

2013 PUBLIC TOILETS SURVEY: Cambridge Residents, Workers & Visitors

Summary Report *February 2014*

Presented by:

City of Cambridge Public Toilets Working Group

Cambridge Public Health Department



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Introduction

Recognizing that access to public toilets is a citywide issue impacting a diverse spectrum of people and organizations, the City's Public Toilets Working Group examined this issue broadly, rather than focus on a specific population or location.

In 2013, the Working Group conducted individual interviews and online surveys with three distinct groups:

- **Community Members:** This group consisted of residents, workers, students, frequent visitors, and tourists;
- **Businesses, Universities, Churches:** This group was comprised of organizations that provide public toilets to the community and/or are impacted by requests from non-customers to use their restroom facilities; and
- **Human Services Organizations:** This group consisted of organizations and individual providers who serve clients who rely on public toilet facilities.

Goals

The goals of the Public Toilets Working Group are to help the City:

- **Understand the level of demand from all users** and how this demand is currently being met;
- **Understand how vulnerable populations are impacted** and identify groups having the greatest difficulty accessing public toilets;
- **Gauge awareness of existing public toilets** and identify barriers to use;
- **Gauge community expectations;**
- **Prioritize locations of future facilities** by identifying areas with the greatest demand;
- **Understand the impacts of limited public toilet facilities** on the community; and
- **Understand concerns related to cleanliness, misuse, and vandalism** associated with public toilets.

About the Community Survey

In October 2013, the Public Toilets Working Group conducted three targeted online surveys:

- A Community Survey;
- A Business Survey; and
- A Human Services Organization Survey.

Of these surveys, the Community Survey, which was completed by nearly 850 people, elicited the most useful and comprehensive information.

This anonymous survey targeted individuals likely to be impacted by or concerned about this issue, including: parents of small children; active users of the city's parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, open spaces, and bike paths; and community advocates.

The Community Survey was promoted via social media and other communication channels via City and private social media accounts, Advocates for a Common Toilet (ACT), Cambridge Local First, neighborhood associations, and local listservs, to name a few.

The Community Survey distribution method resulted in people with strong ties to Cambridge responding to the survey; tourists and infrequent visitors to Cambridge are under-represented.

Additionally, the survey findings may over-represent the views of community advocates who are committed to establishing a permanent, year-round public restroom facility in or near the Cambridge Common.

Finally, it is important to note that the Community Survey is not a representative sample of the City's overall population. Survey findings reflect the opinions of those individuals who completed the survey, and may not necessarily represent the views of the city as a whole.

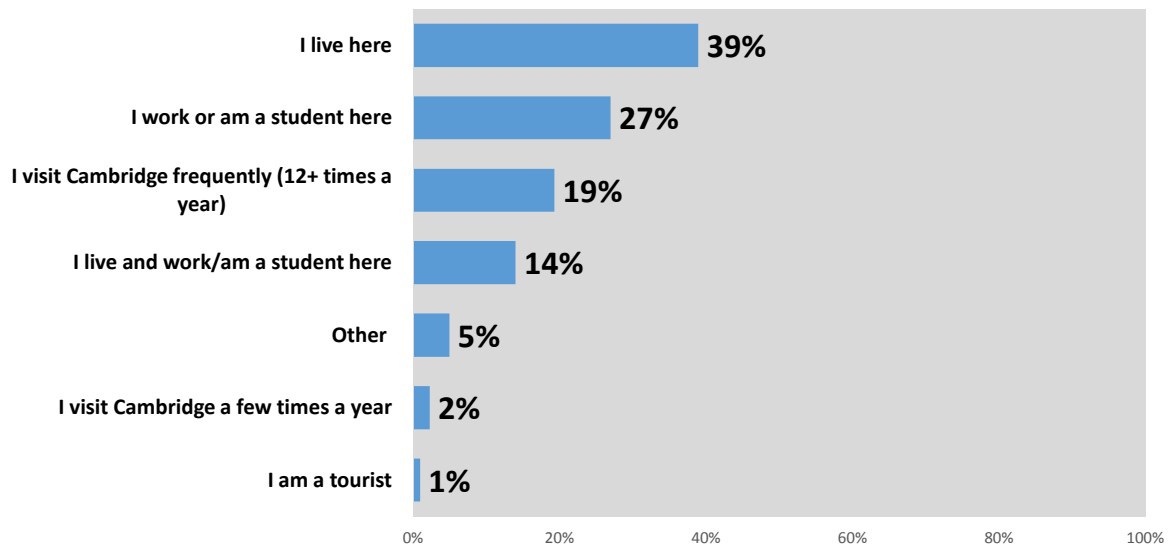
The following section summarizes findings from the *2013 Public Toilets Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers & Visitors*.

