

# COMMUNITY SURVEY FOR THE PARK DISTRICT OF HIGHLAND PARK

AUGUST 2019 PRESENTATION

*aQity Research & Insights*

*Evanston, IL*

## Research Methods

- Findings are based on a sample of n=851 households within the PDHP boundaries.
- Data collection timeframe: May 17 through June 23, 2019.
- Printed mail surveys and post card invitations were sent to all households in the PDHP. Respondents had the option of participating by phone, mail, or online survey. Final completions included:



- Respondent sample was weighted to match updated US Census data for the City of Highland Park by region, gender, age, ethnicity, and percentage of households with children.
- Maximum margin of error is +/- 3.4% (at the 95% confidence level) \*.

\* In addition to sampling error, question wording, respondent error, and practical difficulties in conducting surveys may introduce error or bias in any opinion poll.

## Methods: Sample Demographics

(weighted to reflect US Census data for Highland Park)

### Gender\*

Male	47%
Female	53%

### Age\*

<35	8%
35-44	16%
45-54	21%
55-64	22%
65+	33%
<i>Mean (years)</i>	<i>57</i>

### Children in Household\*

Yes	39%
No	61%

### Length of Residence in Area

< 5 yrs.	16%
5-14 yrs.	21%
15-24 yrs.	18%
25-34	16%
35+ yrs.	28%
<i>Mean (years)</i>	<i>24</i>

### Ethnicity\*

White	91%
Hispanic	5%
Asian	2%
Black/African American	1%
Other	1%

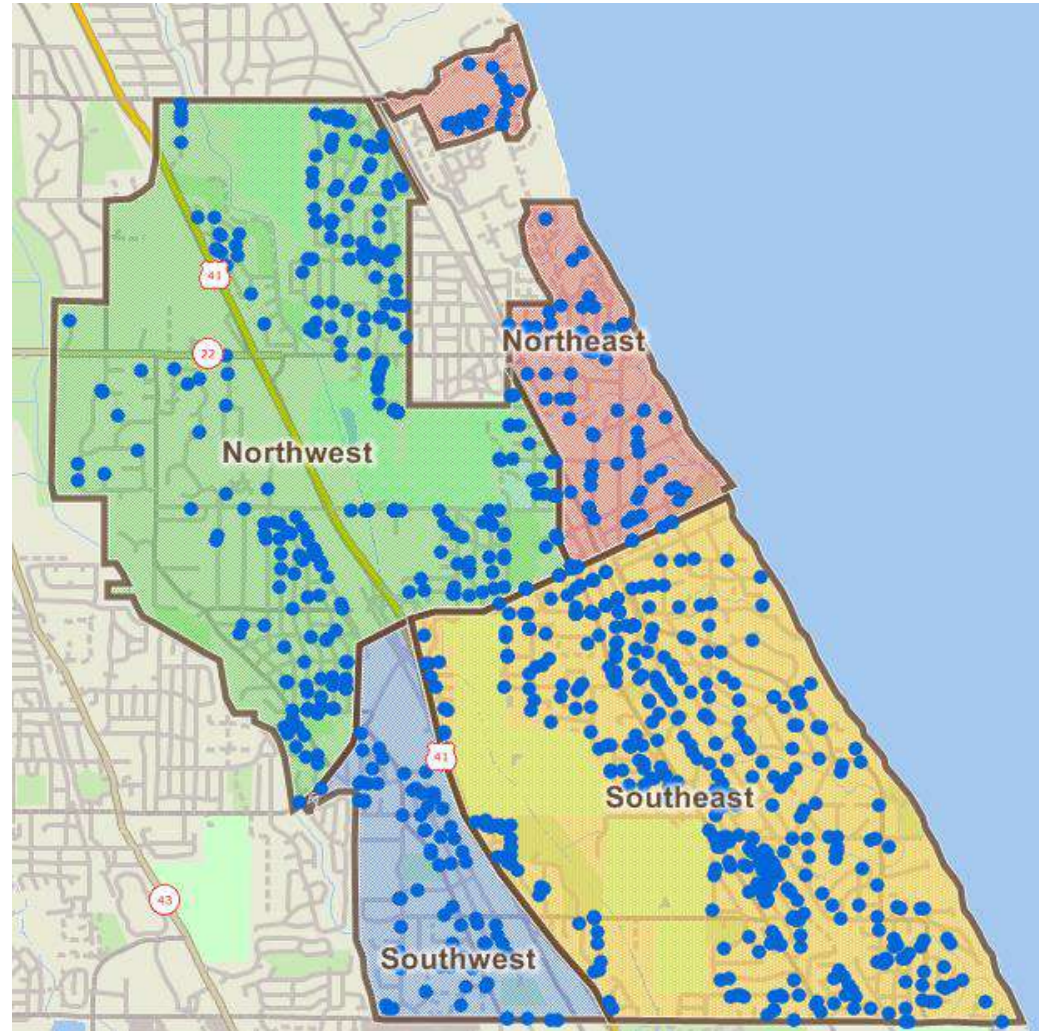
### Household Income

<\$75,000	9%
\$75,000 - \$124,999	18%
\$125,000 - \$199,999	21%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	17%
\$300,000 +	16%
(refused)	19%

## Methods: Regional Distribution of Survey Respondents (n=851)

### Regions\*

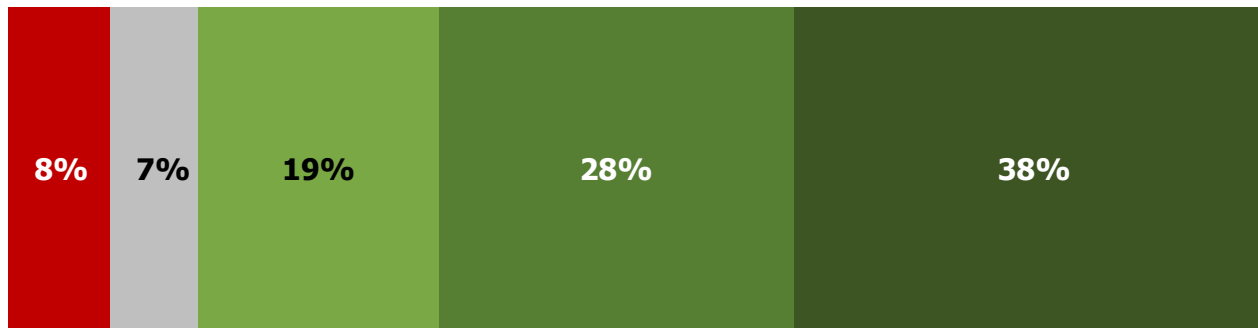
Northwest	44%
Northeast	11%
Southeast	36%
Southwest	9%



\*Weighted to 2017 Census data.

Highland Park residents hold the PDHP in very strong esteem.

Overall 0-10 Esteem Ratings for PDHP



Avg.  
(mean)  
0-10  
Rating

7.6

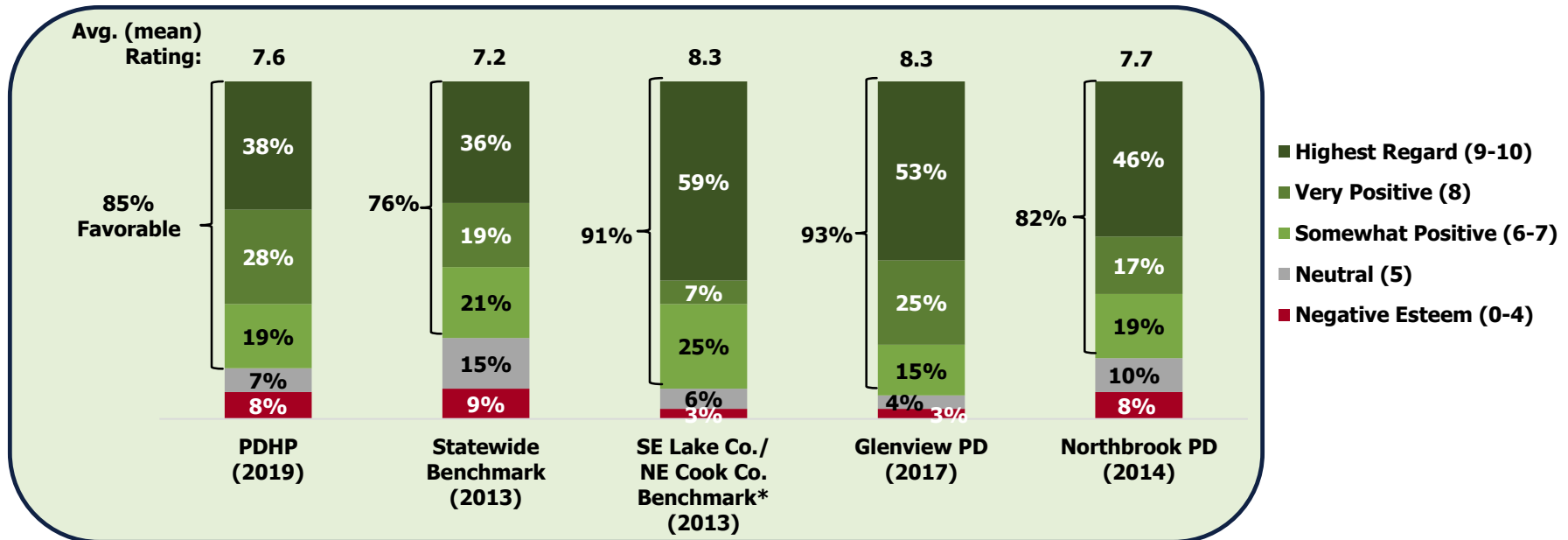
*% NA/  
Unfamiliar*

12%

■ % Negative (0-4)   ■ % Neutral (5)   ■ % Somewhat Positive (6-7)   ■ % Very Positive (8)   ■ % Highest Regard (9-10)

The PDHP's overall esteem ratings are comparable to the statewide benchmark, but lags some of its nearby peer agencies.

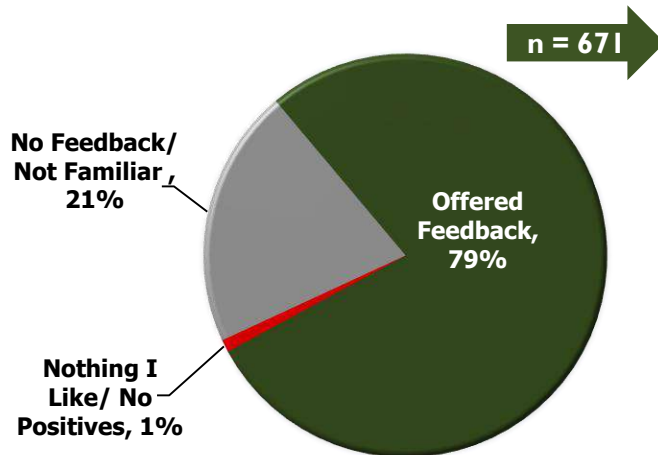
PDHP Esteem Compared to Benchmarks



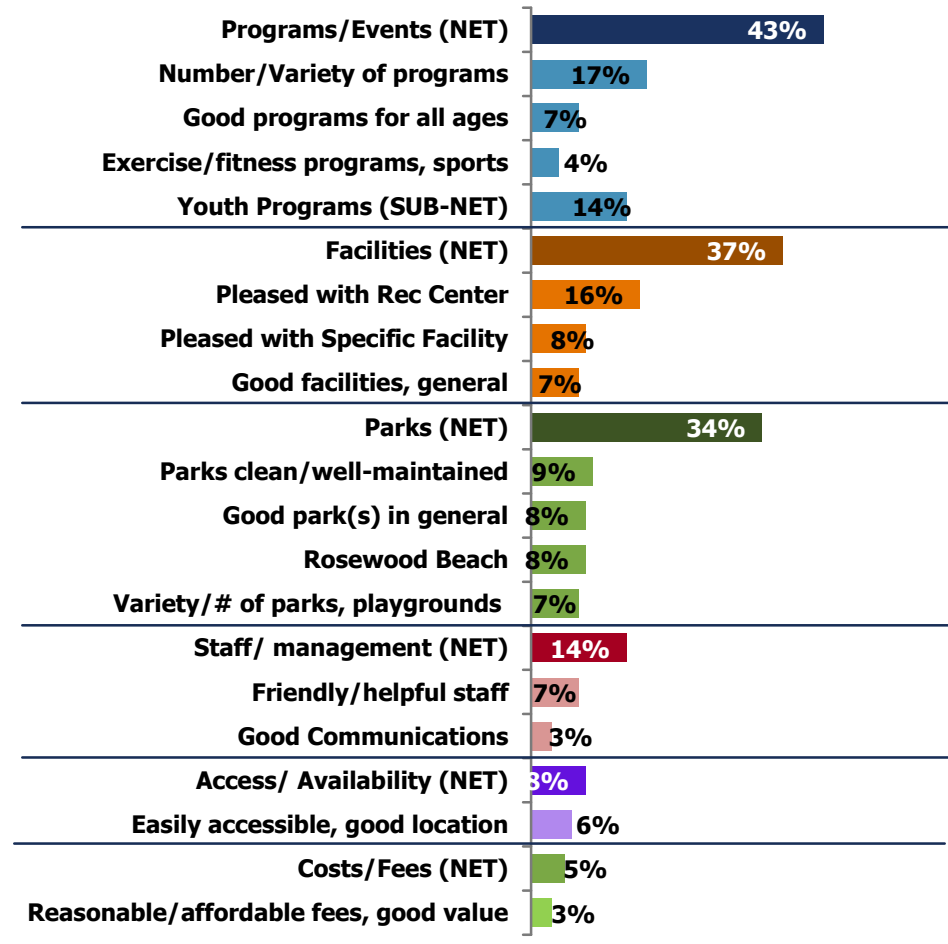
Q2. Please rate your overall opinion of the Park District of Highland Park on a 0-10 scale (0=dislike completely, 5=neutral, 10=highest regard).

**Four out of five residents offered positive feedback for the PDHP, most often regarding its variety of programs (especially for youth).**

