

DATE: June 6, 2023

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Preliminary Findings from Extended Student Demographic Survey

ORIGINATORS: Kent Pharis, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Co Chair Anti-racism and Equity Steering Committee
Nancy Petersen, Managing Director Strategic Division Supports, Co Chair Anti-racism and Equity Steering Committee

RESOURCE STAFF: Anti-racism and Equity Steering Committee, Erin Faught, Veronica Jubinville, Terry Korte, Willa Kung-Sutton, Bob Morter, Chris Neeve, Carrie Rosa, Mangal Singh, Jon Yin

ISSUE

In the fall of 2022 the Division invited students in Grades 4 to 12 to participate in an extended student demographic survey. This report is sharing initial results from the survey.

BACKGROUND

September 22, 2020, the Board of Trustees [passed a motion](#) formally requesting that Edmonton Public Schools administration develop a model for the collection of data to better understand the self-described identities of students in the Division. As a first step to support this initiative, the Superintendent established an advisory committee made up of members of the community who provided feedback related to how best to proceed with the collection of this data. The feedback from this group, along with input from staff and students provided insight related to steps required to collect this information from students. This work was also identified as a key action in the first year of the Division's [Anti-racism and Equity Action Plan](#).

In September 2021, a working group was established to explore and develop a model that would support the collection of extended student demographic information. This group was made up of staff from across various central decision units, including expertise from diversity education, First Nations, Métis and Inuit education, technology, student information, communications and research.

The planning and development process was also supported by ongoing consultation with staff, students and community organizations, examination of research and learning from other Canadian jurisdictions that have been collecting additional student demographic data for a number of years. The working group examined a broad range of factors critical to the initiative, such as:

- What questions around identity should be asked and why will this information be important?
- Should the data be anonymous or linked to student identity?
- How will this additional data inform action that will result in greater success for students?

- What are the Division's legal responsibilities around the collection and protection of this data (FOIP)?
- How should the data be gathered?
- What supports will schools need to implement the initiative?
- What engagement and communication with stakeholders will be critical to the success of this work?

The result of this work was the implementation of the Student Demographic Data (SDD) Survey in the fall of 2022. The survey included the following questions:

- Do you identify as First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit?
- Which of the following best describes you? (Students select from a list of eight descriptors of race and an other text box)
- What ethnic or cultural origin(s) do you see yourself as?
- What is your religion and/or spiritual affiliation?
- Please describe your gender identity.
- Please describe your sexual orientation. (This question was asked of Grades 7 to 12 students only)

These questions were asked of students through an online survey. To respect individual student and family comfort with sharing additional identity information with the Division, parents were able to request that their child not participate in the orientation session or the SDD Survey. Parents were able to indicate their preference to the school through an email, phone call or conversation with school staff.

Additionally, all questions for students were voluntary, which meant participating students only answered the questions they felt comfortable answering. For each question, students were also able to choose to not answer the question at all or select a response of 'I prefer not to answer.'

Communication was recognized as a critical factor to the success of this initiative. With this in mind, a key component of the model supporting the collection of SDD included developing materials to support communication with principals, staff, families and students. A range of resources was developed, in consultation with both internal and external stakeholders. Examples of these materials included:

- A video to introduce the student survey and provide key information.
- Materials for principals to work with their staff in preparation of the survey.
- Materials for principals to support further conversations with families prior to the survey being implemented with students.
- Materials for teachers to use with their students to support a pre-survey orientation and materials to support the actual implementation of the survey.
- To support clarity and understanding, student glossaries were developed to help students with language and terminology used in the survey.

To support communicating with as many individuals as possible, key materials were translated into the 15 most common languages represented within the student population. Information regarding the survey was available on SchoolZone, epsb.ca and Connect (internal staff website); additionally, the Superintendent sent a letter out to all families and Division social media accounts were used to reach out to staff, students and families.

CURRENT SITUATION

The SDD survey was implemented in a six week period during November and December of 2022. During this time approximately 55,850 students participated in the survey. After the survey closed a small group of Division staff began the work to prepare for the reporting of preliminary results. This work included

looking at reports from other school divisions that have asked similar questions of students and engaging with the Equity Advisory Committee and the Anti-racism and Equity Principal and Steering Committees to determine how best to visually present the results.

