

Erie Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Survey 2014
Final Report

June 2014

Prepared for:

Town of Erie

Prepared by:

RRC Associates, LLC

4940 Pearl East Circle, Ste 103

Boulder, CO 80301

303/449-6558

www.rrcassoc.com



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION/METHODOLOGY.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
RESPONDENT PROFILE	6
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF RESULTS.....	9
Values and Vision	9
Current Programs and Facilities	12
Future Recreation Facilities, Amenities, and Services.....	30
Trails and Open Space	37
Programs, Activities, and Special Events	44
Communication.....	48
Financial Choices	50
Suggestions.....	52

INTRODUCTION/METHODOLOGY

The 2014 Erie Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Survey was designed as an update to the 2008 Master Plan Survey, and was conducted as a mailback and online survey. The survey was sent to every identified household within the Town of Erie, which may include households outside the town limits as well as Erie P.O. boxes belonging to residents who live outside the town limits. Unique passwords were included in the mailed invitation, in order to allow recipients to complete the survey online, should they prefer. Completed surveys received totaled 790 out of approximately 7,141 delivered. This represents a robust response rate of approximately 11.1%. Based upon the total sample size of 790 responses received, overall results have a margin of error of approximately +/- 3.5 percentage points calculated for questions at 50% response¹. Also, note that the resultant database is weighted by age of respondent to ensure appropriate representation of Town residents across different demographic cohorts in the overall sample.

The primary list source used for the mailing was a third party list purchased from Melissa Data Corp., a leading provider of data quality solutions with emphasis on U.S., Canadian, and international address and phone verification and postal software. Use of the Melissa Data list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists.

¹ For the total sample size of 790, margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent calculated for questions at 50% response (if the response for a particular question is “50%”—the standard way to generalize margin of error is to state the larger margin, which occurs for responses at 50%). Note that the margin of error is different for every single question response on the survey depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various segments, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a general comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, residents indicate a high degree of satisfaction with Erie Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails. Although some variation exists, responses to the 2014 survey are very similar to 2008, suggesting that priorities and interests among residents have remained consistent. Trails, open space, aquatics, and fitness space/equipment continue to be areas of interest for residents, with notable shares of respondents indicating desire for expansion of related amenities and services. Erie is well-served to consider how best to expand such facilities to meet the needs of a growing resident population, including trail connectivity and expansion of Community Center facilities. Specific key findings from the survey of all Erie households include the following:

Values and Vision: Respondents were asked to indicate which three parks, recreation, open space, and trails services they feel are most important for the Town to provide. Promoting healthy active lifestyles is viewed as most important (52 percent), followed by preserving sensitive natural areas and protecting wildlife (44 percent) and enhancing property values (41 percent).

Usage Levels and Frequency of Participation: The Erie Community Center (84 percent), Town trails (79 percent), neighborhood parks (74 percent), and Town open space areas (62 percent) are used by the greatest shares of residents. These facilities are also used most frequently on an annual basis, with the Community Center used 50.7 times per year on average, Town trails 49.2 times, neighborhood parks 32.4 times, and Town open space areas 31.8 times. Therefore, not only are these facilities utilized widely, but regularly as well. As compared to 2008, residents use most all of the facilities and programs with greater frequency, suggesting a higher degree of engagement among community members in 2014.

Level of Needs Met by Current Programs and Facilities: Overall, most current facilities and programs available in Erie receive positive satisfaction ratings. Rated highest is the Erie Community Center (83 percent mostly/completely meeting needs), neighborhood parks (77 percent), Erie Community Park/The Ballpark at Erie (72 percent), Town open space areas (72 percent), Thomas Reservoir/Erie Lake (71 percent), Town trails (69 percent), recreation programs and classes (68 percent), and community special events (66 percent). When compared to 2008, results show that satisfaction has clearly improved with regards to Town open space areas and trails.

Areas for Improvement: Respondents noted several areas of improvement for parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs, including size of facilities/amount of space available (32 percent), lack of facilities and amenities (23 percent), price/user fees (21 percent), hours of operation (20 percent), “don’t have the programs I want” (18 percent), and lack of parking (17 percent). Size of facilities/amount of space available was mentioned with much greater frequency in 2014 than in 2008. Not being aware of the facilities offered was mentioned less frequently in 2014 than in 2008. Awareness and communications are clearly much improved since 2008, while demand for additional facilities (primarily weight room, fitness space, and aquatics) has clearly increased.

Satisfaction with Erie Parks & Recreation: Respondents rated a variety of aspects of the Parks and Recreation department. Ratings are positive overall, with the following ranking the highest (81 to 87 percent excellent scores): maintenance of facilities provided by the Erie Community Center, Erie Community Park/the Ballpark at Erie/Skate Plaza, safety and security at parks and recreation locations, and customer service by Erie Parks and Recreation staff.

When responses are compared to 2008, results show a high degree of similarity between the two survey years. However, respondents are slightly more approving of the following areas this year: variety of recreation programs offered, number of parks maintained by the Town, quality and maintenance of open space areas, trail maintenance, amount of open space areas available, number of trails available, and outdoor restrooms.

Respondents also indicated which aspects they feel are most in need of improvement. Number of trails available is by far the highest priority (51 percent). Open space areas available (34 percent) is also indicated as a relatively high priority.

Erie Community Center: When compared to 2008 findings, results show that, across-the-board, most all levels of needs being met are lower in 2014 than in 2008. Relative to areas most in need of improvement, pricing/user fees tops the list (34 percent), closely followed by fitness class space (30 percent), weight room and cardio fitness areas (29 percent), lap pool (27 percent), and hours of operation (23 percent).

Future Facilities to be Added, Expanded or Improved Over Next 5 to 10 Years: The top-rated indoor future facilities include swimming pool/aquatics area (66 percent), weight room and cardio fitness space/equipment (52 percent), and fitness class space (49 percent). Meanwhile, the top-rated outdoor facilities include outdoor pool (43 percent), open space/natural areas (40 percent), and paved and/or soft surface trails (38 percent).

Importance of Trails and Open Space: The survey probed the importance of various aspects of trails and open space among respondents. With regards to trails, most important are improving trail connectivity within Erie and between neighborhoods (70 percent), improving trail connectivity to regional trails outside of Erie (66 percent), and building more soft surface trails (52 percent). With regards to open space, most important are preserving views and view corridors (62 percent), preserving wildlife habitat/creating viewing opportunities (60 percent), and protecting rivers, creeks, canal corridors, and wetlands (59 percent).

Decision to Move to Erie: A new question to the 2014 survey explored the importance of the presence of parks, recreation facilities and programs, trails, and open space in respondents' decision to move or continue living in Erie. Results show that these facilities and amenities are increasingly important among cohorts of newer residents, suggesting that they play a significant role in the growth of Erie and attracting new residents to the area. Sixty-four percent of respondents who have lived in Erie for less than a year indicated that such facilities were "very important" in their decision to move to Erie. Roughly half of residents who have lived in Erie for between one and 20 years cite such facilities as "very important" to their decision.

Programs and Activities: Residents report the most need for fitness and wellness programs (73 percent of households have a need), individual activities such as road biking and hiking (71 percent), and community special events (71 percent). Compared to 2008, respondents currently indicate higher levels of need for each of these choices. In particular, needs for community special events (71 percent in 2014 vs. 39 percent in 2008) are now more in demand.

Relative to how well programs, activities, and events are currently meeting household needs, responses reveal a wide range of needs being met and unmet. Fitness and wellness programs top the list (58 percent of respondents with needs *met*), followed by youth athletic leagues (56 percent), community special events (54 percent), and children/youth activities (53 percent). Meanwhile, several categories have high shares of respondents reporting needs being unmet, including gymnastics programs (65 percent of respondents with needs *unmet*), teen activities

(60 percent), golf programs (55 percent), special needs/therapeutic (52 percent), and environmental/natural programs (52 percent).

Communication: According to residents, email or text message notices are the best way to reach them, with 42 percent of respondents noting this to be their number one communication choice. Having a newsletter or flyer mailed with the utility bill came in as a distant second (17 percent). Interestingly, social media is not preferred among most respondents, with a slim 5 percent of respondents choosing Facebook and 1 percent of respondents choosing Twitter.

Financial Preferences: Residents report the strongest support for user fees as a mechanism for funding the operations and maintenance of new facilities, with 53 percent of respondents indicating “probable” or “definite” support. General property tax (35 percent) and new dedicated property tax (32 percent) earn relatively lower levels of support, with higher shares of respondents indicating they would not support such mechanisms than those who would support them.

Suggestions: Residents were also provided the opportunity to offer any additional comments or suggestions regarding parks, recreation facilities, services, and programs in Erie. Respondents offered a variety of insightful comments, the full set of which can be found in the appendix to the report. Commonly identified themes include:

- Concerns regarding taxes and fees
- Desire for an outdoor pool area
- Worries about the impact of growth and development in Erie on Town feel and use of facilities and amenities
- Preservation and maintenance of open space
- Increased trail connectivity
- Positive satisfaction with the overall work of Erie Parks and Recreation

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Based on US Census data of the adult population (over 18 years old) for the Town of Erie, the age profile of residents is distributed as follows (which is the basis for the weighting of the survey data): 24 percent are under 35 years old, 29 percent between 35 and 44 years, 25 percent between 45 and 54 years, 14 percent between 55 and 64 years, and 9 percent 65 years or over.

Fifty-nine percent of responding households have kids living at home, 18 percent are couples without kids, 7 percent are single without kids, and 14 percent are empty-nesters (couples and singles with kids no longer at home). As compared to 2008, a greater share of resident households has children, while proportionately fewer households identify as empty-nesters.

In regards to household income, 66 percent of responding households have annual incomes greater than \$100,000 (compared to 50 percent in 2008), suggesting that Erie residents skew affluent.

The majority of respondents (84 percent) live within the Town limits of Erie, compared to 10 percent who live outside the Town in unincorporated Weld County and 7 percent in Boulder County.

Respondents report an average length of residency of 8.6 years (compared to 7.0 years in 2008). Forty percent of respondents have lived in Erie for five years or less (vs. 57 percent in 2008), with 7 percent of respondents living in Erie for less than a year.

**Figure 1
Respondent Demographics
2014 vs. 2008**

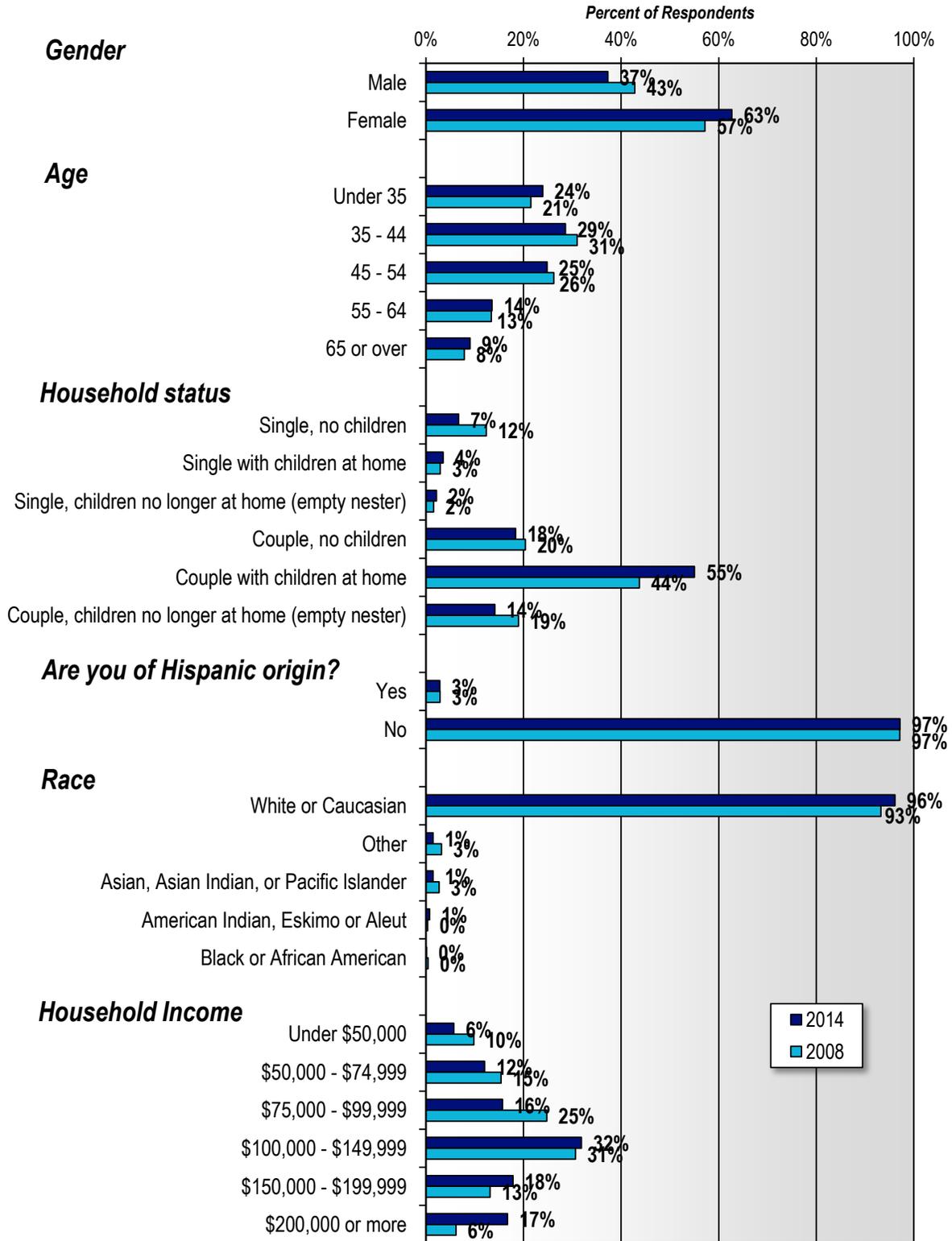
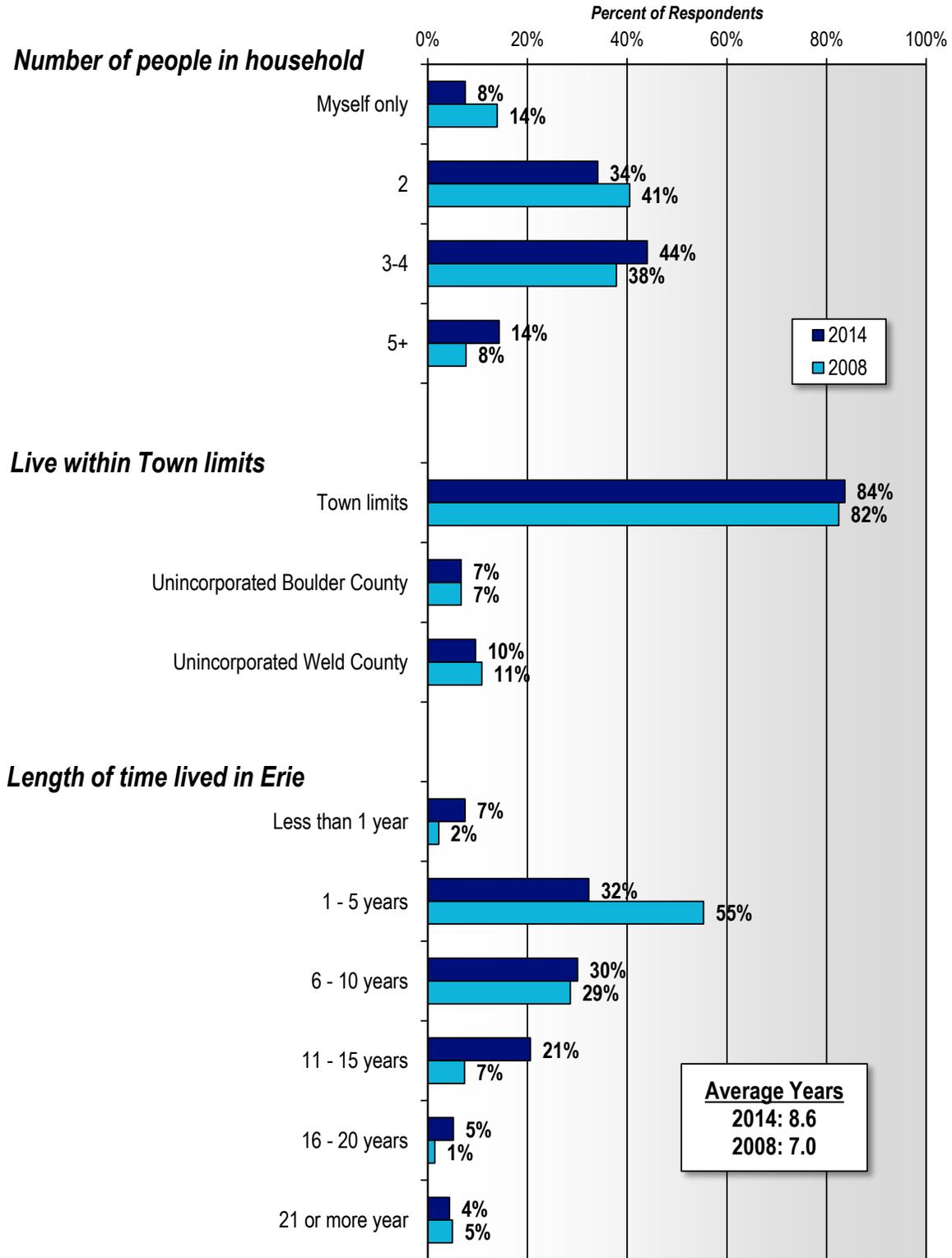


Figure 2
Respondent Demographics, Continued
2014 vs. 2008



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Key findings from the study are summarized below. Additionally, several of the questions on the survey form allowed respondents to comment on their responses. Major themes that emerge from the comments are summarized in the report, while a complete set of the comments is provided as an appendix section.

In addition to overall responses, results are also segmented by whether or not respondents have children at home. This segmentation of the results helps to further “explain” local opinions and provides additional insight into parks and recreation issues in the area. A set of data tables showing this segmentation is provided as an appendix to this report.

Values and Vision

Town Services. Respondents were asked to indicate which parks, recreation, open space, and trails services they feel are important for the Town of Erie to provide on a 5-point scale with 1 meaning “Not at all important” and 5 “Very important.” Overall, each of the options is rated as important, with at least 50 percent of all respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5” for each category. Promoting healthy, active lifestyles (88 percent), preserving sensitive natural areas and protecting wildlife (84 percent), and enhancing property values (83 percent) receive the highest shares of “4” or “5” ratings.

Respondents were also asked to indicate which three of the services they feel are most important for the Town to provide. This provides the opportunity to not only see which services are overall viewed as most important, but also shows how respondents prioritize these services in relation to each other. As shown in Figure 4, the same three services mentioned above are viewed as most important, with the greatest shares of respondents listing these services as their first, second, or third most important priorities. Promoting healthy active lifestyles also receives the greatest share of respondent indicating this to be the “most important” priority (24 percent).

Figure 3
Importance of Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Services for Town of Erie to Provide
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not at all Important)
2014 Only

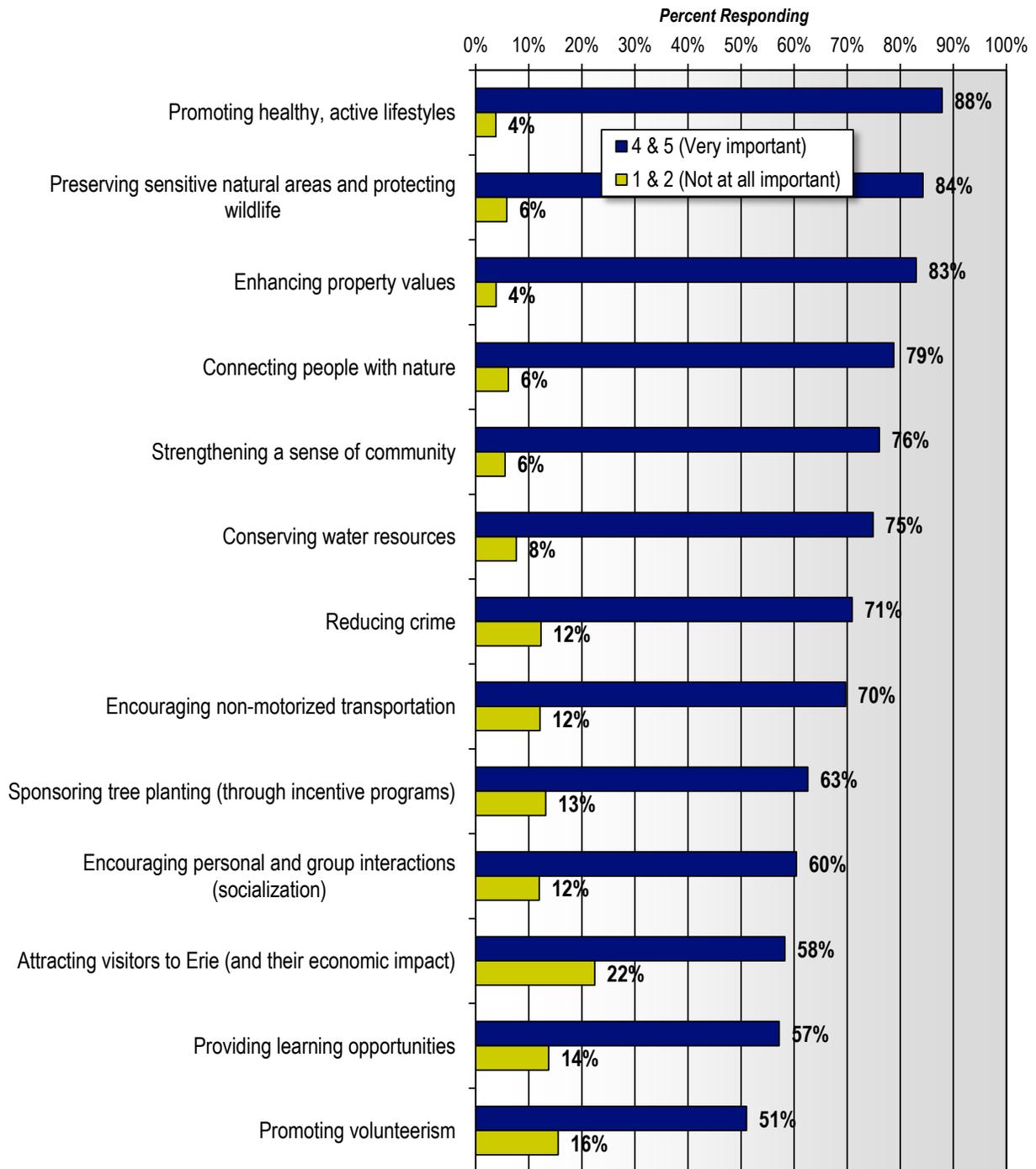
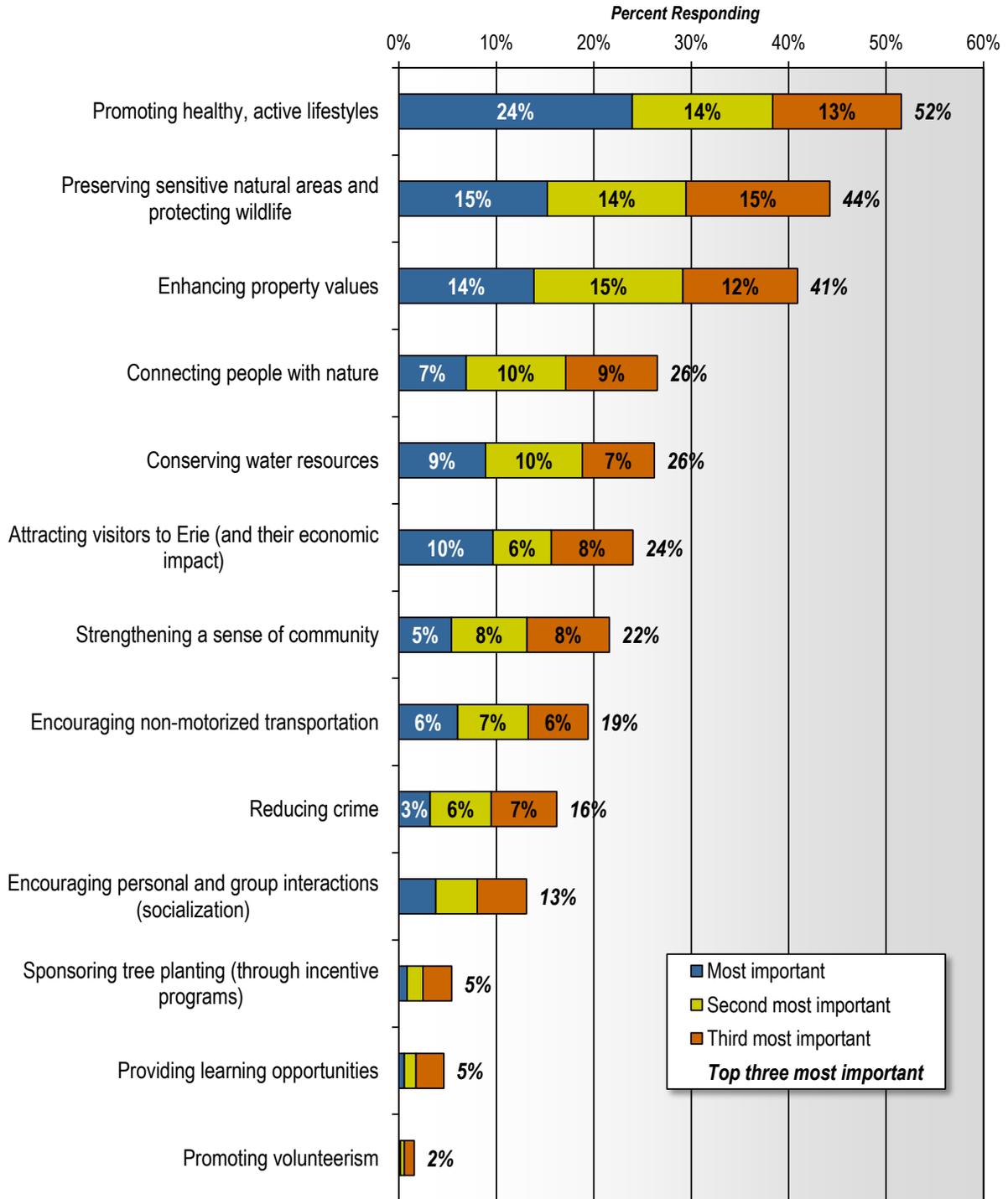


