

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment and Feasibility Survey Final Report

July 2020



RRC
ASSOCIATES

Table of Contents



- Introduction & Methodology
- Key Findings
- Demographics
- Current Usage
- Importance-Performance
- Communication
- Future Needs
- Values & Vision
- Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences
- Community Comments

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess system-wide parks and recreation needs in Groton, along with support for renovation of the Pratt Recreation Building including specific amenities desired.

This survey research effort and subsequent analysis were designed to assist Groton Parks and Recreation in developing a plan to reflect the community's needs and desires.



Methodology

Primary methods:

1 = Statistically Valid (Invitation Survey)

Mailed survey with an option to complete online through password protected website

2 = Open Link Survey—online survey made available to all residents in the Groton area via email, Groton website, and social media

3,874 Surveys Mailed



400 - Invitation Surveys Completed
+/- 4.9
Margin of Error



301 - Open Link Surveys Completed

701
Total
Completed
Surveys

Weighting the Data

1

The underlying data from the invitation survey were weighted by age, race and ethnicity to ensure appropriate representation of **Groton residents** across different demographic cohorts in the sample.

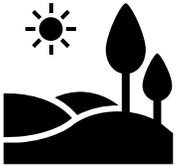
2

Using U.S. Census Data, age, race and ethnicity distribution in the sample were adjusted to more closely match the actual population profile of **Groton, CT**.



Key Findings

(Overall Assessment of Survey Results)



OVERALL ASSESSMENT of SURVEY RESULTS

The survey data suggest that the Pratt Building renovation, in and of itself, is important or very important to about half of all households; but when ranked along with the entire scope of other potential system-wide improvements that could be made in the community, it's a lower priority overall, ranking within the bottom one-third of top priorities (at 11%). A new aquatic center or indoor pool is ranked as the top priority overall for the community (at 39%), and it is possible that the aquatic facilities planned for the Pratt Building could satisfy some of this need (note, however, the survey did not probe "where" a new aquatic center should be located if that was the highest priority).

Further, it is evident from the survey results that the location of the Pratt Building site (in the far northeastern corner of Groton) is a potential barrier to usage, which surfaces in the comments and likely contributes to the results and patterns described above. Respondents comment they are excited about the facility and supportive of the project, but there is concern about access to the site with it being "so far from most of town," especially for kids living farther away who would likely benefit most from the facility. Providing "environmentally friendly" transportation options to the site, however, might mitigate some of this concern. Concern with potential overlap with the nearby YMCA in Mystic was also noted in the comments. Finally, respondents comment that Groton should stop spending money on "old, derelict buildings" and focus attention on building a new community center to accommodate and serve the needs of all residents. As such, given the extent of all these concerns combined, the project is viewed as less of an overall priority in consideration of other desired needs in the community.

Along with a new aquatic center, increasing trails/pathway connectivity is another top community priority (37%), as is improving water access (34%), both of which the Pratt location will offer and may serve as additional draws for encouraging use of the facility.

Key Findings (System-wide Parks and Recreation)



MEETING NEEDS

Asked how well current offerings are meeting the needs of the community, Groton Senior Center, open space/natural areas, trails and pathways, community parks, and athletic fields were the top five that are meeting needs the best (all rated between 4.1 and 4.5 on the 5-point scale).



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Lower rated aspects of meeting need include the community boating dock (Spicer Park), Central Bark, neighborhood events/festivals, and cultural events/festivals (all rated at 3.6). The hockey rink (3.3) and disc golf course (3.2) were the lowest rated aspects in terms of meeting need.



PARTICIPATION

78% of invite respondents are current users of Groton Parks and Recreation programs and facilities. Open link respondents are more likely to be participants, with 85% being current users.



OPEN LINK PROFILE

Open link respondents consist of many more families (58% kids in the household vs. 33% invitation sample) and are generally more familiar with current offerings (more current users). Also many newer residents. Results for this group are similar compared to the invitation sample throughout the survey on most questions, but not identical (some differences of note in places). In general, however, the overall consistency of results comparing the two samples lends an additional level of confidence in the data.

Key Findings (System-wide Parks and Recreation)



FUTURE NEEDS

As noted, a new aquatic center ranked as the top priority (39%), followed closely by increased trail/pathway connectivity (37%), and improved water access (34%). Splash pads, improved community involvement, and more parks followed. Renovation of the Pratt Building for community use ranked 11th out of 17 projects evaluated with 11% response.



COMMUNICATION

The most preferred methods to receive information on parks & rec services are email and the activity guide/brochure (both 51%), followed by social media (39%), Town of Groton website (33%), and newsletter/E-newsletter (also 33%). Results demonstrate a need to maintain diversify in communication methods.



VALUES & VISION

Providing affordable activities and facilities to all, providing a high level of safety and security, and continuing to focus on providing family-oriented activities are the top three most important values for Groton Parks and Recreation to focus on in its mission for the future. Focus on maintaining what is currently available follows closely.



INCREASE USE

More programs/community events, improved communication about offerings, enhanced maintenance of parks/facilities, lower pricing/user fees, more security lighting, and more facilities, fields, and amenities were among the top items that would increase participation in parks and recreation.

Key Findings (Pratt Recreation Building)



IMPORTANCE OF RENOVATING PRATT BUILDING

Renovating the Pratt Recreation Building is important or very important to about half of all households (53%). Open link respondents exhibit similar opinions (54% important or very important). Households with kids are especially supportive (69% vs. 46% households without kids).



TOP 3 AMENITIES

Asked to rank their top 3 priorities for spaces/amenities to be included in the Pratt Building, swimming pool with lap lanes (33%), fitness areas (31%), warm water activity pool (25%), group exercise rooms (20%), multi-activity gym (18%), and leisure pool with zero depth entry and water play (18%) are top priorities.



AMENITIES TO INCLUDE

Again, aquatics tend to be the most important amenities that residents would like to see included in the renovation (reinforcing the importance of aquatics as a priority in the overall community). Locker rooms/restrooms are important as well, along with group exercise rooms, fitness areas, and multi-activity gym space.



OUTDOOR AMENITIES

Trails rated the highest in importance (4.1), followed by water access (3.8), playgrounds (3.8), court sports (3.7), community gardens (3.6), and field sports (3.5). Open link respondents rated each amenity similarly.

Demographics

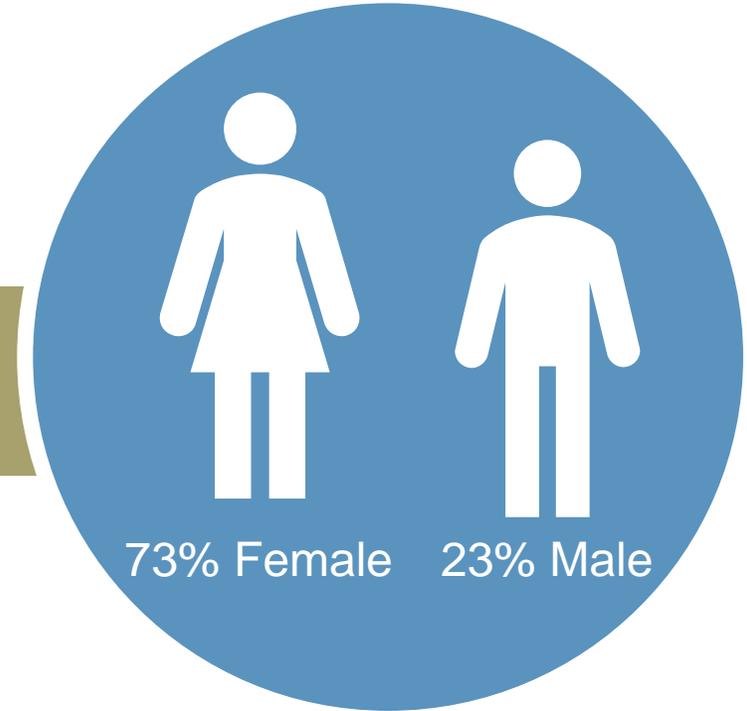


What area of Groton do you live:

- 32% - City of Groton
- 31% - Mystic
- 9% - Poquonnock Bridge
- 7% - Subase
- 7% - Center Groton
- 5% - Noank
- 4% - Old Mystic
- 3% - Groton Long Point/Mumford Cove

19.2

Average number of years
living in the Town of Groton



66% of respondents own their residence / 32% rent

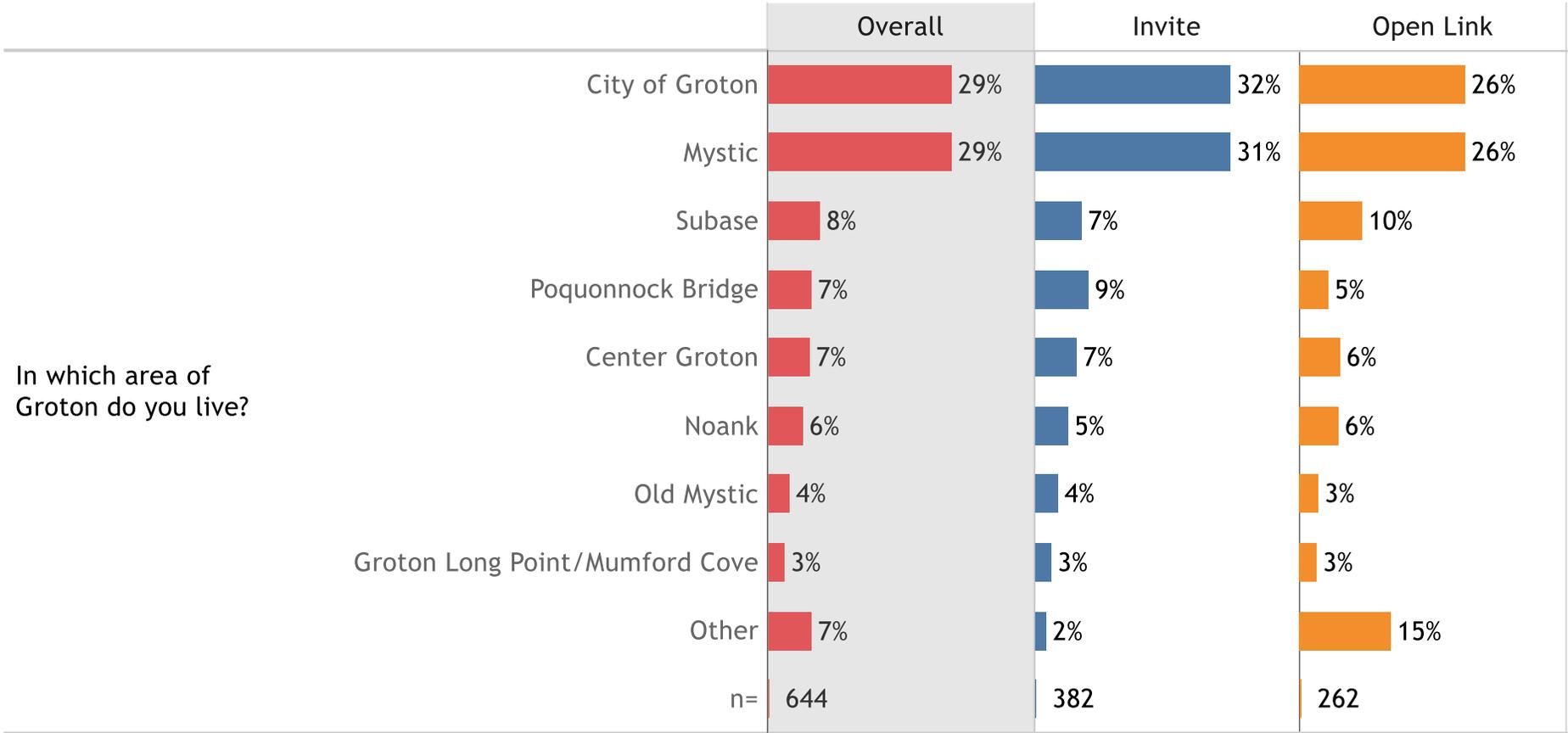


6% of respondents have a need for ADA accessible facilities and amenities

Demographic Profile
(Invitation Sample)

About one-third each of the invite sample live in the City of Groton (32%) and Mystic (31%), followed by Poquonnock Bridge (9%), Subase (7%), and Center Groton (7%). The open link results have about one-quarter from both City of Groton (26%) and Mystic (26%), and slightly more from Subase (10%) and a variety of “other” locations (including areas outside of the Town).

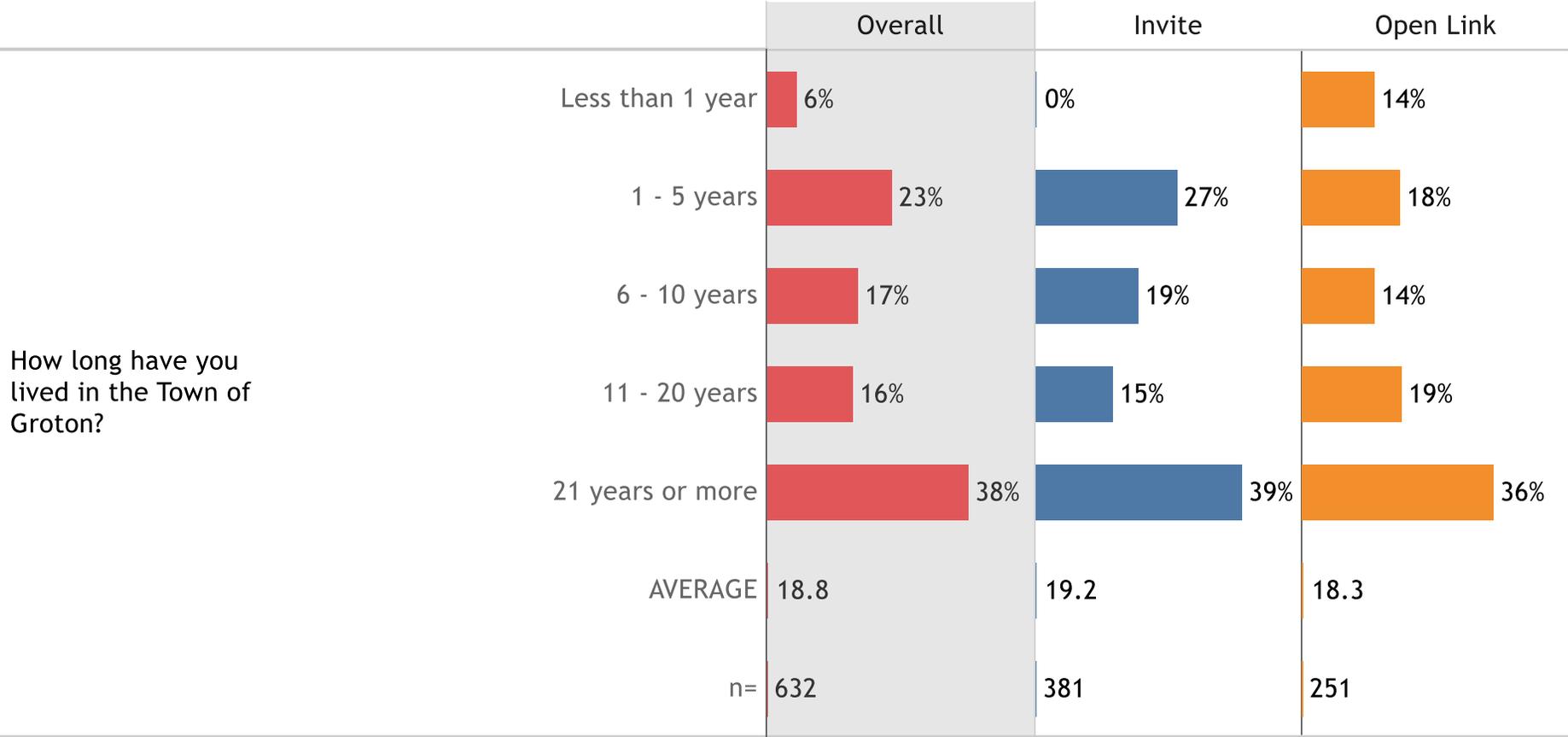
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Demographics



Demographic Profile

Close to 40% of invite respondents have lived in Groton for 21 years or more, similar to the open link results (36%). One quarter of invite respondents have lived in Groton 5 years or less (27%). One-third of open link respondents have lived in Groton for 5 years or less (32%), including 14% who have lived in Groton less than a year. Average length of residency is 19.2 years for the invite sample and 18.3 years for open link respondents.

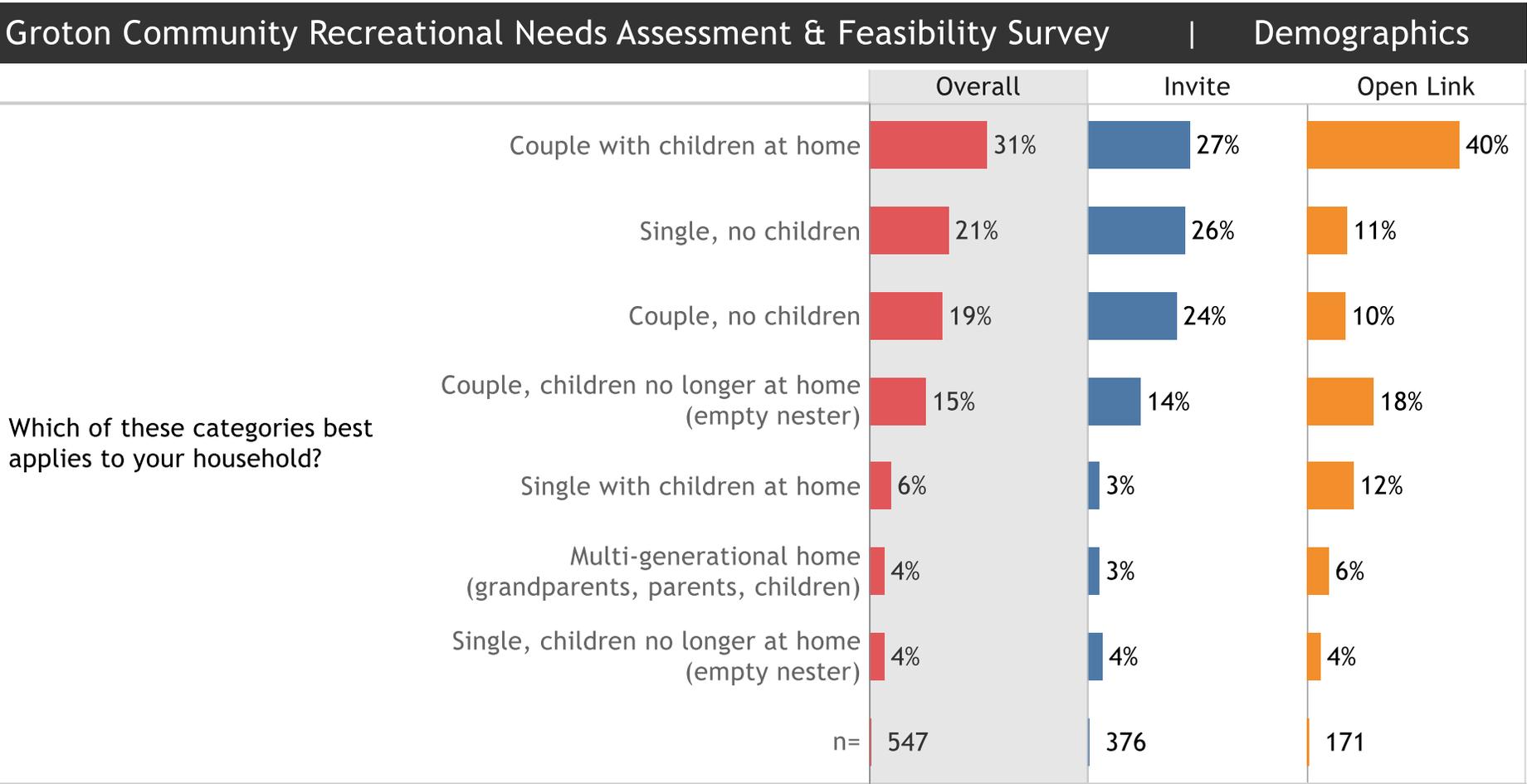
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Demographics



How long have you lived in the Town of Groton?

