



CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan

FEBRUARY 2022





Tonight's Agenda

Welcome
Meeting Format – chat and recording
LPPRP Process Review
Community Engagement
Stakeholder & Focus Groups
Survey
On-site park assessments
Next Steps
Closing

About us

Expertise. Innovation. Independence.

The qualities that have driven us for more than four decades are the ones we continue to bring to every client engagement—every day.

We are **committed to your success.**



Founded in **1974**

Your Project Team



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▲ The Vision

The plan will provide a basis for the statewide Maryland Land Preservation & Recreation Plan. The **State of Maryland requires** local governing bodies to prepare a local land preservation and recreation plan at least every five (5) years and submit it to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Planning.

The plan is a **prerequisite for county participation in Program Open Space.**

Master Plan Process

Schedule



Charles County Demographics

**Current
Population
166,617**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020;
Prepared by the Maryland Department of
Planning



Median Age
Charles County – 38.5
Maryland - 39.6
United States - 38.8

Source: 2021 Esri Business Analyst



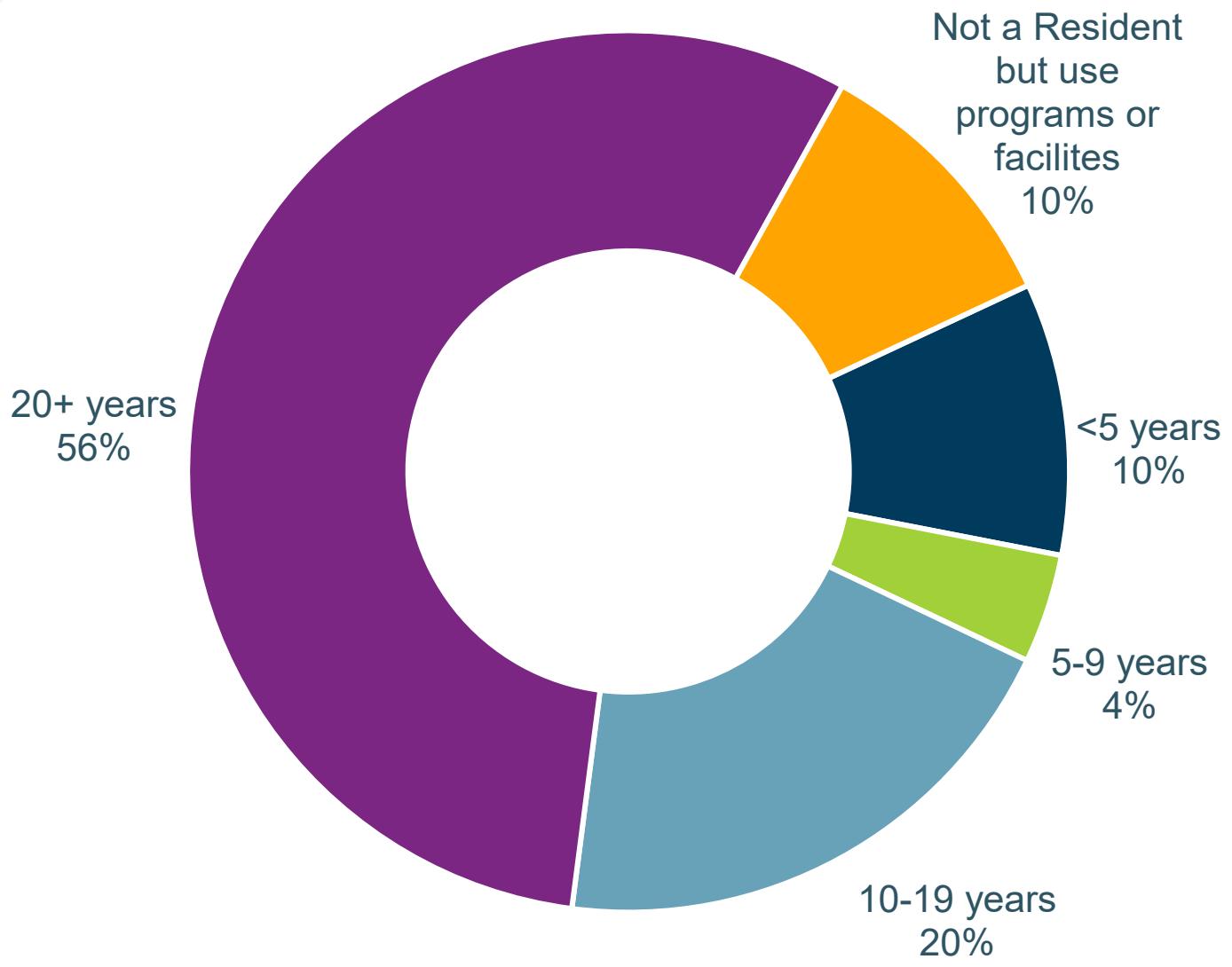
► I. Engagement

- Stakeholder & Focus Groups

Community Information & Gathering Summary

- Staff SWOT Analysis
- Focus Group Meetings
- Stakeholder Meetings
- Public Meeting

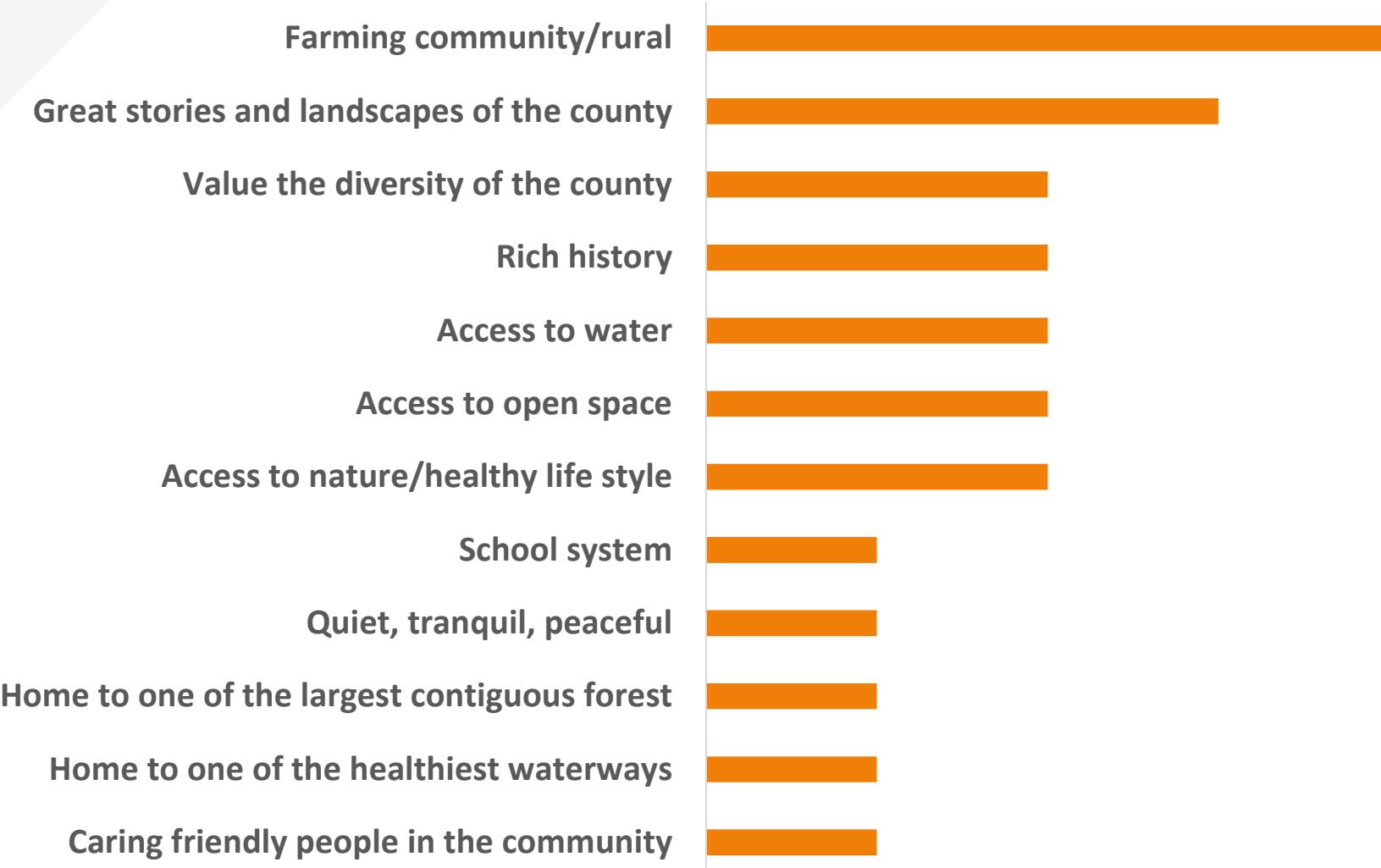
Years of Residency



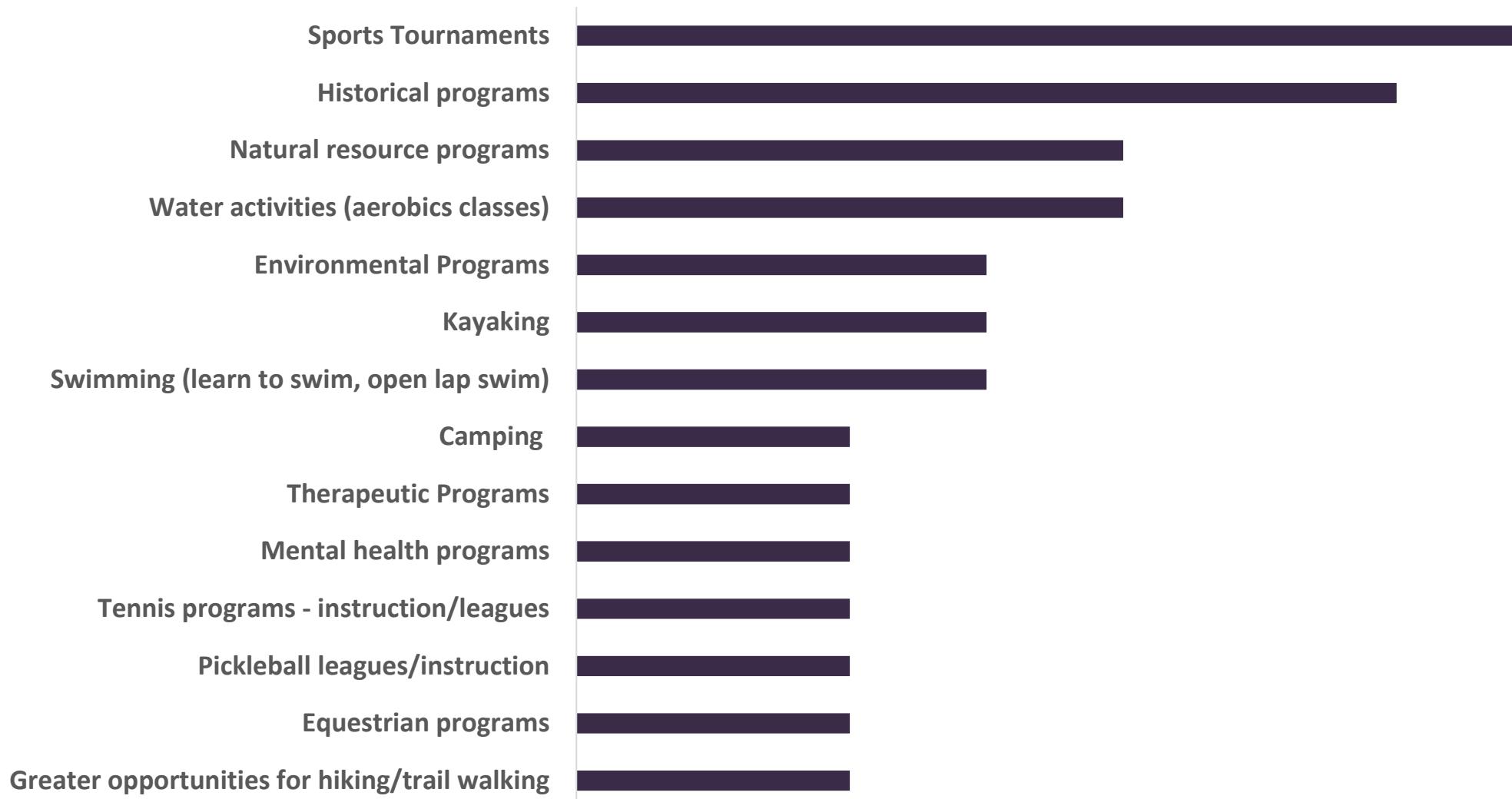
Initial Public Engagement
Total 50 participants

