

YURA Survey, 2022: Report to YURA Members

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Development of survey

In the Fall of 2021, the YURA Executive Board decided to conduct a survey of YURA members to learn more about what our members thought about our current activities, and how YURA could better support its members in the future.

The survey was distributed to YURA members through the YURA email listserv at the end of February 2022. When interpreting the results, we should keep in mind that the survey took place while concerns about COVID persisted and some restrictions lingered, which could be described as an “evolving situation.” The responses to the survey offer reactions from a wide variety of the YURA members who were navigating those restrictions and assessing their participation in activities.

The 400 or so YURA members on our email list received several reminders. The final responses were tabulated beginning in early April, with more than a 60% response rate – amazingly high for a survey of this nature. This means that the responses give a relatively accurate picture of the opinions of engaged YURA members who have the skills to do an on-line survey.

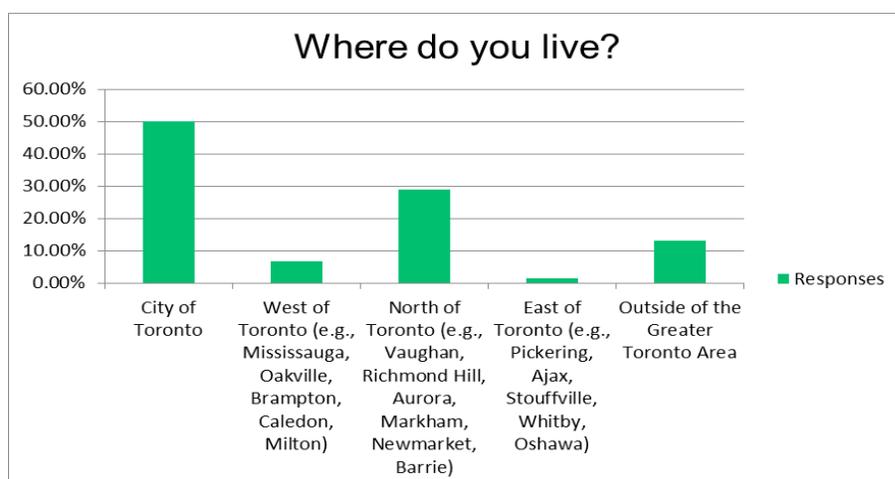
What We Learned From the Survey

YURA Members: Who We Are and Life Experiences

Who we are: We asked our members when they retired. Of respondents, 30% indicated that they retired between 2015 and 2019, 25% between 2010 and 2014, 15% between 2005 and 2009, and 20% earlier than that. Only 8% retired between 2020 and March 2022. This indicates that the majority of our respondents likely retired in the past ten years or so.

Where we live now:

We asked our members where they now reside. Of respondents, 50% indicated that they live in the City of Toronto; nearly 30% live north of Toronto, fewer than 10% per cent west or east of Toronto, and 12% outside of the Greater Toronto Area (including other parts of Canada and other places



in the world). This result provides useful information for planning both in-person events and virtual events.

We asked our members of which employee group they were members prior to retirement. Of respondents, 45% had belonged to YUFA, 30% to YUSA, 20% to CPM, 3% to CUPE 3903, and 5% to another union or on contract. This shows that our membership is fairly well-balanced between retired faculty and retired staff, but we need to ensure outreach to prospective retirees whose employee groups are under-represented in our membership.

