

Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities: Demographics and Service Delivery Expectations

September 2008

A Research Initiative of Parks, Forestry and Recreation:
Divisional Coordination and Community Engagement Branch
Access and Diversity Unit,
Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities 2005-2008

Contacts

Lorene Bodiam
Advocate for People with Disabilities
City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation division
416-394-8532 labodiam@toronto.ca

Elvin Dobani
Program Specialist - Research and Analysis
City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation division
416-394-2732 edobani@toronto.ca

ABSTRACT

The "Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities" research project was part of an effort to demonstrate the Parks, Forestry and Recreation division's (PFR) commitment to reaching out to those who are disenfranchised through disability, including developmental/intellectual, physical, cognitive, emotional, mental health and social.⁽¹⁾ Although the PFR division has the challenge of increasing participation by 1000 per cent during a time of fiscal restraint and cost containment, it is responsible, under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), 2001, to reduce barriers and increase universal access. It also has a duty to accommodate individually, provide opportunities for full participation and respect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Newly legislated provincial standards are in development for people with disabilities in the areas of:

- Customer Service (which took effect on January 1, 2008)
- Transportation
- Information and Communication
- The Built Environment and
- Employment.

In light of the need to incorporate these standards into PFR's service delivery, it is recommended that the division develop performance measures to ensure accountability for reducing barriers and increasing accessibility across all sectors.

Data was gathered in 2005 through 14 public focus groups held across Toronto, a survey sent to approximately 6,200 Toronto residents with disabilities, and a separate survey sent out to 56 Toronto disability service agencies. Two divisional staff focus groups were also conducted in 2007. Data was received from 150 public focus group attendees representing thousand of people with disabilities/special needs, 667 resident survey respondents, 51 agencies and 23 divisional staff.

The public focus groups and the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey provided data on: age, gender, residence, disability type and disability severity of survey respondents; previous participation in the City of Toronto's Adapted Programs and Integrated Services; the importance and meaning of recreation; barriers to recreational participation; use of parks, trails and natural areas; program and service improvements; communication of information; recreational respite needs; employment and recruitment issues; Youth Outreach Worker – Disability priorities; cultural and social concerns; and policy improvements.

The Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities provided a disability service agency perspective on: client demographics; primary function of the agency; recreational opportunities available through the agency; provision of multilingual services to clients; and cultural and social concerns.

Table of Contents

Page

ABSTRACT		
SECTION I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Purpose	1
	Background	2
SECTION II	PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND DATA COLLECTION	7
	Method And Procedure	7
	A) Public Focus Groups	7
	B) Surveys	8
	i. Toronto Residents with Disabilities Survey	
	ii. Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities	9
	C) Staff Focus Groups	9
SECTION III	KEY FINDINGS	10
	A) Public Focus Groups and Toronto Residents with Disabilities Survey (1 – 12)	10
	B) Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities (13–17)	13
	C) Staff Focus Groups (18 – 25)	16
SECTION IV	DETAILED RESULTS	19
	A) Public Focus Groups and Toronto Residents with Disabilities Survey	19
	B) Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities	43
	C) Staff Focus Groups	54
SECTION V	RECOMMENDATIONS	55
	A) Over Riding Themes	55
	B) Specific Themes	58
SECTION VI	CONCLUSION	66
SECTION VII	GLOSSARY OF TERMS - FULL DEFINITIONS	68
SECTION VIII	REFERENCES	70
APPENDICIES	1) OVERALL FINDINGS BY AGE GROUP	71
	2) PARKS, FORESTRY AND RECREATION ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS	73
	3) ACCESSIBLE HOUSING UNIT MAP	76
	4) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	76

SECTION I - INTRODUCTION

This study was an innovative collaboration between the City of Toronto and Toronto disability service agencies to understand, from a recreation and leisure perspective, the demographics and service delivery expectations of people with disabilities/special needs. Currently, there is no sub-provincial data of which we are aware regarding the demographics and recreational participation of people with disabilities. This initiative therefore represents the first of its kind in Canada, and speaks to how difficult it is to gather demographic data on people with disabilities/special needs. Although the study was Toronto-based, its findings provide insight into the priorities that are on the minds of Canadians with disabilities. People continue to remind us that the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry and Recreation division (PFR) needs to "just do it". The next step will be to transfer the recommendations into operations.

The issues raised and recommended actions that follow in this report will help draw a blueprint that focuses on delivering high quality and accessible municipal recreation opportunities to Toronto residents with disabilities. In this way, PFR will effectively enhance inclusion, customer safety, participation and satisfaction.

In turn, this should lead to a greater number of people with disabilities pursuing healthy and more active lives at our facilities and programs through improved services. This is consistent with the ACTIVE 2010 Ontario government sport and physical activity strategy, which states that the ultimate benefit of creating more recreational opportunities for people will be:

"A culture of physical activity and sport participation that directly contributes to healthier Ontarians, stronger communities, and reduced health care costs... Its successes will reduce the incidence of chronic diseases associated with inactivity and ultimately ease health care costs."⁽²⁾

PURPOSE

The purpose of the research was to:

1. build a comprehensive demographic profile of Torontonians with disabilities by gathering information on their age, gender, district of residence and disability status
2. identify the most significant barriers that community members face when accessing recreation and leisure opportunities. These barriers were identified by people with disabilities, PFR staff and disability service agencies and organizations.
3. identify how to improve the programs and services that PFR offers to people with disabilities by gathering information on their current level of satisfaction as well as what they would like to see offered.

BACKGROUND

The PFR division currently offers people with disabilities of all ages a spectrum of services within an inclusive recreation model that range from fully integrated to specialized. It is important to note that the term “segregated” is no longer used to describe any of the services that are offered to people with disabilities. In fact, the language used in the disability field is frequently changing and, as providers of recreational opportunities working closely with the public, it is important to use current and consistent language. Policies will also need to be developed and reviewed regularly with attention to changing language and supportive practices.

The ODA defines disability quite generally as any degree of disability, infirmity, malformation or disfiguration that is caused by bodily injury, with a resulting defect or illness (see the glossary of terms section of the full report for full ODA definition). It affects all segments of the population regardless of cultural background, gender, race or religion, age or sexual orientation.

The following are definitions that will be referenced throughout this report. *Adapted programs* are activities that participants with disabilities/special needs choose to join for the mutual benefit of experiencing a specialized recreational interest together. *Integrated services* are offered so that participants with disabilities/special needs may choose to join general programs for the mutual benefit of experiencing recreational interests together with participants who do not have disabilities.

The idea that regular involvement in recreation and active living improves the physiological, physical and psychosocial well-being of people with disabilities has received such overwhelming research support that its validity is indisputable.

According to a recent Alberta Centre for Active Living article, ⁽³⁾ leading an active lifestyle helps people with disabilities to:

- reduce their heart rate and blood pressure
- maintain and enhance healthy bone density, muscles, and joints
- improve their muscle strength and endurance
- increase their flexibility
- reduce the incidence of secondary health conditions like obesity, hypertension, and pressure sores
- gain valuable social experiences
- increase personal confidence in pursuing new physical activities
- use experiences that have supported their participation to challenge negative stereotypes about their disabilities.

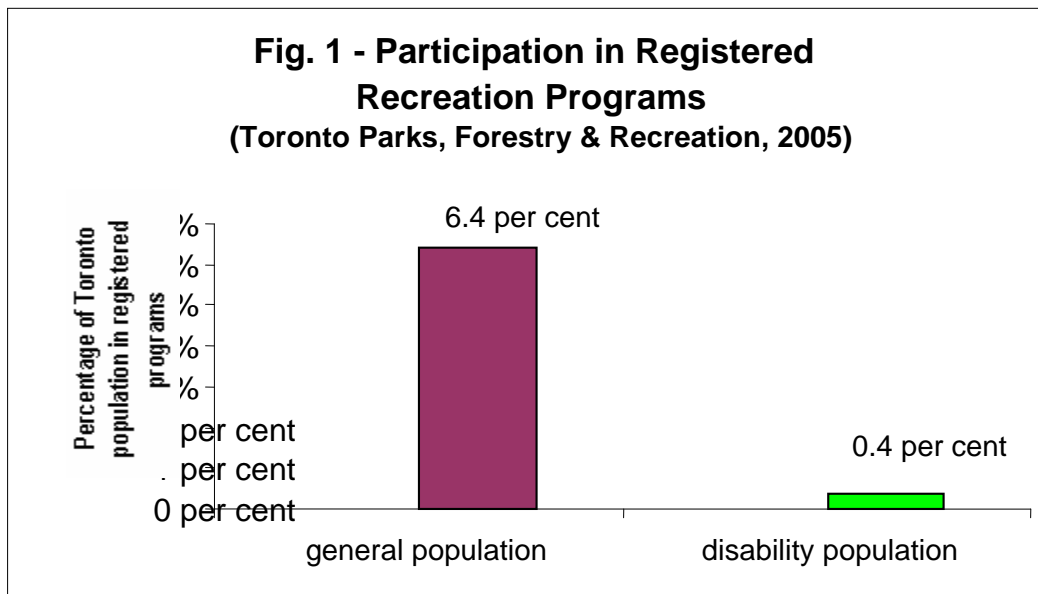
Despite these wide-ranging health benefits, many of the approximately 542,000 Torontonians living with disabilities (24.3 per cent of the City's population) identified by the Canadian Community Health Survey in 2005 face significant barriers to participation in municipal recreation. ⁽⁴⁾

The vast majority of people in our society are able to access various forms of age appropriate recreation throughout their lives via existing service delivery structures. This

same variety of age-appropriate recreational programming is not readily available to people with disabilities.

Furthermore, unlike most people, many Torontonians with disabilities who want to participate in municipal recreation can not travel to an unfamiliar location independently and/or may require assistance in performing the activities involved in a recreational program. They therefore often face the additional barriers of having to make alternative transportation and support arrangements well in advance.

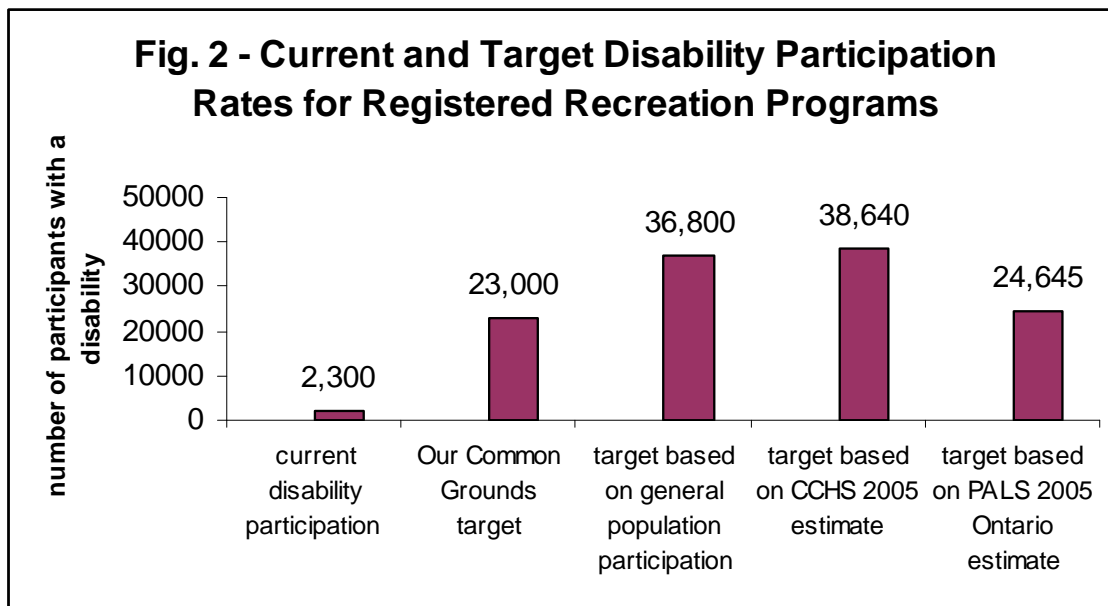
In contrast to the 159,000 (6.4 per cent) of Torontonians without disabilities that participated in registered PFR programs in 2005, participant data from 2005 shows that of those Torontonians who identified themselves as having a disability, only 2,300 (0.4 per cent of the City's disabled population) participated in adapted programs and integrated services (Fig. 1). This means that for the City to reach its *Our Common Grounds* strategic direction of a 1,000 per cent increase in disability participation, the number of participants identifying themselves as having a disability would have to grow from 2,300 to 23,000. As a parallel comparison, if people with disabilities were to participate at the same rate as the general population, their number would have to grow by 16 times (i.e. the disability participation rate of $.4 \times 16 =$ the general population participation rate of 6.4 per cent), from 2,300 to 36,800 participants (i.e. $2,300 \times 16 = 36,800$).



The 1000 per cent increase in disability participation stated in *Our Common Grounds* should be viewed as a minimum target as it would not represent a true reflection of the City's disability demographic. Higher targets would be set by basing the number of people with disabilities taking part in registered recreational programming on either the CCHS 2005 estimate of the percentage of Torontonians with a disability (24.3 per cent) or the 2006 PALS Ontario estimate of the number of Ontarians with a disability (15.5 per cent).

Thus, if the CCHS 2005 estimate were used, a truly reflective or optimal rate would be reached if disability participation increased from 2,300 to 38,640

(24.3 per cent of 159,000). This maximum target represents a 1,680 per cent increase (i.e. $2,300 \times 1680$ per cent = 38,640). If the PALS 2006 Ontario estimate was used, a lower rate would be reached if disability participation increased from 2,300 to 24,645 (15.5 per cent of 159,000). This represents a 1,072 per cent increase (i.e. $2,300 \times 1072$ per cent = 24,645). These participation targets, in relation to the current disability participation level, are illustrated in Fig. 2.



It is also perceived by recreation staff that the majority of current participants in adapted programs and integrated services are represented by a physical disability, a developmental/intellectual disability or autism/spectrum disorder. There is very low representation from people with hearing, visual and mental health disabilities. This may suggest that specific designs and recreational programming for people with hearing, vision and mental health needs may be required in our planning process.

Staff have also indicated isolation issues within Toronto's newcomer population. This is evidenced by the fact that the participation rate for newcomers with disabilities of any age in adapted programs and integrated services is very low. A possible explanation for this is the reported tendency from visible minority communities to keep their children at home. Families may do this in order to avoid being thought of negatively by others, or for fear that if the person with a disability participates in mainstream recreational activities alongside people who grew up in Canada, they may choose to adopt the Canadian philosophy over that of their country of origin.

These observations were supported in a 2004 study conducted by Community Living Toronto and the Roeher Institute, which examined perceptions of disability, culture and service engagement in Toronto's Chinese, Somali and Tamil communities. ⁽⁵⁾ Findings revealed that, on the whole, members of each of these groups were more likely to access medical and rehabilitative services than to access support services such as organized recreation and respite. In addition, there was a strong tendency among Chinese, Somali and Tamil families to keep children and youth with developmental/intellectual disabilities at home. These results suggest that The division

will need to make outreach to newcomer and ethno-racial disability communities a priority as well.

Three reasons were identified at the outset of the study that help explain the low participation in municipal recreation by people with disabilities:

1. it is a challenge to provide accessible, affordable and suitable recreational programs and services for community members within a limited budget and skill set
2. planning is more difficult when there is a lack of information about people with disabilities living in our city, such as what age, gender, cultural and disability groups are represented and in what proportion they reside in each of the four service districts of the city
3. partnerships with disability service agencies and ethno-cultural organizations need to be strengthened in order to effectively reach the gaps in our target groups (i.e. people with hearing loss, vision loss, mental health disabilities and with members of newcomer and ethno-racial disability communities).

Statistics Canada has made two recent attempts to gather data on the demographic characteristics of Canadians with disabilities.

The Participation and Activity Limitations Survey (PALS), conducted in 2006, found that approximately 1.85 million or 15.5 per cent of Ontarians voluntarily reported having a disability. This represents a 2.8 per cent increase over the number of Ontarians reporting disability in the PALS 2001 survey. ⁽⁶⁾ This increase in the provincial disability rate is due to a number of factors, including:

- a general aging of the population
- changes in how respondents perceive their activity limitations
- a greater willingness among respondents to report their limitations, which may be due to increased social acceptance of reporting disability. ⁽⁷⁾

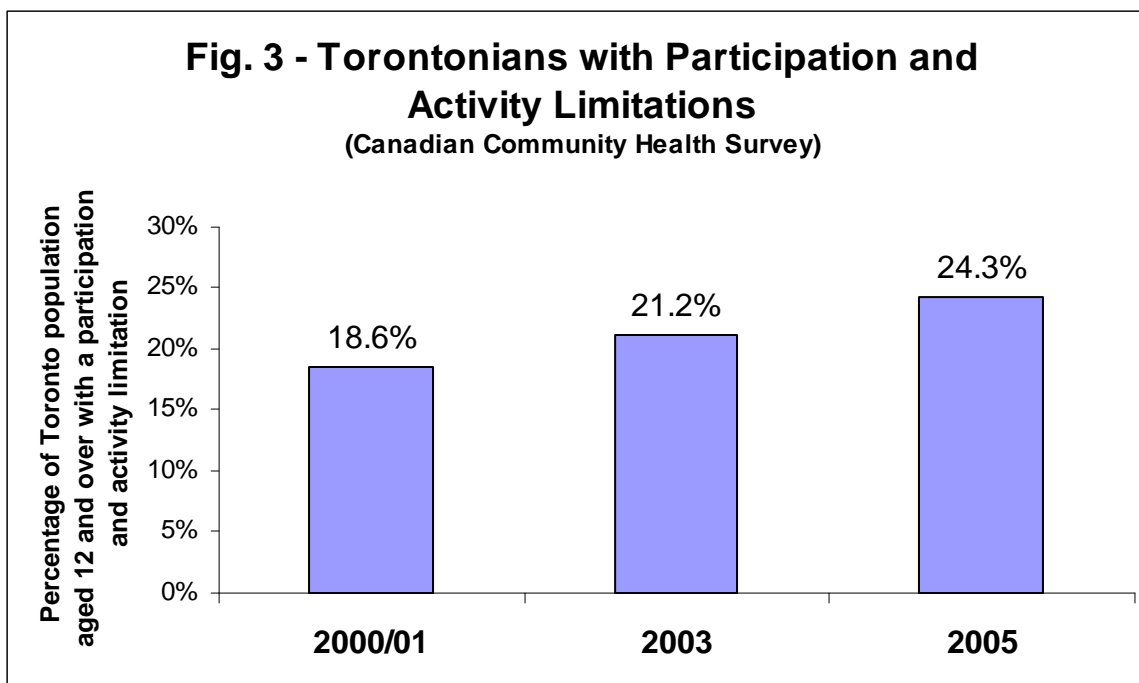
Although PALS figures are often cited in the disability literature, there are some difficulties with generalizing them to Toronto.

1. It is not mandatory for people to provide disability information on Statistics Canada census surveys, from which the PALS sample was drawn. Many people may choose not to disclose this information due to their desire to maintain privacy.
2. Many people with aging and debilitating conditions such as arthritis do not consider themselves to have a disability, and therefore would not self-identify.
3. Although Toronto makes up approximately 20 per cent of Ontario's population, there were not enough participants in PALS to allow for a sub-provincial (city by city) analysis. This leaves open the possibility that the PALS Ontario data may have missed many people. Therefore, it may not accurately reflect the disability demographic, recreational participation and unique concerns experienced by people with disabilities who live in the province's largest city.
4. The figures reported in the PALS study are probably low given the continuing shift towards a community-based approach to serving people with disabilities, as well as the fact that de-institutionalization is expected to be complete by mid 2008. In addition, Toronto's seniors' population is projected to increase by 22 per cent by 2021. This means that, by 2021, there will be approximately 412,000 older adults

65 and over living in Toronto.⁽⁸⁾ Since the prevalence of disability increases with age, this trend towards an aging population will bring about an increase in the number of people with disabilities.

5. There is very little data on what community members expect with regards to the delivery of municipal recreation programs and the types of services that would encourage greater participation of people with disabilities living in Toronto.

Statistics Canada has also gathered information on the demographic characteristics of Canadians with disabilities through the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), which was conducted in 2000/01, 2003 and 2005 (Fig. 3). In 2005, 24.3 per cent of Torontonians aged 12 and over reported being limited in selected activities (home, school, work and other) because of a physical condition, mental condition, or health problem which had lasted or was expected to last six months or longer. This percentage is based on a total Toronto population of 2,234,412, and is probably low given the fact that PFR programs for people with disabilities begin at preschool age.



The CCHS data is more applicable to Toronto due to the fact that:

1. the results are based on a representative sample of 3,400 people who lived in Toronto (2005 cycle)
2. since the questions asked were health-related, it included people with aging and debilitating conditions who might not have self-identified in PALS
3. it supports anecdotal evidence that disability is on the rise in Toronto, in part due to the growing number of older adults. Through three survey cycles, CCHS has tracked an increase in the percentage of people with participation and activity limitations in Toronto from 18.6 per cent in 2000-01, to 21.2 per cent in 2003, to 24.3 per cent in 2005.

SECTION II – PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND DATA COLLECTION

In conducting this study, we wanted to know:

- “who in our community has a disability?”
- “what specifically can we do to improve the delivery of PFR programs and services in order to reach our goal of a 1,000 per cent increase in participation rates?”

In collecting this data, our intention was to gain an understanding of relevant issues and concerns regarding Toronto’s municipal recreation services, and to ensure that any service changes that are made truly reflect the priorities of people with disabilities living in the city, their families and the agencies that serve them.

The data will also be used to identify gaps, avoid duplication of services and to increase public awareness about the recreational opportunities available in the community.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Data was gathered in 2005 through:

A) PUBLIC FOCUS GROUPS

Fourteen public focus groups specifically for the disability community **that** were held across the city in the Fall of 2005 within disability service agencies and in divisional facilities.

These sessions were aimed at gaining the input of community members on PFR programs and services offered to people with disabilities.

A total of 150 people participated in the focus groups, including 38 employees of various disability service agencies who collectively serve thousands of clients.

Public focus group participants were recruited through:

- disability service agencies
- a contact list of existing PFR participants with disabilities
- public inquiries
- limited local media coverage
- word of mouth.

Participants were divided into three age groups: children, youth and adults/older adults. Parents represented their children with disabilities and caregivers were present to represent different age groups and disabilities. The questions asked of participants covered the topics of:

- creating a more welcoming environment
- accessibility
- program and service interests
- program and service improvements
- employment and recruitment
- Youth Outreach Worker – Disability priorities
- increasing inclusion.

The following six accommodations were offered at each of the 14 sessions:

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpretive services
- attendant care
- Braille format for all materials
- FM assistive listening devices
- large print format for all materials
- supervised recreation program for participants' children.

The following three accommodations were only offered at specific sessions within the 14 focus groups:

- deaf-blind interveners
- first language interpreters (Spanish, Somalian, Tamil, Urdu, Cantonese, Mandarin and Turkish)
- real-time captioning services.

