

# **Environmental Justice Needs Assessment for the Long Island Sound Watershed**



Photo credit: Long Island Sound Study

**Conducted for the  
Long Island Sound Study**

**By Responsive Management**

**2024**



# **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE LONG ISLAND SOUND WATERSHED**

**2024**

## **Responsive Management National Office**

Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director  
Amanda Center, Research Associate  
Madeline Duda, Research Associate  
Martin Jones, Senior Research Associate  
Tom Beppler, Senior Research Associate  
Andrea Criscione, Senior Research Associate  
Patrick Doherty, Research Associate  
Gregory L. Hughes, P.E., Research Associate  
Jeremiah Morris, Survey Center Manager  
Alison Lanier, Business Manager

P.O. Box 1828  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801-9500  
540/432-1888  
Email: [mark@responsivemanagement.com](mailto:mark@responsivemanagement.com)  
[www.responsivemanagement.com](http://www.responsivemanagement.com)

## Acknowledgments

Responsive Management would like to thank the Long Island Sound Study, including Jimena Perez-Viscasillas and Lillit Genovesi of New York Sea Grant, Deb Abibou of Connecticut Sea Grant, and Kathleen Knight of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, as well as Shahela Begum of Restore America's Estuaries for their input, support, and guidance.

In addition, Responsive Management would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their time and invaluable insights in this process.

Adesuwa Watson, Suffolk County Office of Minority Health  
Adrienne Farrar Houel, Green Team Bridgeport  
Al Krupski, Suffolk County  
Alex Rodriguez, Save the Sound  
Amani Khan, Brookhaven Town Council  
Anieto Henvill, Sovereign  
Ann Fangman, Glen Cove Community Development Agency  
Anne Campbell, Groton Public Library  
Ashley Desrosiers, United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Ben Regas, Waterfront Alliance  
Bessie Wright, United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Brenda Geer, Native American Heritage Advisory Council  
Brookhaven Asian American Advisory Council  
Butch Murray, Brookhaven Civic Association  
Carmetta Freeman, Dare to Dream Community Outreach  
Chadwick Schroeder, City of Bridgeport  
Christina Smith, Groundwork Bridgeport  
Christina Carrero, Bronx and Harlem Urban Rivers  
Cierra Patrick, City of Groton  
Clayton Potter, Town of Groton Parks and Recreation  
Concetta Gleason, Bronx Children's Museum  
Daniel Tainow, Parks Department  
Denise Aikens, Bronx Public Schools  
Denise Savageau, Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts  
Diana Nguyen, The Nature Conservancy  
Diana Williams, Environmental Leaders of Color  
Doris Johnson and Edith Pestana, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
Elise Bouthillier, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
Elizabeth Hewitt and Anil Yazici, Stony Brook University  
Elizabeth Hornstein, New York Sea Grant

## **Acknowledgments (continued)**

Elizabeth McDonald, Town of Groton  
Eric Swenson, Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee  
Evan Casper-Futterman, Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative  
Francine Gordon, Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Furhana Husani, Waterfront Alliance  
Gabriela Campos, Long Island community member and organizer  
Gabriele Guerra, Huntington Public Library  
Gillian Barr, Calvary Episcopal Church  
Jackie Narkiewiez, Huntington Public Library  
Jacqueline Gonzalez, Junta for Progressive Action  
JD Allen, WHSU, NPR Affiliate  
Jennifer O'Brien, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut  
Jhoni Ada, CT Chapter of Sierra Club  
Jim Ammerman, New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission  
Joan Cergol and Jason Zove, Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Josephine Bailey, Dare to Dream Community Outreach  
Juliemar Ortiz, Community Member and Candidate for Connecticut State Senate  
Kara Hartigan Whelan, Westchester Land Trust  
Kevin Booker, Jr., Booker Empowerment, LLC., Men of Color Hiking Group  
Khamarin Nhann, Mekong  
Larissa Graham, Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Lee Cruz, Committee on Equity and Environmental Justice for the Governor's Council on Climate Change  
Leigh Youngblood, Gather New Haven  
Lily Mleczko, Rocking the Boat  
Lynne Bonnett, Greater New Haven Green Fund  
Maggie Favretti, Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed  
Maisa Tisdale, Freeman Center  
Margaret Cozens, Connecticut Sea Grant  
Margaret Galbraith, Transition Town Port Washington  
Mark Tedesco, United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Mary Beth Mills Curran, St John's Church  
Maura Robie, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District  
Mel Campos, Boys and Girls Club of Mount Vernon  
Millie Mota and Maria Romero, Latina Sisters  
Minerva Perez, OLA of Eastern Long Island  
Monique Fitzgerald, Setalcott Nation  
Nancy Seligson, Town of Mamaroneck  
Nicole Borukhov, Nassau-Cornell Cooperative Extension Nutrition Program  
Nicole Tachiki, United States Environmental Protection Agency

## **Acknowledgments (continued)**

Pam Cook, Riverhead Public Library  
Port Jefferson Free Library  
PT Partners  
Rebecca Kassay, Port Jefferson Village  
Reggy Saint Fortcolin, Aspetuck Land Trust  
Sam Marquand, Save the Sound  
Sarah Anker, Suffolk County  
Sarah Deonarine, Manhasset Bay Protection Committee  
Sarah Powell, New York Sea Grant  
Sarah Schaefer-Brown, New York Sea Grant  
Sarah Schechter, Connecticut Sea Grant  
Shadara Jones, Suffolk County Public Health  
South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ)  
Spiro Tsirkas, Glen Cove Recreation Department  
Tiara Crosby, Suffolk County Office of Minority Health  
Tom Ardito and Adam Reilly, Restore America's Estuaries  
Troy Johnson, Mount Vernon Democratic City Committee  
Wanda Salaman, Mothers on the Move  
Xóchitl García, Consultant, Environmental Justice Advocate, and Spanish Translator  
Yaprak Onat, Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People of color, indigenous people, low-income individuals and families, those who experience major health issues and inequities, elderly individuals, children, non-English speaking people, immigrants and migrants, and other disadvantaged groups experience the most severe impacts of climate change, industry, and pollution.<sup>i</sup> Many of these groups are also considered the least involved in environmental decision-making, even though many decisions will disproportionately affect them.<sup>ii</sup> In efforts to counter this long-standing trend, many natural resource and environmental organizations are building environmental justice into their programming and goals.<sup>iii</sup> Environmental justice initiatives and programming operate under the understanding that the environment, health, ecology, and social equity are all inextricably linked.<sup>iv</sup>

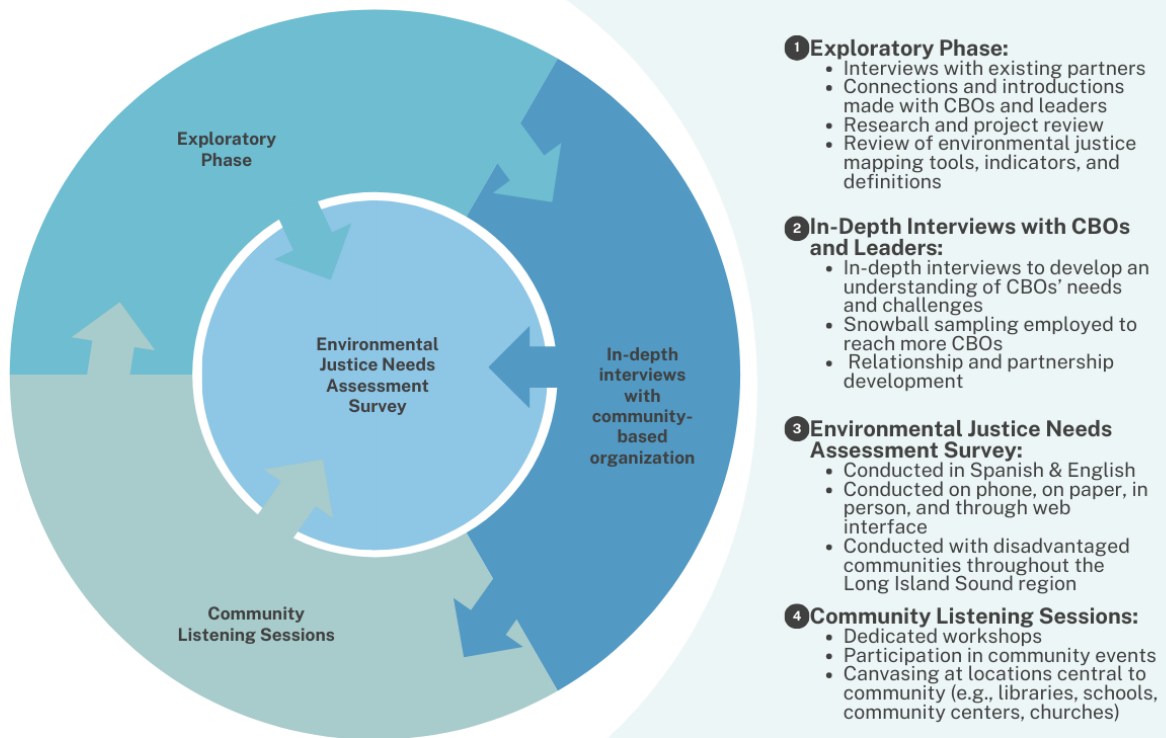
The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”<sup>v</sup> Quite simply, environmental justice refers to efforts to ensure that all people have the right to environmental protections and benefits. The movement seeks to ameliorate situations where marginalized communities are disproportionately affected, negatively, by land uses that are environmentally damaging, such as industrial uses and hazardous waste disposal.

This project was conducted for the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) to facilitate relationship- and connection-building between the LISS partners and community-based organizations (hereinafter referred to as CBOs) and leaders, and to determine the environmental justice-related needs of disadvantaged communities in the New York and Connecticut portions of the Long Island Sound watershed. The project was also undertaken to inform future environmental management programming of the LISS national estuary program and to improve representation of minority and underserved communities in local decision-making to meet the needs of these stakeholders.<sup>vi</sup> This project was conducted with in-depth collaboration and involvement from the LISS partners to ensure that connections made and lessons learned during this process will remain long after the completion of the needs assessment.

There were several components of this project. These components are first listed below and are followed by a visual illustration of the process.

- 1) An exploratory phase (shown in Appendix A)
- 2) A series of personal interviews with CBOs and leaders in disadvantaged communities
- 3) A needs assessment survey conducted with members of disadvantaged communities in the Sound (because some non-disadvantaged community members participated in surveys at community listening sessions, their responses are included in region-wide graphs for comparison with disadvantaged respondents)
- 4) A series of community listening sessions and other forms of direct in-person community outreach

## EJ Needs Assessment Development Process



Each component of the project informed the direction and development of the component that followed. For example, the findings from the exploratory phase were used, in collaboration with the LISS team, to create the discussion guide for the in-depth interviews with CBOs and community leaders, and the findings from the in-depth interviews were used, again, in collaboration with the LISS team, to create the needs assessment survey. The community listening sessions took place over the course of a large portion of the project, and therefore feedback from community listening sessions also informed the development of the environmental justice needs assessment survey.

Throughout the report, findings and lessons learned related to different components of the project will be discussed in different ways, including based on the mode or method of data collection and based on region, state, or community.

In this executive summary, information that helped develop an early understanding of the Long Island Sound region and findings from the needs assessment that were consistent throughout the Long Island Sound region are presented. The information and list of findings presented here should be considered top-level as they relate to shared needs and challenges across larger portions of the region or the entire Long Island Sound region. In other sections of the report, community-specific findings, needs, challenges, and lessons will be presented. While there is overlap of needs and challenges throughout the region and it is important to understand the implications of shared challenges and needs, an extremely important overall finding from the needs assessment process is that each community is unique in its needs and challenges. In

order to have a full understanding of needs and challenges on both a broad and specific scale, all findings presented in this report should be considered.

## **RESULTS FROM THE EXPLORATORY PHASE: DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND REGION OVERALL**

An early component of this project included an exploratory phase, in which the project team focused on developing an understanding of the region overall and specifically of disadvantaged communities and CBOs around Long Island Sound. Included in this phase of the project were an evaluation and review of previous social science findings and needs assessments conducted in the Long Island Sound region; an analysis of the demographics of the region, and environmental justice mapping tools, definitions, and indicators of disadvantaged communities; a review of previous surveys conducted by Responsive Management about outdoor recreation needs and opinions among minority groups; and a series of interviews with the LISS's current contacts, experts and professionals in the field, individuals and groups who have experience working closely with disadvantaged communities and CBOs, and those conducting concurrent efforts with disadvantaged communities.

Many of the findings from this primary phase of the project will be used throughout the report to support the findings of the needs assessment. Some of these findings are presented here to establish an understanding of the region.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT RESIDENTS OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND REGION**

- The region is densely populated with 8 million residents directly within the watershed and 23.8 million people living within 50 miles of the shore.
- The population has seen an increase since the COVID 19 pandemic.
- There are many older residents, with some communities ranking in the 95 to 100 percentiles when compared to the United States as a whole.
- There are many minority groups within the region.
- There are many non-English speaking residents in the region.
- The region contains some of the most disadvantaged communities in the United States.
- There are many older housing structures and industrial sites along the Sound.
- There are wealth disparities throughout the region, with communities representing some of the wealthiest in the country and others living below the poverty line.

Numerous sources report high rates of non-English speakers, foreign-born residents, and minority groups in the Long Island Sound region that have surpassed national rates. In an effort to better understand which groups can be found throughout the region, and in turn potentially develop future materials and programming based on such information, the project team researched which demographics could be found in different areas, as well as which languages are being spoken throughout the region.

The following graphics illustrate some of the groups that can be found in the region, as well as some of the languages spoken in different locations. Data from numerous sources, including the 2020 United States Census, reports and publications from Yale and Stony Brook Universities, the Immigration Research Initiative, the Urban Institute, and state and city



governments, were combined to develop these graphics. Note that in addition to the information presented below, interviews with partners from the region (and later with CBOs) further yielded information about the groups and languages that can be seen in the Long Island Sound region.

**Demographic Characteristics of Regions and Cities**

**New York City**

The Bronx: 44% Black, 56.6% Hispanic, 34% foreign-born residents mostly from Mexico, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, in addition to West Africa (Nigeria)  
Queens: 20% Black, 28.2% Hispanic, 27.9% Asian  
47% foreign-born residents mostly from Mexico, China, Jamaica, Ecuador, Haiti

**Westchester County**

Significantly higher percentages of Black residents (17% throughout county with some cities at 62%) and Hispanic residents (with over 26% in the county)  
Largest immigrant group from Latin America, (Mexico, Guatemala, and Ecuador), with others from China and Jamaica  
Up to 27% foreign-born residents

**Long Island**

Brookhaven: 16.7% Hispanic  
Huntington Station: 31.9% Hispanic  
21% of economic output from immigrants, but 48% of Hispanic men and 35% Hispanic Women in Long Island make more than what is considered low wage in the US  
16% Foreign Born in Suffolk County  
22.8% foreign born in Nassau County

**Eastern Connecticut**

Significantly higher percentages of Hispanic and Black residents (30% Hispanic in some cities and up to 20% Black)  
Large number of Chinese and Haitian immigrants

**Western Connecticut**

Over 7% Asian in some communities  
Up to 30% Black and nearly 40% Hispanic in some cities  
23% foreign-born residents in the region  
More than 60 languages spoken in New Haven City Schools  
Large immigrant populations from Dominican Republic, Poland, India, Jamaica, Haiti

**Central Connecticut**

Nearly 50% Hispanic in some cities  
Nearly 40% Black in areas  
21% foreign-born residents  
Most common countries of origin are India, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Poland, Italy, and Ecuador

**Languages Spoken in Regions and Cities**

<p><b>New York City</b>                  Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, Russian, and French Creole                  The Bronx: Bengali, Kru, Igbo, and Yoruba                  Queens: Large group of Mandarin speakers</p>	<p><b>Westchester County</b>                  Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, and Jamaican Patois</p>
<p><b>Long Island</b>                  Latin American Spanish                  Suffolk County: French Creole, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese                  Nassau County: Mandarin, Italian, Persian (Farsi), Korean, Hatian Creole</p>	<p><b>Eastern Connecticut</b>                  Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, French Creole, Polish</p>
<p><b>Western Connecticut</b>                  Latin American Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish                  Significant numbers of Hindi speakers, Jamaican Patois, and French Creole                  New Haven has a significant number of Mandarin speakers</p>	<p><b>Central Connecticut</b>                  Latin American Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish                  Also significant numbers of Hindi speakers, Jamaican Patois, French Creole, and Italian</p>

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND WATERSHED BASED ON PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE REGION**

The project team reviewed social science research and other similar projects that have been conducted in the region (including the 2022 National Waterways Literacy Survey, the 2006 Public Perceptions of Long Island Sound Watershed Residents, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Long Island Sound Future’s Fund, and information collected during an informal needs assessment conducted by The Nature Conservancy) to begin to understand public perceptions about the watershed. Some of the primary perceptions that related to the efforts of the needs assessment are shown below.

- Overall, New York and Connecticut residents who reside further away from the Sound are more likely to think the Sound has poor water quality when compared to those who live closer to the Sound.
- New York and Connecticut residents who reside further from the Sound also more often think the Sound is not a safe place for recreation.
- Residents in New York and Connecticut often think fish caught in the Sound are unsafe for consumption.

- In general, some findings suggest that those who live closer to the Sound, recreate in the Sound more often, and practice more positive environmental behaviors (not washing cars in their driveways, not using pesticides on lawns, not emptying pet waste outside) rate the quality of the water and fish higher than those who live further from the Sound.
- Knowledge of the Sound is lower in minority groups when compared to the population as a whole.
- Disadvantaged groups seem to be more concerned with water quality, water pollution, health, and safety than non-disadvantaged groups.

### **ISSUES RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT IN COMMUNITIES NEAR THE LONG ISLAND SOUND**

The project team reviewed information about the environmental issues in communities near the Long Island Sound. Sources reviewed to better understand environmental issues included the Audubon Atlantic Flyway's *Conservation History of Long Island Sound*, information from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, The Department of Energy, the University of Connecticut, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, the New York Department of State, and the United States Census Bureau. Later in the report, more environmental issues specific to regions and communities will be discussed; below are some of the environmental issues that impact the region as a whole.

- Sea level rise and coastal flooding are major issues in the area.
- Stormwater management is an issue for many due to increasingly severe weather and storms.
- Coastal erosion and impacts from development cause issues for some communities around the Sound.
- Wildlife issues in the region include habitat loss and degradation, shifting seasons and species, tree loss, and invasive species.

## **FINDINGS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT: COMMUNITY-BASED FINDINGS THROUGHOUT THE LONG ISLAND SOUND REGION**

Based on all phases of the project, including findings from the exploratory phase, as well as information obtained during the in-depth interviews with CBOs, the survey with community members, and the community listening sessions, members of the project team developed the following list of Long Island Sound region-wide findings. Later in the report, these findings will be discussed further, and will be accompanied by state-wide and community-specific findings.

### **FINDINGS ABOUT REACHING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES**

- **Broad Community Finding 1: In order to be engaged and be included in events, programs, and conversations, many overburdened community members need flexibility in timing, location, and method of participation.**

Many overburdened community members have competing priorities and did not have much time or capacity to participate in any aspect of the needs assessment. Some community members indicated they do not have much extra time or capacity to participate in surveys, meetings, or other forms of engagement. Many community members stressed the urgency of competing priorities to meet basic needs and noted that not only is attending meetings often not feasible for them, but the Long Island Sound and access to natural resources are not top-of-mind concerns. Showing up at designated places and times can be very difficult for community members with competing priorities and limited transportation. Conversely, the people who tend to show up at community meetings are often already involved, have a lot of passion about the subject, and have the necessary time, capacity, and resources to maintain engagement. Among those who attended community listening sessions and participated in the survey, some indicated that their primary reason for participating was the financial incentive offered to participants.
- **Broad Community Finding 2: As with other stages of the assessment, the survey found that respondents often had needs associated with social and infrastructure priorities rather than with the environment.**

With more than 50% of disadvantaged respondents selecting them in the survey, the social or infrastructural issues respondents would like to see addressed in their communities include lower food costs, more affordable housing, more local jobs, and greater access to healthy food. It is worth noting that the environmental-based issue that rated the highest was cleaning up creeks, waterways, and natural paths (selected by 33% of disadvantaged respondents).
- **Broad Community Finding 3: Communities want events and activities that are relevant and meaningful to their specific community.**

Some community members questioned the planning of events that taught community members to fish when there are fish advisories, while others were very interested in safe fishing practices and learning to fish. Any planned events should be relevant and meaningful to the community in which they are planned. Some participants specifically recommended that activities and educational events should be connected to improving

access and connecting to policy, and some suggested that events should be the start of something that participants can continue on their own.

## FINDINGS ABOUT ACCESS

- **Broad Community Finding 4: Community members need easily accessible and free spaces where they can enjoy nature.**

Many people in different communities expressed concerns about expenses associated with outdoor recreation. Community members want to spend time in nature and use the Long Island Sound, as reflected in responses to the needs assessment survey and conversations with community members. Use of the Sound and access to nature must be easy and provide free paths to access.

- **Broad Community Finding 5: According to disadvantaged needs assessment survey respondents, there is a clear desire for more clean and safe outdoor spaces in which people can recreate.**

With more than 40% of disadvantaged respondents selecting them in the survey, the environmental changes most people would like to see are less trash and illegal dumping; better water quality in general; more natural places with water, trees, plants, and parks; more outdoor programs and opportunities to get outside; and better quality of surrounding waterways for fishing, swimming, and other recreation.

- **Broad Community Finding 6: Primary issues with access that community members feel should be addressed throughout the region are transportation challenges, trash and debris buildup on beaches, costs associated with access, and a lack of signage and information that outlines public access locations.**

Access was cited by many groups in different communities as a major barrier to using the Sound. Issues with debris and trash buildup, high costs associated with parking and travel, lack of available public transportation or accessible routes, access restricted to residents or private landowners in certain areas, and lack of parking were often shared as barriers related to accessing the water.

- **Broad Community Finding 7: Some communities feel that measures should be taken to increase feelings of safety or belonging in certain outdoor spaces.**

Some participants of color indicated direct issues with racism and not feeling welcome in more affluent areas. In some cases, this concern was based on limited access due to private land ownership. Other participants indicated that this feeling was thought to be associated with historic trends to exclude people of color from outdoor spaces.

- **Broad Community Finding 8: Survey data confirm that there is a need to increase access specifically for disadvantaged communities.**

A much larger percentage of non-disadvantaged respondents have used the Sound, and used it with greater frequency, when compared to disadvantaged respondents. These data confirm many of the comments made during the community listening sessions and in-depth interviews with CBOs.

## FINDINGS ABOUT INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

- **Broad Community Finding 9: Some community members believe that education and information materials should focus on the connections between social and infrastructure challenges and the environment.**

Many participants highlighted the connections between environmental issues, such as pollution, and social issues, such as community health. Others highlighted the connections between air pollution and water pollution and the health of the Sound. Many CBOs encouraged explicitly making these connections to engage and bridge gaps with communities that might be focused on social issues and for whom the Sound might not be top of mind.

- **Broad Community Finding 10: Building on the previous need, many CBOs and community members feel that their communities could benefit from more information and education about the environment and nature, in general.**

Many CBOs noted that there is a lack of environmental and nature-based education in their communities. Some argue that their communities would be far more likely to remain engaged if they were provided with education, especially education and information that is accessible and in their language. Many participants asked for more information about water quality to inform their decisions of how to recreate in the Sound and nearby waterways, including subsistence fishing.

- **Broad Community Finding 11: Disadvantaged communities may have an even greater need than non-disadvantaged communities for information about the safety of waterways and specific species for fishing and shellfishing.**

According to survey data, disadvantaged respondents are fishing as a primary source of food for themselves or their family at a much greater rate than non-disadvantaged respondents. Interestingly, disadvantaged respondents were also shown to have less concern about their own safety when eating fish or shellfish caught in the Long Island Sound or other nearby waterways.

- **Broad Community Finding 12: The need for translated and easily accessible fishing regulations and licensure information was repeated throughout the needs assessment interviews and community listening sessions.**

A number of needs assessment participants mentioned seeing rising numbers of non-English speaking subsistence anglers in New York and Connecticut. The need for Spanish and Mandarin materials was mentioned in both states, and the need for materials in Polish and Italian was specifically mentioned in Connecticut.

- **Broad Community Finding 13: Because many CBOs and community members indicated that they are unaware of the Sound and are unfamiliar with the LISS, there is a need for information that educates about the location of the Sound, places to access the Sound, and provides more information about who the LISS is and the various programs available through the LISS.**

In some areas recognition of the Long Island Sound is high. In others, even in some environmental CBOs, there is uncertainty about the location of the Sound and which rivers and waterways are a part of the watershed. In many cases, this extended to a lack

of knowledge about the LISS and its programs, existing materials, and funding opportunities. Community groups and members suggested partnering with local groups to develop educational programs about the Sound and its benefits, how to access it, and how to get involved in existing programs.

➤ **Broad Community Finding 14: People need more information about where to access waterways and other natural areas safely.**

During the review of previous research in the area and during multiple conversations with CBOs and community members, many indicated that they do not visit the Sound because they do not know where to go. While some noted nearby access points, those points were often described as unsafe or unclear, again leaving people unsure of where to go to safely access the Sound.

## FINDINGS ABOUT RECREATION AND USE OF THE SOUND

➤ **Broad Community Finding 15: Some anglers may not be familiar with common tools and techniques and may need increased training and information to learn how to fish in compliance with rules and regulations.**

Around 40% of disadvantaged respondents who have fished in the Sound or nearby waterways indicated that the reason that understanding fishing rules and regulations was difficult was that the rules and regulations referred to tools and techniques with which they were not familiar. Based on this finding and qualitative feedback, there may be a need to start at the beginning and teach anglers how to fish in ways that comply with rules and regulations.

➤ **Broad Community Finding 16: Specific services and resources would encourage greater participation in recreational activities and events.**

According to the needs assessment data, when asked if there are any services or resources that would encourage participation in water- or environmental-related activities and events, many respondents listed food, transportation, and providing equipment or tools necessary to participate, such as fishing rods, bait, and others.

➤ **Broad Community Finding 17: Some disadvantaged groups have historically been excluded from accessing waterways and are therefore not as comfortable with using the Sound or participating in outdoor recreation.**

Some community members feel that groups might benefit from activities that teach their communities where to access the Sound and how to recreate safely. Community members explained that this need was not exclusive to youth but should include generational efforts to help increase comfort in outdoor spaces throughout families and disadvantaged communities.

## FINDINGS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT: CBO-BASED FINDINGS THROUGHOUT THE LONG ISLAND SOUND REGION

- **Broad CBO Finding 1: Many CBOs are overextended and need additional resources in order to seek out partnerships and other opportunities.**

Many smaller community organizations are limited to few employees and noted that they need funding for hiring, for general operations, and for aid in creating partnerships that could potentially assist them in moving in their strategic direction. Further, many of the groups that were engaged through this process have expanded their original missions to be responsive to community needs and issues. CBOs that might be classified more aptly as cultural organizations have begun addressing environmental issues and discrimination, such as issues with energy, waste plants, or flooding, despite the fact that these issues do not always align with their organizational mission and add further burdens to organizational capacity.
- **Broad CBO Finding 2: More funding is needed for general operations support and staffing, in addition to more funding for programs, planning, and implementation of projects.**

Currently, there is not enough funding to support ongoing work to address compounding issues in environmental justice in communities around the Sound. The funding that is available is often tied to specific programs, and general operating support is needed to continue and expand operations and programmatic work. Additionally, competitive funding programs were seen by some as causing groups that have similar missions to compete for funding.
- **Broad CBO Finding 3: Reimbursement-based funding was seen as highly untenable for many CBOs.**

CBOs with limited resources indicated that supplying large amounts of money to begin projects and having to wait months for reimbursement was a barrier to applying for certain funding sources, and therefore a barrier to addressing priority issues.
- **Broad CBO Finding 4: Support is needed to boost many CBOs' capacity to apply for and administer grants.**

Often, it is a long and resource-intensive process to apply for a grant. It takes time and resources to respond to public funding announcements, and such funding often comes with a high administrative burden. Additional funding and capacity-building support is needed to meet these needs.
- **Broad CBO Finding 5: Longer lead times for partnerships, funding opportunities, and other programs are necessary to ensure participation from lower-capacity groups.**

As is mentioned in several parts of this report, many CBOs have issues with funding, staff, and capacity. Strict deadlines and time requests can be a barrier to true engagement if relationships have not been developed before the grant or project begins; it takes time to develop relationships, and that does not always work with grant timelines (some groups with funding expressed struggling with community engagement and needing to meet deliverables). To be accessible, funding sources and other



programs need to be informed by realities faced by CBOs and the communities they serve.

- **Broad CBO Finding 6: Many CBOs expressed levels of distrust with government and public agencies, which for many complicates their ability to address some issues and priorities. In order to advance relationships with CBOs, trust-building is needed.**  
Community members and CBOs most often identified public health disparities, limited access to nature, trash and illegal dumping, and issues with nearby industries and highways as problems that they face. Many CBOs explicitly connected these issues with redlining and institutional racism in practice and policy. As a result of these issues, many groups expressed levels of distrust with government and public agencies, further complicating attempts to address priorities.
- **Broad CBO Finding 7: Communities and CBOs feel that they are often left with the burden of having to apply for funding or to lead efforts to address the issues caused by environmental injustice and perceived discriminatory policy making and planning. Many feel they need support in these efforts in order to lessen burdens.**  
During several of the community listening sessions and conversations with CBOs, participants noted that they feel that the burden of addressing environmental and social issues in their communities is often placed on the members of the communities or small CBOs with limited capacity. Some participants feel that state and federal agencies and municipalities should carry larger portions of the burden.
- **Broad CBO Finding 8: Interviewees, even those who do not focus on environmental issues, agree that access to nature and the Sound would be beneficial in their communities.**  
In order to encourage residents to participate in outdoor recreation, spend time in nature, and attend outdoor events, CBOs feel they need more information and educational materials about how and where to access nature-based recreation and events, environmental science data, and climate change data.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Introduction ..... 1
  - A. Motivation and Summary of the Assessment Methodology..... 1
  - B. Reading the Report..... 2
- II. Findings from the Needs Assessment ..... 4
  - A. Community Findings: Overall ..... 4
    - 1. Findings About Reaching and Engaging Communities ..... 4
    - 2. Findings About Access..... 18
    - 3. Findings About Information and Education ..... 30
    - 4. Findings About Recreation and Use of the Sound ..... 41
  - B. Community Findings by State: New York ..... 47
    - 1. New York Findings About Reaching and Engaging Communities ..... 47
    - 2. New York Findings About Access ..... 56
    - 3. New York Findings About Information and Education ..... 64
    - 4. New York Findings About Recreation and Use of the Sound..... 70
  - C. Community Findings by Region and Community: New York ..... 76
    - 1. Findings About the Bronx, New York ..... 76
    - 2. Findings About Long Island, New York, in General ..... 80
    - 3. Findings About Glen Cove, Long Island..... 82
    - 4. Findings About Port Jefferson, Long Island..... 84
    - 5. Findings About Huntington Station, Long Island ..... 86
    - 6. Findings About Port Washington, Long Island ..... 87
    - 7. Findings About Suffolk County, Long Island..... 88
    - 8. Findings About Nassau County, Long Island ..... 90
    - 9. Findings About Westchester County, New York ..... 91
  - D. Community Findings by State: Connecticut ..... 93
    - 1. Connecticut Findings About Reaching and Engaging Communities ..... 93
    - 2. Connecticut Findings About Access ..... 104
    - 3. Connecticut Findings About Information and Education..... 112
    - 4. Connecticut Findings About Recreation and Use of the Sound ..... 118
  - E. Community Findings by Region and Community: Connecticut ..... 124
    - 1. Findings About Eastern Connecticut..... 124
    - 2. Findings About Groton, Eastern Connecticut ..... 125
    - 3. Findings About New London, Eastern Connecticut ..... 128
    - 4. Findings About Western Connecticut ..... 130
    - 5. Findings About Stamford, Western Connecticut ..... 131
    - 6. Findings About Bridgeport, Western Connecticut..... 132
    - 7. Findings About New Haven, Western Connecticut..... 137
  - F. CBO Findings ..... 139
- III. Findings from Surveys with Community Members..... 148
  - A. Presentation of Survey Results..... 148
  - B. Environmental and Social Stressors..... 152
  - C. Use of the Long Island Sound ..... 163
  - D. Constraints to Using the Long Island Sound..... 173
  - E. Ideal Use of the Long Island Sound..... 177
  - F. Participation in Events ..... 181
  - G. Outreach and Information ..... 192
- IV. Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach ..... 198
  - A. Community Listening Sessions: Lessons Learned and Major Findings ..... 200

## TABLE OF CONTENTS CONTINUED

B. New Haven Community Listening Session.....	203
C. Stonington Community Listening Session .....	206
D. Mount Vernon Community Listening Session .....	210
E. Huntington Station Community Listening Session.....	214
F. Medford Community Listening Session .....	217
V. Lessons Learned and Recommendations .....	222
A. Lessons Learned.....	222
1. Relationship Building Lessons Learned .....	223
2. Reaching and Engaging Community Members: Lessons Learned .....	225
B. Recommendations Based on the Needs Assessment.....	227
1. Relationship Building: Recommendations .....	228
2. Reaching and Engaging Community Members: Recommendations.....	230
3. Community Needs: Recommendations .....	231
4. CBO Needs: Recommendations .....	234
5. Recommendations From In-Depth Interviews.....	235
Sources.....	238
Appendix A: Exploratory Phase.....	241
1. Exploratory Phase Interviews with Existing Contacts and Partners .....	243
2. Research and Information Review .....	246
3. Review and Analysis of Environmental Justice and Social Vulnerability Mapping Tools and Indicators of Disadvantaged Communities .....	250
4. Findings from Previous Responsive Management Research.....	263
5. Prioritizing Communities for In-Person Outreach .....	264
Appendix B: Project Methodology.....	265
1. Personal Interviews.....	265
2. Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach .....	268
3. Survey of Residents of Disadvantaged Communities in the Long Island Sound.....	271
Appendix C: Open-Ended Comments from Community Members .....	282
Appendix D: Discussion Guide .....	304
Appendix E: Survey Questionnaire .....	309
Endnotes .....	327

## INTRODUCTION

People of color, indigenous people, low-income individuals and families, those who experience major health issues and inequities, elderly individuals, children, non-English speaking people, immigrants and migrants, and other disadvantaged groups experience the most severe impacts of climate change, industry, and pollution.<sup>vii</sup> Many of these groups are also considered the least involved in environmental decision-making, even though many decisions will disproportionately affect them.<sup>viii</sup> In efforts to counter this long-standing trend, many natural resource and environmental organizations are building environmental justice into their programming and goals.<sup>ix</sup> Environmental justice initiatives and programming operate under the understanding that the environment, health, ecology, and social equity are all inextricably linked.<sup>x</sup>

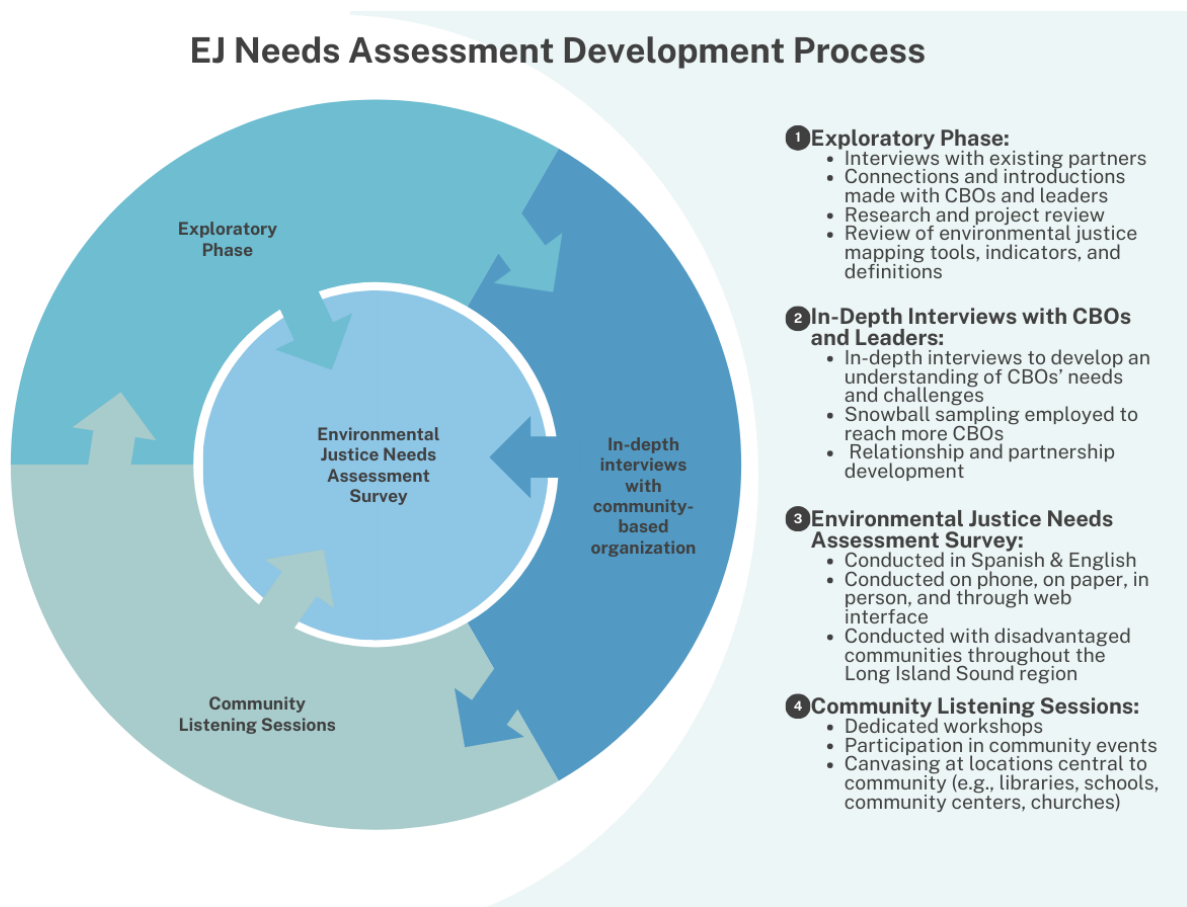
The EPA defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”<sup>xi</sup> Quite simply, environmental justice refers to efforts to ensure that all people have the right to environmental (and natural resource) protections and benefits. The movement seeks to ameliorate situations where marginalized communities are disproportionately affected, negatively, by land uses that are environmentally damaging, such as industrial uses and hazardous waste disposal.

## MOTIVATION AND SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

This project was conducted for the LISS to facilitate relationship- and connection-building between the LISS partners and CBOs and leaders and to determine the environmental justice-related needs of disadvantaged communities in the New York and Connecticut portions of the Long Island Sound watershed. The project was also undertaken to inform future environmental management programming of the LISS national estuary program, and to improve representation of minority and underserved communities in local decision-making to meet the needs of these stakeholders.<sup>xii</sup> This project was conducted with in-depth collaboration and involvement from the LISS partners to ensure that connections made and lessons learned during this process will remain long after the completion of the needs assessment.

This project examines different facets of environmental justice and the burdens that disproportionately impact some communities in the Long Island Sound region. The components of this project are listed below and are followed by a visual illustration of the process.

- 1) An exploratory phase (This is shown in Appendix A)
- 2) A series of personal interviews with CBOs and leaders in disadvantaged communities
- 3) A survey conducted with members of disadvantaged communities in the Sound, (because some non-disadvantaged community members participated in surveys at community listening sessions, their responses are included in region-wide graphs for comparison with disadvantaged respondents)
- 4) A series of community listening sessions and other forms of direct in-person community outreach



Each component of the project informed the direction of the component that followed. For example, the findings from the exploratory phase were used, in collaboration with the LISS team, to create the discussion guide for the in-depth interviews with CBOs and community leaders, and the findings from the in-depth interviews were used, again in collaboration with the LISS team, to create the community member survey.

## READING THE REPORT

While most of the information from different forms of outreach can be found in the section that immediately follows, more details about the survey with community members and the community listening sessions can be found in subsequent chapters. There are also several appendices to this report (including full details of the exploratory phase and project methodology) that can be useful in understanding the full needs assessment process. The below outline can be used as a guide to understand and utilize this report.

- Findings from the Needs Assessment: This section includes information from all stages of the project and should be used to develop an understanding of overall findings and results from the needs assessment. Results from the needs assessment are presented in several different ways in this section (listed below).
  - broad findings that apply to the entire region
  - state-specific findings

- region- or community-specific findings that apply to specific subsets of each state, including regional and community findings
- Findings from Survey with Community Members: This section presents all findings from the survey conducted with members of disadvantaged communities around the Long Island Sound. Results are presented with a comparison of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged respondents and a comparison of New York and Connecticut respondents. While many of the findings from this section are also included in the Findings from the Needs Assessment portion of the report, this section provides all findings from the survey with community members.
- Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach: Similar to the previous section, while information from the listening sessions and outreach can be found in the Findings from the Needs Assessment section of the report, this chapter presents all findings from the community listening sessions and additional outreach conducted throughout the region. Results in the chapter are first presented with overall findings and lessons learned from all community outreach; this is followed by specific information about each listening session, findings from the specific session, and any pertinent quotations that support the findings; and finally, information about the additional outreach performed in communities is discussed.
- Lessons Learned and Recommendations: In the final section of the report, lessons learned throughout the needs assessment process and recommendations are discussed. Recommendations are divided into two groups: 1) those that come directly from Responsive Management staff after reviewing all quantitative and qualitative information collected during the needs assessment, and 2) those that come directly from CBOs.
- Several appendices include information about the needs assessment process and additional data collected during the survey with community members. The body of the report focuses primarily on the findings from the needs assessment, but appendices can be used to gain a full understanding of the process of the needs assessment.
  - Appendix A: All components of and findings from the Exploratory Phase.
  - Appendix B: A detailed discussion of project methodology.
  - Appendix C: All open-ended comments from the survey with community members. Note that all comments were analyzed for discussion of the needs assessment findings and have been included in the appendix for review in their entirety.
  - Appendix D: The discussion guide used for all in-depth interviews with CBOs.
  - Appendix E: The survey questionnaire used for collection of survey data.

## FINDINGS FROM THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

One of the most significant lessons learned during the needs assessment process is that some needs and challenges are shared throughout the entire Long Island Sound region, while others are unique to a particular state or community. In order to fully understand some of these needs and challenges, it is important to examine findings on each of these levels.

In this section, findings from communities and CBOs will be discussed. The chapter will start with community-based findings, with overall findings that apply to the entire Long Island Sound region discussed first, followed by state-specific findings, and smaller regional and community-based findings. In the final section of this chapter, CBO findings will be discussed.

At the overall and state community levels, findings will be discussed thematically with the following topics: reaching and engaging communities, access, information and education, and recreation and use of the Sound. Because findings at the regional and community level are qualitative, and therefore often deeper and more specific, the final regional and community-based findings section is sorted by community and the themes that emerged within each community. The section of the chapter with CBO findings will also be discussed based on the themes that emerged during the in-depth interviews.

Please note that in addition to the findings and supporting data presented in this chapter, the final chapter of this report presents lessons learned and recommendations that further build on the findings.

### COMMUNITY FINDINGS: OVERALL

#### FINDINGS ABOUT REACHING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

The first series of findings apply to needs and challenges in reaching and engaging disadvantaged community members. An important aspect of engaging community members is understanding what might prevent their engagement and trying to lessen those barriers. The information from the needs assessment that supports the findings will be shown in the following order: exploratory phase information, in-depth interview additions, findings from the survey with community members, and finally feedback from community listening sessions and additional outreach.

**Broad Community Finding 1: In order to be engaged and be included in events, programs, and conversations, many overburdened community members need flexibility in timing, location, and method of participation.**

**Broad Community Finding 2: As with other stages of the assessment, the survey found that respondents often had needs associated with social and infrastructure priorities rather than with the environment.**

**Broad Community Finding 3: Communities want events and activities that are relevant and meaningful to their specific community.**

**Findings from the Exploratory Phase**

In the exploratory phase, mapping tools and environmental justice indicators established by the Justice40 Initiative<sup>xiii</sup> indicated that several communities around the Long Island Sound region could be classified as disadvantaged. In all cases, community members in these areas are experiencing compounding challenges related to public health issues; limited transportation, job opportunities, housing, and income; proximity to wastewater and toxic substances, and in many cases histories of exclusion, systemic breakdowns, and racism.

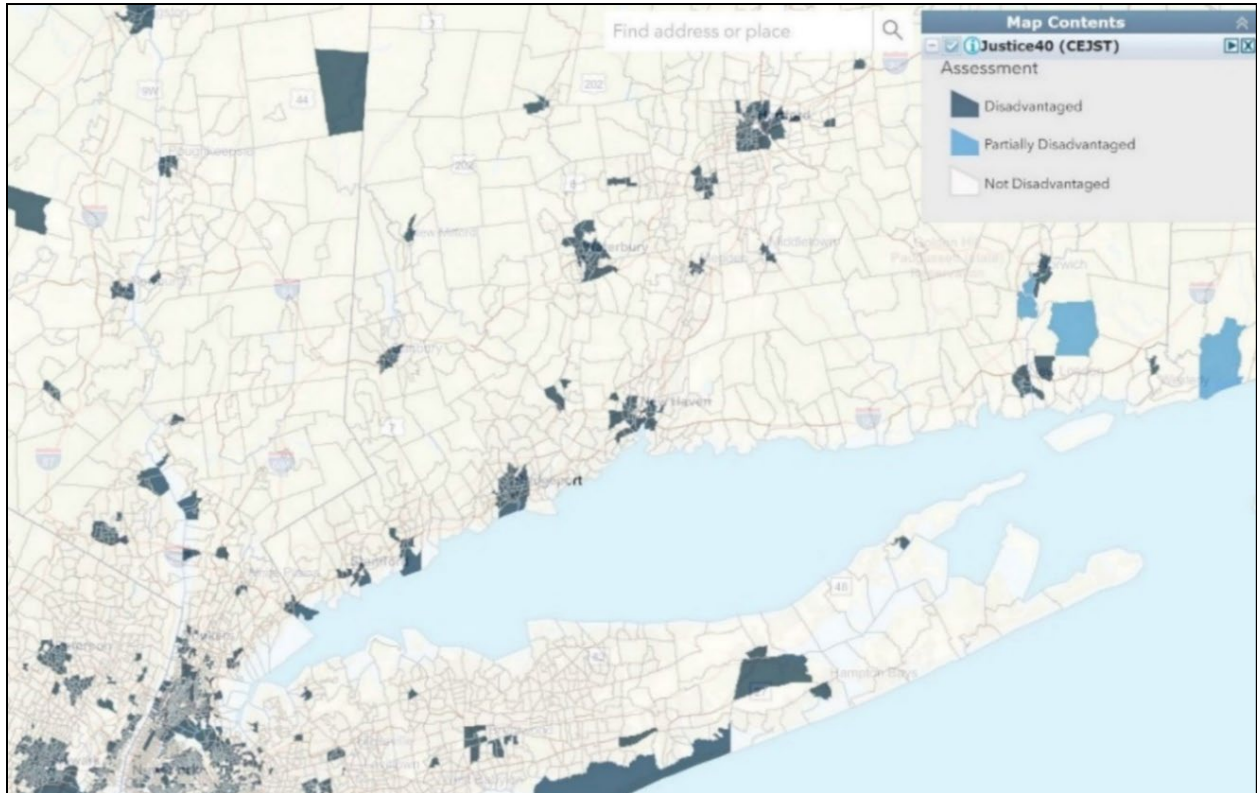
Challenges associated with these issues frequently make engagement in environmental events and conversations, as well as recreational activities, a lower priority in disadvantaged communities.

<b>Justice40 Indicators</b>	
<p><b>Climate Change</b>            &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected agricultural loss rate</li> <li>• Expected building loss rate</li> <li>• Expected population loss rate</li> <li>• Projected flood risk</li> <li>• Projected wildlife risk</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<p><b>Legacy Pollution</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have at least one abandoned mine land, or;</li> <li>• Formerly used defense sites</li> </ul>           &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to hazardous waste facilities</li> <li>• Proximity to superfund sites</li> <li>• Priorities list</li> <li>• Proximity to risk management plan facilities</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>
<p><b>Energy</b>            &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• energy cost</li> <li>• PM2.5 in the air</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<p><b>Transportation</b>            &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diesel particulate matter exposure</li> <li>• Transportation barrier</li> <li>• Traffic proximity and volume</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>
<p><b>Health</b>            &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asthma</li> <li>• Diabetes</li> <li>• Heart disease</li> <li>• Low life expectancy</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<p><b>Water and Wastewater</b>            &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underground storage tanks and releases</li> <li>• Wastewater discharge</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>
<p><b>Housing</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced historic underinvestment (redlined) OR</li> </ul>           &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing cost</li> </ul>	<p><b>Workforce Development</b>            &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic isolation</li> <li>• Low median income</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul>

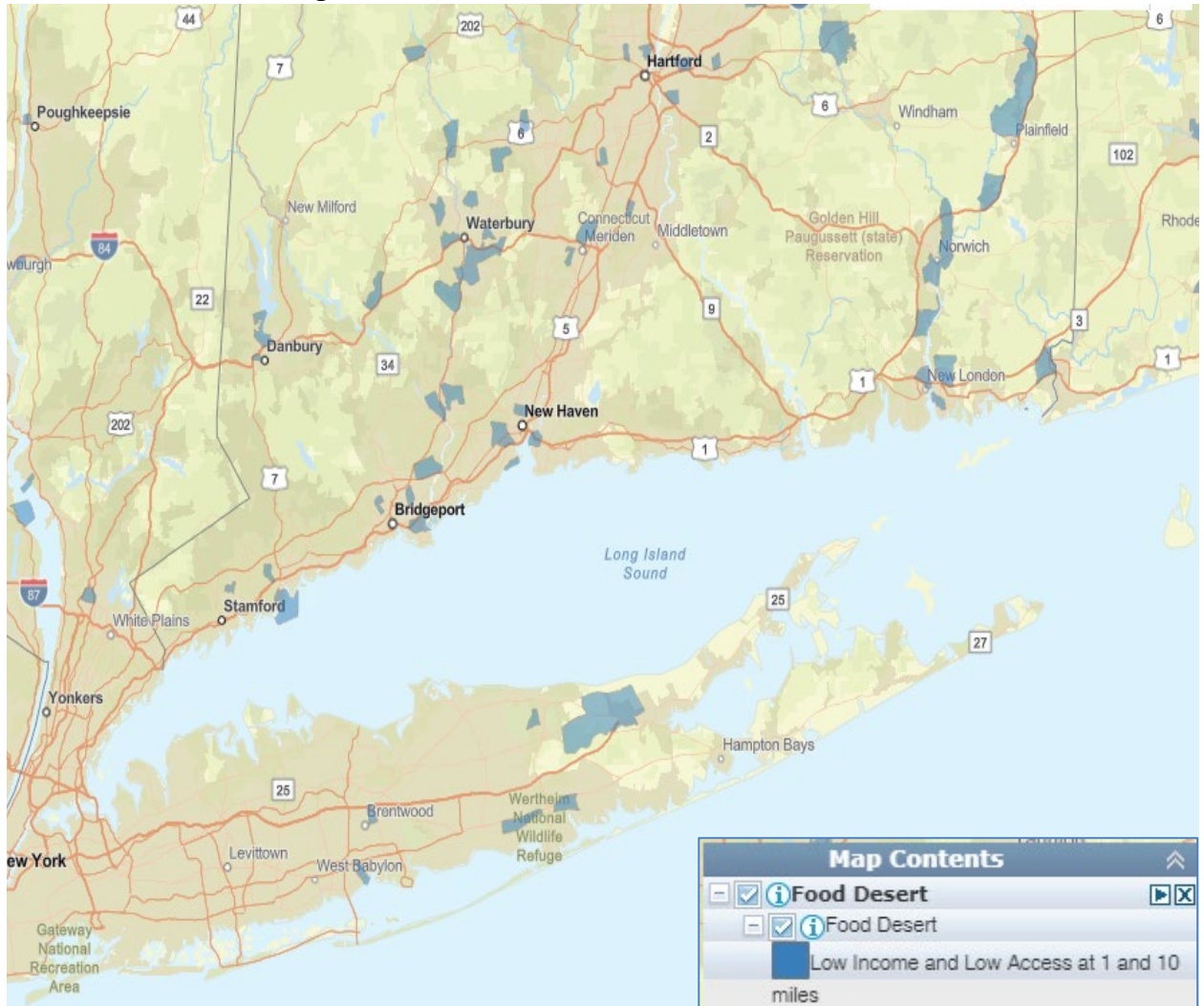


<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of green space</li><li>• Lack of indoor plumbing</li><li>• Lead</li></ul> AND $\geq$ 65 <sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unemployment</li></ul> AND $<$ 10% people older than 25 have a high school diploma
--	--

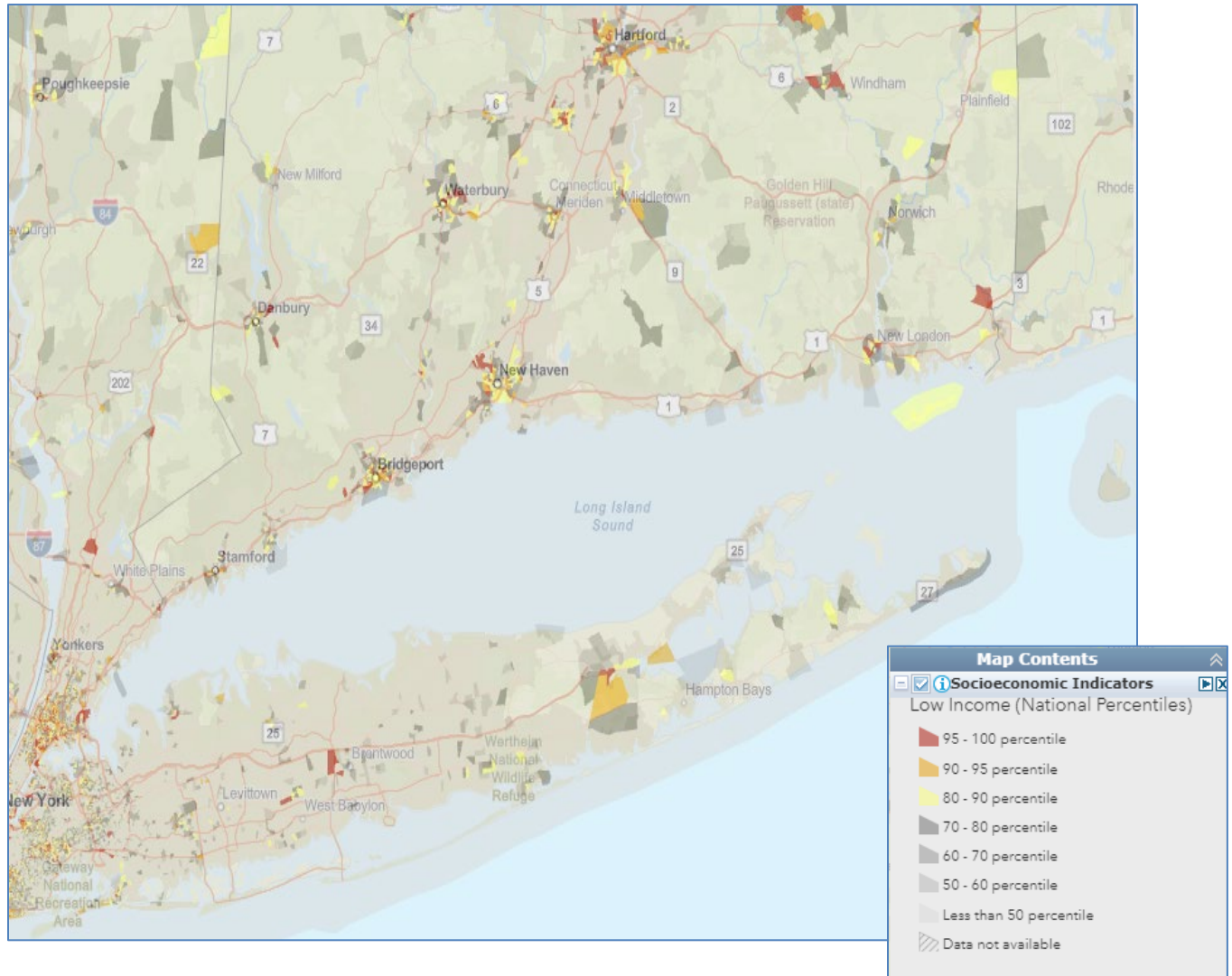
### Disadvantaged Communities on the Long Island Sound



### Food Deserts on the Long Island Sound



### Percentiles of Low Income on the Long Island Sound



### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

As in the exploratory phase, many interviewees indicated that community members, while concerned about environmental issues and interested in participating in activities that involve spending time in nature and learning about the environment, are frequently faced with more pressing issues that are prioritized over environmental challenges. Issues with infrastructure, systemic concerns, and social and public health concerns often take precedence over environmental concerns. Below is a summary of the issues that arose during the in-depth interviews and how these issues impact some communities.

#### Infrastructure Issues

- Parking, transportation, housing structures, and failing sewage and stormwater systems were most often mentioned.
- Interviewees expressed concerns about limited parking near natural areas in many communities.
- Housing structures are degraded. Some consider them unsafe for occupancy. Some interviewees mentioned compounding issues associated with housing built in flood zones, near industry or roadways, and near former or existing brownfield sites.
- Many community public transit systems are in disrepair and offer limited options for routes and pick-up/drop-off times.
- Other infrastructure issues mentioned during interviews included lower income housing being limited to flood zones and failing sewage and stormwater systems.
- Other transportation issues listed included a lack of affordable public transportation, long wait times, a need for more public routes, and extended hours for public transportation.

#### Flooding Concerns

- An increase in flooding and storm surge, which interviewees generally attribute to climate change, was discussed as its own environmental stressor that is causing extensive challenges for many community members.
- Some interviewees expressed concerns about potential impacts on public health caused by flooding and climate change issues.
- Stormwater and sewage runoff, connections with declining air quality, and mold and mildew buildup in flooded homes were all mentioned as public health concerns stemming from flooding.
- Some participants raised concerns about the disproportionate impact of flooding on those who are already vulnerable to other social and public health issues.
- Infrastructure issues are thought to be contributing to flooding issues throughout the region.
- Flooding and storm concerns were also often connected to the abundance of trash and debris in some communities.

**Systemic Concerns**

- Redlining and its continued consequences were mentioned as major contributors to social and public health issues.
- Many participants feel that the areas most impacted by pollution of all kinds and climate change stressors are lower income Black and Brown communities. They feel that these communities are consistently neglected while wealthier communities with higher tax brackets receive major infrastructure overhauls.
- Participants in interviews discussed public health impacts from air and water quality issues, and many tied these issues to redlining and proximity to point source pollution as well as to areas greatly affected by nonpoint source pollution.

**Social And Public Health Concerns**

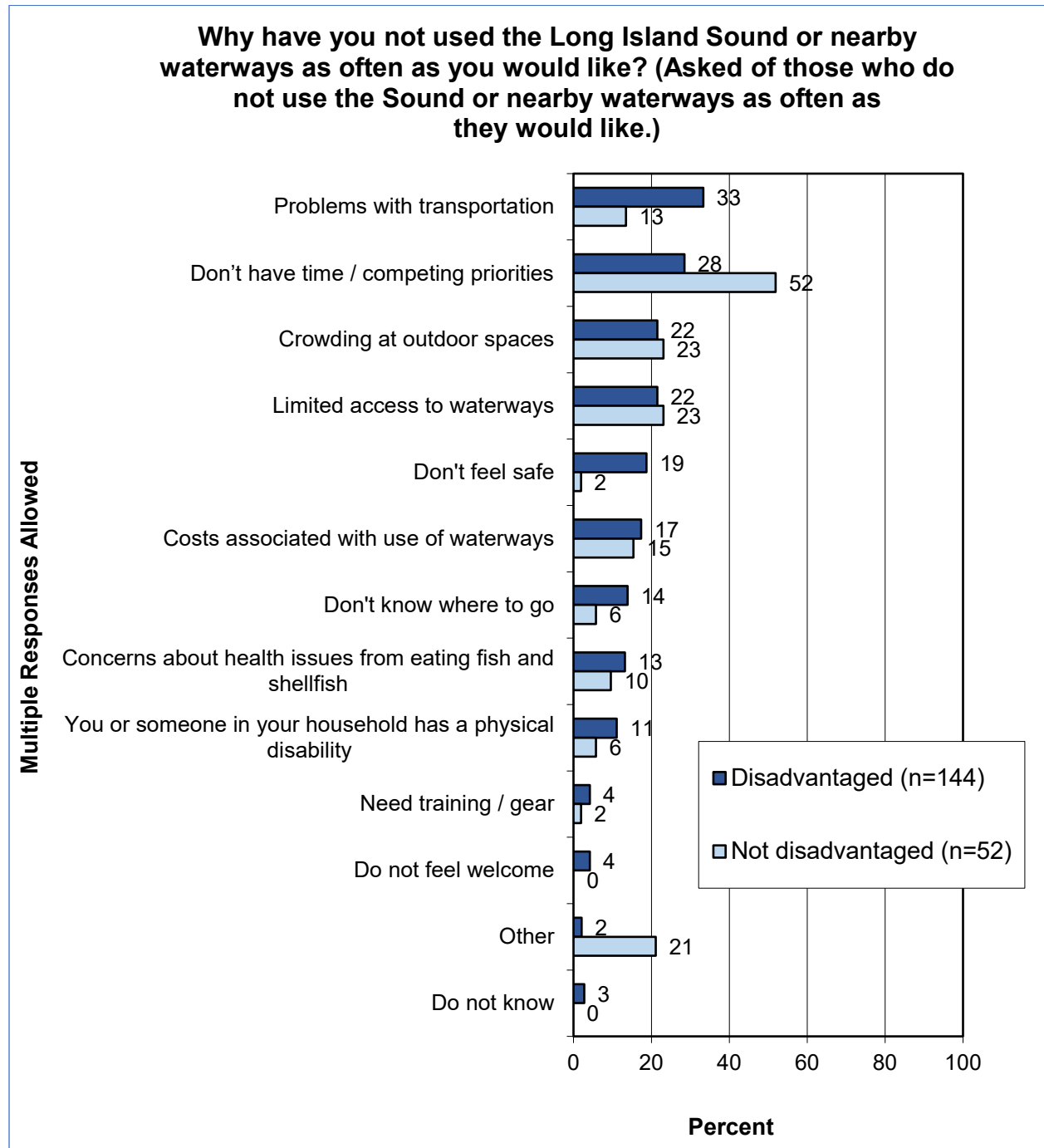
- Housing concerns varied based on location and region, but many mentioned concerns about the availability of housing, the affordability of housing, and safety risks associated with housing structures that are close to industrial sites or that have not been updated in decades.
- Food concerns included limited access to grocery stores and fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as rising costs from inflation.
- According to interviews, some areas have numerous public health issues. Rising asthma rates and increasing numbers of deaths attributed to climate-related causes such as increasing temperatures and storms were mentioned most often.
- There is a need for computer classes and other technical training for students and underemployed adults from socially and economically vulnerable areas. Many underemployed people could learn and obtain employment or higher paying employment, especially in areas where school districts do not offer these classes.
- Water and air quality are major concerns for many interviewees, especially with regard to the impact poor water and air quality have on public health.
- Water quality concerns discussed during interviews often related to pollution, plastic, marine debris, and the potential health impacts caused by poor water quality.
- Participants are concerned about the rising rates of asthma as a result of poor air quality, particularly related to pollution from industrial and commercial sources and traffic emissions.
- Some participants are concerned about subsistence anglers fishing in areas with poor water quality.
- Some participants expressed the need to explicitly focus on the connection between air quality and water quality, and how this might be an important connection for LISS to make to connect communities with the LISS work and programs.

**More Reaching and Engaging the Communities Findings from In-Depth Interviews**

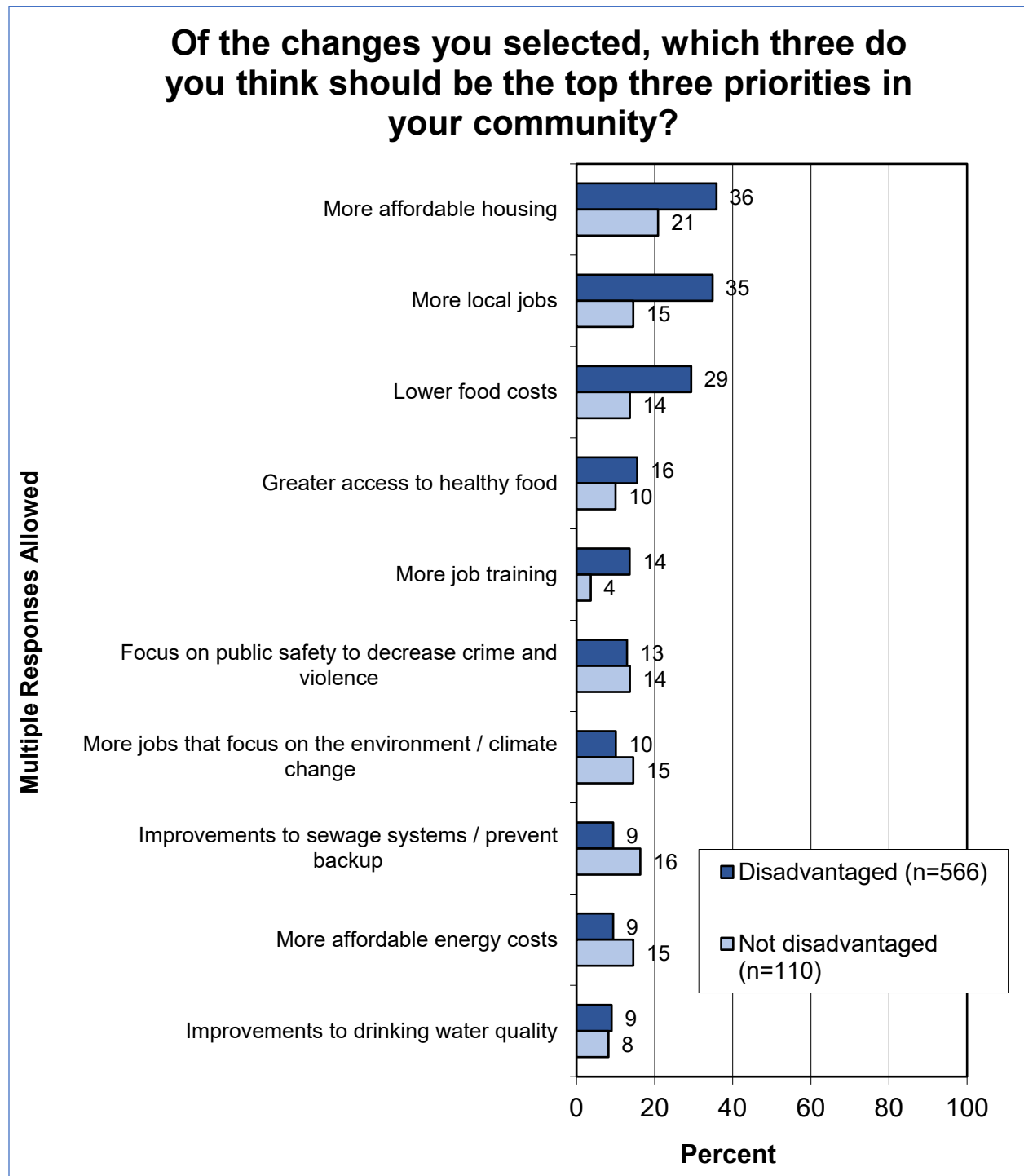
- Interview participants suggest simplifying the process for engagement in Sound-related events and activities (less follow-up; more open invitations; limiting requests of participants, such as participating in surveys or bringing their own equipment for recreation) and providing the public with more information about how to become engaged in ways that are more convenient with everyday life.
- Many interviewees feel that events would be more widely attended if transportation to and from events was available to all.
- Interview participants feel that events should offer some benefits to residents in order to compete with daily priorities.
- Some interviewees suggested partnering with libraries and schools as a bridge to the community. Many feel that getting students involved will ultimately lead to parents, which can spread through the community (note that some interviewees also said the opposite parent to student approach could also work). Teachers are a major asset and should be used more to engage communities and bring communities together.
- Interviewees suggested taking advantage of available spaces and events where community members gather and keep them involved every step of the way.
- Suggestions were made to connect with communities through community boards and community group meetings and to attend seemingly unrelated events in communities to connect with community members.
- Door-to-door communication, up-to-date newsletters, and emailing were all suggested as good methods to contact community members.
- Interviewees also suggested that community-building events have incentives to encourage participation: instead of having people come to a meeting and sit in a room, event organizers could pay for food trucks and offer prizes to encourage people to use QR codes to give feedback.
- Interviewees discussed the importance that organizations continue introducing youth in urban areas to the environment and continue to foster a better understanding of the importance of being a steward. Providing opportunities to make connections between issues that urban areas experience and the environment, particularly with youth, would be beneficial.
- Some encouraged job development and creation as a way to connect with communities. They noted that positions within organizations should be paid when possible and give students and community members the opportunity to take responsibility for and have career development in conservation fields.
- Many interviewees feel that connecting with the communities must be done through a localized approach. Interviewees noted that no two communities are the same; each community must be met where they are.
- Interviewees often agreed that it is important to bring fun, joy, and optimism into environmental justice work in order to engage more members of the public.

**Findings from the Survey with Community Members**

Survey findings further indicated that many throughout the region are not using the Sound or participating in events as a result of some of the infrastructure and social and public health issues. In the graph below, reasons for not using the Sound are shown, with the top two results directly relating to the finding that engagement should be easy and provide incentives.

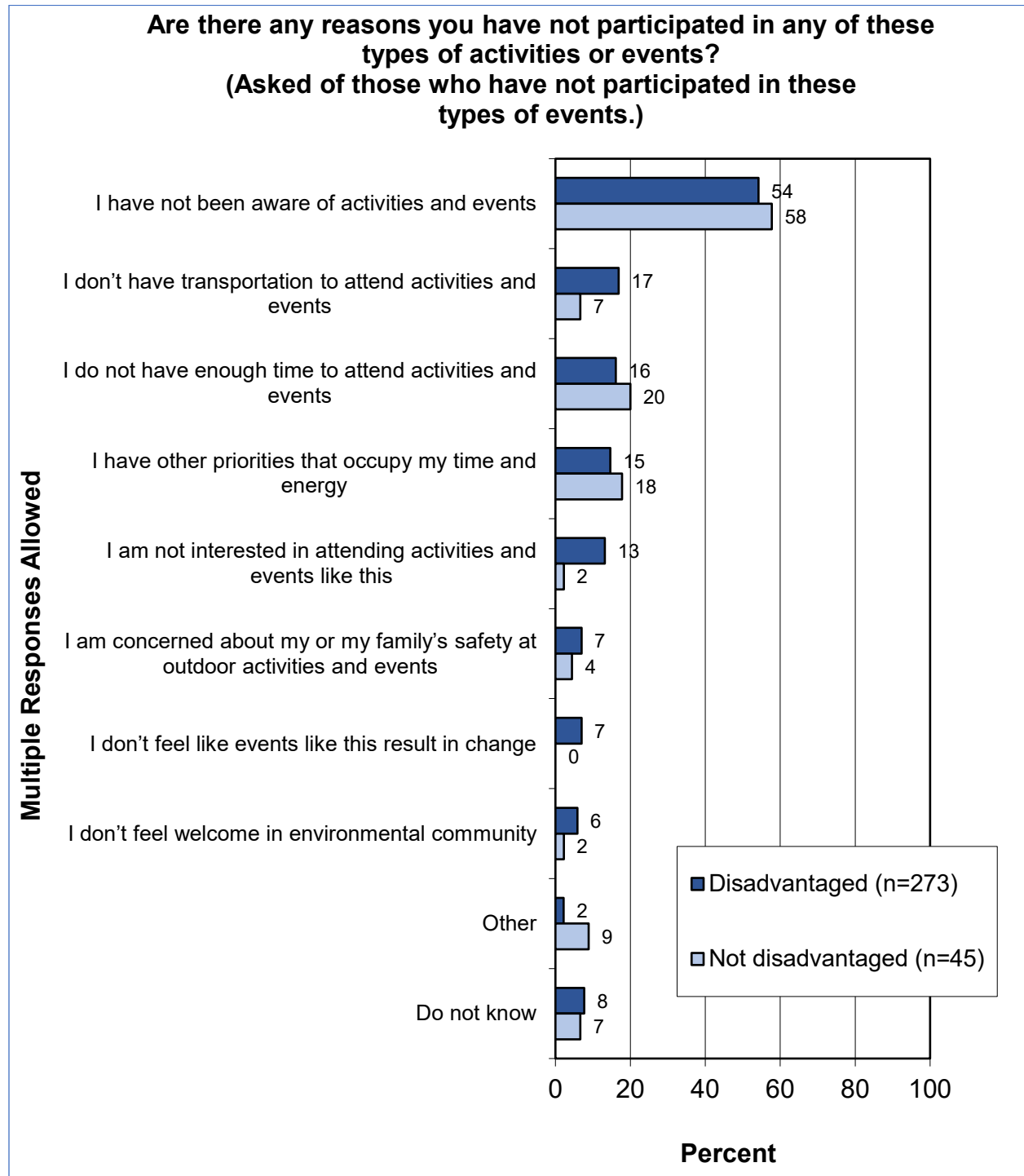


Disadvantaged community members selected more affordable housing, more local jobs, and lower food costs as the top three things they would like to see in their communities that would allow for fair and equal access to resources and opportunities. With issues associated with income, housing, and food, disadvantaged community members might be less likely to prioritize participating in conversations and events related to the environment.

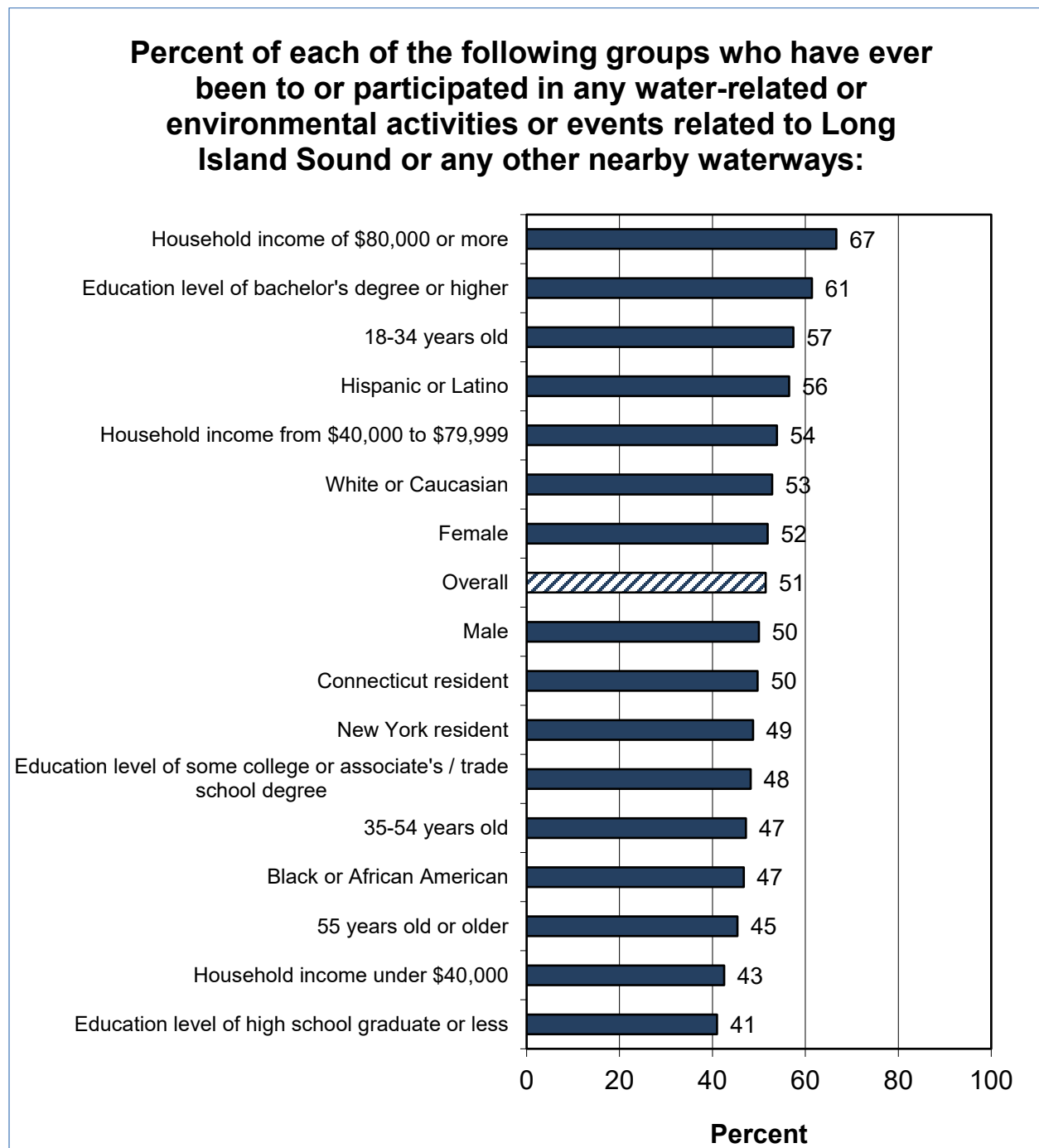




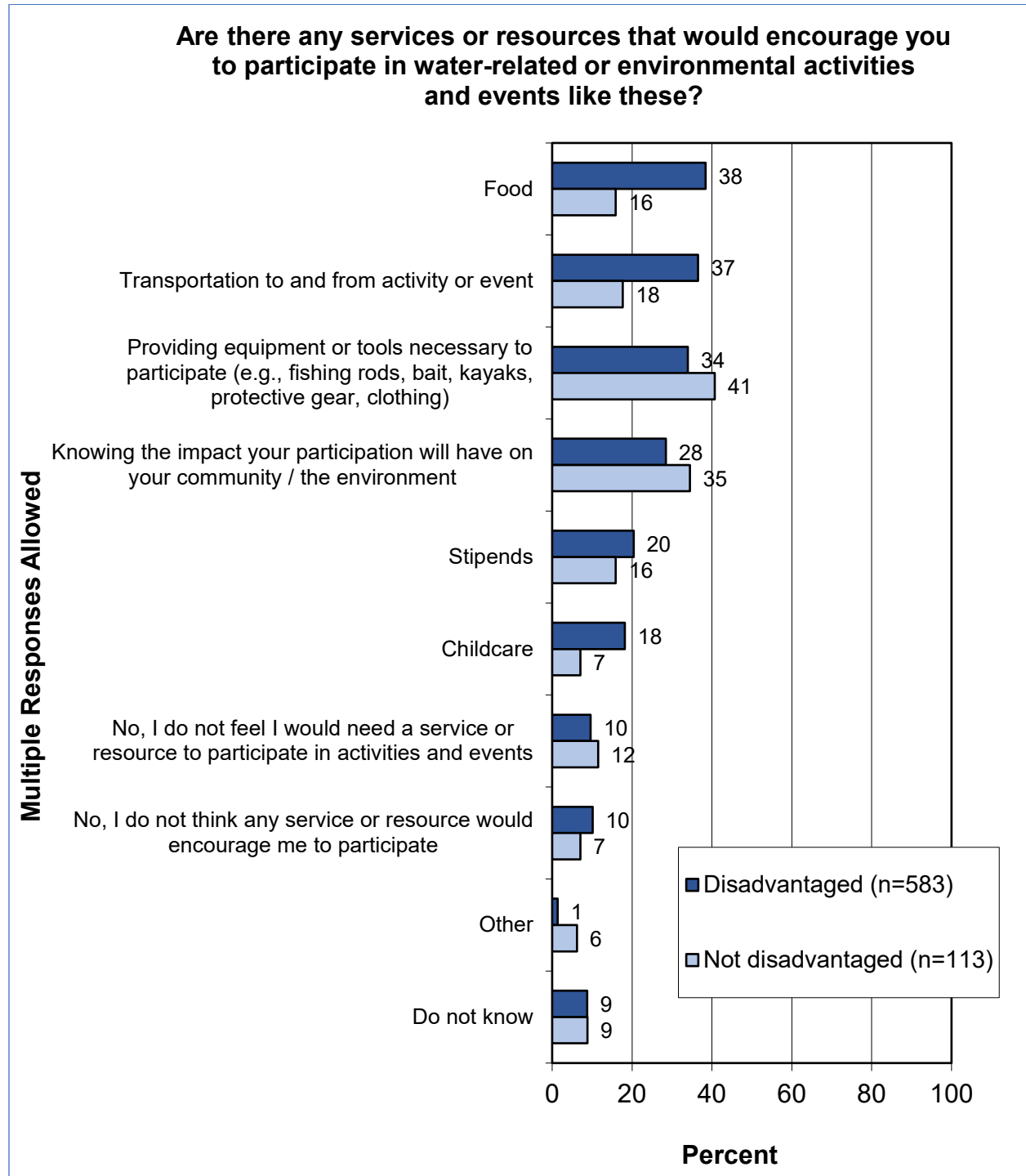
When asked if there are any reasons why they are not participating in environment-related activities or events, the number one response indicated that many respondents were unaware of such activities and events. The most frequently selected responses support the finding that disadvantaged community members have challenges and issues that prevent them from engaging as much as they might like and take precedence over environment- and nature-related concerns.



