FOREST PRESERVES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY

2026 COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

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Introduction & Purpose

This report represents the findings of a Community Survey conducted by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County from February 1, 2026 - April 30, 2026. The survey gathered 1,281 unique responses, with a completion rate of 85%.

The Community Survey was designed to identify the wants, needs, and values of our community, and help the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County establish key goals and objectives for the agency in preparation for the strategic planning process. Data was gathered through an anonymous online survey available in both English and Spanish. A desktop computer and paper copies of the survey were also made available at the FPWC Headquarters Administration Building (5500 Northrock Drive, Rockford, IL 61103) during the agency's regular business hours.

This report includes:

- Respondent demographics
- Primary data

Acknowledgments

The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County extends their thanks to the internal committee who dedicated their time and expertise to the development of the Community Survey, as well as to each individual who took the survey and communicated their vision for the future of their forest preserves.

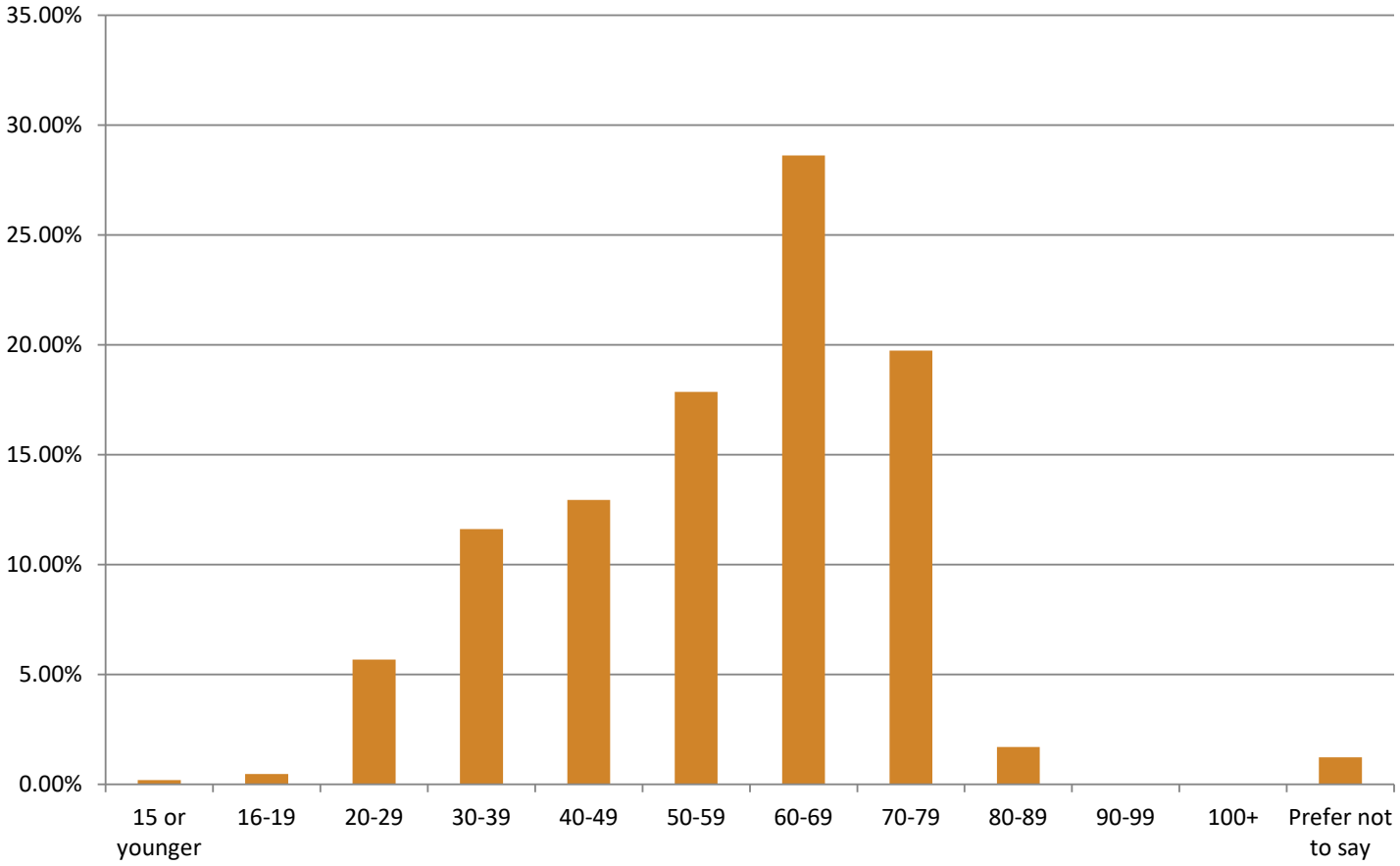
About the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County owns and manages 45 forest preserves—over 11,600 acres in total—in Winnebago County, Illinois. Forest preserves protect natural lands and the wildlife that inhabits them. They also provide areas for people to recreate, connect with nature, and learn about the benefits and history of Winnebago County. Our mission is protecting, conserving, enhancing, and promoting Winnebago County's natural heritage for the environmental, educational, and recreational benefit of present and future generations.

Respondent Demographics

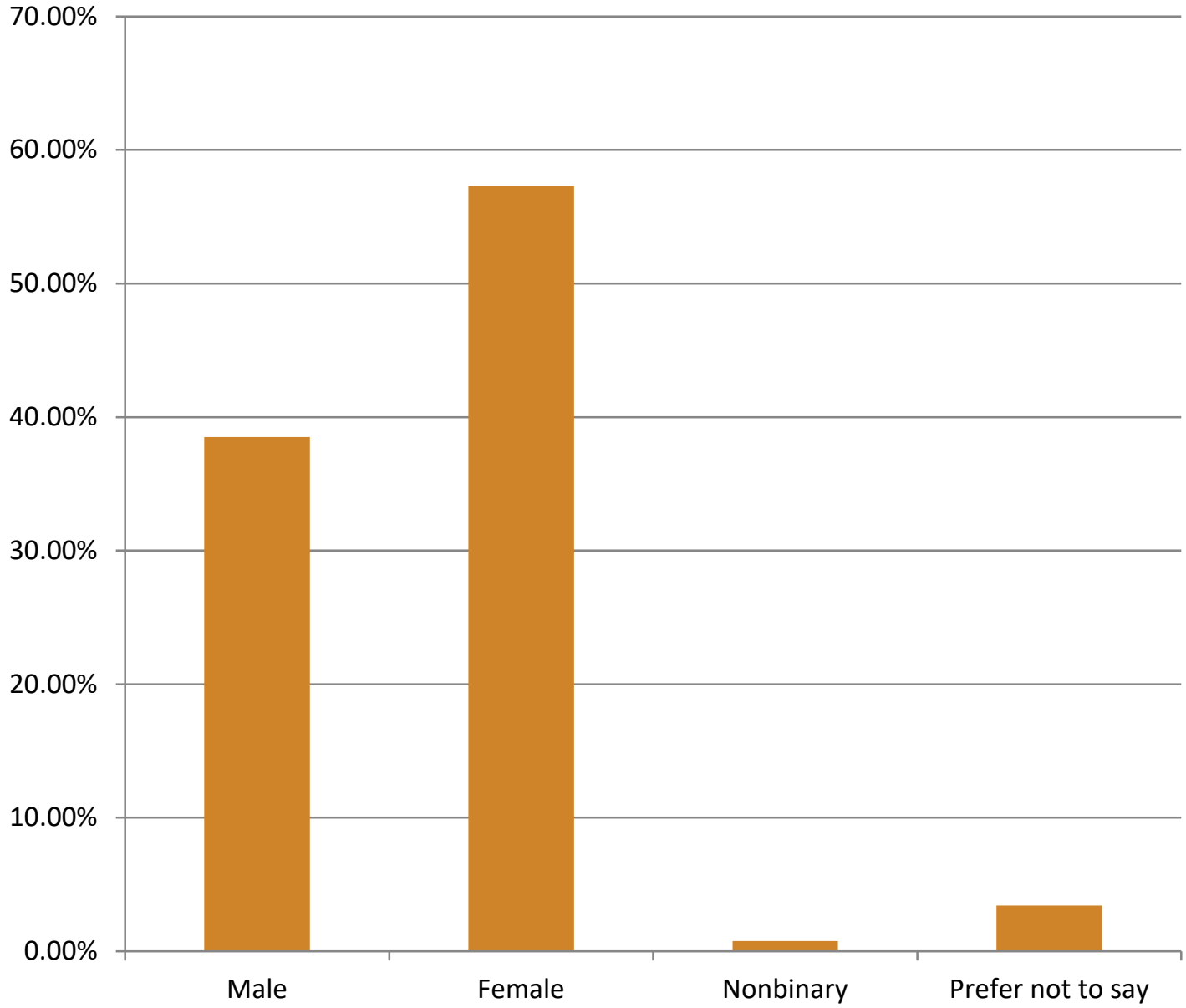
According to the United States Census Bureau (2020 Decennial Census), Winnebago County, Illinois has an estimated population of 285,350 people. The following demographic information represents the 1,281 respondents who took the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County's Community Survey.