An instructional guide entitled Recommendations for Performing Public Consultations for People with Disabilities was developed as a result of conducting these focus groups.⁽⁹⁾

B) SURVEYS

1) Toronto Residents with Disabilities Survey:

This survey was sent out to approximately 6,000 Torontonians by 27 disability service agencies who distributed it to their Toronto clientele as part of a self-addressed return envelope mail-out in August 2005.⁽¹⁰⁾ The 27 out of 200 agencies that distributed this survey may appear to represent a low number. There would have been an even higher return, except that some of these agencies did not have the administrative support required to participate in a large survey mail-out. In addition, Right to Privacy legislation prevented many agencies from distributing a survey being conducted by an outside organization to their clients.

Another 1,200 surveys were sent out by PFR to participants who were registered in adapted programs and integrated services during the summer of 2005. Out of the 6,200 surveys sent out, a total of 667 responses were received, 633 by mail and 34 online.

The survey was comprised of 24 questions that collected information on: demographics (age group; gender; place of residence; nature, duration and severity of the respondent's disability); participation in City recreation programs and services; use of City parks, trails and natural areas; ways to improve programs, services and facilities; communication channels; the meaning and importance of recreation; willingness to travel to programs; recreational respite; and employment and recruitment.

Using disability service agencies to distribute most of the surveys allowed us to successfully reach and gain input from both users and non-users of the division's programs, services and facilities. However, as these agencies did not provide individual client names due to privacy concerns, a random sample of all Torontonians with a disability could not be developed (i.e. soliciting participants randomly by calling people from a telephone book or other data base).

2) Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities:

This separate survey was sent out to 56 agencies serving Torontonians with disabilities out of an original contact list of 200 Toronto agencies. These 56 organizations were chosen because they were the only ones that indicated that they had the data required to answer all or most of the survey questions. ⁽¹¹⁾ Fifty-one organizations returned the survey – a response rate of 25 per cent of the original contact list and 90 per cent of the agencies who received the survey.

The survey comprised seven questions which probed the organization's primary function and the types of recreational programs, services and supports offered to clients. We also asked how many clients with various types of disabilities their organizations serve in each district of the city and the cultural/social issues most important to users of their recreational services.

It is possible that some double-counting may have occurred through this survey, as individuals with disabilities may be clients of more than one disability service agency. However, given the apparent low representation in current response numbers, this is not likely to inflate these numbers in any way.

C) STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

Two additional focus groups were conducted with recreational staff in 2007 to give staff members an opportunity to respond to the recommendations and share their perspective on the delivery and quality of programs and services to people with disabilities. A total of 23 staff participated and were recruited via a promotional flyer that was e-mailed to all full time recreational staff two weeks prior to the events.

SECTION III – KEY FINDINGS

The findings summarized in this section represent a synthesis of the insight that was gained from the public and staff focus groups, the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey and the Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities.

Please note that although the theme areas sited in the following section are not in priority order, the findings within each area are.

A) PUBLIC FOCUS GROUPS AND TORONTO RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SURVEY (1-12)

1) TORONTO RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- An approximately equal number of males and females participated in the *Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities* consultation process.
- The demand for PFR programs and services for people with disabilities appears to come from:
 - adults between the ages of 25 and 59 (47 per cent)
 - youth between the ages of 13 and 24 (22 per cent)
 - children between the ages of five and 12 (17 per cent)
 - preschoolers between the ages of 0 and five (1 per cent).
- In terms of respondents' district of residence:
 - 29 per cent live in Toronto & East York
 - 26 per cent live in North York
 - 24 per cent live in Etobicoke York
 - 17 per cent live in Scarborough.
- A large proportion of Torontonians with disabilities appear to have a permanent physical or developmental/intellectual disability that is either moderate or severe:
 - physical (21 per cent)
 - developmental/Intellectual (16 per cent)
 - autism/spectrum disorder (25 per cent).

2) PREVIOUS PARTICIPATION IN ADAPTED PROGRAMS AND INTEGRATED SERVICES

- Of the survey respondents who had previously participated in municipal recreation, 23 per cent took part in adapted programs only, 42 per cent took part in integrated services only, and 35 per cent took part in both adapted and integrated recreation opportunities.

3) IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF RECREATION

- An overwhelming majority of survey respondents viewed recreation as being significant in their lives.

- Almost two in five respondents were willing to travel more than 10 km to participate in municipal recreation.

4) BARRIERS TO RECREATIONAL PARTICIPATION

- The four largest barriers to recreational participation identified by respondents are:
 - not being aware of what programs and services are offered to persons with disabilities
 - not knowing who to talk to
 - not being able to afford the cost of participating
 - inadequate one-to-one support available at programs and services.

5) USE OF PARKS, TRAILS AND NATURAL AREAS

- Over half of survey respondents visited a City park, trail or natural area in the past year. This is significantly lower than the park visitation rate in the general population, which is close to full participation.
- Greater satisfaction for current park and trail users with disabilities will come from:
 - improved accessibility
 - improved maintenance
 - increased safety.
- A majority of people who had not visited a City park, trail or natural area indicated that personal reasons (e.g. the severity of their disability and/or a lack of interest) had prevented them from doing so.
- Four key ways of attracting new people to parks, trails and natural areas are:
 - providing better information about outdoor areas
 - increasing physical accessibility
 - providing transportation to these locations and ensuring that all parks/trail locations have specific addresses
 - improving safety.

6) PROGRAM AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- The service delivery expectations that will have the largest impact on increasing disability participation in order of importance are:
 - hiring more staff who are knowledgeable and experienced in working with people with disabilities in community recreation
 - offering more programs that combine life skills training and social opportunities with a recreational component. Examples of this include:
 - learning how to shop for food while enrolled in a cooking class
 - practicing how to read a map while visiting a park or trail
 - having a social time or an opportunity for food after a group swim program.

- expanding the existing summer model of one-to-one support by offering it year-round across the city
- providing ongoing disability awareness training for all staff
- offering more life skills programs at the following times: weekend afternoons, after school and weekday evenings.
- When respondents were asked to rank response options, they told us that disability participation can be improved by:
 - offering a greater number and variety of adapted programs and integrated services
 - providing more uniformity in program and service offerings across the four districts of the city
 - providing children attending summer camps with more than two weeks of one-to-one support.

7) COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION

- Survey respondents prefer PFR to communicate information to them through:
 - regular mail
 - e-mail
 - accessible website.
- Respondents also suggested that general information about adapted programs and integrated services be advertised more widely through additional communication channels such as:
 - agency distribution to clients
 - media
 - advertisements in bus shelters, classrooms and special education schools and agency facilities.

8) DEMAND FOR RECREATIONAL RESPITE

- Of the survey respondents who were looking for recreational respite, a majority required this service for two hours or more.
- The highest demand for recreational respite appears to be on weekends and on weekday evenings.

9) EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT ISSUES

- Three key ways of attracting people with disabilities to apply for job opportunities in the division are to:
 - improve advertising of job vacancies in specific areas where people with disabilities will see them, as well as the promotion of the fact that PFR is an equal opportunity employer
 - partner with agencies to provide job coaching for a limited amount of time at the outset
 - partner with agencies to provide training on the steps involved in the job search process.

10) YOUTH OUTREACH WORKER – DISABILITY PRIORITIES

- The three most important ways in which Youth Outreach Workers – Disability can connect with community members are to:
 - relate personal experience, such as having a disability themselves
 - partner with youth service agencies, schools and places of worship
 - inform youth with disabilities about services, appropriate recreational opportunities and how to contact them via telephone, e-mail and in person.
- The two most important services that Youth Outreach Workers – Disability can offer community members are to:
 - communicate information about the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) (e.g. bus schedules, accessible transit options, etc)
 - refer them to employment training, educational and independent living opportunities in their communities.

11) CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

- The three most important ways of alleviating the social and cultural concerns of Torontonians with disabilities are to:
 - increase the number of family change rooms and accessible washrooms in all recreational facilities
 - offer more female only programs in swimming, general fitness and sports
 - offer registrants the opportunity to choose the gender of their one-to-one support worker when both are available.

12) POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

- On policy, respondents felt that PFR should:
 - simplify the processes of: registering for programs, applying for financing assistance through the division's Welcome Policy and reviewing Welcome Policy decisions
 - include more people with disabilities who are knowledgeable and committed to recreational inclusion on program planning and review committees
 - issue a photo identification card to participants with a disability.

It is important to note that in addition to this feedback, the public made further comments that were heavily supported by staff. Please see the Staff Focus Group section (18-25 on pages 16-19).

B) COMMUNITY AGENCY SURVEY REGARDING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (13-17)

13) AGENCY CLIENT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

- The demand for PFR programs and services for people with disabilities appears to come from:
 - adults between the ages of 25 and 59 (approximately 40 per cent)
 - youth between the ages of 13 and 24 (approximately 20 per cent).
- The types of disabilities that are most frequently represented in the community are:
 - hearing (47 per cent)
 - physical (16 per cent)
 - developmental/intellectual (8 per cent)
 - visual (8 per cent).
- In terms of where clients of disability service agencies live:
 - 29 per cent live in the Etobicoke York district
 - 27 per cent live in the Toronto & East York district
 - 25 per cent live in the Scarborough district
 - 19 per cent live in the North York district.

14) AGENCY'S PRIMARY FUNCTION

- The top three primary functions identified by the 50 disability service organizations that responded to this question were:
 - multi-service agencies
 - health services providers
 - children /youth services.

15) RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE THROUGH AGENCIES

- The three types of recreational opportunities offered most frequently by disability service agencies are:
 - life/social skills
 - indoor/outdoor sports
 - social activities.
- The three types of programs that are offered less frequently by agencies to Torontonians with disabilities are:
 - gardening
 - hobbies
 - travel.
- The three recreational supports most frequently offered by disability service agencies are:
 - training for workers and recreation service providers
 - adapted recreation equipment

- one-to-one support.
- The three recreational supports offered less frequently by disability service agencies are:
 - transportation
 - attendant care services
 - agency referrals to community recreation opportunities.
- The three concerns that were most frequently cited by disability service agencies with regards to recreational opportunities are:
 - a lack of transportation to and from recreational opportunities
 - an inadequate number of opportunities for community consultation about programs and services
 - inadequate disability awareness training for program and service staff.

16) PROVISION OF MULTILINGUAL SERVICES

- Although 69 per cent of agencies surveyed indicated that they have clients who require services in a language other than English, only 57 per cent of agencies are in a position to provide such services.
- The three non-English languages in which services are most commonly required are:
 - Chinese
 - Spanish
 - Tamil.
- The three non-English languages in which disability services through agencies are most commonly available are:
 - Spanish
 - Chinese
 - Italian.

17) CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

- The four cultural and social concerns that were most frequently identified by the 31 organizations that completed this question are:
 - family change rooms and washrooms
 - disability awareness training
 - first language interpreters
 - women-only swim programs.

C) STAFF FOCUS GROUPS (18-25)

The findings summarized in this section represent the insight that was gained from two staff focus groups. These consultations gave divisional staff an opportunity to provide feedback on the report recommendations and share their perspective on the delivery and quality of programs and services. Their feedback was consistent with and overwhelmingly supportive of what we heard from the public and further strengthens the case for the recommendations. In order to show where the public has supported the staff comments, each topic area is divided into two sections.

18) AFFORDABILITY

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Allocate a designated percentage of the operating budget towards an overall Adapted Programs and Integrated Services budget.
- Simplify the Welcome Policy application process by:
 - setting up the renewal process to be in effect for three years, unless the disability is considered temporary
 - encouraging agency representatives to send in completed forms on the client's behalf when necessary (e.g. vision impaired people who are living independently or in cases where English is not spoken) and
 - giving applicants the option of mailing, e-mailing or faxing in their Welcome Policy applications (e.g. for the benefit of the deaf-blind community)
- Setting up a pilot program whereby families can volunteer their time and/or expertise to benefit the division (a monitoring system would need to be established) in exchange for the cost of a program or buying recreation related equipment/clothing from participating local businesses.

Additional Staff Comments

- placing a pre-determined amount or credit on the account of Welcome Policy applicants.

19) WORKING GROUP ON GETTING SERVICES RIGHT

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Establish a Working Group that includes cross representation of PFR City staff and a senior management presence.
- Ensure that this working group has decision-making influence to guide the implementation of the report recommendations.

20) COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Provide recreation staff with
 - sensitivity training
 - an adapted and integrated component to the City's intranet/separate website where they can access information and resources

Additional Staff Comments

- Provide recreation staff with:
 - a training tool which lists disability service agency contacts and the recreational opportunities that are available through them
 - a one-page summary of disability service agency information in multiple languages, which they can distribute to citizens from ethno-cultural communities and
 - a hard copy and a downloadable version of the Adapted Programs and Integrated Services for People with Disabilities information guide.

21) EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Make sure that previous experience working with people with disabilities is one of the qualifications used in the hiring of program staff.
- Partner with disability service agencies, colleges and universities to provide interested staff with opportunities for practical training and leadership in working with people with disabilities.

Additional Staff Comments

- Hire program specific trainers (i.e. aquatics, skating, gymnastics) to assist in the delivery of programs for people with disabilities.
- Make any divisional budget line funding of accommodations for employees with disabilities available to each facility/program and added to the existing budget rather than absorbed from what has already been allocated.

22) RECREATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Simplify the current registration process by making it more person-centered and sensitive to customer needs by:
 - communicating openly with staff about program/participant needs
 - having open house nights prior to program start dates and
 - providing opportunities for participants to visit a program prior to registering to determine it's suitability

Additional Staff Comments

- encouraging customer service representatives to put people with disabilities who could not get into their program of choice on a wait list.

23) RECREATIONAL SUPPORT

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Explore options for obtaining additional funding for one-to-one support workers so that the service can be offered year-round.

- Provide Sign and First Language interpretive services and attendant care at public events, programs and facilities.
- Develop a float staff system to ensure that there is adequate coverage of support staff to cover absences and other unexpected surprises or emergencies.

24) STAFF TRAINING

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Offer and fund more full time disability awareness training, both mandatory and refresher, to all staff in areas such as:
 - communication with the deaf, deafened and hard of hearing community via American Sign Language (ASL)
 - sensitivity awareness and
 - accommodations.

Additional Staff Comments

- specific types of disabilities– and what to expect workshops
- how to make referrals and
- expanding current First Alert requirements and materials
- Have Adapted program and Integrated service staff train recreation staff on an as needed basis. This training effort would be supported by:
 - having an A and I staff member on call to resolve urgent issues, especially during the first few weeks of programs
 - involving experts from within and outside the corporation and
 - recruiting people with disabilities to do the training wherever possible.

25) PROGRAM AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Comments Given by Both Staff and Public

- Increase the number, type, scope and variety of adapted and integrated program offerings for all age groups by providing more:
 - programs geared towards a specific type of disability or special need based on community demand
 - recreation opportunities to underserved communities such as people with hearing difficulty, vision loss, mental health disabilities culturally specific and newcomer groups and
 - camps and alternative summer programs for youth and adults who are over the age of 24.

SECTION IV – DETAILED RESULTS

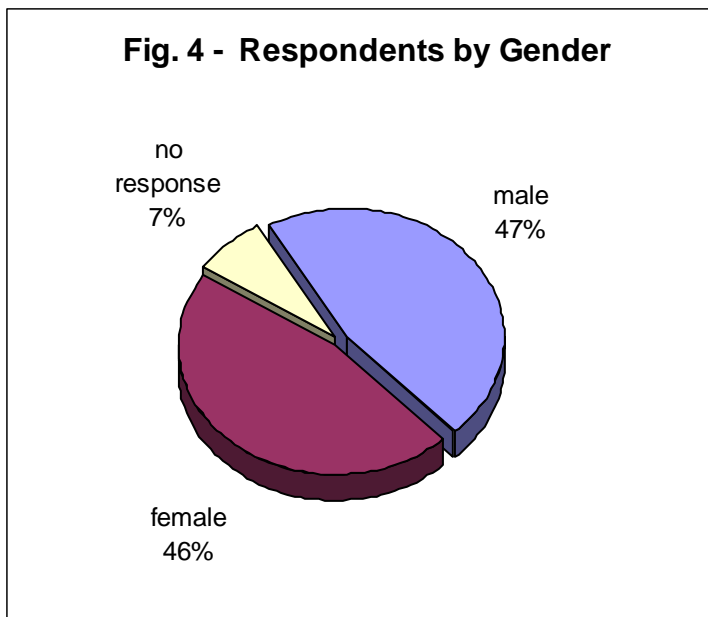
A) PUBLIC FOCUS GROUPS AND TORONTO RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SURVEY (1-12)

The feedback received from focus group participants and Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey respondents is broken down into 12 topic areas.

1) TORONTO RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE (Figs. 4-10)

The 667 respondents to the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey were asked to voluntarily provide demographic information on their gender, age, district of residence and the type and severity of their disability. Such data will be used by PFR to improve planning and development of adapted programs and integrated services. However, the individual sources of information will remain confidential.

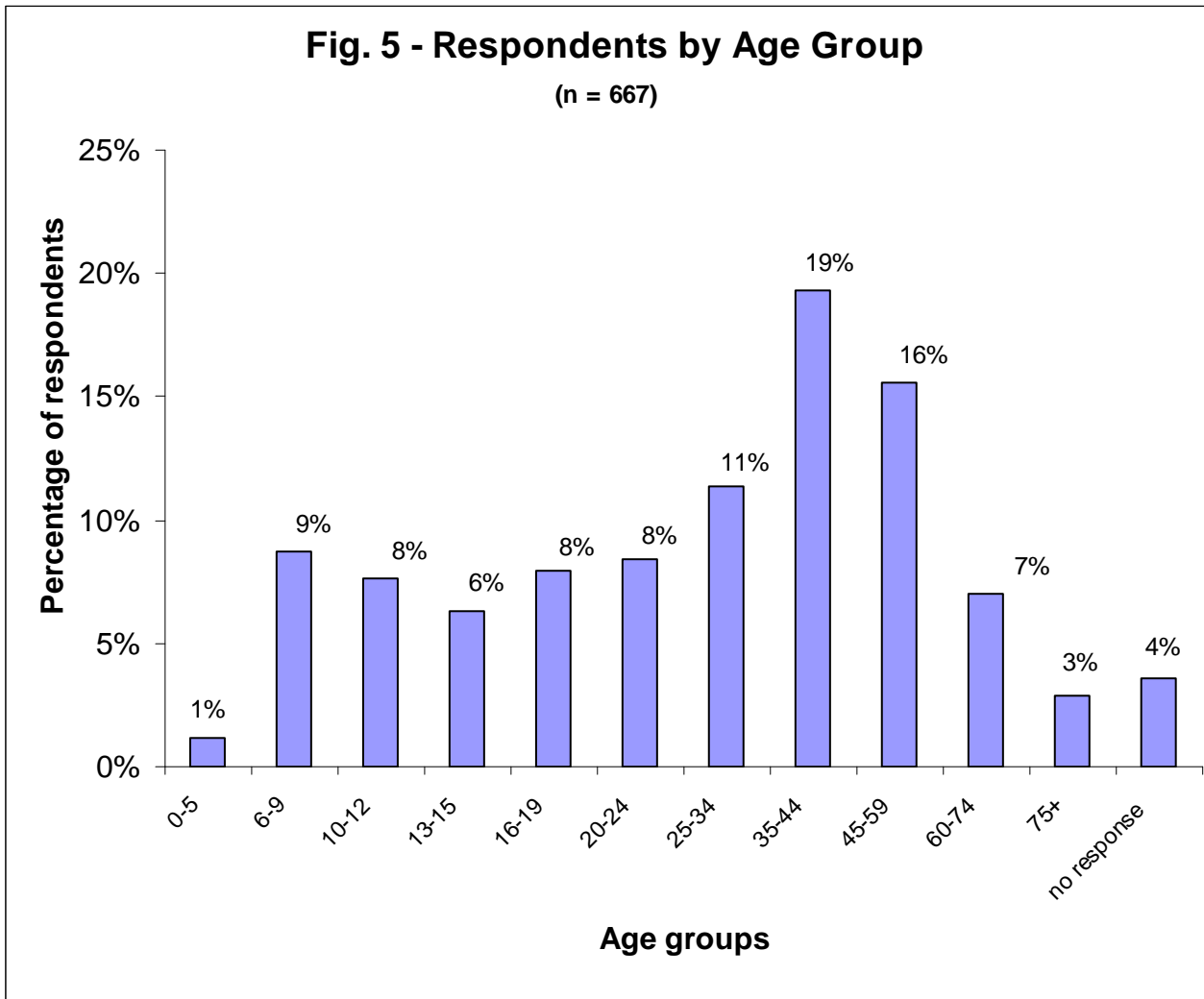
In terms of gender, 47 per cent of respondents identified themselves as male and 46 per cent identified themselves as female (Fig. 4). This suggests that disability is represented by a similar number of males and females in Toronto.



Respondents were placed into one of 11 age categories (Fig. 5):

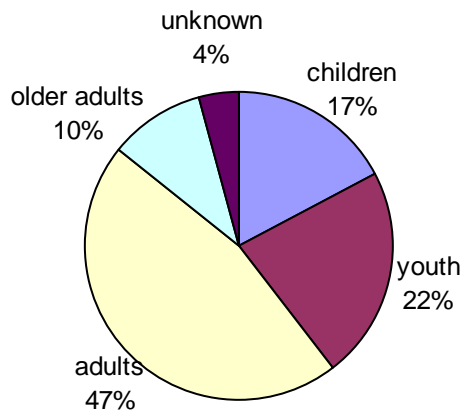
- 0-five = 1 per cent
- six-nine = 9 per cent
- 10-12 = 8 per cent
- 13-15 = 6 per cent
- 16-19 = 8 per cent
- 20-24 = 8 per cent
- 25-34 = 11 per cent
- 35-44 = 19 per cent

- 45-59 = 16 per cent
- 60-74 = 7 per cent
- 75+ = 3 per cent.



Using the age categories used by PFR to register participants in recreation programs (Fig. 6), these numbers show that Toronto's disability community is comprised of approximately one per cent preschoolers (0-five), 17 per cent children (six-12), 22 per cent youth (13-24), 46 per cent adults (25-59) and 10 per cent older adults (60+).

Fig. 6 - Respondents by Parks, Forestry & Recreation's Program Age Categories



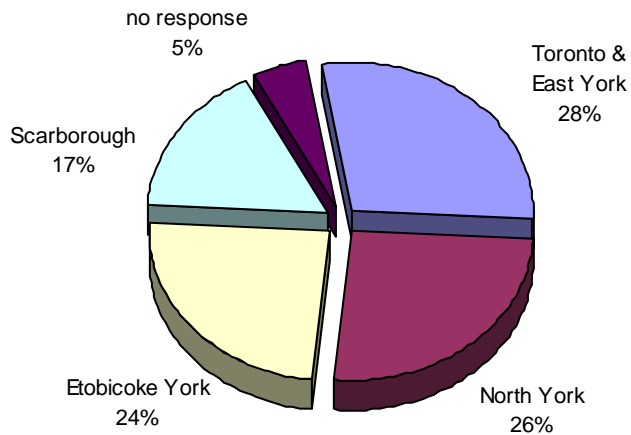
It should be noted that although a large percentage of surveys went out to parents responding on behalf of their children or preschoolers, only 18 per cent came back indicating a need for service improvement. In contrast, although a smaller percentage of surveys went out to adults, 46 per cent were returned indicating a need for change, improvement or increase in service delivery. This demonstrates that parents are somewhat satisfied with the municipal recreation system for children and preschoolers with disabilities and that the division's focus should be on modifying its service delivery model to meet the expectations expressed by youth, adults and older adults with disabilities/special needs.

