

Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

Findings Report

conducted for the

Prince William County Park Authority



by

Leisure Vision

(a division of ETC Institute)

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February 2008

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Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

Executive Summary of Citizen Survey Results

Overview of the Methodology

The Prince William County Park Authority conducted a Recreation Needs Assessment Survey during January and February of 2008 to help establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Prince William County. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Prince William County Park Authority officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

Methodology

In January 2008, surveys were mailed to a random sample of 5,000 households throughout Prince William County. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 1,100 completed surveys, including at least 125 from each of the seven election districts. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 1,120 surveys having been completed, including at least 136 surveys from each of the seven election districts. ***This allows for statistically valid results from each of the seven election districts.***

The results of the random sample of 1,120 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-2.9%.

The survey also paid close attention to matching the race and ethnicity of survey respondents to the census for Prince William County and was very successful in this regard. For example, 60% of residents are White/Caucasian according to the U.S. Census for Prince William County with 60% of survey respondents being White/Caucasian. Other comparisons of survey returns to the census include: African American/Black – census (19%) and survey (18%); Asian – census (8%) and survey (7%); and Hispanic/Latino –census (19%) and survey (17%).

Last the ages of household respondents in the survey were very close to the actual ages of residents in Prince William County in the U.S. Census. The average household size in Prince William County (2.92 persons) is higher than the average household size of U.S. residents (2.61 persons). This is indicative of the County growing in youngsters under the age of 18 years of age and is reflective in respondents to the survey.

Cross-Tabular Analysis By Various Demographics

To gain additional information regarding key short and long range strategic decision-making for the Prince William County park system, survey results were further broken down by key demographic factors: These factors which are all included in the report include breakdowns by:

- Location of residence in the 7 voting districts
- Household size and composition
- Hispanic or Latino Ancestry
- Gender
- Amount Willing to Pay in Additional Property Taxes

Prince William County has been provided an electronic data-base of all survey responses for on-going analysis including presentations in GIS formats.

National Benchmarking Data-Base

Leisure Vision has an unparalleled data base of over 60,000 surveys from recreation needs assessment surveys across the country, including Virginia. National averages have been developed for numerous parks and recreation planning, management, and funding questions. Examples of large national and Virginia communities in our data base include:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Albemarle County, VA | • Atlanta, GA |
| • Arlington County, VA | • Denver, CO |
| • Fairfax County, VA | • Henderson, NV |
| • Loudoun County, VA | • Mecklenburg County, NC |
| • Richmond, VA | • Oakland County, MI |
| • Roanoke County, VA | • Wake County, NC |
| • Virginia Beach, VA | • Westchester County, NY |

The following 2 pages summarize “Major Findings” from the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey, with the following pages summarizing survey findings from each question and demographic information:

***Major Findings from the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey
Prince William County, Virginia***

- ***Household respondents are supportive of purchasing land to preserve open space and green space for future generations.*** 79% of respondents were very supportive (57%) or somewhat supportive (22%) of purchasing land to preserve open and green space for future generations.

Out of 13 potential actions respondents would be willing to fund with their county tax dollars to improve the park system, purchasing land to preserve open space and green space for future generations rated as the most important action.

- ***Household respondents are supportive of fixing up/repairing existing outdoor park facilities.*** 84% of respondents were very supportive (61%) or somewhat supportive (23%) of fixing up/repairing existing outdoor park facilities.

Out of 13 potential actions respondents would be willing to fund with their county tax dollars to improve the park system, fixing up/repairing existing outdoor park facilities rated as the 2nd most important action.

- ***Sixty-six percent of household respondents would vote in favor or might vote in favor to fund a dedicated tax for open space and parkland acquisition for the amount of tax funding they indicated they would pay.*** 46% of household respondents would vote in favor and 20% might vote in favor to fund a dedicated tax for open space. Only 12% indicated they would vote against with 20% not sure.

- ***The Prince William County Park Authority is the prime provider of parks and recreation services to County residents.*** From a list of 12 organizations, the Prince William County Park Authority is the prime provider of parks and recreation services to all county residents. Along with the schools the Park Authority rated as one of the top 2 providers of services to household members ages 17 and under. The Park Authority was the top provider of services to household members 18 and over

- ***Walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks are the most important facilities for households across the County. Soccer fields are the most important facility for youth.*** In all 7 voting districts, walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks were the two most important parks and recreation facilities to provide. Also, in all 7 voting districts youth soccer fields was the 1st most important sports field to provide.

- ***Adult fitness and wellness programs are the most important programs for households across the County. Youth sports programs are the most important program for youth.*** In all 7 voting districts adult fitness and wellness programs are the most important adult programs for residents. In 5 voting areas youth sports programs are the most important youth programs for residents, with youth learn to swim programs being the most important in the Occoquan and Neabsco areas.
- ***Improving physical health and fitness is the most important benefit to respondent households from parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs.*** This benefit rated number 1 out of 10 potential benefits to households. With increasing childhood obesity problems and an aging baby boomer population who are very interested in physical health and fitness activities this benefit will remain important.
- ***Making the County a more desirable place to live, preserve open space and the environment, increase property values in surrounding areas, and help reduce crime are the most important benefits to the future of Prince William County from parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs.***

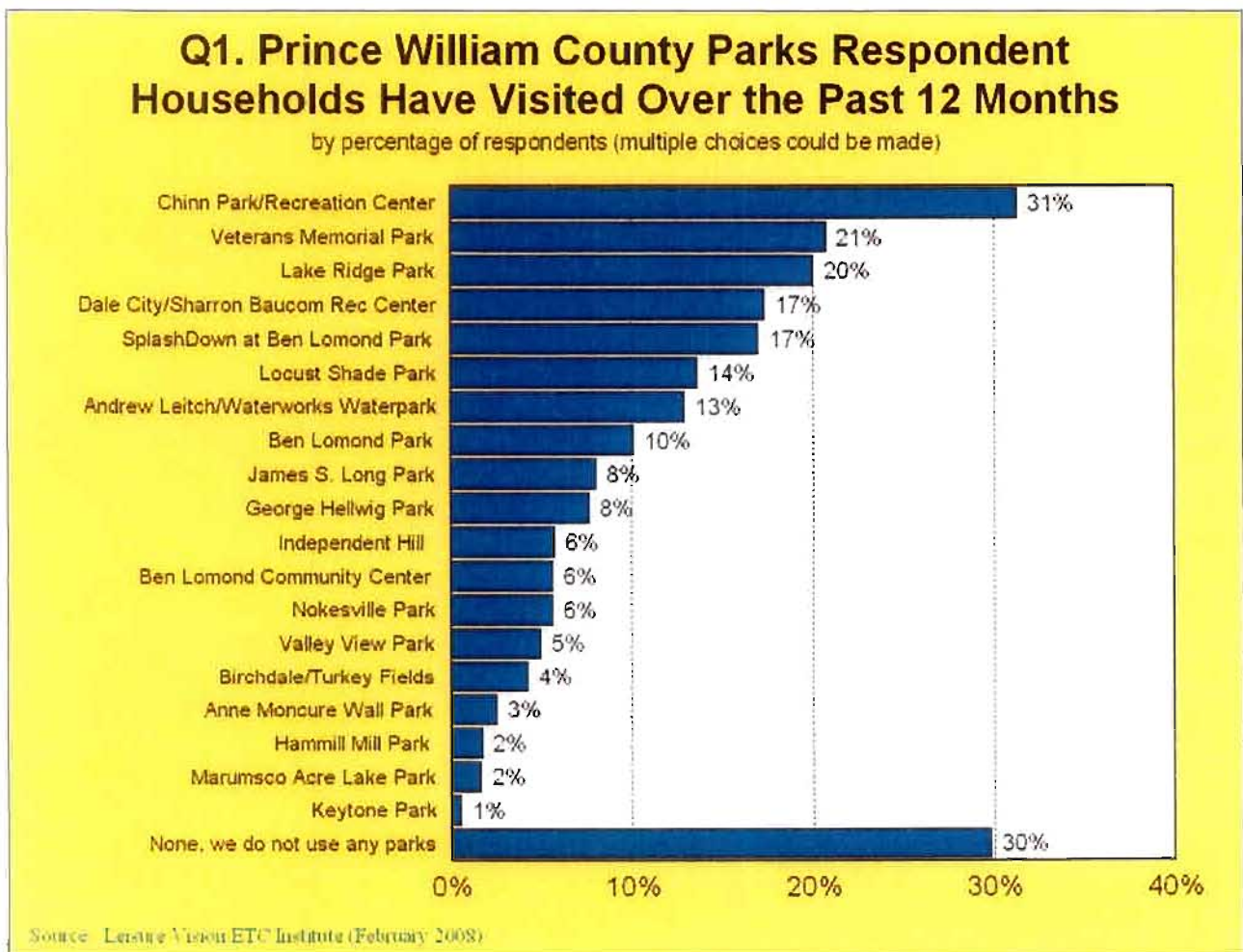
Make Prince William County a more desirable place to live rated 1st out of 10 potential benefits regarding the future of Prince William County, with fairly equal and strong support preserving open space and the environment, increase property values in surrounding areas, and help reduce crime.

- ***Unmet citizen needs exist for a wide range of parks, trails and recreation facilities and programs.*** As two examples, walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks both have over 30,000 households who have needs for these facilities indicate their needs are only being 50% or less being met. In more than half of the 23 program areas the percentage of respondents who indicated their needs are 0% being met is greater than the percentage who indicate their needs are 100% being met.

Prince William County Parks Visited Over the Past 12 Months

From a list of 19 Prince William County parks, respondents were asked to indicate all of the parks their household has visited over the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The Prince William County parks visited by the highest percentage of respondent households are: Chinn Park/Recreation Center (31%), Veterans Memorial Park (21%), Lake Ridge Park (20%), Dale City/Sharron Baucom Rec Center (17%), and SplashDown at Ben Lomond Park (17%).** Seventy percent (70%) of respondent households have used at least one of these 19 parks over the past 12 months.

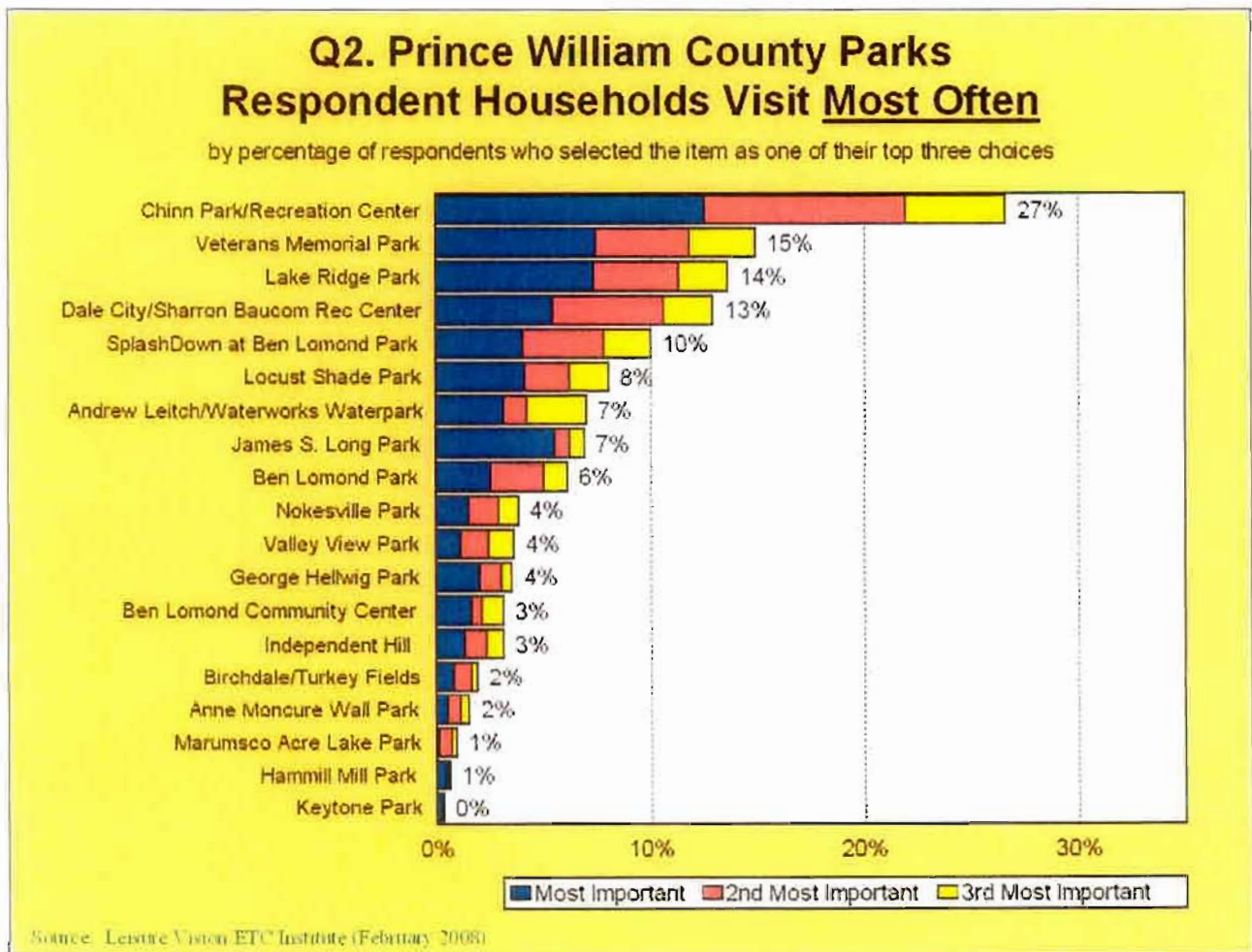


70% of respondents have visited Prince William County parks which compares favorably with our national benchmarking averages of 72% for local park systems.

Prince William County Parks Visited Most Often

From a list of 19 Prince William County parks, respondents were asked to select the three parks their household visits most often. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top three choices, the County parks that respondent households have visited most often are: Chinn Park/Recreation Center (27%), Veterans Memorial Park (15%), Lake Ridge Park (14%), and Dale City/Sharron Baucom Rec Center (13%).** It should also be noted that Chinn Park/Recreation Center had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the park they visit most often.

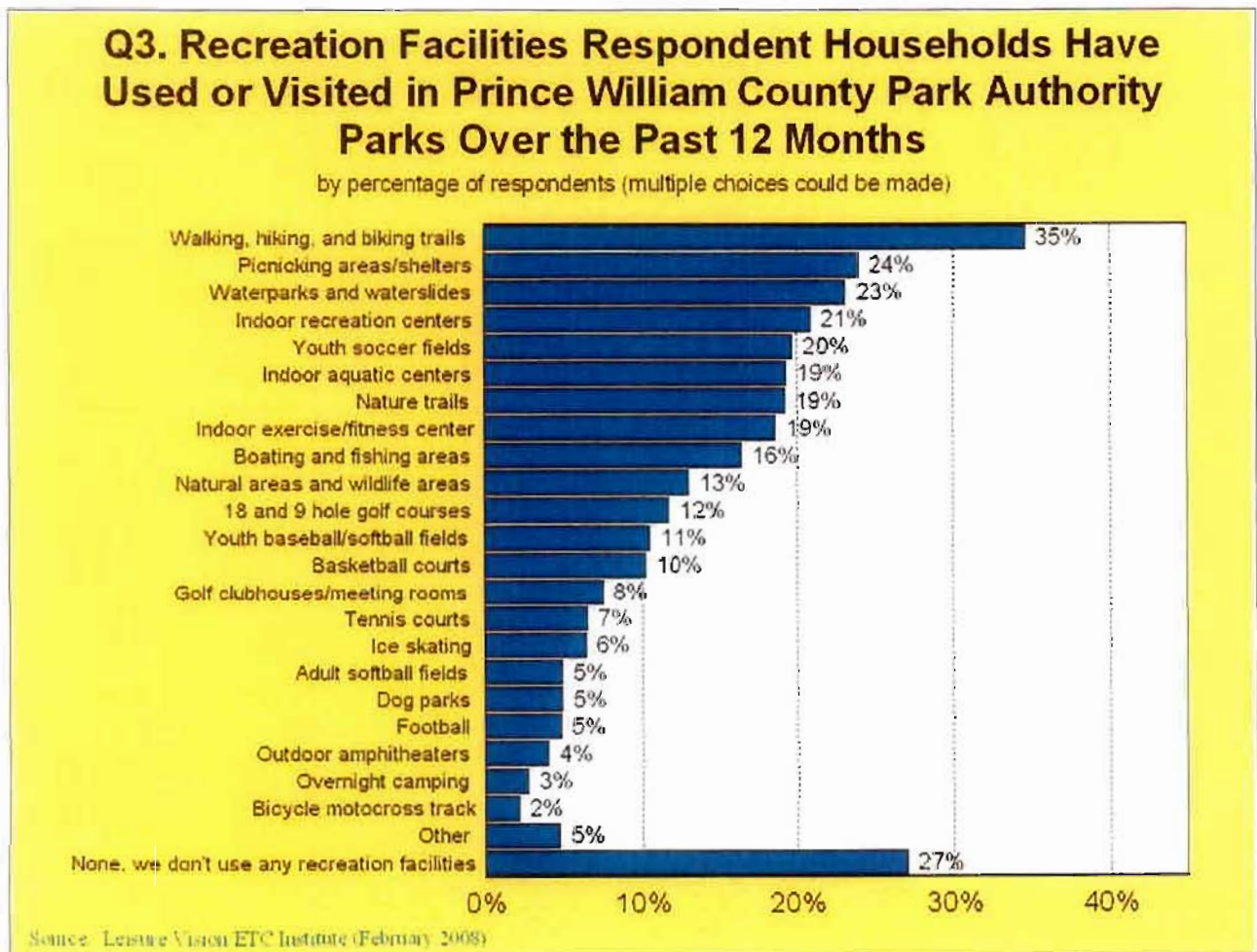


The Chinn Park/Recreation Center was the most visited facility or park in 5 of the 7 voting districts.

