

Return to Engagement Results

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Communications
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Introduction and Summary

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Strathcona County has worked with our community to provide services and opportunities for engagement that is in alignment with provincial guidelines and community comfort levels. Accordingly, we have moved many public engagement opportunities online since March of 2020. Now with the Government of Alberta ending the majority of COVID-19 restrictions in February of 2022, including the lifting of restrictions on public gatherings, we want to understand where residents are at in terms of comfort levels with in-person public engagement and what their expectations for public engagement are going forward.

In March 2022 we submitted five questions to the Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP). We heard from 710 respondents. Feedback from this survey will be used to inform public engagement opportunities going forward, and to ensure we continue to provide safe and accessible opportunities for Strathcona County residents to have their voices heard.

What We Heard

We heard that just under half of respondents were ready to participate in in-person public engagement immediately. Fourteen percent of respondents felt they needed another two months before they would feel comfortable, with small numbers of respondents indicating they would be ready by either August or October. Four percent of respondents indicated they may never feel comfortable with in-person events and 20% indicated not knowing yet.

Given the choice of in-person or digital options to participate in public engagement, the largest group of respondents (31%) favoured a digital/online option. Twenty one percent indicated a preference for in-person engagement. However, 28% of respondents indicated they would prefer to engage in both in-person and digital/online engagement. Twenty percent of respondents indicated that it would depend on the topic, indicating a place for both options as well.

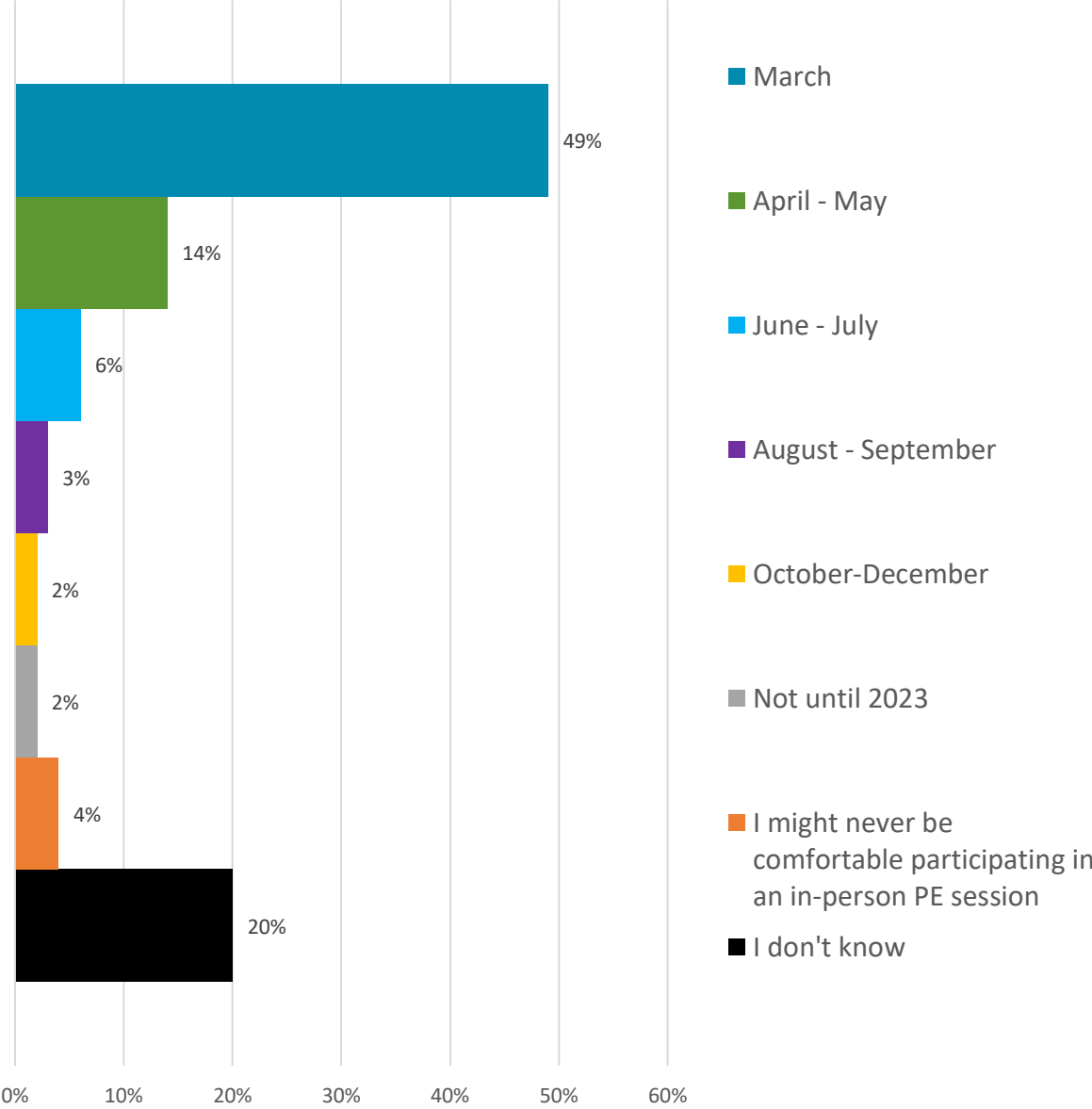
We also asked what safety protocols would be necessary for the community to feel comfortable and safe at public engagement events. Just under half of respondents noted a need for hand sanitizer to be available for participants. Maintaining physical distancing, using masks and limiting the number of participants were supported by approximately 40% of respondents. Twenty-nine percent of respondents indicated a need for event pre-registration and only 13% indicated a need for plexiglass barriers. Just under a quarter of respondents felt comfortable with no safety protocols, or felt protocols were unnecessary.