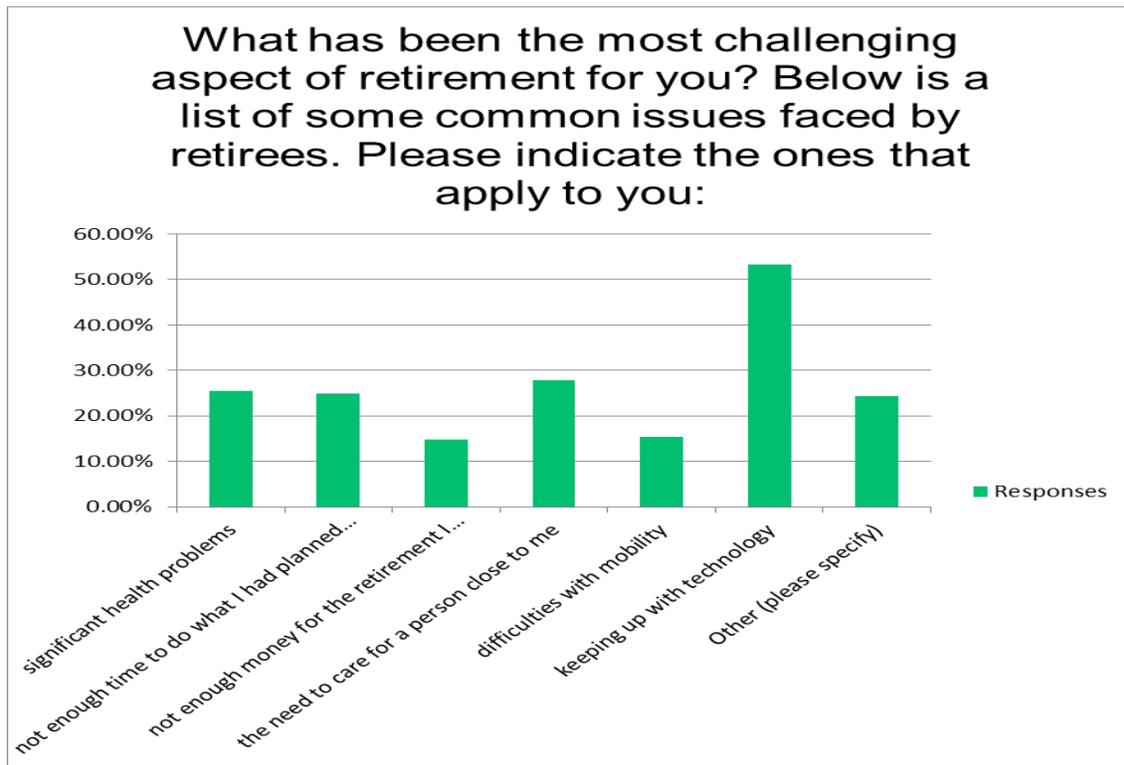
Of respondents, 62% identified as women and 38% as men. None identified as non-binary or “preferred not to self-describe.” This result indicates that perhaps women retirees are more likely to be engaged in YURA than men. It also means that our survey results, summarized below, are slightly more likely to indicate the views of our female members than our male members.

We wanted to find out something about our members’ retirement experiences. Respondents were asked to indicate some positive aspects of retirement. Fully 80% of those surveyed replied to this question. Of those, 80% indicated that they had more time for family, friends and hobbies. A further 75% said they experienced less stress, and 30% said they now had time to downsize. In addition, 50 individual members provided additional examples of the joys of retirement, from being able to write more, to interact with family and friends more, and to get involved in activities they regarded as a new stage of life.

Joys and Challenges During Retirement:



Respondents also listed challenging aspects of retirement. More than 50% indicated that “keeping up with technology” was a challenge. About 25% indicated that the need to care for a person close to them was a challenge, and an equal number listed health problems as a challenge. Another 25% said that even in retirement, they did not have enough time to pursue their interests, and 15% indicated that their retirement income was insufficient.

