

Housing Journey Survey

Results and Analysis

May 2023



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The following report provides an initial summary of responses to the Housing Journey survey recently issued by the Planning & Economic Development Department. This survey is only part of a larger public engagement strategy around a Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code amendment currently under development by the department, known overall as Building Opportunity for Housing (BOH).

The Housing Journey survey was issued online via the Survey Monkey software between January 23 and March 31 of this year. The survey asked a combination of multiple-choice and text answers exploring topics of past, present, and future housing as well as some general economic and demographic information. Questions were chosen to be understandable and easy to answer by most residents.

Survey Response Rates and Valid Submittals

The survey was available online for a total of 68 days via an online form. Respondents were not required to answer every question if they did not want to. The survey was issued in seven languages common in the Spokane region, including English, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Marshallese. The survey was originally drafted in English and then translated into these additional languages by Spokane International Translation, a local agency that provides both voice and text translation services. Similarly, text responses that were received in languages other than English were translated by the same firm into English for the consideration of decisionmakers.

During the survey period, the City received 5,226 responses, a record number for a City of Spokane survey. Of those, the following non-English responses were received:

- 31 in Spanish;
- 9 in Arabic;
- 3 in Russian; and
- 3 in Marshallese.

Upon completion of the survey period, staff undertook an overall review and analysis of the responses. During this review, several responses were identified that showed a high probability they were not genuine responses and had been generated by a bot or script. Various criteria were used to confirm this determination, including:

- Completion times of less than one minute;
- Grouped simultaneous submittals that provided identical responses to all questions; and
- Responses in individual records that contradicted answers later in the same survey response.

These suspect responses were analyzed by staff and found to be sourced from international servers in countries known to have issues with internet security. Accordingly, these flagged responses were removed from the results pool and are not represented in the following analysis. A total of 1,809 responses were invalidated, leaving 3,417 valid responses. Those 3,417 will be used going forward for all analysis and discussion.

Result Fidelity and Census/ACS Comparison

In the case of this report, fidelity connotes the approximate degree to which the 3,700 responses are representative of the Spokane community. This is not as exact as statistical validity but is a reasonable approach for determining the applicability of results for purposes of the BOH project. To measure the

fidelity of the collected responses, staff compared certain questions in the survey to similar questions asked by the American Communities Survey (“ACS”, a product of the US Census Bureau). If the proportion of answers were similar to those given by ACS the survey is considered to have fidelity and readers can reasonably assume that the survey results were not unduly influenced by one part of the community to the detriment of others. To test this, seven ACS variables are presented in the following table alongside the response rates from survey responses:

Variable Comparison: ACS to Survey Results

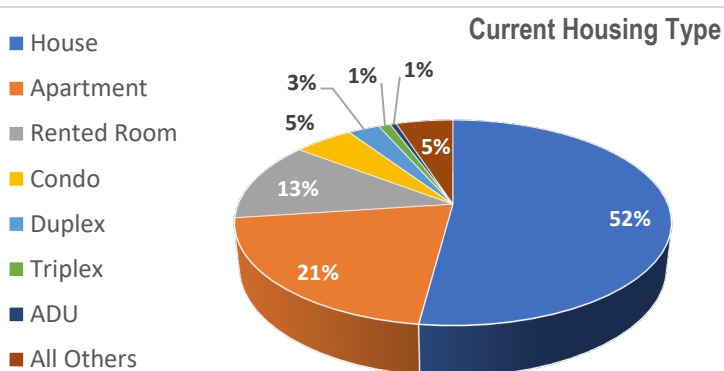
Variable	ACS	Survey	Deviation
Worked Full Time	57.6%	57.1%	0.5%
Worked Part Time	19.8%	19.9%	-0.1%
Work from Home	9.5%	10.7%	-1.2%
Own Their Home	56.9%	54.8%	2.2%
Rent Their Home	43.1%	40.0%	3.1%
2 Bedroom Home	29.9%	31.6%	-1.7%
1 Bedroom Home	14.9%	13.9%	1.0%

Note: ACS = 5-year 2021 American Community Survey Results, retrieved from data.census.gov

All response rates between the ACS and the survey were within +/- five percent, suggesting survey results are reasonably representative of the community. However, no part of this analysis is meant to indicate that these results are scientifically or statistically accurate. This is an optional survey whose respondents chose for themselves whether they were sufficiently interested in the topic to respond. As such, the results should not be considered alone and should instead be evaluated alongside other engagement efforts underway by the City (and others) around the topic of housing.

Current Housing Characteristics

The first round of questions provided input into the respondents and their current living conditions. As shown in the chart below, the survey asked respondents to indicate their current home type. Responses indicate most live in a house, with the second most living in apartments. The low number of respondents living in duplexes, triplexes, and ADUs may correlate to the low number of units of those types present in the city.



Note: “All Others” answers included “unhoused, group housing, dormitory,” or a text answer entered by the user.

Respondents were also asked to write in an answer if they felt that the available categories did not reflect their current home. Of these “other” responses, several indicated townhomes, while others stated they were living with friends or relatives. Several others indicated “trailer” or “RV.” All told, only 52 respondents felt the need to select the “other” option.

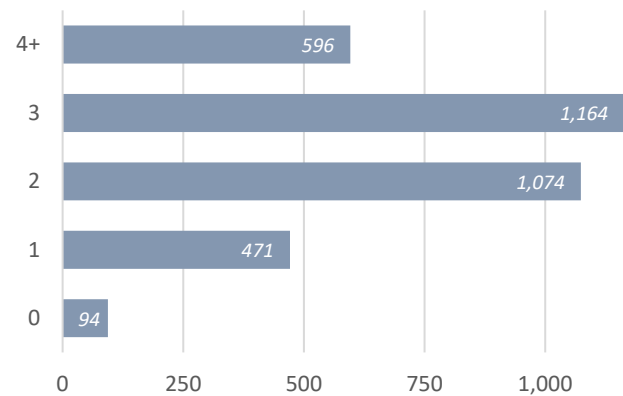
Next, the survey explored the number of bedrooms in the homes of respondents (see next page). The overwhelming majority of

respondents reported either two or three bedrooms. However, both larger and smaller residences are still fairly common. Only 17 percent of respondents were from homes with one or no bedroom, indicating that smaller homes were somewhat less prevalent in the responses.

