



**Skwxwú7mesh
Úxwumixw**

Squamish Nation



Eshíhkw'íws Chet

We are all related

A census of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw

March 28, 2023

Data Report:
Our Identity, Culture,
and Language

Produced by Big River Analytics
& Tiskwat Consulting

Acknowledgements

Chet kw'enmantúmi (we thank you), Skwxwú7mesh Members, for your high levels of participation in Eshíhkw'íws Chet - a census of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw.

We'd also like to thank the enumerators, who helped collect all the data for this project, for their hard work and efforts to make this project a success, Elder Vanessa Campbell for her advice and sharing her knowledge and insights, and to the Nation staff who made this work possible.

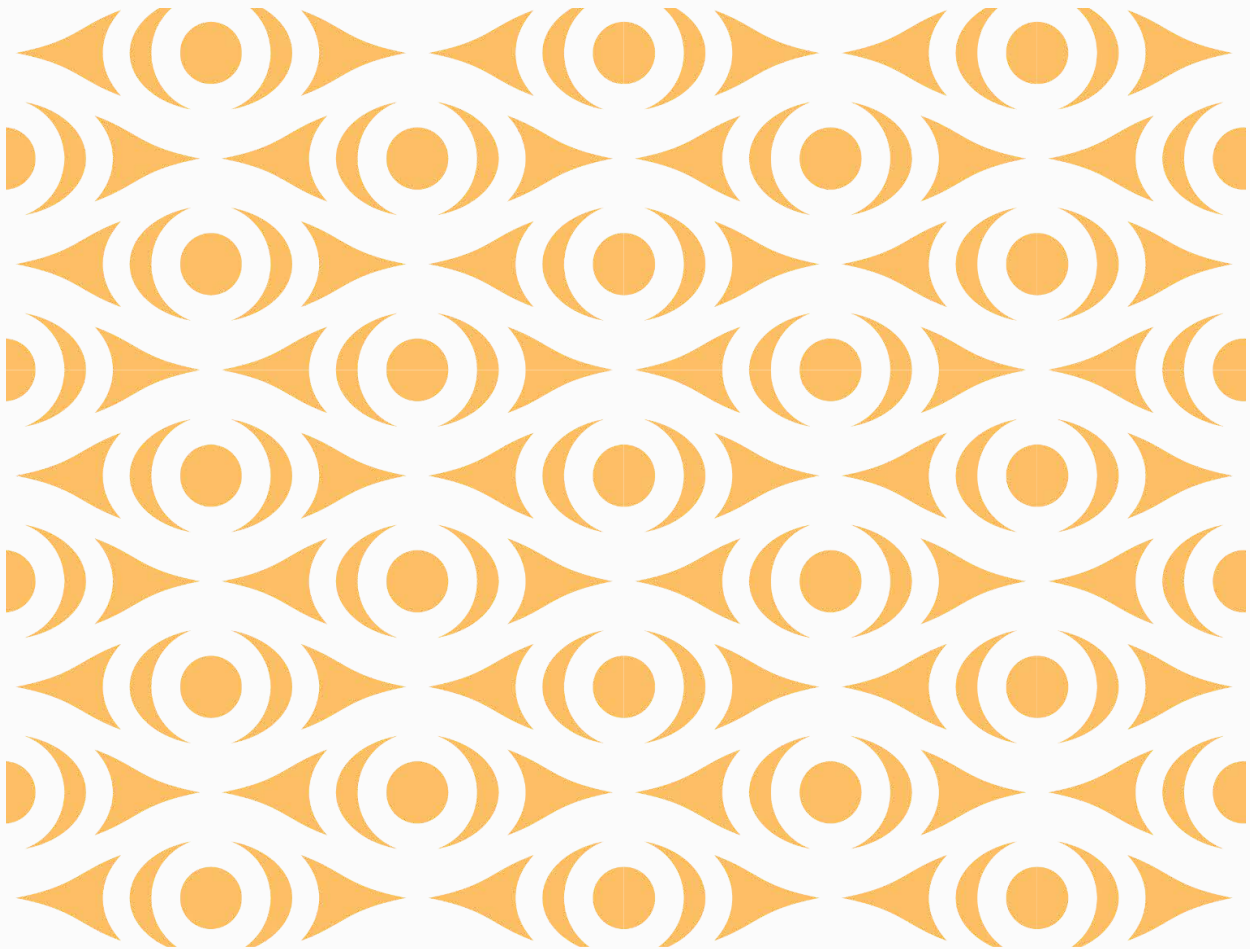


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Introduction

Skwxwú7mesh people have used data to steward territory, exercise governance, undertake planning, and assure well-being since time immemorial. This function of governance has been disrupted over the past two hundred years, and today, much of the data generated about Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw is not controlled by Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw or reflective of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw priorities and worldviews.

Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw undertook a census to ensure the Nation and Members have quality data relevant to their lives and decisions, and to inform major planning initiatives and program design. The guiding vision was for this project to enhance self-determination, rebuild and reinforce connections between family and kin, and leave a legacy of both useful information and new skills and understanding to support Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw in years to come. The project was named Eshíhkw'íws Chet – “we are all related” – by Elder Vanessa Campbell.

*“All of us, everywhere on our Land, our families, our friends,
we are all related...”*

*it's best that we advise each other...
All Squamish people need to say something.”*

— Elder Vanessa Campbell

The result of Eshíhkw'íws Chet is a dataset representing the perspectives of roughly one in three Members: all generations are well-represented, and the voices of men, women, and gender-diverse people, Members on- and off-reserve, and Members near and far from Skwxwú7mesh Territory are all included. Use of the data is guided by a set of policies and protocols to ensure people's privacy and the protection and security of the data.

This is one of 9 reports that summarize the data collected through Eshíhkw'íws Chet. There is one full report including all sections, and then 8 mini-reports by topic area:

- Who Did We Hear From
- Our Identity, Culture, and Language
- Our Territory, Lands, and Waters
- Our Housing
- Our Jobs, Income, and Schooling
- Our Health and Wellness
- Our Experiences of Cultural Safety
- Our Rights, Governance, and Administration

Method, Limitations, and Interpretation

Eslhíhkw'íws Chet gathers the voices of roughly 1 in 3 Skwxwú7mesh Members. Although we tried to hear from everyone, we could not reach all Members and some Members chose not to participate. This means that some voices might be over- or under-represented. Data collection relied on a friends-and-family approach, and household heads could answer on behalf of everyone in the home. This means that we were more likely to hear from people who receive information from the Nation or whose friends and family receive information from the Nation. It also means that we heard from more female respondents than other genders, as they are more likely to be a head of their household.

To protect individuals' privacy and confidentiality, we do not report if fewer than 11 people responded a certain way to a question, or if fewer than 21 people responded to a question overall. This means that some charts, figures, and tables do not sum to 100%. Additionally, too few respondents identifying as two-spirit, non-binary, or gender identities other than male and female participated to report results for those gender identities.

Responses to questions in the census were analyzed for all respondents, as well as examined consistently by gender, location, and age, and by other groupings where relevant. Only notable differences across these population groups are reported; if there are no notable differences, summary statistics representing all respondents are presented.

The questionnaire was designed to collect a core set of data from all participants, including individuals who were represented by a household head. The remainder of the questionnaire, organized by modules on specific topics, was self-directed. This means that the response rates and demographic profiles of respondents change throughout this report depending on whether the question was part of the core questionnaire or one of the modules. The total number of respondents is reported for each figure and chart, unless it is suppressed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents. Additional analysis is possible to make inferences about the characteristics of all Skwxwú7mesh Members or to make comparisons with other populations, groups, or governments, but this was not the purpose of this particular report.