PFR may find this breakdown helpful to determine the amount of resources allocated to programming for each of these age groups. It may also be useful to help determine the number and types of recreational opportunities that are made available to children, youth, adults and older adults with disabilities. Appendix 1 provides a summary of service improvement priorities broken down by age group.

We asked respondents where they lived, then grouped them according to the City's four service districts (Fig. 7):

- 28 per cent live in the Toronto/East York district
- 26 per cent live in the North York district
- 24 per cent live in the Etobicoke York district
- 17 per cent live in the Scarborough district
- 5 per cent did not respond.

Fig. 7 - Respondents' Residence by Service District

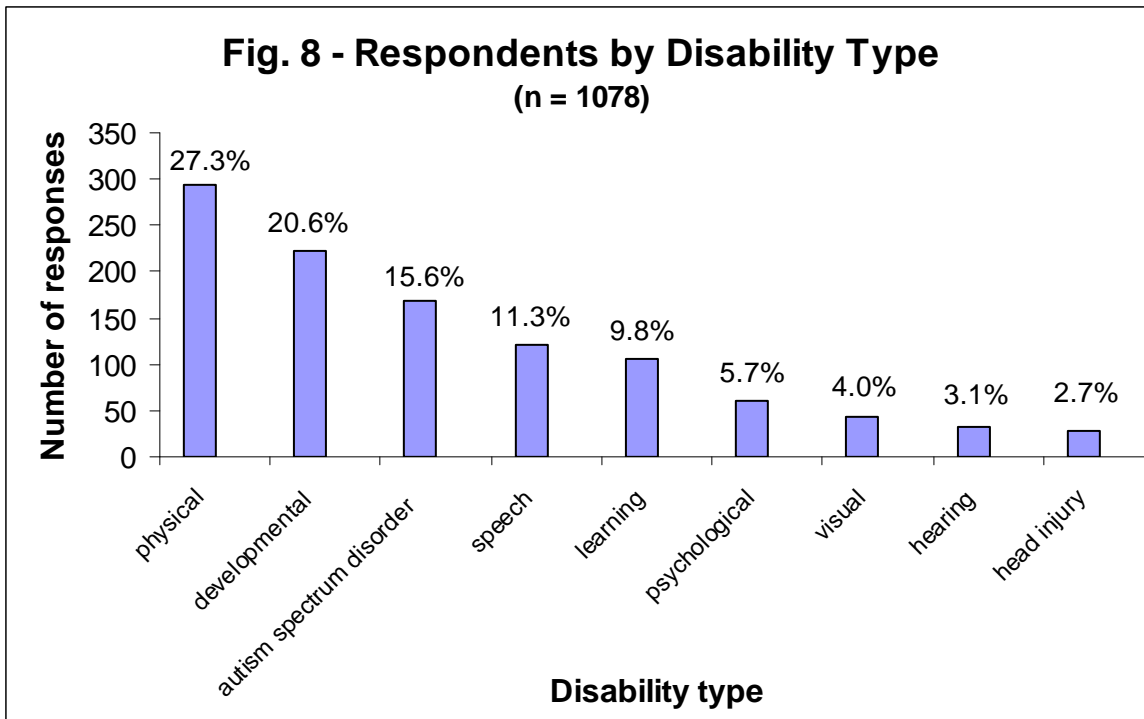


According to this data, the distribution of people with disabilities is very similar across the City's four service districts. This indicates that PFR will need to increase the number, type and variety of adapted programs and integrated services offered in each of the districts. This will reduce the amount of time required for participants to travel to recreational programs, which will have a major impact on increasing participation rates.

As shown in Fig. 8, the three most common types of disabilities represented in the survey sample are:

- physical disabilities (44 per cent)
- developmental/intellectual disabilities (33 per cent)
- autism spectrum disorder (25 per cent).

When asked to describe their condition in more specific terms, the three most common types of disabilities cited by respondents are: Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and polio. Some respondents reported more than one type of disability.



Ninety-two per cent of respondents described their disability as permanent (Fig. 9), while 13 per cent described the severity of their disability as mild, 45 per cent as moderate, 30 per cent as severe and seven per cent as very severe (Fig. 10).

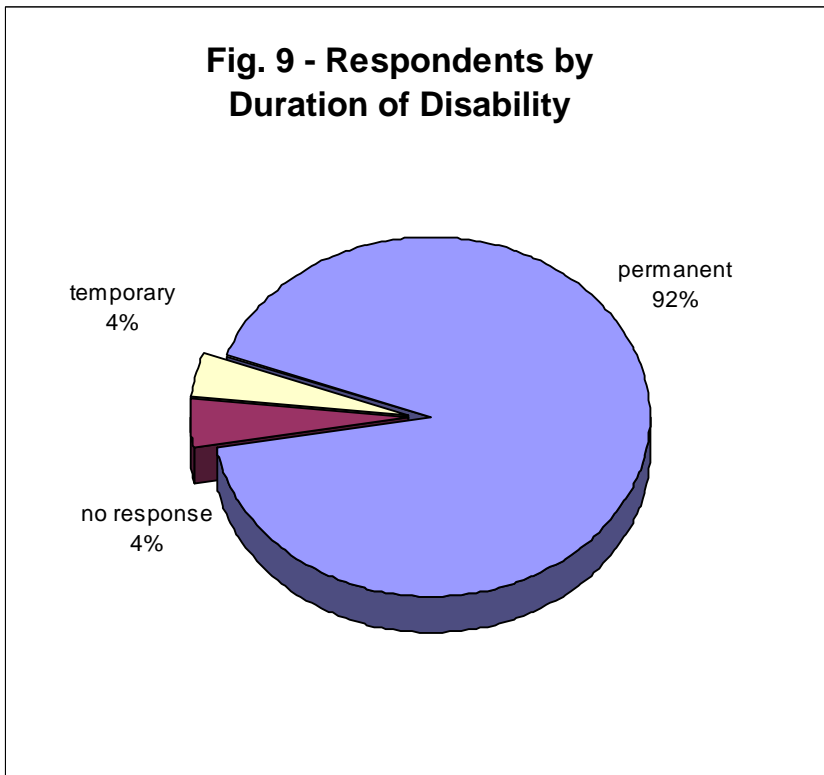
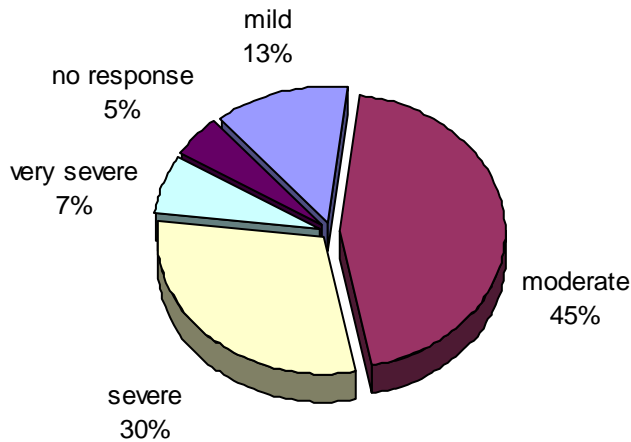


Fig. 10 - Respondents by Severity of Disability



Based on this data, the majority of current and potential PFR participants describe themselves as having a moderate or severe physical or developmental/intellectual disability that is permanent.

One of the main issues presented by people with mobility-related disabilities of all ages is transportation. Even in major urban centres like Toronto, very few families are in a position to drive their child to and from day programs. For example, some families suggested that, as the largest publicly-funded transportation system in the province, the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board should continue to make school buses available to them.

In addition, participants in this research as well as those involved in a 2006 public consultation on the transformation of Ontario's developmental services sector expressed a great deal of frustration about mobility transit systems, including:

- lack of system availability in some areas
- lack of system reliability
- inconsistency in regulations that stipulate an attendant accompany the child
- requirements that do not allow advance scheduling, meaning that parents must book trips each day.⁽¹²⁾

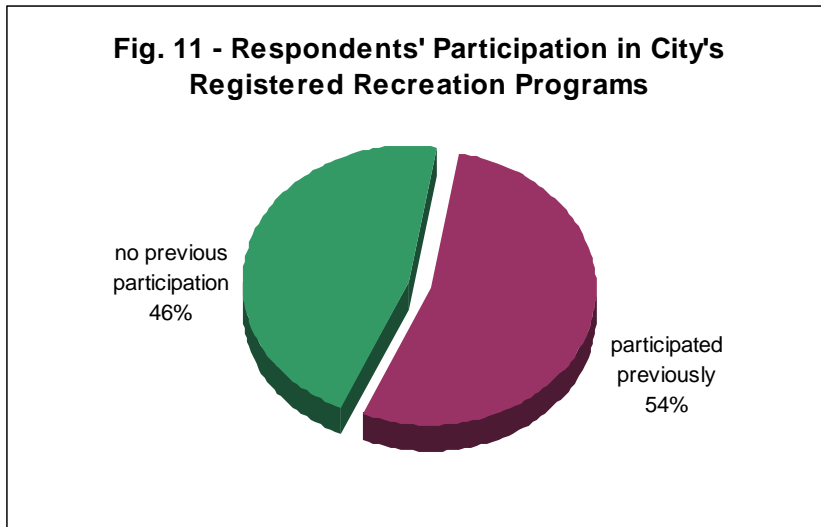
The data suggests that a significant proportion of Torontonians with disabilities have a moderate or severe physical or developmental/intellectual disability that restricts their ability to travel independently.

PFR may therefore need to explore the possibility of helping to provide alternate transportation to adapted programs and integrated services. Respondents suggested that the division may want to consider the feasibility of reimbursing TTC fares for participants. Respondents also suggested arranging a car pooling system whereby people participating in mainstream programs can transport individuals with disabilities

enrolled in recreation opportunities at similar locations and times. Another option would be to arrange pickup and drop-off points on main intersections if possible.

2) PREVIOUS PARTICIPATION IN ADAPTED PROGRAMS AND INTEGRATED SERVICES (Figs. 11-12)

Of the 667 Torontonians with disabilities who responded to the survey, 358 (54 per cent) said they had previously participated in PFR adapted programs and/or integrated services, whereas 307 (46 per cent) had not (Fig. 11).



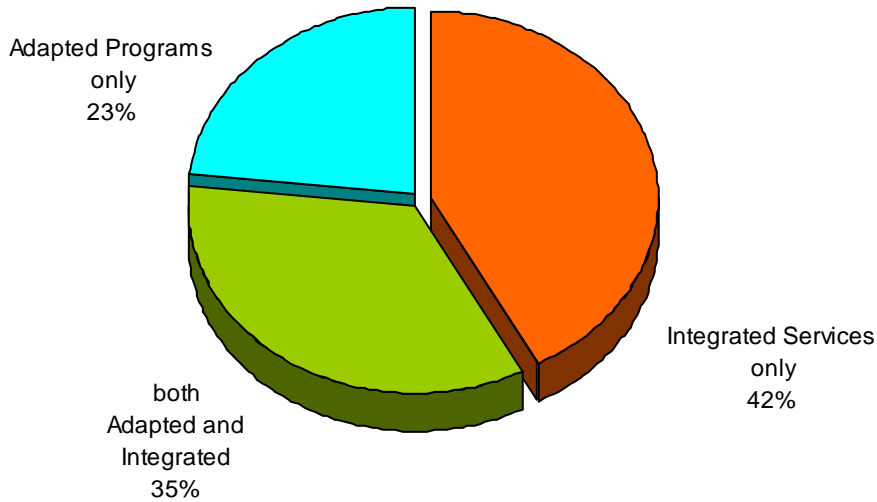
This demonstrates that our decision to distribute the survey through disability service agencies was an effective way of gaining the input of community members who had not yet taken advantage of municipal recreational opportunities that are available to them.

It also points to the importance of PFR partnering with more disability service agencies to improve the distribution of information about municipal programs and services to community members who are unaware of what is available.

In addition, the relatively equal number of participants and non-participants in the sample indicates that our results were not biased towards either of these groups.

Of the 358 previous participants, 23 per cent took part in adapted programs only, 42 per cent took part in integrated services only and 35 per cent partook in both adapted and integrated recreation opportunities (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12 - Respondents' Participation by Program Type



Although the survey may have been completed by slightly more integrated than adapted program participants, there is clearly a demand for both types of inclusive opportunities. Future resources should therefore be allocated to maintaining adapted programs and integrated services and to expanding them wherever possible, with a focus on responding to the findings and recommendations of this report.

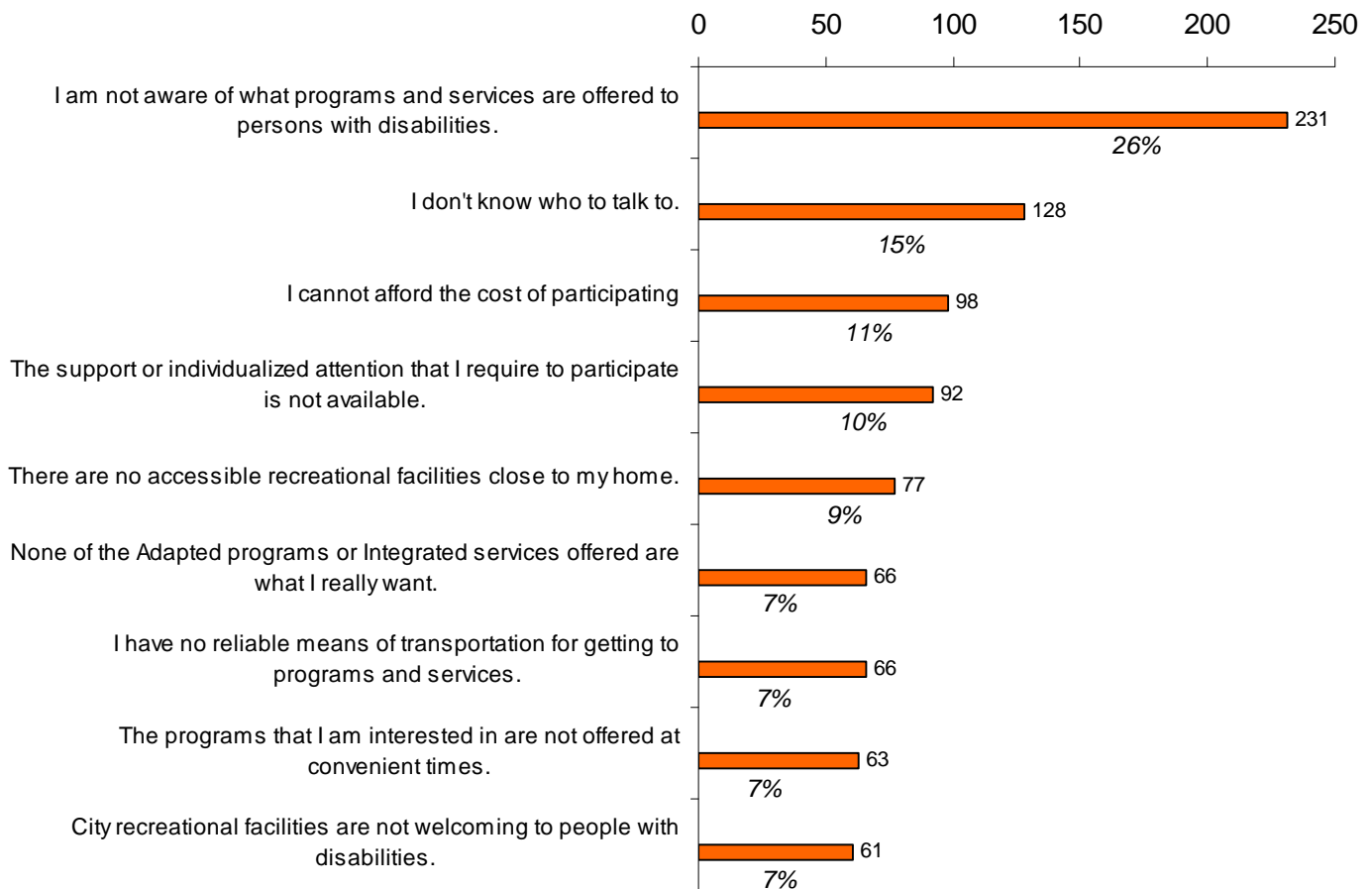
3) BARRIERS TO RECREATIONAL PARTICIPATION (Fig. 13)

The four barriers to participation most frequently cited by people who had not yet taken part in municipal recreation opportunities are:

- not being aware of what programs and services are offered to persons with disabilities (26 per cent)
- not knowing who to talk to (15 per cent)
- not being able to afford the cost of participating (11 per cent)
- inadequate one-to-one support available at programs and services (10 per cent).

Fig. 13 - Respondents' Reasons for Non-Participation

(n = 882)



Number and percentage of responses

This feedback was based on a total of 882 responses given by 307 individuals. Taken together, it suggests that PFR will need to devote more attention and resources to: promoting both the programs and services that it offers to Torontonians with disabilities; promoting the Welcome Policy; permitting alternative methods of fee payment; hiring more support staff; and providing more affordable recreation to people with disabilities.

In summary, the data demonstrates that a significant number of respondents requested:

- better communication and profile (41 per cent)
 - not being aware of programs and services (26 per cent)
 - not knowing who to talk to (15 per cent)
- greater affordability (11 per cent)
- more one-to-one support (10 per cent).

Improving these aspects of service delivery will therefore have a major impact on increasing the number of Torontonians with disabilities participating in registered programs and services.

The need for more deaf-blind interveners has also been identified in other research as a barrier to participation. In April of 2003, the Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind

(CNSDB) and the Canadian Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association (CDBRA) began conducting a study aimed at determining the service needs of Canadians who are deaf-blind. ⁽¹³⁾ Without exception, deaf-blind individuals, their families and the agencies who serve them identified the lack of Interveners as the largest obstacle to accessing recreational and other community services. Participants could only obtain Intervention services for a few hours per week without cost and many individuals talked of long waiting lists for services. Deaf-blind people who lived in group residences or assisted housing had greater access to Intervention services than those who lived independently.

Participants described the need to rely on friends and relatives for Intervention services when paid or volunteer Interveners were unavailable. Some were afraid they would wear their relationships with friends and family too thin as a result of needing to depend upon them. One person said: "Our needs are endless, you feel you're constantly asking someone for help and you wonder when they'll start distancing themselves from you and your problems".

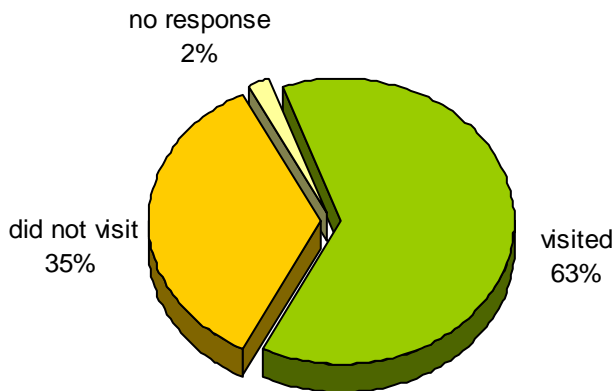
A few participants found it more difficult to undertake home-based activities such as cooking or reading because Interveners were not always available to assist with these pursuits. Respondents described the difficulties becoming involved in community activities such as taking walks, going shopping or to the bank, doing volunteer work, attending recreation programs or social events without the assistance of Interveners. According to one person: "When I have an Intervener ... I can go grocery shopping. I get along better and faster. I know what is going on around me. I get information and I feel engaged in the world. Having an Intervener makes me feel fresh, healthy and stimulated."

As is evident from the above two quotes, having an intervener is critical to a deaf-blind person's independence, self-esteem and community engagement. In order for PFR to effectively increase participation by people who are deaf-blind, it will need to partner with agencies such as CNIB and the Canadian Hearing Society to ensure that intervener services are more available. PFR will also need to promote this increased accessibility directly to the deaf-blind community.

4) USE OF PARKS, TRAILS AND NATURAL AREAS (Fig. 14)

A majority of respondents (63 per cent) have visited a city park, trail and/or natural area (e.g., ravine) in the past 12 months. Although this represents more than half, it is well below the 92 per cent park visitation rate for the general public reported in a Fall 2005 survey conducted by Environics Research Group for PFR.

Fig. 14 - Respondents' Visits to City Parks, Trails or Natural Areas over Past Year



The three main areas that current park and trail users want the division to improve upon are:

1. increase the accessibility of parks, playgrounds and trails. For playgrounds, this includes both physical accessibility and accessible equipment.
2. improve park maintenance
3. improve park safety.

On the issue of accessibility, park and trail users told us to:

- redesign pathways in parks and along trails to be fully accessible in terms of their slope, terrain and materials used to construct them. This process should be guided by universal design principles.
- place more wheelchair accessible washrooms in parks and along trails
- provide more accessible playground equipment in accordance with universal design principles. Some specific needs that were identified include: raised sandboxes, chair swings and/or net swings for children who use wheelchairs.
- indicate on trail maps all available wheelchair accessible trails and washrooms
- provide tactile maps (comprised of raised dots) of parks, trails and natural areas for visitors with vision impairments
- improve access from parking lots to parks and/or trails
- increase the accessibility of golf courses in Toronto so that people with disabilities will not have to travel outside the city to play golf
- put addresses on all parks so that TTC Wheel-Trans can transport people there. It is important to note that we have had positive feedback from park visitors regarding how much more accessible some of our parks have become due to the street address signage that has been placed in front of them by the City's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) division
- arrange for drop-off points to be closer to facilities and/or shorten distances from drop-off points to facilities in parks.

In addition, concern was expressed over the lack of accessibility inside some PFR facilities. This was demonstrated in a letter written by a mother of a child in a wheelchair, who recounts her experience taking her son to a friend's birthday party in an arena. She was excited by the fact that the parking lot was accessible. However, after learning that the party room was on the second floor and that the arena had no elevator, she writes: "I felt bad for my son (who is age 12, five and a half feet tall and 170 pounds) having to transfer out of his chair on to the steps and haul himself up two flights of stairs with his arms. It was demeaning for him as people stared and no one offered to help." She closes by stating: "This is disgusting the way Johnathan was treated and the peril he and his siblings and the other children were put in... This lack of accessibility reduces the integration of people with disabilities everywhere, reduces their joy and participation in everyday activities." This story illustrates how important it will be to make divisional facilities more accessible.

Maintenance-related suggestions from park users included:

- provide cleaner, larger and better-stocked washrooms in parks and along trails that are placed closer together and are open year-round
- increase the number of accessible benches, picnic areas, public barbecues and operational water fountains
- undertake more frequent clean-up of garbage in parks, with existing garbage cans and recycling bins being emptied more often in busy areas
- enforce anti-littering bylaws more strictly, while providing more garbage cans and recycling bins
- improve the tending of grass and gardens.

Torontonians with disabilities who regularly use city parks, trails and natural areas would like the division to ensure their safety by conducting more frequent safety audits of these areas. They indicated that safety could be improved by:

- installing more lighting, safety signs (e.g. clearer markings near stair edges) and video cameras
- having more security officers and night patrols on duty
- installing more audible traffic lights located at intersections around major city parks
- reducing the amount of vehicular traffic in parks
- increasing enforcement of laws pertaining to off-leash dogs.

