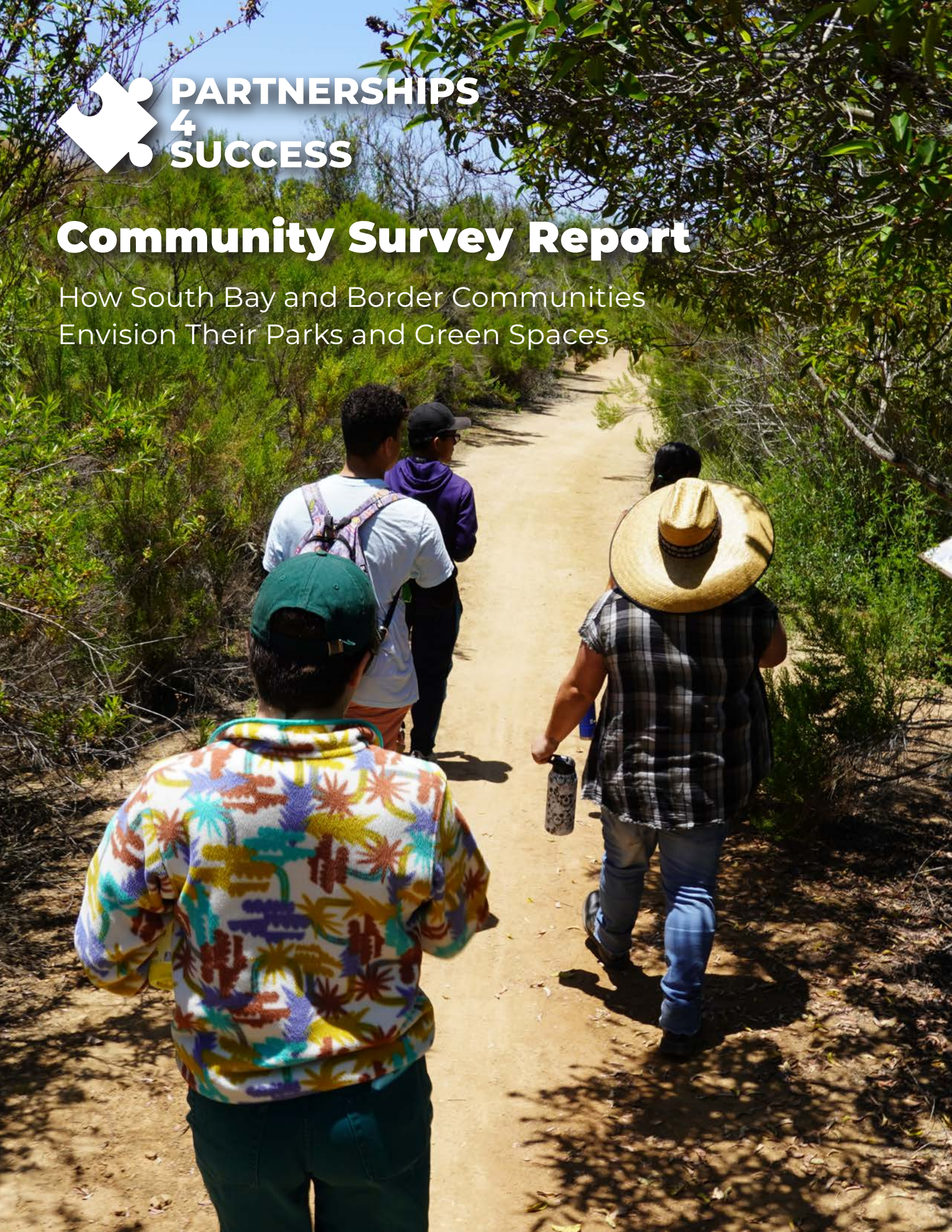




**PARTNERSHIPS  
4  
SUCCESS**

# **Community Survey Report**

How South Bay and Border Communities  
Envision Their Parks and Green Spaces



# Parks in San Diego South Bay and Border Communities



NATIONAL CITY

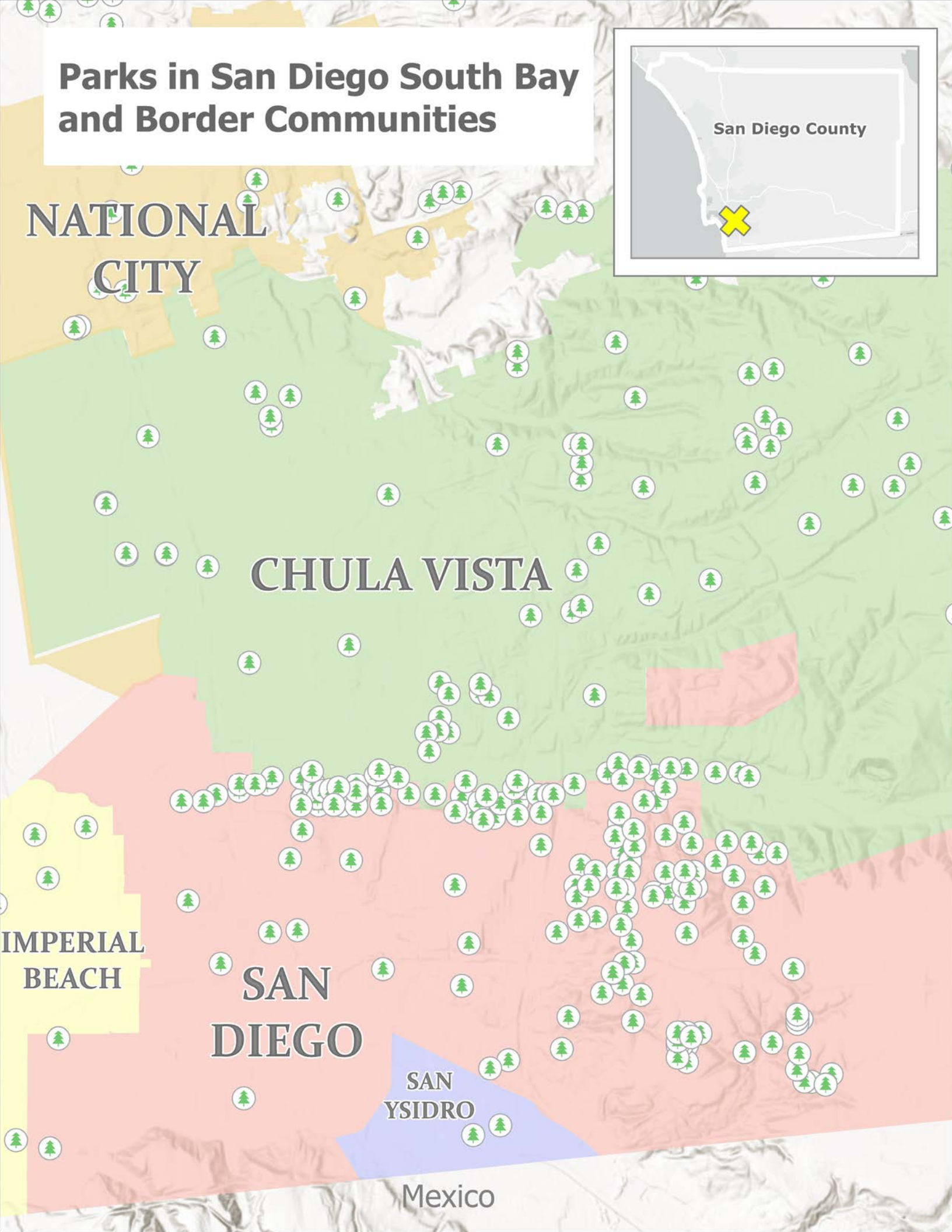
CHULA VISTA

IMPERIAL BEACH

SAN DIEGO

SAN YSIDRO

Mexico



## Introduction

The Partnerships 4 Success (P4S) Coalition is a multi-sector collaborative facilitated by the Institute for Public Strategies with the mission of reducing and preventing substance use among residents of the South Bay and Border Communities in San Diego County. We do this by advancing policy, systems, and environmental change through collective impact.

***Our mission is to empower the South Bay and Border Communities to improve their quality of life through collaborative planning, community action, and advocacy. We envision a South Bay and Border Communities where all residents have the opportunity to live a healthy and fulfilling life.***

P4S takes a nontraditional angle by promoting upstream solutions to prevent substance misuse among the Latino/e/x population in the region. We do this by focusing on unfair neighborhood conditions that negatively impact health. By unfair neighborhood conditions, we mean unsafe parks, a lack of access to accurate information, a lack of access to healthy foods, and limited health care services. These community characteristics can lead to toxic stress, resulting in substance use and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and shorten people's life spans in these neighborhoods.

The Park Equity Survey was the first step in achieving P4S's program goal to address park and green space equity in the South Bay and Border Region. Our team has been working in collaboration with park rangers at the Otay Valley Regional Park to address concerns about crime, lighting, trash, and the community of unhoused neighbors who reside within the park. All of these issues are reasons why the survey was conducted. It was to ensure that South Bay residents' concerns regarding parks and green spaces are heard.

Therefore, the goal of this survey/report was to advocate for improved access and amenities to green spaces and parking in the South Bay region. Many of these communities are overburdened by pollution and limited walkability. Parks and green spaces offer refuge, relaxation, and an opportunity to boost social cohesion among residents of this region.



## Overview

Parks and green spaces are essential to the overall health and liveliness of a community. People who have access to these spaces have more opportunities for physical activity, social connection, and communal cohesion. Parks can also be a great space for mitigating the impact of climate change in under served communities as these spaces serve to reduce air and water pollution.

Parks and green spaces are especially important in regions like the South Bay communities of San Diego. The 2019-21 Community Health Assessment found that heart disease, diabetes, and stroke were all major health problems for a large majority of the South Bay population. Providing spaces for people to exercise and engage in recreational activities can be a vital tool for decreasing these high rates of disease. Everyone should have a right to a clean and safe neighborhood.

Parks are essential public services. They are conducive to hosting programs such as food banks and recreational programming. During the COVID-19 pandemic, community parks such as the Otay Valley Regional Park were used to provide testing and vaccine services. During emergencies, they serve in vital public spaces to provide public health care services. Recently, local parks in the South Bay were used to shelter immigrant children. These spaces are vital to the health of the community and they must be well-maintained and resourced.

