



7.2 VISITOR SURVEYS AND RESPONSES







To: Isby Fleischmann, PlaceWorks
From: Kim Voros, Alta
Date: March 23, 2022
Re: Folsom RTMP

Introduction

As part of the Folsom Area State Parks Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP), a user survey was conducted to gather information about how the trail system is currently used and understand what types of improvements the public might like to see. The results of the survey will be used to inform plan development. This memorandum contains the following information:

- **Survey Design, Public Outreach and Respondent Demographics.** This includes a description of the survey instrument, the associated outreach and a discussion of respondent demographics. A description of a previous survey completed in 2013/2014 is also included. The 2013/2014 survey results are found in **Appendix B**.
- **Key findings** that providing an overall understanding of the survey responses as well as insights into topics of interest such as the reported reasons for park use.
- **Graphs and tables** providing insight into the answers for specific survey questions. This memo includes charts and figures illustrating the results from the web survey. Unless otherwise noted, results from the app-based survey are generally consistent with the web survey.
- **Survey Mapping.** This memo includes two maps. The first relates survey respondents self-reported status as a local or nonlocal to typical park entry points and parking locations. The second relates reported trail use types to typical park entry points and parking locations. Maps are inserted in the body of the memo and also found in **Appendix A**.

Key Findings from Survey Respondents

- **Respondents are** overwhelmingly white, male, middle aged, and live in households with high annual incomes. About 70 percent of people reported using the park weekly; 18 percent of people reported using the park daily and over 40 percent reported mountain biking as a primary use.
- The **most common reason for visiting** Folsom Area State Parks was to **use the trail system**, which is unsurprising given the survey targeted trail users. This is true for people that who identified themselves as living ‘near’ the parks or ‘far away’.
- Three-fourths of respondents travel to Folsom Area State Parks alone and **then meet up with a group**. About half of all groups are comprised of either three or four people.
- Over **half of people drive** to the park. About 25 percent of respondents reported biking to the park.
- Most **people that do not drive to the park enter through an informal connection** rather than an official, designated entry point.
- About 60 percent of **all park visits are more than 2 hours long** and almost all respondents (97 percent) reported that a typical visit is at least one hour long.
- **The most common trail use for respondents was mountain biking (43 percent) followed by hiking or walking.** Considering road bike and e-bike use, over half of respondents use trails for some form of biking. In nearly all cases, regardless of their main reasons for visiting the parks, the plurality of respondents reported using the trails for mountain biking purposes. For those respondents visiting for nature viewing, leisure, or cultural features, the most common trail usage was hiking or walking.
- The trail **qualities valued most highly** by respondents were the **diversity of trail difficulty levels** (25 percent), **trail loop options** (18 percent), and **regional trail connections or long-distance routes** (14 percent).
- **A majority of respondents have a positive perception of the trail system**, particularly that the trails provide scenic views, difficulty levels suitable for all users, and are clean and safe. No more than 20 percent of respondents disagree with any of the statements, but those with the highest levels of disagreement are those regarding park information and wayfinding, and trail width to avoid conflicts between users.
- The **top issue detracting** from trail usage is a **lack of desired trail types** (31 percent of respondents selected), followed by **interactions with other users**, via user etiquette (21 percent) and **trail user conflicts** (16 percent). Users are generally not dissuaded by the current parking or amenity provisions.
- When asked about **potential park improvements**, respondents overwhelmingly selected options involving **expanded mountain biking trail types**, but more broadly for expanding the number of trail options for all user types.
- Key themes that emerged from write in answers include trail overcrowding / overuse, etiquette among all user groups, question about the legality of e vehicles use on trails, requests for increased enforcement along trails, concerns over homeless encampments, concerns over personal safety and requests for more mileage of trails open to mountain bikes.

Survey Design, Public Outreach and Respondent Demographics

Survey Design

The 2021 Folsom Area RTMP Trail Use survey was conducted as part of the planning effort’s public outreach. The survey questions were developed using the 2013/2014 survey, which is described in detail later in this memo, as a starting point.¹ The 2021 survey was made available as both an online survey and through California Department of Parks and Recreation’s (State Parks) smartphone app provided by OuterSpatial (State Parks trail app). This trails app was initially launched in 2021, and this was the first app-based survey (referred to as a ‘Challenge’) conducted using the app. The Challenge allowed deployment of the survey in discreet geographic areas of the park.² The survey asked users to answer a series of questions about demographics, how they travel to and use the parks as well as attitudes and perceptions of the parks and trails. The web survey design was intended to provide an overall understanding of the park’s travel patterns and use and while the challenge was intended to capture attitudes and perceptions about subareas of the park. Low response rates to the challenge made this analysis of subregions unfeasible. Possible reasons for the low number of survey responses include barriers to entry (e.g., downloading the app and creating a user name) and low levels of cell phone usage during park visits; the app may be more accessible for future projects assuming that public use of the State Parks trails app increases.

Public Outreach

A multi-pronged approach to outreach for the online survey and app were utilized to encourage broad participation.

Strategies included:

- **Project webpage.** The project website was maintained to provide information on the planning process, identified opportunities to participate, provided links to the online survey and app, allowed visitors to sign up for email updates, and provided an email address to contact with comments or questions.
- **Project contact list.** Emails were sent to the project contact list that announced opportunities to participate in the survey and other engagement activities. The project contact list included contacts from 2013 stakeholder outreach efforts, representatives of local and regional stakeholder groups, offices of regional agencies and elected official, individuals who contacted State Parks with question or comments related to Folsom Area State Parks trails prior to or during the planning process, and individuals who signed up for the contact list either through the project website and/or at pop-up events.
- **Social Media.** Posts encouraging survey participation were made Folsom Lake SRA Instagram and Facebook accounts.
- **Workshop.** Participation in surveys was encouraged at the virtual public workshop conducted for the project in October 2021.
- **Pop-up events.** Four pop-up events were conducted in Fall 2021 at events within or near the parks to encourage engagement in the planning process, with emphasis on survey opportunities. Pop-ups included the Folsom Electricity Fair (9/11/2021), the Folsom Peddler’s Fair (9/19/2021), Granite Head Trails and Ales (10/9/21), and the Folsom Blues Half Marathon (10/17/2021).
- **Temporary Signs at Trailheads.** Signs were posted at trailheads announcing the planning process and encouraging participation in the survey. The signs provided QR codes to connect the project website and to download the State Parks’ trails app.

¹ Folsom Lake SRA 2013 – 2014 Trail User Survey Results: https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=28192

² The OuterSpatial app is geared towards the outdoor community and provides park and trail users with a one-stop shop for maps, news articles, directions, and other curated content about specific sites.



Through these combined strategies, survey opportunities were shared with numerous visitors and stakeholders of Folsom Lake SRA and the Folsom Powerhouse SHP. However, project outreach did not target potential visitors and stakeholders at the State level.

Survey Response and Demographics

Response to the survey was varied. While the web survey received responses from over 1,500 unique users, about 30 people responded to the challenge (OuterSpatial application). The typical survey respondent was white, male, middle aged, and lived in a household with no children and had a high annual income. Mountain biking was the most common reason stated for trail use. Given the accessibility of the web survey, it is possible that communities with specific interests self-selected, which may in turn affect the survey results. It may also be related to the abilities of interest groups to spread the word about the user survey, the accessibility of the survey via technology and the in-person outreach, which targeted the populations around the park itself, rather than potential visitors and stakeholders at the State level.

Comparison to Previous Surveys

Mentioned previously, the 2013/2014 survey was conducted as an intercept survey at 18 locations throughout the park. The survey was conducted at each location quarterly throughout the year on a weekday and weekend. Surveys were collected from about 760 participants. While trail users in this survey effort were also typically residents of surrounding counties and middle aged. The distribution of reasons for trail use was more varied and included a greater proportion of people who indicated hiking, road biking and trail running as their primary reason for trail use than the current survey, which cited mountain biking as the most common trail use. Demographic information collected during this survey effort was limited to age and zip code, which limits the amount of demographic comparison that is possible.

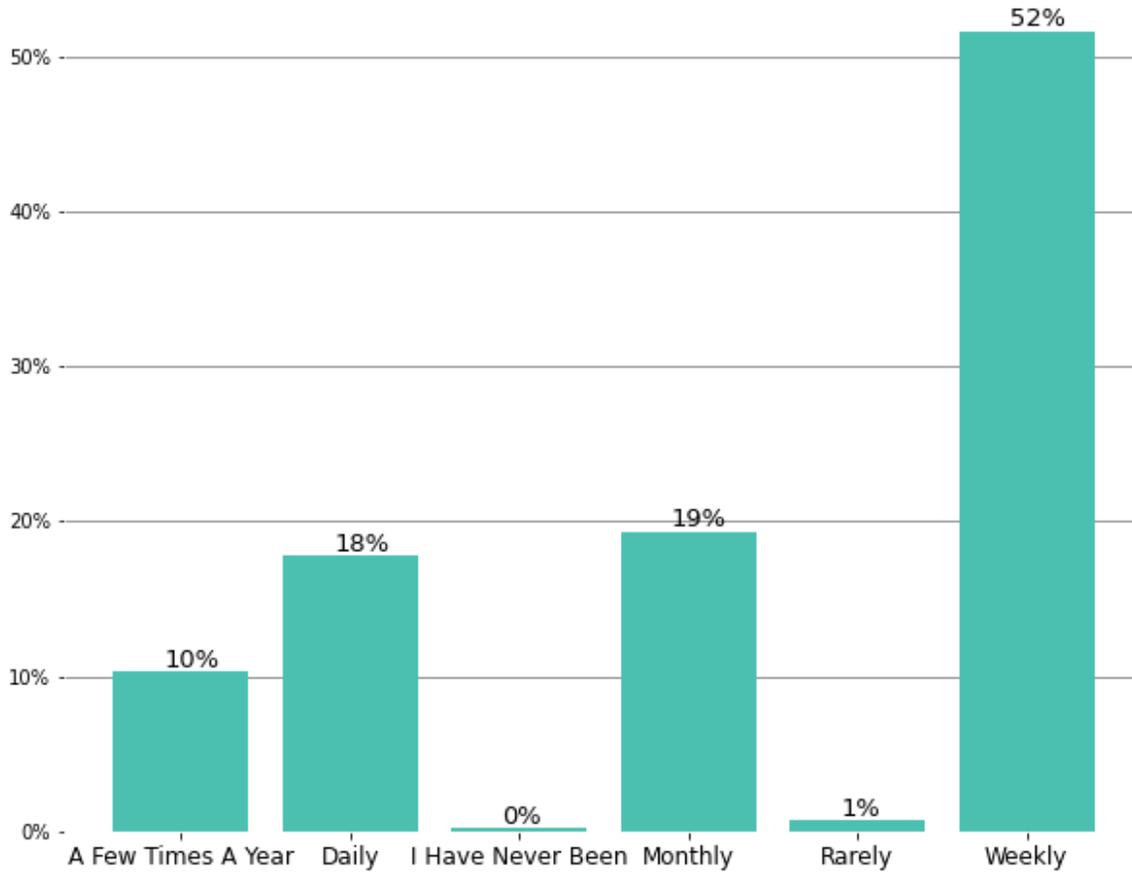
The analysis of individual questions, contained later in this memo, will include a summary of the answer from the 2013/2014 survey when comparable data is available. Methodology differences will also be noted. The primary difference is that the 2013/2014 survey asked users to select a single answer to many questions while the 2021 survey allowed users to select their top three answers.

Other key findings from the 2013/2014 survey included the following:

- The most popular entry points were Granite Bay and Nimbus Flat. Approximately 40% of respondents entered through these areas. Other common points of entry included Brown's Ravine, Beal's Point, Lake Natoma and other trail systems.
- The majority of people who drive to the parks were able to park at their desired destination.
- More than 70 percent of survey respondents use the trail for fitness, and almost 20 percent reported using the trails for general recreation.
- Most people thought the park provided enough opportunities trail related recreation, though mountain bikers were most likely to report dissatisfaction.
- The highest priorities for improvement recreational trail use were better trail maintenance, better signage and more trails. Nearly 20 percent of respondents said no improvements were needed.

2021 Detailed Survey Results

Question 1. How often to you recreate within the Folsom Lake SRA and the Folsom Powerhouse SHP (Folsom Area State Parks)? (N=1508)

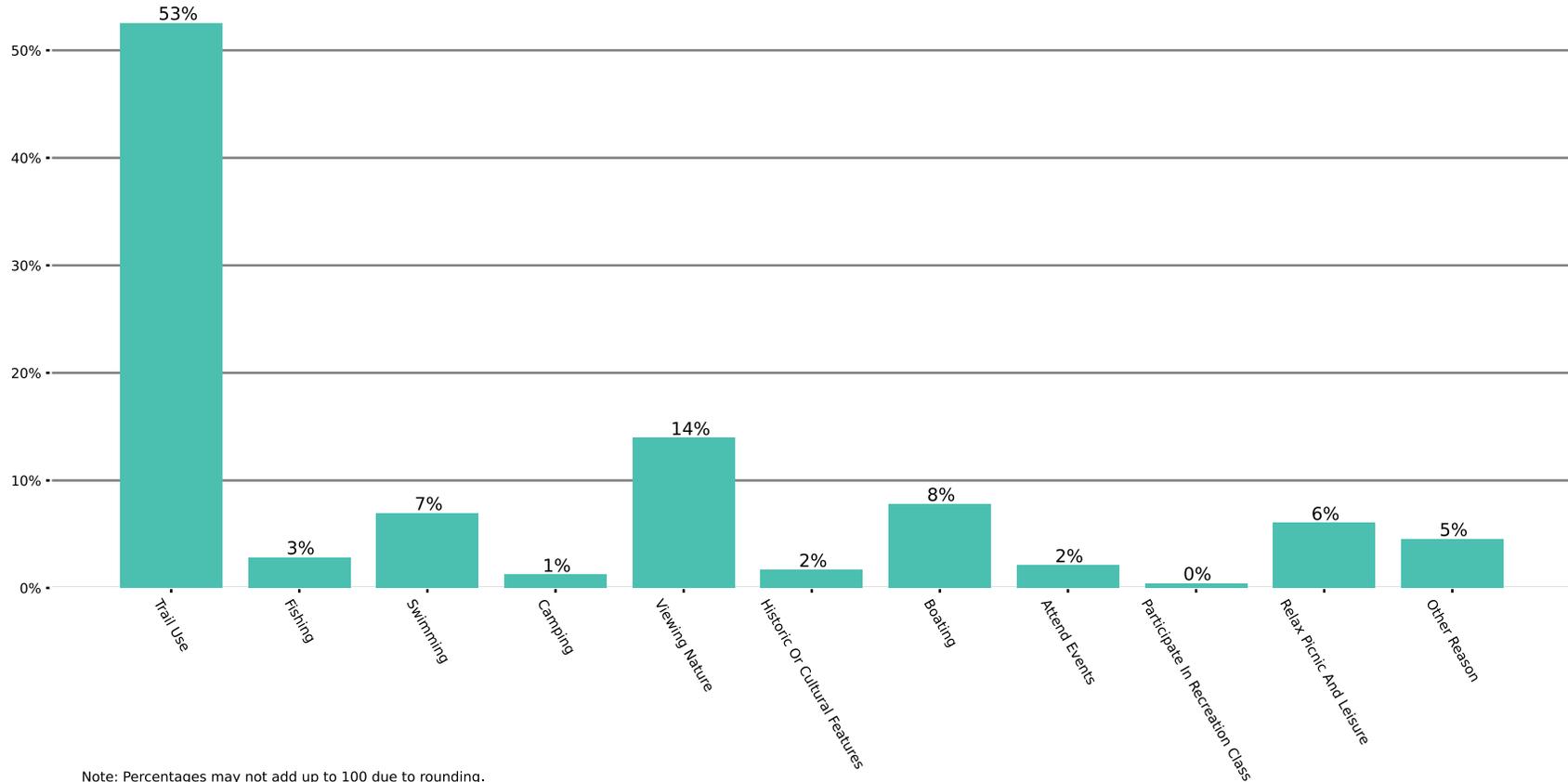


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Most people who responded to the web survey are frequent users of the park. About 70 percent of people reported using the park weekly; 18 percent of people reported using the park daily. These numbers are similar to patterns of use reported in the 2013/2014 survey, though slightly different wording of the question prohibits a direct comparison. These findings are consistent expected, given that outreach was focused around the park itself.

