



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

**TO** Interested Parties

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**RE:** Accessibility and Recreation Habits at East Bay Regional Parks

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This memo outlines key trends in data from surveys of East Bay Regional Park District residents in response to requests for more specific trend and demographic data from the District's board and staff. It draws largely from FM3 Research's July 2023 survey of 637 residents of the East Bay Regional Park District, with comparisons to surveys from 2020 and 2022.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this analysis is to provide a shared understanding of the current state of the community's views of the Park District. At the conclusion of this analysis, we will present opportunities to explore additional themes and issues in future Park District work.

### Key Findings

- **Seven in ten visit parks or trails at least once a month, and nearly half do so weekly.**
- **Walking and hiking are the most popular activities residents like to do at parks close to home.**
- **Residents strongly and broadly agree that East Bay parks, trails, and open space areas are accessible.**
- **Residents place greater importance on maintaining existing parks and trails than developing new ones.**

The remainder of this memo describes in more detail findings by key demographics, and over time, on the questions of park visit frequency, preferred activities, and accessibility, as well as the value they assign to maintaining existing parks compared with developing new ones.

### Details

#### Park Visit Frequency

**Seven in ten visit parks or trails at least once a month, and nearly half do so weekly.** As shown in Figure 1 on the next page, 45% of residents visit a park or trail at least weekly. It is important to note that this question was not specific to EBRPD properties, and likely includes residents' experiences visiting city parks, state parks, and EBMUD land along with East Bay Regional Parks. (In the 2022 survey question asking which park they visit most often, 40% could not name one, or named a park that is not part of EBRPD).

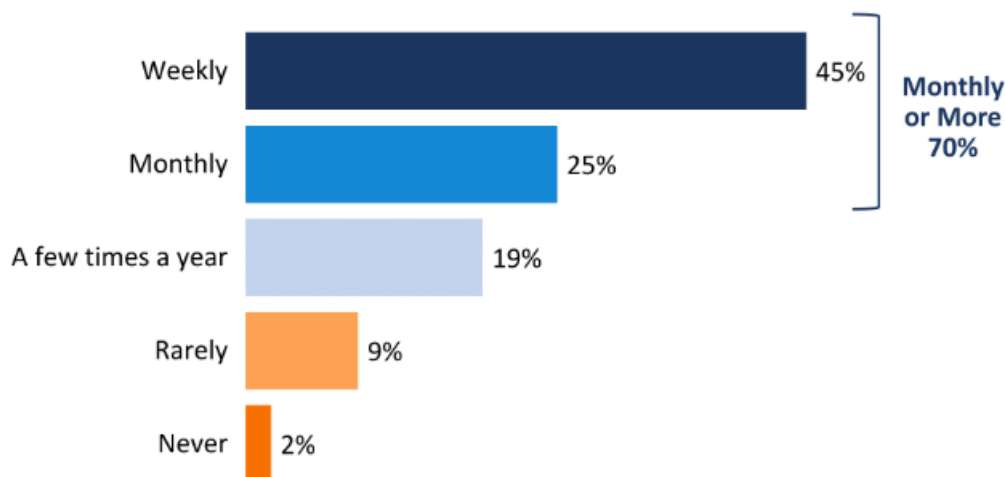
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<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From July 15-20, 2023, FM3 completed 637 online and telephone interviews with adult residents living in the East Bay Regional Park District. The survey was conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

In a 2022 resident survey, 37% said they visited East Bay Regional Parks at least weekly, and in a 2020 survey, 41% said they visit weekly or more often. The increase in park visit frequency in the last year could be accounted for by the broader wording of the 2023 question. See Appendix A for 2022 and 2020 EBRPD visitation rates in detail.

