

# Winnetka Park District Comprehensive Master Plan

Engagement Update for Board of Park Commissioners – March 20, 2025







# Agenda

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# Project Team



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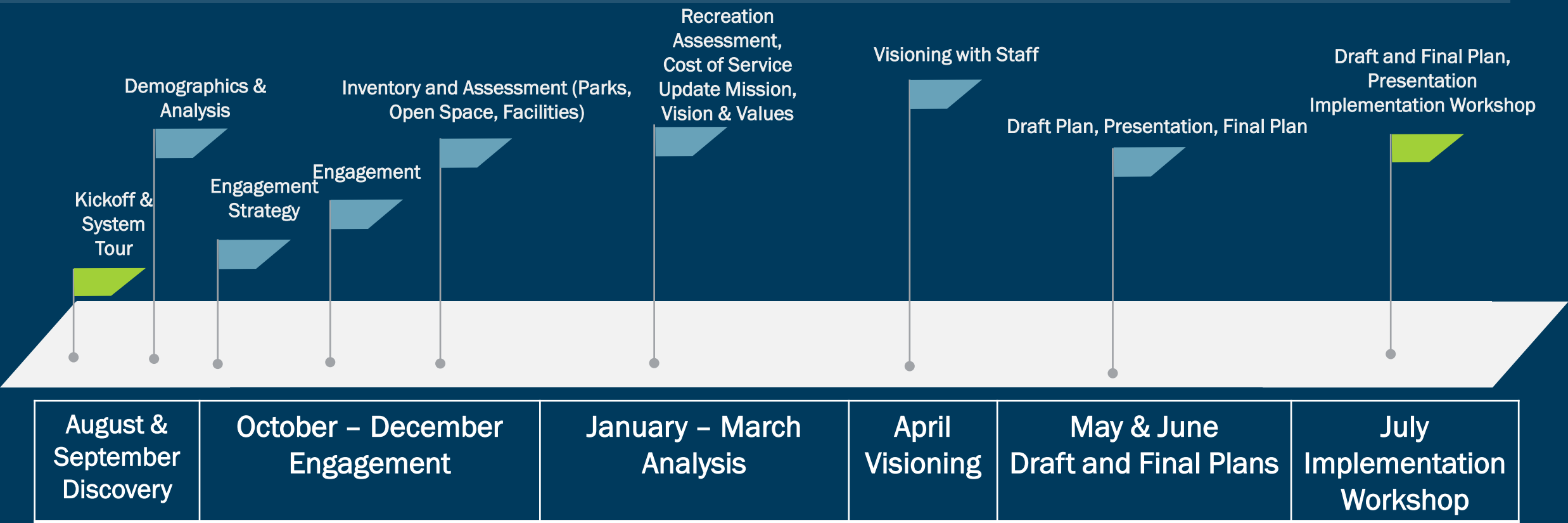


# Project Overview

# Six Project Phases



# Project Timeline







# Survey Results - ETC



**Since 2006,  
ETC Institute  
Has,  
In More Than  
1,000 Cities  
&  
49 States,  
Surveyed  
More Than  
3,000,000  
Persons.**

**ETC Institute is a National Leader  
in Market Research for Local  
Governmental Organizations**

*For more than 35 years, our mission has  
been to help municipal governments  
gather and use survey data to enhance  
organizational performance.*



# Survey Purpose



To help guide the District's Comprehensive Master Plan



To assist in establishing priorities for future improvements to parks, facilities, programs, and services



To gather objective feedback from residents to help determine priorities for the community using the PIR analysis

# Methodology

## **Survey Description**

- Five-page survey

## **Method of Administration**

- By mail and online to a random sample of households in the Park District
- Each survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete

## **Sample Size**

- 478 completed surveys

## **Margin of Error**

- +/- 4.4% at the 95% level of confidence



# What to Know

- *96% of respondents have visited a park or facility* in the past year - *Nationally, 81% of respondents visit parks or facilities*
- *65% of respondents participated in a program* in the past year - *Nationally, 36% of respondents participate in programs*
- *Residents are most satisfied with how close parks* are to their home – *86% live within a 10-minute walk to a park/natural area and 92% of those have visited the park/natural area*
- *Park District program brochure and website* are the most used and most preferred sources of information

# Top Priorities Based on PIR Analysis

## PROGRAMS

1. Community events
2. Fitness & wellness programs
3. Hiking & outdoor recreation programs
4. Aquatics
5. Active adult programs
6. Lake recreation
7. Nature programs
8. Performing & visual arts programs
9. Biking programs
10. After-school programs for youth of all ages
11. Active adult (50+) programming

## AMENITIES

1. Outdoor swimming pool
2. Indoor swimming pools
3. Public beaches
4. Multi-use hiking, biking, walking trails
5. Off-leash dog park
6. Community center



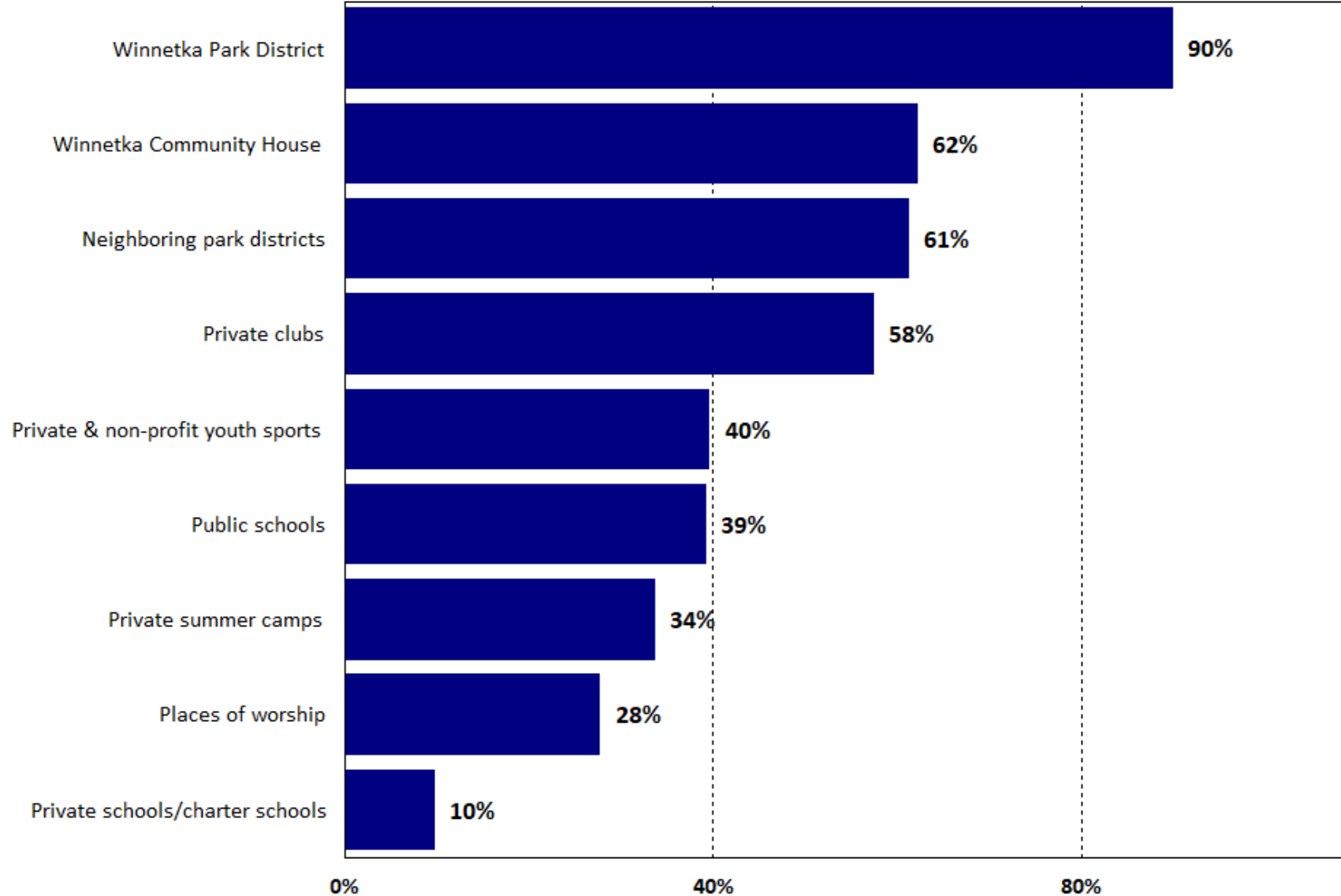
A wide-angle photograph of a golf course on a bright, sunny day. Large, leafy green trees dominate the upper half of the frame. In the foreground, a paved path runs horizontally. To the right, a tall, slender light pole stands against the clear blue sky. Several people are visible on the grass: one person in a blue shirt is in the center, another in white is further right, and others are scattered near benches and trash bins. The overall scene is peaceful and well-maintained.

# Rating the System



**Q6. From the following list, please check all the organizations that you/your household have used for recreation/sports activities during the last year.**

