

EXPLORATORY STUDY

Clothing Repair Access *in Canada*

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How Canadians think about clothing repair, what gets in their way,
and what it would take to build a system that makes repair the obvious choice.

Theertha Bakam · Founder, RenWeSort

Survey period: May 13, 2026 to May 30, 2026 · Published: June 23, 2026

renwesort@gmail.com · www.renwesort.com

What if fixing your clothes was *as easy as buying new ones?*

Clothes do not end up in donation bins and landfills because people have stopped caring. They end up there because the easier option is always to throw them away and buy something new. A broken zip. A torn seam. A loose button. None of these are reasons to give up on a piece of clothing. But without an accessible, affordable, simple way to get something fixed, disposal often becomes the more practical choice.

Repair professionals exist in every city across Canada. They are skilled, experienced, and ready to work. Yet, people who genuinely want to repair their clothes often do not know where to go. This points to an access gap, and this survey was designed as an early step in understanding it.

Key findings at a glance.

65.5%

Said barriers are
actively stopping them
from repairing

91.7%

Believed repair should play a
larger role in Canada's circular
economy systems

95.2%

Are open to using a
structured repair network

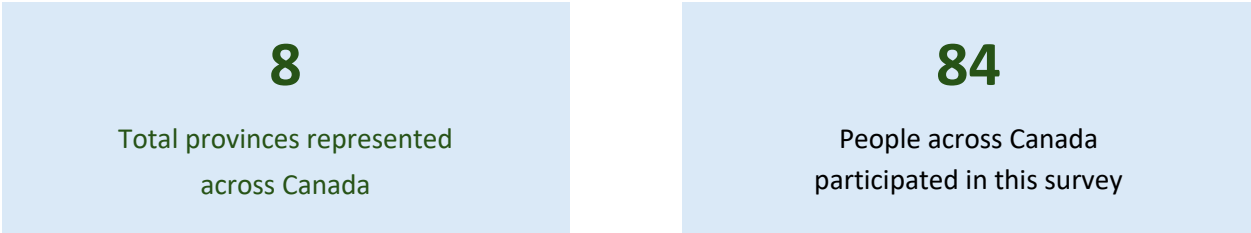
ABOUT THIS STUDY

This independent exploratory pilot survey was designed to better understand how people in Canada think about clothing repair, what barriers they face, and what they would want from a more accessible repair system. The findings offer early insight into patterns, expectations, and gaps across respondents from different backgrounds. This report is intended as a starting point for discussion, learning, and future testing rather than as a definitive national study.

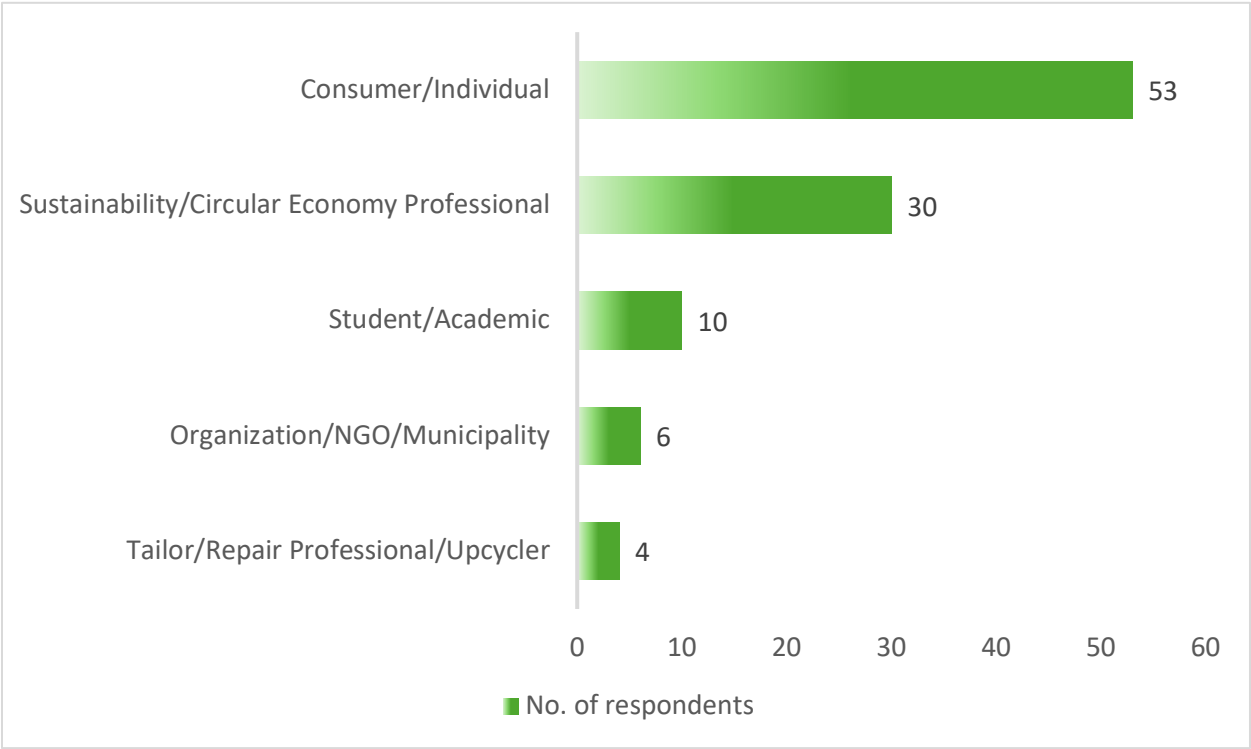
WHO PARTICIPATED

A range of perspectives shaped this survey.