Question 2. What are the main reasons you visit these parks? (Choose up to three) (N=2821)



Findings

The most common reason for visiting Folsom Area State Parks was to use the trail system (53 percent). The second most selected response was viewing nature (14 percent), followed by water sports like boating (8 percent) and swimming (7 percent). Popular write in answers included horseback riding, mountain biking and paddling activities.

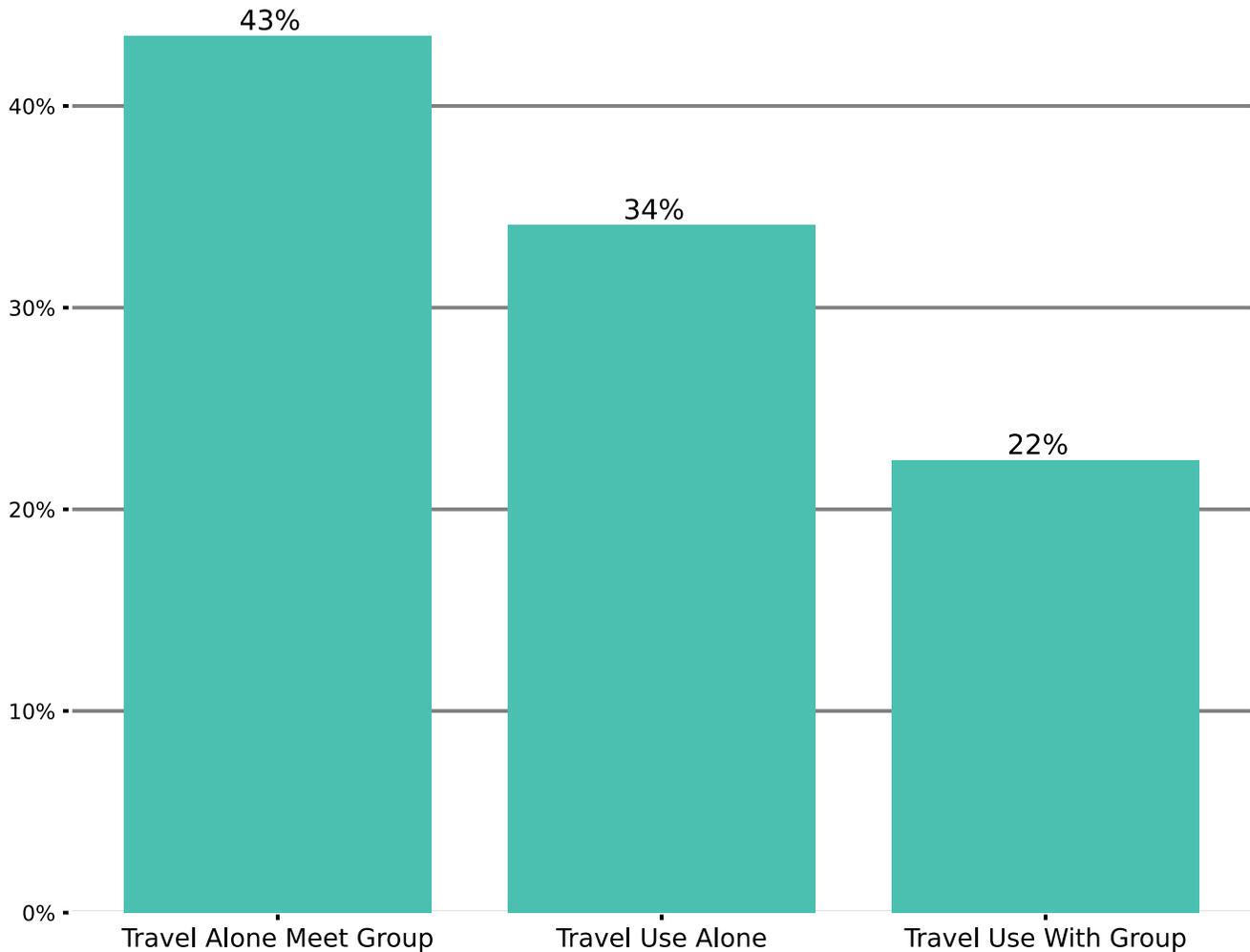
Table 1. Main Reason for Park Visitations, by Location of Home and Work

What are the main reasons you visit these parks?	Do you live or work near Folsom Area State Parks?			
	No		Yes	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Trail use	324	60%	1129	51%
Viewing nature	63	12%	326	15%
Boating	26	5%	191	9%
Swimming	23	4%	170	8%
Relax picnic and leisure	24	4%	145	6%
Other reason	28	5%	95	4%
Fishing	17	3%	61	3%
Attend events	15	3%	44	2%
Historic or cultural features	8	1%	38	2%
Camping	8	1%	26	1%
Participate in recreation class	3	1%	9	0%

Cross-tabulation Findings

A greater percentage of respondents that do not live or work near Folsom Area State Parks visit the park for trail use. However, trail use is by far the most commonly reported reason that people come to use the Parks, which is to be expected given that the survey targeted trail users, not all park users. Those that live or work nearby report using the park for water sports like swimming and boating more frequently than those who do not live or work in the area.

Question 3. Do you typically travel to these parks by yourself or with others? (N=1502)

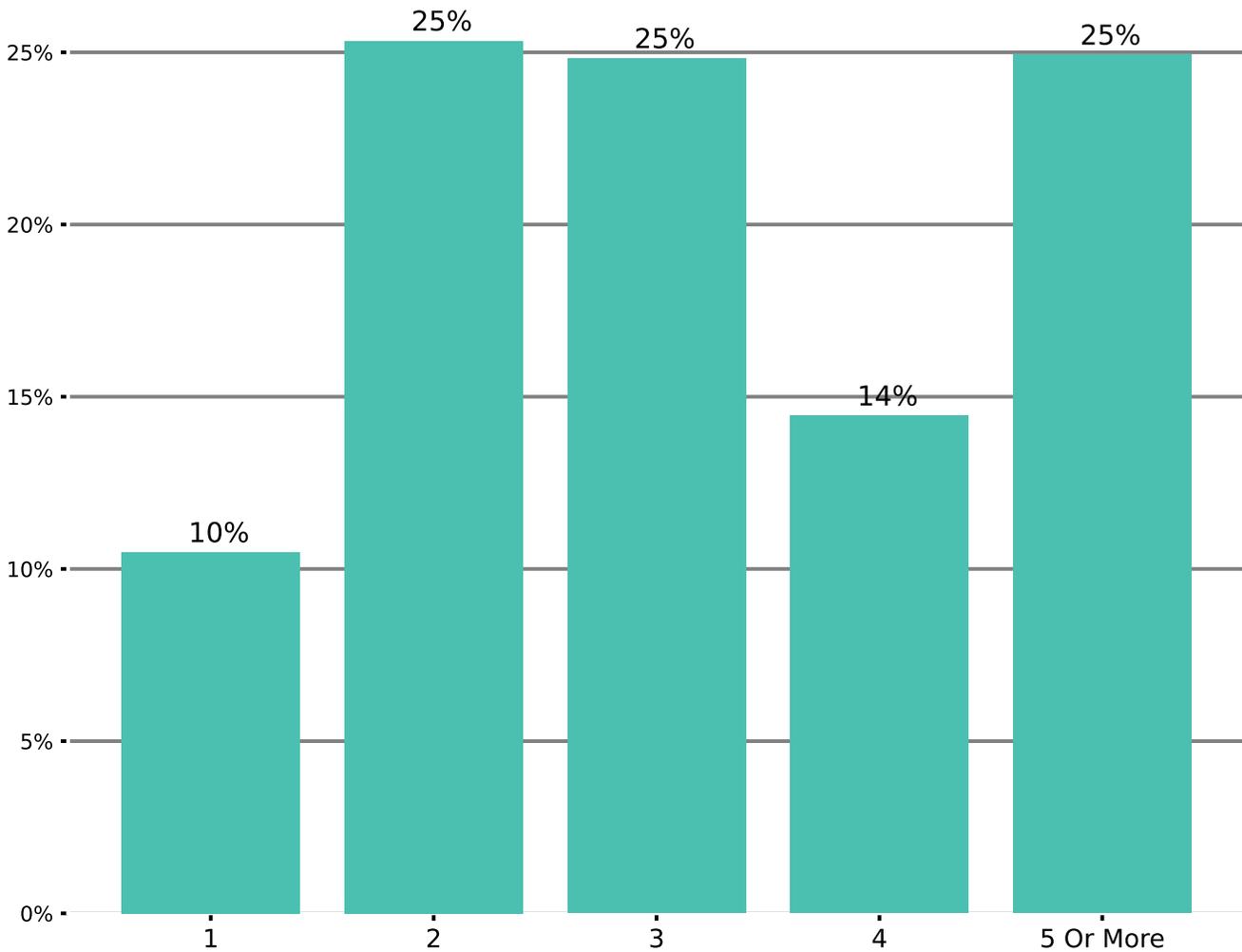


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Three-fourths of respondents travel to Folsom Area State Parks alone, but the majority use the park in groups. Most frequently, respondents traveled to the park alone but met up with a group at the park. Respondents of the app-based survey reported using the park alone more frequently than traveling alone to meet a group. The 2013/2014 survey reported that about 25 percent of responders are solo users, as opposed to 34 percent in the 2021 survey. This finding is not surprising, given that the high response rate of people who live near the park and may find it more convenient to travel from their home and meet a group at the park.

Question 4. Branching logic (ask if answer to Question 3 indicated they use the park in a group) How many people typically accompany you when you make use of these parks? (N=983)



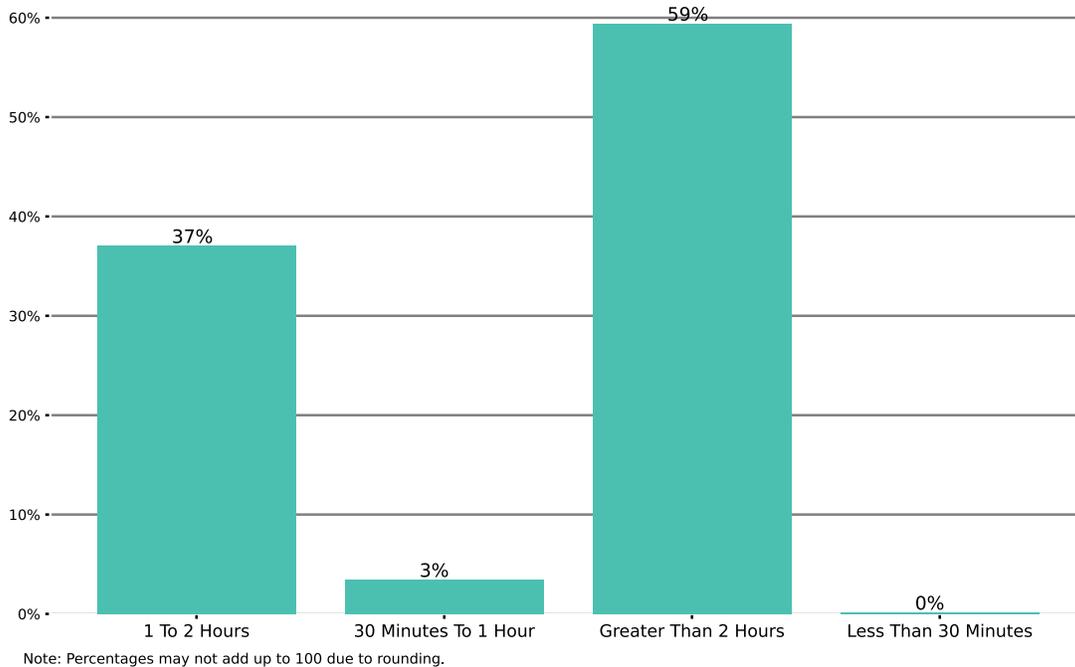
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Group size varies for those using the park with others, but 90 percent of groups include at least three people and 50 percent of groups are comprised of either three or four people. Compared to the 2013/2014 survey, more people tend to use the park with smaller groups of people. This finding could be due many reasons including COVID-19, slight differences in the way this question was worded between the two surveys or differences in demographics of the user groups.

