

WORCESTER ARTS COUNCIL

FY21 Grant Funding Priorities



WE'RE LISTENING,
WORCESTER.



About WAC

The Worcester Arts Council (WAC) is a municipal body consisting of nine members appointed by the City Manager.

WAC is part of a statewide network of 329 Local Cultural Councils (LCC) supported through the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC). The LCC Program is the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the nation. It supports thousands of community-based projects in the arts, humanities, and sciences. This program assists the Worcester community in developing local projects and adds to its cultural vitality.

Our mission is to promote excellence, access, education and diversity in the arts, humanities and interpretive sciences to improve the quality of life for Worcester residents and contribute to the economic vitality of our City.

Find out more at: worcesterma.gov/wac

Meet the Council



YASMIN GORIS
CHAIR



JENNIFER RILEY
VICE CHAIR



LISA MALO
SECRETARY



MITCHELL PERRY
TREASURER



TOM CONROY



DAVE FILAR



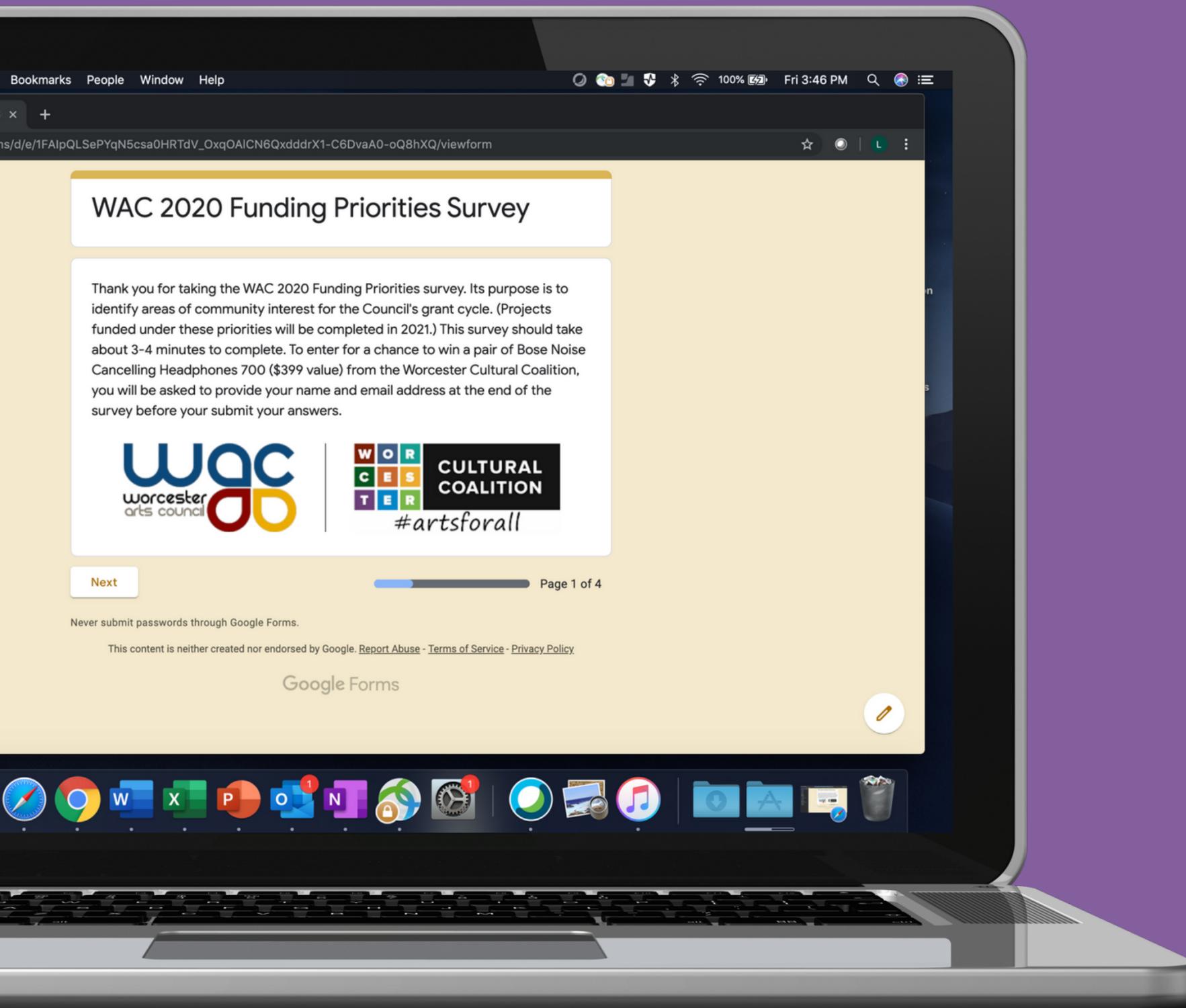
GEORGE SEDARES



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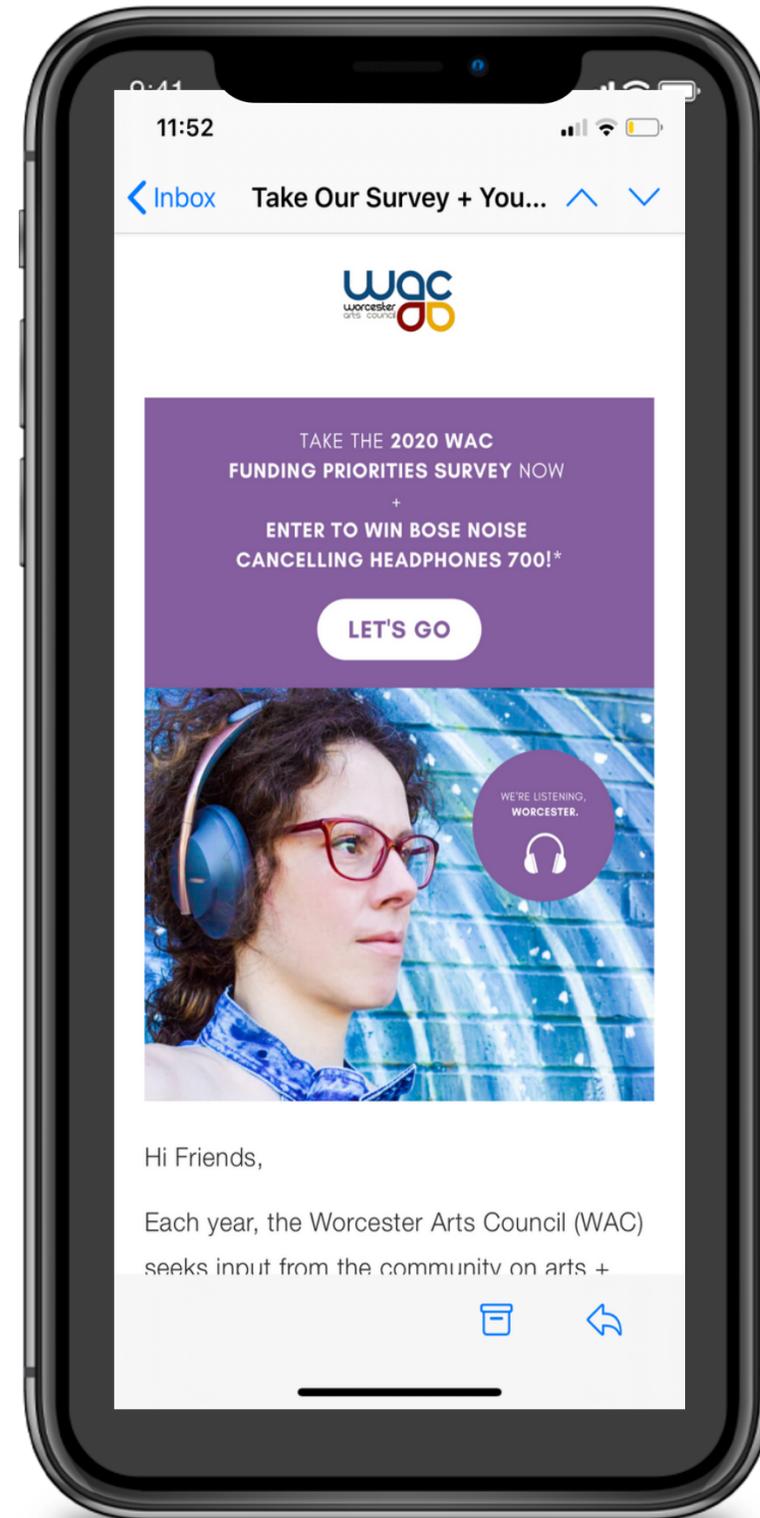
Community Input

Because the Worcester Arts Council (WAC) is responsible for distributing public dollars, each year the Council solicits public opinion about how to best distribute its grant funds through a Funding Priorities Survey. All Local Cultural Councils (LCC) are required to conduct a community input process, and LCCs receiving more than \$20,000 must develop funding priorities.

Like most LCCs, WAC typically receives more grant requests than can be funded. Strong priorities based on community input help guide our grant-making decisions.

Find out more at: <https://bit.ly/339ExLD>

Survey Method



The survey was live 6.23.2020 to 9.7.2020. It was originally scheduled to close on 8.10.2020, but after the MCC extended the LCC grant timeline by one month, WAC opted to extend the survey as well.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was available online only via Google Forms.

WAC secured a raffle prize to incentivize participation: Bose headphones (\$399 value).

The survey was promoted primarily via email, social media, and local radio (La Mega).

WAC and the Worcester Cultural Coalition emailed their distribution lists and posted on social. The City of Worcester emailed the survey to City employees and posted on social.

WAC also did extensive community outreach, including directly contacting ~75 local organizations, over 100 local "influencers," all City Council members, and more.