Participation in activities and events by different demographic groups is depicted in the graph below. While the striped line shows that 51% of all respondents have been to some type of activity or event, lower in the graph Black or African American respondents (47%), respondents with a household income under \$40,000 (43%), and those with an education level of high school or less (41%) are shown to be attending events at a lower rate than are respondents overall. (Further instructions on interpreting demographic graphs are shown in the survey results chapter.)



In the final graph presented here, respondents were asked if there were any services or resources that would encourage them to participate in activities and events. Disadvantaged respondents selected providing food and transportation as the top two services or resources.



### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Several comments from attendees at community listening sessions further illustrate the findings regarding reaching and engaging communities. In addition, summaries of some of the conversations that occurred in community listening sessions help highlight the importance of making engagement easy and free.

“If you can get transportation like you were saying, that is I think key right there. That’s the most important thing. A lot of people would like to go, but they have a lot of issues to get there.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“We had so many people tell us they wanted to be here. We had over 50 people respond, but if they have to work or take care of their kids, they can’t come to things like this.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“Our infrastructure is crumbling right underneath us. In 2020-2021, we got \$160 million from Governor Hochul, and that’s really just a drop in the bucket. The total rebuild for the sewer infrastructure will probably cost about \$250 million, and this is due to bad management from prior administrations. This has been an issue for over a decade.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“I don’t have time to go to the beach, because I have to work two jobs to afford low-income housing. My low-income housing is almost \$2,000 a month in Long Island. I don’t even have time to spend with my kids.” –Comment from community member

- Stonington listening session participants expressed concern about the frontline communities in the area that they feel are being disproportionately impacted by flooding and sea level rise. Attendees were concerned that, unlike many of the wealthier coastal landowners in the area, many who live in frontline communities do not have the ability to relocate in times of extreme climate impacts. As with all of the other listening sessions, issues with competing and more pressing needs or priorities and the necessity to make environmental conversations more appealing were discussed.
- As was the case in nearly all community listening sessions, attendees also discussed the fact that, especially for overburdened individuals, immediate needs often take precedence, so it is important to make environmental engagement easy and appealing.
- Infrastructure issues were possibly the most discussed topic during the Mount Vernon listening session. Most infrastructure discussion addressed the sewage system issues that have plagued Mount Vernon for more than 100 years, according to some in attendance. Attendees discussed issues with being able to finance much needed repairs and the fear of contamination in local waterways because of the faulty sewage system.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT ACCESS**

The next series of findings apply to needs and challenges with accessing nature and the Long Island Sound. The information from the needs assessment that supports the findings will be shown in the following order: exploratory phase information, in-depth interview additions, findings from the survey with community members, and finally feedback from community listening sessions and additional outreach.

**Broad Community Finding 4: Community members need easily accessible and free spaces where they can enjoy nature.**

**Broad Community Finding 5: According to disadvantaged needs assessment survey respondents, there is a clear desire for more clean and safe outdoor spaces in which people can recreate.**

**Broad Community Finding 6: Primary issues with access that community members feel should be addressed throughout the region are transportation challenges, trash and debris buildup on beaches, costs associated with access, and a lack of signage and information that outlines public access locations.**

**Broad Community Finding 7: Some communities feel that measures should be taken to increase feelings of safety or belonging in certain outdoor spaces.**

**Broad Community Finding 8: Survey data confirm that there is a need to increase access specifically for disadvantaged communities.**

### **Findings from the Exploratory Phase**

The project team reviewed social science research and other similar projects that have been conducted in the region (including the 2022 National Waterways Literacy Survey, the 2006 Public Perceptions of Long Island Sound Watershed Residents, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Future's Fund, and information collected during an informal needs assessment conducted by The Nature Conservancy) to begin to understand public perceptions about the watershed. Many of these early findings relate directly to access.

With regard to the final point listed below, when combined with in-person conversations and community listening sessions in which community members indicated that they were not sure about the safety of or quality of water in the Sound, some indicated that concerns about water quality and pollution prevented them from using the Sound. This point is also connected to other conversations from community listening sessions and the survey findings that indicated that many disadvantaged communities feel that trash and debris are major barriers to access.

- Overall, New York and Connecticut residents who reside further away from the Sound are more likely to think the Sound has poor water quality when compared to those who live closer to the Sound.

- New York and Connecticut residents who reside further from the Sound also more often think the Sound is not a safe place for recreation.
- Some residents think fish caught in the Sound are unsafe for consumption.
- Knowledge of the Sound is lower in minority groups when compared to the population as a whole.
- Disadvantaged groups seem to be more concerned with water quality, water pollution, health, and safety than non-disadvantaged groups.

### **Findings from the In-Depth Interviews**

Throughout most discussions, access was a major topic. There are a number of different issues with access to the Sound and many interviewees would like to see these issues resolved so that more communities can access the waterways. In addition to issues with access, some interviewees provided important information about ways in which community members are accessing the Sound.

#### **Access Issues**

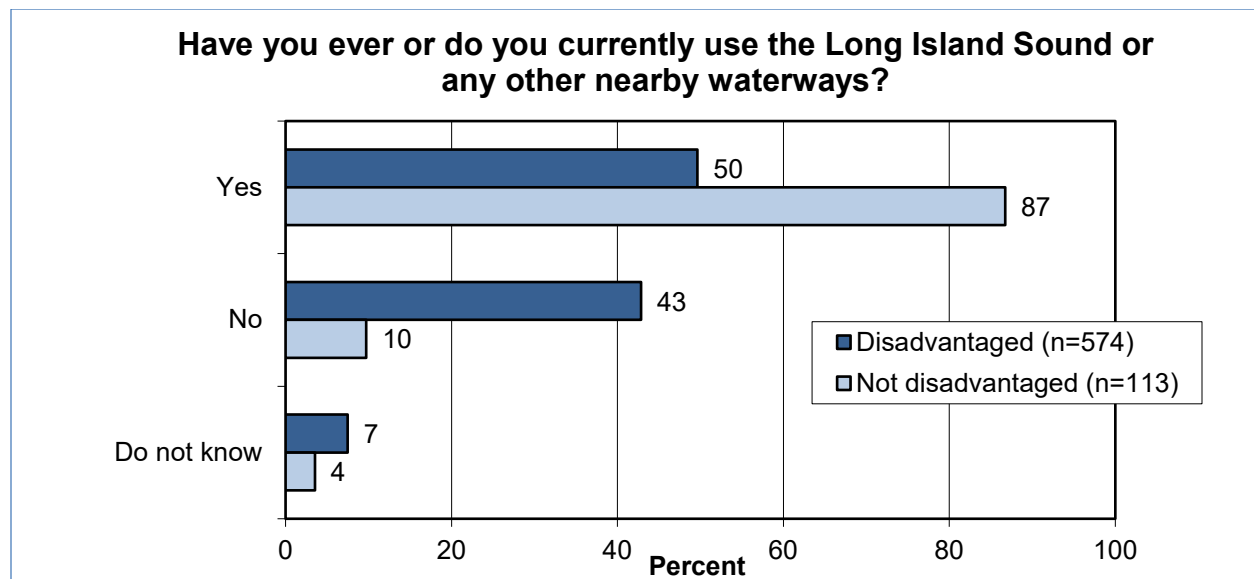
- There was a great deal of discussion about the amount of waterfront land that is privately owned and therefore inaccessible to many community members. This was especially prevalent in Long Island, but communities throughout the Sound mentioned the issue.
- Some interviewees mentioned a need to develop relationships and connections with homeowners to ease the tension associated with community use of the waterfront.
- Several interviewees said they need more general information about locations with public access. This information could then be shared with the public and used for events to engage the public.
- Interviewees are concerned about areas that appear to have public access but have signs indicating that they are off limits without proof of residency. Some feel residents might see these signs and avoid the area entirely instead of trying to find public access points around or near signage.
- Some noted that many areas are inaccessible without a car and either do not have adequate parking or have high costs for parking.
- Participants of color indicated direct issues with racism and not feeling welcome in more affluent areas.
- Waterways are being accessed for fishing, swimming, and enjoying the outdoors. Because of access difficulties in some regions, there is concern among some interviewees that anglers are not always fishing in the safest locations.

### Safety Concerns

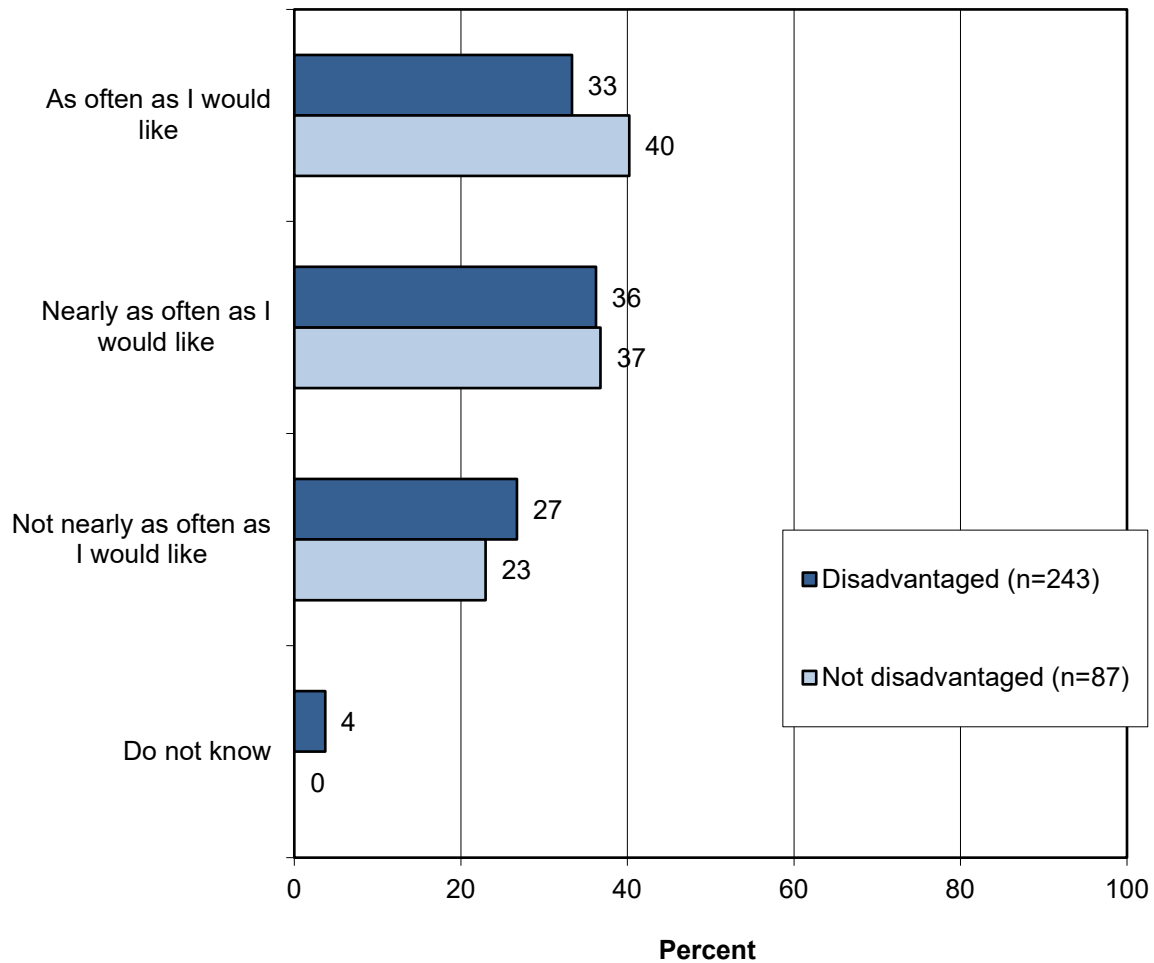
- Many mentioned concerns about dangerous pathways to waterways. Some locations do not have biking or walking paths and people must cross highways, construction zones, or other dangerous or cluttered areas.
- Interviewees noted that many areas were littered with trash and debris, making pathways unsafe for residents.
- There is concern about safety related to certain recreational activities, such as swimming or fishing. While there is a need to keep the public informed about areas where fishing and swimming should not be occurring for safety reasons, some participants are concerned about the public believing some waterways are not suitable for recreation when they are in fact perfectly safe.

### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

Throughout the survey, findings clearly indicate that disadvantaged respondents are not accessing the Sound as often as non-disadvantaged respondents. In the graph below, 43% of disadvantaged respondents versus 10% of non-disadvantaged respondents indicated they had not used the Sound. When respondents who had indicated they had used the Sound were asked in follow-up if they use the Sound as often as they would like, the trend continued, with lower percentages of disadvantaged respondents indicating they use the Sound as often or nearly as often as they like.



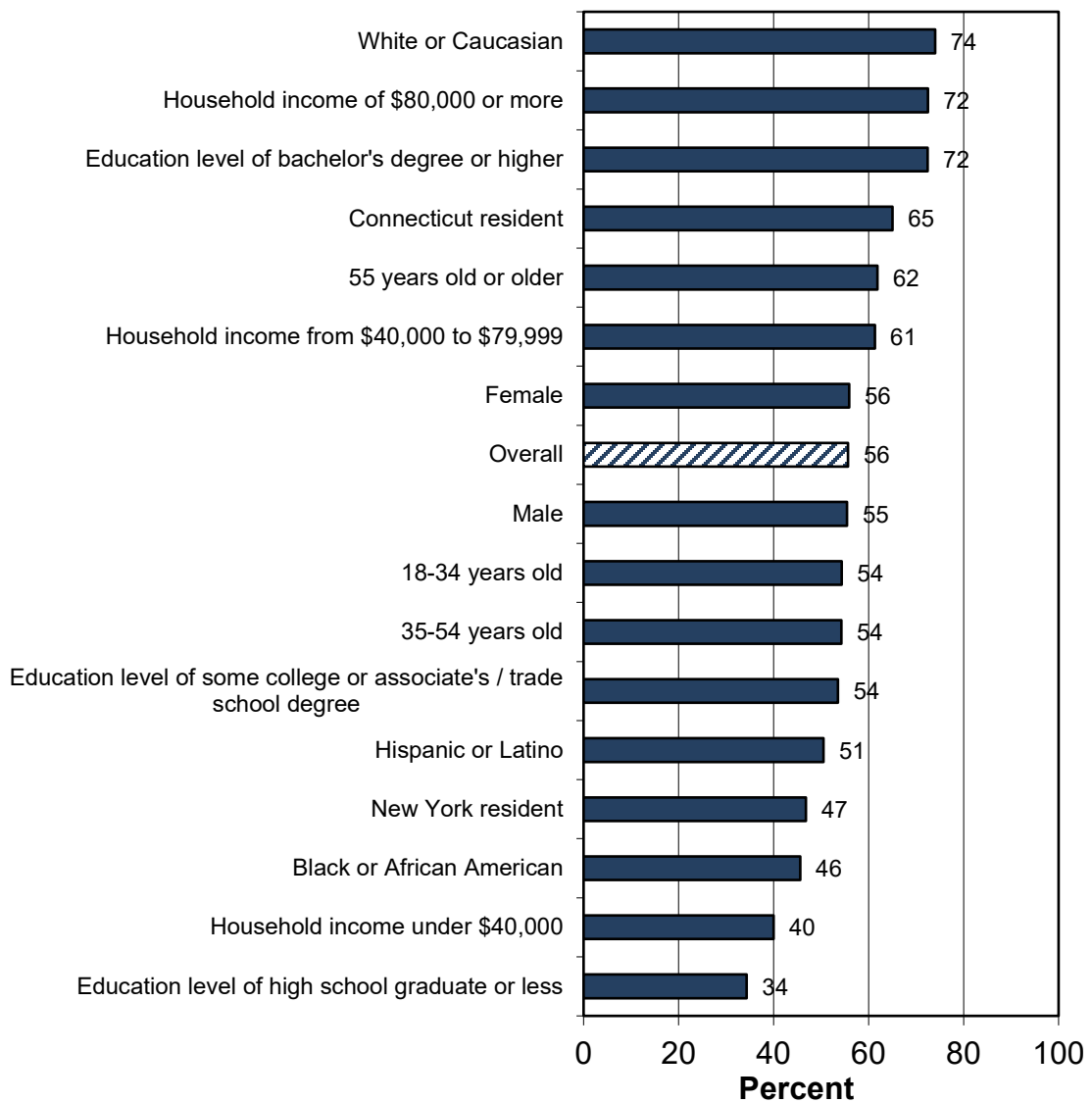
**Would you say you are able to use the Long Island Sound and/or other nearby waterways as often as you would like, nearly as often as you would like, or not as often as you would like?**



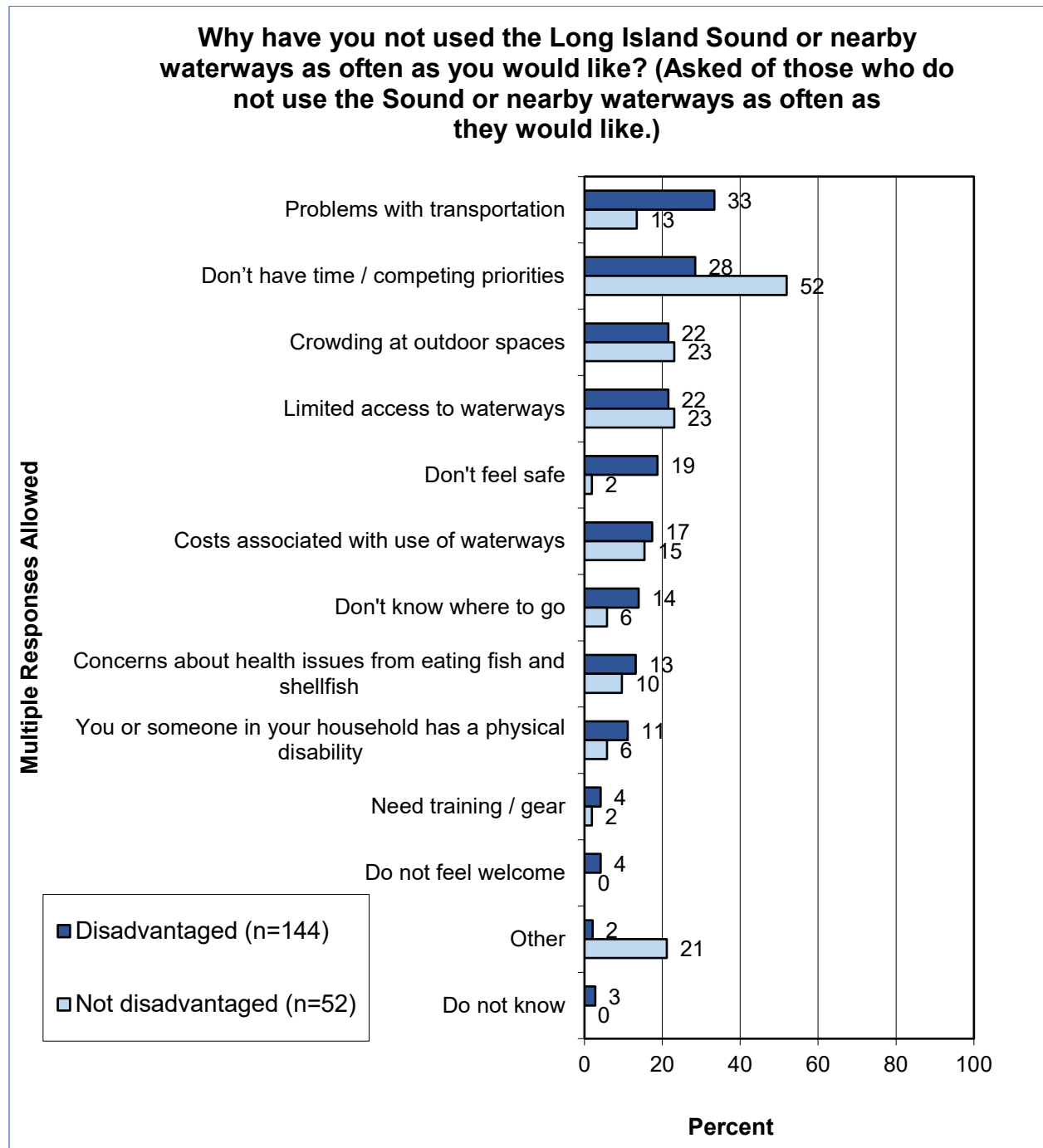


In the graph that follows, use of the Sound by different demographics is shown. The striped bar in the center of the graph shows the percentage of use among all demographics. Those demographic groups above the bar have used the Sound more than the overall percent of respondents, and those below the bar have used the Sound less. Here, again, demographics typically associated with disadvantaged communities are shown to be using the Sound less, with those with an education level of high school or less (34%), those with a household income under \$40,000 (40%), and Black or African American respondents (46%) reporting the lowest use.

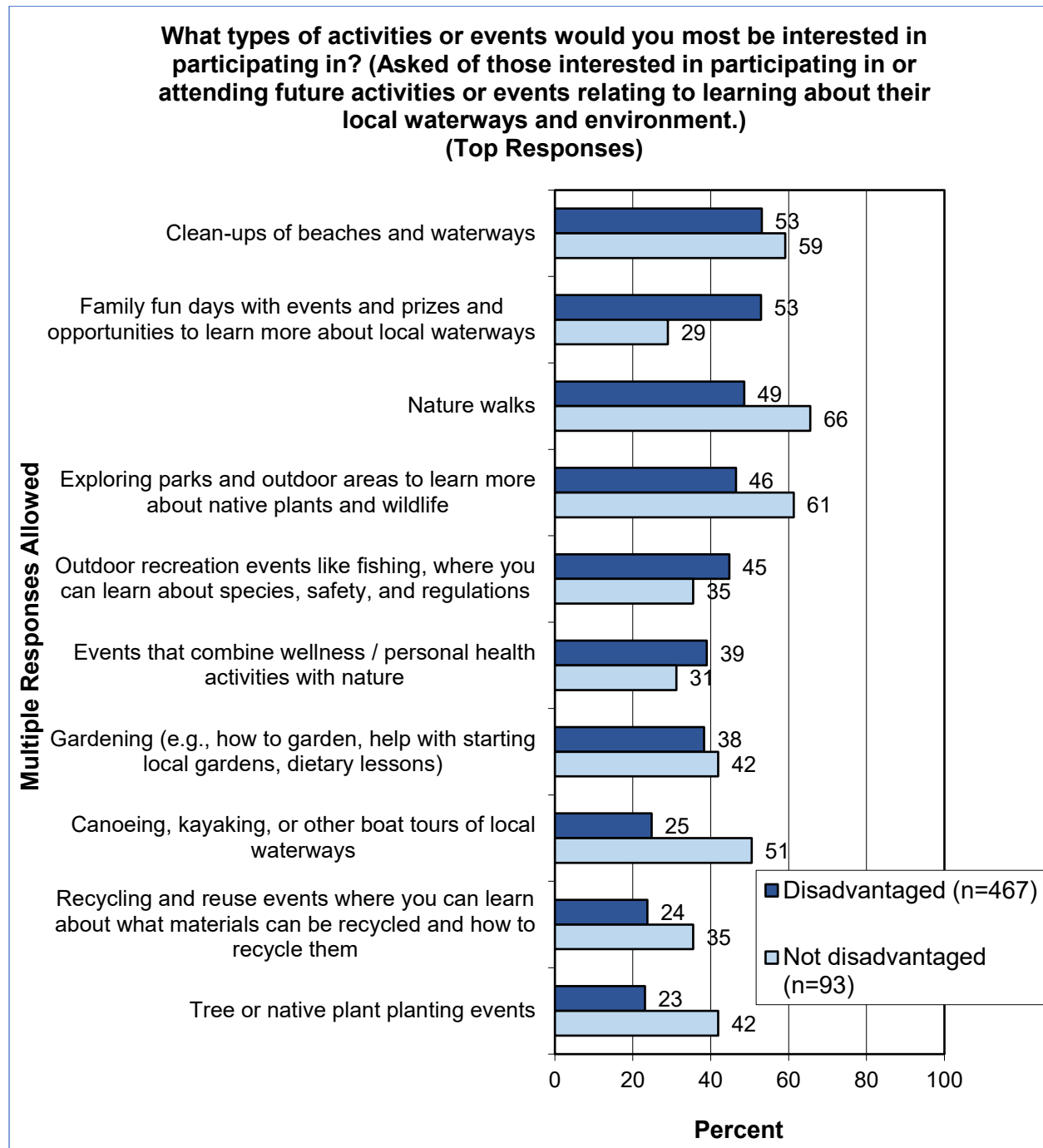
**Percent of each of the following groups who have ever used or currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways:**



Respondents who had not used the Sound or had not used the Sound as often as they would like, were asked for any reasons that prevented them from using the Sound. While having competing priorities and limited time is a personal barrier to access, problems with transportation (the top response) and limited access to waterways, in general, were also top responses and are directly related to more systemic access issues.

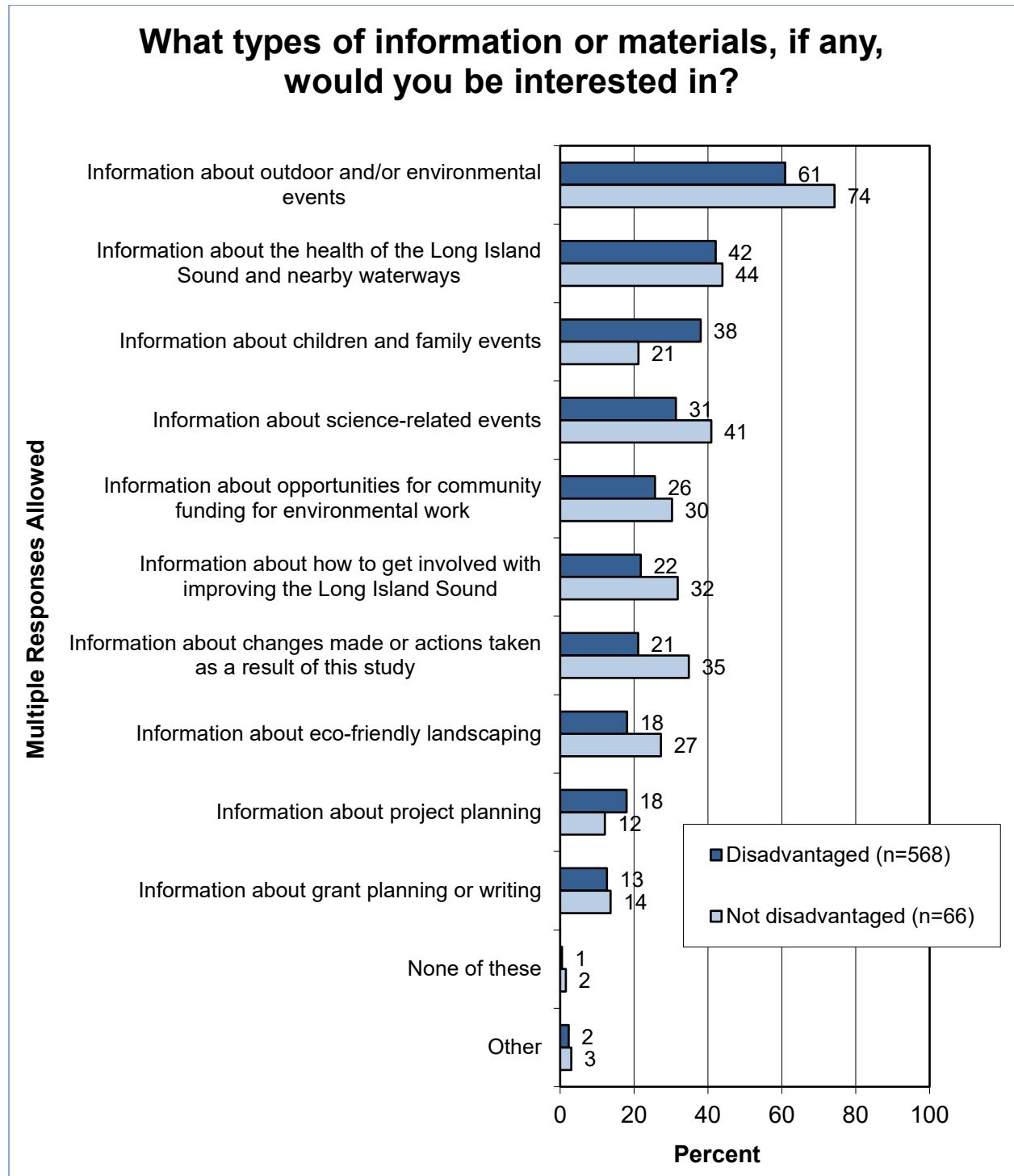


Clearly showing the desire for clean spaces in which to recreate, respondents selected clean-ups of beaches and waterways along with family fun days as the top two types of activities or events they would be interested in participating in (only top responses are shown below).

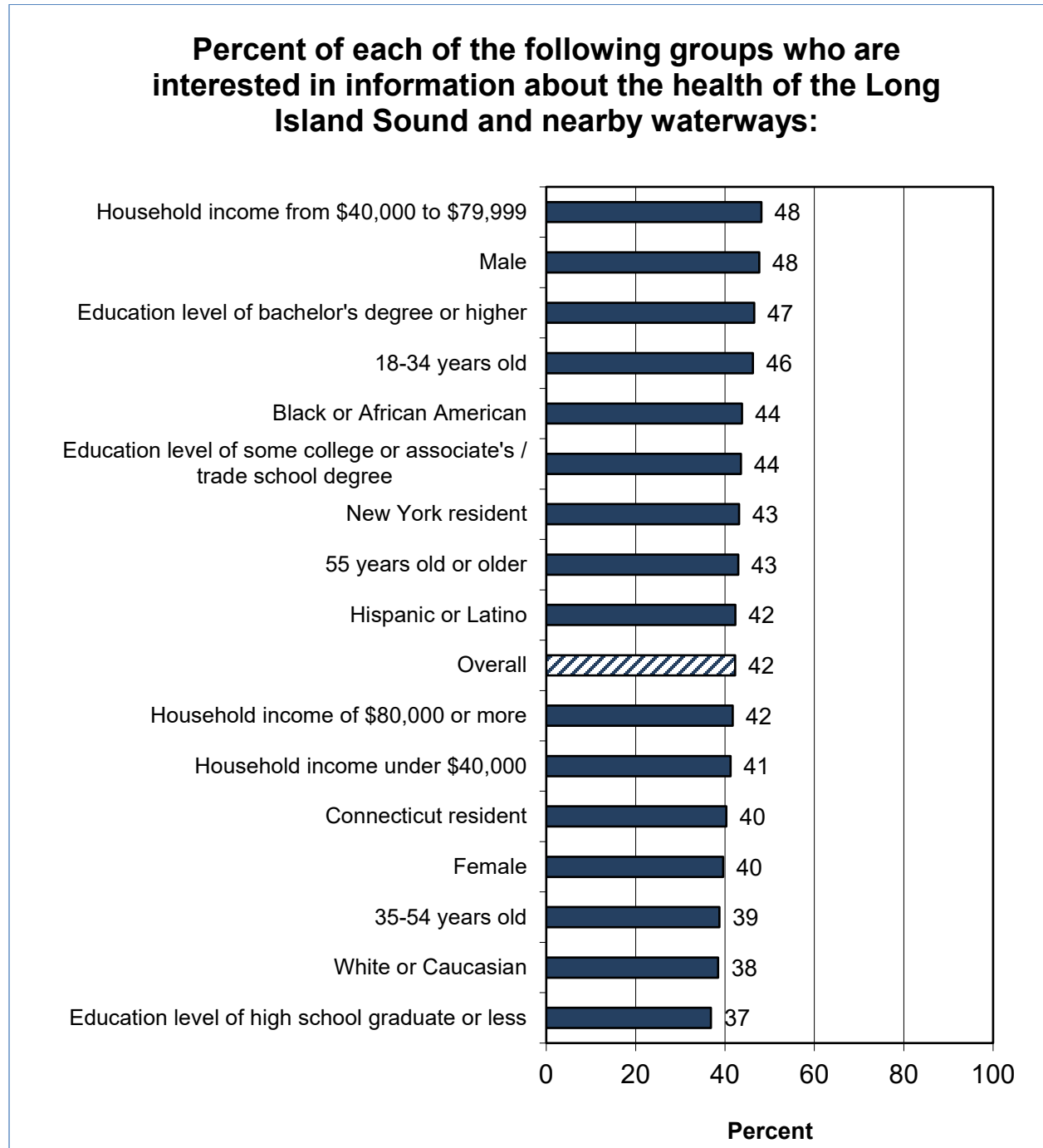


The graph below shows results for the type of information respondents would be interested in. The second highest response among disadvantaged respondents was information about the

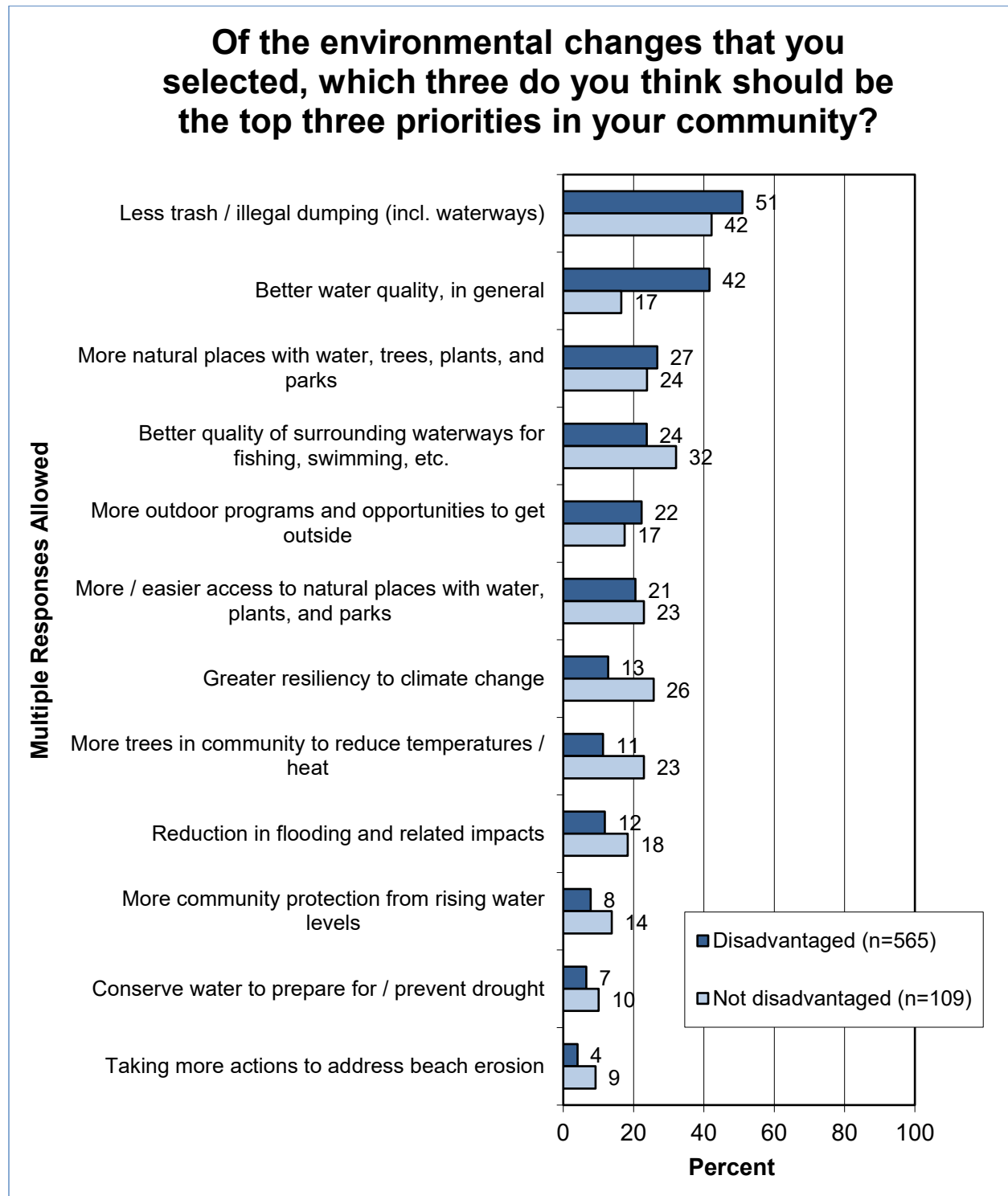
health of the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways. This response highlights the desire for clean and safe access to the Sound.



The demographic analysis below shows respondents who indicated they were interested in receiving information about the health of the Sound and nearby waterways. As shown, the level of interest for this information is generally consistent between the various demographic groups.



Respondents were asked which environmental changes they thought should be prioritized in their communities. The top two responses, with more than 40% of disadvantaged respondents selecting each, both indicate a desire for clean and safe spaces.



### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Comments from attendees at community listening sessions further illustrate the findings about access. In addition, summaries of some of the topics included and conversations that occurred in community listening sessions help highlight the challenges with accessing the Sound.

“I have lived in different states. It always surprises me how much beach is private, but not just access to the beach itself but to transportation to get there, to access to education about it.”  
--Comment from Community Listening Session

“Some parks close at sunset. That’s when families can go to the park. Leaving them out feels exclusionary.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“I want to go fishing and do fun things, but the bus doesn’t work for me—it’s too expensive, doesn’t run all day on Saturdays, or go to the places I want to go. I give up.” –Comment from Community Member

“One way to keep that river clean is to make sure that the shoreline is clean, usable, and ready for everybody. What is the problem practically? Nobody, no single agency is willing to take responsibility for what’s on there or leased there, or even try to find out: is it the Department of Transportation? Is it the Department of Energy? Is it the Department of Conservation? Who is it? Until you do that, you cannot make significant changes along that shoreline, because nobody’s going to take responsibility. I promise you.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- In several of the community listening sessions, community members indicated that the beaches closest to disadvantaged communities are often not as clean; have nearby industry, which makes residents feel unsafe; or are privatized or restricted from the public. Some community members indicated that, although there may seem to be clean accessible beaches within driving distance, these beaches were *not* accessible to those experiencing the issues associated with disadvantaged communities, such as transportation issues or costs associated with travel or parking.
- Transportation was a major issue that emerged in nearly all community listening sessions and additional community outreach. Some attendees discussed issues with limited routes, times, or bus or train stops. Attendees in some locations also indicated that the price of public transit had increased in their communities.
- According to some participants in the listening session, several communities in the area are making efforts to prevent public access (such as through attempting to block the building of fishing piers) to prevent outsiders from accessing waterways in and around their communities. In addition, attendees discussed issues with large amounts of land being privately owned, further preventing access to natural areas. Attendees also discussed several local parks closing at sunset, effectively excluding many who have heavy work burdens or school-aged children.

- Community members in Mount Vernon indicated that accessing the Long Island Sound, and particularly the Hutchinson River (a tributary of the Long Island Sound that runs through Mount Vernon), was difficult for some community members. Some attendees mentioned issues with safety because of trash and debris buildup in some areas, as well as uncertainty about privatization of the shoreline.
- Community members indicated that they feel they have limited access to the Sound. Some attendees said that they had seen lots of trash and debris on the shoreline, especially during periods of flooding. Some noted that the buildup seemed unsafe and made accessing the water difficult. Many in attendance noted issues with transportation being a barrier to access. Specifically, there was discussion about the lack of public routes that went directly to beaches.



## FINDINGS ABOUT INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The next series of findings apply to needs and challenges with information and education. The information from the needs assessment that supports the findings will be shown in the following order: exploratory phase information, in-depth interview additions, findings from the survey with community members, and finally feedback from community listening sessions and additional outreach.

**Broad Community Finding 9: Some community members believe that education and information materials should focus on the connections between social and infrastructure challenges and the environment.**

**Broad Community Finding 10: Building on the previous need, many CBOs and community members feel that their communities could benefit from more information and education about the environment and nature, in general.**

**Broad Community Finding 11: Disadvantaged communities may have an even greater need than non-disadvantaged communities for information about the safety of waterways and specific species for fishing and shellfishing.**

**Broad Community Finding 12: The need for translated and easily accessible fishing regulations and licensure information was repeated throughout the needs assessment interviews and community listening sessions.**

**Broad Community Finding 13: Because many CBOs and community members indicated that they are unaware of the Sound and are unfamiliar with the LISS, there is a need for information that educates about the location of the Sound, places to access the Sound, and provides more information about who the LISS is and the various programs available through the LISS**

**Broad Community Finding 14: People need more information about where to access waterways and other natural areas safely.**

### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

Early in the project, when interviewing LISS partners to begin connecting with CBOs, interviewees indicated concern about the limited information that some groups might be receiving. Many interviewees discussed the need for more and greater access to educational materials in different languages. Interviewees also mentioned the need for materials specifically for subsistence anglers. Some feel that many of these anglers are refugees and immigrants, Spanish speakers (in Connecticut, it was suggested that a large portion of Spanish speakers were of Puerto Rican descent), Southeast Asians, Syrian and Afghan refugees, and Eastern Europeans. Many are concerned that without translated materials, they may not be aware of the dangers associated with fishing in some waterways and for some specific species.

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, every phase of this project found that there is a need for materials translated into multiple languages. In the exploratory phase of the project, the

table below was created to show the primary non-English languages used throughout the region. While there is some variation in languages spoken in each area, there is a fair degree of overlap, particularly with Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, and French Creole.

### Languages Spoken in Regions and Cities

<p><b>New York City</b> Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, Russian, and French Creole The Bronx: Bengali, Kru, Ibo, and Yoruba Queens: Large group of Mandarin speakers</p>	<p><b>Westchester County</b> Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, and Jamaican Patois</p>
<p><b>Long Island</b> Latin American Spanish Suffolk County: French Creole, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese Nassau County: Mandarin, Italian, Persian (Farsi), Korean, Hatian Creole</p>	<p><b>Eastern Connecticut</b> Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, French Creole, Polish</p>
<p><b>Western Connecticut</b> Latin American Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish Significant numbers of Hindi speakers, Jamaican Patois, and French Creole New Haven has a significant number of Mandarin speakers</p>	<p><b>Central Connecticut</b> Latin American Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish Also significant numbers of Hindi speakers, Jamaican Patois, French Creole, and Italian</p>

### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

Many interviewees noted the need for education and information. In many cases, interviewees indicated a general need for information about the environment, climate change, and public access. In some cases, interviewees indicated the need for translated materials and several interviewees feel strongly that many infrastructure and public health issues are related to environmental justice, and therefore materials about the connection between the environment and more pressing issues should be emphasized.

Some interviewees also expressed concern that a lack of interaction and access and a history of exclusion among many disadvantaged groups had created a type of disconnect between disadvantaged communities and the natural environment. To counter this issue, interviewees feel that more education and information, especially information that could increase use of and

access to nature and the Sound could restore the connection and help highlight the intersections between infrastructure and social or public health issues and the environment.

### **Education and Information Findings**

- Interviewees feel that more outreach to teachers and schools would be helpful. Because of the time and financial burdens often placed on educators, many educators are waiting for information to be provided by an outsider.
- More easily available information about where to access green and blue spaces (water-based spaces) would be extremely helpful to communities.
- CBOs need help with getting community members and students out on the water and out in the environment.
- Many feel they need support with climate change education curriculum. Collaboration and events for schools could help make connections between air quality and climate change-related issues or events (such as recent fires).
- Materials should be shared across groups and organizations to support and enhance programming and curriculum related to climate change and the environment.
- Many CBOs that may not have addressed environmental issues in the past will have to deal with environmental issues and discrimination, such as those presented by coal plants, sewage plants, and flooding in low-income areas. These organizations often have capacity limitations that act as barriers to participation, and while there are funds and support available, this limited capacity will prevent much movement. Agencies need to meet these organizations and their missions.
- CBOs need help bringing in communities to help plan and develop assets such as more bike paths, walking paths, and transportation.
- Several CBOs expressed concern about subsistence anglers, who may not speak English or be aware of fish advisories or regulations, potentially consuming fish that were unsafe for consumption.

**Language and Communication Recommendations**

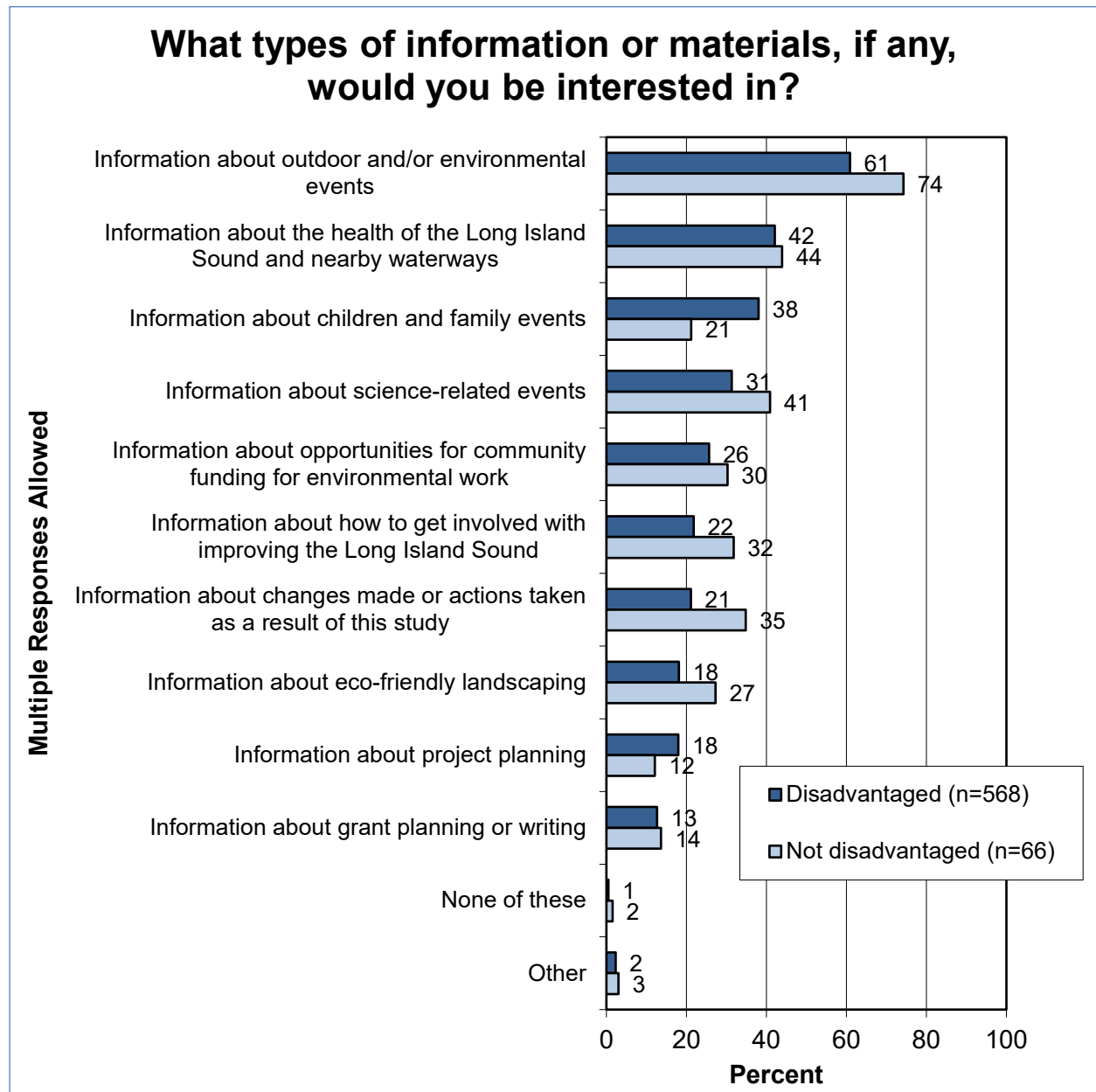
- When speaking with or providing written materials to communities, interviewees feel that it is important to explicitly make connections between marginalization and environmental justice issues.
- Some suggested starting with something tangible when talking about a big issue like climate change. Tell the story of wetlands and waterways and emphasize their importance in connecting people and communities.
- Some feel that the best strategy can be to prove that something is financially responsible. Effusive conversations about nature do not resonate with everyone, but potential financial gains resonate with most. Some people have had success showing how something environmentally friendly is financially advantageous.
- Interviewees feel that discussions around environmental issues need to be purposeful and meaningful to different groups. Interviewees mentioned that in some locations it might be better to talk about the Long Island Sound, whereas in other locations, it might work better to speak about a nearby part of the watershed instead of the Sound as a whole. One interviewee asked, “What does ‘conservation’ mean in an urban environment?” Some feel that taking the approach of talking about increased frequency of flooding, for example—something everyone sees and experiences—can make climate change feel more tangible and help communities understand the connections between social and environmental justice where they might not otherwise.

**Disconnection From the Environment**

- Interviewees feel that a history of excluding some communities (particularly BIPOC communities) in environmental discussions has resulted in feelings of marginalization and being unwelcome in environmental justice decision-making.
- Some feel that because communities have not had opportunities to access and appreciate the environment, they do not feel connected to its future or invested in its protection.
- Many interviewees feel that even those who live closest to the Sound or other waterways have not ever visited or used the waterway and are therefore completely unaware of how their actions might impact the Sound.
- Interviewees noted that conversations about the environment should also be conversations about environmental *justice*.
- Some feel that there should be a focus on educating the public about the intersections between climate change, environmental justice, and social and health issues.
- Interviewees stressed the importance of making connections between environmental justice and more immediate concerns like health and food. Some interviewees believe that to reach underserved communities, the connection between the environment and their daily concerns must be made.

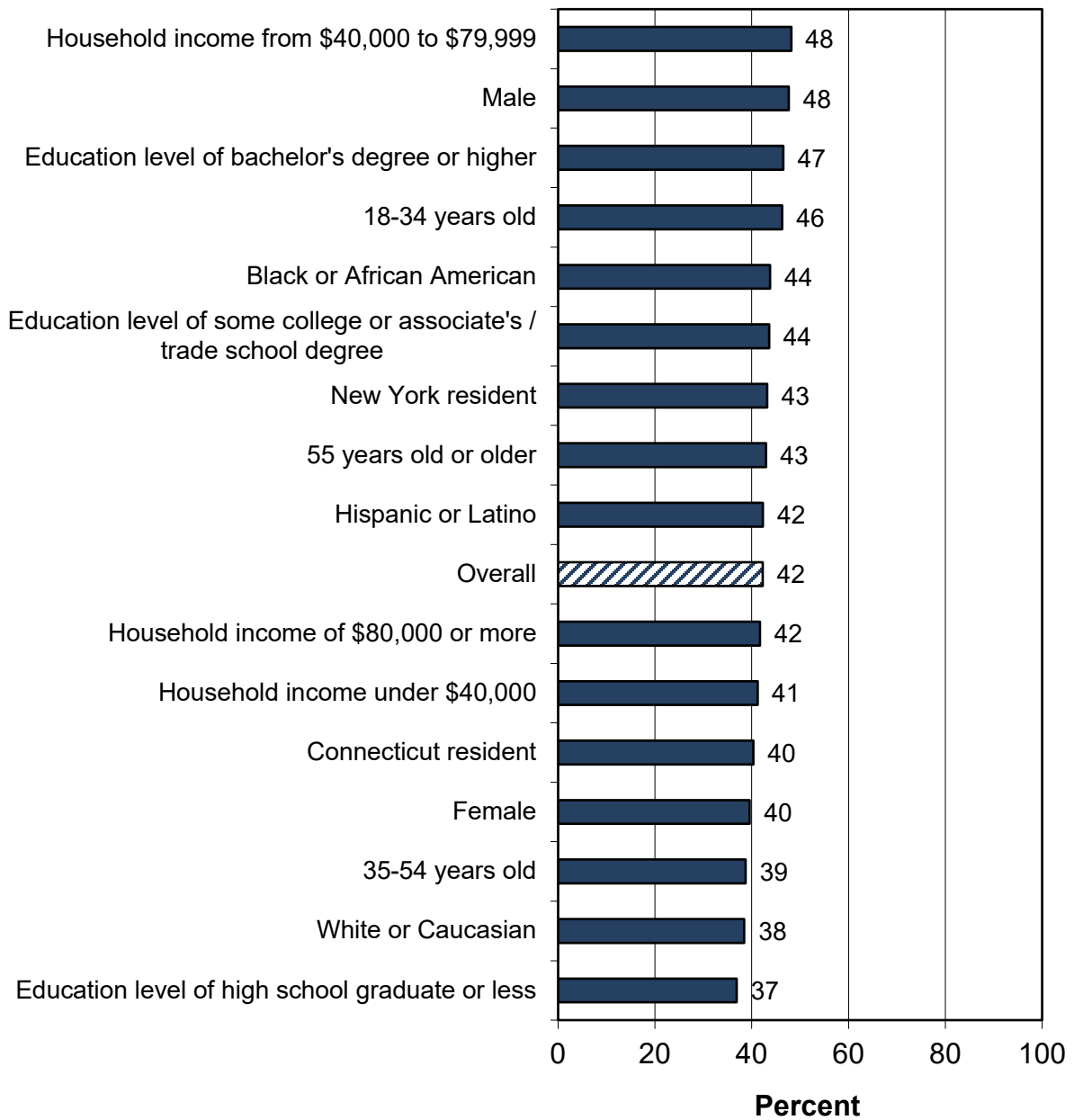
### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

Some findings from the survey with community members explicitly outlined the types of information disadvantaged respondents are interested in receiving. Other findings, however, implied the need for information and education, especially when combined with findings from other phases of the project. The graph below is an example of the former. The responses most often selected by disadvantaged groups when asked what types of information or materials they would be interested in, compliment many of the findings discussed earlier in this chapter, including the desire for clean and safe spaces (indicated by the ranking of information about the health of the Long Island Sound) and the desire to spend time in nature (indicated by the ranking of information about outdoor and/or environmental events).

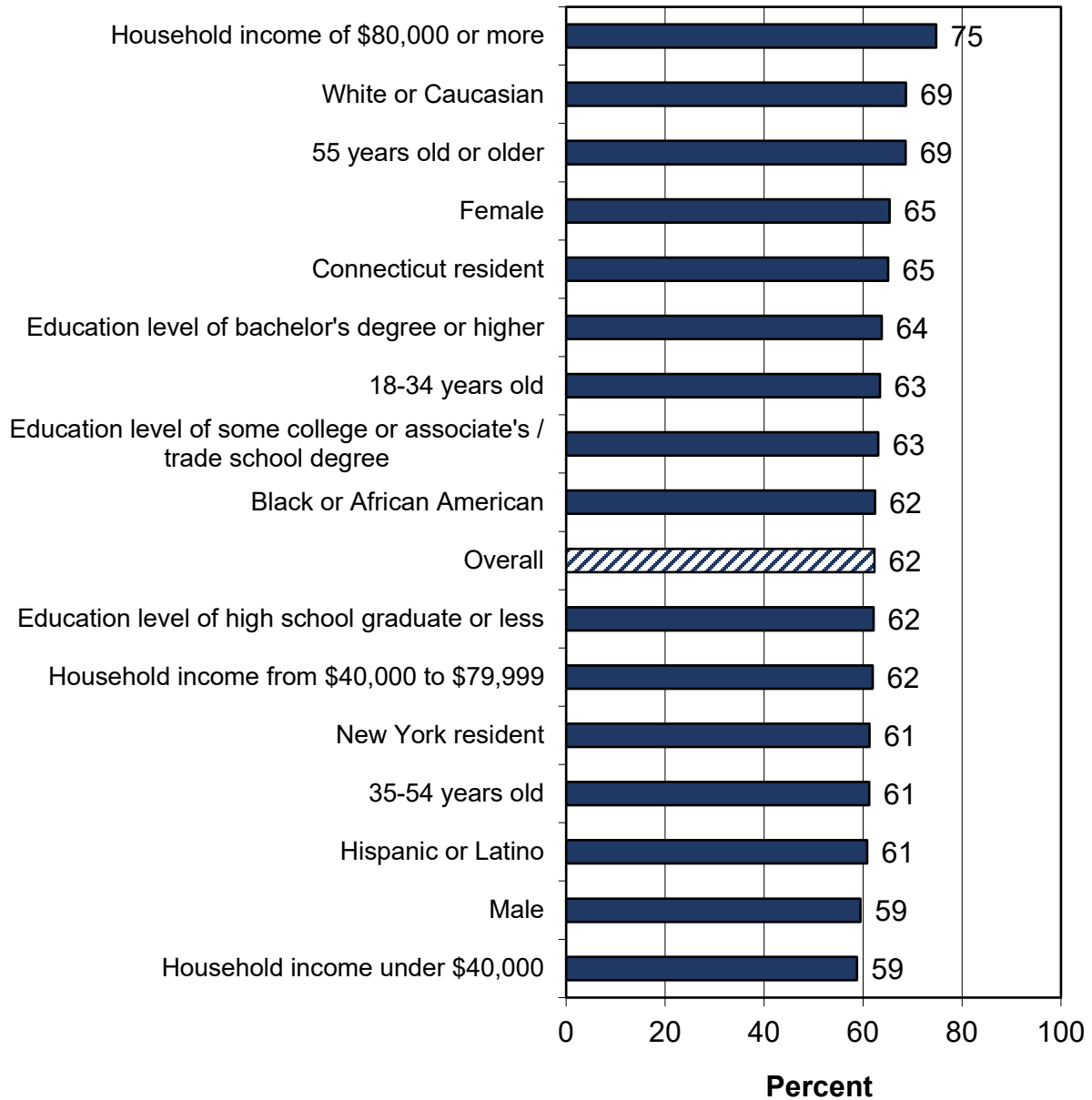


In order to better understand which groups might be interested in which types of information, the percentage of each demographic that is interested in information about the health of the Long Island Sound and information about outdoor and/or environmental events (the top two types of information for which disadvantaged respondents indicated interest) are shown next.

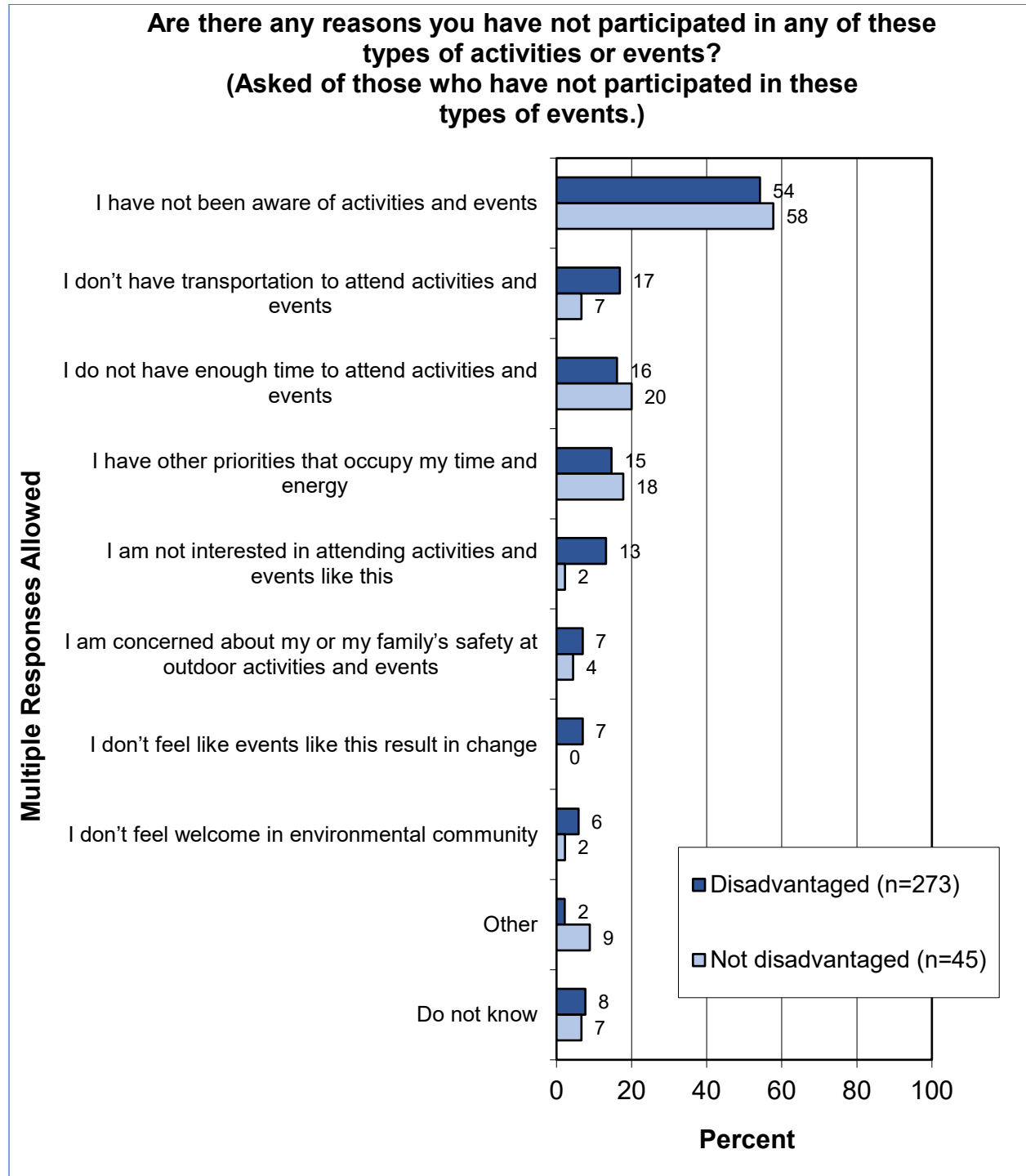
**Percent of each of the following groups who are interested in information about the health of the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways:**



**Percent of each of the following groups who are interested in information about outdoor and/or environmental events:**

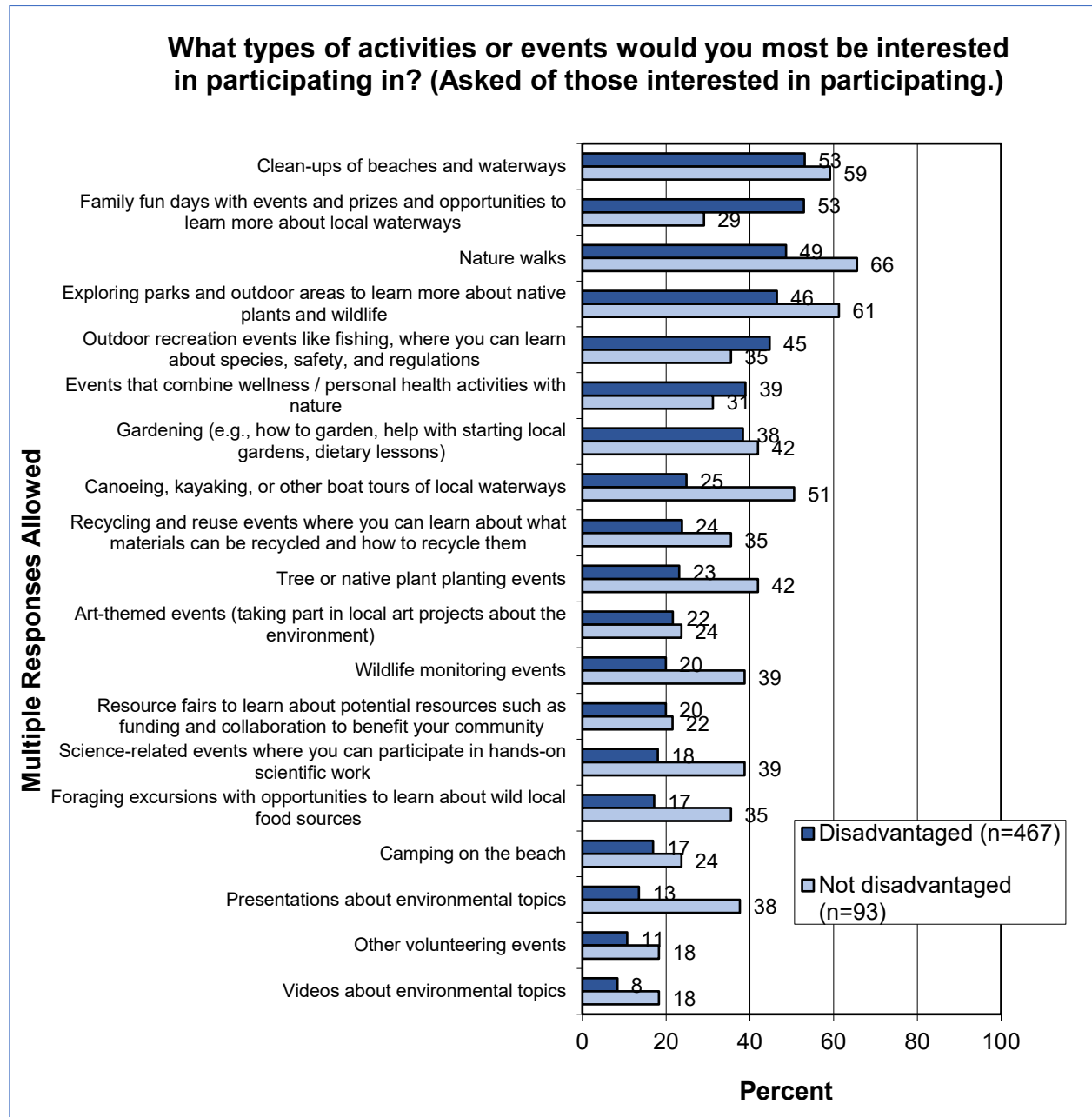


When asked if there are any reasons they have not participated in outdoor or environmental activities and events, the most common response among disadvantaged respondents was that they were not aware of such events. These results indicate a need for more widely disseminated information about activities and events.

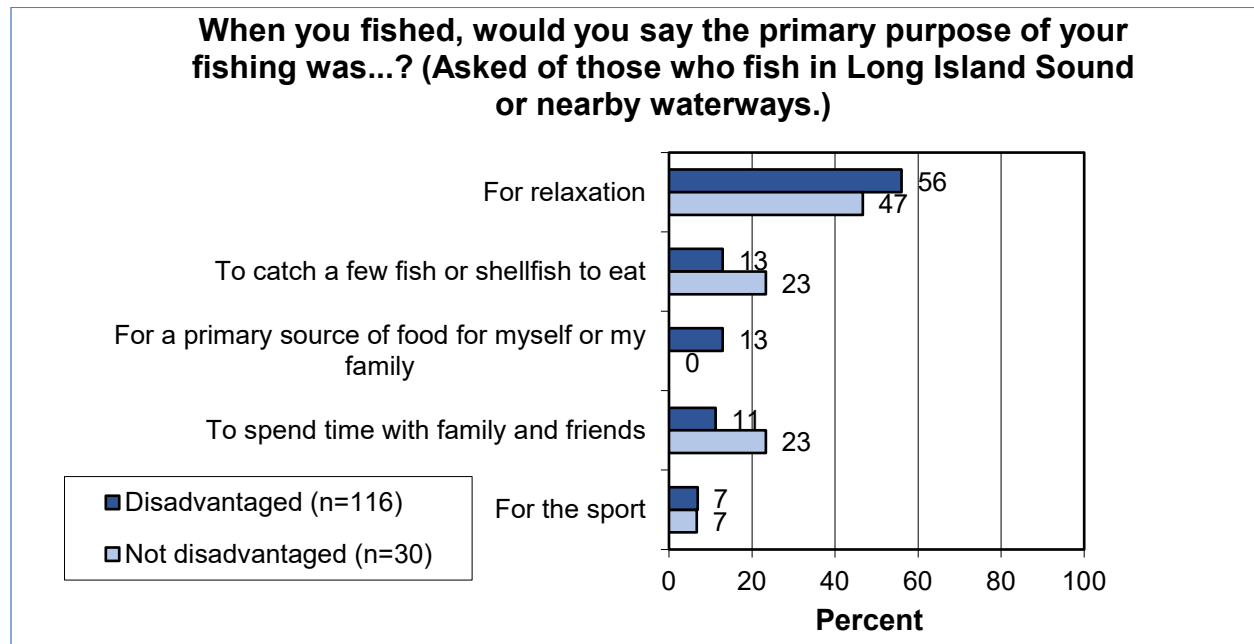




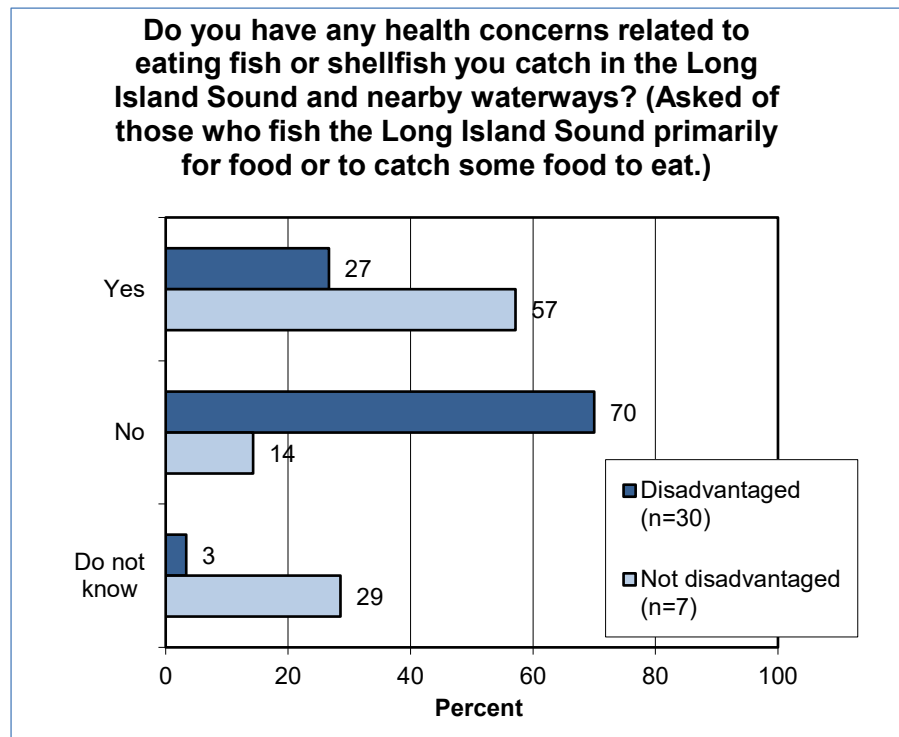
When asked about the types of activities and events they would most be interested in, several of the top responses, further indicated a desire for more information and education, including family fun days with events and prizes and opportunities to learn more about local waterways, exploration of parks and outdoor areas to learn more about native plants and wildlife, and outdoor recreation events like fishing, where they can learn about species, safety, and regulations.



The final two graphs shown in this section exemplify an implied need for information among disadvantaged respondents. First, respondents who indicated they had used the Sound for fishing were asked for the primary purpose of their fishing. Disadvantaged respondents were far more likely than their counterparts to indicate that they had fished for a primary source of food for themselves or their family.



Among those who indicated that they fished for food to eat, disadvantaged respondents were significantly less likely to be concerned about their health related to eating fish or shellfish caught in the Sound. When combined, this information implies a need for more information about which species of fish and shellfish are safe to consume, as well as when and where it is most safe to catch and consume those species.



### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Comments from attendees at community listening sessions further illustrate the findings about the need for more information and education. In addition, summaries of some of the conversations that occurred in community listening sessions help highlight the need for specific information and education.

“People don’t know about certain things. It’s done on purpose, mind you. But I think if we could introduce the people or get them into some sort of a program to explain things, maybe use social media, Facebook, Instagram; whatever else they use out there and get the information out there so people could be aware of certain things, that would help. I think that would be the next step.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“I did get a license. When I was starting to fish, I didn’t have a license, but then I was talking to a friend of mine who was like you should probably get a license, it’s really cheap, you can just go down to the place and get it, and boom! I got it. At first when I started I didn’t know you had to have a license.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- A community need that was discussed at length during the listening session was the need for programming, education, and information to introduce people to the Sound and how to use and access its natural resources. Many in the Huntington Station listening session indicated that they were initially completely unaware of the Sound. Although they knew there were nearby waterways, they were not aware of the specific waterbody or whether the waterway was accessible to the public. Further, attendees indicated that they were not aware of the LISS. Attendees said that the community would likely be interested in information about water quality, how to protect the Long Island Sound, and fishing.

## FINDINGS ABOUT RECREATION AND USE OF THE SOUND

The next series of findings apply to recreation and use of the Sound. The information from the needs assessment that supports the findings will be shown in the following order: exploratory phase information, in-depth interview additions, findings from the survey with community members, and finally feedback from community listening sessions and additional outreach.

**Broad Community Finding 15: Some anglers may not be familiar with common tools and techniques and may need increased training and information to learn how to fish in compliance with rules and regulations.**

**Broad Community Finding 16: Specific services and resources would encourage greater participation in recreational activities and events.**

**Broad Community Finding 17: Some disadvantaged groups have historically been excluded from accessing waterways and are therefore not as comfortable with using the Sound or participating in outdoor recreation.**

### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

Some of the interviewees from the exploratory phase of the project indicated that they had seen a great number of anglers fishing for in the Sound, particularly anglers from disadvantaged communities, such as non-English speaking immigrants and refugees. In addition, some interviewees indicated that they had seen an increase in fishing in the Sound overall.

### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

When asked when and how community members were recreating and using the Sound, interviewees indicated that they had seen many anglers in the Sound, some of which they believed to be subsistence anglers. Interviewees indicated that some non-English speaking anglers may have come from locations without fishing rules and regulations and were therefore sometimes completely unaware that there were rules they needed to follow. Interviewees also discussed the fact that misperceptions about the quality of the water in the Sound might be preventing some community members from using or recreating in the Sound.