Parks and green spaces are currently not up to par with lighting, surveillance, or enough park rangers. One example of this is Otay Regional Valley Park which has three rangers for a multi jurisdictional park. There is no consensus as to who takes care of this area because multiple police departments are charged with overseeing patrol and its maintenance. Imperial Beach is also an important recreation area that continuously faces pollution and contamination from transborder sewage water. Other parks struggle with crime, and residents report feeling unsafe in using the amenities.

Our survey found that a wide majority of community members felt that safety should be the top priority for park improvements. A large majority supported additional police and security presence to alleviate this concern. Further, improved lighting, walkability, and pedestrian safety were also mentioned frequently. This report will assist the local governments in understanding the needs of South Bay residents concerning parks and green spaces.



## Methodology

Our team created the survey using the platform Survey Monkey. We created fliers that contained the QR code with a link to the survey and sent out email blasts to over 10 public health networks in the South region of San Diego, and at least one network on the Mexico side of the border in Baja California. Additionally, our team canvassed public spaces in the following ZIP codes: 91910, 92154, 91911, and 91950. These ZIP codes include the census tracts with the most disadvantaged community members according to the [P4S Needs Assessment](#) released in 2020.

The sample size was 300 people and 304 people took the survey. During the last six weeks of the survey, we offered one \$25 gift card to Northgate Market per week.

### ***While we were strategically canvassing the Latino/e/x population in the South Bay and Border Communities, we did NOT turn away:***

- South Bay and Border Community members of different ethnic/racial backgrounds
- Latino/e/x people who were in the area BUT did not live in the area

### ***This means that on occasion we captured information from***

- Latino/e/x community members who cited a ZIP code in a different region of San Diego County
- Non-Latino/e/x community members who live in the South Bay and Border communities

This strategy helped us capture the unique condition that the US-Mexico Border produces in the region. Primarily, the more common experience of transborder community members, also known as a Fronterizo/e/x – a person who may work, study, or play in San Diego but live in Tijuana. As community members of the South Bay and Border Region, we also aimed to capture their input on the conditions of parks in the region.



## Results

Over 70% of participants chose English and approximately 25% spoke Spanish as their preferred language. A wide variety of communities within the San Diego South Bay region were represented in this sample. The majority of participants were from Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, and the City of San Diego. Participants were asked for their ZIP code before taking the survey to ensure that the majority of the respondents lived, worked, or played in the South Bay Region. However, we did not exclude Latine/x from taking the survey who did not live, work, or play in South Bay. The majority of participants were women (66%) followed by men (30%), non binary (3%), and no answer (8%). Age ranges varied but the largest age block was 25-34 years old. A significant portion of participants identified as Latinx/Hispanic (64%) followed by Black/African American (12%) and White (10%).