Age Group Distribution



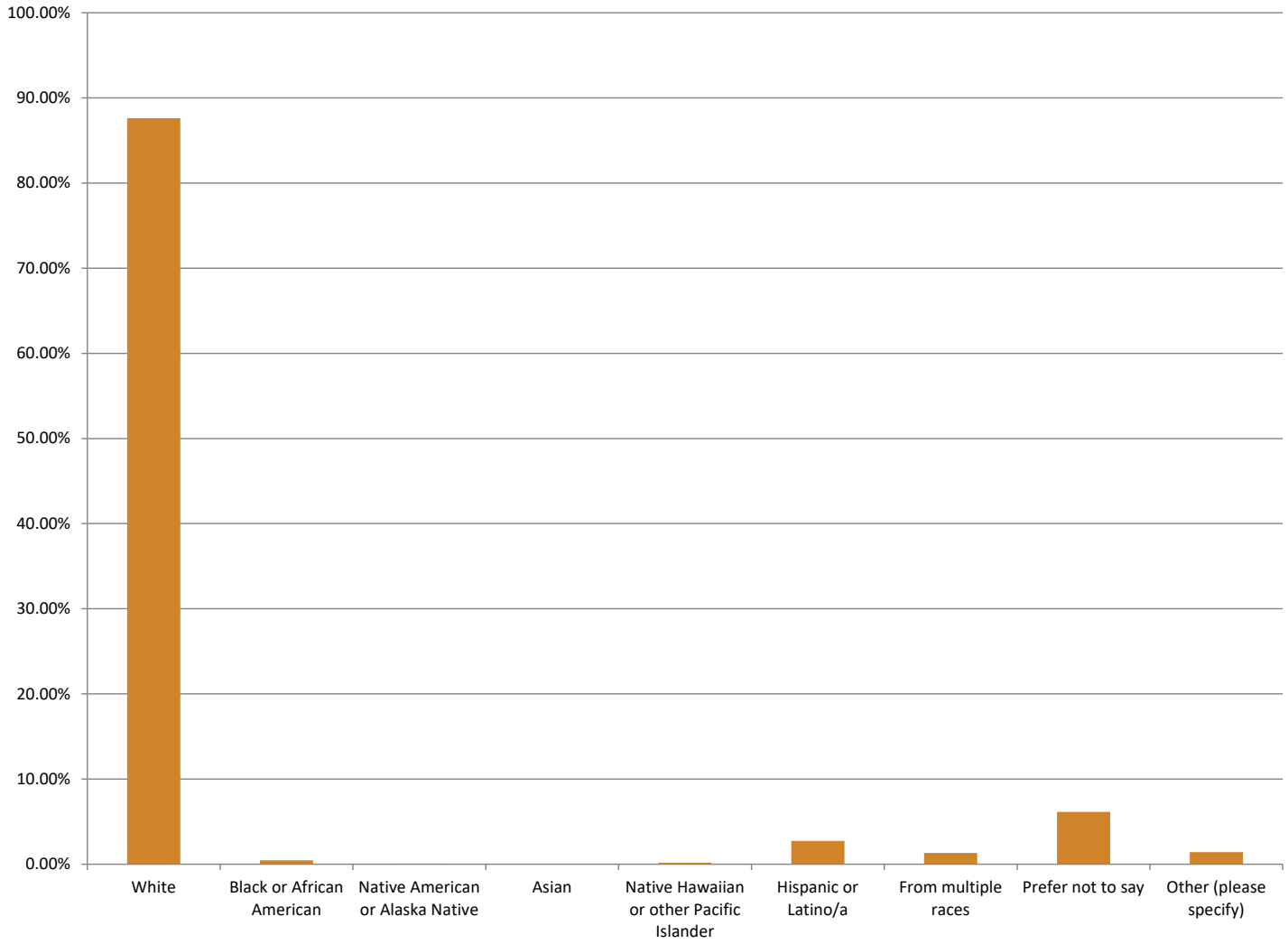
Answer Choices	Responses	
15 or younger	0.19%	2
16-19	0.47%	5
20-29	5.67%	60
30-39	11.61%	123
40-49	12.94%	137
50-59	17.85%	189
60-69	28.61%	303
70-79	19.74%	209
80-89	1.70%	18
90-99	0.00%	0
100+	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	1.23%	13
	Answered	**1059**
	Skipped	**222**

Gender Identification



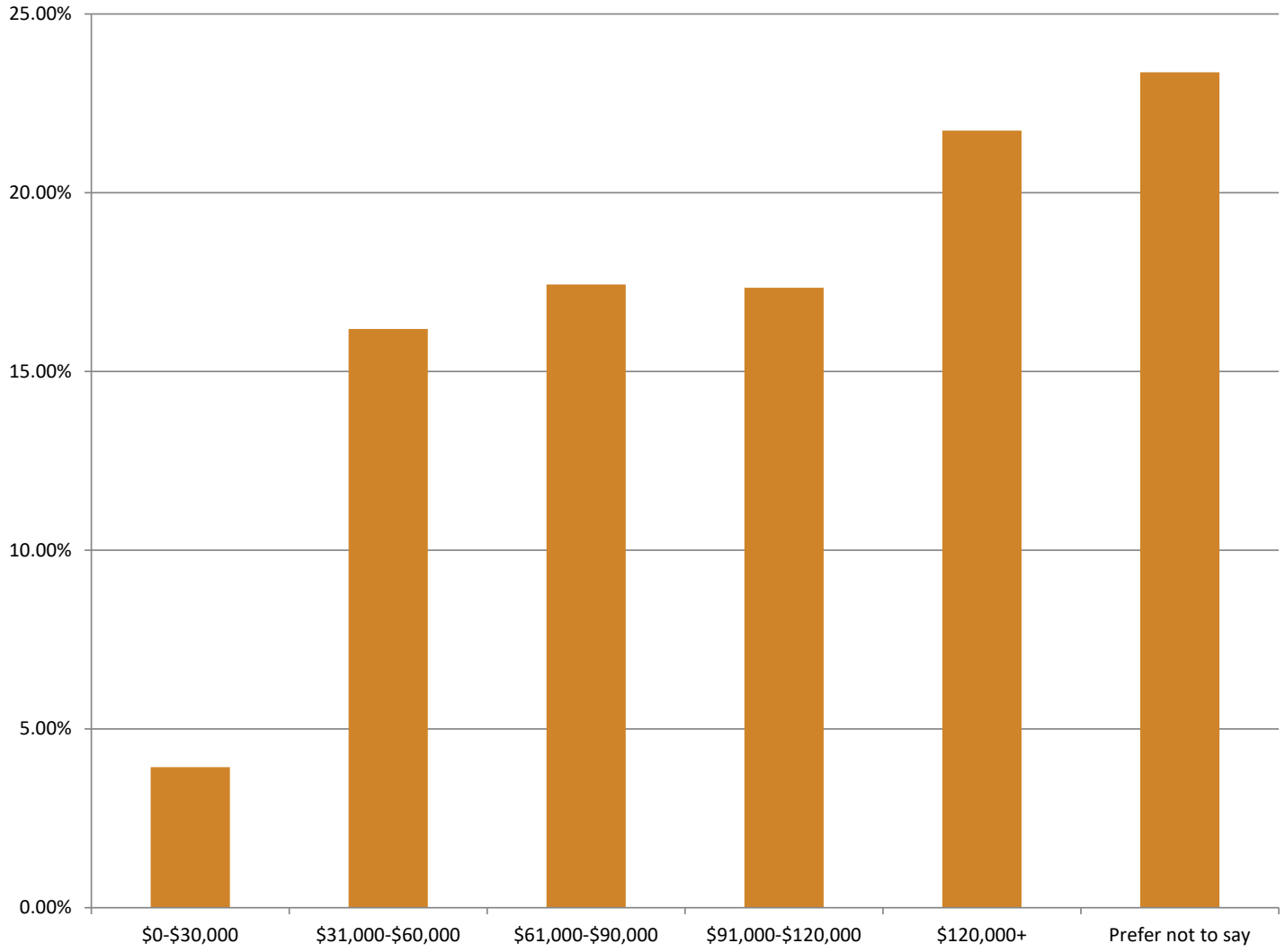
Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	38.51%	404
Female	57.29%	601
Nonbinary	0.76%	8
Prefer not to say	3.43%	36
	Answered	**1049**
	Skipped	**232**

Ethnicity Identification



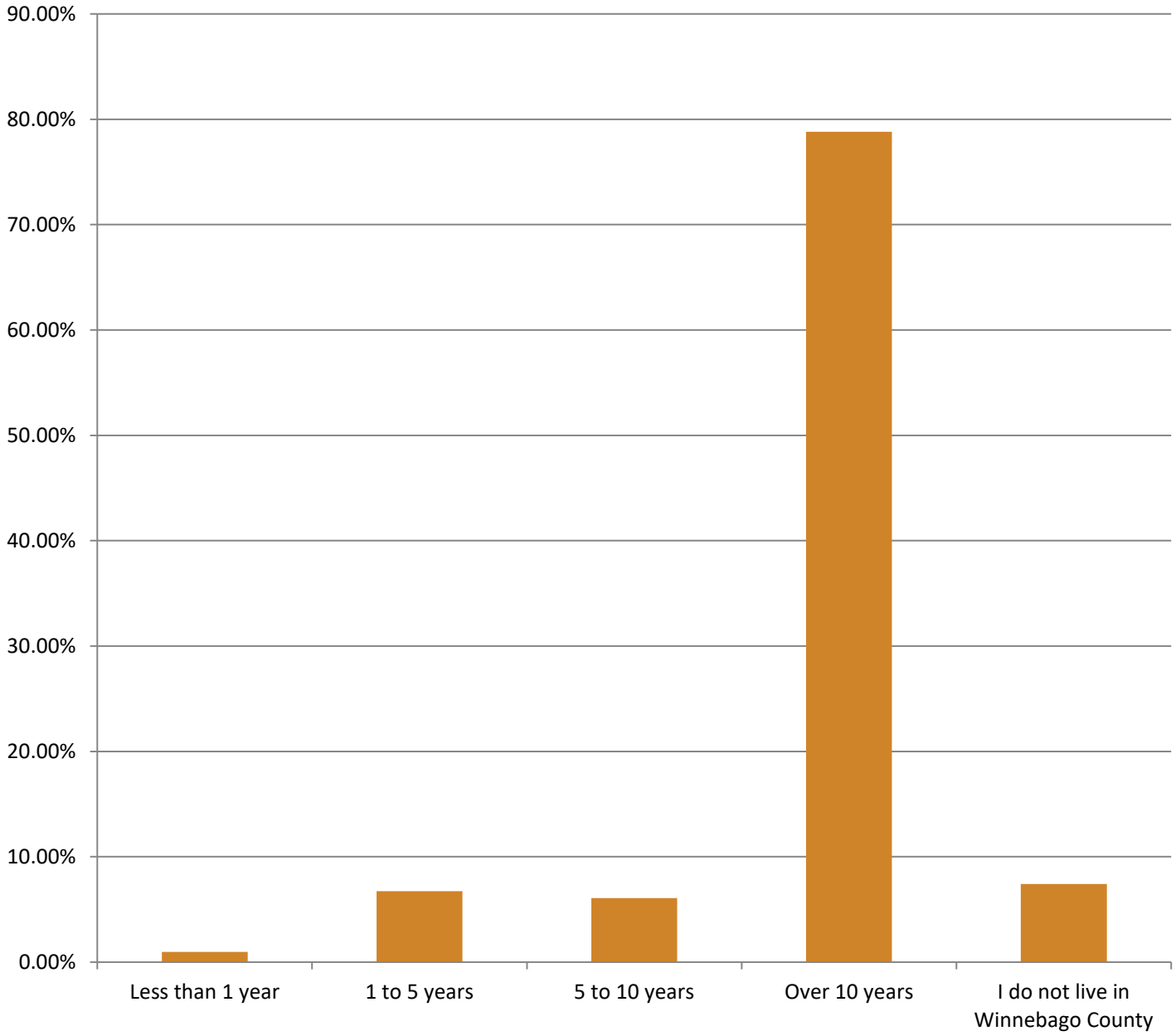
Answer Choices	Responses	
White	87.61%	926
Prefer not to say	6.15%	65
Hispanic or Latino/a	2.74%	29
Other (please specify)*	1.42%	15
From multiple races	1.32%	14
Black or African American	0.47%	5
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.19%	2
Native American or Alaska Native	0.09%	1
Asian	0.00%	0
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1057**
	Skipped	**224**