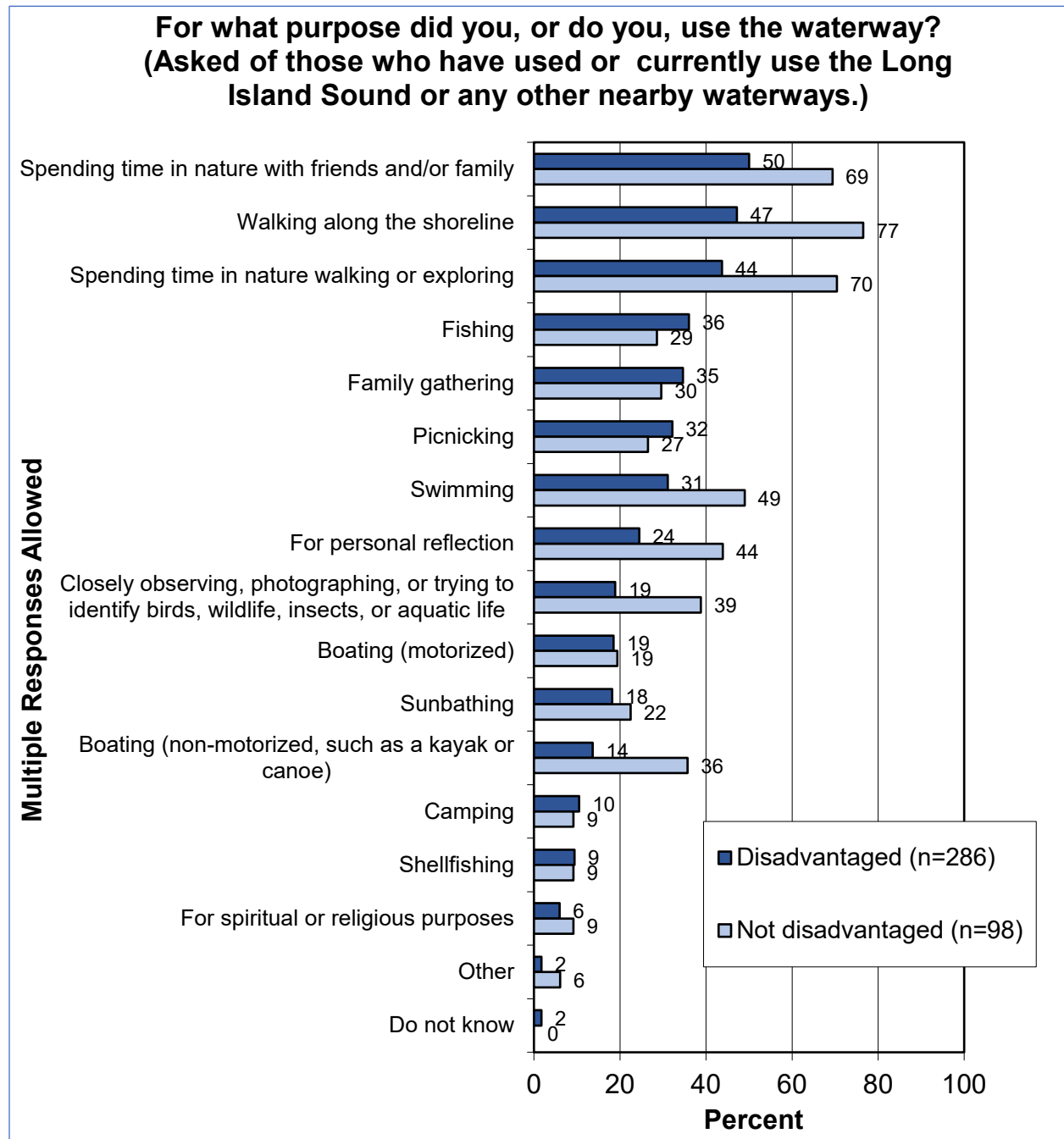
### Recreation and Activity

- Interviewees feel that a paper guide of fish species that are safe and in-season, with a list of size limits and why these regulations are important, could be very useful for subsistence anglers. Although such resources are available, the onus is on the individual to obtain regulatory information. Pamphlets or handouts at fishing areas could be very helpful.
- Many interviewees asked for more information about water quality and safety to inform and support access to recreation.
- There should be more free community activities to make people more aware of the Sound, its resources, and how to access beaches and waterways.
- Programs like the Long Island Sound shuttle program should be shared with community

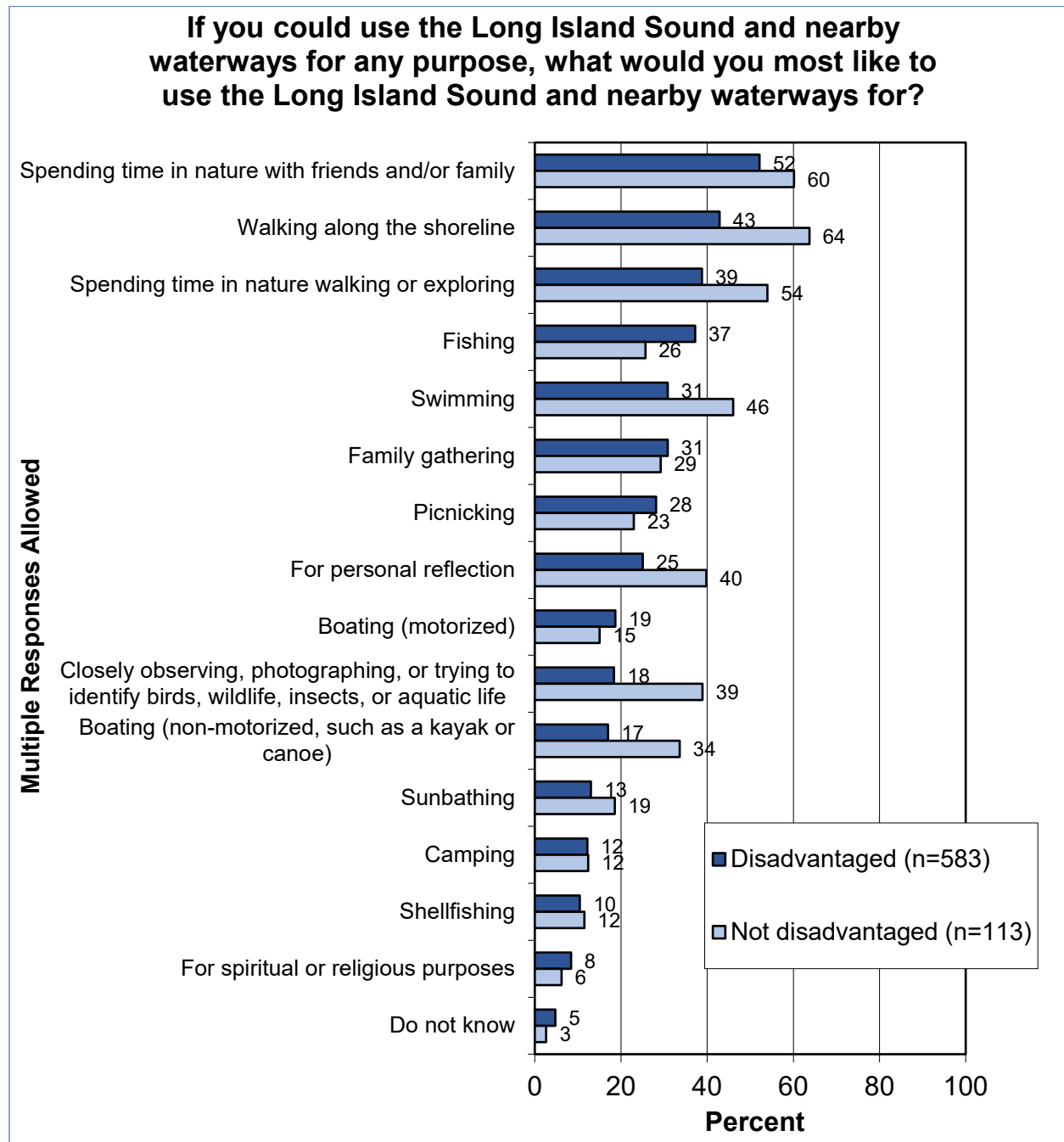
members and municipalities to help with outreach and engagement, and to find support for the program, which would allow more community members to access waterways for recreation.

### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

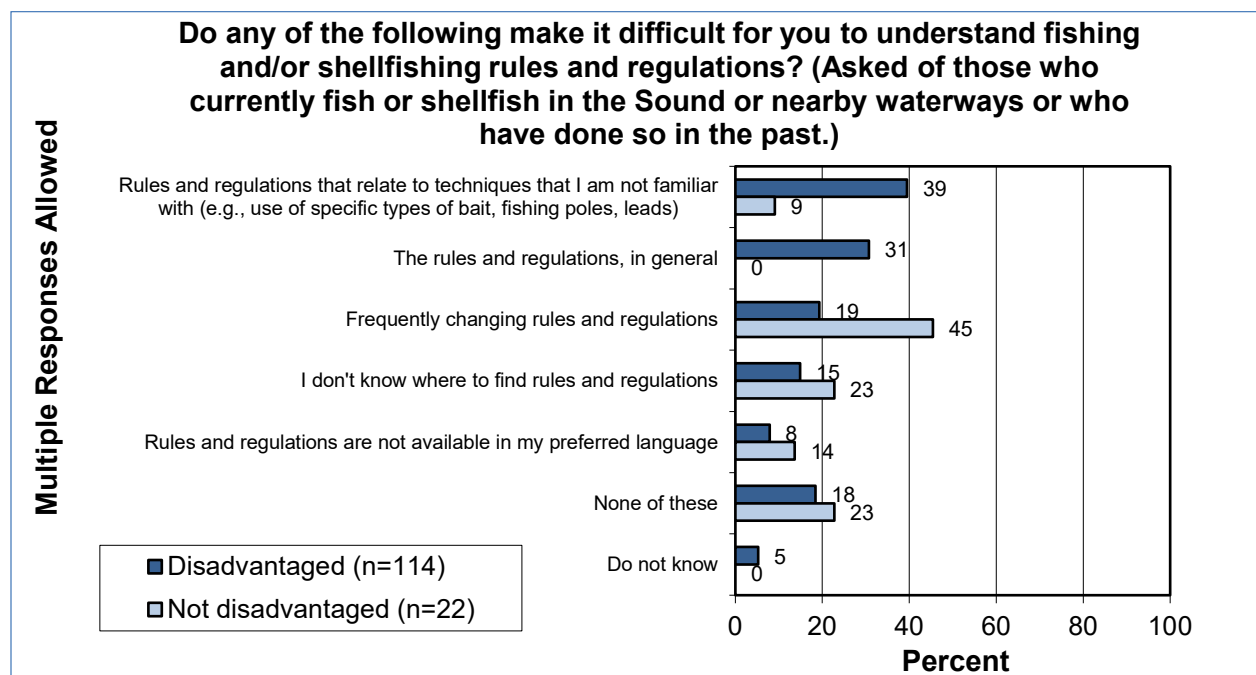
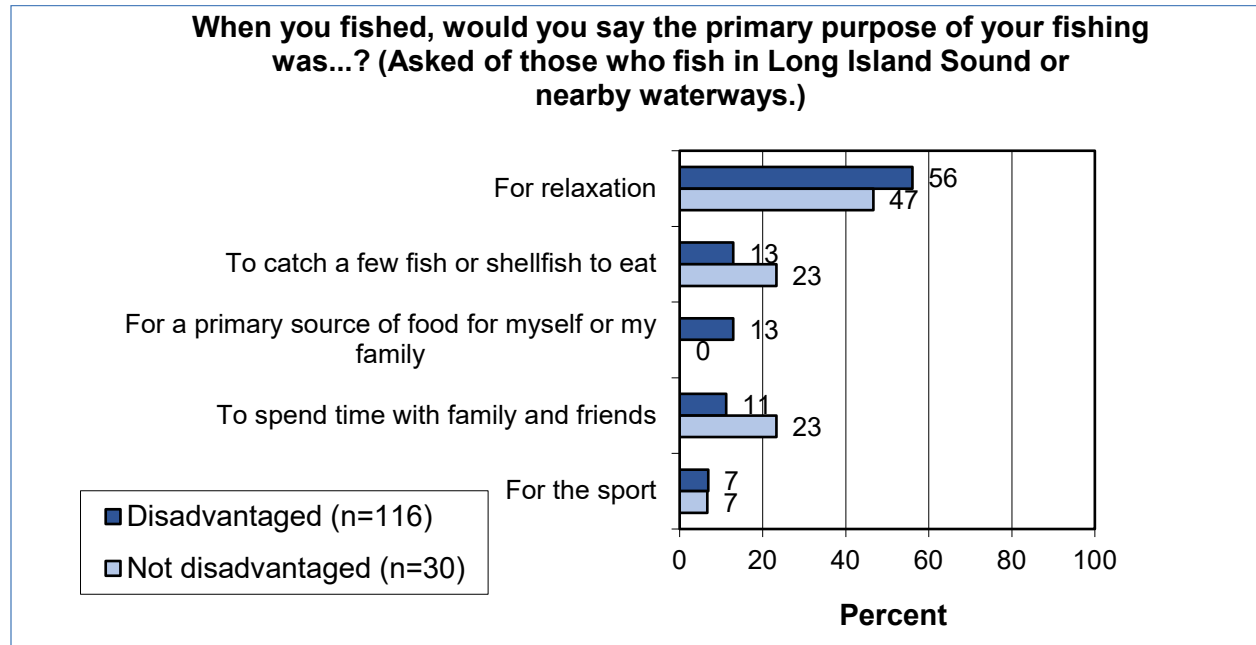
When respondents were asked what they have used the Sound for, the top three responses involved spending time in nature or just walking along the shoreline. The percentage of disadvantaged respondents who had used the Sound for fishing was higher than the percentage of non-disadvantaged respondents, which directly supports some of the comments made by community members and CBOs.



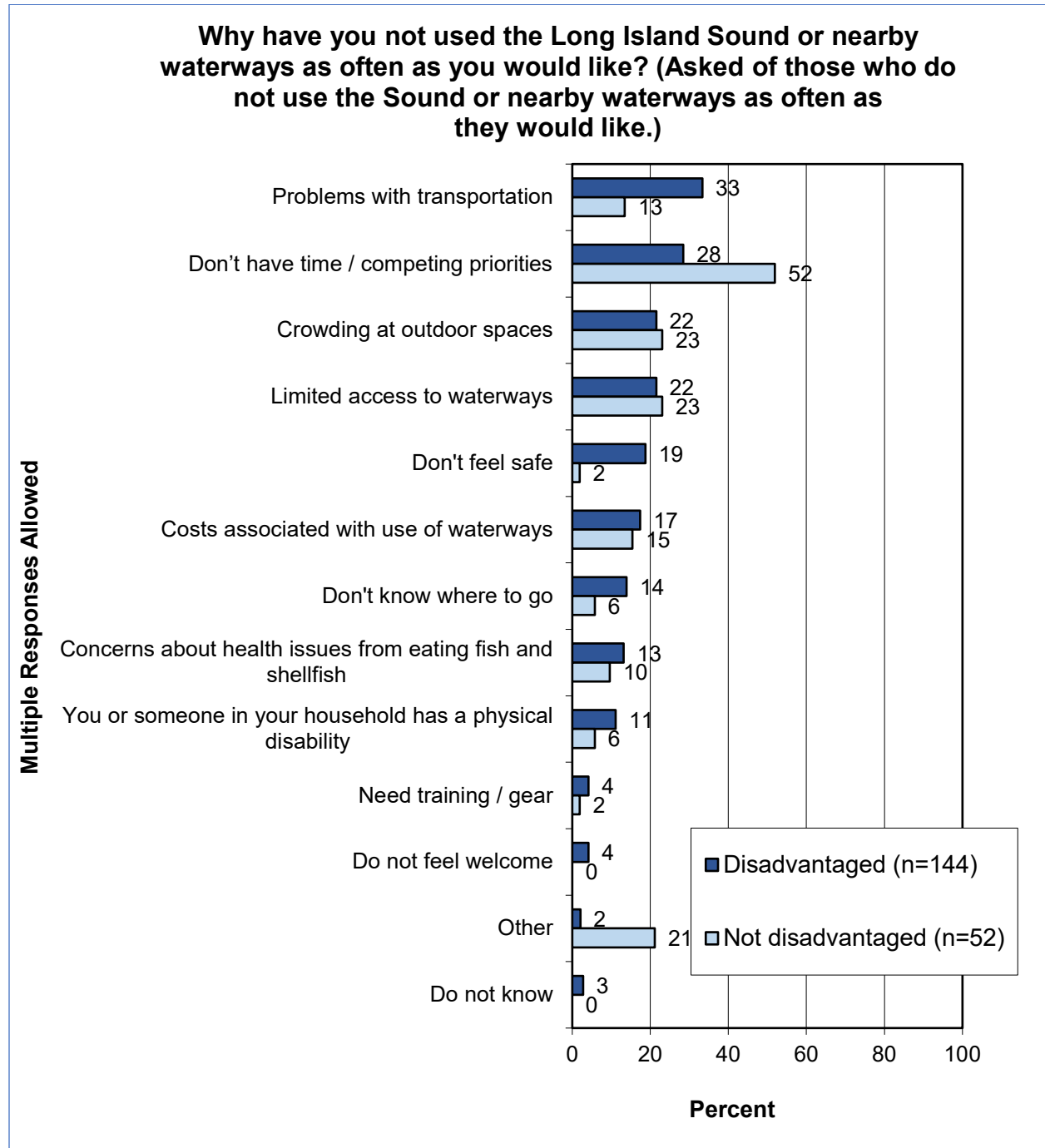
In a similar question, all respondents were asked what they would most like to use the Sound for, and again responses indicated that many would simply like to spend time in nature. Here again, disadvantaged respondents indicated a greater interest in fishing.



Those who indicated they had been fishing were asked the primary purpose of their fishing. Disadvantaged respondents were more likely to indicate they had been fishing for a primary source of food for themselves or their families. Those who indicated they fished were later asked if there was anything that made understanding rules and regulations difficult for them. The most common response among disadvantaged respondents was rules and regulations that relate to techniques they are not familiar with. This information indicates that non-compliance with rules and regulations might be remedied with more training and information about tools and techniques.



When asked why they have not used the Sound as often as they would like, disadvantaged respondents were more likely to indicate they did not feel safe when compared to non-disadvantaged respondents.





### Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Comments from attendees at community listening sessions further illustrate the findings about recreation and use of the Sound. In addition, summaries of some of the conversations that occurred in community listening sessions help highlight the need for specific information and education.

“I grew up on Long Island and I know we didn’t always go to the water because my mother had a fear of water. I find a lot of people of color have a fear of water. Not everyone, but many folks don’t know how to swim or engage with water. I think we need to start with encouraging people to learn how to swim or be comfortable in water and then work from there.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“It’s not a lack of interest. It’s not a lack of access. It’s not a lack of education. It’s the fact that we were restricted from those spaces.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- The Stonington listening session began with a discussion about the history of the immediate area, Connecticut in general, and the Long Island Sound region. Listening session attendees discussed what they perceived to be a long history of racism, colonialism, and exclusion, especially, in their opinions, in Connecticut.

## **COMMUNITY FINDINGS BY STATE: NEW YORK**

In the following section, results and findings are shown by state, starting with findings from New York in general. To support state-level findings, information from the exploratory phase, in-depth interviews, the survey with community members, and community listening sessions are presented.

### **NEW YORK FINDINGS ABOUT REACHING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES**

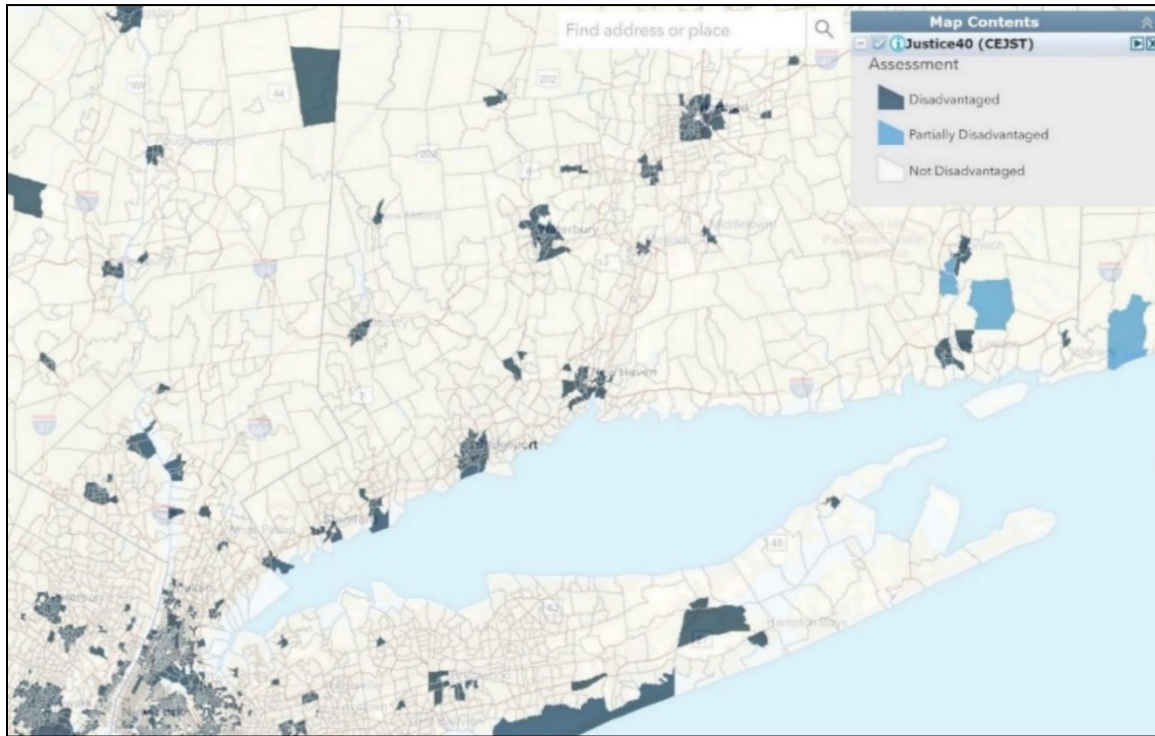
As with the overall findings throughout the region, many communities in New York indicated that they often had to prioritize daily issues, such as rent or food, rather than being more focused on the environment or engaging in outdoor activities. Throughout New York, transportation was mentioned as a major barrier to engagement, as well as several other infrastructure, public health, and social issues.

#### **Findings from the Exploratory Phase**

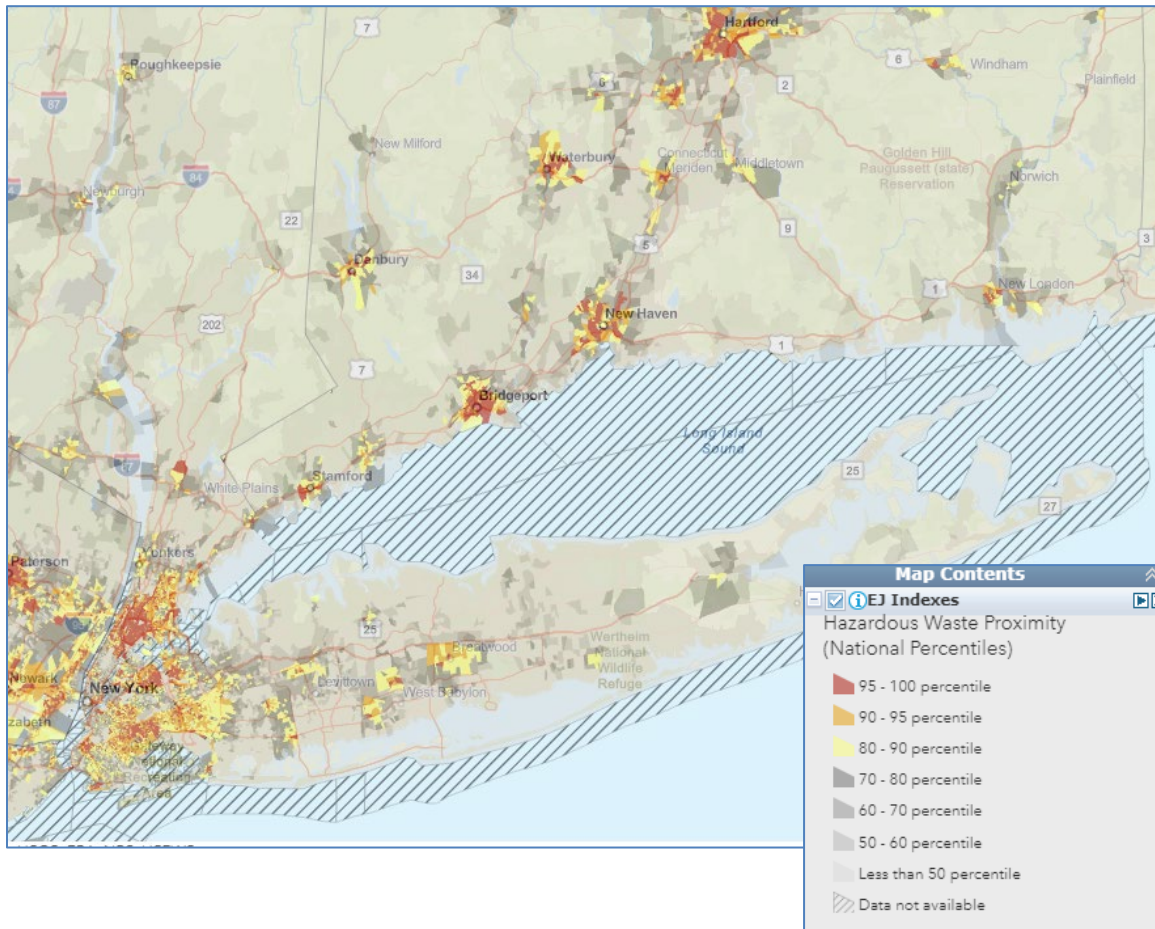
The exploratory phase included an in-depth review of mapping tools used to show issues associated with environmental justice and disadvantaged communities. In the below series of maps from the EPA EJScreen, several things can be seen that highlight some of the challenges in New York communities around the Sound. First, the number of disadvantaged communities in Westchester County, as well as the Bronx and Queens, are shown. Following the initial map, when examining proximity to hazardous waste, the percentiles of low income, and the percentiles of wastewater discharge, New York is shown as being heavily impacted by all of these environmental justice challenges.

While Long Island does not appear to be as impacted by these issues as some of the other New York communities around the Sound, one important goal of this needs assessment was to find out more about communities who may not have been involved in conversations or whose challenges and issues may not be reflected in data sets such as those presented in these maps. Community conversations and CBOs did, in many cases, indicate major issues in Long Island that will be discussed more thoroughly in the community-specific findings.

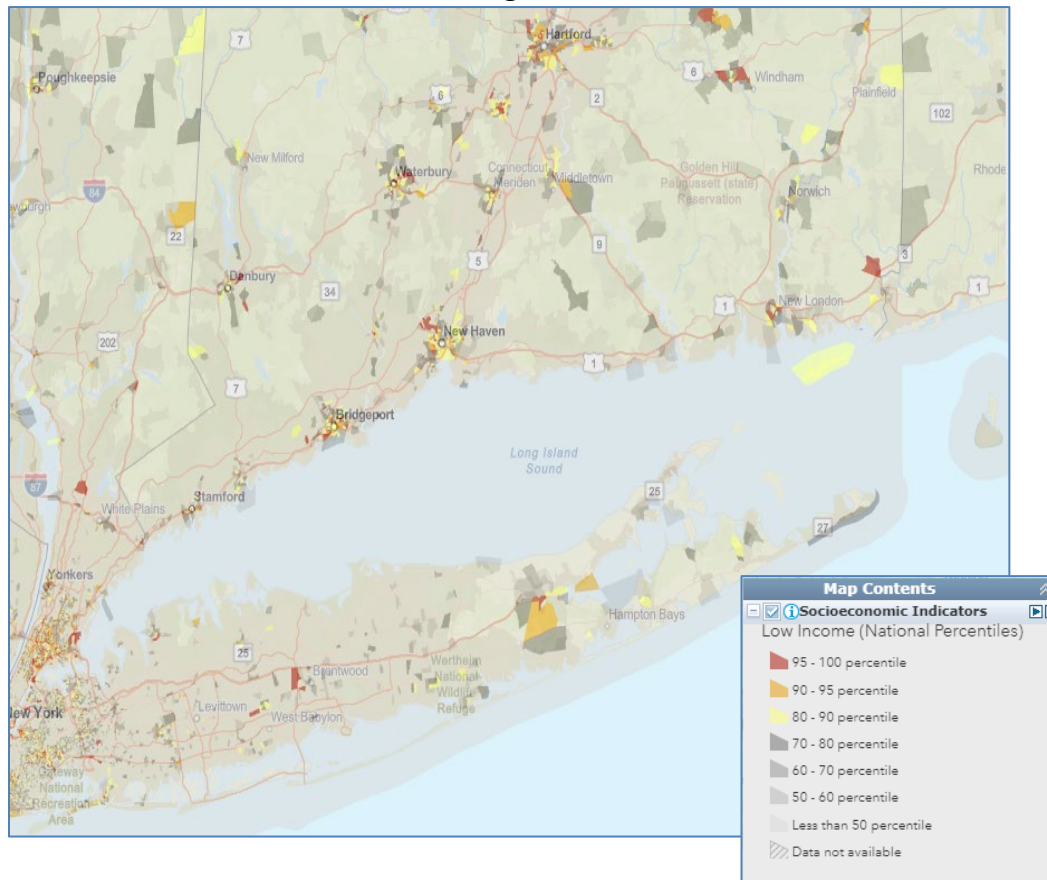
### Disadvantaged Communities on the Long Island Sound



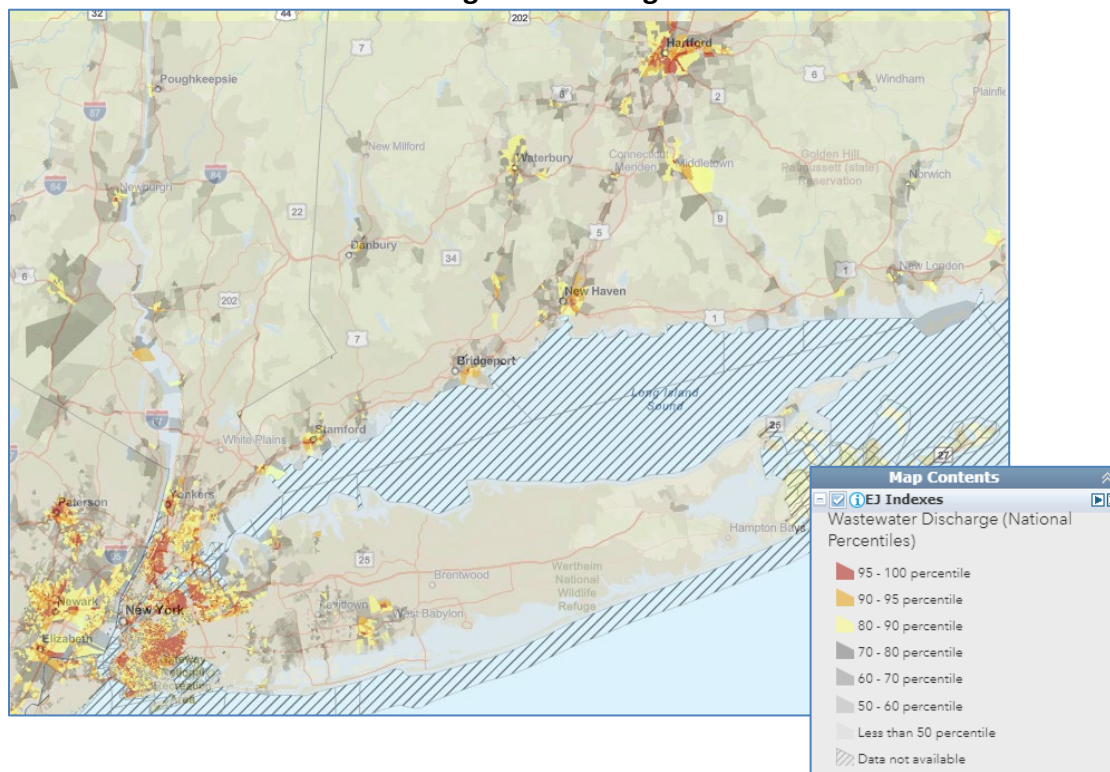
### Percentiles of Hazardous Waste on the Long Island Sound



### Percentiles of Low Income on the Long Island Sound



### Percentiles of Wastewater Discharge on the Long Island Sound



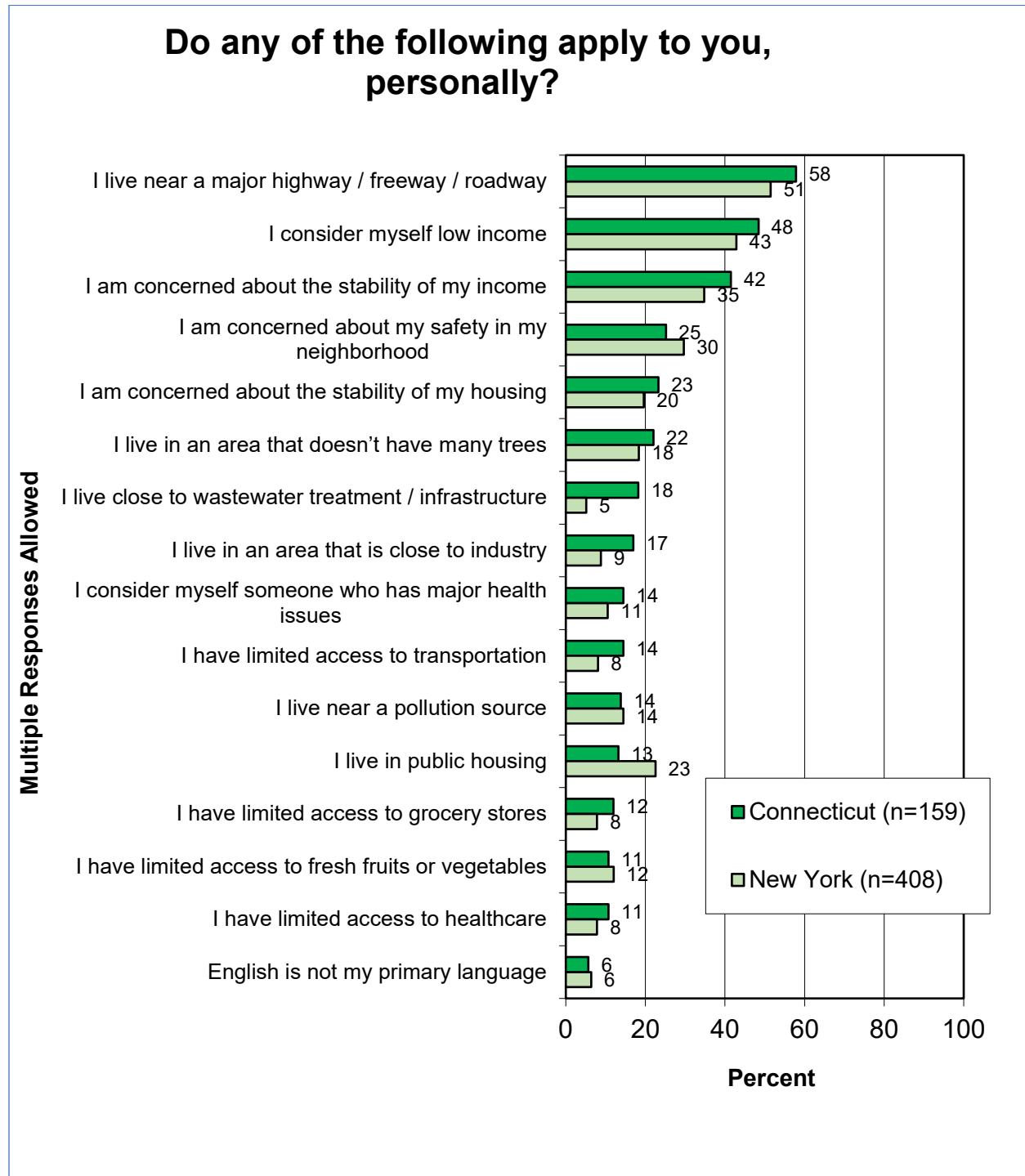
### **Findings from the In-Depth Interviews**

Some of the findings from in-depth interviews that relate to challenges with reaching and engaging communities in New York are summarized below. Many of the findings from the in-depth interviews emphasized the infrastructure and social challenges that many New York residents faced. As in other components of the project, many of these challenges are prioritized over environmental or nature-based activities or conversations.

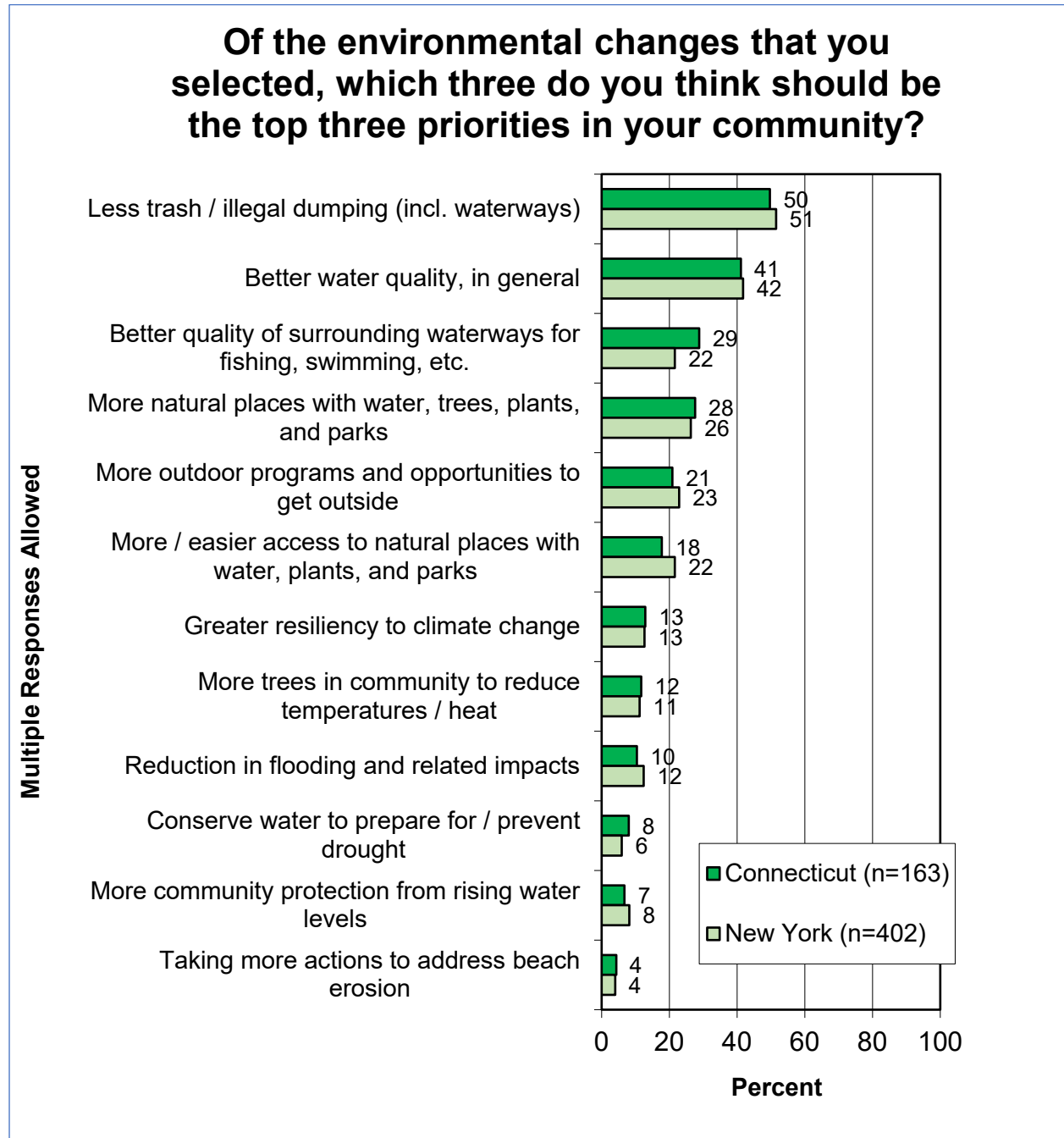
- Wealth disparities are thought to be contributing to a number of issues throughout the region, including public health, access to waterways and recreation, and social concerns.
- Interviewees think that most people are not aware of the Sound, and many do not recreate in the Sound or other nearby waterways.
- Shortage of housing in general and affordable housing in the region were often mentioned during interviews.
- New York CBOs discussed the increased need for community groups to focus on issues with housing in the region. In addition to a shortage of housing, in general, affordable housing in the region was often mentioned during interviews. Some CBOs reported that they had spoken with community members who feel that they sometimes have to choose between paying for groceries or paying rent.
- New Yorkers indicated that day-to-day transportation was a major issue and that transportation for the purpose of outdoor recreation, events, or just enjoying nature was likely to be even more difficult.

**Findings from the Survey with Community Members**

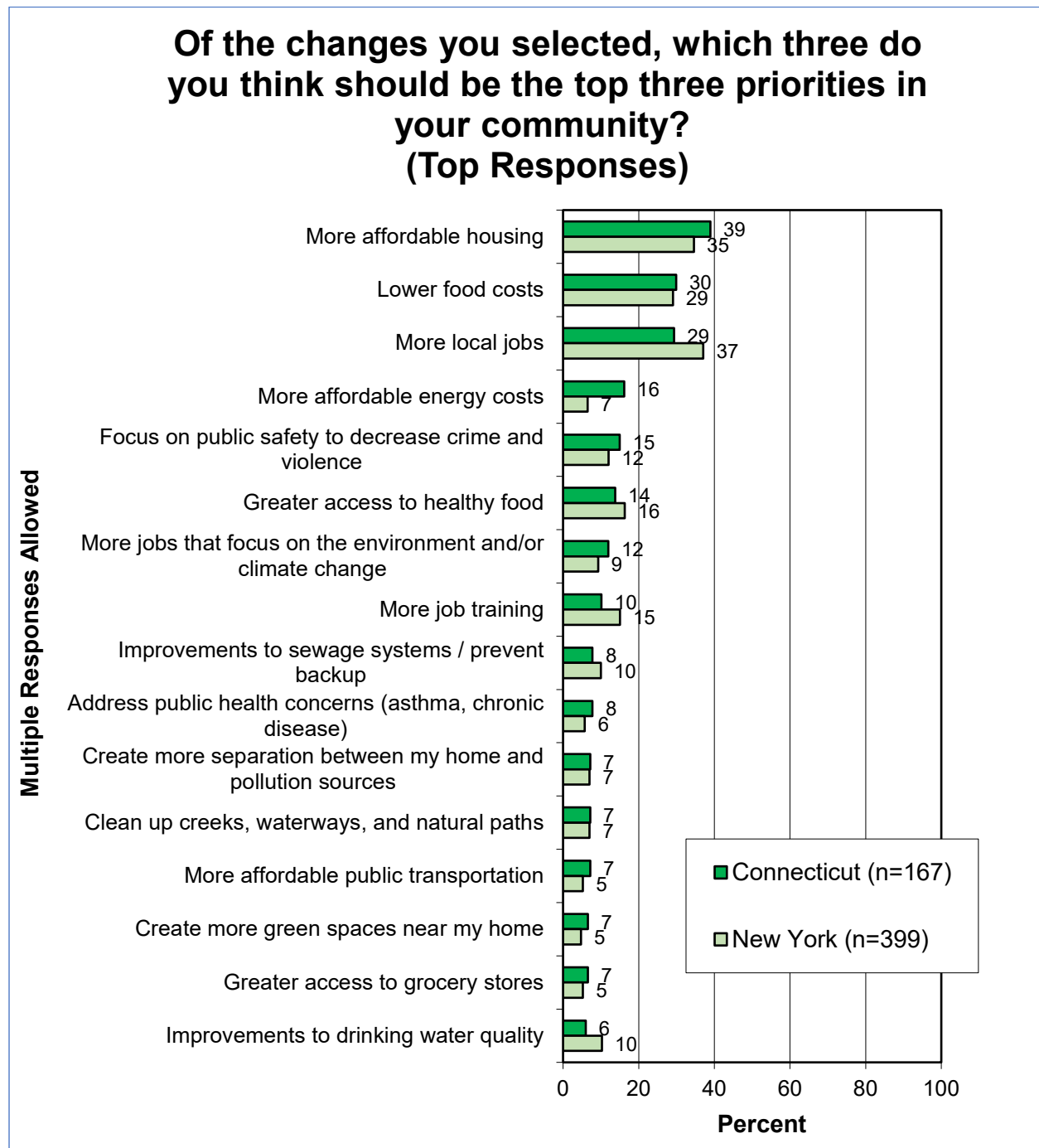
Some of the infrastructure, public health, and social issues that New York residents indicated applied to them more often than Connecticut residents did included being concerned about their safety in their neighborhood, living in public housing, and having limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables.



When asked about the environmental changes that should be prioritized in their communities, compared to Connecticut residents, New York residents were more likely to prioritize less trash and illegal dumping; better water quality, in general; more outdoor programs and opportunities to get outside; more / easier access to natural places with water, plants, and parks; and reduction in flooding and related impacts. However, differences between the states are minor. The responses from New York residents indicate that while there is a clear desire to spend time in nature and on the Sound, some more pressing issues like trash and debris buildup and water quality concerns may need to be addressed in order to increase levels of engagement.

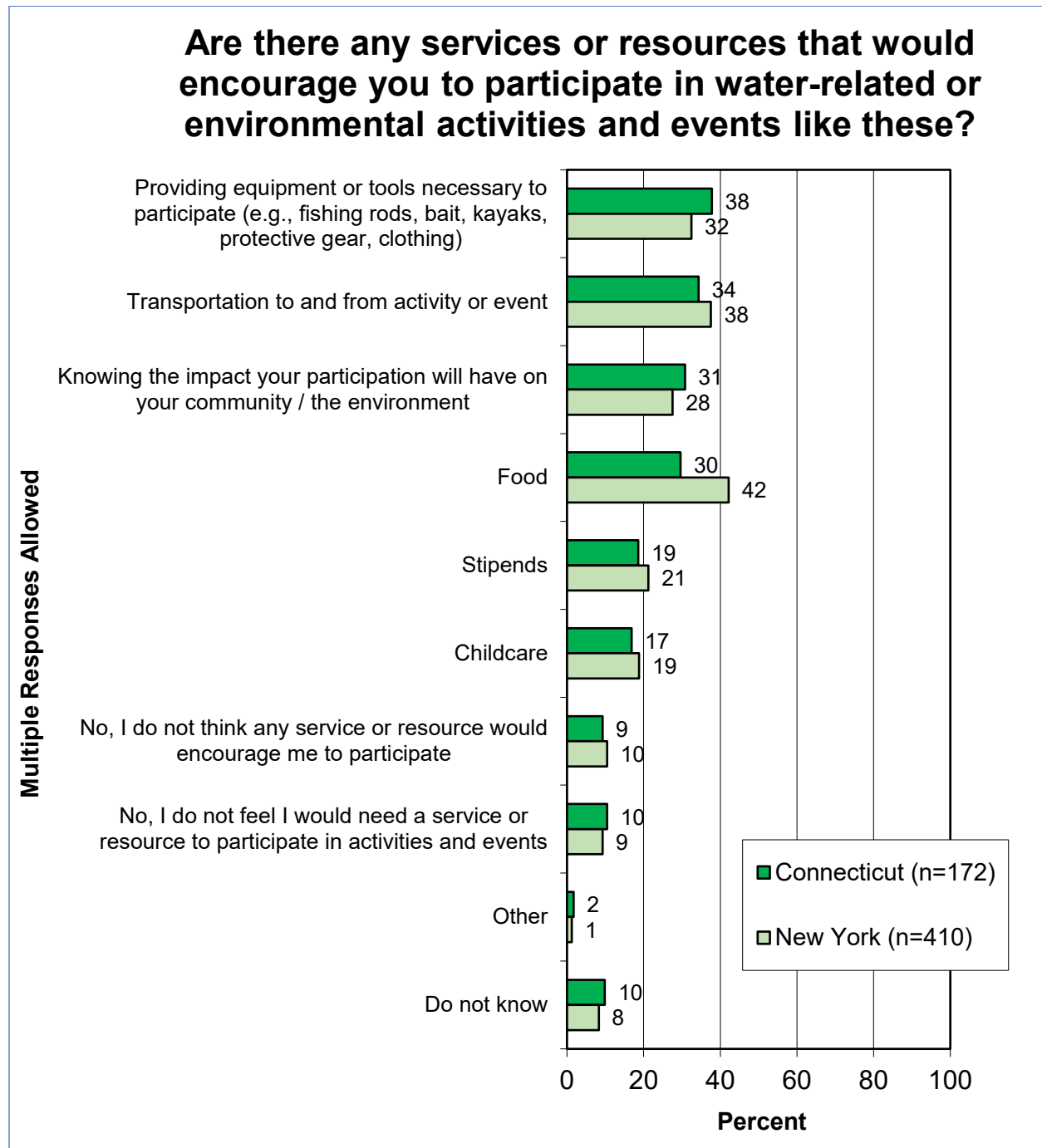


After addressing environmental issues, respondents were asked which changes they feel would allow for fair and equal access to opportunities and resources. In a follow-up to that question, respondents were asked to select the top three priorities from their original list of selections. Below are the top responses sorted by state. When compared to Connecticut residents, New York residents were more likely to prioritize jobs and job training, as well as greater access to healthy food, improvements to sewage systems, and improvements to drinking water quality.





When asked if there are any services or resources that would encourage their participation in water-related or environmental activities and events, the top response for New York residents were providing food and transportation to and from an activity or event.



### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to challenges with reaching and engaging communities in New York are summarized below. Note that while many of the findings and comments below come from specific communities, only comments and summaries that applied to other overall findings about the state are included in this section.

#### Reaching and Including Disadvantaged Communities

“Kids use social media, and they can start a movement. Once we start a movement with just a few, we could recruit others. But we have to start somewhere.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“What I’m saying is get parents involved in a social gathering, i.e., a local juice bar event. Everything’s a trickle-down effect. Get the parents and you’ll get the kids.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“There’s also a lot of industrial pollution, serious industrial pollution. It’s very hard to figure out how to deal with each one of these different industries along the Hutch that are polluting all kinds of chemicals, and all kinds of terrible stuff. We need help trying to figure that out.”  
–Comment from Community Listening Session

- In the Mount Vernon community listening session, there was some disagreement about whether engaging youth first or engaging adult members of the community first would be the best approach for increasing engagement overall.
- Attendees in Mount Vernon noted that the most important thing that could be done to encourage engagement among community members is to continue to have discussions like the one that took place at the listening session. Attendees feel that more conversations will allow for more participation as more days and times are available for engagement and as word-of-mouth increases. In addition, attendees noted that continued outreach from organizations like the LISS would increase trust and familiarity, leading to further engagement.
- Community members in Medford indicated that they feel that very little comes out of discussions about injustices in communities, which can lead to a feeling of hopelessness in some cases. Attendees stressed that returning to the community for additional conversations and showing how their engagement impacted the LISS’s environmental management plan could lead to increased engagement from the community and trust in the LISS.
- Community members feel that the best ways to reach them are to use places and platforms they frequent. Ideas offered by those in attendance at one community listening session in New York included social media, community centers, existing events, markets, libraries, schools, and television. In addition, some suggested that more in-person outreach should be conducted.

## **NEW YORK FINDINGS ABOUT ACCESS**

Based on survey results and community listening sessions and additional outreach, New York residents were less likely than Connecticut residents to indicate that they had used the Sound. When asked about barriers to accessing the Sound, New York residents indicated access issues very similar to those seen throughout the region, including a lack of clean and debris free spaces, limited feelings of safety, and transportation issues.

### **Findings from the Exploratory Phase**

While much of the exploratory phase focused on developing an understanding of the environmental justice issues impacting communities around the Sound, the limited conversation that occurred during the exploratory interviews about observations of disadvantaged communities accessing the Sound referred to concerns about non-English speaking subsistence anglers. In conversations with LISS partners working in New York, the most common languages thought to have been heard among subsistence anglers were Spanish or Mandarin.

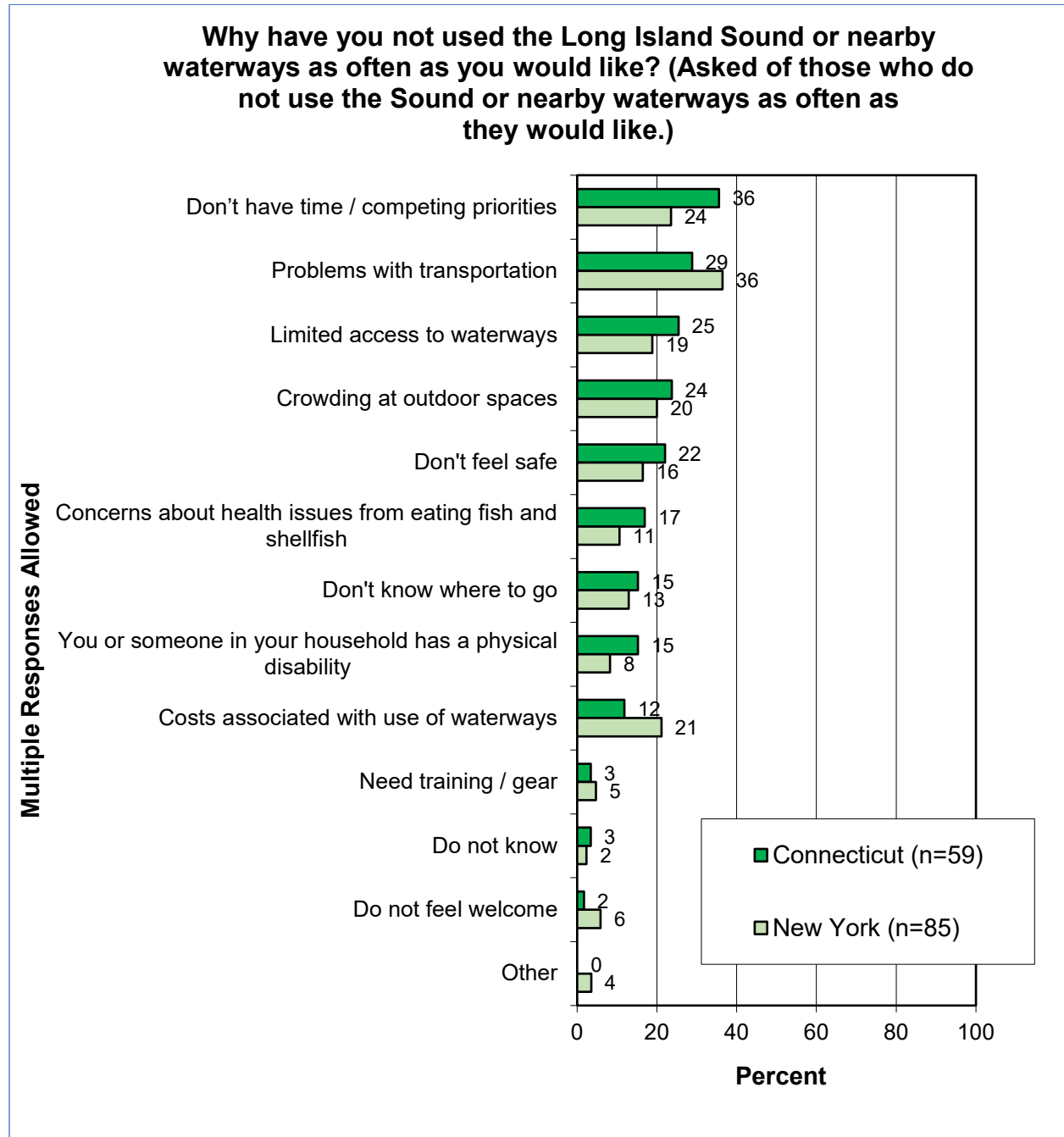
### **Findings from the In-Depth Interviews**

Some of the findings from in-depth interviews that relate to challenges with access in New York are summarized below. One of the major themes about access that emerged in New York conversations was the connection between a lack of information and limited access. Many interviewees indicated that New York communities were isolated and therefore often unaware of waterways, access points, and the health of waterways.

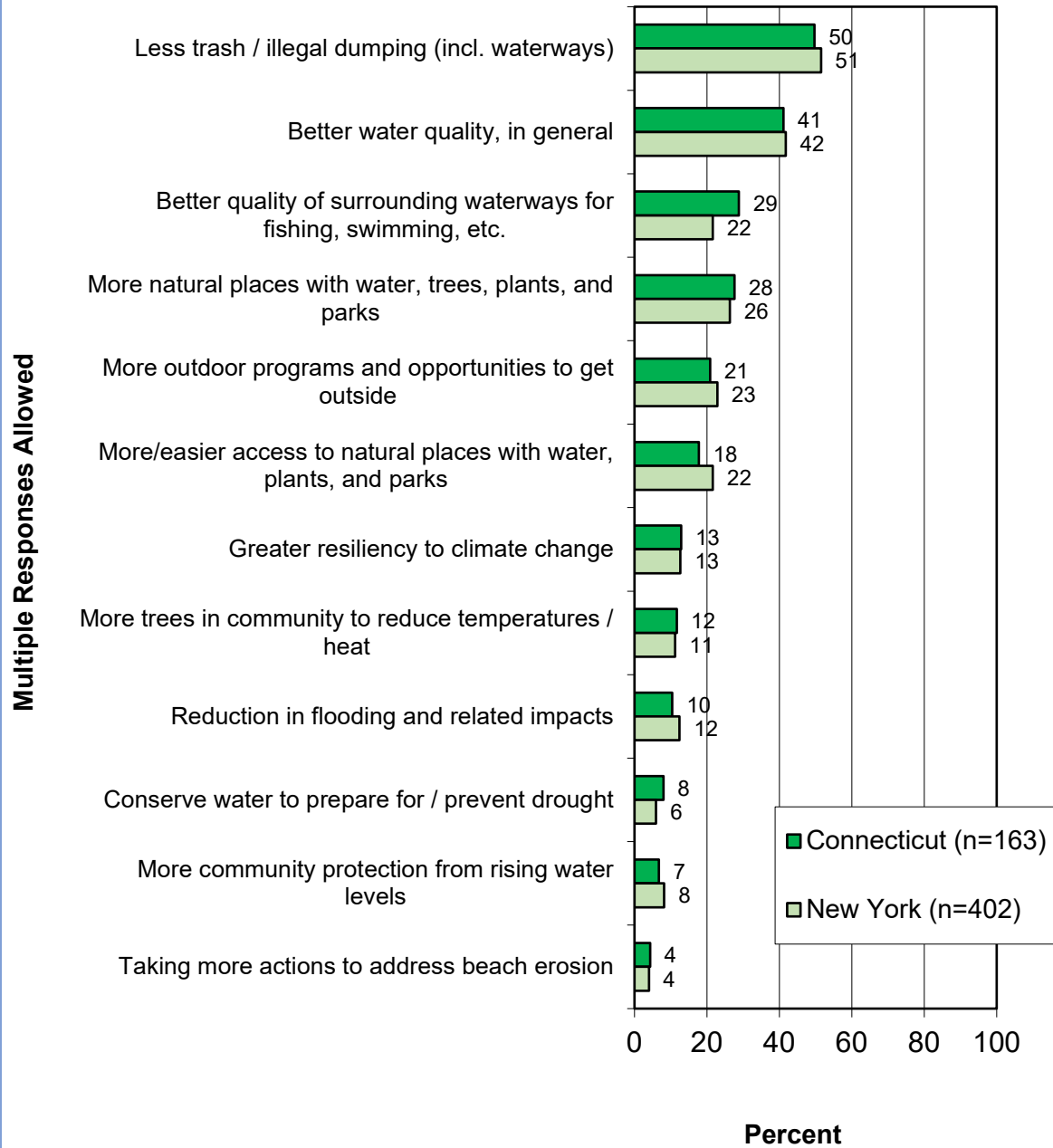
- Many New York interviewees were not sure that their communities were aware of the Sound.
- In some cases, interviewees noted that while they initially thought many in their community would be accessing the Sound, they were surprised to find out that many were not aware of nearby waterways or public access points.
- Interviewees indicated that they did not feel many communities had an updated understanding of the quality of water in the Sound and other nearby waterways. In many cases, they feel that community members are basing their opinions of the health of waterways, and ultimately their decisions to visit or recreate in the Sound, on decades-old information about pollution.

**Findings from the Survey with Community Members**

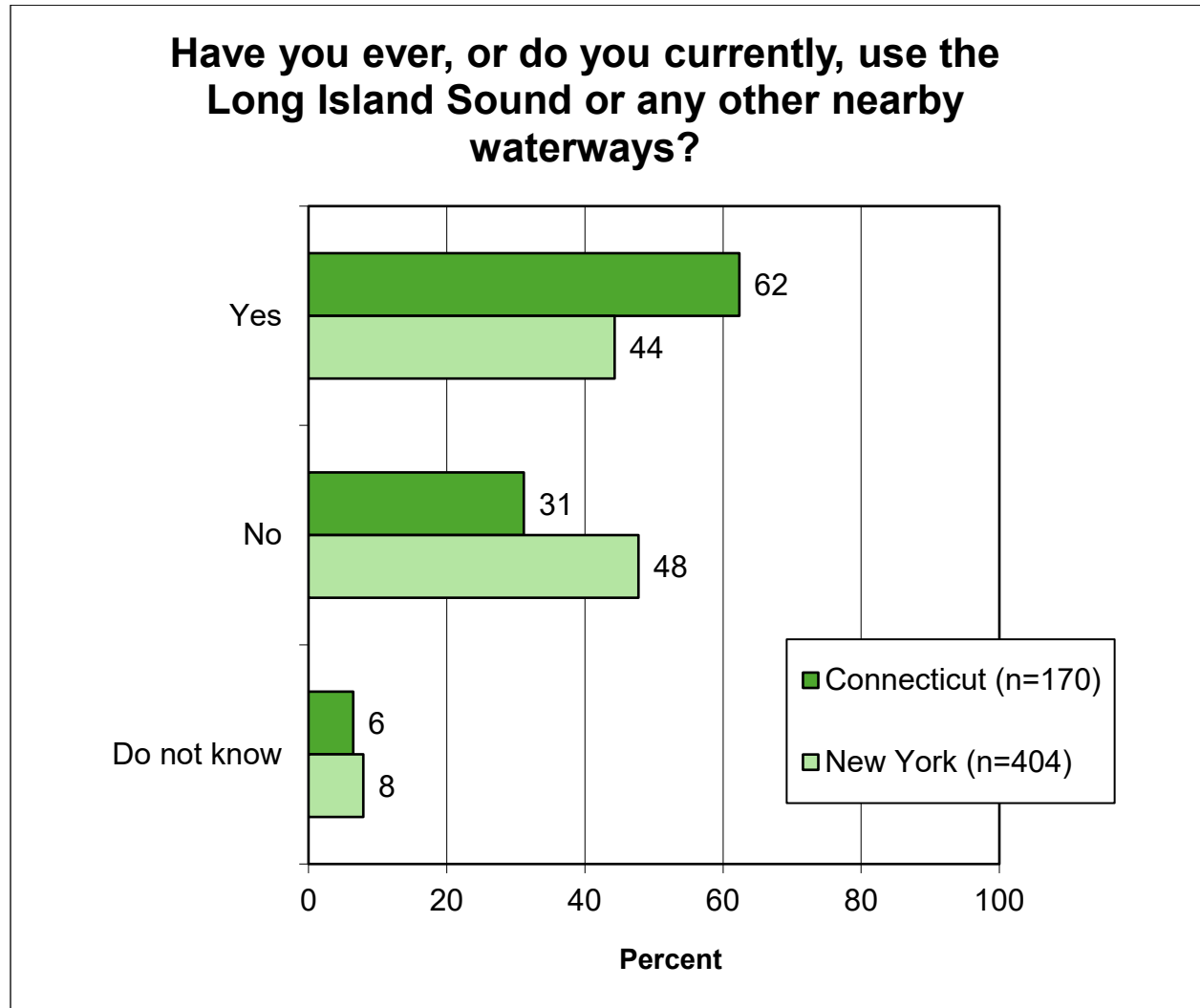
With regard to access, survey respondents from New York were quite similar to respondents from the entire region. New York residents indicated issues with transportation and a desire for clean spaces in which they can recreate, as shown in the two graphs that follow.



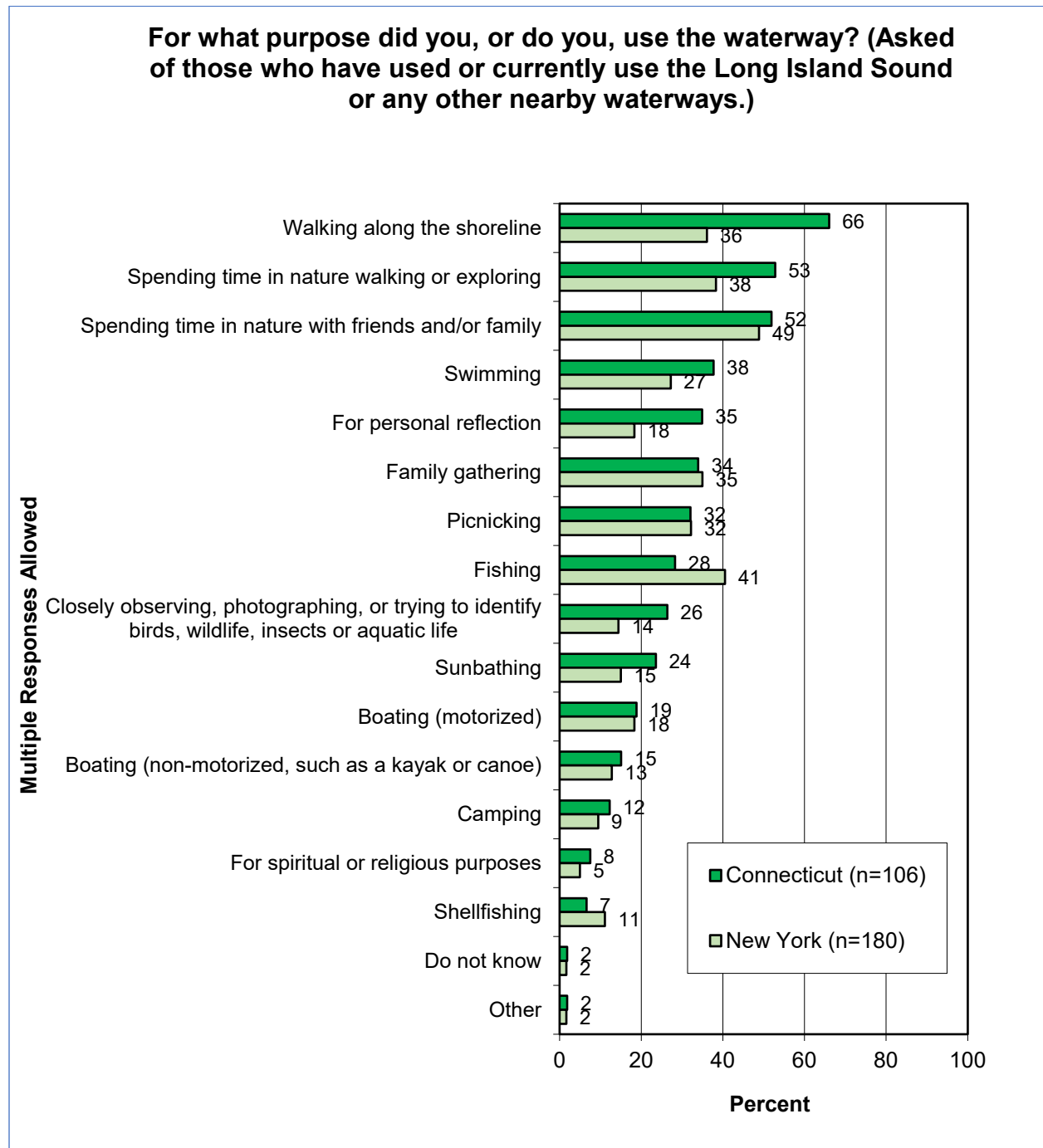
### Of the environmental changes that you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community?



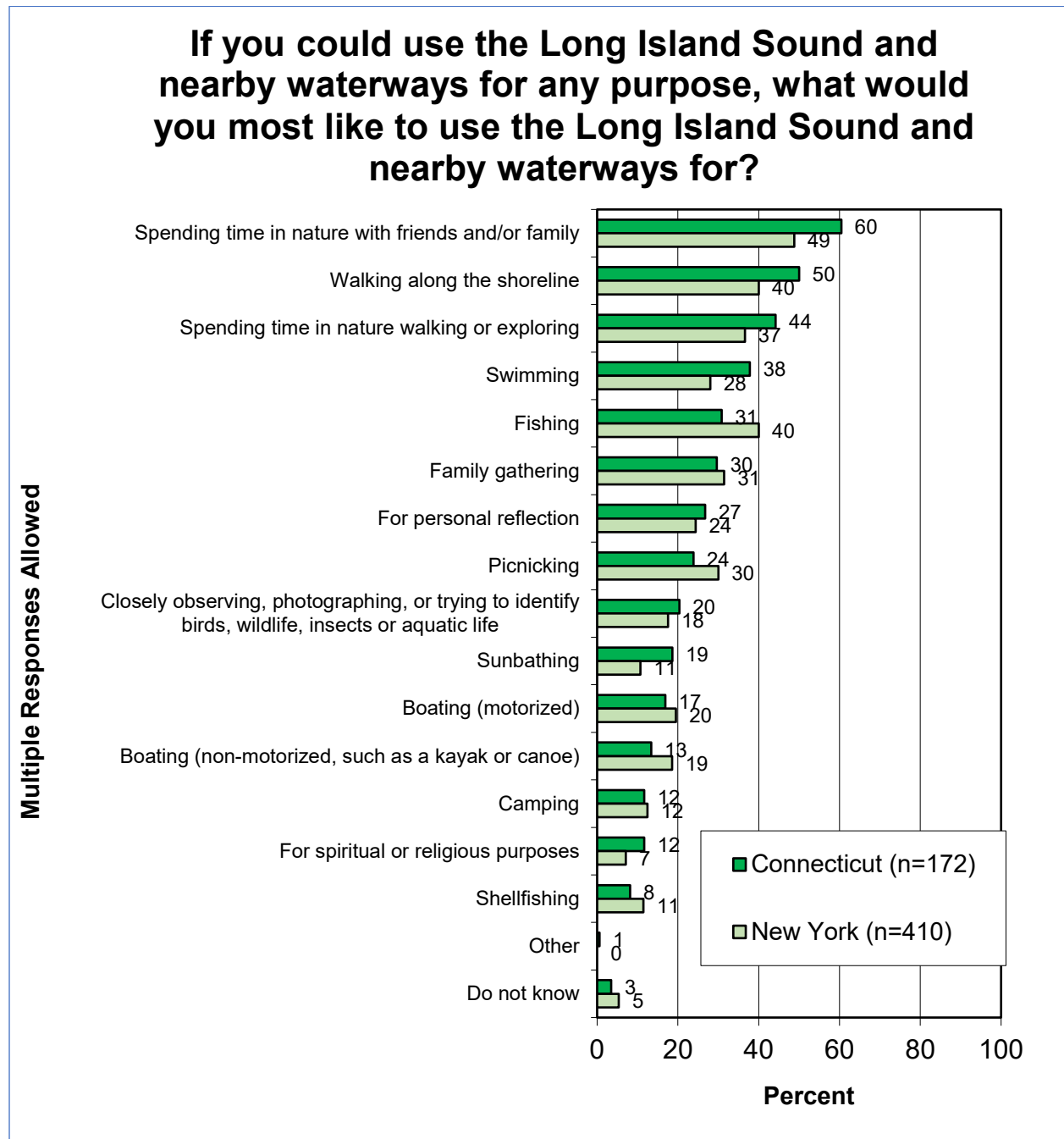
In terms of overall access, New York residents indicated that they had not used the Sound as much as Connecticut residents. Based on conversations with community members, these survey results seemed to mirror much of what was heard in a one-on-one format.



When asked what they had used the Sound for, the number one response among New York residents was that they had used the Sound for spending time in nature with friends and/or family. This result might indicate that increasing and encouraging access for New York residents should be more group-focused. New York residents were also considerably more likely to have used the Sound for fishing, when compared to residents from Connecticut.

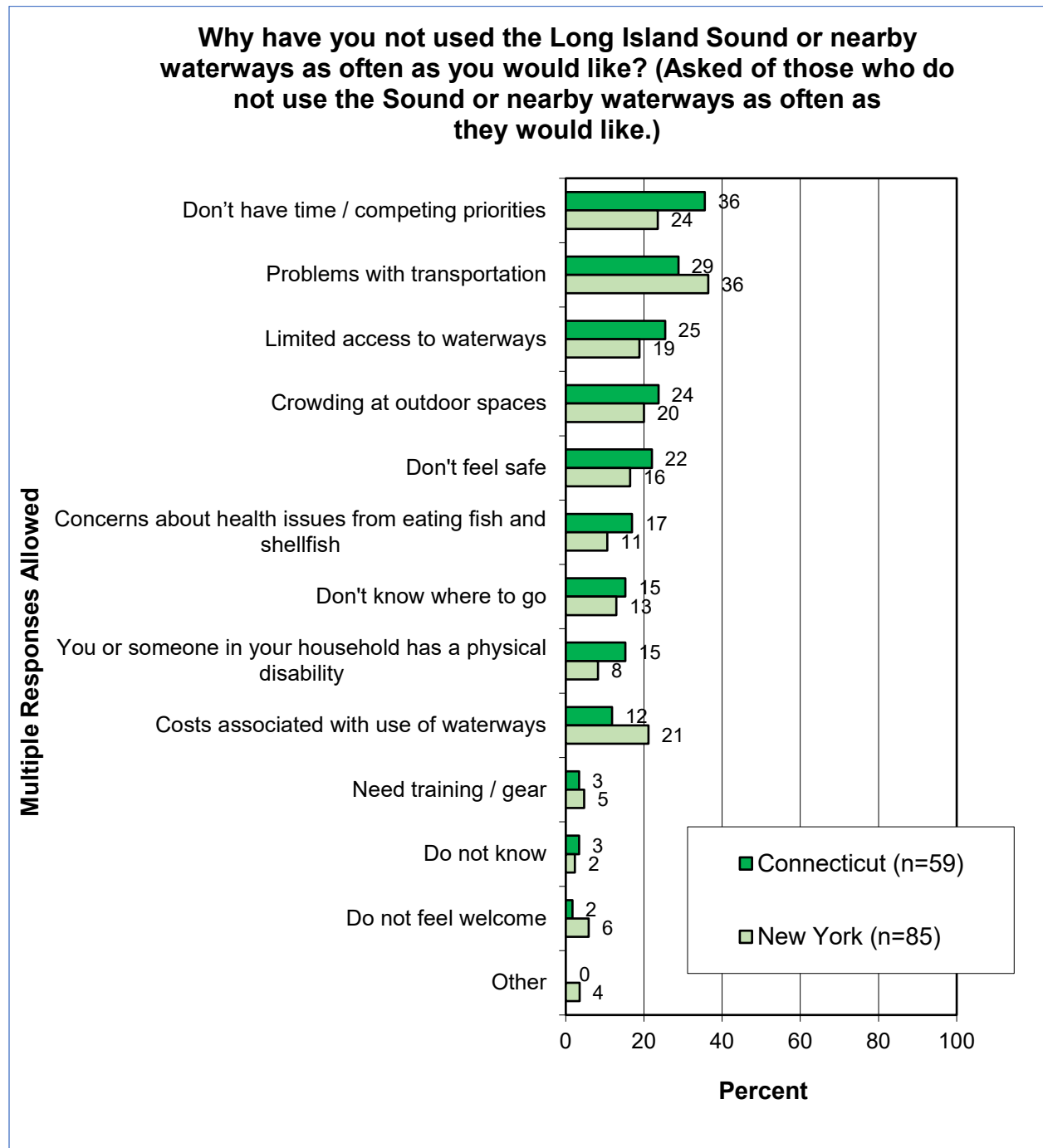


When asked what they would like to use the Sound for, again, New York residents were more likely to indicate interest in fishing. New York residents were also more likely to want to picnic on the Sound. An interesting, if small, finding about New York residents was that they were more likely than Connecticut residents to indicate that they did not know what they would like to use the Sound for.





New York residents selected problems with transportation most often as a reason they had not used the Sound at all or as often as they would like, followed by not having time or having competing priorities. Also of note is the fact that New York residents were also far more likely than Connecticut residents to indicate that costs associated with use of waterways had prevented them from using the Sound at all or as often as they would like. Although the below graph was recently shown in support of a different finding, it also pertains to findings about access.



### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to challenges with access in New York are summarized below. Again, although comments come from specific community listening sessions and outreach in different communities in New York, only those that applied across different communities are included here.

“Do they have access to public transportation for certain beaches? I don’t think so.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“A lot of the buses don’t go to the actual water. They don’t go to Wildwood State Park, they don’t go to Smith Point, they don’t go to the ones that are around in these places, and people have to walk a long way to get to the water.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- Community members in Mount Vernon indicated that accessing the Long Island Sound, and especially the Hutchinson River, was difficult for some community members. Some attendees mentioned issues with safety because of trash and debris buildup in some areas, as well as uncertainty about privatization of the shoreline. There was also some discussion about the long-term separation from nature resulting in fear of and lack of knowledge pertaining to water-based recreation, especially in communities of color, further complicating access to waterways.
- In Mount Vernon there was discussion about the uncertainty of the safety of the water, especially with regard to water quality and a history of industrial and sewage runoff being found in the Hutchinson River. Many noted that this uncertainty likely limited communities trying to access waterways.
- Issues with transportation to and from the Sound are a major barrier to access. Discussion addressed limited public transportation, with little to no public routes that go to beaches, as well as a lack of bus and train stops throughout the region.
- Attendees noted that there were many areas in New York that were privatized, and even in public areas, there was limited or expensive parking, signs indicating that the beach was only for resident use, and limited sidewalks for accessing the beach on foot.
- There was discussion about limited access and its connection with the historic exclusion of minority groups. Attendees referred to racist and exclusionary practices that had prevented indigenous groups, such as the Setalcott Nation, and Black and Brown people from using the waterways. Many noted that these practices had promoted fear in minority groups in the region, which had then been passed on to other family members generationally.
- Several attendees discussed the positive impacts on mental health from connecting with nature. Some attendees also explained that they believe that increases in the number of individuals with mental health issues might be the result of a disconnection from the environment. Some noted that they would love to encourage time in nature or outdoor recreation for those with mental health issues, but the limited access to green and blue spaces prevented them from doing so. Others shared their experiences with seeing the development of stewardship and the increases in confidence they perceived as a result.

## NEW YORK FINDINGS ABOUT INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

With regard to information and education, New York-specific findings were not dissimilar to overall regional findings. A number of different languages are spoken in New York and in many cases, findings showed a need for materials translated into locally prevalent languages.

### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

Throughout the needs assessment, the diversity of residents on the Sound was often a primary topic. Challenges with reaching audiences with different experiences, challenges, cultures, and languages is often a major barrier in providing information and education. Concerns about important safety information being available to subsistence anglers was also mentioned during the exploratory phase.

