



2020 January SCOOP Mixed Topic Survey: Special Events run through Recreation Parks and Culture



Research Results

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Communications

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In January 2021, Strathcona County conducted an online survey as part of its Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP) initiative. This project, entitled *the Mixed Topic Survey*, consisted of different survey areas whereby only a limited number of questions were asked within one or more topic areas and was exclusive to residents who signed up to be part of SCOOP. The January 2021 mixed topic survey consisted of questions about the 2020 Winter Freeze Fest event and the 2020 Celebration of Lights drive-through event.

Obtaining primary data from residents directly will provide Strathcona County departments with information and enable County officials to make decisions that accurately reflect the perspectives and attitudes of residents. This report will provide a comprehensive review of all steps undertaken in the development and implementation of the survey, as well as a detailed summary of the results. The results from this study were prepared by Phil Kreisel, Ph.D. (Communications); SPSS was used for the data analysis.

A review of the methodology associated in the development and implementation all aspects of the survey can be found in the next section of this report.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was new, using questions that were submitted by department representatives from Recreation Parks and Culture (RPC). The survey was then created, reviewed and modified where necessary by members of Survey Central for wording, question ordering and general understanding. This included a final check of the content by FOIP¹ prior to the release of the survey to the public.

B. Sampling Design and Data Collection Procedure

The sample frame used in this study consisted of 417 people² who had previously signed up to be part of SCOOP, Strathcona County's online opinion panel. Overall, 70.4% of the participants lived in the urban area, 28.1% came from rural parts of Strathcona County, and the remaining 1.4% worked in Strathcona County but did not live there.

Although poll-based data is derived from people who decide to participate, were not randomly selected and have access to the online poll, the margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is $\pm 3.9\%$, 19 times out of 20.³ The data was gathered via the online SCOOP platform in November 2020.

During the fielding of the survey, respondents had the option to skip a section if they felt that the topic had no relevance to them.

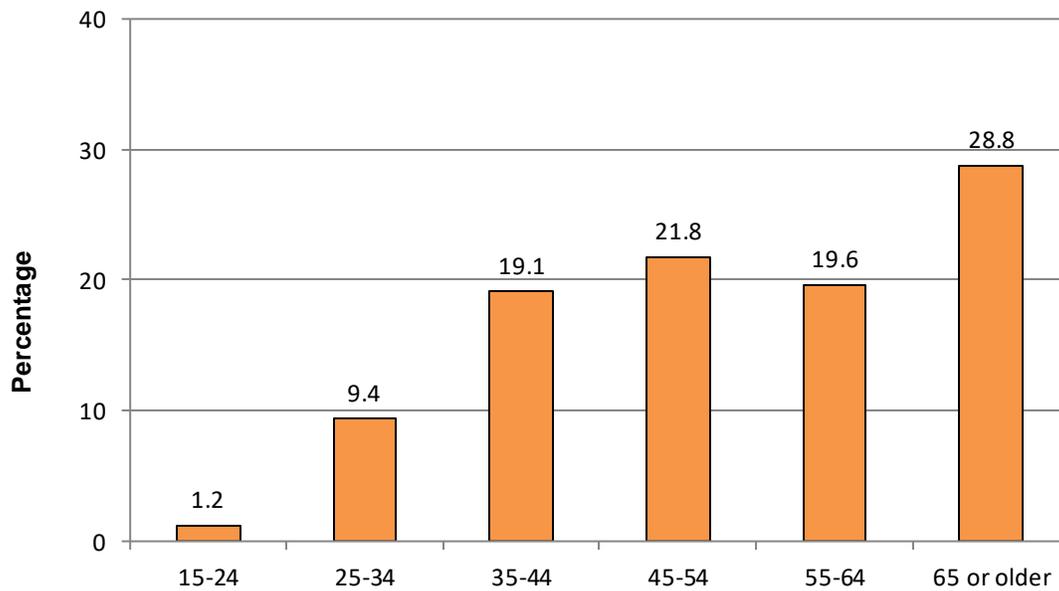
¹ FOIP stands for Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy and was reviewed by selected members from Strathcona County's Legislation and Legal Department (LLS).

² In this survey, there were an additional 82 people who indicated that they did not want to do either portion of the survey, and as such, were removed from the total number of participants in the January survey.