- Focus Groups
- Stakeholders
- Staff

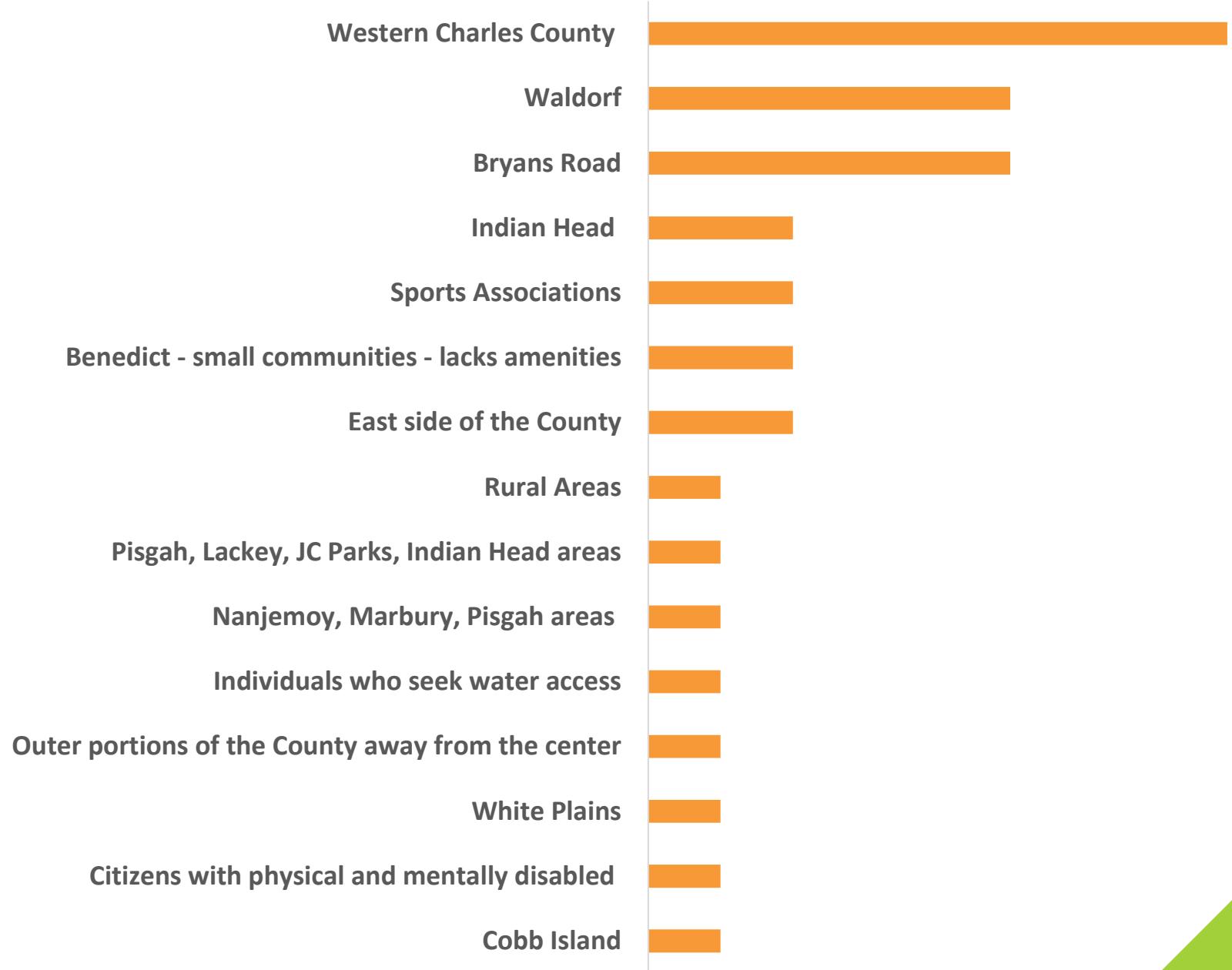
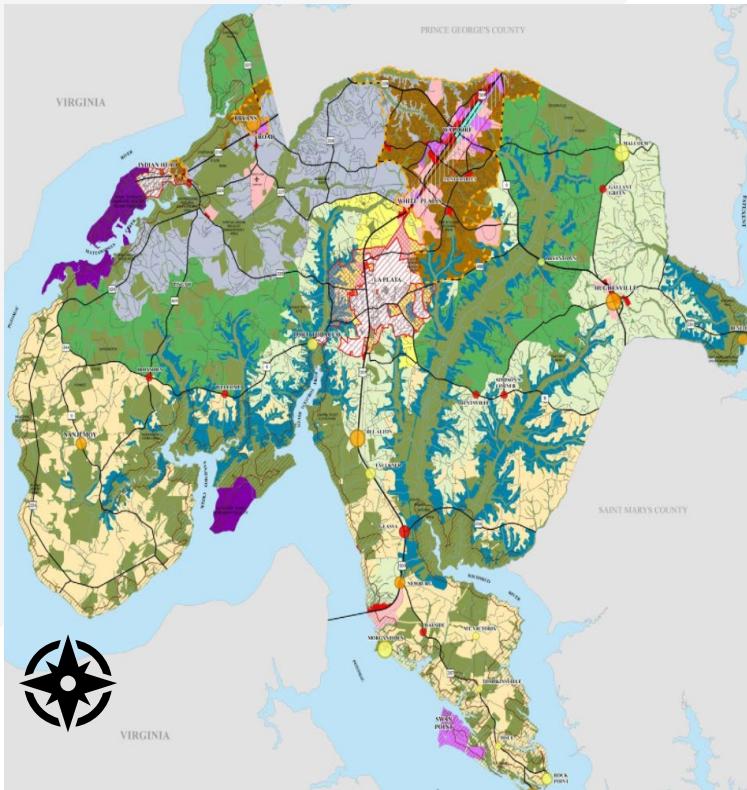
What are the Values of Parks and Recreation in Charles County?



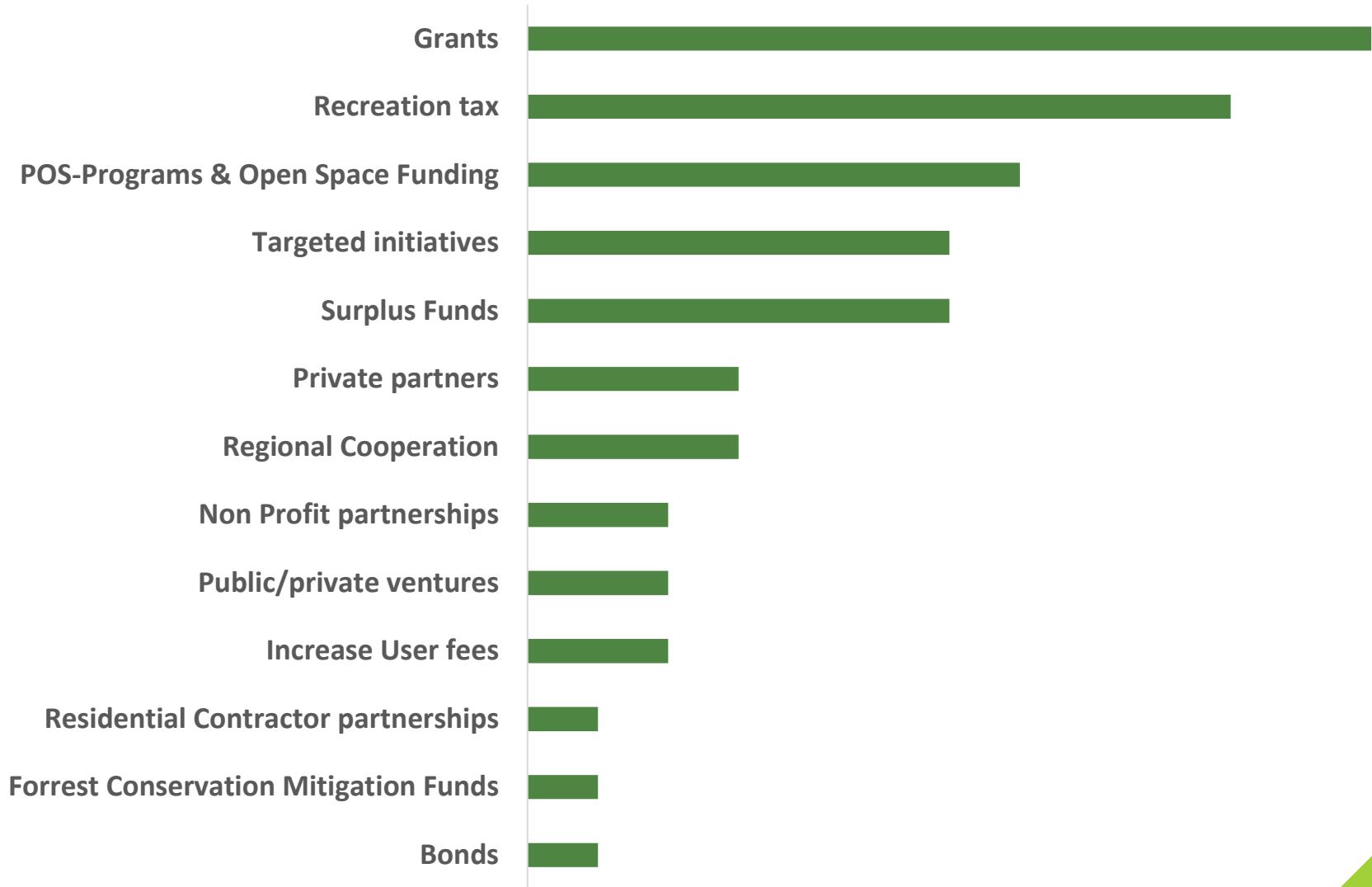
Additional Programs/Services Desired



Areas of the County that are Underserved



Community Supported Funding Options



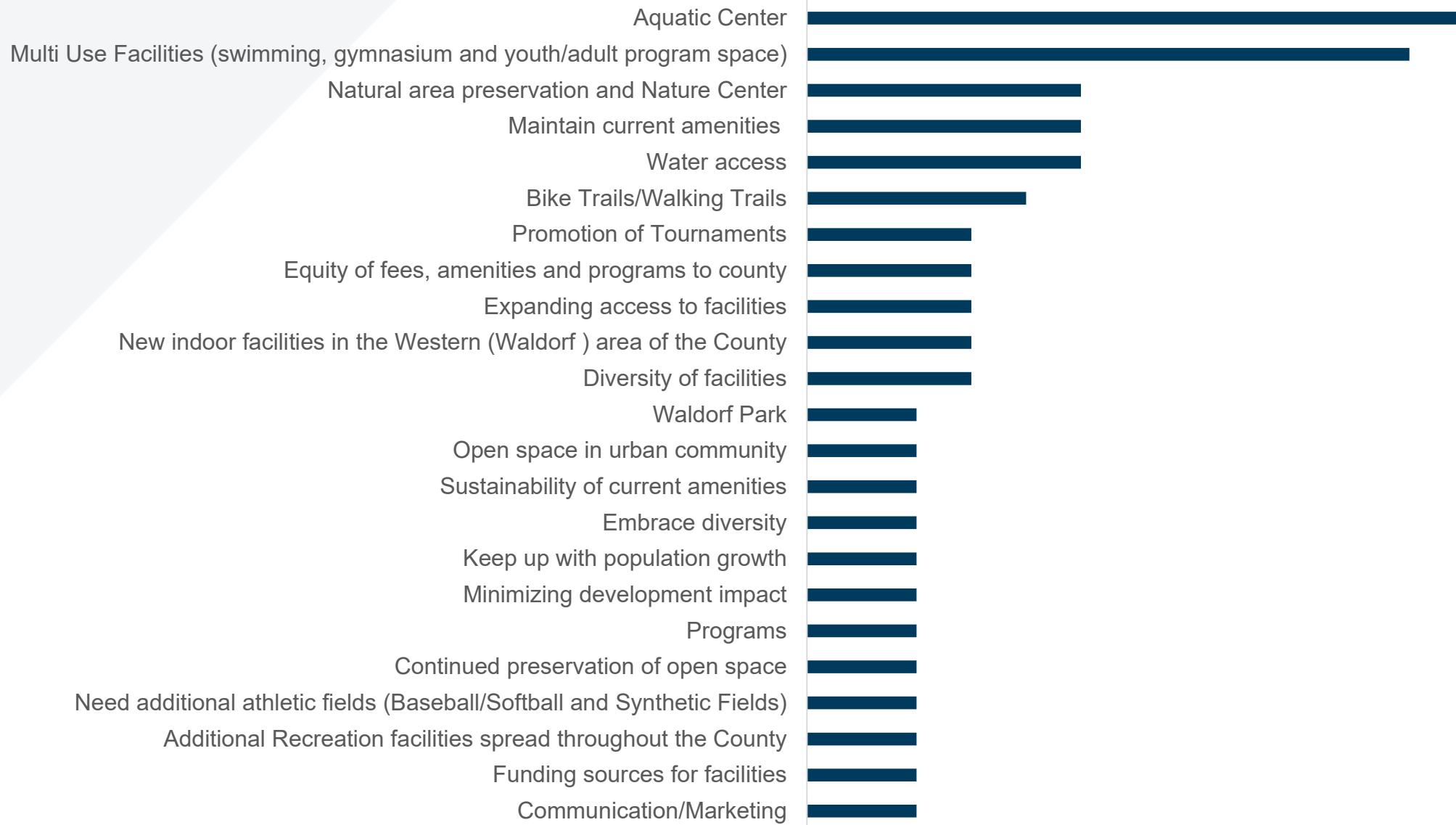
Key Community Concerns

(Not in priority order)



- Huge development in La Plata Heritage Green)
- Future population growth
- Transportation infrastructure
- Resistance to Change
- Coal Power Plant closing (losing tax revenue)
- Uncertainty of power plant future use
- Traffic
- Climate Response
- Protecting the waterways is an issue.
- Population growth/associated new building ahead of school infrastructure
- Increase in industrial permits near airports
- Protection of waterways
- Interpretative signage, displays and programs related to history
- Bedroom Community (People will not come back out)
- Creating atmosphere for next generation to return to CC to live
- Ensure the waterways are cleaner
- Balance of building new infrastructure while maintaining natural beauty.
- School enrollment is slowing down

Community Priorities the County Should Consider



Additional Priorities cont.



- Maintain waterways and farms
- New outdoor open space, parks in the Western (Waldorf) area
- Access to the Potomac River
- Adding indoor activities
- Physical and mental health of citizens
- Developing existing facilities (sport and historical) into gold standard sites
- Accessibility for seniors to outdoor space
- Marketing within and outside of the county through tourism
- Improve the partnership with the military
- Leisure beach (swimming)



Survey Summary

- Statistically Valid Survey & Open Link Survey

Methodology

Primary methods:

1 = Statistically Valid (Invitation Survey)

Mailed survey and postcard with an invitation to complete online through password protected website.



365 - Invitation Online and Paper surveys completed
+/- 5.1% Margin of Error

2 = Open Link Survey

Online survey available to all residents of Charles County.



727 - Open Link Surveys Completed

4,000 Surveys and Postcards Mailed
(3,948 delivered)

1,092
Total
Surveys

Key Findings (1 of 3)

Living in Charles County



Majority of respondents are long-term residents of Charles County. A total of 72% of the Invite sample have lived in the county over 11 years with an average of 21.5 years. A total of 45% of Invite respondents reside in Waldorf, and 16% in La Plata. The remaining respondents are dispersed across the county.



Satisfaction

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied, 42% of Invite respondents rated their current satisfaction with recreation opportunities in Charles County a 4 or 5. The average rating was 3.2, indicating some area for improvement.



Current Usage

The most frequented locations for the Invite sample include nature/passive parks, regional parks/athletic fields, trails and historic sites. Open link respondents visit these sites more often. Invite respondents most frequently participate in adult programs, birthday parties, and sports clinics and programs. There are some differences in use by sample type.