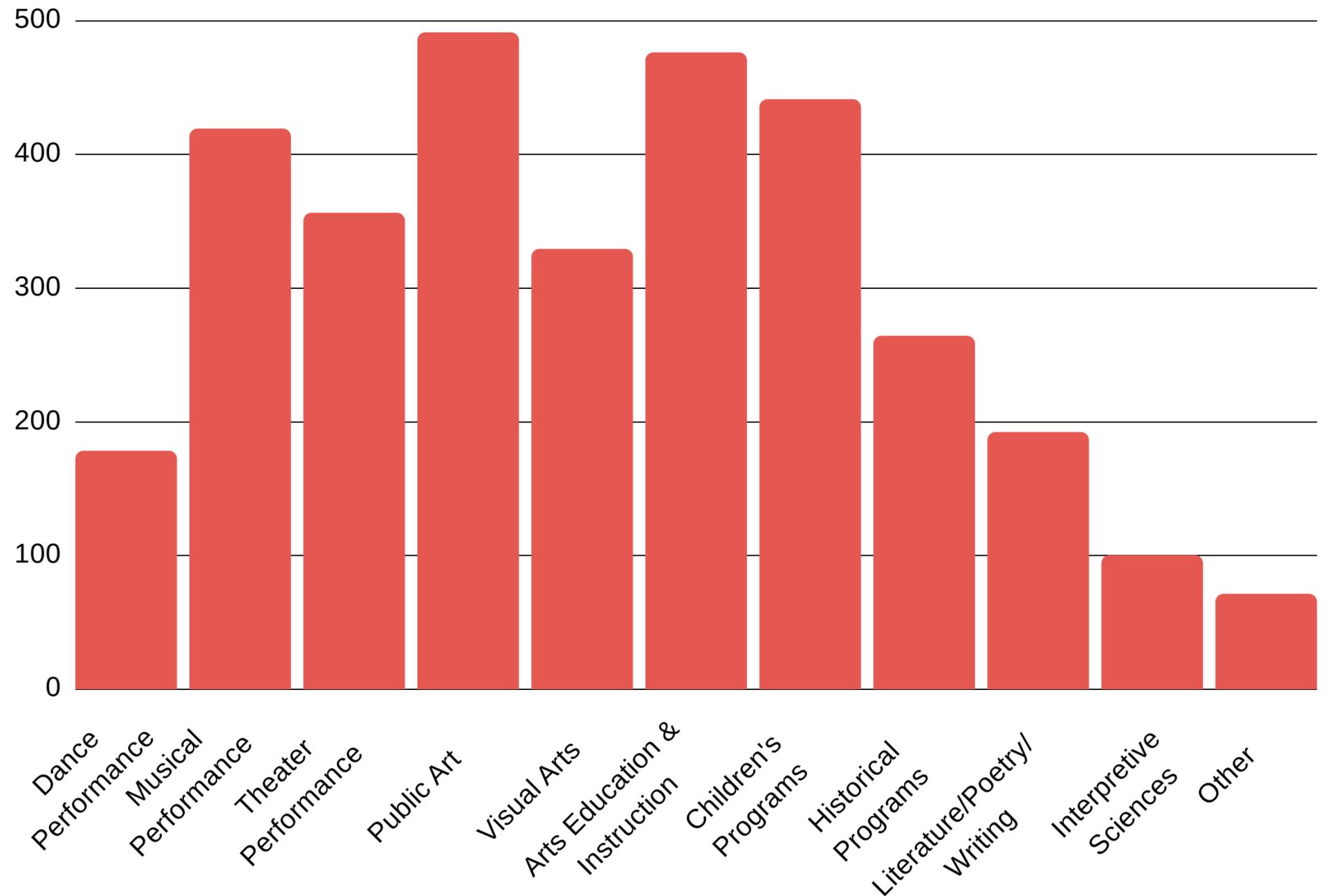
Survey Results

There were 1,020 total survey responses this year. This represents an increase of 415% over last year's participation, and our highest overall WAC Funding Priorities Survey participation ever!

You'll find a summary of the responses to each survey question on the following pages.

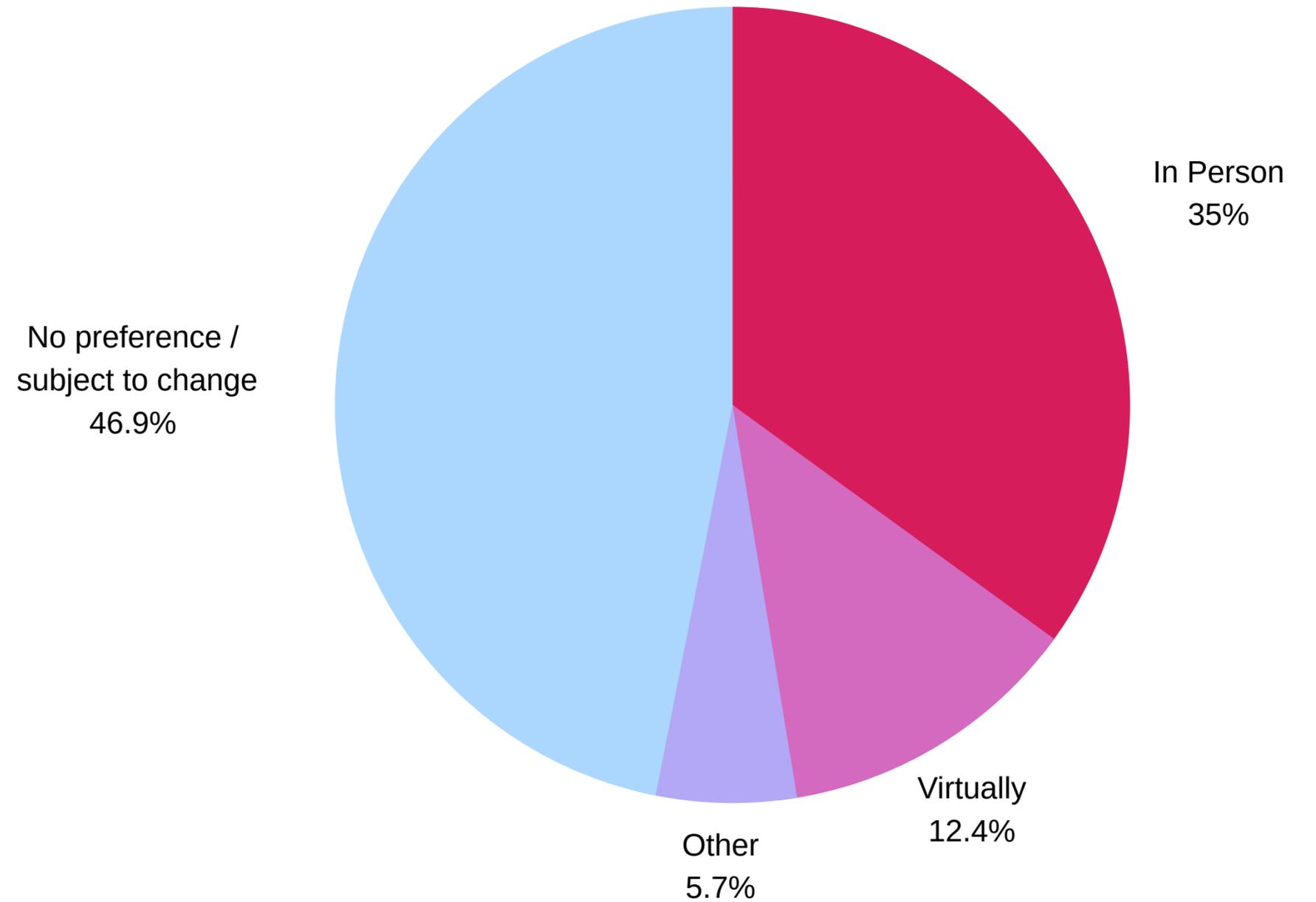
QUESTION 1

What areas would you most like to see the Worcester Arts Council prioritize in 2021? Please select your top three categories.



QUESTION 2

Of the top three priorities you chose in the previous question, would you prefer to attend respective programs virtually or in person?



QUESTION 4

Please share your additional comments or suggestions for arts and culture in the City of Worcester, including what types of arts / culture experiences you'd like to see more.



While the responses to this question varied greatly, a few themes emerged for WAC to consider related to its FY21 funding priorities:

- 1 A focus on diversity and inclusion, including representation of BIPOC artists, culture, and community members
- 2 Preference for outdoor programs, both due to COVID-19 concerns, and a desire for more programming in Worcester's public parks and other open spaces
- 3 Preference for virtual programs due to COVID-19 concerns
- 4 Comments reinforced preference for Public Art (identified in Question 1) and also reflected a desire for more historical programming specific to Worcester's local history

On the following pages, you'll find a sample of comments from survey respondents.

