Seattle
Parks & Recreation

healthy people healthy environment strong communities

EMC research

Seattle Parks and Recreation Survey

Full Draft Report | February 2022

Methodology

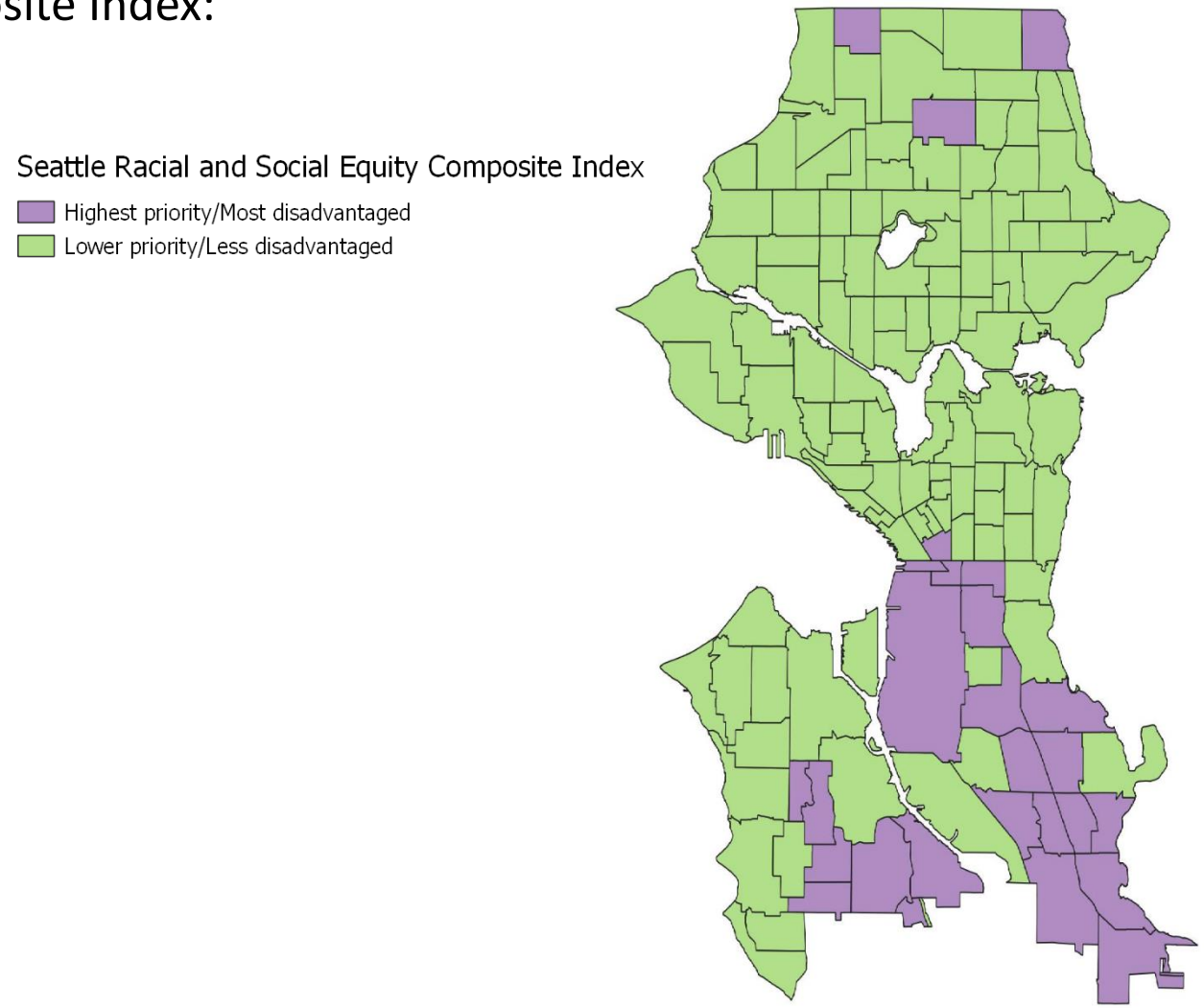
- Multi-modal web and phone survey of Seattle residents using Address Based Sampling (ABS)
- Survey conducted November 10th to December 8th, 2021
- Survey administered in English, Spanish, Amharic, Korean, Tagalog, Traditional Chinese, Somali, and Vietnamese
- Total unweighted number of interviews (n) = 1,366
- Total weighted number of interviews (n) = 801; overall margin of error ±3.5 percentage points
- Where applicable, results compared with the following:

Methodology	Dates	Universe	Weighted Interviews (n)	Margin of Error	EMC #
Web & Phone via ABS	November 18 - December 16, 2016	Seattle residents	513	±4.3 percentage points	16-6056
Web & Phone via ABS	May 10 - June 4, 2019	Seattle residents	441	±4.7 percentage points	19-7225

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

Census Tract Oversample

- This survey consists of 949 citywide respondents from all citywide Census tracts, plus an oversample of 417 interviews in the highest disadvantaged Census tracts as defined by the City of Seattle's Racial and Social Equity Composite Index:



Key Findings

- Amid the backdrop of the pandemic and larger public safety issues facing the City and region, residents' overall quality of life perceptions have continued to decline in 2021.
- Residents rely on Seattle's parks and recreation system even more than before the pandemic, both in usage and perceived importance. Three-quarters consider SPR's system as "extremely important" to quality of life in Seattle. They also report using outdoor parks/facilities like neighborhood parks, walking trails, green spaces, beaches, and playfields more frequently now compared to 2019.
- Broader public safety concerns have likely contributed to lower ratings of the Seattle parks and recreation system, overall, and especially in terms of safety and cleanliness/maintenance. Those issues weigh heavily on residents' perceptions of the system, even as they continue to use many of its parks and facilities more often.

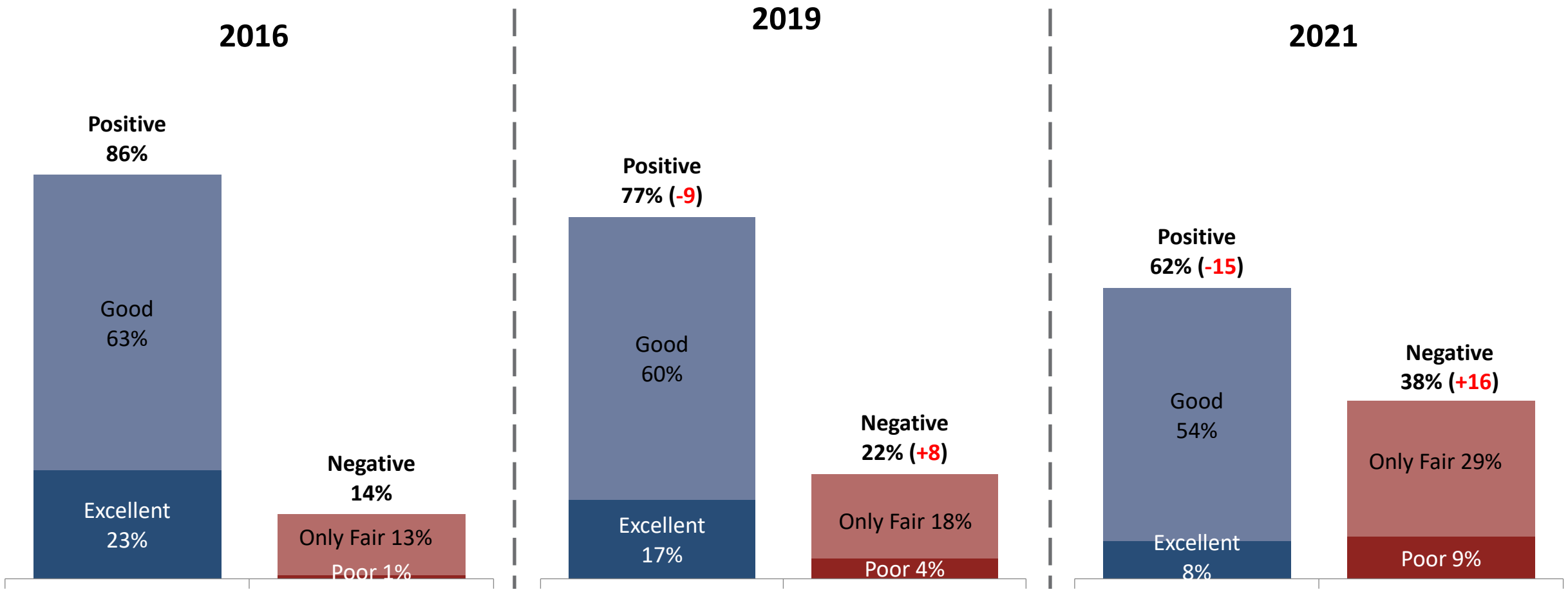
Key Findings

- Residents' general priorities for the Seattle parks and recreation system align with their broader safety and cleanliness concerns. Most prioritize addressing those issues and improving existing parks and facilities over acquiring park lands, building new facilities, and improving recreation programs.
- Beyond those key overarching challenges, there is strong interest for several of the specific maintenance and amenity priorities tested. Strong majorities believe the following improvements would have a high impact on their overall satisfaction with the system:
  - More frequent restroom cleaning
  - More frequent garbage pickup
  - More accessible trails and natural areas
  - Improved lighting
  - More available restrooms

