

Curbside Collection Survey 2023 Results

December 1, 2023

Introduction

The City of Chilliwack sought feedback from residents on the City's Curbside Collection Program to inform the next curbside collection contract.

The City conducted the survey from October 23 to November 10, 2023 primarily online through engagechilliwack.com/curbside-survey. Hard copies of the survey were also available at the main reception desk and the Engineering Department at City Hall. The City promoted the survey through the City of Chilliwack's social media, website, and Curbside Collection App. Local online news, radio, and the newspaper also shared information about the survey.

The target audience for the survey were the residents of the City of Chilliwack currently on the curbside collection program. The objective of the survey was to gather public input to possible changes to the curbside collection program. The survey focused on collection frequency, types of containers, container sizes, and collection methods.

In order to encourage participation in the survey, the City gave the opportunity for residents to enter a draw to win a \$100 Visa gift card. A total of 2,368 survey entries were submitted along with 2,000 ballots for the draw. On November 22, 2023 a winner was awarded.

Curbside Collection Survey 2023

Share feedback on our Curbside Collection Program before we draft the next curbside contract.

[View Project](#)



Survey Results

Collection Frequency

The current curbside collection frequency consists of weekly collection of compostable waste and recycling, and bi-weekly collection of garbage and glass. Residents help divert waste from the landfill by properly sorting out items that are accepted for composting and recycling. A weekly schedule for compost and recycling, and bi-weekly schedule for garbage reduces the overall cost of the program and encourages diversion.

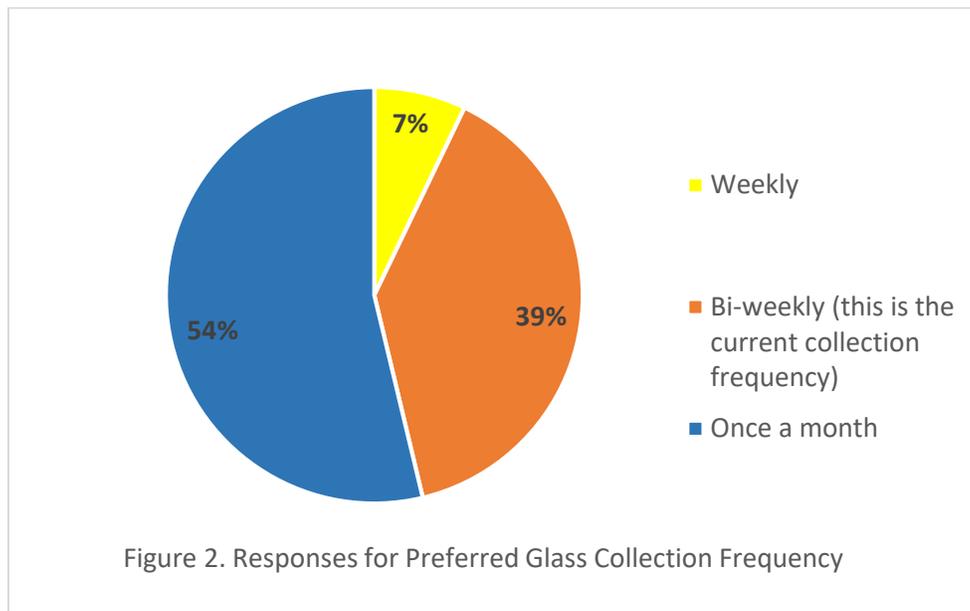
Current Collection Services Used

The City of Chilliwack asked residents which commodities they set out to curbside at least occasionally (e.g. in the past three months). Figure 1 showcases resident responses on which commodities residents put out for collection. The majority of the residents use all four collection services with mostly garbage, recycling and compostable waste with over 2,000 responses, while glass was just slightly below.



