

Interests and expectations

Results of the Canadian Urban Forest Network member survey



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Background and Objectives

Comprised of over 900 members, the Canadian Urban Forest Network (CUFN) is the largest network of urban forestry professionals, experts, academics, students and practitioners in the country. Created and managed by Tree Canada, the CUFN advocates for urban forests across Canada under the guidance and leadership of the CUFN National Steering Committee.

In an effort to better understand the composition of the network members, their needs, interests and expectations, the CUFN Steering Committee conducted a survey of the membership – this report presents a summary of those results.

Approach

In autumn of 2017, the CUFN Steering Committee prioritized the need to understand the members' interests and expectations to better direct national activities. Survey questions were developed by the CUFN Committee to address both quantitative and qualitative responses. The survey was circulated through the CUFN listserv, often referred to as CANUFNET, and remained open until December 1st, 2017.

Results

Of the 875 members at the time of circulation, survey results yielded a 7.4% response rate (65 respondents). The results of this report are categorized into four sections:

- 1) Who are the CUFN members?
- 2) What urban forestry topics are the CUFN members mainly interested in?
- 3) What actions do the CUFN members expect from the Steering Committee?
- 4) What is the level of engagement of the CUFN members?

Who are the CUFN members?

96% of the members who took part in the survey are Canadian (Fig. 1) from seven provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Fig. 2). Ontario had the highest representation of 40%, followed by British Columbia with 17%, Quebec 13% and Alberta 11%, which also reflects the choice of primary working language, 88% English and 12% French (Fig. 3).

