



2021 Visitor Study data discussion

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Community Development Committee

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Discussion outline

Tonight's topics:

- Overview/background
- Implementing agencies workshops/MPOSC
- Visitor satisfaction and most popular activities
- Demographics of park visitation
- New visitors and information seeking



Implementing agency staff joined five scheduled lunch conversations to dive into operations implications of survey results.

Background and Implementing Agency Workshops



Visitor Study Purpose



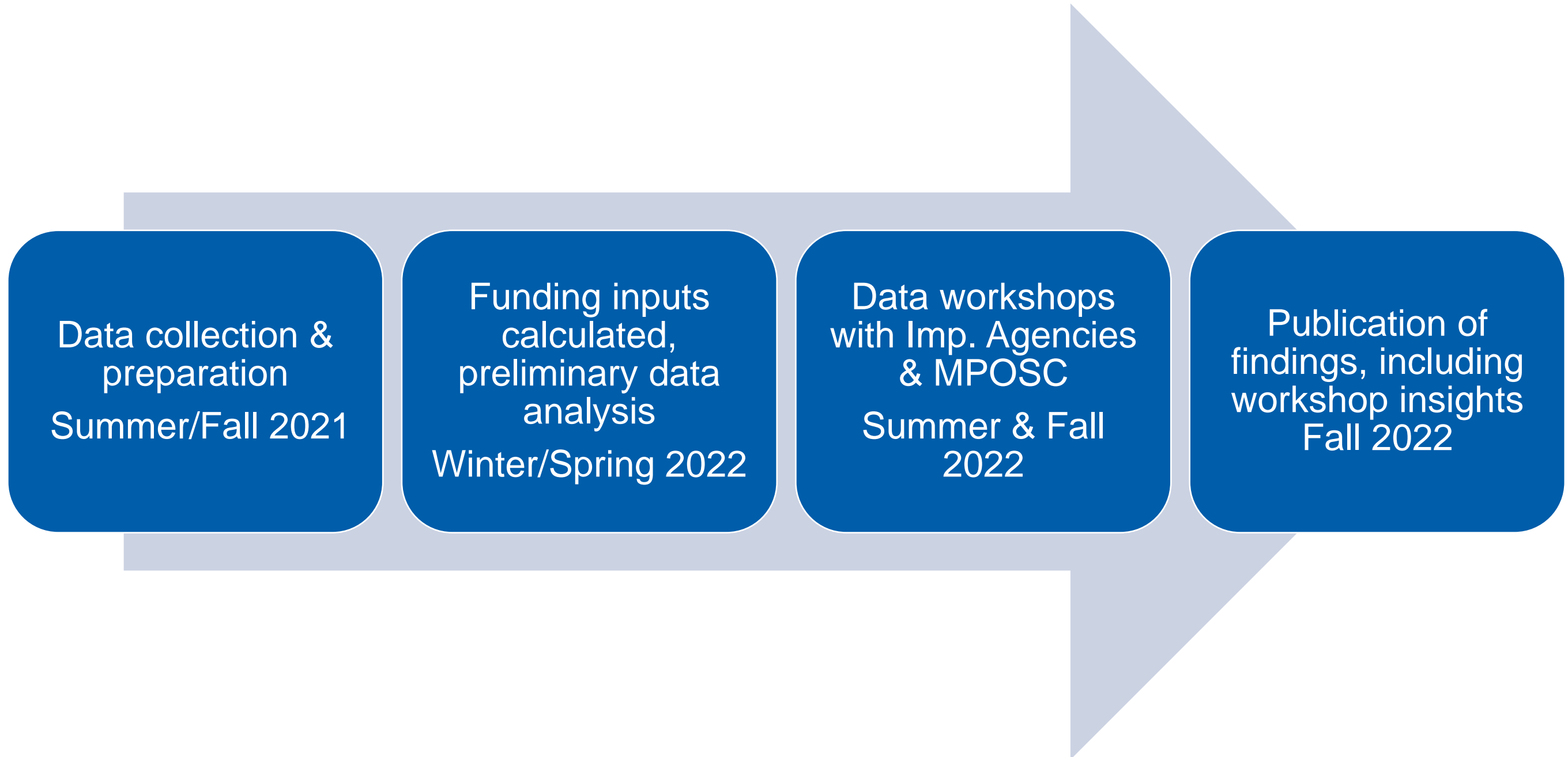
- Help inform planning, policy, and management
- Evaluate and strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails in accordance with the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*
- Update data in funding formulas to help determine where funding goes for parks and trails