QUESTION 4

Sample of responses:

"I want to see the City of Worcester showcase its diverse, rich, cultural citizenry and not keep supporting the same old people and institutions. Time for more equity in the arts!"

"Art that promotes civic engagement and brings Worcester residents together across age, race, religion, and class."

"I think there should be more programs and projects highlighting the diverse cultural population of our students. Include facilitators of color so the students feel more empowered and engaged."

"The arts need to reflect the needs of the world and society we live in. I would like to see more funding for black and brown artists and art that reflects the black and brown experience and history in America. By focusing on a specific medium, we exclude art that is important. The medium need not be the focus."

"I really want to see more Black/POC artists prioritized. Actual outreach past the typical channels, and not the same faces all the time."

"Community efforts and projects that have the potential to involve younger members of marginalized communities. Historical projects that focus on the history that has been erased, rewritten, or white washed. Celebrations of the culture of all people."

"Bilingual programming to give access to the many newcomers to this city. Prioritize and support grant requests."

"I'd love to see a poetry in the neighborhood project with a writing workshops and performances by regional poets of color."

"Worcester is very diverse, but that is not represented in the events that take place around the city. I think it should be encouraged for the many cultural organizations to work together and get their feedback on how to better serve the community. It is difficult to obtain local grants to put together cultural and humanities events that represent the diversity of the community. My own organization has had to self fund the projects we've presented in the city, because it is too specific about our heritage. This is discouraging, because the point is to bring representation in order to encourage others to share their story and be proud of their identity. Obviously, activities are open to everyone, but successful audience-building initiatives target a specific audience. After all, it is hard to address attendance barriers or build a meaningful connection with people using a one-size-fits-all strategy."

"Creative ways to connect people and let people create without contact (virtually or otherwise). Prioritize funding to people of color and projects that aim to combat/decrease structural racism. Prioritize funding projects that get people moving and outside (art in the... insert obscure park here)."

"So challenging right now w/ COVID! But I believe everything must be offered online; despite state opening, things are not safe."

"In the time of COVID I think that outdoor sculpture and painting is very relevant. Maybe projections of local musicians or performers that run on a wall in a public space. This city is so creative I believe we can still share art experiences safely."

"I think the outdoor public art arena is a great direction given the fact people are currently not always feeling safe indoors with other people."

"I would like to see more WAC initiatives in the Main South area, typically in the underserved population of the city to bring better views of the area. As well as all accessible parks in the city where groups of people can gather in an open air setting due to recent pandemic restrictions."

"Art exhibits outside by local artists."

"Given the reality of the COVID-19 crisis I hope to see support for organizations making an effort to offer creative virtual solutions for children's programs."

"Perhaps it makes sense to invest heavily in innovative virtual experiences and socially distance friendly activities. It's a hard constraint to adapt to... I wonder if it would make sense to inspire and direct some submissions with a changing annual grant, or if WAC issued a theme, or a provocation with their announcement - 'Looking for programming and artists to push the boundaries of how we can feel together, when not physically co-located.'"

"I'd like to see more art in public spaces that are more than just a statue/monument. Maybe a historical reenactor walking around historic areas for an hour for the public to talk to/ask questions, someone painting on an easel in public instead of just playing music, a screen on the side of a building showing someone creating something. I've seen young people put on hip hop/break dancing shows at Elm Park and if they could get paid to play downtown for an hour that would draw people to them and be very cool. Stuff that's interactive but less effort, more casual!"

"I would like more historical information in the outer neighborhoods about how they came to be, famous people who live/lived there, and history of Worcester."

"Historical education and children's programs are my top priority and will be going forward. Supporting the WAM with their Higgins Armory display would be amazing, plus expanding parking for the WAM. stART on the street is also going to be highly welcome next year."

"History of Worcester and significant people in its evolution."

"As they say, the arts are always the first to go in public schools, so anything to uplift youth and teens would be super beneficial, both to them and to the City."

"As a performer born and raised here, we need more diversity of performance and more space to practice performing. We'd love a community studio practice space."

"I do think we have rich resources in Worcester which I attend frequently but do not see many young people at such performances. Whether it is the cost or marketing... I do not know. It may not be the specific performances but rather how we attract and market to different audiences. I would love to see not so many gray-haired people at the performances I attend..."

"As a local musician, I would like to see more venues that support local performers on a higher level to encourage more residents to work harder at their respective band and goals. This would encourage more local interest, as well as give the City's citizens more entertainment options and local pride."

"Better advertisement of what is available to the public."

"I'd more like to see a way that Worcester better publicizes these offerings."