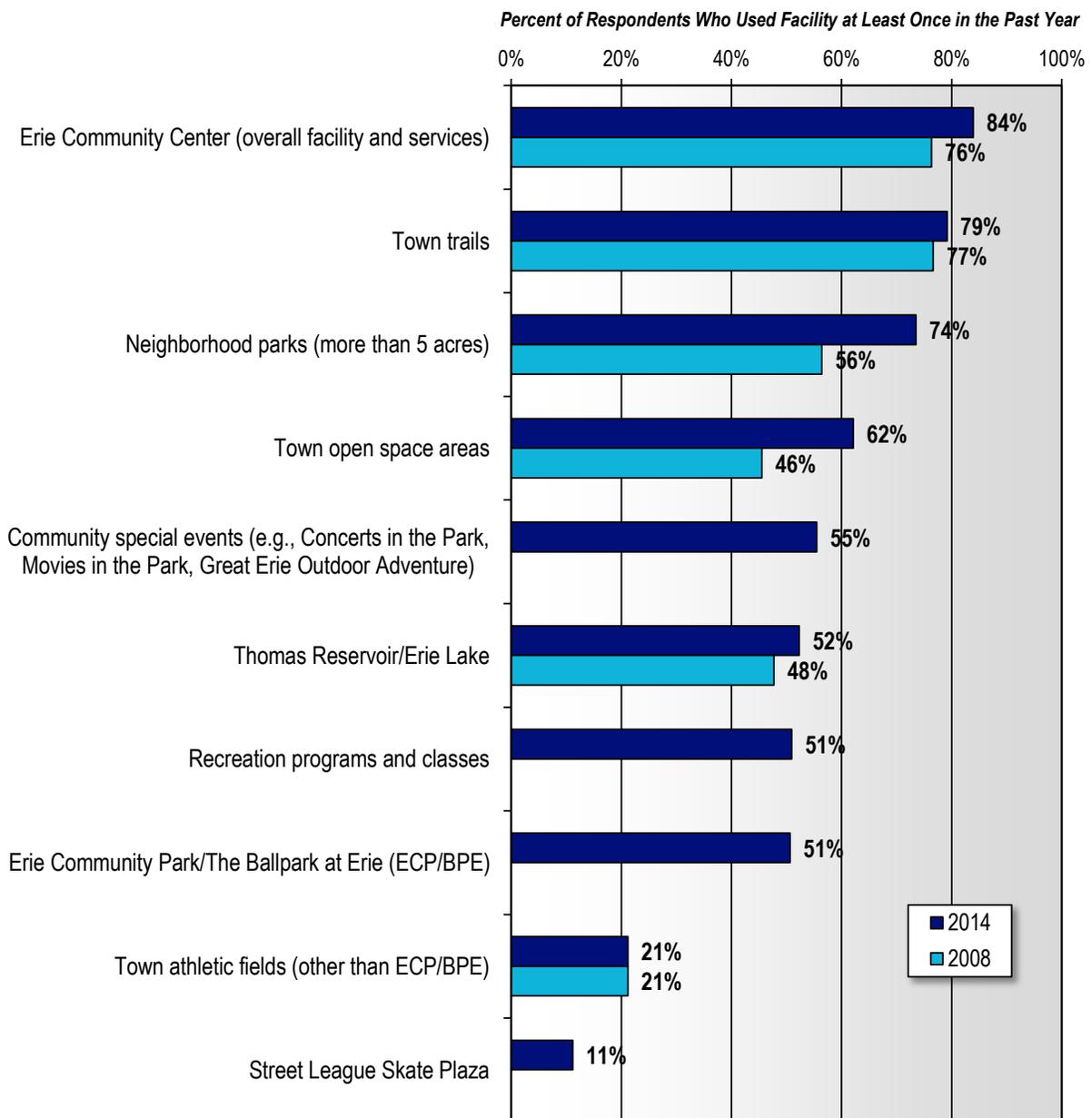
Figure 4
Top 3 Most Important Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Services for Town of Erie to Provide 2014 Only



Current Programs and Facilities

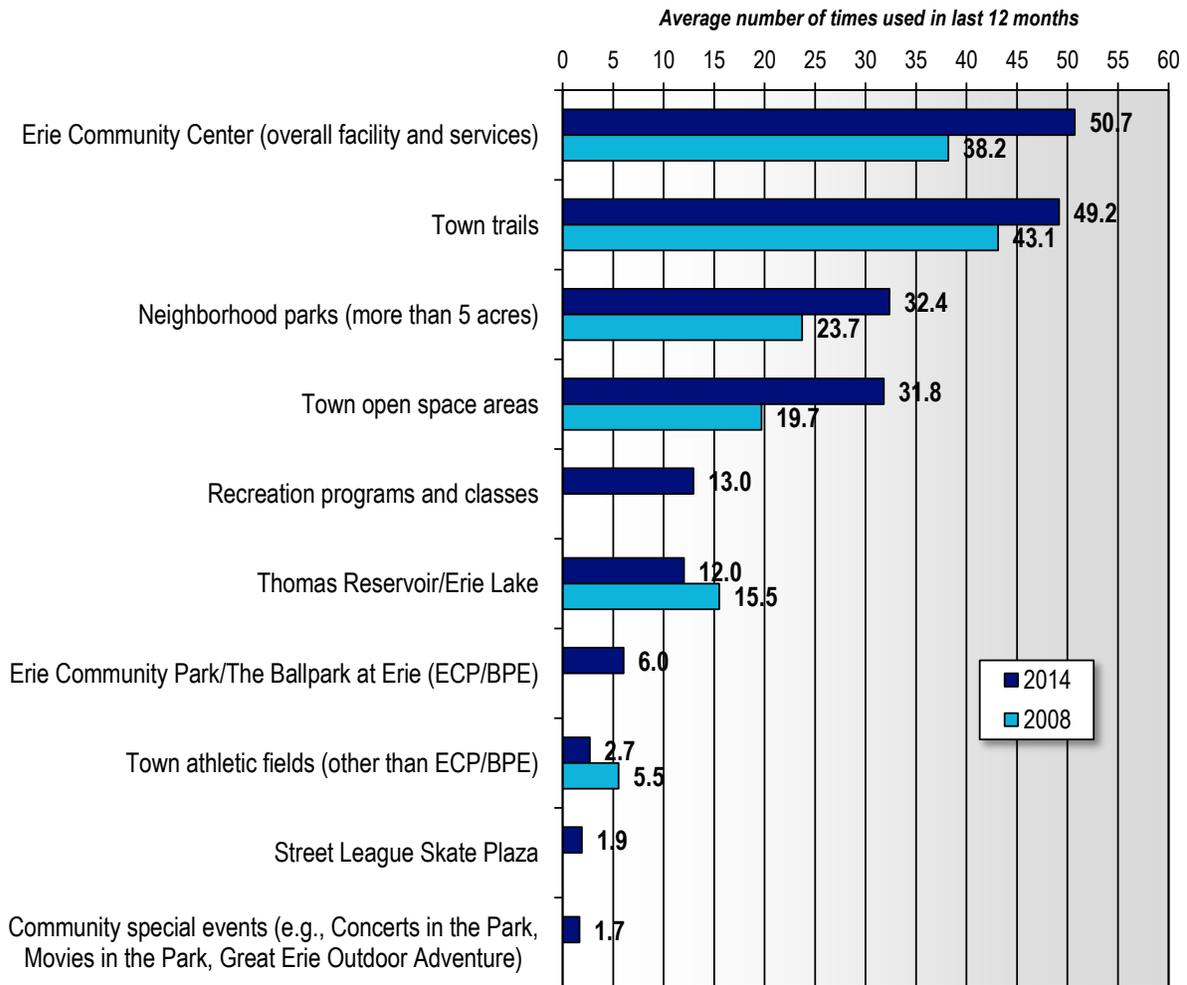
Usage levels. Among the facilities and amenities currently available in Erie, the Erie Community Center is used by the greatest share of respondents (84 percent of respondents have used the Community Center at least once in the last 12 months), followed by Town trails (79 percent of respondents), and neighborhood parks (74 percent). Used the least is the Street League Skate Plaza (11 percent). As compared to 2008, residents use most all of the facilities and programs with greater frequency, suggesting a higher degree of engagement among community members in 2014.

Figure 5
Current Usage of Town of Erie Facilities and Programs
Percent Using at Least Once in Last 12 Months
2014 vs. 2008



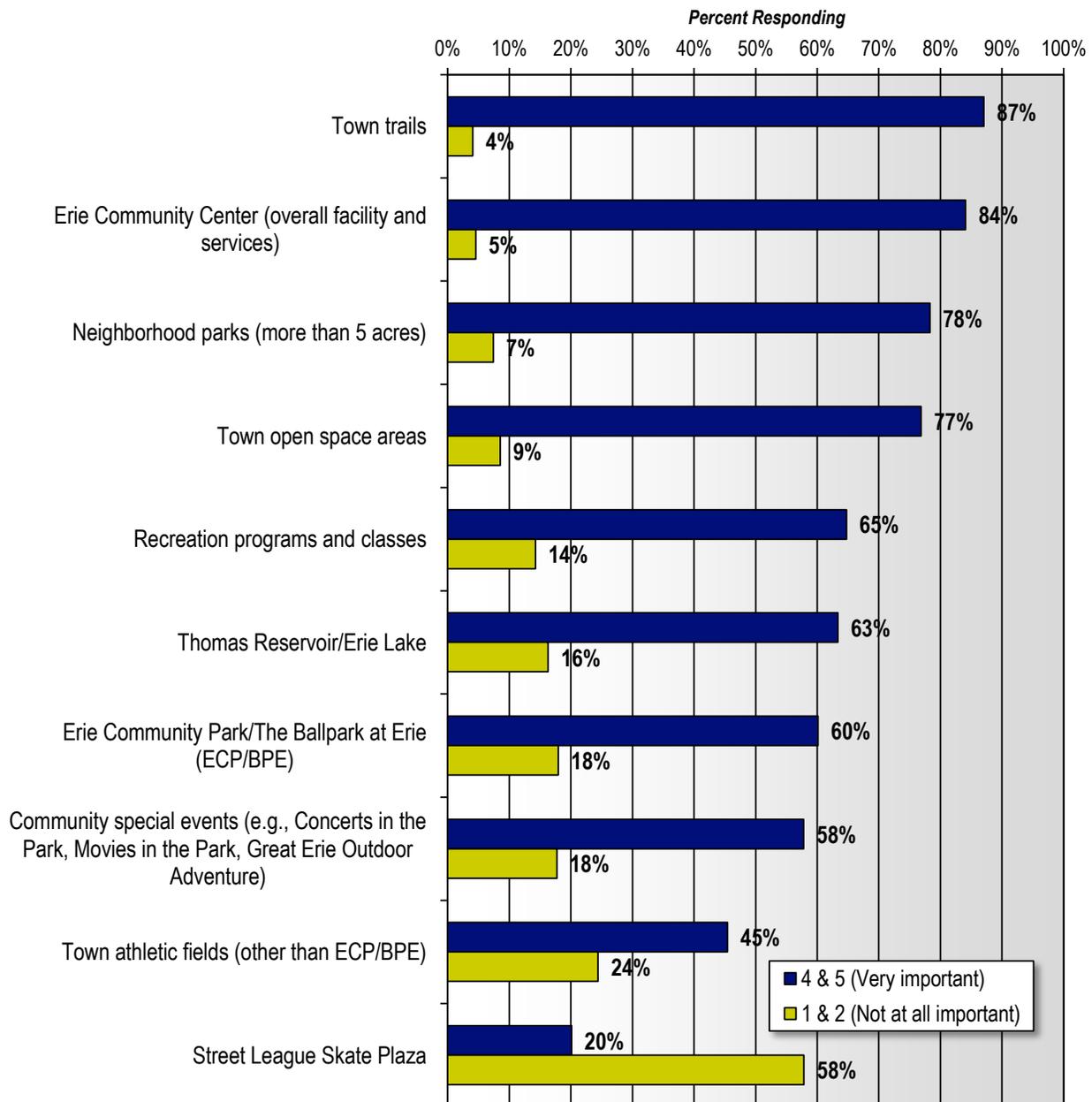
When asked about their frequency of use, respondents indicate the highest number of average uses per year for the Community Center (50.7 times per year, or about once a week), again followed relatively closely by Town trails (49.2 times). Neighborhood parks (32.4 times per year) and Town open space areas (31.8 times) are also used frequently throughout the year. While a considerable share of respondents use the Erie Community Park/The Ballpark at Erie (6.0 times per year) and attend community special events (1.7 times) at least once per year, these facilities and programs are not used as frequently, on average, throughout the year.

Figure 6
Current Usage of Town of Erie Facilities and Programs
Average Number of Visits in Last 12 Months
2014 vs. 2008



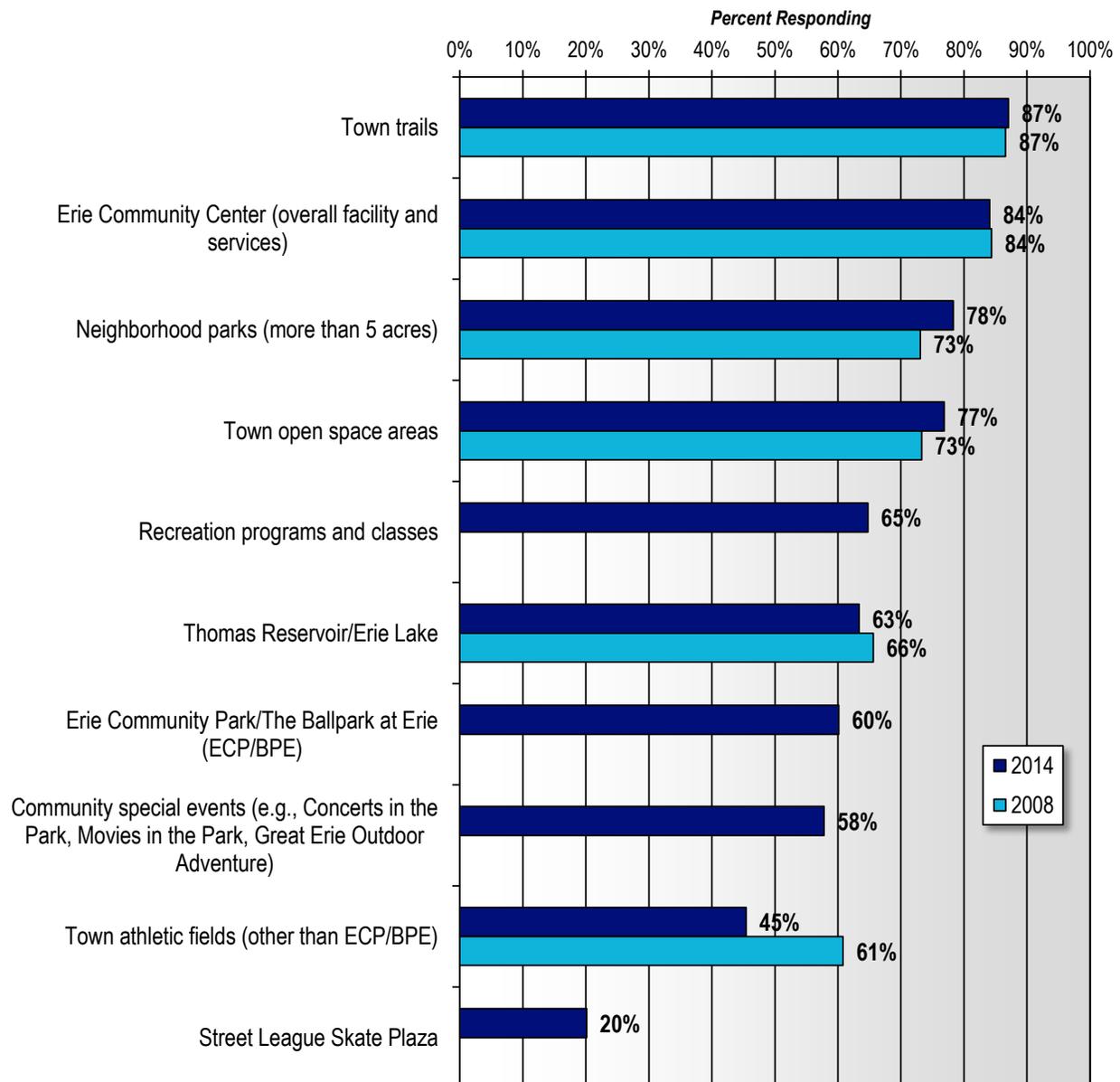
Importance to you and your household. Respondents were then asked to indicate how important each of these parks and recreation amenities are to their household. While most of the facilities and programs are rated as being important, Town trails and the Erie Community Center are rated the highest (84 to 87 percent of respondents rated these as “very important,” a “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale). These facilities are closely followed by neighborhood parks (78 percent) and Town open space areas (77 percent). Town athletic fields (45 percent) and the Street League Skate Plaza (20 percent) are rated as relatively less important. The Street League Skate Plaza has a high share of respondents rating it as “not at all important,” a “1” or “2” on a 5-point scale.

Figure 7
Importance of Each Facility and Program to the Community
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not at all Important)
2014 Only



When responses of “very important” are compared to 2008, results show a high degree of similarity between the two survey years. Town trails and the Erie Community Center still top the list of facilities. The only area of change is Town athletic fields, which had 61 percent of respondents rate it as “4” or “5” in 2008, but 45 percent in 2014. It is worth noting that question wording changed slightly between the two survey years. In 2008, respondents were asked to rate importance of these facilities and programs to the community, while in 2014 respondents were asked to rate importance to their households.