**Feedback on Park District of Highland Park Strengths?**

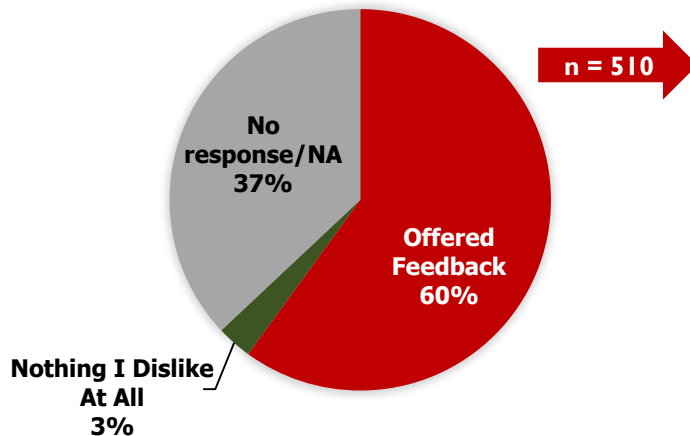


**Strengths most frequently cited (open-ended)**

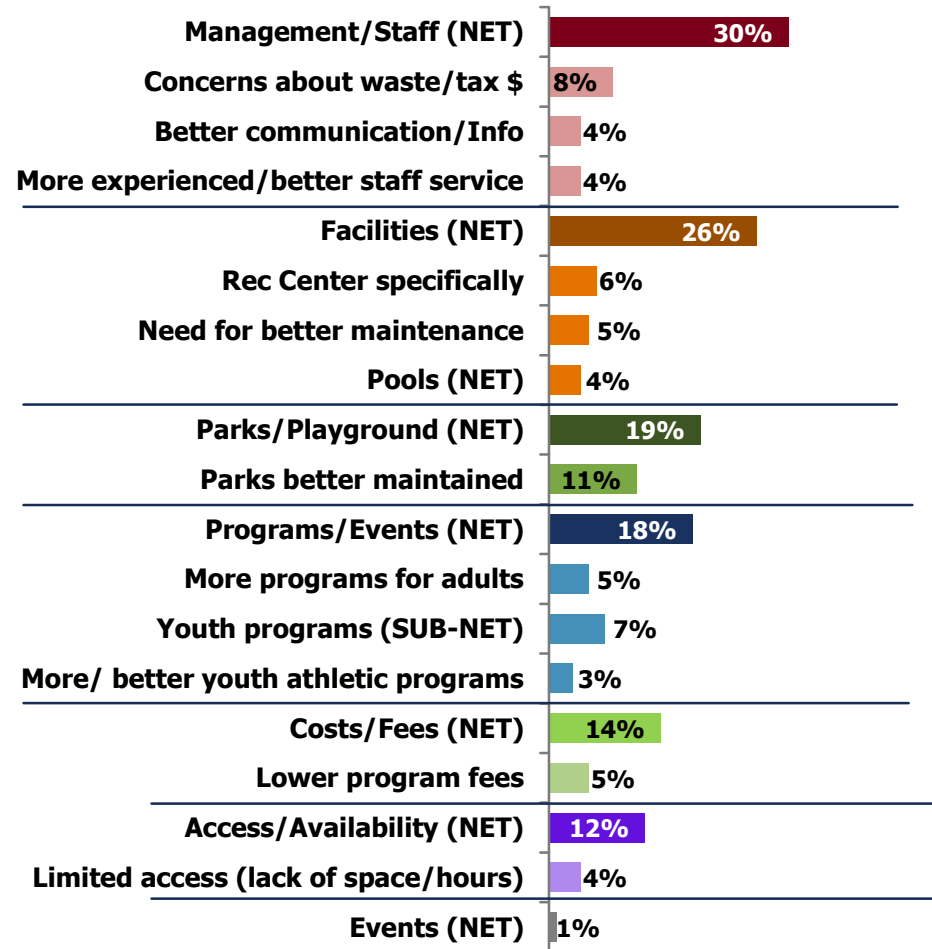


**Most (60%) likewise cite something they dislike or feel is a needed improvement for the PDHP.**

**Weaknesses/Improvements Sought From Park District of Highland Park**



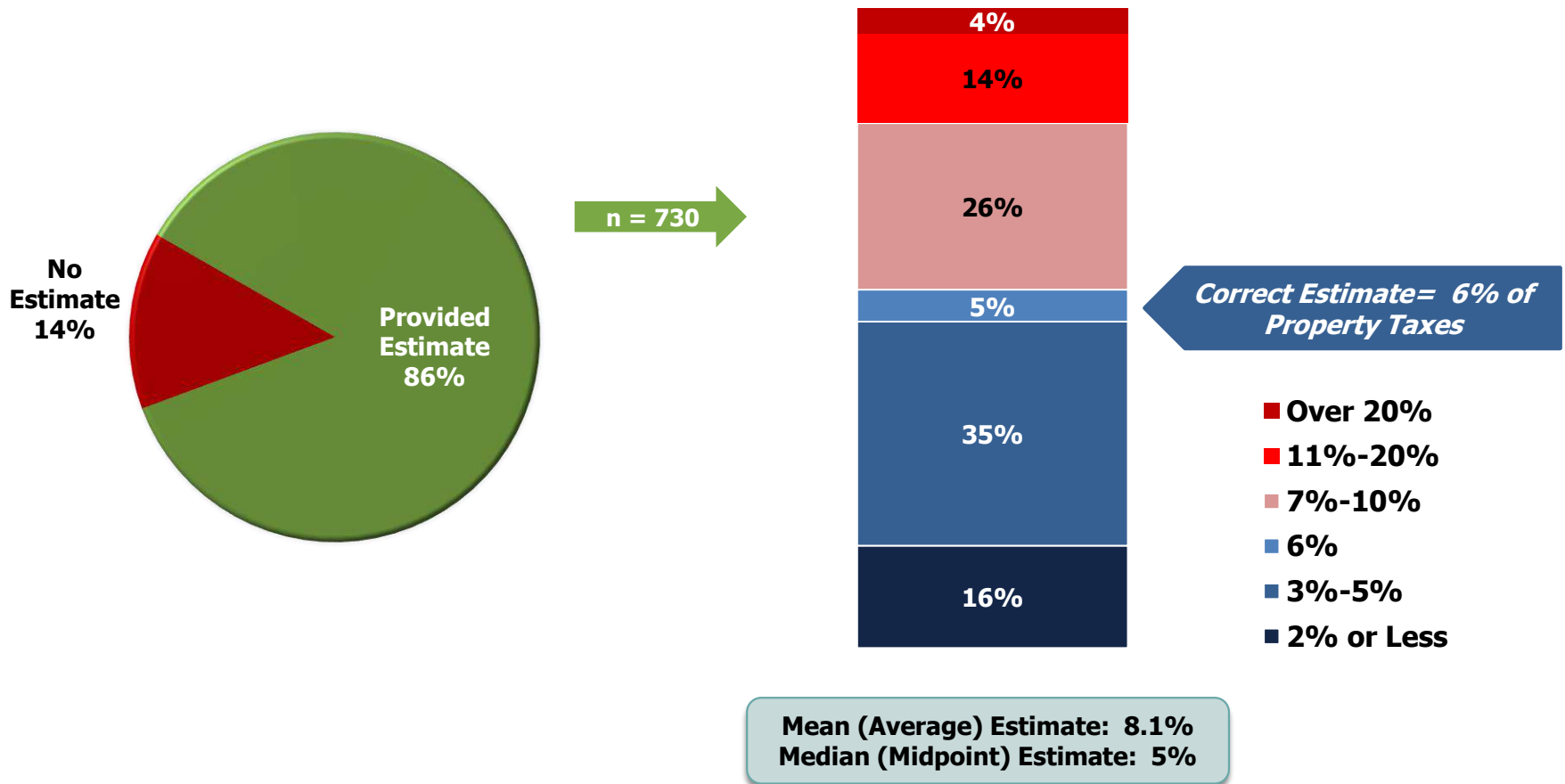
**Weaknesses most frequently cited (open-ended)**





When asked to estimate the PDHP's share of their property taxes, most respondents were able to offer an estimate, and were generally accurate.

Estimated Percent of Property Taxes Going to the PDHP



Q5. About what percent of your property taxes do you think goes to the Park District of Highland Park?

**When informed that the PDHP represents 6% of one's property taxes, residents feel that this represents a very good value overall.**

**Significant Differences: Value of Property Taxes to PDHP**

**Most Value**

- **Women (7.3)**
- **Lived in HP <10 yrs. (7.4)**

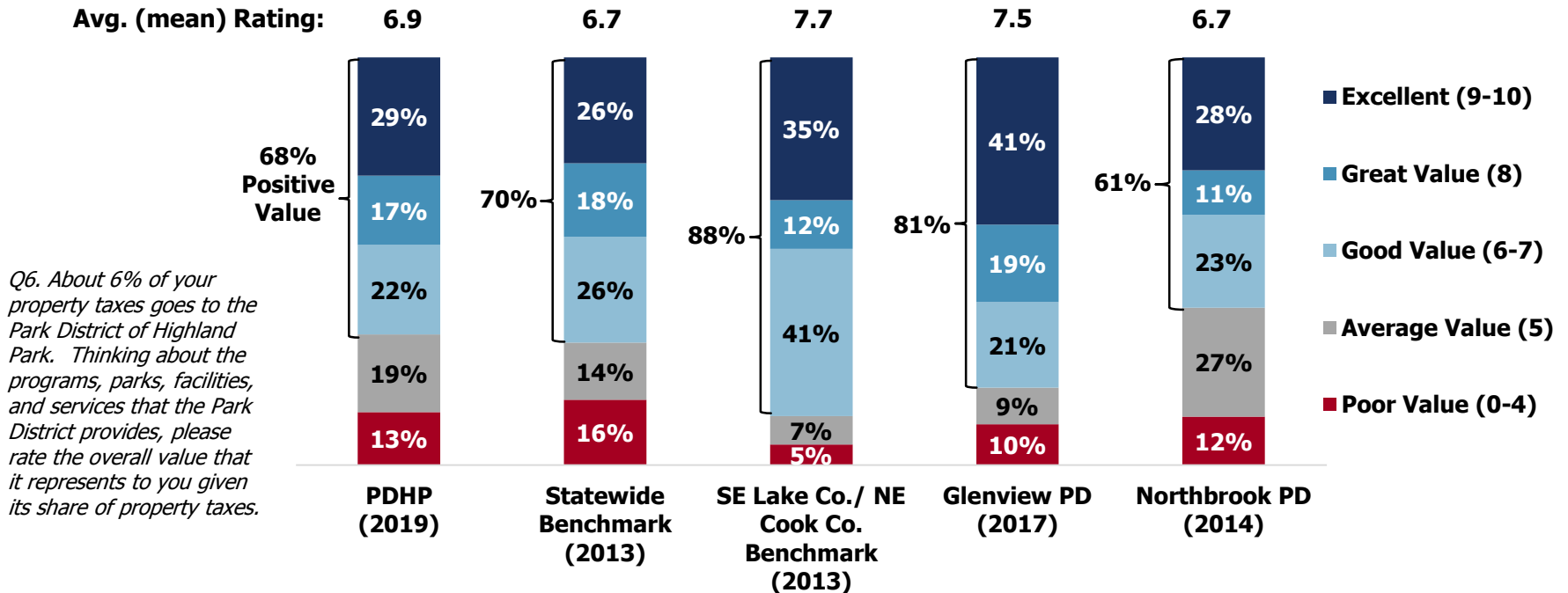
**OVERALL AVERAGE = 6.9**

- **Lived in HP 10-29 yrs. (6.5)**
- **Men (6.5)**
- **Non-PDHP users (5.8)**

**Least Value**

The PDHP's overall value ratings are slightly more in line with nearby benchmarks (albeit remain lower).

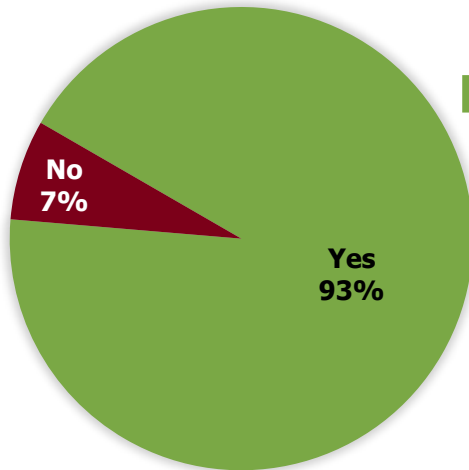
Perceived Value of PDHP Relative to Property Tax Share



\* The 2013 SE Lake Co./NE Cook Co. benchmark results includes agencies in Bannockburn; Deerfield; Glencoe; Glenview; Kenilworth; Highwood; Lake Bluff; Lake Forest; Northbrook; Northfield; Wilmette; Winnetka. The 2013 Statewide benchmark referenced a 2% share of property taxes; the Northbrook PD survey (2014) referenced a 7% share of property taxes; the Glenview PD survey (2017) referenced an 8% share of property taxes.

**Virtually all households report visiting or using a PDHP park or facility in the past year.**

**Used or Visited a PDHP Park or Facility in Past 12 Months?**



n = 785

Visited or Used Facility/Park in Past 12 Months	% Reporting (n=785)	% All Respondents (n=851)
Recreation Center of Highland Park	68%	63%
Rosewood Beach/Park	66%	62%
Sunset Woods Park	55%	51%
Heller Nature Center	38%	36%
Hidden Creek Aqua Park	34%	32%
Danny Cunniff Park	28%	26%
Centennial Ice Arena	26%	24%
West Ridge Center	26%	24%
Rosewood Beach Interpretive Center	24%	23%
Larry Fink Park	23%	22%
Park Ave. Boating Facility	22%	20%
Sunset Valley Golf Club	18%	16%
Deer Creek Racquet Club	17%	16%
HP Golf Learning Center (driving range)	16%	15%
Centennial Gymnastics Center	14%	14%
Olson Park	14%	13%
Dog Park (in winter) at HP Golf Learning Center	10%	9%
River's Edge Adventure Golf (mini golf)	8%	8%
Other PDHP parks/facilities (<5% each, most often: Moraine Park/Beach, Millard Park, Mooney Park, Brown, HPCC green space)	23%	22%

## Most District parks and facilities draw proportionately from various parts of the city.

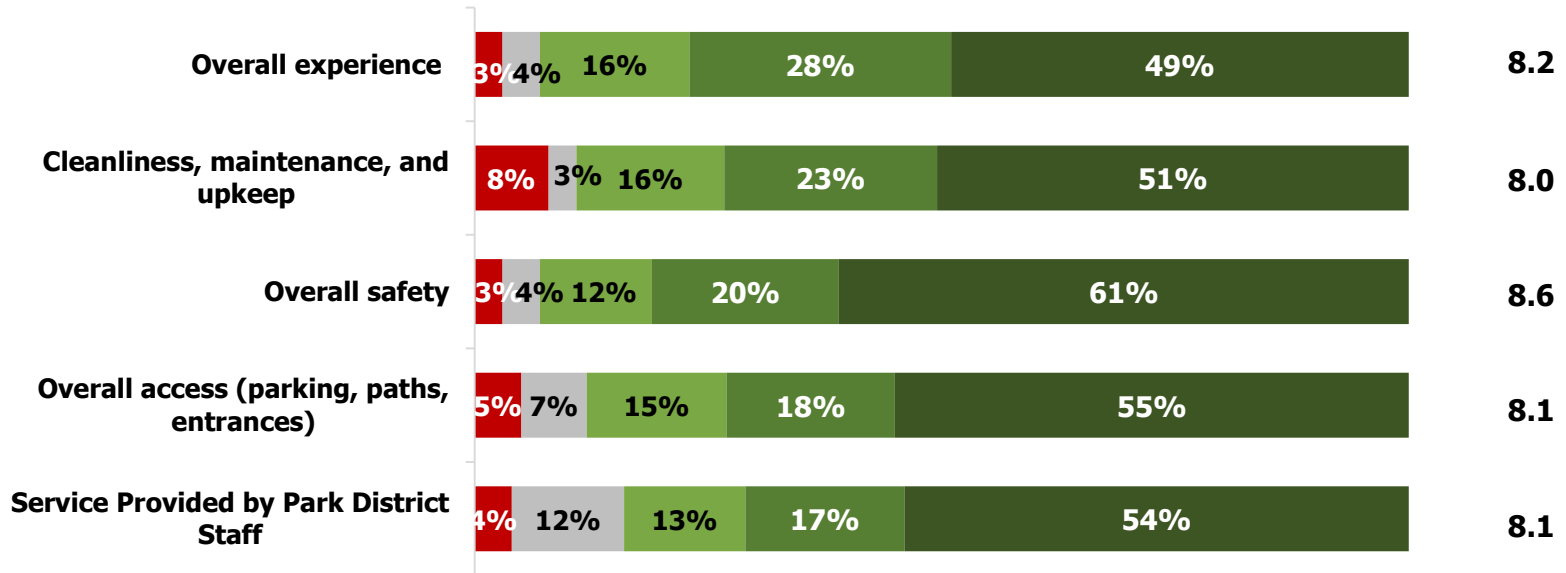
Region (overall row %):	NE (10%)	NW (44%)	SE (36%)	SW (10%)	(= 100%)
Recreation Center of Highland Park	10%	49	33	8	= 100%
Rosewood Park and Beach	9%	41	41	9	= 100%
Sunset Woods Park	11%	46	34	9	= 100%
Heller Nature Center	10%	45	35	10	= 100%
Hidden Creek Aqua Park	9%	42	38	11	= 100%
Danny Cunniff Park	9%	50	33	8	= 100%
Centennial Ice Arena	12%	49	33	6	= 100%
West Ridge Center	6%	40	31	23	= 100%
Rosewood Beach Interpretive Center	9%	34	48	9	= 100%
Larry Fink Park	4%	35	51	10	= 100%
Park Ave. Boating Facility	16%	46	32	6	= 100%
Sunset Valley Golf Club	12%	40	39	9	= 100%
Deer Creek Racquet Club	6%	41	44	9	= 100%
HP Golf Learning Center	13%	41	33	13	=100%
Centennial Gymnastics Center	9%	41	28	22	=100%
Olson Park	6%	69	20	5	=100%
Dog Park (in winter) at HP Golf Learning Center	14%	50	29	7	=100%

 Higher than average response by region

**Recent visitors/users of PDHP parks and facilities are extremely satisfied with their overall condition, safety, access, and service.**

**Satisfaction with PDHP Parks and Facilities**  
(n=723 recent users/visitors who responded)

**Avg. (mean)  
0-10 Rating**



■ % Dissatisfied (0-4) ■ % Neutral (5) ■ % Somewhat Satisfied (6-7) ■ % Very Satisfied (8) ■ % Completely Satisfied (9-10)

**In addition to strong satisfaction for the cleanliness, maintenance, and upkeep of parks and facilities, few feel drastic improvements are needed.**

**Many PDHP parks and equipment look tired, outdated, run down, and need much better landscaping, equipment, and improved features, 17%**

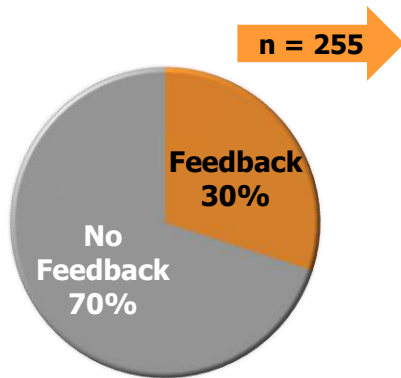
**For the most part, parks and playgrounds look to be in good shape and do not need much more beyond basic ongoing maintenance, 48%**

**No opinion either way, 35%**

**n=794**

**Residents unhappy with specific PDHP parks or facilities most often cite the Recreation Center and/or Rosewood Park and Beach (the two most popular destinations).**

**Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Parks or Facilities (frequently cited comments, unweighted n of cases)**



**Recreation Center of Highland Park**

**n=67**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=19)
- Problems with staff (inattentive/impolite) (n=18)
- Accessibility (not enough parking/ hard to access) (n=11)
- Add/ improve restrooms (n=11)
- Too dirty, improve cleanliness (n=9)
- Management issues (registration, lack of communication, customer service) (n=9)
- Cost issues (memberships/ program fees) (n=8)

**Rosewood Park and Beach**

**n=37**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Accessibility (not enough parking/ hard to access) (n=18)
- Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=10)
- Too dirty, improve cleanliness (n=6)
- No enforcement of policies/ more patrol officers (n=4)

**Park Ave. Boating Facility/ Beach**

**n=20**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=15)
- Accessibility (not enough parking/ hard to access) (n=4)

**Sunset Woods Park**

**n=16**

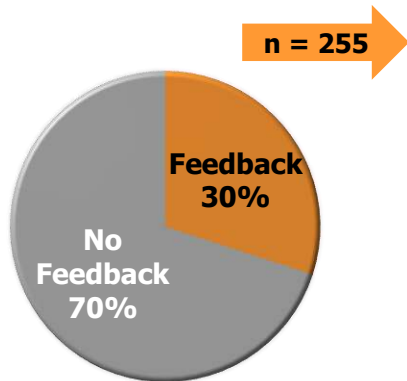
**Frequently cited comments**

- Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=10)
- Problems with staff (inattentive/impolite) (n=3)
- No enforcement of policies/ more patrol officers (n=3)



The remaining top facilities and parks cited for improvements almost always reference a need for more maintenance and cleanliness.