³ The $\pm 3.9\%$ is the *margin of error* associated with this study and refers to the potential percentage spread that exists within answers to questions. This means that an answer could be up to 3.9% higher or lower than what is reported. Please note, however, that the data was gathered through an online survey and no controls were undertaken to make this a random sample.

As seen in Figure 1, most of the respondents who participated in the survey are over the age of 44, with 18.5% of the participants between the age of 25 and 44. Only a very small percentage of participants were under 25. Overall, 60.7% of participants were female while 39.3% were male.

FIGURE 1
Age of Respondents



III. SURVEY RESULTS

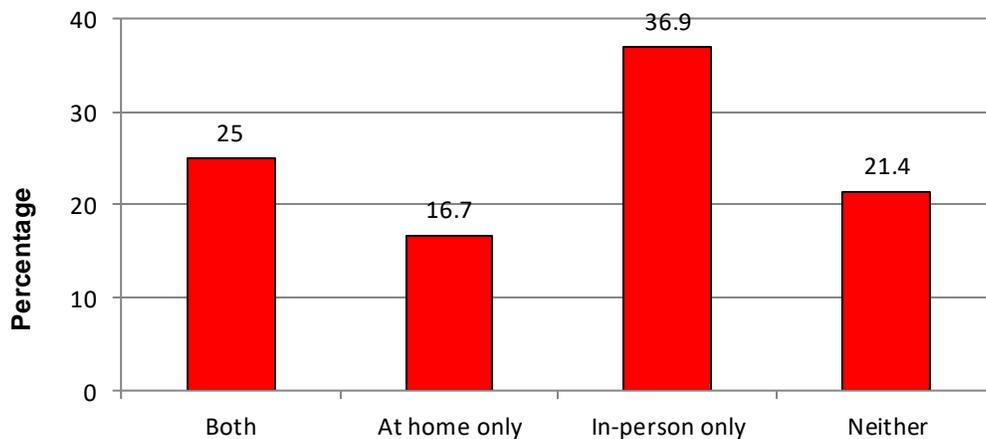
A. Winter Freeze Fest

In the first section of the mixed topic survey, respondents were asked if they would like to answer a series of questions about the County's Winter Freeze Fest events that took place between December 19, 2020 and January 3, 2021. Overall, 92.6% of the participants opted to answer questions on the Winter Fest.

Initially, it was found that 22.8% of the respondents took part in the event (or considered doing so). Those who did not were asked to indicate why they declined to take part. The overwhelming reasons cited by most were COVID-19 and all the restrictions/fears associated with the pandemic; those who were interested decided not to because of fears of crowding or that it was too far to drive to the event. There were also many people who were not aware of the event or were not interested in attending because they had other commitments.

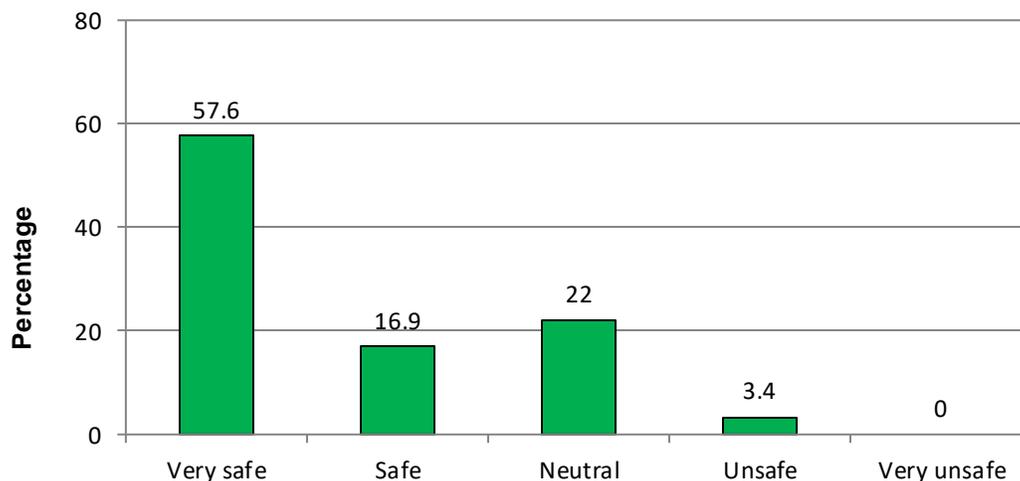
Of the people who took part in the Winter Freeze Fest, 72.1% were aware in advance of both the in-person and at-home activities. With respect to participation in the event, the breakdowns are shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Type of Participation for the Winter Fest



Those people who attended in-person activities at the Winter Freeze Fest were asked to indicate how safe they felt. It can be seen from Figure 3 that most attendees felt very safe or safe at the event.