Quality of Life

Quality of Life – Over Time

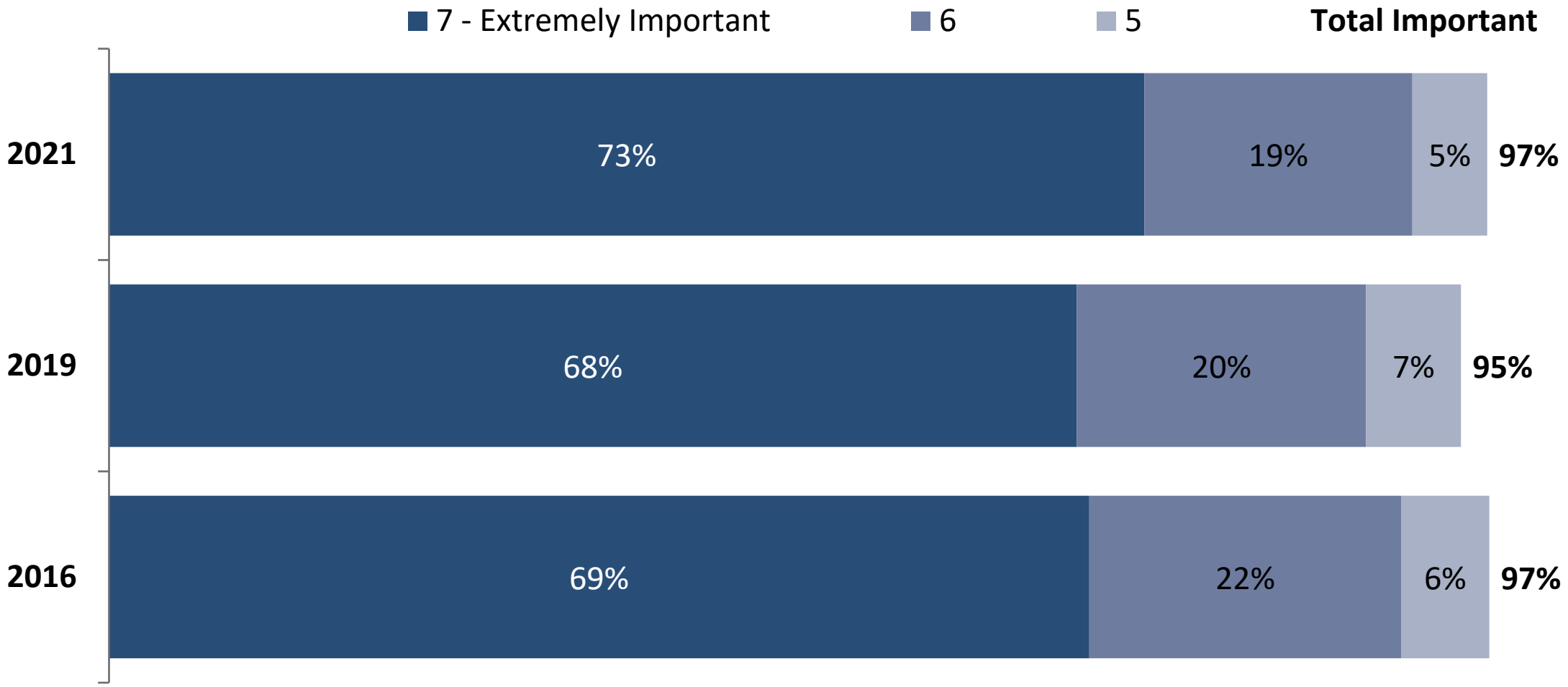
Residents' perceptions of Seattle's overall quality of life have continued to erode since 2016.



Q2. How would you rate the overall quality of life in Seattle?

Importance of Parks & Rec System – Over Time

Despite declines in their quality of life ratings, a vast majority of residents consider Seattle's parks and recreation system to be extremely important to the quality of life in the city.



Q3. How important do you think Seattle's parks and recreation system is to the quality of life here in Seattle?

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Parks & Rec Usage

Top-of-Mind Reasons for Visitation

Residents report visiting Seattle's parks and recreation facilities for a variety of reasons, led by enjoying nature/green space, walking, and fitness-related activities.

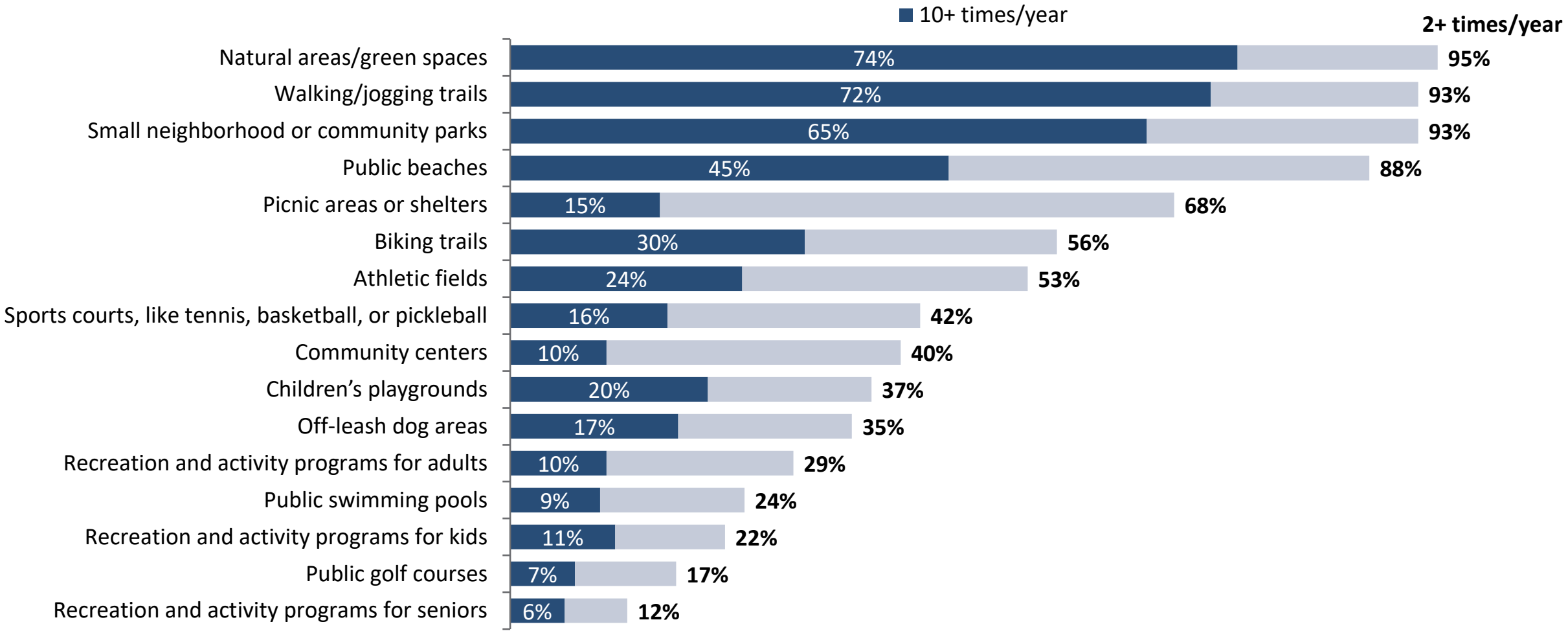
What are the main reasons you or your family visit Seattle parks and recreation facilities?

Reason	*% of Responses*	*Weighted # of Mentions*
Enjoyment of nature/green space/forested areas/woods	33	243
Walking/running/hiking	17	124
Fitness/health	13	95
Relaxation/peaceful/quiet	5	40
Sports/athletics	4	30
Dog walking/dog parks	3	24
The playground/to play/children playing	3	19
Activity with friends/family/picnics/cookouts	2	18
Recreation	2	15
Get away/get away from the city/city noise/traffic	1	8
Pool/swimming/water activities	1	8
Biking	1	8
Classes/programming	1	6
Activities/events/programs	1	6
Happy/well being/quality of life/enjoy life	1	5
Socialize/get to know your neighbors/community	0	2
Other reasons	10	73
Nothing	0	2

Q33.

Parks & Facilities Usage – Overall

Around 9-in-10 residents say they or their families visit natural areas/green spaces, small parks, walking/jogging trails, and public beaches at least a couple times a year, with many visiting far more frequently. Majorities also use picnic areas, biking trails, athletic fields multiple times a year.



Q17-32. For each of the following types of parks and recreation facilities, please indicate how often you or your family visit that type of park or facility.

Parks & Facilities Usage – Over Time

Compared to before the pandemic, reported usage is slightly higher for most outdoor parks and facilities and slightly lower for indoor activities.

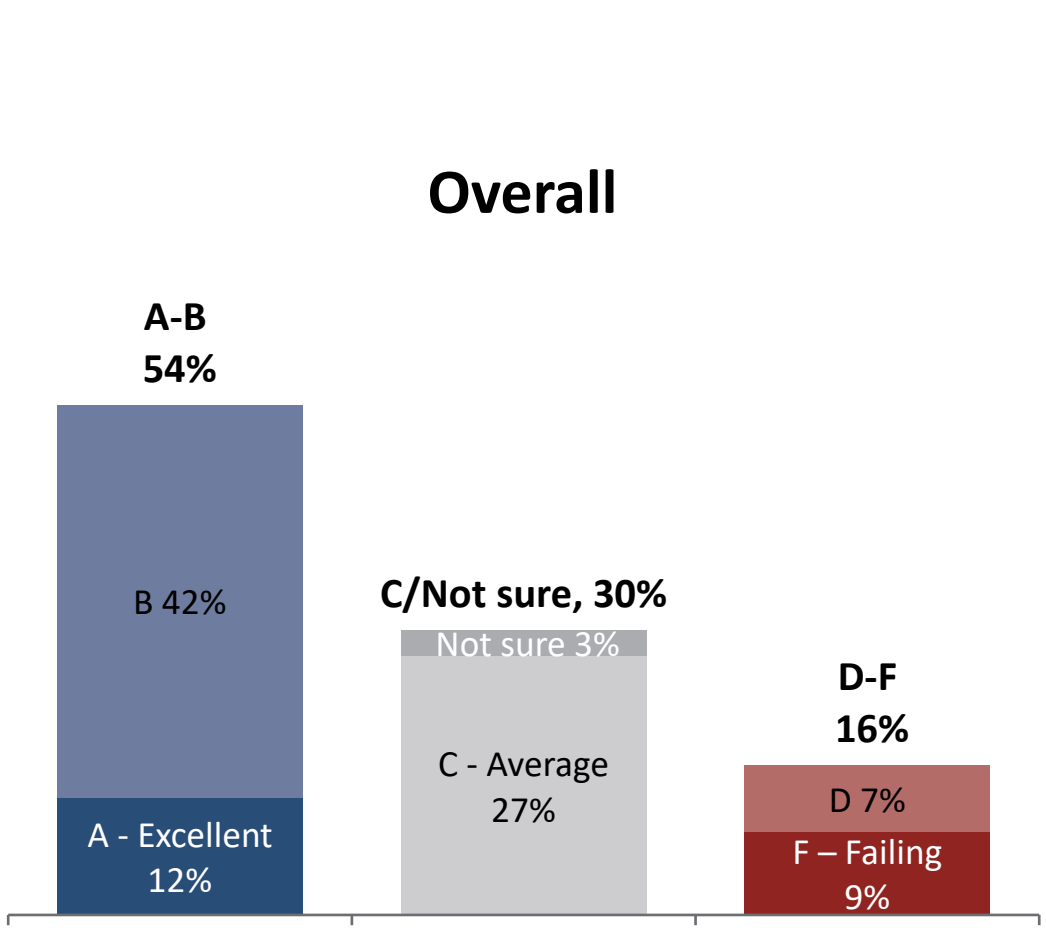
	Visit 10+ Times/Year		
Parks & Recreation Facility	**2019**	**2021**	**PP Change**
Natural areas/green spaces	70	74	**+4**
Walking/jogging trails	68	72	**+4**
Small neighborhood or community parks	60	65	**+5**
Public beaches	41	45	**+4**
Biking trails	27	30	**+3**
Athletic fields	20	24	**+4**
Children's playgrounds	18	20	**+2**
Off-leash dog areas	18	17	**-1**
Picnic areas or shelters	13	15	**+2**
Recreation and activity programs for kids	9	11	**+2**
Recreation and activity programs for adults	11	10	**-1**
Community centers	14	10	**-4**
Public swimming pools	12	9	**-3**
Public golf courses	5	7	**+2**
Recreation and activity programs for seniors	7	6	**-1**

