

# **Meewasin Valley Authority Public Opinion Survey Report**

**August 2013**

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Prepared for:  
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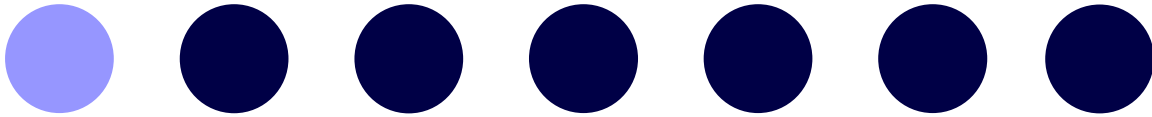


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# Executive Summary

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In July 2013, Fast Consulting conducted a public opinion survey with a cross section of Saskatoon residents on behalf of the Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin). The survey tracked a variety of metrics for comparison against the 2008 public survey, also conducted by our firm.

The survey explores public awareness of and support for the Meewasin as well as public perceptions regarding funding and donor potential. A total of 500 surveys were completed with adults in Saskatoon. The sample size lets us say with a 95% level of certainty that the results are within plus or minus 4.4% of what they would be if the entire adult population of the city was polled.

## Highlights

### Awareness of Meewasin

- › Seven out of 10 Saskatoon adults (72%) think the Meewasin Valley Authority is a conservation, development and education agency. This marks a shift from the 2008 survey, in which 40% of residents thought Meewasin was a conservation agency, 19% a development agency, 14% an education agency and 37% 'all of the above'.
- › Six out of 10 respondents (61%) identify the City of Saskatoon as a participant in Meewasin. This is generally consistent with the 2008 survey. The percentage of residents who identify the Province as a participant has essentially doubled to 33%, while the percentage who identify the University of Saskatchewan as a participant has increased fourfold to 29%. The same percentage—21%—identify all three as participants.
- › Saskatonians demonstrate a high level of awareness of Meewasin projects. The large majority (87%) identify the Meewasin Trail as a project for which the MVA is responsible. This is consistent with 86% in the 2008 survey. Between 61% and 73% also identify the Meewasin Valley Centre, Riverfront development at River Landing, Beaver Creek Conservation Area, Pelican Watch and Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink at PotashCorp Plaza.

### Awareness of Meewasin Valley Centre

- › Eight out of 10 residents (81%) have heard of the Meewasin Valley Centre, an increase from seven out of ten (70%) in the 2008 survey. Nearly all respondents (90%) are aware of the Meewasin Valley Centre's location, and the large majority are aware it offers Meewasin Trail (87%) and visitor information (87%). This is consistent with 2008 survey results.

### **Meewasin Website**

- › Visits to the Meewasin website are up slightly: 14% of residents say they have visited the site at [www.meewasin.com](http://www.meewasin.com), compared to 9% in 2008.

### **Meewasin Facilities and Programs Are Well Used**

- › Downtown riverbank parks are the most often visited Meewasin parks: 66% of residents say they or a member of their household have visited Kiwanis Park, 63% have visited Kinsmen Park and 60% have visited Friendship Park in the last year. Visits to Kiwanis Park are up slightly, visits to Kinsmen Park down slightly over 2008.
- › Three-quarters (75%) of residents say they or a member of their household have visited the Riverfront at River Landing in the last year—up from 59% when the development was new.
- › The large majority have also visited the Weir (74%) and Meewasin Trail (74%) in the last year. This is consistent with 2008 survey results.
- › The large majority of residents (78%) are using the Meewasin Trail for leisure or recreation, while 5% are using it as a commuter trail to get to work or school.
- › Nearly all (91%) of those who used the Meewasin Trail in the past year went walking, an increase over 79% in the 2008 survey. One third (33%) went biking and 18% went running.

### **Residents Think Meewasin Is Having Positive Impact**

- › Consistent with 2008 responses, a large majority of Saskatoon residents think it is important for Meewasin to be involved in:
  - Conserving and restoring the natural resources of the river valley (89%)
  - Developing riverbank facilities such as Meewasin Trail and riverbank parks (85%)
  - Controlling the type of developments allowed on the riverbank (81%)
  - Providing educational programs for children, youth and the general public (84%)
  - Conserving and restoring the cultural resources of the river valley (78%)
  - A recruitment tool for new employees/residents to Saskatoon (52%)
- › Also consistent with 2008, the large majority of residents agree that:
  - I support continued free access to Meewasin facilities (90%)
  - I want Meewasin to continue to work in the river valley (90%)
  - Meewasin is an important contributor to quality of life in Saskatoon (87%)
  - Meewasin is a good investment of tax dollars (87%)
  - Meewasin is important to attracting visitors to Saskatoon (84%)
  - I am as supportive of Meewasin's activities today as I was 5 years ago (81%)
  - Meewasin's river edge facilities and activities help business recruit new employees to Saskatoon (69%)

### Future of Meewasin

- A large majority of residents agree that Meewasin’s future strategic plan should continue to address
  - Improvements to existing infrastructure (e.g., trails) (93%)
  - Management of naturalized areas (e.g. North East Swale) (90%)
  - Extension of Meewasin Trails (90%)
  - Development and implementation of interpretive and educational programs (88%)
  - Policy development (e.g., development of a recreation plan) (85%)
  - Construction projects similar to River Landing or the Works at the Weir (85%)
  - Meewasin’s participation in the development and design of new bridges (76%)
  - Improved access for water-based activities (70%)
- Eight out of 10 respondents (81%) believe the land in the Meewasin Valley should grow with the city, a significant increase over 69% in 2008.
- A quarter of respondents (25%) are aware of Meewasin’s *Wanuskewin to Whitecap* concept plan to connect Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Wanuskewin Heritage Park via the Meewasin Trail.
- Most residents would like to see Meewasin add more community trail connections to the Meewasin Trail (71%), more picnic sites (70%), more natural areas (70%) and expanded riverbank trails (68%).
- Virtually all respondents (94%) think it is important for Meewasin to continue reviewing the development of projects that impact our river valley.

### Good Use of Tax Dollars

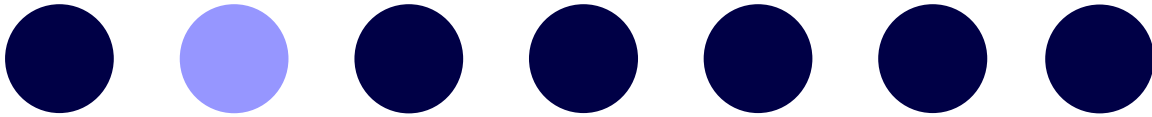
- Few resident—only 10%—are aware that only \$18 million of the \$90 million Meewasin has invested in the river valley since its inception has come from their local taxes.
- Virtually all residents (87%) think the money spent on park and trail development, conservation and education over the last 34 years is a good return on their taxes.

### Has Meewasin Made Saskatoon a Better Place to Live?

- Nine out of 10 respondents (89%) believe Saskatoon is a better place to live because of Meewasin, slightly higher than 84% in 2008.

### Support for Meewasin

- When asked whether they would support Meewasin (while being assured the question was part of the research and not a request for a donation), 25% of respondents say they would be interested in giving a cash gift and 16% say they would be interested in planned giving or bequest. This is generally consistent with 2008 responses, in which 29% said cash gift and 17% said planned giving or bequest.



# Methodology

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In July 2013, Fast Consulting conducted a public opinion survey with a cross section of Saskatoon adults on behalf of the Meewasin Valley Authority (Meewasin). The survey tracked a variety of metrics for comparison against the 2008 public opinion survey, also conducted by our firm.

## **Survey Sample**

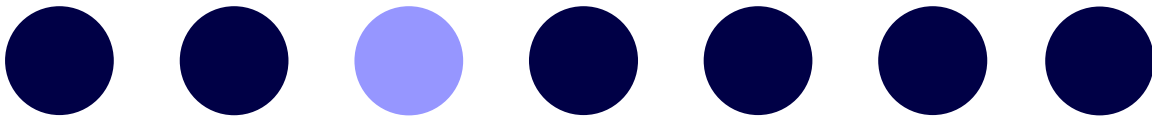
The survey explores public awareness of and support for the Meewasin as well as public perceptions regarding funding and donor potential. A total of 500 surveys were completed with adults in Saskatoon. The sample size lets us say with a 95% level of certainty that the results are within plus or minus 4.4% of what they would be if the entire adult population of the city was polled.

The survey was conducted using both telephone and online survey modalities. Respondents for the telephone surveys were selected from a randomly generated electronic sample frame built by Fast Consulting and ASDE. Standard polling practices were used at all times to ensure random selection of households and respondents. The sample frame, and the random sampling that resulted from it, was constructed to facilitate proportionate representation of demographic characteristics evident in the provincial population such as gender, age and level of education.

Telephone interviews were conducted by our experienced team of interviewers using our in-house Computer Aided Interviewing (CATI) system. Surveys were done at times that were appropriate and convenient for respondents – between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. on weekends.

