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# APPENDIX A - 1

## Task 3.2 Survey Synthesis Slides



# 2026 Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan Community Survey

## Findings and Synthesis

July 3rd, 2025



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# Methodology

## Survey Overview

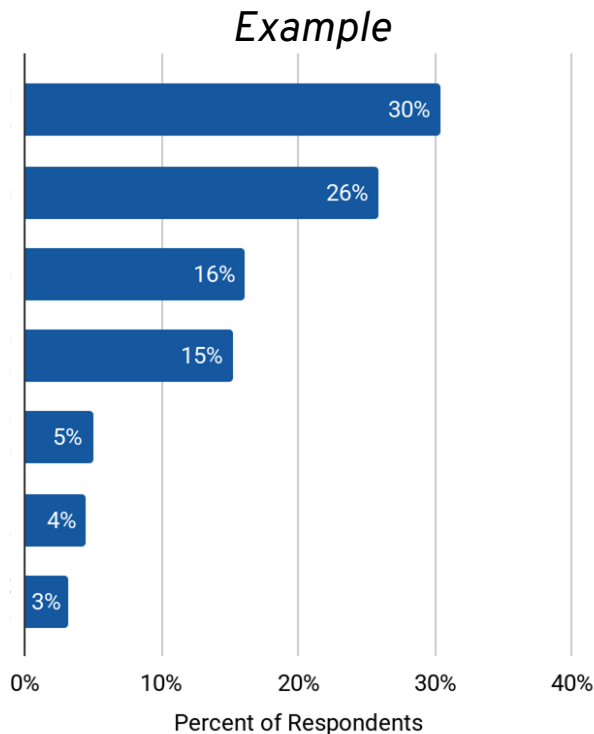
This survey asked respondents about their experiences with Bellingham's Parks and Recreation, collecting data through several question types such as multiple choice, select all that apply, likert scale, and open ended.

Each question type needed a different approach to process the data accurately and understandably. These are the methods used.

## Single Response and Select all That Apply

These graphs indicate what percentage of respondents selected each answer.

In single response questions, the percentage of each bar will equal 100%. For questions that allow more than one selection, each individual bar can be between 0% and 100%.

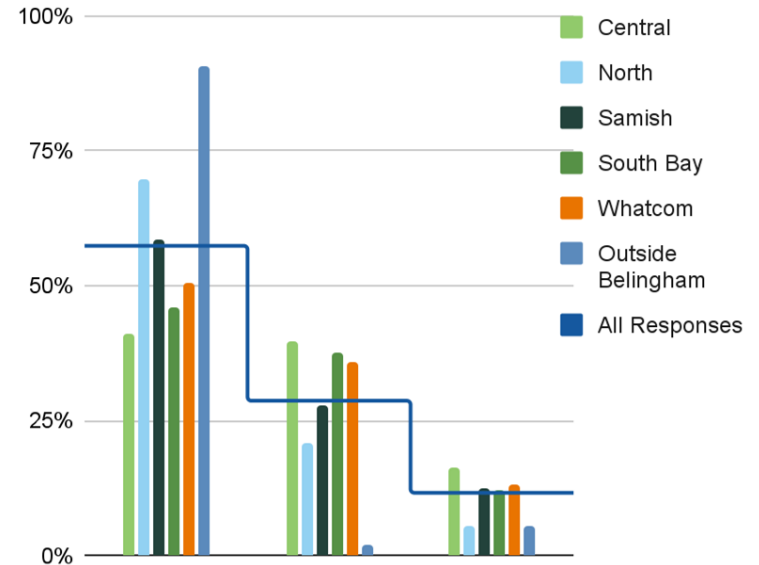


## Response by Breakout Group

These graphs show the percentage of all respondents that selected a given answer. They also include a breakdown of responses by group.

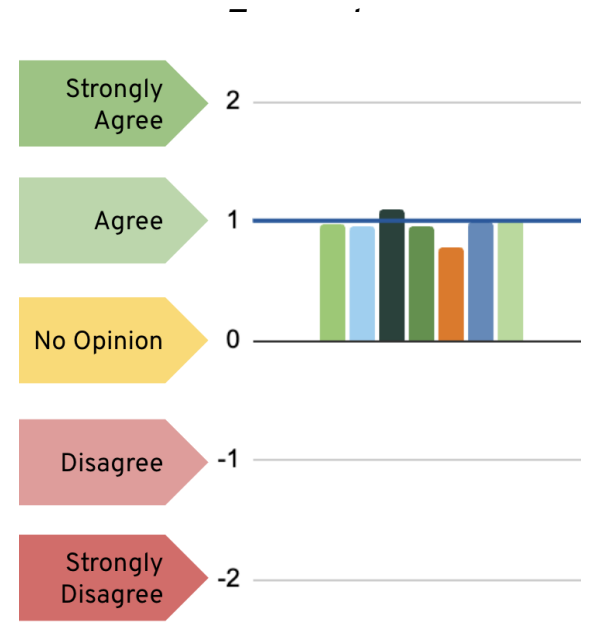
The responses of all respondents are represented as a waterfall style line, and each breakout group's response is represented as a bar underneath the line. The farther the breakout group's bar is from the "All Responses" line, the higher the difference is from the average response.

### *Example*



## Weighted Likert

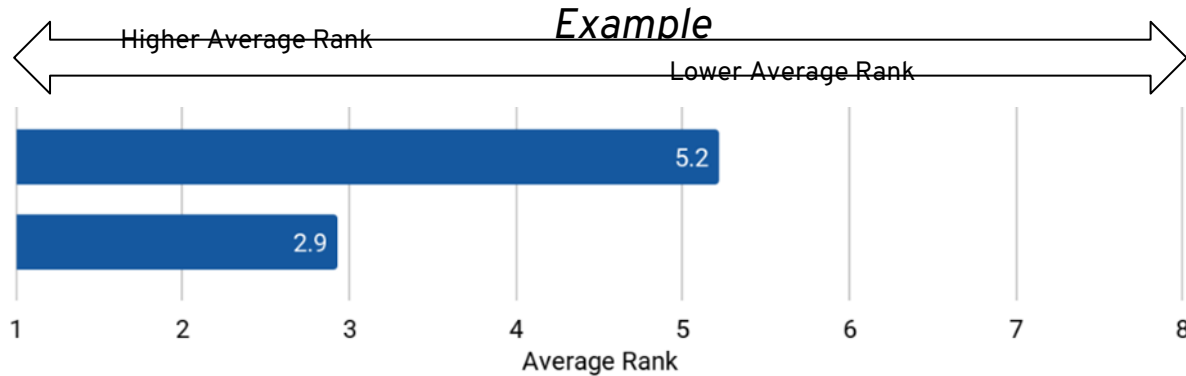
These graphs are a form of the Response by Breakout Group but represents results of likert questions, i.e. questions that ask respondents to select from a scale of options. A weight is applied to each of the response options to find a weighted average. The resulting value indicates the average response of respondents.



Indicates the average response is agree

## Ranked Response

These questions ask respondents to rank categories based on importance. The weighted average is used to determine the average rank of the category.



## Breakout Groups

Survey results were cross analyzed by two sets of breakout groups: demographic groups and regional groups. Reviewing how these groups' responses varied from responses of all respondents can highlight disparities and differences in experiences; as well as improvements and barriers to improve to increase equity within Bellingham's Park system.

## Breakout Groups

### Demographic Groups

- Annual Household Income Less than \$50k
- 24 and Younger
- 65 and Older
- Households with Children at Home
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)
- Latinx
- Men

## Breakout Groups

### Regional Groups

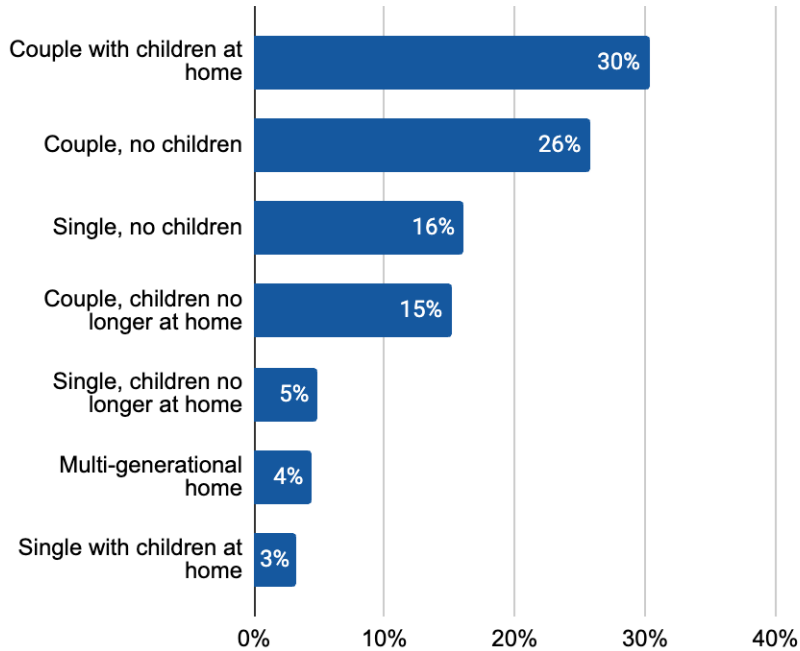
- Central (Columbia, Birchwood, Sunnyland, Cornwall, Lettered Streets, York, City Center)
- North (Cordata, King Mountain, Meridian, Iron Gate)
- Samish (Samish, Whatcom Falls, Puget)
- South Bay (Fairhaven, Happy Valley, South Hill, Sehome, Edgemoor, South, WWU)
- Whatcom (Alabama Hill, Silver Beach, Barkley, Roosevelt)
- Outside Bellingham (Sudden Valley, Outside of Bellingham)

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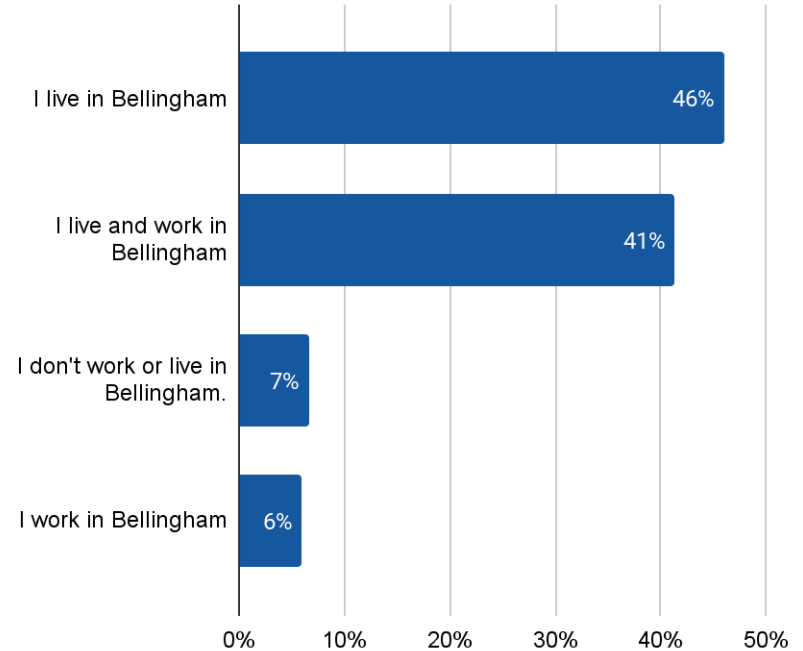
# Demographics

## Demographics

Which of these categories best apply to your household?

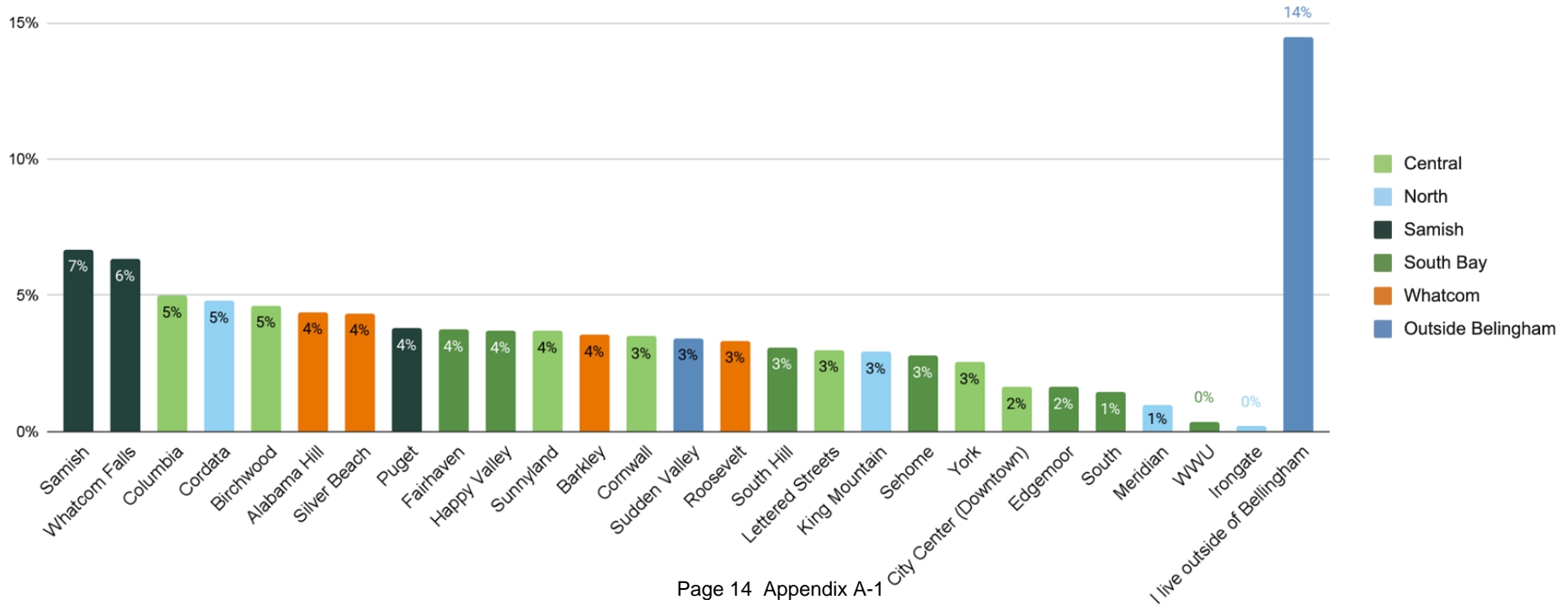


Do you live or work in the City of Bellingham?



## Demographics

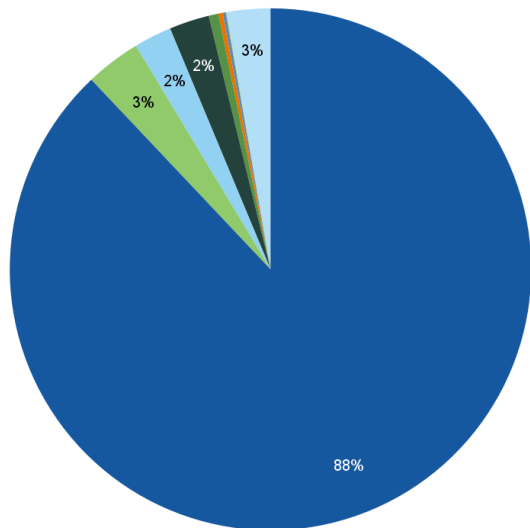
### Where do you live?



