyone.

### 39b. Access concerns (cont.)

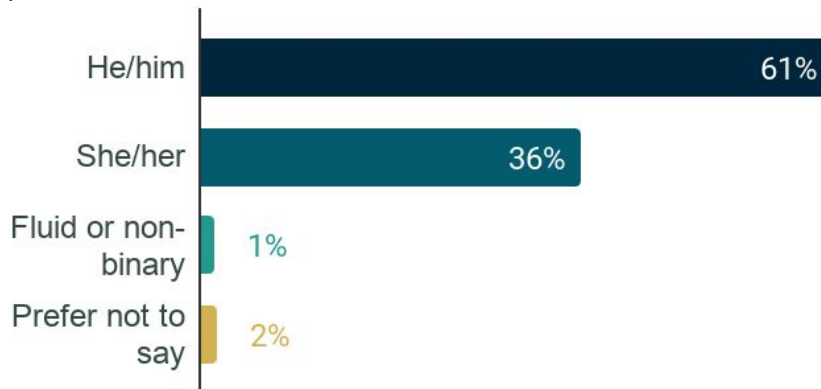


“[There are] large groups of people unfamiliar with LNT and other low impact behaviours that jeopardize our relationships with land owners. We as a community need to do a better job of educating those coming out of the gym, for what is likely their first experience in more ‘wild’ spaces.”

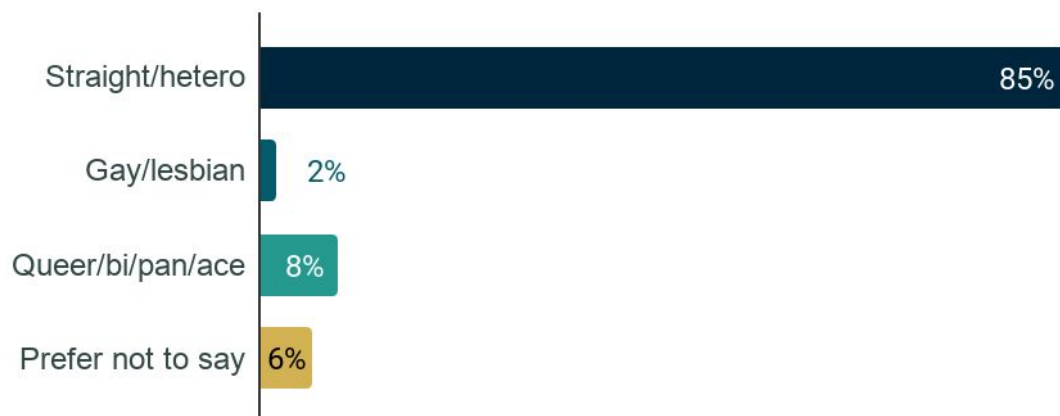
(Respondent 91)

Photo: Brooke Anderson (Unsplash)

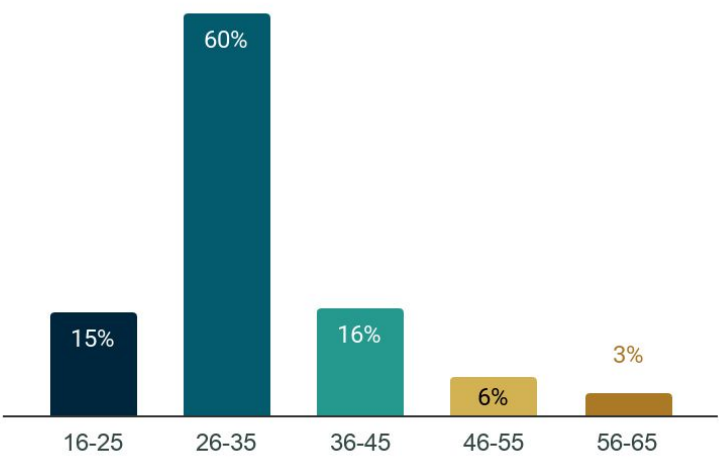
**40.** How would you describe your current gender identity (open response)?