Finally, data collection was targeted towards Members and any individuals living on-reserve. If a non-Member living on-reserve was living in a household with Skwxwú7mesh Members, they could participate in the whole survey. If a non-Member living on-reserve did not have any Skwxwú7mesh Members living in their household, we collected basic demographic information and information about renters and tenants on their property, but they are otherwise not included in the analysis in this report.

See the full report *Honouring Members' Voices: Data Report from the 2022 Skwxwú7mesh Census* for a more detailed description of method.

Our Identity, Culture, and Language

Snewíyelh: the advice one possesses and shares. It is captured in our language and culture. It also simply means “instructions”

Skwxwú7mesh worldview is given expression through Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language) and culture. The transmission and celebration of culture and language is intimately connected with Skwxwú7mesh identity, well-being, Nationhood, and community. Eshíhkwíws Chet asked respondents to provide information about their relationship with their identity, the culture and language activities they partake in, the knowledge they possess, as well as their desires for the future, including what they would like to see more of and what might pose a challenge to growing their connection with Skwxwú7mesh sníchim and culture.

Key Findings

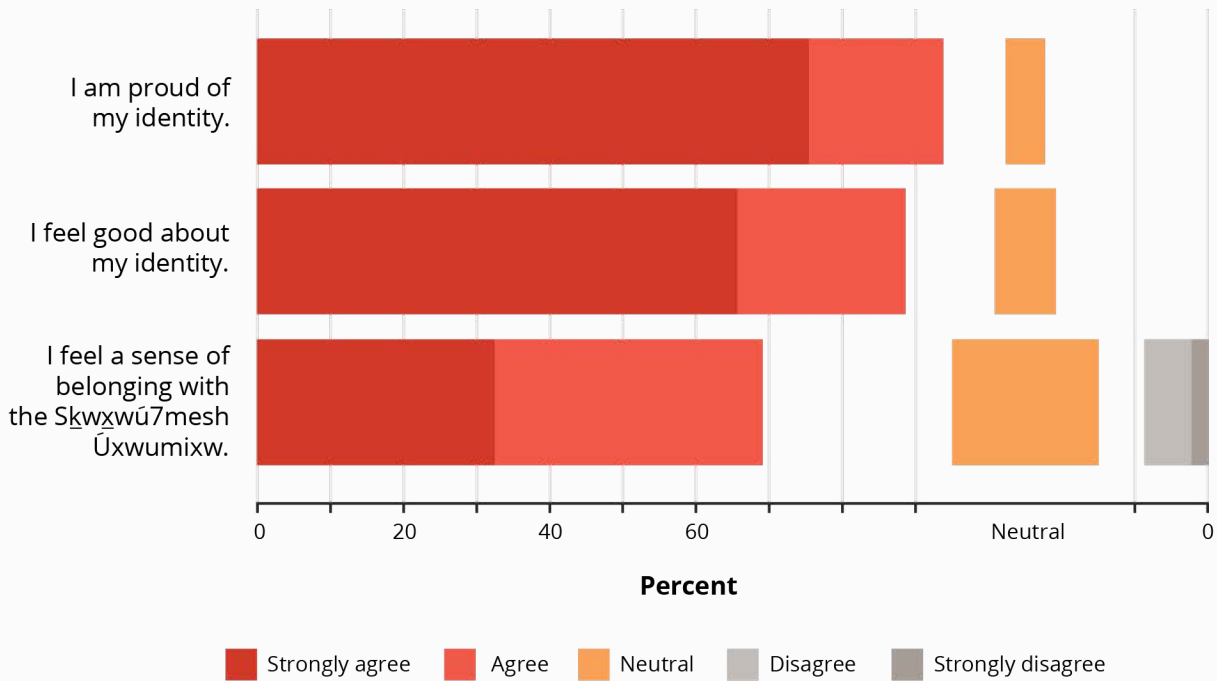
People feel proud to be Skwxwú7mesh and most feel a sense of belonging with Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. They feel strongly about the value of saving Skwxwú7mesh sníchim and knowing and learning about Skwxwú7mesh culture – especially for children and youth. Most are deeply interested in learning the language and cultural ways and want to use the latest technology to make this accessible at times and locations convenient for them.



Skwxwú7mesh Identity

More than 90% of respondents are proud of their identity, close to 90% feel good about their identity, and a strong majority (69%) feel a sense of belonging with Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Figure LC.1). Elders (ages 60 and over) (77%) and young adults (ages 20-39) (68%) are more likely than older adults (ages 40-59) (63%) to feel a sense of belonging with Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. Respondents that live on-reserve or nearby feel a stronger sense of belonging with the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw than respondents living further away – 79% of respondents living in the Skwxwú7mesh Valley and 78% of respondents living on the North Shore agree or strongly agree they feel a sense of belonging with the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, while 52% of respondents living outside of the Skwxwú7mesh Valley and the North Shore agree or strongly agree.

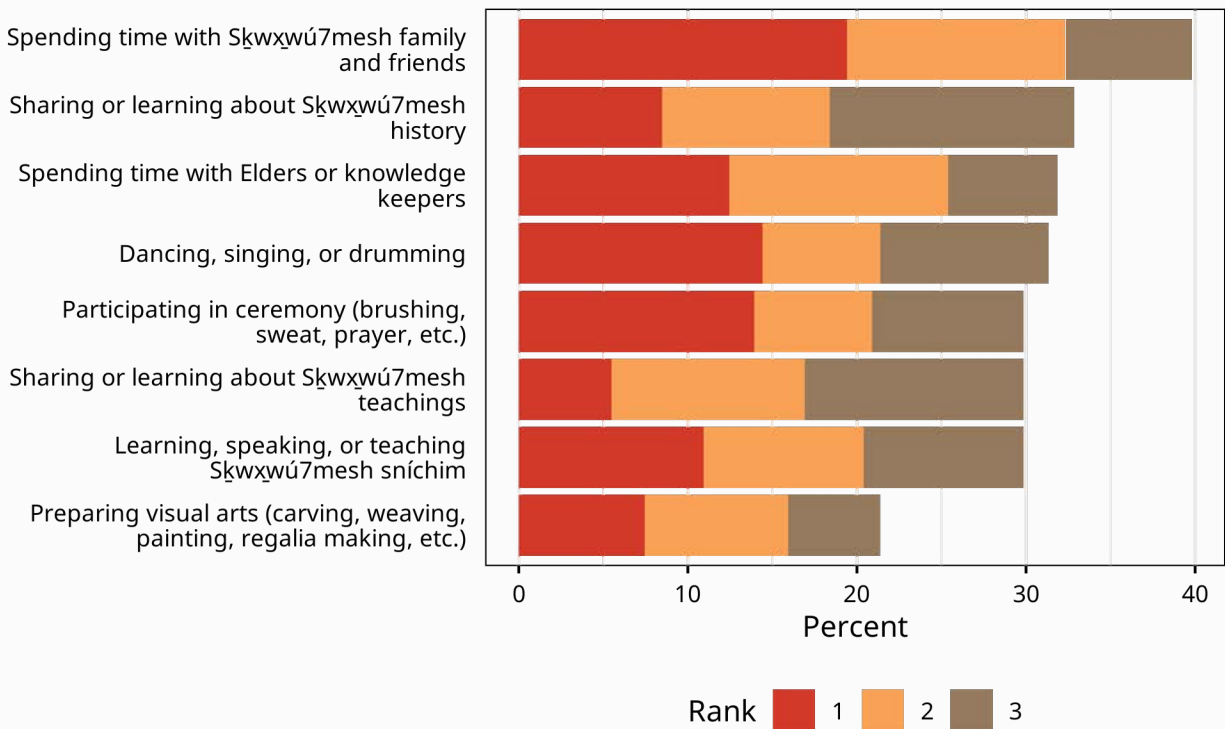
Figure LC.1: Feelings about Identity and Belonging



Note: Question: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I feel good about my identity; I am proud of my identity” and Question: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I feel a sense of belonging to Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw”. There were 217 respondents for the first question and 788 respondents for the second question. Suppressed responses: “Prefer not to say”. Some “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” counts have been suppressed due to low response rates.