2021 Visitor Survey



- Surveys administered in the field by Wilder Research
- Over 5,400 surveys, over 50% response rate. Survey quotas proportionate to visitation.
- At least 393 surveys per implementing agency. One unit in each implementing agency was “oversampled” to have data at the unit level.
- Data were reviewed and analyzed by Council staff.
- Report to be published this fall; currently workshopping data with implementing agencies.


2021 Visitor Survey Process



Data workshops summer 2022

Data partners: why & how

- Extensive data; workshops and conversations offer areas of focus.
- Five topics: Visitor satisfaction; activities; race & age equity; gender & disability equity; new visitors and information seeking.
- Conversations look at management and policy implications.
- Fall 2022: Publication of final report.



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Visitor satisfaction and popular activities



Visitor satisfaction & suggestions

Study details/ visitor satisfaction

- 88% reported facilities very good or excellent
- Higher satisfaction in suburbs; slightly lower in systems with older facilities (MPRB, St Paul)

Visitor Suggestions

- Top parks suggestion: everything's good
- Top for trails: Better trail maintenance
- Bathrooms, water, signage, shade are important

Popular activities & social characteristics

Most popular activity	Hiking/walking is the most popular activity for all groups				
2nd most popular activity	Relax/do nothing: Age 12-44; Black, Latino, Asian American, multiple race visitors; gender nonbinary	Biking: Age 45+, American Indian, white visitors; men	Dog walking/dog park: women	Observing nature: Group incl member with a disability	
3rd most popular activity	Biking: Women, gender nonbinary; ages 12-44; Black, Latino, multiple races visitors	Dog walk/dog park: Age 44-64; white visitors	Family/friend meetup: American Indian, Asian American	Observing nature: Age 65+, men	Relaxing/do nothing: Group incl. member with a disability

Table 1: Most popular activities, disaggregated by social characteristics. Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Visitor Study

Visitor demographics



Visitation less racially/ethnically diverse than regional population overall.

Communities of color are underrepresented among park, trail visitors relative to the population.

