

Smoke-Free Outdoor Opinion Poll

Final Report

Introduction

In the spring of 2009, the City of Peterborough amended its Smoking Bylaw (#07-126) to extend to City owned park and recreation areas. Smoke-free designated areas were created within three city parks, Del Crary, East City Bowl and Riverside. The Arenas, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee recommended that the City consider expanding this amendment to all parks in 2010. During deputations to City Council the Peterborough County-City Health Unit committed to assisting with information collection to support this decision-making.

An opinion poll was developed with the aim to assess the level of citizen support for expanding current smoking bylaws to additional park spaces.

Methodology

The opinion poll was designed to be brief and simple (a copy is appended). No identifying information was collected, only basic demographic data. Respondent's opinions were measured using a scaled tool applied to five options for park-related smoking bylaws.

Individuals had two options to complete the poll. They could:

- 1) write their answers on a hardcopy version and return the completed poll to the data collector immediately, or
- 2) complete an online version that was posted on the Peterborough County-City Health Unit website.

While anyone 18 years old and older was eligible to complete the poll, the data collectors targeted people who were using city park space as well as those who were caregivers of young children.

Data collection commenced in late June and was completed in mid-September. Face to face data collection was performed by Peterborough County-City Health Unit staff, Recreation staff from the City, as well as a high school student on a summer placement through Employment Planning and Counselling Peterborough. The following parks were visited multiple times by data collectors over the 3 month period: R.A. Morrow Memorial, Millenium, Bowers, King Edward, Knights of Columbus, Rogers Cove, Turner, Riverside, Riverview (and Zoo), and James Stevenson.

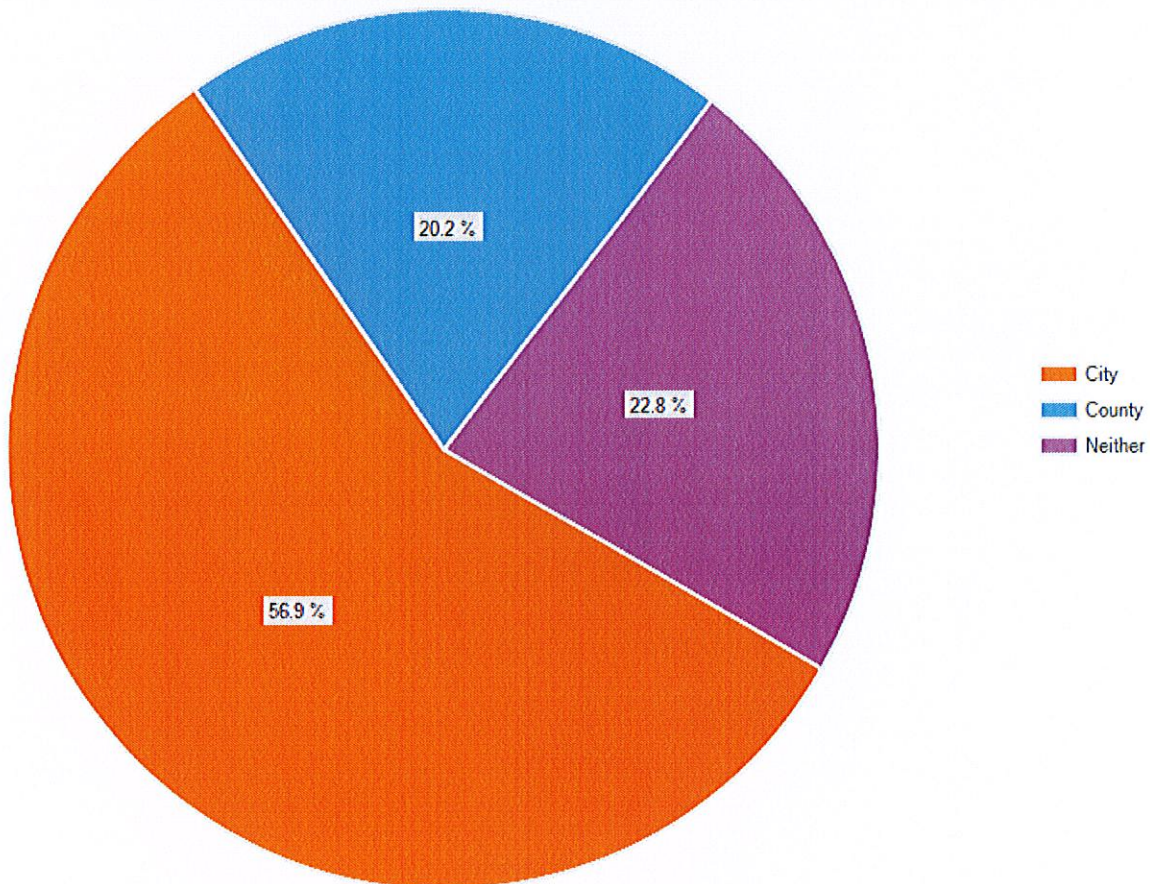
All data was entered into the online Survey Monkey database. This software was also used to perform the analysis. A qualitative analysis was necessary for responses to Question #6.

