



rails-to-trails
conservancy

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO TRAIL USE

MAY 27, 2021

MET BRANCH TRAIL | PHOTO BY INDIA KEA



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Today's Presenters



Liz Thorstensen

Vice President, Trail Development
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



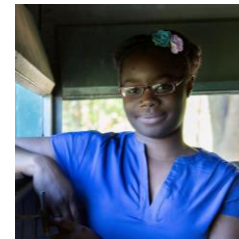
Caressa Givens

Milwaukee Advocacy & Programs Manager
Wisconsin Bike Fed



Torsha Bhattacharya

Director of Research
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



Nicole Jackson

Environmental Educator, Park Advocate,
Birder and Organizer



Xavier Brown

Small Parks Specialist
D.C. Parks & Recreation

Motivation

Perception

Value

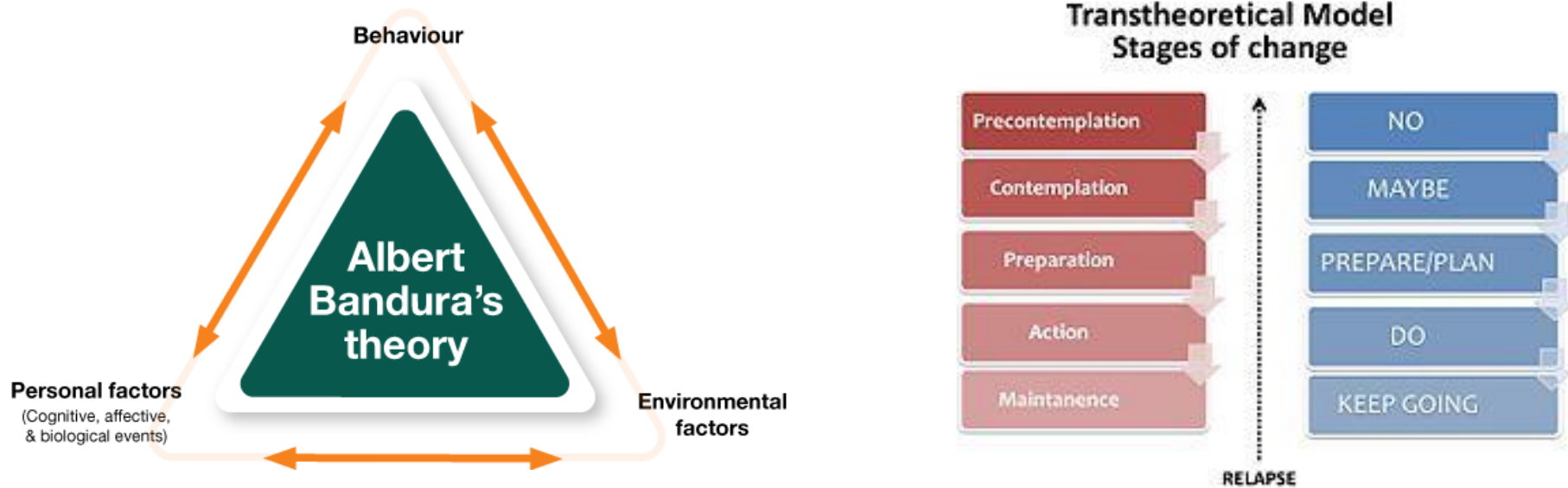
Empathy

Research Objectives

Gain insight across race, age and gender into:

- How trails, walking and biking are perceived?
- The top motivators and barriers to trail use?

Research Objectives



- **What do we want to do with this information?**
Help create informed strategies to increase trail use across all groups.
- **Next steps:** How do we convert interest in trails into use and support for trails across all groups especially in the Hispanic/Latin and Black/ African-American communities?