Further data was collected by asking the following questions: Why did you visit the public park that you visit most often? What is the name of the park you visit most often? What are the best ways to inform you about programs, events, or facilities offered to the public? What do you need/ want the park to do more often? What is the most important idea you have for improving your community? Is there anything else you would like us to know about the parks and recreation needs of your community?

The most notable findings of this report were that people use the parks and recreational areas to be with family and friends, be closer to nature, and play and exercise. The most visited parks identified within this report were Kimball Park in National City, Montgomery-Waller Park in the City of San Diego, and Veterans Park in Imperial Beach. Most people felt that the best way to disseminate information was through Instagram, fliers/in-person outreach, and local newspapers.

The most pressing concerns for improving parks revolved around safety. Many people felt that more or new lighting, surveillance cameras, and additional police and security are necessary in the parks. Many also reported a need for improved walkability with additional bike and pedestrian lanes, crosswalks, and signage. Community members were interested in having more access to social service programs at their local parks, recreational programs for children and adults, and social/cultural events.

## The following graphs present the results of the survey



**Question 1: What is your preferred language?**

We began by asking participants to choose the language in which they would like to take the survey. Out of the 304 participants, 225 or approximately 75% chose English. And 75 or approximately 25% chose Spanish.

**Graph 1: Language Preference**



**Question 2: What is the name of your neighborhood?**

We asked participants what neighborhood they were from to ensure we reached participants in our target areas which included National City, San Ysidro, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, and Tijuana.

**Word Cloud 1: Neighborhood Name**

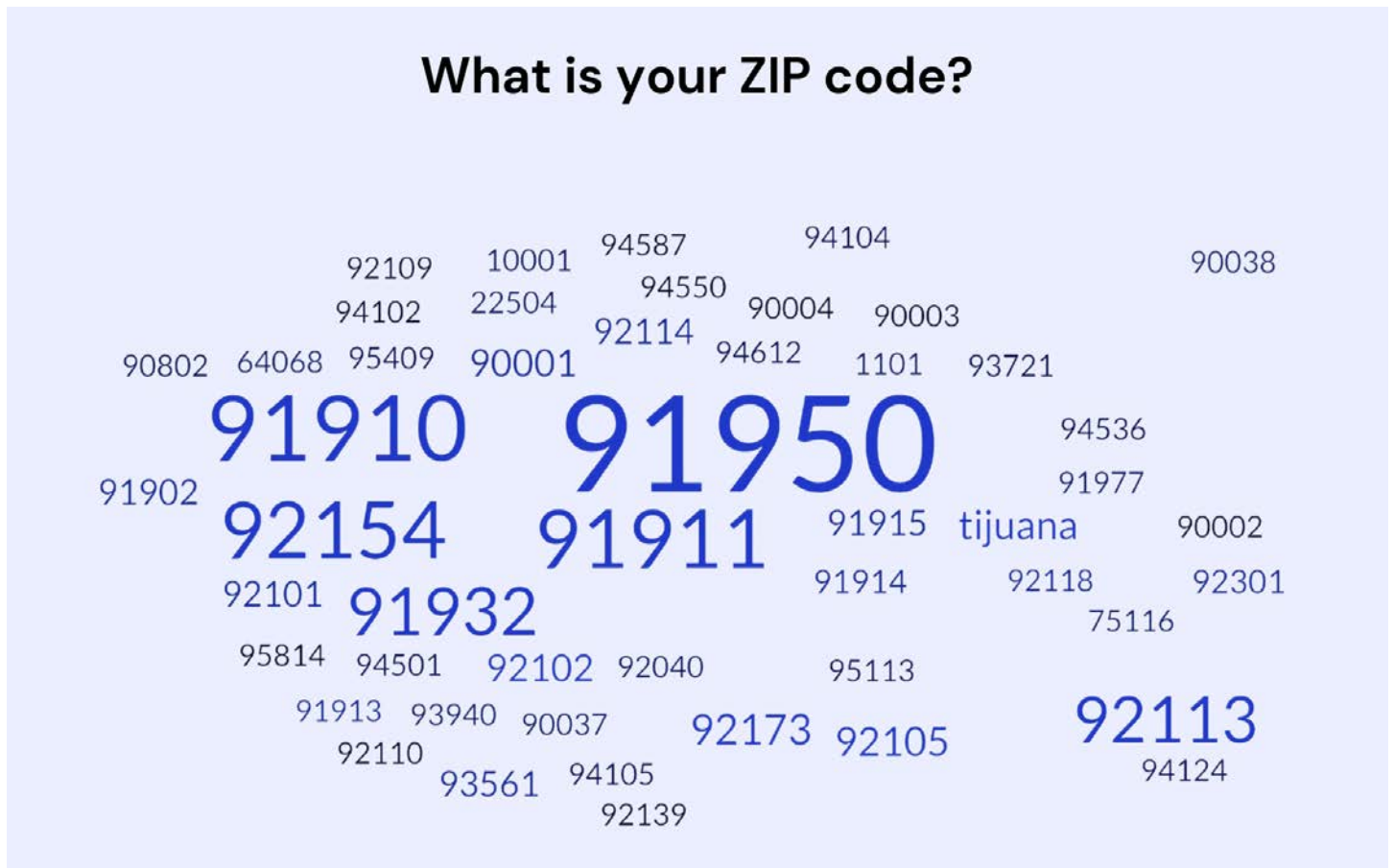




**Question 3: What is your ZIP code?**

We asked participants to tell us their ZIP code. As mentioned earlier, our target population was either community members from the South Bay and Border Communities or community members from the Latino/e/x demographic. As shown in Graph 2.1, the most frequently responded ZIP codes were Chula Vista (91910), National City (91950), Imperial Beach (92154), and the City of San Diego.