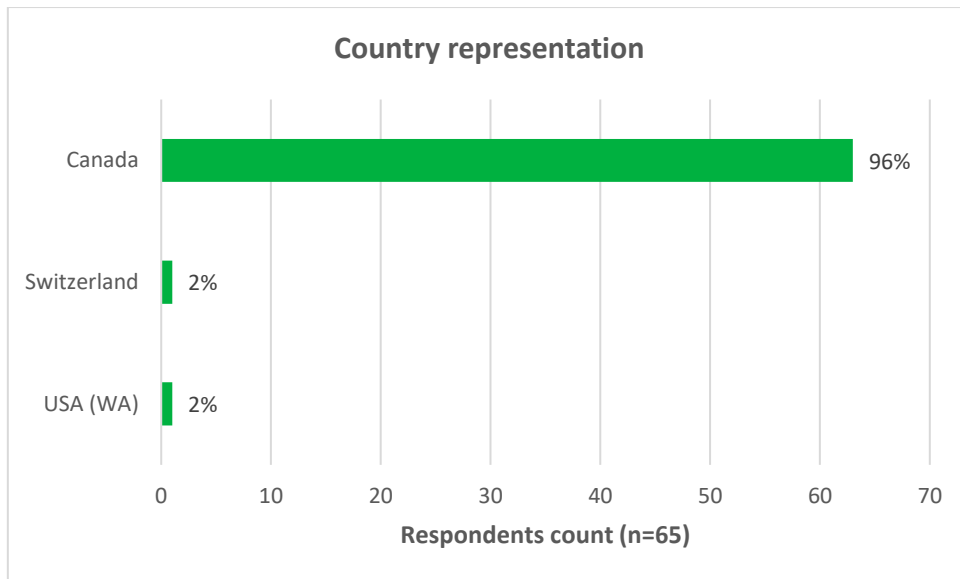


Fig. 1. Country representation

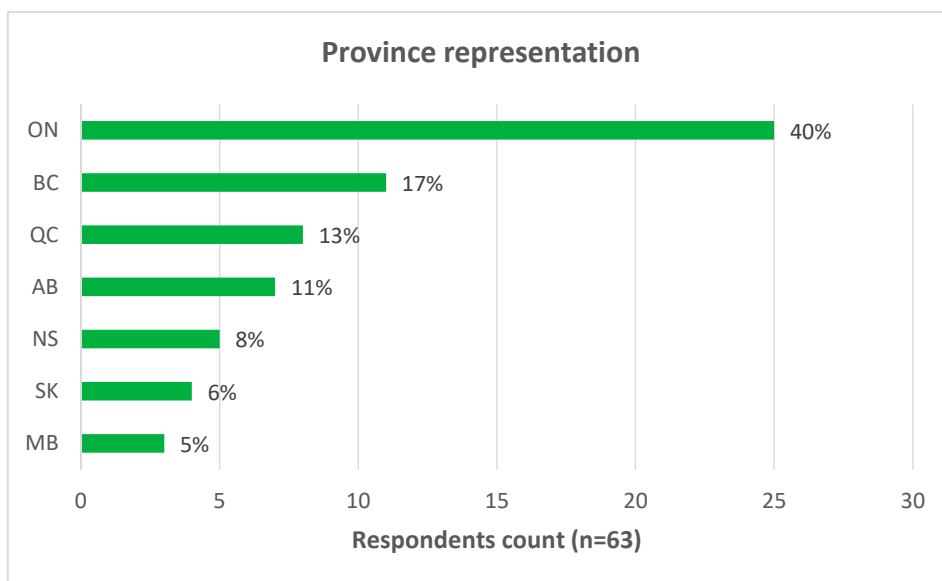


Fig. 2. Canadian province representation

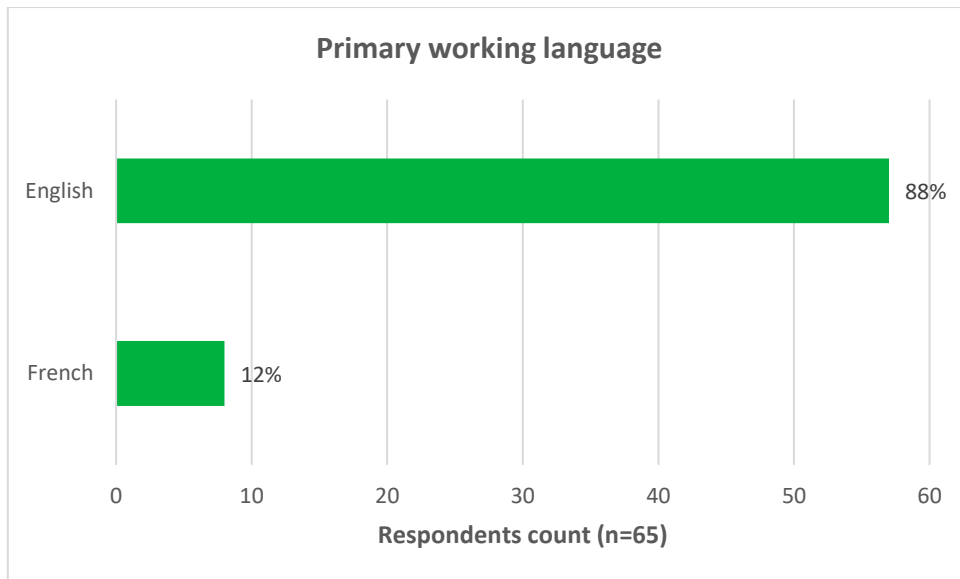


Fig.3. Primary working language

63% of the participating members come from the public sector, followed by the private sector (17%), environmental NGOs (9%), academia (6%) and other (5%) (Fig. 4). Responses in the “other” category included: advisory committee, retiree, and conservation authority. Upon further investigation, based on reviewing respondent job titles and organizations, 48% of the respondents work in urban forestry, followed by arborists and horticulturists (21%) and green space managers and technicians (11%). There was also representation from education (8%), pests and diseases (3%), botanical gardens (3%) and tree nurseries (2%) (Fig. 5).