An invitation to complete the online survey was sent to a random sample of our community panel. These are respondents who have done a survey with Fast Consulting or who were previously recruited and qualified by our firm.

Data checking procedures were used at all times and statistical analysis of the survey data was done using the industry standard SPSS computer program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).



# Survey Results

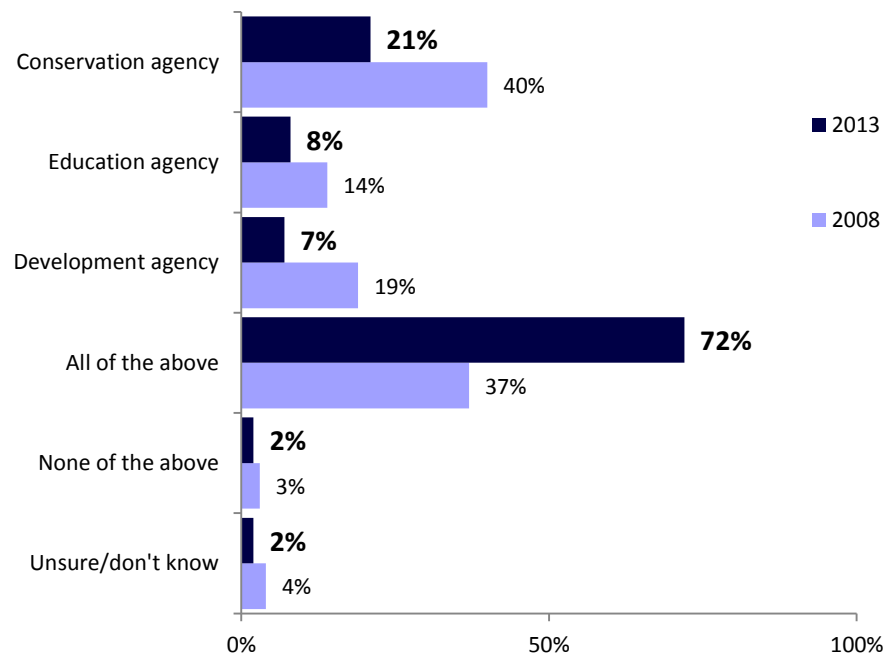
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## Awareness of Meewasin

Q. *Have you heard of the Meewasin Valley Authority?*

- Only respondents who have heard of Meewasin are asked to complete the survey (n=500 respondents).

Q. *Do you think the Meewasin Valley Authority is a conservation agency, development agency, education agency, all of the above or none of the above?*

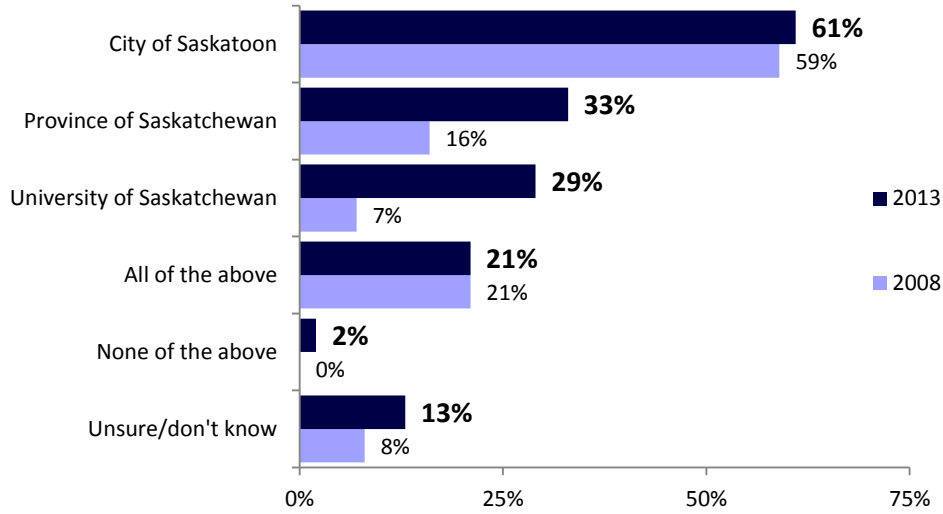


\* *Multiple responses allowed*

- Seven out of 10 respondents (72%) think the Meewasin Valley Authority is a conservation, development and education agency—or ‘all of the above’.
- This marks a shift from the 2008 survey, in which respondents appeared more divided in their perception of Meewasin: 40% thought it was a conservation agency, 19% a development agency, 14% an education agency and 37% ‘all of the above’.



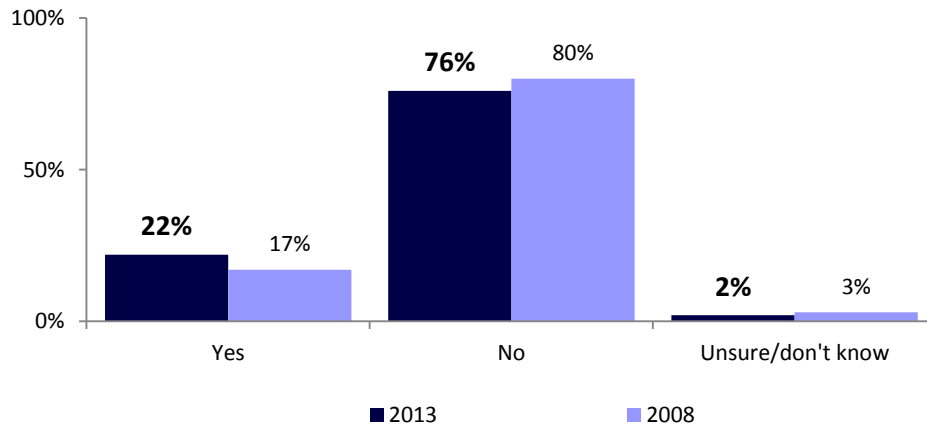
Q. Do you know who participates in Meewasin?



\* Multiple responses allowed

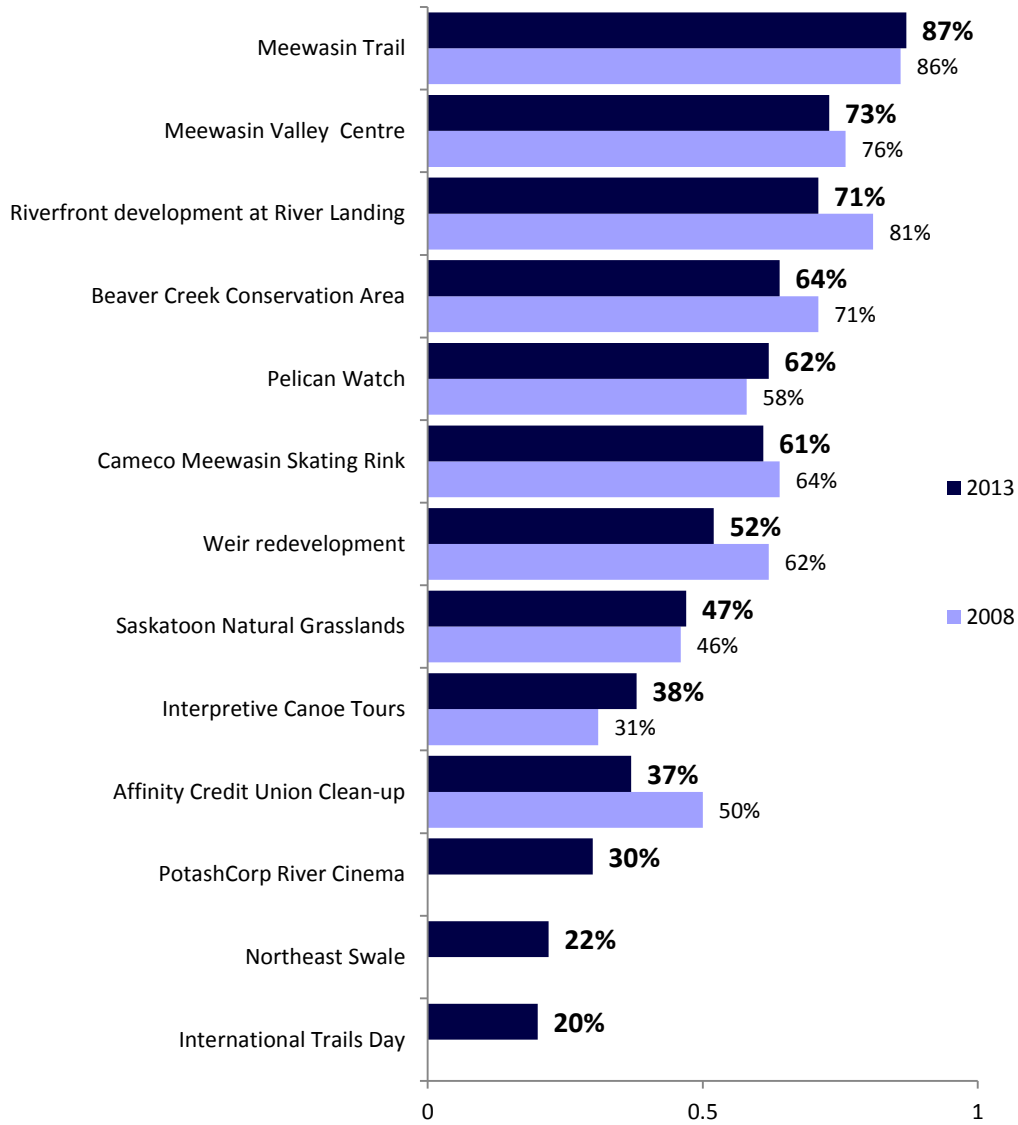
- Six out of 10 respondents (61%) identify the City of Saskatoon as a participant in Meewasin. This is generally consistent with 2008 survey results.
- There is a significant increase in respondents who identify the Province (33%) and the University of Saskatchewan (29%) as participants, compared to 2008.
- Approximately 21% identify 'all of the above' as participants, consistent with 2008.