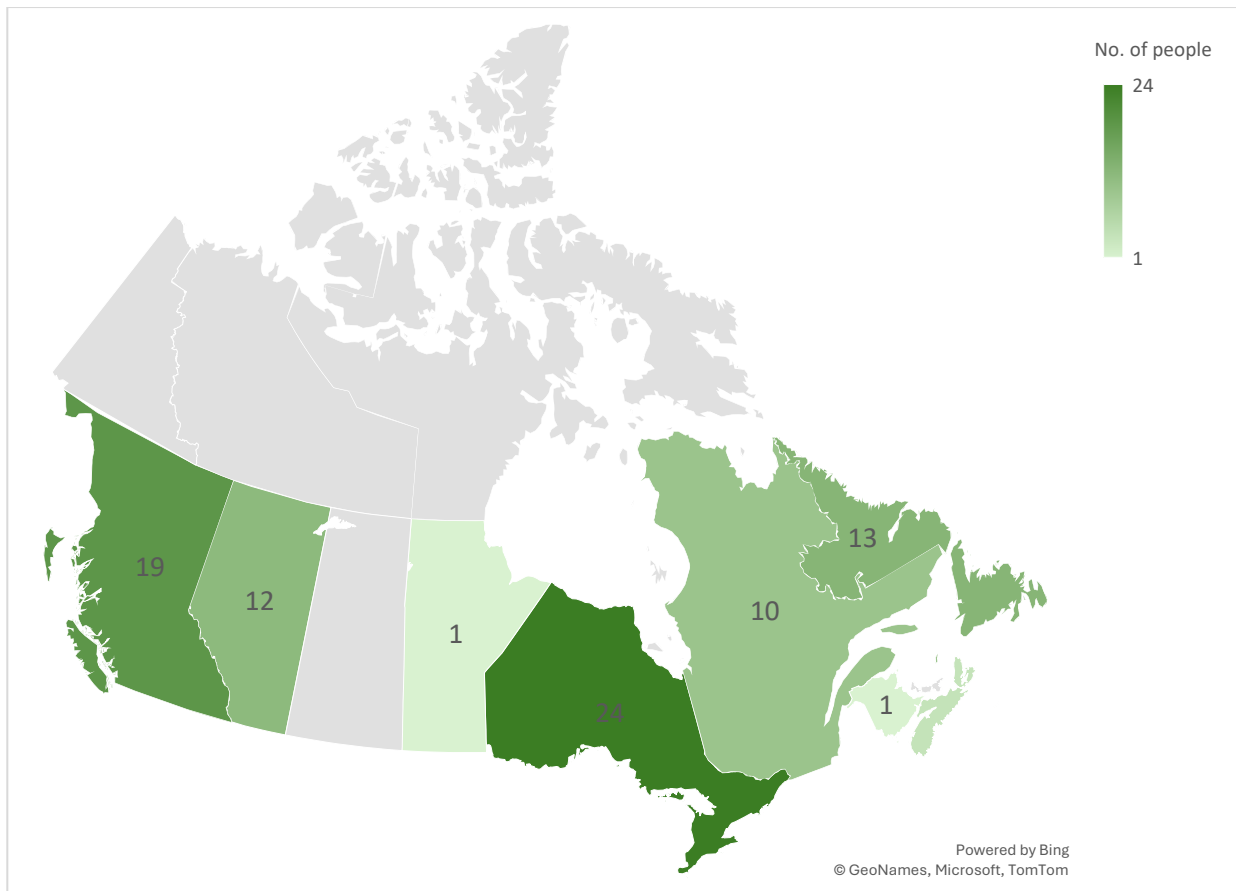
The survey included respondents from a range of backgrounds, including consumers, repair professionals and upcyclers, students and academics, sustainability and circular economy professionals, fashion designers, and representatives from organizations, NGOs, and municipalities.



- Which best describes you?
Multiple selections allowed. Respondents could choose more than one option.



○ Which province are you based in?



NOTE ON MULTI-ROLE SELECTION

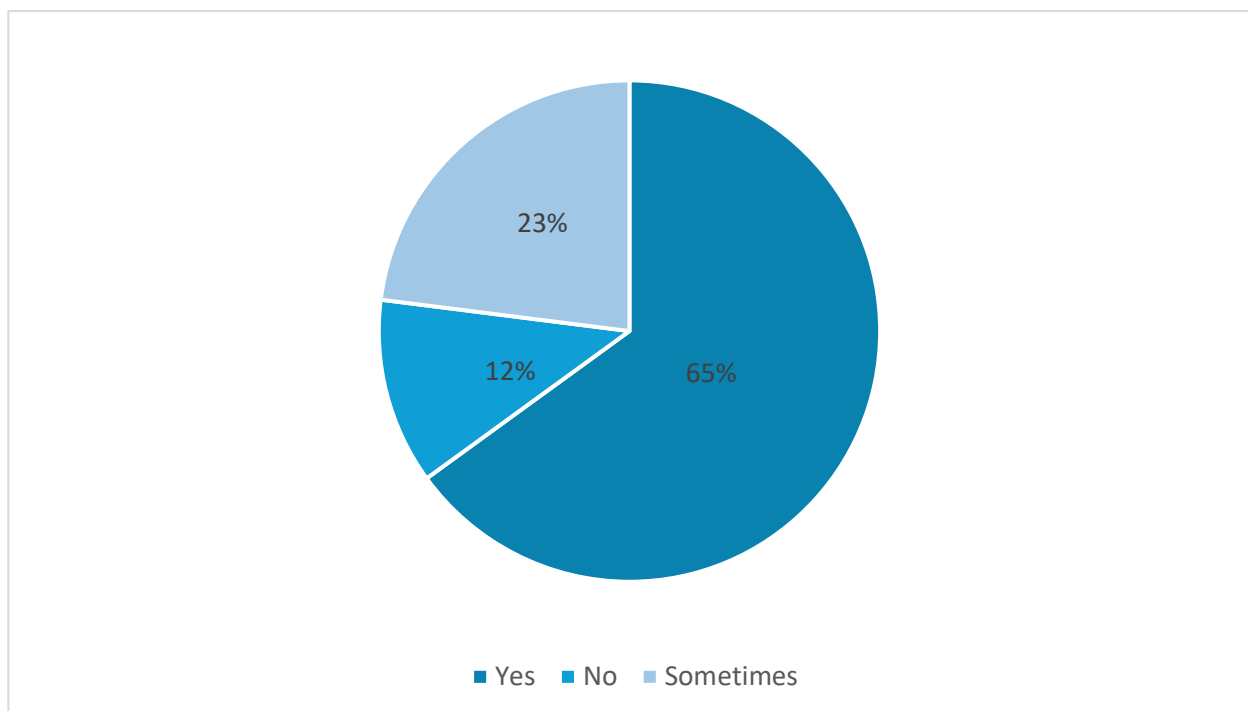
Because respondents could identify with more than one category, the percentages in this section reflect the overlap across roles. This was intentional and helps capture the range of identities participants brought to the survey.