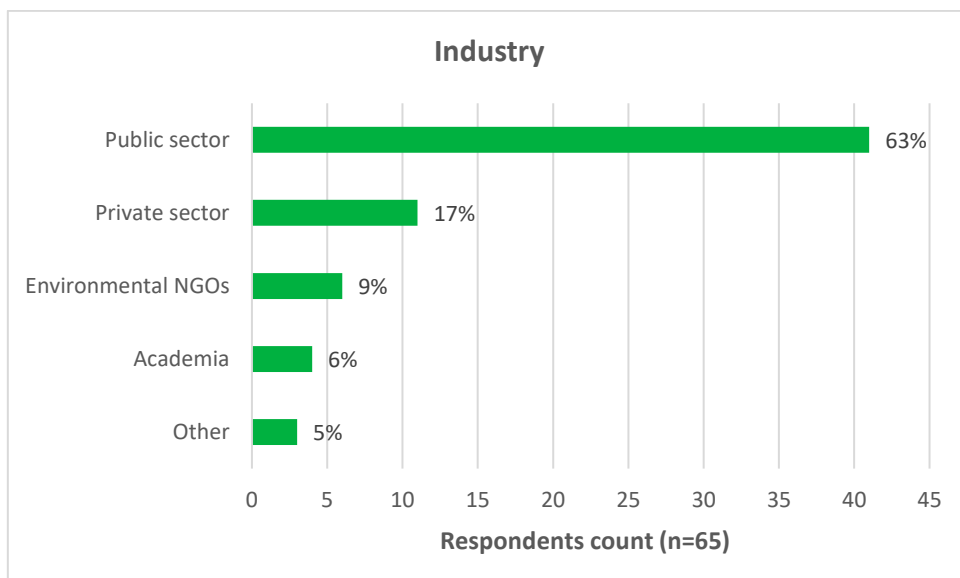


Fig. 4. Industry representation

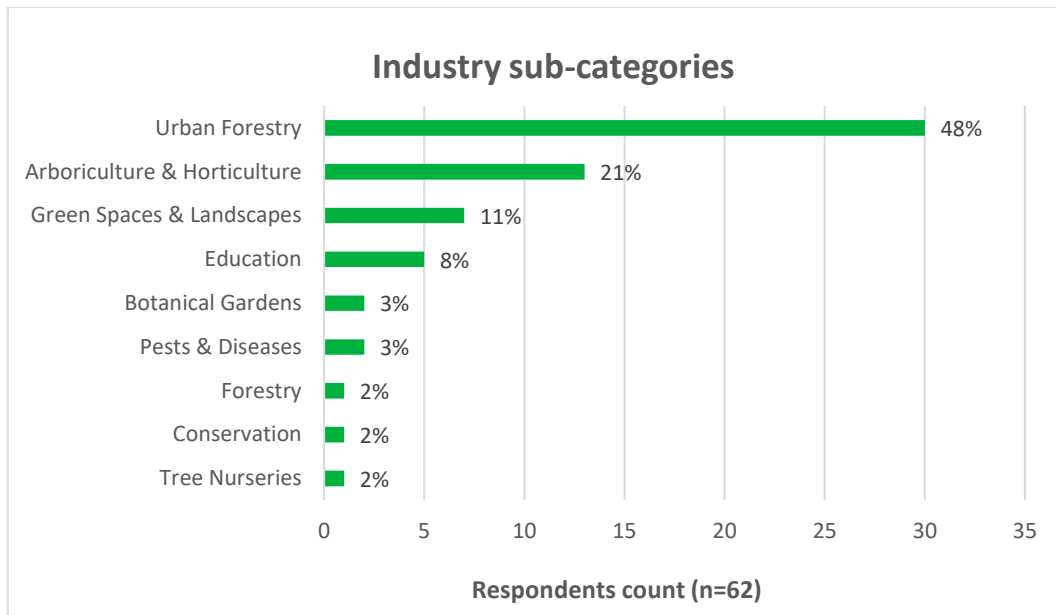


Fig. 5. Industry sub-categories

What urban forestry topics are the CUFN members mainly interested in?

According to the survey, 42% of respondents are primarily interested in urban forest policies, legislation and bylaws, as well as urban forest management planning (27%); this is not surprising given that 62% of participating members come from the public sector (Fig. 6). 17% favour invasive species, pests and diseases, while 3% are interested in all topics. None of the 65 respondents indicated interest in ecosystem services, tree maintenance, or social values for communities.

Additionally, in the narrative responses, one participant proposed that climate change mitigation and adaptation be considered as a priority for the CUFN.