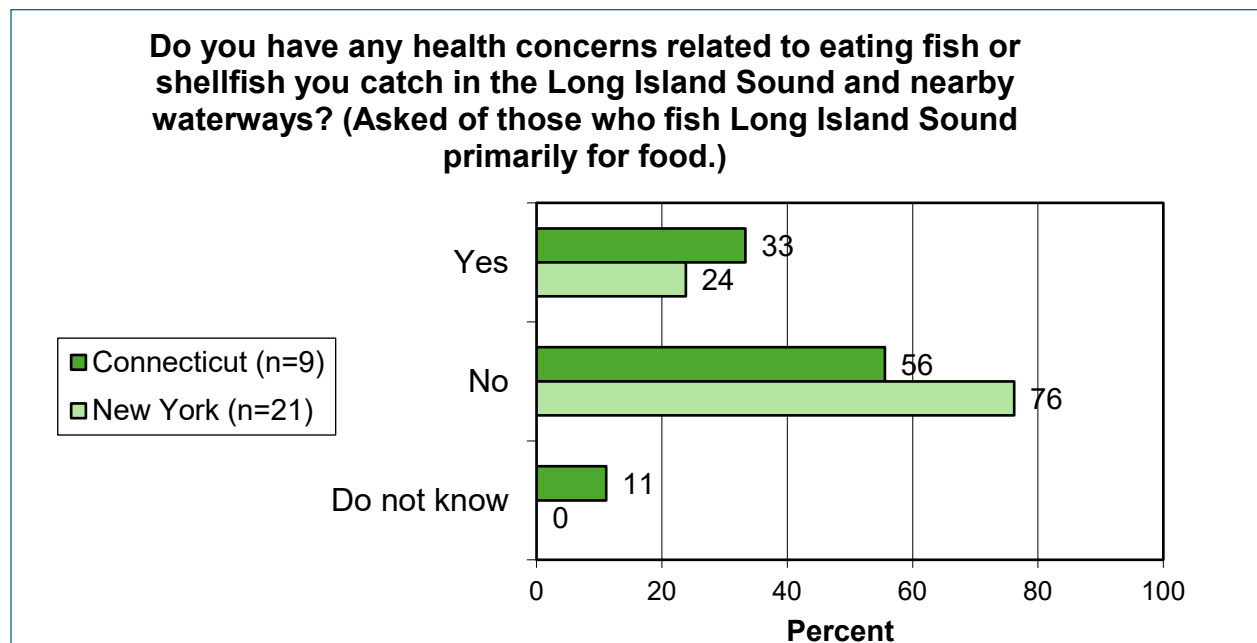
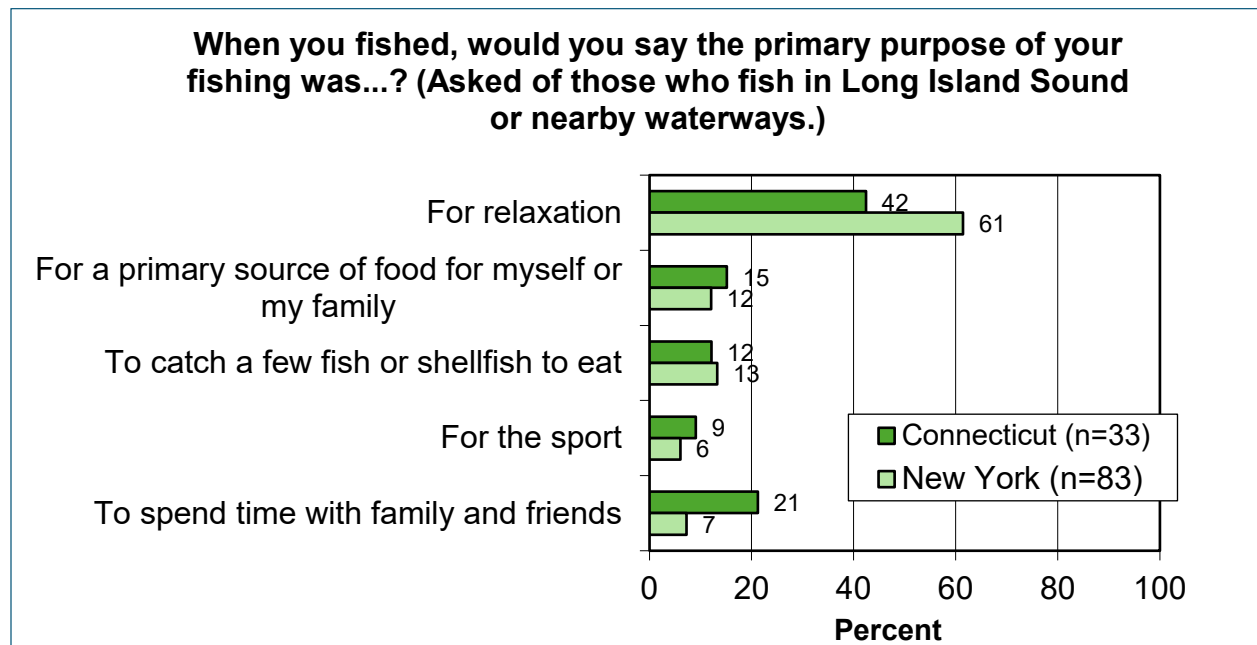


### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

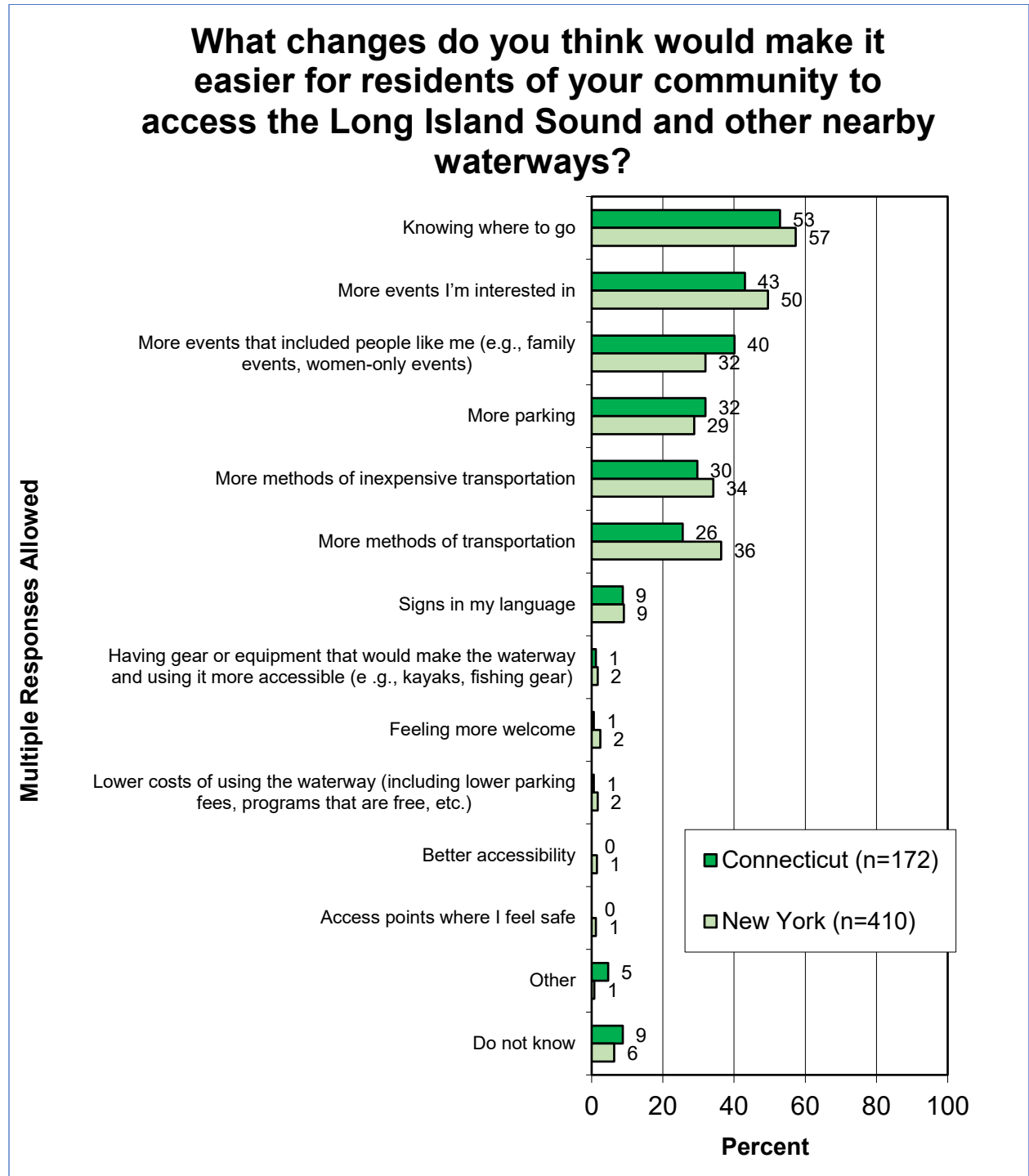
As in the exploratory phase, the need for translated materials and information and education about environmental issues and fishing were discussed during the in-depth interviews.

**Findings from the Survey with Community Members**

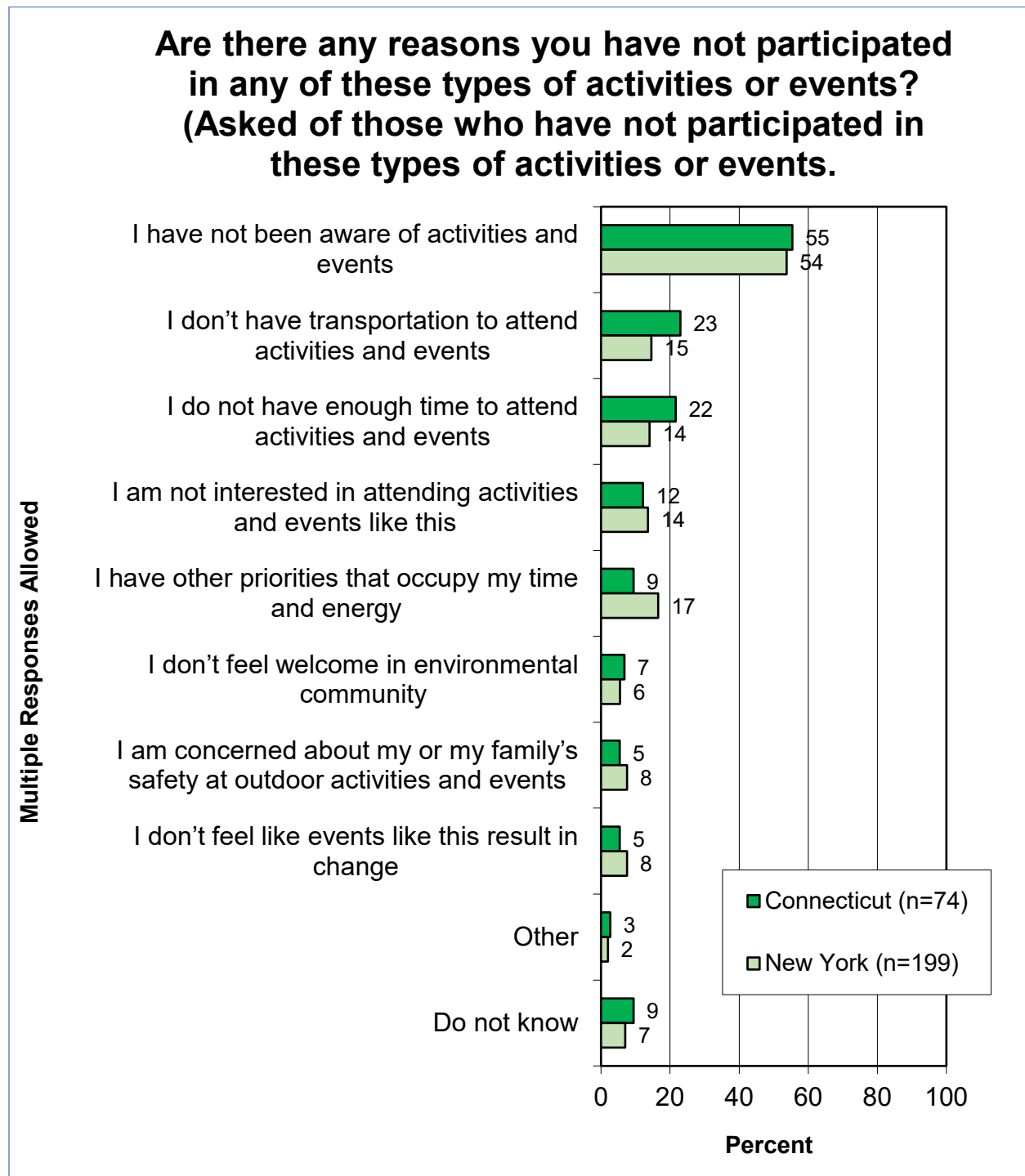
New York residents were slightly less likely than Connecticut residents to fish for a primary source of food for themselves or their families, but they were far less likely to be concerned about their health as a result of eating fish or shellfish caught in the Sound. While the number of subsistence anglers alone suggests the need for education and information about safe locations for fishing and which species of fish and shellfish are safe to consume, the lack of concern among New York residents could suggest a more urgent need for information in New York. Note that the overall number of anglers who indicated they fished for a primary source of food was low.



Both New York and Connecticut residents feel that knowing where to go and having access to more events they are interested in are the top changes that would make it easier for residents of their community to access the Sound. These responses indicate a need for more information about access locations and events.

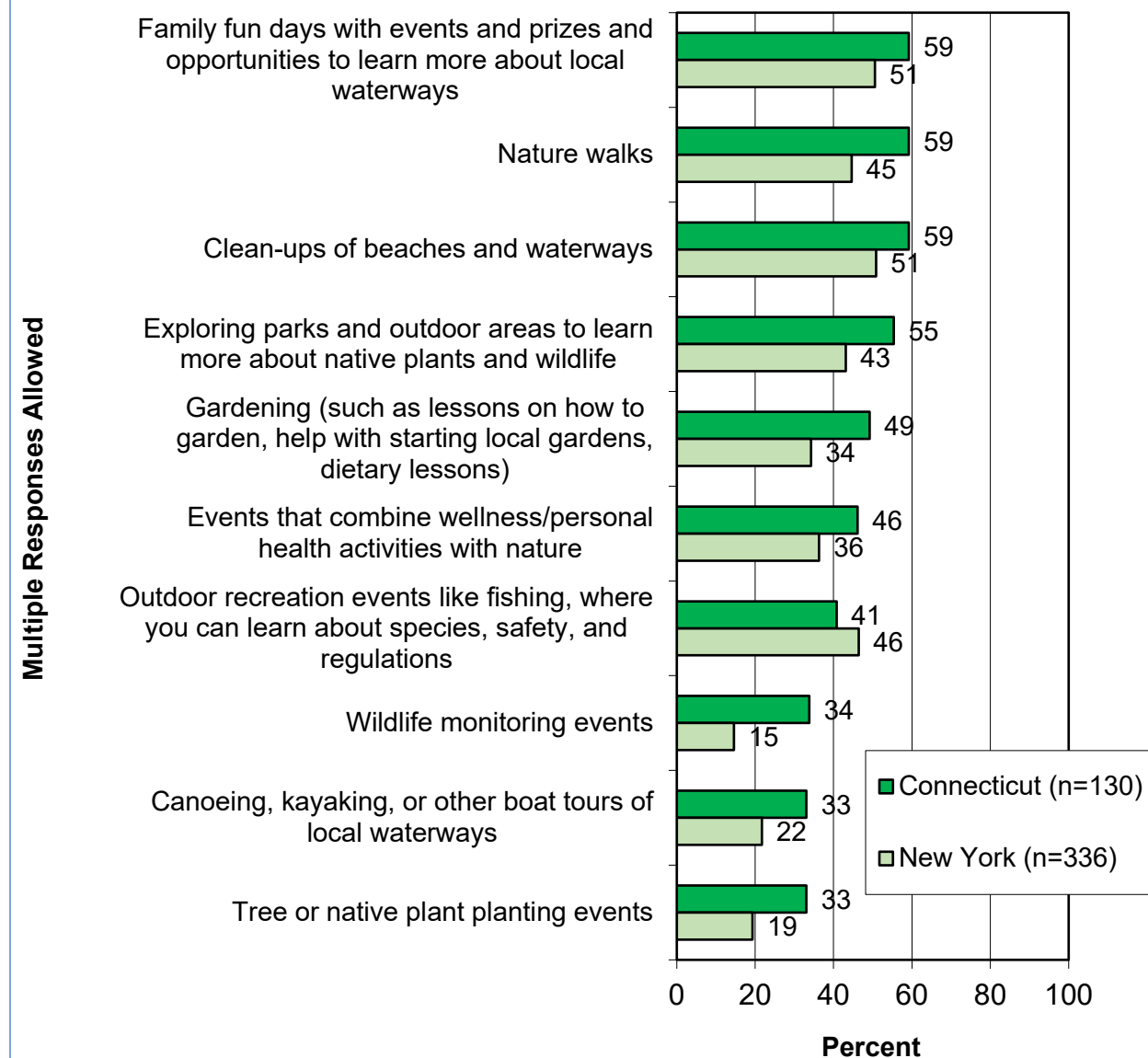


When asked if there are any reasons they have not participated in environment-based activities or events, New York and Connecticut residents were nearly equally as likely to indicate that they were not aware. At various stages of the needs assessment, disadvantaged community members showed an interest in activities, events, and spending time in nature. The previous graph and the graph below both suggest that this might be possible if community members had information about activities and events and where to access waterways.



Two of the top types of activities or events that New York residents indicated they would be interested in involve education—family fun days with events and prizes and opportunities to learn more about local waterways and outdoor recreation events like fishing, where they can learn about species, safety, and regulations.

**What types of activities or events would you most be interested in participating in? (Asked of those interested in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about your local waterways and environment.) (Top Responses)**



### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to information and education in New York are summarized below. Again, although comments come from specific community listening sessions and outreach in different communities in New York, only those that applied across different communities are included here.

“The more people that know about [public health and water quality issues], hopefully we can find an answer so we can save not only our brothers and sisters, but hopefully our children and grandchildren.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- Attendees discussed the need to connect with the large number of Spanish speakers in the area. Some attendees indicated that limited translated materials made any effort difficult and suggested that translations should be a focus to engage more Spanish speakers.
- Community members discussed the need to get communities involved and educated about the environmental issues in Mount Vernon. Many attendees feel that behavioral changes will only occur with increased engagement and understanding. Some attendees feel that getting community members involved with water quality testing would be a great way to educate many about the issues in the community and allow them to see the progress that can be made when people come together.
- Another community need discussed was the need for programing, education, and information to introduce people to the Sound and how to use and access its natural resources. Many in the Huntington Station listening session indicated that they were initially completely unaware of the Sound. Although they knew there were nearby waterways, they were not aware of the specific waterbody or whether the waterway was accessible to the public.
- Attendees said that communities would likely be interested in information about water quality, how to protect the Long Island Sound, and fishing.



## NEW YORK FINDINGS ABOUT RECREATION AND USE OF THE SOUND

### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

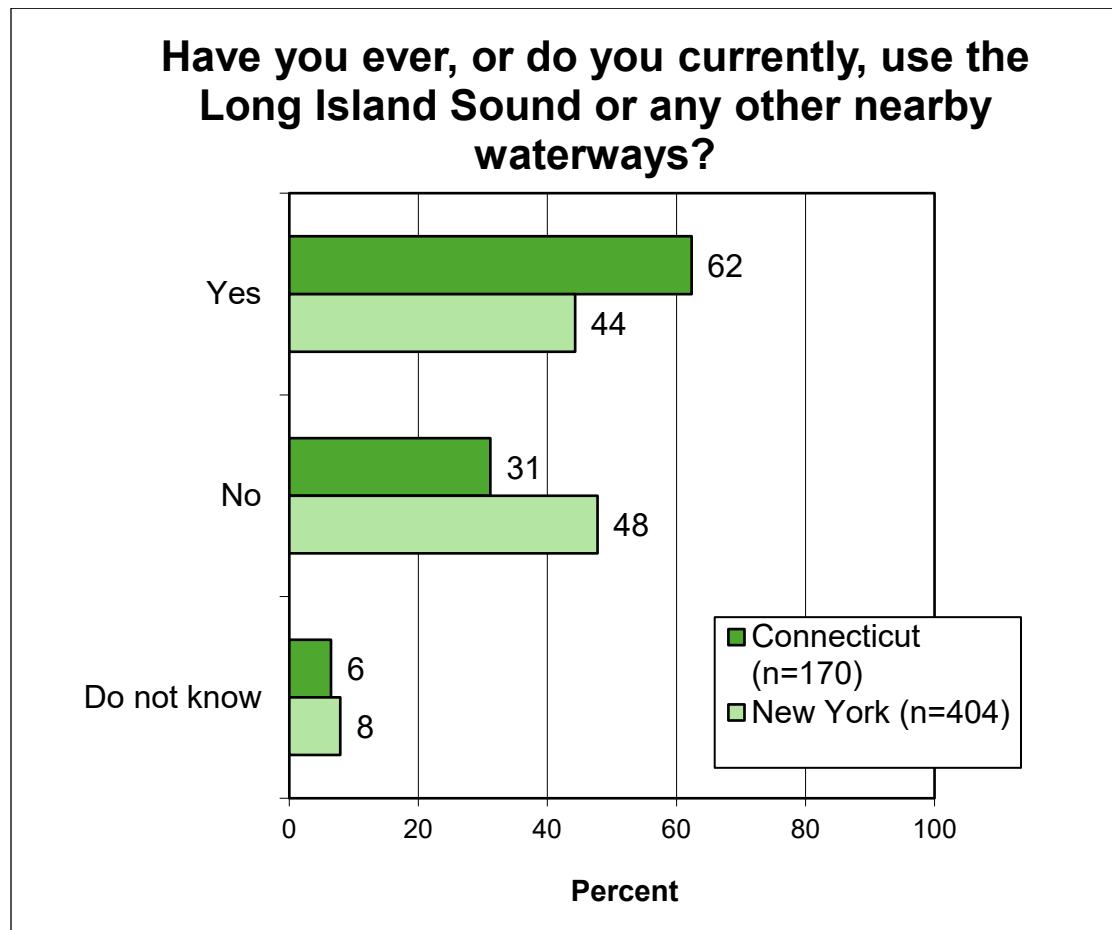
Exploratory phase interviewees from New York were just as likely as their Connecticut counterparts to indicate that they had seen subsistence anglers and a rise in interest in fishing. Subsistence fishing in different parts of Long Island was especially emphasized during these early interviews.

### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

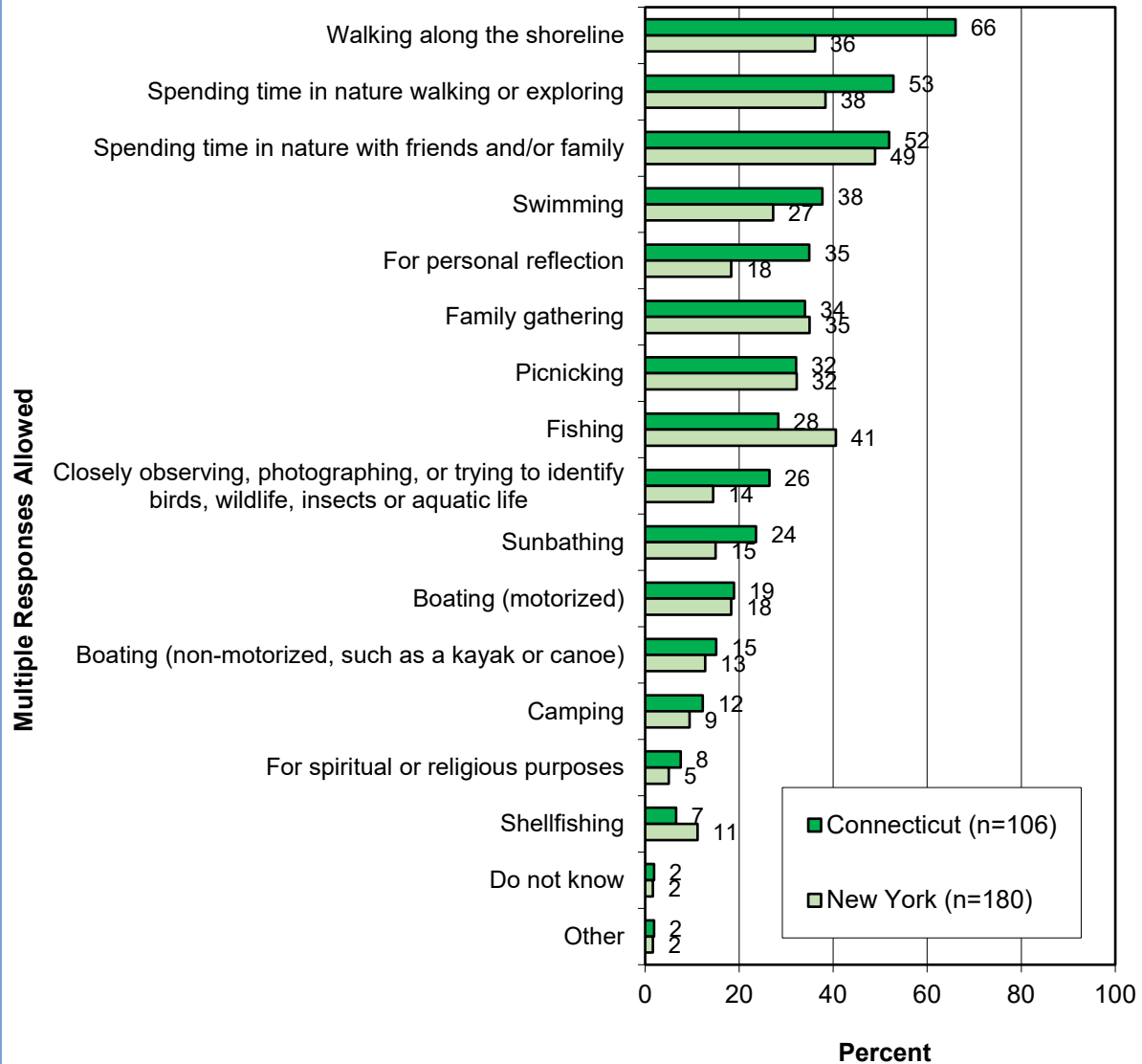
Interviewees discussed seeing anglers throughout the state, many of which they believed to be subsistence anglers. Some New York interviewees indicated that they had heard community members mention that spending time on the Sound, and in nature in general, was therapeutic. In most cases, interviewees indicated that New York residents were interested in spending time on the Sound.

### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

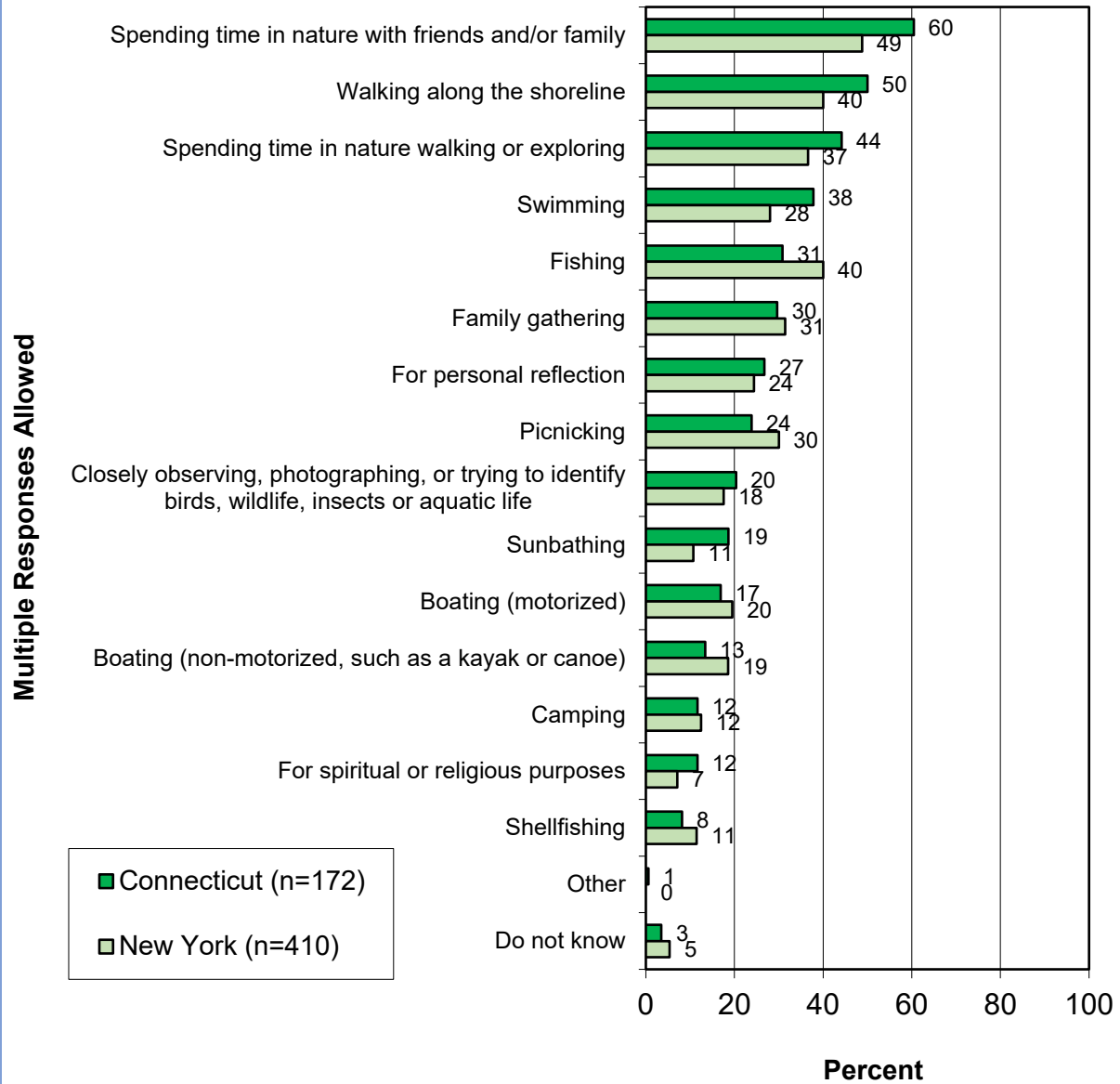
Findings from the survey with community members showed that New York residents were less likely than Connecticut residents to have used the Sound. Also, New York residents were more likely to have fished, overall, and for the purpose of relaxation.



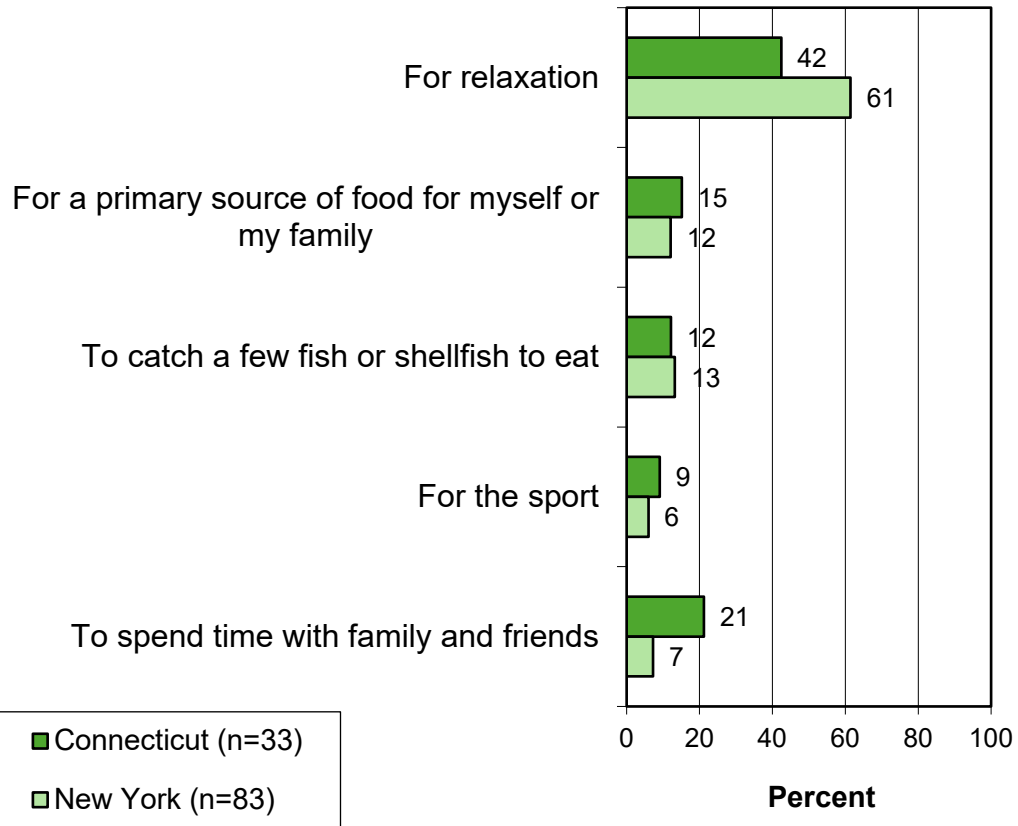
**For what purpose did you, or do you, use the waterway? (Asked of those who have used or currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways.)**



## If you could use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for any purpose, what would you most like to use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for?

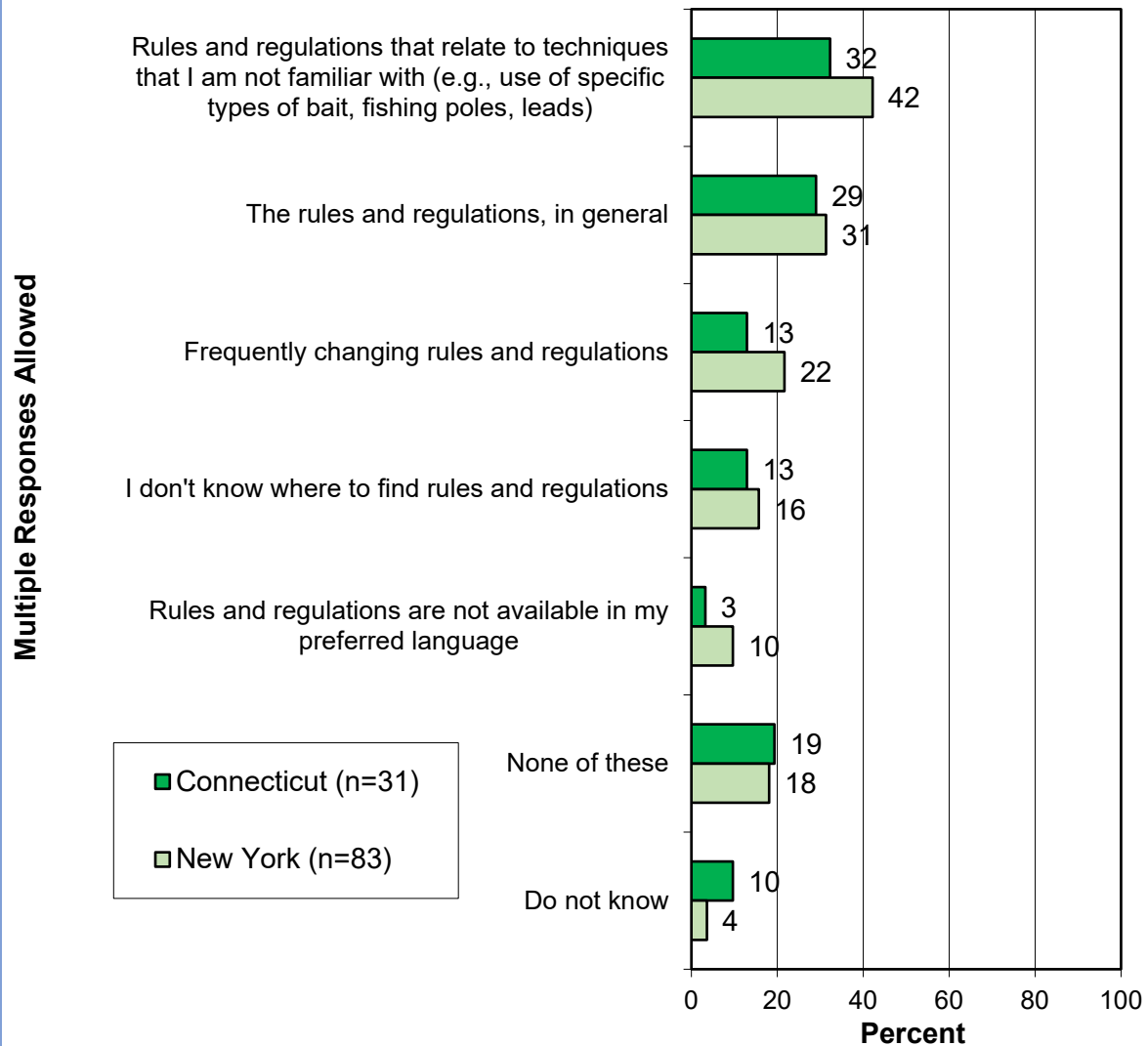


**When you fished, would you say the primary purpose of your fishing was...? (Asked of those who fish in Long Island Sound or nearby waterways.)**



When respondents who fished were asked if anything made it more difficult for them to understand fishing and/or shellfishing rules and regulations, the top responses from residents from both states were rules and regulations that relate to techniques that they are not familiar with and the rules and regulations, in general. With regard to other response options, New York residents were more likely to indicate that they had difficulties understanding rules and regulations because they were frequently changing, they were not available in their primary language, and they did not know where to find them.

**Do any of the following make it difficult for you to understand fishing and/or shellfishing rules and regulations? (Asked of those who currently fish or shellfish in the Sound or nearby waterways or who have done so in the past.)**



### **Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach**

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to recreation and use of the Sound in New York are summarized below. Again, although comments come from specific community listening sessions and outreach in different communities in New York, only those that applied across different communities are included here.

[I would like it] “if there are barbeques to hang out with family, to cook and stuff.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“I did get a license. When I was starting to fish, I didn’t have a license, but then I was talking to a friend of mine who was like you should probably get a license, it’s really cheap, you can just go down to the place and get it, and boom! I got it. At first when I started, I didn’t know you had to have a license.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“If you can get transportation like you were saying, that is I think key right there. That’s the most important thing. A lot of people would like to go, but they have a lot of issues to get there.”—Comment from Community Listening Session

- Community members indicated a desire to spend time on the beach, and in many cases fish.
- During additional outreach, New York residents indicated they would like to be able to reach public access points for picnicking and spending time with friends and family.

---

## **COMMUNITY FINDINGS BY REGION AND COMMUNITY: NEW YORK**

In the following section, results and findings are shown by region and community. As sample sizes at the community level would be small and therefore would have a low confidence interval, findings at this level are better presented qualitatively. The below summaries of findings by region and community are based on findings from the exploratory phase, the in-depth interviews with CBOs, in-person discussions and interviews conducted in the Long Island Sound region, and feedback provided during the community listening sessions. (Please see page 264 of this document for more information about the process of prioritizing communities for in-person outreach.)

### **FINDINGS ABOUT THE BRONX, NEW YORK**

#### **Access to Waterways**

- Few are accessing waterways, perhaps due to lack of knowledge or lack of safe, accessible spaces. Some of those who do access the waterway do so to canoe, kayak, fish, and gather near water.
- There is a genuine lack of awareness in the Bronx when it comes to the Long Island Sound. Even with numerous waterways nearby, many do not know which waterways exist and how they are connected.
- Access can be a major issue in the Bronx, with wealthy private landowners being the only group that has consistent access to the waterways.
- Many interviewees think that accessing water has benefits that community members might not be aware of, including improvements in physical and mental health, the creation of stewards of the land and environment, and an increased interest in building resilient communities.
- The natural areas that are available to the public are small, and there are many people in the city. Not a lot of people are accessing the Long Island Sound because they are simply unsure of how to access the water.

#### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- Many students have not been to the Bronx River or Long Island Sound. There needs to be an effort to clean up areas in proximity to the water and improve access. Areas are often surrounded by warehouses and industry, and park areas are scattered throughout the community. There needs to be more awareness and information about where to find natural areas.
- Green spaces in the Bronx are not as ubiquitous as they are in other areas.
- Pelham Bay Park could be a great place for events that are focused on the environment and waterway.
- Many feel that climate change awareness needs to be increased. New York City public schools are now required to have Climate Change Day to raise awareness and teachers could use support with developing climate change curricula. An increase in climate change education and climate change resources for teachers and students could increase awareness of issues.

- Environmental justice programs for residents are hard to access according to some. There are many obstacles and requirements, and resources are often limited. At least some level of technical know-how is also often required. All of these obstacles make access to environmental justice even more difficult for the most vulnerable populations.

### **Safety Concerns**

- Garbage and debris, on beaches and in the ocean, cause issues with access and make some areas unsafe for visitors.
- Some parks are unsafe for children as a result of trash and debris.
- Community members do not feel waterways are safe and base many of their water-related opinions on decades-old facts about unsafe beaches and waterways.
- In some areas where fishing is not safe, parks have a fish carving / gutting station which would seem to encourage fishing and indicate that it is safe.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- Industrial and commercial pollution and a lack of regulation for trucks and barges, due to large, powerful industries and markets, cause air quality issues.
- There are air quality issues due to proximity of roadways and industry; many communities are blocked off from cleaner air.
- The area is perceived as having high rates of asthma, especially in Black and Brown communities.
- Water quality and the safety of swimming and fishing in waterways, particularly near Hunts Point, are a concern.
- There is a lack of awareness about certain issues – particularly safety issues, such as air quality and water quality—in areas where people swim, as well as a lack of awareness about the safety of consuming fish from those areas.
- There is also a lack of awareness regarding pollution of waterways after rain; very few people know about combined sewer overflow.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- Walls being used to prevent flooding are not sustainable or built with green infrastructure in mind.
- Flooding from intense rainfall, storm surge, hurricanes, and other storms is causing issues in many parts of the city, especially in low-lying homes.
- Many of these communities are built on the waterfront, and they have no protection from climate change issues associated with waterways.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- The community has a lot of interest in green infrastructure, safe access, job opportunities, and development, as well as affordable housing. Some feel that



community members would be more engaged if they felt engagement resulted in opportunities like those described here.

- One interviewee noted a former jail in Hunt's Point that they would like to use as an environmental center.
- Infrastructure projects have largely been in higher income areas.
- Communities in lower tax brackets are not getting as much attention and this is causing mistrust amongst the most vulnerable communities. Many feel they are not getting the support they need, especially regarding infrastructure repair.

### **Disconnection from the Environment**

- It is thought that many people are completely unaware of the Sound and even fewer know that Long Island Sound is a safe place for recreation.
- Communities need education to link health issues and environmental issues.
- There is a need for education about the environment and climate change.
- Some feel that limited education about the environment has resulted in limited concern for the environment.
- Children in some communities are completely unaware of the natural areas that are around them.
- Interviewees feel that there needs to be a push to increase residents' connection with the environment to increase protection of the green and blue spaces in the area.
- Interviewees feel that a holistic approach to environmental learning, which includes public health, social issues, and science will be essential to gain interest in protecting the environment.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- There are thought to be many city-level funding issues.
- Environmental justice does not appear to be a focus for local government.
- Redlining is a major issue in many areas in New York.
- Due to the layout and diversity of New York City, it is hard to establish a standard set of procedures for nearly anything.
- There is a general lack of trust in government (especially the federal government). Limited action and follow through only complicate the relationship further.
- Cohesion between agencies and organizations is lacking.
- There is a major lack of investment in disadvantaged communities.
- The urban heat island effect is resulting in disproportionate death rates in Black and Brown communities. There is not enough attention paid to funding these communities.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- The Bronx is perceived as being notoriously neglected, but there are many community members working hard to resolve issues. There are many people in the community who focus entirely on environmental justice.

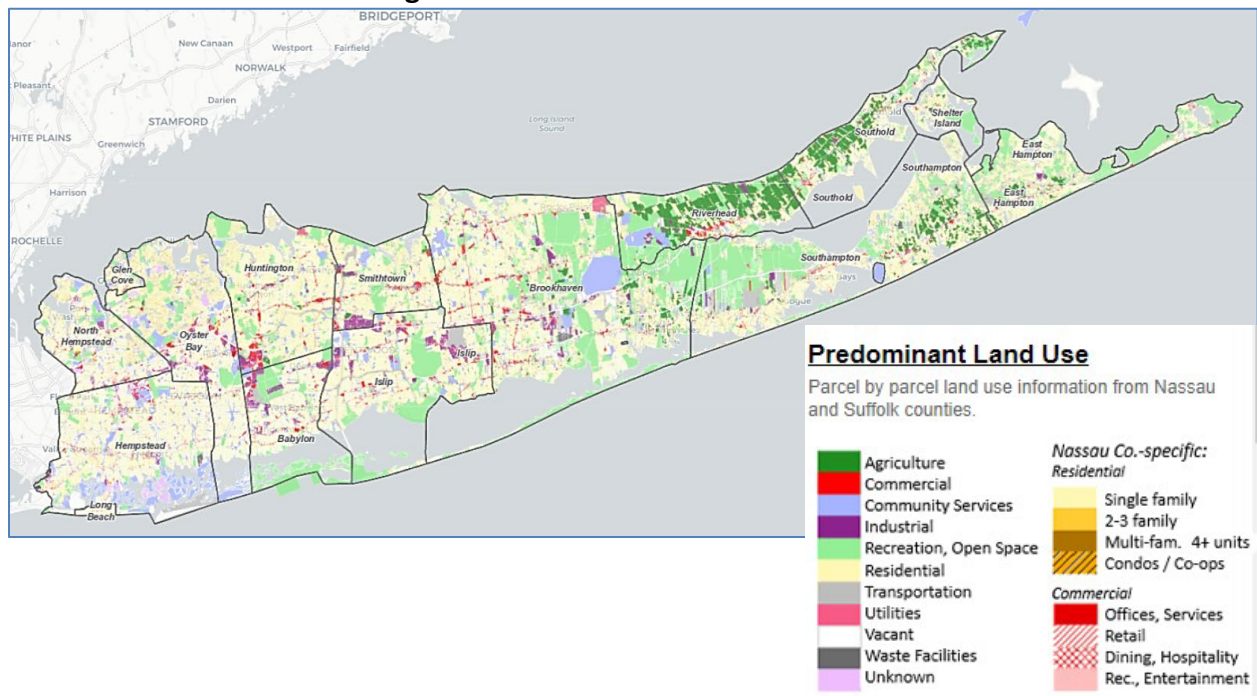
- 
- The community is thought to be the lowest income area in the region, and, as with almost all other areas of the city, the lack of housing and especially affordable housing is a major issue.
  - Limited low-income housing is a huge issue. Existing housing structures are severely deteriorated.
  - Climate change, storm surge, and urban heat island effects, compounded by a lack of green space, are all issues in the community.
  - Food deserts and a lack of access to fresh food are a major issue. Some organizations are focusing on community gardens and identifying edible plants to combat food issues, but communities need education in order to participate in community gardening activities.
  - There are indigenous lands in the area (Split Rock), and many feel that acknowledgement about the importance of the land is long overdue. Overall, there should be more education about the indigenous groups from the area and their connection to the Bronx.
  - Affordable housing, public health, immigration, and how all of these are tied to climate change is something that needs to be addressed.
  - Many interviewees are concerned that upgrades to waterfronts and greenspaces will come with gentrification, which might result in long-term residents leaving their communities. Some interviewees indicated that they have already experienced this occurrence in several communities.
  - There is a lot of interest in disaster prevention programs. Although this interest can be viewed in a positive light, there is some concern that the interest is rooted in hopelessness and anxiety around climate change and fear that there is no control over the future.
  - The New York list of “disadvantaged” communities is based on census tracts, which some interviewees feel might not be detailed enough to reveal important differences in communities.

## FINDINGS ABOUT LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK, IN GENERAL

### Access to Waterways

- A lot of Long Island Sound beaches are not currently accessible. There are many layers of inaccessibility and barriers to access. In order to access the beaches, one would need to be a resident or have a car and the ability to pay for expensive parking. Access to waterways is viewed largely as an aspect of wealthy White privilege.
- Many areas are privatized, or ownership is unclear. In many cases community members are not comfortable accessing beaches for fear that they may be trespassing.

### Predominant Land Use on Long Island



### Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information

- Translation of all materials in the area is important, but ease of access is equally important. Educational and informational materials should be available in multiple locations in multiple places where the community already goes. People should not need to visit numerous locations in order to receive information and education.
- Non-English speakers in Long Island have issues with connecting with services and knowing their rights. Some organizations are working hard to fill this gap, but many feel that there is more that needs to be done in this regard.
- Several interviewees indicated that there is a growing number of subsistence anglers fishing in Long Island. Interviewees indicated that in many cases these anglers were Spanish- or Mandarin-speaking. In the interest of reaching these individuals and ensuring that they are safely fishing and consuming their catch, interviewees feel that rules and regulations and licensure information should be available in Spanish and Mandarin. Interviewees noted that many of these anglers were simply unaware of rules

and regulations or the need for licenses, and many interviewees feel that adequate education and information provided in the appropriate language could help ensure safe fishing practices.

### **Erosion Concerns**

- Wealthy second-home owners are perceived to be causing a lot of pollution and shoreline erosion. The perception among some CBOs is that these wealthy homeowners do not need to be concerned about pollution or sea level rise, because they can afford to move or protect their own property if necessary.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- Parts of Long Island are geographically and socially isolated, which interviewees feel prevents communities from learning from one another and collaborating effectively.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- High income disparities and racial segregation are apparent; those living along the water tend to be wealthier and White. Particularly on the North Shore those on the water tend to be more affluent populations.
- Day-to-day transportation to work and to access daily needs is an issue.
- North Fork has a lot of farms and farm workers. Language issues make engaging with residents in the area complicated. There is an effort to use Spanish-speaking newspapers for engagement with the community.
- Housing has become increasingly unaffordable. Interviewees spoke about needing to choose between paying their rent or eating.
- There is a perception that resources are not being shared and there is very little cooperation between community members. Resources were seen as being provided only to those who can afford them.
- Housing on Long Island is not affordable for most residents. Some community members feel they are being pushed from their homes and there is a great deal of housing insecurity.
- Some feel that racism is a major issue in the area.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT GLEN COVE, LONG ISLAND**

### **Access to Waterways**

- Access to the waterfront is limited.
- The waterfront is generally populated by very expensive condominiums.
- Some village beaches have residence requirements and fee structures that prioritize residency, Glen Cove included.

### **Safety Concerns**

- A lot of fishing debris is left behind.
- There is confusion about fishing and shellfishing restrictions. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has posted restrictions in English and Spanish, but many feel the postings are unclear and do not know which waters are restricted. A lot of people who grew up in the area do not understand what areas are closed to shellfishing. Many feel it would be helpful to have things clarified. Agencies should work together to make sure rules, regulations, and closings are clear.
- Many of the people shellfishing in the lower harbor are thought to be Southeast Asian immigrants, and signage is rarely available in their languages. This can result in fishing in unsafe locations and consuming contaminated or unsafe shellfish.
- There are reports of people doing what is likely subsistence shellfishing in Glen Cove Creek, people swimming in Crescent Creek, and poaching in the lower harbor. As there has been limited contact with many of these groups, there can be no certainty that regulations are being followed and that people are not risking their own safety.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- There are a number of issues and concerns in the area associated with perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAs) and freon particulates from industry.
- Asthma rates in the area are thought to be high because of air quality issues.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- There are issues with persistent flooding and more frequent storms in residential areas (not just those near creeks). There are certain sites that seem to flood far more often. Some of these are located on former brownfield land or questionable sites, most under the auspices of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation or the EPA. Flooding has been incredibly impactful hitting low- to moderate-income houses.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- The community needs money for bulkhead restoration. Granting agencies want a hybrid approach, but in some areas, it is not feasible to rebuild or to build bulkheads. The Department of Public Works' yard on the south side of Glen Cove Creek needs expensive bulkhead rehabilitation.
- Glen Cove needs help with inventory, mapping, and analysis of existing infrastructure.

- Public transit is an issue. Those who use the Long Island Railroad feel they experience delays and frequent technical issues, especially when going to areas with concentrated development.
- Glen Cove is in a drinking water crisis. The community needs to spend \$40 to \$50 million in the next 5 years on water infrastructure. The community has some funding, but not enough, so the community needs to keep existing wells at capacity.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- Glen Cove has a lot of zoning issues. Interviewees noted that there are a number of rental units and historic brownfield sites in the area, which lead some to view the area as an undesirable place to live.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Areas on Long Island, including Glen Cove, are dramatically changing. Hempstead Harbor has an industrial past. As these areas are cleaned up, they are attracting more development, which has been overwhelmingly high income. There is a minimum requirement of 10% of funding to be allocated for affordable housing, and developers find ways to eliminate those elements. Even affordable housing along the waterfront is expensive because the median income in Nassau is high, and that median is used to constitute “affordable housing.”
- Housing is a huge issue and permeates through all other issues, including physical and mental health. There is section-eight and low-income housing, but there is a shortage of moderate-income housing.
- There is a very diverse population, with over 25% Hispanic residents, and a large portion of immigrants, including a large population of Italian-speakers. As a result, there is a great need for translated materials to reach all members of the community.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT PORT JEFFERSON, LONG ISLAND**

### **Access to Waterways**

- The village has some resident-only parking lots near beaches. In the past, some minority groups would gather fish from the jetty. In reaction, the village put up “no fishing” signs. The village has largely started gatekeeping the resources.
- For those who are not residents, their only access to the Long Island Sound is McAllister County Park, which has only six parking spaces. The water cannot be accessed without being a resident of Port Jefferson Village or without getting dropped off.

### **Safety Concerns**

- Some think that subsistence fishing is occurring in McAllister Park, Pirate’s Cove, Port Jefferson’s East Beach, and the mouth of Mt. Sinai Harbor. There is some concern that these anglers are not aware of regulations and may not be engaging in safe practices.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- Brookhaven Landfill causes debris and air quality issues. This remains a top-of-mind issue on Long Island. It is scheduled to be closed to construction waste (thereby limiting the debris) in 2024, after a calculated cap. The landfill is a large burden to the town.
- There are water quality issues in the area.
- There is a need for more education, specifically about water quality.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- Flooding is an issue. Port Jefferson used to be called “drain meadow” because of the frequent flooding issues. More frequent and more intense flooding has occurred over the past decade.
- Groundwater is only 2 to 3 feet below the surface and will come up very quickly during rain events.
- There is high tide flooding during storm events. Stormwater runoff gathers in the commercial area of downtown.
- The community has removed vegetation and has hardscape surfaces. The fire department has been under 3 to 5 feet of water several times in the past few years, and the department is exactly the people needed to help in these situations.
- There is discussion about what infrastructure can and should be moved to reduce flooding.
- There is inadequate stormwater infrastructure, and all drainage pipes lead to the commercial downtown area causing flooding issues during heavy rainfall.
- Businesses adjacent to the harbor are always threatened during flooding events. A large part of the waterfront is for parking, which makes storm catchment and filtration before the harbor difficult.
- All issues are exacerbated by sea level rise and storm activity.

### **Erosion Concerns**

- There are coastal erosion issues with a large bluff. It has eroded 15-20 feet in the past 10 years near the country club.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- There is not enough parking in town in general.
- The landfill is one of biggest topics on Long Island right now. People are unsure of when the new landfill will be opening or where it will be. There is concern that it will be in an underserved community and that cancer rates will skyrocket.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- The Setalcott Nation formerly lived on the North Shore, but they now live in Southport, and they are working to reclaim and steward their land.
- People who use waterways for food, particularly those of the Setalcott Nation, are considered a nuisance to homeowners and landowners.
- There are sometimes issues when decision-makers ignore problems because there is no clear path forward.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- There are a lot of minority groups in Port Jefferson Station. Councilmembers have had trouble reaching underserved Hispanic communities. There has been some success through connecting with churches, but they would like further suggestions and assistance with reaching these audiences.
- There are large immigrant populations in the area, particularly of Southeast Asian descent, and there is a large Hispanic community. Signs are posted in English, Mandarin, and Spanish, and some perceive the non-English signs to have a racist element.
- Resources are being used for services by a highly valued small minority of residents; there was a \$5 million dollar project to save the country club catering hall.
- There is a fair amount of gentrification happening uptown near the train station.
- There is a lack of diversity, and housing costs can be extremely high.
- Some community members are resistant to change--boaters are attached to the marina, and different lobbyists fight against change.
- Residents have complained about not being able to find parking because nonresidents are using the beach.



## **FINDINGS ABOUT HUNTINGTON STATION, LONG ISLAND**

### **Access to Waterways**

- The area is somewhat removed from waterways. Waterfront properties are almost exclusively owned by high income, White, and upper middle-class individuals.
- Community members in the area indicated that other priorities and limited time were their primary barriers to accessing the Sound. In many cases this issue was connected with social issues, particularly the high cost of housing in the area.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- There are a significant number of cultural resources along the coastline that improved transportation and improved access could connect to underserved communities. Access to these areas and recreational opportunities would be a benefit.
- Communication about existing resources is a challenge: underserved populations have not known about service offerings, like where they can go to get the COVID vaccine or other types of resources.
- The town just adopted a plan to help construct a multimillion-dollar African American history museum on the waterfront in and around Lloyd Harbor.
- Some anglers in the area are unaware of fishing regulations and some even reported being unaware that a fishing license was needed.
- Some reported a significant number of Spanish- and Mandarin-speaking anglers in the area, many of which are thought to be substance anglers. Interviewees feel that fishing regulation and licensure information should be easily obtained and available in both Spanish and Mandarin.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- Transportation is an issue: residents do not have transportation to get to work, to get kids safely to school, and so forth. Work could be done to increase transportation opportunities by improving walkability and bike-ability and by expanding bike share programs.
- Huntington Station is one of the only towns in Suffolk County that has its own transit system—a bus system that only exists within the town.
- The sewer system needs major investment. The state, county, and town are working on partnering on a project and have committed \$22 million to sewer improvements.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- There are many socioeconomic disparities in the area.
- Some residents in the area do not have access to necessary healthcare.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT PORT WASHINGTON, LONG ISLAND**

### **Access to Waterways**

- There are a lot of posted signs that limit access, and many areas require membership.
- Community members do not know where they can access the Sound.
- Hempstead Harbor Park has no transportation for people to use and no bikes or walking paths.
- The immigrant community in the area uses the waterfront frequently.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- The community needs more hands-on programs. Young people are really interested in the environment, and the waterfront and associated programs can bring people in.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- Water quality and pollution are major issues, including impacts of fertilizers and nitrogen loads.
- A low-income community near the beach just received a C rating for water quality.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- Impacts from climate change, super storms, and coastal disasters are causing many environmental issues, and especially issues with flooding.

### **Erosion Concerns**

- Developments on the shore and in the community are causing environmental damage.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Immigrant rights are a major social issue in the area.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT SUFFOLK COUNTY, LONG ISLAND**

### **Access to Waterways**

- There are a lot of nonresidents who come to Cold Spring Harbor to boat and fish. Many Hispanic people fish in the area. Parking is often by the library or along Shore Road on the Suffolk side of inner harbor.
- Other areas where people often fish are Caumsett State Historic Park Reserve and Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Park in Oyster Bay.
- Communities are not always aware of places that exist for outdoor recreation; they do not know where to find walking trails or access to waterways.
- Public access to waterways needs to be maintained in the interest of equitable sharing of resources.
- Geographic sprawl can be a challenge—if people live close to the beach they might go there, but those not in proximity to waterways might be less likely to visit the area.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- Some of the county parks are fenced and have limited access. Some community members mistake these areas for private parks where they are not allowed to go.
- Community members in the areas that are lower income do not have as much time to volunteer and get involved in environmental issues. A lot of parents have multiple jobs. There should be more opportunities to support children and involve them in environmental programs.
- Many feel that education about the environment, the Sound, and nature are needed throughout the area. Individuals who do not have access to services and clubs with fees need other resources that will aid in making opportunities more accessible.
- The Longwood School District is one of the most challenging districts. Community members have major language barriers. The district tries to give opportunities for more students to experience boating, because (despite living on an island) they likely have not ever used the waterway for recreation.
- The county needs help educating the public about the variety of ways the environment affects people, and there is a need for more programs for students to experience nature first-hand.

### **Safety Concerns**

- There is a lack of knowledge of rules and regulations around fishing and community members need more education in order for them to engage in safe fishing practices.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- Pollution, plastic, marine debris, derelict lobster pots, and ghost fishing gear are found on beaches and in waterways.
- There is a lack of awareness around certain issues, such as marine debris, plastics, and derelict fishing gear.

- With regard to water quality issues, underserved communities are interested in the condition of drinking water.
- Water quality issues related to stormwater runoff are impacting the area.
- Inner Harbor of Cold Spring Harbor has some of the worst water quality in the Sound.
- In Bellport, there is a confluence of landfill, water, and air quality issues.

#### **Erosion Concerns**

- Coastal erosion is a major issue.
- Nitrogen from lawns has caused many issues. Awareness programs are needed to educate more about how actions impact the waterways and how nitrogen affects the root system and results in erosion.

#### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- There are issues with limited parking and crowding.

#### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- The area has issues with ticks that carry Lyme's disease, which could make the outdoors more inaccessible. For instance, it could make going out for walks less desirable.
- The county has superfund sites/remediation, food insecurity issues, and a large senior community.
- Communities of color have various ways in which they access health services and might not always know where services can be found.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT NASSAU COUNTY, LONG ISLAND**

### **Access to Waterways**

- A lot of people are inland, 20 or more minutes from the Long Island Sound.
- Much of the shoreline is privately owned, making access especially difficult.
- The area on Nassau's side near Cold Spring Harbor is all privately owned.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- In the area there are many concerns about childcare, and concerns about transportation and social engagement for older adults.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- Many communities on Long Island do not have good access to public transportation.
- Without personal transportation, impoverished residents have a very small scope of movement.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- Racial injustice is a large part of the history of the Cold Spring Harbor area. While it is now primarily wealthy and White, 100 years ago it was an industrial area and one of the areas with the most people of color living anywhere in the region.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- The area is considered a food desert by some, and residents do not always have access to healthy food. Food security is top of mind.
- Work is often difficult to find in the region.
- There are high poverty levels in areas where it is very expensive to work and live.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NEW YORK**

### **Access to Waterways**

- People from Mount Vernon do not interact with Long Island Sound much unless they go to Rye Beach. The Hutchinson River plays a big role in their lives because of its proximity, but most residents feel that the water is dirty and rarely access the waterway in any direct way, with the exception of a very small number of residents who fish in the waterway. Community members indicated that there was a plan a few years ago to clean up the Hutchinson River so it could be used by the community, but the status of that plan is unclear.
- Waterways in Mount Vernon do not have good public access. Other communities along the Hutchinson River have restaurants and boats and different kinds of activities. Mount Vernon does not feel welcoming around the waterway in the same way. Some think this lack of amenities is playing a role in preventing people from using the waterway and might be making people feel unwelcome. The waterway is in places hidden by bushes and forestry; even the pathway to get to the Hutchinson River from Willson's Woods Park is not well defined. If the pathway were defined, and if there were more amenities, more people would likely use the waterway.
- Mount Vernon residents do not feel welcome at the Long Island Sound because they do not consider the area close enough to the Sound do not understand the connection between the Sound and the Hutchinson River.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- Some outdoor areas are closed to the public because of easements.
- There is a need to make outdoor spaces and waterways more accessible to people and families, but there is a feeling that more amenities are needed to accomplish this.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- In Mount Vernon, more people are becoming concerned about the impact of fossil fuels and micro toxins in the environment.
- Many people in Mount Vernon have respiratory issues that they feel is linked to fossil fuel burning. The perception is that there are high asthma rates in the area.
- People are concerned about the safety of water-bacteria, fungus, and viruses that can kill—and the news coverage of these might make people unlikely to use the river.
- Some interviewees think that oysters and other shellfish could be used to clean up the river.
- There is concern about areas downriver toward the Bronx where there are industrial areas that might pollute the river.
- Water quality is a barrier to accessing the river. The river needs to be cleaned.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- The health and other impacts of flooding cause many problems for the community. Basements flood, and community members do not have resources to repair basements. Mold and mildew can cause myriad health problems.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- Attempts have been made to increase the amount of parking in the area, but groups have received a fair amount of pushback in response to their efforts.
- There is reportedly only one site in Westchester County where people can bring cooking oil to dispose of safely, and it requires an appointment. As a result, oil clogging municipal drains is a problem for most municipalities.
- Mount Vernon consists of two very distinct communities: southern Mount Vernon is closer to the Bronx, while the northern part is closer to Brownsville. It is thought that the people most at risk of experiencing environmental justice issues tend to be in southern Mount Vernon, and those least at risk of experiencing environmental justice issues tend to be in the northern part.
- Inadequate and aging infrastructure is an issue in Mount Vernon. The sewer systems are very old, and there is a lot of flooding. Storm events are worsened by the old system's inability to remove water from drains. New pipes are needed, but the city does not have money to repair its infrastructure even though Mount Vernon only encompasses 4.4 square miles. Even small storm events can cause water to get into peoples' basements because storm drains are not working.

### **Disconnection from the Environment**

- Many people do not see a place for themselves in the environmental space, and a lot of people might not even be interested in protecting the land. It is pivotal to focus on message development and delivery in order to create connections between environmental and social justice.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- Many urban communities do not own their own land, and decision-making can be contentious and complicated.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Many of the issues in urban communities, including poverty, social justice, and food insecurity (such as in Yonkers), are challenging issues, and they are not connected to the environment or environmental justice in many residents' minds.
- Food scarcity is an issue in Mount Vernon. Prices are high and rising since the pandemic.
- Climate change is not a top priority for communities that are dealing with things that seem more urgent. People care, but in their perception, there are far more urgent issues taking precedence.

## **COMMUNITY FINDINGS BY STATE: CONNECTICUT**

In the following section, results and findings are shown by state; specifically, findings in this section apply to Connecticut in general. The below summary of findings is based on information from the exploratory phase, the in-depth interviews with CBOs, the survey with community members, and the community listening sessions.

### **CONNECTICUT FINDINGS ABOUT REACHING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITIES**

As with the overall findings throughout the region, many communities in Connecticut indicated that they often had to prioritize daily issues, such as rent or food, rather than being more focused on the environment or engaging in outdoor activities. Although Connecticut residents did not select transportation as a barrier as often as New York residents, transportation was mentioned as a major barrier to engagement in many communities, as well as several other infrastructure, public health, and social issues.

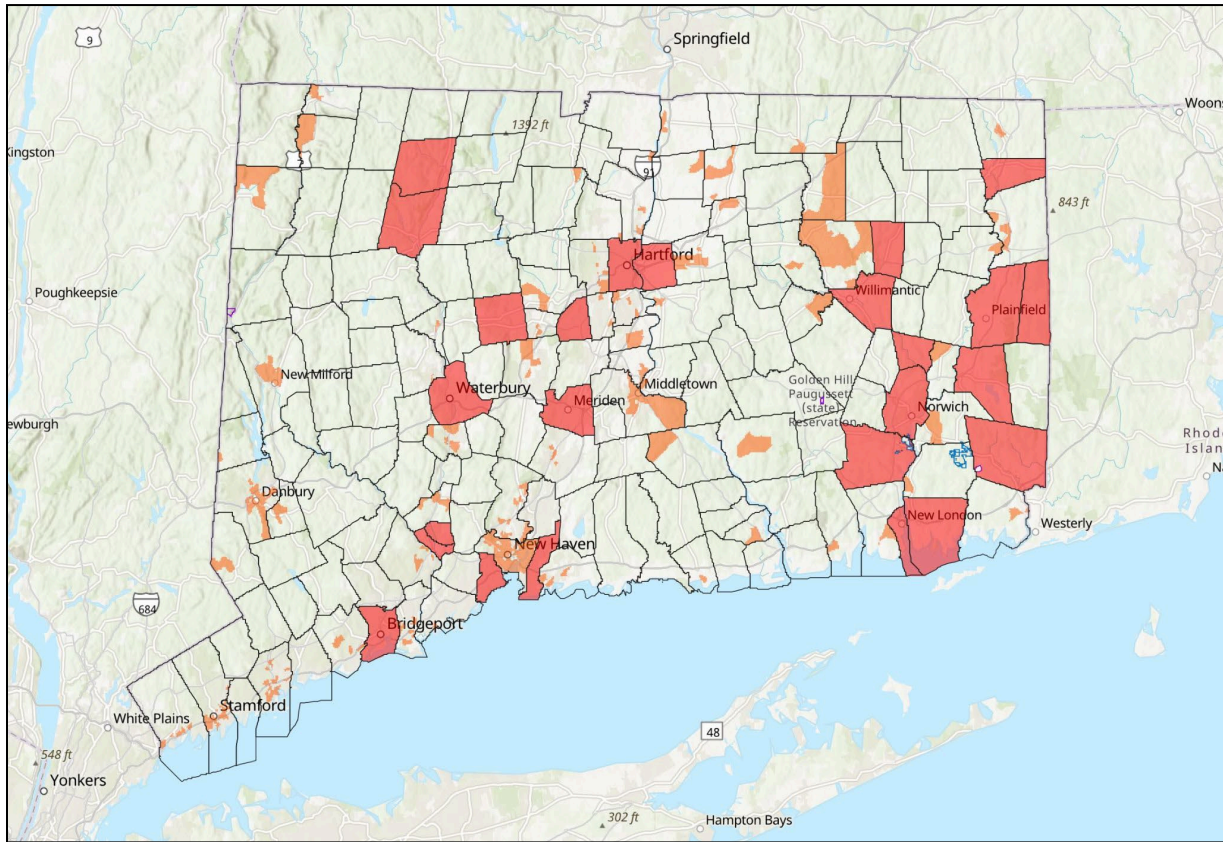
#### **Findings from the Exploratory Phase**

The exploratory phase included an in-depth review of mapping tools used to show issues associated with environmental justice and disadvantaged communities. In the below series of maps from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Economic Innovation Group, and EPA EJScreen, several things can be seen that highlight some of the challenges in Connecticut communities around the Sound. First, different disadvantaged communities in coastal Connecticut are shown. New Haven, New London, Bridgeport, and others can be seen as disadvantaged. Following the initial map, percentiles of low income and low life expectancy are shown. As in the disadvantaged maps, New Haven, Bridgeport, and New London, among others, are shown to be experiencing major social and public health issues.

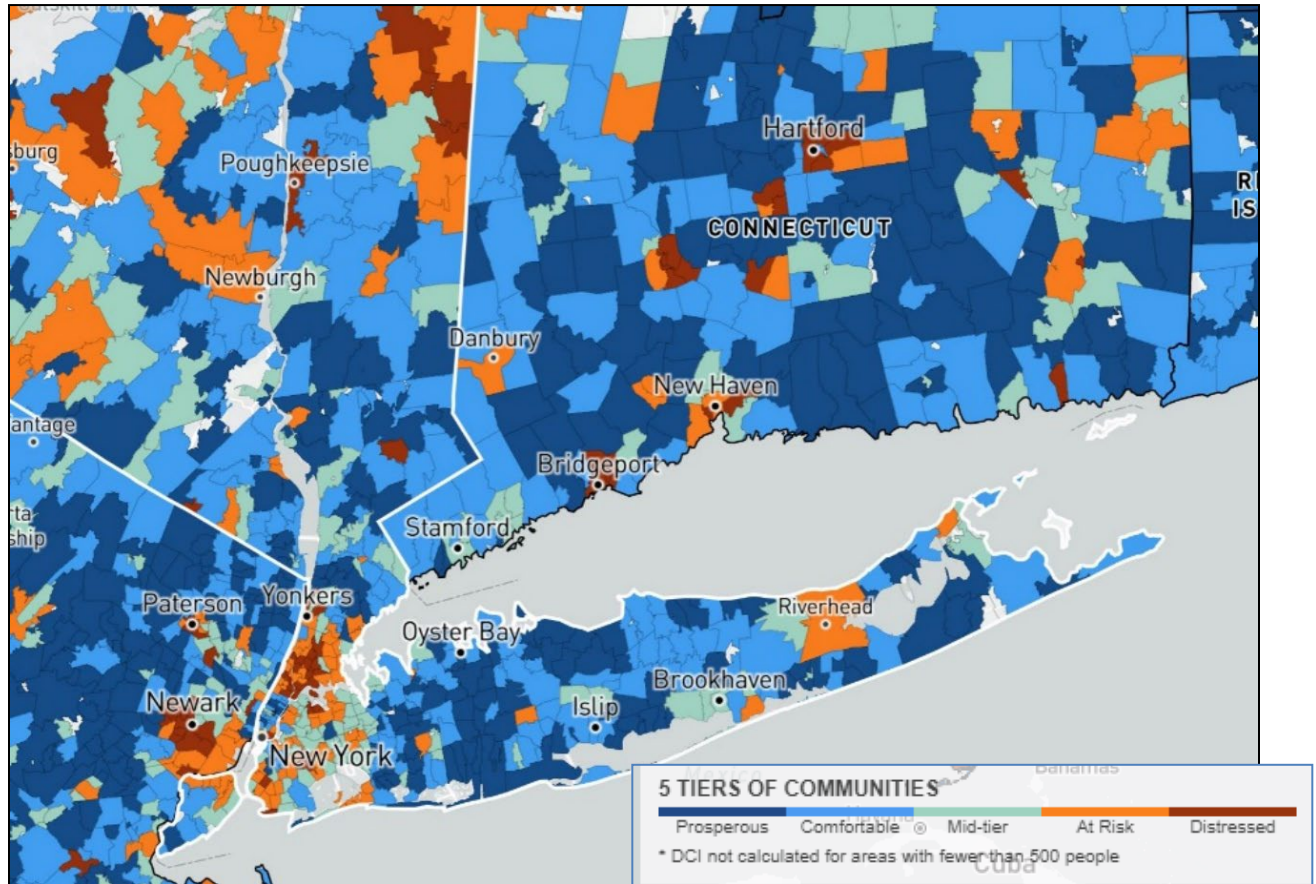
As in New York, some communities might not be reflected in data sets such as those presented in these maps; nonetheless, interviews with CBOs and community members indicated many environmental issues in different communities in Connecticut around the Sound. In the community-specific findings for the State of Connecticut, information about some of these communities is discussed.



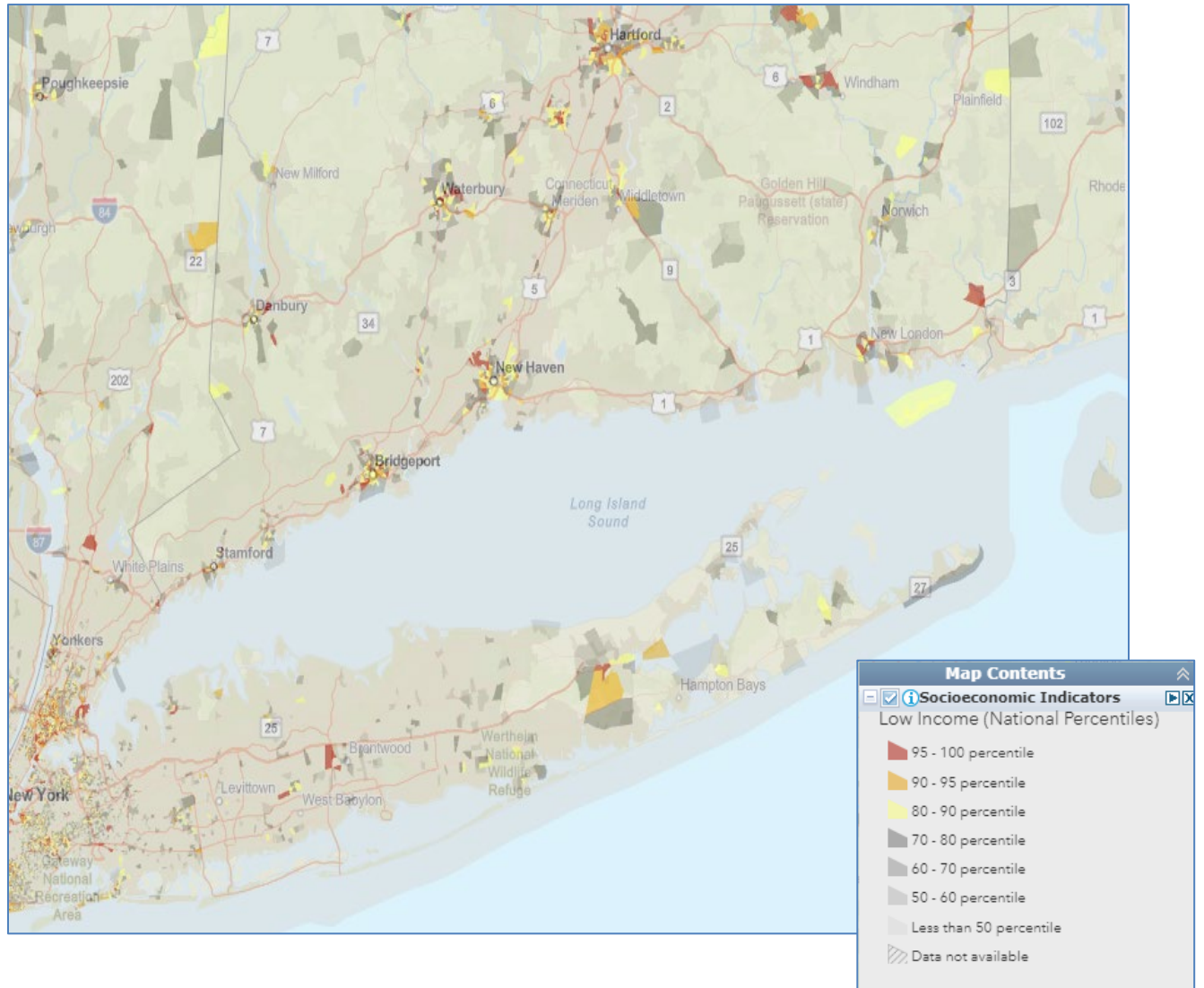
**Connecticut Environmental Justice Communities**



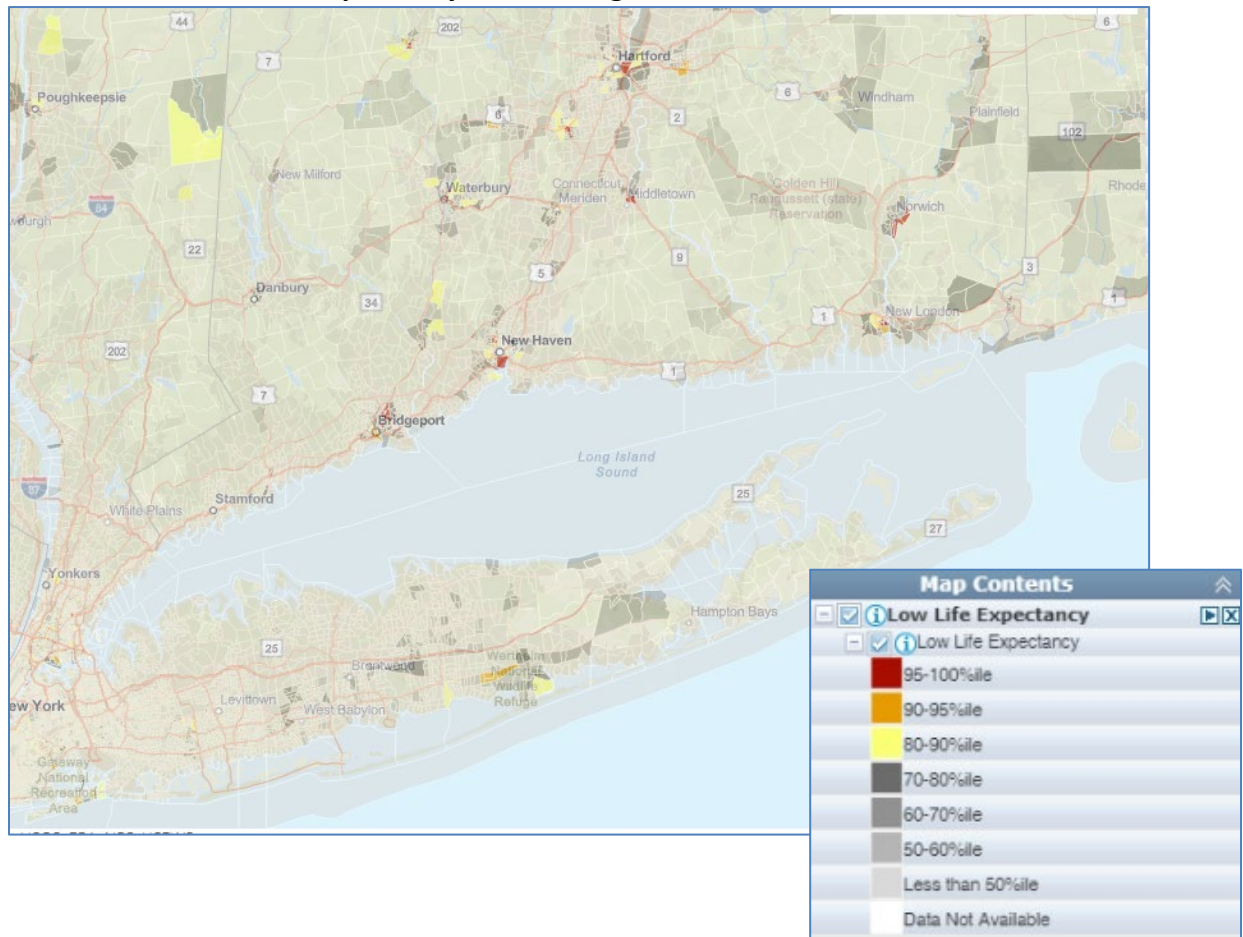
**Disadvantaged Community Index**



Percentiles of Low Income on the Long Island Sound



### Percentiles of Low Life Expectancy on the Long Island Sound



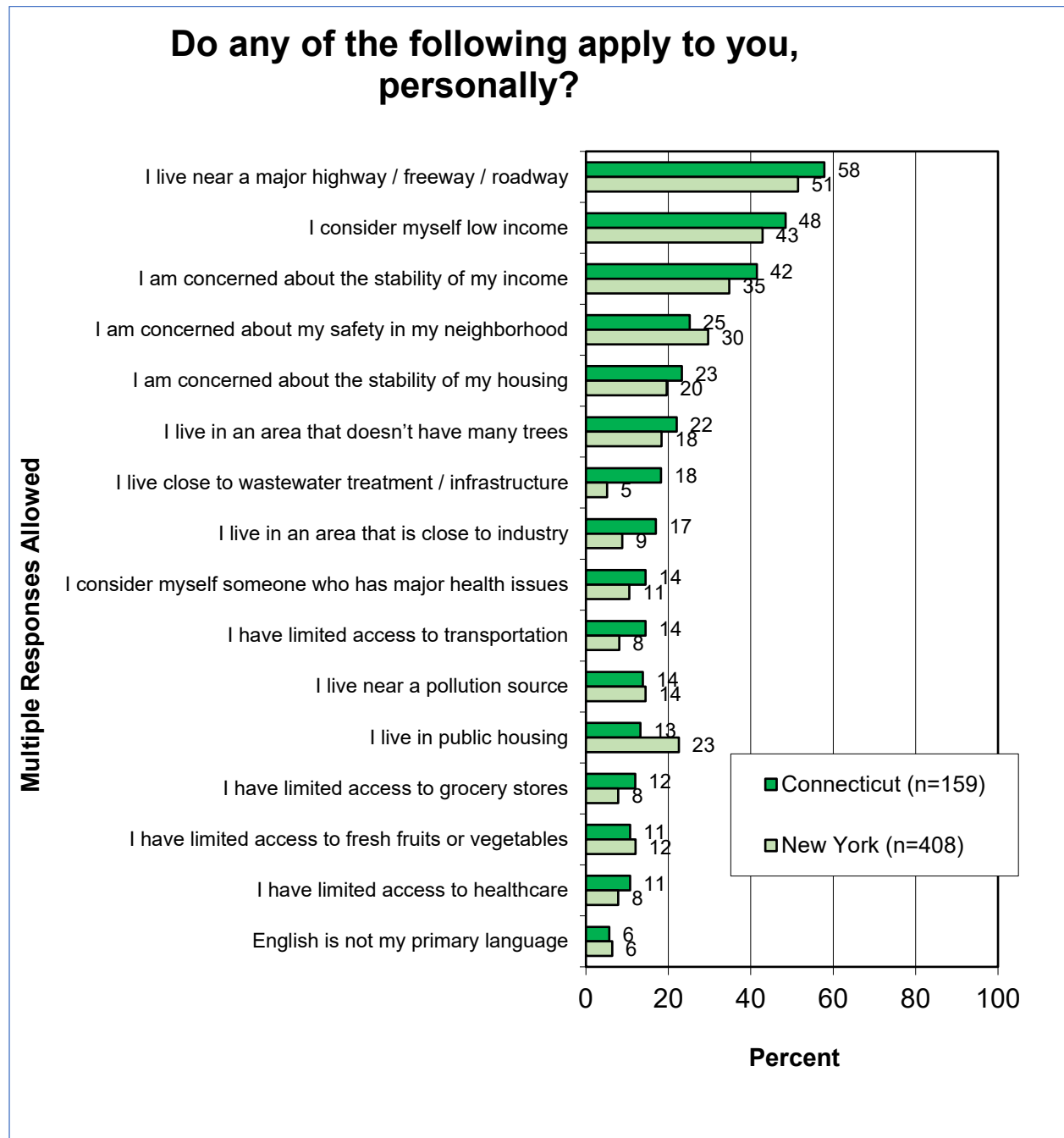
### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

Some of the findings from in-depth interviews that relate to challenges with reaching and engaging communities in Connecticut are summarized below. Many of the findings from the in-depth interviews emphasized the infrastructure and social challenges that many Connecticut residents faced. As in other components of the project, many of these challenges are prioritized over environmental or nature-based activities or conversations.

