Madison Parks & Open Space Plan 2025-2030

Community Engagement Activities and Outcomes

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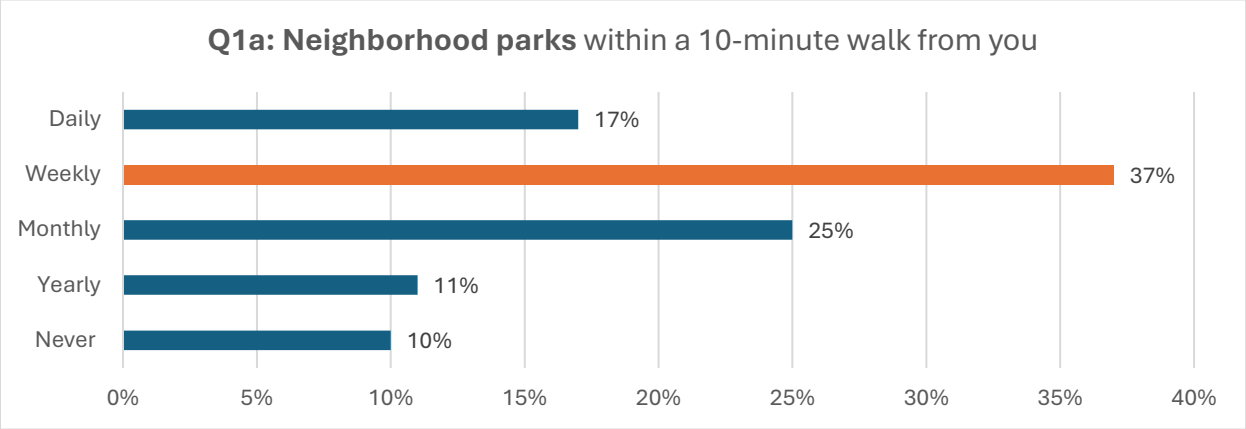
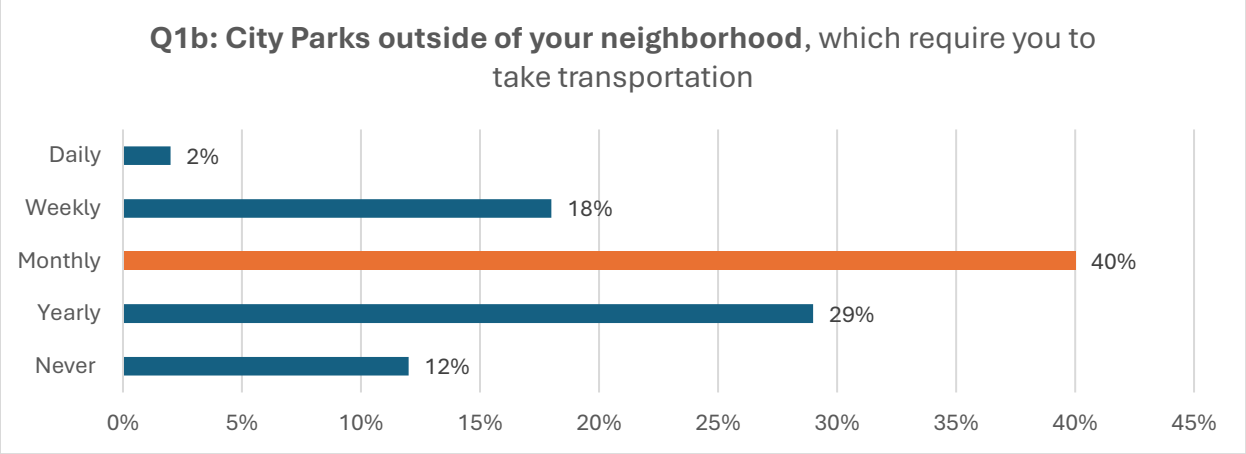
UW Survey Summary

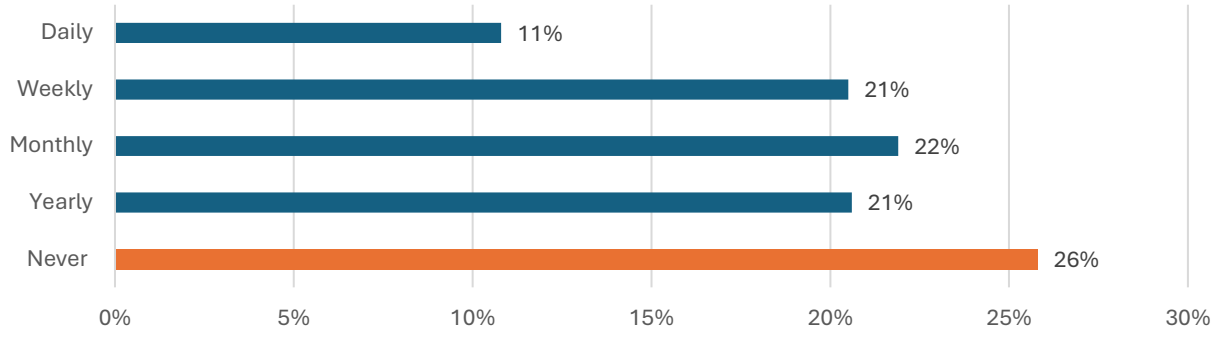
In the fall of 2023, the Madison Parks Division hired the UW Survey Center to assist in the development and administration of a large-scale survey. The intent of the survey was to gauge satisfaction with the City's park and recreation amenities and learn more about how residents use those facilities. 5,000 Madison addresses were randomly selected and mailed the survey; 898 households completed it (18% response rate). The following is a 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?

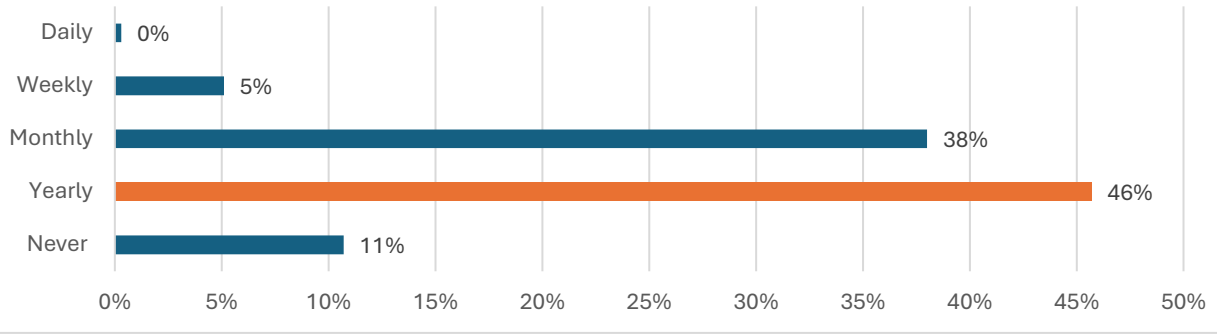




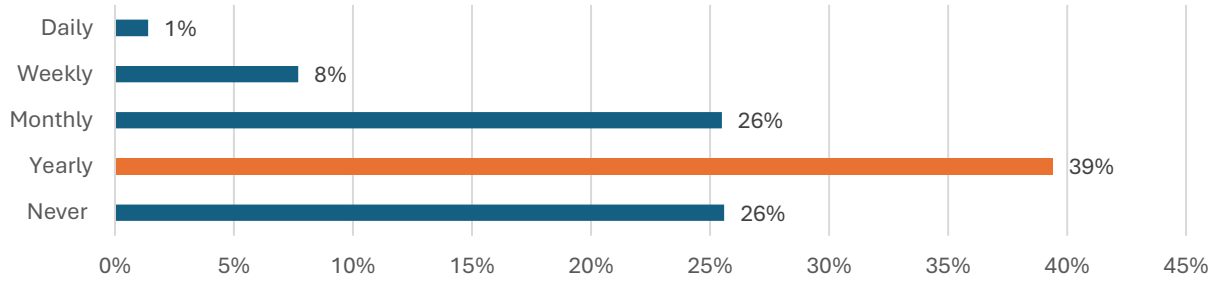
Q1c: Public Open Spaces that are not parks (ex. School yards, greenways)



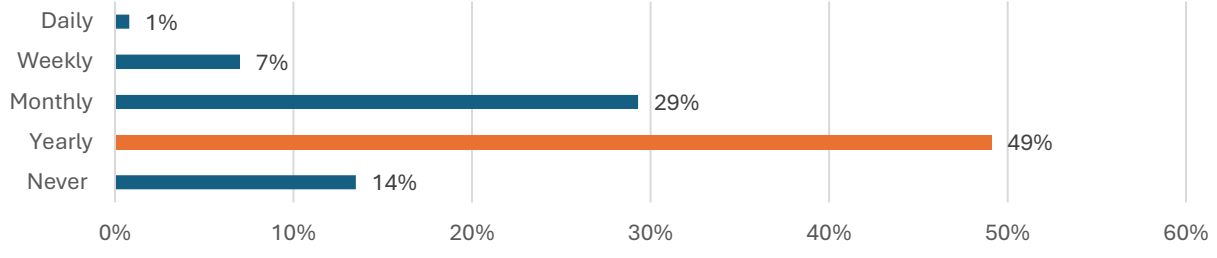
Q1d: Larger regional parks, such as national, state, or county parks



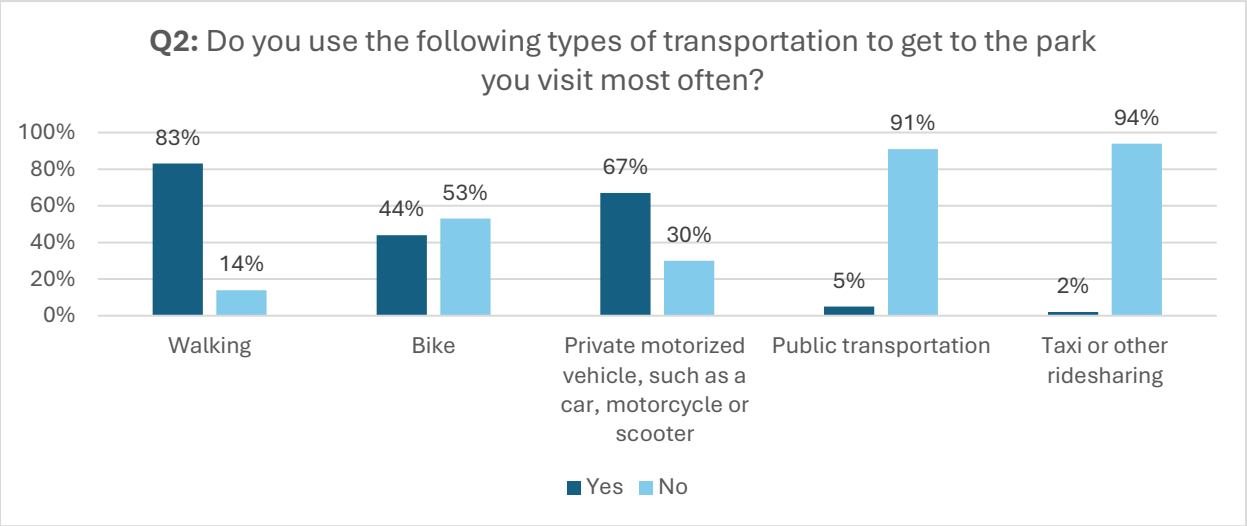
Q1e: Natural areas or **conservation areas**, such as Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor Park, and others



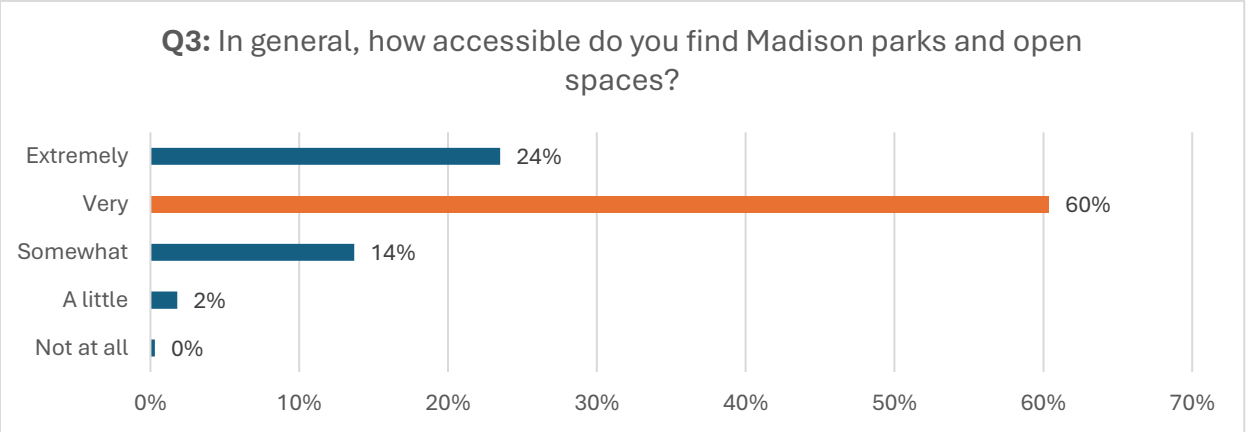
Q1f: Special facilities such as botanical gardens, pools, skate parks, recreation centers, or splash parks



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?

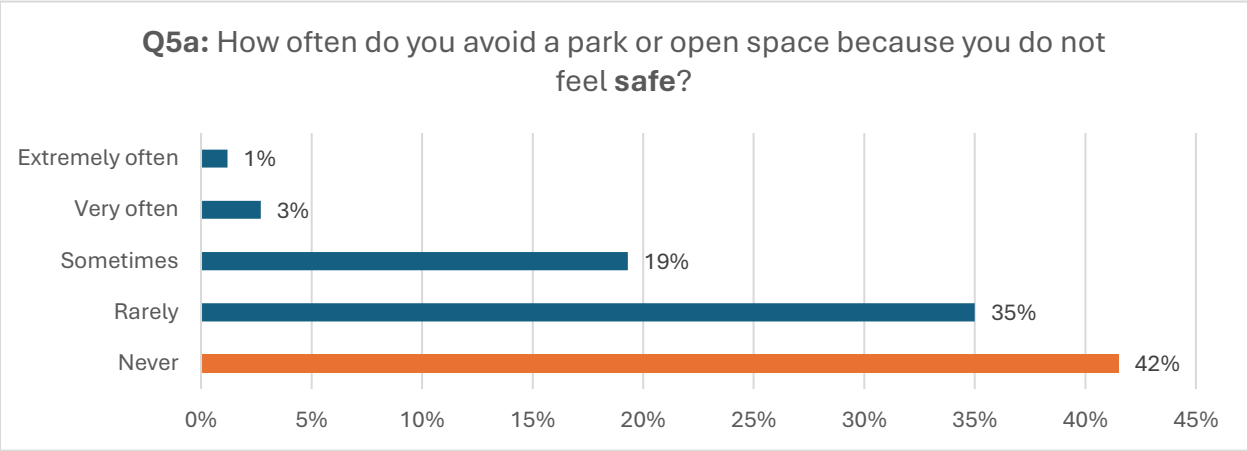


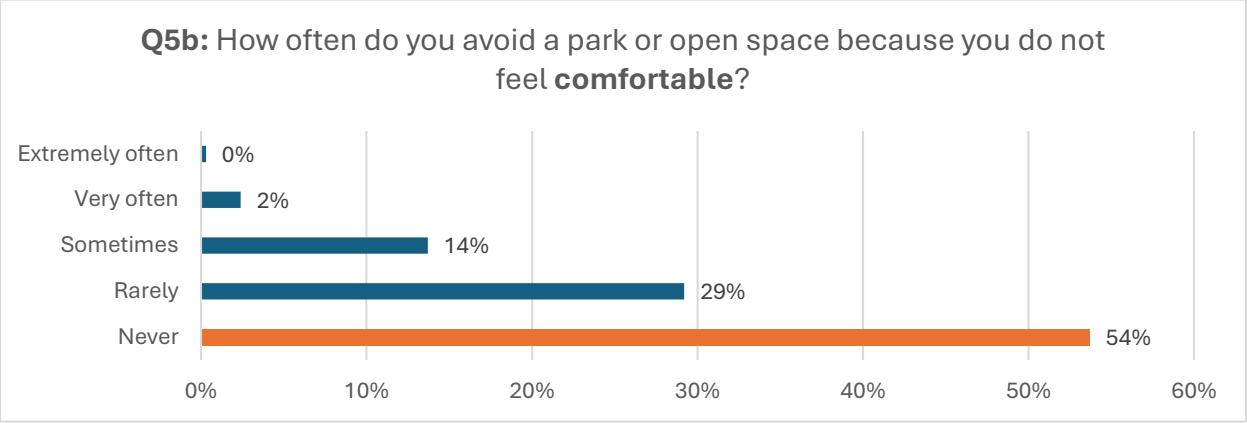
Q3: In general, how accessible do you find Madison parks and open spaces?

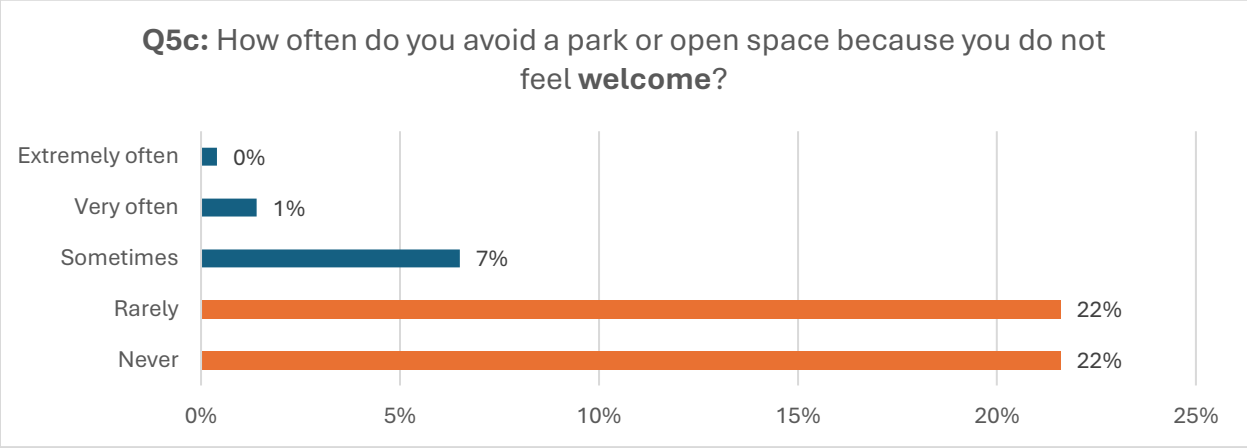


Q4: Open-ended (see page 18).

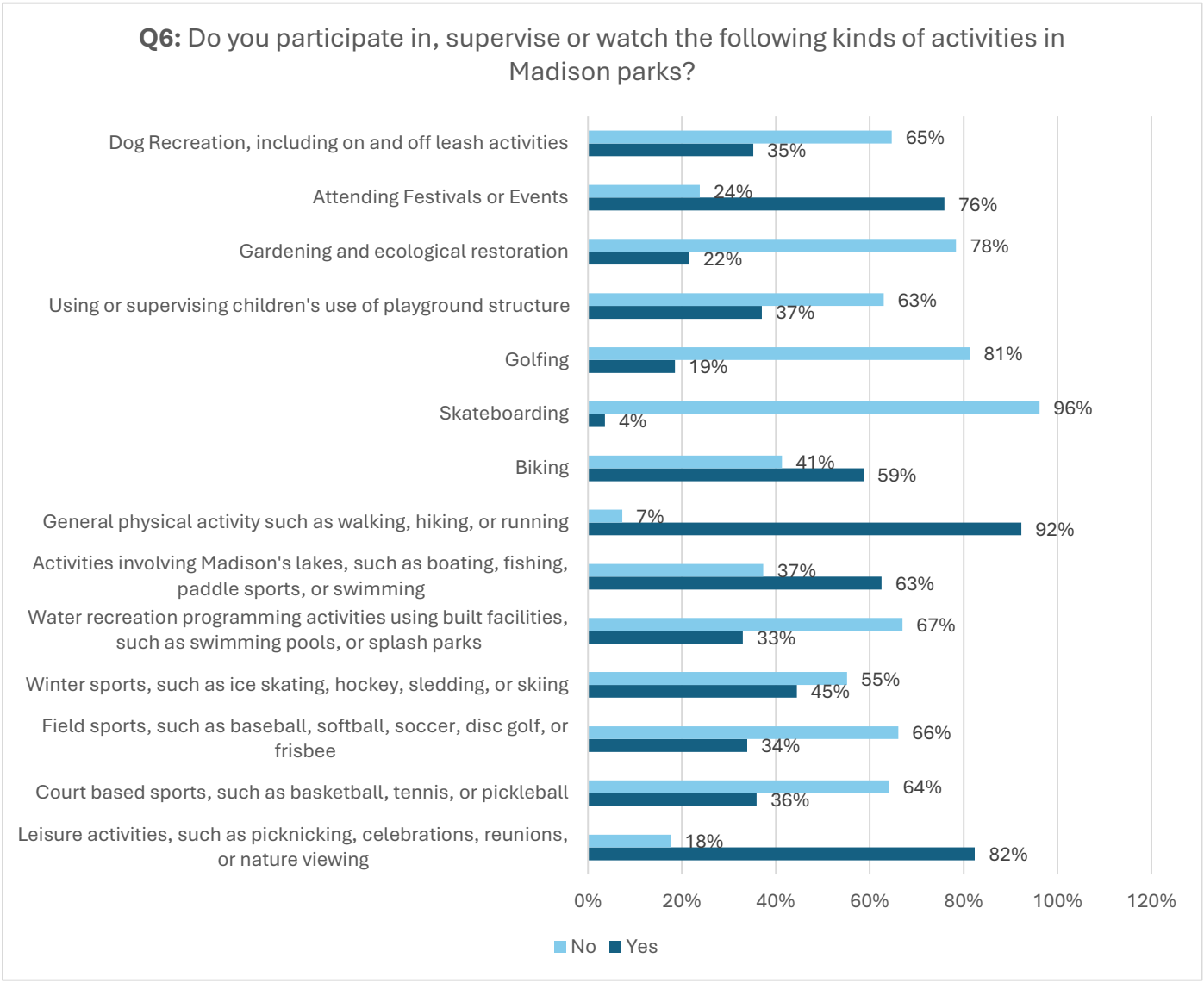
Q5: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel safe, comfortable, or welcome?