FIGURE 3
Degree of safety at the in-person Winter Fest activities



The next question was directed to people who attended the Winter Freeze Fest and asked them which they preferred – the in-person activities or the home-based activities, and why they felt that way. Overall, 33.3% preferred the home-based activities, while 66.7% chose the in-person activities.

When asked why they preferred the home-based activities, the following comments were noted:

- Although felt safe at outside activities, anxiety still there. So feel better at home.
- Easier to stay safe from COVID (mentioned three times)
- Easy to access; not weather dependant
- Felt safer and quality time with kids
- I found that the drive through lights celebration was crazy busy with traffic problems. There should have been better signage as the roads especially Sherwood Drive were completely packed.

- I simply preferred to stay home.
- It was easier, it's not that we didn't enjoy the drive through lights it's just that the traffic was backed up quite a bit.
- Just not comfortable doing group activities, if we can't be with people. Outside our household hard to be with people outside houses in a class
- While I didn't attend, I did think about participating in the at home activities.
- Zero chance of becoming infected

When asked why they preferred the in-person activities, the following comments were noted:

- Activities I was interested in were outdoors
- Anything that can be done outside in decent weather; safely is preferable to us
- Being around people
- Being out and about with something to do safely
- Better experience.
- Easier to communicate. Less frustration with the technology hookups - sometimes working, sometimes not.
- Enjoyed walking to a close by road to watch Santa pass by
- Feel so much the feel of moment when there
- Got out of the house (mentioned 10 times)
- I appreciate being able to get out of the house safely and enjoy what the county has to offer.
- I don't like virtual meets
- In-person activities we participated in were all outdoors
- In-person is always better, this is a silly question.
- It is nice to get together
- It is nice to see people - other than the ones I live with lol
- It was a chance to get out and do something new (that was also designed to be safe), providing us with a much-needed break from our home and neighbourhood walks. It was hugely appreciated and enjoyed by our family -- even the anticipation leading up to the event. It was something to look forward to.

- It was nice to have a reason to get out of the house with a toddler to see things that are not just in the backyard.
- It was good to be able to greet people while walking and skiing.
- It's a nice break to be outside, in fresh air, and be active with other community members.
- Less onus on me to do the work and gets us out of the house.
- Like getting outside and seeing other people - even when social distancing and masking are in place.
- Liked to be where the activities were been held.
- Loved seeing the musical Christmas lights and tree at Festival Place
- More enjoyable
- have a change of scenery
- Outside
- spend too much time at home, nice to see actual people
- the feeling of connectedness
- The more in person connection we can have at this time, the better.
- Tired of anything at home
- To get out of the house. I can find my own activities to do at home.
- Wanted to get out
- We are tapped out on virtual events with everything being online right now, I think families are looking for out of home activities that can be done safely.
- we kept forgetting about the at home ones, and it was a great night out of the house (and then we got take out!)
- We only went to one in person event, but everyone in the community safely distanced (more than the guidelines, actually), and wore masks.
- It was so wonderful to see community members out and enjoying something together.

Those people who attended the Winter Freeze Fest were asked to indicate they heard about it. It can be seen from Figure 4 that digital communications were the best sources, followed by the newspaper. Satisfaction with the event is shown in Figure 5.