## Demographics

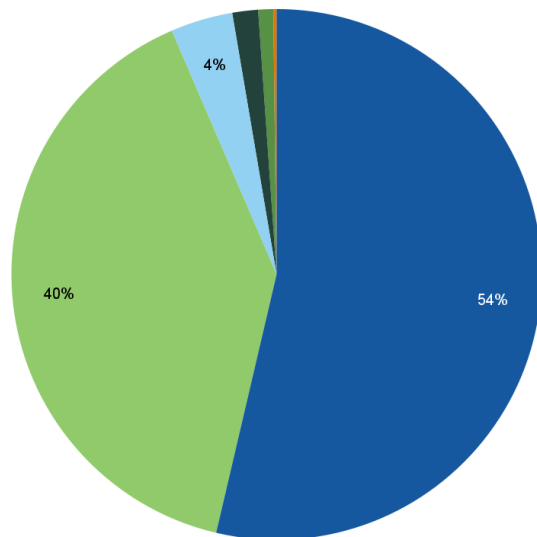
### What race(s) or ethnicity(ies) do you most closely identify with?\*

- White
- Biracial or Multiracial
- Asian or Asian American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- A race or ethnicity not listed above



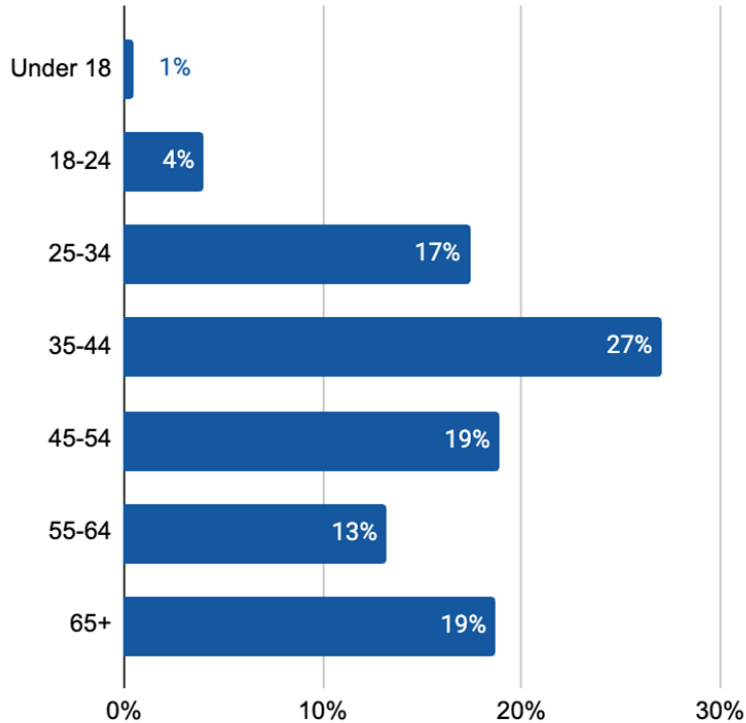
### What gender do you most closely identify with?\*

- Woman
- Man
- Prefer not say
- Non-binary or gender non-conforming
- Prefer to self-describe
- Transgender

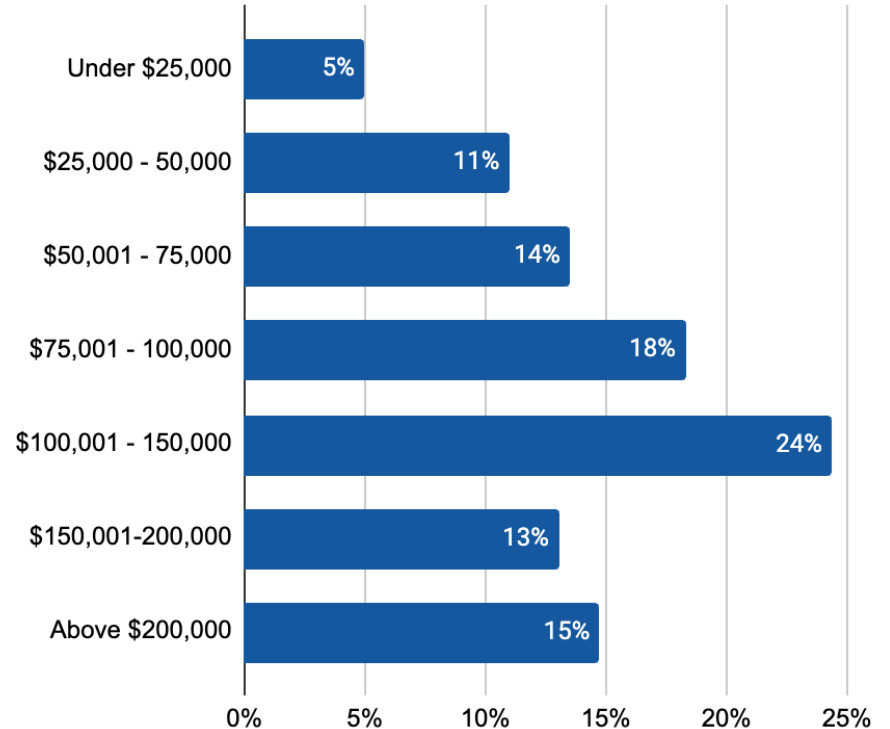


\*Select all that apply function was not sufficiently operational on these questions, leading to potential inaccuracies.

## What age group are you in?



## What is your annual household income?



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# Facility Usage

In the past month, how many times have you visited a park or park facility in Bellingham, such as a neighborhood or community park, Arne Hanna Aquatic Center, or Civic Athletic Complex?

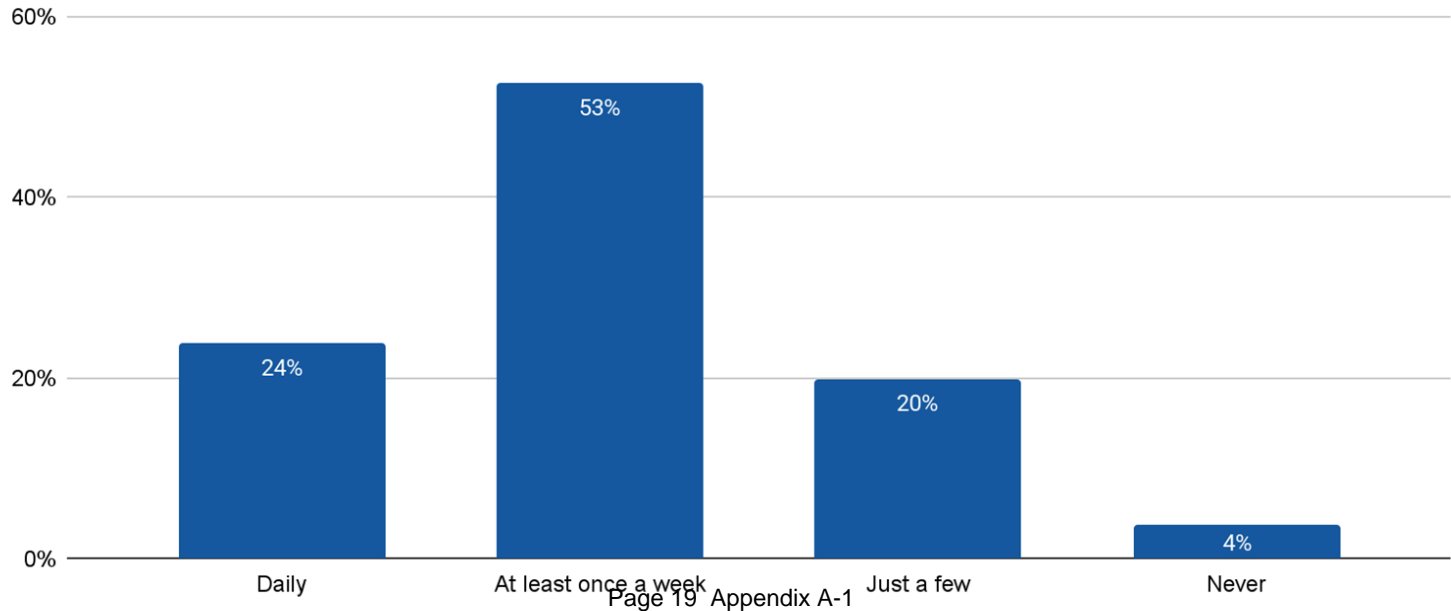
The majority of survey respondents visit park facilities on a weekly basis. This was generally consistent among the survey breakout groups except for:

- Latinx respondents indicated that they visit parks more frequently.
- Respondents living in North Bellingham and outside of the City visit parks less frequently.

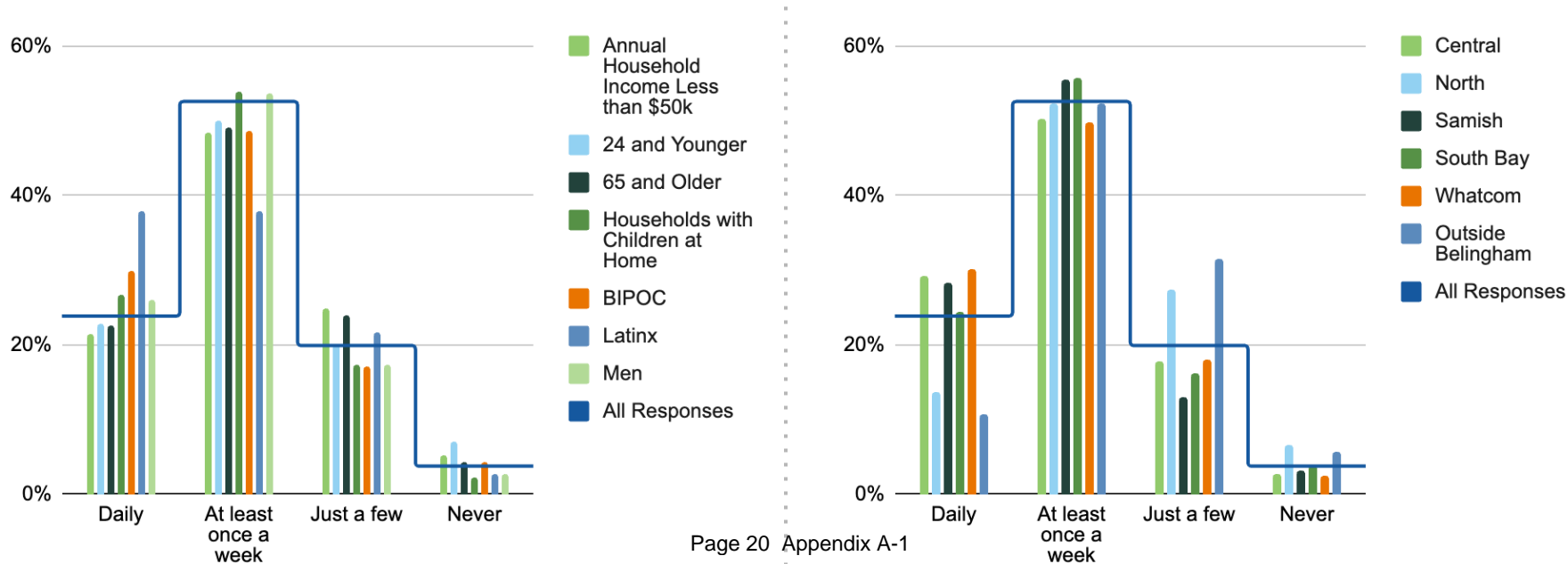
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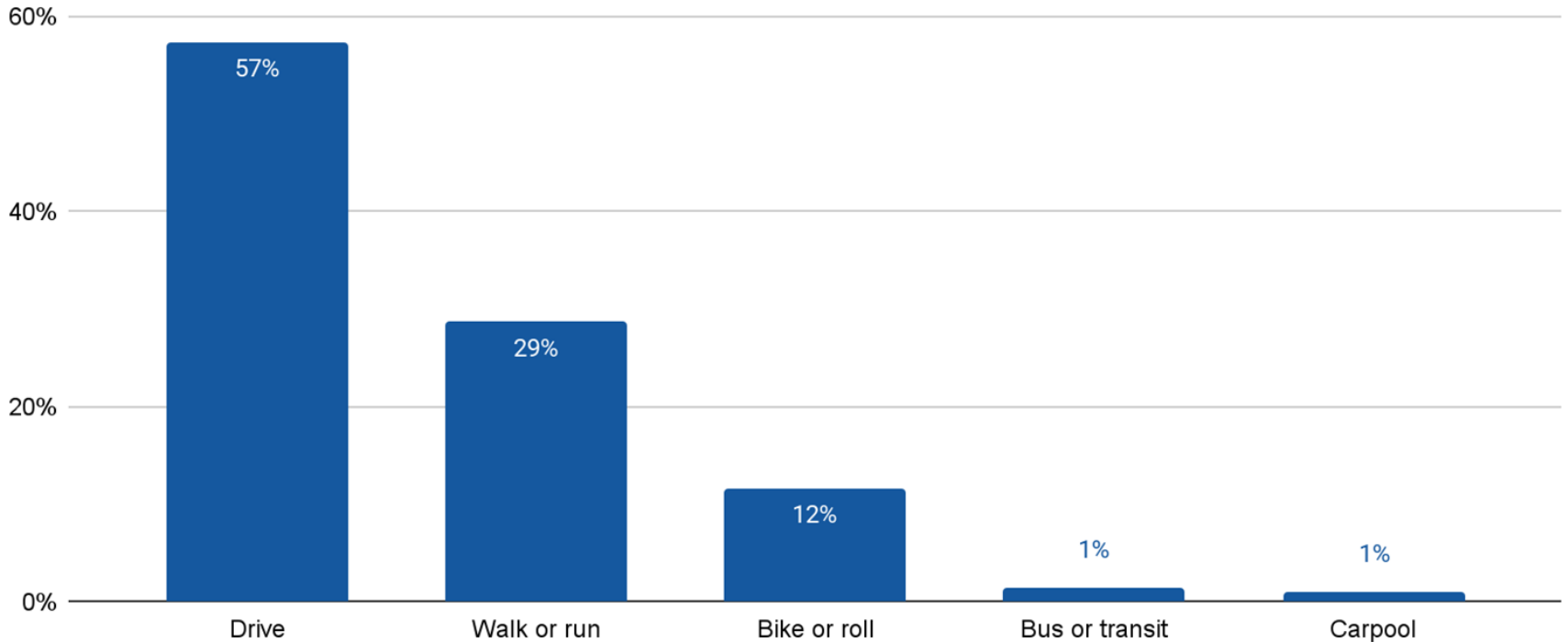


## How do you typically get to a park, trail, or program/activity?

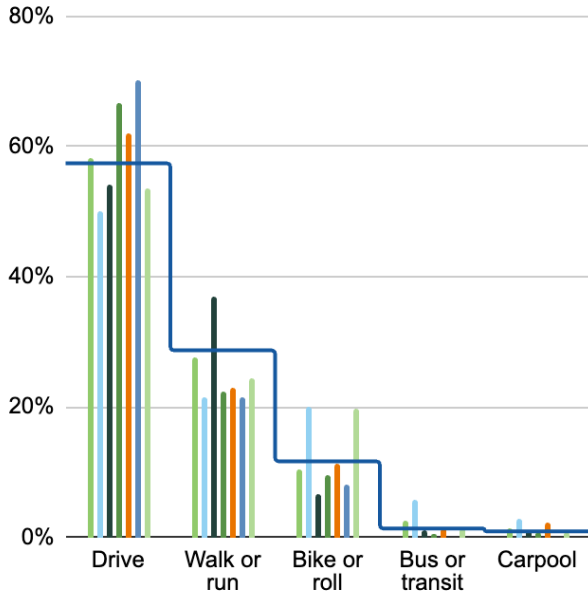
The majority of respondents get to park facilities by driving. However, a substantial portion utilize active modes such as walking or biking.

- Young respondents tend to drive less and bike or roll more.
- Older respondents tend to drive less and walk more.
- Households with children at home and Latinx respondents tend to drive more.
- Respondents living in North Bellingham and outside of the City tend to drive more.

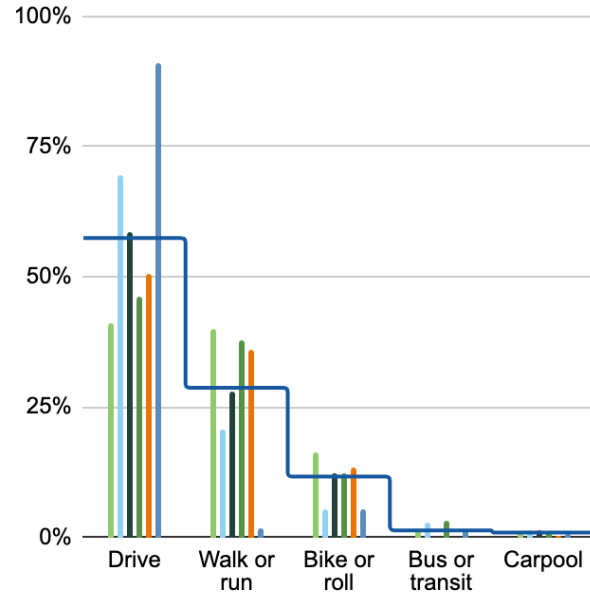
## How do you typically get to a park, trail, or program/activity?



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- Annual Household Income Less than \$50k
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- 65 and Older
- Households with Children at Home
- BIPOC
- Latinx
- Men
- All Responses



- Central
- North
- Samish
- South Bay
- Whatcom
- Outside Belingham
- All Responses

Which of the following features have you or someone in your household used in a City-managed park, trail, or open space in the last year?

The majority of respondents have used trails, waterfronts, and open space within the past year. Respondents use least frequently golf courses, volleyball courts, and cricket fields.

