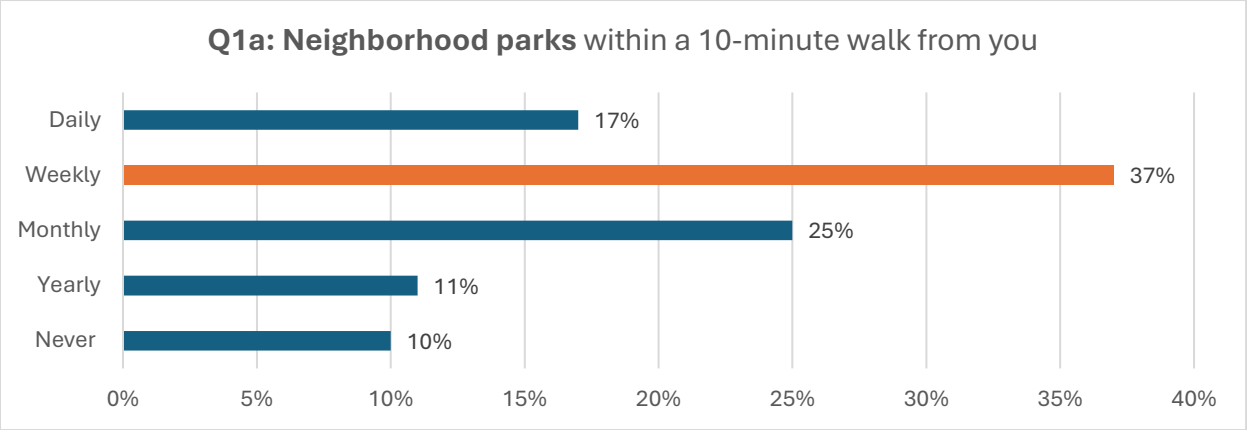
Madison Parks & Open Space Plan 2025-2030
Community Engagement Activities and Outcomes

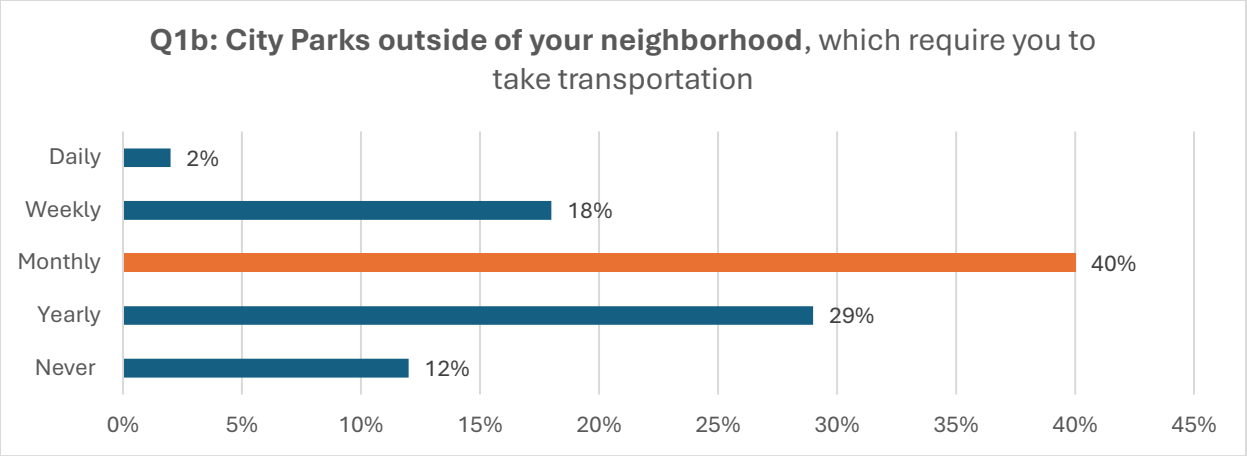
UW Survey Summary

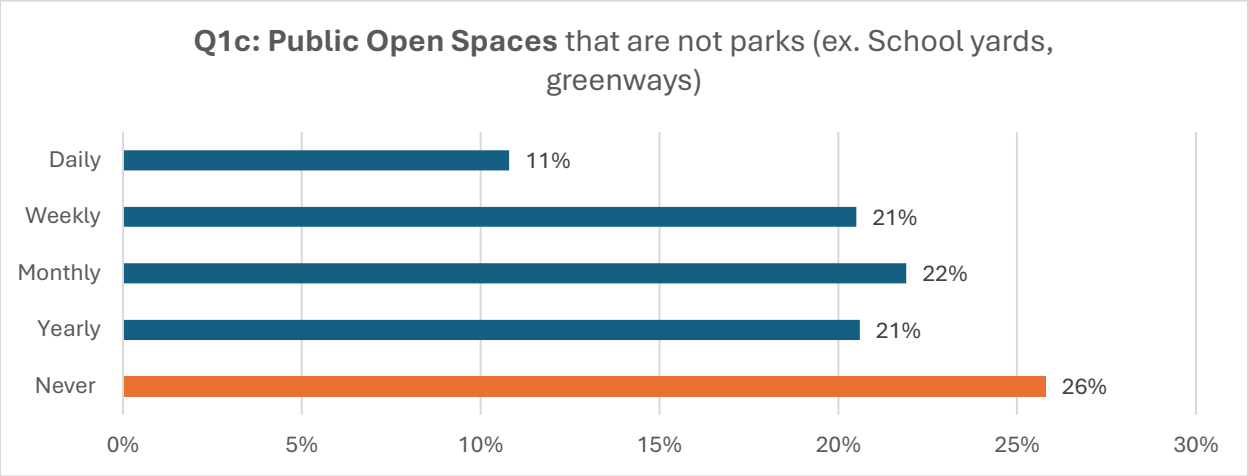
In the fall of 2023, the Madison Parks Division hired the UW Survey Center to assist in the development and administration of a large-scale survey. The intent of the survey was to gauge satisfaction with the City's park and recreation amenities and learn more about how residents use those facilities. 5,000 Madison addresses were randomly selected and mailed the survey; 898 households completed it (18% response rate). The following is quantitative summary of each survey question's results. The three open ended, qualitative questions asked through the survey are summarized at the end of this section.

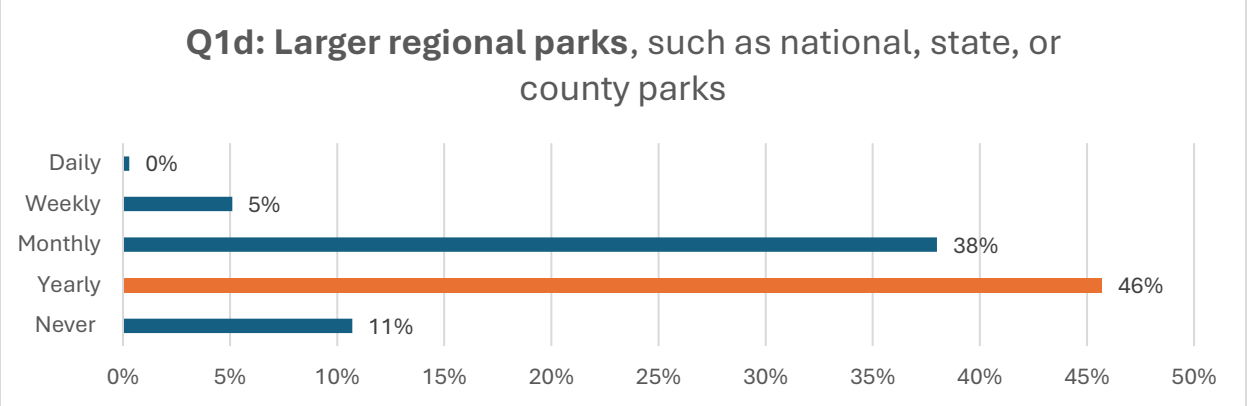
Q1: In the past 12 months, how often did you use each the following types of parks or park-like spaces in Madison?

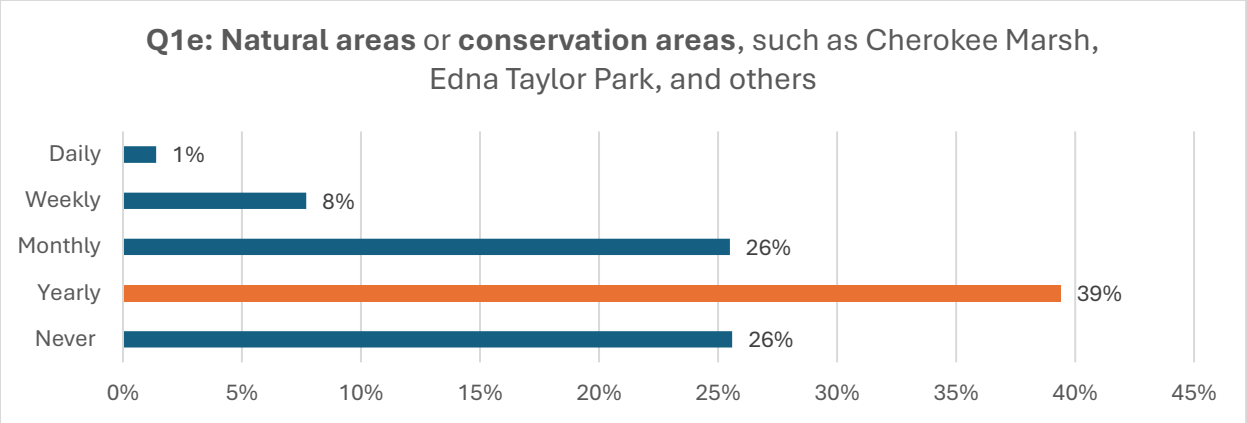
- The majority of respondents visit neighborhood parks within a 10-minute walk of their residence on a weekly or daily basis (54%). For parks that require transportation outside one's neighborhood, more than half of respondents report visiting monthly or yearly.
- For other types of parks—including larger regional parks, natural or conservation areas, and special facilities—most respondents visit annually.

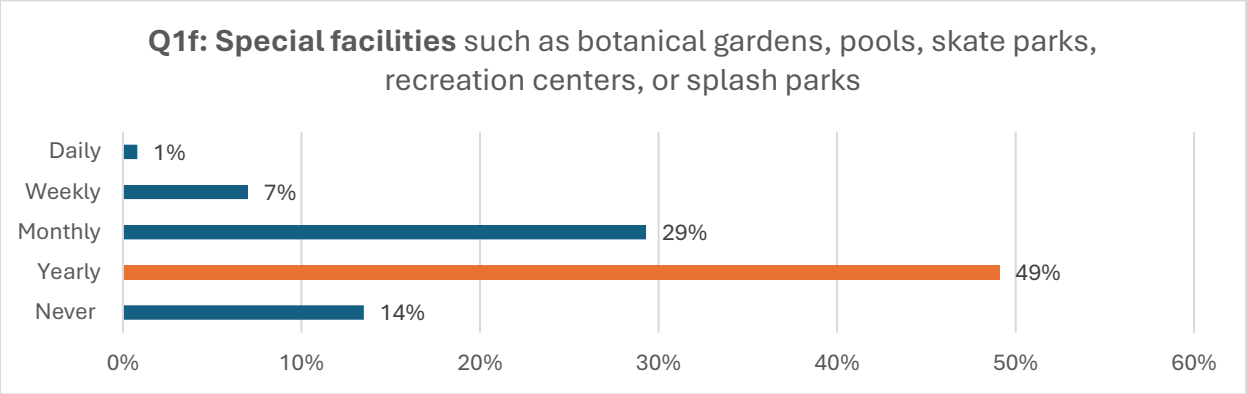



Q1b: City Parks outside of your neighborhood, which require you to take transportation
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly
Never
2%
18%
40%
29%
12%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%


Q1c: Public Open Spaces that are not parks (ex. School yards, greenways)
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly
Never
11%
21%
22%
21%
26%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%

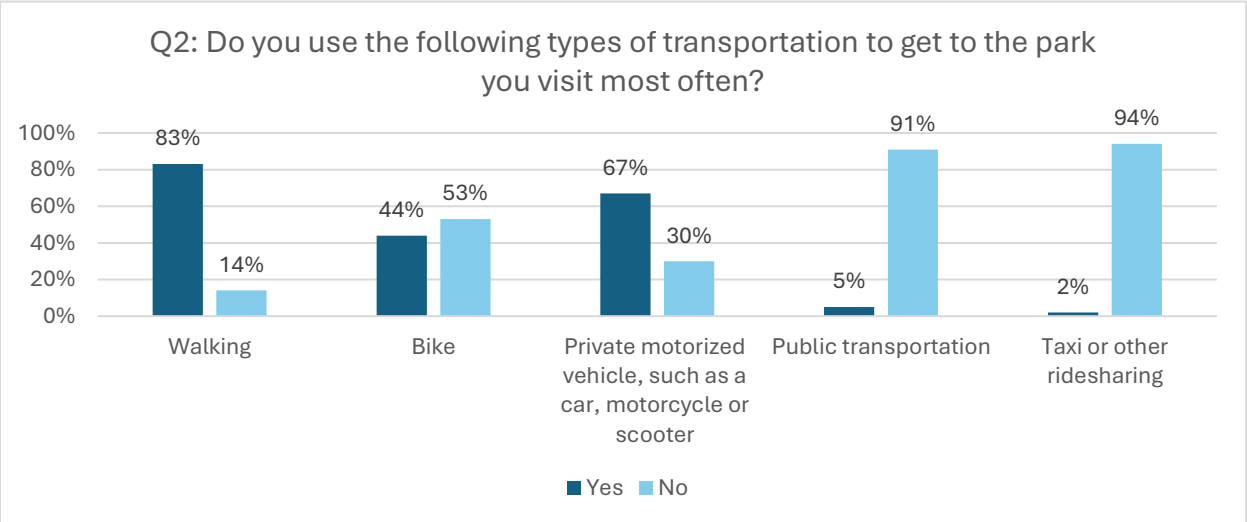

Q1d: Larger regional parks, such as national, state, or county parks
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly
Never
0%
5%
38%
46%
11%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%
50%





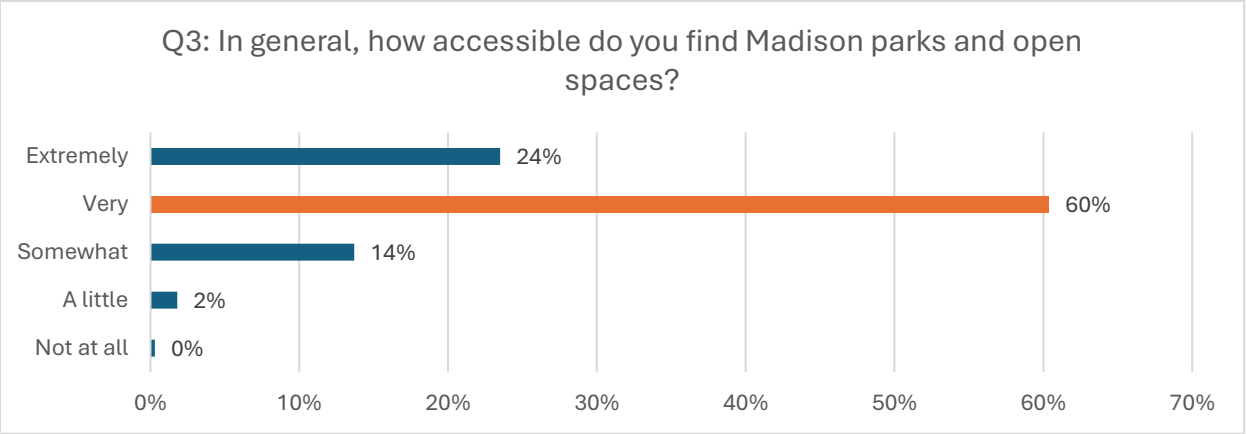
Q2: For this question, think about the park you visit or use <u>most often</u>. Do you use the following types of transportation to get to the park you visit most often?

- Walking and private motorized vehicles are the primary modes of transportation identified by survey participants. Public transit and ridesharing are minimally utilized.



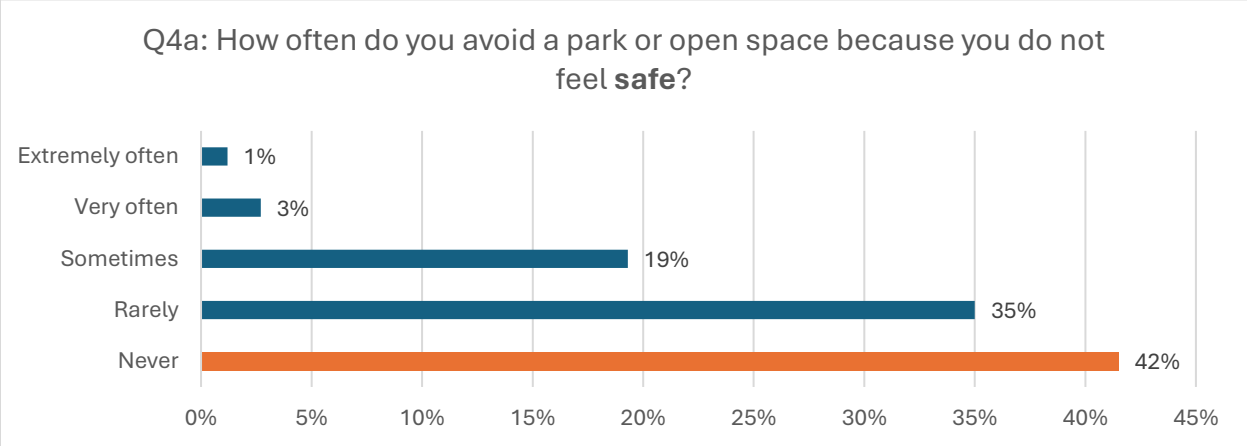
Q3: In general, how accessible do you find Madison parks and open spaces?