01

Every piece of damaged clothing is a decision in waiting.

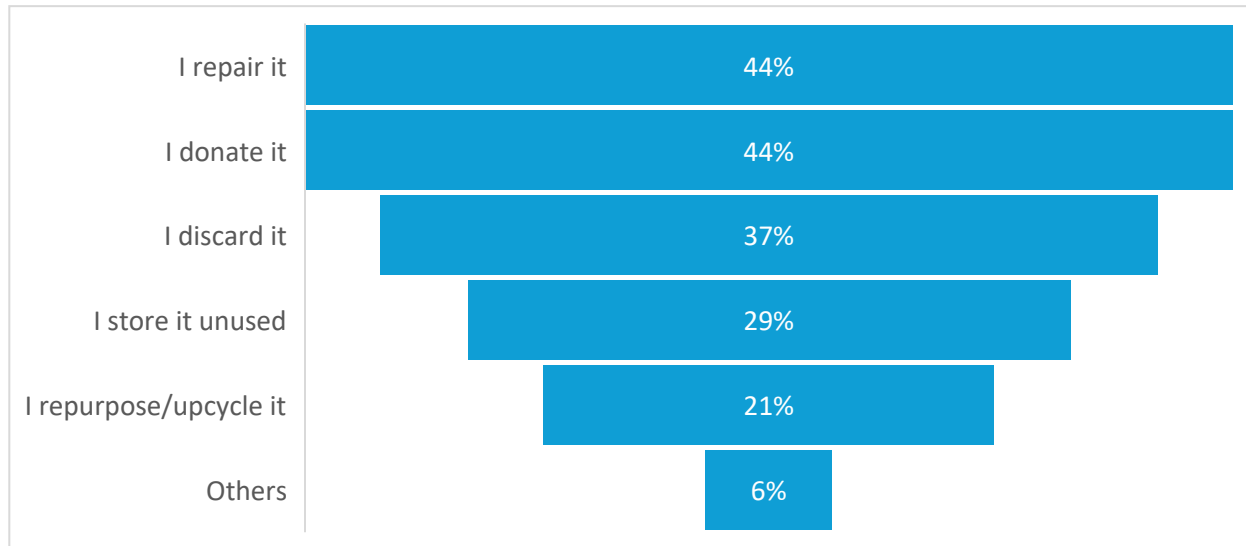
Clothing damage is common, but people do not always respond to it in the same way. This section explores whether inconvenience or difficulty has led people to avoid repair, and what they actually do when clothing gets damaged. Because respondents could choose more than one answer in the section question, the results reflect a range of real behaviours rather than a single fixed response.

- **Have you ever avoided repairing clothing because it felt inconvenient or difficult?**



○ **When clothing gets damaged, what do you actually do with it?**

Multiple selections allowed. Respondents could choose more than one option. Percentages do not total 100%.



WHAT THE RESPONSES REVEAL

The survey suggests that repair is already one of several common responses when clothing gets damaged, alongside donation, storage, and disposal. The main issue appears to be inconsistency at the point of decision, which may be shaped by convenience and access rather than by a lack of interest in repair.

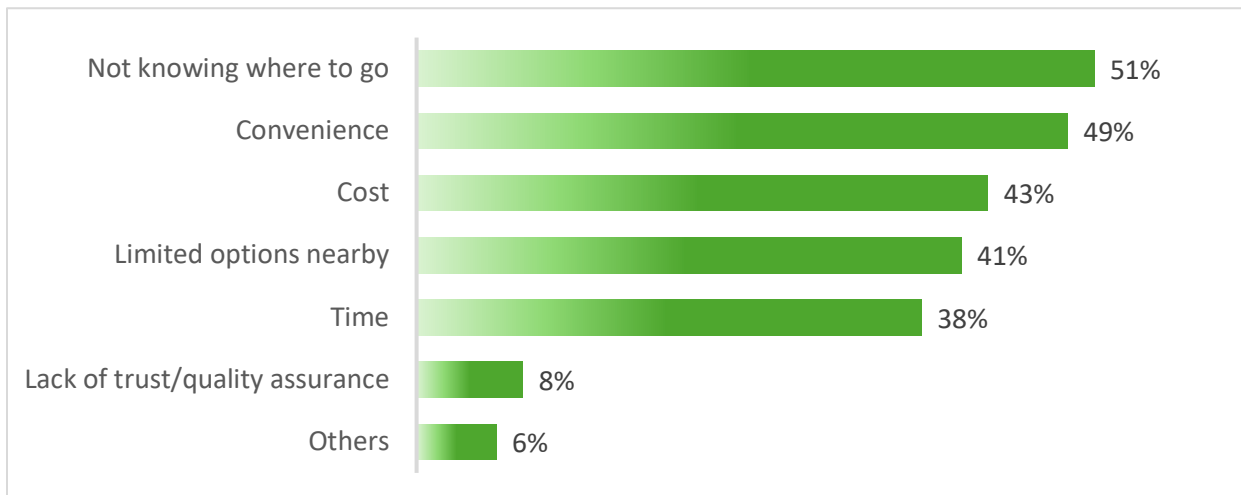
02

The biggest barriers to repair are practical and structural.