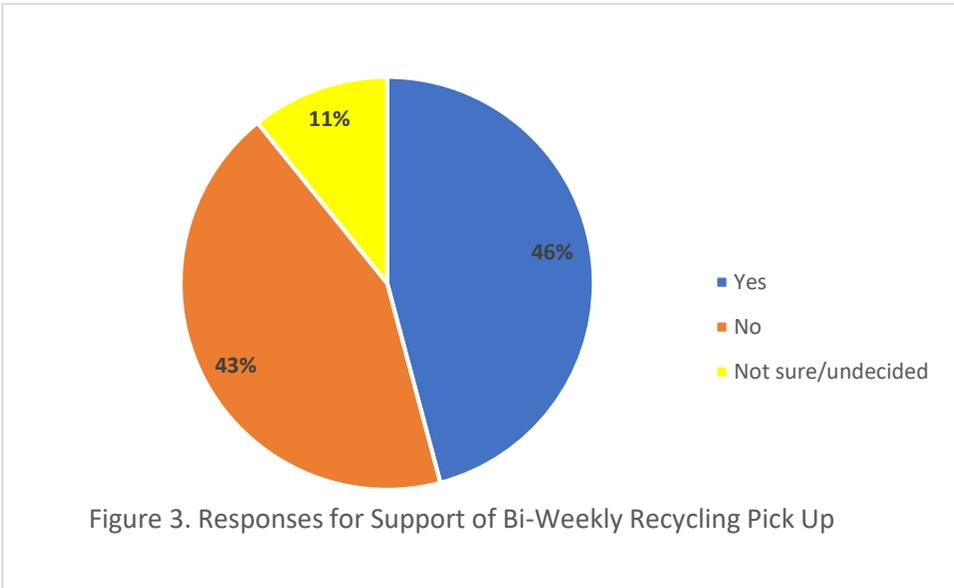
Glass Collection Frequency

As part of the survey, the City asked residents if they preferred to have their glass materials picked up weekly, bi-weekly or once a month. Figure 2 displays more than half (54%) of residents who participated in the survey are in favor of glass collection once a month while 39% of the residents want to continue with the bi-weekly schedule. Some residents bring their glass materials directly to the local bottle depots when they bring other items for recycling. Additionally, there are residents who don't set out their glass materials for collection every two weeks.



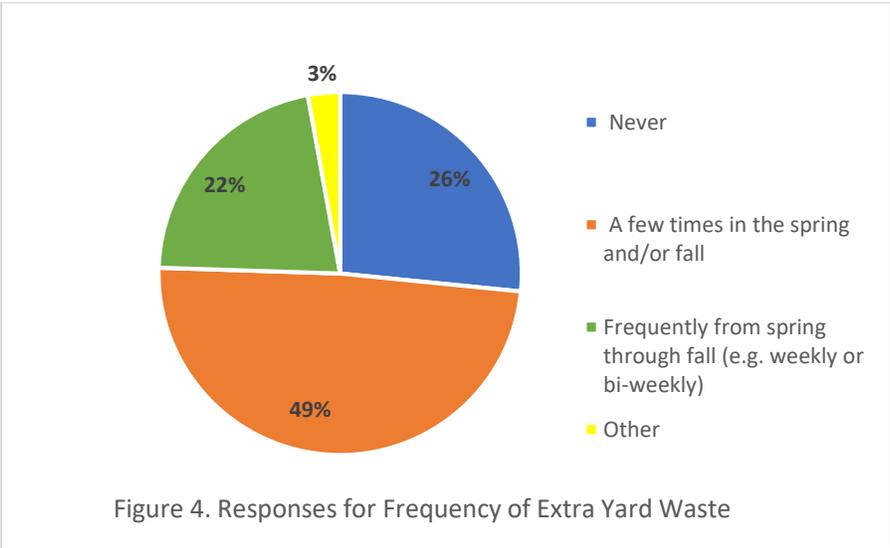
Recycling Collection Frequency

Many municipalities collect recycling on a bi-weekly basis and alternate with garbage collection to further reduce collection costs. Currently, recycling is picked up weekly with an unlimited number of 121L containers allowed every week. The City asked the residents if they are in support of bi-weekly collection if they were offered a larger bin size such as a 240L or 360L cart. Figure 3 showcases the responses of residents who were fairly divided with 46% in favor of bi-weekly collection and 43% that prefer weekly collection. Some of the residents were concerned about the cost to upgrade the container, that they did not have enough storage space for a larger bin, or that they have too much material to hold for two weeks if collection day is missed resulting in them having to store their waste materials for a month.



