

ARIZONA 2025

Trails Plan Report

Maricopa County



Introduction



Partners in Brainstorms, in collaboration with Arizona State Parks and Trails, conducted a representative survey of Arizona residents at both the state and regional levels. This effort supports the development of the **2025 Trails Plan**, which is updated every five years as required by state law (A.R.S. § 41-511.22 and A.R.S. § 41-511.04 [20]). The survey provides valuable insight into how Arizonans use trails, their priorities, and their concerns—across motorized, non-motorized and emerging uses, such as e-bikes or devices utilized to increase accessibility.

Combined with two additional surveys of land managers and “invested users” – people who accessed the survey using a link on an Arizona State Parks and Trails webpage – and qualitative feedback, these findings shape the statewide Trails Plan. This **supplementary document** presents a deeper look at the data specific to **Maricopa County**, offering local context to help guide planning and decision-making at the county or regional level.

We hope this information will be useful to agencies, organizations, and community partners working to enhance trail-related outdoor recreation. The data can support planning efforts, recreation initiatives, and funding proposals to improve trail access, experiences, and infrastructure across the region.

The preparation of the 2025 Trails Plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578) as amended.





Demographics

THE FOLLOWING FIGURES COMPARE THREE GROUPS IN MARICOPA COUNTY:



INVESTED USERS

Arizona State Parks and Trails and their partners invited specific audiences, partners, and trail users to complete a survey. The goal was to hear from as many people as possible. There were 2,335 surveys completed.



PUBLIC DATA

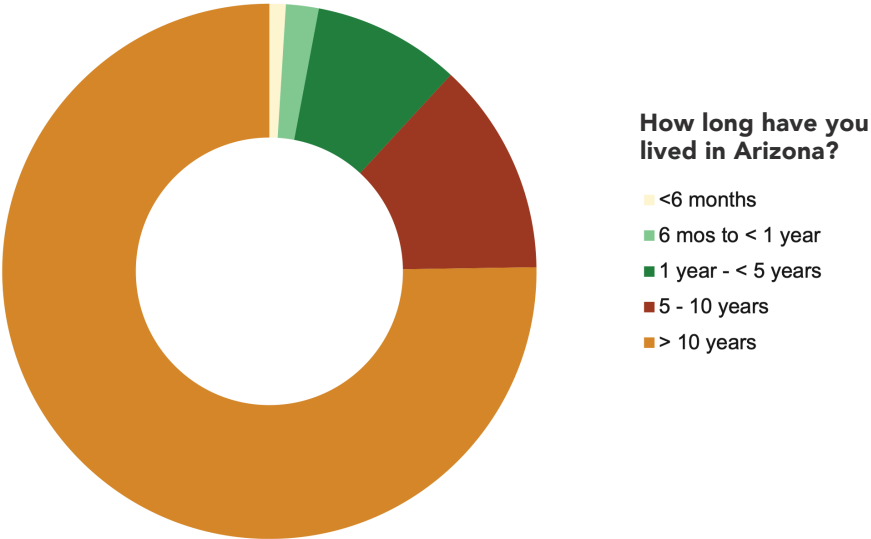
This comes from a survey of 2,101 Maricopa County residents conducted by Partners in Brainstorms. The respondents were specifically chosen to ensure the sample reflected Arizona's overall demographics. This survey included people who engage in different types of trail recreation (motorized, non-motorized, and emerging) and those who don't use them at all.



CENSUS ESTIMATES

This uses the 2023 American Community Survey data estimates for Maricopa County.

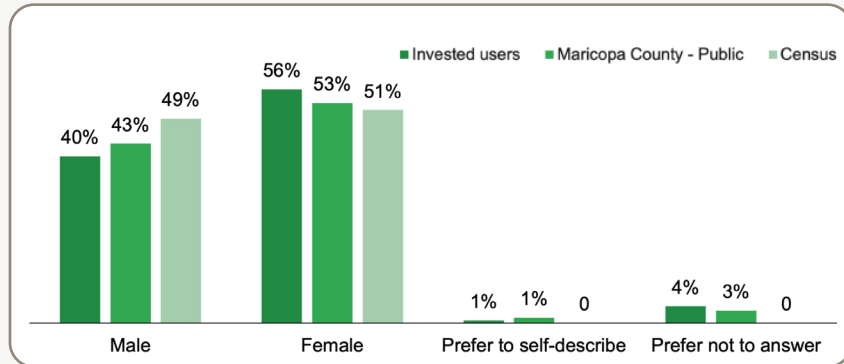
To make the Public survey results more accurate for the overall state population, the data were adjusted (weighted) based on two factors: respondents' gender and Hispanic origin. More than three-quarters (76%) the Public survey respondents had lived in Arizona for more than 10 years.



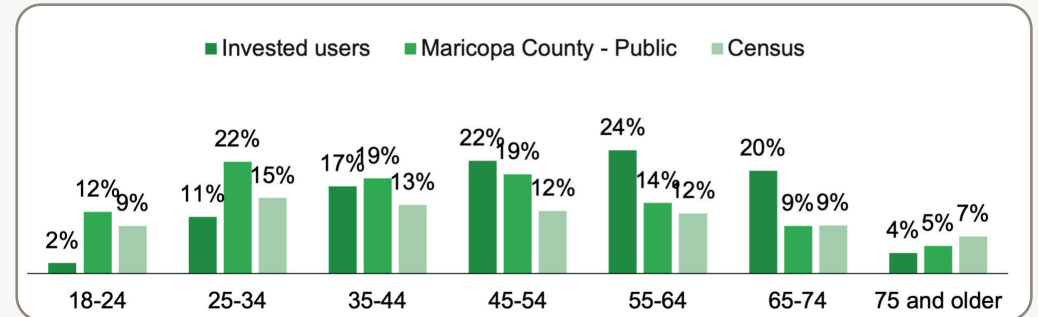
DEMOGRAPHICS CONTINUED

To ensure that a wide variety of voices and perspectives were represented, the survey included or even oversampled demographic categories that are typically difficult to access in surveys relative to their proportion in the population of Maricopa County. The sample of Invested Users tends to skew towards more female, white and older respondents, whereas the public sample focused on oversampling younger and more racially and ethnically diverse trail users. Finally, 13% of the survey respondents from Maricopa County identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