Demographic Profile

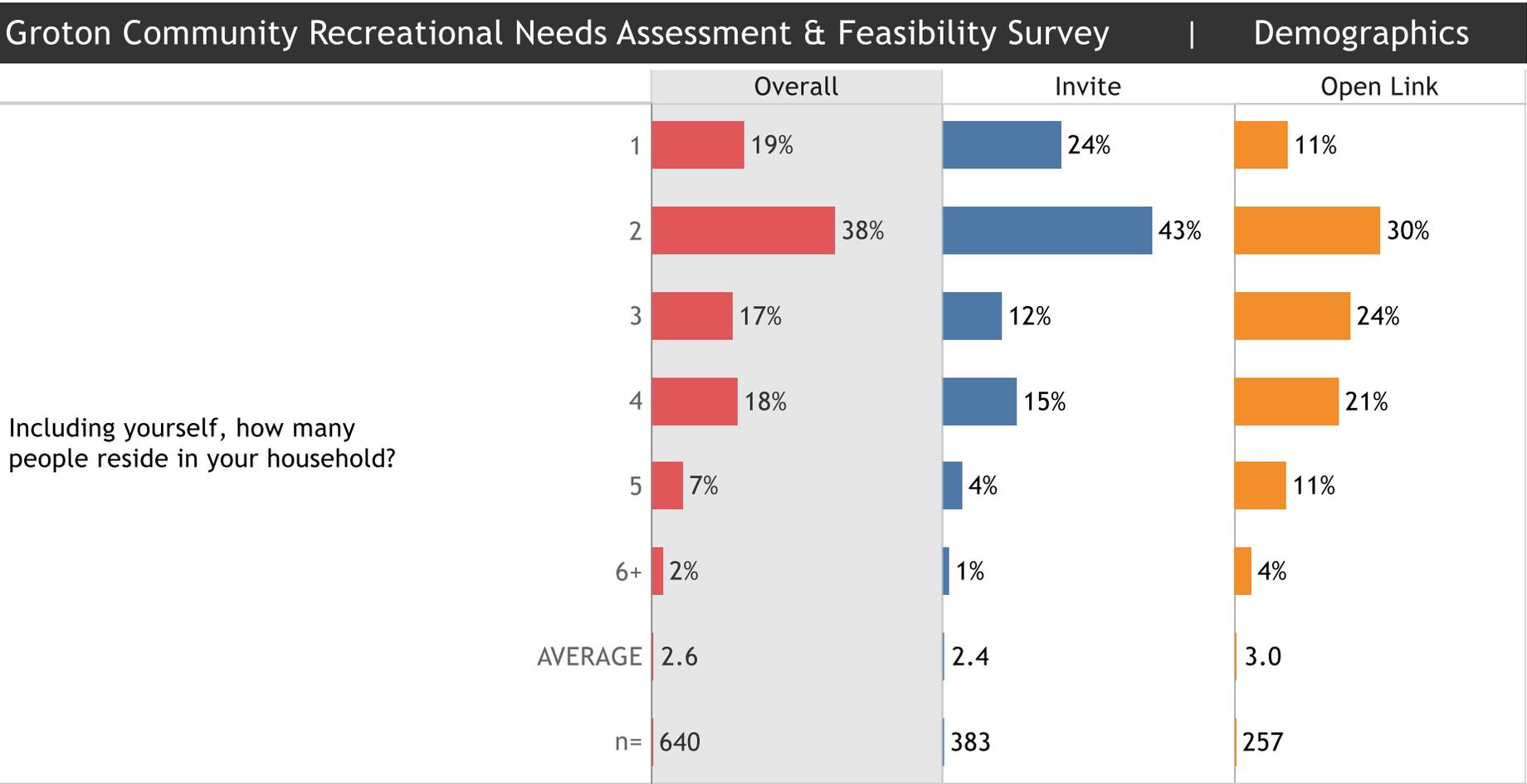
Among invite respondents, 33% of households have children at home while 67% do not. Open link responses have a much larger percentage of households with children at home (58%).



Which of these categories best applies to your household?

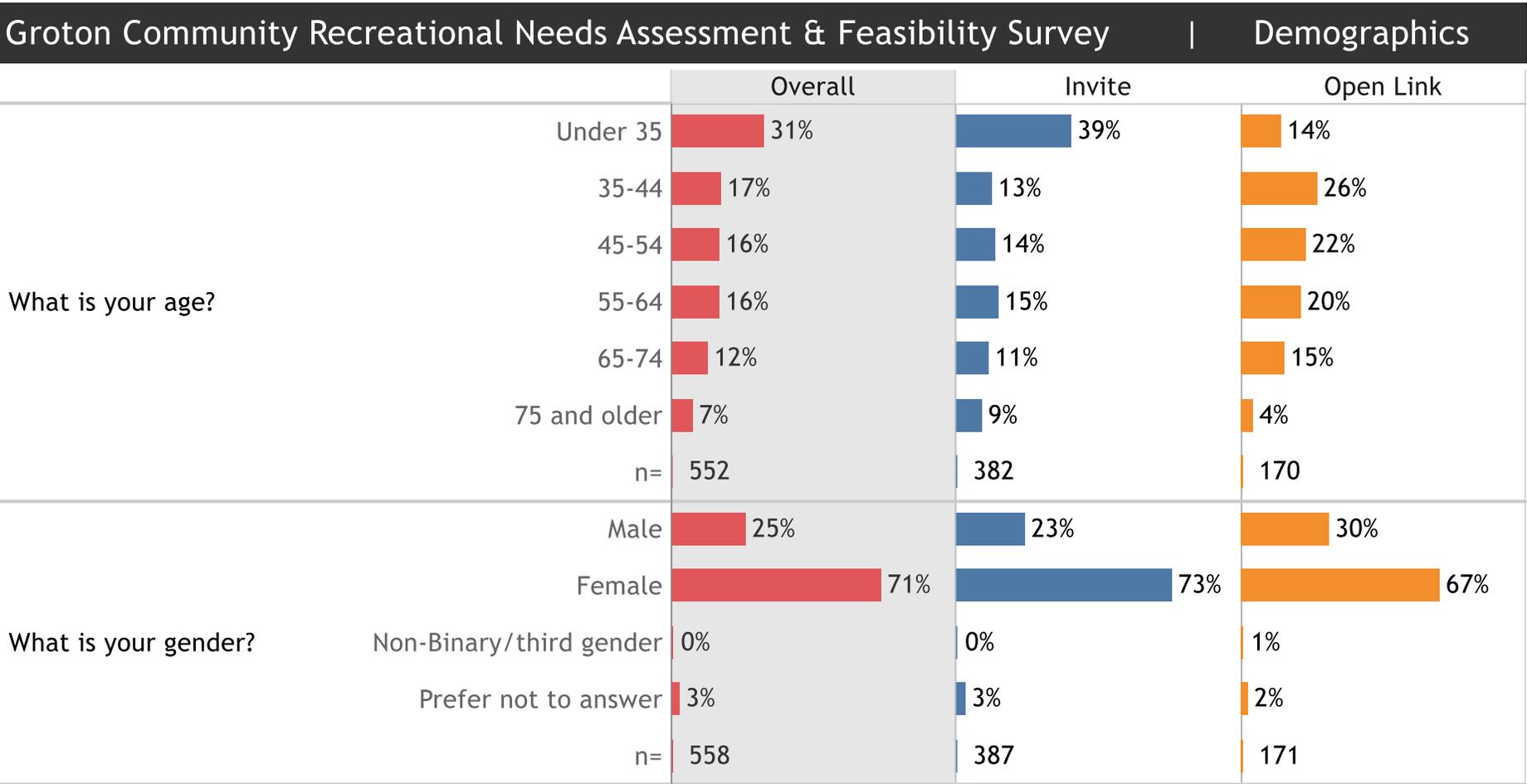
Demographic Profile

As such, with more children in the household, average household size is larger among the open link sample at 3.0 people vs. 2.4 for the invite sample.



Demographic Profile

Among invite respondents, a majority identified as females (73%), a finding commonly seen in survey research. Furthermore, age, a weighted variable, indicated those under 35 the largest age group represented (39%).



Demographic Profile

The majority of invite respondents identify as “white” and “non-Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin,” which aligns closely to U.S. Census Data for the Town of Groton. Eight percent are Black or African American, 7% Asian, and 8% some other race. Thirteen percent are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin (again, aligning with U.S. Census Data).

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey		Demographics	
	Overall	Invite	Open Link
Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?	Yes	11%	5%
	No	89%	95%
	n=	535	171
What is your race and ethnicity? (Check all that apply)	White	84%	90%
	Black or African American	8%	7%
	Some other race	7%	4%
	Asian	5%	1%
	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2%	1%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	2%
	n=	534	167
	n=	364	367

Demographic Profile

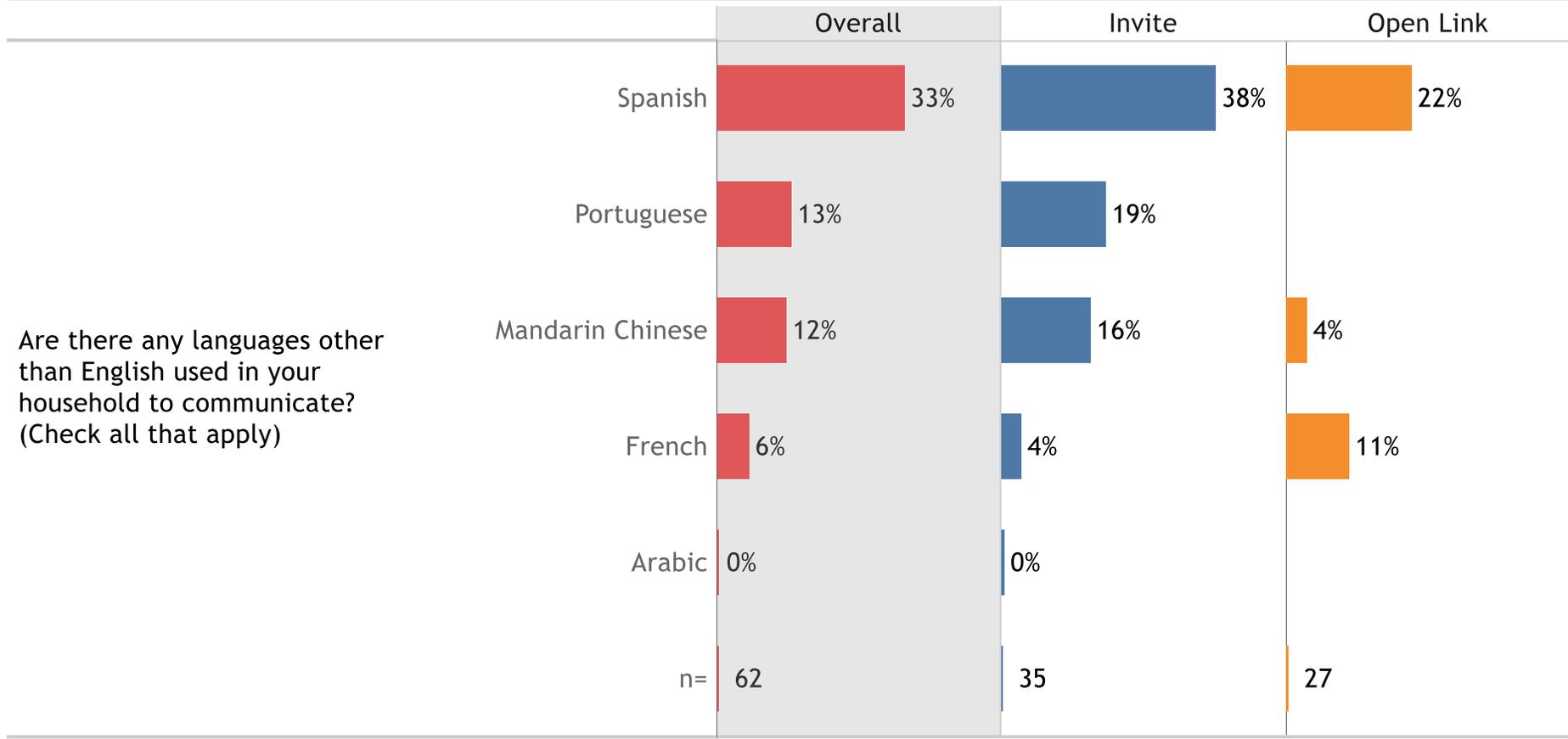
Among invitation respondents, 66% own their home, 32% rent, and 87% are registered to vote in the Town of Groton. About 6% of invite and 10% open link respondents have a need for ADA-accessible facilities and services. Forty-one percent of invite respondents own a dog vs. 45% of open link respondents.

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey		Demographics		
	Overall	Invite	Open Link	
Are you a registered voter in the Town of Groton?	Yes	85%	87%	81%
	No	15%	13%	19%
	n=	554	383	171
Do you own or rent your residence in Groton?	Own	69%	66%	76%
	Rent	28%	32%	17%
	Other	3%	2%	7%
	n=	554	383	171
Does your household have a need for ADA-accessible facilities and services?	Yes	8%	6%	10%
	No	92%	94%	90%
	n=	551	379	172
Do you own a dog?	Yes	42%	41%	45%
	No	58%	59%	55%
	n=	558	386	172

Demographic Profile

Close to 10% of the invite sample indicated that languages other than English are used to communicate in their households. Among those who do, Spanish was mentioned by 38%, followed by Portuguese (19%) and Mandarin Chinese (16%).

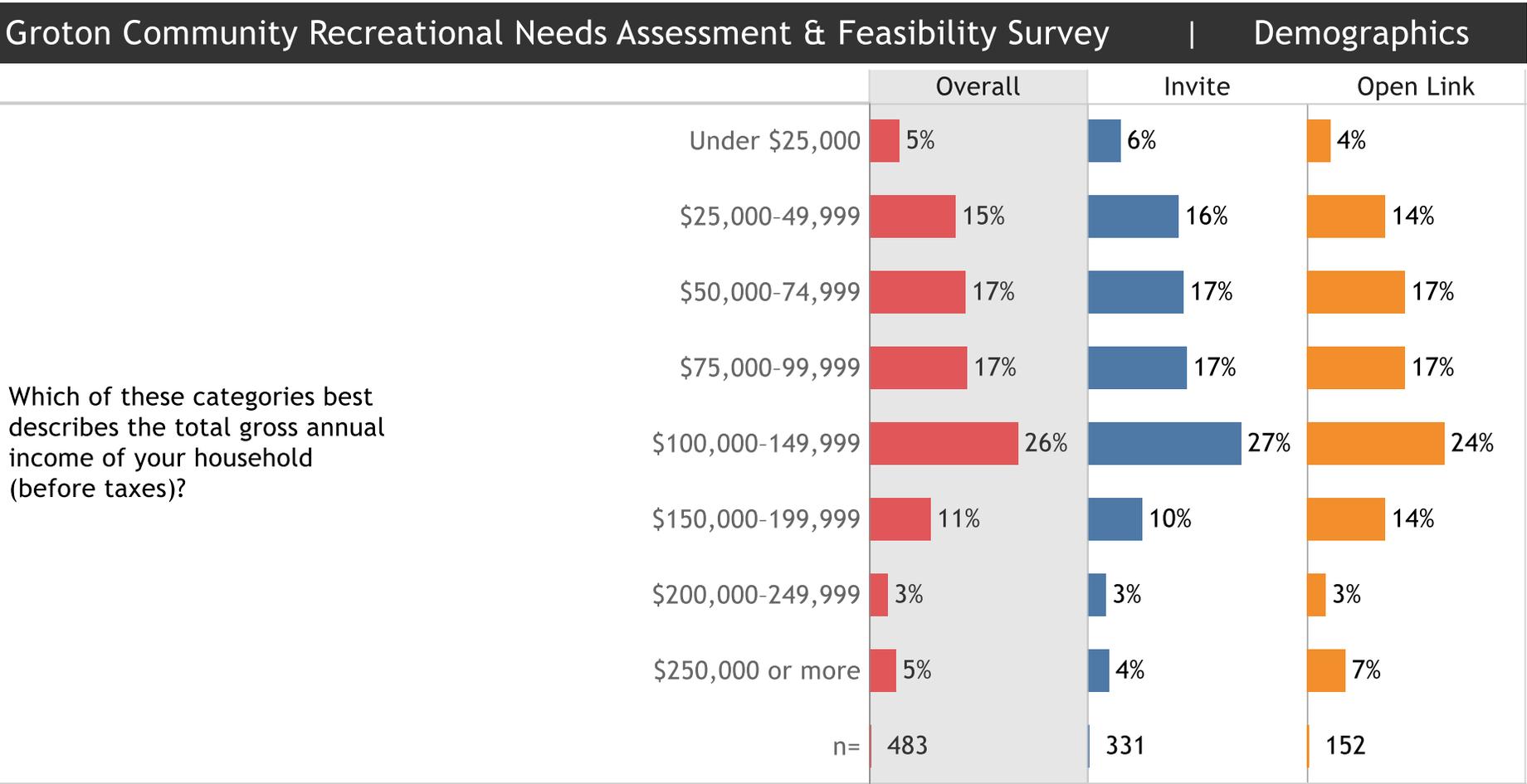
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Communication



Are there any languages other than English used in your household to communicate?
(Check all that apply)

Communication Language

Approximately 44% of invite respondents have a household income over \$100,000, with one-quarter (27%) falling within the \$100,000-\$149,999 income category specifically. Open link respondents have a very similar income profile.