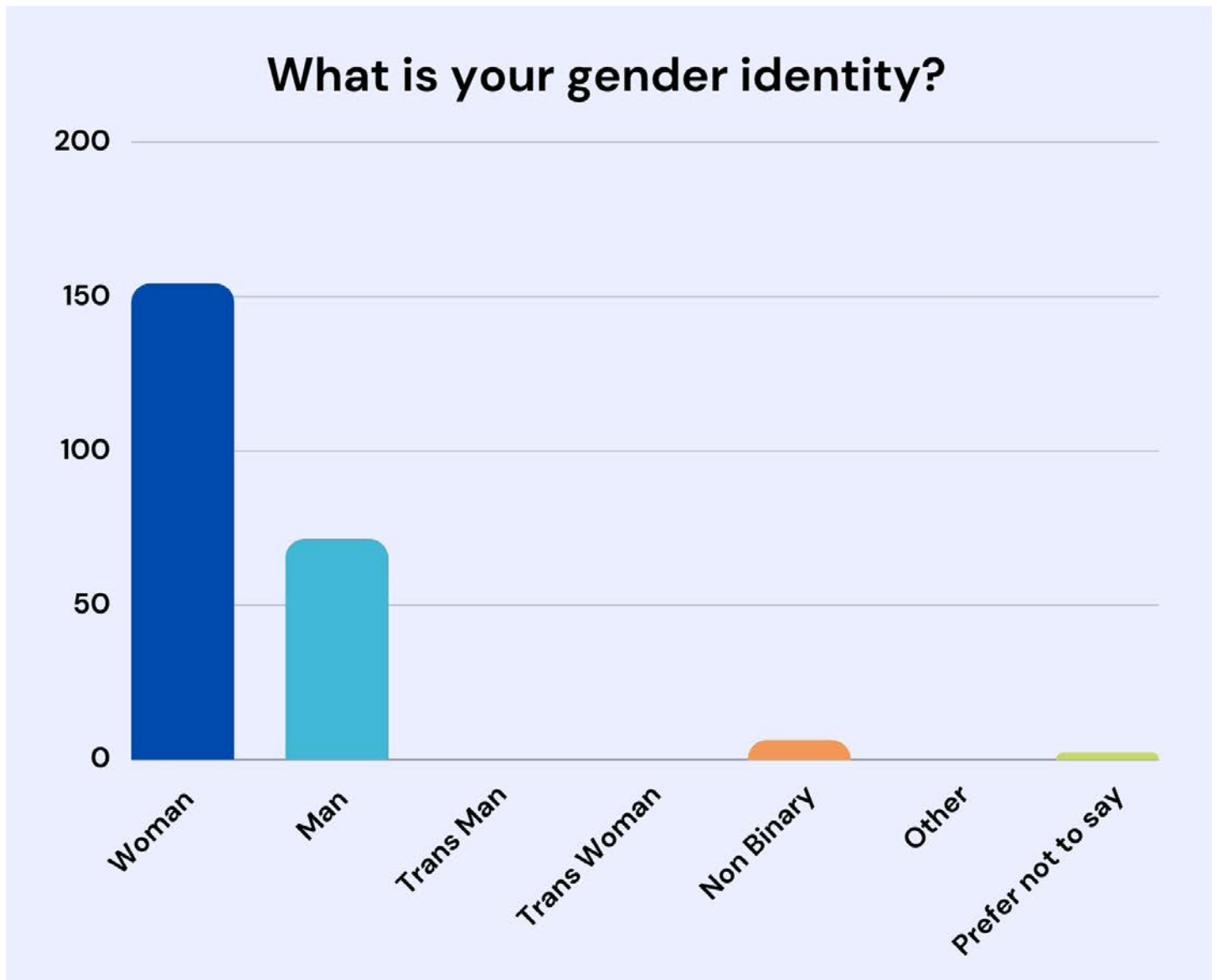
**Word Cloud 2: ZIP Codes**



**Question 4: What is your gender identity?**

This question was optional. Approximately 66% of the respondents identified as women and 30% of the respondents identified as men. Two percent of respondents identified as non-binary and 1% of respondents preferred not to state their gender identity. Out of the 304 respondents, 67 people skipped this question.