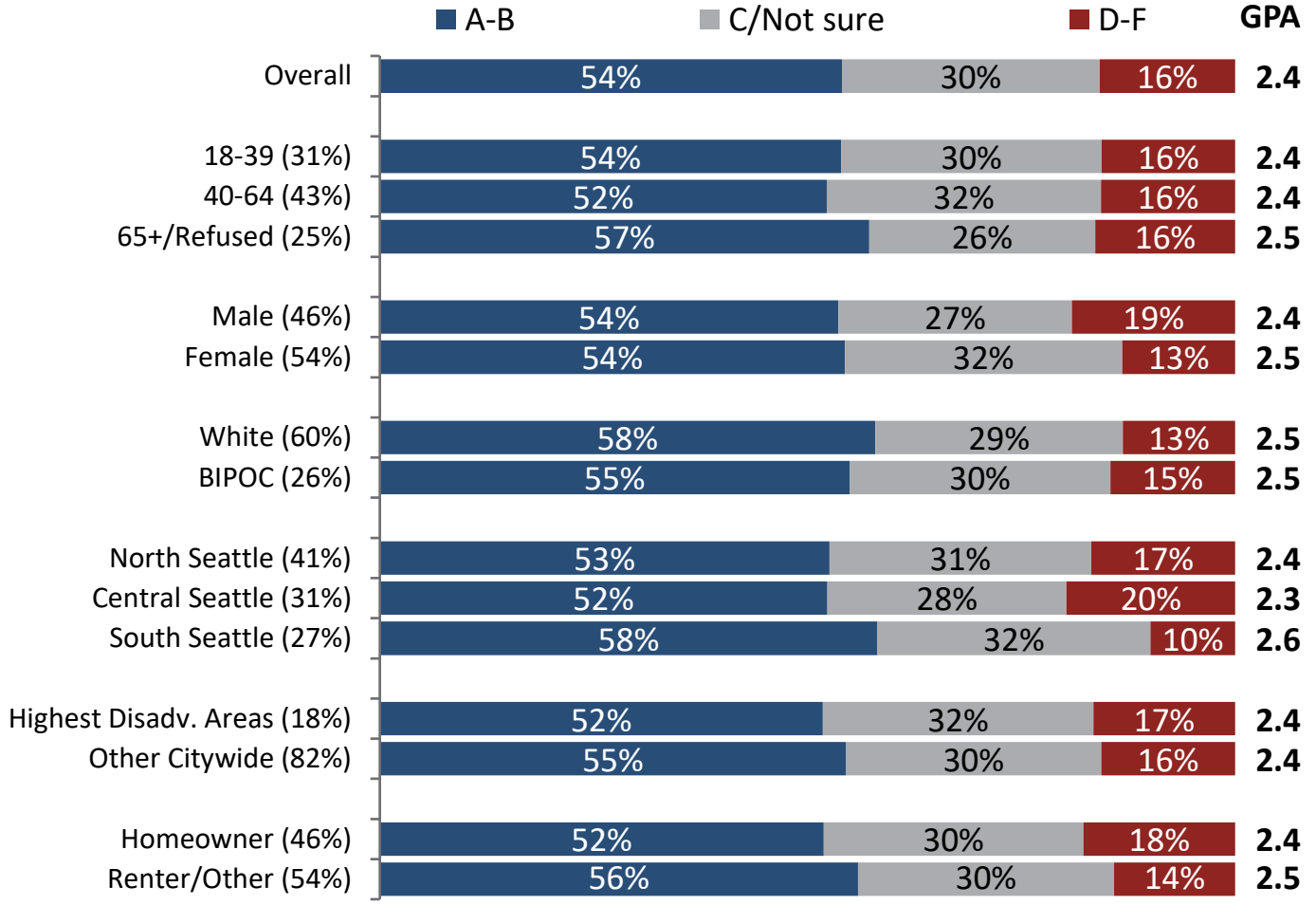
Q17-32. For each of the following, please indicate how often you or your family visit that type of park or facility.

Overall System & Attribute Grades

Seattle Parks and Rec Overall Grade

A slim majority of residents give positive "A" or "B" grades for Seattle's overall parks and recreation system, compared to one-in-five who give it a critical "D" or "F" grade, with nearly a third rating it as "C"/average. These ratings are comparable across major demographic and geographic subgroups.

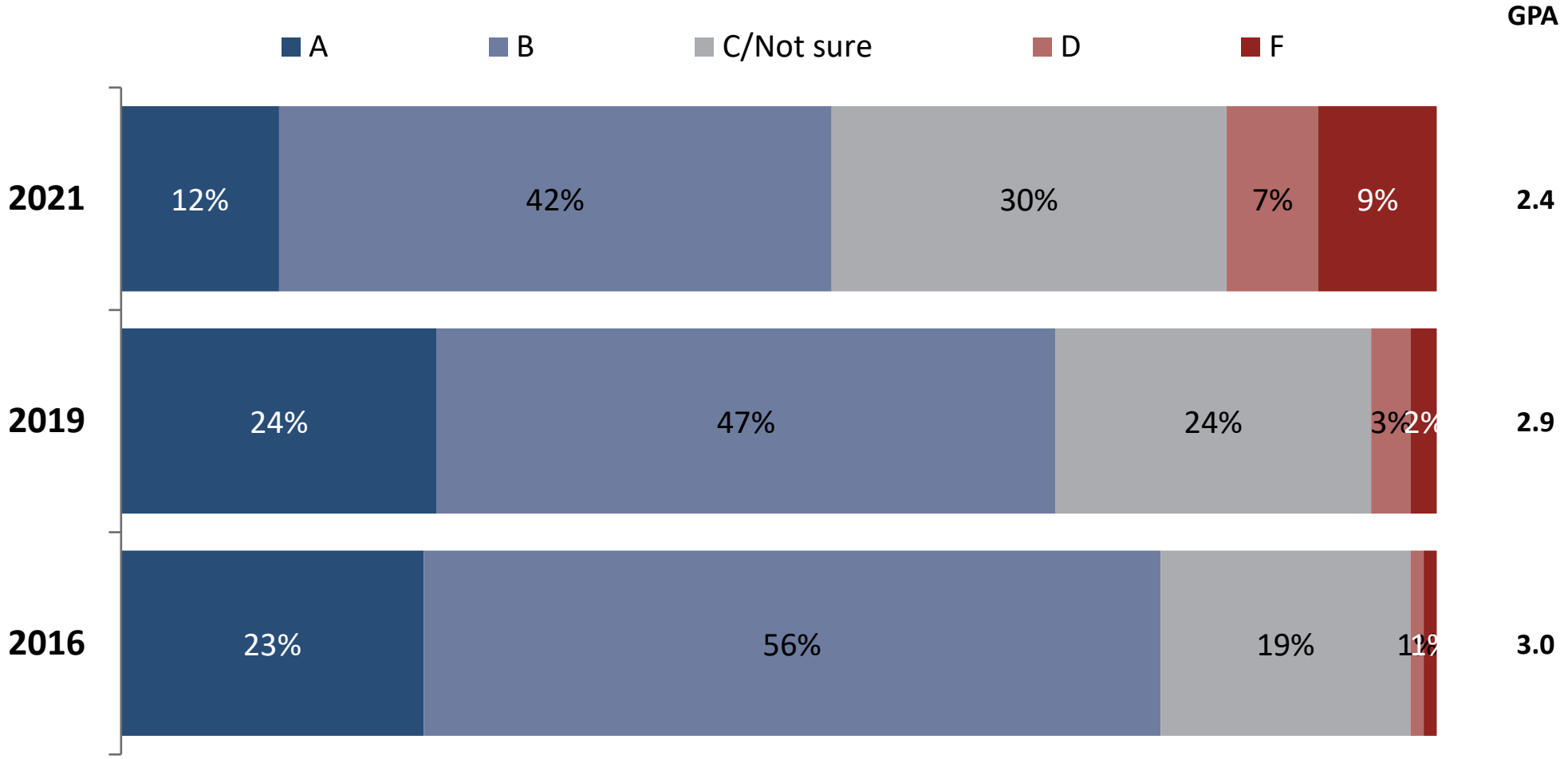




Q4. How would you rate the Seattle parks and recreation system overall?

Seattle Parks and Rec Overall Grade – Over Time

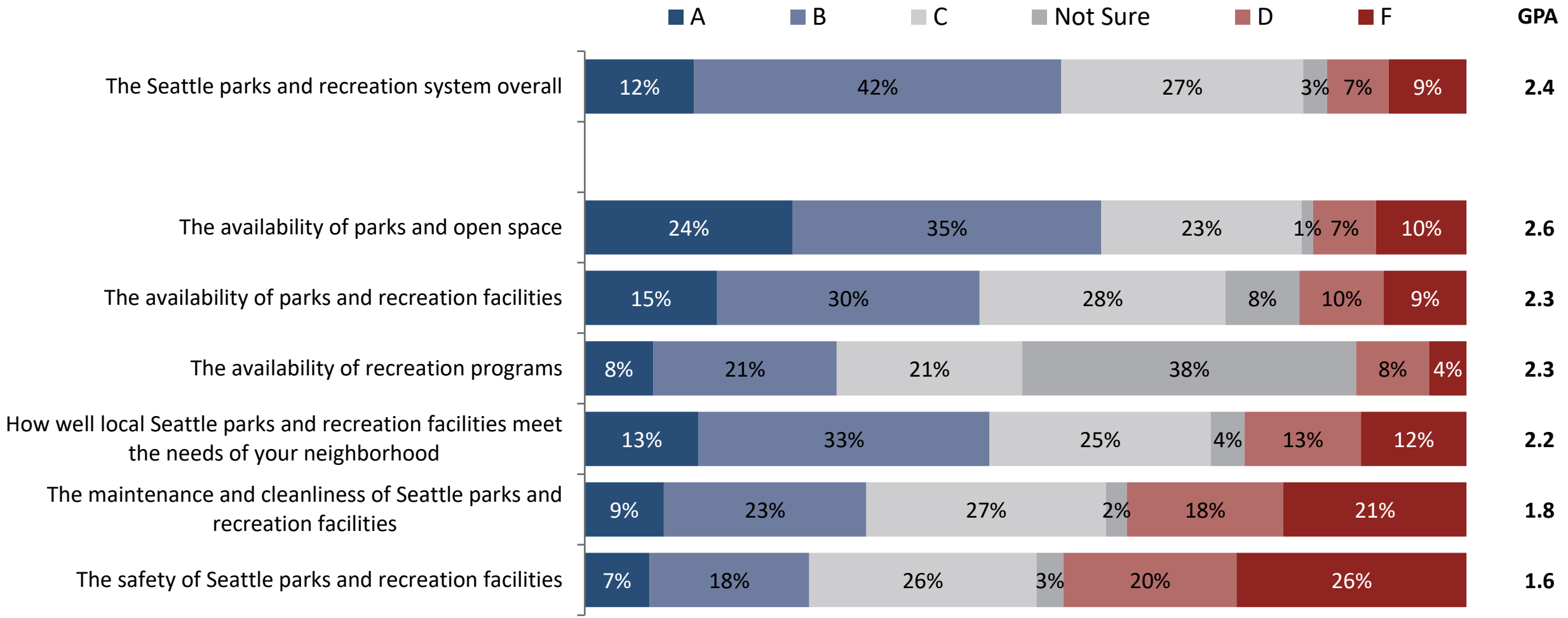
Overall system grades have declined significantly since 2016, and especially since before the pandemic. Although the intensity of ratings remains low – both positively and negatively – the share of "A" grades have dropped by half since 2019, while the share of "F" grades have more than tripled.



