

Breathe

Edmonton's Green Network Strategy

Breathe Implementation Phase 1 What We Heard Report

August 2025

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

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Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land and Treaty Six territory on which we reside today. We honour the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' inhabited this territory, including the nêhiyawak (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Isga Nakota (Nakota Sioux) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.



Executive Summary

Project Overview	<p>The City of Edmonton is developing an Open Space Management Plan (OSMP) and Network Analysis Framework, which will replace the strategic direction of the Urban Parks Management Plan (2006-2016). The OSMP will implement the vision identified in Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy (2017), and align with The City Plan (2020) and the District Policy and Plans. In addition to other information, the resulting OSMP will provide technical details to guide the City and its open space development partners on all aspects of the open space development life cycle. As such, the engagement feedback collected from the City's development partners are technical in nature.</p>
Engagement Approach	<p>In Phase 1, from spring 2024 to spring 2025, the project team met with key development partners, and a public engagement survey was conducted between May 26 and June 9, 2025. Key development partners are entities that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have assets on open space throughout the city2. Have operational or work plans separate from the City for these assets. <p>The goals of Phase 1 were to integrate the strategic direction of Breathe (and other policies/plans) with the operations and plans of key development partners to ensure coherent and practical implementation. The public engagement survey will help inform the OSMP and approach to the open space network analysis.</p>
What We Heard	<p>Engagement with key development partners clarified how changing trends and new standards impact servicing requirements, area footprints and development timing. This discussion will improve the alignment of the planning and design of open spaces with the needs of development partners and city communities. Public engagement informed the project team on how Edmontonians use City parks throughout the year, their preferences for activities and their proximity, and barriers to access.</p>
Next Steps	<p>The information gathered during Phase 1 of the project will inform the draft Network Analysis Framework and recommendations for the OSMP. Feedback on base provision levels, core amenities and servicing requirements will be used to develop the draft content and highlight areas to test during the district case studies work and targeted engagement</p>

in Phase 2. Phase 3 engagement in 2026 will focus on sharing City-supported strategies and recommendations for the OSMP and results of the open space network analysis through the State of the Parks Report.

Project Overview

The City of Edmonton is developing an Open Space Management Plan and Network Analysis Framework, which will implement the [Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy](#) (2017), replace the [Urban Parks Management Plan](#) (2006-2016) and align with The City Plan (2020).

Edmonton's Urban Parks Management Plan (UPMP 2006) currently guides the City's investment in parks and open spaces, from acquisition and development, to ongoing maintenance and service delivery. While the UPMP provides guidance for greenfield development, it does not provide guidance for the developed and redeveloping neighbourhoods experiencing increased density and development pressures. The OSMP will provide open space standards and guidelines for developing and redeveloping areas, including future growth areas defined within The City Plan. Breathe (2017) includes three functional themes (ecology, celebration and wellness), and expands previous notions of "*parkland adequacy*" to include considerations of open space quality, quantity, diversity and distribution. However, the strategic goals in Breathe (2017) were not fully implemented since the policy did not include an update of the City of Edmonton's standards for open space provisioning, assembly, development, or network analysis.

The Breathe Implementation project will:

1. Update the City of Edmonton's open space standards to align with the vision identified in Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy and The City Plan.
2. Align City open space strategies and initiatives such as the Community Parks Framework, Greener as We Grow, Naturalization, Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy, etc.
3. Replace the strategic direction identified in the Urban Parks Management Plan (2006-2016) in order to inform future acquisition, development, maintenance and operation of open space.
4. Provide a new framework for assessing the City's network of open spaces that is consistent with the recently approved City Plan and District Plans.

Breathe Implementation will establish provisioning and classification standards and a framework to understand and support the myriad ways Edmontonians access and spend time in their network of parks and open spaces. The City's parks and open space network is diverse and unique, from large parks with a regional draw, to smaller pocket parks and public plazas that afford residents with opportunities for relaxation or active experiences.

Integration with The City Plan

In 2020, the City of Edmonton adopted The City Plan, which introduces a new planning geography called districts. Districts are collections of diverse neighbourhoods where residents can live more locally and meet most of their daily needs within a 15-minute walk, roll or transit trip from their homes. Open space management must address the diverse needs of different districts and demographics by applying equity principles (e.g., prioritizing underserved areas of the City where gaps in amenities are identified), while also aligning with the broader needs of all Edmontonians.

Timeline

The Breathe Implementation project will take place over the course of two years. The project began in spring 2024 and is anticipated to conclude in spring 2026.

Phase 1: Develop Standards and Management Plan Recommendations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project launch and preliminary communications• Draft Open Space Management Plan (OSMP)• Engagement:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Key development partners (see Appendix A)◦ Public engagement	Spring 2024 - Summer 2025
Phase 2: Test Breathe Implementation and through Network Analysis Framework	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preliminary District Plans (15) Analysis and Recommendations• Preliminary Network Analysis• Preliminary Open Space Prioritization Model• Engagement:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Key development partners	Early 2026
Phase 3: Analyze/Guide Districts and Finalize Breathe Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Open Space Management Plan (OSMP)• Final Network Analysis Framework• Final Open Space Implementation Plan• State of Parks Report including District Analysis and Recommendations• Engagement:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Targeted key development partners◦ Equity-deserving groups◦ Public engagement	Spring 2026

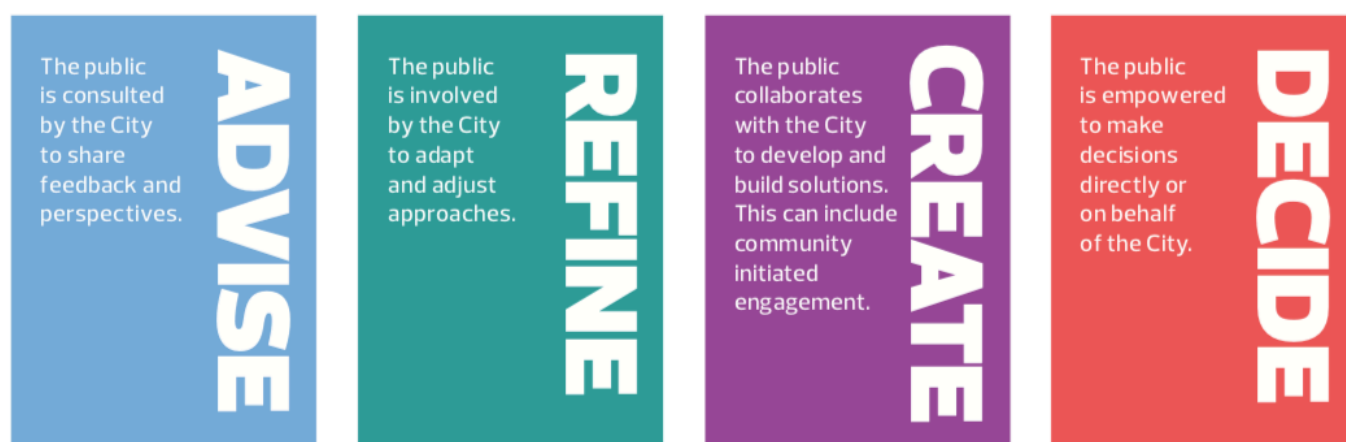
Engagement Approach

Engagement Goals

The [Public Engagement Spectrum](#) explains the four roles the public can have when they participate in City of Edmonton public engagement activities. There is an increasing level of public influence and commitment from the City and the public from ADVISE to DECIDE.

The visual below illustrates the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum:

Increasing influence of the public →



Key Development Partners were engaged in Phase 1 at the **ADVISE** level (*"Participants are consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects, or services"*). **The public** was engaged in Phase 1 at the **ADVISE** level.

The OSMP will be shaped by a combination of City policies and programs, safety and technical requirements and public and targeted partner input. This process helps to ensure that the decisions we make are fiscally responsible; align with best practices, City policies and strategies; and result in the best outcomes for our city, in alignment with Public Engagement Policy C593D.

Who We Engaged





Phase 1 of Breathe Implementation included engagement with the following groups:






Group	Engagement Objectives
<p>Key Development Partners</p> <p>See Appendix A for list of Key Development Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive input on draft classification and provision standards. Support development of initial recommendations on servicing and utilities strategy, lighting strategy, development and funding strategy and open space assessment methodology. Current approaches and processes to funding, development, management, collaboration design and planning.
<p>Public</p> <p>See Appendix C for survey respondent demographics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how Edmontonians use City parks, excluding the river valley and recreation facilities, in various seasons and the activities they do in City parks Learning about challenges and barriers Edmontonians face in accessing and using City parks Understanding preferences for proximity of amenities in City parks



How We Engaged

In Phase 1 of Breathe Implementation, the project team engaged with key development partners through a variety of tactics, including workshops, meetings and surveys. Approaches to engagement were responsive to partners’ needs and adapted to reflect how partners wish to participate in and influence the project.

Resources & Tactics	Description	Audience	Format	Statistics
Engagement				
 Land Management Committee Workshop (November 8, 2024)	Meeting with the Joint Use Agreement Land Management Committee (LMC) to provide a project update and discuss school site requirements and functional uses.	Key Development Partner	Online	6 attendees
 EFCL Meeting (March 28, 2025)	Meeting with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) to discuss amenity servicing, development timing, and impacts of expanding community sizes on access to and use of recreational amenities.	Key Development Partner	Online	3 attendees
 EPCOR Meetings Drainage and Servicing Strategy (April 15, 2025) Park Power Servicing and Lighting Strategies (April 17, 2025)	Two online workshops to review key recommendations for drainage and power servicing in open spaces, fostering support for the recommendations, and highlighting potential challenges around development and maintenance.	Key Development Partner	Online	7 attendees (Drainage) 8 attendees (Power)
 BILD Edmonton Meetings (April 23 and 25, 2025)	Two online workshops to review key recommendations for the updated OSMP, highlighting potential changes to open space sizing and distribution and presenting the proposed network analysis approach for amenity provision.	Key Development Partner	Online	18 attendees (April 23) 6 attendees (April 25)

Resources & Tactics	Description	Audience	Format	Statistics
 Public Survey (May 26 - June 9, 2025)	A survey on park use, activities and barriers.	Public	Online	3,323 responses
Communications				
 Project Webpage	The project webpage provides information on the project, past Breathe Strategy engagement, and upcoming engagement information.	Public	Online	N/A
 Public Service Announcement	The Breathe survey was advertised in the City of Edmonton's weekly Public Service Announcement while live.	Public	Online	N/A
 Social Media	A series of social media posts were sent out on X, Facebook and Instagram	Public	Online	N/A
 Emails to Organizations	Emails were sent to various community organizations advertising the survey opportunity.	Targeted Public	Online	140

What We Asked

During this phase of engagement, we invited key development partners to provide direct feedback on the draft content developed in Phase 1. This included the Open Space Management Plan (OSMP) as well as strategies related to lighting, drainage and servicing and power. Engagement sessions offered participants the opportunity to review materials in detail, ask clarifying questions, and engage in group discussions about potential outcomes and industry implications. The public engagement survey asked respondents about how frequently they used city parks during warmer and colder months, their preferences for activities and proximity to access activities, and barriers to accessing parks.