Next, we asked if a digital engagement option should accompany any in-person engagement opportunity. Two thirds of respondents agreed that a digital option should be included either always or most of the time. The remaining third of respondents were split – with 17% believing that it would be ideal but not required and the other 17% not believing it necessary at all.

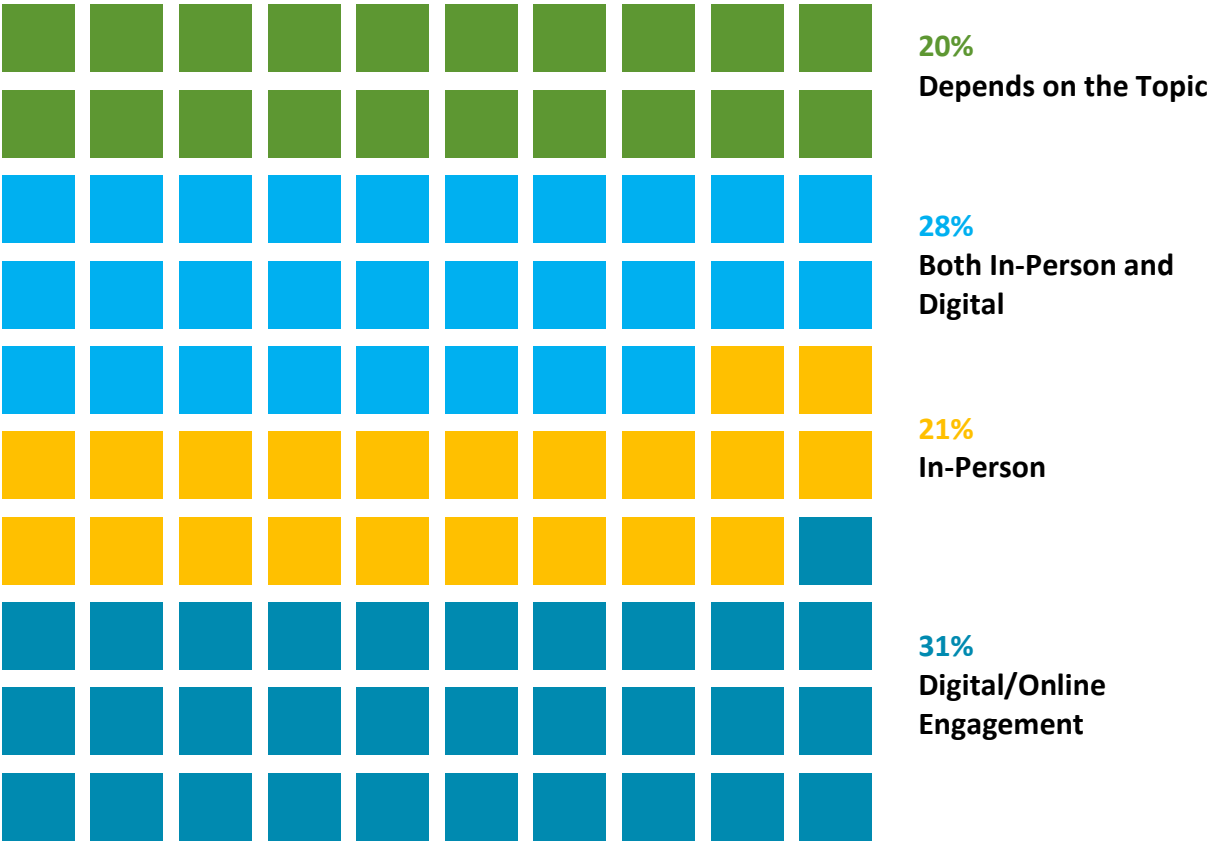
Lastly, we provided an opportunity for respondents to share any additional thoughts. A summary can be found below.