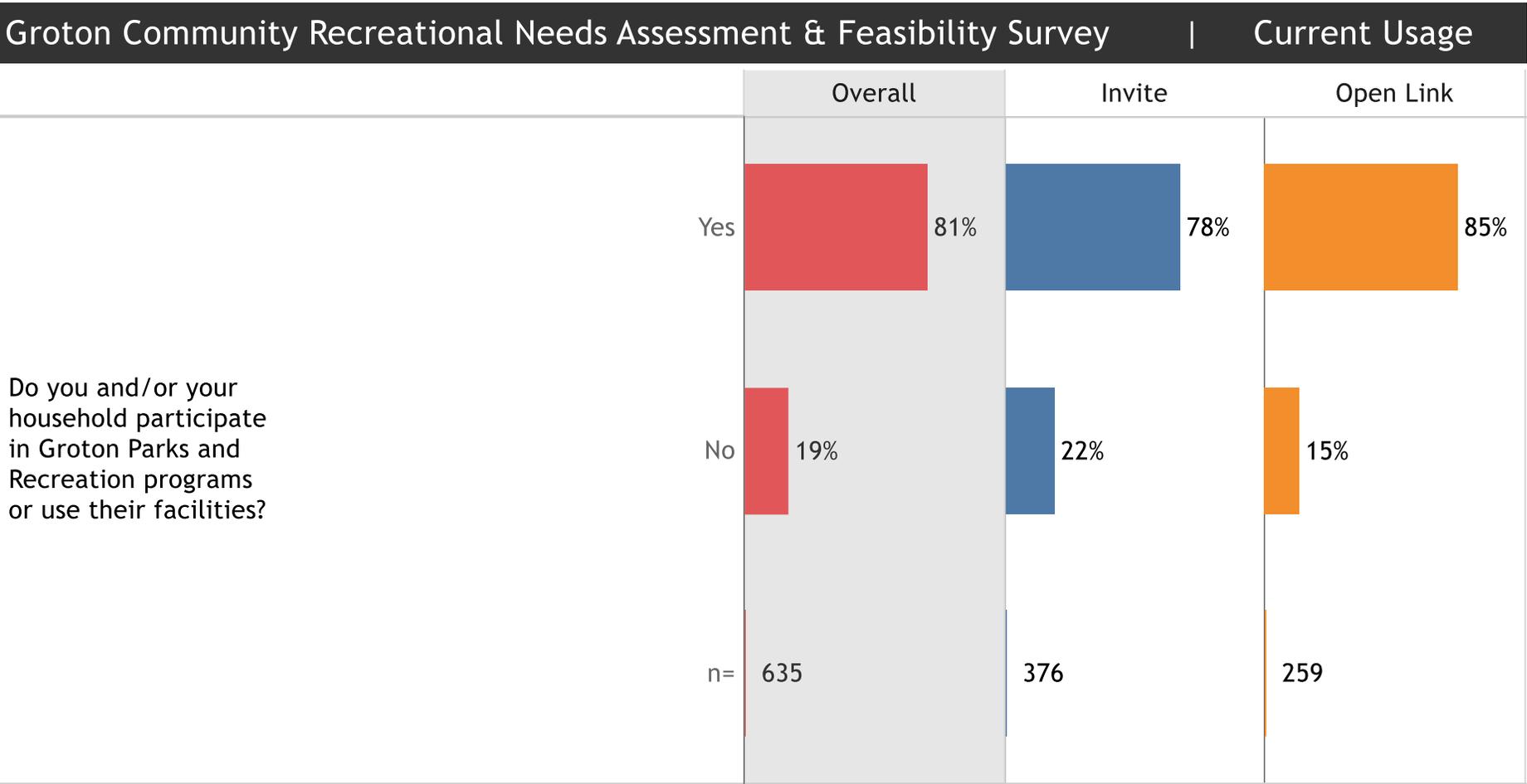
Which of these categories best describes the total gross annual income of your household (before taxes)?

Demographic Profile

Current Usage



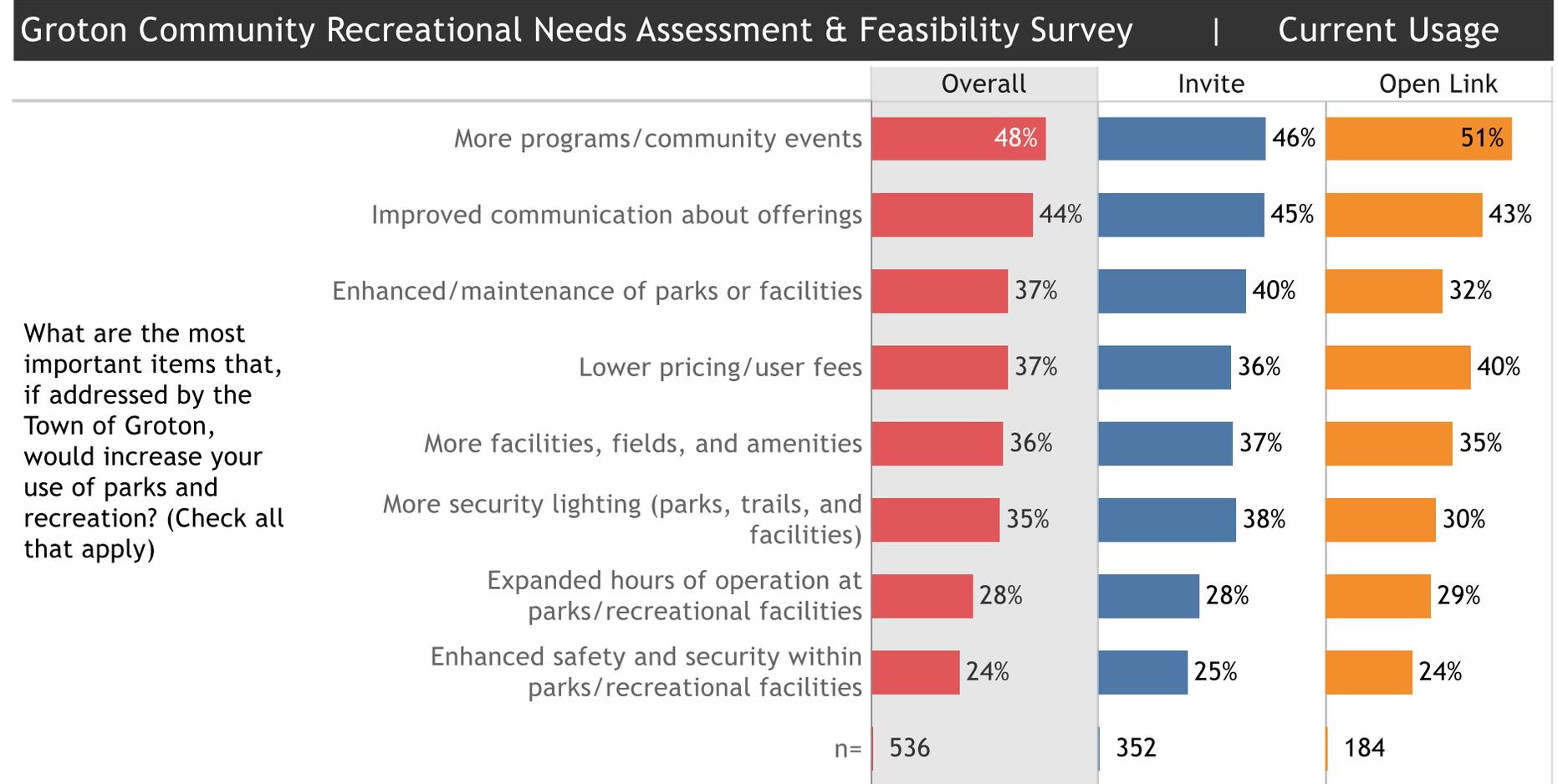
Approximately 78% of invite respondents are current users of Groton Parks and Recreation programs and facilities. Open link respondents are more likely to be participants, with 85% being current users.



Participation

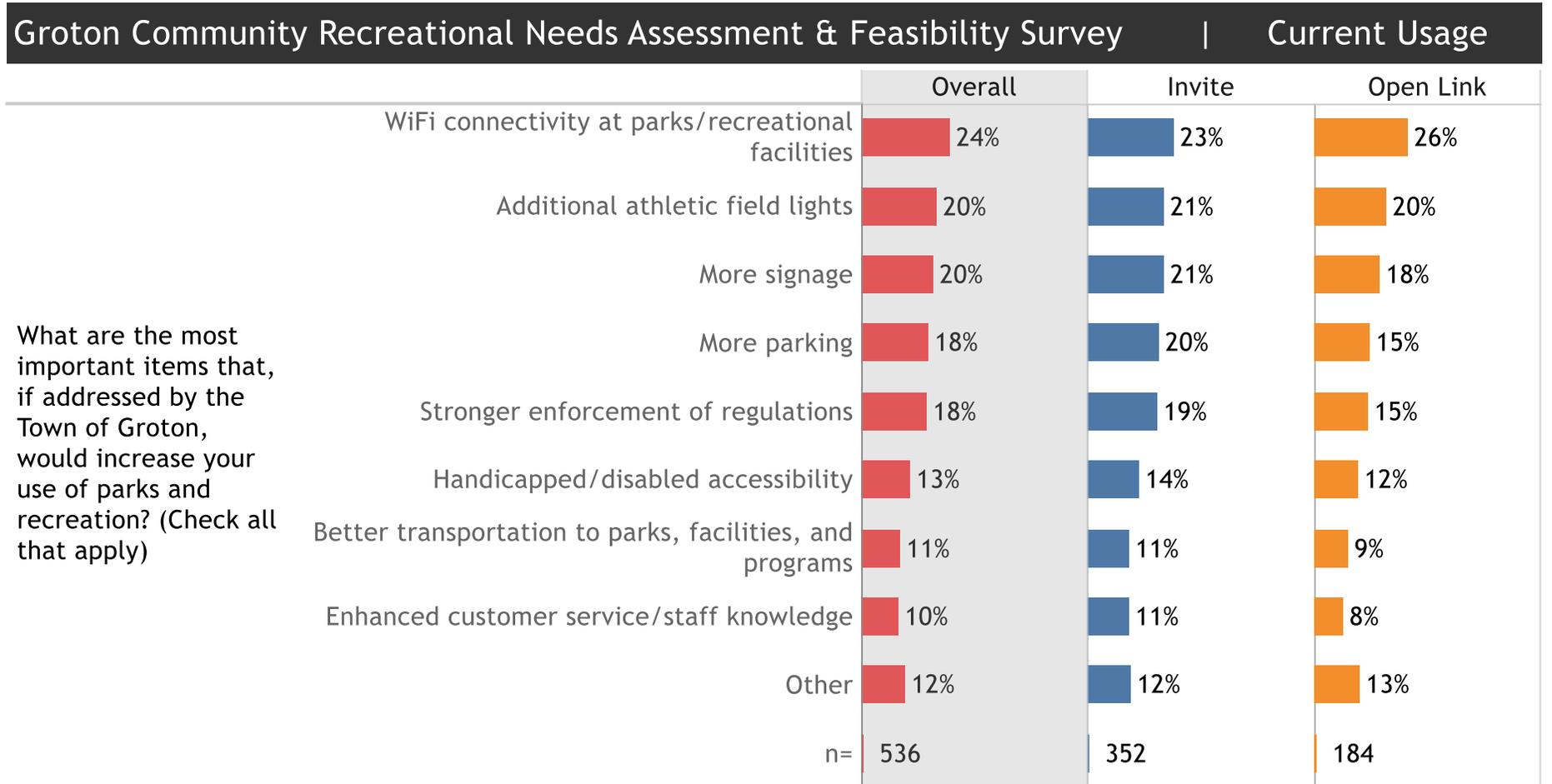
Increase Participation

When asked what the most important items that, if addressed by the Town of Groton, would increase use at parks and recreation facilities, more programs/community events, improved communication about offerings, enhanced maintenance of parks or facilities, lower pricing/user fees, more security lighting, and more facilities, fields, and amenities were among the top items for both invite and open link respondents. Open link respondents focused slightly more importance on programs/events as well as lower pricing/user fees.



What are the most important items that, if addressed by the Town of Groton, would increase your use of parks and recreation? (Check all that apply)

List continued.



What are the most important items that, if addressed by the Town of Groton, would increase your use of parks and recreation? (Check all that apply)

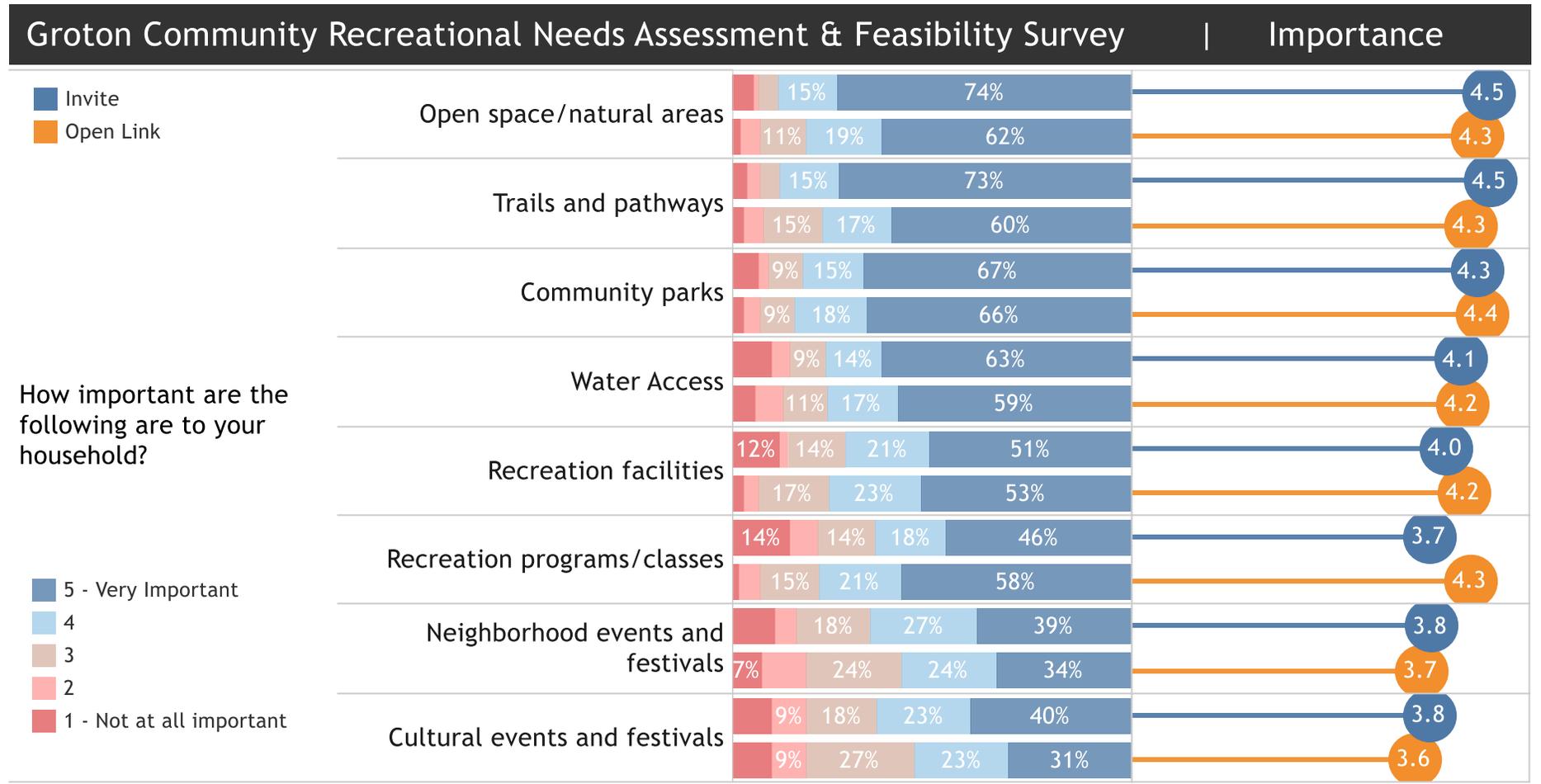
Increase Participation (continued)

