

Rural Snow and Ice Policy

What We Heard Report

September 22, 2026



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF WOOD BUFFALO

We humbly acknowledge that the land on which we live, learn, work and play is Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From July 7 to September 21, 2026, public engagement focused on hearing directly from rural residents to inform the Rural Snow and Ice Control Policy.

Residents could participate in several ways, including in-person conversations, surveys, quick polls and dotmocracy boards.

Participation included:

- 257 paper and online surveys
- 68 quick poll responses
- 41 dotmocracy dots
- 8 in-person engagement events, with approximately 192 attendees

Feedback was received from every rural community, capturing local experiences, concerns and priorities.



REPORT DISCLAIMER

Feedback considerations

This engagement was specifically intended to inform the Rural Snow and Ice Control Policy. For the purposes of this report, only feedback from rural residents is considered in the findings.

Feedback from Fort McMurray residents is included at the end of the report to acknowledge what was shared and ensure it remains on record.

Urban feedback was collected through the separate Urban Snow and Ice Control Policy engagement and does not inform the rural policy development.

For more information on the Urban Snow and Ice Control Policy engagement and to read the What We Heard Report visit: rmwb.ca/snow.



PARTICIPANTS

Who did we talk to?

Residents from:

- Anzac
- Conklin
- Draper
- Fort Chipewyan
- Fort McMurray
- Fort McKay
- Gregoire Lake Estates
- Janvier
- Saprae Creek Estates



ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

aware

ways people saw communications and advertisements.

- Mailout to all rural residents
- Rural newsletters
- Community portable signs
- Community Open House topic
- RRC screen in Anzac and Conklin
- Participate Newsletter
- Social Media
- Meta and Google Ads



ENGAGEMENT IN NUMBERS

engaged

Times people took action to provide feedback

- 257 Surveys (paper and online)
- 68 Quick poll responses
- 41 Dotmocracy dots
- 8 In-person engagement events in each community with approx. total of 192 attendees



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



1. Timely & Reliable Snow Clearing

- 23.13% of respondents reported winter challenges related to delays in snow clearing following a snowfall.
- When asked about rural priorities, 23.19% of selections focused on reliable travel on municipal roads, the highest result, while another 22.32% focused on having a standard response to heavy snowfall and extreme weather.
- 15.54% of priority selections from rural residents also identified clear timelines and service-level expectations.
- Written rural feedback reinforced these results, with residents asking for **earlier clearing, additional plow passes, full-width road clearing, adherence to schedules and clearing before work and school-bus travel.**
- In-person feedback from rural community engagements mirrored the need for **reliable clearing, with residents discussing road conditions following snowfall and the importance of maintaining safe and dependable access from rural communities.**
- Together, the feedback shows that residents are looking for a **predictable and consistent level of winter maintenance**, particularly following significant snowfall.



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



2. Windrows & Accessibility

- 23.47% of reported winter challenges identified **windrows blocking driveways** making this the most frequently selected challenge in the survey.
- 20.75% rural respondents also identified **poor visibility caused by snowbanks**, showing that accumulated snow creates concerns beyond driveway access.
- Written feedback described vehicles becoming stuck, rural residents being unable to enter or leave their properties, and high snowbanks reducing visibility when pulling onto roads.
- Residents of rural communities also specifically identified **impacts on Elders, seniors and people with disabilities** and those who may not be able to remove large amounts of heavy snow.
- In-person feedback strongly mirrored the survey and written comments, including concerns about **driveway windrows, Elders and seniors being unable to clear snow**, and whether blocked driveways could affect emergency access.
- Residents also suggested grader wings, specialized blades or other equipment that could reduce the amount of snow left across driveway entrances.



OVERALL KEY FINDINGS/THEMES



3. Road Safety & Winter Access

- 17.35% of reported winter challenges related to icy roads, while 19.69% of priority selections identified reliable sanding and salting.
- Written feedback connected Fort Chipewyan winter road conditions with access to work, school, medical appointments and other communities, with specific concerns raised about Highway 881 and Draper Road.
- Draper Road feedback included narrowed travel lanes, limited shoulders, snow and ice, and difficulty identifying the road edge.
- In-person feedback mirrored these safety concerns, particularly around Highway 881 conditions and sanding following snowfall.