Key Findings (2 of 3)

Proximity to Recreation



Distance to recreation facilities varies for Invite respondents. About a quarter (25%) travel 1-4 miles to their most visited facility, 38% 5-9 miles away, while another quarter travel 10-19 miles away. Open link respondents tend to travel further to their most visited facility.

Communication



There is room for improvement to better leverage communication efforts and information dissemination about parks and recreation to further create awareness in Charles County. A total of 61% of respondents say that improved communication about Parks and Recreation offerings would assist them in participating more frequently in activities, facilities and programs. About half of the Invite sample use word of mouth to hear about Parks and Recreation opportunities followed by an online search and the Charles County website. Open link respondents use the variety of communication methods more frequently. The average rating of effectiveness was a 2.6 out of 5 with 5 being “very effective” for the Invite sample.



Importance/Quality of Life



There is strong support for land and agricultural preservation. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “very important”, all categories related to agricultural and land preservation rated at least a 4.1 for both Invite and Open link respondents. Parks, recreation and open space are also highly important to respondents, although slightly less than agricultural and land preservation. The top-rated categories (average 4 and above out of 5 in importance) for the Invite sample are the existing parks, recreation and open-space opportunities, recreational programs for youth, and new opportunities for walking, hiking, running, and bicycling.

Key Findings (3 of 3)

Future Needs



Invite and Open link respondents agree that the most important needs for outdoor recreation are park outdoor activities and trail-based recreation. The top two highest rated most important future needs are park outdoor activities and trail-based recreation. For additional recreational amenities, Invite respondents would like to see paved walking and biking trails, an indoor fitness and exercise facility, and community parks.

Funding Support



Respondents are split between whether a fee increase would impact their visitation or not. About a third of Invite respondents say a fee increase would not limit participation at all, another third said it would limit participation somewhat, and the others say it would limit participation significantly or they don't know. They would prefer to support parks and recreation through more private/public partnerships followed by a bond referendum for specific projects.



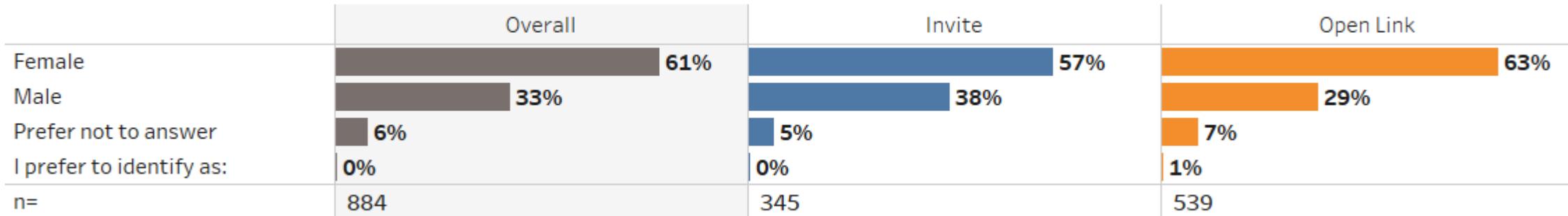
Demographics



Gender & Age

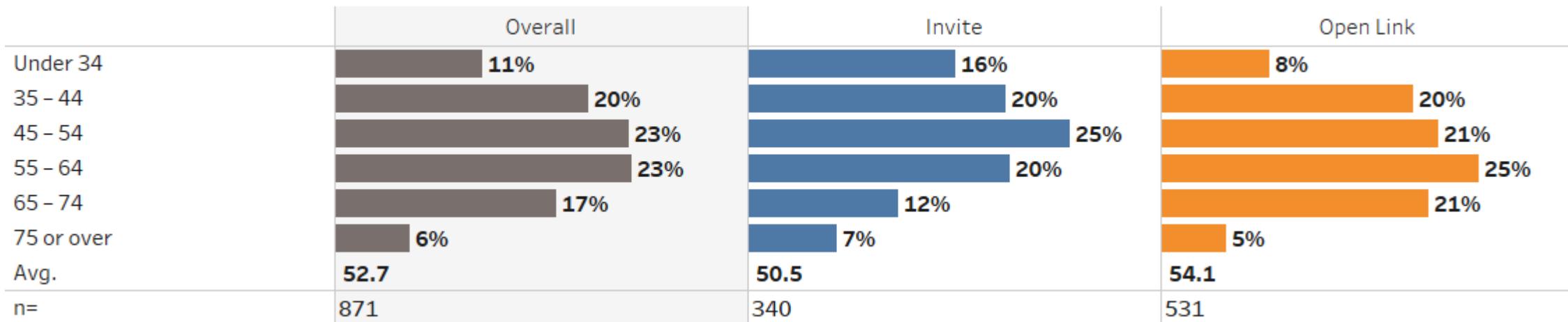
More respondents were female. The Invite sample was weighted by age using Census data to better reflect the community profile of Charles County

Q 21: Please indicate the gender with which you identify:



Source: RRC Associates

Q 22: What is your age?

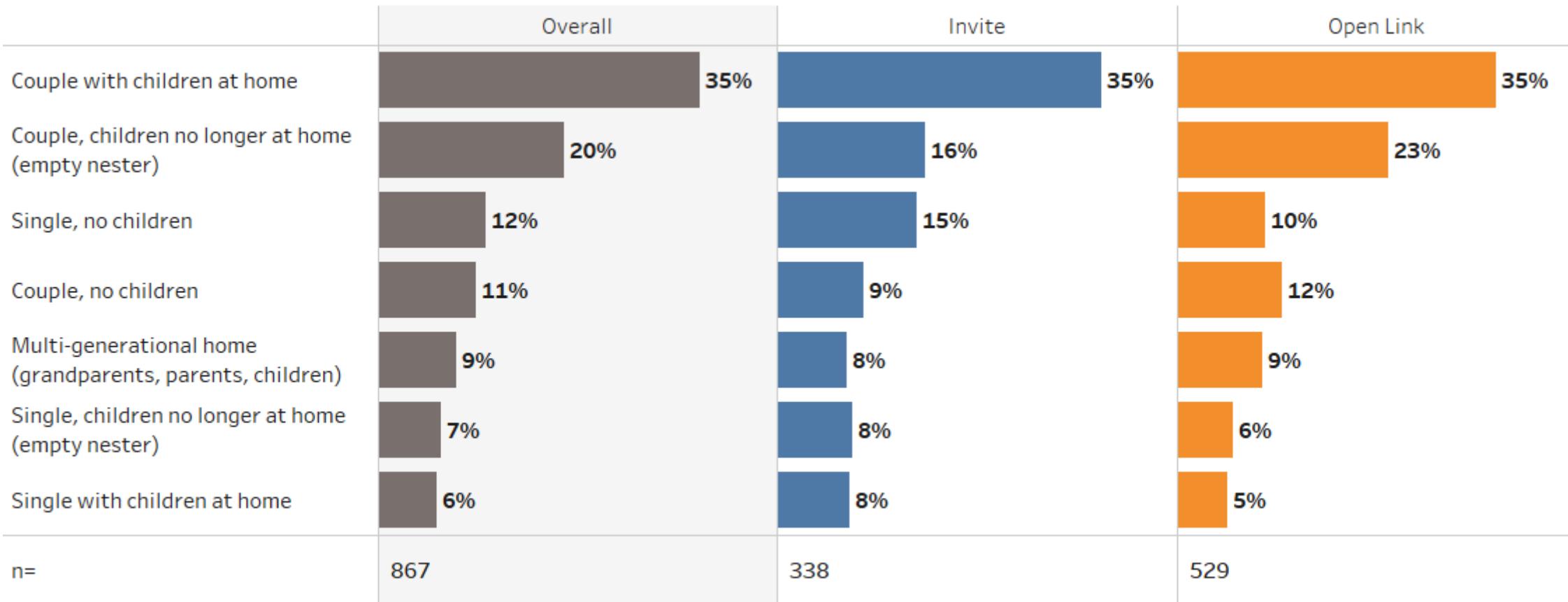


Source: RRC Associates

Household Makeup

Most respondents are couples and 35% of the Invite sample are couples with children at home. Overall, 9% of respondents live in a multi-generational home, showing a need to cater facilities and programs to all age ranges.

Q 23: Which of these categories best applies to your household?



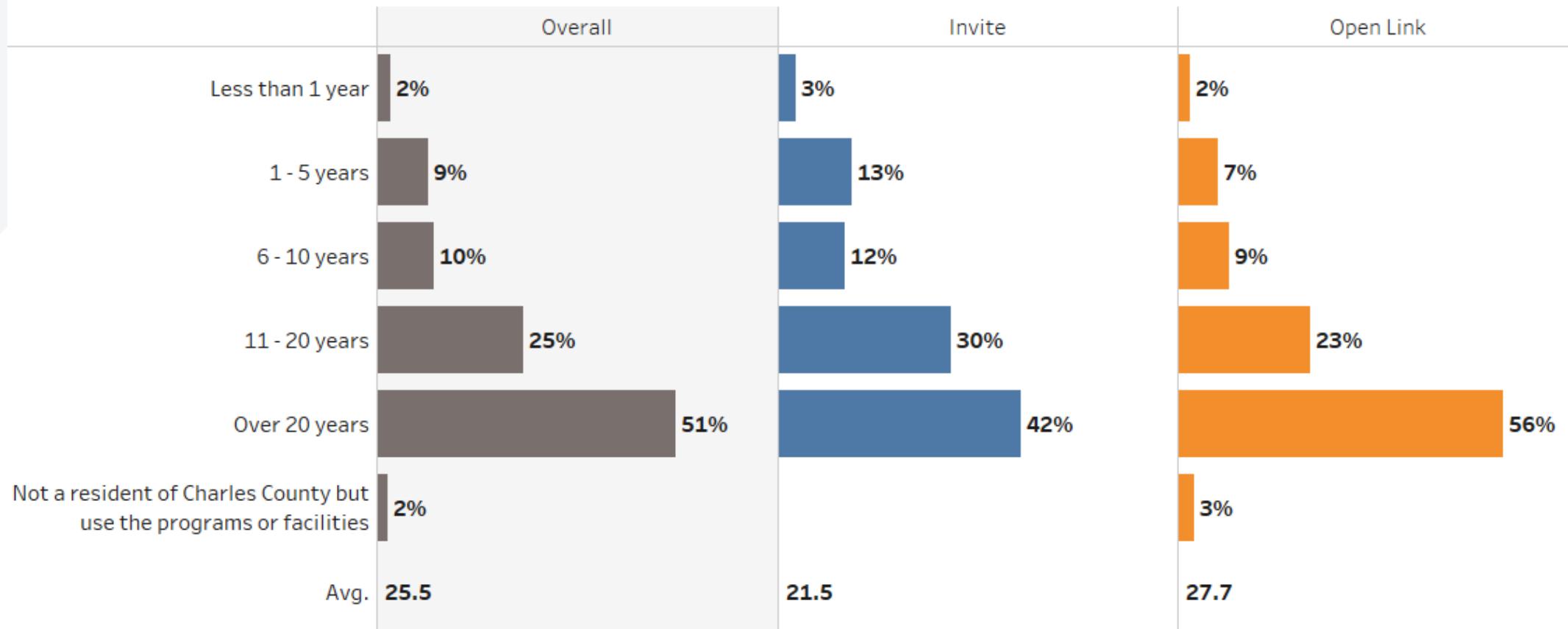
Source: RRC Associates



Length of Time in Charles County

Majority of respondents are long-term residents of Charles County. A total of 42% of the Invite sample have lived in the county over 20 years. Open link respondents have lived in the area slightly longer than the Invite (average of 27.7 years vs. 21.5 years Invite).

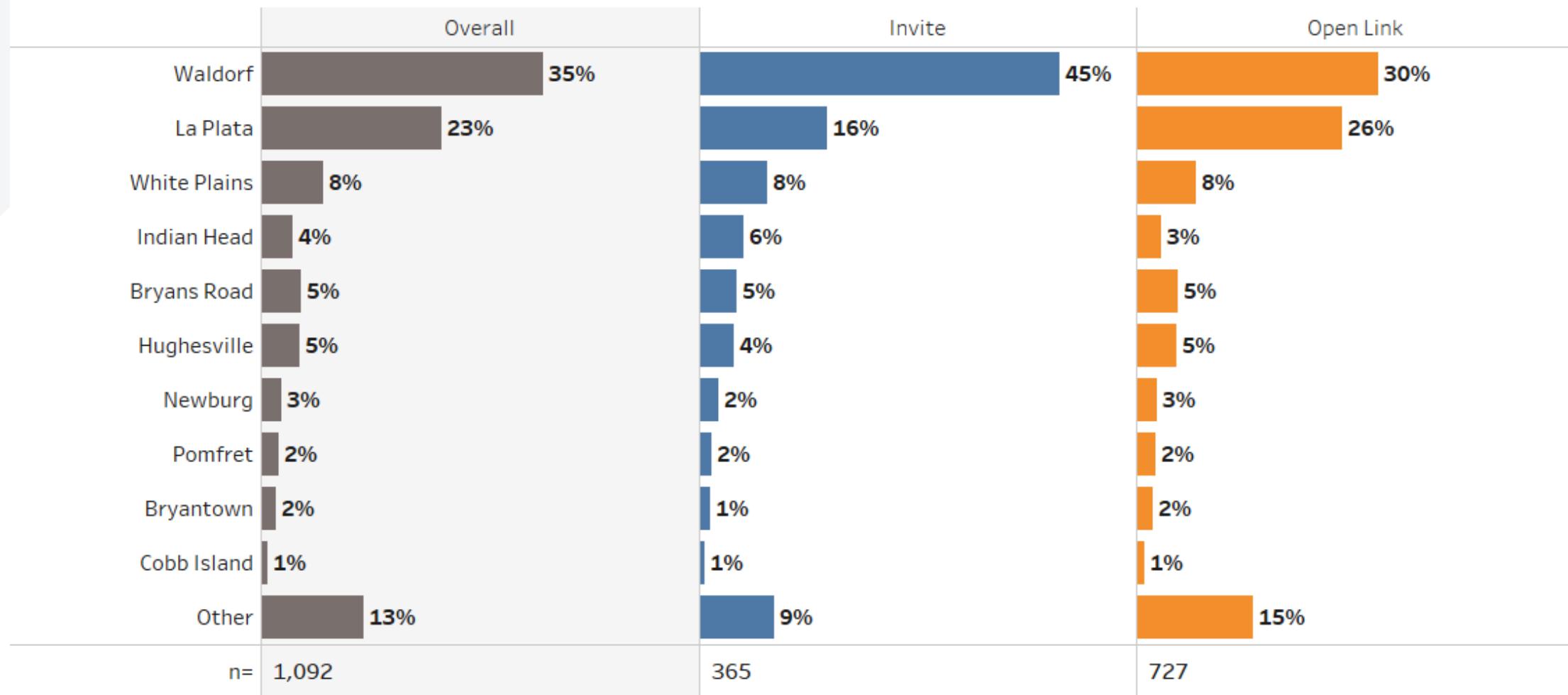
Q 1: How long have you lived in Charles County?



