TRANS CANADA TRAIL

NATIONAL TRAIL SECTOR SURVEY 2022 RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION

In an effort to better understand the trail sector in Canada, Trans Canada Trail launched a comprehensive national trail sector survey in March 2022.

▶ **TOPICS:**

Accessibility and Inclusion	Projects and Investment
Nature and Climate	Tourism
Employment	Trail Maintenance
Organizational Capacity	Trail Volunteers

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The **national trail sector survey** was directed to people who work and volunteer in the trail sector in Canada and covered topics that were relevant to organizations managing trails across the country.

These trail organizations included not-for-profit trail groups, Indigenous communities, municipalities, counties, districts, and provincial and territorial government departments responsible for trails.

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SURVEY SUMMARY

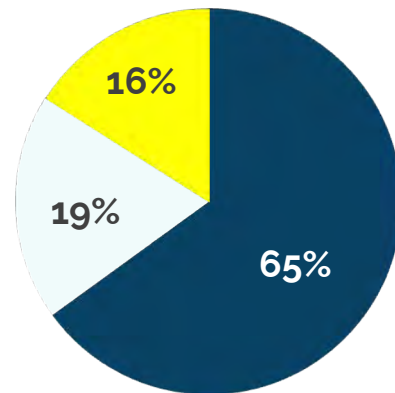TRANS CANADA TRAIL
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SURVEY SUMMARY

- Survey period: March 15 to April 8, 2022

- The survey was distributed online to partner groups as well as shared through social media.

- A total of 264 responses were received, with respondents located in all 13 provinces and territories.

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RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

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COMMUNITY SIZE

65% of respondents' trails are in a small community (<30,000 of population)

19% in a medium size community (<100,000 of population)

16% in a large centre (>100,000 of population)

LOCATION

Respondents were located in all 13 provinces and territories.

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OPERATING LANGUAGE

81%

English

14%

French

3%

Indigenous languages

2%

Other languages

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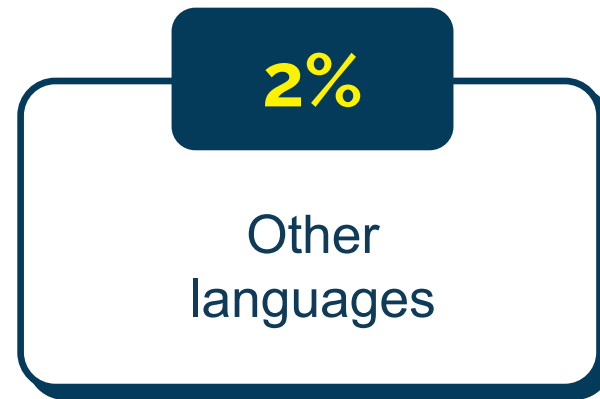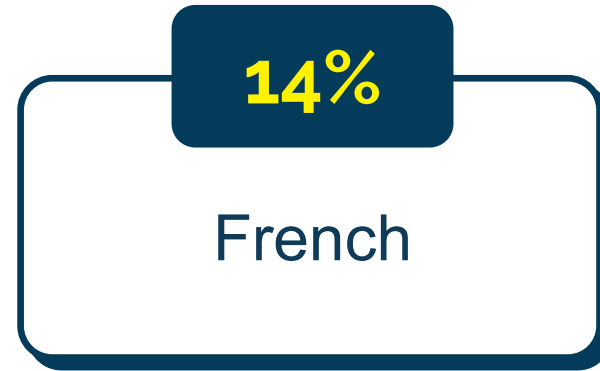
TYPE OF ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED

56% of respondents represented **community-based, non-governmental trail organizations**, including:

- ▶ **44%** registered charities
- ▶ **28%** non-profit organizations
- ▶ **28%** primarily community-based organizations

93% of these groups have fewer than 10 people involved in managing and operating trails

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TYPE OF ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED

44% of respondents represented **governmental organizations**, including:

▶ Largely municipal: **87%**

▶ Relatively small departments: **54%** have fewer than five people involved in managing and operating trails

▶ Most common departments responsible for trails:

1. Parks and Recreation
2. Transportation and Infrastructure

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Role Within Community Group Organizations

47%

Volunteers

53%

Paid Staff

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KEY
FINDINGS

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TRAIL GENERAL INFORMATION

86% of respondents' trails are part of the Trans Canada Trail network

36% of respondents are affiliated with a regional trail network

35% of respondents are affiliated with a provincial trail network (i.e., Route Verte, Blue Route)

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TRAIL GENERAL INFORMATION

Most respondents manage or operate under **200 km** of trail

44% manage less than **25 km** of trail

37% manage between **26** and **100 km**

29% manage more than **100 km**

KEY FINDINGS

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ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

64%

of respondents report their trails are accessible, to a certain extent, for people with disabilities.

