

WORCESTER ARTS COUNCIL

FY22 Funding Priorities



About WAC

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

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 supports local creatives.

WAC's 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



JENNIFER RILEY
CHAIR



MITCHELL PERRY
VICE CHAIR



BRANDON LEWIS
SECRETARY



CHRIS RICH
TREASURER



SILVANA BOAHENG



SEAN BRENNAN



DAVID FILAR



LISA MALO



GEORGE SEDARES

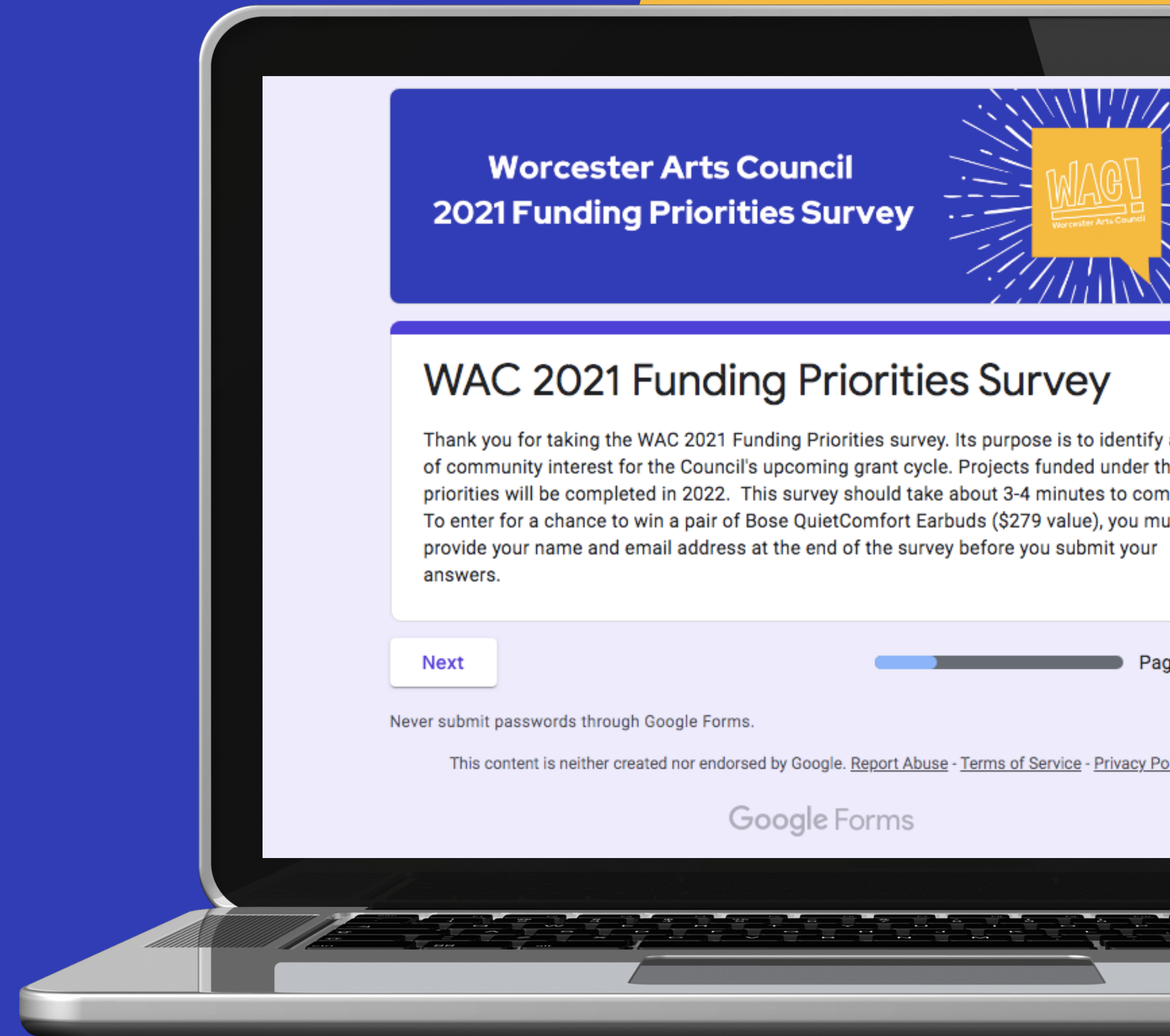


Community Input

Because 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 LCCs are required to conduct a community input process, and LCCs that receive more than \$20,000 in funding 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: tinyurl.com/waccommunityinput



Survey Method



The survey was live 6.12.2021 to 8.7.2021. It was available online via Google Forms.

WAC used raffle prizes to incentivize participation, including three bonus prizes (\$50 gift cards to local businesses) and a grand prize (Bose earbuds valued at \$279).

The survey was promoted primarily via email, social media, posters/flyers, and word of mouth.

WAC emailed its distribution list and posted on social regularly. The Worcester Cultural Coalition also promoted the survey via social and email. The City of Worcester posted the survey to its social accounts.

WAC did extensive community outreach, including contacting local organizations and "influencers," and promoting the survey at a Worcester Red Sox game.

This year, WAC focused on increasing participation from those who live in areas of Worcester that were underrepresented in past survey responses. WAC used targeted Facebook and Instagram ads in an effort to reach underrepresented zip codes.