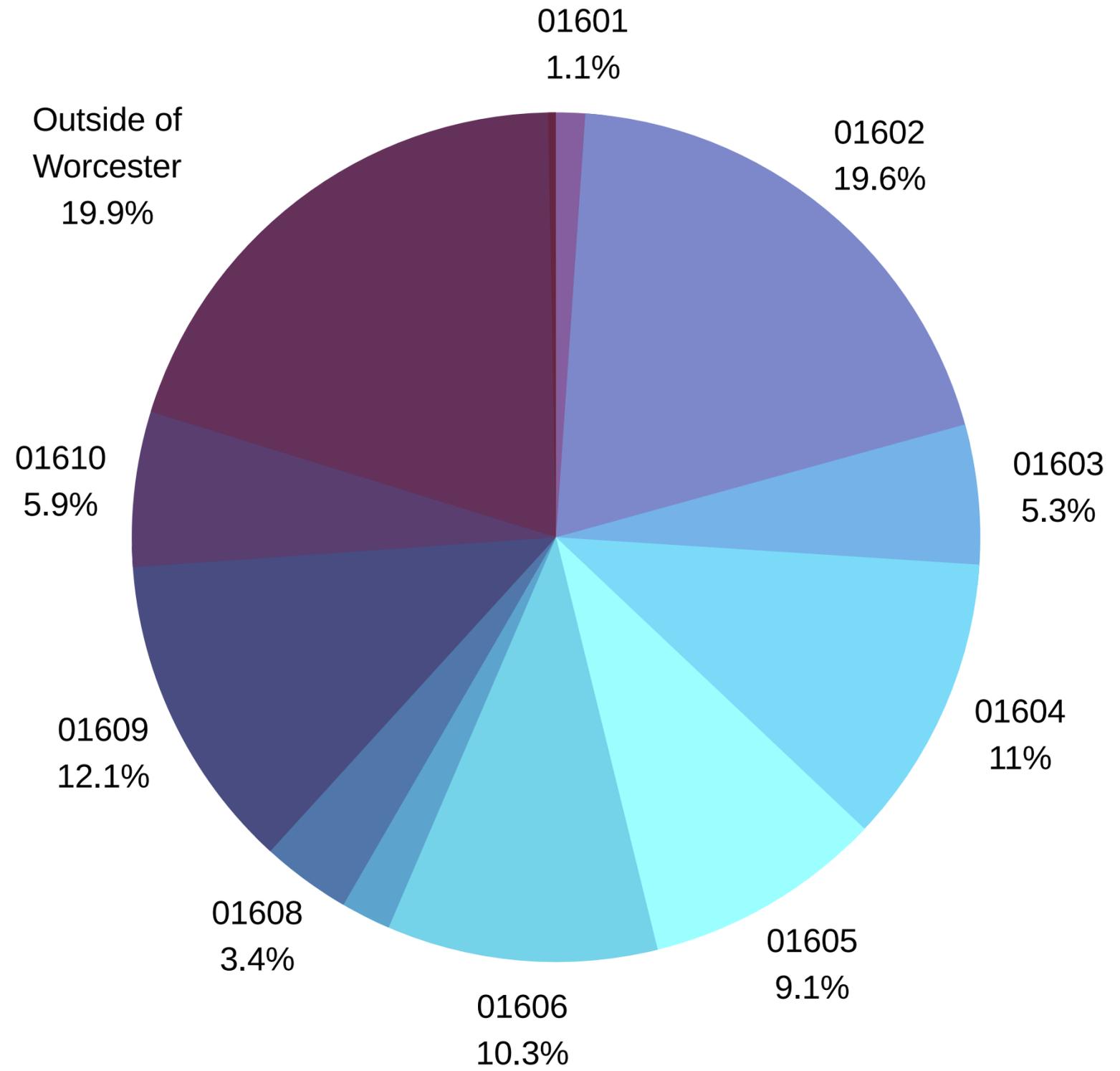
Survey Demographics

We ask several questions to help us understand how well the survey respondents reflect the population of Worcester.

The answers to these questions are not used to personally identify respondents in any way.

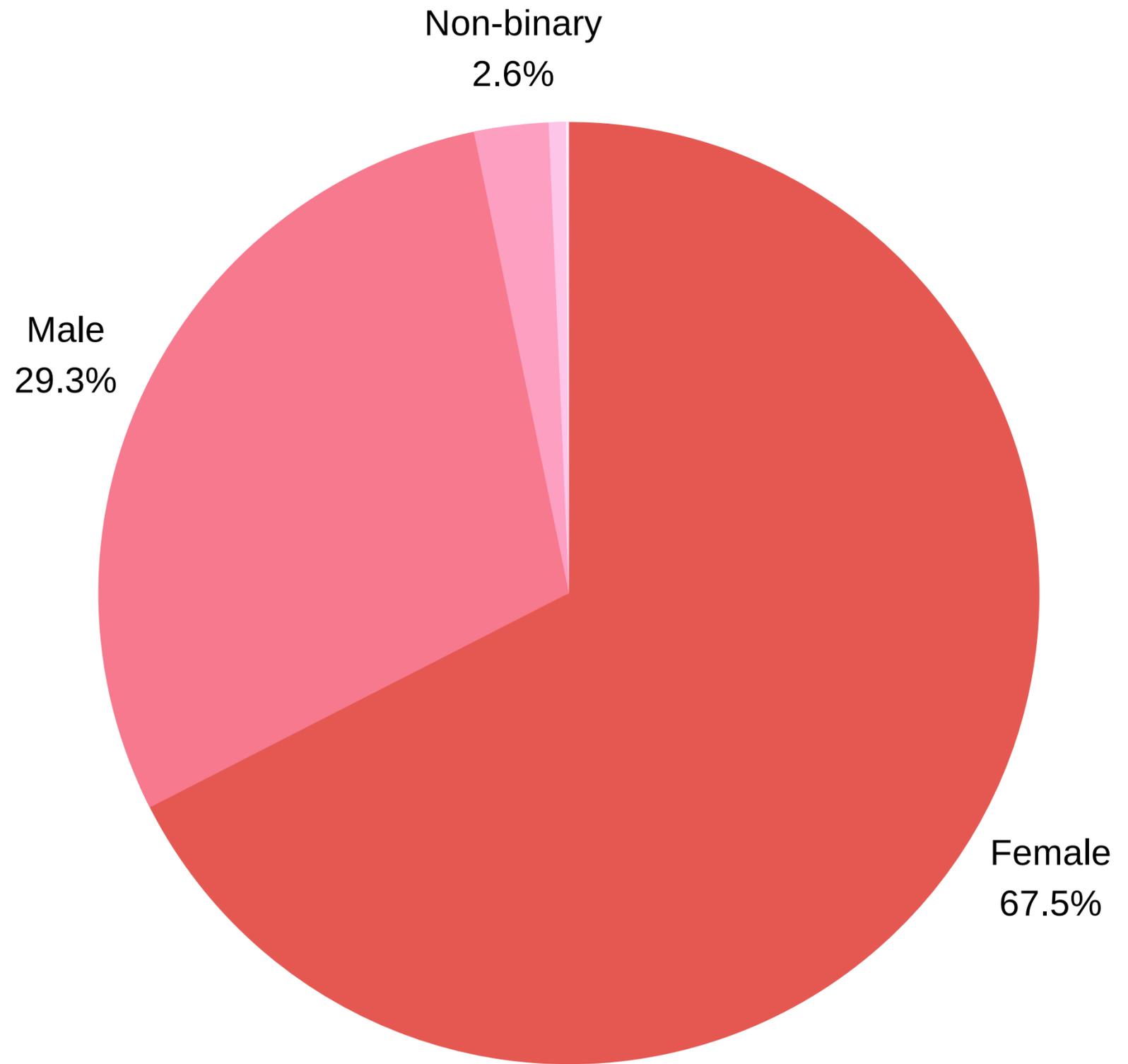
QUESTION 6

What is your home zip code?