This report is available online at: www.cambridgepublichealth.org/publications.

For more information about the City's public toilets initiative, see: www.cambridgepublichealth.org/policy-practice/public-toilets/index.php.

1. How are you affiliated with Cambridge?

Answered: 845 people



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

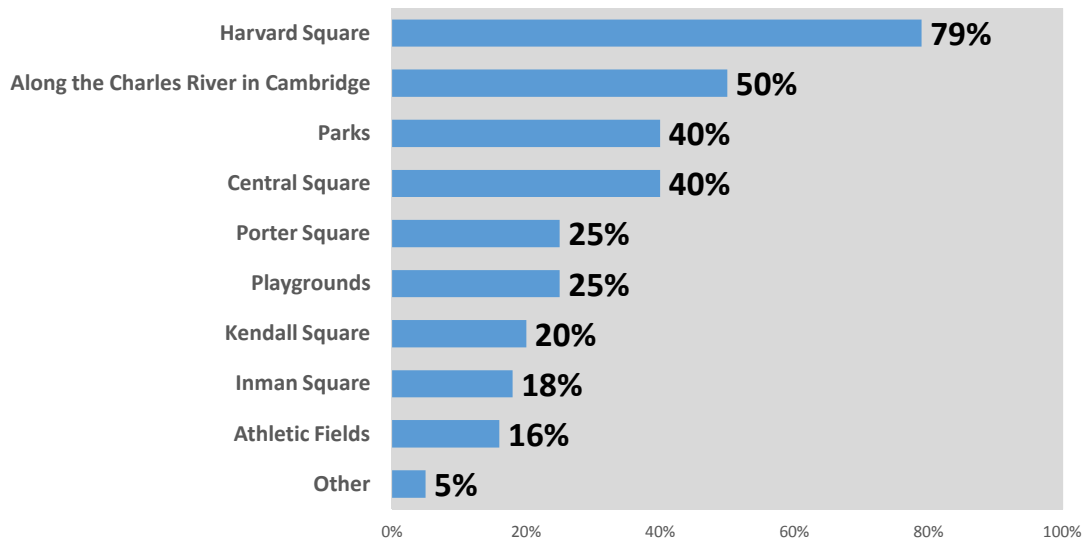
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--|-----------|--------|
| I live here. | 329 | 38.93% |
| I work or am a student here. | 228 | 26.98% |
| I visit Cambridge frequently (more than 12 times per year) | 163 | 19.29% |
| I live and work/am a student here | 118 | 13.96% |
| Other (please specify) | 42 | 4.97% |
| I visit Cambridge a few times a year. | 19 | 2.25% |
| I am a tourist. | 8 | 0.95% |
| Total Respondents: 845 | | |

About the Data

- Survey question: *How are you affiliated with Cambridge?*
- Because the community survey was promoted and shared through social media and email listservs, it drew people with strong ties to Cambridge.
- Survey takers were allowed to choose multiple affiliations with Cambridge: 845 survey participants provided 907 responses to this multiple choice question.
- Frequent visitors reported that they live in Somerville, Belmont, Watertown, Arlington, Boston, and Metro West communities.