When asked about the activities that most help respondents feel connected with Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, the top response is spending time with Skwxwú7mesh family and friends (40%) (Figure LC.2). Apart from preparing visual arts, which ranks lower than all other options, respondents feel that the remaining responses are all similarly important (30-33%).

Figure LC.2: Activities that Make Respondents Feel Most Connected to Skwxwú7mesh



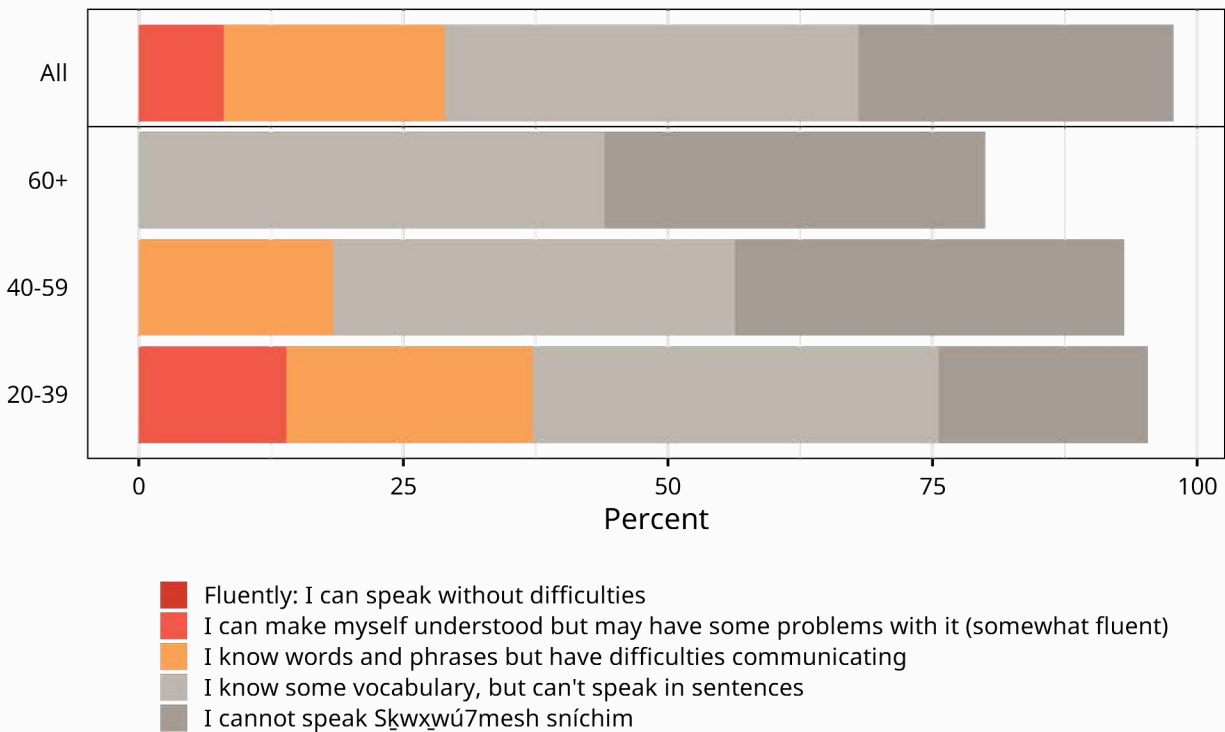
Note: Question: “Which of the following activities makes you feel the most connected to Skwxwú7mesh?” This question had 201 respondents.

Skwxwú7mesh sníchim

There are not many Eshlílkw’iws Chet respondents who are fluent in Skwxwú7mesh sníchim and only 8% reported being somewhat fluent (Figure LC.3). The majority can speak some sníchim, either knowing some vocabulary (39%) or phrases (21%). About one third (30%) of respondents cannot speak Skwxwú7mesh sníchim.

When considering fluency in Skwxwú7mesh sníchim by age, the median age range of respondents who report being fluent and somewhat fluent is 30-39, the median age of those who know some vocabulary and words and phrases is 40-49, and the median age of those who do not speak sníchim is 50-59. This suggests that Skwxwú7mesh sníchim speakers and those currently learning Skwxwú7mesh sníchim tend to be younger. Close to 60% of respondents report using sníchim at home, and half (51%) report using it at work.

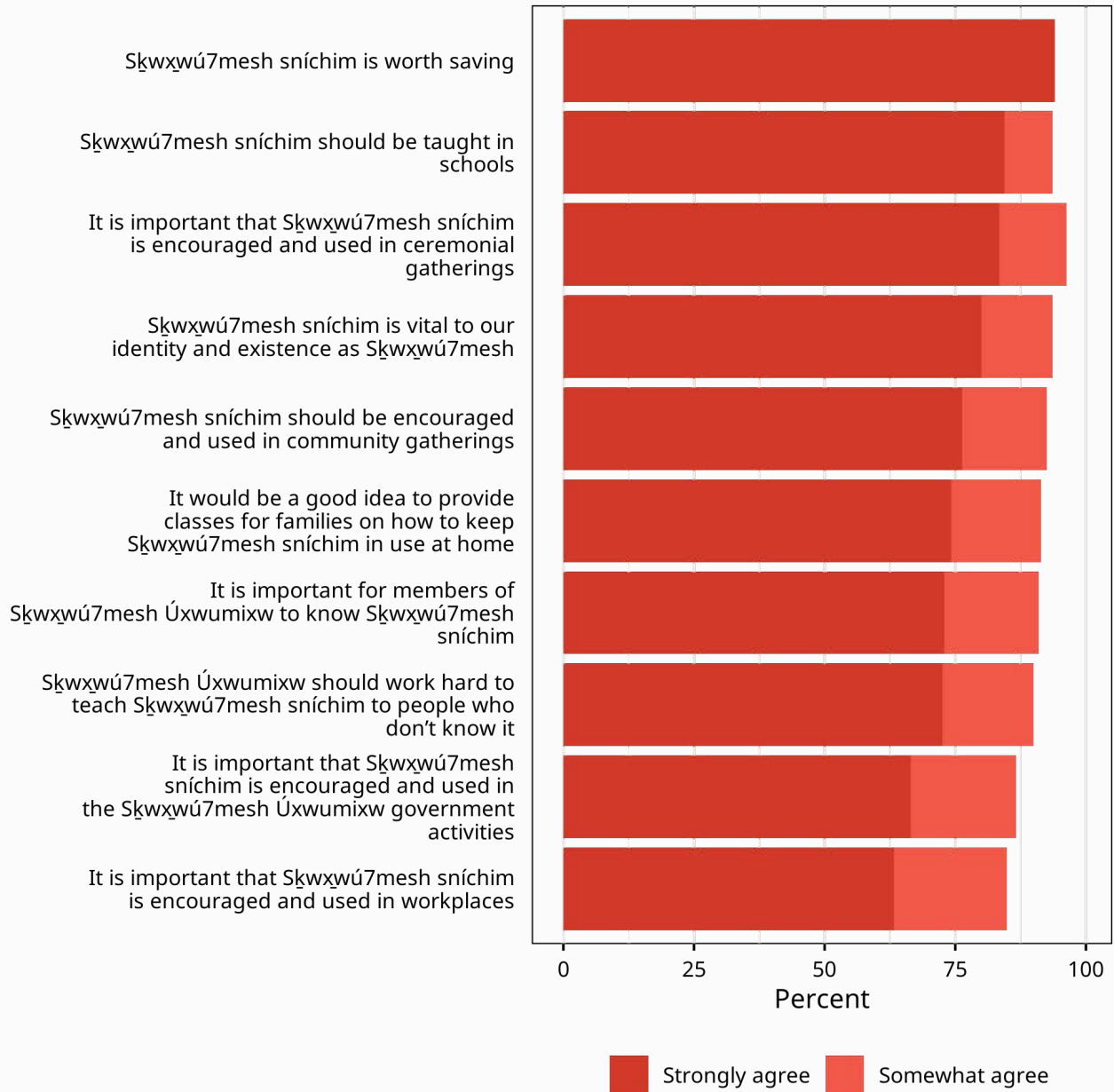
Figure LC.3: Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim Fluency and Skill Level