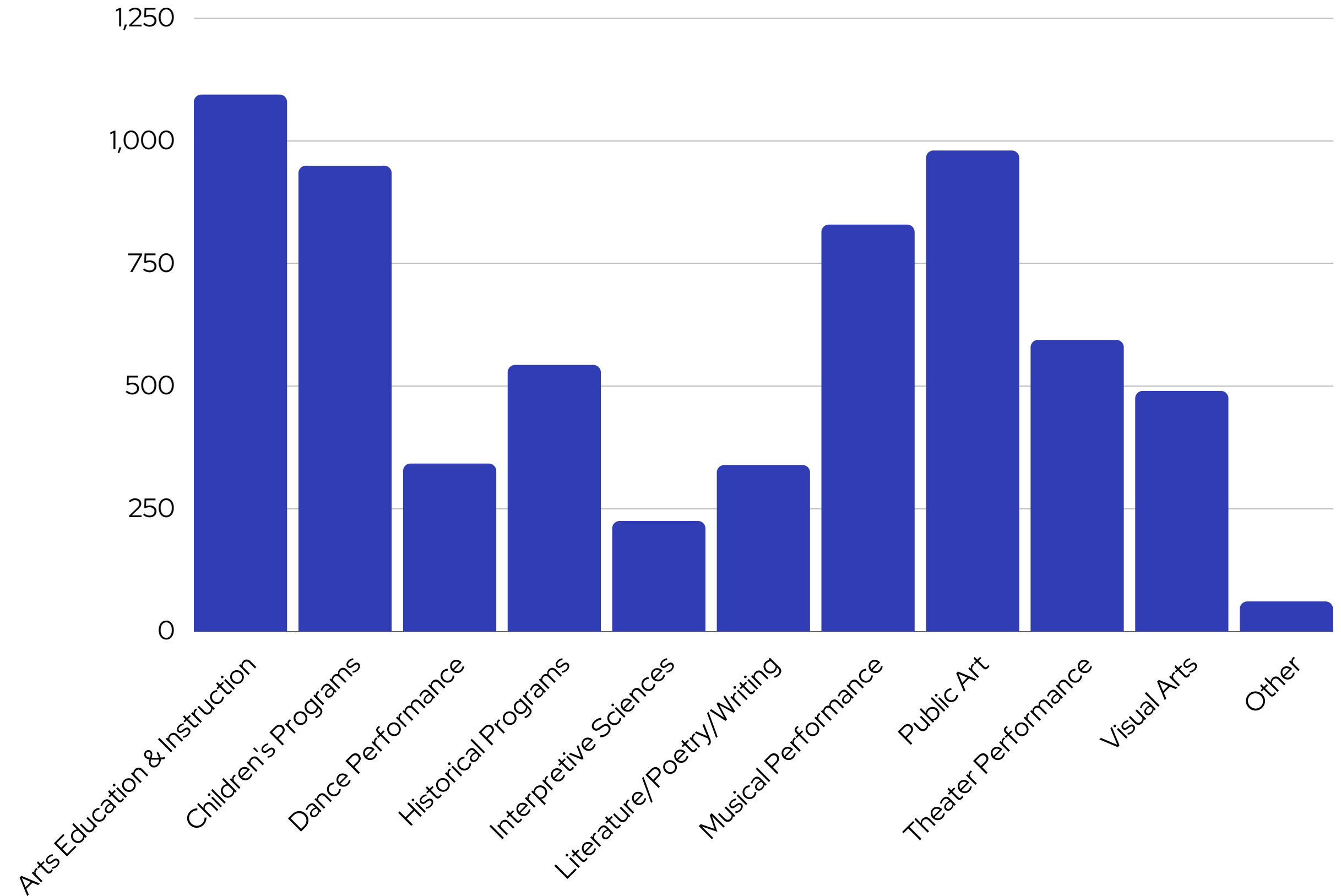
Survey Results

There were 2,050 total survey responses this year -- more than double last year's participation! This now represents the highest WAC Funding Priorities Survey participation ever.

