



Our Climate, Our Future  
2020 Online Survey Results

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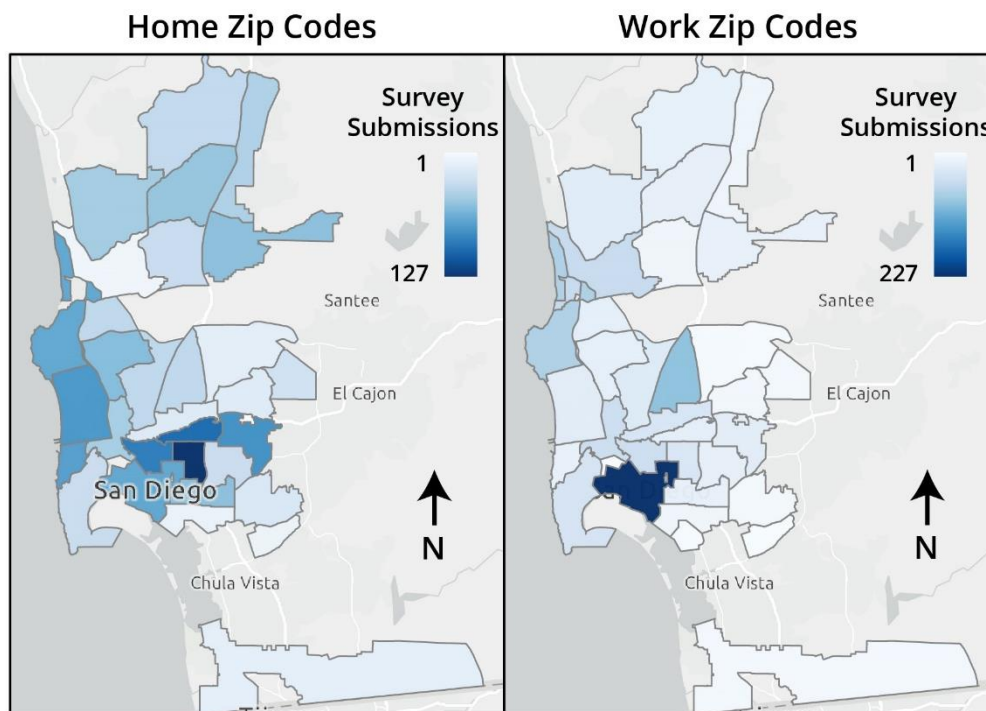
# Introduction

The City of San Diego considers community member participation in the planning process crucial to the Climate Action Plan update. A series of public community forums and an online survey made up a large part of the City’s outreach effort. The online survey, available from April through November 2020, asked San Diegans how they prioritized various environmental actions, and what barriers they faced in implementing those actions in their own lives. Over 1,700 people responded to the survey; results are described below. Continued engagement, with a focus on reaching residents in Communities of Concern, is planned for early 2021.

## Participant demographics

The City was interested in feedback from all stakeholders, which included not only people who call San Diego their home but also those who work there. Respondents were asked to provide their home and work zip codes; the distribution of survey submissions in zip codes contained in the City of San Diego are displayed in Figure 1.

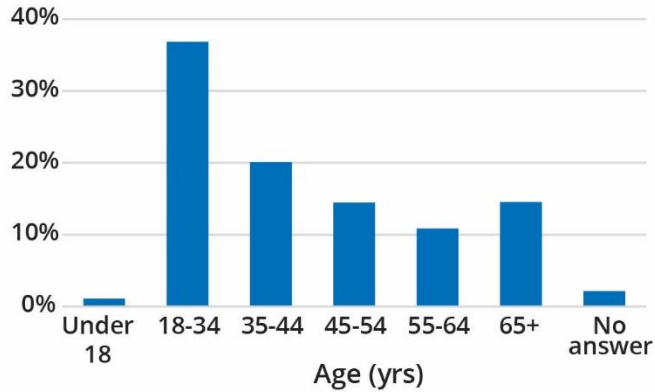
**Figure 1. Number of survey submissions associated with City of San Diego zip codes. The left panel shows distribution of participants’ home zip codes (1,663 responses displayed); the right panel shows distribution of participants’ work zip codes (1,320 responses displayed)**