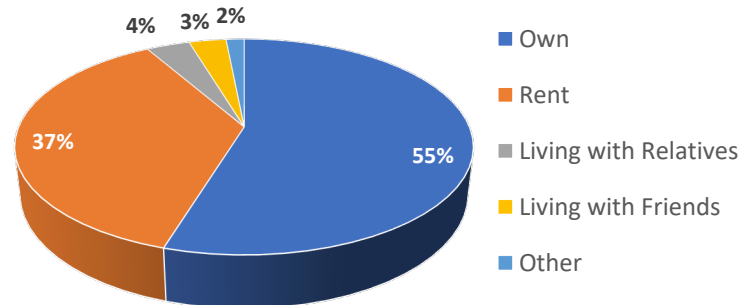
In addition to the physical characteristics of the home, it is helpful to understand the tenure of current housing—whether respondents rent or own their home. The proportion of responses is shown at right. More than half the respondents, 55 percent, own their home. Nearly 40 percent rent and the remaining live with friends or relatives, or answered “other”.

When reviewing the above results, readers should note that these answers do not indicate the *desired* condition—some respondents may be living in 3-bedroom homes but are seeking more or fewer bedroom homes. See the “**Housing Desire**” section later in this report for a comparison between home types in which respondents are currently living and their desired home type.

Number of Bedrooms in the Home



Current Housing Tenure



Note: Respondents were not given an option to explain their response of “other.”

Adults and Children in the Home

The survey asked respondents to report the number of children in their home as well as the number of adults. Children were defined in the survey as those under 18. With these two factors, it is useful to compare the answers together. The following table shows the responses to both questions and how they compare. For sake of clarity, responses of four or more adults or children are combined.

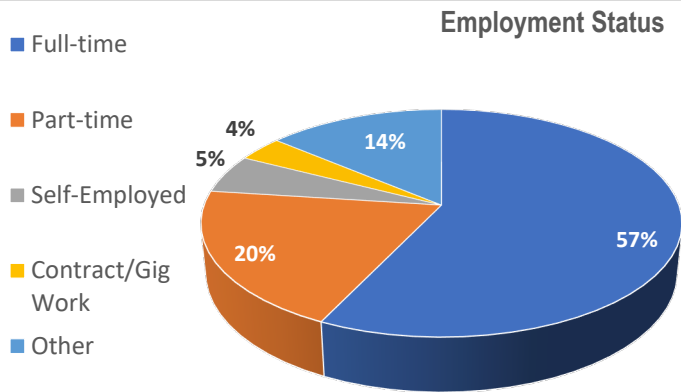
Adults and Children by Respondent

Number of Adults	Number of Children					TOTAL
	0	1	2	3	4+	
1	288	33	20	2	2	345
2	627	255	153	35	20	1,090
3	482	232	124	41	15	894
4+	146	114	83	24	29	396
TOTAL	1,543	634	380	102	66	2,725

Notes: Data shown in table represent the number of children reported by respondents who also reported that number of adults. For example, to determine the number of times a respondent reported both 1 adult and 2 children, find the intersection of the “1 adult” row and the “2 children” column to find 20 total respondents.

As shown in the table on the previous page, the most common combination was two adults with zero children, though respondents who reported children in the home made up 43 percent of all responses.

While responses of more than two children made up only a small percentage of responses (6 percent), a much larger number of responses indicated more than two adults in the home (48 percent). This, combined with the high percentage of responses indicating zero children (57 percent), could indicate that the need for housing options for adults is higher in Spokane than for those with children. However, more study is required to make this determination. Approximately 50 percent of responses to the survey represented households with two or fewer adults and two or fewer children.



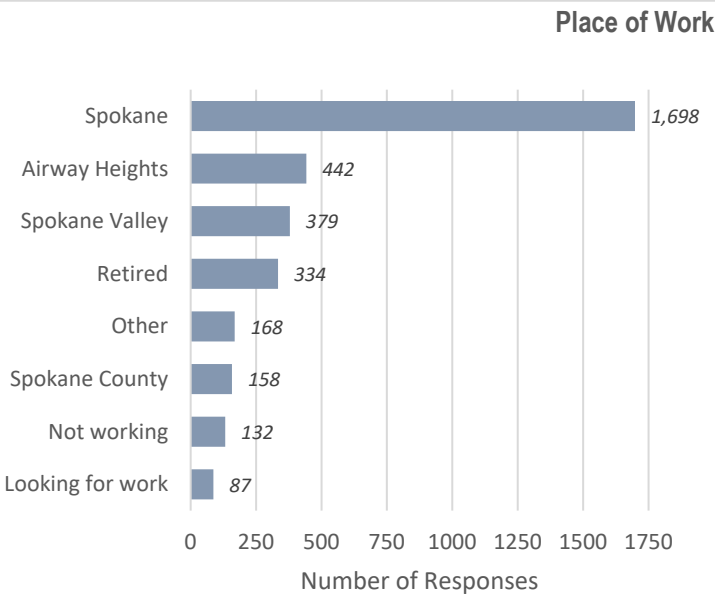
Note: Respondents were not given an option to explain their response of "other."

Employment Responses

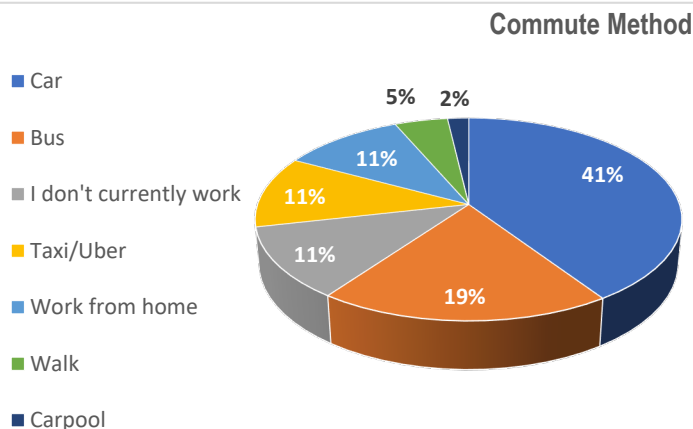
Relatively few questions in the survey concerned economic aspects of housing and need, though some general questions were included. Firstly, respondents' employment status was requested (results at left). Nearly two-thirds of respondents work full time, coupled with an additional five percent that are "self-employed." One fifth of the respondents work part time as well. These proportions match, within five percent, similar data provided by the ACS (see the "Fidelity" section above).