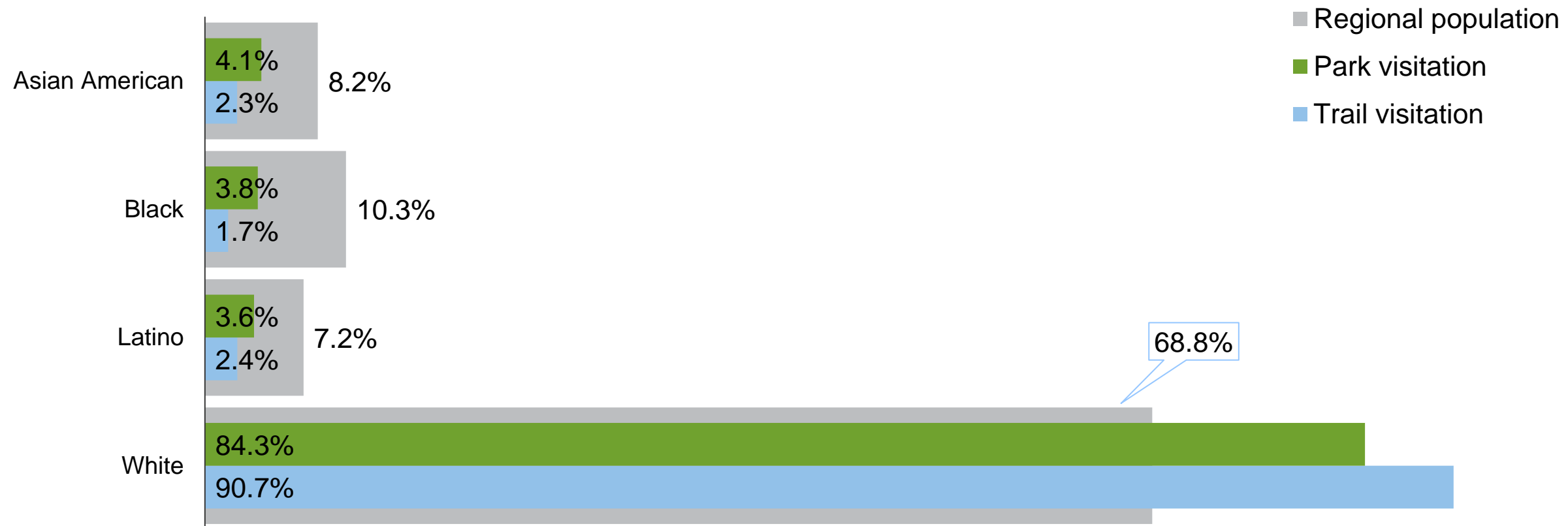


Figure 1: Comparing survey demographics with the regional population for race/ethnicity.
Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Parks & Trails Visitor Study.

Fewer young people visit compared with their proportion in population.

Young people are underrepresented among park, trail visitors. Disparities are greater on trails.

