



**Consultation on Westmount's houses of worship**

**Results of the online survey**

February 2019





## BACKGROUND

For many years, the City of Westmount has endeavoured to protect, enhance and preserve its built heritage. Twelve houses of worship of various faiths are part of that heritage.

As in other Quebec municipalities, these spaces are less frequented than before, and their maintenance costs are becoming more and more difficult for spiritual communities to bear.

The sustainability of these spaces is a priority for the City, particularly the preservation of their main vocation, namely religious practices. However, other complementary uses could be envisioned to maintain financial stability.

Current municipal regulations restrict other uses but worship. If needed, these regulations must be modified to authorize other uses.

To continue the premises of its reflection, the City of Westmount conducted a survey in order to:

- inform them of issues related to Westmount's religious heritage;
- encourage ideas about the sustainable future of these spaces;
- measure the level of social acceptability concerning certain changes.

## METHODOLOGY

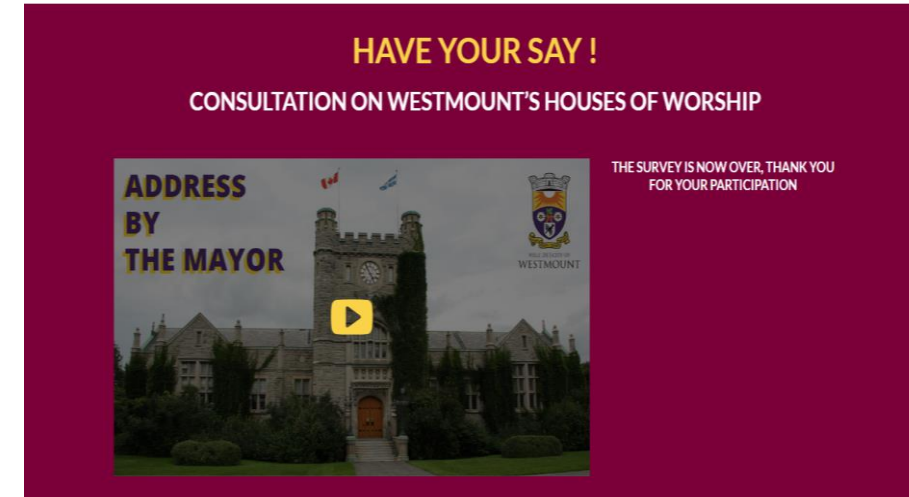
- Creation of a web platform, in French and English, to allow citizens to complete the survey online

[www.lieuxdecultwestmount.ca](http://www.lieuxdecultwestmount.ca)  
[www.housesofworshipwestmount.ca](http://www.housesofworshipwestmount.ca)

- Possibility to complete the survey, in paper format, at the Westmount Public Library

- Distribution of postcards to all residents (approximately 9,400 doors) to inform them of the process, between November 12 and 16, 2018\*
- Responses collected from November 1<sup>st</sup> to December 2, 2018
- Number of respondents: 369, of whom 90% (328 individuals) completed the survey in English
- Statistical margin of error of 5%. According to the survey industry and by experience, a rate between 3% and 5% is a guarantee of the reliability of the results
- The statistical margin of error indicates the widest possible gap between what is measured and reality. It is calculated from the sample size (number of individuals surveyed) and the level of confidence in the results, which is generally set at 95% in the survey industry

\* It should be noted that the strike at Canada Post in early November caused a delay of several days in the distribution of postcards, which required a review of the City of Westmount's communication strategy and therefore an extension of the survey deadline to early December 2018.

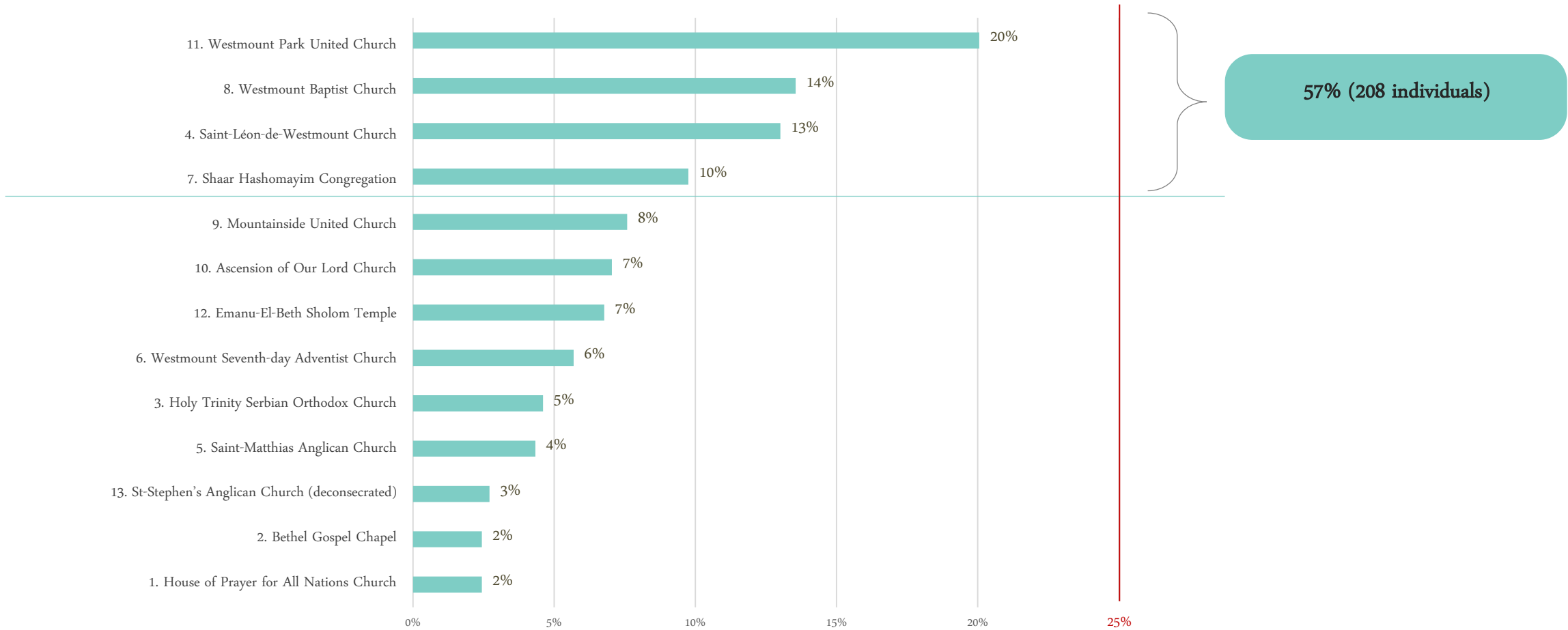




COMPLETE RESULTS

COMPLETE RESULTS

Q1. Which house of worship is the nearest to your home? (n= 369)



- 57% of respondents live near the following four places: Westmount Park United Church (20%), Westmount Baptist Church (14%), Saint-Léon-de-Westmount Church (13%) and Shaar Hashomayim Congregation (10%)
- Citizens residing near House of Prayer for All Nations Church, Bethel Gospel Chapel or St. Stephen's Anglican Church (to date deconsecrated) are, however, few to have completed the survey (7%)

COMPLETE RESULTS

Q2. How important is the presence of houses of worship with heritage value in your community?  
Please choose three of the following statements and place them in order of importance (n=367)



Caution: Most respondents selected more than three statements, this is why the analysis of this question is in absolute numbers, not in percentages.

The numbers indicate the number of times a response choice has been selected by the respondent, depending on the level of importance.