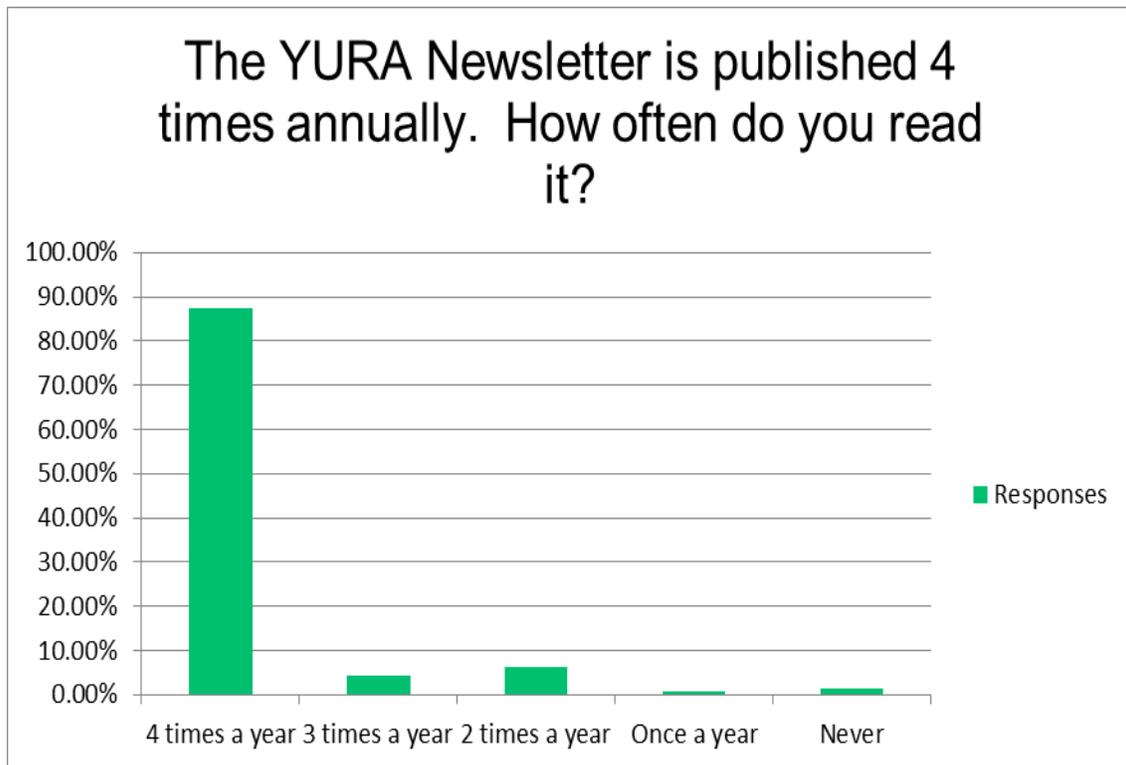


We asked how YURA might be able to help address the challenges faced by our members. Sixteen individual respondents suggested that YURA provide more information about how retirees could better use technology. Eleven individuals suggested providing more information about health and benefits. The YURA executive will consider all suggestions received.

Communications:

Emails: YURA sends emails to its members to keep them informed of YURA activities. Just over half of the respondents recommended that the emails be limited to once a month.

Newsletter and Person-To-Person: We asked how often our members read our newsletter published four times a year. Nearly 90% of respondents said they looked at all the newsletters. Congratulations to our Editor, Anne-Marie Ambert! Thirty-one individual respondents had suggestions that have been passed on to Anne-Marie, and 56 individuals added encouraging comments and endorsed the current format.



Anne-Marie also produces the Person-To-Person Bulletin, with a variety of information and personal reflections. Of our respondents, 80% reported reading the Person-To-Person at least occasionally, and half of these reported reading it regularly. Thirteen individuals made suggestions for improvement; these have been passed along to the editor; most respondents indicated satisfaction with the current format. Nine individuals wanted to know more about Person-to-Person.

Several of our members said they would be willing to contribute to the newsletter or person-to-person, and this information will be passed along to the editor.

The YURA web site: As our society adopts new methods of communication, web sites are becoming standard communication tools. During the past two years, YURA has put considerable effort into improving its web site to provide current information to our members, updating it on a weekly basis. We learned that 20% of our members never check our web site, although 60% do so, on an “as needed” basis. We need to encourage our members to check our excellent web site to stay apprised of YURA activities and for the additional information we provide to our members. Those who do consult the web page occasionally or regularly use it to be informed of YURA events, learn about pension and benefit updates, and membership renewal. Several respondents had suggestions or comments, which we appreciate. A number said they had not been aware of the web site prior to the survey. Here is the link: [York University Retirees' Association | YURA](#) .

Activities:

In-person activities: We asked respondents to rank the importance of YURA's major in-person activities on a scale of 1 (*no importance*) to 5 (*very important*). Fully 90% responded to this question, and the average importance of the activities was as follows: Annual General Meeting 3; Theatre Outings (Statford and Shaw Festivals) – 2.7; Group excursions (eg. to museums) – 2.7, Showcase (featuring “Attic Treasures” items for sale) – 2.2; and Toronto Waterfront Marathon (to raise funds for scholarships) – 2.1. Although all the averages were between 2 (*low importance*) and 3 (*moderate importance*), there were at least 34 individual respondents who rated each category as *quite important* or *very important*, and at least 37 individuals who rated each category as *not important at all*. The results indicate that there is enough support to continue with all of our in-person activities, and enough variety to provide something of interest to all YURA members.

Respondents were also asked whether “in light of continuing COVID uncertainties,” *how comfortable they would feel participating in in-person activities* over the next couple of years. On a five-point scale, the average was 3.2. Of respondents, 45% indicated that they would feel *quite comfortable* or *very comfortable*, while 30% indicated that they would feel *quite uncomfortable* or *very uncomfortable*. These results indicate that YURA can gradually ramp up its in-person activities, while maintaining on-line activities for those preferring to avoid in-person activities or who have difficulty attending in-person activities.

On-line activities: We asked respondents to rank the importance of YURA's on-line activities on a scale of 1 (*no importance*) to 5 (*very important*). Fully 88% of those surveyed responded to this question, and the average importance of the activities was as follows: Educational/Informational Webinars sponsored by YURA – 2.8; On-line university events promoted by YURA (Scholar's Hub, York Circle lectures, College lunch talks, Faculty-sponsored events) – 2.5; On-line events offered by the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada – 2.3; and the YURA Café (coffee hour) – 2.

As was noted with responses to the question about in-person activities, there were significant groups of devotees in each category, as well as significant numbers with no interest. On average, our members signaled that it would be *moderately important* to continue offering on-line activities even after the COVID pandemic is over. For each of the on-line activities listed above, at least 31% of respondents considered the activity in one of the two highest categories of importance.