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

More than half of the survey participants were below 45 years of age (see Fig. 2); the mean age of survey respondents was 42.3 yrs. Of participants that chose to disclose their race or ethnicity, the majority selected White (see Table 1). Although participants could select as many answers as desired, only 8% of respondents selected two or more categories, whereas 92% of respondents selected a single race/ethnicity.

**Figure 2. Participant Age** (percentages based on 1,714 participants)

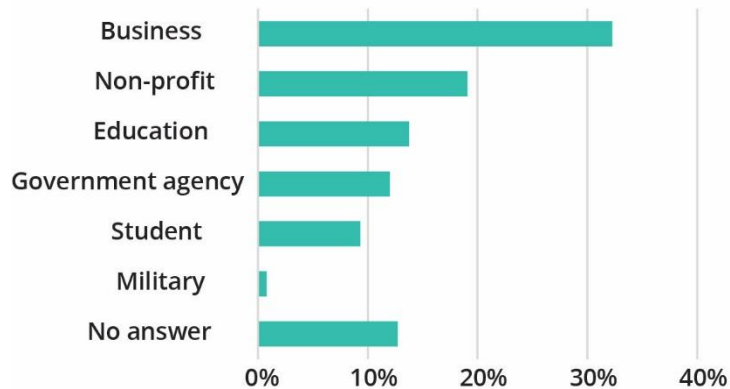


**TABLE 1: PARTICIPANT RACE/ETHNICITY**  
(OUT OF 1,857 RESPONSES)

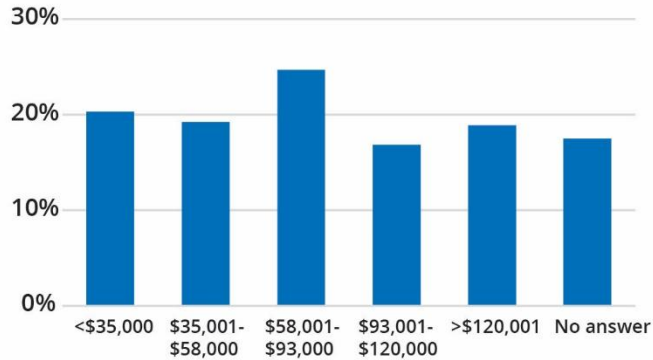
RACE/ETHNICITY	COUNT
American Indian or Alaskan native	22
Asian or Asian Indian	158
Black or African American	33
Hispanic	207
Middle Eastern or North African	20
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	13
White	1207
Other	11
No answer	185

Most respondents were employed in the private sector (see Fig. 3). Retired or unemployed participants were possibly included in the “No answer” category (13% of the total). Participants were approximately evenly distributed across annual income levels, with slightly larger representation in the \$58K-93K range (see Fig. 4).