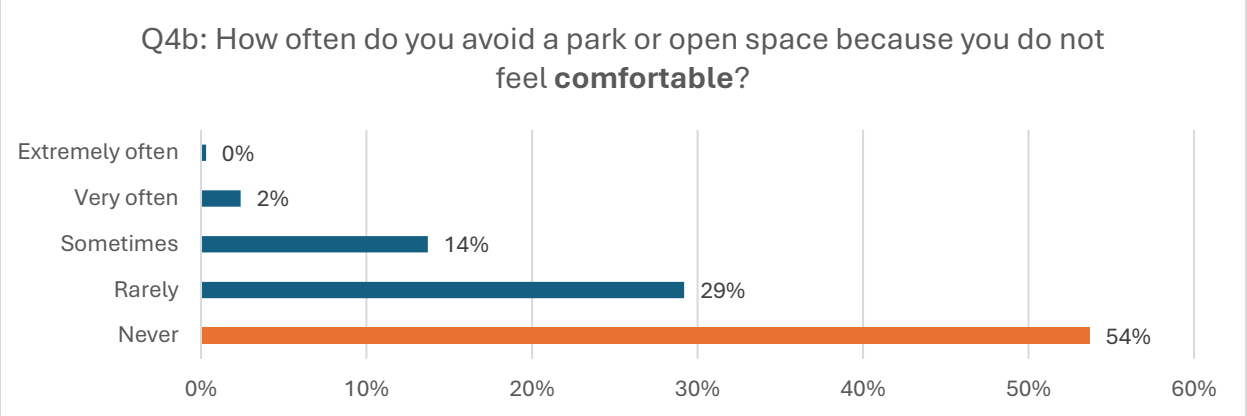
- Most respondents find Madison parks and open spaces to be very or extremely accessible.

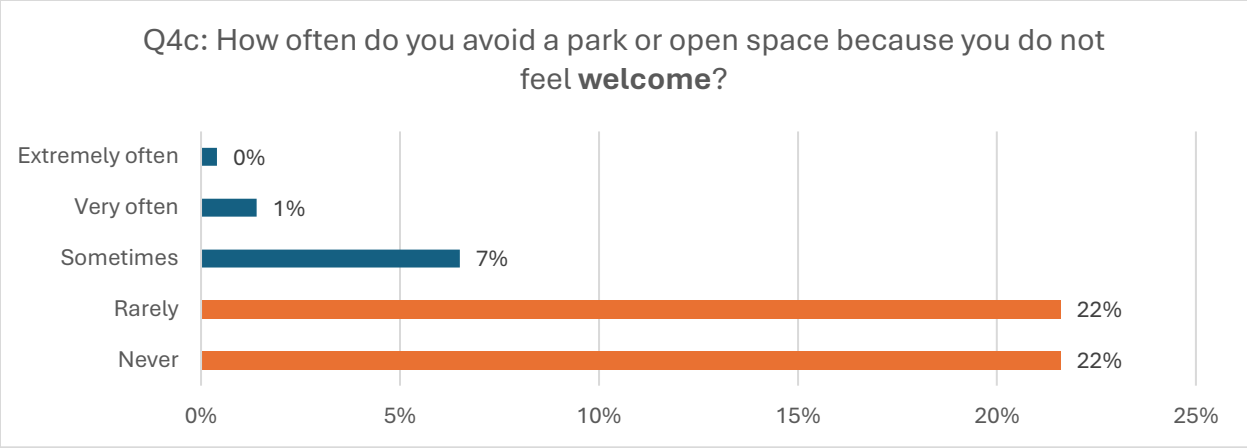


Q4: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel safe, comfortable, or welcome?

- Most people (>50%) rarely or never avoid Madison parks or open space because they do not feel safe, comfortable, or welcome.



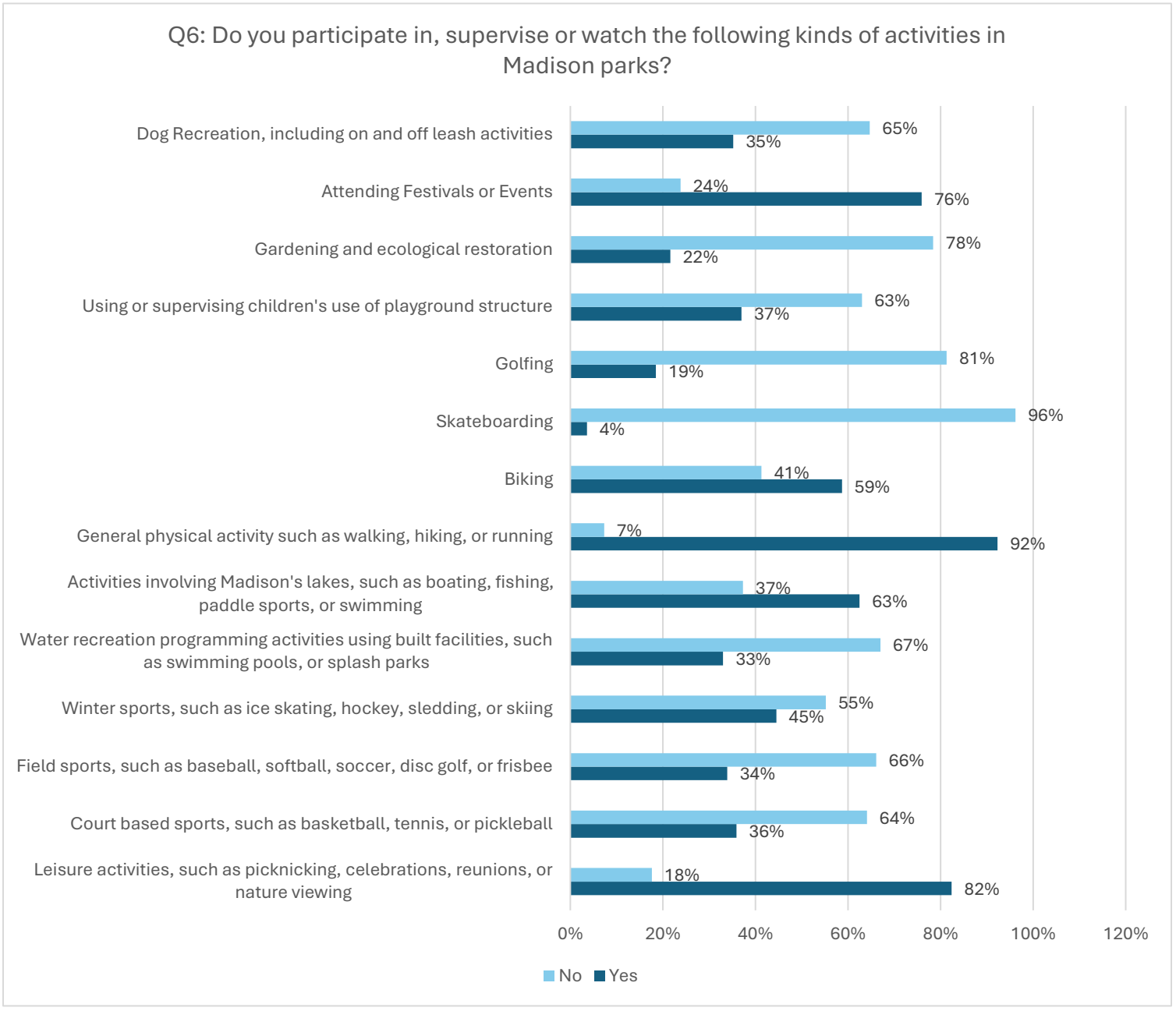



Q4c: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel **welcome**?
Extremely often
0%
Very often
1%
Sometimes
7%
Rarely
22%
Never
22%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%

Q6: Activities someone might participate in at Madison parks include playing, supervising children, or watching activities, such as a baseball or basketball game.

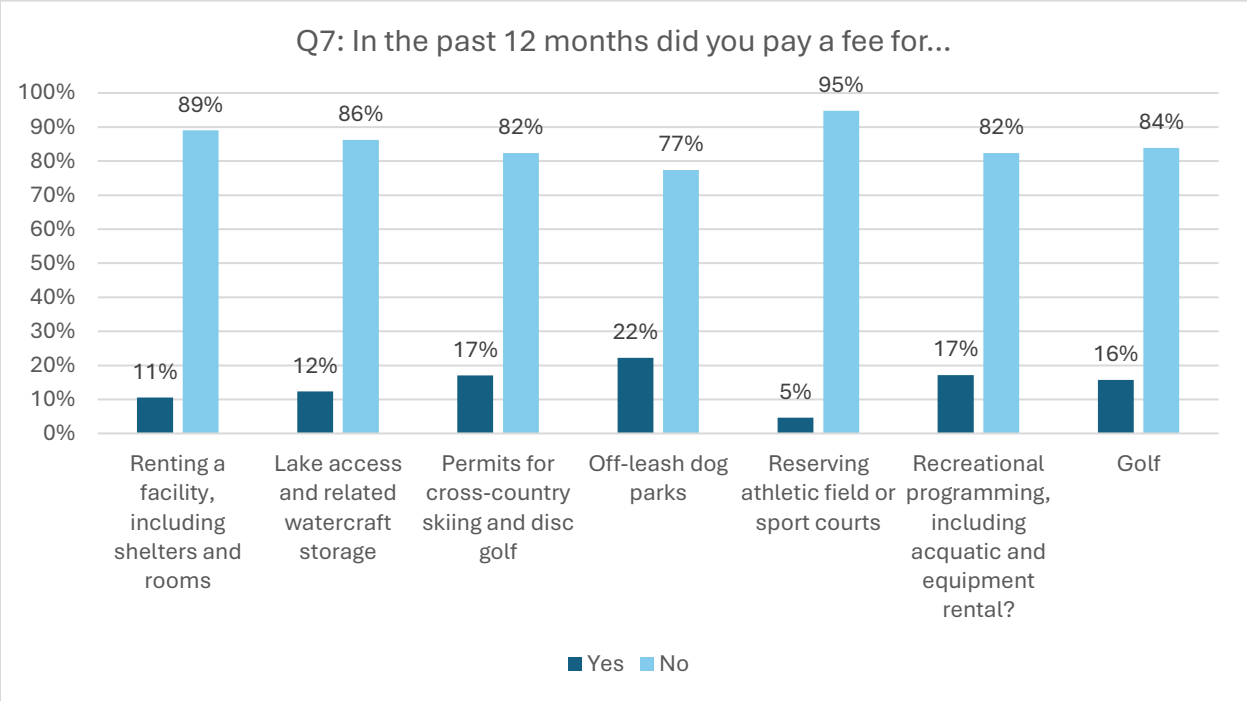
Do you participate in, supervise, or watch the following kinds of activities in Madison parks?

- The most common activities in Madison Parks among survey respondents are general physical activities, leisure activities, and attending festivals or events.



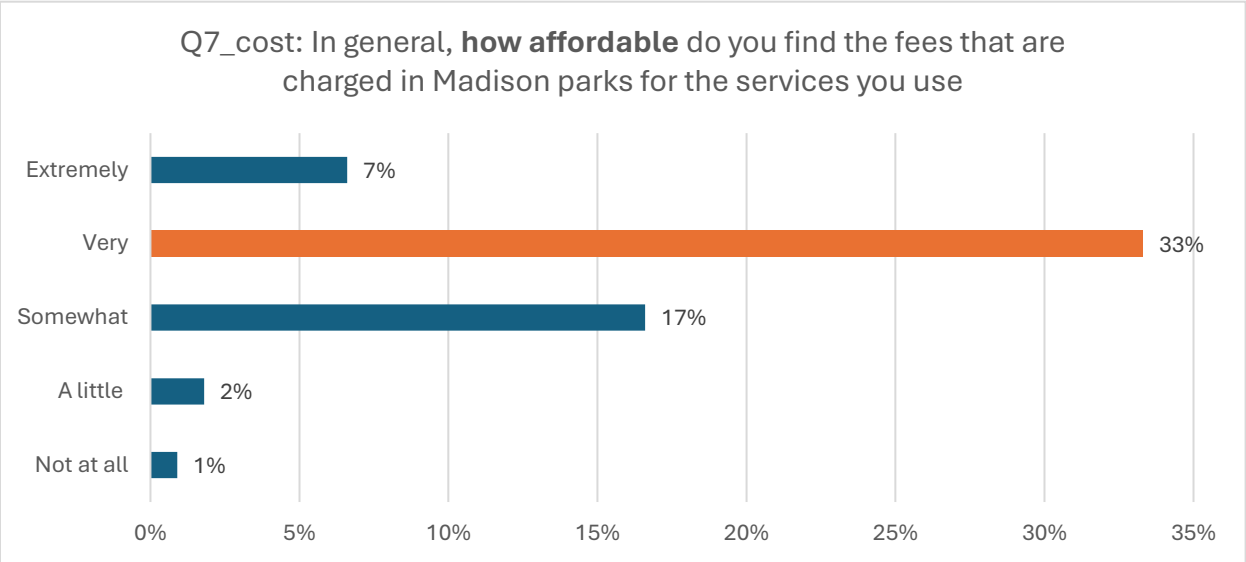
Q7: Still thinking about your use of Madison Parks, in the past 12 months did you pay a fee for…

- Most respondents had not paid a fee for any of the park amenities listed.
- On average between the different amenities, 14% of park users paid a park fee in the previous 12 months. The most common fee paid was for off-leash dog parks, and the least common was reservations for athletic fields or courts.



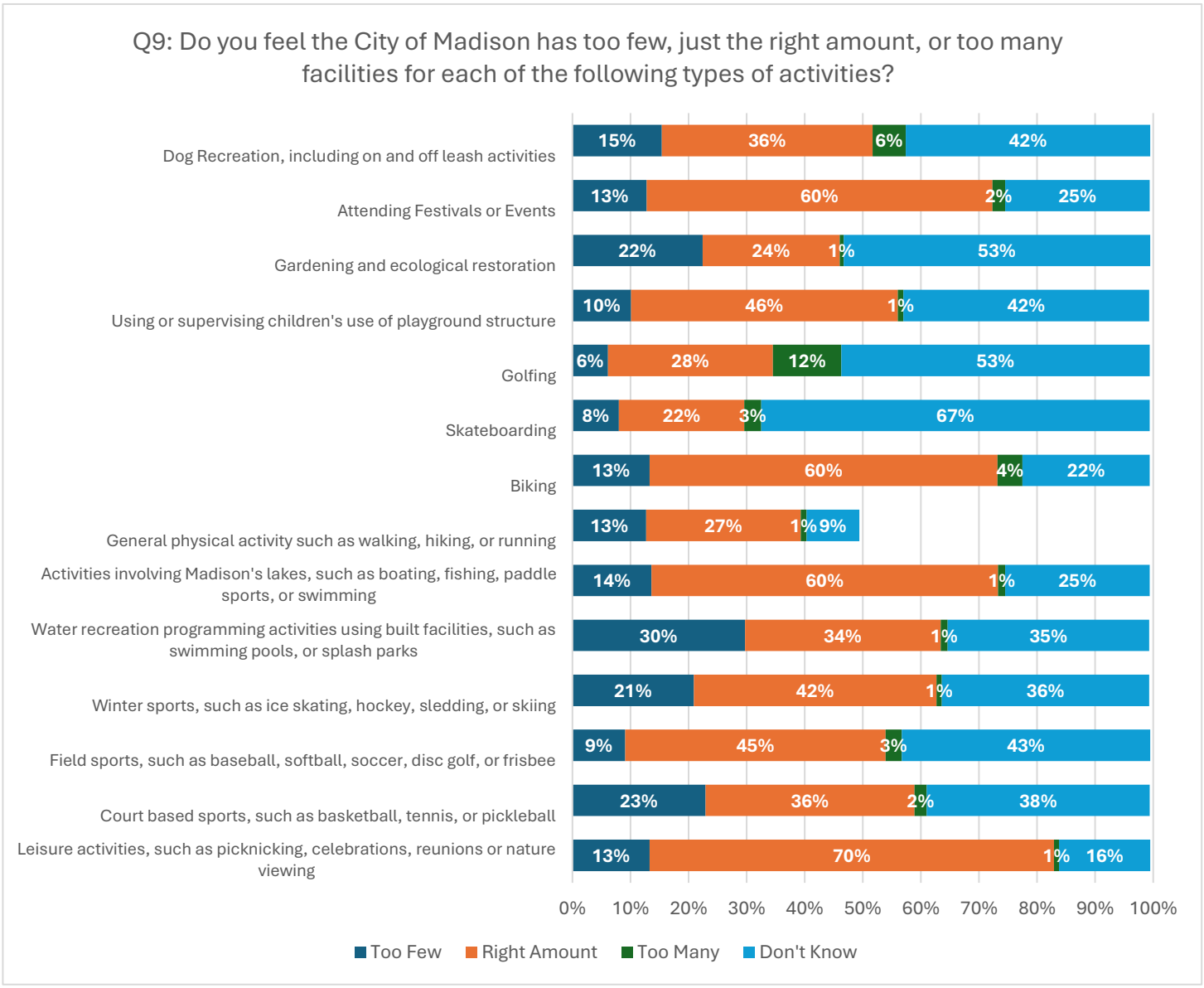
Q7_cost: In general, how affordable do you find the fees that are charged in Madison parks for the services you use.

- Most people found the fees charged at Madison parks to be very affordable.



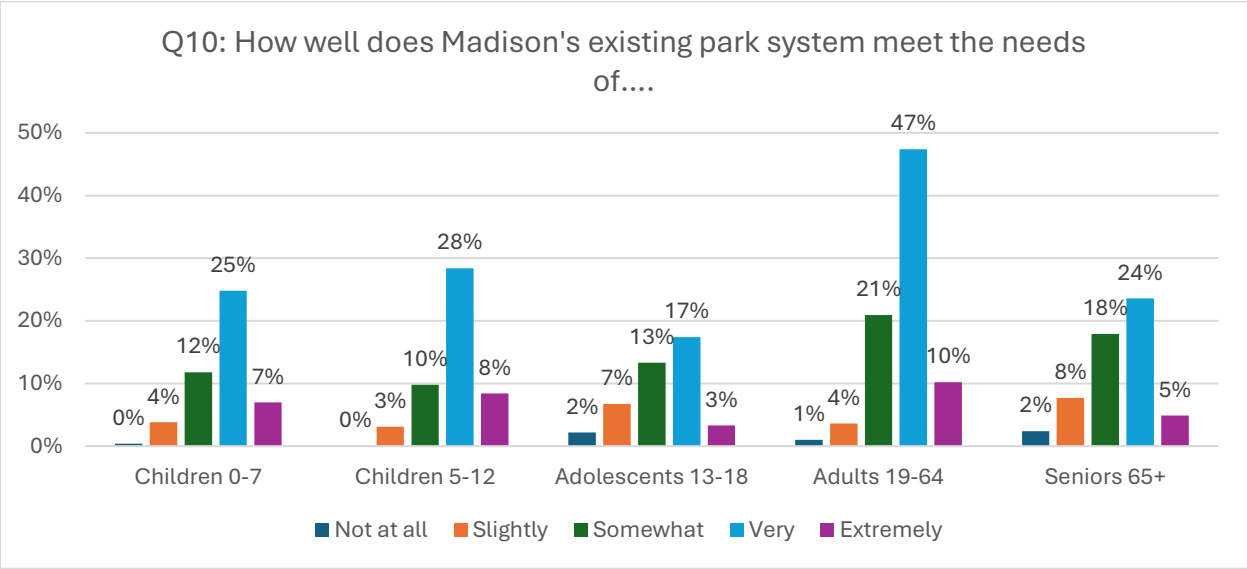
Q9: Do you feel the City of Madison has too few, just the right amount, or too many facilities for each of the following types of activities?