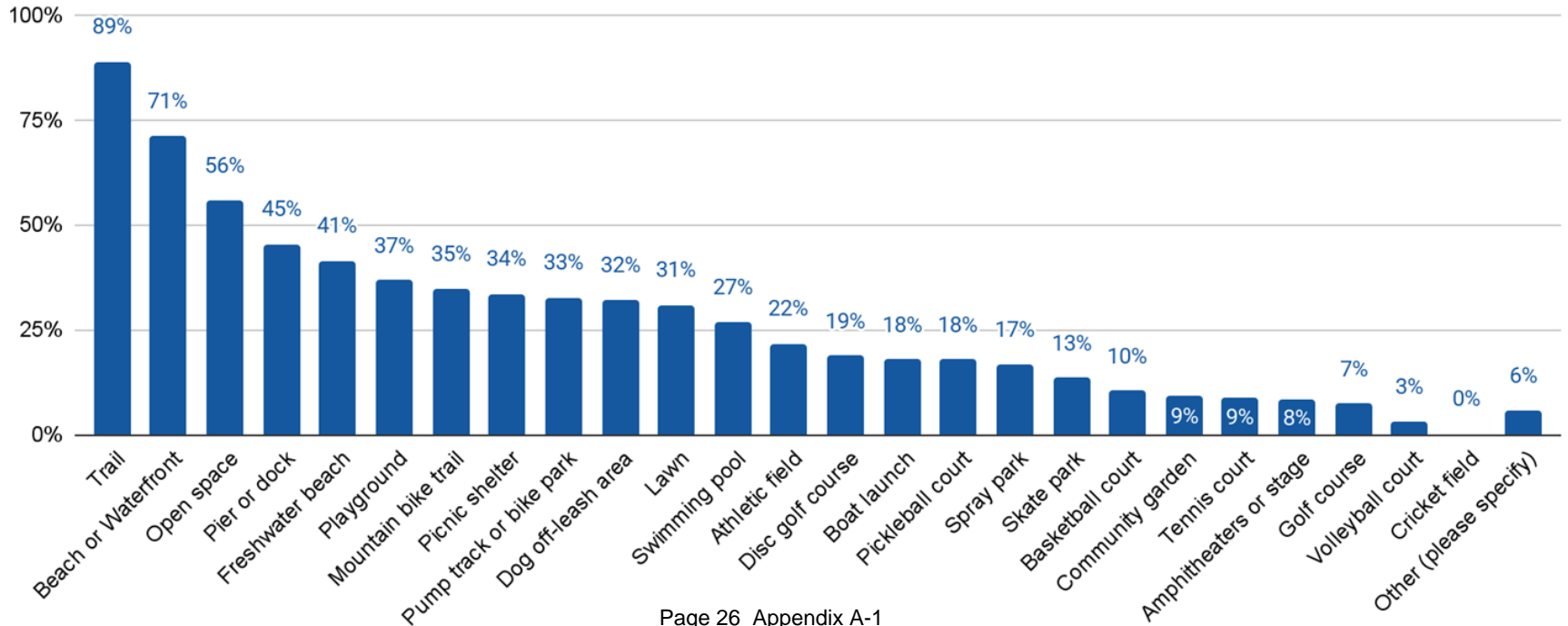
- Respondents 24 and under use the waterfront, swimming pools, and spray parks less frequently than all respondents, and use pump tracks and skateparks more frequently.
- Respondents 65 and older use nearly all facilities less frequently than all respondents, particularly mountain bike trails and bike parks.
- Respondents with children at home use nearly all facilities more frequently than all respondents, particularly playgrounds, pools, and spray parks.

Which of the following features have you or someone in your household used in a City-managed park, trail, or open space in the last year?

- Latinx respondents use trails less frequently than all respondents, and use swimming pools and skateparks more frequently.
- Respondents living in North Bellingham use pierd and docks, mountain biking trails, and bike parks less frequently than all respondents.
- Respondents living in Samish use mountain biking trails more than all respondents.
- Respondents living outside of Bellingham use open space and lawns less frequently than all respondents.

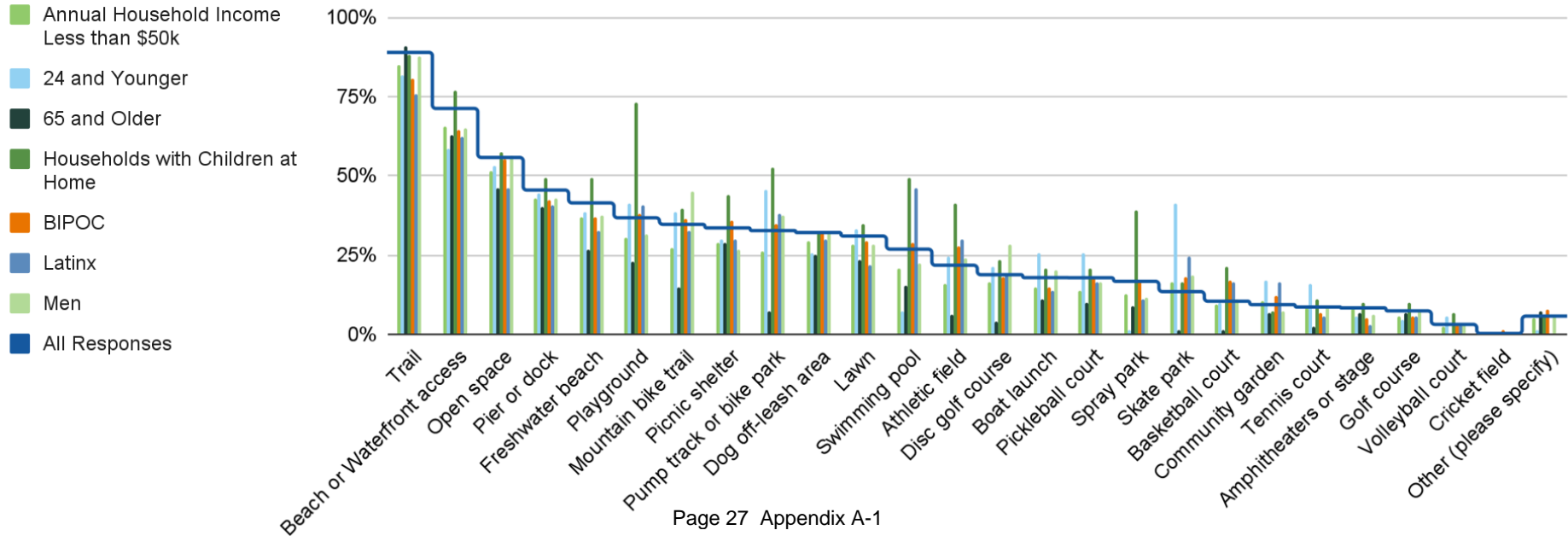
## Facility Usage

Which of the following features have you or someone in your household used in a City-managed park, trail, or open space in the last year? (Check all that apply)



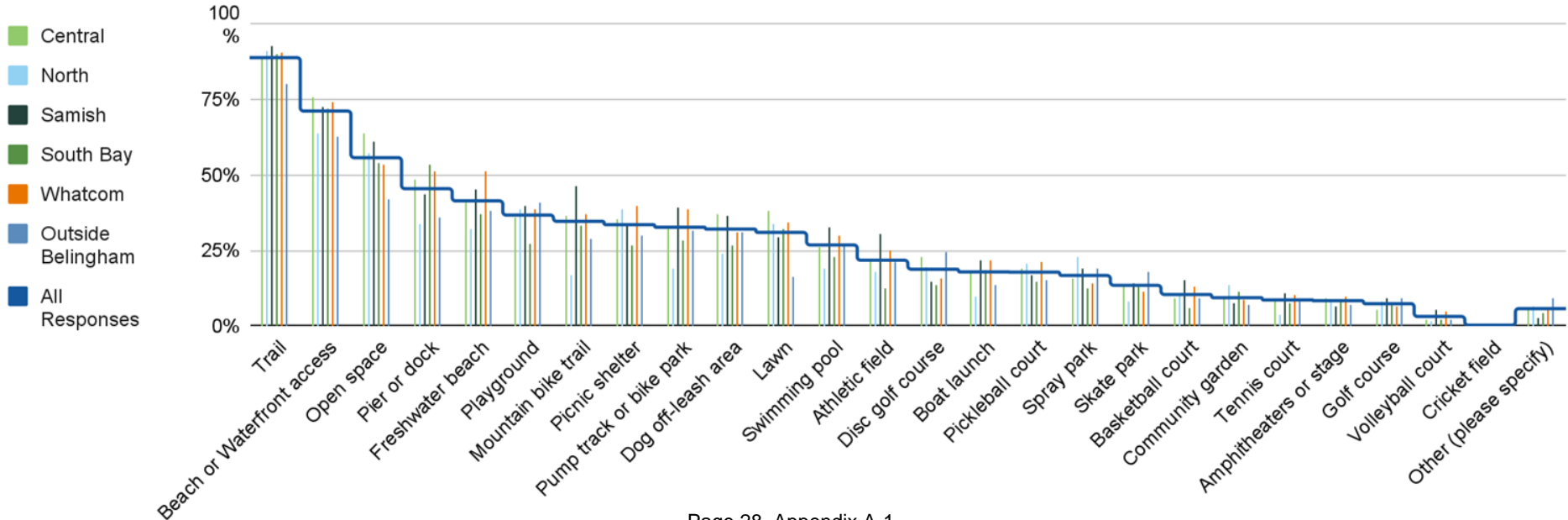
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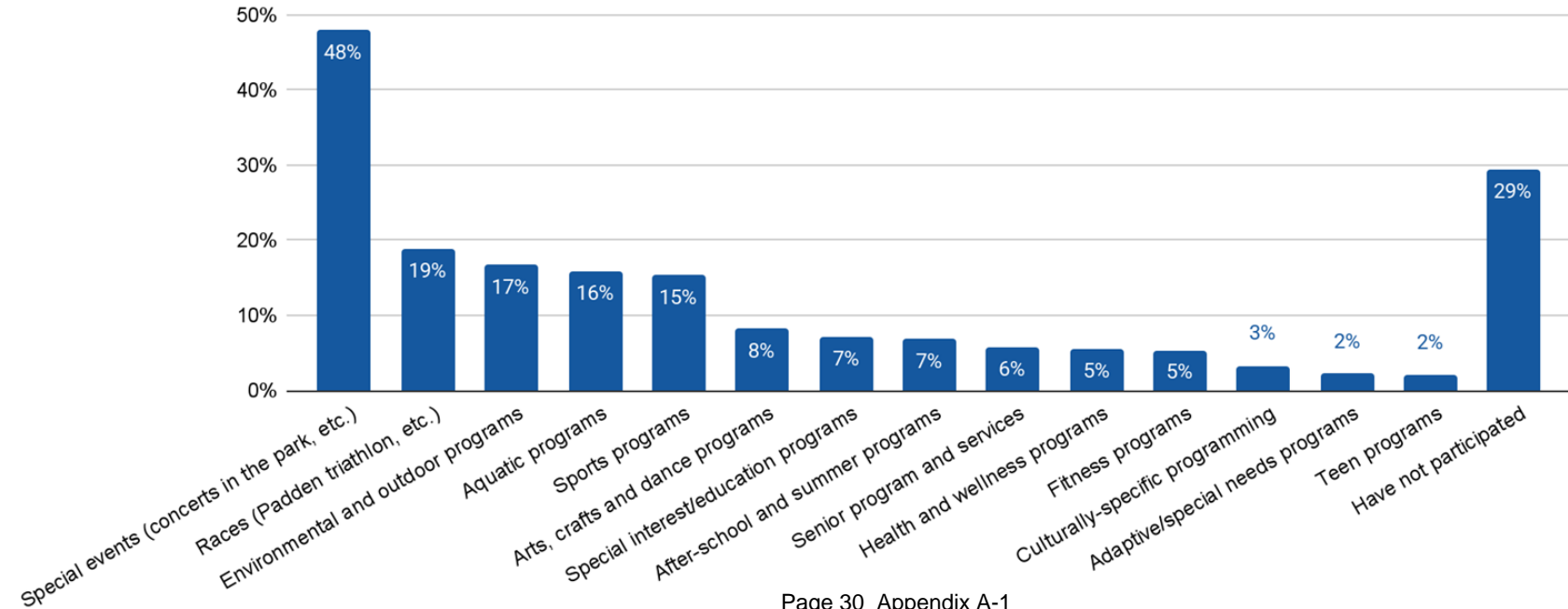
Have you or any member of your household participated in any of the City of Bellingham's recreation activities or programs in the last two years?

Respondents have most commonly attended special events such as concerts in the park, and respondents reported substantially lower participation in all other programs.

- Respondents 24 and under have participated less in programs, particularly special programs and aquatic events.
- Respondents 65 and older have participated less in races and more in senior programs.
- Respondents with children at home have participated more in programs, particularly aquatic and sports programs.
- Latinx respondents have participated more in aquatic programs.
- Location did not have a significant impact on program participation.

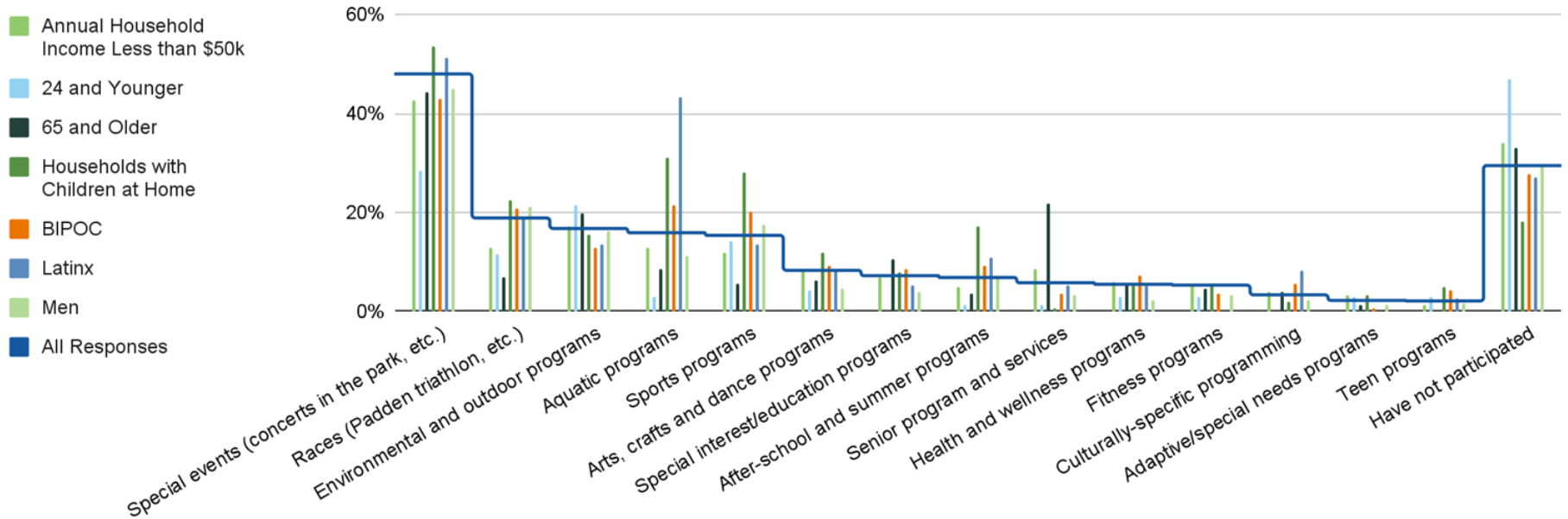
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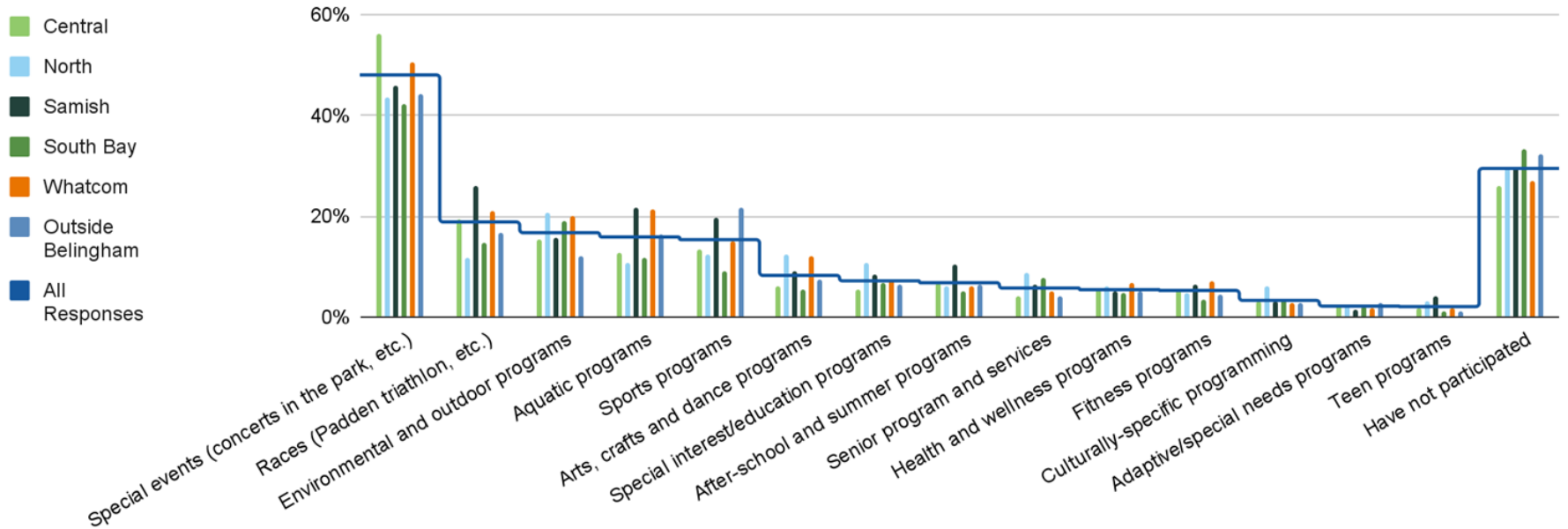
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# Facility Perceptions

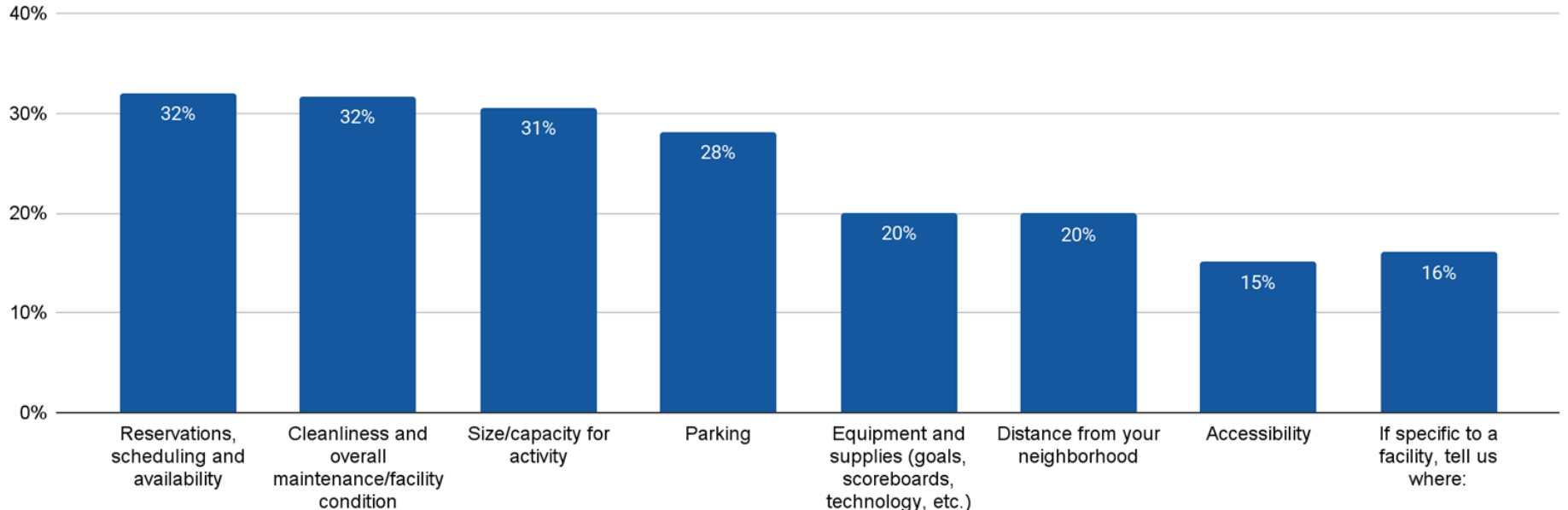
If you or a member of your household participates in an activity that occurs in a school, senior center, church or other non-City owned facility, what could be improved?