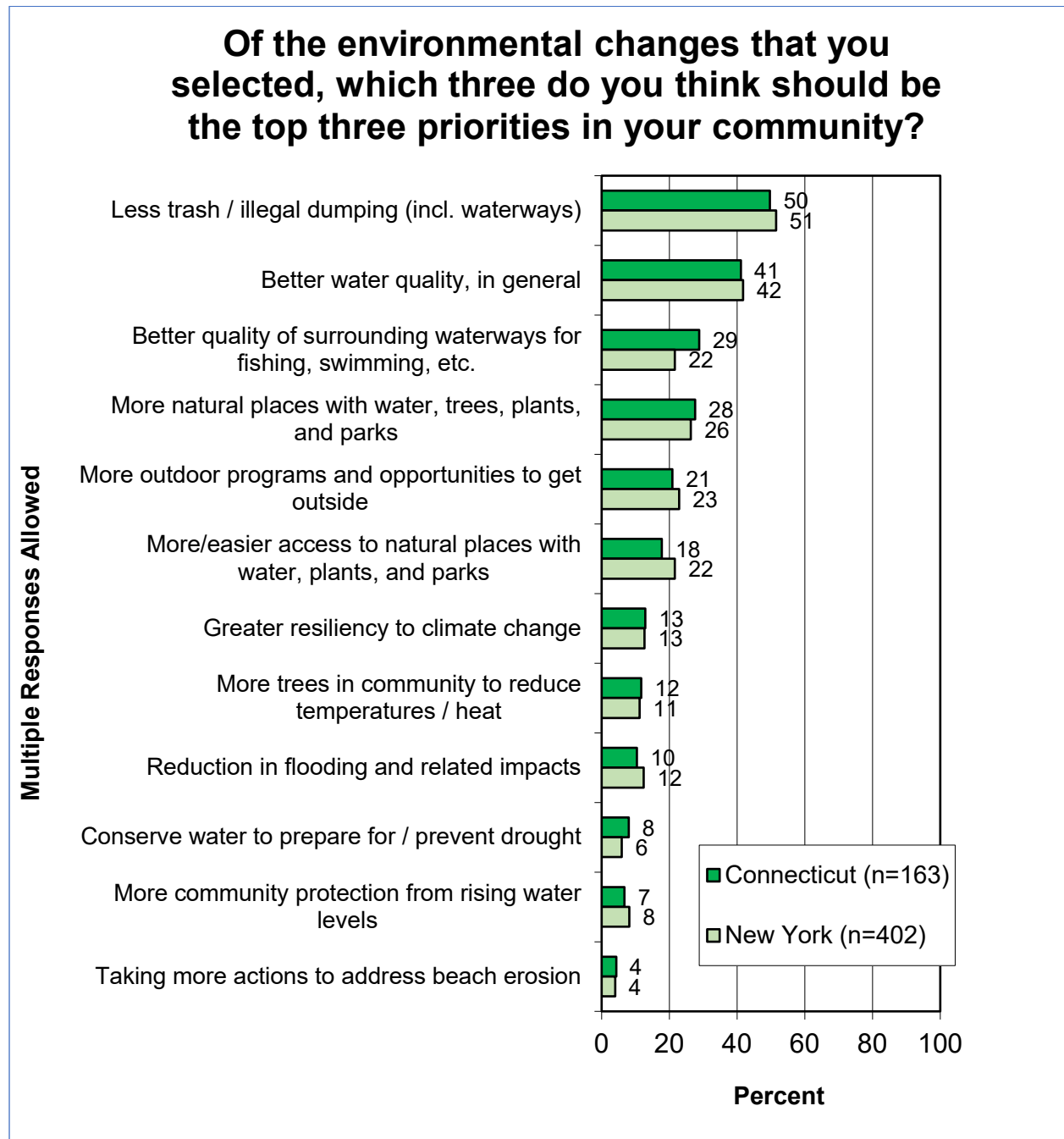
- Air quality, infrastructure, and transportation issues were noted as major concerns in many urban areas in Connecticut.
- Issues with energy resources were a major infrastructure topic in Connecticut.
- Many interviewees feel that Connecticut has a history of exclusion and racism that has resulted in systemic issues that prevent minority communities from accessing resources and being involved in conversations and decision-making.
- Some interviewees mentioned issues with trust in government and larger organizations. In many cases, interviewees noted that communities are better reached by going through trusted leaders and organizations.
- Poverty in minority communities and wealth disparities throughout the state are believed by many interviewees to be at the center of infrastructure, social, and public health issues.

### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

While there was a significant amount of overlap between Connecticut and New York residents regarding the environmental justice indicators that applied to them, Connecticut residents selected living near a major highway, considering themselves low income, and being concerned about the stability of their income at least 5% more often than New York residents. Living close to wastewater treatment/infrastructure and living close to industry showed the most substantial difference between Connecticut and New York residents (Connecticut residents were 13% more likely and 8% more likely to select these responses, respectively).

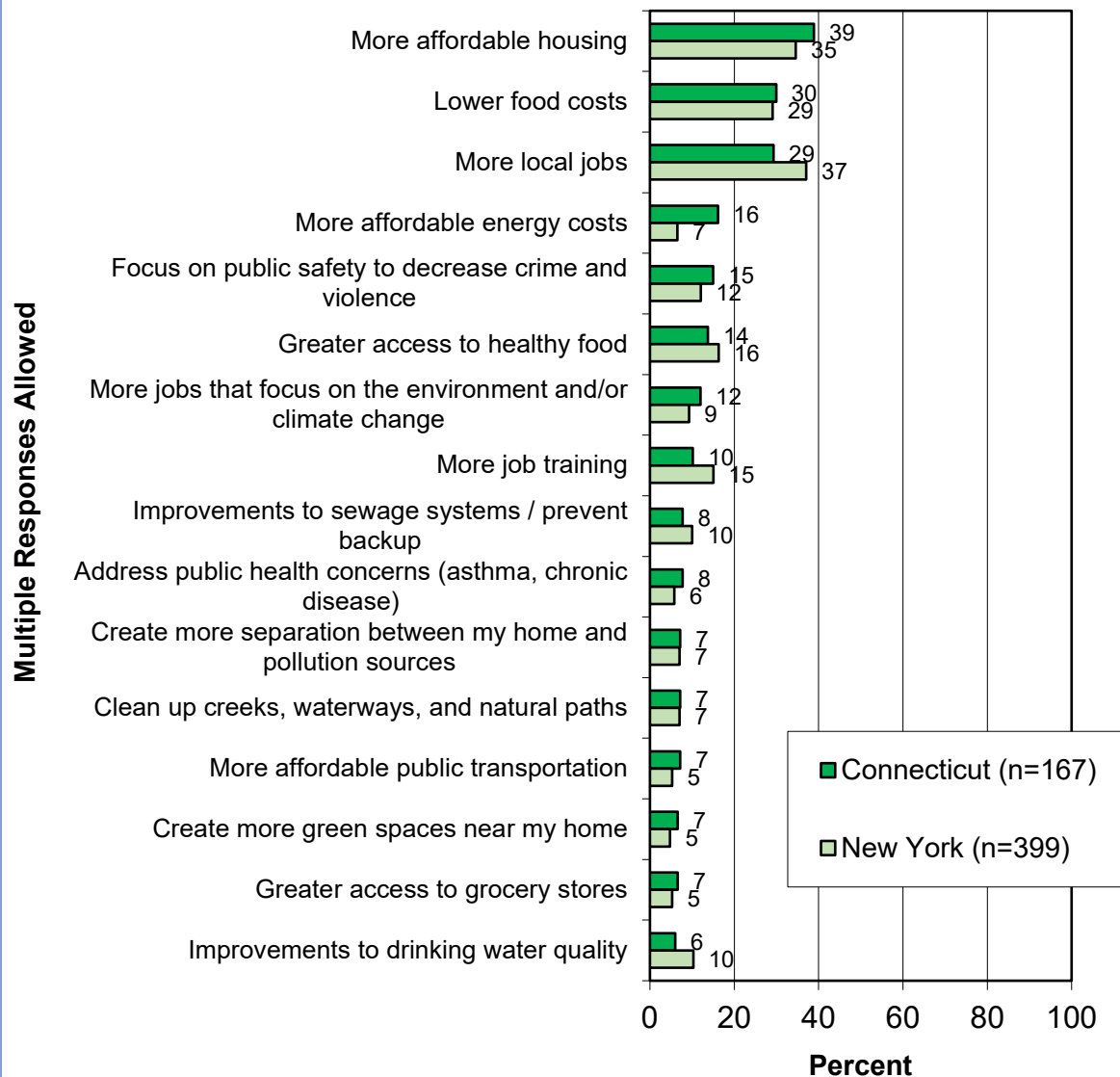


When asked about the environmental changes that should be prioritized in their communities, compared to New York residents, Connecticut residents were more likely to prioritize better quality of surrounding waterways for fishing, swimming, etc.; more natural places with water, trees, plants, and parks; and conserving water to prepare for/prevent drought. Less trash and illegal dumping was the number one response in both Connecticut and New York.

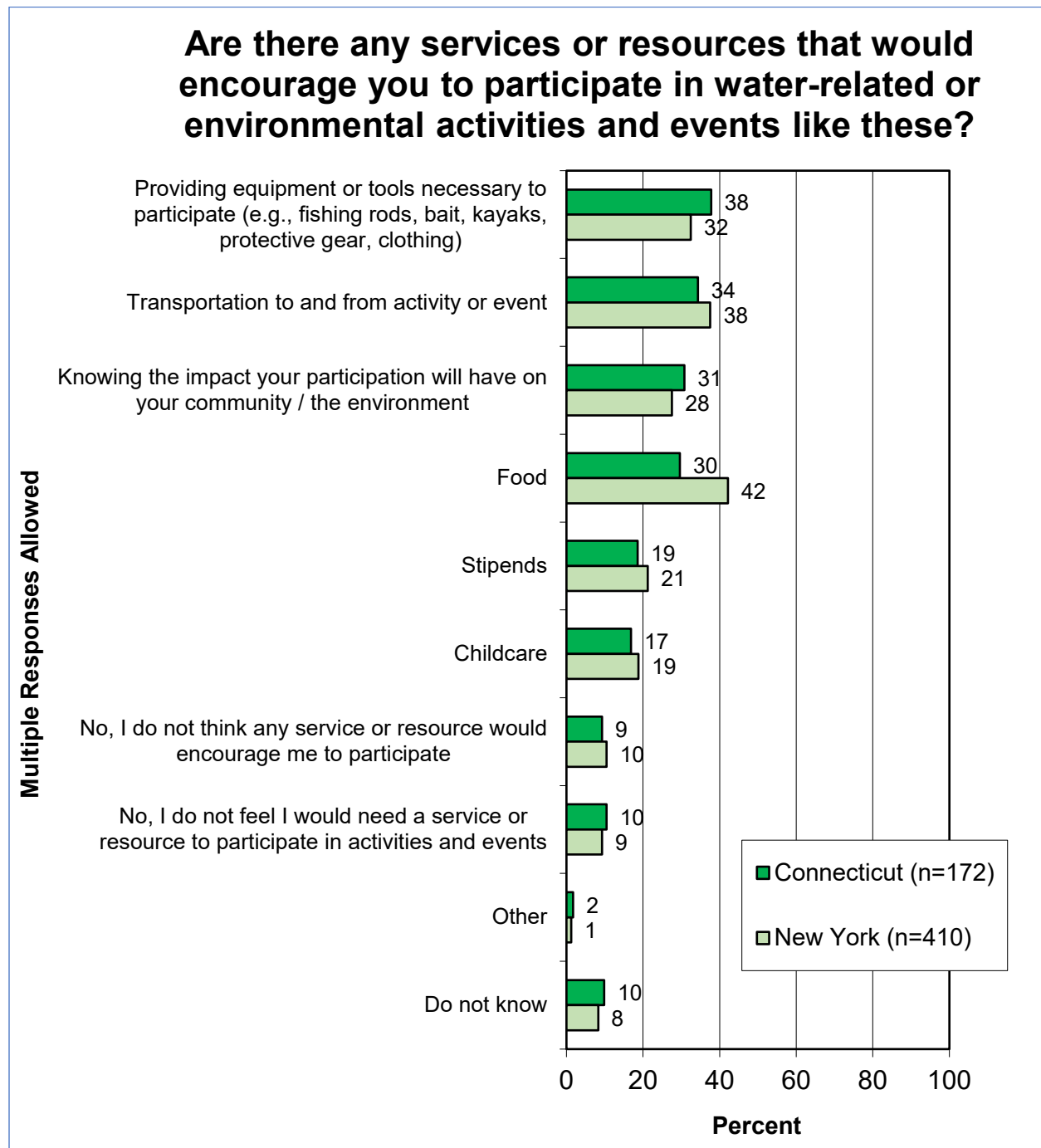


After addressing environmental issues, respondents were asked which changes they feel would allow for fair and equal access to opportunities and resources. In a follow-up to this question, respondents were asked to select the top three priorities from their original list of selections. Below are the top responses sorted by state. When compared to New York residents, Connecticut residents were more likely to prioritize affordable housing, lower food costs, more affordable energy costs, and several other responses. The response selected by a much larger percentage of Connecticut residents was more affordable energy costs.

### Of the changes you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community? (Top Responses)



When asked if there are any services or resources that would encourage their participation in water-related or environmental activities and events, the top response for Connecticut residents was providing equipment or tools necessary to participate. In addition, when compared to New York residents, Connecticut residents more often indicated that they would be encouraged to participate by knowing the impact their participation will have on their community or the environment.





### Findings from the Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to challenges with reaching and engaging communities in Connecticut are summarized below. Note that while many of the findings and comments below come from specific communities, only comments and summaries that applied to other overall findings about the state are included in this section.

#### Reaching and Including Disadvantaged Communities

“I think it is important to consider the cumulative effects of pollution. To build on that, there is the intersectional piece of environmental justice, which includes education, food, mental health, and all basic needs. Those are needed to get to justice.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“Focus on the transportation and the cleanup, too. It really needs to be done together.” – Comment from Community Listening Session

“I feel like this always falls on the people who live in the cities. It feels like the municipalities don’t ever take any responsibility for cleaning things up and making the cities safer and cleaner places. They should be doing more of the work.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

[When discussing how to get communities involved in discussions and decision-making]  
“Urgency is the enemy of trust. You have to take the time.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“We’re having a great deal of difficulty just getting eastern Pequots on the map. They are not on the federal census as a separate entity because they are not federally recognized. It not only erased them but every other state-recognized tribe in Connecticut. We went to the meeting and very respectfully pointed out that here was a cluster of environmental justice communities that were not represented on the environmental justice screening tool, which was proudly presented by Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation as this wonderful way of identifying environmental justice communities.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- A fair amount of the discussion at the listening session focused on how to reach disadvantaged community members who had historically been left out of conversations. Several attendees feel that the conversation needs to be more holistic so that community members can better understand the connections between the environment and seemingly unrelated, but more pressing priorities, like flooding, housing, and public health. Some feel that community members are not always aware of the links between public health and environmental issues, and making this connection could be particularly effective in increasing engagement. This aspect of the discussion also addressed the fact that many community members want to be involved in conversations but simply do not have the personal capacity to focus on much more than everyday

needs.

- Some participants noted that, although community organizing can be powerful and effective in beginning processes to address the issues discussed, attendees feel that those in disadvantaged communities who do this work should be compensated for their time and effort, as it will surely be taking away from other priorities and adding additional burdens.
- Some attendees noted that environmental events often included the same faces and voices and were not always inclusive of the people who are most impacted by environmental justice issues. Some attendees suggested using trusted community leaders to reach non-English speakers, of which there are many in eastern Connecticut.
- Other attendees indicated that communities need more representation that looks like them and that prioritizes their needs. Finally, attendees at the community listening session indicated that perhaps the best way to reach those who have historically been left out of environmental conversations was to meet them where they are: libraries, community centers, churches, popular restaurants, and facilities that provide services in disadvantaged communities.

## CONNECTICUT FINDINGS ABOUT ACCESS

Based on survey results and community listening sessions and additional outreach, Connecticut residents were more likely than New York residents to indicate that they had used the Sound. Based on all components of the project, Connecticut residents were often more aware of the Sound, which might account for greater use of the Sound; despite this increased use, however, many Connecticut residents cited major issues with access. When asked about barriers to accessing the Sound, Connecticut residents indicated access issues very similar to those seen throughout the region, including a lack of clean and debris free spaces, limited feelings of safety, and transportation issues.

### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

While much of the exploratory phase focused on developing an understanding of the environmental justice issues impacting communities around the Sound, the limited conversation that occurred during the exploratory interviews about observations of disadvantaged communities accessing the Sound referred to concerns about non-English speaking subsistence anglers. In conversations with LISS partners working in Connecticut, the most common languages thought to have been heard among subsistence anglers were Spanish, Mandarin, Italian, and a number of different Eastern European languages. In addition to the languages spoken in the region, some conversations during the exploratory phase addressed the need to be sensitive to cultural identities and differences in order to bring more groups into recreation and use of the Sound.

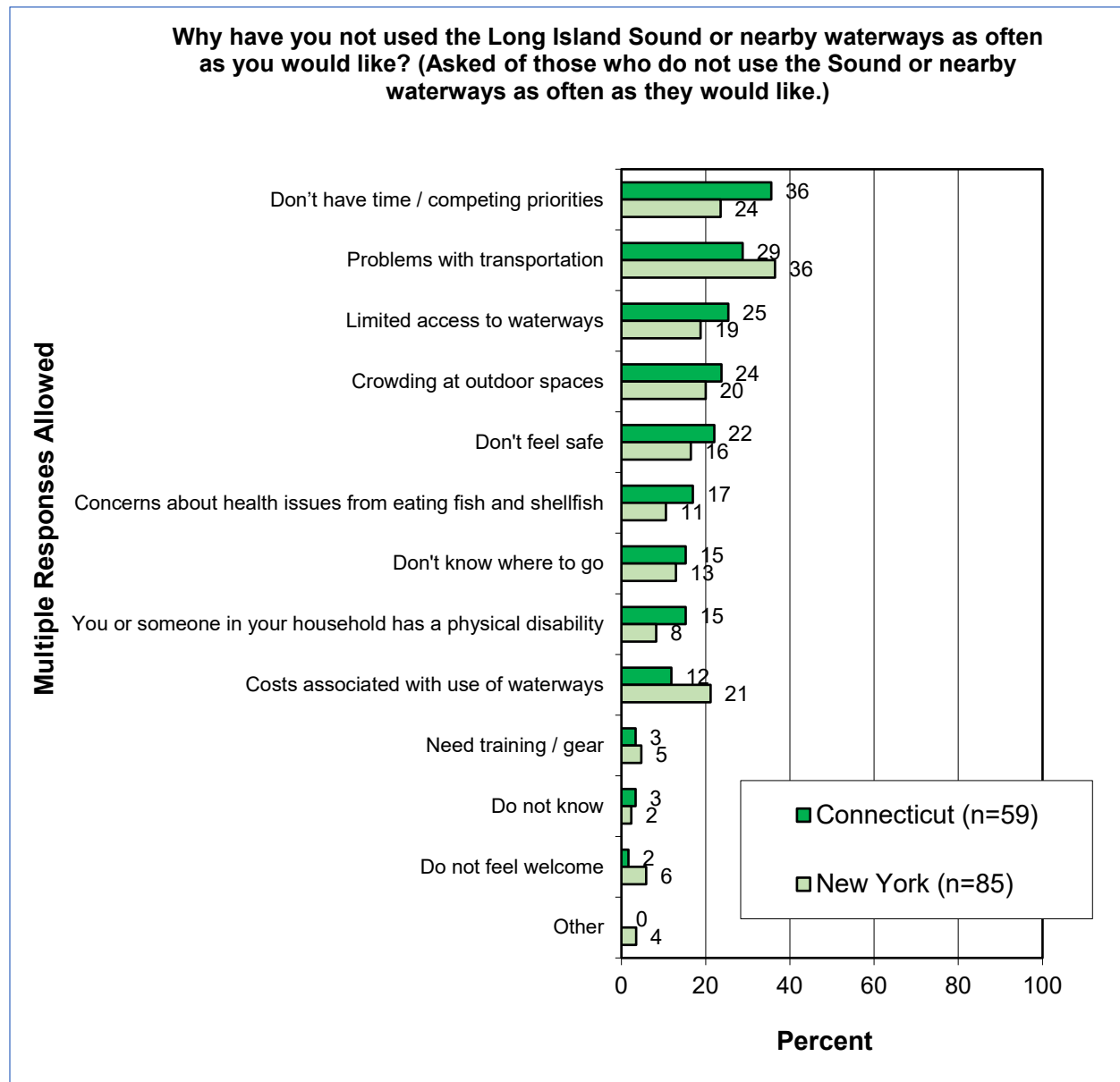
### Findings from the In-Depth Interviews

Some of the findings from in-depth interviews that relate to challenges with access in Connecticut are summarized below. Two of the major themes about access that emerged in Connecticut conversations were unsafe waterways and limited transportation to natural spaces.

- Interviewees noted changes in public transportation that have resulted in limited stops, routes, and hours. Some further noted the dissolution of programs that used to provide affordable public transportation.
- In some Connecticut communities, even those within extremely close proximity to the Sound, interviewees noted that access was limited because residents were unsure of the safety of the water.
- Trash and debris were mentioned very often as barriers to access.

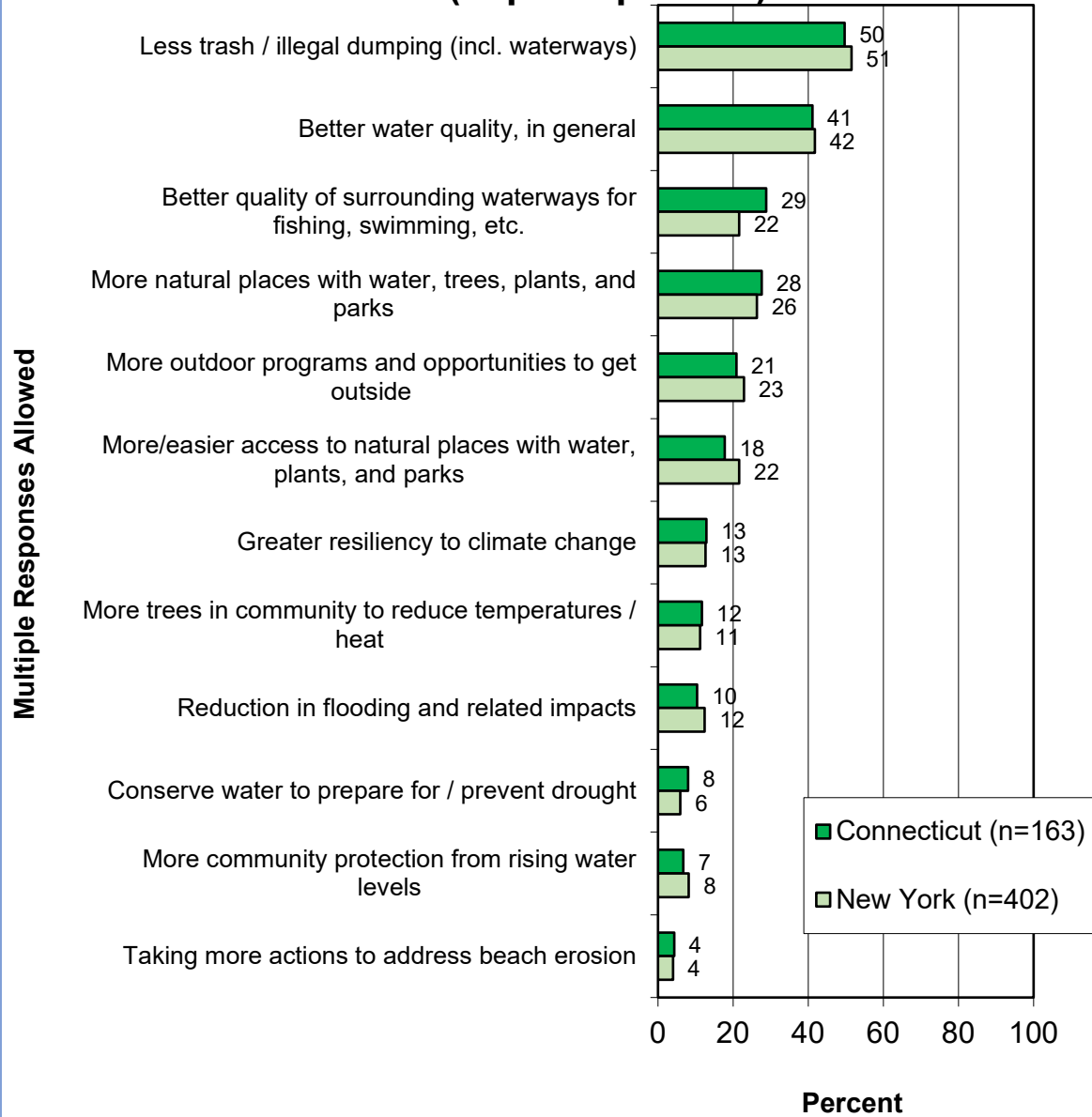
### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

With regard to access, survey respondents from Connecticut were quite similar to respondents from the entire region. Connecticut residents most often indicated issues with not having time and having competing priorities, problems with transportation, and limited access to waterways, in general.

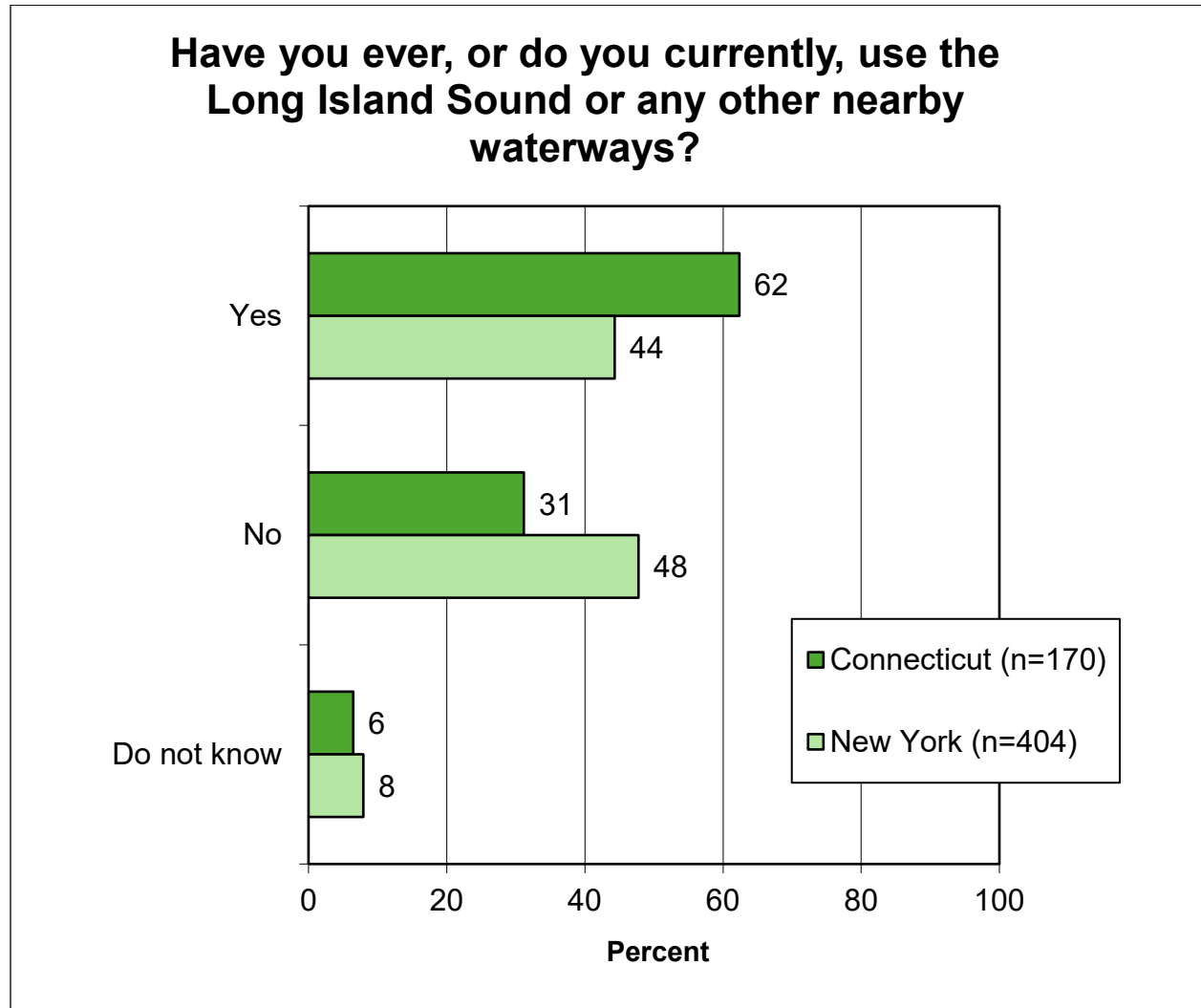


When asked about the top three environmental changes they would prioritize in their community, Connecticut residents selected less trash and illegal dumping; better water quality, in general; and better quality of surrounding waterways for fishing, swimming, etc. as their top responses most often. Note that two of the top three responses directly relate to increasing access to waterways.

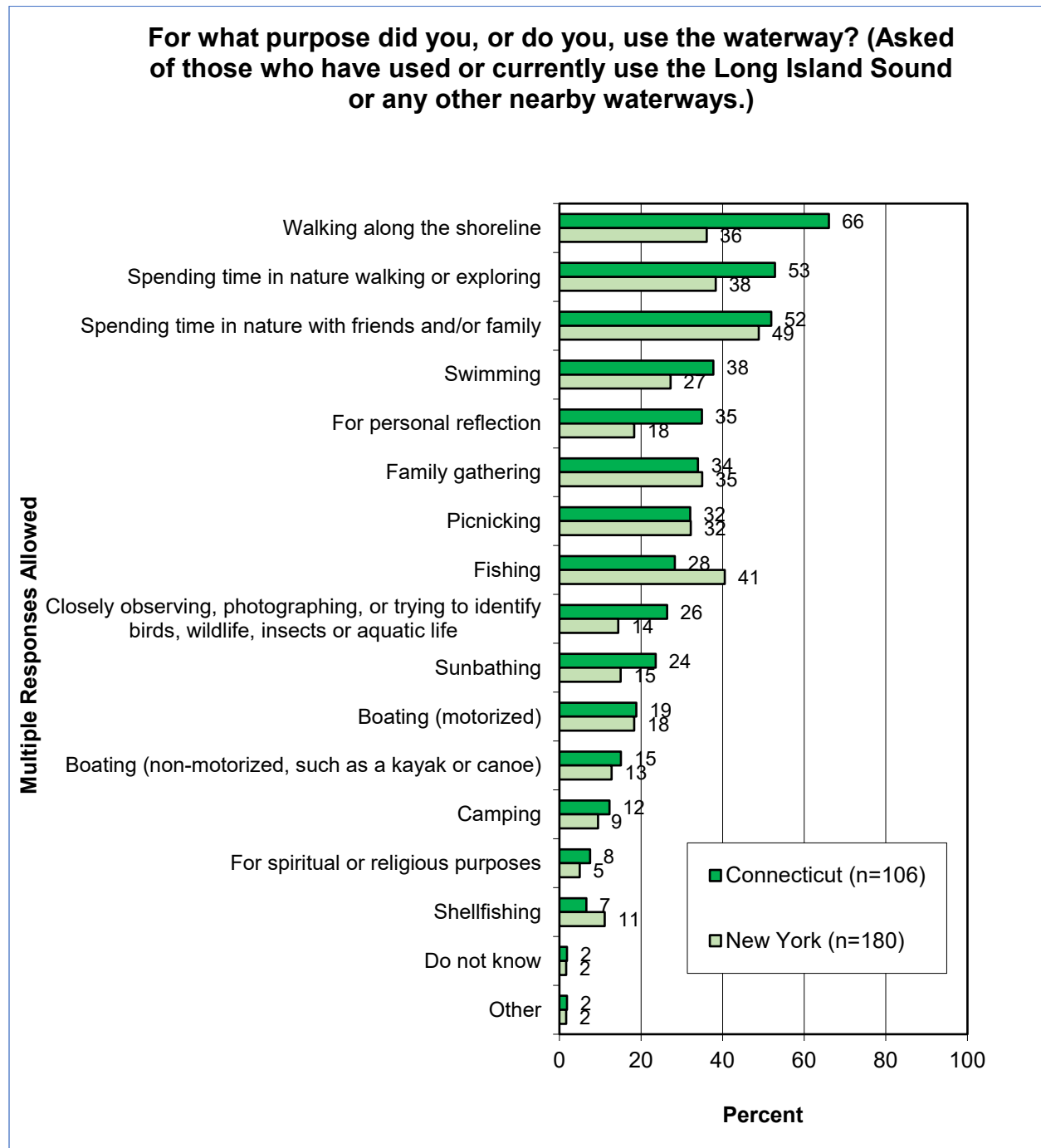
### Of the environmental changes that you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community? (Top Responses)



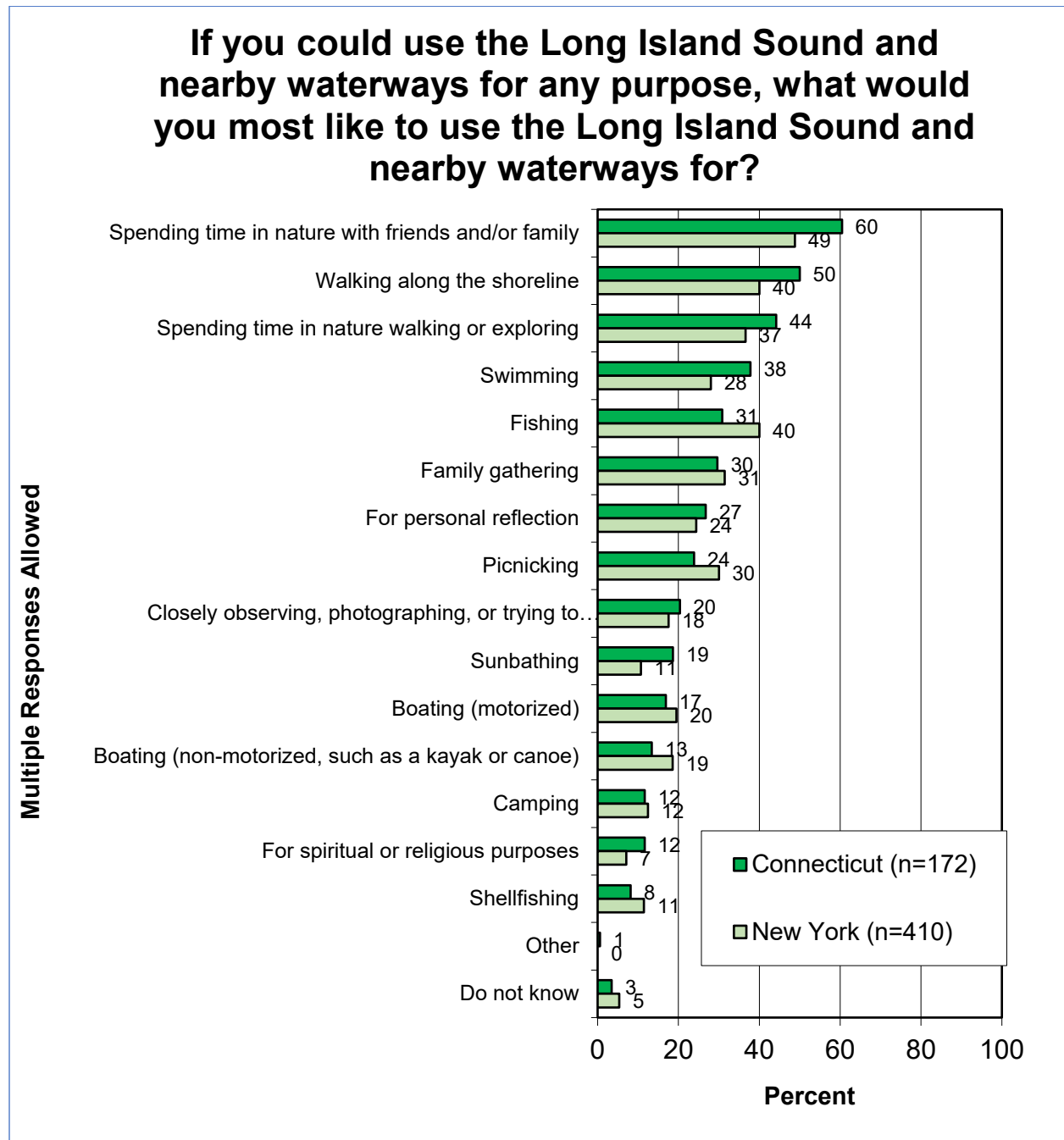
In terms of overall access, Connecticut residents indicated that they have used the Sound more often than residents of New York did. Based on conversations with community members and CBOs, these survey results seemed to mirror much of what was heard in a one-on-one format.



When asked what they had used the Sound for, the number one response among Connecticut residents was walking along the shoreline, followed by spending time in nature walking or exploring. Connecticut residents also indicated that they use the Sound for personal reflection at a much greater rate than did New York residents. The responses from Connecticut residents indicate a desire to simply spend time in nature.

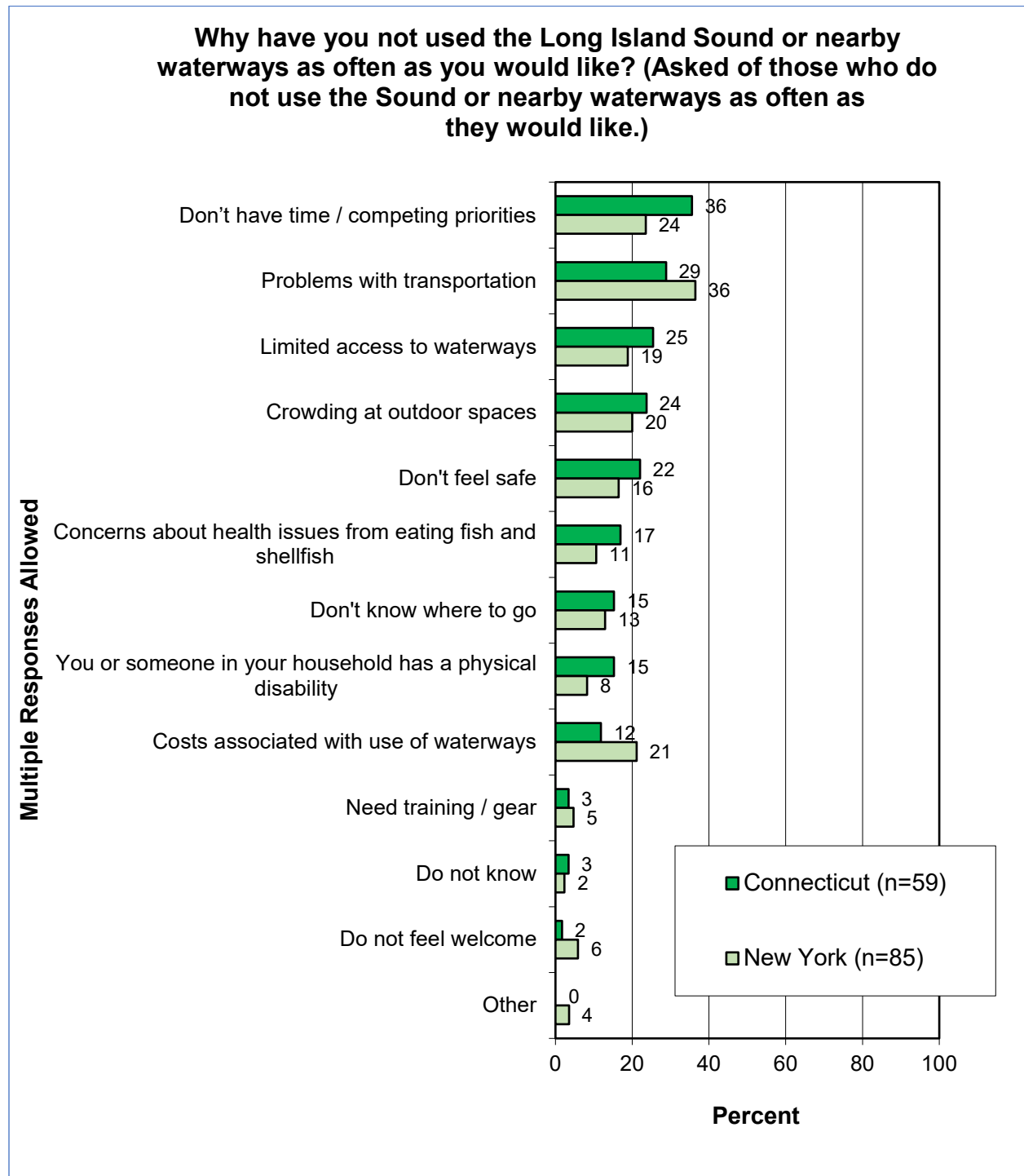


When asked what they would like to use the Sound for, Connecticut residents most often selected spending time in nature with friends and family, suggesting that residents in both Connecticut and New York would like to use the Sound for communal gatherings.





Connecticut residents selected not having time / having competing priorities most often as a reason they had not used the Sound at all or as often as they would like, followed by problems with transportation. Connecticut residents were more likely than New York residents to indicate that they were not using the Sound at all or as often as they like as a result of concerns about health issues from eating fish and shellfish.



### Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to challenges with access in Connecticut are summarized below. Again, although comments come from specific community listening sessions and outreach in different communities in Connecticut, only those that applied across different communities are included here.

“I have lived in different states. It always surprises me how much beach is private, but not just access to the beach itself but to transportation to get there, to access to education about it.”

--Comment from Community Listening Session

“I would like to bring up the issue of feeling welcome at places that *are* publicly accessible. Signage makes a difference about how welcome one feels: if you see rules off the bat, it is not welcoming, try encouraging positive reinforcement. You can still say the rules without being unwelcoming.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“We used to have free public transportation, but all of that is disappearing.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“Some parks close at sunset. That’s when families can go to the park. Leaving them out feels exclusionary.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

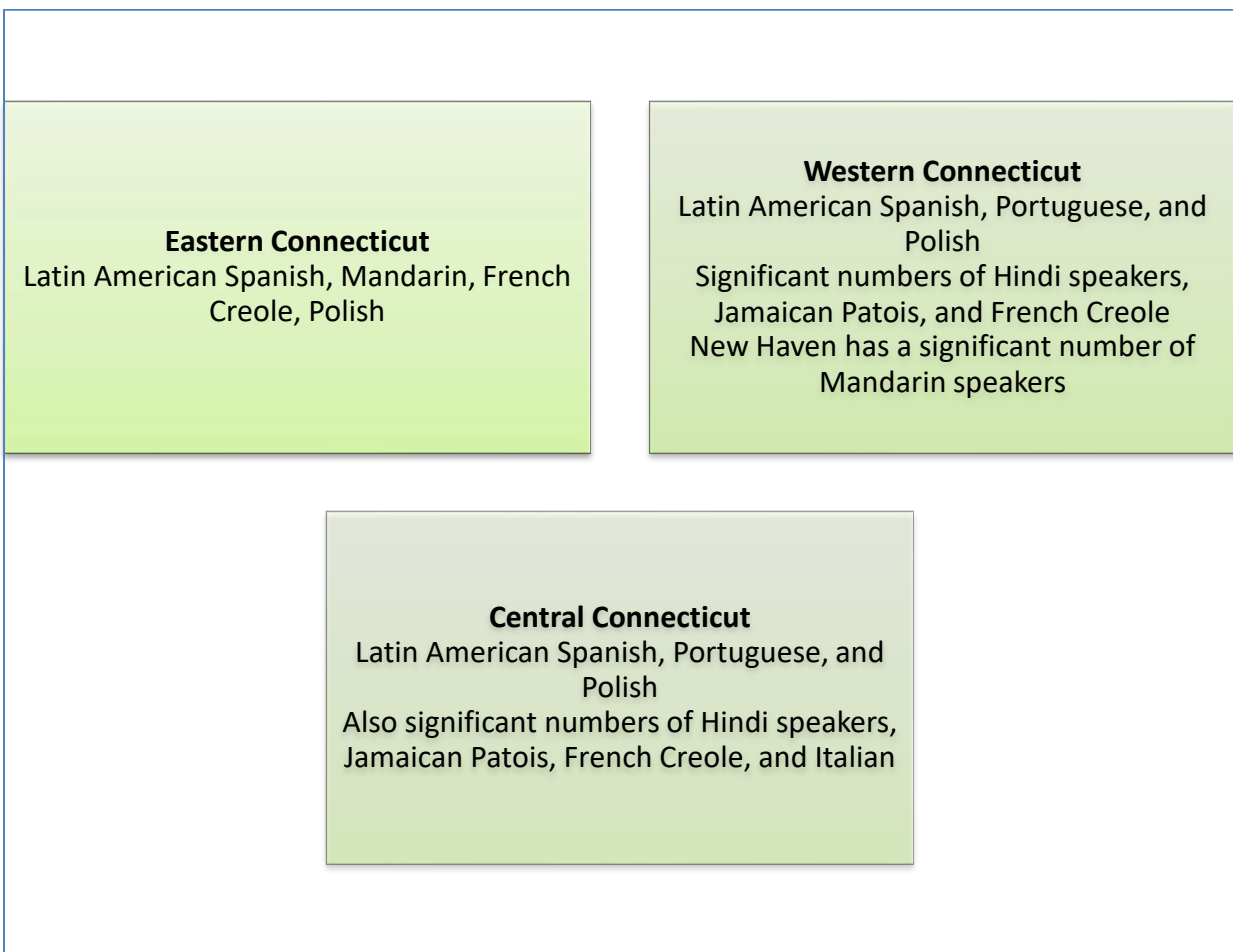
- The New Haven community listening session included a discussion about limited access to green and blue spaces because of zoning, transportation issues, an abundance of private land and private parking, and issues with water quality associated with industrial sites in the area. Community members noted that accessing clean and safe waterways was especially difficult for those in disadvantaged communities. Outdoor spaces closest to disadvantaged communities were thought to be the most polluted by industry and illegal dumping. Some participants also indicated that they feel the onus for addressing such issues often falls on community members who are usually overburdened with increasing housing and food costs, among other things.
- Further complicating the ability to access waterways, community members noted that transportation issues, such as increasing transit prices, fewer public routes, and limited hours of operation, prevented many from being able to travel to cleaner, safer outdoor spaces.
- In addition, several attendees indicated that some local parks and outdoor spaces had begun closing at sunset, effectively excluding many who work long hours or have children in school. Participants suggested that there should be a focus on expanding hours to be more inclusive of different groups. Finally, community listening session attendees expressed that they feel that municipalities and legislators should be working harder to clean up natural spaces near disadvantaged communities so that the onus does not fall on the shoulders of already overburdened community members, and ultimately so that communities can better access natural resources.

## CONNECTICUT FINDINGS ABOUT INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Regarding information and education, Connecticut-specific findings were not dissimilar to overall regional findings. A number of different languages are spoken in Connecticut, and, in many cases, findings showed a need for materials translated into locally prevalent languages.

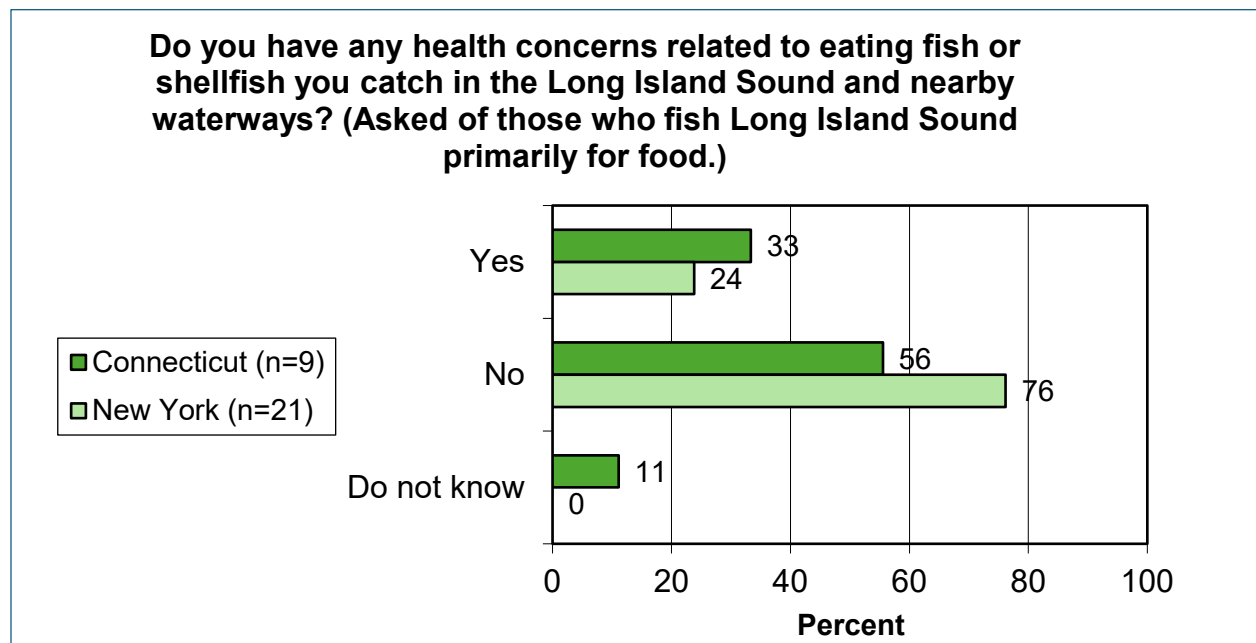
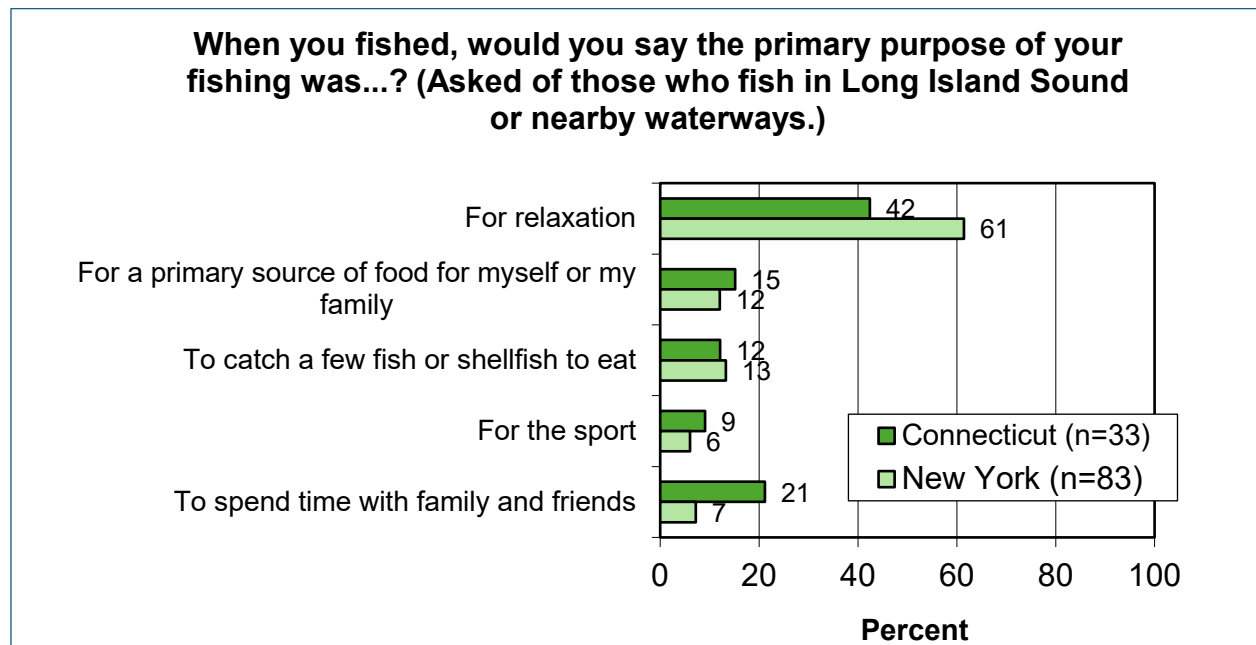
### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

Throughout the needs assessment, the diversity of residents on the Sound was often a primary topic. Challenges with reaching audiences with different experiences, challenges, cultures, and languages is often a major barrier in providing information and education. Concerns about important safety information being available to subsistence anglers was also mentioned during the exploratory phase.

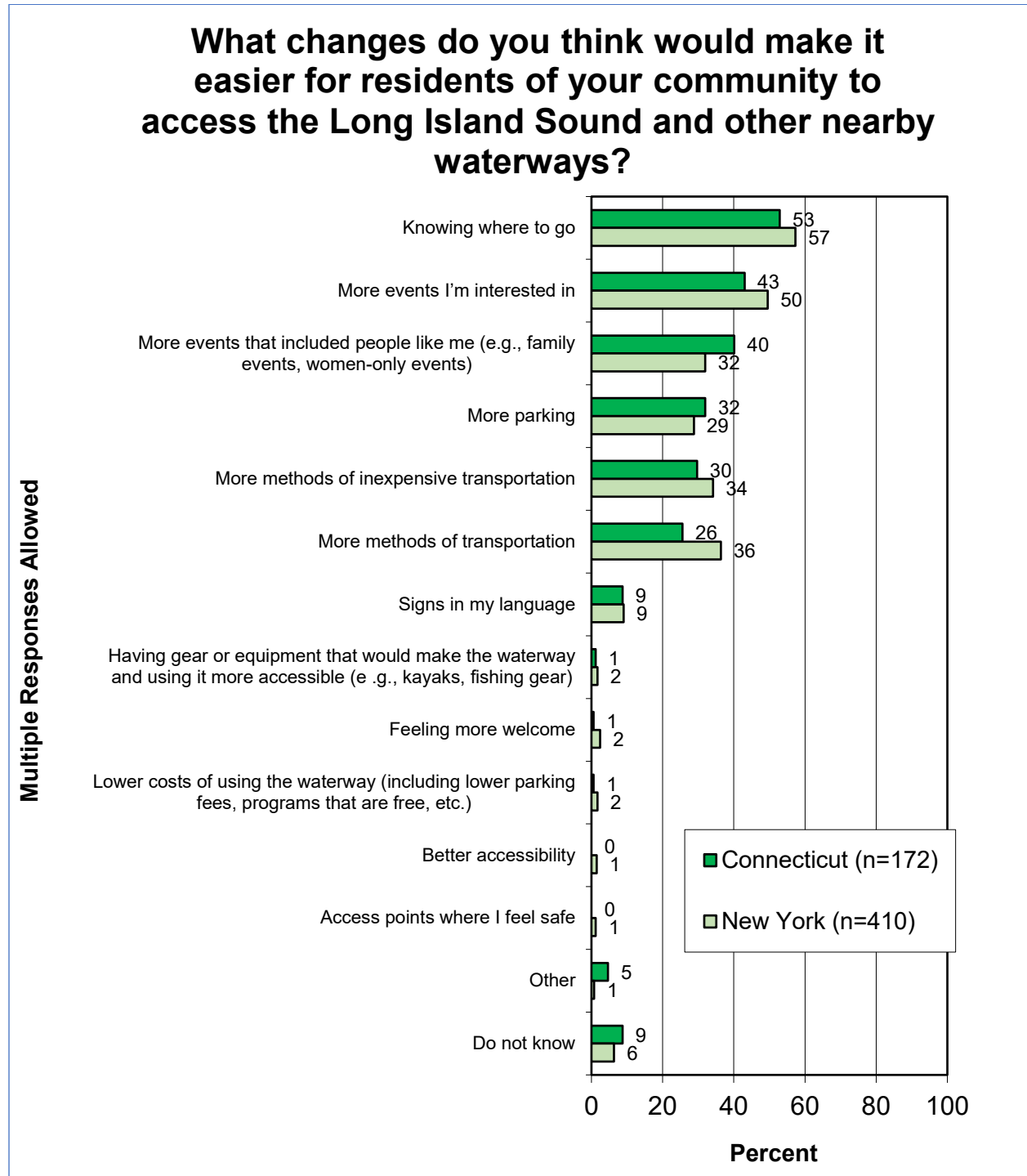


**Findings from the Survey with Community Members**

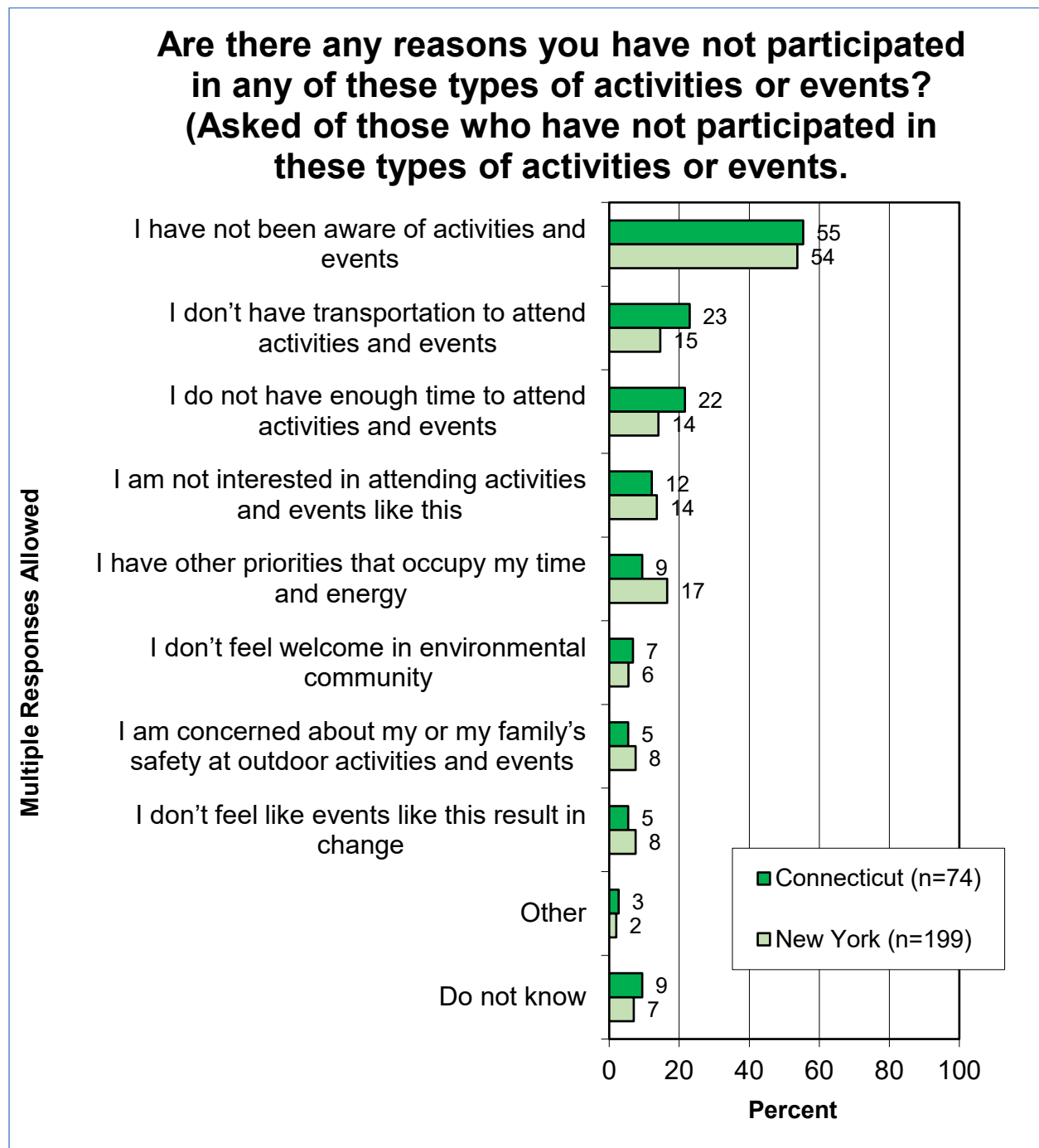
Connecticut residents were more likely than New York residents to fish for a primary source of food for themselves or their families. Even though Connecticut residents, in a follow-up question, indicated that they were more likely to have health concerns associated with eating fish or shellfish caught in the Sound, there were more Connecticut residents who were not concerned. This finding, particularly when combined with information from other phases of the project, emphasizes the need for information and education about healthy fishing practices and consumption. Note that the overall number of anglers who indicated they fished for a primary source of food was low.



Both Connecticut and New York residents feel that knowing where to go and having access to more events they are interested in are the top changes that would make it easier for residents of their community to access the Sound. These responses indicate a need for more information about locations where they can access the Sound and events.

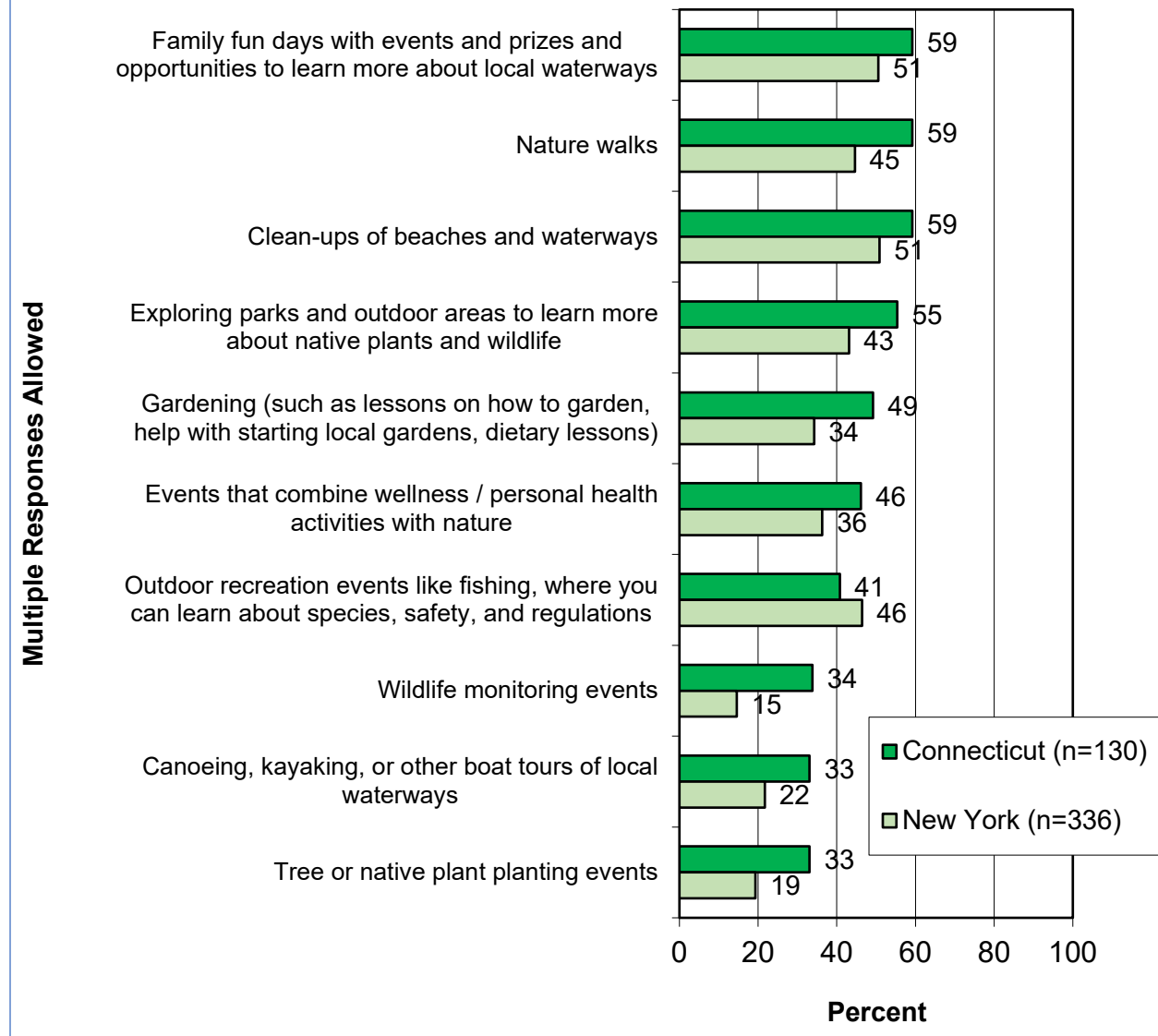


When asked if there are any reasons they have not participated in environment-based activities or events, Connecticut and New York residents were nearly equally likely to indicate that they had not participated in events or activities because they were not aware of them. At various stages of the needs assessment, disadvantaged community members showed an interest in activities, events, and spending time in nature. The previous graph and the graph below both suggest that this might be possible if community members had information about activities and events and where to access waterways.



Three of the top five types of activities or events that Connecticut residents indicated they would be interested in involve providing education—family fun days with events and prizes and opportunities to learn more about local waterways; exploring parks and outdoor areas to learn about native plants and wildlife; and gardening, such as with lessons on how to garden, help starting local gardens, and dietary lessons.

**What types of activities or events would you most be interested in participating in? (Asked of those interested in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about your local waterways and environment.)  
(Top Responses)**



### Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to information and education findings in Connecticut are summarized below. Again, although comments and summaries come from specific community listening sessions and outreach in different communities in Connecticut, only those that applied across different communities are included here.

“I would like to bring up the issue of feeling welcome at places that *are* publicly accessible. Signage makes a difference about how welcome one feels: if you see rules off the bat, it is not welcoming, try encouraging positive reinforcement. You can still say the rules without being unwelcoming.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“All the Spanish signs only seem to focus on the bad stuff. Do not do this or that. What about the ‘Welcome, enjoy!’ type signs?” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“I know there’s a huge misperception of how bad water quality is in the Long Island Sound in parts of the state.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

“It sounds like kids need to get involved in this. Kids will be much more honest with you than adults will be, particularly if you work with the government, especially middle school kids. They get more conscious of how the system works and how to work the system when they get older, but if you catch them young enough and have opportunities to engage in authentic ways so that they’re planning this playground and park, they will be really involved.” –Comment from Community Listening Session

- In addition to issues with access, concepts and understanding of environmental justice were discussed during the listening session. Some attendees noted that environmental justice was a very simple concept that encompassed all communities being protected equally. Attendees mentioned that they feel that Black and Brown and non-English speaking communities are often not protected from environmental, social, or infrastructural issues in the same ways that more affluent communities are protected. Some participants noted that, before becoming more involved in their community, they had viewed environmental justice as the work of addressing issues in the environment, and only after attending events and listening sessions had they realized that environmental justice encompasses social issues, public health, and other topics that might not appear to some to be connected to the environment.



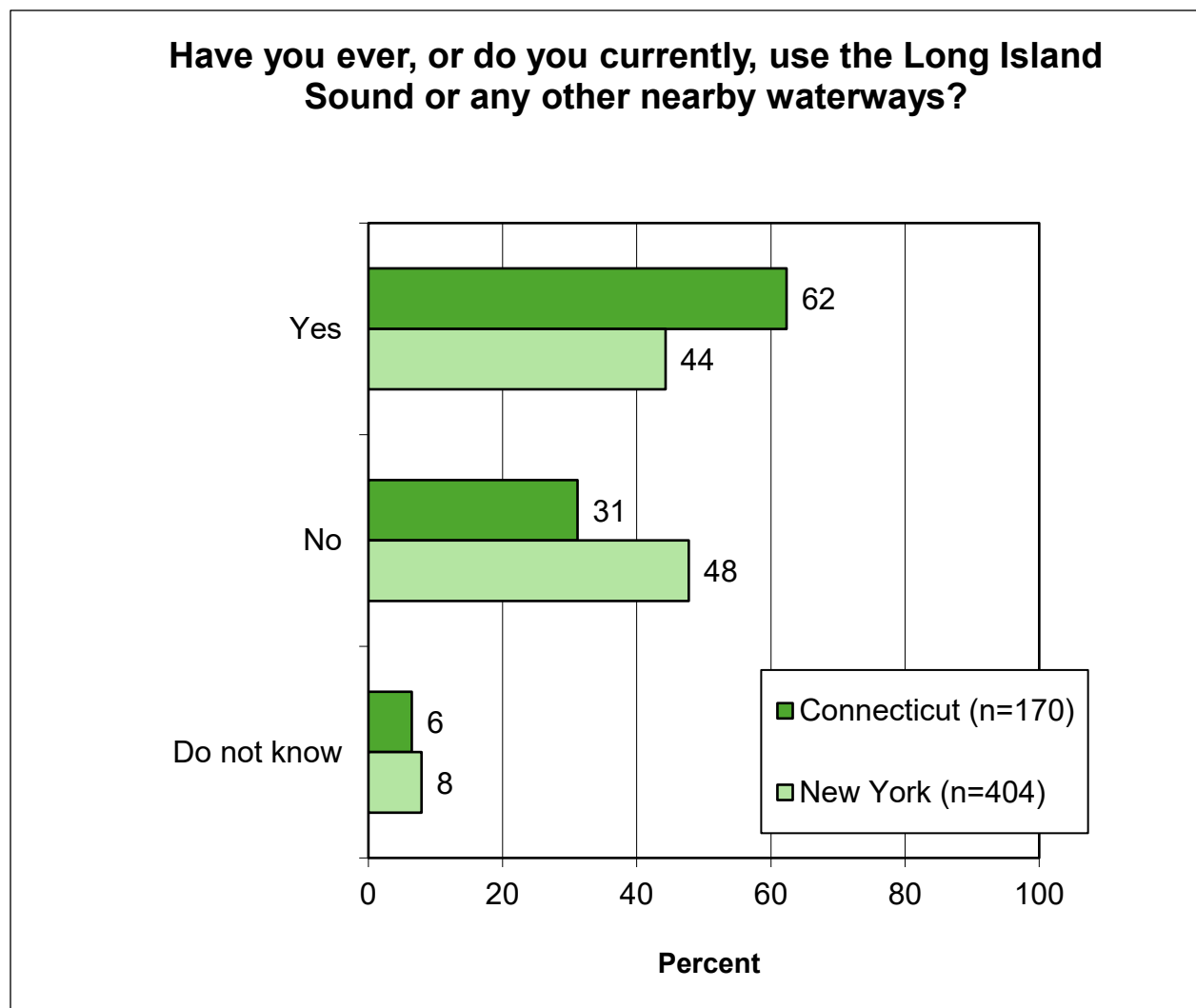
### CONNECTICUT FINDINGS ABOUT RECREATION AND USE OF THE SOUND

#### Findings from the Exploratory Phase

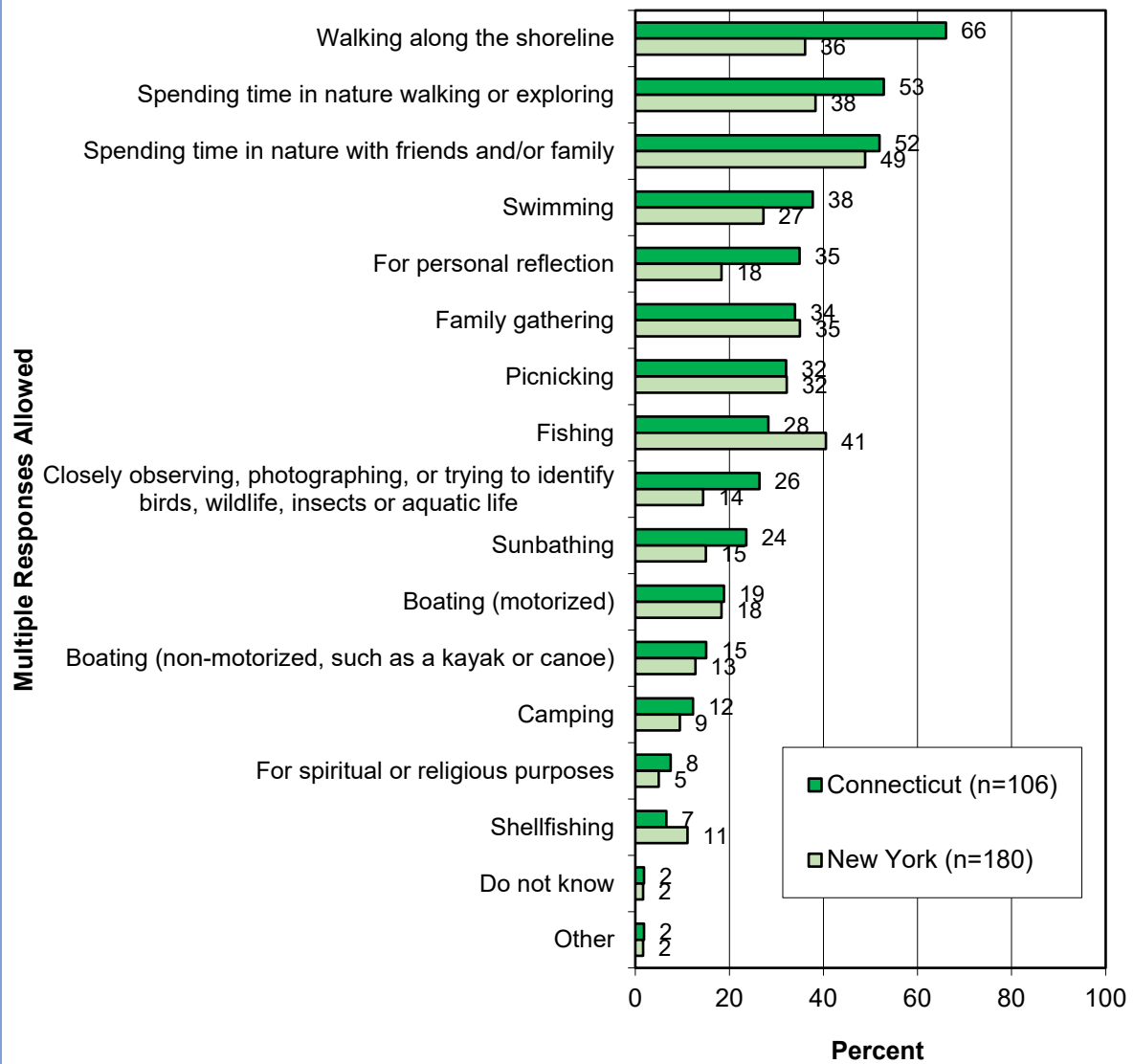
Exploratory phase interviewees from Connecticut were just as likely as their New York counterparts to indicate that they had seen subsistence anglers and a rise in interest in fishing. Some interviewees suggested they had seen subsistence anglers in New Haven and Bridgeport, in particular.