The survey next asked respondents to report the location of their work. Fifty percent of respondents work in the City of Spokane, while the remainder either works elsewhere or does not work at all. Of note, four percent of respondents reported "not working" while a further three percent are actively looking for work.

The survey also asked respondents for their typical form of commute. The largest proportion of respondents drive to work (41 percent), but other commute methods are well represented in the responses. Also of note, 11 percent of respondents work from home, a number that is assumed to be much larger after the COVID pandemic than before. As the world continues to

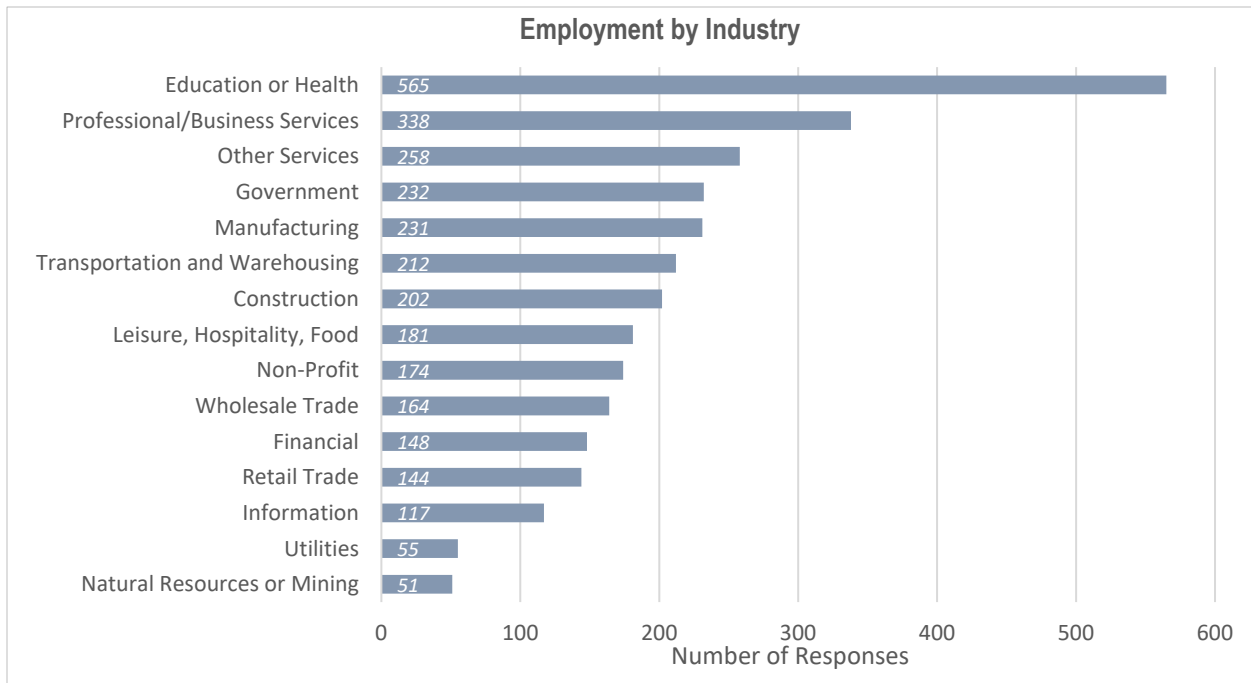


Note: Respondents were not given an option to explain their response of "other."

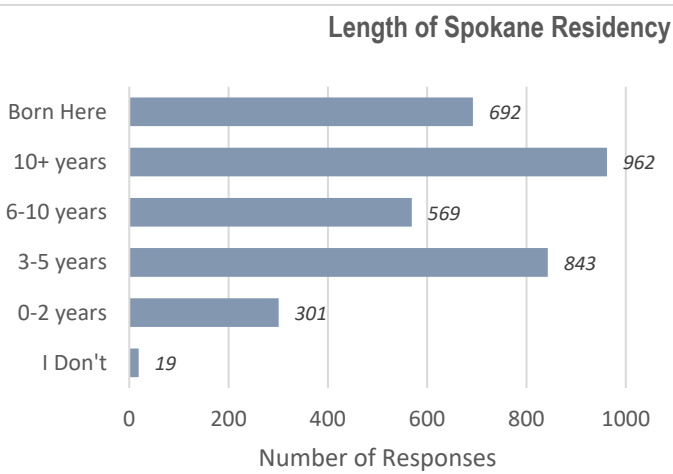


recover from the fallout of a global pandemic and the rise of new technologies that allow many more work from home opportunities, the working environment may continue to change. This number should be monitored in the future, but this survey only provides a point-in-time picture of current employment here.

The survey also asked in what general industries respondents are currently employed (those who *are* employed). Because there is a very large list of possible industries in common usage, the survey utilized grouped responses that conform to typical Census reporting. As shown below, respondents reported working in a wide range of industries, with all possible industry groups represented. One in five respondents work in the Education/Health industry, with a further ten percent in the Professional/Business Services realm.



Overall, respondents reported a broad range of employment industries, commute types, status, and place of work. Accordingly, responses to other questions are expected to represent a similarly broad range of residents and community members.



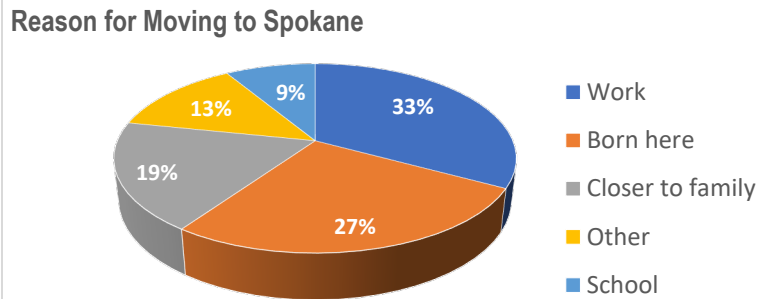
Residence and Mobility

To better understand the degree to which responses are from long-time residents of Spokane or those that have moved here in recent years, the survey asked respondents to report how long they have lived in Spokane (see at left). The survey did not define the term “born here” further, so some respondents may have reported longer times if they lived here in the past, left, and have since returned.