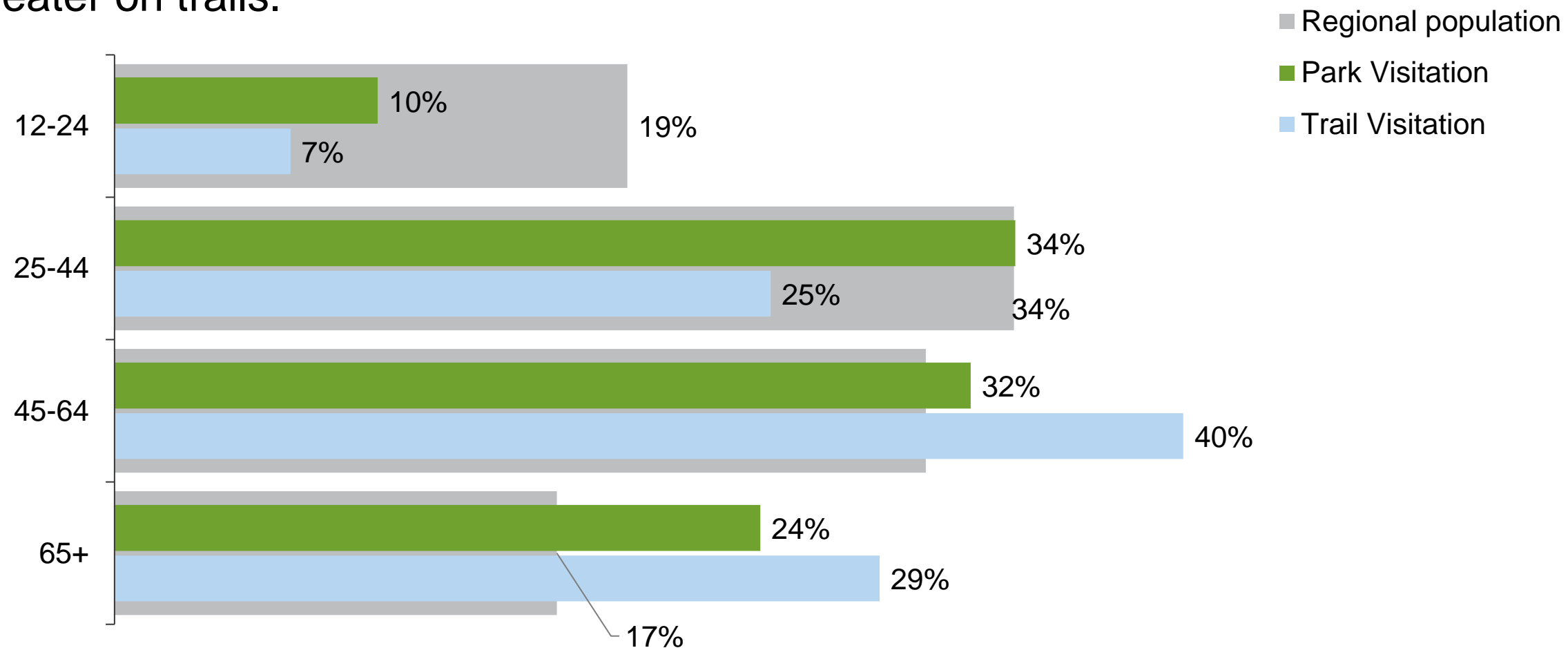


Figure 2: Comparing survey demographics with the regional population for age. Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Parks & Trails Visitor Study

Higher racial/ethnic diversity among younger visitors.

Younger visitors are more racially/ethnically diverse.