- Of the facilities presented, water-based recreation activities had the highest amount of need.
- Very few people found that Madison Parks had too many of any of the facilities presented.



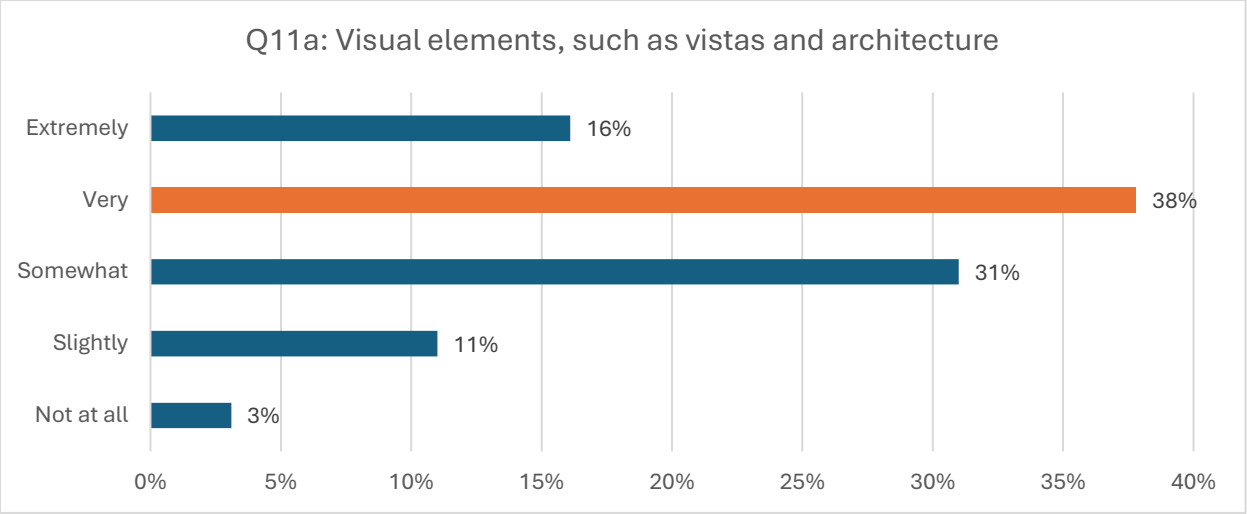
Q10: How <u>well</u> do you feel Madison's existing park system meets the needs of the following age groups?

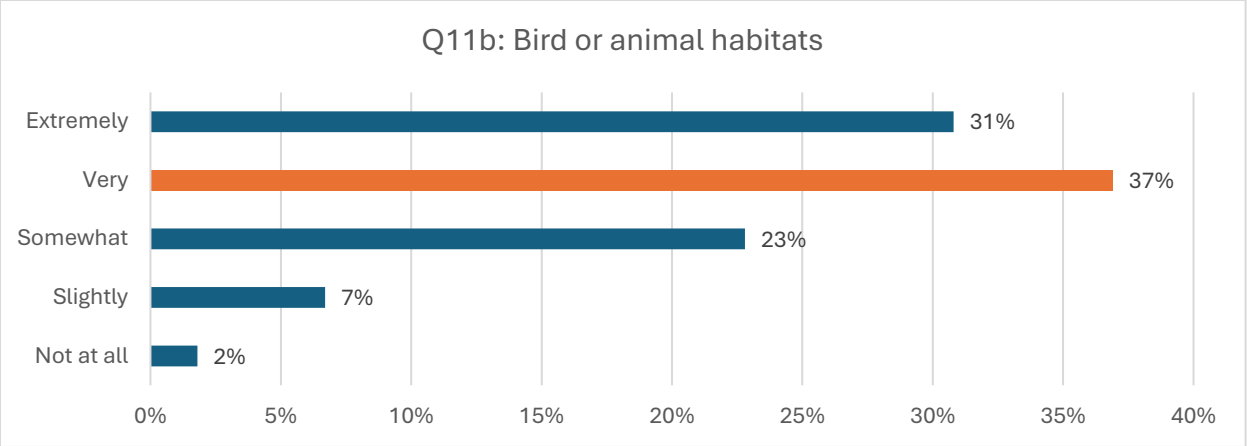
- For those that chose an option other than 'don't know', most age groups feel their needs "very" met. Of the age groups, people found adolescents and seniors to be the most in need of additional focus.

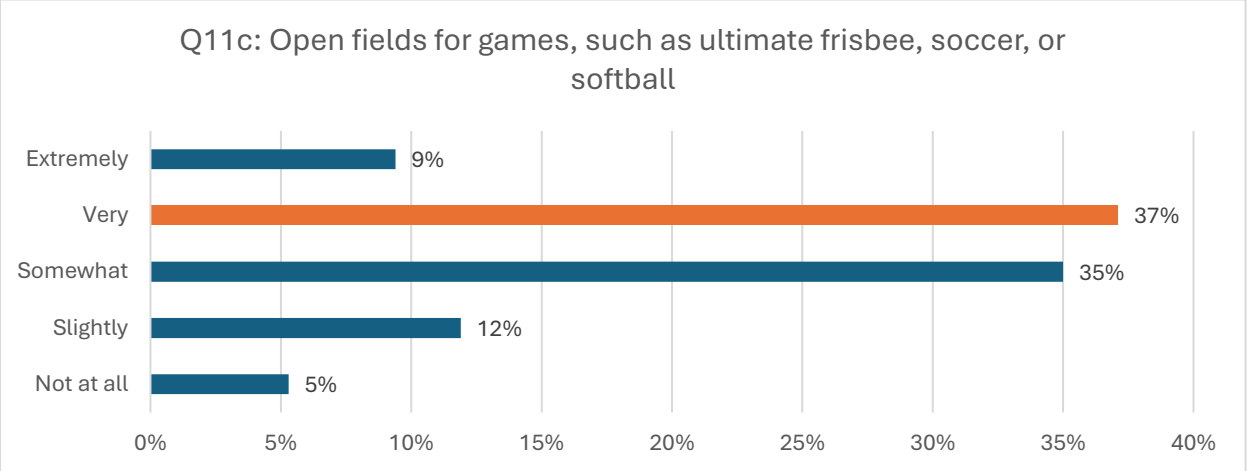


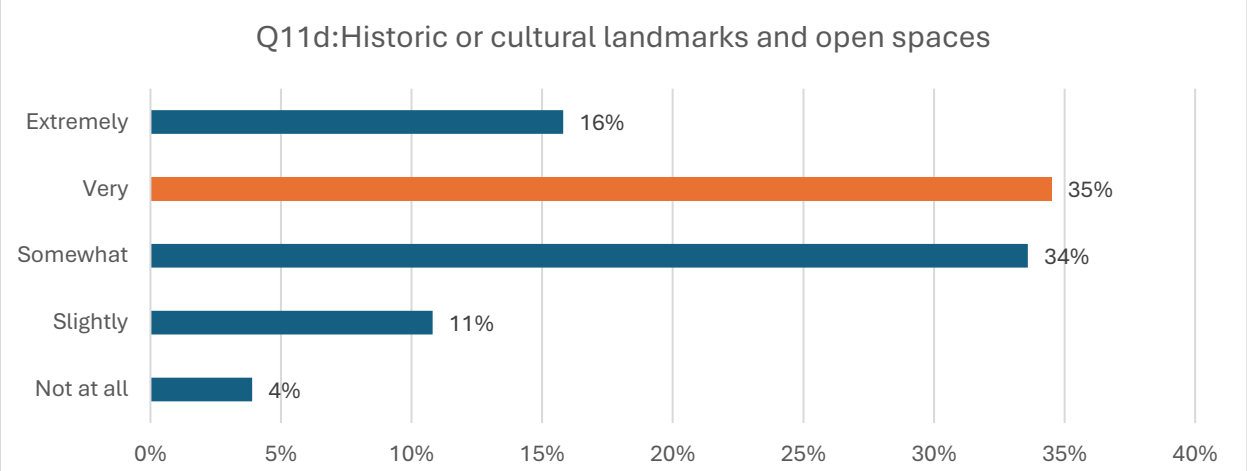
Q11: How valuable do you find each of the following feature in the City of Madison park system?

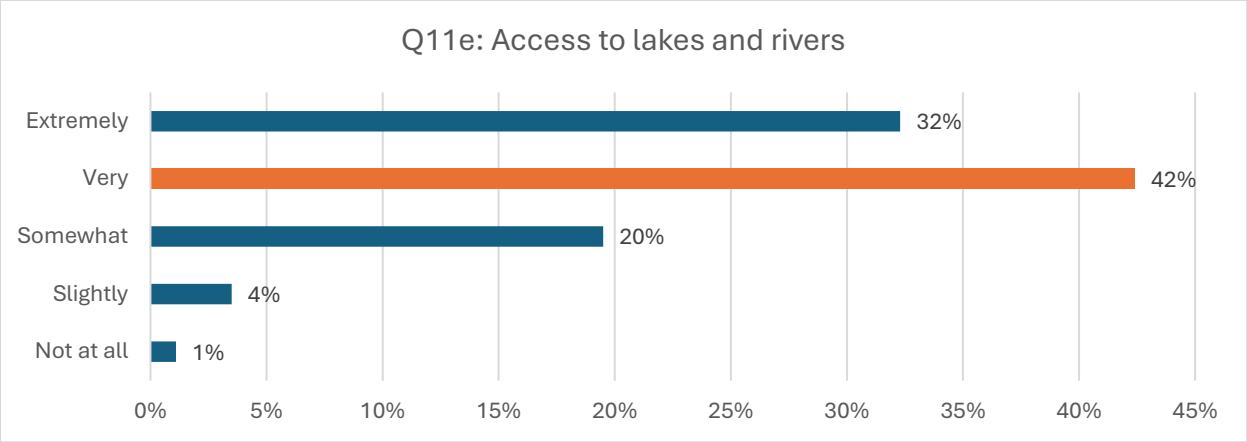
- The majority of respondents found all of the features highlighted in this survey to be very important.

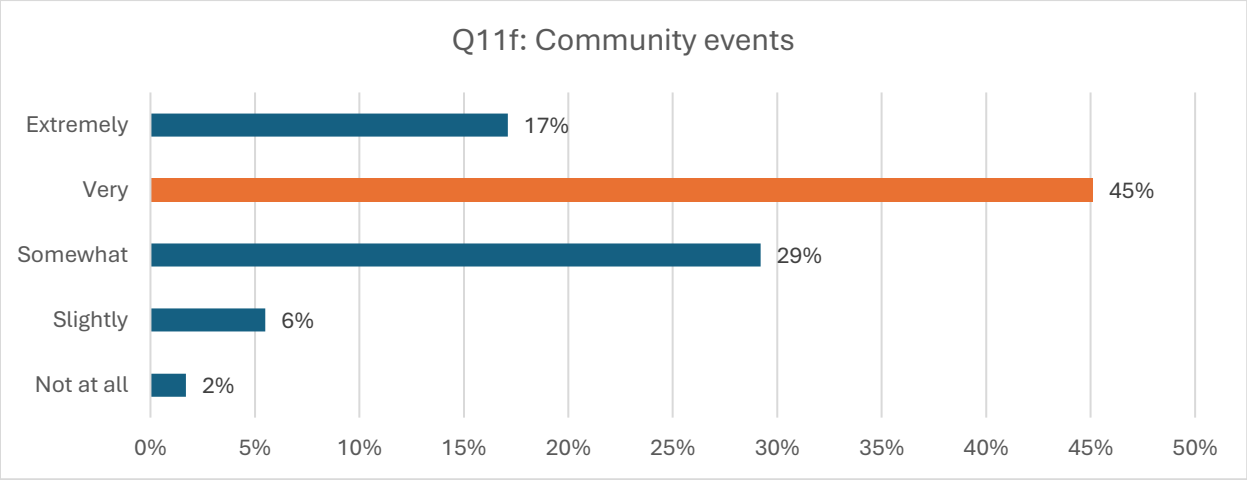


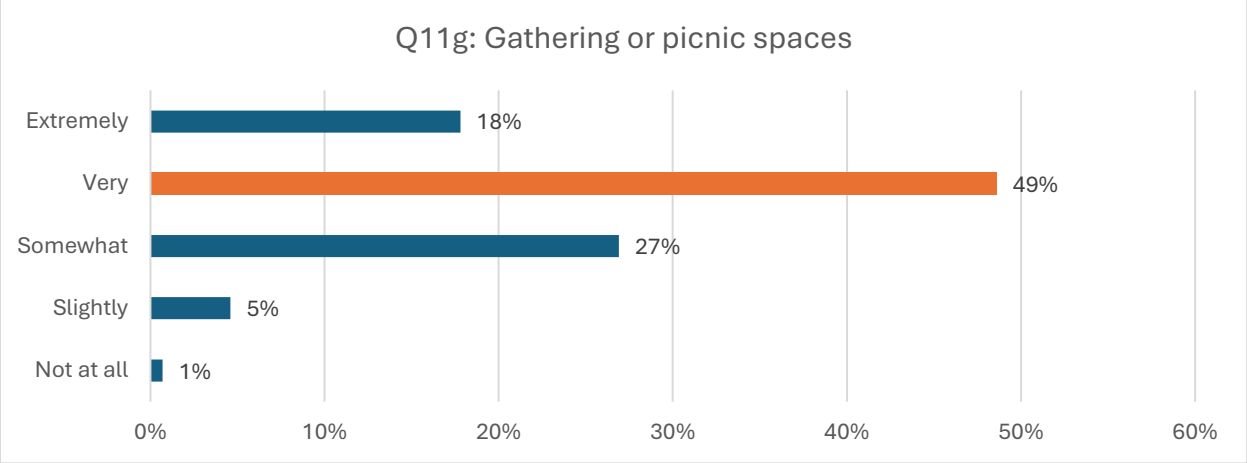

Q11b: Bird or animal habitats
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
31%
37%
23%
7%
2%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

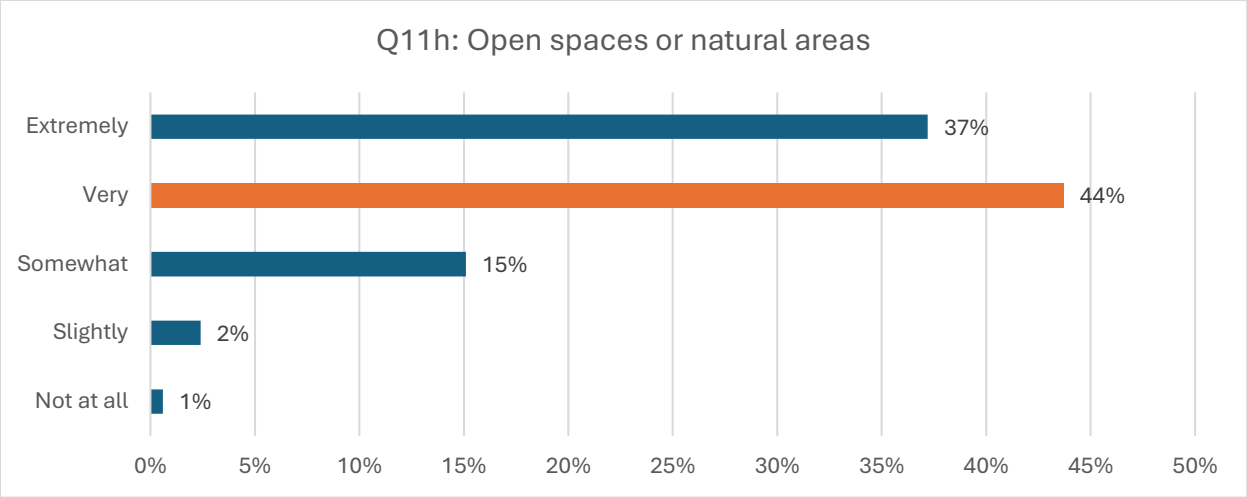

Q11c: Open fields for games, such as ultimate frisbee, soccer, or softball
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
9%
37%
35%
12%
5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

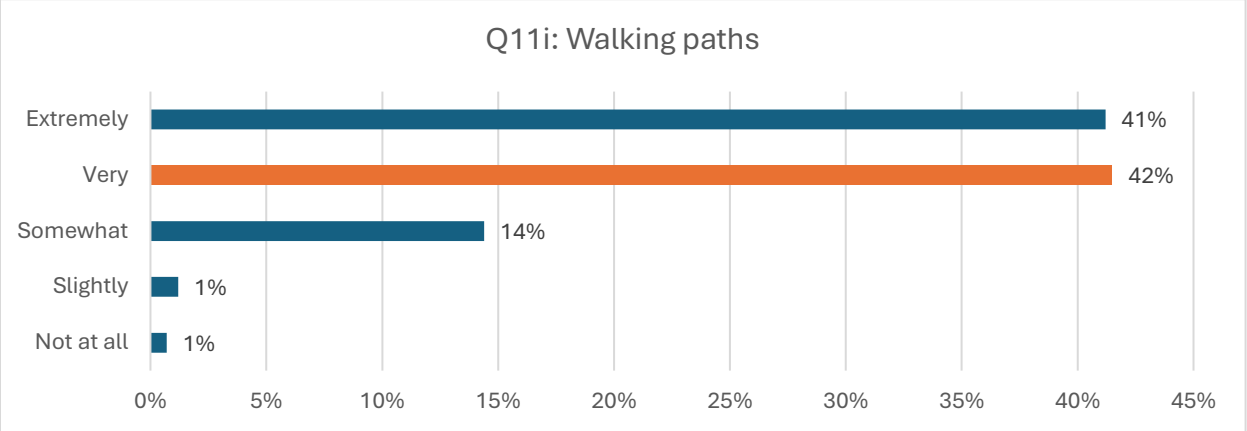

Q11d:Historic or cultural landmarks and open spaces
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
16%
35%
34%
11%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