Roughly a third of respondents think that activities could improve reservations and scheduling, cleanliness and maintenance, and capacity.

- Respondents 24 and under felt reservation and scheduling improvements were less necessary than all respondents, and that equipment and accessibility improvements were more necessary.
- Respondents 65 and older felt equipment improvements were less necessary than all respondents.
- Latinx and BIPOC respondents felt reservation and scheduling improvements were more necessary than all respondents, and Latinx respondents felt that distance improvements were more necessary.
- Respondents in North Bellingham felt cleanliness and maintenance was less of a concern and distance was more of a concern than all respondents.
- Respondents living outside of Bellingham felt parking improvements were more necessary than all respondents.

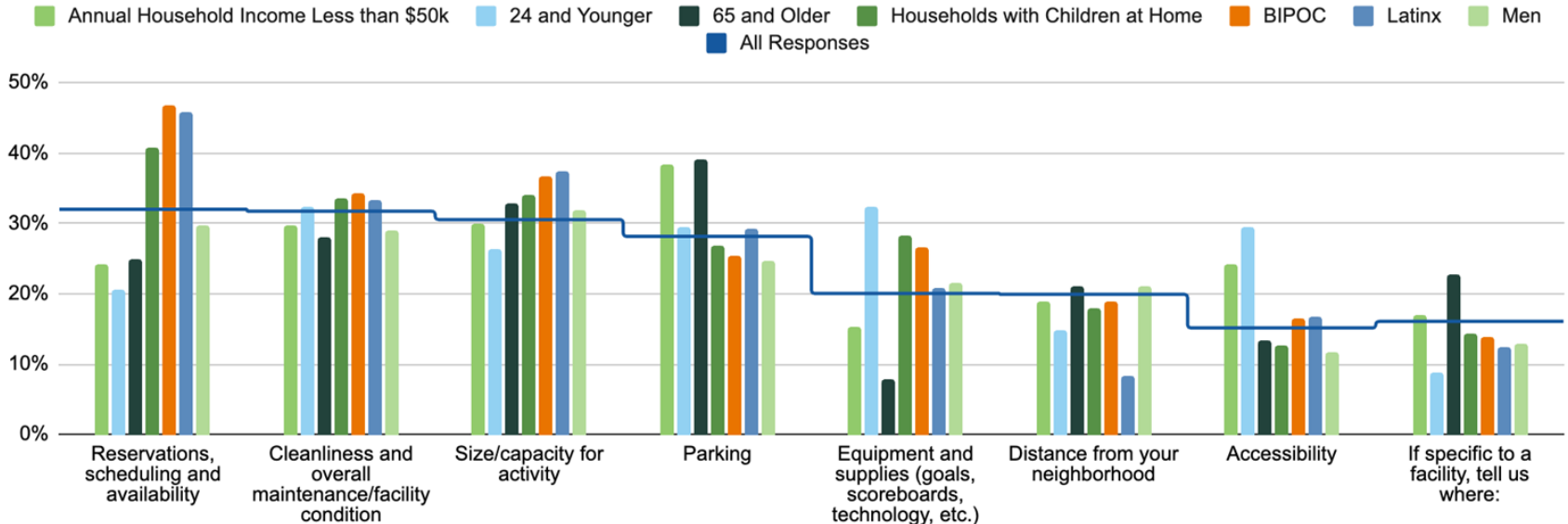
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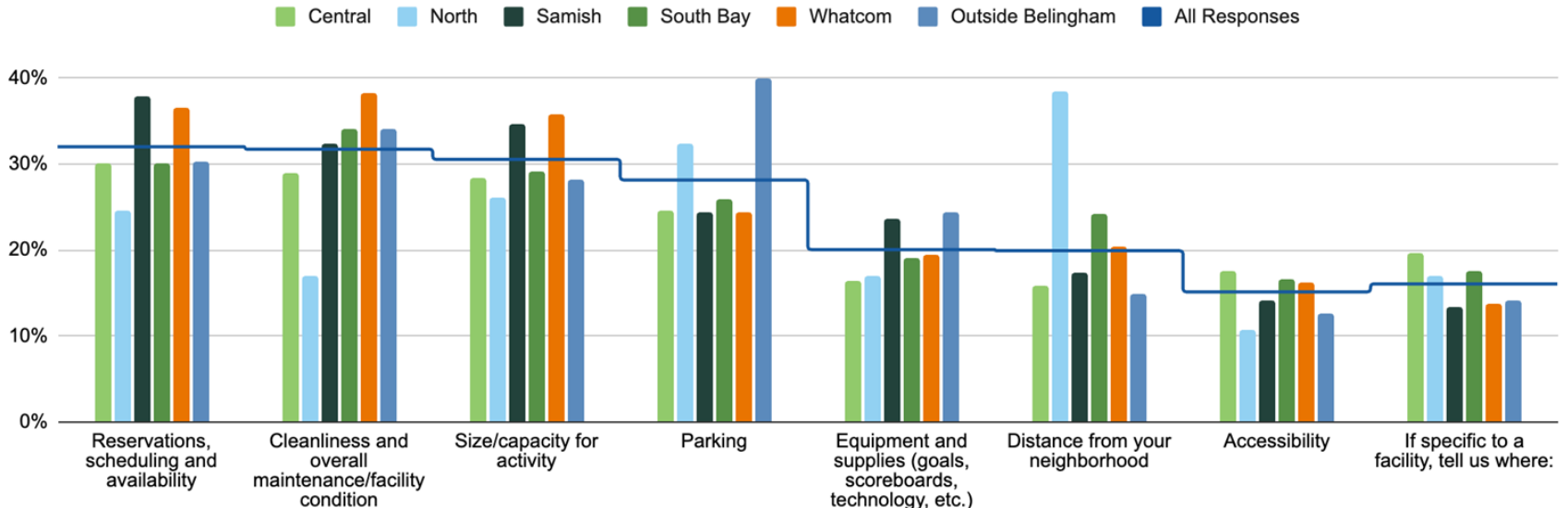
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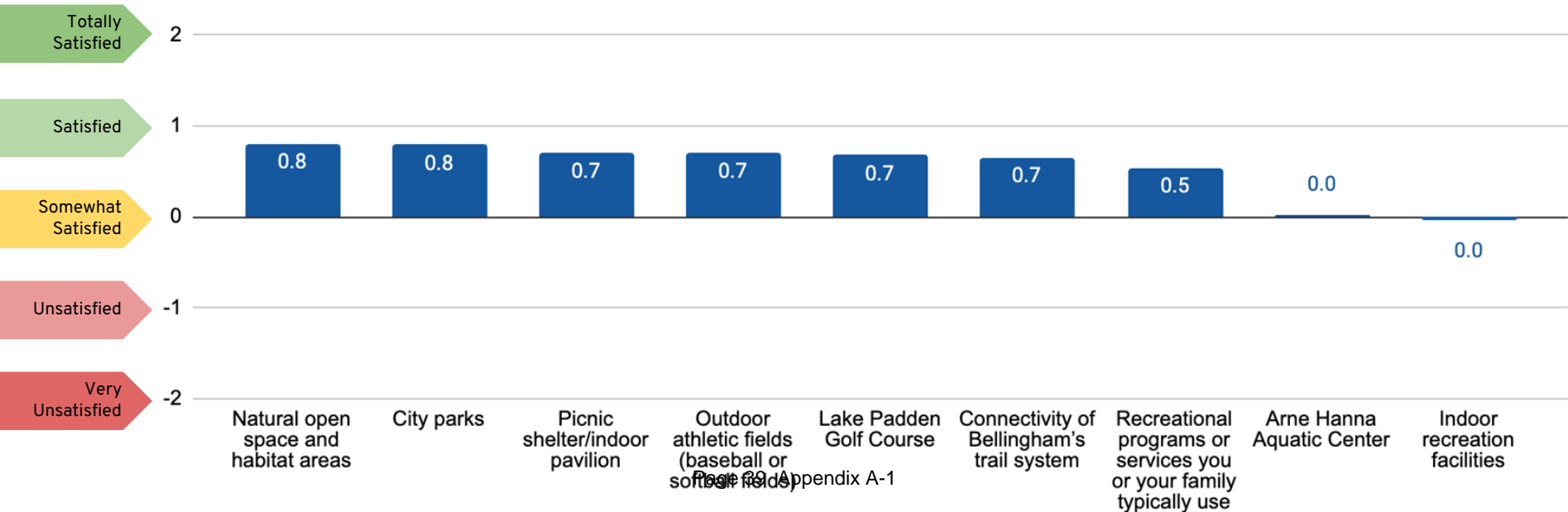
The City manages parks, trails, open spaces, and special use areas. How satisfied are you with the following parks and recreation services or features?

Respondents generally feel between somewhat satisfied and satisfied with City managed park features and services, except for Arne Hana Aquatic Center and indoor recreation facilities. Respondent satisfaction generally remains consistent across demographics groups and neighborhoods.

- Respondents 65 and older felt more satisfied with indoor recreation facilities than all respondents.
- Households with children at home tend to feel less satisfied with park features, particularly with Arne Hanna Aquatic Center and indoor recreation facilities.
- Latinx respondents tend to feel less satisfied with park features, particularly with Lake Padden golf course and Arne Hanna Aquatic Center.

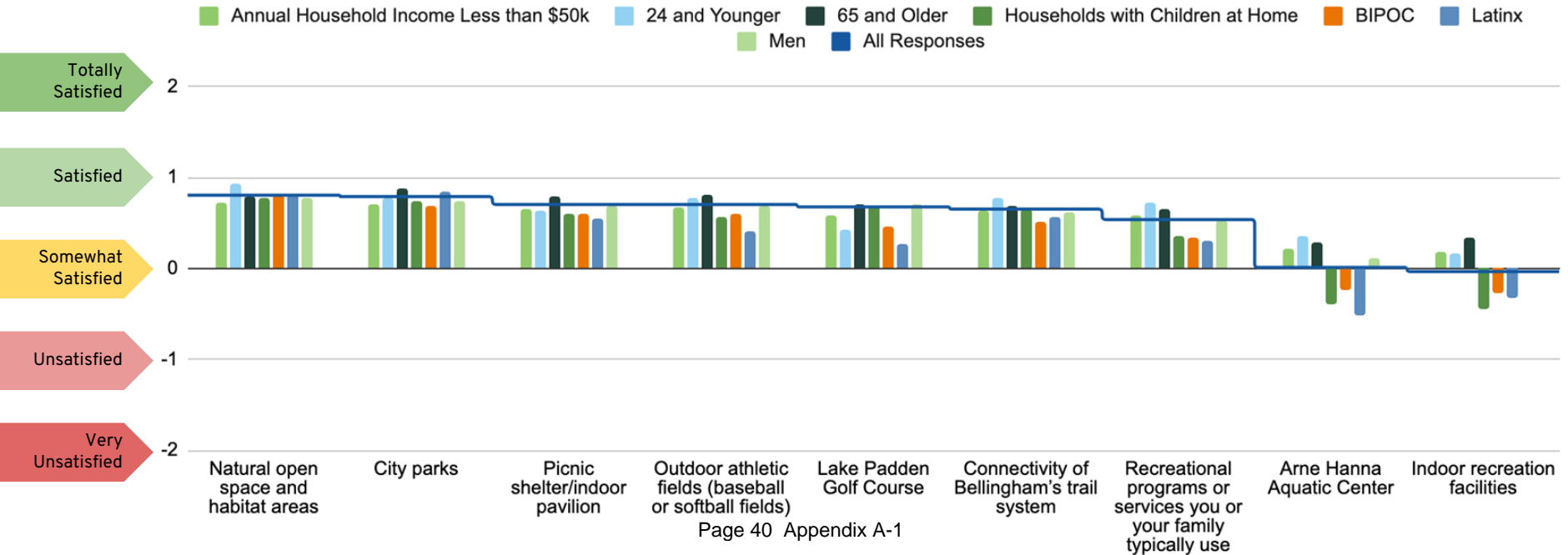
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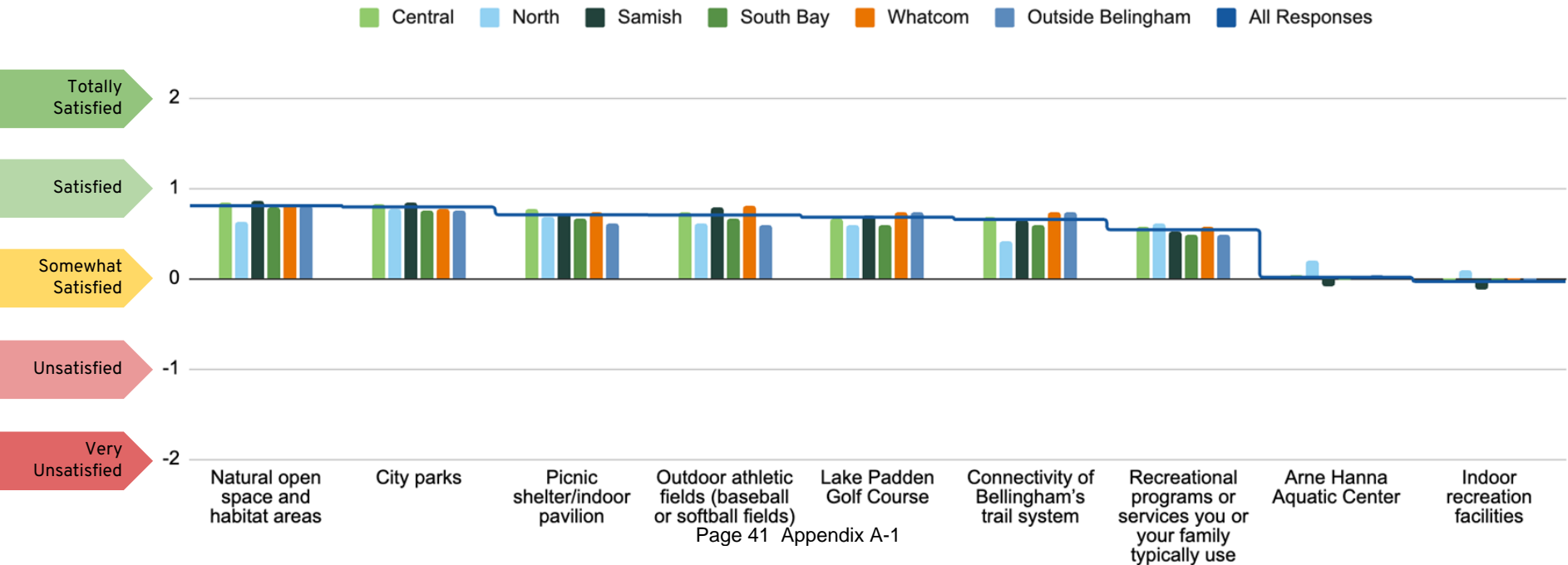
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# Barriers