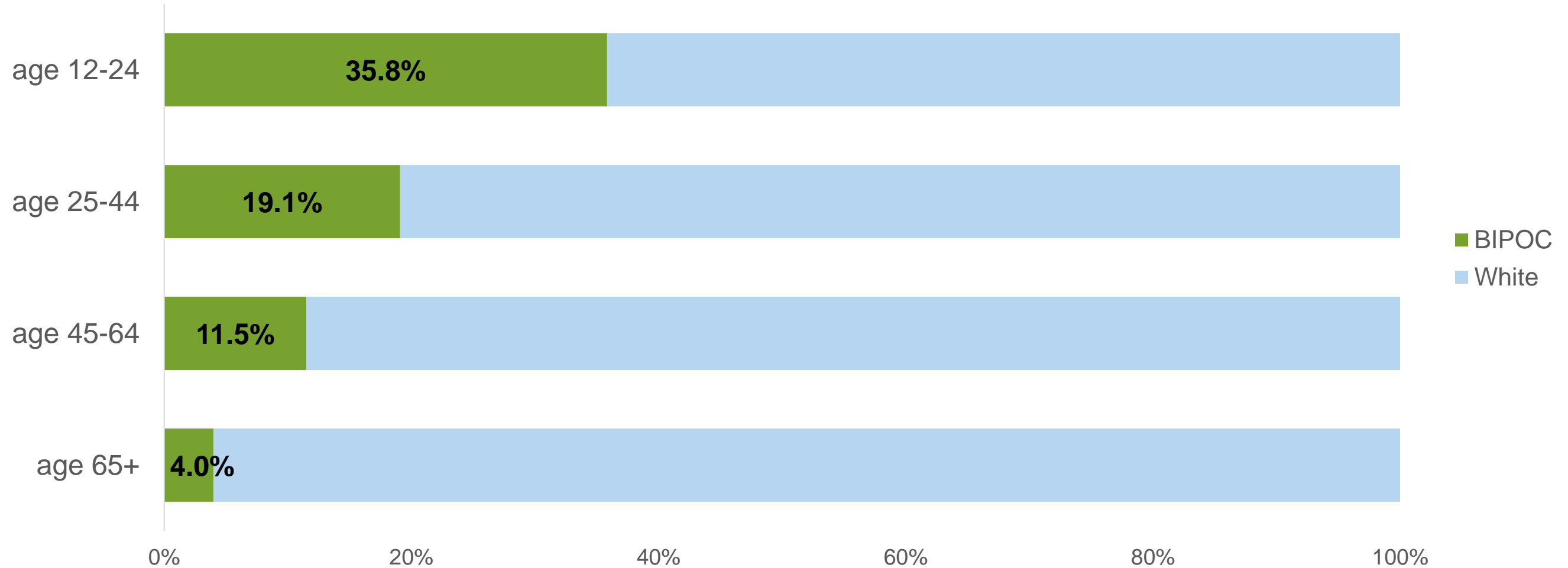


Figure 3: Percent visitors who are BIPOC and white, by age group. Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Parks & Trails Visitor Study.

Gender gap in trail visitation.

Men and women equally visit parks. Trail visitation shows a gender gap.