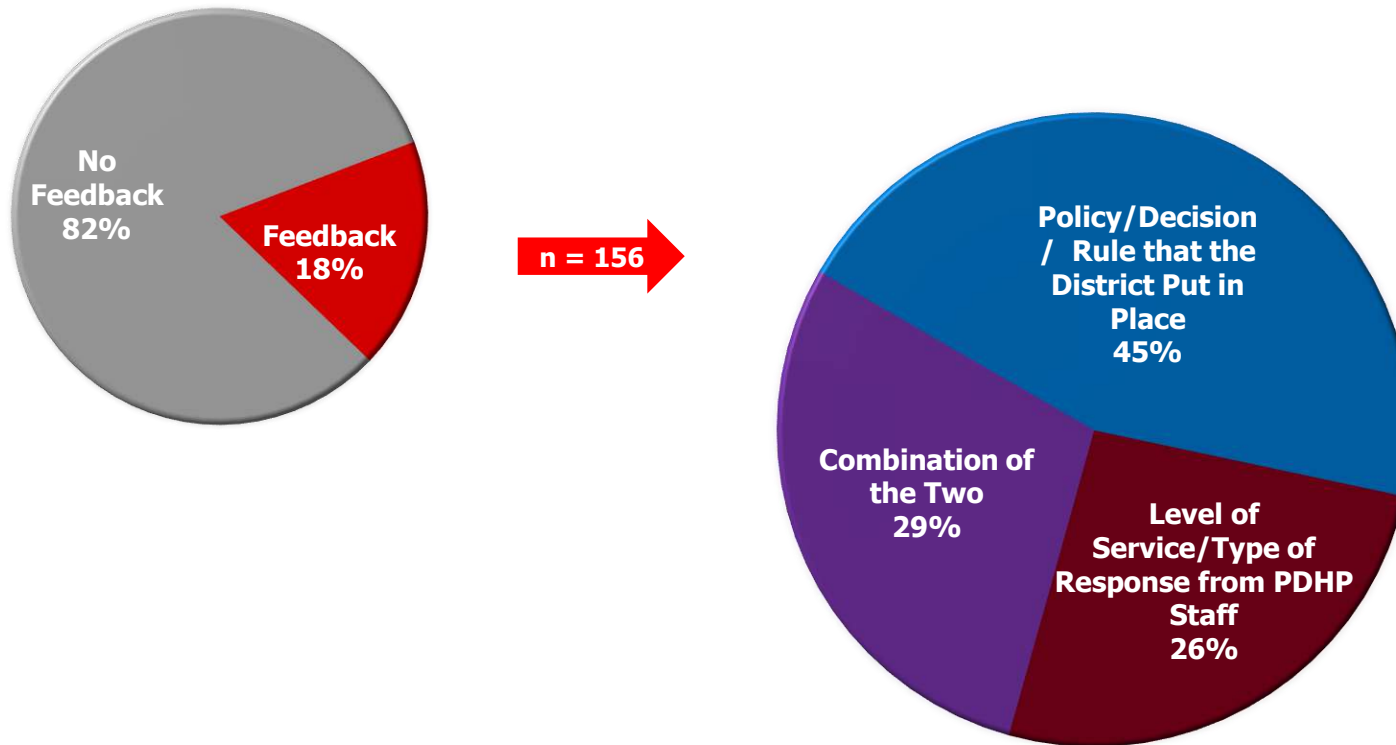
Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Parks or Facilities, cont'd (frequently cited comments, unweighted n of cases)



Centennial Ice Arena	n=15	<p><b>Frequently cited comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=8)</li> <li>• Add/ improve restrooms (n=5)</li> <li>• Accessibility (not enough parking/ hard to access) (n=4)</li> </ul>
Larry Fink Park	n=15	<p><b>Frequently cited comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=15)</li> <li>• Too crowded in general (n=3)</li> <li>• Safety concerns (n=3)</li> </ul>
Hidden Creek Aqua Park	n=13	<p><b>Frequently cited comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too dirty, improve cleanliness (n=6)</li> <li>• Problems with staff (inattentive, impolite, etc.) (n=5)</li> <li>• Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=4)</li> <li>• Add/ improve restrooms (n=4)</li> </ul>
Centennial Gymnastics Center	n=10	<p><b>Frequently cited comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=5)</li> <li>• Accessibility (not enough parking/ hard to access) (n=4)</li> </ul>
Moraine Beach (Dog Beach)	n=10	<p><b>Frequently cited comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly maintained/ in disrepair (n=12)</li> <li>• Accessibility (not enough parking/ hard to access) (n=4)</li> <li>• Safety concerns (n=4)</li> </ul>

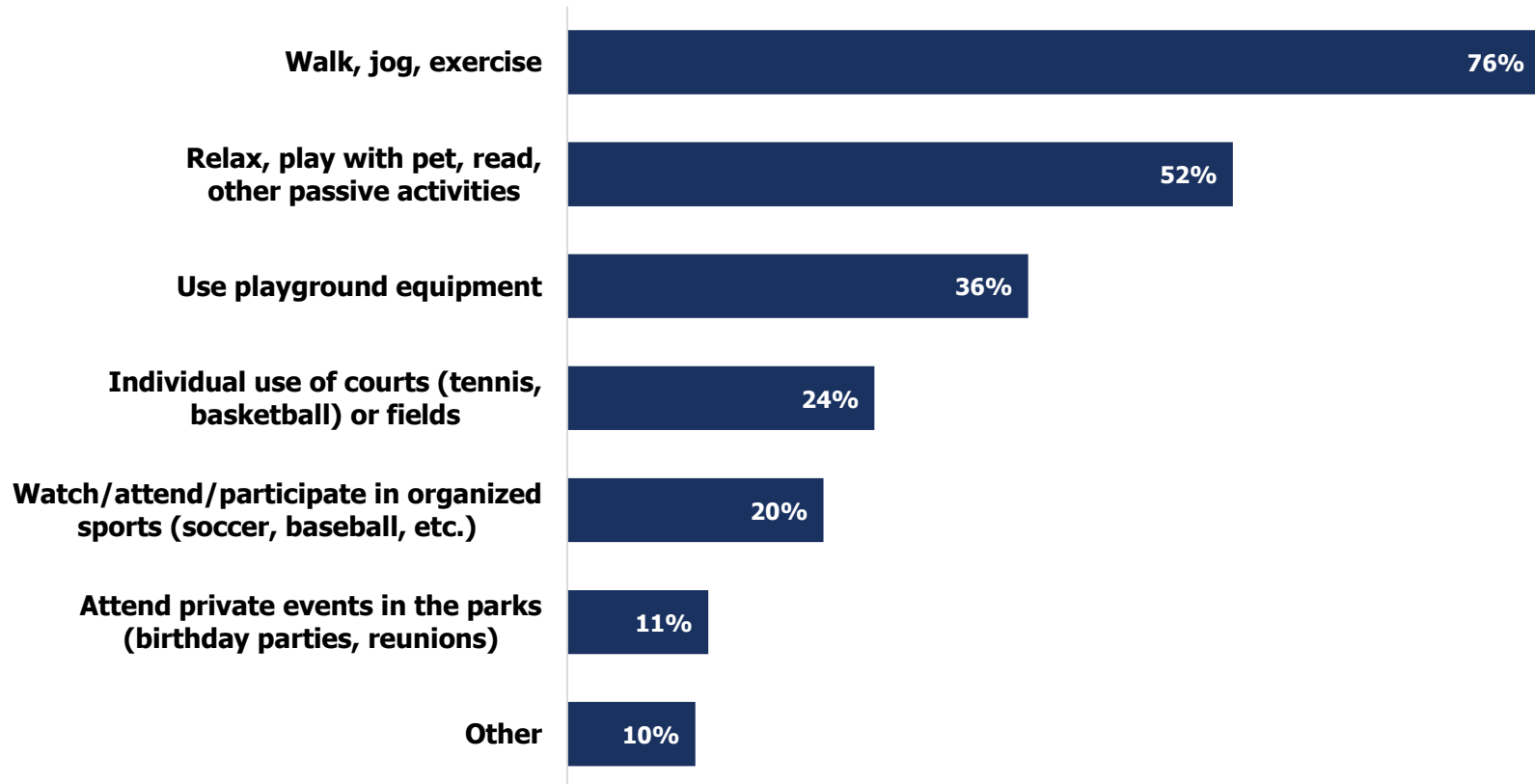
Those citing negative experiences with PDHP staff tend to attribute such incidents with District rules/policies, more so than to individual staff.

Reasons for Dissatisfaction (among n=156 dissatisfied PDHP visitors/users)



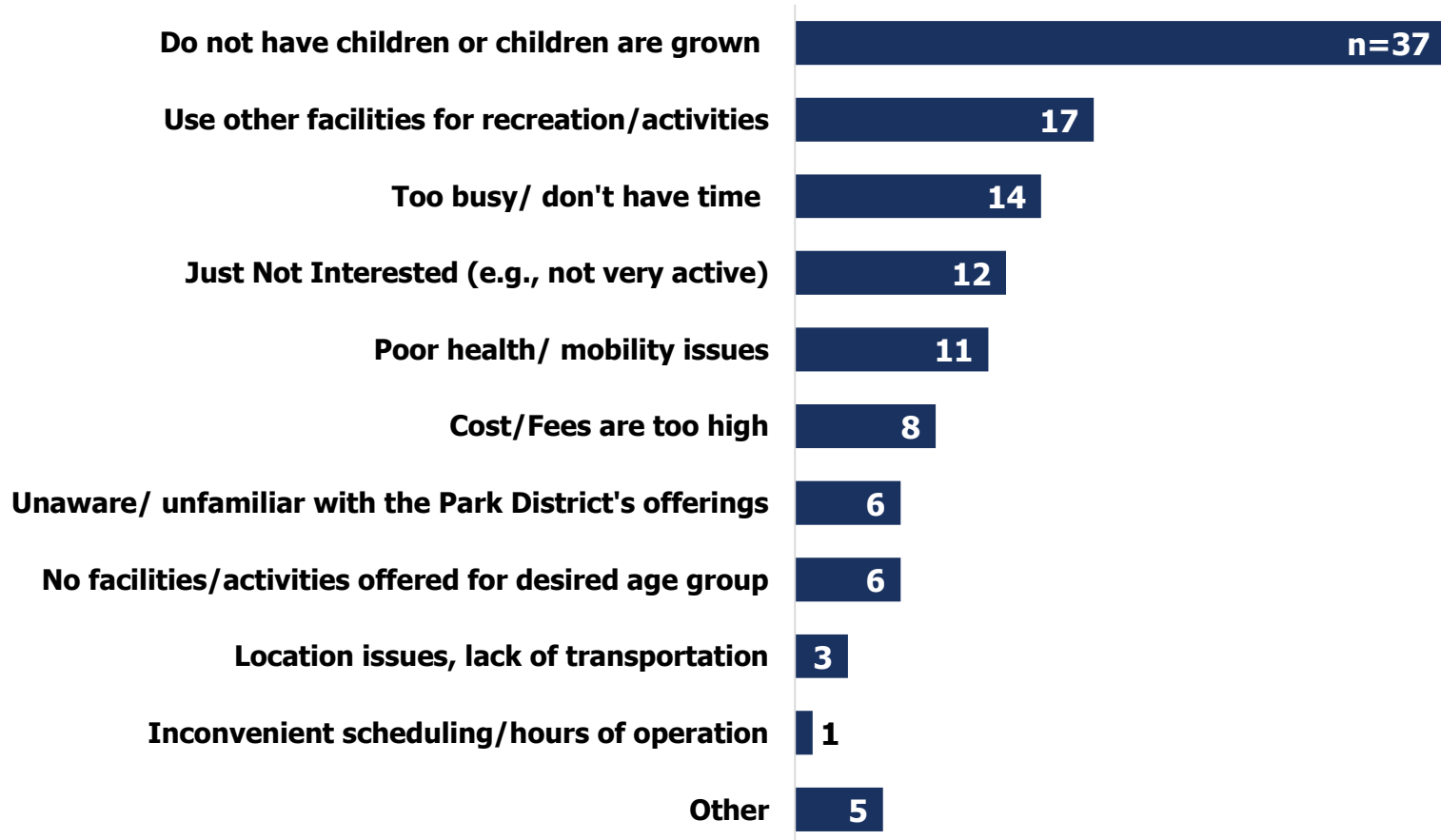
**Most residents go to outdoor PDHP parks for some form of exercise, but at least half also cite more passive activities in these parks.**

**Types of Activities/Usage at PDHP Parks  
(n=675)**



**Relatively few residents (7% overall) report not visiting or using any PDHP parks or facilities in the past year.**

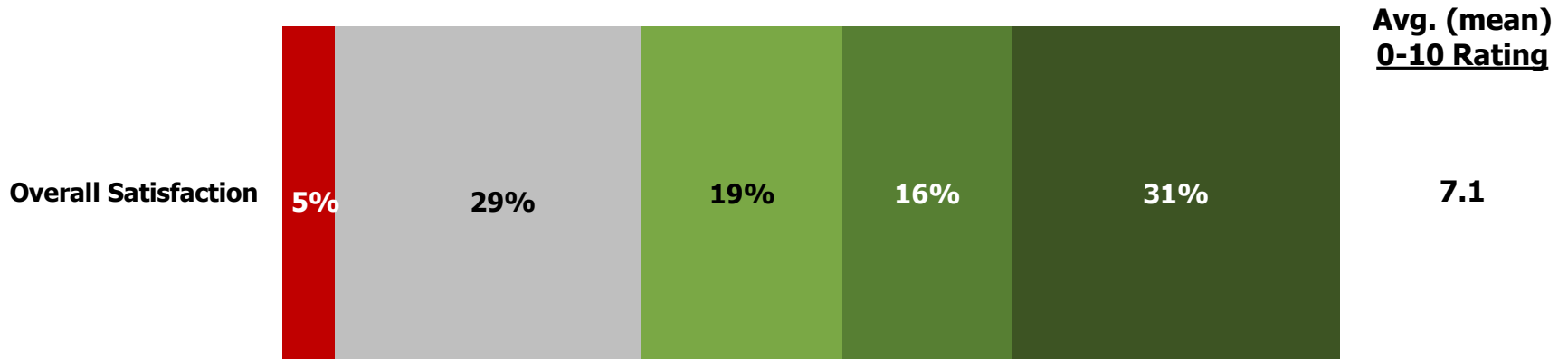
**Top Reasons (n of cases): Not Using PDHP Parks/Facilities (n=57)**



Q11. (IF NO PDHP PARK/FACILITY USED OR VISITED): Why haven't you visited a Park District park or facility? (multiple responses)

**Among those familiar with the PDHP's special events, roughly two-thirds express satisfaction.**

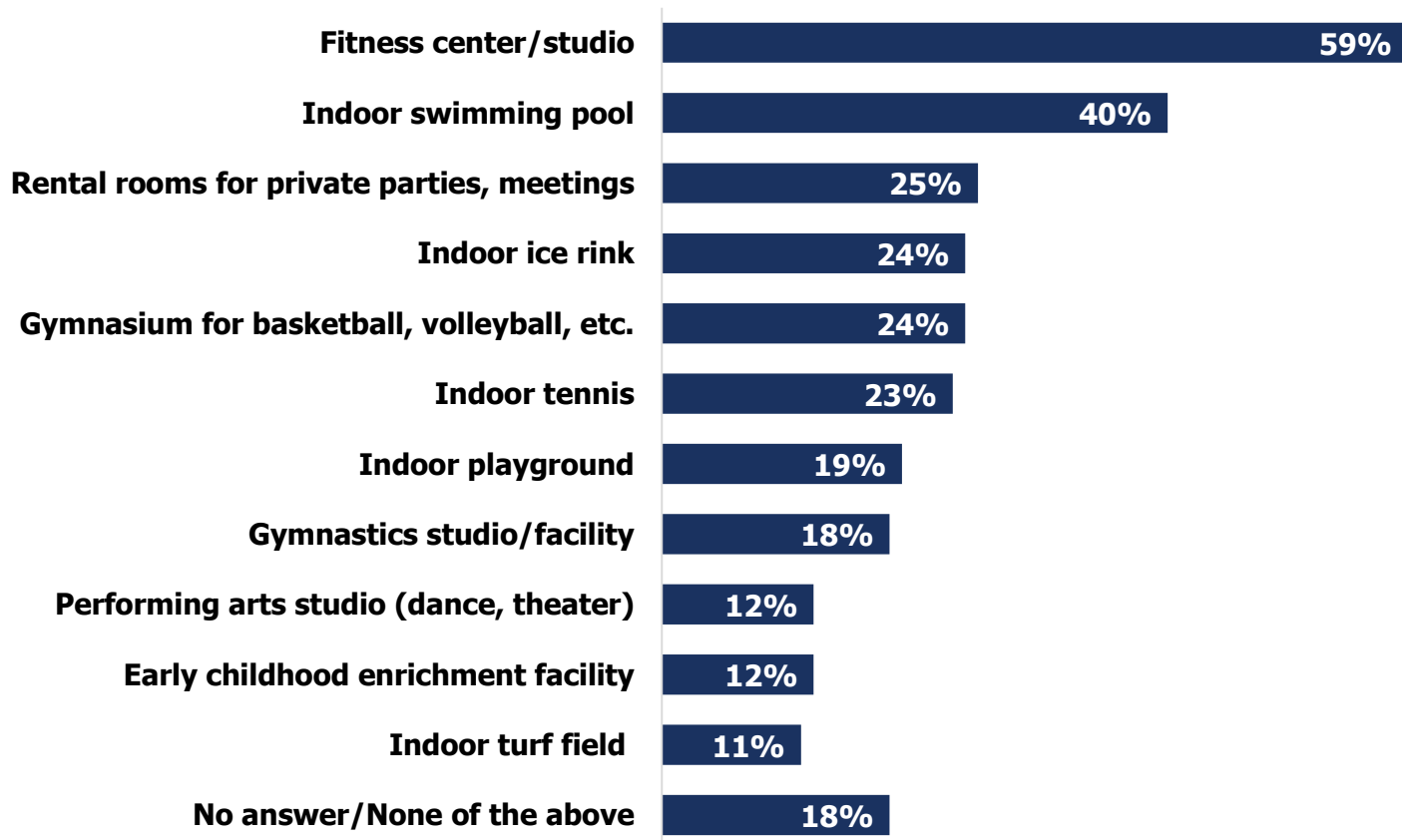
**Satisfaction with Special Events**  
(n=424 who responded; 48% were "unfamiliar" and could not give a rating)