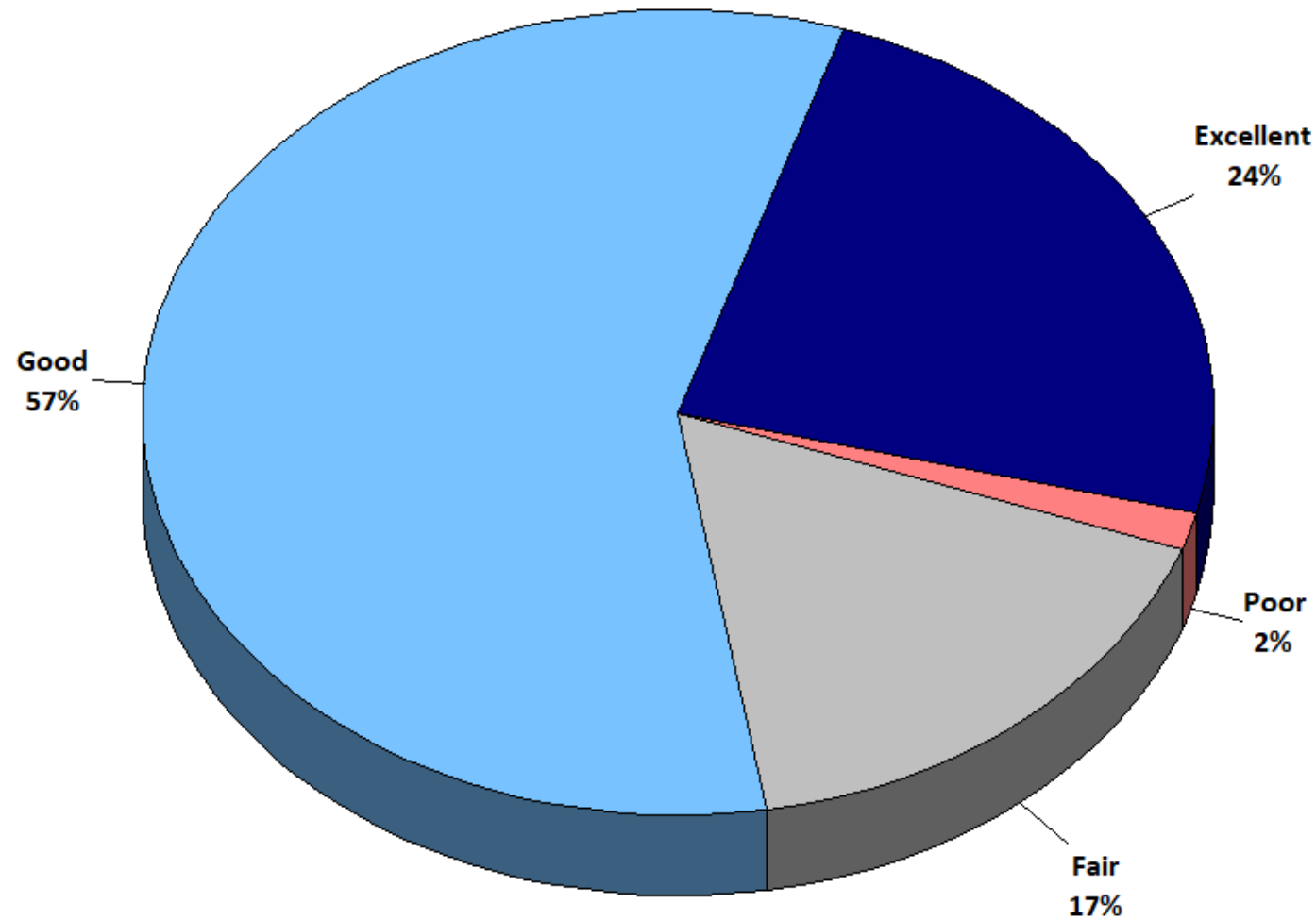
by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)





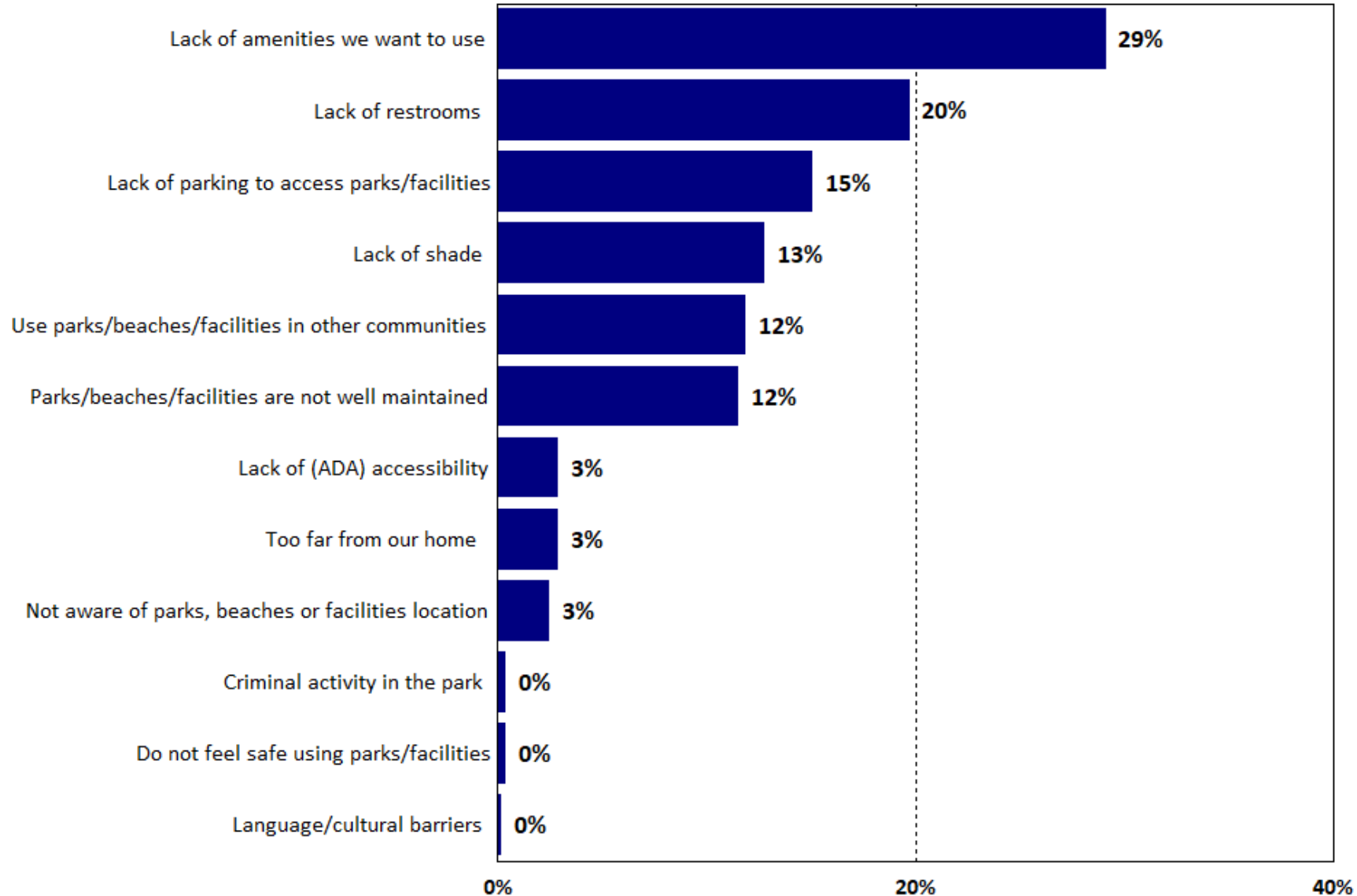
**Q2a. Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of all the parks, beaches, and recreation facilities you have visited?**

by percentage of respondents who responded "YES" to Q2 (excluding "not provided")



### Q3. Please check all the following reasons that prevent you/your household from visiting parks, beaches, and recreation facilities more often.

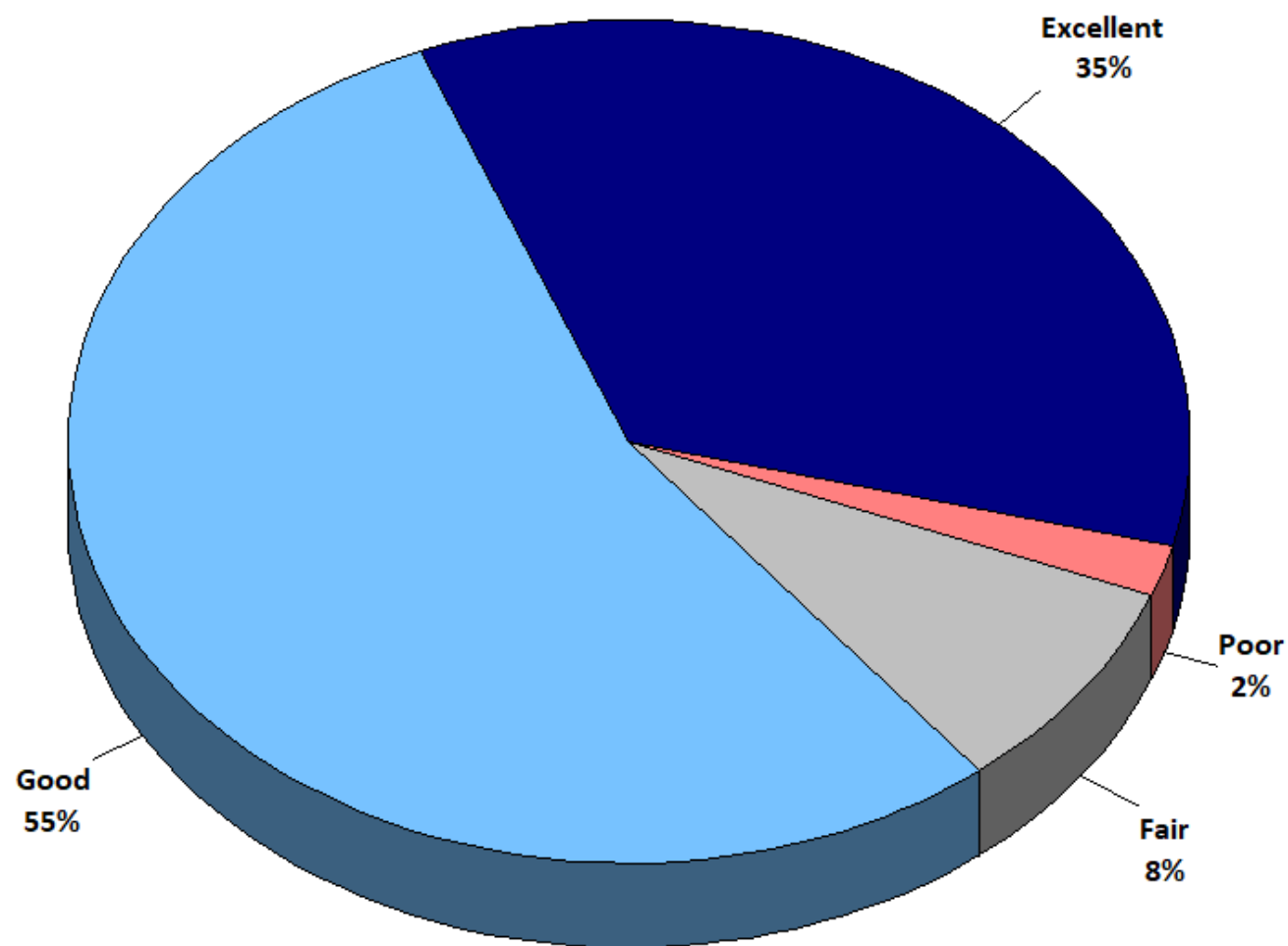
by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)





# Q7a. How would you rate the overall quality of the programs/events in which your household has participated?

by percentage of respondents who responded "YES" to Q7 (excluding "not provided")