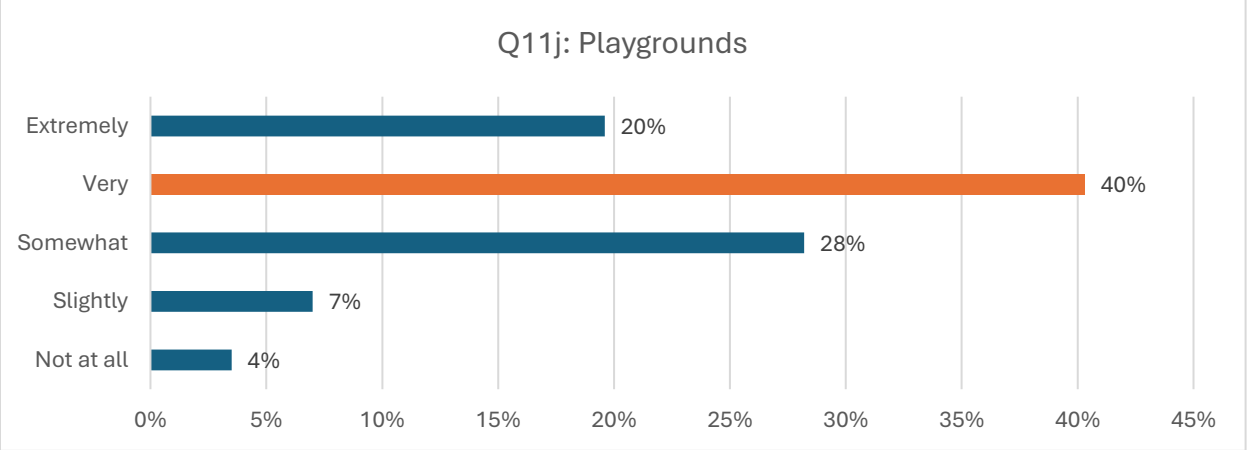

Q11e: Access to lakes and rivers
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
32%
42%
20%
4%
1%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%


Q11f: Community events
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
17%
45%
29%
6%
2%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%
50%


Q11g: Gathering or picnic spaces
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
18%
49%
27%
5%
1%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%

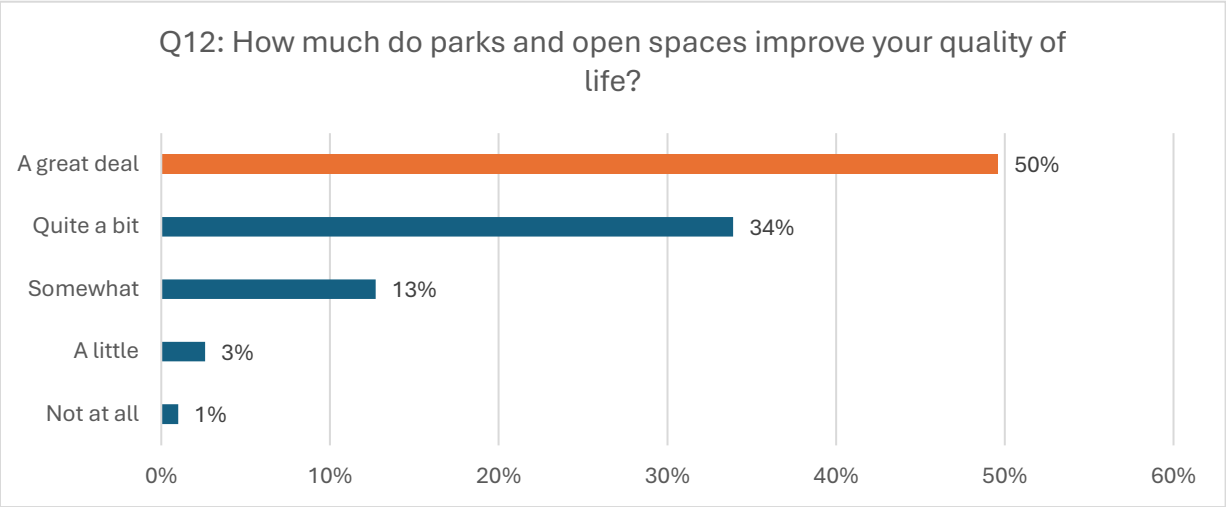

Q11h: Open spaces or natural areas
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
37%
44%
15%
2%
1%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%
50%


Q11i: Walking paths
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
41%
42%
14%
1%
1%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%


Q11j: Playgrounds
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
20%
40%
28%
7%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%

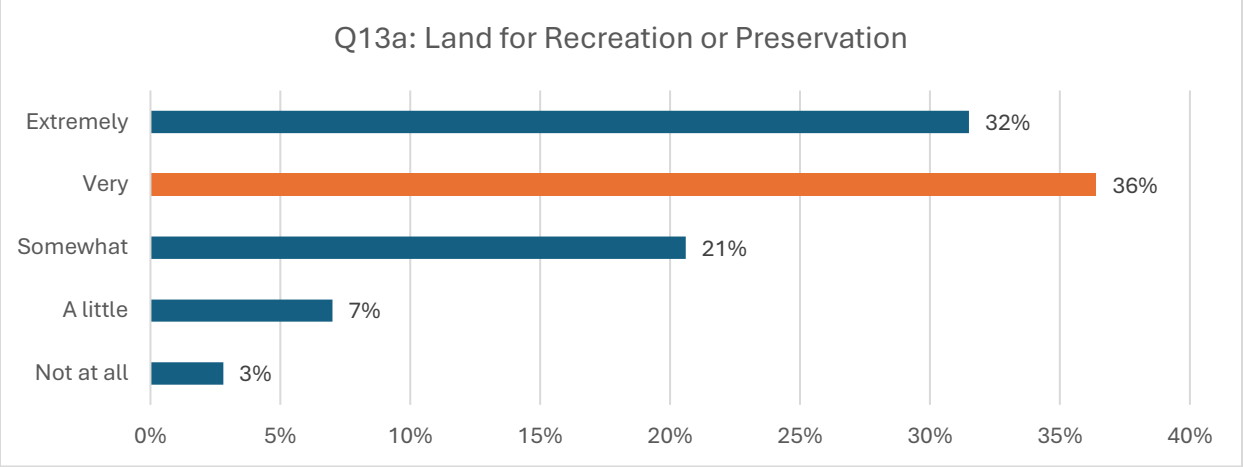
Q12: How much do parks and open spaces improve your quality of life?

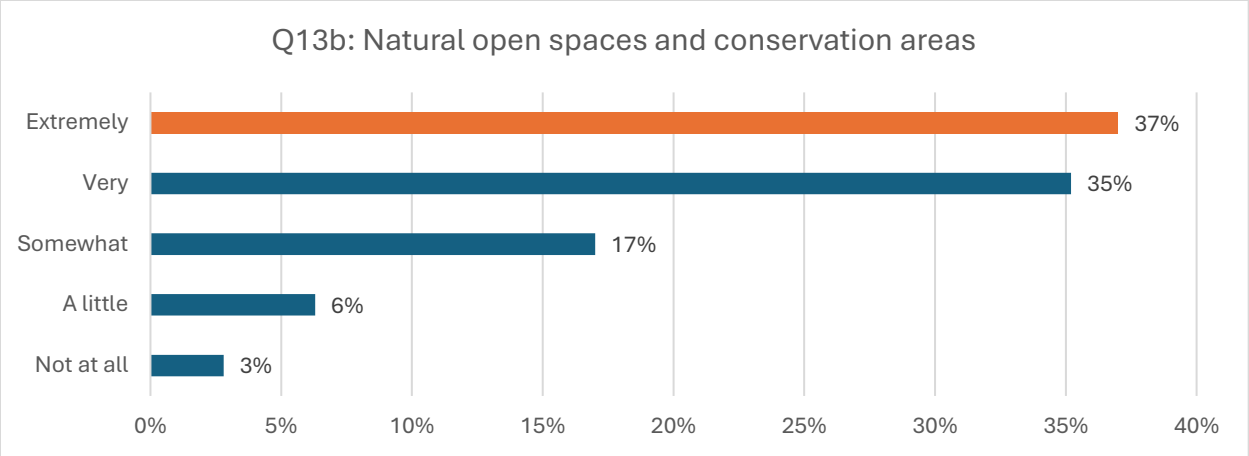
- Parks and open space play a vital role in the lives of many; 84% of respondents say that parks and open space improve their quality of life 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal'.

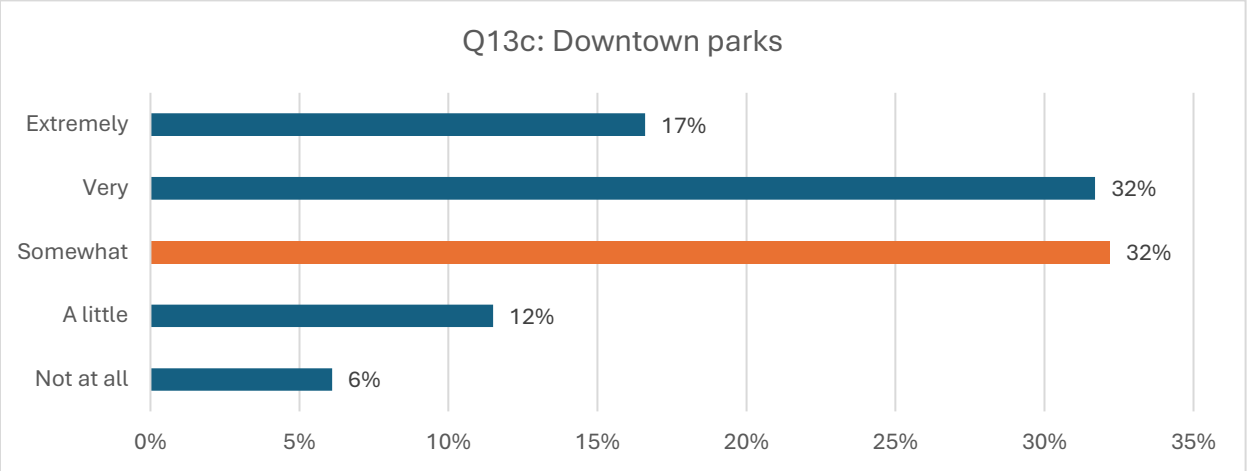


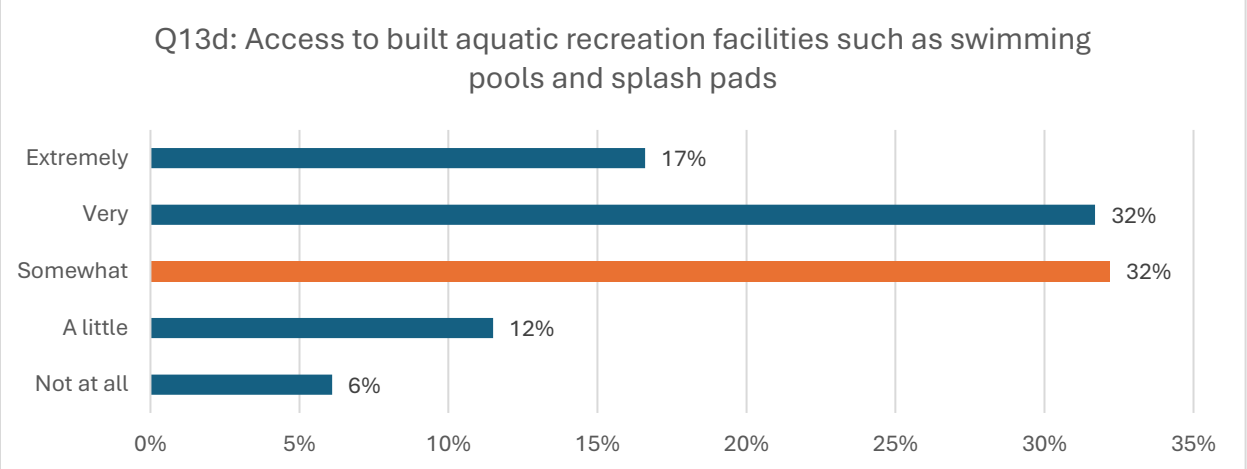
Q13: How important is it for the City to have each of the following facilities or amenities?

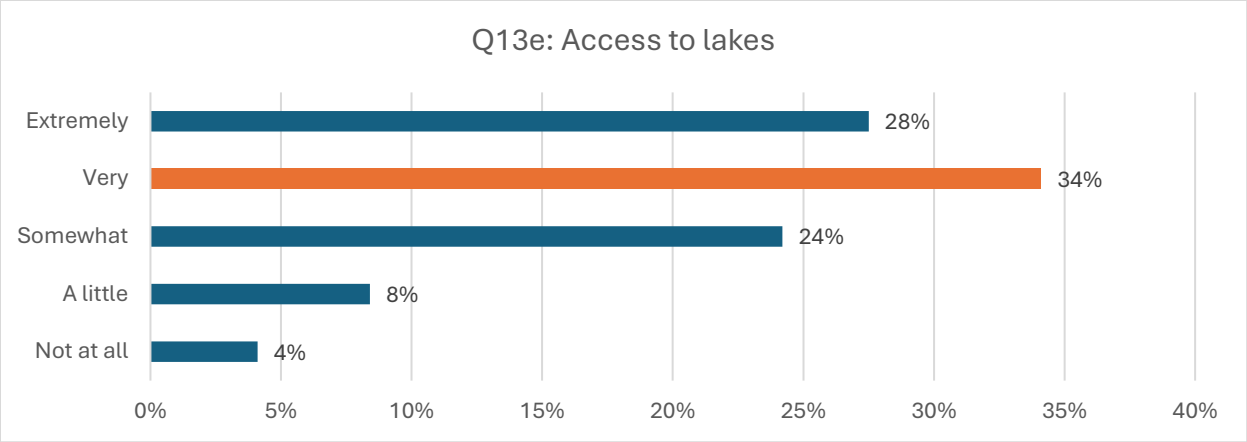
- Of the categories listed, roughly 30-36% of respondents believed downtown parks, access to aquatic facilities, fields for sports activities, recreational programming, and dog parks were "somewhat" important facilities for the City to include in its parks system.

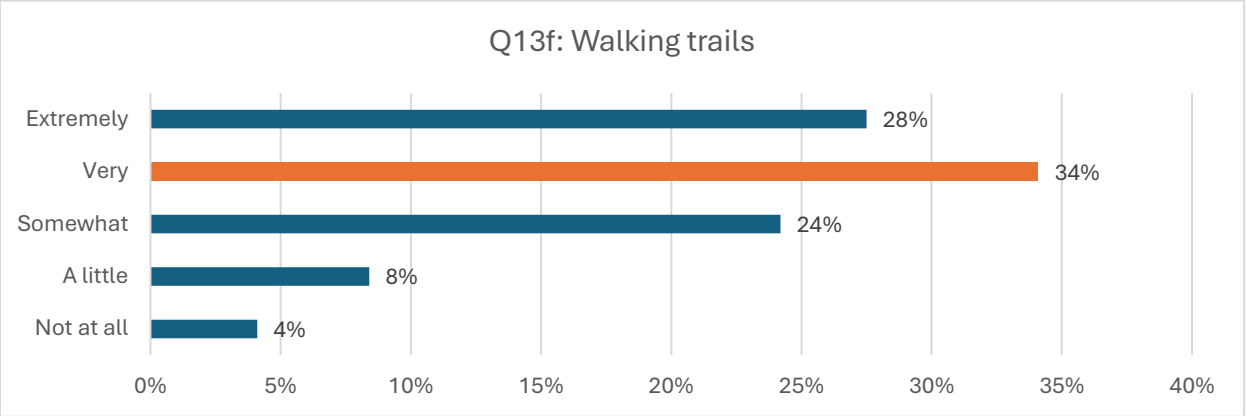


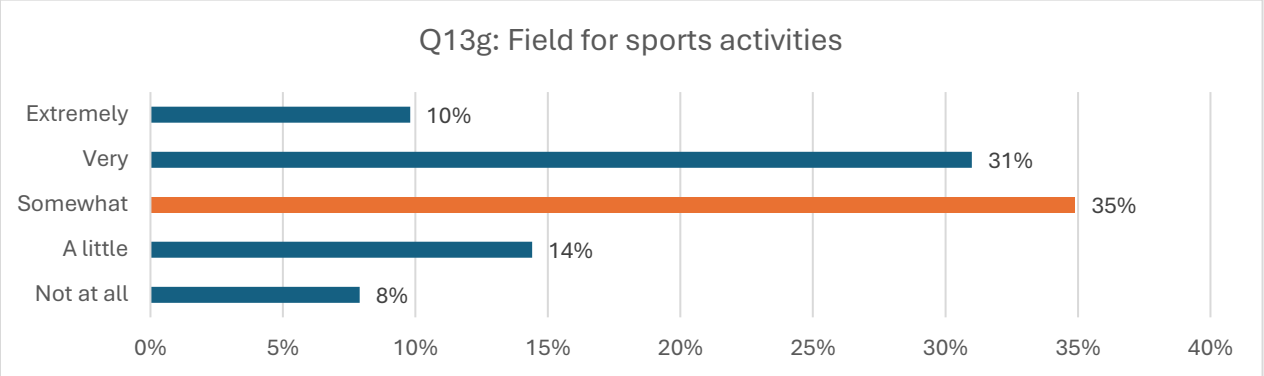

Q13b: Natural open spaces and conservation areas
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
37%
35%
17%
6%
3%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

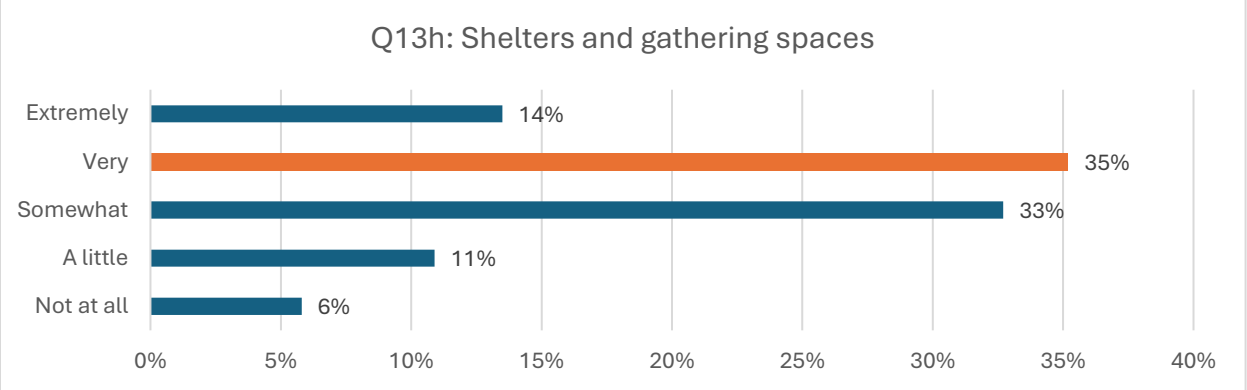

Q13c: Downtown parks
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
17%
32%
32%
12%
6%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%