2. When outdoors in Cambridge, where have you experienced the greatest need for public toilets?

(Answered: 716 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

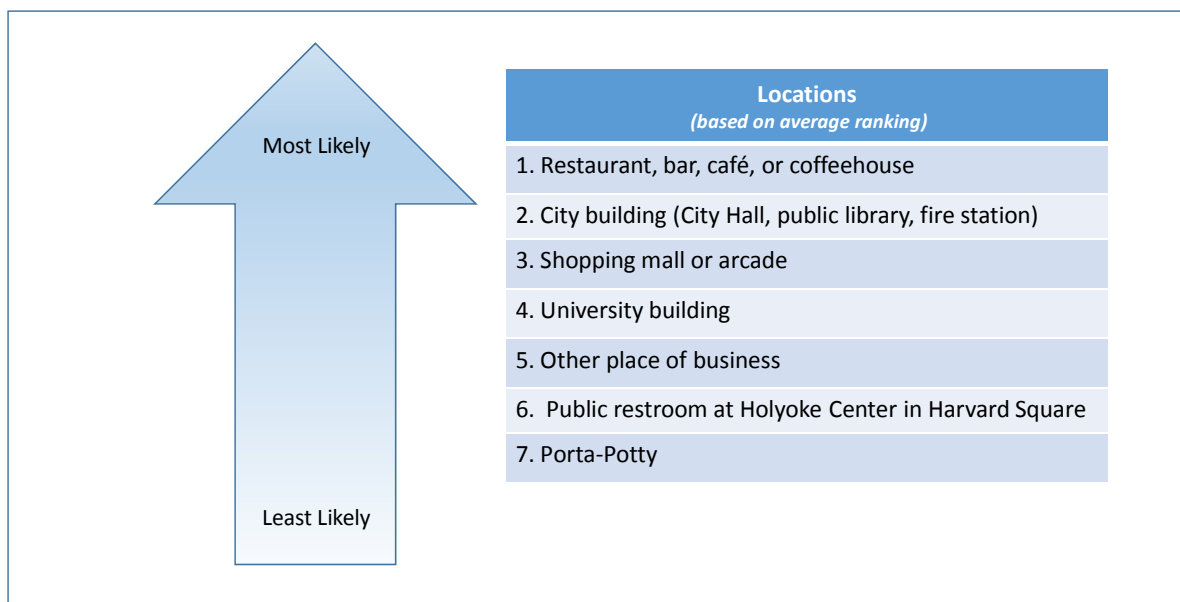
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Harvard Square | 563 | 78.63% |
| Along the Charles River in Cambridge | 357 | 49.86% |
| Central Square | 289 | 40.36% |
| Parks | 285 | 39.80% |
| Playgrounds | 182 | 25.42% |
| Porter Square | 181 | 25.28% |
| Kendall Square | 144 | 20.11% |
| Inman Square | 126 | 17.60% |
| Athletic Fields | 112 | 15.64% |
| Other (please specify) | 38 | 5.31% |
| Total Respondents: 716 | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *When outdoors in Cambridge (e.g. walking, biking, parks/playgrounds), where have you experienced the greatest need for public toilets? (Please check all that apply.)*
- 716 survey participants provided 2,277 responses to this multiple choice question.
- Individual comments in the “other” category included bike paths, East Cambridge, Cambridge Common, and MBTA stations.

3. When outdoors in Cambridge, where would you most likely seek out a public toilet for yourself, your child, or another family member?