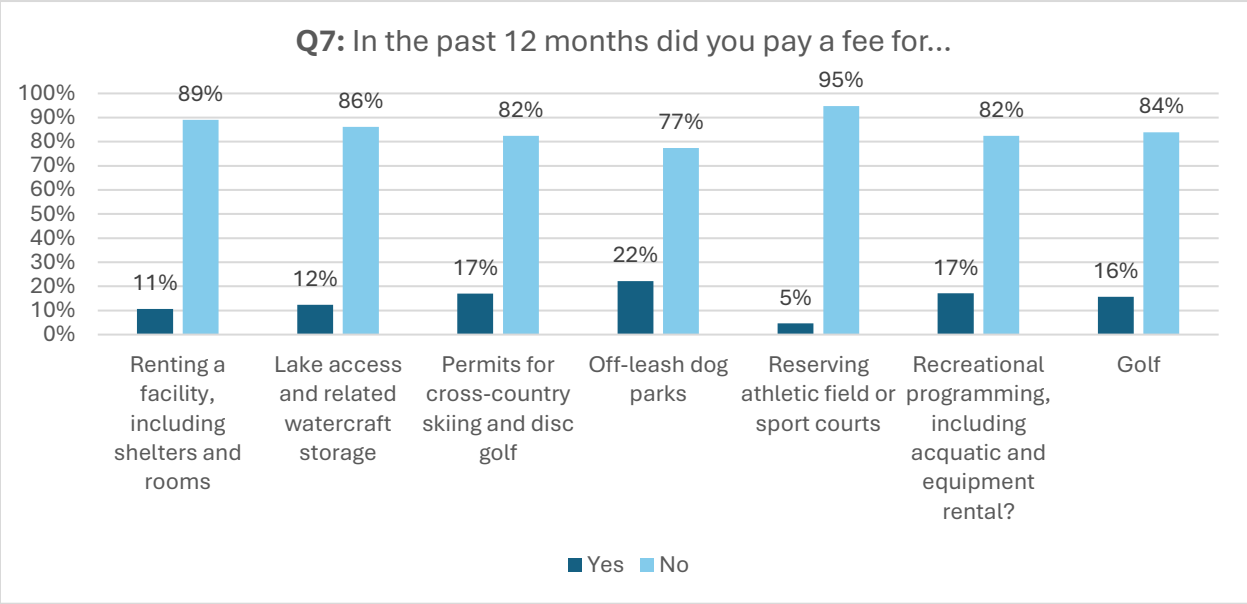




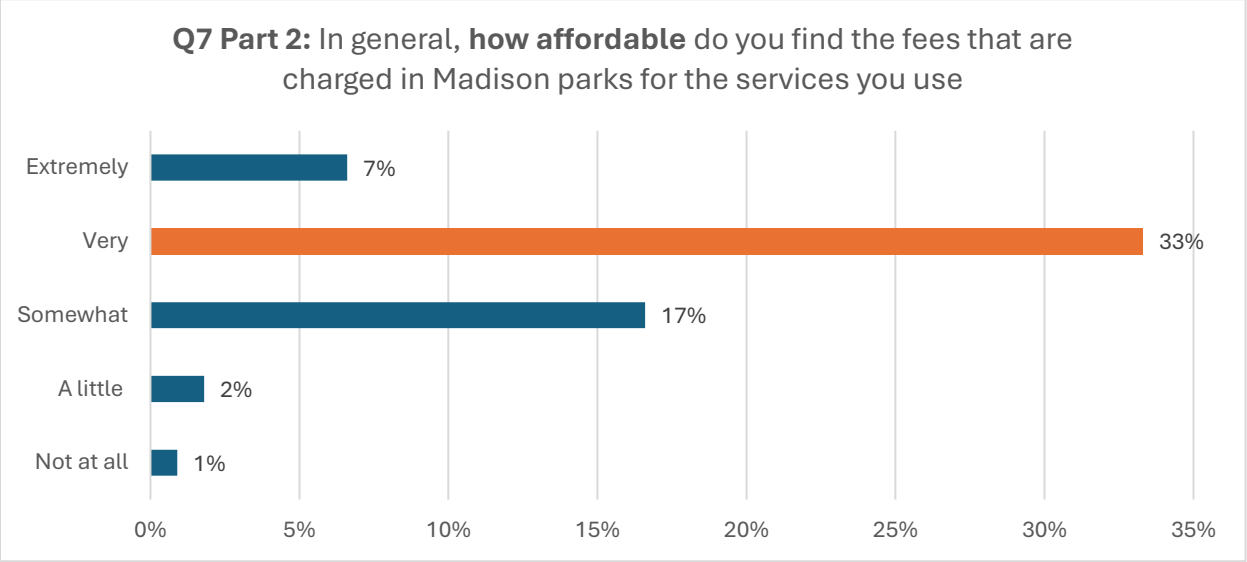
Q6: Activities someone might participate in at Madison parks include playing, supervising children, or watching activities, such as a baseball or basketball game. Do you participate in, supervise, or watch the following kinds of activities in Madison parks?



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

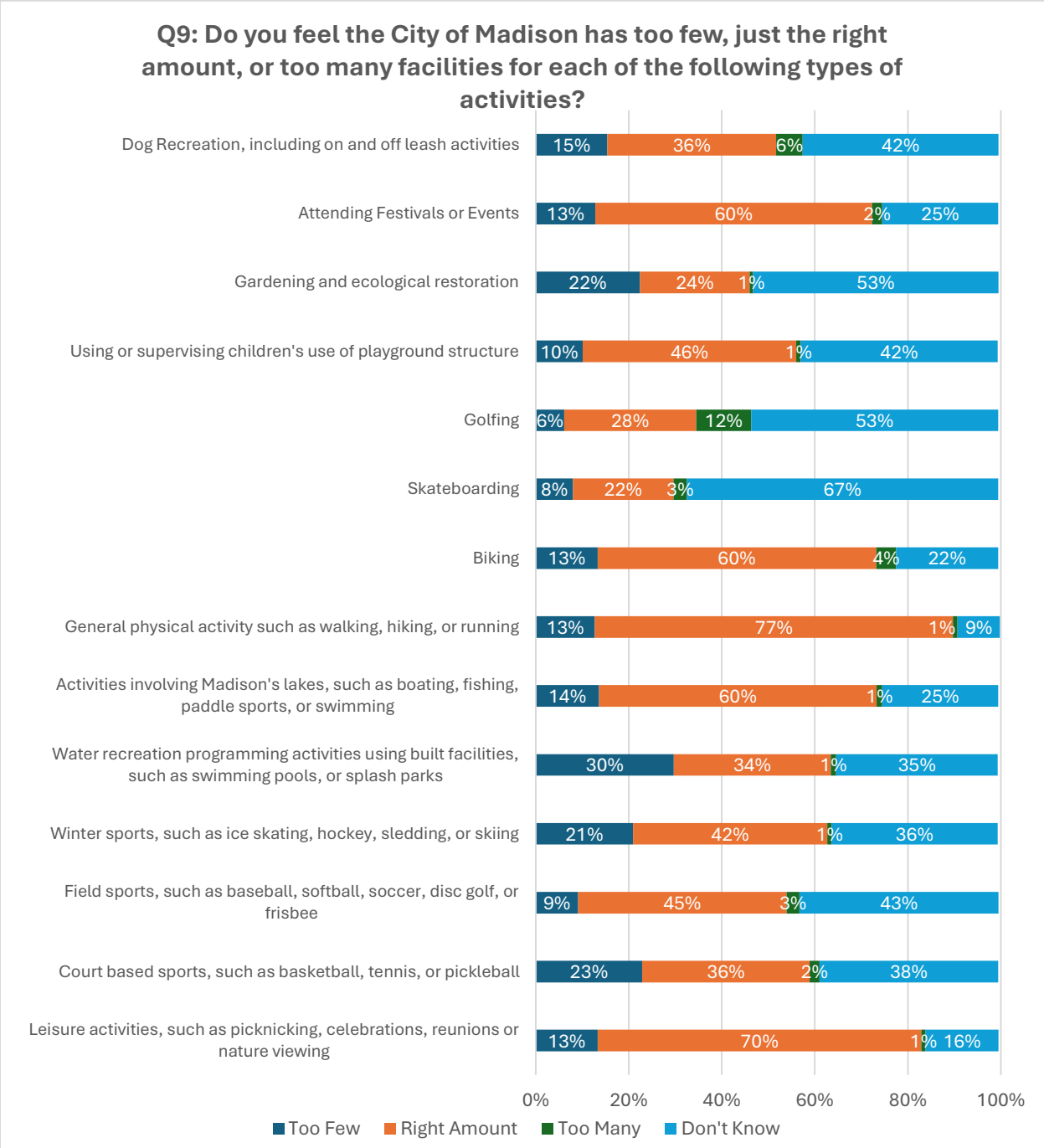


Q7 Part 2: In general, how affordable do you find the fees that are charged in Madison parks for the services you use.

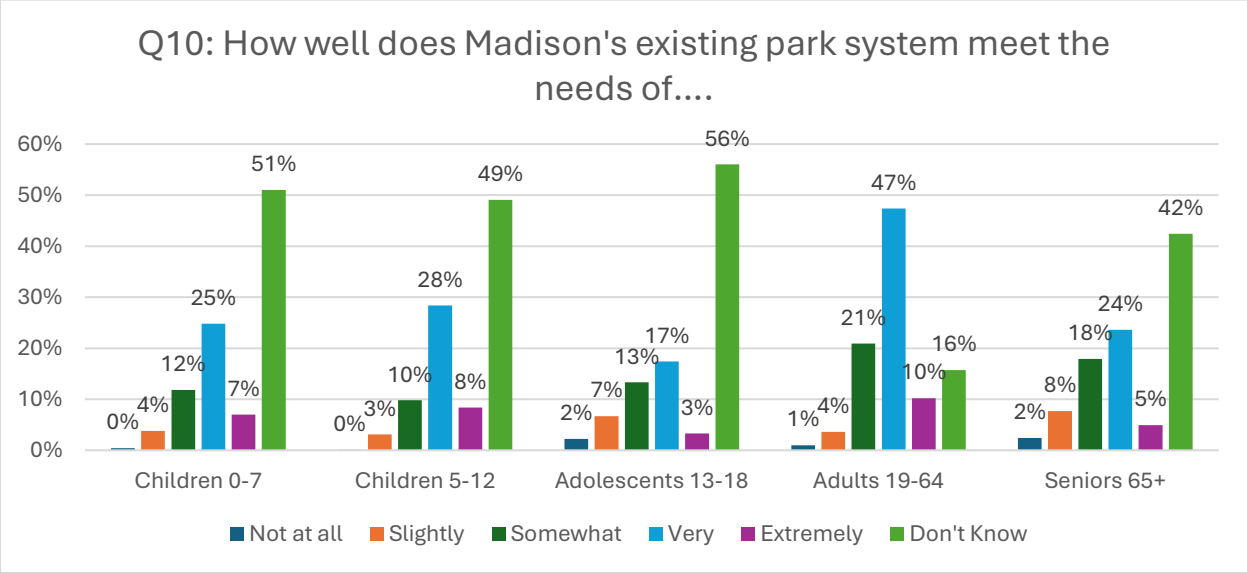


Q8: Open-ended (see page).

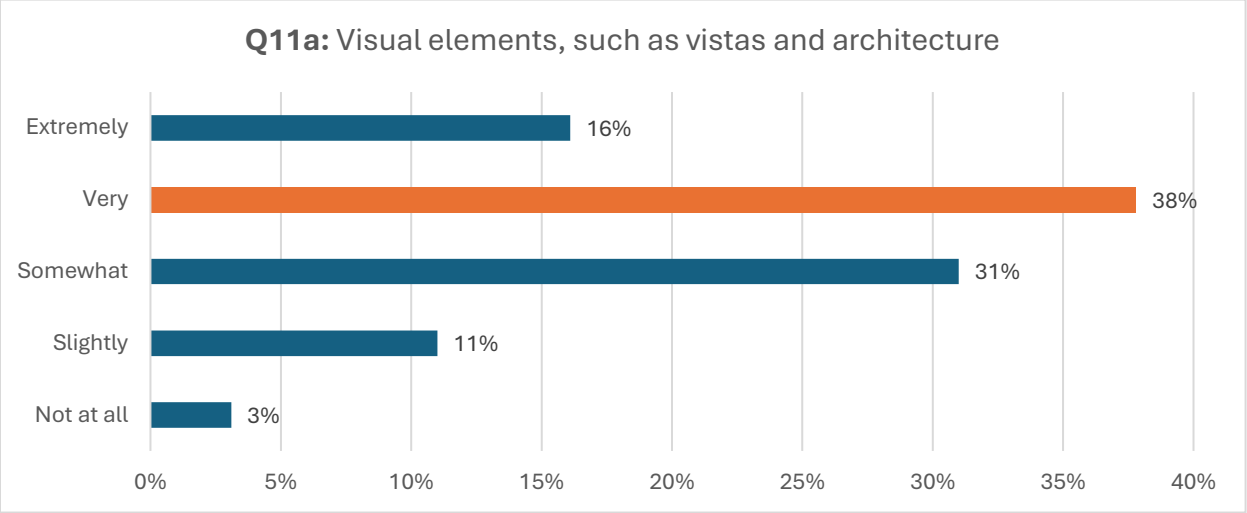
Q9: Do you feel the City of Madison has too few, just the right amount, or too many facilities for each of the following types of activities?

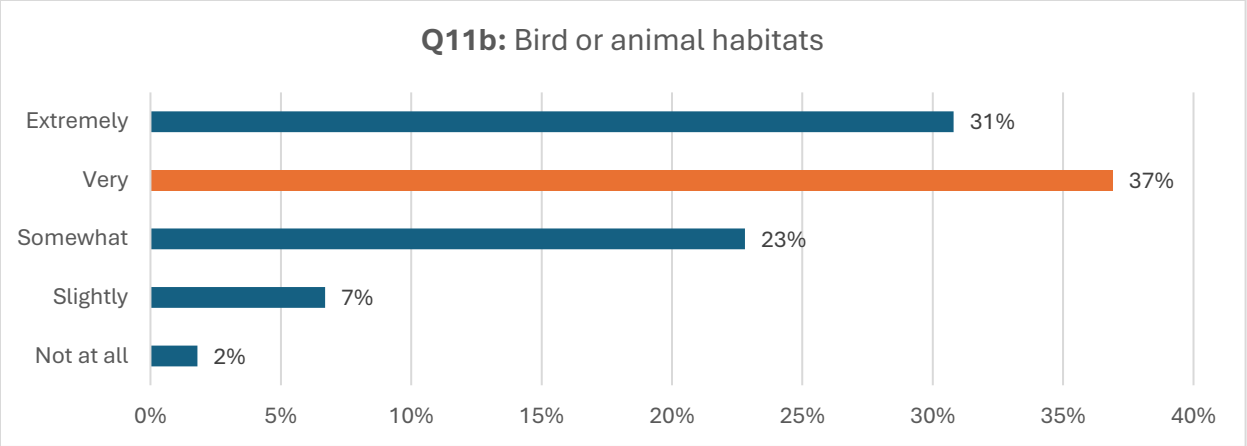


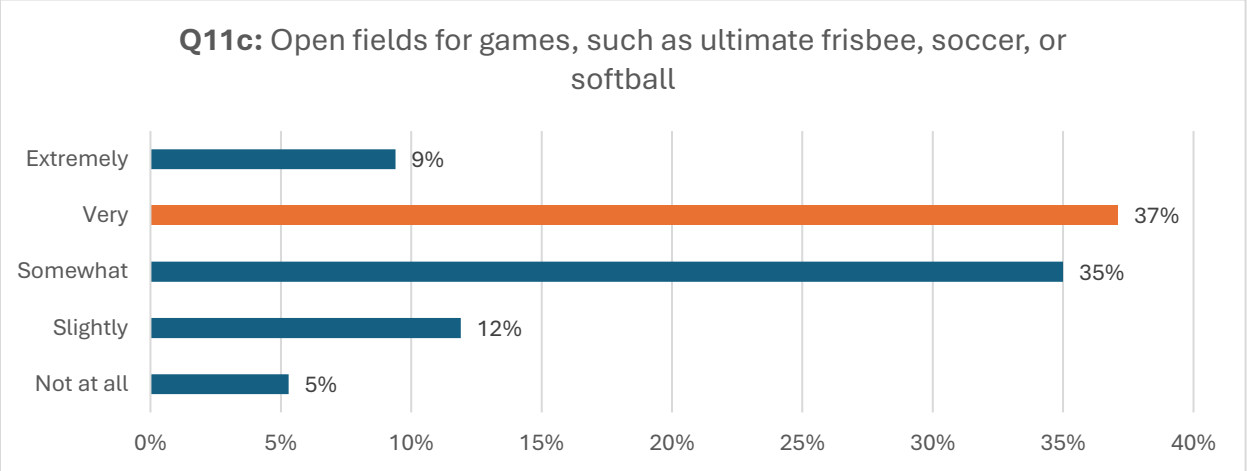
Q10: How <u>well</u> do you feel Madison's existing park system meets the needs of the following age groups?

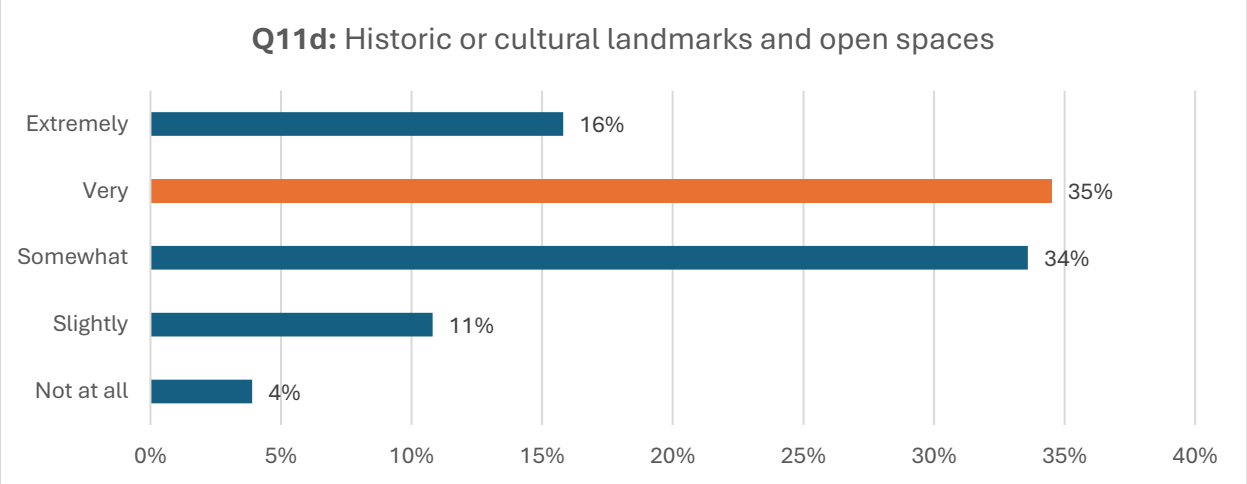


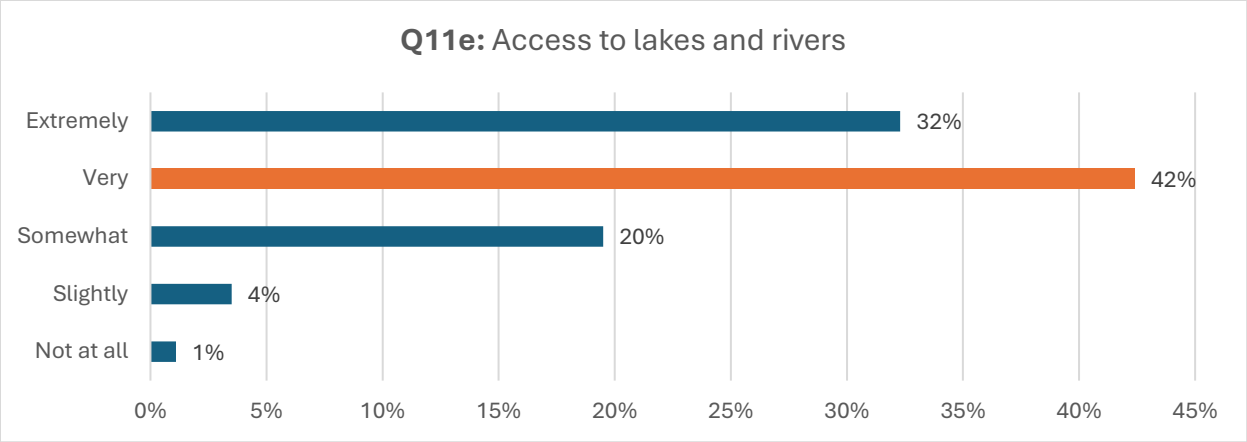
Q11: How valuable do you find each of the following features in the City of Madison park system?