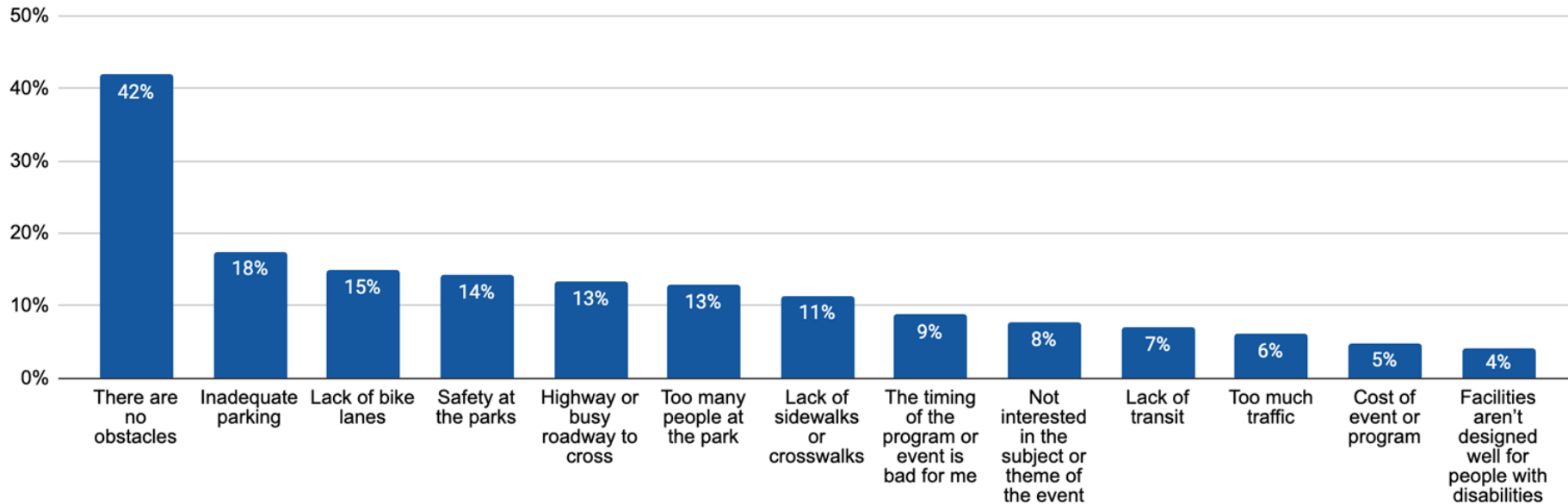
Are there any obstacles that make it difficult for you or your family to visit a Bellingham park or participate in a park program or event?

Many respondents reported that they face no obstacles in coming to parks or events, however, the most common barriers faced are inadequate parking, lack of bike lanes, and park safety.

- Respondents 24 and under are typically less interested in the subjects and themes of the events than all respondents.
- Latinx respondents are typically less impeded by the lack of bike lanes, but more impeded by the time of the programs than all respondents.
- Residents of North Bellingham typically face more barriers when to coming to parks or events.

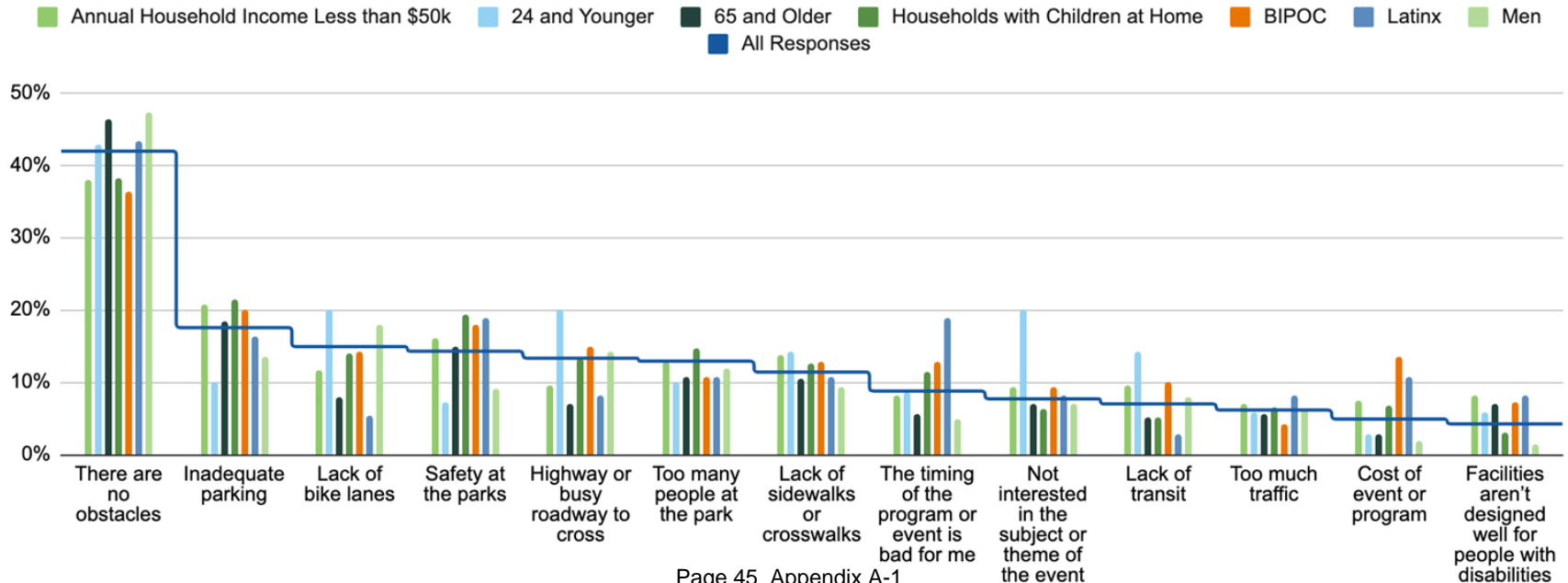
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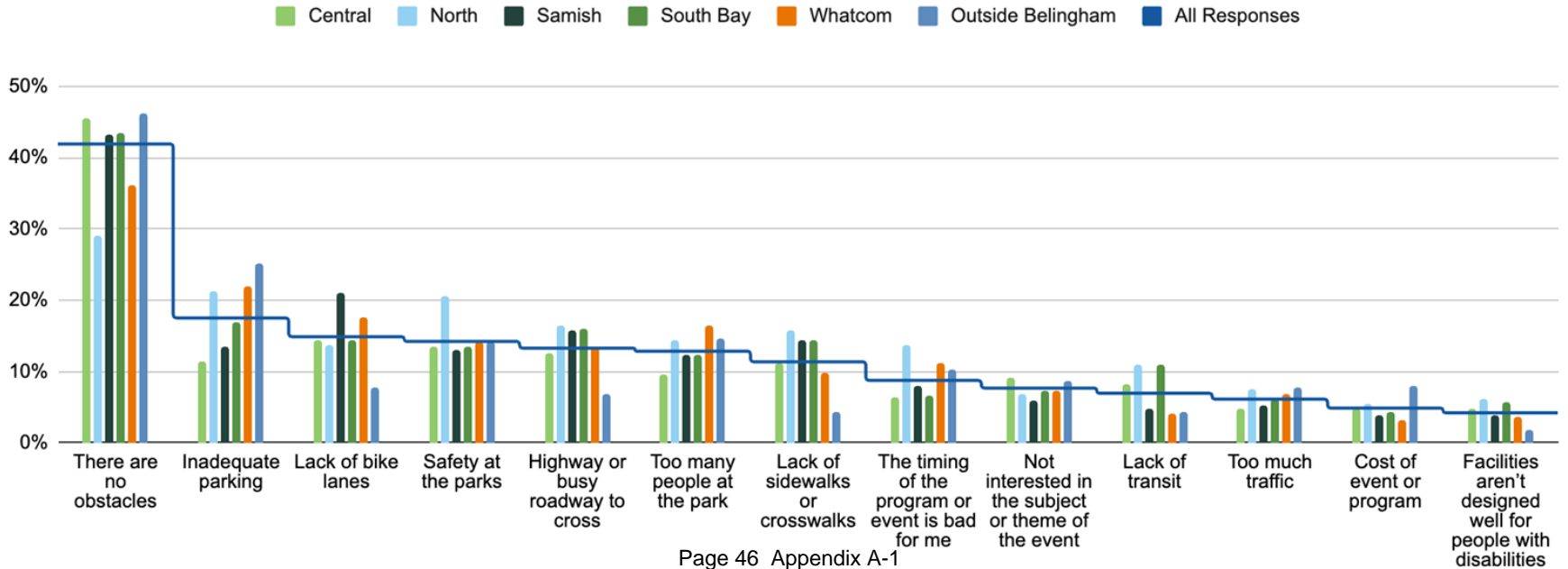
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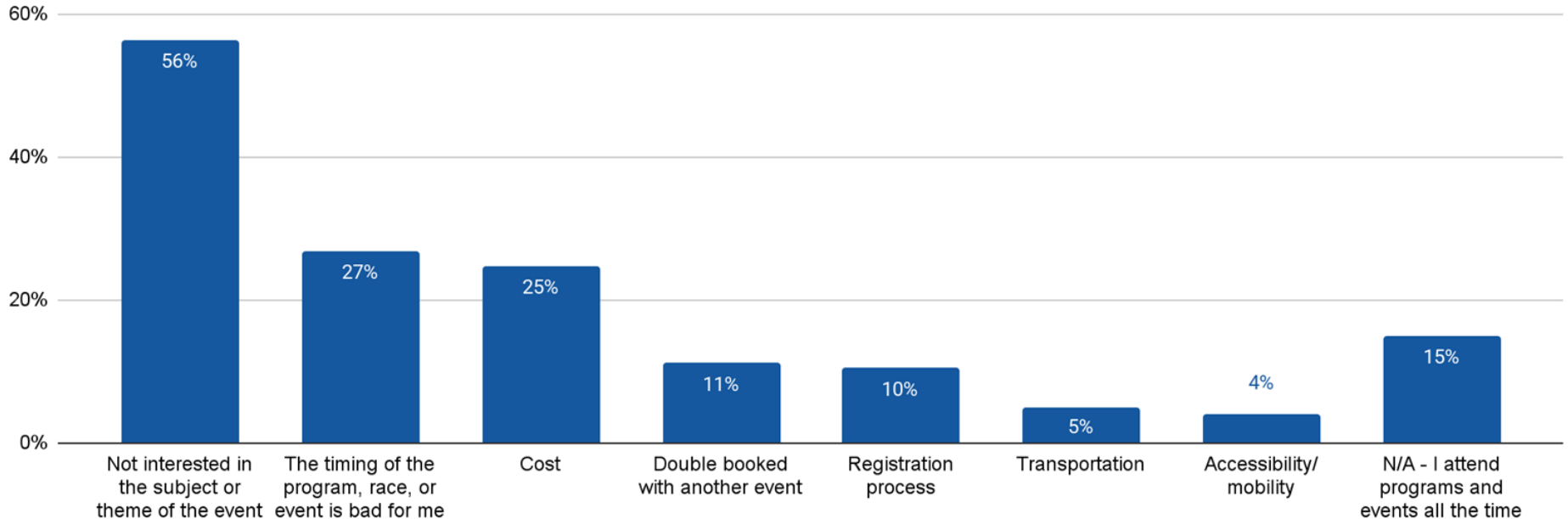
What holds you back from attending a paid program, race, or event?  
(Pick as many answers as you'd like)

The majority of respondents reported that a lack of interest in the subject or theme holds them back from attending paid programs and events.

- Households with children at home, BIPOC, and latinx respondents tended to be more interested in the subject of the events, but impeded by timing, cost, and registration processes.
- Households with an annual income less than \$50k and respondents 24 and younger tended to be more impacted by the cost of events than all respondents.
- Respondents 65 and older tended to be less interested in the subject and themes of events than all respondents.
- Location did not have a significant impact on responses.

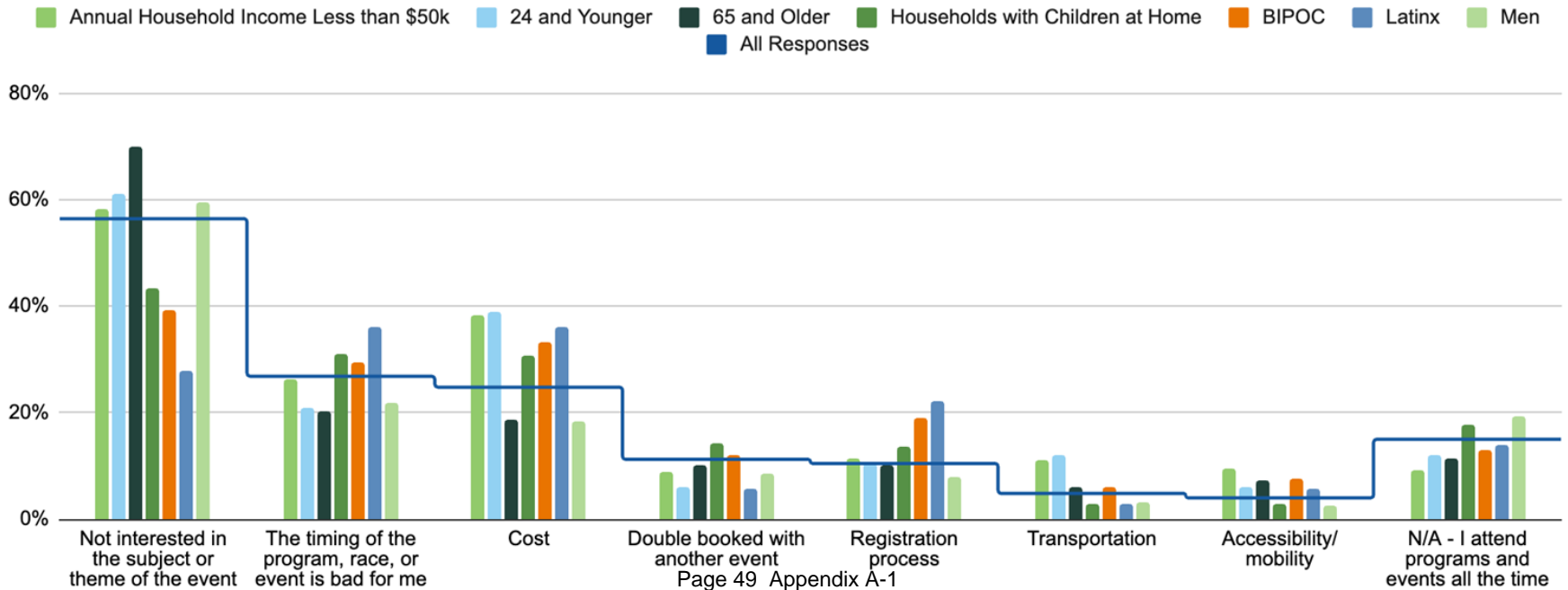
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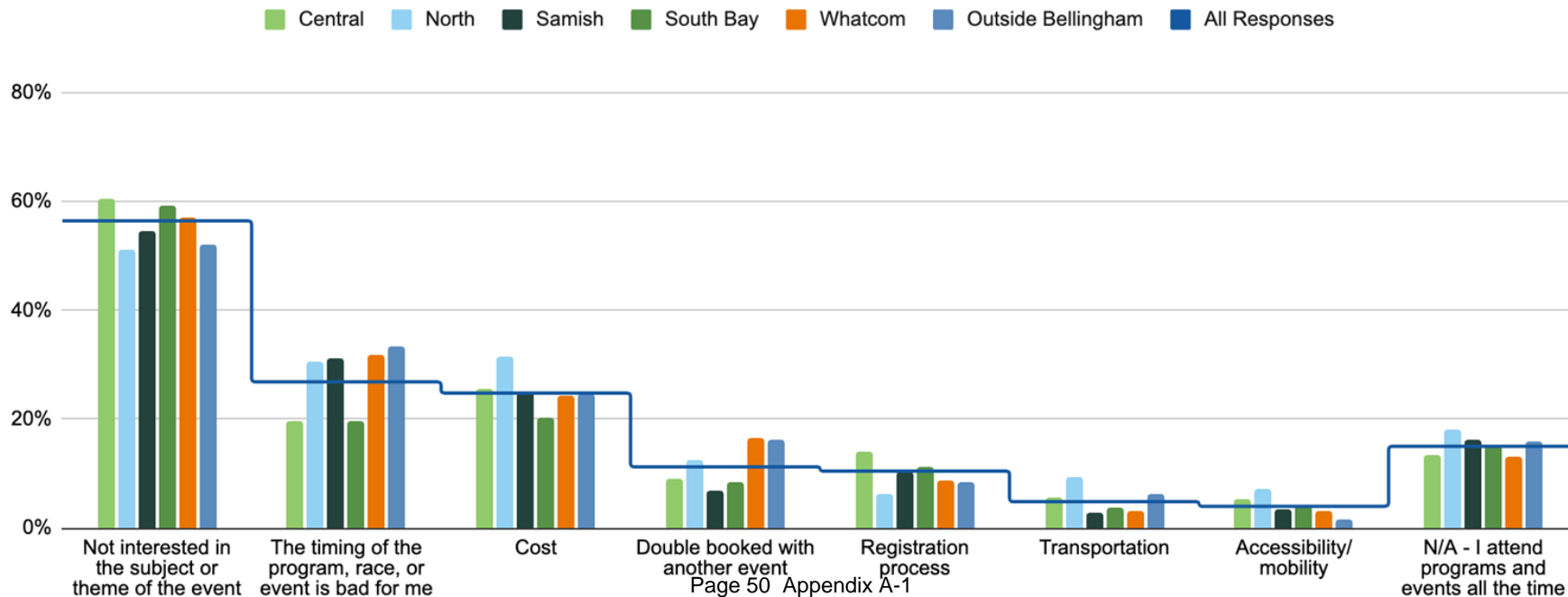
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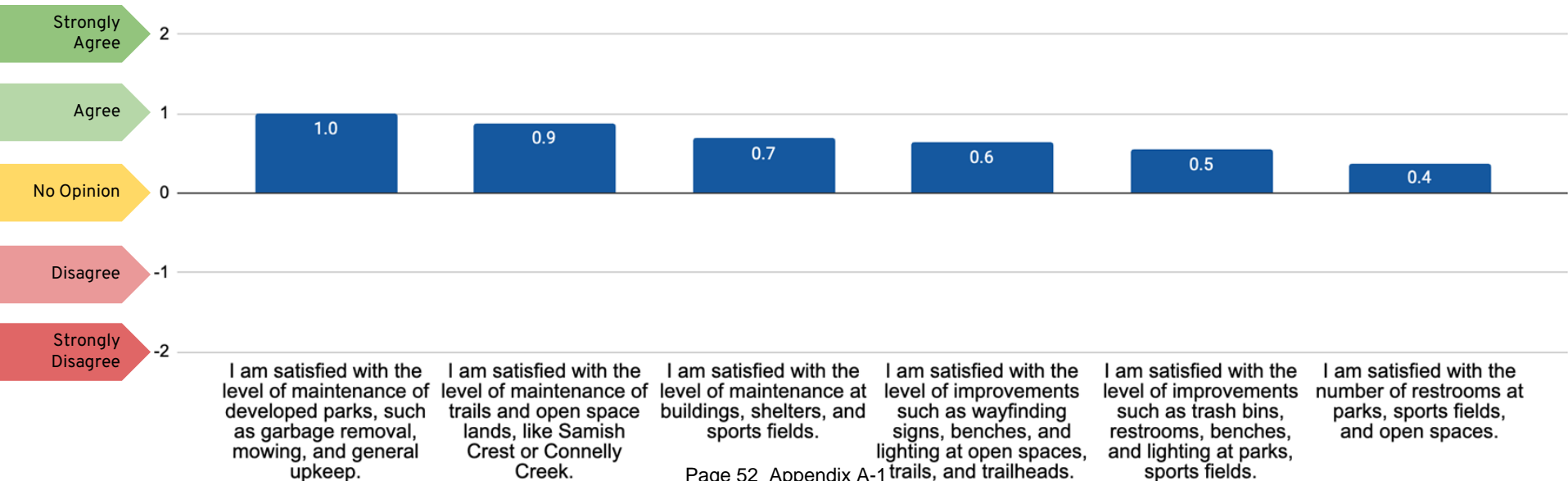
Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about how the City maintains parks, trails, and recreational amenities?