(Answered: 720 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

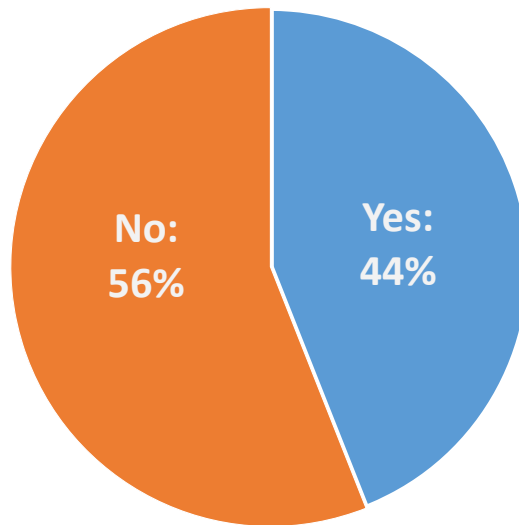
| Answer Choices | Most Likely | | | | | | | Least Likely | N/A | Total Responses | Average Ranking |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | | | |
| Restaurant/bar/café/coffeehouse | 39.28% 282 | 21.03% 151 | 15.74% 113 | 11.98% 86 | 5.99% 43 | 3.06% 22 | 0.84% 6 | 2.09% 15 | 718 | 2.36 | |
| City Building | 19.03% 137 | 19.44% 140 | 15.42% 111 | 17.36% 125 | 11.39% 82 | 8.19% 59 | 4.17% 30 | 5.00% 36 | 720 | 3.25 | |
| Shopping mall or arcade | 10.56% 76 | 22.36% 161 | 21.53% 155 | 19.86% 143 | 14.31% 103 | 4.72% 34 | 1.67% 12 | 5.00% 36 | 720 | 3.27 | |
| University building | 12.78% 92 | 16.11% 116 | 17.50% 126 | 16.25% 117 | 13.75% 99 | 10.14% 73 | 6.67% 48 | 6.81% 49 | 720 | 3.63 | |
| Other place of business | 3.75% 27 | 7.36% 53 | 12.92% 93 | 15.56% 112 | 28.47% 205 | 21.67% 156 | 6.25% 45 | 4.03% 29 | 720 | 4.54 | |
| Holyoke Center in Harvard Square | 10.28% 74 | 8.19% 59 | 9.72% 70 | 8.89% 64 | 10.97% 79 | 19.03% 137 | 25.28% 182 | 7.64% 55 | 720 | 4.74 | |
| Porta-Potty | 3.75% 27 | 4.44% 32 | 5.56% 40 | 6.94% 50 | 10.56% 76 | 24.31% 175 | 38.89% 280 | 5.56% 40 | 720 | 5.59 | |
| Total Respondents: 720 | | | | | | | | | | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *When outdoors in Cambridge (e.g. walking, biking, parks/playgrounds), where would you most likely seek out a public toilet for yourself, your child, or another family member? Please rank the following with “1” being the most likely choice and “7” being the least likely choice.*
- Answer choices are presented in order by average ranking from most likely to least likely.

4. Are you aware that many city buildings (libraries, fire stations, City Hall) in Cambridge have free public toilets?

(Answered: 725 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

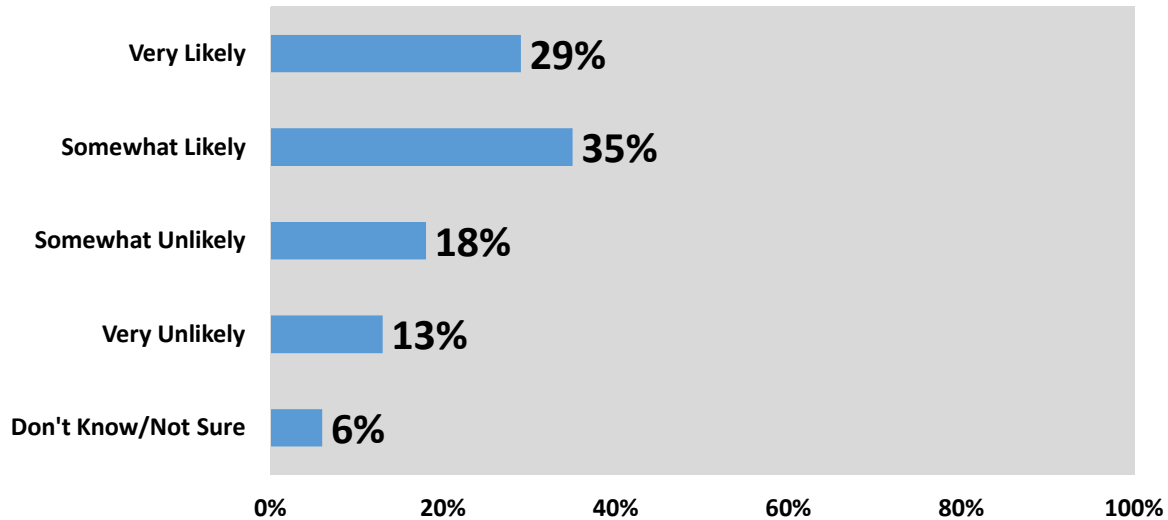
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Yes | 322 | 44.41% |
| No | 403 | 55.59% |
| Total Respondents: 725 | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *Are you aware that many city buildings (e.g. libraries, fire stations, City Hall) in Cambridge have free public toilets?*

5. If you were in a commercial square in Cambridge, how likely would you be to use a public toilet in a nearby city building?