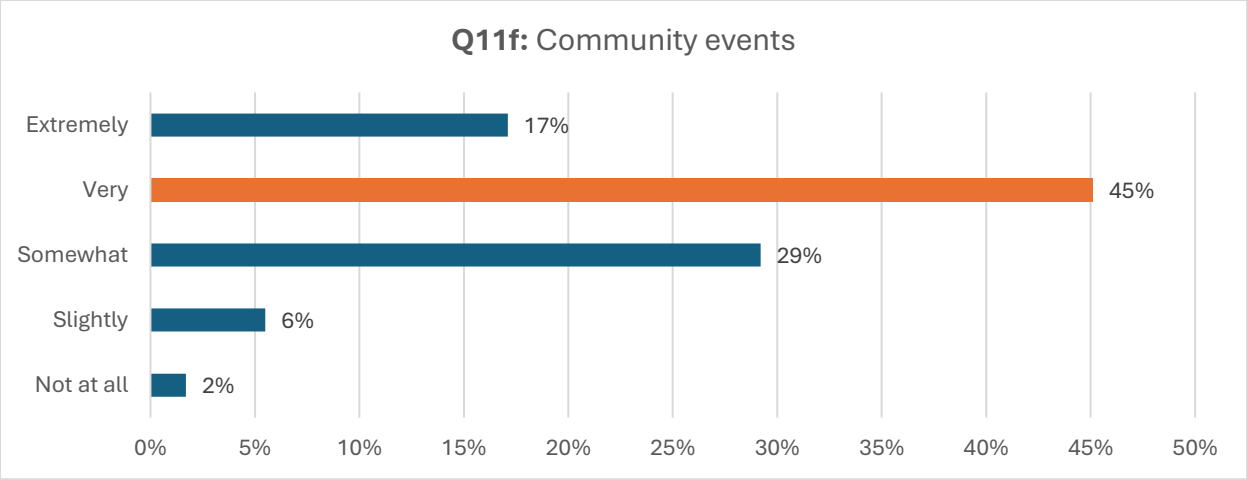


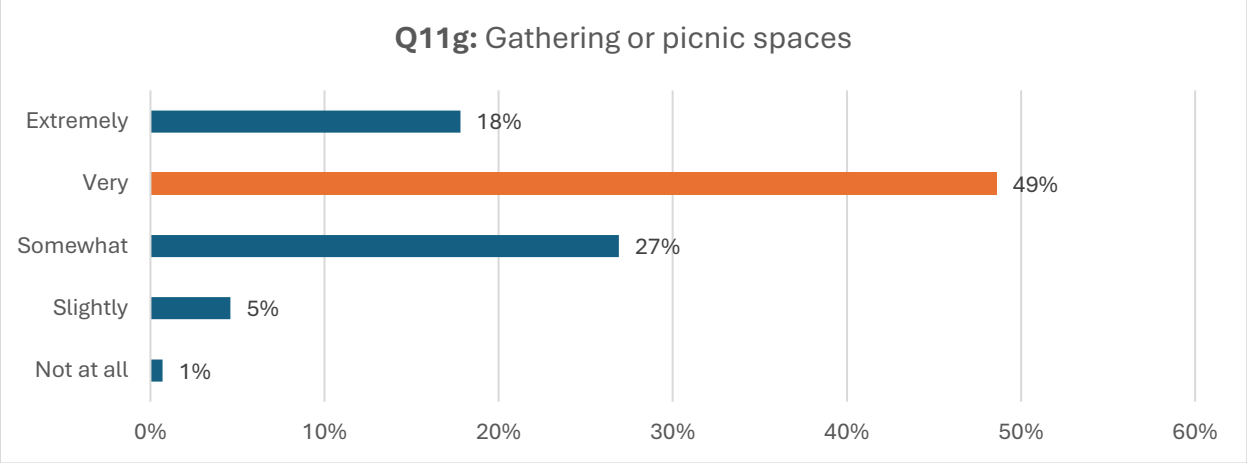

Q11b: Bird or animal habitats
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
31%
37%
23%
7%
2%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

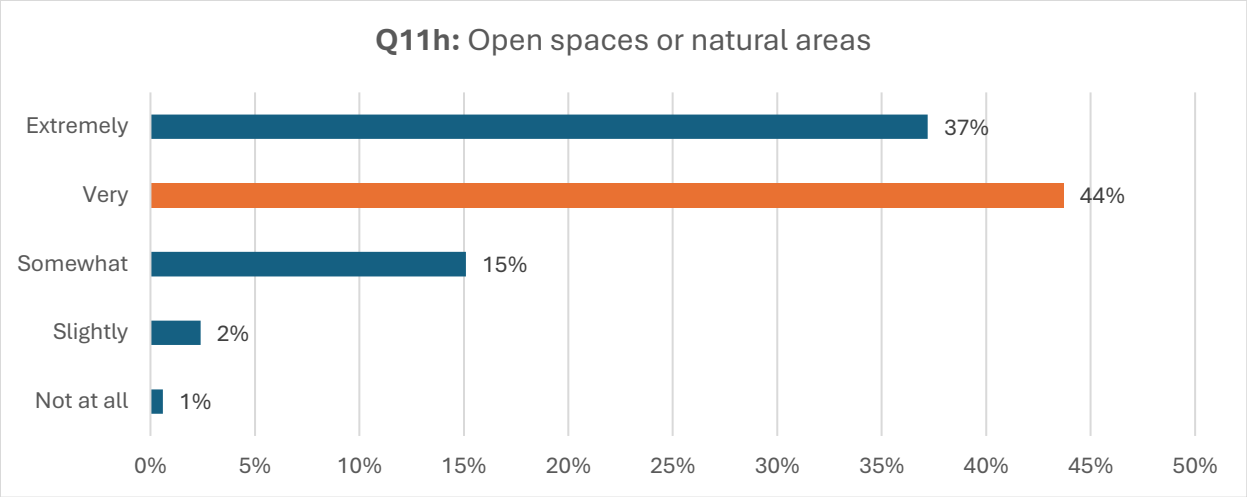

Q11c: Open fields for games, such as ultimate frisbee, soccer, or softball
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
9%
37%
35%
12%
5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

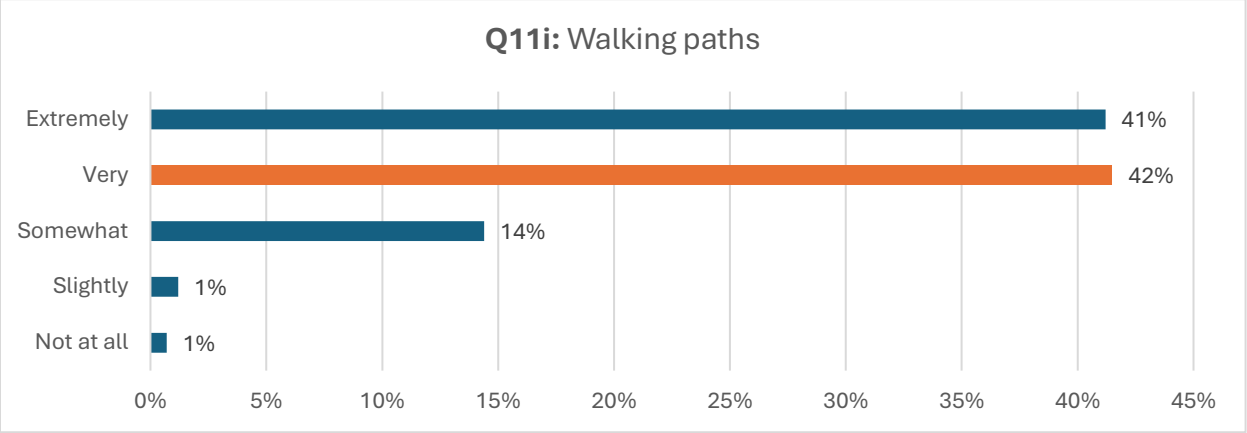

Q11d: Historic or cultural landmarks and open spaces
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
16%
35%
34%
11%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

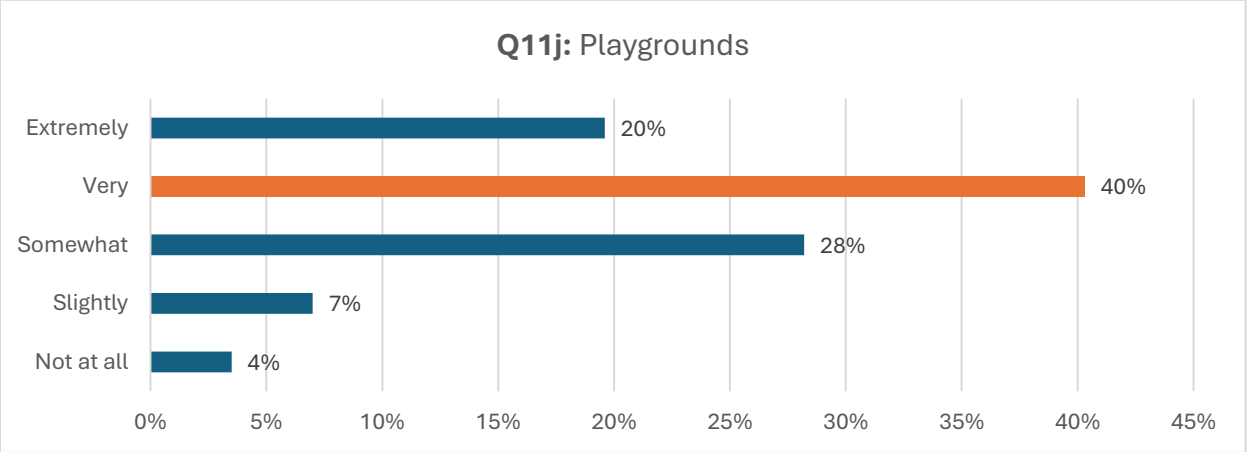

Q11e: Access to lakes and rivers
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
32%
42%
20%
4%
1%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%


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%

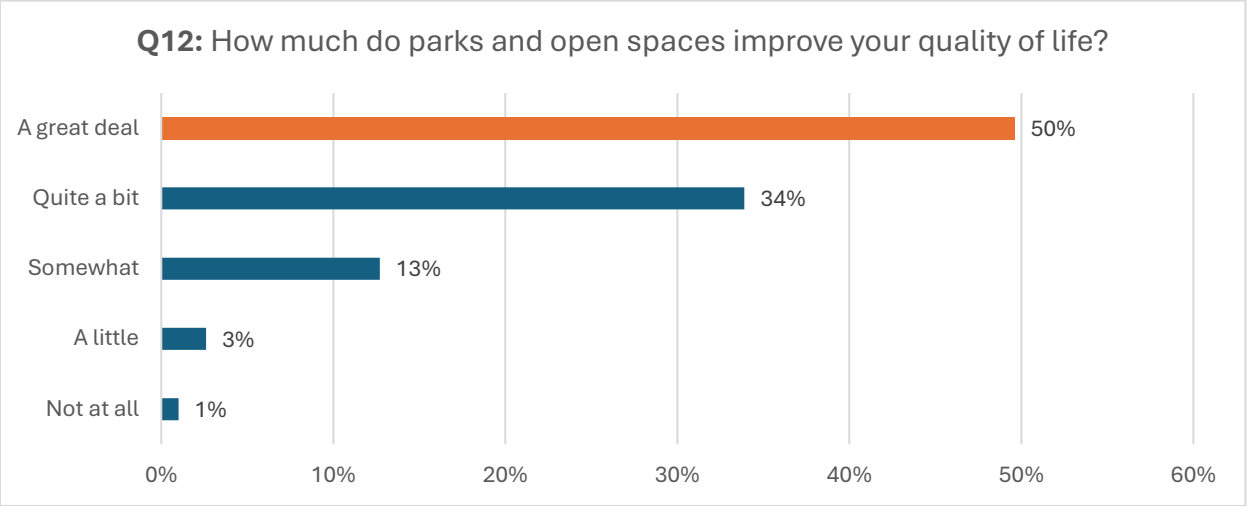

Q11g: Gathering or picnic spaces
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
18%
49%
27%
5%
1%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%


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%

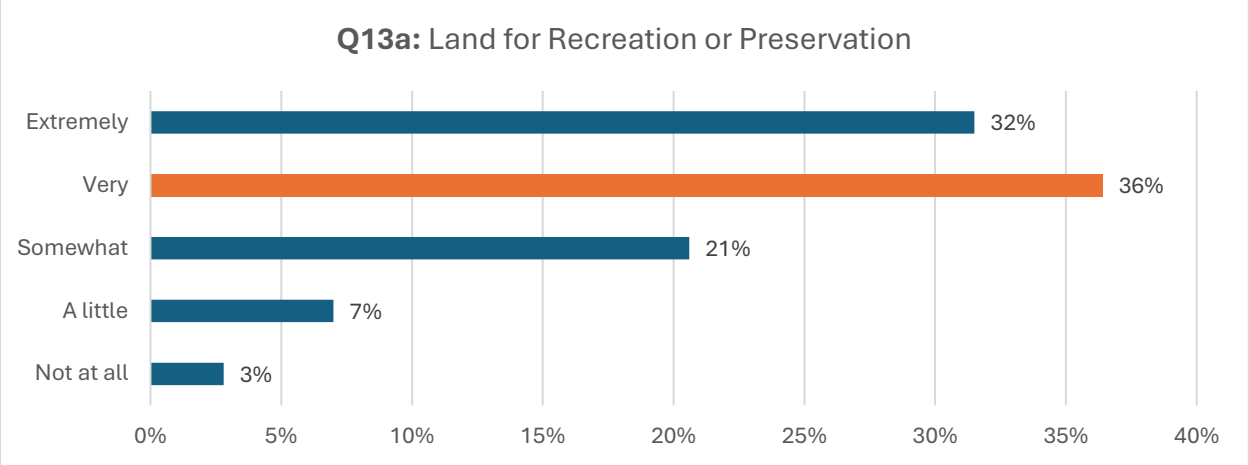

Q11i: Walking paths
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
41%
42%
14%
1%
1%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%

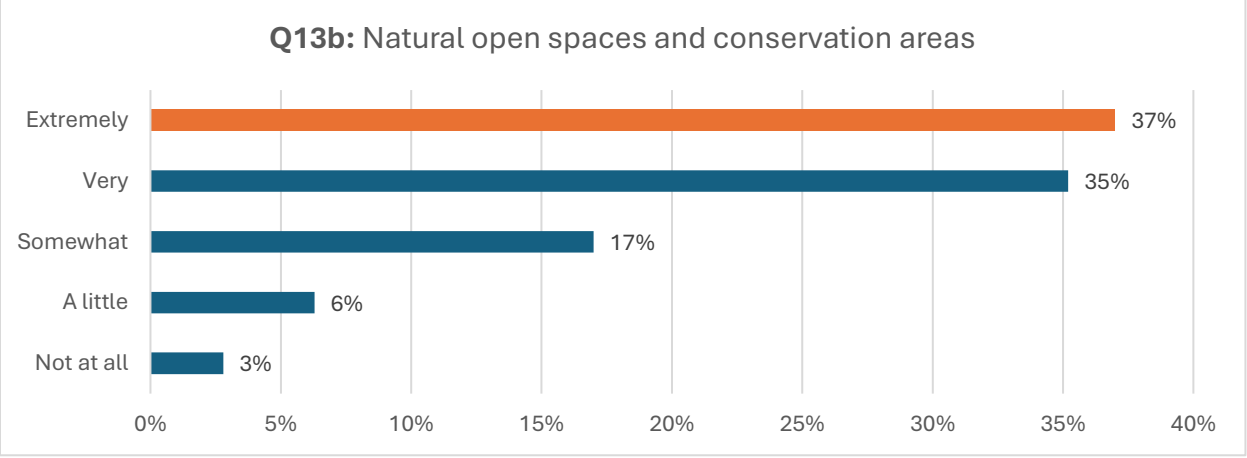

Q11j: Playgrounds
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
Slightly
Not at all
20%
40%
28%
7%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%
45%

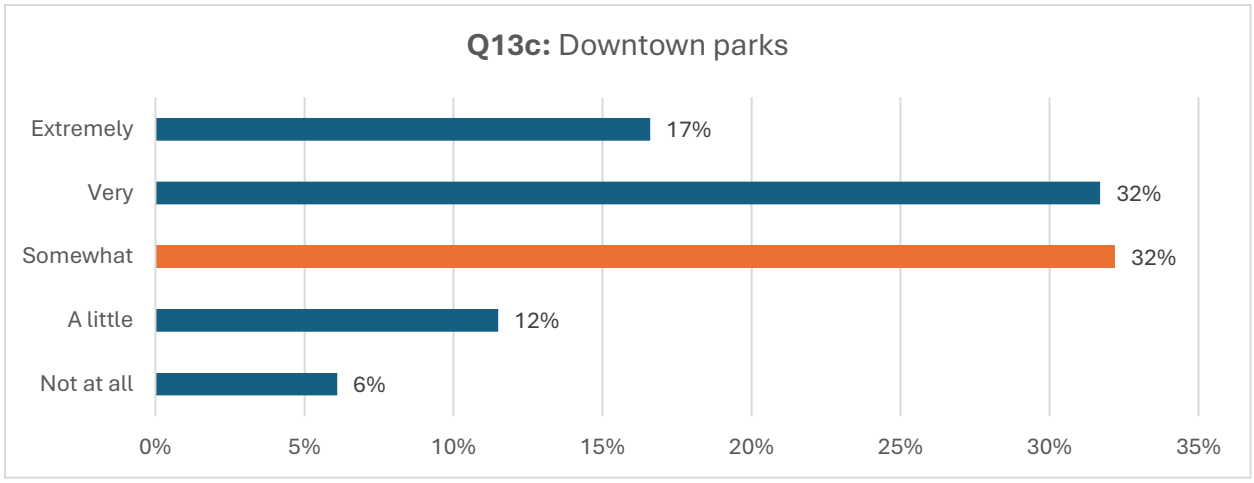
Q12: How much do parks and open spaces improve your quality of life?

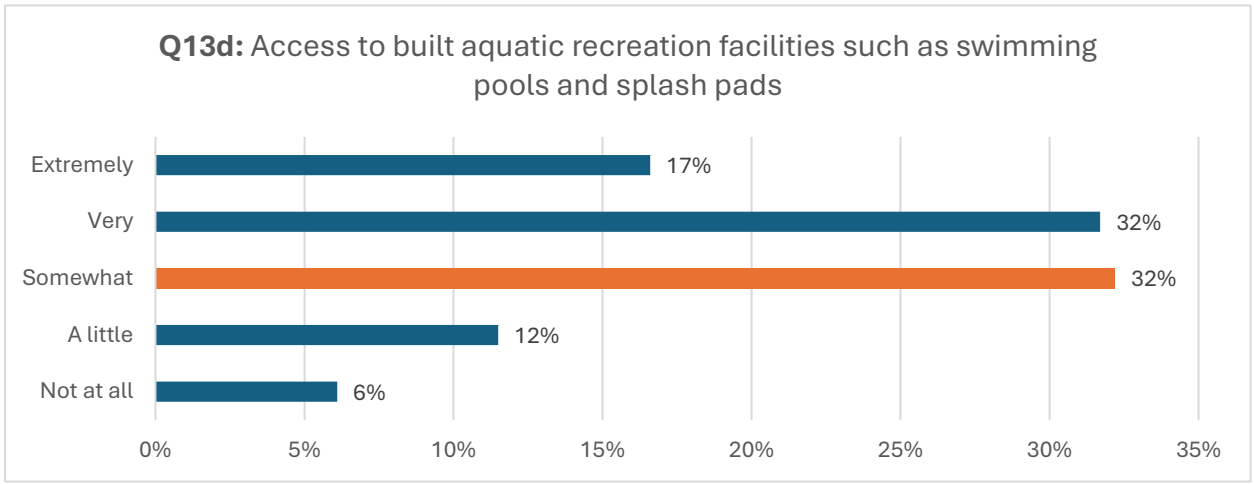


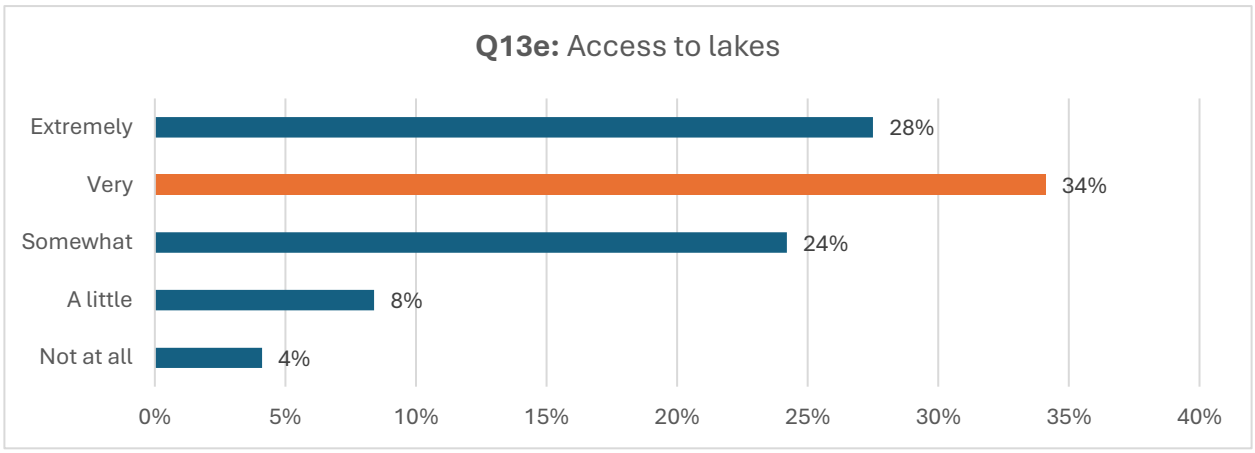
Q13: How important is it for the City to have each of the following facilities or amenities?