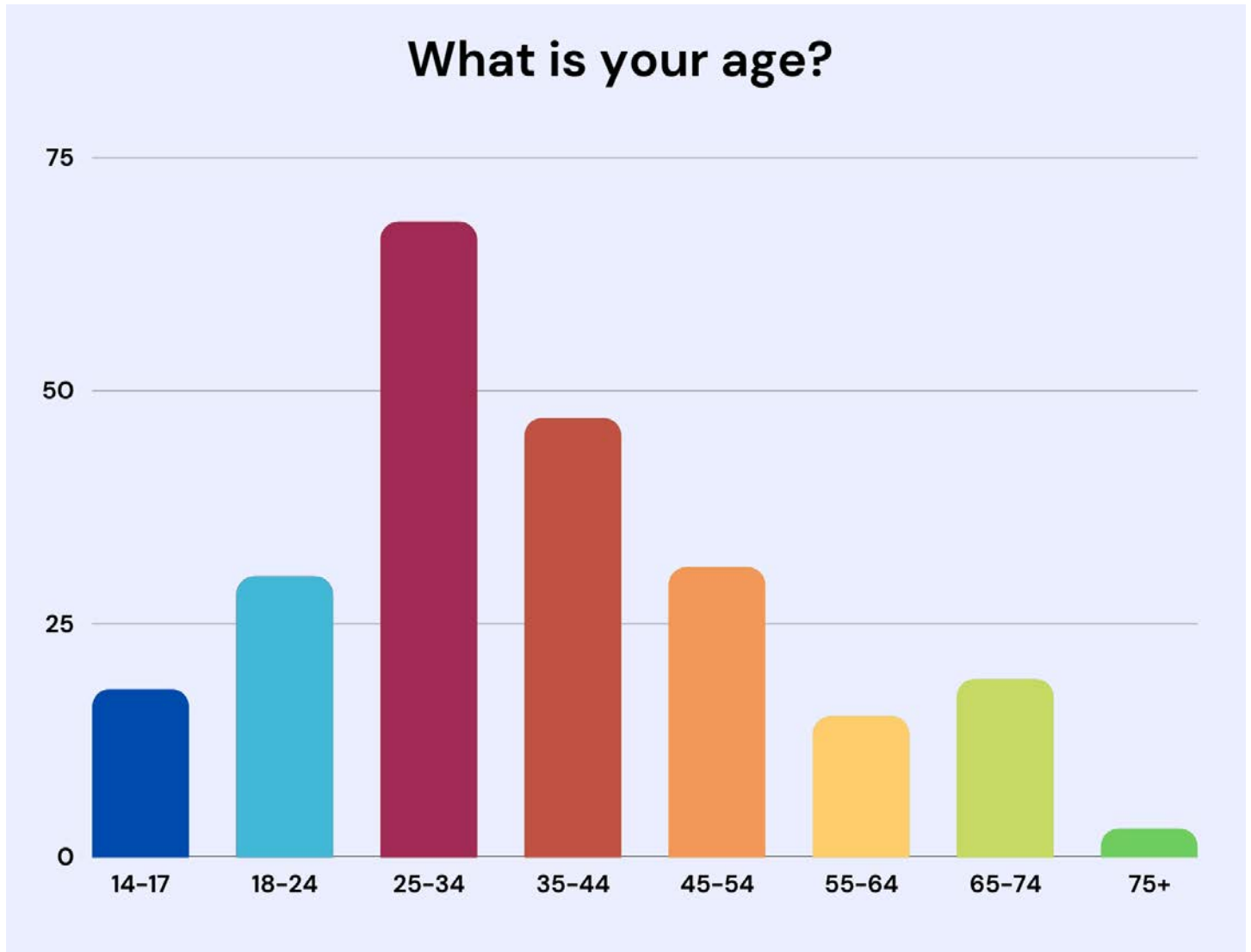
**Graph 2: Gender Identity**



**Question 5: What is your age?**

This question was optional. The highest percentage of respondents (35%) fell between the ages of 25-34. Out of the 304 respondents, 69 respondents skipped this question.

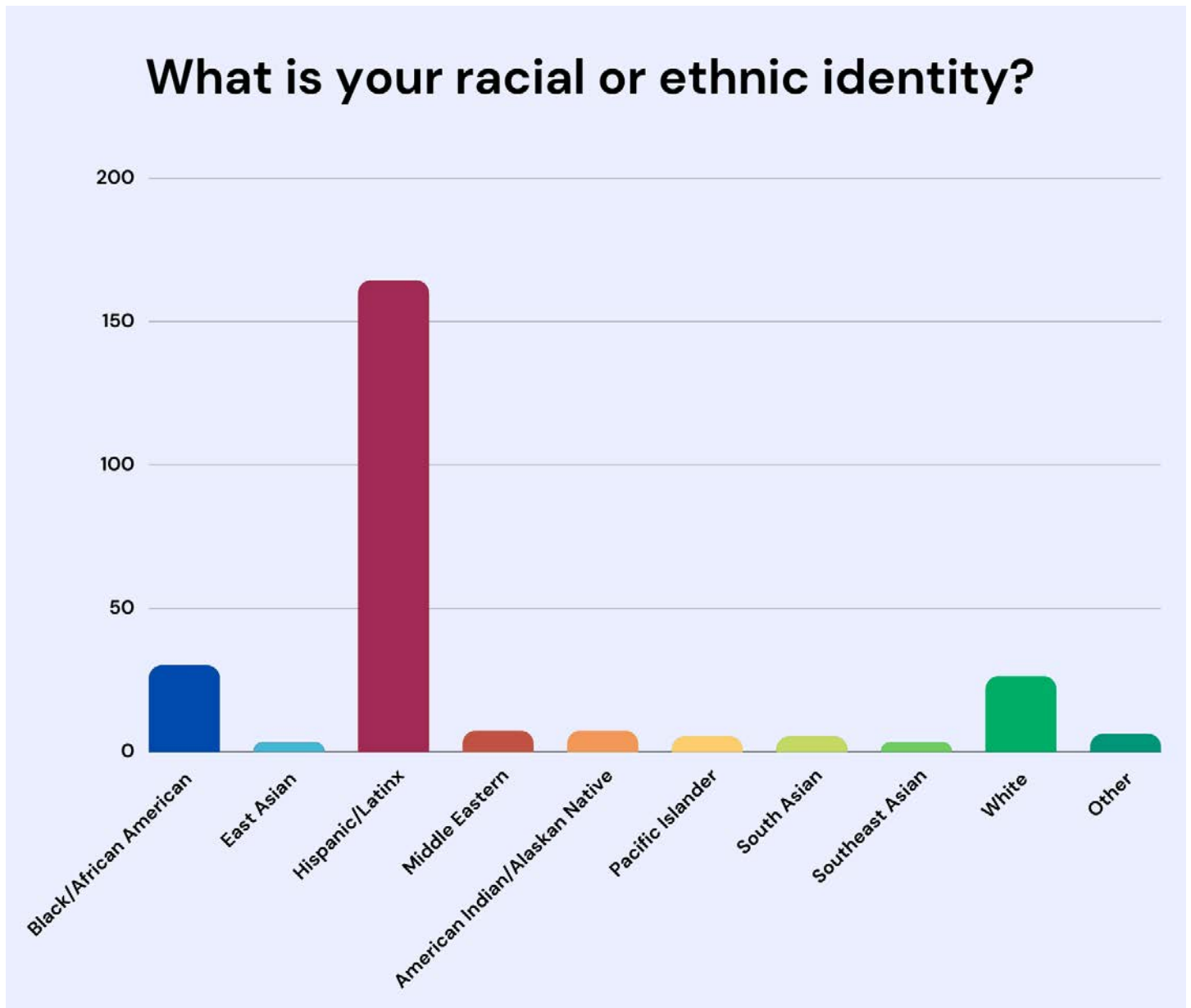
**Graph 3: Age**



**Question 6: What is your racial or ethnic identity?**

This question was optional. Approximately 64% of respondents identified as Latino/e/x which was our target demographic. Out of the 304 respondents, 44 respondents skipped this question.