This initial report provides the representation of the identity of Division students based on their own voices and what they have been comfortable and willing to share with the Division through the survey instrument.

The data from the survey tells us more about how students identify and provides us with a better understanding of the diversity of students from across our 213 schools. This report is a first step to celebrate the diversity of students served by the Division and thank students for their willingness to participate in the survey.

Over the coming months and years the Division will examine the data from the SDD survey along with other information about students to better understand which students are facing challenges and where the Division needs to take action that will reduce barriers and improve the school experience so that all students can be proud of who they are, experience success and feel welcome at school.

KEY POINTS

- In the fall of 2022 the Division conducted a survey for students in Grades 4 to 12 to gain more information about student identity.
- Approximately 55,850 students participated in the survey.
- This report shares initial results from the survey; over the coming months and years the Division will further analyze the data from the survey to help inform actions that will remove barriers and improve the school experience so that all students can be proud of who they are, experience success and feel welcome at school.
- This initiative was identified as a key action in year one of the Division's Anti-racism and Equity Action Plan.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Who we are: Student Demographic Survey Report 2022-23

Who we are

Student Demographic Survey Report 2022–23

Background

In fall 2022, Edmonton Public Schools conducted a Student Demographic Survey for the first time. We wanted to learn more about the diversity of the students we serve. This information will be used to inform actions that can lead to more students experiencing success. To help us learn more, we reached out to students in Grades 4-12 and invited them to share information about themselves, including their:

- Indigenous identity
- racial identity
- ethnicity
- religion or spiritual affiliation
- gender identity
- sexual orientation (*Grades 7–12 only*)

The Student Demographic Survey is one step on our path to address racism and take action towards reconciliation and equity. The Board of Trustees and Division are committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment for all students. In recent years we have acknowledged racism exists in Edmonton Public Schools and have laid the foundation to becoming an anti-racist organization. This work has been informed by the voices of students, staff, families and members of the community and has included the following actions:



“The Board of Trustees believes the steps we are taking to address racism and support reconciliation in schools are critically important. What we learn from the survey will lead to change that we hope will help all students feel safe and welcome at school.”

— Trisha Estabrooks, *Board Chair*



Thank you students

Edmonton Public Schools is grateful to students in Grades 4 to 12—without you, this survey wouldn't have been possible. All students deserve to be proud of who they are and feel a sense of welcome and belonging at school.



While talking to students about the survey, we asked them what their hopes for this project were.

Students hope that...

Student engagement

As the Division prepared for the survey, we talked with students to understand how they felt about participating. Students told us they were enthusiastic about sharing more information about who they are. They also told us it was important that this information lead to actions that will address inequity and help all students experience success.

Administering the Student Demographic Survey

The survey was open for students to complete between November 1 and December 16, 2022. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Parents who did not want their child to participate were able to opt their child out.

Survey questions were designed to be age appropriate for students in [Grades 4–6](#) and [Grades 7–12](#). When answering each question, students were able to choose from a list of options provided and were also given the opportunity to provide a written response.

Students who participated in the survey responded only to the questions they felt comfortable answering. For each question, students also had the option to choose “I prefer not to answer” or to skip the question altogether.

Student participation rates

In total, 55,844 students participated in the survey out of a possible 76,438 students. This is a 73 per cent response rate.

Grades	Students enrolled*	Students responded	Response rate (%)
4–6	24,724	19,757	80
7–12	51,714	36,087	70
Total	76,438	55,844	73

*Grades 4–12 students enrolled in Edmonton Public Schools as of September 29, 2022.

Everyone can feel proud of who they are.

Everyone feels safe and can truly be themselves.

This will help students feel more comfortable and welcome at school.



