



METROPOLITAN  
C O U N C I L

# 2021 Visitor Study data discussion Part 3 of 3

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Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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# Visitor Survey Background



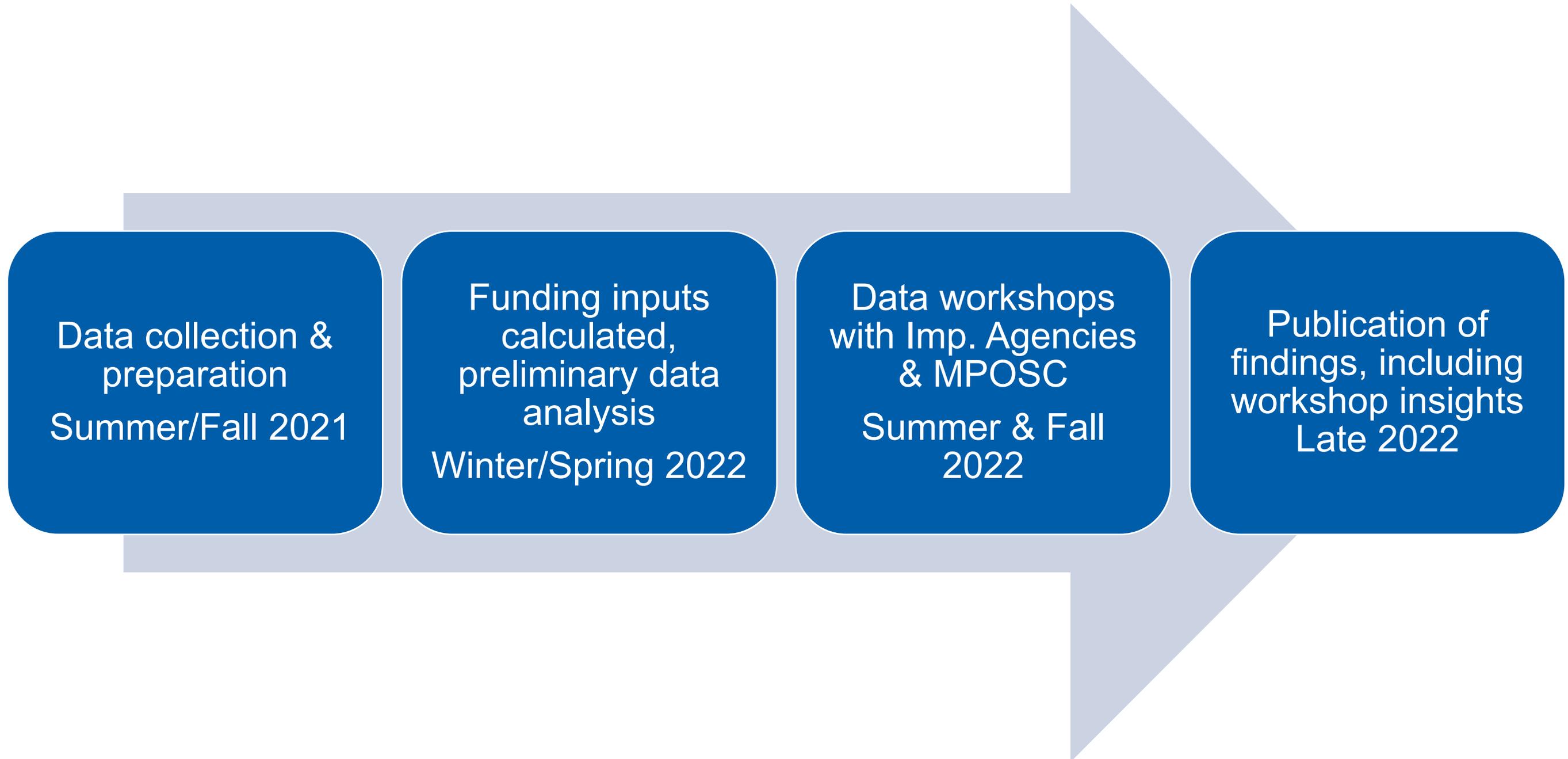
- Help inform planning, policy, and management
- Evaluate and strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails in accordance with the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan
- Update data in funding formulas to help determine where funding goes for parks and trails
- Only captures summer activities on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

# 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

# 2021 Visitor Survey Process



# MPOSC discussion of Visitor Survey

## Timeline of MPOSC data discussions

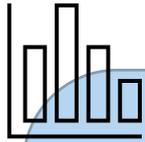
- August: Overview, multipliers, visitor satisfaction, popular activities (Topics 0, 1, 2).
- September: Brief overview, report out Implementing Agency insights, demographics and disparities (Topics 3, 4).
- November: Data on new visitors, information seeking (Topic 5), Wrap up of Implementing Agency insights
- Late 2022: Publication of final report.