FIGURE 4
How attendees heard about the Winter Freeze Fest

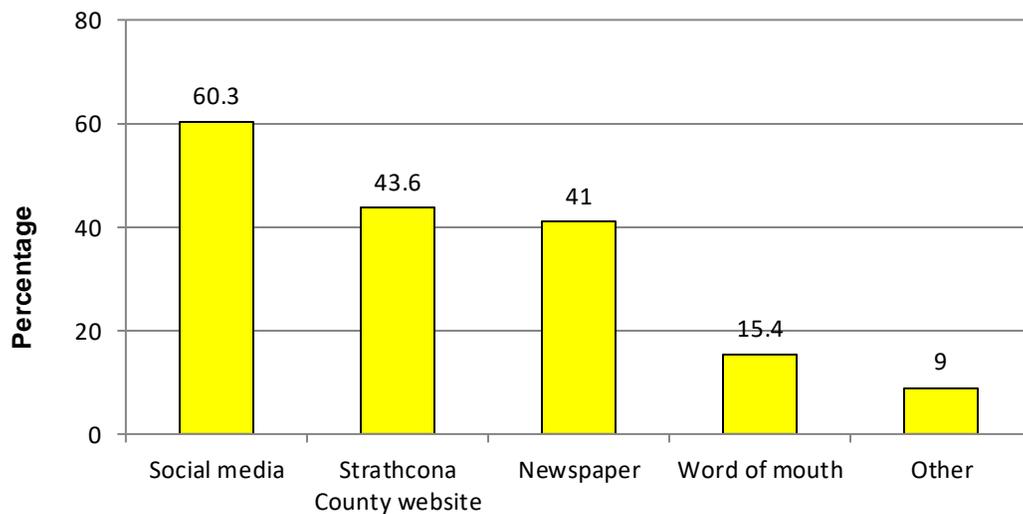
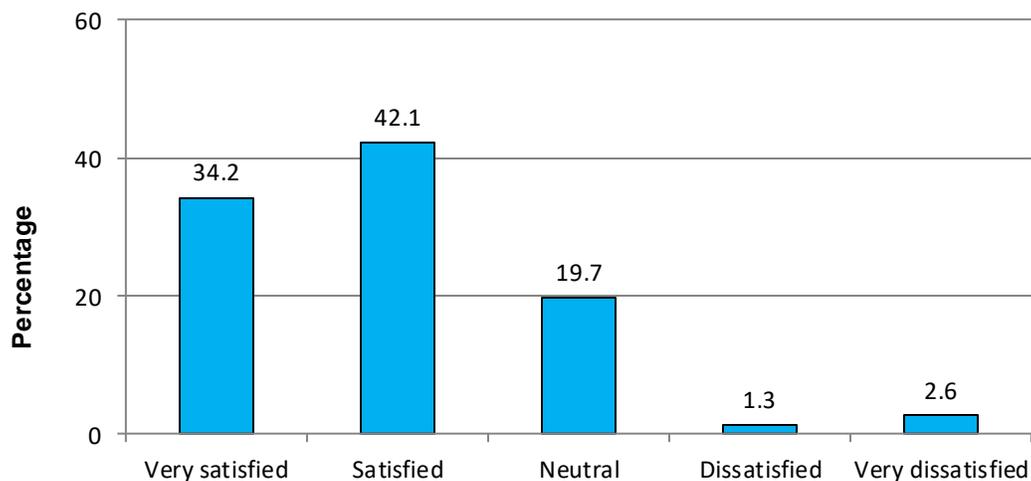


FIGURE 5
Overall satisfaction with the Winter Freeze Fest



Attendees at the Winter Freeze Fest listed several things that they liked about the event. Aspects mentioned multiple times included the ice and snow sculptures, the decorations and lights in Broadmoor Park and the Santa Convoy. Outdoor activities that were mentioned included the free skating and snowshoeing.

People were also asked about potential improvements to the event. There were a variety of suggestions, which were broken down into three themes: the traffic and drive-through events, the lights, and the activities.