4. Snow Placement & Drainage

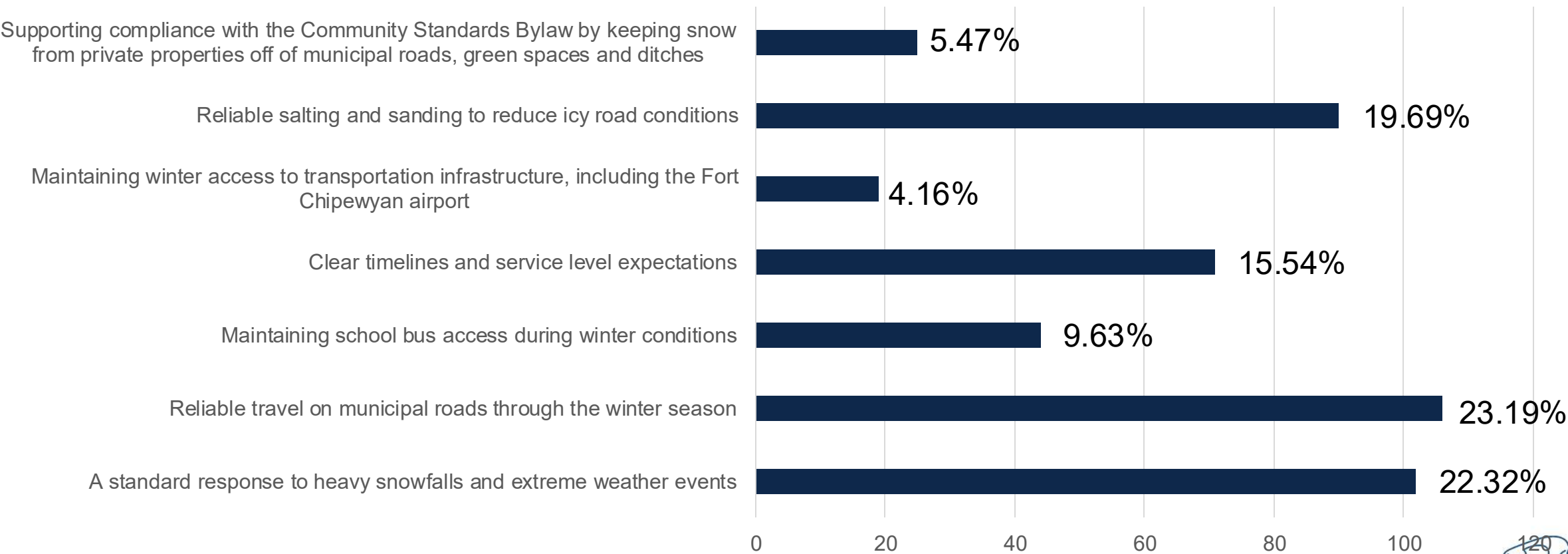
- 20.75% of reported winter challenges related to poor visibility caused by snowbanks.
- Written rural feedback linked snow placement with visibility, drainage, water returning to roadways and refreezing, as well as longer-term road conditions.
- In-person feedback mirrored the visibility concern, with rural residents identifying large snow piles that obstruct sightlines.
- In Saprae Creek Estates, in-person feedback also raised concerns about snow placed in ditches and its potential effect on drainage during spring melt.



SURVEY

Q4 – Looking at the list below, what are your top four snow plowing priorities? (Select four priorities)

The results below reflect feedback from participants who indicated they live in a rural community.



NEXT STEPS

Feedback gathered through this engagement will help inform the development of the Rural Snow and Ice Control Policy.

The *What We Heard Report* will be shared with residents, Administration and Council to provide a summary of the feedback received.

Administration will bring the Rural Snow and Ice Control Policy forward to Council for consideration in the coming months.



Thank You

For more information on this report please contact rmwb.ca/Pulse



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Appendix A

Rural only survey responses

(Capturing the 125 participants that indicated they live in rural communities)