Note: Question: “Are you able to speak Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language)? Please select the option that best captures your highest skill level.” This question had 225 respondents. Some responses to “I can make myself understood but may have some problems with it (somewhat fluent)” and “I know words and phrases but have difficulties communicating,” as well as all responses to “Fluently: I can speak without difficulties” have been suppressed due to low response rates.

Eslhíhkw’iws Chet respondents feel very strongly about the importance of learning, investing in, and encouraging the use of Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim (Figure LC.4). Although the majority of respondents strongly agree with all positive statements asked about Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim, they feel particularly strongly that Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim is worth saving (98% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree) and should be taught in school (94% somewhat or strongly agree). Respondents feel that Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim should be used in particular in ceremonial gatherings (96% somewhat or strongly agree), community gatherings (93% somewhat or strongly agree), and at home (91% somewhat or strongly agree). In general, female respondents express higher rates of agreement with most statements about the importance of Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim. The largest difference between female and male respondents on this topic relates to the statement “it is important that Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh sníchim is encouraged and used in Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh Úxwumixw government activities,” with 70% of female respondents expressing strong agreement, as compared to 52% of male respondents.

Figure LC.4: Beliefs about Sḱwxwú7mesh sníchim

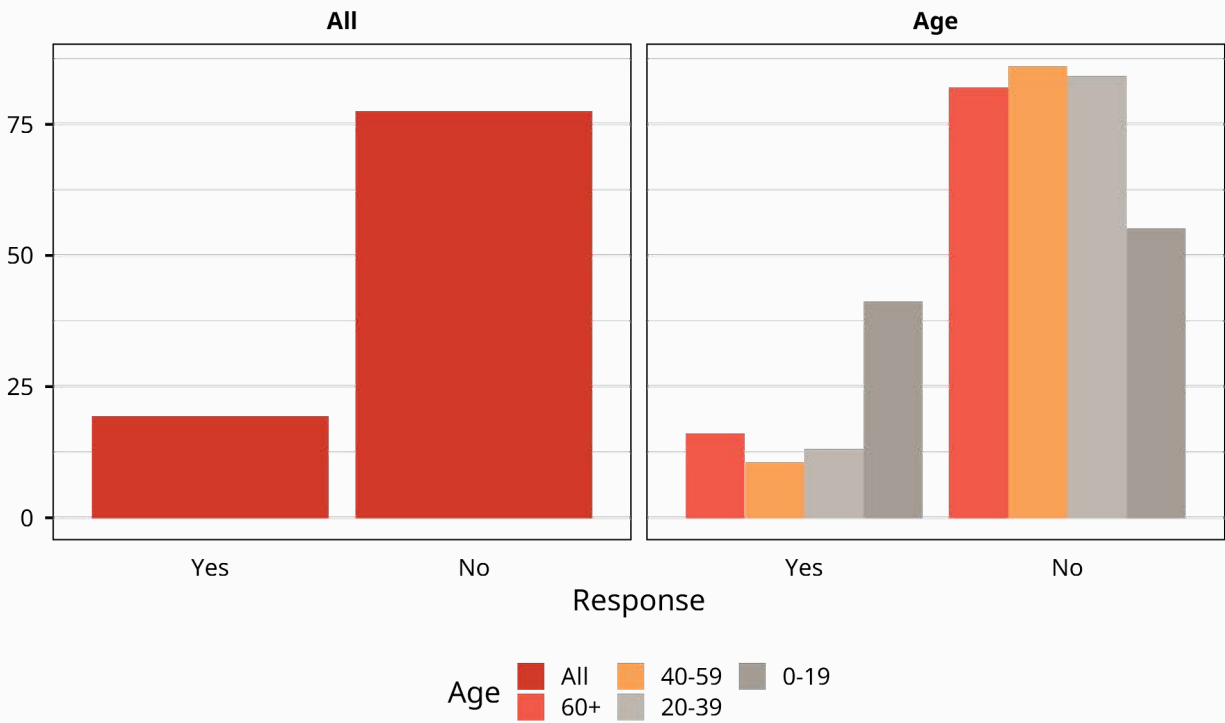


Note: Question: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” This question had 221 respondents. Suppressed responses: “Somewhat disagree”, “Strongly disagree”, and “Not applicable”. Responses not included: “Neutral”. Some responses to “Somewhat agree” have been suppressed due to low response rates.

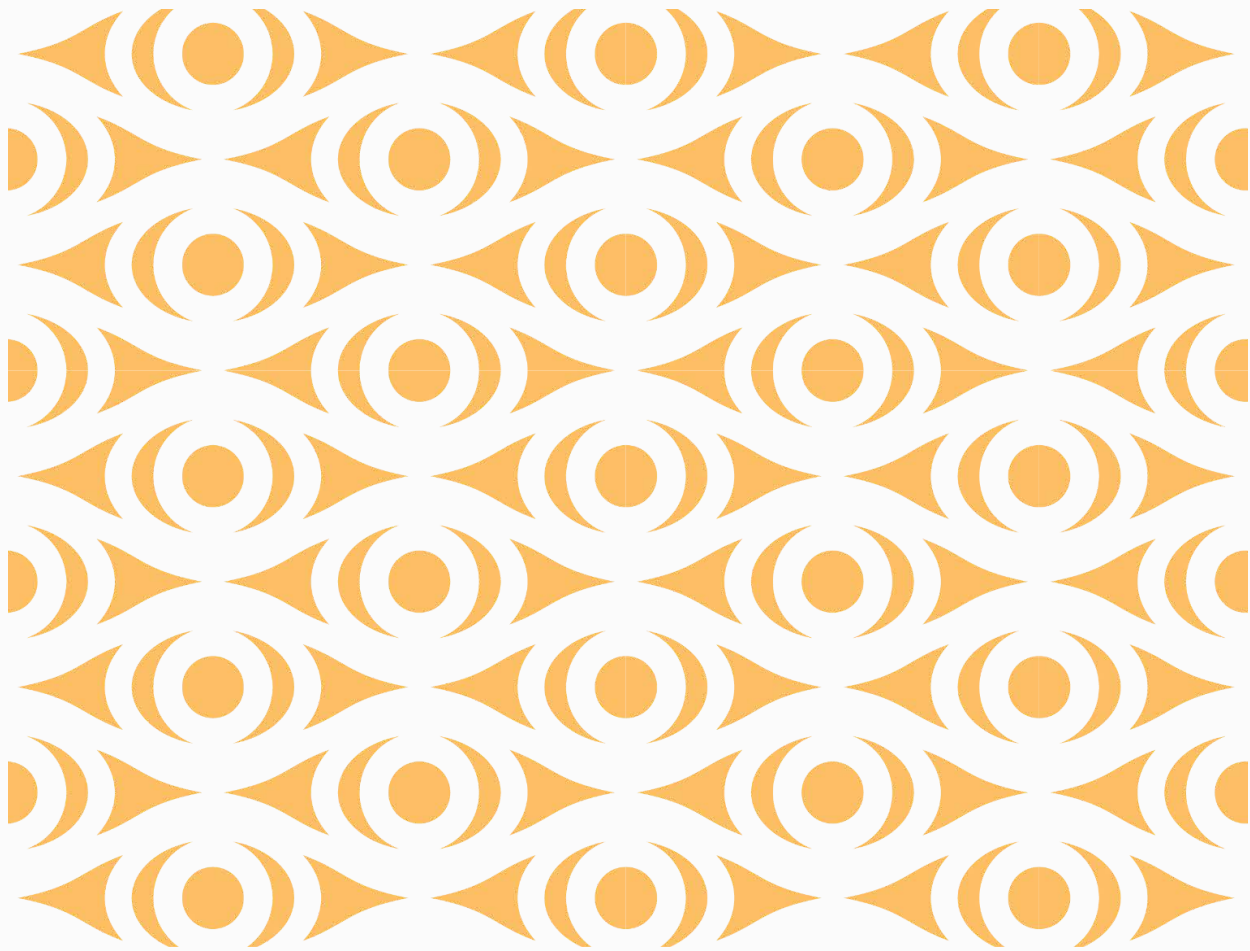
Four in five (80%) of Eshíhkwíws Chet respondents are interested in learning Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim and one in five (19%) report actively learning Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim (Figure LC.5). Half of respondents have access to Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim speakers (49%) and half of respondents have access to Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim resources (50%) while about a third (29%) reported having access to Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim classes.