Comments on the traffic and the drive-through events

- Maybe have 2 drive through times, I know many turned around and left, did well with what you could offer under restrictions
- Add drive by adds on Wye and baseline? To increase awareness?
- much better signage and traffic control for the drive through lights celebration. This is often a problem with Strathcona County events.
- Obviously, the traffic movement along Sherwood Drive was an issue for many. Traffic control from even Baseline Rd to the event was needed. We sat in the same spot for a VERY long time. We expected as much and prepared for this, but perhaps such an event held in a rural area would help, without the traffic lights slowing things down (Main Blvd and Oak Street) and vehicles being allowed to enter the line-up further ahead.
- Better (or any in fact) traffic control for the drive thru event
- The drive through light event was mishandles and route to enter was not policed properly. Lots of cutting and illegal turning by citizens. Really needs improvement. And after long wait there was not much to see. Very disappointing.
- The drive thru lights was a bit of a fail. It was well intended, but the execution was not great, and I heard many complaints in the community. My family didn't even try to attend because we knew it would be too busy. I know it was the first year doing something like that, and I imagine that a lot was learned!
- Santa and the Grinch drove by very fast where we were standing.
- The Santa parade drove by way too fast and could have been great with some more vehicles and decorations
- Traffic control for the drive by parade was an absolute failure. For those that adhered to the route plan, it was terribly long and frustrating to see people cutting to the front of the line via Grenada Blvd. No police to control anything. Chaos

Comments on the lights

- We went to the celebration of lights. After waiting 1.5 hours in line, someone moved the standard to block our way to enter the FP parking area, saying event now closed (it was 8:01). There must have been a way for staff to inform the looong line that we would not be able to enter. This was extremely frustrating and we will not bother attending future events.
- Publicity - several people I told about the lights did not know about them, especially liked the big tree in front of Festival Place
- More lights
- Celebration of Lights Dec 23 event was poor - traffic control and performers. Lights could be witnessed at any time (without a 45 minute wait in an idling vehicle).
- Didn't like the Christmas light display. Lots of hype for a very underwhelming experience.

Comments on the activities

- It would be nice to have more of a connectedness feeling for the activities. Like a cards-to-seniors program or something like that where you can pick up a pack of cards to fill out, or something. For the lights, I have been advocating for years that Centennial Park would make an excellent celebration of lights. The road through there is well suited for one-direction vehicle traffic, and there is the room to be able to have a fantastic display.
- Events got moved (Drive thru date moved). And some activities were all booked (Snowshoeing) so couldn't participate. And Sobeys was out of cupcakes when stopped by with my child.
- I didn't know about the Santa convoy until just a few days before, and I certainly didn't know it was going right down my front street. Almost no one in my neighborhood went outside to enjoy. A special flyer or something should have been put in people's mailboxes to notify of event going down their street. Not everyone is on social media (like the older folks in my neighborhood).
- In general, I feel the events in the County need more activities and programming. The programming could be spiced up more.
- I think (in spite of the large turnout) it could have been promoted a bit more, in grocery stores or local gas stations or on transit
- Looking forward to next year after the COVID restrictions pass and we can celebrate as a community
- Timing of the December 23 event. Perhaps spread it out over more than one evening.
- Wish we could have had virtual fireworks but know people may be problem of not attending!

B. Celebration of Lights Event

In the second section of the mixed topic survey, respondents were asked if they would like to answer a series of questions about the County's Celebration of Lights event that took place on December 23, 2020. Overall, 84.3% of the participants opted to answer questions on this.

It was found that 24.3% of respondents attended the Celebration of Lights in 2020, while 76.7% did not. Of those who did not, an open-ended follow-up question found that:

- COVID-19 was a major factor influencing non-attendance, due to risks of exposure and restrictions in place (as mentioned by 21.6% of the respondents);
- Many of the respondents were not aware that the event was taking place or thought that the event was cancelled (23.5%);
- A number of people felt that a drive-through event was not appealing to them; others had heard or perceived that the line ups of cars to view the lights was not appealing to them; and
- Others indicated that they were too busy with other things to taken in the event or were just not interested in it.

The remaining questions in the survey were directed to the ones who attended the event. It was determined that the majority of the attendees (90%) knew in advance that the Celebration of Lights was a drive-thru event this year.

As with other events, there are a variety of ways that people heard about this year's Celebration of Lights. It can be seen from Figure 6 that *social media* and the *local newspaper* were the main sources of information about the event cited by those who attended the event.

The other sources of information volunteered by respondents were various forms of outdoor signage.

