



Connecting American Youth with Nature:

Key Findings From Opinion Research

October 15, 2011

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Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3

Public Opinion Research & Strategy

SANTA MONICA • OAKLAND • MADISON • MEXICO CITY



PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES

Methodology



- On-line interviews with 602 youth between the ages of 13-18
- Interviews conducted July 28 – August 4, 2011
- Quotas set by gender, age, geography, and ethnicity to ensure a diverse and representative sample
- Preceded by an in-depth focus group in San Antonio, TX (Latinos); two groups in New York City (African-Americans and mixed-race); and Berkeley, CA (mixed-race)
- Bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R)



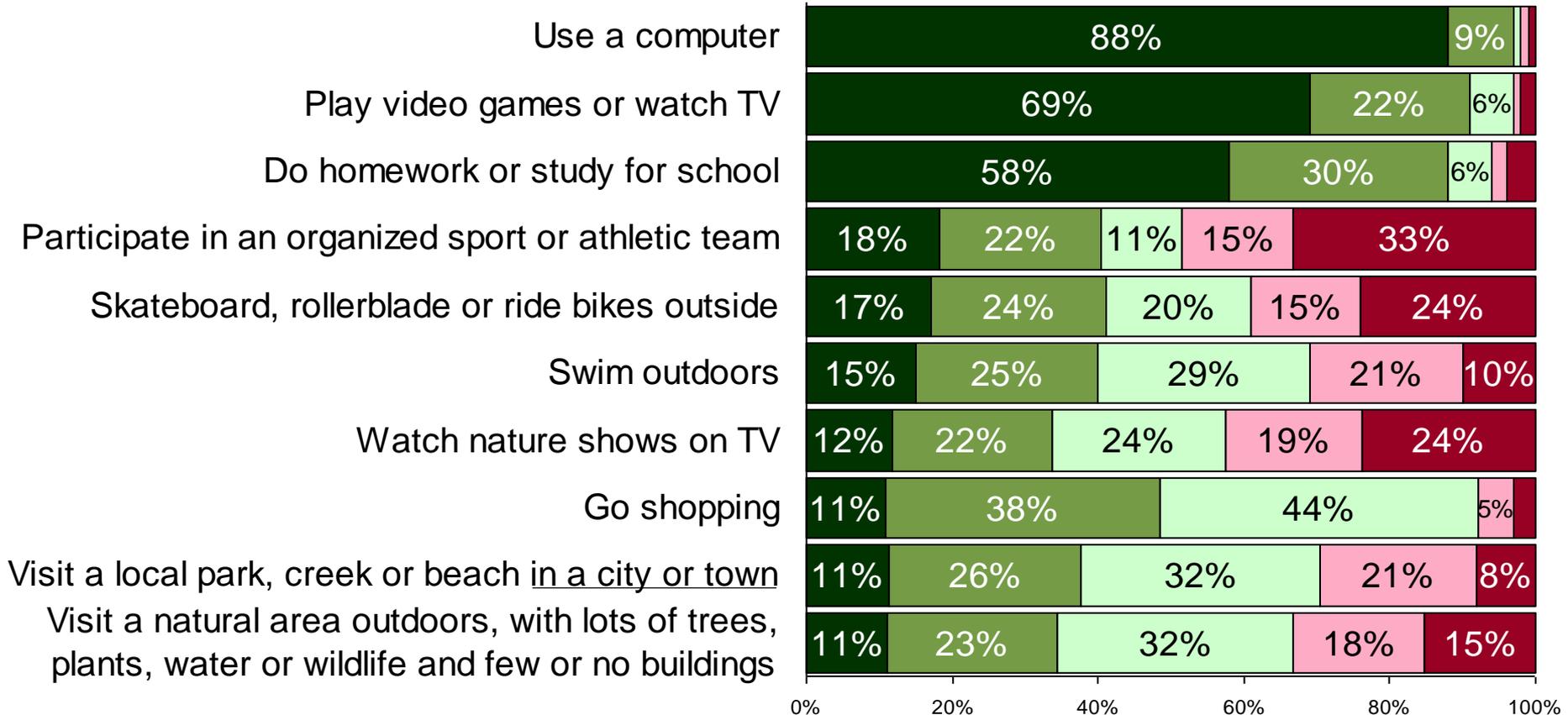
Current Connections Between Youth and Nature

Currently, youth are more likely to report engaging with electronic media than with any other activity.



Below is a list of common activities. Please indicate how often you do each one: almost every day, weekly, monthly, yearly or less, or almost never.

■ Almost Every Day ■ Weekly □ Monthly □ Yearly ■ Almost Never

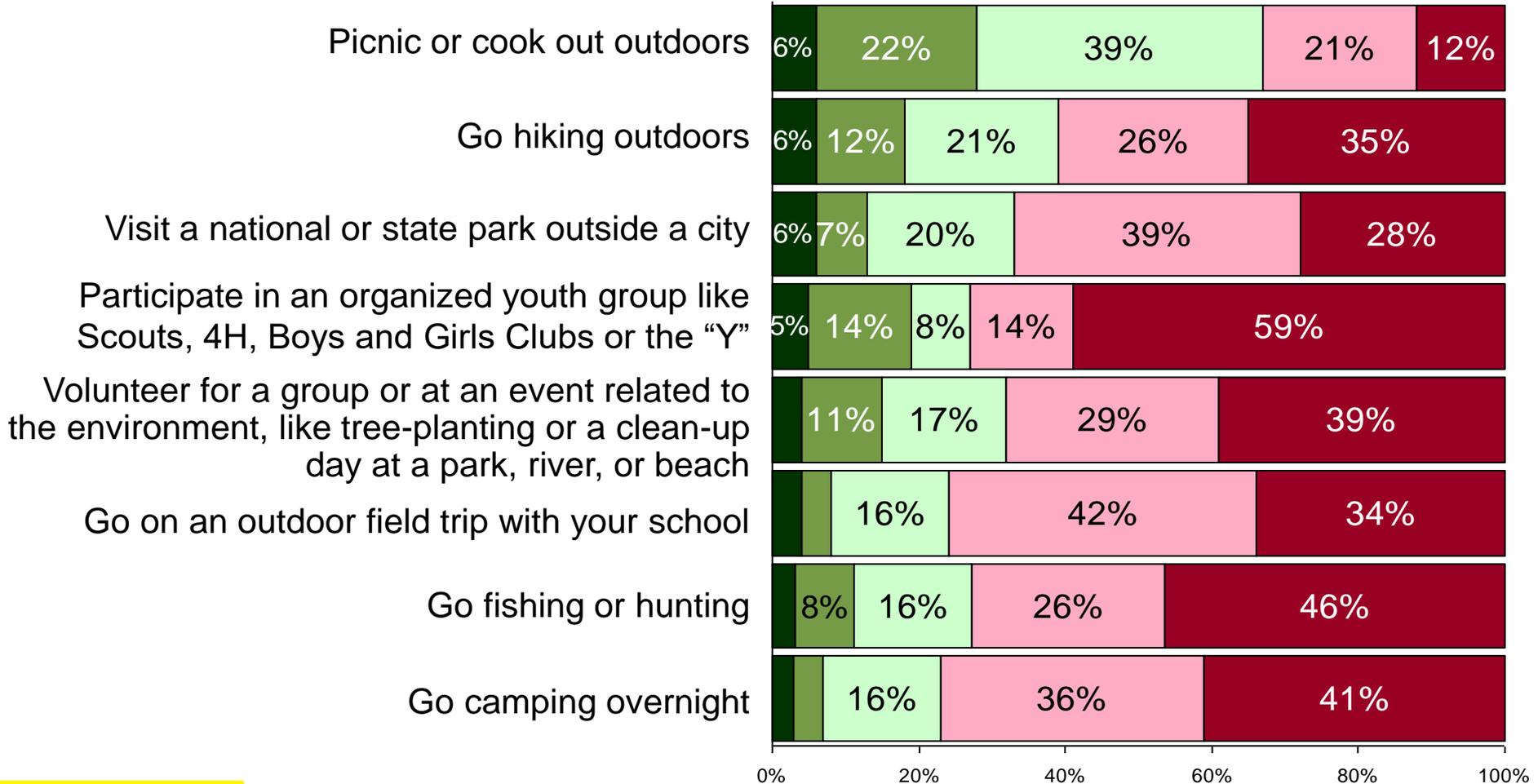


0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Continued:



■ Almost Every Day ■ Weekly □ Monthly □ Yearly ■ Almost Never



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Urban youth and youth of color engage with nature in some different ways.



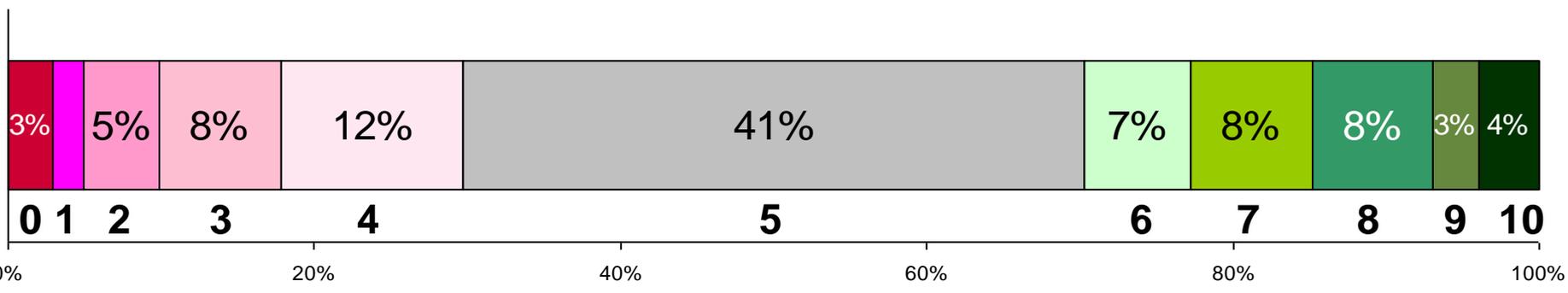
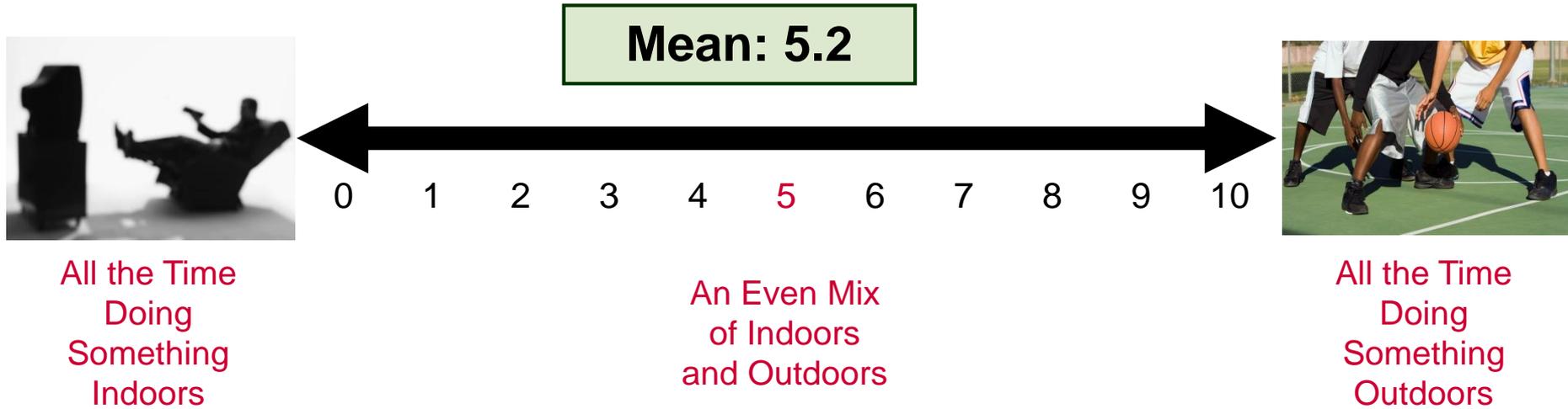
(% Total Almost Every Day/Weekly)

Common Activities	All Respondents	Teens of Color	Big City Residents
Use a computer	97%	97%	99%
Play video games or watch TV	91%	90%	92%
Do homework or study for school	88%	87%	87%
Go shopping	49%	54%	56%
Skateboard, rollerblade or ride bikes outside	41%	42%	47%
Participate in an organized sport or athletic team	40%	41%	42%
Swim outdoors	40%	37%	38%
Visit a local park, creek or beach <u>in a city or town</u>	37%	40%	45%
Watch nature shows on TV	34%	41%	45%
Visit a natural area outdoors, with lots of trees, plants, water or wildlife and few or no buildings	34%	38%	36%

Youth are split between wanting to spend time indoors and outdoors.