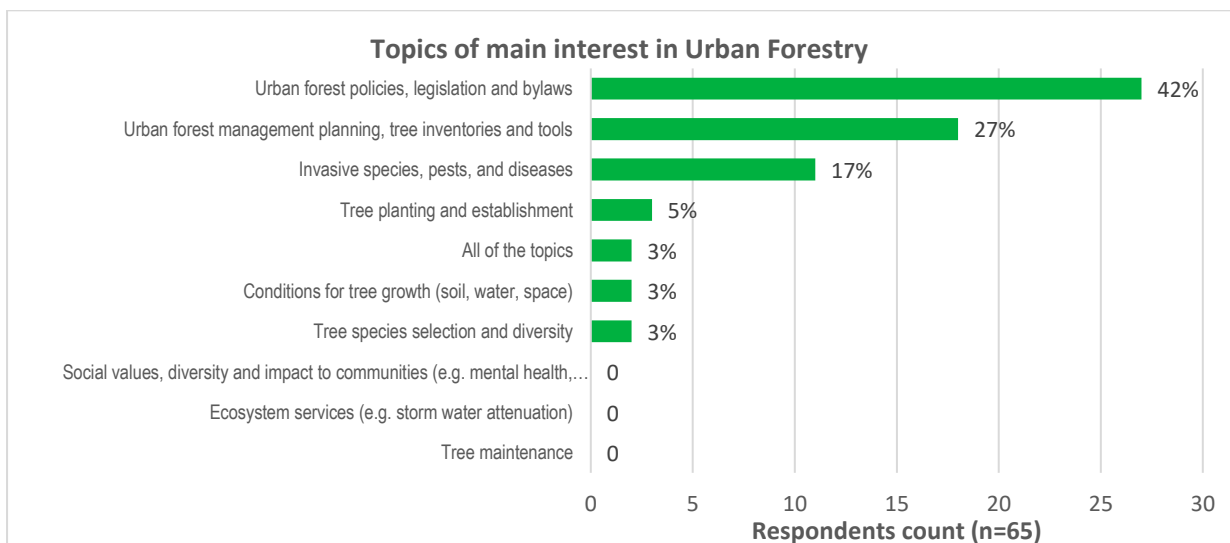


Fig. 6. Topics of main interest in Urban Forestry

What actions do the CUFN members expect from the Steering Committee?

According to respondents, the top five most important and expected activities for the CUFN Committee are to:

- Increase involvement of federal and provincial governments and their agencies in urban forestry (89%);
- Develop and maintain multiple partnerships with governmental departments, municipalities and green industry groups (86%);
- Identify research needs and collaboration with the academic community (84%);
- Provide direction for the Canadian Urban Forest Strategy (81%); and
- Update the Compendium of Best Management Practices for Canadian urban forests (80%).

Other actions that were deemed important are managing the CUFN listserv (77%), and coordinating the Canadian Urban Forest Conference that offers the opportunity for urban forest professionals to network and learn (76%). 75% expected the CUFN Committee to help secure strong and lasting financial commitments to develop and maintain urban forests.

Lastly, 67% highlighted the importance of administering the CUFN website, and 60% placed importance on developing and administering regional urban forestry action plans for the network.