Income Range Distribution



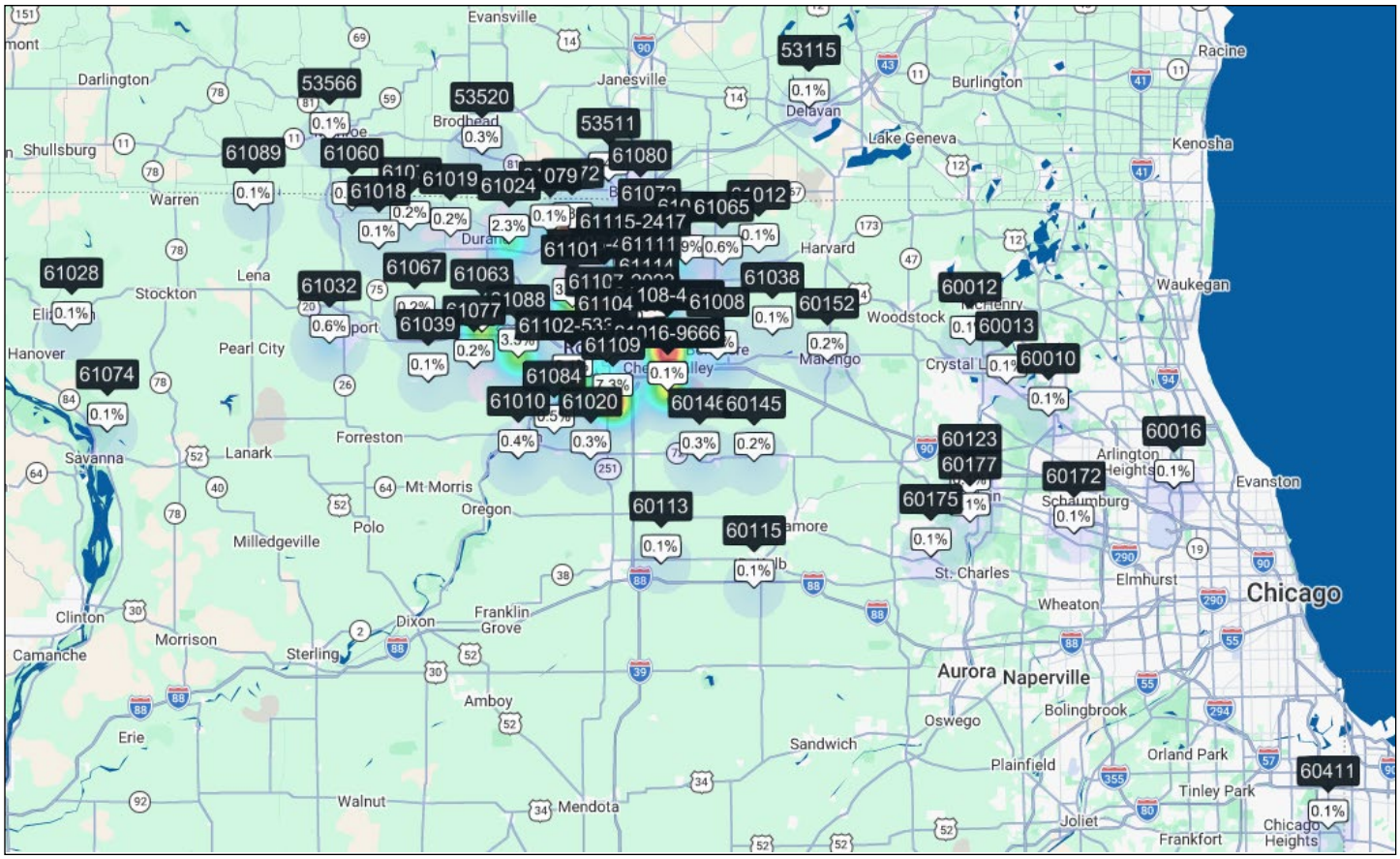
Answer Choices	Responses	
$0-$30,000	3.93%	41
$31,000-$60,000	16.19%	169
$61,000-$90,000	17.43%	182
$91,000-$120,000	17.34%	181
$120,000+	21.74%	227
Prefer not to say	23.37%	244
	Answered	**1044**
	Skipped	**237**

Length of Residence in Winnebago County



Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 1 year	0.96%	10
1 to 5 years	6.74%	70
5 to 10 years	6.07%	63
Over 10 years	78.81%	818
I do not live in Winnebago County	7.42%	77
	Answered	**1038**
	Skipped	**243**

Zip Code Distribution



Zip Code	Percent
61107	10.9%
61073	9.3%
61072	8.3%
61108	7.4%
61109	7.3%
61103	7.3%
61115	5.8%
61102	4.6%
61016	4.6%
61111	4.3%
61114	4.3%
61063	3.8%
61101	3.5%
61088	3.5%
61080	2.7%
61024	2.3%
61104	1.5%
61008	1.0%
61011	0.9%
61065	0.6%

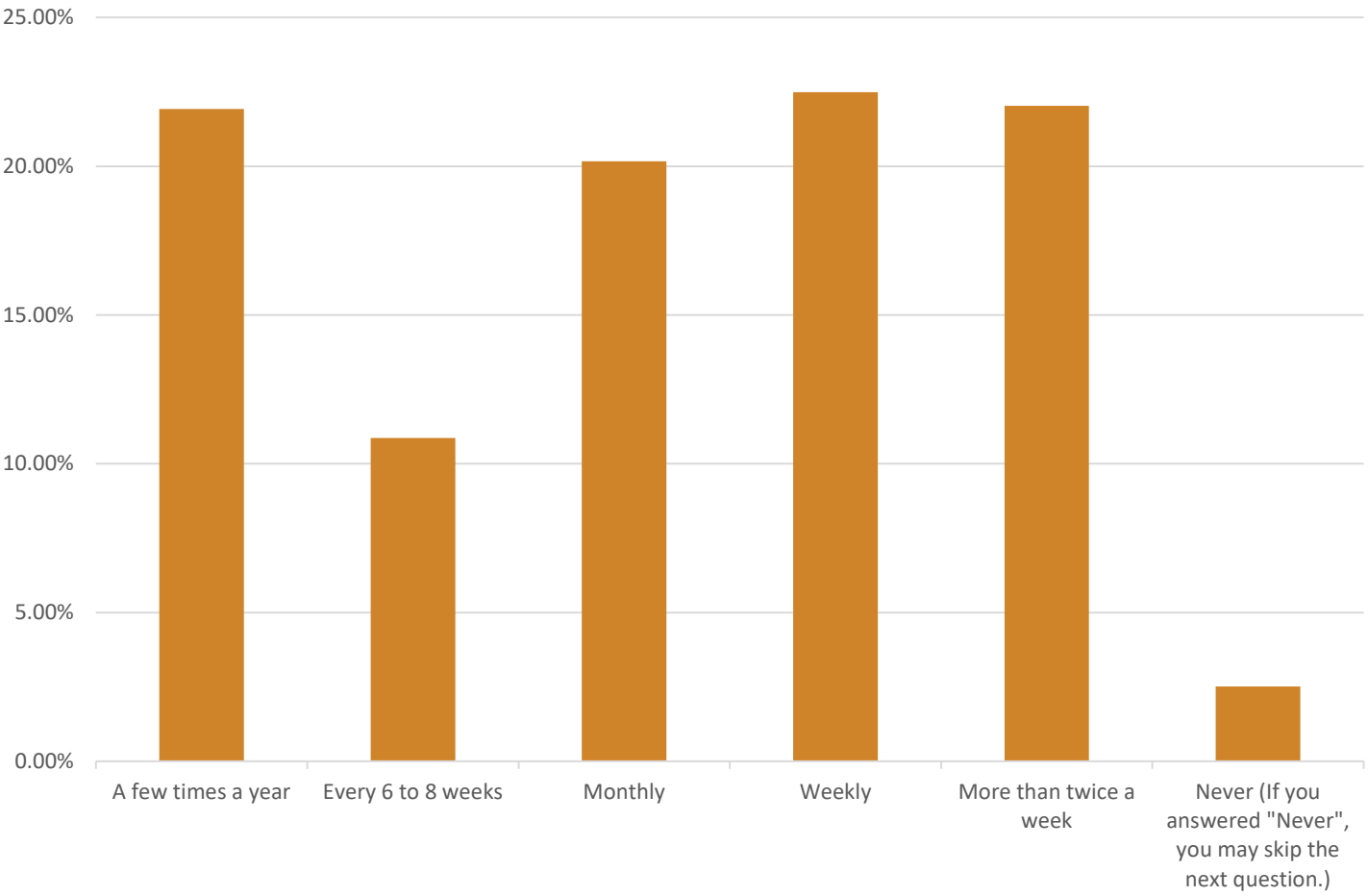
Zip Code	Percent
61032	0.6%
61084	0.5%
53511	0.4%
61010	0.4%
61020	0.3%
60146	0.3%
53520	0.3%
61019	0.2%
61060	0.2%
60152	0.2%
61067	0.2%
60145	0.2%
61070	0.2%
61077	0.2%
61028	0.1%
60172	0.1%
60012	0.1%
53115	0.1%
60013	0.1%
61018	0.1%