What We Heard

Key Takeaways

The following summary outlines the overarching takeaways from Phase 1 engagement with key development partners, including BILD, the Joint Use Agreement Land Management Committee (LMC), and EPCOR, highlighting key themes around open space planning, operations and maintenance, policy alignment and implementation challenges. In addition, key takeaways from the public engagement survey are provided.

BILD emphasized the importance of operations and maintenance in supporting the long-term functionality of park amenities and recommended that this be more clearly addressed in the Breathe Open Space Management Plan (OSMP). Both BILD and the LMC acknowledged the ongoing challenges of accommodating all the programming elements needed in open spaces, particularly as expanding school building envelopes increasingly encroach on open space areas. Key concerns included the size and capacity of school envelopes, circulation and drop-off configurations, and the need for appropriate frontages. The lack of park concept designs at the time of servicing also poses risks, as infrastructure decisions made early can limit future park development.

There was general support from both EPCOR and BILD for the Network Analysis Framework's focus on supply, distribution, quality and diversity of open space. However, partners requested further clarification on how the framework will be applied in practice.

While partners acknowledged the benefits of shared amenities in redeveloping areas, they also noted significant challenges in their implementation. Maintenance agreements are time consuming and add cost for developers, and they discussed the need for better methods for the City to adopt enhanced amenities. This highlights the importance of integrating maintenance considerations earlier in the planning process to avoid compromising function or innovation.



An additional challenge includes unclear amenity targets, particularly for features like running tracks and spray parks, and the absence of consistent guidance for pathway design, lighting, and utility servicing. Partners also pointed to the difficulty of balancing accessibility with sustainability goals.

Additionally, while BILD recognized that renewing open space in redeveloping areas will be difficult given supply and funding constraints, they were not yet ready to suggest a specific approach. They also raised concerns about the use of cash-in-lieu funds being spent outside the neighbourhoods where they were collected, underscoring the need for greater transparency and alignment in funding strategies.

Through the public survey, we learned that city parks (not including the river valley as it is not in scope for Breathe), are well-used by the majority of respondents. The most frequently identified park activities in which users participated, directly corresponded with their preference for how close they would prefer to have these activities available.

Park use was notably higher (about 23%) in the warmer months compared to the colder months. Access to washroom facilities in particular would better support and encourage use of parks. Protection from the elements was another popular response - shaded seating in the warmer months, and relief from the cold in the winter via warming stations, fire pits or access to hot drinks. Many suggested a greater variety of amenities (e.g., outdoor exercise equipment, sport courts, cross country skiing trails, etc.) and more diverse programming that would draw users of all ages (e.g., community events, festivals).

Survey respondents agreed their neighbourhood parks served wellness and celebration functions more than ecological functions.

When given the opportunity to provide additional comments regarding park activities in Edmonton, the most prominent themes were the need for improved park maintenance and cleanliness, need for additional amenities, and safety concerns.

Land Management Committee Meeting

The City of Edmonton's Land Management Committee (LMC) operates under the *Edmonton Joint Use Agreement: Land*, guiding the planning, assembly, design, development and maintenance of Joint Use sites for school, recreation and park purposes as well as other functions outside the scope of Breathe. The LMC has representatives from four key partners:

- Edmonton Catholic School Division (ECSD)
- Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB)
- Le Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord
- City of Edmonton

The project team met with the LMC in a virtual workshop on November 8, 2024 to share updates on Breathe Implementation and discuss school site requirements relating to the envelope and functional site uses. The findings will help school site considerations be addressed in the OSMP.

The section below describes three key themes discussed in the meeting with the LMC:

Trends in School Size and Capacity:

- Shift toward modular school design to better accommodate future growth.
- Increased demand for open spaces (related to open space needs and limited open space availability) has led to more compact school designs.
- Growing number of K-9 schools with larger student populations.
- Provincial School Capital Manual does not account for compact school designs (e.g., not accommodating increased circulation space for multi-storey schools).
- Interest in flexible school building envelope size and use.

Drop Off, Parking, and Vehicle Circulation:

- Preference for street drop-off zones and street parking, rather than on-site.
- Secondary schools require on-site parking with separate student and staff zones, plus street options
- Preference for the school sites facing two streets for better drop-off circulation.

Programming Trends and Needs:

- Multi-sport fields (such as football, soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey) are helpful on compact school sites.



- Consultation with School Directors and Joint Use Facilities Groups is needed on individual school sites to understand “must-have” open spaces to deliver curriculum.
- K-9 schools should have a baseball diamond, soccer field, basketball court, and playground.
- High schools should have soccer, track, and football fields.
- Concern that shared facilities or off-site facilities for functional uses are challenging to coordinate with school programs, logistics, costs, and union/staffing obligations.
- In neighbourhoods without public playgrounds (often mature neighbourhoods), a playground and basketball court is often built within the school’s envelope.
- Pickleball is emerging as a popular activity that can serve more students.

There were discussions on the Municipal Reserve (MR) allocation for school sites, with school board representatives sharing that some neighbourhoods receive less than 10 per cent MR, placing challenges on allocating these lands between parks, school sites, and other municipal uses. The City of Edmonton clarified that MR is balanced at the Area Structure Plan (ASP) level, not the neighbourhood level.

What is Municipal Reserve?

Municipal Reserve (MR) refers to land dedicated by developers at the time of greenfield subdivision for public amenities such as parks, schools, or open space. As mandated by Alberta’s Municipal Government Act (MGA), this dedication is set at 10 per cent of the total developable area.

Receiving less than 10 per cent MR can reduce access to essential open space and recreational areas, potentially impacting livability, equity, and the overall parkland supply available to Edmontonians. The Open Space Management Plan (OSMP) sets a target for municipal park supply, guiding how MR contributions support long-term open space planning.

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Meeting

The project team facilitated an online workshop on April 15, 2025 with Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) to discuss amenity servicing, development timing, and impacts of expanding community sizes on the access to and use of recreational amenities.

The section below describes key themes heard from the EFCL:

Community league challenges:

- Community league facilities are vital gathering spaces that support broad community use and participation, especially in new neighbourhoods. Large service areas make it difficult for leagues to engage residents across dispersed communities.
- Utility servicing delays were identified as a hindrance to project progress. As such, a “plug-and-play” approach with pre-installed stubs was recommended to streamline connections.
- Since community leagues rely heavily on volunteers, participants highlighted the need for funding and support to reduce burnout and sustain operations.

Developing versus developed areas:

- Community leagues in developing areas prioritize accessible locations, ease of servicing, and park size, while in developed areas, the focus shifts to renewing amenities, improving servicing, and preserving or expanding existing open space. The biggest challenge is securing well-located parcels of land, not parcel size, with establishment of new community leagues typically taking up to two years.



Community Parks (separate from school sites):

- Participants suggested creating smaller, standalone community parks separate from school sites to reduce land use conflicts and give community leagues greater autonomy to prioritize amenities that reflect their needs.

Grants and Funding:

- Participants identified securing sufficient and coordinated funding as a major challenge for community leagues, noting that large projects often require multiple grants—municipal, provincial, and national—combined with community fundraising, which can take years and lead to delays if any one source falls through.

Flexibility in License Areas:

- Maintaining the flexibility of league license areas, even if immediate development doesn't occur, recognizing the value of this space for community activities. Participants cited instances where the City has prioritized preserving community league areas over other potential uses.

EPCOR Meeting: Drainage and Utility Servicing Strategy

The project team facilitated an online workshop on April 15, 2025 with EPCOR to review key recommendations for drainage and servicing in open spaces, fostering support for the recommendations, and highlighting potential challenges around development and maintenance.

The following key themes emerged in the meeting with EPCOR regarding drainage and servicing:

Drainage bylaw:

- The project team discussed Bylaw 18093, which requires private drainage systems for properties with impervious surfaces. The City proposed allowing surface drainage for small parks under certain conditions.
- Participants offered insights into the bylaw and the use of Low Impact Development (LID) practices. LID is an approach to land development that works with nature to manage stormwater runoff where it falls. LID preserves and recreates natural landscape features, and minimizes hard surfaces to create functional and appealing site drainage.

Water service connections:

- The project team identified a challenge with Bylaw 19626, which limits parks to a single water service connection. The City proposed allowing multiple connections for larger parks based on need.
- Participants noted that EPCOR may have flexibility to approve/offer additional services on a case-by-case basis.

Cross-lot utility servicing:

- The project team described challenges with cross-lot utility restrictions between adjacent park parcels, which complicate design, especially in older parks. The City proposed emphasizing integrated open space design in the OSMP and discouraging drainage breaks at property lines.
- Participants noted that the City, not EPCOR, typically reviews these cases and design standard updates could help prevent drainage issues.
- The City aims to avoid runoff from private lots into parks and may draw on EPCOR's drainage expertise. Participants supported exploring alternative solutions, such as absorbent topsoil, to reduce reliance on swales.

Premature utility installation:

- A key challenge is installing water and sewer mains before park designs are finalized, leading to misalignments and costly retrofits. The project team emphasized the need for better coordination among the City, developers, and EPCOR, along with early collaboration during planning.
- Improved future-proofing was identified as essential as utility needs evolve. Participants agreed on the importance of early collaboration between developers, consultants, and the City to better plan utility placement.

Third-party infrastructure in open spaces:

- The challenge of third-party utilities in parks was highlighted, as they can disrupt usability and pose safety risks. The City's recommendation is to minimize utility placement in parks, allowing above-ground infrastructure only by exception and with strong justification. Participants agreed that this approach aligns with current practices.