Importance-Performance



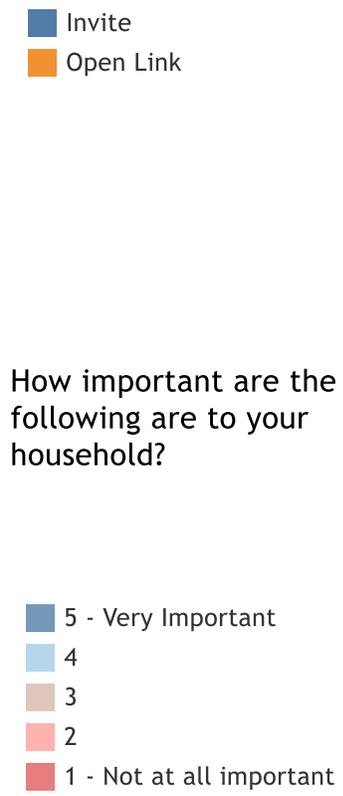
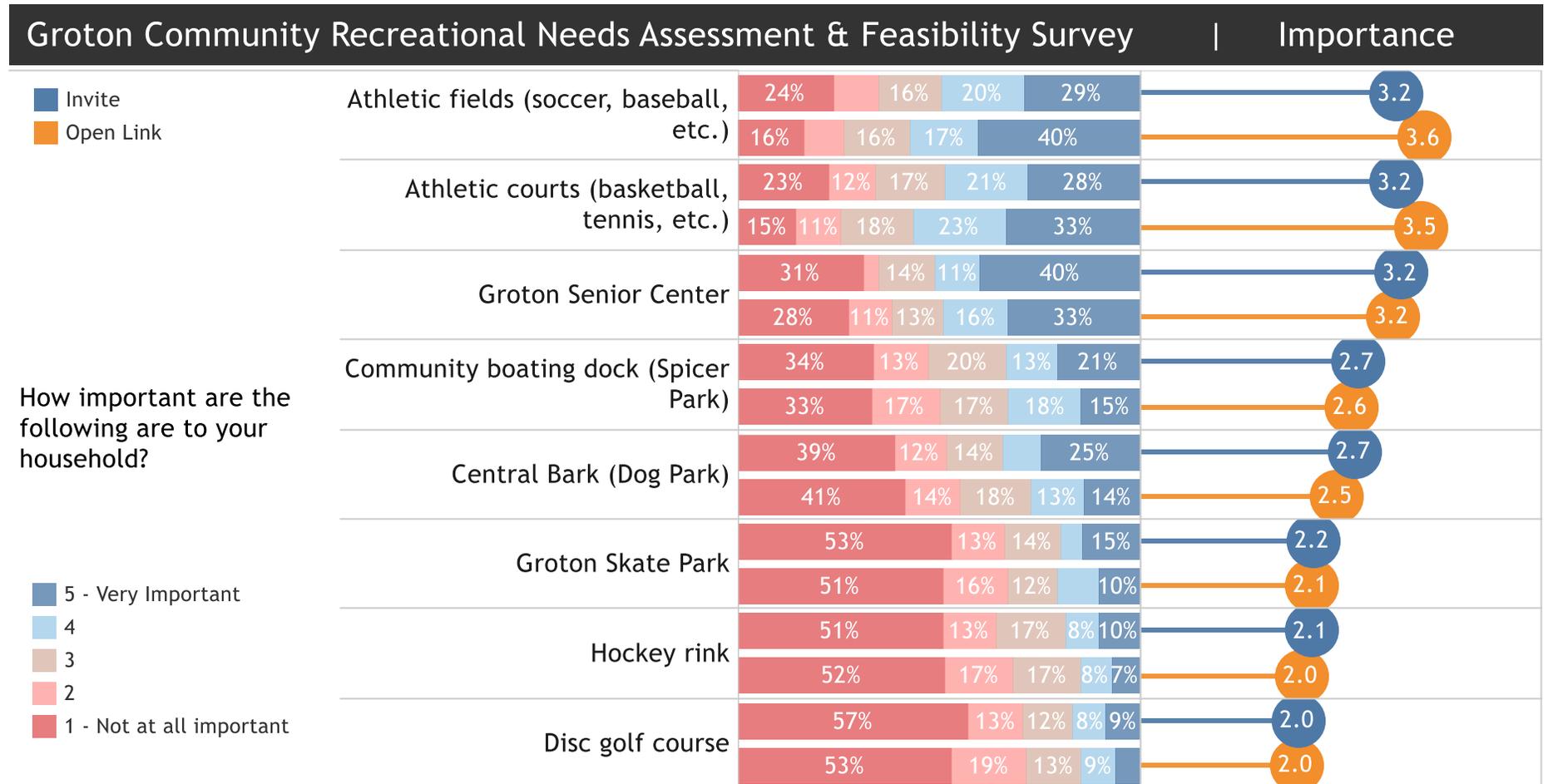
Importance of Current Facilities and Programs

Invite respondents rated open space/natural areas (4.5), trails and pathways (4.5), community parks (4.3), water access (4.1), and recreation facilities (4.0) as most important to their household. Open link respondents rated the list of facilities and services similarly but were slightly higher for community parks (4.4) and included recreation programs/classes in their top responses (4.3).



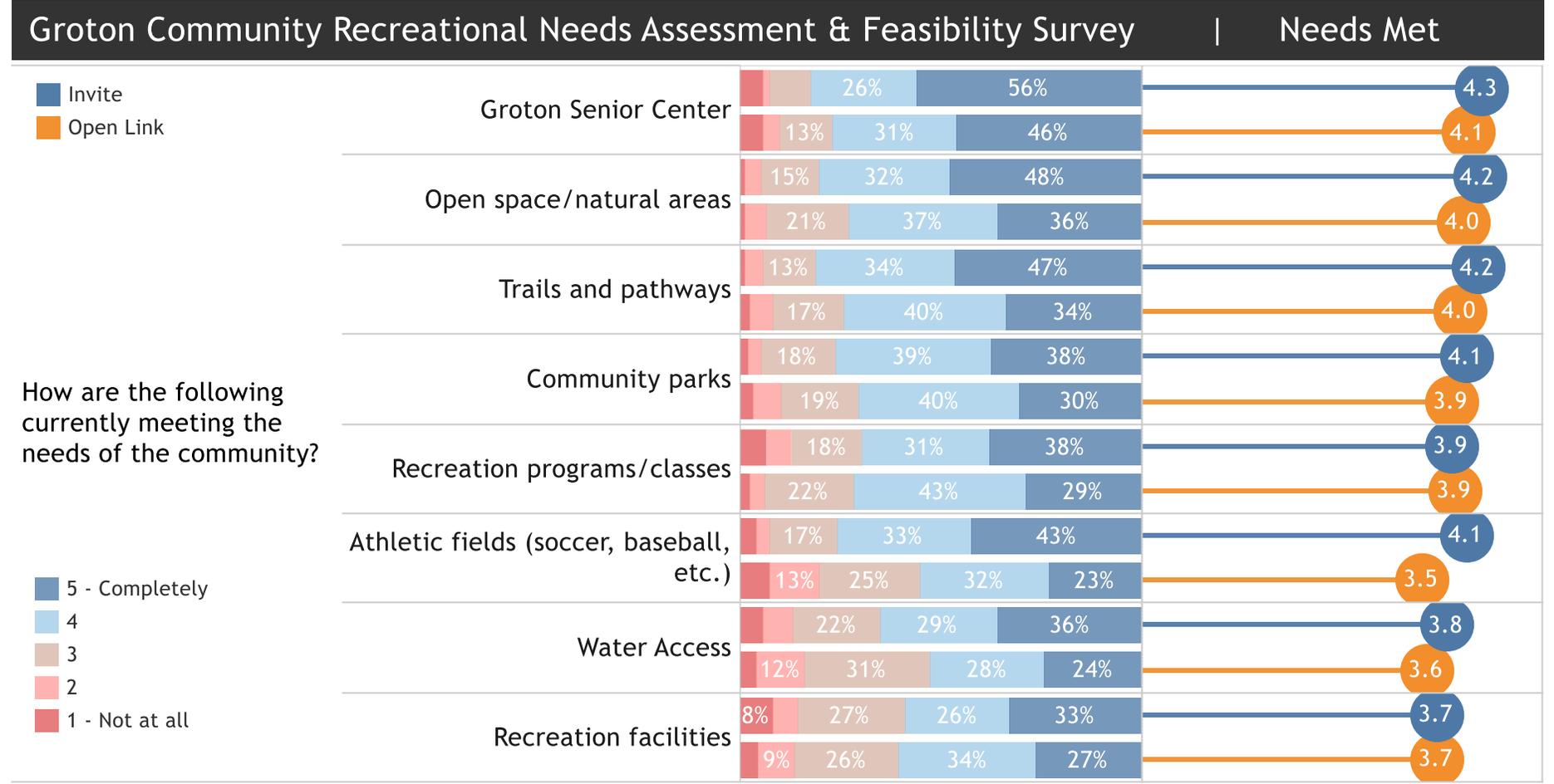
Importance of Current Facilities and Programs (continued)

List continued.



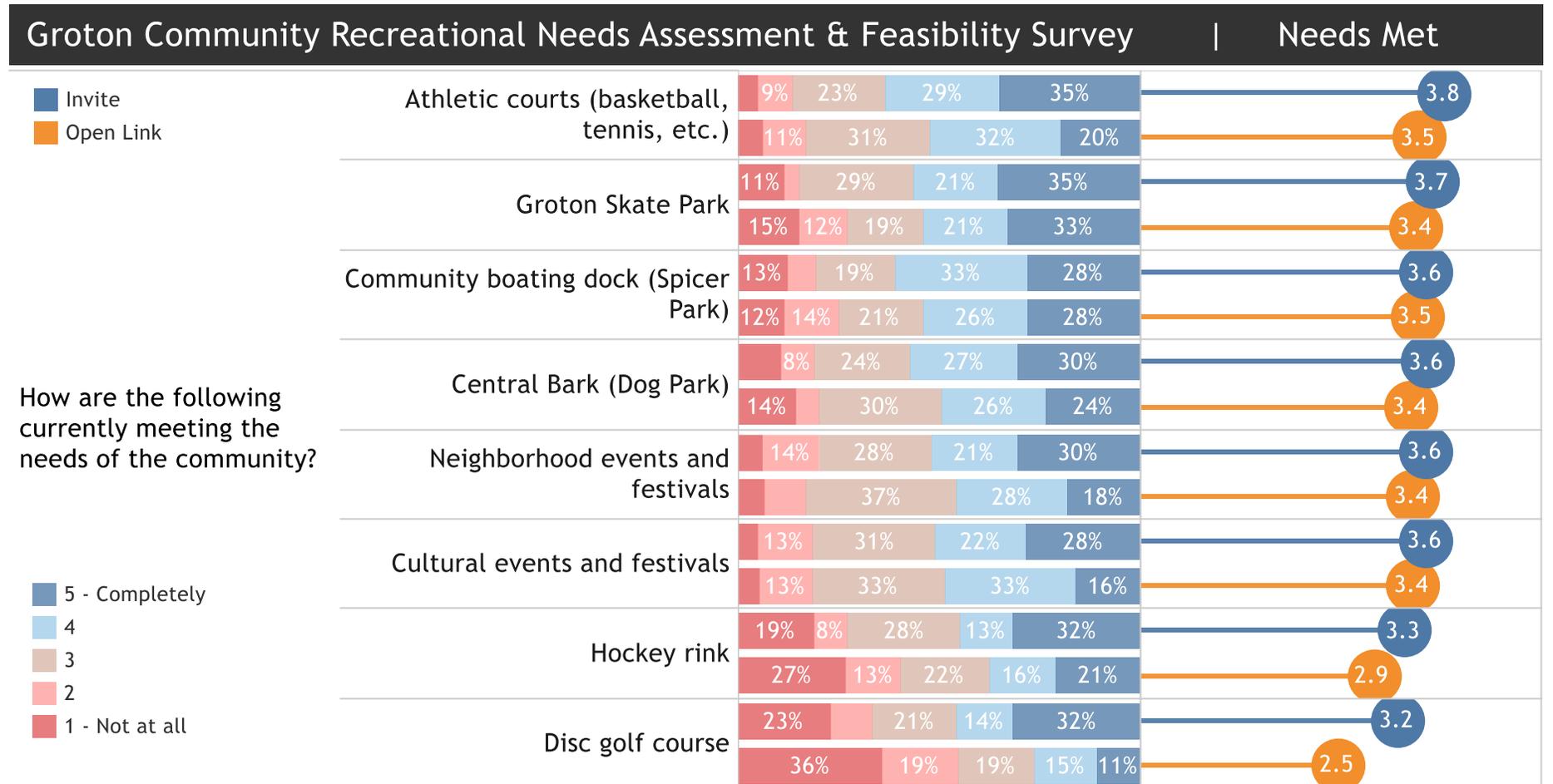
Needs Met of Current Facilities and Programs

When asked how well these offerings are meeting the needs of the community, Groton Senior Center, open space/natural areas, trails and pathways, community parks, and athletic fields were the top five that are meeting the needs the best (all rated between 4.1 and 4.5). Open link respondents rated needs met similarly or slightly lower than invite respondents and were somewhat more critical of athletic fields (3.5 average score and 20% ratings of 1 or 2).



Needs Met of Current Facilities and Programs (continued)

List continued. Lower rated aspects in terms of meeting need include the community boating dock, Central Bark, neighborhood events and festivals, and cultural events and festivals (all rated at 3.6 among the invite sample). The hockey rink (3.3) and disc golf course (3.2) were the lowest rated aspects. Open link respondents again rate needs met similarly or slightly lower for most facilities.



Importance-Performance Matrix

**High importance/
Low needs met**

These are key areas for potential improvements. Improving these facilities/programs would likely positively affect the degree to which community needs are met overall.

**High importance/
High needs met**

These amenities are important to most respondents and should be maintained in the future but are less of a priority for improvements as needs are currently being adequately met.

**Low importance/
Low needs met**

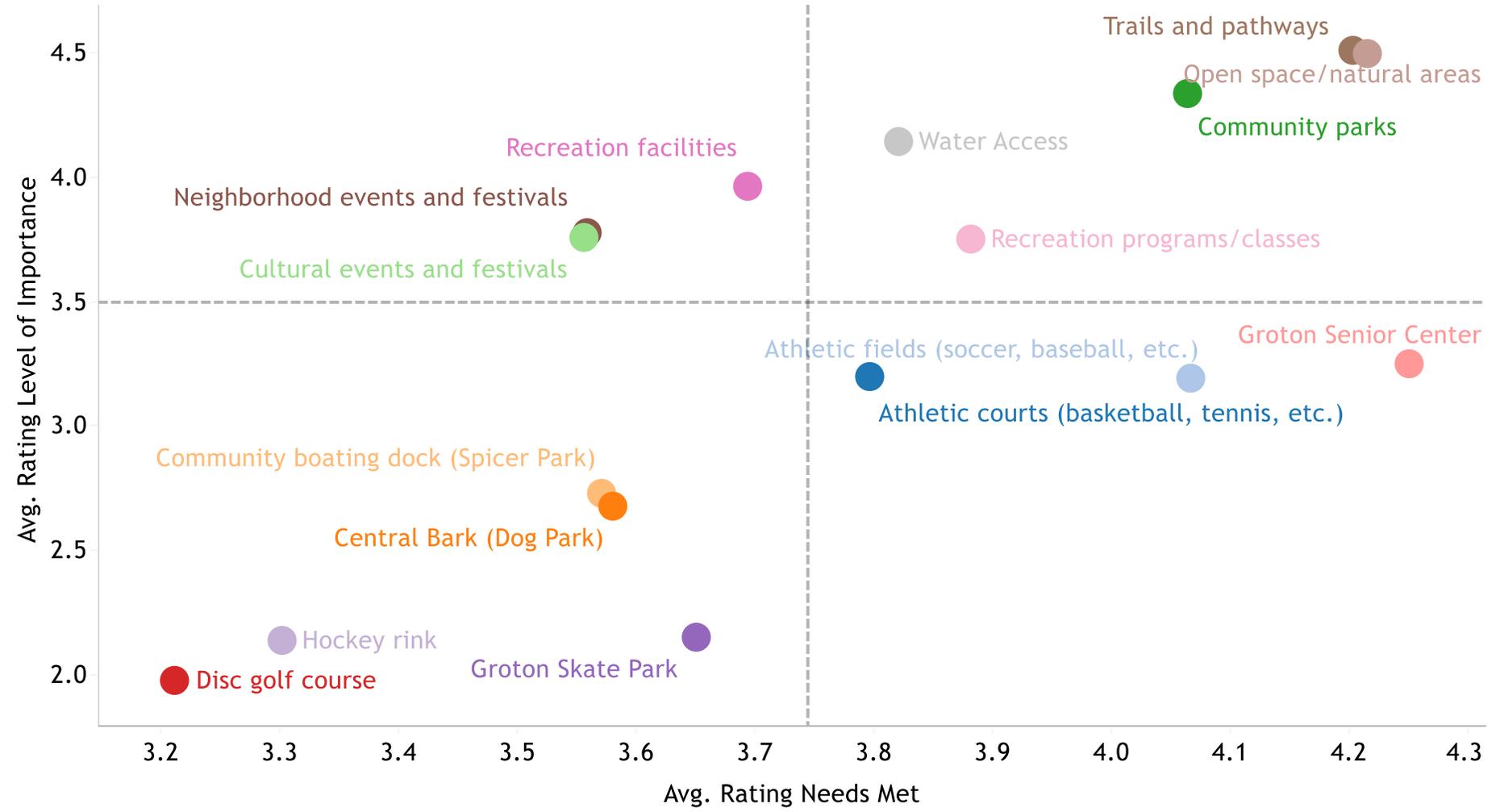
These “niche” facilities/programs have a small but passionate following, so measuring participation when planning for future improvements may prove to be valuable.

**Low importance/
High needs met**

Current levels of support appear to be adequate. Future discussions evaluating whether the resources supporting these facilities/programs outweigh the benefits may be constructive.