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

8% of respondents indicated that the nearest population was predominately Indigenous.

▶ Of these respondents, **85%** indicated that they regularly collaborate with non-Indigenous groups for projects.

Of the respondents that indicated that the predominant population near their trail was non-Indigenous, only 38% regularly collaborate with Indigenous groups for projects.

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION
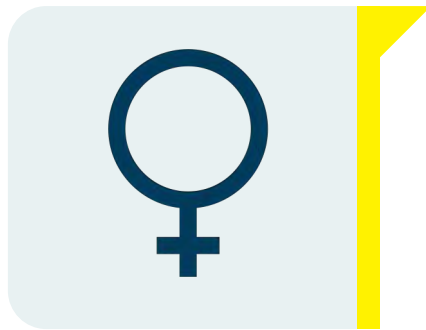
12%
of respondents said that among their staff, no members identified as women.

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Transgender, non-binary, and/or gender diverse participation in trails:

86% of respondents reported they were not aware of any gender diverse staff members or participants.

19% of respondents reported they were not aware of any gender diverse participants in trail maintenance and other activities.

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

▶ **45%** of groups are using Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) principles in their hiring practices.

Equity

Access

Diversity

Inclusion

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

More than half of respondents are interested to learn more about DEIA.

The respondents prefer to learn DEIA-related material through:

- Webinars
- Self-paced online courses

Equity

Access

Diversity

Inclusion

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

42% of groups reported that they have members of their trail staff who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC), and **31%** of groups reported that there are BIPOC staff involved in the management of trails.

18% of groups said that there are no BIPOC participants at trail maintenance days, trail events, and other public activities, and **53%** said that only 1-16% of participants are BIPOC.

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ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

66%

of respondents indicated they
did not review their trail names
with respect to impact on trail users.

Trail

Names

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Half of respondents believe that their organization has the capacity to manage the impacts of climate change.

▶ Interestingly, **41%** of groups expect that their current infrastructure can withstand the impacts of climate change; however, **71%** indicated that major repairs are needed now or very soon.

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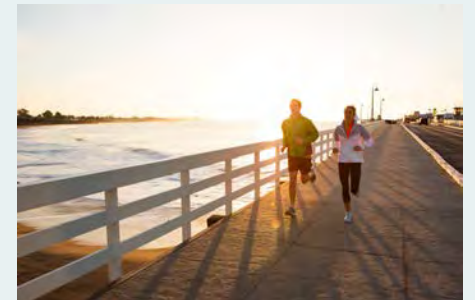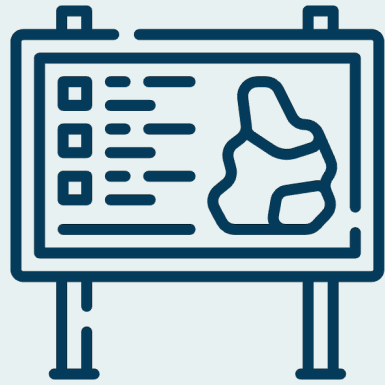
NATURE AND CLIMATE

43% of respondents mentioned that their trails are located in a **conservation** or **protected area.**

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NATURE AND CLIMATE

Respondents indicated these **top 5 measures** are needed to address the impact of climate change on their trails:

Flood mitigation — **1**

Rebuilding infrastructure — **2**

Invasive species removal — **3**

Tree planting — **4**

Management of shoulder season — **5**

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NATURE AND CLIMATE

66% of respondents indicated that if **tree planting** were an option for a reduced cost, they would be interested in doing this on parts of their trail.

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EMPLOYMENT

▶ There is a close split between groups that hire and do not hire temporary staff.

Of those that do: **37%** hire between **1** and **4** staff.

▶ Almost all temporary staff are students working on trail construction/maintenance and **47%** are for terms lasting **4-6** months.

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EMPLOYMENT

The most challenging areas in which to find qualified staff are:

▶ Fundraising

▶ Indigenous expertise

▶ Habitat restoration

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EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ If offered quick labour at no or low cost to the group, **61%** indicated that they would participate.