Of note, only 19 respondents indicated that they do not currently live in Spokane. For the remaining responses,

only 300 lived here less than three years (9 percent). More than a quarter of respondents have lived here more than a decade, not including a further 20 percent that reported being born here. Responses span the range of possible residencies, indicating that no one group has overly influenced the survey data. Those not living in the region are not well represented, but they were not the direct target of this outreach effort. Regardless, some of these respondents may benefit from the overall project if they decide to move to the region in the future.

For those that live here, the survey also asked respondents to report the general reason they moved to Spokane in the first place. Responses are shown at right. More than half of respondents were either born here or came to Spokane for work. Perhaps indicating a social aspect to housing need, nearly 20 percent of respondents (622) indicated they moved here to be closer to family.

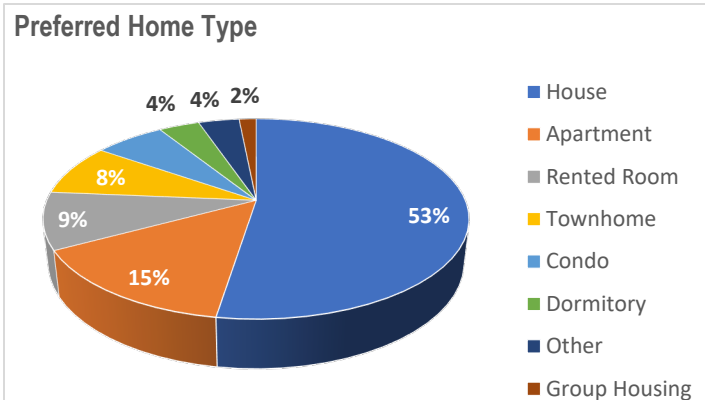


There is an apparent inconsistency when comparing length of residence to their reason for moving to Spokane. While 692 respondents reported their length of residence as “Born Here,” many more (898) reported that they moved to Spokane because they were born here. There are two possible explanations for this.

Firstly, as is often said, “Spokane is a great place to move back to.” Many residents who have interacted with staff as part of other public engagement efforts have indicated that they were born here, left for employment or school, and moved back to Spokane later. Accordingly, some of these respondents may have answered “born here” on both questions, while others may not have. Secondly, it was not explicit in the survey questions that “born here” as a reason for moving here or as a length of stay indicates that they have lived only here their whole lives. Respondents’ answers to these two questions were left to each respondent’s judgment, thus there is some variability in possible responses.

Housing Desire and Factors in Securing It

The survey sought to understand better the relationship between where respondents live and where they desire to live. Firstly, the survey asked respondents to report their *preferred* housing type, with the overall results shown at right. The survey then asked respondents to report what kind of housing they would occupy if cost were not a factor.

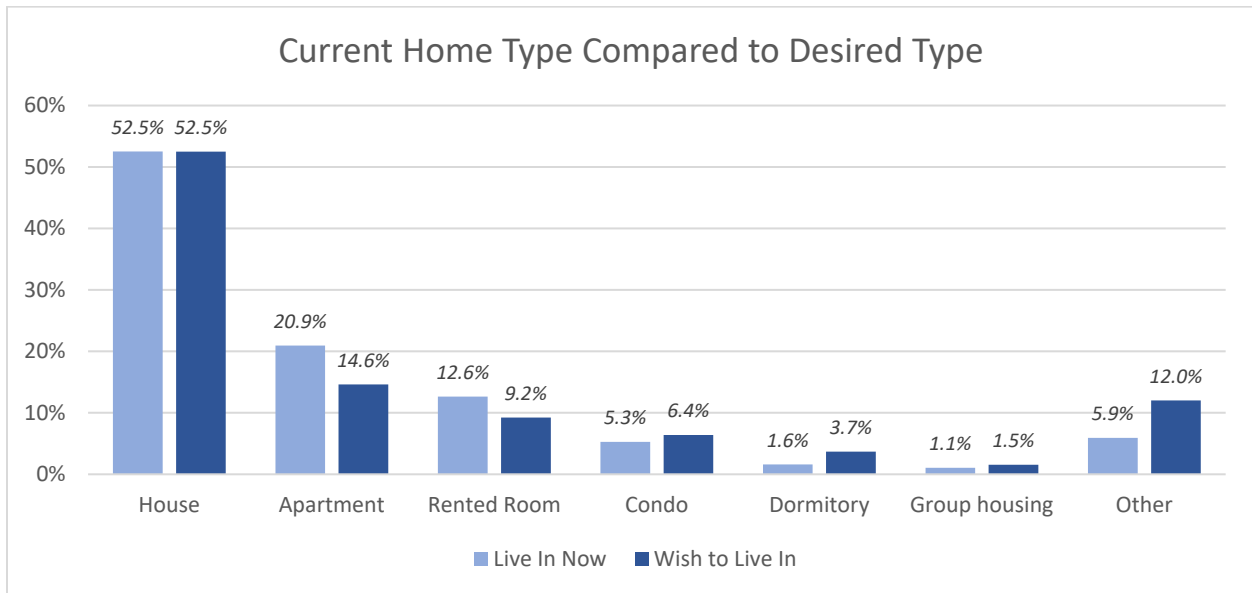


If respondents selected “other” as their preferred home type, the survey asked them to enter their preferred type. These ranged widely and included several responses that were outside the concept of “type” as envisioned in this question. That said, many people mentioned ADUs and duplexes as a preferred home type. Co-housing was also a

frequent answer, as was mention of a senior/retirement community. Only four percent of respondents selected “other” as a response here.

The relationship between existing housing and preferred housing can shed light on the overall demand for certain housing types in the city. By comparing these answers, we might better understand those parts of the community that remain in undesired housing types, and how they might migrate to other types if that type of home became available. Results also potentially speak to the potential that smaller, more affordable housing is sometimes occupied by those that seek to move to larger/different housing. Residents vacating a smaller, more affordable unit would then free that unit up for someone who is seeking smaller or more affordable options.

Some adjustment of responses is required to directly compare existing and desired home types. Most of the possible answers to both questions match, but some (like “triplex” or “duplex”) cannot be matched perfectly between the two questions. For the following discussion, any answers that match between the two questions (i.e. house, apartment, condo) are retained, while any that are unique to one question or the other are grouped into the “other” category. The resulting comparison overall is shown in the figure below.