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

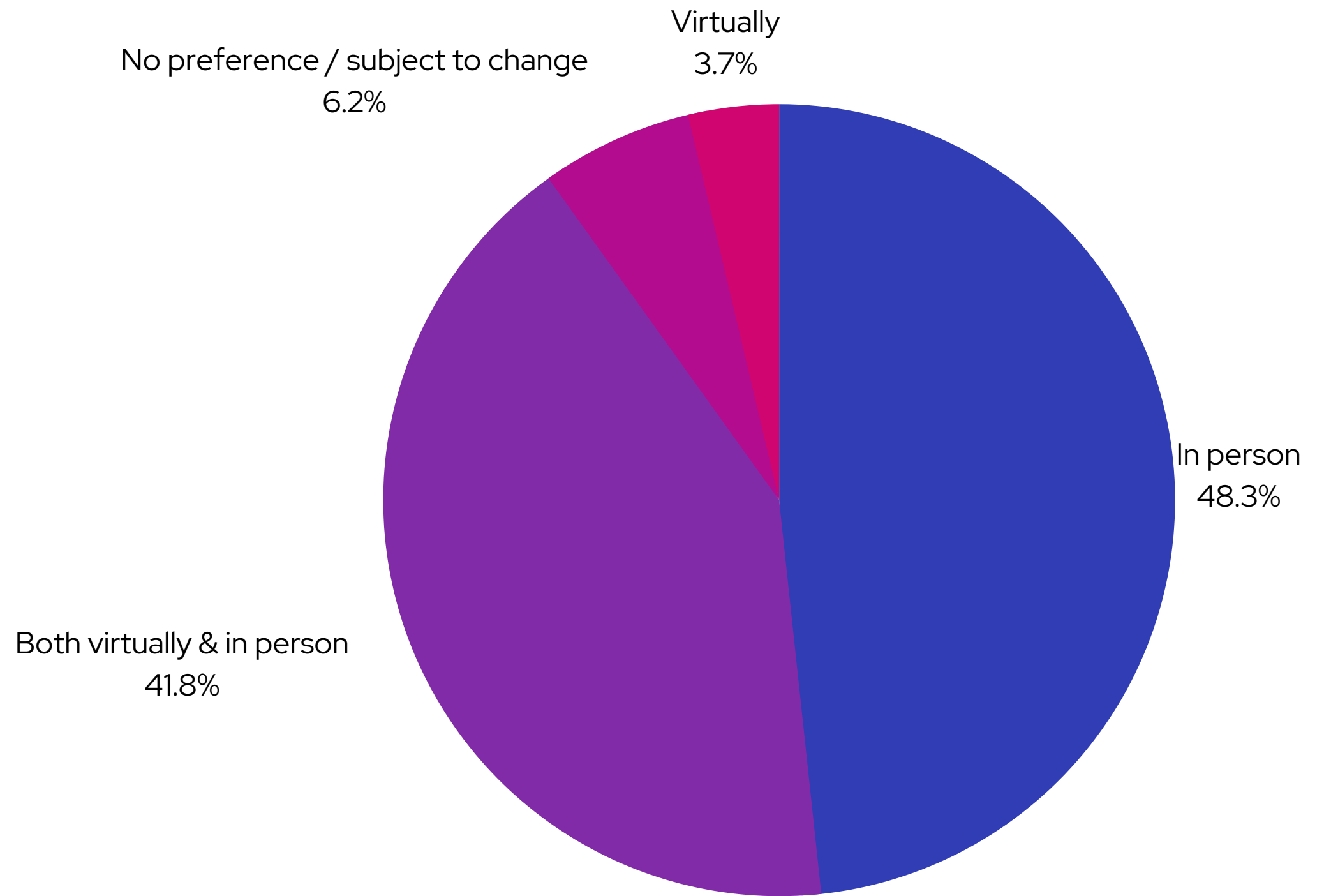
QUESTION 1

What types of projects would you most like to see the Worcester Arts Council prioritize in 2022? Please select your top three categories only.



QUESTION 2

In 2022, would you prefer to attend local arts & cultural programs virtually, in person, or both?



QUESTION 3

Are there particular neighborhoods or areas of Worcester where you would like to see more WAC initiatives take place?



QUESTION 4

Please share any additional comments or suggestions you may have related to arts & culture in the city of Worcester.

While the responses to this open-ended question varied, a few key themes emerged:

- Fostering connection among artists, arts organizations, local businesses, and City government
- Better awareness and advertising of arts & cultural projects in the city
- Strong support for public art, especially murals
- Addressing concerns about gentrification
- Supporting historically marginalized groups and underserved communities, including BIPOC & LGBTQIA+ communities
- Projects focused on Worcester's history

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



QUESTION 4

Sample of responses:

"I would love to see more partnerships amongst arts organizations and groups in the city."

"Maybe more events to bring local artists together to create... just an open space/time where artists can come in and work on their projects in a communal space with other artists all doing their own thing."

"I'm new to the city and have really been loving the artist community and its collective efforts and support. Would love to see more formal mutual aid for artists."

"I would love to see more opportunities for local artists to share their process and to get them connected to resources to help build their practice."

"More engagement with local artists and better notifications for upcoming events. [There are] a lot of missed opportunities for spreading awareness about the artists community, as well as potential fundraising projects."

"I think Worcester has a vibrant arts scene, but it needs better advertising."

"There is great potential in the neighborhoods surrounding Canal District, but there is also a cleanliness problem. Replacing old and dirty walls with street art can make a big difference. For example, the tunnel in Canal District leading to Union Station. Or the wall on the Public Market in Harrison Street. These are all wonderful canvases for public art that can improve our neighborhood."

"Offering more real-time/short-term advertisement of events and through different avenues... like a text blast the day before or day of an event so people are reminded about the programming."

"Never too much public art! Underpasses and bridges should be opened up to graffiti artists."

"I love the murals. I like anything that makes Worcester more unique, like the novelty city signs and the bears. Maybe some sculptures throughout city."

"I love the expansion of murals around the city and would like to see more! Perhaps there is a way to incorporate some teaching/classes around the muralist process, even including the funding process."

"... it feels like there's a lot of outsourcing for Worcester arts/culture that's in the public eye. [Murals painted] by artists flown in from other states, for example. It leaves a very gentrified 'urban-chic' aftertaste... I'd love to see more focus on 'enhancing Worcester' by collaborating with local BIPOC."

"There needs to be less emphasis on becoming Boston West/Boston Lite, and more on becoming an economically and culturally supportive city of WORCESTER. More inclusive of the diversity and the uniqueness. The downfall of the Bridge says it all as to what we are becoming."

"There seems to be a somewhat adversarial relationship between new people moving into Worcester (who are often coming due to gentrification of larger cities like Boston) and some who have lived/worked in the city for years and are now experiencing gentrification themselves. It's understandable, but I'd love it if there was a way to directly address this. Maybe something to address how Worcester fits into the bigger picture of housing issues."

"Please (continue?) to make more spaces and opportunities available for LGBTQ+ folks, as well as others who possess marginalized identities. Most of the time, I am seeing a lot of folks from the queer community taking on the lion's share of work on these cultural projects with little-to-no support from the city, often having to pay out their own pocket. Not everyone is well-resourced with the time and money to do this for free, and it's directly contributing to folks burning out."

"Worcester is being gentrified. Would be nice to see projects focused on areas where ethnic minorities can still afford to live before the community becomes completely White and elite."

"Just make sure that the decisions you make about communities are made with people who live in those communities present, in the room where decisions are being made."

"Support BIPOC creatives, and encourage partnerships to address community issues such as civic engagement. "

"Worcester is very diverse, but more representation is needed. Small organizations are important, as they are in the middle of the communities they serve; therefore, they should be prioritized when it comes to funding. Cultural programs that give voice and bring representation to marginalized and underrepresented people should also be prioritized."

"We greatly appreciate the work of the Council. We enjoy a range of cultural activities in the city. The Council should focus efforts on providing cultural experiences to ALL residents, especially those who may not be able to afford regular tickets to the city and its major venues."

"Maybe a map of installations that is on the city streets so that people actually walk our city... like how Boston has the bricks for Freedom Trail and other maps placed throughout to help guide self-guided tours."