**Figure 3. Participant Vocation** (percentages based on 1,714 participants)



**Figure 4. Participant Annual Income** (percentages based on 1,714 participants)

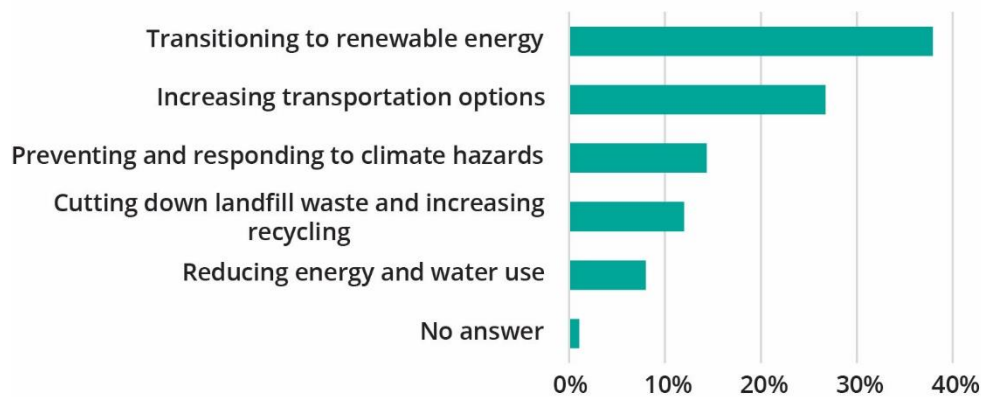


While the City is pleased with the number of participants in the online survey, it is clear from the geographic distribution of submissions as well as the responses to the race/ethnicity question that we did not engage a fully representative cross-section of the San Diego population. The relatively flat distribution of annual income (Fig. 4, above) implies that the professional class is overrepresented in this survey. These limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the responses described below, and underscore the importance of ongoing engagement efforts, such as the public forums and targeted outreach to residents in San Diego’s Communities of Concern.

### Participant feedback on CAP strategies

The OCOF survey asked respondents how they prioritized the strategies set forth in the City’s 2015 Climate Action Plan. Subsequent questions probed respondent support for specific actions within the Energy and Water Efficiency, Clean and Renewable Energy, Mobility, and Zero Waste strategies. Participants were asked both what actions they thought the City should prioritize, and what actions they themselves would be willing to take in service of CAP goals. Overall, respondents selected Clean and Renewable Energy as the most important strategy (38% selected), whereas Energy and Water Efficiency was the least popular strategy (8% selected, see Fig. 5). Additional participant feedback on each separate CAP strategy is presented below.

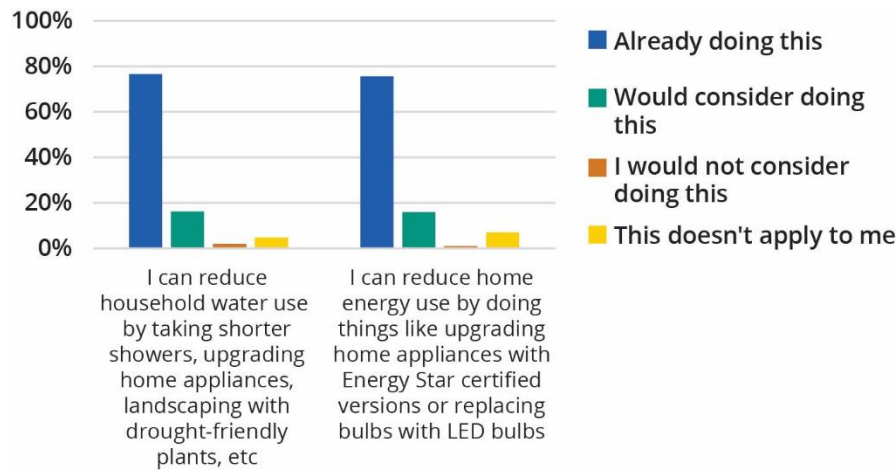
**Figure 5. What Climate Action measure is the most important to you?** (percentages based on 1,714 participants)



### Strategy 1: Energy and Water Efficiency

The fewest number of participants (8%) thought that Energy and Water Efficiency was the most important of the City’s strategies (see Fig.5, above). When asked whether they would be willing to reduce their own home energy and water use, over three quarters of participants indicated that they have already taken action to do so (see Figure 6). This is consistent with respondents rating residential buildings as those with the least opportunity to reduce energy use (see Table 2, below).