Q4. How would you rate the Seattle parks and recreation system overall?

Parks and Recreation Grades

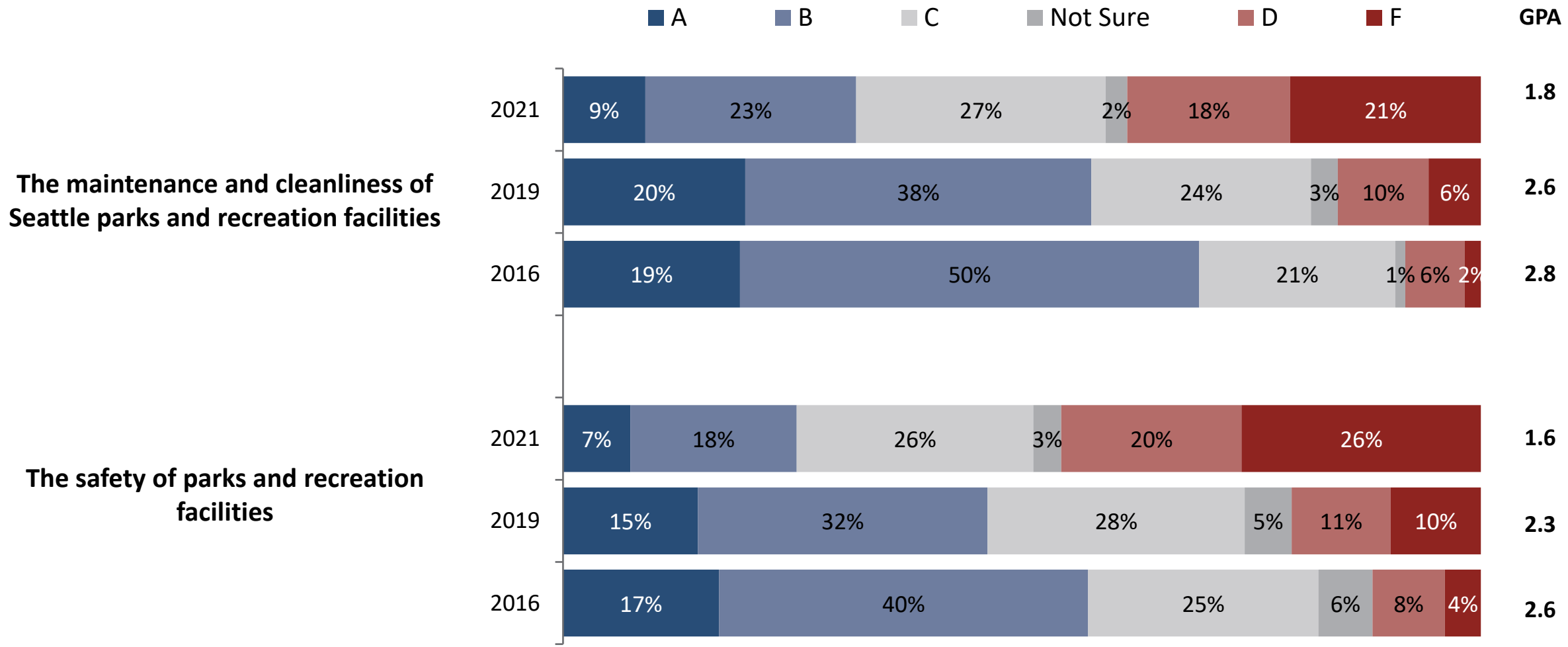
Seattle's parks and rec system earns generally positive marks overall and for the availability of parks/open space and facilities, as well as meeting the needs of neighborhoods, but residents are highly critical of the safety and maintenance/cleanliness of P&R facilities.



Q4-10. How would you grade the following aspects of Seattle's parks and recreation system? For each, please use a grading scale of A through F where A is "Excellent," C is "Average" and F is "Failing."

Parks and Recreation Grades – Over Time

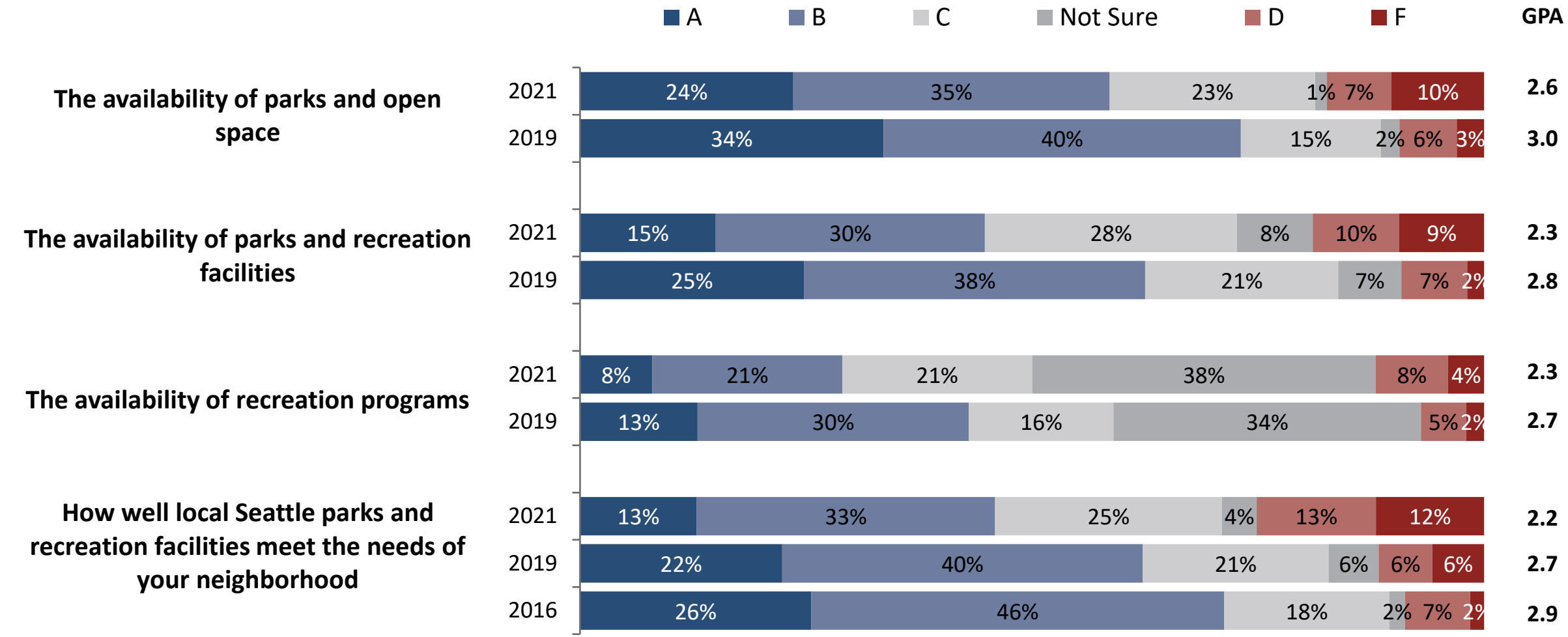
Ratings for each individual attribute have declined since 2019 but safety and maintenance/cleanliness have seen the steepest declines, with their share of "D" and "F" grades more than doubling between 2019 and 2021.



Q4-10. How would you grade the following aspects of Seattle's parks and recreation system? For each, please use a grading scale of A through F where A is "Excellent," C is "Average" and F is "Failing."

Parks and Recreation Grades – Over Time

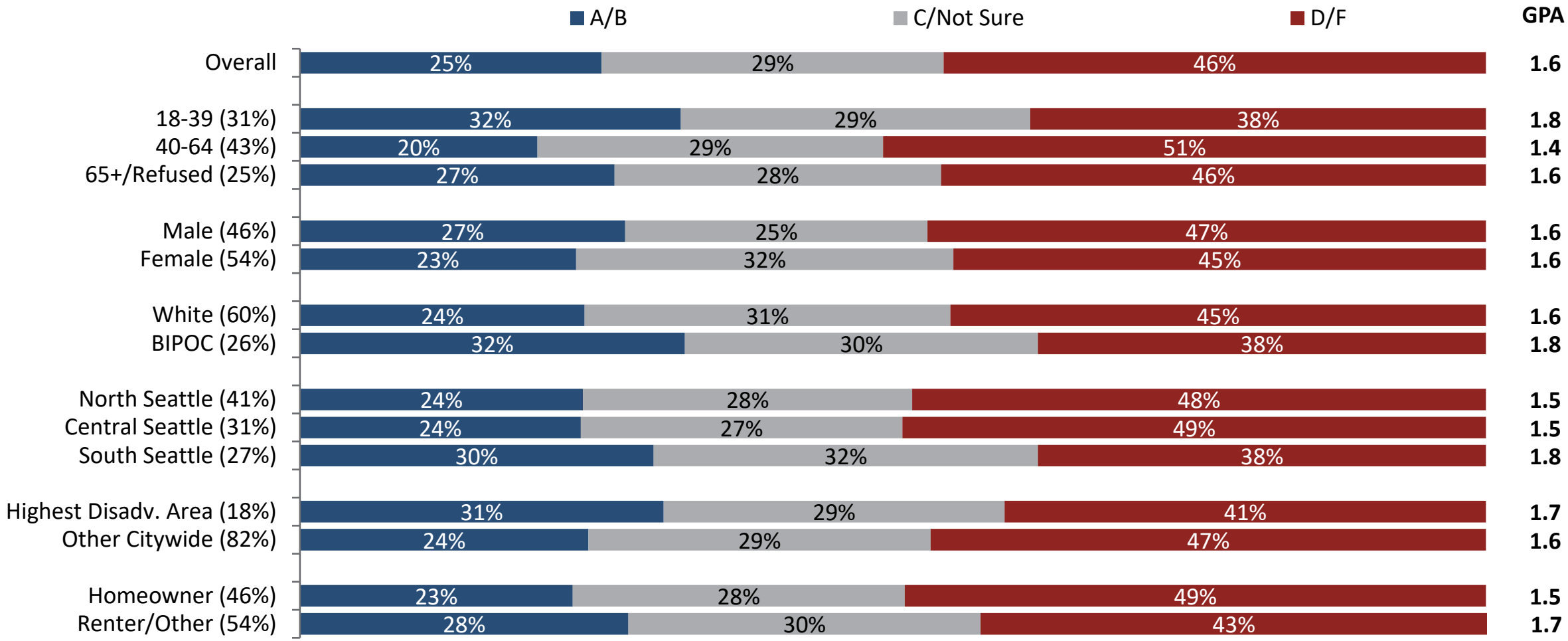
Grades for the availability of parks/open space, facilities, and meeting the needs of the neighborhood continue to be net positive but those ratings have also dropped since 2019, with a potential spillover effect from the most pertinent safety and cleanliness issues.