Understanding why people do not repair is as important as understanding whether they want to. This question was designed to identify where people experience friction in the repair journey and where a better-designed repair system could help.

○ What do you think is the biggest barrier to clothing repair today?

Multiple selections allowed. Respondents could choose more than one option. Percentages do not total 100%.



DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

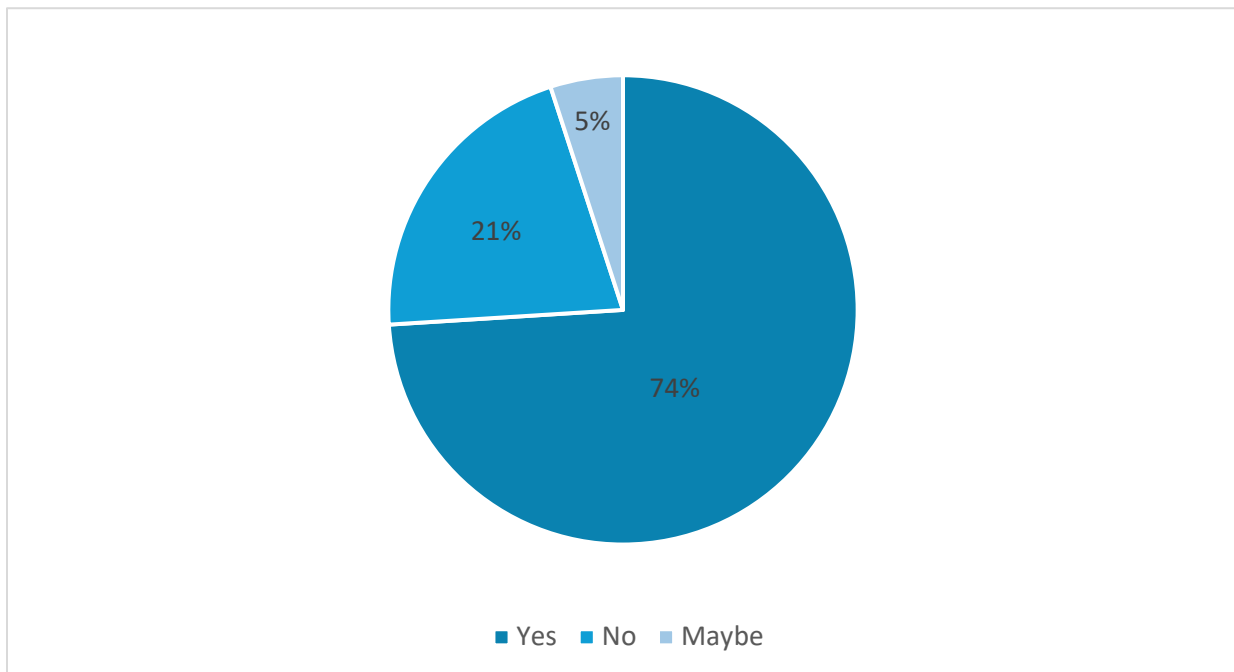
The findings suggest that barriers to clothing repair are shaped mainly by practical and structural constraints. Convenience, awareness of where to go, cost, time, and nearby availability appear to matter more than trust-related concerns. Overall, the results point more to friction in the repair journey than to resistance to repair itself.

03

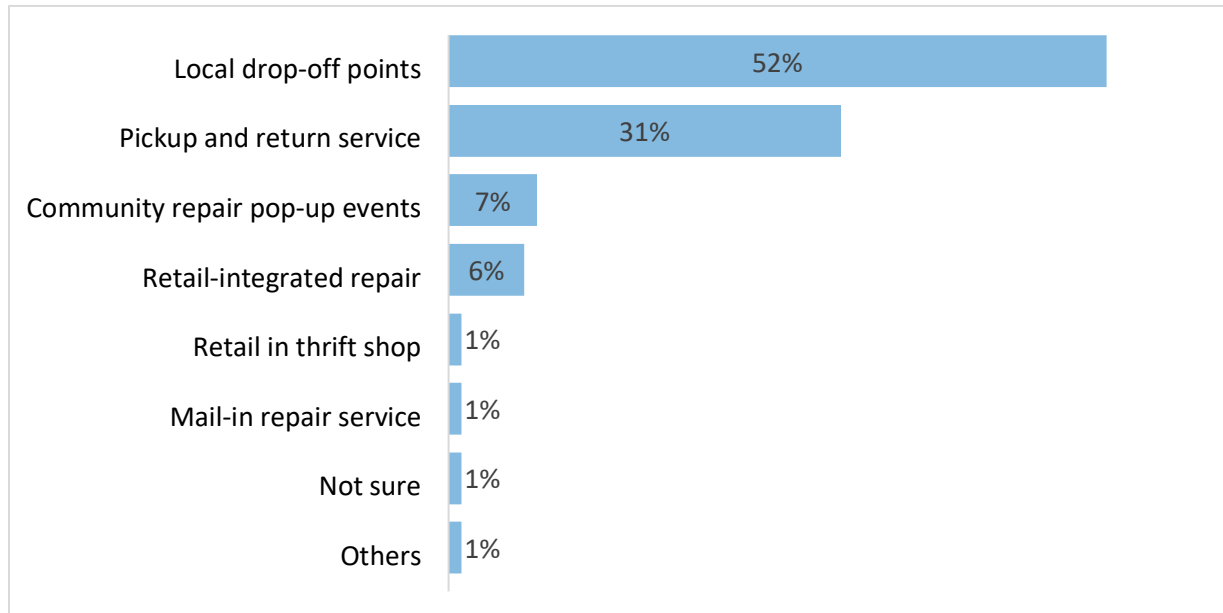
People already have clear expectations for a repair system.