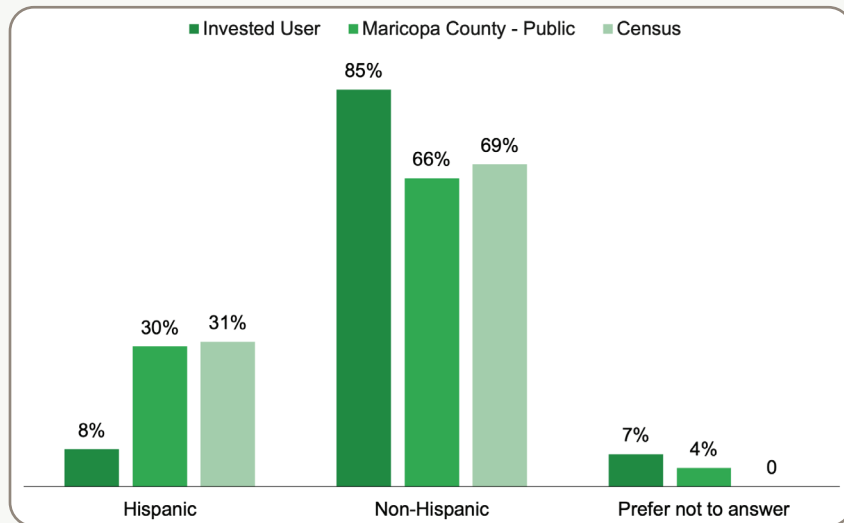
GENDER



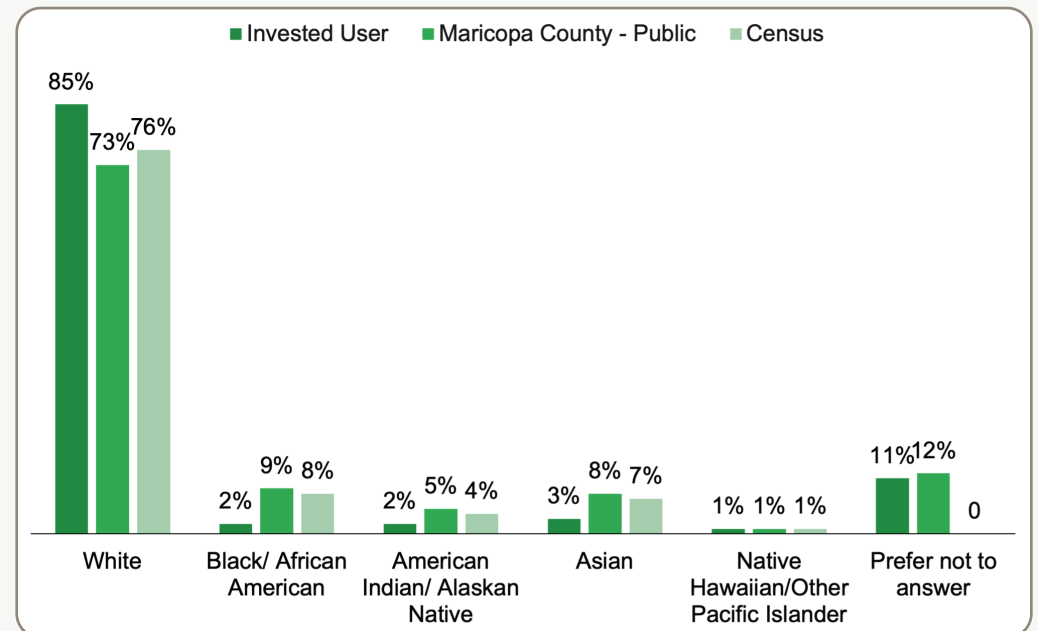
AGE



HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN

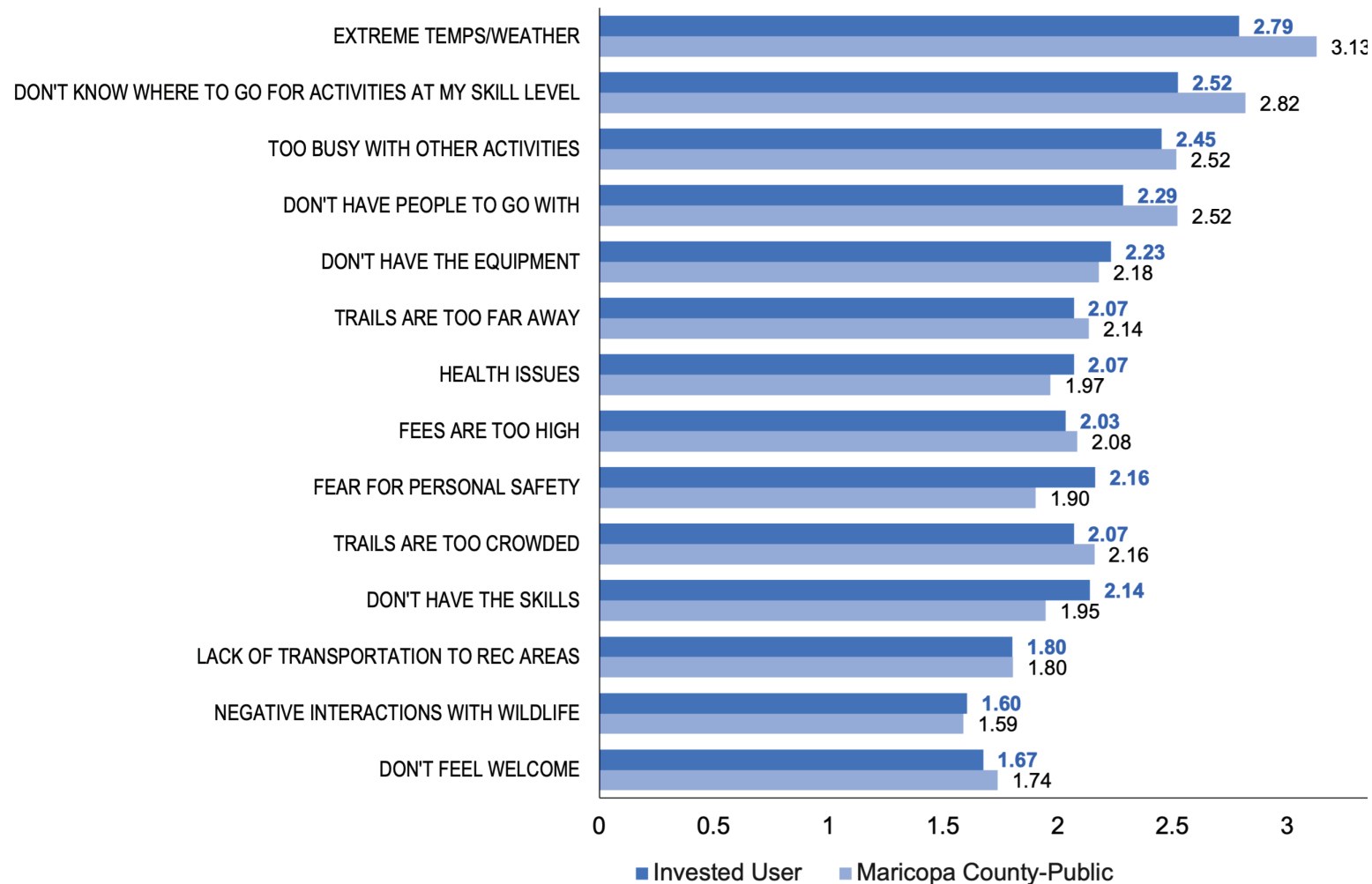


RACE



Why Aren't Maricopa County Residents Using Trails?

If residents reported that they had never used trails in Arizona or had not used them **in the last 12 months**, they were asked why. Below are responses from both the Public and Invested Users. The Public and Invested User samples agreed in general that **extreme weather** and **lack of knowledge** regarding where to go to find the experience they wanted and that fit their skill level, as well as being **too busy with other activities**, were barriers to trail use. Although the mean ratings are not as high, Invested Users tended to have higher means on items, suggesting a lack of equipment, health issues, fear for personal safety, and missing skills to use trails. To the extent possible, addressing these barriers through enhanced targeted marketing, programming, gear libraries, etc., might increase opportunities for Maricopa County residents. Listed below are reasons that people often give for not participating in trail-related activities. 1=Strongly disagree to 4=Strongly agree.



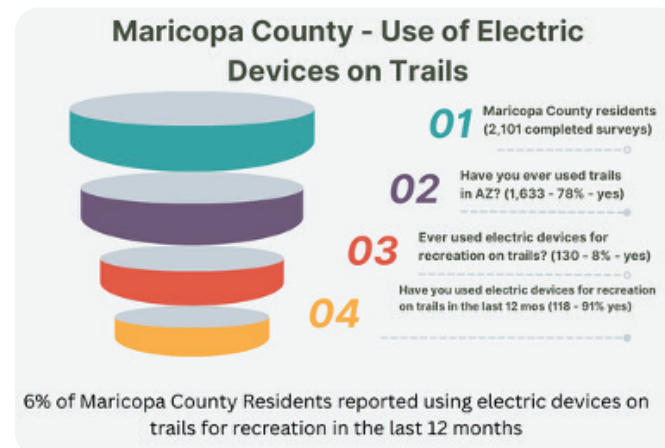
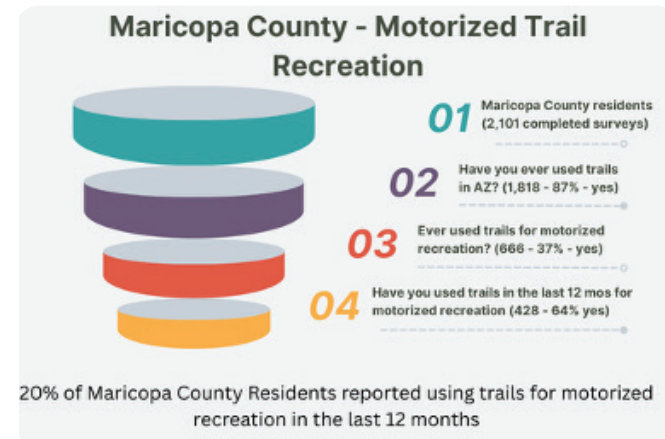
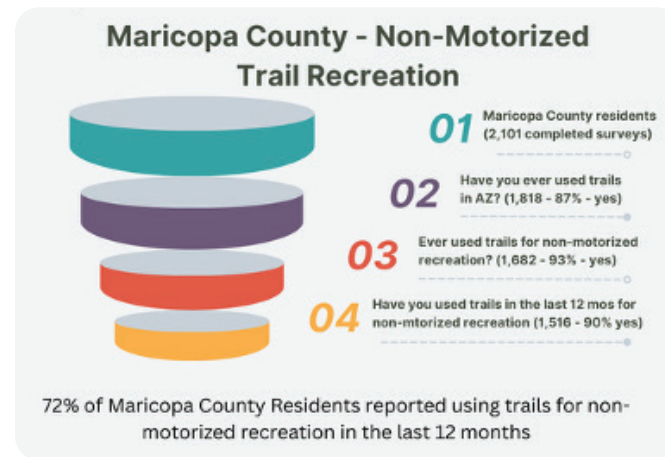
Maricopa County User Profile