Recreation Facilities Used at Prince William County Park Authority Parks Over the Past 12 Months

From a list of 22 various recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate all of the facilities their household has used at Prince William County Park Authority parks over the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

- The Prince William County Park Authority recreation facilities used by the highest percentage of respondent households are: walking, hiking and biking trails (35%), picnicking areas/shelters (24%), and waterparks and waterslides (23%). Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondent households have used at least one of these 22 recreation facilities over the past 12 months.

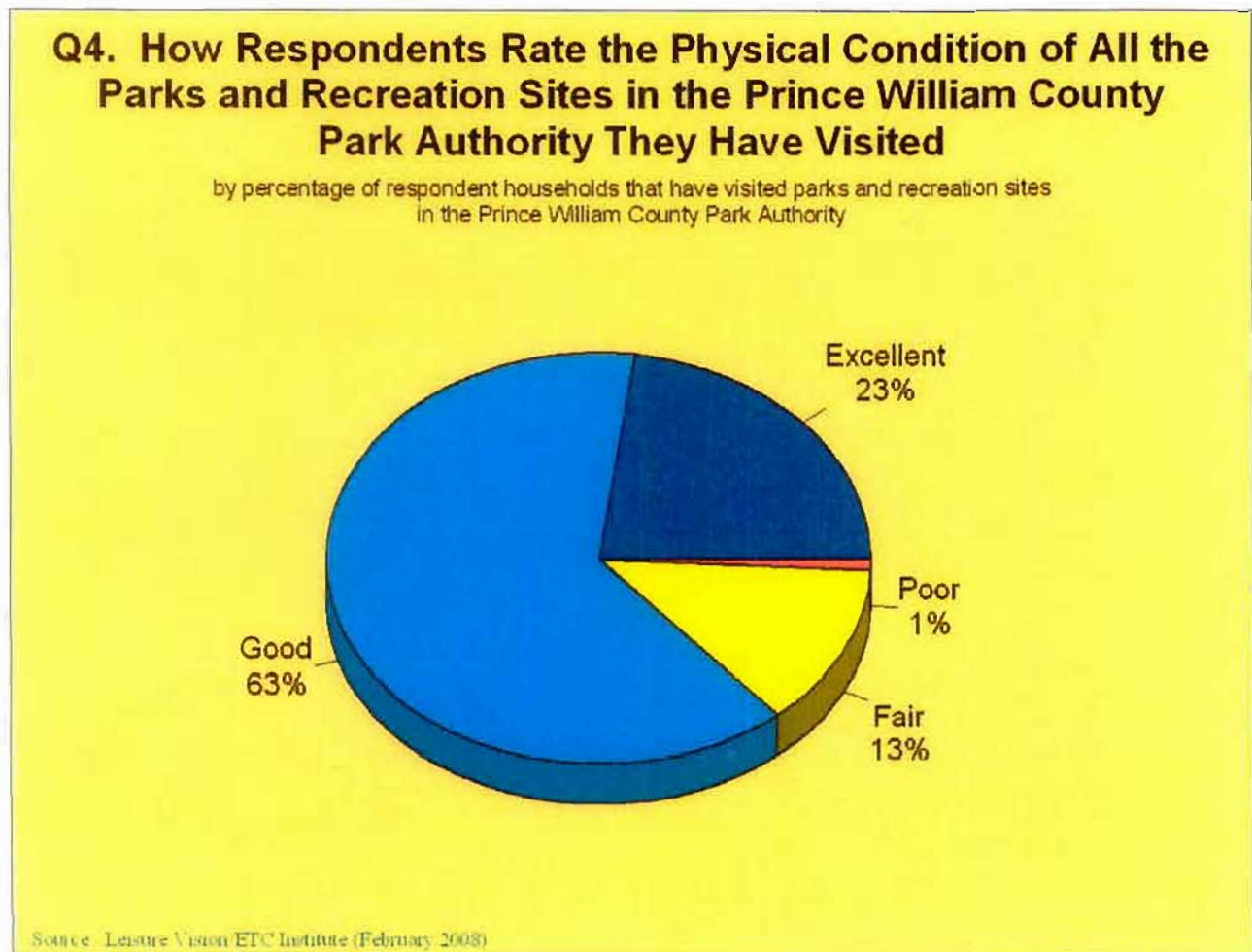


In all 7 voting districts walking and biking trails are the most used or visited facility in Prince William County parks.

Physical Condition of All County Parks and Recreation Sites Visited

Respondents were asked to rate the physical condition of all the parks and recreation sites they have visited in the Prince William County Park Authority. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondent households that have used parks and recreation sites in the Prince William County Park Authority rated them as either excellent (23%) or good (63%).** An additional 13% rated the parks and recreation sites as fair, and only 1% rated them as poor.

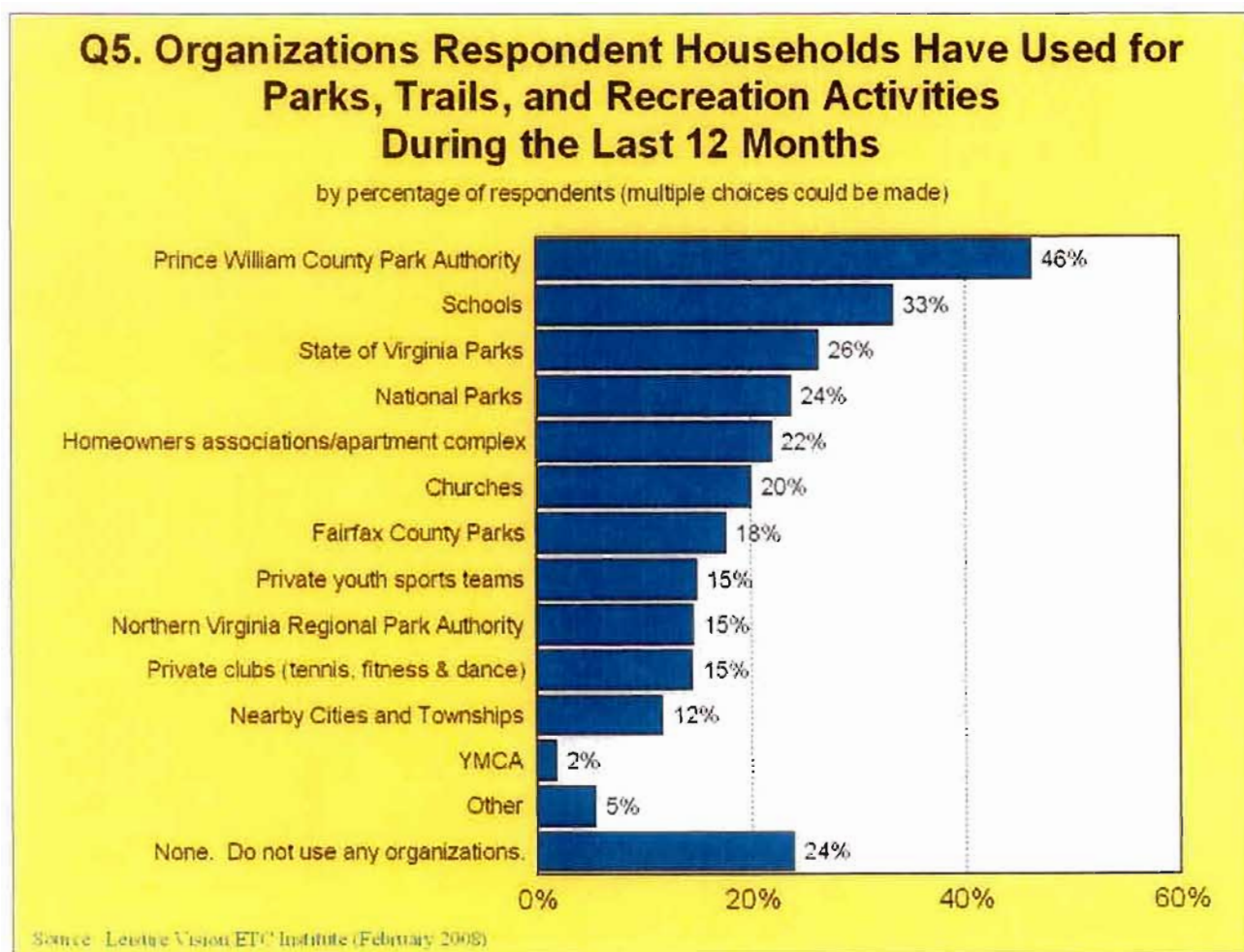


Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondent households that have used parks and recreation sites in the Prince William County Park Authority rated them as either excellent or good which is slightly higher than the national benchmarking average of 84%. Opportunities for higher excellent ratings exist.

Organizations Used for Parks, Trails and Recreation Activities

From a list of 12 organizations, respondents were asked to indicate all of the organizations they have used for parks, trails, and recreation activities during the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The organizations that the highest percentage of respondent households have used for parks, trails, and recreation activities during the past 12 months are: the Prince William County Park Authority (46%), schools (33%), State of Virginia Parks (26%) and National Parks (24%).** It should also be noted that 76% of respondent households have used at least one of these organizations.

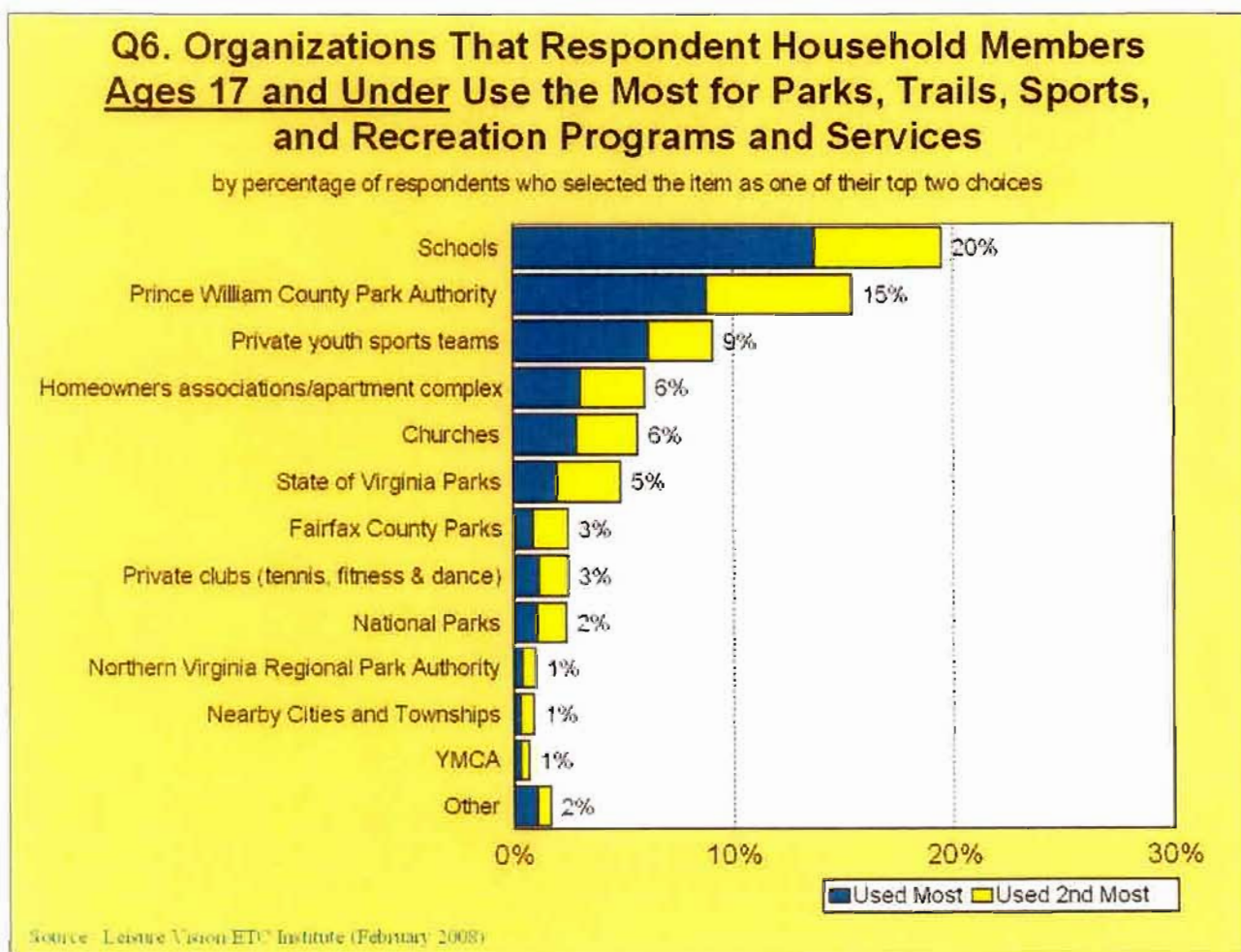


Many respondents use more than one provider. The Prince William County Park Authority is the chief provider in all 7 voting districts.

Organizations Used the Most for Ages 17 and Under

From a list of 12 organizations, respondents were asked to select the two organizations they use the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services for household members ages 17 and under. The following summarizes key findings:

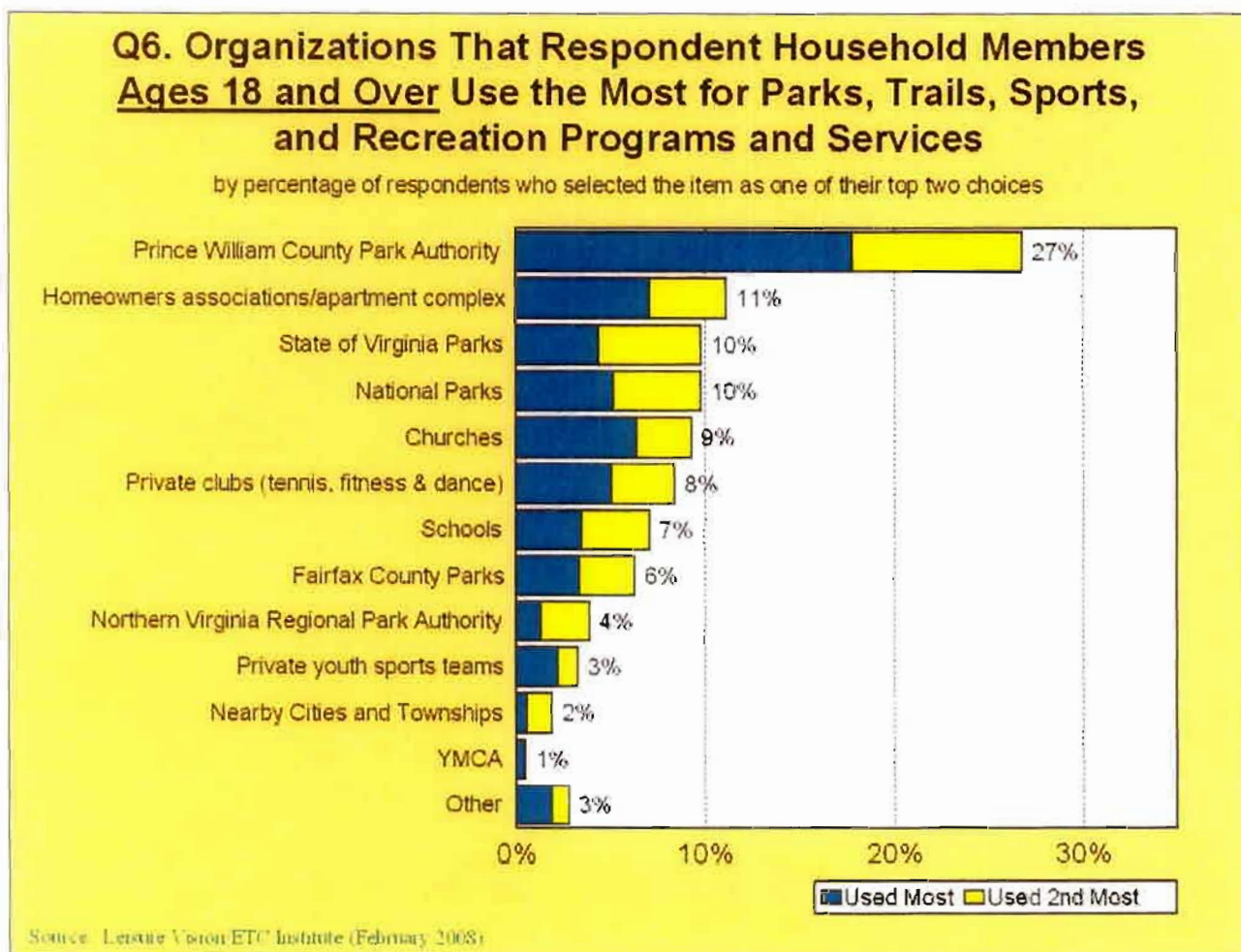
- **Based on the sum of their top two choices, the organizations used the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services by household members ages 17 and under are: schools (20%), Prince William County Park Authority (15%) and private youth sports teams (9%).** It should also be noted that schools had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the organization used the most by household members ages 17 and under.