The three most significant barriers identified by non-users of city parks, trails and natural areas are:

1. personal reasons (i.e. prevented from participating due to the severity of their condition, a lack of interest or a lack of time)
2. inadequate communication and promotion
3. a lack of universal accessibility.

Some non-users of our parks, trails and natural areas said they will likely not become users. Over 30 per cent of respondents said that their condition prevents them from visiting parks and trails, they were not interested in visiting these areas, or they had no time to go to these areas. The division may be able to reduce this number by modifying its promotional materials to include photos of, or inspirational quotes from, people with severe disabilities who have benefited from participating in activities in parks and along

trails. Doing this may inspire readers to realize that city parks, trails and natural areas have much to offer them and that they are for everyone.

With regards to communication and promotion, respondents would like to see improved general information about parks, trails and natural areas made available via maps and brochures regarding location, accessibility features and recreational opportunities.

On universal accessibility, non-users suggested that we:

- increase wheelchair accessibility by constructing smoother and wider pathways in parks and along trails. This should also be done for pathways leading from boardwalks to beaches.
- add more trail maps and accessible parking spots close to park and trail entrances
- make it possible for the severely disabled to experience city parks and trails by having City support staff to accompany them (by request) at certain times of the day.

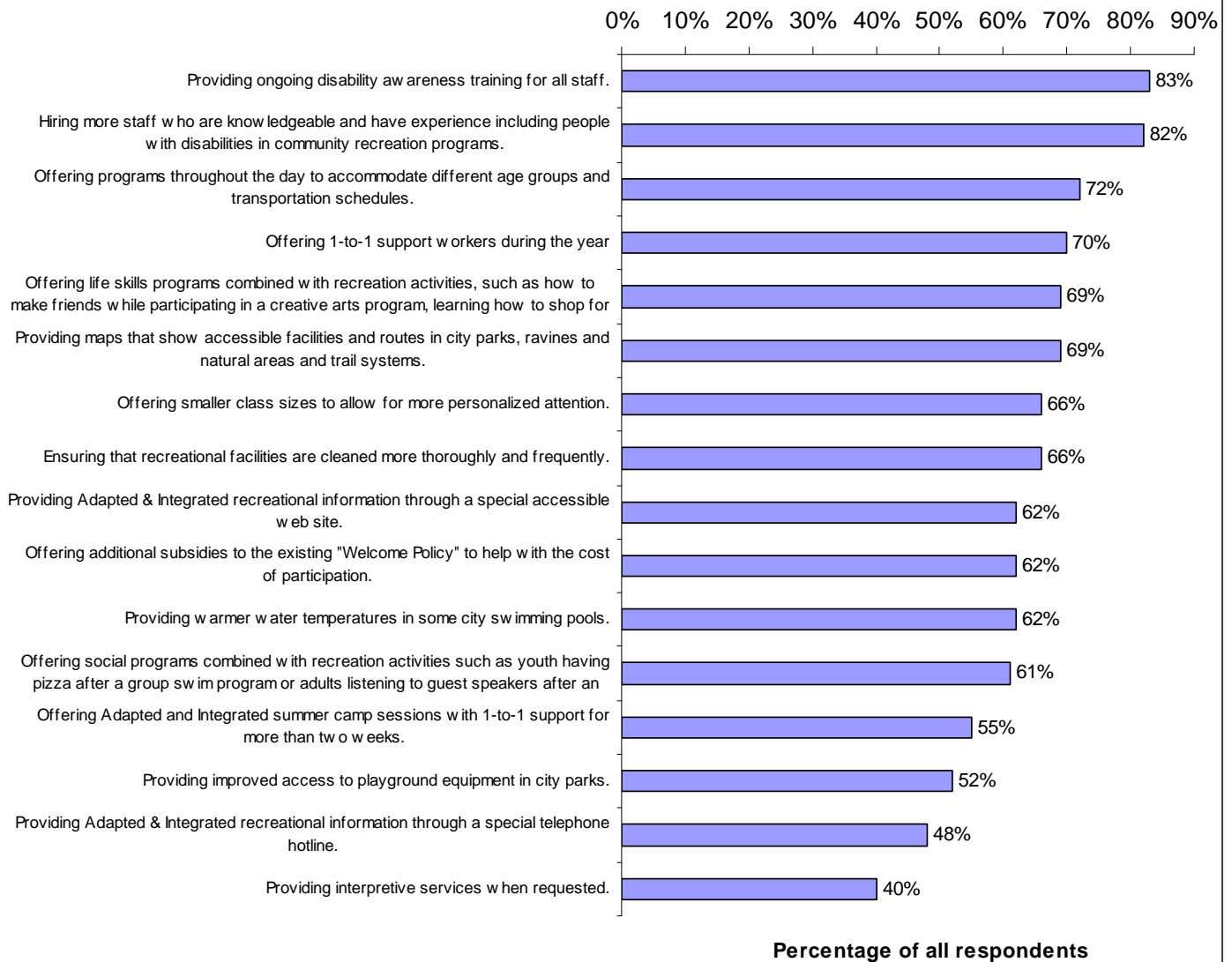
Many participants who had not visited a park, trail or natural area in the past 12 months indicated that a lack of transportation had prevented them from doing so, and suggested that the division consider providing transportation to parks, trails and natural areas.

5) PROGRAM AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS (Figs. 15-16)

As indicated in Fig. 15, the three service improvement priorities that Toronto residents with disabilities identified as having the greatest impact on their decision to participate in municipal recreation opportunities are:

- providing ongoing disability awareness training for all staff (83 per cent)
- hiring more staff who are knowledgeable and have experience including people with disabilities in community recreation programs (82 per cent)
- offering programs throughout the day on both weekdays and weekends to accommodate different age groups and transportation schedules (72 per cent).

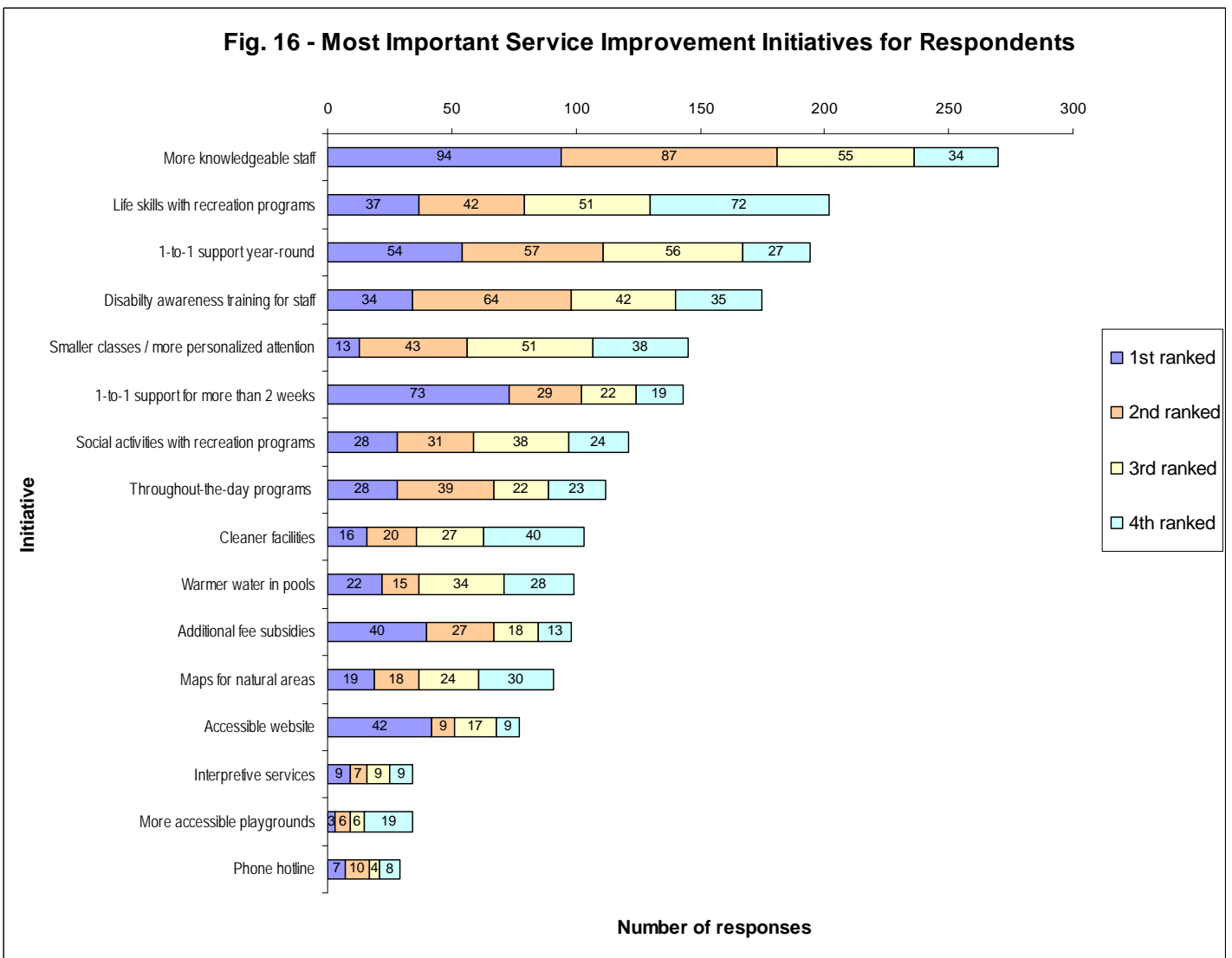
Fig. 15 - Program and Service Improvements Suggested by Respondents



When respondents were asked to rank a list of service delivery expectations in order of importance, the top three priorities are (Fig. 16):

- hire more staff who are knowledgeable and have experience including people with disabilities in community recreation programs
- offer life skills programs combined with recreation opportunities, such as how to make friends while participating in a creative arts program, learning how to shop for food while enrolled in a cooking class and practicing how to read a map while visiting a park/trail
- offer one-to-one support year-round.

Fig. 16 - Most Important Service Improvement Initiatives for Respondents



Numerous data analysis procedures (i.e. summing up the frequency of rankings for each response and dividing by four, and a weighting system for the responses based on the total number of answers in each part of the question) were used to calculate the overall rankings for each of the responses related to program and service improvements. The ordering was identical regardless of the procedure being used.

A real-life example of the need for more knowledgeable staff and more thorough disability awareness training for staff is demonstrated in a letter written by a mother who had enrolled her neurologically challenged child in a Kindergym program. On the first day, the program leader informed the mother that she would need to contact the Adapted Programs and Integrated Services district staff, as the program leader was unaware of how to integrate her son into the program. Several weeks went by with no attention to the matter. The staff were continually unprepared for the mother and her son and made no attempt to make them feel included. In fact, each time they arrived at the door, one of the staff took a mat from the back room and placed it in the quietest corner of the room, as far from the activities as possible. In her words, "Clearly, there are many problems within the system as it is not an integrated program, as the marketing materials suggest. The wording in your brochure is wonderful but, in reality, our experience with this particular program is that integrated means that we can sign up and pay the fee like everyone else but that's where the integrated part ends." This story

shows that a co-ordinated effort on staff training and special needs staff support for the ongoing delivery of programs will need to be an important priority for the division.

In terms of program and service offerings, *Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities* participants would like to see more uniformity in what is available across the City's four service districts. This would make it possible for community members to find suitable recreational opportunities that are closer to their home. Their top six priorities were:

- more weekend-day, after-school and evening programs that focus on the development of social and life skills
- expand the existing summer model of one-to-one support by offering it year-round across the city to children, youth, adults and older adults
- a greater number and variety of programs (e.g. sports, fitness, computer training, art, cooking and dance)
- more programs of longer duration (three to four hours)
- an increased number of programs for teenagers and young adults with disabilities
- more programs geared towards specific types of disabilities (i.e. autism, developmental and psychological). One of the fastest growing groups that are requesting and accessing recreational services is children and youth with autism.

Additional feedback from residents' survey respondents on programs and services suggested that PFR should be offering:

- more integrated and specialized general fitness and swim classes for children (in which they can participate with a parent), youth and adults
- more social and life skills programs for youth and adults across the city
- develop camps for youth and adults with disabilities who are over 24 years of age.

In addition to offering services where there are identified gaps (i.e. programs and supports for older youth and adults), PFR should offer programs and services for people with disabilities that are on par with those offered to the general population as well as the supports needed to participate in these programs.

The initiatives that people ranked first most frequently are:

- have knowledgeable and experienced staff
- one-to-one support for more than two weeks at summer camps
- one-to-one support at programs year-round
- accessible website.

The fact that both one-to-one support and hiring knowledgeable staff were identified as important on two separate survey questions indicates that they were critical aspects of service delivery to participants. In the words of a customer who wrote to the General Manager of PFR: "Without the necessary one-to-one support, many of the city's disabled participants would not be able to attend the Parks and Recreation programs at all." Thus, for many, the key component would be more one-to-one support.

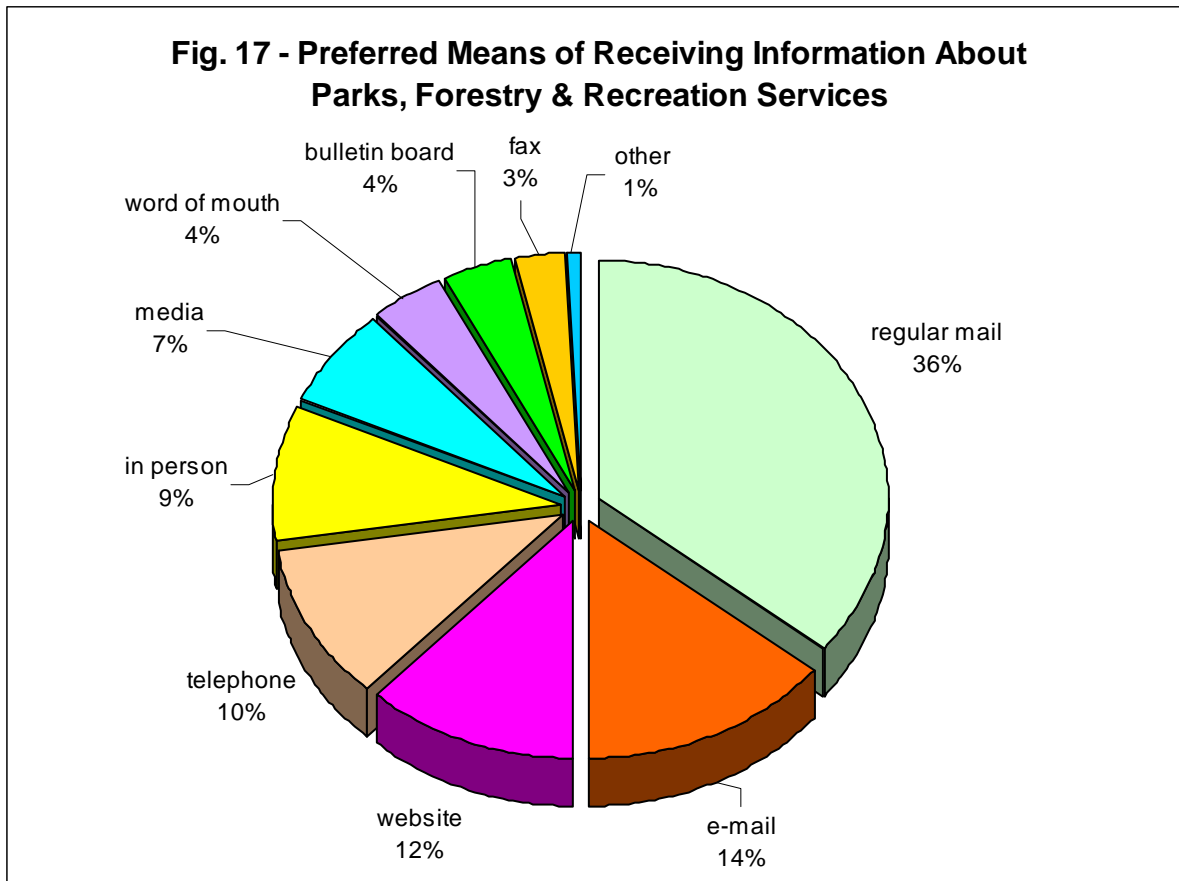
The sentiment that many people with disabilities would not be able to participate in municipal recreation without one-to-one support was also expressed by a mother, who recently wrote a heart-felt letter after receiving a telephone call informing her that her daughter, who has Downs Syndrome, would not be able to attend integrated summer

camp that day because her one-to-one support assistant was sick. Commenting on how unfortunate it is that children with disabilities wishing to participate in integrated services have to be turned away due to a lack of support workers, she states that: "On so many different levels, a phone call like this communicates that my child does not belong – that she is different, that she is a burden, and that she does not have a right to the services and programs that her sister does... It's a deep-seeded issue. It needs a lot of attention. It needs commitment, passion, determination, collaboration, and, like anything else, it needs money." The comments expressed in this letter illustrate the importance of consistent and reliable one-to-one support to the public.

6) COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION (Fig. 17)

Torontonians with disabilities prefer to receive information about the division's programs and services through:

- regular mail (36 per cent)
- e-mail (14 per cent)
- website (12 per cent)
- telephone (10 per cent).



Other suggestions included: public libraries, advertisements on Wheel-Trans buses and in agency newsletters/pamphlets and through classrooms and special education schools. This implies that a significant number of community members do not have regular access to a computer and/or the Internet or the knowledge/ability to use them.

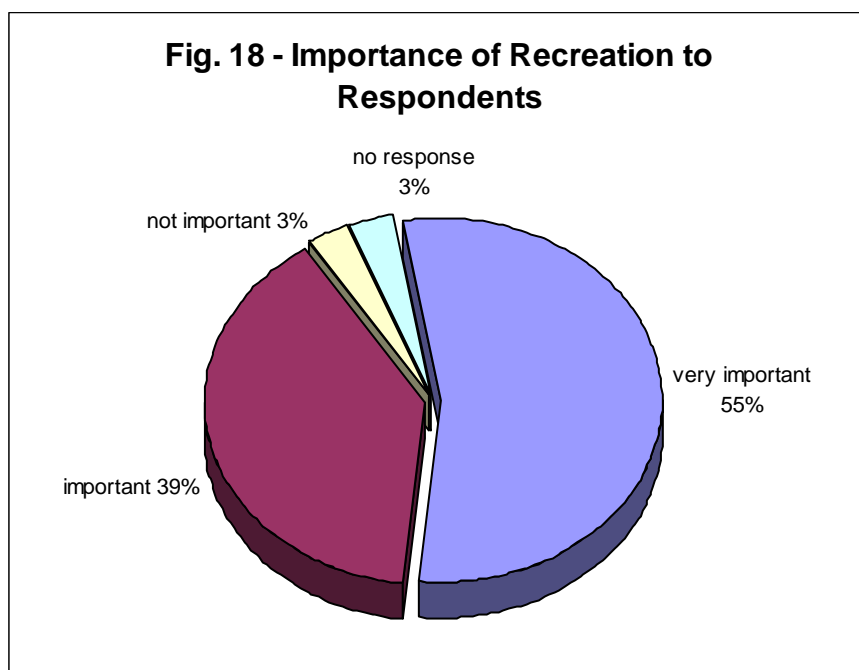
Additional feedback around communication and promotion suggests that PFR will need to:

- advertise general information about adapted programs and integrated services more widely through additional communication mechanisms. For example, the Adapted Programs and Integrated Services Recreation Resource Guide received an overwhelmingly positive response during our public consultations. Respondents requested that it be made available in all four districts of the city.
- establish a disability services link off the division's website
- compile and continue to maintain a voluntary central registry for people who have expressed interest in adapted programs and integrated services
- improve the promotion of the Snoezelen Room.

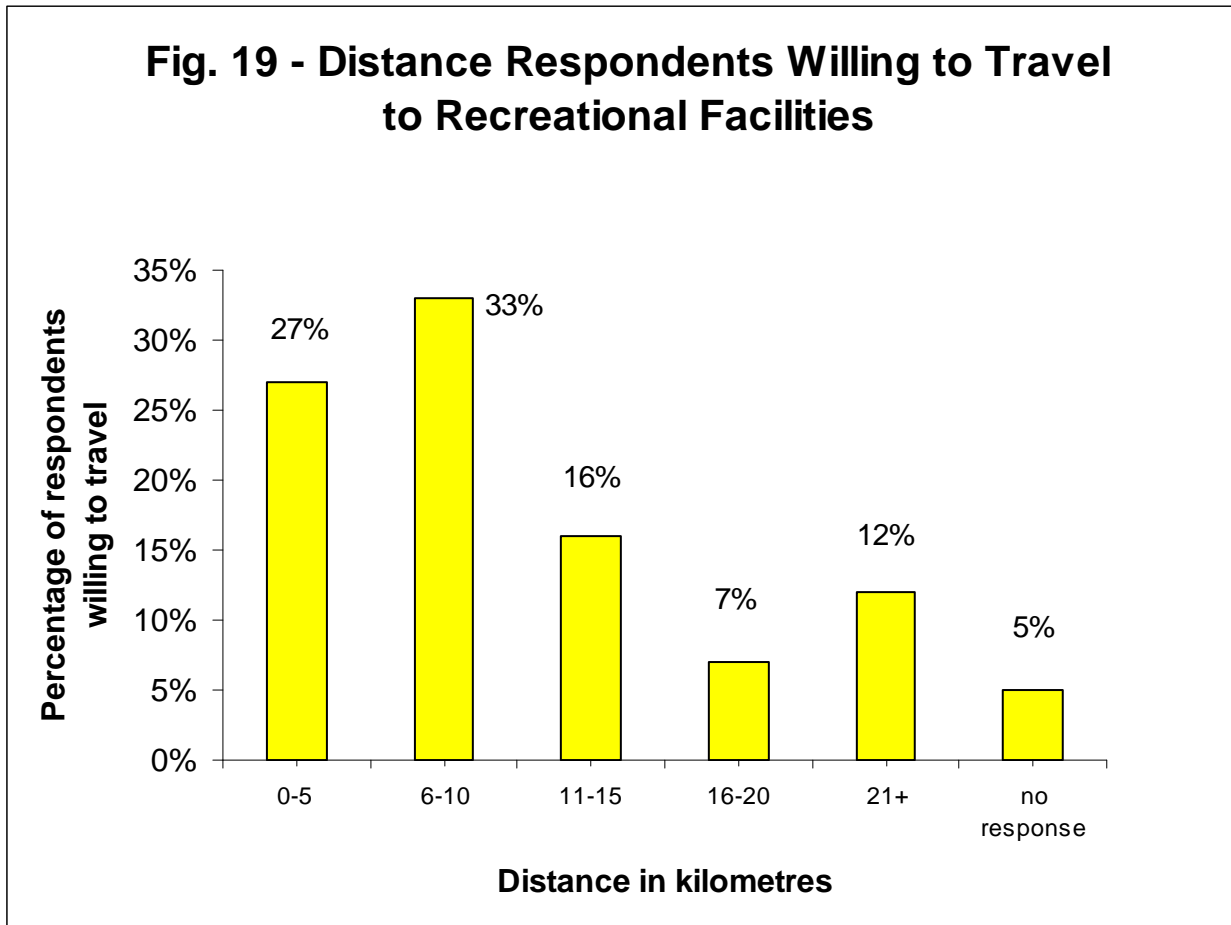
Snoezelen Rooms are multi-sensory environments filled with lighting effects, shapes, textures, aromatherapy, soft music and colors. They create a stress-free environment designed specifically for people with disabilities. The division operates a Snoezelen Room, the first in North America integrated into a community recreation centre, at Agincourt Community Centre.

7) IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF RECREATION (Figs. 18-20)

An overwhelming majority of Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities participants (93 per cent) considered recreation to play a significant role in their lives, with 55 per cent deeming it to be very important and 39 per cent deeming it to be important (Fig. 18). This result is similar to a 2005 Environics survey, which found that 97 per cent of the general public believes that parks and recreation make a significant contribution to the quality of life in Toronto. Of these respondents, 64 per cent perceived a very important contribution, while 33 per cent perceived an important contribution. This makes the low participation rate of people with disabilities in municipal recreation of particular concern to the division.



In addition, 35 per cent of Toronto residents with disabilities who responded to our survey indicated that they are willing to travel more than 10 km to take part in organized recreational programs (Fig. 19). According to one survey respondent, “often, the adapted or integrated program is one of the few outings each week for a person with special needs.”



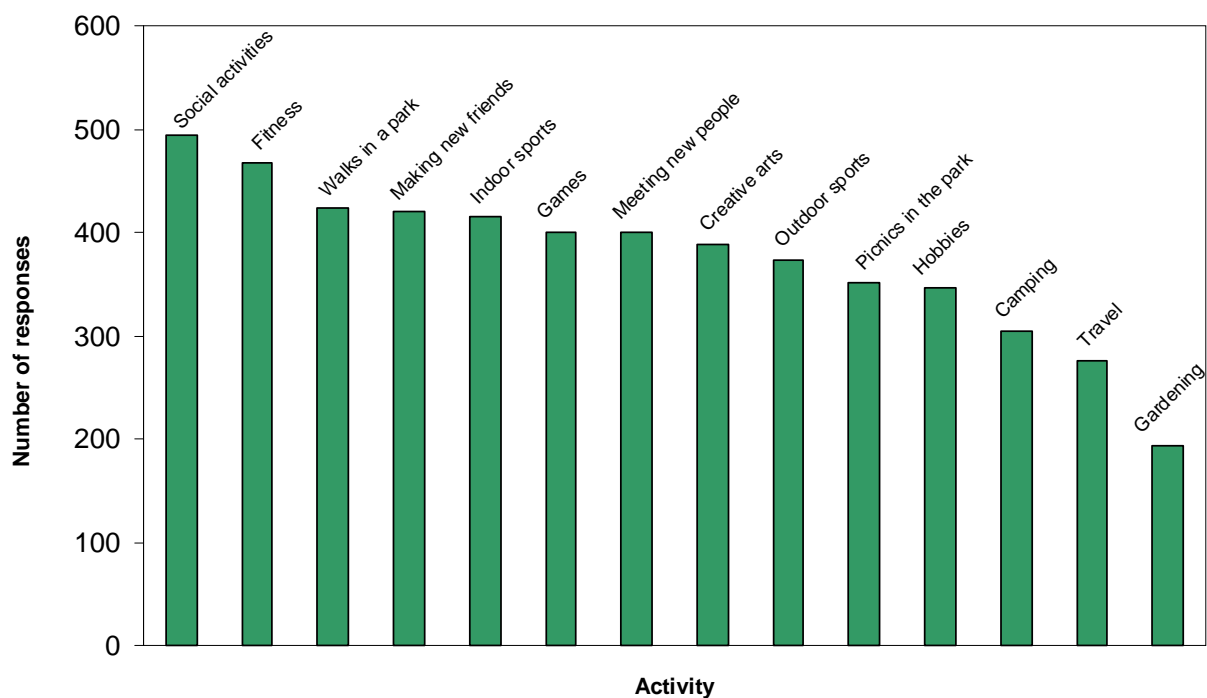
Many participants view their involvement in a recreation program as the highlight of their week, enthusiastically talking about their experience with friends and family members.

These findings demonstrate that people with disabilities value recreation and leisure opportunities just as highly as do members of the general population. They also suggest that in order for the division to improve customer satisfaction and reach its goal of a 1,000 per cent increase in disability participation, it will need to allocate the resources required to implement the recommendations in this report.

In terms of what recreation means (Fig. 20), the top three responses given by the 667 Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey respondents were:

- social activities, such as making new friends (74 per cent)
- fitness (70 per cent)
- walks in a park (63 per cent).

Fig. 20 - Meaning of "Recreation" to Respondents



Additional suggestions offered by participants included: indoor and outdoor sports, creative arts and camping.

8) DEMAND FOR RECREATIONAL RESPITE (Figs. 21-24)

Recreational respite refers to recreational activities that give a parent or caregiver a break from taking care of someone with a disability; as well as giving the person in care a break from their usual caregiver(s).

Caring for an individual with a disability, if provided by mainly one person, can be demanding, and can create strain on relationships within families. Some families, especially those with a single parent, often require relief to allow for their own energies to be renewed and to devote time to other family members and duties. Community supports such as recreational respite are important in providing a break for caregivers and those they care for. According to a recent report on the transformation of developmental services in Ontario, mothers of children with learning disabilities view respite support as being significant to their quality of life, including their relationship with their child. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Just over half (53 per cent) of our residential survey respondents said they were looking for recreational respite (Fig. 21), with over 60 per cent requiring this service once or twice per week (Fig. 22). The highest demand for both specialized and integrated recreational respite appears to be on weekends (37 per cent) and on weekday evenings

(29 per cent), generally for a period ranging from two hours (34 per cent) to a half day (26 per cent) (Figs. 23 and 24).

Fig. 21 - Respondents Looking for Respite through Recreation

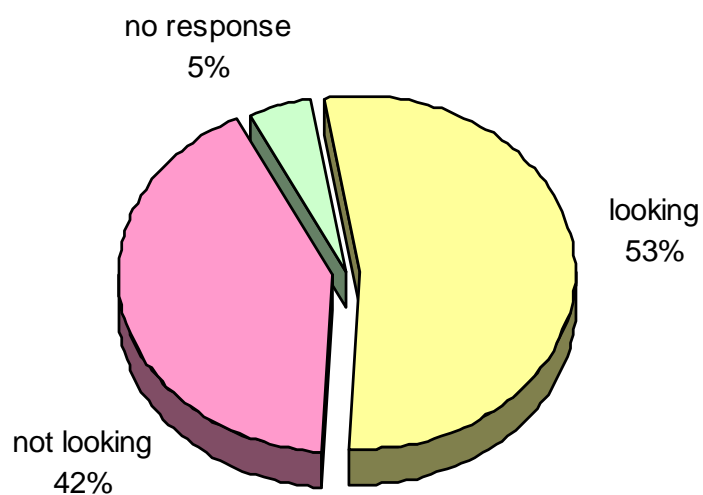


Fig. 22 - Frequency of Recreational Respite Needed

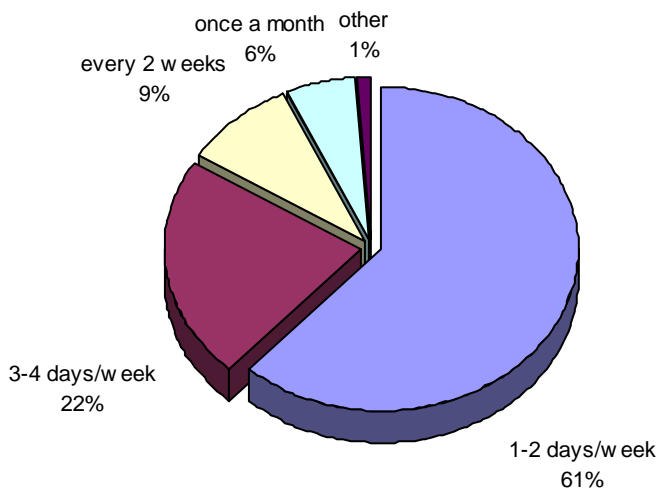


Fig. 23 - Time of Day Needed for Recreational Respite

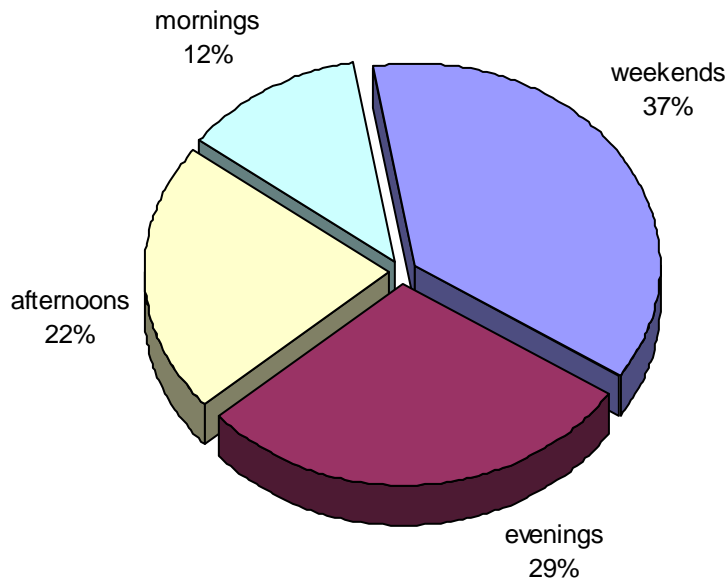
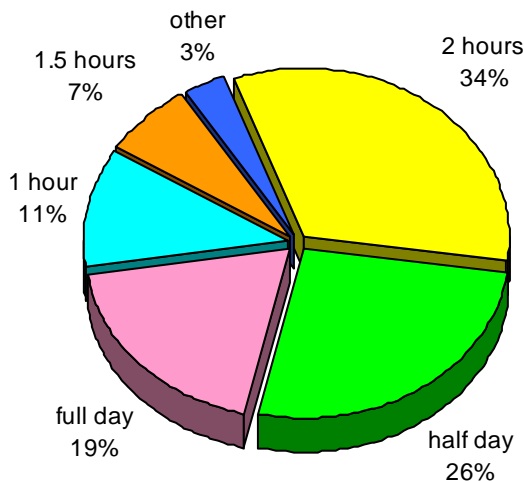


Fig. 24 - Length of Time Needed for Recreational Respite



This demonstrates that there is a strong demand among families and caregivers of people with severe disabilities for relief through recreational respite such that they could attend to other family and household responsibilities. This demand is currently not being met uniformly and consistently across the city by PFR. Further, the division will need to provide recreational respite programs for two hours or more.

9) EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT ISSUES

Participants of Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities provided significant insight into how PFR can help increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Their top four priorities are:

- improve the advertising of job vacancies as well as of the fact that the division is an equal opportunity employer. Such advertisements should appear in agency publications and facilities, major media outlets, Wheel-Trans buses and TTC bus shelters and community centres. They should also be available on the proposed Disability Services link of PFR's website. In addition, such communications should be available in alternative formats and in languages other than English.
- offer workshops on the steps involved in the job search process
- develop a formalized work experience program for youth and young adults with disabilities
- provide new employees with one-to-one training in the form of job coaching and mentoring.

10) YOUTH OUTREACH WORKER – DISABILITY PRIORITIES

In late 2005, a new initiative placed Youth Outreach Workers – Disability in each of Toronto's four service districts to help increase the participation of youth with disabilities in community recreation.

We asked focus group participants how they thought our Youth Outreach Workers – Disability could best connect with youth with disabilities. Their top three priorities were:

- hire people with disabilities to fill Youth Outreach Worker – Disability positions
- provide outreach to community members through partnerships with youth service agencies, school guidance counselors and places of worship
- ensure that Youth Outreach Workers – Disability are available for consultation by telephone, e-mail and in person.

With regards to the services that Youth Outreach Workers – Disability should be providing to youth with disabilities, the following three were of highest importance to participants:

- provide youth with disabilities with information on public transportation such as the TTC and Wheel-Trans
- assist youth in accessing employment, volunteer, mentorship and educational opportunities by connecting them with skills development organizations in their community
- inform youth of programs, services and other opportunities that exist within PFR.

11) CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

The three cultural and social issues that were of greatest concern to Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities participants were:

- more family change rooms and family washrooms that are spacious and cleaned regularly
- more women-only programs in swimming, general fitness and sports
- provide one-to-one support workers that are the same gender as the participant when available.

12) POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

When given the opportunity to make additional comments on how to improve participation, most respondents expressed their gratitude to PFR for undertaking a project aimed at capturing the views of people with disabilities.

Comments such as: "Thanks for the chance to offer feedback: I don't remember doing it before" and "This is a fabulous project: keep up the good work" were quite frequent. In addition, a significant number of respondents provided positive feedback such as: "I found the survey an easy read and I think that it covers most of my concerns".

These comments suggest that current and potential participants will be more likely to partake in municipal recreation opportunities when their concerns and input are solicited by the division. The research project opened up an important avenue of dialogue between PFR and people with disabilities across the city, a dialogue which will need to be sustained in the future.

In terms of Policy Improvements, the four most frequently cited priorities are:

1. Simplify the registration process and ensure that it is more user friendly by:
 - a) increasing and improving the focus on customer needs
 - b) reducing bureaucracy by making necessary paperwork less intrusive and easier to complete (e.g. using simpler language)
 - c) hiring registration staff who are courteous, knowledgeable about disability, empathic and sensitive to individual needs
 - d) ensuring that voicemail messages are returned within one business day
 - e) offering extended hours for people who require assistance.

According to numerous survey respondents, potential participants often attempt to obtain information about municipal recreation services, but to no avail. As one respondent asked, "Why does no one help me get into programs?"

2. Make the subsidy application Welcome Policy process less intrusive and the process for questioning a denial simpler.
3. Include more people with disabilities on program planning and review committees.
4. Issue a photo identification card to participants with disabilities partaking in either adapted programs and integrated services. This card could be attached to participant information/medical information forms as part of the registration

process. It would increase the safety of young children and those who easily stray, or are not fully verbal. The card would also help to reinforce the fact that one-to-one support workers are entitled to participation with a person with disabilities in our services at no charge. Such a practice is common among disability service agencies, taxis and the TTC.

As we move towards reducing barriers in order to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), partnerships both inside and outside our division will be critical. For example, it was suggested that a partnership with the Toronto Community Housing Corporation would be beneficial in sharing information about where people with disabilities are living and which facilities they would be most likely to use. Such a partnership would also enhance the planning of capital projects.

B) COMMUNITY AGENCY SURVEY REGARDING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (13-17)

The feedback received from the 51 organizations that returned the Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities (a response rate of 25 per cent of the original contact list and 90 per cent of the agencies who received the survey) is broken down into six topic areas.

13) AGENCY CLIENT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE (Figs. 25-28)

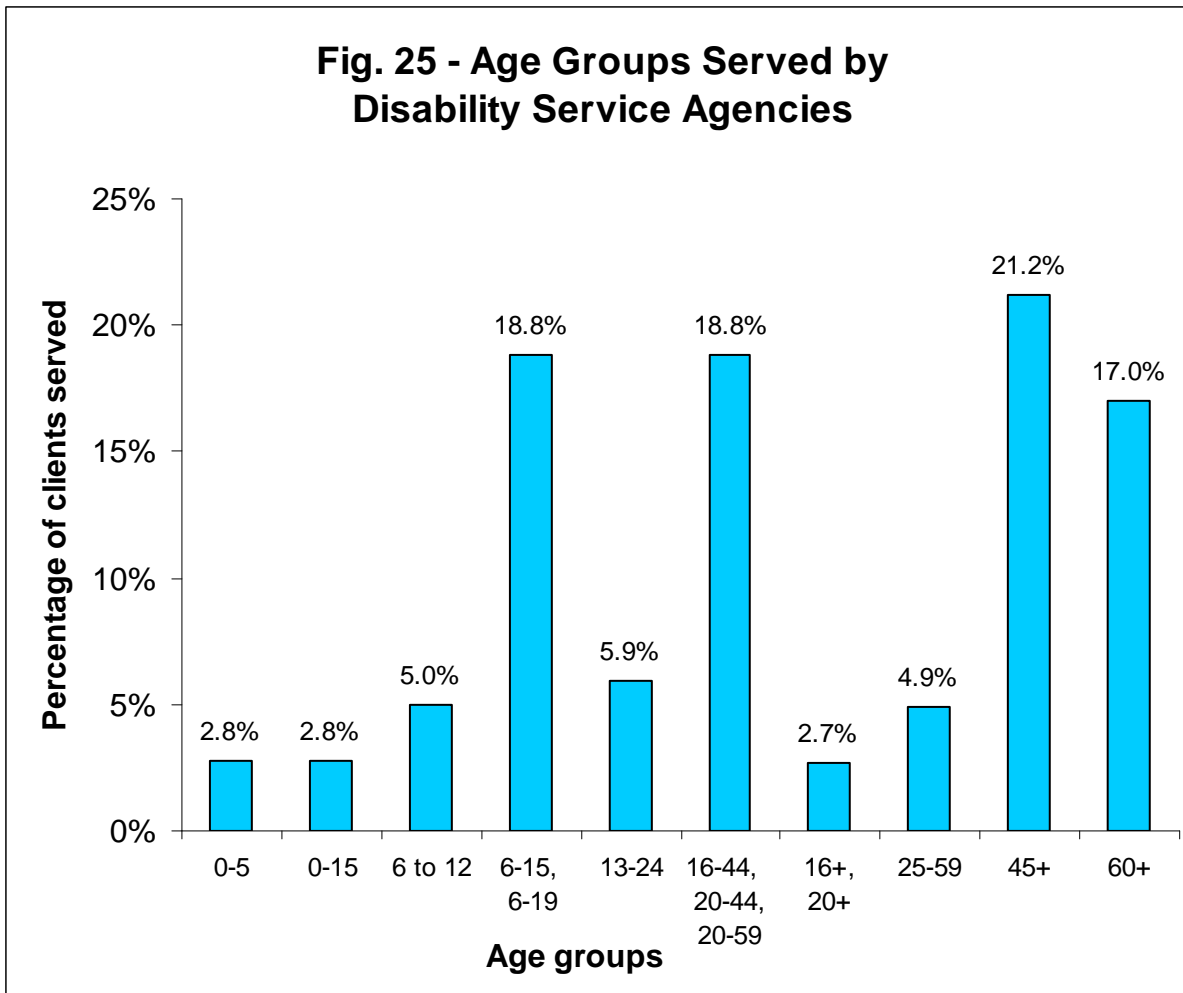
Organizations that filled out the Community Agency Survey Regarding Programs and Services for People with Disabilities were asked to voluntarily provide basic demographic information about their clients' age, disability type and district of residence.

The data collected will be used by PFR to improve its planning and development of adapted programs and integrated services. However, the individual sources of information will remain confidential.

Note that the number of agencies and the number of their clients may differ between demographic components due to the fact that agencies responded to only the questions on which data was available.

A total of 44 (86 per cent of agency respondents) provided data on the age of their clients. Figure 25 provides an age-group breakdown of the 172,121 Torontonians with disabilities served by these agencies.

Fig. 25 - Age Groups Served by Disability Service Agencies



It is important to note that the age categories used by many of the organizations surveyed do not match those used either by other agencies or by PFR (zero-five, six-12, 13-24, 25-59, 60+ years). For example, the Canadian Hearing Society classifies its clients into the age groups of: zero-five, six-19, 20-60 and 60+.

This lack of consistent categorizing among agencies makes it impossible to allocate clients according to the five program age categories defined by PFR.

To maintain the usability of the information received and communicate it in the simplest possible way, the age range data was divided into the following ten age ranges:

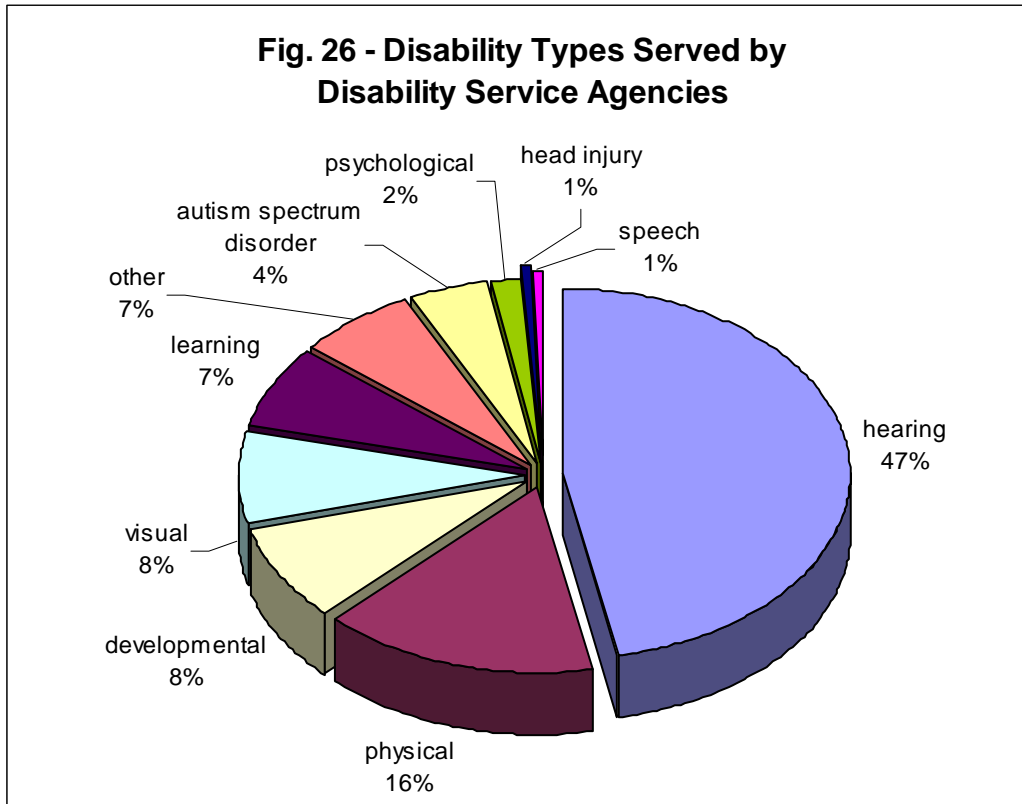
- zero-five (preschool) = 2.8 per cent
- zero-15 (preschool, child and youth) = 2.8 per cent
- six-12 (child) = 5 per cent
- six-15 and six-19 (child and youth) = 18.8 per cent
- 13-24 (youth) = 5.9 per cent
- 16-44, 20-55 and 20-59 (youth and adult) = 18.8 per cent
- 16 an older and 20 and older (youth, adult and older adult) = 2.7 per cent
- 25-59 (adult) = 4.9 per cent
- 45 and older (adult and older adult) = 21.2 per cent
- 60+ (older adult) = 17 per cent.

These findings are consistent with those of the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey, which show that approximately:

- one in ten Torontonians with disabilities are of preschool age
- one in ten Torontonians with disabilities are children
- two in ten Torontonians with disabilities are youth
- four in ten Torontonians with disabilities are adults
- two in ten Torontonians with disabilities are older adults.

With regards to the youth age group, it should be noted that many youth with disabilities take longer than members of the general population to complete their education and find gainful employment. For this reason, the division consulted with representatives from the provincial and federal governments to determine what they were using as a cut-off age for youth with disabilities. Since there is no consistent standard across the 10 provinces, for defining the age of youth for the purpose of this study and program delivery, the division followed the federal government's lead and extended the maximum youth age for disability from 24 to 29 years shortly after the research project began. This was positively supported in all focus groups and it is thus recommended that this practice be adopted.