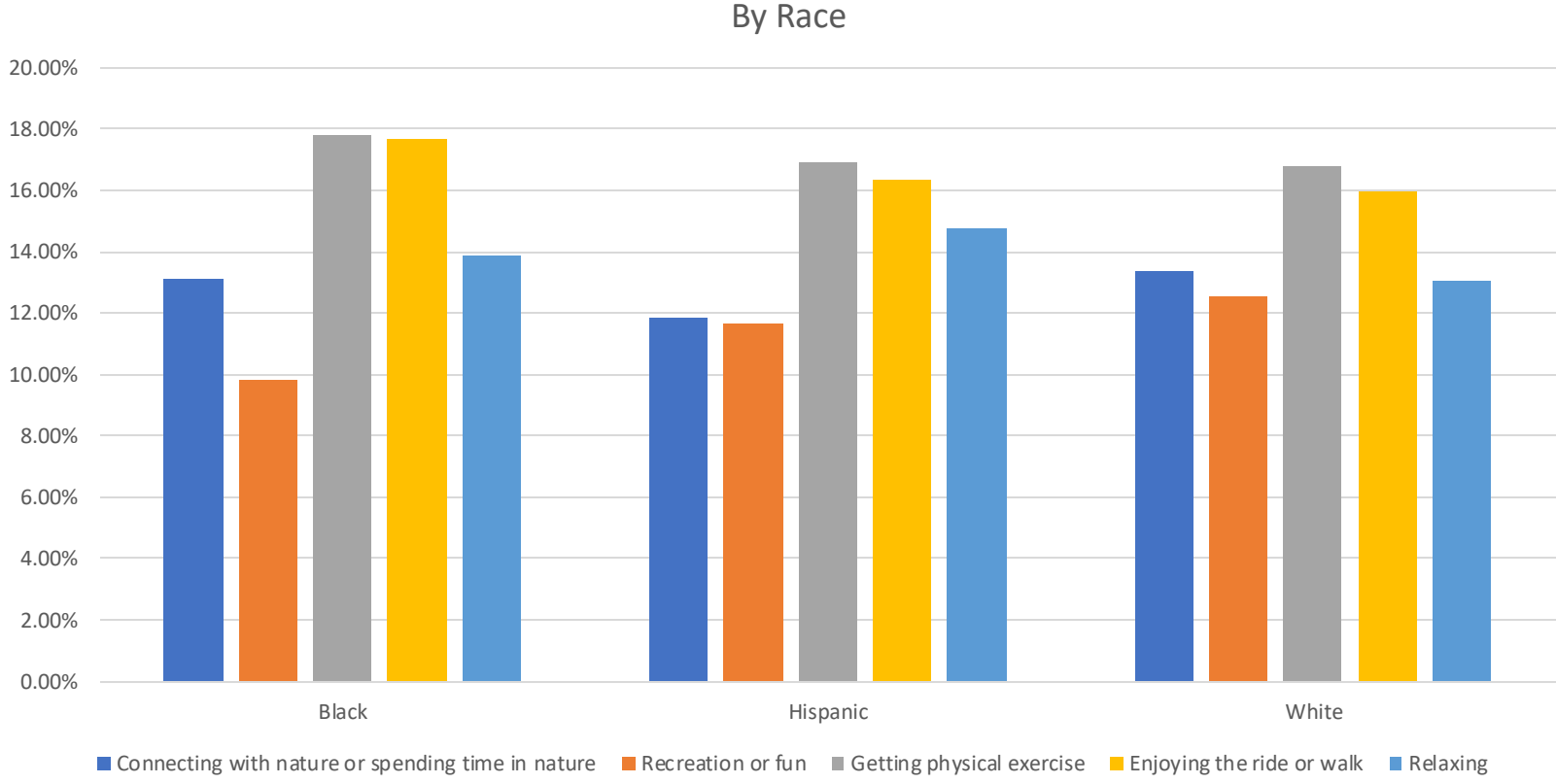
Methodology

- RTC's National Barriers to trail use survey conducted between Spring 2020 (1214 responses)
- RTC Regional Survey focusing on four metro areas: Bay Area, Cleveland, Miami and Washington DC metro area conducted Summer 2020 (n>= 600)
- Qualitative focus group with 21 DC residents

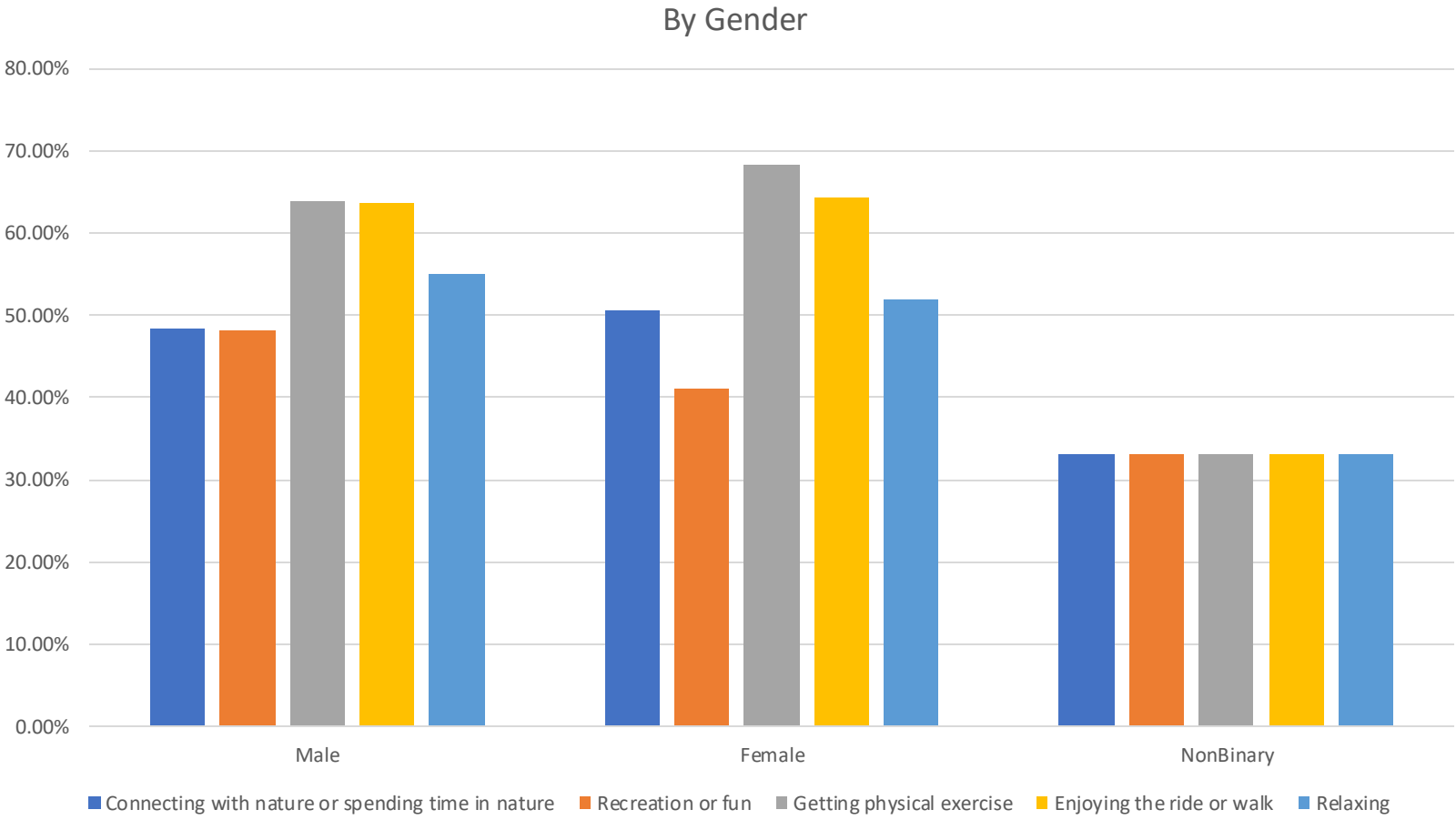
Who we surveyed

- 33% Black/African-American, 30% Hispanic/Latin, 36% White/Caucasian
- 15% 18-24 years, 49% 25-44 year, 35% 45-64 years, 1% 65 and above
- 51% female, 49% male, less than 1% non-binary