Residents who reported using trails in Arizona in the **last 12 months** were asked about the types of trail activities that they engaged in **50% or more of the time** that they spend on trails (also referred to as “core users”).

Activity types are: non-motorized (such as hiking, mountain biking, riding horses, kayaking, etc.), motorized (such as driving UTVs, ATVs, side-by-sides, 4x4s, or dirt bikes), and emerging uses (such as riding e-bikes or using other powered mobility devices, or OPDMDs).

The data below have been rounded to the nearest percentile ($\leq .49$ rounded down, $\geq .5$ rounded up).

In Maricopa County, **nearly three-quarters (72%)** of residents in the Public sample reported participating in non-motorized trail activities within the last 12 months, **one out of five (20%)** residents participated in motorized activities, and 6% participated in recreation on trails with electric devices. Survey respondents categorized as non-users either had never used trails for motorized or non-motorized activities in Arizona (14% of the sample) or had not used trails within the last 12 months.

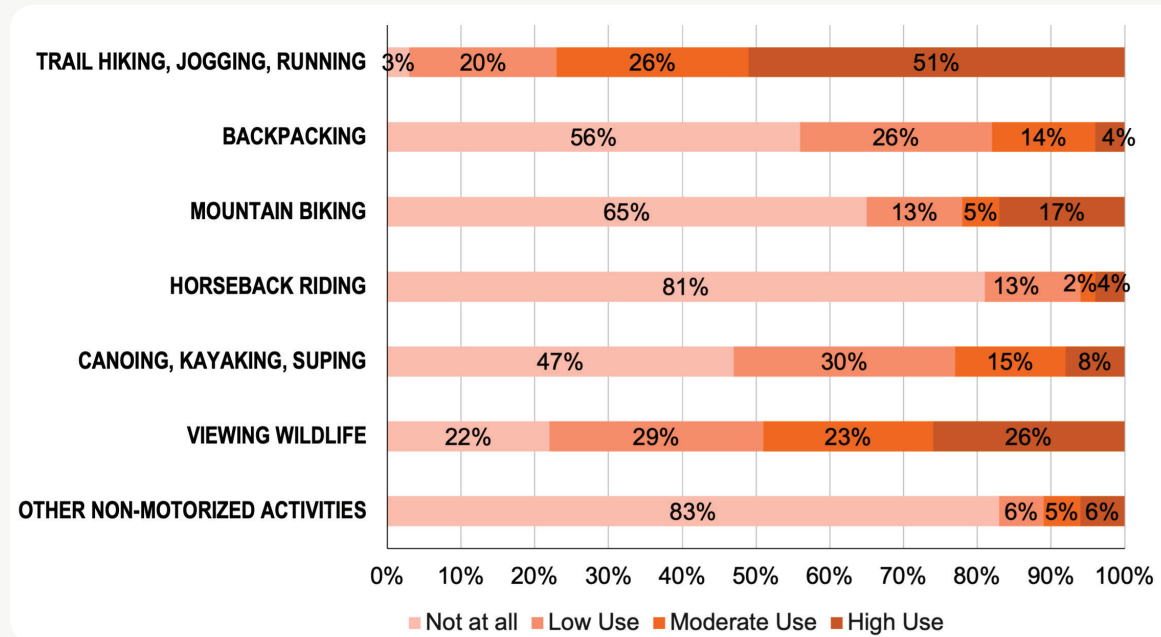


MARICOPA COUNTY USER PROFILE CONTINUED

The figures below show Maricopa County residents' (Public sample) non-motorized trail activities, motorized trail activities and activities using electric devices on trails within the last 12 months, by activity type and frequency. The high frequency category below contains the responses: "More than once a week," "Once a week," and "Every few weeks." Moderate frequency contains the responses: "Once a month," and "Every couple months," and the low frequency category contains the responses "A few times" and "Once". The "Not at all" category represents the percentage of respondents who reported not participating in a particular activity in the past 12 months.

*"During the past 12 months, how often have you used trails on public or private lands in Arizona for the following types of non-motorized recreational activities?" (*This data is drawn from the Public sample)*

NON-MOTORIZED USE TYPE AND FREQUENCY

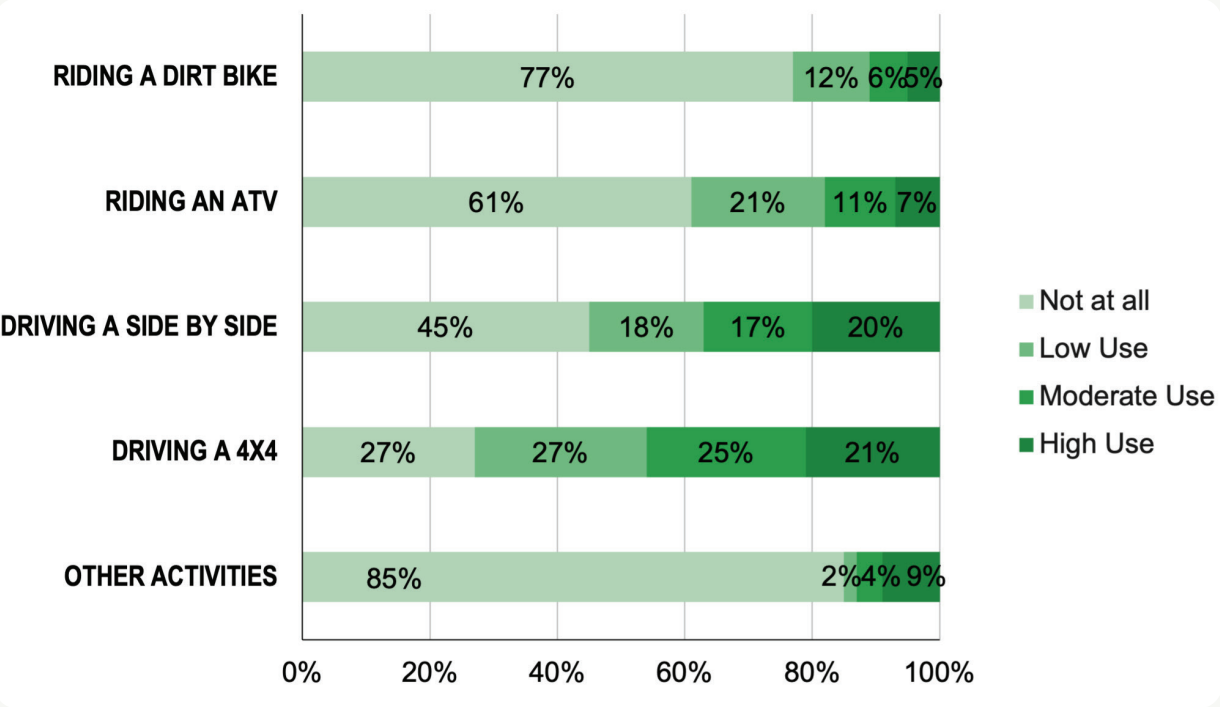


Trail hiking, jogging, or running are by far the most popular non-motorized activities in Maricopa County. Nearly all (97%) of non-motorized users participated in at least one of these activities during the last 12 months. Viewing wildlife is another popular non-motorized activity, with 78% of respondents participating at least once in the last 12 months. More than half of Maricopa County residents reported engaging in canoeing, kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding. Finally, survey respondents also reported participating in backpacking (44%), mountain biking (35%), or horseback riding (19%) on trails within the last 12 months. Both the Public and Invested Users reported that they used trails for non-motorized activities approximately every few weeks or a few times a month, and prefer to recreate for 6-10 miles on the trail per trip (although the preferred length of trail use per trip would likely vary depending on what type of activity is engaged in – e.g., hiking, biking or horseback riding). Non-motorized trail users from both samples tend to recreate on trails with two adults and one child on average.