A total of 44 (86 per cent of agency respondents) provided data on the disability status of 142,546 of their clients (Fig. 26). It should be noted that although there was no “multiple” response option on the survey, some clients most likely had multiple disabilities.



Numbers in this figure do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

The four most common types of disabilities identified by the agencies were:

- hearing (47 per cent)
- physical (16 per cent)
- developmental/intellectual (8 per cent)
- visual (8 per cent).

Based on this data, the majority of current and potential PFR participants affiliated with a disability service agency describe themselves as having a hearing, physical, developmental/intellectual or visual disability. It should be noted that the unusually high representation of people with hearing disabilities may be due, in large part, to the fact that 65,950 (46.3 per cent) of the people on which the disability type data was based are affiliated with the Canadian Hearing Society. This is inconsistent with current participation rates in adapted programs and integrated services, which show very low participation from people with hearing and vision loss. Therefore, this information will help program planners develop recreational opportunities to better meet the needs and interests of varying types of disabilities and set meaningful opportunity targets.

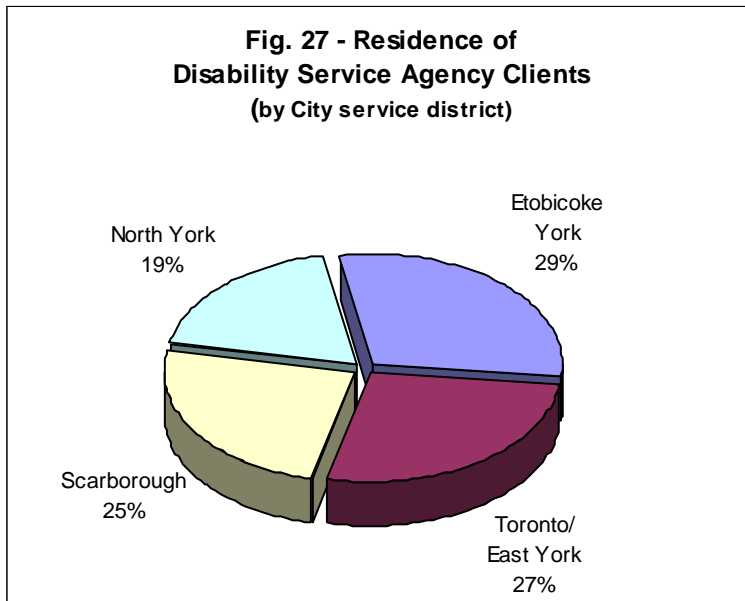
It is also interesting to note that although autism/spectrum disorder is one of the fastest growing areas in terms of municipal recreation participation, only 6,219 individuals (4.4 per cent) were identified as having this disability. This inconsistency may be due, in large part, to the fact that more children than adults were identified as having

autism/spectrum disorder. This concludes that program planners in the children's area will need to develop a greater understanding of and programs geared toward this growing demand from children with autism.

Data was gathered from 26 agencies (51 per cent of agencies surveyed) on where their clients lived in relation to the City's four service districts (Fig. 27).

Based on a sample of 18,269 clients:

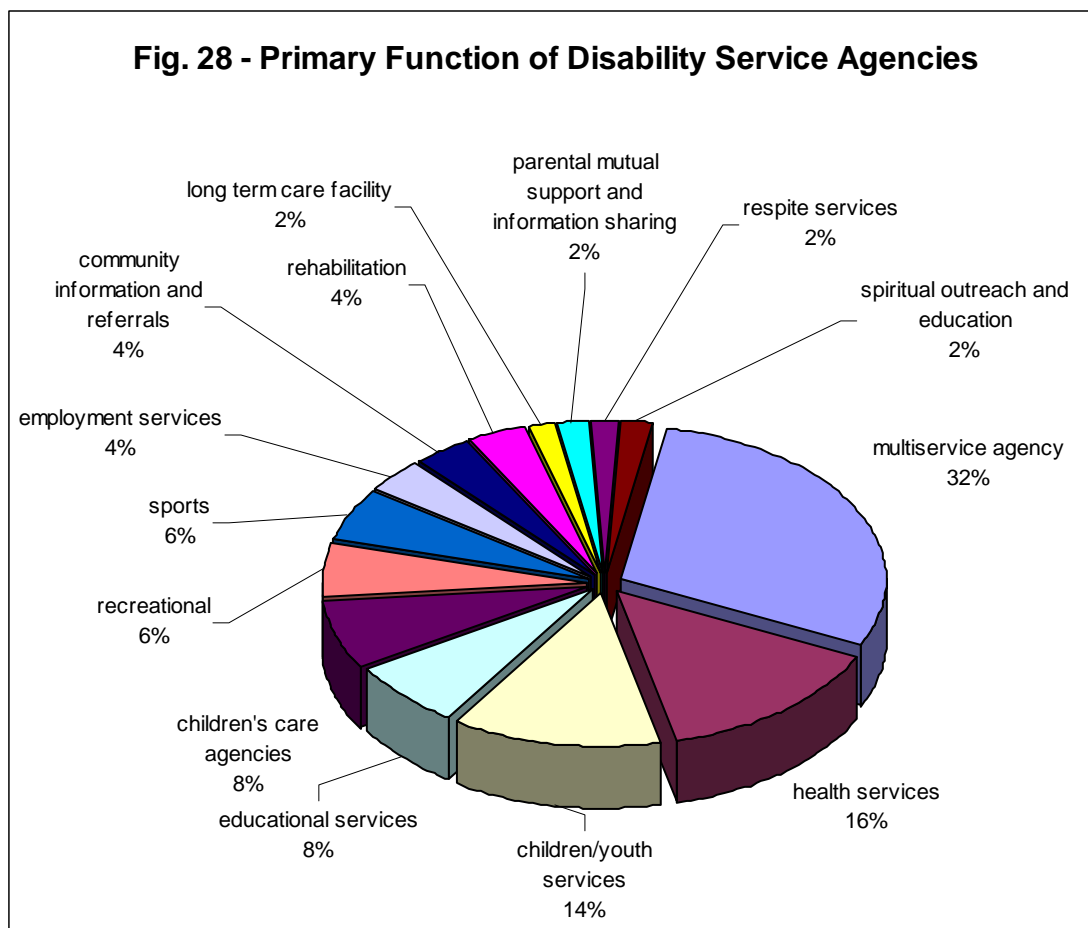
- 29 per cent live in the Etobicoke York district
- 27 per cent live in the Toronto & East York district
- 25 per cent live in the Scarborough district
- 19 per cent live in the North York district.



In contrast to the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey data, these numbers suggest that a slight majority of Torontonians with disabilities (54 per cent) live in the Scarborough and Etobicoke York districts. This inconsistency is due to the fact that some of the agencies providing data serve clients only or mainly in one district. For example, George Hall Centre and Storefront Humber serve a total of 2,133 clients who live only in the Etobicoke York district; Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre serves 230 clients in Scarborough and only 60 in the other three districts combined. Taken together with the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey data provided by community members, the results do suggest that the disability population is relatively equal in the City's four service districts. Thus, any future improvements that the division makes to parks, trails, programs and services should be made uniformly across the city rather than be determined by the disability population in each district.

14) AGENCY'S PRIMARY FUNCTION (Fig. 28)

Disability service agencies were asked to classify themselves into one of 14 categories that relate to the function they serve and the types of services they deliver. This information will provide a better understanding of what services are available in the community. In this way, PFR will be able to provide additional educational information and referrals to people looking for recreational opportunities and avoid duplication of services.



The top three primary functions identified by the 50 disability service organizations that responded to this question were:

- multi-service agencies (32 per cent)
- health services providers (16 per cent)
- children/youth services (14 per cent).

Although only 12 per cent of the agencies that were surveyed identified themselves as either recreational or sports organizations, 51 per cent offer recreational programs and services to their clients as a vehicle to meeting other community needs (e.g. social, educational and/or self-improvement). This suggests that recreational services are available to people with disabilities through agencies that do not necessarily classify themselves as recreational or sports organizations, thus supporting the value and benefits of recreation to people with disabilities. In fact, the benefits of recreation have long been associated with health and social care providers.

Besides indicating that a wide cross-section of organizations that serve people with disabilities was reached, this information will allow PFR to expand existing agency partnership initiatives to include new organizations. Such partnerships would strengthen the division's ability to deliver recreational programs and services to children, youth, adults and older adults with disabilities. This could be accomplished by providing experienced staff as well as offering the delivery of training sessions to recreation staff. In turn, the division could facilitate space requirements for agencies running recreational programs.

15) RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE THROUGH AGENCIES (Figs. 29-31)

Of the 51 organizations that responded to this question, approximately half of them (26) offer recreational programs and services to Torontonians with disabilities (Fig. 29).



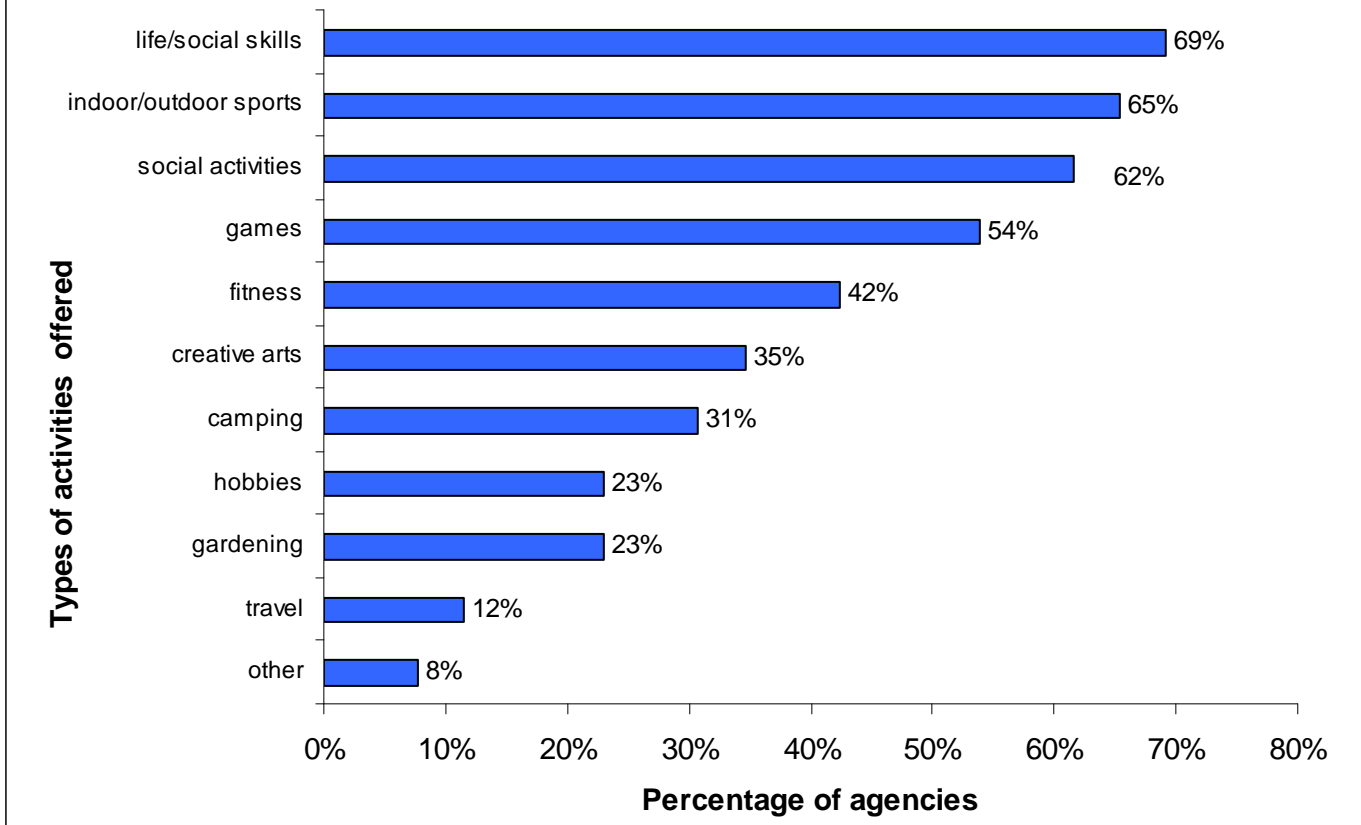
As outlined in Fig. 30, the three types of programs offered most frequently by these 26 agencies were:

- life/social skills (69 per cent)
- indoor/outdoor sports (65 per cent)
- social activities (62 per cent).

The three types of programs that are offered less frequently by agencies to Torontonians with disabilities were:

- gardening (23 per cent)
- hobbies (23 per cent)
- travel (12 per cent).

Fig. 30 - Recreation Activities Offered by Disability Service Agencies



In addition, 42 of the 50 organizations that responded to this question (84 per cent) provide their clients with one or more supports that facilitate participation in community recreation opportunities.

As is shown in Fig. 31, the three most frequently offered supports are:

- training for workers and recreation service providers (44 per cent)
- adapted recreation equipment (40 per cent)
- one-to-one support (33 per cent).

The four less frequently offered supports are:

- transportation (21 per cent)
- attendant care services (19 per cent)
- agency referrals to community recreation opportunities (12 per cent)
- interpretive services (seven per cent).

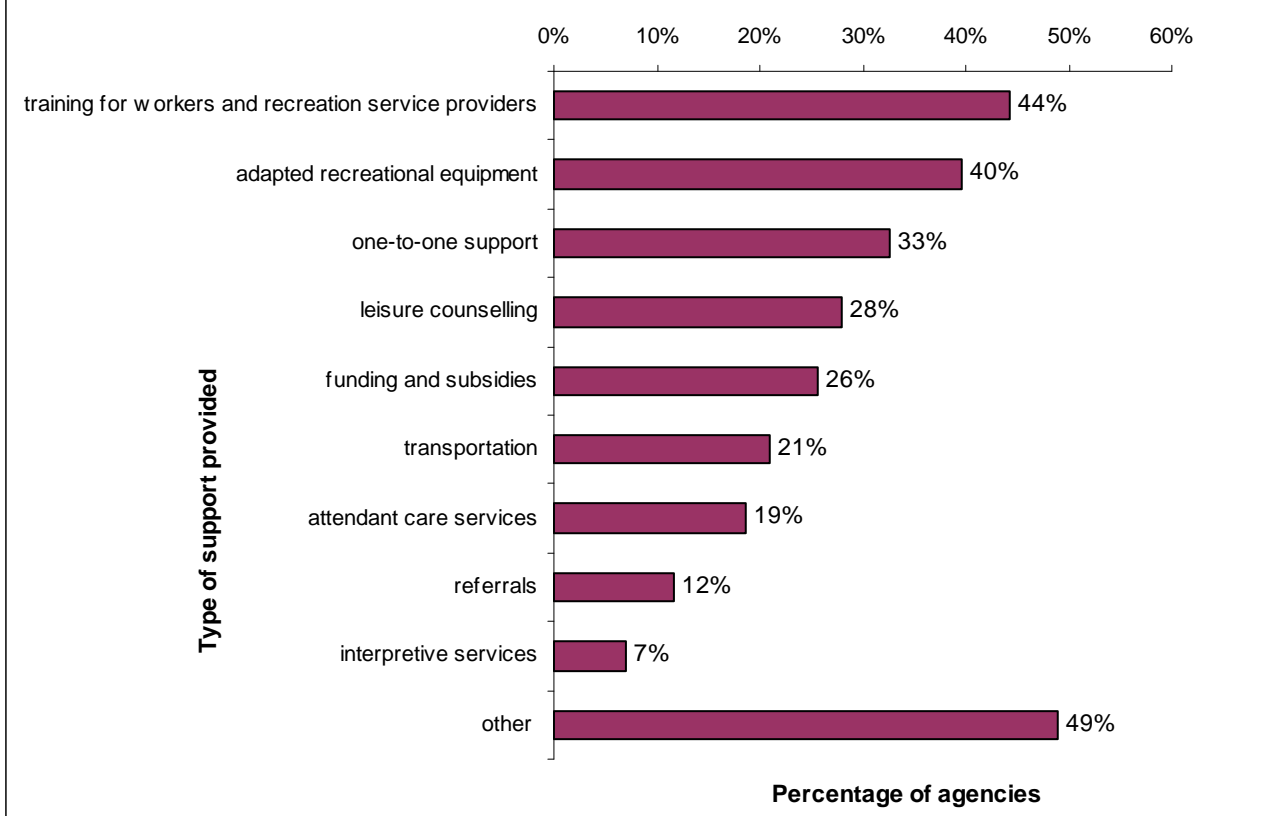
It is important to note that 49 per cent of the organizations that responded to this question also offer other supports that were not included as response options in the survey. Other supports include such services as:

- home and community assessments
- orientation training and mobility instruction in recreation facilities/community centres
- vocational coaching.

Of the 51 disability service agencies responding to the survey, 17 (33 per cent) cited concerns with regards to the delivery of recreational opportunities to Torontonians with disabilities. The three concerns most frequently mentioned are:

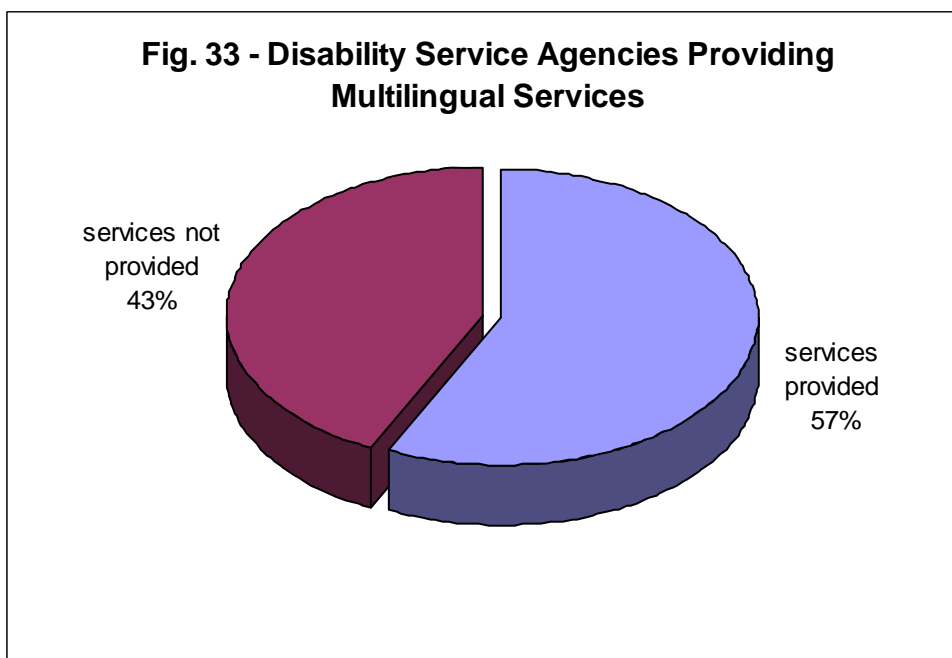
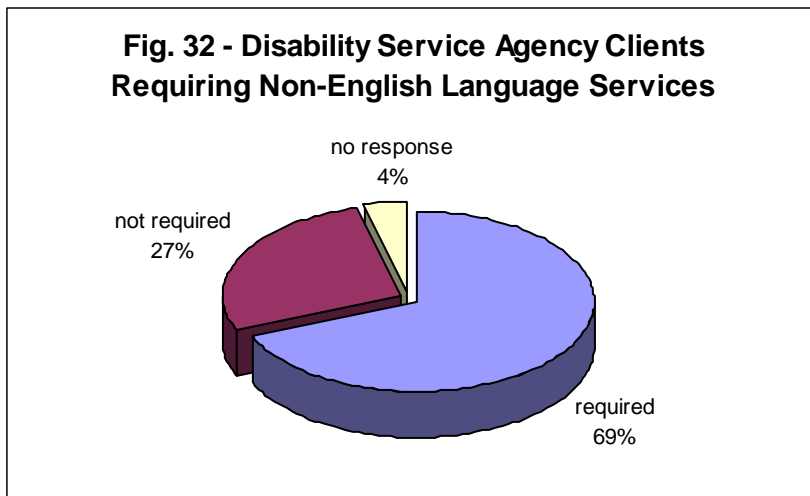
- lack of transportation to and from recreational opportunities (24 per cent)
- inadequate number of opportunities for community consultation about program and service delivery (18 per cent)
- inadequate disability awareness training for recreational staff (12 per cent).

Fig. 31 - Recreational Supports Provided by Disability Service Agencies



16) PROVISION OF MULTILINGUAL SERVICES (Figs. 32-35)

Of the 49 agencies that responded to the question on language service provision, 34 (69 per cent) indicated that some of their clients with disabilities require services in a language other than English (Fig. 32). However, only 28 (57 per cent) of these agencies provide such multilingual services (Fig. 33).



As outlined in Figs. 34 and 35, the three non-English languages in which services are most commonly required are:

- Chinese (19 per cent)
- Spanish (16 per cent)
- Tamil (8 per cent).

However, the three non-English languages in which agency services are most commonly available are:

- Spanish (23 per cent)
- Chinese (19 per cent)
- Italian (13 per cent).