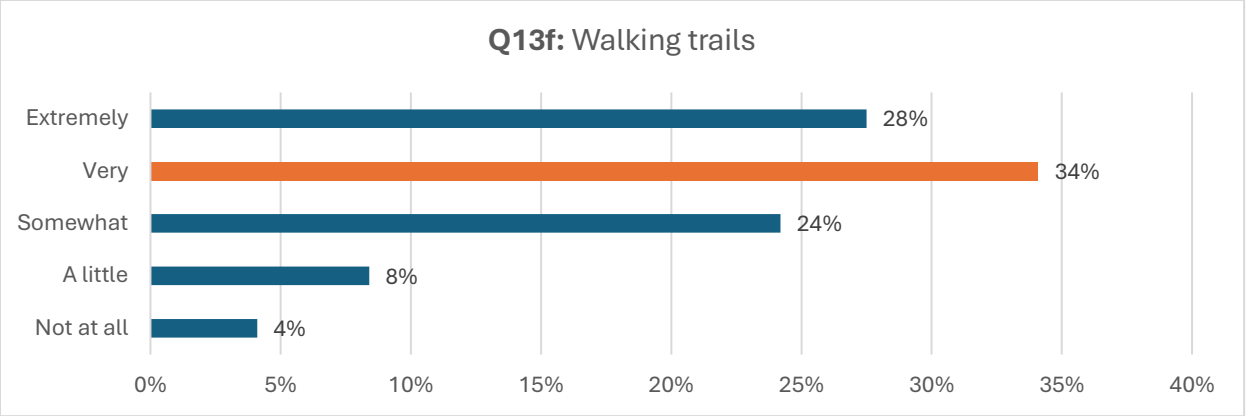


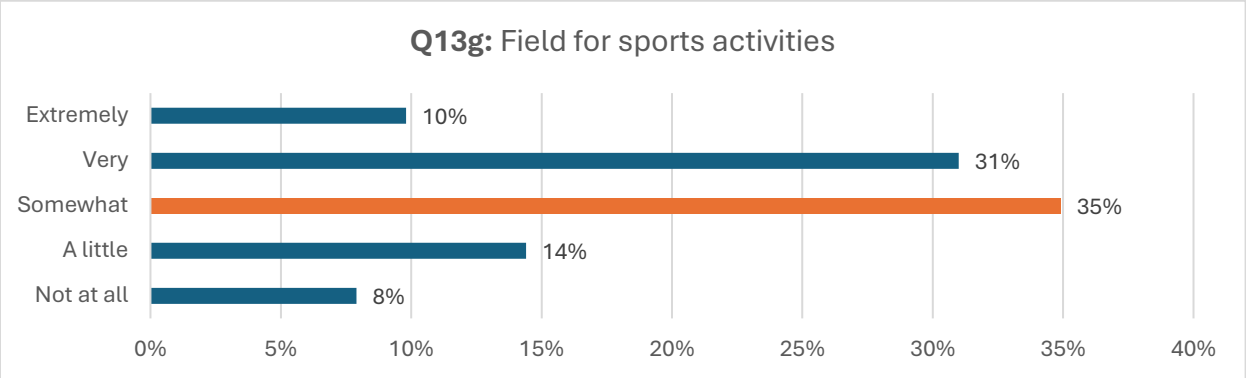


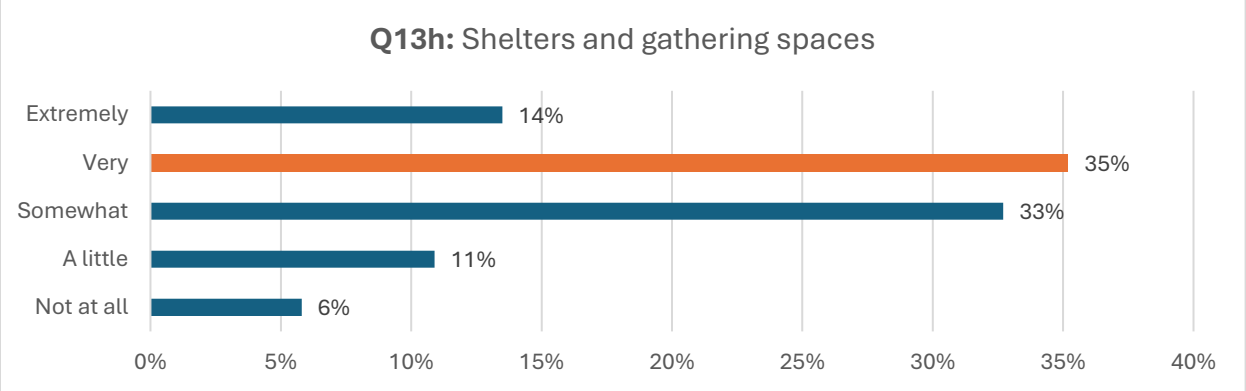

Q13c: Downtown parks
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
17%
32%
32%
12%
6%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%

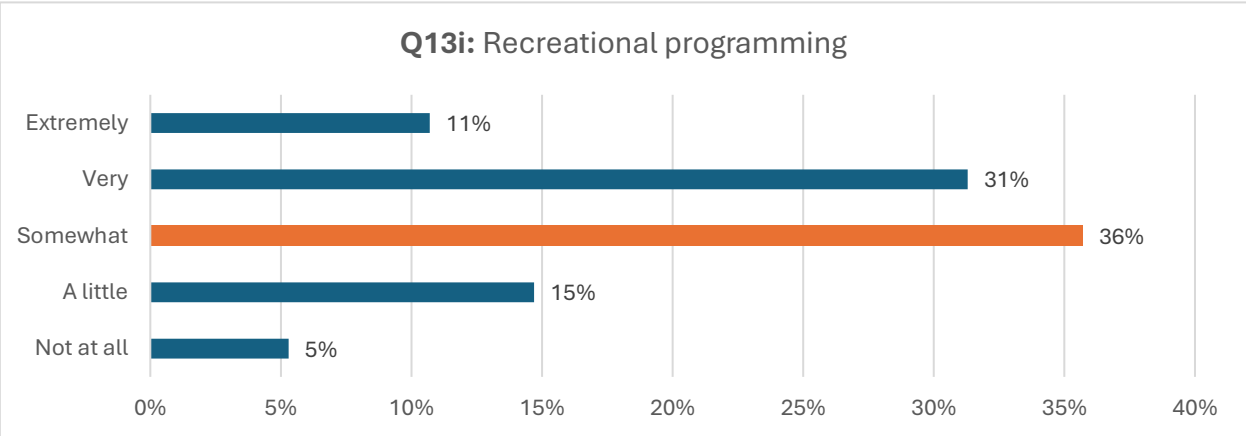

Q13d: Access to built aquatic recreation facilities such as swimming pools and splash pads
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
17%
32%
32%
12%
6%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%

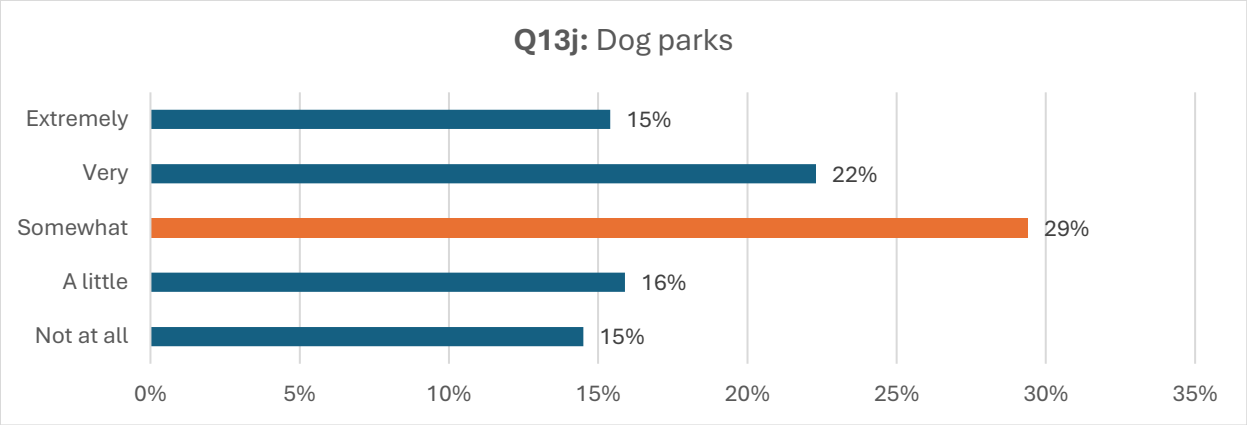

Q13e: Access to lakes
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
28%
34%
24%
8%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%

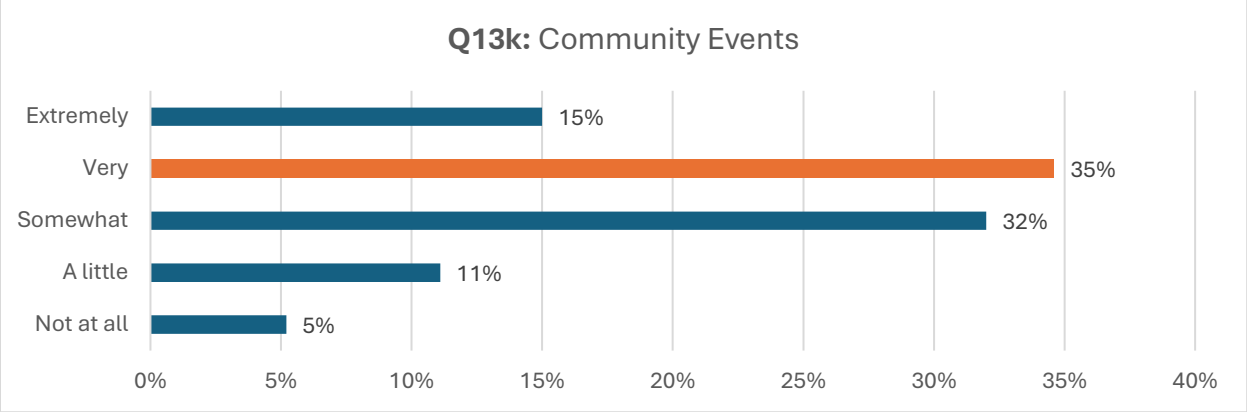

Q13f: Walking trails
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
28%
34%
24%
8%
4%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%


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%

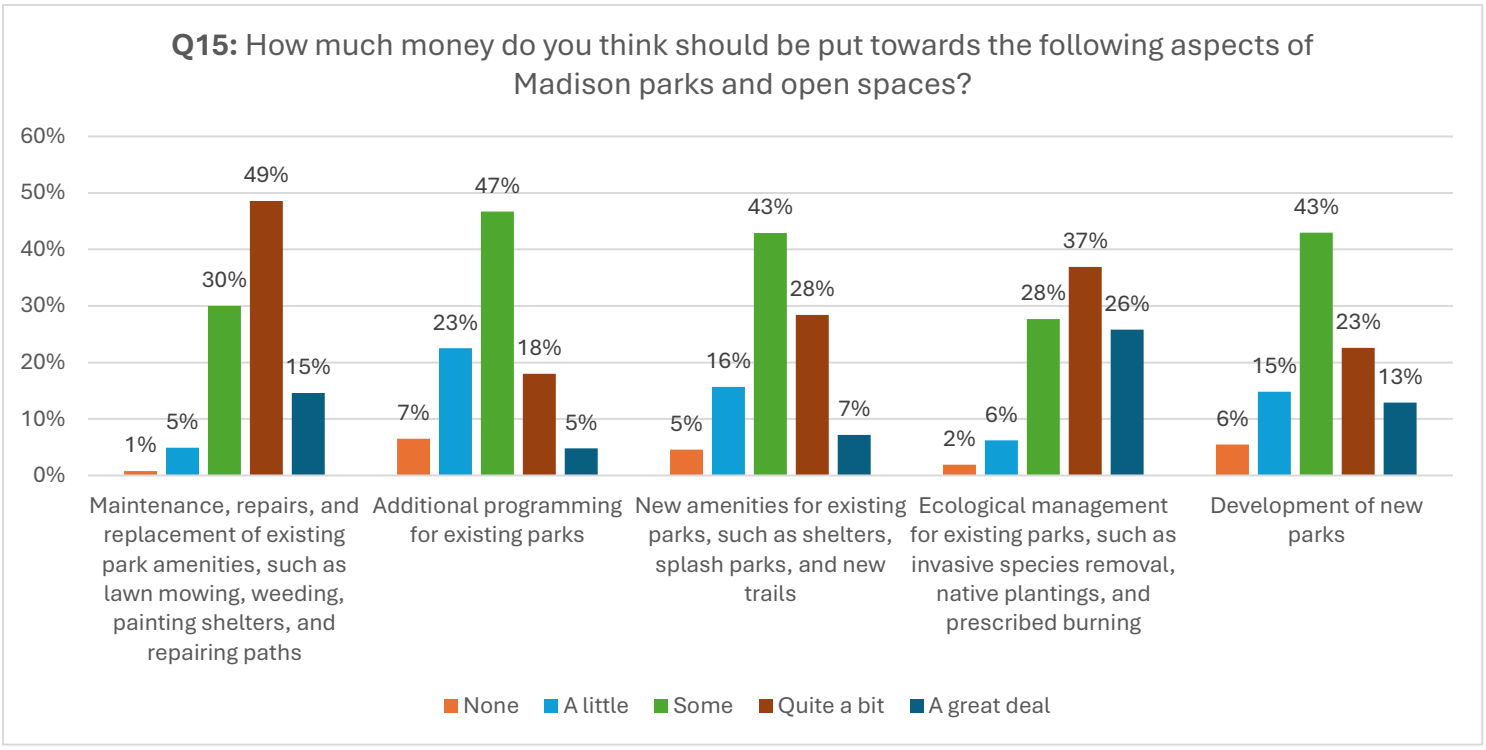

Q13i: Recreational programming
Extremely
Very
Somewhat
A little
Not at all
11%
31%
36%
15%
5%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%
35%
40%



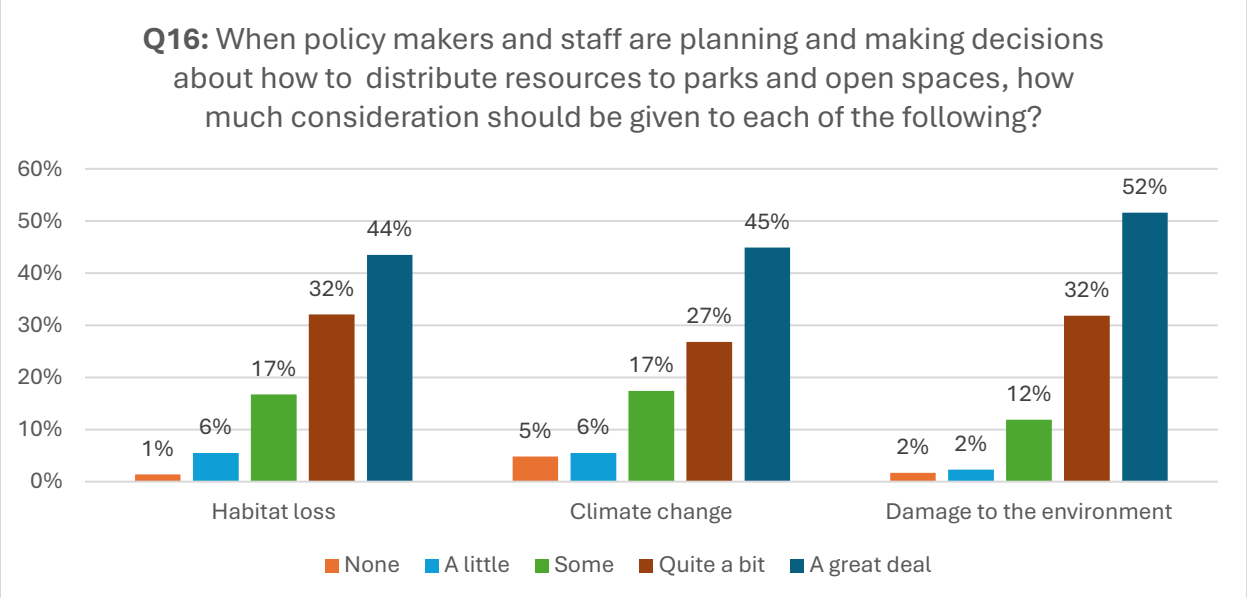


Q14: Open-ended (see page 18).

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



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?



Open Ended Survey Questions

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

Common Responses:

- *"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

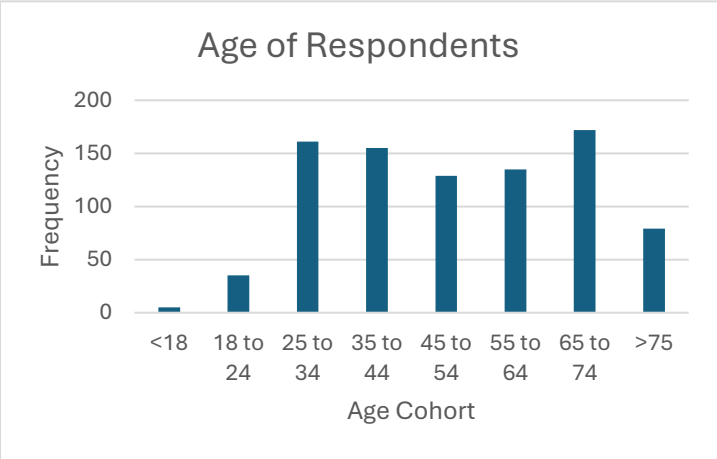
Q23: Please tell us your favorite thing about Madison Parks and open spaces:

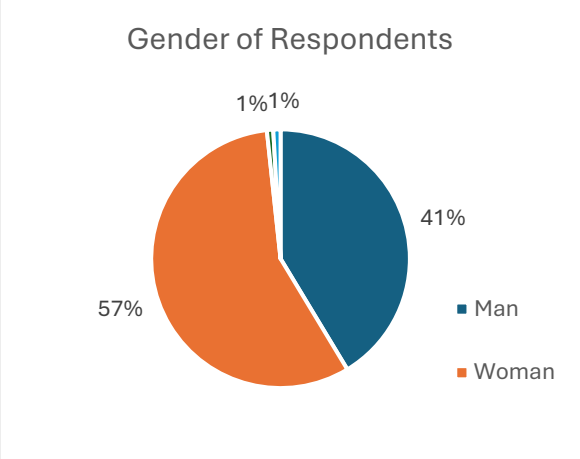
Common Responses:

- *"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."*

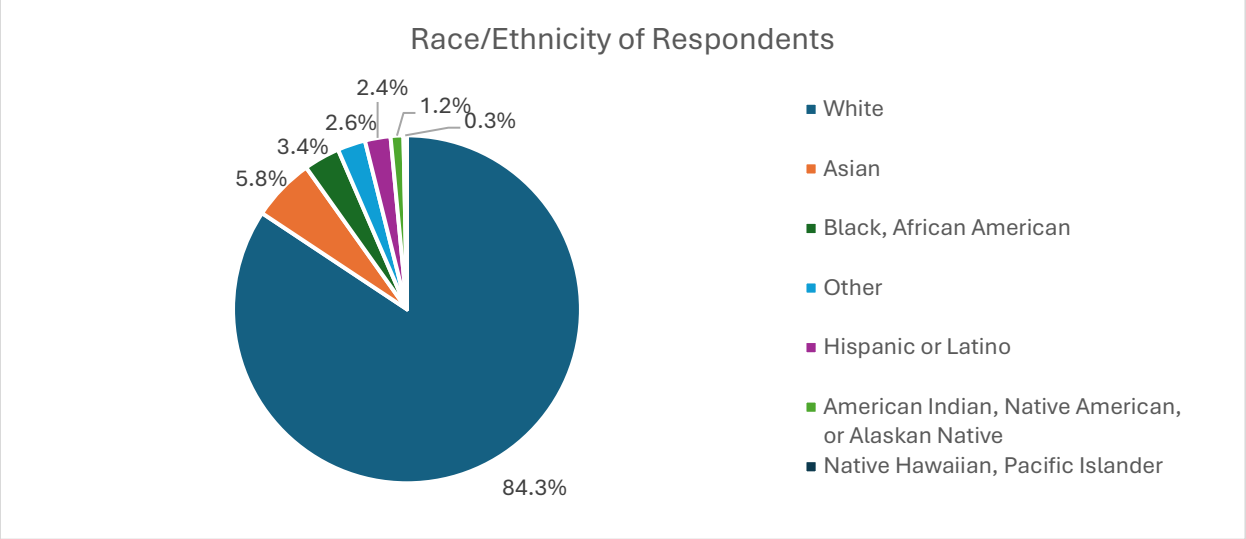
Survey Respondents Demographic Data

Age: Median age of respondents is 50.