Organizations Used the Most for Ages 18 and Older

From a list of 12 organizations, respondents were asked to select the two organizations they use the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services for household members ages 18 and older. The following summarizes key findings:

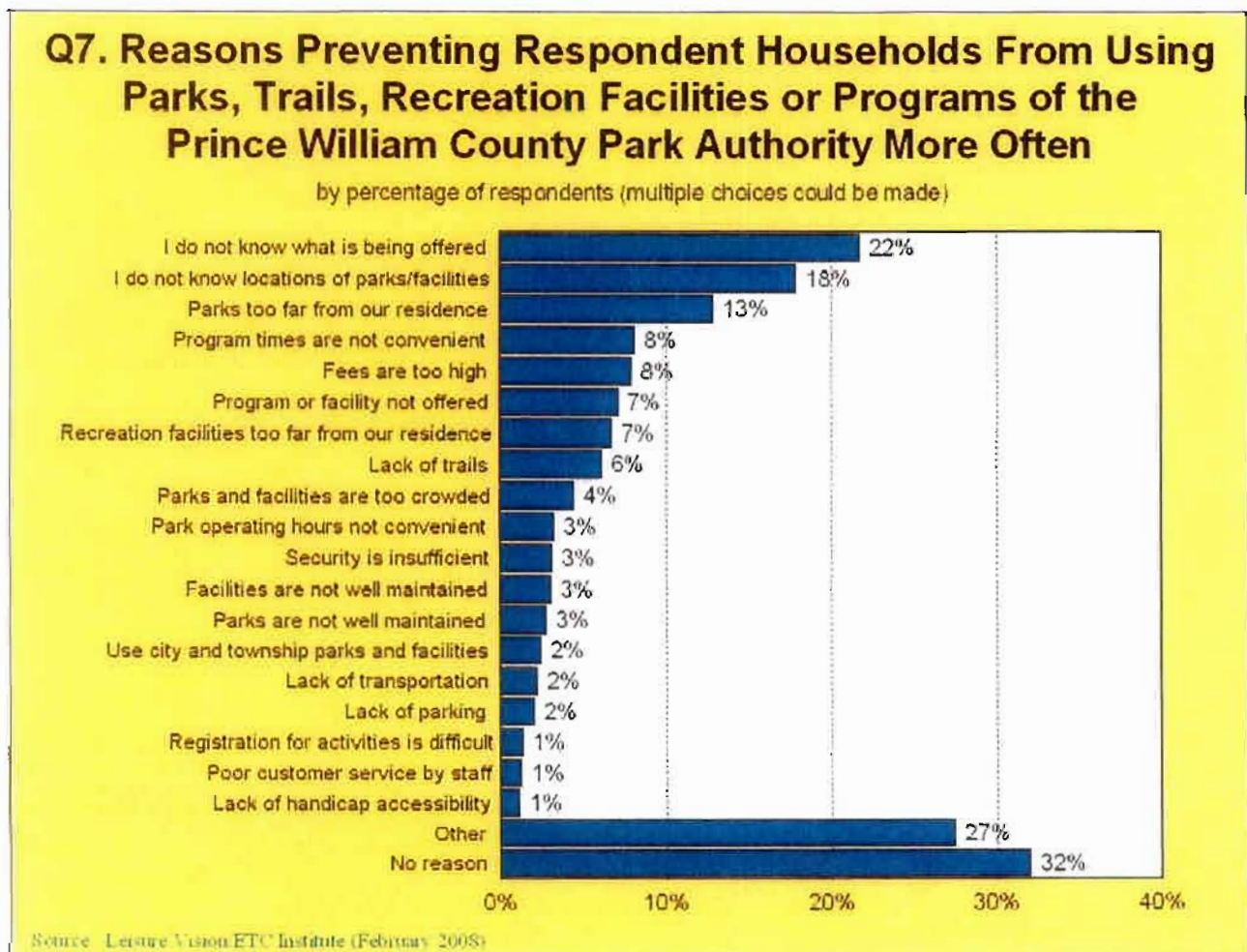
- **Based on the sum of their top two choices, the organizations used the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services by household members ages 18 and older are: Prince William County Park Authority (27%), homeowners associations/apartment complex (11%), State of Virginia Parks (10%) and National Parks (10%).** It should also be noted that the Prince William County Park Authority had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the organization used the most by household members ages 18 and older.



Reasons Preventing the Use of Facilities or Programs More Often

From a list of 19 options, respondents were asked to select all the reasons preventing their household from using parks, trails, recreation facilities or programs of the Prince William County Park Authority more often. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The reasons preventing the highest percentage of respondent households from using Prince William County Park Authority parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs more often are: “I do not know what is being offered” (22%), “I do not know locations of parks/facilities” (18%) and “parks too far from our residence” (13%). It should also be noted that 27% of respondents selected “other”, with the top reason being “too busy/not enough time”.**

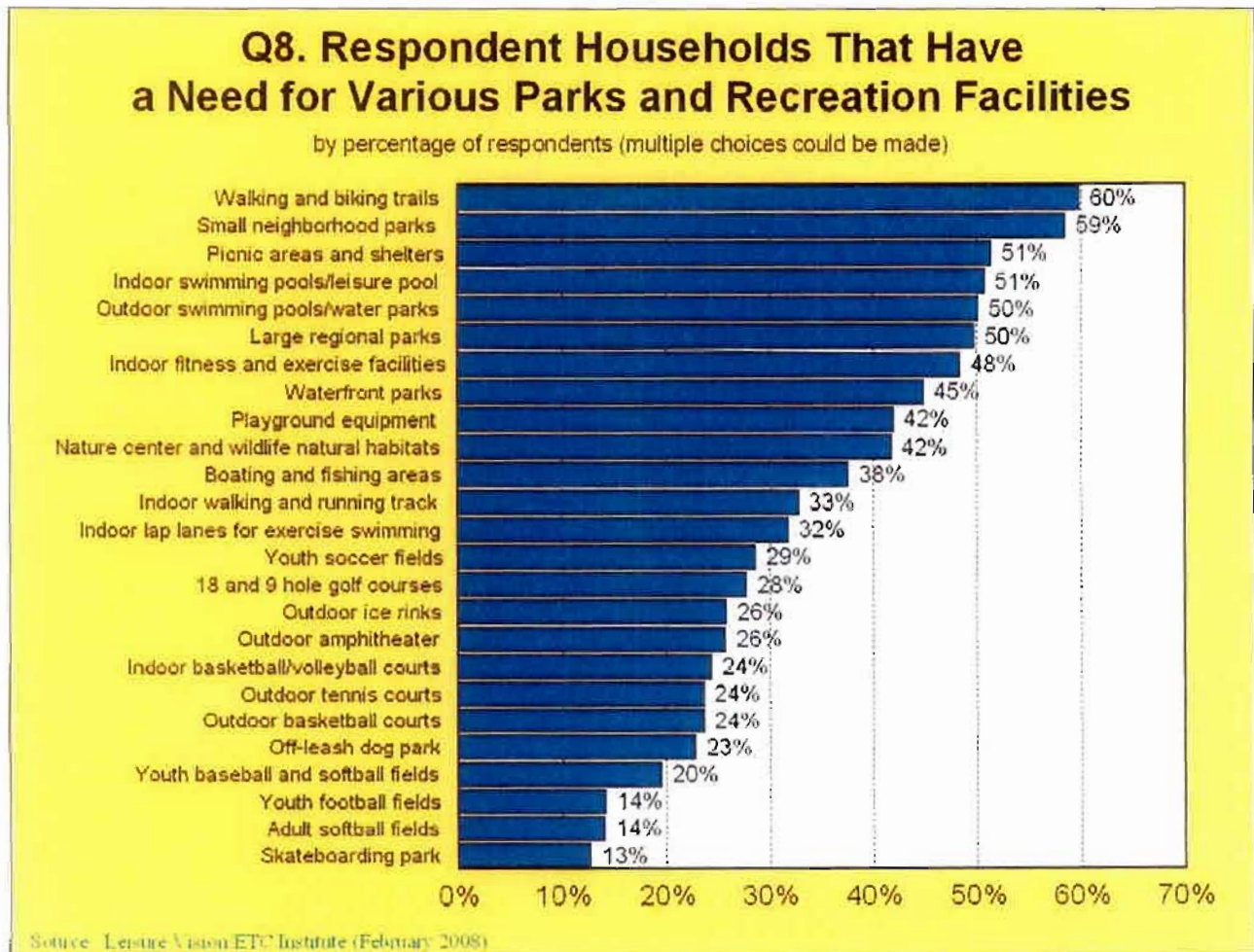


Opportunities exist to improve marketing of parks and recreation programs and activities. Only 1% of respondents indicate poor customer service as a reason preventing additional usage.

Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities

From a list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones that they and members of their household have a need for. The following summarizes key findings:

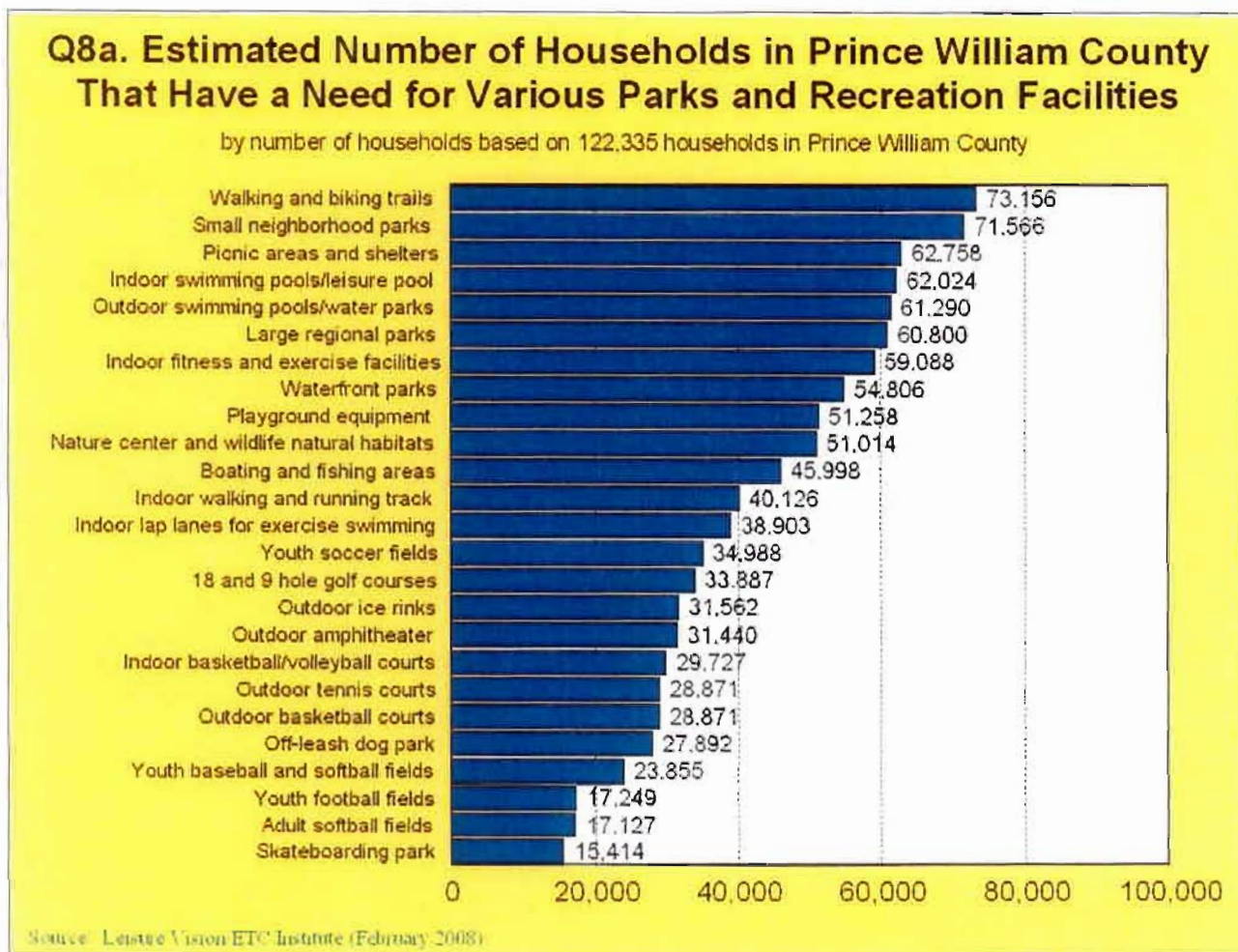
- There are six parks and recreation facilities that over 50% of respondent households have a need for: walking and biking trails (60%), small neighborhood parks (59%), picnic areas and shelters (51%), indoor swimming pools/leisure pool (51%), outdoor swimming pools/water parks (50%), and large regional parks (50%).



At least 54% of households have a need for walking and biking trails and 52% of households have a need for small neighborhood parks in all 7 voting districts. The need for youth soccer fields (29%) is significantly higher than the national benchmark of 22% and indicative of a high youth population in Prince William County.

Need For Parks and Recreation Facilities in Prince William County

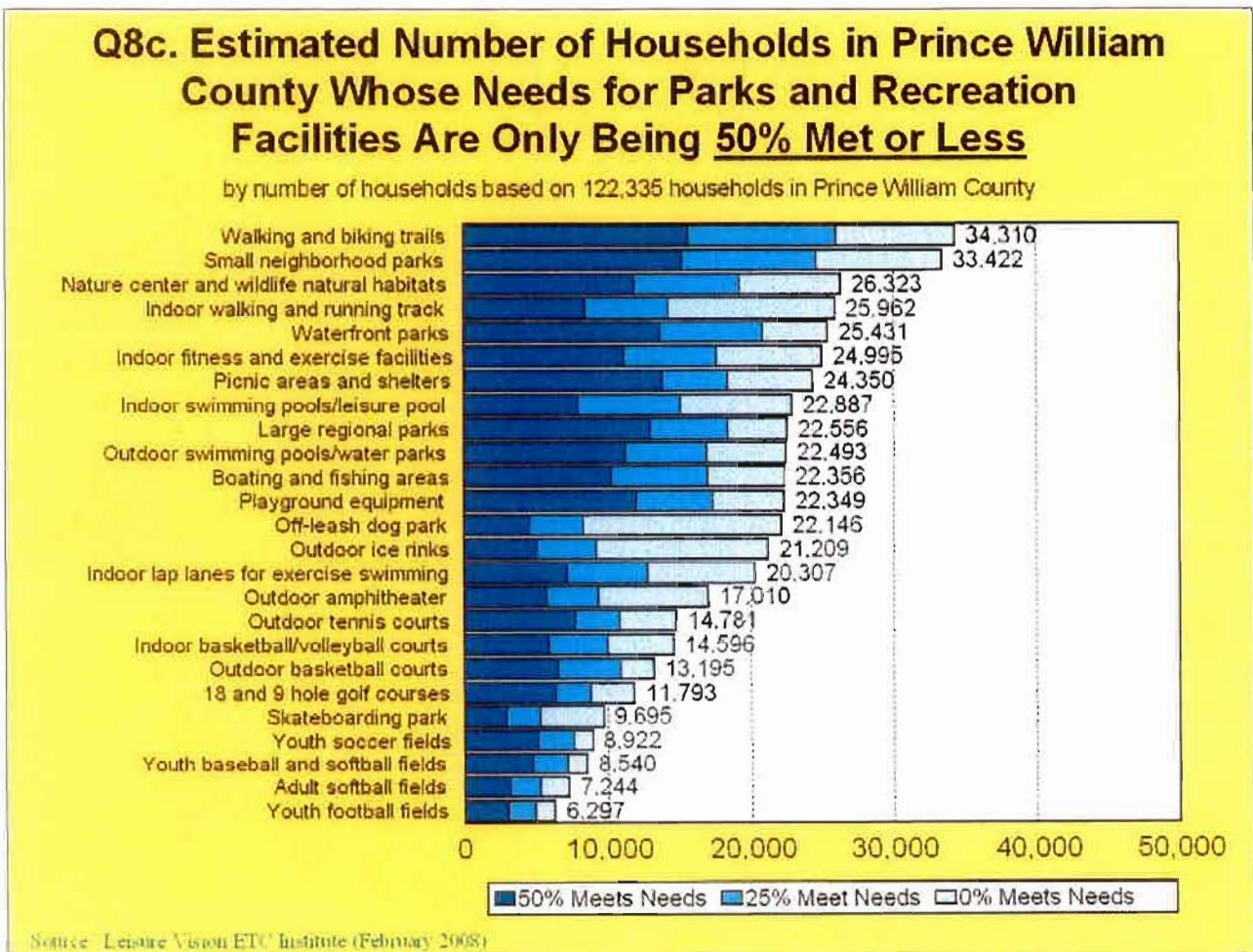
From the list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate the ones their household has a need for. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Prince William County that have a need for various parks and recreation facilities, based on 122,335 households in the County.



This chart shows the percentages illustrated on page 10, by the number of households in Prince William County who have needs for a wide variety of parks and recreation facilities based on 122,335 households in Prince William County.

Prince William County Households with Their Facility Needs Being 50% Met or Less

From the list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondent households that have a need for parks/facilities were asked to indicate how well these types of parks and facilities in Prince William County meet their needs. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Prince William County whose needs for parks/facilities are only being 50% met or less, based on 122,335 households in the County.