Engagement / Survey Results

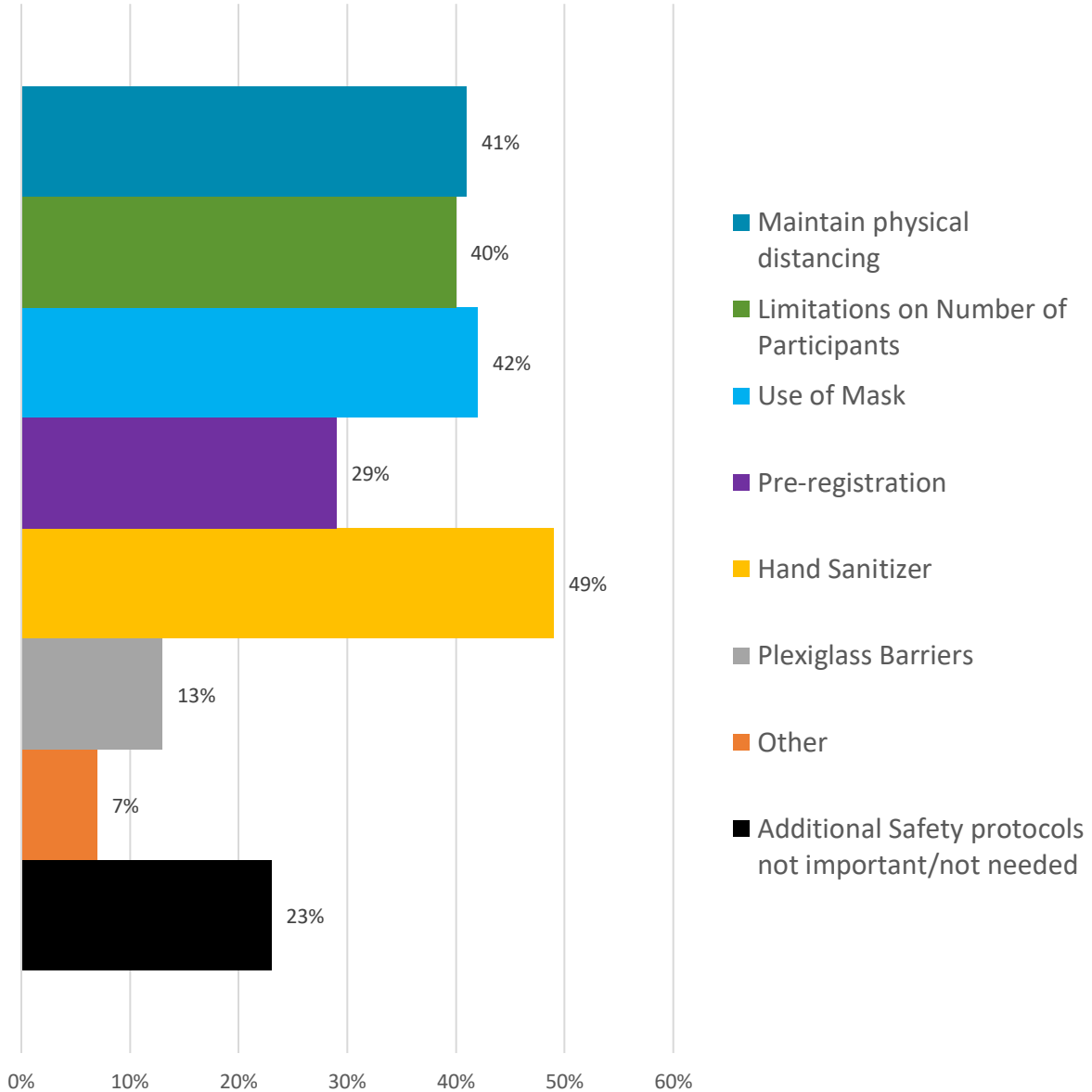
When do you think you will feel comfortable participating in in-person engagement with Strathcona County?