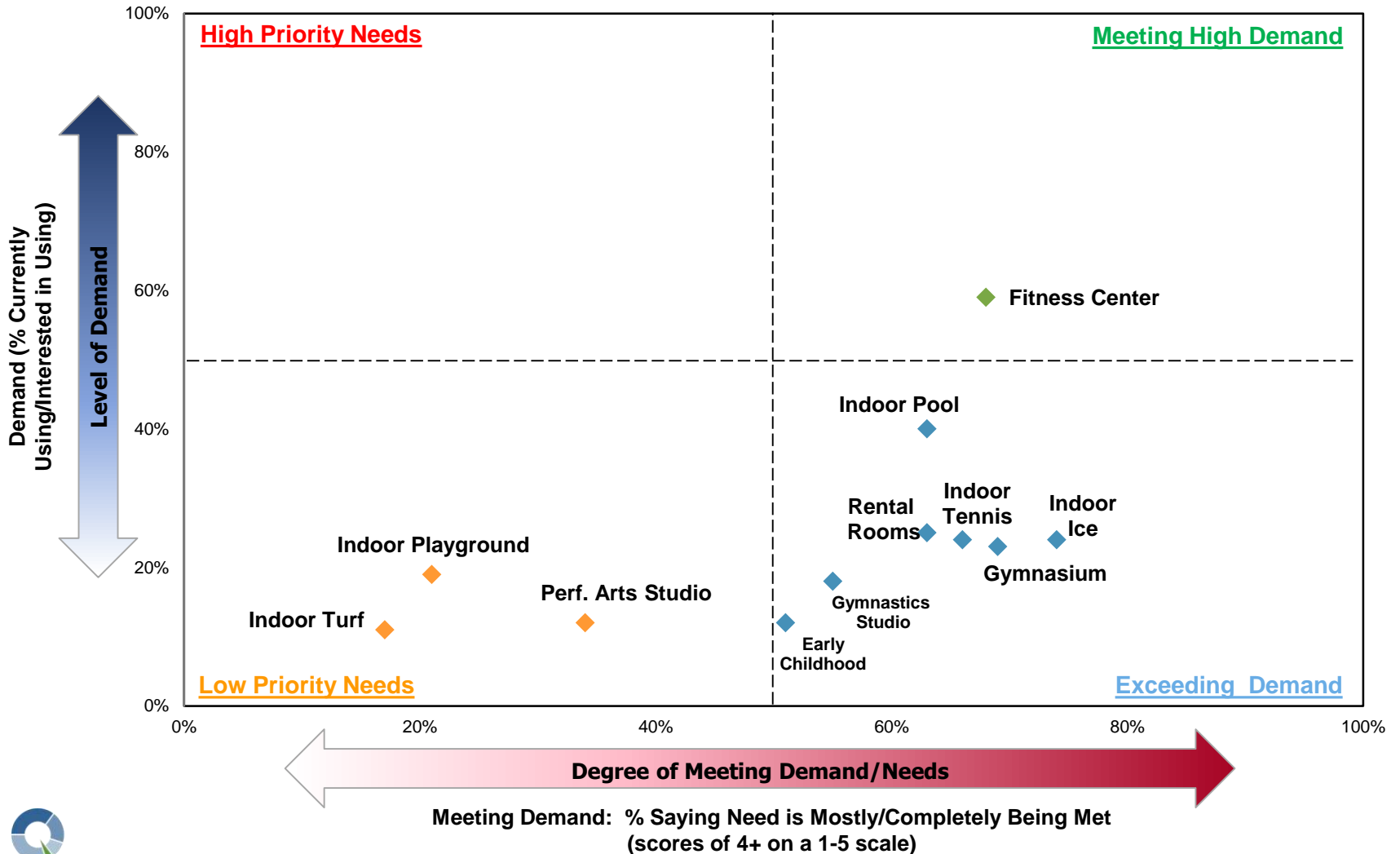
■ % Dissatisfied (0-4) ■ % Neutral (5) ■ % Slightly Satisfied (6-7) ■ % Very Satisfied (8) ■ % Completely Satisfied (9-10)

**Among the indoor facilities tested, residents are most likely to express an interest or need for a fitness center and/or indoor pool.**

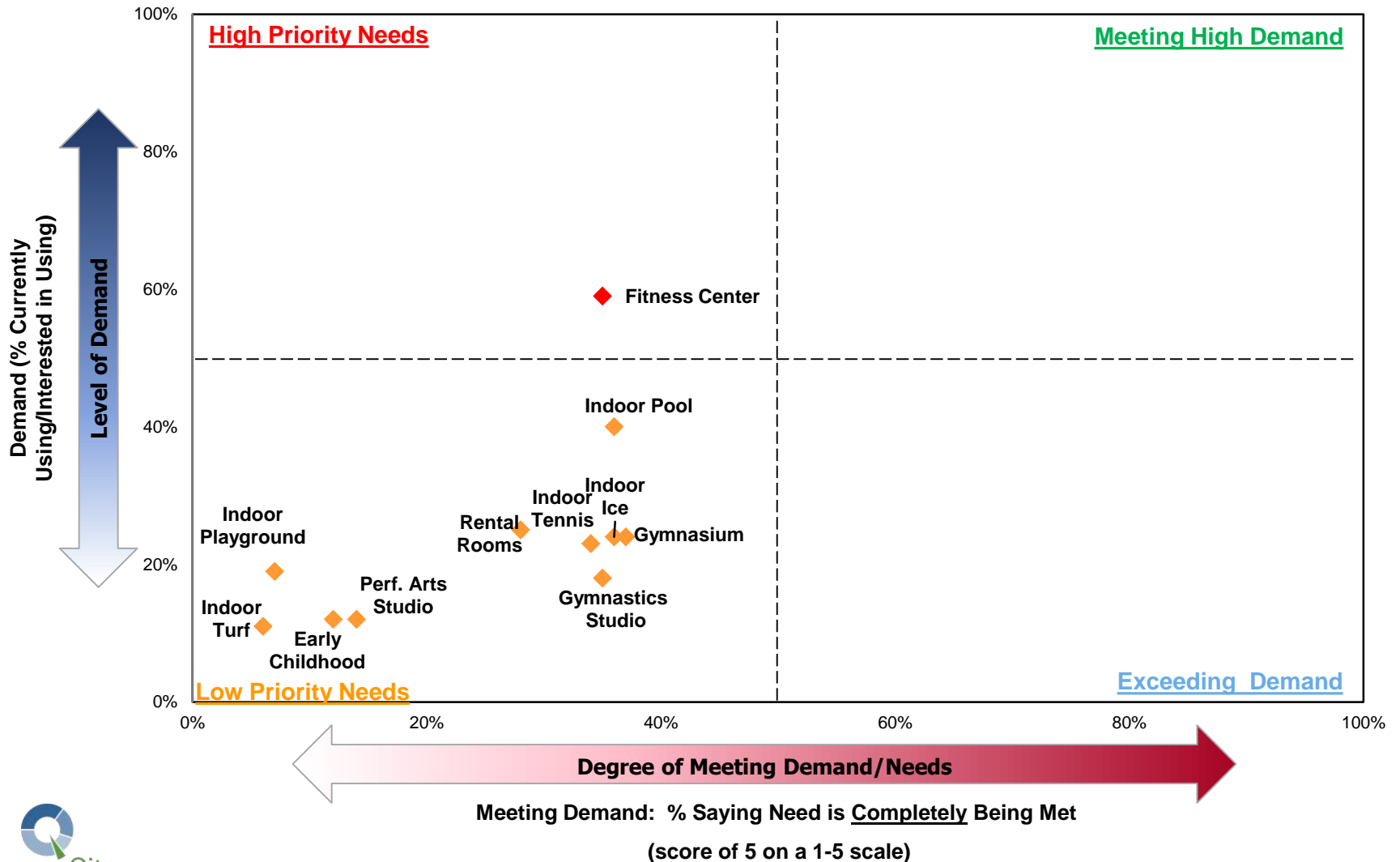
**Indoor Recreational Facilities of Interest/Need Among Residents (% "Yes")  
(n=851)**



Quadrant analysis shows that none of the indoor facilities tested register strongly as an unmet need in the community.



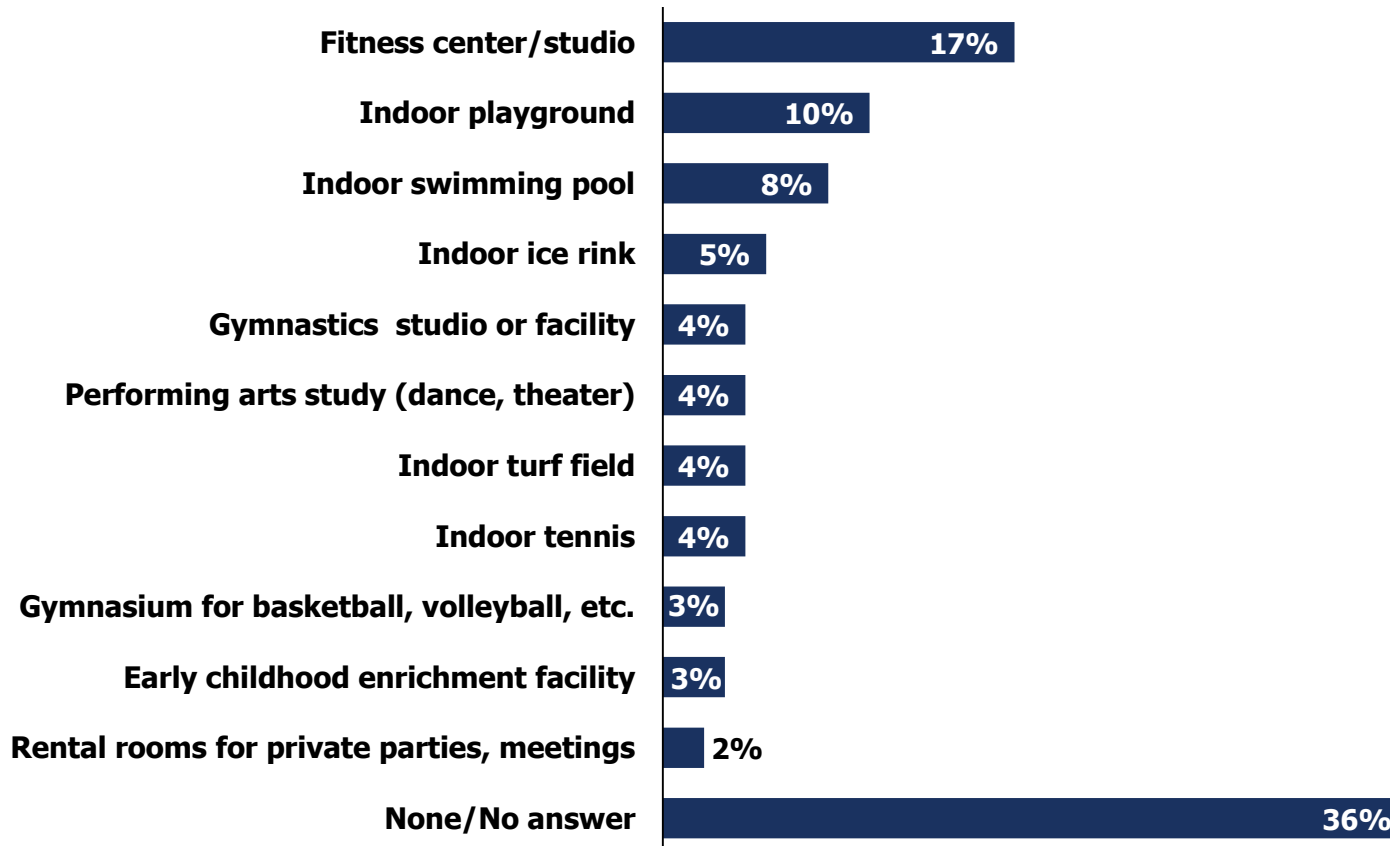
Further analysis shows that none of these indoor facilities are currently available at a level that completely meets existing demand.





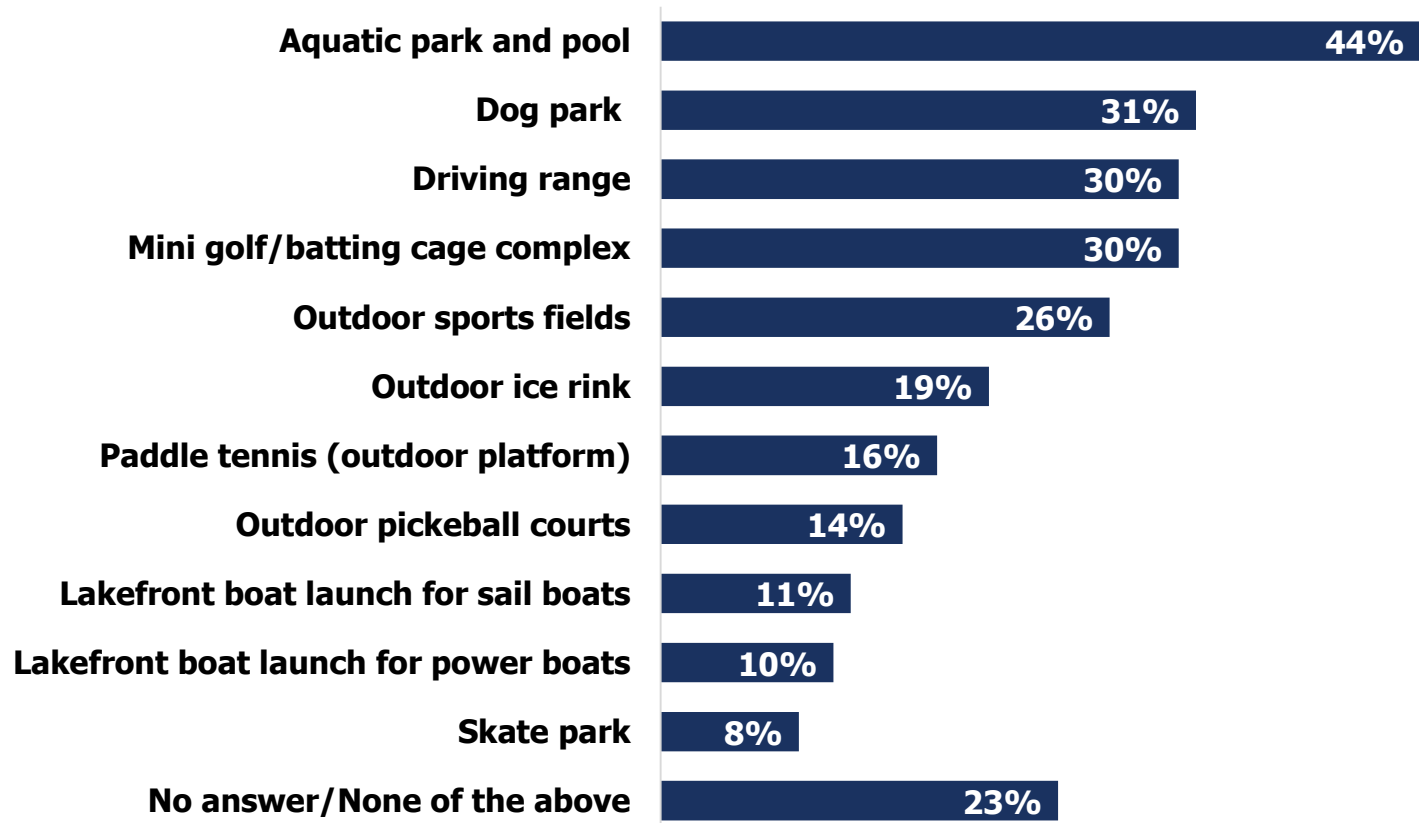
In terms of identifying the single most important priority for indoor facilities, the most frequent response is “none”.

**Top Priority: Most Important Indoor Facility/Amenity For PDHP To Provide/Add/Improve (n=851)**

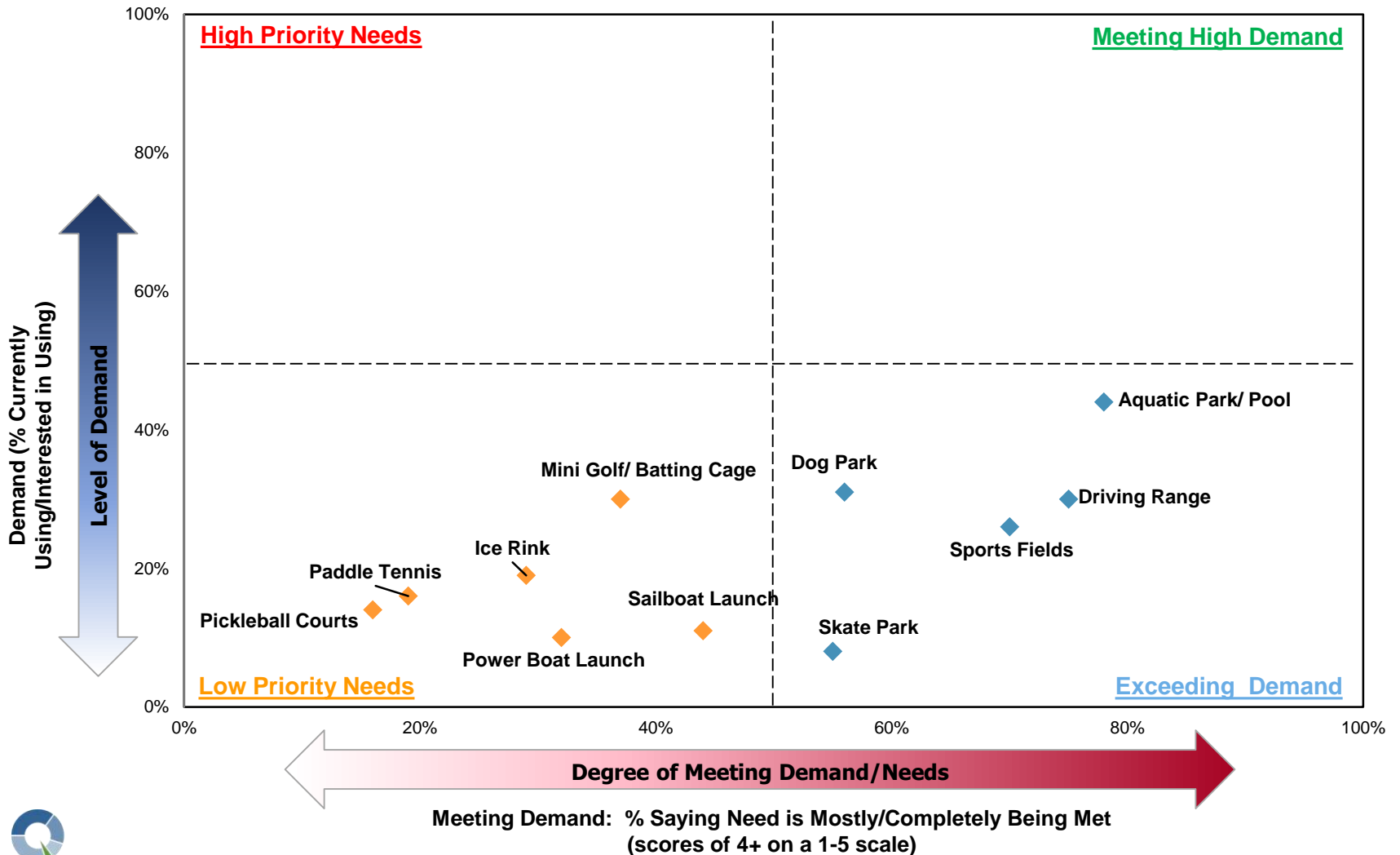


**A few of the outdoor recreational facilities tested generate relatively high levels of demand (though less than a majority).**