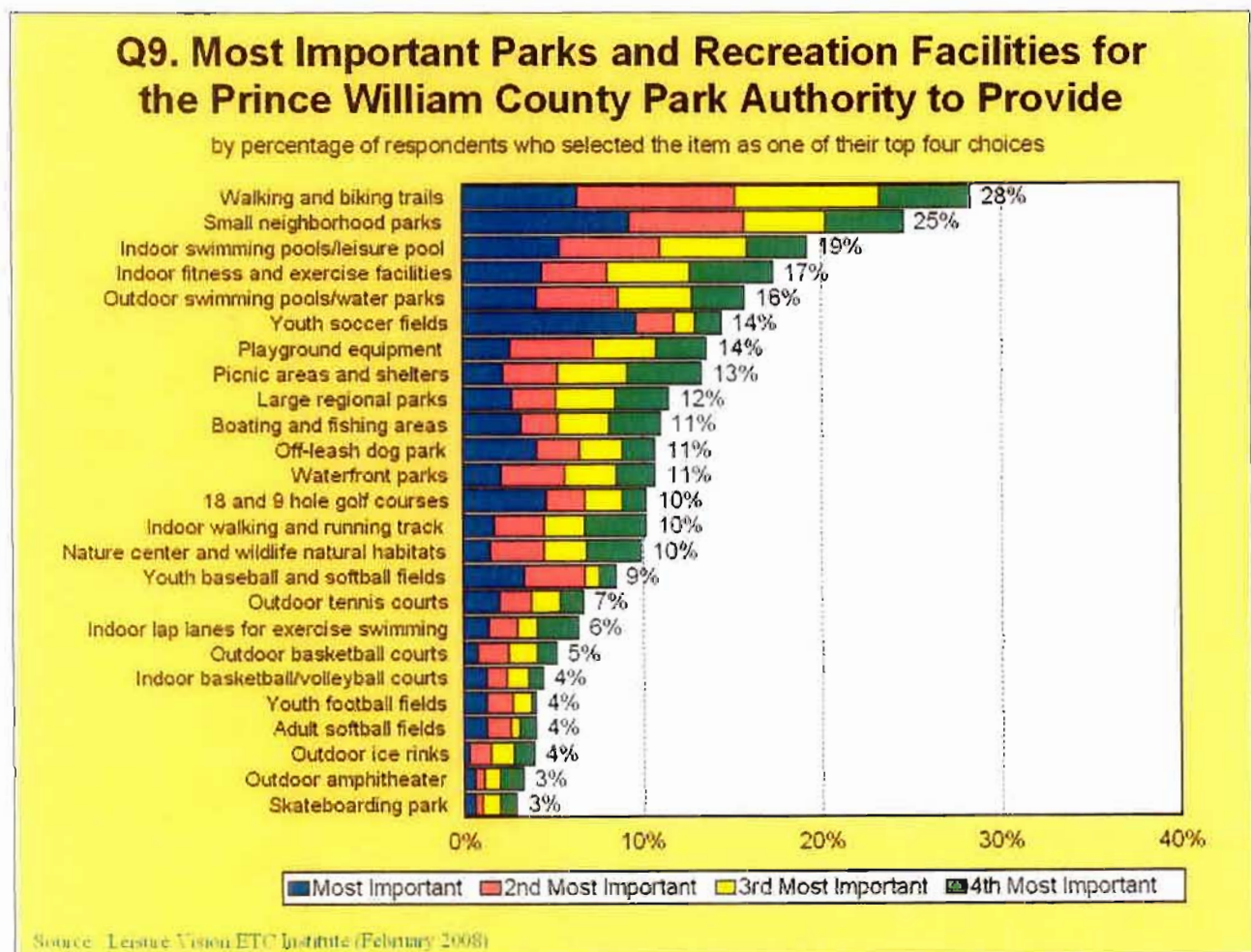


Walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks both have over 30,000 households who have needs for these facilities indicate their needs are only being 50% or less being met. Unmet needs are high for a wide range of outdoor and indoor facilities.

Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities

From the list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to select the four parks and facilities that are most important to their household. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top four choices, the parks/facilities that respondent households rated as the most important are: walking and biking trails (28%), small neighborhood parks (25%) and indoor swimming pools/leisure pool (19%).** It should also be noted that small neighborhood parks and youth soccer fields had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the park/facility that is most important to their household.

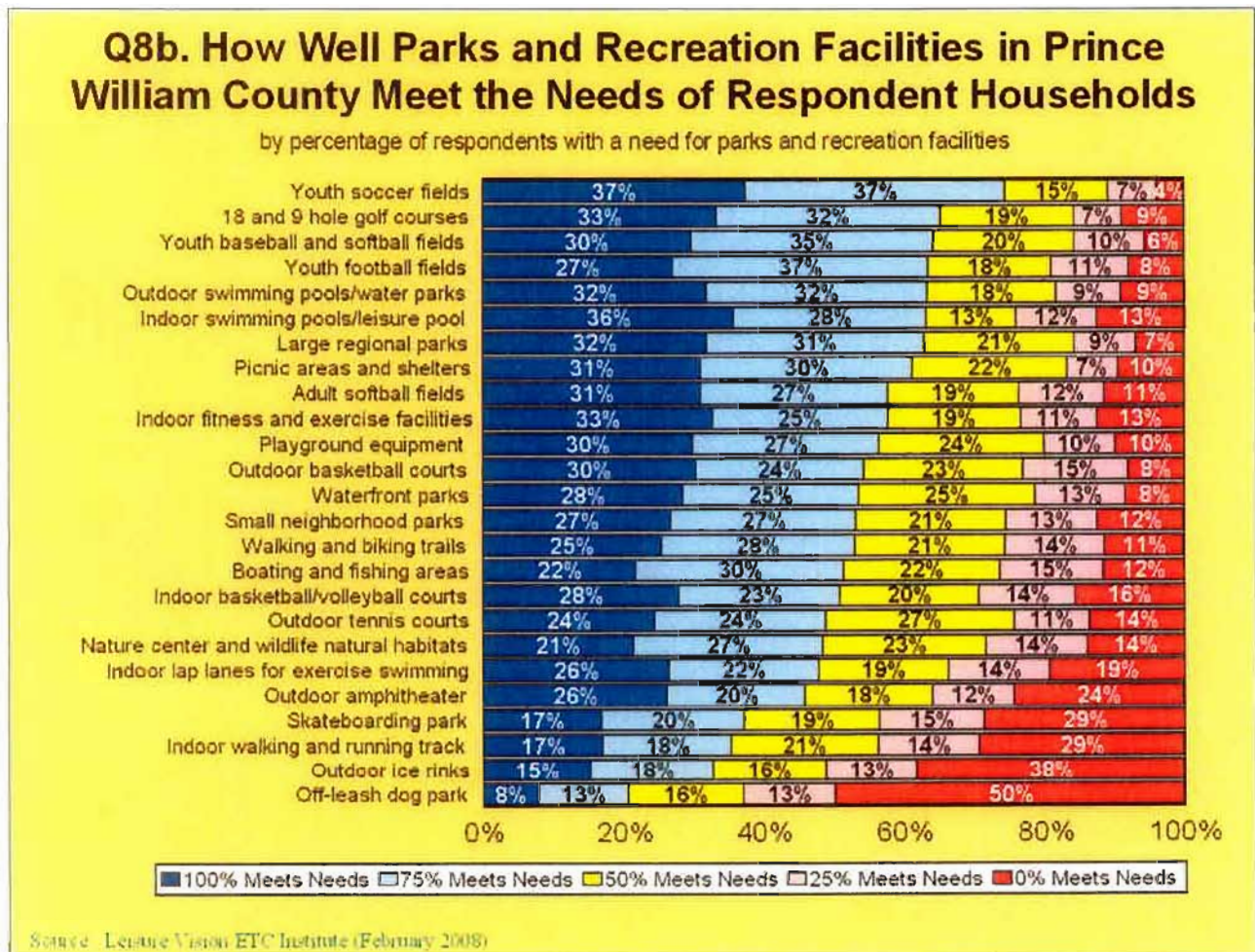


In all 7 voting districts, walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks were the two most important parks and recreation facilities to provide. Also, in all 7 voting districts youth soccer fields was the 1st most important sports field to provide.

How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities Meet Needs

From the list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondent households that have a need for parks/facilities were asked to indicate how well these types of parks and facilities in Prince William County meet their needs. The following summarizes key findings:

- For all 25 parks/facilities, less than 40% of respondents indicated that the park/facility 100% meets the needs of their household.

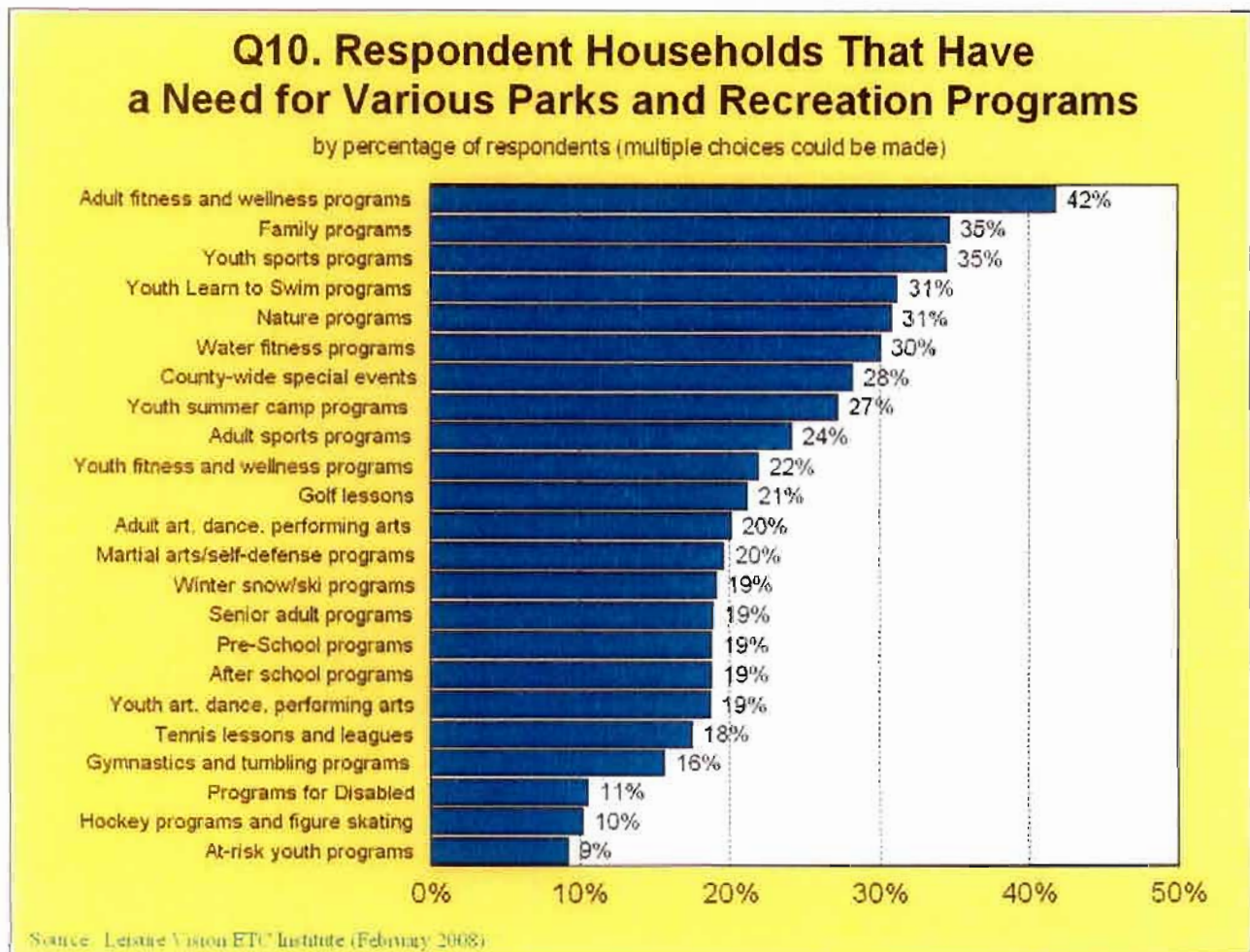


For a wide range of outdoor and indoor facilities, Prince William County residents who have needs indicate their needs are not not being 100% or in many cases even 75% being met.

Need for Recreation Programs

From a list of 23 recreation programs, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones that they and members of their household have a need for. The following summarizes key findings:

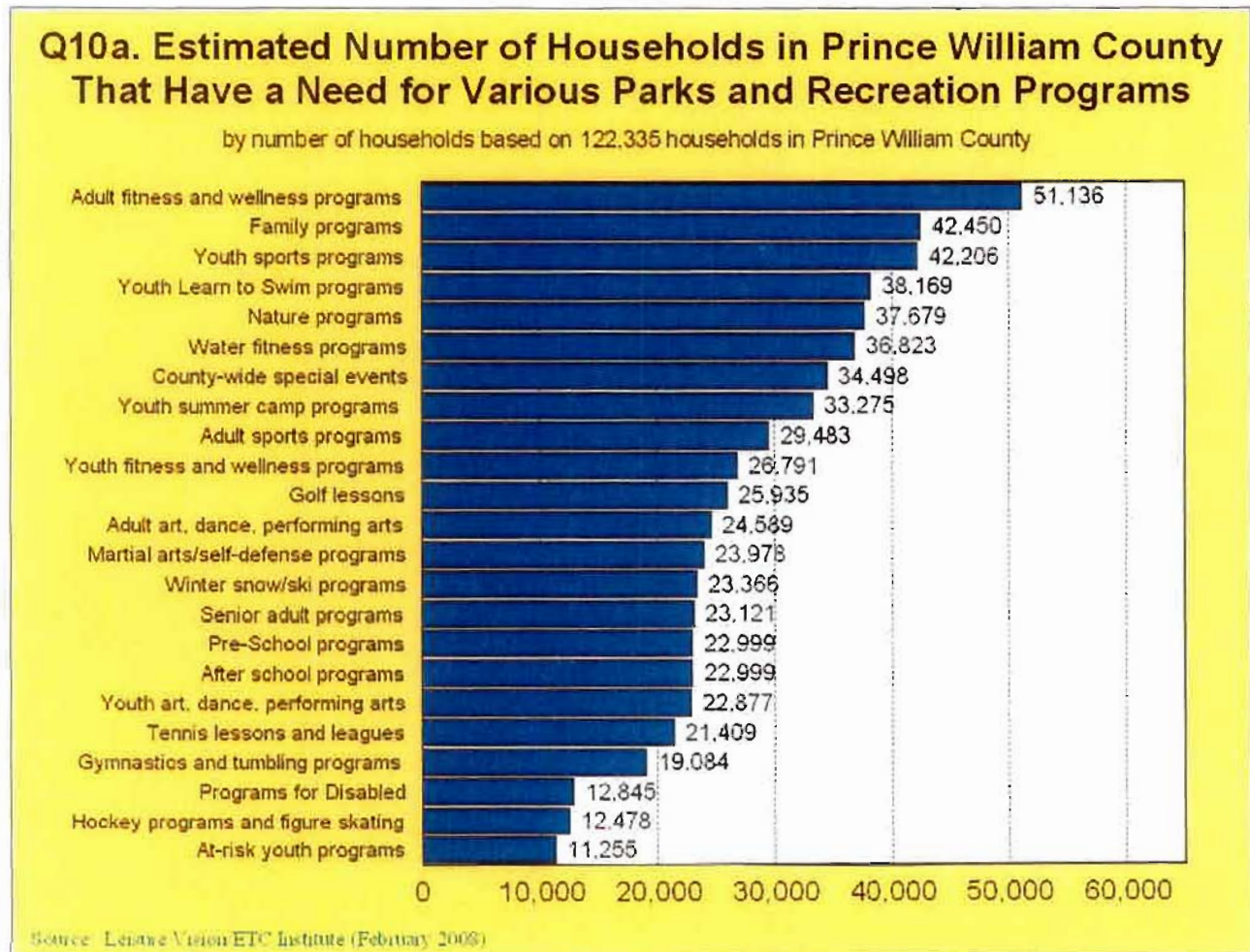
- The recreation programs that the highest percentage of respondent households have a need for are: adult fitness and wellness programs (42%), family programs (35%), and youth sports programs (35%).



In all 7 voting districts, at least 36% of residents had a need for adult fitness and wellness programs and at least 28% had a need for family programs.

Need for Recreation Programs in Prince William County

From the list of 23 recreation programs, respondents were asked to indicate which ones they and members of their household have a need for. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Prince William County that have a need for recreation programs, based on 122,335 households in the County.