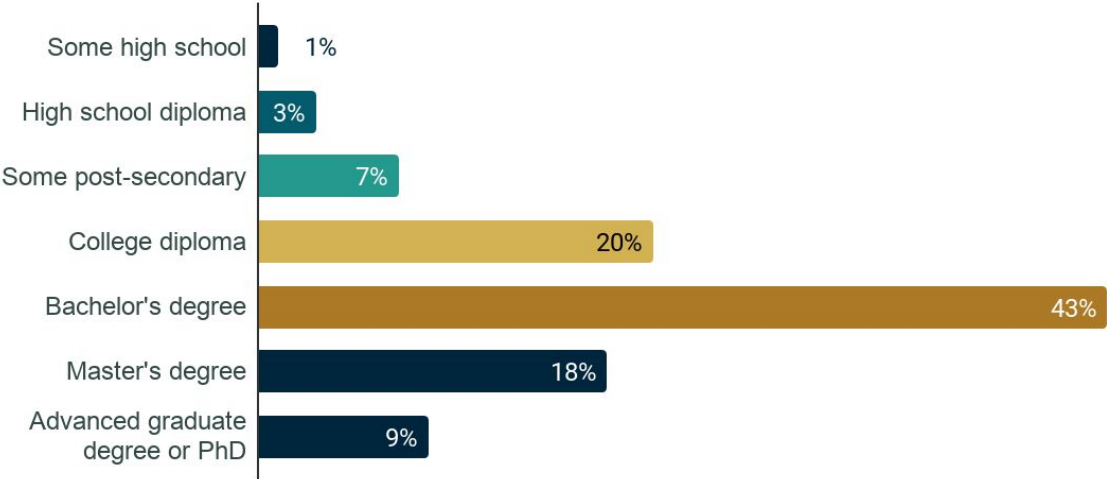
**41.** What is your sexual orientation (open response)?