As a rule of thumb, differences in the “live in now” and “wish to live in” answers in the chart provide an approximation of demand for that type. If the second column is greater, then we can assume that demand for that type is greater than our current capacity. Likewise, if the righthand column is lower, then demand is lower than our current supply.

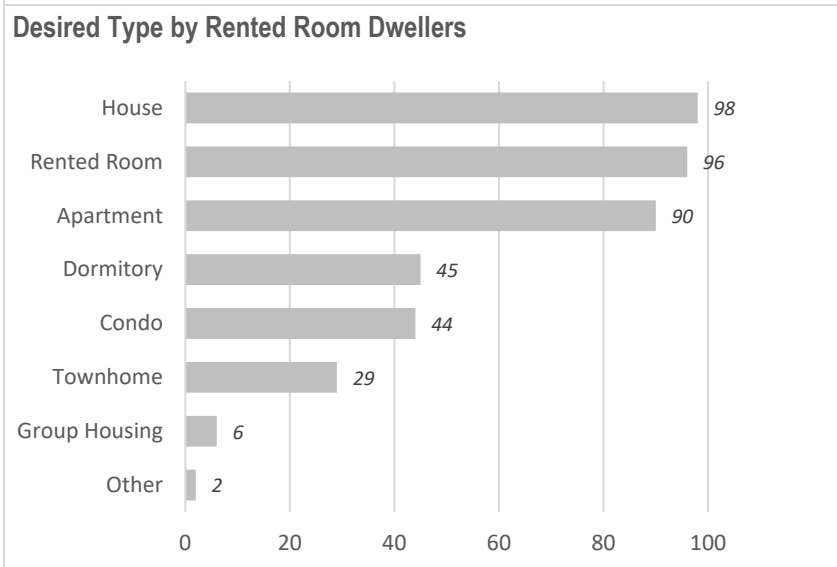
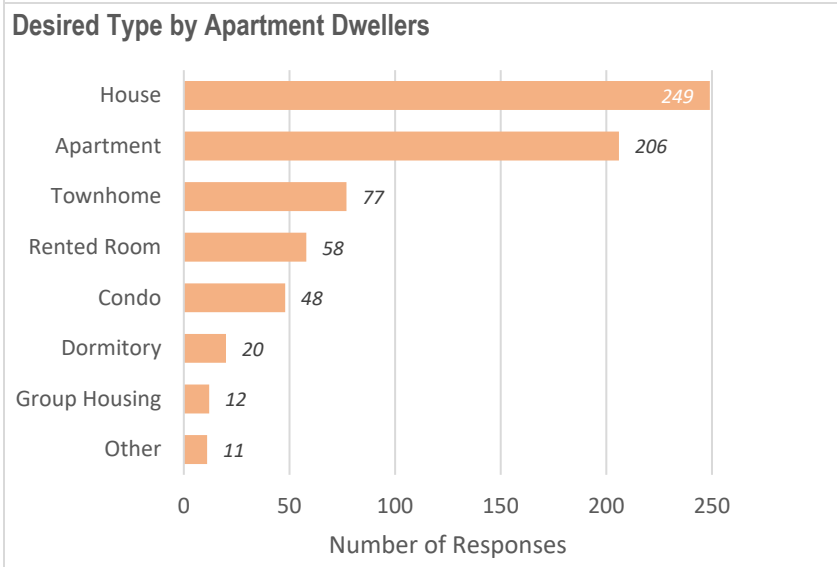
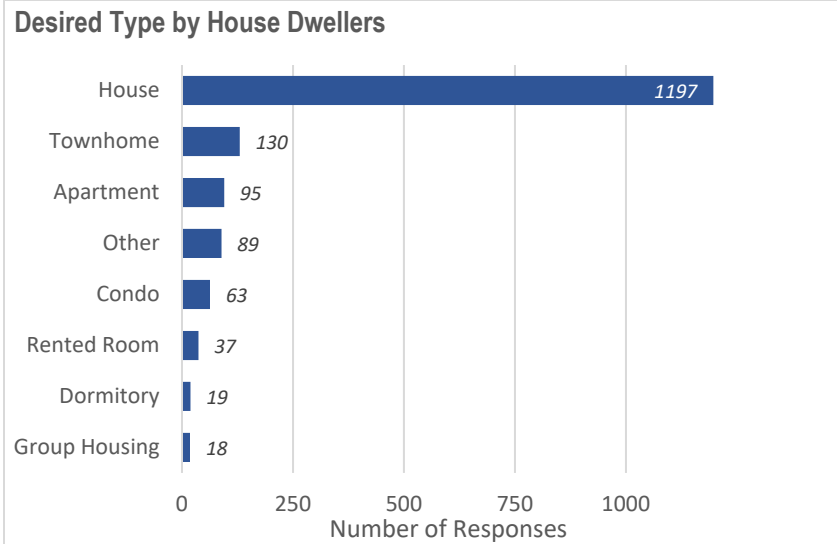
Using this basic comparison as a guide, the chart above indicates that demand for houses is somewhat the same while demand for apartments and rented rooms is significantly lower. In contrast, demand for condos and dormitories is increased. Perhaps most significantly for the considerations of the project at hand, demand for “other” types of housing (including duplexes, triplexes, etc.) is significantly higher. Those seeking these other types of housing are twice those currently living in those types. In general, these responses would seem to indicate a moderate shift in demand from more “traditional” forms (e.g., houses and apartments) to types not currently seen in large numbers in Spokane, like middle housing types.

To further illuminate these comparisons, three charts are provided at right, indicating the home type desired by those currently living in a house, an apartment, and a rented room, in that order. These data are distinct from the comparison on the previous page because they are limited only to the answers of one type of *current* home type.

Of the 1,648 respondents living in houses now, only 1,197 reported they wish to remain in a house, a reduction of 27 percent. This is a telling difference that may indicate the desire for more housing types in the city outside the “traditional” single-family detached house. It could also point to a desire by many house dwellers to change their housing type, while those living in apartments or other home types might still want to occupy houses. To explore this, the next chart is provided.