FIGURE 6
How attendees learned about the 2020 Celebration of Lights event

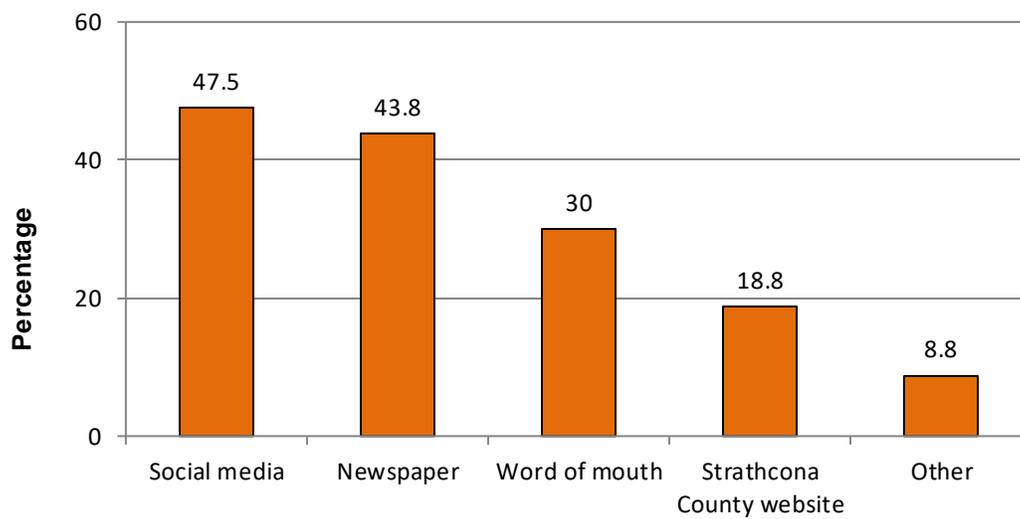
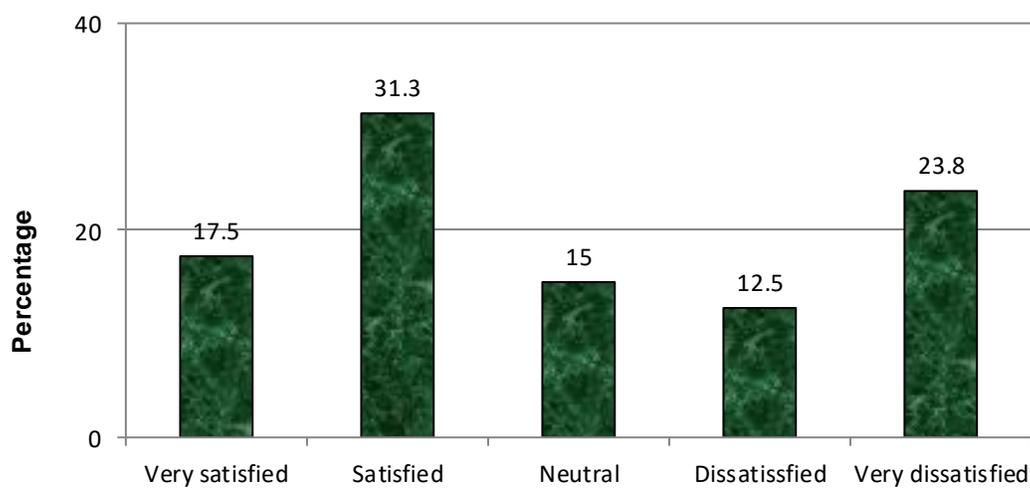


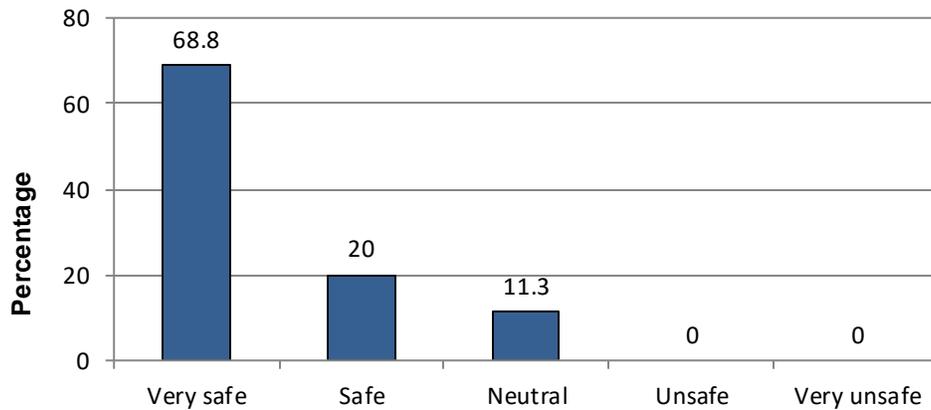
Figure 7 presents results pertaining to how satisfied people felt about the event. People were mixed as to the concept, with slightly more people being satisfied rather than dissatisfied.