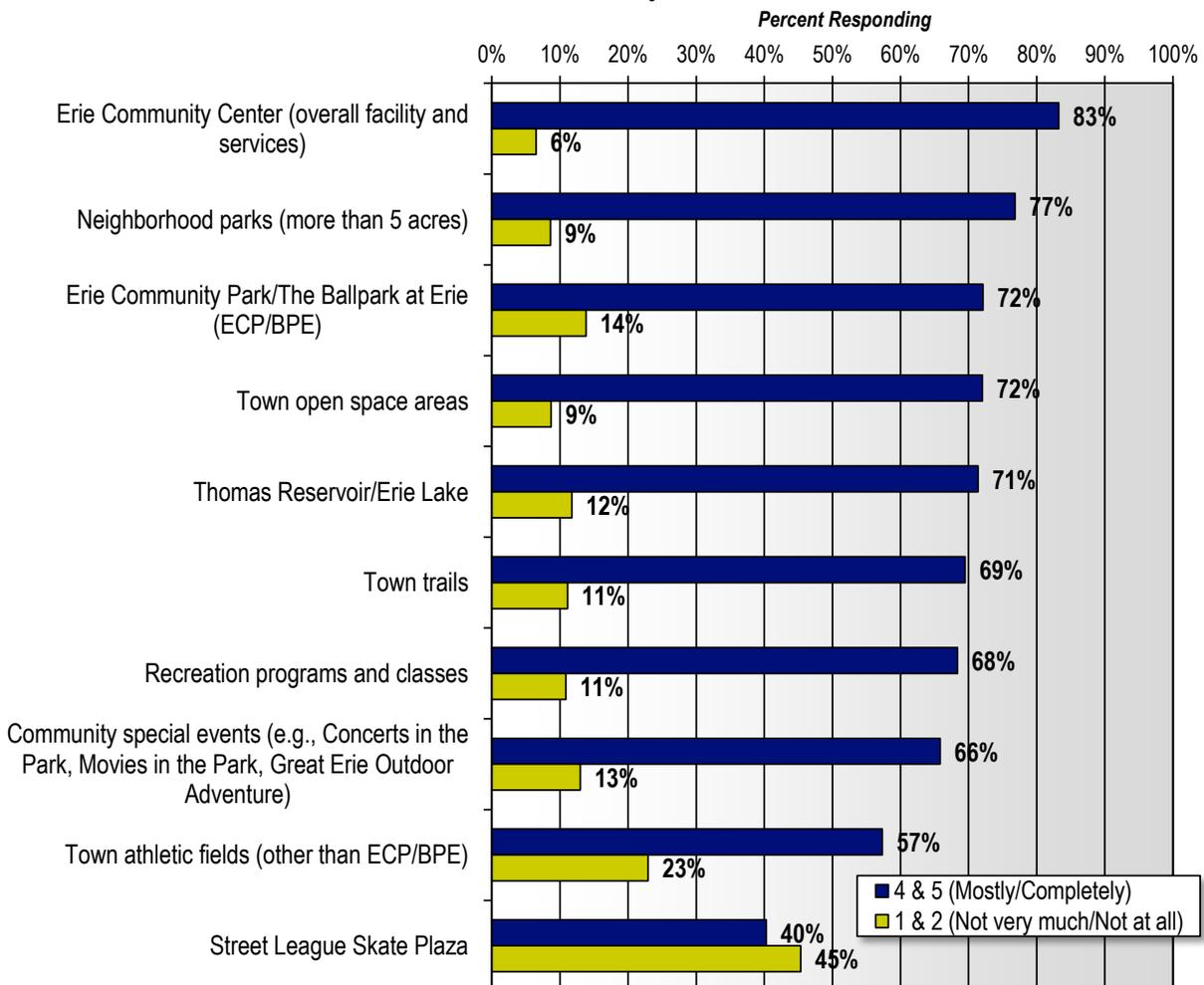
Figure 8
Importance of Each Facility and Program
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important)
2014 vs. 2008



How satisfied are you that the parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs provided in Erie are currently meeting the needs of your household? Overall, most facilities and programs available in Erie receive relatively positive satisfaction ratings. Similar to the frequency of use of current facilities, respondents indicate that the following facilities meet the needs of their household the most: Erie Community Center (83 percent of respondents reporting needs were being met), neighborhood parks (77 percent), Erie Community Park/The Ballpark at Erie (72 percent), Town open space areas (72 percent), Thomas Reservoir/Erie Lake (71 percent), Town trails (69 percent), recreation programs and classes (68 percent), and community special events (66 percent).

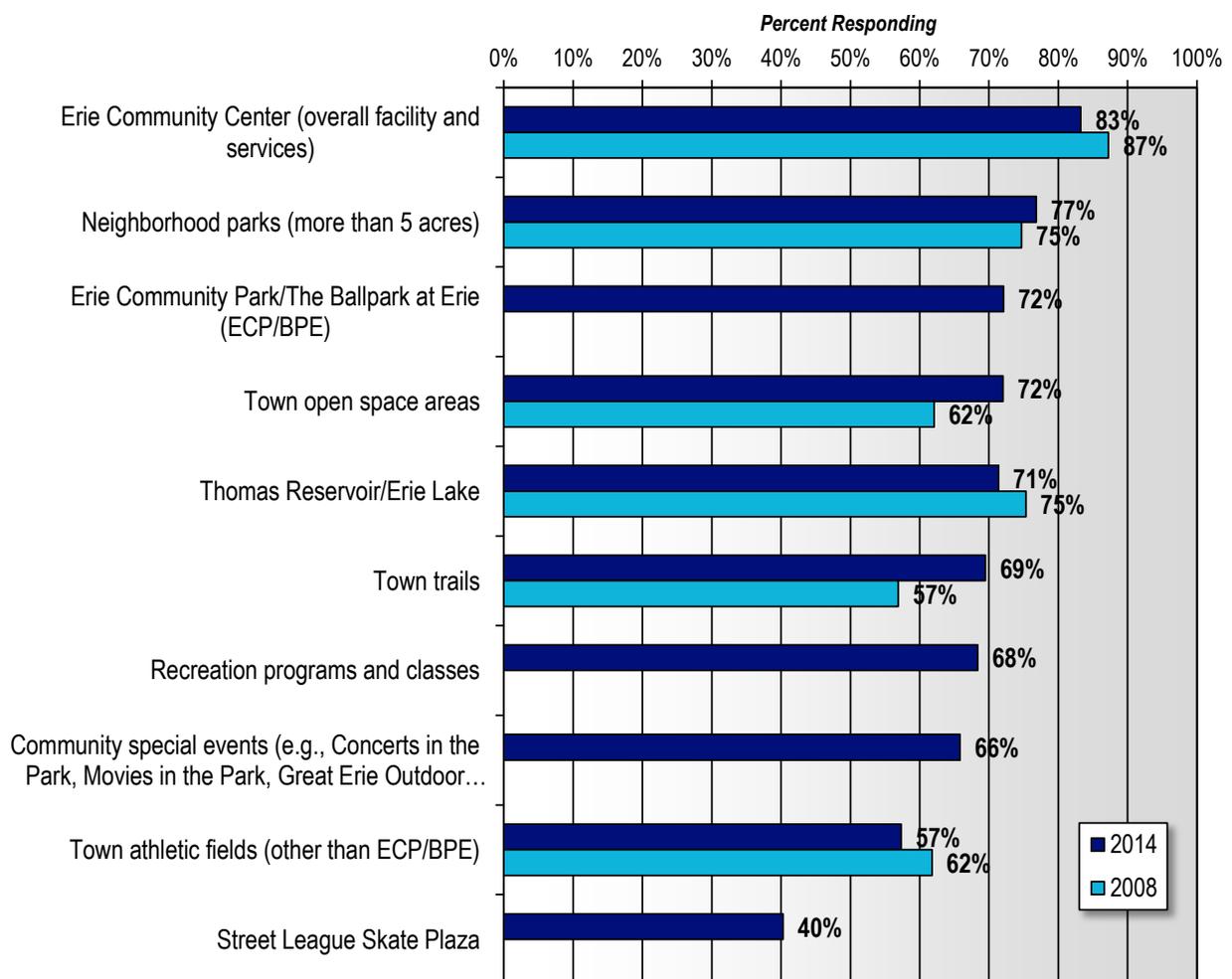
Similar to 2008, Town trails tops the list for importance but relative to other amenities, receives lower ratings relative to needs being met. However, the overall satisfaction rating for Town trails is still relatively positive (69 percent are “mostly or completely” satisfied, ratings of “4” and “5” on a 5-point scale), with 11 percent indicating needs are not being met very much or at all (ratings of “1” or “2”). Town athletic fields (23 percent needs unmet) and Street League Skate Plaza (45 percent needs unmet) bring up the rear.

Figure 9
How satisfied are you that the parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs provided in Erie are meeting the needs of your households?
Percent 4 & 5 (Mostly/Completely) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not Very Much/Not at All)
2014 Only



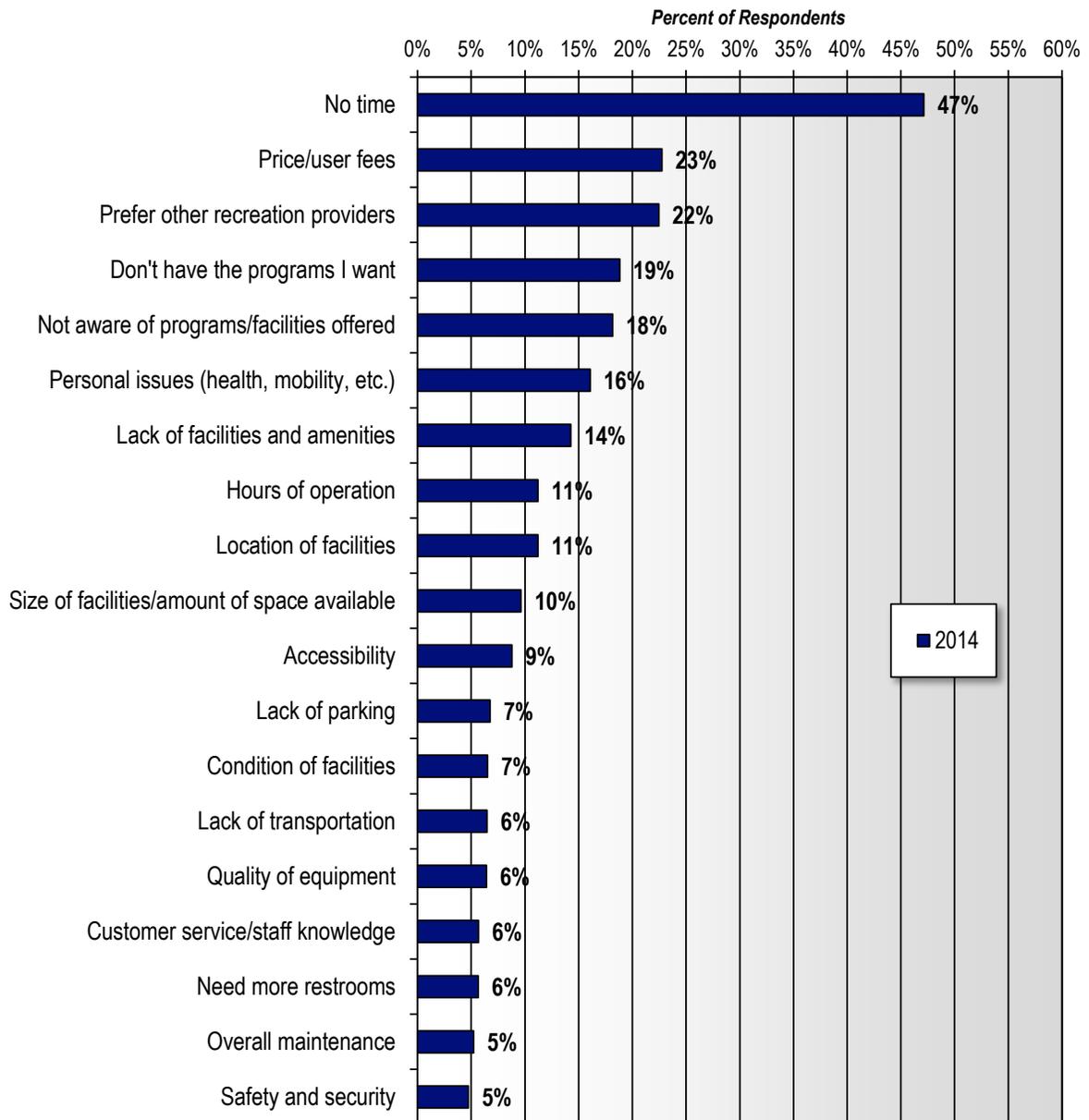
When compared to 2008, levels of needs being met (respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5”) are relatively similar with some slight differences. Needs are slightly less met by the Erie Community Center (83 percent in 2014 vs. 87 percent in 2008), Thomas Reservoir/Erie Lake (71 percent in 2014 vs. 75 percent in 2008), and Town athletic fields (57 percent in 2014 vs. 62 percent in 2008). Conversely, needs are being met among a greater share of respondents relative to neighborhood parks (77 percent in 2014 vs. 75 percent in 2008), Town open space areas (72 percent in 2014 vs. 62 percent in 2008), and Town trails (69 percent in 2014 vs. 57 percent in 2008). Needs for Town open space areas and trails have clearly improved since 2008.

Figure 10
How satisfied are you that the parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs provided in Erie are meeting the needs of the community?
Percent 4 & 5 (Mostly/Completely)
2014 vs. 2008



Aspects of Town’s facilities and/or programs most in need of improvement. New to the 2014 survey, respondents who do not use parks and recreation facilities and programs were asked to identify reasons they do not use these amenities. Among those residents who do not use amenities (approximately 34 percent of the survey sample), the leading reason is not having enough time (47 percent of respondents). Price/user fees (23 percent), prefer other recreation program providers (22 percent), don’t have the programs I want (19 percent), and not aware of programs/facilities offered (18 percent) are cited by roughly one in five residents who do not currently use Erie amenities.

Figure 11
Reasons Do Not Use Parks and Recreation Facilities, Services, and Programs
2014 Only



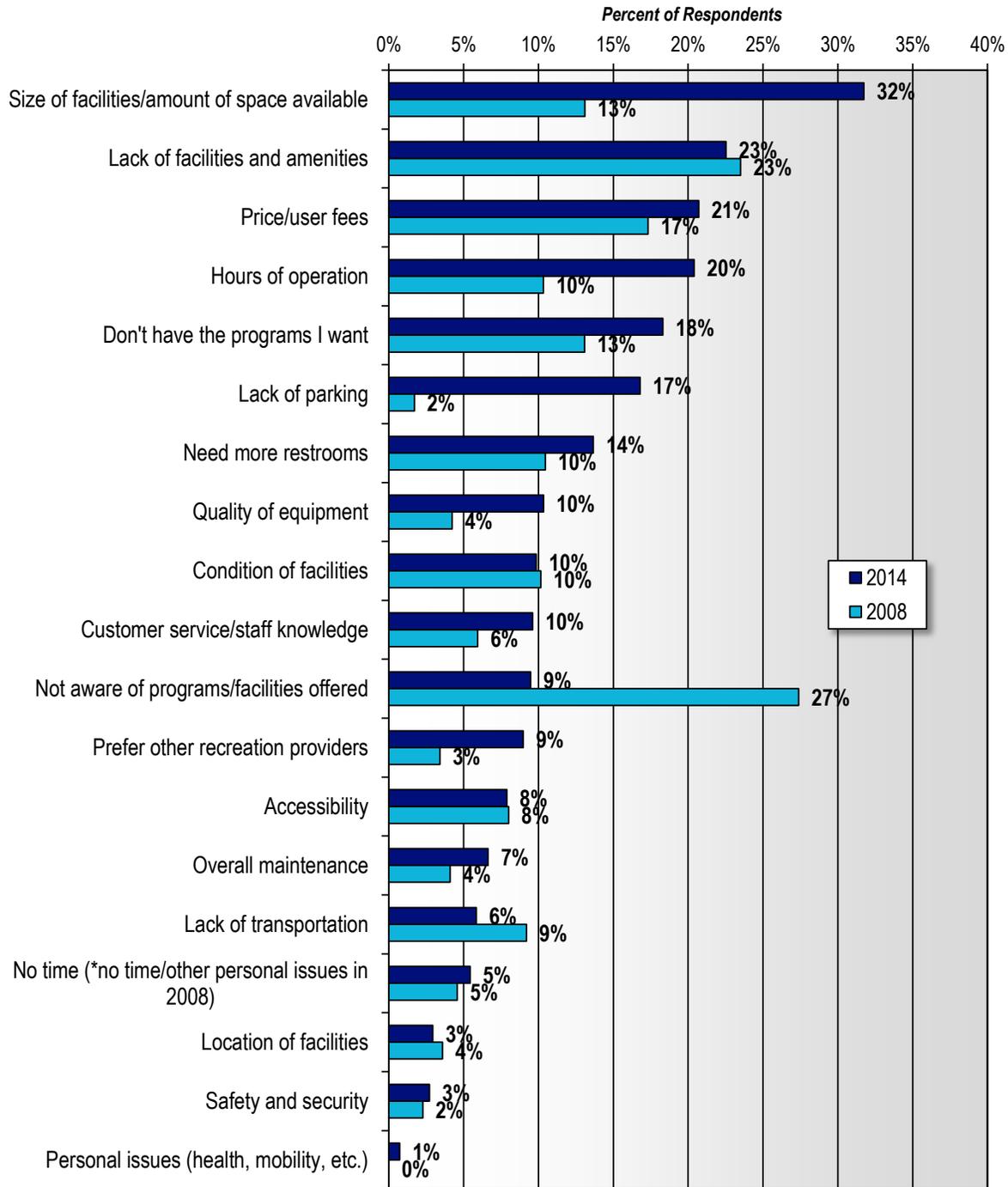
Meanwhile, residents who do use parks and recreation facilities and programs were asked to identify areas for improvement from the same list of options. Among respondents who do use amenities, when asked what parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs they think are most in need of improvement, most respondents report size of facilities/amount of space available (32 percent), followed by lack of facilities and amenities (23 percent), price/user fees (21 percent), hours of operation (20 percent), “don’t have the programs I want” (18 percent), and lack of parking (17 percent). Many of these facilities and programs were mentioned with greater frequency in 2014 than in 2008.

Not being aware of the facilities offered was mentioned less frequently in 2014 (9 percent) than in 2008 (27 percent of respondents). Awareness and communications are clearly much improved since 2008.

Several of the answer options allowed respondents to elaborate on their response. Commonly identified themes and topics are briefly highlighted below:

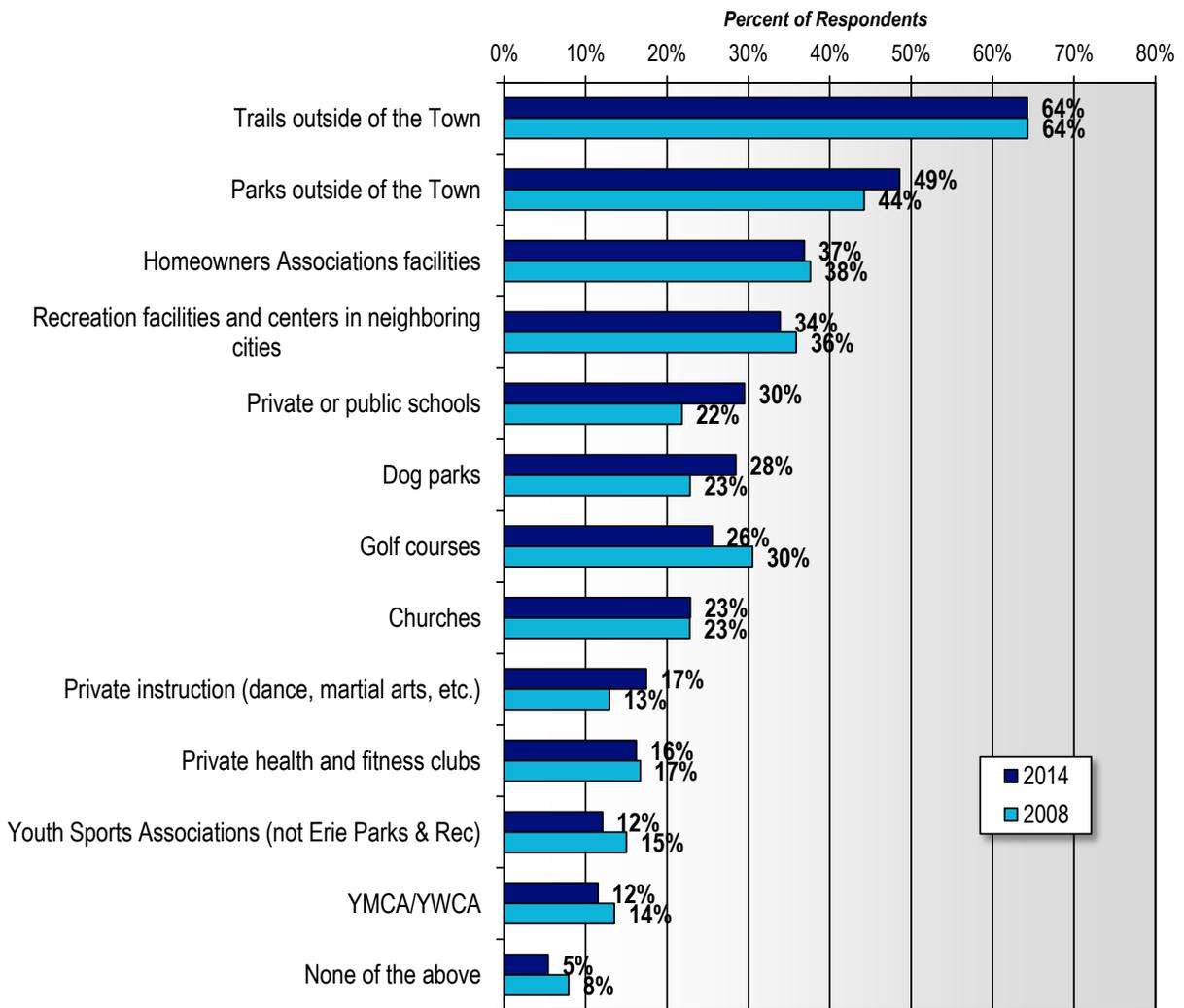
- Accessibility (explain): More sidewalks between community facilities, more connectors and trails to adjacent communities
- Don’t have the programs I want (such as): Tennis programs, more lap swim programming, yoga
- Lack of facilities and amenities (such as): Basketball courts and soccer fields, larger pool, more lap lanes, outdoor pool
- Prefer other recreation providers (such as): Lafayette Recreation Center, Lifetime Fitness, YMCA

Figure 12
What parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs are most in need of improvement?
2014 vs. 2008



Other recreation facilities used. When asked what other recreation facilities and programs respondents use, 64 percent indicate that they use trails outside of the Town (identical to 2008), along with 49 percent who indicate they use parks outside of the Town (vs. 44 percent in 2008). Other facilities used include homeowner’s association facilities (37 percent), recreation facilities and centers in neighboring cities (34 percent), private or public schools (30 percent), dog parks (28 percent), golf courses (26 percent), and churches (23 percent), among other relatively less used facilities and programs. Other providers used by 2014 respondents is largely similar to 2008 findings, although residents are now slightly more likely to use parks outside of town, private or public schools, dog parks, and private instruction.

Figure 13
Other Recreation Facilities and Programs Used
2014 vs. 2008



Current Ratings of Erie Parks and Recreation. Respondents were asked to rate a variety of aspects of the Parks and Recreation department, such as maintenance, service, and facilities provided in Town. Ratings are positive overall, with maintenance of facilities provided by the Erie Community Center ranking the highest (87 percent of respondents indicate it is a “4” or “5” “Excellent” on a 5-point scale), along with Erie Community Park/the Ballpark at Erie/Skate Plaza (87 percent), and closely followed by quality of Erie Community Park/the Ballpark at Erie/Skate Plaza (85 percent), safety and security at parks and recreation locations (83 percent), and customer service by Erie Parks and Recreation staff (81 percent). Rated the lowest are amount of open space areas available (54 percent), number of trails available (48 percent), and outdoor restrooms (39 percent).