"Please be aware that many of us can't participate in the cultural life of the city because we don't have a car. Think about who you are including or excluding when you plan an event, or a public art exhibit. Consider providing transportation to the out of the way locations, and be aware of how late the buses run."

"Out-of-towners still have trouble navigating Worcester. More cultural signage would help."

"My biggest difficulty getting to some stuff is parking, so if WAC can put some pressure on Worcester for better parking!"

"I live in the Beaver Brook area of the city and it would be super cool to see more public arts initiatives over here, especially those related to the history of the area. Beaver Brook was a local settlement formerly enslaved African Americans and the center of Worcester's Black culture for a time, and not enough people know that."

"It would be wonderful to see more art programs and installations devoted to the culture of Worcester and its Indigenous history."

"More murals that represent Worcester's history."

"The history of the American Revolution coming to light and Worcester's part is underrepresented or unknown. So is the [history of the] immigration periods that grew the city."

"There is a rich history about people who have made Worcester their home. That needs to be highlighted and told through words, photography, and short films."

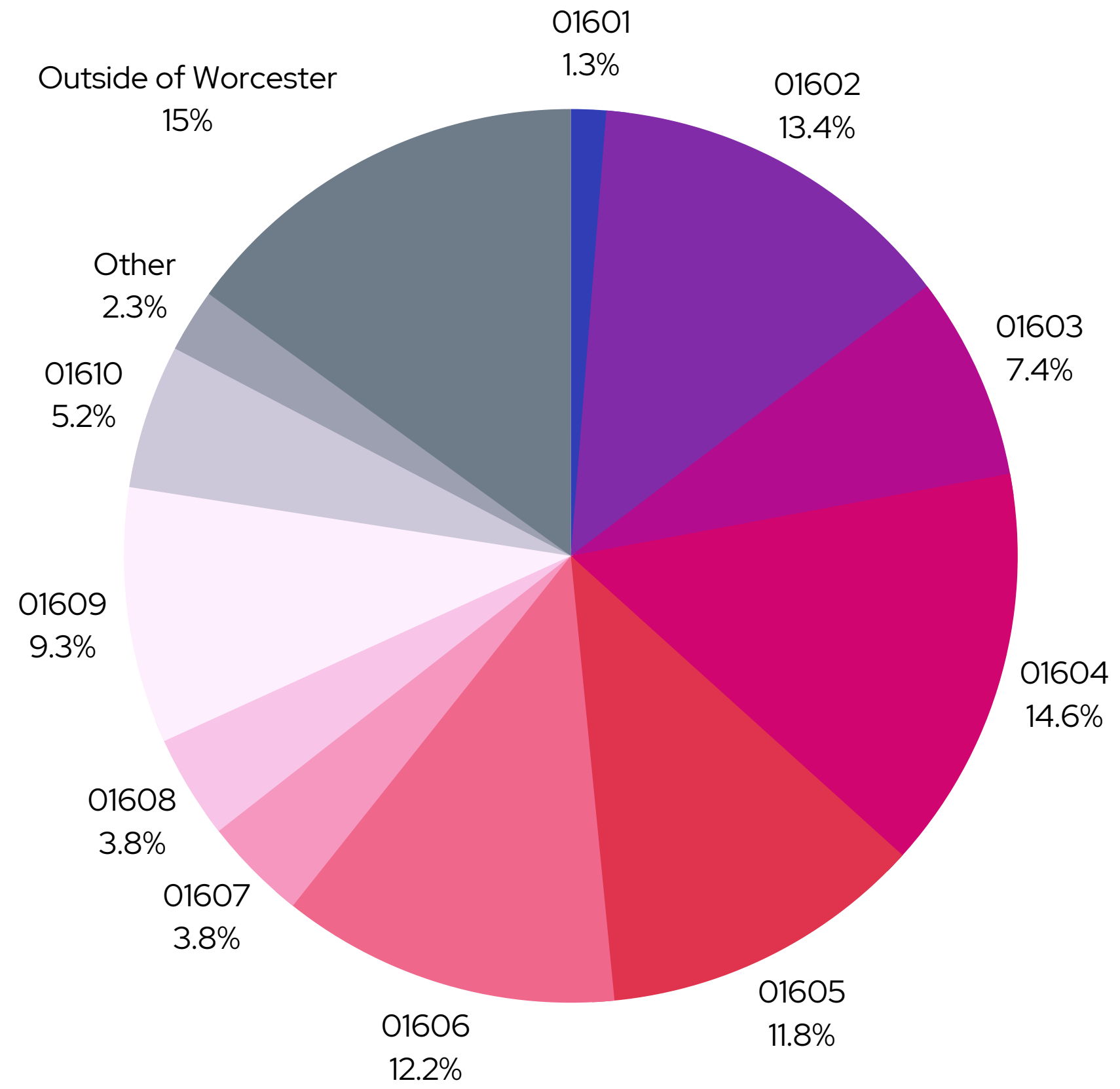


Survey Demographics

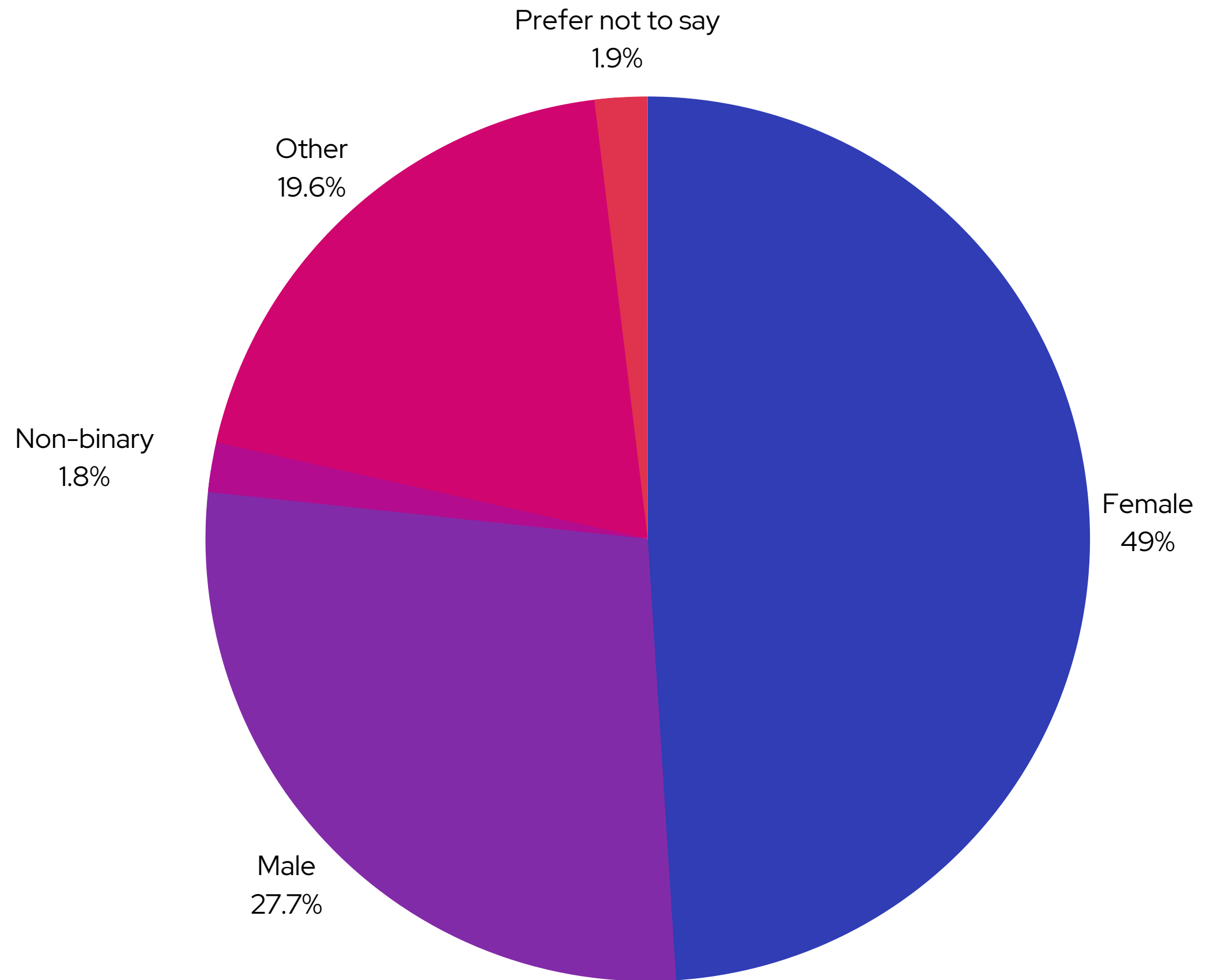
We asked several questions to help us understand how well the survey respondents reflect the population of Worcester.

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

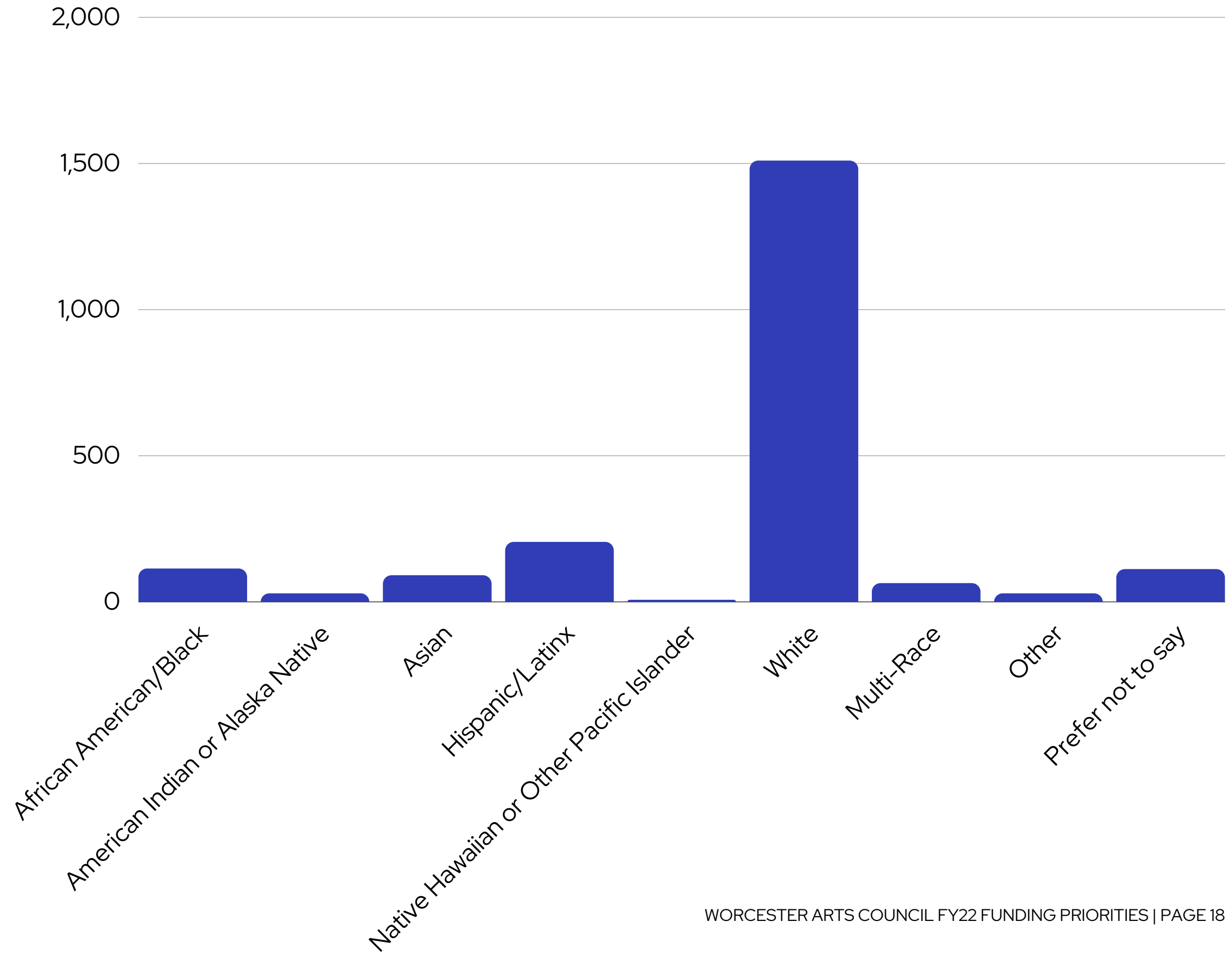
QUESTION 6
What is your home zip code?