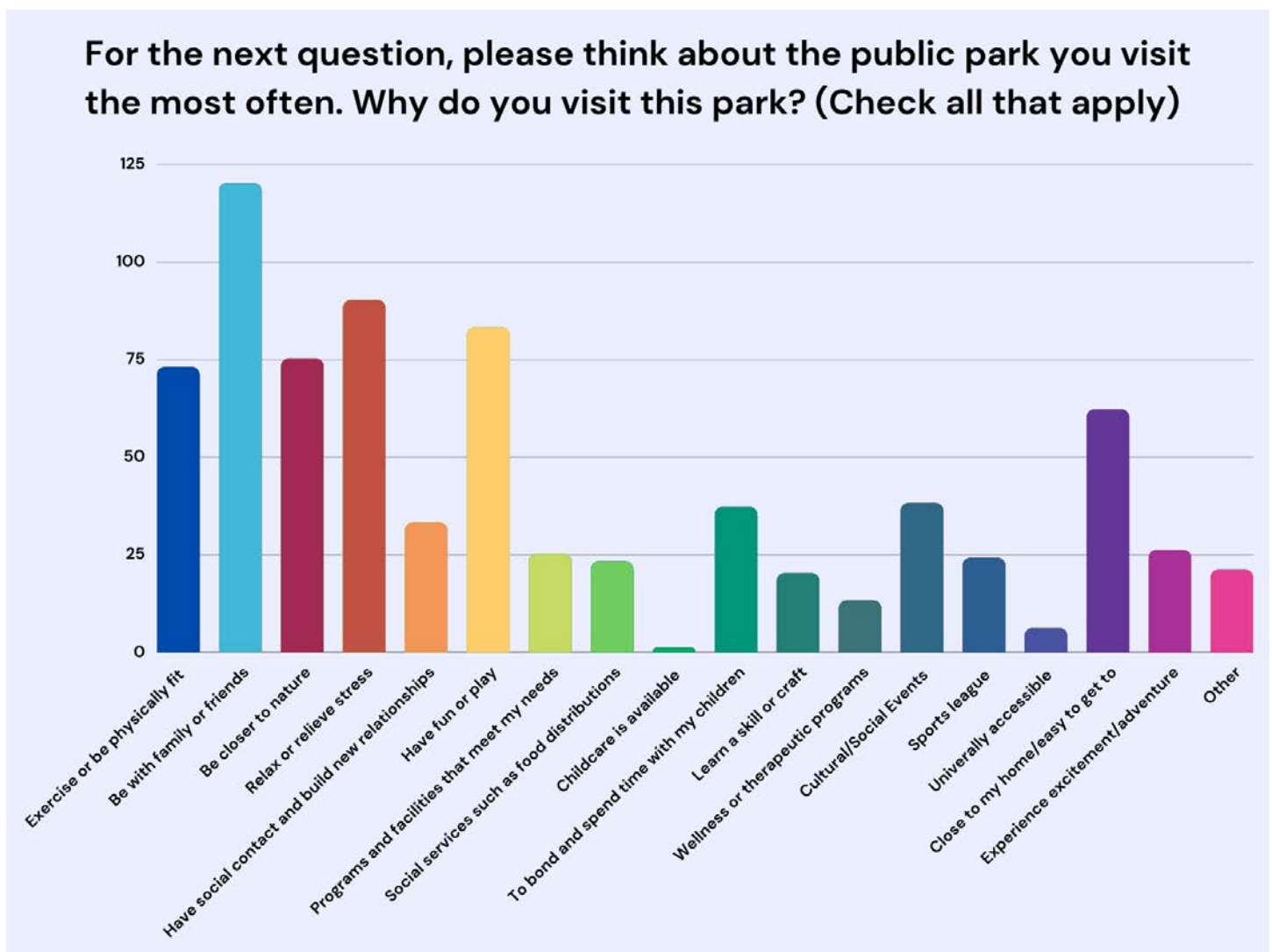
**Graph 4: Racial or Ethnic Identity**



**Question 7: For the next question, please think about the public park that you visit most often. Why do you visit this park?**

This question was mandatory. We asked community members to specify their reasons for visiting the park. They could select various answers from the list we provided. The most common answers chosen were “Be with family or friends” (51%) and “Relax or relieve stress” (38%). This indicates that parks are essential for social connection as well as mental health.

**Graph 5: Reasons for Visiting a Park**



**Question 8: Please provide the name of the park, if you know it. If you don't know the park's name, please provide the nearest cross streets.**

This question allowed participants to name the park or the cross streets if the respondent did not know the name of the park. The parks that participants most frequented were Kimball Park in National City, Montgomery Waller Park in the City of San Diego, and Veterans Park in Imperial Beach. We conducted outreach at each of these sites while this survey was open which could be a contributing factor.