Respondents tended to agree with the statements presented, reporting that they felt satisfied with the maintenance of park facilities and amenities (lighting, benches, waste receptacles, restrooms, etc.).

Respondent satisfaction remained generally consistent across demographics groups and neighborhoods

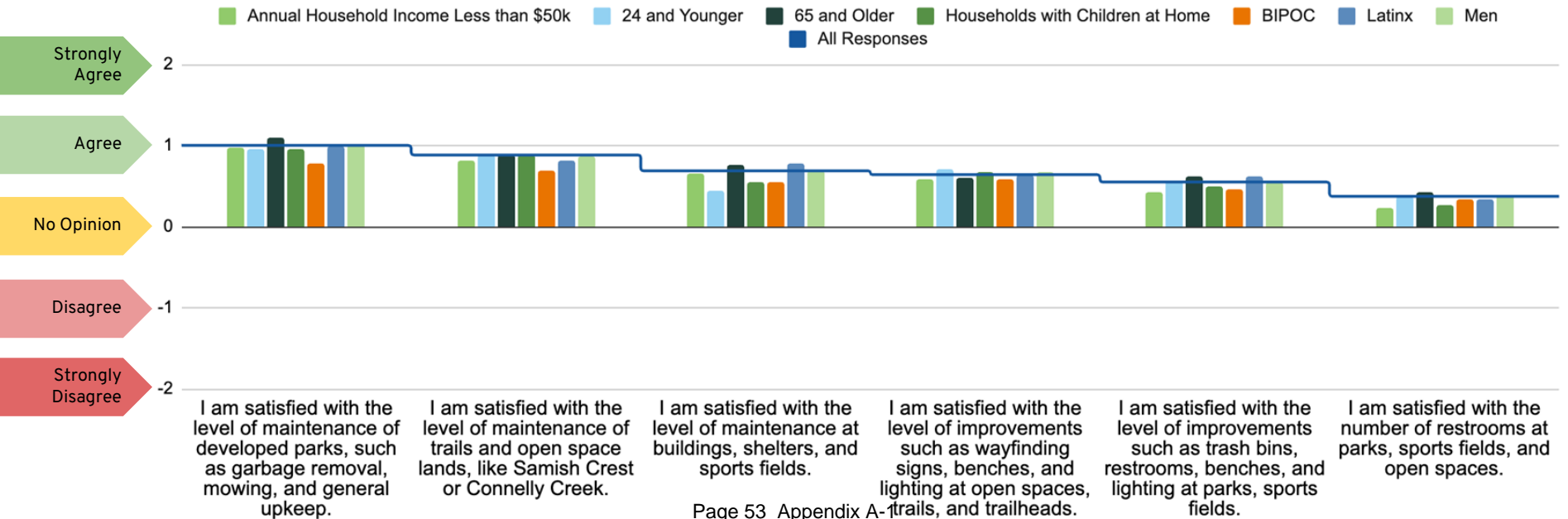
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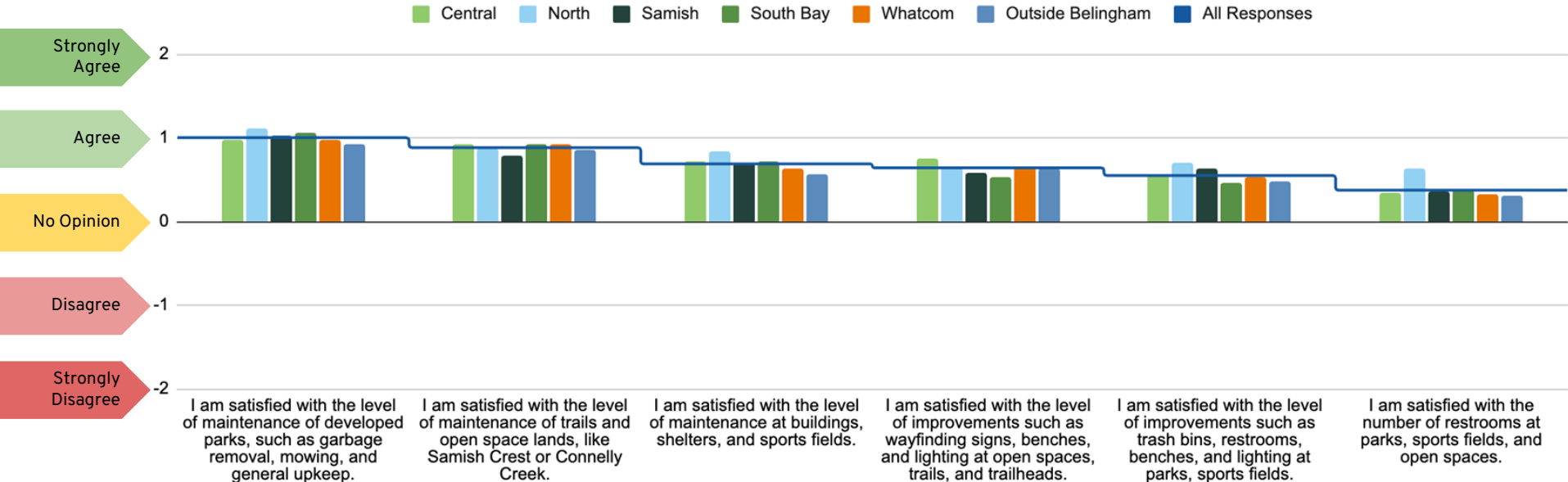
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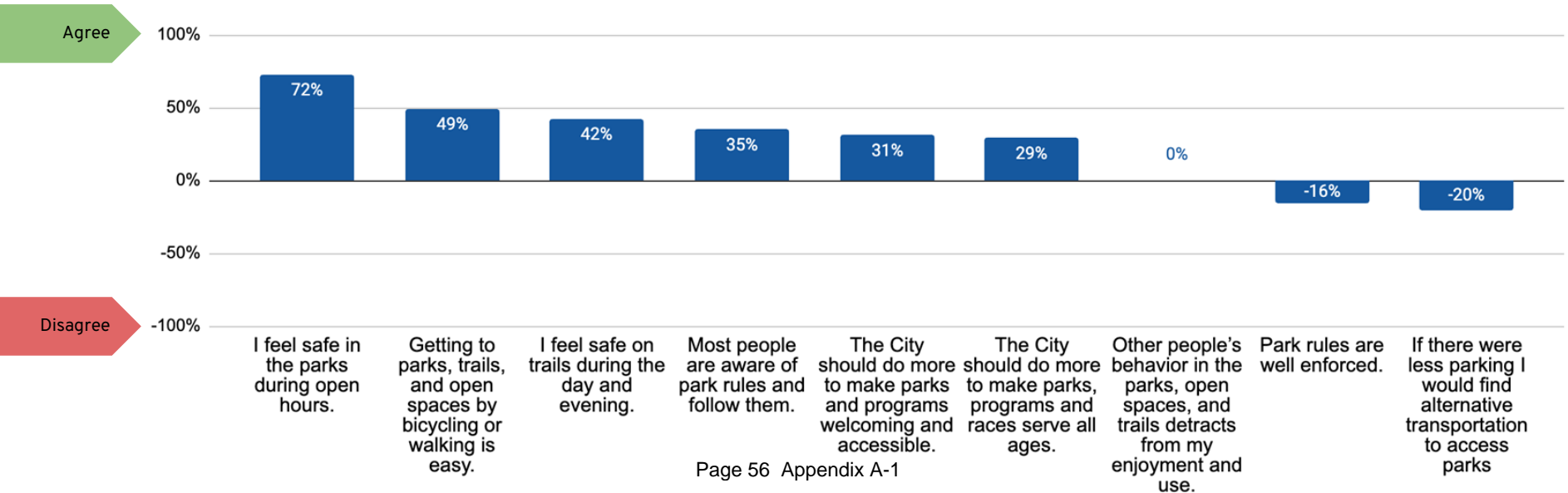
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Bellingham's parks and recreation system?

The majority of respondents feel safe in the parks during open hours, however, fewer respondents feel safe on the trails. Many respondents feel that people are aware of park rules, but they don't feel that they are well enforced. Many respondents feel that having less parking would not encourage them to find alternative means of transportation.

Respondent satisfaction remained generally consistent across demographics groups and neighborhoods.

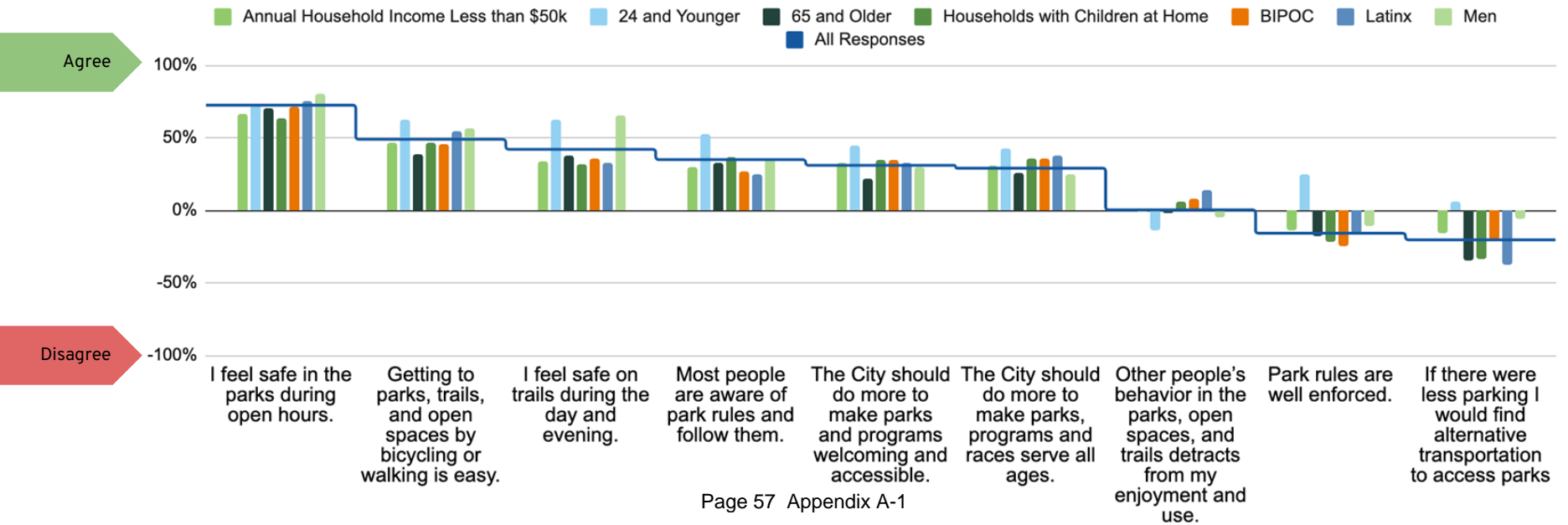
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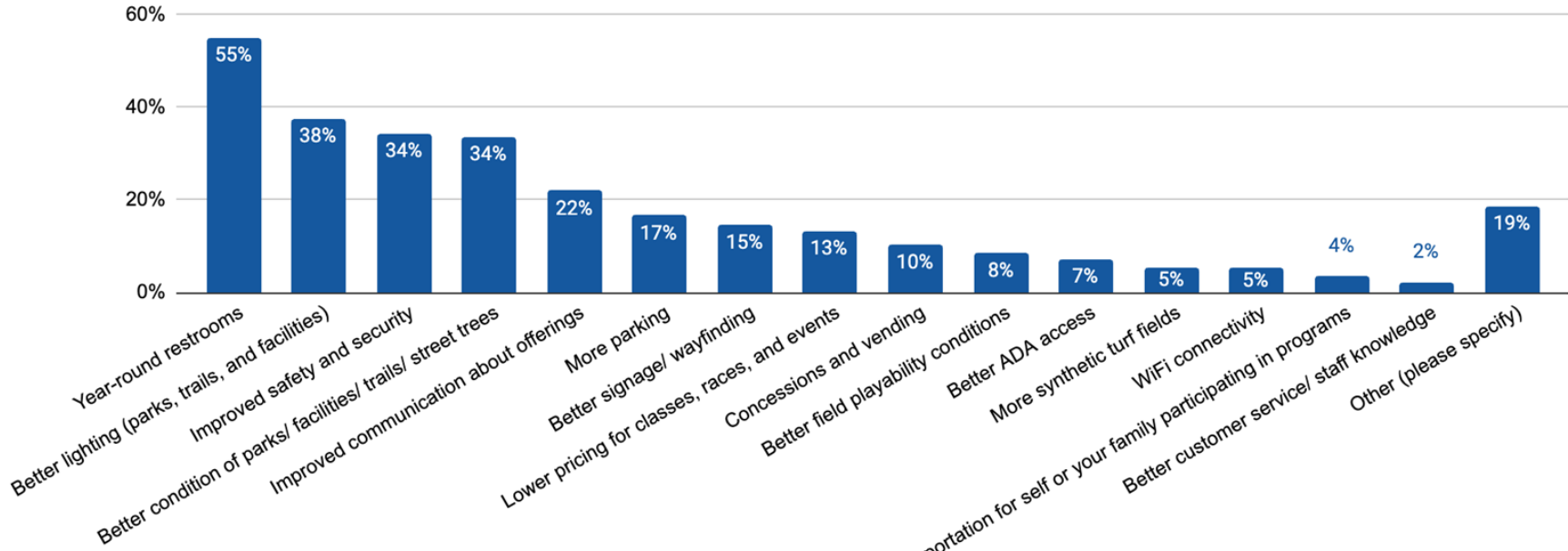
# Goals and Priorities

What are the most important improvements that would increase your use of parks and recreation facilities? (Select top five)