EPCOR Meeting: Park Power Servicing and Lighting Strategies

The project team conducted an online workshop on April 17, 2025 with EPCOR to review key recommendations for the Power Servicing and Lighting Strategies in open spaces, fostering support for the recommendations, and highlighting potential challenges around development and maintenance.

The following key themes emerged in the meeting with EPCOR regarding power servicing and lighting:

Open space redevelopment and ownership:

- Participants expressed concern about increased costs for EPCOR if they retain ownership of infrastructure in redeveloped parks. The project team noted that lighting replacements in redeveloped open spaces would likely transfer ownership of those assets to the City.

Servicing timelines and coordination:

- The project team presented a timeline for power servicing, emphasizing the need to align open space planning with EPCOR's approval processes, and discussed challenges around timing, costs, delays.
- Participants discussed the allocation of costs for power infrastructure—particularly regarding developers' roles—and explored the efficiency of having developers install required cubicles during development rather than afterward.

Three-phase power and investment:

- Participants outlined EPCOR's power infrastructure investment policies, including developer rebates and service connections for schools and large facilities. They noted that smaller amenities like fountains and washrooms typically require single-phase power, while larger facilities with kitchens or HVAC systems need three-phase power. Schools and community facilities require dedicated electrical services, and smaller features such as Wi-Fi zones and emergency phones may need smaller dedicated services or service loops.

Lighting:

- The project team discussed growing lighting needs in open spaces driven by [Winter City](#) initiatives and active transportation. They expressed a preference for City ownership and maintenance of security lighting in new developments, but noted the need to clarify responsibilities for existing EPCOR-owned lighting.
- Participants highlighted concerns about potential cost impacts and regulatory requirements related to lighting upgrades, emphasizing the importance of avoiding unexpected expenses. They also

clarified that solar lighting is intended to be standalone and solely owned by the City, minimizing impacts on EPCOR's network, even in redevelopment projects.

Lifecycle and costs:

- Participants discussed the lifespan and cost-effectiveness of pre-installing switching cubicles, noting a typical lifespan of 30–40 years, which can drop to 20 years when placed near high-speed roads due to rusting. Placing cubicles further from roadways can help extend their lifespan.
- EPCOR maintains these assets even if not yet in use. While developers have expressed concern about investing in cubicles for projects that may not proceed, current development trends and rapid school site absorption have reduced this risk.

BILD Edmonton Meetings

BILD Edmonton Metro members participated in two virtual sessions on April 23 and 25, 2025 to discuss open space provisioning, acquisition, classifications, amenities, and servicing. After project updates and draft recommendations, facilitated discussions gathered feedback, and are summarized in the table below.

The following key themes emerged in the meeting with BILD:

Provisioning:

- While the City is exploring options to ensure that school footprints are sized appropriately to meet curriculum requirements while minimizing impacts to other park functions, the Municipal Governance Act requirements for Municipal Reserves remain at 10%.
- Participants requested clarity on the evaluation criteria that will be introduced to improve open space diversity and distribution.
 - Despite balancing diversity and distribution, participants noted continued high developer demand for more playgrounds.
- The City is considering classifying school sites separately and offering larger, centralized community parks with broader amenities.

Acquisition:

- Participants suggested that [Infill Infrastructure Fund \(IIF\)](#) criteria be revised to incentivize green space enhancements.
- The City acknowledged that parks improve neighborhoods, but noted that current IIF funding is tied to dwelling units and infrastructure barriers, with green space inclusion considered for future programs.

Classifications and Amenities:

- Participants agreed that amenity planning should occur later in the development process due to multiple landowners and community preferences.
- The project team described how the OSMP adopts Breathe's framework, focusing on quantity, quality, distribution, and accessibility, and differentiates between developing and redeveloping areas using a network analysis to guide investments. The City confirmed enhanced amenities are optional and is working to simplify incorporating developer-built features.

- Despite the need for balanced amenity types, participants noted that demand for playgrounds remains high. Alternatives like BMX tracks and natural play areas were suggested by the project team to address demand for family-friendly amenities.
- Participants described challenges in gaining approval for amenities like skating rinks and fire pits. The City acknowledged that maintenance capacity and safety concerns influence decisions, and these amenity types are more commonly approved when community leagues can offer maintenance.

Servicing:

- The City discussed power-ready parks and aligning utility placement with development practices, noting Provincial requirements for three-phase power at school sites and collaboration with developers to manage costs.
- Participants expressed concerns about rising costs, particularly for lighting, which could affect developer affordability.
 - The project team highlighted consideration of solar options despite cost and seasonal challenges.
- Alternative approaches to three-phase power, such as installing cabling but delaying cubicle installation, were suggested by participants to reduce expenses.
- Participants raised concerns about servicing costs from over-dedicated park land and expensive drainage systems for amenities that may not be built.
 - The project team acknowledged these challenges and emphasized the need for a balanced strategy to avoid over-dedication while future-proofing infrastructure.

Public Engagement Survey

Edmontonians shared their feedback through a public survey from May 26 to June 9, 2025. The survey received **3,323 complete responses** and was shared with the Edmonton Insight Community, community recreation organizations, and the public through social media and communication channels.

The survey focused on the following topics:

- Park visitation during warmer and colder months
- Barriers to park visitation
- Activities done in parks
- Willingness to travel to parks to do activities
- Gaps in activities available in parks
- How well local parks serve Breathe functions



Throughout the survey, respondents were reminded that the Breathe Strategy does not include parks in the River Valley and Ravine System and recreation facilities, which are addressed through other City plans such as the Ribbon of Green.

Overall Feedback Summary

Respondents were asked to consider warmer months and colder months, and shared the following feedback on how often they visit parks, what activities they prefer to do, barriers to visitation, and what outdoor activities could be better supported.

Seasonal Park Use

Topic	Feedback for Warmer Months	Feedback for Colder Months
Frequency of visitation	61% visit at least once a week or more 10% not at all	38% visit at least once a week or more 26% not at all
Popular passive activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walking (82%)• Relaxing on a bench or grass (57%)• Visiting with friends or family (43%)• Dog walking (38%) / using dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walking (78%)• Dog walking (39%) / using dog off-leash area (23%)• Visiting with friends or family (25%)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> off-leash area (25%) Picnicking (35%) Bird watching (24%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird watching (15%)
Popular active recreation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycling (35%) Visiting playgrounds (28%) Informal play (27%) Visiting spray parks (22%) Running or jogging (17%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sledding (23%) Ice skating (25%) Informal play (19%) Cross country skiing (20%) Visiting playgrounds (14%) Playing rink sports (11%)
Barriers that prevent park visitation (see Appendix B , question 4 and 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant barriers (39%) Access to washrooms (25%) No activities that interest me (25%) Not enough protection from the heat, wind or rain (15%) Lack of physical accessibility (8%) Other (most popular responses): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of safety (10%) Visit river valley parks instead (7%) or use their backyard (3%) Not interested in visiting parks (7%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer spending less time outdoors during winter (50%) No activities that interest me (33%) Not enough protection from the cold, wind or snow (28%) Shorter daylight hours (25%) No significant barriers (22%) Access to washrooms (20%) Amount of lighting to support outdoor use (11%) Lack of physical accessibility (12%) Lack of availability of winter-specific amenities (7%)
Most popular ideas for outdoor activities that could be better supported in City parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picnic & benches Trails - Walking / biking Festivals, events, community gathering Outdoor pools, splash and spray parks Court sports (pickleball, basketball, tennis, volleyball) Community gardens Playgrounds Outdoor fitness equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skating rinks & freezeways Cross country skiing Sledding / tobogganing <p><i>Many noted snow and ice clearing to improve accessibility to parks. Also, unlike responses for warmer months, responses for colder months had a number of responses mentioning the desire for free or low cost access to lessons or facilities relating to skating or skiing.</i></p>
Ideas for how outdoor activities could be better supported - popular responses	<p>Improving comfort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washroom facilities Access to water More seating Protection from the elements 	<p>Improving comfort:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washroom facilities Warming stations / fire pits Access to hot drinks Protection from the elements

relating to how park visitation experience could be improved (with examples)	<p>(particularly the sun)</p> <p>Greater variety of amenities or more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food trucks • Outdoor fitness equipment • Trails • Picnic tables • Sport courts <p>Organized programming for all ages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events • Festivals • Outdoor exercise classes 	<p>Improving access & safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing ice & snow • increased lighting
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Willingness to Travel

The activities park users participated in most frequently directly correspond with their preference for how close they would prefer to have these activities available. Although community gardens were identified as a preferred activity only by six per cent of respondents, 41 per cent of all survey respondents identified them as desirable to be able to access within a 5 minute or 15 minute distance.

The most desirable activities to have available at a park close to home (i.e., within a five or 15 minute walking distance) are for the purpose of:

Activity	Prefer closer to home (5 minute walk or roll)	Willing to travel farther to access (15 minute walk or roll)	Combined total of respondents who are willing to travel 5 minutes or 15 minutes to access
Walking	49%	27%	76%
Relaxing on benches or on the grass	49%	24%	73%
Informal play	43%	14%	57%
Visiting with friends and family	31%	26%	57%
Picnicking	25%	29%	54%
Visiting playgrounds	33%	16%	49%

Dog walking	33%	16%	49%
Cycling	27%	22%	49%
Running / jogging	31%	13%	44%
Visiting spray parks	24%	19%	43%
Utilizing a community garden	27%	14%	41%
Bird watching	20%	20%	40%
Ice skating	18%	22%	40%
Sledding	20%	19%	39%
Visit a dog off-leash area	19%	20%	39%
Utilizing sports courts	16%	21%	37%
Utilizing sports courts	9%	15%	24%

Respondents are more likely to travel longer distance for:

Activity	Willing to travel longer distance to access (bike, transit, car)
Picnicking	25%
Visiting with friends and family	23%
Cross country skiing	22%
Visiting with friends and family	31%
Bird watching	18%
Ice skating	17%
Walking	15%
Cycling	15%
Visit a dog off-leash area	15%

When asked what other activities participants would like to have within a five or 15 minute distance, few responses were received (approximately nine per cent or less), identifying a variety of activities (e.g., spray park, board games, climbing walls, activities for seniors, etc.), but the most popular of those responses related to:

- social wellness (e.g., public art, painting, music, performing arts, social events, dog parks, etc.)
- outdoor swimming pools
- physical activity (e.g., outdoor fitness equipment, rock climbing, yoga, sport courts, etc.).