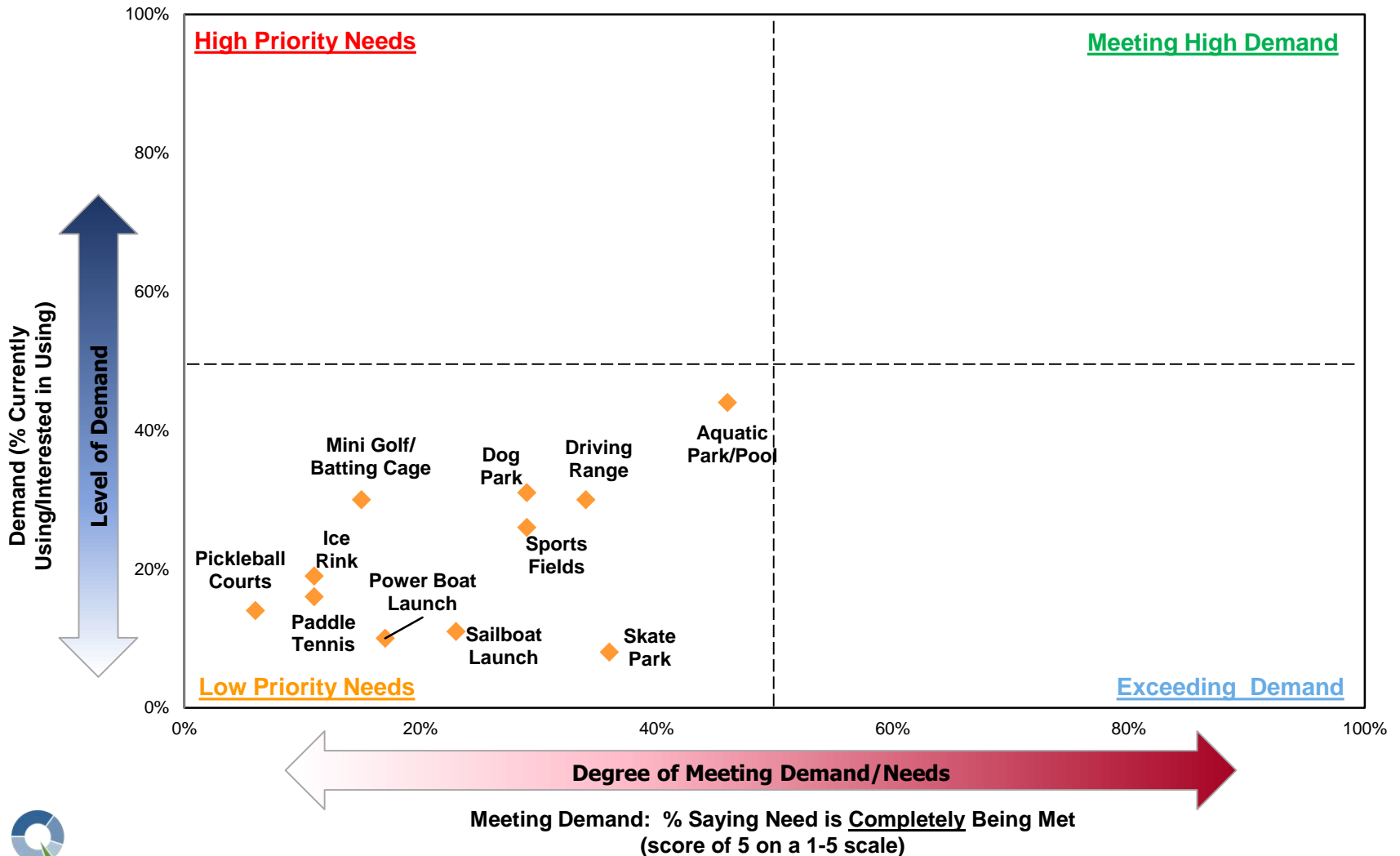
**Outdoor Recreational Facilities of Interest/Need Among Residents (% "Yes")  
(n=851)**



Similar to the indoor facilities tested, none of the outdoor facilities are seen as high priority needs or “gaps”.

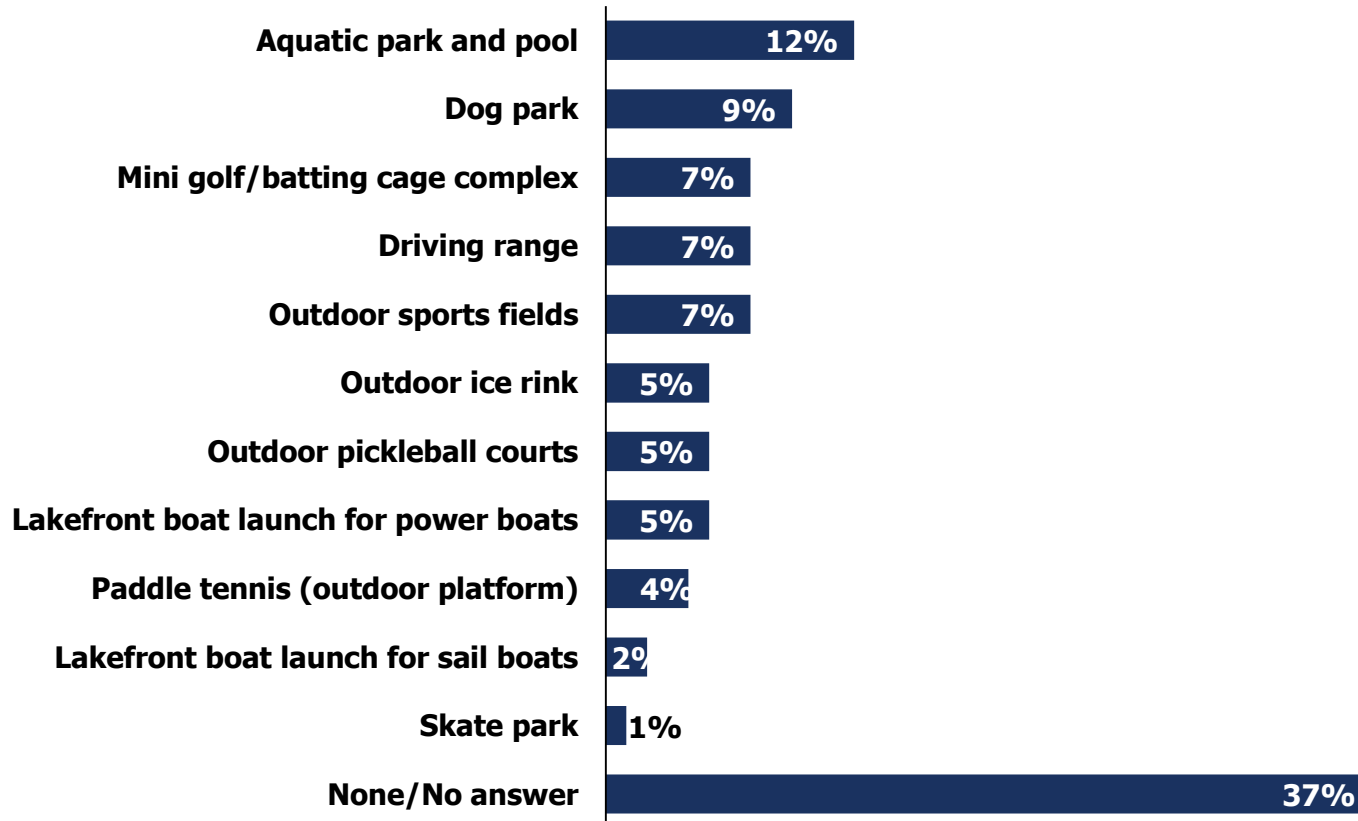


None of the outdoor facility needs are seen as being “completely” available to the point that supply exceeds demand.



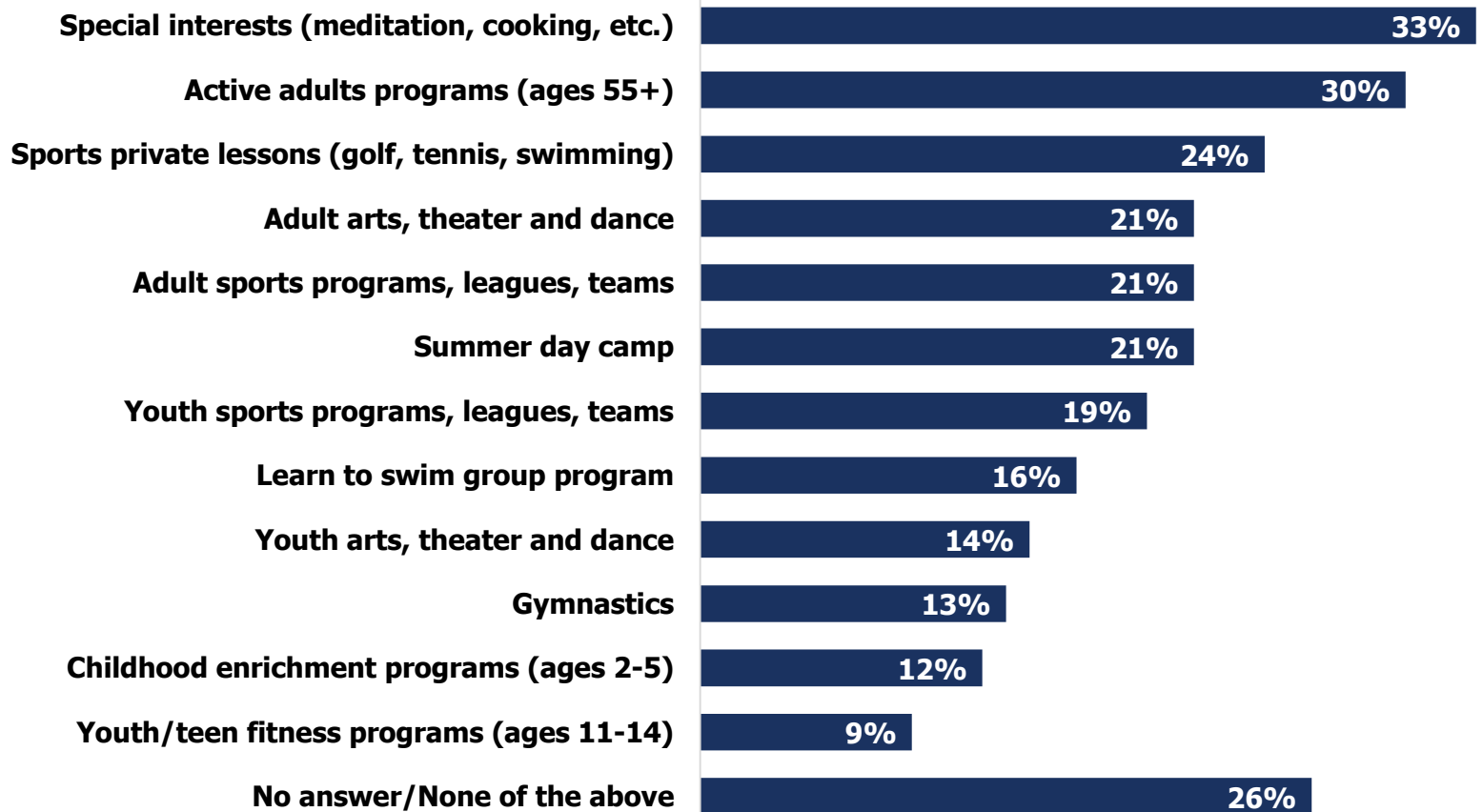
**Consistent with the indoor facilities tested, none of the outdoor amenities register as very strong priorities for the PDHP.**

**Top Priority: Most Important Outdoor Facility/Amenity For PDHP To Provide/Add/Improve (n=851)**

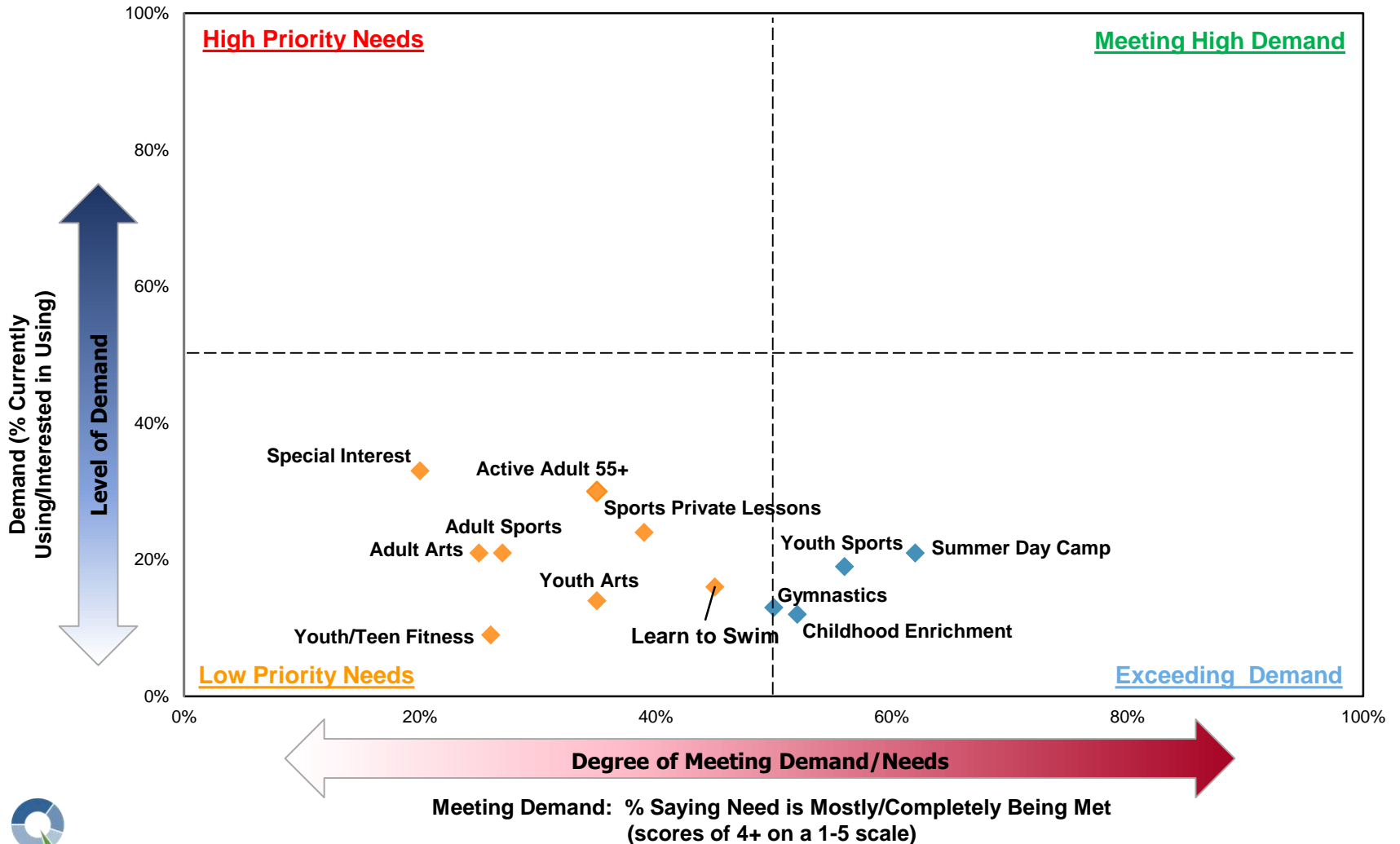


## Residents express generally consistent levels of interest in recreational programs.

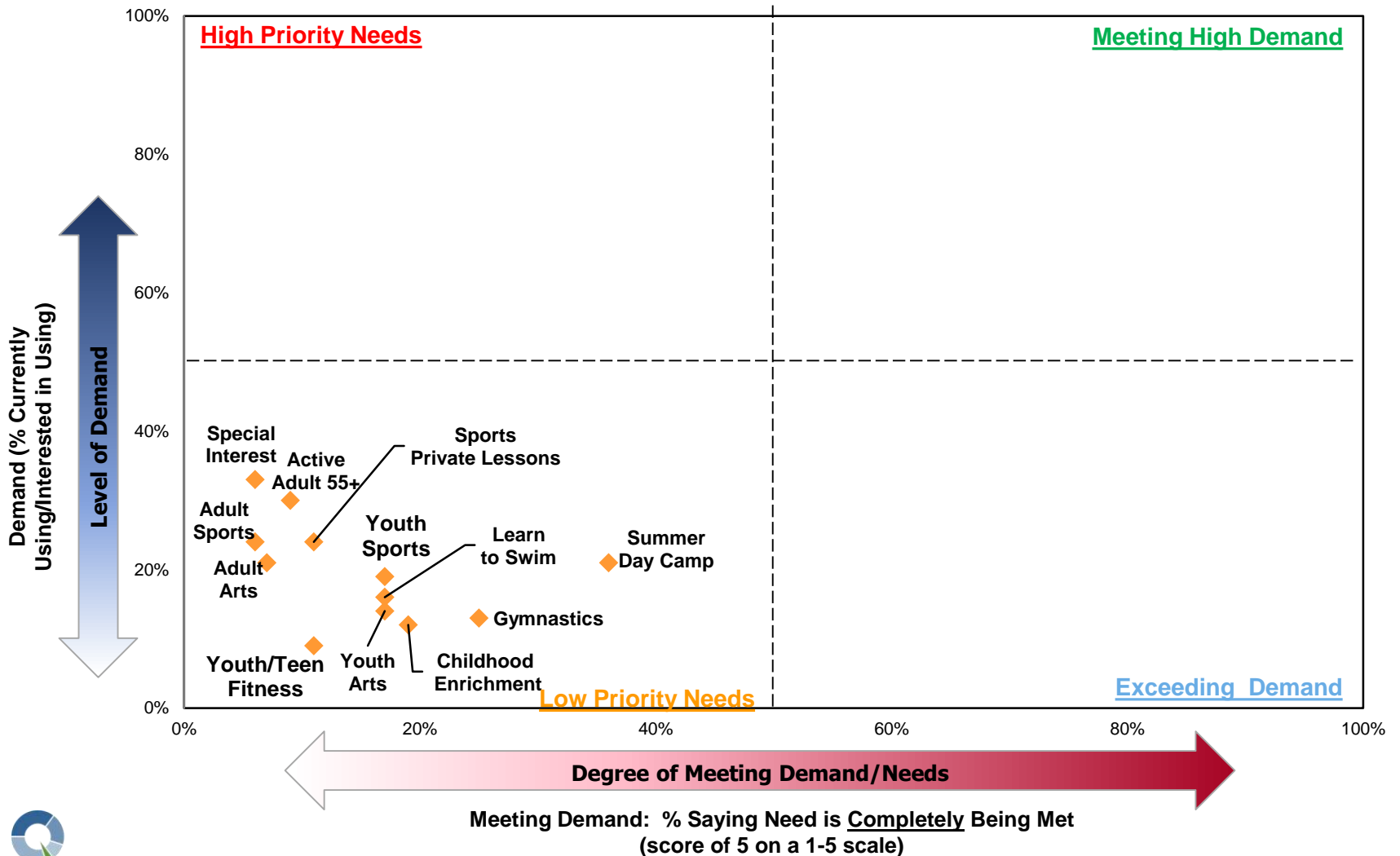
Recreational Programs of Interest/Need Among Residents (% "Yes")  
(n=851)