Q. Have you heard of Meewasin as a national or international leader of conservation agencies?



- Two out ten (22%) respondents have heard of Meewasin as a national or international leader of conservation agencies, a slight increase over 17% in 2008.

Q. Have you heard of any projects that Meewasin is responsible for?

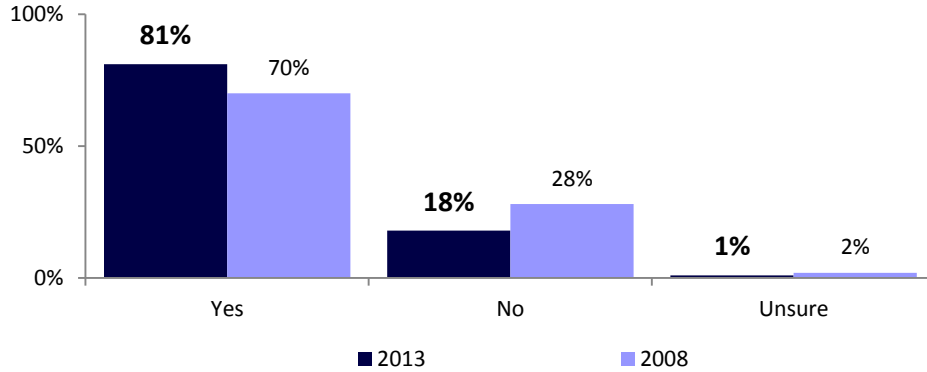


\* Multiple responses allowed

- The large majority (87%) of respondents identify the Meewasin Trail as a project for which the MVA is responsible. This is consistent with 86% in the 2008 survey.
- A large majority also identify the Meewasin Valley Centre, Riverfront development at River Landing, Beaver Creek Conservation Area, Pelican Watch and Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink at PotashCorp Plaza. About half of respondents also identify the weir redevelopment and Saskatoon Natural Grasslands as Meewasin projects. Overall, awareness of Meewasin projects is down slightly from 2008.

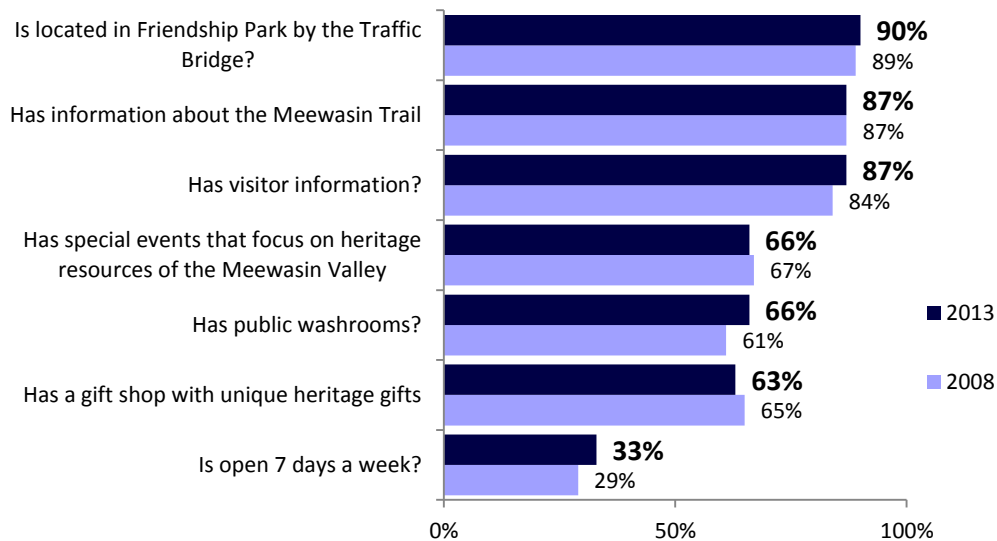
## Awareness of Meewasin Valley Centre

Q. Have you heard of the Meewasin Valley Centre?



- Eight out of 10 respondents (81%) have heard of the Meewasin Valley Centre, an increase from seven out of ten (70%) in the 2008 survey.

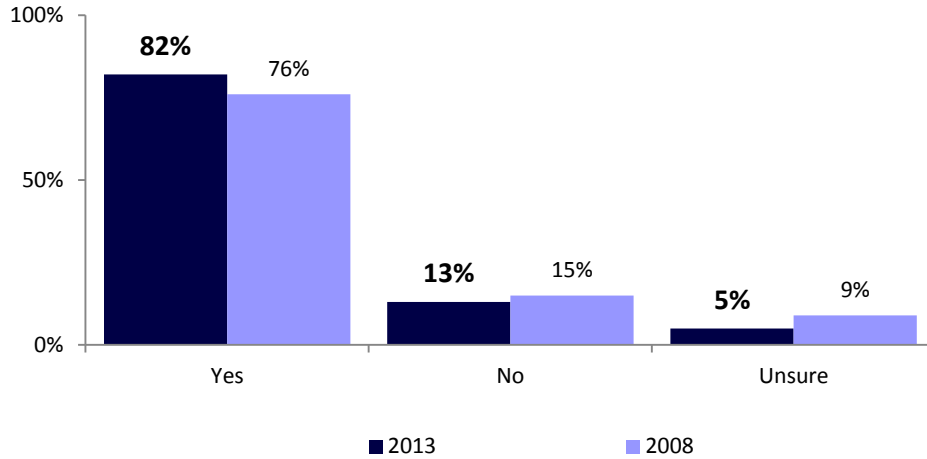
Q. (If yes) Are you aware of the following facts about the Meewasin Valley Centre?



\* Multiple responses allowed

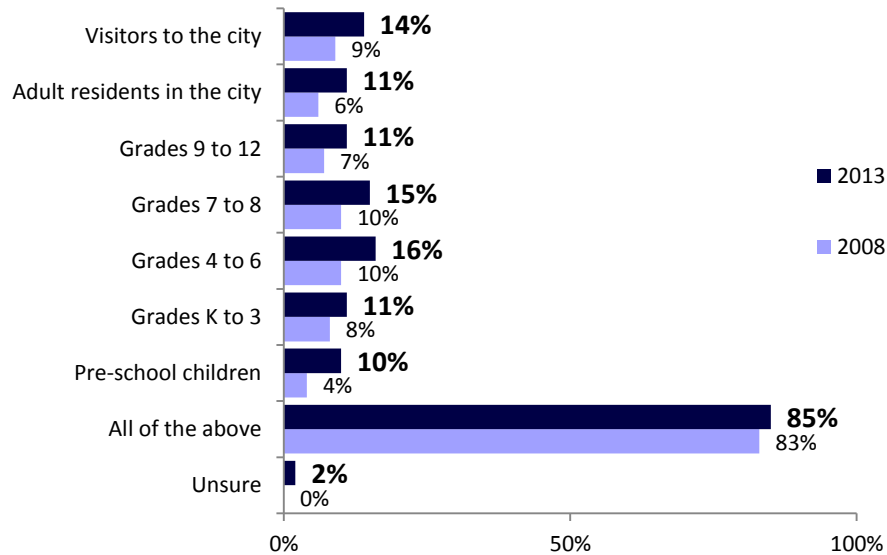
- Nearly all respondents (90%) are aware of the Meewasin Valley Centre’s location, and the large majority are aware it offers Meewasin Trail (87%) and visitor information (87%).
- Two-thirds (66%) are aware the Centre has special events focused on the valley’s heritage resources and 63% are aware it has a gift shop with unique heritage gifts. Most (66%) are also aware it has public washrooms; a third (33%) are aware it is open seven days a week.
- Awareness of the Meewasin Valley Centre’s location and amenities is consistent with 2008 survey results.

Q. Do you think it is important to have a downtown Meewasin Valley Centre open seven days a week for the purpose of providing, at no cost to visitors, information and understanding of the Meewasin Valley?



- The large majority (82%) of respondents think it's important for the downtown Meewasin Valley Centre be open seven days a week in order to provide free information and education on the Meewasin Valley. This is a slight increase from 76% in 2008.