42. What is your age?

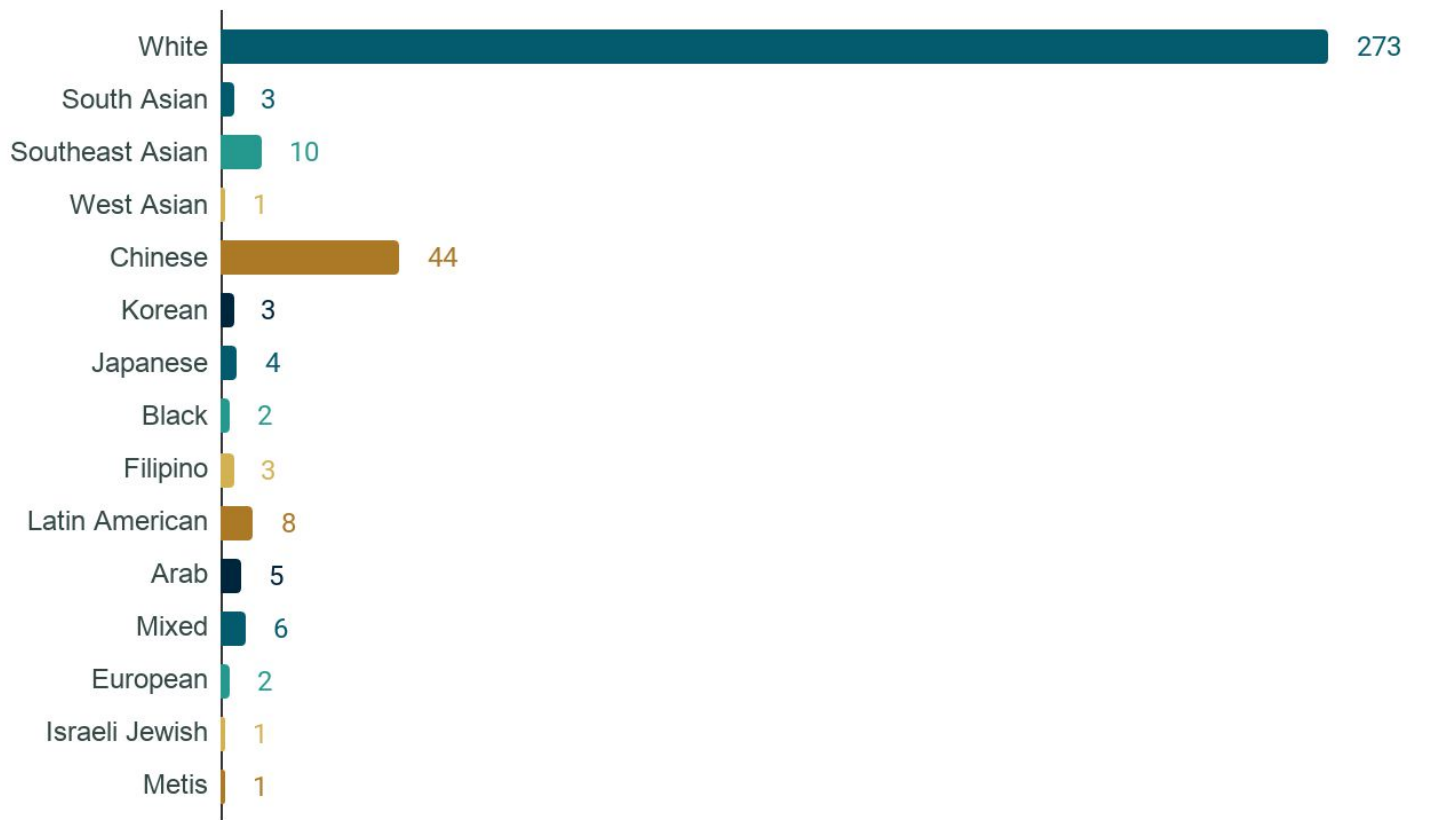


43. What is the highest level of education you have completed?





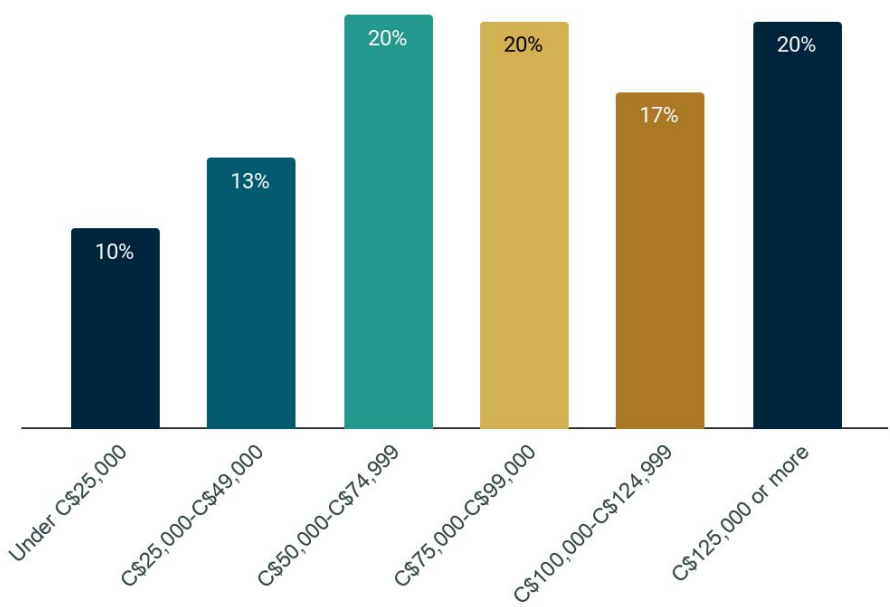
44. What is your ethnicity (multiple choice with room to specify under “other”)?