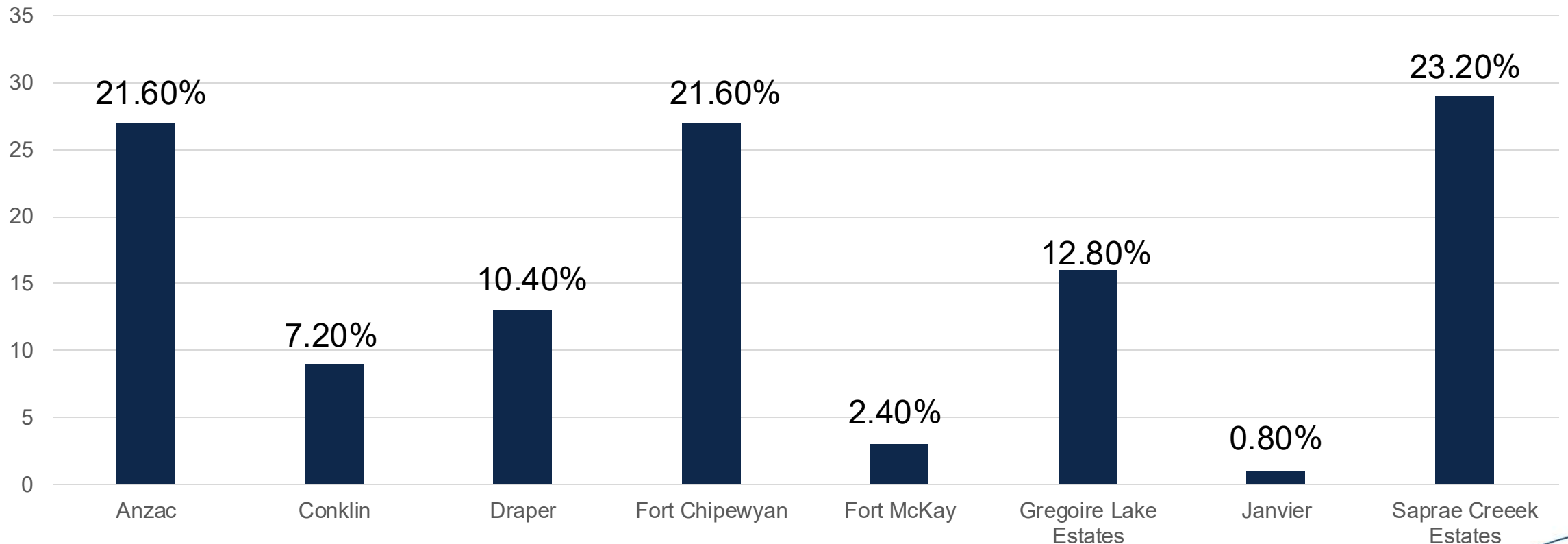


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SURVEY

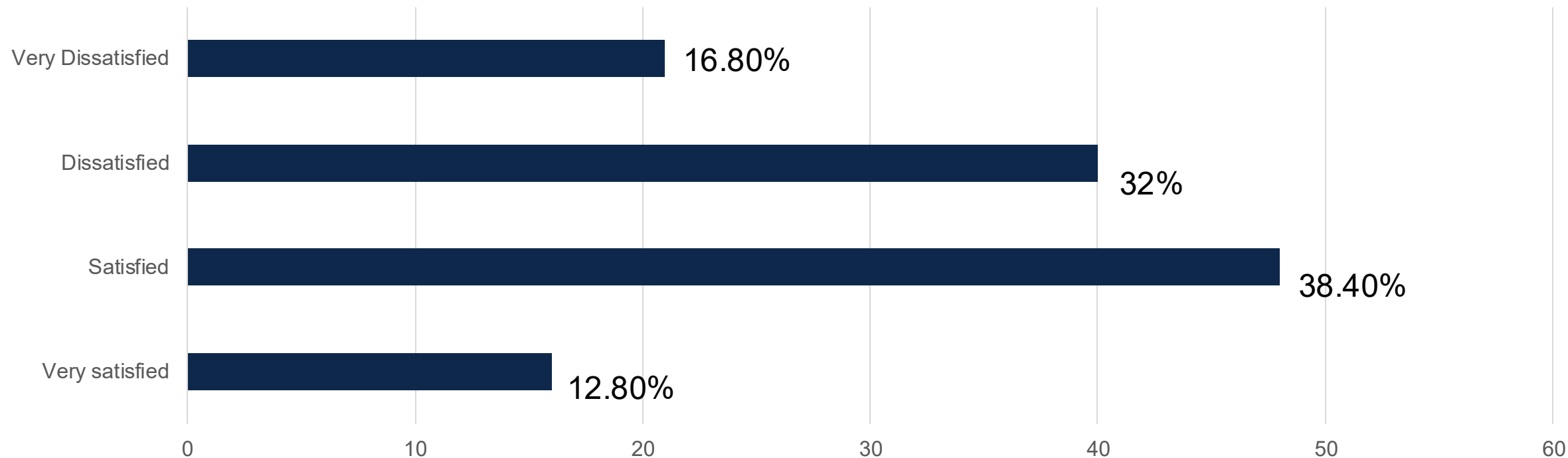
The following data represents the 125 participants that indicated they live in rural communities.

Q1 – What community do you live in?



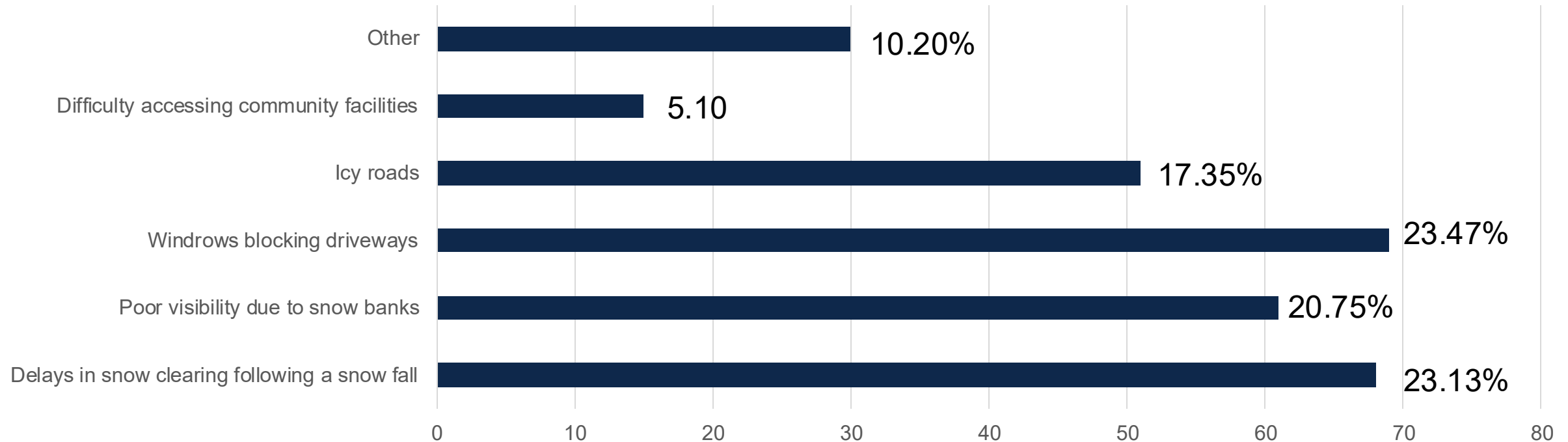
Q2 – How satisfied are you with snow plowing in your community?