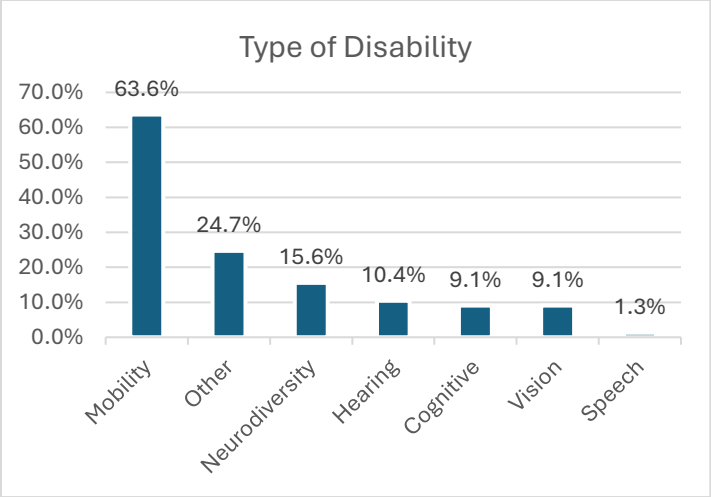


Race/Ethnicity:



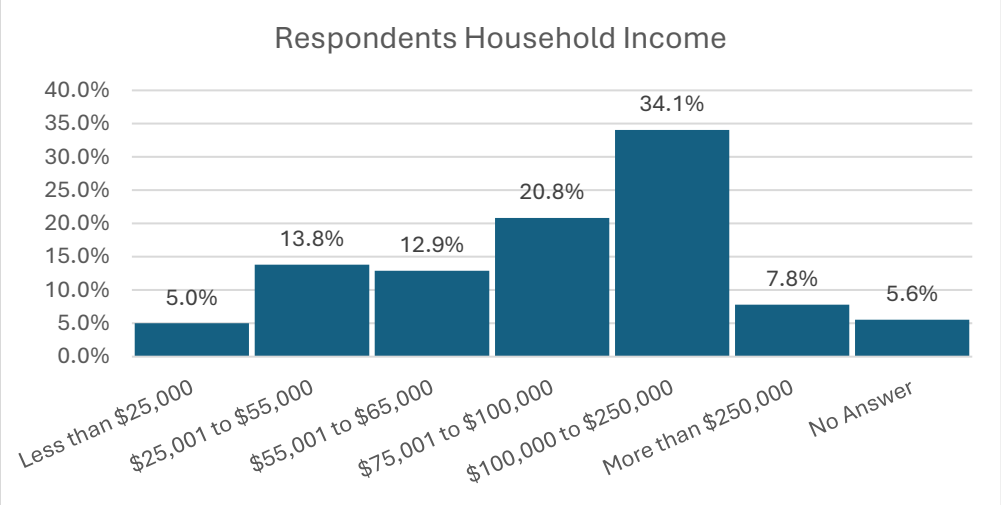
Disability:

8.6% of respondents identified as having a disability. The graph to the right provides a breakdown of the forms of disability that were reported by respondents.

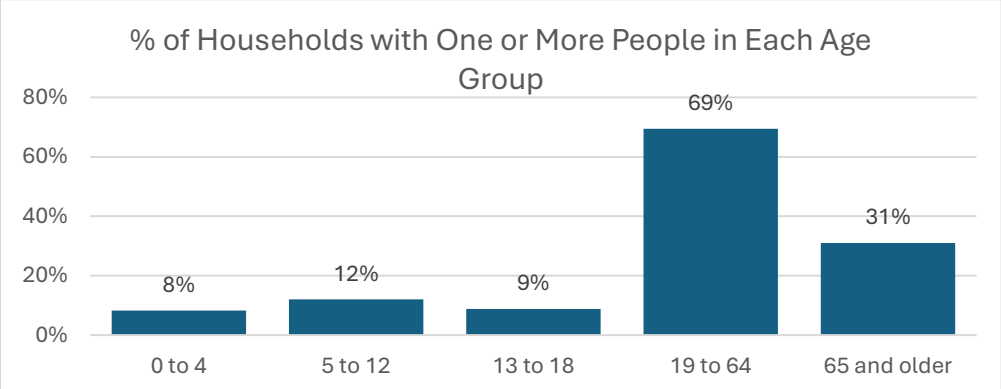


Income: The median household income was in the $75,001 to $100,000 range.

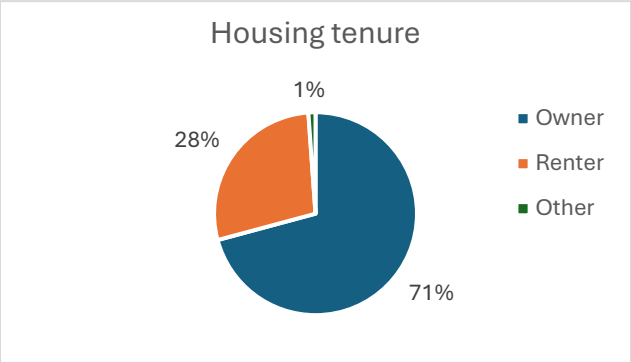
NOTE: The $65,0001 - $75,000 income category was unintentionally excluded from the survey sent out to Madison residents.



Age of Household:



Housing Tenure:

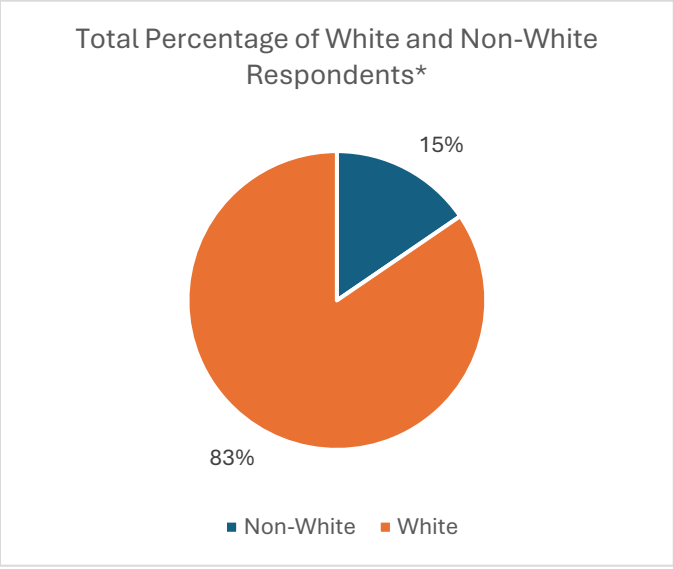


Cross Tabulated Survey Data Summary

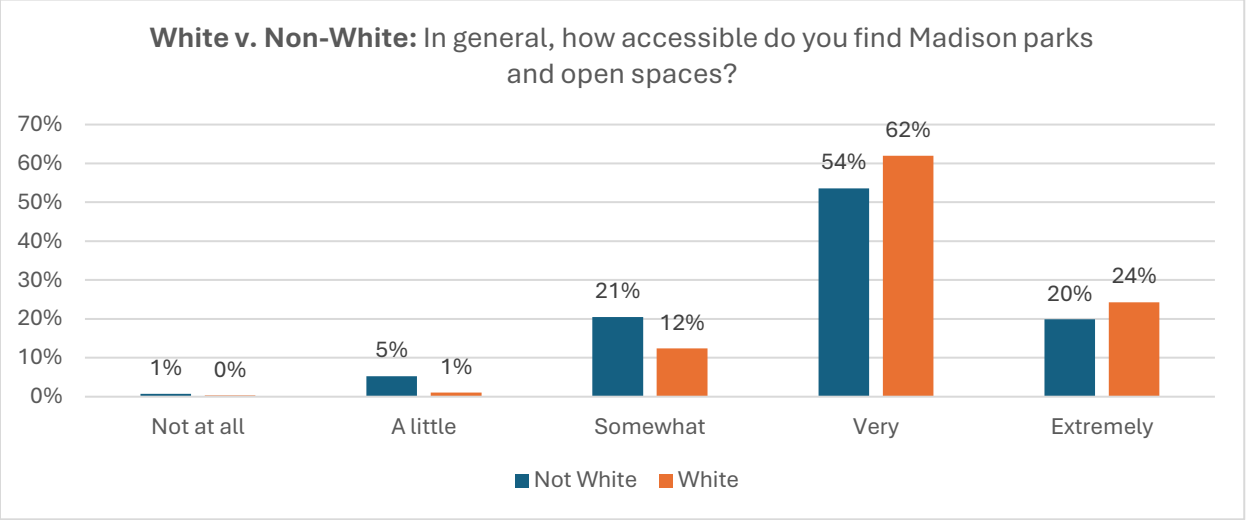
At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to answer several demographic questions to gauge who responded to the survey. This data was then cross tabulated against a selection of key questions throughout the survey to evaluate if and how responses varied based on **race**, **income**, **housing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

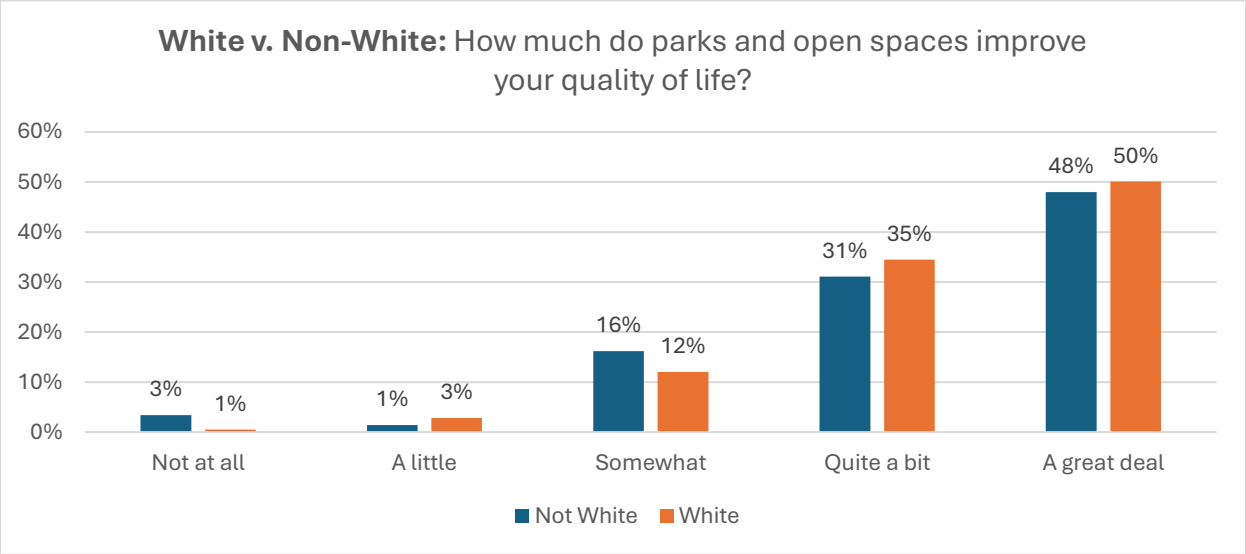
Race

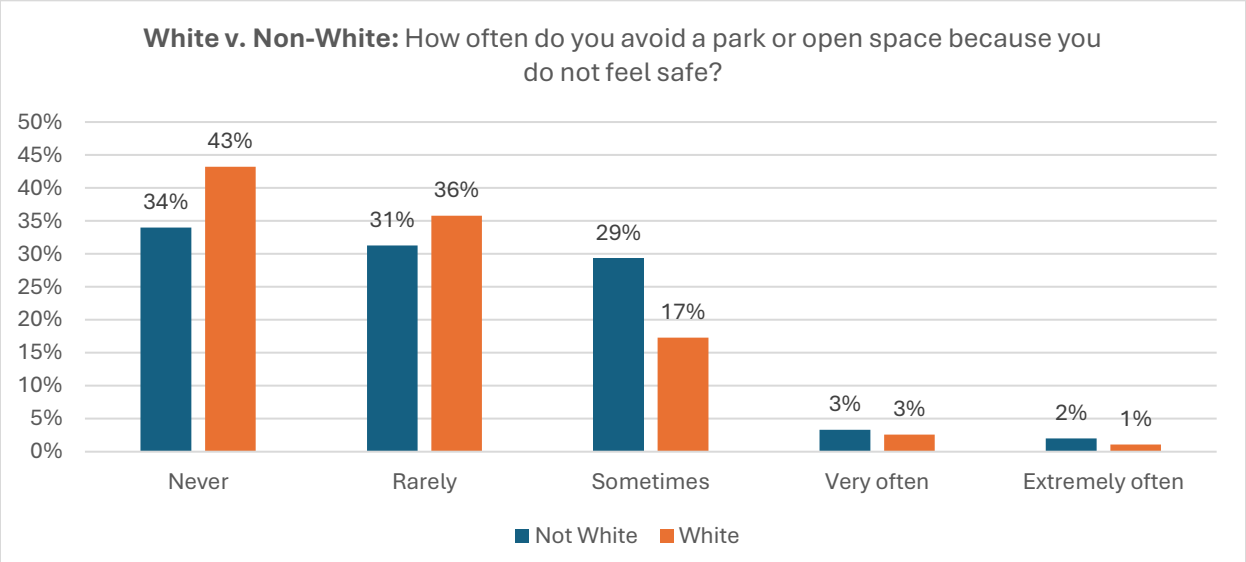
The survey broke down categories for race into 18 discrete options with some including more than one race or ethnicity. For the purpose of this analysis, these categories were consolidated into the binary of white and non-white.



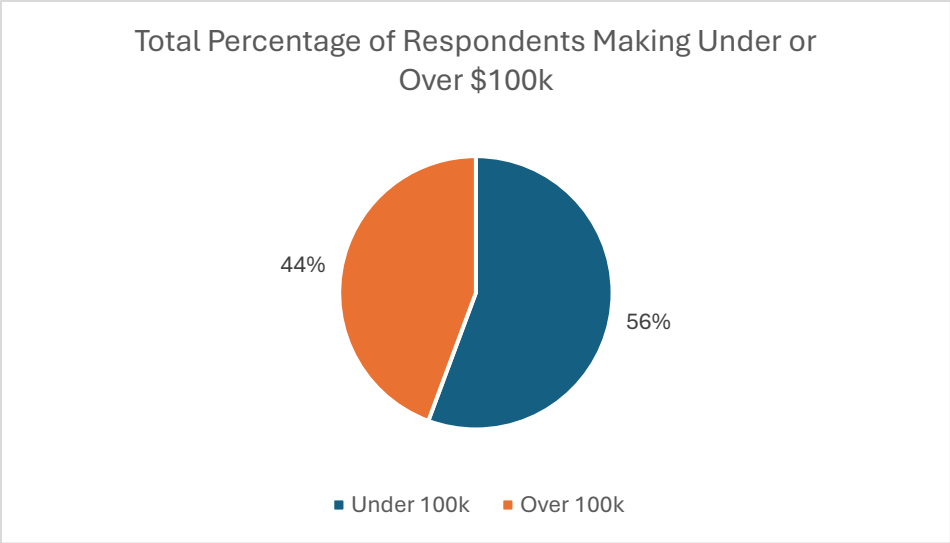
**2% of respondents left this question blank.*

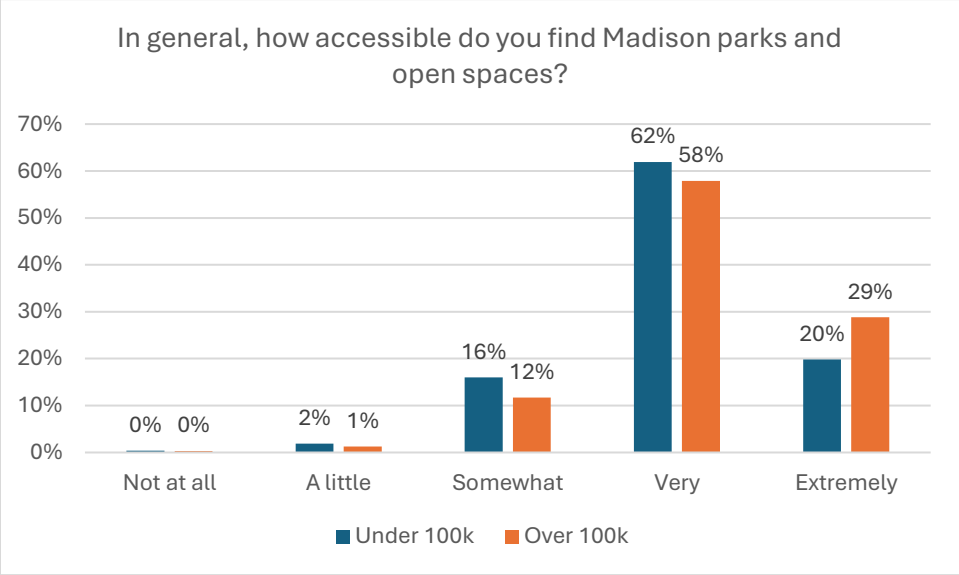

White v. Non-White: In general, how accessible do you find Madison parks and open spaces?
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
1%
0%
5%
1%
21%
12%
54%
62%
20%
24%
Not at all
A little
Somewhat
Very
Extremely
Not White
White

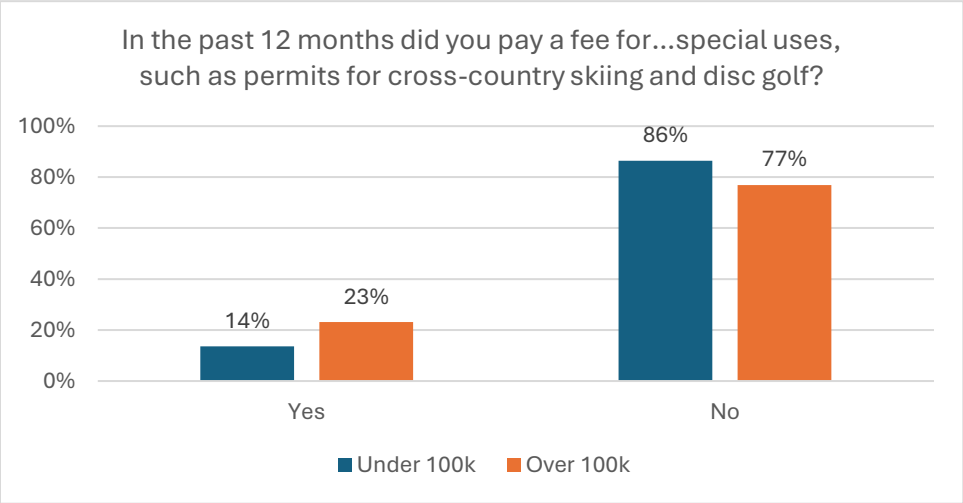

White v. Non-White: How much do parks and open spaces improve your quality of life?
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
3%
1%
1%
3%
16%
12%
31%
35%
48%
50%
Not at all
A little
Somewhat
Quite a bit
A great deal
Not White
White


White v. Non-White: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel safe?
50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
34%
43%
31%
36%
29%
17%
3%
3%
2%
1%
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Very often
Extremely often
Not White
White

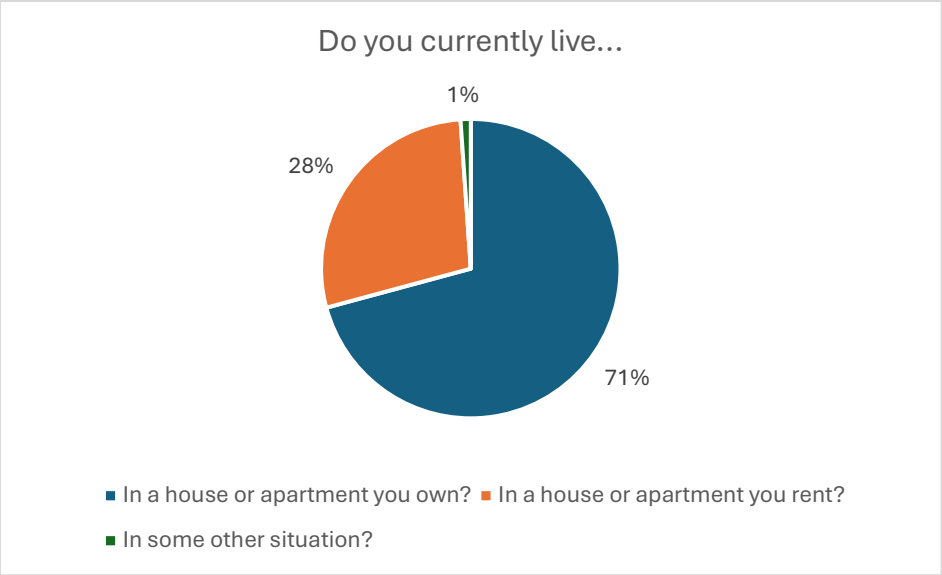
Income

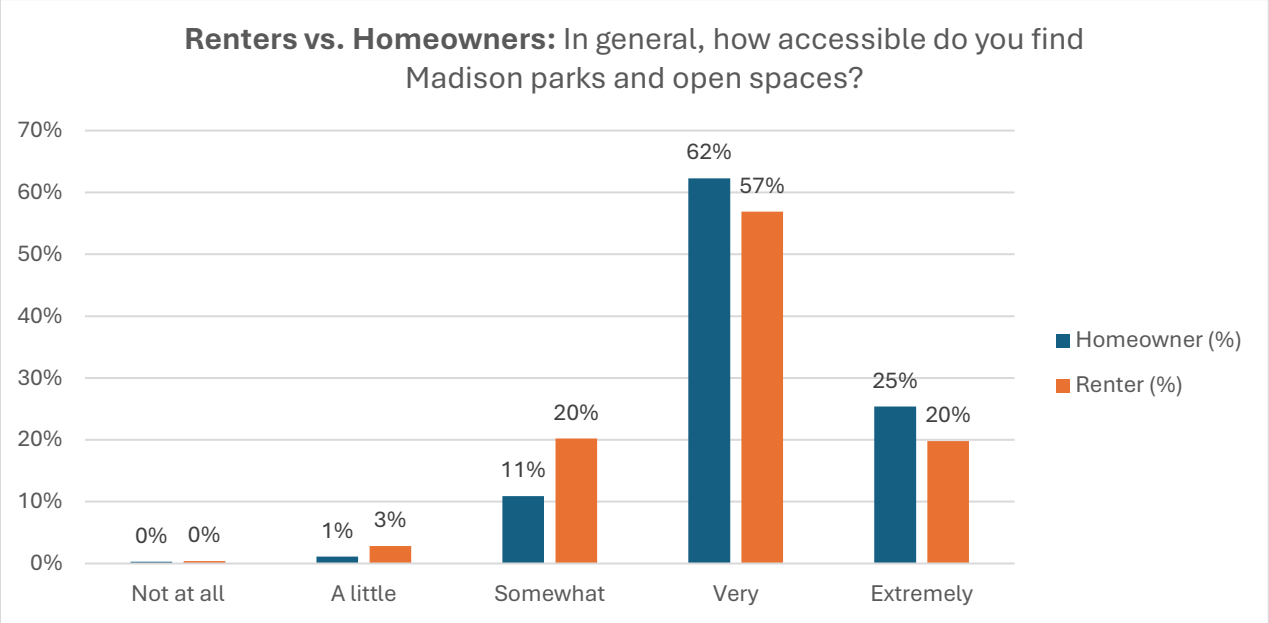

Total Percentage of Respondents Making Under or Over $100k
44%
56%
Under 100k
Over 100k