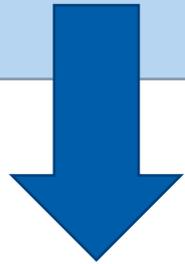
Implementing agency staff joined five scheduled lunch conversations to dive into operations implications of survey results. MPOSC will explore these topics across three sessions.

# Implementing agency analysis



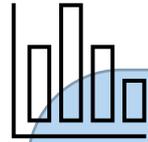


88% reported facilities very good or excellent; higher satisfaction in suburbs; slightly lower in systems with older facilities.

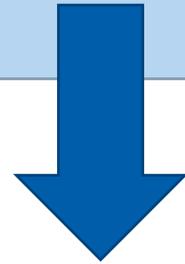


“We can zoom in on what to do better, but it’s notable that people are generally happy, highly positive.”

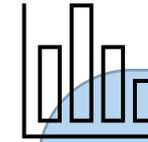
- The public values well-maintained and high-quality facilities. This needs funding. [KEY MESSAGE]
- Bathrooms are unsexy, but they’re an equity issue.



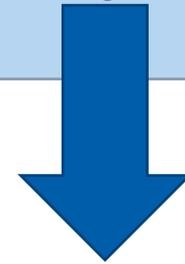
Top desired improvements were better trail conditions; improved maintenance; bathroom availability/quality; water access.



**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.



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

# Topic 3: New visitors and information seeking



# Information seeking: Where and who

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

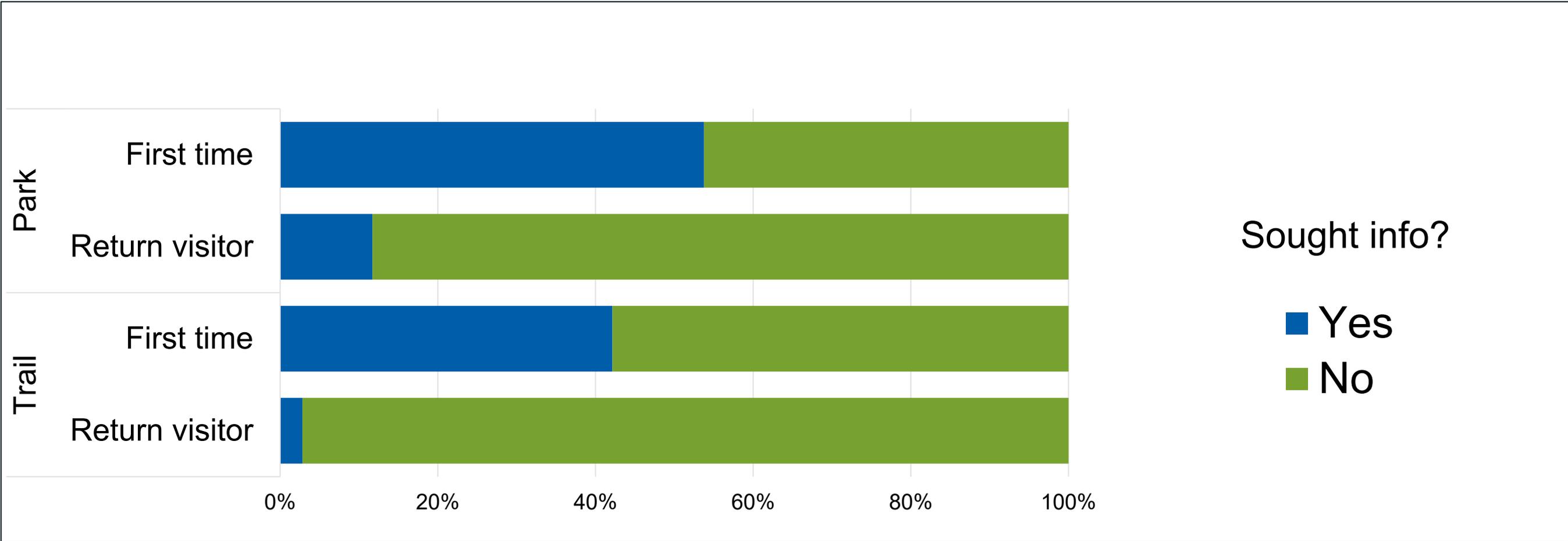


Figure 1: Information seeking by new, return visitors compared by park, trail (unweighted data, percent). Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Visitor Survey

# What information did visitors find helpful?

## Most frequent responses

Smartphone maps

Activity guides

Nature features

## More sought by new visitors

Park hours

Parking information

Park rules

## Some agency differences

Activity Guide: Anoka Co, Carver Co, MPRB, TRPD

Parking info: Ramsey Co, MPRB

Disability accommodations: MPRB, Ramsey Co, St. Paul

Maps: Dakota County

# Where do visitors look for information?

## Most frequent responses

Smartphone maps

Family and Friends

A specific park or trail website

## Used more by BIPOC visitors

Family and Friends

All social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and other)