In general, when you have free time, do you prefer to spend it doing something outdoors or doing something indoors? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where (0) means you would prefer to spend all your time doing something indoors and ten (10) means you would prefer to spend all your time doing something outdoors. Five (5) means an even mix of the two.

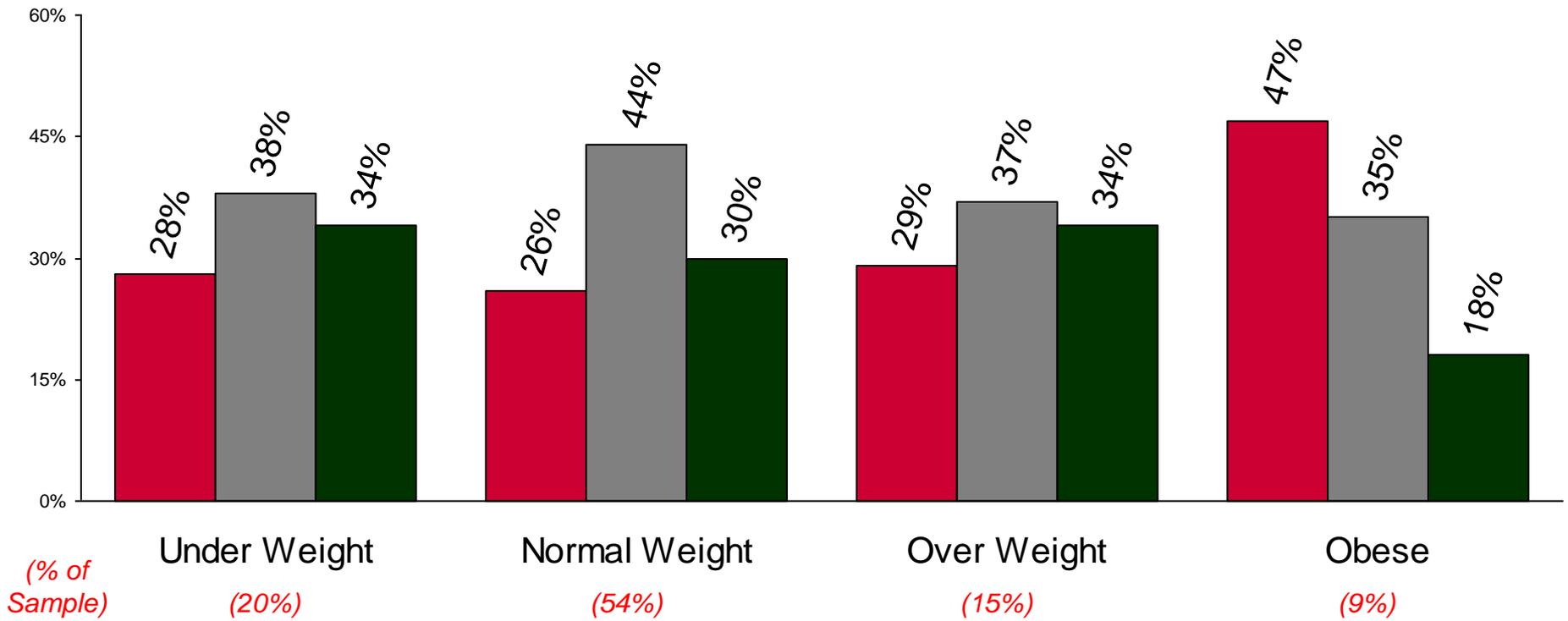


Youth who are obese have a preference for indoor activities.



By Body Mass Index

■ Prefer Indoors (Score 0-4) ■ Even Mix (Score 5) ■ Prefer Outdoors (Score 6-10)

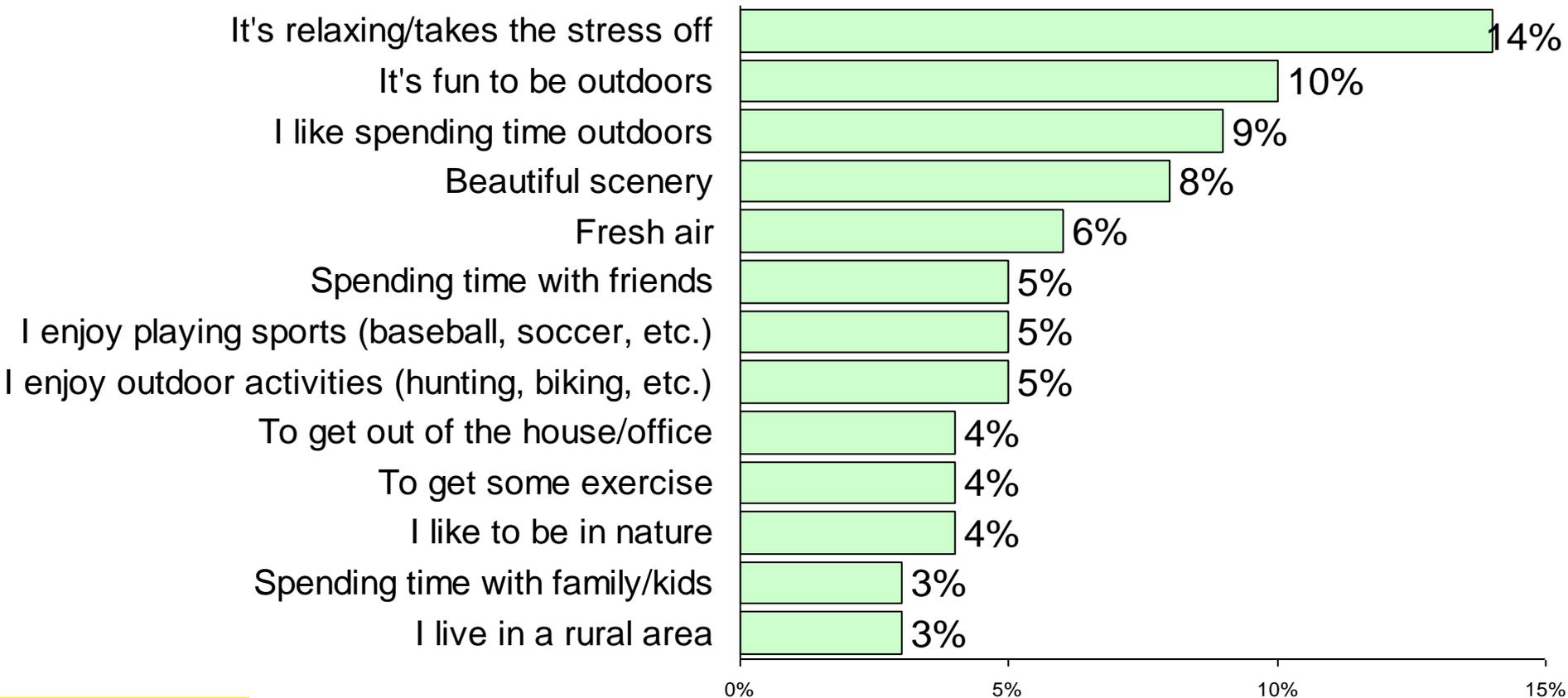


Youth name a diverse variety of reasons for spending time in nature.



You indicated a few moments ago that you participate in some activity outdoors in a natural area on at least a monthly basis. In a few words of your own, please tell us what the main reasons are why you spend time in these kinds of places:

(Open-End; Asked Only of 72% Youth Who Do Spend Time in Nature; Responses 3% and Above Shown)



Fun, friends, and health are common themes in their comments.



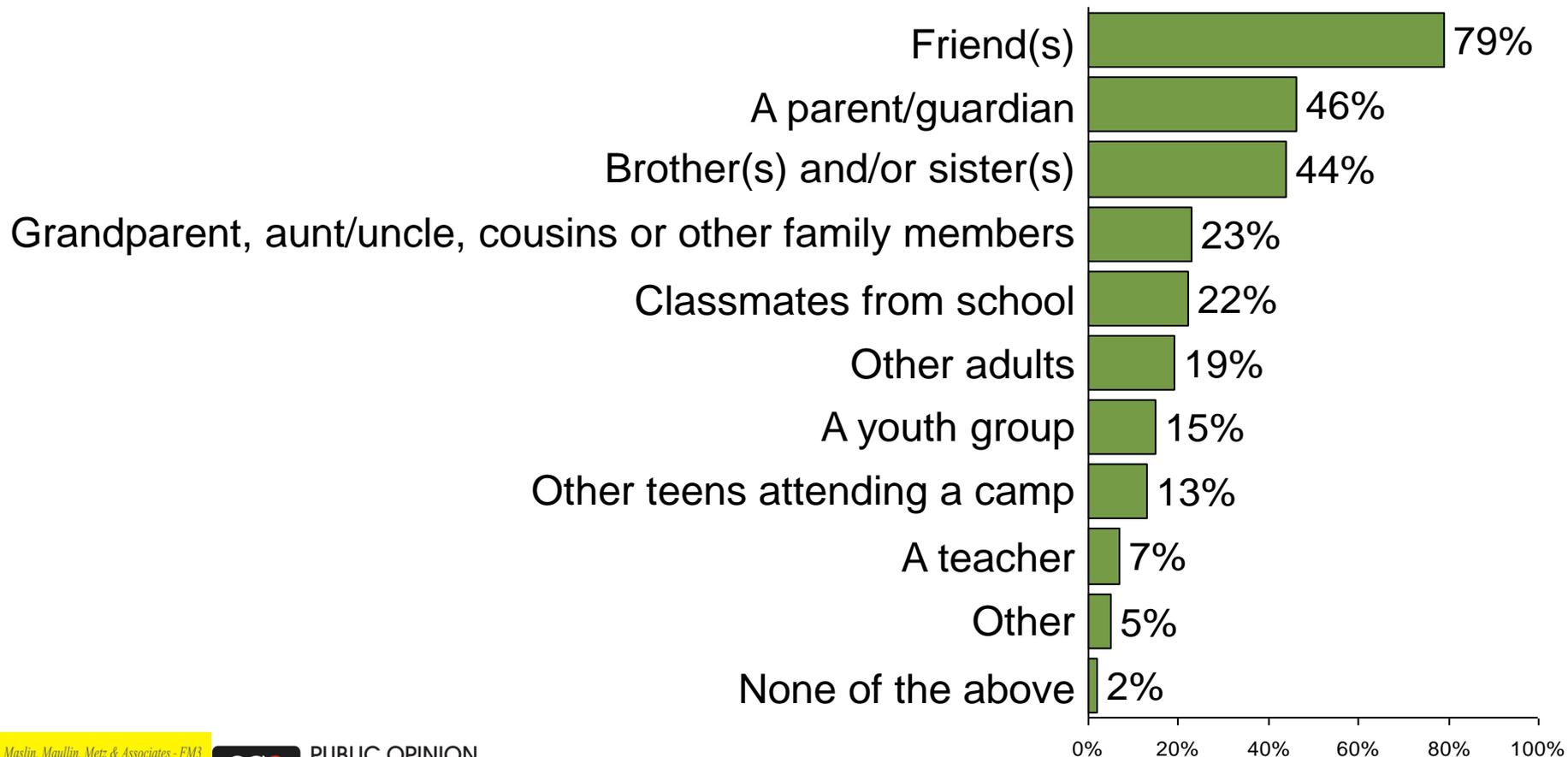
10. You indicated a few moments ago that you participate in some activity outdoors in a natural area on at least a monthly basis. In a few words of your own, please tell us what the main reasons are why you spend time in these kinds of places: (OPEN END)

When youth are in nature, it is most often with friends.