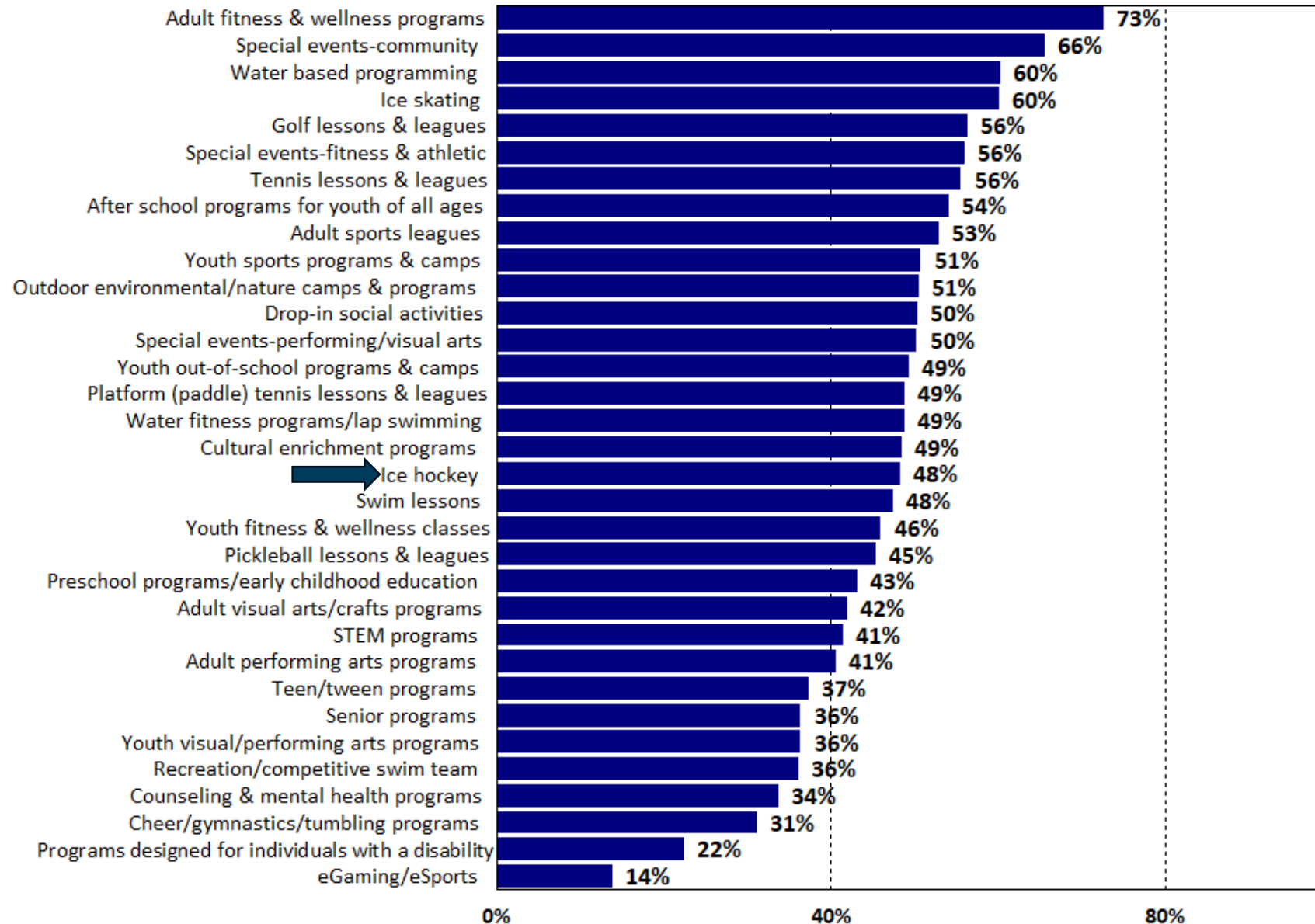


# Program Priorities



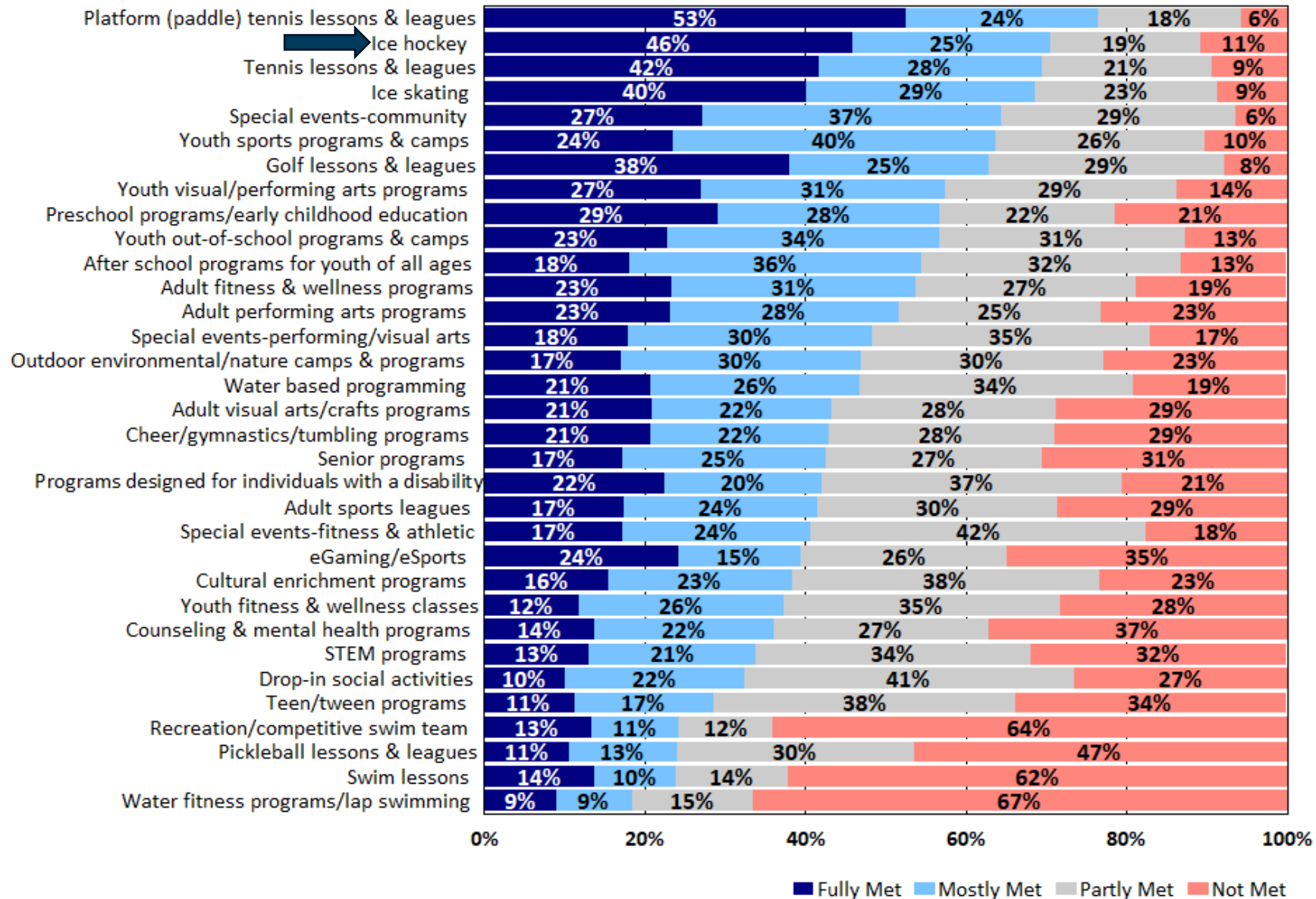
## Q12. Households that have a need for various programs/activities.

by percentage of respondents who indicated need



## Q12c. How well needs are being met for various programs/activities.

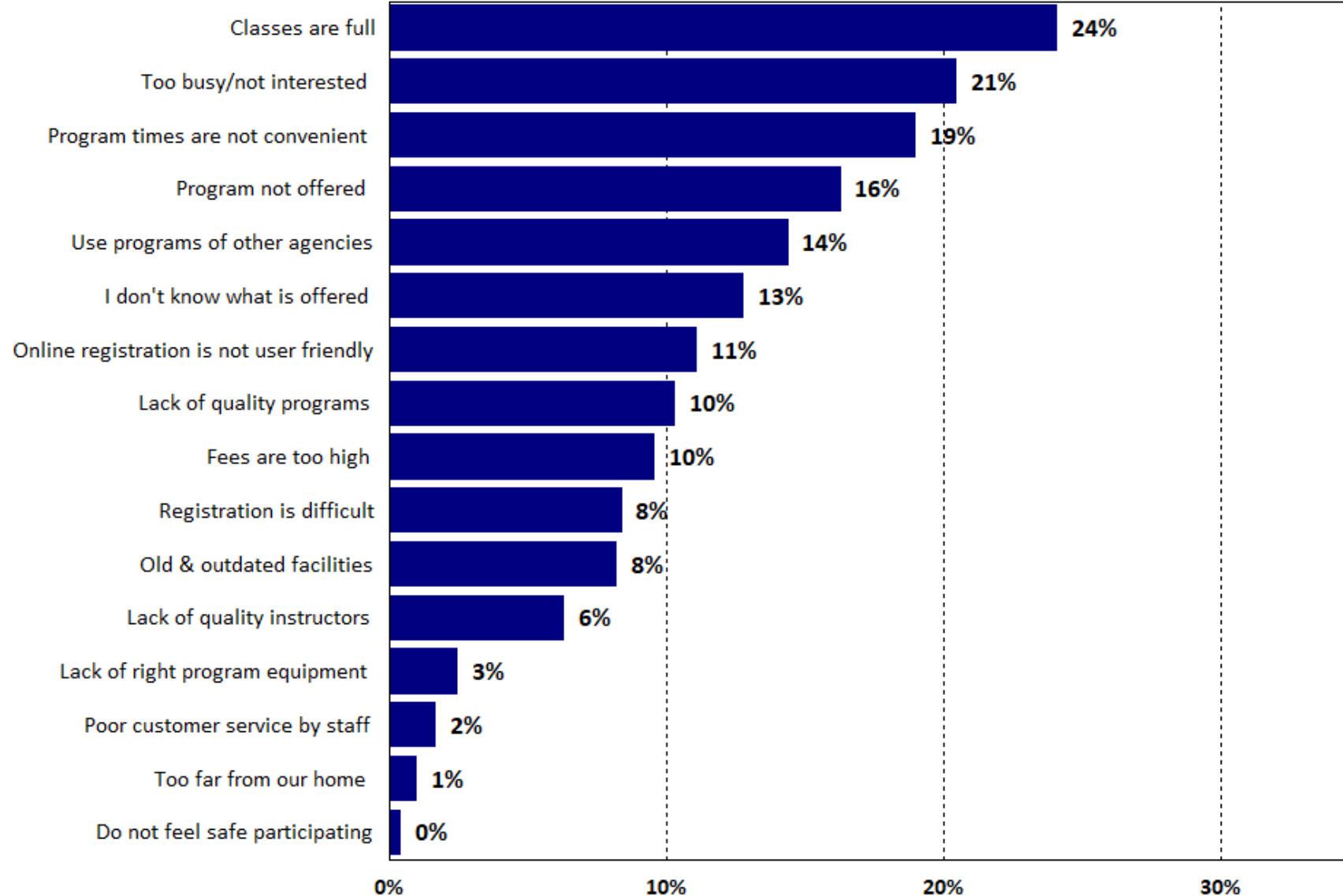
by percentage of respondents (excluding "no need")