When responses are compared to 2008, results again show a high degree of similarity between the two survey years. Although percentages of “4” and “5” ratings are very similar between the two survey years, respondents are slightly more approving of the following areas this year: variety of recreation programs offered, number of parks maintained by the Town, quality and maintenance of open space areas, trail maintenance, amount of open space areas available, number of trails available, and outdoor restrooms. Therefore, even though a few areas received less than 60 percent of respondents giving a rating of “4” or “5,” these areas still show improvement relative to 2008.

Respondents were also asked to indicate which three of the aspects they feel are most in need of improvement. This provides the opportunity to not only see what aspects are currently viewed positively by respondents but also to get an idea of how important it is to improve each one and how respondents prioritize these improvements in relation to each other. Number of trails available is by far the highest priority in need of improvement (27 percent of respondents indicate that it is their top choice and 51 percent indicate that it is one of their top three priorities). Also indicated as a relatively high priority is the amount of open space areas available (14 percent of respondents indicate that it is their top priority and 34 percent indicate that it is one of their top three priorities). A second tier of responses include outdoor restrooms (20 percent), variety of recreation programs offered (19 percent), trail maintenance (18 percent), and variety of facilities provided at Erie Community Center (18 percent).

Figure 14
Ratings of Aspects of Erie Parks and Recreation
Percent 4 & 5 (Excellent) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Poor)
2014 Only

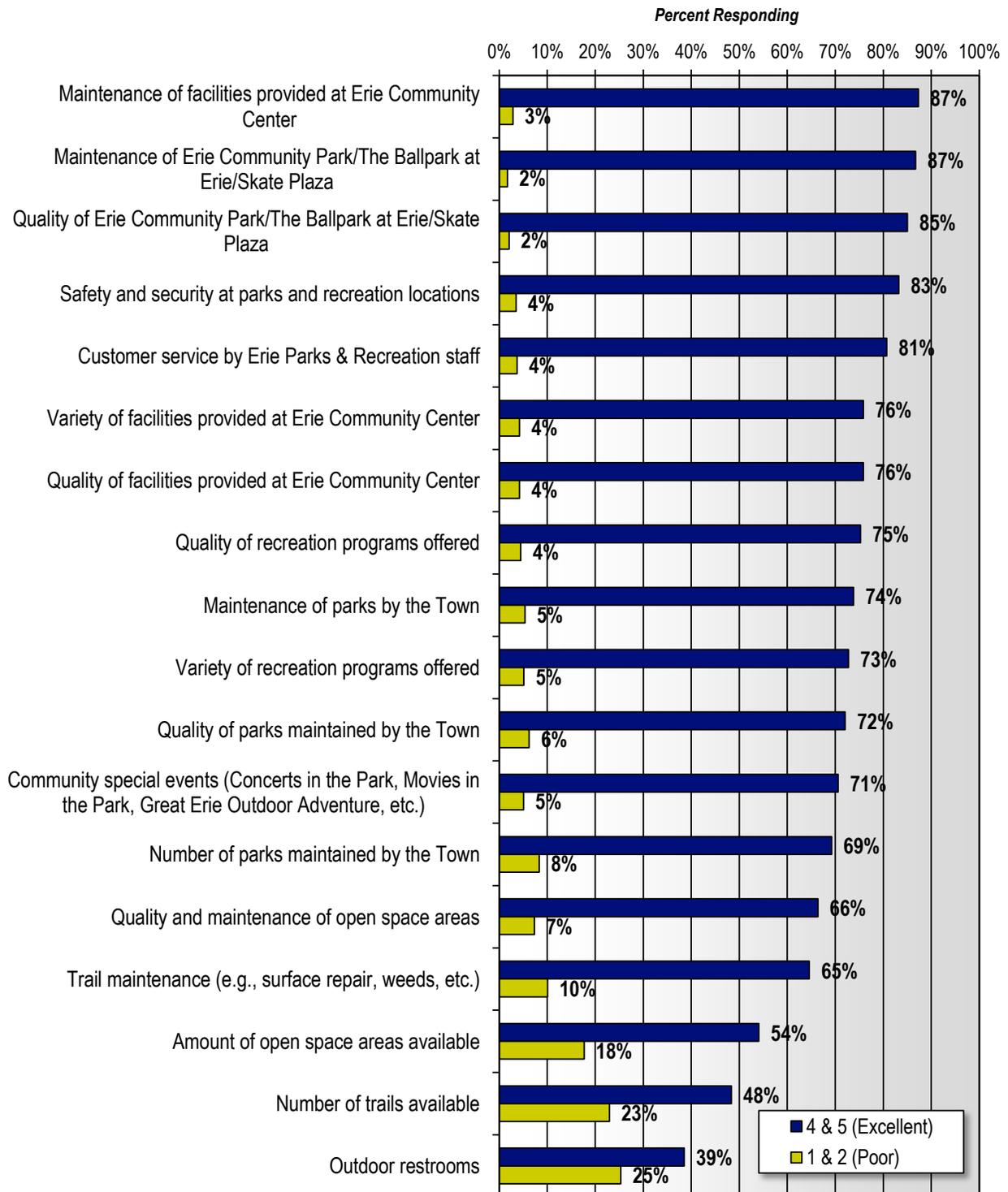


Figure 15
Ratings of Aspects of Erie Parks and Recreation
Percent 4 & 5 (Excellent)
2014 vs. 2008

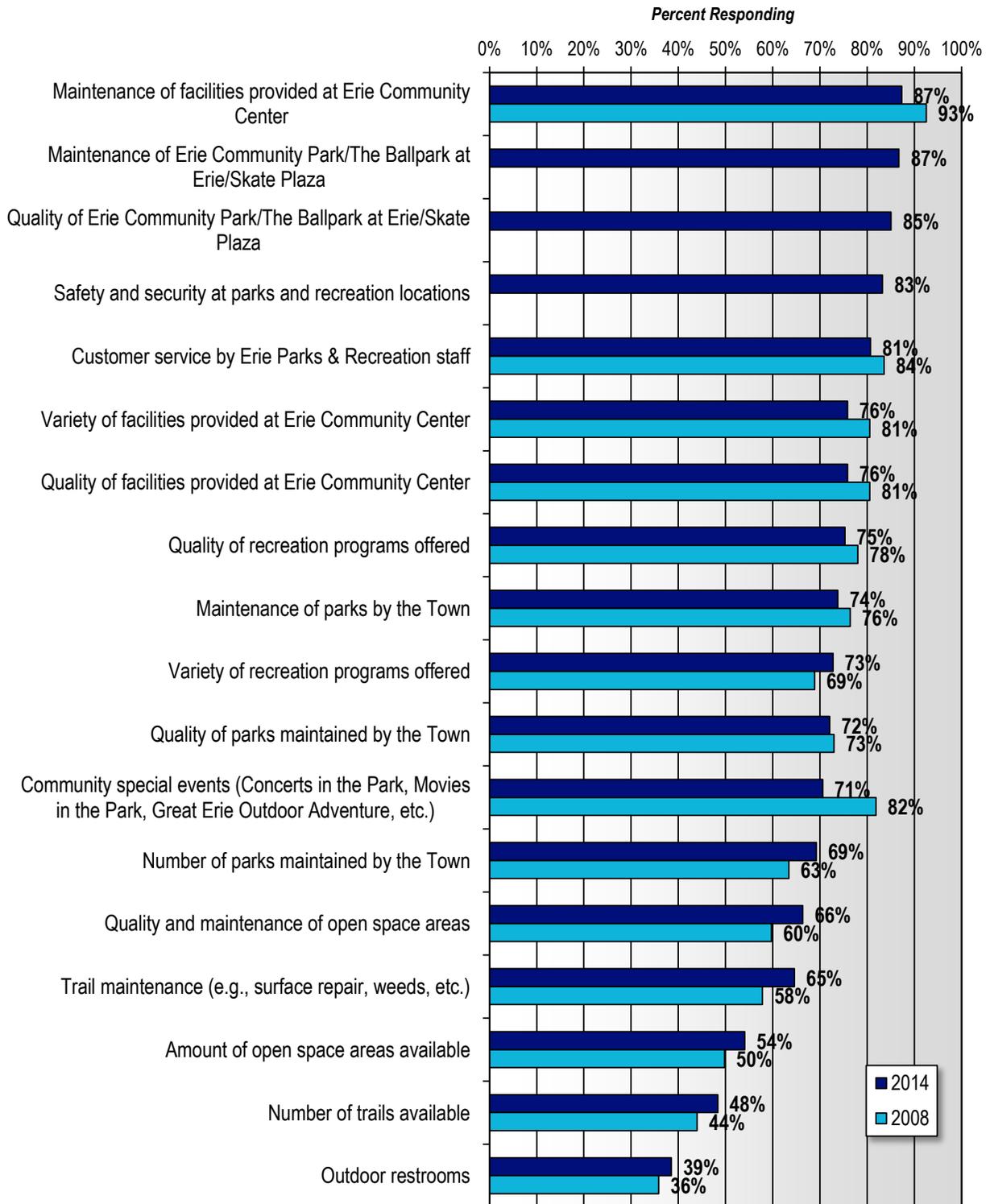
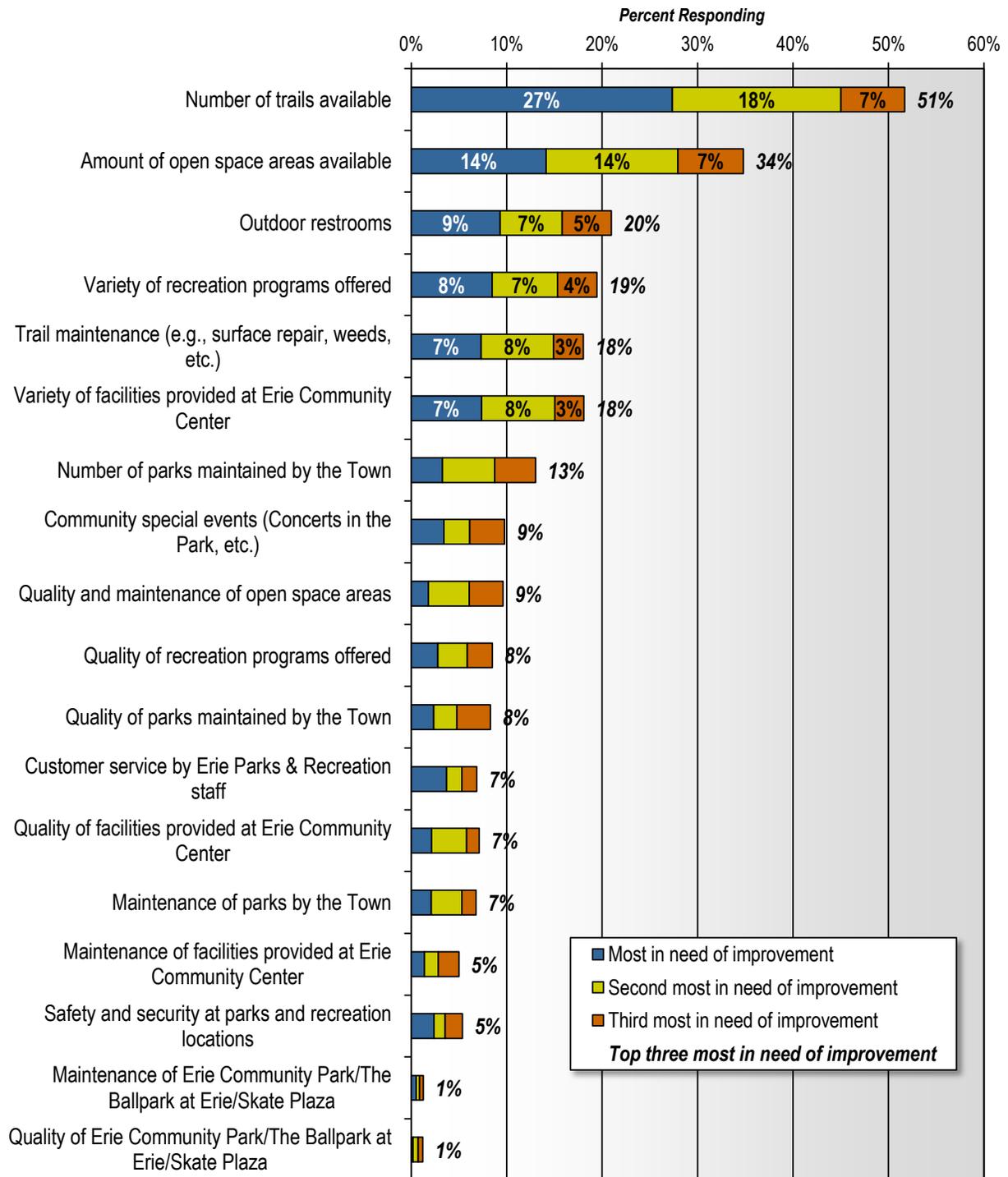


Figure 16
Which aspects of Erie Parks and Recreation are most in need of improvement?
Top 3 Most in Need of Improvement
2014 Only



Erie Community Center. An additional block of questions asked residents to report the extent to which their needs are currently being met by facilities and services provided by the Erie Community Center. Overall, responses are quite positive, with over half of respondents providing a rating of “4” (“Mostly” meeting needs) or “5” (“Completely” meeting needs) for most every facility or service. Needs are most met for the following: reception area/lobby/service desk (83 percent of respondents with needs “mostly” or “completely” met), indoor jogging track (78 percent), locker rooms (77 percent), multi-purpose space (77 percent), multi-purpose gymnasium (77 percent), party room (74 percent), hours of operation (73 percent), and racquetball/handball courts (73 percent). Although still receiving generally positive ratings, child care facility (53 percent), lap pool (53 percent), T-Town (49 percent), and Columbine Lounge (48 percent) have lower shares of respondents with needs being met.

Responses are also compared to 2008 findings. Results show that, across-the-board, levels of needs being met are lower in 2014 than in 2008, with the exception of one area: pricing/user fees (65 percent “mostly” or “completely” meeting needs in 2014 vs. 61 percent in 2008). The facilities and services with the greatest declines since 2008 (of 15 percent or more) include: Columbine Lounge (48 percent in 2014 vs. 83 percent in 2008), child care facility (56 percent vs. 81 percent), hot tub (64 percent vs. 85 percent), racquetball/handball courts (73 percent vs. 91 percent), children’s indoor playground (63 percent vs. 85 percent), and indoor jogging track (78 percent vs. 93 percent).

Respondents were also asked to indicate which three aspects they feel are most in need of improvement. Pricing/user fees tops the list (18 percent of respondents indicate that it is their top choice and 34 percent indicate that it is one of their top three priorities), closely followed by fitness class space (30 percent of respondents), weight room and cardio fitness areas (29 percent), lap pool (27 percent), and hours of operation (23 percent). Lap pool came in second to pricing/user fees relative to top priority listed (14 percent of respondents), closely followed by fitness class space (13 percent). The priority list is helpful in determining which areas are most worthy of attention moving forward.

Respondents were given the option of providing additional comments with regards to current programs or facilities at the Community Center, which resulted in 280 unique responses. The full set of comments can be found in the appendix. The open-ended comment responses to this question shed light onto why needs are not being met as fully as they had been in 2008. Below is a sampling of comments which capture some of the commonly identified themes, which include but are not limited to concerns regarding crowding, new and improved weight room equipment, expansion of pool amenities and hours, and reduced prices/user fees:

- *Cardio and free weight areas are too congested. Not enough equipment variety. It does not take many people to feel overly crowded. The weights and machines need a dedicated area because of traffic associated with their use relative to cardio.*
- *Fitness classes and programs for children are very much geared to non-working parent schedules. A working parent can't get a child to a 4 pm class. Need better times and variety*
- *Hours for swimming are not very open to "free" swim. Rock wall is constantly closing instead of staying open. Come winter, can't get into rec center classes because they are too full.*
- *I was upset that the Erie resident 10-punch pass went from \$29 to \$39! 33% increase! This huge cost increase affects our family significantly.*

- *Please, please put in an outdoor pool!!! This is what our rec center is missing the most. Also, any features that could be added to the climbing wall that would promote more adult climbers would be excellent!*
- *The Community Center is great, love it. It will soon become overcrowded with all the new homes and people coming to Erie. You will have to double size in 5 years, or people will stop using it.*

Figure 17
How well do you think the following facilities and services provided by the Erie Community Center are meeting the needs of the community?
Percent 4 & 5 (Mostly/Completely) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not Very Much/Not at all)
2014 Only

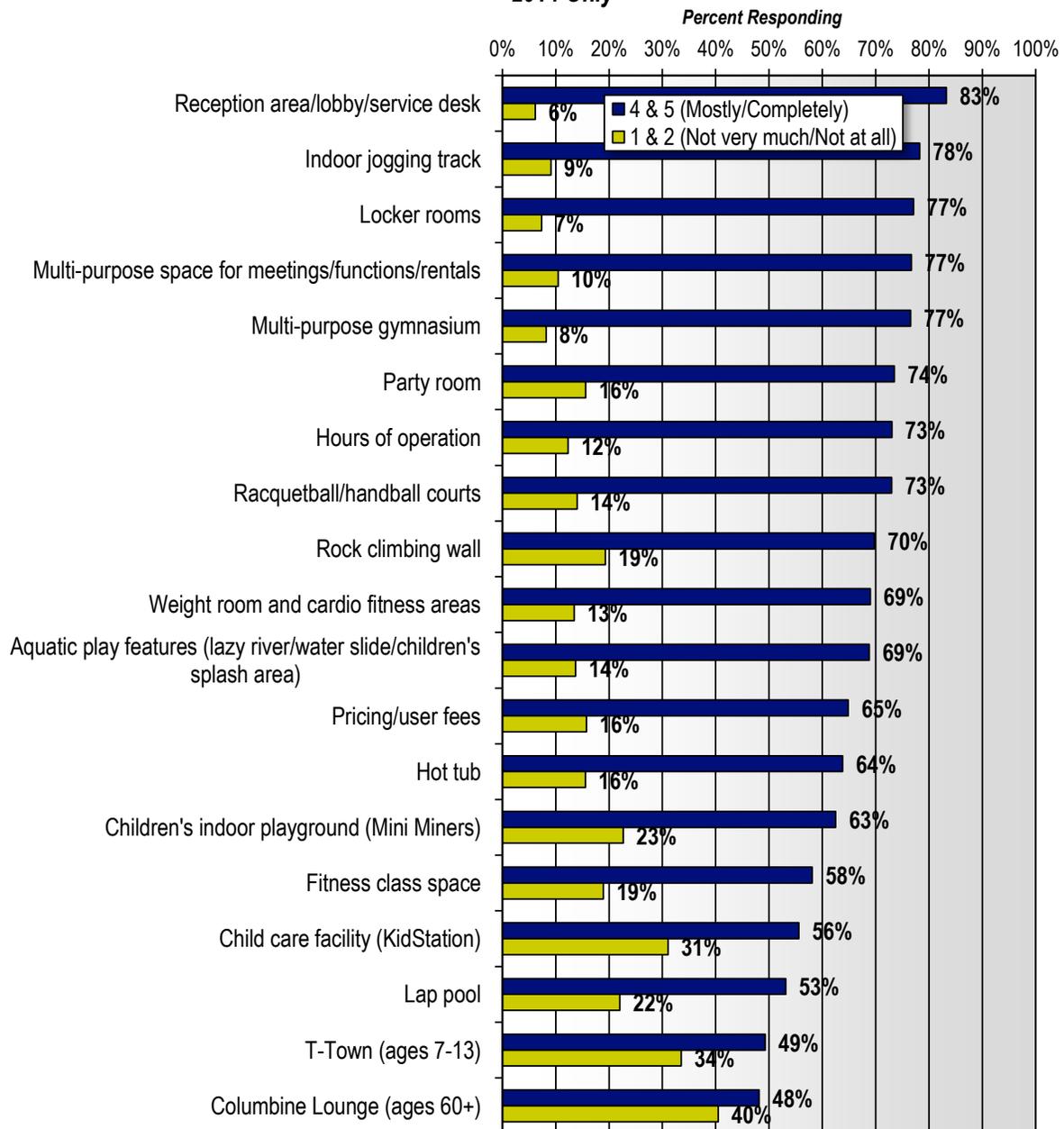


Figure 18
How well do you think the following facilities and services provided by the Erie Community Center are meeting the needs of the community?
Percent 4 & 5 (Mostly/Completely)
2014 vs. 2008