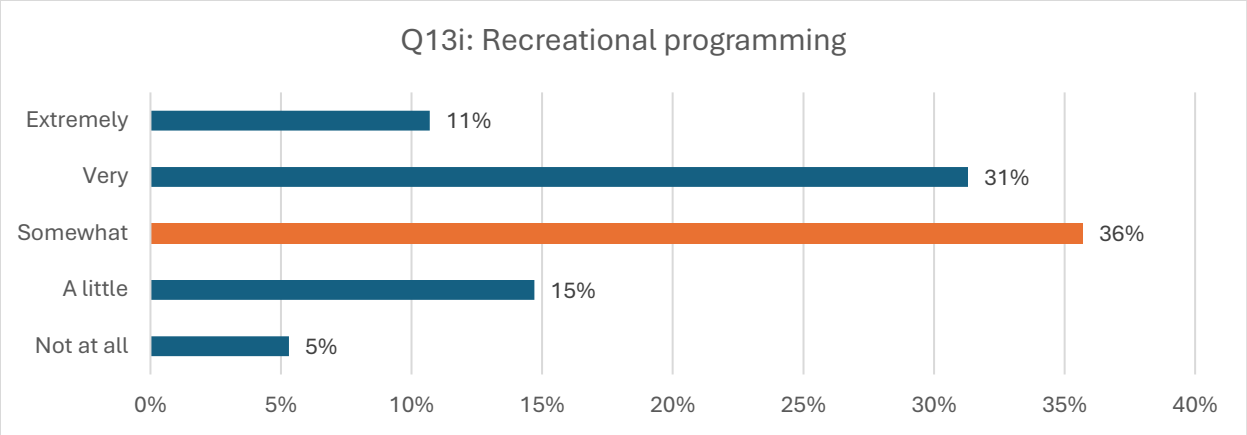

Q13d: Access to built aquatic recreation facilities such as swimming pools and splash pads
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
17%
32%
32%
12%
6%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%

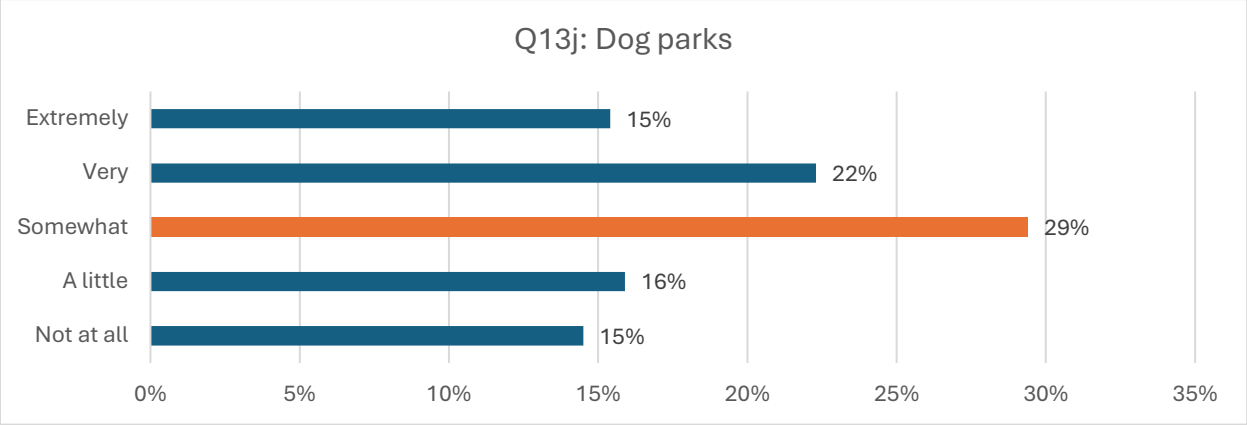

Q13e: Access to lakes
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
28%
34%
24%
8%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

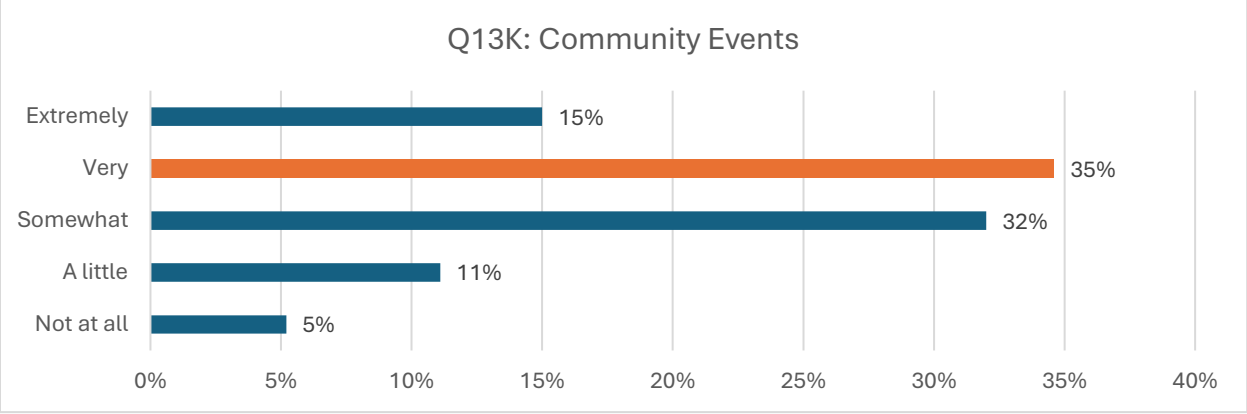

Q13f: Walking trails
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
28%
34%
24%
8%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%


Q13g: Field for sports activities
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
10%
31%
35%
14%
8%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%


Q13h: Shelters and gathering spaces
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
14%
35%
33%
11%
6%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

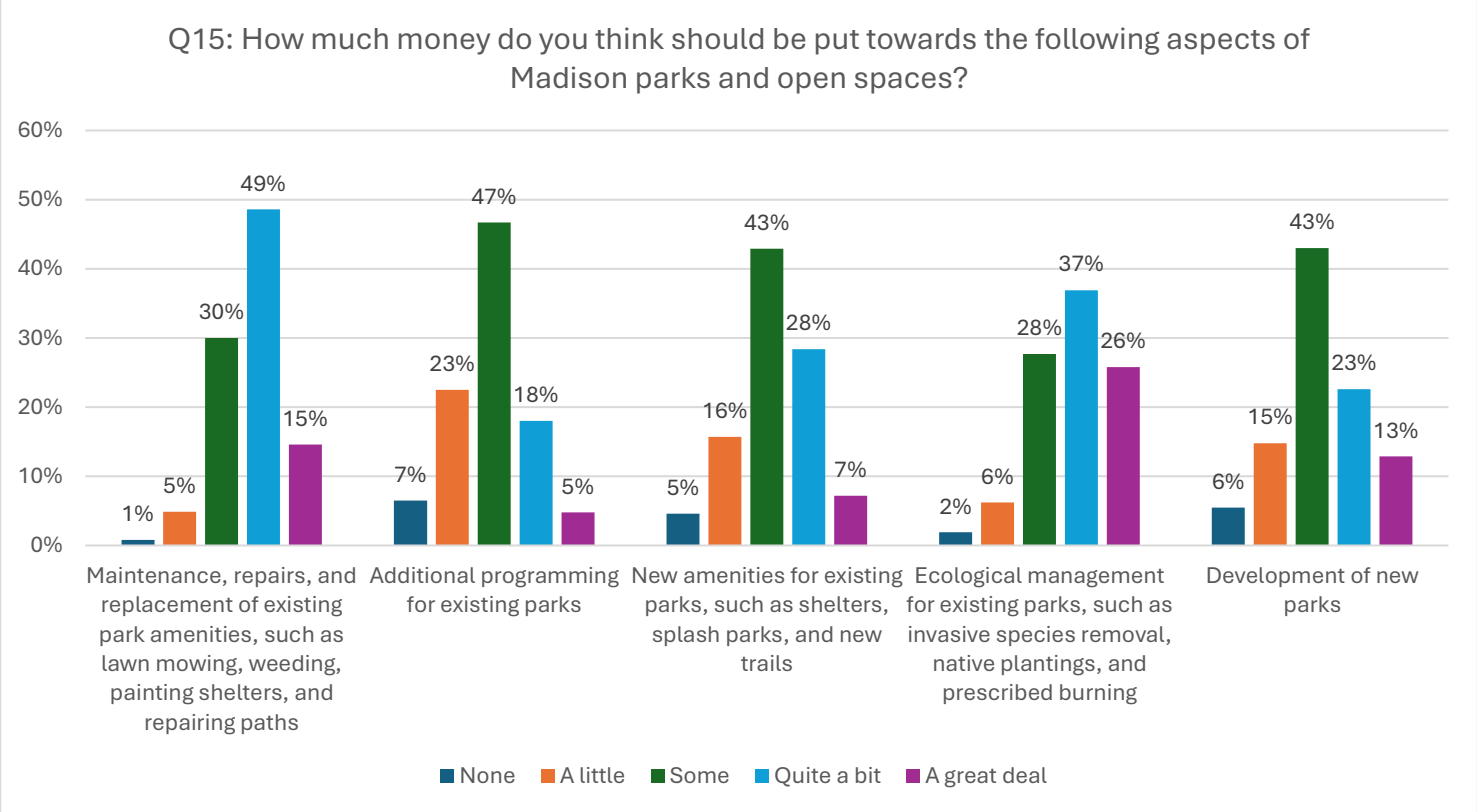

Q13i: Recreational programming
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
11%
31%
36%
15%
5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%


Q13j: Dog parks
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
15%
22%
29%
16%
15%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%


Q13K: Community Events
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
15%
35%
32%
11%
5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

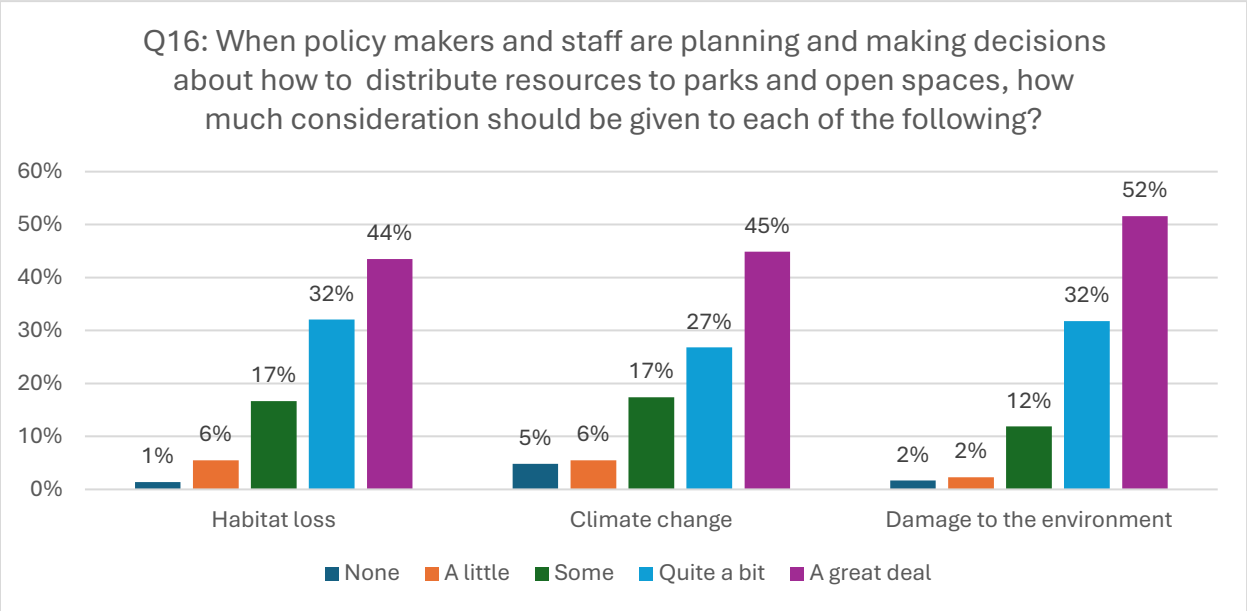
Q15: How much money do you think should be put towards the following aspects of Madison parks and open spaces?

- When asked where money should be distributed amongst aspects of Madison parks and open spaces, the greatest support was for maintenance and repairs, and ecological management. Additional programming received the least amount of support.



Q16: When policy makers and staff are planning and making decisions about how to distribute resources to parks and open spaces, how much consideration should be given to each of the following?

- Trends between each of the considerations –habitat loss, climate change, damage to the environment—show clearly that all three are high priorities for Madison communities.



<u>Open Ended Questions:</u>

Q4: Please tell us about barriers you may have faced in accessing Madison parks and suggestions you have for improving access

Example Comments:

- *"Of everywhere I've lived, Madison has the most accessible parks that I want to go to. No issues here."*
- *"I do not feel all parks have good seating spots for people like me that are disabled"*
- *"I do not have a car, so I have to rely on walking or public transportation. The bus routes are not always helpful and often take much longer than I feel is necessary to get to a green space."*
- *"Better online bicycle path maps and kayak launch maps. Better boat launch markings visible from the water. Have had difficulty finding my start point"*
- *"Need better plowing of sidewalks and entrances in the winter"*

Q5: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel safe, comfortable, or welcome?

When asked to elaborate, comments included:

- *"Sometimes people have dogs off leash and that concerns me."*
- *"Some of the parks are not as well lit in the evenings."*

- *"I may not feel safe because of the group or individual using the park at that time."*

Q8: Do you feel the City of Madison has too few, just the right amount, or too many facilities for each of the following types of activities?

Additional activities, programming, and facilities residents would like to see more of included:

- Indigenous peoples cultural education, and other similar educational programming
- Volleyball
- Skateboarding
- Sky gazing, birdwatching, and other passive recreational activities
- Festivals, live music, and other events

Q14: Is there another facility or amenity you would like to see <u>more</u> of in Madison Parks that was not listed? If so, please tell us:

Additional amenities included:

- Pools and splash pads
- Connected biking and walking trails
- Pickle ball courts
- Public restrooms

Q23: Please tell us your favorite thing about Madison Parks and open spaces:

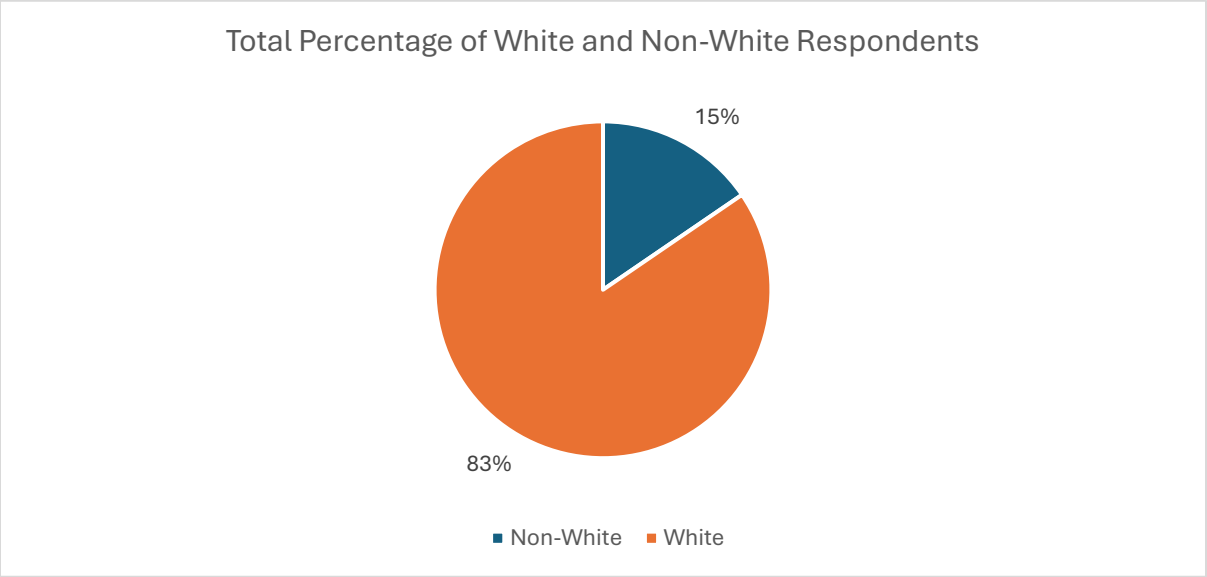
Example Comments:

- *"I love my city and the access to parks is an enormous part of that. It's shared community space and the parks service does a lot to make it accessible and that there are a variety of activities available for the variety of the populace."*
- *"I like the access to more natural environments and green spaces within the city."*
- *"They invite me to be outside more and to share the beautiful parts of Madison with others. Madison parks make it easier to host community events than other spaces."*
- *"The number and variety are great! I love that so many embrace the lakes."*

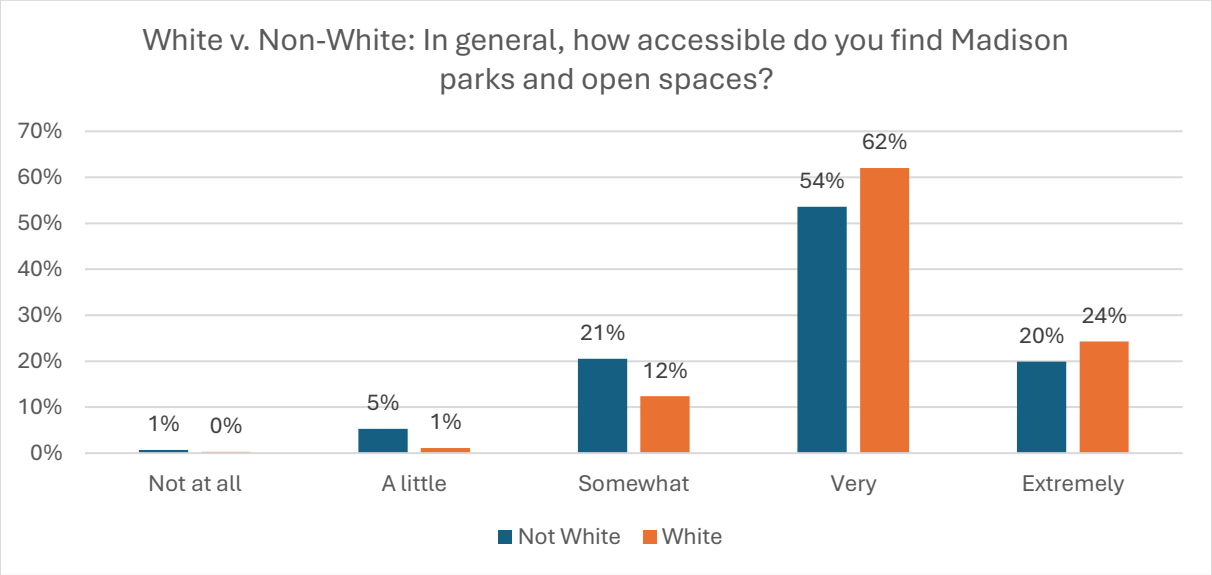
Cross Tabulated Data Summary

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to answer several demographic questions to gauge who responded to the survey. This data was then cross tabulated against a selection of key questions throughout the survey to evaluate if and how responses varied based on **race**, **income**, **housing tenue**, or **ability**. The following is a summary of the cross-tabulated data.