Thinking back to the last time you visited the outdoors doing any activity, who were you with?

(Asked Only of 72% of Youth Who Do Frequently Spend Time in Nature)



Most youth report having had an experience that connects them with nature – while those who have not still care about nature.

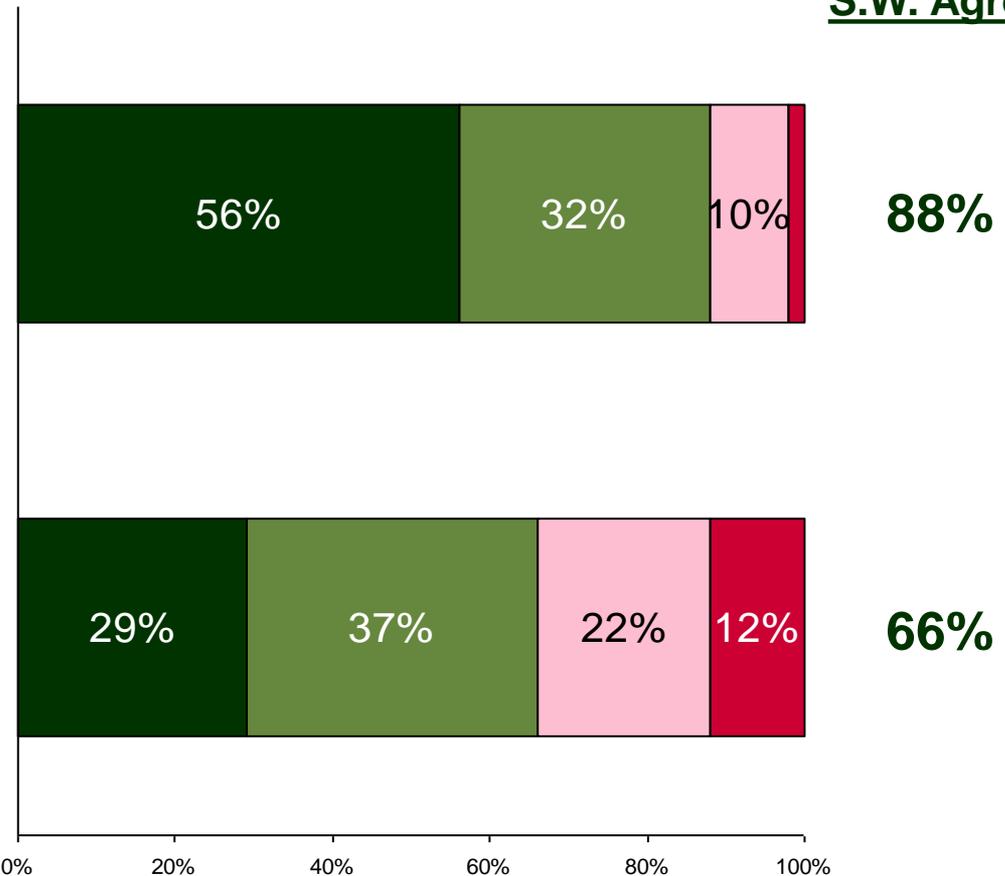


I like knowing that there are natural areas and wildlife out there, even if I never go to those places.

I have had a personal experience in nature that has made me appreciate it more.

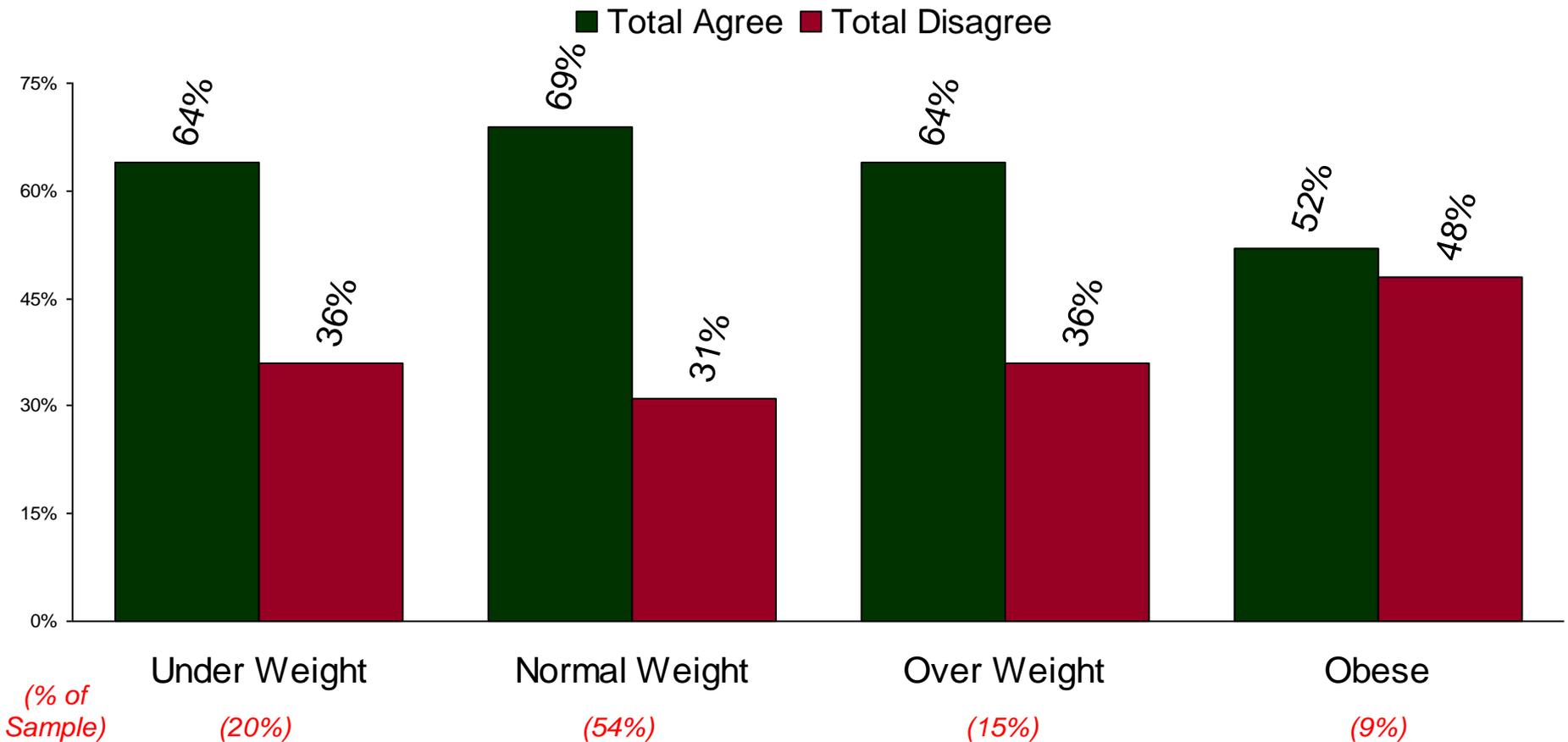
■ Strng. Agr. ■ S.W. Agr. ■ S.W. Disagr. ■ Strng. Disagr.

**Total Strng./
S.W. Agree**



Obese youth are *less* likely to have had a meaningful experience in nature.

By Body Mass Index



Regular participants in certain outdoor activities are *more* likely to say they have had a meaningful experience in nature.



Those who participate in a variety of outdoor activities on at least a weekly basis are far more likely to “strongly agree” that they have had an experience in nature that makes them appreciate it more, in particular:

- **52%** of those who visit national or state parks;
- **49%** of those who camp overnight;
- **49%** of those who hike outdoors;
- **47%** who participate in youth groups with an outdoor focus;
- **47%** of those who volunteer for environmental events; and
- **46%** of those who fish and hunt...
- ...in comparison to just 29% of American youth as a whole.



Environmental Attitudes Among American Youth

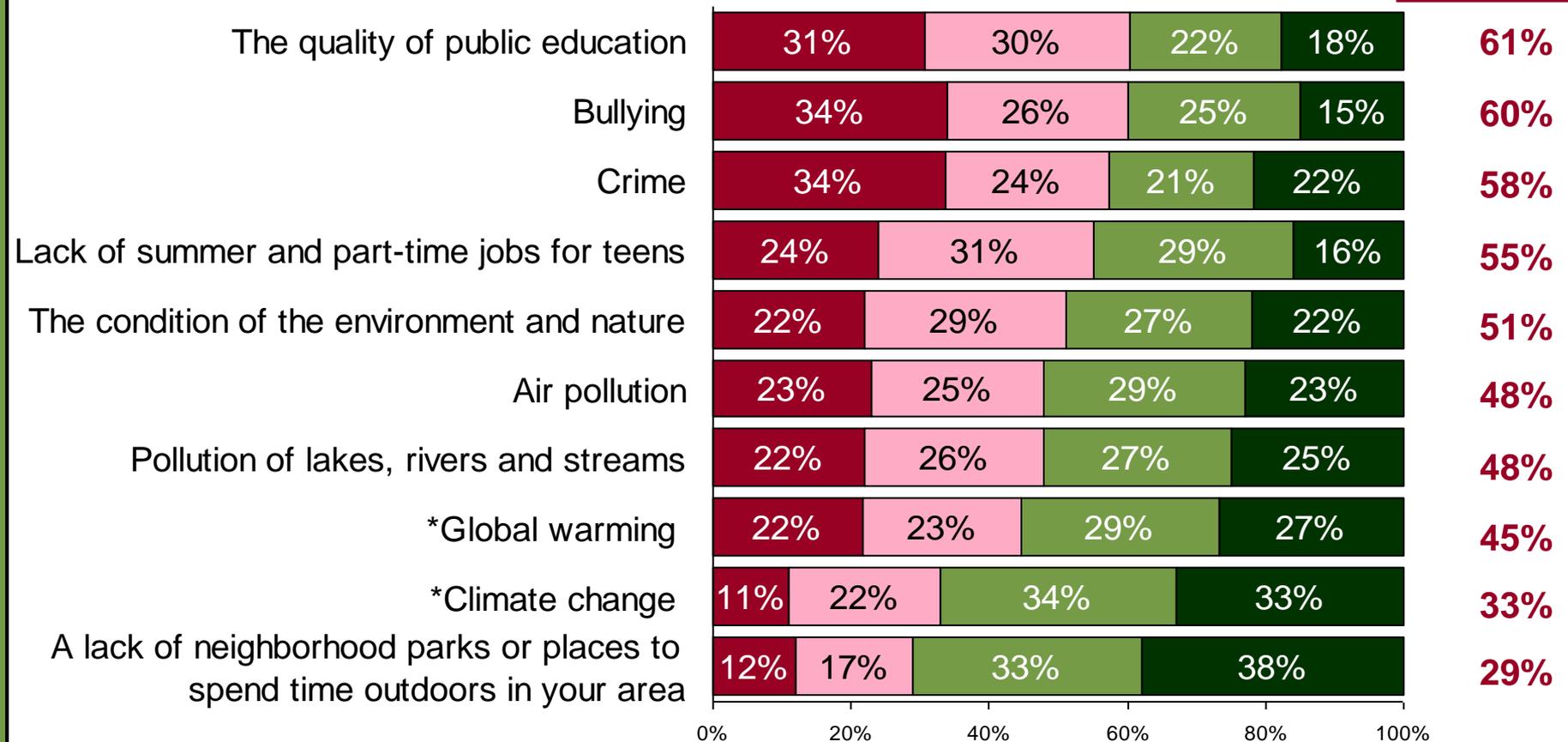
American youth are far more concerned about bullying and crime than about environmental issues.



Please indicate how serious a problem you think each of the following issues is for young people today: extremely serious, very serious, somewhat serious, or not serious.

■ Ext. Ser. ■ Very Ser. ■ S.W. Ser. ■ Not Ser./DK/NA

**Total
Ext./Very
Serious Issue**



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Urban youth and youth of color express greater concern about a number of issues.