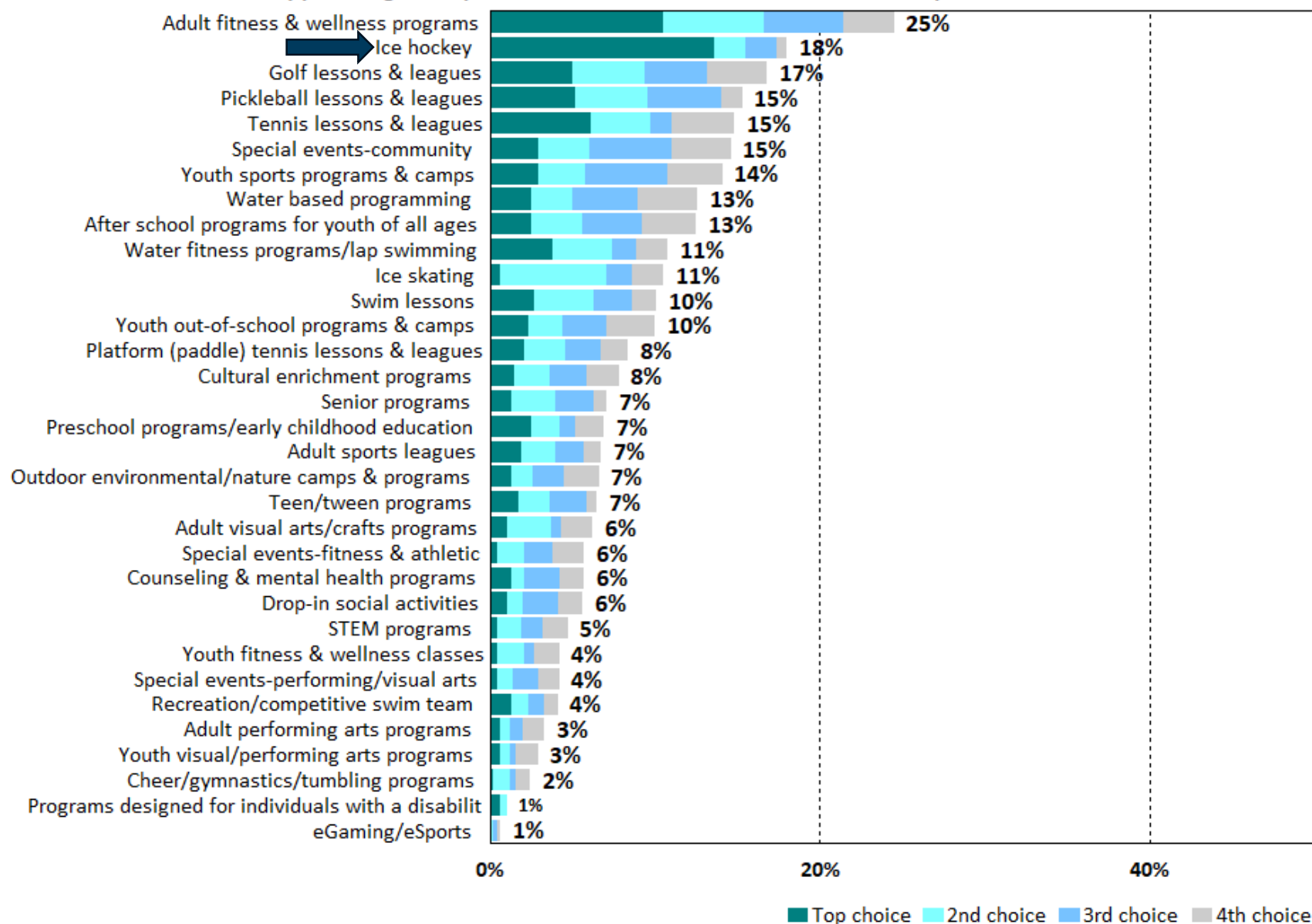
## Q8. Please check all the following reasons that prevent you/your household from participating in programs/events more often.

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)



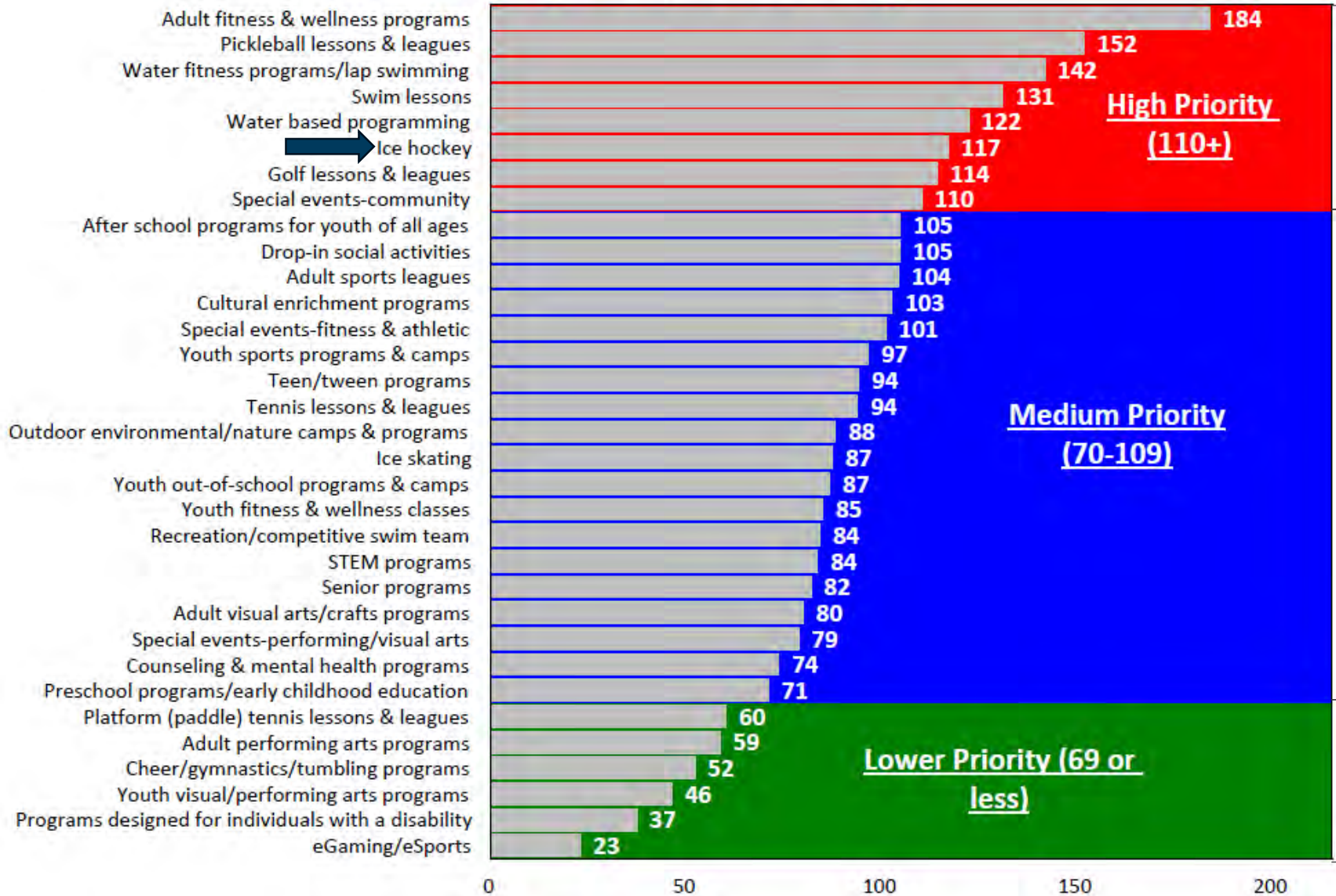
# Q13. Which four programs/activities are most important to your household?