Twenty-five individual members provided suggestions for future on-line or in-person activities. Some of the suggestions included webinars by our own expert members on current issues, a dinner club, a book club, and monthly get-togethers for walking. All suggestions have been passed on to our executive.

Given that YURA is a volunteer organization, in order to offer additional activities we would need additional volunteers! Eleven respondents offered to volunteer to help in specific ways, and they have been contacted.

What days and times are best for YURA events? We asked what days and times YURA members would be willing to attend YURA events. Nearly 90% responded. Of respondents, 40% indicated that they were available for morning activities, 60% for afternoon activities, and only 25% for evening events. Wednesday was the clear favourite day for morning and evening events, while Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday were equally popular for afternoon events.

There are many “life-long” learning opportunities available to retirees in general, such as the Living and Learning in Retirement series at Glendon College, and Mississauga Life Long Learning. We discovered that only about 30% of respondents participated in such programs regularly or occasionally, and 70% had never participated. However, 96% of respondents wanted YURA to provide more information about life-long learning opportunities. Fifty individual members made concrete suggestions about programs. The YURA web site will continue to provide information to members about opportunities for lifelong learning.

YURA has created several student awards in recent years and has raised about \$30,000 annually to endow these awards. Of respondents, 55% thought that these fund-raising activities were in the two highest categories of importance to YURA’s mission, and the average importance on the five-point scale was 3.6. Given this result, YURA should continue to devote considerable energy into these fund-raising activities.

YURA helps to fund the Access to Postsecondary Program for middle and secondary schools in the Jane-Finch area. Support for this activity was about as high as for the scholarship fundraising, with the average on the five-point scale at 3.1, and 68% of respondents ranked this activity in the two highest categories of importance. It appears clear that YURA members want to continue their support here.

Thirty-one individual respondents suggested “*activities or initiatives*” that “might help members to stay connected to the University and to other retirees. Suggestions included various ways of sharing retirement success stories and providing ways to make it easier for retirees to contact each other.

CURAC:

YURA is a member of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC), a nation-wide organization representing 40 college and university retiree associations, representing both faculty and staff retirees. Survey respondents were asked to indicate which of CURAC’s services of which they were aware. Only 57% of respondents replied, likely meaning that approximately 40% of our members are not aware of CURAC. Of those who responded, half knew of the CURAC Annual Conference (which any of our members can attend), nearly half were aware of travel planning and access to special tours, two-fifths were aware of extended health care benefits, and a third were aware of home, auto and trip cancellation insurance. More than half our members (whether or not they knew about CURAC) recommended that

YURA provide more information about CURAC. (Note that the YURA web page provides information about CURAC and its services.)

York Retirees' Observations:

Half our members recorded that they had visited York University's Pension and Benefits website during the past six months. Members were asked to indicate what kind of information they were looking for, and 91 individuals provided details. Most indicated that they were looking for information about the current state of pensions or benefits, and a few indicated that they sought information about health coverage. Only 15% indicated that they had encountered challenges while retrieving the information that they were seeking, and the YURA executive is now aware of the issues they mentioned.

One of YURA's challenges is to ensure that members of the York University community receive information about YURA and how to join when they are considering retiring. What we learned from the survey is that only 35% of respondents remembered being provided with information about YURA when they met with a Pension and Benefits advisor to discuss retirement. Clearly, more needs to be done to ensure that imminent retirees receive information about YURA and how to join.

With regard to the 6 to 12 complimentary parking passes at York University that can accompany a YURA membership if requested, more than 80% of respondents remembered requesting the parking passes when they paid their membership fees. While 15% of respondents admitted that they generally had not used their passes, the majority indicated that they had used their passes between one and twelve times. Clearly, complimentary parking passes are an important benefit of YURA membership, and they facilitate the connection of retired faculty and staff to the York community. Some respondents indicated that they were having trouble using the parking app on their mobile phone. Instructions are on the YURA web page under "frequently asked questions."

Additional Comments:

Toward the end, we asked for additional comments. Twenty-three individual respondents expressed appreciation to YURA, and nine made suggestions which have been passed on to our executive.

We have tried to contact everyone who left us their contact information to connect them with YURA personnel. However, some of the contact information was incomplete, so if you haven't heard from us, please contact Ian Greene at iangreene0766@rogers.com and he will make the appropriate connections.

What Have We Learned?

As a result of the survey, the YURA executive has created a Planning Group that will look carefully at the survey results to identify areas for priority attention and future

initiatives, to evaluate suggestions in the light of YURA's mission and to make some recommendations for the "mosaic of services" that is the hallmark of organizations such as YURA.

Thank You

We would like to thank YURA members for their overwhelming participation in our first ever survey of members. The YURA executive has learned a great deal that will help us to continue to enhance YURA's service to its members.