**Word Cloud 3: Park Name**

**What is the name of the park that you visit most often?**

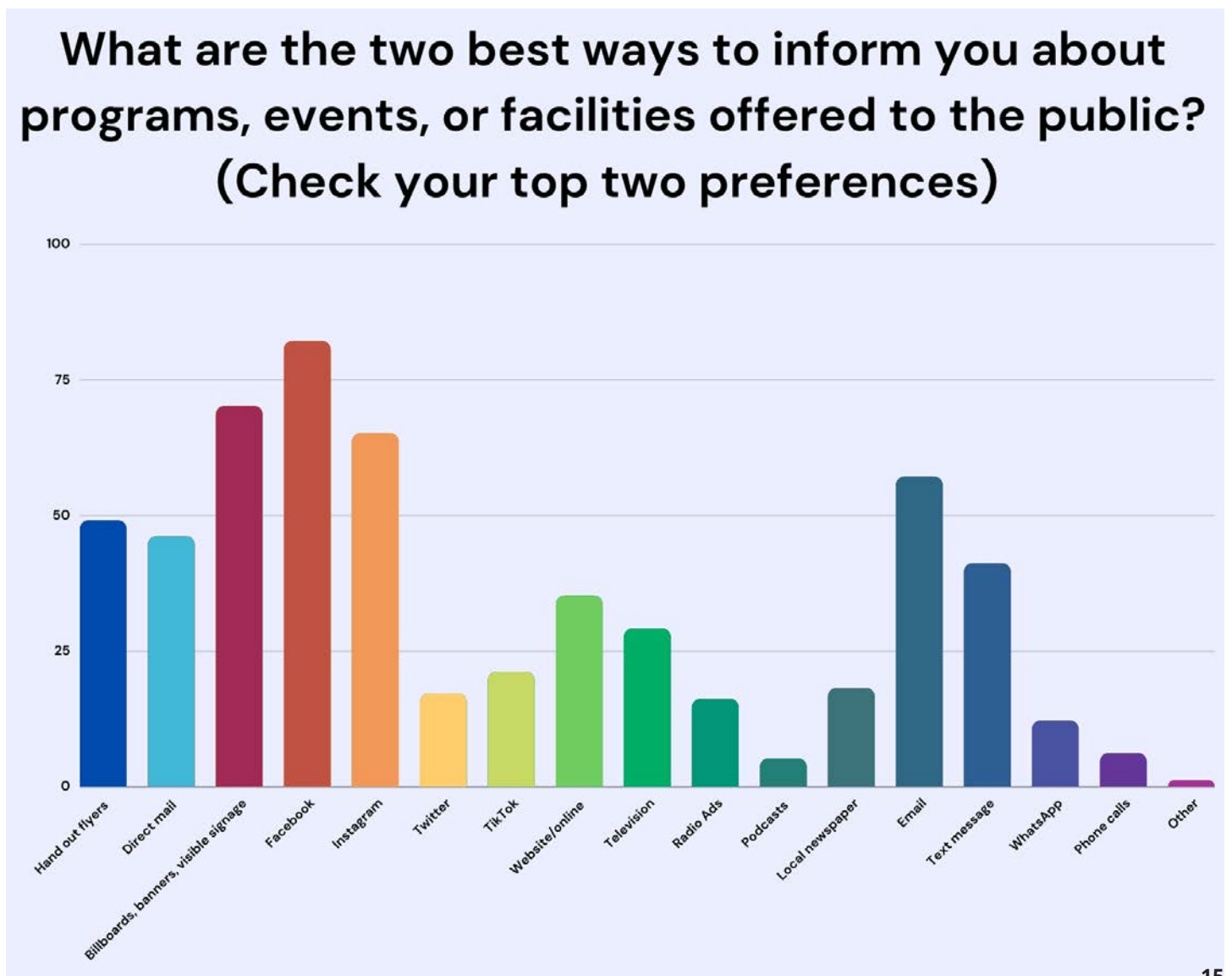


**Question 9: What are the two best ways to inform you about programs, events, or facilities offered to the public? (Check your top two answers)**

For this question, we wanted to gain insight as to how people prefer to receive information about programs, events, and facilities offered to the public. The most preferred methods were Facebook with 35% of respondents voting for it and Billboards, banners, posters, etc. in high pedestrian/traffic areas with 30% of respondents voting for this choice.

Social media continues to be a significant source of information for respondents, suggesting that these platforms continue to serve the greater good, especially for people in under served communities. Social media can also facilitate the formation of online communities where people with shared interests or concerns can connect, share information, and mobilize for various causes around park issues.

**Graph 6: Information Dissemination**



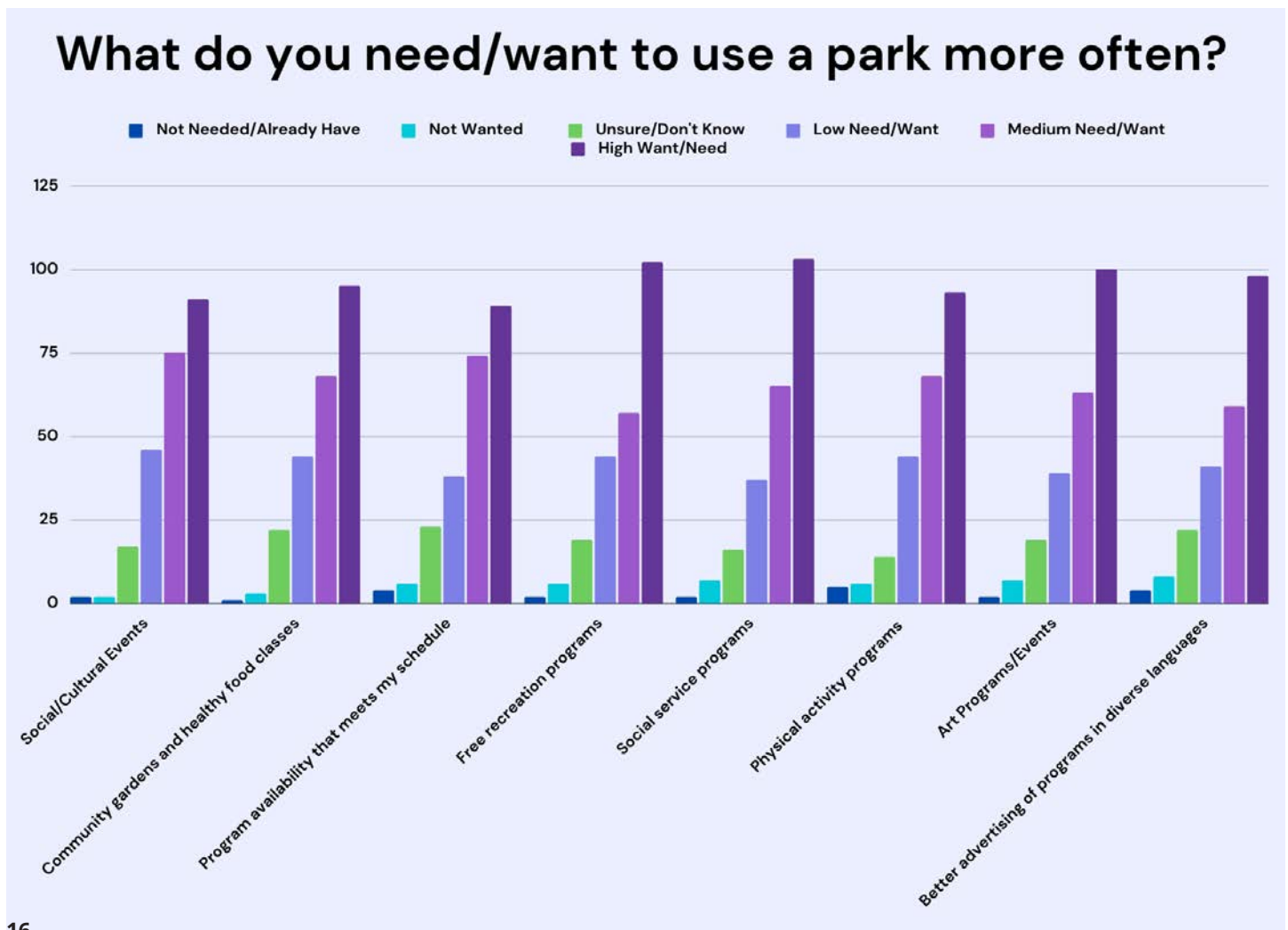
### Question 10:

We asked this question to provide participants an opportunity to stay up to date with our program initiatives. This was an optional question.

### Question 11: What do you need/want to use a park more often (Park Amenities)?

We asked each respondent to rank different park amenities like social services, social events, and programs into the following categories: *High Want / Need, Medium Want / Need, Low Want / Need, Unsure / Don't know, Not Wanted, and Not Wanted / Already Have*. While most respondents ranked High Want / Need across all categories, the most highly marked answer was social service programs. This encompasses services like free meals, health screenings, mental health resources, and life skills workshops. Parks are essential sites for these resources to be offered since they are accessible in addition to being sites for physical wellness.