1. Do you identify as First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit?

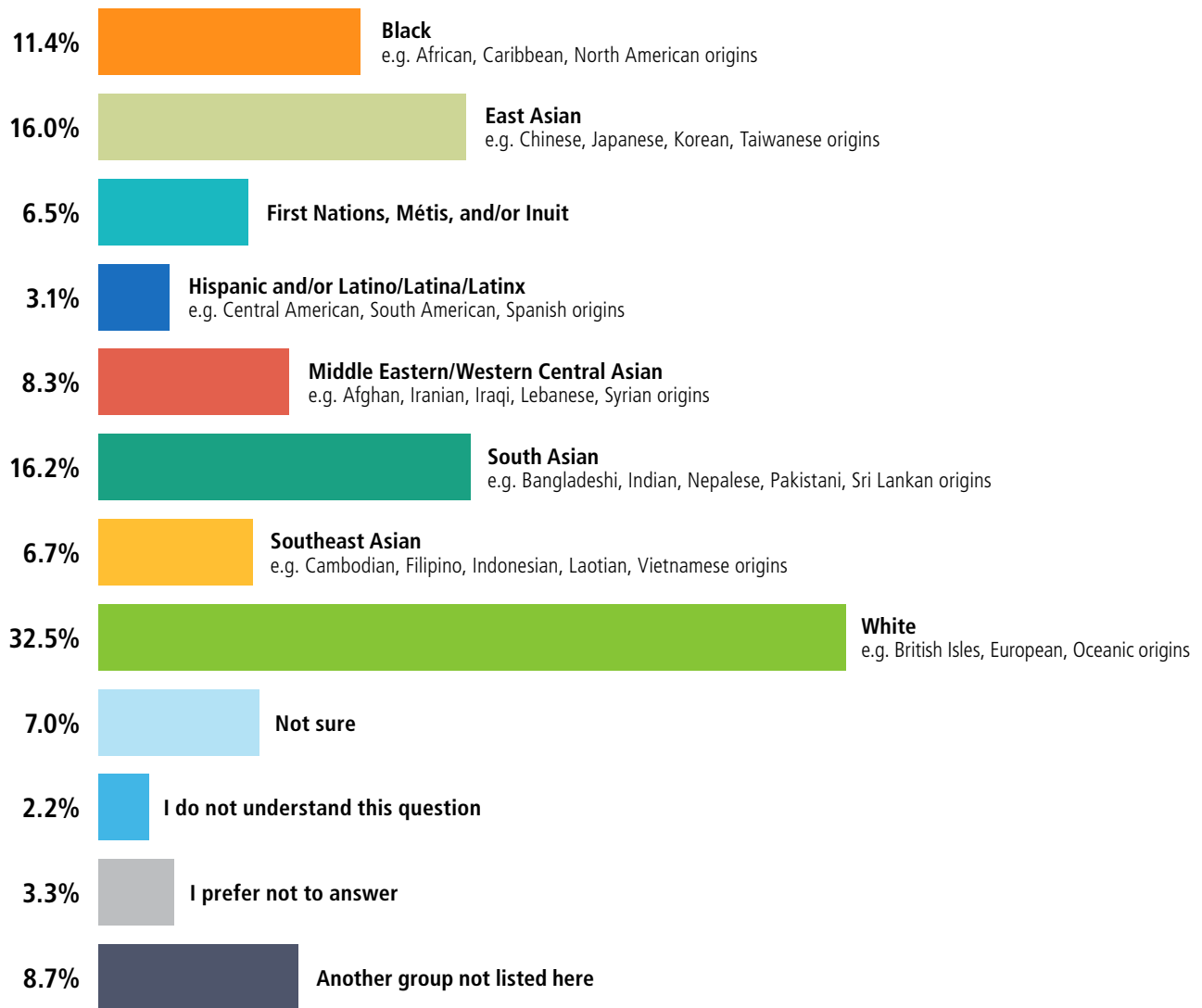
Grades 4–6 survey and Grades 7–12 survey combined (55,193 responses)



The sum of responses may exceed 100% because a student could choose more than one option for this question.