Zip Code	Percent
60411	0.1%
60016	0.1%
60113	0.1%
61074	0.1%
61012	0.1%
60175	0.1%
61079	0.1%
60177	0.1%
60115	0.1%
53566	0.1%
60123	0.1%
61039	0.1%
61089	0.1%
60010	0.1%
61038	0.1%

Community Survey Results

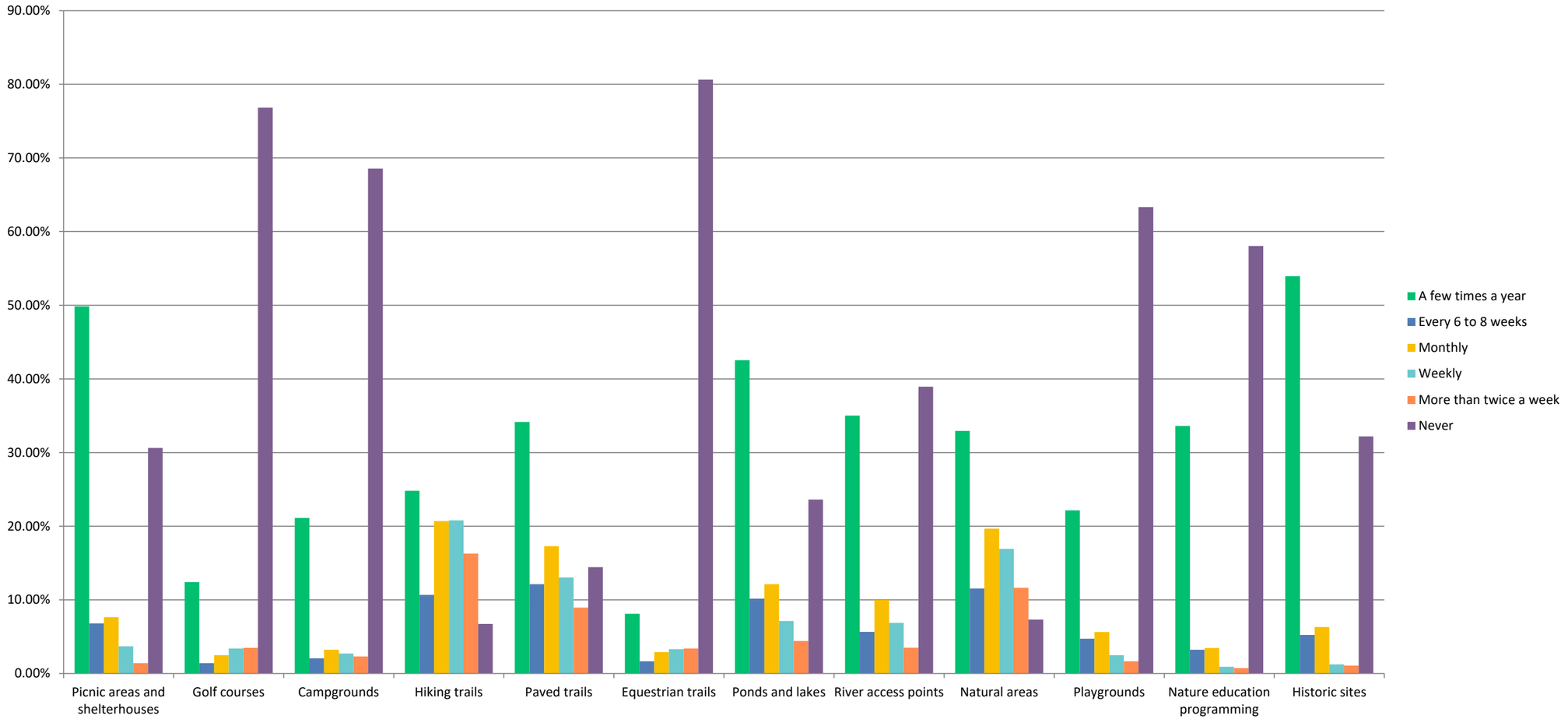
This section reflects the results of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County's Community Survey. Each survey question is listed above a graph depicting a visual display of the responses. A data table with the responses broken out by the percent and count of occurrence is below the graph. These results depict the quantitative data that was collected and does not include comments or text responses.

How often do you visit the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County's facilities and preserves?



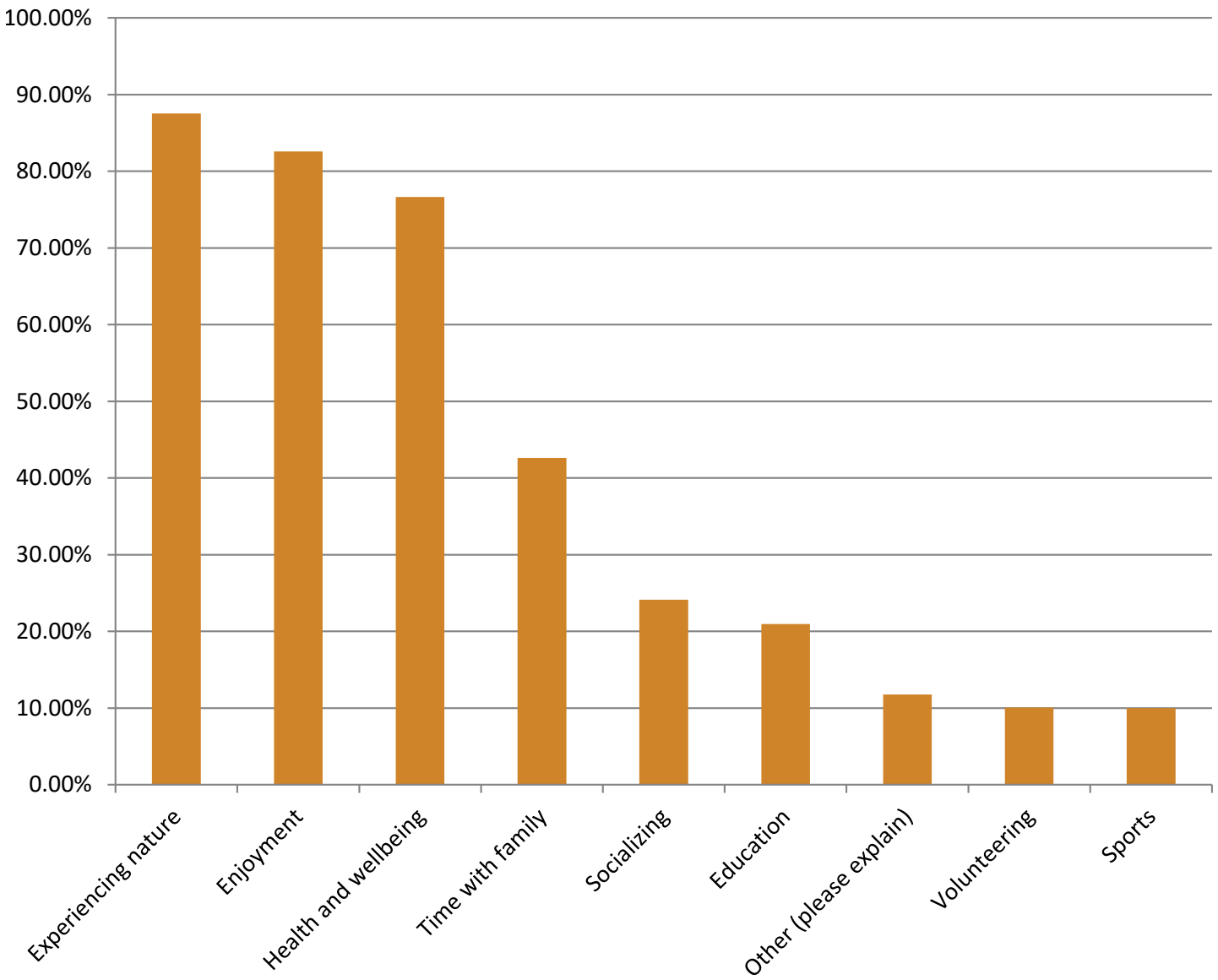
Answer Choices	Responses	
A few times a year	21.93%	236
Every 6 to 8 weeks	10.87%	117
Monthly	20.17%	217
Weekly	22.49%	242
More than twice a week	22.03%	237
Never (If you answered "Never", you may skip the next question.)	2.51%	27
What is your favorite forest preserve?*	N/A	886
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1076**
	Skipped	**205**

How often do you use or visit the following Forest Preserves of Winnebago County facilities and amenities? (Select one option for each row.)