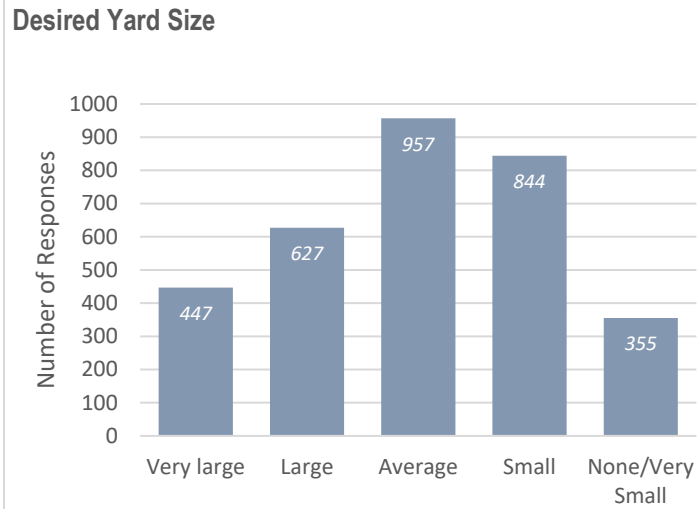
The second chart indicates desired housing types reported by apartment dwellers. When asked where they live now, 681 respondents answered “apartment.” Of those 681, only 206 reported wishing to continue living in an apartment (30 percent). However, not all of those wished to leave apartment living for a house. Only 37 percent of apartment dwellers are seeking a house. A further 18 percent are seeking a condo or townhome. This may indicate that ownership of some kind is more important to some apartment dwellers than the physical type of home.

Lastly, the third chart indicates the desired housing type of those who reported they currently live in a rented room. A total of 410 respondents currently live in a rented room. Of those, desire is split nearly evenly among houses, staying in a rented room, and apartments (approximately 23 percent each). A further ten percent desire to live in dormitories (pointing to possible students) and another 10 percent desire a condo situation.



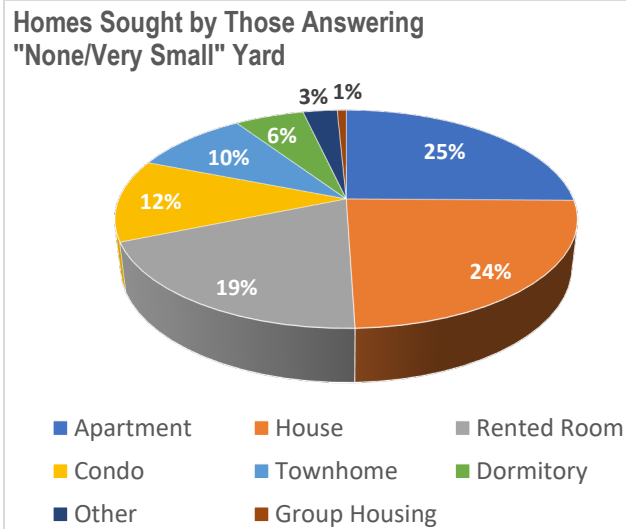
There are more factors involved than just the type of home, of course. The yard and the property on which that home sits have been frequently reported as a factor in choosing a home.

When discussing this topic in the community and with decisionmakers, the assumption is often expressed that most people want a big green lawn with lots of space. To explore that assertion, the survey asked respondents to classify how large their ideal yard would be. Possible answers were subjective, using terms like “average” and “small,” as this question intended to delve into personal attitudes, not specific measured sizes of yards. An option was included for “no yard”, as not everyone was expected to want one.



As shown at right, a range of answers were provided, but the peak was for an “average” yard size. More telling, however, is the high number of “small” responses as well as a notable number of “none/very small.” Approximately 37 percent of respondents are seeking a small, very small, or no yard, potentially speaking against traditional detached home subdivisions with large yards, and more towards middle housing types with shared or smaller yards per lot.

To further explore this group of responses, the chart at right provides the housing types sought by only those that want either a small yard or no yard at all. Of those 1,199 respondents, a quarter are also seeking a house, further supporting the concept that a large house with a large yard may not represent the main desire of Spokane residents as it may have in the past.

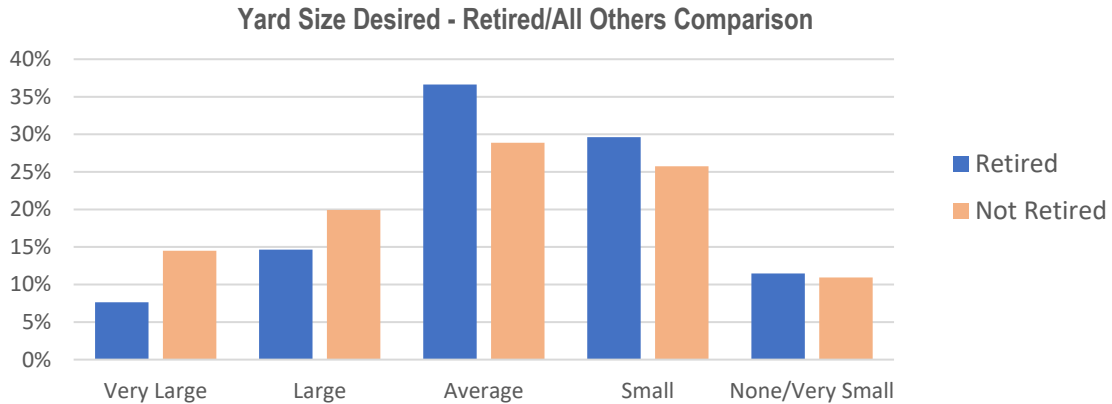


In addition to comparisons of house type and yard size, it is useful to consider that the answer might differ depending on the phase of life of the respondent. For instance, the question has arisen whether retired persons in general desire smaller yards. US Census data has shown that

the share of the population 65 years old and older has increased in Washington and is expected to continue increasing. If retired persons do in fact desire smaller yards, the increasing share of the population that is retired could directly affect the overall answers to the survey. To account for this, the chart at the top of the next page separates out yard size desired by retired persons from all others.

While there is some variation between retired and non-retired respondents, the two sets of answers show a similar curve. Answers of “Very Large” or “Large” seem less prevalent among retirees, perhaps

supporting the assumption that many retirees desire smaller yards. However, retirees also seem to desire average yards more often than non-retired persons.