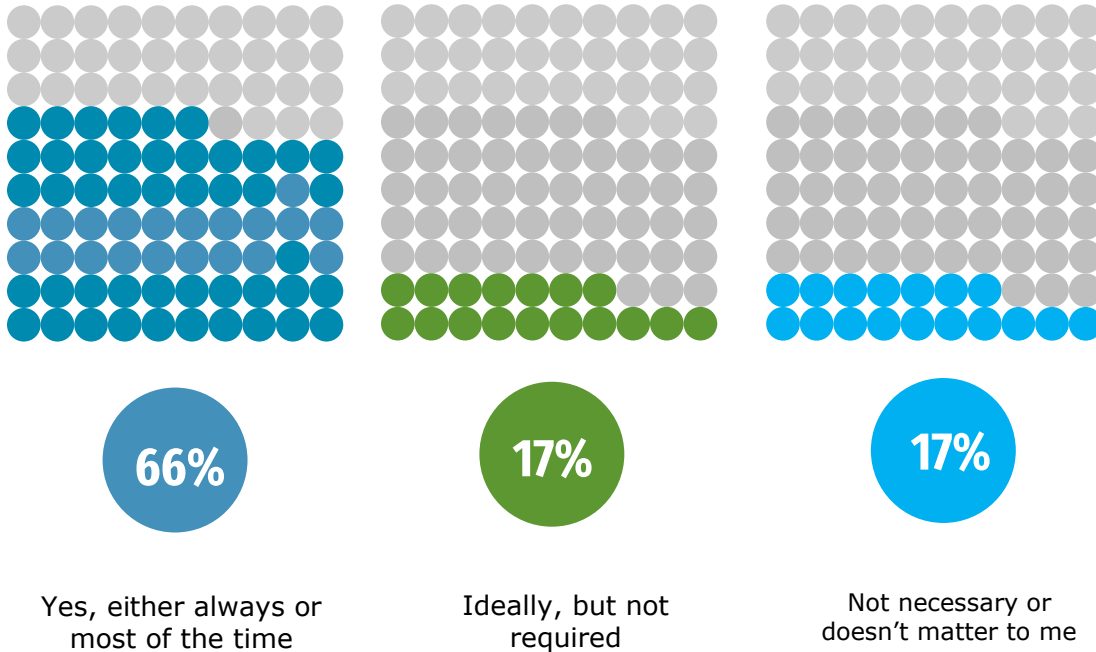
Given the option between digital engagement and in-person engagement, which are you more likely to participate in going forward?



Are there safety protocols that will be important for you to feel comfortable at public engagement sessions?



Do you feel that a digital engagement option should accompany in-person engagement for people who can't attend or do not feel comfortable to attend in person?



Is there anything else you would like to share about the return to in-person engagement?

We also invited respondents to share any other thoughts they had regarding the potential return of in-person public engagement. We received open-ended responses from 119 respondents.

Most comments were related to the comfort respondents had with in-person engagement and with COVID-19 more generally. Twenty-nine respondents left comments indicating a preference for removing all restrictions and proceeding with public engagement under pre-pandemic conditions. Conversely, 27 comments preferred a more cautious and adaptable approach, implementing and removing restrictions based on COVID-19 case numbers or recommendations from public health authorities. We also heard from 15 respondents that felt removing restrictions was happening too quickly. Lastly we heard nine comments about how immunocompromised residents might require a longer period to feel comfortable with in-person engagements, or that there is no level of precaution that will make them 100% comfortable.