Q. Who do you think the target audience of the Meewasin Valley Centre should be?

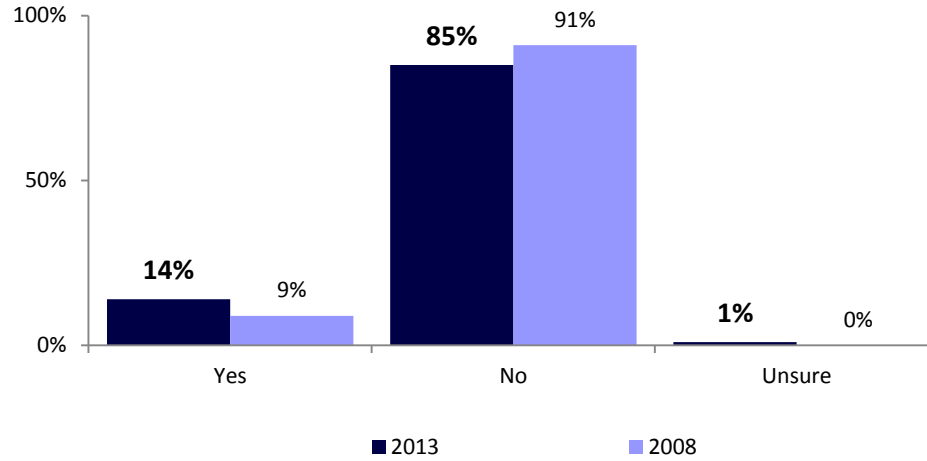


\* Multiple responses allowed

- The large majority (85%) of respondents think the Meewasin Centre's target audience should include everyone—children, adults and visitors. This is consistent with 2008.

## Meewasin Website

Q. Have you visited the Meewasin website at [www.meewasin.com](http://www.meewasin.com)?

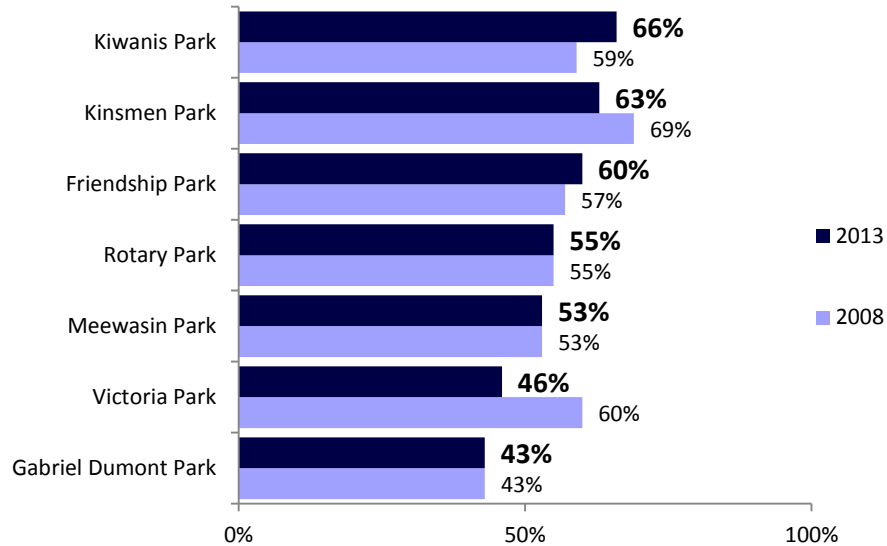


- Visits to the Meewasin website are up slightly: 14% of respondents say they have visited the site at [www.meewasin.com](http://www.meewasin.com), compared to 9% in 2008.

## Visiting/Using of Meewasin Riverbank/Parks

Q. Which of the following sites have you or a member of your household visited in the last year?

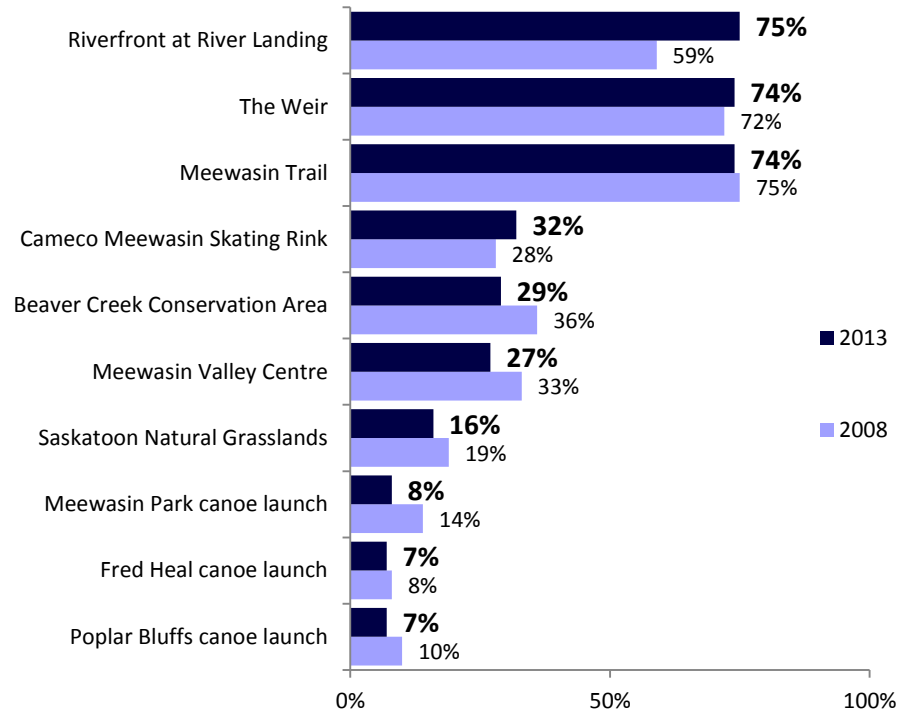
### Parks



\* Multiple response allowed

- Downtown riverbank parks are the most often visited Meewasin Parks: 66% of respondents say they or a member of their household have visited Kiwanis Park, 63% have visited Kinsmen Park and 60% have visited Friendship Park in the last year. Visits to Kiwanis Park are up slightly, visits to Kinsmen Park down slightly over 2008.
- About half of respondents say they or a member of their household have visited Rotary Park (55%) and Meewasin Park (53%). This is consistent with 2008 survey results.
- Visits to Victoria Park are down from 60% in 2008 to 46% in 2013. Visits to Gabriel Dumont Park are consistent with 2008, at 43%.

**Sites/Facilities**

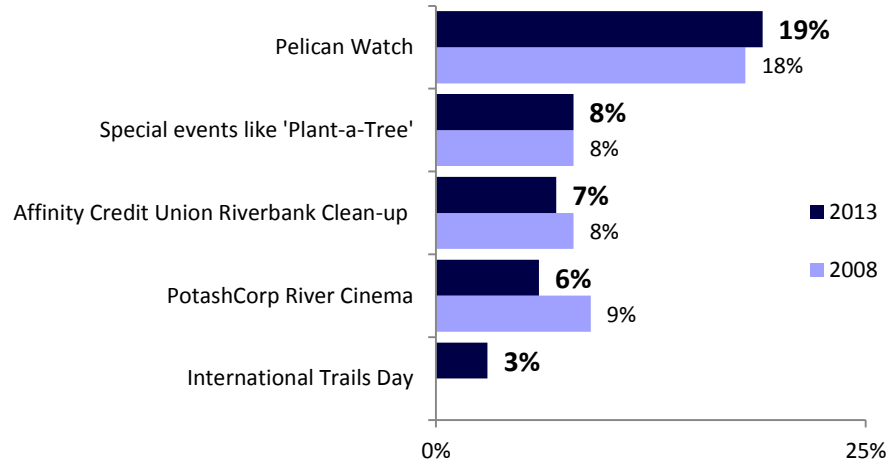


\* Multiple response allowed

- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents say they or a member of their household have visited the Riverfront at River Landing in the last year—up from 59% when the development was new.
- The large majority have also visited the Weir (74%) and Meewasin Trail (74%) in the last year. This is consistent with 2008 survey results.
- Close to a third have used the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink at PotashCorp Plaza (32%). The percentage who have visited Beaver Creek Conservation Area (29%) and Meewasin Valley Centre (27%) is down slightly from 2008.
- About the same percentage of respondents have visited the Saskatoon Natural Grasslands: 16% in 2013 vs. 19% in 2008. Slightly fewer have used the Meewasin canoe launch (8%), while about the same percentage have used the Poplar Bluffs and Fred Heal canoe launches is about the same.