**Figure 6. What actions would you take to increase energy and water efficiency?** (percentages based on 1,714 participants)

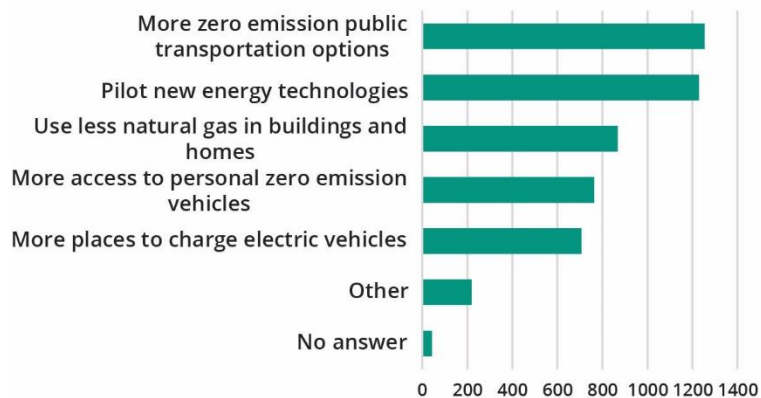


<b>TABLE 2: WHERE DO YOU SEE THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE ENERGY USE?</b>	
<b>(PERCENTAGES BASED ON 1,762 RESPONSES)</b>	
<b>BUILDING TYPE</b>	<b>RESPONSE %</b>
Public buildings and spaces	46
Commercial/Industrial/Educational	33
Residential	14
Other	3
No answer	4

## Strategy 2: Clean and Renewable Energy

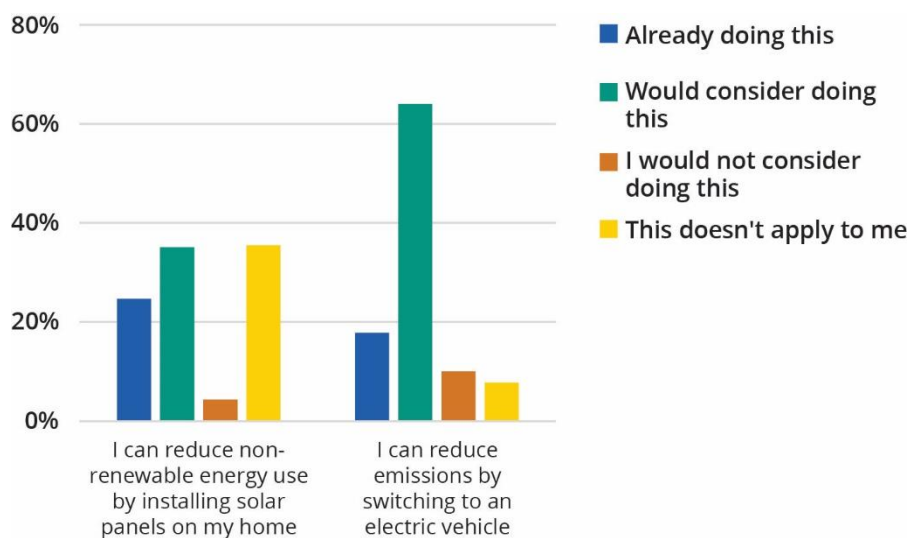
Participants could choose multiple options from a list of potential actions the City could take in support of the Clean and Renewable Energy strategy. The most popular actions centered around public transportation and piloting new energy technologies (see Fig. 7). Respondents also showed an interest in increasing solar power installations through regulation, financial incentives, or subsidies (36 write-in responses), and wanted to ensure that renewable energy infrastructure was provided to our communities of concern (18 write-in responses).

**Figure 7. The City is on track to provide 100% renewable electricity to residents and businesses. What other energy-saving opportunities should be prioritized by the City? (5,082 responses provided)**



Thirty-five percent of participants indicated that they would consider installing solar panels on their own home, although an equal percentage reported that this action was not open to them. A far greater percentage of participants (64%) said that they would consider switching to an electric vehicle (Fig. 8).