We also heard some comments about online vs. in-person engagement. Four commenters indicated a strong preference for in-person engagements, noting that they allowed a greater level of depth to public conversations. Conversely, 20 comments were left by respondents telling us they greatly preferred digital engagement opportunities. Most of these respondents felt digital public engagement opportunities were more convenient, while a smaller subset believed they were safer for those not comfortable with in-person engagement.

Taken together, these comments indicate that the community has different comfort levels with in-person engagement.

Appendix 1: Open Ended Responses

Q5: Is there anything else you would like to share about the return to in-person engagement?
As an immunocompromised person I would like the concerns of all like me are considered when organizing interactions.
As long as there are COVID-19 patients in hospital and ICU, as well as those passing from this disease, I shall not be comfortable with in-person engagement of any sort. We have survived five waves of this Pandemic thus far and now there is a very strong possibility of a sixth wave with the BA-2 variant, as shown by recent events in the U.K. and in Europe. It is simply far too soon to be abandoning the safety protocols that have protected us for the past two years.
As seniors we are unlikely to participate in face to face events. we strongly advise you to continue on-line participation .
be careful, not to pre-conclude the decision, don't go into a session and manipulate it to suit your goals
Can hide forever. Time to to live life.
Continue to provide rapid test kits for free, and continue free vaccinations and booster vaccinations to all citizens.
Covid sucks, but life goes on. Unless you are elderly, or obese, survival rate is very high. Please let us live our lives.
Covid will be with us for a long time to come so it's important to maintain protections such as masks and good ventilation. Many people are immunocompromised and under age 5 still aren't able to get vaccinated.
Dependent on how Covid reacts to no restrictions
Digital and Covid protocol engagements were not any where close to as fulfilling socially as normal in person events
Digital engagement also cost taxpayers less than in person
Digital engagement often makes it easier for me to participate, because I don't have to drive the 40 min to Sherwood Park, or wherever the engagement takes place. I think any larger engagement that involves everyone in the county should have both options. Local engagement that can be set in the local area might not need to be. A 40 minute drive each way can mean I won't participate vs if it's a local session and 10 min drive.
Digital provides a perfect option to maximize participation, as some people are more likely to tribute when they can access surveys on their own timeline.

digital provides engagement for many people with mobility or family or schedule constraints that might not previously had voices at engagement tables
Disappointed that Strathcona County and other suburbs didn't have the fortitude to take a stand like Edmonton to try and stop the lifting of restrictions
Do not over think it. Return to normal
For the; parents, caregivers, mobility challenged individuals and those that are just scared to leave their homes now, having a hybrid approach going forward is much more accessible to all, and I would assume increase engagement participation and overall public knowledge on county matters. Thank you for being inclusive!
Govt has said it is safe to remove these restrictions, I think if individuals use common sanitary practice like washing your hands, cough in your hand, stay home if you are sick... no measures are needed....If you are an employee and sick, stay home.
Great survey idea! Interested to see feedback
Have you people looked at the stats 99% of people survived covid. Old sick people were the major victims. No lockdowns were necessary. Control groups like the Hutterites, mennonites in LaCrete verified that.
hope that we can quickly return to masking and social distancing again if numbers so dictate
How about start creating policy based on data and actual science (no the faux science that has been touted over the past two years). Such as the recent study from Johns Hopkins indicates that lockdowns have had essentially zero impact on transmission. No one knows where the "6 social distancing" came from. Masks do not, nor never have prevented transmission as per over 2 decades of scientific studies.
Why don't we just focus on freedom of choice: if someone is uncomfortable with coming out of their home - give them an option. But DO NOT force society into a mold that is based on the fear of a small subset of society.
I actually prefer digital engagement
I am a believer in science. Vaccination records should be mandatory for in person attendance at any event. Anything other than that is wishful thinking. New variants are emerging. As a senior and someone who has health compromised relatives, I feel it irresponsible to do anything else.
I am immunocompromised and do not yet have a satisfactory solution to attending public events. Perhaps those with immune issues will simply not be able to join in-person events until we are closer to an end of COVID
I am still unsure about those who have not been vaccinated.
I appreciate when community leaders encourage those who feel safer when they wear masks to do so and to emphasize kindness and tolerance between people who have differing opinions. Only kindness and respect where everyone feels safe will allow everyone to continue progressing through and out of the pandemic.
I believe it is time to get back to as normal life as we can, however I believe I'm more likely to respond to online engagement than in-person simply due to convenience.
I do not. Feel comfortable with electronic communications-way too impersonal!
I don't have a problem with masks being required anywhere. Hand sanitizer isn't a bad thing in general but is useless for airborne covid!
I don't have time to do anything in person. I also am not spending money on fuel to travel to do this. I'll participate online but that's as far as I'll ever go. Covid or not, that's never mattered to me.
I feel that being fully vaccinated and having any updated boosters should allow you to engage without restrictions. People noticeably sick should stay home and use online options.
I feel that there should be lower numbers of people infected with Covid before we return to in-person engagement,