Breathe Functional Themes in Parks

Respondents were asked two questions relating to each of the three Breathe functional themes, and how much they agreed that the parks in their neighbourhood served that purpose:

Wellness Theme (3,323 responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 in 10 respondents (81%) feel visiting their neighbourhood parks improve their mental health and wellbeing.• 7 in 10 respondents (72%) say they can play and be active in their neighbourhood parks.
Celebration Theme (3,323 responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 in 10 respondents (69%) feel their neighbourhood parks are good places to meet with their community.• 7 in 10 respondents (69%) feel safe using their neighbourhood parks
Ecology Theme (3,323 responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-third of respondents are neutral about their parks’ role in climate change mitigation, with just under half (47%) agreeing their parks help with mitigation efforts.• One-third of respondents are neutral about how their parks’ vegetation supports biodiversity, with under half (47%) agreeing their parks play this role.

General Comments

When given the opportunity to share any other thoughts about park activities in Edmonton, 940 respondents provided written comments summarized in the following themes:

- **Park maintenance and cleanliness** (20% of written responses): Many indicated inadequate park maintenance. The concerns mainly related to excessive weeds, lack of mowing, litter and overflowing waste receptacles.
- **Lack of amenities** (18% of written responses): The need for washroom facilities, drinking water, more waste receptacles, access to shade (whether via shelters or trees), and more seating to support longer outings and places to rest. The need for activities for seniors, adults, and youths were also mentioned.
- **Safety**: (17% of written comments) Respondents mentioned feeling unsafe using parks, mainly citing social concerns and unhoused population using or living in parks and uncontrolled dogs.
- **Value of parks, more parks or park retention** (7% of written responses): Mentioning how parks are important to them and their wellbeing. (9% of written responses). A desire to create more parks or to retain existing parks, many were concerned about losing existing parks to development.
- **Dogs in parks** (6% of written responses): Some want improved access to parks for their dogs, while others feel that dogs are negatively affecting their enjoyment of parks.
- **Support for conservation and biodiversity** (5% of written responses): The need for conservation of natural features, using native plant species, and supporting wildlife and biodiversity through park acquisition and development.
- **Lack of programming** (5% of written responses): A variety of programming would encourage them to use parks more frequently, such as festivals, outdoor exercise programs, educational programs, and community events.
- **Accessibility** (4% of written responses): The need for improved accessibility in parks because of limited mobility or additional trails for multi-modal access to parks.

Other comments were made that are unrelated to the scope of the project, but were noteworthy, as follows:

- Enforcement was mentioned in 9% of written responses as a means to address encampments, social concerns and the unhoused population in parks, and bylaw infractions (e.g., excessive noise, dogs off leash where they are not allowed to be, and not picking up litter or pet waste).
- Some written responses (6%) noted specific behaviours (e.g., noise, leaving litter or pet waste) impacting their ability to enjoy parks.

Next Steps

How Input Will Be Used

Input from the public and key development partners provided important information about the open space development process, appropriate provision levels for amenities, and servicing to support those amenities. Participants in Phase 1 provided initial support for the proposed lighting, drainage and servicing and power strategies. The public engagement survey responses provide a baseline understanding of current use, what amenities and programming can support park use, and barriers to park users. This information will be considered when making recommendations in the OSMP and the development of the network analysis approach.

Feedback received during Phase 1 engagement will be leveraged to further develop the recommendations of the OSMP in Phase 2, applying the network analysis approach to three district case studies.



Looking Forward

Additional engagement will support the project team in further refinement of the Network Analysis Framework, and provide the opportunity to test recommendations at the district scale. Key meetings must be scheduled with the Land Management Committee (to determine curriculum requirements for amenities on or around school sites and sizing recommendations), EFCL (to discuss community league amenities, operations, and stewardship opportunities), EPCOR (to confirm and discuss the City's preferred servicing requirements), and BILD (to confirm and discuss the City's preferred amenity requirements for park sites in developing and redeveloping areas).

More information can be found at edmonton.ca/breathe under the "Breathe Implementation Project" page or by contacting breathe@edmonton.ca.



Appendices

Appendix A: List of Key Development Partners (Phase 1)

Open space development partners were engaged through a series of workshops and meetings. In Phase 1, the City engaged with key development partners who met the following criteria:

1. Have assets on open space throughout the city
2. Have operational or work plans separate from the City for these assets.

The following key development partners participated in Phase 1 of the project:

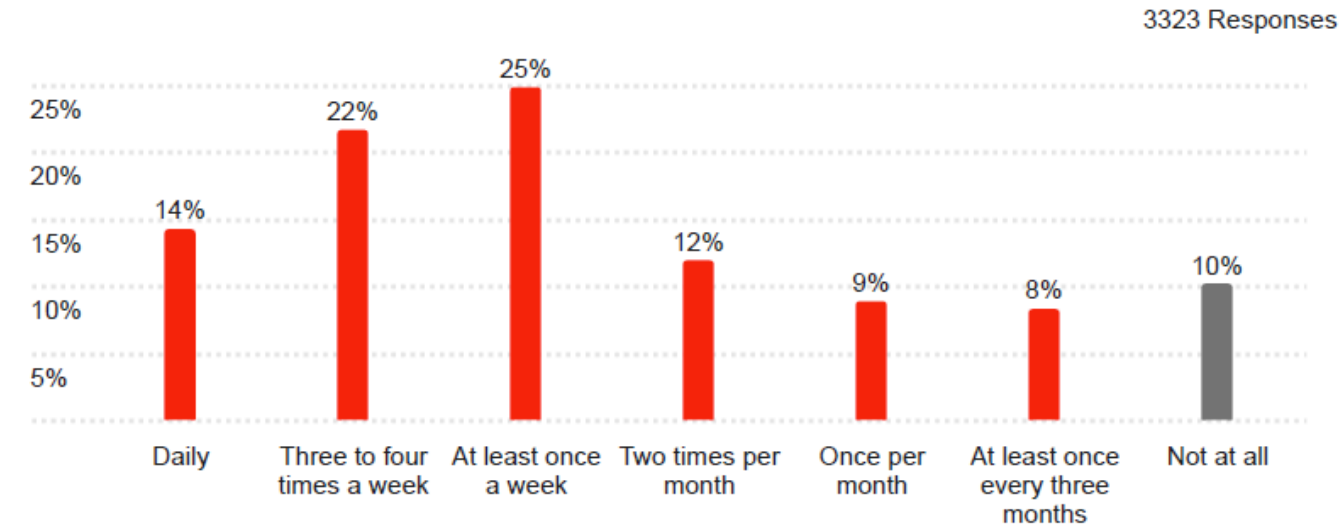
- **School Boards**
 - Edmonton Public Schools
 - Edmonton Catholic Schools
 - Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord
- **Utilities**
 - EPCOR
- **Development Industry**
 - Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Edmonton Metro
- **Non-Profit**
 - Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL)

Appendix B: Public Engagement Survey Summary Report (Phase 1)

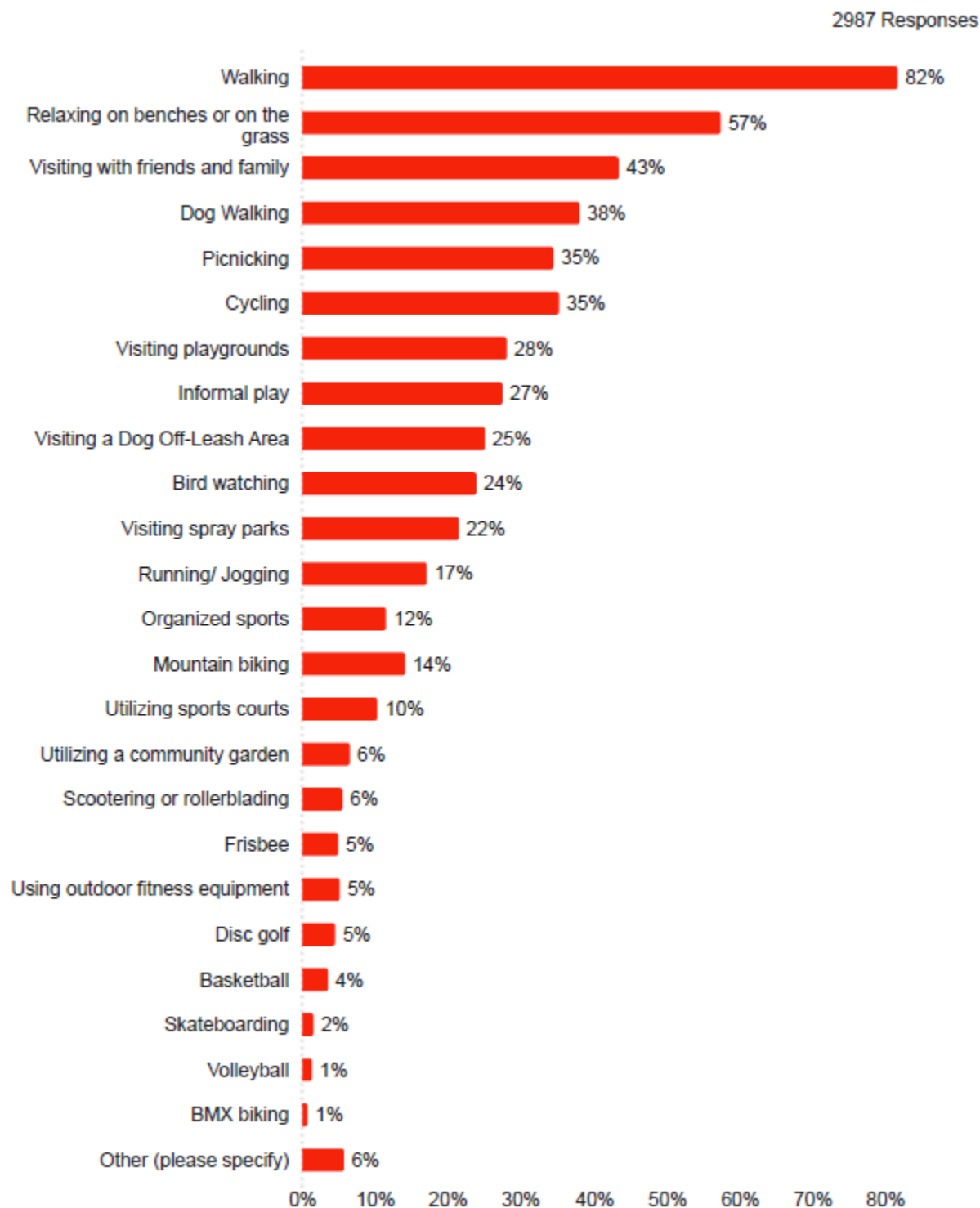
The tabulated questions from the public engagement survey are shown below. Responses from text boxes are not shown and the findings are summarized in the report.