Fig. 34 - Most Common Non-English Languages Required by Disability Service Agency Clients

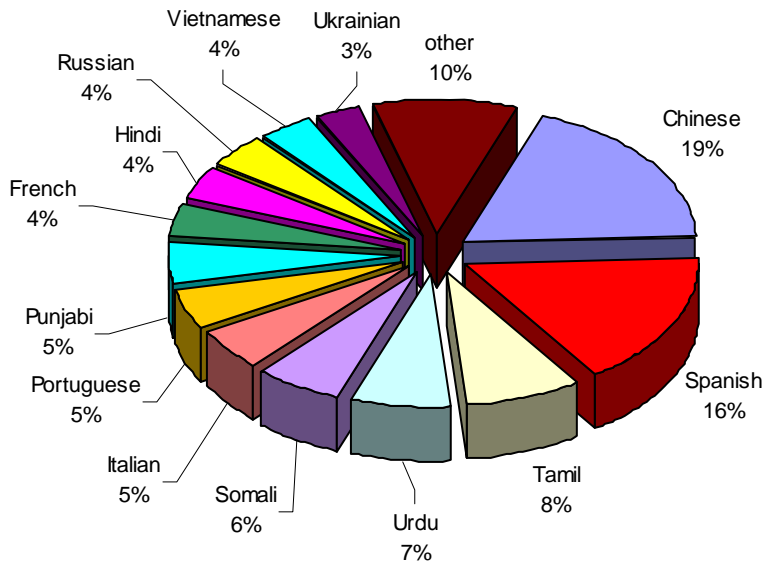
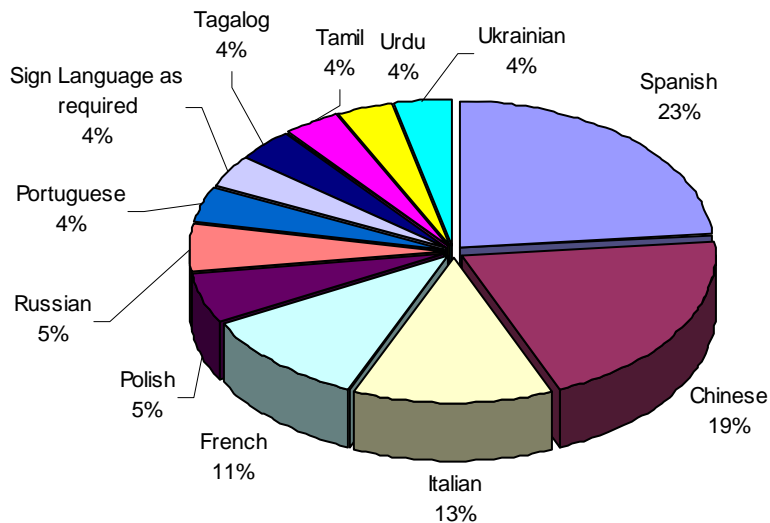


Fig. 35 - Non-English Languages Provided by Disability Service Agencies

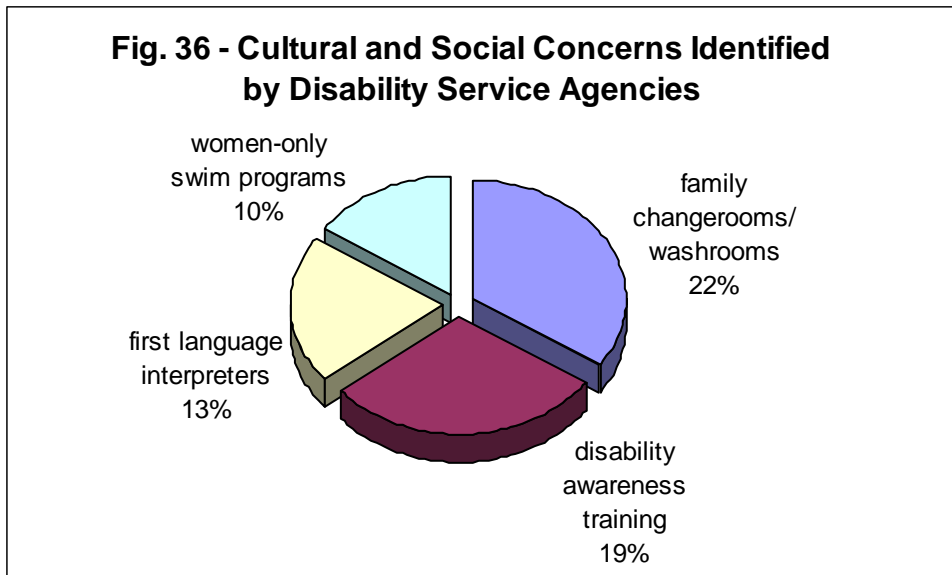


Although 34 (69 per cent) of the agencies that responded to the survey have clients that require services in a language other than English, only 28 (57 per cent) are in a position to provide such services. PFR may therefore wish to consider conducting some of its programs in other languages according to community demand and/or making foreign language interpreters available to clients as requested. In addition, promotional information should be made available in Spanish, Chinese, Tamil, Italian and other languages where underserved needs exist.

17) CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS (Fig. 36)

The four greatest cultural and social concerns identified by the 31 agencies that completed this survey question were:

- family change rooms and washrooms (22 per cent)
- disability awareness training (19 per cent)
- first language interpreters (13 per cent)
- women-only swim programs (10 per cent).



These findings reflect agency opinions of the cultural/social concerns of their clients, and are consistent with the cultural and social concerns expressed in the Toronto Residents with Disabilities survey.

C) STAFF FOCUS GROUPS

Staff feedback was obtained by conducting focus groups. Staff provided comments on the recommendations and topic areas identified as important by the public. The results of this consultation with staff are summarized in this report. (please see Sections 18-25 of the Key Findings section on pages 16-19 for further details). In many cases, the comments provided by staff were so similar to and supportive of those offered by the public, that the case for the following recommendations is even further strengthened.

SECTION V – RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall findings of this study reflect input from Toronto residents with disabilities, disability service agencies and staff. The resulting 46 recommendations, some of which the division has started to implement, provide the basis for developing a multi-year action plan. To complete the implementation of these recommendations, an interdivisional staff team along with external stakeholders and a cross-representational group of people with disabilities will need to take carriage of them. A template for how to carry out these recommendations may also need to be developed and additional resources will need to be allocated in order to put some of the recommendations into practice.

A) OVERRIDING THEMES

The feedback received from this research identified the following five overriding themes in priority order:

AFFORDABILITY (1-6)

The following six recommendations are based on the assumption that modified/specialized programs require a reduced pricing structure for people with disabilities to equitably access them.

Budget Line Allocation:

- 1) Allocate one dollar from each program fee or a designated percentage of the operating budget towards an overall Adapted Programs and Integrated Services budget.

Creating Affordable Fees:

- 2) Charge people with disabilities between 25-33 per cent of the regular program participation fee. Participants in modified/specialized programs will need to be supported more heavily than this, depending on the ratio of staff (i.e. a 1:4 ratio).

Amend the Welcome Policy Process by:

- 3) Creating an allowance for people with disabilities that provides subsidies over and above the Welcome Policy recreational subsidy program administered by PFR.
- 4) Considering a family's disability related expenses in the Welcome Policy approval process by either:
 - a) using the same Low Income Cut Off (LICO) level for all citizens and applying disability expenses to it

If the total annual disability-related expenses put a family's disposable income below the LICO, then they qualify for the Welcome Policy. It would be the responsibility of the family to show their annual disability-related expenses, and any other sources of support.

or

- b) automatically increasing the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) level

by \$10,000 per individuals with a permanent or progressive condition of a disability. Feedback received from both the public and agencies indicates that this amount would be appropriate considering the extraordinary additional expenses (e.g. tutors, special diets, special clothing, transportation, babysitting, medications, supplies and specialized equipment, as well as home adaptations) of families with children, or individual adults with severe disabilities.

- 5) Simplifying the Welcome Policy application, administration and approval process by:
 - a) reducing unnecessary paperwork
 - b) setting up the renewal process to be in effect for three years, unless the disability is considered temporary
 - c) making application forms available online in either html or text format. If PDF files must be used, they will need to be deemed accessible and readable by screen readers such as Job Access with Speech, or JAWS. Note that professional versions of Adobe Acrobat can check for accessibility and can recommend appropriate changes to the document to make it accessible.
 - d) having assistance available over the telephone for the benefit of people with disabilities via a central entry point (hotline)
 - e) encouraging agency representatives to send in completed forms on the client's behalf when necessary (e.g. vision impaired people who are living independently or in cases where English is not spoken)
 - f) giving applicants the option of mailing, e-mailing or faxing in their Welcome Policy applications
 - g) placing a pre-determined amount or credit on the account of Welcome Policy applicants
 - h) having a simpler and more accessible appeal process – please see examples above.

- 6) Offering alternative payment options such as:
 - a) additional fee recovery options such as sliding scale, partial payment and payment over time to increase access
 - b) free educational programs about what services are available through PFR. Participants could then receive discounts on fees for one year.
 - c) a pilot program whereby families can volunteer their time and/or expertise to benefit the division in exchange for the cost of a program or buying recreation related equipment/clothing from participating local businesses. A system for monitoring the volunteer contributions of participating families would need to be developed in order for this recommended pilot program to succeed.

WORKING GROUP ON GETTING SERVICES RIGHT

- 7) Establishing a Working Group comprised of people with disabilities and people who work in the field of disabilities. There also needs to be cross representation of PFR staff who are knowledgeable about and committed to furthering PFR opportunities for people with disabilities. A process would need to be developed to ensure that this committee has decision-making influence (senior management presence) and leadership for carrying out the recommendations from this report.

PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

- 8) Include more people with a broad range of disabilities on existing program planning/review committees, advisory councils and youth councils and regularly consult with members of the disability community when developing new policies and initiatives.

TRANSPORTATION (9-11)

This is an extremely important area that will require creative solutions and partnerships.

Research alternate transportation arrangements such as:

- 9) The development of transportation programs to support volunteers, parents and/or participants. Two examples of this are: carpooling and/or a system whereby volunteers and/or parents supervise TTC rides for people with disabilities to and from recreation opportunities by traveling with them. Such programs would need to be advertised in recreational facilities and on the division's website so that interested parents can network.
- 10) Begin dialogue with the TTC to establish a fare reimbursement program for participants who can not afford it. This is already in place with supplying TTC tickets for youth.
- 11) Determining the availability and feasibility of using accessible public school buses for transportation to day programs through discussions with representatives of the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, Ministry of Education and the provincial public and separate school associations.

AGENCY/ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND INFORMATION SHARING

- 12) Collaborate with agencies such as the Toronto Community Housing Corporation to share information about where Torontonians with disabilities live. Such a partnership would help the division to plan future capital project priorities.

B) SPECIFIC THEMES

The following are recommendations specific to eight topic areas resulting from public and staff feedback. Some of the recommendations under the topics of communication/promotion and employment are also being reviewed at the corporate level.

COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION (13-21)

It was recommended that the division develop a communications plan that is aligned with corporate strategy for staff. This communications plan will also need to be tailored to community agencies and the general public, and would, at a minimum, incorporate the following:

- 13) Provide effective community-based distribution of age-specific information to children, youth, adults/older adults, and multicultural and religious communities. This will require the division to strengthen its partnerships with public libraries, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, disability and social service agencies, ethno-cultural and seniors' organizations/groups, places of worship and hospitals.

The public has also requested that the division:

- a) use regular mail and community agencies as the primary means for distributing promotional material such as the Toronto FUN Recreation Guide or other information to people with disabilities
- b) consider secondary distribution of information through e-mail and accessible websites.

The need for additional distribution methods is also demonstrated by the fact that research conducted by the Access and Diversity Unit shows that the Toronto Fun Recreation Guide is currently being read by only 20 per cent of registrants from ethno-cultural communities.

- 14) Provide recreation staff with:
 - a) a training tool such as the Adapted Programs and Integrated Services for People with Disabilities Recreation Resource Guide, which lists disability service agency contacts and the recreational opportunities that are available through them
 - b) a one-page summary of disability service agency information in multiple languages, which they can distribute to citizens from ethno-cultural communities
 - c) sensitivity training
 - d) an adapted and integrated component to the City's intranet/separate website where staff can access information and resources.
- 15) Provide and distribute a hard copy version of the Adapted Programs and Integrated Services Recreation Resource Guide to:
 - a) people with disabilities and their families
 - b) disability service agencies
 - c) recreation staff at facilities.
 - d) staff in the four district Adapted Programs and Integrated Services offices

An accessible downloadable version will also need to be available on the division's website.

- 16) Provide any documents that are produced, displayed or distributed in a special format such as MS Word in an accessible, open format such as HTML, Rich Text format (RTF) and plain text versions.
- 17) Increase the accessibility of City of Toronto public meetings by providing American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, attendant care, materials (including business cards) in alternative formats such as large print and Braille and meeting minutes online. Many full time staff have shown an interest in courses in ASL so they can be more effective in their communication.
- 18) Design a disability services web page that is directly accessible from the PFR website where people can directly access information, link to other disability service agency websites and take a virtual tour of some divisional community centres. Computer access will also need to be made available at community centres based on local public demand.
- 19) Improve the advertising and promotion of information by:
 - a) using universally recognized disability symbols in promotional material and placing it in more locations (e.g. the provision of wheelchair accessibility, ASL and alternative formats). In addition, information about public meetings/events will need to be planned and communicated at least four weeks in advance to arrange for ASL interpreters. It is a corporate requirement that all public meetings be made accessible.
 - b) setting up display areas in community centres to advertise to people with disabilities
 - c) advertising program and service information as well as job opportunities in more places using various types of media (e.g. person-operated telephone hotlines, deafconnect.com, the Voiceprint cable television channel for the blind and vision impaired and multicultural and mainstream newspapers, radio and television stations)
 - d) having Youth Outreach Workers – Disability inform youth with disabilities about the services they provide, suitable recreational opportunities offered by the division and how to contact them via telephone, e-mail and in person
 - e) providing and promoting material in multiple languages (e.g. Chinese, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Somali) and in alternative formats such as large print, Braille and CD-ROM.
- 20) Continue to expand the newly developed central registry of Torontonians interested in recreational opportunities for people with disabilities and put these interested citizens on the mailing list.
- 21) Improve the promotion of city parks, trails and natural areas and the ways and means they are accessible by:
 - a) indicating where they are located
 - b) describing how accessible they are

- c) listing what recreational opportunities are available to people with disabilities at each location
- d) providing information about slopes, grades, materials used for surfaces and washroom locations
- e) using symbols rather than words where possible in promotional material.

EMPLOYMENT AND RECRUITMENT (22-29)

22) Make sure that previous experience working with people with disabilities is one of the qualifications used in the hiring of program staff. The division may need to partner with disability service agencies to provide interested staff with opportunities for practical training and leadership in working with people with disabilities (e.g. interviewing, matching skills to job functions, providing accommodations, orientation, emergency situations, supervision and evaluation).

For example, strengthening partnerships with disability studies and recreation and leisure departments at Toronto's colleges and universities would be a benefit to the division. PFR would gain expertise and insight from faculty and students, while the schools would gain co-op placements for their students.

- 23) Hire program specific trainers (i.e. aquatics, skating, gymnastics) to assist in the delivery of programs for people with disabilities.
- 24) Provide accommodations to employees and volunteers with disabilities through the identification of a divisional budget line. This funding would need to be available to each facility/program and added to the existing budget rather than absorbed from what has already been allocated.
- 25) PFR recruiters need to:
 - a) attend job fairs specifically for people with disabilities
 - b) answer questions and share ideas about how people with disabilities can apply for employment within the division
 - c) advertise for potential staff online and in other ways that reach target groups (i.e. the Canadian Hearing Society and the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf). Please see Communications and Promotions section for further information.
- 26) Increase contacts/relationships with employment agencies through:
 - a) direct advertising: the division would benefit through the provision of job coaching, mentoring and employment accommodations. Organizations/agencies would also benefit by learning how to access opportunities for space and permits, resulting in appropriate parks and recreational services for their clients.
 - b) working with agencies that support employment initiatives to help with hiring people with disabilities to fill positions in the future. These organizations could also provide postings for job and volunteer opportunities that Youth Outreach Workers–Disability can subsequently share with participants.
- 27) Develop a formalized work/volunteer experience program for people with disabilities to help them obtain the competencies necessary to be more competitive in the job market.

- 28) Hire more people with disabilities in various positions throughout the division.
- 29) Provide accommodations like transportation in emergency situations and flexible work schedules for employees and volunteers as necessary. Any resulting cost would be absorbed through the budget line that is created for accommodations.

PARKS, FORESTRY AND FACILITIES (30-34)

- 30) Increase the accessibility of parks, trails and natural areas by:
- a) constructing wider and smoother pathways
 - b) providing more wheelchair accessible parking spots and washrooms that are open year-round
 - c) installing universally accessible equipment in more playgrounds across the city
 - d) providing support for people with severe disabilities to experience city parks, trails and natural areas
 - e) Redesigning golf courses according to universal design principles.
- 31) Increase the accessibility of indoor facilities by:
- a) placing accessible washrooms in more locations
 - b) providing more family washrooms, change rooms and change tables as well as larger changing spaces in all recreational facilities. These areas should be thoroughly cleaned on a regular basis and, in the case of swimming pools, be directly accessible from both the lobby and the pool
 - c) making use of universal signage to include large print, symbols and Braille
 - d) installing sensory-operated rather than push-button doors
 - e) providing increased reserved parking spots over and above the Ontario Building Code (OBC) requirements.
- 32) Improve the maintenance of parks, trails and natural areas by:
- a) keeping washrooms clean and unlocked
 - b) more frequent picking up of litter, with an increased number of garbage and recycling bins available for waste disposal
 - c) more accessible benches, picnic areas, public barbecues and operational water fountains
 - d) better tending of grass, gardens and flower beds. Some examples are: fragrant, visually distinct and raised gardens.
- 33) Improve the maintenance of indoor areas by:
- a) providing a hotline to report the need for maintenance and repair on things like doors that are not operational
 - b) improving the quality of snow removal on pathways and walkways leading up to facility Entrances and ensuring that all snow and ice is cleared quickly.
- 34) Improve the safety of outdoor areas by:
- a) installing more lighting, safety signs and video cameras in parks, along trails and in facilities
 - b) hiring more security officers
 - c) stricter enforcement of laws pertaining to off-leash dogs

- d) placing audible traffic lights at intersections around major city parks and facilities.

Please see Recommendation (44 -i) for a parks-related programming item.

RECREATIONAL ADMINISTRATION (35 and 36)

- 35) Simplify the current registration process by making it more person-centered and sensitive to customer needs. This includes:
 - a) using easy to understand language
 - b) reducing any unnecessary paperwork (e.g. maintaining accurate, up-to-date and confidential computer records)
 - c) implementing alternative registration processes (e.g. making accommodations such as designating spaces for people with disabilities, permitting online registration and/or filling out forms with the assistance of staff)
 - d) having longer registration hours
 - e) communicating openly with staff about program/participant needs
 - f) having open house nights prior to program start dates
 - g) providing opportunities for participants to visit a program prior to registering to determine it's suitability
 - h) encouraging customer service representatives to put people with disabilities who could not get into their program of choice on a wait list in order to track demand and enhance program development. This will also permit the compilation of reliable wait list statistics and assist in building a case for the idea that additional funding for the expansion of adapted programs and integrated services is required.

- 36) Investigate the feasibility of issuing a photo identification card or magnetic strip to all adapted programs or integrated services registrants. This card/strip could be attached to participant information/medical forms. ID cards would also verify one-to-one support workers entitlement to participation at no charge, thus eliminating the need for letters by the division or families to repeatedly review or provide the same details. The use of photo ID cards has already been proven successful at other agencies. Examples include:
 - a) CNIB National ID cards for discounts on Via Rail and Go Transit fares as well as discounted admission to museums and zoos
 - b) Easter Seals entertainment cards
 - c) TTC cards, which are used in conjunction with CNIB National ID cards for free TTC travel.

RECREATIONAL SUPPORT (37-39)

- 37) Provide one-to-one support workers so that the service can be offered year-round for any programs and age groups consistently across the city. This is not currently possible within existing budget allocation. Options for obtaining additional funding for one-to-one support workers may need to be explored in order to expand the existing summer model.

- 38) Provide Sign and First Language interpretive services and attendant care at public events, programs and facilities. This is provided as a fee for service through existing

City contracts with disability service agencies and organizations such as Ontario March of Dimes, the Canadian Hearing Society and the Canadian Paraplegic Association. Depending on demand for such services, additional resources may need to be allocated to coordinate the provision of these services. Currently, this responsibility rests with the coordinators of the meeting. Only as a last resort when the existing contact list is exhausted may qualified staff from within the City or ASL students be used.

- 39) Provide participants the opportunity to choose the gender of their support worker when both are available. This will require the recruitment of support staff with knowledge and skills in particular program areas as well as the development of a float staff system to ensure that there is adequate coverage of support staff to cover absences and other unexpected surprises or emergencies. The pay rate for these support staff should be relative to the job requirements.

STAFF TRAINING (40-42)

The following recommendations were repeatedly identified throughout each component of the study. Increasing our training efforts may necessitate the hiring of specific trainers, a training coordinator and the creation of a cross-divisional work team. Implementation and sustainability of training needs to have the support of the senior management team. The division will need to:

- 40) Provide and fund ongoing disability awareness training for all PFR staff including front-line workers. More full time training, both mandatory and refresher, have been recommended by staff. This training will need to be as hands on and disability specific as possible and focus on issues related to:
- the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)
 - the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
 - changing attitudes
 - customer service
 - specific types of disabilities– and what to expect workshops
 - communication with the deaf, deafened and hard of hearing community via American Sign Language (ASL)
 - how to make referrals
 - expanding current First Alert requirements and materials
 - sensitivity awareness
 - accommodations
 - reducing barriers through increasing universal accessibility and design
 - program adaptation/inclusion and
 - human rights.

Coordination of such training efforts will require a full time position and staff dedication.

- 41) Provide maintenance workers with training on: the ODA, the AODA, PFR's vision, policies, and the appropriate storage of specialized equipment.
- 42) Have Adapted Program and Integrated Service staff train recreation staff on an as needed basis. By staff modeling the actions required to foster positive attitudes

toward people with disabilities, recreation staff will become more educated and comfortable around disability and share what they have learned with other members of the public.

This training effort would be supported by:

- a) having an Adapted Programs and Integrated Services staff member on call to resolve urgent issues, especially during the first few weeks of programs
- b) involving experts from within and outside the corporation
- c) recruiting people with disabilities to do the training wherever possible.

PROGRAM AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS (43 and 44)

- 43) Develop and carry out uniform policies across the four districts to ensure greater consistency of the programs and services offered (i.e. fees, registration and staffing ratios etc).
- 44) Increase the number, type, scope and variety of adapted and integrated program offerings for all age groups by providing more:
 - a) accessible adapted and integrated social, life skills, fitness, indoor and outdoor sports and computer training opportunities as well as programs that combine traditional recreation activities with an opportunity to learn life and social skills. In addition, there was some interest expressed in programs related to hobbies such as photography, drawing or dancing.
 - b) adapted programs and integrated services offered at various times throughout the week to accommodate different age groups and schedules
 - c) gender and age specific swimming, fitness and sports programs that can accommodate participants with disabilities. Such programs will need to be available in facilities in all four districts
 - d) programs geared towards a specific type of disability or special need based on community demand
 - e) recreation opportunities to underserved communities such as people with hearing difficulty, vision loss, culturally specific and newcomer groups
 - f) camps and alternative summer programs for youth and adults who are over the age of 24
 - g) investigate/offer specialized recreational opportunities for children and youth with autism (e.g. having a Snoezelen room in each district)
 - h) half and full day adapted and integrated recreational respite programs as well as more opportunities for out trips. These programs will need to be developed in partnership with disability service agencies/interest groups and offered on weekends, afternoons and week nights at a recreational facility in each district.
 - i) develop more Discovery Walk programs for people with disabilities. Discovery Walks is a program of self guided walks that link city ravines, parks, gardens, beaches and neighbourhoods. Informative signage helps participants to learn about and experience an area's heritage and environment, while exercising. However, consideration will need to be given to providing signage in alternative formats, clear language and/or symbols.
 - j) increase the amount of adapted equipment available in weight rooms and swimming pools.

REFERRALS (45 and 46)

- 45) Strengthen partnerships with disability service organizations to ensure their familiarity with divisional services as well as our understanding of their program and service offerings. This would permit agencies to refer individual clients whose needs can be met through existing divisional services to us. In turn, PFR can also assist by referring individuals or agencies whose needs we can not currently meet to other agencies that offer parks and recreational opportunities.
- 46) Assist recreation staff in providing referrals to clients with disabilities by:
- a) informing (educating/training) staff which agencies, programs and services are available to clients with various types of disabilities for referral purposes and identifying the staff contact lead
 - b) distributing resources such as the A&I Recreation Resource Guide to all recreation centers
 - c) building referral services into their portfolios
 - d) bringing the need for adapted programs and integrated services to the attention of the neighbourhood teams
 - e) inviting recreation staff to community information fairs on disability as well as to general information fairs which have an added focus on disability
 - f) setting service priorities
 - g) keeping track of referrals.