Extra Yard Waste

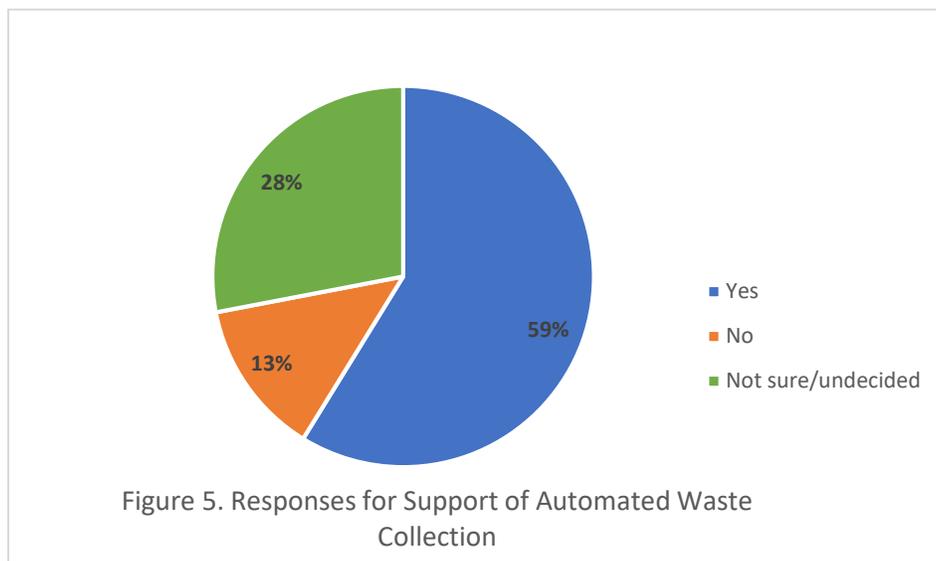
Compostable waste (including yard waste) is currently collected weekly. Residents can put up to 10 extra paper bags of yard waste or bundles of branches at curbside all year round. If residents have more than 10 bags or bundles of yard waste, they are required to purchase Tag-A-Bag stickers for the collection of extra materials. If the City were to switch to a fully automated collection method for all commodities, the City would have to consider how much extra yard waste residents put out to curbside. The City asked residents how often they set out extra compostable materials in addition to their green cart. Figure 4 shows almost half of the residents (49%) put out extra materials a few times during the spring and/or fall, 22% of residents frequently have extra materials from spring through fall, and 26% of residents never put out extra compostable materials.



Collection Method

The current collection method for garbage, recycling, and glass is manual collection, where a labourer must physically pick up the waste bin and tip the contents in the back of a truck. A semi-automated collection system is used for collection of compostable waste in green carts, where a labourer must place the cart on the mechanical arm of the truck and the arm tips the contents in the back of a truck. The City is considering switching from the current manual/semi-automated collection method to an automated collection system. Automated waste collection is a system where trucks have automated arms on the side that mechanically pick up the waste carts and tip the contents in the truck without the need for human or manual intervention.

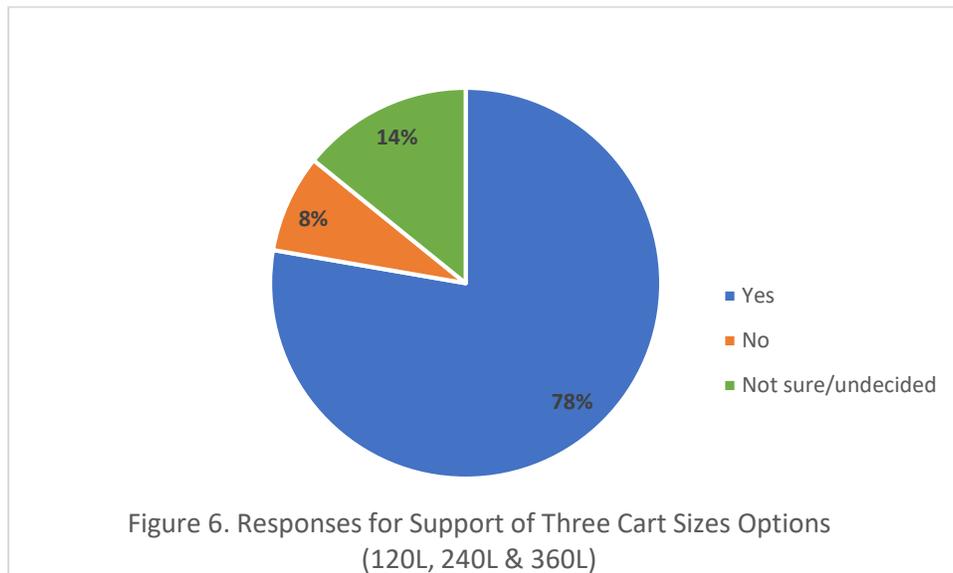
Adopting an automated system would bring many changes to collection services so the City asked residents if they would be in support of the new system. Figure 5 shows the majority (59%) of residents are in favour of the automated system, 13% of residents objected, and 28% of residents were unsure.



In the comments, many of the residents prefer the standardized carts that would improve the curbside aesthetics by presenting a cleaner and uniform appearance, reduce problems related to can/lid placement post-collection, and reduce litter at curbside. Automated collection also reduces the potential for worker injury compared to manual collection. A number of residents identified concerns such as job losses for the waste collection crew and the potential increased collection fee. Furthermore, residents cited issues with having to place the carts in a specific manner at the curbside and are concerned with the possibility of interference with parked vehicles.