Graph 7: Ranking of Park Amenities

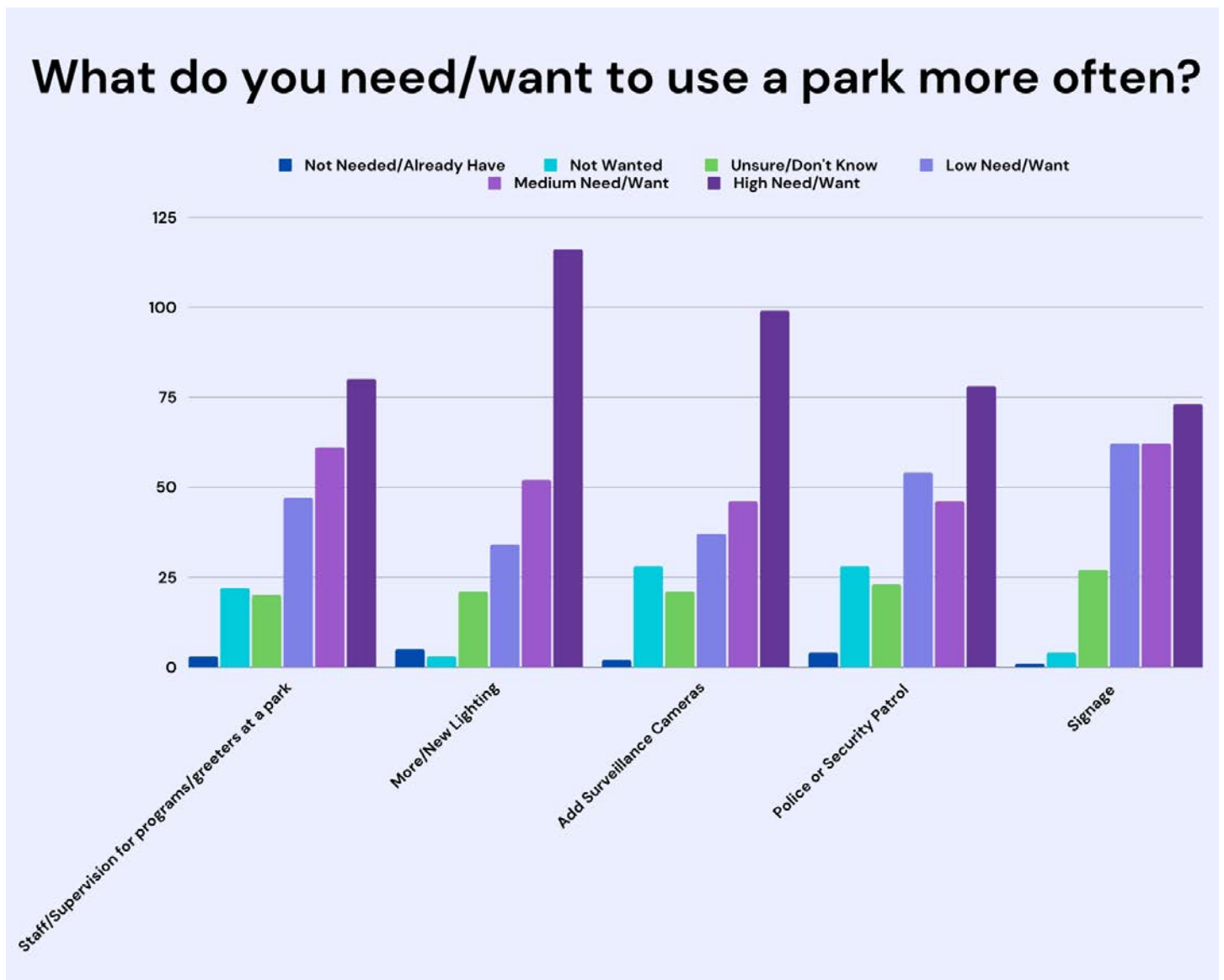




### Question 12: What do you need/want to use a park more often (Park Infrastructure)?

Similar to Question 11, respondents marked High Want/ Need across all categories. The most frequently marked category was new lighting followed by new surveillance cameras. Park safety and accessibility are key concerns among the respondents. They prioritize technical infrastructure over human capital in improving park safety.

Graph 8: Park Infrastructure



**Question 13: What is the most important idea that you have for improving your community?**

Respondents were asked about their ideas for improving their community. Answers ranged from improving infrastructure and safety to creating new park spaces. Out of the 304 respondents, 155 people skipped this question. Improving the security of South Bay parks may elicit more park visitors, which may also consequently enhance safety, as there would be more people around to deter crime.

**Word Cloud 4: Community Input**

**What is an idea you have for improving your community?**



**Question 14: Is there anything else you would like us to know about the park and recreation needs of your community?**

Respondents had the opportunity to give any last input on parks and recreation in their communities. Answers for this were similar to that of Question 13 with many of the same keywords cited such as programming and safety. Other keywords that came up were dog parks, services, and resources. Although physical infrastructure is important to the respondents, the most valuable investment would be through programs that provide enhanced engagement, education and learning, recreation and fun, cultural enrichment, and community building.

**Word Cloud 5: More Community Input**

**Is there anything else you would like  
for us to know about the park and  
recreation needs of your community?**



## **Trends & Conclusion**

### **1. South Bay and the Border Region parks need infrastructure.**

In the responses to Questions 13 and 14, the words safety, cleanliness, and trash came up a combined 51, 14, and 5 times across both questions. This would indicate that South Bay communities have an active need for more walkable spaces to commute to their local parks and green spaces. A common recurring theme from our results was a need for safety, security, and cleanliness at local parks. Nearly half of the survey takers requested additional lighting in and around their green spaces. Many also requested additional police or security surveillance. Many participants reported that the restrooms or park amenities were not clean, safe, or functioning for themselves or their children to use comfortably.

### **2. South Bay and the Border Region Community Members want to see continued expansion of park and green space amenities.**

When asked about programming surrounding events, classes, and programs, community members indicated support for these services. Responses to Question 11 ranked social services as the amenity that was needed the most. Following social services, free recreation programs along with community gardens were ranked next with the highest need for respondents. These programs offer both physical and mental health benefits, as well as social connectivity through community-building, another positive health benefit.

### **3. South Bay and the Border Region Community Members utilize their Parks as sites of recreation, healthy coping mechanisms, and communal gathering.**

The top reasons for visiting local parks were that people went there to spend time with friends and family, to play or exercise, to spend time in nature, and to relieve stress. Congruent with this trend, a wide majority of people reported wanting to see more social events, social services, and recreational programs for children and adults alike. This indicates that the underlying motive for the use of local parks is to socialize and connect as a community. Many also signaled a strong desire for a higher degree of staff supervision for programs or greeters at the park. In sum, our results indicate that the local parks are areas sought out for communal activities which include exercise, play, and relaxation.



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