(% Total Extremely/Very Serious Problem)



Issues	All Respondents	Teens of Color	Big City Residents
The quality of public education	61%	68%	68%
Bullying	60%	65%	61%
Crime	58%	66%	70%
Lack of summer and part-time jobs for teens	55%	62%	62%
The condition of the environment and nature	51%	60%	57%
Air pollution	48%	58%	56%
Pollution of lakes, rivers and streams	48%	52%	56%
*Global warming	45%	66%	63%
*Climate change	33%	43%	40%
A lack of neighborhood parks or places to spend time outdoors in your area	29%	33%	28%

Youth express notably more concern than adults about a lack of places for outdoor recreation.



(% at Least “Somewhat Serious”)

“A lack of neighborhood parks in your area”

“A lack of neighborhood parks or places to spend time outdoors in your area”

33%

Adults (2009)

62%

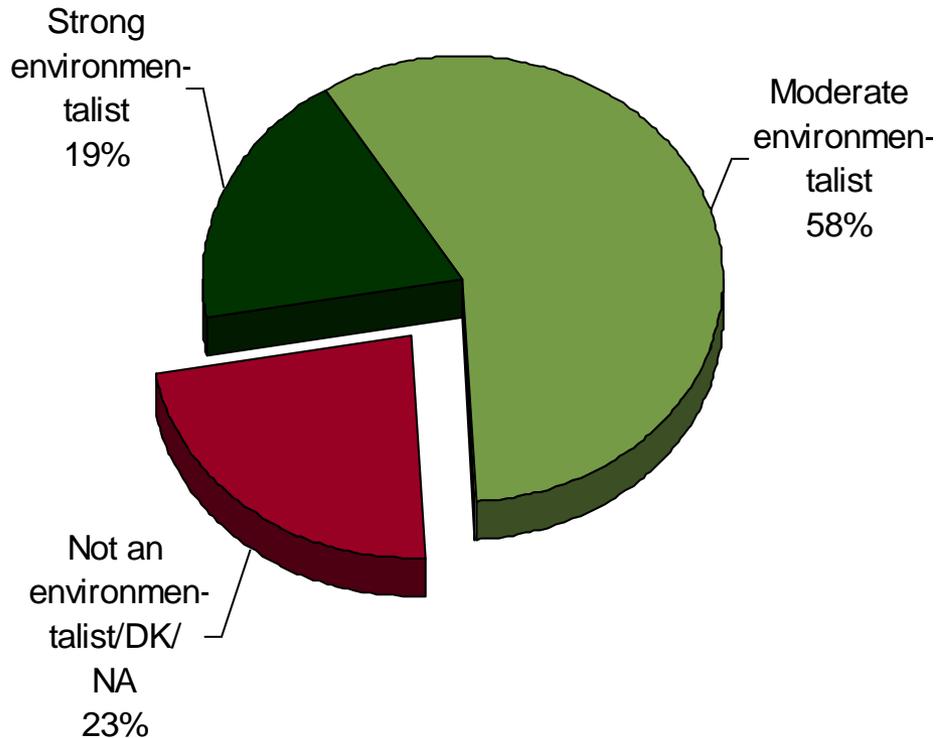
Youth (2011)

Youth are about as likely as adults to label themselves "environmentalists."



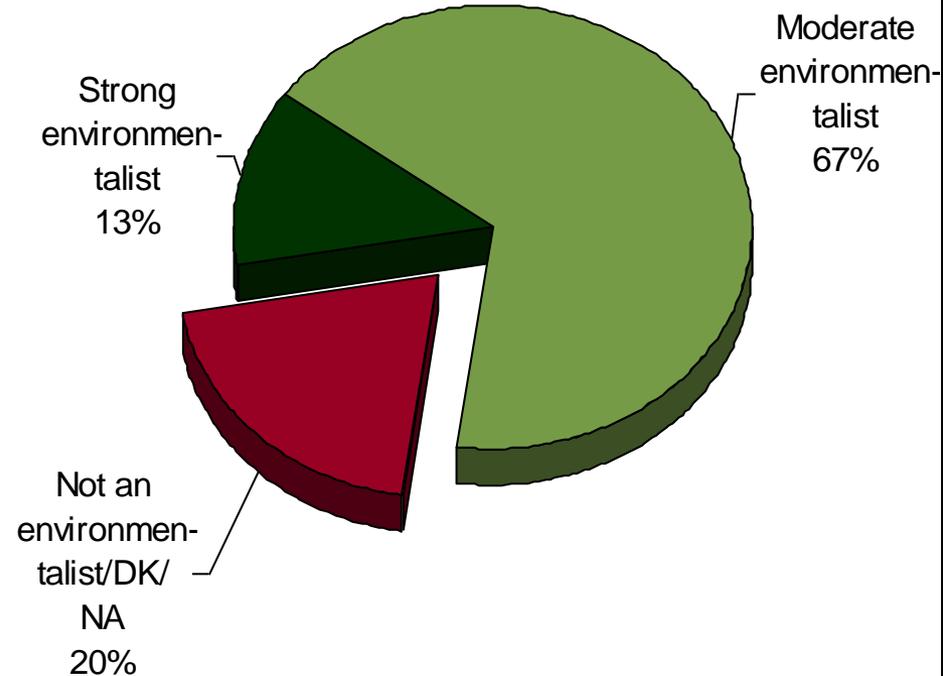
Adults (2010)

Total Environmentalist: 77%



Youth (2011)

Total Environmentalist: 80%

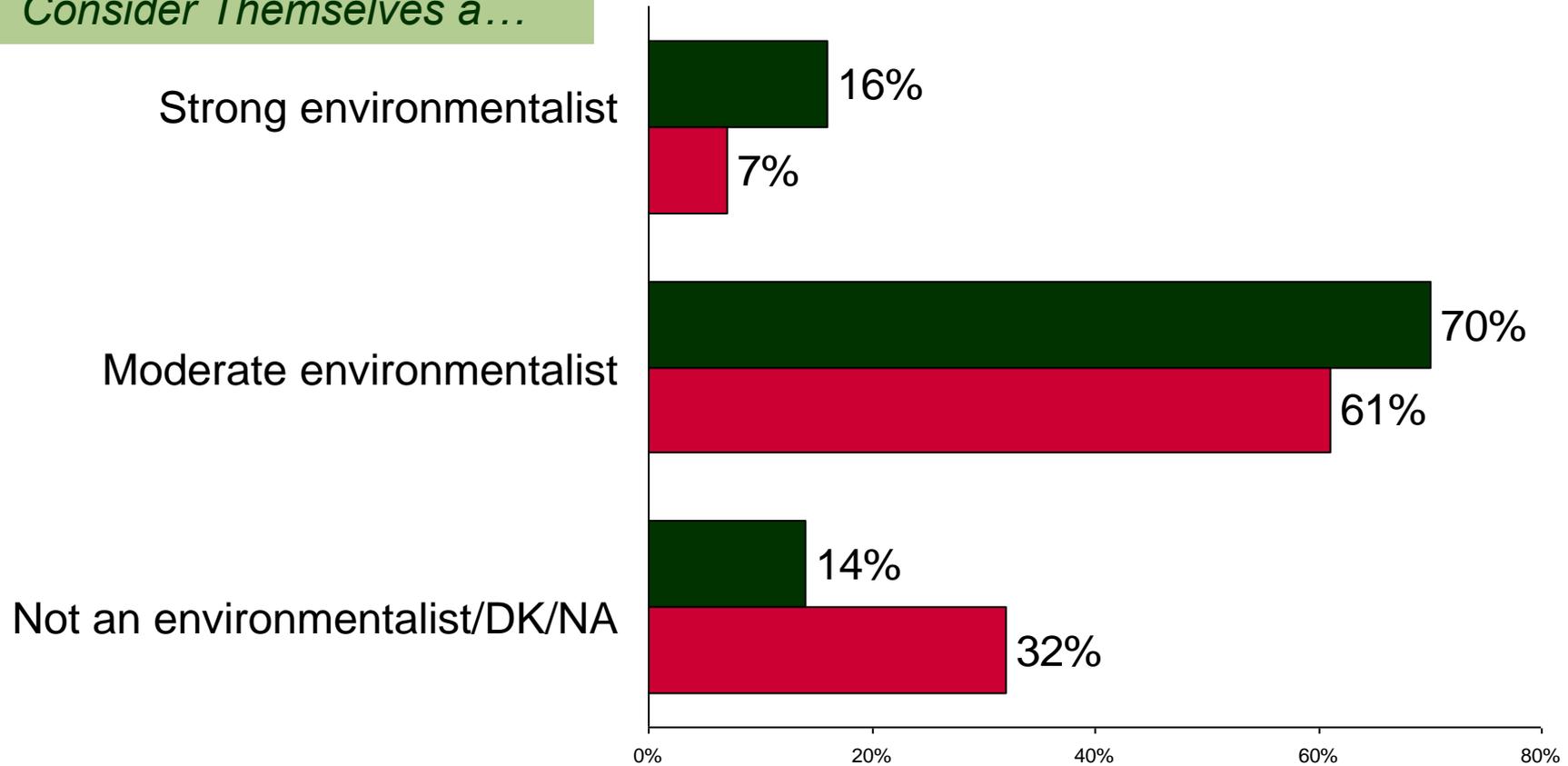


Those who have had a meaningful outdoor experience are more likely to see themselves as environmentalists.



Consider Themselves a...

■ Have Had Meaningful Experience in Nature ■ Have Not

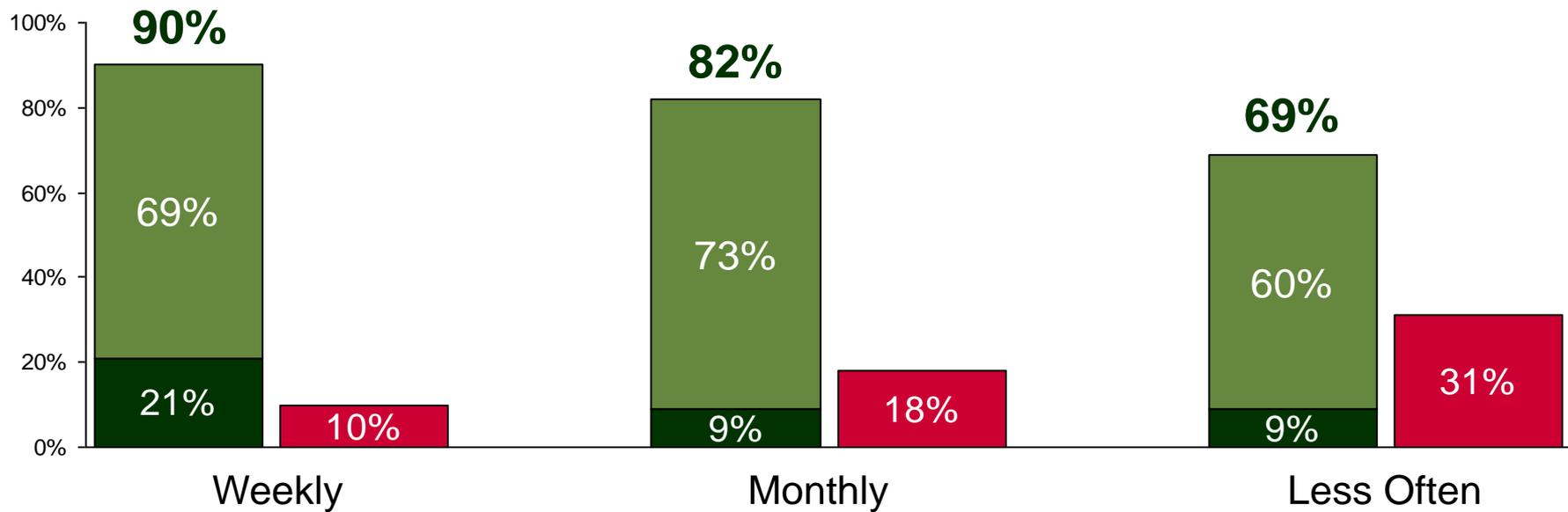


The more *time* youth spend in natural areas, the stronger their pro-environmental sentiments.



How often do you visit a natural area outdoors, with lots of trees, plants, water or wildlife and few or no buildings?

■ Strong environmentalist ■ Moderate environmentalist ■ Not an environmentalist



Youth who have had a personal experience that made them appreciate nature are...