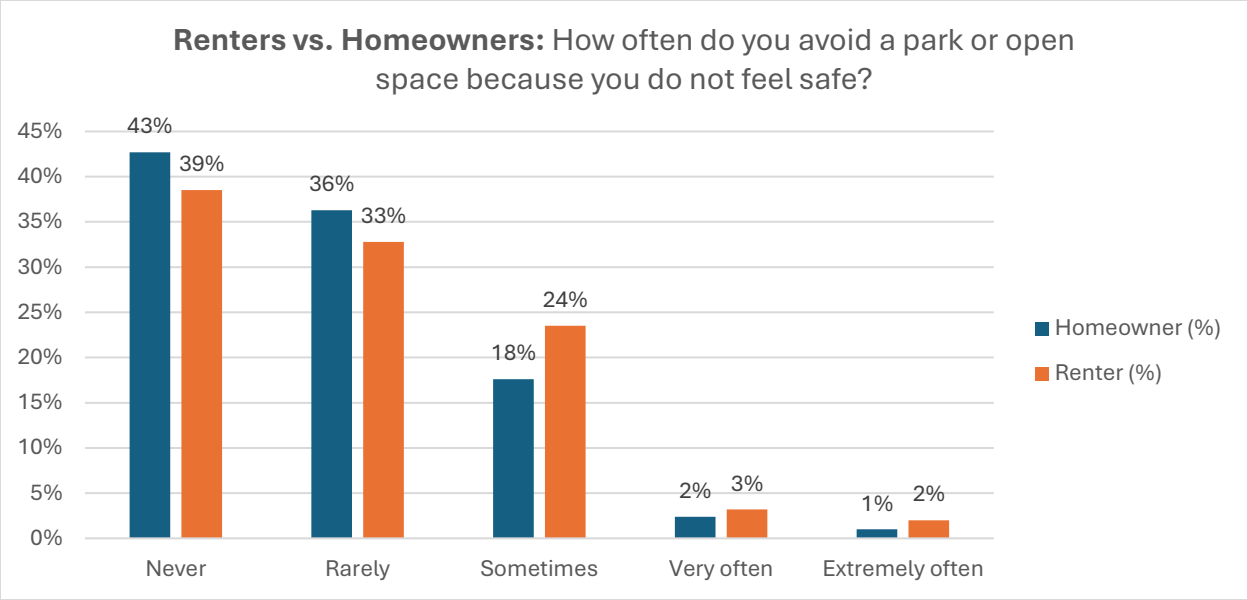

In general, how accessible do you find Madison parks and open spaces?
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
0% 0%
2% 1%
16% 12%
62% 58%
20% 29%
Not at all
A little
Somewhat
Very
Extremely
Under 100k
Over 100k

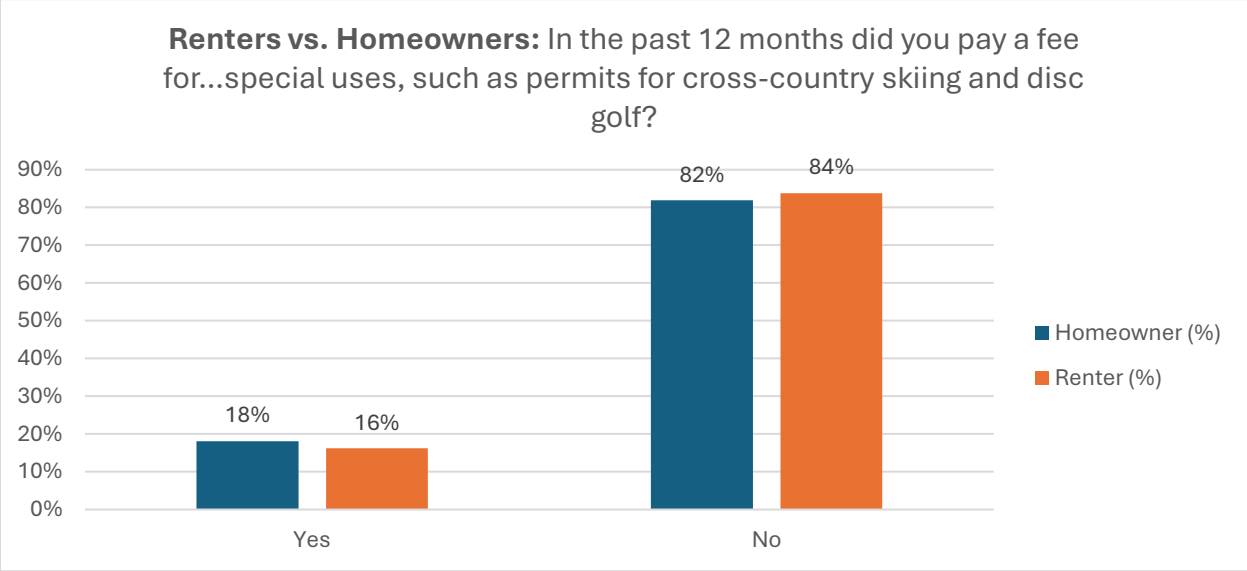

In the past 12 months did you pay a fee for...special uses, such as permits for cross-country skiing and disc golf?
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
14%
23%
86%
77%
Yes
No
Under 100k
Over 100k

Housing

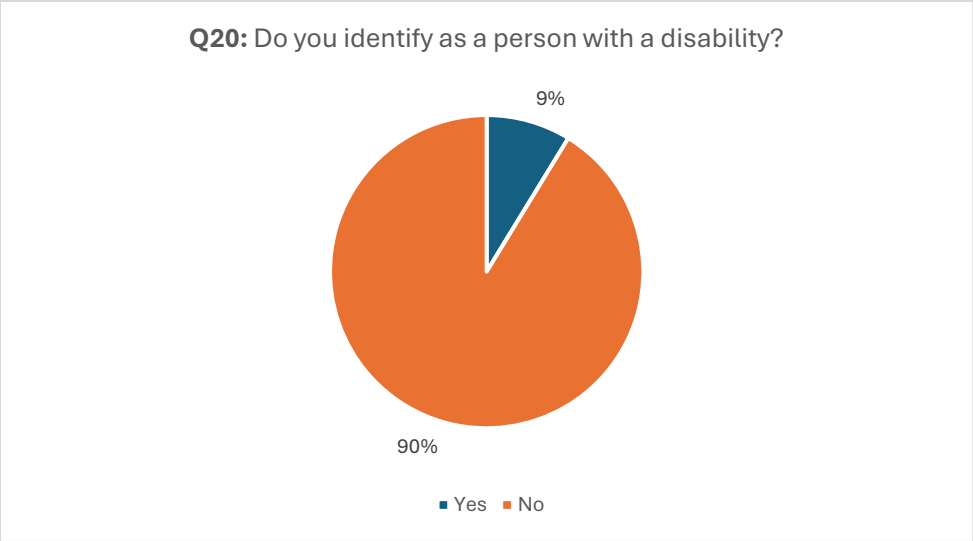

Do you currently live...
1%
28%
71%
In a house or apartment you own?
In a house or apartment you rent?
In some other situation?

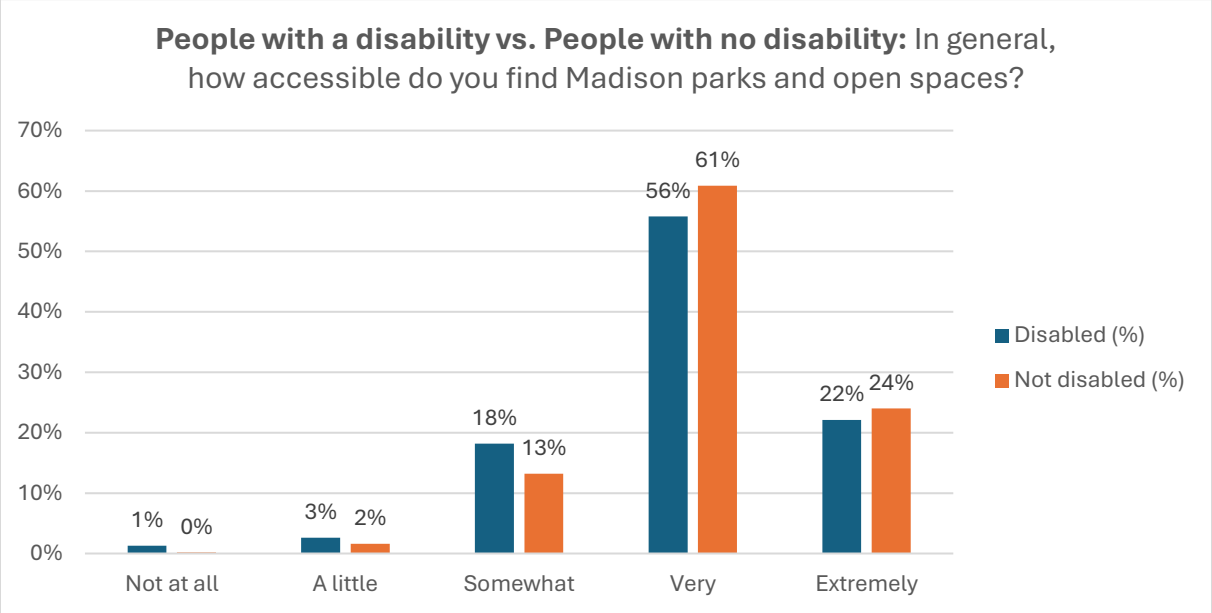

Renters vs. Homeowners: In general, how accessible do you find Madison parks and open spaces?
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
0% 0%
1% 3%
11% 20%
62% 57%
25% 20%
Not at all
A little
Somewhat
Very
Extremely
Homeowner (%)
Renter (%)

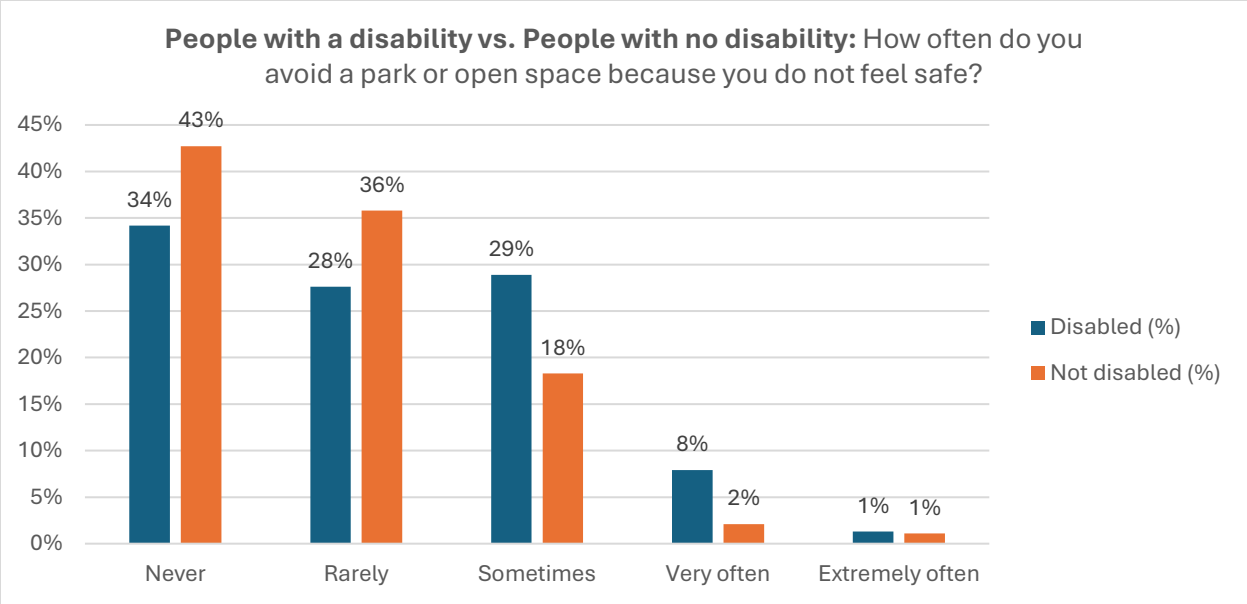

Renters vs. Homeowners: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel safe?
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
43%
39%
36%
33%
18%
24%
2%
3%
1%
2%
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Very often
Extremely often
Homeowner (%)
Renter (%)

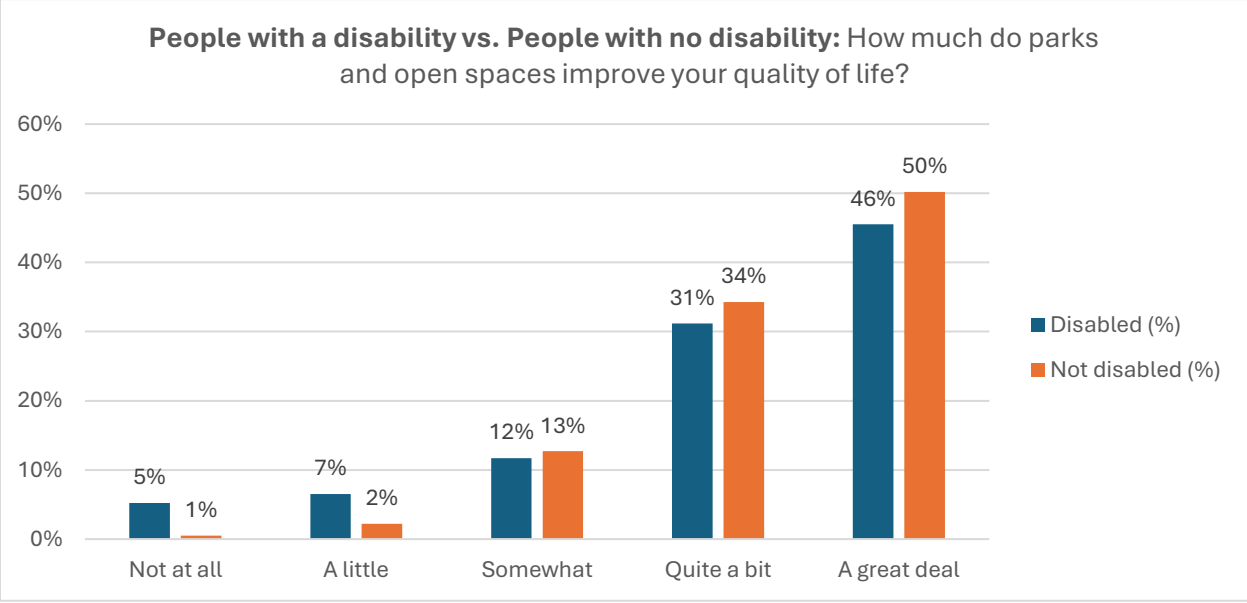

Renters vs. Homeowners: In the past 12 months did you pay a fee for...special uses, such as permits for cross-country skiing and disc golf?
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
18%
16%
82%
84%
Yes
No
Homeowner (%)
Renter (%)

Ability


Q20: Do you identify as a person with a disability?
9%
90%
Yes
No


People with a disability vs. People with no disability: In general, how accessible do you find Madison parks and open spaces?
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
1%
0%
3%
2%
18%
13%
56%
61%
22%
24%
Not at all
A little
Somewhat
Very
Extremely
Disabled (%)
Not disabled (%)


People with a disability vs. People with no disability: How often do you avoid a park or open space because you do not feel safe?
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
34%
43%
28%
36%
29%
18%
8%
2%
1%
1%
Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Very often
Extremely often
Disabled (%)
Not disabled (%)


People with a disability vs. People with no disability: How much do parks and open spaces improve your quality of life?
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
5%
1%
7%
2%
12%
13%
31%
34%
46%
50%
Not at all
A little
Somewhat
Quite a bit
A great deal
Disabled (%)
Not disabled (%)

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 – *12 attendees*
2. April 25th at Warner Park Community Recreation Center – *27 attendees*
3. May 2nd at Olbrich Botanical Gardens Atrium – *20 attendees*
4. May 9th at the Madison Parks Office (Olin Park) – *15 attendees*
    a. *Approximately 74 attendees across the four meetings*

These meetings were intended to be open-house style, with a short presentation at the top of the meeting explaining the purpose of the POSP and planning process. Attendees were then able to participate in a series of activities designed to gauge residents' priorities for the park system.

Activity 1: Mapping Madison

Attendees were asked to participate in a mapping exercise where they placed dots in response to questions about how they use Madison parks. The questions and corresponding dot colors are listed below, and the table tallies the number of dots received for each park.

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

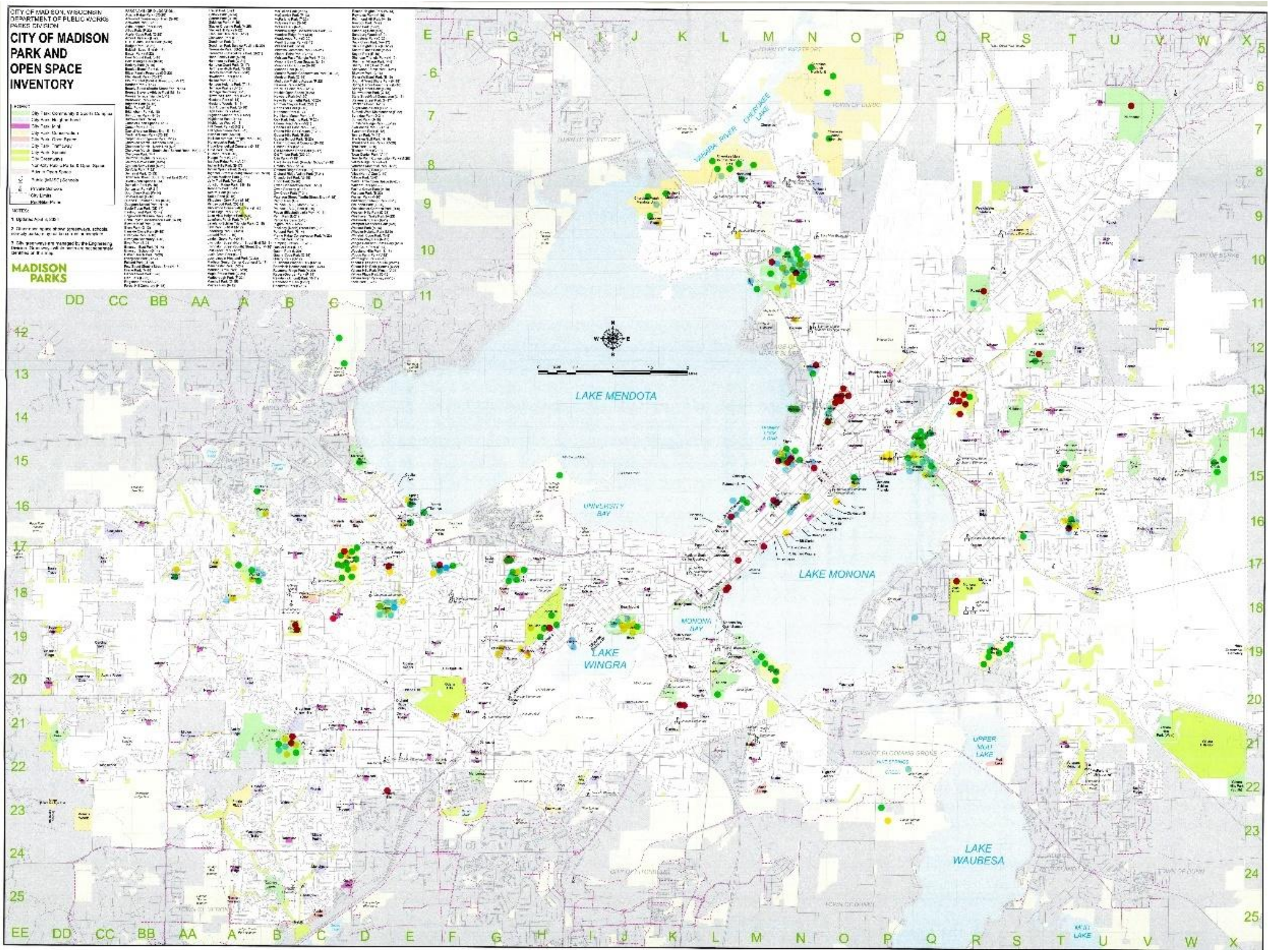
Park	Green	Blue	Red	Yellow	Total
Olbrich	9	11		2	22
Vilas	1	3		5	9
Garner	1	6		2	9
Edna Taylor	6	1			7
Cherokee Marsh S	5	1			6
Olin Turville	5	1			6
Hoyt	4	1		1	6
Walnut Grove	3	2		1	6
Cherokee Marsh N	4	1			5
McPike		3		2	5
Yahara Place	1	2		1	4
Burrows	3				3
Door Creek	3				3
Elmside				3	3
Spring Harbor Beach	1	1		1	3
Cherokee Marsh Mendota	1	1			2
Meadow Ridge	1			1	2

Park	Green	Blue	Red	Yellow	Total
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

Park	Green	Blue	Red	Yellow	Total
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.