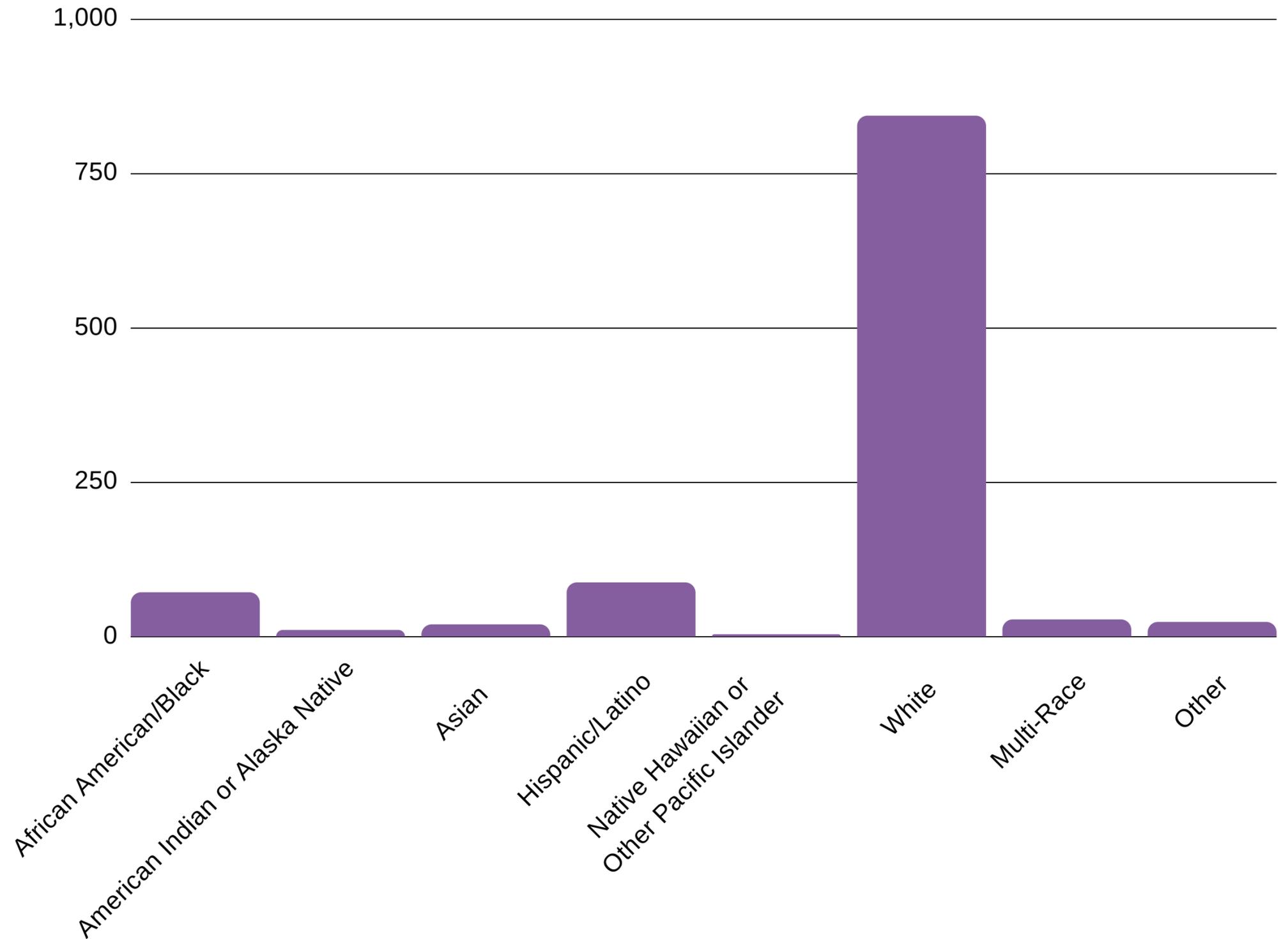
QUESTION 7

What is your gender?