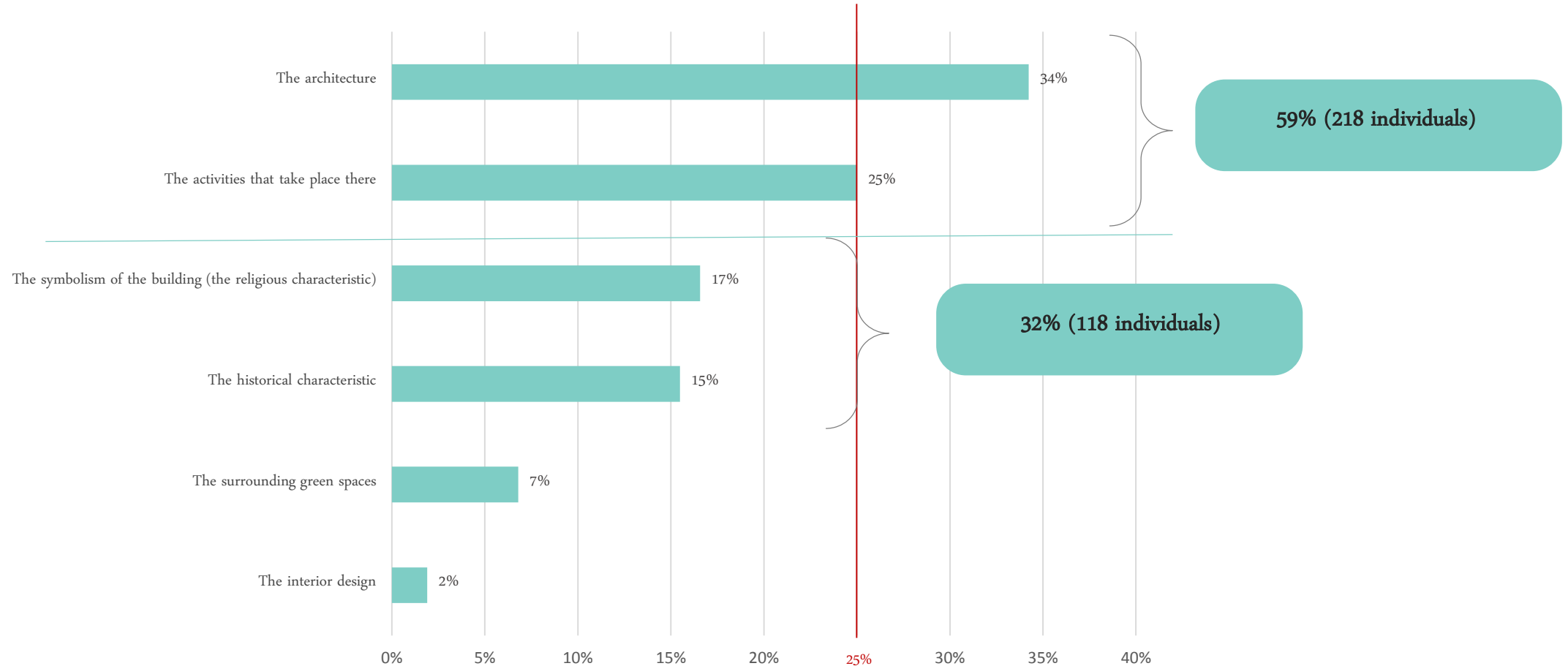
■ Not important  
■ Neutral  
■ Important

- According to the citizens, what is most important is the architectural quality of the buildings (answer selected 157 times) as well as their presence for spiritual reasons (answer selected 121 times)
- The fact that they are meeting places for the community (answer selected 109 times) and that they represent historic pillars (answer selected 95 times) are also important elements according to respondents
- On the opposite, respondents give little or no importance to houses of worship because of the activities that take place inside (answer selected 76 times). For some people, the presence of these houses of worship even leaves them indifferent (answer selected 70 times)



## COMPLETE RESULTS

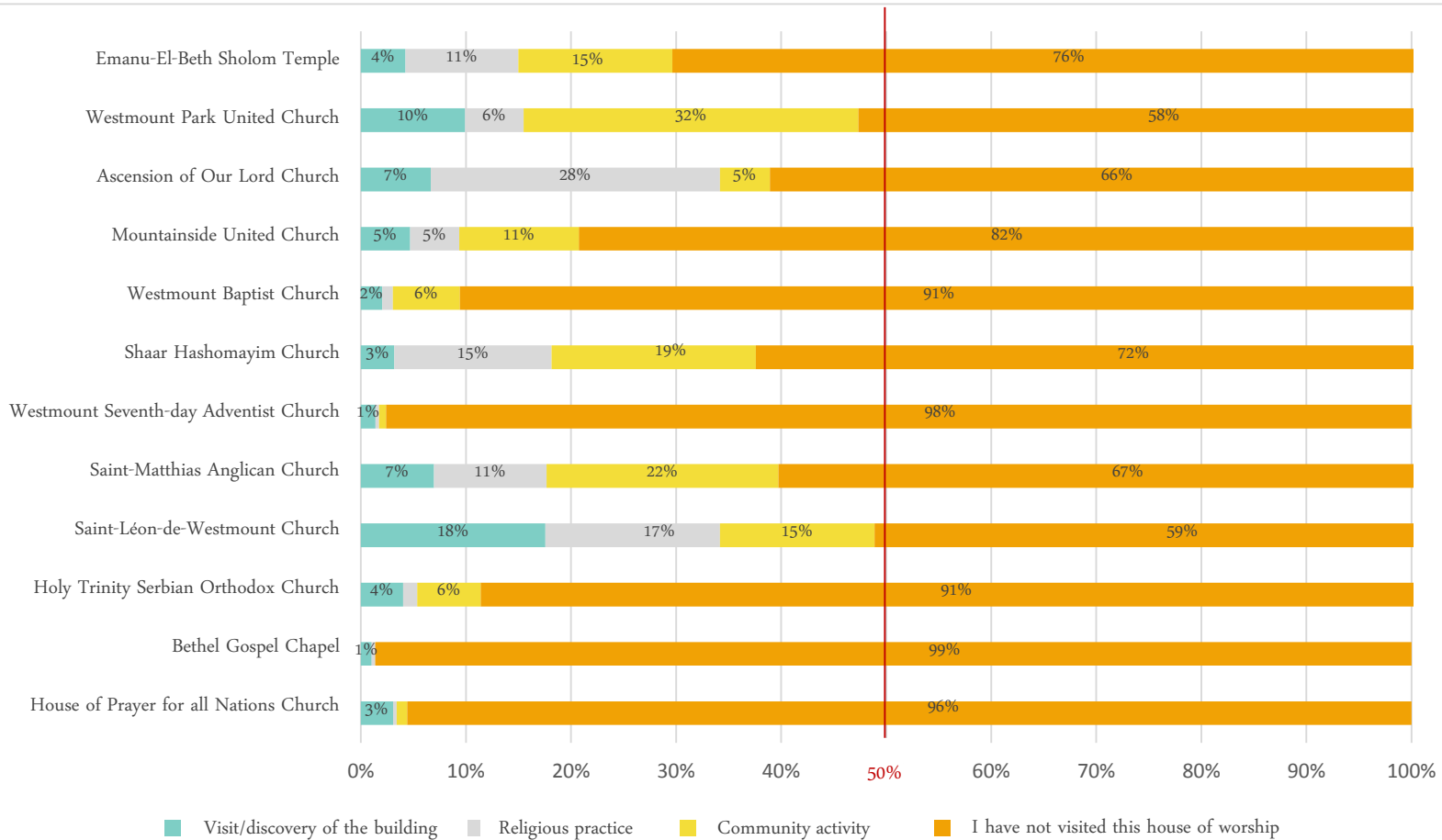
Q3. Which element of the house of worship, closest to your home, do you appreciate the most? (n= 368)



- The architecture is the main quality of houses of worship, for more than a third of the respondents (34%)
- The activities that take place there is the second most appreciated quality by respondents (25%)
- Finally, the interior design (2%) and the surrounding green spaces (7%) are the least appreciated qualities by respondents.