- ▶ However, with no cost to the group, **39%** of groups would not hire staff, suggesting that they may not have the capacity for the administration of staff.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

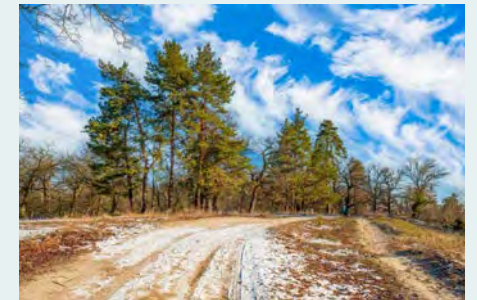**57%** ▶ of respondents have less than **$20,000** of annual budget.

83% ▶ of respondents have less than **$125,000** of annual budget.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

52% of respondents don't have reserve funds.

24% of respondents have a reserve fund for more than **12** months.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

55%

▼

Slightly more than half of respondents indicated that their trail organization has a strategic plan (length between **2** to **10** years).

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Respondents indicated that their organization conducts
a trail audit (**67%**) and a signage audit (**65%**) annually.

67% ▶ **Annual trail audit**

65% ▶ **Annual signage audit**

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The **top 5 investments** to meet user expectations, as identified by respondents, are:

| Trail maintenance & sustainability | Trail signage | Environmental issues (flooding, erosion...) | Increase of usage | Accessibility requirements |

These investments are prioritized over tourism promotion, communications & marketing, digital resources, management of user behavior and e-devices.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

▶ It appears that while most respondents indicated that trail maintenance & sustainability is their focus, **financial support (88%)** is needed to overcome challenges.

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PROJECTS & INVESTMENT

88%

of respondents have projects ready to be implemented in **2022** or **2023**.

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PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT

Top 5 types of trail projects
undertaken in 2022 and 2023:

Trailhead and major signage projects

Infrastructures (bridges, culvert, sidewalks...)

Resurfacing

Bridge remediation

Amenities repairs

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PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT

The main limitation to undertaking a project is **insufficient budget**.

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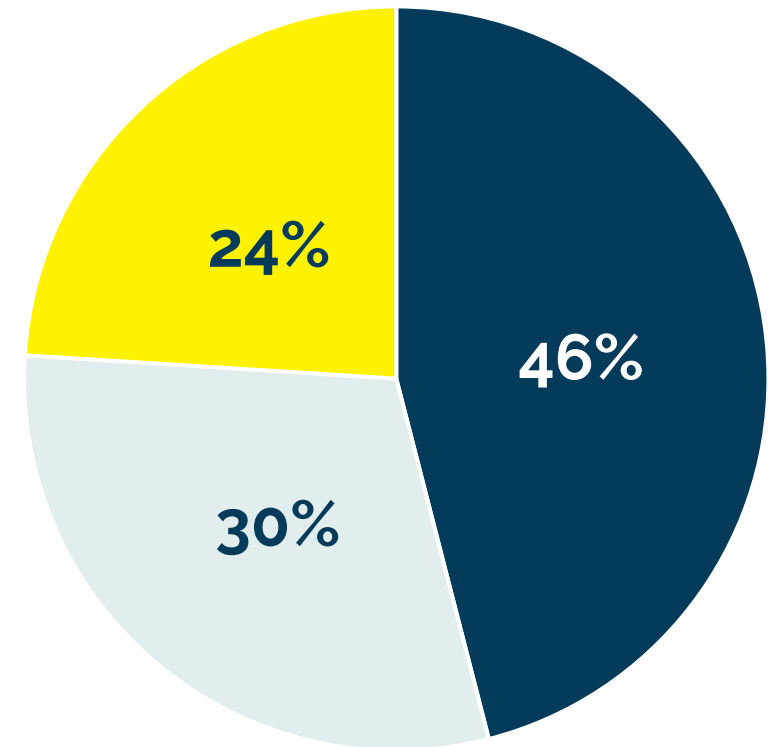
PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT

46% of trail projects undertaken in 2022 and 2023 have a total budget under **$100,000**

30% are between **$100,001** and **$200,000**

24% are above **$200,001**

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PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT

44%

of respondents received funding from their provincial/territorial government to undertake their **2022** and **2023** projects.

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PROJECTS AND INVESTMENT

If more budget and resources were available,
the **top 5 project types** that respondents would like to undertake would be:

Investment in the major infrastructures (bridges, culvert, sidewalks…)

Resurfacing

Trailhead, major signage projects

Bridge remediation

Amenities repairs

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98% ▶ of trail organizations think that their trails are tourism assets

and

50% ▶ think their trails are tourism assets for international visitors

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TOURISM

78% of trail organizations know that their trails are actively promoted, at least in their regional market.