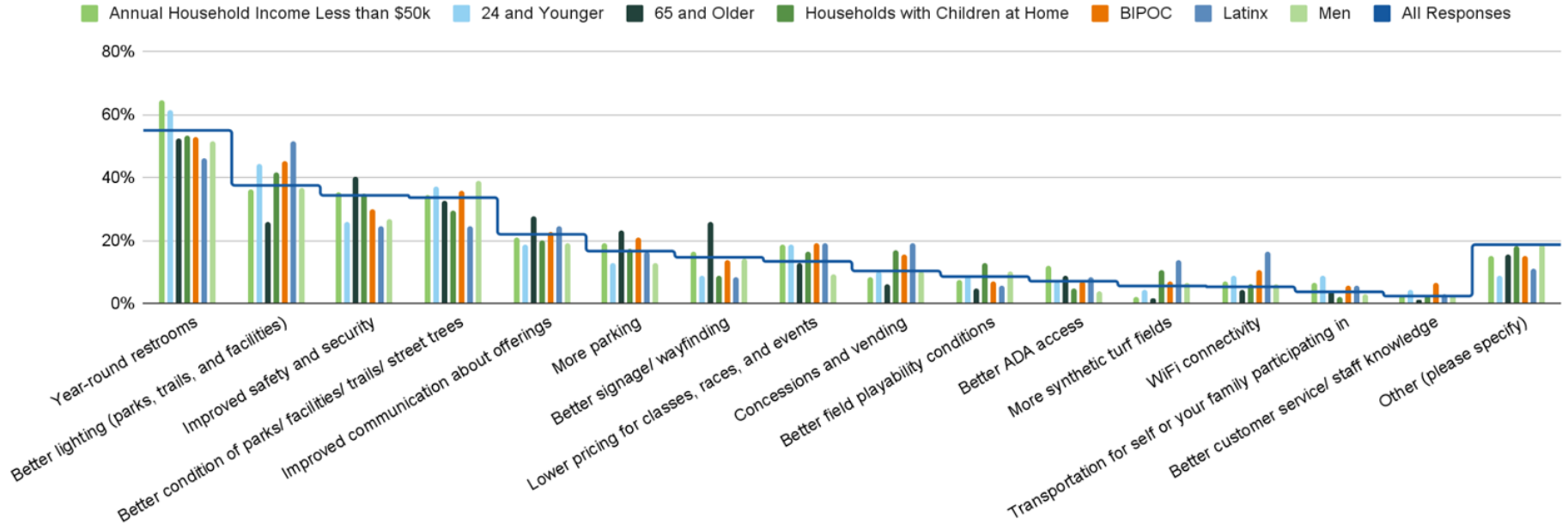
The majority of respondents stated that they would use park facilities more if there were improvements for year round restrooms. They also identified lighting and safety as important features. This held generally consistent across demographic groups, however:

- Respondents 65 and older indicated that signage and wayfinding was more important than all respondents.
- Latinx respondents indicated that lighting and wifi was more important than all respondents.
- Location did not have a significant impact on responses.

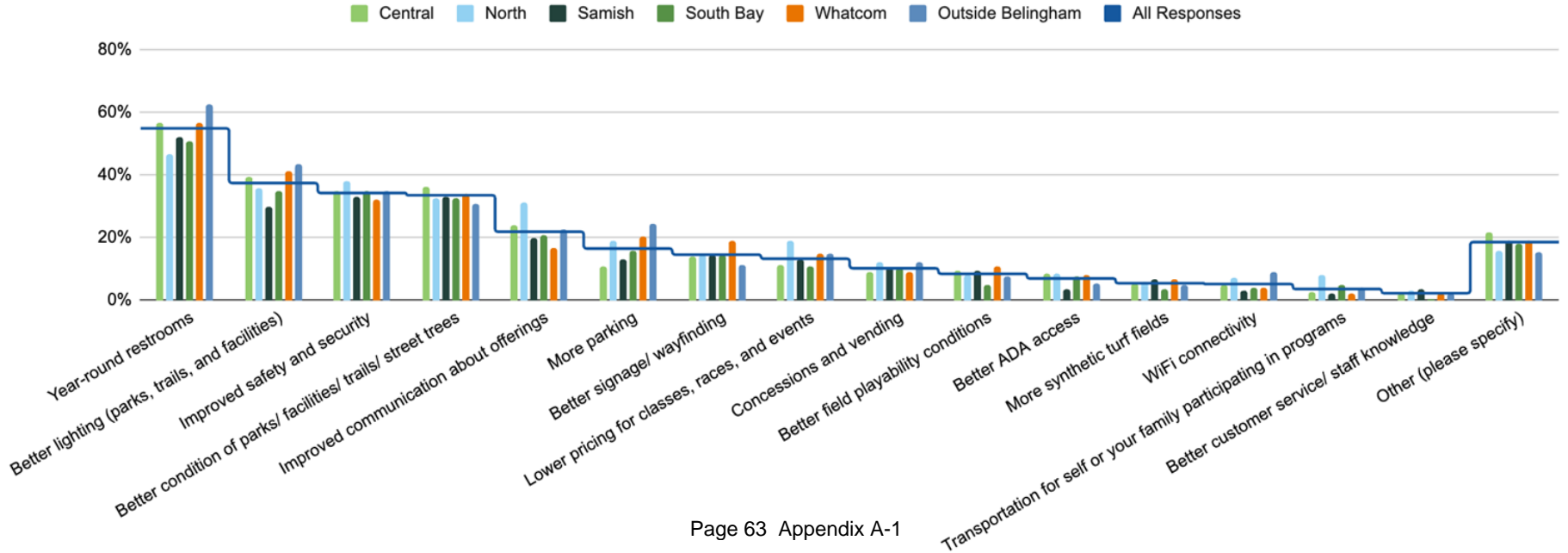
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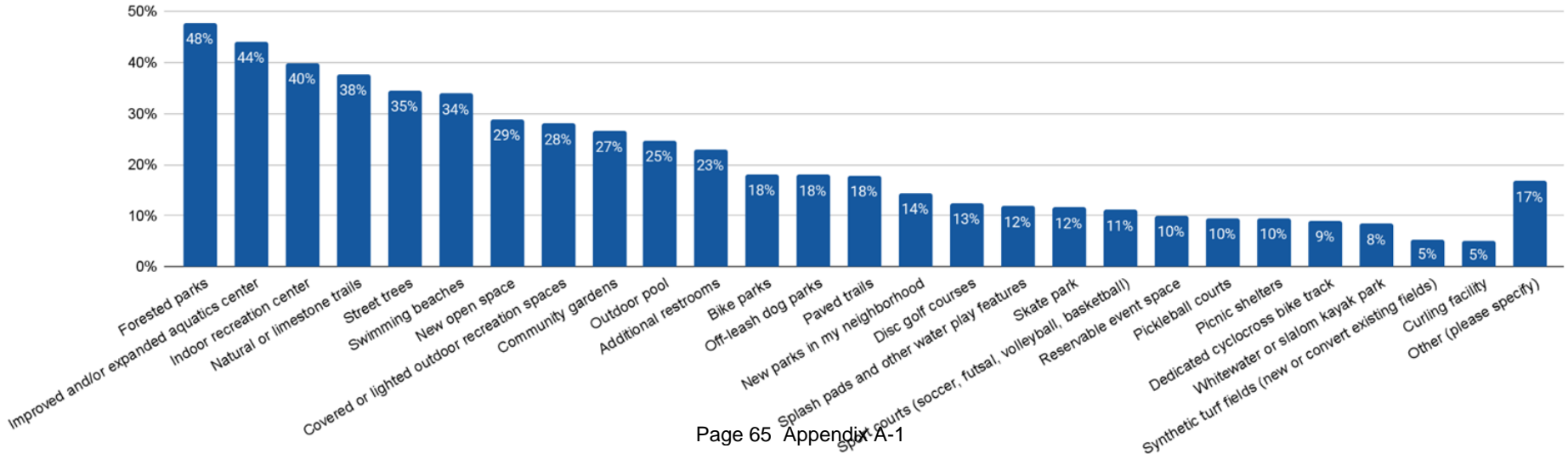


What do you think are the most important needs for new park and recreation development in the next five to ten years? (Select up to eight)

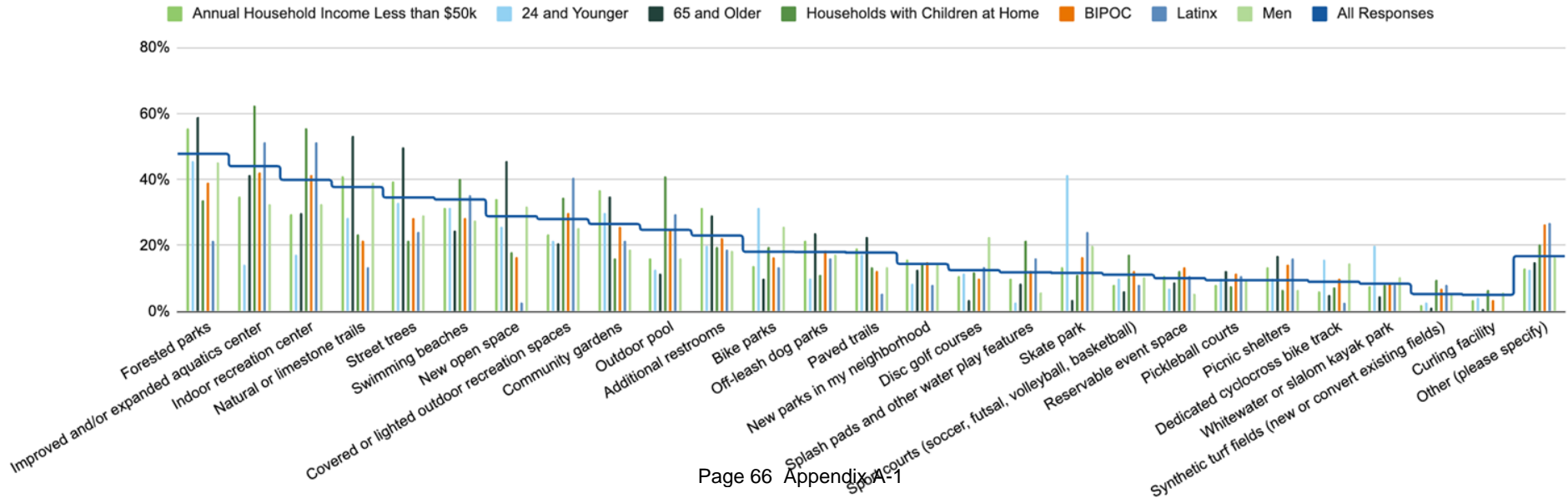
Respondents indicated that forested parks, aquatics centers, and indoor recreation are the most important development needs in Bellingham. These priorities varied substantially among respondent groups:

- Respondents 24 and younger prioritized forested parks, skate parks, and street trees.
- Respondents 65 and older prioritized forested parks, trails, and street trees.
- Households with children at home prioritized aquatic centers, indoor recreation, and outdoor pools.
- Latinx respondents prioritized aquatic centers, indoor recreation, and lit, covered outdoor recreation.
- Residents of North Bellingham prioritized new local parks at a higher rate than all respondents.

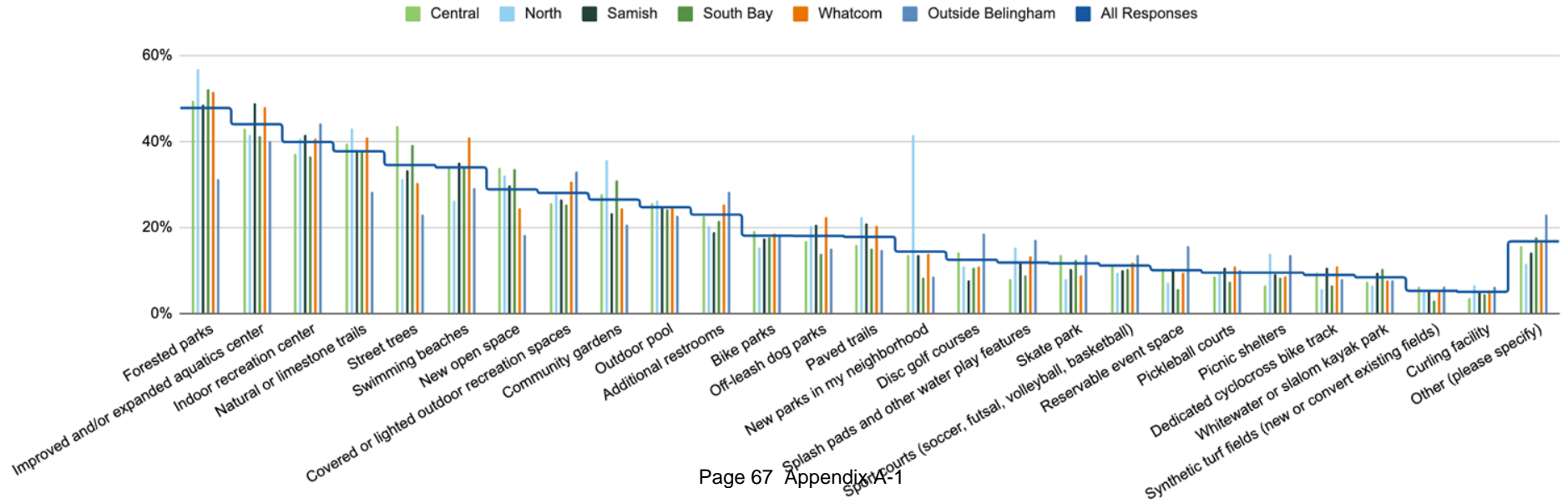
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With the update to the PROS Plan we will set new goals for our park and recreation system. Please rate the importance of each of these goals.

PROS Plan Goals:

Preserve diverse habitats and steward natural systems

Foster a sense of safety within the park system

Manage Bellingham's park land, facilities, and programs effectively, efficiently and sustainably

Interconnect the City's parks and open spaces with trails, greenways, and multimodal street facilities

Provide high-quality facilities and services that are accessible and inclusive

Ensure that parks and trails are equitably distributed across the City

Support health, wellness, and play with recreational facilities and programs

Contribute to a vibrant recreation-based economy

Connect and unify the community with a sense of place and social connections

Support and expand local collaboration and partnerships

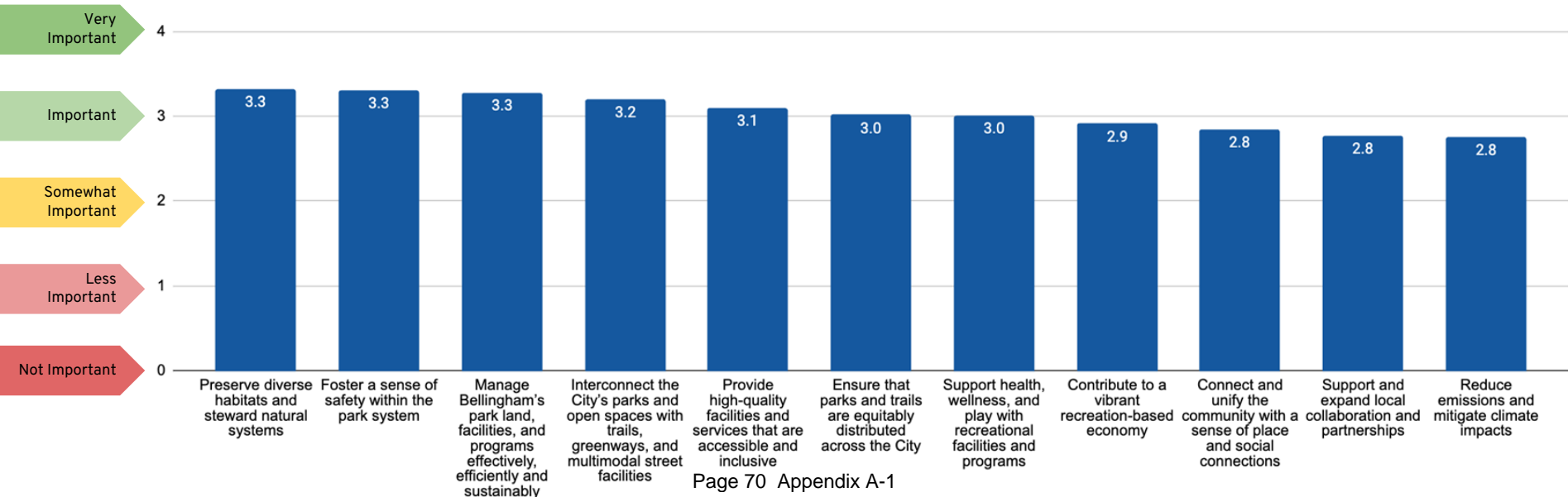
With the update to the PROS Plan we will set new goals for our park and recreation system. Please rate the importance of each of these goals.

Respondents indicated all of the presented goals were important, and while they were all ranked fairly similarly, the top priorities were preserving habitats, fostering safety, and park management.

- Respondents 24 and younger felt safety was less important and mitigating climate impacts was more important.
- Latinx respondents felt safety, accessibility, and health and wellness were the most important.
- Residents of North Bellingham felt that park distribution was more important than all respondents.
- Respondents living outside of Bellingham felt that the presented goals were typically less important than all respondents.