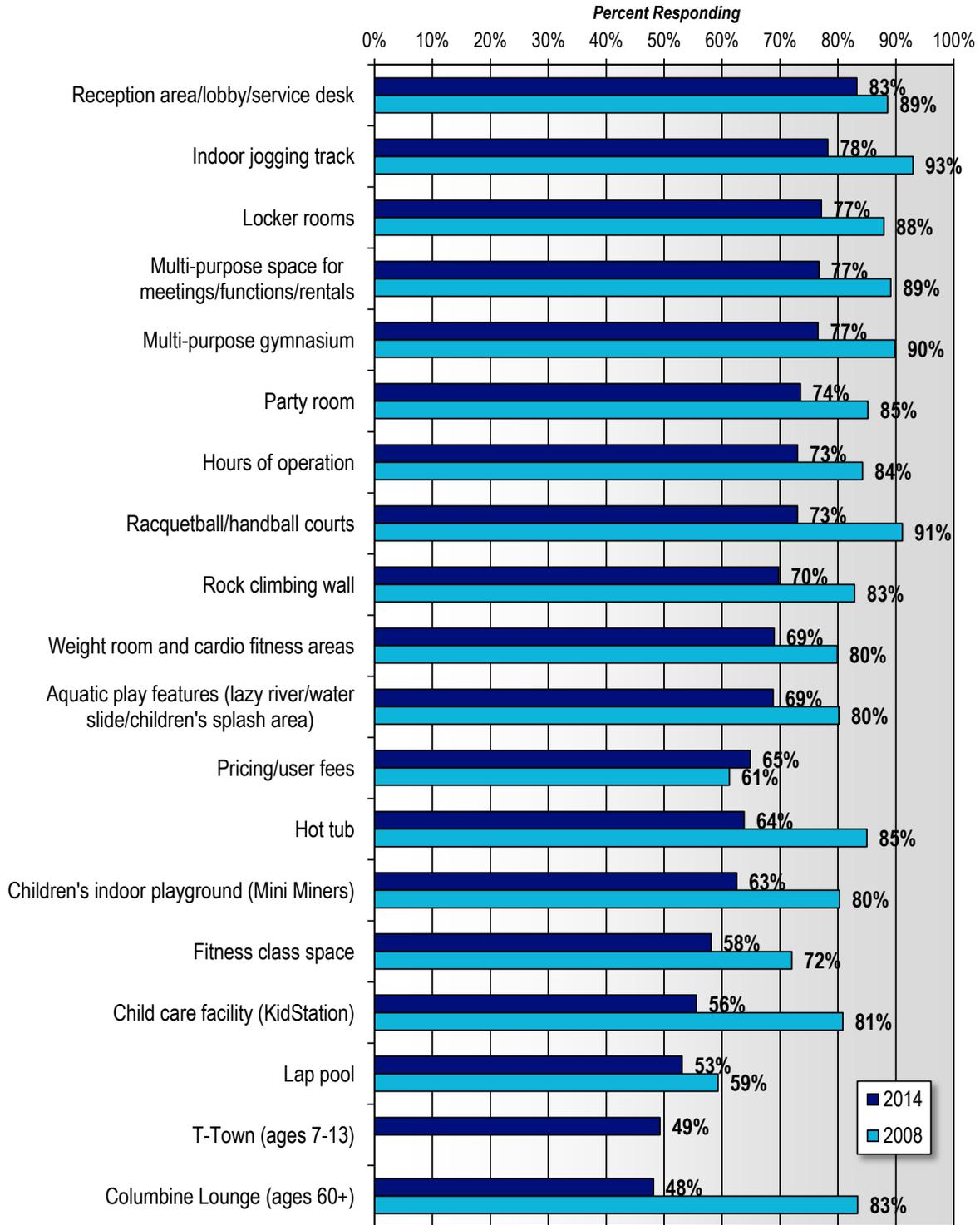
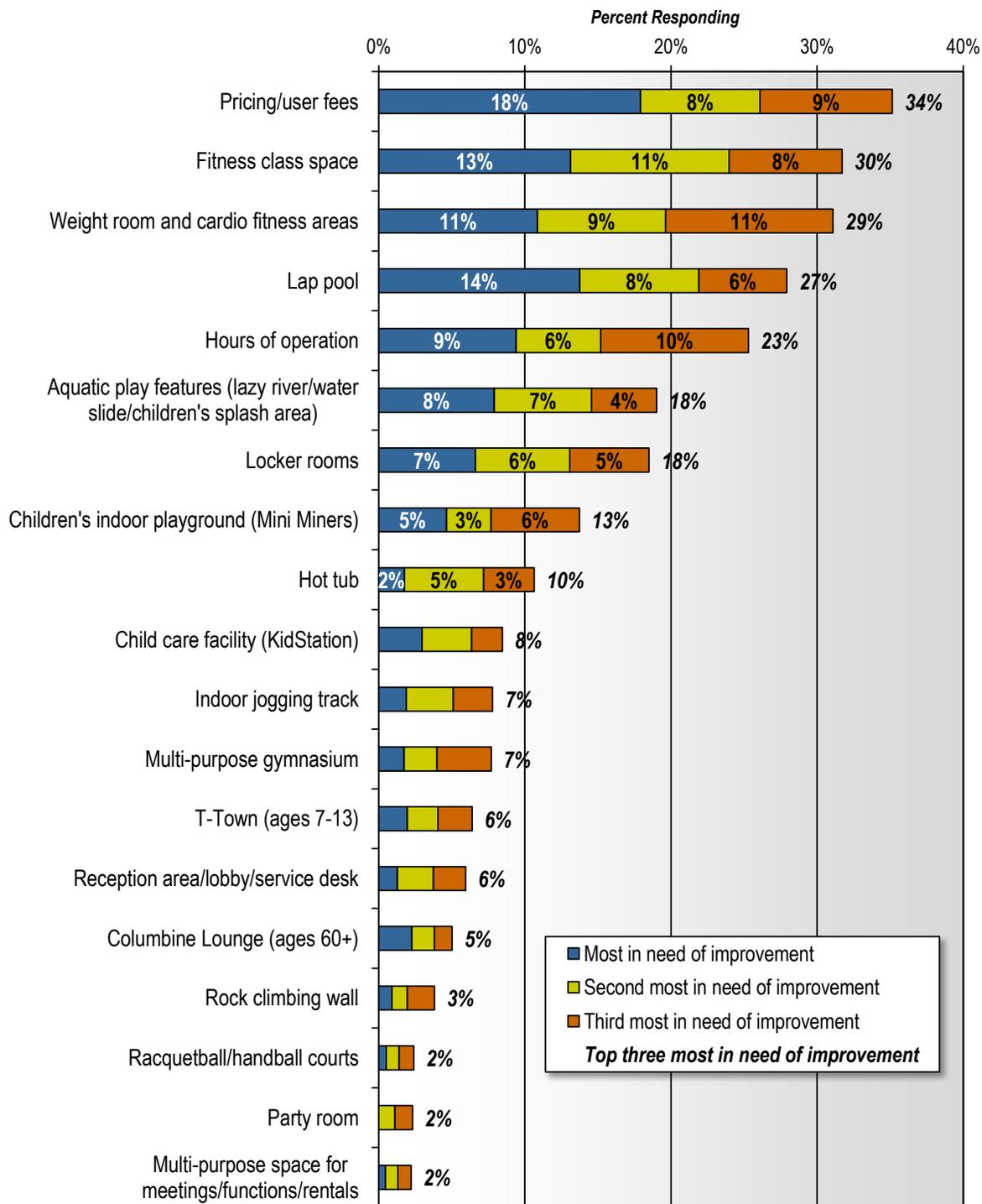


Figure 19
Which aspects of the Erie Community Center are most in need of improvement?
Top 3 Most in Need of Improvement
2014 Only

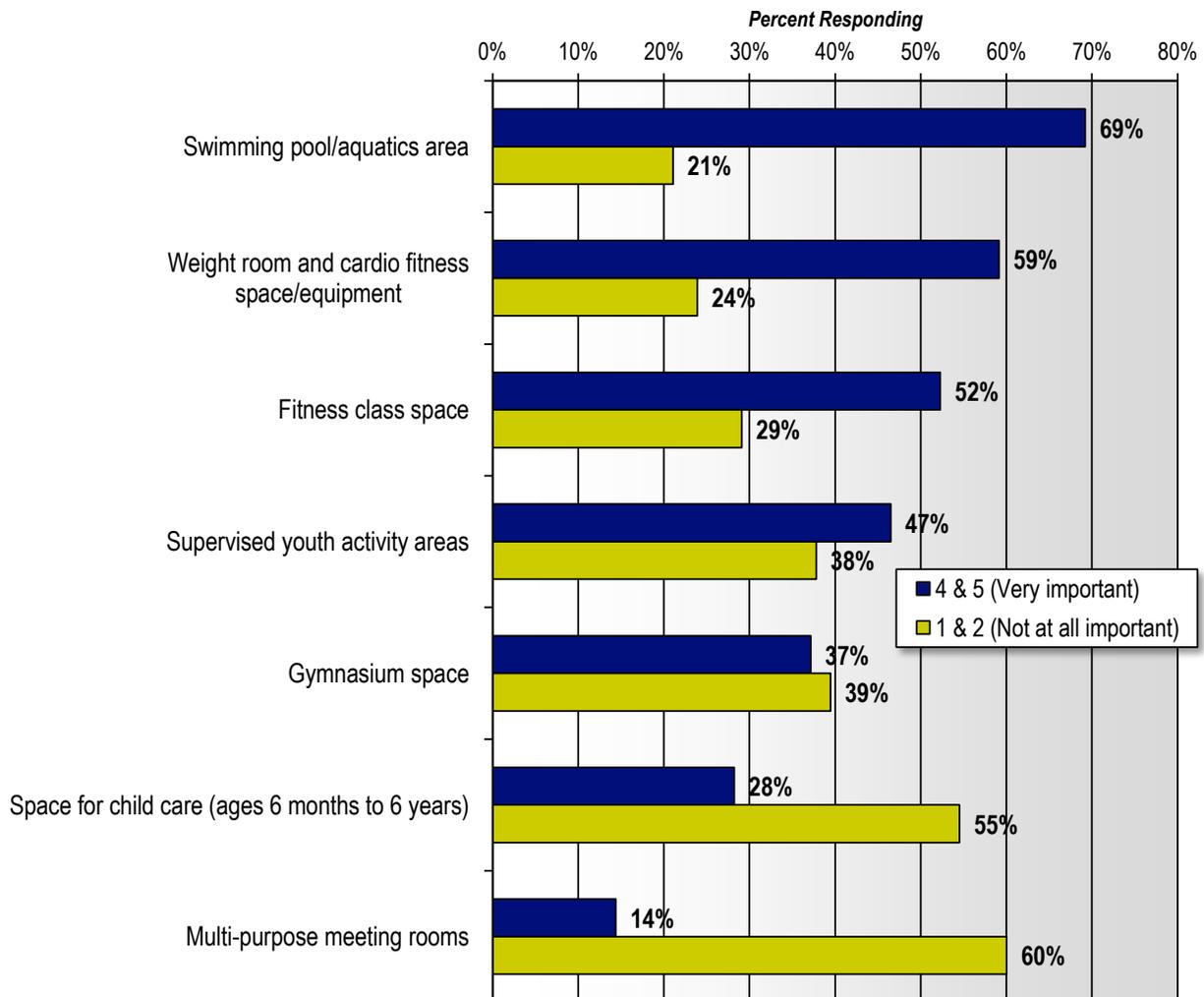


Future Recreation Facilities, Amenities, and Services

The survey prompted residents to consider that the Town of Erie funds parks, recreation, trails, and open space operations and maintenance with user fees, property taxes, and developer fees. This being the case, respondents were asked to keep in mind that additional funds would be required to acquire, build, operate and maintain new amenities.

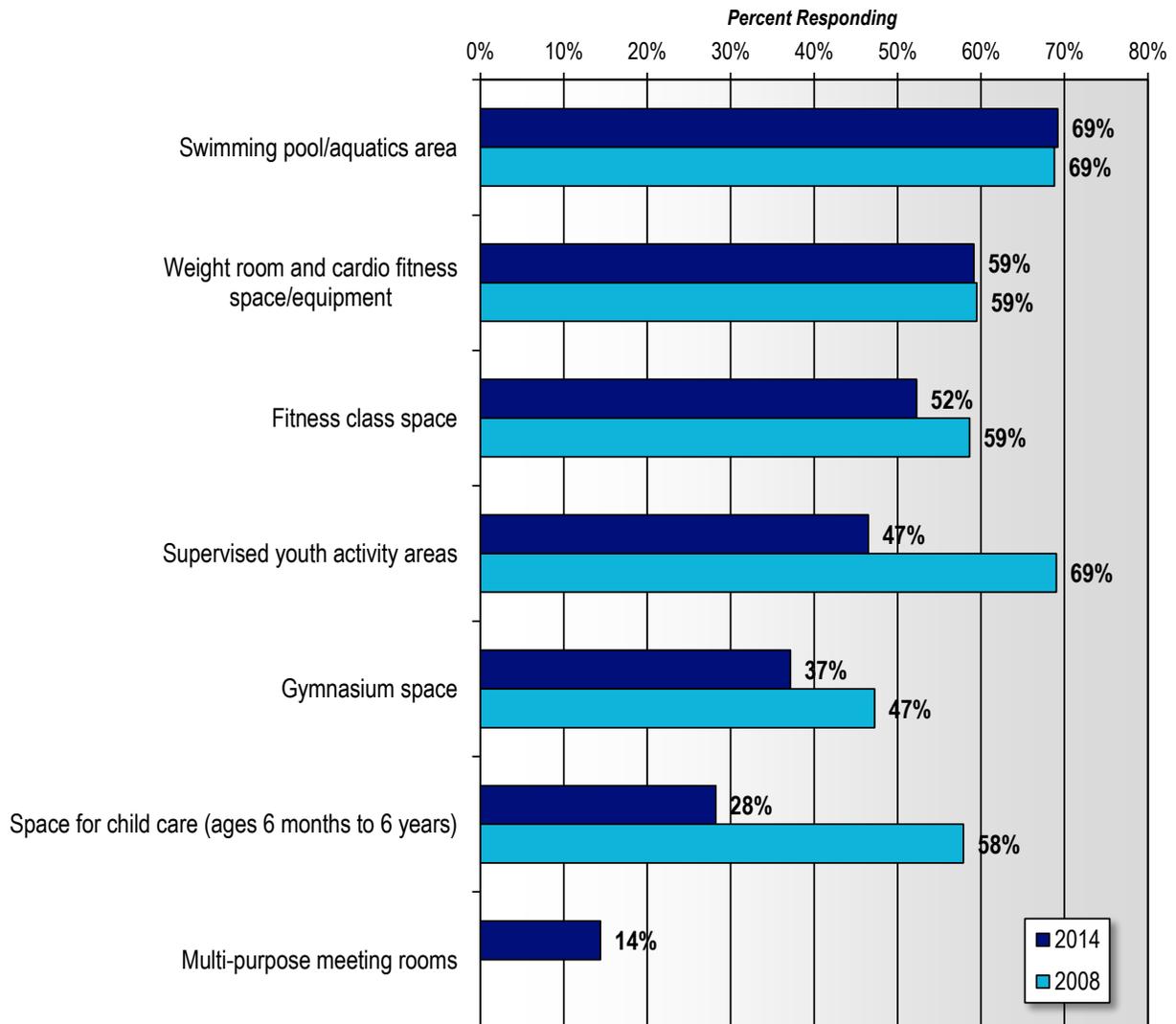
Importance of adding, expanding, or improving indoor recreation facilities. The survey provided a list of indoor facilities/amenities and asked respondents what they thought would be the greatest needs for indoor facilities within the next 5-10 years. The results show that respondents feel that swimming pool/aquatics area is most important (69 percent of respondents indicated it as “very important,” a “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale), followed by weight room and cardio fitness space/equipment (59 percent), fitness class space (52 percent), and supervised youth activity areas (47 percent). As shown in the following figure, amenities such as space for child care (28 percent) and multi-purpose meeting rooms (14 percent) are regarded as relatively less important.

Figure 20
In the next 5-10 years, what do you think will be the greatest needs for indoor facilities in Erie?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not at all Important)
2014 Only



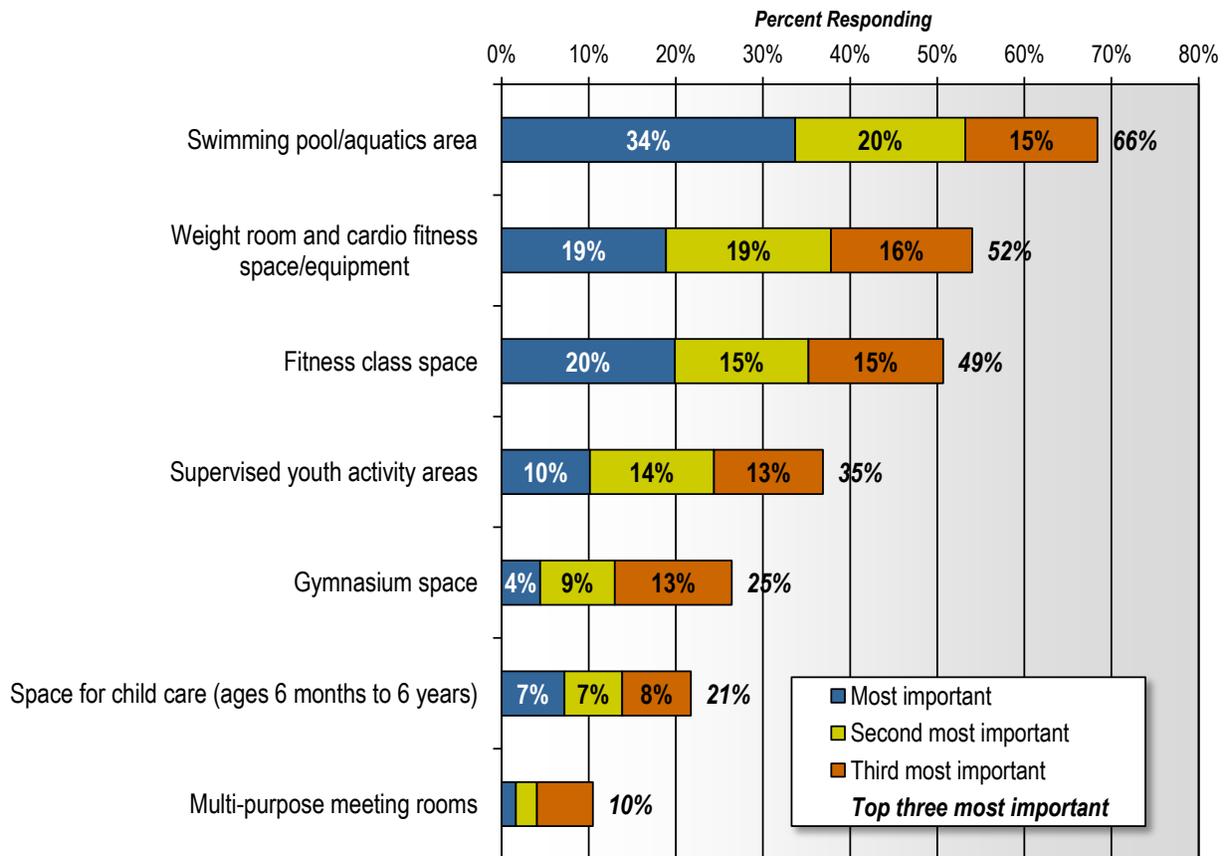
As compared to 2008, the importance placed on swimming pool/aquatics area and weight room and cardio fitness space/equipment are identical. Space for child care, supervised youth activity areas, and gymnasium space had fewer respondents reporting these as “very important” areas for additions, expansions, or improvements.

Figure 21
In the next 5-10 years, what do you think will be the greatest needs for indoor facilities in Erie?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important)
2014 vs. 2008



Respondents were also asked to indicate which of the potential indoor facilities and amenities are most important. Swimming pool/aquatics again tops the list, with 34 percent of respondents reporting this indoor facility to be a top priority and 66 percent of respondents ranking it as a first, second, or third choice priority. Weight room and cardio fitness space/equipment (52 percent), as well as fitness class space (49 percent) also receive relatively high priority ratings. These findings generally corroborate the themes identified in the comments regarding the Erie Community Center, emphasizing that these are areas of importance to residents.

Figure 22
Top 3 Most Important Needs for Indoor Facilities
2014 Only



Importance of adding, expanding, or improving outdoor recreation facilities. The survey also provided a list of outdoor facilities/amenities that could be added, expanded, or improved in the Erie area. The results show that respondents place the highest level of importance on open space/natural areas (75 percent of respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5”), closely followed by paved and/or soft surface trails (72 percent). Outdoor pool (62 percent), mountain bike trails/pump track (56 percent), outdoor water features/spraygrounds (55 percent), and destination or nature-based playgrounds (52 percent) also receive relatively high importance ratings. Several outdoor facilities have a large percentage of respondents providing a rating of “1” or “2,” indicating these amenities are “not important” to add, expand, or improve over the next 5 to 10 years. Some of these facilities include: artificial turf fields (66 percent of respondents providing a rating of “1” or “2”), baseball fields (61 percent), softball fields (57 percent), and disc golf (51 percent).

When 2014 findings are compared to 2008 results, it becomes clear that several outdoor facilities are now considered more important while others have become less important to the community as a whole. For example, an outdoor pool (62 percent of respondents providing a rating of “4” or “5” in 2014 vs. 54 percent in 2008) has become more important over time, accompanied by outdoor water features/spraygrounds (55 percent vs. 45 percent), community gardens (50 percent vs. 41 percent), and dog park (46 percent vs. 39 percent). Meanwhile, the following facilities are seen as relatively less important since 2008: large picnic shelters (43 percent in 2014 vs. 51 percent in 2008), multi-purpose athletic fields (41 percent vs. 58 percent), baseball fields (17 percent vs. 35 percent), and softball fields (17 percent vs. 35 percent).

As done with the indoor facilities, respondents were also asked to indicate which of the potential outdoor facilities and amenities were the three most important to them. Outdoor pool emerges as the top priority for addition, expansion, or improvement (23 percent of respondents list it as the top priority and 43 percent of respondents indicate it as one of the top three priorities). Open space/natural areas (40 percent) and paved and/or soft surface trails (38 percent) closely follow.