Identifying barriers is only part of the picture. This section looks at what respondents say they would want from a repair system if it were simple, accessible, and easy to use. The questions focused on likely usage, preferred service model, and reasonable turnaround time.

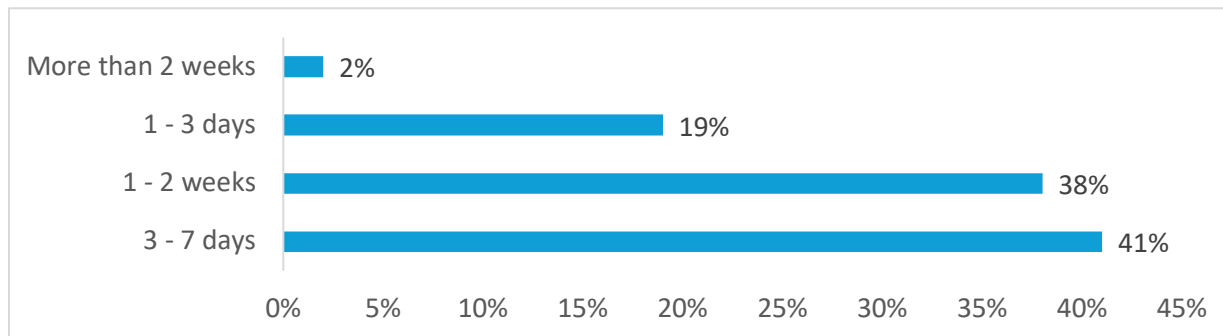
- **Would you use a structured repair service if it were simple and accessible?**



○ Which repair model would feel most convenient to you?



○ What turnaround time feels reasonable?



USER EXPECTATIONS

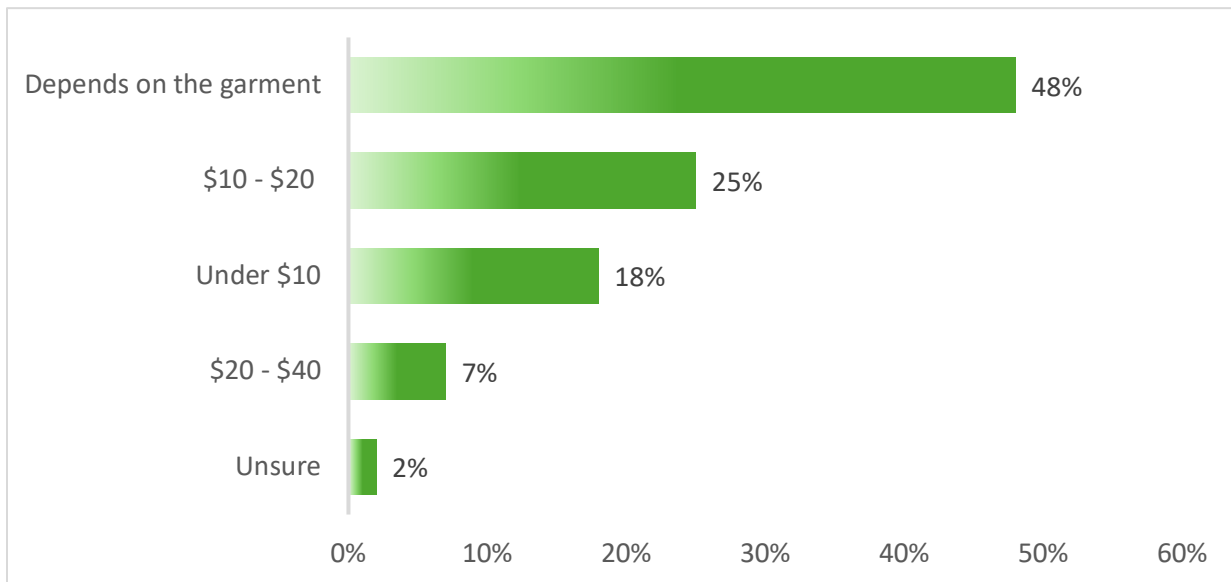
Respondents show clear openness to a structured repair system if it is simple and accessible. Local drop-off points are the most preferred option, followed by pick-up and return services. Turnaround expectations are moderate, suggesting that predictability and convenience may matter as much as speed. Overall, clarity, ease of access, and reliability appear to be the core expectations.

04

Pricing was only one part of the repair decision.

Price is often treated as the main reason people choose replacement over repair, but this question was included to test that assumption more carefully. Respondents were asked what price range feels reasonable for a simple clothing repair. The question was intentionally broad, without specifying a garment type or repair type, so the responses could reflect general perceptions of repair value rather than a single use case. The results suggest that pricing decisions are more context-dependent than a simple affordability question might imply.

- **For a simple clothing repair, what price range feels reasonable to you?**



READING THE PRICE SIGNALS

Price expectations appear to shift depending on the garment. Rather than pointing to one preferred price, the responses suggest that willingness to pay is often tied to perceived value, usefulness, and attachment to the item.