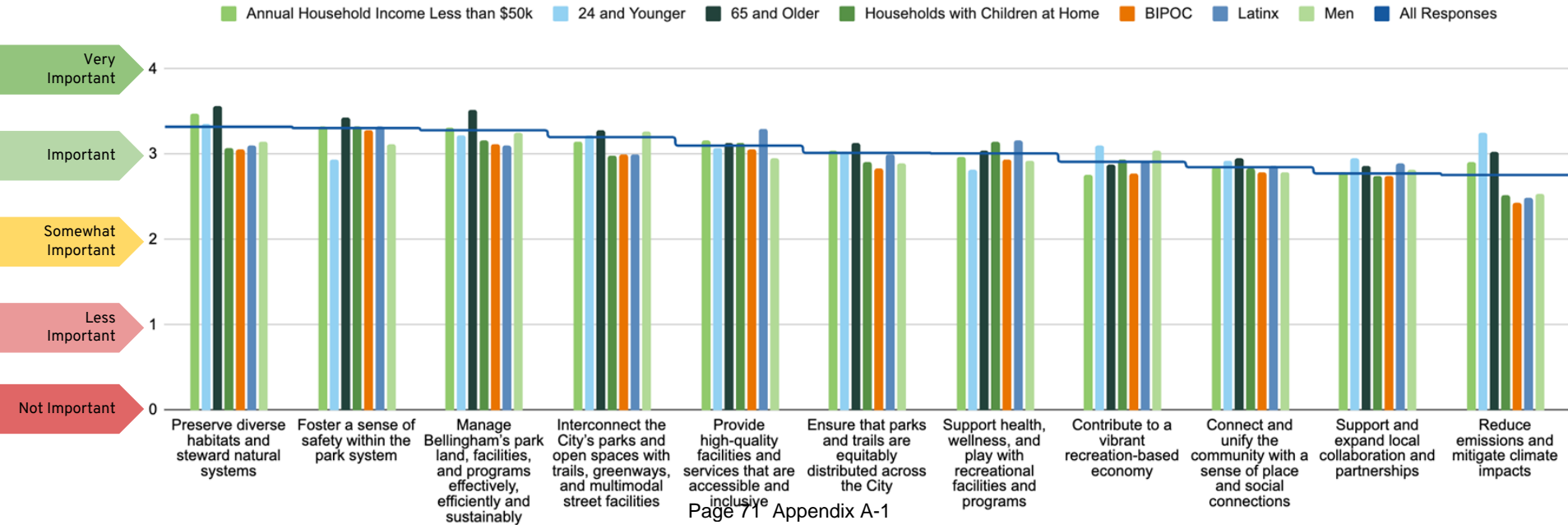
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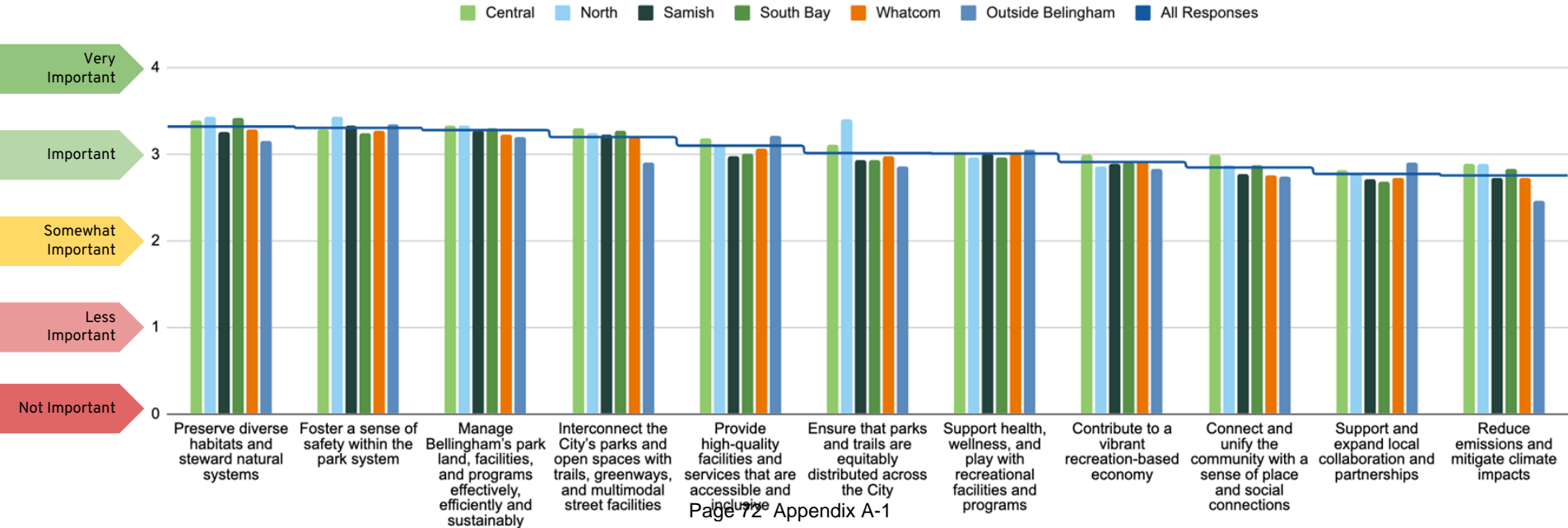
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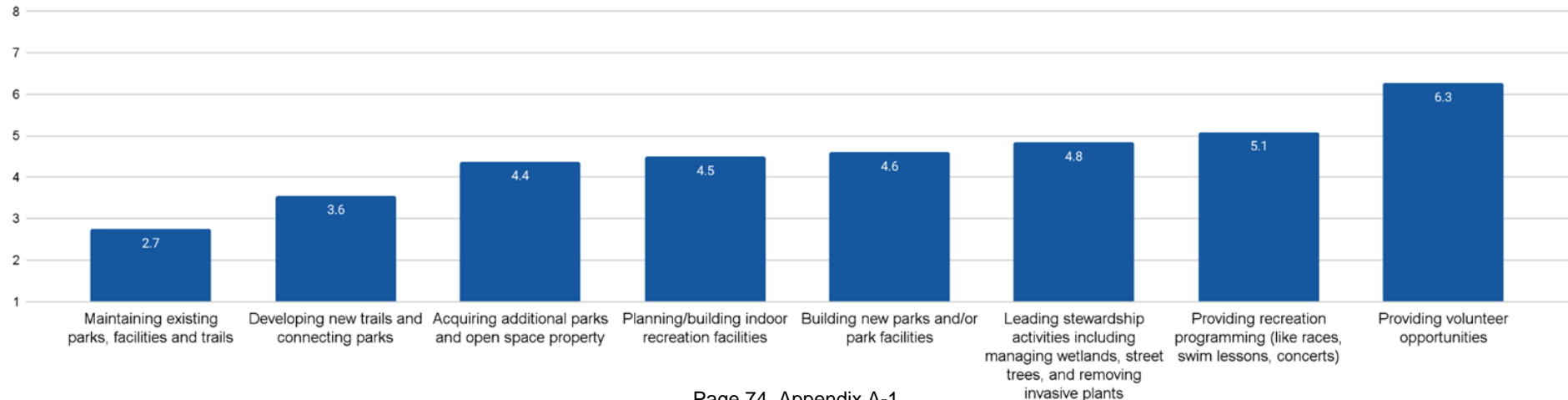
For each of the following Parks & Recreation Department budget priorities, rank the importance to you. (Click and drag to move your highest priorities to the top of the list)

Respondents indicated their top budgetary priority was maintaining current facilities, followed by developing new trails and connecting parks. The priorities remained fairly consistent across respondent groups.

- Households with children at home, Latinx respondents, and respondents living outside of Bellingham also prioritized new indoor recreation facilities.

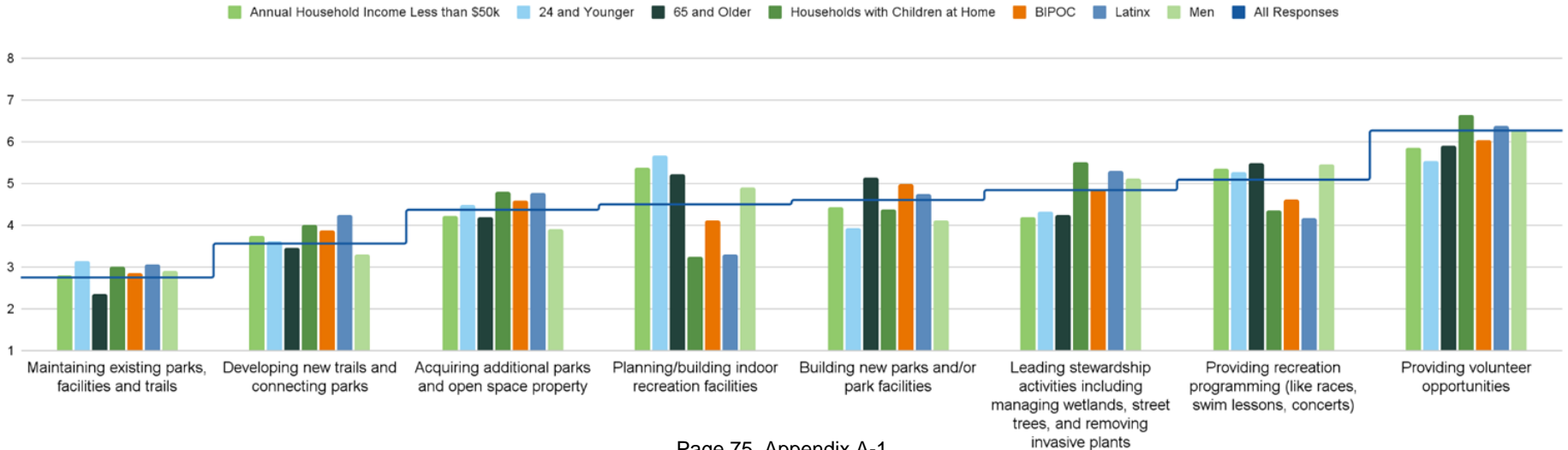
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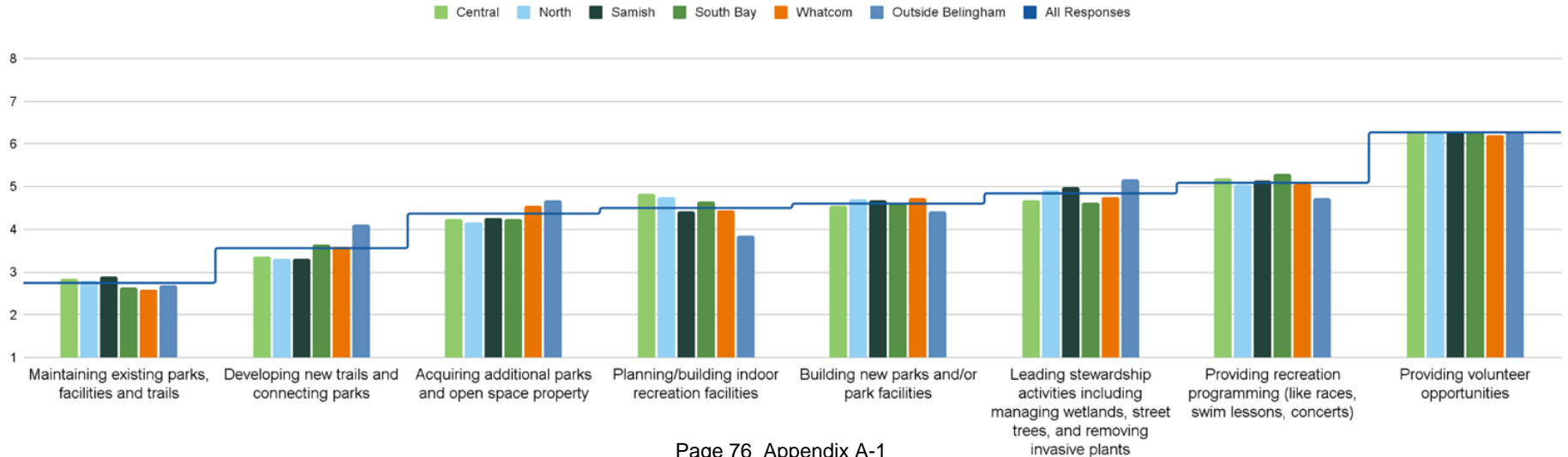
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# Open Ended Responses



## Quotes

- “Abundant open space. Great walking opportunities. Seems to try and include everyone. They really are brilliant.”
- “As a disabled, homebound, single mother, I spent five years, saving and planning to make this move to Bellingham. It’s the best place I knew to bring up a child connected to the natural world and to community by Bellingham’s superior set of trails and walkability standards”
- “As someone who grew up in Bellingham and still lives in Whatcom County, I so appreciate Bellingham's beautiful park system. I love that the parks are well maintained and available for everyone to use, regardless of income level. Everyone deserves to have access to beautiful natural spaces. The City of Bellingham prioritizes that and it shows. Go Bellingham Parks Department!”
- “Easy to access and I can walk to the store on the trails. I can walk to my son's home almost all the way on the trails.”

## Quotes - Continued

- “I feel incredibly fortunate to live in a city with such an amazing Parks and Recreation Dept. Facilities, activities, and spaces are abundant, safe, and well-cared for.”
- “I like how many parks and trails we have throughout the City. I like how I can walk from place to place in the City simply by using a trail. It is a huge part of the high quality of life in Bellingham.”
- “I love that Bellingham prioritizes parks and nature-oriented recreation. I like that the City solicits public feedback and develops based on that feedback. I like all the different options for outdoor recreation (developed parks, paved trails, wooded mountain trails, etc).”
- “I love that every neighborhood I’ve lived in has been walkable with access to trails and parks that I enjoy spending time in. Our city feels green and well connected to its natural surroundings.”
- “What I like best is that there is almost always a park within walking distance of anywhere you are in Bellingham. No need for a vehicle to enjoy the outdoors. Easily accessible to all income levels.”



## Quotes

- “A community events center is badly needed. The terminal building isn't large enough for Bellingham, and Arne Hannah Aquatic Center does not fill the water play gap for those that can't use natural beaches.”
- “A new/improved and expanded aquatics center is the biggest area for improvement based on how my family uses our City's recreation programs. All forms of indoor recreation seem to have been a secondary or lesser priority to the City in the past 20 years.”
- “Disc Golf Courses are a great active way to enjoy the outdoors... they do not require clear cutting or leveling a large swatch of ground. Keep making more and add to this growing active outdoor sport that I have been enjoying for 30 years.”
- “We need a new skatepark. All of the skateparks around here are deteriorating and skateboarding is one of the best ways for people of all cultures and backgrounds to come together and be a part of one community.”

## Quotes

- “The largest gap I see is pedestrian/bicycle access between certain areas. This is as much, if not more, about practical access than recreation, though solving the issue for one would solve it for both. For example, I can bike almost exclusively on trails from Fairhaven to Bloedel Donovan, which is great. But getting to Cordata requires bike lane usage on Northwest (dangerous, especially at roundabouts) then Aldrich (even more dangerous).”
- “I have small children and winter time is so hard, having an indoor recreation center would be amazing. Childcare options would also be life changing. Expanding the aquatic center and providing more programming and better services would be great for our kids. We really have a lack of updated family centered places in Bellingham compared to so many other communities.”
- “Our outside recreation is awesome, but there are SO few indoor places for kids to be active during the 2/3 of the year when its rainy and gross. If we want kids to be healthy, they need indoor places to play just as much as outdoor parks.”

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# Key Findings

## Demographics

- The median household income of respondents was between \$100,001 and \$150,000, and the majority of respondent households consisted of multiple adults.
- BIPOC individuals and young folks aged 25 years old and younger were not thoroughly reached by this survey.

## Facility Usage

- Respondents typically use park facilities at least once a week
- The majority of respondents drive to facilities, but some walk or bike. Employees living outside of the City drive at higher rates.
- The majority of respondents use trails, beaches and waterfront access, and open space.
- Special events such as concerts in the park are the most popular recreation programs.

## Facility Perceptions

- Some respondents think reservations, maintenance, capacity, and parking could be improved at non City owned facilities. Employees living outside of the City have slightly different perceptions of potential improvements.
- Respondents typically feel somewhat satisfied or satisfied with City managed facilities.

## Barriers

- The majority of respondents feel that there are barriers that make it difficult for them to visit Bellingham parks and programs, but there isn't a specific barrier that stands out as more substantial than the others.
- The majority of respondents identified that they don't attend programs due to a lack of interest in the topic.
- Respondents typically felt satisfied with the maintenance of recreational amenities.
- Respondents typically feel that parks are safe and easy to access. Employees living outside of the City feel like they would be less likely to access the parks if there were less parking available.

## Goals and Priorities

- The majority of respondents feel that improving year round restrooms would increase their use of park facilities.
- Respondents identified forested parks, aquatics center, and indoor recreation as the most important new development needs for the coming years. Employees living outside of the City cared more about indoor rec and less about forested parks, open areas, and street trees.
- Respondents felt that all of the goals proposed for the PROS plan were important.
- Respondents indicated that their top budgetary priority was the maintenance of existing facilities followed by developing new trails.