Question 5. How long is your typical visit to the park? (N=1488)

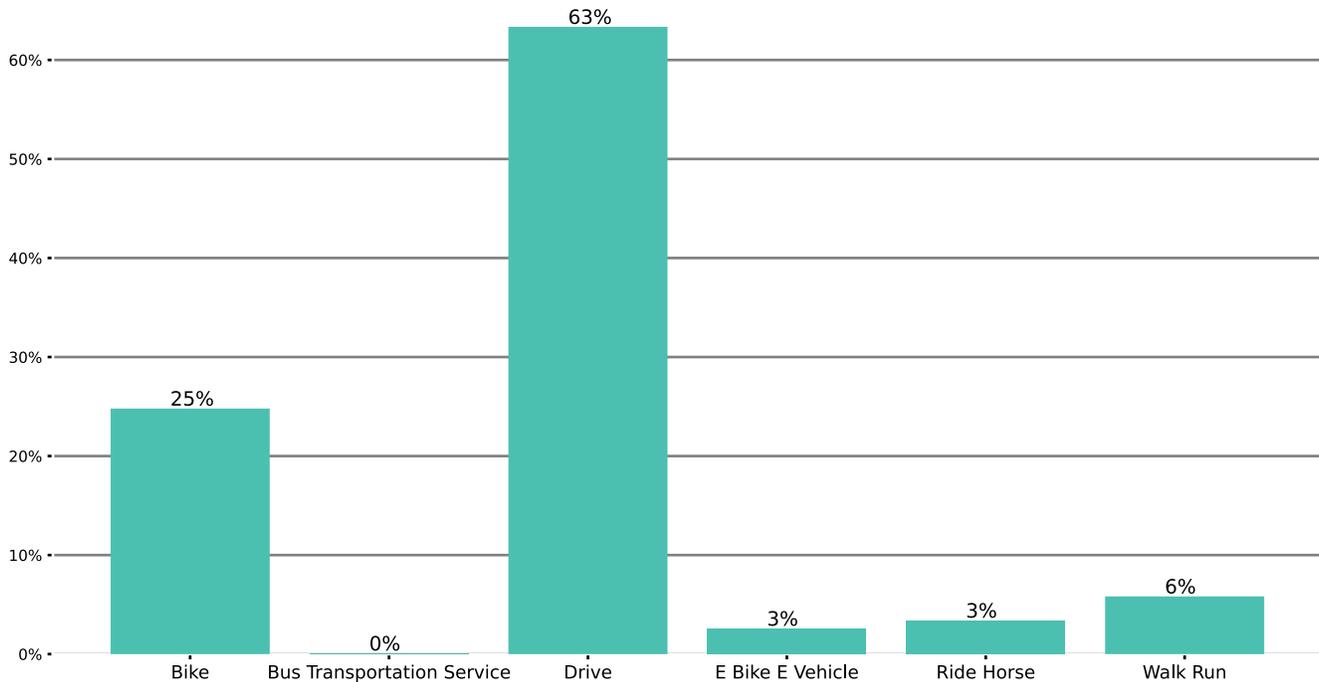
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Findings

Most survey respondents are at the park for more than 2 hours per visit (59%). Nearly all users spend at least 1 hour at the park in a typical visit (97%). This answer is likely affected by the responder demographics, who typically use the trails for mountain biking,

Question 6. How do you typically get to these parks? (Choose the method you use most often) (N=1476)



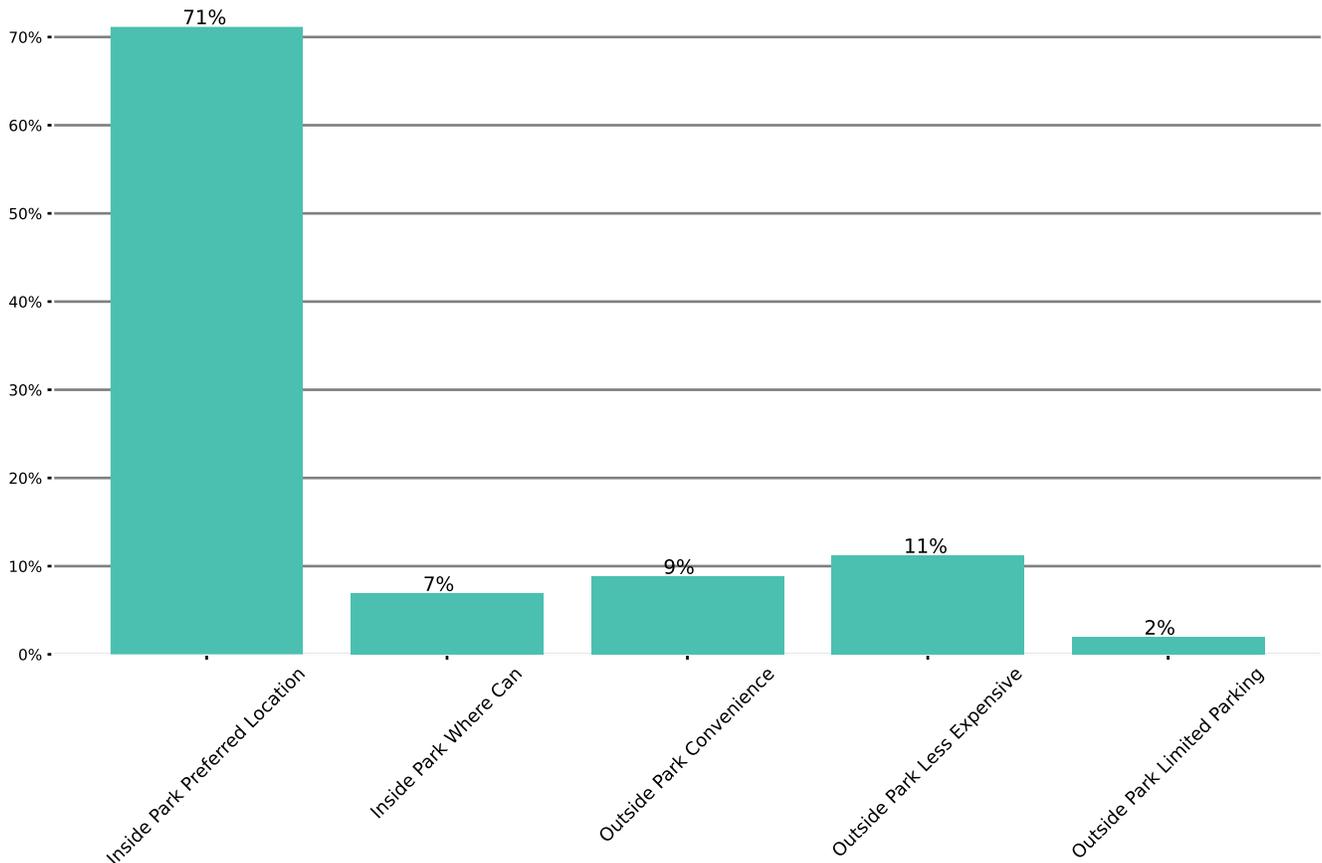
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Respondents most frequently drive to the park (63 percent), followed by bike or e-bike modes (28 percent). No respondents typically use bus services to access the park. While the percentage is low (3 percent) nearly 50 people reported accessing the park on horseback and nearly 100 people (6 percent) accessed the park on foot. Of the 54 people that reported using an E vehicle, about 75 percent reported using a Onewheel electric skateboard.

Comparatively, in the 2013/2014 only 30 percent of respondents reported driving to the park. Users were more likely to bike to the parks (about 35 percent or access the park on foot (about 25 percent).

6a. [For those that selected drive in question 6] When you drive to the parks, where do you usually park?
(N=929)

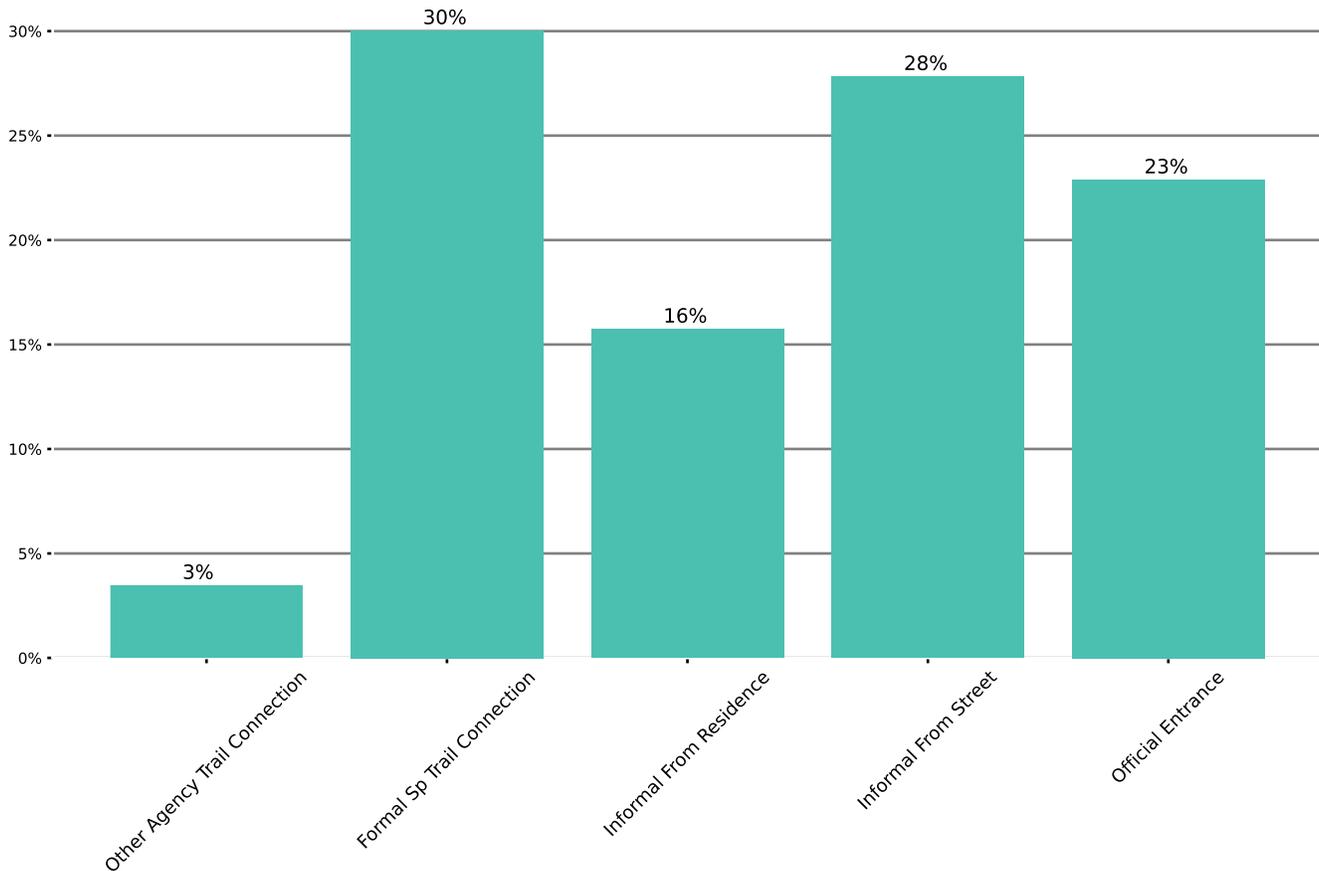


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Respondents who typically drive to the parks generally are able to find parking within the park at their preferred location (71 percent). Only 2 percent of respondents chose to park outside the park because they could not find parking inside the park. However, approximately 20 percent of survey respondents (about 300 people) reported parking outside of Folsom Area State Parks either because it was more convenient or less expensive. These results are consistent with the 2013/2014 survey, where respondents reported that parking was not a major problem.

Question 6b. [For those that did not select drive] Where do you typically enter these parks from? (N=546)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

For respondents who typically visit the park via non-driving modes, they enter the park through diverse means. Thirty percent of respondents enter via a state park trail connection and 28 percent enter informally from the street. These high use of informal entry points is consistent with the high response rate of people who consider themselves to be local residents of the area.



Question 7. Please indicate the location where you most frequently enter the Parks (trailhead or other access point) by placing a point on the map.

Figure 1 shows where users typically enter the park or park their motor vehicle and whether they identify as a local or nonlocal. The greatest number of survey respondents reported accessing the park at Granite Bay. Other key access points are Beales Point, Browns Ravine, Folsom Point Day Use Area and numerous small locations around Lake Natoma. Access around Lake Natoma is more local in nature, while areas like Granite Bay see more nonlocal use. See **Appendix A** for a full-size map of the results.

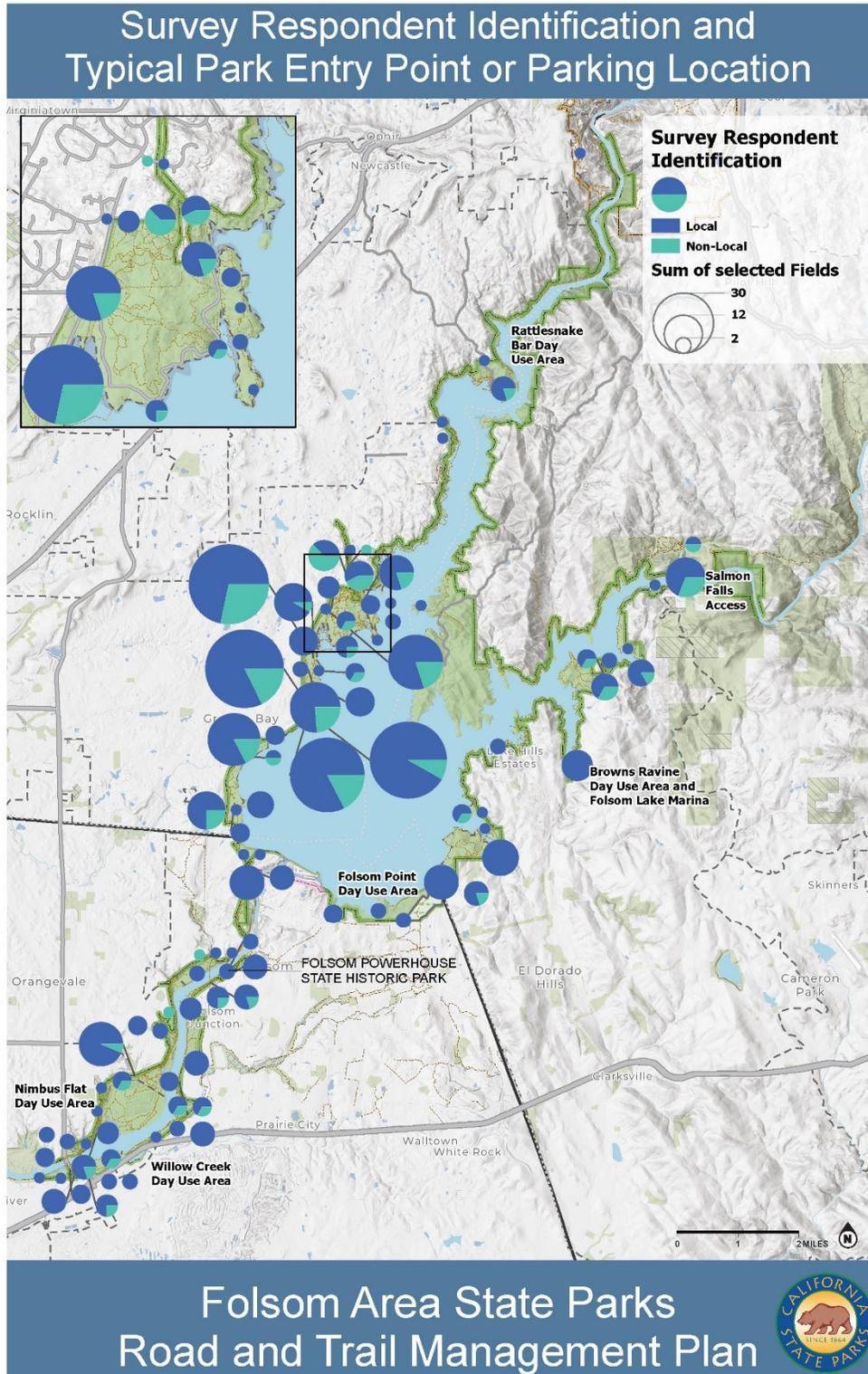


Figure 1. Survey Respondent Identification and Typical Park Entry or Parking Locations