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q4. Please identify the houses of worship you have visited in the past 12 months and specify the reason(s) why you visited them. (n= 369)

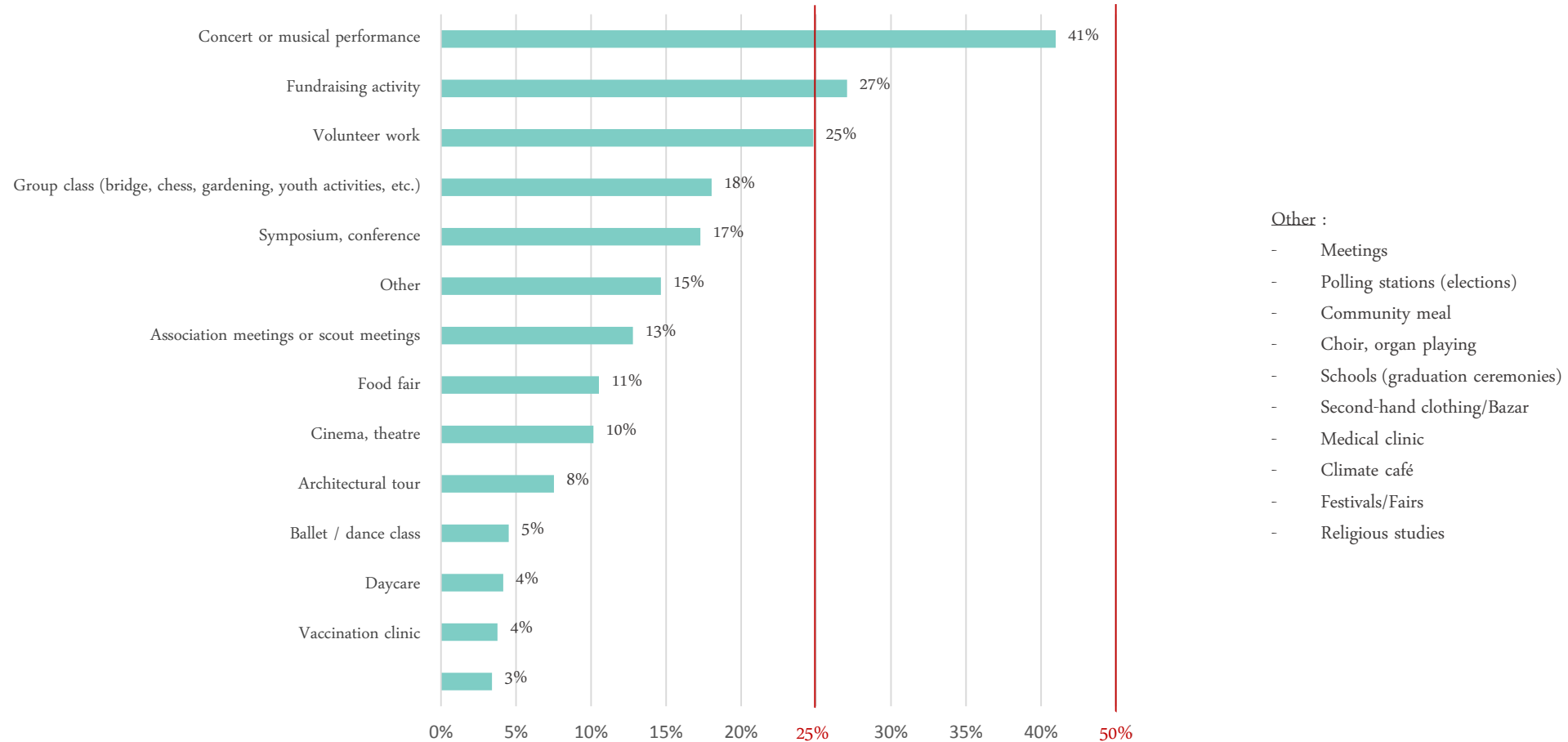


- In general, it is noticed that houses of worship are not or rarely visited by respondents, especially the Bethel Gospel Chapel (99%), Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church (98%), House of Prayer for All Nations Church (96%), Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church (91%) and Westmount Baptist Church (91%)
- However, it should be noted that the two most visited houses of worship are:
  - Westmount Park United Church, primarily used for community activities (32%)
  - Saint-Léon-de-Westmount Church, for various reasons.
- It should be specified that the Ascension of Our Lord Church is the most visited for reasons of religious practice (28%)

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q5. If you selected « community activity » in the previous question, please identify which one(s) from the following list. (n= 266)

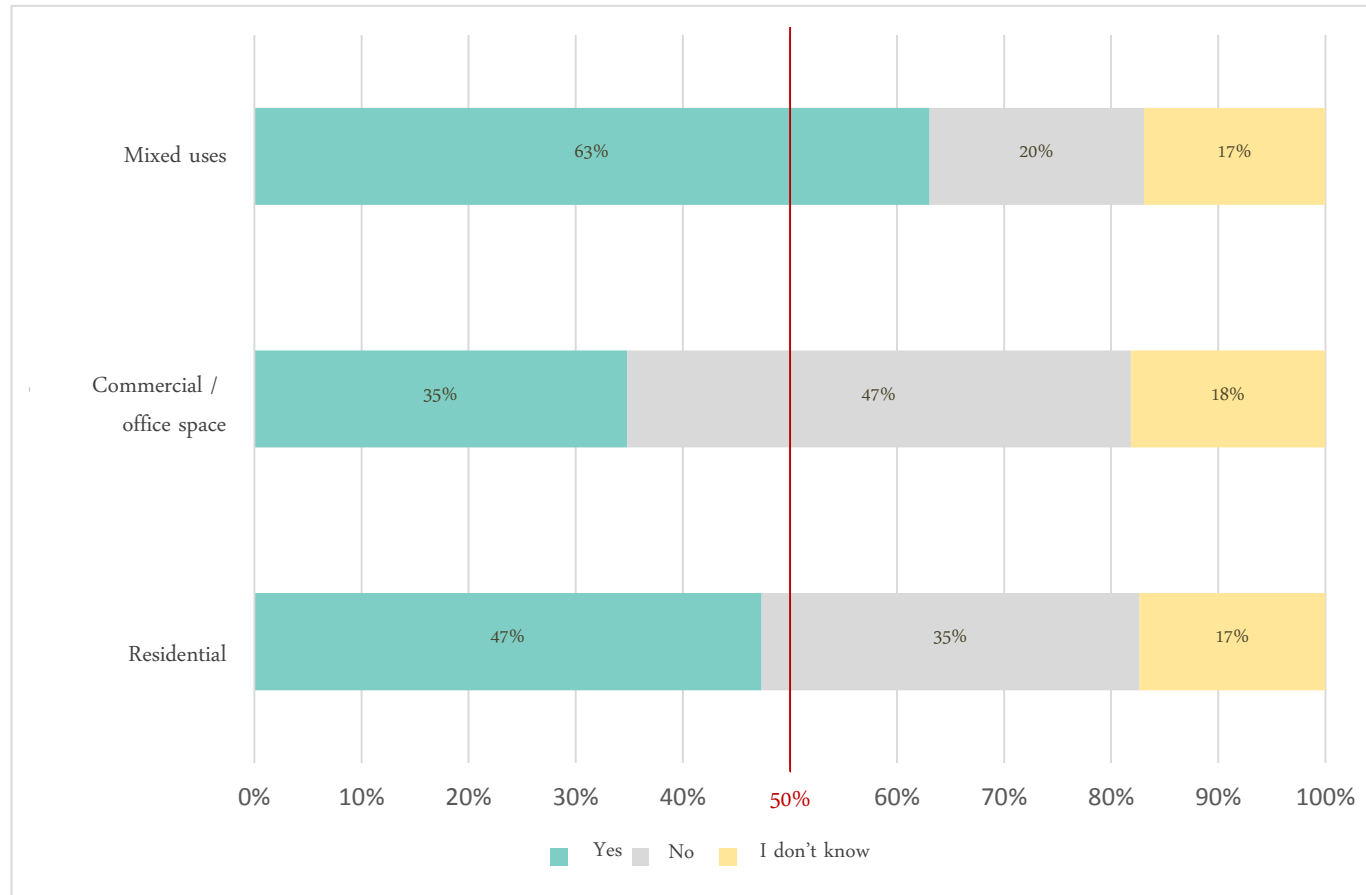
*Multiple answers possible*



- About 2 out of 5 people, (109 individuals), attend concerts and musical performances
- Closely behind are fundraising activities (27%, namely 72 individuals) and volunteer work (25%, namely 66 individuals), amongst the most practiced community activities by the respondents.