**Figure 1: 2023 Park Visitation Frequency**

*How often would you say you or a member of your household visits a park or trail?*



There are several notable differences in frequency of park visitation by key demographics:

- Three in ten (31%) Black residents visit parks and trails weekly. There are no statistical differences for other groups from residents overall.
- Latino residents are slightly more likely to “rarely” or “never” visit (16%) compared to white residents (9%) and residents of color overall (12%).
- Across age groups, residents in their 40s (52%) and ages 65 to 74 (55%) are more likely to visit parks and trails weekly than residents overall. Just 22% of those ages 75+ visit at least weekly.
- Geographically, half (50%) of Ward 1 residents and 53% of Ward 6 residents visit parks at least weekly. Weekly visitation is less common in Wards 2 (41%) and 7 (39%).
- 51% of parents of children under 19 visit at least weekly, compared with 42% who do not.
- Residents with a college degree are more likely to visit weekly or more (49%) than those without a college degree (41%). On the other hand, those without a college degree (15%) are more likely to say they visit “rarely” or “never” than those who do (7%).
- 49% of people with a disability visit at least weekly, compared with 44% of those without one -- meaning there is no statistical difference in frequency between these two groups.
- Among the 68% with a positive view of the District, 44% visit parks weekly.

## Preferred Activities

The 2023 survey took a close look at residents' willingness to travel to participate in a range of park activities, offering "not interested" as a choice as well, which can be used as a way of looking at residents' preferences for activities at EBRPD. While the time it takes to get to a local park and trail varies widely for residents throughout the District -- and even those with a park at their back door may frequently visit another park with different activities they enjoy that is farther away. It again important to note that this question was not specific to EBRPD, asking instead about things they might do at "local parks and trails."

To evaluate the activities that residents prefer to do within the region, Figure 2 shows the activities that majorities of residents are willing to travel at most one hour to participate in, the ones they are willing to travel an hour or more for, and the ones they are not interested in at all.

**Figure 2: 2023 Local Park and Trail Activities**

*I'd like you to consider things you might do at local parks and trails. Please tell me the longest amount of time you would travel in order to participate in each activity: 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, an hour, or more than an hour.*

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	64%	29%	8%
Naturalist-led educational programs	57%	18%	26%
Barbecuing or picnicking	53%	35%	12%
Running or jogging	52%	14%	34%
Outdoor recreational programs	52%	33%	15%
Exercising your dog	50%	16%	35%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	47%	25%	27%
Hiking	45%	45%	10%
Spending time in nature	45%	50%	5%
Activities for youth	43%	27%	31%
Swimming	43%	22%	33%
E-biking	30%	8%	62%
Backpacking	26%	37%	37%
Mountain biking	25%	19%	54%
Horseback riding	24%	23%	54%
Fishing	23%	27%	50%
Car or RV camping	14%	51%	35%

- The activities majorities are willing to engage in closest to home include walking (64% are willing to travel no more than an hour), naturalist-led educational programs (57%), barbecuing or picnicking (53%), running or jogging (52%) and outdoor recreational programs (52%). And in the 2020 survey, 42% of residents said they walk at EBRPD properties often.

- Residents are willing to travel farther for experiences like hiking (45%), backpacking (37%), car/RV camping (51%), and spending time in nature (50%). In a region with multiple iconic national parks a few hours' drive away, this makes sense -- but the question doesn't capture whether people would also like to have options to do those things without traveling quite as far. In fact, the 2020 survey found that 48% of residents go hiking in EBRPD parks often; just 4% say camping is a frequent purpose bringing them to EBRPD parks.
- Majorities of residents report no interest in e-biking (62%) horseback riding (54%), mountain biking (54%), or fishing (50%). Those who are interested in e-biking prefer to do it closer to home (30% will travel within an hour, and just 8% will travel an hour-plus). In 2020, 12% ranked biking among their most-frequent EBRPD activities, though they did not specify whether that was road, mountain or e-biking. Biking in 2020 was more popular than a majority of activities respondents were asked about [specifically, picnicking (10%), birdwatching (6%), camping (4%) and environmental education (1%) to name a few examples], though as with the 2023 survey, it significantly lagged behind hiking (48%) and walking (42%).
- In general, residents who rarely or never visit parks expressed no greater interest in traveling for any outdoor activities than residents who visit parks at least a few times a year. Larger shares of rarely- or never-visitors also expressed having no interest in a variety of activities compared to residents overall. These activities include backpacking (51% said they were “not interested” compared to 37% of residents overall), car camping (44% vs. 35%), running (41% vs. 34%), youth activities (43% vs. 31%), birdwatching (50% vs 24%), naturalist-led education (48% vs. 26%), hiking (29% vs. 10%), and spending time in nature (20% vs 5%).