FIGURE 7
Overall satisfaction with the 2020 Celebration of Lights drive-thru concept



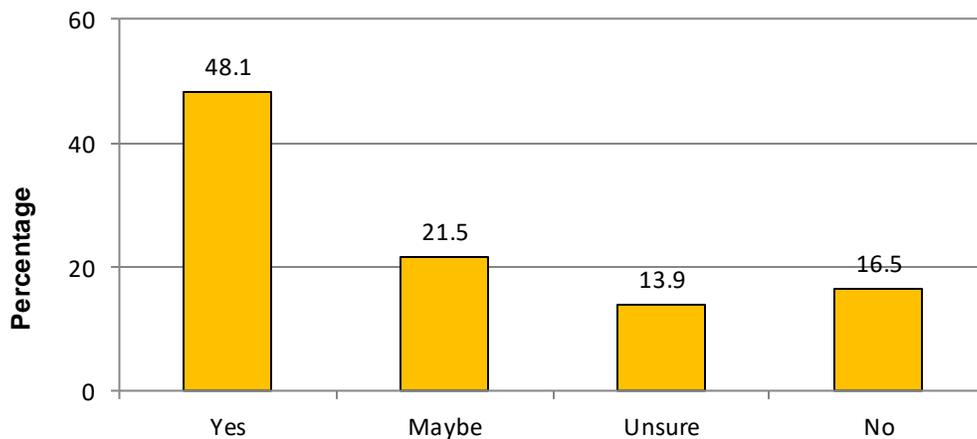
Perceptions of safety are depicted in Figure 8. The majority felt very safe or safe. None of the participants felt unsafe in any way.

FIGURE 8
Perceptions of safety at the 2020 Celebration of Lights drive-thru event



It can be seen from Figure 9 that just under 50% would go to another drive-thru event in the future. Many of the participants were undecided, while 16.5% would not.

FIGURE 9
Would you go to another drive-thru event in the future?



The last question on this topic asked respondents to describe in their own words what they liked the most about the Celebration of Lights drive-thru. People had both good and not so good things to say about the event.

The positive:

- An activity that was safe for COVID-19.
- Singing tree - and just all the lights. Festive and beautiful - a very welcome respite from all things COVID.
- Experiencing the lights in a safe manner during the pandemic.
- Beautiful display and no need to walk
- Beautiful lighting and peaceful experience
- Being in the car with family, and the lights
- It was drive through and did not have to get out of the vehicle
- Could stay in my car
- Could stay in the car and not risk being in a group
- The displays
- It looked beautiful.
- It was a holiday experience to share with my kid.
- It was magical!
- It created a safe environment so everyone could enjoy.
- Felt safe and gave me something happy and hopeful during a time of uncertainty
- I liked the people dressed up in costume. The lights were nice.
- I usually walk it when attending events at Festival Place. As a drive-through, there was nothing to block our viewing, and we were nice and warm.
- It was well done, kids enjoyed it
- Kids needed to see Santa

- Local and happy
- My kids liked Anna, Elsa, Olaf and Marshall
- Nice to get out and enjoy all the wonderful lights
- Real addition to Christmas celebrations.
- Santa and the Grinch
- Something to look forward to escape the house
- The dress up characters
- The effort that was put into it. Very nice
- The fact that it was attempted
- The Grinch was the best feature.
- The interactive characters
- The lights and music in front of festival place, and the live manger.
- The person who played the Grinch was fantastic. As always, the lighted, music synchronized tree was great. We also enjoyed it after the celebration.
- The snowshoe game was a nice way to interact with the event! We (as in, our preschooler) also appreciated seeing all the familiar characters. All of us loved the live nativity scene -- very clever.
- The variety and the colours
- Tree by Festival place
- We were able to walk and not get caught up in traffic.

Neutral comments:

- Lights around Broadmoor Lake, but they were better viewed on foot out of a vehicle. The decorated grader was a highlight.
- Our family, with older children, preferred to walk the Broadmoor Park area on a evening after Christmas.