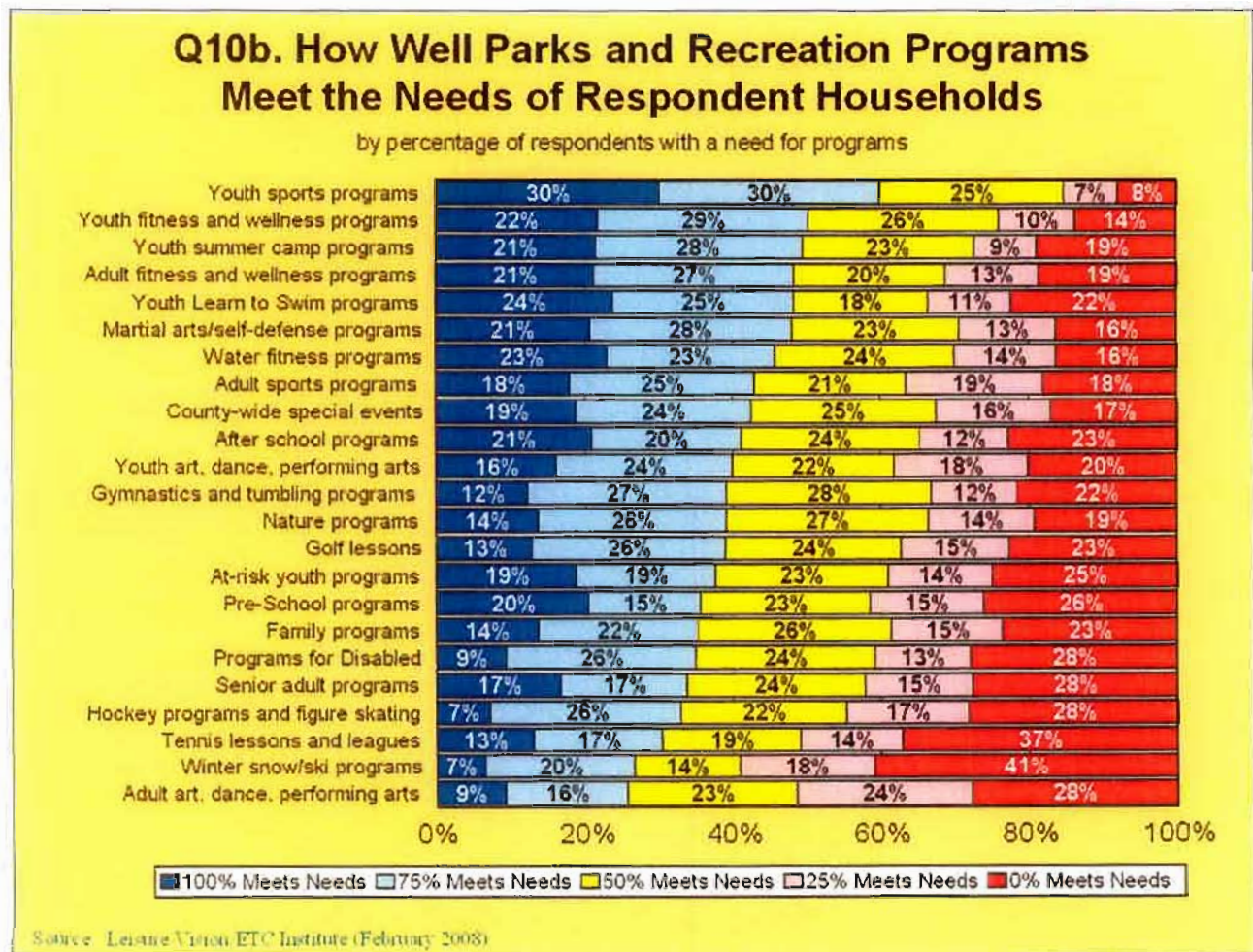


This chart shows the percentages illustrated on page 15, by the number of households in Prince William County who have needs for a wide variety of parks and recreation programs based on 122,335 households in Prince William County.

How Well Recreation Programs Meet Needs

From the list of 23 recreation programs, respondent households that have a need for programs were asked to indicate how well these types of programs meet their needs. The following summarizes key findings:

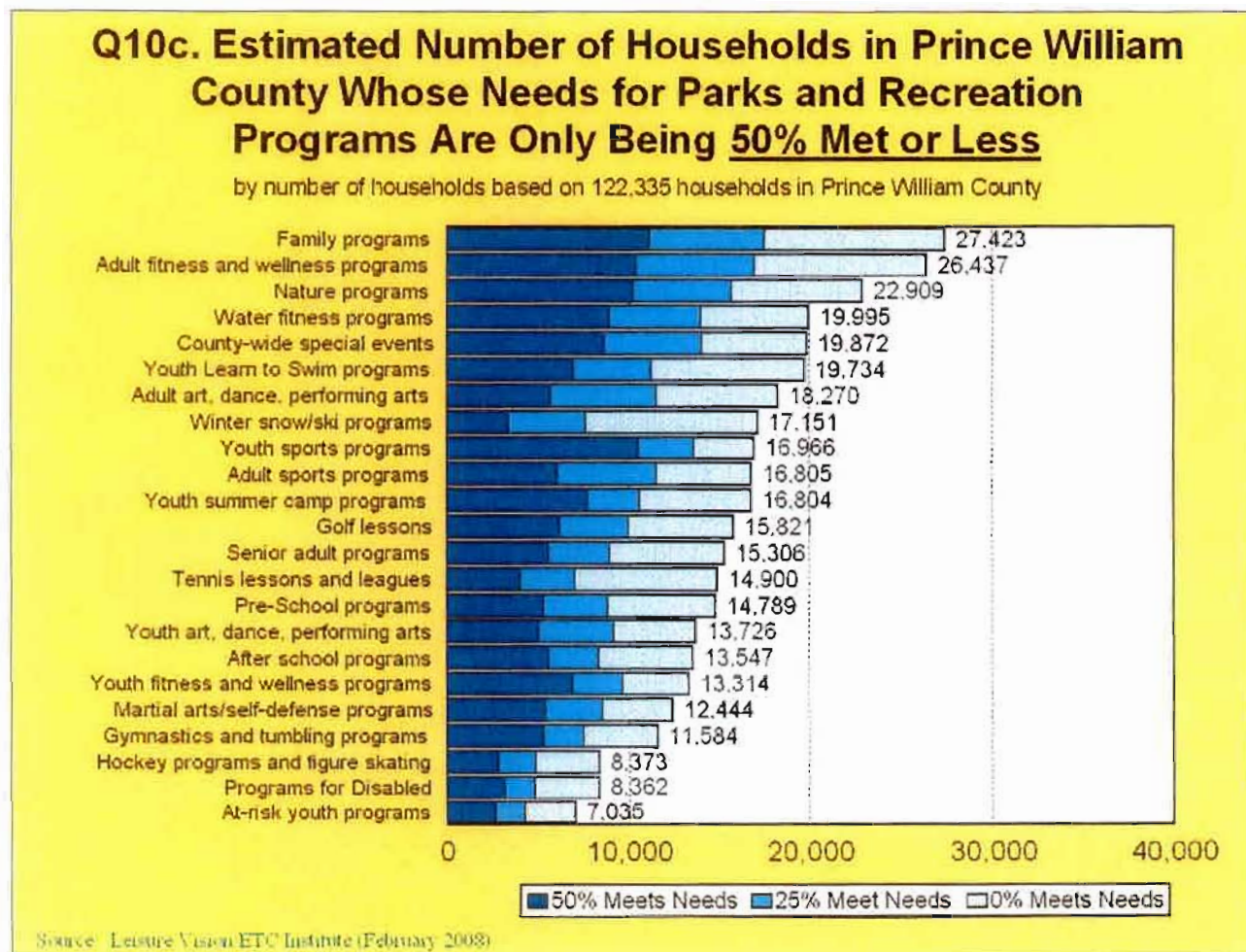
- For all 23 programs, less than 35% of respondents indicated that the program completely meets the needs of their household.



In more than half of the 23 program areas, the percentage of respondents who indicated their needs are 0% being met is greater than the percentage who indicate their needs are 100% being met.

Prince William County Households with Their Program Needs Being 50% Met or Less

From the list of 23 recreation programs, respondent households that have a need for programs were asked to indicate how well these types of programs meet their needs. The graph below shows the estimated number of households in Prince William County whose needs for programs are only being 50% met or less, based on 122,335 households in the County.

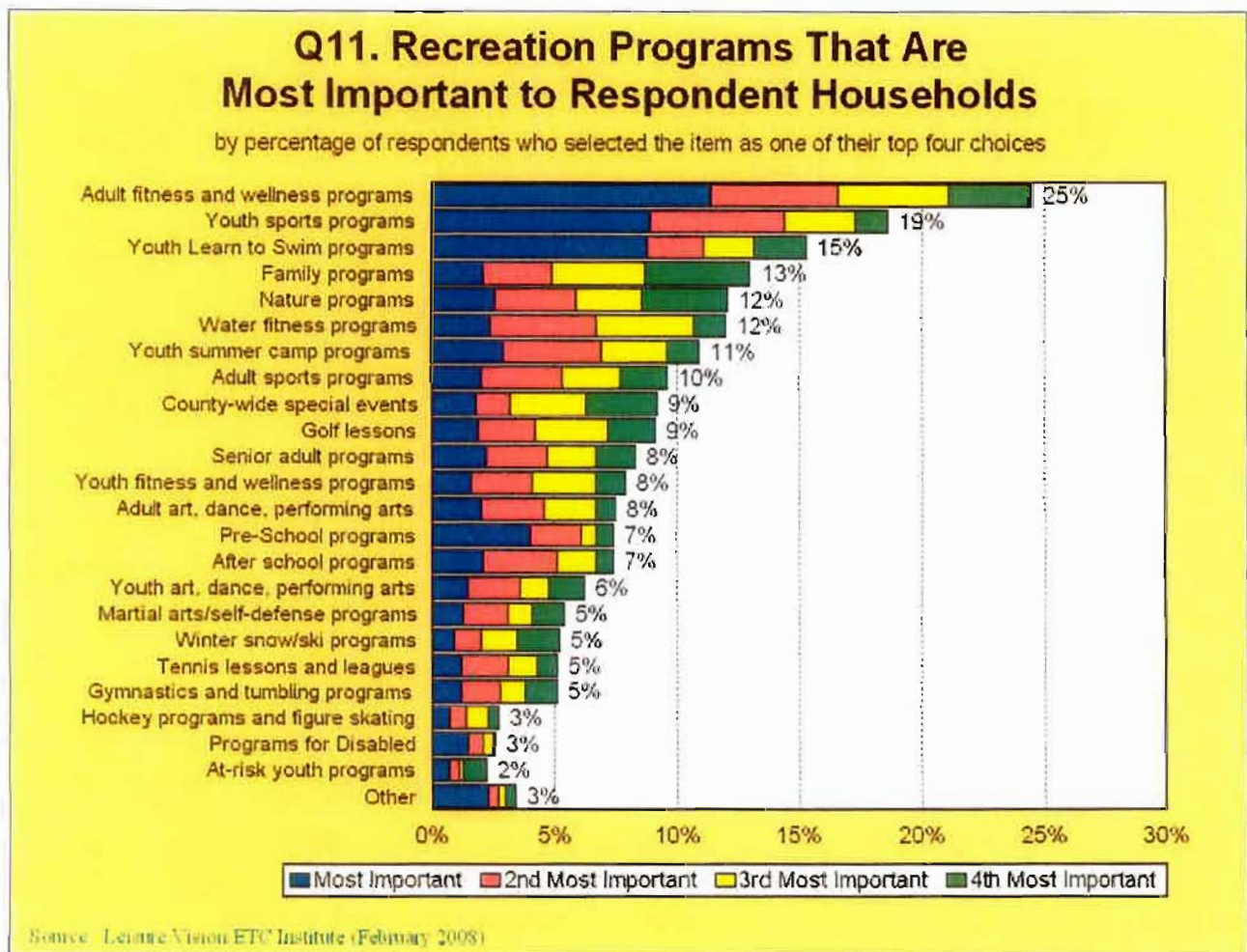


More than 25,000 households in Prince William County have their needs 50% or less being met for family programs and adult fitness and wellness programs.

Most Important Recreation Programs

From the list of 23 recreation programs, respondents were asked to select the four that are most important to their household. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top four choices, the programs that respondent households rated as the most important are: adult fitness and wellness programs (25%), youth sports programs (19%), and Youth Learn to Swim Programs (15%).** It should also be noted that adult fitness and wellness programs had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the program that is most important to their household.

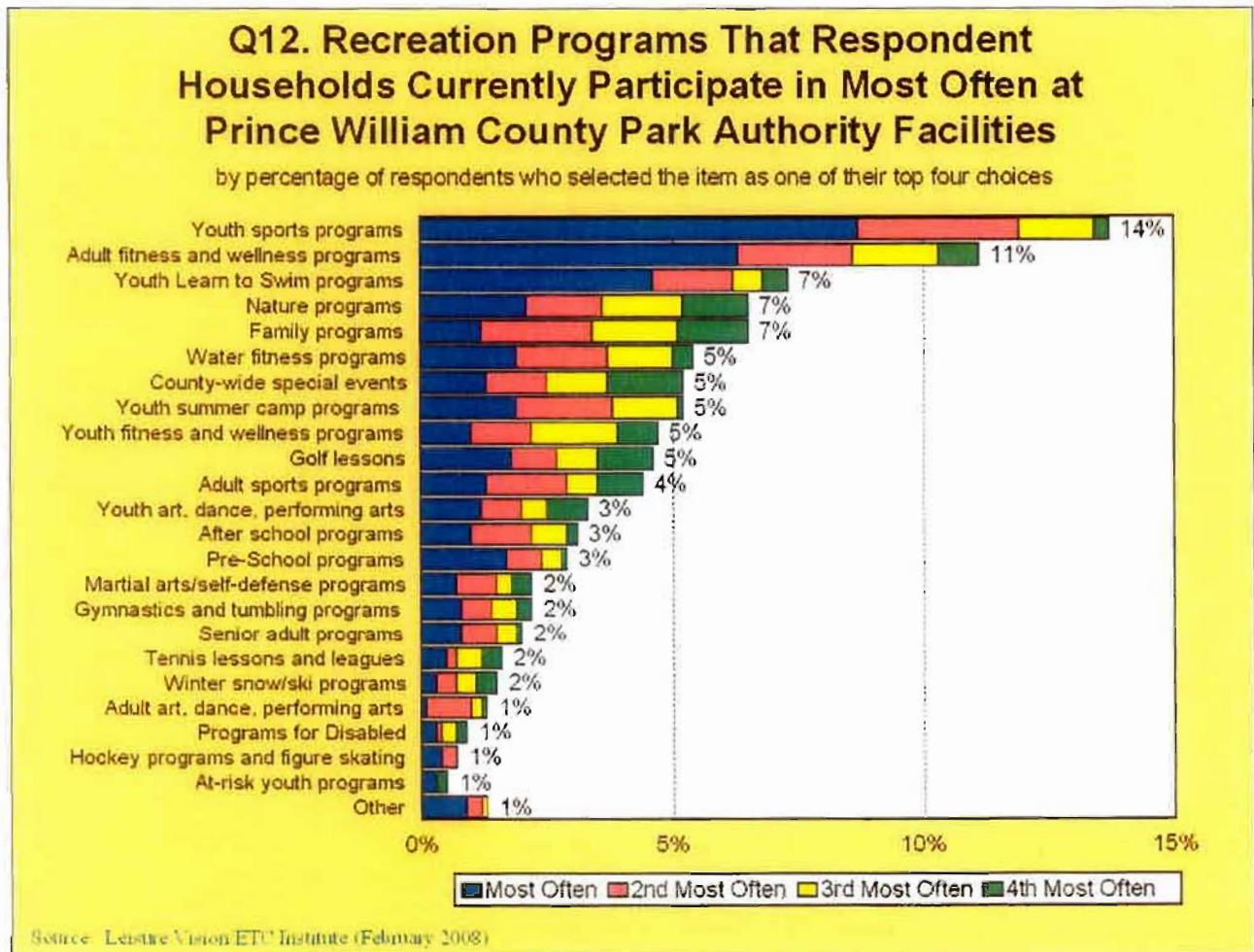


In all 7 voting districts adult fitness and wellness programs are the most important adult program for residents. In 5 voting areas youth sports programs are the most important youth program for residents, with youth learn to swim programs being the most important in the Occoquan and Neabsco areas.

Programs Currently Participated in Most Often

From the list of 23 recreation programs, respondents were asked to select the four that they currently participate in most often at Prince William County Park Authority facilities. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top four choices, the programs that respondents currently participate in most often at Prince William County Park Authority facilities are: youth sports programs (14%) and adult fitness and wellness programs (11%).** It should also be noted that youth sports programs had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the program their household currently participates in most often at Prince William County Park Authority facilities.