In terms of the age of Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim learners, children and youth are more likely to be learning Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim than older respondents, with nearly half (41%) of respondents aged 0-19 learning Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim compared to 13% of respondents aged 20-39, 11% of respondents aged 40-59, and 16% of Elders (respondents over 60) (Figure LC.5).

Figure LC.5: Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim Learners, by Age



Note: Question: “Are you currently learning Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim (for example, at a community class, with an elder, at school, etc.)?” This question had 1360 respondents. Suppressed responses: “Not applicable”.



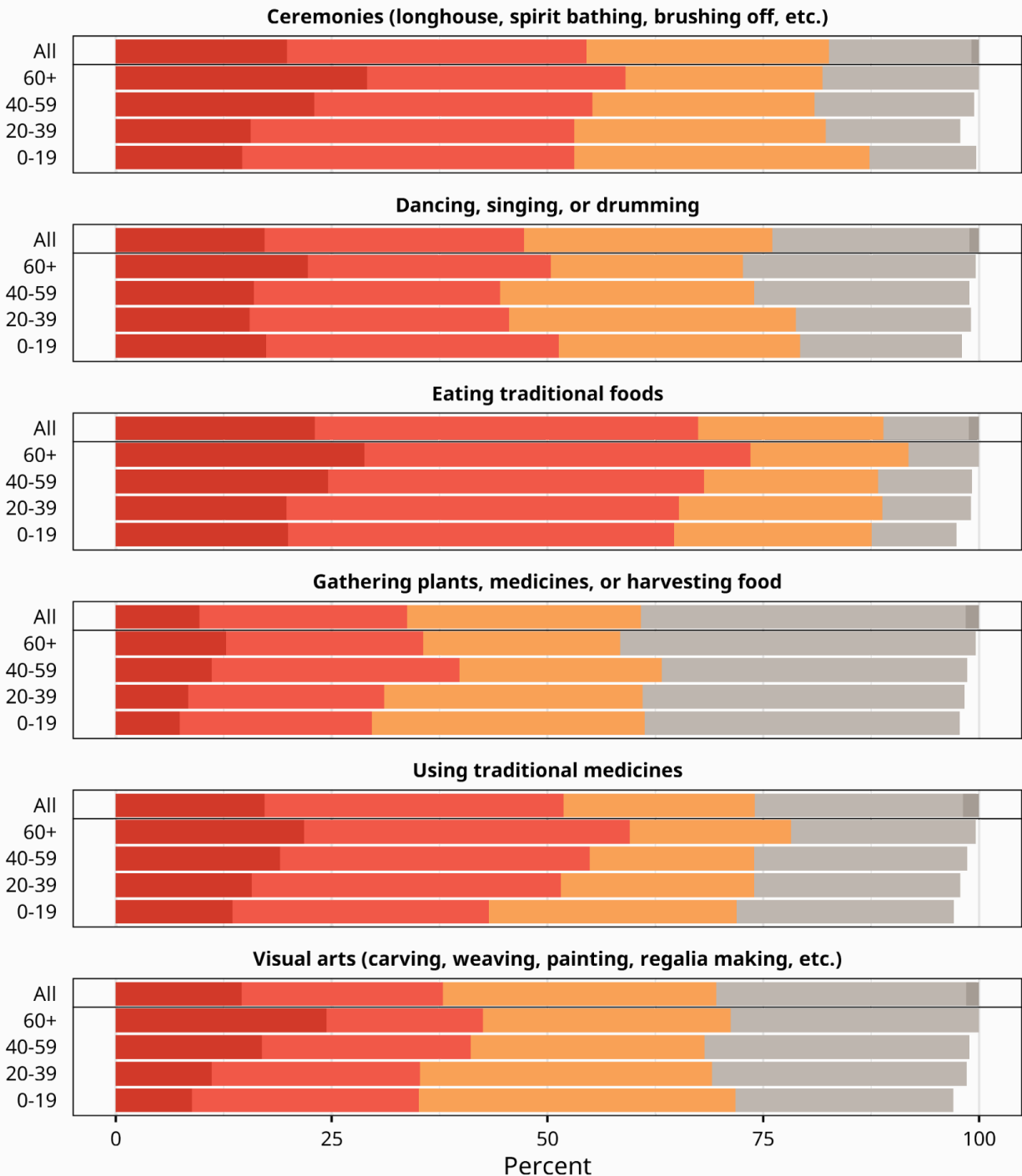
Skwxwú7mesh Cultural Activities

Respondents were asked how often they participate in a range of Skwxwú7mesh cultural activities (Figure LC.6). More than half of respondents sometimes or often eat traditional foods (67%), participate in ceremonies (55%), and use traditional medicines (52%). Eating traditional foods is the cultural activity (23%) that respondents participate in most often, and gathering plants, medicines, or harvesting food the least often (10%).

Generally, older respondents participate in cultural activities more often than younger respondents. Twenty-four per cent (24%) of Elders (ages 60 and over) practice visual arts often, but only 9% of youth (ages 0-19) practice visual arts often. Similarly, 29% of Elders participate in ceremonies often, and 15% of youth do the same.

Respondents living on the North Shore and in the Skwxwú7mesh Valley participate in cultural activities more regularly than respondents living elsewhere. Across activities under two-thirds (65%) of respondents from elsewhere indicating they participate in cultural activities compared with 84% of respondents on the North Shore and 77% of respondents in the Skwxwú7mesh Valley.