The negative:

- After waiting 1.5 hours in line and donating to the food bank, a staff member/volunteer moved the sawhorse to block our entrance and informed us the event was over (it was 8:01). Someone needed to come down the line MUCH EARLIER and inform us there was no way we would be able to see the event. Extremely frustrating and a very poor showing for parks and rec. we will not attend future drive through events.
- I appreciate the appreciative inquiry, but this was a terrible event. The best thing was that some food was raised for the food bank
- I was in line for the event at 7:30 pm and the lineup was all the way back to Graham Road. I wasn't able to enter the event until almost 8:30, at which time most of the lights had already been removed. I was disappointed to have missed the event and with the lack of traffic control. There was no signage on Sherwood Drive until immediately before the event entrance and many people were in the line and didn't know why there was such a traffic jam.
- It was a good idea but hosting it as an "event" was a mistake in my opinion. The event caused traffic issues on Sherwood Drive and Granada Boulevard and I experienced a road rage incident where an old lady gave me and my son the finger! Ultimately the event was pretty underwhelming, but I did enjoy the lights and displays. I would rather have driven through the displays and lights at my convenience (which I did on another night) than have to contend with traffic and move through at a pace to ensure everyone got a chance. The people at the event (mostly politicians I think) didn't add any value to the event
- Not much
- not much, would be much better as a walk thru
- Not much. We were in line from 7:20 and didn't even get to the start of it until 8:36. By that time anything that was set up in the festival place parking lot was already taken down. My family spent a lot of time laughing about how lame everything was given there was really very little to see, so I guess the laughs were at least a good thing.
- Not the same feeling
- Nothing, it was a waste of everyone's time
- Nothing, it was impossible to gain access as people were cutting in and accessing from Granada. There was no traffic control.

- Overall lots of hype but the content didn't live up to it. Felt the 2 hours spent waiting didn't get paid off in seeing the lack of displays.
- The lights were brutal. Couldn't see any lights by the lake. Santa inflatable was put up at 7 pm, so people missed it, then it fell over and nobody corrected that. Poorly done!
- The lights were spectacular. I do prefer a walk about though.
- The Line-up was CRAZY! Strathcona County must do better next year if you have it as it was slower than molasses! You couldn't move anywhere for the longest time! Get it right next time!
- The lineup was so long that we did not drive thru, instead just walked around Broadmoor Lake with the kids. Had 2 friends that did do the drive thru and they were not happy that it took so long, (Both said over an hour)
- The traffic was terribly managed we waited for 2 hours for a 10-minute show. There was no restructuring traffic on Sherwood drive and other drivers not attending were very angry. Had the wait not been so long it would have been a nice event
- This event was a complete disaster. I checked that we attended because we TRIED to attend and could not. Planning and executing this event were disasters of epic proportions. The County indicated drivers should enter the COL from Sherwood Drive southbound, but if you attempted to get onto it from Baseline, which we unfortunately did, you were completely out of luck and highly unlikely to actually ATTEND the event let alone move more than 10 feet in your car in an hour's worth of time. Drivers were entering Sherwood Drive from Oak Street and Main, and crossing the intersection from Granada onto Festival Way, making every other driver further north of them unable to move. We sat in line for an HOUR and moved from just south of Baseline to just shy of Tim's off Main. We then did a really terrible thing which was leave the line, go down Oak and turn around and enter Sherwood Drive from Oak which actually resulted in us moving a bit farther, but we then had to leave and go home because our kids needed to use the bathroom. They were completely devastated they didn't get to see the inflatables, scenes, people, and other fun features of the event, and we were extremely grumpy we wasted an hour of our night and disappointed our kids. This needs to be a ticketed event where people enter between specific times, traffic control needs to be appropriately managed and considered clearly (as in, close off exits from Granada, Oak, Main), and it should be run over several days. I know the County had only a short period of time to put this together, but we expect much more and much better based on past events and festivals. It was surprising and disappointing to see what a mess the County's poor planning resulted in, and if this is indicative of how drive

through events will be handled in the future, we will not be attending any more, ever.

- We waited in the lineup until 5:25, (20min), the event hadn't started yet. We couldn't wait any longer so we had to leave just like multiple other vehicles in line. I wish it had started on time.