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top four choices





# Top Priorities for Investment for Programs/Activities Based on Priority Investment Rating



**Top Priorities**  
(high importance/higher unmet need)

**Continued Emphasis**  
(high importance/lower unmet need)

**Lower Need**  
(lower importance/lower unmet need)

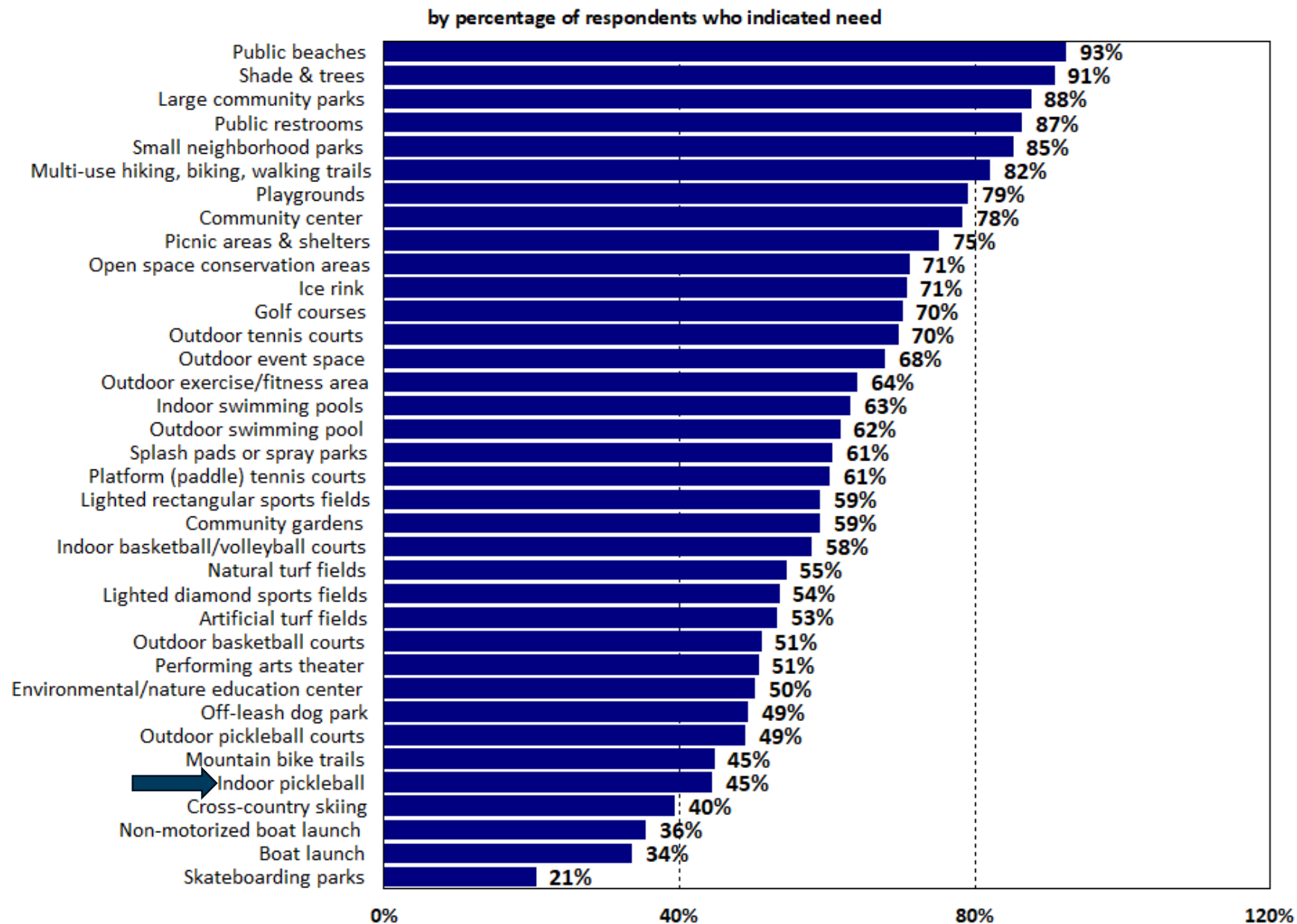




# Facility and Amenity Priorities

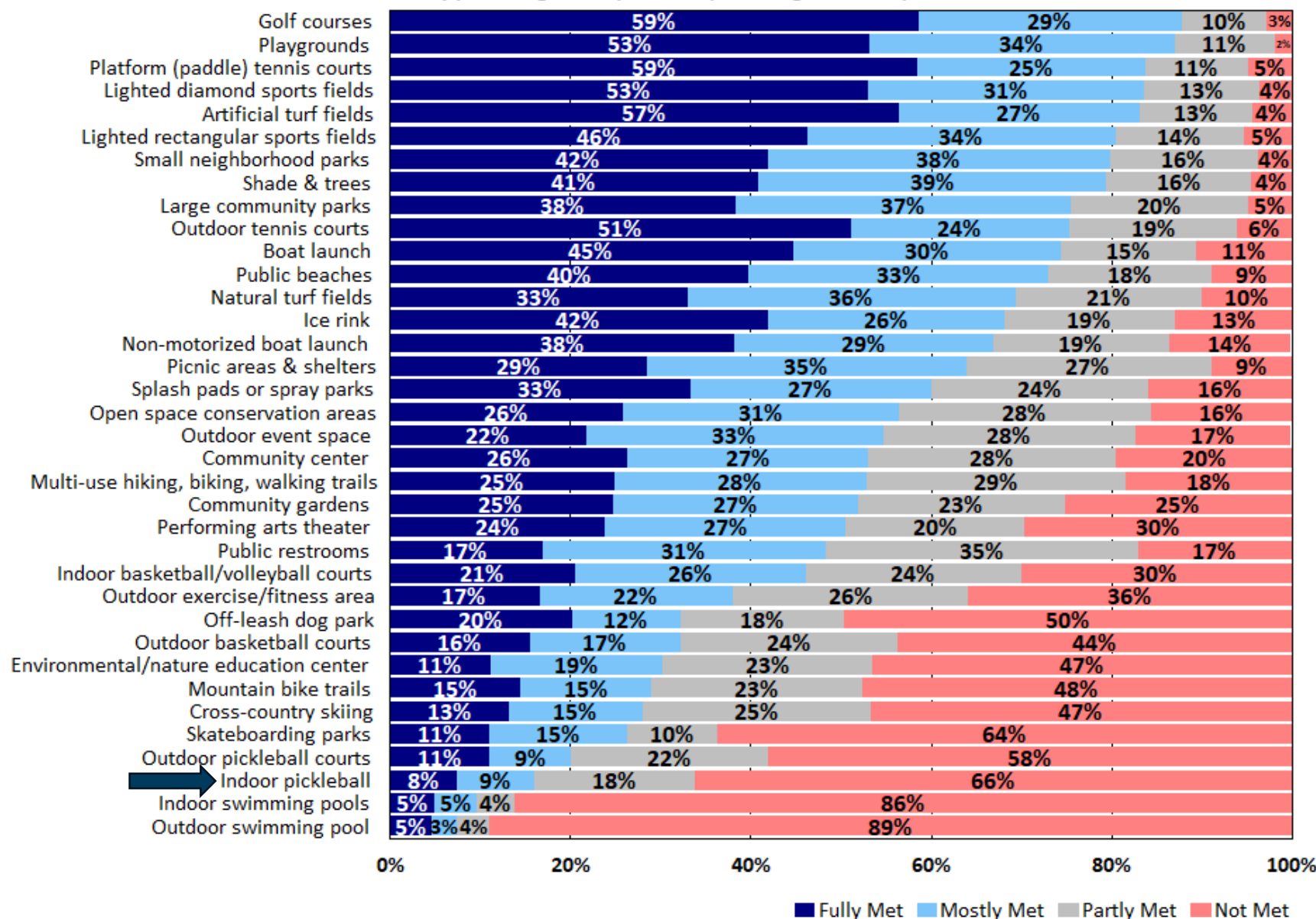


## Q10. Households that have a need for various facilities/amenities.

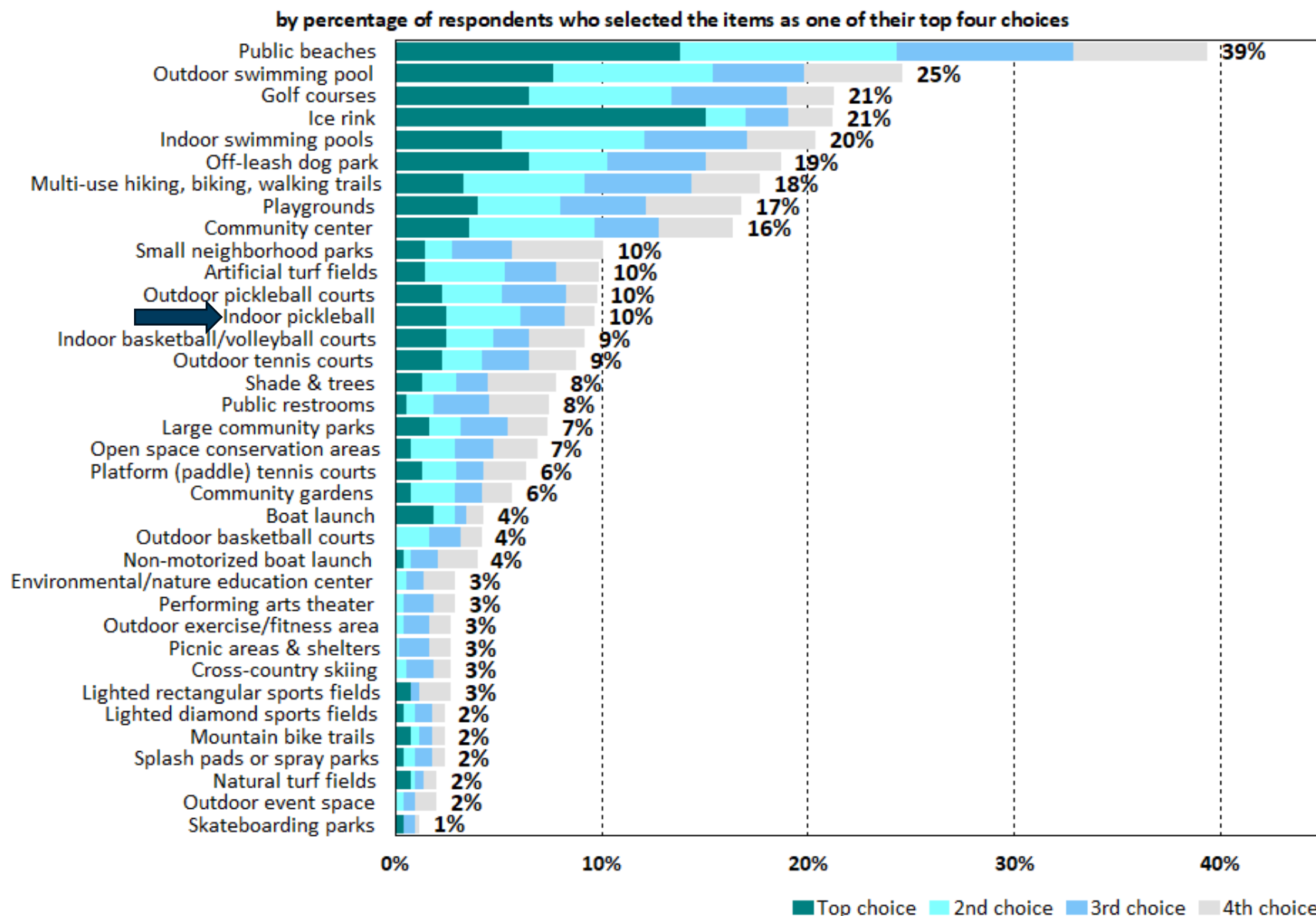


## Q10c. How well needs are being met for various facilities/amenities.

by percentage of respondents (excluding "no need")