**Much of the programming tested represents opportunities (albeit lower priorities) for the PDHP. Nothing registers as a significant “gap”.**



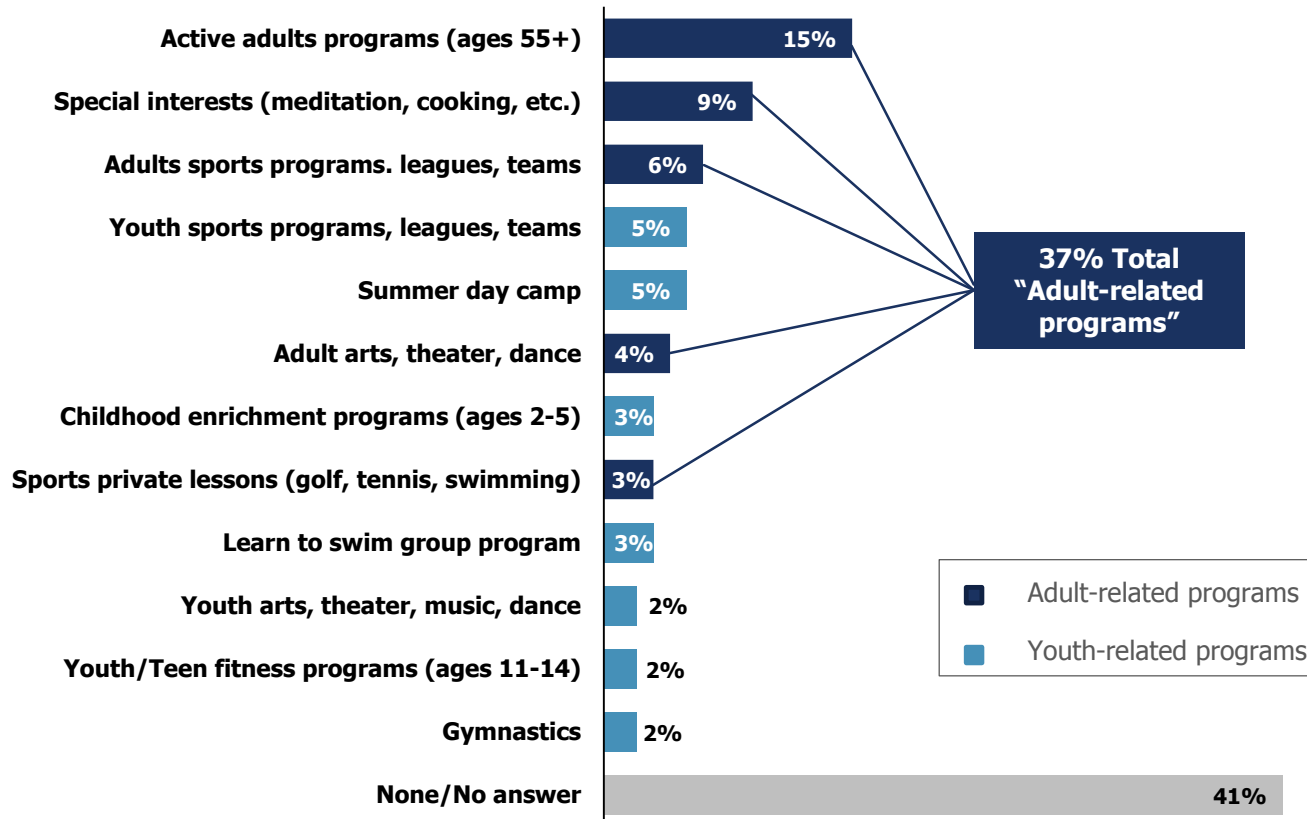
None of the programming opportunities tested are seen as being completely met currently (though summer day camp comes close).





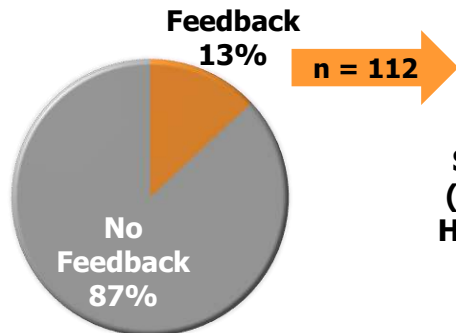
**Roughly two in five residents recommend that some form of adult-related programming to be a top priority for the Park District.**

**Top Priority: Most Important Recreational Program For Park District To Provide/Add/Improve (n=851)**



**Those who express dissatisfaction with existing PDHP programs and activities offer a range of suggested improvements, mostly for fitness programs.**

**Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Programs or Events (frequently cited comments, unweighted n of cases)**



**Exercise/ fitness programs, sports**

**n=42**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Poor availability (lack of space, inconvenient hours/schedule) (n=14)
- Memberships too expensive/too expensive in general (n=10)
- Inexperienced/impolite instructors or staff (n=8)
- Not well managed/poorly organized (n=3) Negative comments about facilities/poorly maintained (n=7)
- Want programs not currently offered by PDHP (n=4)
- Not enough senior programs (n=3)

**Special events (Fourth of July, Halloween, etc.)**

**n=17**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Crowded/ too many people (n=6)
- Dislike specific event (n=5)
- Not well managed, poorly organized (n=5)
- Too expensive (n=2)

**Easter event (egg hunt)**

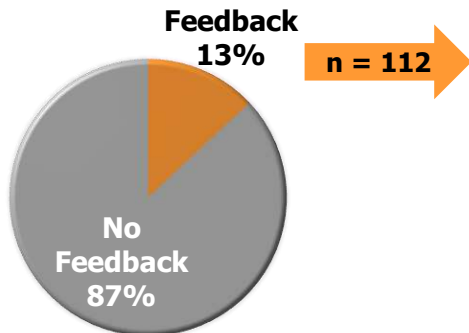
**n=14**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Not well managed, poorly organized (n=7)
- Too crowded (n=2)

**Relatively few offer suggestions or issues with the remaining programs and events reported below.**

**Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Programs or Events cont'd (frequently cited comments, unweighted n of cases)**



**Youth athletic programs**

**n=13**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Poor availability (lack of available space, inconvenient hours) (n=8)
- Want program not currently offered by PDHP (n=7)
- Inexperienced/impolite instructors or staff (n=3)
- Too expensive (n=2)

**Other program/ event related negative**

**n=9**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Poor availability (lack of available space, inconvenient hours) (n=3)
- Program not offered by PDHP (n=2)

**Programs for adults**

**n=8**

**Frequently cited comments**

- Lack of programs for adults (n=4)
- Poor availability (lack of available space, inconvenient hours) (n=3)
- Program not offered by PDHP (n=2)

**Summer camp**

**n=7**

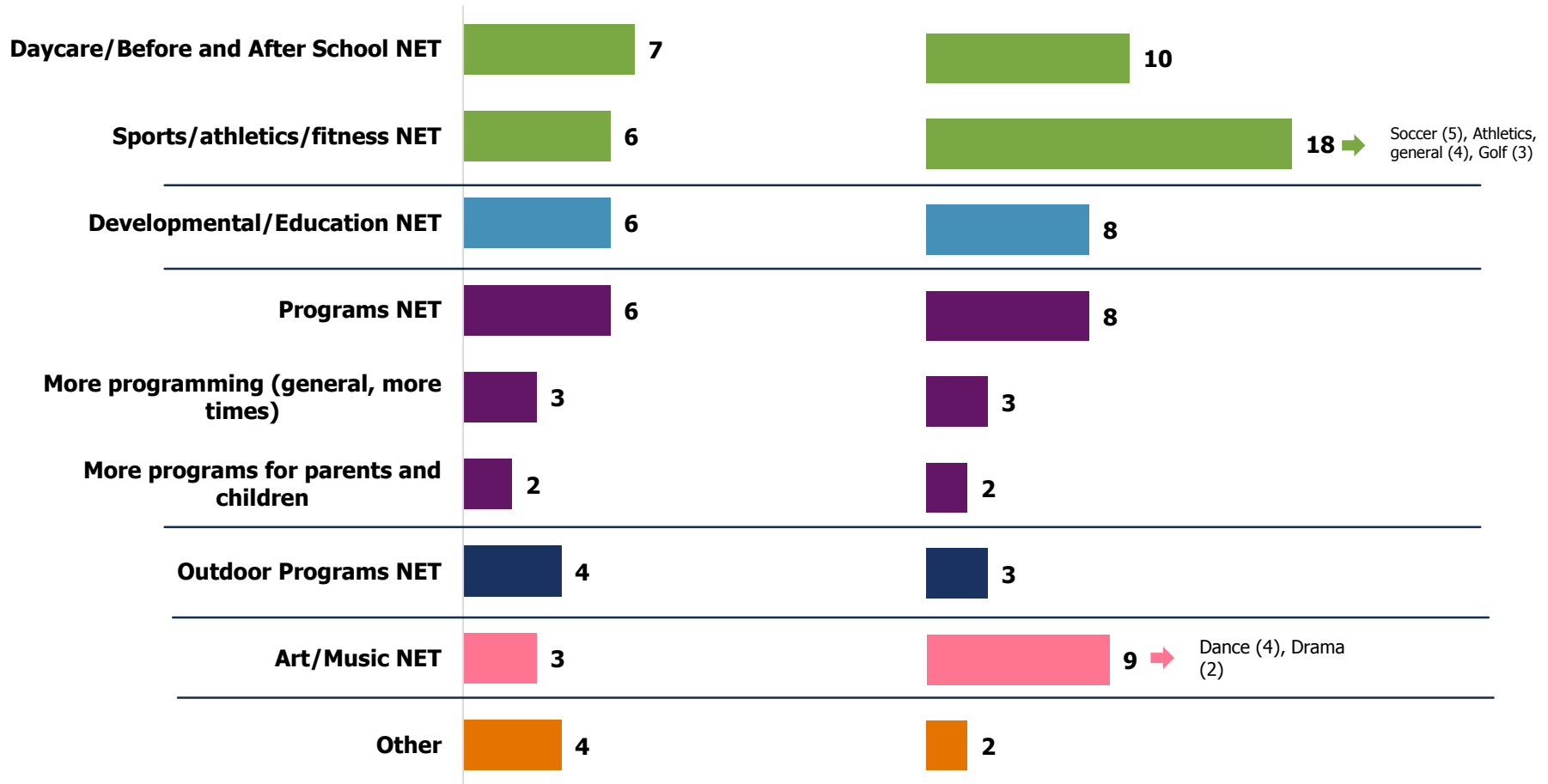
**Frequently cited comments**

- Poor availability (lack of available space, inconvenient hours) (n=4)
- Not well-managed (n=2)
- Too expensive (n=2)
- Impolite/inexperienced leaders/staff (n=2)

**In an open-ended format, residents interested in programming for pre-K children offer a wide range of suggestions. Those with older children (under age 10) tend to seek more sports and arts programming.**

## Programs for Toddlers/Preschoolers

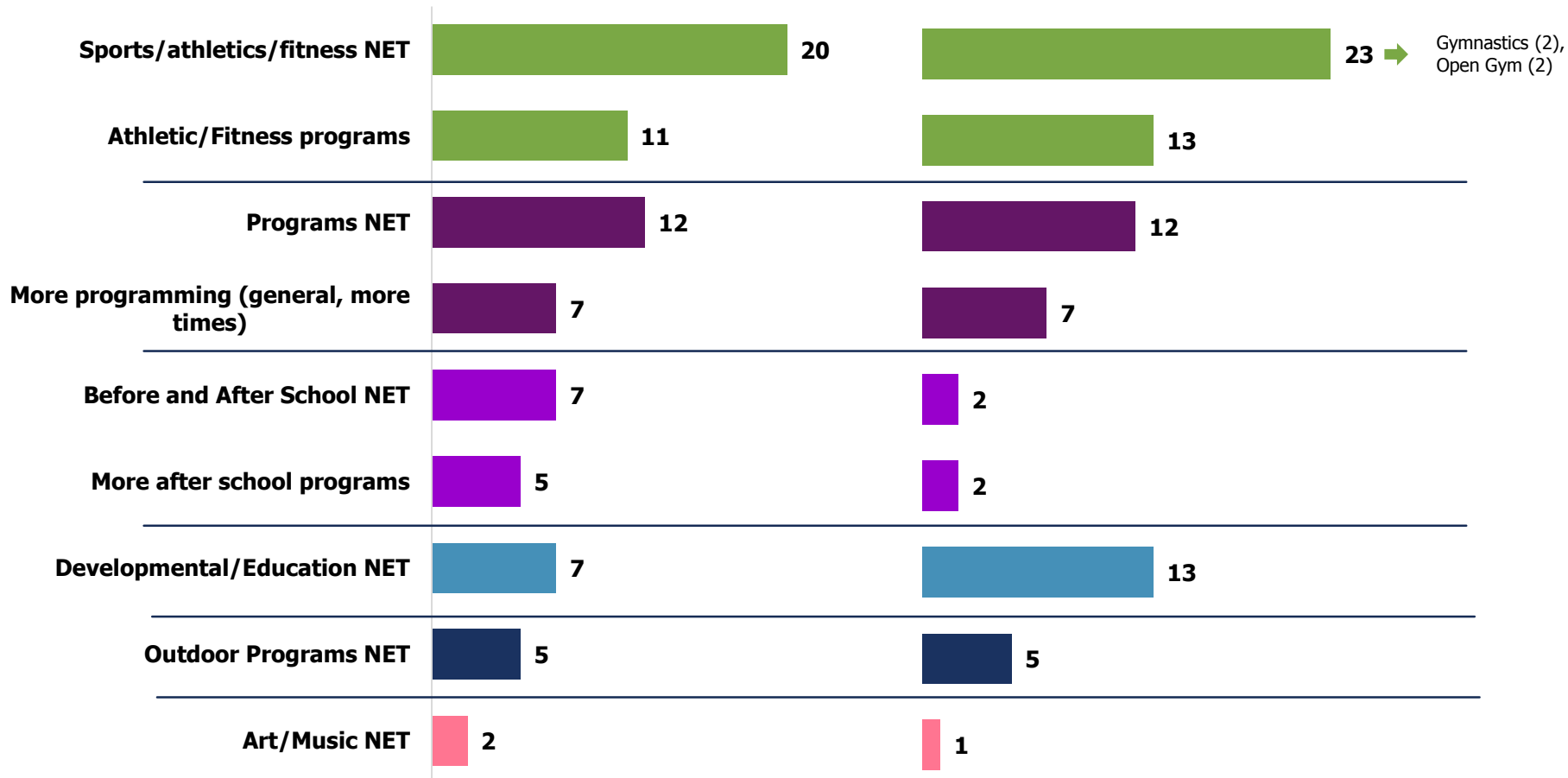
## Programs for Ages 5-10



**Sports and fitness programs are the top suggestion for younger and older teens. Educational activities also tend to emerge more for the high school ages (with the arts less of an emphasis).**

## Programs for Ages 11-14

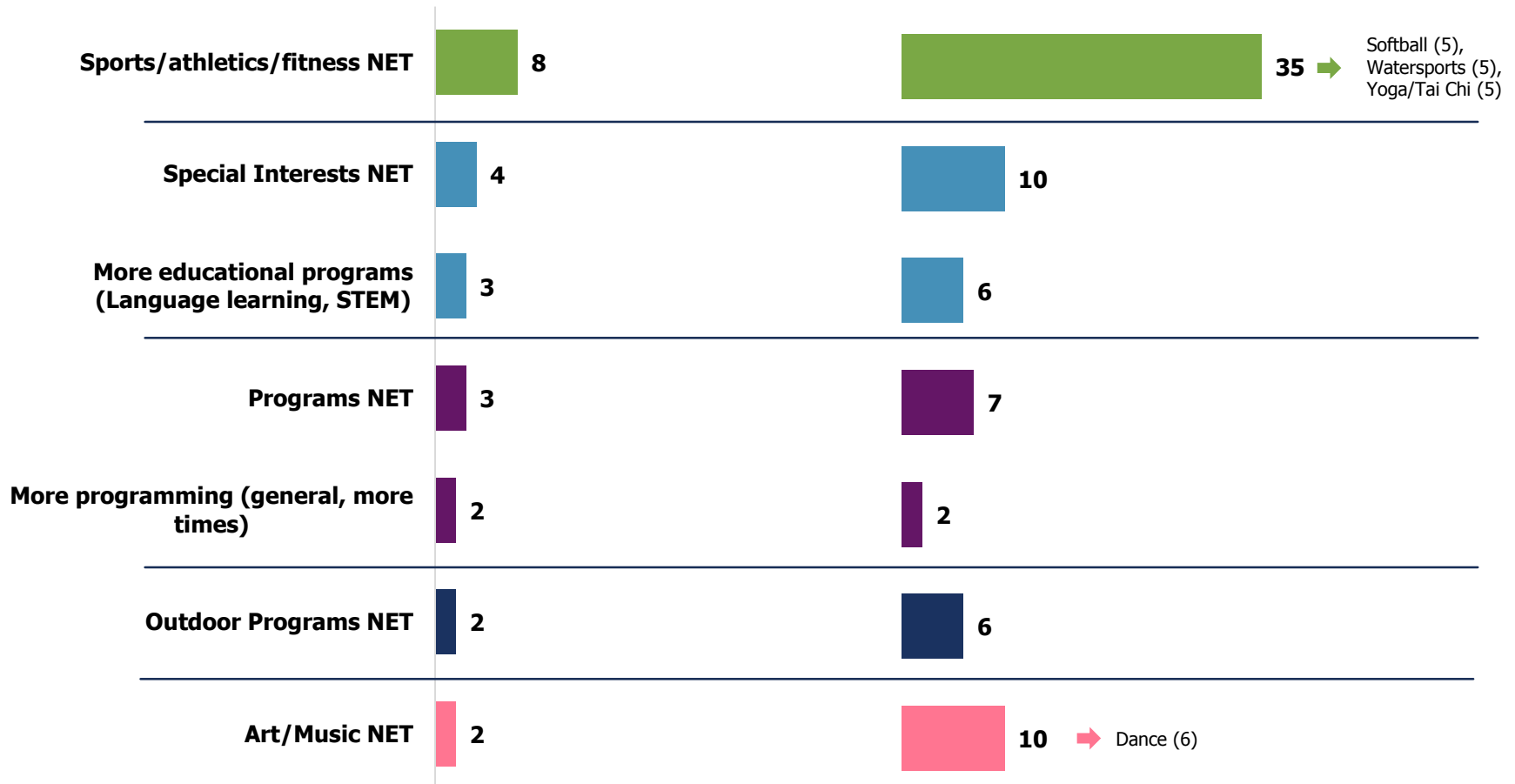
## Programs for Ages 15-18



**Adult programming suggestions focused more on 30-49 year olds (as opposed to younger adults), with a clear focus on sports, fitness and athletics. Arts and special interest/educational programs ranked second.**