## Use of Meewasin Programs

Q. In the last year, have you or a member of your household participated in the following programs?



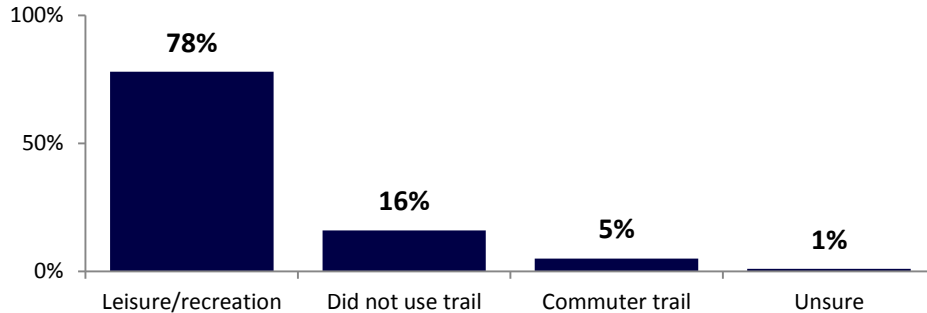
\* Multiple response allowed

- About a fifth (19%) of respondents say they or a member of their household participated in Meewasin's Pelican Watch this past year, consistent with 18% in 2008.
- A handful have participated in other Meewasin programs, including special events like the Plant-a-Tree ceremony (8%), riverbank clean-up (7%), river cinema (6%) and International Trails Day (3%). This is generally consistent with 2008 responses.



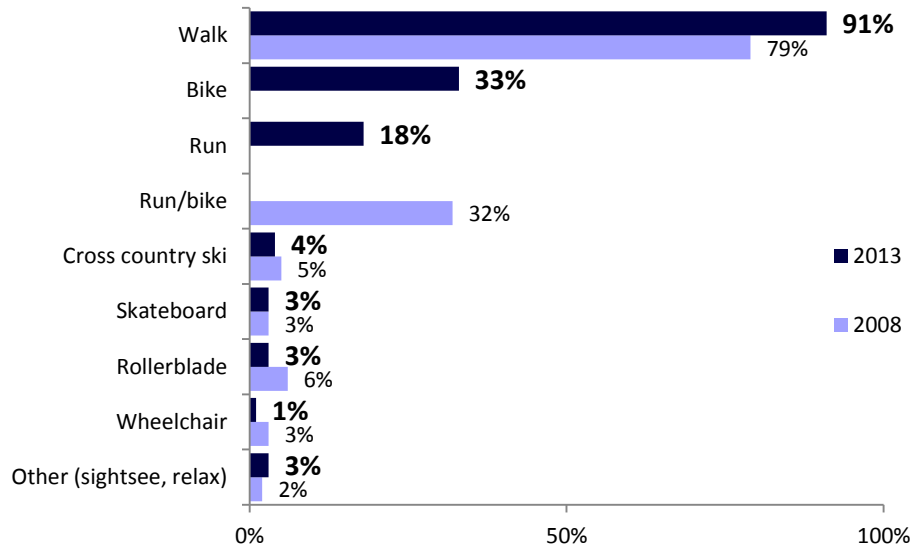
## Use of Meewasin Trail

Q. If you or your family have visited the Meewasin Trail in the past year, did you use it for leisure/recreation or as a commuter trail to get to work or school? (Asked of all)



- This question is new to the 2013 survey. It shows that the large majority of respondents (78%) are using the Meewasin Trail for leisure or recreation, while 5% are using it as a commuter trail to get to work or school.

Q. If you or your family have visited the Meewasin Trail in the past year, how did you use it? (Asked of respondents who used trail or were unsure.)

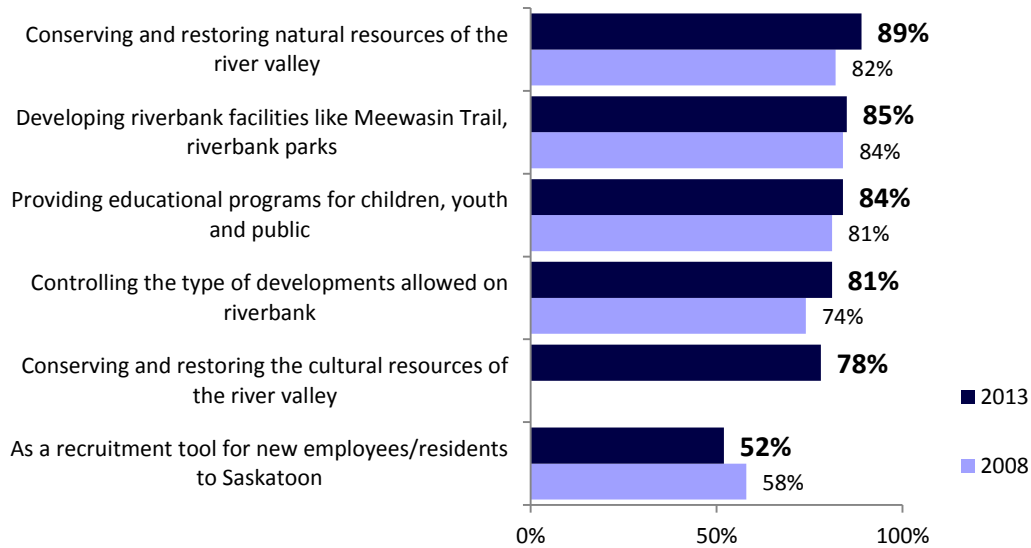


\* Multiple response allowed

- Nearly all (91%) respondents who used the Meewasin Trail in the past year say they or their family went walking, an increase over 79% in the 2008 survey.
- One third (33%) went biking and 18% went running. These categories were reported as a joint run/bike in the 2008 survey. Consistent with 2008, a handful of respondents used the trail for cross country skiing (4%), skateboarding (3%) and rollerblading (3%).

## Importance of Meewasin

Q. Meewasin is involved in many activities on the riverbank. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all important, 5 is neutral and 10 is very important, how important is it to you that Meewasin is involved in the following activities?

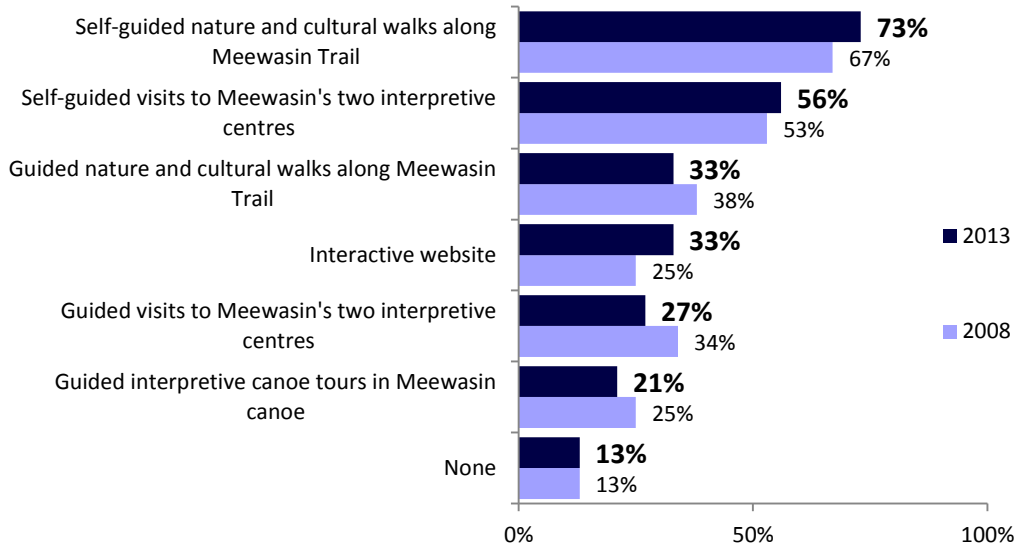


- Combining important and very important responses shows that, consistent with 2008, a large majority of Saskatoon residents think it is important for Meewasin to be involved in:
  - Conserving and restoring the natural resources of the river valley (89%)
  - Developing riverbank facilities such as Meewasin Trail and riverbank parks (85%)
  - Controlling the type of developments allowed on the riverbank (81%)
  - Providing educational programs for children, youth and the general public (84%)
  - Conserving and restoring the cultural resources of the river valley (78%)
  - A recruitment tool for new employees/residents to Saskatoon (52%)

	2013		2008	
	Important (7-8)	Very Imp. (9-10)	Important (7-8)	Very Imp. (9-10)
Conserving and restoring natural resources of the river valley	21%	68%	26%	56%
Developing riverbank facilities like Meewasin Trail, riverbank parks	24%	61%	27%	57%
Providing educational programs for children, youth and public	28%	56%	33%	48%
Controlling the type of developments allowed on riverbank	22%	59%	19%	55%
Conserving and restoring the cultural resources of the river valley	26%	52%	-	-
As a recruitment tool for new employees/ residents to Saskatoon	28%	24%	32%	26%