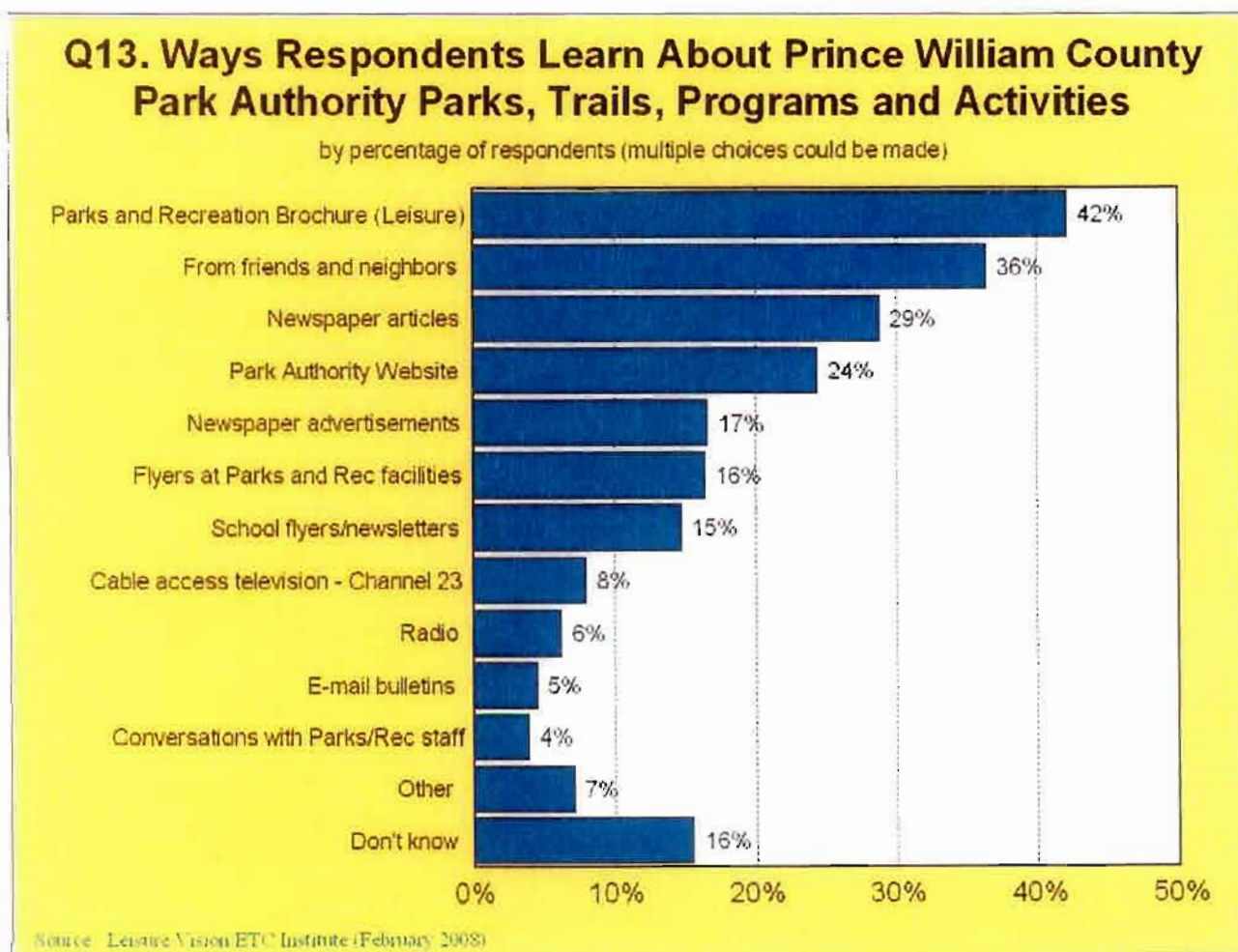


The Prince William County Park Authority is doing an excellent job in providing youth programs to residents, with significant opportunities to increase adult fitness and wellness programs.

Ways Respondents Learn About Programs and Activities

From a list of 11 options, respondents were asked to indicate all the ways they learn about Prince William County Park Authority parks, trails, programs and activities. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The most frequently mentioned ways that respondents learn about Prince William County Authority parks, trails, programs and activities are: Parks and Recreation Brochure (42%), from friends and neighbors (36%) and newspaper articles (29%).**

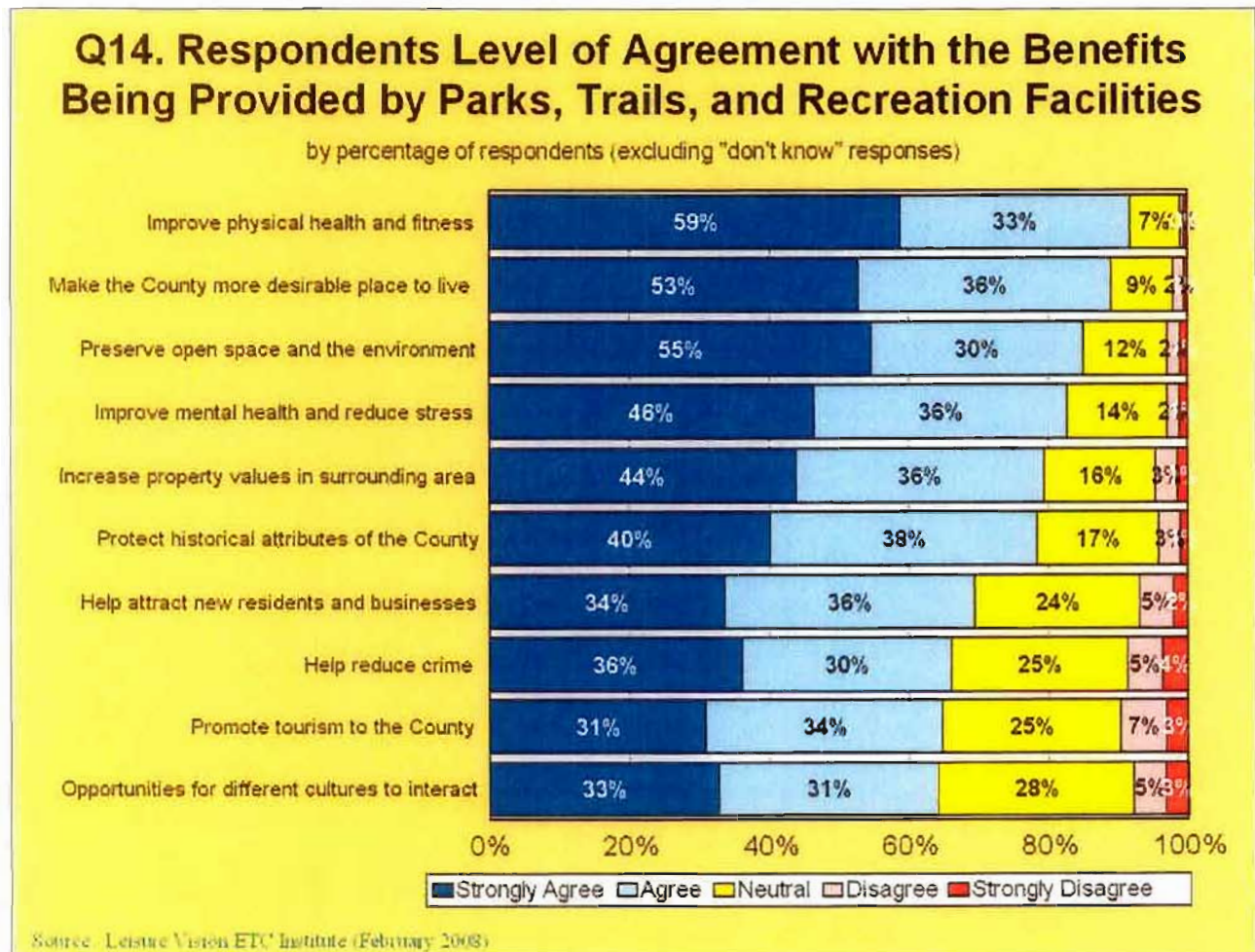


The marketing program for the Prince William County Park Authority is diversified with opportunities for improvements. The percentages of households learning about services from the brochure, friends and neighbors, and newspaper article are all below national benchmarks. The website is highly successful with 24% using it, much higher than the national benchmark of 12%.

Potential Benefits Provided by Parks, Trails, Recreation Facilities & Services

From a list of 10 benefits that could be provided by various parks, trails, recreation facilities and services, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each potential benefit. The following summarizes key findings:

- **There are three benefits that over 50% of respondents strongly agree are being provided by parks, trails, recreation facilities and services: improve physical health and fitness (59%), preserve open space and the environment (55%) and make Prince William County a more desirable place to live (53%).**

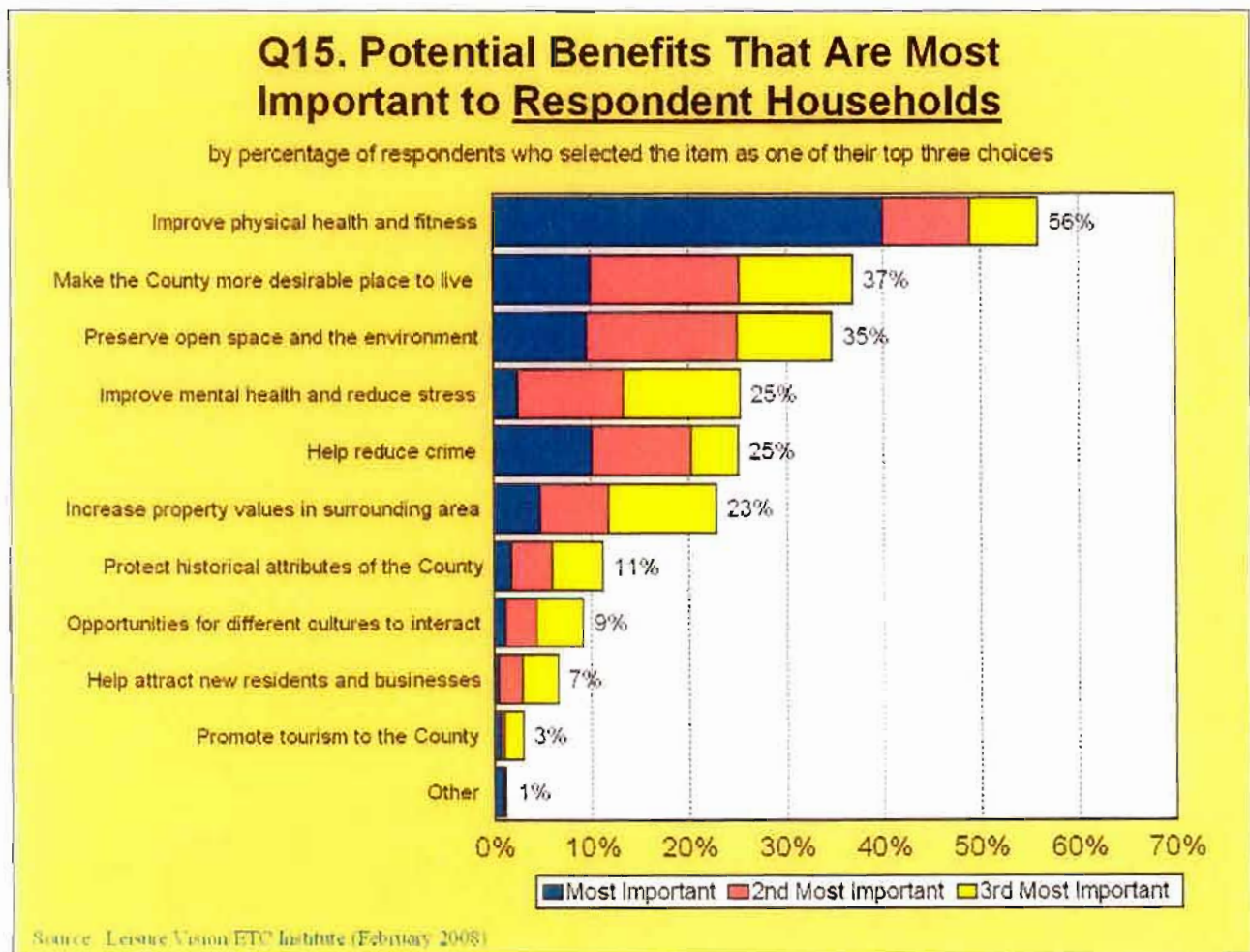


At least 60% of respondents strongly agree or agree that parks, trails, and recreation facilities provide benefits in each of the 10 areas.

Most Important Benefits to Respondent Households

From a list of 10 benefits that could be provided by various parks, trails, recreation facilities and services, respondents were asked to select the three benefits that are most important to their household. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top three choices, the benefits that are most important to respondent households are: improve physical health and fitness (56%), make Prince William County a more desirable place to live (37%) and preserve open space and the environment (35%).** It should also be noted that improve physical health and fitness had by a wide margin the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the benefit that is most important to their household.

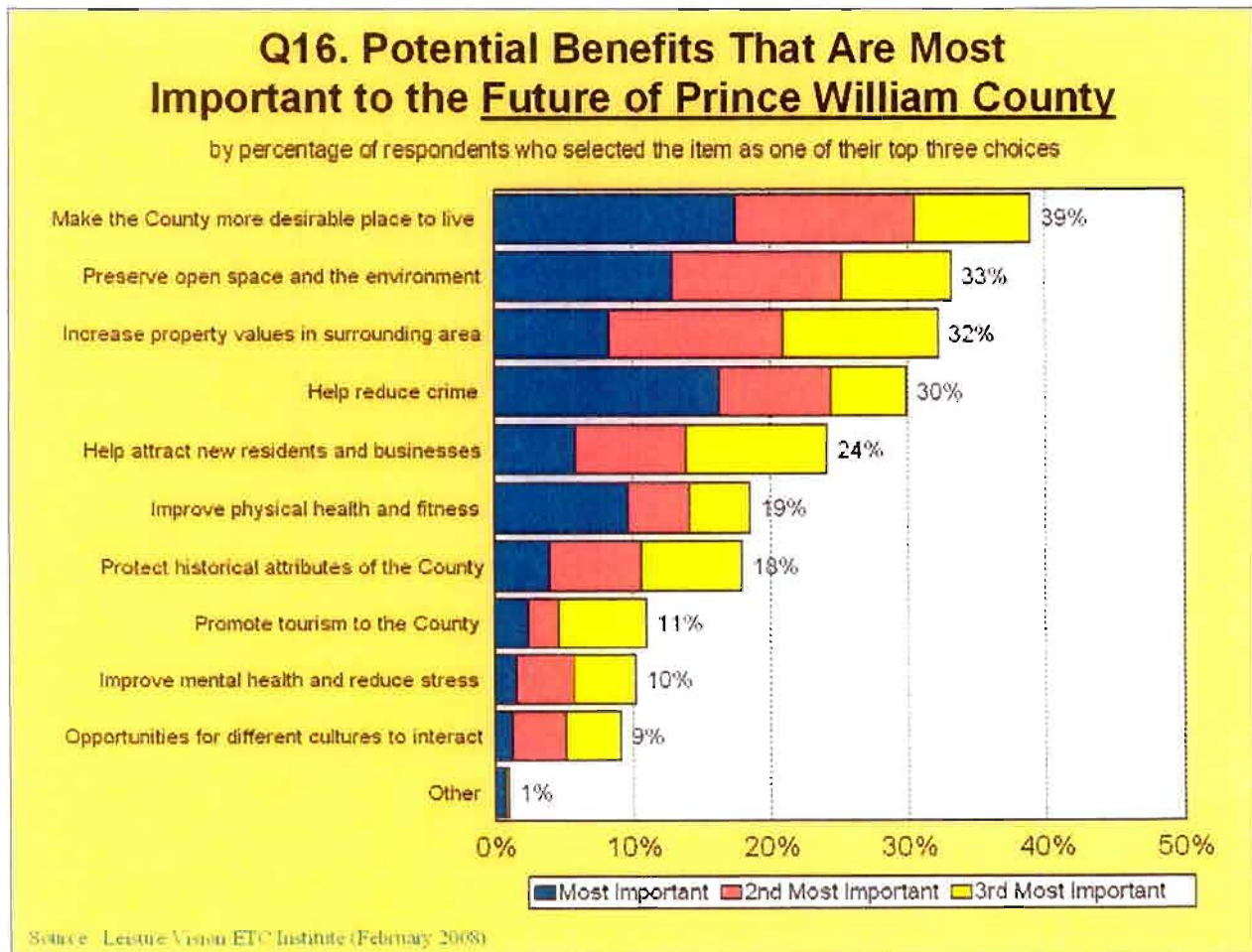


In all 7 voting districts, improve physical health and fitness is the most important benefit to respondent households.

Most Important Benefits to the Future of Prince William County

From a list of 10 benefits that could be provided by various parks, trails, recreation facilities and services, respondents were asked to select the three benefits that are most important to the future of Prince William County. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top three choices, the benefits that are most important to the future of Prince William County are: make Prince William County a more desirable place to live (39%), preserve open space and the environment (33%), and increase property values in the surrounding area (32%).** It should also be noted that make Prince William County a desirable place to live had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the benefit that is most important to the future of Prince William County.