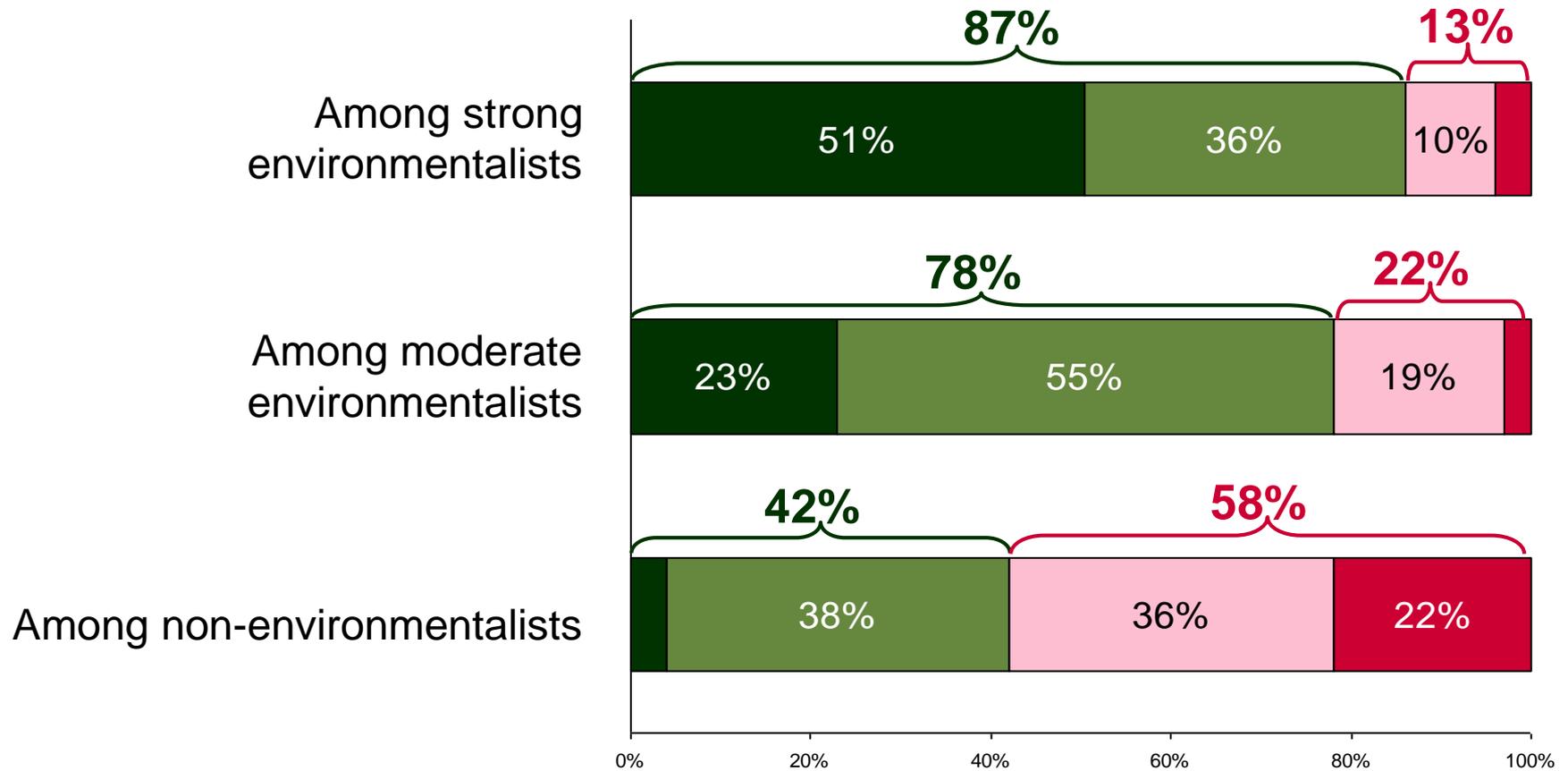
- Almost twice as likely to say they **prefer spending time outdoors**;
- Significantly more likely to **express concern** about water pollution, air pollution, global warming, and the condition of the environment;
- Ten points more likely to **agree that we can solve climate change** by acting now;
- 13 points more likely to **say environmental protection should be prioritized** over economic growth;
- More than twice as likely to **“strongly agree” that protecting the environment is “cool;”** and
- More than twice as likely to **consider themselves a “strong environmentalist.”**

Youth who identify themselves as environmentalists are more likely to say they regularly act to protect the environment.

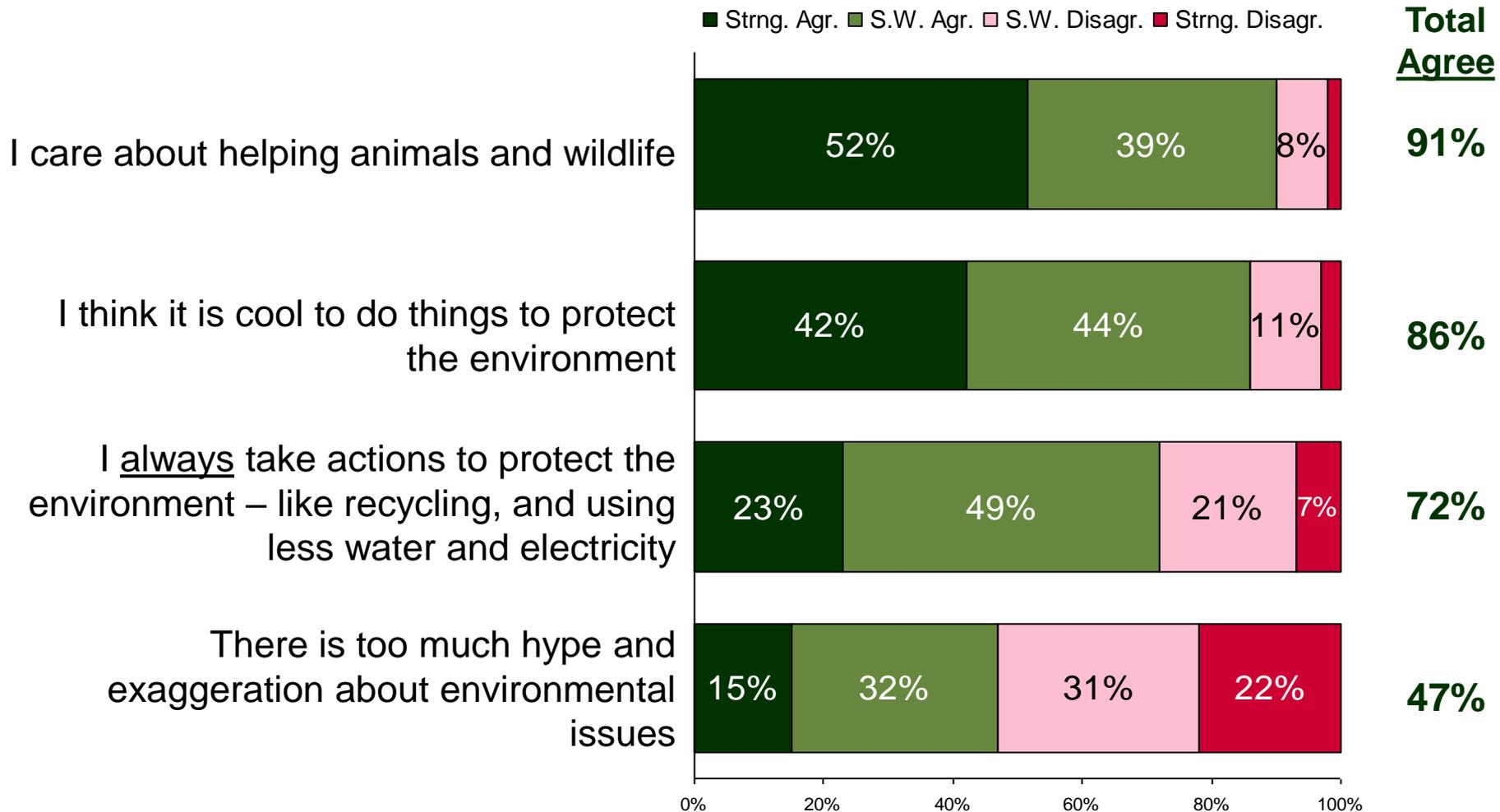


"I always take actions to protect the environment – like recycling, and using less water and electricity."

■ Strng. Agr. ■ S.W. Agr. ■ S.W. Disagr. ■ S.W./Strng. Disagr.



Youth express a strong environmental ethic, and see it as a “cool” issue – even if occasionally over-hyped.



In sharp contrast to American adults, youth prioritize environmental protection over economic growth.



With which of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree:

**Adults
(2011)**

**Youth
(2011)**



Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of slowing economic growth

36%

66%

OR



Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent

54%

34%

Unlike adults, youth see the best rationale for conserving nature as protecting it for its own sake.



Adults
(2010)

Youth
(2011)

The best reason to conserve nature is for its own sake – to leave systems of plants and wildlife undisturbed to evolve, change and grow

42%

56%

OR

The best reason to conserve nature is to preserve the benefits people can derive from it – for our economy, our health, and our enjoyment.

45%

44%

Teens of color are even more likely to feel this way – but urban youth are not.



The best reason to conserve nature is for its own sake – to leave systems of plants and wildlife undisturbed to evolve, change and grow

OR

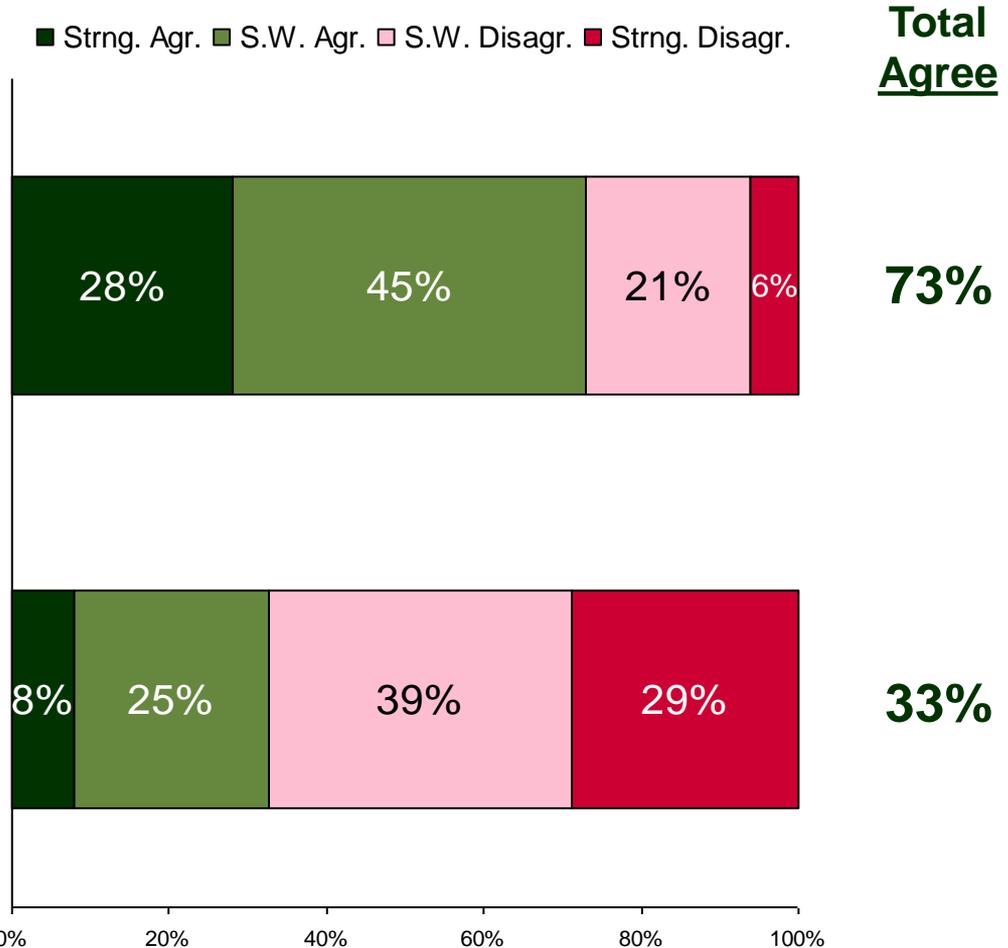
The best reason to conserve nature is to preserve the benefits people can derive from it – for our economy, our health, and our enjoyment.