Location of Residence in Charles County

A total of 45% of Invite respondents reside in Waldorf, and 16% in La Plata. The remaining respondents are dispersed across the county.

Q 2: Where in Charles County or surrounding area do you live?



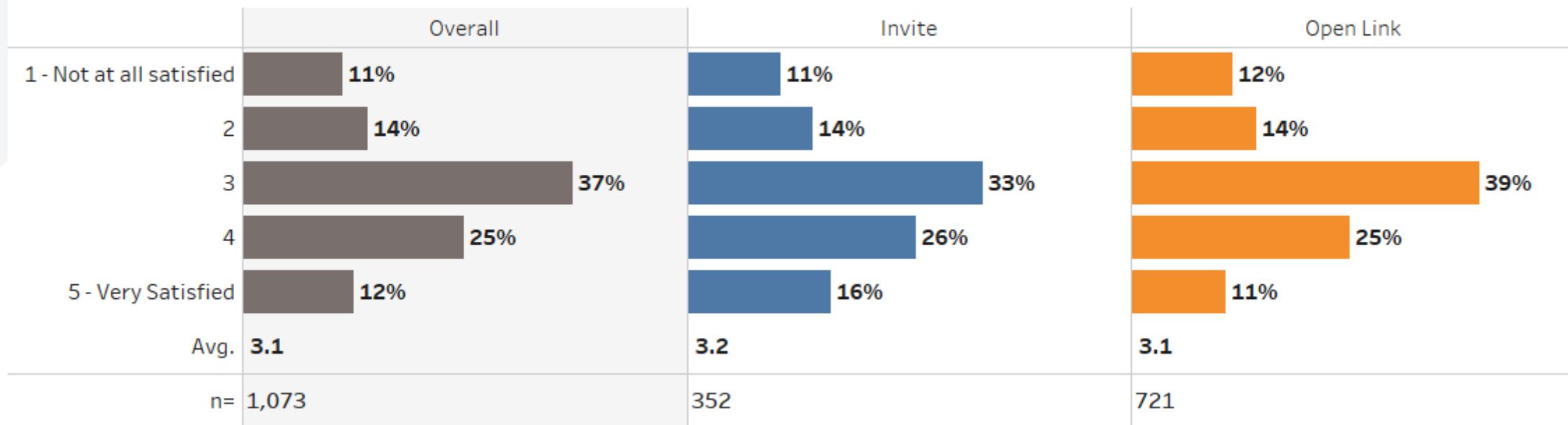
Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation



Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation

Respondents are moderately satisfied (average of 3.2 out of 5 for the Invite sample) with the availability of recreational opportunities within Charles County, which indicates some room for improvement. Invite respondents are slightly more satisfied than the Open link sample.

Q 4: How satisfied are you with the availability of recreational opportunities within Charles County?



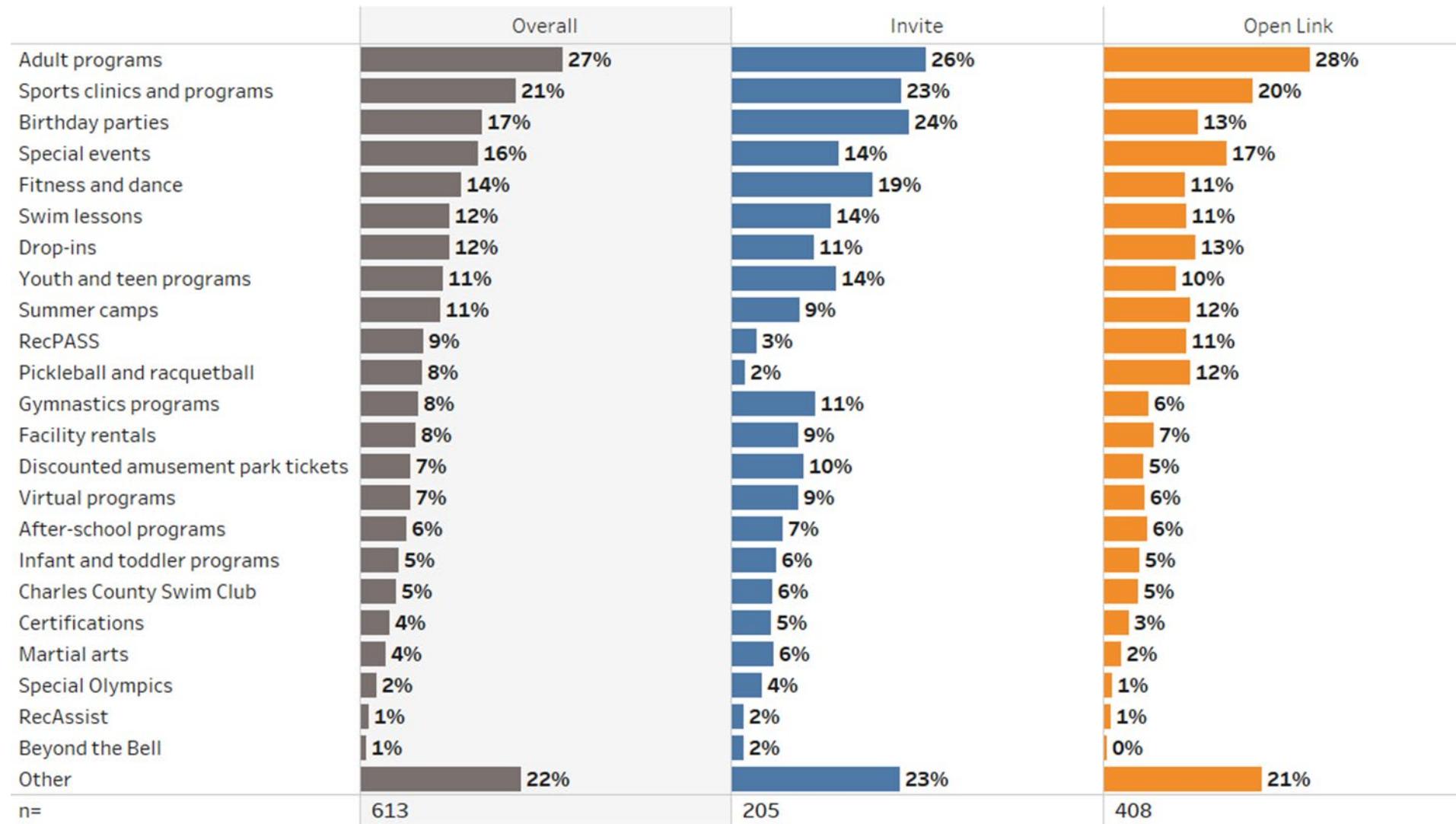
Source: RRC Associates

Current Usage



Participation in Recreational Activities or Services

Q 8: In what recreational activities or services have you participated in and around Charles County in the past 12 months?
(Check all that apply)

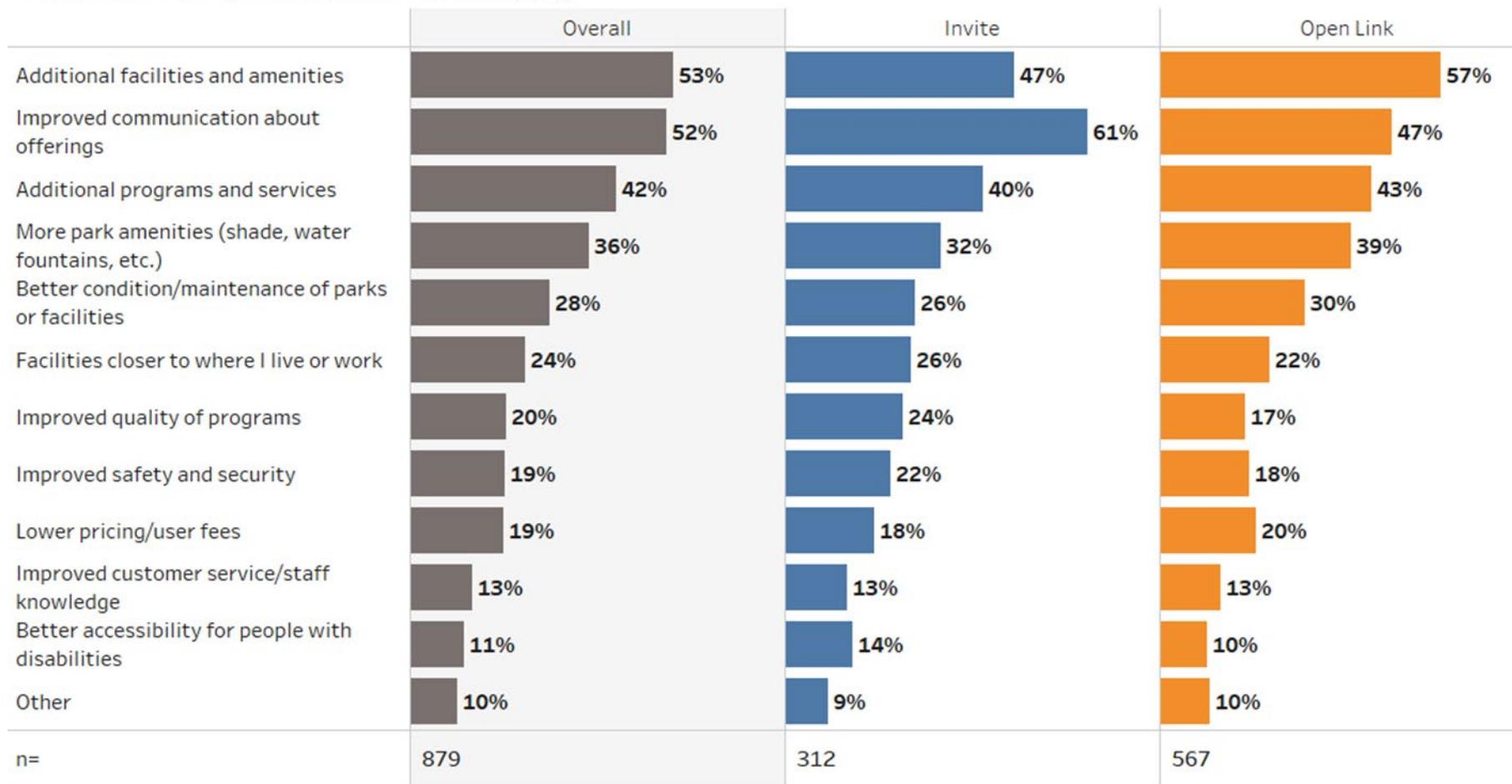


Source: RRC Associates

Most Important Areas to Increase Participation

Improved communication is the top priority for increasing participation in parks and recreation. Respondents would also like to see additional facilities, amenities, programs and services.

Q 10: What are the most important areas that, if addressed, would increase your participation in recreational activities, facilities, and programs? (Check all that apply)



Source: RRC Associates

Importance/Quality of Life



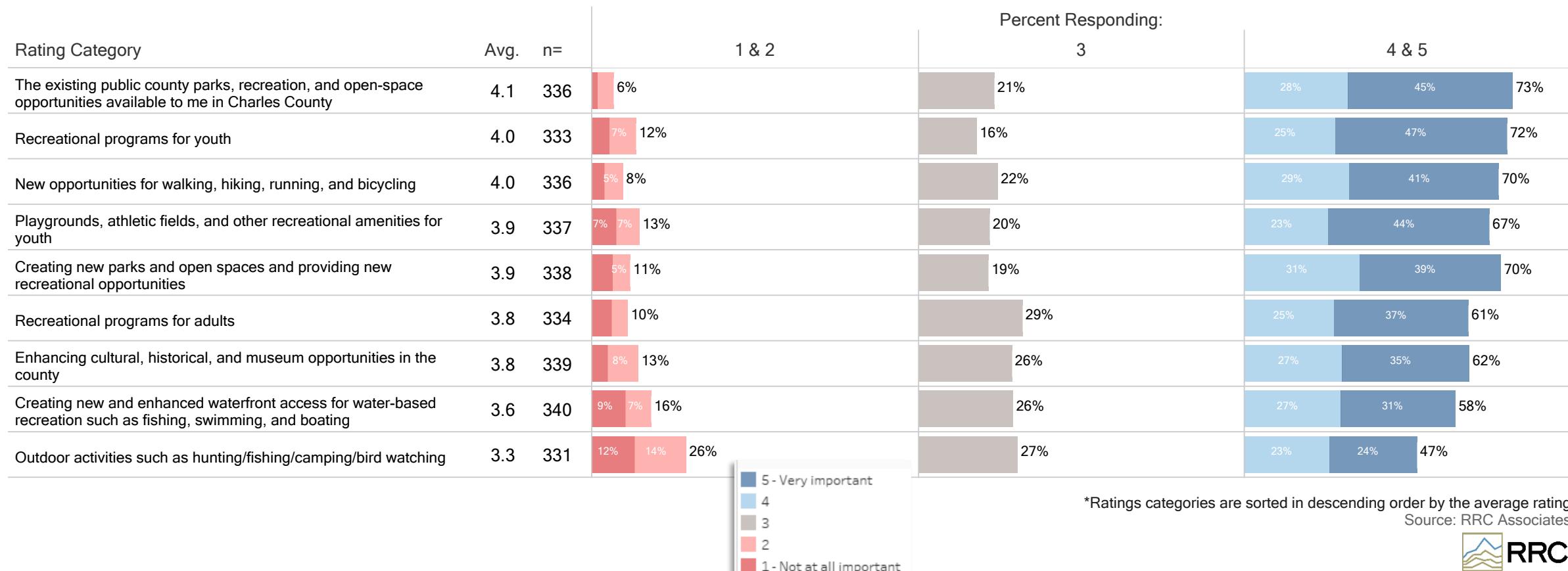
Importance of Parks, Recreation and Open Space

By Invite Sample

Almost all categories rated relatively high among Invite respondents (above 3.5 average rating), showing that there is a strong value placed on parks, recreation and open space in Charles County. The lowest rated category (average 3.3 rating) was outdoor activities such as hunting/fishing/camping and bird watching.