## COMPLETE RESULTS

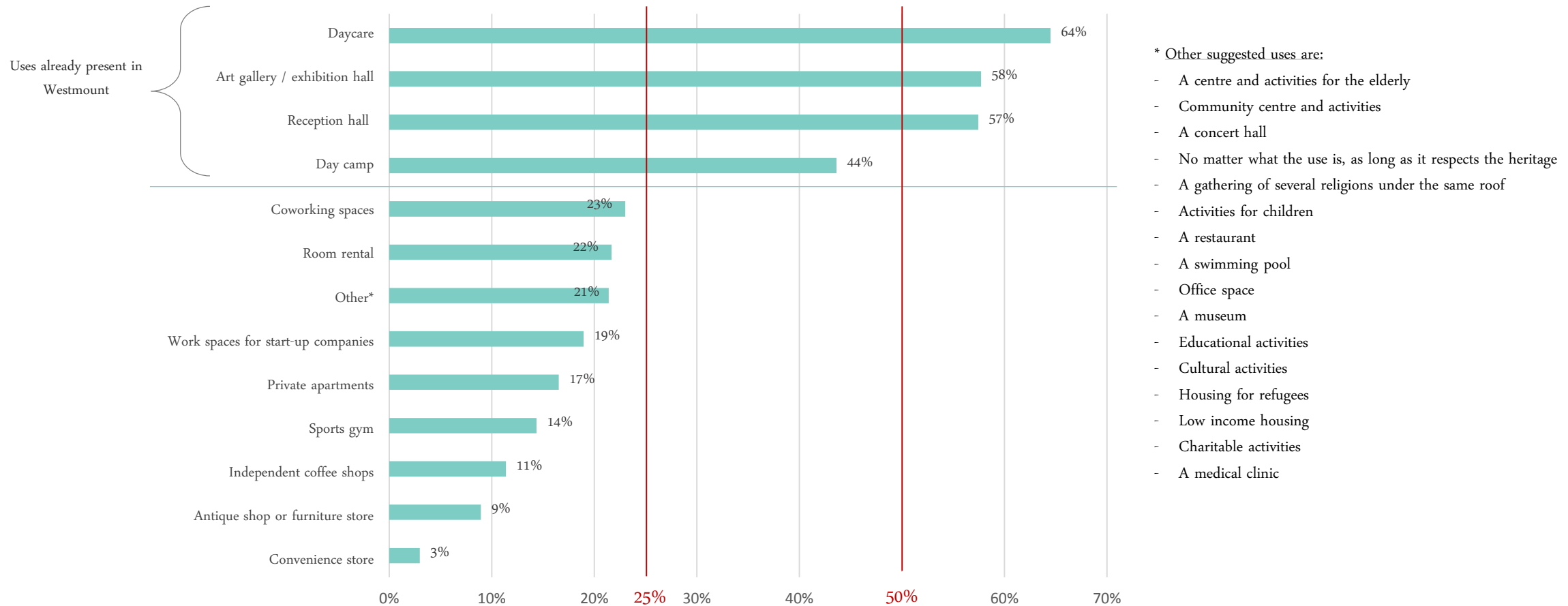
Q6. Are you in favour of modifying municipal by-laws to allow one of the following uses in the house of worship, closest to your home? (n=368)



- More than 60% of respondents are in favour of modifying the by-laws to allow mixed uses
- Respondents are more divided on residential use: 47% of respondents are in favour and 35% are against
- Commercial/office use is not very well received by respondents
- Almost 20% of respondents did not take a position, regardless of the suggested uses

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q7. Regarding the house of worship closest to your home, which of the following uses would seem the most appropriate and compatible with the preservation of the space? *Multiple answers possible* (n= 369)



- The uses that seem most appropriate and compatible with the preservation of the original vocation of the houses of worship are daycare (64%, namely 238 individuals), art gallery / exhibition hall (58%, namely 213 individuals), reception hall (57%, namely 212 individuals) and day camp (44%, namely 161 individuals)
- The uses that seem to be inappropriate as a complement to religious use are independent coffee shops (11%), antique shop or furniture store (9%), and convenience store (3%).

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q8. Please choose three of the following statements and place them in ascending order of importance. (n=368)



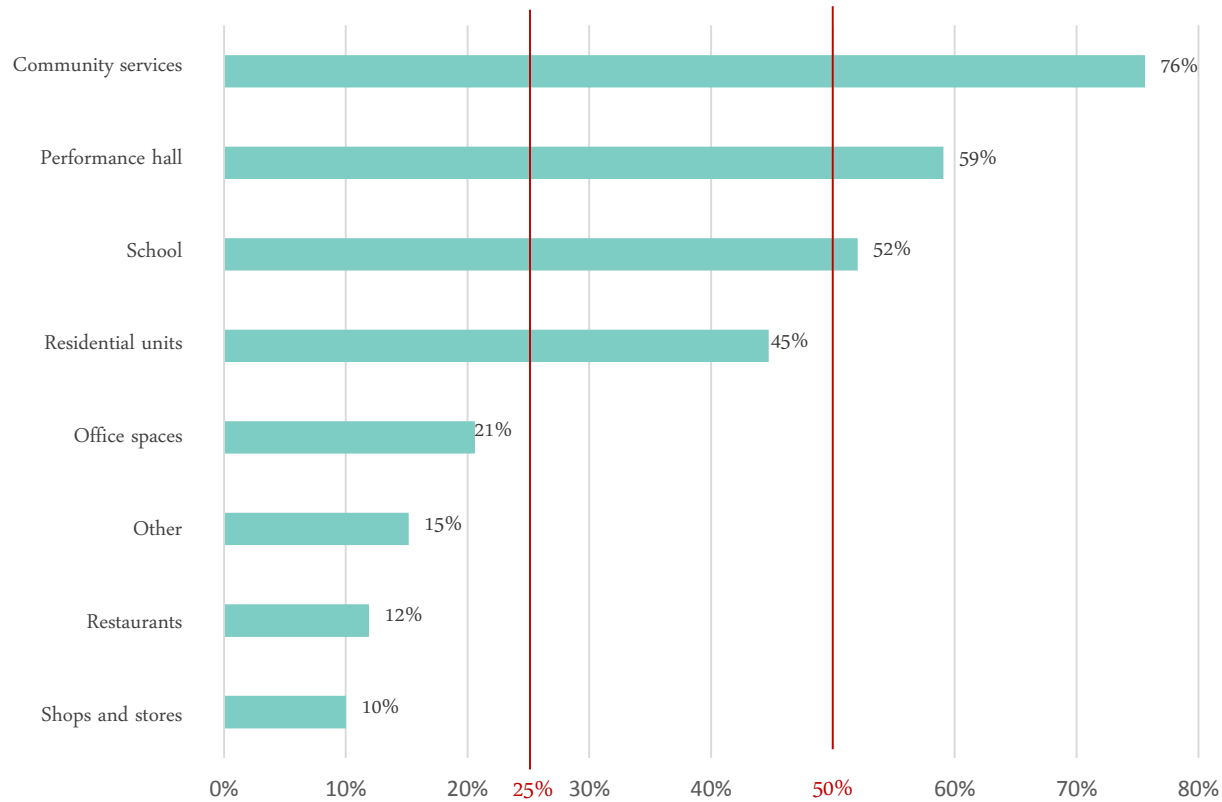
Caution: Most respondents selected more than three statements, this is why the analysis of this question is in absolute numbers, not in percentages.

The numbers indicate the number of times a response choice has been selected by the respondent, depending on the level of importance.