Barriers and Challenges Faced by Respondents

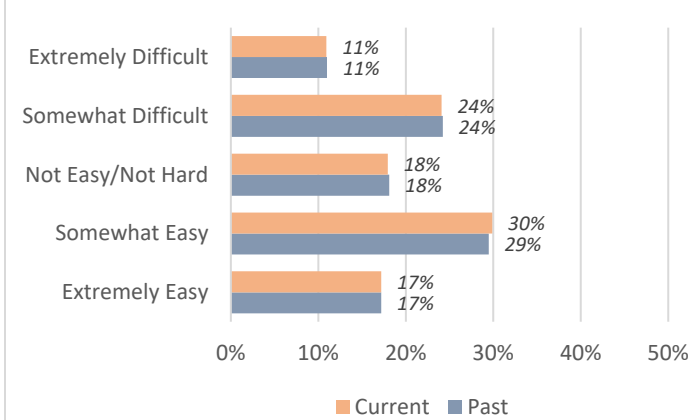
The survey not only asked respondents what they desired, but also to report on their experiences in the past. As a general indicator of difficulty, respondents were asked to grade the relative ease or difficulty they experienced when finding both their current and past residences.

As shown in the chart at right, it made little difference if respondents were considering their current housing or their previous home. The answers in each category largely conformed regardless. Of note is that the fewest respondents felt either experience was extremely difficult (11 percent), while nearly three quarters of respondents felt that their experiences were between somewhat easy and somewhat difficult.

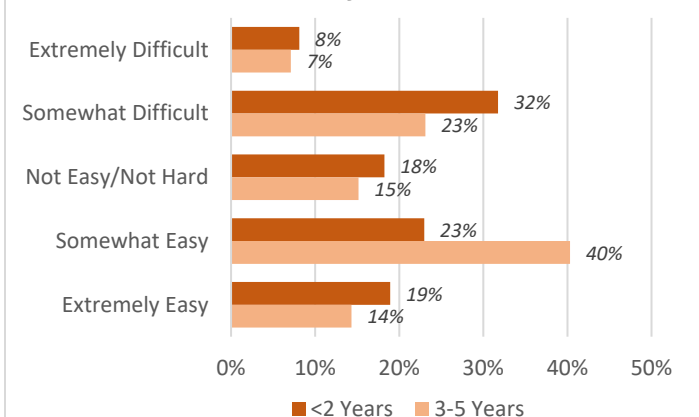
Somewhat surprisingly, the highest number of respondents reported that their current and past housing was somewhat easy to obtain. However, because this survey includes both people who recently moved to Spokane and those that have lived here a long time (or all their lives), it is helpful to break these results down by respondents' length of residency. The second chart indicates answers to the "current housing" question, limiting respondents to only those that have lived in Spokane less than two years or those that have lived here three to five years.

By looking closer at recent residents, some interesting conclusions can be reached. Most cogent to the considerations of this project, it appears that

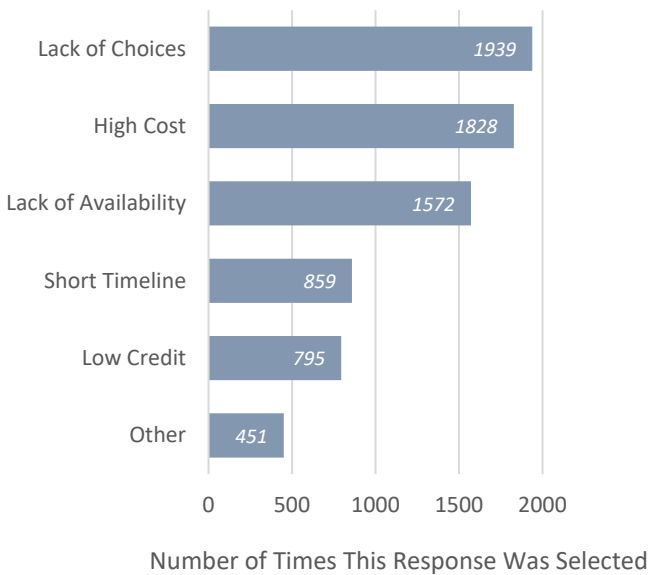
Ease/Difficulty Securing Housing (Past and Current)



Ease/Difficulty Securing Current Housing (Less Than 5 Years Residency)



Reported Difficulties Finding Housing



recent residents (those less than two years) reported a more difficult time finding housing than those that moved here three to five years ago. What cannot be determined from this survey is the effect the COVID epidemic had on this response. However, it is sufficient to assume that the ease by which recently arrived residents find housing in Spokane is worsening of late.

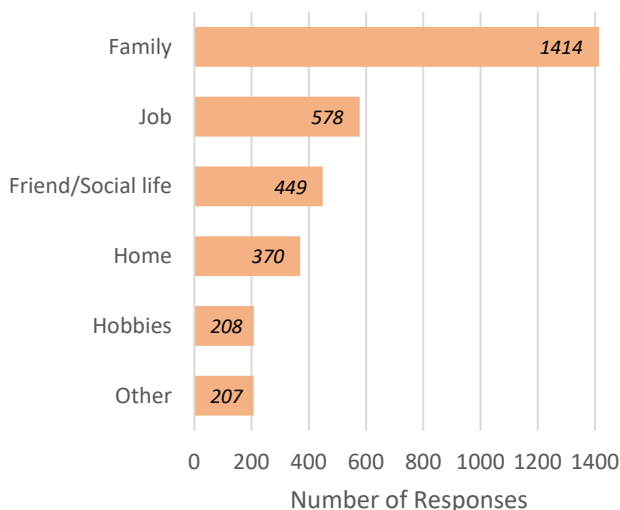
The survey also asked respondents to choose from a list of common housing hardships and provide the top three they experienced when seeking and securing housing. Respondents were also provided an opportunity to enter something else if they felt something was missing from the selected answers. The chart at left provides the various difficulties reported by respondents.

High cost, lack of choice, and lack of availability were each reported the most. A low number of “other” responses were reported as well (approximately 6 percent of the time). Among answers of “Other” to this question, respondents often indicated difficulties that are closely related to the choices already listed—such as cost, difficulty finding homes, and availability in a preferred neighborhood. However, some unique difficulties were mentioned, including the inability to find a place that would accept pets, difficulty securing a loan, and rising interest rates. Some also mentioned that cash buyers were making it hard for those with loans to purchase homes in Spokane.