Q4-10. How would you grade the following aspects of Seattle's parks and recreation system? For each, please use a grading scale of A through F where A is "Excellent," C is "Average" and F is "Failing."

Safety by Subgroups

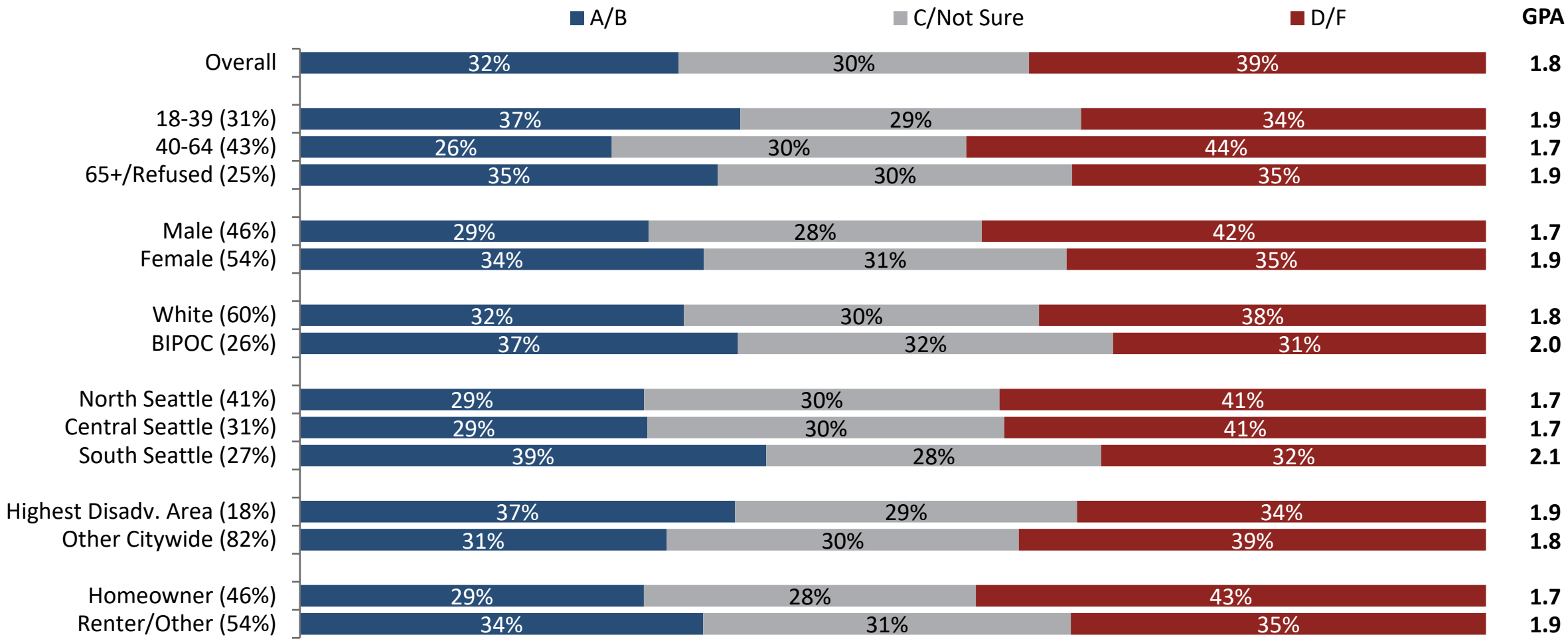
Pluralities of most demographic and geographic subgroups rate parks and rec safety critically, with around a quarter of each group giving it the lowest "F" grade. Safety ratings are lowest among those living in North and Central Seattle, middle age and older residents, and homeowners.



Q5. How would you grade the safety of Seattle parks and recreation facilities?

Maintenance and Cleanliness by Subgroups

Pluralities of most subgroups are also critical of facility maintenance and cleanliness. These grades are lowest among men, people age 40-64, North and Central Seattle residents, and homeowners.



Q6. How would you grade the maintenance and cleanliness of Seattle parks and recreation facilities?

Reasons for Overall Grade (2.4 GPA)

Those rating the overall system critically cite homelessness, camping, drugs, trash, and other general safety and cleanliness concerns.

What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for the Seattle parks and recreation system overall?

A/B Grades

D/F Grades

Reasons for Safety Grade (1.6 GPA)

Homelessness, camping, and drug-related concerns drive most of the negative safety perceptions of Seattle's parks and recreation facilities.

What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for the safety of Seattle parks and recreation facilities?

A/B Grades

D/F Grades

Negative Safety Grade Locations

When asked to identify locations where safety is an issue, one-in-five residents cited Green Lake, specifically, with dozens also mentioning other North Seattle parks like Ballard Commons and Woodland Park.

13. What are some specific locations where you think safety is an issue? (FIRST RESPONSE)	% of Responses	Weighted # of Mentions
Green Lake/Green Lake Park	21	137
Ballard Commons Park	7	48
Woodland Park	6	38
Cal Anderson	4	24
Denny Park	2	13
Freeway Park	2	11
Ravenna Park	2	11
Bitter Lake	1	10
Pioneer Square	1	9
Lincoln Park	1	8
Capitol Hill	1	7

(cont'd)	% of Responses	Weighted # of Mentions
Gasworks Park	1	7
Carkeek Park	1	4
Westcrest Park	1	4
Seward Park	1	4
Magnuson Park	1	4
Golden Gardens	0	1
Other specific locations	40	255
Parks/all parks	4	23
Nothing	2	11
Corner/pocket parks/specific street/address	1	6
Don't know	1	6

Q13.

Note: Data reflects the first response only. If a respondent cited multiple locations, only the first location mentioned was counted.

Reasons for Maintenance & Cleanliness Grade (1.8 GPA)

Residents cited a wide variety of drivers for their maintenance and cleanliness grades, both positively and negatively. Critical mentions include trash/litter, homeless camps, drugs/needles, and bathrooms.

What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for <u>the maintenance and cleanliness parks and recreation facilities</u>?

A/B Grades

D/F Grades

Negative Maintenance & Cleanliness Grade Locations

Location-wise, residents mentioned a similar mix of parks with maintenance and cleanliness issues. Green Lake again leads the list, followed by Ballard Commons, Woodland Park, and Cal Anderson.

15. What are some specific locations where you think maintenance and cleanliness is an issue? (FIRST RESPONSE)	*% of Responses*	*Weighted # of Mentions*
Green Lake/Green Lake Park	18	98
Ballard Commons Park	6	34
Woodland Park	5	28
Cal Anderson Park	4	21
Denny Park	2	9
Alki Beach	1	7
Ravenna	1	7
Gasworks Park	1	7
Capitol Hill	1	7
Bitter Lake	1	6
Golden Gardens	1	6
Pioneer Square	1	4

(cont'd)	*% of Responses*	*Weighted # of Mentions*
Genesee Park/Playfield	1	4
Magnuson Park	1	4
Westcrest Park	1	4
Carkeek Park	1	4
Seward Park	1	3
Salmon Bay Park	0	1
Other specific locations	47	265
Don't know	4	22
Nothing	2	10
Pocket parks/specific street/address	2	9
Same as before	0	1

Q15.

Note: Data reflects the first response only. If a respondent cited multiple locations, only the first location mentioned was counted.

Reasons for Meeting Needs of Neighborhood Grade (2.2 GPA)

When it comes to meeting the needs of their neighborhoods, residents give a mix of suggestions including green space improvements, increasing the number of off-leash dog areas, and greater programmatic variety in addition to the concerns mentioned earlier. They also praise the large number of existing parks, quality of facilities, and location/proximity.

What are the main reasons for the grade you gave for <u>how well local Seattle parks and recreation facilities meet the needs of your neighborhood</u>?

A/B Grades

D/F Grades

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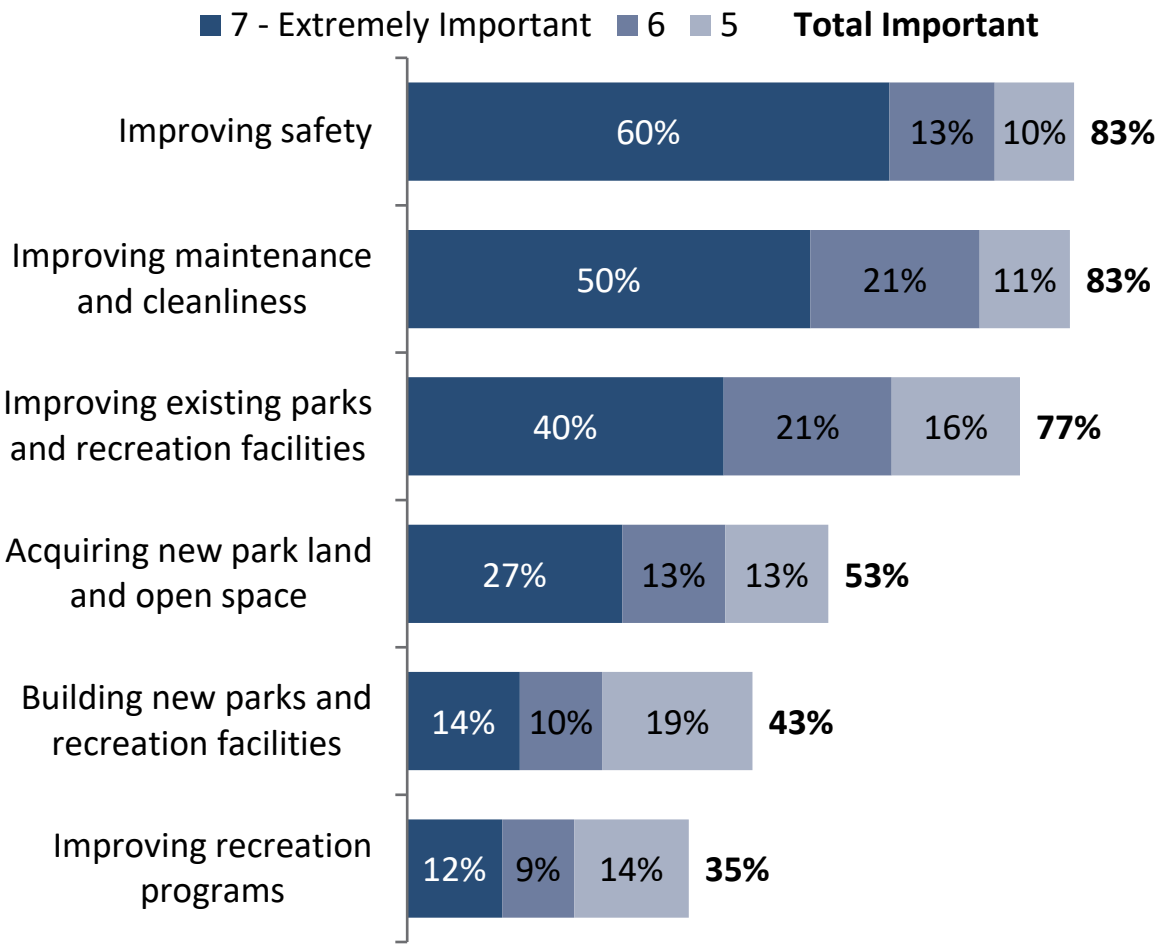
Improvement, Expansion & Funding Priorities

Improvement & Expansion Priorities

Residents' broader funding priorities mirror many of grades they gave for different aspects of the system's performance. Strong majorities believe it will be very important to improve safety and maintenance/cleanliness, and residents generally favor improving existing parks and facilities over acquisition and expansion. The gaps between those priorities have increased over time.