- The preservation of the architectural details of the exteriors, if they have heritage value, is by far the most significant criterion for respondents (answer selected 225 times)
- The choice of complementary uses that meet community needs (answer selected 127 times) and the architectural details of the interiors (answer selected 119 times)
- Finally, maintaining green spaces (answer selected 102 times) and respecting the built environment and the neighbourhood environment (answer selected 107 times) are also important criteria in the eyes of respondents

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q9. If the house of worship closest to your home was sold and deconsecrated, which use(s) would be acceptable in a redevelopment project? *Multiple answers possible* (n= 369)



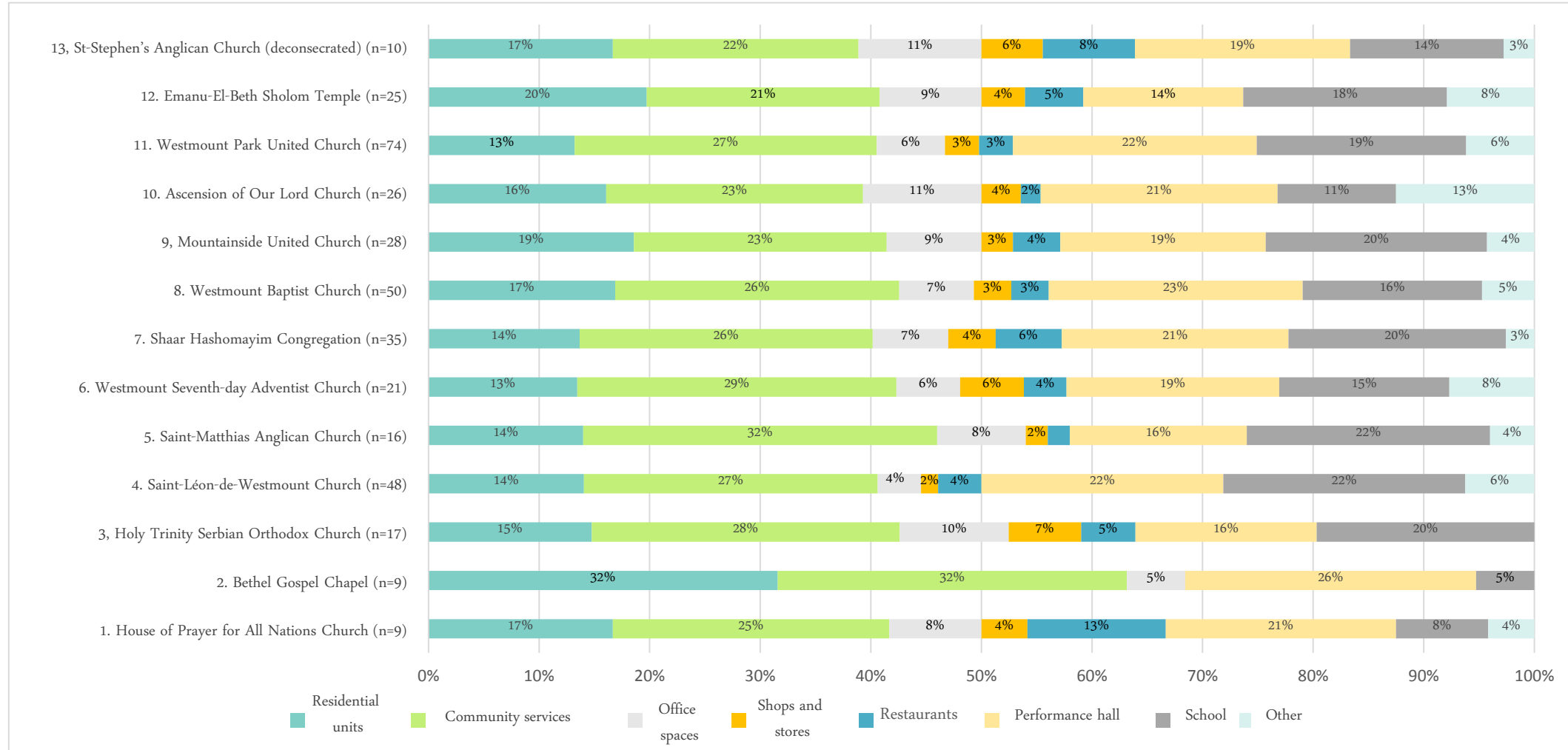
### Other :

- A centre for the elderly
- Low density housing
- The gathering of several religions in the same building
- Regardless of the use as long as it preserves architectural details and exteriors
- A daycare centre
- An indoor swimming pool
- An art gallery/exhibition centre
- A museum
- A park
- A coffee shop
- A coworking space
- Low income housing
- A centre for the most disadvantaged (homeless, refugees)
- A residence for the elderly
- A gym
- No use
- A library and archives

- In case of a redevelopment project, the most acceptable use is community services (76%, namely 283 individuals) followed by performance hall (59%, namely 218 individuals)
- School (52%, namely 194 individuals) and residential units (45%, namely 165 individuals) are also acceptable uses for nearly half of the respondents

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q9 – cross-reference of the question with the 1<sup>st</sup> question where participants were able to choose the house of worship closest to their residence.

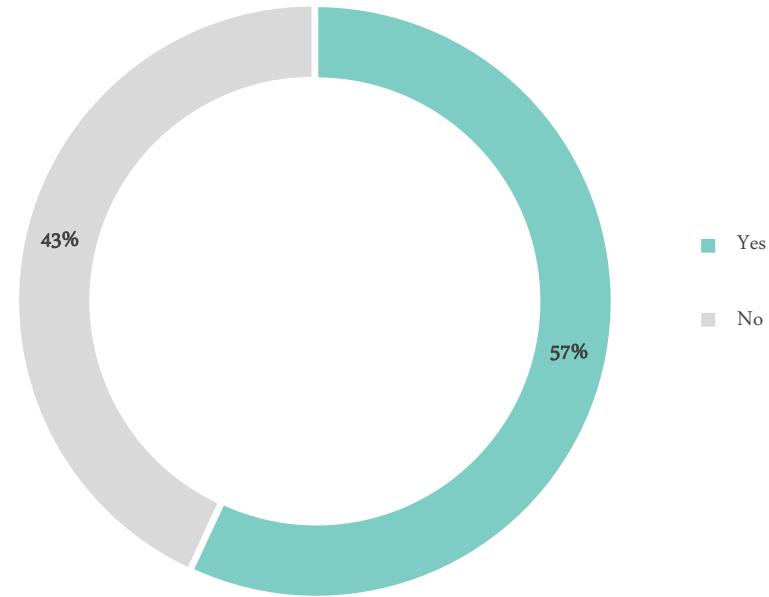


Caution: for some houses of worship, the numbers are small (less than 20 respondents), which is why the above answers allow to have a trend on the use that seems most acceptable for each house of worship.



## COMPLETE RESULTS

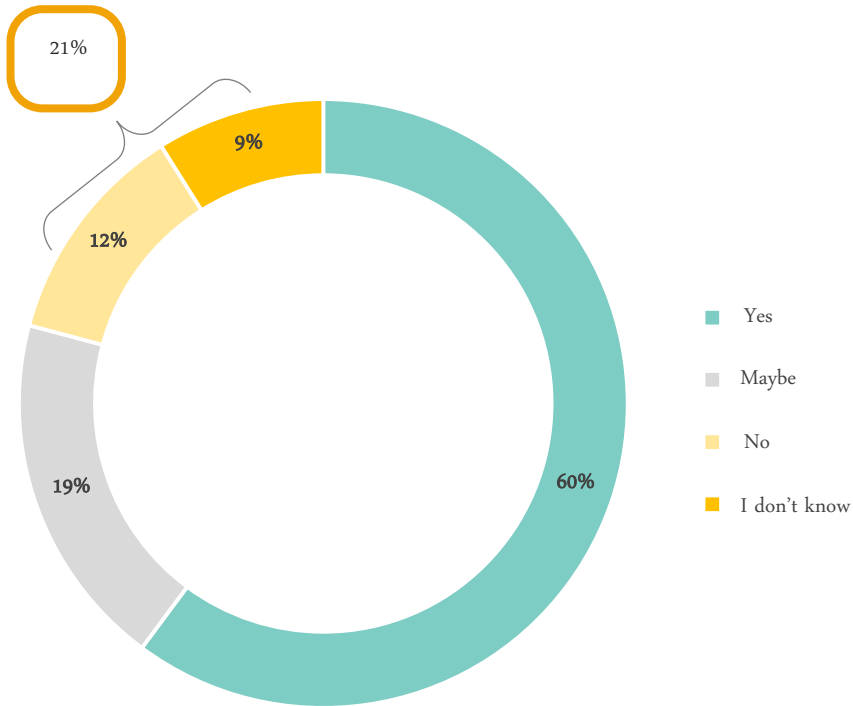
Q10. Would the sale of a portion of the current building be acceptable to you?



- Opinions are rather divided on the sale of part of the building, although a slight majority of respondents (57%, namely 210 individuals) is in favour of it.