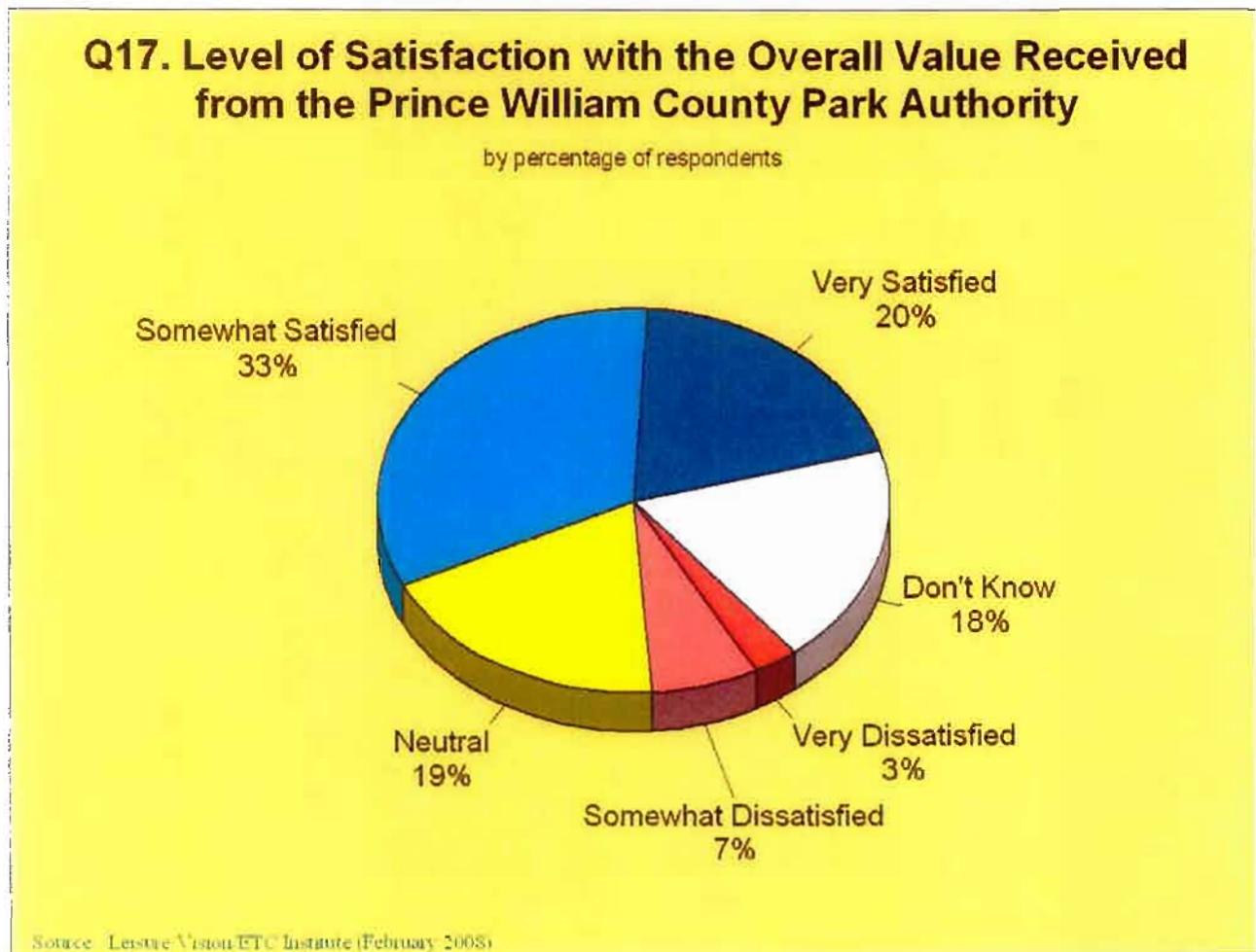


In 6 voting districts, make Prince William County a more desirable place to live, was the most important benefit to the future of Prince William County, with help reduce crime most important in Neabsco.

Level of Satisfaction with Overall Value Received from the Prince William County Park Authority

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the overall value their household receives from the Prince William County Park Authority. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents indicated they are either very satisfied (20%) or somewhat satisfied (33%) with the overall value their household receives from the Prince William County Park Authority.** In addition, 10% of respondents are either very dissatisfied (3%) or somewhat dissatisfied (7%), 19% indicated “neutral”, and 18% indicated “don’t know”.

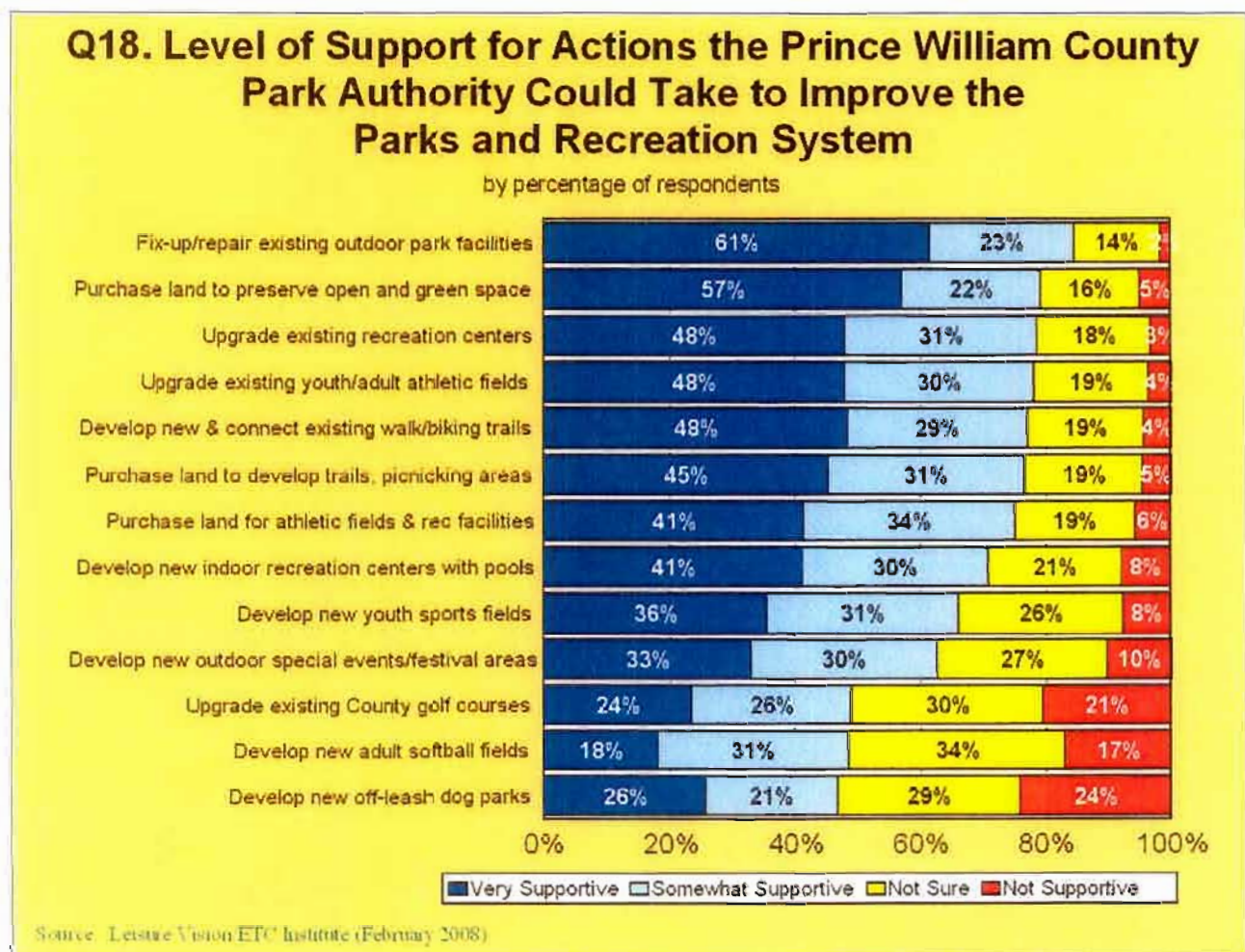


53% of respondents indicated they were very or somewhat satisfied with the value received from the Prince William County Park Authority with only 10% being very or somewhat dissatisfied.

Support for Actions to Improve the Parks and Recreation System

From a list of 13 actions the Prince William County Park Authority could take to improve the parks and recreation system, respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for each one. The following summarizes key findings:

- There are two actions that over 55% of respondents are either very supportive or somewhat supportive of Prince William County Park Authority taking to improve the parks and recreation system: fix-up/repair existing outdoor park facilities (61%) and purchase land to preserve open space and green space (57%).

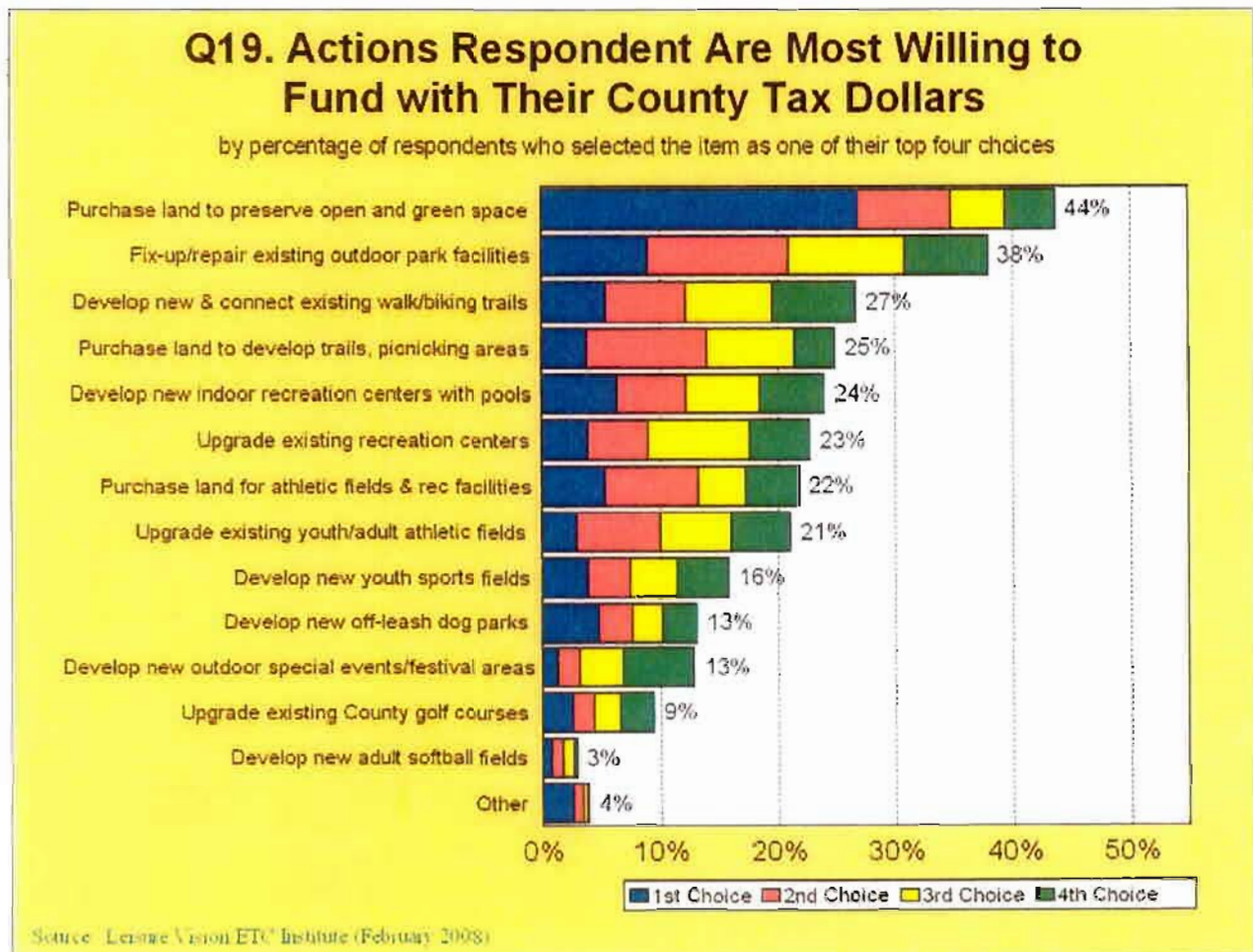


50% or more of respondents are very or somewhat supportive of 11 or the 13 potential actions to improve the parks and recreation system.

Actions Respondents Would Be Most Willing to Fund

From a list of 13 actions the Prince William County Park Authority could take to improve the parks and recreation system, respondents were asked to select the four actions they would be most willing to fund with their county tax dollars. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top four choices, the actions that respondents would be most willing to fund with their county tax dollars are: purchase land to preserve open space and green space for future generations (44%) and fix-up/repair existing outdoor park facilities (38%).** It should also be noted that purchase land to preserve open space and green space for future generations had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the action they would be most willing to fund with their county tax dollars.

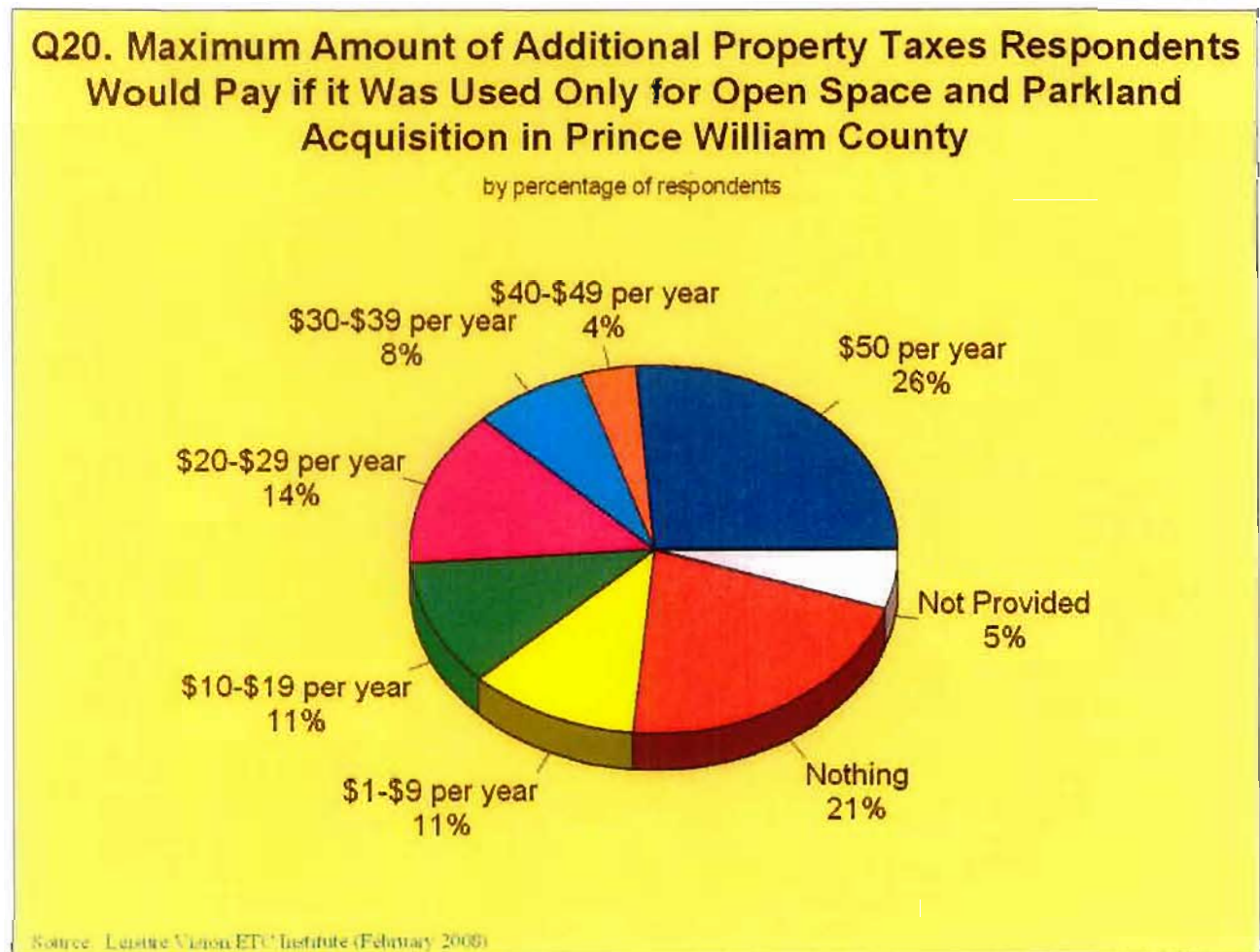


Purchase land to preserve open and green space and fix-up/repair existing outdoor park facilities represent the actions respondents are most willing to fund with their County tax dollars, with 27% indicating purchase land as their 1st choice.

Maximum Amount of Additional Annual Property Taxes Willing to Pay

Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum amount of additional annual property taxes they would pay if the funds could only be used for open space and parkland acquisition. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents would pay at least \$10 per year in additional property taxes to help fund open space and parkland acquisition.** Fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents would pay at least \$20 per year in additional property taxes, and 38% would pay at least \$30 per year in additional property taxes.