Figure LC.6: Participation in Cultural Activities, by Age

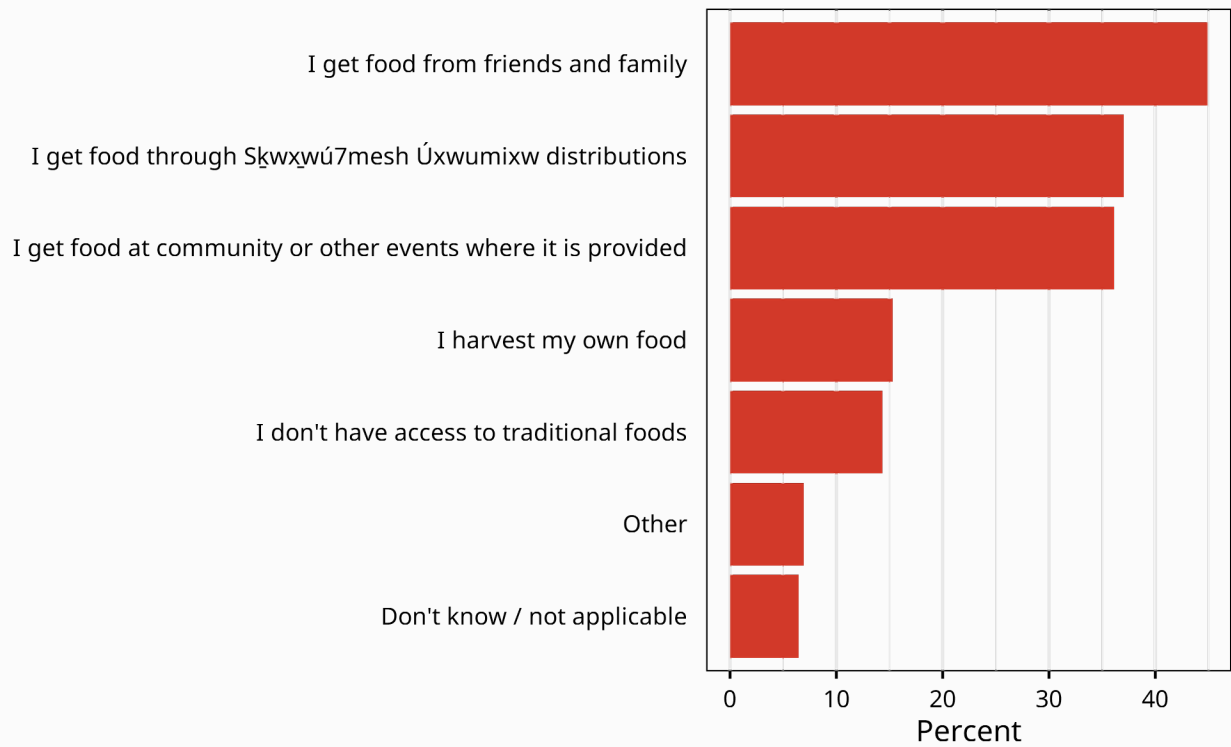


Often Sometimes Rarely Never Don't know

Note: Question: "How often do you participate in the following activities?" This question had 1,364 respondents. This question was asked to household heads, so "Don't know" is a function of the household head's knowledge of each person in their home's activities. Some responses to "Don't know" have been suppressed due to low response rates.

Figure LC.7 shows where Eslhíhkw'íws Chet respondents normally get their traditional foods. Nearly half of respondents (45%) get their food from friends and family, followed by Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw distributions (37%), and community or other events (36%).

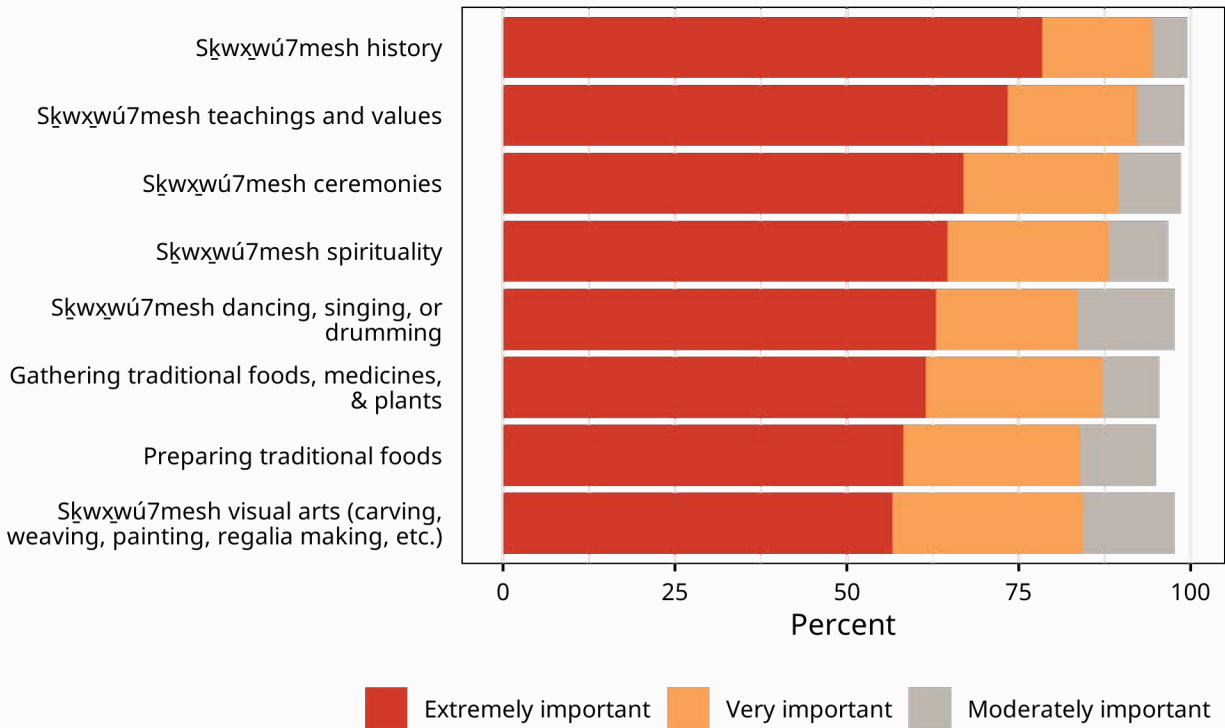
Figure LC.7: Sources of Traditional Foods



Note: Question: “Where do you normally get traditional foods? Please select all that apply.” This question had 216 respondents.

Respondents feel strongly that knowing and learning about aspects of Skwxwú7mesh culture is important, with a majority identifying each cultural aspect as extremely important. For each aspect of culture, fewer than 5% of respondents indicated it was only slightly or not important (Figure LC.8).

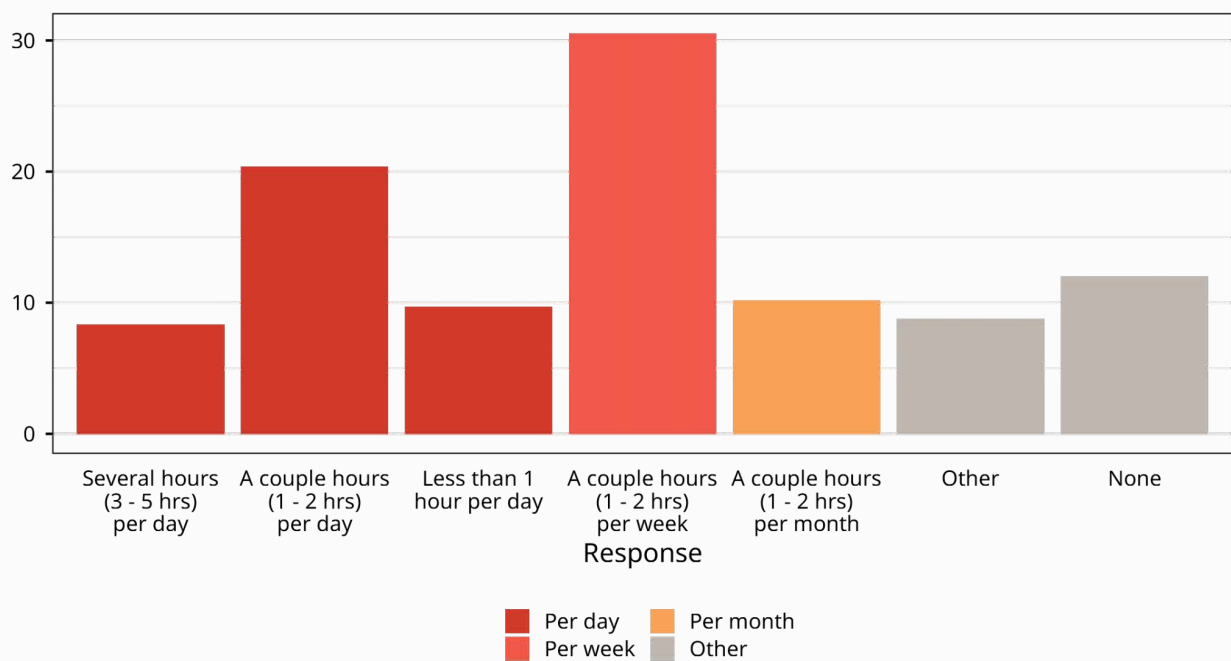
Figure LC.8: Importance of Knowing and Learning Aspects of Skwxwú7mesh Culture