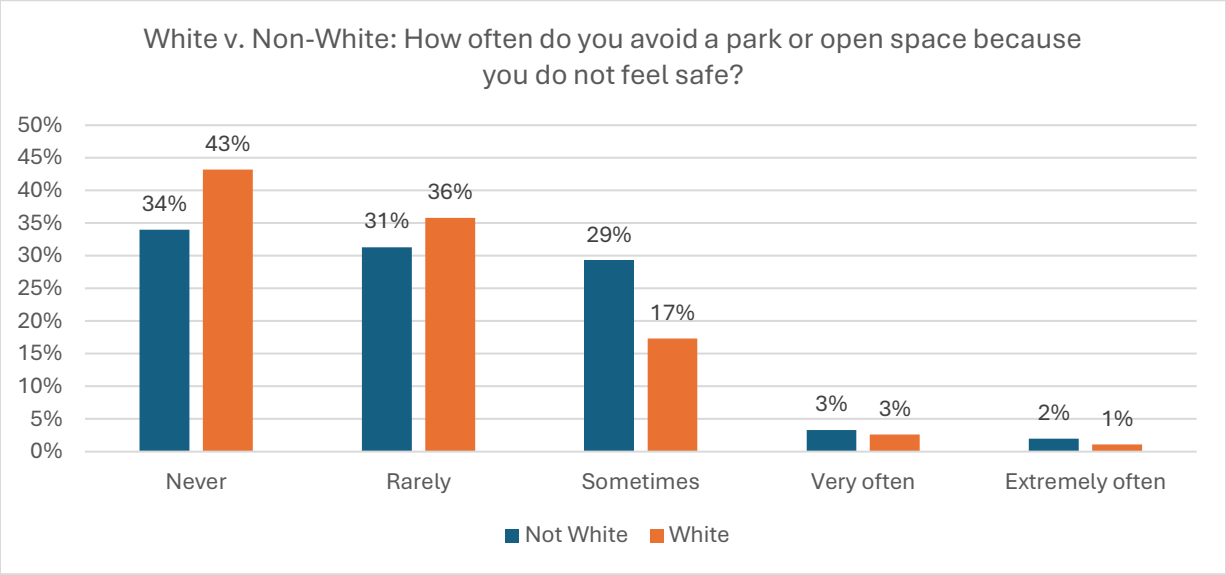
Race



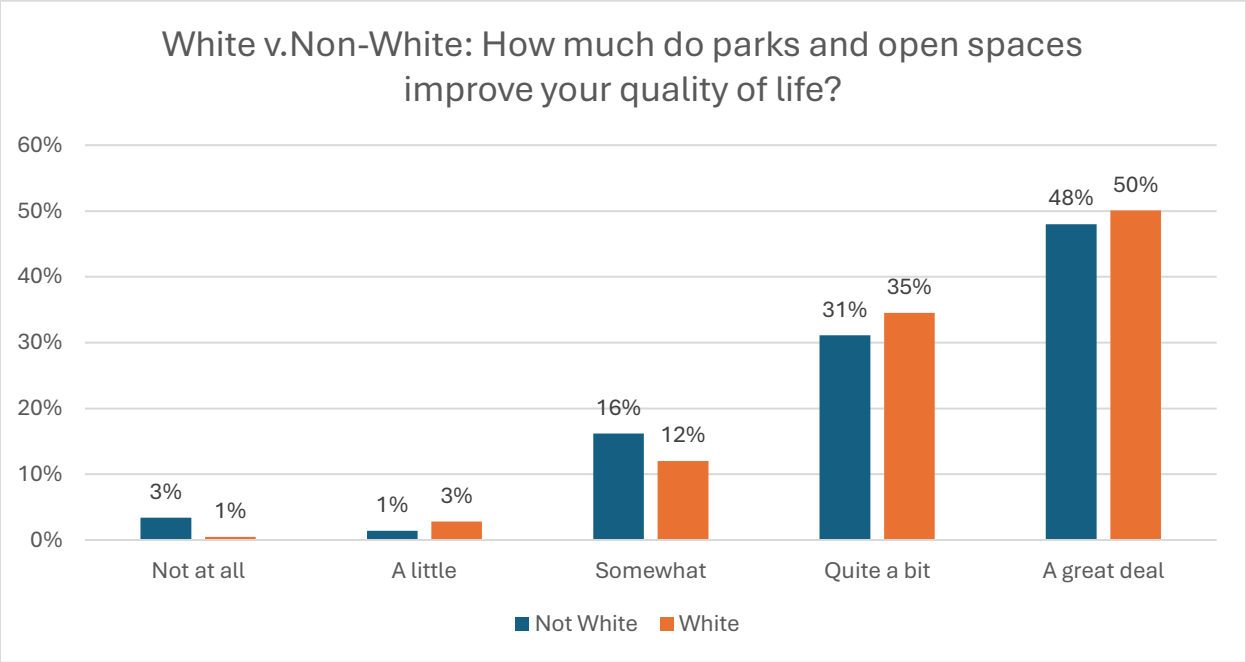
In total, 15% of survey respondents were non-white, compared to 83% of white respondents; 11% skipped this question. This survey broke down categories for race into 18 discrete categories that include multiple races. These categories were consolidated for analysis. Of the survey respondents who identified as non-white, 29% identify as Asian, 15% as Black, and 13% as other.



Overall, both white and non-white participants find Madison parks and open spaces to be very or extremely accessible, however white participants felt more strongly favorable than non-white participants.

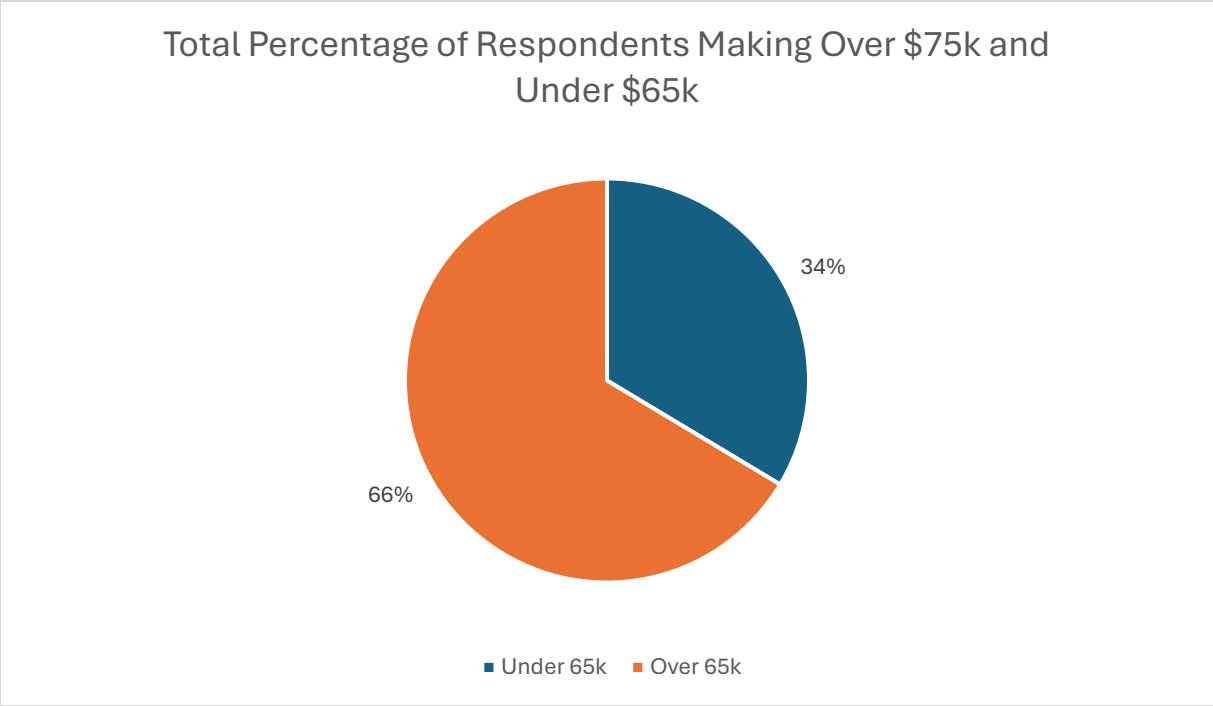


While only 17% of those identifying as white said they sometimes avoid parks and open space due to safety, nearly 30% of non-white respondents chose sometimes. Overall, the majority of both white and non-white respondents rarely or never avoid parks and open spaces due to safety.

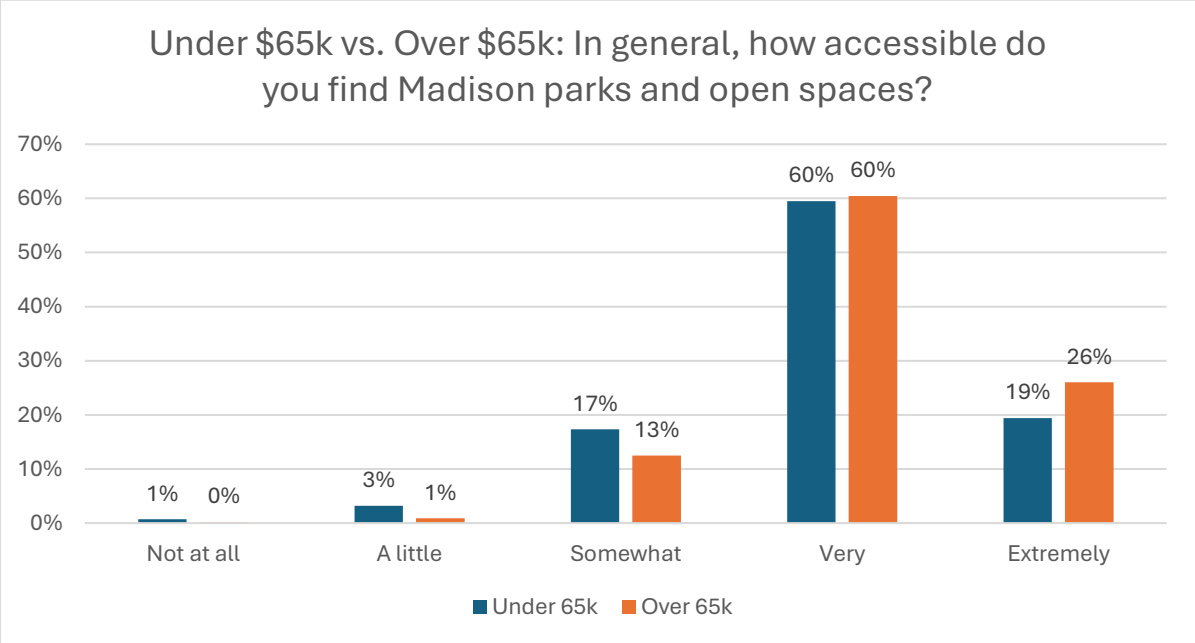


Both white and non-white participants overarchingly identified parks and open spaces as improving quality of life either quite a bit or a great deal.

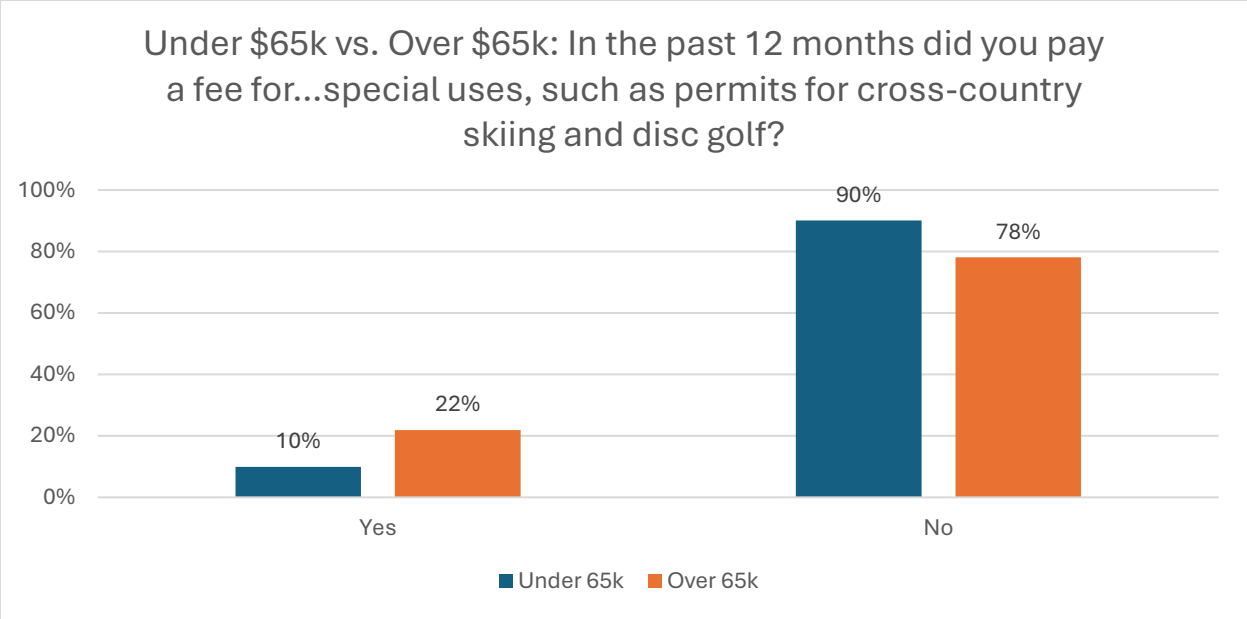
Income



Of those who responded to the survey, 66% make over $75k a year and 34% make under $65k a year. This question erroneously omitted an option for those who make between $65,000 and $75,001.

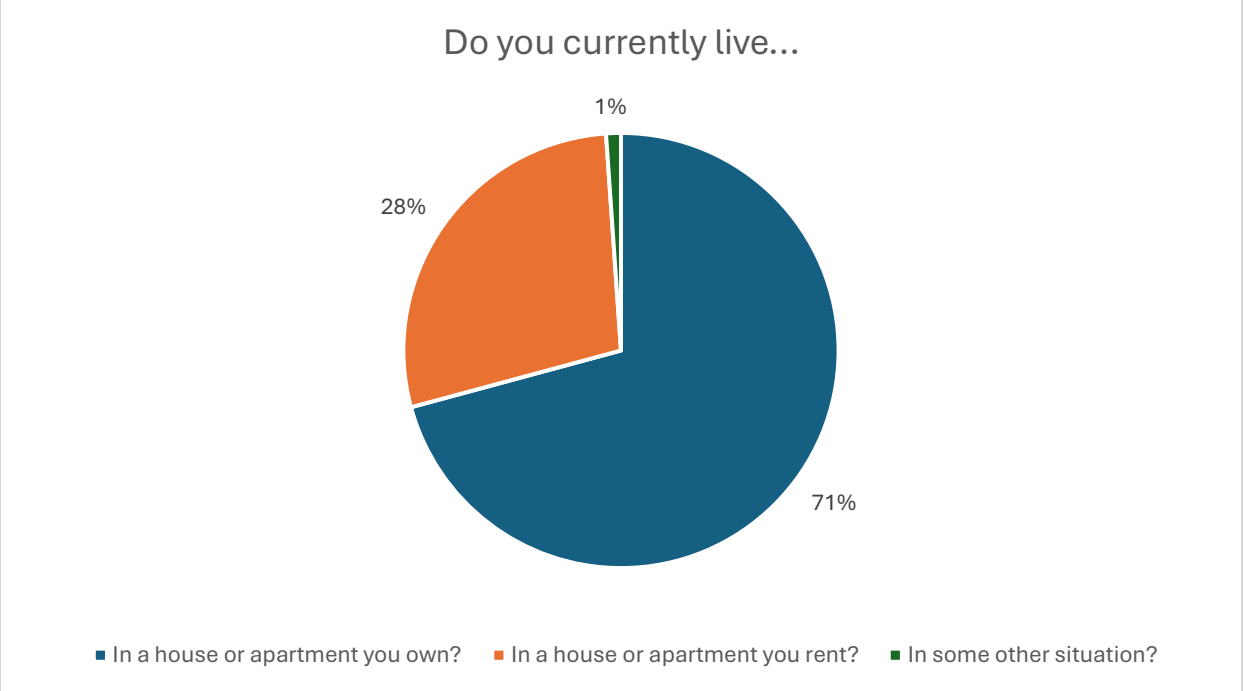


Although those with income above $65k responded slightly more positively, the majority of both income groups identified Madison parks and open spaces as very accessible.

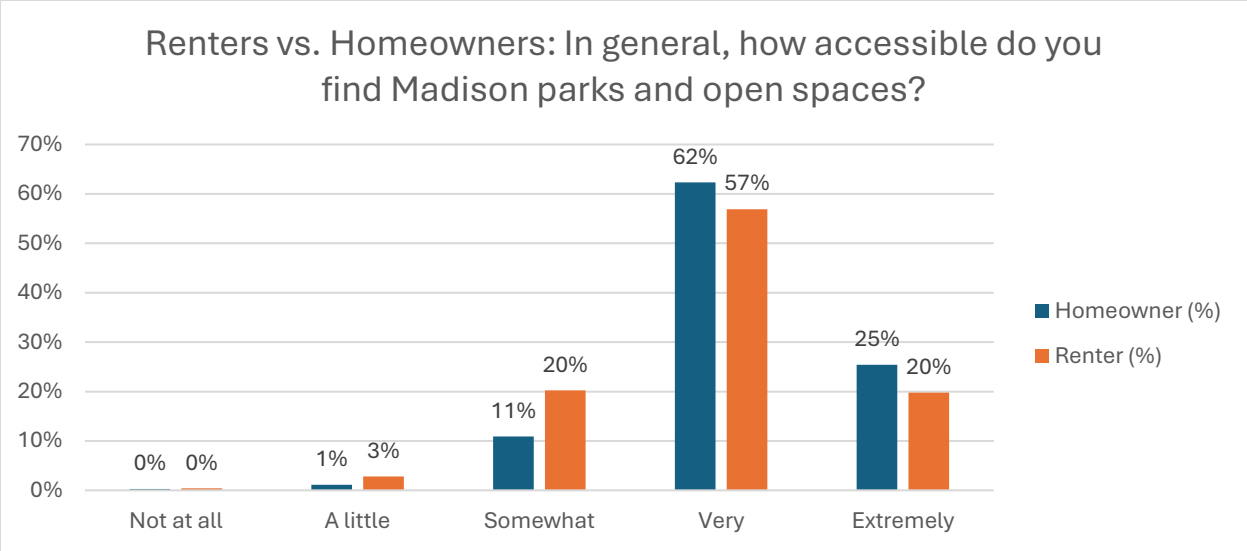


Those who made over $65k pay for special uses at a slightly higher rate than those who make under $65k.