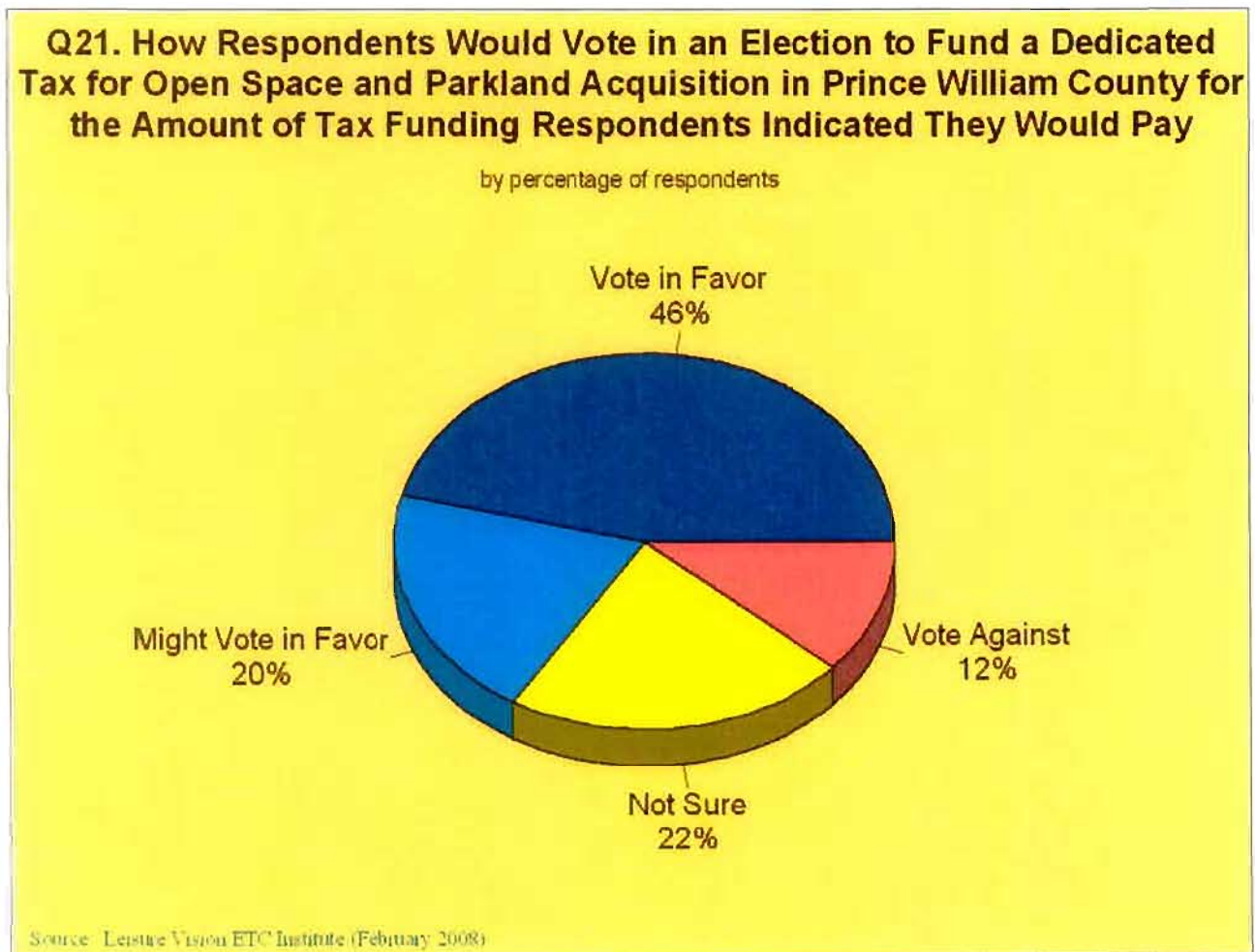


In all 7 voting districts over 62% of respondents would be willing to invest some additional amount of property taxes to help fund the acquisition of parkland and open space.

Voting on a Dedicated Tax for Open Space and Parkland Acquisition

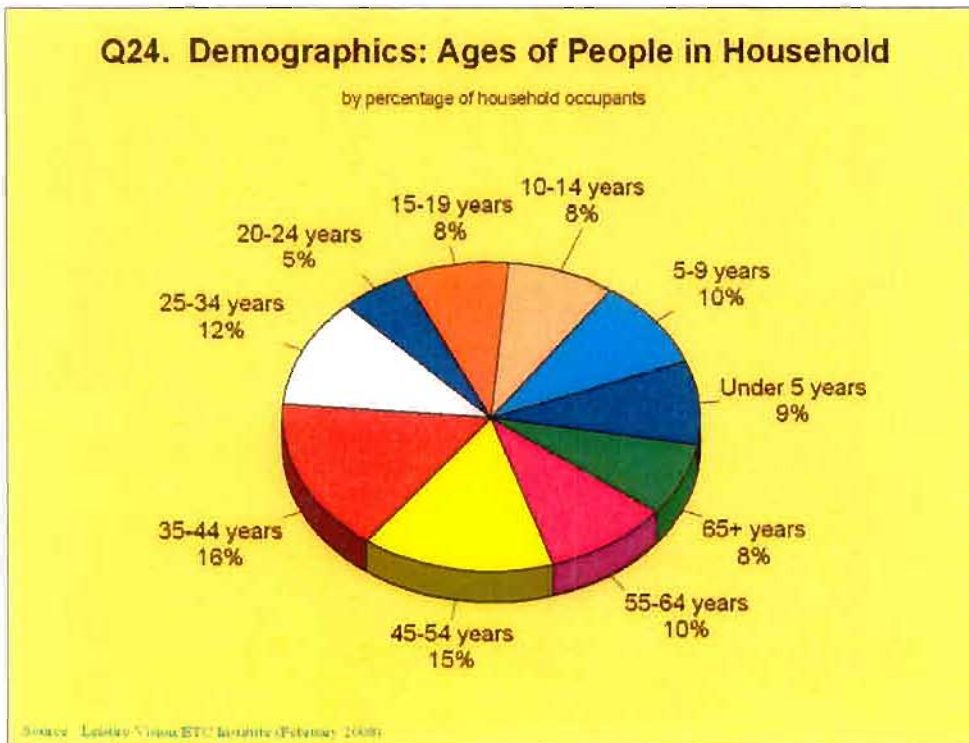
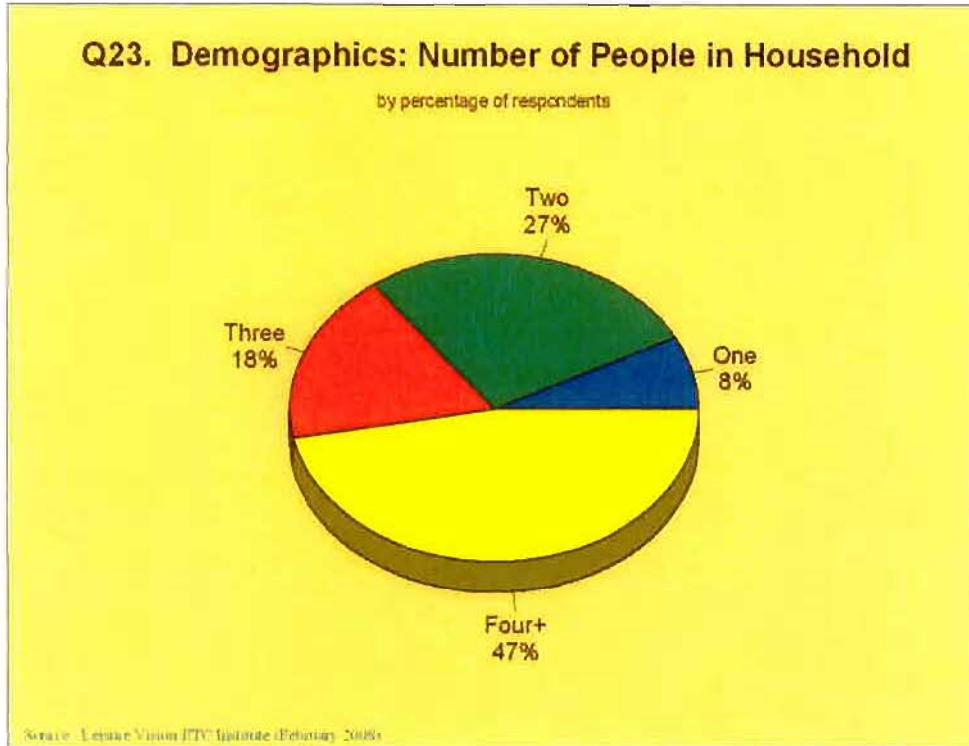
Respondents were asked how they would vote in an election to fund a dedicated tax for open space and parkland acquisition for the amount of tax funding they are willing to pay. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents would either vote in favor (46%) or might vote in favor (20%) of a dedicated tax to fund open space and parkland acquisition.** In addition, 12% of respondents would vote against the dedicated tax, and 22% indicated “not sure”.

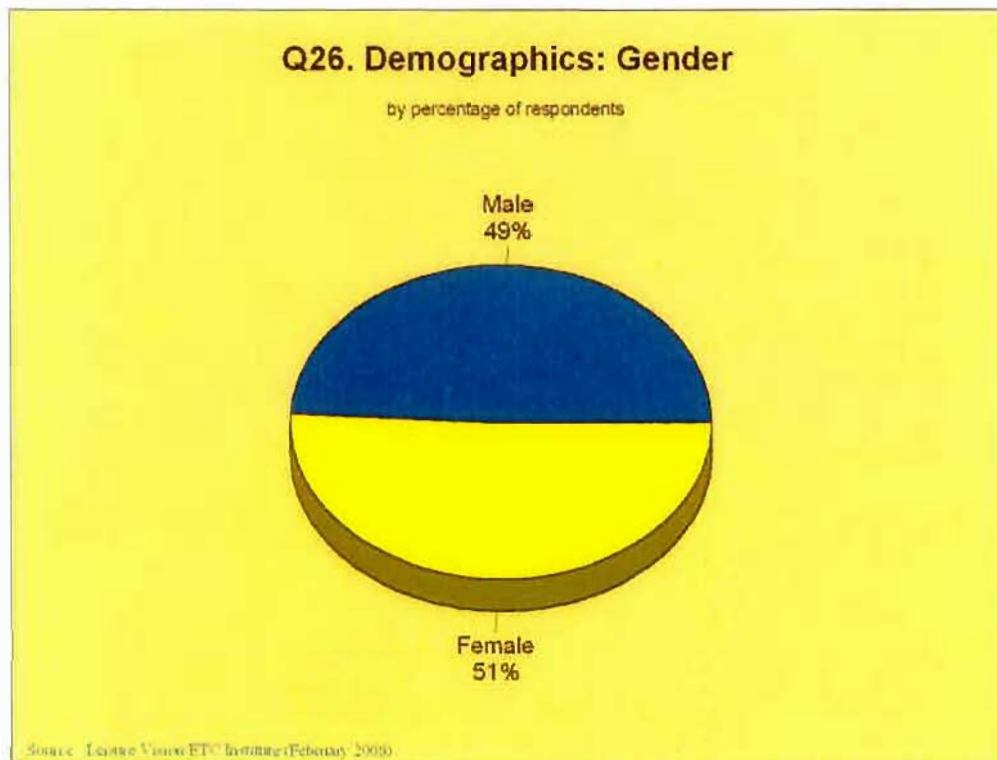
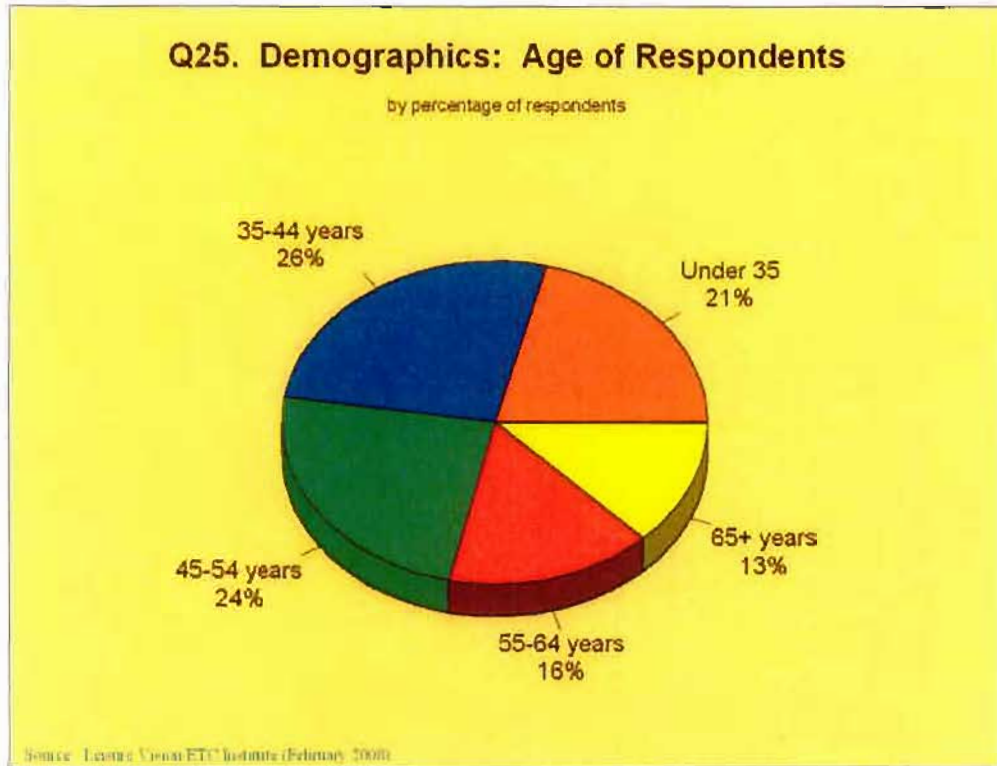


In all 7 voting districts over 50% of respondents would vote in favor or might vote in favor of a dedicated tax for Open Space and Parkland Acquisition for the amount of tax funding they indicated they would pay.

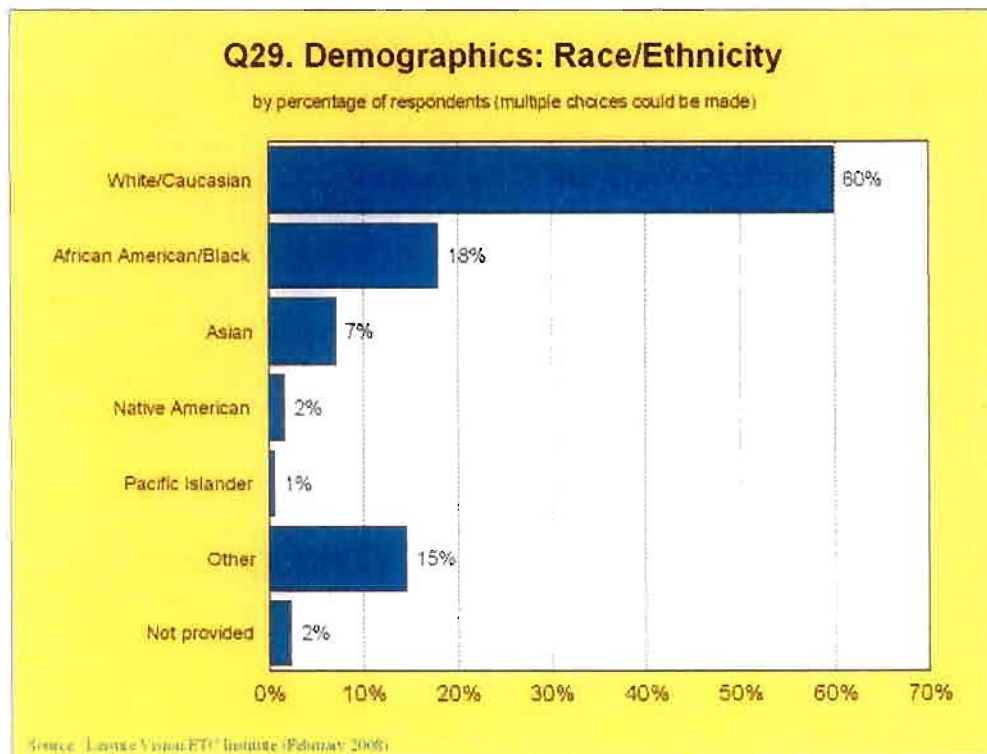
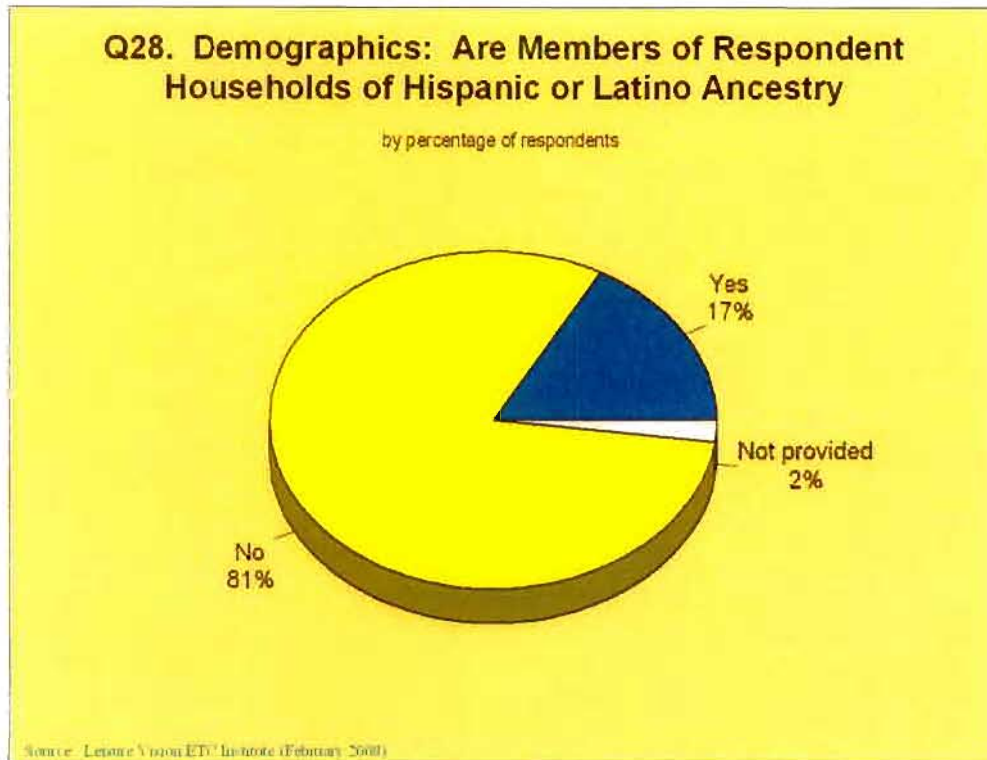
Demographics



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