Question 1: How often do you visit parks in Edmonton during the summer or warmer months?

(Reminder: This survey does not include river valley or ravine parks)

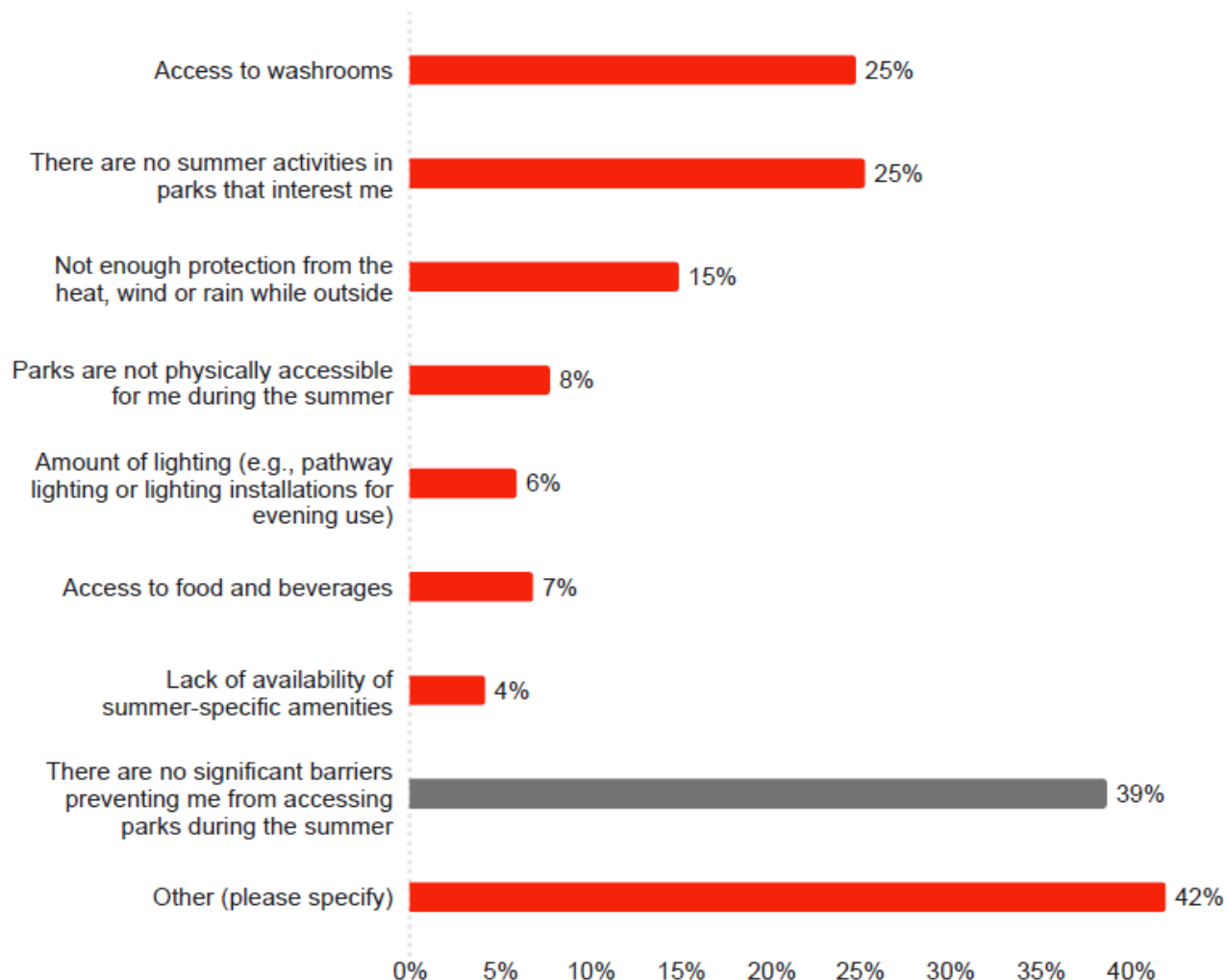


Question 2: Which activities do you like to do in parks in the summer or warmer months? Select all that apply.



Question 4: What might be preventing you from visiting parks in the summer or warmer months?
Select all that apply.

336 Responses

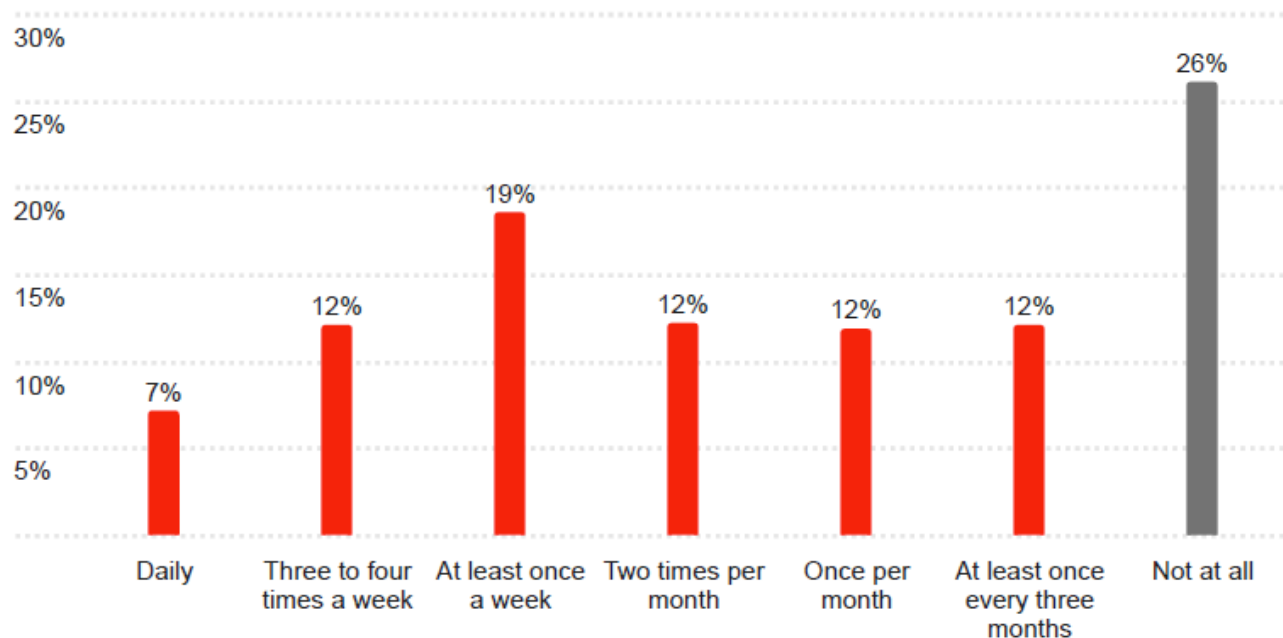


Among the 141 respondents who chose “other” reasons that prevent them from using parks in warmer months, the most commonly mentioned reasons are as follows:

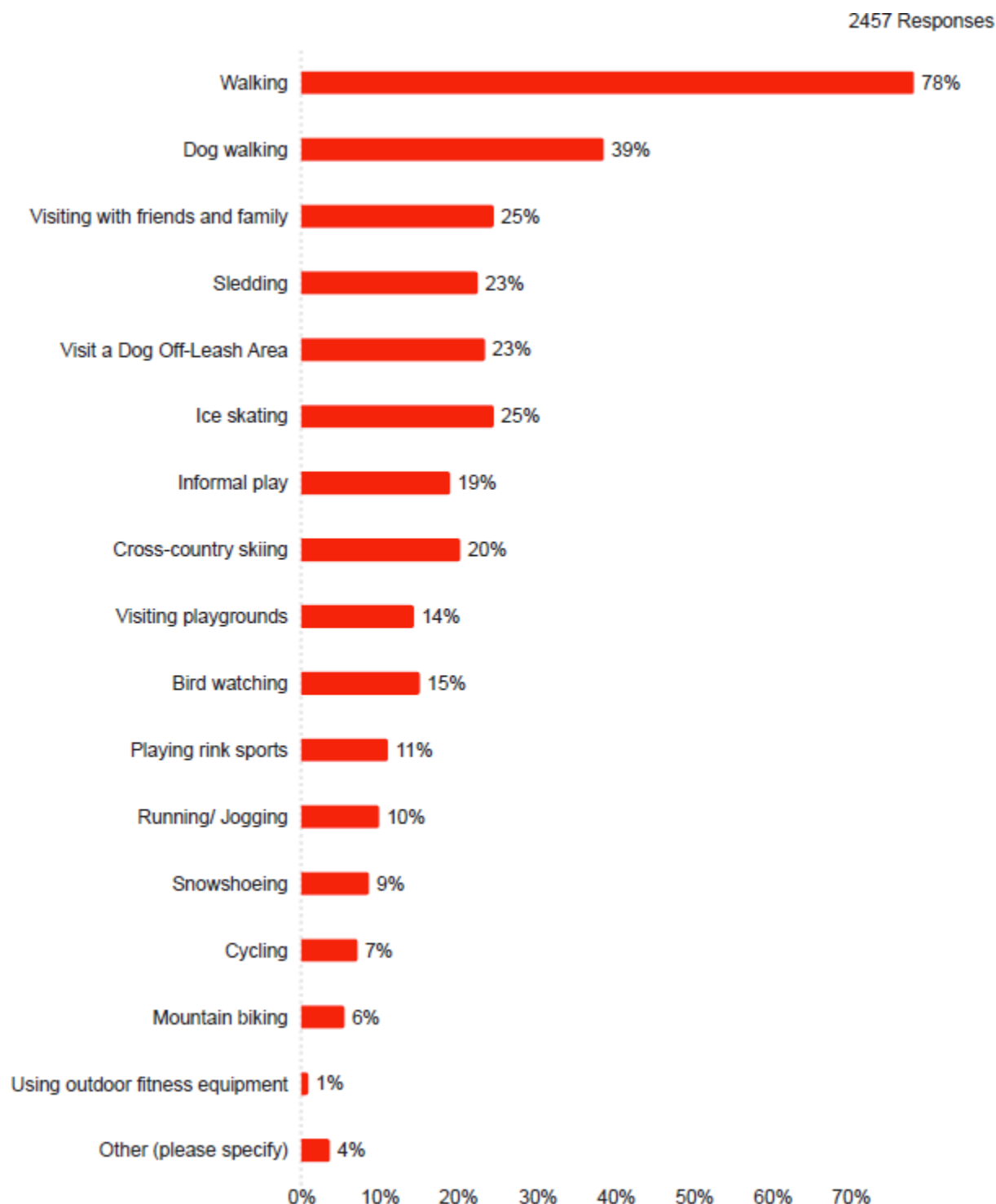
- Lack of safety (32 respondents)
- Visit river valley parks instead (25 respondents) or use their backyard (11 respondents)
- Generally not interested in visiting parks (24 respondents)
- Lack of park maintenance (e.g., cleanliness, weeds, long grass) (11 respondents)