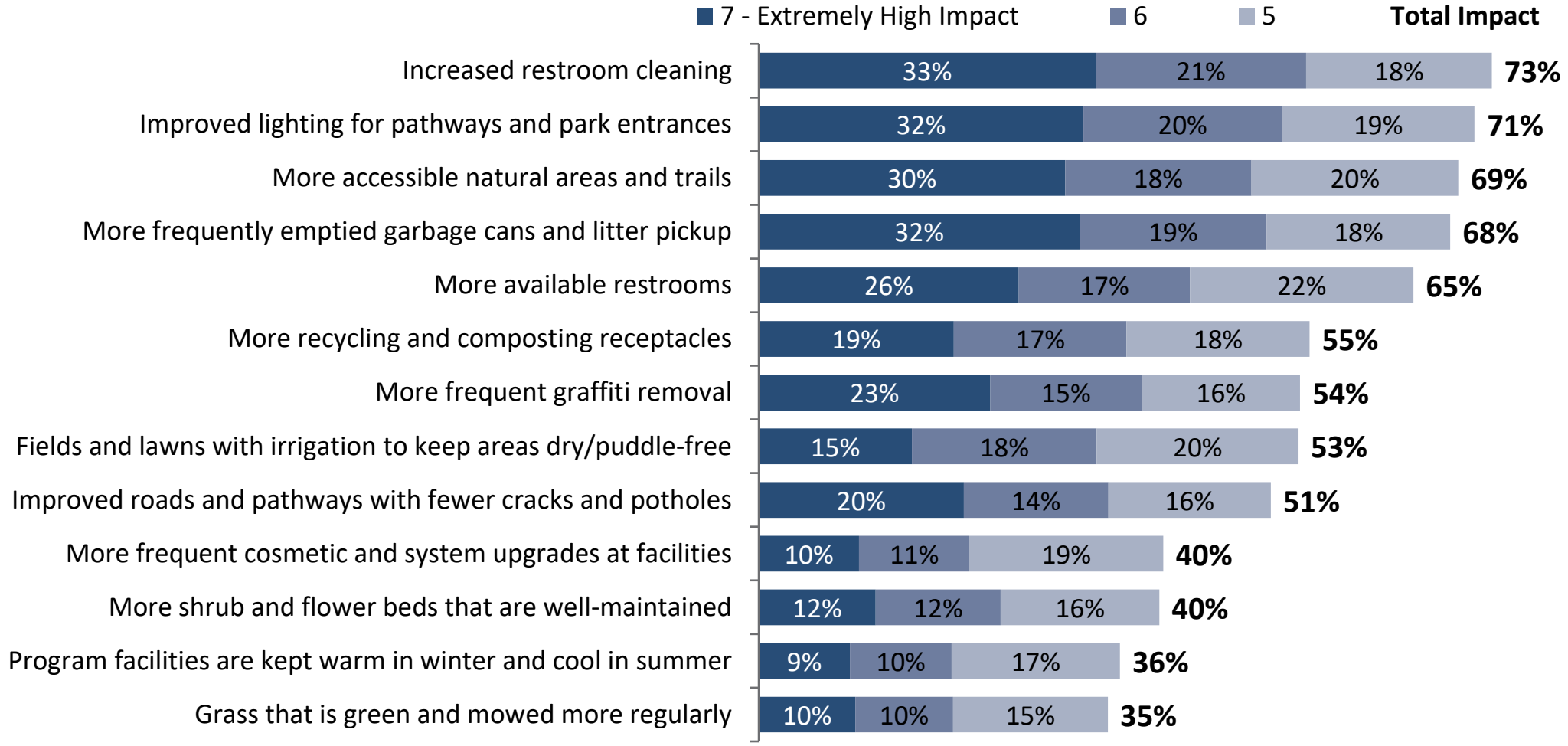


	Total Important		
Priority	**2019**	**2021**	**Change**
Improving safety	76	83	**+7**
Improving maintenance and cleanliness	78	83	**+5**
Improving existing parks and recreation facilities	80	77	**-3**
Acquiring new park land and open space	61	53	**-8**
Building new parks and recreation facilities	54	43	**-11**
Improving recreation programs	50	35	**-15**

Q38-43. Seattle Parks and Recreation must prioritize limited funding to address system needs over the next 10 years. For each of the following, please indicate how important you feel it is to fund that project or issue.

Maintenance Impacts

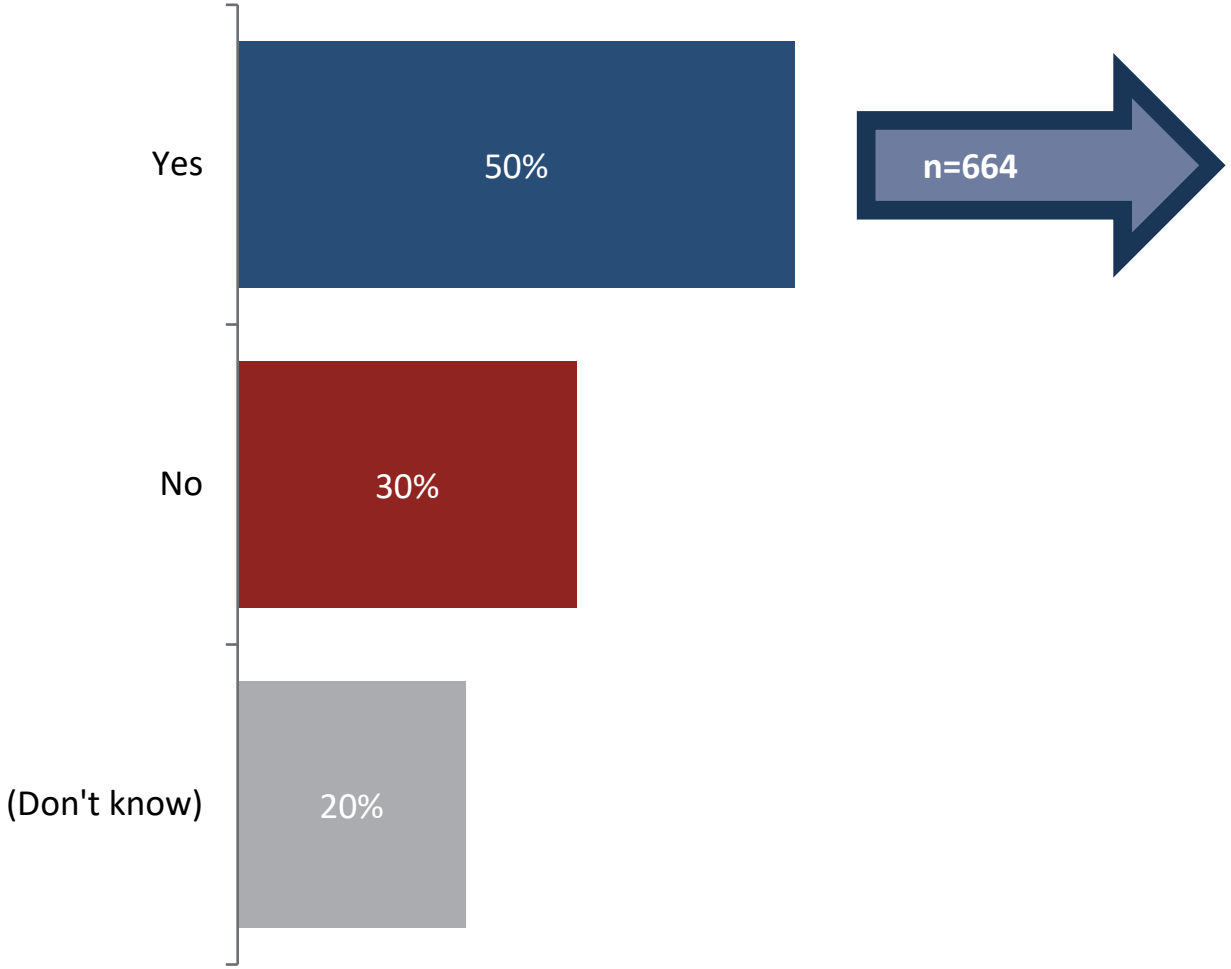
Concerning the specific maintenance and amenity priorities tested, residents believe increased cleaning and more available restrooms, improved lighting, more accessible natural areas/trails, and more frequent garbage pick up will have the highest impact on improving satisfaction with parks and recreation facilities in Seattle. Residents place reduced emphasis on maintaining grass, temperature control at facilities, shrub and flower beds, and more frequent cosmetic upgrades.



Q44-56. For each of the following priorities for maintenance and amenities, please indicate how much of an impact each item would have on improving your overall satisfaction with existing parks and recreation facilities in Seattle.

New Facility Suggestions

About half of residents suggest they would like to see more parks and recreation facilities in Seattle. They give a variety of suggestions, including more pools/water areas, sports fields/courts, green spaces, off-leash dog areas, and walking/jogging trails.