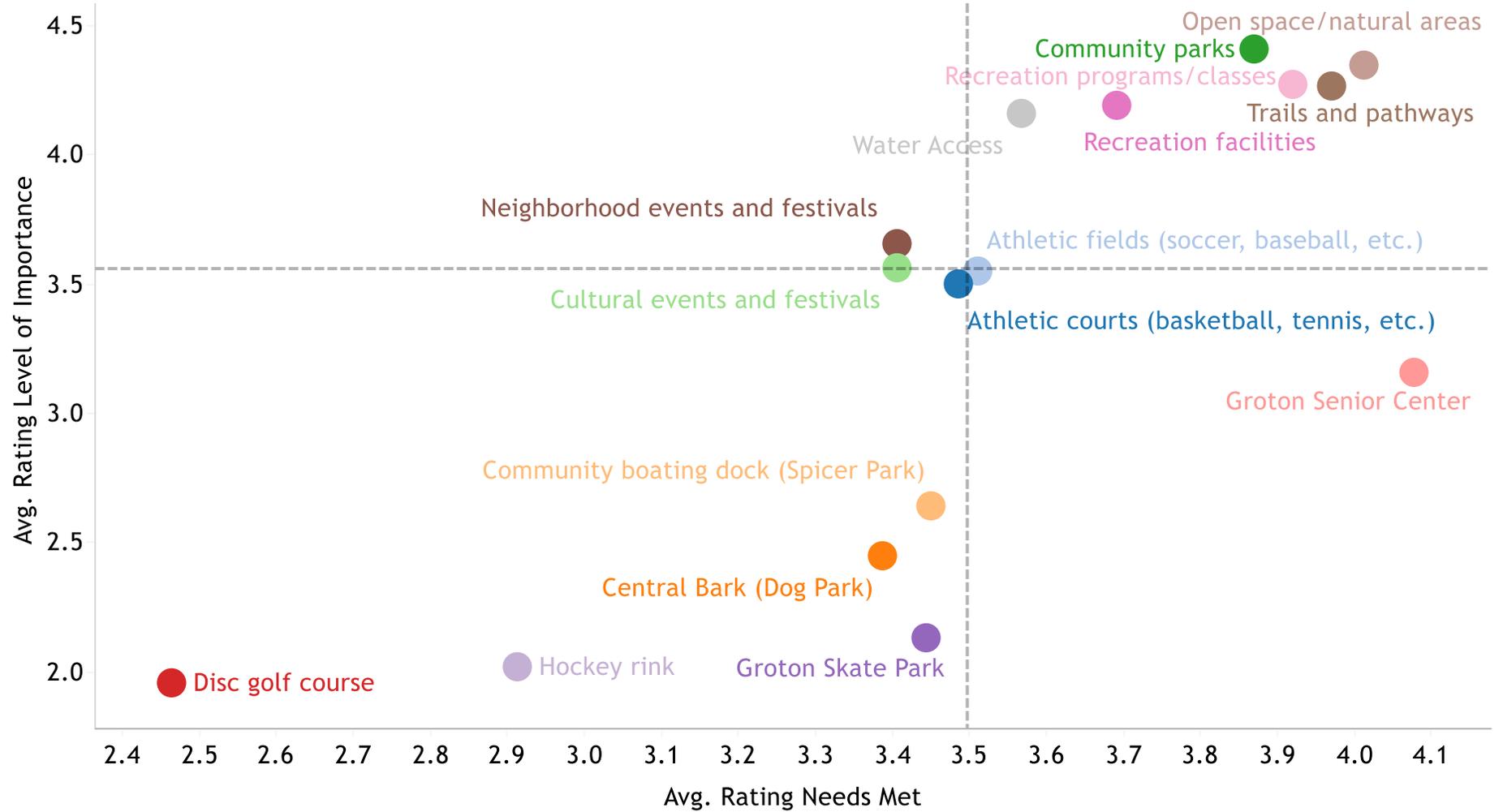
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Level of Importance vs. Needs Met (Invite Sample)

Importance-Performance Matrix
(Invitation Sample)



Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Level of Importance vs. Needs Met (Open Link Sample)

Importance-Performance Matrix
(Open Link)



Communication



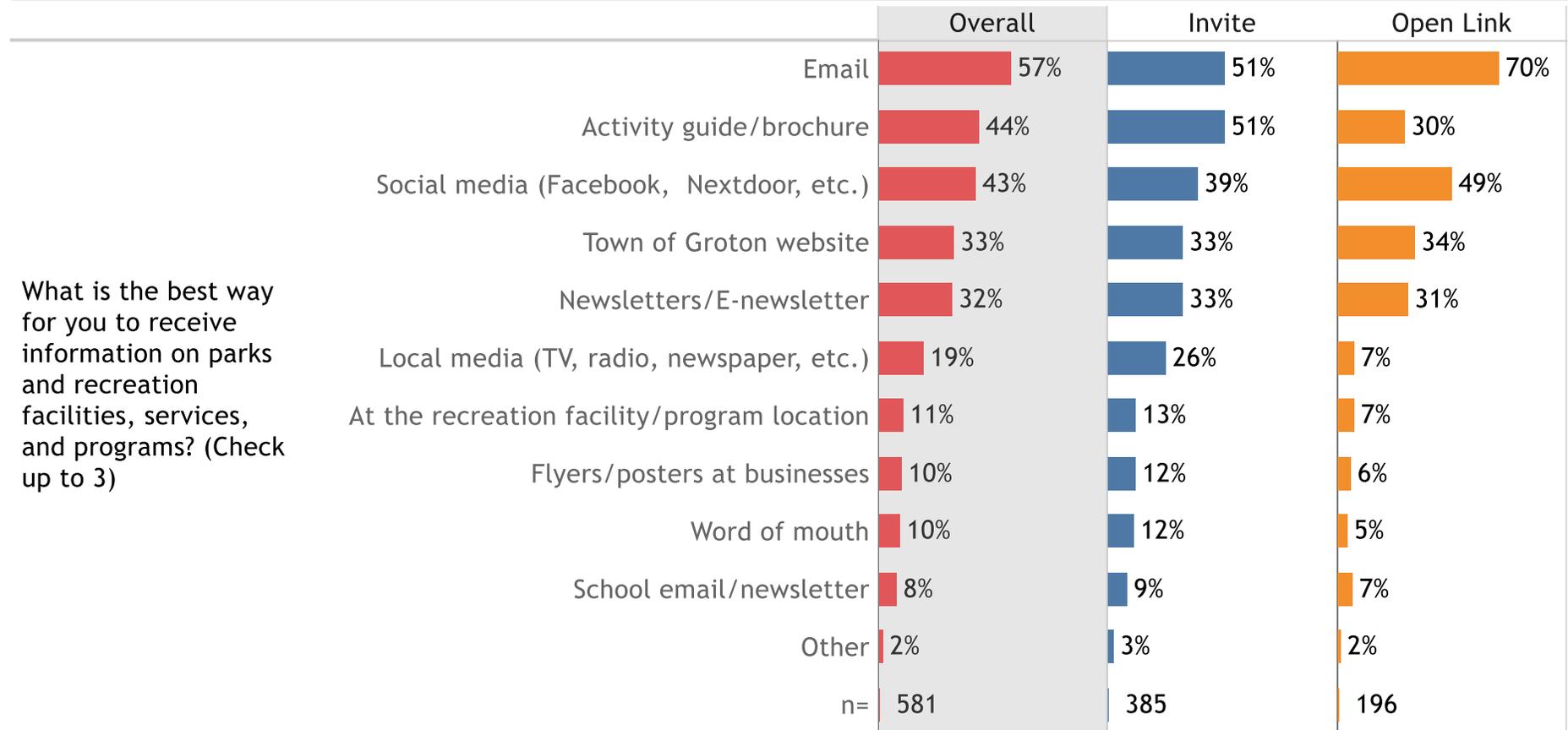
Communication
(Invitation Sample)

	Email	51%
	Activity Guide/ Brochure	51%
	Social Media	39%
	Town of Groton Website	33%
	Newsletter/ E-newsletter	33%

Communication

The most preferred methods to receive information among the invitation sample are email and the activity guide/brochure (both 51%), followed by social media (39%), Town of Groton website (33%), and newsletter/E-newsletter (also 33%). Open link respondents put more emphasis on email (70%) and social media (49%), and less on the activity guide (30%). Results demonstrate the need to maintain diversify of communication methods.

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Communication



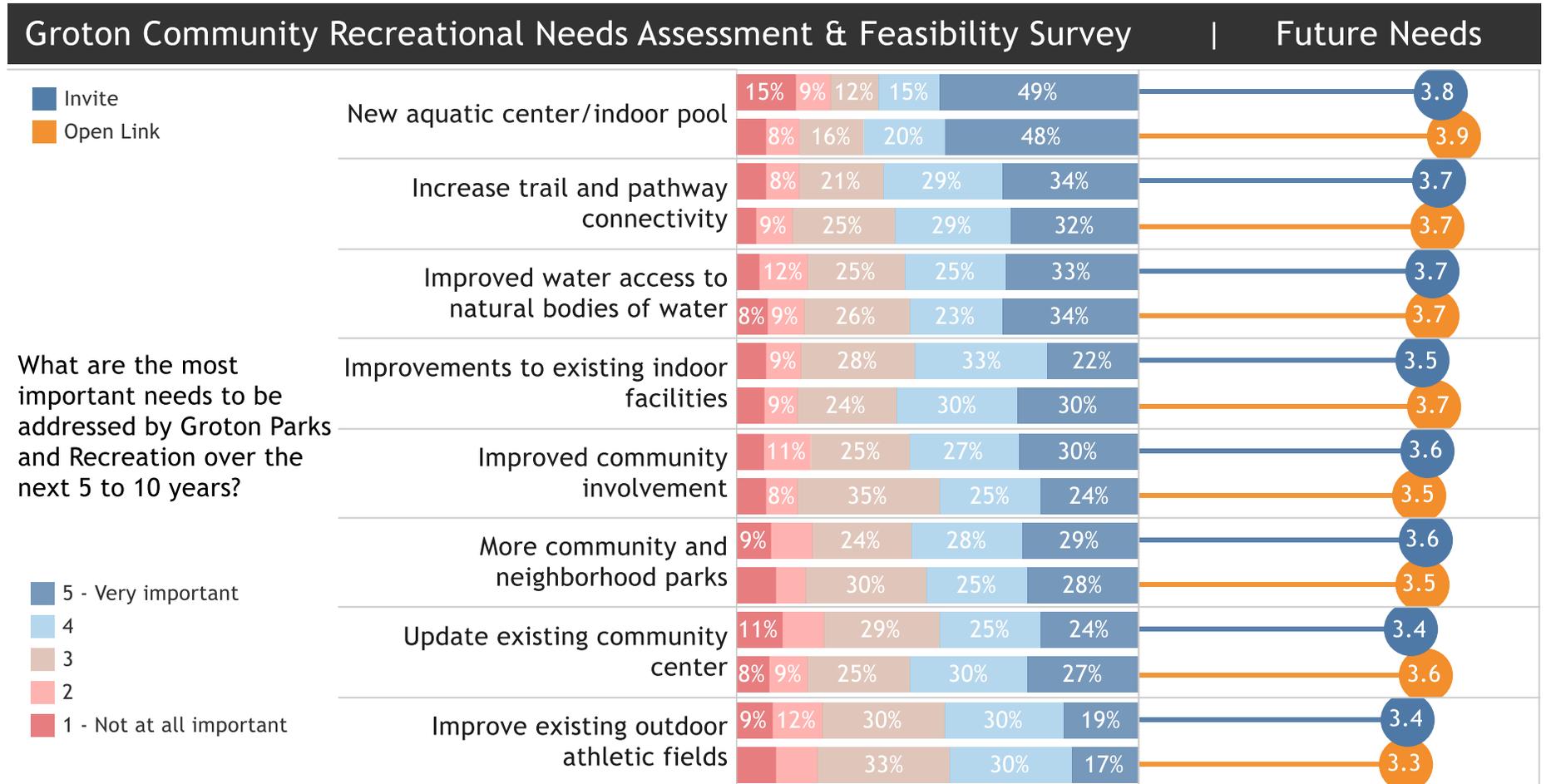
What is the best way for you to receive information on parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs? (Check up to 3)

Future Needs



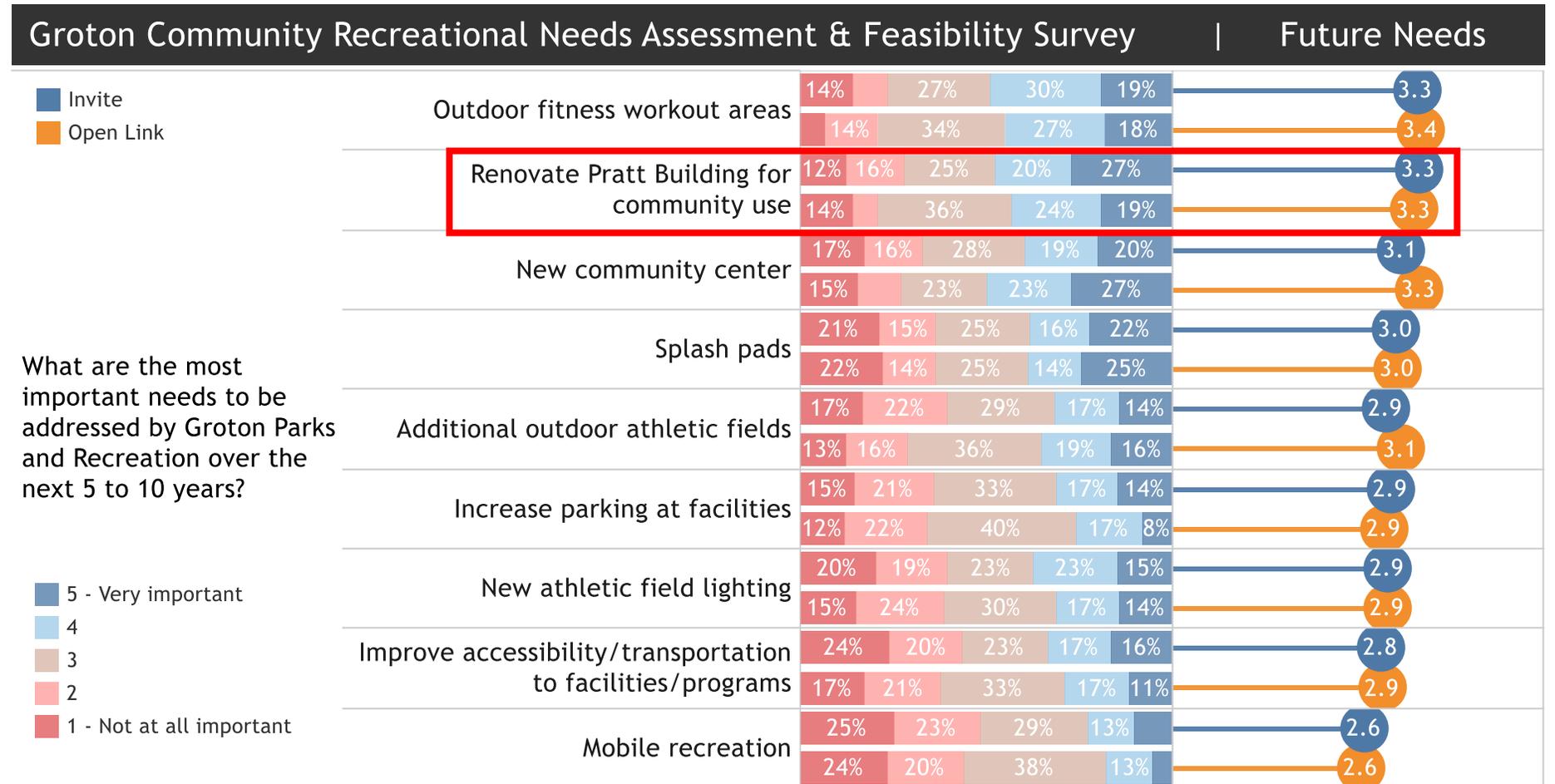
Future Needs

In terms of future needs for parks and recreation facilities over the next 5 to 10 years, the invitation sample rated a new aquatic center/indoor pool at 3.8 and 64% “very important.” Following were increased trail and pathway connectivity, improved water access, improved community involvement, more community and neighborhood parks, and improvements to existing indoor facilities (all rated 3.6 to 3.7). The open link sample expressed the same needs and rated a new aquatic center 3.9 with 68% responses of very important.



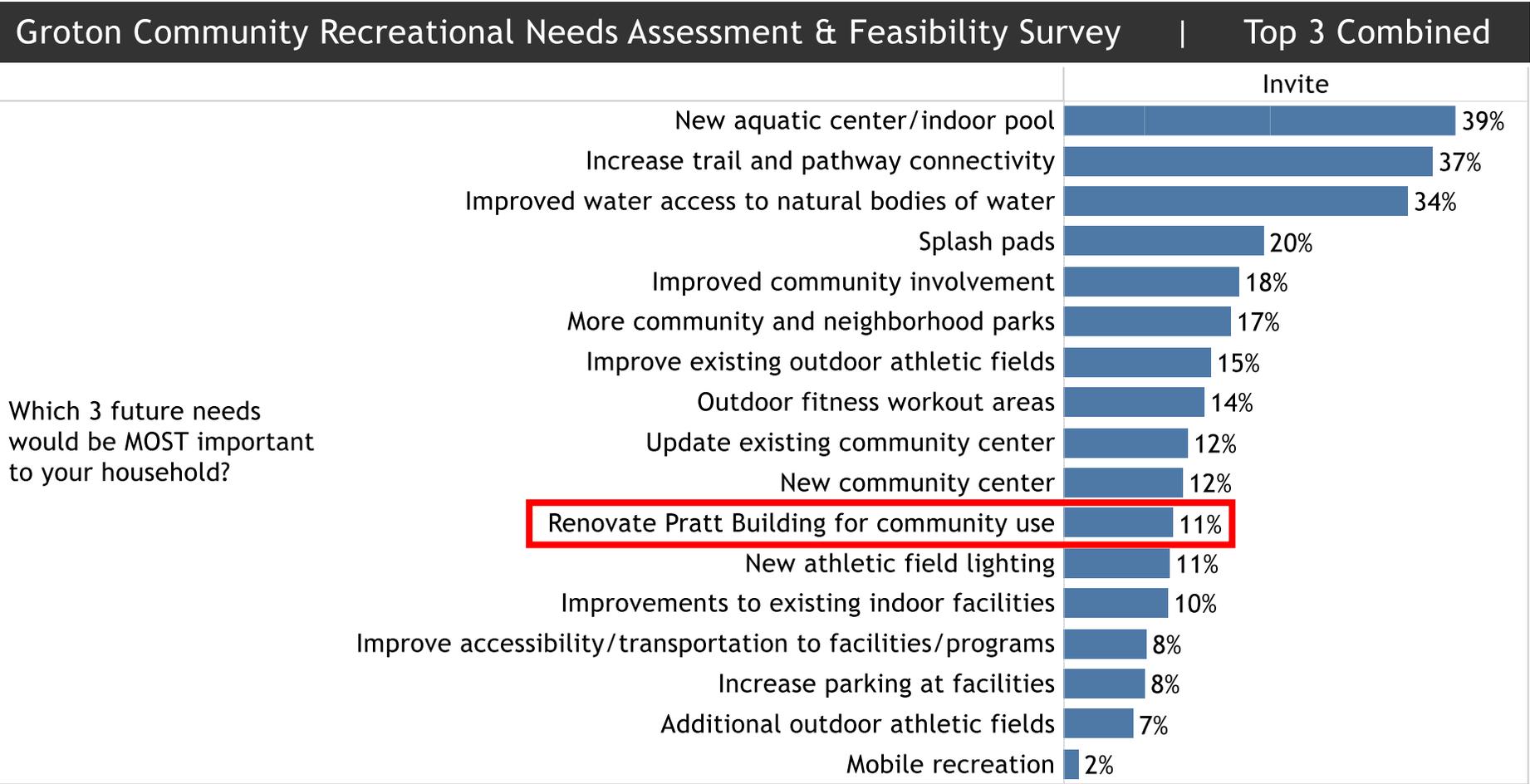
Future Needs (continued)

List continued. Importance of renovating the Pratt Building for community use was generally moderate and in the middle of the pack when evaluated along with other potential improvements—3.3 average score with 47% responses of very important (and 28% not important). Open link respondents rated importance of renovating the Pratt Building similarly.