#### Findings from the Survey with Community Members

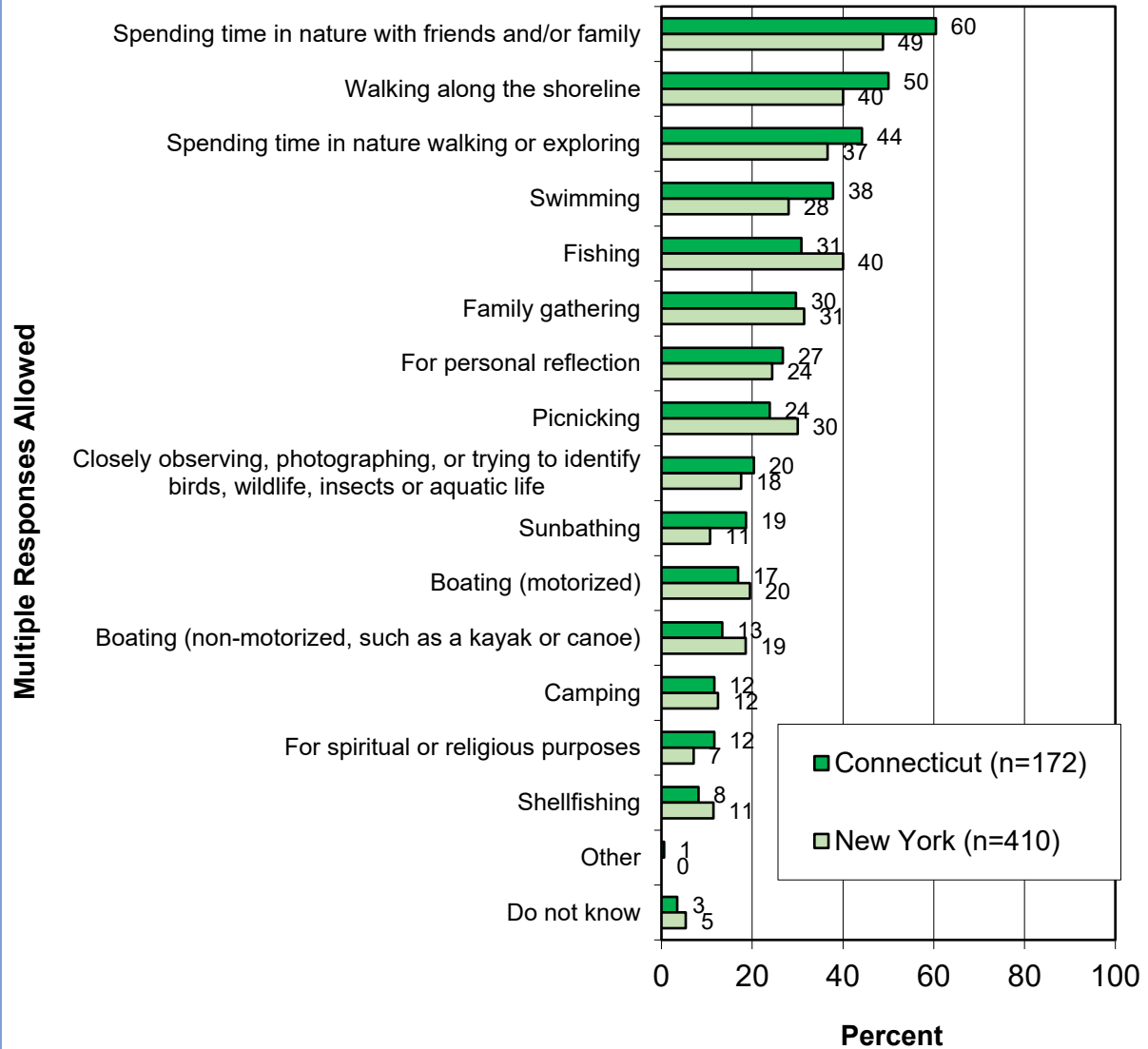
Findings from the survey with community members, showed that Connecticut residents were more likely to have used the Sound and overall more likely to have participated in solitary activities on the Sound, such as walking along the shoreline and spending time in nature walking or exploring. Despite this, when asked which activities they would most be interested in participating in, Connecticut residents selected spending time with friends and family as their number one response.



**For what purpose did you, or do you, use the waterway? (Asked of those who have used or currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways.)**

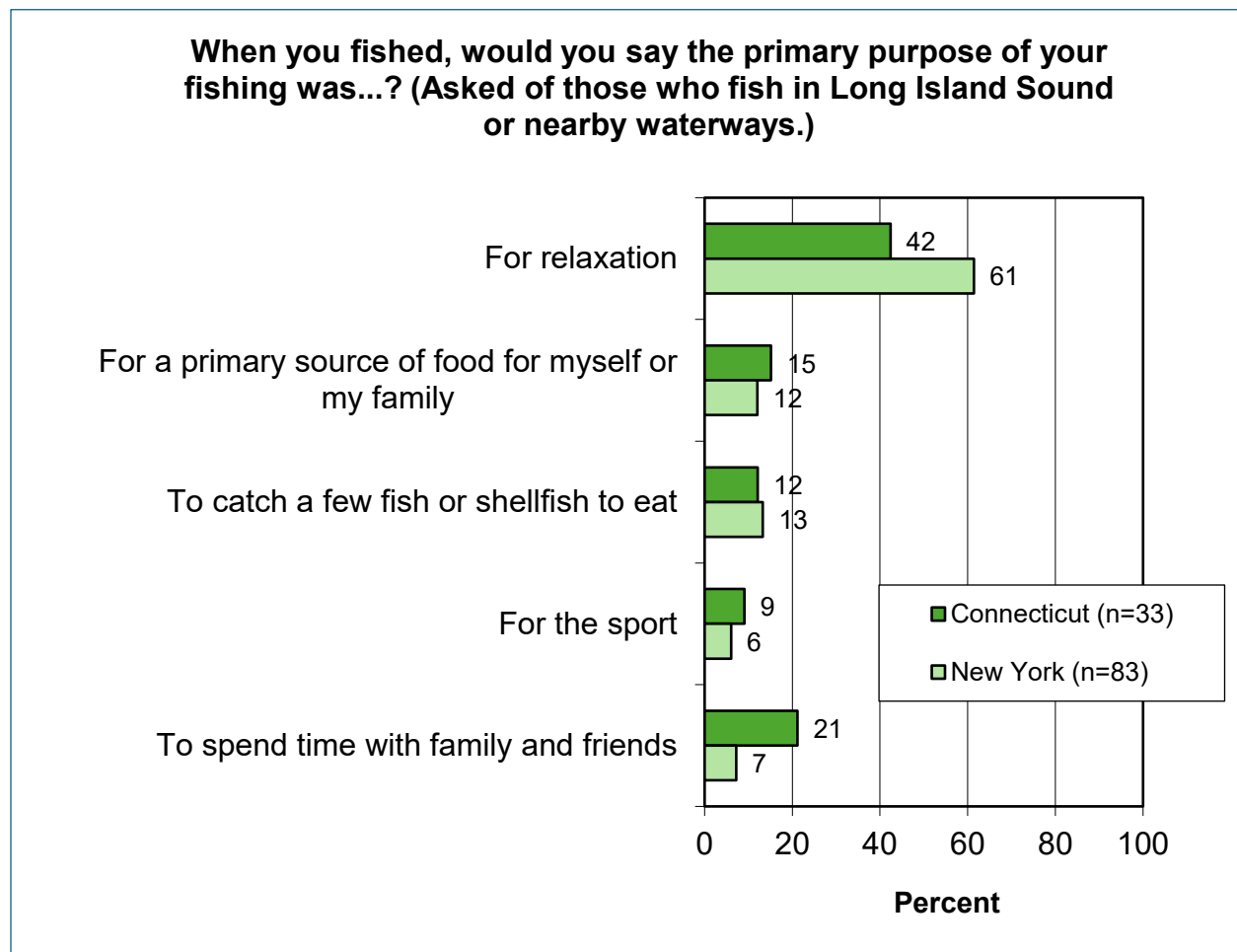


## If you could use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for any purpose, what would you most like to use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for?



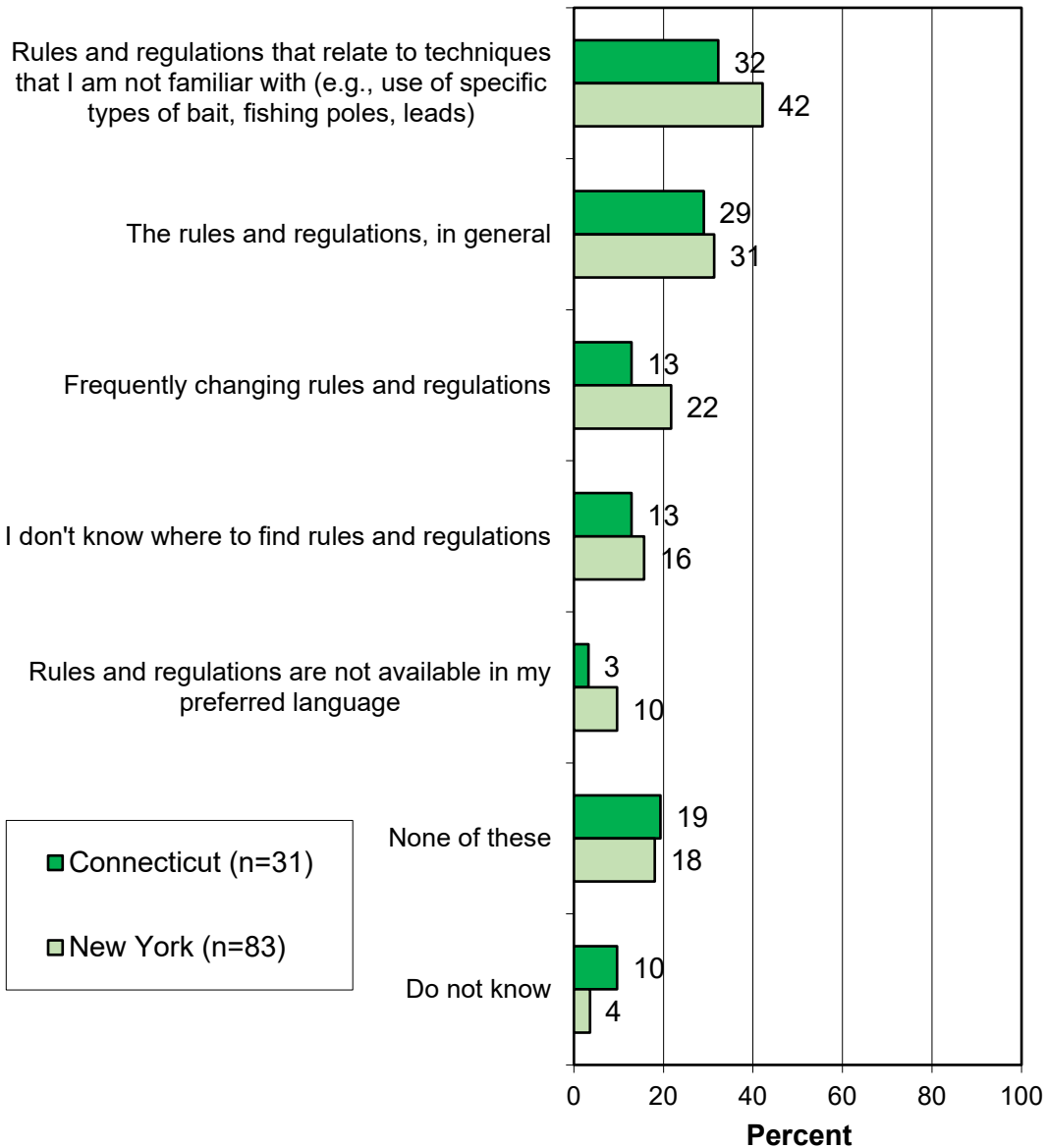
The top two reasons Connecticut residents selected for their fishing activities were for relaxation and for a primary source of food. These top responses tie into many other findings from the needs assessment and conversations with community members in that they point to the connections between nature and positive mental health; also, they highlight that some disadvantaged community members are using fishing to provide primary or supplemental sources of food for themselves and their families.

In the graph that follows reasons for fishing, respondents who fished were asked if anything made it more difficult for them to understand fishing and/or shellfishing rules and regulations. The top responses from residents from both states were rules and regulations that relate to techniques that they are not familiar with and the rules and regulations, in general.



**Do any of the following make it difficult for you to understand fishing and/or shellfishing rules and regulations? (Asked of those who currently fish or shellfish in the Sound or nearby waterways or who have done so in the past.)**

**Multiple Responses Allowed**



### **Findings from Community Listening Sessions and Additional Outreach**

Some of the findings from community listening sessions and additional outreach that relate to recreation and use of the Sound in Connecticut are summarized below. Again, although comments come from specific community listening sessions and outreach in different communities in Connecticut, only those that applied across different communities are included here.

- Many of the conversations that took place during additional community outreach in Connecticut suggested that Connecticut residents are very invested in improving their local waterways so that more residents can use and enjoy the Sound.
- Community members in Connecticut also indicated that they are very connected to the natural places closest to them. In many conversations with disadvantaged communities and community members, it was noted that many of the beaches closest to disadvantaged communities had excess debris and buildup, making use difficult for many. Community members indicated that they would like to improve beaches and clean up waterways closest to their communities so that more residents can use the Sound and recreate.

## **COMMUNITY FINDINGS BY REGION AND COMMUNITY: CONNECTICUT**

In the following section, results and findings are shown by Connecticut region and community. As sample sizes at the community level would be small and therefore would have a low confidence interval, findings at this level are better presented qualitatively. The below summaries of findings by region and community are based on findings from the exploratory phase, the in-depth interviews with CBOs, in-person discussions and interviews conducted in the Long Island Sound region, and feedback provided during the community listening sessions. (Please see page 264 of this document for more information about the process of prioritizing communities for in-person outreach.)

### **FINDINGS ABOUT EASTERN CONNECTICUT**

Throughout eastern Connecticut, there are major issues with flooding and concerns about health complications from standing flood waters. In addition, some in the region have limited trust in government and large organizations, as well as transportation barriers that prevent access to the Sound. In spite of proximity, many in eastern Connecticut feel they are disconnected from the Sound. Many interviewees noted large numbers of Spanish speakers in the region that are likely not receiving as much information about accessing nature and understanding issues associated with environmental justice.

Below are the findings from different communities within the region.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT GROTON, EASTERN CONNECTICUT**

### **Access to Waterways**

- The city is surrounded by water on three sides, which should make water very accessible to all populations, but some groups are not able to access the waterways as easily as others.
- The shoreline is a huge asset for everyone.
- Ke Streeter Boat Launch is popular and well used under the I-95/Gold Star Bridge (industrial area); this area is also talked about as a great fishing area, but it is not technically designed for that.
- Thames River Heritage Park has a water taxi between Groton and New London, and it has a sewage treatment plant upstream from the landing site.
  - Thames Street Park has a state grant to build a transient boat dock.
- Access to the shoreline and waterways could be improved. Officials are looking for a good location for a kayak launch.
- People have to travel to get to the waterway. The community does not have bike lanes, and there are very limited sidewalks, with some areas having incomplete or no sidewalks. Navigating the area can be very difficult.
- In Birch Plain Creek people can kayak, but they generally do not swim in the area. There is some interest in trying to use shellfish to clean up the waterway.
- Beaches are difficult to access and do not have lifeguards, thereby creating safety issues.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- The City of Groton is in the process of applying for age-friendly community status through the American Association of Retired Persons. They are also in the process of talking with seniors about their experience with the outdoors and accessibility regarding seating and shaded areas.
- Concerts could be held at Eastern Point Beach to encourage more community and demographic groups to visit the area.
- Some community members do not know that View Park is a park. The city held a workshop and found that residents thought there were condos on both sides of the park. There should be more signage to promote understanding of what space is publicly available.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- Water quality in the Long Island Sound watershed is a concern for many. Many are unsure of which waterways are safe for recreation.
- Low income and public housing are built in some of the worst areas.



### **Safety Concerns**

- Natural resources need maintenance and protection, especially at Birch Plain Creek and Lake George. Some areas are cluttered with trash and debris and are therefore unsafe for visitors.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- Stormwater runoff and impervious surfaces are issues. The 5 Corners area was identified as a flooding priority.
- The layout of Groton results in flood water accumulation in the “down-hill” section of the town where many low-income individuals reside.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- There are needs for improvement at scenic views and areas for access. Some parks do not have navigable paths and can be fairly inaccessible, especially during periods of heavy rain.
- Maintenance has been an issue in some town parks. Boy Scouts installed tree filters and garden boxes, but these were not maintained, and the trees started dying in some of the filters. Further, the trees were the wrong species and grew into the road.
- Transportation is also an issue. The city needs more buses at a greater frequency. In some areas it takes more than an hour to get places, which makes busing a less viable option for some.
- The city is thought to have inadequate bike infrastructure. The city is looking to do an active transportation grant with complete streets implementation.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- The city has capacity building needs including grant administration, grant writing, and technical support (specifically regarding design and installation and how to apply benefits and understand impacts of green infrastructure). The municipality needs help with planning steps and engineering phases.
  - The city is working to determine how to best get information to people about preparing for storms and the actions that should be taken before and after storm events.
- Funding is a big barrier. If parties do not see financial support or willingness to invest beyond the local tax base, there is hesitancy to fund. Expensive projects can shut some people down.
- Turnover for municipality leadership can be its own obstacle.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Urban heat island effects are a serious concern. The summer of 2023 was very hot and got more peoples’ attention turned to environmental issues.
  - Discussions about heat, trees, and pedestrian and bike infrastructure are moving forward.

- The city is almost 15% low income and has Hispanic, Black, and Southeast Asian populations higher than surrounding towns.
- The 5 Corners area is thought to be a food desert; officials are looking to connect the residential southern area to a commercial corridor.
- The Parks and Recreation Department has been coordinating on a year-round farmer's market (indoors and outdoors). The Department has also participated with United Way for food distribution and food drops and with the Connecticut Program for Youth to provide healthy meals throughout the summer.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT NEW LONDON, EASTERN CONNECTICUT**

### **Access to Waterways**

- Limited public transportation and hours of operation prevent many from accessing waterways.
- Many young people live in New London and Groton but have never been to the beach. New London has had some groups, like New England Science and Sailing, with programs aimed at local residents to make these connections for urban populations.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- Buses do not always operate many hours on weekends, so some residents do not feel they have access to weekend events or recreation opportunities in the community.
- There are lots of surrounding waterways in the New London area, but some residents do not have access to the water.
- It is important to provide translated materials as much as possible in New London in order to be as inclusive as possible.
- New London has a large number of Spanish speakers that could be better reached with materials, information, and education translated into Spanish.
- New London would like to focus on mentoring for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (referred to as STEM) students and work on scholarship programs to keep youth engaged in environmental issues.
- There is a need for education across the board. The community needs to know how issues can be made more relevant for people when more pressing concerns might take priority. CBOs would like to know how to make climate change concepts less abstract and more actionable.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- Flooding is a huge issue in New London. Many community members have standing water in their basements.
- Some community members are concerned about health issues associated with standing flood water throughout their homes.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- There is limited access to open green and blue spaces, especially in terms of parking accessibility and American Disabilities Act accessibility.
- People are also concerned about the lack of sufficient tree cover in New London and urban heat island effects.
- Infrastructure and capital improvements are expensive and can seem overwhelming.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- Interviewees indicated that representation is essential among New London leaders. In such a diverse community, residents need to see people who look like them and speak their language to promote trust and inclusion.

- Policy changes on a large scale are a major area of focus when it comes to environmental justice.
- The municipality's engagement is often missing in communities. Towns need capacity to plan with partners, engage citizens, focus on problem areas, and understand where flooding is happening in lower-income neighborhoods.
- Communities have been disenfranchised and discouraged in the political system. In some areas people are far less likely to become engaged and show up.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Job training and ensuring jobs go to local people are extremely important in the area. Residents will need a trained workforce ready for wind energy coming to New London and the submarine industry in the southeast.
- Food insecurity and high prices of food have been issues since the pandemic.
- Interviewees report that New London is nearly 50% bilingual, with a substantial number of Spanish speakers. Interviewees are concerned that the lack of translated public health materials could prevent this segment of the population from being as aware of public health issues as they should be.
- People in the community may be reticent to trust outsiders, so it is important to be transparent in purpose and in the way that actions will impact the community.
- Interviewees suggested "connecting with connectors"; in other words, work with respected community leaders to reach the community. Going directly to the community may not work well.
- Because many people in the area live in poverty, opportunities for local jobs should be a focus.

### **Other Concerns**

- Leadership development in communities is a major need. Many communities do not feel that they have leaders or champions.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT WESTERN CONNECTICUT**

Throughout western Connecticut, there are a number of issues with flooding, limited access to waterways, and transportation barriers. Many of the communities in the region have experienced issues associated with industrial waste and many feel that their natural areas and waterways are unsafe for recreation. Some of the most disadvantaged communities in the Long Island Sound region can be found in western Connecticut.

Below are the findings from different communities within the region.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT STAMFORD, WESTERN CONNECTICUT**

### **Access to Waterways**

- There is a fair amount of fishing in the area, but it seems that those who are fishing are not necessarily being good stewards—leaving behind trash and debris.
- People in the area are often uncertain about whether or not the water is safe; therefore, there is limited use of local waterways.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- There is not enough involvement of youth in environmental activities in the area. Some activities are too expensive for area youth.

### **Safety Concerns**

- There are issues in the area with trash buildup on beaches. Some community members do not feel beaches are safe because of the excess trash.
- There is a need for more safe paths to waterways in the area.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- Stamford has issues with industrial sites near waterways. Water quality is always an issue for this reason.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- There is a need for signs and more educational information to let residents know where to go for outdoor activities.

### **Other Concerns**

- Residents feel that they have seen a major depletion in the number of horseshoe crabs in the area. Residents also expressed concern about the viability of the local eel population.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT BRIDGEPORT, WESTERN CONNECTICUT**

### **Access to Waterways**

- Areas of public access, such as St. Mary's by the Sea in Black Rock, which were previously used by all community members, are seen to no longer be accessible to individuals from certain backgrounds. Community members wishing to use these access sites face local landowners who are quick to call the police and report their presence. The community of Black Rock is using federal and state funds to build permanent infrastructure, which reinforces segregation in the city.
- People of color do not feel comfortable getting on a bus and traveling to a remote place where fishing is allowed. These points of access are often places where individuals face police harassment for simply being present. As such, residents would rather fish in unclean waters where they will not be harassed.
- The city has systematically blocked streets that lead to Long Island Sound.

### **Access to Educational and Recreational Opportunities and Information**

- It is particularly hard to get people to larger parcels of land where they can engage in outdoor activities. There are great spaces in Bridgeport to explore, like Seaside Park and a smaller woodland park called Elton Rogers; however, many of the larger spaces in Bridgeport are more recreational and not necessarily wilderness. The smaller parcels, like Elton Rogers Park, are very small, and there is not a lot of room for gathering. The Sierra Club has been hosting outings to try to get people to other spots, and they hope that taking people to other areas might make them more willing to explore places nearby. Places they would like to introduce community members to include Trout Valley Preserve and the Shelton or Trumbull campgrounds. The Sierra Club would like to focus on getting youth involved in a partnership with a local urban agricultural organization.
- Property owners along the Sound influence the health of the estuary and wildlife. The community recognizes the importance of land use and policy. If the community could buy land, it could do something positive with it, such as improve water quality, provide community access to the Sound, or similar efforts.
- Pleasure Beach is a great area that was once similar to Coney Island. Some interviewees think it could be an ideal place to have kayaking events. The water taxi that takes people to Pleasure Beach only runs on the weekends, however, which limits visits and use during the week. The water taxi is also free and should be heavily promoted.
- Aquaculture in high schools has been pivotal in providing programs for students to venture out onto the water and develop interests in activities like sailing.
- Kayaks access does not seem to be available in Bridgeport, but in nearby Fairfield, there is relatively high kayak use.

### **Safety Concerns**

- Residents are interested in water recreation but are not sure the water is safe. This is a huge deterrent.
- People in the community care about the Sound but feel they do not have control over things that can improve it. Some have shared that they went to the beach to clam or do other types of shellfishing when they were younger and have expressed the desire to do so now, but some have concerns about the safety of eating shellfish taken from the Sound because of stormwater runoff and the sewer plant.
- Awareness of rising tides in Seaside Park needs to be a focus. There have been several drownings of fisherman who were not aware of the potential to be trapped by the rising tide.
- There is an area to cook and prepare fish next to Johnson’s Creek, but some are concerned that cooking is not eliminating contaminants.
- Fishing is popular and officials want to encourage this, but only in close coordination with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection about the types of fish that people can safely eat. There is a lot of concern that people could be consuming harmful fish or shellfish.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- There are concerns from community members that they can no longer swim and be at Seaside Park because of untreated wastewater that community members feel is being illegally dumped by the power plant.
- Cleanup along some of the paths that people could eventually walk on along waterfronts is a big job, but it needs to be done. Officials have been trying to clean up Johnson Creek for a long time, but there is still a substantial amount of debris. Despite this, however, people still fish in the area.
- There are important connections between air and water quality issues in the community.
- Asthma and air quality issues affect the community because of two major highways and the coal-burning power plant. Some interviewees feel that one way to lower emissions related to the highways is to promote electric or hydrogen vehicles.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- The Pequot, Yellow Mill, and Rooster Rivers are perceived to cause difficulties for Bridgeport residents. Residents feel that the rivers are not contributing anything positive to the community. The Rooster River has been a source of flash flooding for decades, and damming the river only caused more issues.
- Floodwater in basements is a concern. Further, flooding creates impassable underpasses that keep people from travelling or evacuating.



### **Erosion Concerns**

- The town of Fairfield, a very affluent community, is dredging waterways for a small number of yachts. This dredging causes clouding in the water and has removed a sand bar that formerly was in the waterway. Without intervention from local activists, Fairfield would have erected a 100-foot pier that would have caused the erosion of Bridgeport's beaches.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- Zoning plans are hundreds of pages long, and the new zoning plan had zoned the old University of Bridgeport campus for prisons and utility substations. If the community had not read through these many pages (the city said it had zoned the campus the way people asked them to), the area would have been rezoned for uses that were not benevolent or environmentally friendly (right along the Sound).
- The City of Bridgeport went to the community investment fund for approximately \$22 million to remove a privately owned coal plant. Taxpayer dollars were spent to take down a privately owned facility that has made a corporation billions of dollars. Money could have been used for Seaside Village to pump and improve sewers. Some feel that there is no money for the maintenance of resilience projects.
- The city is taking down many trees, and there are concerns about the urban heat island effect.
- It is difficult to connect people to transportation in Bridgeport. Public transportation pricing and limited routes and times cause issues for many.
- Resilient Bridgeport designs are now seen as dated. Many in the community want to focus on flooding. They need to assess new circumstances (lessons from Superstorm Sandy, for example) and include a larger project area. There were communities that were left out of the Resilient Bridgeport plans (like Seaside Village). There should be a conversation about needs and necessary updates to the city's resiliency plan with more community members involved.
- The state-funded \$125 million dollar school proposed to be built on the Long Island Sound in the flood zone is seen as an issue. The process did not include community participation and did not include an environmental impact statement. A lot of people have made the connection between how water has hurt them and their families, and they do not want that continued injustice.
- There are 60 acres of brownfield being opened for development directly on the harbor (which involves deconstructing a coal plant). The community would like to see this as a benefit; that is, a chance to restore years of environmental injustice of a landfill that cut the community off from the harbor and to reconnect the area with the waterway. Currently, many feel that promises were made about giving community access to the harbor that have been walked back.
- Bridgeport was created as an industrial city and was seen as a place to put infrastructure and services no one else wanted that were toxic, such as tanneries, transportation hubs, and sewage plants. Bridgeport existed so that wealthy areas around it did not have to

see the underside of prosperity. People in areas without noxious infrastructure might think the Long Island Sound is bucolic but do not see that raw sewage is going into the Sound a few towns over. These things are interconnected, and there should be a better understanding of this.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- Stratford Avenue was a place occupied primarily by Black businesses, and with the change in traffic these businesses lost the traffic to sustain themselves. This process also took people's homes through eminent domain and cleared large pieces of land. New construction of affordable housing units is required, but those plans have not been completed, and most affordable housing is being planned for low income and Black and Brown neighborhoods. This combination will result in White enclaves being created in which only affluent White members of the community are able to afford to live and use services there.
- Bridgeport has a complicated political climate. The support for environmental justice work and initiatives has been great in the past, but with recent elections, some programs have been undone.
- The city has allegedly discouraged public participation in certain projects. There is no way for the local community to impact land use standards for environmental policies and practices where they live.
- Officials and decision-makers are seen as not actually coming to Bridgeport – they do not convene there, and they do not ask the community for their input.
- Discriminatory and unhealthy use of land has prompted development in a flood zone.
  - An interesting aspect of the flooding in the area is that Black communities that were free settlements of color took land that was unwanted by White communities. It is thought that the Black communities worked to change the local landscape to fit their needs. Evidence of underground drainage systems have been found in the area (according to the Freeman Center).

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Health issues associated with fishing in local waters are allegedly due to flushing sewer outflows as well as alleged dumping by local power stations.
- Some community members have expressed an interest in fishing.
- Black and Brown people do not feel like they are welcome in Ash Creek, Black Rock, and more wealthy areas of Bridgeport that are on the water.
- Some feel there are not a lot of professionals who do environmental work in Bridgeport. Capacity building at the grassroots level is needed to help empower community members.
- There is a need for continued environmental education and the making of connections that show that health outcomes are closely related to environmental factors. People are very cognizant that environmental justice is at the root of a lot of flooding issues, but they might not be able to see the connections between environmental justice and

health outcomes. Some feel that organizations need to develop a better understanding of what resonates with community members, and then train them on the specific things they are most interested in.

- Community members have a complicated relationship with waterways in that they think of rivers as a nuisance rather than a potential resource.
- The south and west end suffer most in terms of impacts with low employment and high poverty levels. The south end and west end also receive pariah industries, public infrastructure, and raw sewage. The south end has two gas stations and a railroad station behind them where an Amtrack train derailed several years ago. There are concerns about the lack of evacuation routes in case of fire or flood.
- Bridgeport has many issues with poverty, reportedly with an over 20% poverty rate.
- There is a large immigrant population in Bridgeport. Interviewees noted large populations of Jamaican immigrants and Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico and the Dominican Republic.
- The energy burden is a concern. The coal plant is also a burden on community health.
- Local job training and employment of locals need to be a focus for the community. The first thing people will ask when proposing a project is what is going to be done to train locals and create jobs.
- Many interviewees feel that the City of Bridgeport is not very proactive in supporting sustainability.
- Community members fully understand the connection between air quality and public health, but they feel that solutions, especially on an individual or family level, are out of reach. They need help from agencies to even begin to attack public health issues around air quality.
- There are issues with education in the area. Some community members want to focus on ensuring there is better education of all kinds for their children.

### **Other Concerns**

- Important history in the area includes economic use of the Long Island Sound and contributions to the underground railroad.
- There is understanding that it is harder to get people to come to an environmental meeting, but they may come to a Skateport. It may be possible to connect with people at a Skateport or similar events that will meet the community in ways typical environmentalist groups will not be able to.

## **FINDINGS ABOUT NEW HAVEN, WESTERN CONNECTICUT**

### **Access to Waterways**

- There is thought to be a lack of access to almost all waterways in the area.
- Some are concerned about the amount of trash and debris on beaches and in waterways.
- Some interviewees are concerned about the increase in business and industrial sites near waterways and believe that these issues impede access to the Sound.
- Waterways are not accessible by public transit. In order to access waterways, community members would need to travel fairly significant distances, which is currently not sufficiently served by public transit.
- Some community members feel there should be an effort to restore local locations and increase public access in these locations. With an additional focus on improving public transportation to these locations, community members feel more residents would access the Sound.

### **Safety Concerns**

- There are increases in crime and drug use in the area, and it makes some community members feel unsafe spending time outside.
- Waterways and the Sound are not safe because of debris or industrial waste.

### **Water and Air Quality Concerns**

- New Haven has a number of old incinerators that impact air quality and issues with sewage sludge.
- Citizen science is important in New Haven because some testing and standards have failed them in the past. Having invested individuals testing air and water quality can be far more effective.

### **Flooding Concerns**

- New Haven is vulnerable to sea level rise. The city is estimated to use a substantial amount of land for public schools, housing, and industrial uses by 2050.

### **Infrastructure Concerns**

- There is a lack of public transportation and routes that serve all parts of the city.
- There are many transportation issues in New Haven. Free programs have ended, and public transit can be costly, slow, and sometimes difficult to access.

### **Systemic Concerns**

- There is a great need to hear directly from the community and people who have not been asked for their opinion in the past.

- Historically, New Haven had many Black farmers whose land was taken. There are grassroots organizations like City Seed and Common Ground working to get Black and Brown communities engaged in farming activities again.

### **Social and Public Health Concerns**

- Some feel that the number of policy meetings occurring should be limited, as many do not feel they speak to community needs.
- Communities prioritize rent, food, and energy costs, and they are not able to focus on environmental issues as much as they might like to.
- There are job and economic insecurities in the area, housing insecurity, food insecurity, and health issues.
- There are connections between people in poverty and lack of education, lack of quality options to educate children, and limited jobs.
- Many feel that there is a lot of available information, but the community needs trusted messengers delivering the right information at the right time. Further, messengers need the capacity to stick with specific people long enough to see the results of their work.
- There are lots of community gardens and spaces, but very few people are involved in the upkeep.
- Community engagement is difficult in New Haven. A small group of people remain consistently and passionately engaged, but they are not necessarily from the communities that have not previously been heard.

## CBO FINDINGS

One of the purposes of this project was to begin to create and maintain relationships with CBOs in disadvantaged communities. In order to begin this process, in-depth interviews were conducted to develop an understanding of the needs, challenges, and barriers of CBOs in disadvantaged communities. Below are the broad findings from the series of more than 50 in-depth interviews accompanied by supporting information from interviews with CBOs.

Note that these findings are from CBOs that work directly *in* disadvantaged communities and focus on the needs and challenges of disadvantaged community members. In order to be connected with some disadvantaged CBOs, several interviews were conducted with public and government officials and professionals that may work *with* or *for*, but not necessarily *in*, disadvantaged communities. The information about the perceptions of disadvantaged communities obtained in interviews conducted with such officials and professionals is not incorporated into the below findings, but is instead included in Appendix A, which discusses interviews conducted during the exploratory phase of the project.

### **Broad CBO Finding 1: Many CBOs are overextended and need additional resources in order to seek out partnerships and other opportunities.**

The following information shows some of the ways in which CBOs are overextended and in need of additional resources. Further, information about CBOs' challenges and needs with regard to developing partnerships and pursuing opportunities is discussed. Finally, a list of training needs that support the need for additional resources is shown.

## CAPACITY BUILDING PRIORITIES AND ISSUES

- Many groups are unable to expand their reach, create and plan new projects, or even fulfill every aspect of their mission because of limited capacity.
- Several participants noted that issues with capacity most often center around not having the staff to do necessary mission-related work.
- Many groups indicated that they have limited capacity to learn about and pursue grants. Some also noted that support with grants is needed to navigate the often-complicated grant application process.
- Some groups, individuals, and communities need assistance with planning, understanding which projects need attention, and developing projects to address issues before moving toward grant writing. There is a need for start-to-finish project planning.
  - Regarding project planning, interviewees feel that a lack of knowledge can sometimes limit what they perceive to be available or possible. Case studies and examples of what is available and possible would be helpful for project planning.
  - Some feel it can be a challenge to make sure people are aware of opportunities and how to access them when they have competing demands and priorities. This is especially true with community members whose focus tends toward more immediate needs.

- In terms of personal capacity issues, teachers have a lot of work and require extra planning to do anything out of the ordinary, such as a hands-on field trip. Assistance with planning events could be extremely helpful.
- Many interviewees feel that supporting relationship development is a very important part of their work and a part they often lack the capacity to do. Many groups struggle to find time to contact different groups, make initial connections, and maintain connections.
- Employees of small nonprofits are often assigned many more roles and tasks than their counterparts in larger, more resource-rich organizations. They need funding and staff in order to maintain their work.
- Some interviewees expressed a need for volunteers and volunteer management for community cleanup.
- Several participants would like more education in their communities. Specifically, education about water quality, gardening, and stewardship were mentioned.

## RESOURCE NEEDS

- Many CBOs need support with capacity building and more funding for capacity building.
- Many CBOs need funding for programs that are *not* tied to fisheries, wildlife, or the waterfront, such as environmental literacy, seashore ecology, or other things CBOs can do.
- CBOs feel they can use assistance with waterway cleanup and putting safety precautions in place. This will help increase waterfront access.
- Many CBOs could use assistance with development of volunteer networks.
- CBOs need access to spaces where they can plan and work directly with communities.
- Many communities need more information about existing resources, programs, and opportunities. It should be easier for people who are not looking for resources to come across them and get involved. Opportunities need to be presented to people via fliers and other means of direct outreach to raise awareness about what is currently unknown.
- New York City residents need more information about flood insurance and flooding in their communities.
- There is a desire to have information about all groups and agencies that work in environmental and environmental justice fields. Interviewees want to know who is doing what, how they can tap into what others are doing, and create more opportunities for the public. Better awareness of resources that have all information about which agencies and organizations are responsible for different areas and topics could help with collaboration.
- Teachers could use a lot of help with planning and resources; for example, planning hands-on field trips for students to show them something they do not see every day.

- While resources are available, they are not always available at the time when community members can utilize them. Things like webinars need to be held when most community members can participate. Programming should include weekend hours to be more inclusive.

### TRAINING NEEDS

- Trainings about nonprofit insurance, such as explaining the basics of what different insurance plans cover and pricing, could be useful to some groups.
- Some groups feel that they could use a standard set of metrics to assess programs. All groups could then understand metrics and tailor them to their needs instead of creating new metrics for grants each time.
- CBOs want to have the capacity and expertise to take on a project to get larger grants. Some interviewees indicated that smaller CBOs are often relegated to community engagement and are perceived as needing partnership or assistance for larger projects.
- Many groups need grant support and grant writing and planning training.

**Broad CBO Finding 2: More funding is needed for general operations support and staffing, in addition to more funding for programs, planning, and implementation of projects.**

The below information shows funding needs, priorities, issues, and barriers that illustrate Broad CBO findings 2 and 3.

**Broad CBO Finding 3: Reimbursement-based funding was seen as highly untenable for many CBOs.**

### FUNDING NEEDS

- Many interviewees feel that there should be more flexibility with funding and that funders should be more willing to take risks with funding smaller organizations or projects. Funding should be more flexible; work should be measured by what is achieved, not by how exactly the initial budget submitted with a proposal matches the work.
- Additional funding is needed for:
  - Planning.
  - Staff and staff time/operations.
  - Equipment like computers.
  - Infrastructure.
  - Parks and recreation resources.
  - Operations and maintenance funding and assistance.
  - Funding to be able to keep programs free or at a reduced cost for underserved communities so more people can participate and be heard.
  - Funding that incentivizes interdisciplinary projects and collaboration between disciplines.
  - Funding with less restrictions that is broader.



- Funding that is available to a wider berth of projects that can address issues that have intersection with environmental justice, such as parks or waterfront access.
- Support and guidance for the grant process.

### **FUNDING PRIORITIES AND ISSUES**

- Many interviewees feel that there is a lack of immediate funding and funding for planning.
- Participants noted perceived uneven distribution of grant funds, with many grants going to larger traditional agencies, instead of smaller nonprofits, CBOs, and Tribal groups that may be in greater need of funding.
- Some interviewees feel that small budgets of cities and municipal departments cause delays and difficulties with projects. Some note that they do not have match-funding or 5-year plans required for funding.
- Competition for funding can get in the way of collaboration; many feel that it is important for organizations to learn what others are doing, be connected, and share connections and models that work. Some groups do not feel they have time or funding to fully coordinate with each other.
- Many interviewees feel that there is a need to educate philanthropies that work directly with 501(c)(3) organizations about the role they could be playing related to climate change and environmental justice. Specifically, philanthropic organizations could potentially provide funding that is not often included in grant budgets and other funding sources, such as funding for transportation, food for meetings, and outreach materials.
- Other funding needs varied by group, but the below list includes some of the most frequently mentioned funding needs.
  - Funding for programs, general operations support, and staff.
  - Funding for marketing.
  - Funding for administrative support.
  - Funding for grant writing (and the process of developing a project idea to submit for grant funding) – grants are hard to get; some groups need step-by-step help with the grant application process.
  - Funding for recruiting staff who can focus primarily on grant-related work.
  - Funding for equipment, such as water quality testing materials.
  - Funding for collaborating with other groups (staff size often limits the ability to collaborate).
  - Funding for paying community members and/or students to participate in programs.
  - Funding for additional outreach to raise awareness about existing programs and resources and to involve and include more community members.

### Funding Barriers

- Funding is a major barrier for most groups.
- Providing the public with frequent and timely information can be cost-prohibitive for many groups. While updating social media and web-based information might not be expensive, frequent updates require a great deal of time. In some cases, communities might be better served with flyers or in-person communication, which in addition to requiring a significant amount of time, can be costly.
- In general, nonprofits need more money to pay quality staff to do quality work with accountability and metrics in order to satisfy the requirements of potential funders.
- Finance, technology, human resources, risk (insurance), marketing, and legal aid were all identified as areas in which nonprofits need support.
- Among nonprofits, groups feel that they are often assessed by the size of their budgets rather than the quality of their product, which can be a barrier to getting larger grants.

**Broad CBO Finding 4: Support is needed to boost many CBOs' capacity to apply for and administer grants.**

A list of the grant-related barriers is shown below. Note that some of the trainings and resource needs shown earlier in this section also support the finding that grant-related support is needed by many CBOs.

### Grant-Related Barriers

- Requests for proposals for grants are often long and complicated and can be intimidating for many, especially for some smaller organizations.
  - Some CBOs are concerned that they may not be eligible to receive grants and support for environmental projects because grants include requirements to show that their environmental work directly protects wildlife and fisheries, instead of communities and the public.
  - Grant funding is often focused on program creation but does not include operational costs or support. This can be a major barrier for smaller CBOs.
- Hiring, onboarding, and training for programmatic work can sometimes take up to 6 months, causing conflicts with grant timelines.
- Nonprofit organizations must create their own metrics to evaluate their work. Many feel the funder should establish these metrics.
- Although smaller grants can be extremely helpful to many groups, some feel that smaller grants (around \$1,000) are not worth applying for because of the amount of time and effort required for obtaining the grant and completing the associated tasks.
- Government grants are often delayed, and groups will not receive updates for months; however, upon receipt of the grant, those nonprofits and CBOs are expected to do the work immediately. The work takes time.

**Broad CBO Finding 5: Longer lead times for partnerships, funding opportunities, and other programs are necessary to ensure participation from lower-capacity groups.**

The project and planning barriers discussed during in-depth interviews with CBOs are listed below.

**Project and Planning Barriers**

- Long timelines and slow approvals of projects are often discouraging, leading to capital and infrastructure exhaustion.
- Planning processes do not include communities and CBOs as often as they should or early enough in processes.
- Some interviewees feel that community input is far too often the last aspect of projects. Some feel that processes are structured so that they can move forward without talking to CBOs.
- Other concerns from communities and CBOs related to working with government agencies on projects and project planning include concerns that government groups only engage people they have previously worked with and who have proven to not raise issues in the past. A further concern is that government agencies often assume they know the issues and how to resolve them without asking communities for their input.
- Some groups mentioned concerns that community input is often sought when addressing what might be perceived as “positive” issues, such as the development of a playground or park, but some groups are concerned that community input is not sought for what might be seen as “negative” issues, like the development of energy sources in their communities.

**Broad CBO Finding 6: Many CBOs expressed levels of distrust with government and public agencies, which for many complicates their ability to address some issues and priorities. In order to advance relationships with CBOs, trust-building is needed.**

Barriers to effective collaboration and communication that support findings 6 and 7 are shown below.

**Broad CBO Finding 7: Communities and CBOs feel that they are often left with the burden of having to apply for funding or to lead efforts to address the issues caused by environmental injustice and perceived discriminatory policy making and planning. Many feel they need support in these efforts in order to lessen burdens.****Barriers in Collaboration and Communication Among CBOs, Municipalities, and Government Agencies**

- Some feel that there can be a general lack of collaboration and coordination among groups, organizations, and agencies and a lack of sharing of existing resources, which can lead to gaps in knowledge. The lack of collaboration also increases the risk of redundant work when organizations are unaware of the efforts of others.
- There is a feeling that there is a lack of cohesion among agencies and organizations; agencies are not working together or coordinating, and coordinating with agencies takes a lot of time and capacity.

- Some feel that regulatory agencies are not on the same page with each other and give different guidance or messages.
- Some interviewees feel that the difficulty associated with initiating comprehensive planning and convening local and state officials is compounded by government's tendency to dismiss CBOs.
- Having collaboration between government and community organizations as a prerequisite to apply for funding can be a barrier, because some CBOs feel that government officials will not speak with them if they do not come equipped with their own funding sources.
- Municipal decision-makers are often geographically isolated or separated from other organizations and entities that could potentially assist in decision-making processes, making collaboration and communication difficult.
- According to some interviewees, because Connecticut does not have county governments and instead is structured with hundreds of municipalities that fund themselves individually, there is limited infrastructure for regional collaboration. Some feel there is a need for such infrastructure to be developed and sustained.
- Some interviewees feel that it is difficult to create supportive relationships with government organizations, and therefore they sometimes feel that they are responsible for community-level work without any level of government support.

#### **Barriers in Collaboration and Communication with Community Members**

- Relationships are often personal, and some participants are concerned about losing community relationships as a result of organizational turnover or staff changes.
  - Community feedback is often solicited for community benefit projects, but not when there is a development that will negatively impact the community, like building another factory. This has created a fair amount of distrust from community members.
- There are many studies being conducted to get a better understanding of disadvantaged communities and their needs, but some groups feel that nothing is ever done in response to studies. Communities lose faith in the government because of what they view as a bureaucratic nightmare.
- In some cases, there is funding for research and planning, but not enough funding for implementation and sharing outcomes with communities.

#### **Leadership Barriers**

- A perceived lack of leadership, initiative, and expertise at local, state, and federal government levels relating to the environment can be a barrier to progress.
- Some interviewees mentioned lack of awareness and lack of support for environmental and environmental justice issues in all levels of government.
- Participants feel that a lack of representation of marginalized communities at the legislative level is a barrier for disadvantaged communities.

- Short term lengths and differing priorities between administrations has been identified as a barrier to progress.
- Many organizations in the environmental space were previously led almost exclusively by White people. There should be more effort to be systematically inclusive in the structure of CBOs.

**Broad CBO Finding 8: Interviewees, even those who do not focus on environmental issues, agree that access to nature and the Sound would be beneficial in their communities.**

The information below includes findings from the in-depth interviews about needs related to information and engagement, as well as needs related to recreation and activities and events.

**INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT NEEDS**

- Interviewees feel that more outreach to teachers and schools would be helpful. Because of the time and financial burdens often placed on educators, many educators are waiting for information to be provided by an outsider.
- More easily available information about where to access green and blue spaces (water-based spaces) would be extremely helpful to communities.
- CBOs need help with getting community members and students out on the water and out in the environment.
- Many feel they need support with climate change education curriculum. Collaboration and events for schools could help in making connections between air quality (such as recent fires) and climate change.
- Materials should be shared across groups and organizations to support and enhance programming and curriculum related to climate change and the environment.
- Many CBOs that may not have addressed environmental issues in the past will have to deal with environmental issues and discrimination, such as those presented by coal plants, sewage plants, and flooding in low-income areas. These organizations often have capacity limitations that act as barriers to participation, and while there are funds and support available, this limited capacity will prevent much movement. Agencies need to meet these organizations and their missions.
- CBOs need help bringing in communities to help plan and develop assets such as more bike paths, walking paths, and transportation.
- A lot of interviewees expressed a need for assistance with translating materials. Immigrant populations in most regions are being left out of conversations because of a limited ability to translate materials. As these populations make up some of the most vulnerable groups, there is a major need for more translation services.
- In the philanthropic/community foundation realm, despite years of advocacy, there has not been a historic interest in addressing climate change, which has been seen as too big and too complicated to address.

**RECREATION AND ACTIVITY/EVENT NEEDS**

- Some CBOs need access to schools and senior centers for possible use of buses and shuttles for pilot programs like the Long Island Sound shuttle program and others.
- CBOs would like more information about which beaches and areas community members like to go to; that is, if there are areas they prefer and why they prefer those areas.
- CBOs would like more information about what community members like to do on the Sound. They feel that more information about this can help with event planning.

## **FINDINGS FROM SURVEYS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

This chapter presents the results of the quantitative survey of community members about the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways. A majority of the surveys were conducted online, while the remainder were administered during in-person outreach and community listening sessions, as well as via emails in which survey links and QR codes were shared by CBOs or Responsive Management staff (a shorter version of the survey was provided through the in-person outreach efforts). For details about the administration of the survey and gathering of quantitative data, refer to Appendix B, “Project Methodology.”

First, this chapter discusses the presentation of data, followed by the survey results.

### **PRESENTATION OF SURVEY RESULTS**

In examining the results, it is important to be aware that the questionnaire included several types of questions:

- Open-ended questions are those in which no answer set is read to the respondents; rather, they can respond with anything that comes to mind from the question.
- Closed-ended questions have an answer set from which to choose.
- Single response questions: Some questions allow only a single response.
- Multiple response questions: Other questions allow respondents to give more than one response or choose all that apply. Those that allow more than a single response are indicated on the graphs with the label, “Multiple Responses Allowed.”

Most graphs show results rounded to the nearest integer; however, all data are stored in decimal format, and all calculations are performed on unrounded numbers. For this reason, some results may not sum to exactly 100% because of this rounding on the graphs. Note that rather than showing the number of respondents giving the various responses to the survey, the graphs show percentages because doing so allows easier comparisons of the data when the sample sizes on questions are different.

Throughout this chapter, survey respondents are generally referred to as “community members” or “residents.”

Responses to open-ended questions are presented in tables that show residents’ statements verbatim, albeit with minor edits to correct obvious misspellings. The shorter tables (typically questions that went to a subset of the sample based on previous responses) are shown throughout this chapter, whereas the longer, multi-page tables are presented in Appendix C of this report.

For each survey question, a two-bar graph showing a comparison of responses by community members classified as “disadvantaged” or “not disadvantaged” is shown, followed by a two-bar graph showing a comparison of responses by community members from New York and community members from Connecticut (note that only results from disadvantaged respondents will be shown in the comparison between states). In order to be classified as disadvantaged, respondents needed to fall into specific demographic categories that are typically indicative of disadvantaged groups:

- Lower income,
- Lower levels of education, OR
- Belonging to a minority racial or ethnic group;

AND respondents had to select one or more of the environmental justice indicators from the list provided in the survey, as shown in the table below:

<b>Environmental Justice Indicators</b>
I live near a pollution source.
I live near a major highway/freeway/roadway.
I live in public housing.
I live in an area that doesn't have many trees.
I live in an area that is close to industry.
I live in an area that is close to wastewater treatment and other public infrastructure that makes noise or produces odors.
I consider myself low income.
I have limited access to transportation.
I have limited access to fresh fruits or vegetables.
I have limited access to grocery stores.
I have limited access to healthcare.
I consider myself someone who has major health issues.
I am concerned about my safety in my neighborhood.
I am concerned about the stability of my housing.
I am concerned about the stability of my income.
English is not my primary language.

Note that not all indicators of disadvantaged communities were offered as options, because respondents might be less likely to know specific information about their housing structures or sources of energy, for example. Based on these criteria to classify respondents as disadvantaged (one of the demographic classifications and one of the environmental justice indicators), Responsive Management obtained 583 completed questionnaires from disadvantaged residents and 113 completed questionnaires from non-disadvantaged residents.

Graphs are also shown crosstabulated by state. There were 223 respondents from Connecticut and 470 respondents from New York.

Approximately 6% of the surveys were conducted in Spanish; these data are included in the graphs and tables throughout this chapter.



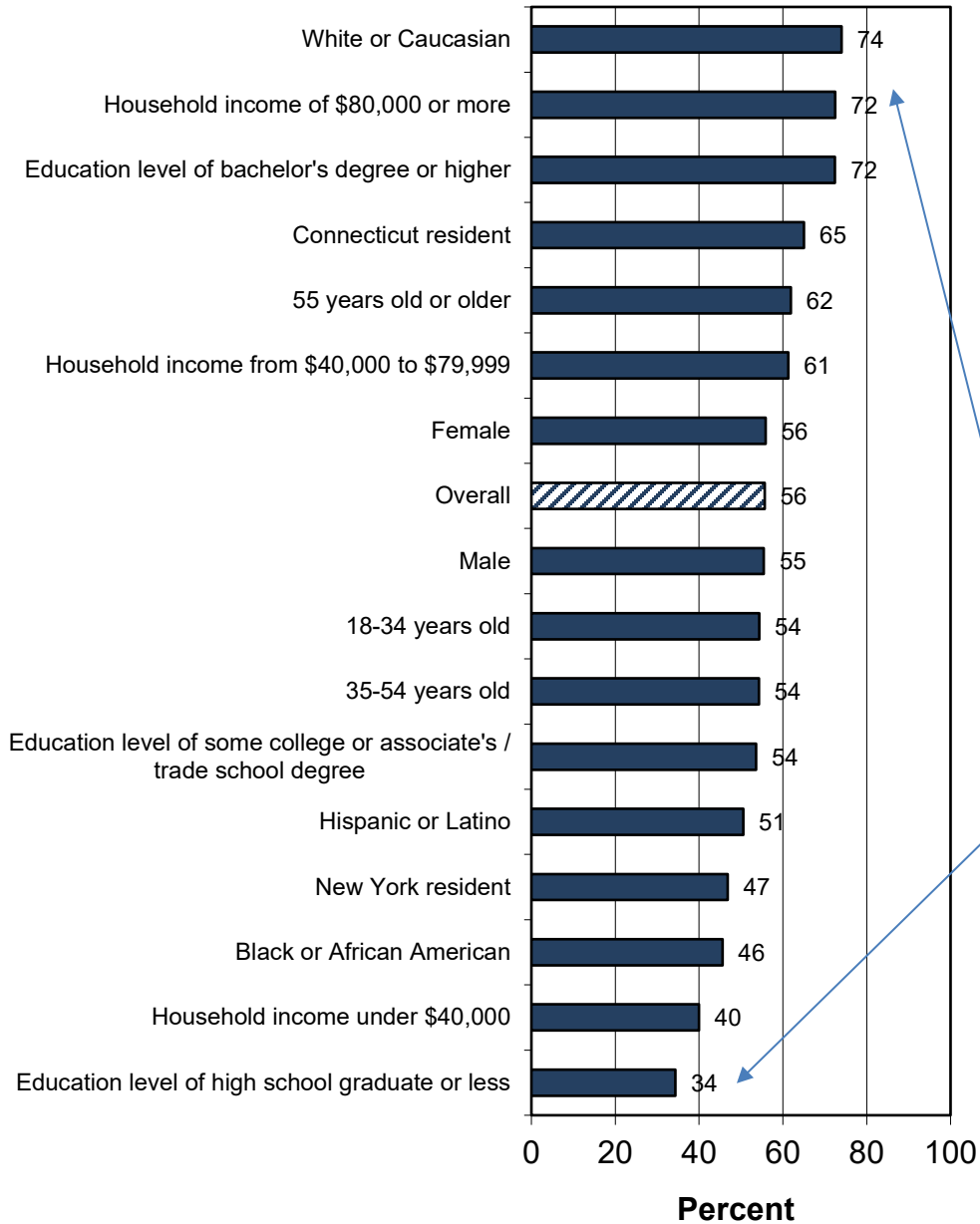
In addition to the graphs mentioned above, the report includes special graphs that show how various demographic groups responded to certain questions, hereinafter simply referred to as demographic analyses graphs. Only select questions were analyzed in this way, including those deemed to be of the most interest or utility and those with sufficient sample size. An example is shown on the following page that explains how to interpret these types of graphs; although this is an example, it is based on actual survey data.

This example shows the percentages of the various groups who have ever used or currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways. Overall, 56% of community members have ever used or currently use the Sound, as shown by the patterned bar. Those groups shown above the overall bar have a higher percentage indicating use of the Sound compared to residents overall. For instance, 74% of White residents have used or currently use the Sound, a considerably higher percentage than that of residents overall. Meanwhile, those groups below the overall bar have lower percentages who have used or currently use the Sound; in this example, 34% of those in the lower education category have used or currently use the Sound.

When one group is above the overall bar (for instance, in this example, Connecticut residents), its counterpart or one of its counterparts (in this instance, New York residents) will be below the overall bar. The distance from the overall bar matters, as well. If a group is close to the overall bar (for instance, females in this example), then the group should not be considered markedly different from respondents overall. A rule of thumb is that the difference should be 5 percentage points or more for the difference to be noteworthy.

**Example of a Demographic Analyses Graph**

**Percent of each of the following groups who have ever used or currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways:**



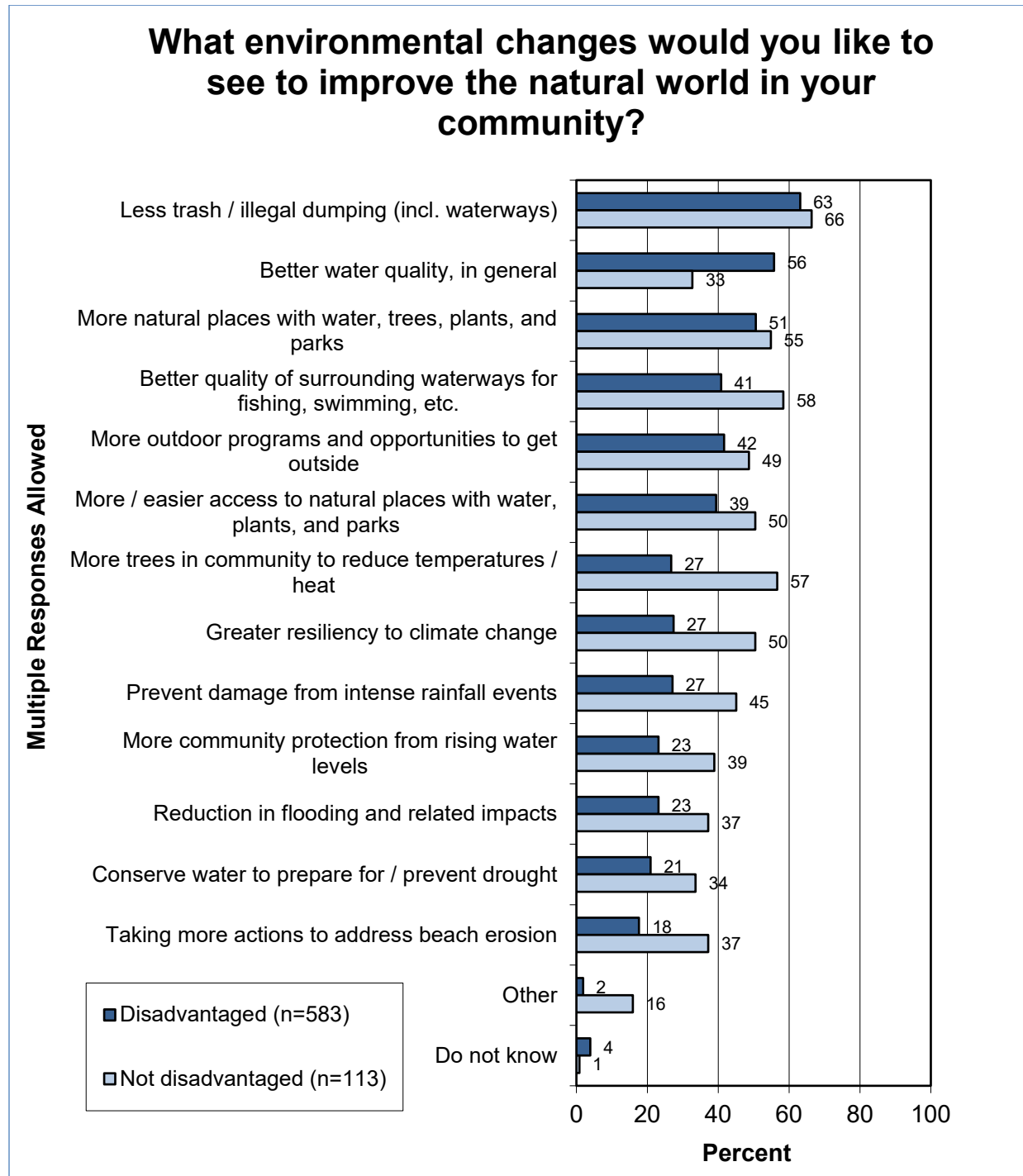
This graph shows the percentage of various demographic groups who have ever used or currently use the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways. Among residents overall, 56% indicated use of the Sound, as shown by the patterned bar.

Those groups above the patterned bar are more likely to have used or currently use the Sound, compared to residents overall. For instance, 74% of White residents indicate use of the Sound, which is well above the overall rate.

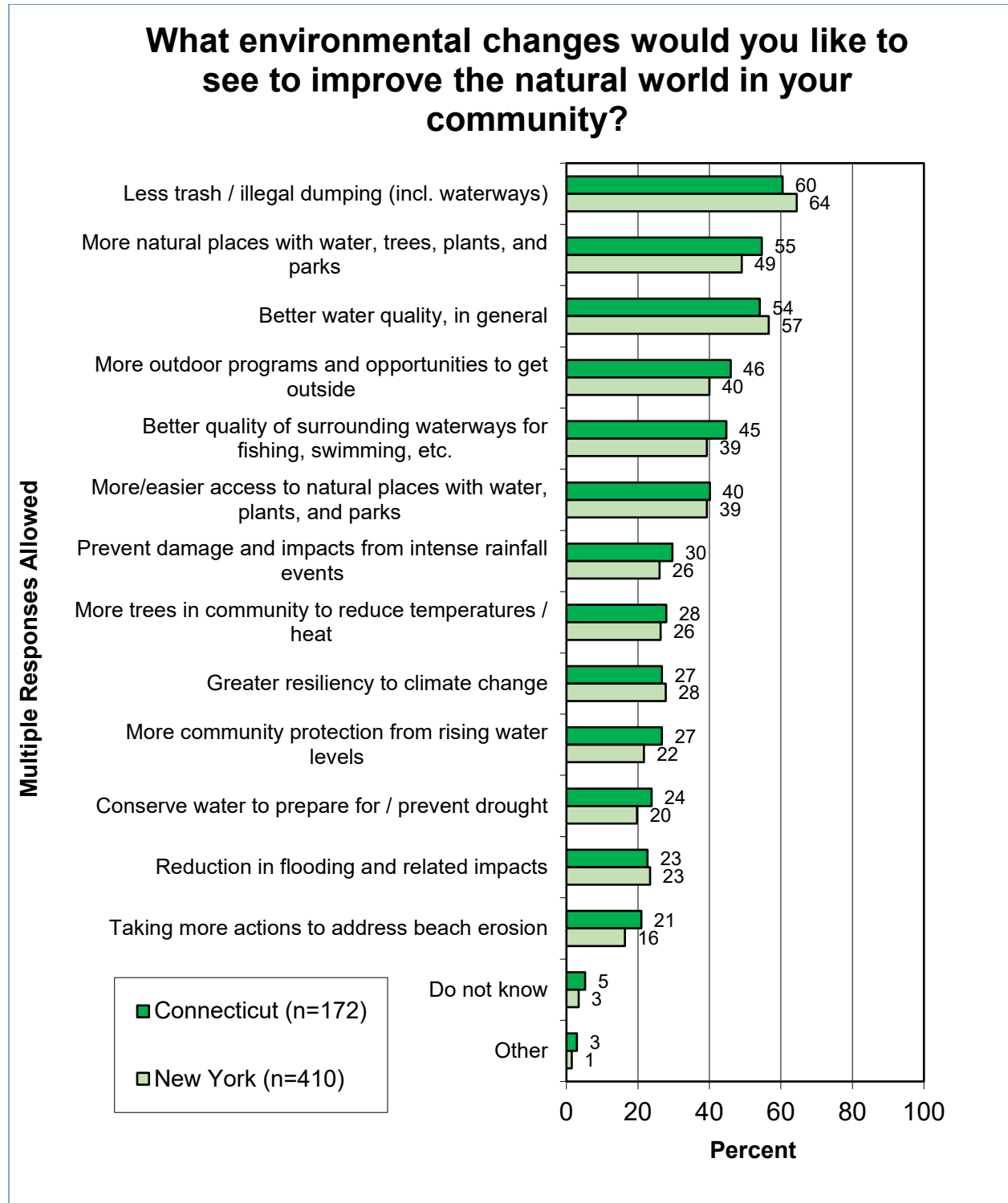
Conversely, groups below the patterned bar were less likely to indicate use of the Long Island Sound. For instance, 34% of those in the lower education category have used or currently use the Sound, which is markedly lower than among residents overall.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL STRESSORS

Disadvantaged community members were much more likely to want better water quality in general, whereas all other options were selected by higher percentages of non-disadvantaged community members. The number one response among both groups indicated that community members would like to see less trash and illegal dumping.



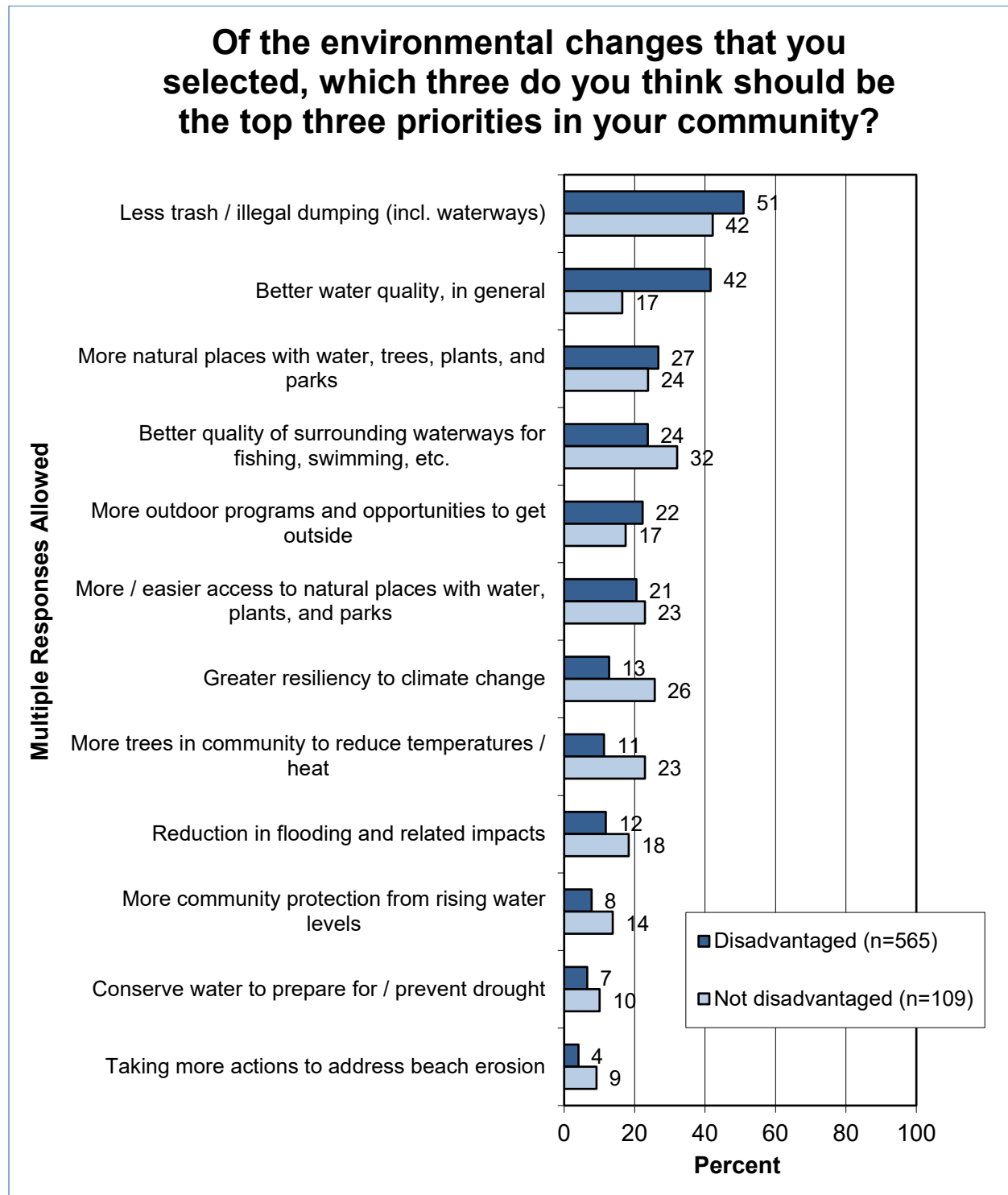
The states are not greatly different from one another on this question.



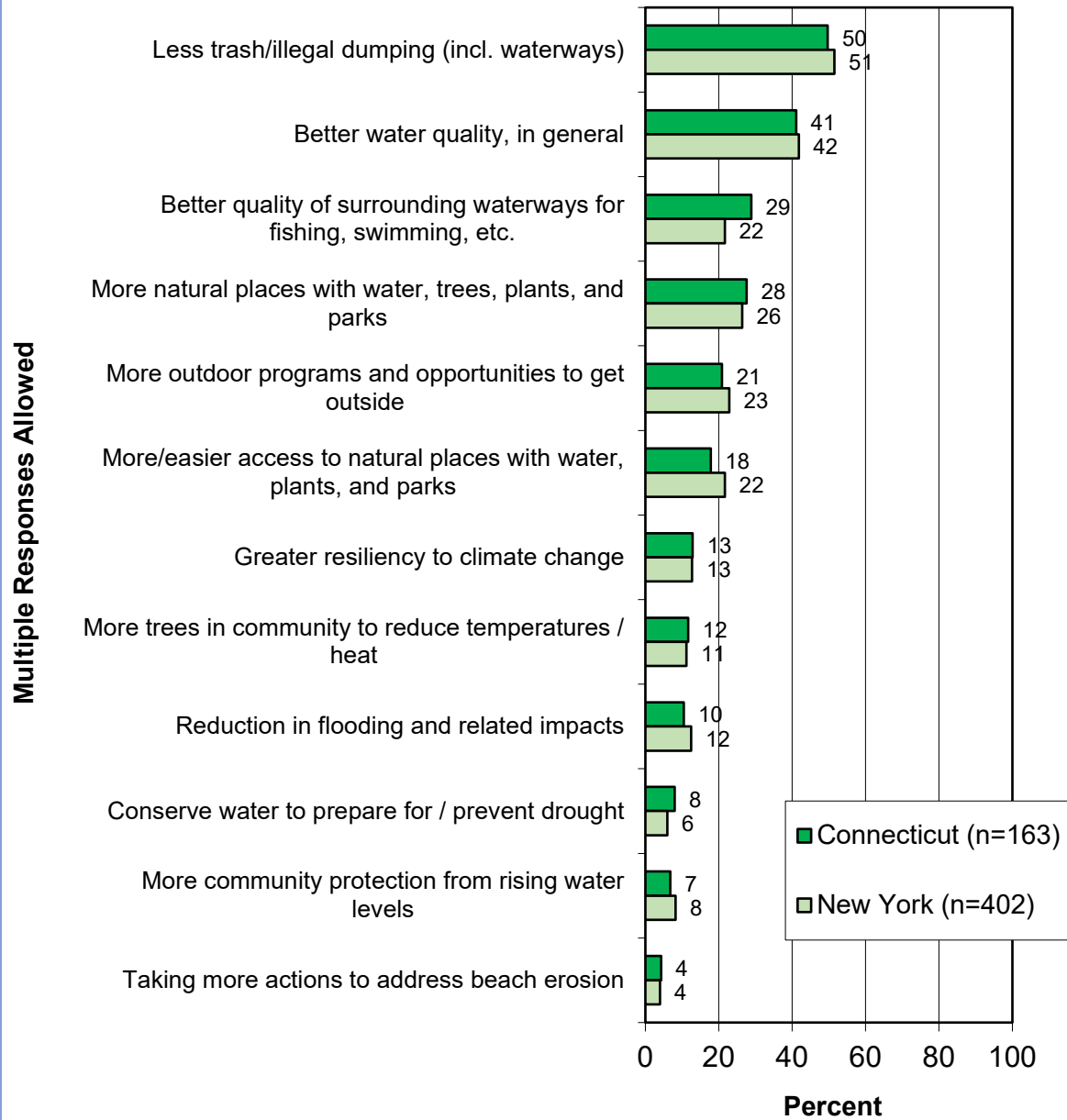
The write-in “other” responses from disadvantaged respondents are shown below.

<b>What environmental changes would you like to see to improve the natural world in your community?</b>
Addressing urban heat islands caused by redlining
Cleaner streets ( there is so much garbage on the floor, programs that help keep the streets clean), smoother sidewalks ( going over cracks is very difficult with a stroller), safer rides on transportation ( maybe undercover people monitoring while riding
Increase pay rates and affordable healthcare
More money
More recycling
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel use.
Reduce Noise Pollution from nearby LGA
Addressing urban heat islands caused by redlining
Cleaner streets (there is so much garbage on the floor, programs that help keep the streets clean), smoother sidewalks ( going over cracks is very difficult with a stroller), safer rides on transportation ( maybe undercover people monitoring while riding
Increase pay rates and affordable healthcare
more money
More recycling
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel use.

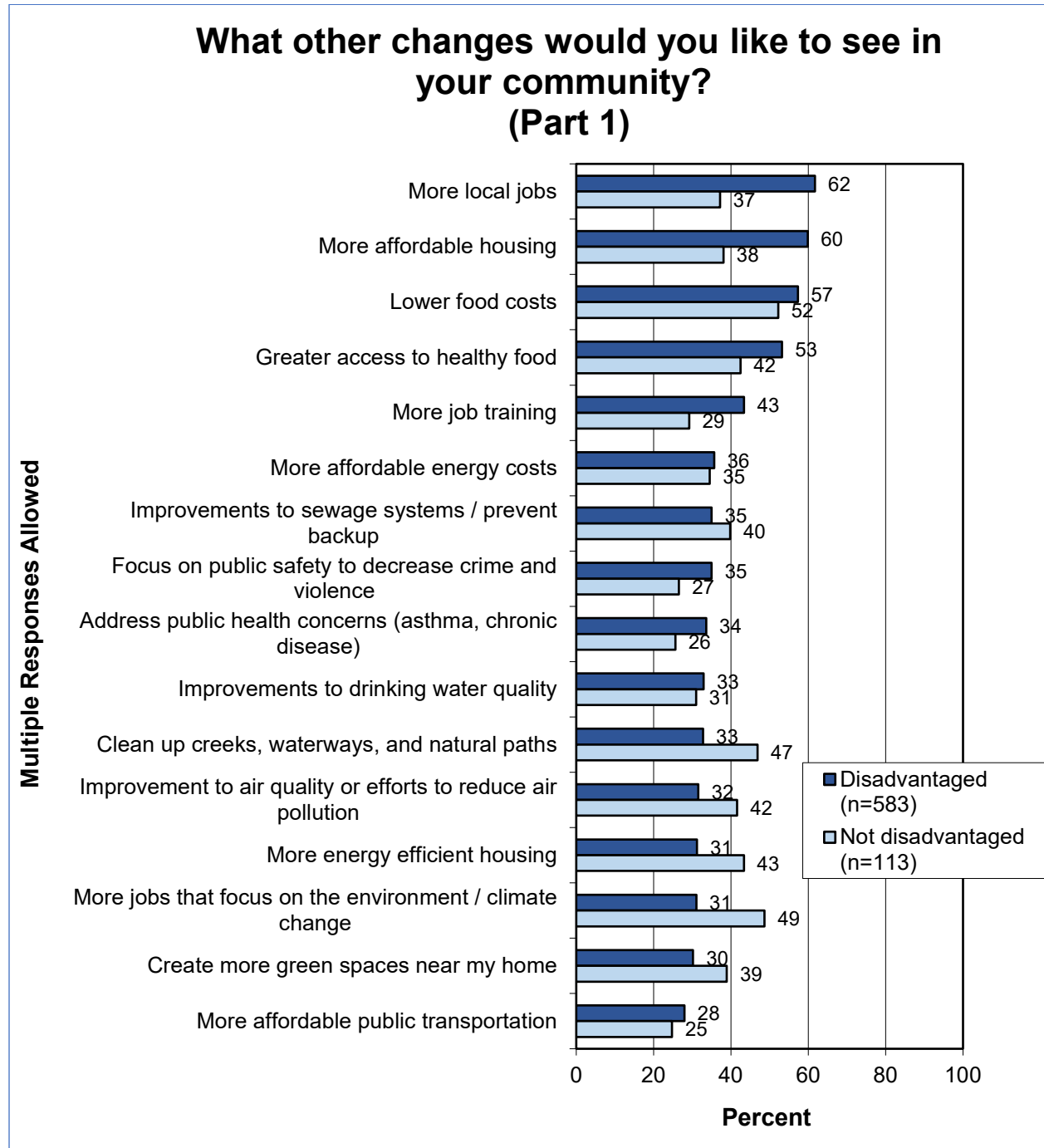
In follow-up, community members were asked to select their top three preferred environmental changes from the same list (they could select as many as they wanted in the original question). The top responses remained the same: less trash or illegal dumping and better water quality in general. Again, disadvantaged residents were much more likely than their counterparts to want better water quality.