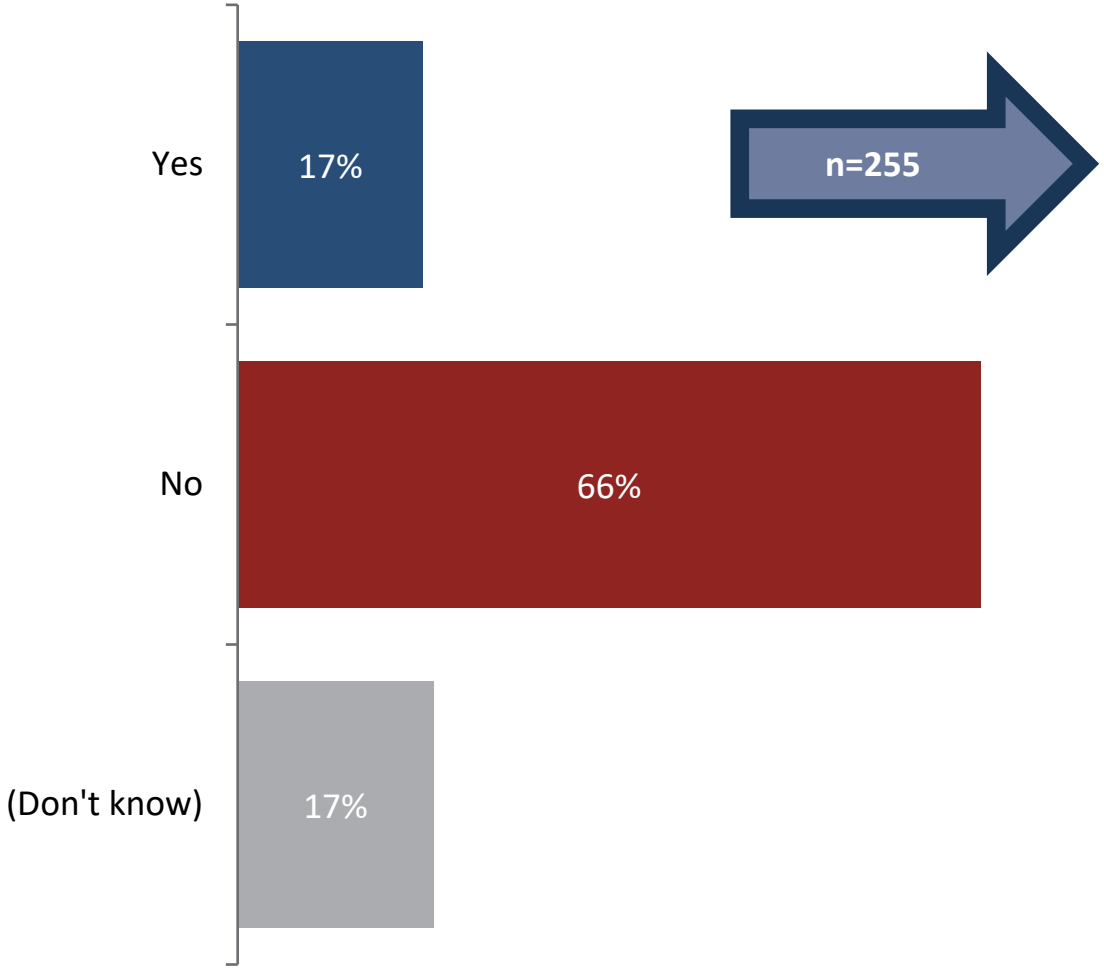


Response	%
Pools/waterfront/water activities	17
Sports fields/courts (basketball/baseball/soccer)	15
Green spaces/forested areas/open space/natural areas	10
Dog parks/Off leash parks	10
Walking/jogging/running biking trails	10
More/better facilities/amenities	6
Community activities/programs/events	5
Pocket parks/small neighborhood park	4
Safety/security/police	4
Make a specific park (any)	2
Arts/education/history/music	2
Outdoor exercise stations/pull up bars/climbing walls	1
Clean parks	1
Gardens/Japanese gardens/conservatories/arboretum	1
Skate parks	1
Other Type of Park/Recreational facility	9
Nothing	1

Q35. Is there any type of park or recreational facility you would like to see more of in Seattle?

Current Program Participation

Residents in about one-in-five households report participating in a recreation program. Currently, these include general sports and swimming.

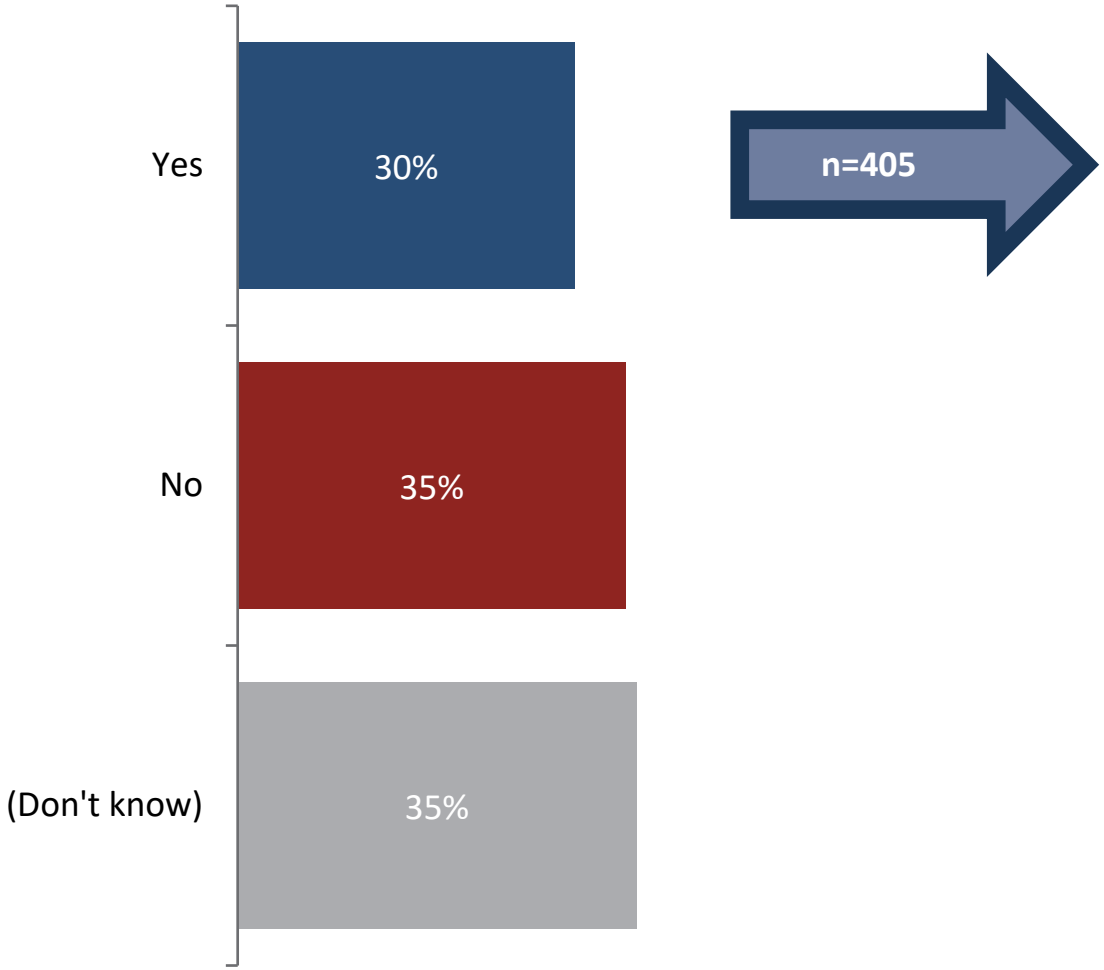


Response	%
Sports fields/courts (basketball/baseball/soccer)	19
Swimming related	13
Pickle ball	6
Exercise	6
Senior services	6
Camps/programs for kids	4
Tennis	4
Water exercise	4
Golf	3
Rowing	3
Hiking/walking/running/nature walks	3
Festivals/events	3
Dance related	2
Community/recreation centers	2
Skating (any)	1
Ultimate Frisbee	1
Biking	1
Other recreational programs	18
Nothing	1

Q36. Thinking of the recreation programs in Seattle, is there a recreational program that you or your family currently participate in?

New Program Suggestions

Nearly a third would like to see more recreation programs, including sports-related items, swimming, and exercise classes.



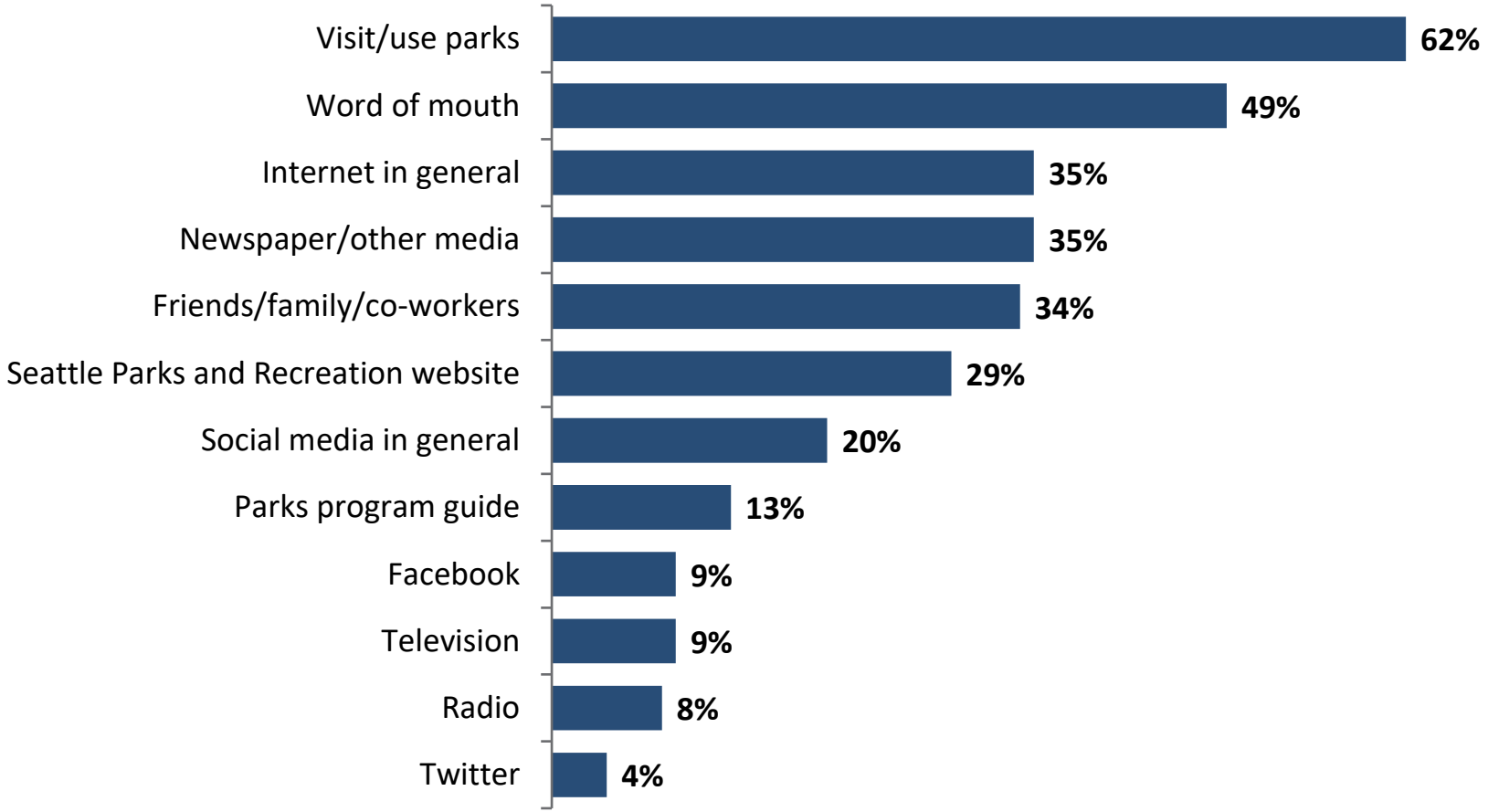
Response	%
Sports/sport leagues/fields/courts	20
Swimming/water related	17
Exercise classes	13
Guided tours/walks	9
Classes/programs/activities (any)	7
Arts/crafts programs/classes/festivals	7
Nature activities/studies	3
Dance	3
Community activities/programs/events	2
Senior programming	2
Dog parks/off leash parks	2
Biking	2
Bird watching	1
Theater/shows/plays	1
Musical related	0
Other	9
Nothing	2
Don't know	0

Q37. And are there any recreational programs that you or your family would be interested in participating in if it were offered?