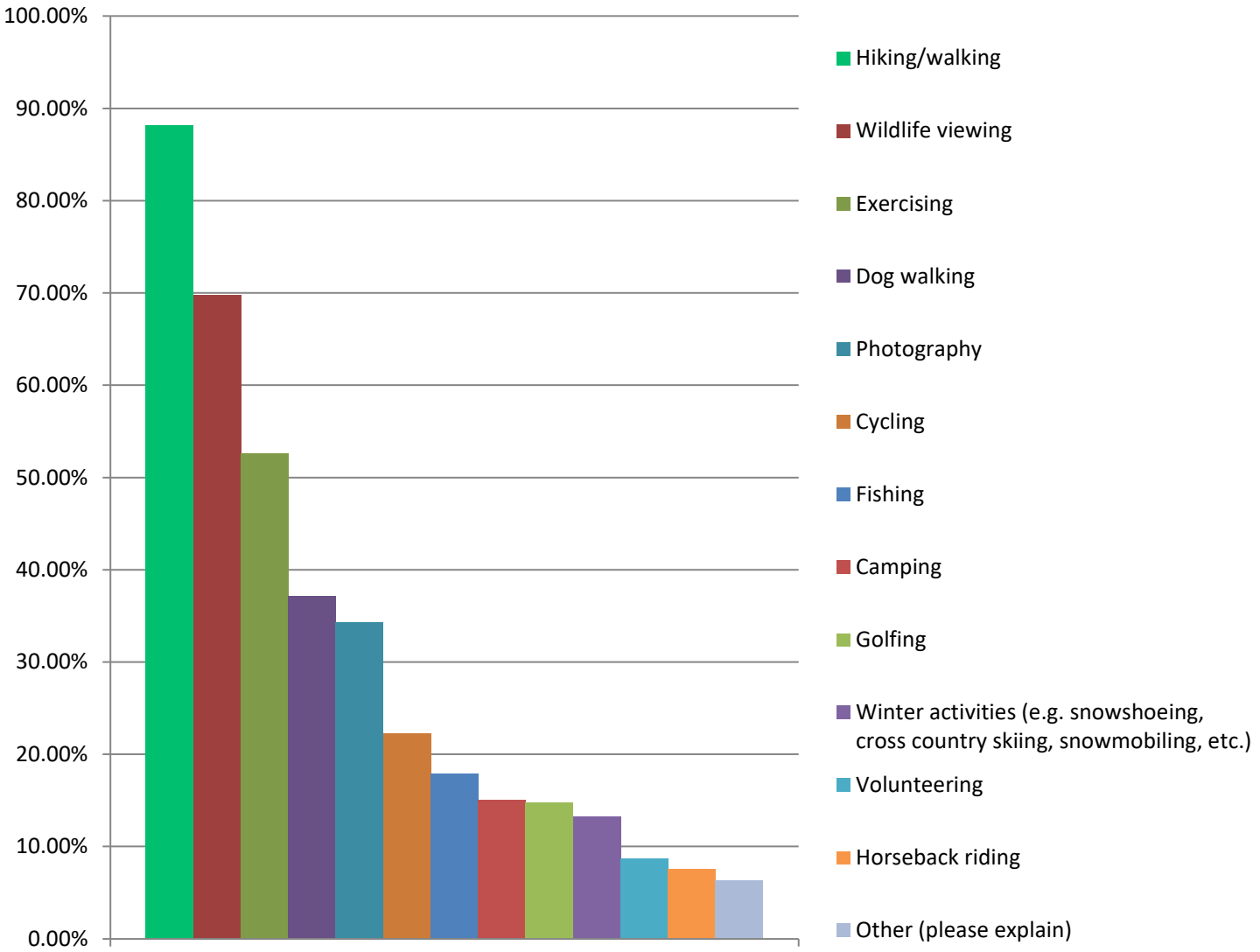
Answer Choices	A few times a year		Every 6 to 8 weeks		Monthly		Weekly		More than twice a week		Never		Totals
Picnic areas and shelterhouses	49.84%	607	6.81%	83	7.64%	93	3.69%	45	1.40%	17	30.62%	373	1218
Golf courses	12.42%	150	1.41%	17	2.48%	30	3.39%	41	3.48%	42	76.82%	928	1208
Campgrounds	21.12%	256	2.06%	25	3.22%	39	2.72%	33	2.31%	28	68.56%	831	1212
Hiking trails	24.80%	309	10.67%	133	20.71%	258	20.79%	259	16.29%	203	6.74%	84	1246
Paved trails	34.15%	419	12.14%	149	17.28%	212	13.04%	160	8.96%	110	14.43%	177	1227
Equestrian trails	8.11%	98	1.66%	20	2.90%	35	3.31%	40	3.39%	41	80.63%	974	1208
Ponds and lakes	42.54%	519	10.16%	124	12.13%	148	7.13%	87	4.43%	54	23.61%	288	1220
River access points	35.02%	428	5.65%	69	9.98%	122	6.87%	84	3.52%	43	38.95%	476	1222
Natural areas	32.93%	405	11.54%	142	19.67%	242	16.91%	208	11.63%	143	7.32%	90	1230
Playgrounds	22.16%	267	4.73%	57	5.64%	68	2.49%	30	1.66%	20	63.32%	763	1205
Nature education programming	33.61%	407	3.22%	39	3.47%	42	0.91%	11	0.74%	9	58.05%	703	1211
Historic sites	53.94%	650	5.23%	63	6.31%	76	1.24%	15	1.08%	13	32.20%	388	1205
												Answered	**1266**
												Skipped	**15**

Why do you visit the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County? (Select all that apply.)



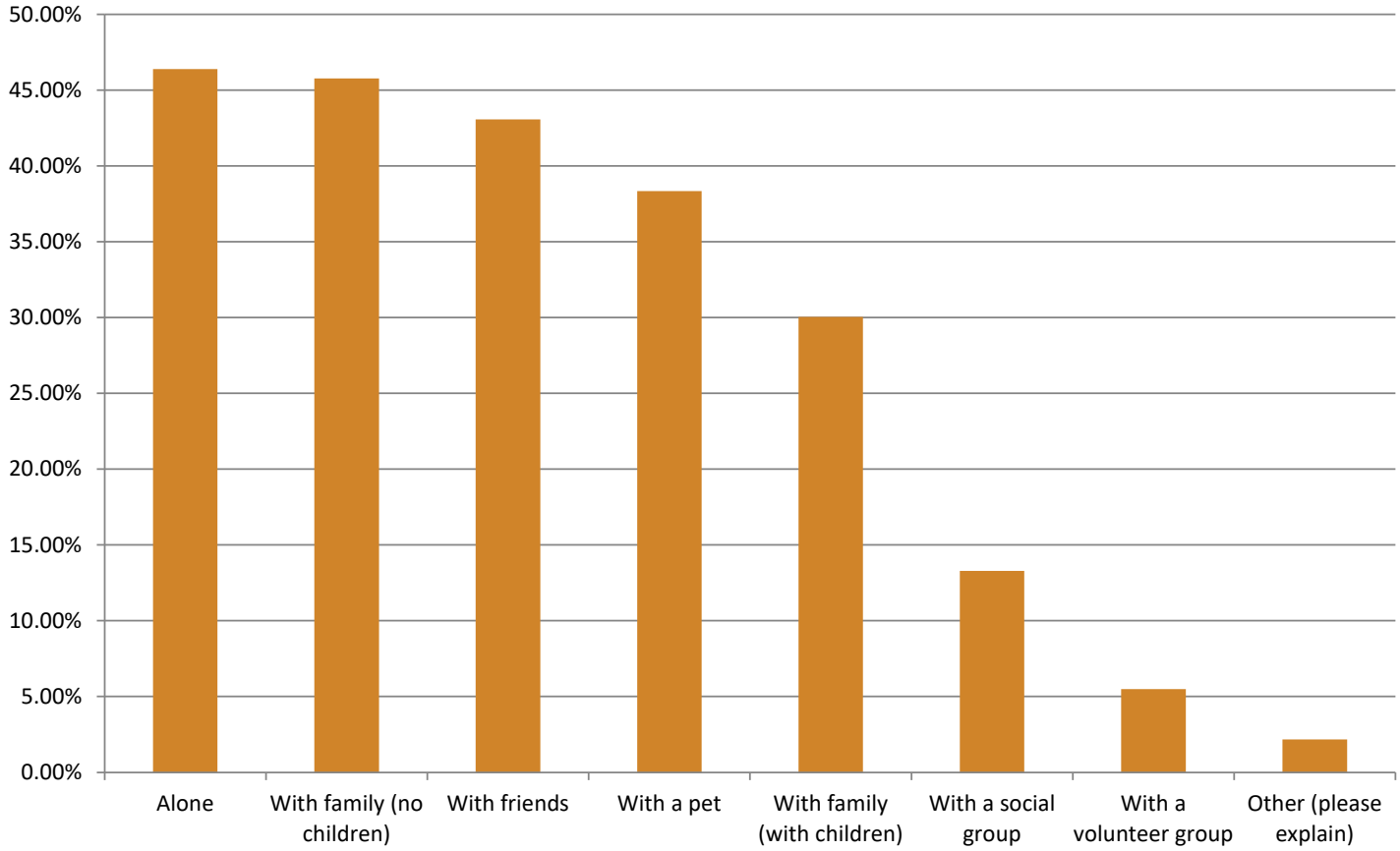
Answer Choices	Responses	
Experiencing nature	87.53%	990
Enjoyment	82.58%	934
Health and wellbeing	76.66%	867
Time with family	42.62%	482
Socializing	24.14%	273
Education	20.95%	237
Other (please explain)	11.76%	133
Volunteering	10.08%	114
Sports	9.99%	113
	Answered	**1131**
	Skipped	**150**

When I visit the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, I usually take part in the following activities: (Select all that apply.)