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following parks, recreation, and open space statements and agricultural and land preservation statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County?

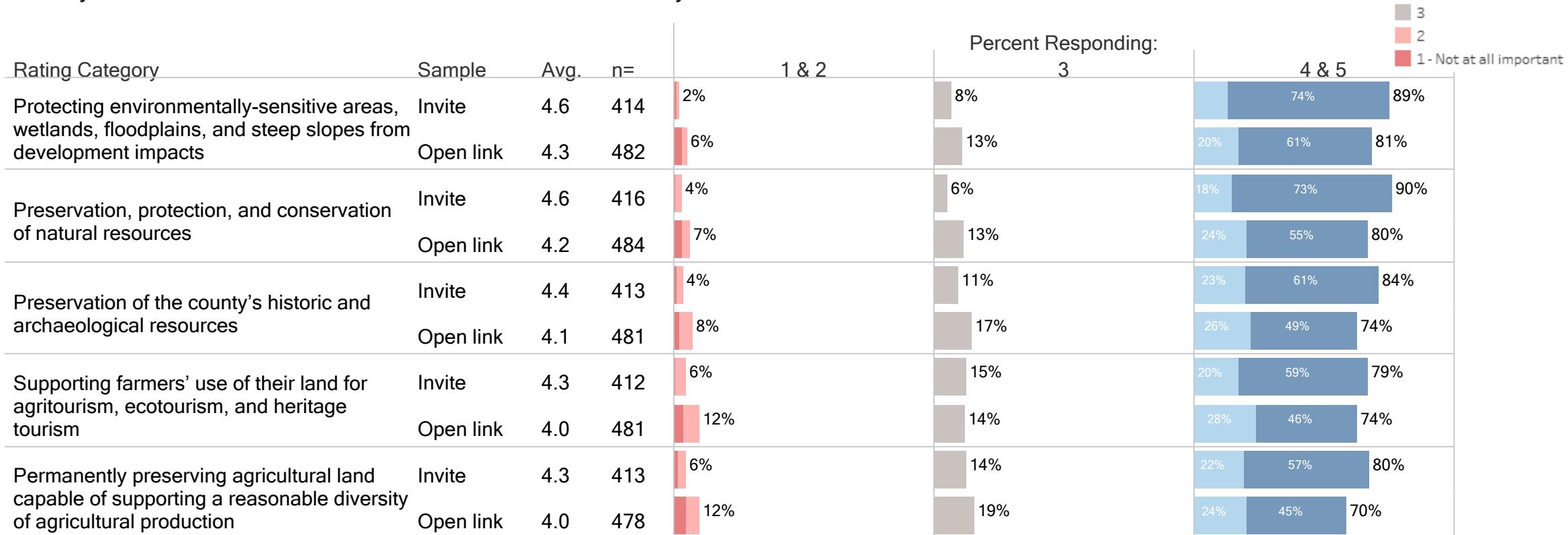
*Invite Only



Importance of Agricultural and Land Preservation

Agricultural and land preservation is of high importance to respondents and more so for Invite respondents. On all questions, 79% or more Invite respondents rated either a 4 as “somewhat important” or 5 “very important”.

Q: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following parks, recreation, and open space statements and agricultural and land preservation statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Calvert County? AGRICULTURAL AND LAND PRESERVATION by "Q 0: Source"



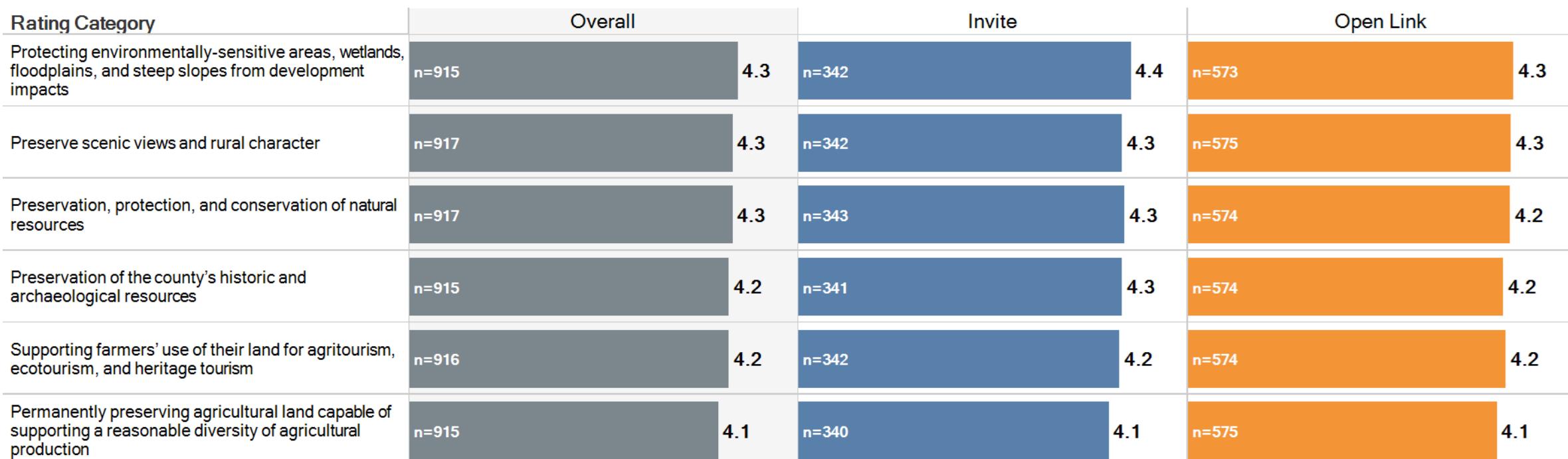
Importance of Agricultural and Land Preservation

By Average

All categories related to agricultural and land preservation are of high importance, averaging at least a 4.1 out of 5 with 5 being “very important” for both Invite and Open link respondents. The top-rated category is protecting environmentally-sensitive areas, wetlands, floodplains and steep slopes from development impacts.

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following parks, recreation, and open space statements and agricultural and land preservation statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County? Agricultural and Land Preservation:

*All Only



Source: RRC Associates



Importance of Parks, Recreation and Open Space

By Averages

Almost all categories rated a 3.6 out of 5 with 5 being “very important” except for outdoor activities such as hunting/fishing/camping/bird watching. This demonstrates an overall highly invested community when it comes to parks, recreation and open space.

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following parks, recreation, and open space statements and agricultural and land preservation statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County?



Source: RRC Associates

Communication

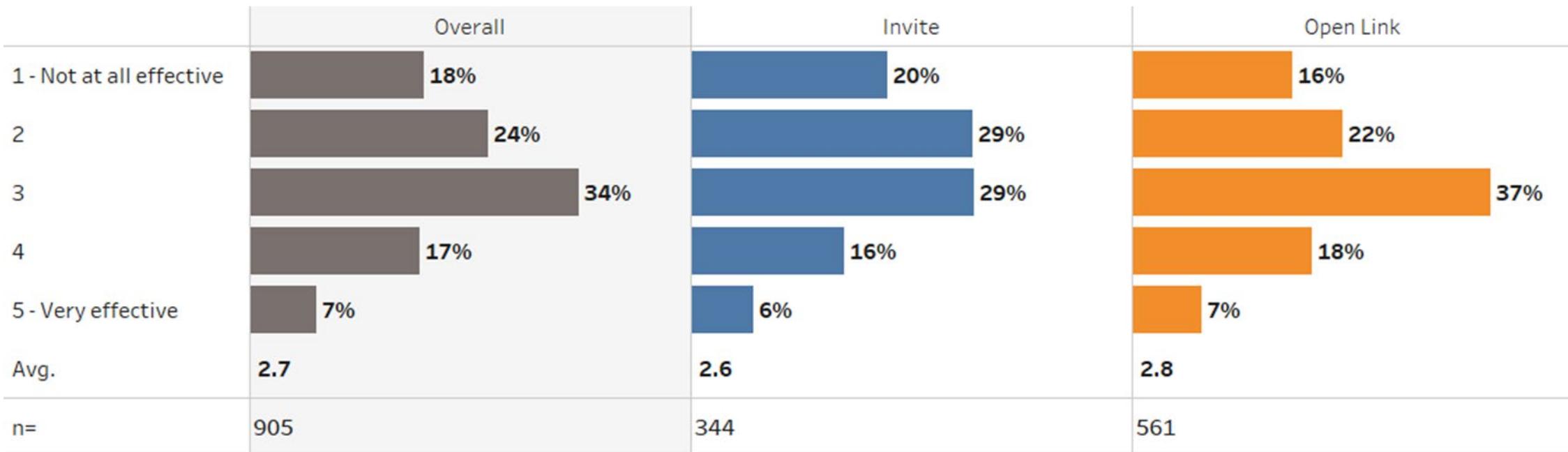
GUIDE



Effectiveness of Communication

There is room for improvement in terms of communication. The average rating for the Invite sample was 2.6 out of 5 with 5 being “very effective”.

Q 12: How well does Charles County communicate with you about recreational activities, facilities, and programs?

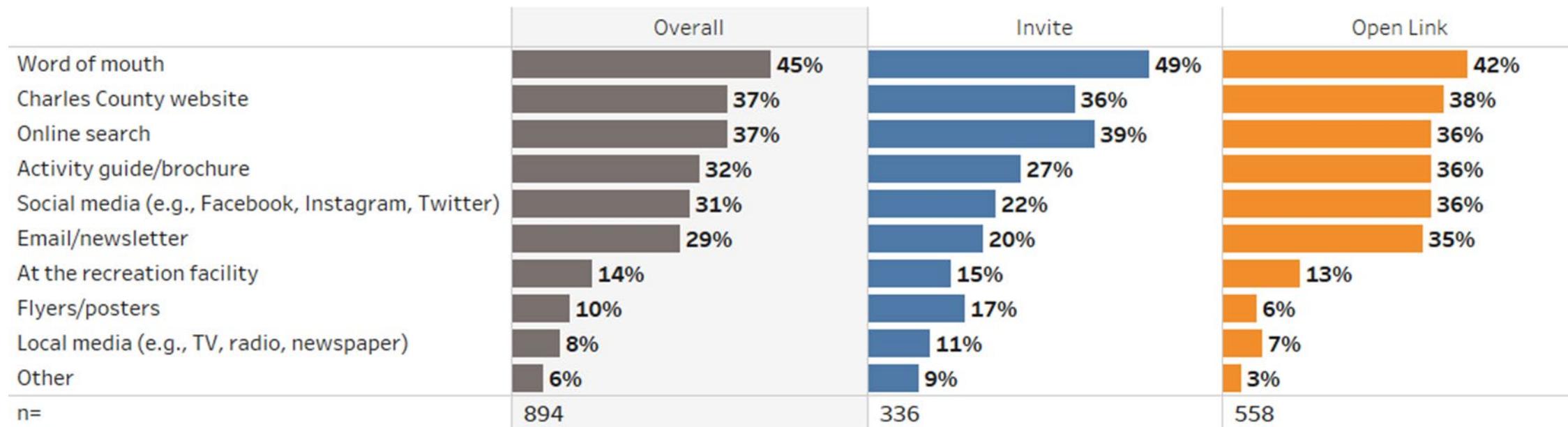


Source: RRC Associates

Communication Methods

About half of Invite respondents receive information via word of mouth, followed by an online search and the Charles County website. Open link respondents receive information from a variety of methods, most frequent also being word of mouth.

Q 13: How do you currently receive information on recreational activities, facilities, and programs offered by Charles County?
(Check all that apply)

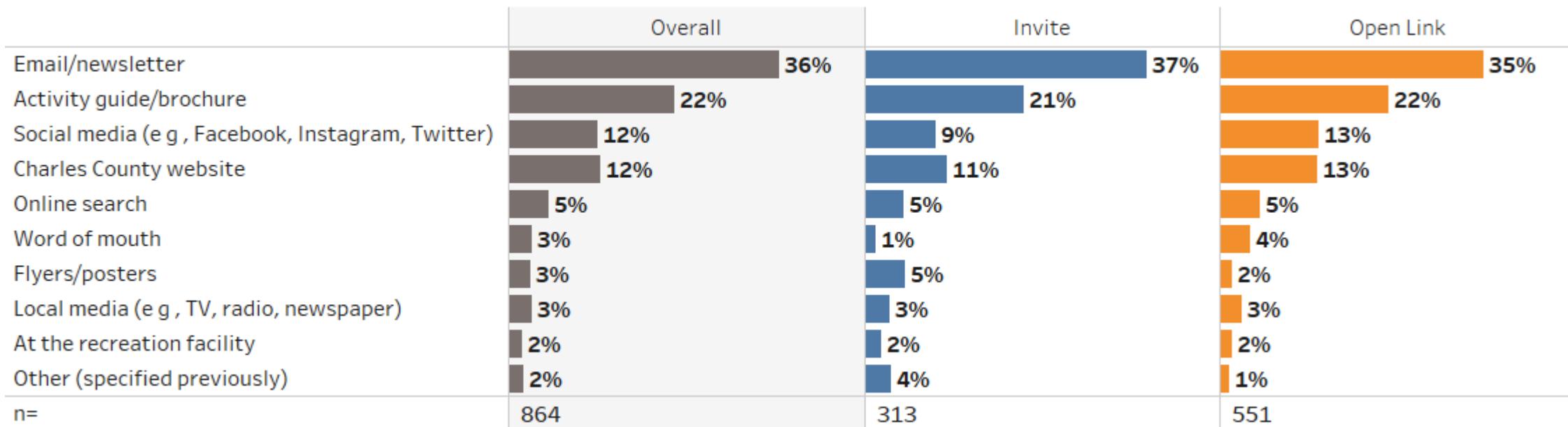


Source: RRC Associates

Best Communication Method

Although Invite and Open link respondents use word of mouth as their primary method for receiving communications from the county, it is also their lowest rated preference. Both samples agree that they prefer to receive information from an email/newsletter, the activity guide/brochure, and the Charles County website. Open link respondents are more interested in social media and less interested in flyers/posers.