As seen in the figures below, driving a 4x4 was the most popular motorized activity on trails, with 73% of motorized users participating at least once in the past year, followed by driving a **side-by-side (55%)** and riding an **ATV (39%)**. Riding a dirt bike was the least cited activity in the motorized category, but 23% of motorized users still rode a dirt bike at least once in the last year. On average, all respondents who engaged in motorized activities did so approximately once a month, and **nearly two-thirds (61%)** expected the next 12 months to be about the same, while **nearly one-third (32%)** expected their engagement in motorized trail activities to increase. A typical ride lasts between **4-6 hours** on average for those engaged in motorized trail recreation. Motorized trail users (both samples) report, on average, including two adults and one child (under 18) in their groups most often when they ride or drive on trails in Arizona.

“During the past 12 months, how often have you used trails on public or private lands in Arizona for the following types of motorized recreational activities?” (*This data is drawn from the Public sample)

MOTORIZED USE TYPE AND FREQUENCY

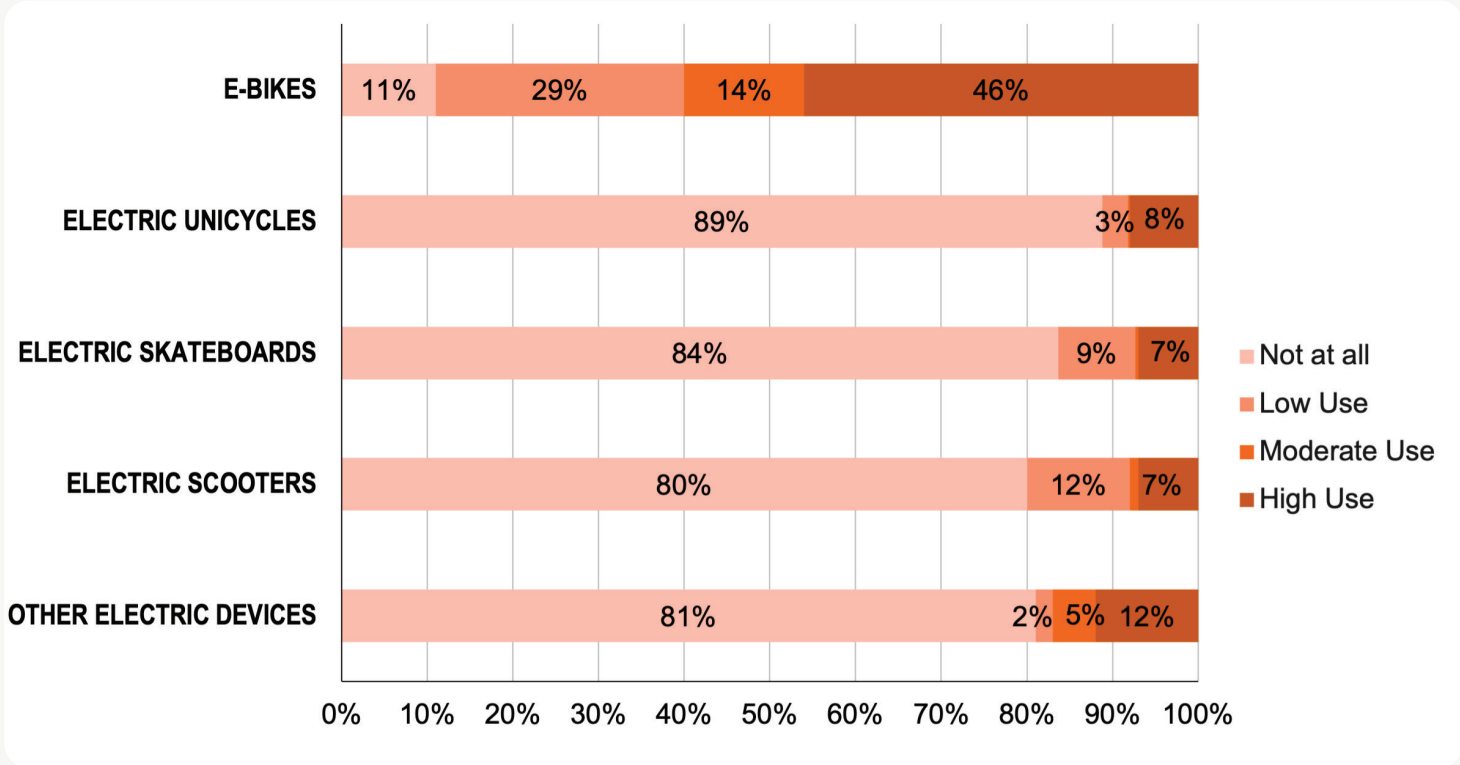


Electric and Emerging Use Type and Frequency

Eight percent of Maricopa County residents (Public) and 12% of Invested Users reported that they had used some type of electric device on trails in Arizona. **Nearly nine in 10** of those (91% and 90%, respectively) reported that they had ridden an electric device on a trail in Arizona within the last 12 months. Approximately **nine in 10 of these respondents rode an e-bike** on a trail. Both samples indicated that, on average, they rode an e-bike on trails approximately once a month. Nearly three-fourths of e-bike riders used a Class 1 e-bike (pedal assist), 21% used a Class 2, while 14% used a Class 3 e-bike and 7% didn’t know. Much smaller groups reported using electric scooters (20%), electric skateboards (16%) and electric unicycles (11%).

“During the past 12 months, how often have you used one of the following electric devices on trails on public or private lands in Arizona for recreational activities?” (*This data is drawn from the Public sample)