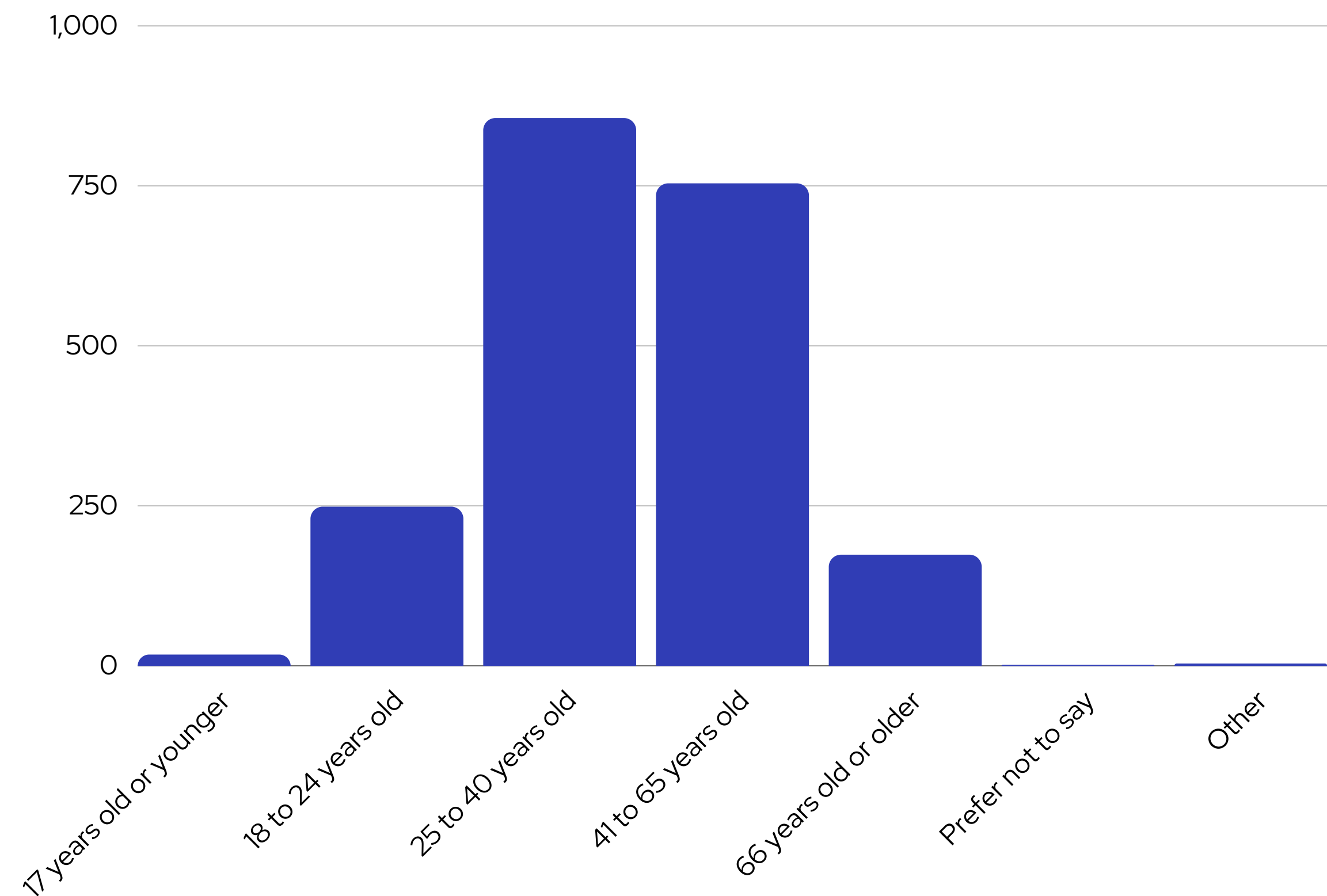
QUESTION 7
What is your gender?