Q 14: How do you want to receive information about recreational activities, facilities, and programs?



Source: RRC Associates

Future Recreational Activities, Facilities, and Programs



Important Needs for Outdoor Recreation Areas

By Average

Invite and Open link respondents agree that the most important needs for outdoor recreation to be added or improved are park outdoor activities and trail-based recreation. Open link respondents feel there is a greater need for nature/wildlife-related recreation.

Q 15: What are the most important needs for outdoor recreation areas that need to be added or improved in Charles County?

*All Only

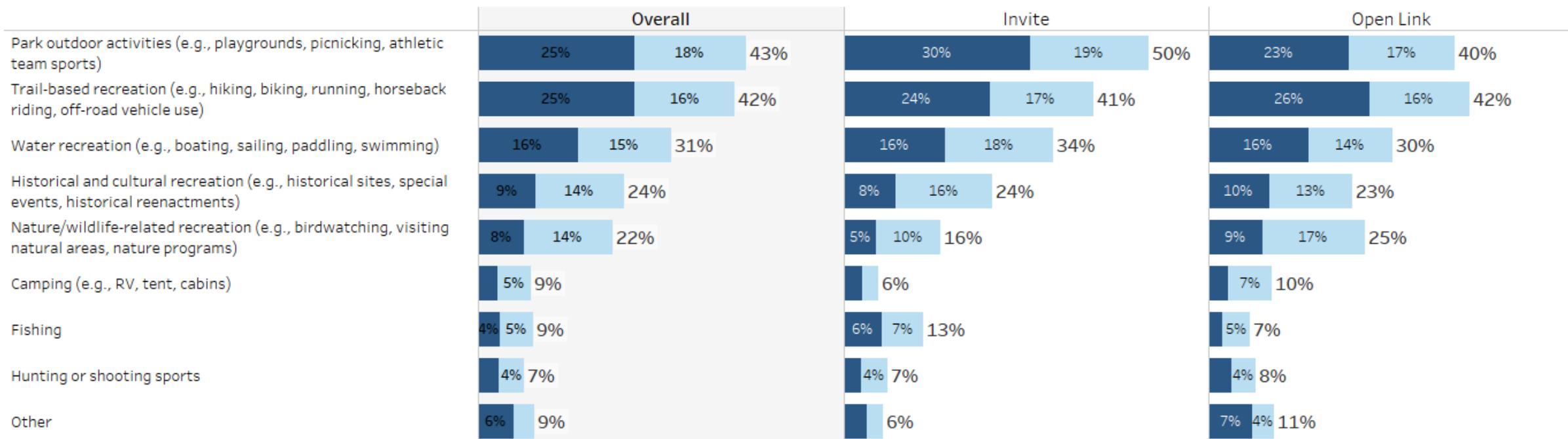


Source: RRC Associates

2 Most Important Needs for Outdoor Recreation Areas

The top two highest rated priorities are park outdoor activities and trail-based recreation. Water and historical/cultural recreation also rated highly. Open link respondents are more interested in nature/wildlife-related recreation.

Q 16: From the list in the previous question, please select the top two highest priority items for you and your household.

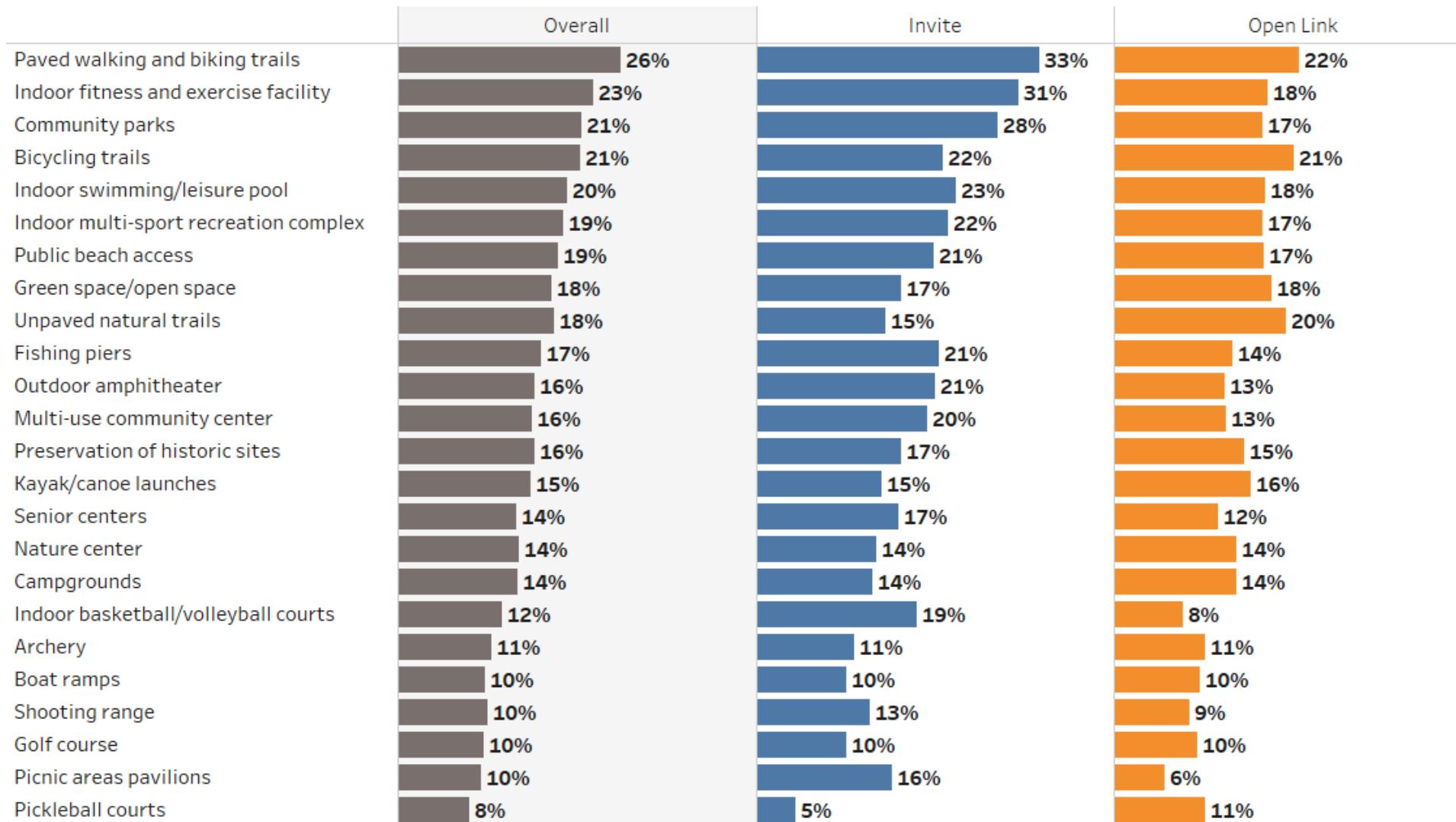


Source: RRC Associates

Additional Recreational Amenities

Slide 1 of 2

Q 17: What additional recreational amenities are most needed for you or your household in Charles County? (Select up to 5)

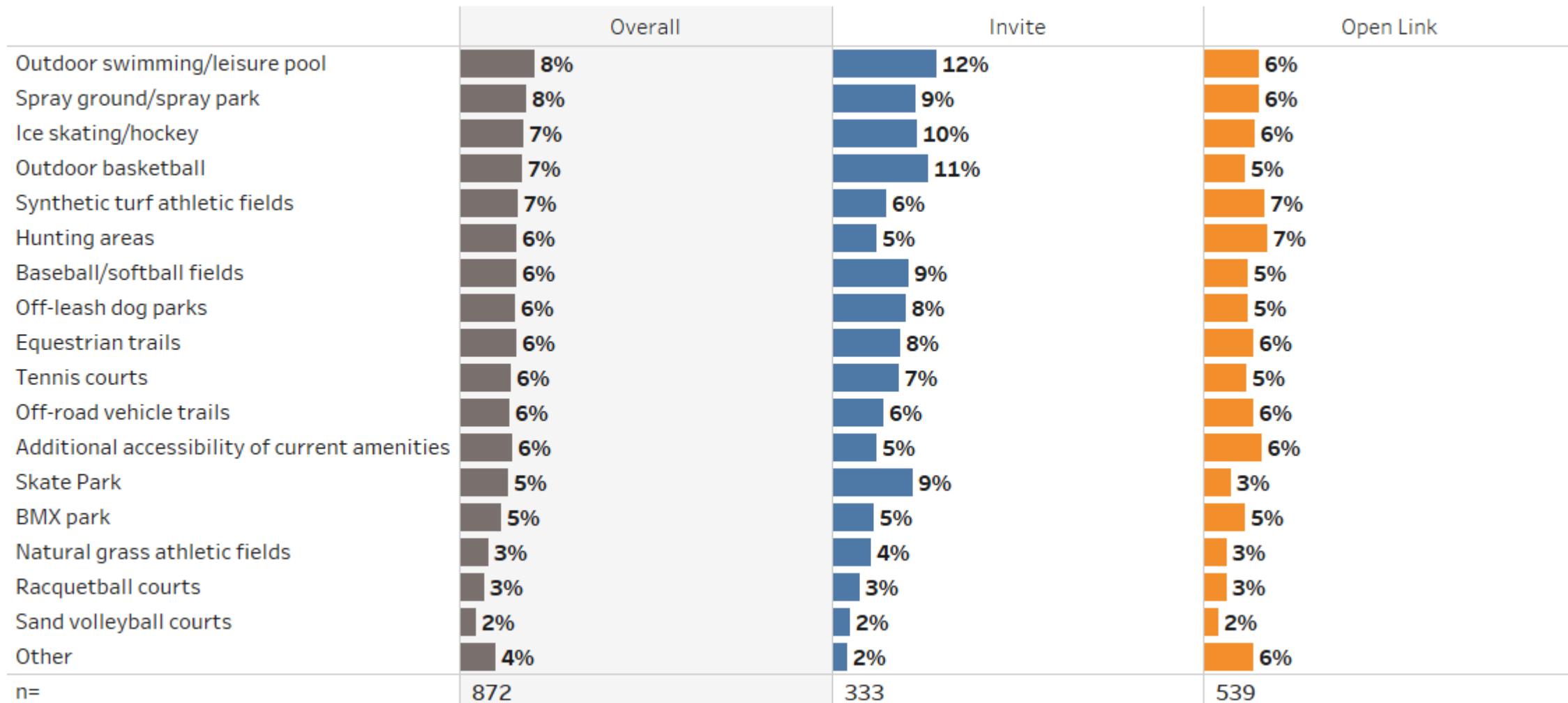


Source: RRC Associates

Additional Recreational Amenities

Slide 2 of 2

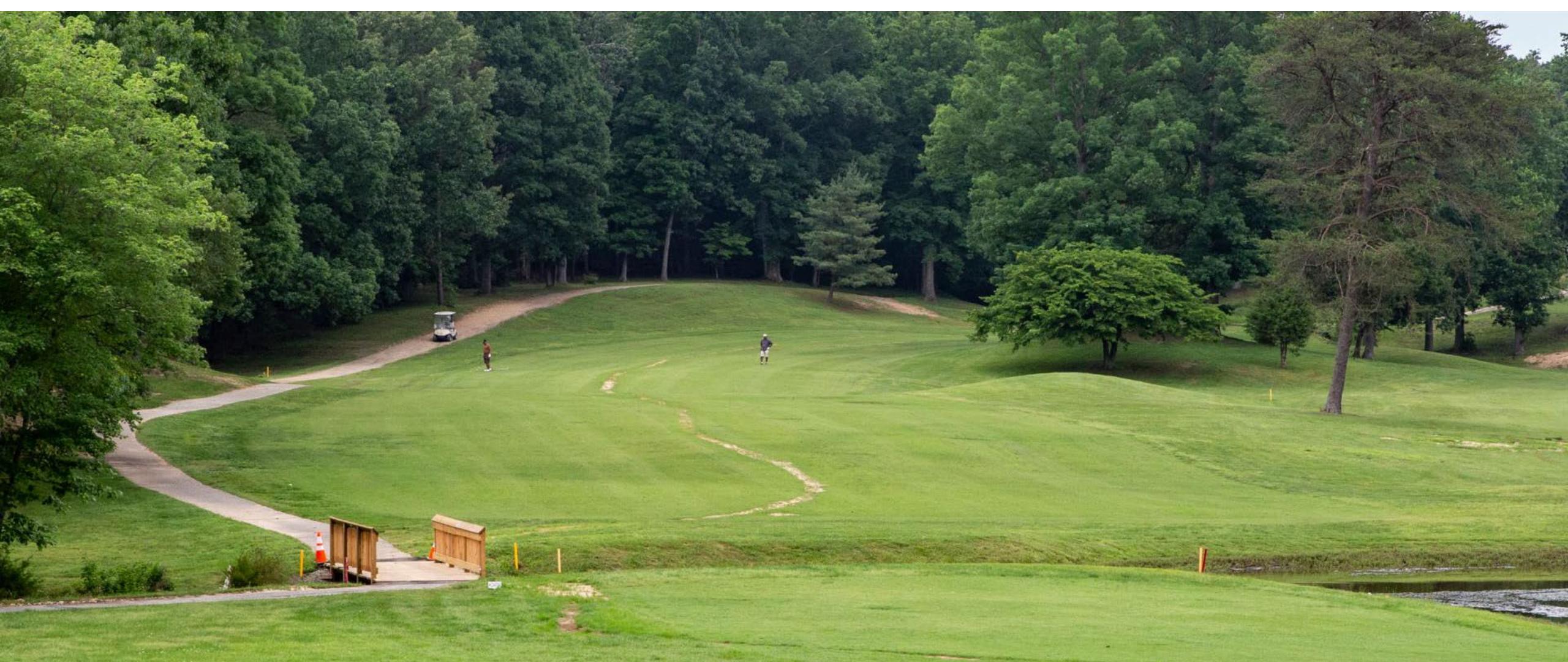
Q 17: What additional recreational amenities are most needed for you or your household in Charles County? (Select up to 5)



Source: RRC Associates



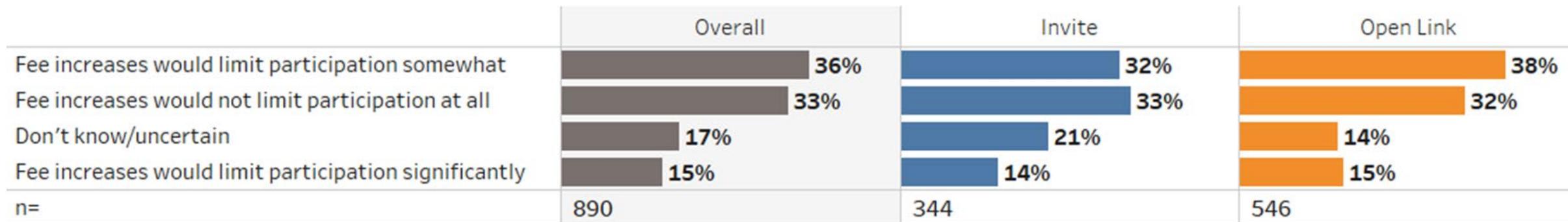
Financial Choices



Fee Increases and Participation

Respondents are split on how fee increases would impact their participation. About a third of Invite respondents say a fee increase would not limit participation at all, another third said it would limit participation somewhat, and the others say it would limit participation significantly or they don't know.