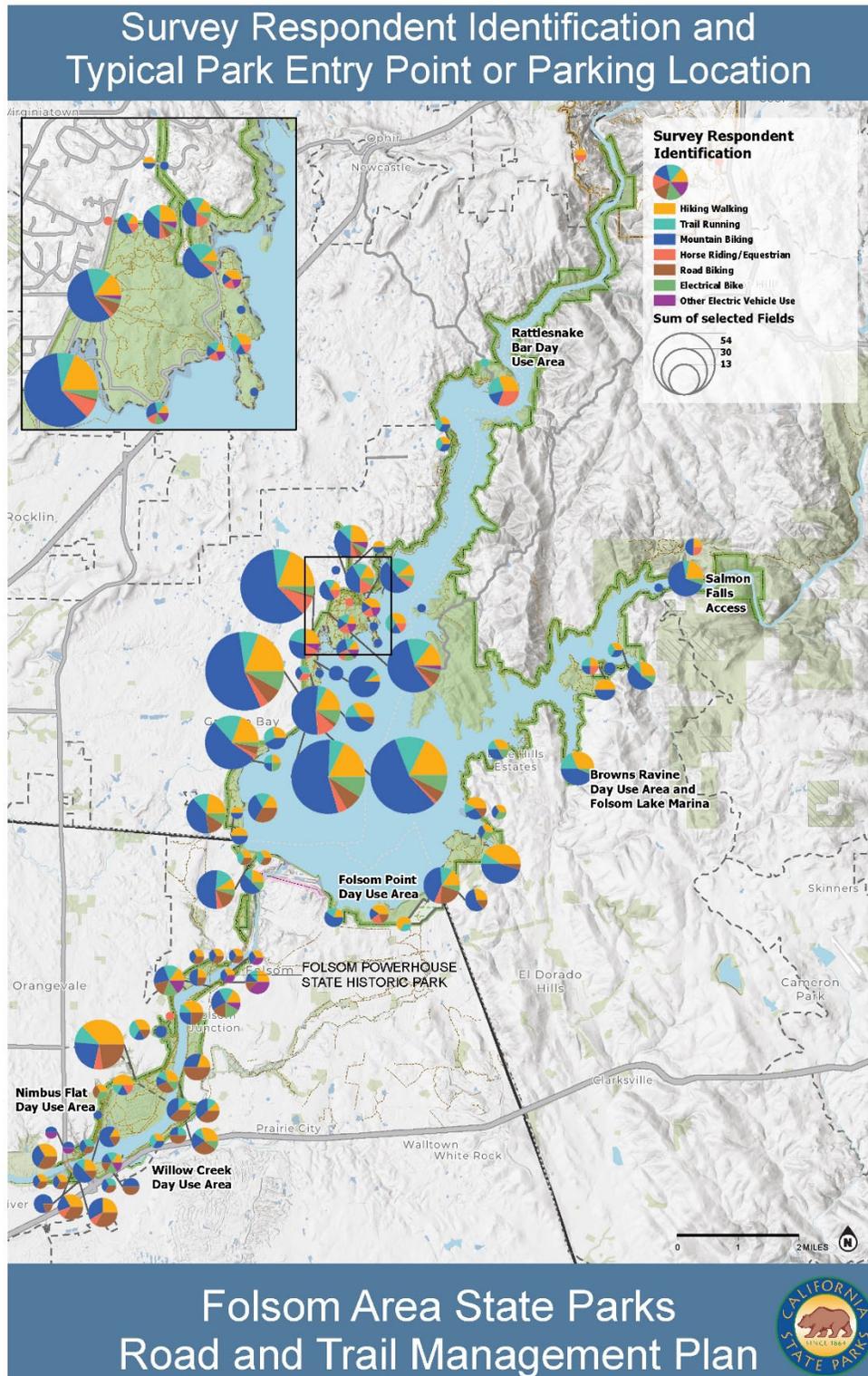
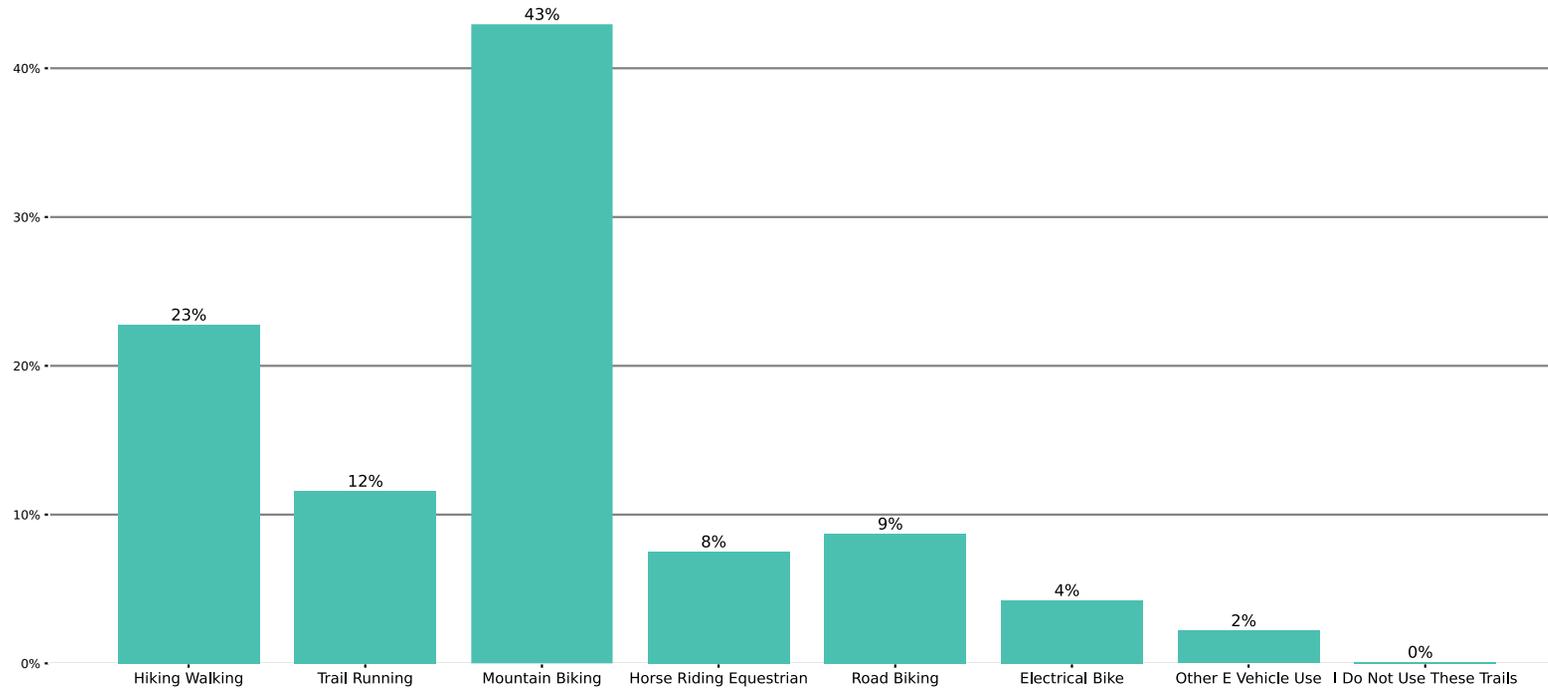


Figure 2. Survey Respondent Reasons for Trail Use and Typical Park Entry Point or Parking Location

Question 8. How do you use trails within the park? (Select up to three) (N=2505 answers outnumber survey respondents)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

The most common trail use for respondents was mountain biking (43 percent) followed by hiking or walking. Considering road bike and e-bike use, over half of respondents use trails for some form of biking. These results are inconsistent with the app-based survey, where approximately 40 percent (or 12) of users reported their primary reason for trail use as hiking or walking. As shown on Figure 2, trail the proportion of people using trails for different activates varies across the park. For example, more than half of the access in Granite Bay is related to mountain biking, while there is more road biking and hiking/walking on the paved loop around Lake Natoma. Low levels of equestrian use are reported throughout the west shore and lower use on the east shore. See **Appendix A** for a full-size map.

comparatively, in the 2013/2014 survey rates of hiking, walking and equestrian use were similar. However, road biking was more popular (about 25 percent of respondents) and rates of mountain biking were lower (about 20 percent of respondents). Care should be taken when comparing these results: in the 2013/2014 survey users selected their primary use, while in 2021 users could select up to three uses.

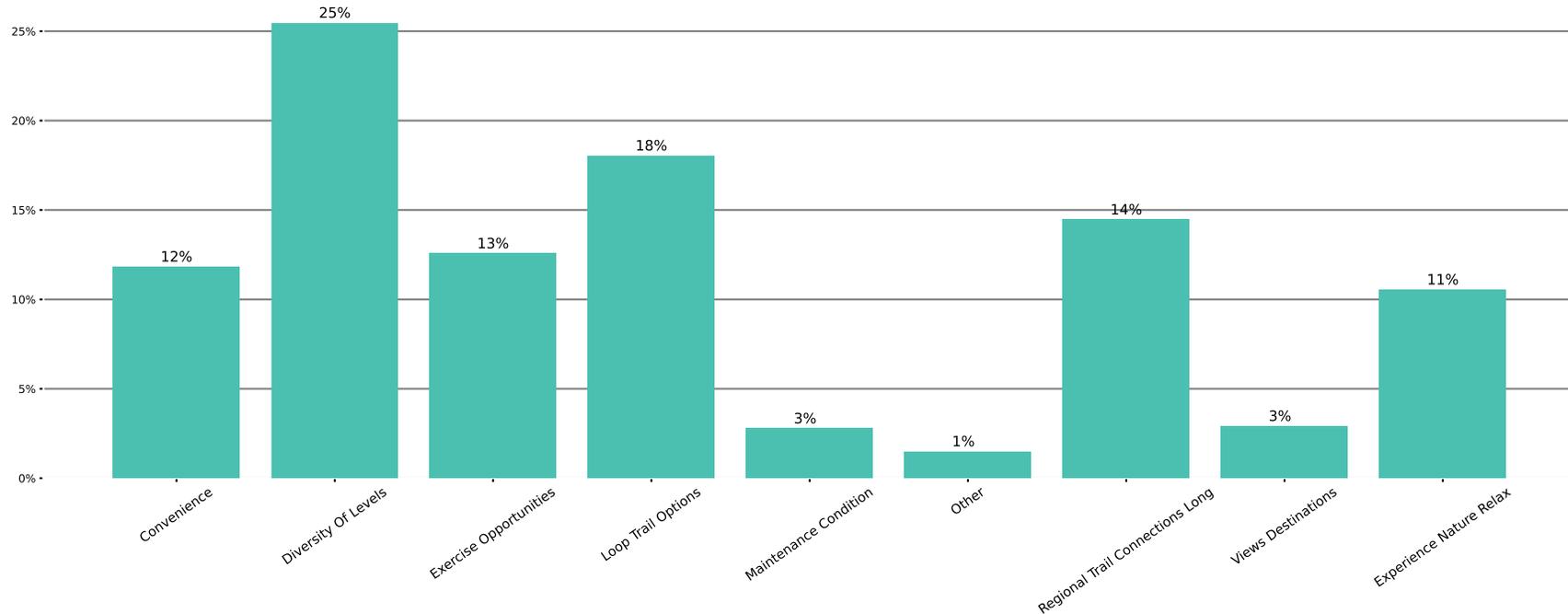
Table 2. Trail Use Type by Top 3 Reasons for Park Visitation (answers outnumber survey respondents)

How do you use trails within the park?	What are the main reasons you visit these parks?										
	Trail use	Viewing nature	Boating	Swimming	Relax, picnic, and leisure	Other reason	Fishing	Attend events	Historic or cultural features	Camping	Participate in recreation class
Hiking walking	23%	34%	25%	27%	37%	24%	25%	21%	39%	27%	21%
Trail running	12%	13%	12%	15%	13%	9%	7%	15%	11%	13%	26%
Mountain biking	43%	31%	39%	39%	28%	43%	46%	36%	26%	43%	47%
Horse riding equestrian	7%	5%	4%	4%	4%	9%	9%	8%	11%	0%	0%
Road biking	9%	11%	11%	9%	10%	12%	4%	10%	9%	9%	0%
Electrical bike	4%	3%	7%	4%	4%	1%	5%	5%	0%	4%	5%
Other E Vehicle use	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	0%
I do not use these trails	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total votes	2467	756	414	402	343	211	136	107	80	67	19

Findings

In nearly all cases, regardless of their main reasons for visiting the parks, the plurality of respondents reported using the trails for mountain biking purposes. For those respondents visiting for nature viewing, leisure, or cultural features, the most common trail usage was hiking or walking. Given that this survey targeted trail users, the views of other types of park users may be underrepresented.

Question 9. What do you value most about trails in these parks? (N=1481)



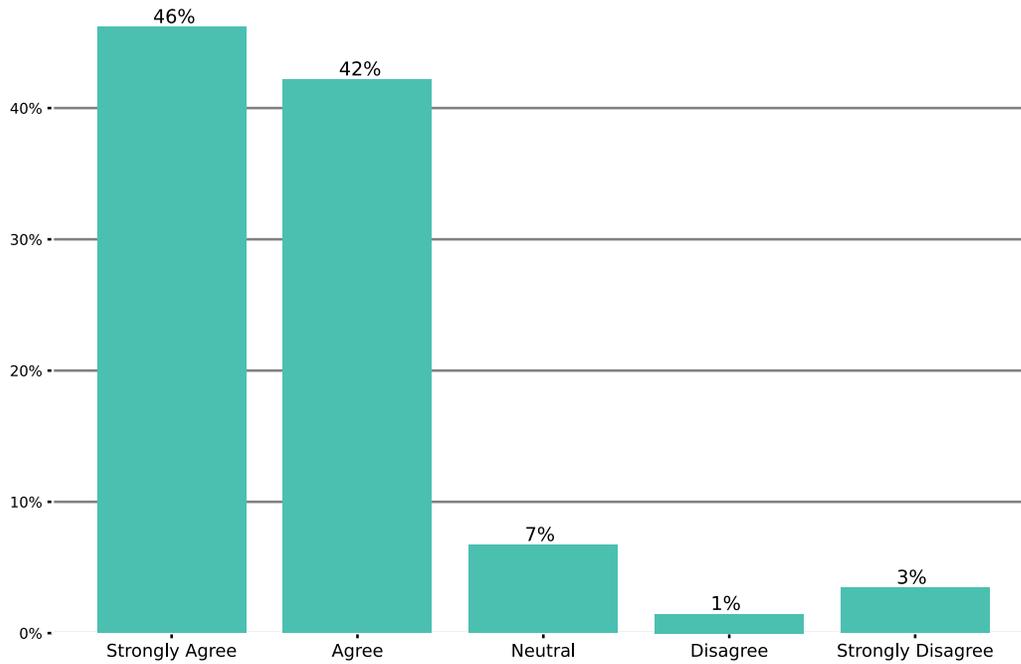
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

The top responses for what respondents value about the trails are the diversity of trail difficulty levels (25 percent), trail loop options (18 percent), and regional trail connections or long-distance routes (14 percent). Other common write in answers included publicly accessible equestrian trails, dedicated mountain bike trails. These findings are likely impacted by the large percentage of responses from mountain bikers.