The following data represents the 125 participants that indicated they live in rural communities.



Q3 – What challenges do you experience during the winter? (Select all that apply)

The following data represents the 125 participants that indicated they live in rural communities.

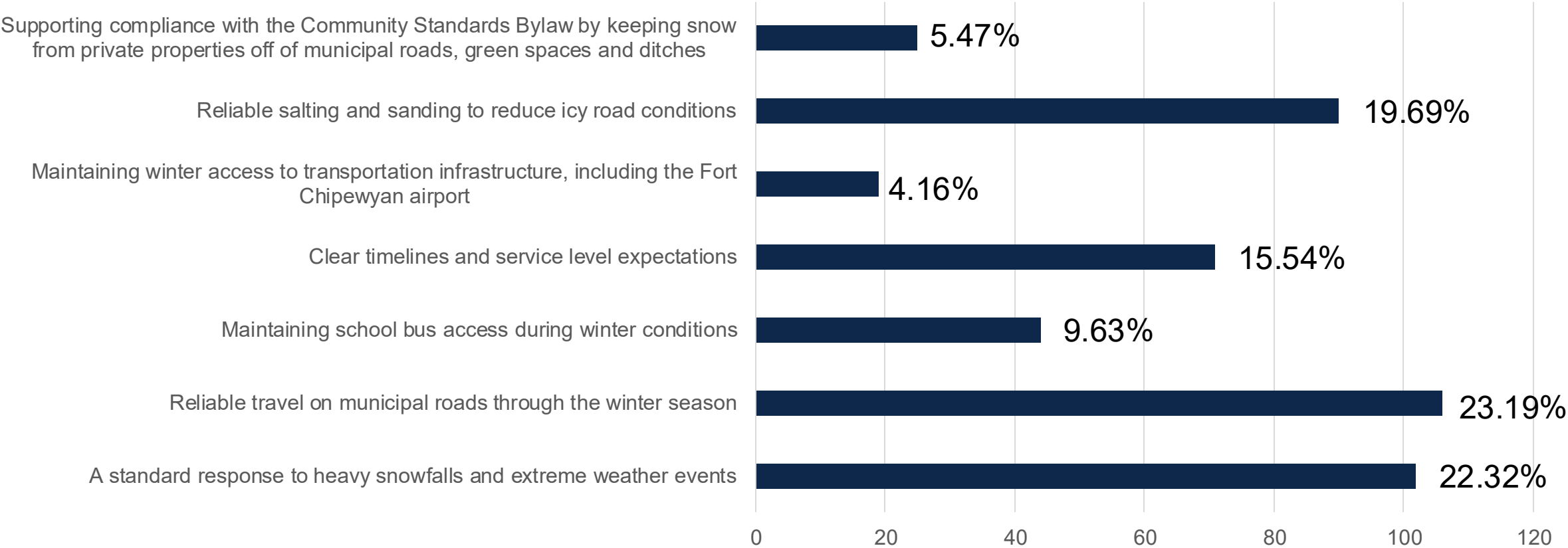


Sample "Other" comments: "Sidewalks not plowed or de-iced." "Removal of plowed snow," "Large piles left for weeks." "What roads are the RMWB in charge of?" "Quit putting windrows in senior's driveways" "It has been good."



Q4 – Looking at the list below, what are your top four snow plowing priorities? (Select four priorities)

The following data represents the 125 participants that indicated they live in rural communities.



Q5 – Do you have any other comments, ideas or suggestions about rural winter maintenance in your community?

(61 participants)

The following data represents the 125 participants that indicated they live in rural communities.

Top themes from long answer responses:

Service Levels & Snow Clearing (32 responses)

Participants shared both positive experiences and areas where winter maintenance could be improved. Key feedback included:

- Some participants were satisfied with snow clearing and noted improvements or quick responses following snowfall.
- Participants requested more thorough clearing, including additional plow passes, clearing lanes to the full width of the painted lines, and better clearing of cul-de-sacs, corners and sidewalks.
- Additional plow passes and full-width lane clearing were requested to prevent roads from becoming too narrow for two-way traffic.
- Feedback on sanding and ice control varied. One participant raised concerns about salt melting and refreezing on shaded sections of Draper Road and suggested using sand, while another felt excessive amounts of salt and sand were being used.
- Draper Road was specifically raised as a safety concern, with participants describing delayed plowing, narrowed lanes, snow and ice, limited shoulders and conditions where one lane was being used for traffic in both directions.
- Participants asked that posted snow-clearing schedules be followed and suggested extended or 24-hour service during heavy snowfall or when crews fall behind, along with communication about service.
- Participants raised concerns about icy stop signs and the speed of some snow-clearing equipment travelling through residential estates.