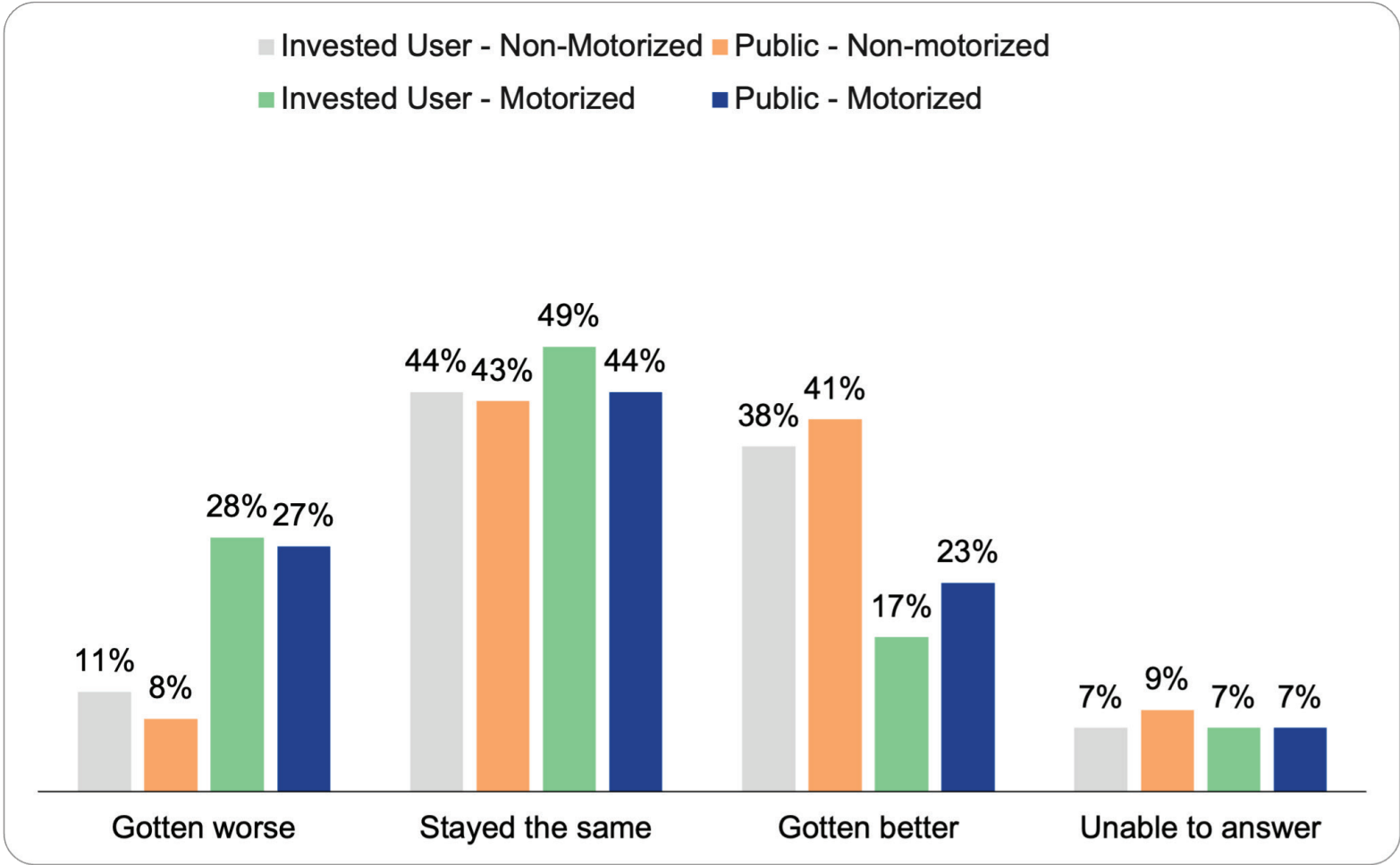
ELECTRIC DEVICE USE TYPE AND FREQUENCY



ACCESS TO MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION & SATISFACTION WITH TRAILS IN ARIZONA

Each trail user surveyed was asked if they thought access to the trail type that they use has declined, stayed the same or improved. Access refers to the trails throughout the state that the respondent uses, not just those in Maricopa County. As seen below, motorized trail users in Maricopa County were more likely to report that **access had stayed the same or improved**, whereas non-motorized trail users were more likely to report that **access had stayed the same or improved**. Also of note, motorized users from both samples were more likely to report being somewhat satisfied with trails in Arizona, whereas non-motorized users were more likely to be very satisfied with non-motorized trails in the state.

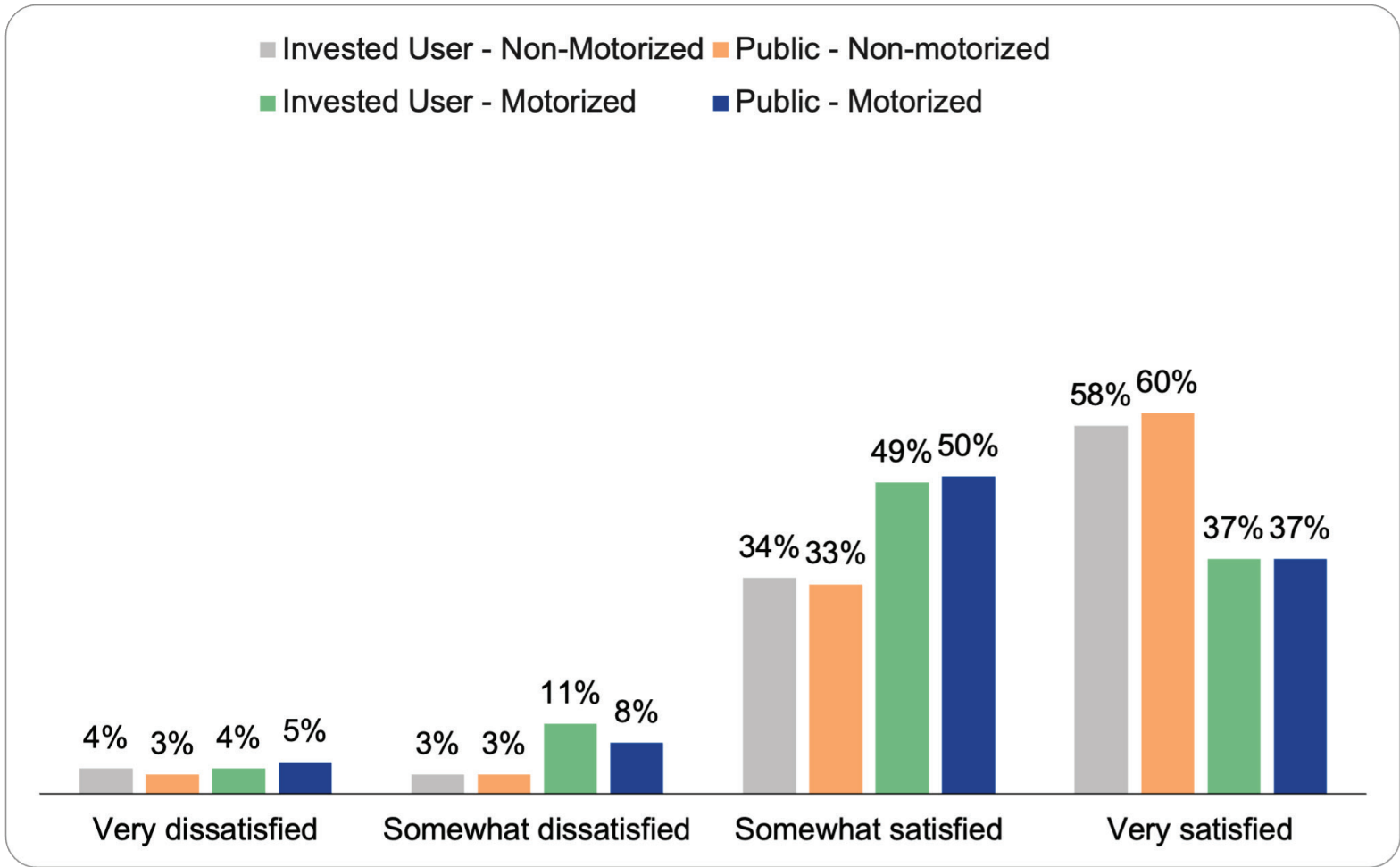
“In the past 5 years, do you think that access for non-motorized/motorized recreation has gotten better, stayed the same, or gotten worse?”