## Programs for Ages 19-29

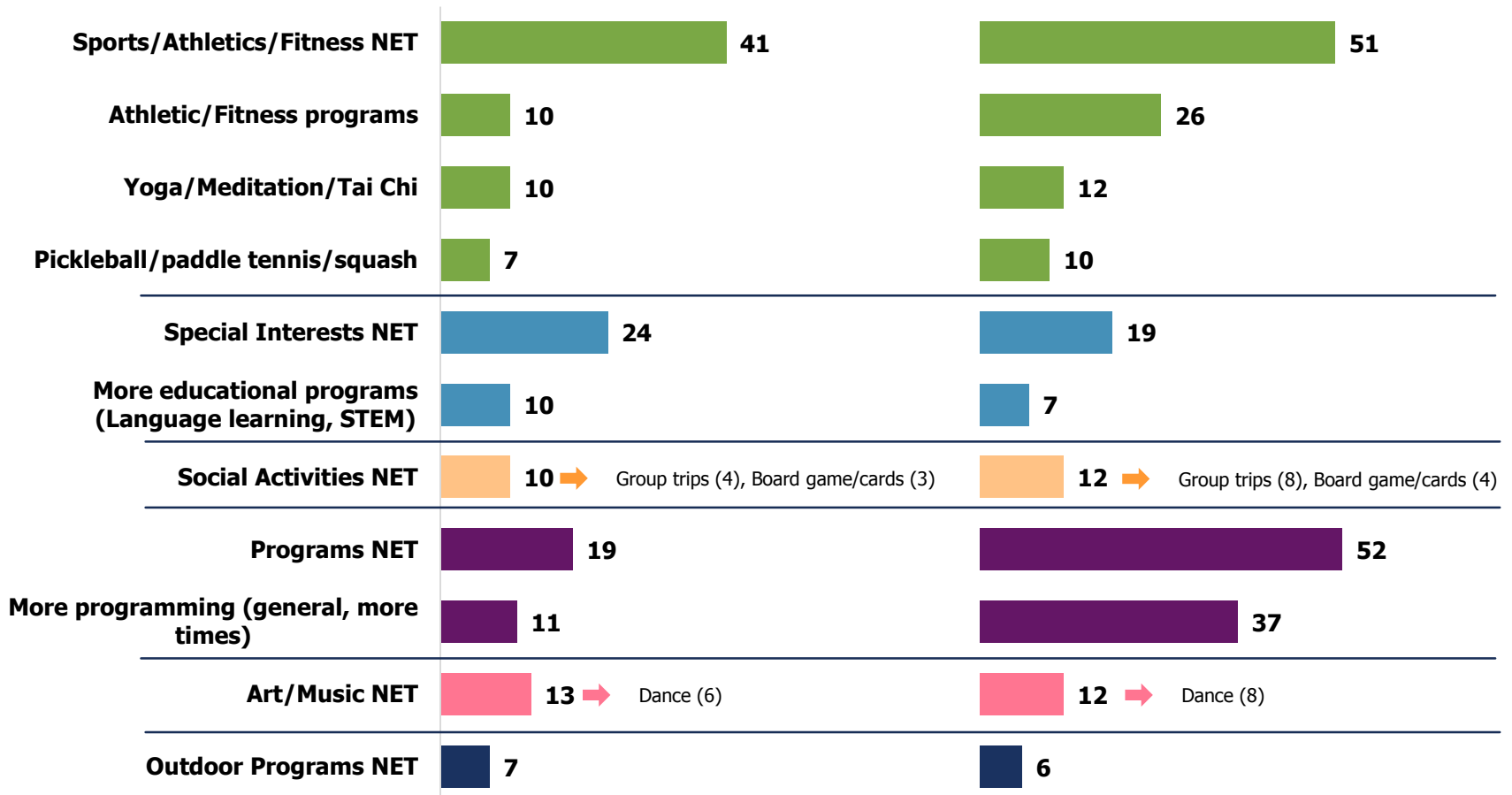
## Programs for Ages 30-49



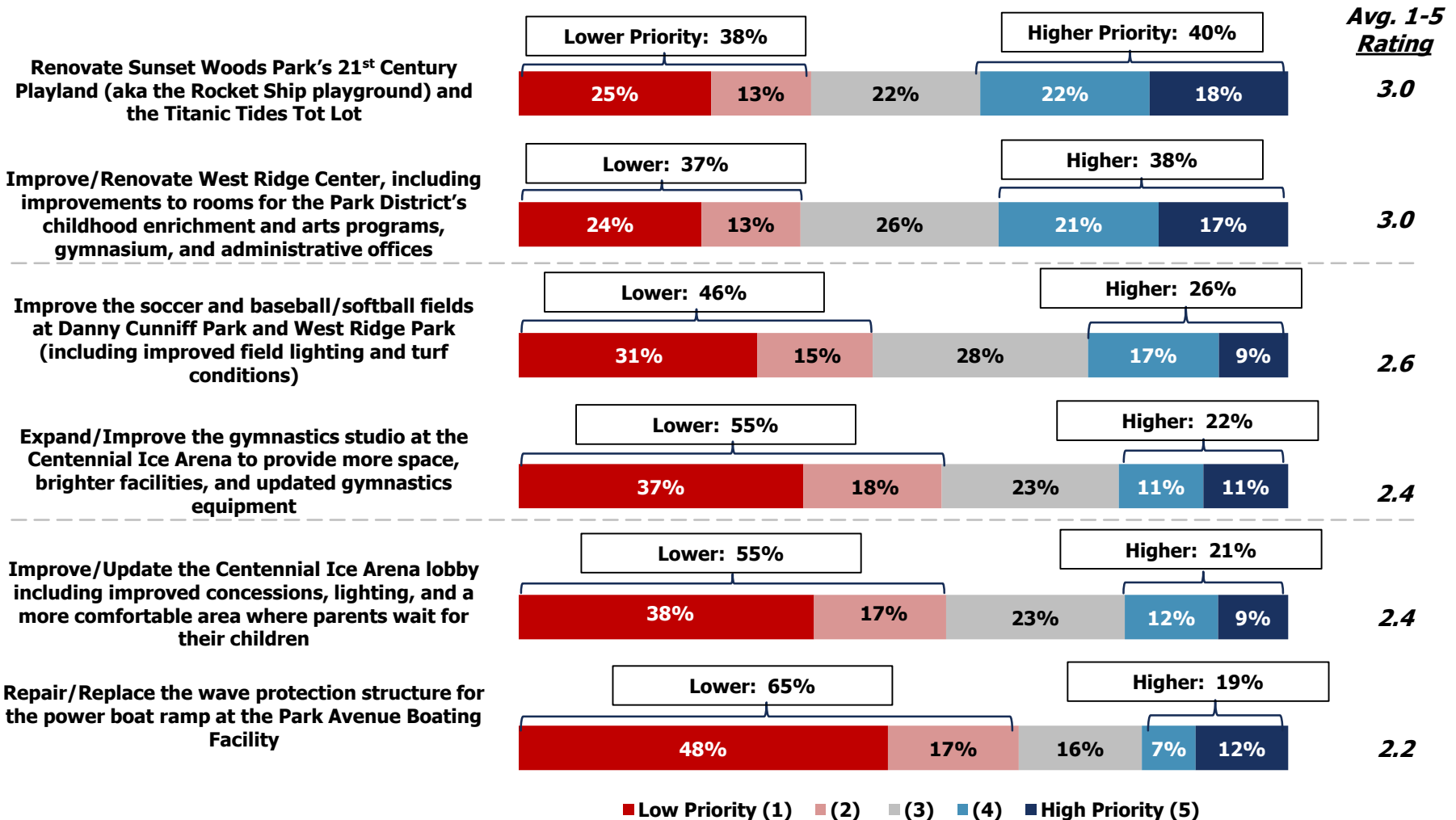
**For older/active adults (who tend to represent a programming “gap”), a variety of sports and athletic programs are sought. Several simply said they want to see more programming in general (especially those ages 65+).**

## Programs for Ages 50-64

## Programs for Ages 65+



**From a list of potential facility improvements, renovations to Sunset Woods Park and West Ridge Center are top priorities (but are still evenly divided among residents).**

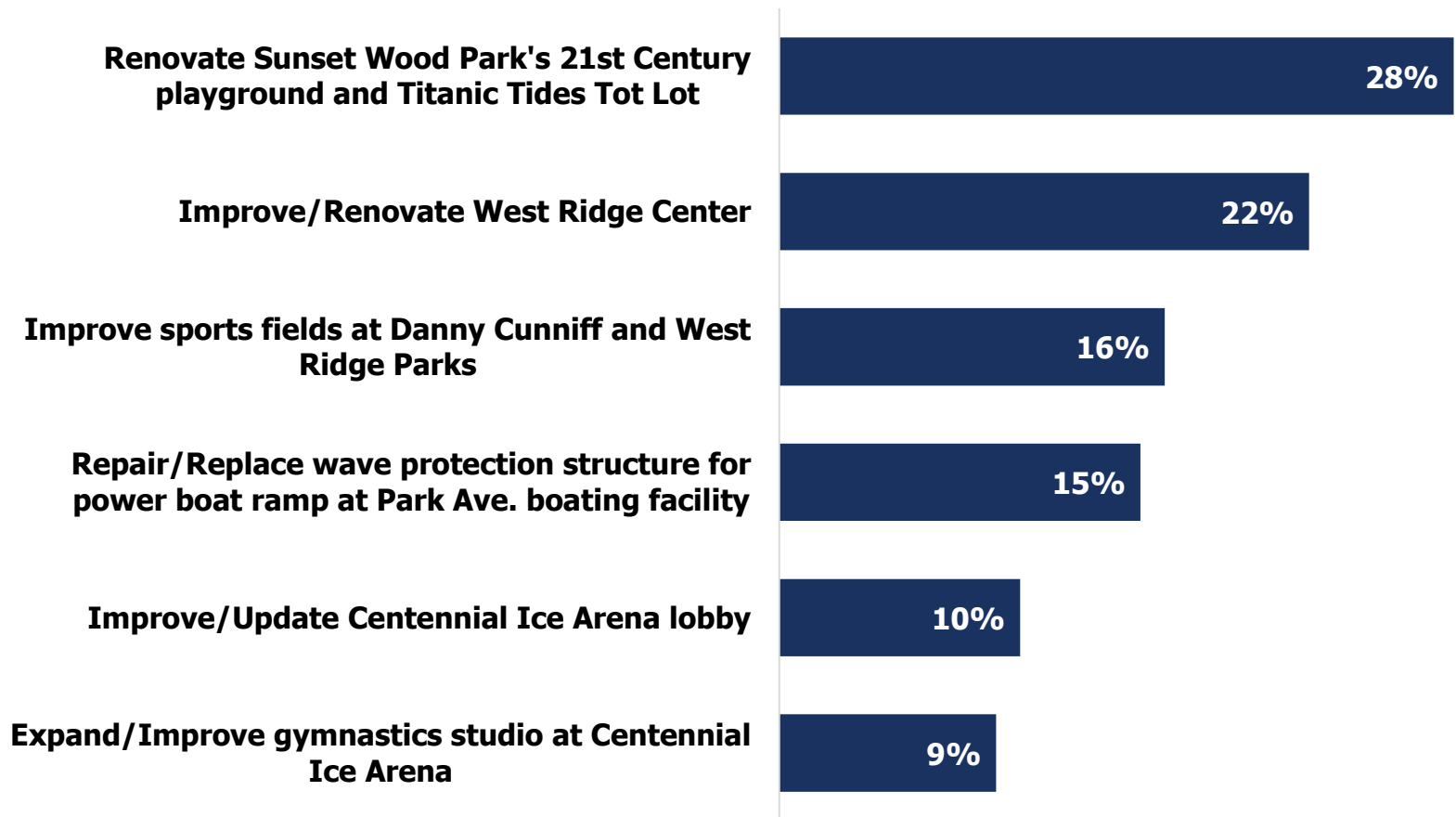


Q28. As you may know, there are various facility and space needs that the PDHP needs to address. Knowing that addressing any item could mean delays in other improvements and/or higher fees or property taxes, please indicate what priority should be placed on each facility or improvement shown below. (ORDER WAS VARIED)



**Improvements and upgrades to both the playground at Sunset Woods and the West Ridge Center register as the top priorities for the PDHP.**

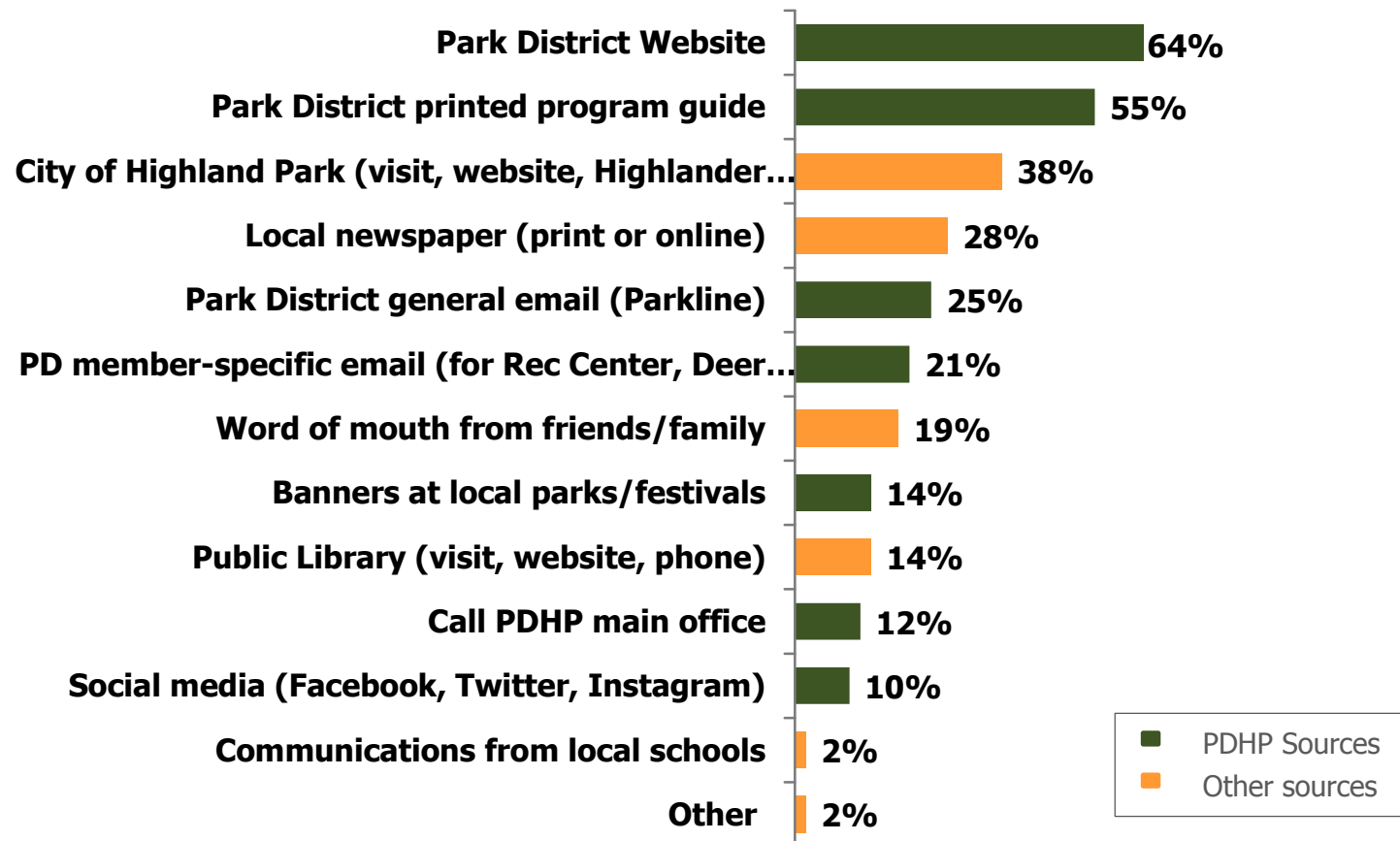
**PDHP Capital Improvements: Single Top Priority  
(n=557)**



Q29. Which one of those improvements should be a top priority?