Windrows & Accessibility (20 responses)

Windrows and snowbanks left at the ends of driveways were a frequent concern. In some cases, they made it difficult or impossible to enter or leave properties and resulted in vehicles becoming stuck. The impact was particularly noted for Elders, seniors, people with disabilities and residents driving smaller vehicles, raising both accessibility and safety concerns.

Residents also expressed frustration with cleared driveways being filled back in by plows and high snowbanks reducing visibility when entering the roadway. Suggested improvements included different blades, wings, attachments or other technology to prevent windrows, as well as removing snow left across driveway entrances.

Participant quotes:

“Clear the driveways, sometimes as a senior I am stuck in the driveway because the snow plow driver leaves a pile of snow in my driveway.”

“Windrow at the end of the driveway for me as a disabled person.”

“Last year I had banks on both sides of my driveway that obscured vision getting out of my driveway.”

“I drive a minivan and have gotten stuck in my driveway due to the windrow at the top of our driveway.”



Highway safety / road access (6 responses)

Concerns were raised about safe and reliable winter road access, particularly on Highway 881, Draper Road and the highway between Fort Chipewyan and Fort McMurray. Feedback focused on narrowed lanes, snow-covered shoulders, icy conditions, visibility and clearing frequency. These conditions were described as affecting access to work, school and medical appointments, with one resident reporting cancelling medical appointments because of winter road conditions.

Participant quotes:

“I have had to cancel medical appointments because of the highway conditions.”

“The site highway between Ft Chip and Mac is such a dangerous highway, that highway is our life line.”

Service Delivery & Resources (5 responses)

Feedback focused on how winter maintenance is staffed and contracted. Key feedback included:

- Increasing staffing or better allocating personnel during heavy snowfall.
- Training and employing local community members to support snow clearing.
- Contracting local companies that already have suitable snow removal equipment.
- Using subcontractors when additional staffing or equipment is required.
- Improving contractor performance, coordination and accountability.
- Considering bringing snow clearing back in-house rather than relying on contractors.
- Better coordinating staff, contractors and available equipment to support winter maintenance.

Participant quote:

“Offer an open contract with local companies who has the equipment to snow remove.”



Snow Placement / Drainage (3 responses)

Concerns were raised about where snow is placed and how snow accumulation can affect drainage, visibility and road conditions. Key feedback included:

- Snow melting during warmer periods, draining back onto roads and refreezing.
- Concerns about spring drainage and water flowing toward neighbouring properties.
- Questions about restrictions on residents placing snow in ditches when snow from road clearing is also pushed into these areas.
- Managing snow placement to reduce moisture near roads and potential impacts from freeze-thaw conditions.

Participant quotes:

“If we have to keep all our snow out of the ditches I don’t think our neighbours would appreciate it draining on there properties in the spring.”

“Push windrows to the ditch bottom for safety reasons and to keep moisture away from the side slope. Moisture is the enemy of roads; failure to control it results in more expensive maintenance and reduces the lifespan of the road.”



Appendix B

Quick Poll

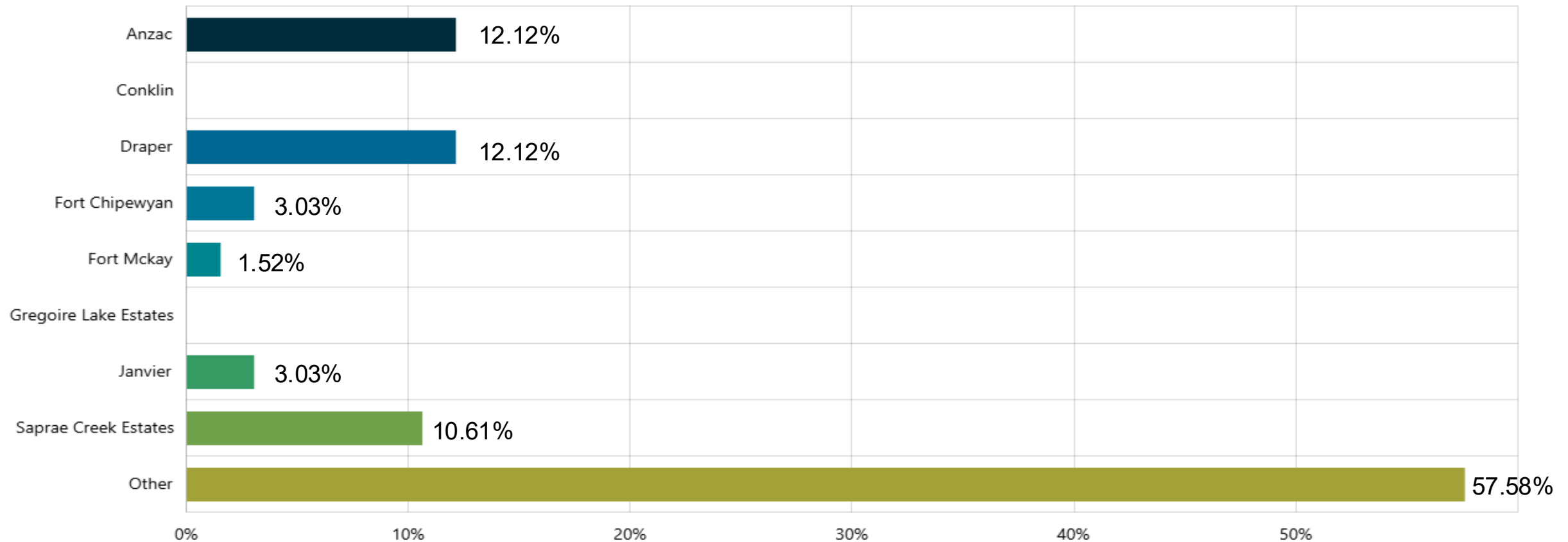
(66 contributions)