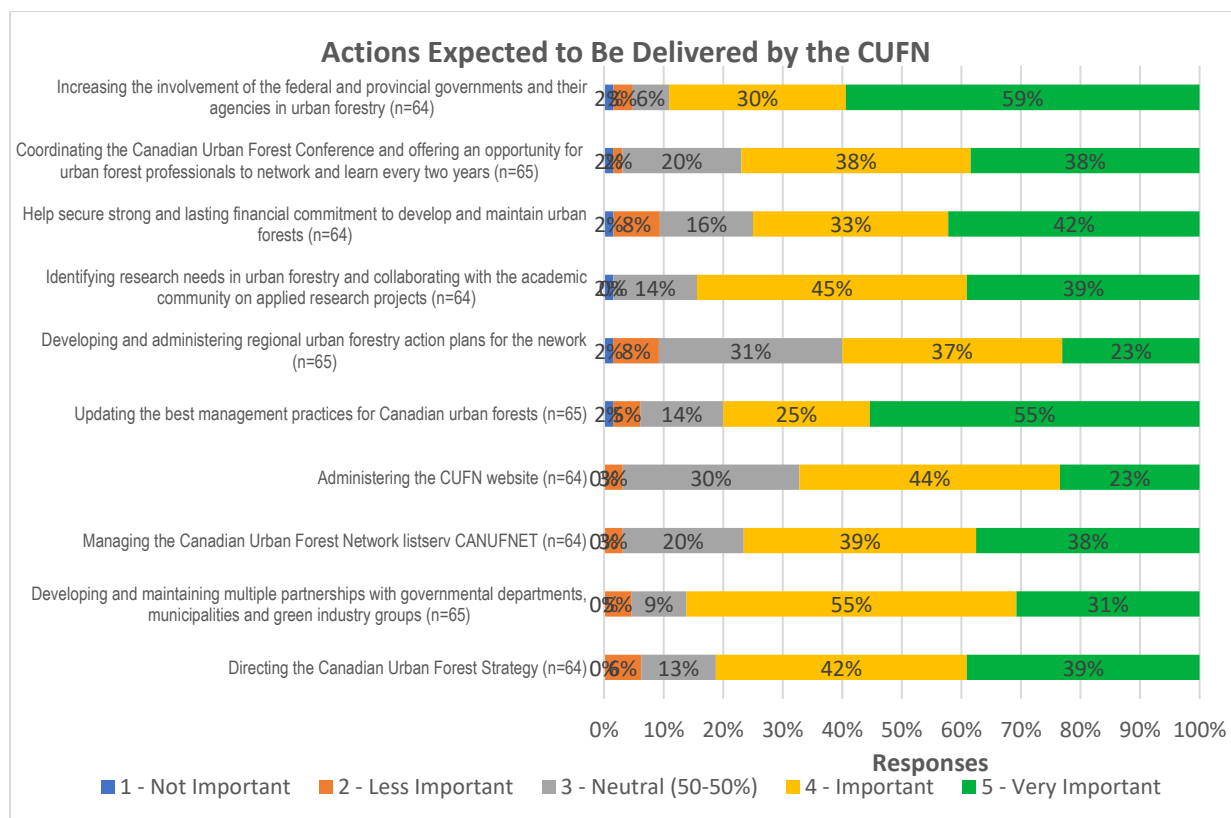


Fig. 7. Actions expected to be delivered by the CUFN

In the narrative comments, individual respondents suggested the following actions:

- Actively implement the Canadian Urban Forest Strategy;
- Challenge municipalities and other levels of government to first enforce the policies that they have in place, and then further work to strengthen them;
- Enable both the municipal and private sectors to have a more defined and active role in implementing plans and strategies that they have in place;
- Strengthen public engagement/outreach surrounding trees and their needs;
- Identify research needs and funds to support that research;
- Fill the gap in communicating with all of the other professionals that have profound influence on the future of urban forests, such as: landscape architects, landscapers, engineers, planners, asset managers, risk managers and politicians;
- Provide the opportunity to meet and learn from other professionals, as well as present current research;
- Create an apprenticeship program and better cooperation between self-employed arborists and government levels;
- Create an additional regional committee in large provinces like Ontario;
- Enable more capacity in the province of Quebec for successful engagement and to initiate change at provincial and national scale;
- Help create an inter-connected global urban forest network needed for urban forest research, projects and activities

What is the level of engagement of the CUFN members?

Overall, response with regards to engagement is high. 95% of respondents are willing to meet and collaborate for one day a year (Fig. 8) and 86% are willing to be contacted directly with regards to a possible collaboration (Fig. 9).