	All Respondents	Teens of Color	Big City Residents
The <u>best</u> reason to conserve nature is <u>for its own sake</u> – to leave systems of plants and wildlife undisturbed to evolve, change and grow	56%	61%	52%
The <u>best</u> reason to conserve nature is <u>to preserve the benefits people can derive from it</u> – for our economy, our health, and our enjoyment.	44%	39%	48%

In thinking about solutions for environmental problems, youth have little confidence in government or in prior generations.



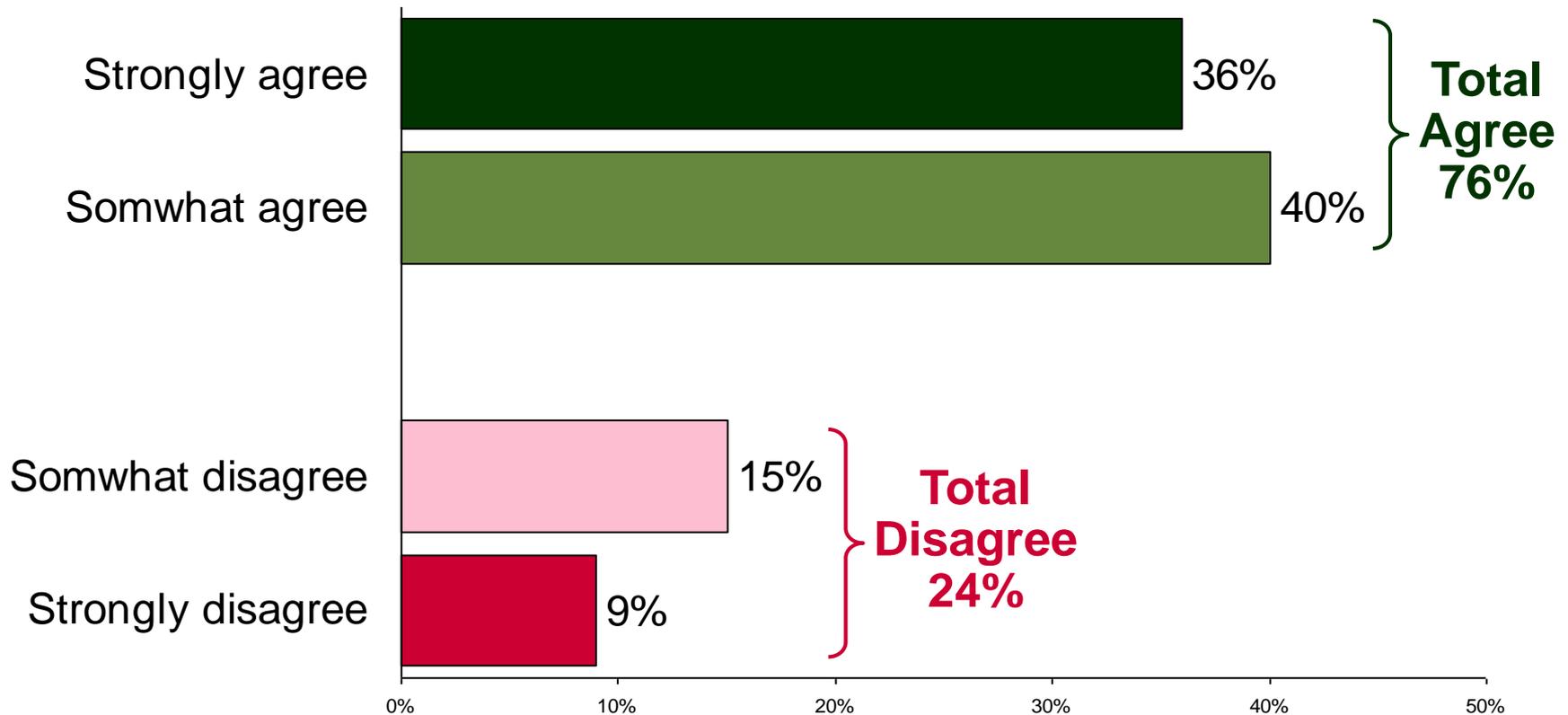
Previous generations have damaged our environment and left it to our generation to fix it



But at the same time, they are confident climate change can be addressed.



“We can solve climate change if we take action now.”





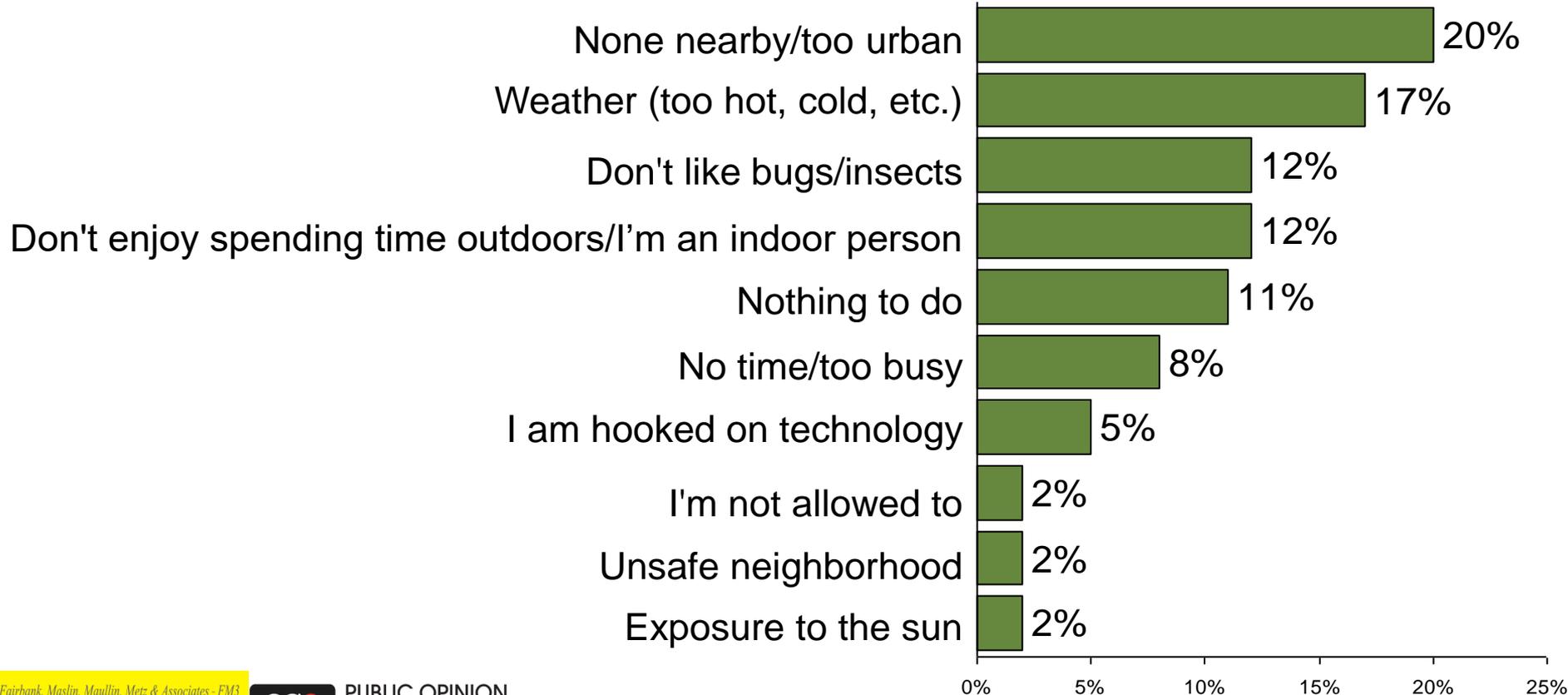
Obstacles to Connecting Youth with Nature

Convenience and discomfort come up regularly as reasons for *not* spending time in nature.



You indicated a few moments ago that you rarely spend time outdoors in a natural area. In a few words of your own, what are the main reasons you do not spend time in these kinds of natural areas?

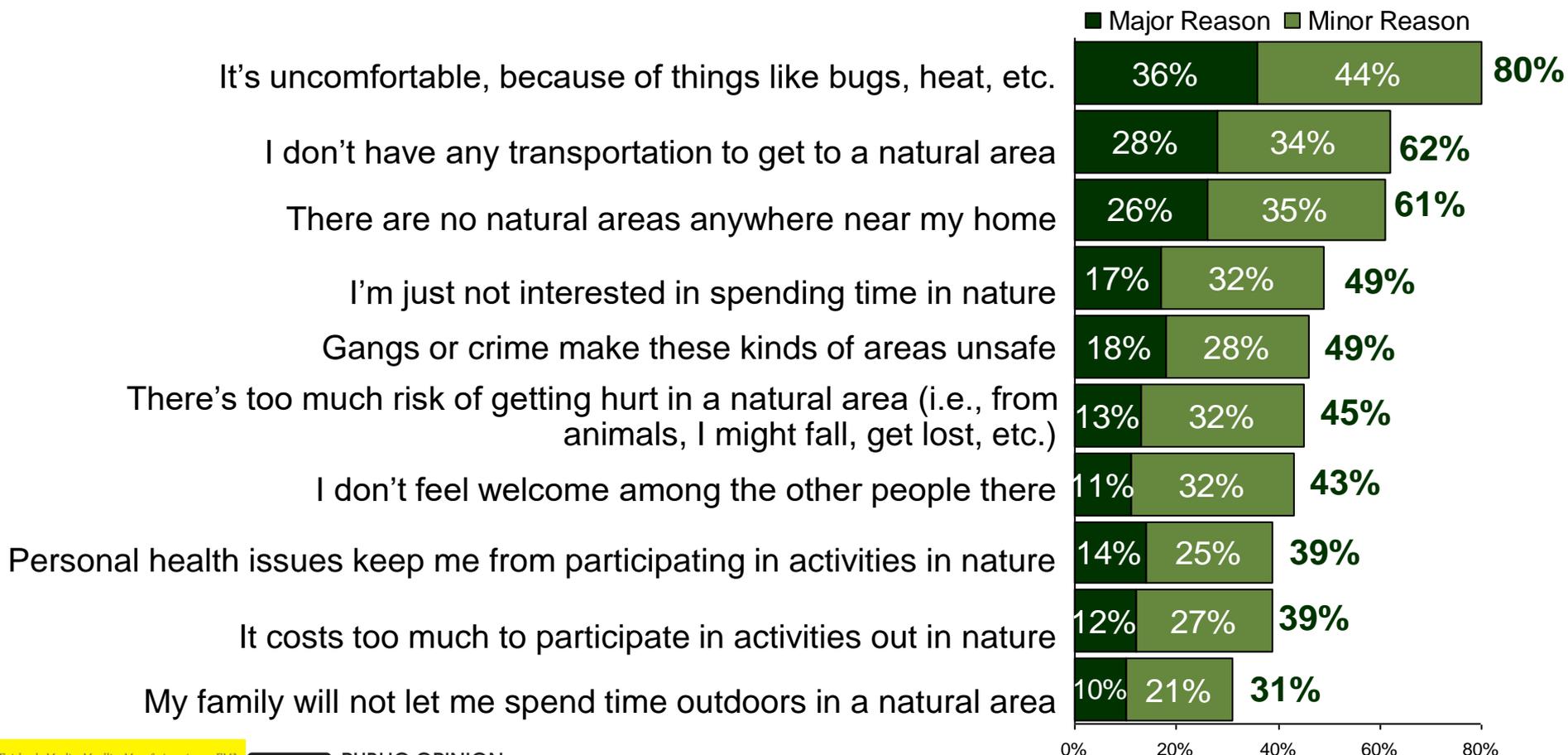
(Open-End; Asked Only of Youth Who do Not Spend Time in Nature; Responses 2% and Above Shown)



When prompted to consider obstacles, discomfort rises to the top.