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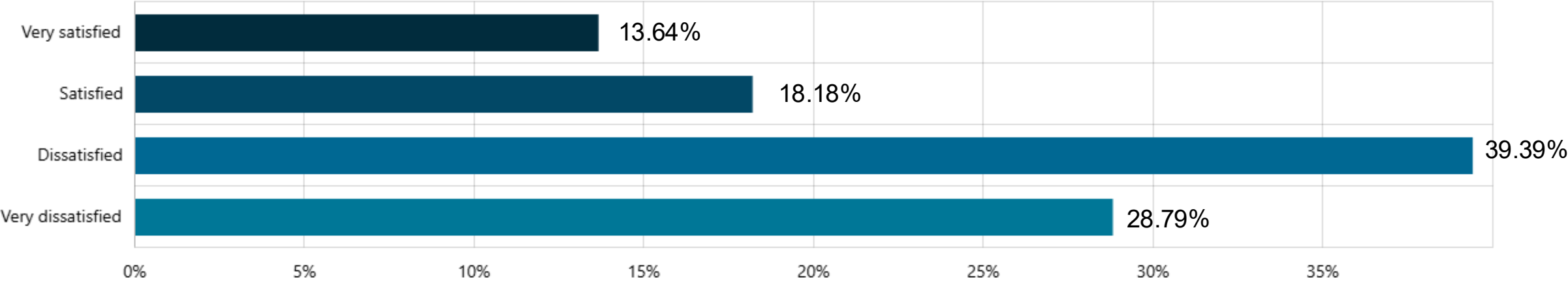
QUICK POLL

Q1 – What community do you live in? (68 participants)



Q2 – How satisfied are you with snow plowing in your community?

(66 participants)



Q2 – How satisfied are you with snow plowing in your community?

(66 participants)

This slide shows snow plowing satisfaction by rural community. Urban responses are not included.

Community	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Responses
Anzac	25%	25%	38%	13%	8
Draper	25%	25%	50%	0%	8
Fort Chipewyan	50%	50%	0%	0%	2
Fort McKay	0%	0%	0%	100%	1
Janvier	0%	100%	0%	0%	2
Saprae Creek Estates	14%	14%	57%	14%	7



Appendix C

Community Open House

(192 attendees)



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IN-PERSON EVENT

Where: Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier, and Saprae Creek Estates

When: From July 8 to September 16 at Community Open Houses

Participation: 192 residents

How we engaged

The community engagement was held in an open-house format, beginning with a welcome/blessing from an Elder followed by a community meal. Residents could move between several topics to learn more, ask questions, speak directly with staff and provide feedback.

Summary of Conversations

- Concerns about large snow piles creating visibility issues, particularly at intersection and along roads, including the Saline Creek Parkway berm/curve and boat launch exit near Reach 11, where participants reported more than 15 collisions this year.
- Windrows left at the ends of driveways were a common concern, particularly for properties occupied by seniors.
- Residents reported being unable to get out of their driveways due to snow and windrows, creating concerns about access for emergency services.
- Concerns about the amount of salt used during winter maintenance and its impacts on roads, vehicles and the environment.
- In Saprae Creek Estates, residents raised concerns about snow piles placed in ditches contributing to drainage issues during spring melt.



Appendix D

Dot-mocracy Board

(Total of 41 responses)



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DOT-MOCRACY BOARD

Dotmocracy results reflect feedback collected at Community Open Houses across all rural communities, with the exception of Fort Chipewyan, where residents provided feedback through paper surveys instead. Participants at the open houses placed dots on the boards to indicate their preferences.

How satisfied are you with snow plowing in your community?