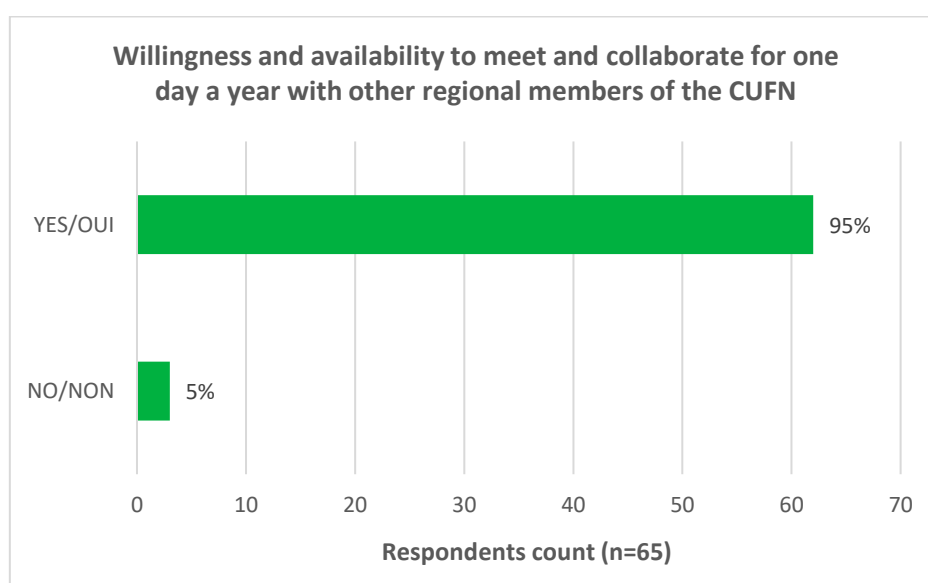


Fig. 8. Willingness and availability to meet and collaborate

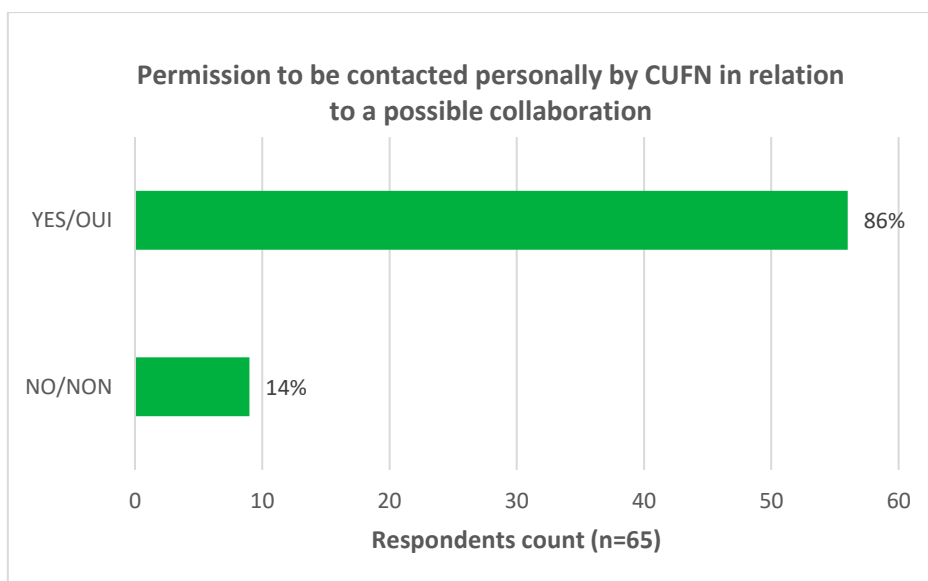


Fig. 9. Permission to be contacted by CUFN

With respect to willingness to volunteer: 46% of respondents are willing to volunteer, and 3% can offer 10 hours of their time each week and 24% indicated an availability of 5 hours/week (Fig. 10).