**Figure 8. What actions would you take in support of clean and renewable energy? (percentages based on 1,714 participants)**

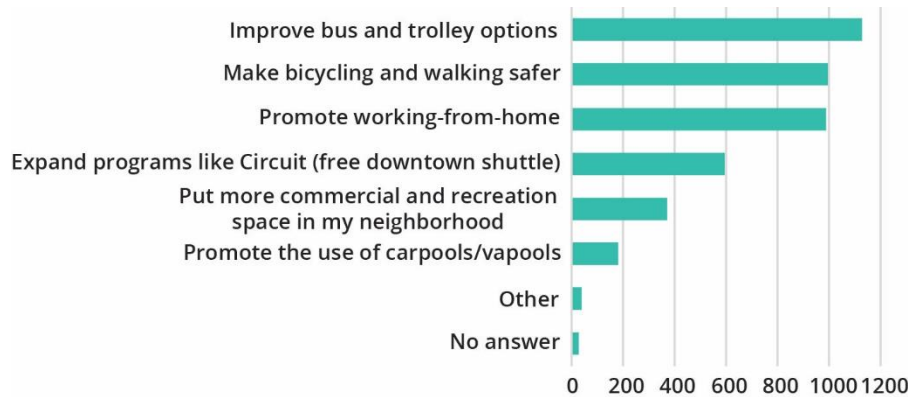




### Strategy 3: Mobility

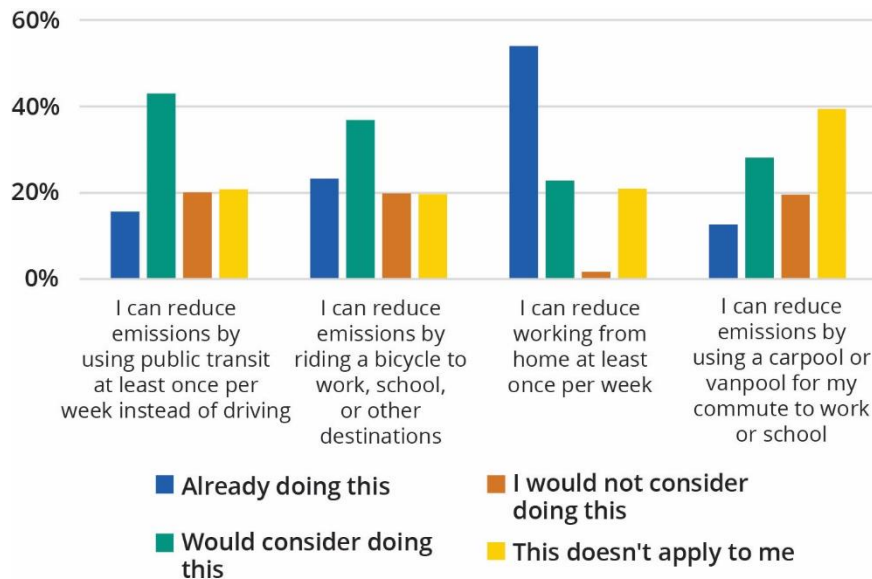
The Mobility strategy was ranked second most important by respondents (27%, see Fig. 5 above). Expanded public transportation, biking/walking, and telecommuting received broad, roughly equivalent support, but carpool/vanpool options were unpopular (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9. How could the City make it easier for you to get around without your car?** (4,323 responses provided)



These preferences were mirrored in actions participants were willing to take themselves (see Fig. 10). Respondents were willing to consider weekly public transit and increased bicycle use, and many respondents said that they are already telecommuting at least part of the week. However, respondents were less willing overall to consider carpools/vanpools an option.