Response option	Dotmocracy responses	By percentage
Very Satisfied	4	9.76%
Satisfied	13	31.71%
Dissatisfied	9	21.95%
Very Dissatisfied	15	36.59%



Appendix E

Survey – All respondents

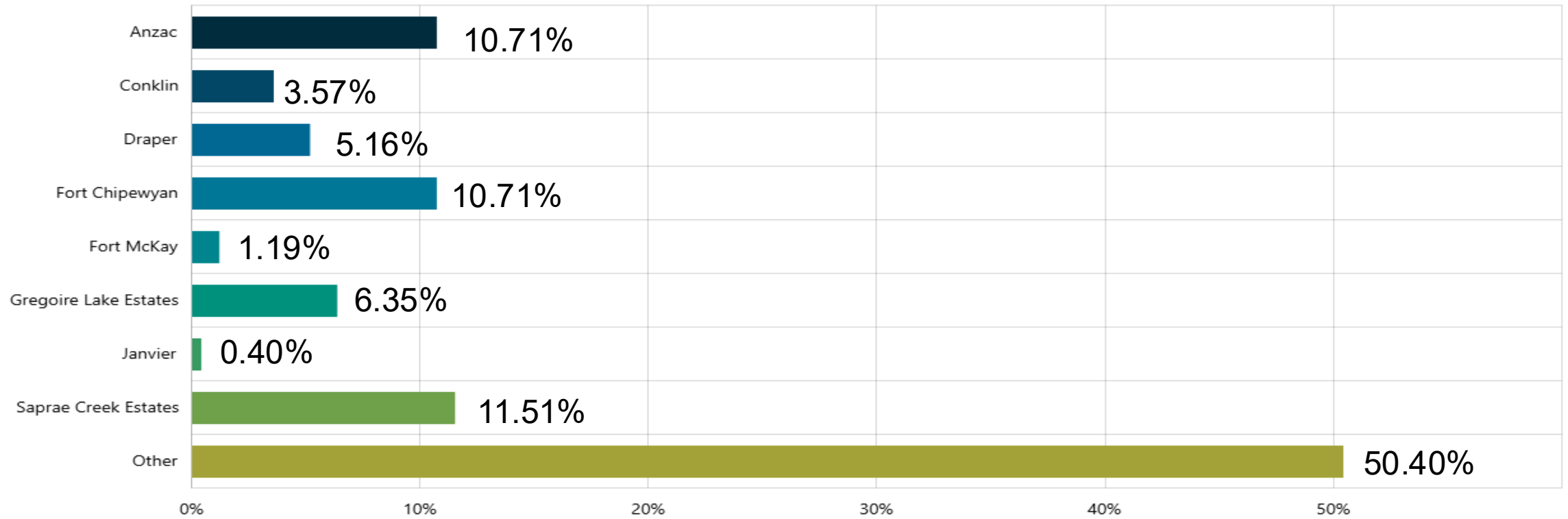
(257 responses)



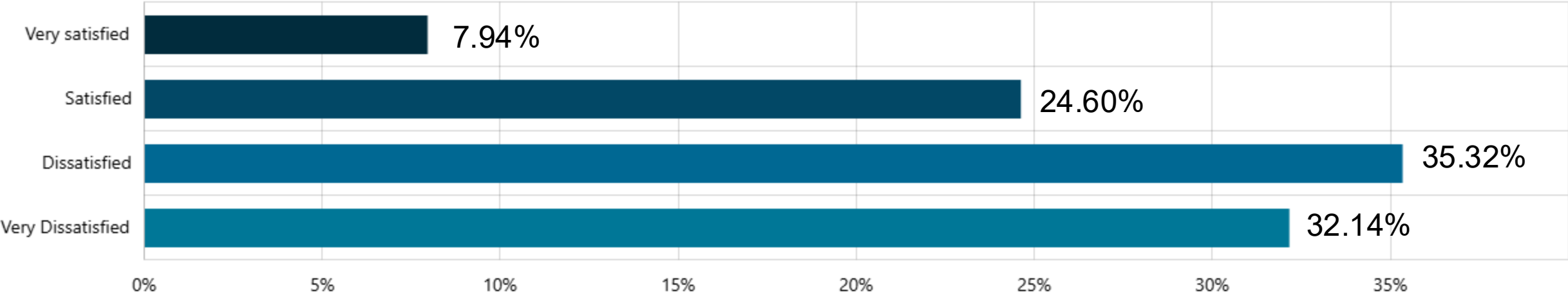
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SURVEY

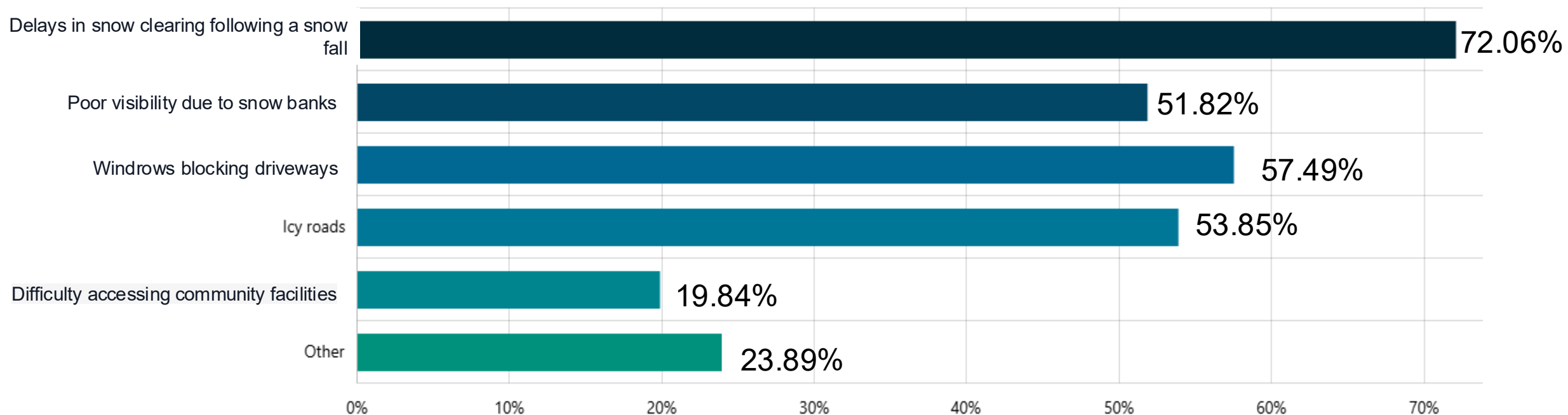
Q1 – What community do you live in? (257 participants)