Figure 23
Importance of the following outdoor recreation facilities to be added, expanded, or improved
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not at all Important)
2014 Only

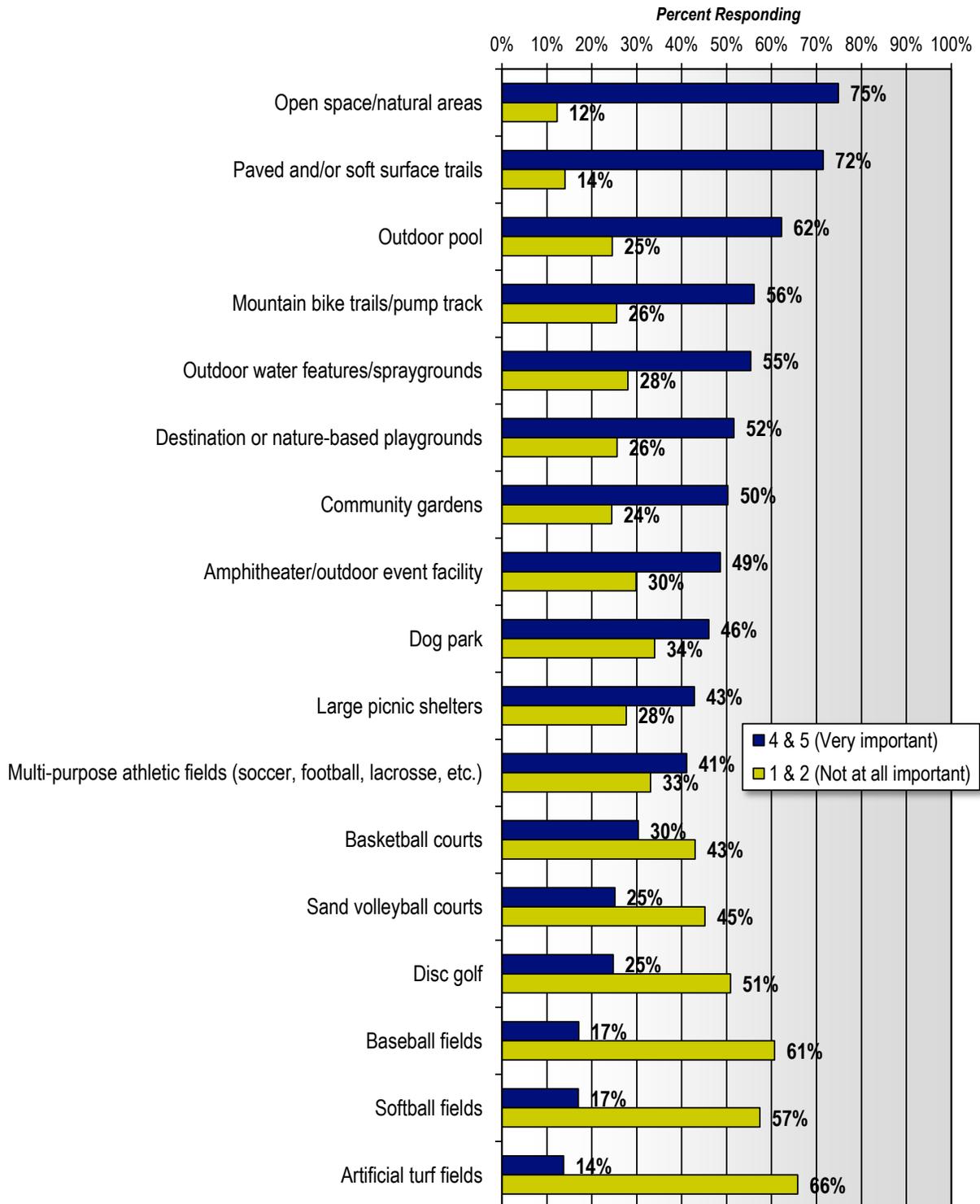


Figure 24
In the next 5-10 years, what do you think will be the greatest needs for outdoor facilities in Erie?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important)
2014 vs. 2008

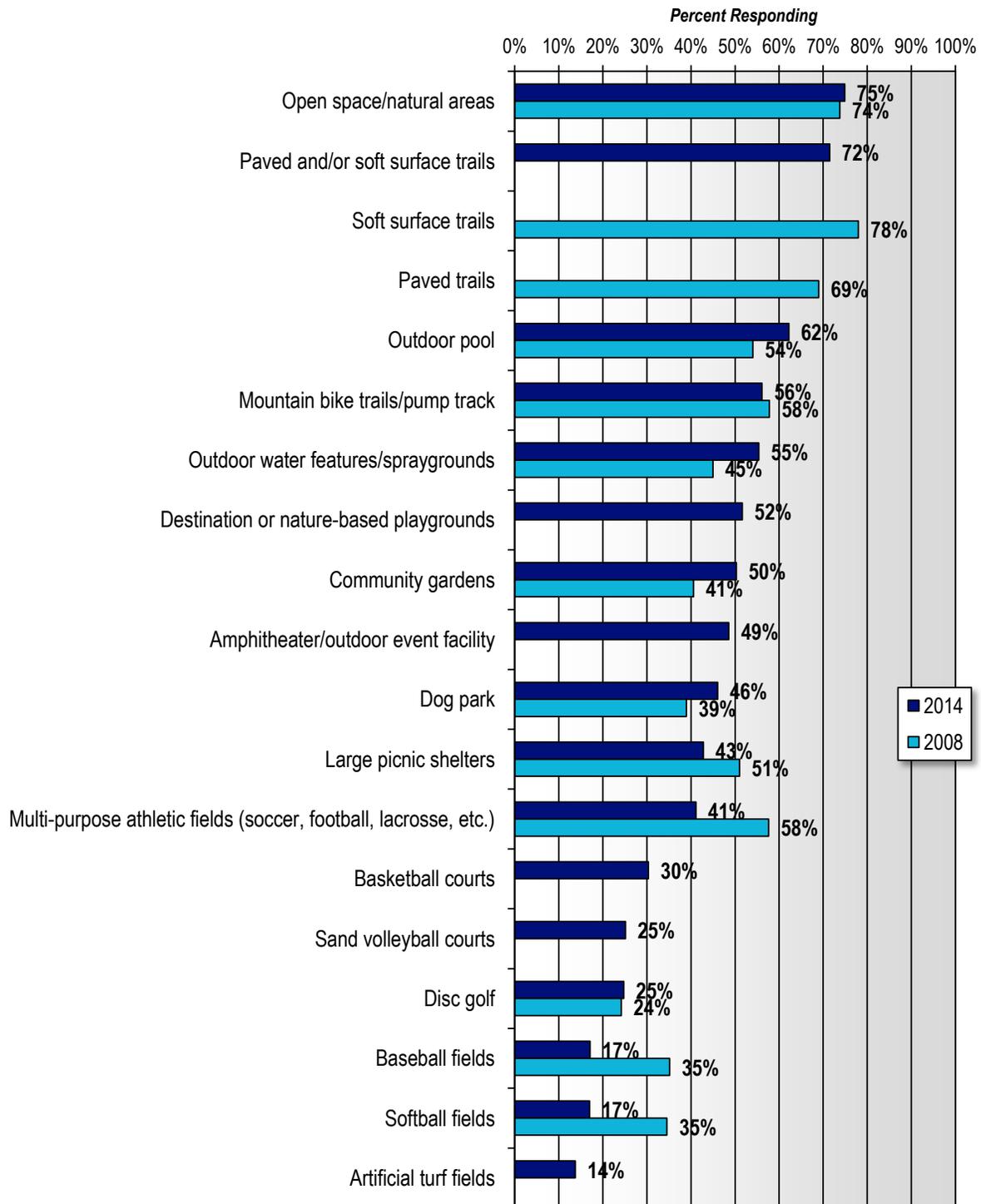
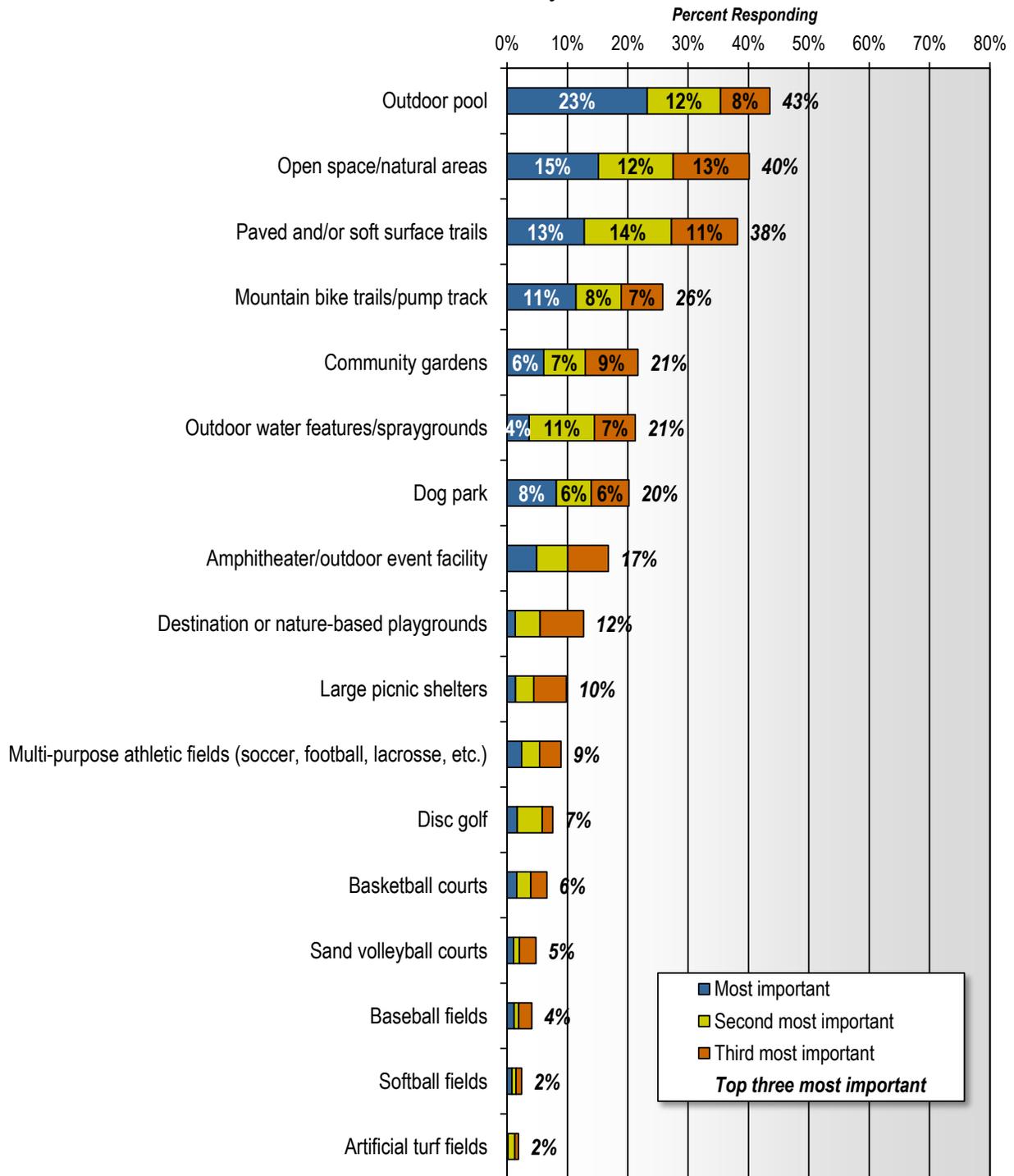


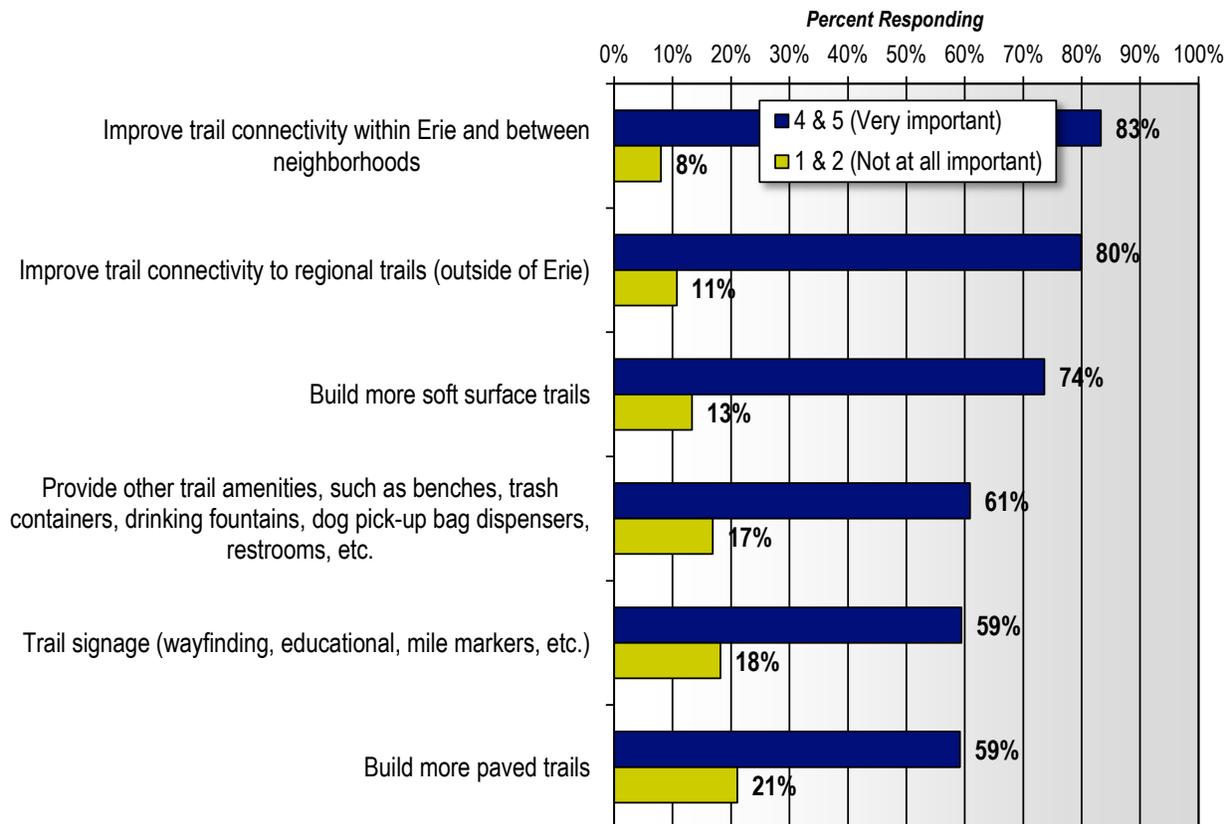
Figure 25
Top 3 Most Important Outdoor Facilities to be Added, Expanded, or Improved
2014 Only



Trails and Open Space

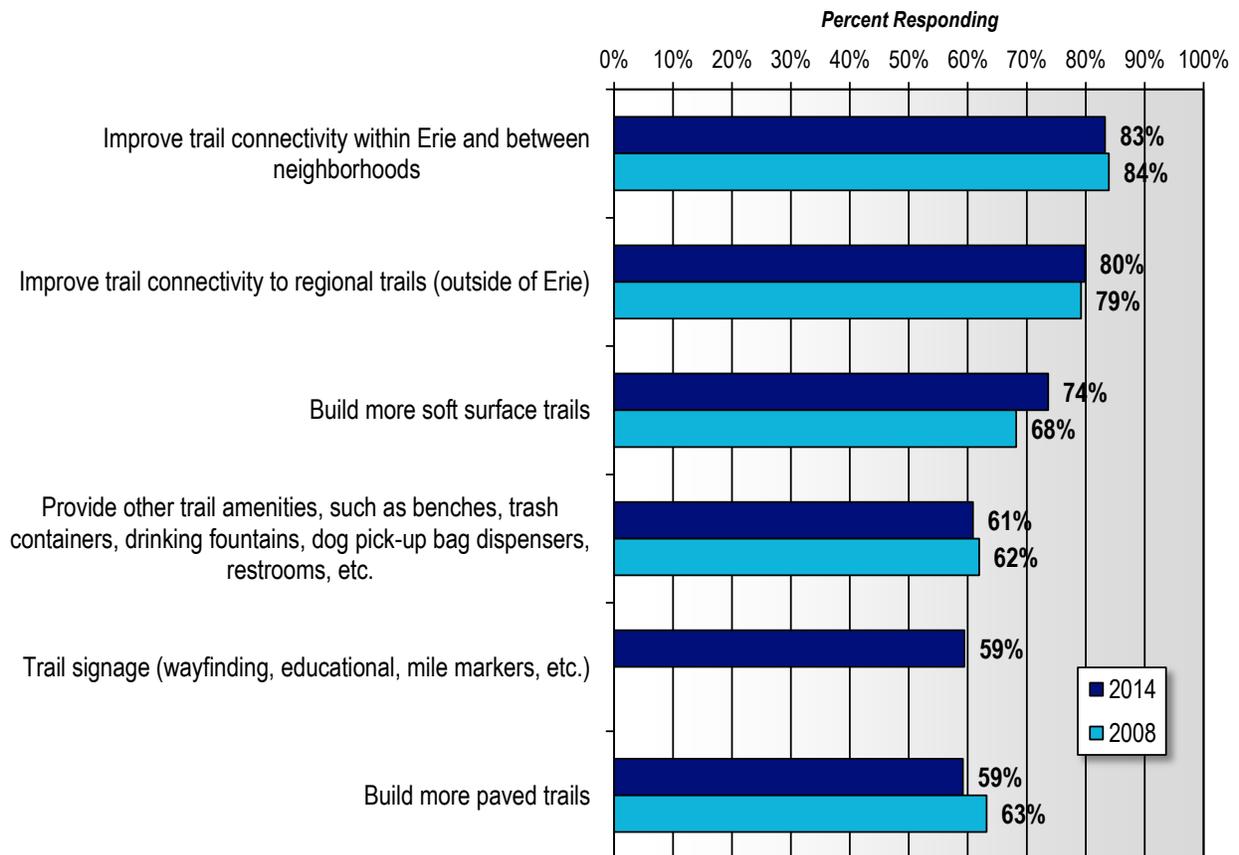
Trails. The survey probed the importance of various aspects of trails among respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate how important various aspects of trail improvements in Erie are to them and their household. Findings show that all five categories are relatively important to respondents overall. Improving trail connectivity within Erie and between neighborhoods is most important to respondents (83 percent of respondents indicating it as a “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale), followed closely by improving trail connectivity to regional trails outside Erie (80 percent). Findings also show that soft surface trails are more important to residents (74 percent) than paved trails (59 percent), helping clarify the outdoor priorities explored in the previous section.

Figure 26
With respect to trails, how important are the following to you and members of your household?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not at all Important)
2014 Only



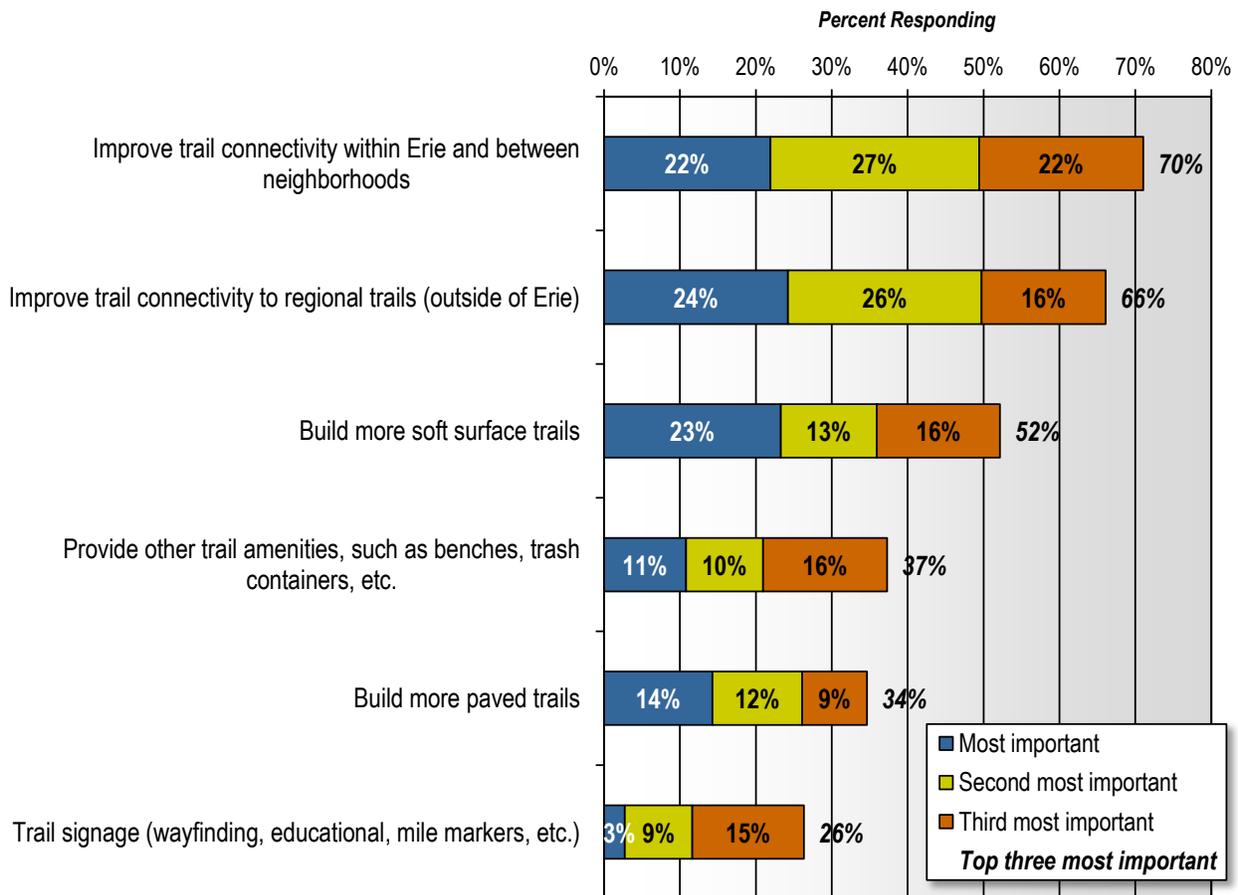
It is also informative to compare responses to 2008. Findings are nearly identical between the two survey years. However, building more soft surface trails is seen as slightly more important in 2014 (74 percent indicate it is “very important”) than in 2008 (68 percent), while paved trails have become slightly less important over time (59 percent vs. 63 percent).

Figure 27
With respect to trails, how important are the following to you and members of your household?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important)
2014 vs. 2008



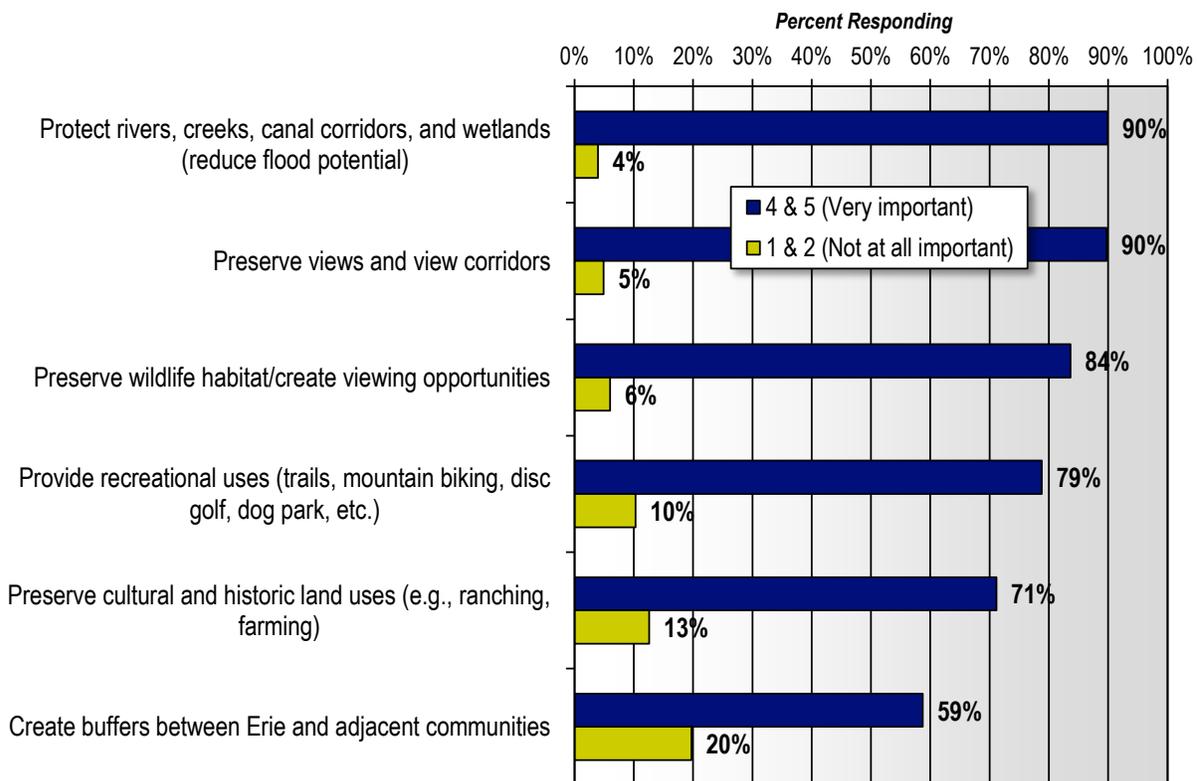
Since all categories are relatively important to respondents overall, it is useful to look at how residents prioritize these aspects of trails. For the most part, the order does not change, but the top priorities become clearer, as shown in the following figure. Improving connectivity within Erie and between neighborhoods is the highest priority with 70 percent listing it as one of their top three priorities. Also important is improving connectivity to regional trails (outside Erie) with 66 percent listing it as one of their top three priorities. While building more soft surface trails receives a lower share of respondents rating it as one of their top three priorities overall (52 percent), it did receive a high share of respondents listing it as their number one priority (23 percent).