2. Which of the following best describes you?

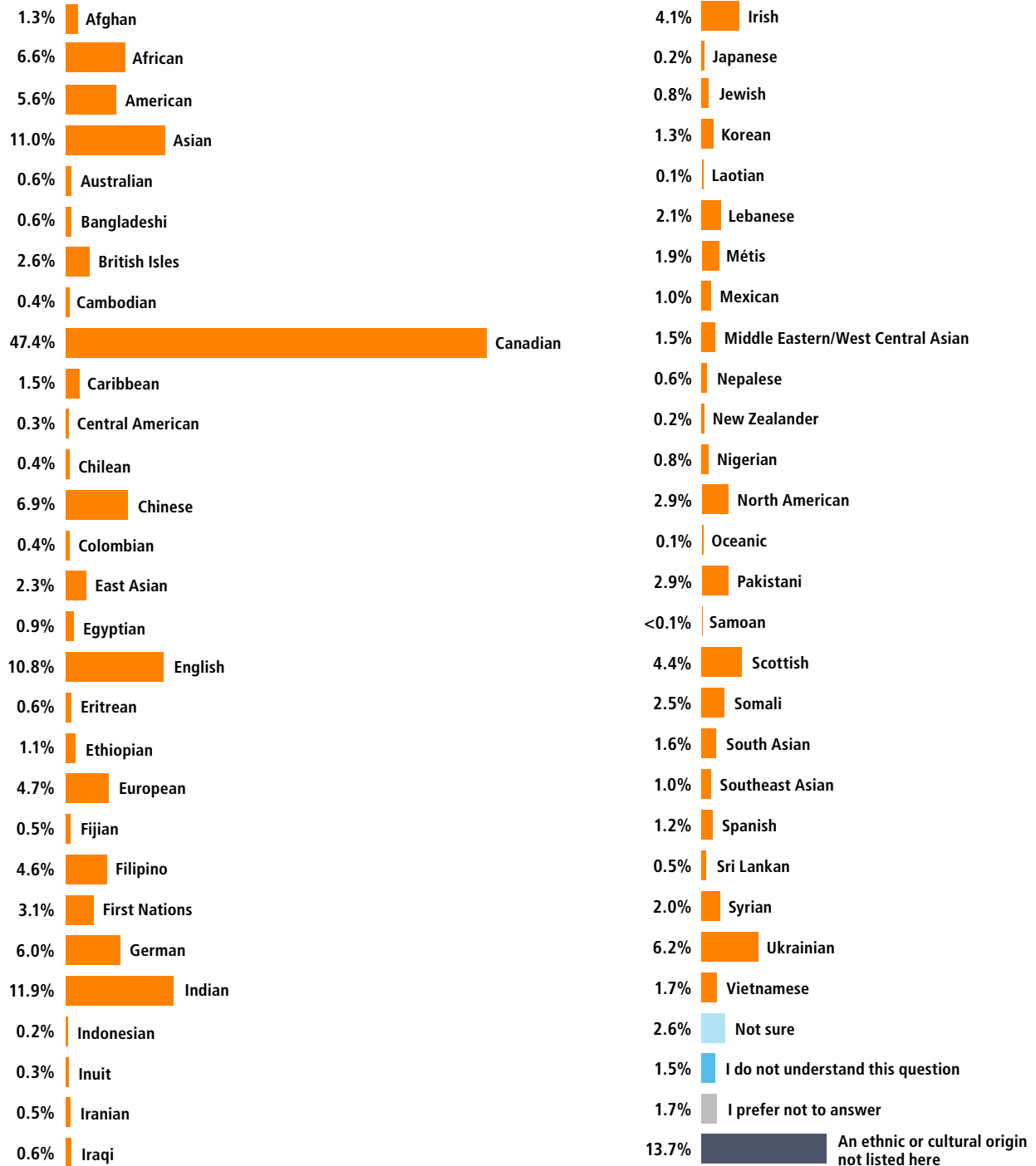
Grades 4–6 survey and Grades 7–12 survey combined (55,313 responses)



The sum of responses may exceed 100% because a student could choose more than one option for this question.

3. What ethnic or cultural origin(s) do you see yourself as?

Grades 4–6 survey and Grades 7–12 survey combined (55,361 responses)