Asked to rank their top 3 future needs, a similar hierarchy is evident with a new aquatic center ranking as the top priority with 39% of the response, followed closely by increased trail and pathway connectivity (37%), and improved water access (34%). Renovation of the Pratt Building, when ranked along with other potential improvements in the community, is a lower priority overall at 11%.

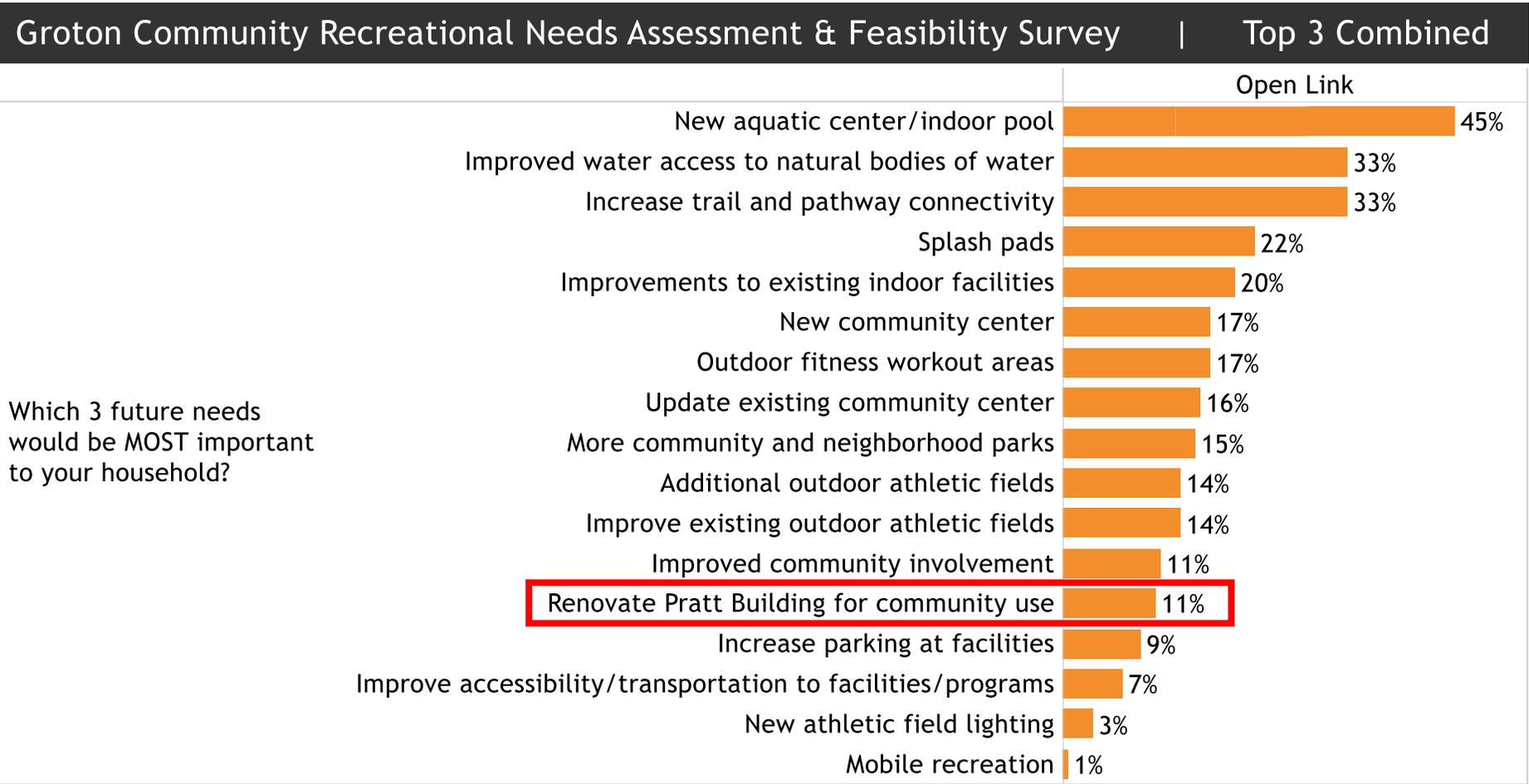
Top 3 Future Needs (Invitation Sample)



Which 3 future needs would be MOST important to your household?

Open link respondents were similar, with a new aquatic center even more of a priority (45%), followed by increased trail and pathway connectivity (33%) and improved water access (33%). Again, renovation of the Pratt Building is a lower priority overall for the open link sample, also at 11% response.

Top 3 Future Needs (Open Link Sample)

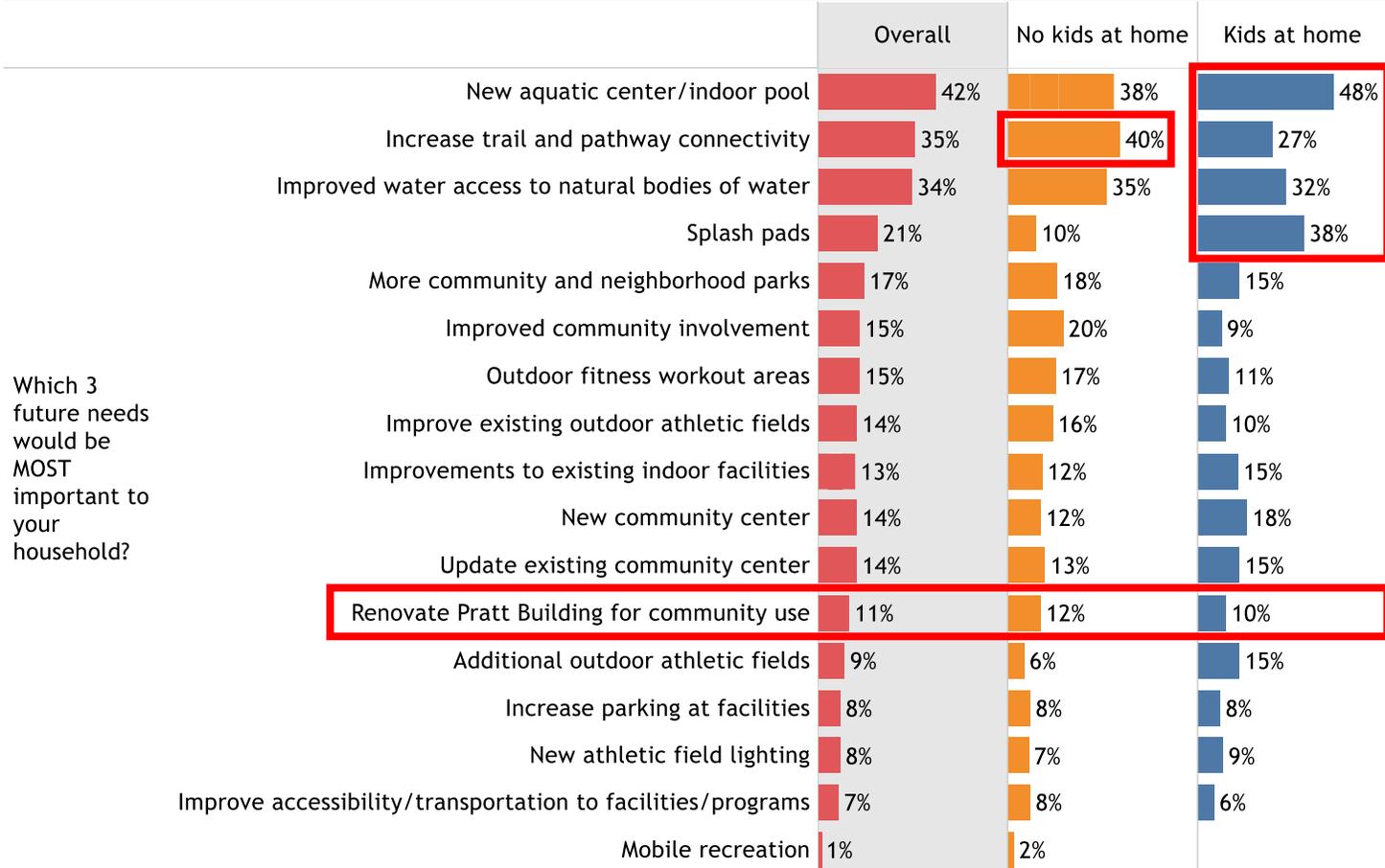


Which 3 future needs would be MOST important to your household?

Looking at results comparing households with and without kids, a new aquatic center is especially important to households with kids (48%), followed by splash pads (38%), improved water access (32%), and trail/pathway connectivity (27%). Households without kids are most likely to consider trail/pathway connectivity as the top priority (40%), followed closely by a new aquatic center (38%) and improved water access (35%). (Note that results for this chart combined responses for both the invite and open link samples in order to build sample size for this comparison.)

Top 3 Future Needs (By Households with Kids vs. Without Kids)

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Top 3 Combined



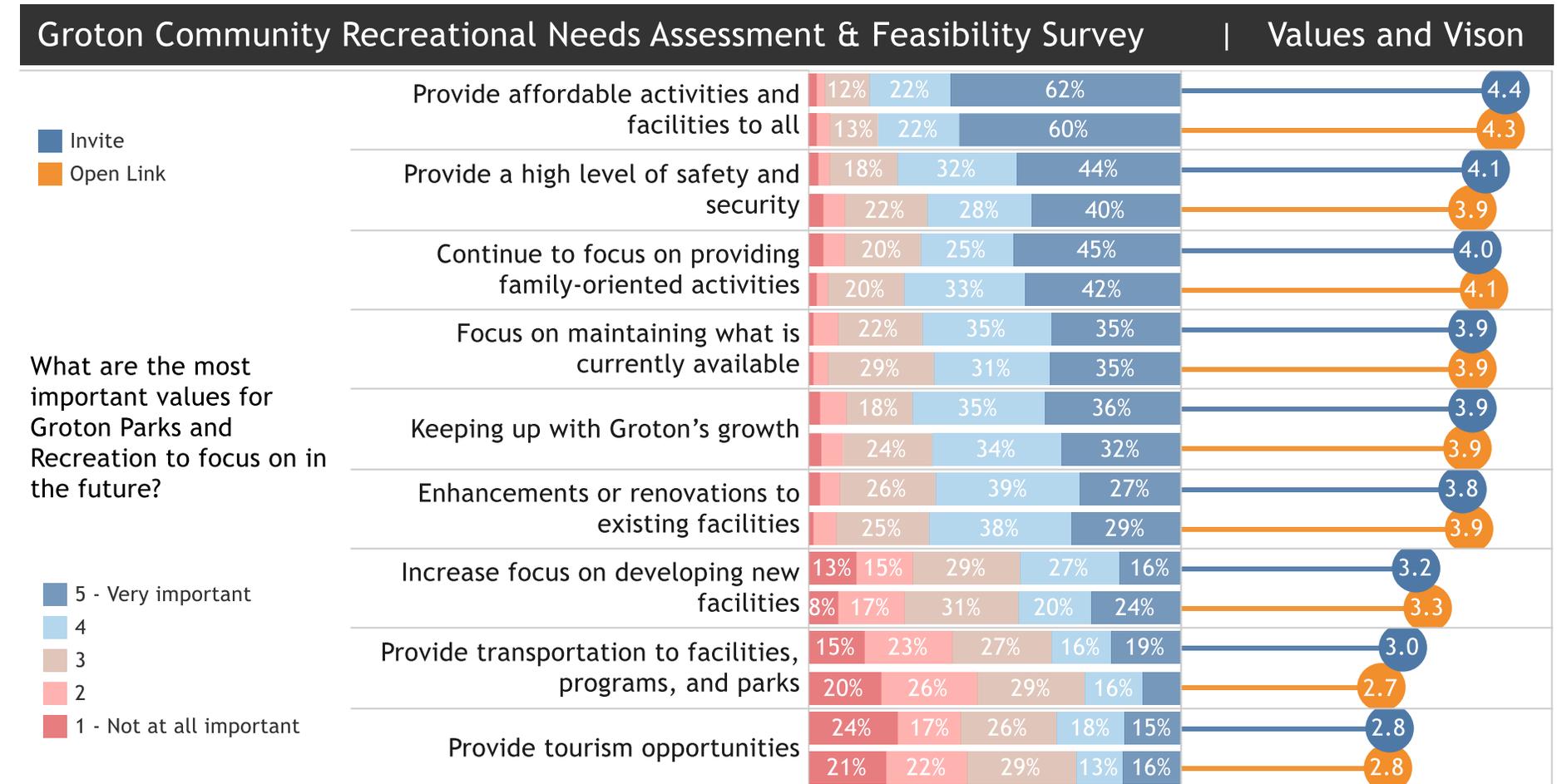
Which 3 future needs would be MOST important to your household?

Values & Vision



Values & Vision

Providing affordable activities and facilities to all (4.4), providing a high level of safety and security (4.1), and continuing to focus on providing family-oriented activities (4.0) are the top three most important values for Groton Parks and Recreation to focus on in its mission for the future. Focus on maintaining what is currently available follows closely (3.9), as does keeping up with Groton's growth (also 3.9).



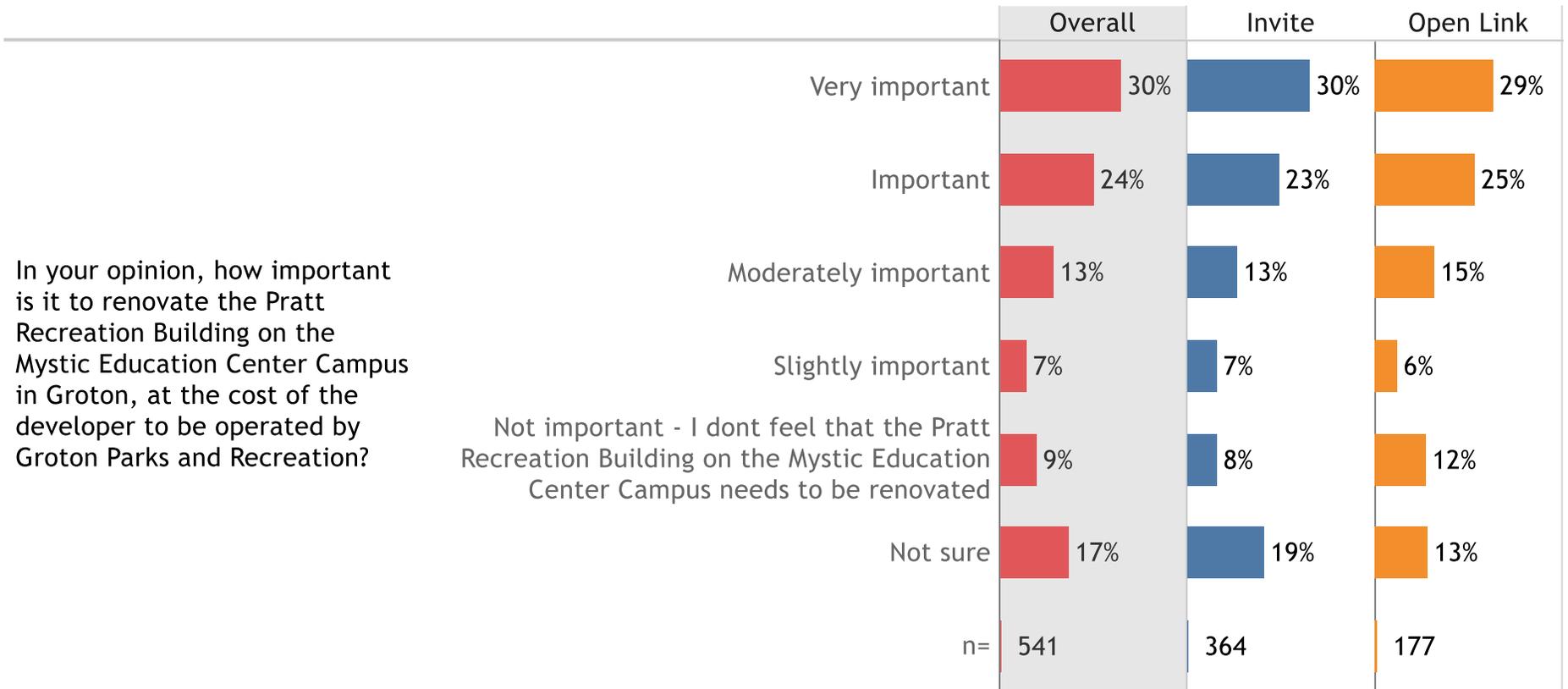
Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Importance of Pratt Recreation Building Renovation

In general, renovating the Pratt Recreation Building is important or very important to about half of all households (53%), consistent with findings discussed earlier. Open link respondents exhibit similar opinions (54% important or very important).