I have participated in a virtual fitness class over the winter and enjoyed being able to participate virtually from my home.
I have to wait for better vaccines and treatments. Multiple conditions that mean I'm very likely to have a bad outcome from a COVID infection.
I hope the county will reopen drop in daycare at Millenium and Ardrossan this Spring. Parents willing to drop our kids off are not concerned about them not being vaccinated!
I prefer to meet in person always have but being that now I am more at risk because of health issues that arose out of vaccines I prefer the safety protocols at this point.
I realize that the "official narrative" is traf we need to just live with Covid and that the pandemic is over. However, scientifically, I can't see any reason that could possibly be the case. New variants may well sprout, and I feel the least everybody can do is wear a mask to prevent the spread. It's simple and not invasive! Wear a proper (!) mask in indoor and possibly some outdoor settings and numbers of Covid infections decrease. Keeping ourselves and others safer. Please encourage (proper, N95 /N99!) masks wherever throughout the county! For all of us!
I think having the digital option for those not comfortable is important and that in all other ways we should return to how it used to be. Forced masking should NOT happen. Those who wish to mask can.
I think it is time for people to take responsibility for their own safety. Would discourage mandated masks, hand sanitizing etc.
I think it is up to the individual visitor to decide to wear a mask or not. Digital engagement should be an option for seniors who may not have the transportation to attend in person.
I think masks and vaccination remain the best methods to ensure everyone's safety. We need to presume that a new outbreak of Covid 19 (any number of variants) will likely occur int the future. I believe it will become like the flu, which is sometimes deadly.
I think that in-person engagement is difficult to attend and I would imagine more costly to conduct, I think that the discussion boards they did maybe last spring for the traffic safety engagement was a really good model to follow, they were well moderated, open for an extended period of time and collaborative in that you could respond to other participants. I like this format because it mimics some of the benefits of in-person (building off of each others ideas, stimulating new thoughts) but is accessible for a long period of time so more people can have their input heard.
I think we have to see how things go with recent restrictions being lifted
I think we need to consider Covid endemic and get back to normal. I prefer engaging online because I am an introvert, not because I am afraid of catching something from people around me, so the option for online engagement will allow people like myself (and people who are scared of catching Covid) to engage when they might avoid having to go out and interact with people.
I think we need to return to pre pandemic procedures. We need to learn to live with Covid. People that are immune compromised need to protect themselves as they did prior to the pandemic
I think we really need to watch the outbreaks happening right now in China etc. We should base our decisions on what the WHO is saying. Most Certainly we should not rely on Jason Kenney to make decisions for us. He's already proven he doesn't know which way is up. Sherwood Park Mayor and counsellors needs to start making decisions the way a city does. Too much time is spent on nit picky things. E.g. putting a traffic circle behind and down from AMA. There was a four way stop. If we need to babysit drivers in Sherwood Park. We have a way bigger problem. We need to have more police presence with radar. Even in residential neighborhoods. .
I will continue to wear my mask in public spaces.
I'm not completely sure about this since there could be a new variant of some other factor that would impact my decisions.
If the County wants the best for its youth, it must return to "normal", or pre-pandemic now. We have an opportunity to resume life for all ages, as it should be. Please do not keep online activities of any kind. Humans are social beings and as such, must meet in person. From baby time at the library to seniors gatherings. Please do what is right. Thank you.