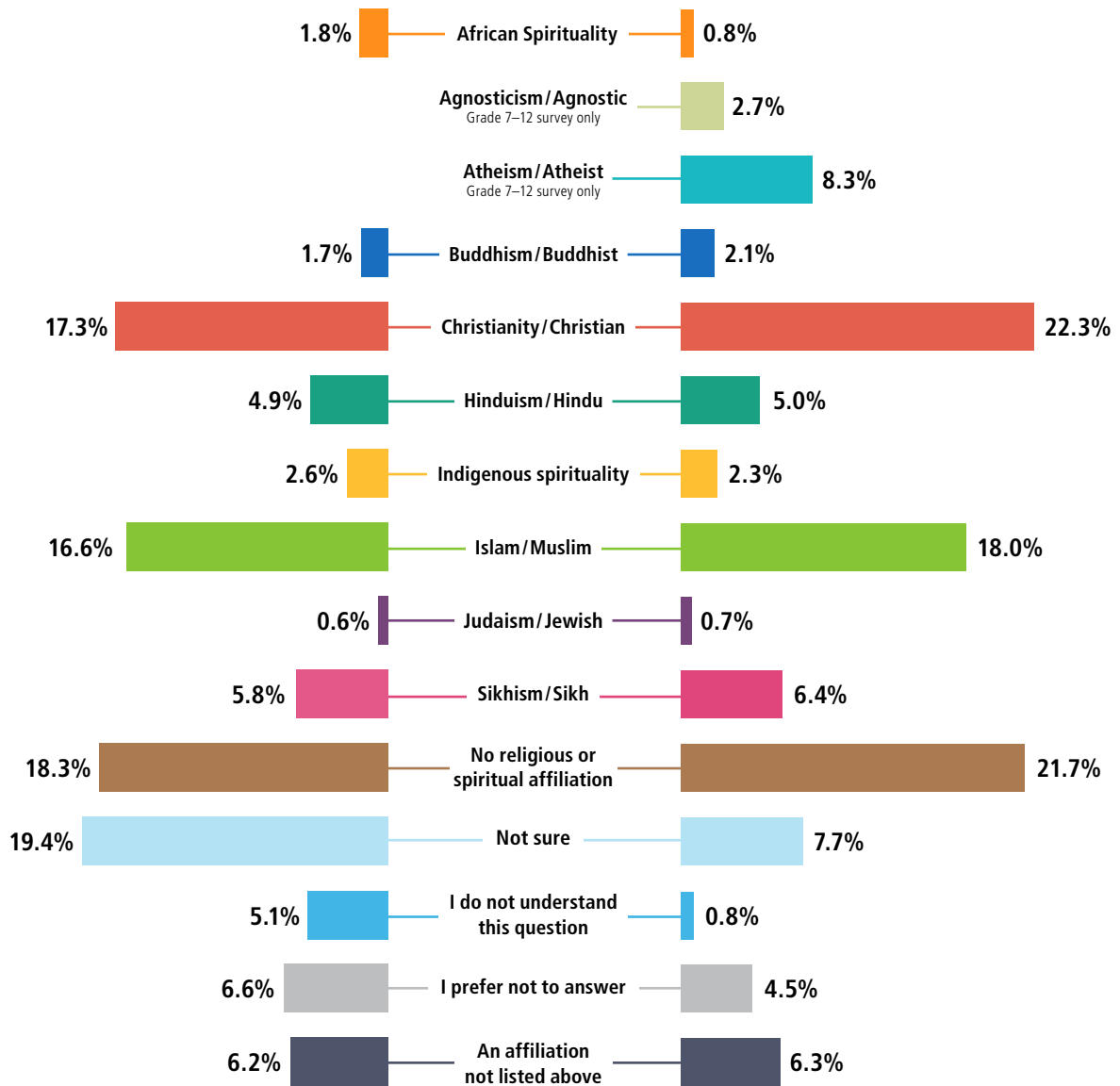


The sum of responses may exceed 100% because a student could choose more than one option for this question.