## Educational Activities

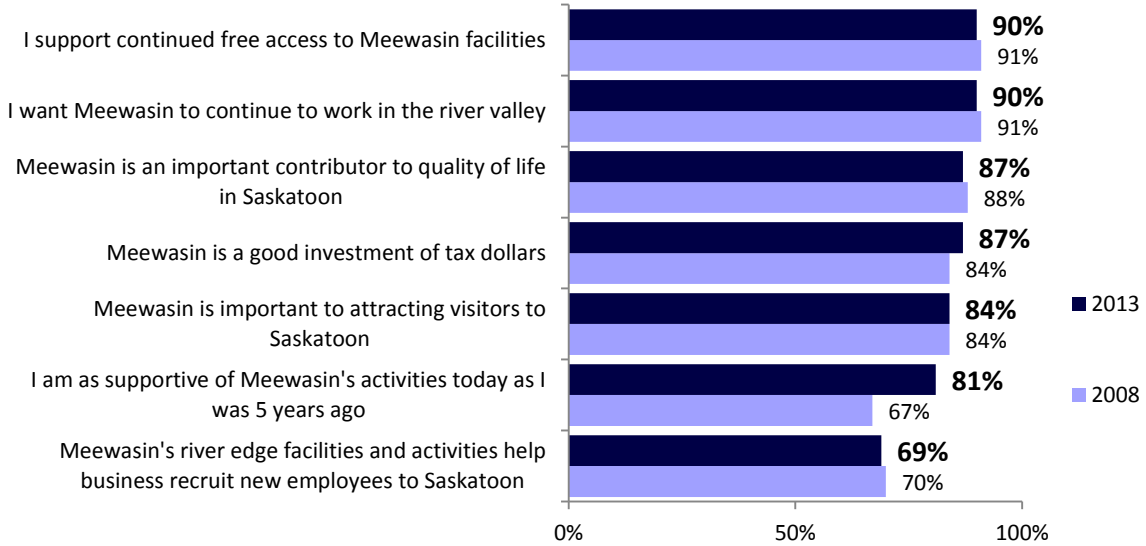
Q. From a learning aspect, what types of educational activities are you most likely to participate in?



- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73%) say they are most likely to take self-guided nature and cultural walks along the Meewasin Trail; 33% are most likely to take guided nature and cultural walks along the trail. This is generally consistent with 67% and 38%, respectively, in 2008.
- More than half (56%) are most likely to make self-guided visits to Meewasin’s two interpretive centres, while 27% are most likely to make guided visits. This is also consistent with 53% and 34%, respectively, in 2008.
- A third of respondents (33%) are most likely to visit Meewasin’s interactive website. This is up from 25% in 2008.
- Approximately 21% are most likely to take guided interpretive canoe tours in Meewasin’s 10-passenger canoe, which is generally consistent with 25% in 2008.

## Importance of Meewasin to Saskatoon

Q. Do you strongly agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements?

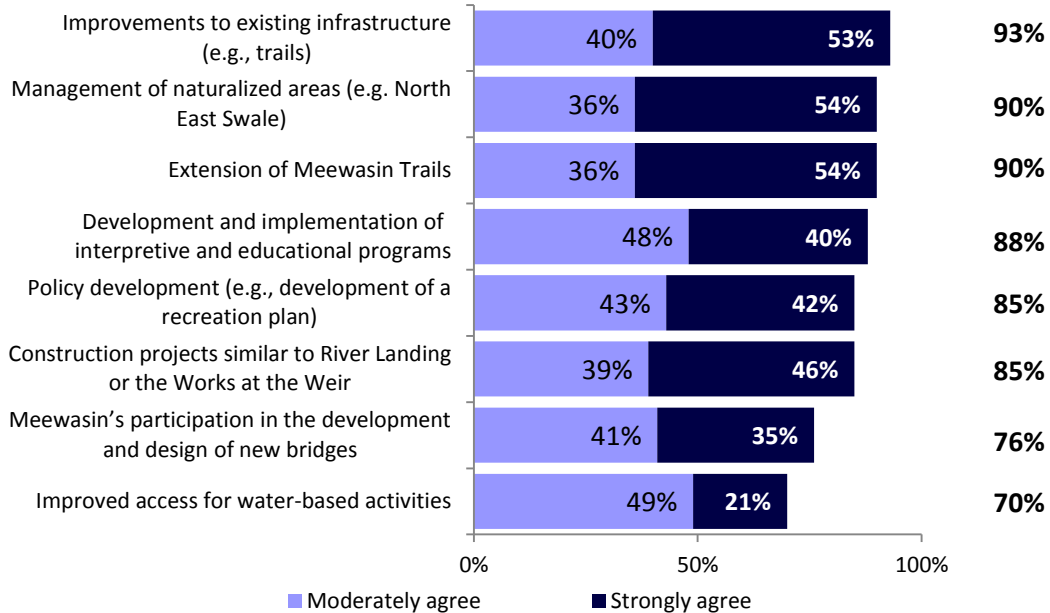


- Combining moderately agree and strongly agree responses reveals generally strong public opinion regarding the importance of Meewasin's role. Consistent with 2008, the large majority of respondents agree that:
  - I support continued free access to Meewasin facilities (90%)
  - I want Meewasin to continue to work in the river valley (90%)
  - Meewasin is an important contributor to quality of life in Saskatoon (87%)
  - Meewasin is a good investment of tax dollars (87%)
  - Meewasin is important to attracting visitors to Saskatoon (84%)
  - I am as supportive of Meewasin's activities today as I was 5 years ago (81%)
  - Meewasin's river edge facilities and activities help business recruit new employees to Saskatoon (69%)

	2013		2008	
	Mod. Agree	Strong Agree	Mod. Agree	Strong Agree
I support continued free access to Meewasin facilities	19%	71%	17%	74%
I want Meewasin to continue to work in river valley	21%	69%	24%	67%
Meewasin is an important contributor to quality of life in Saskatoon	27%	60%	29%	59%
Meewasin is a good investment of tax dollars	33%	54%	33%	51%
I am as supportive of Meewasin's activities today as I was 5 years ago	36%	45%	32%	35%
Meewasin is important to attracting visitors	39%	45%	38%	46%
Meewasin's river edge facilities and activities help business recruit new employees to Saskatoon	49%	20%	42%	28%

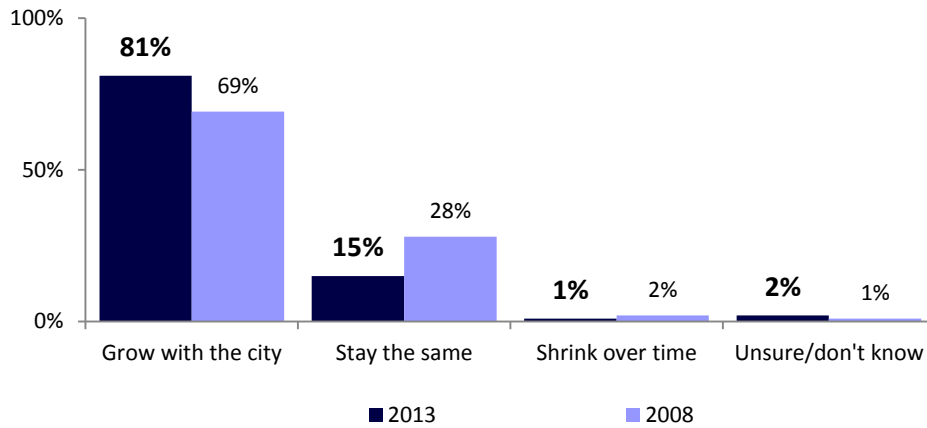
## Future of Meewasin

Q. Meewasin is currently undertaking a review of their strategic plan. Do you agree or disagree that the following activities should be included in future planning?



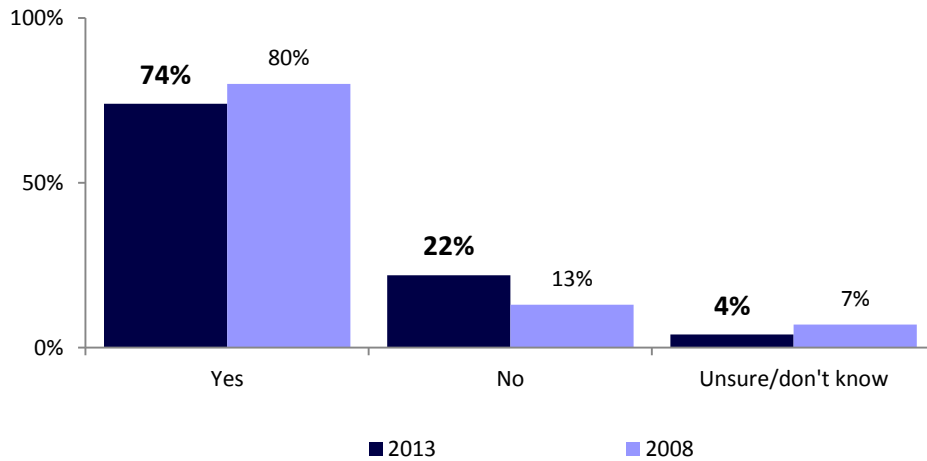
- Combining moderately agree and strongly agree responses shows that the large majority of respondents agree that Meewasin's future strategic plan should continue to address:
  - Improvements to existing infrastructure (e.g., trails) (93%)
  - Management of naturalized areas (e.g. North East Swale) (90%)
  - Extension of Meewasin Trails (90%)
  - Development and implementation of interpretive and educational programs (88%)
  - Policy development (e.g., development of a recreation plan) (85%)
  - Construction projects similar to River Landing or the Works at the Weir (85%)
  - Meewasin's participation in the development and design of new bridges (76%)
  - Improved access for water-based activities (70%)

Q. As the City of Saskatoon grows, do you think the land in the Meewasin Valley should grow with the city, stay the same or shrink over time?