Note: Question: “How important is it to you that you know and learn about the following?” This question had 219 respondents. Suppressed responses: “Slightly important”, “Not at all important”, and “Not applicable”.

Nearly 80% of Eslhíhkw'íws Chet respondents are typically able to spend time engaged in culture and language activities every month (Figure LC.9). About 40% of respondents are typically able to spend some time on these activities every day – 22% several (3-5) hours per day, over half (53%) a couple (1-2) hours per day, and a quarter (25%) less than 1 hour per day. One third of respondents (31%) are typically able to spend 1-2 hours on these activities weekly, and 10% have 1-2 hours to spend monthly.

Figure LC.9: Time Typically Able to Spend on Culture and Language Activities



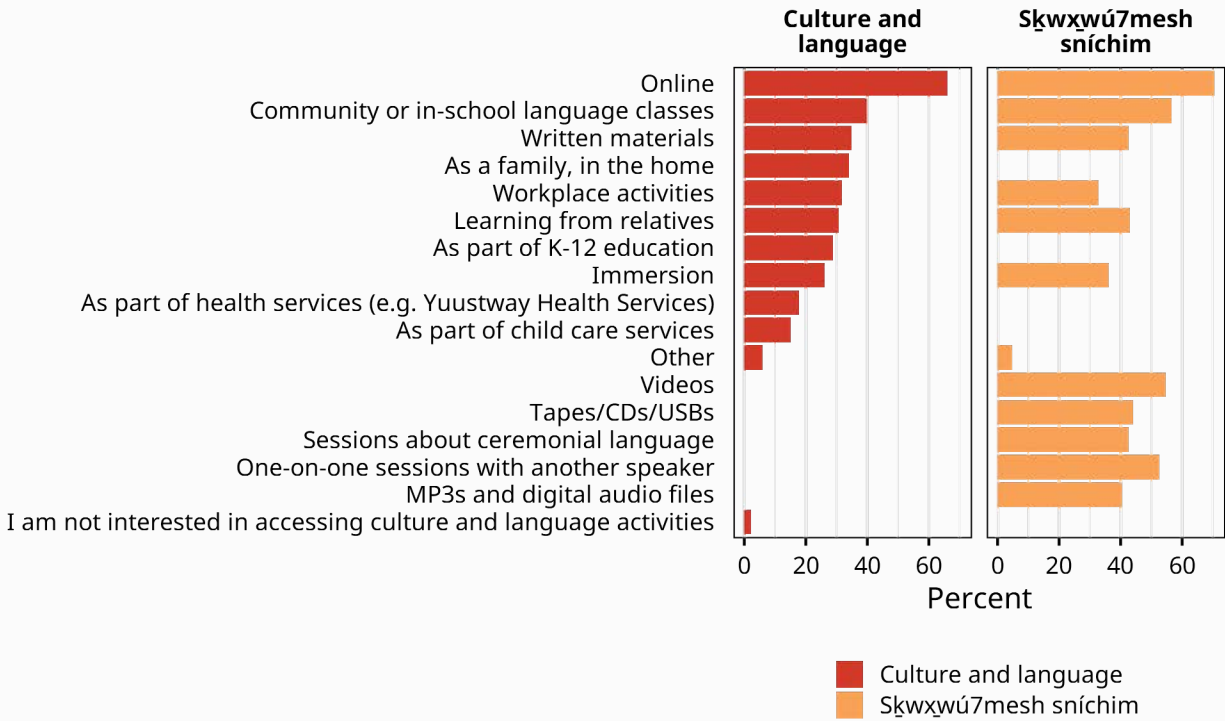
Note: Question: “How much time are you typically able to spend doing culture and language activities?” This question had 216 respondents.

Needs and Priorities for the Future

The vast majority of respondents want more access to culture and language activities – fewer than 5% of respondents are not interested in accessing culture and language services, and no respondents report that they do not want to learn Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (Figure LC.10).

Most respondents (66%) are looking for more culture and language activities online. Respondents living elsewhere (neither on the North Shore nor in the Skwxwú7mesh Valley) are particularly interested in online access to language and cultural activities, with more than three quarters (78%) indicating they would like more access online, compared to 61% of respondents on the North Shore and 67% of respondents in the Skwxwú7mesh Valley.

Figure LC.10: Desired Way to Access Cultural Activities and Skwxwú7mesh sníchim



Note: Questions: “How would you most like to access language and cultural activities? Please select all that apply” and “How would you like to learn Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language)? Please select all that apply.” The first question had 218 respondents, and the latter had 207 respondents.

Most (68%) respondents would prefer to access these activities in the evening, compared to 47% on weekends, and 34% during the daytime. For in-person language and cultural activities, 66% of respondents would prefer these to be available on the North Shore, versus 33% in the Skwxwú7mesh Valley, and 12% in Metro Vancouver areas.

The most commonly identified barriers to Eshíhkw'íws Chet respondents' participating in cultural activities or attending language classes is their work schedule and responsibilities – 38% see this as a barrier to participating in cultural activities and 43% see this as a barrier to attending language classes (Figure LC.11). Other commonly identified barriers included a lack of knowledge about what programs are available (34% for cultural activities and 28% for language classes), and family responsibilities (25% and 23%).