The following page includes a scan of the full map.

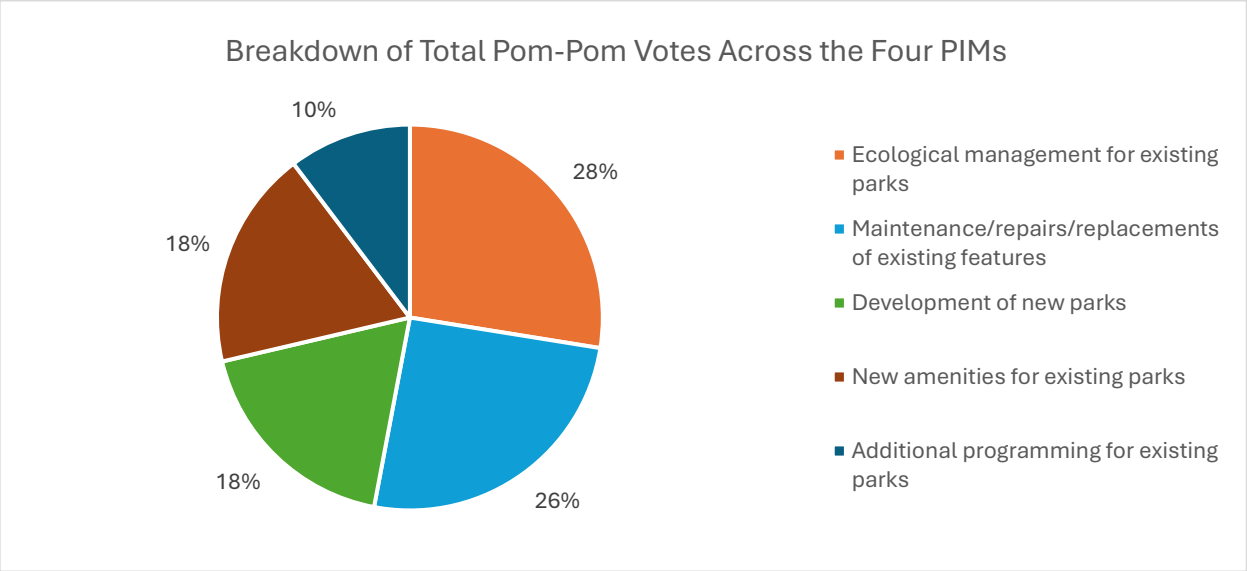

CITY OF MADISON
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
PARKS DIVISION
CITY OF MADISON
PARK AND
OPEN SPACE
INVENTORY
MADISON
PARKS
LAKE MENDOTA
LAKE MONONA
LAKE
WINGRA
LAKE
WAUBESA
UNIVERSITY
BAY
MONONA
BAY
YAHARA RIVER
CHEROKEE
LAKE
UPPER
MUD
LAKE
MUD
LAKE

Activity 2: Balance the Budget

Over 60 participants were asked how they would allocate a hypothetical Parks Division budget of $100 amongst five different spending categories using colorful pom-poms. Participants were given 10 pom-poms, each one representing $10 dollars. Overall, participants allocated more funding to existing parks maintenance/repairs and ecological management than the development of new parks or adding new amenities to existing parks. However, new amenities for existing parks and the development of new parks did receive the same number of total votes (114). The table below shows the breakdown of pom-pom votes per meeting, and the pie chart breaks down the sum of votes across the four public meetings.

Total pom-pom counts per meeting

Funding 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



Activity 3: Issue Boards

Participants were asked to comment on a series of issues which are highlighted in the plan. A count and summary of the comments for each issue are provided below.

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

Total: 185 Comments

- **Climate Resilience**
    - Overarching themes included 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**
    - Community participants often cited a number of potential opportunities for improvement, including improved access to information, stronger inter-organizational collaboration, and more tailored participation opportunities for specific groups of people. More broadly, PIM participants would like to see more volunteering efforts 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 of golf turf, limited usage, and the financial costs and benefits of the courses. However, some residents also noted the financial accessibility of an otherwise costly sport, and the potential to bring in revenue for the Parks Division due to the popularity of the sport.
    - *"Need outreach programs to encourage young golfers, build a more diverse clientele."*
- **Activating Parks**
    - Common interests from the participants included 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

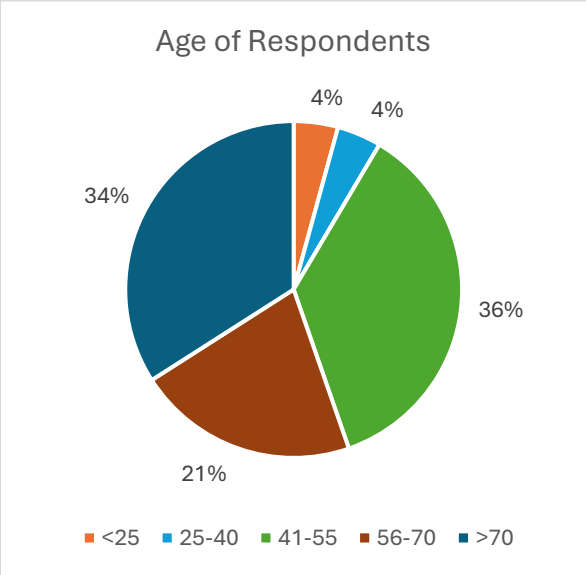
emphasized the importance of being environmentally sensitive to the natural habitats throughout Madison Parks.
    - *"Madison's bike community is large and vibrant and growing. I'd personally love more infrastructure for both recreation and transportation."*
- **Lake Monona Waterfront**
    - With upcoming 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."*

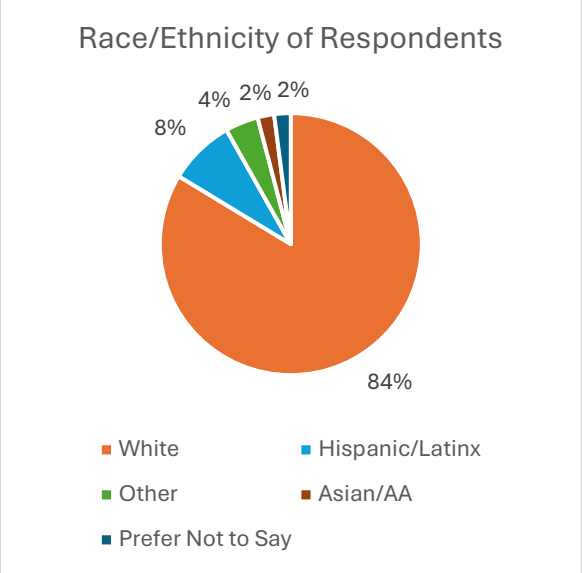
Activity 3: Facility Usage Board

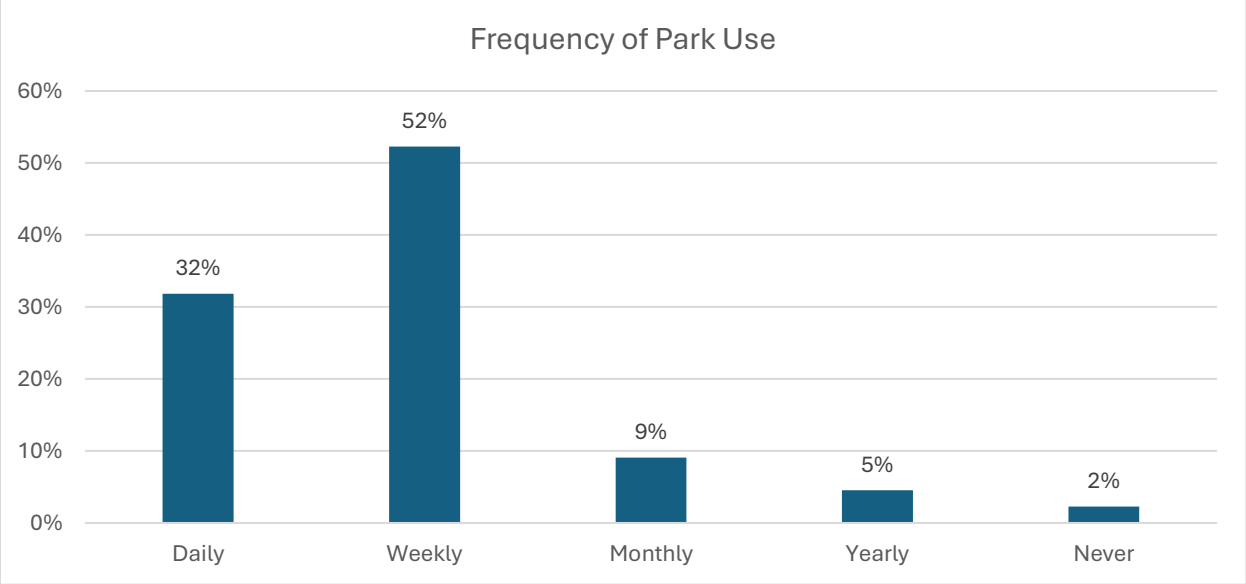
Participants were asked to place stickers on the board corresponding to the facilities/activities that a member of their household has participate in/utilized in the last 12 months. Of the options presented, leisure activities were the most popular, and golfing was the least popular.

PIM Attendees Demographics

At the start of each meeting, Madison Parks presented an overview of the planning process and purpose of the POSP. This presentation included a Mentimeter survey with demographic questions; Mentimeter is a live surveying platform, enabling participants to use their phone via a QR code to answer a series of questions, with the results being tallied in real time and displayed for all the see. It is important to note that given the open-house style of the meetings, not all of those who attended participated in the demographic survey. Some folks also opted to take a paper version of the survey; those results have been factored into the total tallies. The following results reflects all those who participated in the Mentimeter survey across the four PIMs.







BIPOC and Youth Focused Engagement

Focus Groups

Madison Parks, MSA Professional Services, Inc., and All Together held a total of 3 focus groups, 2 virtual and 1 in-person, to collect feedback from community members that often are left out of community planning processes. These focus groups were designed to engage underrepresented voices, including Hmong residents, BIPOC advocacy groups, and youth. Participants provided valuable insights on their experiences, needs, and aspirations for Madison's parks, helping to shape a more inclusive and responsive park system for the entire community.

The focus group dates in 2024 were as follows:

1. July 17 at Warner Park (Youth group)
2. July 22 over Zoom (Hmong group)
3. July 23 over Zoom (BIPOC advocacy group)

Overall feedback

Favorite Things About Madison Parks:

- Participants appreciate the variety of activities available, including sports facilities, playgrounds, and walking trails. Parks are favored for their diverse amenities.
- Green spaces and playgrounds are major draws, especially for families. The availability of activities like tennis, biking, and splash parks are highlighted.
- The parks' spaciousness and safety are valued, with features like obstacle courses being a unique attraction.

What's Missing From the Parks:

- Participants mentioned the need for more shelters with clean restrooms and additional seating. Current facilities are often insufficient for larger gatherings.
- There's a desire for more sports courts, including basketball, volleyball, and a wish for larger playgrounds to reduce crowding.
- Suggestions also included more swimming pools, better walking trails, and additional amenities like water fountains and shaded areas.

Desirable Features from Other Parks:

- There were calls for more shelters and benches, water fountains that are hygienic, and amenities like outdoor sinks for washing hands.
- Participants also suggested having more shaded areas and seating options in Madison parks.

Top 3 Desired Additions to Parks:

- More rental shelters and sports courts for various activities, with an emphasis on facilities for adults such as disc golf and workout equipment.
- Additional amenities like water fountains, benches, and shaded areas.
- Improved communication on how to rent park facilities, possibly through QR codes on shelters themselves or better signage.

Barriers to Accessing Parks:

- Concerns were raised about the cleanliness and availability of water fountains and the accessibility of restrooms, especially for families with young children.
- Some participants noted that crowding in popular areas can be a deterrent.
- The cost of rental bikes and lack of clear information on reserving shelters were also mentioned as potential barriers.

The youth focus group was structured slightly differently to make the younger participants feel comfortable and to have fun. The focus group was broken into two parts: 1) a kinesthetic cone exercise, and 2) a groupthink. Participants heard a statement like "I spend a lot of time at the parks" and stood by the cone that matched their level of agreement ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' After the second exercise, everyone gathered in a small circle to share additional thoughts and bounce ideas off each other. There were 10 participants and below is a high-level overview of the results.

Park Usage and Accessibility

Frequency of Visits:
When asked if they spend a lot of time at parks, 5 participants stood at "Strongly Agree," visiting parks daily or multiple times a week. Four stood at "Agree," while one was "Neutral." No participants disagreed, indicating high park engagement among those present.

Ease of Access:
Four participants "Strongly Agreed" that parks are easy to access, citing proximity and good biking routes. Three "Agreed," but highlighted issues like police presence as deterrents for youth of color feeling welcome. Two were "Neutral," and one "Strongly Disagreed" due to safety concerns crossing busy streets.

Park Activities & Events

Available Activities:
Opinions on activities were diverse. One participant "Strongly Agreed" that parks offer plenty to do, relying on self-directed fun. One "Agreed," but noted that activities are often limited to certain age groups, namely younger kids and not teens. Three were "Neutral," and five "Disagreed," expressing the need for more facilities and inclusive events.

Community Events:
Regarding events, four "Strongly Agreed" they attend park events regularly, enjoying activities like graduation parties and fireworks. Three "Agreed," attending events occasionally. One was "Neutral," and two "Disagreed," feeling events are not well-publicized or appealing for them.

Safety & Nighttime Use

After-Dark Usage:
Two participants "Strongly Agreed" they felt comfortable using parks at night, enjoying the quieter environment. One "Agreed," while four were "Neutral," mentioning safety concerns and restrictions. One "Disagreed," and two "Strongly Disagreed," citing insufficient lighting and potential dangers.

Facilitated Group Activity & Recommendations

The group brainstormed several ideas to enhance park experiences, emphasizing inclusivity and community engagement:

- ***Cultural & Artistic Enhancements:*** Incorporating art that reflects diverse cultures, such as murals and sculptures.
- ***Community & Fitness Initiatives:*** Establishing fitness-based equipment, a community pool, and interactive games like chess/checkers.
- ***Environmental Improvements:*** Focusing on clean lakes, native plantings, and conservation education.
- ***Event & Vendor Opportunities:*** Hosting more community events citywide, along with food vendors and pop-up shops.
- ***Infrastructure & Safety Upgrades:*** Improving trail connectivity, lighting, bathroom facilities, and creating designated community representatives for each park.

Pop-ups

Madison Parks, MSA Professional Services, Inc., and All Together held a total of 4 pop-ups at Parks Alive events. The dates of the pop-ups in 2024 were as follows:

1. June 24, Allied Park
2. June 25, Aldo Leopold Park
3. July 16, Worthington Park
4. July 17, Warner Park

The pop-ups were an opportunity to attend events happening in neighborhood parks and connect with BIPOC families to hear their thoughts on opportunities and challenges related to parks and open space in Madison. Kids were asked to share their wish for the future of the parks as well as asked for their favorite thing to do while there. An estimated 144 kids came to our table and shared their thoughts. A summary of the feedback is below.

Wishes and General Feedback (Across All Events):

- Swings: 35 mentions
- Slides: 23 mentions
- Basketball Courts: 13 mentions
- Splash Pads/Water-related: 12 mentions
- Playground Equipment: 12 mentions
- Soccer Fields: 9 mentions
- Monkey Bars: 8 mentions
- Football Fields: 7 mentions
- Ice Cream/Food Trucks: 7 mentions
- Cleaner Parks/Less Litter: 6 mentions
- More Youth Activities/Events: 5 mentions
- More Bugs/Butterflies: 5 mentions
- Shelter/Restrooms: 4 mentions
- Accessibility/Inclusive Spaces: 3 mentions
- Nature/Native Plants: 3 mentions

- Motorcycle: 2 mentions (by young children)
- Trampoline: 2 mentions
- Zipline: 2 mentions
- Gaga Ball Pit: 1 mention

General Trends:

- High demand for more swings and slides across parks.
- Strong interest in sports facilities, especially football, basketball, and soccer.
- Frequent requests for water-related amenities (pools, splash pads, water slides).
- Desire for cleaner, safer, and more accessible parks with diverse activities.

Wish Boxes

Fourteen wish boxes were placed at community centers and libraries throughout Madison during the summer of 2024 to gather additional feedback from the public. The activity asked community members to describe their "wish" for what they would like to see changed or added to Madison's parks. The stations were also used as a way to promote the online survey (see below) via a QR code.

Key Themes from Wish Box Responses

- Alicia Ashman Library (west side) – emphasis on trees/greenery, athletic fields, preserving natural environment, park events such as concerts
- Elver Park (southwest) – Water fountains, monkey bars, cleaner bathrooms
- Hawthorne Library (central E Wash) – Public restrooms
- Lakeview Library (north by coop) – Pool, flowers/pollinators, cleaner lake beaches/swimming, events and concession (food trucks)
- Monroe St Library (by University) – Climbing structures, walking/running/biking
- Pinney Library (east side by Olbrich) – Playgrounds, especially nature playgrounds and wheelchair-accessible playgrounds, community toys in the parks
- Warner Park (north side) – More events (concerts or 4th of July)

Wish Box Results Summary by Location

Location	#	Common Park-Related Responses*
Alicia Ashman Library	114	Trees (6) – provide shade for playgrounds, keep existing trees, "Sauk Creek Greenway" Sports / athletic fields (5) – cricket, soccer (2), basketball (2), football, disc golf, baseball Preserve open space / natural environment / wildlife / native plantings (6) – "like Pheasant Branch Conservancy" More parks (4) Events (4) – concerts, an "Encanto show", book swap/giveaways, story reading Playgrounds (3) – better, cooler Splash pads (3) – more and open longer in the year Garden (3) – food growing, butterflies (2) Bathrooms (2)

		Bounce houses (2) Public fountains (2) Active/free transportation options (2) – buses, biking, walking Dog parks (2) More sidewalks (2) Slides (2) Pool (1) Apple picking (1) Water fountains (1) Monkey bars (1) – Haen Park in W Madison Concessions (1) Water slide (1) Art (1) More chairs (1) Train rides (1) Crafts (1) Zipline (1) Petting zoo (1) – garden for chicks and bunnies Clean beaches & swimming (1) Benches (1) Picnic Area (1) – with shade from pink trees Bird bath (1) Rent toddler cars in the park (1) Play with horses in the park (1) Rollercoaster (1) Accessibility / wheelchair-friendly (1)
Elver Park Neighborhood Center	11	Water fountains (4) – including drinking fountains for people/dogs Monkey bars (3) Cleaner bathrooms (3) Pool / Splash Pad (2) Pickleball courts (1) Ponds (1) Gardens (1) Dog Parks (1) Events (1) – more Parks Alive Safe / welcoming parks (1)
Goodman Community Center	4	Climbing (1)
Hawthorne Library	17	Public restrooms (2) Fruit trees/bushes (2) - edible landscape areas for public foraging Drinking fountains (1) Allow leashed dogs in all parks, dog drinking fountains (1) Empathy for neighbors experiencing homelessness (1)

		Children enjoying the parks – Affordable housing nearby, safe walkable access to the park (1) Splash pad (1) Bees (1) Hammocking (1) More monkey bars (1) Bike racks (1) Shady sitting spots (1) Flowers (1) No pesticides or herbicides, a chemical-free life (1) Keep wooded areas for birdwatching and nature walks (1) Ping pong tables (1)
Lakeview Library	35	Pool (5) – East or North Madison More flowers / pollinator plants habitat (4) Clean beaches/lakes & swimming (2) Events (2) – "a festival for trees", live music Concessions (2) – cotton candy stand, food trucks / bike carts Open space / greenery (2) Bike lanes / paths (2) Less trash (2) Dog stations in parks (1) Walking/hiking paths (1) – away from roads Benches (1) Gardens (1) Ice Skating/Roller Rink (1) Waterfall (1) Shading for playgrounds (1) Fire pits (1) Park toy stand (1) Splash pad (1) More parks (1) Ninja course (1) Merry go-round (1)
Monroe St Library	13	Sculptures / things to climb on (3) More walking/running/biking (2) Park access (1) Green (1) Safe / welcoming parks (1) More trees (1) More swings (1) More wildflowers (1)
Neighborhood House Community Center	13	Pool (1) – specifically by Warner Park
Pinney Library	31	More playgrounds (2)

		Accessible playgrounds / wheelchair-friendly (2) Nature playgrounds (2) Keep community toys in the parks (2) – trucks and cars Butterfly habitats (2) Sports museum (1) Outside theme park (1) Garden (1) – to grow watermelon No more tire mulch (1) Events (1) – Concerts in the park Slides (1) More flowers (1) Toddlers play spaces (1) Splash pad (1)
Warner Park Community Rec Center	13	Events (3) – 4th of July, Adult social events Splash Pad (1) Basketball courts (1) Playground (1) Pool (1) Outdoor parkour course (1) No turf grass (1) – switch to native grasses and plants Kids vending machine (1) Zipline (1) Bike tracks (1) Trampolines (1) Indoor skating ring (1)

*Wish box responses without relevance to park improvements are included in the response total counts but not in the summary of common responses.