4. What is your religion and/or spiritual affiliation?

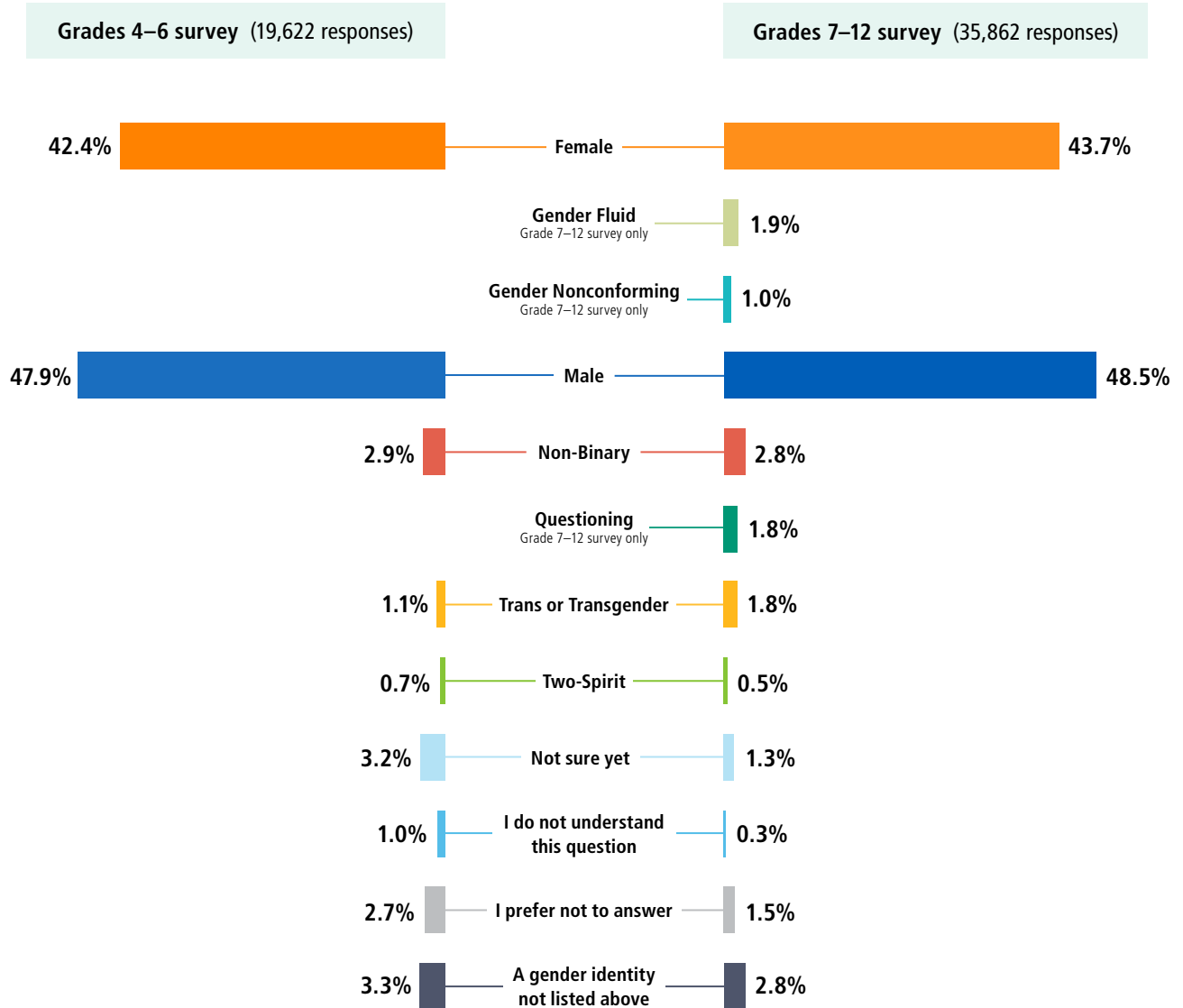
Grades 4–6 survey (19,342 responses)

Grades 7–12 survey (35,426 responses)



The sum of responses may exceed 100% because a student could choose more than one option for this question.