Question 5: How often do you visit parks in Edmonton during the winter or colder months?**(Reminder: This survey does not include river valley or ravine parks)**

3323 Responses

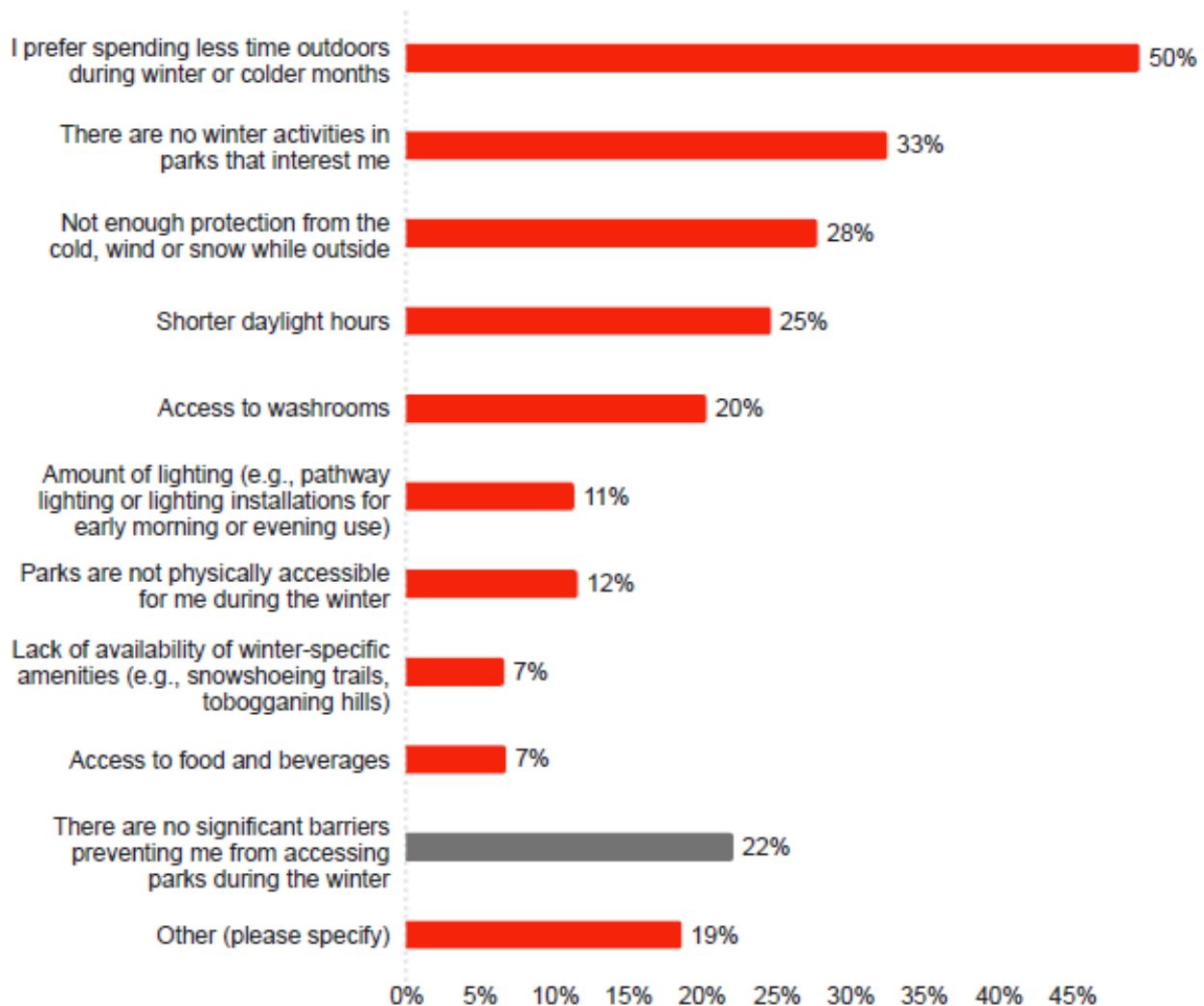


Question 6: Which activities do you like to do in parks in the winter or colder months? Select all that apply.



Question 8: What might be preventing you from visiting parks in the winter or colder months? Select all that apply.

866 Responses



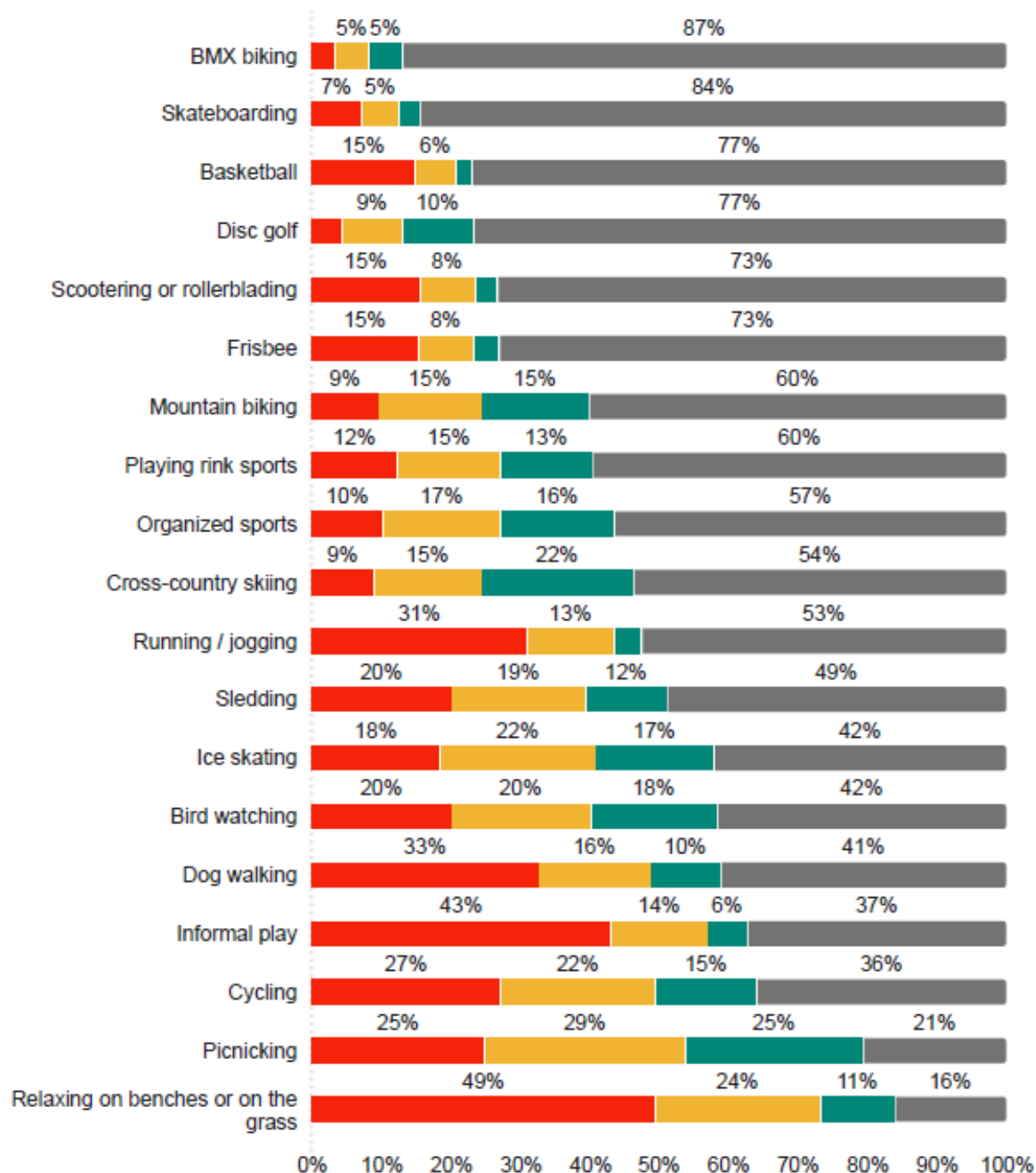
Among the 164 respondents who chose “other” reasons that prevent them from using parks in colder months, the most commonly mentioned reasons are as follows:

- Generally not interested in visiting parks (*31 respondents*)
- Lack of safety (*23 respondents*)
- Visit river valley parks instead (*18 respondents*)
- Are not in Edmonton during the colder months (e.g., snowbirds, traveling) (*17 respondents*)
- Temperatures are too cold (*17 respondents*)
- Lack of snow and ice clearing limiting accessibility (*16 respondents*)

Question 9: For each activity, please share how close or far you would prefer to travel.