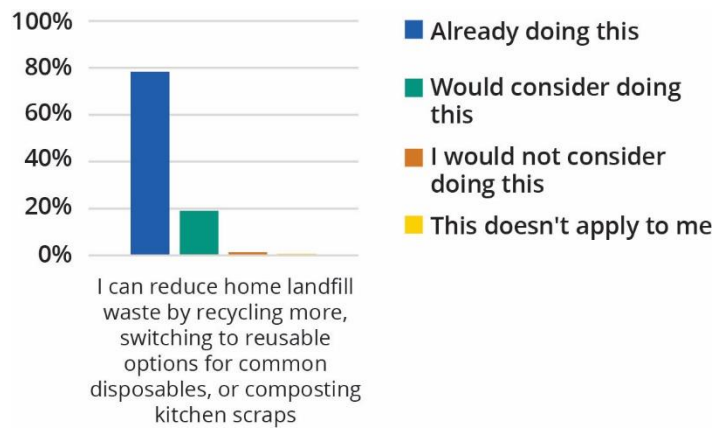
**Figure 10. What actions would you take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions created by driving alone?** (percentages based on 1,714 participants)



### Strategy 4: Zero Waste

The Zero Waste strategy was ranked fourth most important by respondents. As with the Clean and Renewable Energy strategy, respondents overwhelmingly report that they are already taking action to reduce landfill waste, so may not perceive opportunity for further improvement there (see Fig. 11).

**Figure 11. What actions would you take to reduce landfill waste?** (percentage based on 1,714 participants)



### Strategy 5: Resiliency

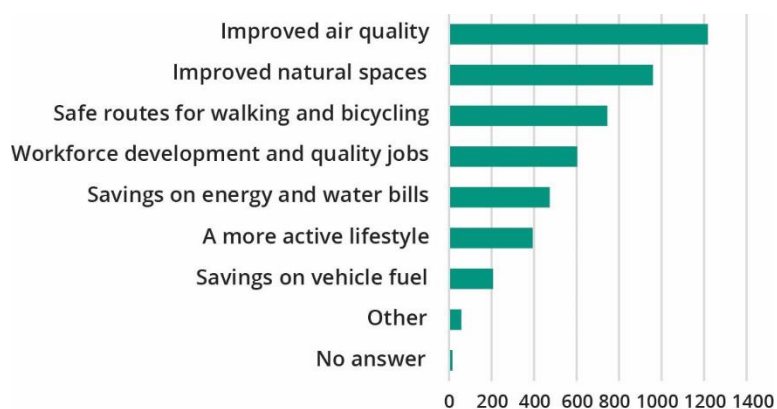
Resiliency was ranked the third most important strategy by respondents. While there were no questions specifically addressing this strategy in the OCOF survey, when provided the opportunity to suggest additional actions to the City, respondents cited resiliency as a concern and requested actions targeting San Diego’s tree canopy, wetland and native habitat restoration, and carbon sequestration (see “Additional strategies” below).

### Perceived benefits and additional actions

Participants could choose multiple options from a list of perceived benefits of climate change action. Improved air quality was chosen by over 70% of respondents, and over half chose improved natural spaces. The third most popular choice, safe routes for walking and biking was cited by more than 40% of respondents (see Fig. 12).

The survey provided space for participants to write in suggestions for strategies or actions they thought the City should pursue, and more than three quarters of participants did so. Many of these comments reiterated or reemphasized measures described elsewhere in the survey and highlighted that participants’ priorities were consistent throughout the survey. Suggestions were roughly separable into the same CAP strategies described above, and here again, the largest number of write-in comments centered around mobility (29% of comments) and clean and renewable energy (17%). Suggested actions with the most support within each strategy are shown in Table 3.