High cost, lack of choice, and lack of availability were each reported the most. A low number of “other”

In an effort to explore desire and need further, the survey also asked respondents to indicate the best thing about their life by choosing from a list of possible answers. The various answers received from respondents are shown below.

"Best Thing About Your Life"

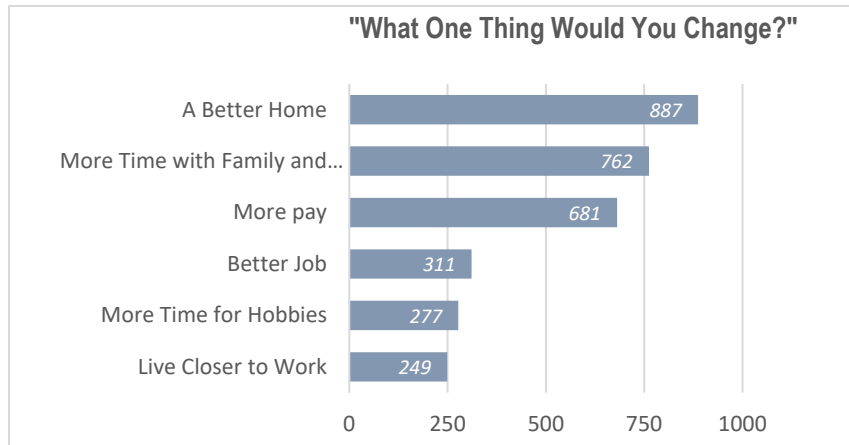


Perhaps not surprisingly, the most respondents by far listed family as the best thing about their life. Only about 11 percent listed their home as their answer, potentially indicating need for improvement in housing conditions in the city. As a secondary concern, the high “family” response rate indicates a possible focus on community and social aspects over physical housing needs. However, home is a critical component of community and society—a safe home is generally understood to be a critical component in the happiness of any person, family, or group.

“Other” responses to this question ranged widely. The vast majority of these “other” answers relate to the other possible answers (i.e., “time with family” could also be classified under the “family” response). However, some unique responses stood out, including

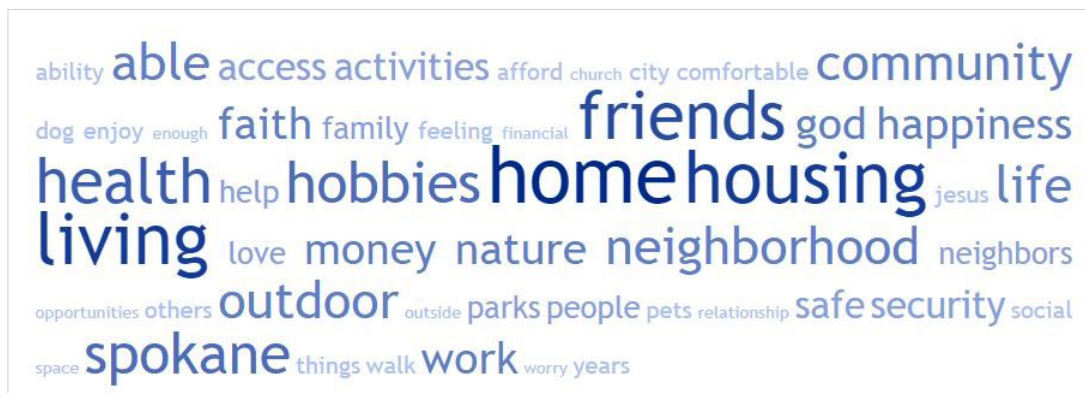
mentions of work/life balance and topics of religion or faith. Still others mentioned that the best thing in their life was that they were now retired.

As a follow up question to the best thing about life, the survey also asked respondents to report the top thing in their life they would change if they could (see results at right). Possible answers were chosen by staff to somewhat coordinate with the previous question. The chart at right provides the response from respondents.



The most frequent request to this question was “a better home.” Considering the low number of respondents who indicated in the last question that home was the best thing about their life, respondent satisfaction with their home is both important and relatively low at this time.

A follow up question was asked as well regarding the topic of happiness and satisfaction. This open-ended question asked respondents to describe the one thing in their life has had the most influence on their happiness, not including job or family. The survey did not specify if that thing should be positive or negative. Using a word cloud association tool, the following terms arose most frequently (see below). As shown in the graphic, home and housing were two of the most frequent words that showed up in the 1,793 answers provided to this question. Community was also prevalent in answers as well as God or other terms of faith.



Note: The more often a term appeared in the text answers to the question, the larger the word appears in the word cloud above. The top terms in this word cloud, those most frequently included in responses, were “home, living, and housing, in that order.

To provide some analysis of the responses, staff used various word searches for key topics/terms and recorded the frequency those topics appeared in the responses to this question. Please note that some respondents answered with more than one theme or topic. Major themes identified by staff analysis are shown in the table on the following page.

Theme or Topic	Count of Related Responses
Home, Housing, Shelter	256
Friends, Neighbors, Community, Pets	242
Religion, Faith	146
Money, Finances, Mortgage, Affordable	131
Nature, Outdoors, Gardens	116
Hobbies, Activities, Sports	91

Final Conclusions

This effort overall resulted in one of the largest public engagement response rates of any effort to date by the City of Spokane. Accordingly, several major takeaways have arisen from the analysis above for consideration. To provide a summary for decisionmakers, the largest outputs from the Housing Journey survey can be summarized as follows:

1. **The housing crisis is foremost in the community's mind.** Collected responses make it clear that housing is both important and in crisis in Spokane. A combination of factors, chief among them lack of choice and high prices, have contributed to this condition. Housing is both the highest need as well as the largest factor when achieving happiness and wellbeing in the region.
2. **Choice and diversity of housing type is truly a major factor in the local housing situation.** A significant part of the community still seeks a single family detached home, but the desire for middle housing types is high enough to warrant the development of more middle housing. To put it bluntly, no single housing type can serve the immediate needs or desires of the entire Spokane community.
3. **Demand in the housing market is nuanced.** It would be incorrect to assume that purchasing a detached house with a big yard is the dream of almost all residents. The survey delved deeply into respondents' desires and found that the dream for many has evolved from the traditional detached house to a range of living situations. Furthermore, respondents' needs change over time and thus safe, secure housing should be seen as a journey, not a destination.