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q11. According to you, should the City of Westmount make additional efforts to ensure the sustainability of the houses of worship on its territory? (n= 369)



Why? (171 respondents but 180 comments)

For those in favour of additional efforts on the part of the City:

- To preserve the heritage and green spaces surrounding buildings, through the establishment of criteria and obligations for the preservation of architectural and green elements (70)
- The City can be responsible for the preservation of a community function (32)
- For the City's planning and regulatory competence for future additional uses and redevelopments (26)
- The City should assist religious communities to continue to practice their religion in these places (16)
- Tax exemptions or financial contributions could be proposed (7)
- Because these communities are part of Westmount's community wealth (5)
- However, certain respondents point out that additional efforts do not necessarily have to result in a financial contribution (4)

For those who do not wish upon additional efforts to be made:

- It is not the City's responsibility because it does not benefit all citizens (8)
- It is not the City's responsibility to support what is religious (6)
- This is not a municipal jurisdiction. These buildings do not belong to the City (3)
- It is up to the religious communities to manage and decide what they want to do with their houses of worship, not the City (3)

- 3 out of 5 individuals believe that the City should make additional efforts to ensure the sustainability of houses of worship on its territory in order to:
  - preserve Westmount's built and landscape heritage
  - ensure a community vocation
  - supervise and regulate future developments or to authorize complementary uses
- Although additional efforts are desired, some people point out that it depends on the cost. Its efforts do not have to necessarily be a financial contribution or the committed budget does not have to be significant, as they do not want their taxes to increase
- Nearly 10% of respondents do not want the City to make additional efforts because it is not its responsibility considering it is religious domain and these places do not benefit all citizens.

## COMPLETE RESULTS

Q12. Which additional efforts should the City of Westmount put in place to better preserve the heritage value of houses of worship on its territory? (n=208 respondents but 201 comments)

- **Planning and regulations** (74): authorize complementary uses, force future developers/users to preserve architectural elements of exteriors and interiors, preserve landscaping, ensure that redevelopment projects benefit the community and that they integrate adequately into the environment, change the zoning;
- **Financial support** (35): tax exemption, specific fund, financial contribution, assistance in finding funding;
- Don't know (27);
- Continue the consultation for more concrete projects (10);
- Organize guided tours and raise public awareness of the historic and heritage character of these spaces (8);
- Organize community and non-religious events in these buildings to increase attendance and introduce people to these places (8);
- This is neither the responsibility nor the priority of the City (8);
- Assist in the renovation and maintenance of these places (6);
- Approach the provincial and federal governments for grants (4);
- Study houses of worship on a case-by-case basis, there is no single solution for all these places (4);
- Evaluate the heritage value and the elements to be preserved in each space (4);
- Consider as an example what other cities have done in this situation (3);
- The City must meet the needs of these religious communities in any way (3);
- Maintain the congregation and the building as they are (3);
- Bring together several congregations under the same roof (2);
- Encourage religious activities (2).

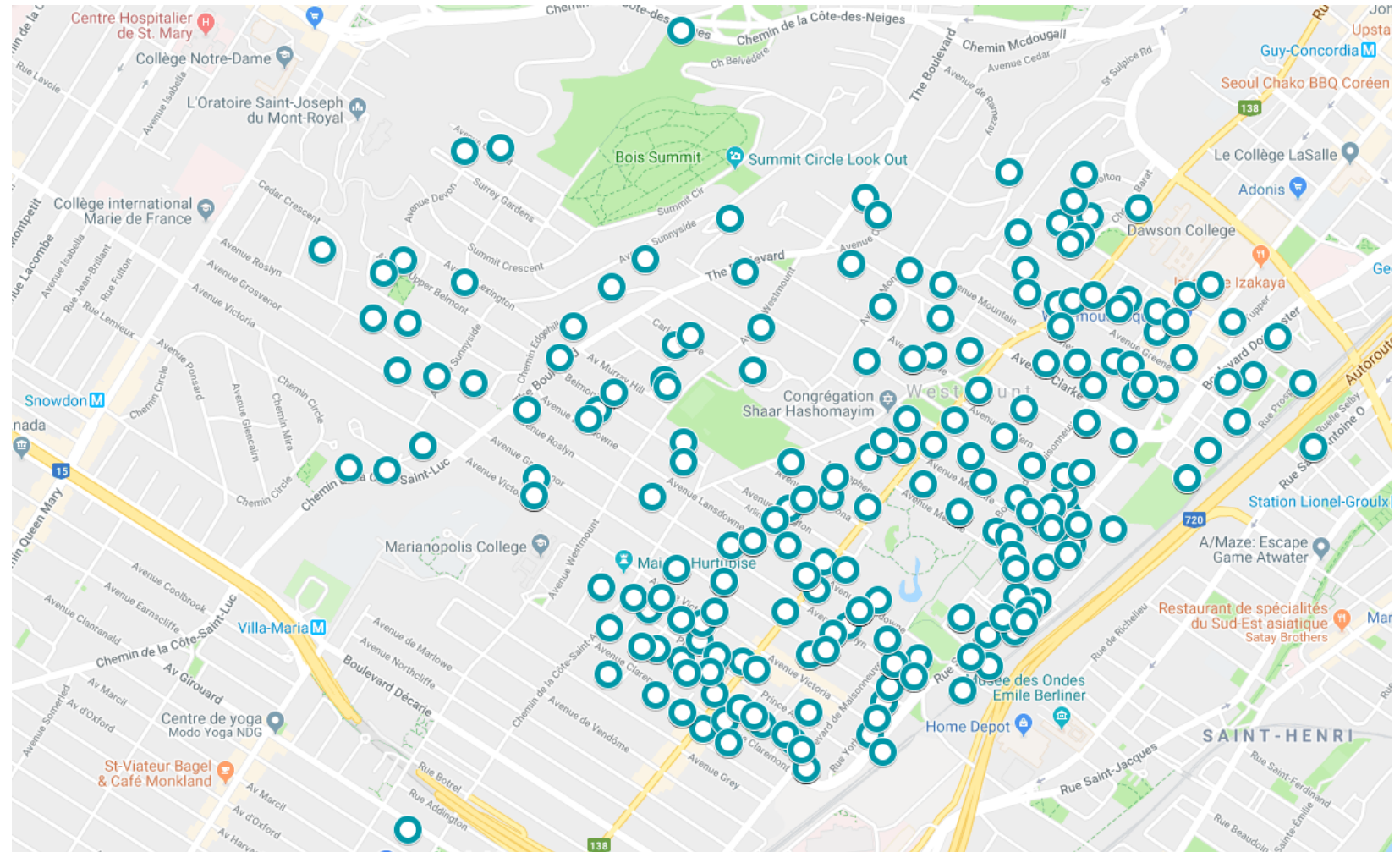
- More than one-third of respondents (36%) believe that the City's main effort should focus on planning and regulation
- About 17% of respondents also want financial support to be provided to these communities through tax exemptions, the creation of a fund or the assistance in fundraising or a financial contribution
- However, a few respondents (8) are against financial support from the City.



## RESPONDENTS' PROFILES

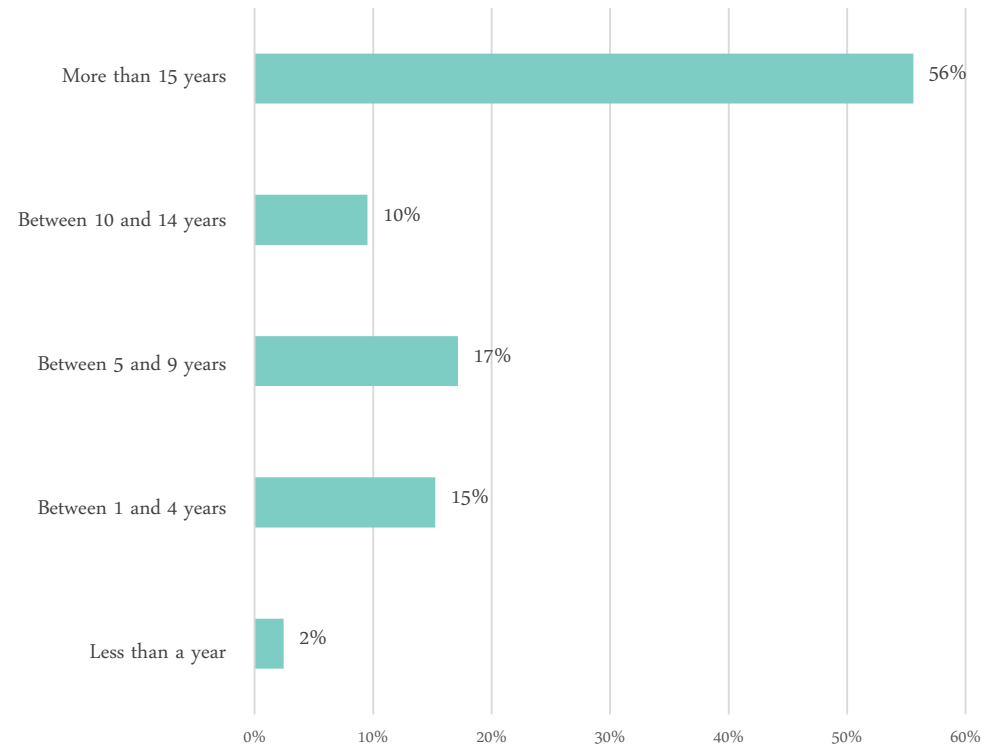
# LOCATION MAP

Based on postal codes, respondents' place of residence (n=350)