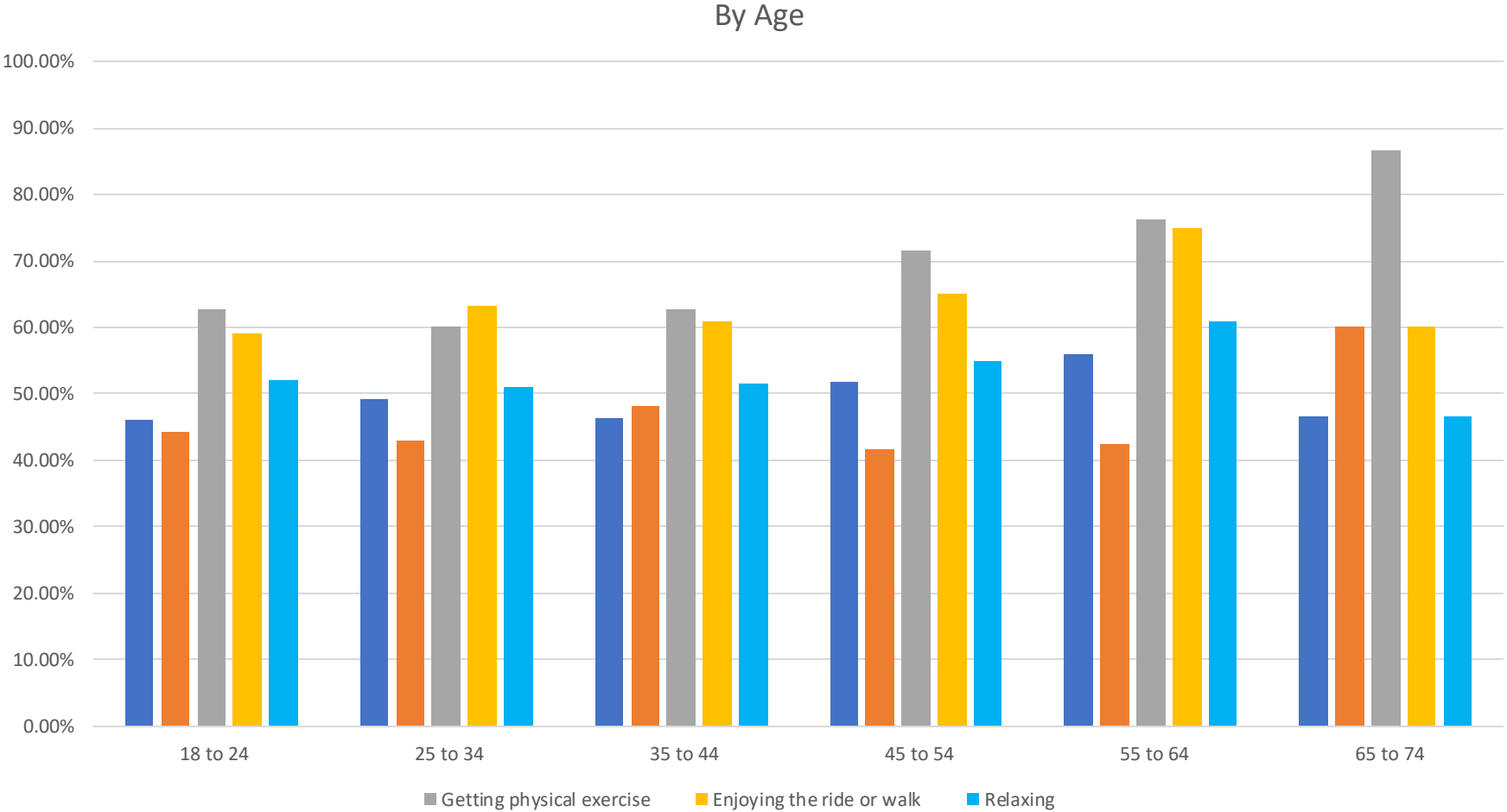
We all choose to use trails for exercise, enjoyment, relaxation and connection.



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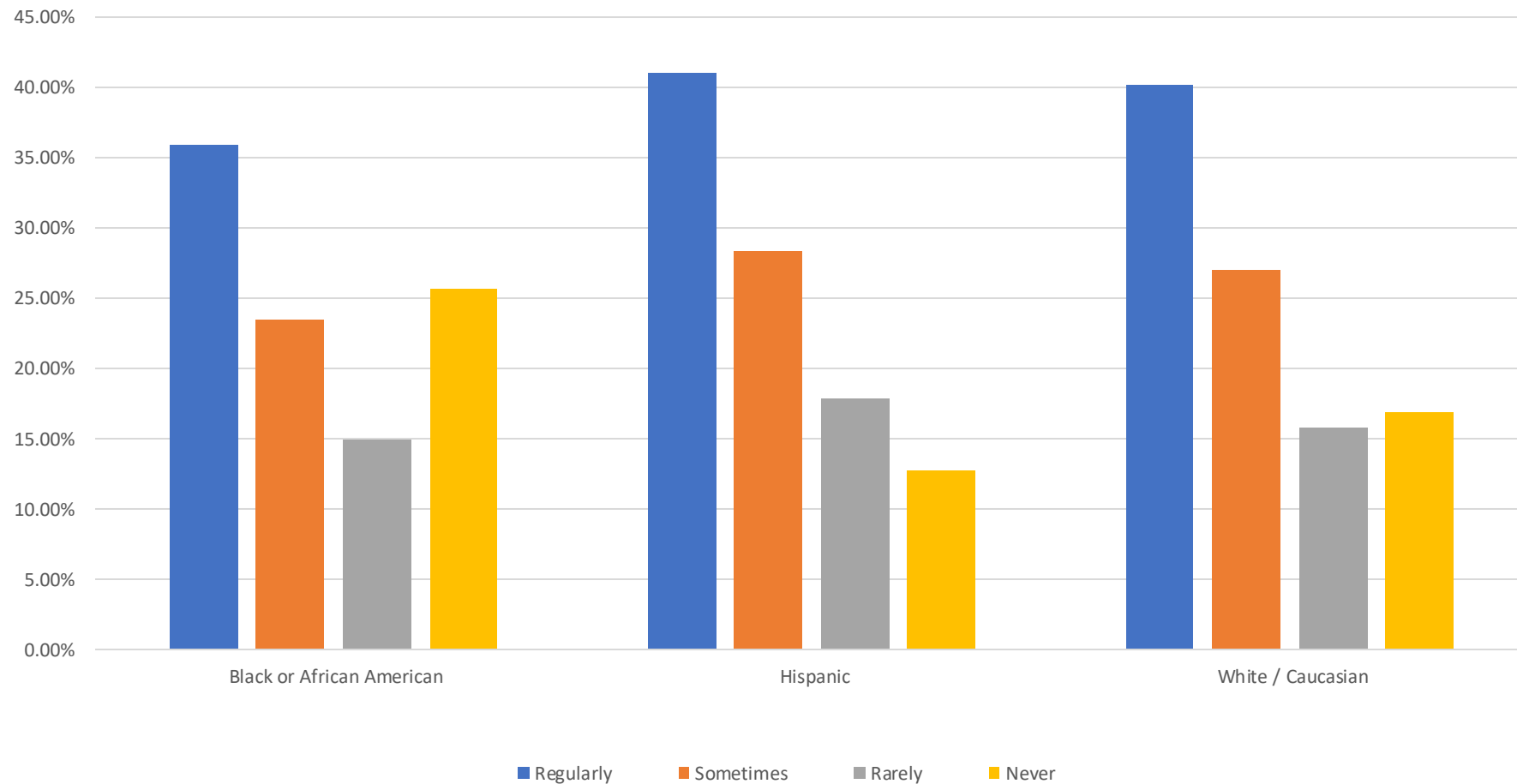