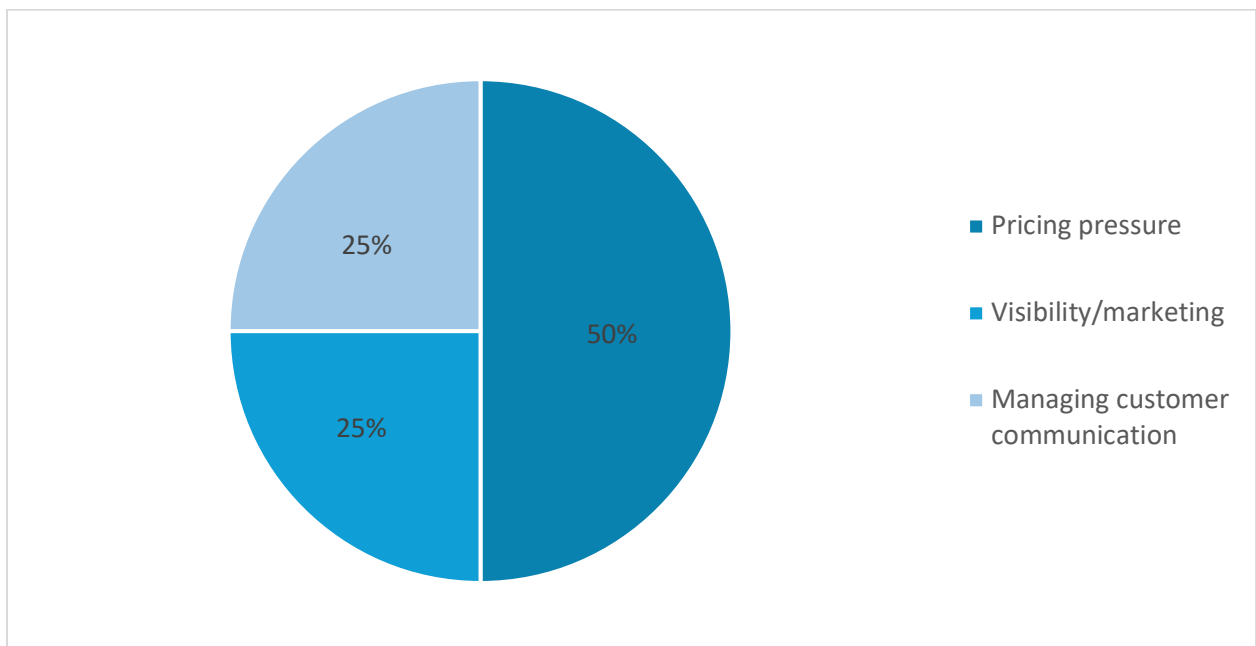
05

The skills exist. But the system around it is fragmented.

This section shifts perspective from consumers to repair professionals and upcyclers. We asked what the biggest challenge in their repair work is, and whether they would be open to receiving structured work through a managed network. Although this subgroup had limited representation, the responses point to recurring challenges related to visibility or marketing, pricing pressure, and customer communication. Interest in structured work through a managed network appears present, but best understood as cautious rather than conclusive.

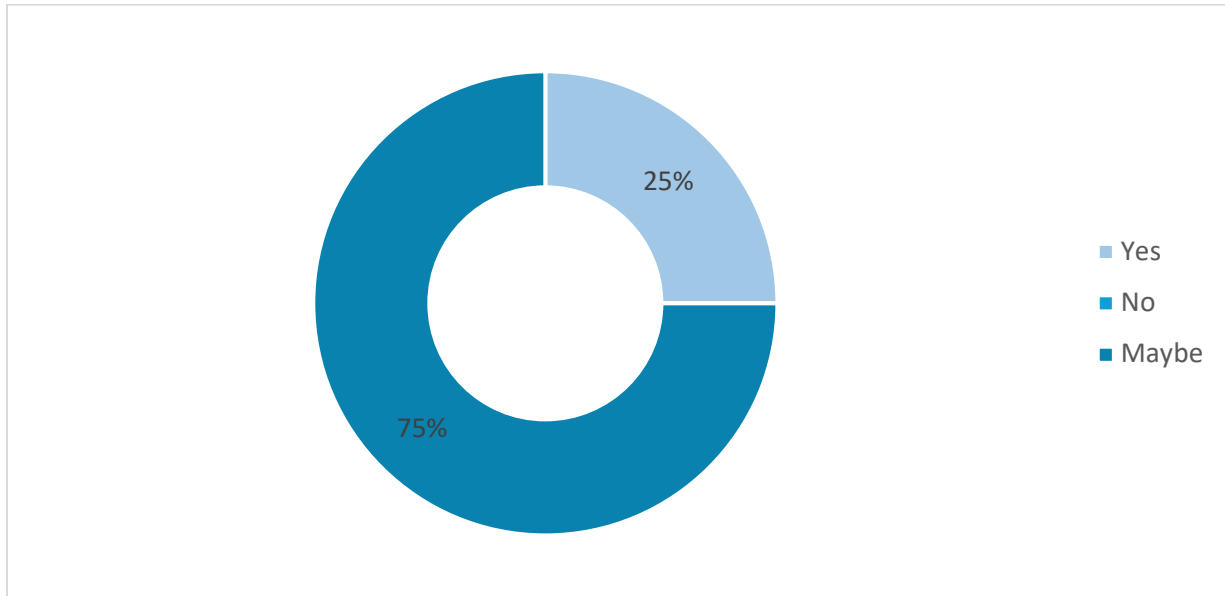
○ What is the biggest challenge you face in your repair work today?

Repair professionals only. "Not applicable" responses excluded.



○ **Would you be interested in receiving structured work through a managed repair network?**

Repair professionals only, segmented responses.