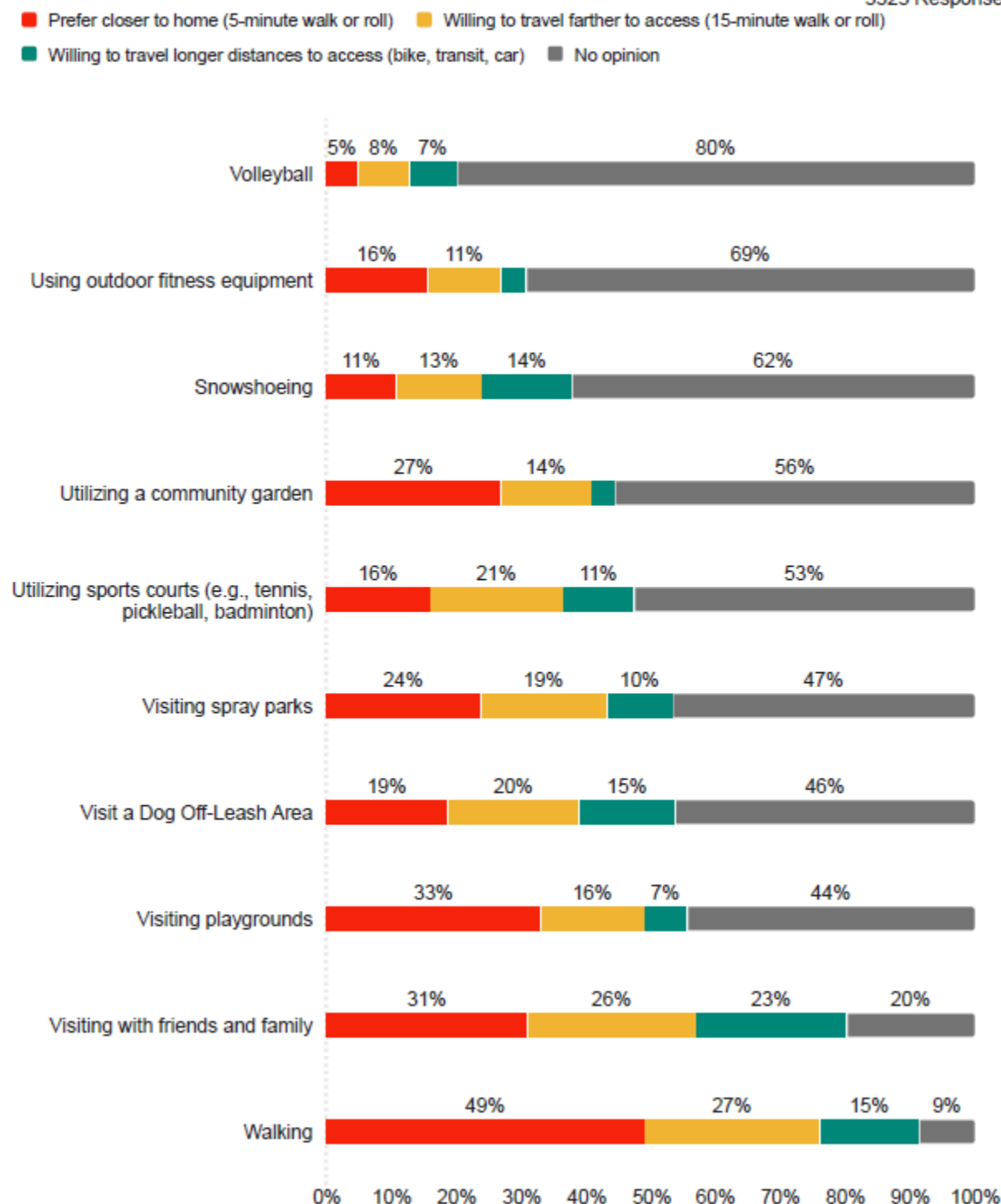
3323 Responses

- Prefer closer to home (5-minute walk or roll)
 ■ Willing to travel farther to access (15-minute walk or roll)
 ■ Willing to travel longer distances to access (bike, transit, car)
 ■ No opinion

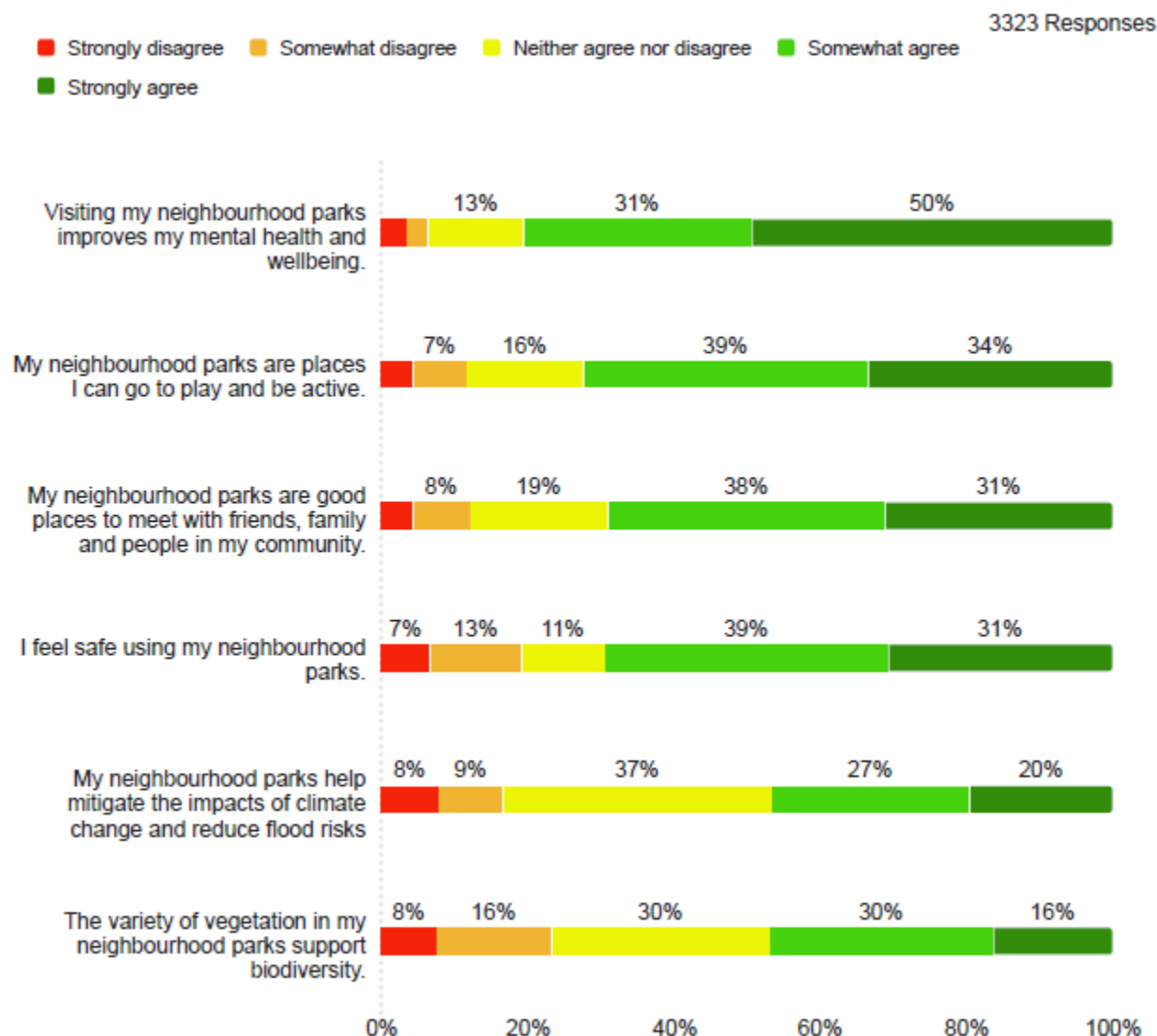


Question 9 (continued):

3323 Responses



Question 12: Thinking about the parks in your neighbourhood, please rate how much you agree with the following statements:



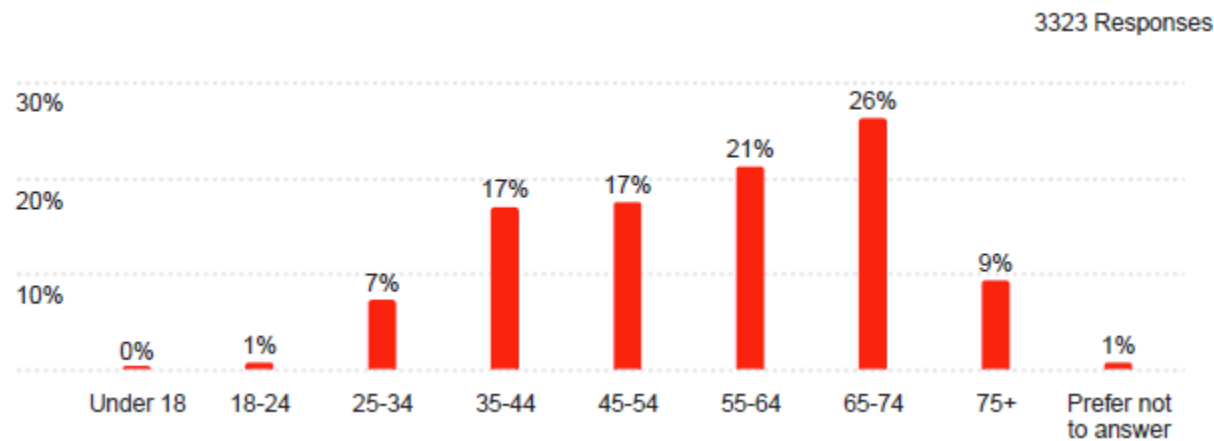
Appendix C: Public Engagement Survey Respondent Demographics (Phase 1)

The following demographics-related questions were asked of survey respondents. Responses regarding postal code have been excluded.

Question 1: Do you currently live in the city of Edmonton?