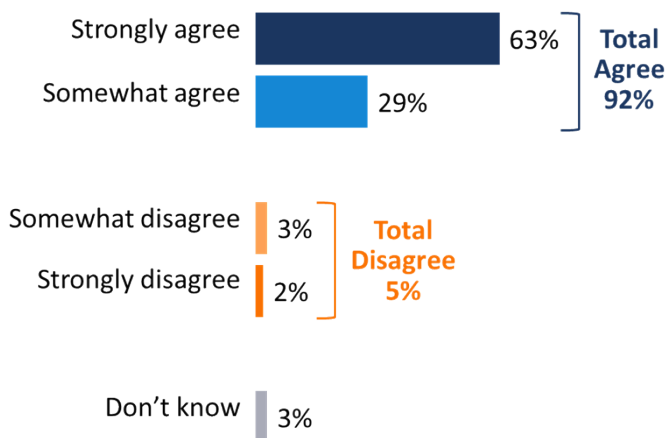
Appendix B further breaks down interest in traveling for activities by ethnicity and ward.

### Accessibility

**Residents strongly and broadly agree that East Bay parks, trails, and open space areas are accessible.** Fully 92% of residents of the District agree that parks, trails and open space areas in the East Bay are accessible to people like them -- and 63% strongly agree (Figure 3 on the next page). Just 5% disagree with that statement. While nearly all residents feel that these areas are accessible to people like them, they still see potential room for improvement. At the same time, 63% said they would be more likely to visit local parks and trails "if facilities were more accessible to people like me."

**Figure 3: 2023 Views of Accessibility**

*Do you agree or disagree with this statement? "The parks, trails, and open space areas in the East Bay are accessible to people like me."*



There are several notable differences in feelings of accessibility by key demographics – and some places with no real difference:

- 87% of Black residents say parks are accessible to people like them – a 5-point difference from residents overall that is just outside the survey's 4% margin of error. Among other racial and ethnic groups, views do not differ.
- Across age groups, 90% or more say they feel parks are accessible.
- Geographically, agreement with the statement ranges from 86% in Ward 6 to 99% in Ward 3 -- given subsample margins of error, this means attitudes are similar.
- For those with a college degree, strong agreement is broader (69%) than among those without one (57%), though total agreement is statistically the same.
- There is no statistical difference in attitudes on this question between parents of children under 19 and those without children at home, or between residents with a disability and those without a disability.

### **Maintaining vs. Developing New**

**Residents place greater importance on maintaining existing parks and trails than developing new ones.**

Residents were asked about a number of potential priorities for EBRPD investment, including two over-arching themes: "maintaining existing regional parks and trails" and "developing new regional parks and trails." As shown in Figure 4 on the next page, 58% of residents say it is "extremely" important that EBRPD invests in maintaining existing parks and trails compared to only 30% who say the same.

**Figure 4: 2023 Importance of Maintaining Versus Developing New Parks and Trails**

*I am going to read you a list of items that the East Bay Regional Park District considers as potential investment priorities over the next few years. Please tell me if you think it is extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.*

Priority	% Extremely Important	% Extremely or Very Important
Maintaining existing regional parks and trails	58%	94%
Developing new regional parks and trails	30%	65%

Views on developing new regional parks are consistent with the survey conducted in 2020. Though not an identical question, residents were asked to rate the importance of a similarly framed investment area: “develop, operate, and maintain new park facilities and trail improvement in areas like the San Francisco Bay Trail, the Concord Hills, and along the Oakland shoreline.” Twenty-eight percent (28%) rated it “extremely important,” while 66% in total rated it “extremely” or “very important.” This is statistically identical to the finding from 2023.

The 2022 survey did not ask separately about maintaining and expanding parks and trails, and the question was framed differently. Rather, respondents were given a list of investment priorities and asked to rate their importance on a scale of 1-7, where “1” was “not important at all” and “7” was “extremely important.” “Increasing capacity, maintaining and expanding the public’s access to parks and trails” received an average rating of 5.6 out of 7. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of residents rated it a “7.”

As shown in Figures 5 and 6 on the next page, overwhelming shares across ethnicity and ward call maintaining parks “extremely” or “very important.” However, some key subgroups assign even more importance to maintaining parks and trails. For example:

- A slightly higher share (69%) of Black residents say that maintaining parks is “extremely important,” compared with 58% of residents overall.
- Residents in Wards 5 (66%) and 7 (68%) are more likely to rate maintenance “extremely important.”
- Those ages 50+ are especially likely to deem maintenance “extremely important” (68%).
- There is no statistical difference in attitudes on this question by education, or between residents with a disability and those without a disability.