QUESTION 8
What is your race?
(select all that apply)

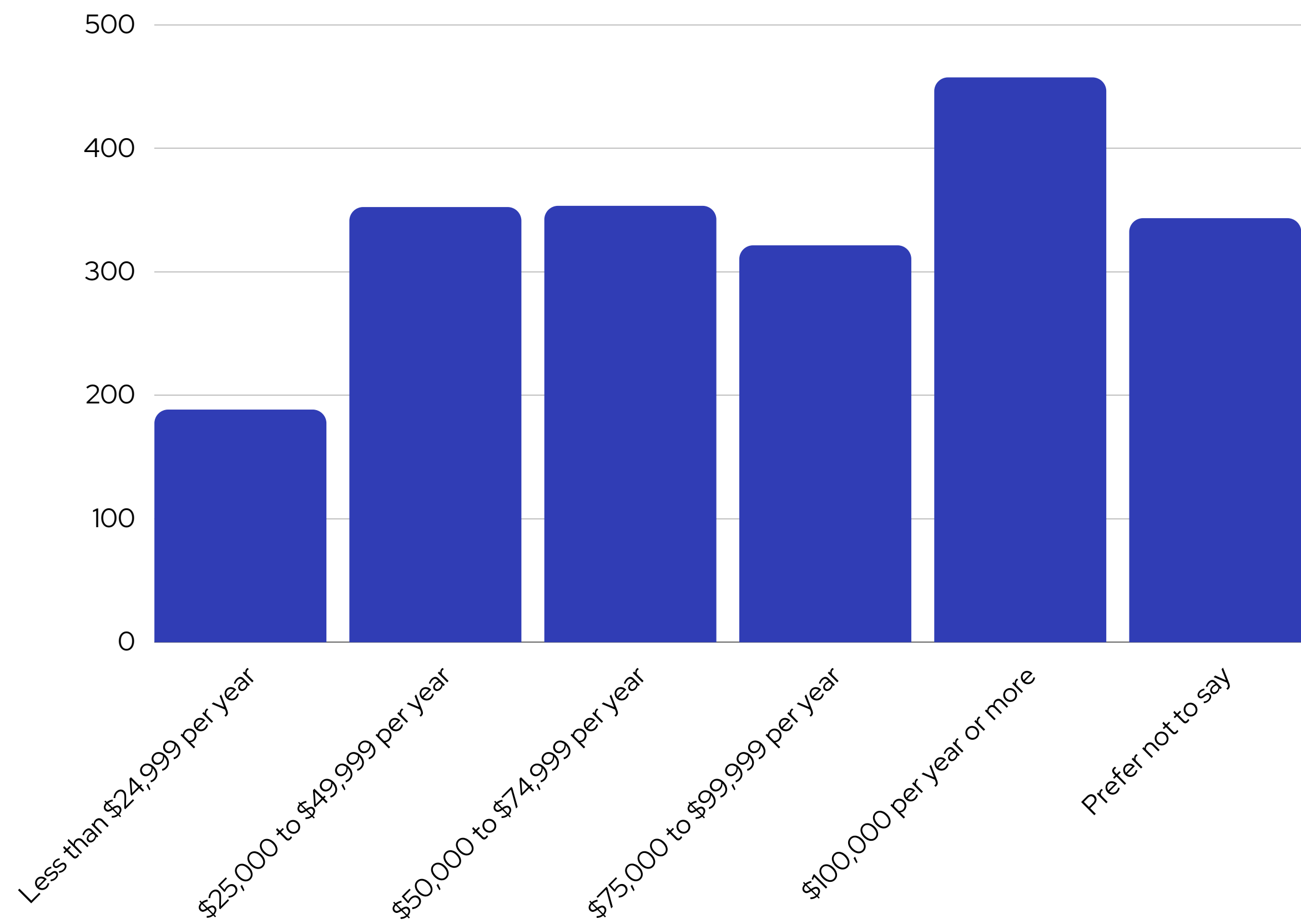


QUESTION 9
Select your age group.