It is interesting as some are still on the preventive side compared to others who are almost in your face.
It is time to get back to normal as best as we can
IT IS TOO SOON YET; MY THOUGHTS ONLY
It is too soon.
It seems to early, we need another year to know how all this will go.
It will take a little time to be generally comfortable.
It would be nice if all the organizers/leaders/facilitators who are doing the engagement consistently masked / used sanitizer/ social distanced to set an example.
It's a convenient option to have digital access.
It's been a long two+ years. The restrictions implemented statistically did not really have a significant affect ("science" is actually looking at that, not just repeating the word on twitter). It's time. If you're nervous, stay home yourself. I'm good.
It's time to get on with life
It's time to move on and start enjoying life again.
It's time to return to normal
Just not sure that we won't see future waves, so being able to adjust accordingly is important.
Just to respect others
Learn to live with your surroundings and don't depend on others to make choices for you!
Let the Provincial Government set the standard for all of us. It is ridiculously confusing to go from town to town to City to City not knowing what the rules are because currently, it is up to each individual municipality. and they are ALL different.
Looking forward
Masks should be optional as I will be wearing one for some time to come. I am fine getting comments from others who think it is too much or if it makes them uncomfortable. Our active cases as of today Mar 18 are up almost 10% in the county. So we need to learn to live with this virus.
Meeting in person is a total waste of tax dollars. The County needs to stop doing things the way they have always been done
My comfort level and the limits or restrictions I'd like to see in place would depend on infection rate numbers and whether they're rising or not.
no
No
No
No
No more masks
Offering digital engagement options will be more inclusive for individuals who may have health issues that require the continued use of safety precautions or have other mobility challenges.
Online options increase the ability for people to attend sessions where otherwise limitations (childcare, transportation) may prevent them from doing so.
Online, I would think can save you money. Keep doing online when it is possible. In person, do not allow as many in a room. Maybe having in person and online when possible.
Opening in-person without any protocol or restrictions is concerning. Anyone who is unwell (with ANY symptoms) should not be allowed to participate in person.
Outdoor engagement opportunities would be okay in person

<p>People attending public engagement in person should feel welcome to wear masks if they feel the need (example: have masks available),</p> <p>There are limitations to digital engagement, when limitations can be minimized on line options should be available. In person public engagement will need to include rural locations (if only in person). Residents should not be expected to travel to Sherwood Park, when there are County buildings in rural, in order to be a valued member of the tax paying public, it places barriers that skew the results to increase the urban voice.</p>
<p>Personally, I have gotten used to rules & regulations, feel comfortable with them, and will take my time getting back to normal in Strathcona County.</p>
<p>Please resume in person library programs for the young kids and families. We miss them and zoom is not the same with toddlers. Thank you! Hopefully more in person parent link/ family resource network programs can resume for young children as well.</p>
<p>Please! It is time to learn to live WITH Covid-19. The County council should follow Provincial guide lines and stay out of the Health decisions. Council is not equipped with all the facts and data to make these decisions.</p>
<p>Rarely anywhere at county facilities where it is crowded.. GARC gym is almost empty.</p>
<p>Really depends on how numbers of serious cases there are and how many folks are in hospital - many folks were denied necessary medical procedures because we were not cautious enough or not vaccinated enough</p>
<p>Regardless of any health/safety goals, online digital options should be provided. Often people can't make in-person events due to other reasons and online opportunities can help provide more options.</p>
<p>Regardless of covid, having masks so I dont get sick from strangers would be really nice!</p>
<p>Seniors like myself appreciate the option of digital contact so we avoid winter roads and night time driving. Day programs are great</p>
<p>Should we have a full 4 months without another flair up of high infections/hospitalizations/ICU beds, then I would be more likely to be comfortable in larger in-person settings. At this time, it is unfair to the thousands who have been delayed key medical treatment to be careless about taking away another opportunity for them to get care.</p>
<p>Staff must model their understanding that covid 19 is still a concern for many and that facts and science are what should be guiding decisions.</p>
<p>Stop the fear mongering</p>
<p>Stop the posturing already! Most of us are triple vaxxed and if we catch Covid will be mildly sick. Time to move on</p>
<p>Stop wasting our taxes and fuelling the mentally distressed that think covid was ever a threat or even exists. Stop the nonsense.</p>
<p>The current world view is that we should mingle when the omicron is around and while we still have immunity from vaccines. The infection immunity is much better and longer lasting than any vaccine so we should get back together, even if it means more will catch this lesser version of Covid.</p>
<p>The difficult variable is the people you interact with, one does not have knowledge of their past interactions with others who are reckless in whom they interacted with.</p>
<p>The media and the Federal Government are to blame for instilling the terror in society. The Federal government have not followed the science with the mandatory vaccination policy. Having a mandatory vaccination policy today to board a plane is ridiculous and does nothing to stop the spread. The Liberals have discriminated against Canadian citizens, and turned the people against one another. Many people are so terrified to leave their house, due to the constant bombardment of covid numbers. The truth will come out in the end. An example is how the covid hospitalizations were being reported. ON and AB have admitted that the hospitalization numbers were skewed - people in the hospital with covid, or because of covid. Big difference.</p>
<p>The option to mask or not without any rude comments from others.</p>