The list below includes sample reasons why some youth do not spend more time outdoors in natural areas. Please indicate whether each is a major reason, minor reason, or not a reason why you, personally, do not spend more time outdoors.



0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

Certain obstacles are more prevalent for urban youth and youth of color.

(% Total Major/Minor Reason)



List of Reasons	All Respondents	Teens of Color	Big City Residents
It's uncomfortable, because of things like bugs, heat, etc.	80%	80%	82%
I don't have any transportation to get to a natural area	62%	68%	66%
There are no natural areas anywhere near my home	61%	61%	70%
I'm just not interested in spending time in nature	49%	47%	48%
Gangs or crime make these kinds of areas unsafe	46%	55%	60%
There's too much risk of getting hurt in a natural area (i.e., from animals, I might fall, get lost, etc.)	45%	55%	54%
I don't feel welcome among the other people there	43%	45%	51%
It costs too much to participate in activities out in nature	39%	46%	49%
Personal health issues keep me from participating in activities in nature	39%	44%	48%
My family will not let me spend time outdoors in a natural area	31%	40%	39%

Summary of Key Obstacles to Greater Engagement with Nature



#1 It's Not Comfortable

#2 It's Not Convenient

#3 There Are Other Things They Would Rather Do

#4 Obesity is a Barrier

Thanks for your support!



Steering Committee

Steve Hagler – Foundation for Youth Investment

Deb Bialeschki - American Camp Association

Nina Roberts - San Francisco State University

Akiima Price - New York Restoration Project

Rue Mapp - Outdoor Afro

Eugenie Bostrom - Department of the Interior / Youth in the Great Outdoors

Brother Yusuf Burgess - Children and Nature Network

Michael Conn - Girl Scouts

Eleanor Morris - The Nature Conservancy

Angelica Tassoulas - The Nature Conservancy

Hazel Wong - The Nature Conservancy

Berkeley Darr - The Nature Conservancy

Elizabeth Ward - The Nature Conservancy

Financial Supporters

Toyota USA Foundation

Foundation for Youth Investment

The Nature Conservancy



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**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

Highlight of a Partner School: The High School for Environmental Studies

- Founded in 1992 through the collaboration of the Surdna Foundation, Council on the Environment of New York City and the New York City Department of Education.
- Nation's first environmental themed High School.
- Originally designed for 500-700 students, now has nearly 1,400 students from all five boroughs. A Title I school, that serves a majority of students coming from low income families.





FRIENDS of the High School for Environmental Studies

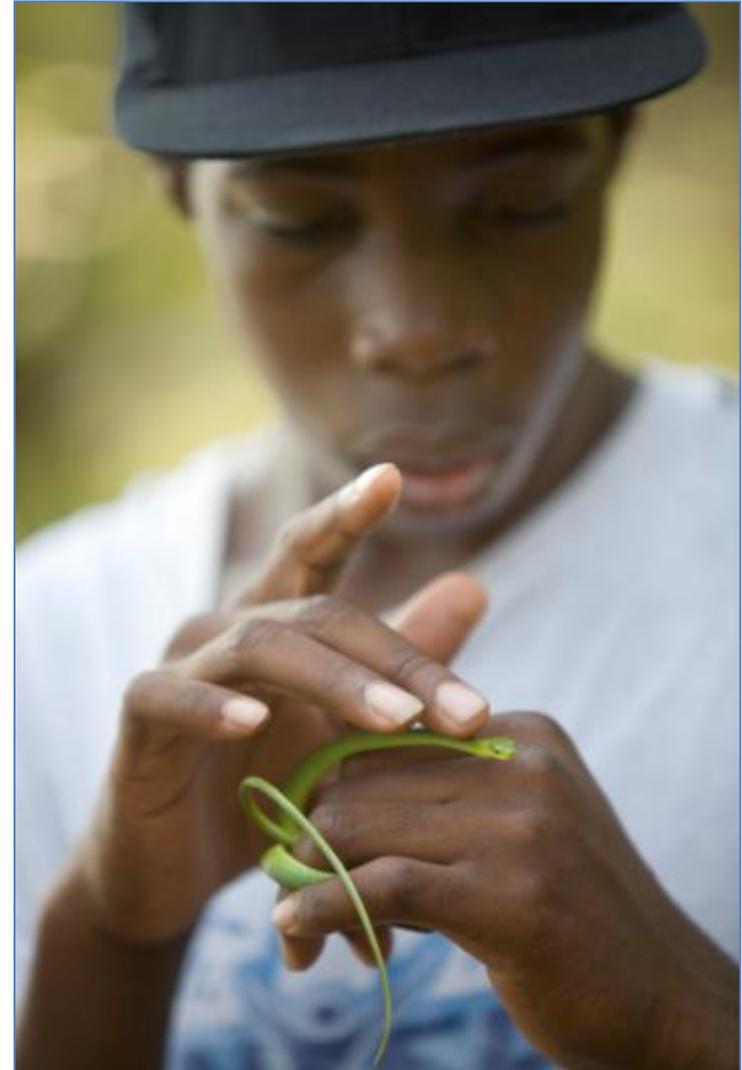
- Founded in 1992, incorporated in 1996
- Supports the work of the High School for Environmental studies with Career Development, Environmental Education and Professional Development programs.
- Screens and recommends students for LEAF Program.
- Works to connect students with environmental opportunities before and after LEAF program.





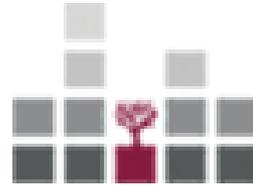
LEAF Program Model

1. A partnership between The Nature Conservancy and urban environmental high schools to combine classroom lessons with real world conservation work experience on nature preserves
2. Serves 85% students of color age 16-17;
70% eligible for free or reduced lunch
3. Expanding from 7 environmental high schools to serve 20 schools in NYC, Newark, New Haven, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Seattle and Los Angeles by 2012