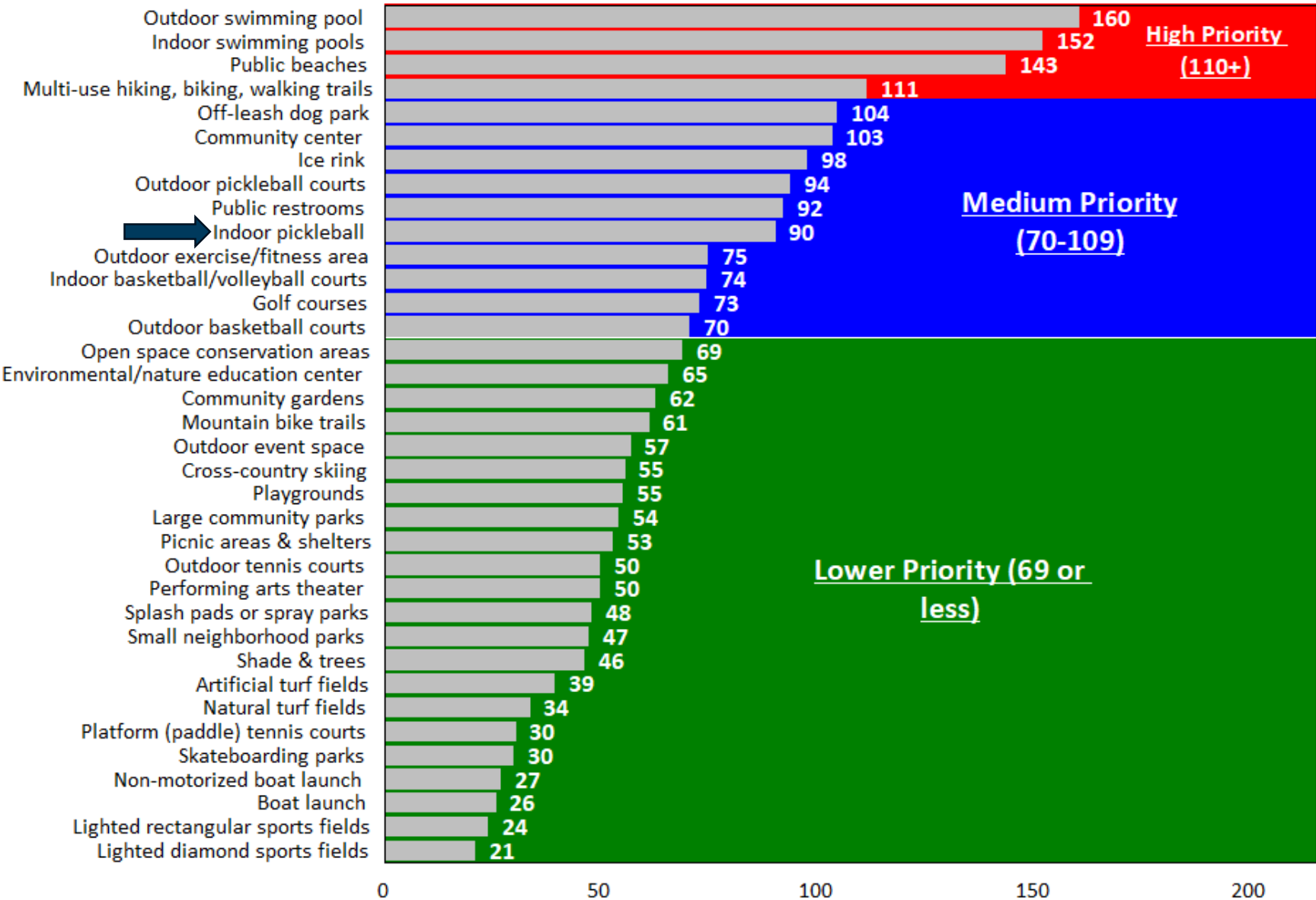


# Q11. Which four of the facilities/amenities do you think are most important to you/your household?





# Top Priorities for Investment for Facilities/Amenities Based on Priority Investment Rating



**Top Priorities**  
(high importance/higher unmet need)

**Continued Emphasis**  
(high importance/lower unmet need)

**Lower Need**  
(lower importance/lower unmet need)



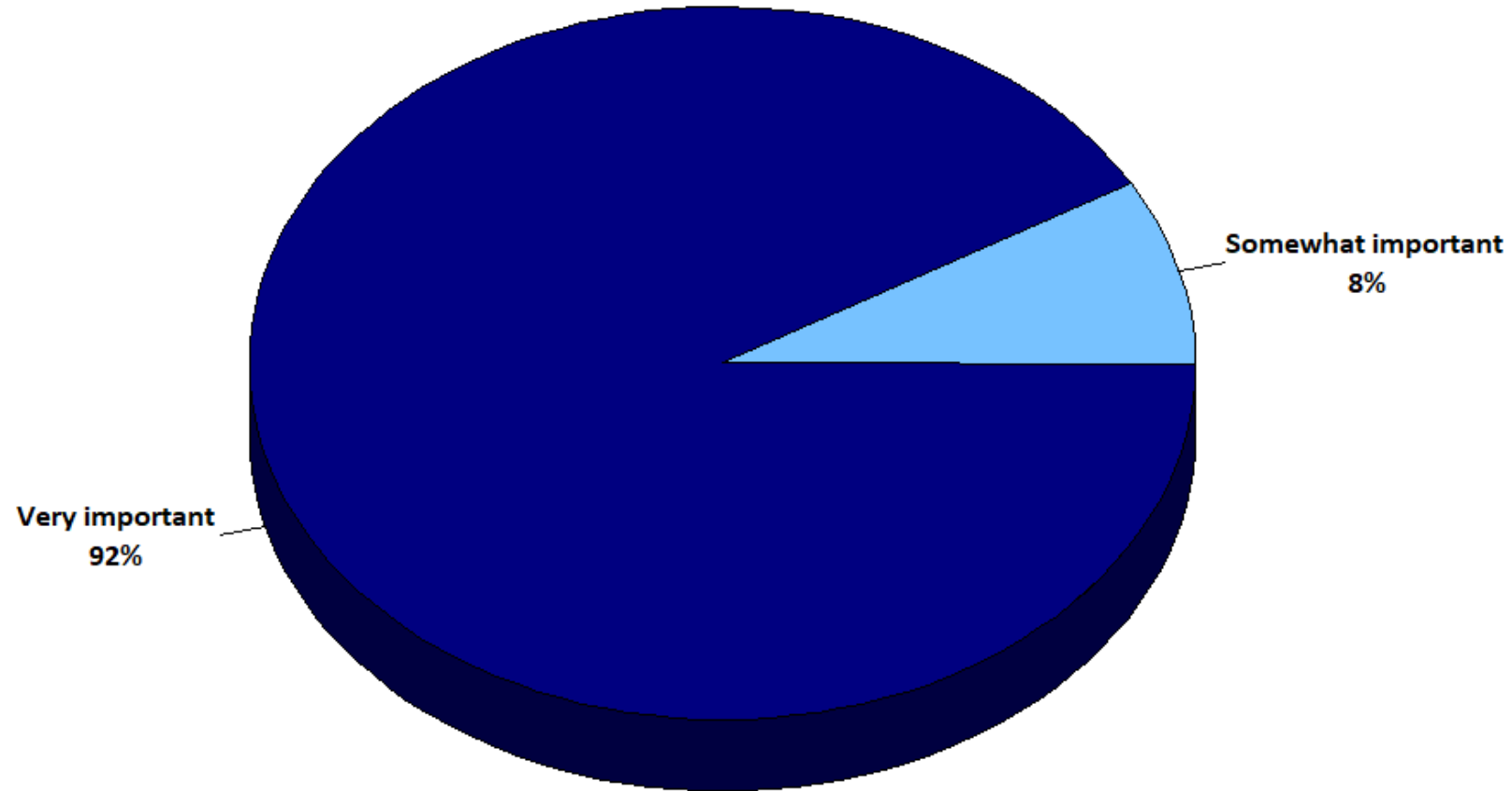


# Additional Findings



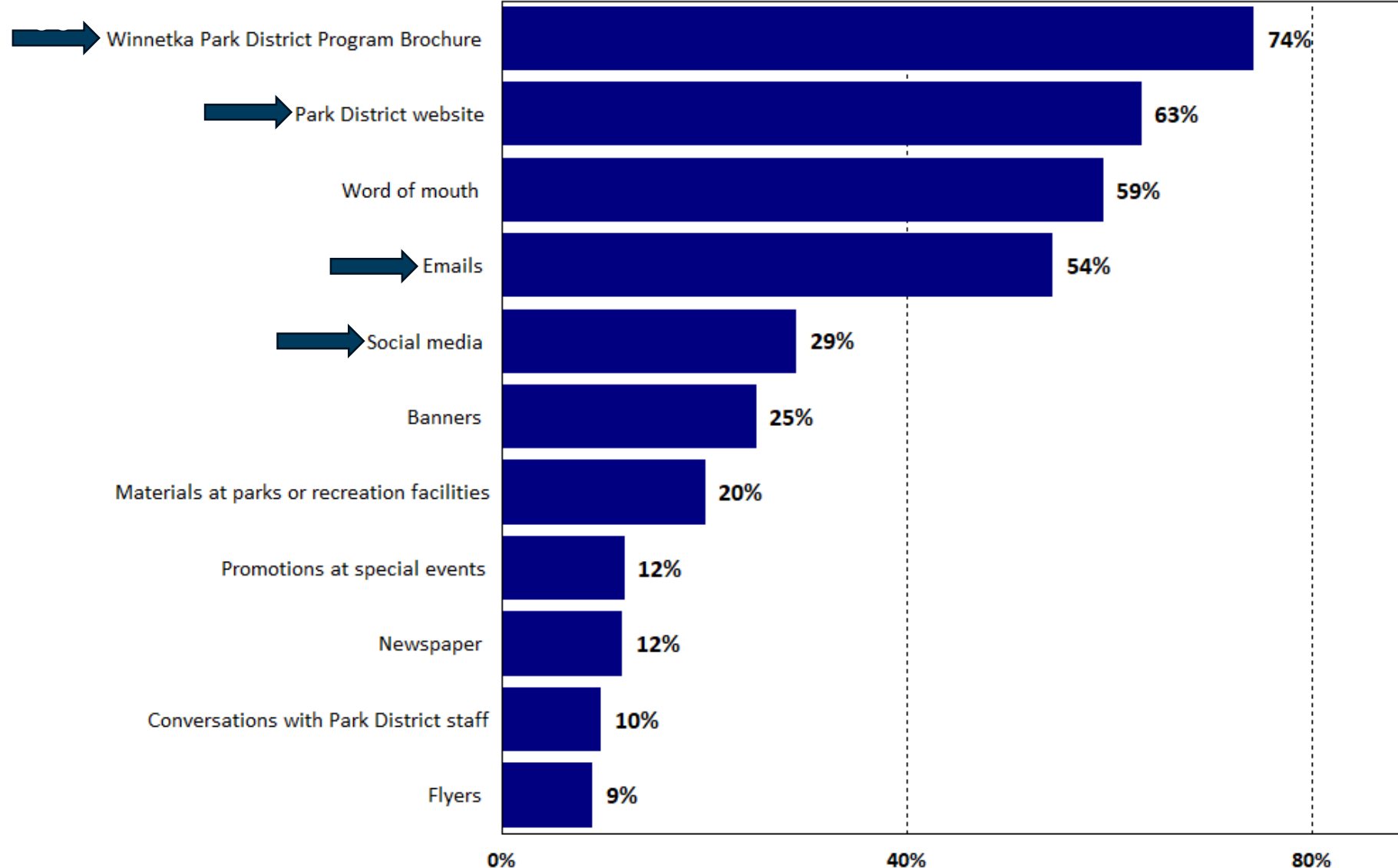
**Q15. How important do you feel it is for the District to provide high quality parks, recreation facilities and programs?**