### Of the environmental changes that you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community?

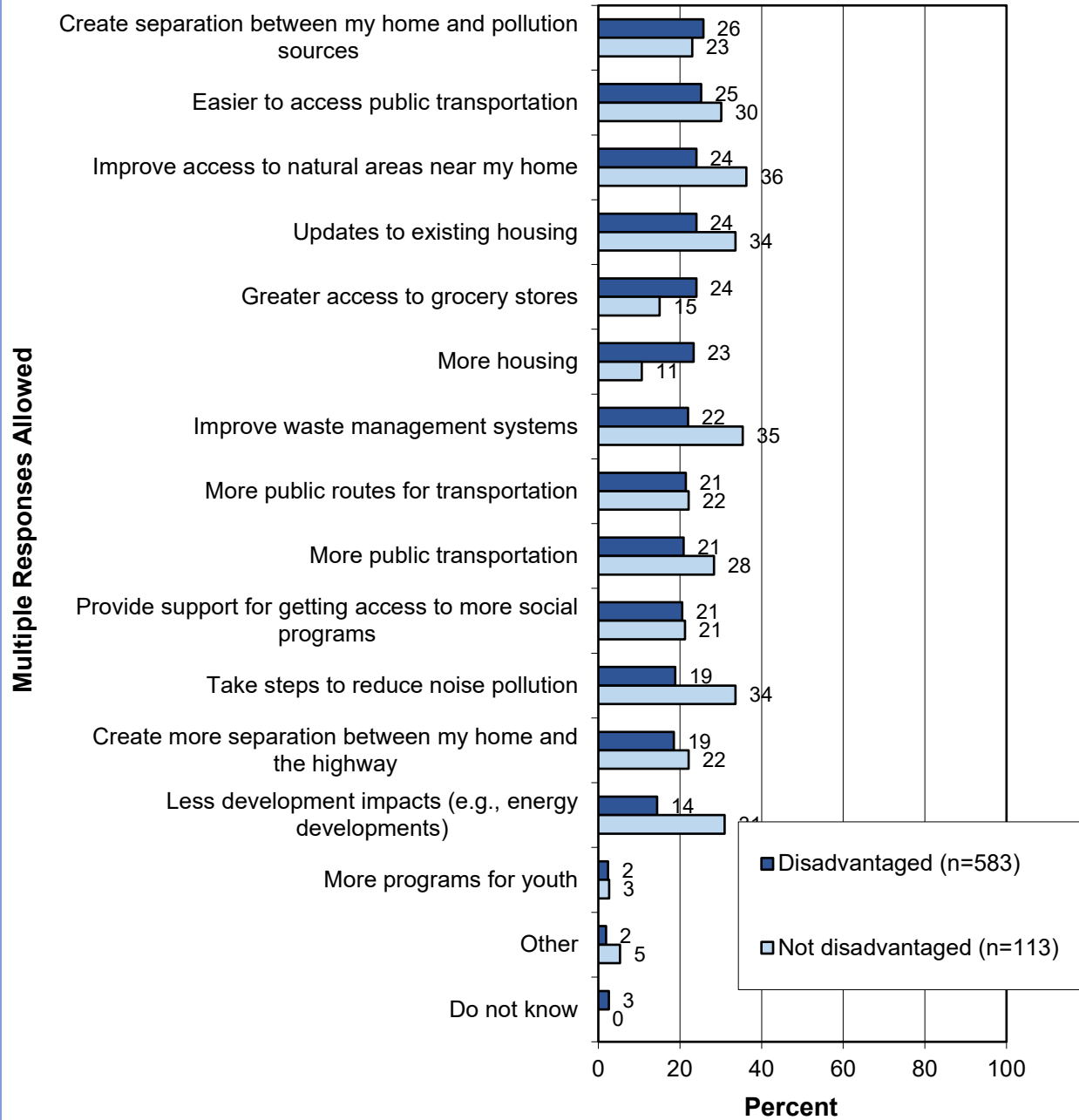


Next, from an extensive list, community members were asked to select the community changes they would like to see. Over half selected more local jobs, more affordable housing, lower food costs, and better access to healthy food. These top responses were selected by disadvantaged residents more often than by their counterparts. State data are shown to be similar.

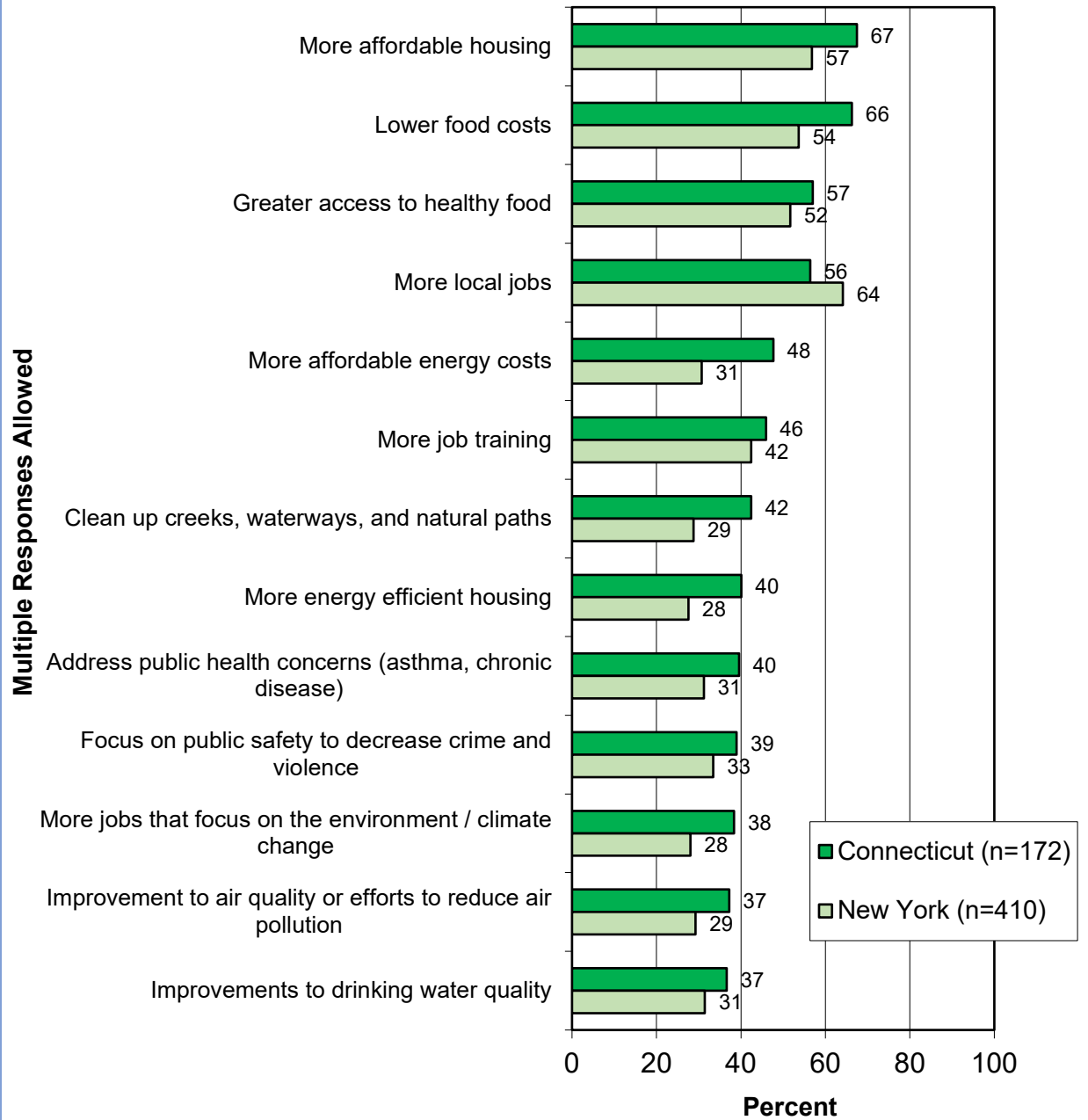




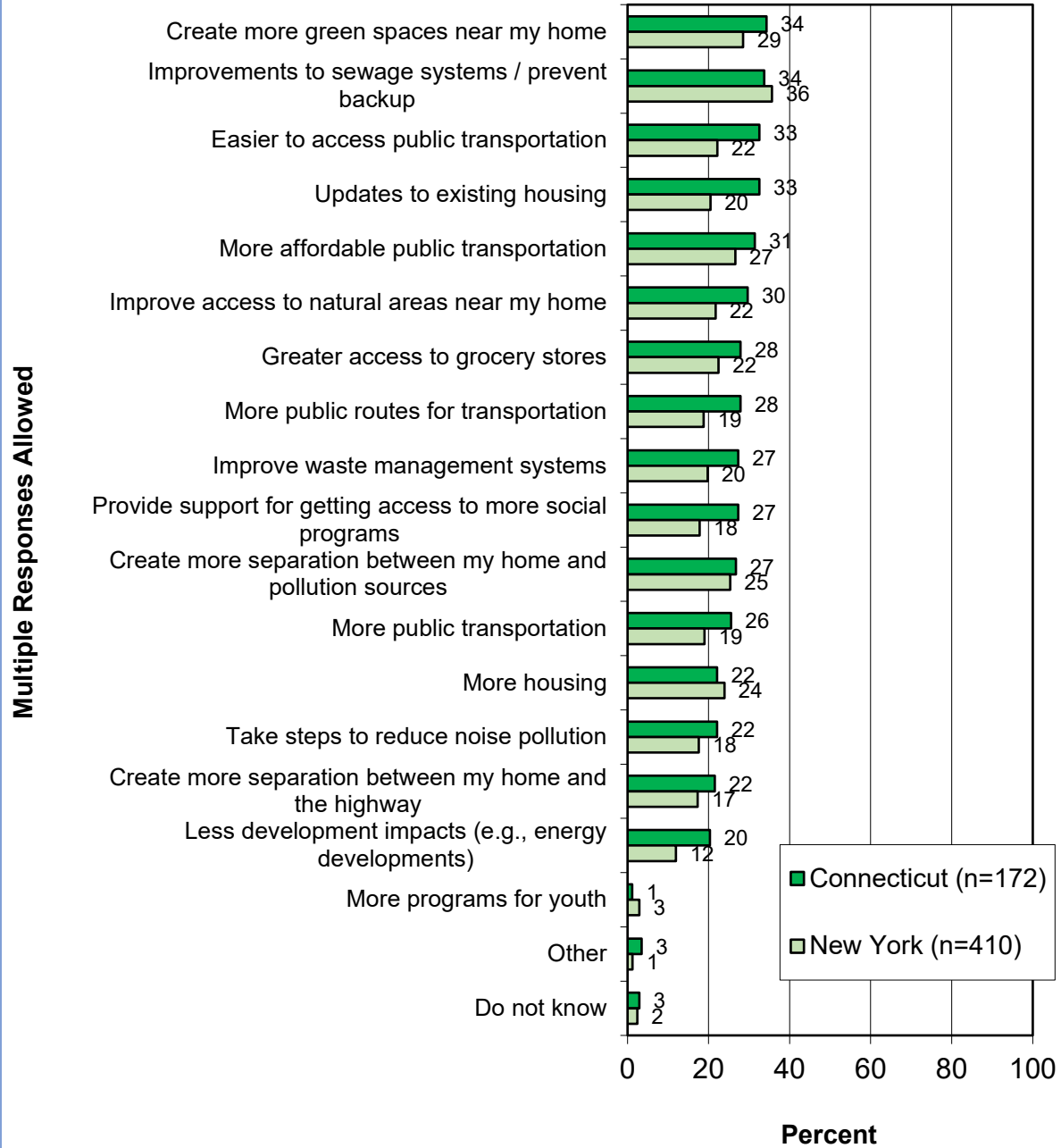
## What other changes would you like to see in your community? (Part 2)



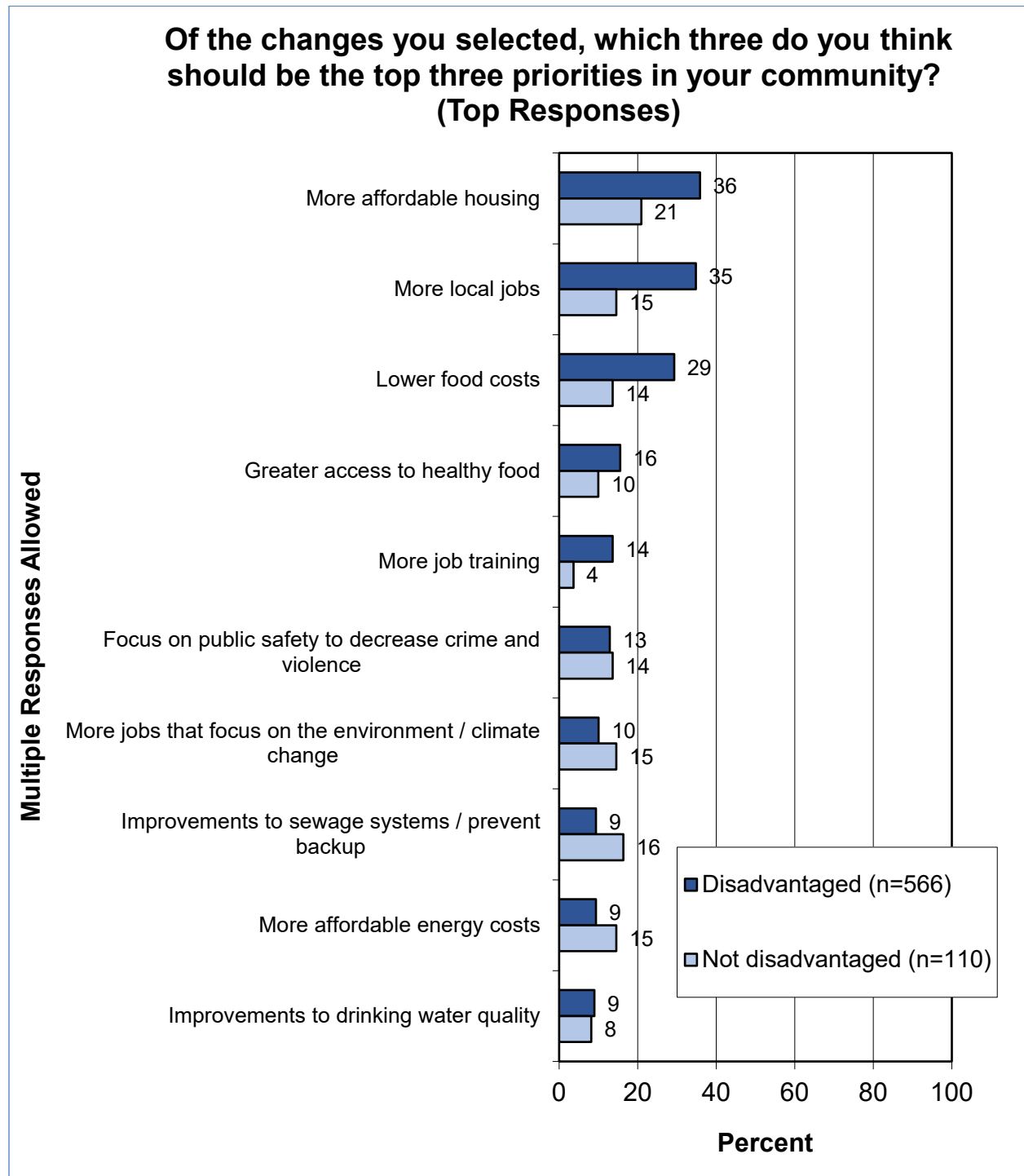
## What other changes would you like to see in your community? (Part 1)



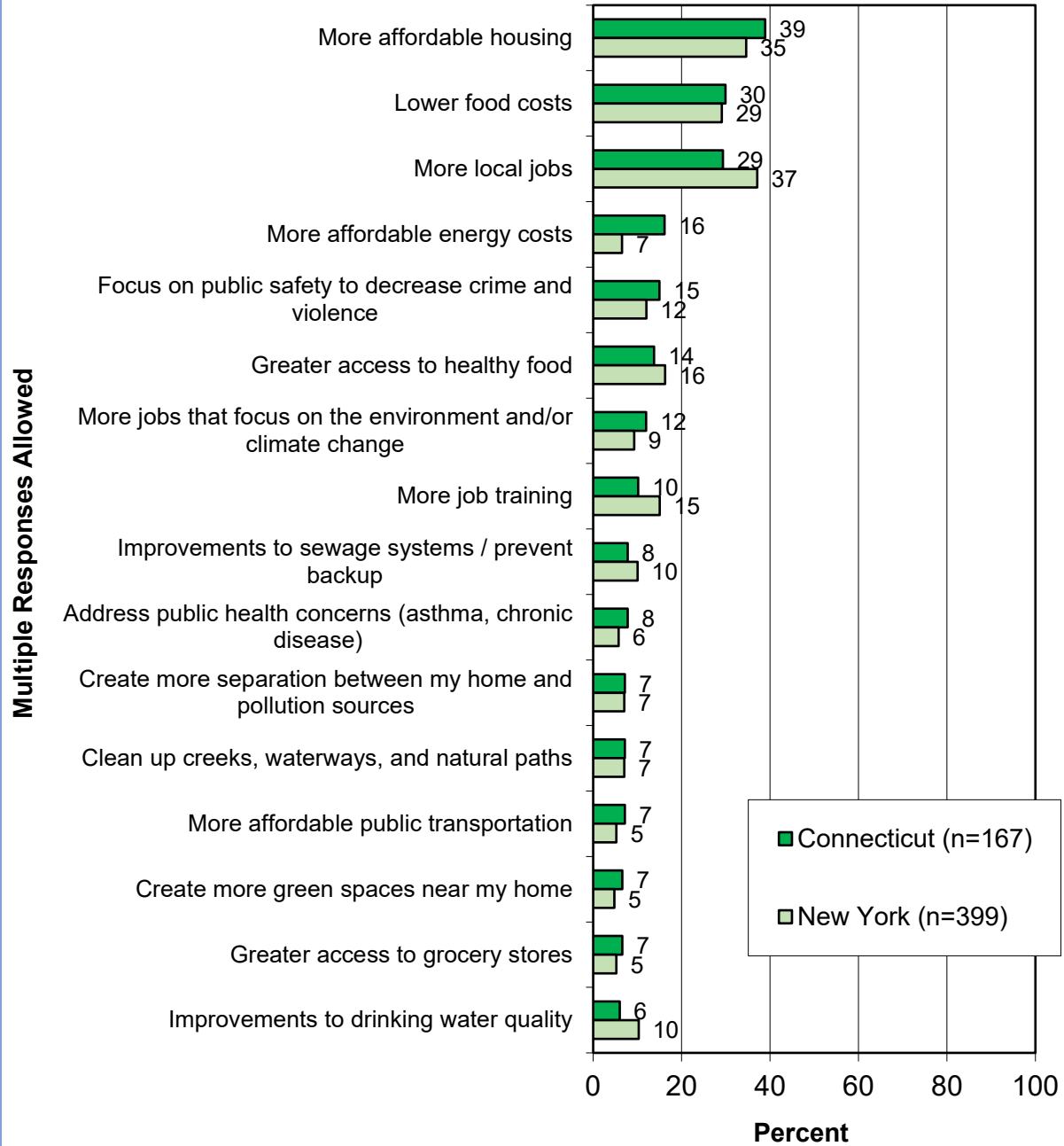
## What other changes would you like to see in your community? (Part 2)



When community members were asked to pick their top three priorities for community changes, the top responses were more affordable housing, more local jobs, and lower food costs. Higher percentages of disadvantaged residents selected these options, compared to non-disadvantaged residents. In the regional graph, the top responses are shown. The state graph is presented, as well.

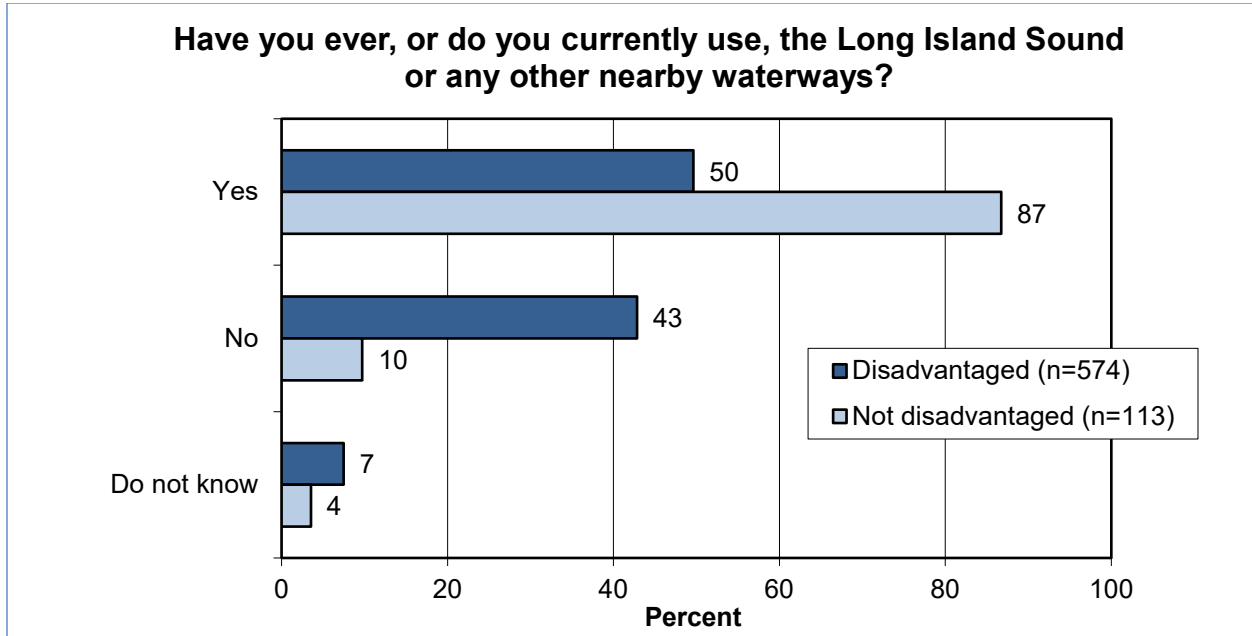


**Of the changes you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community?  
(Top Responses)**

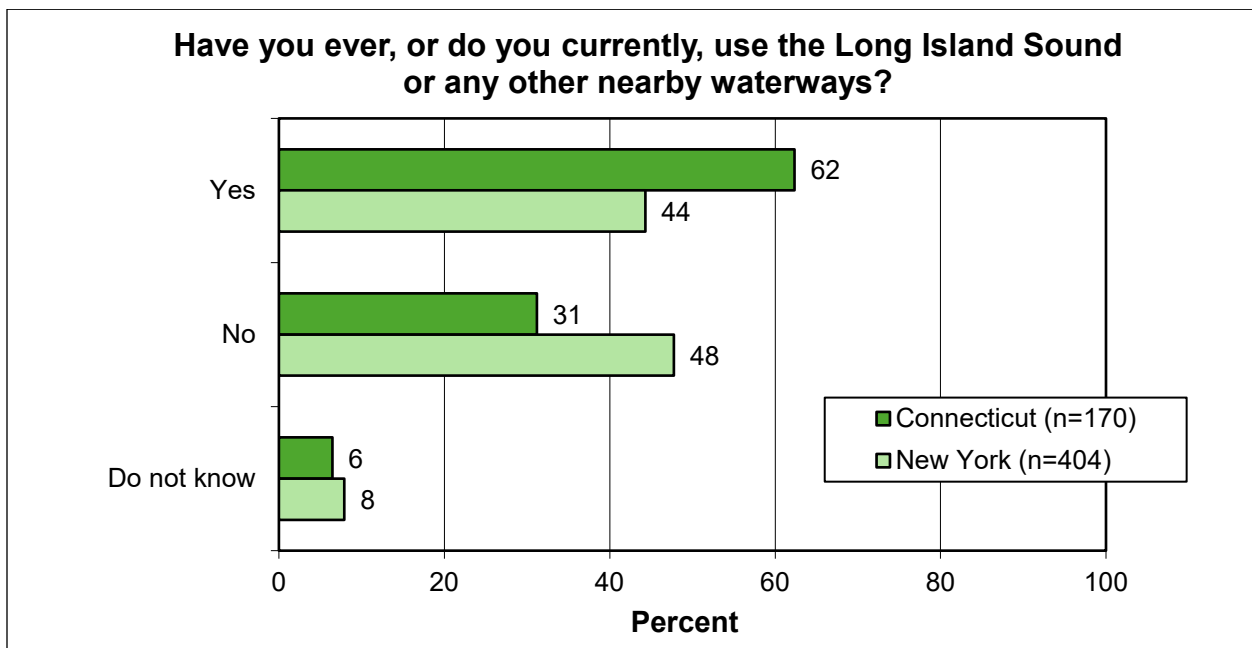


### USE OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND

Use of the Sound is much more prevalent among non-disadvantaged community members (87% indicated use of the Sound) compared to the disadvantaged (50%).

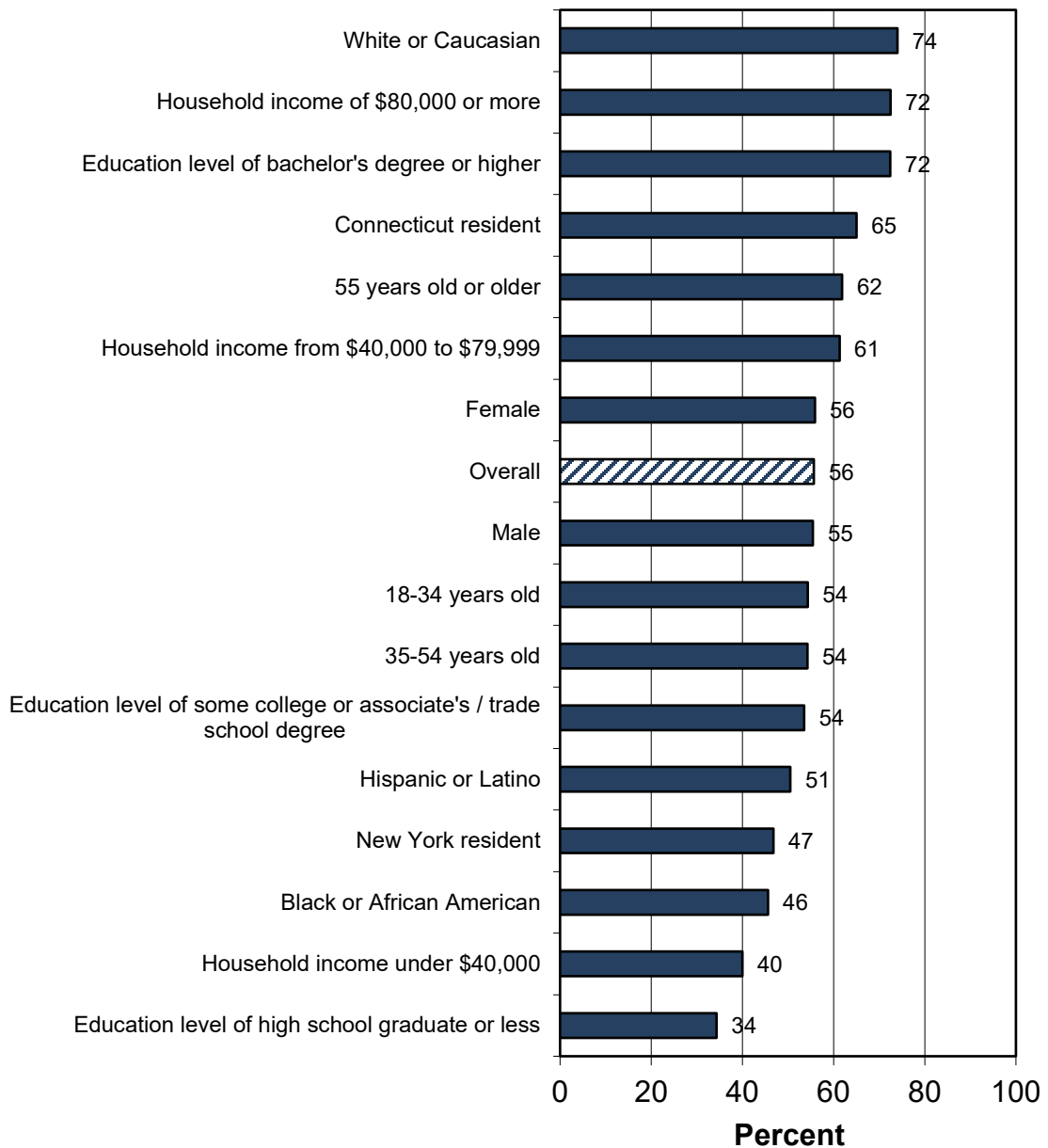


Use of the Sound is higher among Connecticut respondents than among New York respondents.

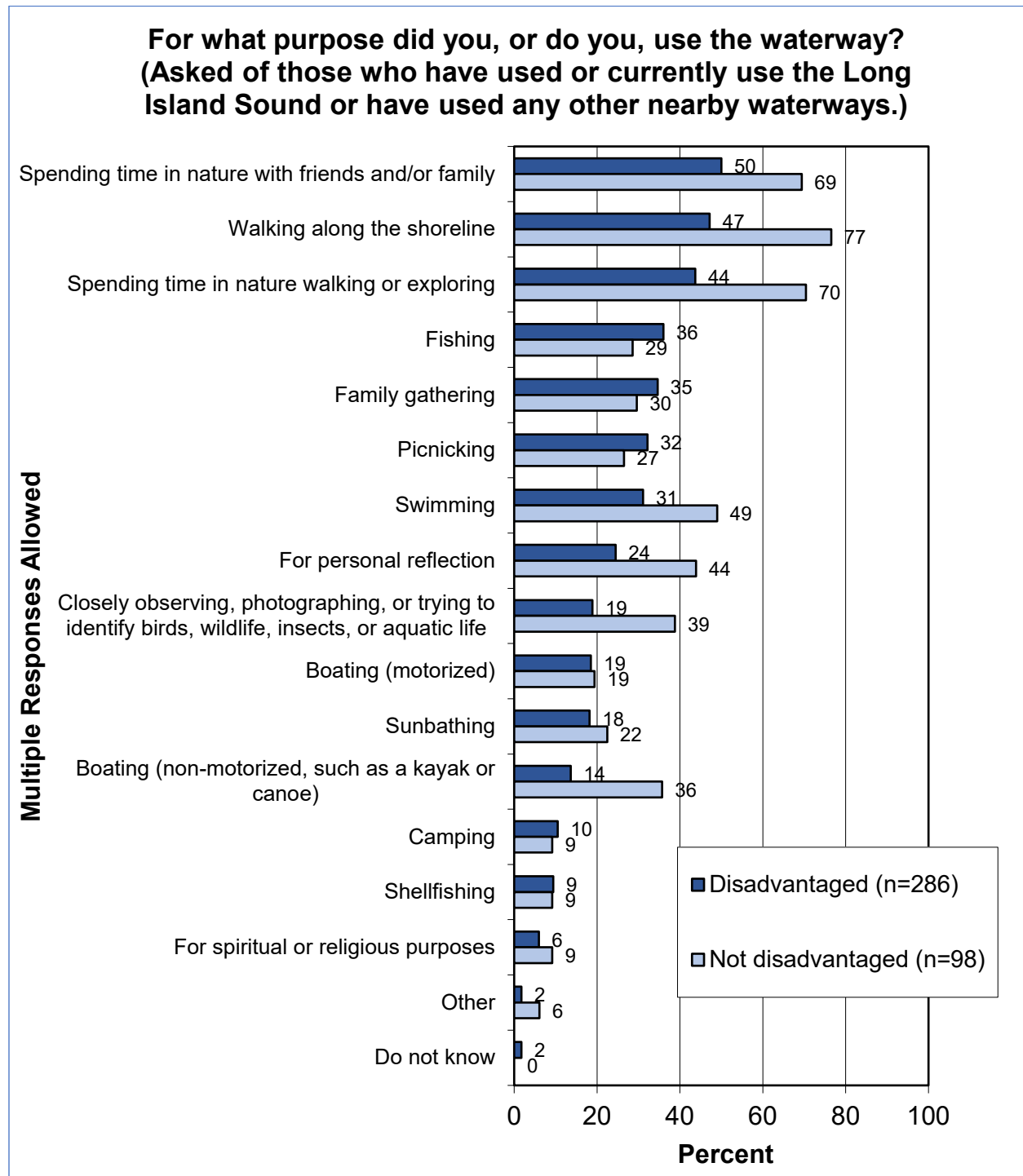


The demographic analyses graph shows that the groups most likely to use or to have used the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways include White residents, those in the highest income category, and those in the highest education category. (Note that all respondents are included in these demographic analyses graphs.)

**Percent of each of the following groups who have ever used or currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways:**

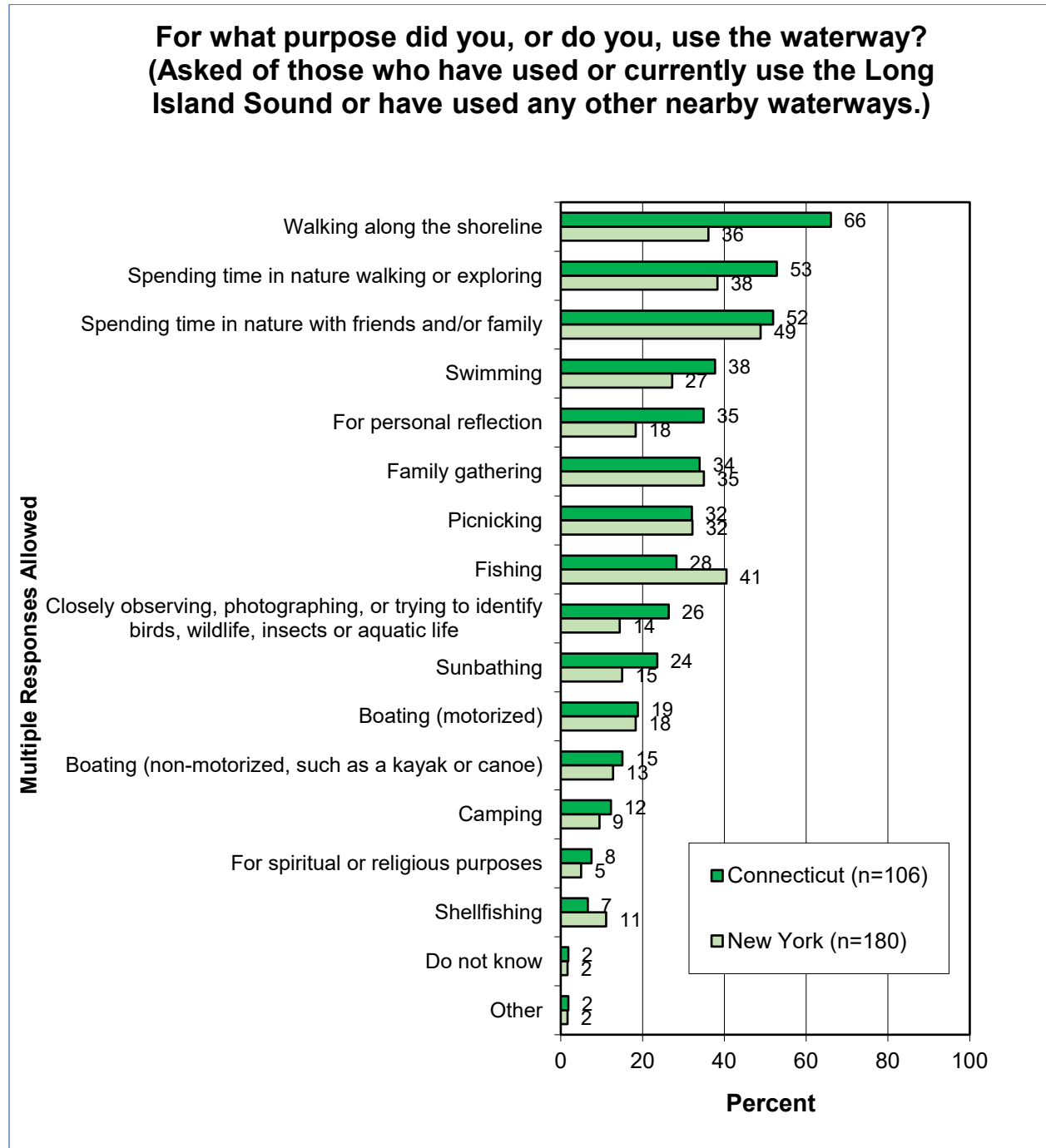


From a list of reasons to use the Long Island Sound, majorities who use the Sound selected to spend time in nature with friends and family, to walk along the shoreline, and to spend time in nature walking or exploring. Higher percentages of non-disadvantaged community members participate for these reasons, compared to those who are disadvantaged (recall that non-disadvantaged community members use the Sound more in general).

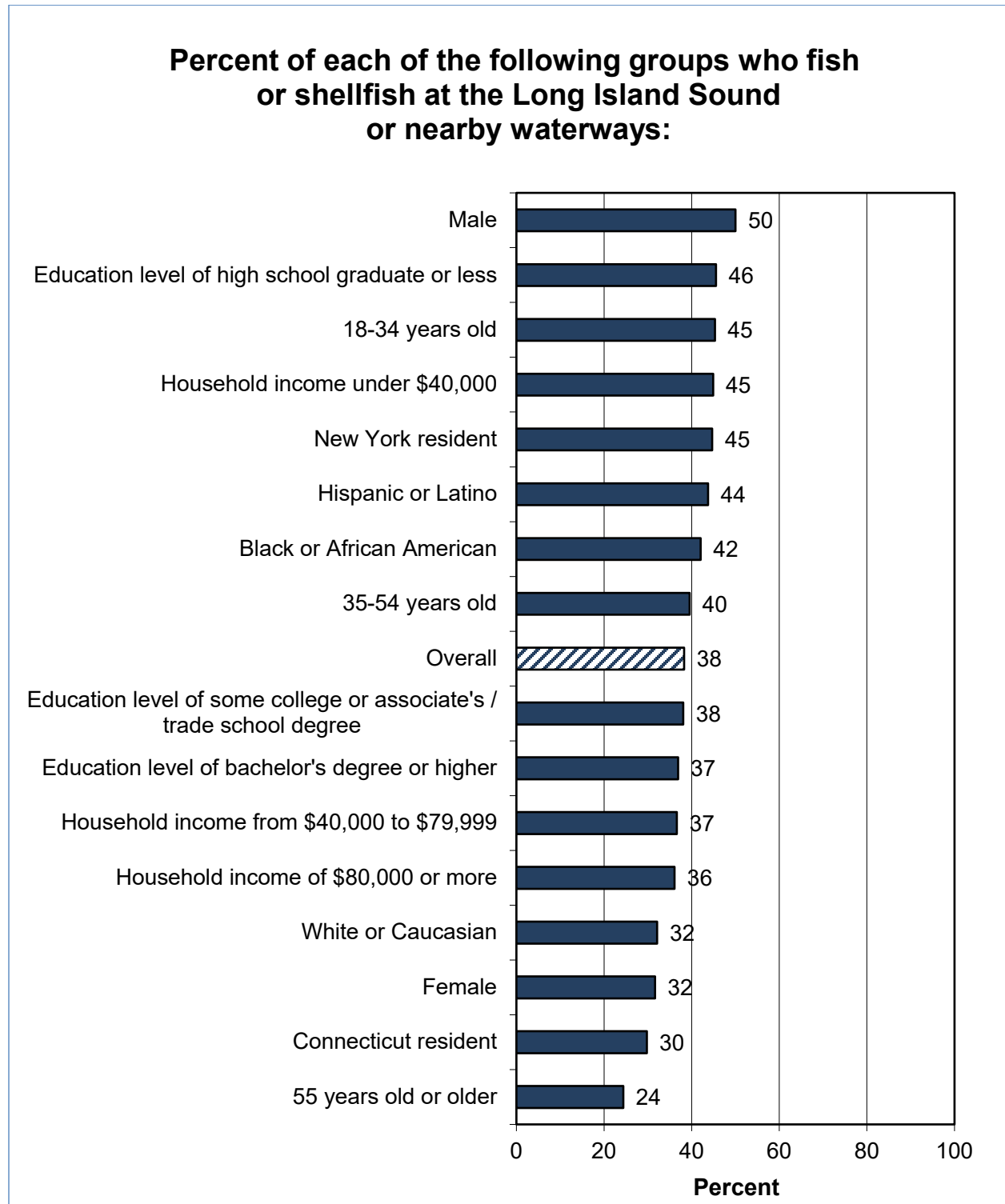




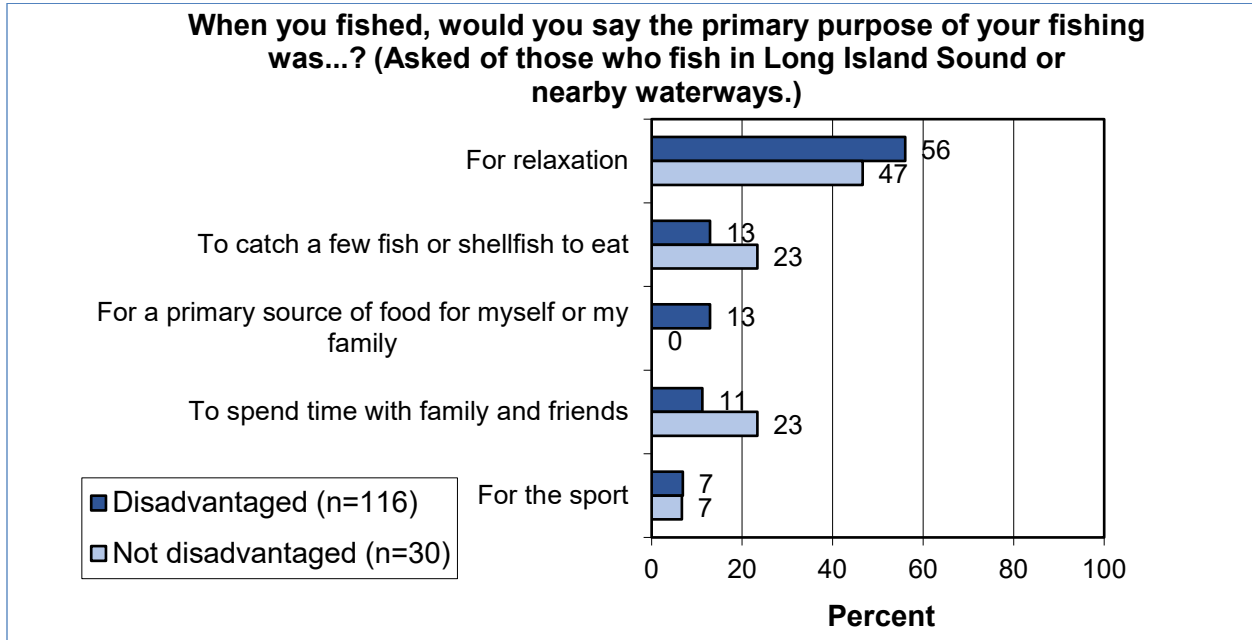
Among the state findings, shoreline walking is more prevalent in Connecticut than in New York, as is swimming in the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways. On the other hand, fishing is more prevalent among New York respondents.



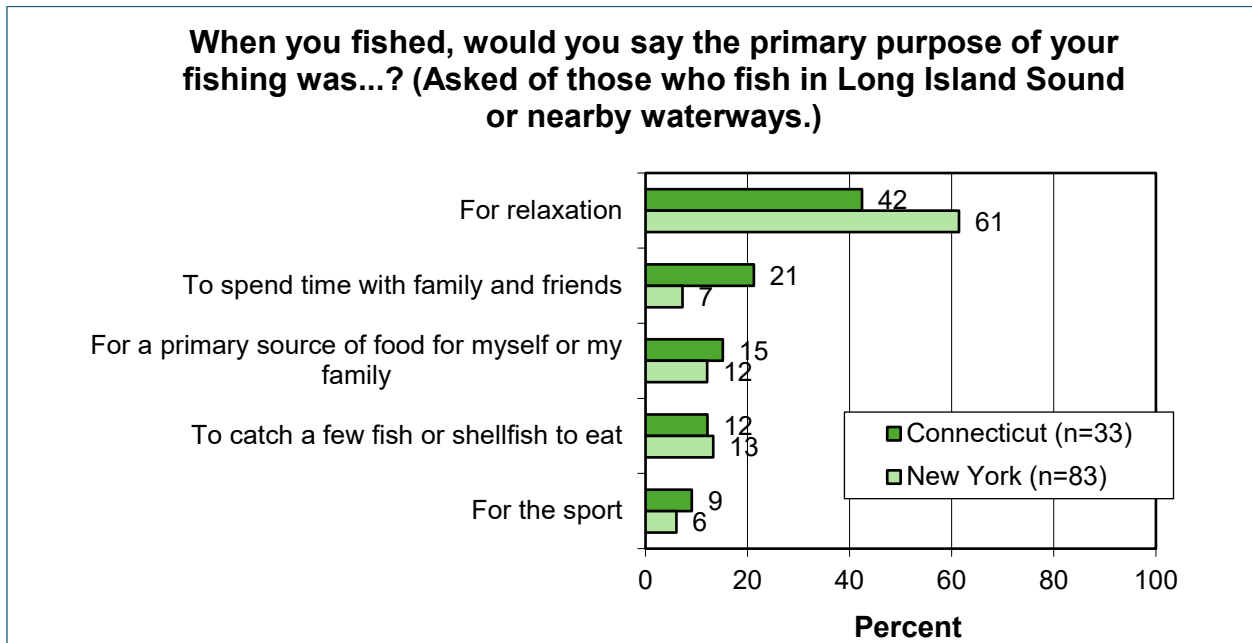
Groups that most often fish or shellfish at the Sound are males, those in the lower education category, younger residents, those in the lower income category, and New York residents.



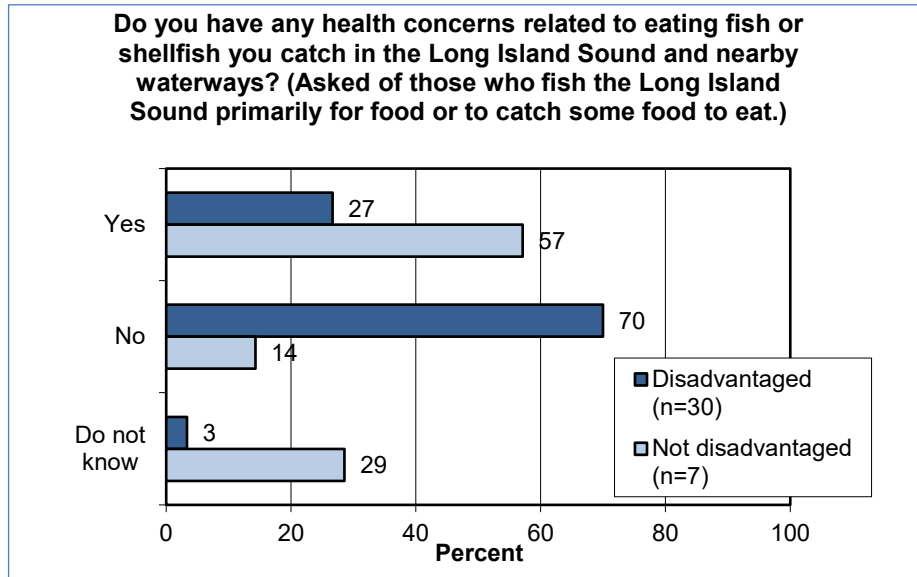
Those who fished or shellfished at the Sound were asked to state their primary purpose for fishing or shellfishing: by far the top response was for relaxation. Disadvantaged residents were much more likely to have fished as a primary food source (no non-disadvantaged residents selected this as their top reason).



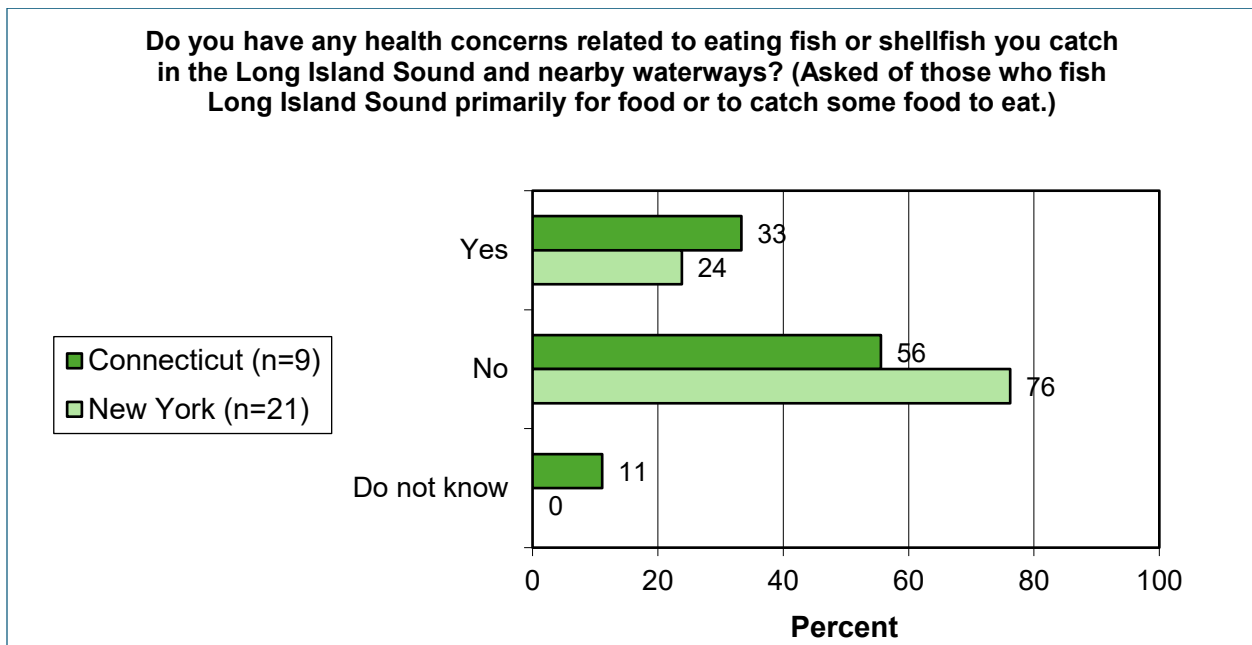
State results are shown regarding reasons for fishing.



A majority of disadvantaged respondents who fished the Sound for food do not have health concerns about eating the fish or shellfish (70% stated this). Nonetheless, about a quarter (27%) have concerns. Note that only 7 community members who are not disadvantaged got the question.



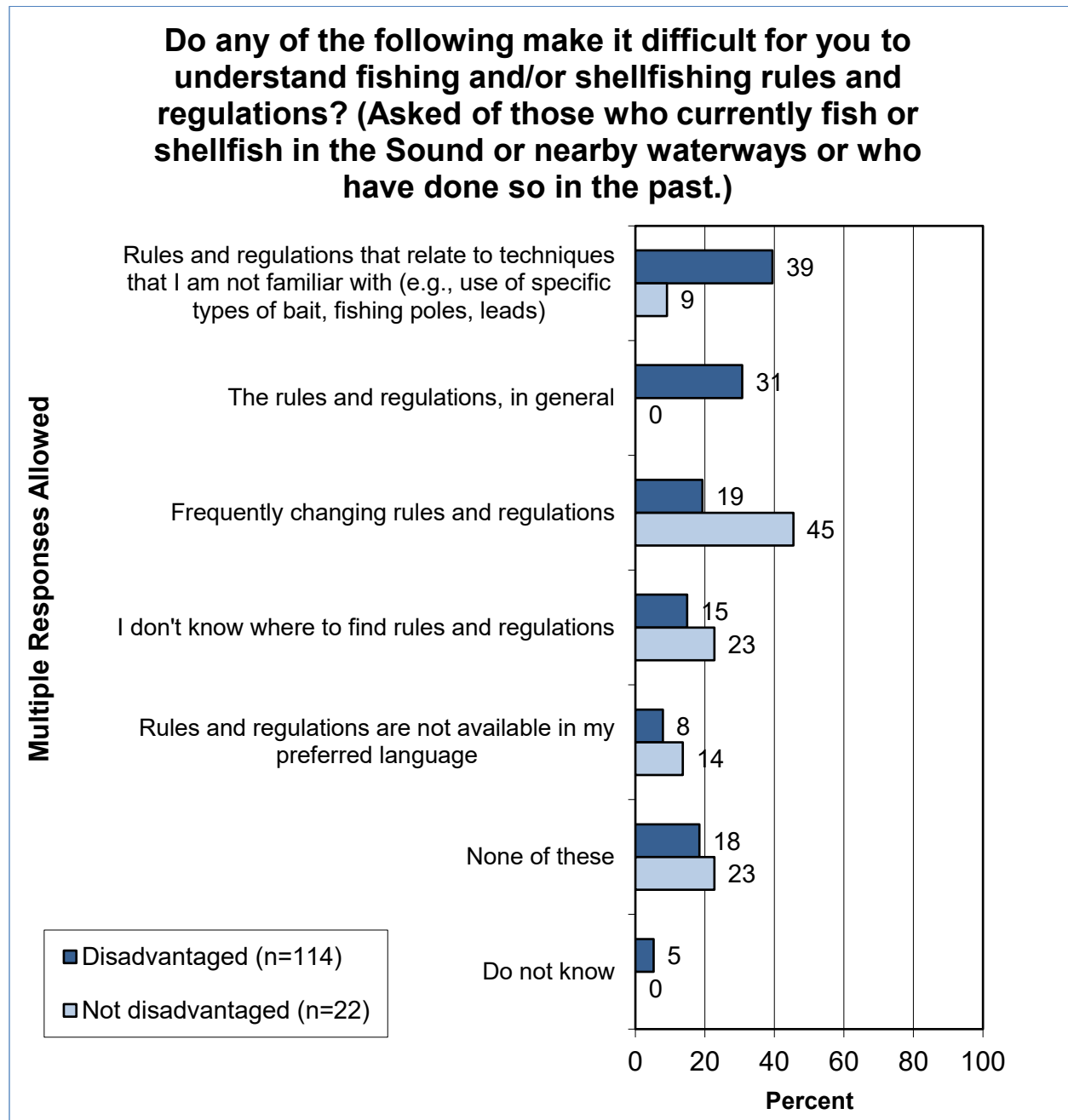
With only 30 disadvantaged respondents who fished for food, note that the state crosstabulation graph presented below has small sample sizes.



In follow-up, those who have health concerns about eating fish or shellfish from the Sound were asked to describe their concerns, in an open-ended question. The concerns of disadvantaged respondents are shown below.

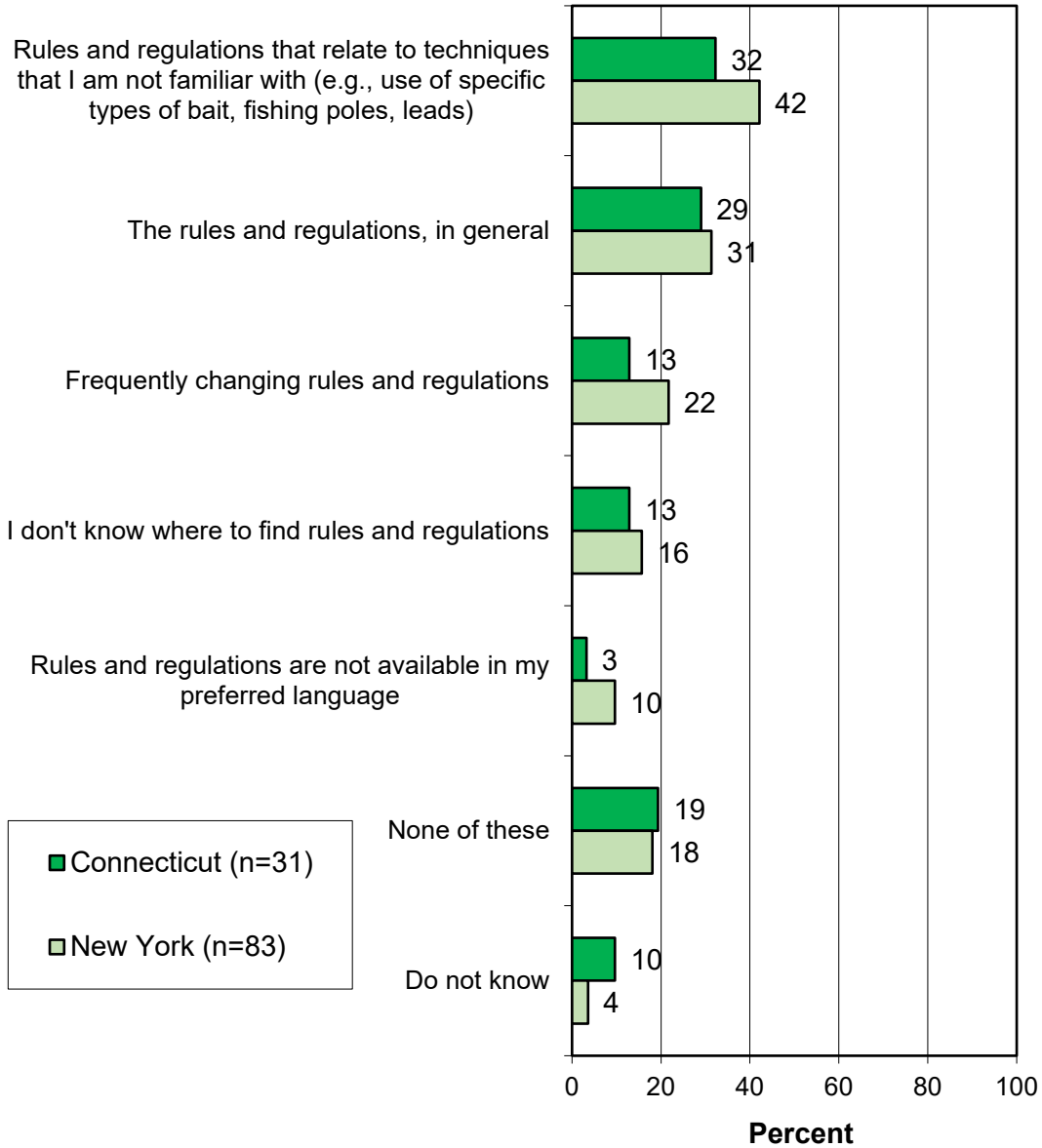
<b>Do you have any health concerns related to eating fish or shellfish you catch in the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways?</b>
DDTs & microplastics
International pollution of sea from other countries
Mercury poison
Safety
Sometimes the water tends to have an odor to it and I don't think that it's healthy enough but I just don't know I'm not sure
The odor there's sometimes comes from the sound itself
Unclean waters

From a list of potential difficulties in understanding fishing regulations, over a third of community members who had fished or currently fish in the Sound stated that fishing regulations that relate to techniques they are unfamiliar with are difficult to understand, while 31% have difficulty with the regulations in general and close to a fifth have difficulty with frequent changes in the regulations.



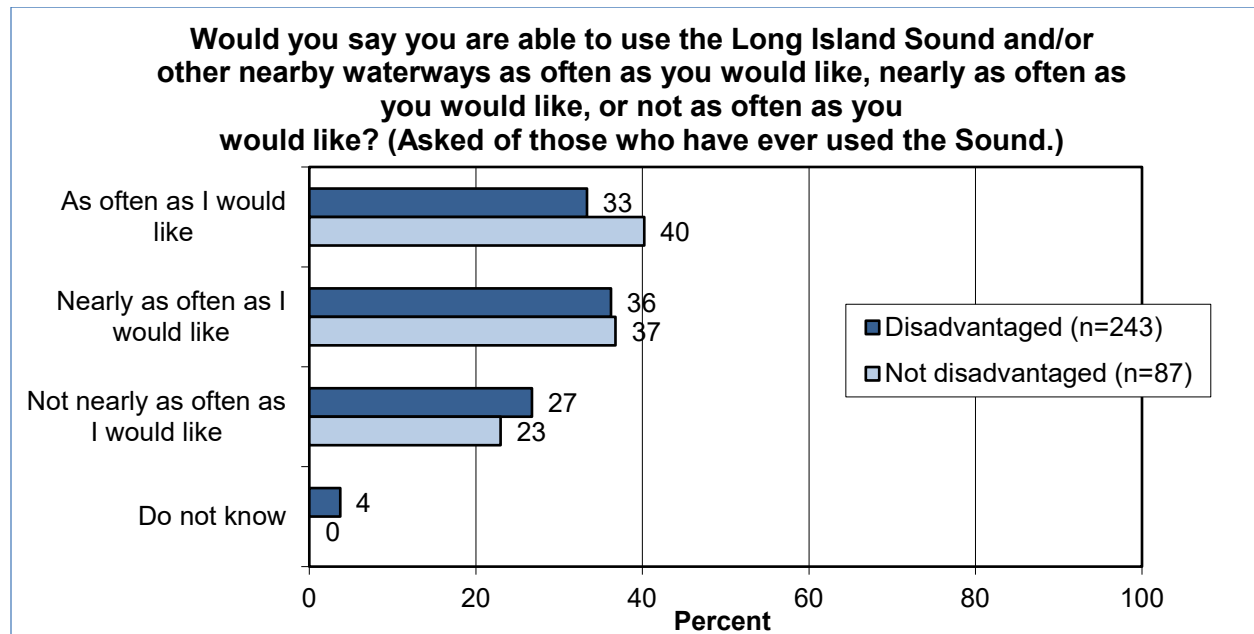
**Do any of the following make it difficult for you to understand fishing and/or shellfishing rules and regulations? (Asked of those who currently fish or shellfish in the Sound or nearby waterways or who have done so in the past.)**

Multiple Responses Allowed

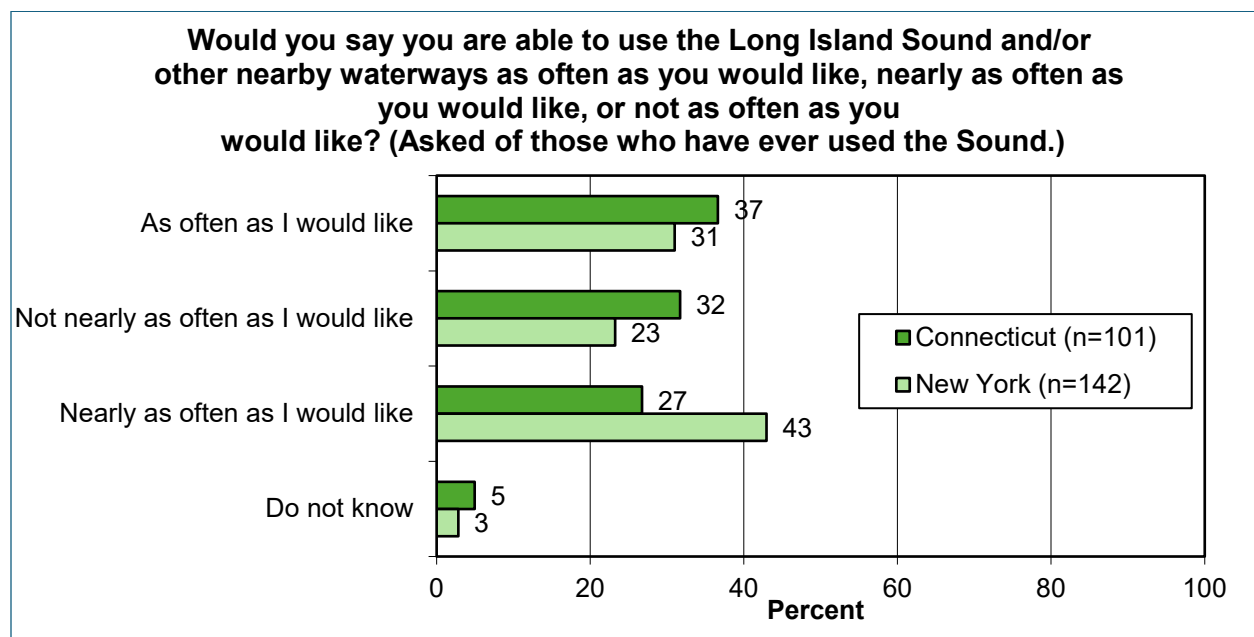


## CONSTRAINTS TO USING THE LONG ISLAND SOUND

Recall that 43% of disadvantaged community members have not ever or do not currently use the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways. The related question below shows that 27% do not use the Sound nearly as often as they would like.

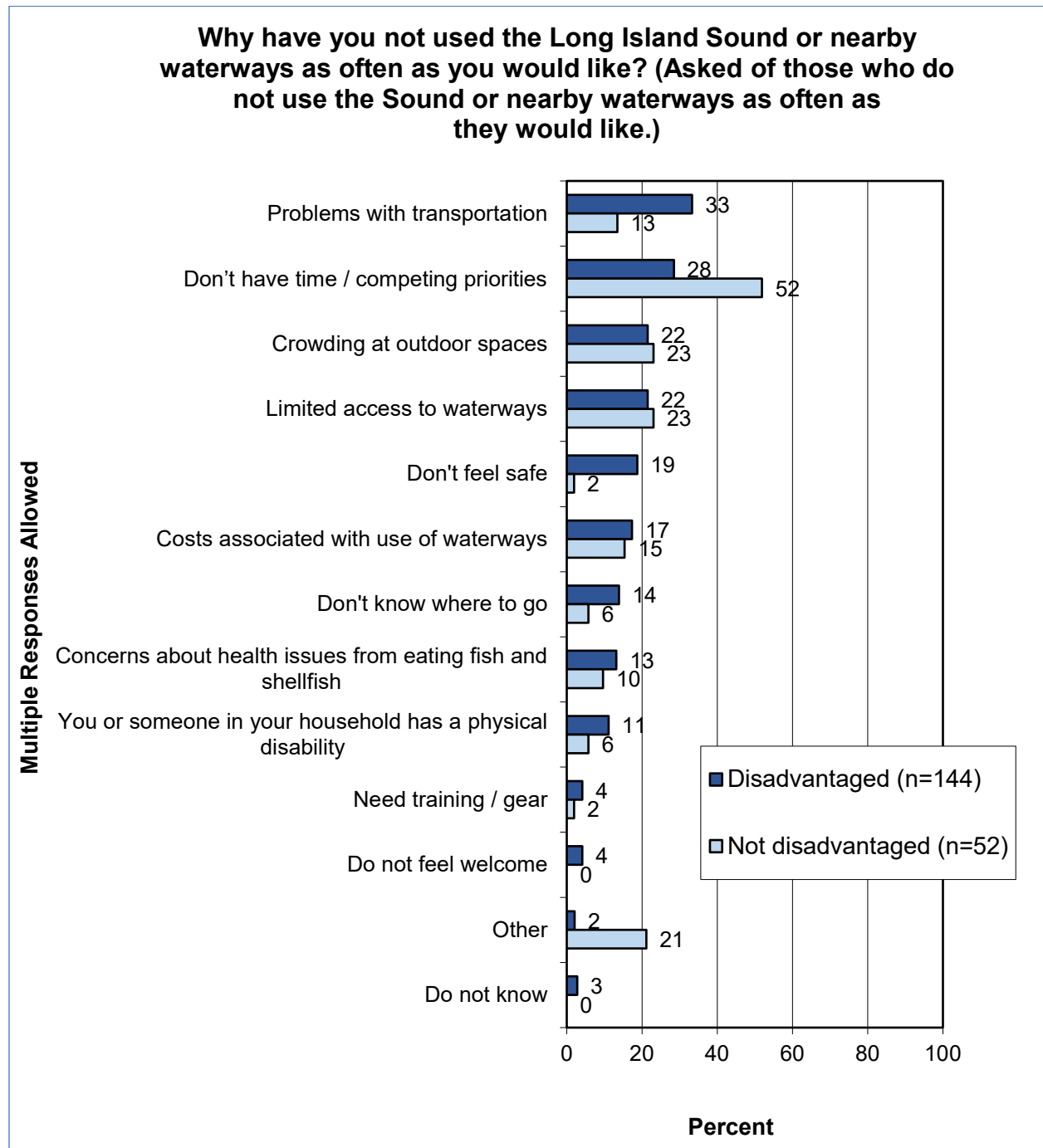


The states do not greatly differ on this question about ability to use the Sound and nearby waterways.



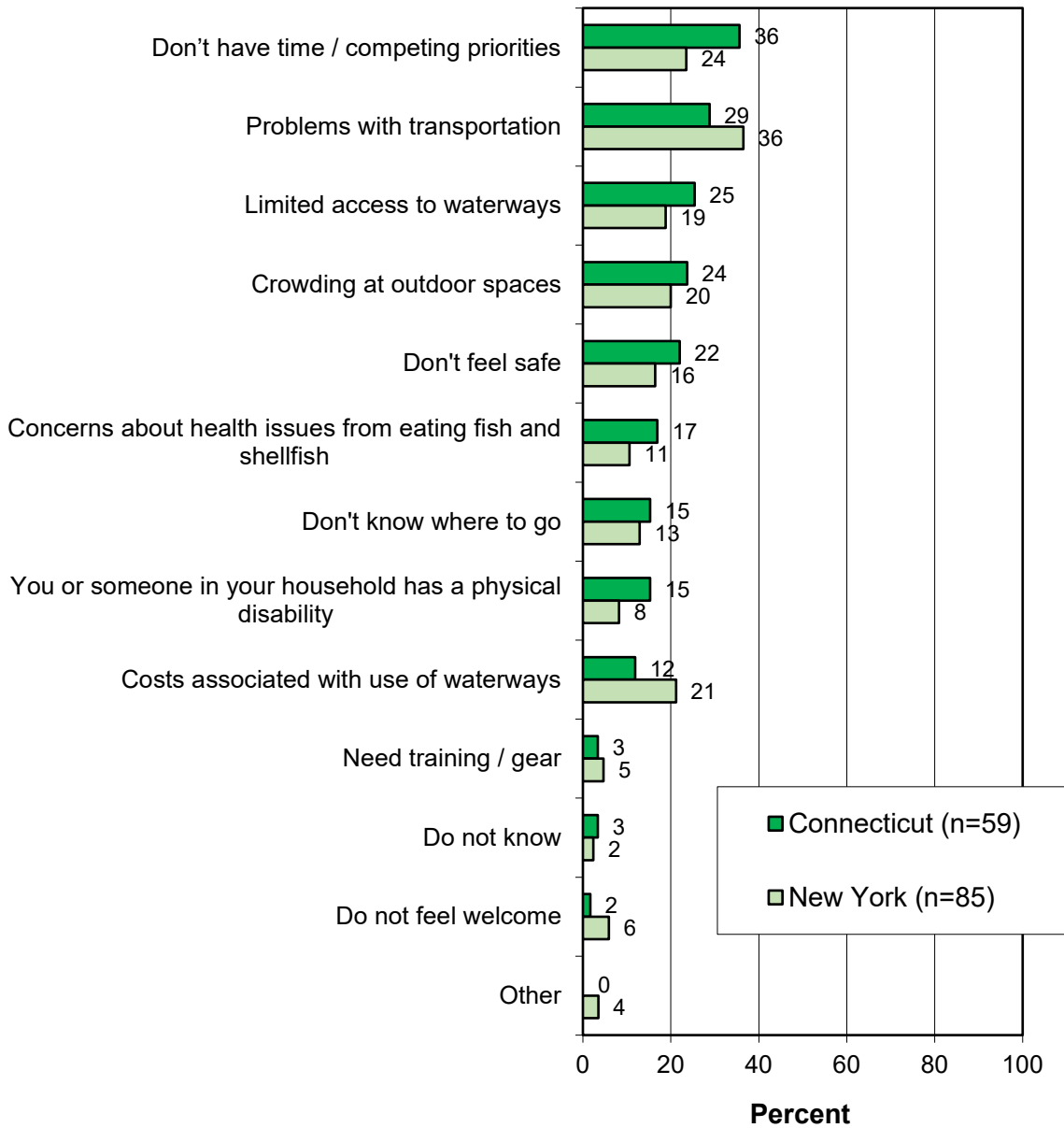


From a list of constraints to using the Sound, the most common constraint among those disadvantaged respondents who do not use it at all or as often as they would like is problems with transportation, followed by a lack of time or having competing priorities, crowding, limited access, and a feeling of being unsafe. The full list is shown. Lack of time is a much larger constraint for non-disadvantaged community members. State results are included, as well.



**Why have you not used the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways as often as you would like? (Asked of those who do not use the Sound or nearby waterways as often as they would like.)**

Multiple Responses Allowed

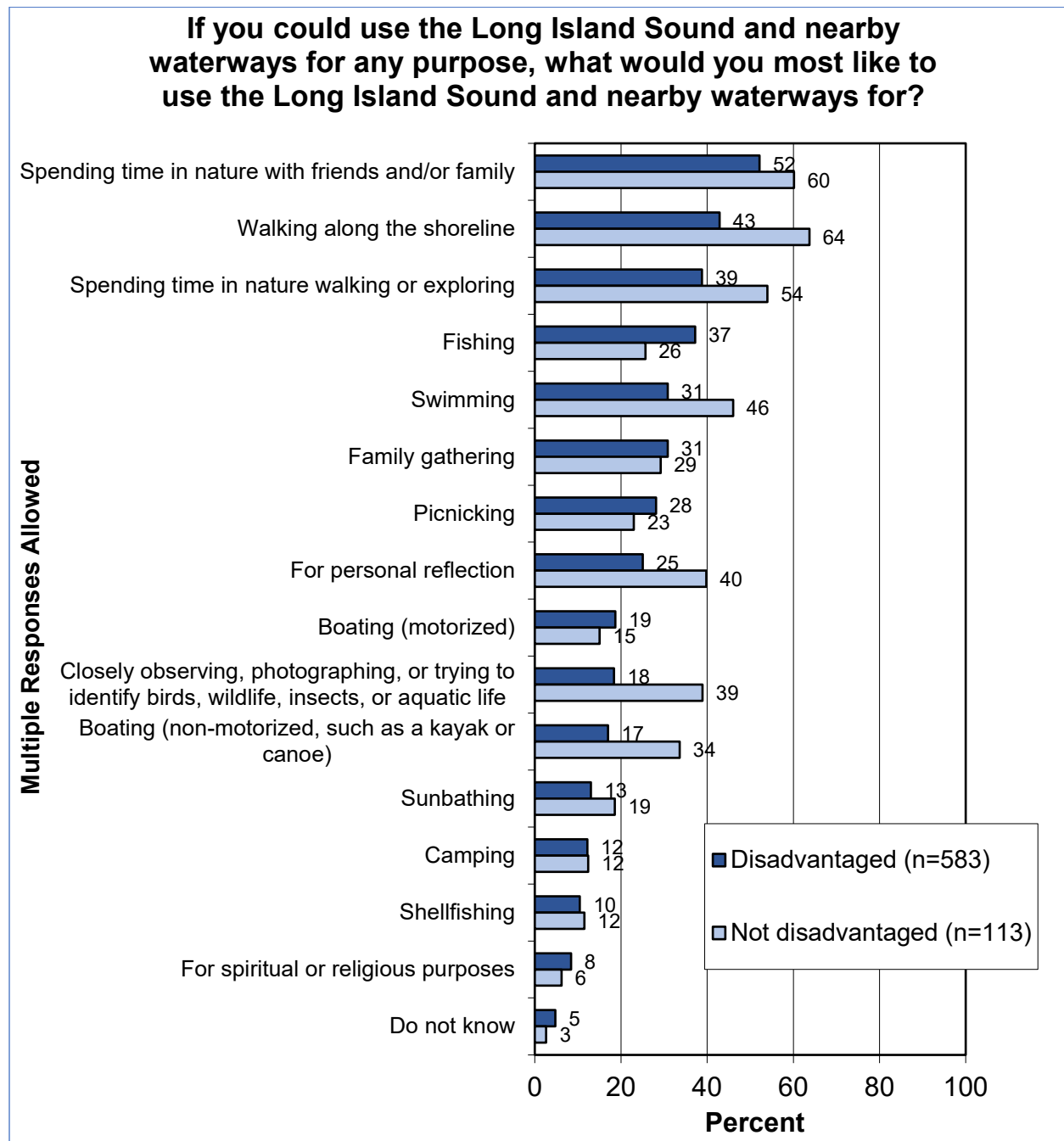


Those who do not feel welcome to use the Sound stated their reasons, in an open-ended question. Note that no non-disadvantaged respondent indicated that they do not feel welcome to use the Sound. (This was the only follow-up question regarding reasons for not using the Sound.)

<b>Are there any specific reasons why you don't feel welcome to use the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways?</b>
Because I don't live in the area
I do not feel welcome because there are too many private areas
I don't really know
I get a weird feeling from them
It's because the guards' laws and policies that limit access to long island sound waterway
Many Northshore beaches are private or to residents only. Makes me feel discriminated if i do go around
More public access to waterways. Where towns do not have full control of the parks. As well as private properties taking away more access to the water and shoreline on the Northshore. As well as building jetties for fishing
Residence requirements, parking unavailability, casual racism from other beachgoers.

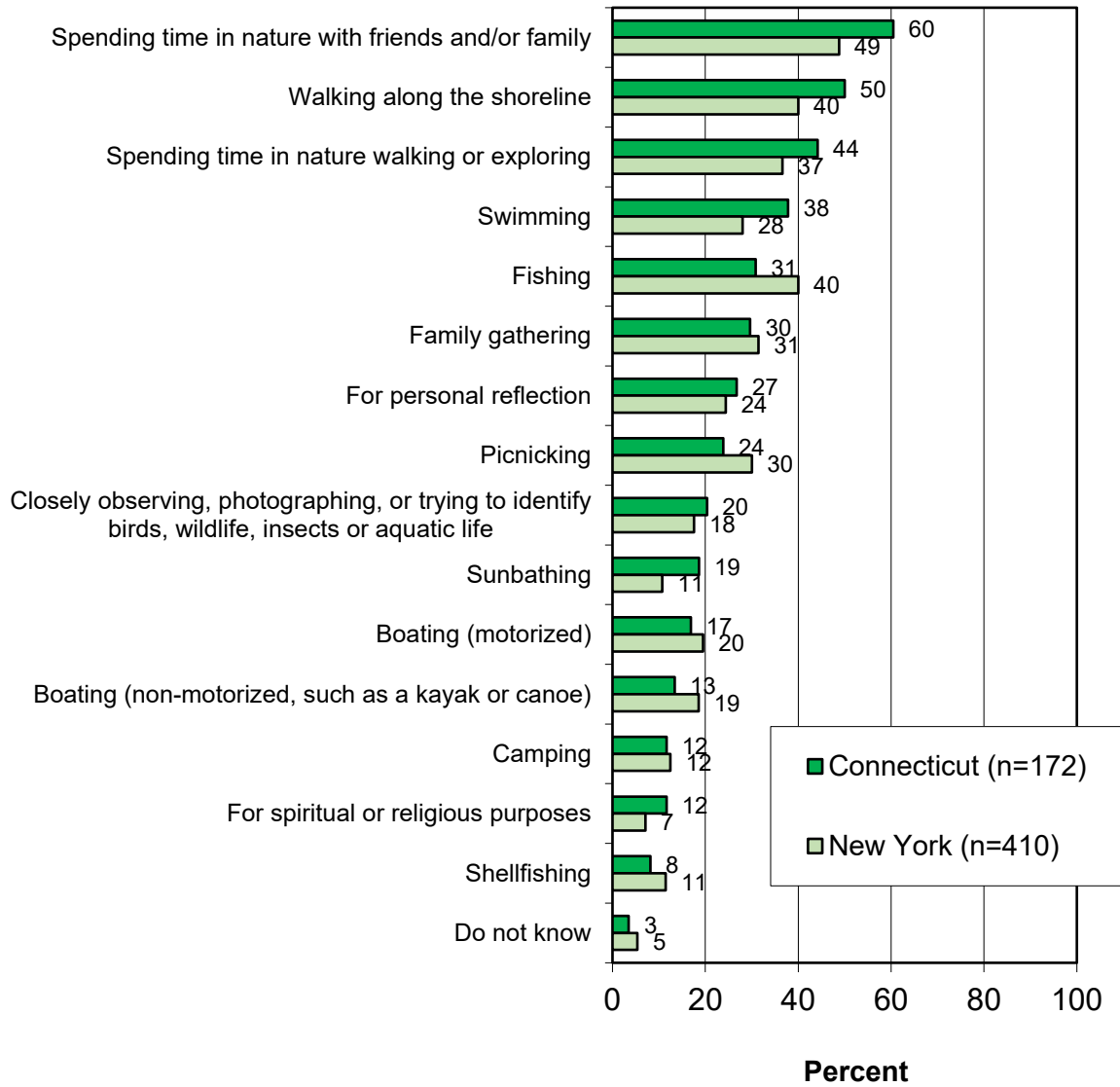
### IDEAL USE OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND

If community members could use the Long Island Sound and surrounding waterways for any purpose, the top preferences (from a provided list) would be to spend time in nature with friends and family, to walk along the shoreline, and to spend time in nature walking or exploring. A second tier of activities includes fishing, swimming, family gatherings, picnicking, and personal reflection. The full list of responses is shown below, followed by the state crosstabulation.