Since the provision of referrals and support for respite care is not widely available in the community, the newly hired Youth Outreach Workers - Disability will play a critical role in assisting to fill these gaps for youth with disabilities. They will do this by exploring new opportunities and liaising with disability serving agencies.

The public has also requested referring youth to employment training, education and independent living opportunities in their community.

SECTION VI – CONCLUSION

This report has summarized the feedback received from the individuals who participated in the Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities public and staff consultation process as well as from disability service agencies. It also provides a snapshot of where the division currently stands with regard to the provision of programs and services for people with disabilities/special needs in Toronto, identifies existing program and service gaps and proposes recommendations as identified by respondents.

The collective input of individuals, agencies and staff provides considerable new insight on where PFR currently stands with regard to the delivery of programs and services to children, youth, adults and older adults with disabilities/special needs. It also gives PFR a clearer understanding of Toronto's disability demographic. This feedback also supports the division's three disability-specific recommendations as outlined in Our Common Grounds. These are to:

- A. Provide physical activity opportunities and leader in training programs in partnership with other agencies for youth with a disability or special need.
- B. Develop partnerships to improve programs for children with disabilities
- C. Increase the number of Torontonians with disabilities in registered programs by 1000 per cent.

In addition, some people felt that PFR should take a more active role in educating its staff about the economic advantages of including Torontonians with disabilities in the division's programming as well as its workforce.

The citizens and disability service agency representatives who partook in this research repeatedly indicated that they thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the process and expressed their gratitude to the division for comprehensively inviting their views. Positive comments such as: "I found the survey an easy read and I think that it covers most of my concerns" were quite frequent. Other examples of complementary statements included: "Thanks for the chance to offer feedback: I don't remember doing it before" and "This is a fabulous project: keep up the good work".

These comments suggest that current and potential participants will be more likely to partake in municipal recreation opportunities when their concerns and input are solicited by the division. The research project opened up an important avenue of dialogue between PFR and people with disabilities across the city; a dialogue which will need to be sustained in the future.

Next Steps

We learned that community members need PFR to continue to work towards greater inclusion and increased accessibility of our parks, trails, natural areas, programs and services. One of the messages that came through loud and clear is that each of the stakeholder groups that took part in this research believe that the City has produced enough public consultation reports that, all too often, end up sitting on a shelf and never get implemented. They are encouraging the division to get on with it and "just do it" and are excited about the implementation of these recommendations.

In terms of future action steps, it is recommended that the division do the following:

1. the General Manager and Directors adopt the report recommendations in principle
2. the Access and Diversity Unit circulate the full Getting Services Right for People with Disabilities report to PFR branches and committees for review and feedback
3. the Access and Diversity Unit finalize the project report for internal and external distribution
4. the Directors create a divisional team made up of branch representatives to determine the cost of implementing the recommendations
5. the Access and Diversity Unit create a task force comprised of internal and external stakeholders representing people with disabilities to draft a strategic plan to guide the implementation of the report findings
6. the Access and Diversity Unit present the final report and recommendations and get endorsement from the City's Disability Issues Committee
7. the division obtain City Council approval for the strategic plan in time for the 2010 budget cycle.

The implementation of these recommendations by both PFR and Toronto City Council will be critical for aligning the programs and services available to people with disabilities to those available to the general public. Doing this will permit the division to better accomplish its mission of:

- more equitable access to high quality, locally responsive recreation programs
- more efficiently-operated recreation facilities
- safer, cleaner and more beautiful parks, trails, open spaces, ravines and natural areas
- improved recreation programs, services and accessibility for this population in a more cost-efficient manner
- a 1000 per cent increase in the number of Torontonians with disabilities participating in municipal recreation.

Final Remarks

In order to impact change in the five overriding and eight specific themes that came out of the Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities public consultation process, the division will need to successfully achieve the action steps and implementation of the recommendations described in this report. This will require collective commitment from PFR staff at all levels, Toronto City Council and disability service agencies. These efforts will lead to greater participation and employment by people with disabilities in municipal recreation.

The ultimate benefit of incorporating this feedback will be to improve resident participation, safety and satisfaction. Putting the public's feedback into action will assist the division in continuing to work towards its goal of a 1,000 per cent increase in recreational participation by:

- increasing access for all through barrier reduction and
- improving customer service to decrease complaints, risk and liability.

Incorporating this feedback will ultimately be a positive, proactive step to healthy living and thereby reduce global healthcare costs, resulting in enriching Toronto's social fabric.

SECTION VII - GLOSSARY OF TERMS - FULL DEFINITIONS

There were a number of terms used in this report which may either be new or have slightly different meanings than many people are accustomed to. In many cases however, only a summary definition was provided in the report for purposes of concision, these include:

Accessibility

A situation in which there is easy approach, entrance, exit or attainability. Access will often lead to inclusion.

Adapted Programs

Activities that participants with disabilities choose to join for the mutual benefit of experiencing a specialized recreational interest together, such as youth leadership programs, adult Swim and Social, life skills programs, the Snoezelen sensory exploration room, the Junior Chefs in Training cooking class and special interest social clubs.

Barrier

Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communication barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, a policy or a practice.

Children/Youth Services

Agencies that provide services and programs for children and youth (note: excluding childcare centres and nurseries). For example: children's aid societies, early learning centres, boys/girls clubs, youth drop-ins and parent/child drop-ins.

Disability (as defined by the Human Rights Code and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001)

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, and any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in the understanding of symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder, or
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*; ("handicap").

Health Services Providers

Agencies that provide community-based health care services. For example: community health centres, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, “disease or disability specific” public education and research organizations, detox centres.

Integrated Services

Integrated services are offered so that participants with disabilities may choose to join general programs for the mutual benefit of experiencing recreational interests together with participants who do not have disabilities. Such programs include summer camps, swim, leisure skate and general interest programs, etc.

Multi-Service Agencies

Agencies that provide a multitude of different programs and/or services under “one roof.”

Recreation

All those things a person or group chooses to do in order to make leisure time more interesting, enjoyable and satisfying. The Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation identified three elements contained within this definition:

- Choice – having both a variety of pursuits to select & the opportunity to make choices, based on one’s needs, interests and abilities;
- Individual/Group Participation - having the opportunity to do things on one’s own or with others;
- Enrichment - having the opportunity to enhance one’s quality of life through enjoyable recreational pursuits.

Recreational Organizations

Agencies that promote healthy and active lifestyles by providing opportunities for people to engage in recreational and leisure activities. For example: community centres and summer camps.

Recreational Respite

Recreational activities that give a parent or caregiver a break from taking care of someone with a disability; as well as giving the person in care a break from their usual caregiver(s).

Snoezelen Rooms

Multi-sensory environments filled with lighting effects, shapes, textures, aromatherapy, soft music and colors. They create a stress-free environment designed specifically for people with disabilities. The division operates a Snoezelen Room, the first in North America within a municipal recreation department, at Agincourt Community Centre.

SECTION VIII - REFERENCES

1. This definition follows that used in the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (S.O. 2001, Chapter 32).
http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_01o32_e.htm
2. Minister Jim Watson, (2005) A Message from the Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion. In Ministry of Health Promotion. Active 2010 Ontario's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.
<http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/sportandrec/active2010.asp>
3. Sawler, J. (2005) Encouraging the Abilities of People with Disabilities in Recreation and Active Living, Well Spring; August 2005; Vol. 16/No.4. Pg 2
<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/publications/wellspring/2005/AugArticle.html>
4. Statistics Canada, (2005) *Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)* at
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/82-221-XIE/2006001/tables/t004a.pdf>
5. The Roeher Institute, Disability, Culture and Service Engagement Among Chinese, Somali and Tamil Communities in Toronto. Pg 2, 8 and 14
6. Statistics Canada, (2001) *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS)* at
<http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/downpub/listpub.cgi?catno=89-577-XIE20010011>
7. Statistics Canada, (2006) Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Analytical Report: (Catalogue no. 89-628-XIE-no. 002), p. 14-16.
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-628-XIE/89-628-XIE2007002.pdf>
8. Toronto City Planning , (2002) Flashforward: Projecting Populations and Employment to 2031 in a Mature Urban Area. Pg 98-99.
<http://www.toronto.ca/torontoplan/flashforward.htm>
9. Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR): The Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities, (2005) *Recommendations for Performing Public Consultations for People with Disabilities*. Please call: 416-394-8532 or 416-394-8535.
10. PFR: The Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities, (2005) *Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities- Toronto Residents with Disabilities* survey. Please call: 416-394-8532 or 416-394-8535.
11. PFR: The Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities, (2005) *Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities- Community Agency Survey*. (See above)
12. Parsons, Ernie MPP, (2006) *Report on Consultations Regarding the Transformation of Developmental Services*. Pg 15
13. Watters, C., Owen, M. and Munroe, S. (2004) A Study of Deaf-Blind Demographics and Services in Canada. Pg 29
14. Parsons, Pg 40

APPENDIX 1 – OVERALL FINDINGS BY AGE GROUP

It is important to get feedback from different age groups in addition to the other categories, because most of Parks, Forestry and Recreation's programs and services are targeted to specific age groups.

The following section provides a summary of priorities identified by all age groups; adults, youth, preschoolers/children and older adults. It takes into account responses given by both community members and disability service agencies.

This additional information should improve future planning of recreation programs and services across the city.

ALL AGES (applies to each age group)

- **MORE ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT**
Expand our existing summer model of one-to-one support by offering it year-round across the city
- **TRANSPORTATION**
Provide transportation to recreation opportunities for people with disabilities (e.g. using public school buses, reimbursing TTC fares, or arranging a carpooling system with people attending mainstream programs)
- **RESPIRE CARE**
Provide respite care on weekday evenings and weekend afternoons across all four districts of the city
- **MORE FAMILY CHANGE ROOMS**
Provide spacious and regularly cleaned family change rooms and family washrooms in a greater number of recreational facilities
- **MORE WOMEN-ONLY ACTIVITIES**
Offer more specialized and integrated women-only swim, general fitness and sports programs
- **ENHANCED REGISTRATION PROCESS**
Provide a more user-friendly registration process (e.g. customer focused, staffed by empathic people who are sensitive to individual needs, less bureaucratic and ensures that voicemail messages are returned within one business day)
- **PROMOTE THE WELCOME POLICY**
Improve the promotion of the division's subsidized recreation or "welcome policy" program

ADULTS: Represented by 46 per cent ages (25 – 59)

- **MORE ADULT CAMPS**
Provide more camps for people over 25.
- **AFFORDABILITY**
Provide more affordable recreation opportunities for adults with disabilities.
- **MORE COMBINED PROGRAMS**
Provide more programs that combine recreation with a social and/or a life skills component.

YOUTH: Represented by 22 per cent ages (13 – 24)

- **MORE PROMOTION**
Improve the promotion of programs, services and employment opportunities for youth with disabilities by:
 - using more symbols and less language
 - greater distribution of information through schools, places of worship, agencies, bus shelters and mass media
 - making information available in alternative formats and in other languages.
- **MORE PROGRAMS**
Increase the number of social, life skills, fitness and sports programs for youth with disabilities.
- **OUTREACH WORKERS**
Communicate information about TTC schedules, routes and accessible buses through Youth Outreach Workers - Disability.

PRESCHOOLERS (ages 0-5) = (1 per cent) and CHILDREN (ages six-12) = (17 per cent):

Total (ages 0-12) = 18per cent

- **MORE ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT**
Provide one-to-one support all year round at municipal recreation opportunities and for longer than two weeks at summer camps
- **MORE ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUNDS**
Provide physically accessible playgrounds with accessible equipment such as raised sandboxes, chair swings and/or net swings for children who use wheelchairs in more city parks

OLDER ADULTS: Represented by 10 per cent ages (60 +)

- **MORE PROGRAMS**
Offer a greater number of social, swim and general exercise programs for older adults.
- **AFFORDABILITY**
Provide more affordable recreation opportunities for older adults with disabilities

APPENDIX 2 – PARKS, FORESTRY AND RECREATION ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Taken From The Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) PLAN, 2008

Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation have had a long history of providing recreational opportunities to people with disabilities and special needs. Since the onset of public focus groups, the division has been working even more diligently towards reaching the goal of greater inclusion and accessibility. The following are some examples of the many initiatives that have either been completed or are in progress.

- **Accessibility Design Guidelines**

Participated in the development, distribution, online posting and implementation strategy for the City of Toronto's standardized Accessibility Design Guidelines. In addition, any Request For Proposals (RFP's) includes requirements for compliance with the new Accessibility Design Guidelines.

- **Advertising and Promotion**

Improved advertising and promotion of adapted programs and integrated services by:

- Clearer communication of information in the Toronto FUN Recreation Guide.
- Indicating fully and partially accessible facilities in the main Parks, Forestry and Recreation brochure.
- Promoting TTY further (e.g. in the Canadian magazine "Vibes").
- Introducing a new city-wide TTY line through customer service for registration purposes.
- Attending fairs, events and conferences.
- Piloting an Adapted and Integrated services booklet in the Etobicoke York district and drafting similar booklets in the other three districts.
- Working with Corporate Communications to increase the accessibility of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation website for all users.

- **ASL Interpreters and Attendant Care Services**

Improved accessibility by having ASL interpreters and attendant care services available at City of Toronto public meetings.

- **Braille Resources**

Respond to staff requests for Braille printed materials such as:

- Parks signs
- Facility information for volunteer receptionist

- **PFR City-Wide Agency Database**

Compiled and maintained a City-wide central registry (database) for approximately 250 agencies and people who are interested in knowing more about or participating in adapted programs and integrated services and/or in volunteering for the division.

- **PFR City-Wide Steering Committee**

Established an advisory group, which includes representation from the disability community, to give city-wide advice and feedback on divisional disability issues

- **Communication with the Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing**

TTY's have been made available in all divisional district offices for recreational programming and a city-wide TTY line that connects directly to customer service representatives has been introduced for registration purposes.

- **Disability Research**

Increase knowledge of the demographics and service delivery expectations of people with disabilities by:

- Identifying people with disabilities in our community and the supports they require.
- Offering four separate public consultation sessions for people with disabilities through "Reactivate TO" and 14 public focus groups through the "Getting Services Right" research study.
- Partnering with agencies and developing questionnaires and surveys to send to existing customers.
- Using resources from the Access and Diversity section and staff to identify community needs.

- **Education on Permits, Grants and Services**

Education to disability serving agencies on: how to obtain affordable permits to hold events in our facilities and parks, how to access grants and recreation services

- **Facility Accessibility Audits**

Increased the accessibility of Parks, Forestry and Recreation facilities by:

- Conducting accessibility audits of divisional facilities and analyzing the audit results.
- Obtaining City Council approval for an annual budget line of \$500,000 for retrofits to facilities.
- Renovating Toronto's five golf courses on an as needed basis to increase the accessibility of buildings and washroom facilities (e.g. automatic doors and water fountains).

- **Parental Involvement**

Formed parent advisory groups to offer feedback on program and service development in the Toronto/East York, Scarborough and Etobicoke/York districts.

- **Park Accessibility**

Reduced barriers in parks by:

- Forming a small staff working group to document barriers in parks and a process for eliminating these barriers. This group has identified an inventory of accessible and partially accessible parks in each district.
- Identifying one park each year in each district that could be modified to accommodate people with disabilities.

- Developing an implementation strategy for park modifications.
- Identifying accessible features of parks across the city (e.g. High Park Children's Garden and Franklin's Garden tree house).

- **Physical Activity and Youth Mentorship**

Increased number of physical activity and youth mentorship programs.

- **Snoezelen Room**

An interactive sensory stimulation environment called the Snoezelen Room, officially opened to the public in September, 2005. Located in Scarborough, it was the first in North America to be launched by a municipal recreation department.

- **Technology: Adapted and Integrated Management System (AIMS)**

Worked with the City's Information Technology (IT) Department to develop the Adapted and Integrated Management System (AIMS). This system provides key staff with exclusive access to a confidential database of participant records. In this way, relevant information for health and safety requirements is captured, while the privacy of clients with disabilities is maintained.

- **Toronto Island Ferry Service**

Increased the accessibility of the Toronto Island Ferry Service by:

- Grinding of all ferry trip hazards in Harbour Square Park and on Toronto Island.
- Enlarging washroom doorways in the ferry dock building to provide wheelchair access.
- Installing push button automatic doors.

- **Training and Education**

Improved staff training by:

- Conducting ongoing work with staff, volunteers, committees, networking groups and community agencies on developing and improving training efforts.
- Making Human Rights training available to managerial and supervisory staff.
- Providing ongoing training to staff on applying the Accessibility Design Guidelines in the daily operation of City parks; staff are becoming more receptive and thinking about access on a regular basis.
- Providing the Accessibility Design Guidelines to working groups to share with districts.

- **Welcome Policy Promotion and Access**

Increased promotion to disability serving agencies of our Welcome Policy, which allows eligible families to receive subsidies to participate in recreational programs. This has increased the number of families that have accessed services.

- **Youth Outreach**

Increased outreach to youth with disabilities by:

- Developing a recreational strategy for youth with disabilities.
- Employing a disability Youth Outreach Worker as well as a Recreationist and a Supervisor focusing on people with disabilities in each of the four districts.

APPENDIX 3 – ACCESSIBLE HOUSING UNIT MAP



Building Accessibility
Map - 2008

APPENDIX 4 - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Disability Service Agencies

We would like to sincerely thank the following disability service agencies and organizations for their contributions to the Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities: Demographics and Service Delivery Expectations research project.

- Autism Ontario
- BALANCE for Blind Adults
- Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre
- Bloorview Kids Rehab
- Bridgepoint Health
- Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario
- Centre for Independent Living in Toronto
- Christian Horizons
- City of Toronto, Children's Services
- CNIB: Vision Health, Vision Hope
- Community Association for Riding for the Disabled (CARD)
- Community Head Injury Resource Services of Toronto
- Community Living Toronto (CLT)
- Down Syndrome Association of Toronto
- East Metro Youth Services
- Friends and Advocates Centre
- Friendship Club: Royal York Baptist Church
- Geneva Centre for Autism
- Heep Chi Association
- Jewish Family and Child Service
- Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) Toronto
- Lakeshore Area Multi-Service Project Community Health Centre (L.A.M.P.)
- Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District
- Learning Enrichment Foundation
- March of Dimes
- Meta Centre
- Ministry of Community and Social Services: Ontario Disability Support Program
- Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Toronto Chapter
- Muscular Dystrophy Canada
- Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy
- Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children
- Ontario Track 3 Ski Association
- Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association
- Parasport Ontario

- Pegasus Community Project for Adults with Special Needs
- REENA Foundation, Toby and Henry Battle Development Centre
- Respite Services.com
- Rexdale Community Health Centre
- Scadding Court Community Centre
- Silvercreek Preschool
- Special Olympics Ontario
- Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario
- St. Joseph's Health Centre, Family Medicine
- Storefront Humber Inc.
- Surrey Place Centre
- Terry Tan Child Centre
- The Canadian Hearing Society
- The Easter Seals Society, Ontario
- The George Hull Centre for Children and Families
- The Salvation Army, Broadview Village
- Tobias House Resource Centre
- Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)
- Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Special Education and Support Services
- Toronto Rehabilitation Institute
- Toronto Transit Commission, Wheel Trans
- Trail Blazers
- Trillium Health Centre, Rehabilitation Services
- Variety Village
- West Park Healthcare Centre, Recreation Department
- Youth Link
- YWCA Toronto

Committees and Reference Groups

We would like to thank the following members of the Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Steering Committee for their feedback and insight on this report.

- Bill Alexander, Citizen
- Barbara Anthony, Bloorview Kids Rehab
- Shane Holten, SPH Planning and Consulting
- Patricia Longmuir, PEL Consulting

We would also like to acknowledge members of the Strategic Reference Group for their input and suggestions during the project planning and development phase. These are:

- Jack Brown, City of Toronto, PFR
- Deborah Jackson, City of Toronto, Children's Services
- Jaye Lee Jensen, formerly of Toronto Transit Commission, Wheel-Trans
- Adrienne Johnson, Toronto District School Board, Special Education Department
- Bernita Lee, City of Toronto, Diversity Management and Community Engagement
- Alan Meisner, City of Toronto, Social Development, Finance and Administration
- Siva Sivasangaram, formerly of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program
- Karen Swaffield, Community Living Toronto
- Bob Thacker, Toronto Transit Commission, Wheel-Trans

- Angela Vanalstine, formerly of March of Dimes
- Sorraya Walker, City of Toronto, PFR
- Mel Watson, formerly of Toronto Community Housing, Capital Planning

Focus Group Staff

We would like to thank the following City of Toronto, PFR staff for their assistance at the Getting Services Right for Torontonians with Disabilities focus groups.

- Sheena Abdulcader
- Shawn Abdulcader
- Costanza Allevato
- Sabrina Antones
- Kenneth Atkinson
- Trevor Baxter
- Sarah Billings
- Anthony Boudrean
- Karen Boulton
- Leslie Boyle
- Karla Bravo
- Meaghen Bunting
- Shannon Cabral
- Michael Campbell
- Daniel Caravaggio
- Yasmin Carter
- Brechin Caverley
- Melissa Clare
- Darla Connoih
- Roman Dasek
- Jackie Day
- Serena DeSouza
- Elaine Devine
- Anita Dickson
- Steve Domotor
- Liz Emanuele
- Betty Fallis-Trow
- Nancy Figueredo
- John Formosa
- Angela Gagliano
- Brendan Gray
- Deborah Harry
- Kym Haynes
- Delsean Haywood
- Janet Hilts
- Wendy Jang
- Helen Kennedy
- Angie Kingswood
- Jen Kitchen
- Paula Lemyre
- Rocco Licalzi

- Jenny Lo
- Anne Mackay
- Katie Marians
- John Mayburn
- Kelly McDougall
- Gary Mercer
- Anne Messore
- Lindsay Mogford
- Jimmy Oliveira
- Steve Pett
- Pauline Phillys
- Marta Proctor
- Victor Rego
- Ivan Robinson Jr
- Joanne Roy-Victor
- Shaon Saeed
- Virginia Schenk
- Lala Schultz
- Sonya Serpa
- Heather Stainton
- Meaghan Tanaka
- Carlotta Thomas
- George Tzavaras
- Kathy Wiele
- Reza Yousefi

Statistical Information Providers

We would like to acknowledge the following people for providing us with statistical information that was used in the preparation of this report.

- Donna Howard, City of Toronto, Public Health
- Andrew Mackenzie, Statistics Canada
- Brian Oliver, Toronto Transit Commission, Wheel-Trans

We would also like to acknowledge additional City of Toronto staff for assisting with the logistical components of this research initiative.

- Gerry Burns, Steve Domotor, and John Formosa, City of Toronto, Records and Information Management: Printing and Distribution
- Brad Eyre, City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR)-Access & Diversity
- Ken Jeffers, City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation-Access & Diversity
- Joylyn Mendonca, formerly of City of Toronto, PFR
- Erin Piotrowski, formerly of City of Toronto, PFR
- Wayne Reeves, City of Toronto, PFR
- Mike Schreiner, City of Toronto, PFR
- Don Smith, City of Toronto, PFR
- Kathy Wiele, City of Toronto, PFR-Divisional Co-ordination & Community Engagement
- Liz Weston, City of Toronto, PFR- Office of the Advocate for People with Disabilities