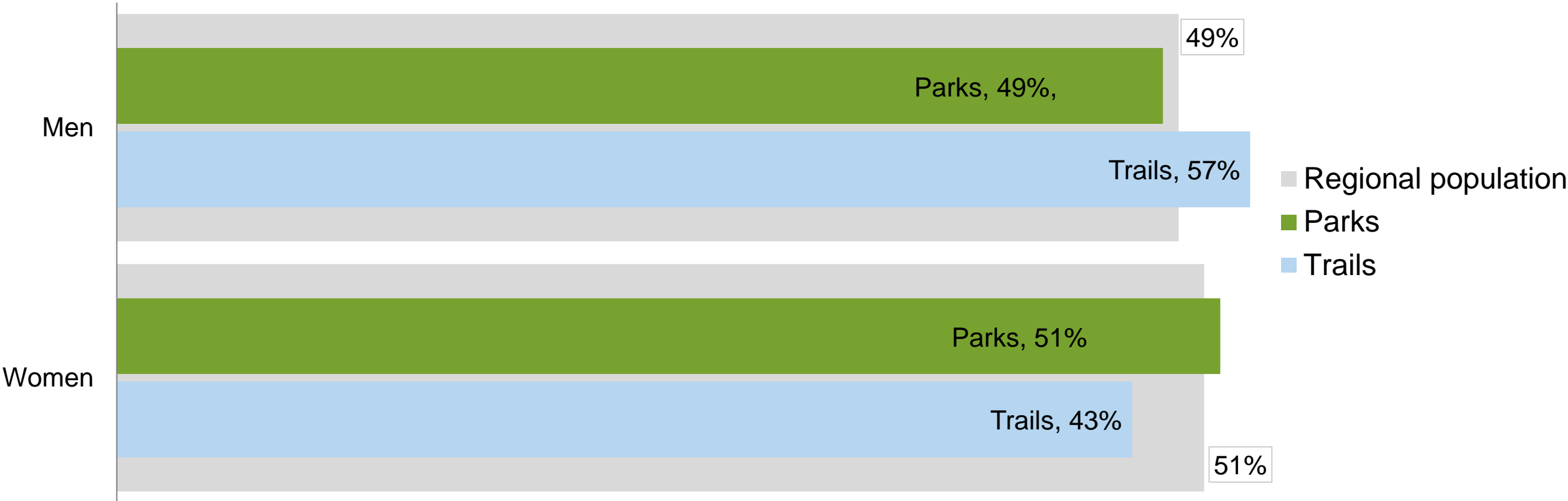


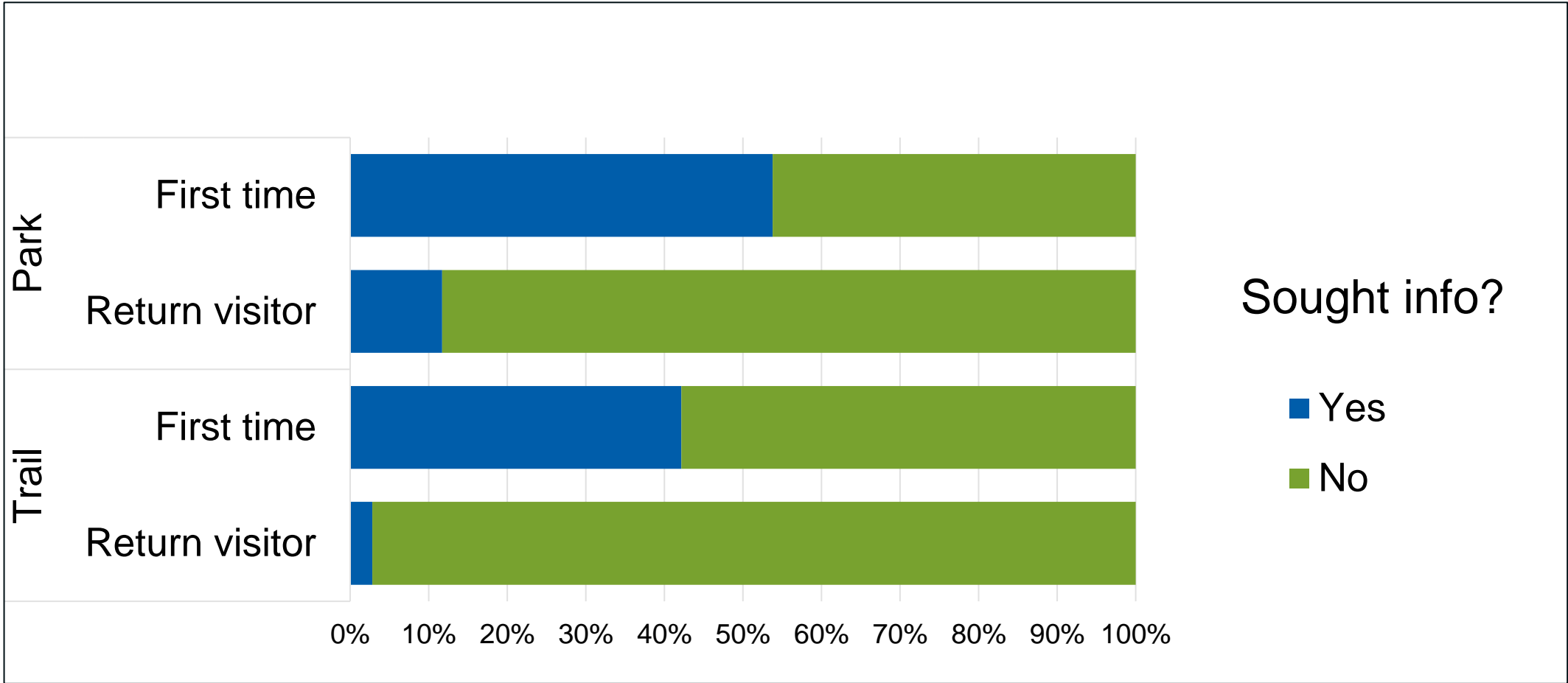
Figure 4: Gender of surveyed visitors for parks, trails compared with the seven-county regional population (percent). Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Parks & Trails Visitor Study

New Visitors and Information Seeking



Information seeking: Where and who

New visitors, park visitors, were the most likely to seek information prior to visiting.



NEW VISITORS are:

- 84% of information seekers
- Wanting to know about park hours, parking, and rules
- 3 times greater a presence at parks than trails

Figure 5: Information seeking by new, return visitors compared by park, trail (unweighted data, percent). Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Visitor Survey

New visitors more likely to be non-white, seek information, visit parks.

New/infrequent visitors are more racially/ethnically diverse than return visitors.