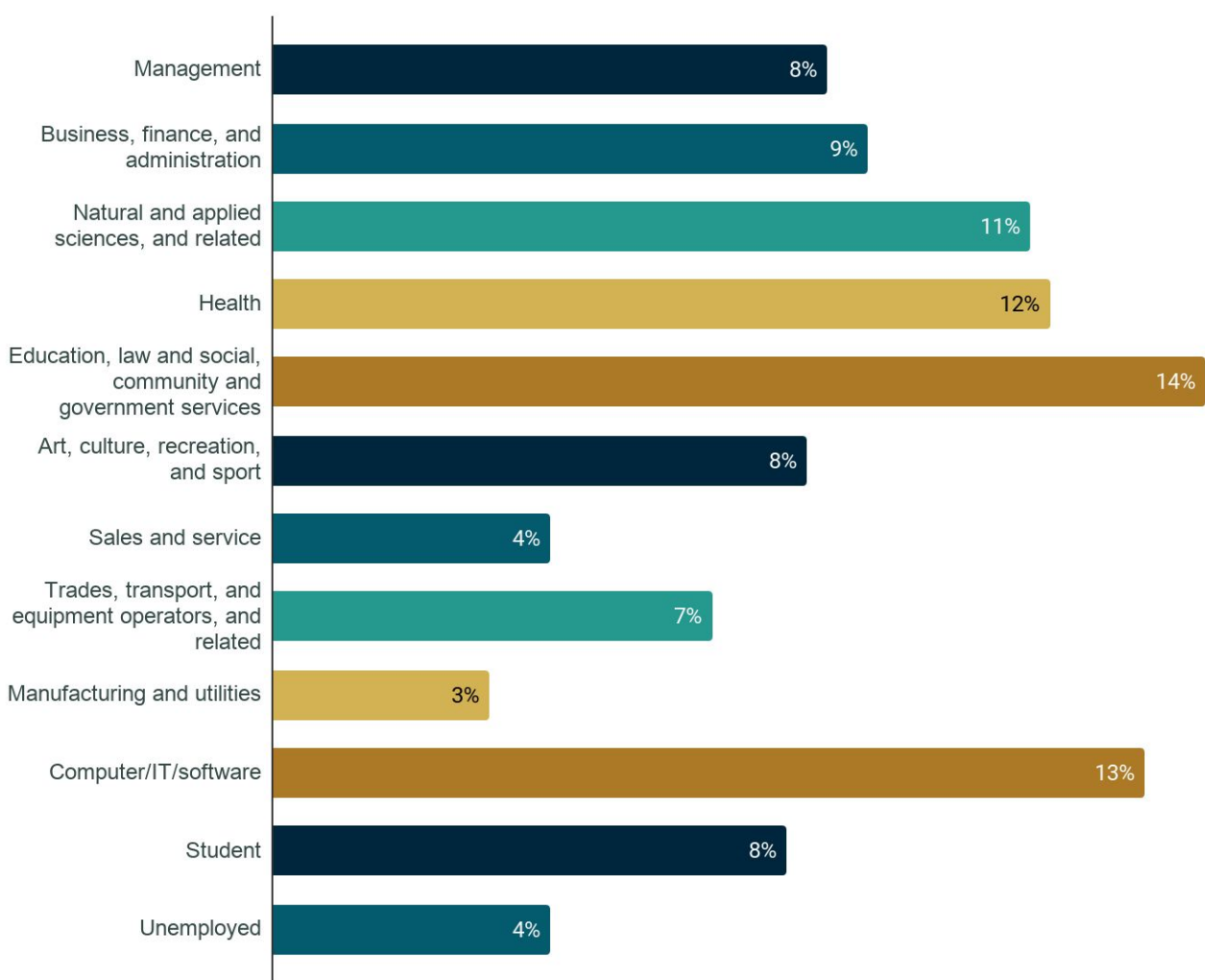
**Note on Aboriginal status**

When asking about ethnicity, we used the Statistics Canada question without also asking about Aboriginal status (as these are separate questions on the Canadian census). We deeply regret omitting Aboriginal status from our survey and will do better next year. This act has unwittingly contributed to the ongoing erasure of Indigenous peoples and we sincerely apologize.