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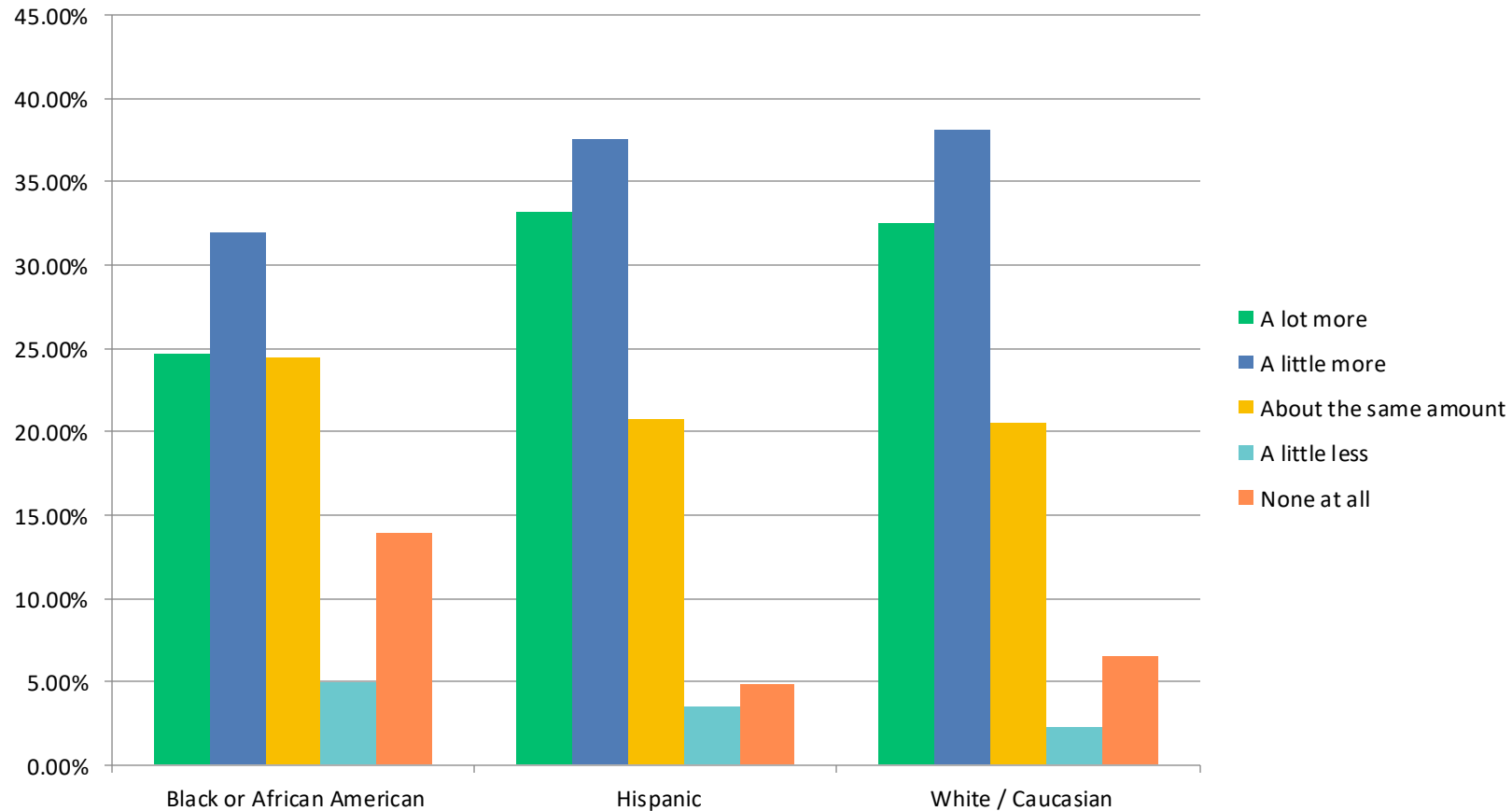
Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

How Frequently do you use trails?