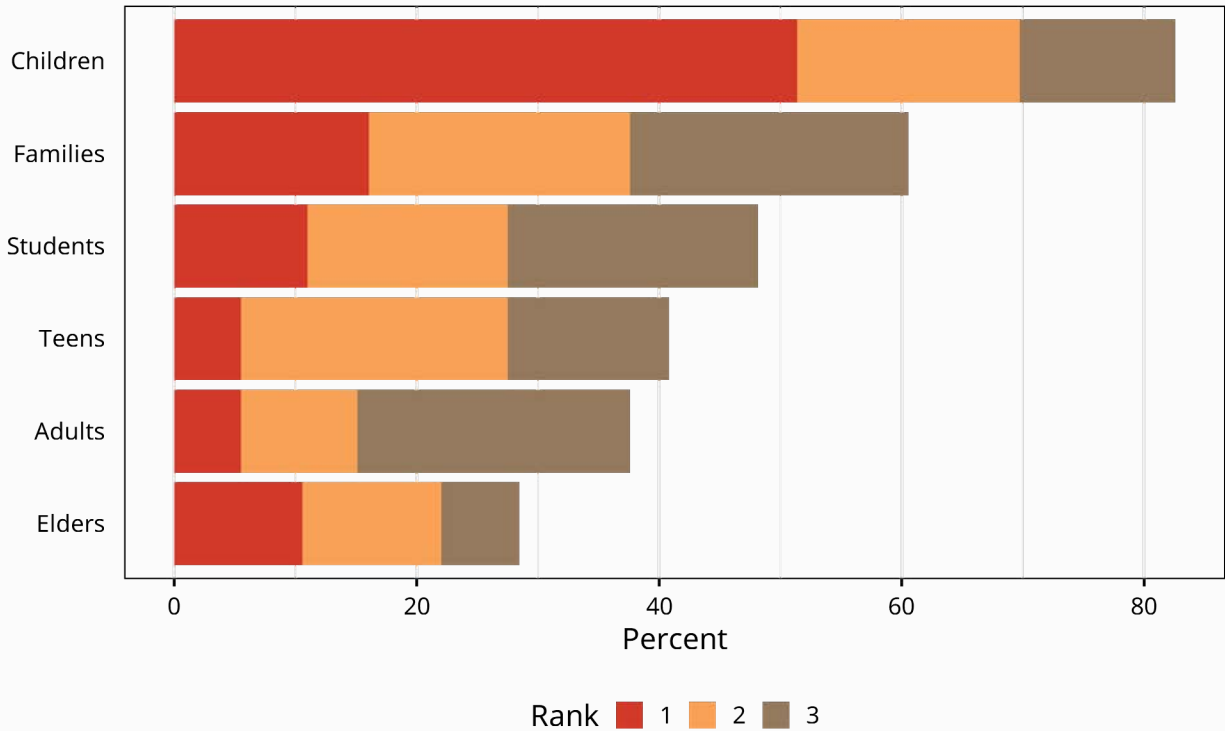
Figure LC.11: Barriers to Participation in Cultural Activities and Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim Class



Note: Questions: “Do you experience any of the following difficulties when trying to participate in cultural activities? Please select all that apply” and “Do you experience any of the following difficulties when trying to attend Sḱwḱwú7mesh sníchim class? Please select all that apply.” The first question had 215 respondents, and the latter had 211 respondents.

When it comes to learning Skw̓wú7mesh sníchim, Eshíłhkwiws Chet respondents feel the highest priority, by a large margin, is to provide these opportunities for children (83%). The next top priorities for providing opportunities to learn Skw̓wú7mesh sníchim were families (61%) and students (48%) (Figure LC.12).

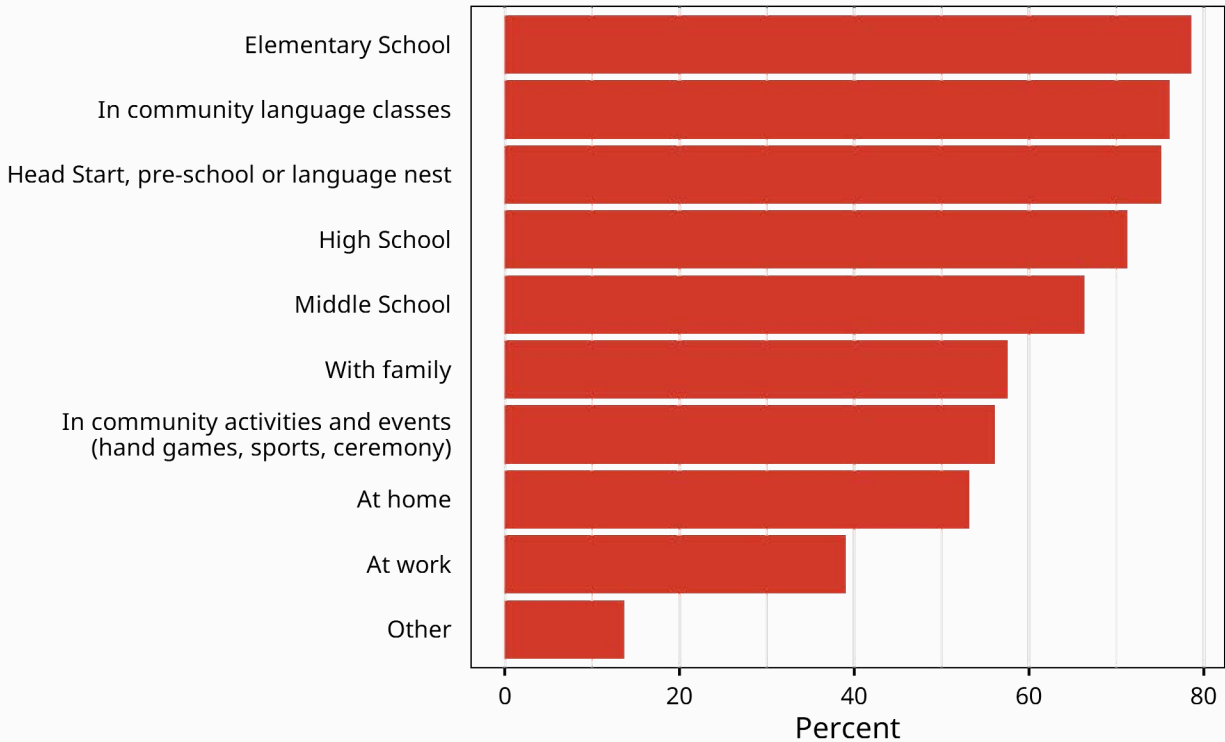
Figure LC.12: Highest Priority Groups to Learn Skw̓wú7mesh sníchim



Note: Question: “Which of the following groups are highest priority for providing opportunities to learn Skw̓wú7mesh sníchim?” This question had 218 respondents.

Consistent with respondents’ priorities for children and youth to learn Skwxwú7mesh sníchim, more than three quarters (79%) of Eshíhkw’iws Chet respondents feel Skwxwú7mesh sníchim should be taught more in elementary schools; community language classes; and head start, pre-school, or language nest programs (Figure LC.13). A majority of respondents want to see Skwxwú7mesh sníchim taught more in all of the options presented, with the exception of at work (39%).

Figure LC.13: Where Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim should be Taught More



Note: Question: “Where do you think Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language) should be taught more? Please select all that apply.” This question had 205 respondents.

Eslhíhkw'íws Chet respondents were asked if they had the time, knowledge, skills, and willingness to teach others about a range of cultural activities, including dancing, singing, or drumming; gathering traditional foods; gathering traditional medicines; learning cultural teachings, storytelling, customs, and protocols; participating in ceremonies; preparing traditional foods; teaching Skwxwú7mesh sníchim; and using traditional medicines. More than one in five respondents (22%) feel they have the cultural knowledge and are willing to teach at least one of these cultural activities. A similar number (23%) feel they have the cultural knowledge but not the teaching skills necessary and 28% indicated they have the cultural knowledge and teaching skills, but no time available to teach (Table LC.1).

Table LC.1: Willingness and Skills to Teach Culture and Language

Response	Count	Percent
I have the cultural knowledge and am willing to teach	45	21.63%
I have the cultural knowledge but not the teaching skills necessary	48	23.08%
I have the cultural knowledge and teaching skills, but not the time	58	27.88%

Note: Question: “Would you be willing to teach the following, if you have the skills, knowledge, and time to do so?” Activities listed: “Skwxwú7mesh sníchim (Squamish language)”; “Participating in ceremonies (longhouse, spirit bathing, brushing off, etc.)”; “Dancing, singing, or drumming”; “Creating visual arts (carving, weaving, painting, regalia making, etc.)”; “Learning cultural teachings, storytelling, customs, and protocols”; “Gathering of traditional medicines”; “Using of traditional medicines”; “Gathering of traditional foods (e.g. berries)”; and “Preparing of traditional foods (e.g. salmon).” This question had 218 respondents.