(Answered: 723 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

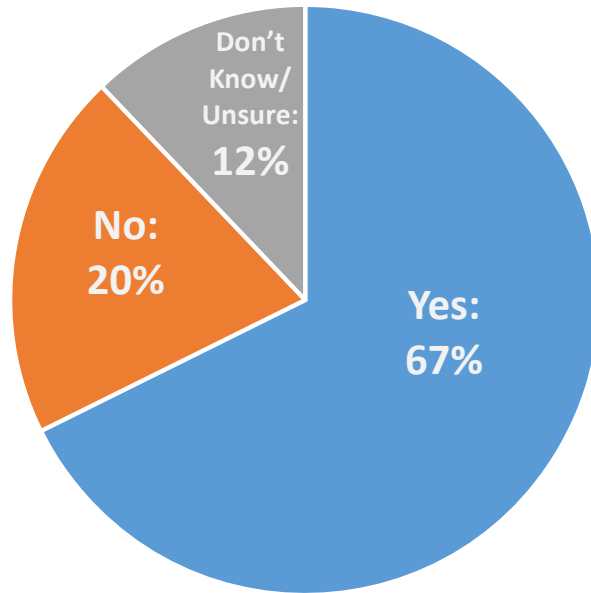
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Very Likely | 207 | 26.63% |
| Somewhat Likely | 253 | 34.99% |
| Somewhat Unlikely | 128 | 17.70% |
| Very Unlikely | 95 | 13.14% |
| Don't Know/Unsure | 40 | 5.53% |
| Total Respondents: 723 | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *If you were in a commercial square (e.g. Central, Harvard, Porter) in Cambridge, how likely would you be to use a public toilet in a nearby city building?*

6. Have you or a family member had difficulty accessing public toilets in Cambridge?

(Answered: 723 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

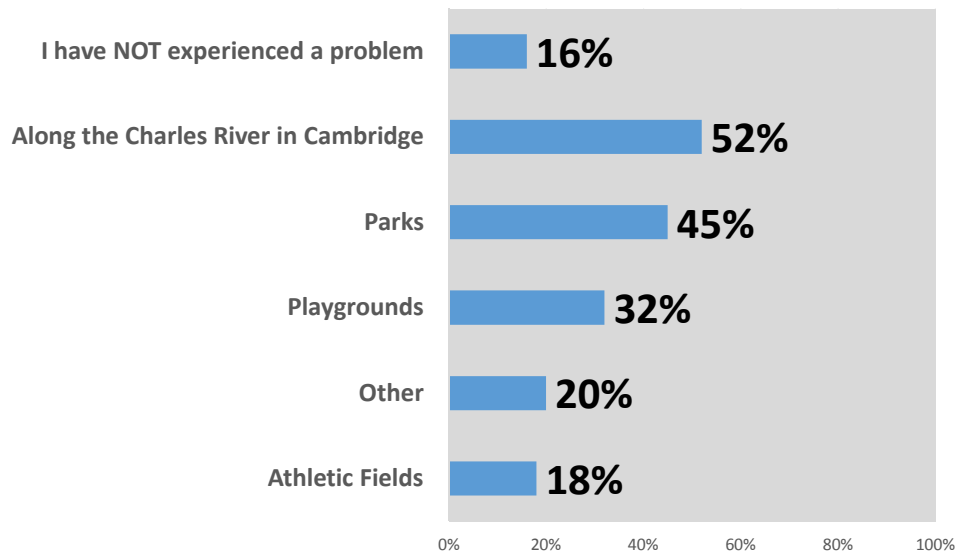
| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Yes | 487 | 67.36% |
| No | 147 | 20.33% |
| Don't Know/Unsure | 89 | 12.31% |
| Total Respondents: 723 | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *Have you or a family member had difficulty accessing public toilets in Cambridge?*

7. Have you experienced a problem accessing a public toilet in the City's parks, playgrounds, and open spaces?

(Answered: 563 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Along the Charles River in Cambridge | 292 | 51.87% |
| Parks | 251 | 44.58% |
| Playgrounds | 179 | 31.79% |
| Other (please specify) | 110 | 19.54% |
| Athletic Fields | 104 | 18.47% |
| I have NOT experienced a problem | 92 | 16.34% |
| Total Respondents: 563 | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *Have you experienced a problem accessing a public toilet in the City's parks, playgrounds, and open spaces?*
- 563 survey participants provided 1,028 responses to this multiple choice question.

8. Name the parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, or open spaces where you experienced a problem accessing a public toilet.