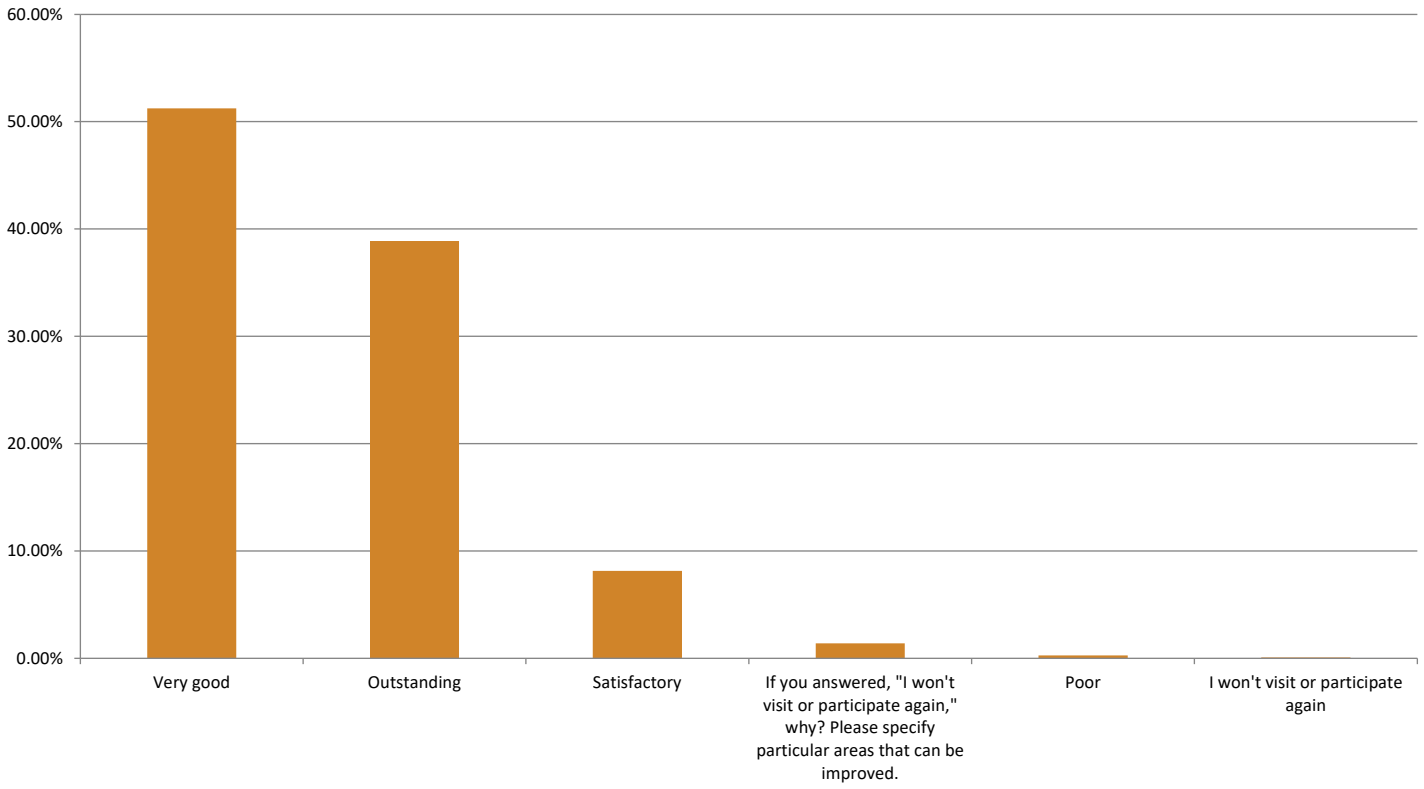
Answer Choices	Responses	
Hiking/walking	88.13%	1010
Wildlife viewing	69.72%	799
Exercising	52.62%	603
Dog walking	37.17%	426
Photography	34.29%	393
Cycling	22.25%	255
Fishing	17.89%	205
Camping	15.01%	172
Golfing	14.75%	169
Winter activities (e.g. snowshoeing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, etc.)	13.26%	152
Volunteering	8.64%	99
Horseback riding	7.50%	86
Other (please explain)	6.28%	72
	Answered	**1146**
	Skipped	**135**

When I visit the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, I am usually: (Select all that apply.)



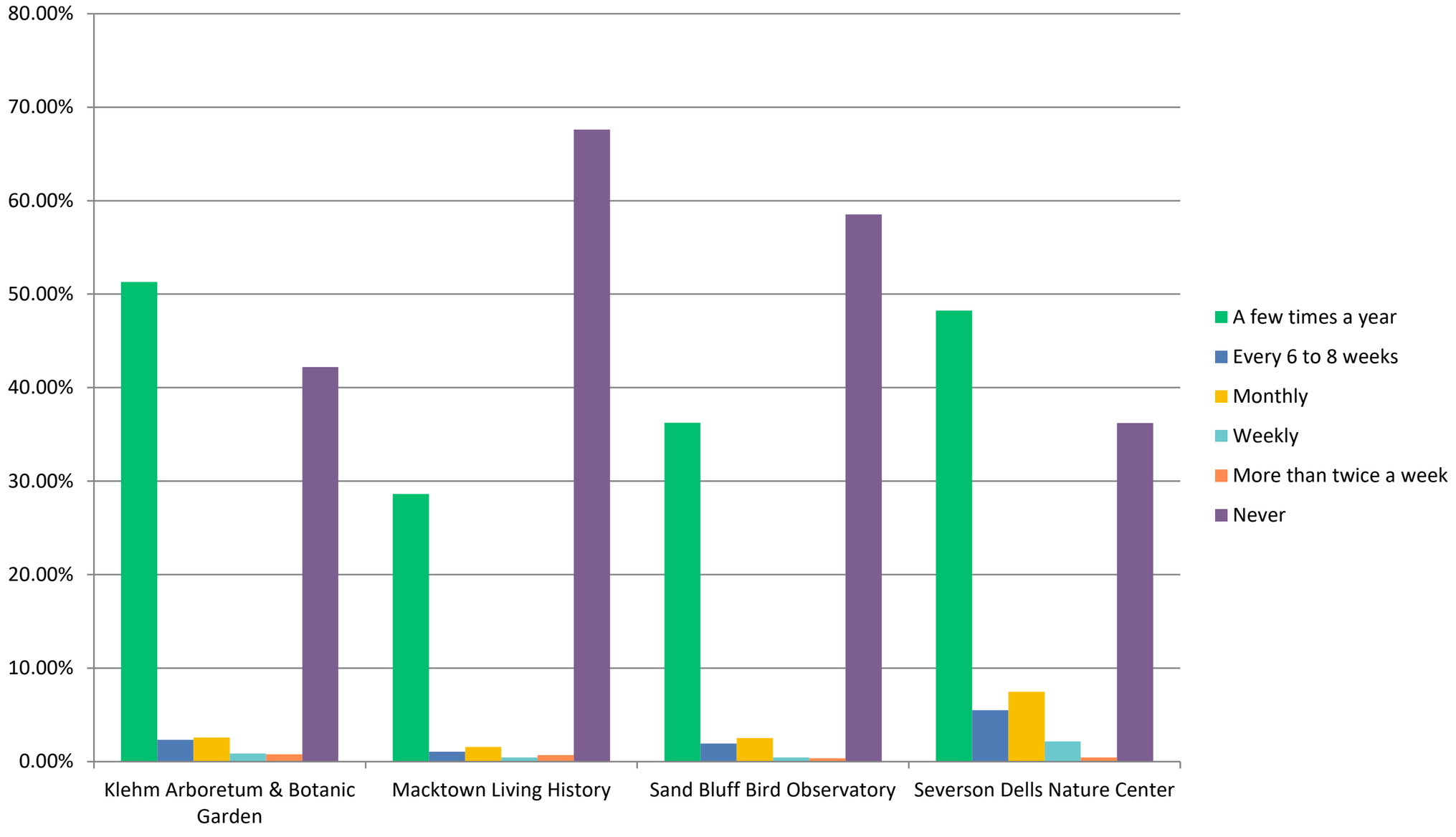
Answer Choices	Responses	
Alone	46.38%	531
With family (no children)	45.76%	524
With friends	43.06%	493
With a pet	38.34%	439
With family (with children)	30.04%	344
With a social group	13.28%	152
With a volunteer group	5.50%	63
Other (please explain)*	2.18%	25
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1145**
	Skipped	**136**

If you have visited one of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County's facilities or preserves, how would you rate your experience?



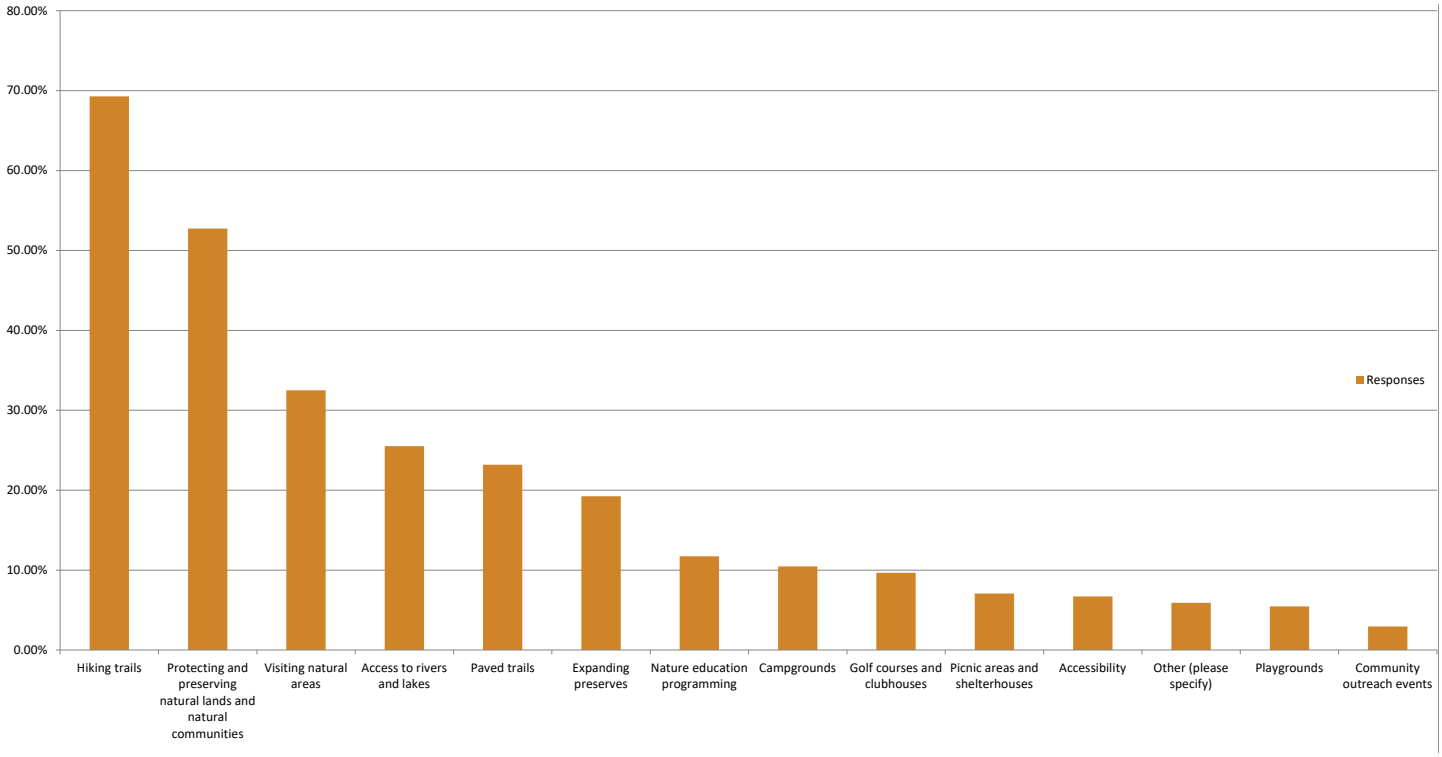
Answer Choices	Responses	
Very good	51.23%	585
Outstanding	38.88%	444
Satisfactory	8.14%	93
If you answered, "I won't visit or participate again," why? Please specify particular areas that can be improved.	1.40%	16
Poor	0.26%	3
I won't visit or participate again	0.09%	1
	Answered	**1142**
	Skipped	**139**