by percentage of respondents (excluding "not sure")



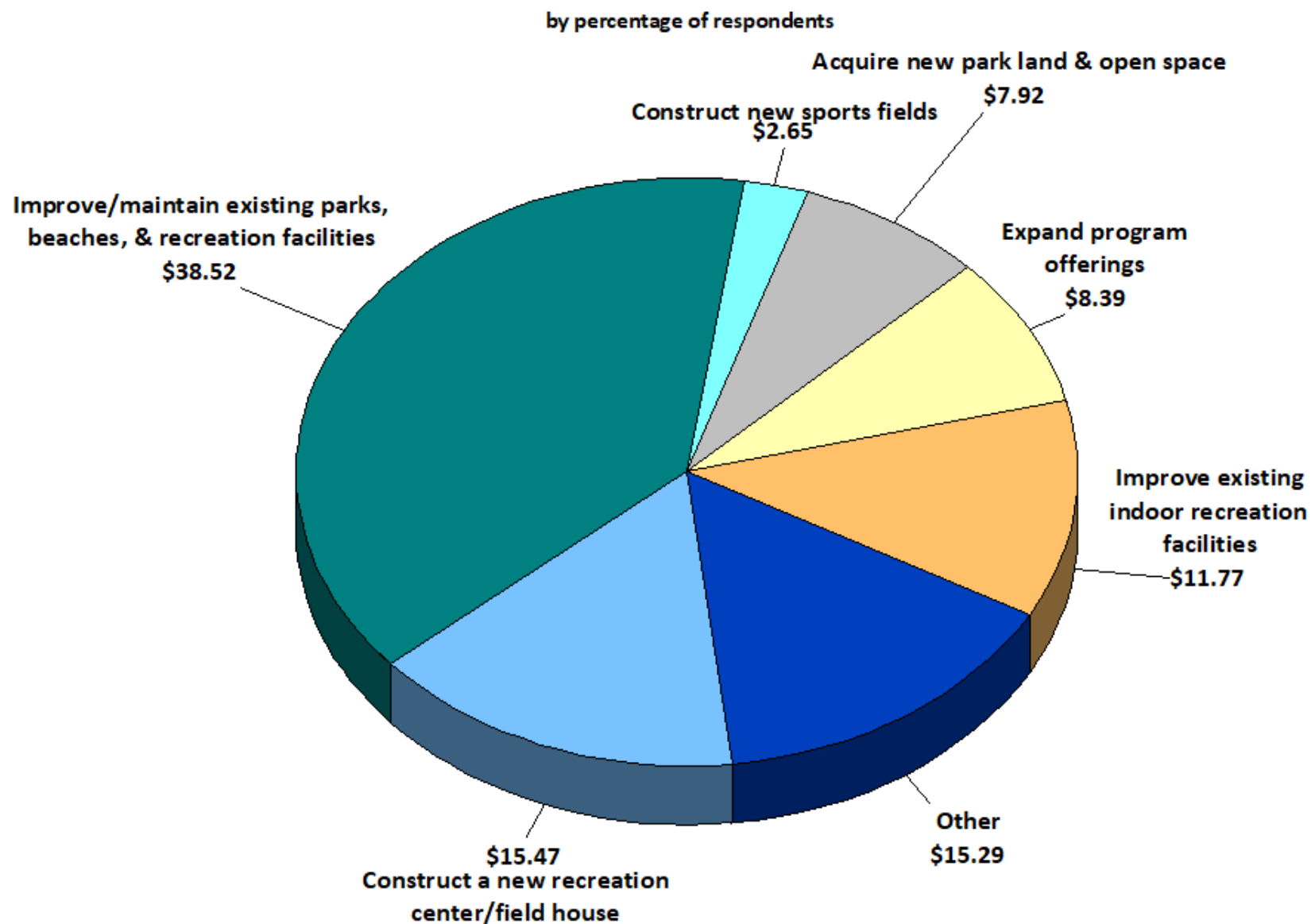
## Q4. From the following list, please check all the ways you learn about parks, beaches, recreation facilities, programs, and events.

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections could be made)





**Q14. If you had \$100, how would you allocate the funds among the parks and recreation categories listed below?**



The background of the slide is a top-down view of numerous light-colored wooden blocks scattered across a white surface. Each block has a black question mark printed on its top face. The blocks are arranged in a non-uniform, random pattern, creating a textured, repetitive visual field.

# Survey Questions?




# Engagement Overview









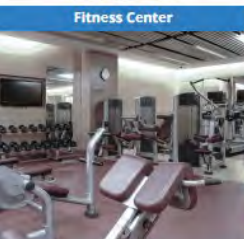


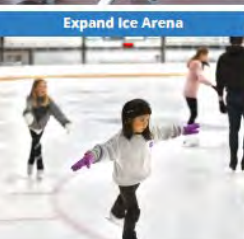
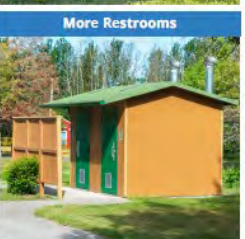

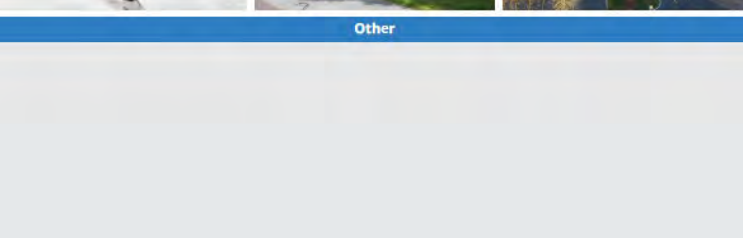
# Project Branding

**plan  
winnetka  
parks!**

What facilities would you like to see added or improved in your community?



Scan to share your feedback!

<b>Indoor Pool</b> 	<b>Outdoor Pool</b> 	<b>Recreation Center</b> 
<b>Fitness Center</b> 	<b>Off-Leash Dog Park</b> 	<b>Outdoor Pickleball Courts</b> 
<b>Expand Ice Arena</b> 	<b>More Restrooms</b> 	<b>Additional Parking</b> 
<b>Other</b> 		

**plan  
winnetka  
parks!**

# TELL US YOUR IDEAS!

Get involved in the Comprehensive Master Plan.



[winpark.org/planwinnetkaparks](http://winpark.org/planwinnetkaparks)

**plan  
winnetka  
parks!**



# TELL US YOUR IDEAS!

Help *shape the future* of the Winnetka Park District.



[winpark.org/planwinnetkaparks](http://winpark.org/planwinnetkaparks)

# External Engagement



Fall Fest  
September 28



Farmers Market  
October 5 & 12



Pumpkins in the Woods  
October 25



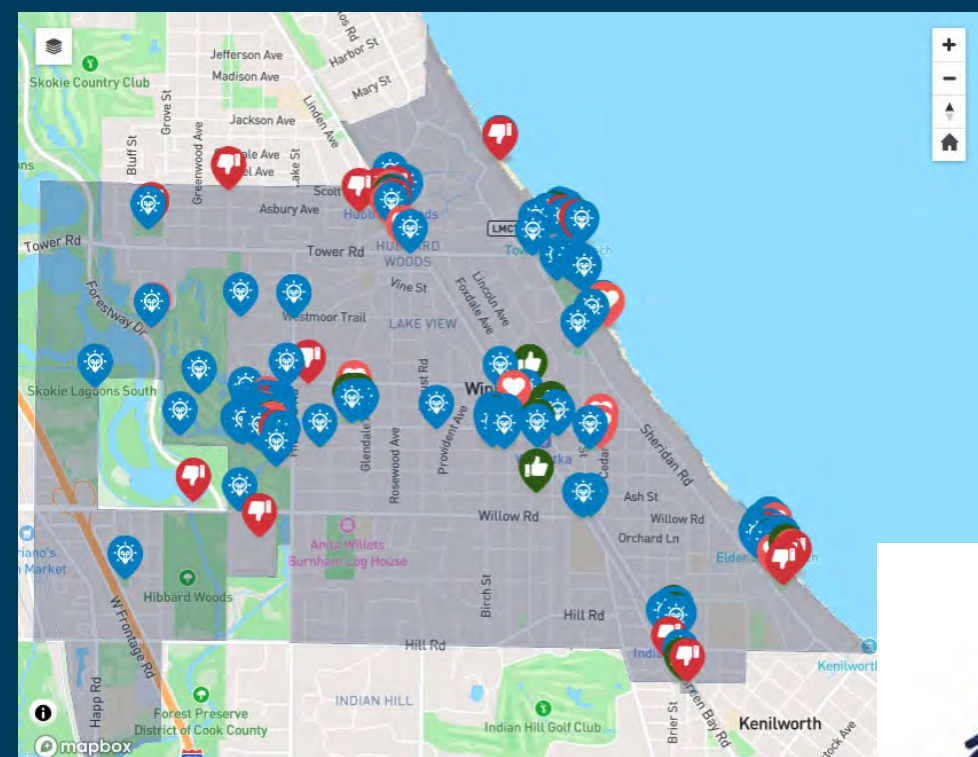
Open House  
October 28

BerryDunn also spent time at Skokie Playfields handing out postcards to participants at ice, golf, tennis, paddle, and the athletic fields.