**Figure 12. Which benefits of climate action are the most important to you?** (4677 answers provided)



<b>TABLE 3: ARE THERE OTHER STRATEGIES OR IDEAS YOU HAVE TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO?</b>		
(PERCENTAGES BASED ON THE 1,220 PARTICIPANTS THAT PROVIDED AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION)		
<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSE %</b>
<b>Mobility</b>	Expand and improve public transit	15
	Improve bike network and infrastructure	9
	Street reform	7
	Housing policies	6
	Increase number of EVs in use	5
<b>Clean and Renewable Energy</b>	Increase amount of renewable energy	9
	Increase EV infrastructure and use	5
	Use taxes/incentives to modify behavior	3
	Focus on residential buildings	2
	Reduce use of natural gas	2
<b>Energy and Water Efficiency</b>	Solar	5
	Focus on commercial buildings	3
	Focus on residential buildings	3
	Energy efficient upgrades and retrofitting	2
<b>Zero/low waste</b>	Increase composting/provide curbside composting	7
	Increase recycling	2
	Reduce plastic waste	2
<b>Resilience</b>	Expand the tree canopy	5
	Carbon sequestration/natural habitats	3
	Expand green spaces and green infrastructure	3
	Sustainable food systems	2

## Awareness of (and support for) the CAP

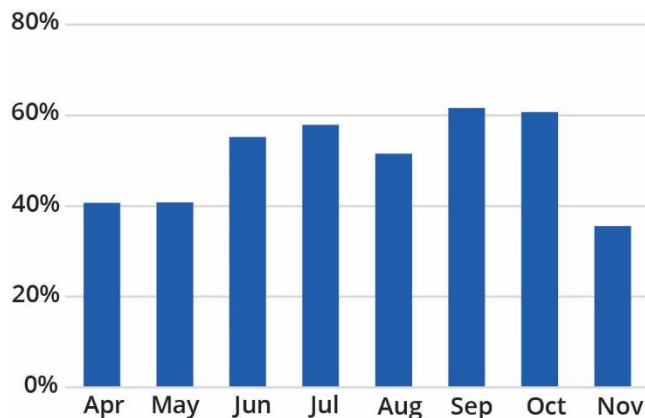
Most survey participants (75%) reported that they were previously aware of the Climate Action Plan. When asked how participants saw themselves involved in the future of the CAP, a total of 93% replied that they wanted to be involved either through action or advocacy (see Table 4). While some participants disagreed with the entire premise of the Climate Action Plan, or opposed specific actions within it, negative feedback comprised only 1-2% of survey responses.

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>RESPONSE %</b>
I want to work more closely with the city on achieving its goals	39
I want to take action on my own	27
I want to help spread the word about actions my friends and neighbors can take	27
I have no role	6
No answer	1

## The impact of the COVID-19 health crisis on participant answers

Overall, respondents were evenly split when asked whether the COVID-19 health care crisis had influenced their answers on the survey. When examined over time, the proportion of “yes” responses increased after the first two months of the survey, but fell in November, the final month of the survey (see Fig. 13). Approximately one third of respondents reported that they have been telecommuting either part or full time due to the COVID-19 health crisis.

**Figure 13. Has the current health crisis from COVID-19 had an impact on how you answered these questions?** (percentages based on total number of respondents per month)



## Conclusions and future directions

Participants in the “Our Climate, Our Future” online survey demonstrated that they were interested and invested in the City of San Diego’s Climate Action Plan. Participants overwhelmingly expressed a willingness to take part climate actions either on their own or in partnership with the City and said that improved air quality and natural spaces would be a valuable outcome. The City’s Clean and Renewable Energy and Mobility strategies were favored by respondents, who expressed a particular desire for increased investment in and availability of solar power and fewer cars on the roads. The relative unpopularity of the City’s Energy and Water Efficiency strategy may be because of residents’ perception that they are already conserving energy and water to the best of their ability, and that there is no room for additional savings there.

This survey did not reach a fully representative sample of San Diegans. People in upper income brackets were overrepresented, and there was a relative lack of racial/ethnic diversity. Additionally, there was a relative lack of representation from San Diego’s Communities of Concern. Because the City wants the Climate Action Plan update to reflect the viewpoints, priorities, and needs of all residents, additional strategies are necessary to solicit feedback from those that this mode of communication did not reach. Different outreach efforts are currently underway, and information from those upcoming engagements will be combined with current information in order to provide a more complete picture of our communities’ needs and preferences.