How often do you use or visit the following Forest Preserves of Winnebago County connections in the community? (Select one option for each row.)



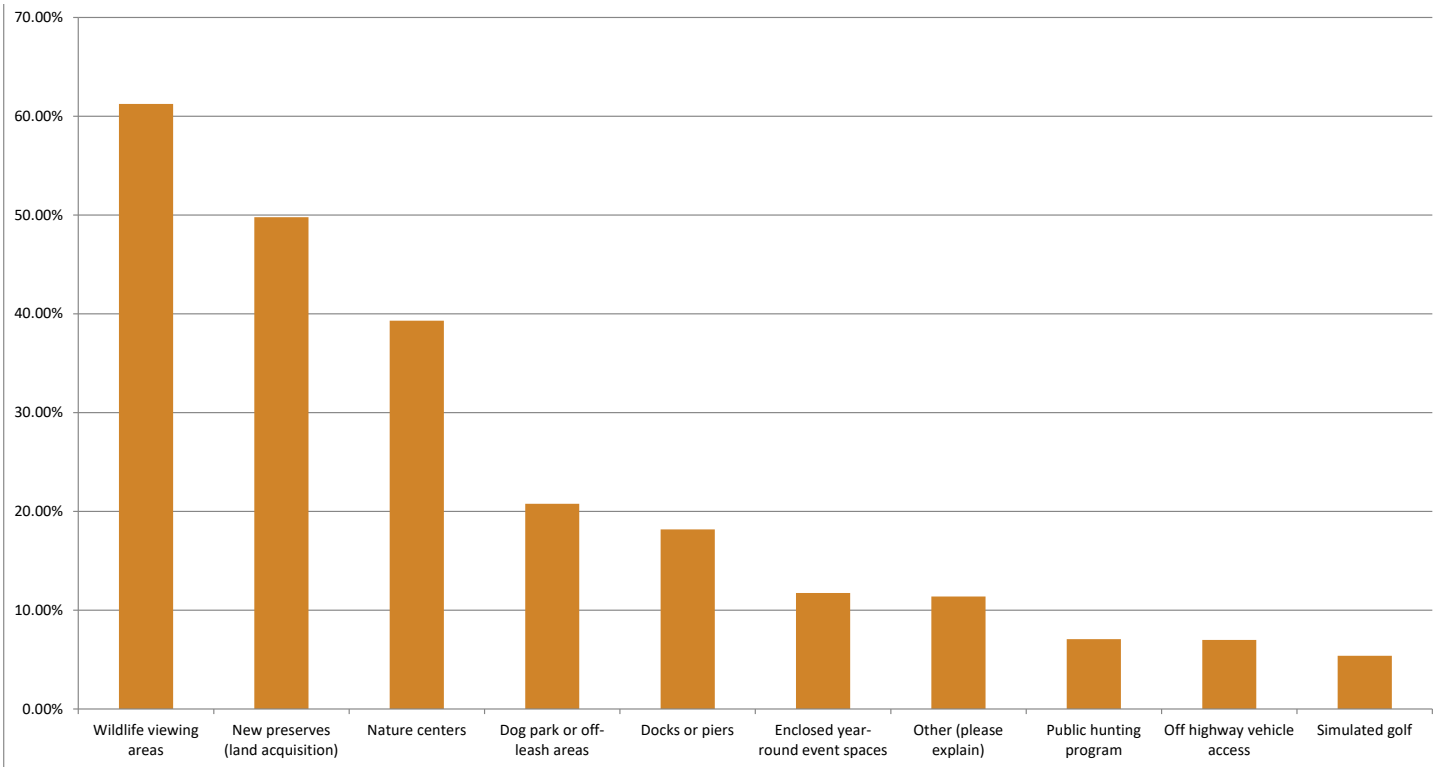
Answer Choices	A few times a year		Every 6 to 8 weeks		Monthly		Weekly		More than twice a week		Never		Totals
Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden	51.29%	598	2.32%	27	2.57%	30	0.86%	10	0.77%	9	42.20%	492	1166
Macktown Living History	28.63%	327	1.05%	12	1.58%	18	0.44%	5	0.70%	8	67.60%	772	1142
Sand Bluff Bird Observatory	36.24%	415	1.92%	22	2.53%	29	0.44%	5	0.35%	4	58.52%	670	1145
Severson Dells Nature Center	48.24%	562	5.49%	64	7.47%	87	2.15%	25	0.43%	5	36.22%	422	1165
												Answered	**1183**
												Skipped	**98**

Of the following opportunities and services offered by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, which do you value most? (Select up to 3 choices.)



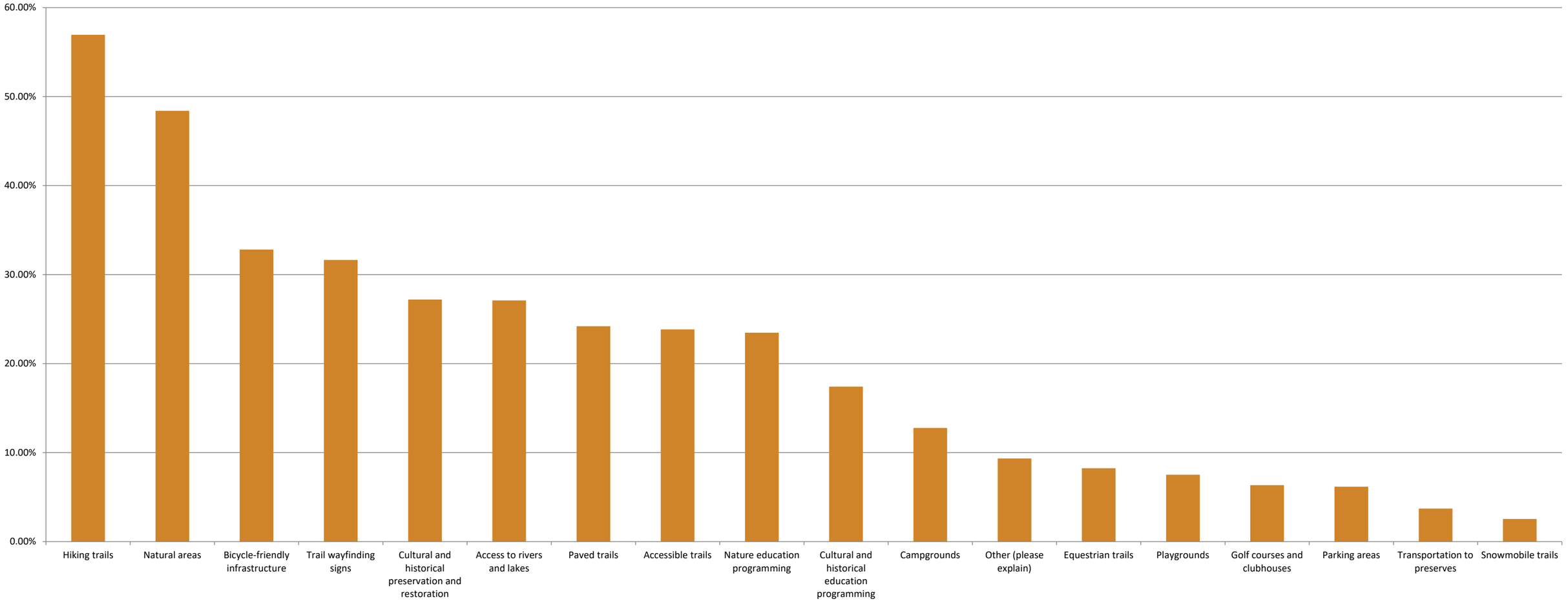
Answer Choices	Responses	
Hiking trails	69.29%	774
Protecting and preserving natural lands and natural communities	52.73%	589
Visiting natural areas	32.50%	363
Access to rivers and lakes	25.51%	285
Paved trails	23.19%	259
Expanding preserves	19.25%	215
Nature education programming	11.73%	131
Campgrounds	10.47%	117
Golf courses and clubhouses	9.67%	108
Picnic areas and shelterhouses	7.07%	79
Accessibility	6.71%	75
Other (please specify)*	5.91%	66
Playgrounds	5.46%	61
Community outreach events	2.95%	33
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1117**
	Skipped	**164**

Of the following opportunities and services not currently offered by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, which do you value most? (Select up to 3 choices.)