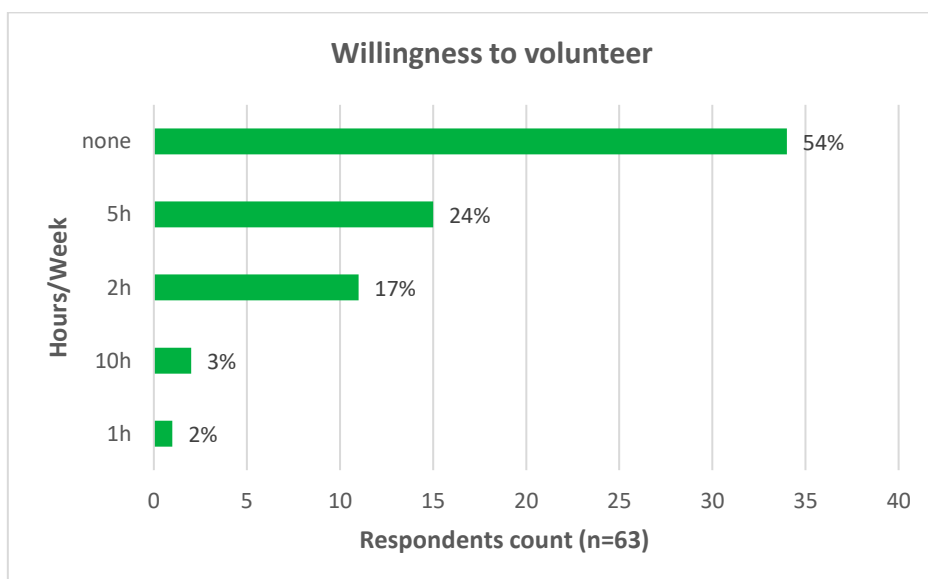


Fig. 10. Willingness to volunteer

Summary

The Canadian Urban Forest Network member survey conducted in autumn 2017 yielded a total of 65 responses. Based on responses, highlights of results include:

- Respondents are primarily from the province of Ontario (40%)
- Choice of primary working language is English (88%)
- Respondents are primarily from the public sector (63%)
- Respondents primarily work specifically in urban forestry (48%)
- Respondents' primary topic of interest is urban forest policies, legislation and bylaws (42%)
- According to respondents, the most important and expected activity for the CUFN is to increase involvement of federal and provincial governments and their agencies in urban forestry (89%)
- Most respondents are willing to meet and collaborate for one day a year (95%)
- Less than half of the respondents were willing to volunteer their time (46%)

The CUFN Steering Committee is working to incorporate these results and responses into the 2018-2019 workplan moving forward.

Acknowledgments

On behalf of Tree Canada Dr. Bardekjian would like to thank the Canadian Urban Forest Network Steering Committee for contributing to the design of the survey questions and to the participants who responded to this study; in particular, Dr. Bardekjian thanks her co-author, Georgiana Chiriac, for generously volunteering her time to this project to conduct analysis and writing.

About the Authors

Dr. Adrina C. Bardekjian is an urban forestry researcher, writer and educator. She works with Tree Canada as Manager of Urban Forestry Programs and Research Development; she is also a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the University of British Columbia and a Totten Fellow of the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station. Dr. Bardekjian has a number of publications and is one of the editors the book, [Urban Forests, Trees and Greenspace: A Political Ecology Perspective](#) (2014). She remains an active Board member of the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition, the Program Review Committee for the Urban Forestry Technician Program at Fleming College and a member of the International Society of Arboriculture Ontario Chapter Board of Directors. Dr. Bardekjian's [academic research](#) focuses on communicating underrepresented narratives in urban forestry through a political ecology lens. Her doctoral research focused on arborist

perspectives on identity and labour, and her current postdoctoral work examines women's participation and gender equity in arboriculture and urban forestry. She is the recipient of several awards including York University's Graduate in Environmental Studies Community Excellence Prize (2012), the Canadian Dermatology Association Public Education Award for the film, [Partners In Action: A Shade Policy for the City of Toronto](#) (2014), and the International Society of Arboriculture's Honourary Membership Award (2016) in recognition for her efforts to promote and advance the ideas of arboriculture and urban forestry.

Georgiana Chiriac has a BSc degree in Global Sustainability from Coventry University, U.K. and an MSc degree in International Development (Poverty, Inequality and Development) from the University of Birmingham, U.K. She comes from a family of forestry professionals and researchers and grew up with a love for forests and the natural environment. She is an inter-disciplinarian interested in both research and projects in a variety of topics such as: forest management, conservation and certification; urban forestry and green spaces; climate change mitigation; waste management; socio-economic and environmental sustainability; poverty and inequality in developing countries; gender and development, and livelihood frameworks and coping mechanisms. She conducted a research study into the livelihood strategies of different societal groups living with HIV/AIDS in Lusaka Zambia, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the impact of the pandemic on urban dwellers. She also conducted an unprecedented research study into issues of social marginalization and stigma, girl marriage and livelihood strategies of the Roma gypsy community in Coventry, U.K., which offers insight into the livelihoods of ethnic minorities living in the UK and policy changes surrounding a harmonious integration of the Roma gypsies into the British society.