Retrieved, No Responses:

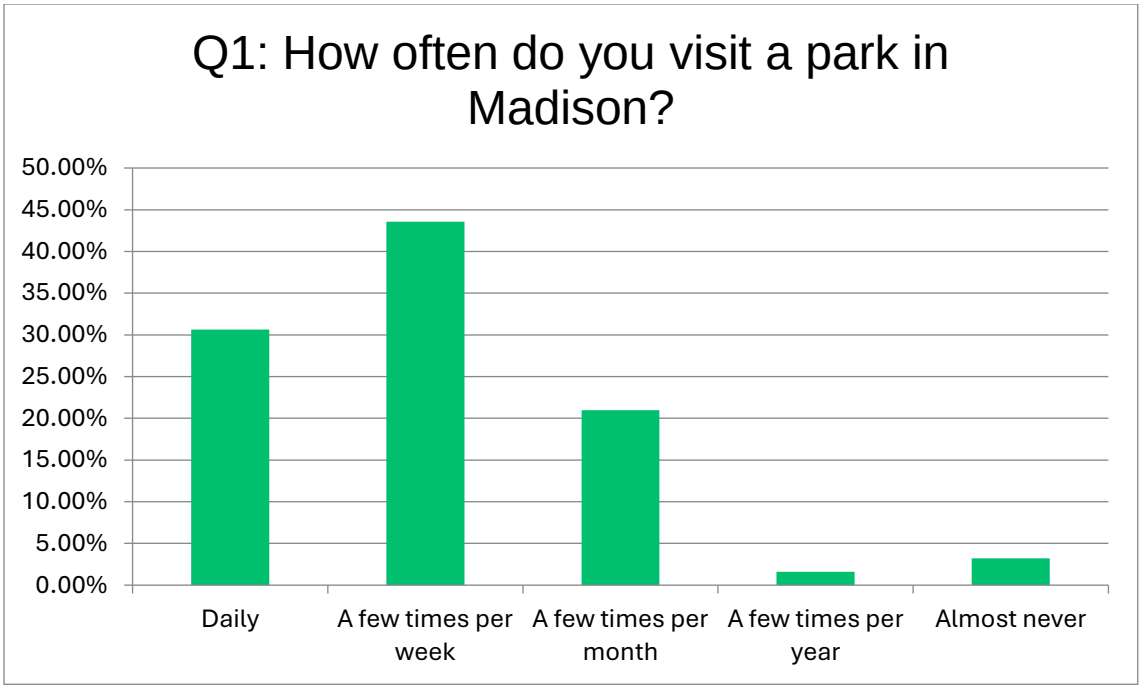
- East Madison Community Center

Not Retrieved (Assumed Lost or Misplaced):

- Kennedy Heights Community Center
- Centro Hispano
- Theresa Terrace Neighborhood Center
- Meadowridge Library

Supplemental BIPOC Survey

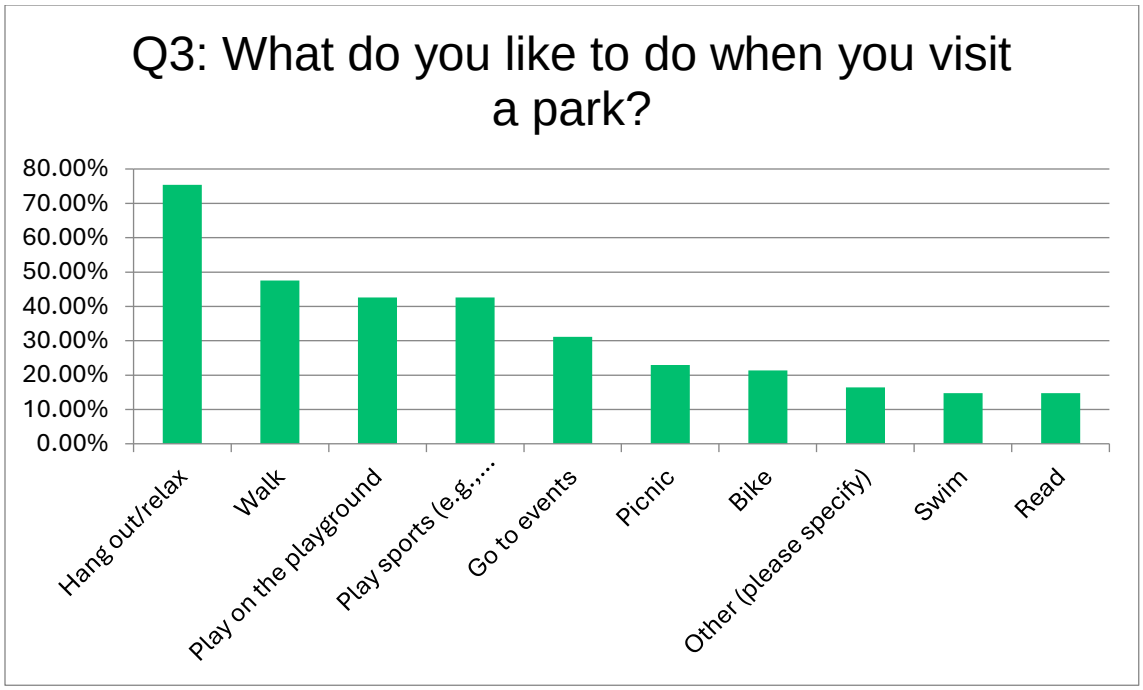
A brief online survey, provided in both English and Spanish, intended as a supplement to the survey produced through the UW Survey Center was promoted during the summer of 2024 via the four Parks Alive pop-ups and wish boxes. The survey was also sent directly to numerous community organizations throughout Madison. 62 people responded to the English survey and one response was received in Spanish; that response has been incorporated into the English responses summarized below.

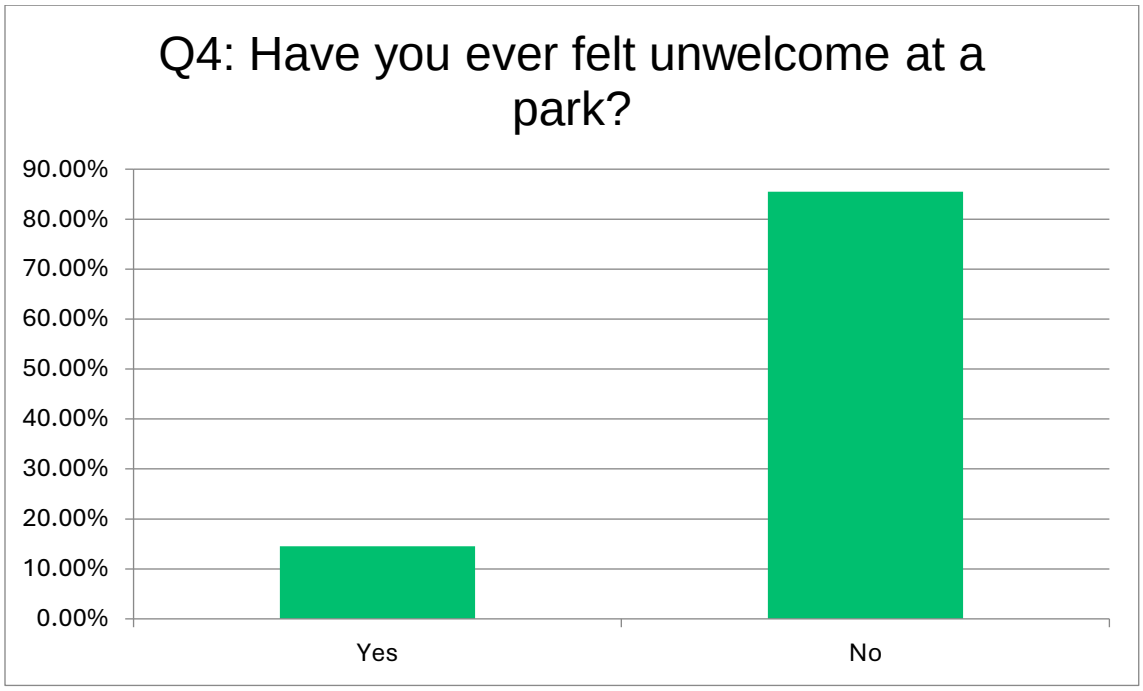


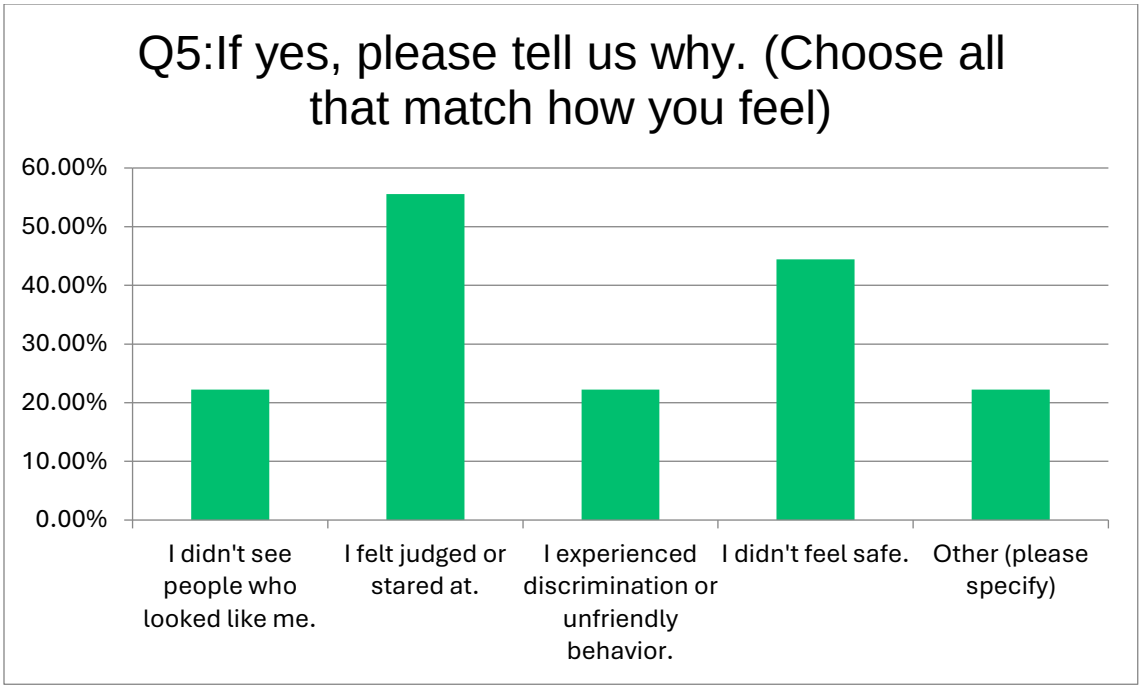
Q2: What park do you visit most and why? Click here for a list of all parks!

Common Responses included:

- Aldo Leopolod Park
- Brittingham Park
- James Madison Park
- Kennedy Park
- Vilas Park
- Demetral Park
- Walnut Grove Park
- Warner Park
- Worthington Park

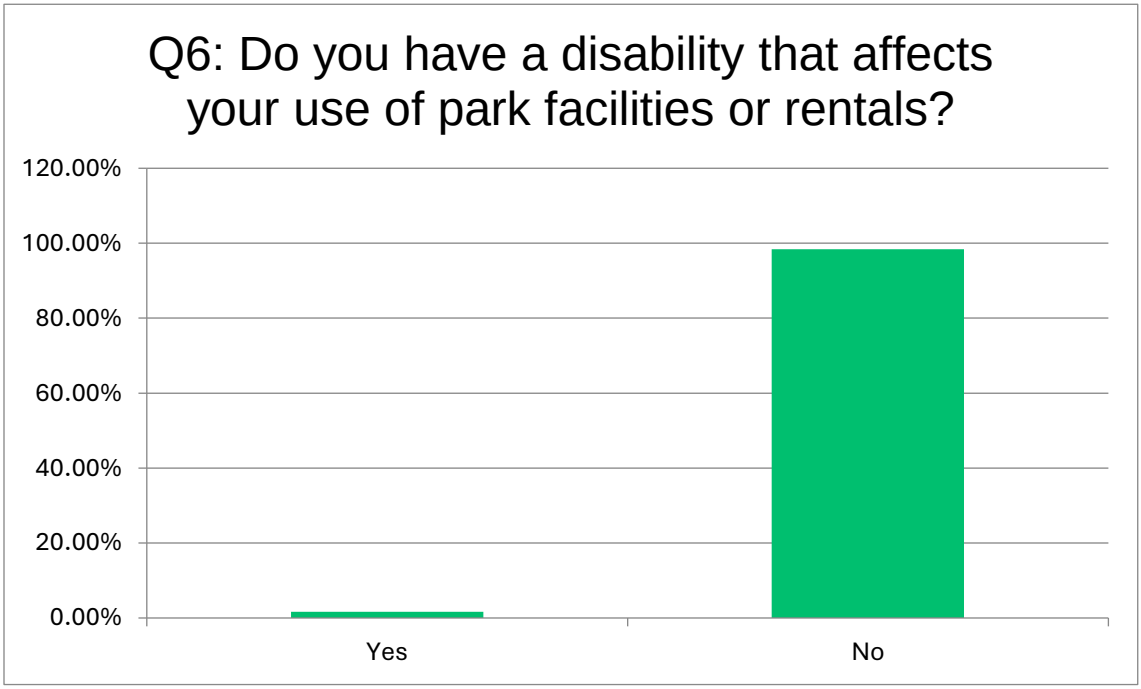

Q3: What do you like to do when you visit a park?
80.00%
70.00%
60.00%
50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
20.00%
10.00%
0.00%
Hang out/relax
Walk
Play on the playground
Play sports (e.g.,...
Go to events
Picnic
Bike
Other (please specify)
Swim
Read

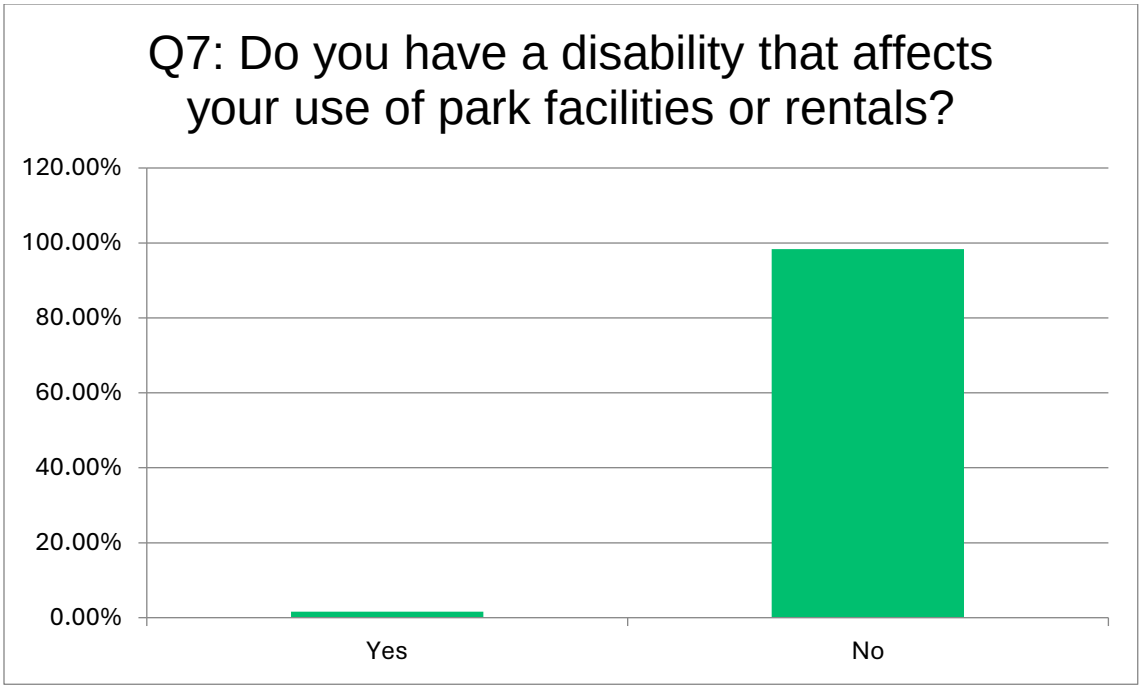

Q4: Have you ever felt unwelcome at a park?
90.00%
80.00%
70.00%
60.00%
50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
20.00%
10.00%
0.00%
Yes
No



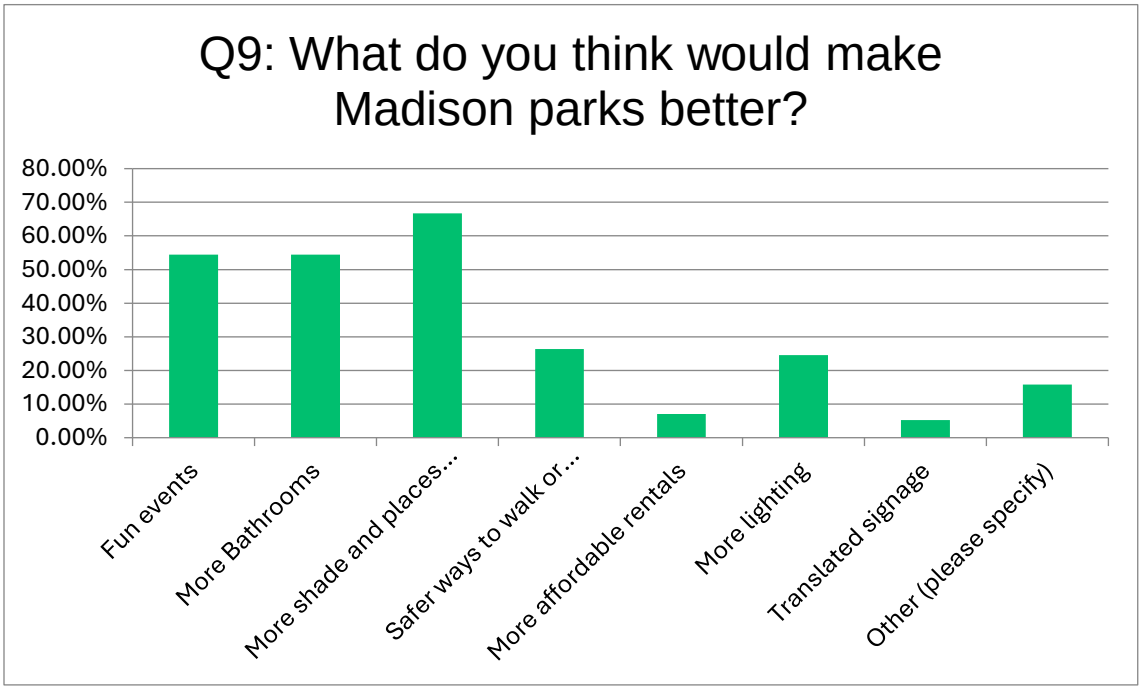
Other Responses:

- *People were swearing loudly*
- *I felt safe*





Q8: If yes, please tell us how we can make the parks more accessible and enjoyable for you. *All respondents skipped this question.*



Other responses:

- *More shade trees and quiet areas to enjoy bird watching and wildlife*
- *A pool and/or splash pad at Warner Park*

- *Fountains and more seats*
- *LIT basketball courts for late season outdoor play past 5pm*
- *Better fencing*
- *More food trucks*
- *Paths*
- *More basketball courts.*

Q10: **Is there anything else you'd like to share?**

- *Parks needs to plant more trees. More wildlife, less prairies. More splash pads. Better playground for kids over age 7*
- *All playgrounds should be built accessibly or with accessibility features*
- *I love how clean our parks are. The open spaces and sports fields and nature*
- *In addition to biking through on my way to and from work, I visit parks often. I especially like shady spots. I love being able to walk or bike to a park: it makes the city feel more human. Because of Ride the Drive, I learned about two parks I hadn't known about before. I enjoy the Parks Alive events and I was grateful for Democracy in the Park. I loved Ride the Drive this year -- best Ride the Drive ever! I appreciate the partnership with Madison Boats -- I have a membership with them and it brings me to the parks. As a bicycle commuter I sometimes go out of my way to plan my errand route to take a path through a park instead of biking down the road with cars -- it calms me and makes me feel joyful.*
- *In view of the climate crisis, preserving green space and tree canopy should be the city's and Parks Division's #1 priority, not trying to increase usage.*
- *Better maintenance of tennis courts.*
- *Get more info about parks and events at the schools! I'm a teacher and would love to take my kids during the school year*
- *Rinse off/out door shower stations would be great at the beaches. No a proper shower, but a place to rinse off and go back to whatever you were doing. With the lake algae levels questionable … this would be amazing. Add water bottle filling stations.*
- *Love the variety of parks!*
- *More native plantings and gardens!*
- *I love the parks and they are very fun to be at and i always feel very welcomed by the other people there*
- *Please add bathrooms to all parks! So not fun to have to leave to use the facilities elsewhere.*
- *Enclosed area needed to prevent Stoughton frontage road access/ drug dealing*