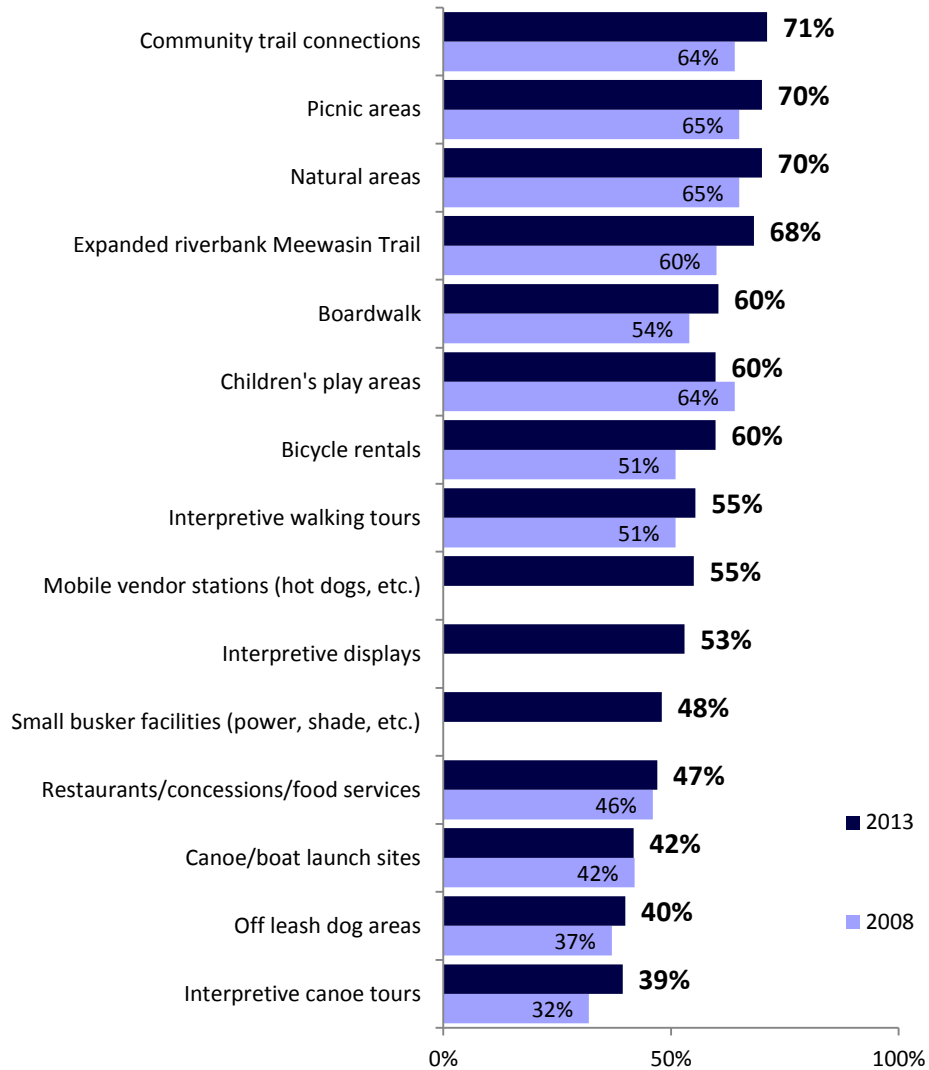
- Eight out of 10 respondents (81%) believe the land in the Meewasin Valley should grow with the city, a significant increase over 69% in 2008.

Q. As scientists predict climate change, there is a lot of discussion about water availability and quality. Do you think climate change will impact our river?



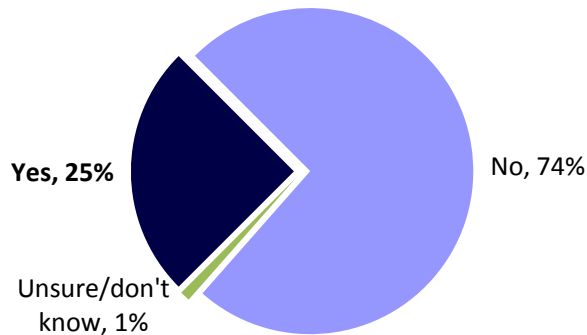
- The large majority of respondents (74%) believe climate change will impact our river, a slight drop from 80% in 2008.

Q. In the Meewasin Valley, what would you like to see more of?



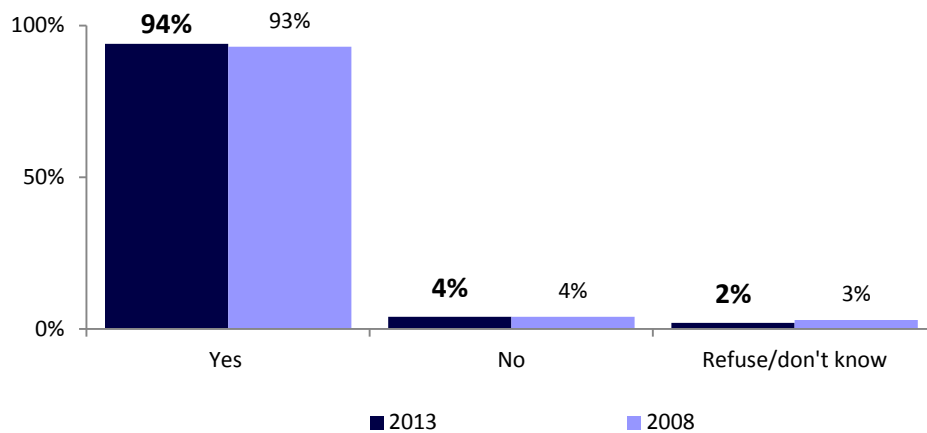
- Respondents have a long list of things they would like to see more of in the Meewasin Valley. A large majority would like to see more community trail connections to the Meewasin Trail (71%), more picnic sites (70%), more natural areas (70%) and expanded riverbank trails (68%).

Q. Are you aware of Meewasin's Wanuskewin to Whitecap concept plan to connect the Whitecap Dakota First Nation to Wanuskewin Heritage Park by the Meewasin Trail?



- A quarter of respondents (25%) are aware of Meewasin's *Wanuskewin to Whitecap* concept plan to connect Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Wanuskewin Heritage Park via the Meewasin Trail.

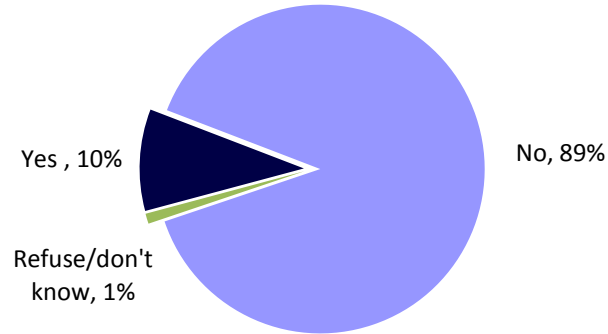
Q. Is it important that Meewasin keeps reviewing the development of projects that impact our river valley?



- Virtually all respondents (94%) think it is important for Meewasin to continue reviewing the development of projects that impact our river valley. This is consistent with 2008.

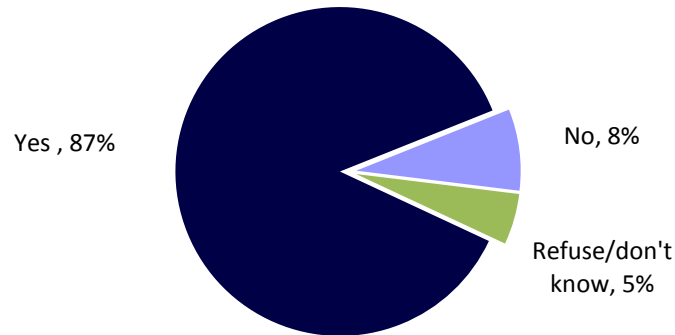


Q. Are you aware of the \$90 million that Meewasin has spent in the river valley over the past 34 years in park and trail development, conservation and education, only \$18 million of which has come from your local taxes?



- Few respondents—only 10%—are aware that only \$18 million of the \$90 million Meewasin has invested in the river valley since its inception has come from their local taxes.