Information Sources

Residents generally receive parks and recreation-related information by visiting parks and facilities, word of mouth, and general online, newspaper, and other media. Three-in-ten report using the SPR website, specifically.

Where do you typically receive information about parks and recreation programs, activities and facilities in Seattle?



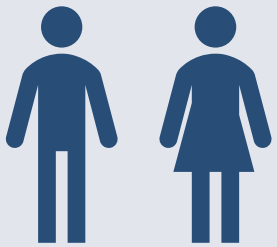
Q57.

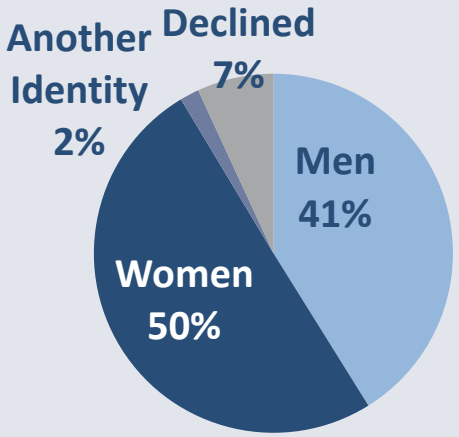
Note: multiple responses to this question were accepted.

Demographics

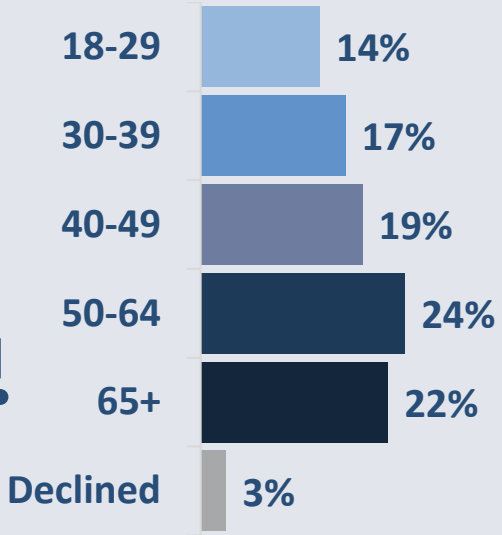
Key Personal Demographics

Gender

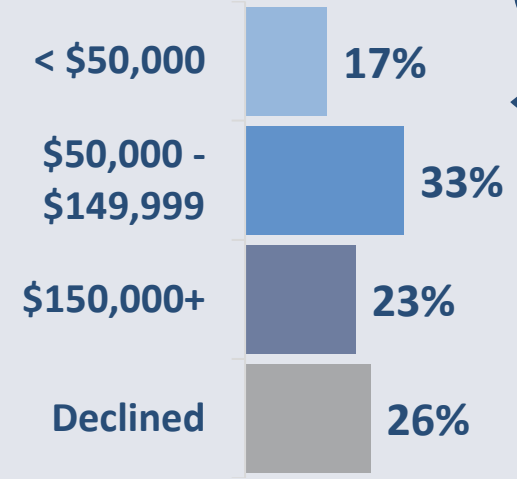




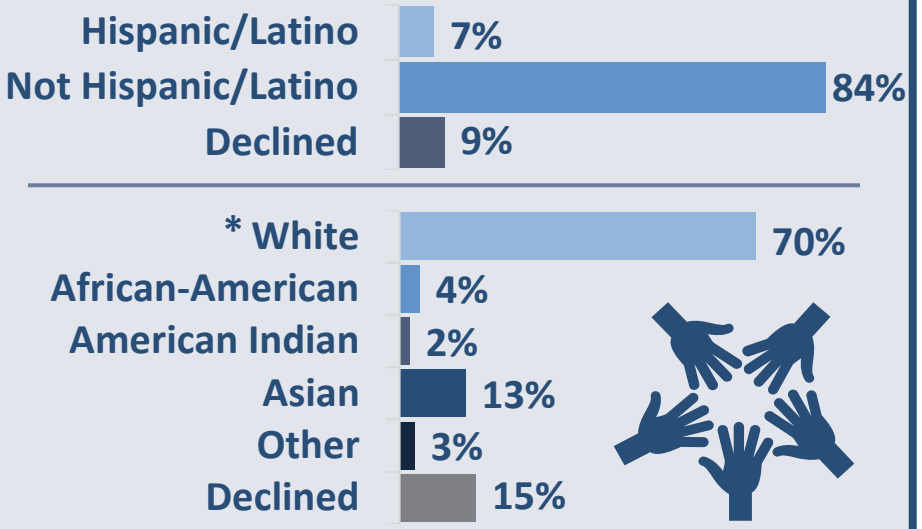
Age



Income

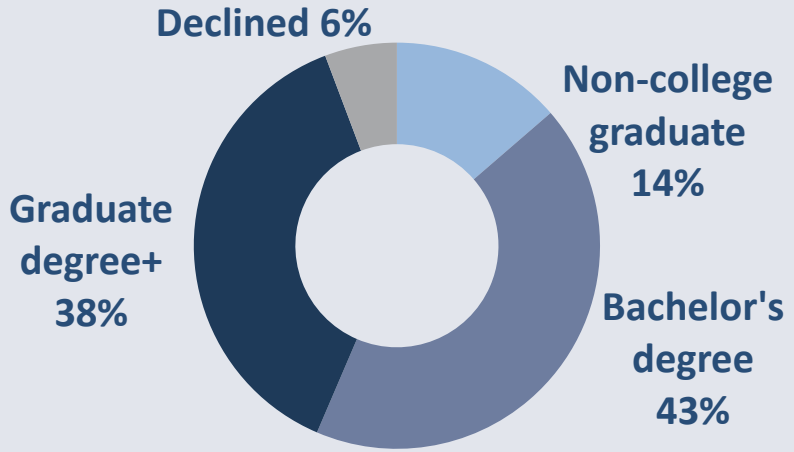


Ethnicity



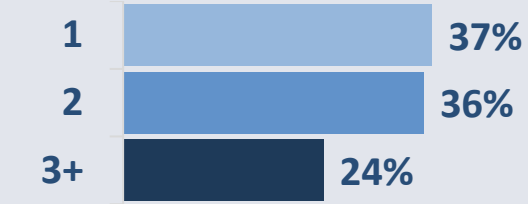
**Multiple responses accepted, so values add to more than 100%*

Education

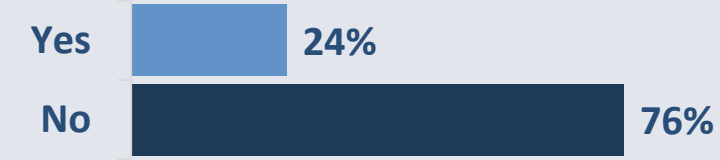


Key Household Demographics

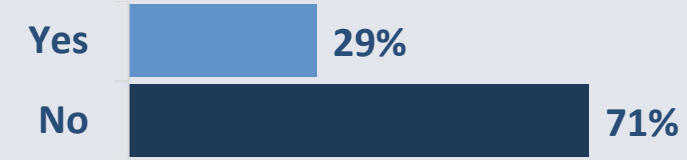
Number of People in Household



Children in Household

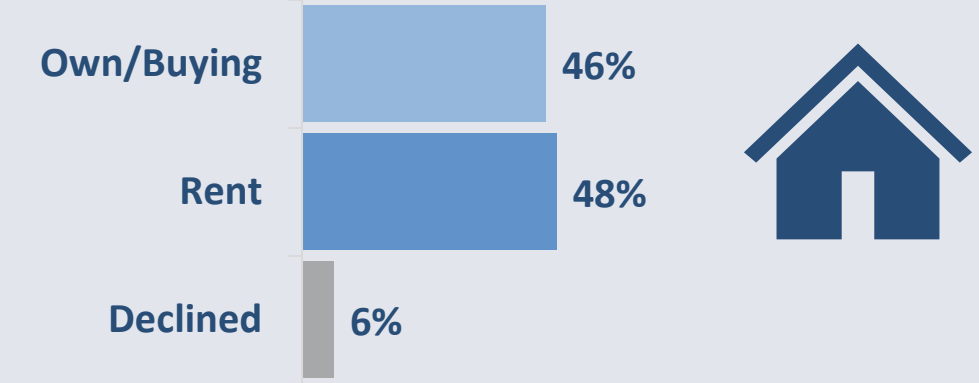


Seniors in Household

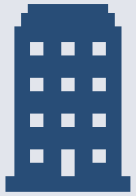


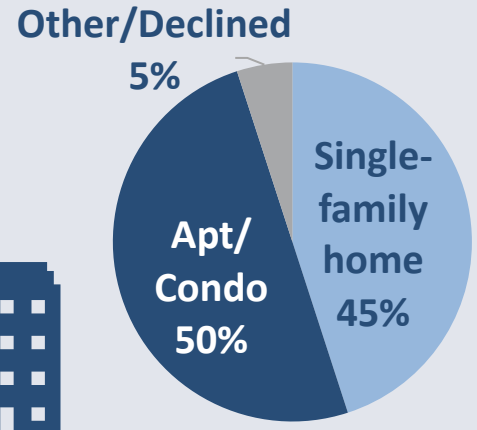
People with Disabilities in Household

Homeownership

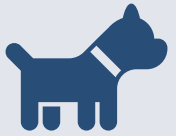


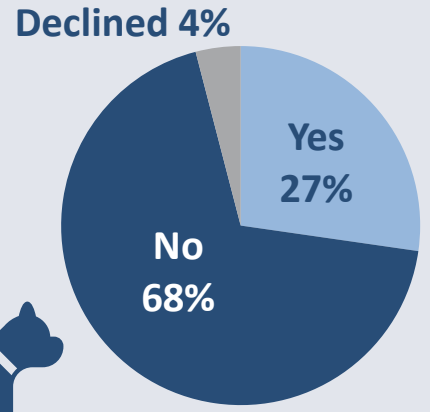
Residence Type





Dog Ownership





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