Q 18: Which of the following best describes the potential impact, if any, that fee increases would have on your current level of participation?



Source: RRC Associates

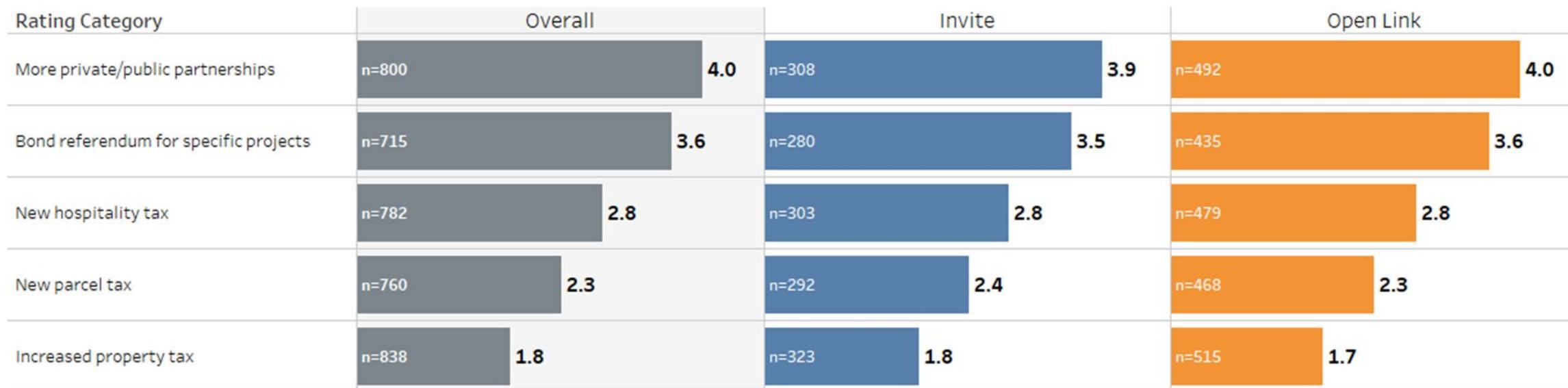
Support for Funding Sources

By Average Rating

The following categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the Invite sample. The ratings are from 1 “definitely not support”, to 5 “definitely support”.

Q 19: Charles County receives funding from taxes and grants to operate and maintain the existing recreation facilities. Would you support any of the following new funding mechanisms to help pay for operations and maintenance costs of parks and recreation facilities and services in Charles County that currently exist or may be developed in the future?

*All Only



Source: RRC Associates

Overall Survey Themes

- Strong value placed on parks, recreation, open spaces, and trails
- Regional parks and athletic fields have had the largest amount of participation
- Adult programs, sports clinics, programs, special events, fitness and dance, and swim lessons are very popular
- Room for improvement with communication strategies and how that information is shared
- Agricultural and land preservation are very important
- Respondents would like to see additional facilities, amenities, programs, and services
- Outdoor activities and trail-based recreation are important
- Top 5 recreational amenities households requested include: paved walking and biking trails, indoor fitness and exercise facility, community parks, bicycling trails, indoor swimming/leisure pool