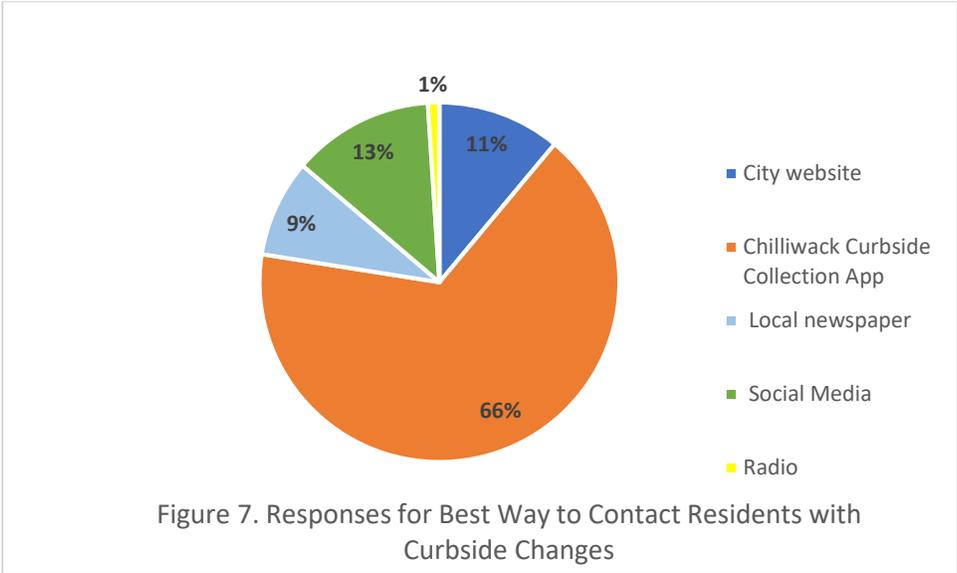
Containers

Currently all residents on the City's Curbside Collection Program are provided with one green cart for compostable waste (combined food waste, food-soiled paper and yard waste), one 121L blue recycling bin, and one 27L grey bin for glass collection. The City does not provide garbage containers as residents can use garbage bags at the curb or use their own containers, provided they are compliant with the City's *Solid Waste Management Bylaw*. The City asked residents whether they would support having three cart size options available of 120L, 240L and 360L for each commodity. Figure 6 shows a majority (78%) of the residents prefer having those cart size options so they can select the size they need for their household. In the comments, some residents voiced concerns with lack of storage space especially if they live in a wildlife area.

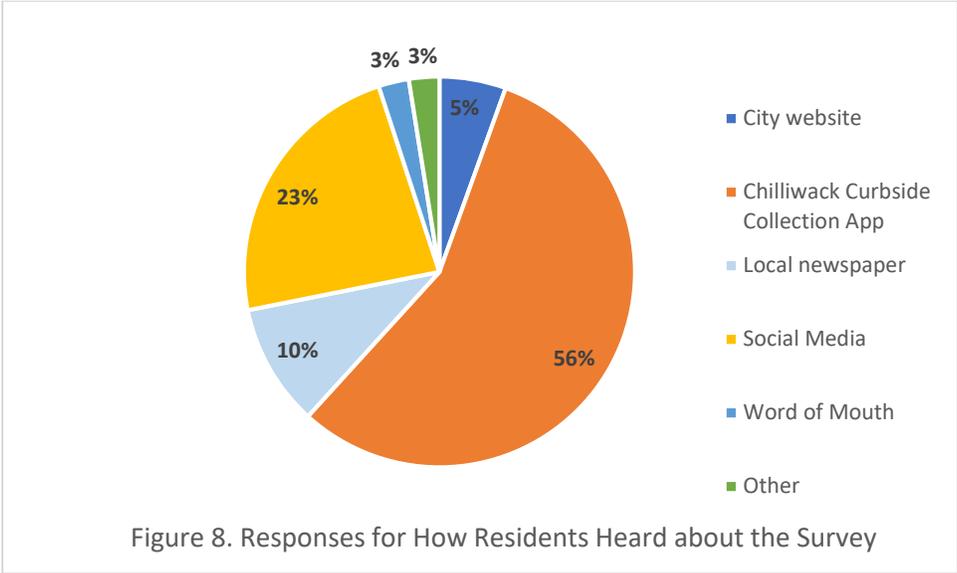


Communication

The City currently provides curbside information updates through the online website, social media, mobile application, and local newspaper to reduce the printing and mailing of content to each household. The City asked for feedback from residents as to what their preference was to communicate and provide curbside program changes and updates. Figure 7 shows that majority (66%) of residents prefer the Curbside Collection App as their main source for information, followed by social media, and City website.