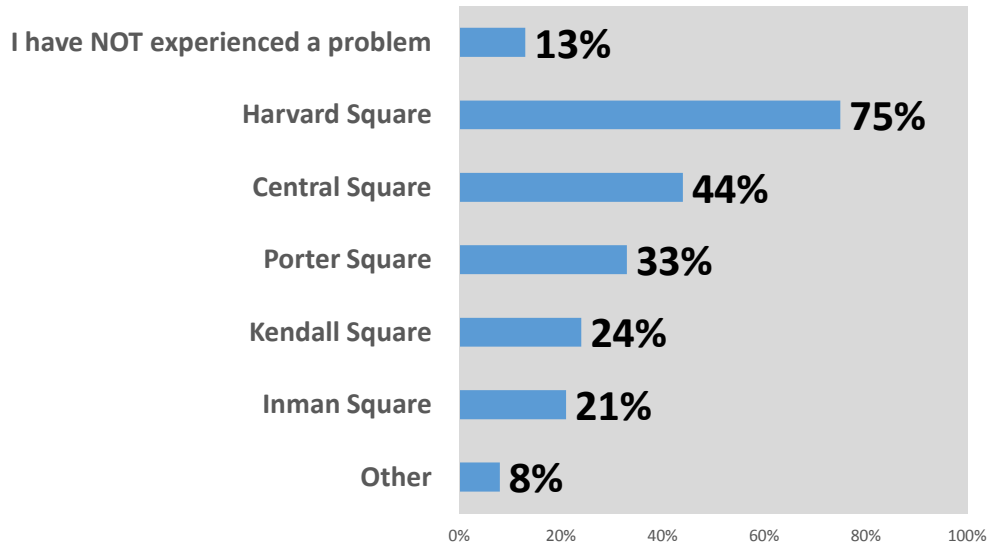
| Top 15 Most Named Parks, Playgrounds, Fields & Open Spaces <i>(based on analysis of respondents' comments)</i> | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Cambridge Common |
| 2. | Charles River |
| 3. | All Parks & Playgrounds |
| 4. | Danehy Park |
| 5. | Raymond Park |
| 6. | JFK Memorial Park |
| 7. | Dana Park (Magazine St.) |
| 8. | Russell Field |
| 9. | Cooper Park (Hancock St.) |
| 10. | Sennott Park (Broadway) |
| 11. | Fresh Pond |
| 12. | Magazine Beach & Lindstrom Field |
| 13. | Reverend Williams Park (Cedar St.) |
| 14. | All Harvard Square Parks |
| 15. | Riverside parks (along Memorial Dr.) |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *What is the name or location of the park(s), playground(s), athletic field(s), or open space area where you experienced a problem accessing a public toilet?*
- 355 survey participants responded to this open-ended question. To analyze the responses, each identified park/playground/open space area was listed as a separate entry. Official names for park/playground/open spaces were added to entries in which only street names were given. Some responses were excluded from the analysis, including commercial squares (if a park was not indicated) and parks in other communities.
- Survey participants identified approximately 50 separate park/playground/open space areas in Cambridge where they had experienced a problem accessing a public toilet.
- The Cambridge Common (30% of analyzed responses) and “along the Charles River” (24% of analyzed responses) were the most frequently cited locations. The remaining entries in the Top 15 list generated 1% to 4% of the analyzed responses.
- The Top 15 list correlates with findings from 2008 Cambridge Open Space Study on public open spaces visited most frequently by Cambridge residents.

9. Have you experienced a problem accessing a public toilet in the City's commercial squares?

(Answered: 556 people)



Source: Public Toilet Survey: Cambridge Residents, Workers, and Visitors, October 2013

| Answer Choices | Responses | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Harvard Square | 419 | 75.36% |
| Central Square | 243 | 43.71% |
| Porter Square | 186 | 33.45% |
| Kendall Square | 135 | 24.28% |
| Inman Square | 116 | 20.86% |
| I have NOT experienced a problem | 73 | 13.13% |
| Other (please specify) | 43 | 7.73% |
| Total Respondents: 556 | | |

About the Data:

- Survey question: *Have you experienced a problem accessing a public toilet in the City's commercial squares?*
- 556 survey participants provided 1,215 responses to this multiple choice question.