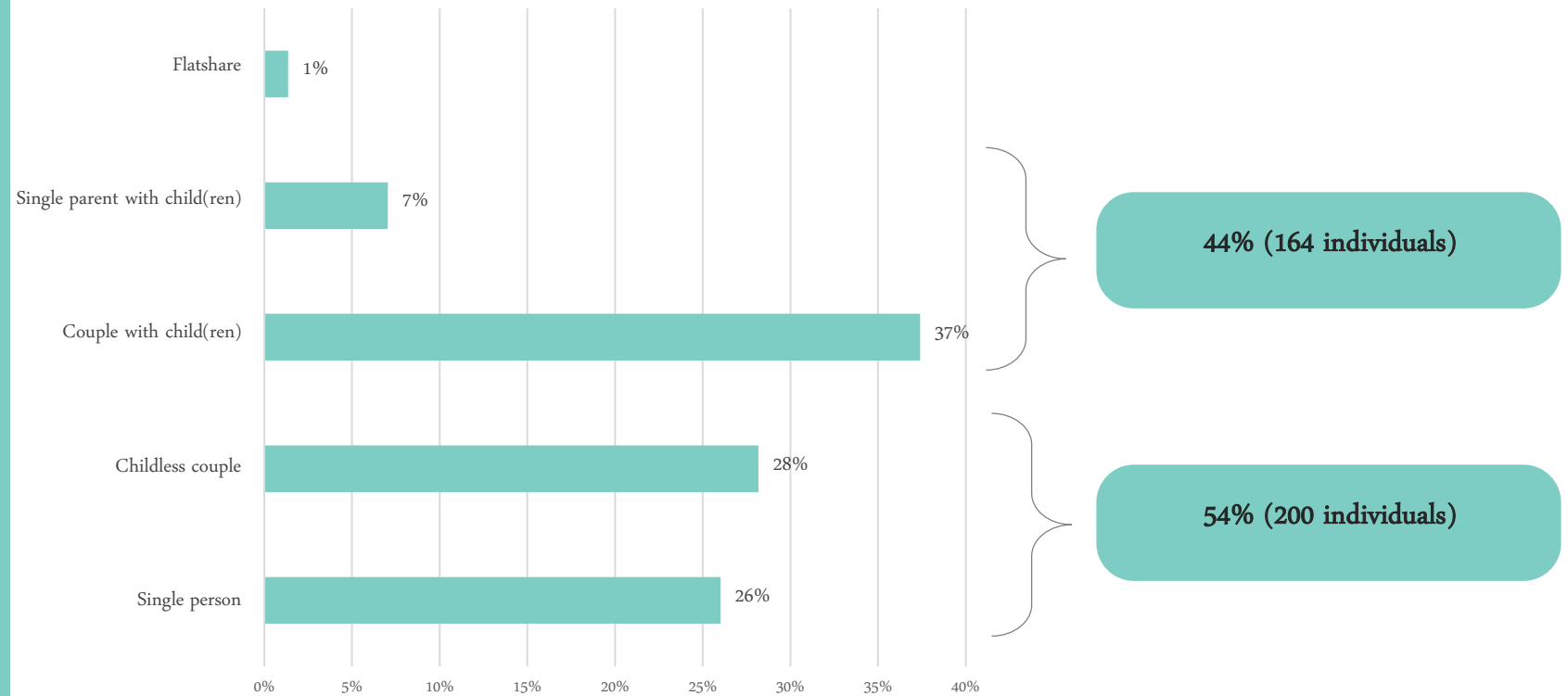
N.B. Although four respondents reside outside the City of Westmount boundaries, their responses were retained in the analysis.

## DURATION OF RESIDENCE, IN WESTMOUNT



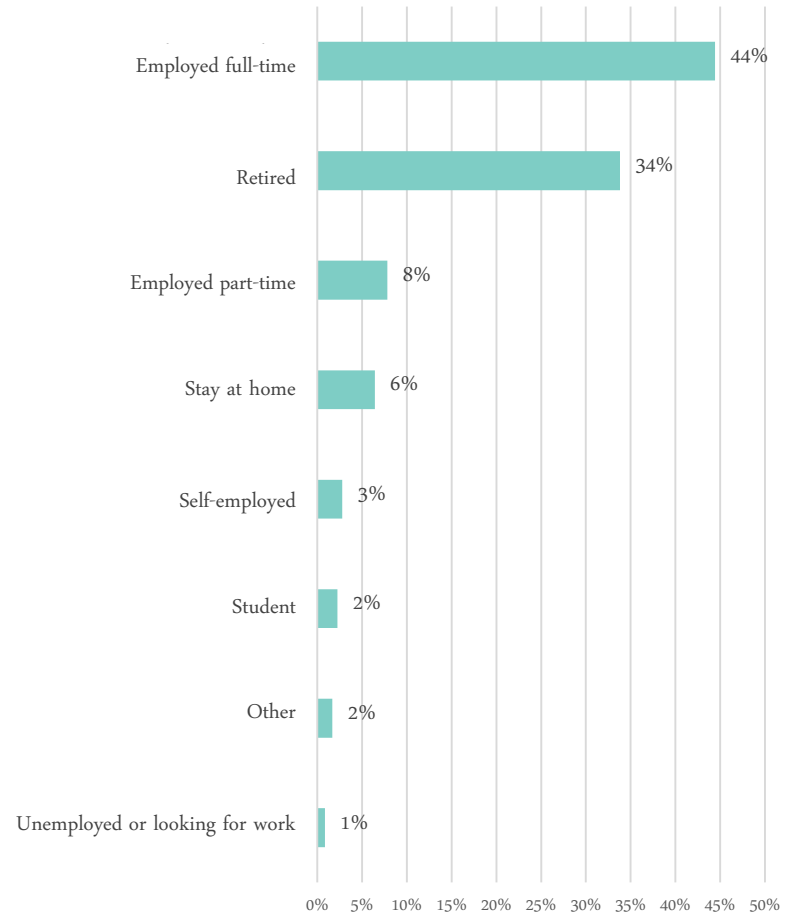
More than half of the respondents (56%) have lived in Westmount for more than fifteen years

# HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION



- More than half of the respondents (54%) are childless couples or single people living alone
- Nearly 2 out of 5 households are couples with children, most of whom are between 12 and 18 years of age, representing 141 children out of a total of 257.