# Online Engagement

Making it easy for anyone to contribute their ideas and keep up with project updates



*plan*  
**winnetka  
parks!**



**Brainstorm with Ideas Wall**



**Prioritize with Budgeting**



**Pin with Interactive Mapping**



**Drive Conversations with Forums**





# Engagement Results



# External Engagement Results

## Programming

- **Special Events – Free: 90 votes**
- Special Events – Paid: 45 votes
- Volunteer Opportunities: 41 votes
- Youth Sports: 40 votes
- Art Classes: 36 votes
- Childcare: 31 votes
- Teen Programming: 40 votes
- Fitness Classes: 24 votes
- Active Adults: 23 votes
- Adult Sports: 22 votes

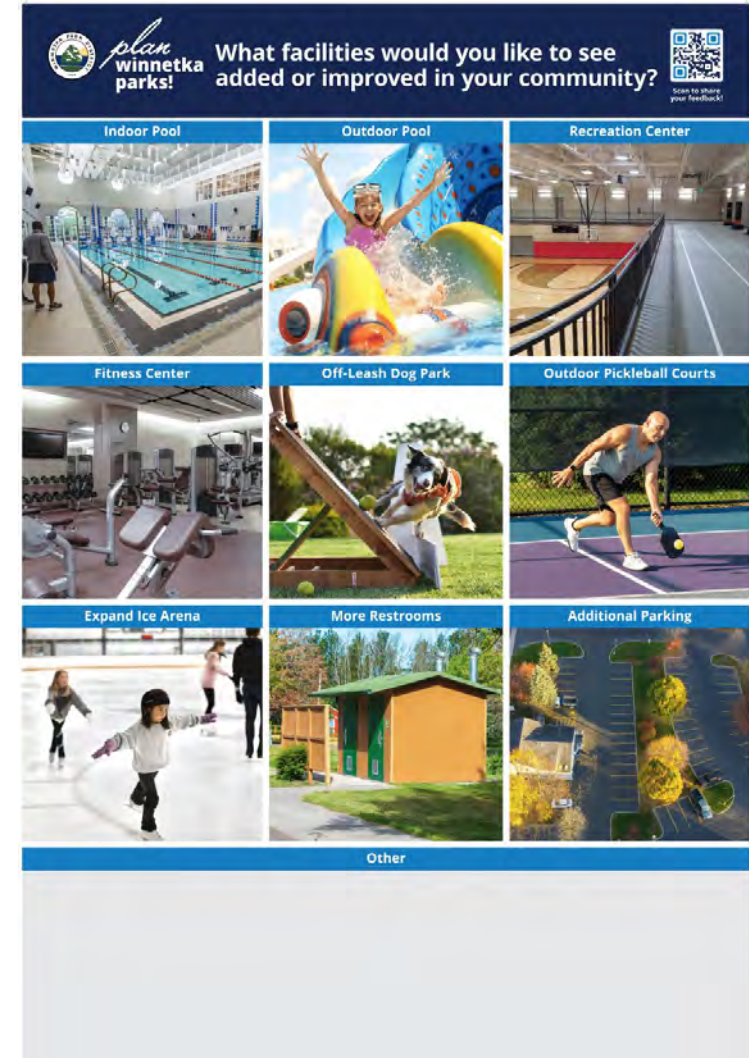




# External Engagement Results

## Facilities

- **Outdoor Pool: 168 votes**
- Indoor Pool: 104 votes
- Dog Park: 98 votes
- Expanded Ice Arena: 74 votes
- Outdoor Pickleball: 73 votes
- Recreation Center: 73 votes
- Fitness Center: 39 votes
- More restrooms: 33 votes
- Additional Parking: 9 votes



# External Engagement Results

## Budget Voting

- **Build a Pool: \$304**
- Improve Beach Access: \$143
- Build a new Recreation Center: \$102
- Increase Cycling Opportunities: \$80
- Improve the Ice Arena: \$80
- Other: \$64





# External Engagement Results

## Capital Improvement Ranking

- **Build an indoor pool: 2.47**
- Finish implementation of the WPD waterfront 2030 Master Plan: 2.89
- Expand racquet sports: 3.06
- Build an outdoor pool: 3.12
- Build a recreation center: 3.44
- Enhance/expand Ice Arena: 4.22

Guests were provided a card with six capital improvement projects and were asked to rank them 1 to 6.



# Focus Groups





# Highlights of Focus Groups

## District Strengths

### Staff

- Provides great customer service
- Maintains and operates facilities very well

### Facilities

- Best facilities on the north shore
- Lots of upgrades in the past 10 to 15 years

### Programs

- Summer camps are the best on the north shore
- So many offerings (both indoors and out)

### Brand and Image

- The District has a strong brand
- Many like the printed brochure and are happy it's coming back
- The e-newsletter is appreciated



# Highlights of Focus Groups

## District Strengths

### Events

- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festivities
- The family events are phenomenal!

### Parks & Beaches

- The parks and open spaces are well-maintained
- Not many communities have open space, parks, and beaches – “We are fortunate!”

### Marketing

- It's easy to find information regarding offerings
- The District does a good job of publicizing activities
- Easy to sign-up for District programs – “Simple to manage my account”





# Highlights of Focus Groups

## Needed Improvements

### Facilities

- An overhaul of the Ice Arena
- Indoor or outdoor pool
- Permanent restrooms in heavily used parks

### Parks & Beaches

- Strong desire to get the Elder Beach open for use
- More creativity desired in park design
- Frustration that the ongoing beach project has eaten up resources

### Brand and Image

- The brand and image have been tarnished over the last year
- Lack of transparency regarding the beach projects



# Highlights of Focus Groups

## Needed Improvements

### Programming

- More programming options are needed for tweens, teens, and adults
- There is a gap between when summer camp ends and school begins

### Technology

- Improved and streamlined communication, improved website navigation, create a District app
- More flexibility with beach passes – so kids could bring their nonresident friends
- A new system for Tennis registration, which is done by hand

### Partnerships

- Increased collaboration with the Community House
- Increased access to New Trier: climbing wall, fields, gyms, indoor pool







# Stakeholder Meetings

# Highlights of Stakeholder Meetings

## Major Issues Facing Community

- Degradation of civility
- A few voices have a loud presence
- Trust between the community and Park Board
- Competition with country clubs
- Lack of collaboration between government bodies
- Need for more trail connections to enhance biking opportunities
- Mindful investment – not interested in the biggest and brightest but thoughtful



# Highlights of Stakeholder Meetings

## Strengthening of Existing Partnerships

- Reflect on past successes and duplicate (golf course project)
- Free up Executive Director so she has time to connect with other leaders
- Show and model collaboration

## Underserved Populations

- People with disabilities
- Teens
- Families with children (they need more than the District can currently provide)
- Seniors – most of the programming is geared towards youth





# Internal Engagement



# Highlights of Internal Engagement

## Staff Focus Groups (4)

On November 21, 2025, BerryDunn conducted focus groups that included 27 staff from all areas of the District

- Twelve questions were provided to staff in advance and reviewed with each group.
- Many of the strengths and opportunities pointed out by the public were reaffirmed by staff.
- Some of the items noted, are already being addressed, or will be included in the next budget cycle.
- A staff retreat, focusing on culture, was facilitated by BerryDunn on March 12.



A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a mustard-colored sweater and a ring on their left ring finger. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a desk with a glass and some papers. A dark blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'Online Engagement' in white.

# Online Engagement



# Online Engagement

Social Pinpoint Site: Open from September – November 2024

## Online Engagement by the Numbers

1,436 Site Visits

816 Visitors

460 Total Contributions

165 Total Contributors

219 Interactive Mapping Tool Responses

111 Forum Responses

87 Budget Prioritization Tool Responses

43 Ideas Wall Responses

# Online Engagement

## Budgeting Tool (87 responses)

Participants provided \$100 to spend and were provided 10 options:

### Ranking

- Improve beach access: \$1,675
- Build a new recreation center: \$1,565
- Enhance programming: \$920
- Increase cycling opportunities: \$850





# Online Engagement

## Forum Questions (1 of 3)

What is the most important factor for the District to consider during the master plan process? (52 comments)

- Preservation of park land and natural spaces
- Improve beaches and open Elder
- More effective summer programming
- More public input, more fiscal responsibility (minimize tax burden)
- Build a public pool
- Collaborate – don't duplicate efforts
- Family friendly programming and facilities



# Online Engagement

## Forum Questions (2 of 3)

What is one feature you wish our parks had to improve your experience?  
(40 comments)

- Community Pool
- Improve Ice Arena
- Off-leash Dog Park away from the beach
- Beach and lakefront improvements
- Practical and affordable beach passes for guests
- More walking/biking infrastructure
- Natural parks and nature focused recreation





# Online Engagement

## Forum Questions (3 of 3)

The Park District has been around for 120 years, and things have changed a lot since 1904. What does the community of the future want to see from their Park District 10 – 20 years from now? (17 comments)

- Safety
- Accessibility
- Fiscal responsibility
- Collaboration
- Maintain the simplicity and natural beauty of Winnetka's green spaces
- Transparency
- Community Engagement





# Engagement Themes



# Engagement Themes

## Beach Projects

- Open the beach

## Brand and Image

- Website and registration process

## Facilities

- Maintain current assets
- Upgrade existing facilities
- Consider new projects: pool, recreation center, Ice Arena renovation
- Pickleball courts
- Golf Course food & beverage

## Internal Operations

- Internal and external communications
- Desire to re-evaluate staffing levels and service contracts
- Financial transparency



# Engagement Themes

## Parks

- Maintain green space
- Accessibility throughout parks
- Permanent restrooms in heavily used parks
- Dog Park
- Improvements to the Green Bay Trail

## Partnerships

- Current Partnerships
- New partnerships
- Power Plan
- East/west walking and biking trail

## Programming

- Expand nature programming
- Out-of-school time child care
- New program service providers and internal programming expansions
- Senior programming





# Q&A

# Thank You!

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# Next Steps

- **March:** Complete Recreation Assessment and Cost of Service Study
- **April:** Visioning
- **May:** Compile draft plan
- **June:** Final Plan & Board Presentation
- **July:** Staff Implementation Workshop