## Higher use within an agency

Smartphone map: MPRB, Ramsey, St. Paul

Family & Friends: MPRB, St. Paul

A specific park or trail website, help desk: Washington Co

Instagram: Bloomington, TRPD, MPRB

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

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

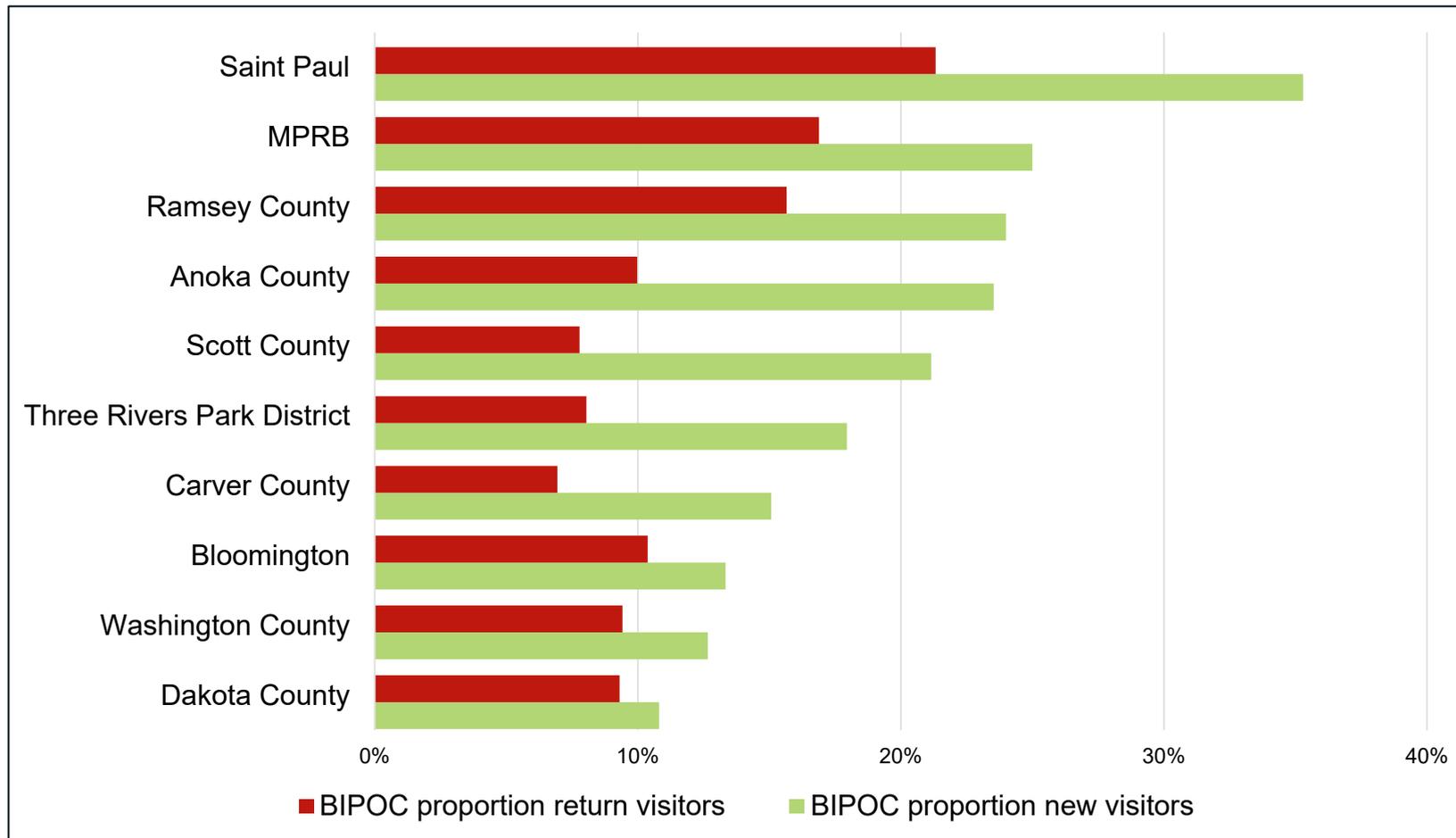


Figure 3: Comparison by implementing agency of proportion of BIPOC visitors, new vs return visitors (percent). Source: Metropolitan Council 2021 Parks & Trails Visitor Study

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



“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.”

# Your analysis, comments, questions

## Discussion questions

- What are my reflections on Implementing Agency insights?
- How does the Regional Park and Trail system have influence to respond to these trends? What factors lie outside of our control? How should the Council respond to these trends?
- What else would I like to know?
- What are the implications for our work as Commissioners?

**Gracias**

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**Thank you**

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