User Concerns and Management Priorities

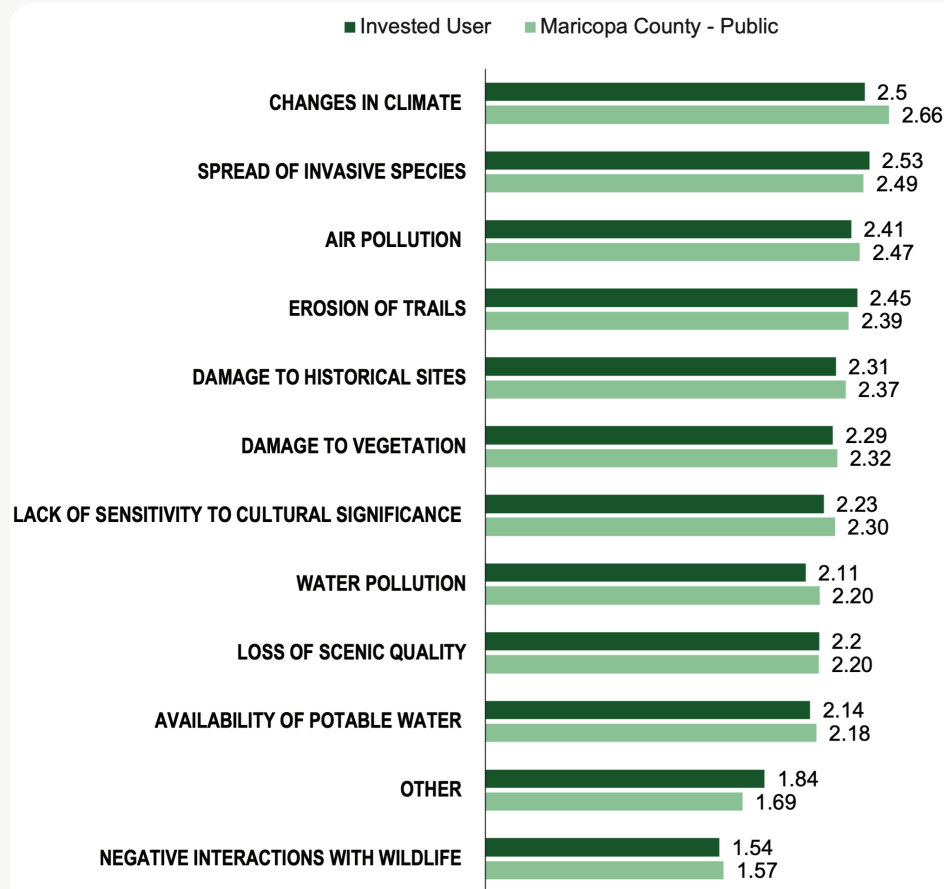
The next three figures compare Maricopa County's trail users' mean ratings of trail-related issues on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 "Not a problem" to 4 "A major problem" for environmental and social concerns and 1 equals "not at all important" to 4 equals "very important" for trail management priorities. The concerns and priorities are in order from highest (top of the figure) to lowest (bottom of the figure) in importance to all trail users. The information below is reported for all trail users, and is not separated by use type (motorized and non-motorized).

"Overall, how satisfied are you with (motorized/non-motorized) trails in Arizona?"



USER CONCERNS AND MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

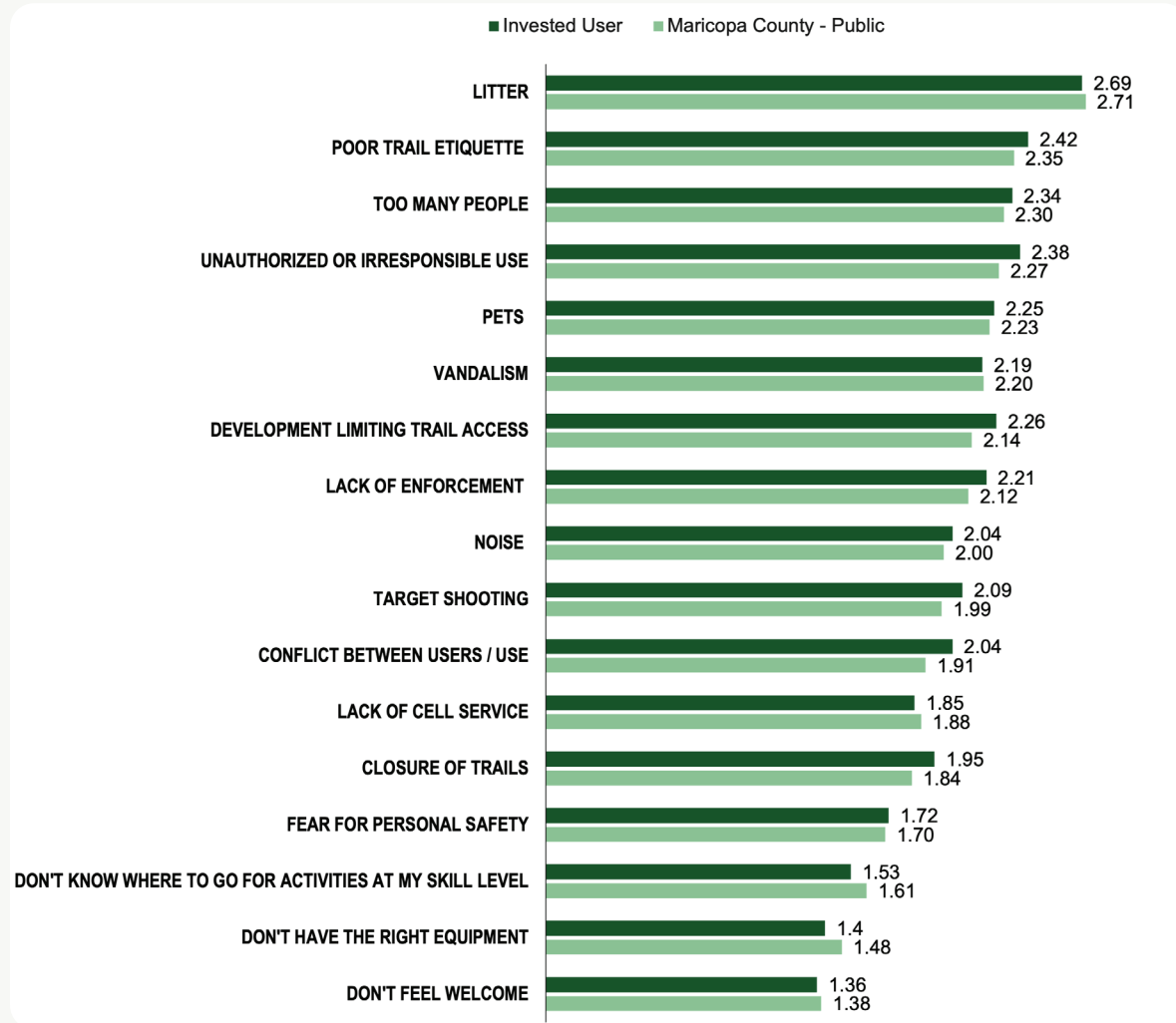
While both the Public and Invested User samples agree on the top five environmental concerns for trails, they differ in the order of these concerns (although the difference in means is slight and may not be statistically significant). Mean ratings indicate that the number one concern of Maricopa County Public trail users is changes in climate, followed by the spread of invasive species and air pollution. Invested users, on the other hand, are slightly more concerned about the spread of invasive species, followed by changes in climate and erosion of trails.



*"Thinking about possible environmental and cultural conditions that might negatively affect your trail experience, how much of a problem is each of the following on the Arizona trails you use most for recreation activities?"
(1=Not a problem, 4=Major problem)*

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS OF TRAIL USERS

The figure below shows the rankings of individual and social issues or conditions on trails by all users. The primary concern of trail users in Maricopa County is litter, which is a moderate problem on average. However, poor trail etiquette, too many people, unauthorized or irresponsible use and pets (off-leash or leaving pet waste along a trail) are also concerns. It is important to note, however, that these are seen as minor problems on average as compared to litter.