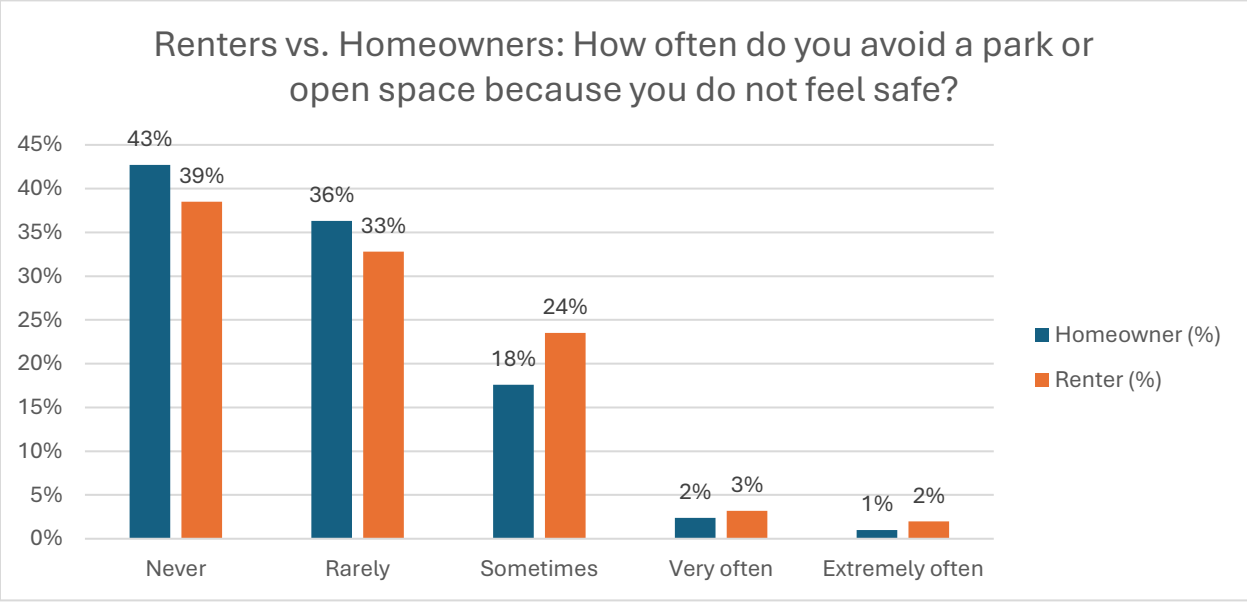
Housing



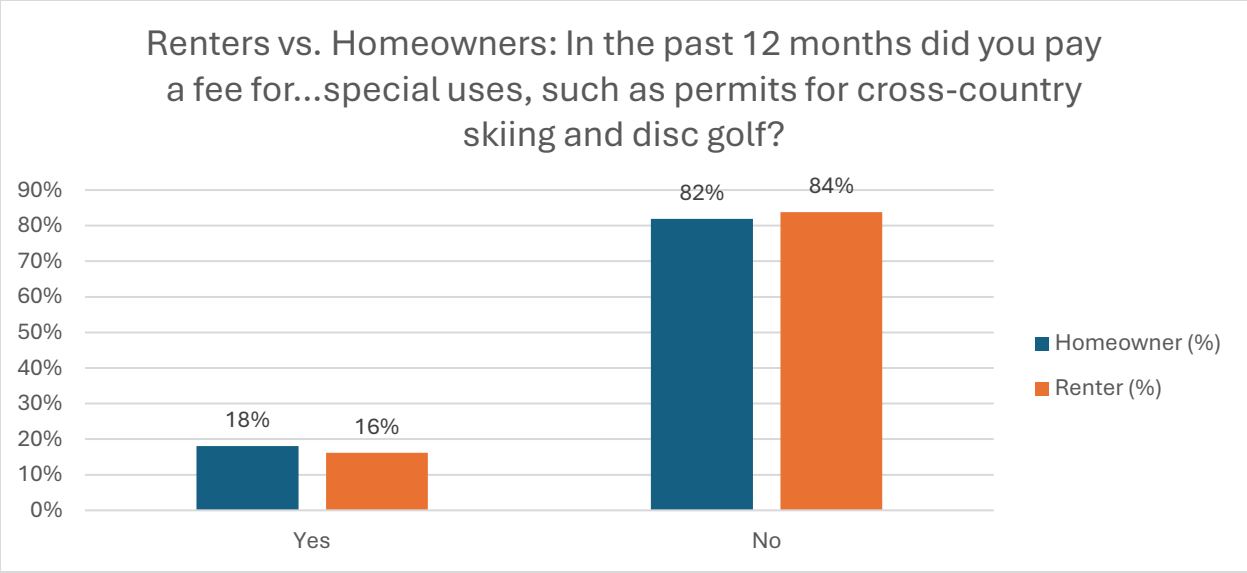
Data was cross tabulated to compare the responses between those who identified as renters and those who identified as homeowners. 71% of respondents identified as homeowners, compared to 28% of renters.



In comparison to homeowners, renters had a slightly less positive response to the accessibility of Madison parks and open spaces. While only 11% of homeowners found the parks and open spaces only somewhat accessible, 20% of renters identified the parks as only somewhat accessible.

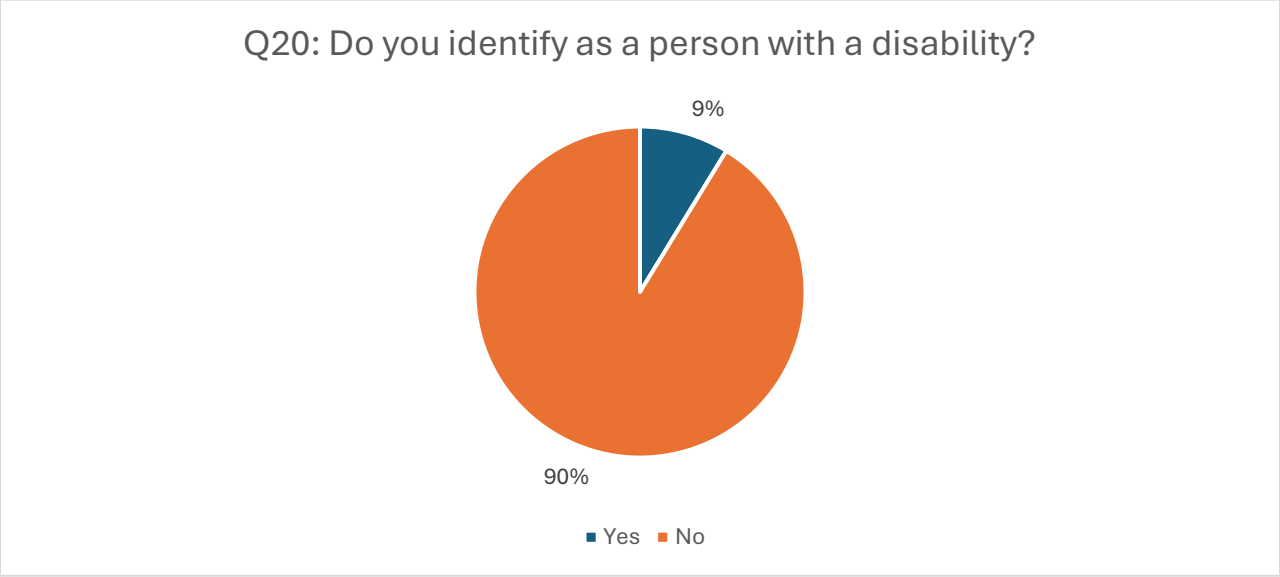


Although the majority of both renters and homeowners both either never or rarely avoid parks and open spaces due to safety, renters trended slightly less positive, with 18% of homeowners saying they sometimes don't feel safe, compared to 24% of renters.

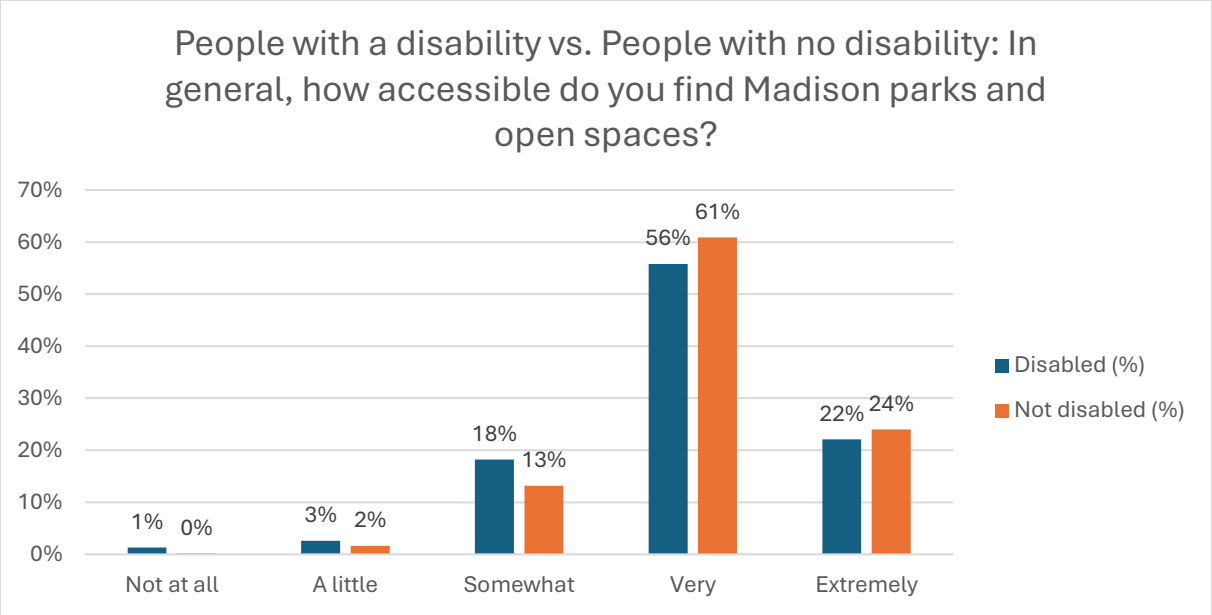


Comparing renters and homeowners, there is almost no difference in the percent of survey participants who have paid a park fee in the previous 12 months and the percent who have not paid a park fee.

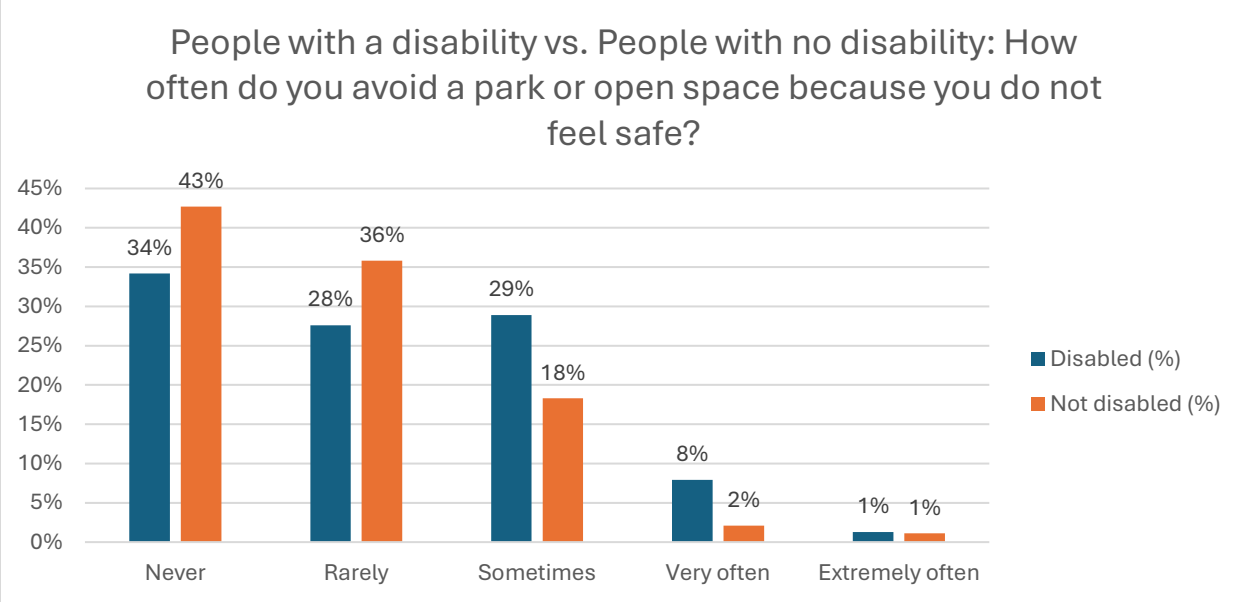
Ability



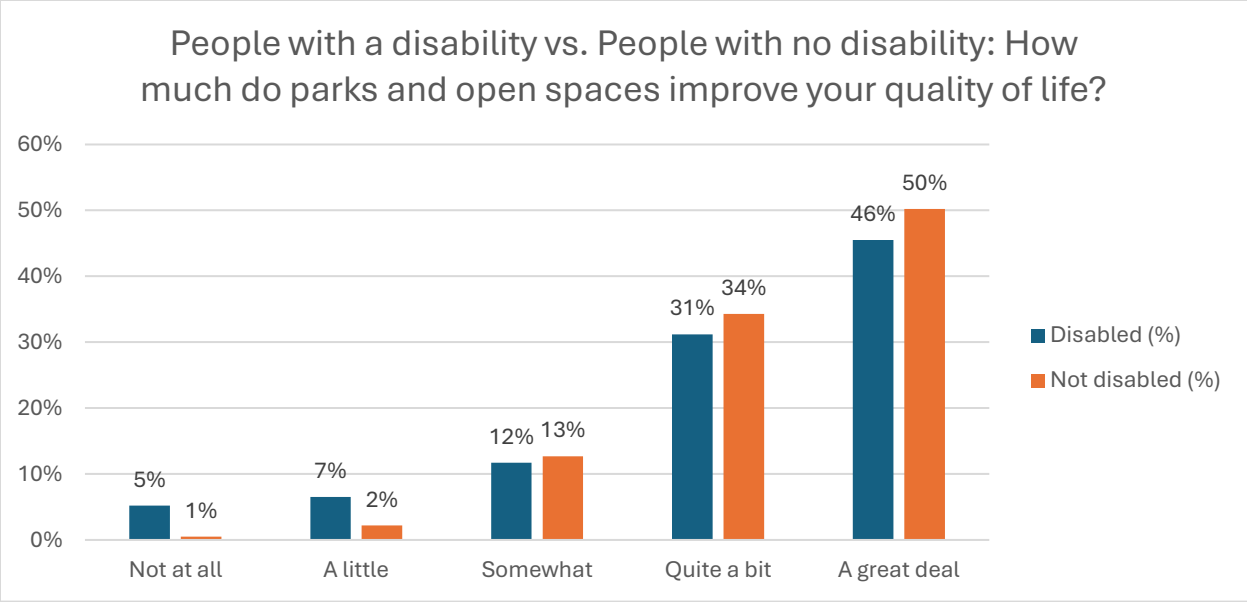
Of those who responded to the survey, about 90% identified as not having a disability and 9% identified as a person with a disability.



The majority of both disabled and not disabled survey participants find Madison parks and open spaces to be very or extremely accessible. However, those who identified as disabled overall responded slightly less positively to accessibility than those without a disability.



Compared to those without a disability, over a third of survey participants who identified as disabled said they avoided parks or open spaces due to safety either sometimes or very often. However, more than half still said rarely or never for both disabled and not disabled respondents.



When asked about quality-of-life improvement, both disabled and not disabled participants said parks and open spaces improved their quality of life a great deal or quite a bit. Compared to those who identified as not disabled, disabled respondents voted less favorably overall to improved quality-of-life.

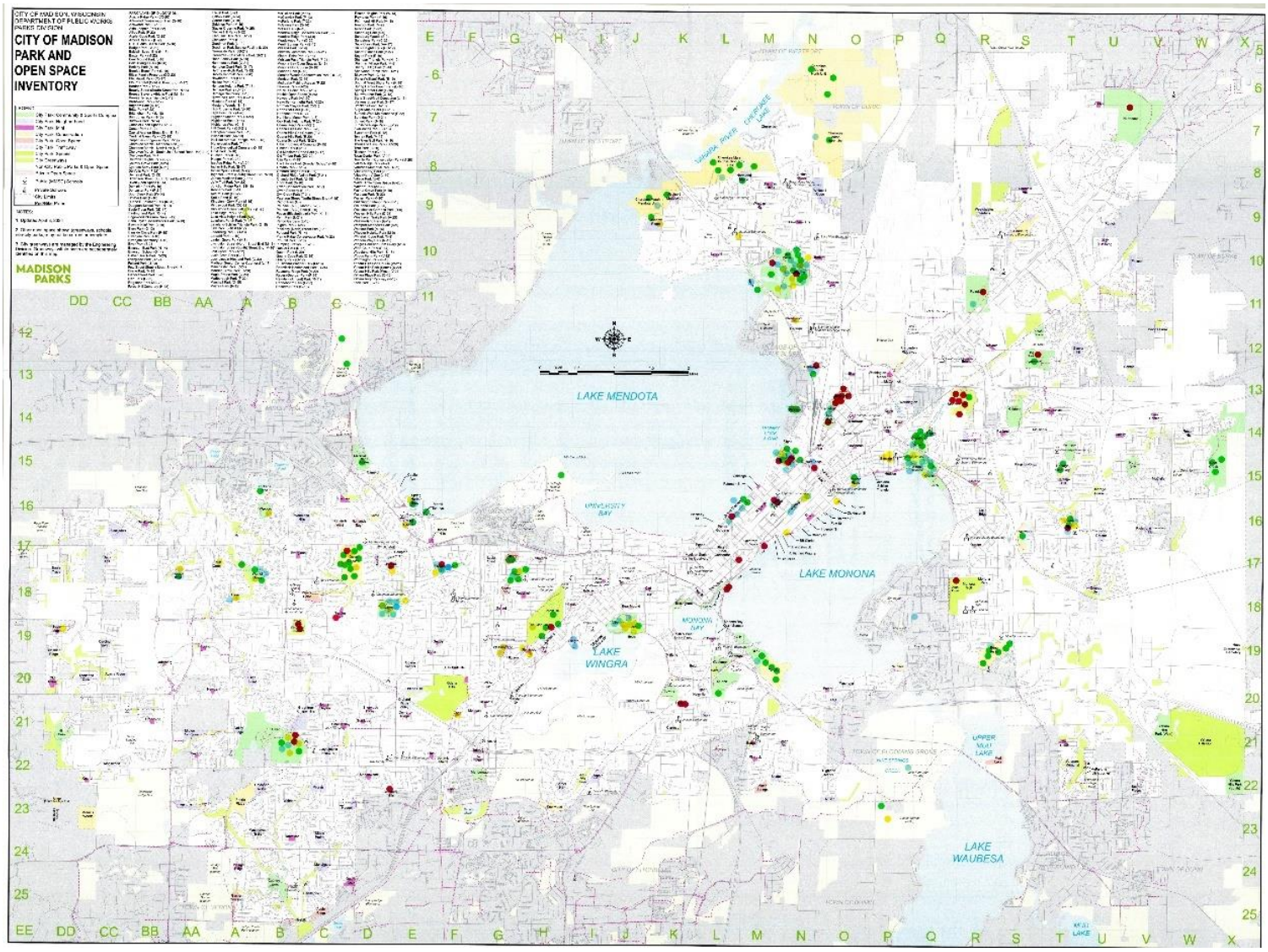
Public Input Meetings (PIMs)

Madison Parks and MSA Professional Services, Inc. held a total of four Public Input Meetings (PIMs) around Madison to gather input on the POSP update. The PIMs dates were as follows:

1. April 4th at Vel Phillips Memorial High School
2. April 25th at Warner Park Community Recreation Center
3. May 2nd at Olbrich Botanical Gardens Atrium
4. May 9th at the Madison Parks Office (Olin Park)

These meetings were intended to be open-house style, with a small presentation at the top of the meeting. Residents were asked to participate in a series of activities designed to gauge resident's priorities.