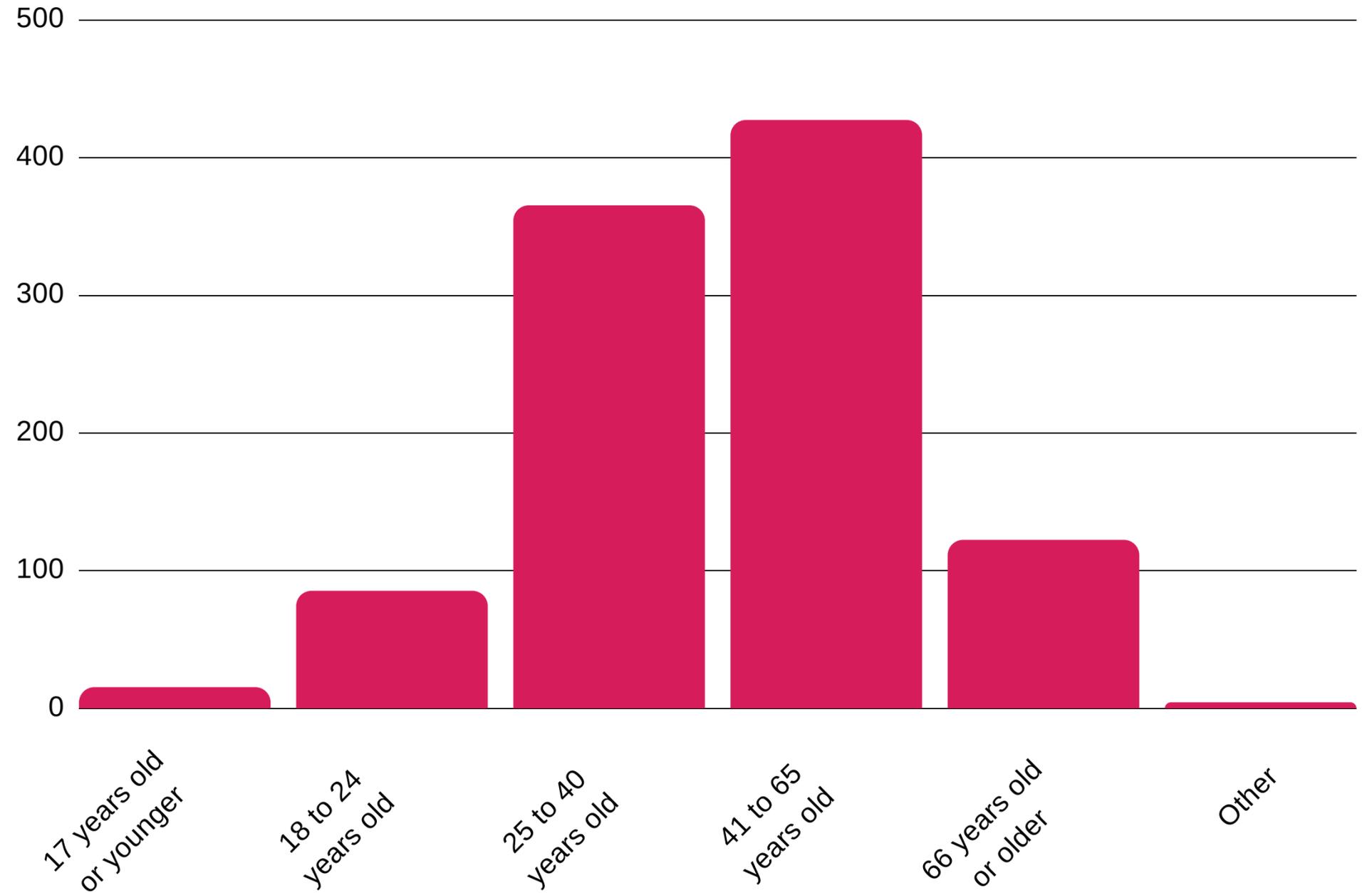
QUESTION 8

What is your race?
(check all that apply)



QUESTION 9

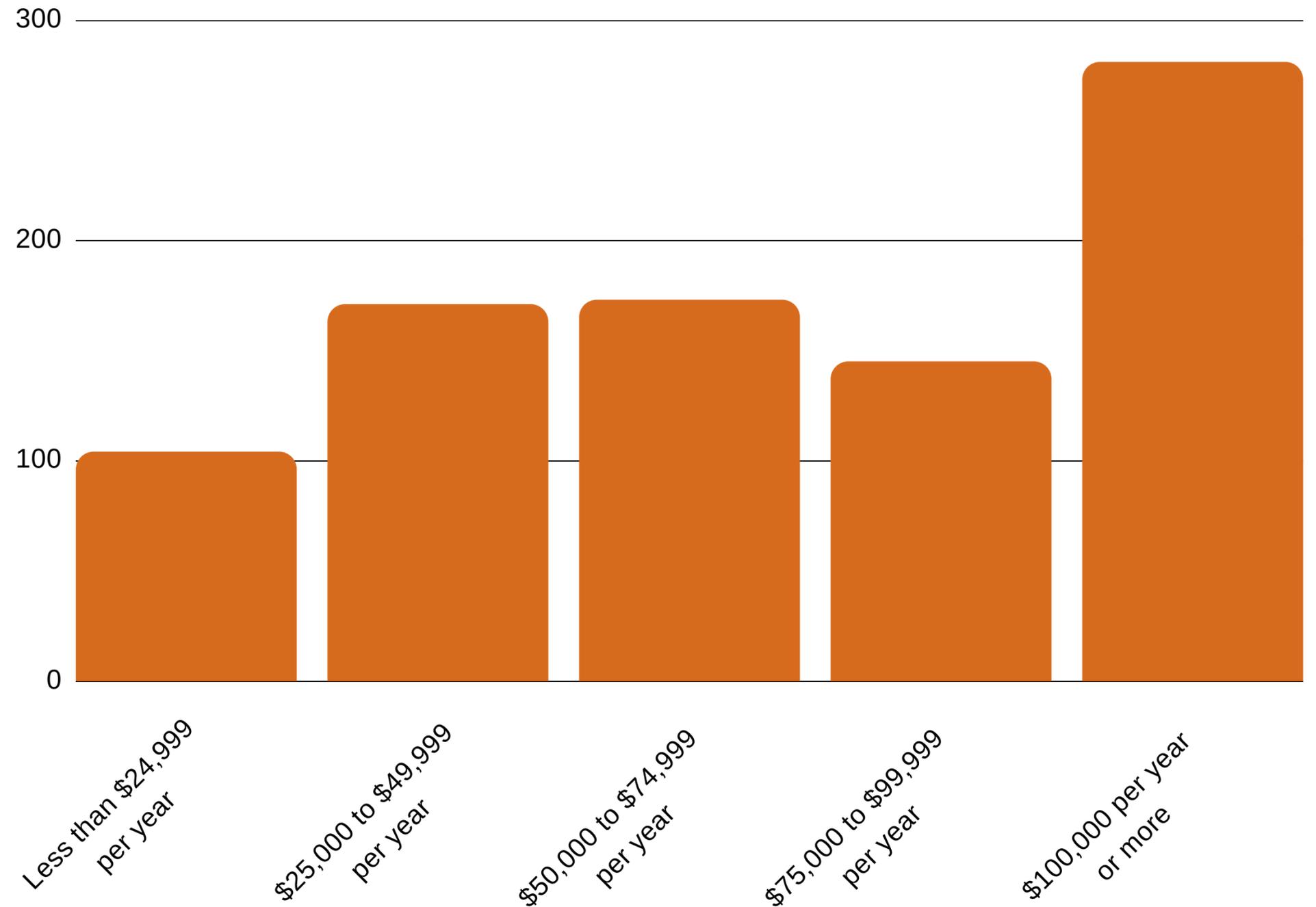
Select your age category.



QUESTION 10

Select your approximate household income.