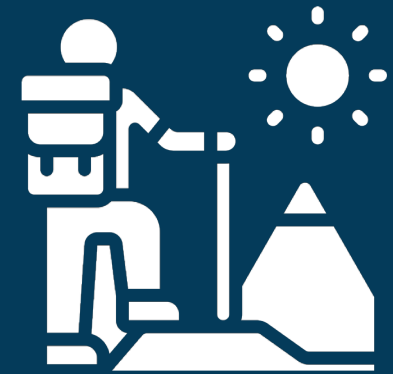Only **10%** know that their trails are internationally marketed.

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TOURISM

85%

of respondents said that the vast majority of trail users visit for a single day.

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TOURISM

20% of respondents have websites with trail maps, trip planning tools and up-to-date information about the trail condition.
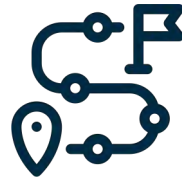
52% only have a map

28% don't offer a trip planning tool

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TOURISM

20% of respondents have sufficient staff, resources, infrastructures and tools required to effectively **welcome** and **support visitors** to their trail.

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TOURISM

50% of respondents do not have a relationship with, or receive support from, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

27% have relationships with a **regional** DMO

20% have relationships with a **provincial** DMO

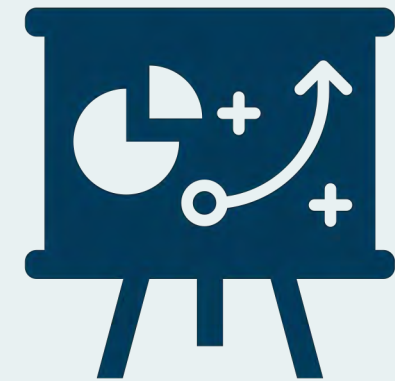**3%** have relationships with a **national** DMO

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TOURISM

72%

of trail organizations have at least one event offered by themselves or others on or adjacent to their trail.

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TOURISM

▶ Respondents identified the following **top 5 unique selling points** for their trail:

🏔	Geographic uniqueness	**1**
👢	Uniqueness of trail infrastructure and activities	**2**
🍁	Canadian heritage and cultural experience	**3**
📖	Conservation and educational experience	**4**
🪶	Indigenous heritage and cultural experience	**5**

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TOURISM

Respondents identified the following **top 5 challenges** they are facing when developing a trail tourism strategy:

Trail infrastructure conditions

Lack of municipal infrastructure and services

Marketing

Mapping and GIS limitation

Concerns of the host communities about tourism (overcrowding, etc.)

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TRAIL MAINTENANCE

35%

Over one-third of respondents indicated that they could soon see trail closures due to major infrastructure failures.

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TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Respondents indicated the **top 5 priority areas** where additional investment and/or work would be required in order to maintain trail systems to meet user expectations and local trail building standards:

Maintaining infrastructure

Trail sustainability

Installing and maintaining adequate signage

Environmental issues

Increased use

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TRAIL MAINTENANCE

▶ Only **35%** of respondents have enough capacity to perform all the necessary maintenance on their trail to reach high quality standards.

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TRAIL MAINTENANCE

67%

▶ Over half of respondents lack the funds required to hire adequate staff to effectively manage their trail.

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TRAIL MAINTENANCE

According to respondents, approximately **55%** of trails are maintained on a monthly basis, at minimum.

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TRAIL VOLUNTEERS

76%

Most groups seek the assistance of volunteers, and almost **50%** of those groups do so for every project they undertake.

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TRAIL VOLUNTEERS

40% of respondents who use volunteers reported logging more than **250 volunteer hours** per year.

46% of respondents indicated the most common average age of volunteers is **45-60**, with another significant portion aged **older than 60**.

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TRAIL VOLUNTEERS

The most **significant challenges** facing groups include:

- Volunteer availability, recruitment
- Willingness to do 1-day tasks only
- A lack of skills/knowledge of how to perform trail-specific work

Financial support was cited by 56% of groups that engage volunteers as the number one resource that would help them overcome these challenges.

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TRAIL VOLUNTEERS

Overall, groups reported that engaging volunteers with specific skills is challenging, with the following being the most challenging skills to find:

Infrastructure building

Fundraising

Administration

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THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey.
We deeply appreciate you sharing your insights, allowing us to better understand the trail sector in Canada.
For more information please contact:

✉ info@tctrail.ca

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