Mapping Madison:



- KEY:
    - Green Dots: Your favorite park to enjoy nature
    - Red Dots: Park you think is most in need of improvement
    - Blue Dots: Your favorite park to go to with children
    - Yellow Dots: the park you think is best for group activites

Park	Green	Blue	Red	Yellow	Total
Olbrich	9	11		2	22
Vilas	1	3		5	9
Garner	1	6		2	9
Edna Taylor	6	1			7
Cherokee Marsh S	5	1			6
Olin Turville	5	1			6
Hoyt	4	1		1	6
Walnut Grove	3	2		1	6
Cherokee Marsh N	4	1			5
McPike		3		2	5
Yahara Place	1	2		1	4
Burrows	3				3
Door Creek	3				3
Elmside				3	3
Spring Harbor Beach	1	1		1	3
Cherokee Marsh Mendota	1	1			2
Meadow Ridge	1			1	2
Reindahl		1		1	2
Heritage Sanctuary	2				2
Quarry	2				2
Wingra		2			2
Glenwood				2	2
Westmorland				2	2
Spring Harbor	1			1	2
Pheasant Branch Cons.	2				2
Junction Ridge	1			1	2
Haen		1		1	2
Capital Springs	1			1	2
Westport Meadows	1				1
Northland Manor	1				1
Mendota Elementary				1	1
Brentwood				1	1
Acewood	1				1
Morrison				1	1
BB Clark				1	1

Quann	1				1
Eagle Heights	1				1
Merrill Springs	1				1
Marshall N Estates	1				1
Wexford				1	1
Strickers Pond	1				1
Sauk Creek				1	1
Zook				1	1
Sugar Maple				1	1
Lake Farm		1			1
Monona United Methodist Church		1			1
Warner	11	11	2	5	29
Owen Cons.	10		1	2	13
Elvehjem	2	2	1	3	8
James Madison	2	4	1		7
Rennebohm	1	4	1	1	7
Forest Hill	4		1	1	6
Tenney	3	6	3	2	14
Elver	2	2	2	3	9
Hartmeyer-Roth	1	1	1		3
Breese Stevens		2	2		4
Dog Park Sycamore	1		1		2
Burr Jones		1	1		2
Glen Oak			1	1	2
Demetral		2	7		9
Starkweather	1		6		7
Brittingham			2		2
Heifetz			2		2
West Towne Detention			2		2
Northeast			1		1
Law			1		1
Monona Terrace			1		1
Nautilus Point			1		1
Western Hills			1		1
Monona Golf			1		1
Total	**103**	**75**	**43**	**54**	**275**

In total, 275 dots were placed on the map by participants cumulatively across all of the meetings. Warner Park received the most dots, with 29, followed by Olbrich Park, with 22 dots. In both parks, the majority of dots were blue and green. The parks that received the most red dots were Demetral and Starkweather, with 7 and 6 red dots, respectively. Green dots were the most assigned category, with 103

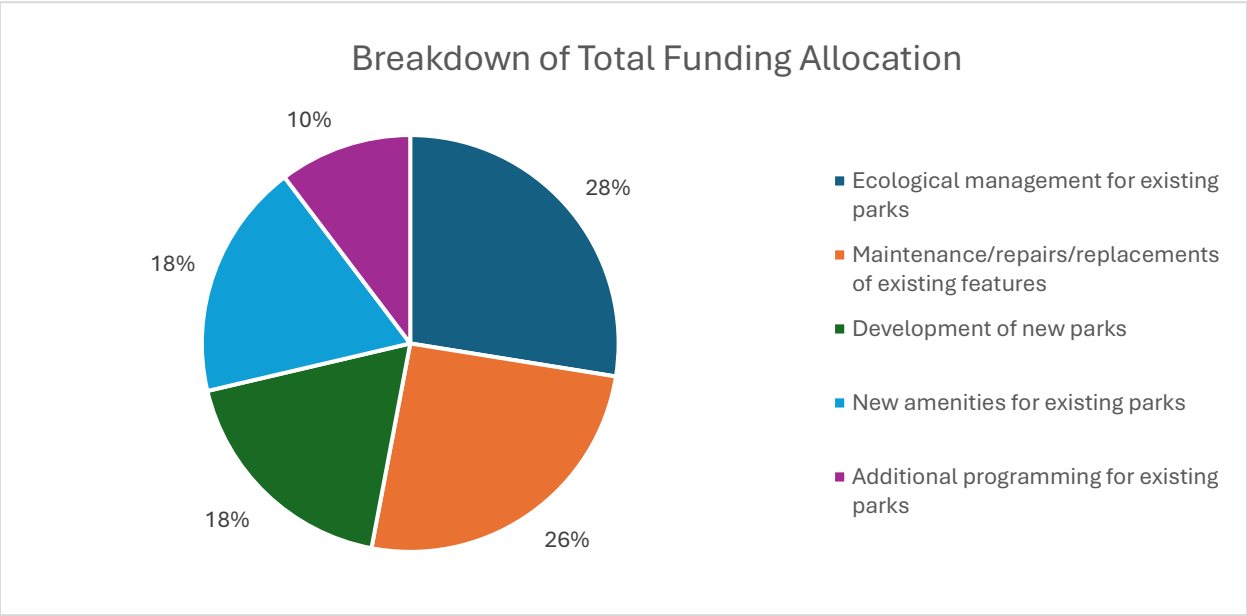
dots out of 275 total dots. The parks along the Isthmus and in the Near East side received the most votes, with the rest of the votes scattered throughout the West Side. The majority of negative votes, or red dots, were located in the parks on the Near East side. The votes for each park tended to skew very positive or very negative, and only a few of the parks fell in the middle.

Balance the Budget: Over 60 participants through the course of the meetings participated in this activity. Participants were asked how they would allocate a Parks budget of $100 amongst five different spending categories using colorful pom-pom. Participants were given 10 pom-poms each, with each one representing $10 dollars. The funding categories included:

1. Development of new parks
2. Additional programming for existing parks
3. Maintenance/repairs/replacements of existing features
4. New amenities for existing parks
5. Ecological management for existing parks

Total pom-pom counts per meeting:

Category	Development of new parks	Additional programming for existing parks	Maintenance/repairs/ replacements of existing features	New amenities for existing parks	Ecological management for existing parks
Meeting 1	50	25	55	37	51
Meeting 2	37	24	40	20	44
Meeting 3	6	3	28	31	34
Meeting 4	21	12	35	26	42
Total	114	64	158	114	171



Issue Boards:

Participants were asked to comment on a series of issues which are highlighted in the plan, including:

1. Climate Resilience – 33 Comments
2. Volunteers in Parks – 24 Comments
3. Golf – 32 Comments
4. Activating Parks – 42 Comments
5. Recreational Biking – Recreational Biking
6. Lame Monona Waterfront – 27 Comments

Total: 152 Comments

- **Climate Resilience**
    - The overarching themes from comments provided were support for maintaining natural areas, preservation of the tree canopy, reduction of hard surfaces, and special attention to habitats for pollinators and birds. Additionally, participants were interested in additional educational resources and opportunities for the public.
    - *"Park planning should take the ecological and social impacts of climate change into consideration e.g. think about what parks could do to help people adapt (more gardens, etc.)."*
- **Volunteers in Parks**
    - On the topic of volunteering, community participants often cited a number of potential opportunities for improvement, which included improved access to information, stronger inter-organizational participants, and more tailored participation opportunities for specific groups of people. More broadly, PIM participants seek volunteering efforts which are rooted in the needs, wants, and ideas of the prospective and active volunteers.
- **Golf**
    - Participants express both excitement and concerns about the future of golf in Madison Parks. Some expressed concern about ecological health, limited usage, and financial costs and benefits. However, some residents also note the financial accessibility of an otherwise costly spot, and the potential for economic sustainability of the Parks Department due to the popularity of the sport.
    - *"Need outreach programs to encourage young golfers, build a more diverse clientele."*
- **Activating Parks**
    - Common interests from engagement participants for park activation include skateboarding, pickleball, and dog parks. Additionally, there was community interest for cultural events, and ensuring that Madison Parks are a hub for cultural celebrations for the diverse residents, and education for the public.
- **Recreational Biking**
    - Participants showed interest in an interconnected system of bike paths through Madison and extending into the surrounding municipalities. However, some emphasized the importance of being environmentally sensitive to the natural habitats throughout Madison Parks.

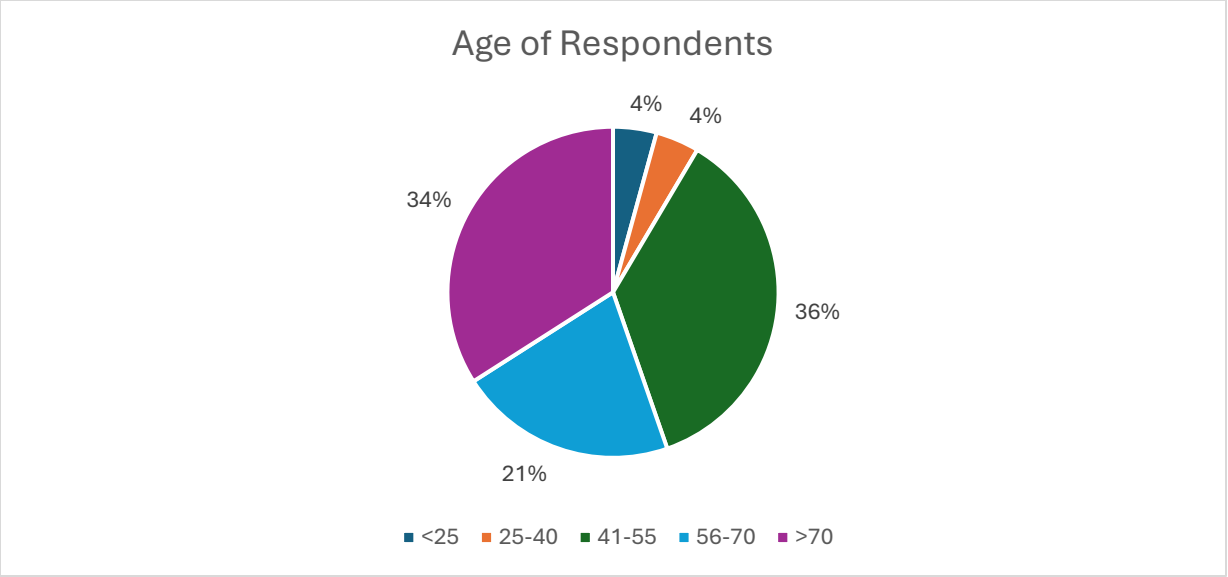
- *“Madison's bike community is large and vibrant and growing. I'd personally love more infrastructure for both recreation and transportation.“*

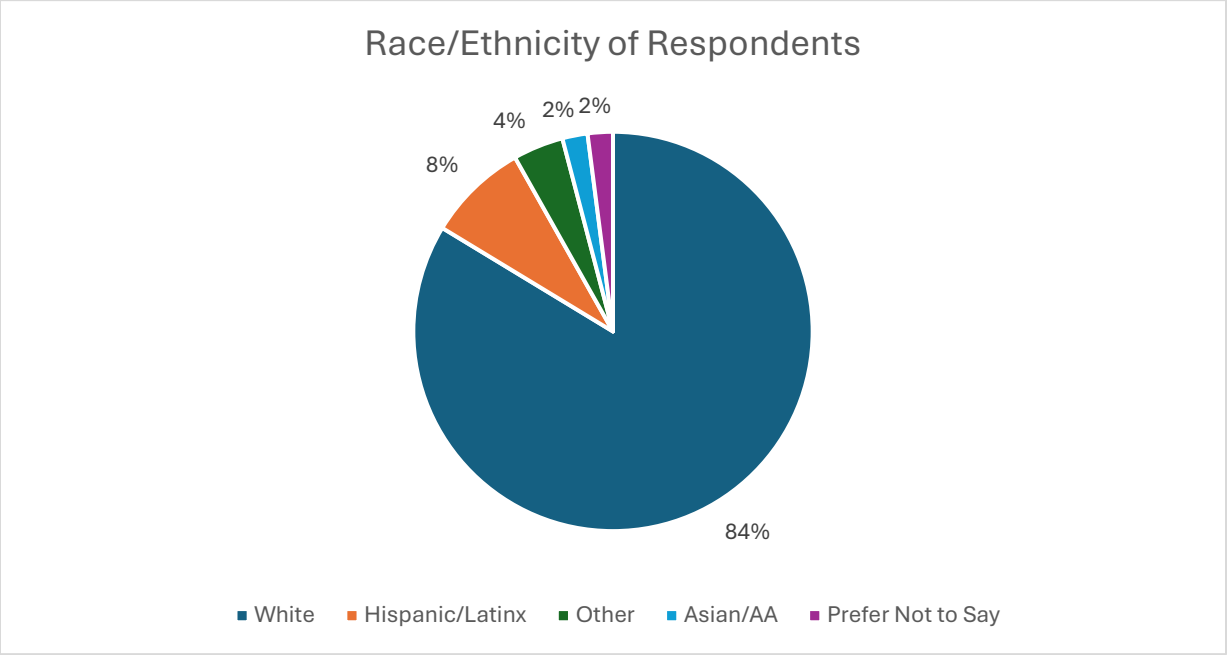
- **Lake Monona Waterfront**
  - With upcoming changes planned for the Lake Monona waterfront, community comments focused on protection of natural and ecological health and quality communication between the City and residents.
  - *“Everyone should be comfortable along our lakefront, being in an automobile shouldn’t give one priority over others.”*

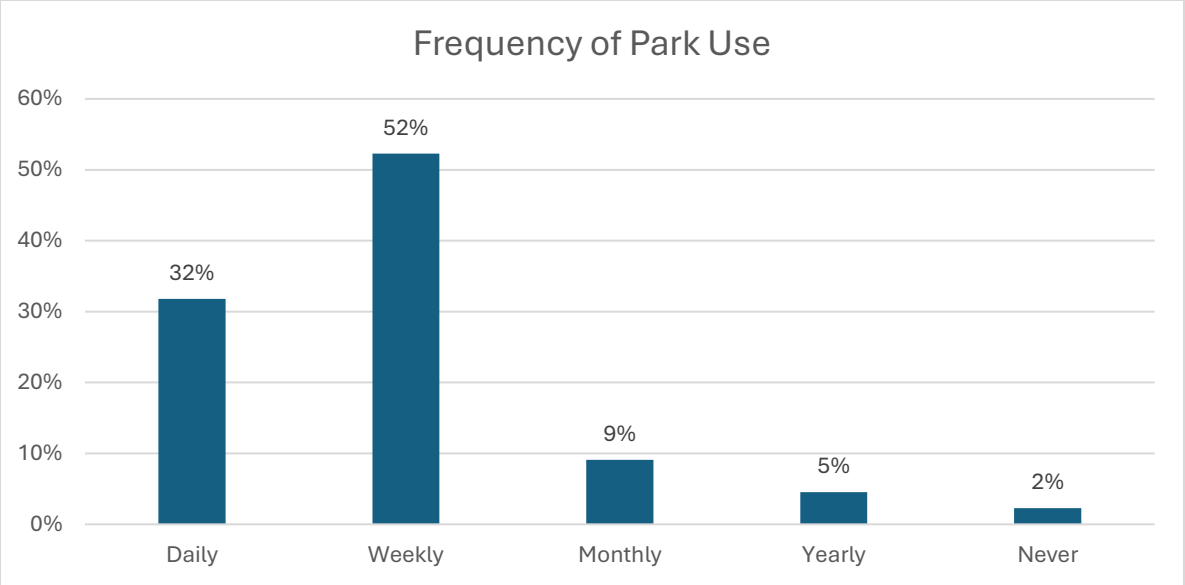
Facility Board: Participants were asked to place stickers on the board corresponding to the facilities/activities that a member of their household has participate in/utilized in the last 12 month. Of the options presented, leisure activities were the most popular, and golfing was the least popular.

PIM Attendees Demographics

At the start of each meeting, the Madison Parks Department presented a short summary of the plan, and included a Mentimeter survey with demographic information. It is important to note that the open-house style of the meetings mean that not all of those who attended the meetings participated in the demographic survey. Of those who participated in the Mentimeter survey, results are summarized below:


Age of Respondents
4%
4%
34%
36%
21%
<25
25-40
41-55
56-70
>70


Race/Ethnicity of Respondents
4%
2%
2%
8%
84%
White
Hispanic/Latinx
Other
Asian/AA
Prefer Not to Say


Frequency of Park Use
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
32%
52%
9%
5%
2%
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly
Never