A NOTE ON DATA HANDLING

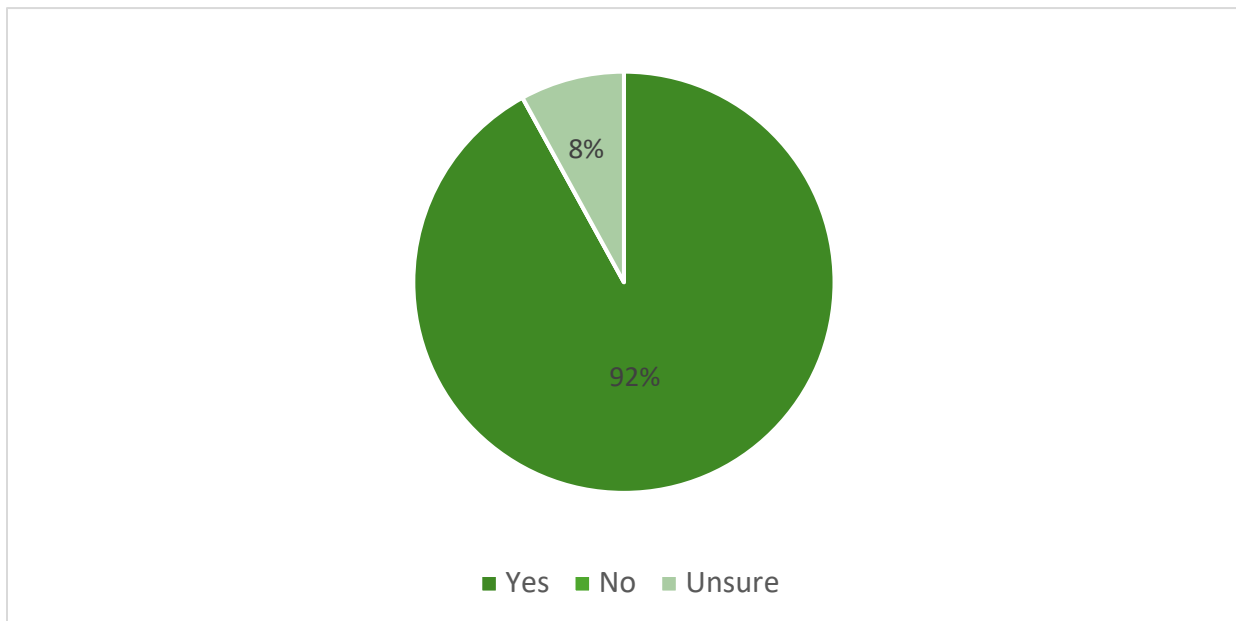
These questions were designed for repair professionals and upcyclers. Responses from participants without repair-related experience were excluded from this part of the analysis so the findings reflect the views of those directly engaged in repair work.

06

Support for repair is strong, and interest in participation is clear.

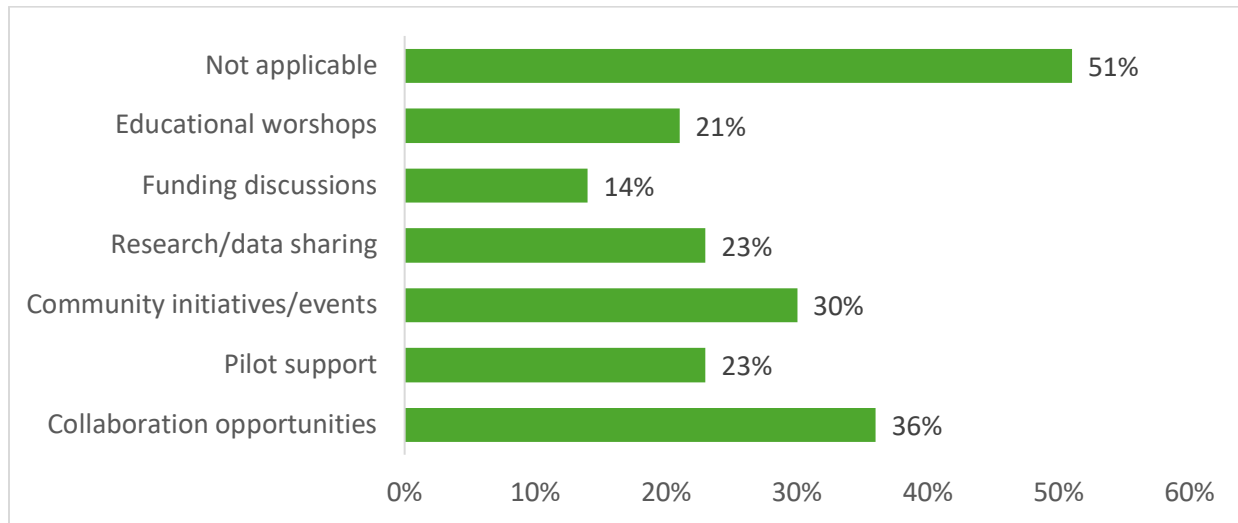
Up to this point, the findings focused mainly on individual behaviour, barriers, and expectations. This section looks at a broader view of repair, circular economy participation, and future involvement. The questions were designed to understand whether respondents see repair as an important part of reducing textile waste and whether they would be open to supporting future initiatives.