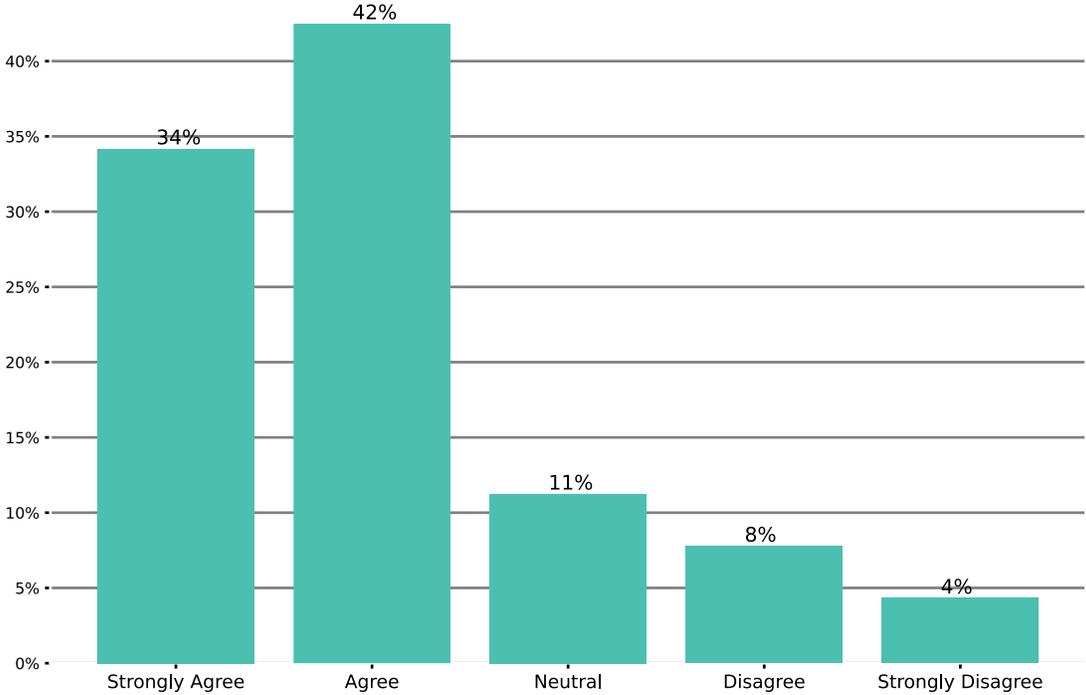
Question 10. Do you agree or disagree with these statements about trails in the parks?

- i. Trails provide scenic views, interesting destinations, and/or satisfying experiences of the natural environment. (N=1503)



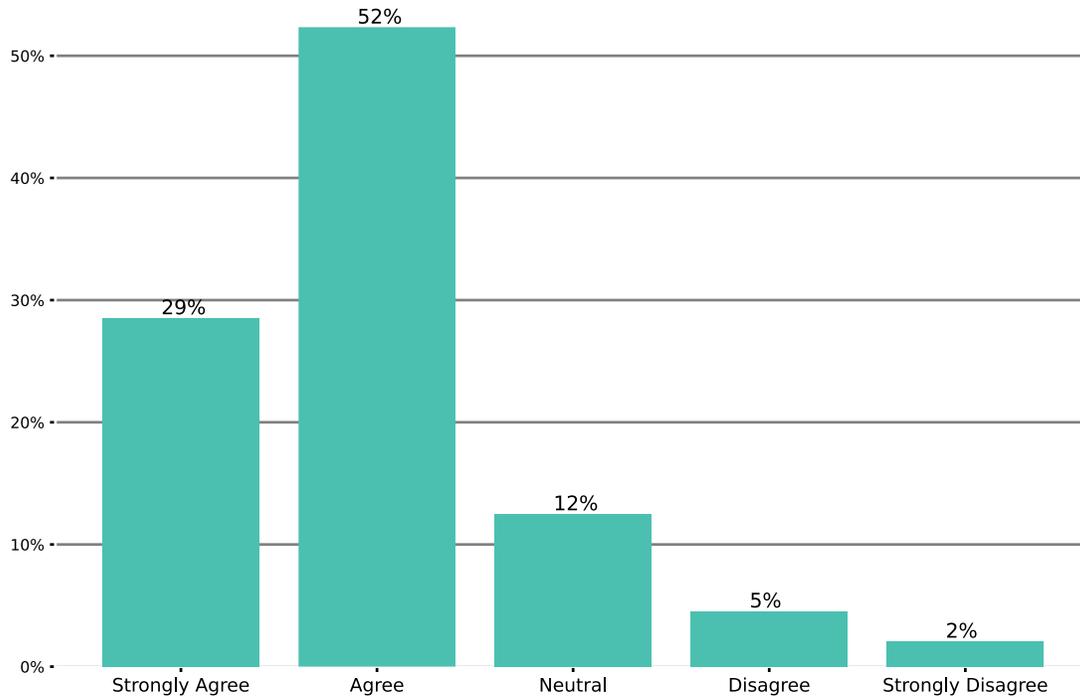
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

b. Trails provide a range of opportunities and level of challenge for people of different fitness levels. (N=1504)



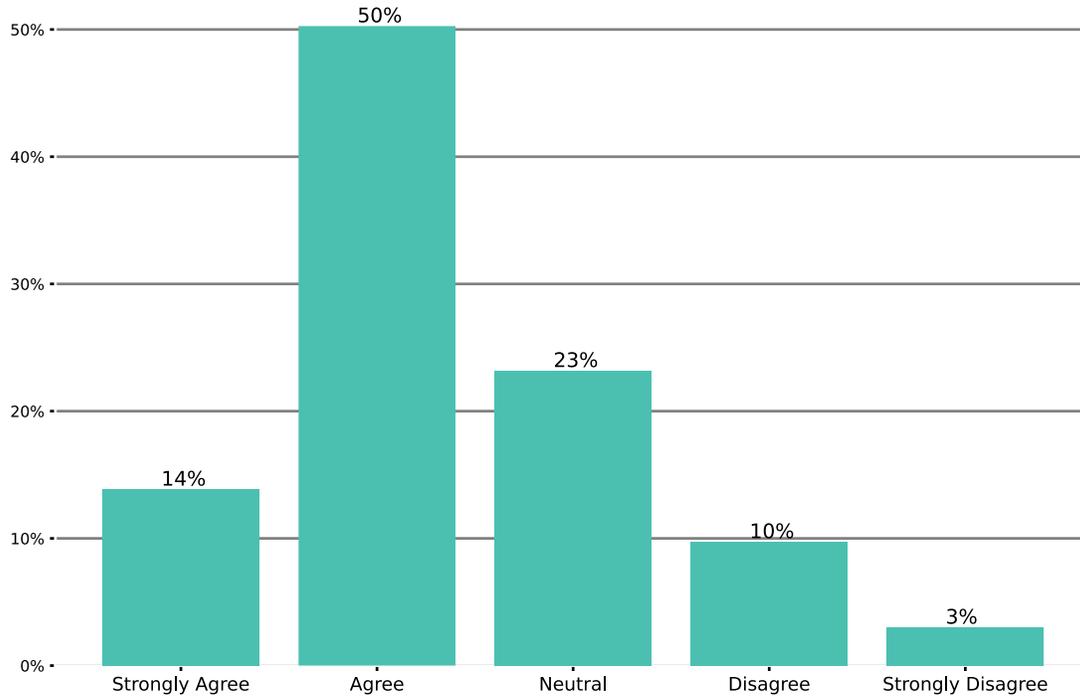
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

c. Trails are clean and feel safe. (N=1496)



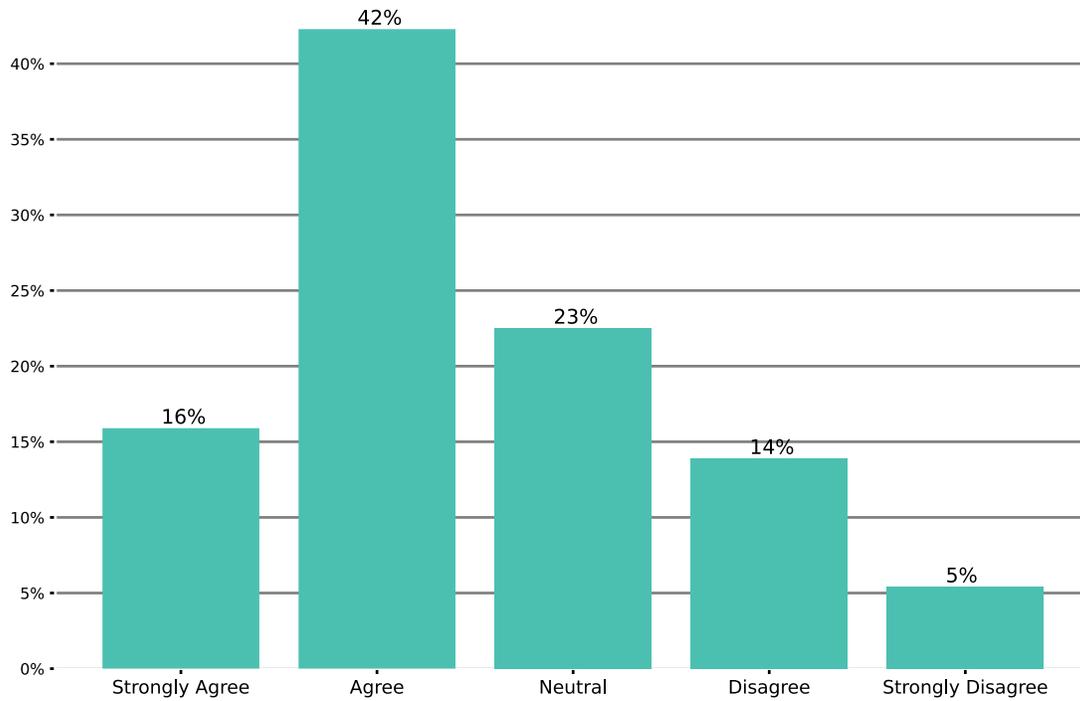
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

d. Trail surface is in good condition. (N=1502)



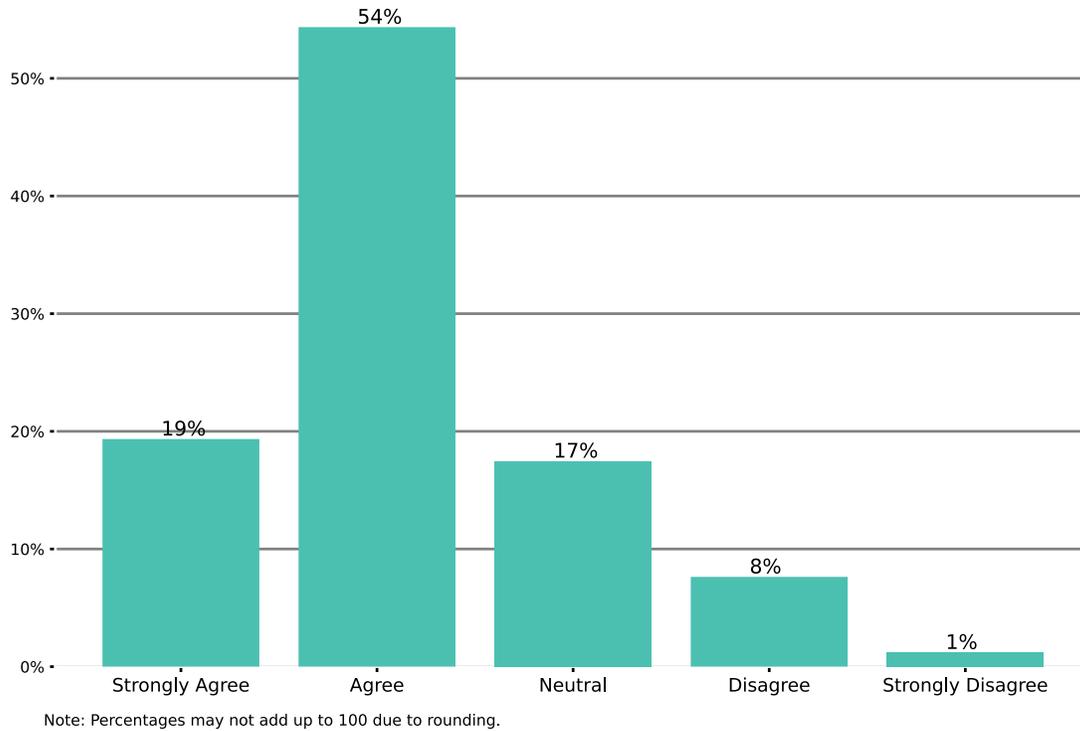
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

e. Trails are wide enough to avoid conflicts between trail users. (N=1497)