The world is moving on from Covid. So should the County.
The world is now set up so that those who are concerned can for extracurricular activities make at home choices; the rest can mask or not and choose one of several levels of comfort/protection There is nothing more that can be done for opening up
Things are getting better, however people who are still at high risk, the elderly, the immunocompromised, people with pre-existing conditions are going to feel left behind as we push hard to "get back to normal" before we even know for sure if we are entirely out of the woods.
This pandemic has not ended. A lot of how I feel will depend on what new variants re like and what their dangers are.
This pandemic is not completely over - we cannot and should not move ahead in quickness - please still take all precautions
This virus is not over yet the decision to open up was a political one not a medical one.
Through covid 19 I feel that Strathcona County was the big influence in dividing people and taking away freedom of choice. I believe that people should take responsibility for their own choices and not judge others for their decisions. It should never be about covid 19 vaccinated against the unvaccinated. The QR code turned out to be a bit of a joke. I could go into any facility as a vaccinated person but my friend with health issues was recommended not to take the vaccine so instead had to provide a negative test to enter a county facility. I soon came to realize that since the vaccine didn't prevent covid 19 I could go anywhere not knowing if I'm positive or not and my friend was much safer in knowing she was negative. I believe that in order to not divide people we all should have had to provide a negative test - it would be the only way for everyone to keep everyone safe. Research and not mainstream media information is the best way to go. Mandates are not law
Time to get on with life and treat Covid as something that will always be around. Seniors (me) and at risk community members need vaccination. Just like other influenza, we will all be exposed and will likely contract it. Vaccinations seem to control outcomes.
Time to learn to live with whatever virus comes our way...we didn't change our way of living for any other virus, e.g. H1N1 which was also commutable and caused many deaths as well. All people can learn to stay home if sick, sanitize if needed, etc. without shutting down the whole community, destroying businesses, increasing rates of suicides, drug usage, etc.
To date, I have never attended an in person engagement due to scheduling conflicts, I much prefer on line engagements and I feel these reach a broader segment of people, as it make the enggement time much more flexible, ie 24/7 online. Some online engagements for complex topics are still well done with background information provided. I would be prepared to listen to a 10-15 min video presentation of someone presenting the topic before answering a questionnaire. I prefer and desire an unbiased presentation of the topic and an unbiased survey c/w "is there anything else" text box such as this one. In my company we have an annual employee survey that is anonymous and includes "is there anything else" text boxes much like this Scoop system, what I like is to see the real spectrum of individual responses vs group thinking or fear of speaking up. THanks for soliciting my opinion.
Trudeaus scamdemic is over,
Unclear whether you mean the county as a whole (e.g., festival place, Canada day) or just the surveying / focus group part.
We are just not ready yet. There are many of us who have not caught this disease and we would like to keep it that way. There is still no definitive knowledge about long term (several years minimum) impact. We have proven we can meet via zoom, shop online, go for walks, gather in very small groups. Its a tremendous way to live, lets just keep it up.
We are protecting young grandchildren who aren't old enough to get vaccinated so we will be in this position until they are vaccinated.

We need to protect the unvaccinated who are our children, that means that until there is medical proof of safety we have to act responsibly.

We never needed all these protocols it first place. 85% of the deaths with COVID were people over 70 years old.

we should always keep the digital options open

While it may not be possible or necessary for every engagement to include a digital component, having one reduces barriers to participation related to travel, timing, caregiving, social anxiety, and a whole host of other physical and mental challenges in addition to COVID. Opening up another avenue for connection just seems like something that should be considered whenever possible, especially when trying to engage a wide audience.

With the number of deaths due to Covid, I'm not comfortable going without a mask.

yes it will be nice to actually have government not hiding , emails and no one answering phones is getting old .