Answer Choices	Responses	
Wildlife viewing areas	61.24%	684
New preserves (land acquisition)	49.78%	556
Nature centers	39.30%	439
Dog park or off-leash areas	20.77%	232
Docks or piers	18.17%	203
Enclosed year-round event spaces	11.73%	131
Other (please explain)*	11.37%	127
Public hunting program	7.07%	79
Off highway vehicle access	6.98%	78
Simulated golf	5.37%	60
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1117**
	Skipped	**164**

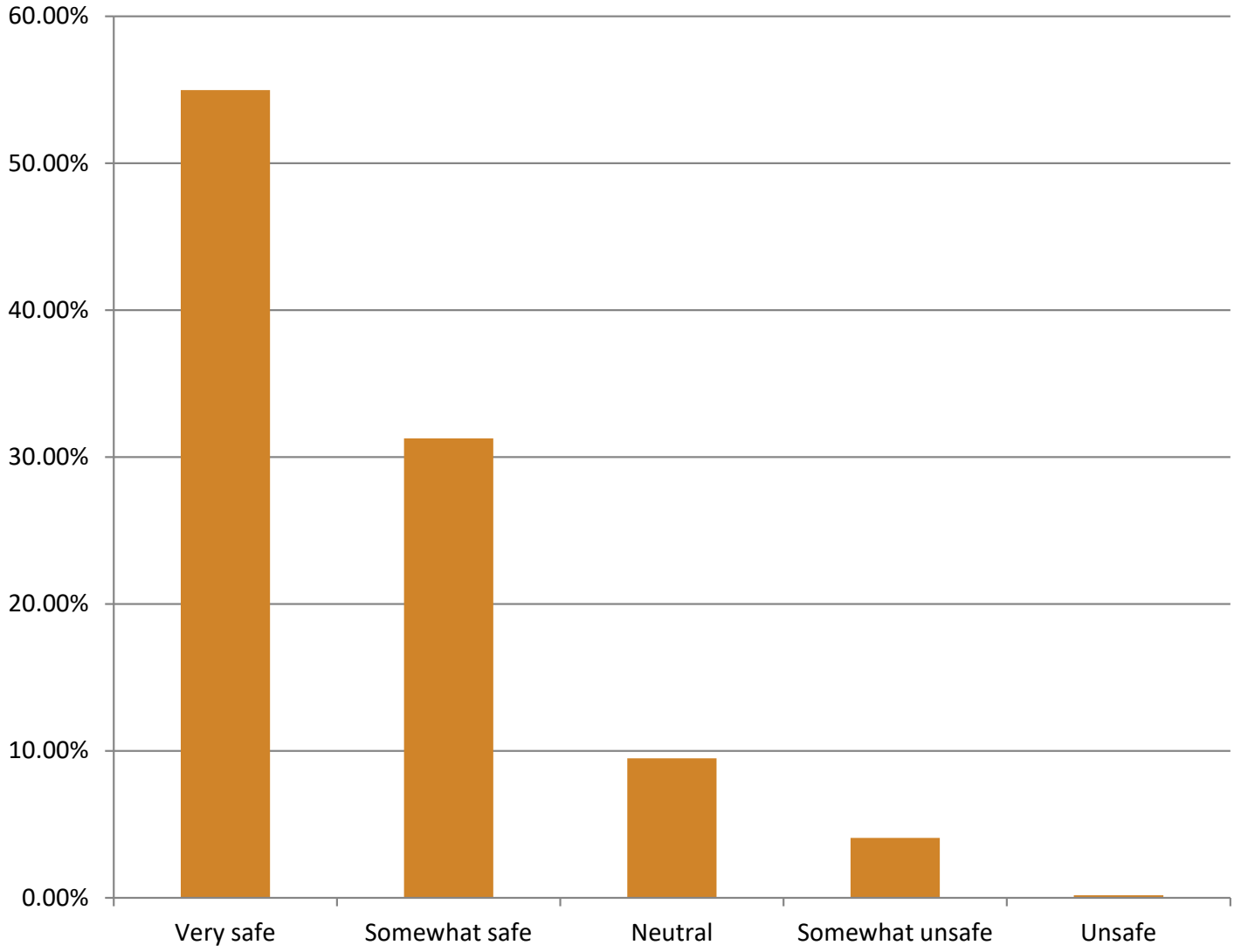
I would like to see more: (Select all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Responses	
Hiking trails	56.94%	628
Natural areas	48.41%	534
Bicycle-friendly infrastructure	32.82%	362
Trail wayfinding signs	31.64%	349
Cultural and historical preservation and restoration	27.20%	300
Access to rivers and lakes	27.11%	299
Paved trails	24.21%	267
Accessible trails	23.84%	263
Nature education programming	23.48%	259
Cultural and historical education programming	17.41%	192
Campgrounds	12.78%	141
Other (please explain)*	9.34%	103
Equestrian trails	8.25%	91
Playgrounds	7.52%	83

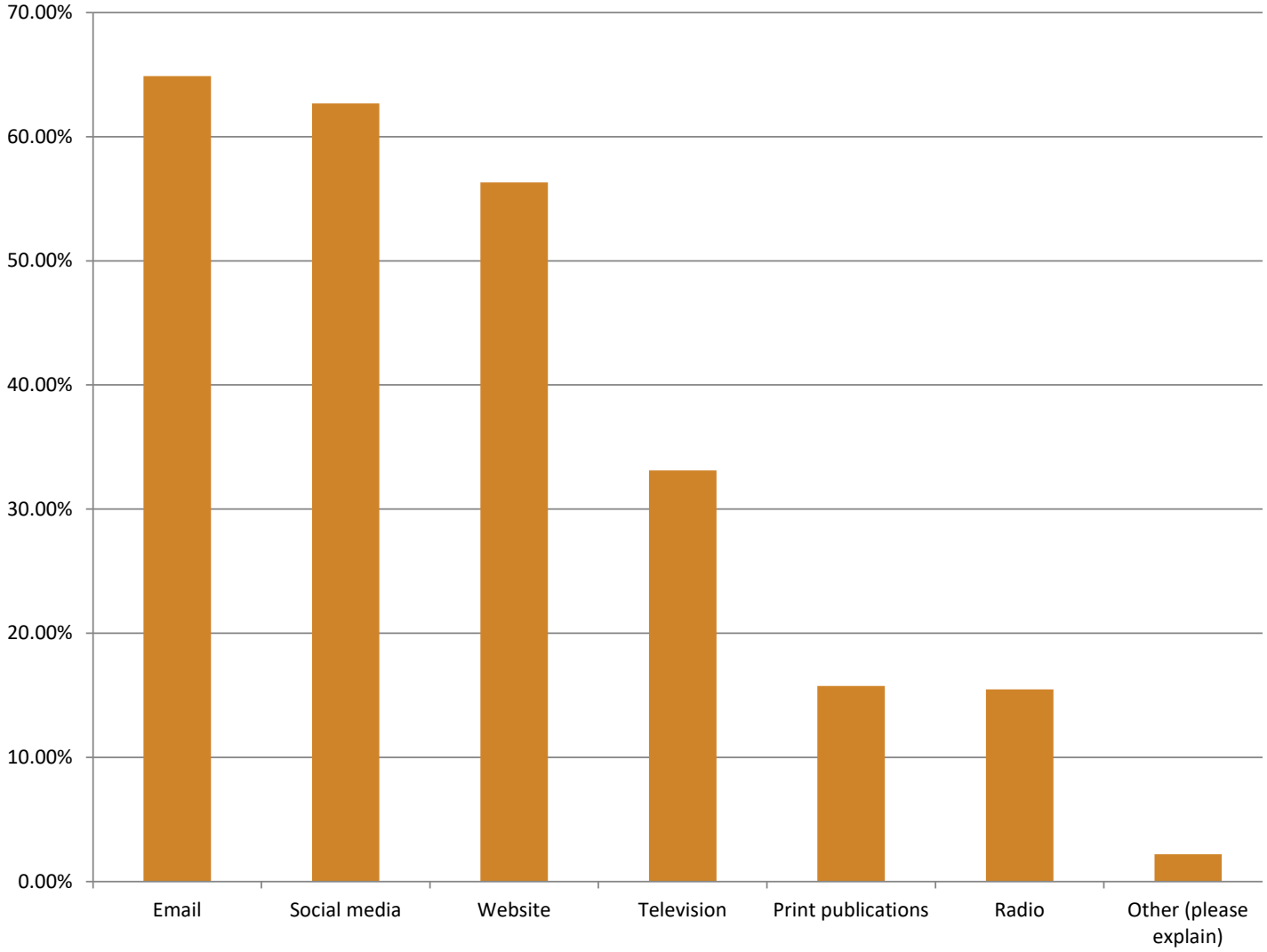
Answer Choices	Responses	
Golf courses and clubhouses	6.35%	70
Parking areas	6.17%	68
Transportation to preserves	3.72%	41
Snowmobile trails	2.54%	28
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1103**
	Skipped	**178**

Overall, how safe do you feel when visiting the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County? Please explain further in the comment box below.



Answer Choices	Responses	
Very safe	54.97%	608
Somewhat safe	31.28%	346
Neutral	9.49%	105
Somewhat unsafe	4.07%	45
Unsafe	0.18%	2
Please explain further.*	N/A	265
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1106**
	Skipped	**175**

Which of the following media platforms do you use most? (Select up to 3 choices.)



Answer Choices	Responses	
Email	64.88%	713
Social media	62.69%	689
Website	56.32%	619
Television	33.12%	364
Print publications	15.74%	173
Radio	15.47%	170
Other (please explain)*	2.18%	24
**Responses entered as text comment*	**Answered**	**1099**
	Skipped	**182**