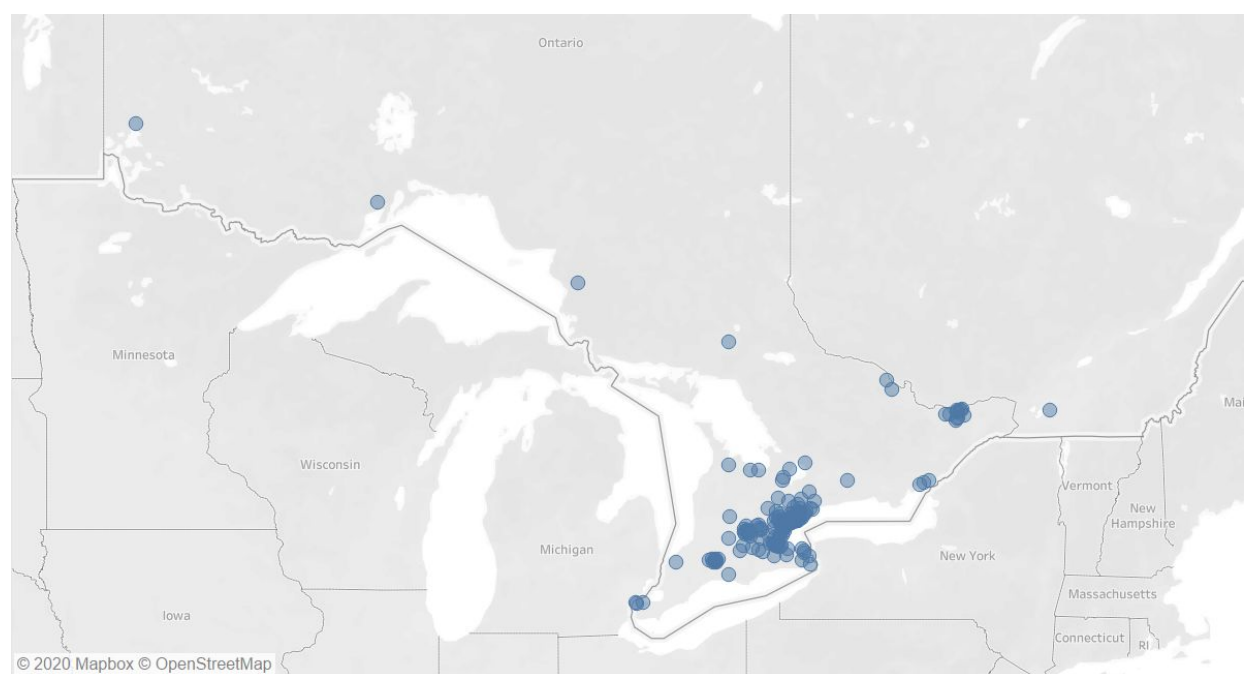
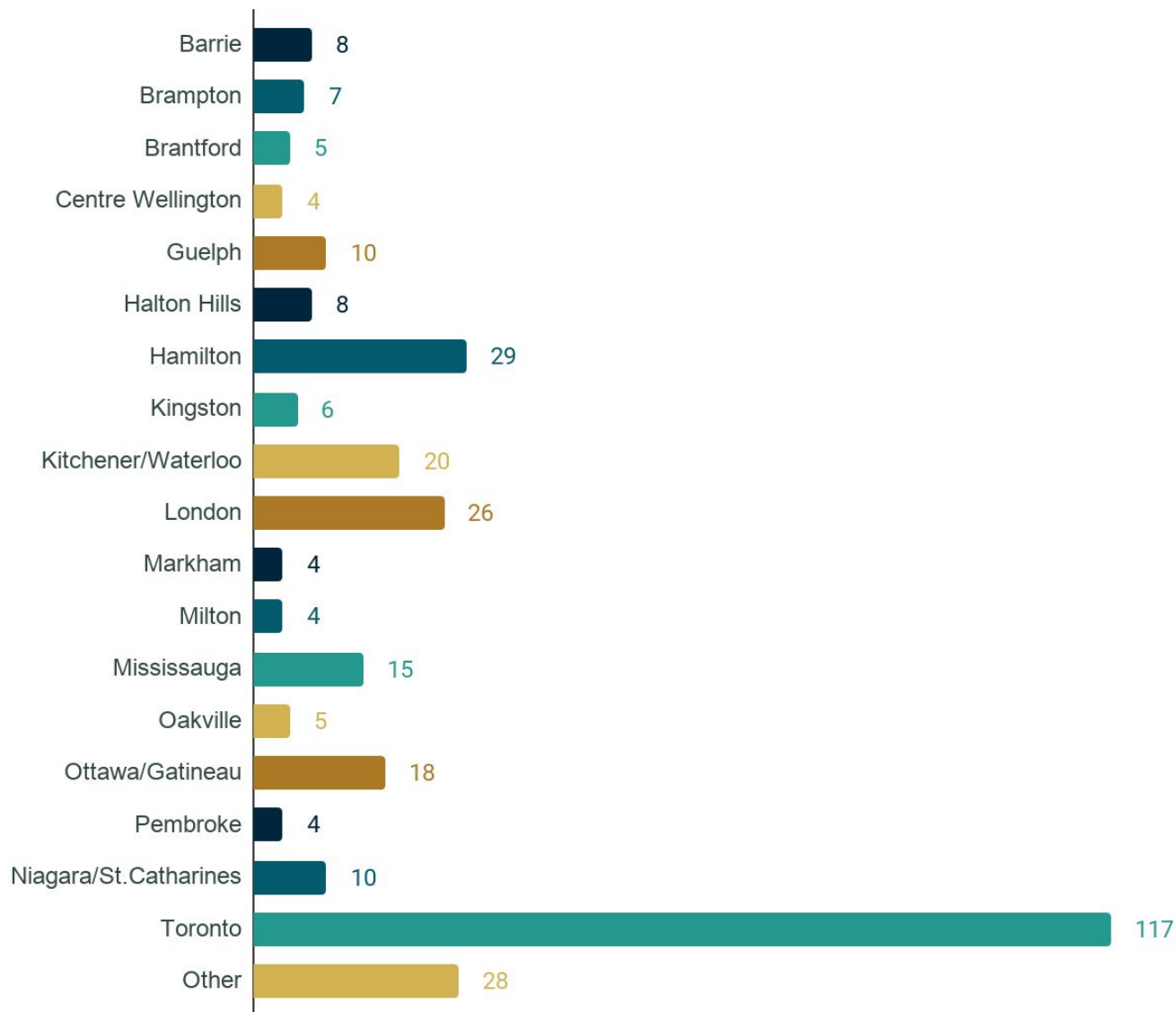
45. What is your total yearly household income?



46. What is your occupation?



47. Where are you located?



Thank you to the 368 climbers who took the time to complete this year's survey.



Questions? Concerns? Feedback? Just want to say hello?  
Drop us a line any time at [info@ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca](mailto:info@ontarioallianceofclimbers.ca).



Photo by: Andrew Serack