Figure 28
Top 3 Most Important Aspects of Trails
2014 Only



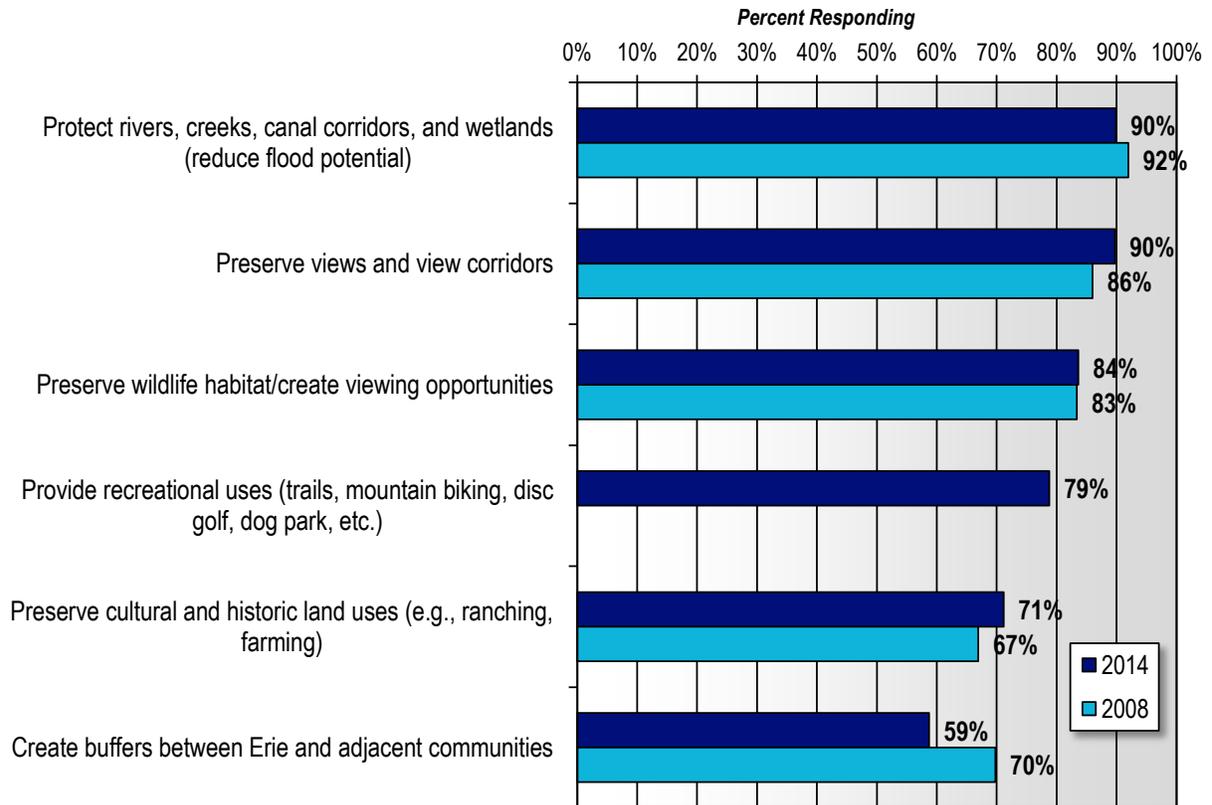
Open space. Respondents were also asked to indicate what they believe to be the most important functions of open space. As shown in the following figure, protecting rivers, creeks, canal corridors, and wetlands and preserving views and view corridors are rated highest (each 90 percent, respectively). Although still important, creating buffers between Erie and adjacent communities (59 percent) is considered relatively less important compared to the other functions.

Figure 29
What do you think are the most important functions of open space?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not at all Important)
2014 Only



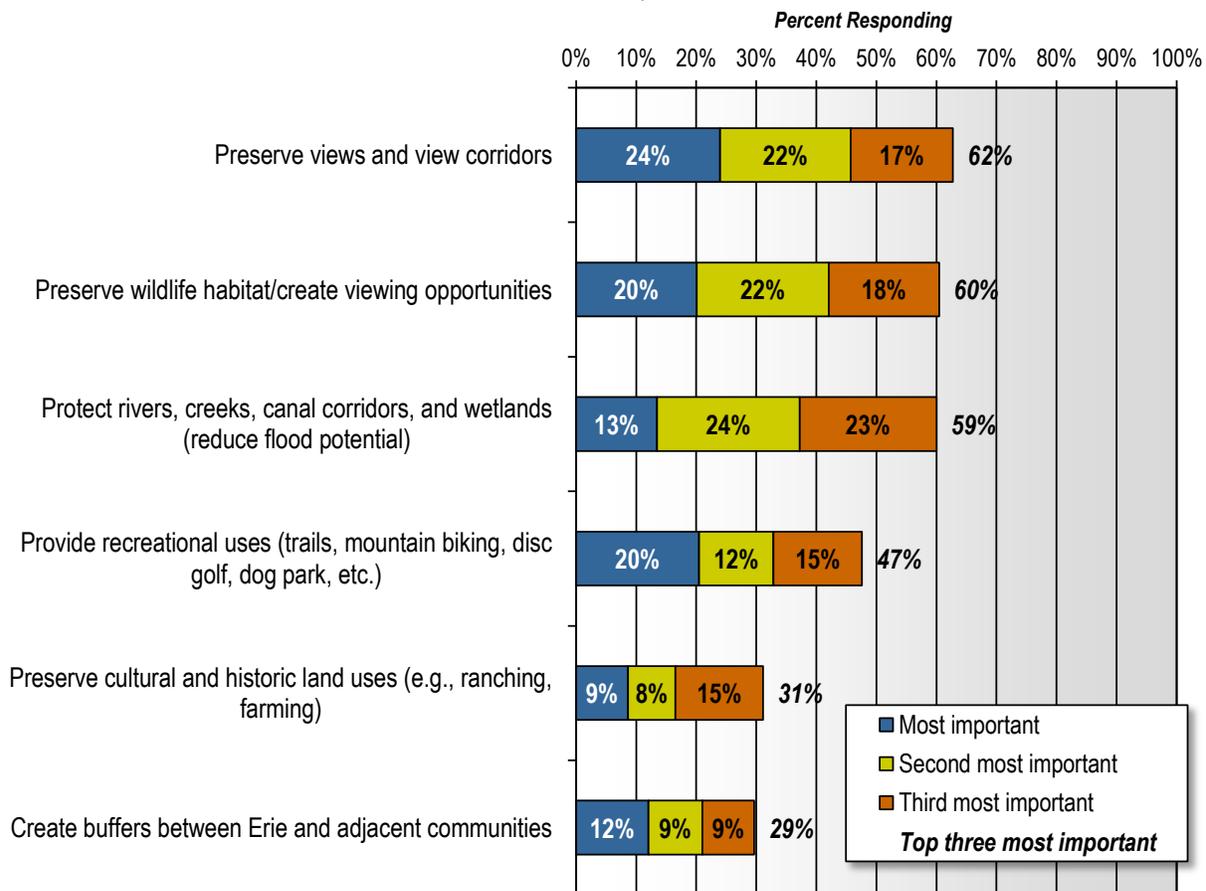
Results between the two survey years regarding the functions of open space are highly similar. Protecting waterways and wetlands and view corridors are still seen as slightly more important by residents currently. Meanwhile, creating buffers between Erie and adjacent communities (59 percent vs. 70 percent) is somewhat less important. Providing recreational uses, a new category this year, ranks in the middle relative to importance (79 percent).

Figure 30
What do you think are the most important functions of open space?
Percent 4 & 5 (Very Important)
2014 vs. 2008



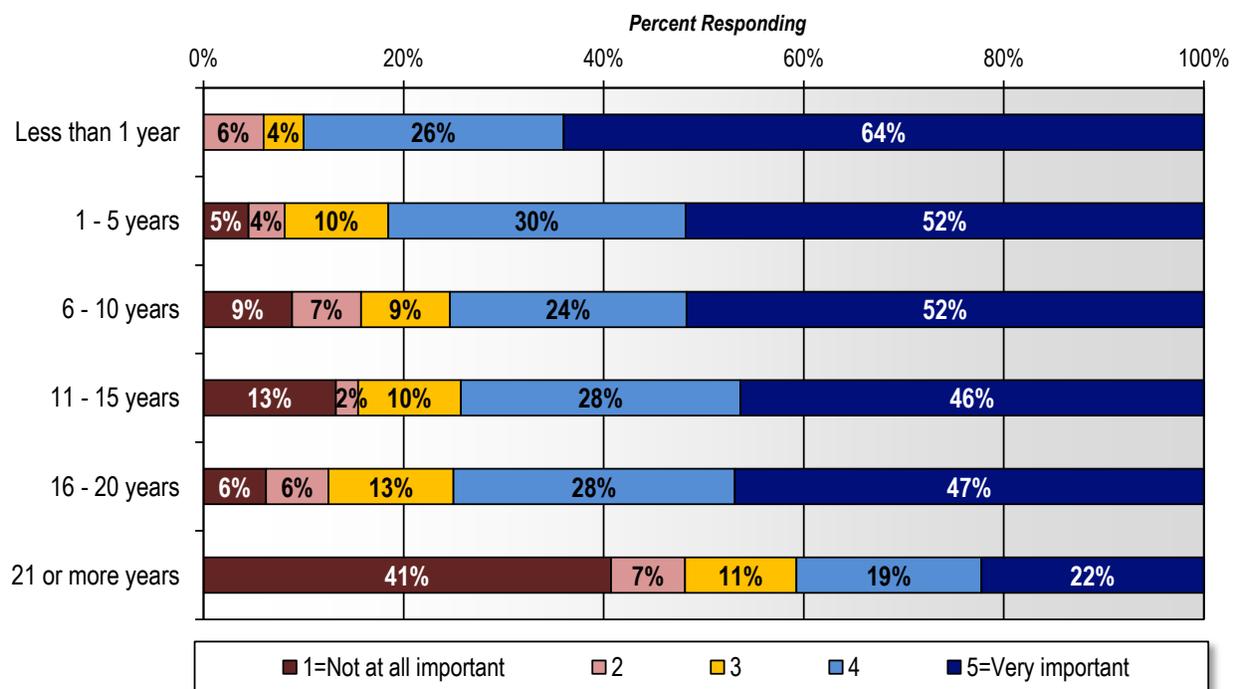
As done in previous sections, a follow-up question asked respondents to select their top three most important functions of open space from the same list. Preserving view corridors (62 percent of respondents noting it as the most, second-most, or third-most important priority), preserving wildlife habitat/creating viewing opportunities (60 percent), and protecting rivers, creeks, canal corridors, and wetlands (59 percent) all ranked closely in priority. While providing recreational uses ranked lower overall (47 percent), it did earn a high share of respondents indicating this use to be a number one priority (20 percent).

Figure 31
Top 3 Most Important Functions of Open Space
2014 Only



Decision to Move to Erie. A new question to the 2014 survey explored the importance of the presence of parks, recreation facilities and programs, trails, and open space in respondents’ decision to move or continue living in Erie. Results are explored by length of residency below. As shown, these facilities and amenities are increasingly important among cohorts of newer residents, suggesting that they play a significant role in the growth of Erie and attracting new residents to the area. Sixty-four percent of respondents who have lived in Erie for less than a year indicated that such facilities were “very important” in their decision to move to Erie. Roughly half of residents who have lived in Erie for between one and 20 years cite such facilities as “very important” to their decision.

Figure 32
How important was the presence of parks, recreation facilities and programs, trails, and open space in your decision to move to Erie or to continue living in Erie?
By Length of Residency
2014 Only



Programs, Activities, and Special Events

Programs and Activities. The survey listed a variety of programs, activities, and special events that are currently available in Erie and asked respondents to indicate for which ones their household has a need, then of the ones for which they have a need, how well those programs are meeting their needs. Respondents used a 5-point scale, with 1 meaning “0% met” and 5 “100% met.”

As shown in Figure 33, the programs and activities for which respondents indicate the highest need include: fitness and wellness programs (73 percent of households have a need), individual activities such as road biking and hiking (71 percent), and community special events (71 percent). A second tier of programs and activities include: cultural/arts programs (49 percent), children/youth activities (48 percent), swimming programs/swim team (46 percent), and environmental/natural programs (42 percent). While the order of programs, activities, and events has remained very similar to 2008, respondents currently indicate higher levels of need for each of these choices. In particular, needs for community special events (71 percent in 2014 vs. 39 percent in 2008) are now more in demand.

Relative to how well these programs, activities, and events are currently meeting household needs, responses reveal a wide range of needs being met and unmet. Fitness and wellness programs top the list (58 percent of respondents indicating their needs are being “75%” or “100% met”). This is a positive finding given that it is also the choice in which the highest shares of respondents express need. Relatively high levels of needs being met are also recorded for youth athletic leagues (56 percent), community special events (54 percent), and children/youth activities (53 percent). Meanwhile, several categories have high shares of respondents reporting needs being unmet (providing a rating of “1” or “2”), including: gymnastics programs (65 percent), teen activities (60 percent), golf programs (55 percent), special needs/therapeutic (52 percent), and environmental/natural programs (52 percent).

Figure 35 shows the average percentage rating (using the 0% to 100% scale) for each category in 2014 as compared to 2008. The average rating for every single category is higher in 2014 than it had been in 2008, suggesting that needs have been more fully met over time—a very positive finding. Even though there is room for improvement in several of these areas, there has still been strong overall improvement since 2008.

Figure 33
Does your household have a need for the following programs?
2014 vs. 2008

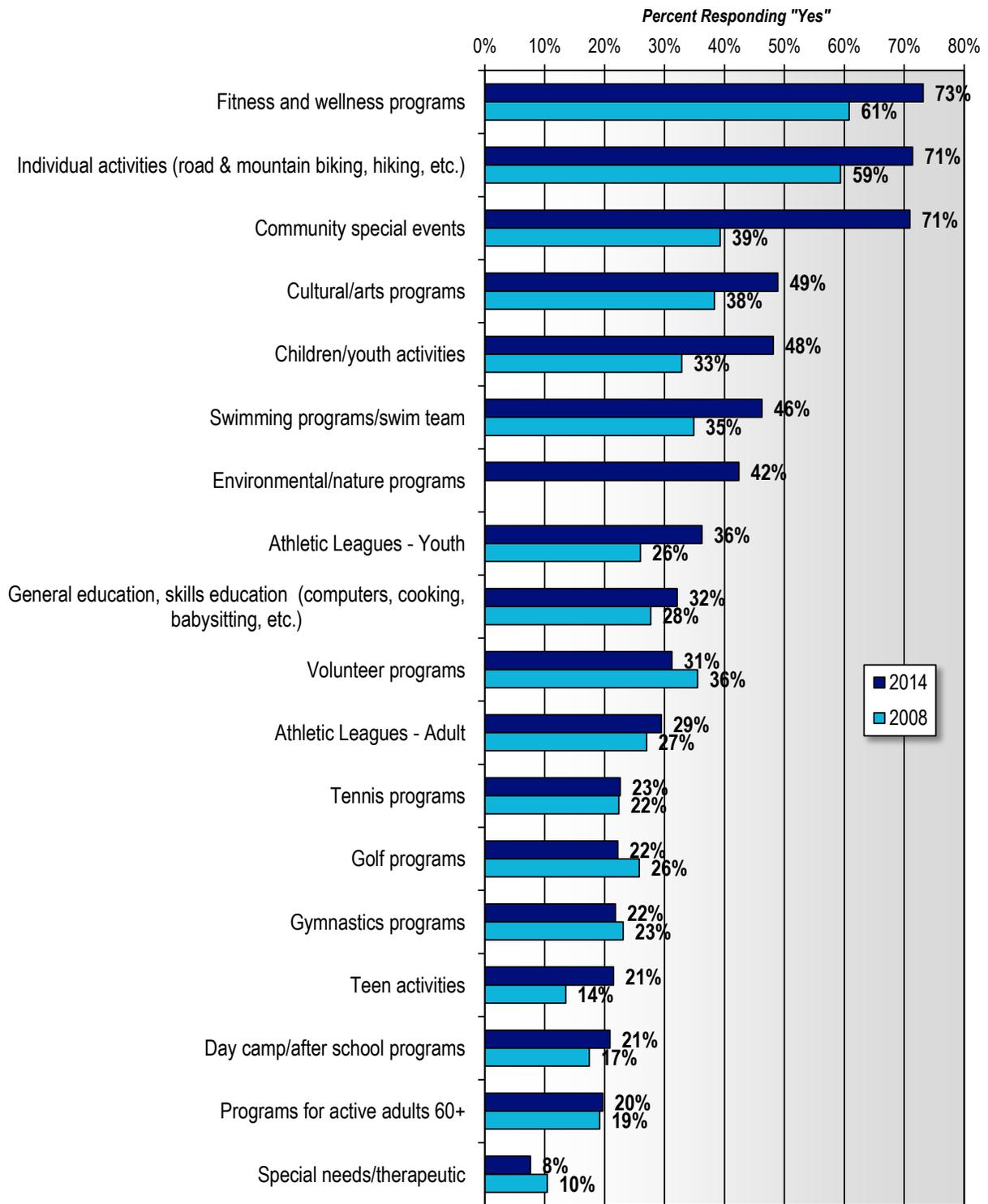


Figure 34
Of the programs your household has a need for, how well are your needs currently being met?
Percent 4 & 5 (75-100% of Needs Being Met) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (0-25% of Needs Being Met)
2014 Only

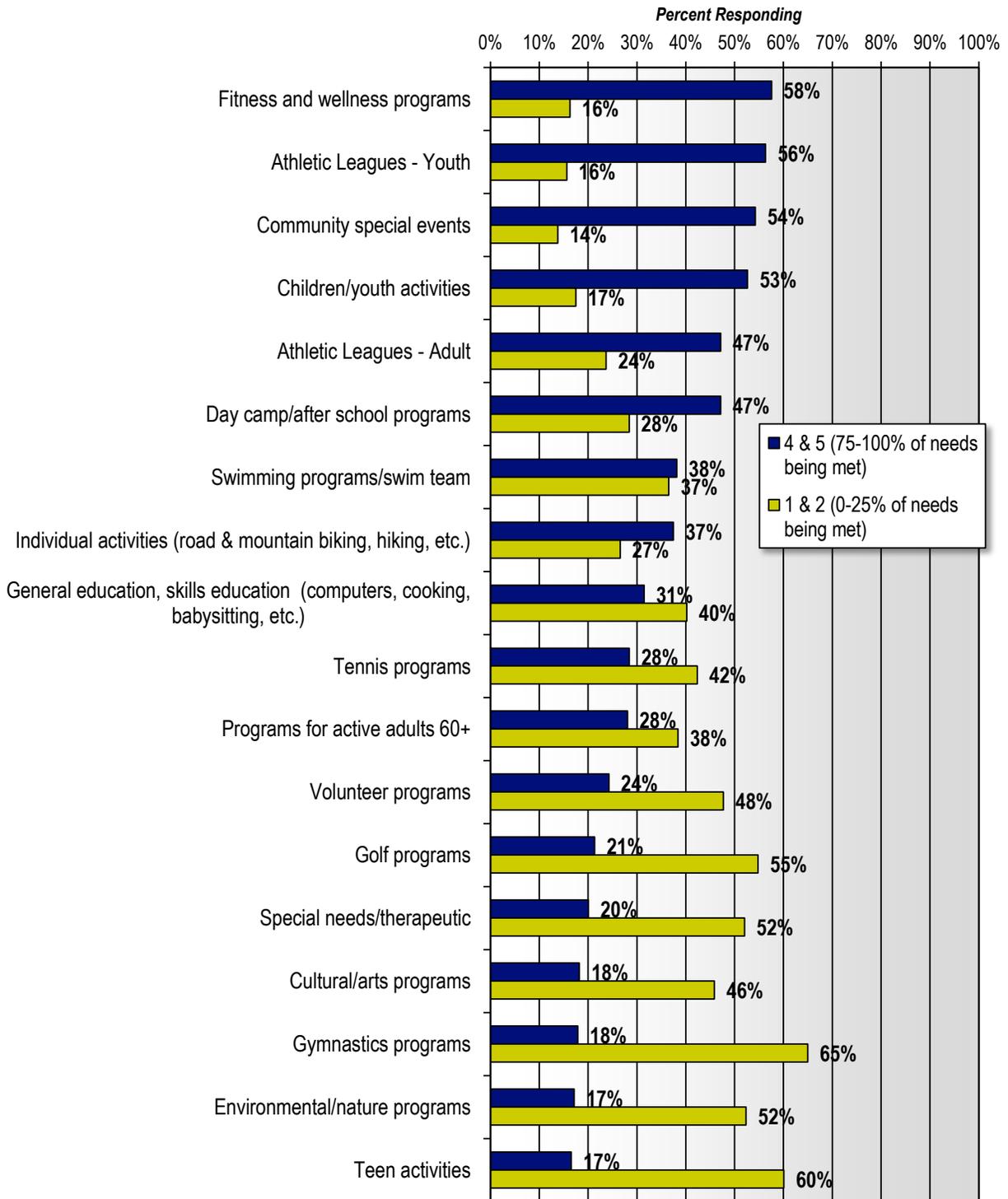
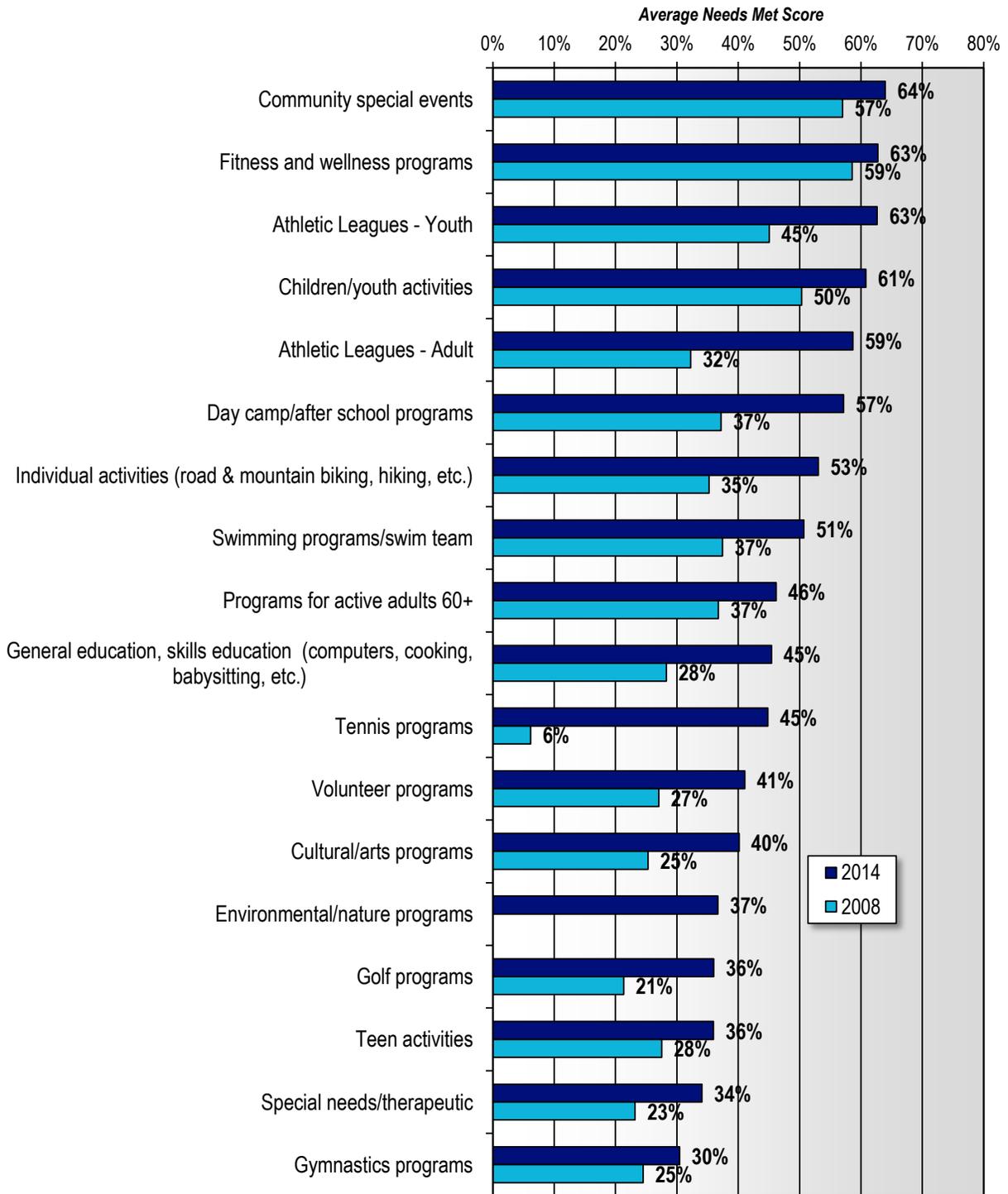