*"Thinking about possible individual or social conditions that might negatively affect your trail experience, how much of a problem is each of the following on the Arizona trails you use most for recreation activities?"
(1=Not a problem, 4=Major problem)*

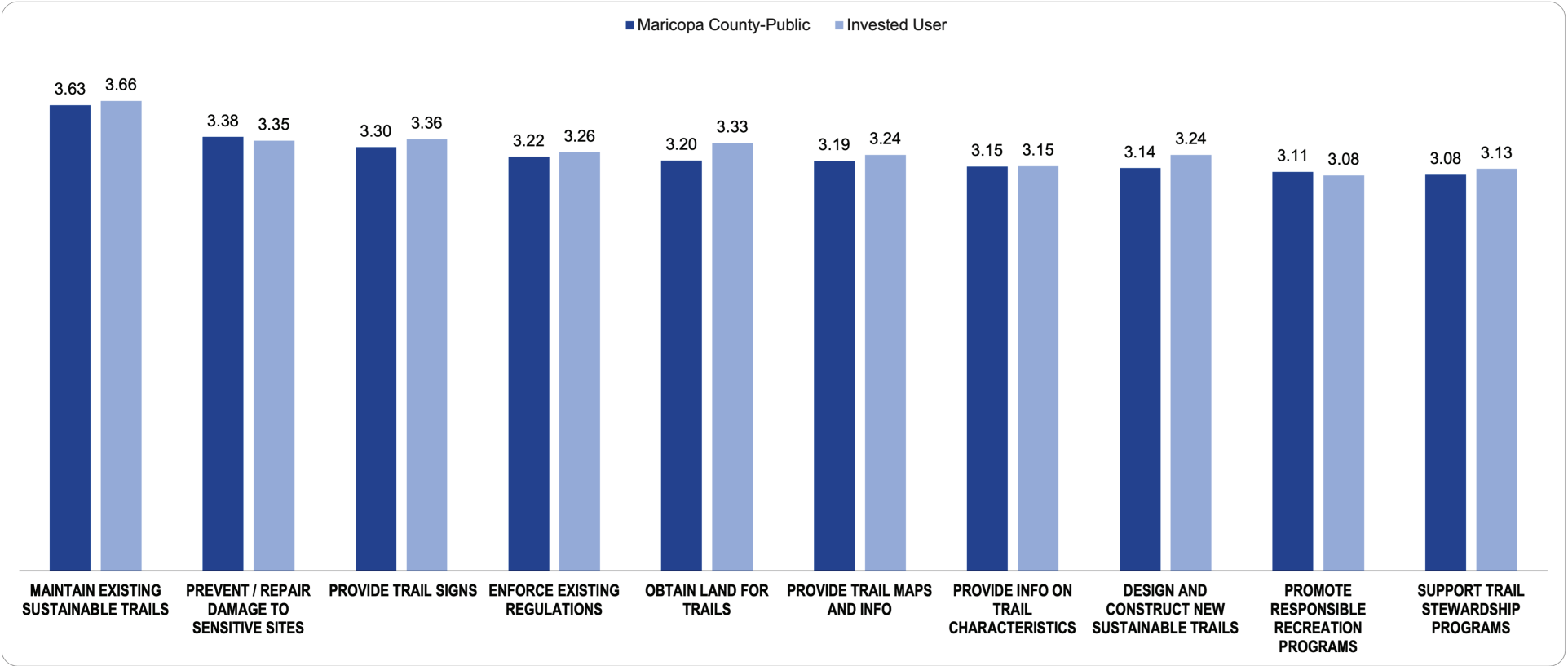


Planning for the Future

MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES OF TRAIL USERS

The figure depicts the top 10 management priorities for Public and Invested trail users. **Maintaining trails** is the highest priority for both samples, and is very important on average. The remaining issues above were somewhat important on average. Taking care of existing trails, surrounding resources, and trail corridors is a high priority for the Public. Also, **providing trail signs** and enforcing existing regulations both make trails safer, and obtaining land to build additional new trails ranks highly. Although the mean ratings of trail management priorities are similar across both samples, Invested Users think that obtaining land for more trails and designing and constructing new sustainable trails are more important than the Public.

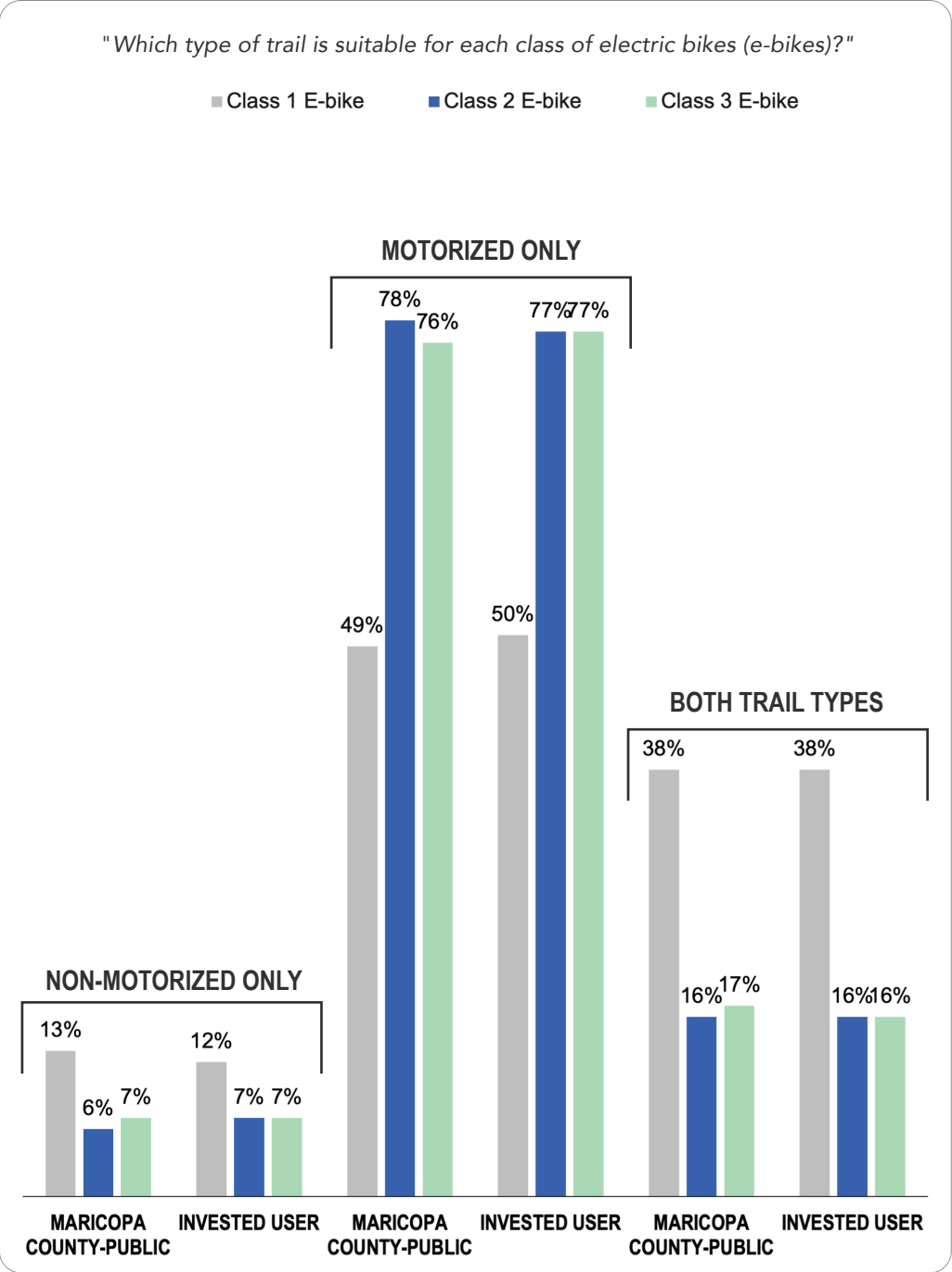
“How important to you are the following trail management priorities?” 1=Not at all important, 4=Very important



The findings shown can help counties and regions to plan, seek and allocate resources for trail recreation. The information from this and the statewide plan may then be used as a baseline for future studies.

Maricopa County residents, both in the **Public (74%)** and **Invested User (70%)** samples, reported preferring trails that incorporate multiple activities, with motorized and non-motorized uses separated. In addition, residents were asked what types of activities should be included on multi-use pathways. The majority of both samples agreed that hiking (91%, 90% respectively), walking, bicycling and jogging (35%, 84% respectively), mountain biking (66%, 69%) and horseback riding (56%, 59%) should be allowed on multi-use pathways, whereas only approximately one-third (31% of Public and 36% of Invested Users) agreed that e-bikes should be allowed.