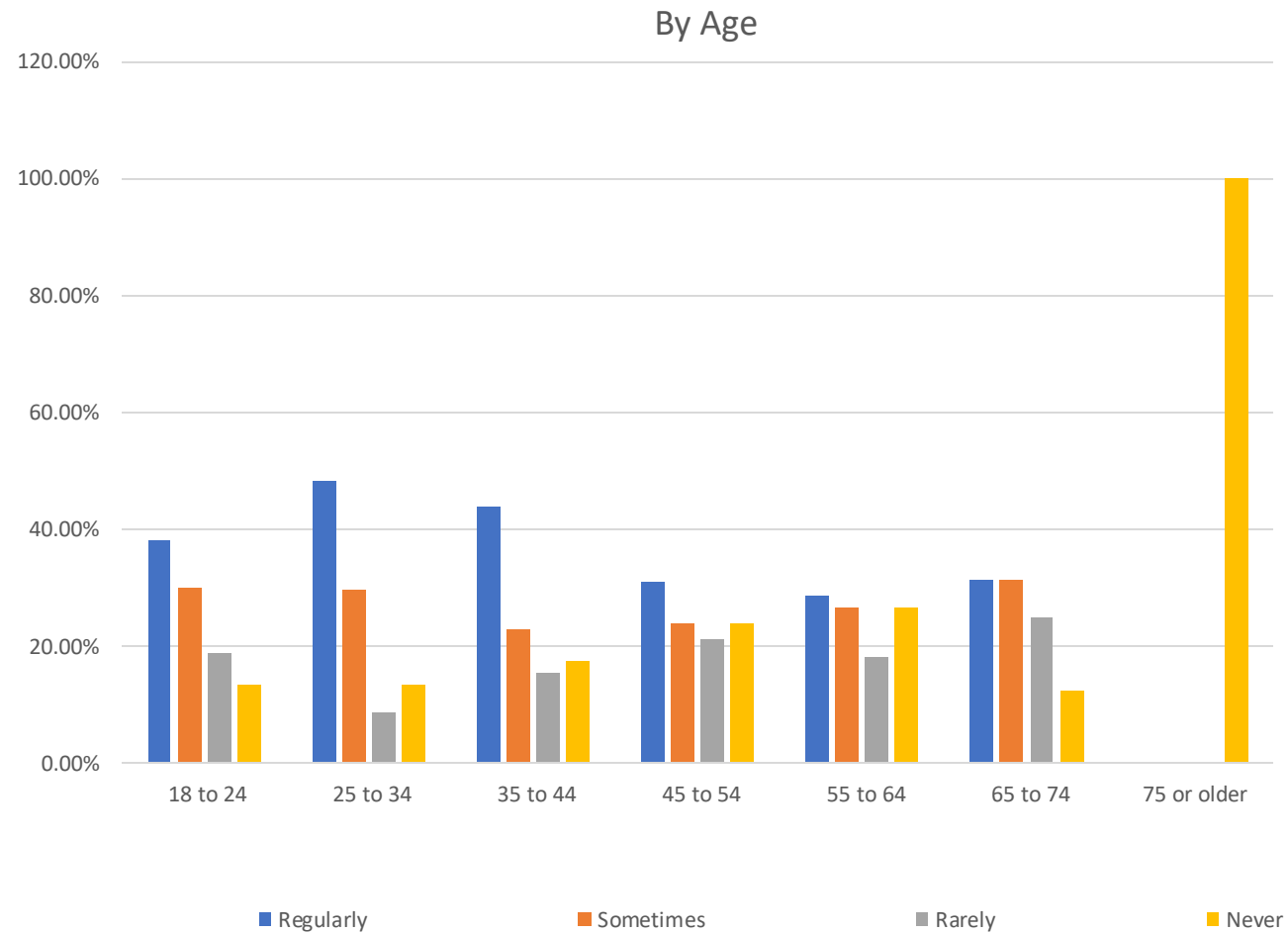


Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age

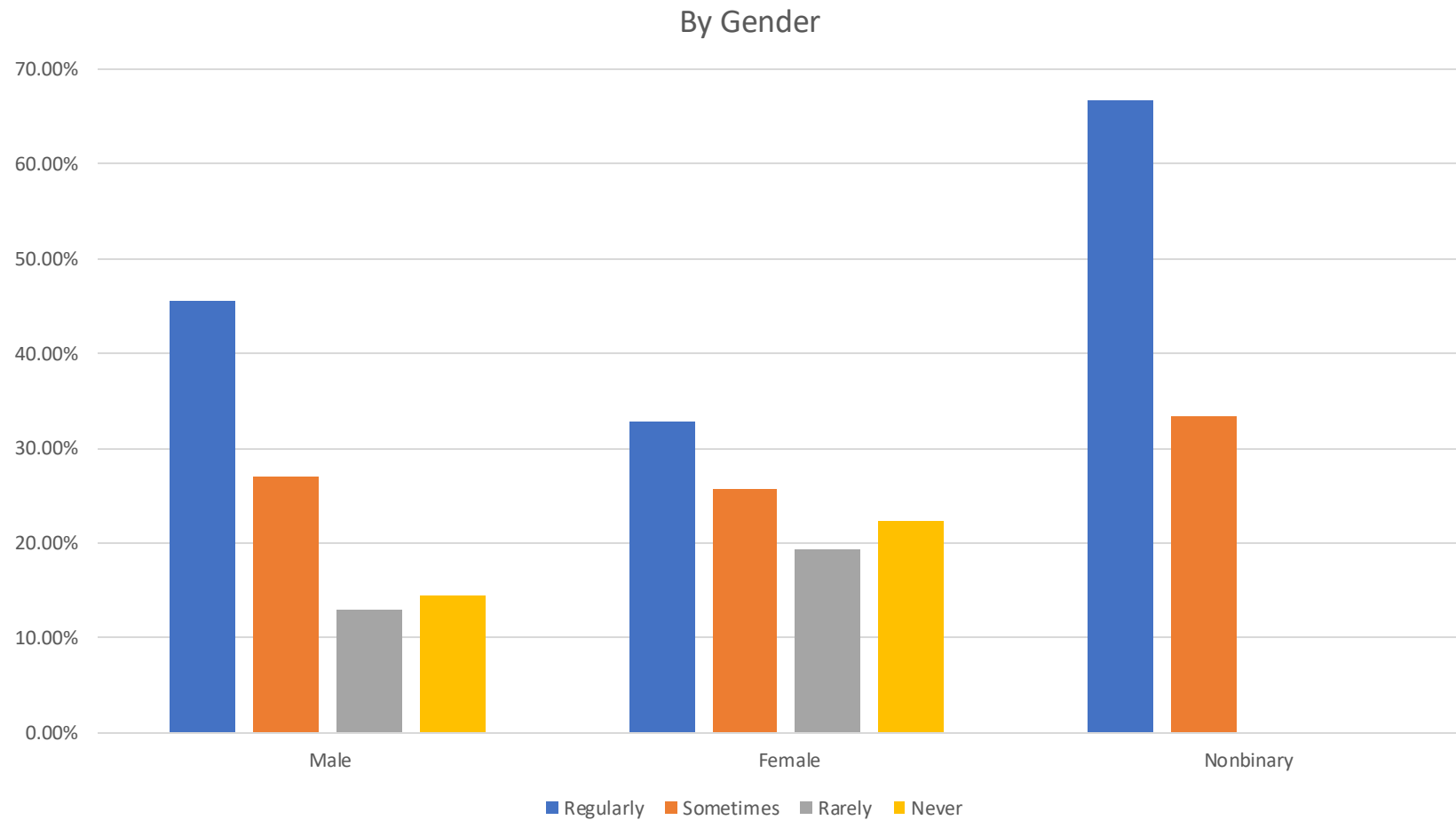
Ideally how frequently would you like to use a trail?



Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age



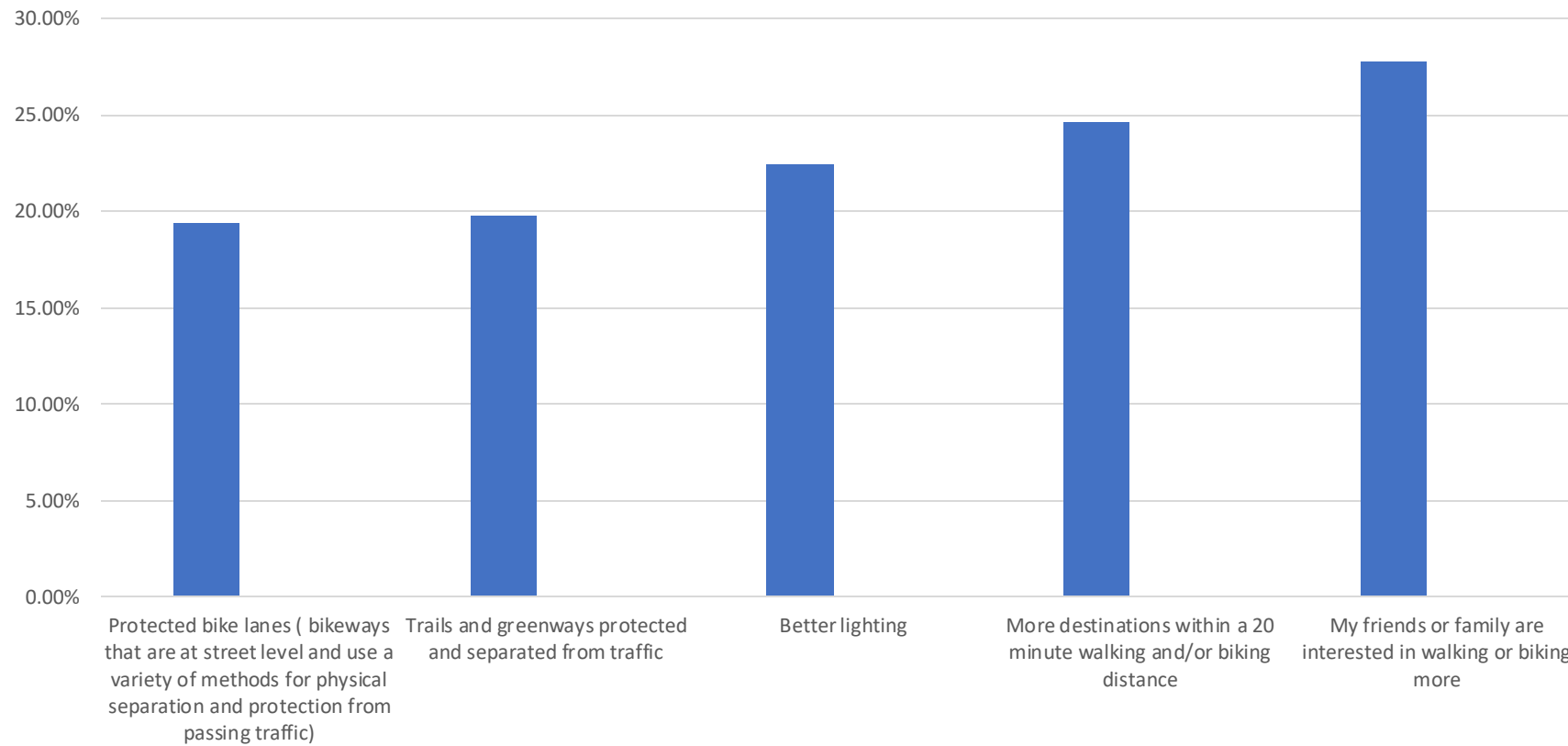
Frequency of Trail Use Varies by Race, Gender and Age



What prevents us from using trails?

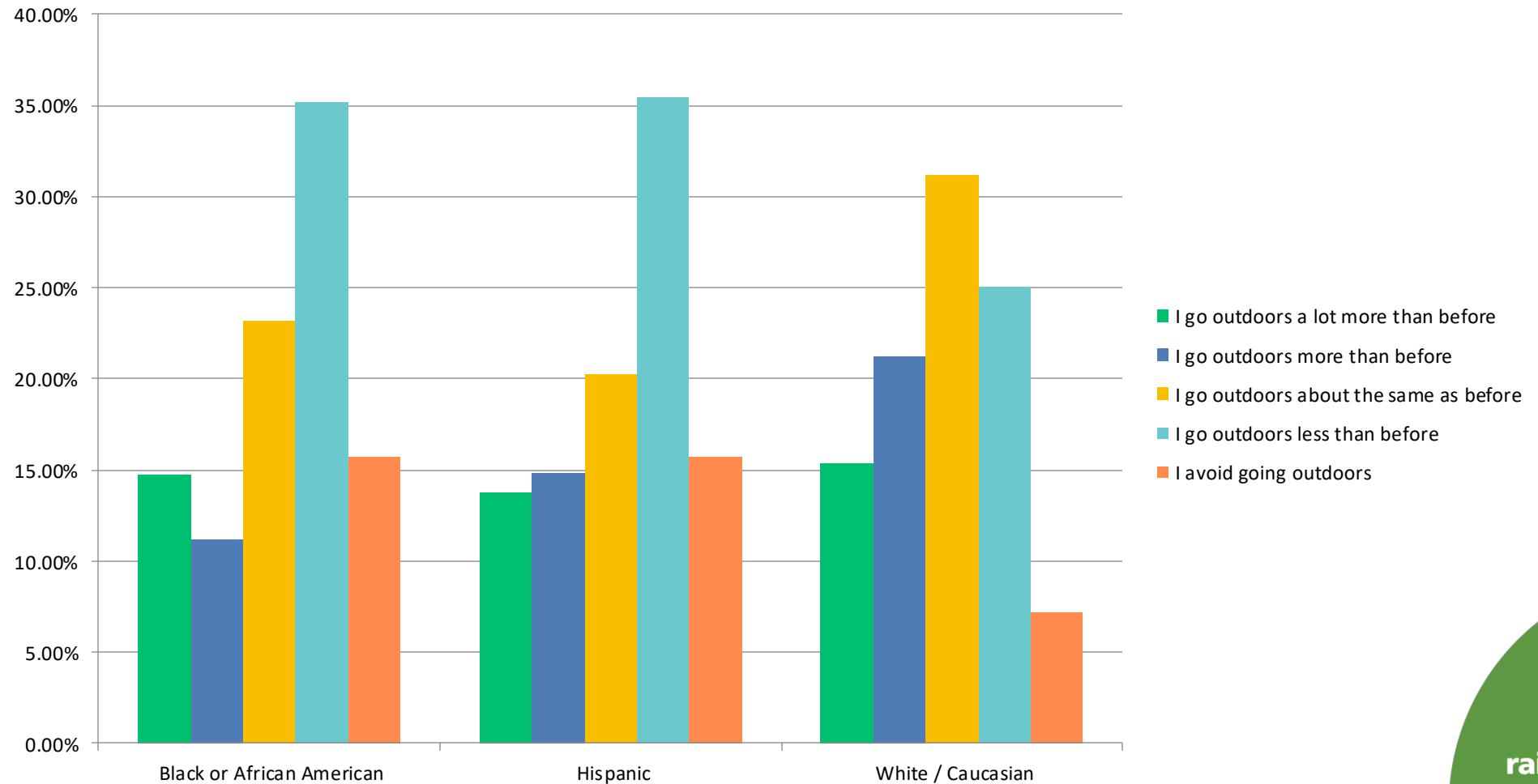
1. Time
2. Access to trails
3. Destination vs. thorough fare
4. Gear and appearance
5. Perceptions of welcome and safety