Q2 – How satisfied are you with snow plowing in your community? (257 participants)



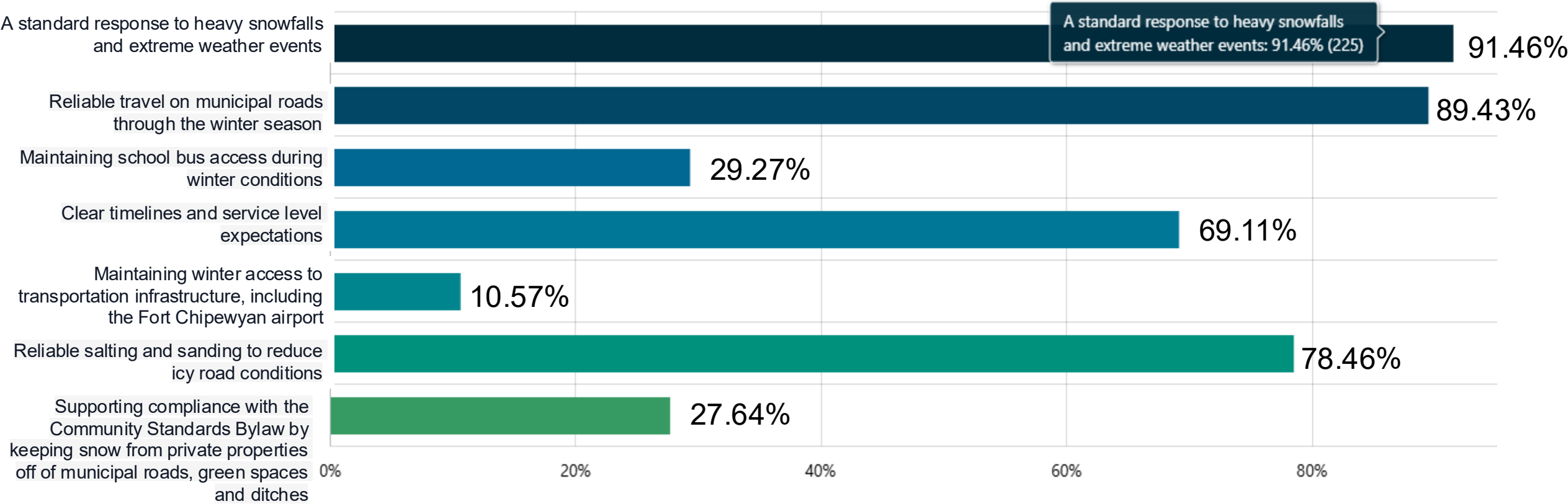
Q3 – What challenges do you experience during the winter? (Select all that apply) (252 participants)



Sample "Other" comments: "Huge piles of snow were left." "Snow pushed up on side walk that home owners are suppose to keep clean." "Difficulty accessing my own driveway due to my street having so much snow." "No able to go for walks or get to bus safely due to sidewalks not maintained."



Q4 – Looking at the list below, what are your top four snow plowing priorities? (Select four priorities) (250 participants)



Q5 – Do you have any other comments, ideas or suggestions about rural winter maintenance in your community?

(150 participants) **Top themes from long answer responses:**

- **Snow Clearing Frequency & Timeliness (42 responses)**
Residents called for more frequent, timely and proactive snow clearing, including residential streets, highways and priority routes.
- **Road Safety & Accessibility (24 responses)**
Feedback highlighted icy roads, sanding, narrowed lanes, sidewalks and maintaining safe access to work, schools and services.
- **Snow Removal & Windrows (19 responses)**
Residents raised concerns about snow accumulation, driveway windrows and snowbanks, with requests to remove or haul snow away.
- **Winter Maintenance Zones & Enforcement (17 responses)**
Feedback focused on zone scheduling, completing zones on time, parking restrictions, ticketing and towing when clearing does not occur.
- **Staffing, Equipment & Service Delivery (16 responses)**
Residents suggested additional or experienced operators, better use of equipment, 24/7 operations and contingency resources during heavy snowfall.