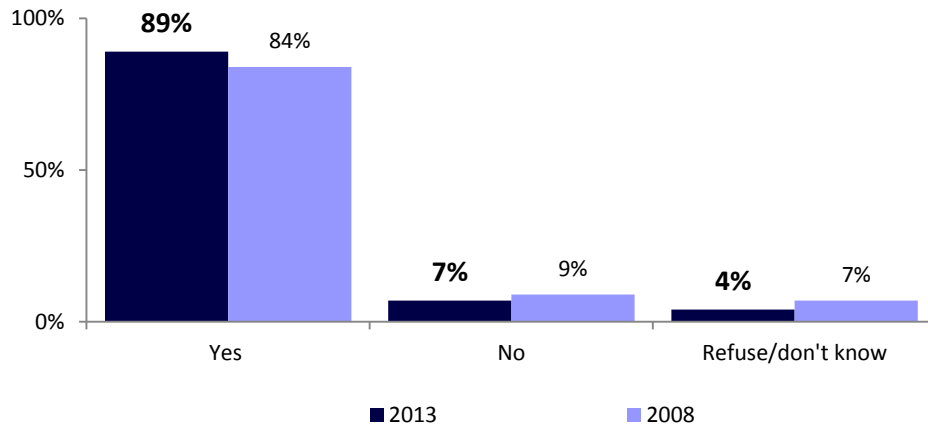
Q. Do you consider that a good return on your taxes?



- Virtually all respondents (87%) think the \$18 million spent by Meewasin on park and trail development, conservation and education over the last 34 years is a good return on their taxes.

## Has Meewasin Made Saskatoon a Better Place to Live?

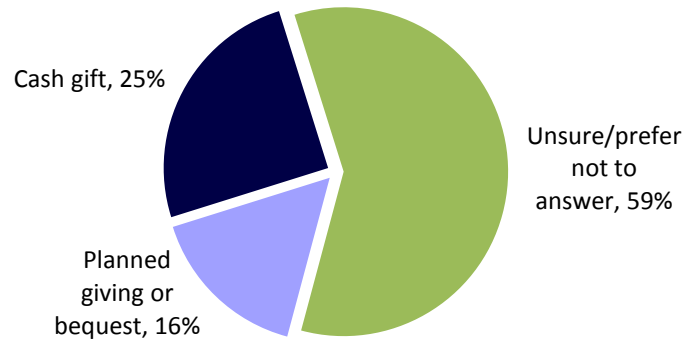
Q. Do you believe Saskatoon is a better place to live because of Meewasin?



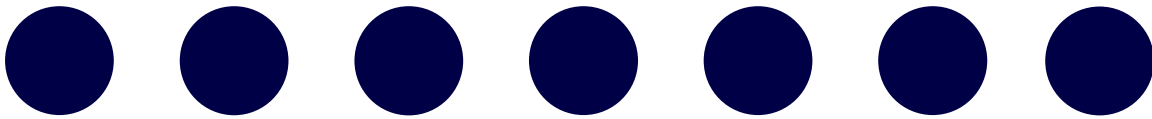
- Nine out of 10 respondents (89%) believe Saskatoon is a better place to live because of Meewasin, slightly higher than 84% in 2008.

## Support for Meewasin

Q. Before I ask the next question, I want to ensure that you understand this is a public opinion survey. We are not asking for a donation or your name. Would you be interested in supported Meewasin in one of the following ways?



- When asked whether they would support Meewasin (while being assured the question was part of the research and not a request for a donation), 25% of respondents say they would be interested in giving a cash gift and 16% say they would be interested in planned giving or bequest. This is generally consistent with 2008 responses, in which 29% said cash gift and 17% said planned giving or bequest.
- The largest percentage (59%) are either unsure or prefer not to answer.

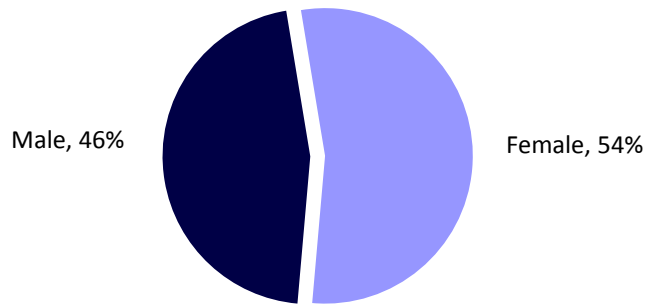


# Appendix

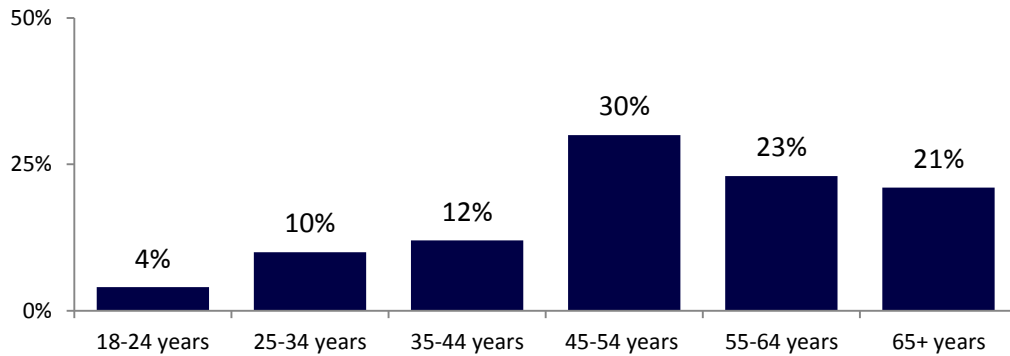
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## Demographics

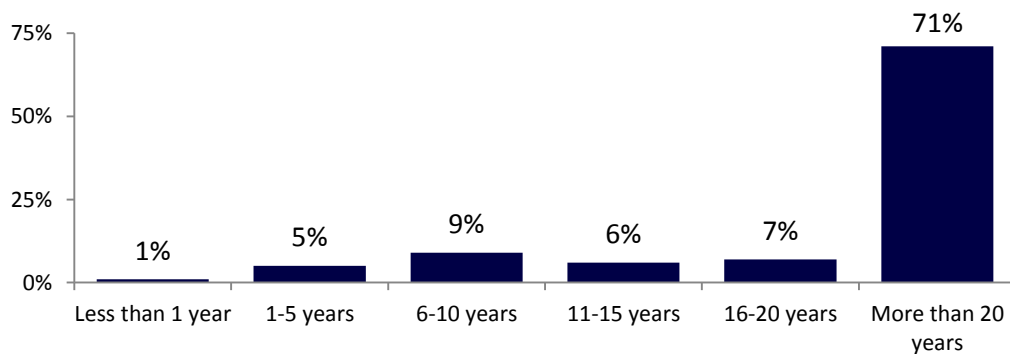
### Gender



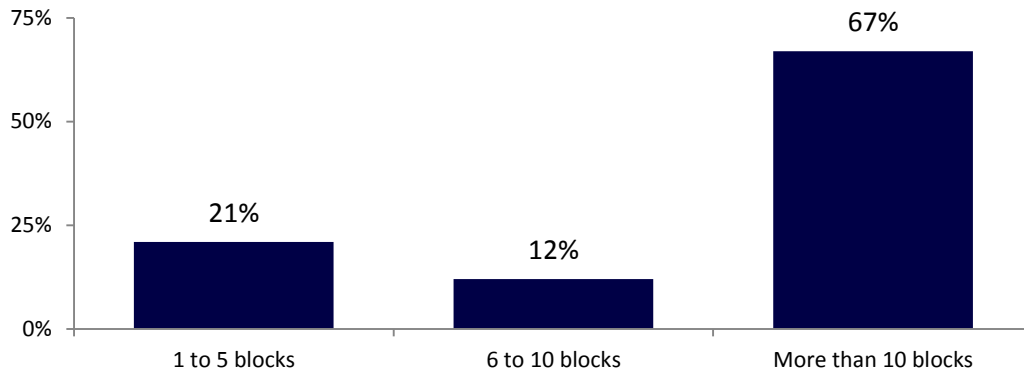
### Age



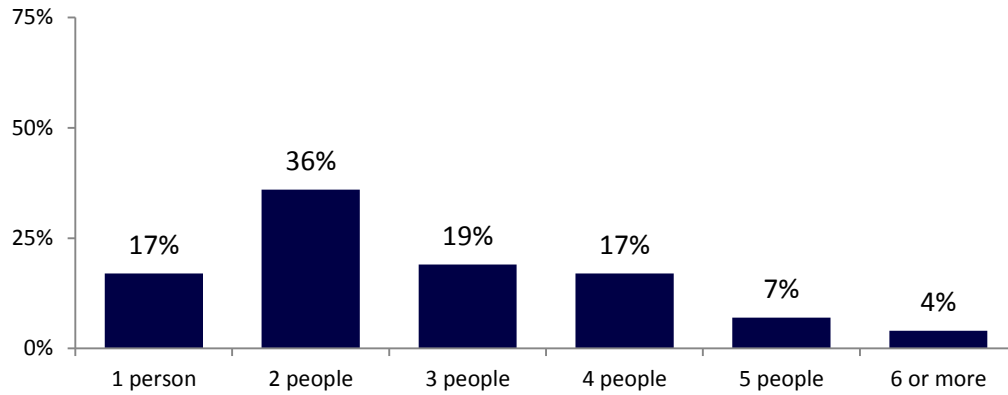
### Residency in Saskatoon



### Residence Proximity to Meewasin Trail



### No. of People in Household



### No. of Children in Household