What would make it more likely for us to walk and bike in our neighborhood?

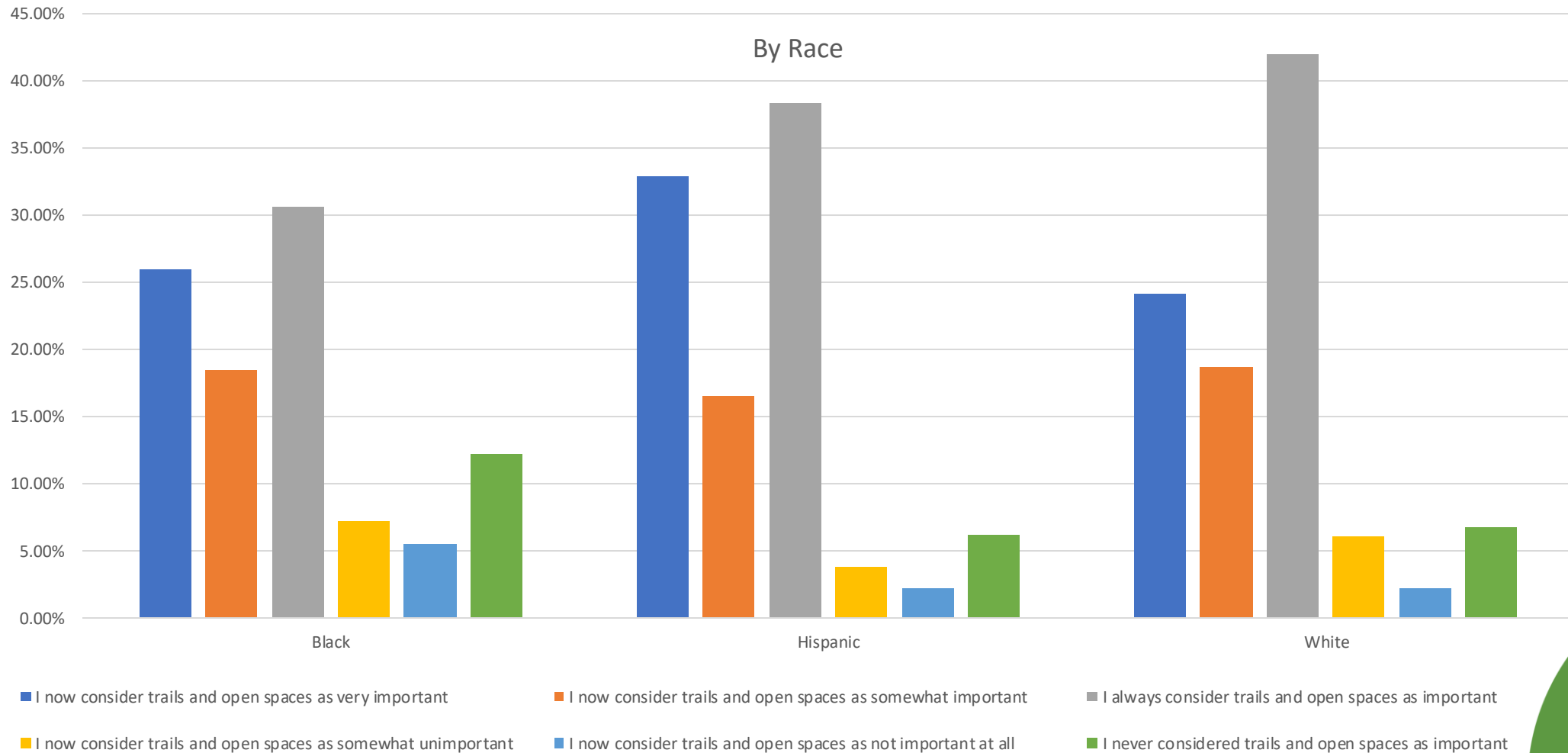


How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the frequency of your outdoor activity?