**Figure 5: Maintaining and Developing Parks by Ethnicity and Ward**  
(Extremely Important)

Priority	All Residents	Ethnicity				
		White Residents	Latino Residents	African American Residents	Asian/Pacific Islander Residents	All Residents of Color
Maintaining existing regional parks and trails	58%	61%	52%	69%	57%	57%
Developing new regional parks and trails	30%	33%	29%	44%	27%	29%

**Figure 5: Maintaining and Developing Parks by Ethnicity and Ward**  
(Extremely Important)

Priority	All Residents	Ward						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Maintaining existing regional parks and trails	58%	57%	61%	55%	47%	45%	66%	64%
Developing new regional parks and trails	30%	29%	36%	20%	31%	26%	37%	28%

Developing new regional parks and trails is a lower priority overall, with some texture in opinion by subgroup:

- African Americans are especially likely to call new parks and trails “extremely important” (44%) – 14 points higher than among residents overall.
- Those under 30 are less likely to say this is “extremely important” (18%), while people ages 50 to 64 are more likely (41%) to value it.
- There is no statistical difference in attitudes on this question by education, or between residents with a disability and those without a disability.

## Appendix A: Park Visitation Frequency

**Figure: Visitation**

*2023 Wording: First, how often would you say you or a member of your household visits a park or trail?*

*2022 Wording: How often would you say you or a member of your household visits an East Bay Regional Park?*

*2020 Wording: On average, how often would you say you visit parks or trails in the East Bay Regional Park District?*

Visitation	2020	2022	2023
Daily	5%	37%	45%
Twice a week	10%		
Weekly	15%		
Monthly	26%	27%	25%
Rarely / A few times a year	26%	32%	28%
Only on special occasions	9%	N/A	N/A
Never	8%	4%	2%



## Appendix B: Willingness to Travel for Park and Trail Activities by Demographic Groups

Figure C: White Residents

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	70%	24%	6%
Naturalist-led educational programs	58%	17%	25%
Barbecuing or picnicking	57%	25%	18%
Running or jogging	41%	10%	49%
Outdoor recreational programs	58%	19%	22%
Exercising your dog	48%	14%	38%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	46%	32%	22%
Hiking	44%	45%	11%
Spending time in nature	47%	48%	5%
Activities for youth	37%	19%	46%
Swimming	36%	22%	40%
E-biking	17%	5%	79%
Backpacking	28%	43%	47%
Mountain biking	10%	15%	57%
Horseback riding	20%	19%	61%
Fishing	19%	24%	57%
Car or RV camping	11%	46%	44%

Figure D: Residents of Color

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	61%	31%	8%
Naturalist-led educational programs	57%	17%	26%
Barbecuing or picnicking	51%	40%	9%
Running or jogging	58%	14%	28%
Outdoor recreational programs	49%	39%	12%
Exercising your dog	51%	16%	33%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	49%	22%	29%
Hiking	47%	43%	10%
Spending time in nature	45%	50%	6%
Activities for youth	46%	30%	25%
Swimming	45%	23%	31%
E-biking	33%	10%	56%
Backpacking	25%	34%	34%
Mountain biking	32%	22%	54%
Horseback riding	25%	24%	51%
Fishing	24%	28%	47%
Car or RV camping	16%	51%	32%

**Figure E: Ward 1**

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	64%	32%	4%
Naturalist-led educational programs	61%	15%	24%
Barbecuing or picnicking	46%	38%	16%
Running or jogging	51%	17%	32%
Outdoor recreational programs	42%	34%	25%
Exercising your dog	44%	13%	43%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	55%	29%	16%
Hiking	37%	52%	11%
Spending time in nature	36%	55%	9%
Activities for youth	39%	16%	46%
Swimming	38%	33%	29%
E-biking	35%	6%	58%
Backpacking	22%	37%	39%
Mountain biking	23%	19%	59%
Horseback riding	22%	20%	57%
Fishing	17%	26%	57%
Car or RV camping	14%	57%	29%