Key Findings

Who responded to the poll?

In total, 580 people completed the poll. The pie chart below depicts respondent place of residence.

Do you live in the City of Peterborough or the County of Peterborough?

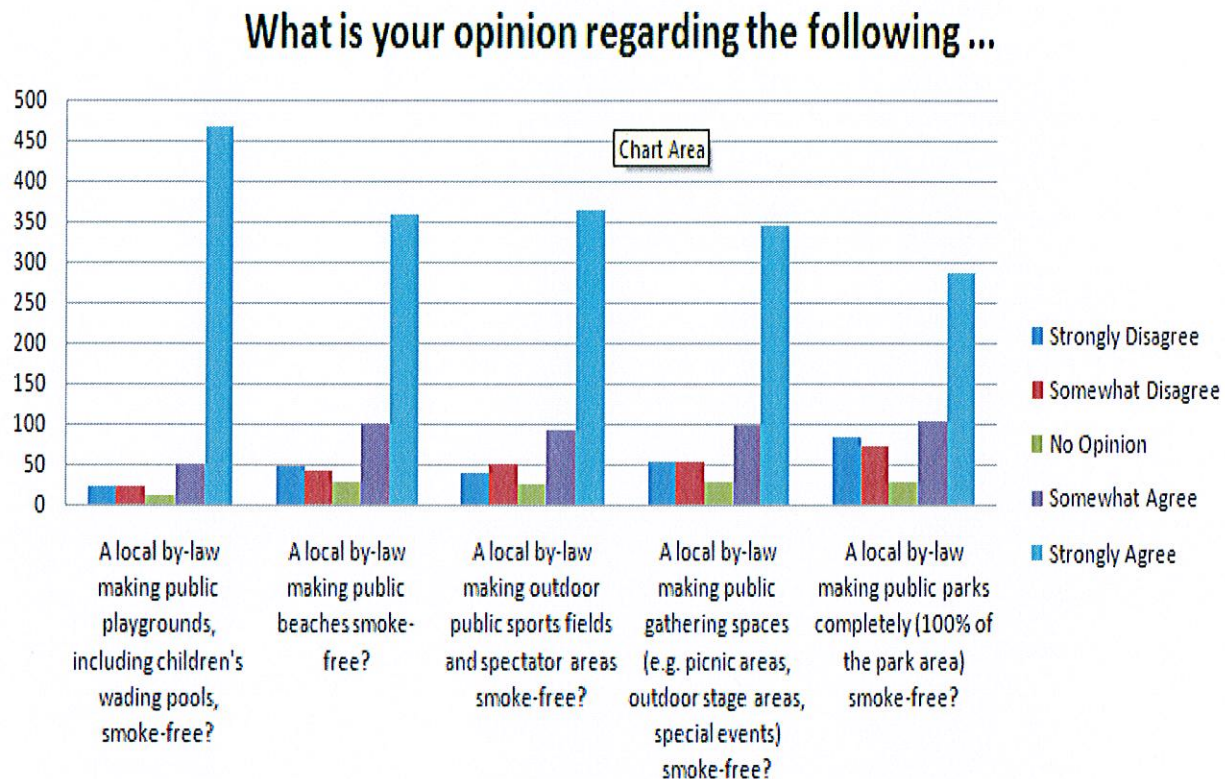


Almost 63% of respondents were parents, guardians or caregivers of a child aged 12 and under.

Thirty-nine percent of respondents either smoke or live with someone who smokes.

What are their opinions?

The bar graph below depicts the key findings of the poll.



Support was highest for a by-law making public playgrounds smoke-free. When those who “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” are grouped together, this represents 90%. The levels of support for bylaws to make beaches, sports fields/spectator areas and public gathering places smoke-free were similar - all within a range of 77-80%. The lowest level of support (68%) was reported for a by-law making public parks completely smoke-free.

The last question on the poll provided respondents the opportunity to add comments. One hundred nineteen people submitted additional comments. More than two-thirds of those comments were supportive of outdoor smoke-free bylaws. Twenty people emphasized the importance of protecting children. 18 people commented on the need to accommodate smokers in park spaces, such as the creation of designated smoking areas. Twenty-seven percent of the comments were not supportive of outdoor smoke-free bylaw development. The most frequently stated concern focused on the curtailment of individual rights, especially in the use of a legal substance. Comments were also critical of the assessment of risk associated with second-hand smoke as a health priority.

Limits to Interpretation

Looking at the characteristics of the respondents (see Key Findings) it is apparent that the findings primarily reflect the opinions of caregivers of young children. The other interest group that is well represented is people who smoke or people who live with someone who smokes. It was the intent of the pollsters to have these sub-groups well represented. Due to the methodology (non-randomized, targeted selection) used in this poll the results should not be interpreted as representative of all people 18+ who live in the Peterborough region.

Conclusions

The findings from this poll strongly suggest that there is a high level of support for extending the current bylaw to other park spaces within the City of Peterborough. The park areas with the highest support for outdoor smoking prohibitions were playgrounds, beaches and sports fields/spectator areas.