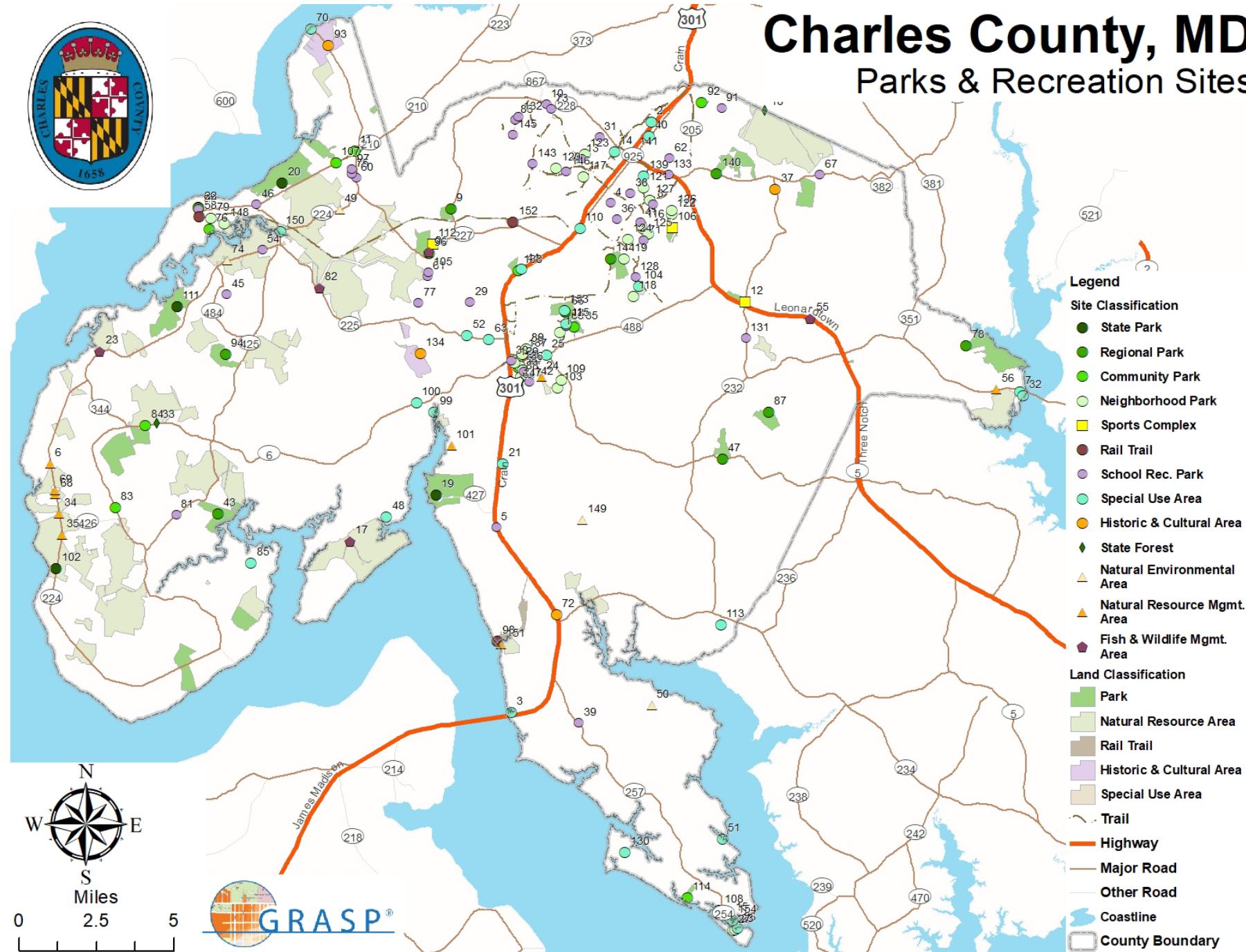


▲ Access to Parks and Recreation Opportunities



Charles County, MD

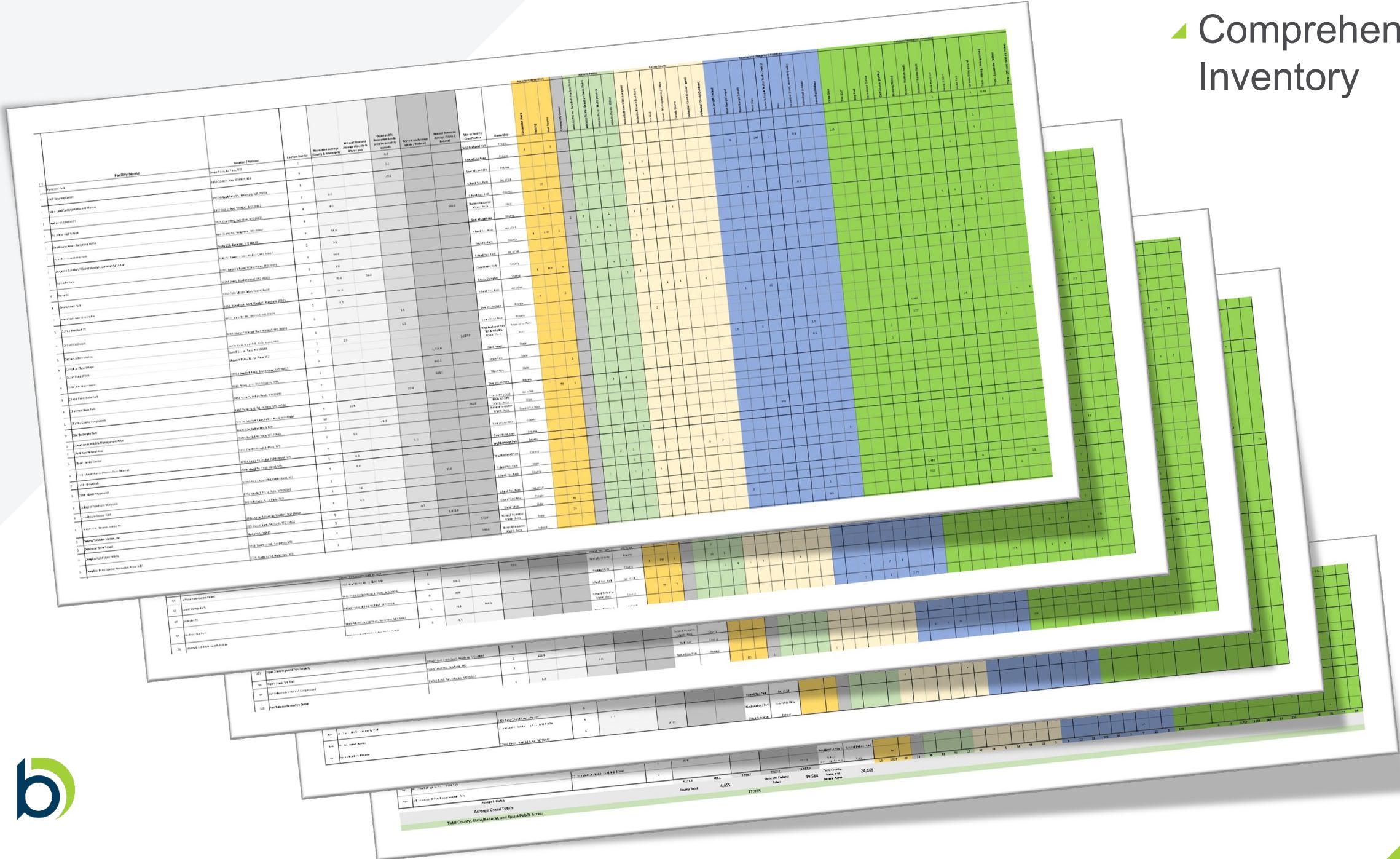
Parks & Recreation Sites

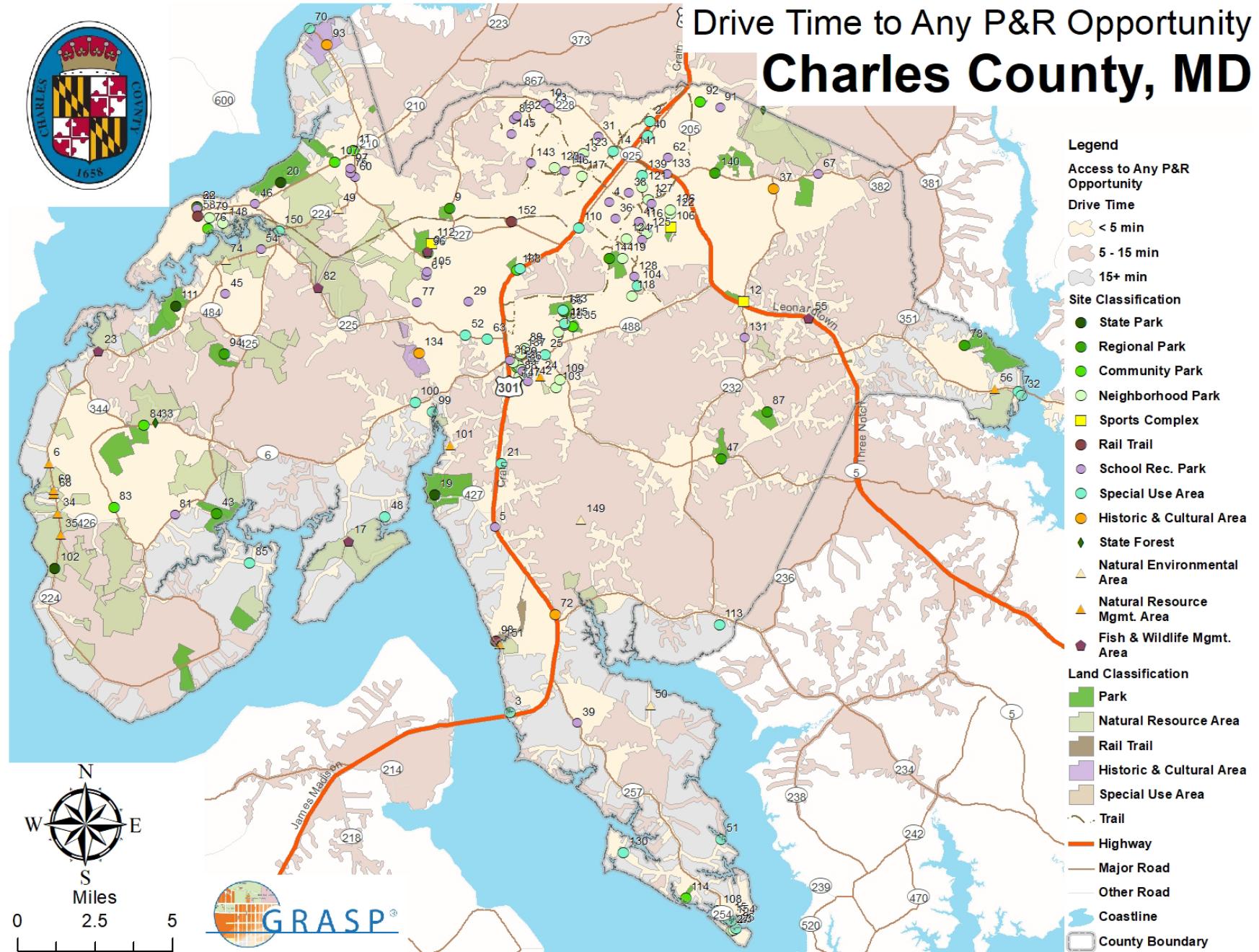


GIS Mapping
of Locations



► Comprehensive Inventory





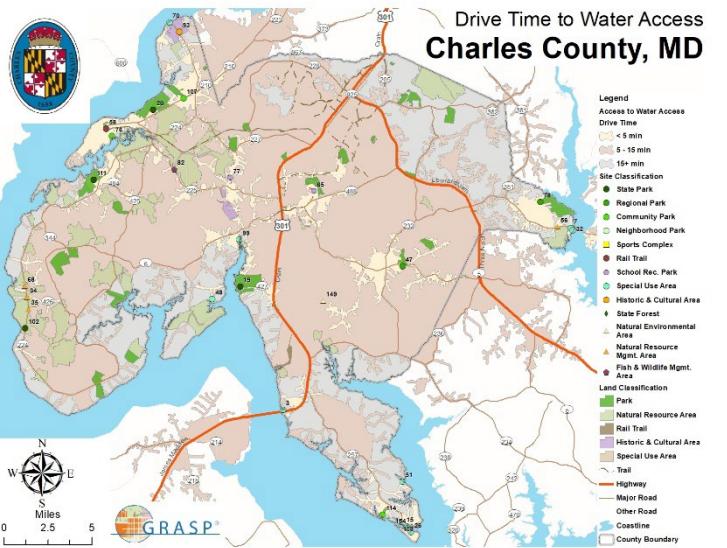
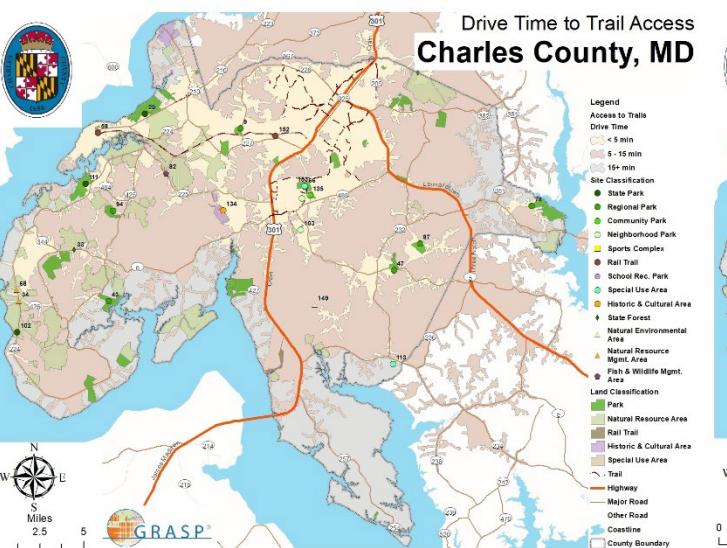
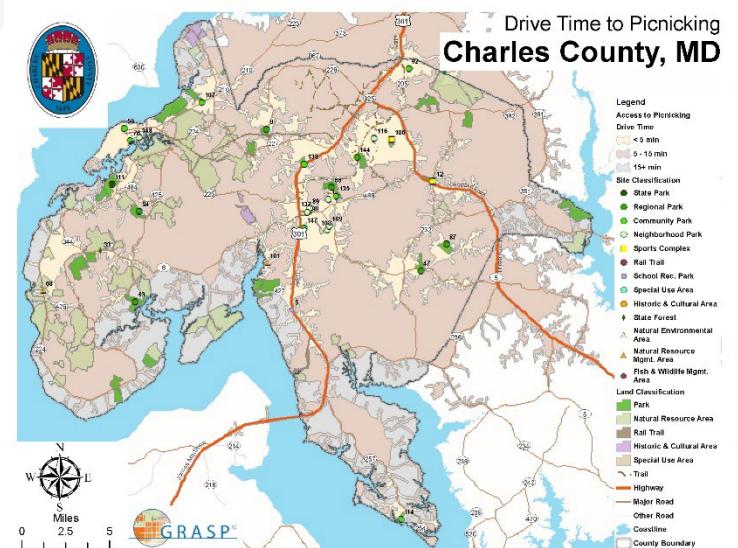
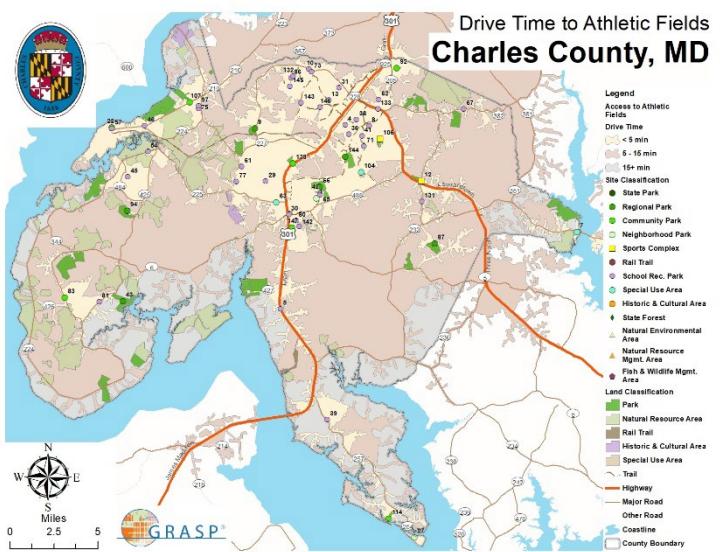
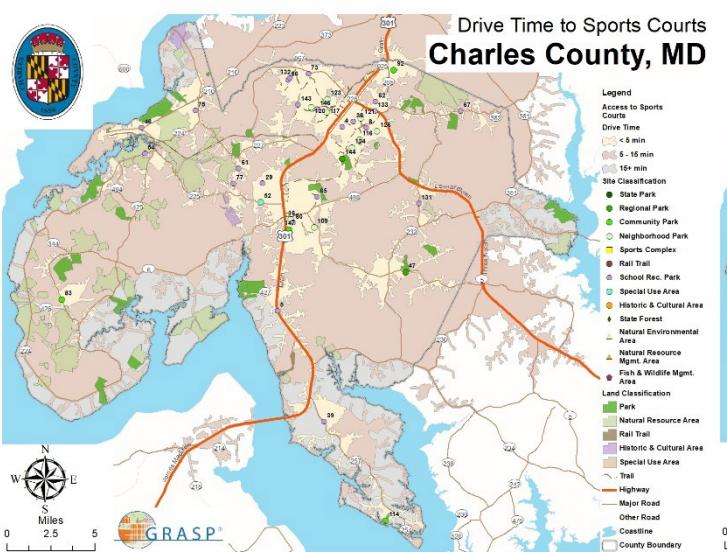
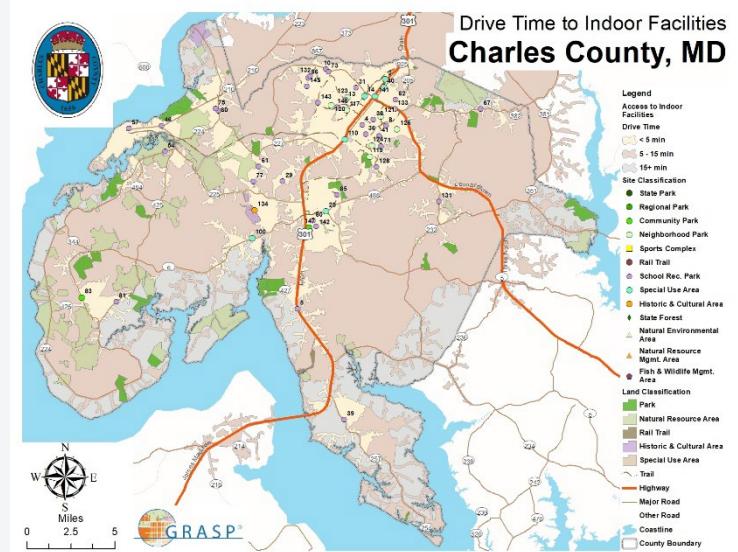
Estimated Drive Times

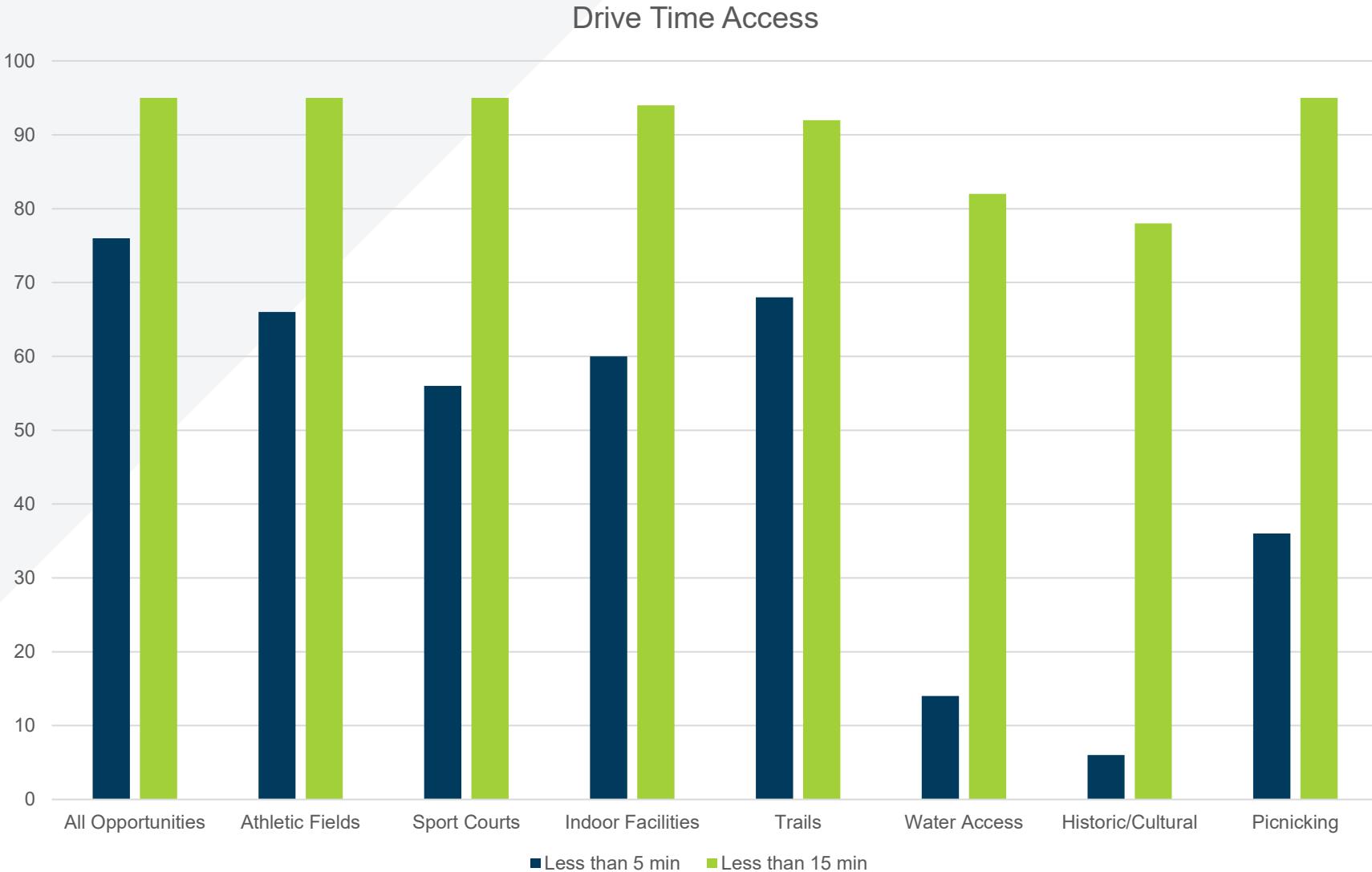
Drive Time Access

>15 min drive to any P&R facility

0-5 min drive to any P&R facility

5-15 min drive to any P&R facility





- ▲ Access within 15 min drive is consistent almost 90% of residents or greater
- ▲ Only water access at just over 80% and Historic/Cultural at 78% fall below
- ▲ Access within 5 min drive is less consistent - trails, picnicking and historic/cultural opportunities are lowest

► Recurring Themes of Information Gathered

- Accessibility to parks and facilities through improved connectivity; trails, greenways, multi-use paths
- Add artificial turf fields
- Individuals want to feel safe in parks, trails, and facilities
- Aging infrastructure
- Renovate and improve existing facilities and parks; address the deferred maintenance program
- Improve communication and outreach
- Increase natural open space, and green space; additional passive and informal programming
- Address the need for facilities in underserved areas
- New recreation center
- Complete park development projects



Next Steps

LPPRP Process



Thank You!



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