**Figure F: Ward 2**

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	63%	25%	12%
Naturalist-led educational programs	45%	19%	36%
Barbecuing or picnicking	61%	33%	6%
Running or jogging	64%	9%	27%
Outdoor recreational programs	59%	24%	17%
Exercising your dog	51%	15%	34%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	36%	27%	38%
Hiking	46%	47%	7%
Spending time in nature	36%	60%	4%
Activities for youth	51%	20%	38%
Swimming	42%	3%	45%
E-biking	29%	3%	68%
Backpacking	24%	31%	42%
Mountain biking	26%	6%	70%
Horseback riding	31%	15%	53%
Fishing	28%	21%	50%
Car or RV camping	9%	53%	38%

Figure G: Ward 3

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	73%	18%	9%
Naturalist-led educational programs	60%	21%	20%
Barbecuing or picnicking	47%	36%	18%
Running or jogging	67%	16%	17%
Outdoor recreational programs	62%	28%	11%
Exercising your dog	50%	10%	40%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	58%	21%	21%
Hiking	54%	36%	10%
Spending time in nature	73%	21%	6%
Activities for youth	54%	25%	24%
Swimming	50%	22%	24%
E-biking	32%	11%	58%
Backpacking	33%	37%	34%
Mountain biking	29%	17%	50%
Horseback riding	27%	18%	56%
Fishing	31%	24%	45%
Car or RV camping	19%	41%	40%

Figure H: Ward 4

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	62%	22%	15%
Naturalist-led educational programs	60%	13%	27%
Barbecuing or picnicking	60%	29%	11%
Running or jogging	48%	11%	40%
Outdoor recreational programs	50%	35%	15%
Exercising your dog	55%	16%	30%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	32%	33%	35%
Hiking	43%	44%	13%
Spending time in nature	52%	39%	9%
Activities for youth	42%	33%	24%
Swimming	43%	20%	38%
E-biking	24%	3%	73%
Backpacking	15%	39%	31%
Mountain biking	30%	35%	50%
Horseback riding	17%	29%	53%
Fishing	27%	31%	42%
Car or RV camping	10%	56%	34%

**Figure I: Ward 5**

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	69%	25%	5%
Naturalist-led educational programs	66%	12%	22%
Barbecuing or picnicking	52%	33%	16%
Running or jogging	52%	12%	36%
Outdoor recreational programs	41%	39%	20%
Exercising your dog	50%	16%	34%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	50%	22%	29%
Hiking	44%	45%	11%
Spending time in nature	47%	50%	3%
Activities for youth	43%	28%	33%
Swimming	39%	20%	37%
E-biking	43%	8%	49%
Backpacking	30%	30%	41%
Mountain biking	28%	21%	49%
Horseback riding	22%	18%	60%
Fishing	21%	24%	55%
Car or RV camping	9%	58%	33%

**Figure J: Ward 6**

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	56%	40%	4%
Naturalist-led educational programs	62%	19%	20%
Barbecuing or picnicking	51%	37%	12%
Running or jogging	38%	10%	52%
Outdoor recreational programs	54%	43%	3%
Exercising your dog	51%	16%	33%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	46%	26%	28%
Hiking	44%	46%	10%
Spending time in nature	37%	60%	3%
Activities for youth	38%	33%	31%
Swimming	37%	23%	39%
E-biking	23%	13%	64%
Backpacking	25%	41%	39%
Mountain biking	20%	23%	52%
Horseback riding	26%	25%	49%
Fishing	11%	24%	65%
Car or RV camping	19%	41%	40%

Figure K: Ward 7

Activity	Less than One Hour	One Hour or More	Not Interested
Walking	60%	37%	3%
Naturalist-led educational programs	48%	23%	29%
Barbecuing or picnicking	50%	40%	9%
Running or jogging	46%	16%	38%
Outdoor recreational programs	56%	33%	11%
Exercising your dog	47%	22%	31%
Birdwatching or wildlife viewing	50%	23%	27%
Hiking	53%	40%	7%
Spending time in nature	44%	53%	3%
Activities for youth	40%	34%	17%
Swimming	49%	36%	25%
E-biking	18%	17%	65%
Backpacking	36%	43%	34%
Mountain biking	24%	20%	43%
Horseback riding	19%	34%	47%
Fishing	24%	38%	38%
Car or RV camping	21%	45%	35%