- **Do you believe repair should play a larger role in Canada's circular economy?**

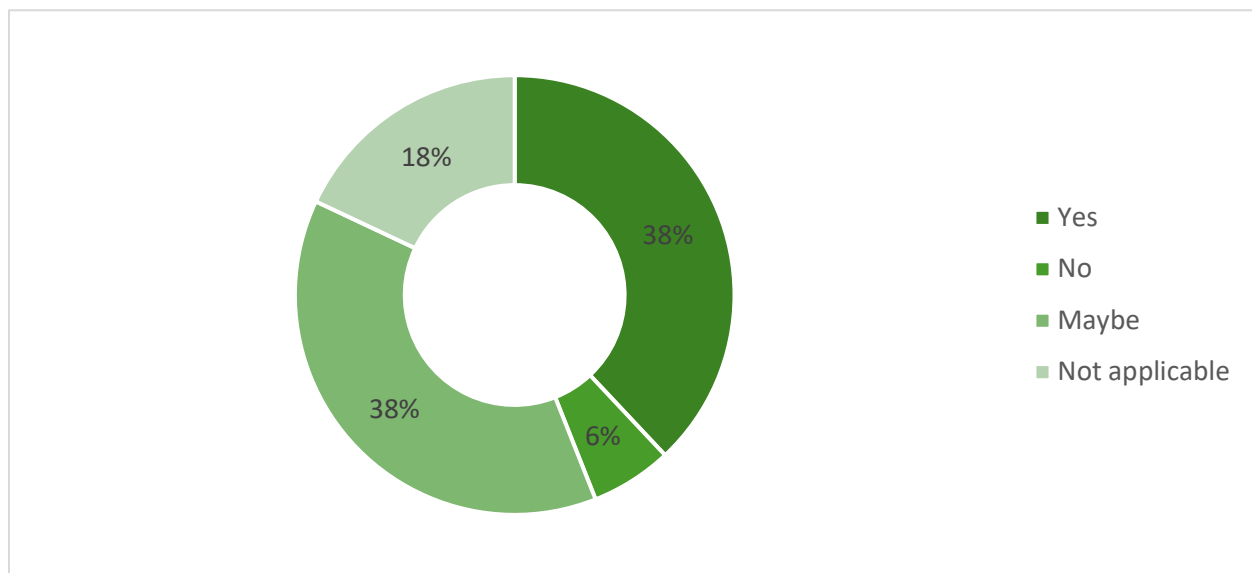


○ **If you represent an organization, what would you be open to exploring?**

Multiple selections allowed. Directed at respondents from organizations, NGOs, and municipalities.



○ **Would you be open to participating in an early pilot or future testing phase?**



THE BIGGER PICTURE

The results suggest strong support for repair as part of Canada's circular economy. The responses also indicate some organizational openness to collaboration and a meaningful level of interest in future testing or pilot participation. These findings are encouraging, while still remaining exploratory in nature.

Open responses help explain the patterns in the survey.

The final question invited respondents to describe, in their own words, what would make a textile repair system work in Canada.

- **In your opinion, what would make a textile repair system actually work in Canada?**

ALBERTA

Responses from Alberta emphasized cost, convenience, awareness, and systems integration.

"We need to make the right choice the easy choice."

"Normalising the process, having people know there is a service available nearby."

"Integrating repair into textile EPR systems."

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Responses from British Columbia emphasized accessibility, education, and interest in both self-repair and structured services.

"Convenience. Lots of people I know plan to repair their clothing, but never do it or take it in."

"Make it fun and accessible, with opportunities for people to learn how to do it themselves, not just have it done for them."

"Coordinating government services with grassroots, community-based organisations invested in textile repair."

ONTARIO

Responses from Ontario emphasized local access, transparent pricing, and timely service.

"Accessibility is key, as well as consumer education on the value of clothing. People will be more inclined to repair a garment they actually love than a low-quality fast fashion trend."

"Local drop-off points, price below ten dollars and service done within seven days."

"It has to be local, convenient and well-advertised."

QUEBEC

Responses from Quebec raised policy, legislation, and corporate accountability.

“Government incentives such as tax exemptions for clothing repairs would help make textile repair more accessible.”

“Corporations being forced to adopt the model and to stop selling cheaply made clothes.”

NOVA SCOTIA

Responses from Nova Scotia emphasized value perception and legislative support.

“People placing more value on clothing that they want to invest time and resources to repair.”

“Textile repair could work in Canada if legislated, alongside textiles being banned from garbage disposal.”

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Responses from Newfoundland and Labrador emphasized accessibility, affordability, and visibility.

“Easy to find, easy to use, not more expensive than buying another item.”

“A well-branded app or website marketed widely, including through word of mouth.”

MANITOBA AND NEW BRUNSWICK

Responses from Manitoba and New Brunswick emphasized community-level access and convenience.

“Increasing the availability at the community level would potentially improve the system.” — Manitoba

“Great initiative, convenience for sure.” — New Brunswick

Repair demand exists. What is missing is a system around it.

The findings in this survey suggest that clothing repair may be better understood as a service access issue within the wider circular economy. Interest in repair appears to exist, but access remains uneven.

Across respondent groups, the same practical themes appear repeatedly: repair should be easy to find, reasonably priced, and completed within a predictable timeframe. These responses point to a service design challenge rather than a lack of public interest.

Even within the smaller repair professional subgroup, the responses suggest that skill and willingness exist, but visibility, customer flow, and coordination remain challenges.

Responses from organizations, NGOs, and municipalities also suggest some openness to partnerships, referrals, pilot support, and policy-related discussion. While these findings are exploratory, they indicate that future collaboration may be possible if supported by a clear pilot model.

Overall, the survey points to an opportunity for better coordination between consumer demand, repair capacity, and institutional support. The next step would be to test these patterns through more targeted research and pilot implementation.

The study is directional, but the gaps it points to are real.

This was an exploratory, voluntary survey. Participants chose to take part, meaning the results should be interpreted as directional insights rather than a statistical representation of all Canadians. Some questions received responses from participants outside their intended audience. These responses were reviewed and handled carefully during the analysis.

Acknowledging these limitations strengthens the credibility of the analysis and helps readers interpret the findings appropriately. Every finding in this report is grounded in what respondents shared, interpreted with care, and presented honestly.

The findings suggest that meaningful gaps remain within Canada's repair ecosystem.

Let's talk.

If this study resonates with your work or interests, participation in future conversations, pilots, or partnerships would be welcome.

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Founder, RenWeSort

renwesort@gmail.com

www.renwesort.com