FRIENDS of the High School
for Environmental Studies



ACADEMY OF
urban planning

THE URBAN ASSEMBLY
**New York
HARBOR
SCHOOL**



COMMON GROUND
HIGH SCHOOL, URBAN FARM, AND
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER



BASE
BROOKLYN ACADEMY
OF SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT



The Sound School
Regional Vocational Aquaculture Center









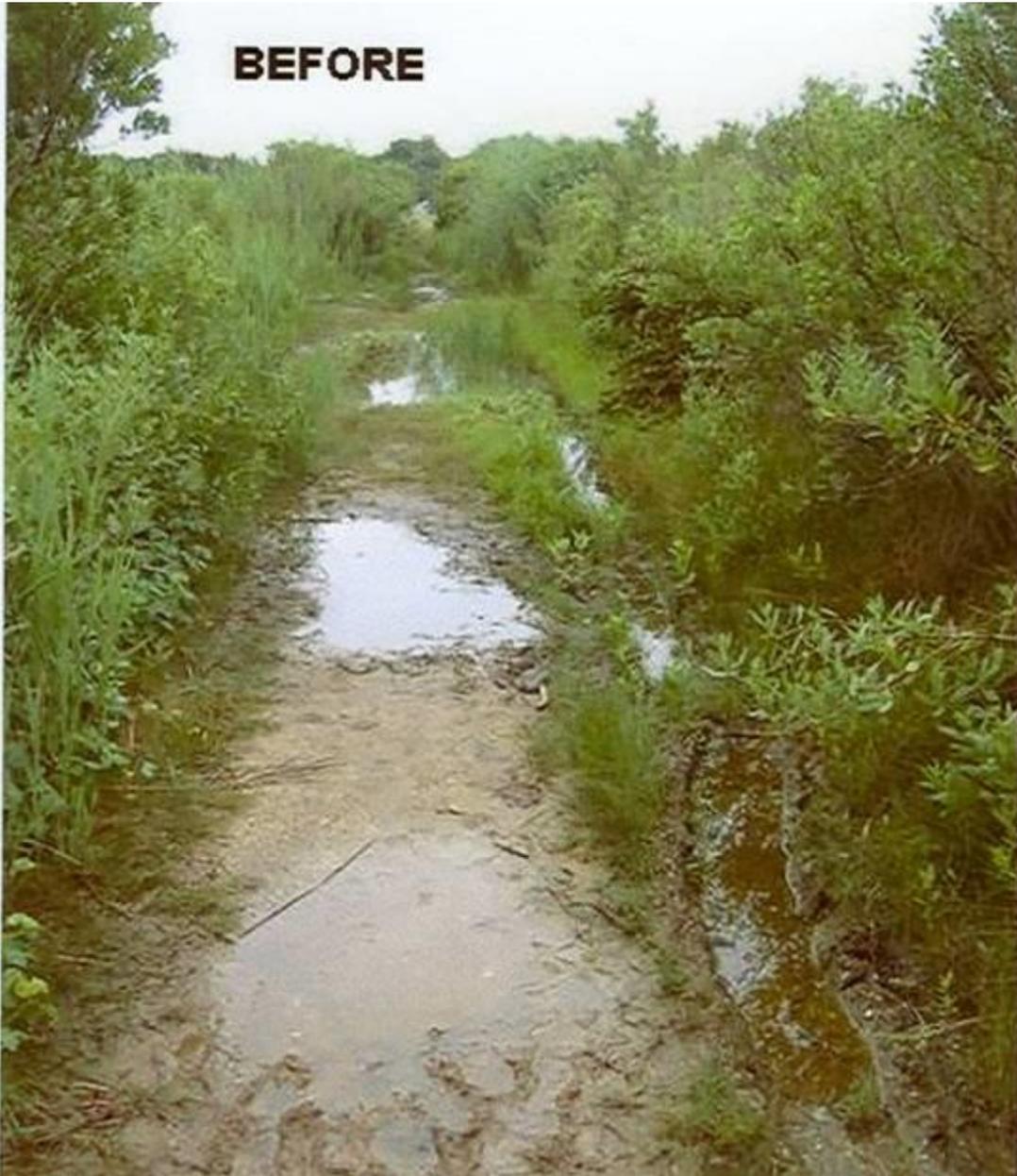








BEFORE



AFTER



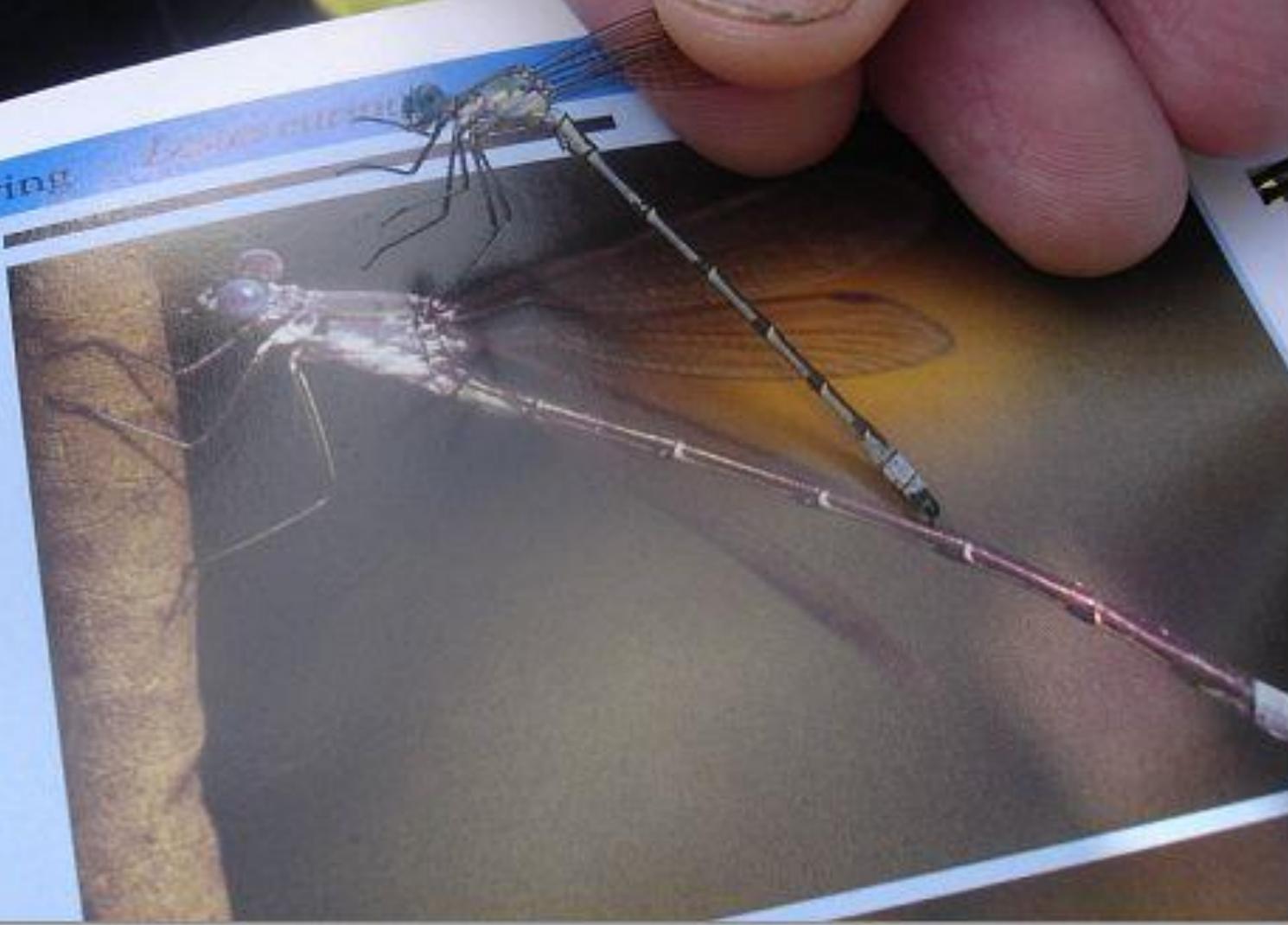






Four-winged Spreadwing

of the largest
ings with varying
of amber wash in
Male thorax dark
bluish above,
yellow sides and
diagonal lateral
t fades with age;
dark green to
bove with a pale
(S9-S10) when
eyes bright blue
typically

























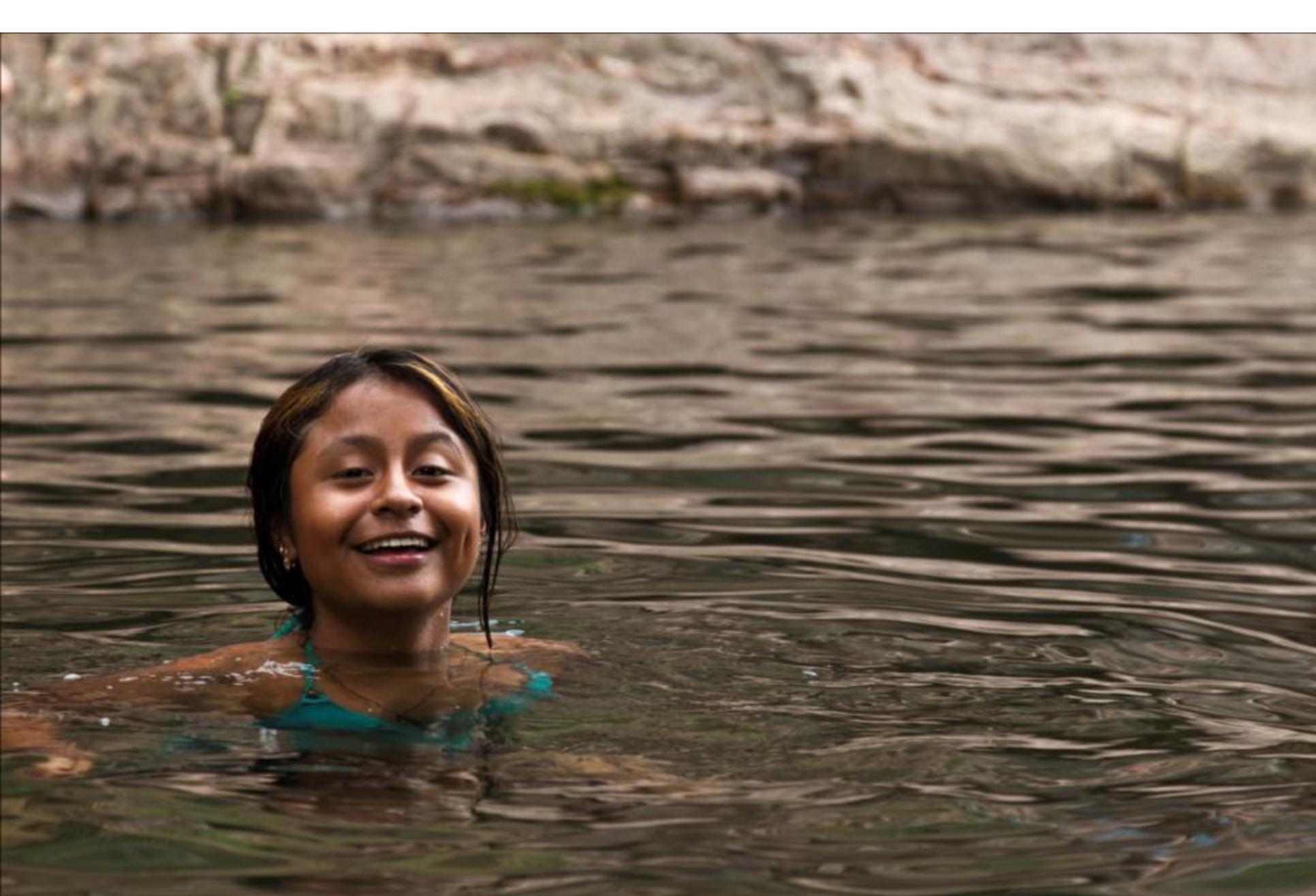
UNIVERSITY
AT ALBANY

State University of New York

Welcome to the
University at Albany













AUG 3 2005

































Since 1995:
Over 500 Students Served



Orlando Raez - 1996



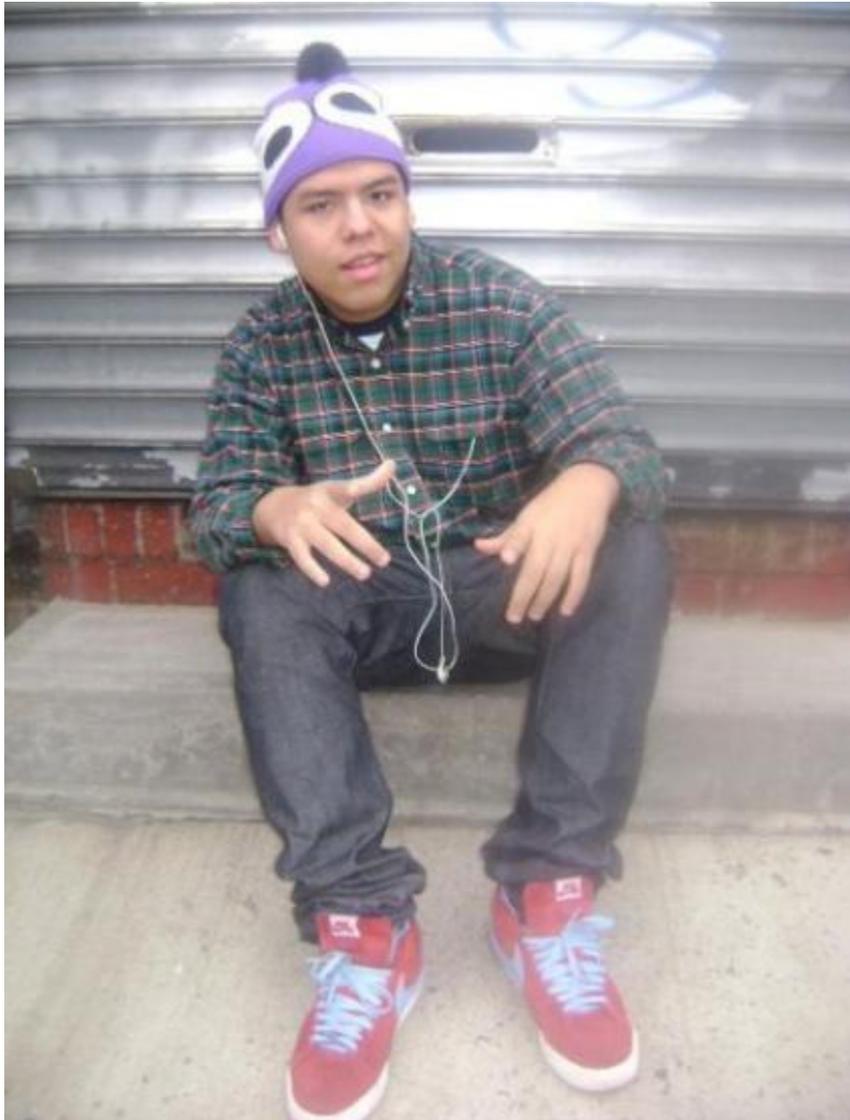
I have vivid memories of the paper mills of Maine, the giant Sequoias of California, the deserts of New Mexico, the jungles of Peru, and all the villages and cities in between. I see the connections between all these places ecologically, and understand the importance of land use and policy decisions.



Building a Pipeline of Diverse Green Leaders IT DOESN'T STOP AT HIGH SCHOOL

Successful youth programs must adhere to the fundamental principles of Positive Youth Development:

- close relations with caring adults,
- high expectations,
- engaging activities,
- opportunities to make a difference in their world, and
- **continuity of support!**



Joshua Carrera

2007 – LEAF

2008– University of Vermont, School of Natural Resources, Wildlife Biology

2009 – Diversity Internship Program, Pine Butte Ranch, Montana

2010 – Diversity Internship Program, Long Island

2011 – Study Abroad, Ecuador and Brazil



Orlando Raez

1996 – LEAF

1998 – Syracuse University, New York, Environmental Studies, GIS

2004 – Florida Atlantic University, Masters of Urban and Regional Planning

2008 – Urban Planner and GIS specialist, Hollywood, FL



Gladys Ruiz



1997 – LEAF

1999 – SUNY Long Island, Environmental Studies, College Internship with TNC

2000 – Central Park Ranger, New York

2003 – Forest Park Conservancy, Urban Educator, Portland, Oregon

2005 – Patagonia, Environmental Grants Program Manager, Portland, Oregon

2008– ConEX Featured Speaker



Princess Serrano

2007 – LEAF

2008 – Nature Conservancy Gala, Public Speaker/Interpreter

2009 – Bethany College, Communications Major

2009 – Internship, Saco River, Maine, Leave no Trace Public Outreach

2010 – Diversity Program Internship, Saco River, Maine, Leave no Trace Public Outreach



LEAF Expansion Strategy (over three years)

Create a Nationwide Network of Environmental High Schools

- the first of its kind, allowing teachers to share best practices

Provide 221 summer jobs

- for high school students working in conservation stewardship

Enrich Classroom Education with Scientific Resources

- available to member schools throughout the school year

Build the Pipeline

- through collegiate partnerships and programs



Our Alumni

49% reported LEAF influenced their academic study

34% pursued life sciences in college and 21% pursued environmental studies

79% identify as environmentalists

52% volunteer for environmental causes

33% have worked for an environmental organization

67% believe loss of natural areas is “extremely serious”

73% believe climate change is “extremely serious”



The Need

The conservation community is 90% Caucasian and over 50 years old

By 2043, people of color will represent the majority of the U.S. population

Youth are driving the racial demographic shift – 44% of youth age 18 and younger are people of Color, 20% of Baby Boomers are people of color

Students of color constitute only 11% of college graduates in natural resource/agricultural fields





Conservation Career Program The Next Phase

1. An unprecedented program to build upon LEAF's success and support program Alums in higher education / conservation career exploration
2. Includes multi-year summer work experiences with conservation organizations, career mentoring and guidance through regular workshops and retreats, and university tuition/living assistance (promotion of environmental scholarships)
3. Vision is to support a professional pipeline for underrepresented youth through college/graduate school to job placement to diversify the conservation workforce of the future



“Direct experience with nature is the most highly cited influence on environmental attitude and conservation activism”

For more information visit www.nature.org/leaf