(optional)





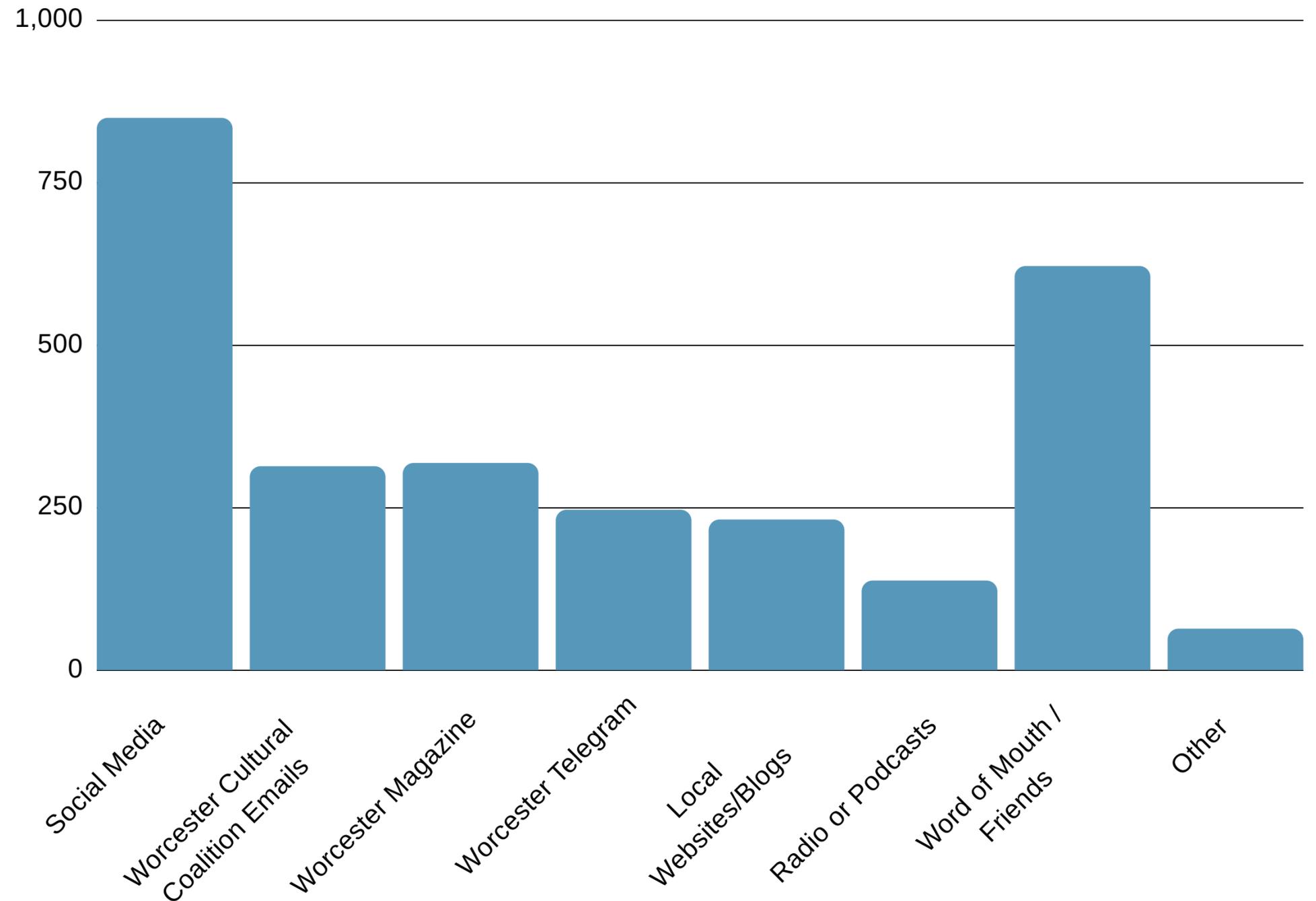
Marketing Insights

We included one question aimed at helping us learn how respondents find out about arts and cultural programs in Worcester. We hoped to identify popular sources for future marketing efforts.

However, because this year's survey was promoted almost entirely online, and most heavily on social media, we believe the responses reflect that. Therefore, the information obtained through this question may not necessarily be directive for future marketing activities.

QUESTION 5

In what ways do you typically find out about arts and culture events in Worcester? (check all that apply)



FY21 Funding Priorities



Based on this community input, WAC voted on its FY21 funding priorities during the September 2020 meeting. **The official WAC Funding Priorities for FY21 are:**

- 1 Project Categories** | Projects that focus on Public Art, Arts Education & Instruction, Children's Programs, and Musical Performances.
- 2 Cultural Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion** | Projects that elevate the voices and experiences of historically marginalized groups to highlight the current and historical diversity of Worcester. Projects should create opportunities for artists and community members who identify as Black, Indigenous, POC, LGBTQX, refugee, immigrant, or person living with a disability.
- 3 Locations** | Projects that take place in or benefit areas of Worcester that are historically underserved.

Additional Resources

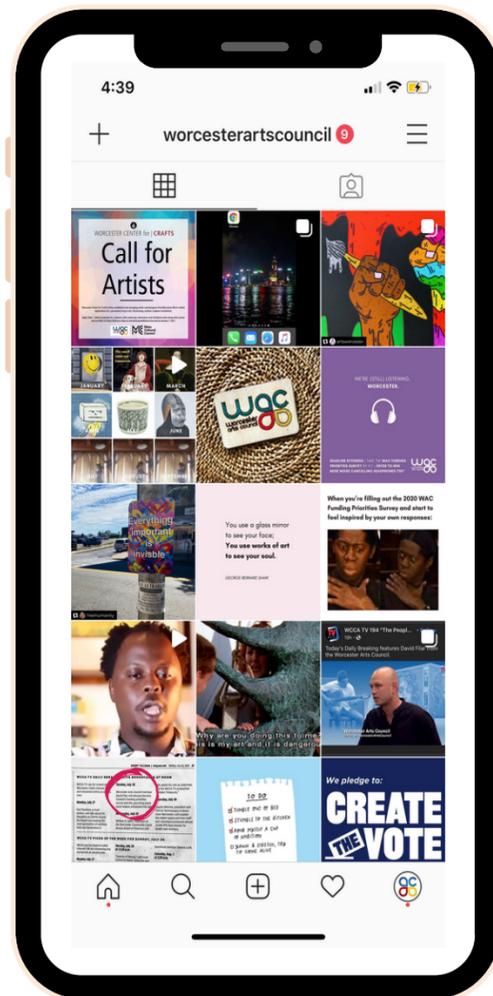
[FY21 WAC GRANT GUIDELINES & APPLICATION](#)

Find more information about our FY21 Project & Fellowship Grant opportunities and the application process (once available). Applications will be open 10/1 - 11/16/2020.

[ABOUT OUR 2020 WAC GRANTEES](#)

Learn more about our FY20 Project and Fellowship grantees.

Get in Touch



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