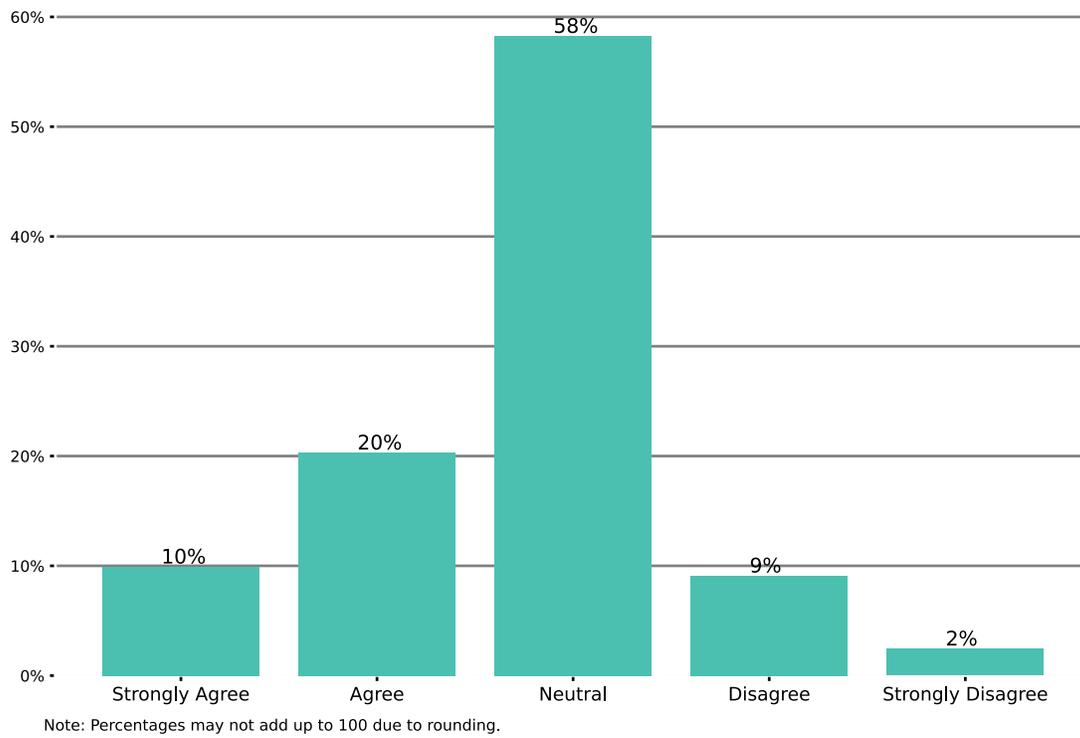


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

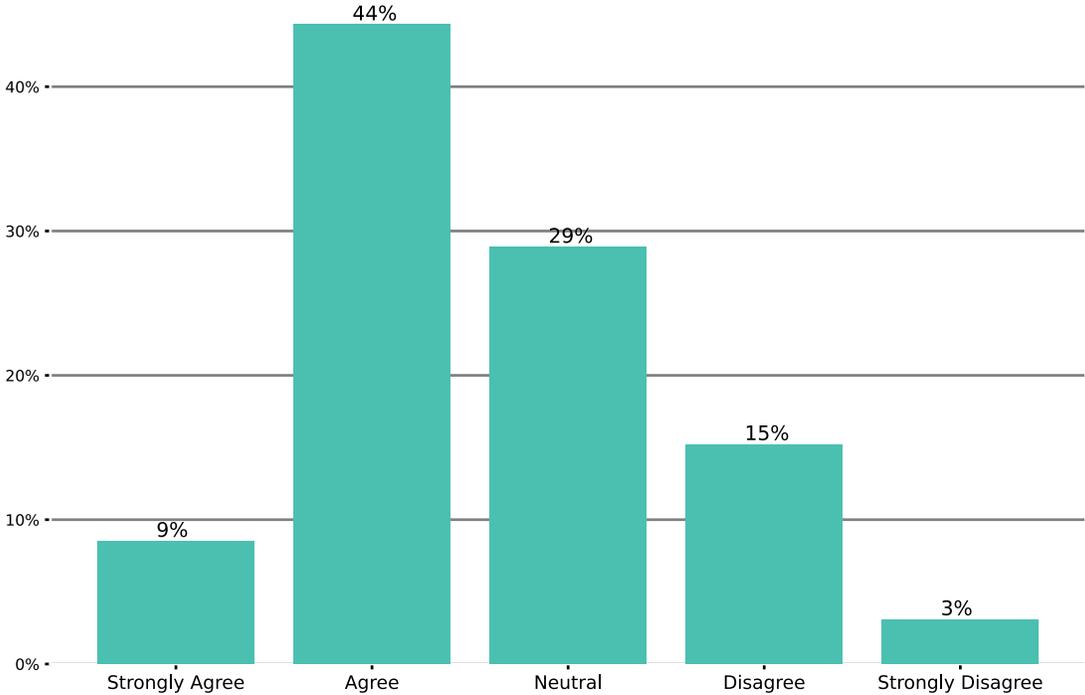
f. There are sufficient access points and connections between trails. (N=1494)



g. There are sufficient trails that are accessible to people using mobility devices. (N=1473)

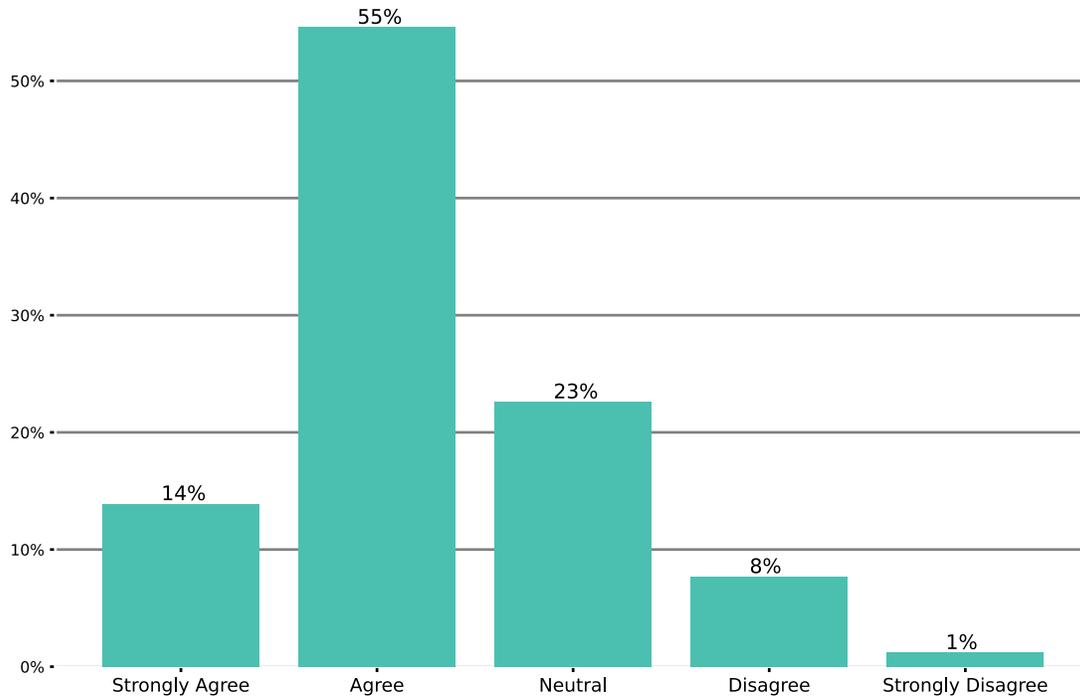


h. Park information and wayfinding is generally sufficient. (N=1492)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

i. Facilities such as restrooms and parking areas are readily available. (N=1495)

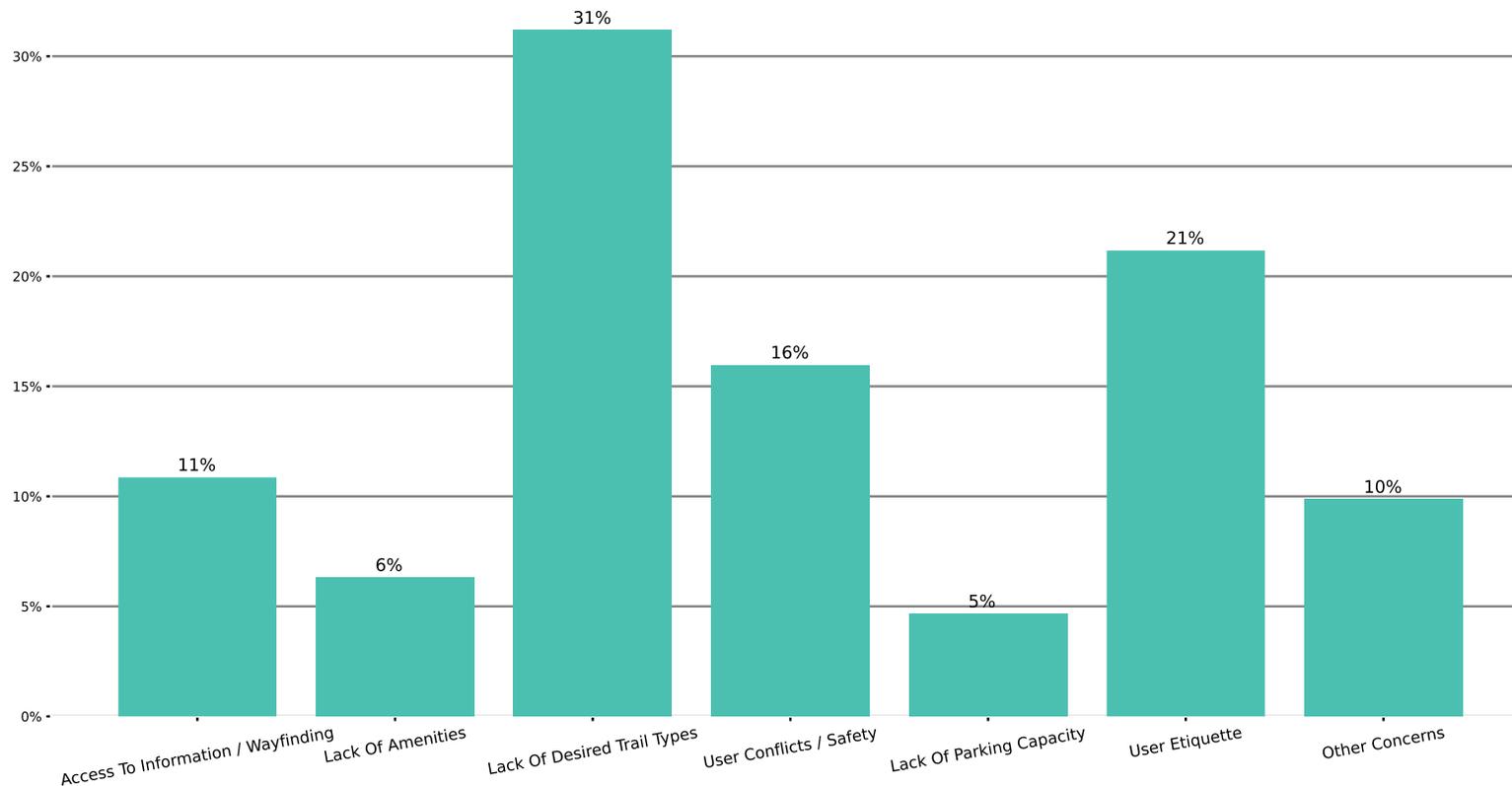


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

A majority of respondents agree or strongly agree with all statements, particularly that the trails provide scenic views, difficulty levels suitable for all users, and are clean and safe. No more than 20 percent of respondents disagree with any of the statements, but those with the highest levels of disagreement are those regarding park information and wayfinding, and trail width to avoid conflicts between users. These findings are likely impacted by the large percentage of responses from mountain bikers.

Question 11. Are there issues or concerns that make your trail use less enjoyable and/or keep you from using the trails? (Select up to three)
 (N=1998 answers outnumber survey respondents)

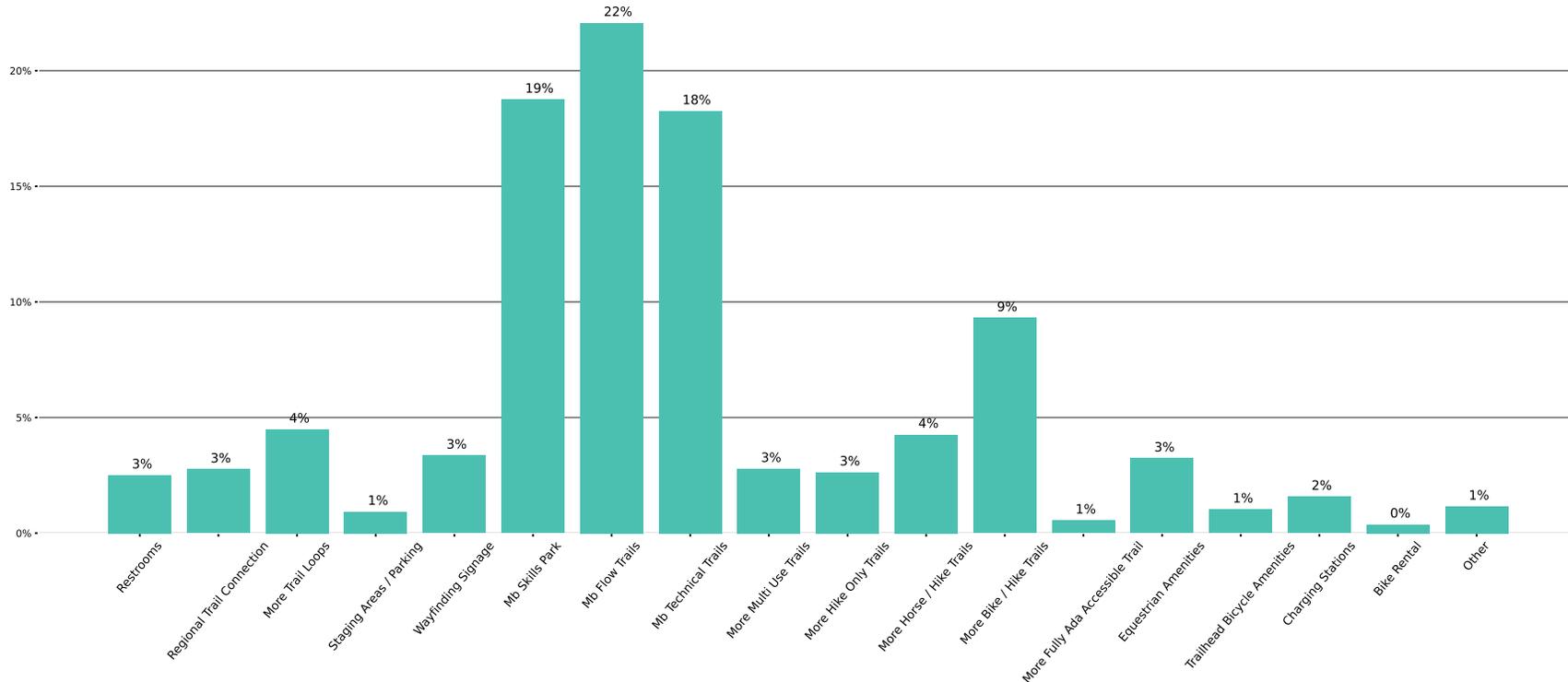


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

The top issue detracting from trail usage is a lack of desired trail types (31 percent), followed by interactions with other users, via user etiquette (21 percent) and trail user conflicts (16 percent). Users are generally not dissuaded by the current parking or amenity provisions. Nearly 200 people provided written answers to this question. Common responses included a need for more mountain bike trails, general trail repair and resurfacing, safety concerns, homeless encampments, off leash dogs, limited or missing, no understanding of what trails are open to E vehicles, environmental degradation and etiquette for all types of trail users. These findings are likely impacted by the large percentage of responses from mountain bikers.