In addition, 56% of residents heard about the survey through the Curbside Collection App and email notifications while 23% received the information through social media as shown in Figure 8. The feedback received from some senior residents was that they prefer to be notified of any changes through the local newspaper as they do not have access to any electronics in order to use any of the online resources.



General Comments Regarding Curbside Collection

The residents of Chilliwack also provided additional feedback regarding the current curbside program and what they would like to see for the new contract. There was strong support for Chilliwack to move towards an automated collection system, similar to what other municipalities currently have in place.

Flexible Plastics and Styrofoam

Some residents suggested flexible plastics and Styrofoam should be allowed in the curbside recycling bin as opposed to bringing it to the Recycling/Bottle Depots. As Chilliwack is part of the Provincial Stewardship Program for packaging and paper products administered by Recycle BC, these materials are required to be separated from other curbside recyclables so that they can be recycled to the highest possible use.

Missed Glass Collection

Glass and garbage are both on a bi-weekly collection schedule. Some residents noted that the glass material is missed while their garbage collection is successful. When the program started four years ago, the curbside contractor had split compartment trucks that allowed the crews to collect both glass and garbage at the same time. Now the contractor uses separate trucks to collect garbage and glass from most residents. Due to this change, there is likely confusion as to when the glass is collected. Residents are advised to leave their Grey Bins out until 5 pm to avoid missed collection.

Garbage Collection Frequency

Residents also proposed that garbage should be picked up weekly due to larger families and families that need to dispose of diapers. Residents noted concerns with odours from diapers if garbage is only collected bi-weekly. Municipalities have bi-weekly garbage collection to reduce costs and encourage diversion from the landfill. Food waste can cause odours and pests, so green carts are prioritized for weekly collection. For families with diapers, it is recommended they double-bag the materials. Residents can place up to two 121L garbage cans out for collection bi-weekly. Each year residents can request four free Tag-A-Tag stickers for their extra garbage or they can purchase more as needed.

Reducing Wildlife Conflicts in Hillside Areas

As of July 2023, residents in hillside areas with wildlife issues must store their curbside containers in a manner that is inaccessible to wildlife and only place materials out after 5 am on the morning of their collection day. Some hillside residents suggested the City provide bear resistant containers, and some hillside residents advocated for their collection to be later in the day. The City is exploring wildlife resistant containers for hillside residents with the new contract. The City's curbside contractor will typically collect all materials from the hillside areas first in the morning to help minimize the time containers are left at the curb and accessible to wildlife.

Plastics in Green Carts

Some residents want to use plastic bags or liners that are marked compostable or biodegradable in their green carts but they are not accepted in the curbside program. The facility that processes the curbside compostable waste does not permit compostable or biodegradable plastic bags. There are different levels of quality for bags marketed as compostable or biodegradable, and some do not break down properly. The City recommends residents use paper or newspaper liners and encourages residents to clean carts to avoid odours and pests.

Containers

The current containers for recycling are also a concern for some residents because they are not sturdy, lids can fly away, and sometimes they can crack. The City is exploring switching to a cart-based collection system for recycling, similar to the green carts. Some residents also mentioned that containers sometimes are not put back where they were originally placed after collection. This too would be resolved with automated collection. In the interim, the City has addressed this issue with the contractor and performs audits on can and lid placement.

Cost of Service

Some seniors raised concerns over the cost of the curbside service since the senior's rate discount was phased out May 1, 2022. There are also residents who want to opt out from the curbside service. The senior's discount was associated with a reduced collection frequency (bi-weekly), but starting in 2017 all residents receive bi-weekly garbage collection. Service reductions and exemptions were reviewed prior to the 2017 program change, but the contractor would still need to provide the same number of trucks and crews to service the community and there would be administrative costs to track the service levels, so there would be no cost savings to pass on to residents. As a result, exemptions are only granted under specific circumstances (e.g. a residence is uninhabitable due to fire) as the City has standardized the curbside program for all single-family dwellings and duplexes to help keep overall program costs down for all residents year-round.

Next Steps

The City of Chilliwack would like to thank all the residents who took the time to complete the survey. All the information gathered will help the City plan the next curbside contract. The City will start the procurement process in the new year by releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to interested solid waste haulers (potential contractors). Potential contractors will then go through a competitive-bid process that allows for the City to assess their submissions based on technical and financial criteria. The feedback from the survey will help inform the RFP and help staff assess which needs each potential contractor can provide. Further, it helps the City to understand what residents on the program want, in order to match the curbside services that can be provided.