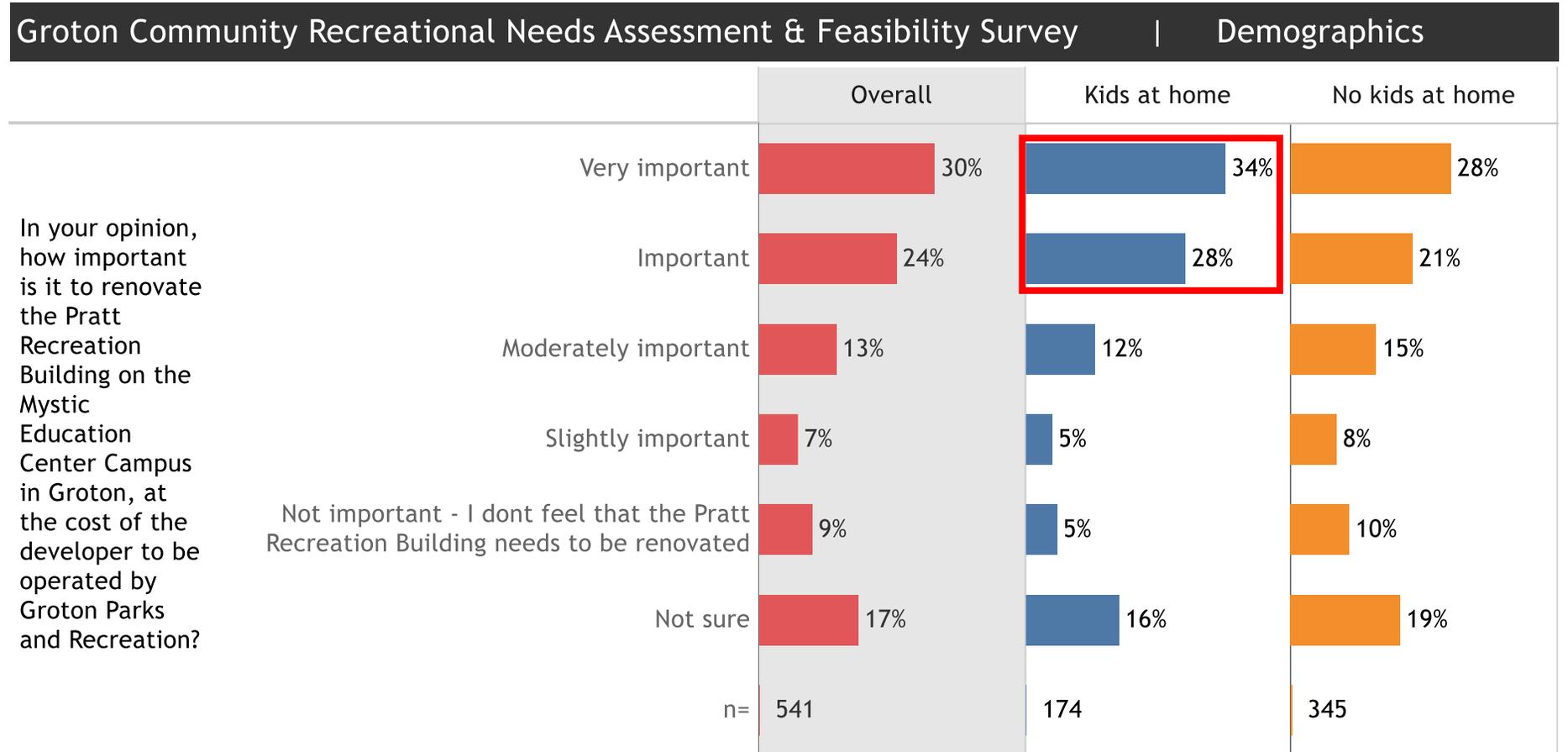
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



In your opinion, how important is it to renovate the Pratt Recreation Building on the Mystic Education Center Campus in Groton, at the cost of the developer to be operated by Groton Parks and Recreation?

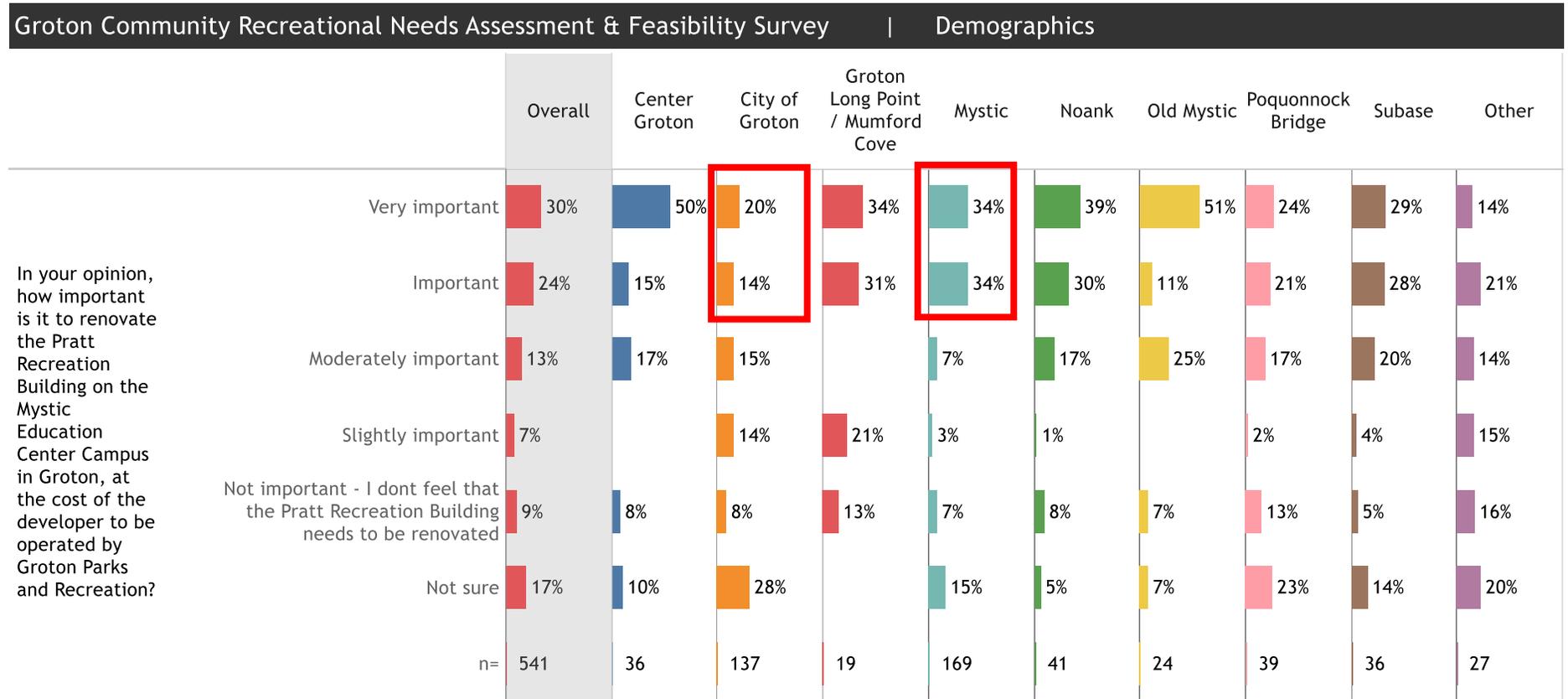
Importance of Pratt Recreation Building Renovation (by Households with Kids vs. without Kids)

Comparing households with and without kids, renovating the Pratt Recreation Building is important or very important to 62% of households with kids vs. 49% of households without kids. (Note that results for this chart combined responses for both the invite and open link samples in order to build sample size for this comparison.)



Importance of Pratt Recreation Building Renovation (by Location of Residence in Groton)

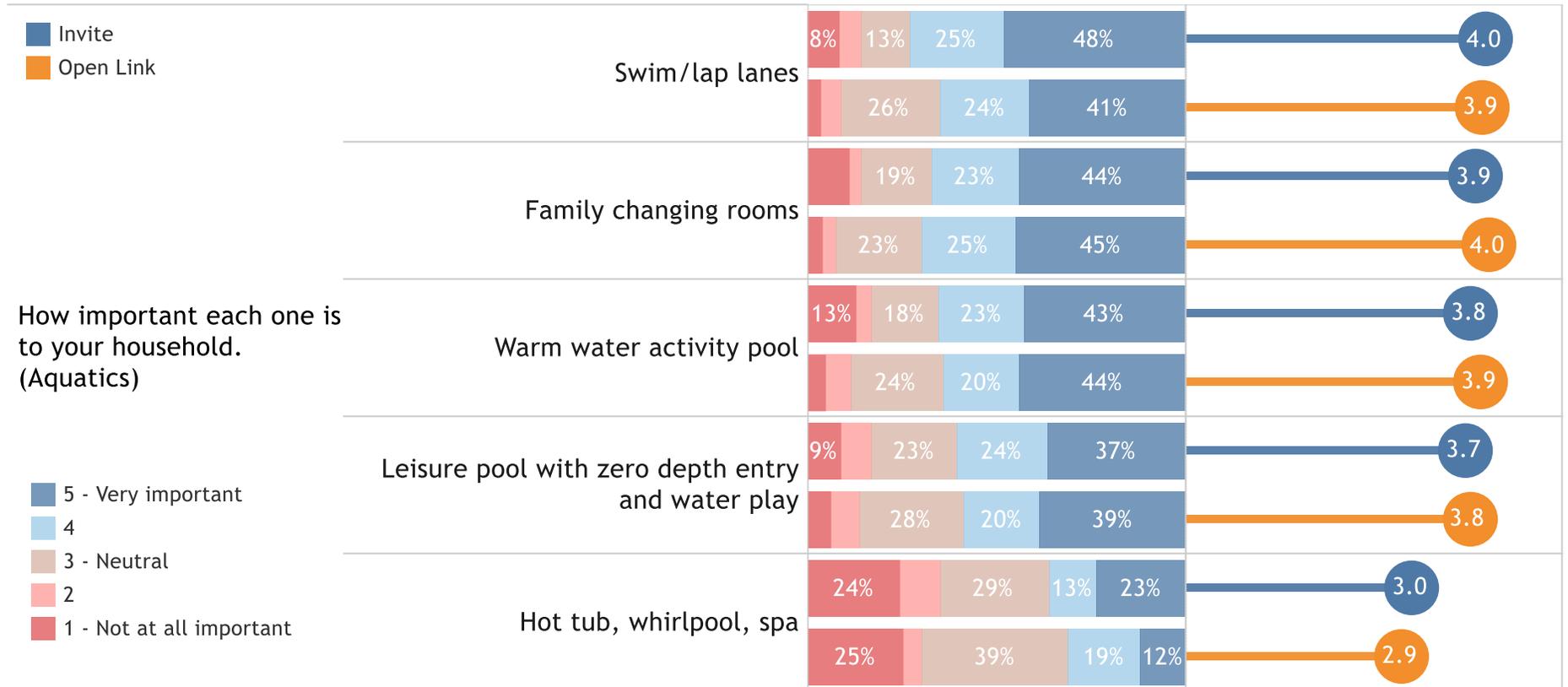
By location of residence (caution small samples sizes for this segmentation), renovating the Pratt Recreation Building is generally most important to residents of Mystic (68%) and least important to residents of the City of Groton (34%). (Note that results for this chart combined responses for both the invite and open link samples in order to build sample size for this comparison; however, sample sizes are still very small for most individual areas of town except for Mystic and City of Groton.)



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations (Aquatics)

Again, aquatics tend to be the most important amenities that Groton residents would like to see included in the Pratt Recreation Building renovation.

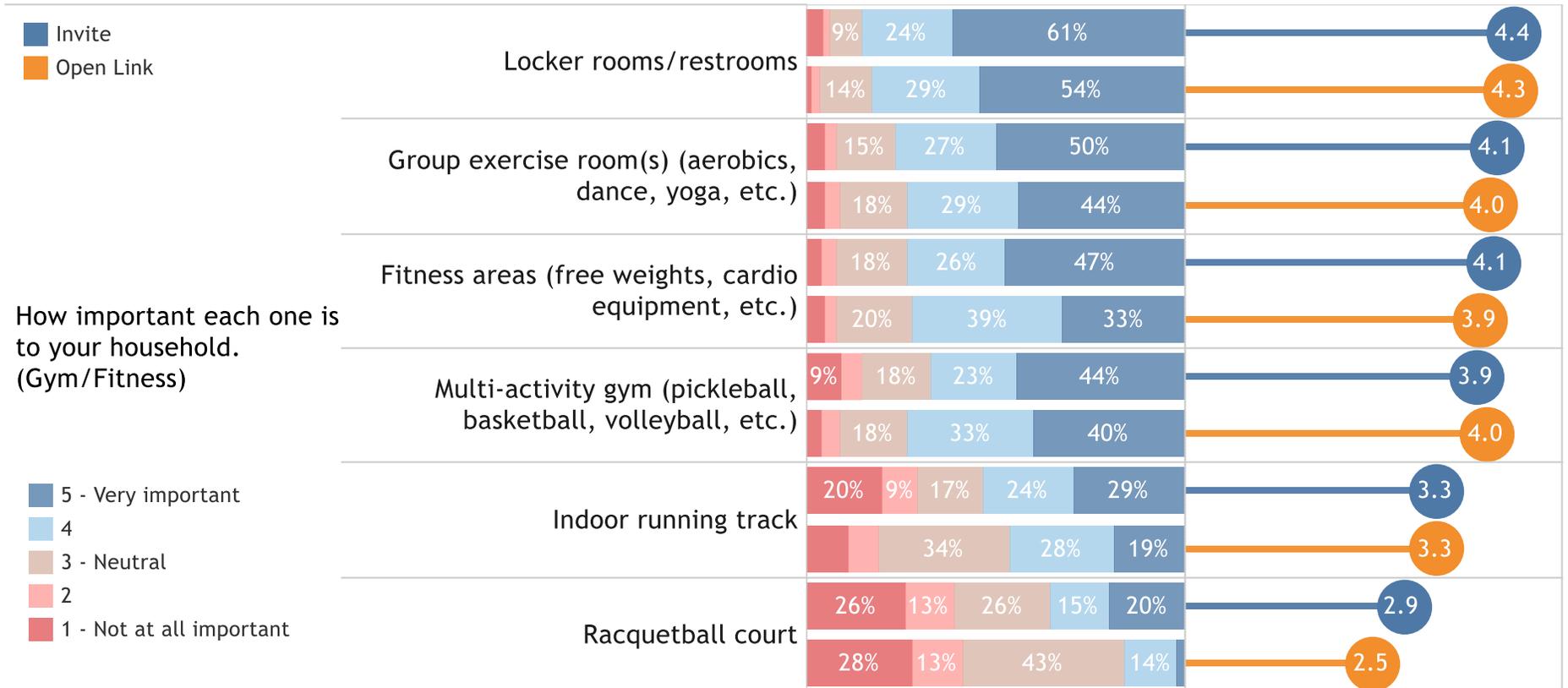
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations (Gym/Fitness)

Locker rooms/restrooms are an important part of the equation as well, along with group exercise rooms, fitness areas, and multi-activity gym space.

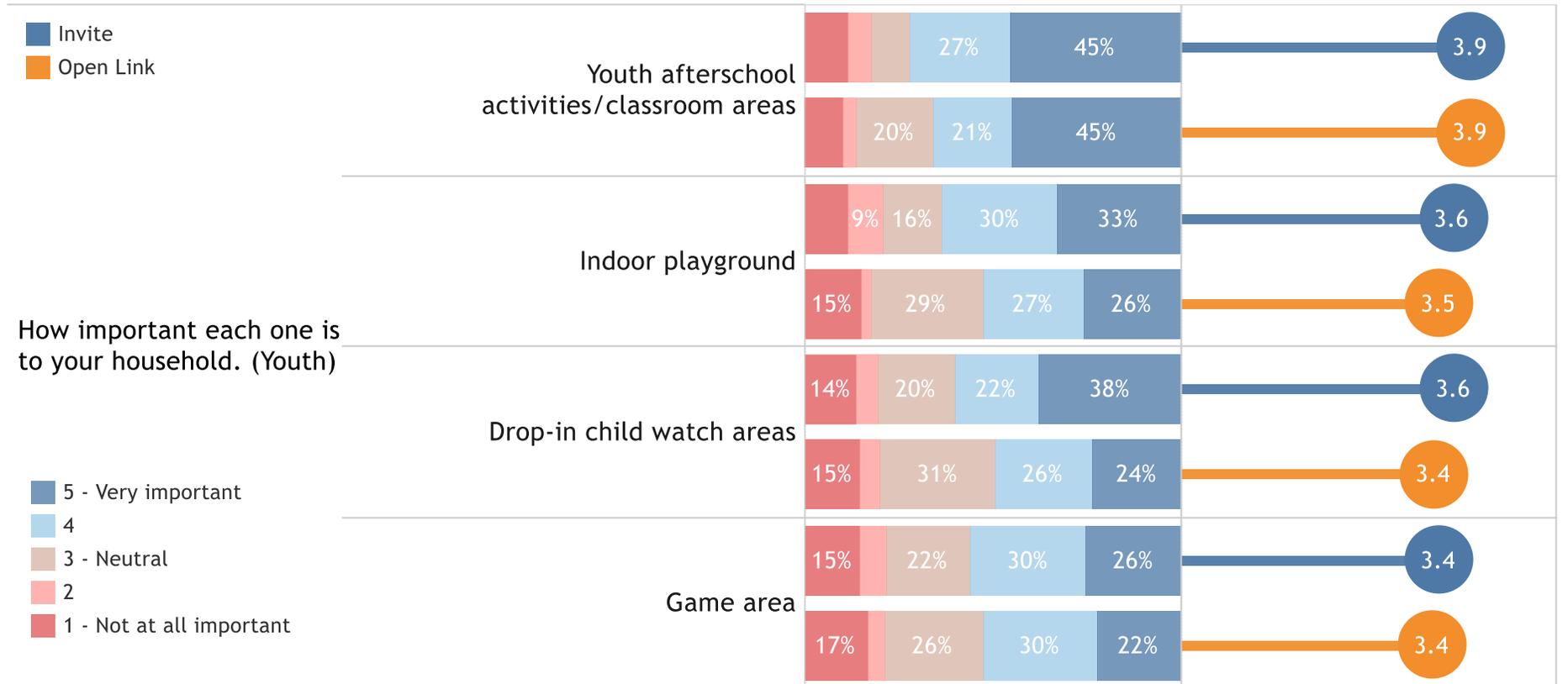
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations (Youth)

Youth afterschool activities and classroom areas also rate strongly, with somewhat lesser importance placed on an indoor playground, drop-in child watch areas, and a game area.