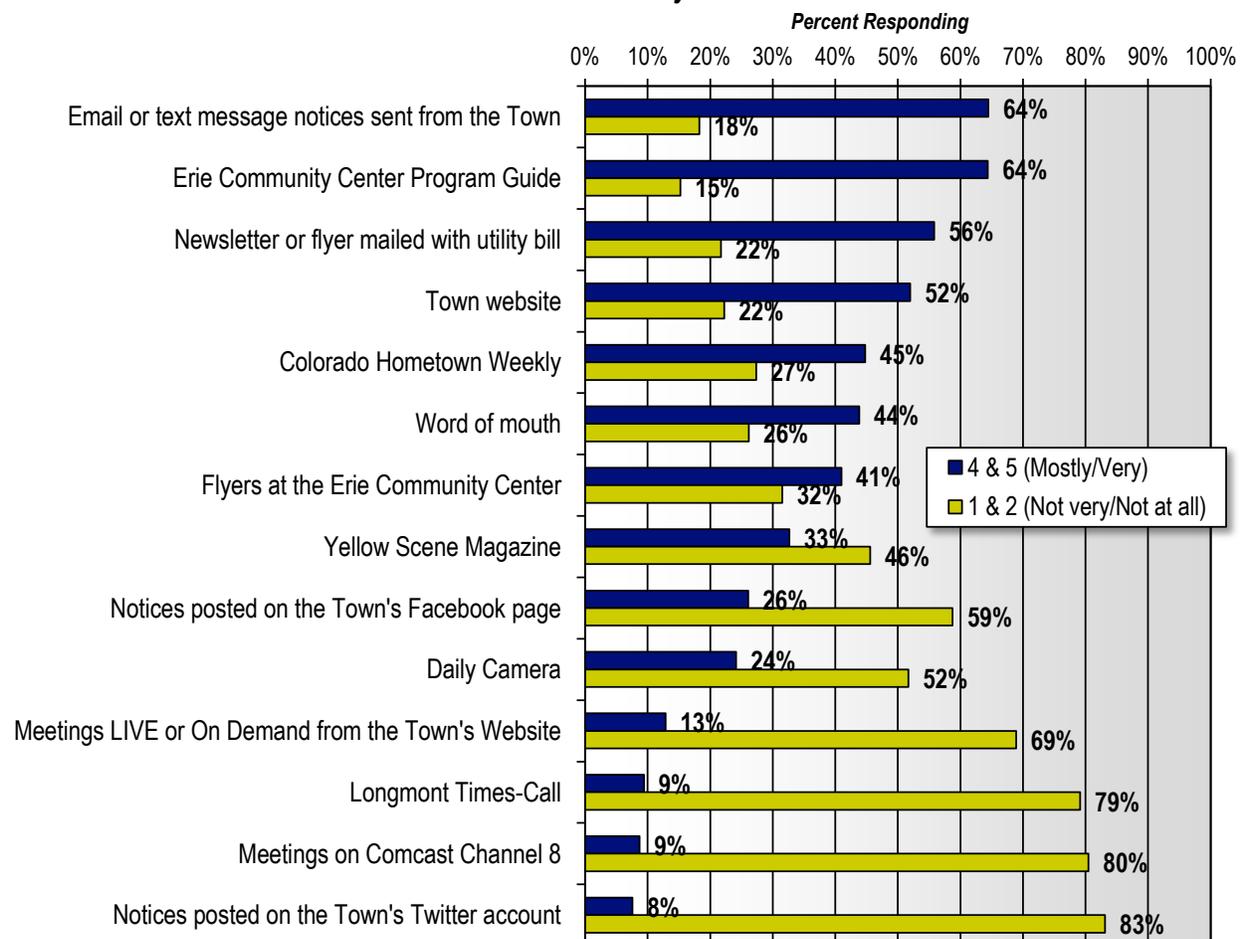
Figure 35
Of the programs your household has a need for, how well are your needs currently being met?
Average Needs Met Score (on 5-Point Scale: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, or 100% Met)
2014 vs. 2008



Communication

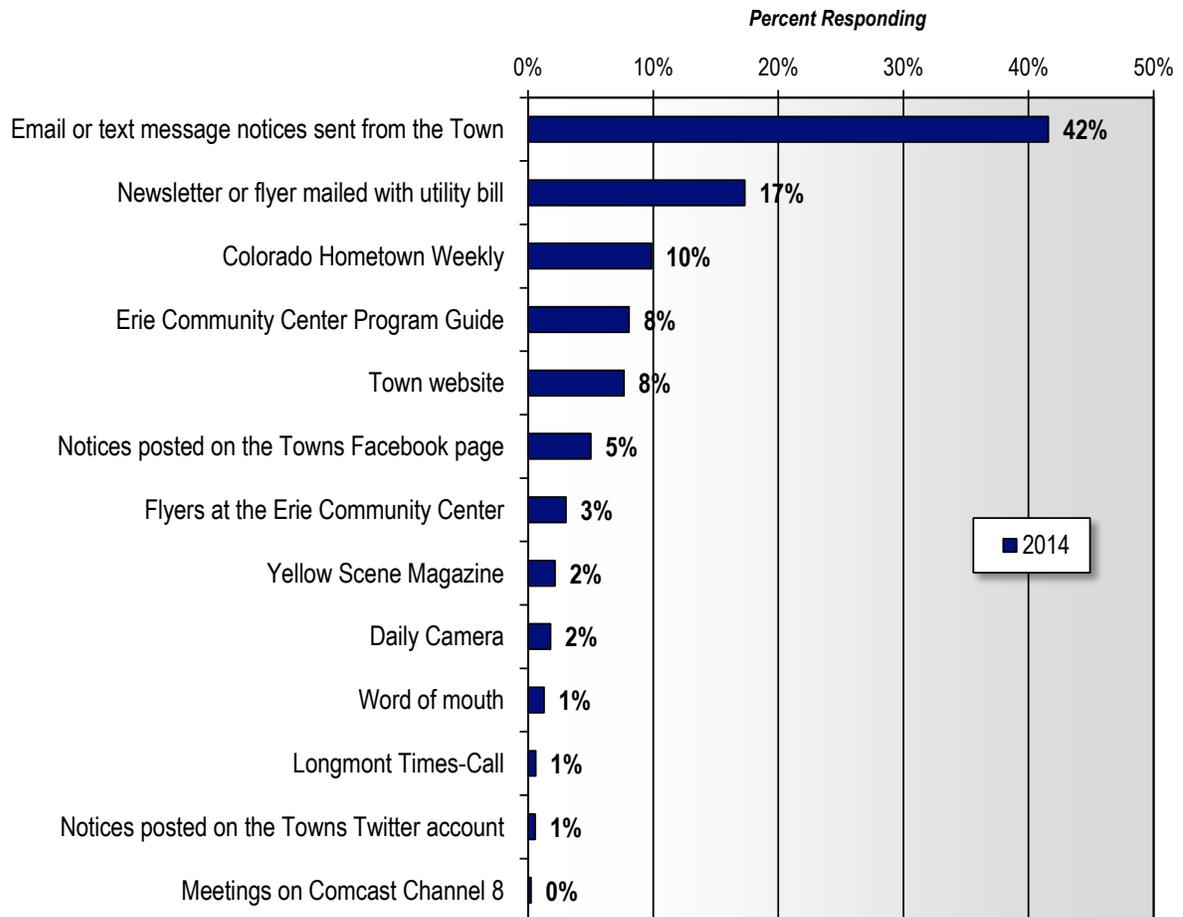
Communication. Respondents were first asked to indicate how useful a source, if at all, they consider 15 different local sources to be for obtaining information about Erie Parks and Recreation using a 5-point scale with 1 meaning “not at all useful” and 5 “very useful.” Email or text message notices sent from the Town, along with the Erie Community Center program guide, are deemed most useful, with 64 percent of respondents indicating each of these to be either “mostly” or “very” useful. In a second tier of sources, the utility bill newsletter or flyer (56 percent), Town website (52 percent), Colorado Hometown Weekly (45 percent), word of mouth (44 percent), and flyers at the Community Center (41 percent) are also considered relatively useful. Yellow Scene Magazine, Facebook, and the Daily Camera are rated in the middle, with notable shares of respondents indicating these to be useful sources, but higher shares of respondents citing these to be “not useful” than “useful.” Meanwhile, Longmont Times-Call, meetings on Comcast Channel 8, and notices posted on the Town’s Twitter account bring up the rear.

Figure 36
Usefulness of Communication Sources
Percent 4 & 5 (Mostly/Very) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Not Very/Not at all)
2014 Only



Respondents were then asked to report the best way to reach them, selecting just one choice from the list provided. Email or text message notices sent from the Town top the list by far, with 42 percent of respondents noting this to be their number one communication choice. Interestingly, social media is not preferred among most respondents, with a slim 5 percent of respondents choosing Facebook and 1 percent of respondents choosing Twitter (Facebook is just slightly more popular with younger age groups, as well as families, at 7 to 8 percent).

Figure 37
What is the best way to reach you?
2014 Only



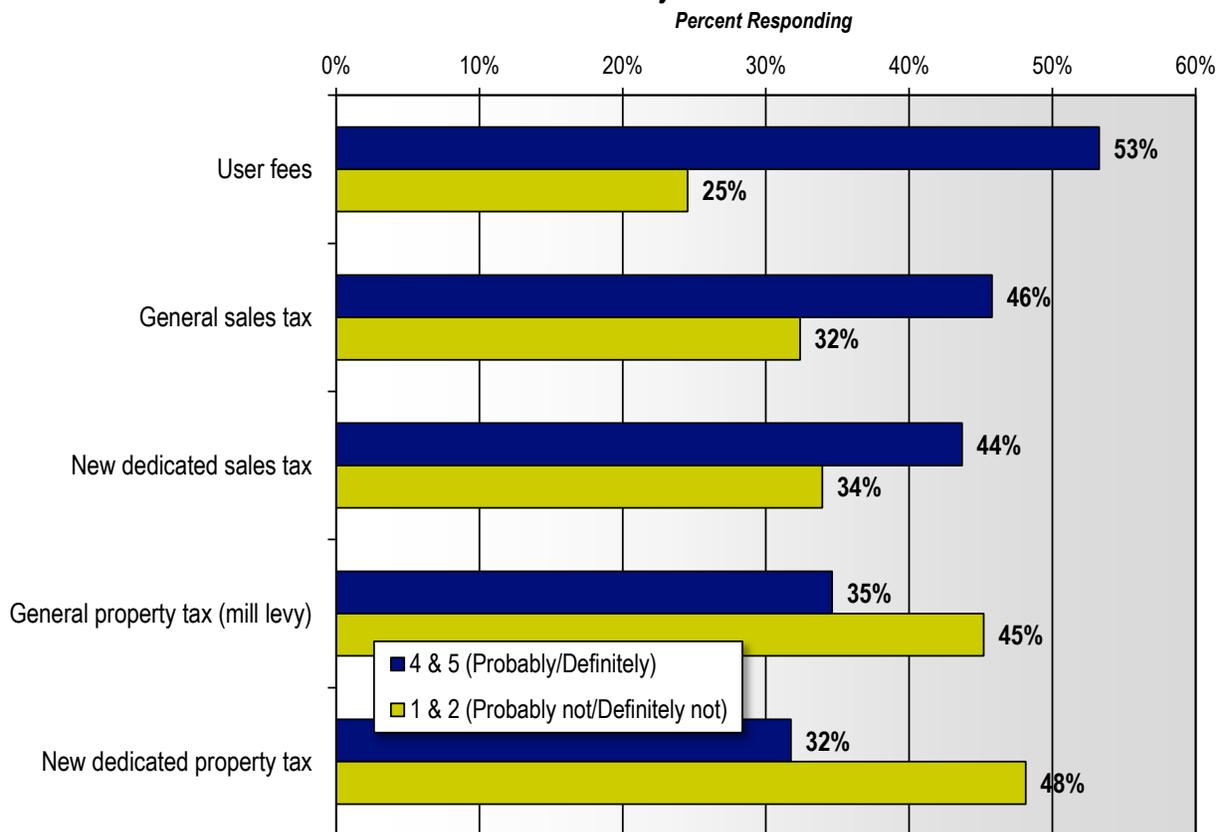
Financial Choices

It was explained in the survey that “the Town of Erie receives taxes, grants and development impact fees to build parks, recreation facilities, open space, and trails. Additional funds are required for the operations and maintenance of new facilities. User fees, grants, and donations offset some costs.”

Respondents were then asked to what extent, if any, they would be willing to support a number of different funding mechanisms to fund operations and maintenance costs of new parks and recreation facilities, open space, trails, and programs in Erie in the future. Of the list of potential mechanisms (shown in the figure below), user fees have the strongest support (53 percent of respondents would “probably” or “definitely” support), followed by the general sales tax (46 percent) and a possible new dedicated sales tax (44 percent). General property tax (35 percent) and new dedicated property tax (32 percent) earn relatively lower levels of support, with higher shares of respondents indicating they would not support such mechanisms than those who would support them.

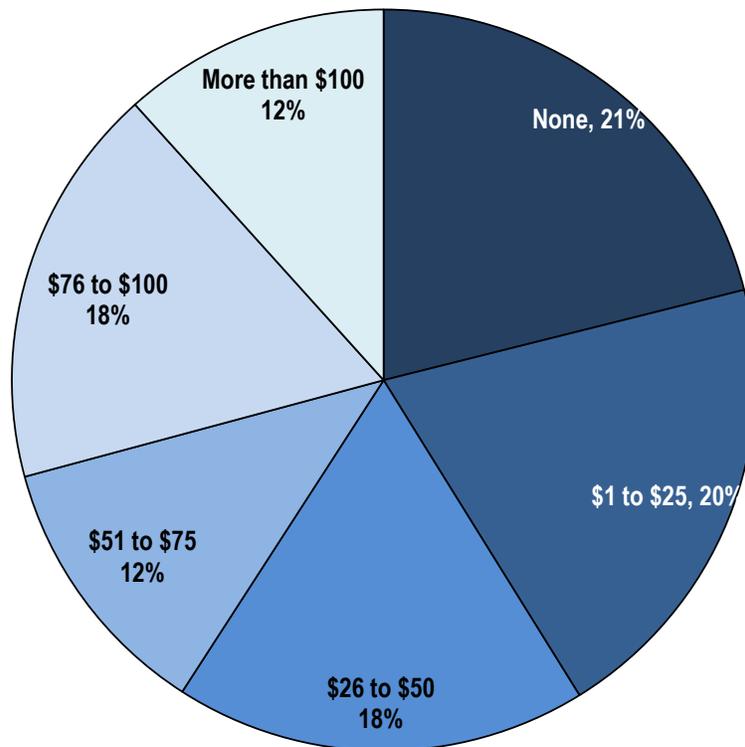
When assessed by levels of “definite” support, user fees is the clear standout, with 26 percent of respondents supporting this mechanism (followed by 15 percent for general sales tax and 14 percent for a new dedicated sales tax).

Figure 38
Potential Funding Mechanisms
Percent 4 & 5 (Probably/Definitely) vs. Percent 1 & 2 (Probably Not/Definitely Not)
2014 Only



Level of Support for Additional Property Tax. A related question prompted respondents with the notion that “quality recreation facilities and programs cost money to provide and maintain.” Respondents were then asked how much additional property tax (if any) they would be willing to pay annually to increase recreational opportunities in Erie. Twenty-one percent of respondents are not willing to pay any additional money annually, while 20 percent are willing to pay an additional \$1 to \$25 annually. Fifty-nine percent of respondents are willing to pay at least \$26 extra in property taxes per year. The median amount respondents would be willing to pay is approximately \$37.50.

Figure 39
How much additional property tax would you be willing to pay annually to increase recreational opportunities in Erie?
2014 Only



Suggestions

At the end of the survey, residents were provided the opportunity to offer any additional comments or suggestions regarding parks, recreation facilities, services, and programs in Erie. Respondents offered a variety of insightful comments and suggestions, the full set of which can be found in the appendix to the report. While it is recommended that interested parties look over these comments in full, commonly identified themes and topics are explored further below.

An open-ended comment analysis reveals that taxes and fees are the most frequent concerns addressed in the comments (roughly 15 percent of all comments mention taxes or fees). Respondents show concern regarding raising already high taxes, propose receiving financial support through new businesses or residents, and suggest discounted user fee programs:

- *Considering that Vista Ridge already has taxes associated with the development of the area, and that we already have our own recreation provided within the community, I anticipate that we would be hard-pressed to support funding resources for the community at-large through property taxes. Considering the challenges of population growth and the lack of space at the (still new) elementary schools, you would be competing with funding for educational resources.*
- *I believe you should have a program for disabled or on fixed income to help curve the cost for individuals to community center facilities*
- *The city is about to DOUBLE in size over next decade- make these builders pay for these amenities!*
- *What sales tax are you going to increase? If Erie does not get business that is not an option. Don't give house developers incentives that they don't need anyway. Erie lacks facilities not homes.*

The second most-identified theme in the comments is the desire for an outdoor pool area (9 percent of all comments mention an outdoor pool):

- *Erie really needs an outdoor pool facility that is large enough for swim teams and recreation*
- *I have 3 children, we love outdoor pools and we would love to be able to have a membership to an Erie Pool. We love Broomfield's pool, The Bay, but we can't get a membership there because we are not residents. We consider YMCA, Lamont Does and Sunset every year. We have lived here for 14 years and don't plan on ever leaving, but this is our biggest issue with the city.*

Another recurring topic is growth and development in Erie (mentioned in 9 percent of all comments). Many residents are concerned with losing the “small town feel” of Erie or worry that new development will strain local resources:

- *Block housing and retail development - need to maintain the rural feel of this town, otherwise we are just another sad bedroom community full of commuters*
- *I love old town. Don't change it. I moved to Erie because of it's rural feel and history. We are now losing that FAST!*
- *I moved to Erie 16 years ago to Arapahoe Ridge. We loved the peace and quiet, the open space, etc. Too many homes are being built, which is leading to congestion. Town facilities will be overcrowded. I've lived in Los Angeles and Phoenix and have watched as the*

developer- city government alliance destroys communities, and Erie's decline has begun. We are now planning to move.

- *If developers continue to be allowed to take away beautiful open farm spaces, there won't be any left for parks and open spaces.*
- *Quit building these enormous housing developments putting a strain on the facilities we have. Erie was such a nice small town and now it's massive and still growing out of hand.*
- *Town should encourage developers to include recreation facilities (pool, community building with workout room) in their neighborhoods and new development areas. This would lessen the burden to ECC.*

A notable portion of respondents commented on the open space in Erie, including the desire to preserve open space and maintenance of current open space areas:

- *Can never have too much open space. Let us use our limited land wisely and reserve as much as possible for parks, open space and recreational facilities. We will never get back what housing developers absorb today.*
- *Continue to acquire large tracts of open space, especially along Coal Creek and drainages, and restore them. Weed control in open space.*
- *I'd like to see as much open space Erie can buy and make trail use and wildlife protection - forget all this news of making roads bigger to bring in more big box stores found at every corner - it would make us more special and a much better place to live.*
- *Please focus on acquiring and maintaining open space and open space recreation. This is why people are moving to Erie and to Colorado.*

A number of comments mention trail connectivity (7 percent of comments), both within Erie and to adjacent communities:

- *Creating a connection for bike trail to Boulder that keeps bike riders on designated "paths," not roads*
- *I obviously would like to see the trail system improve, increasing connectivity to surrounding communities. You can ride from Denver to Golden on paved trail the entire way. How far can I ride from Erie?*
- *We live in Arapahoe Ridge. Trail access to other open space/trail systems is terribly lacking. There is some connectivity to the Lafayette open space to the south, but no trails to connect Arapahoe Ridge to other Erie neighborhoods or trail systems. It feels very isolating (as though we are more a part of Lafayette than Erie), and will be part of our decision making of where to live when we move in approximately 3 years. The trails sorely need a way to do longer distances without jumping between one trail and another. There is also no way to get to the shops (especially Safeway but also the new and under construction shops on route 7). Even getting to town along county road is hard for pedestrians or kids.*

Finally, many residents compliment the work of Erie Parks and Recreation (8 percent of all comments):

- *Erie does a wonderful job with parks and rec. Not much room for improvement needed in my opinion.
I'm excited that Erie has unique venues like the velodrome and skate park! I'm definitely going to look into the trails to get out and be more active in the community.*
- *Improvements over the last 25 years have been outstanding, hopefully we can afford to continue that trend*
- *Thank you all for the work you've put into this town!*

Other frequently cited topics include resident desire for more commercial space, enthusiasm regarding existing mountain biking amenities and desire for expansion, more senior programming and gathering spaces, endorsement of environmentally friendly initiatives, and expansion of the Erie Community Center.