By Race

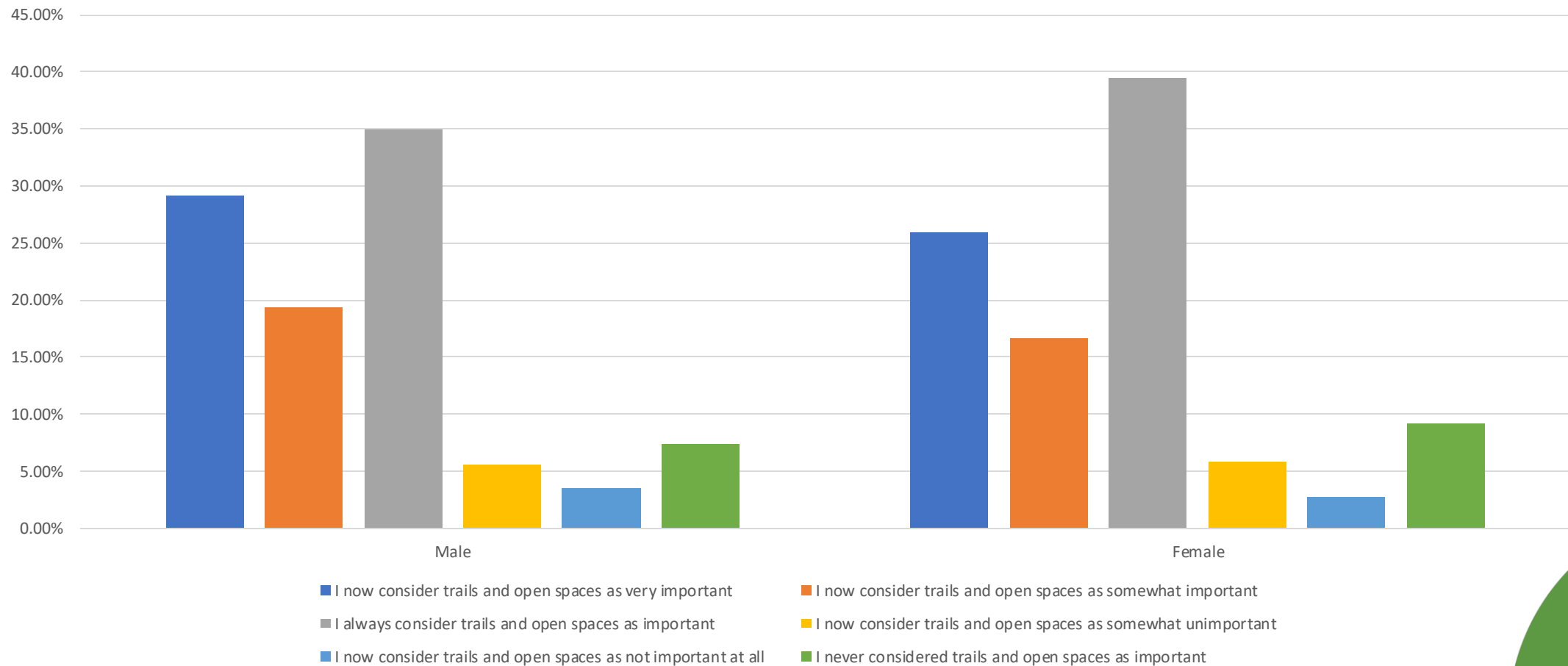


How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about trails and open spaces?



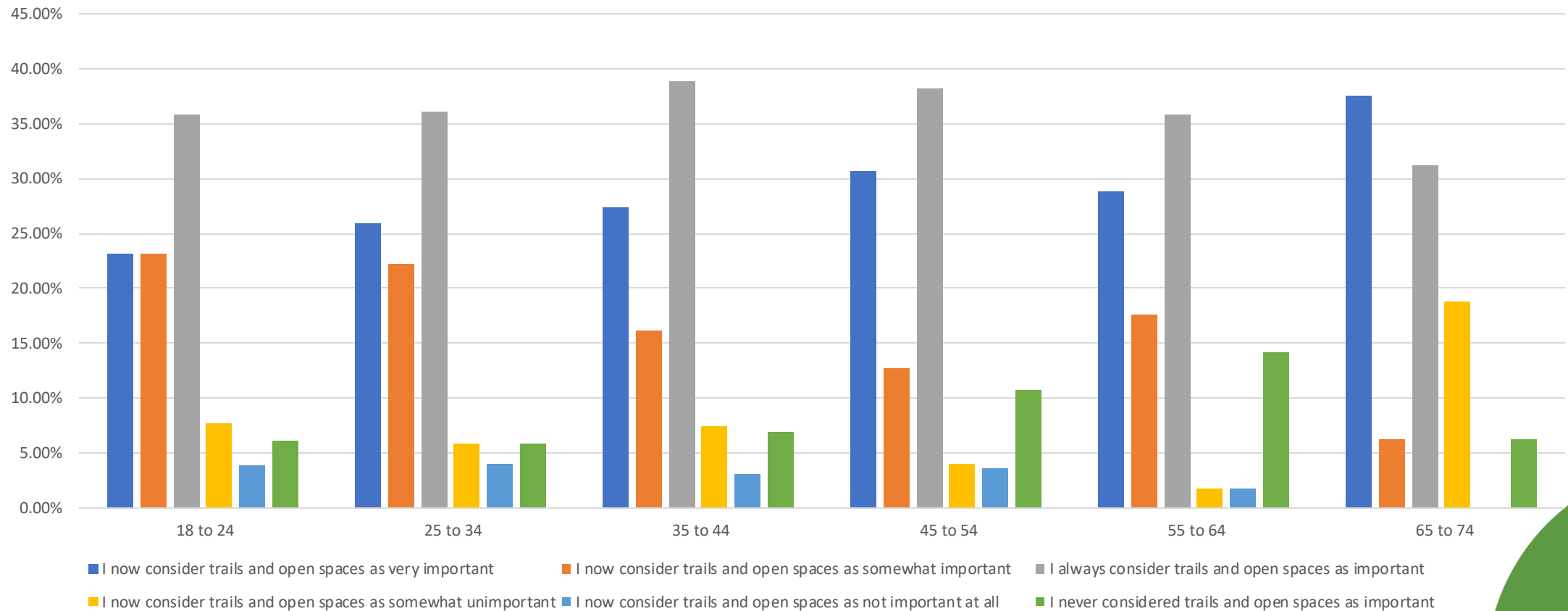
How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about trails and open spaces?

By Gender



How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about trails and open spaces?

By Age



Key Findings from national survey

1. Trails are universally used and valued for **recreation, mental and physical health purposes and social interactions** across gender, race and age groups
2. Female respondents report **less frequent** trail usage than males
3. Male respondents are more likely to say **saving time and money** is a major motivator whereas female respondents are more likely to say having **social interactions** with family and friends is a major motivator
4. Black respondents **are less likely to be trail users** AND less likely to report interest in increasing their trail usage
5. Black respondents are more likely to **say trails are not welcoming** and that they **do not like running or walking outdoors**

Key Findings from national survey

6. Younger respondents are more likely to mention **lack of proper maintenance, being unsure what to do on trails, being sweaty and not having proper gear** as major barriers

7. Older respondents are more likely to say not having enough **places to stop and rest** are barriers to trail use (trails as the destination)

8. Hispanic and Black respondents are much **less likely to go out during COVID-19** compared to white respondents (2020)

9. Male, older and Hispanic respondents are more likely to say that they ‘NOW’ consider trails to be important, implying that **the pandemic has had a positive impact on perception of trails**

10. **Separated bike lanes, trails and greenways; improved lighting and maintenance; destinations accessible by walking and biking, social support from friend and family** might go a long way in encouraging walking, biking and trail use

Panel Discussion

- What do we want to do with this information?
- Help create informed strategies to increase trail use across all groups.
- How do we convert interest in trails into use and support for trails across all groups especially in Black/African-America, Hispanic/Latin and other communities of color?



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