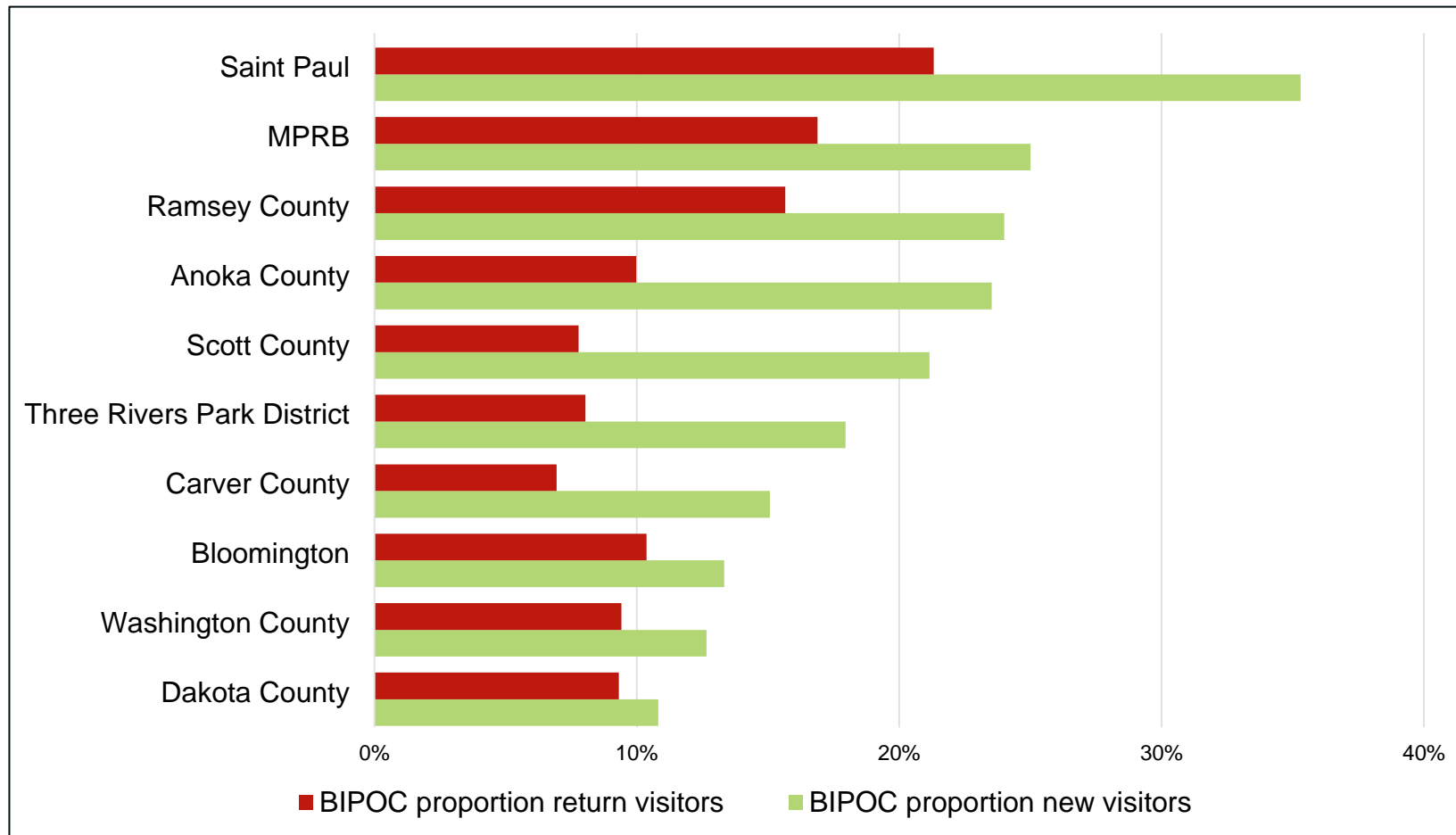


Figure 6: Comparison by implementing agency of proportion of BIPOC visitors, new vs return visitors (percent). Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Parks & Trails Visitor Study

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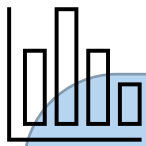


“There is a misconception that we only need to build the system and invest in growing the system. But good communication is what attracts people. We need to push this priority, and the Council can support this through grant opportunities. Directors can support it through reviewing this data.”

Review of implementing agency insights



Survey data says:



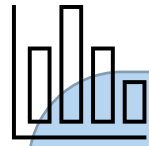
88% reported facilities very good or excellent; higher satisfaction in suburbs; slightly lower in systems with older facilities.



Summer workshop analysis

“We can zoom in on what to do better, but it’s notable that people are generally happy, highly positive.”

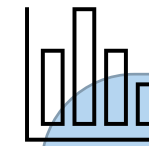
- The public values well-maintained and high-quality facilities. This needs funding. [KEY MESSAGE]
- Trail maintenance concerns are important [KEY MESSAGE].



Top desired improvements were better trail conditions; improved maintenance; bathroom availability/quality; water access.



[KEY MESSAGE]:
“Resources are biggest thing. The operations funding is chronically underfunded. Statute says we could add up to 40%, and the legislature only adds up to 8-9%...Knowing about maintenance problems informs the conversation about sustainable funding.”



All social groups had hiking/walking as top activity, but family events, family/friend meetups, playing sports, and fishing were more popular among underserved racial ethnic groups.



- [KEY MESSAGE] Continue/expand efforts to understand and meet diverse users’ needs.
- Open and flexible space are key to offering equitable opportunities.
- Support spaces for “doing nothing” and getting into hiking/walking.

Gracias
Mahadsanid
Miigwech
Pilamya ye/do
Ua Tsaug
Thank you

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