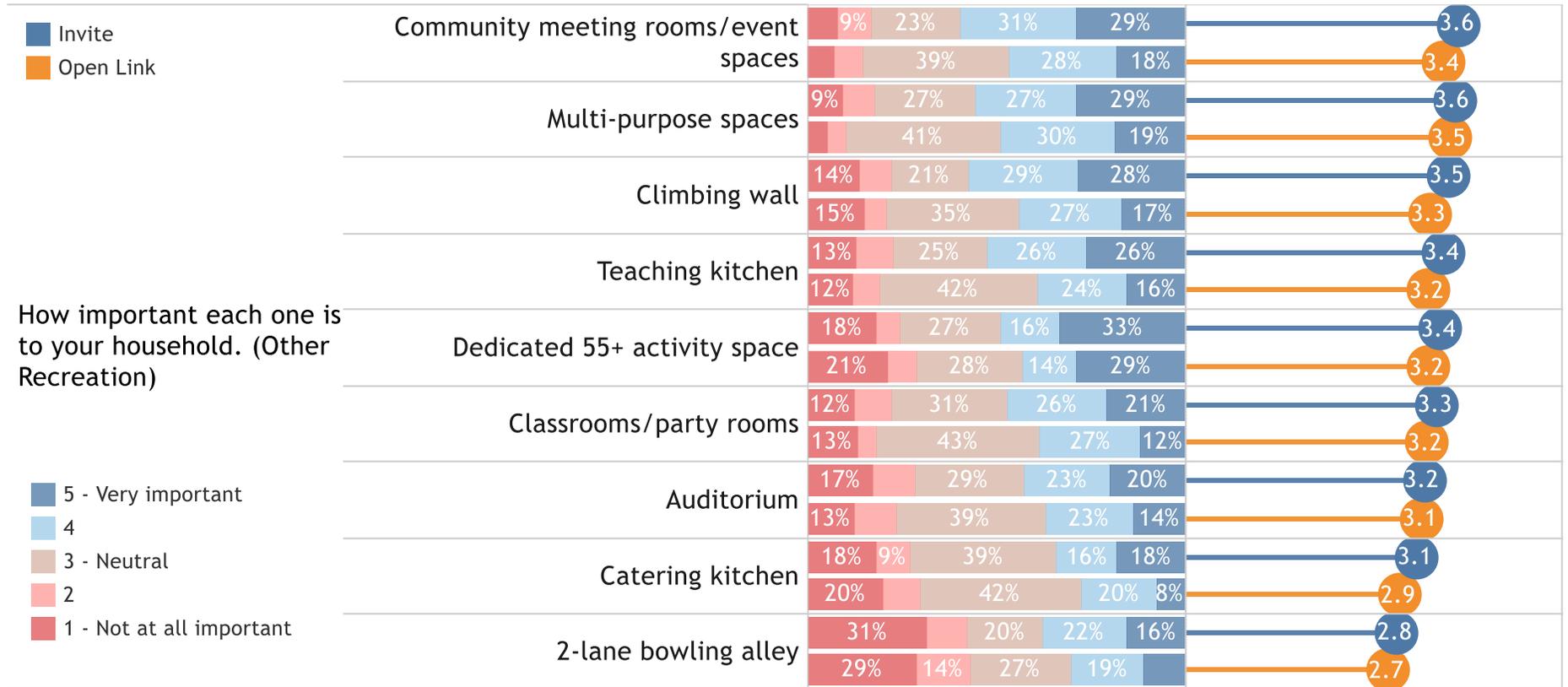
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations (Other)

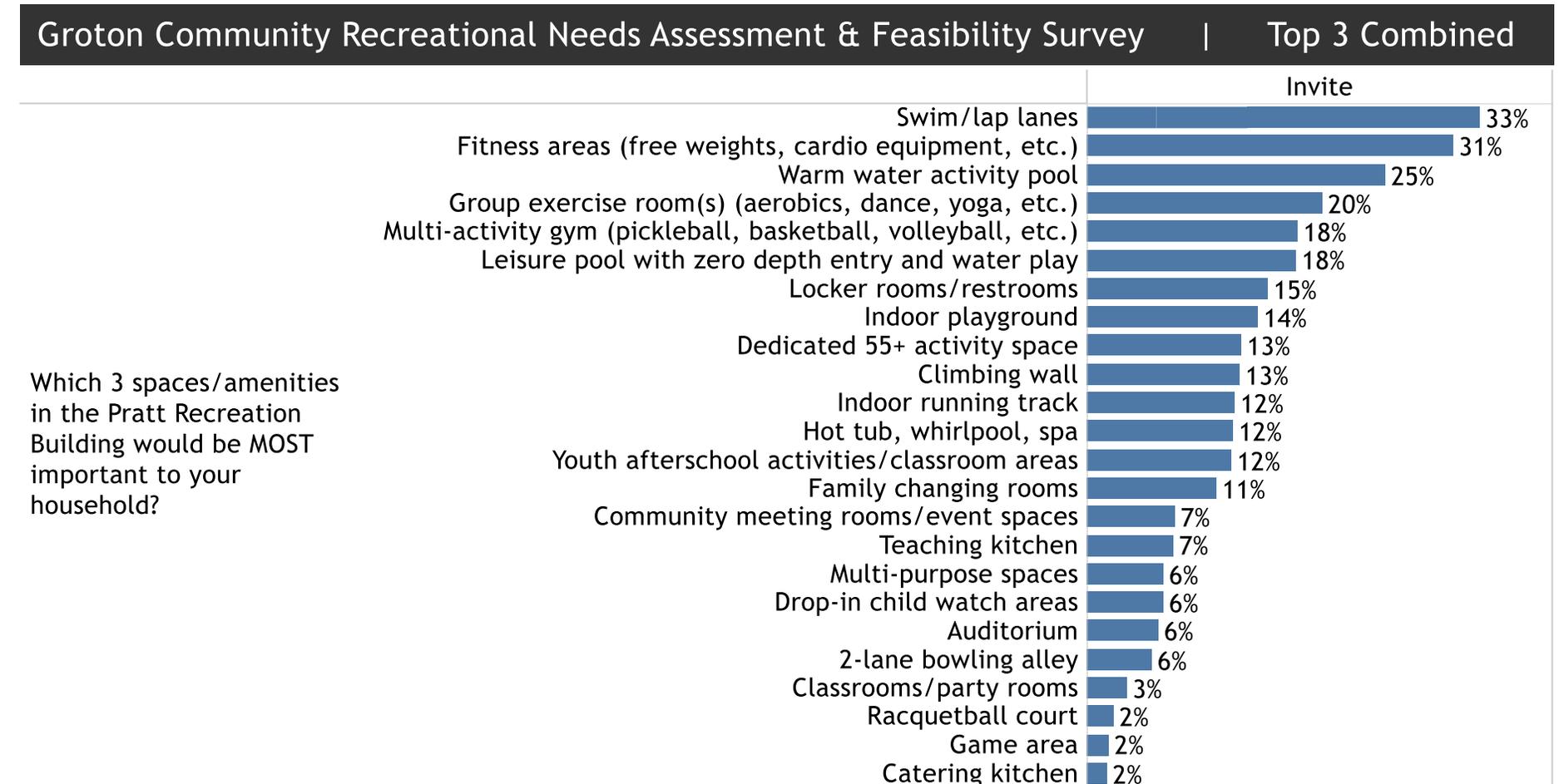
Other general amenities have moderately strong support and interest, including community meeting rooms/event spaces, multi-purpose spaces, a climbing wall, teaching kitchen, and dedicated 55+ activity space. Less importance is placed on the 2-lane bowling alley, catering kitchen, and auditorium.

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations Top 3 (Invitation Sample)

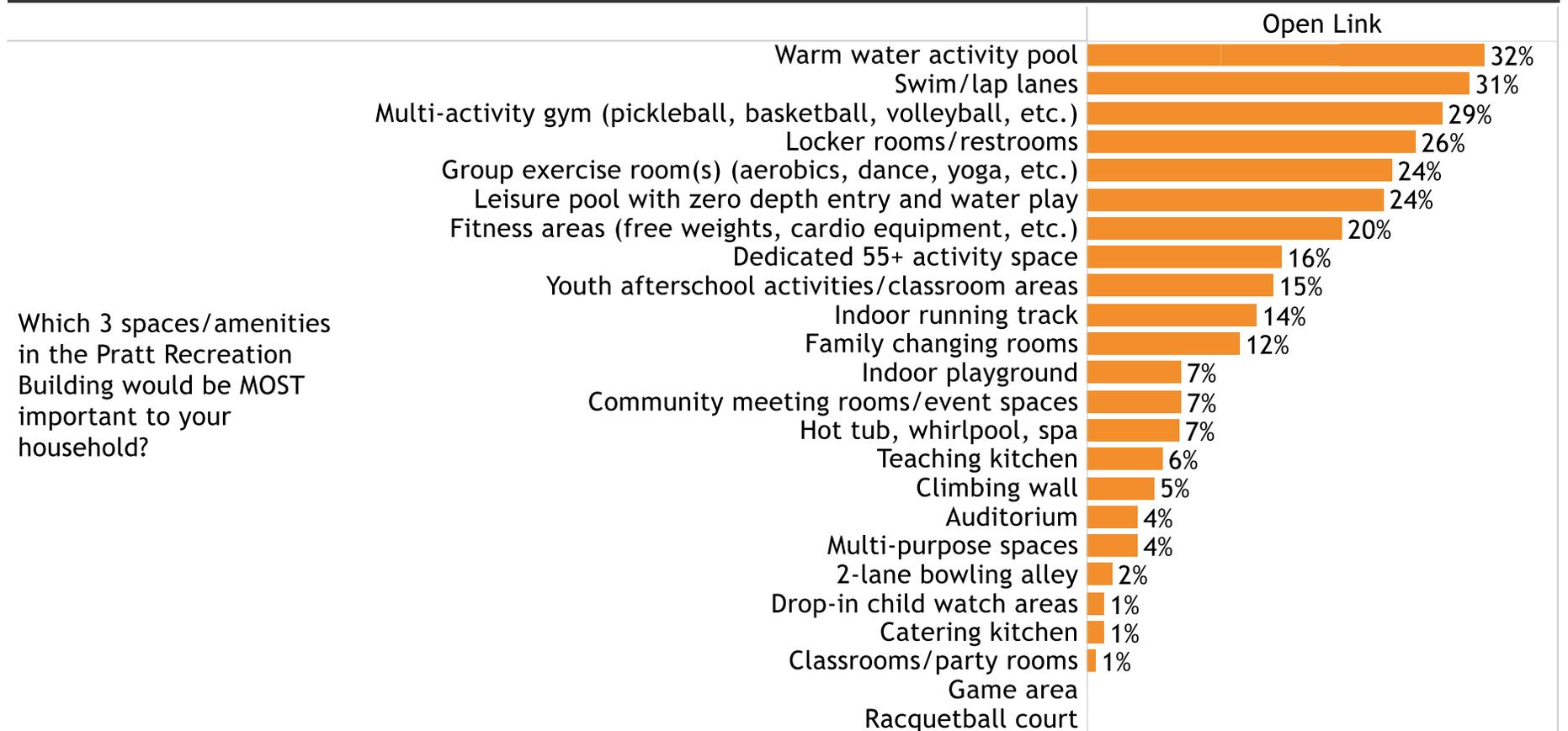
Asked to rank their top 3 priorities for spaces/amenities to be included in the Pratt Recreation Building, swimming pool with lap lanes (33%), fitness areas (31%), and warm water activity pool (25%) are the primary priorities. Group exercise rooms (20%), multi-activity gym (18%), and leisure pool with zero depth entry and water play (18%) follow in priority. Results to this series of questions again indicate that aquatic facilities are a priority of the community.



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations Top 3 (Open Link Sample)

For the open link sample, aquatics are still top priorities, albeit in slightly different order—warm water activity pool received the greatest response (32%—likely due to the greater presence of households with kids in the open link sample), followed closely by swimming pool with lap lanes (31%), multi-activity gym (29%), locker rooms/restrooms (26%), group exercise rooms (24%), and leisure pool with zero depth entry and water play (24%). Fitness areas are still important to this group (20%) although to a slightly lesser extent than the invite sample.

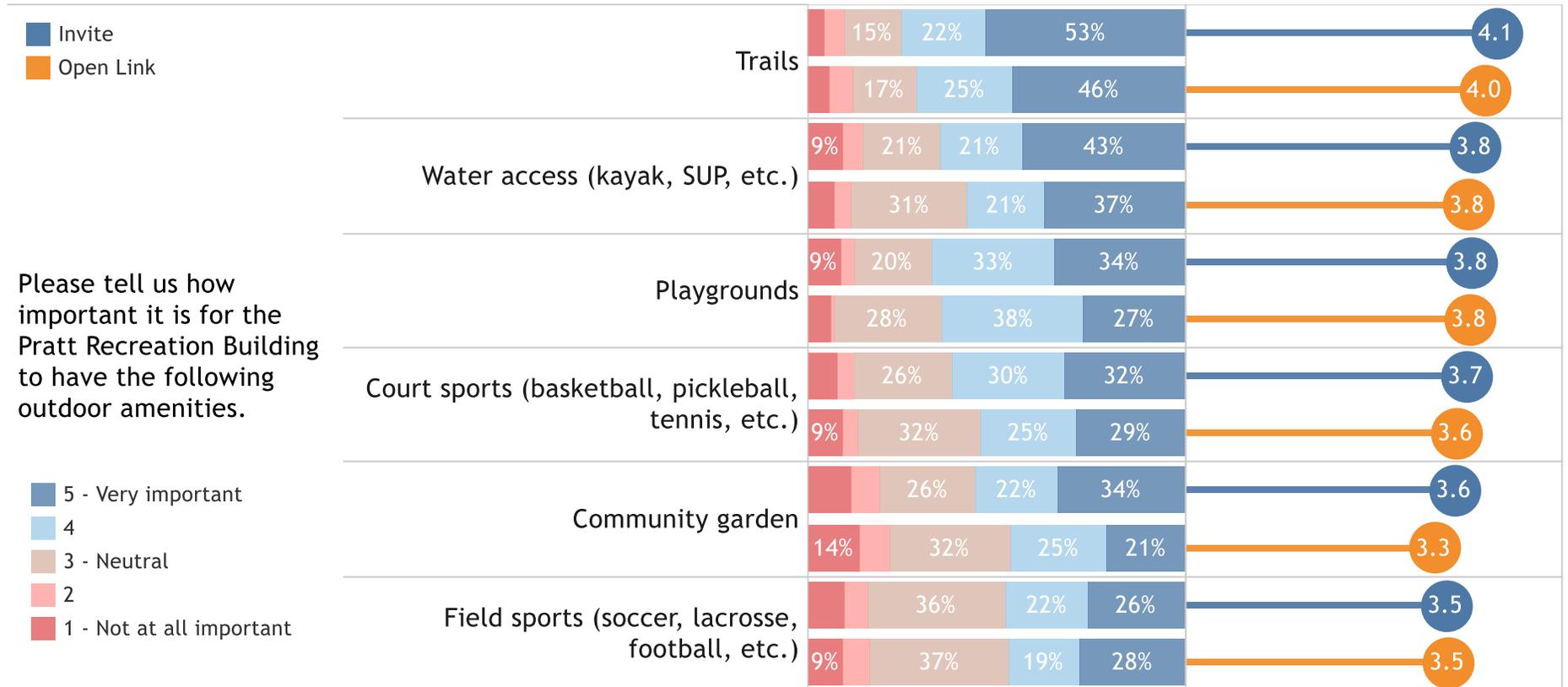
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Top 3 Combined



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations (Outdoor Amenities)

In terms of outdoor amenities that could be included at the Pratt Building site, trails rated the highest in importance (4.1), followed by water access (3.8), playgrounds (3.8), court sports (3.7), community gardens (3.6), and field sports (3.5). Open link respondents rated each amenity similarly.

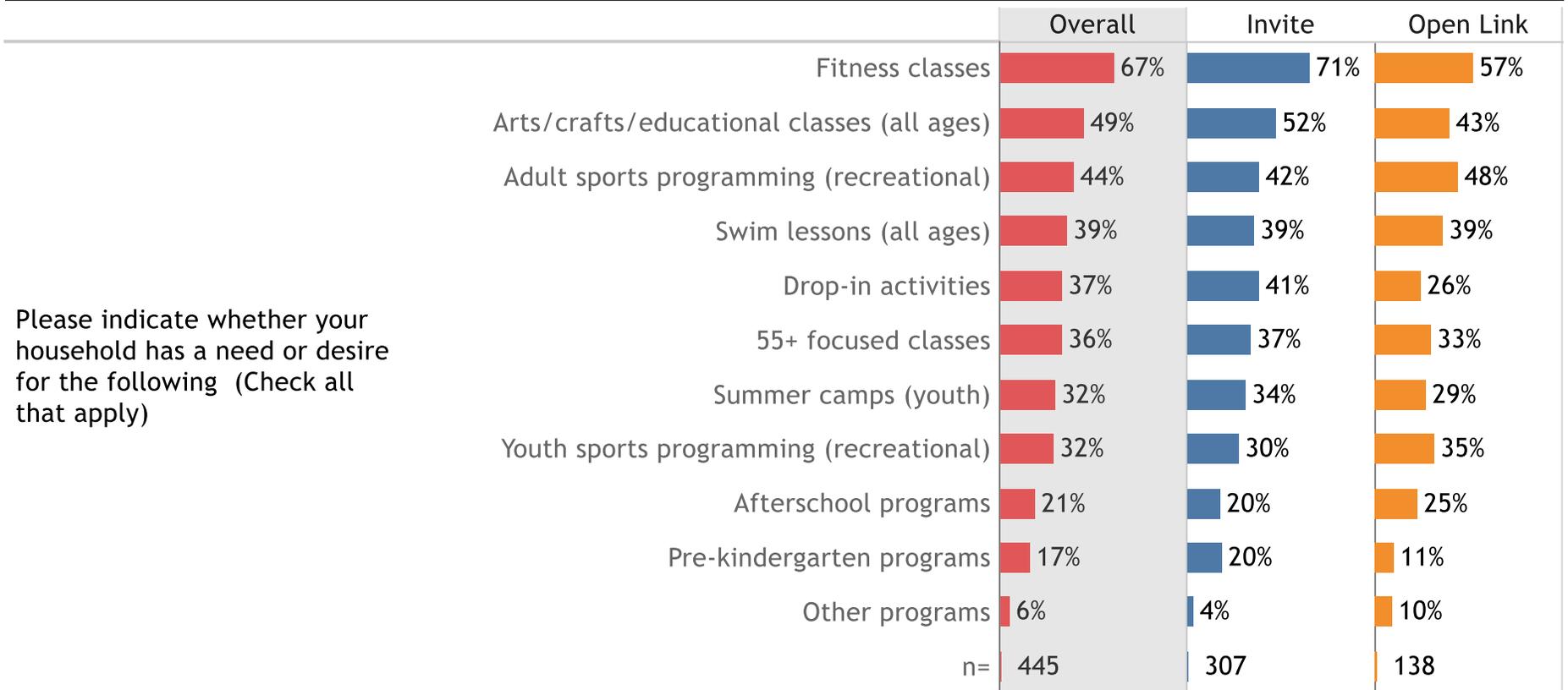
Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Pratt Recreation Building Renovations (Programs and Services)

Regarding programming and activities, fitness classes ranked tops by far as a household need or desire (71%), followed by arts/crafts/educational classes for all ages (52%), adult sports programming (42%), drop-in activities (41%), swim lessons for all ages (39%), 55+ focused classes (37%), and youth summer camps (34%). Open link respondents were similar although emphasized both adult and youth sports programming to a greater extent, along with afterschool programs.

Groton Community Recreational Needs Assessment & Feasibility Survey | Pratt Recreation Building Renovation Preferences



Community Comments