QUESTION 10

**Select your
approximate household
income. (optional)**



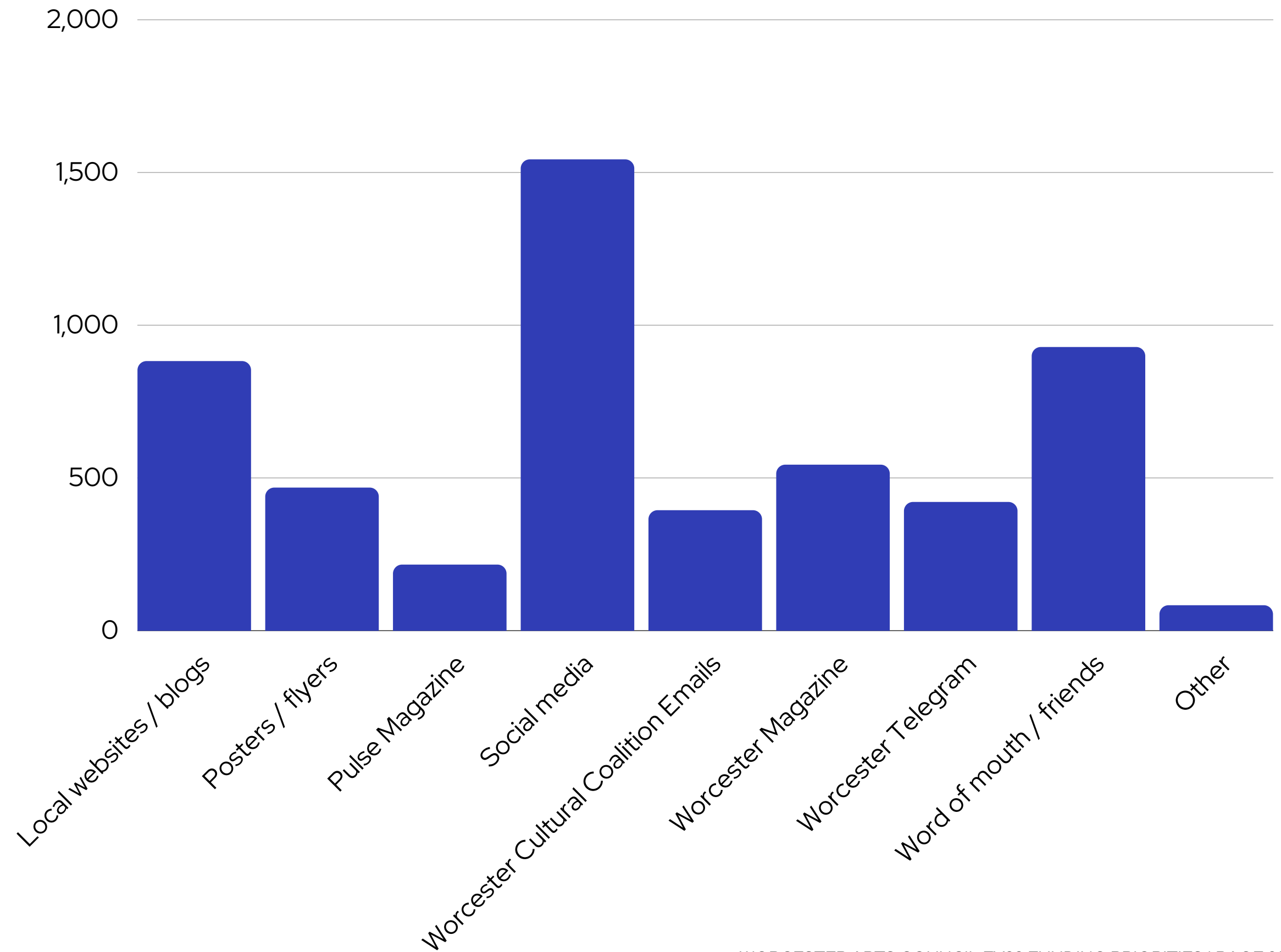


Marketing Insights

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.

QUESTION 5

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



FY22 Funding Priorities

Based on this community input, WAC voted on and approved the following funding priorities for FY22:

- **Project Categories | Projects that focus on Public Art, Arts Education & Instruction, and Children's Programs.**
- **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, LGBTQIA+, refugee, immigrant, or person living with a disability.**
- **Locations | Projects that take place in or benefit areas of Worcester that are historically underserved.**



Additional Resources

FY22 WAC Grant Guidelines & Application

Find more information about our project & fellowship grant opportunities and the application process (once available). FY22 grant applications will be open 9/1/21-10/15/21.

About our Change to Direct Granting for FY22

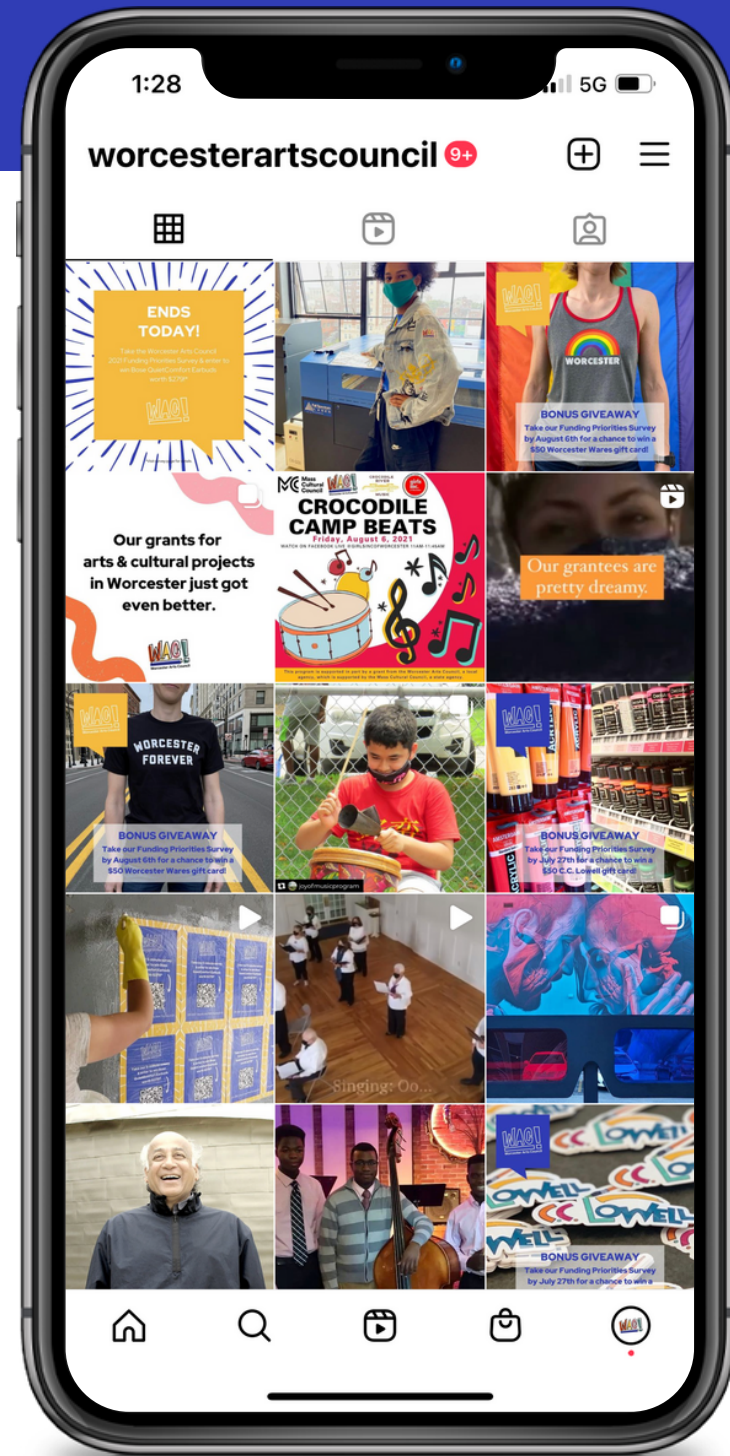
Learn about WAC's transition from reimbursement-based granting to direct granting for FY22 project grants.

About our 2021 WAC Grantees

Learn more about our FY21 project and fellowship grant recipients.



Get in Touch



artscouncil@worcesterma.gov



508.799.1400 ext. 31414



@worcesterartscouncil



@worcesterartscouncil



@worcart