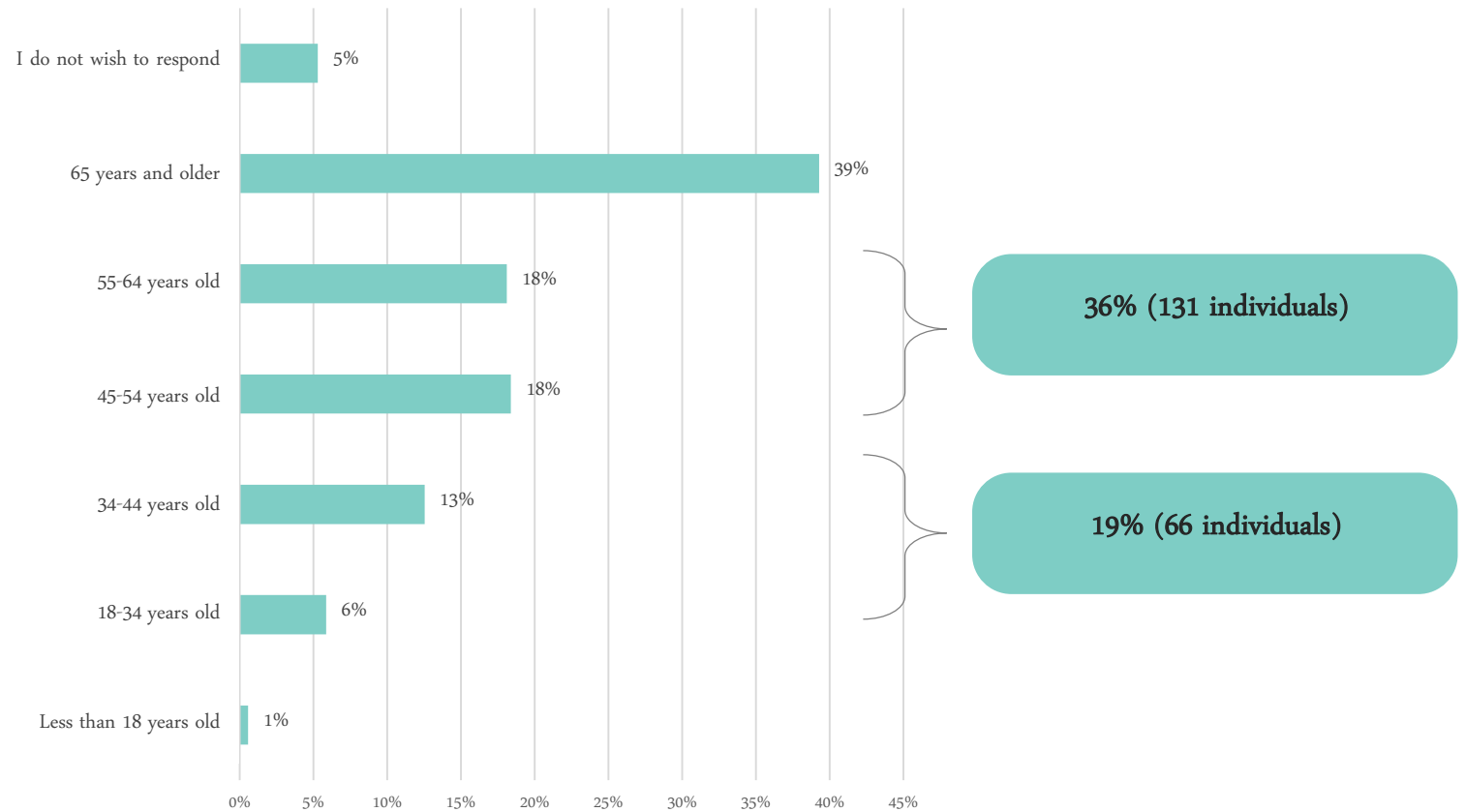
## MAIN OCCUPATION



- Almost half of the respondents (44%, namely 159 individuals) work full-time
- About one-third of respondents (34%, namely 121 individuals) are retired

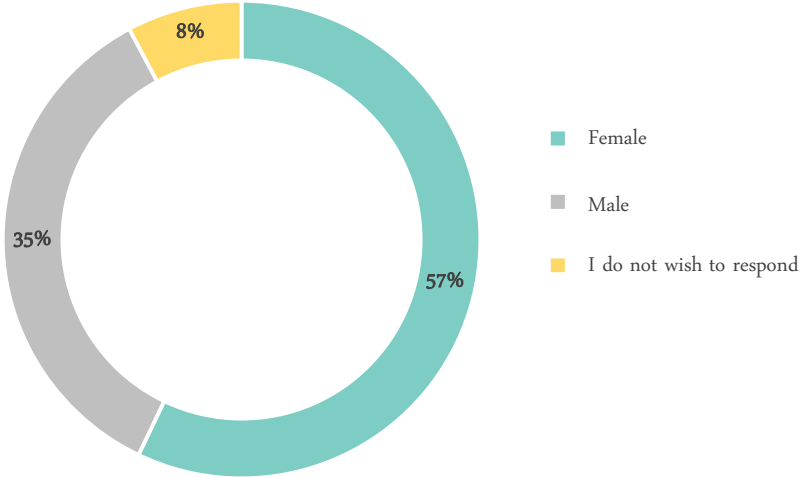


# AGE



- There is a high representation of a part of the population aged 65 and older (39%, namely 141 individuals)
- The proportion of individuals aged between 45 and 64 years is almost as high (36%, namely 131 individuals)
- Respondents aged between 18 and 44 years represent less than 20% of the respondents' sample
- 5% of respondents did not wish to answer this question

# GENDER



- About 60% of the survey respondents are women
- 8% of respondents did not wish to answer this question



HIGHLIGHTS

# HIGHLIGHTS

## General information on houses of worship in Westmount

A high proportion of survey respondents (57%) reside near one of the following four houses of worship, while not frequenting them regularly:

- Westmount Park United Church
- Westmount Baptist Church
- Saint-Léon-de-Westmount Church
- Shaar Hashomayim Congregation

## Heritage and landscape value of houses of worship in Westmount

- The characteristics most appreciated by respondents in terms of the presence of houses of worship in the community are: the architectural quality of the buildings, the spiritual reasons associated with them, the fact that they are meeting places for the community and that they are witnesses to their community's history.
- The architecture of the building is the most appreciated quality (34%) by respondents.

## Uses of houses of worship associated with the religious mission

During the past year, respondents have been attending houses of worship for a variety of reasons:

- Community activity, particularly at Westmount Park United Church, Saint-Matthias Anglican Church, and Shaar Hashomayim Congregation;
- Religious practice, particularly at the Ascension of Our Lord Church, Saint-Léon-de-Westmount Church, Shaar Hashomayim Congregation;
- Visit or exploration of the building, especially Saint-Léon-de-Westmount Church and Westmount Park United Church.
- Nearly 60% of respondents who participated in a community activity in the past 12 months attended a concert, participated in fundraising or volunteer activities

## HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

### Uses of houses of worship associated with the religious mission (continued)

More than 90% of respondents have not attended the following houses of worship in the past 12 months:

- Bethel Gospel Chapel
- Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church
- House of Prayer for All Nations Church
- Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church
- Westmount Baptist Church

### Integration of complementary uses

- If municipal by-laws were to be amended to authorize additional uses for houses of worship, more than 60% of respondents would be in favour mixed uses. On the opposite, less than half of them (47%) are against adding a commercial or office use
- The complementary uses that seem, by far, the most appropriate and compatible with the preservation of the initial vocation of the place are: daycare centres, exhibition hall/art gallery, reception hall or day camps
- By far the least appropriate are convenience stores followed by furniture or antique shops or independent coffee shops.

From this perspective, the three characteristics that are most important to respondents, if changes are made, are:

- To preserve the architectural details of the exteriors, if they have a heritage value;
- To choose complementary uses that meet a community need;
- To preserve the architectural details of the interiors, if they have heritage value.

## HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

### **Opinion on the complete redevelopment of houses of worship**

- From the perspective that the house of worship closest to their residence was to be sold and deconsecrated, the most acceptable uses in a redevelopment project would be, in increasing order: community services, a performance hall, a school or housing.
- With regard to the "housing" usage, it should be noted that some respondents (less than a dozen) add that they prefer low income housing and not luxurious condominiums.
- The answers are essentially the same, regardless of the house of worship of reference for the respondents, that is, the one closest to their residence.
- A slight majority of respondents (57%) find it acceptable to sell part of the building.

### **Role of the City of Westmount**

- About 60% of respondents believe that the City of Westmount should make additional efforts to ensure the sustainability of houses of worship on its territory, but 10% are against the principle because it is not a municipal jurisdiction (it is religious domain) and these places do not benefit all citizens.
- The additional measures proposed concern planning and regulation, financial support\*, community consultation on concrete projects, planning of guided tours to increase public awareness on the historic and heritage character of these places, and the renovation and maintenance of the buildings.

\* This measure is not unanimous as some respondents specifically mentioned that the means of action does not necessarily have to be financial.