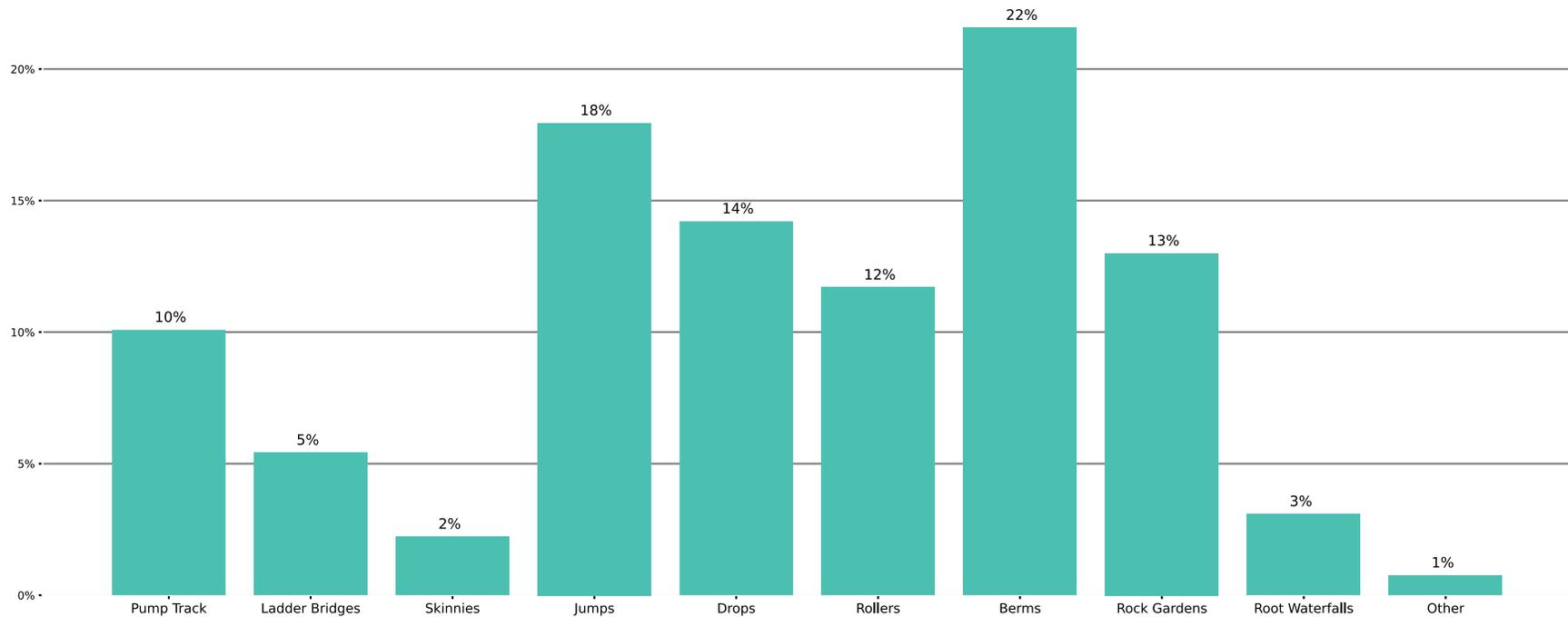
Question 12. Are there additional road and trail features or opportunities that are not currently offered that you would like to see? (Select up to three) (N=3989 answers outnumber survey respondents)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Respondents overwhelmingly selected options involving expanded mountain biking trail types, but more broadly for expanding the number of trail options for all user types. Write in answers emphasized widened trail shoulders, additional trash cans, exercise stations, enforcement of trail user restrictions (e.g., bikes on walking/equestrian trails), and better trail etiquette. These findings are likely impacted by the large percentage of responses from mountain bikers.

Question 12a. [Participants that selected skills park, flow trail, or technical trails] What type of technical features are you most interested in? (Select up to three) (N=2786 answers outnumber survey respondents)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

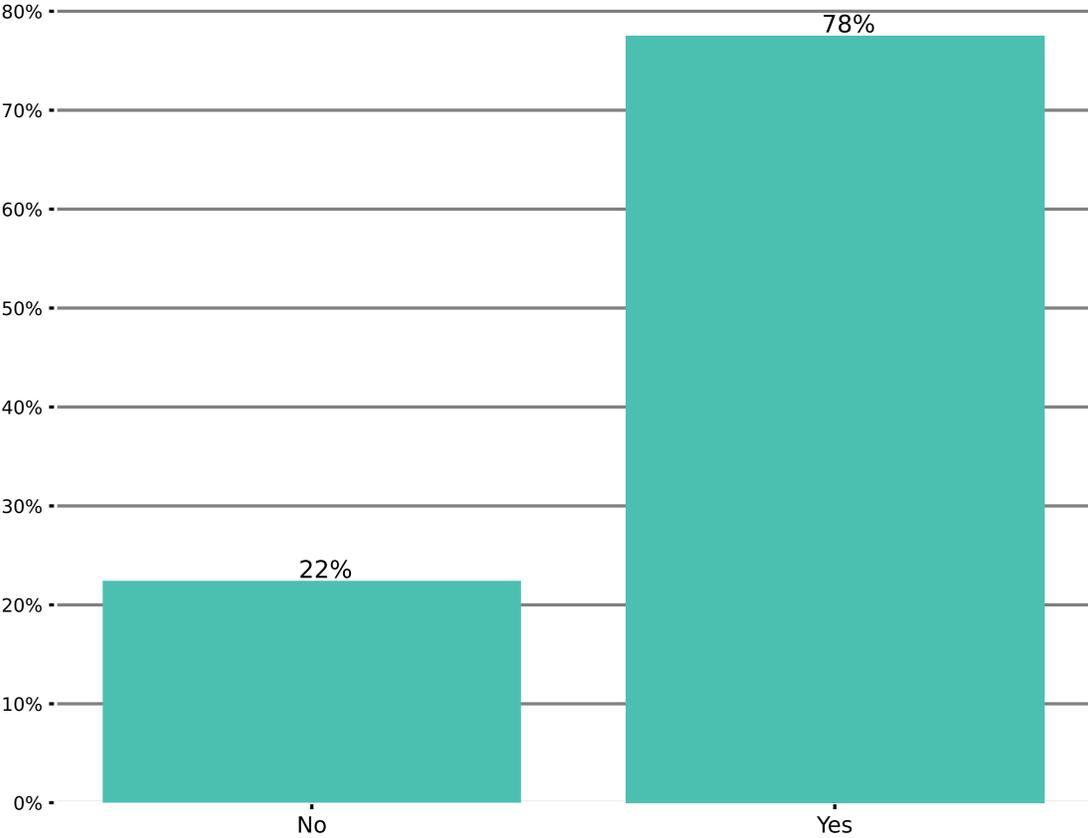
Of the types of technical features, respondents looking for expanded mountain bike facilities selected berms, jumps, and drops as the top three.

Question 13. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about Folsom Area Trails? (Write in question) (N=53)

The answers to this question reiterated themes seen throughout the survey. These themes include:

- **Overcrowding.** Both the park and trail use have become increasingly popular over the last 10 to 20 years leading to an increased number of users. This in turn leads to complaints around trail etiquette and competition for the same space on trails. Associated requests include new trails, parallel trails for separate user types of users and increased recognition of some groups of trail users.
- **Personal Safety.** There are several instances where people report concerns of personal safety either affecting how they use the trails, or affecting how they use the parks.
- **Enforcement.** There are requests for increased enforcement of trail speeds, restricted use types and general trail etiquette.
- **More mountain bike trails and better maintenance.** In addition to calling for increasing the miles of trails open to mountain bikers, a number of answers encourage parks to allow the mountain bike community to organize and help maintain these trails.

Question 14. Do you live or work near Folsom Area State Parks? (N=1480)

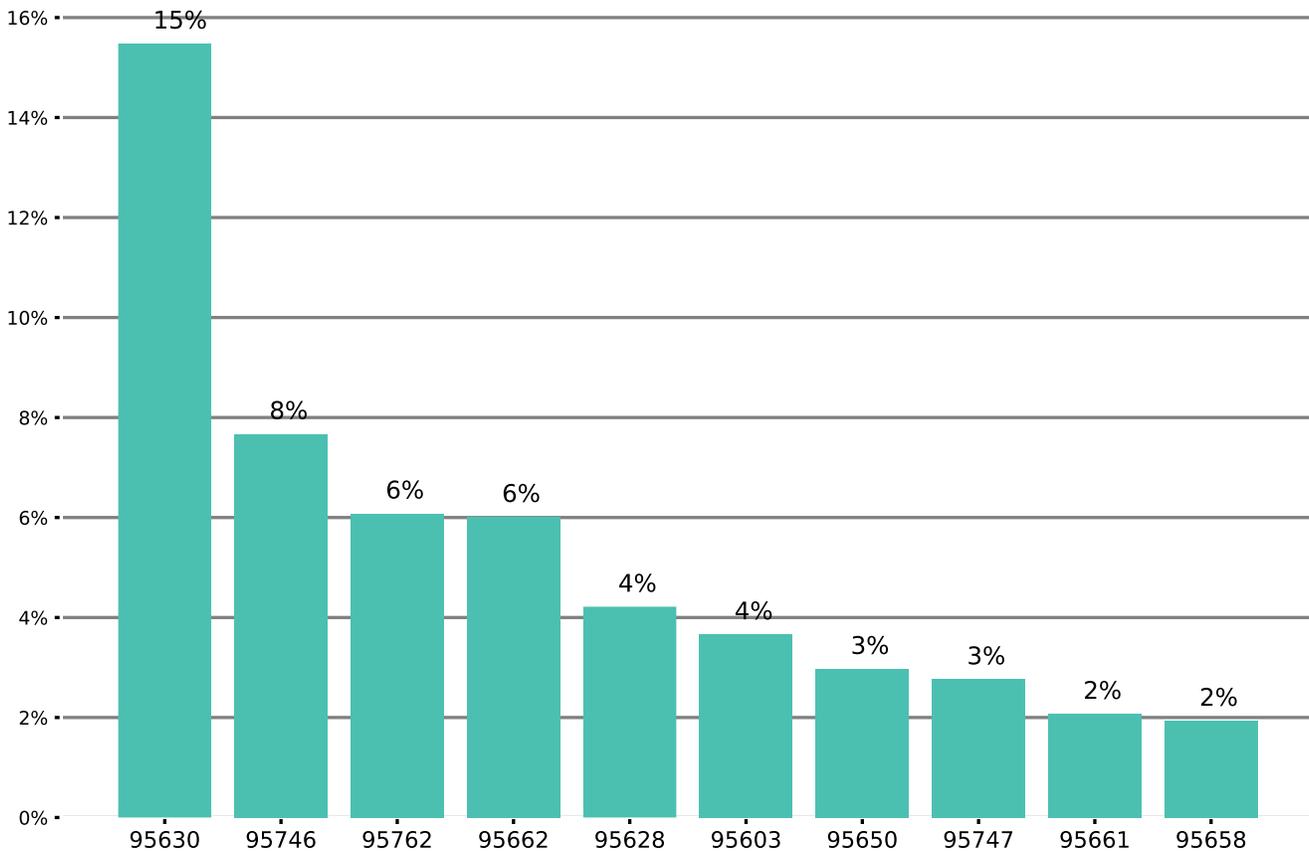


Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

Over three-fourths of respondents live or work near Folsom Area State Parks. Survey outreach was targeted on a local level and the park is well used by locals due to close proximity.

Question 15. Please provide your home zip code. (Note these are the top ten) (N=1447)



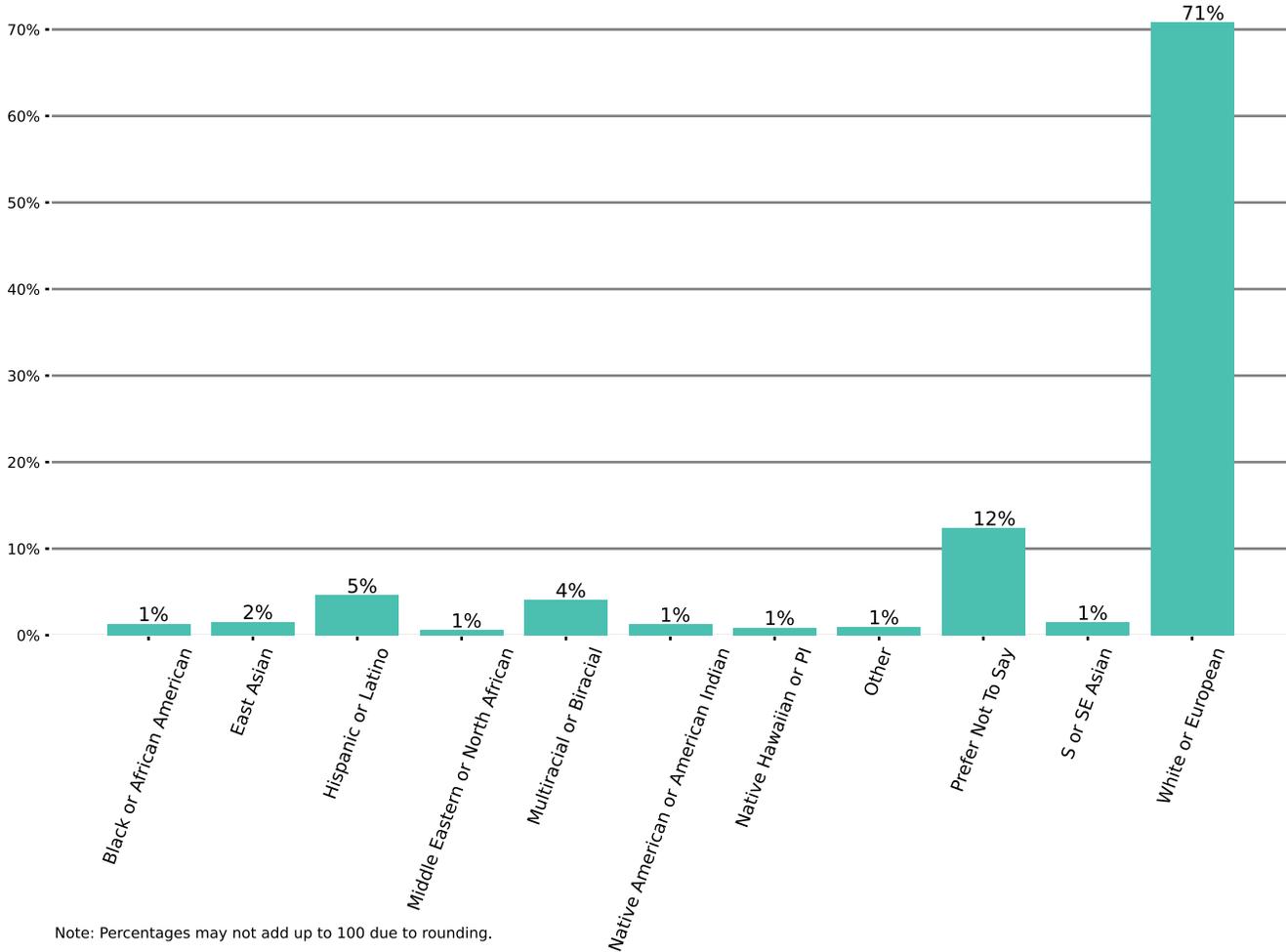
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings

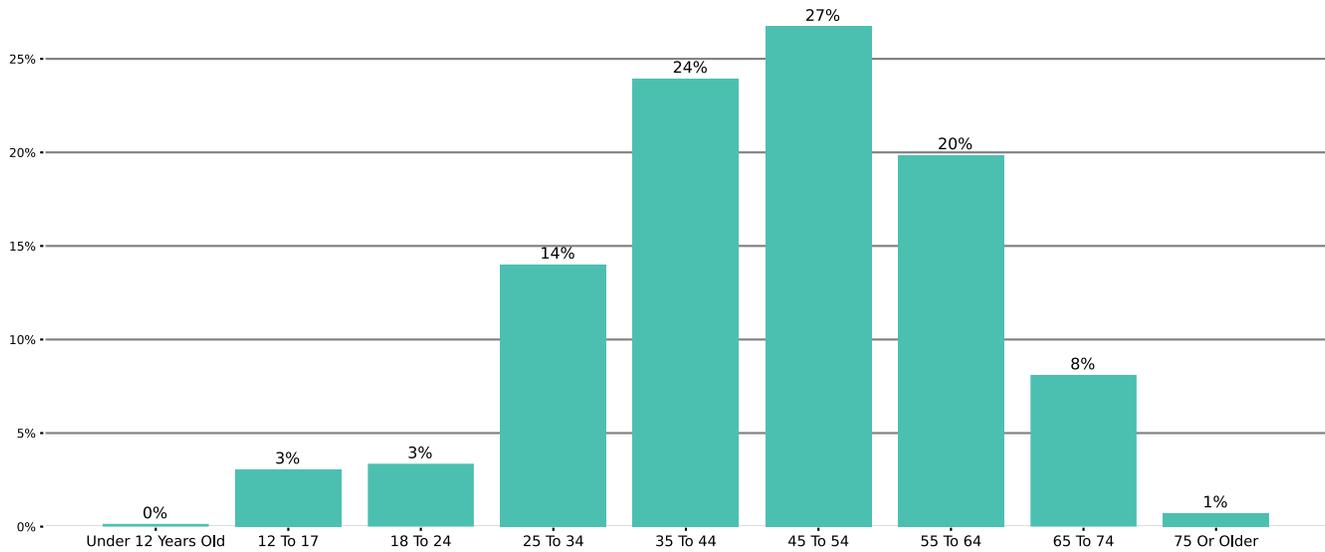
The 95630 zip code that encompasses downtown and southeast Folsom had the highest number of respondents, but responses are generally geographically spread. A map of nearby zip codes is included below for reference.

Demographic Questions

Question 16. Which race or ethnicity best describes you? (N=1347)

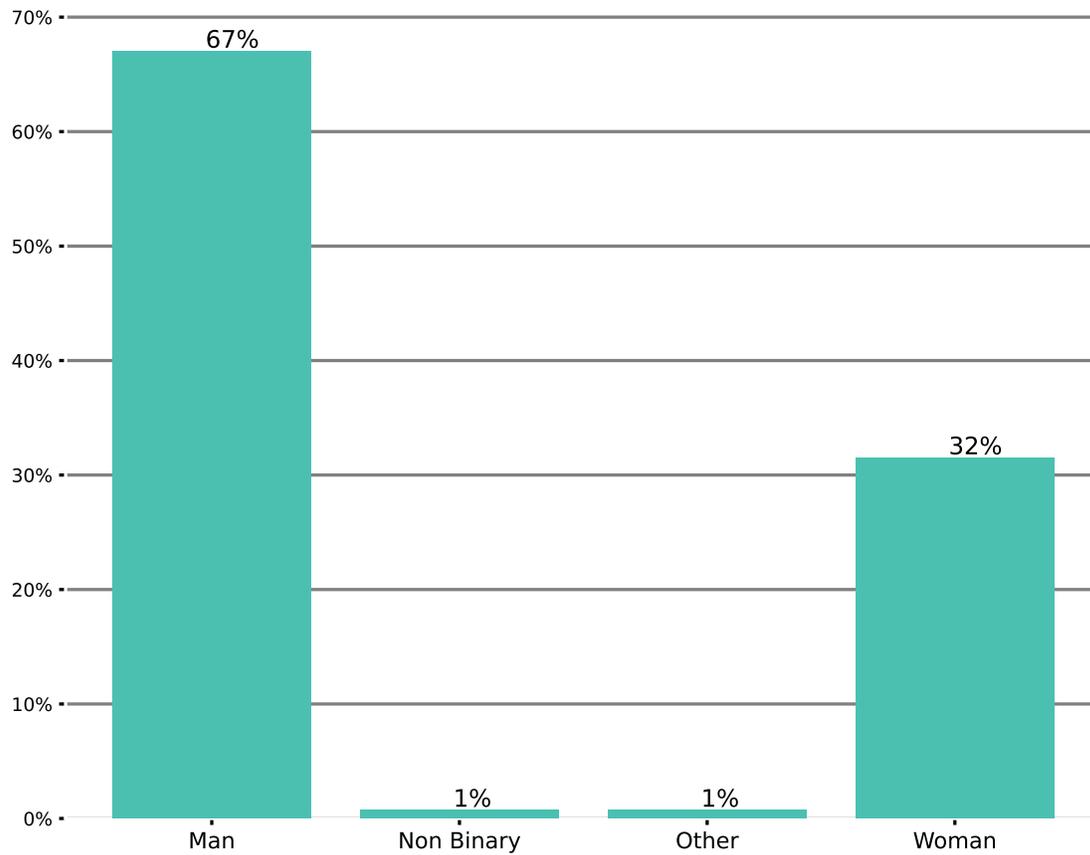


Question 17. What is your age? (N=1369)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Question 18. What is your gender? (N=1347)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

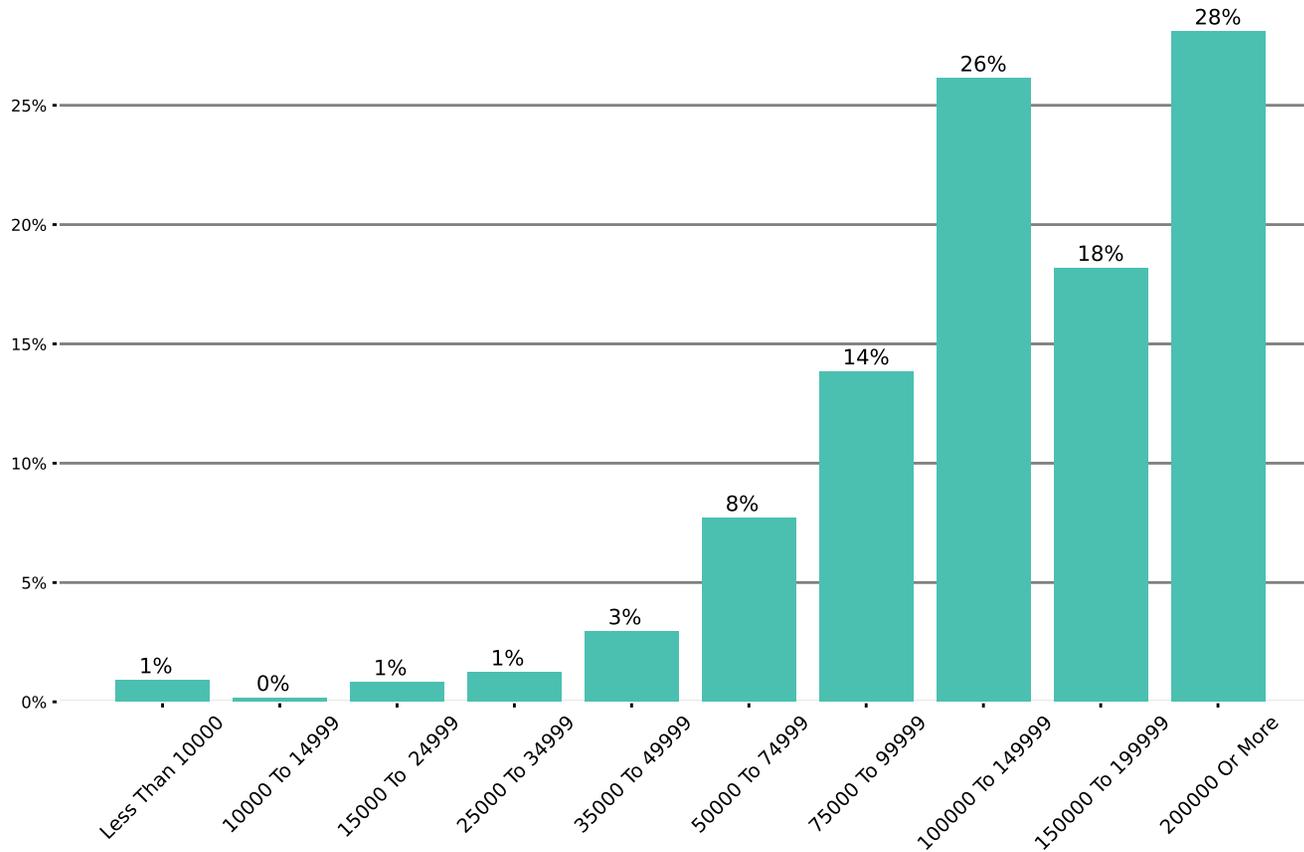


Question 19. Who lives in your household?

Table 3. Who Lives in Your Household?

Number	Age Group							
	Children Under 12 (N=410)		Youth (12-18) (N=381)		Adults (N=1279)		Seniors (Over 65 Years) (N=210)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One	202	49%	209	55%	219	17%	113	54%
Two	159	39%	145	38%	898	70%	90	43%
Three	36	9%	23	6%	98	8%	4	2%
Four or More	13	3%	4	1%	64	5%	3	1%

Question 20. What is your annual household income? (N=1221)



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

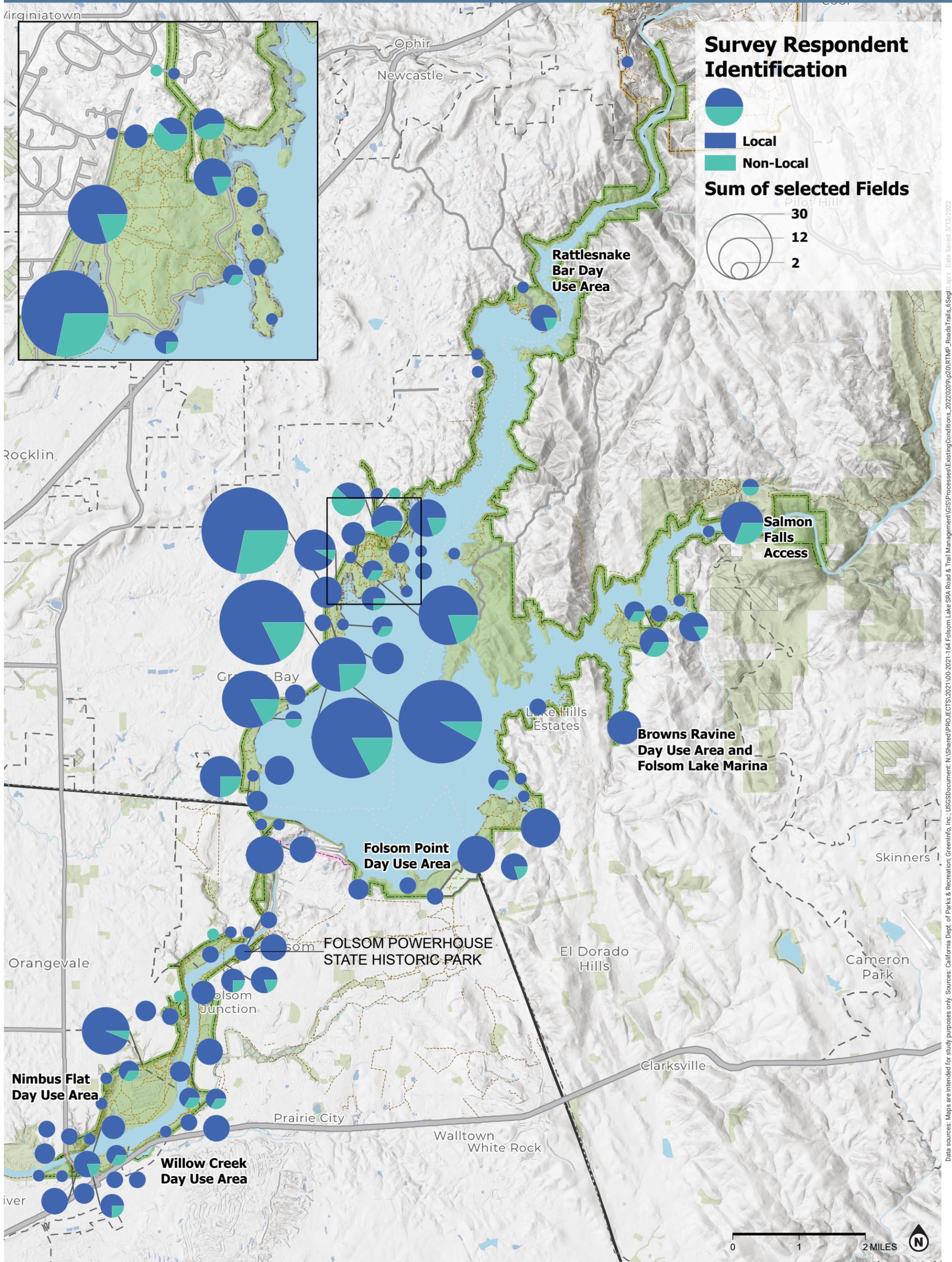
Demographic Findings

Respondents are overwhelmingly white, male, middle aged, and live in households with no children with high annual incomes. The 2013/2014 survey respondents were also middle aged, no other demographic data was reported making additional demographic comparison impossible.



Appendix A - Maps

Survey Respondent Identification and Typical Park Entry Point or Parking Location



Data sources: Maps are intended for study purposes only. Sources: California Dept. of Parks & Recreation, GreenInfo, Inc., USGS Document: N:\Shared\PROJECTS\2021\10-2021-164 Folsom Lake SRA Road & Trail Management\GIS\Process\Existing Conditions_20220209\p20\RTMP_RoadsTrails_6Seg1.aprx Date Saved: 9/13/2022

Folsom Area State Parks Road and Trail Management Plan





Appendix B – 2013/2014 Survey Findings