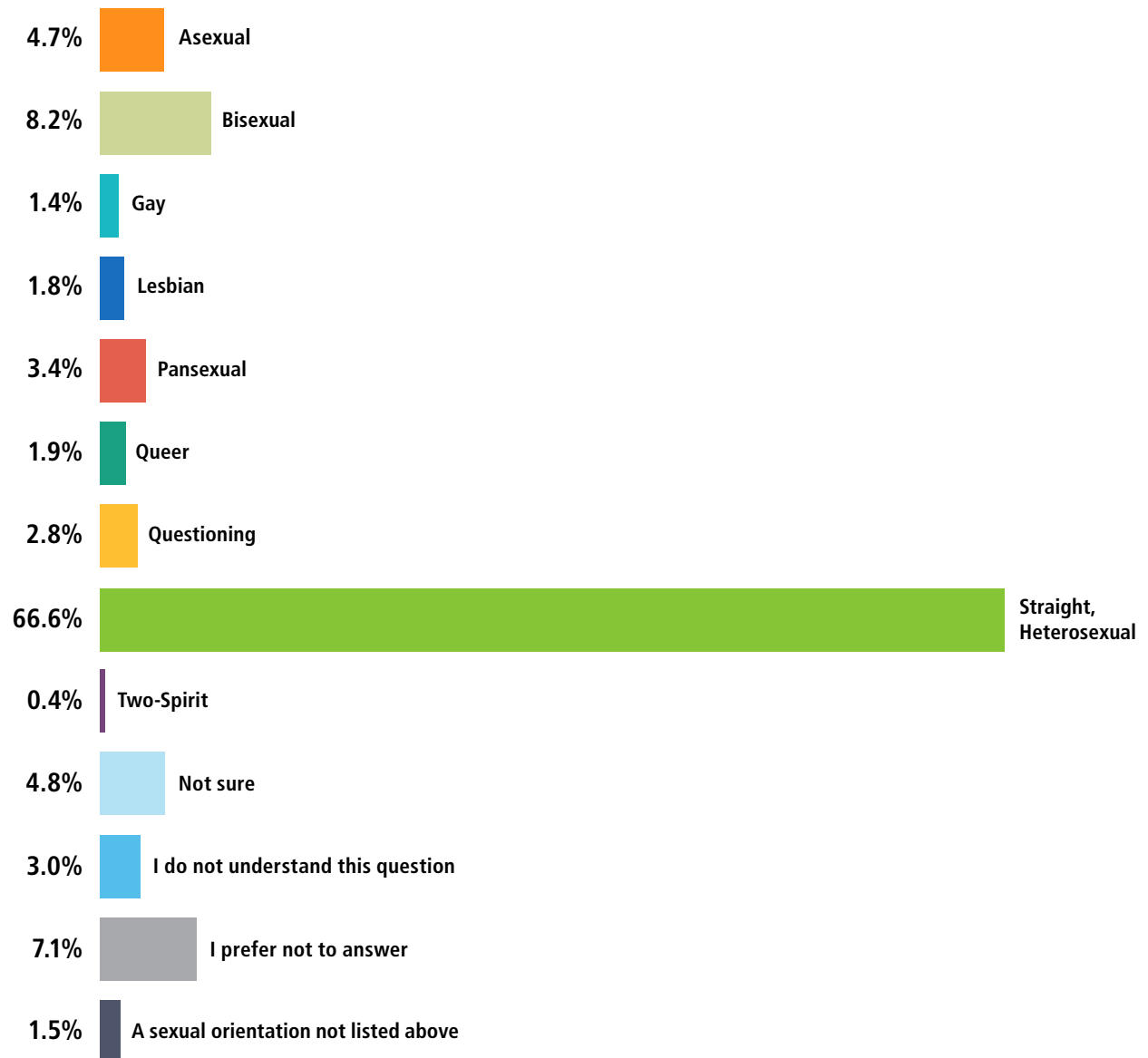
5. Please describe your gender identity.



The sum of responses may exceed 100% because a student could choose more than one option for this question.

6. Please describe your sexual orientation.

Grades 7–12 survey (34,977 responses)



The sum of responses may exceed 100% because a student could choose more than one option for this question.

“Education serves as the cornerstone of society and Edmonton Public Schools strives to be an organization where every student feels that they belong, are included and can succeed.”

— Darrel Robertson, *Superintendent of Schools*



Moving forward

We are proud that students across our schools come from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, communities and experiences.

The findings of the Student Demographic Survey are just the beginning. We will analyze the findings with other student information we have related to academic achievement, safety and a sense of belonging. Together, this information will help us answer questions about how students experience school and where the Division can take action to improve their experience.

As we move forward, we are committed to working with students to gain further perspectives and insights. Once the Division has a better understanding of how students experience racism and inequity at school, we can take next steps to reduce barriers. Our goal is to improve the school experience so that all students can be proud of who they are and feel welcome at school.

References

- [Board of Trustees statement on anti-racism and inclusion](#)
- [Board of Trustees motion to collect extended student demographic data](#)
- [Equity Advisory Committee](#)
- [Anti-racism and Equity policy](#)
- [Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan](#)
- [Division Strategic Plan 2022–26](#)
- [Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan – Year One Update](#)



Families are encouraged to visit the [Student Demographic Survey page](#) on the Division’s website for more information and to watch a short video from Superintendent Darrel Robertson and Board Chair Trisha Estabrooks.