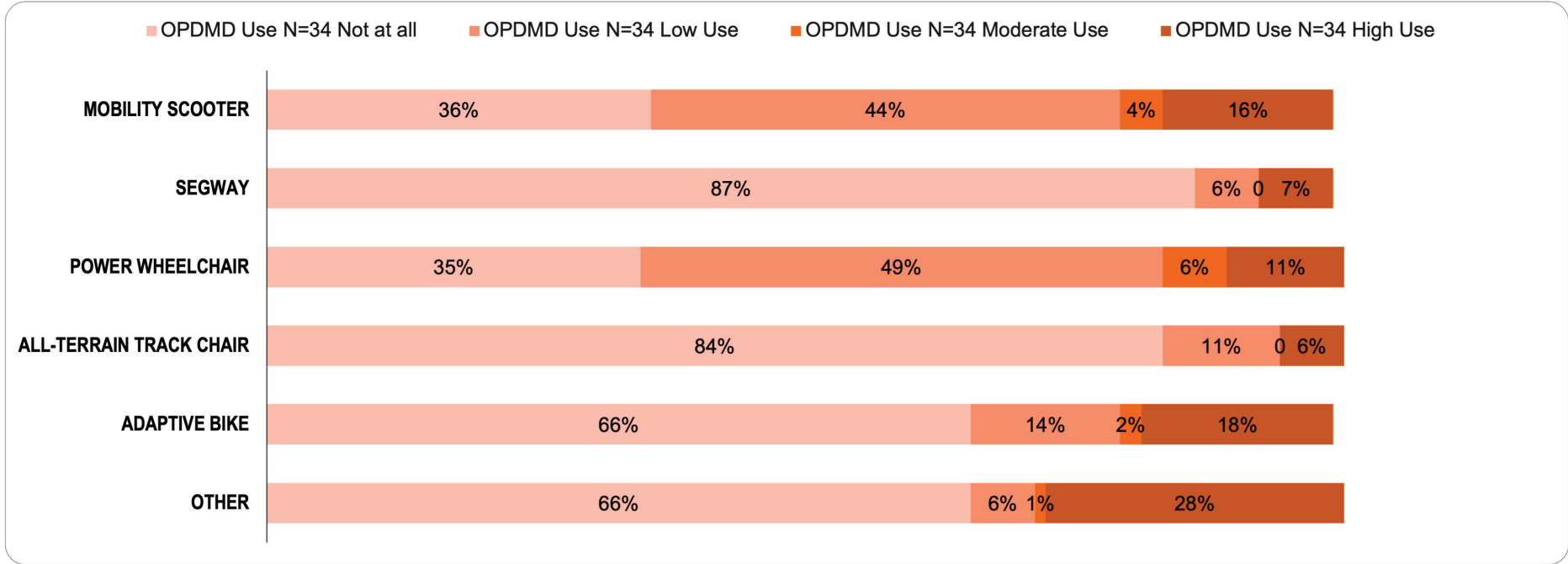
Survey respondents were also asked what types of trails different classes of e-bikes should be allowed on. Both the Public and Invested Users seem **evenly split on the use of e-bikes on non-motorized trails**. Although nearly half of both samples stated that Class 1 e-bikes should be allowed on motorized trails only, the other half of both samples indicated that Class 1 e-bikes should be either allowed on non-motorized trails only or on both non-motorized and motorized trails, whereas more than three-quarters of both samples agree (78% and 77% respectively) that Class 2 and 3 e-bikes should only be allowed on motorized trails. This information may be used by land managers as they work with the public to determine the suitability of e-bike use on the trails they manage.



OPDMD USE TYPE AND FREQUENCY

Maricopa County residents were also asked whether there was an individual in their household who required an accommodation related to trail use. Nearly 12% reported that an individual in their household required an accommodation to use the trails in Arizona. The vast majority of these individuals required an accommodation related to mobility (72%), followed by cognitive processing (16%).

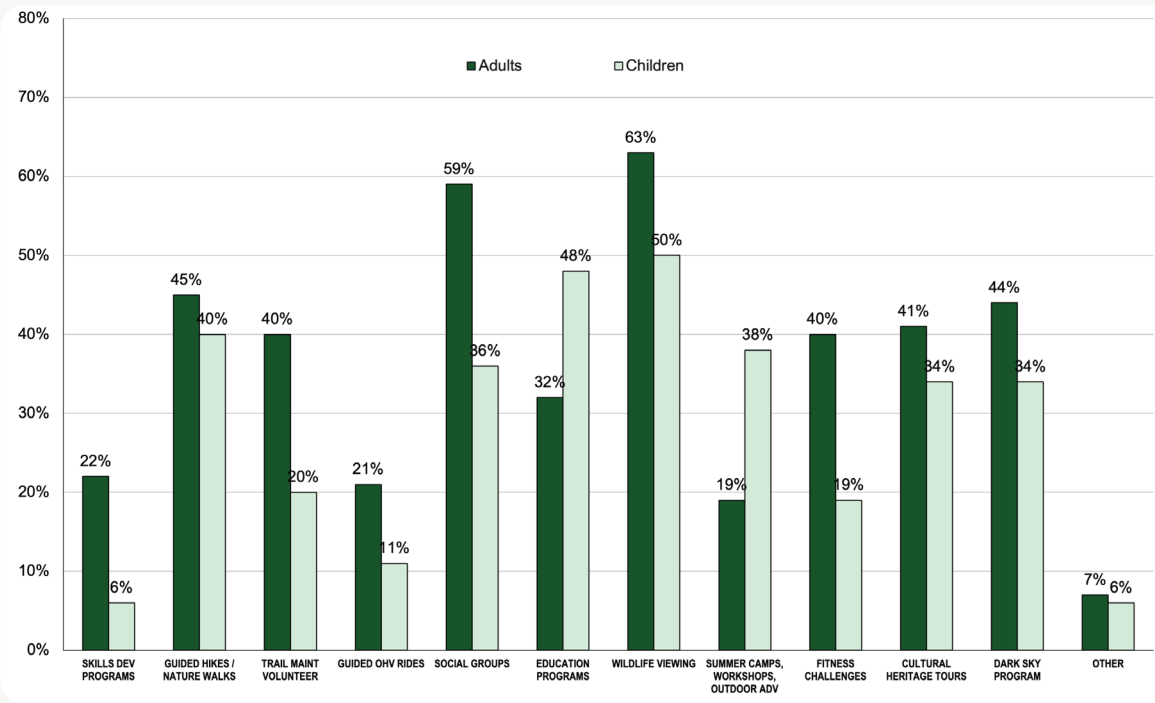
Below are the Power Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMDs) that individuals used on trails in Arizona in the 12 months prior to the survey. The most common OPDMD used on trails were power wheelchairs, followed by mobility scooters. Some of the other devices respondents reported using were: e-bikes, golf carts, electric knee scooters, side-by-sides, walkers, and e-tricycles.



Trail-Related Programs and Activities

Finally, Maricopa County residents were asked if they, another adult, or child in their household had participated in any of the following types of programs or activities in the last year. The most frequent were wildlife viewing (for both adults and children), followed by social groups for adults, and education programs for children.

ELECTRIC DEVICE USE TYPE AND FREQUENCY



WOULD YOU PARTICIPATE IN...?

DARK SKY PROGRAM	69%
TRAIL MAINT. VOLUNTEER	60%
GUIDED HIKE/NATURE WALK	51%
CULTURAL HERITAGE TOUR	51%
SOCIAL GROUPS	43%
WILDLIFE VIEWING	43%
FITNESS CHALLENGE	40%
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS	39%
SUMMER CAMP/WORKSHOPS	38%
SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS	33%
GUIDED OHV RIDES	31%

Residents were also asked which of these program types they would like to participate in, to inform future program planning. Nearly 7 in 10 respondents indicated that they would like to participate in a dark sky program. Six out of 10 said they would like to volunteer for a trail maintenance project, and more than half said they would like to take a guided hike or nature walk. These results can help land managers develop programming to meet residents' needs.



These survey results can help land managers, trail advocates, and current and future trail users by providing justification for allocating resources to projects that meet the highest trail planning, funding, and maintenance needs and concerns of the public. This information can also help to guide decision-making for elected officials, agencies, non-profits and community partners.

If additional information is needed,
please contact **trailsplan@azstateparks.gov**

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