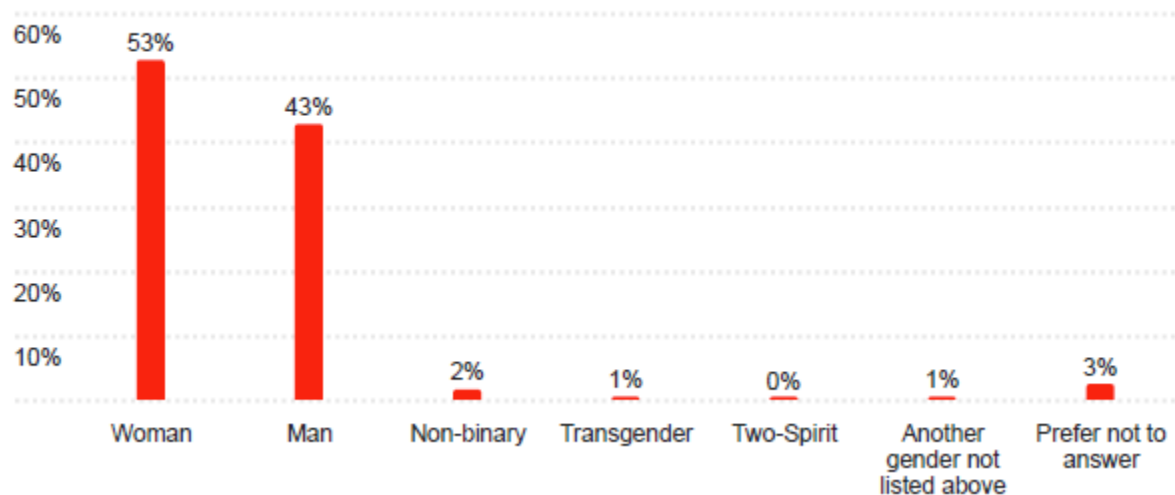


Question 2: What is your age category?



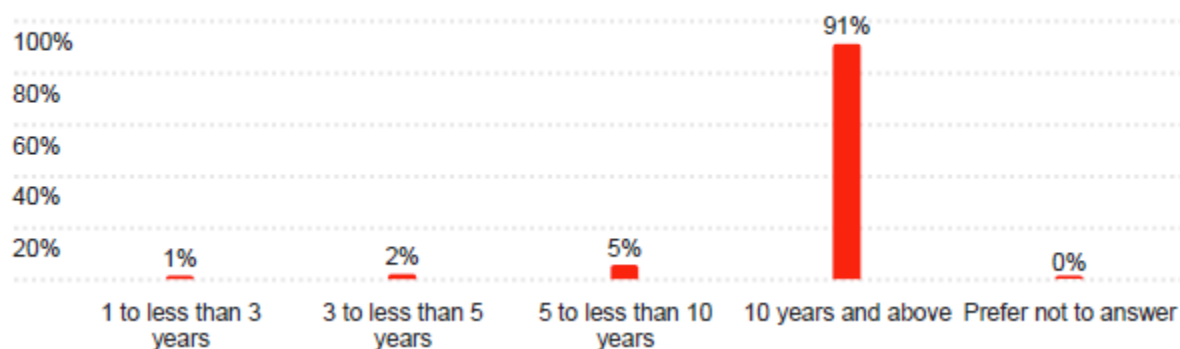
Question 3: What gender do you identify as?

3323 Responses

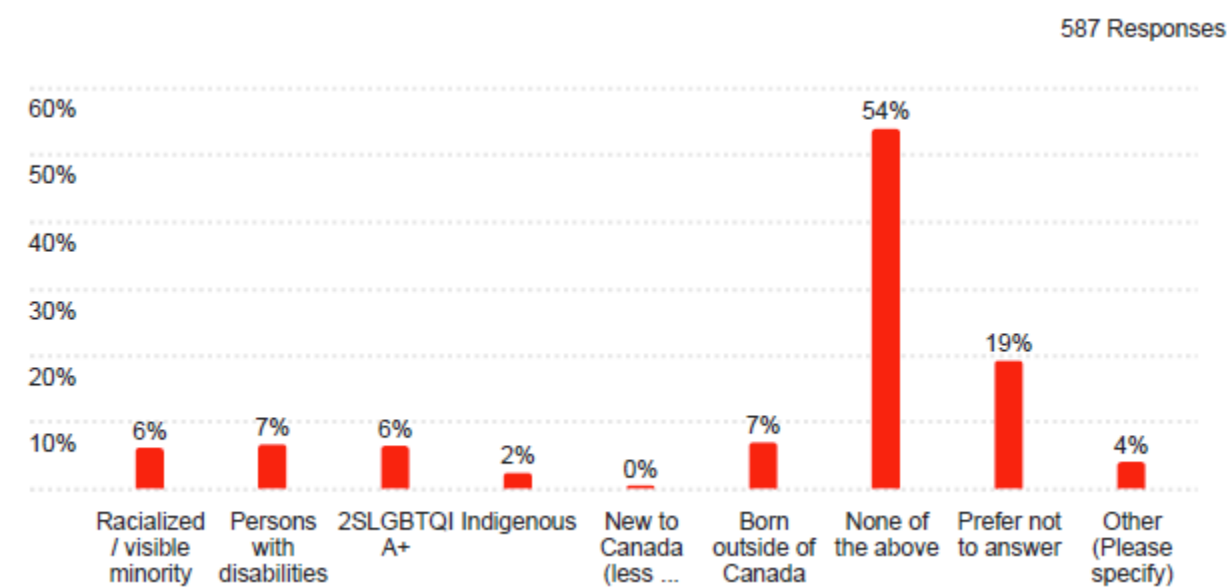


Question 4: How long have you lived in Edmonton?

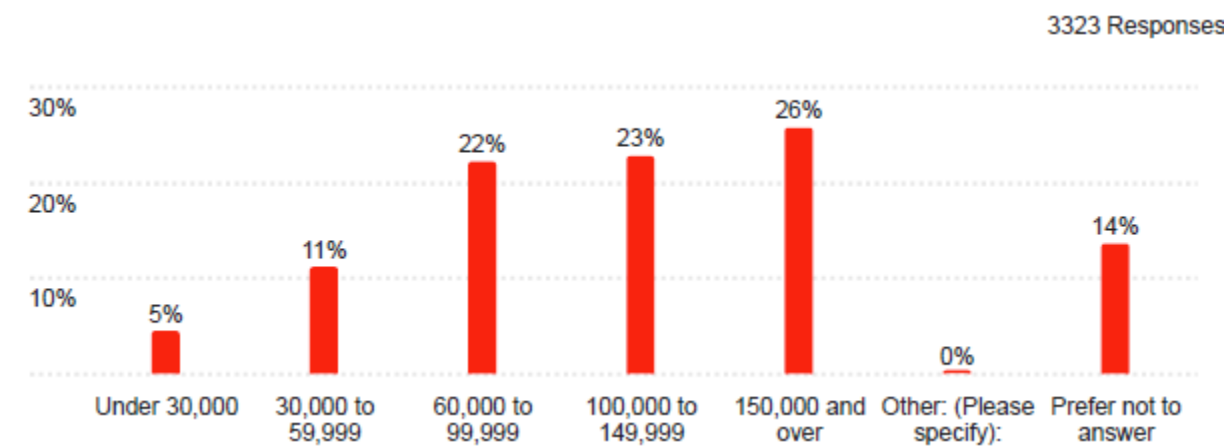
3302 Responses



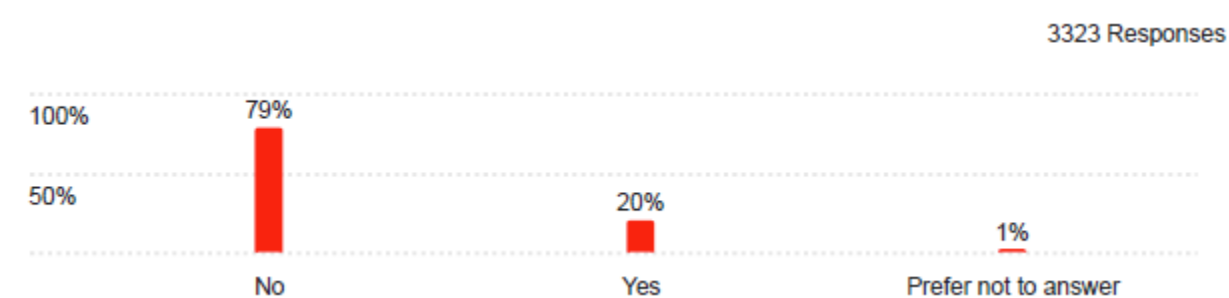
Question 5: Do you identify with any of the following?



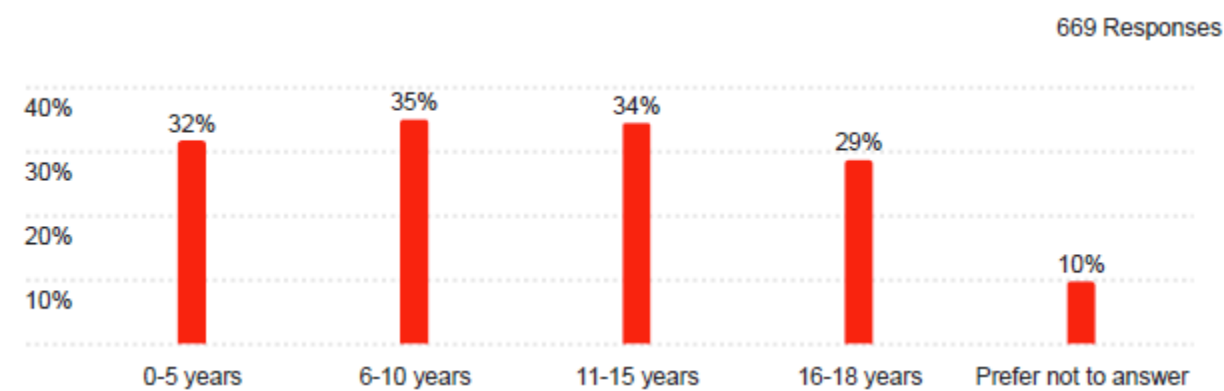
Question 6: Which of the following categories best describes your total household income in 2024 before taxes?



Question 7: Do you have children/grandchildren under 18 years of age living at home?



Question 8: Some City parks amenities serve specific age groups. For example: a tot lot is suited for ages 2 to 5, and larger playgrounds typically serve ages 5 to 12. Understanding the ages represented in your household will help us understand your survey responses. Which age groups of youth are represented in your household? Select all that apply.



Question 9: Which type of dwelling is your home?