**Most Highland Park residents look to the PDHP website and program guide for information about facilities, programs, and events.**

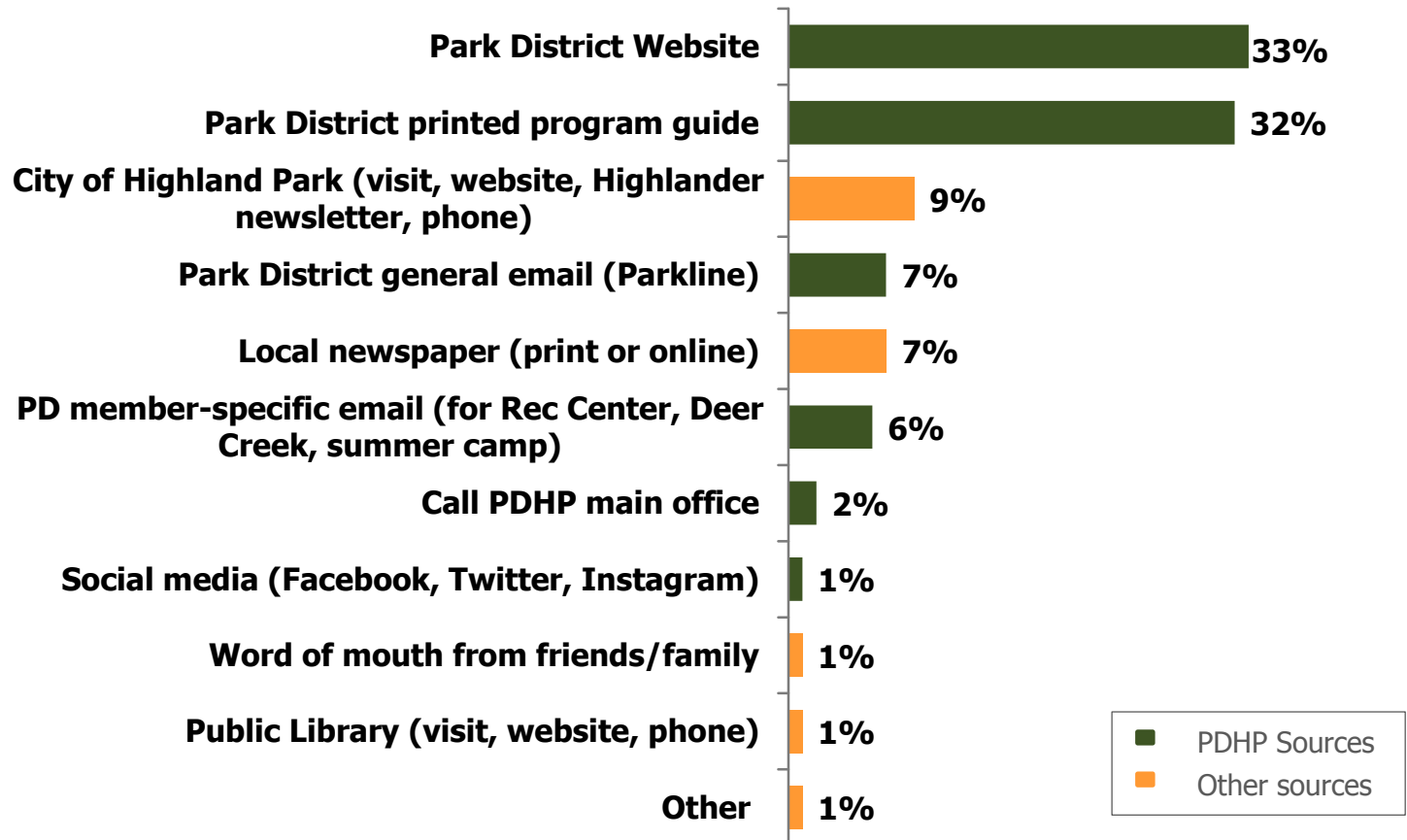
**Most Used Current Sources for Park District Information (n=779)**



Q30. When you seek information about the Park District of Highland Park and its programs, parks, facilities, or services, from what sources do you get that information? (based on multiple responses)

The most preferred sources of PDHP information are clearly the District's website and printed guide (each cited by one in three residents)

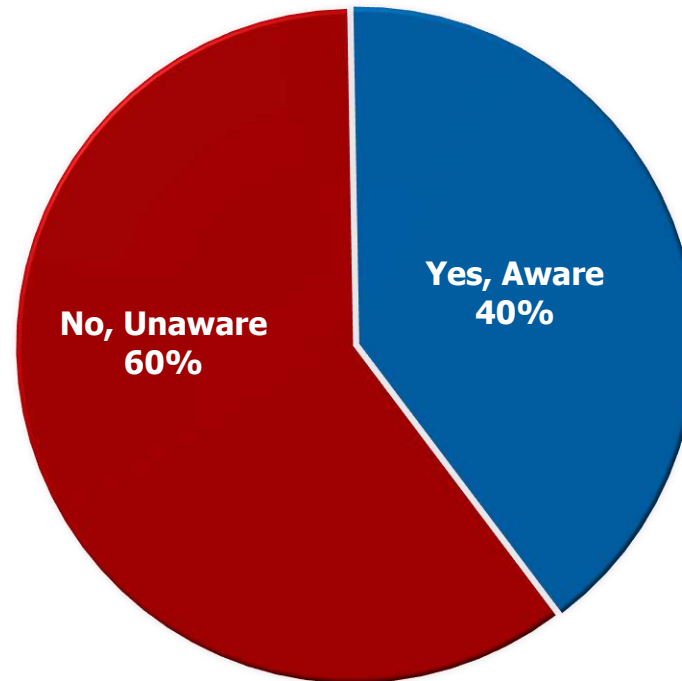
**Preferred Source for Park District Information (n=539)**



Q31. Which is your preferred source of PDHP information? (single response)

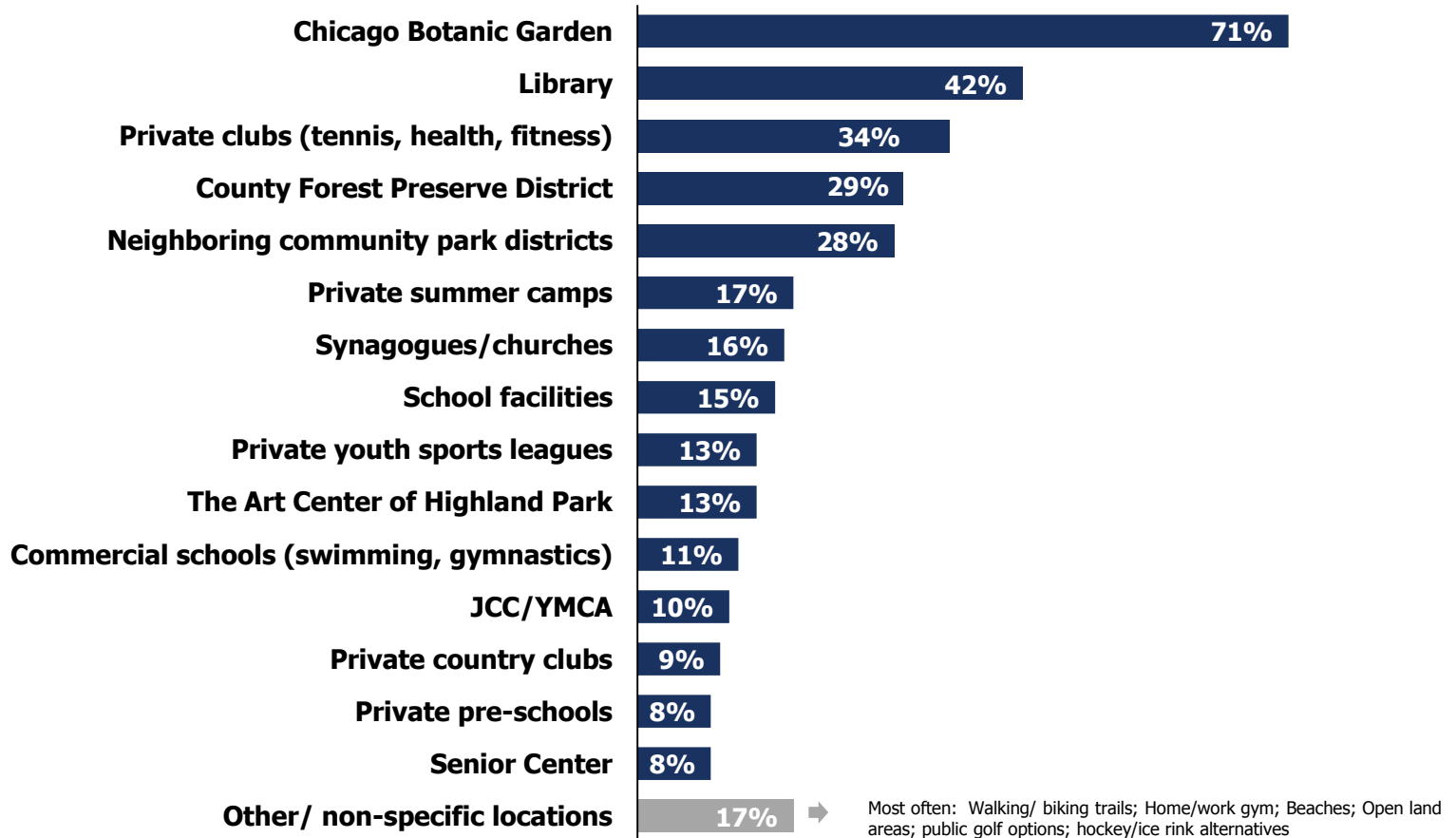
**Two in five residents report being aware of the PDHP's grants-in-aid program for families in need.**

**Awareness of PDHP's SMILE Grants-in-Aid Program**



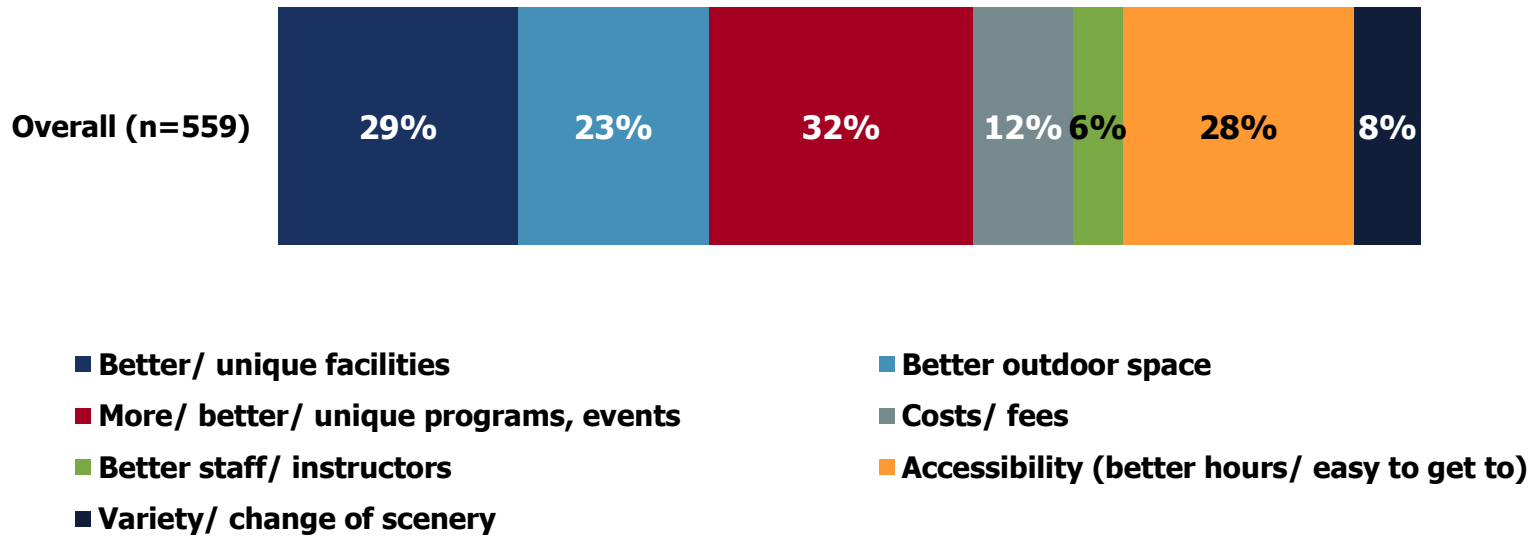
**Nearly three in four Highland Park residents report visiting the Chicago Botanic Garden for recreation or fitness. The Public Library ranks a distant second.**

**Other Non-PDHP Parks/Facilities Used For Recreation/Fitness (n=781)**



## Residents using other facilities or agencies for fitness and recreation cite a wide range of reasons.

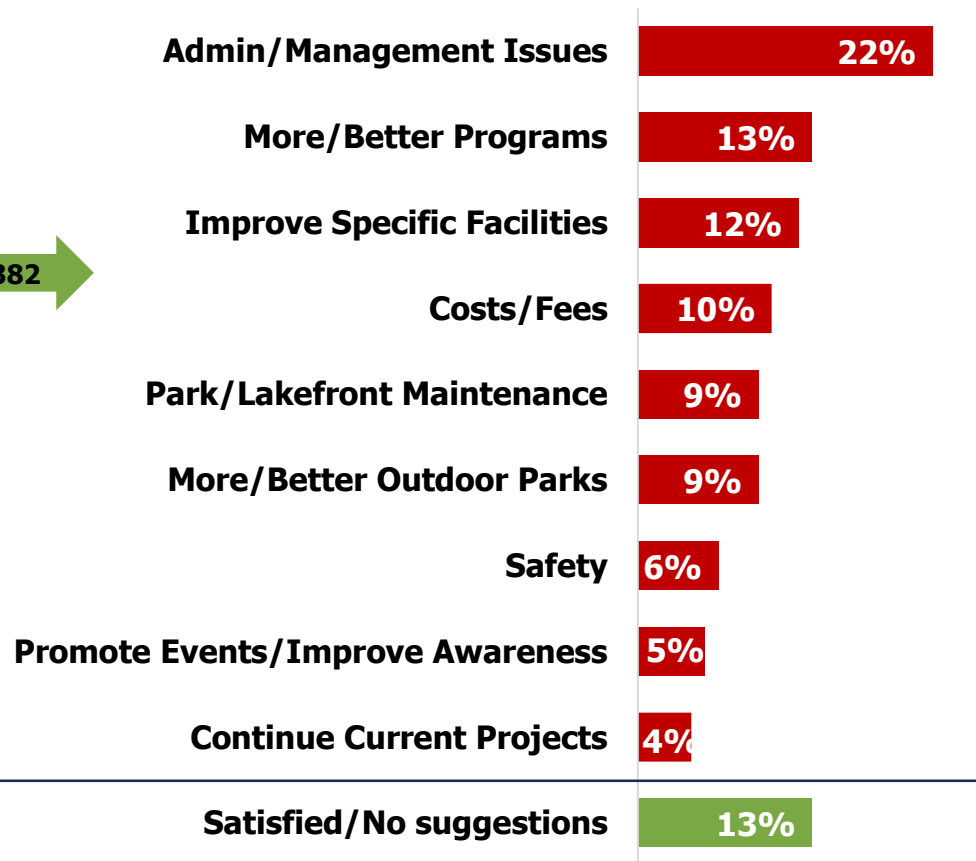
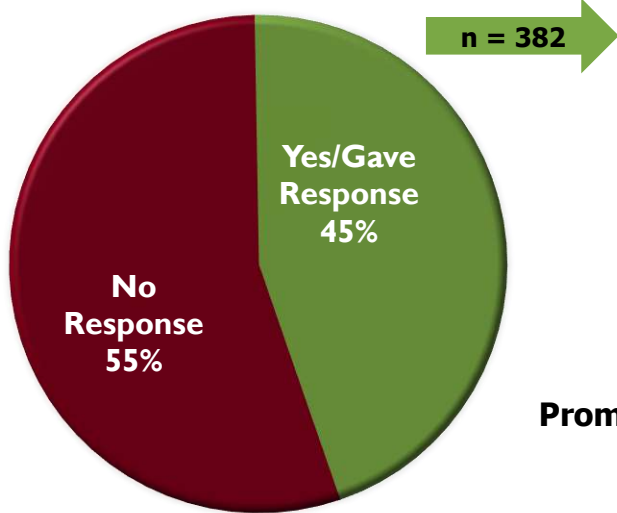
### Reasons For Using Non-PDHP Parks/Facilities (top multiple open-ended responses)



**At the conclusion of the survey, just under half of the respondents offered final comments and feedback.**

**Most Frequent Comments/Suggestions  
(multiple open-ended responses)**

**Have Additional  
Comments/Feedback?**



## Residents are Very Satisfied with the District and its Parks/Facilities.

- The PDHP is held in very strong regard overall, given its strong esteem rating (85% satisfied vs. 8% dissatisfied) and perceived “good” value overall (68% good/great value overall, vs. 13% poor value).
- Residents are especially satisfied with the overall upkeep, safety, accessibility, and service provided at its parks and facilities. These scores are even more positive than the overall opinions for the PDHP.
  - Residents generally feel that aside for needing basic ongoing maintenance, the outdoor parks are in relatively good shape.
- PDHP staff receive strong satisfaction scores overall, and any staff- or service-related issues have more to do with specific District policies or rules.
  - One in four of the relatively few who expressed dissatisfaction attribute these lower scores to staff service exclusively, and about as many feel it is a combination of PHDP policies and the staff’s response.
  - When educating users and conveying rules and protocols, ensure greater consistency and training on how staff deliver helpful, polite service.



## **Some capital improvements are deemed priorities among residents overall, but many appeal primarily to just current users.**

- A couple of capital improvements register as priorities to about 40% of residents communitywide, namely:
  - Playground improvements at Sunset Woods Park, and
  - Renovation of West Ridge Center.

Still, even these two projects have somewhat divided support. Again, many residents generally feel that parks and facilities are in good shape.

- Other improvements (either tested specifically or volunteered via open-ended feedback) register as lower priorities community-wide. Interest in these other upgrades is mostly limited to current users of each facility, the most popular of which are:
  - The Recreation Center (improved general maintenance, easier access, better bathrooms);
  - Rosewood Beach and Park (improved access, more maintenance/cleaner);
  - Centennial Ice Arena (maintenance, more/nicer bathrooms, easier access/parking);
  - Park Avenue Boating Facility (repair the protective wall, easier access).

## Other Opportunities Include More Adult Programming, and Improving (or “Updating”) the District’s Brand

- In addition to addressing capital improvements that the District deems as highest priorities, other improvement opportunities include:

- **Continue to demonstrate and convey responsible and good stewardship** of residents’ tax dollars.

Residents are quick to recognize the great parks, facilities, and events that the District provides, but give less positive scores for the agency overall and the value it represents.

Some of this “drag” on the PDHP’s image or brand comes from long-held opinions of waste and mismanagement, including decisions and events from around ten years ago. Roughly 5% to 8% consistently cite this concern, and is one of the top drivers for lower ratings.

These sentiments are sometimes coupled with general concerns about property taxes, and those who oppose any tax increase and expect agencies to do more with the same (or less).

- **Identify new programming ideas and options for adults** (especially active adults and/or empty nesters) who often feel that the PDHP is no longer relevant to them. This programming represents the only real “gap” in terms of what the PDHP currently offers in programming and indoor/outdoor facilities.

Developing and consistently promoting/communicating new adult programming represents the biggest opportunity for the PDHP.