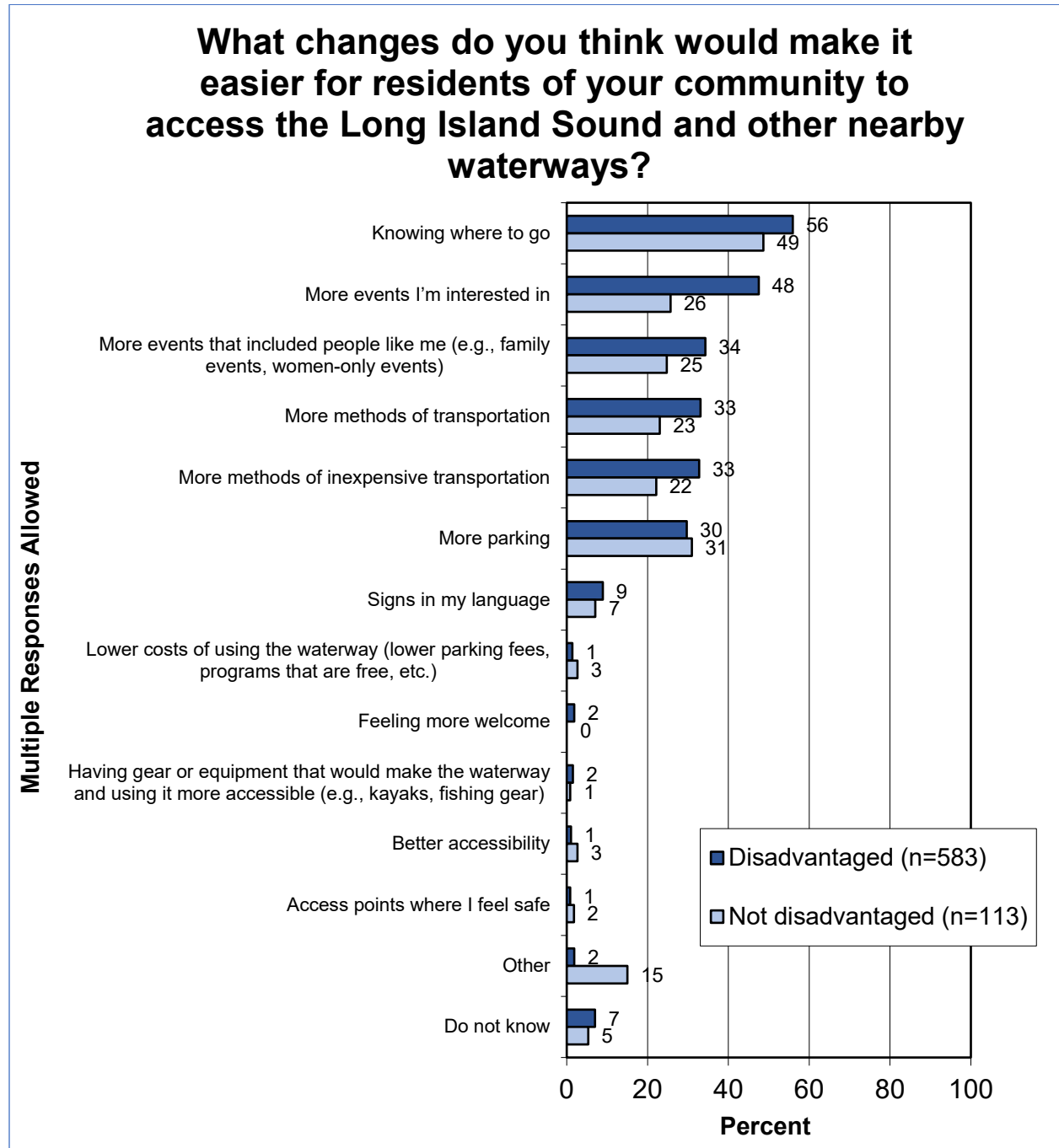


**If you could use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for any purpose, what would you most like to use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for?**

Multiple Responses Allowed

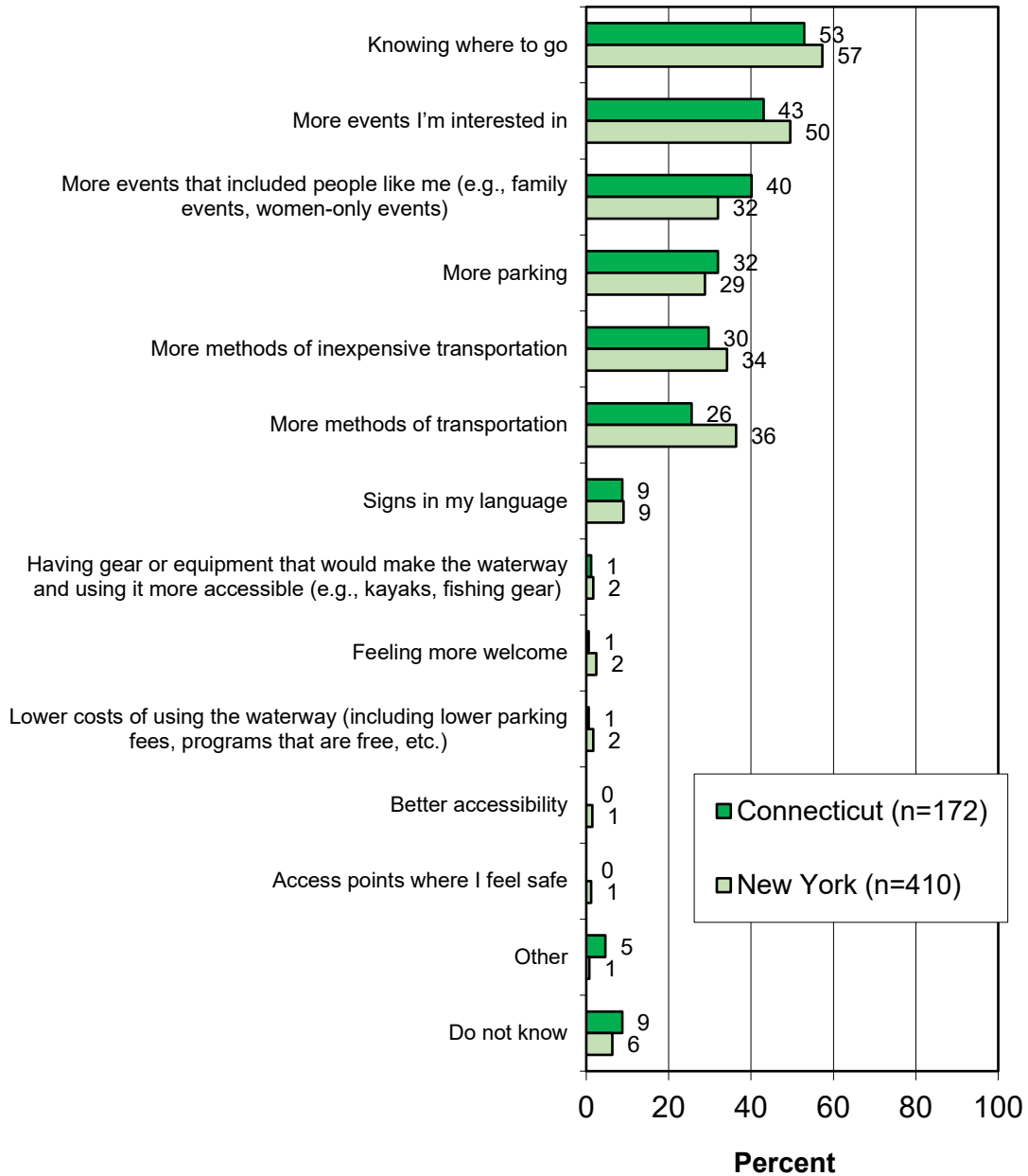


When asked which changes they thought would make it easier for residents of their community to access the Sound and other nearby waterways (from a list of potential changes), residents most often said that knowing where to go and events that they are interested in would make it easier to access the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways.



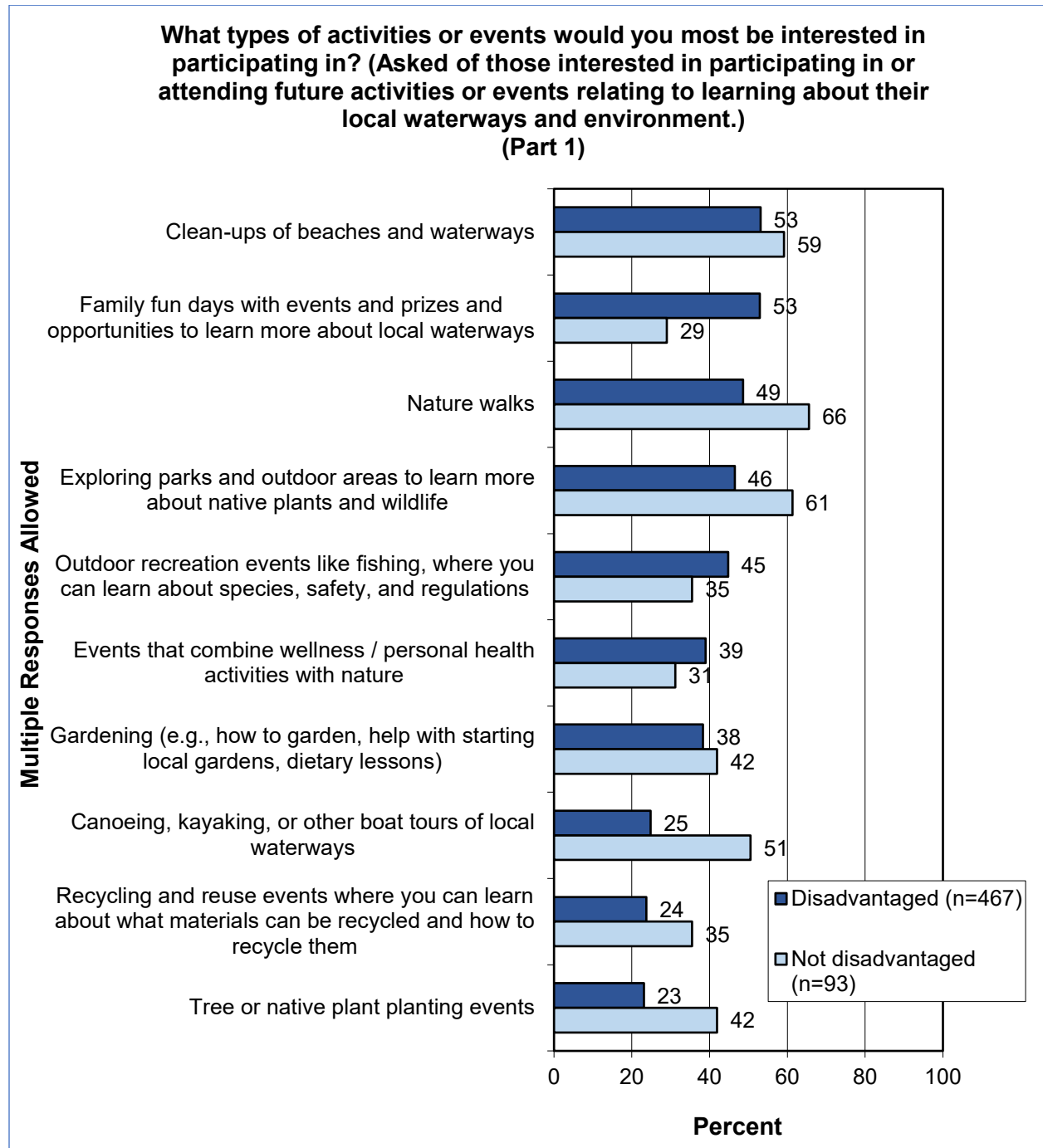
### What changes do you think would make it easier for residents of your community to access the Long Island Sound and other nearby waterways?

Multiple Responses Allowed



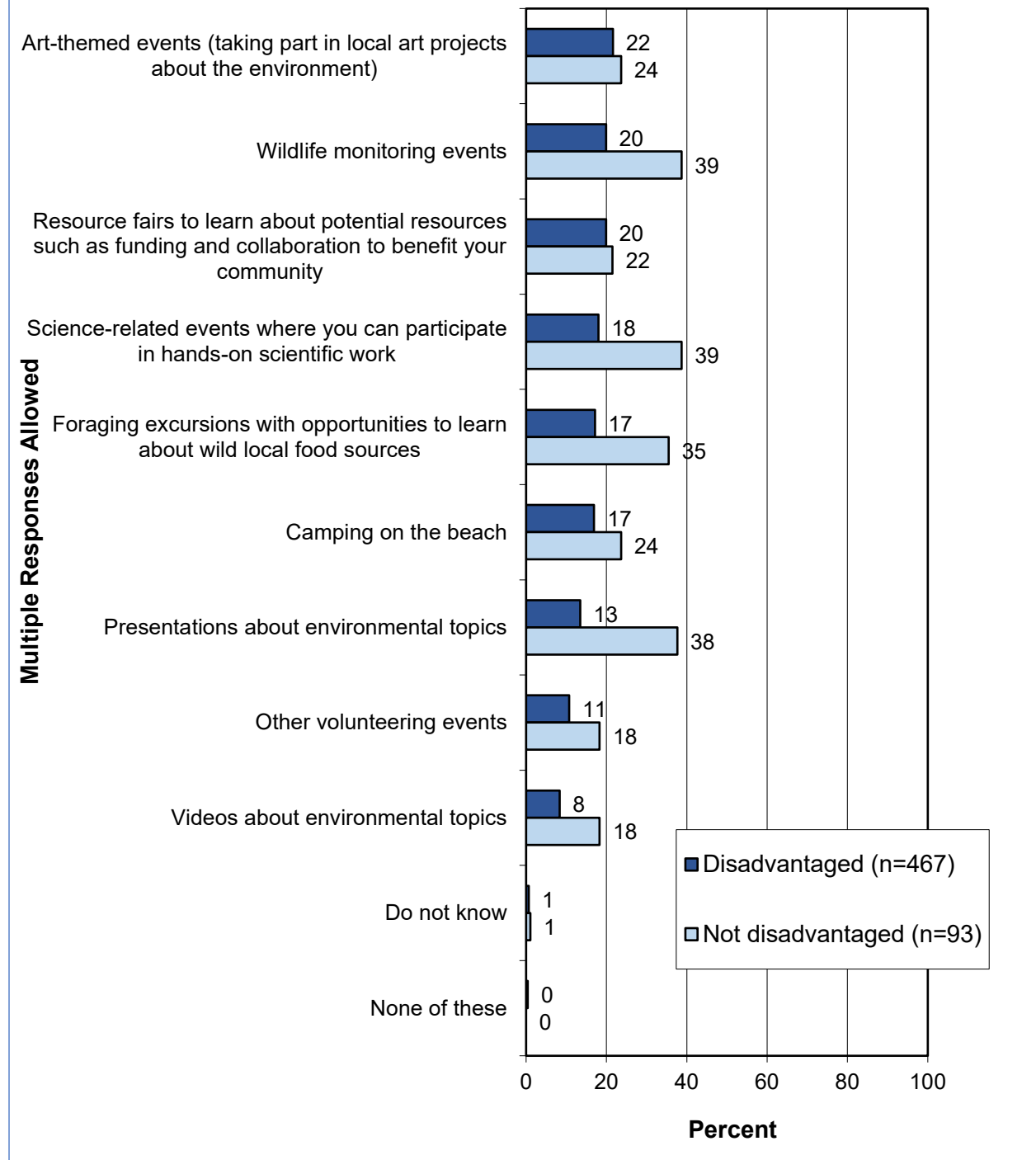
## PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS

From a list of activities or events related to the Sound, the top choices of interest to community members are beach and waterway clean-ups; family fun days with events and prizes and opportunities to learn more about local waterways; nature walks; and exploration of outdoor areas to learn about native plants and wildlife. The full list is shown.

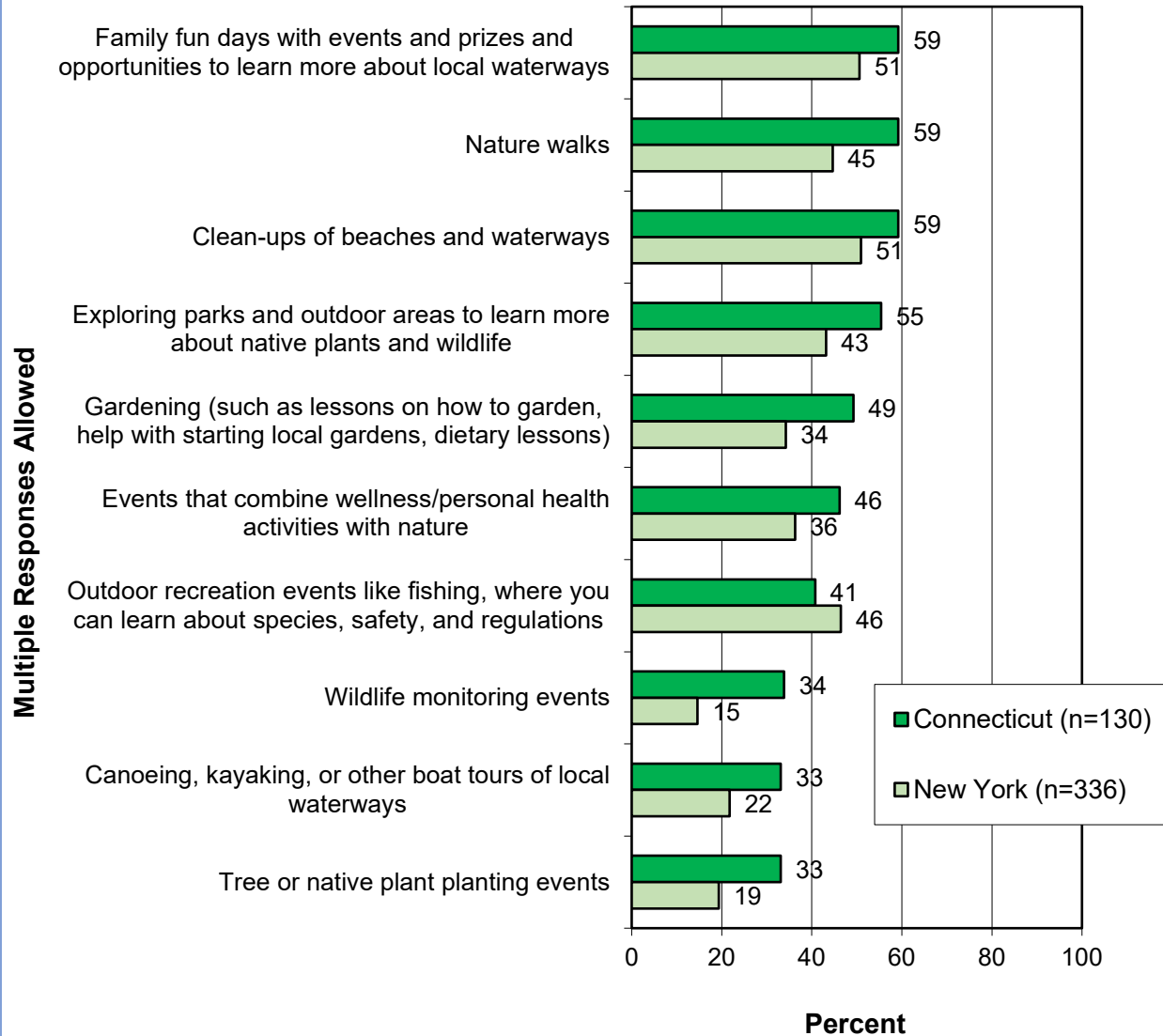




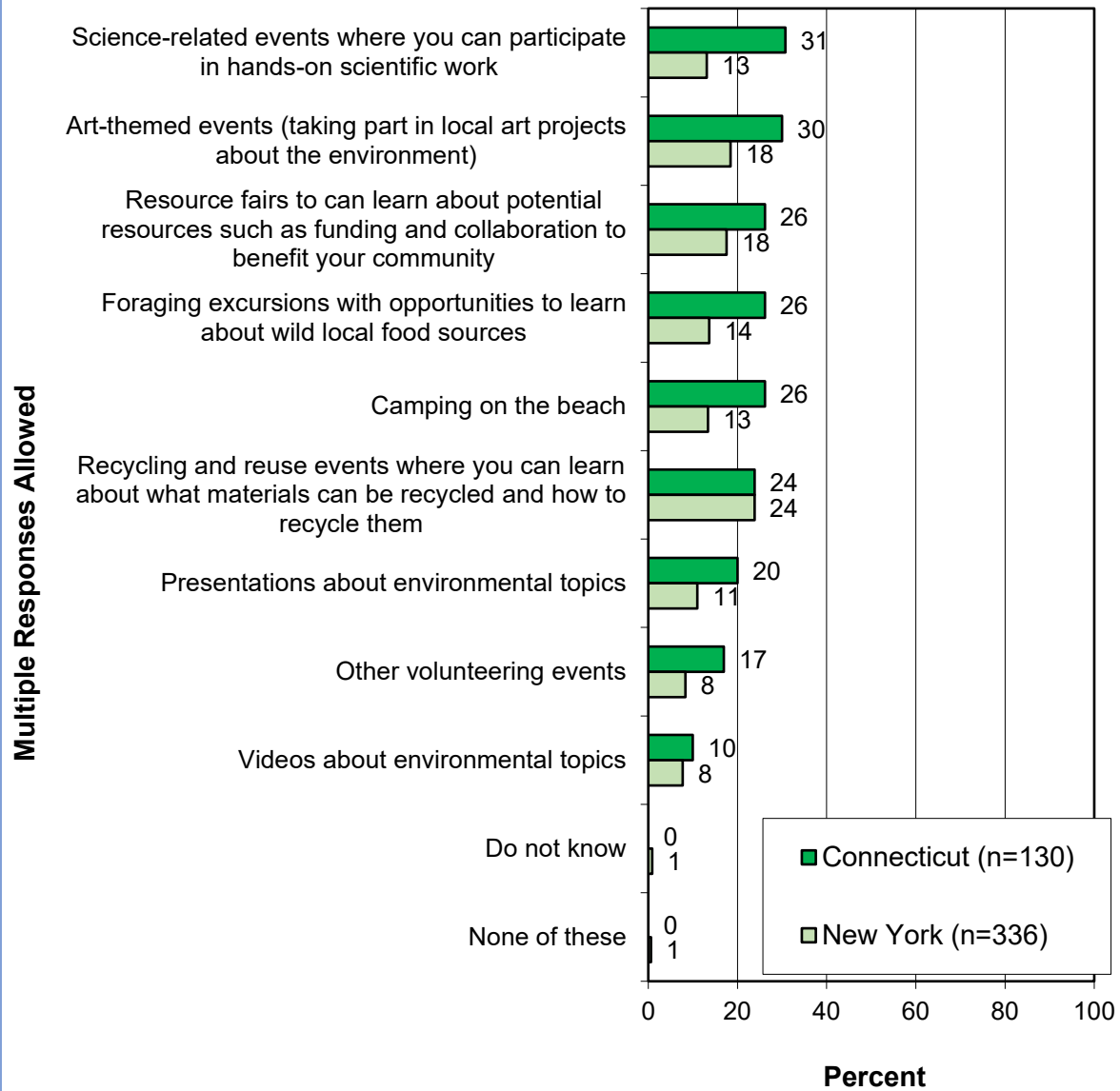
**What types of activities or events would you most be interested in participating in? (Asked of those interested in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about their local waterways and environment.)**  
**(Part 2)**



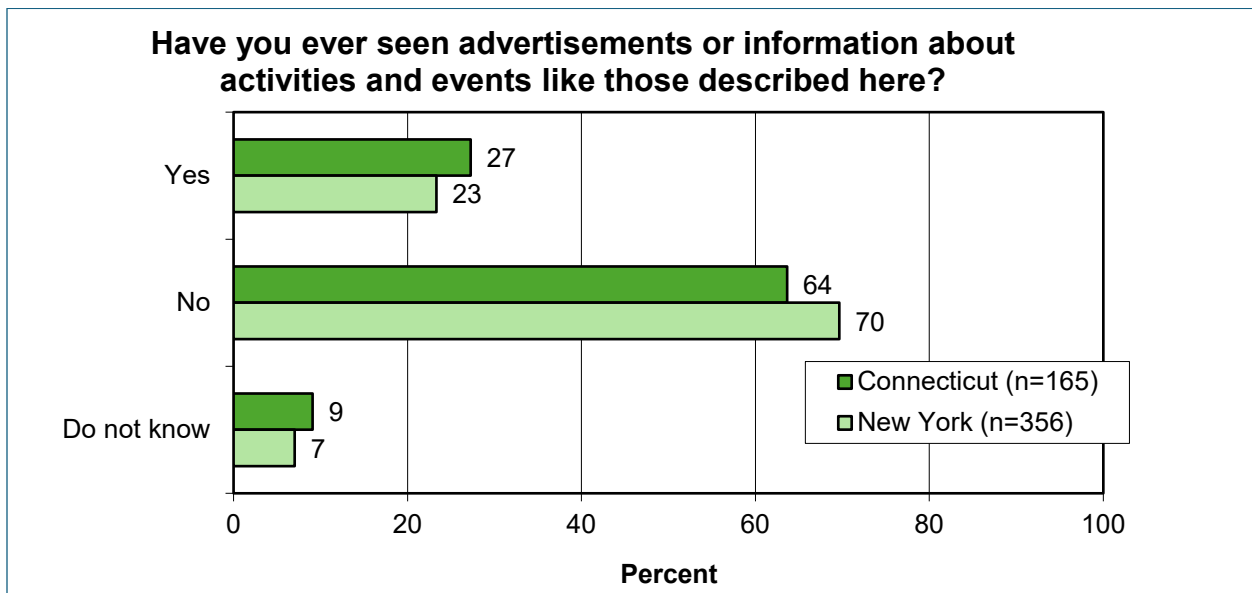
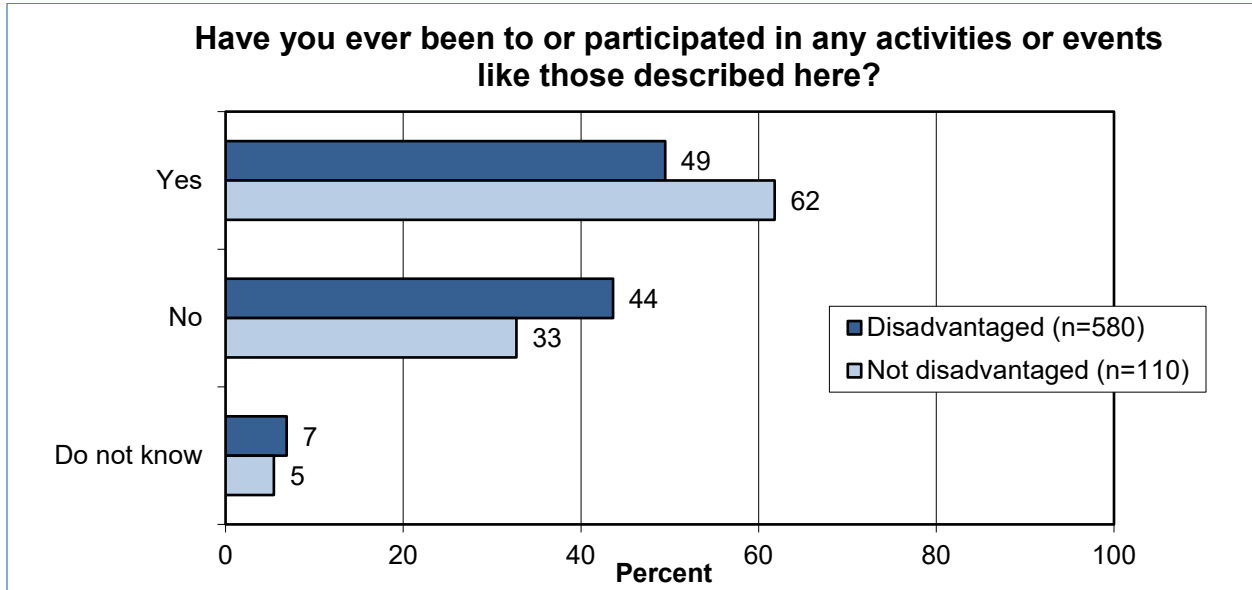
**What types of activities or events would you most be interested in participating in? (Asked of those interested in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about their local waterways and environment.)**  
**(Part 1)**



**What types of activities or events would you most be interested in participating in? (Asked of those interested in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about their local waterways and environment.)**  
**(Part 2)**

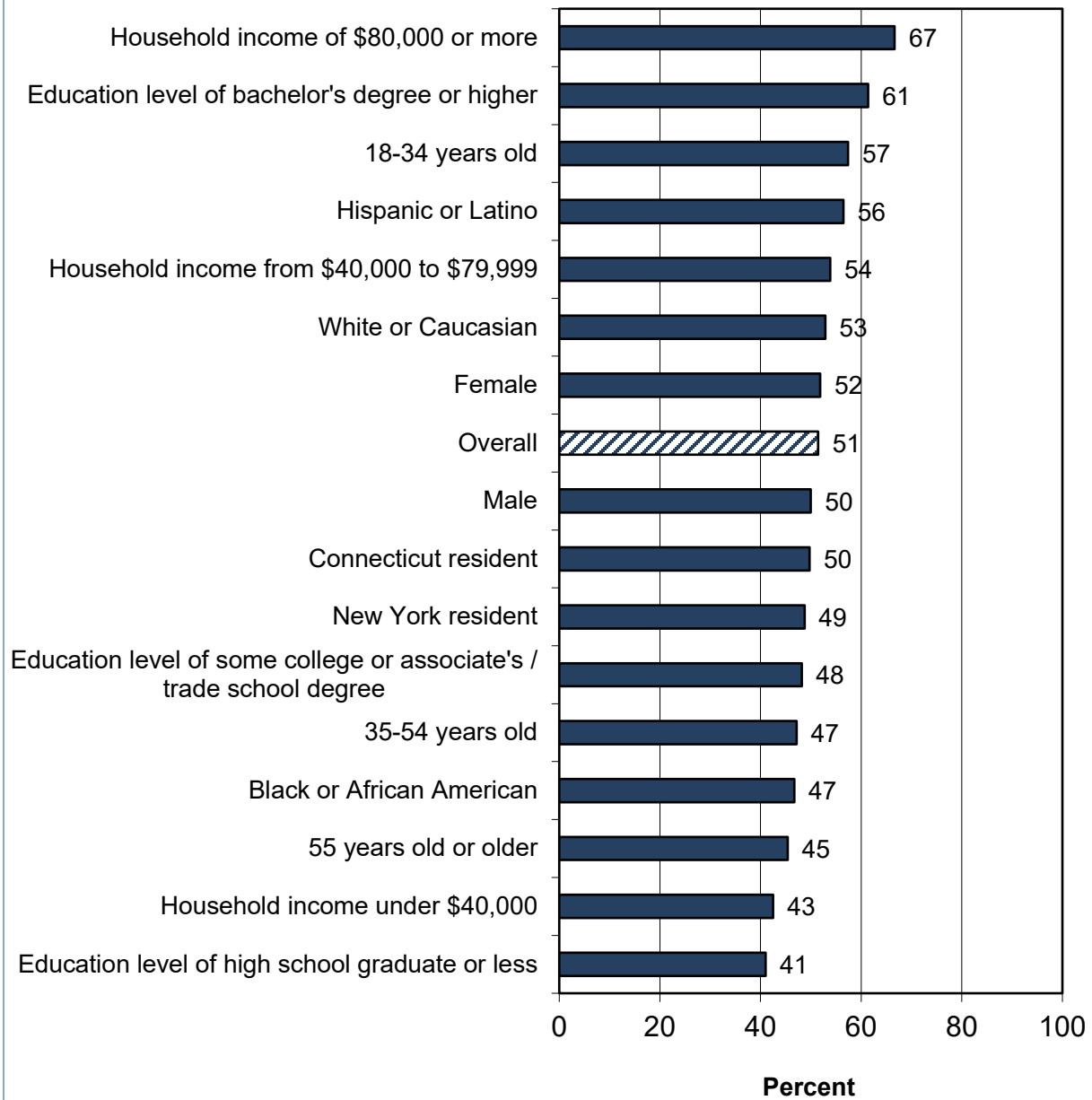


A slight majority of disadvantaged community members have participated in water-related or environmental events like those listed in the previous question, with participation higher among non-disadvantaged community members. The states do not greatly differ from one another.

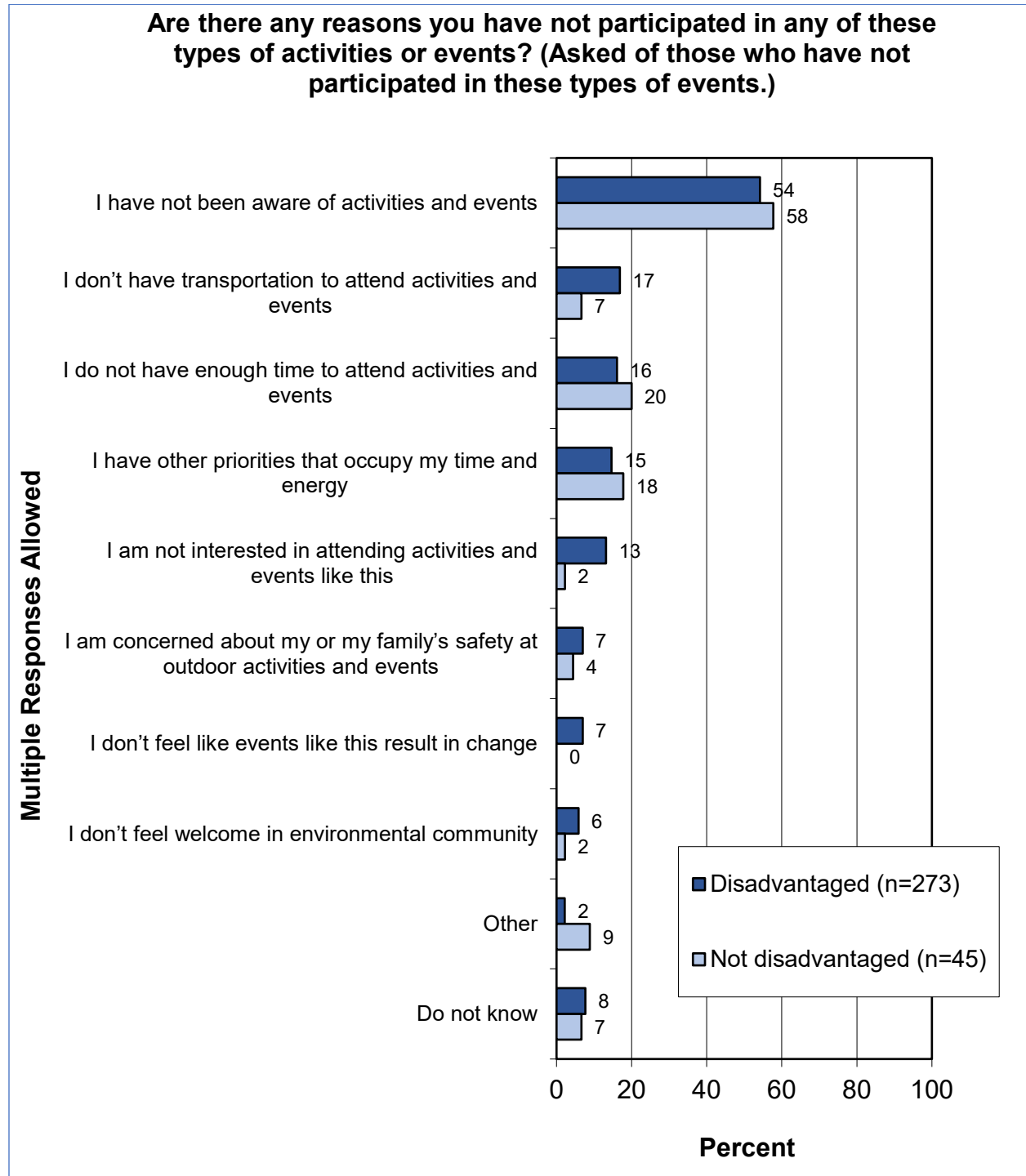


The groups who most often participated in events related to the Sound include those in the top income bracket, those in the top education bracket, and younger residents.

**Percent of each of the following groups who have ever been to or participated in any water-related or environmental activities or events related to Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways:**

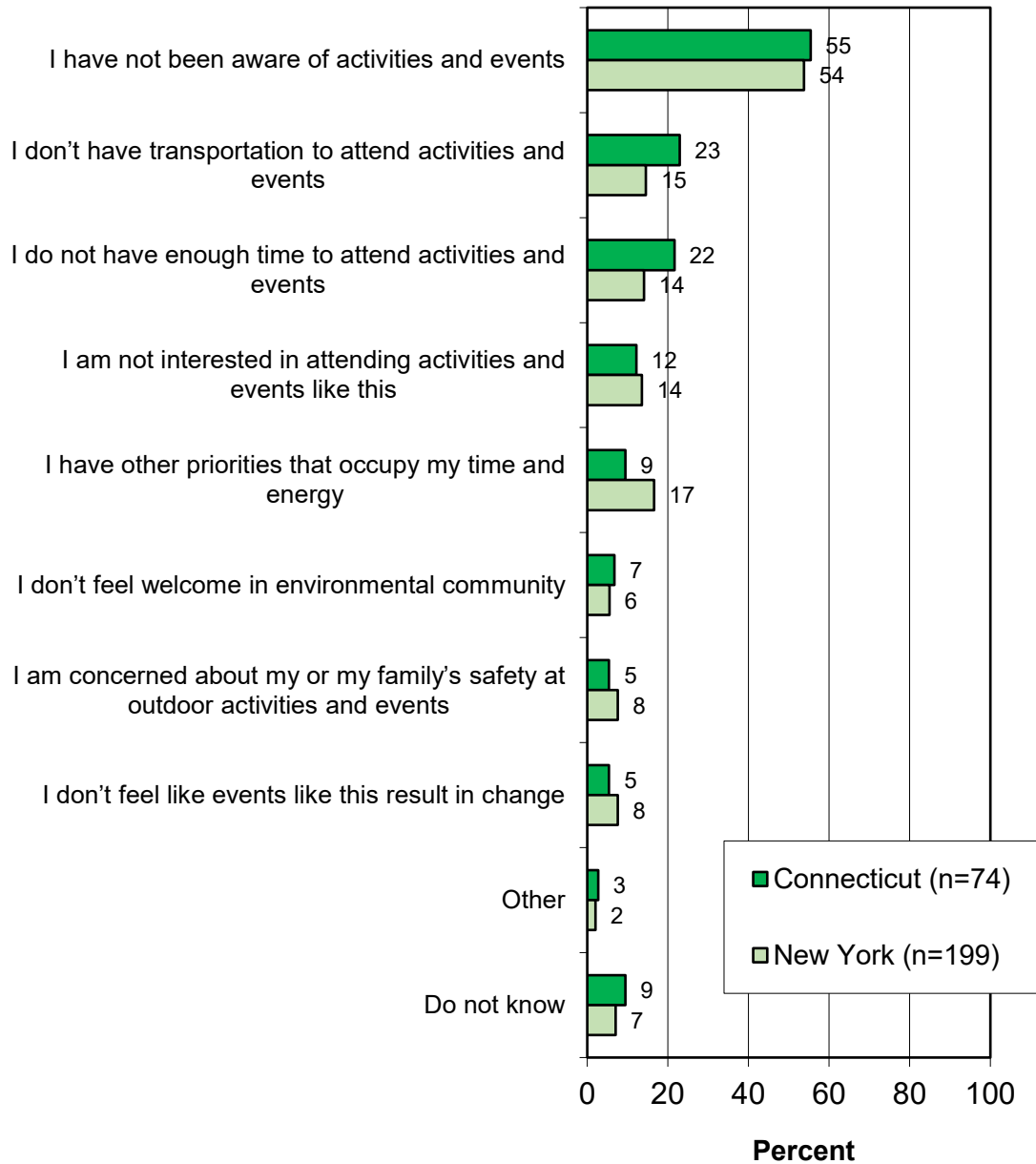


Among those who have not participated in the previously listed types of events, the top selection by far from the listed reasons is lack of awareness. Responses are generally similar between the groups and between the two states.



**Are there any reasons you have not participated in any of these types of activities or events? (Asked of those who have not participated in these types of events.)**

Multiple Responses Allowed



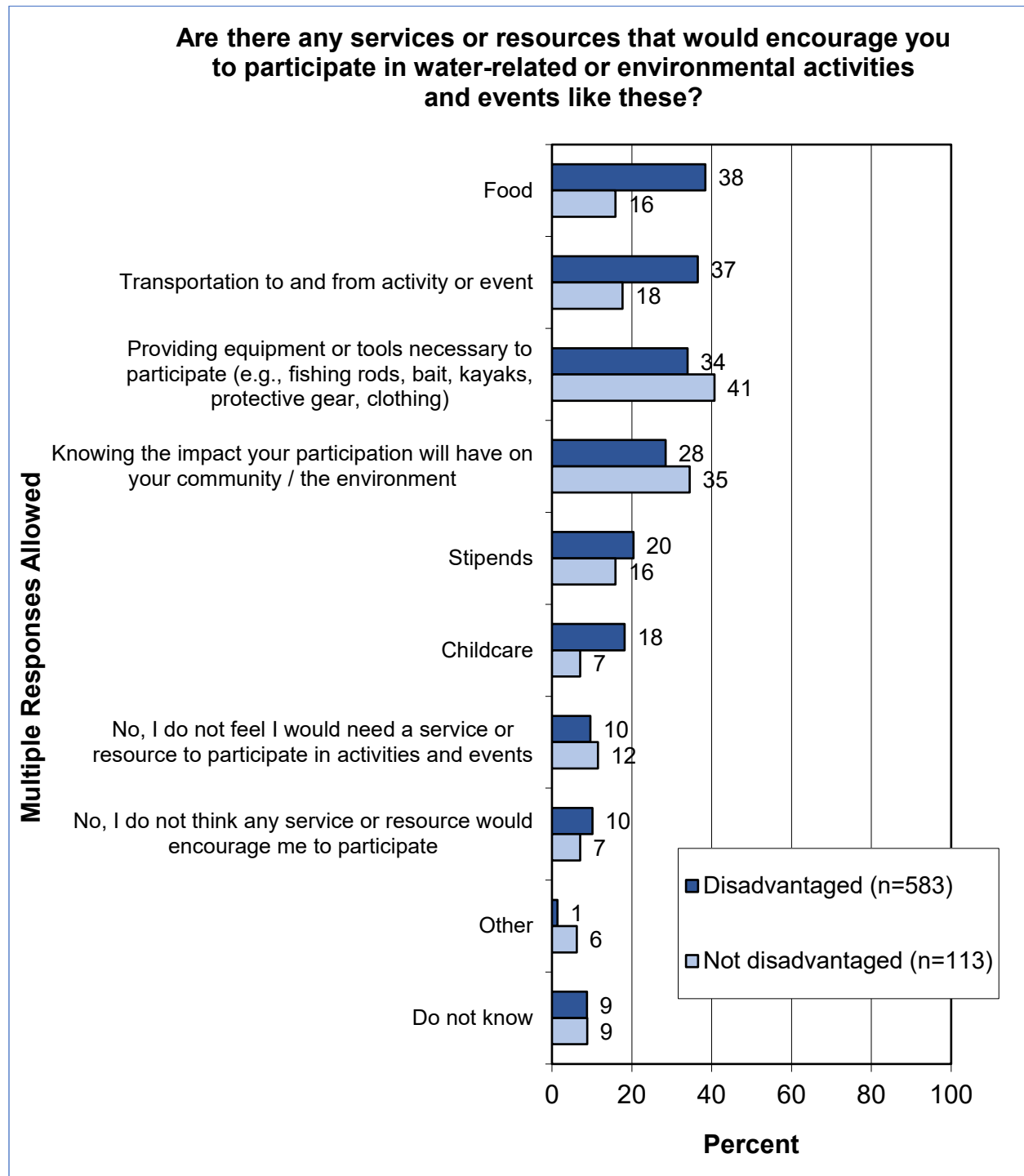
The project team were interested in following up on two reasons why disadvantaged respondents have not participated in outdoor or environmental events related to the Sound: not feeling welcome in the environmental community and not feeling safe.

<b>You indicated that you don't feel welcome in the environmental community. What changes, if any, would make these events feel more welcoming?</b>
Because some people judge by the color of our skins
Clean up the community
I am black, and this sport is usually played by white people
I don't have fresh air
I don't like the feeling I get when I go
I feel like races of people need to blend together and not just stick by themselves. Ex I lived by the rockaway in queens one time and white people stay to themselves and there is hardly any poc there, it makes you feel weird to even approach them(white people) because they tend to stick to them selves
Idk
If they had events that was featured in diversity I would feel more welcome to attend but most of the time this isn't the case
More security
Nada
People need to accept everyone for who they are.
These communities not feel welcoming. They gave signs that say residents only

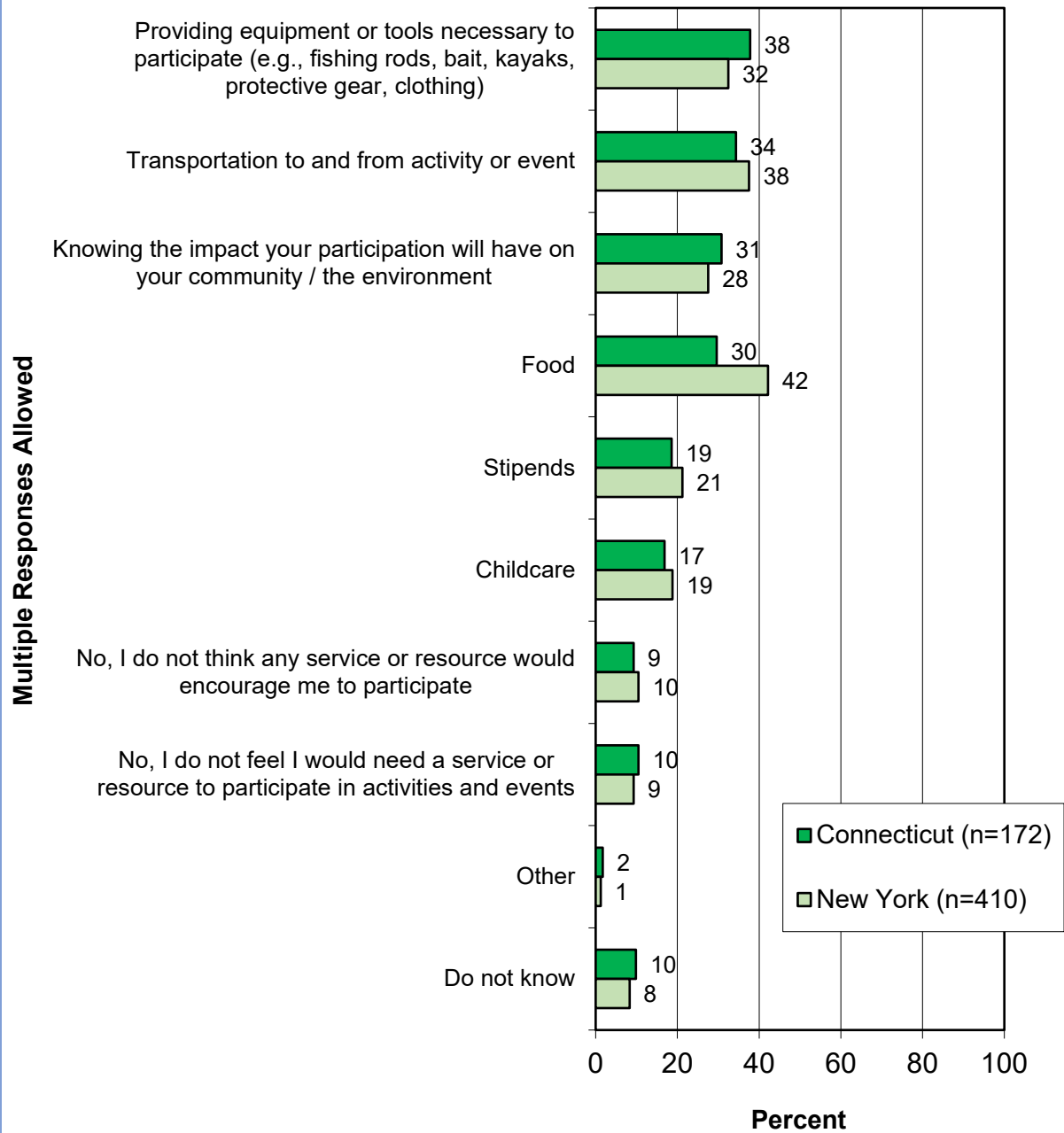
<b>You indicated that you are concerned about your or your family's safety at outdoor activities and events What are the reasons you are concerned about safety at outdoor activities and events? (Disadvantaged)</b>
Because crime in my area is at all time high
Because of gun violence
Clima seguridad
crowd control and pollution in the environment
Fear of mass shootings
Health wise ..to many viruses since covid
I'm concerned about COVID-19, and those that have it
It's not safe as people are not civil
Killing and shooting
No fresh air
No signs stating stay out of the water pollution her as well
The reasons I'm concerned about any outdoor activities is because the weather plays a big role on outdoor activities.
The safety personally wellbeing society as a whole
the surrounding area and no safety patrols
things can happen at any time and always be aware of surroundings cause u don't know no one
To crowed and to me family
To many people scared of getting covid again
Water quality
Well right now because of the different bacteria that that being found in the water and the different shock infestation that they be having at the beaches, that's why I'm concerned for my family, safety and minds



The survey asked about services or resources that would encourage participation in water-related or environmental activities and events. The top selections among the listed encouragements are food, transportation, the provision of equipment or tools needed for participation, and knowledge of the beneficial impacts. Food and transportation are particularly important for disadvantaged residents. State results are included.

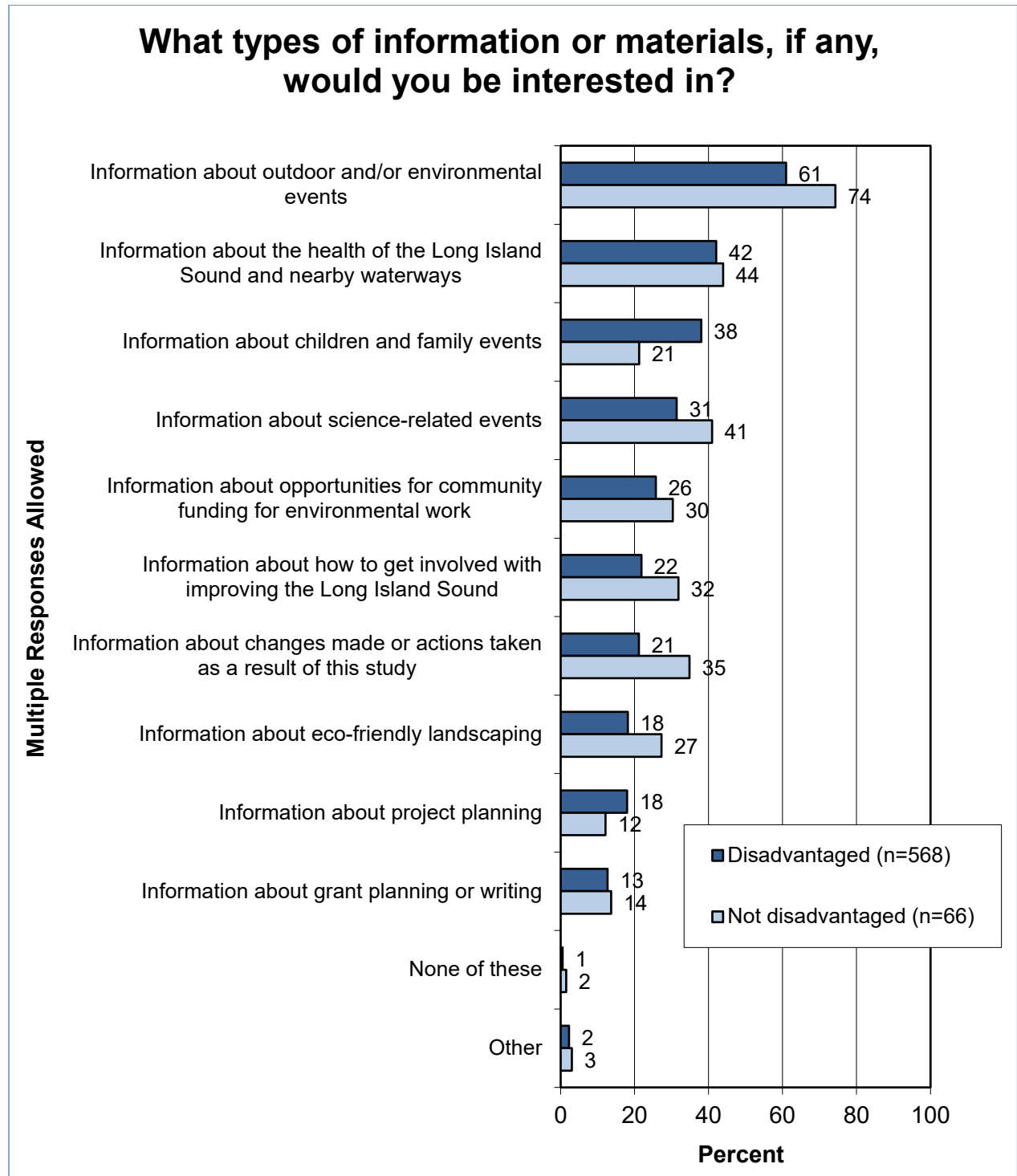


**Are there any services or resources that would encourage you to participate in water-related or environmental activities and events like these?**

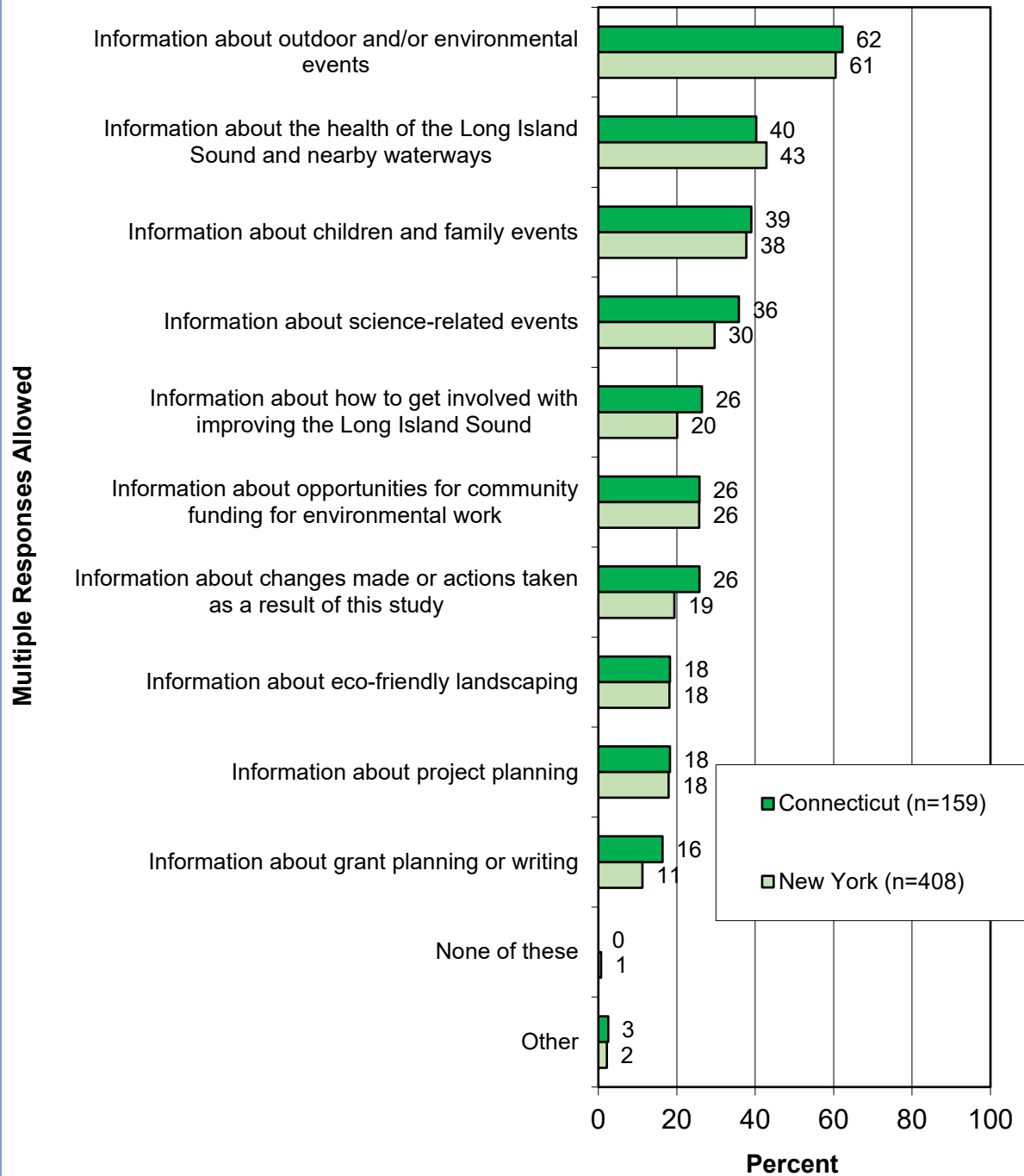


## OUTREACH AND INFORMATION

A majority of disadvantaged community members (61%) are interested in information about outdoor or environmental events. Otherwise, about a third or more are interested in information about the health of the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways, youth and family events, and science-related events. The states are largely the same on this.

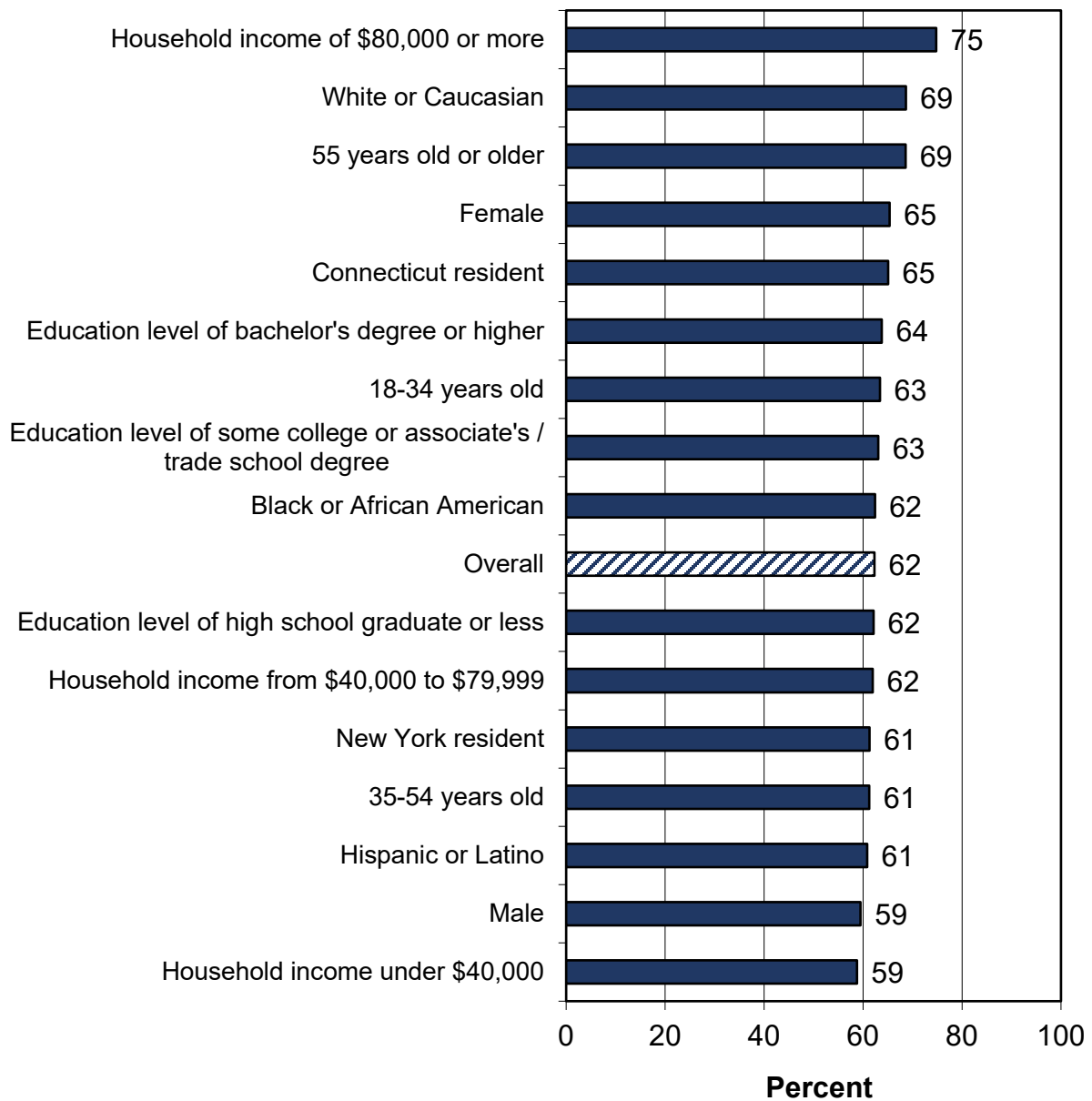


### What types of information or materials, if any, would you be interested in?



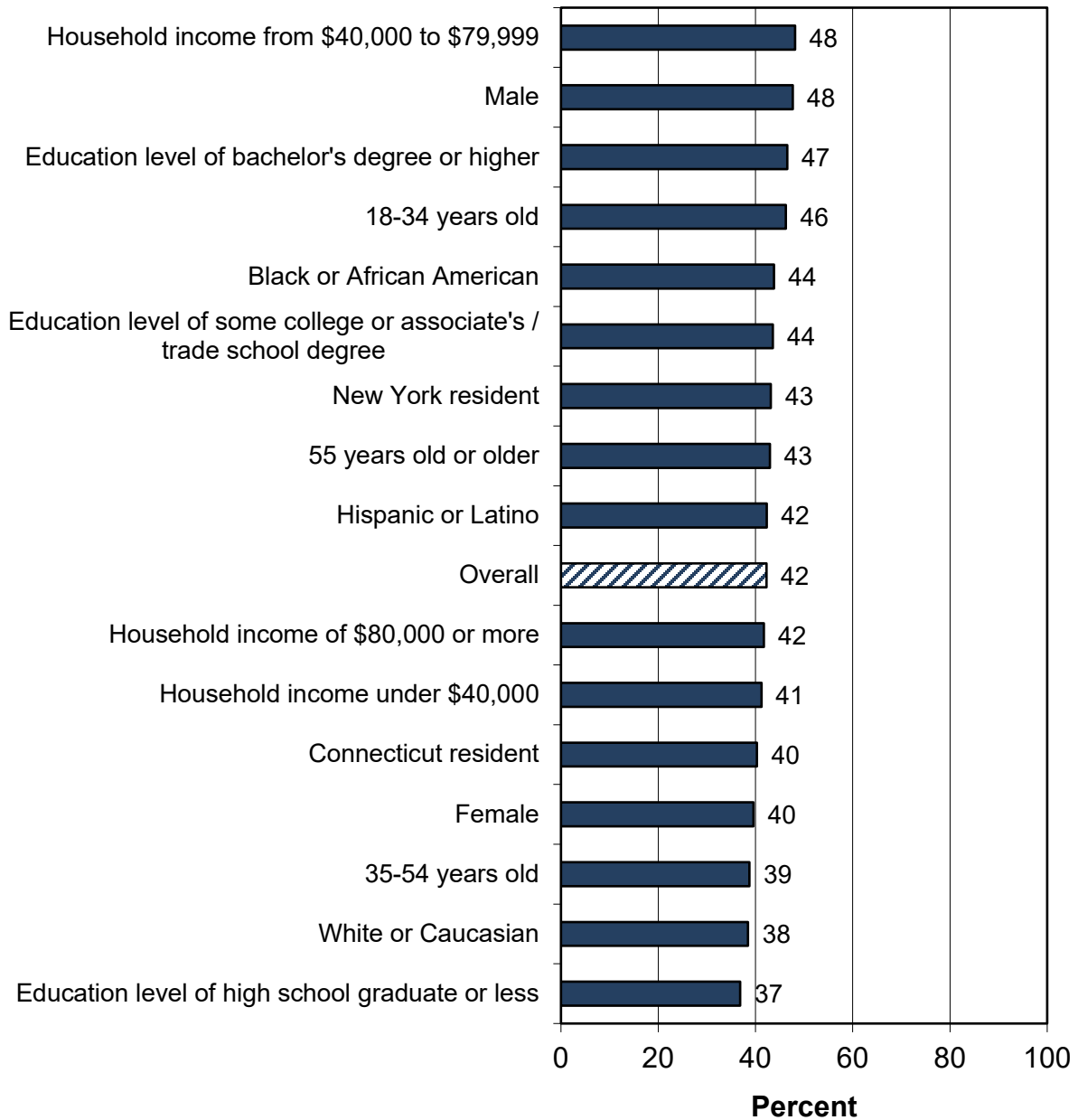
The groups most associated with being interested in information about outdoor or environmental events are those with an income of \$80,000 or more, Whites, and older community members.

**Percent of each of the following groups who are interested in information about outdoor and/or environmental events:**

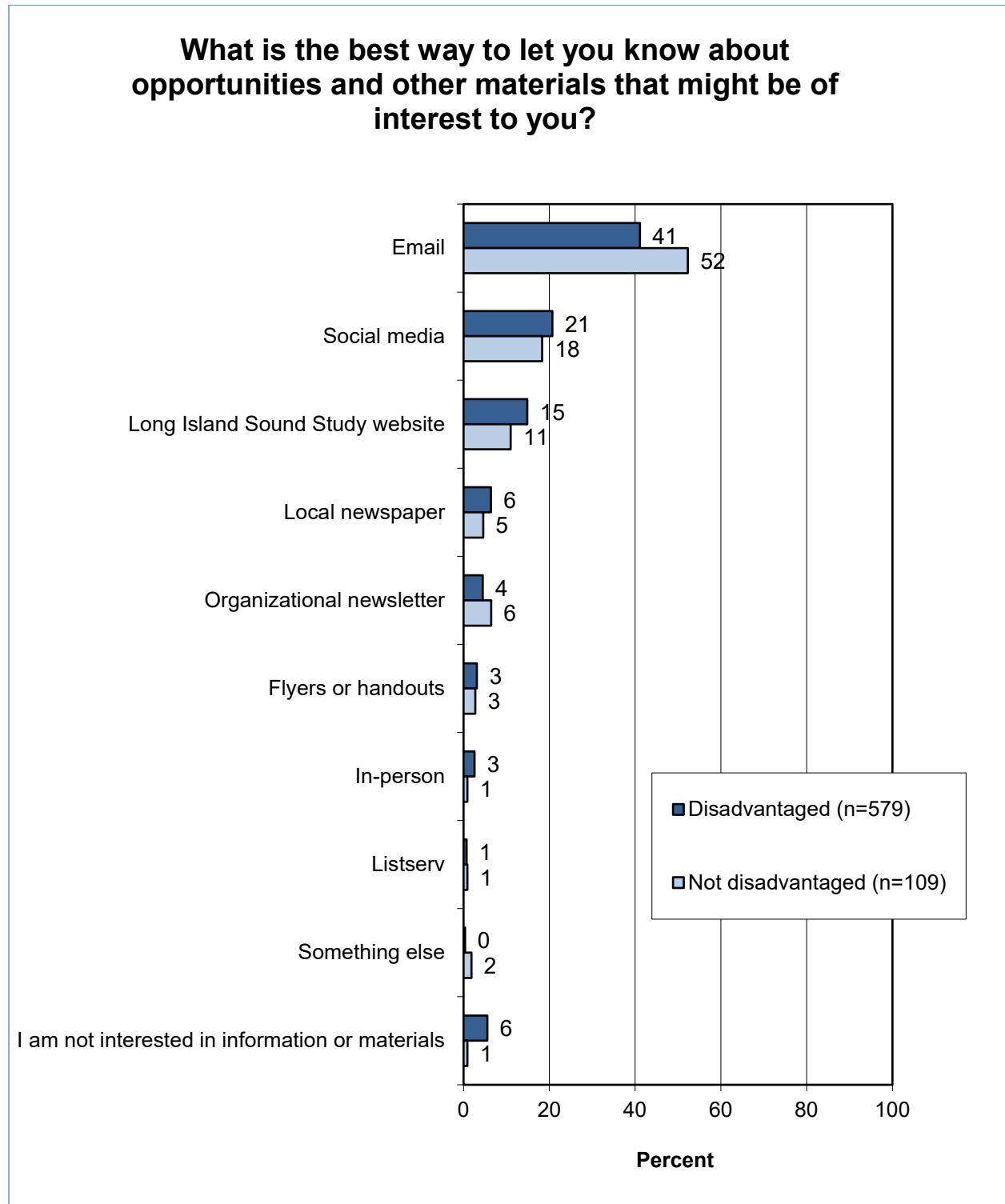


Groups most likely to be interested in information about the health of the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways include those in the middle-income bracket, males, and those in the higher education bracket.

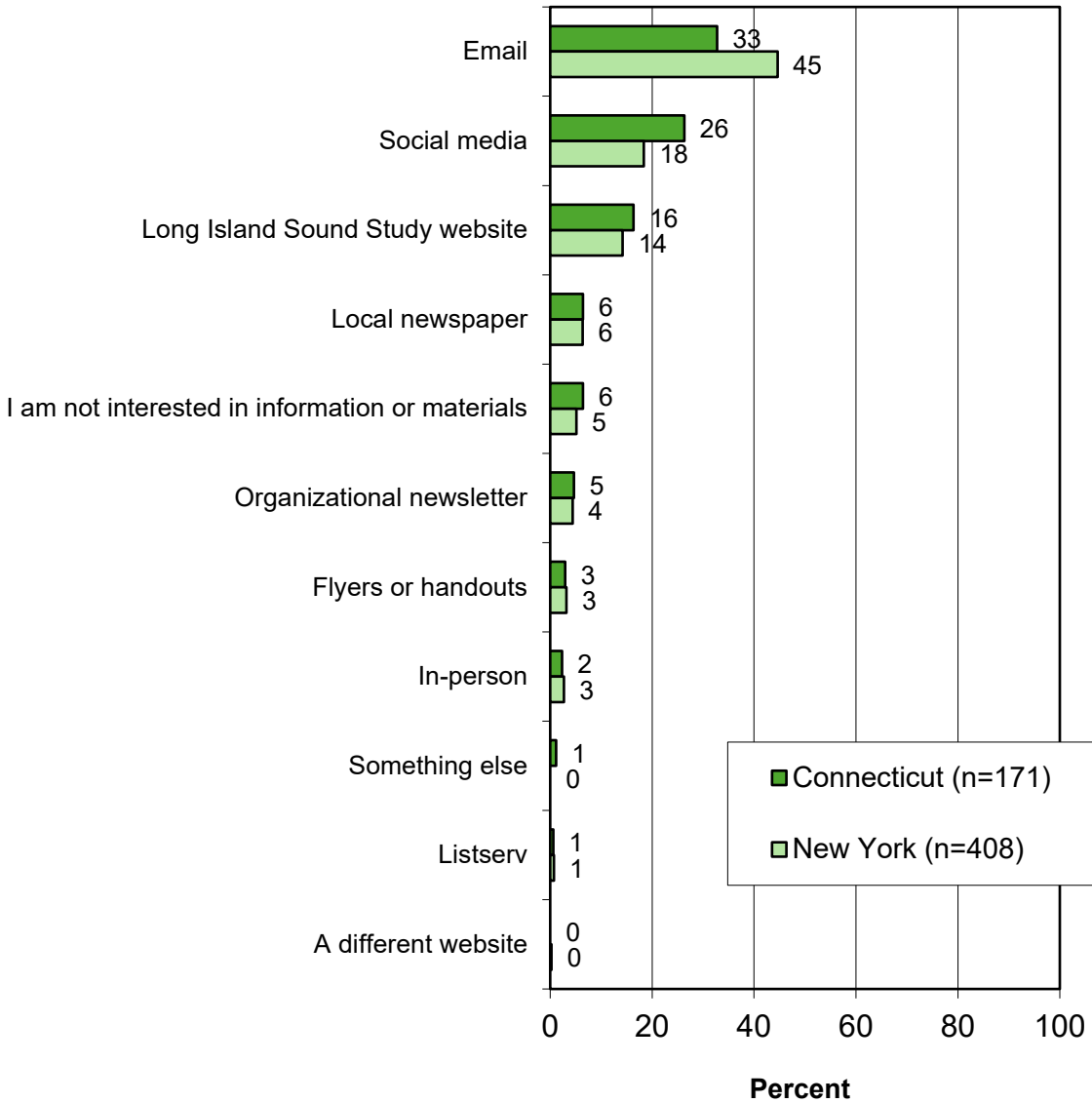
**Percent of each of the following groups who are interested in information about the health of the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways:**



Email is the preferred mode of receiving information about opportunities or materials of interest, distantly followed by social media and the Long Island Sound Study website.



### What is the best way to let you know about opportunities and other materials that might be of interest to you?





## **FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS AND ADDITIONAL OUTREACH**

To obtain public input from any residents from disadvantaged communities who chose to provide it, Responsive Management helped facilitate five community listening sessions and other in-person community outreach.

The full methodology for these qualitative findings is included in Chapter 5.

Community listening sessions were held in New Haven and Stonington in Connecticut on September 9 and November 5, 2023, respectively, and in Mount Vernon, Huntington Station, and Medford in New York on November 11, November 20, and December 9, 2023, respectively. The New Haven listening session was conducted in partnership with Save the Sound and Junta for Progressive Action; the Mount Vernon listening session was conducted in partnership with Save the Sound and Environmental Leaders of Color; and the Medford listening session was conducted in partnership with Dare to Dream Community Outreach. All listening sessions included materials in Spanish, and immediate Spanish translations of spoken components of the sessions were provided when necessary.

CBOs were not able or available to partner for two community listening sessions: Huntington Station and Stonington. Without a CBO or community leader to partner with, additional steps were taken to encourage participation in these listening sessions. For the Stonington meeting, Responsive Management staff distributed flyers with information about the session at places of worship, a food center, a senior center, and libraries in Groton and New London, Connecticut, and organizers provided a free shuttle service (information about the shuttle service was included in the flyer) to bring community members from the Groton, Connecticut Town Hall to the Stonington listening session. For the Huntington Station listening session, Responsive Management staff distributed flyers at churches, schools, public housing facilities, and set up tables for 2- to 4-hour intervals at several libraries in the area.

In addition to location-specific methods to try to increase public engagement for each listening session, each event was advertised through the LISS's social media platforms, and information about the event was shared with all CBO contacts in each region.

As is discussed in Appendix A, qualitative feedback for different phases of this project was provided by individuals from four major categories (shown on the following page). While the third category was only involved in exploratory phase interviews, community listening sessions were open to all community members who chose to attend; therefore, every category was represented in the community listening sessions to varying degrees.

In the Stonington meeting, for example, individuals representing every category were present, despite the moderate turnout. The Huntington Station meeting also had a moderate turnout, although in this case individuals from disadvantaged communities (Category 1) represented a

higher proportion of those in attendance. More details about meeting attendance will be described throughout the chapter.

1. Those currently living in disadvantaged communities (included members of the public, some community leaders, and some representatives from CBOs).
2. Those who previously lived in disadvantaged communities and have first-hand experience with the environmental justice issues faced by communities but are not currently experiencing environmental justice issues (included some concerned residents, some legislators or community leaders, and some representatives from CBOs).
3. Those who are invested in environmental justice and aided in developing an early understanding of the region and in efforts to reach community members and CBOs (included professionals from NGOs and state, federal, and local agencies, as well as partners of the LISS, those who participate in the LISS workgroups, and those who have conducted outreach and assessments in the region).
4. New partners with whom the LISS team is in the early stages of relationship development.

This chapter will begin with lessons learned and major findings from all community listening sessions and community outreach. After major findings, each listening session and form of community outreach will be specifically addressed; this will include additional major findings specific to that event or form of outreach. In some cases, relevant quotations from community listening session attendees will be provided to support the findings.

## **COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS: LESSONS LEARNED AND MAJOR FINDINGS**

First, lessons learned, major findings, and impressions from all community listening sessions and other forms of community outreach are discussed. Following the overall analysis are discussions more specific to each listening session and community outreach effort.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- **Attending listening sessions is often more convenient for people who are already invested and passionate about environmental issues and justice.**

There are many dedicated and passionate individuals in the Long Island Sound region. These individuals do not always represent disadvantaged communities, but they are eager to engage, join in conversations, and bring attention to issues with environmental justice. Scheduled listening sessions work very well for these individuals, as they often have more resources and more ability to attend scheduled events. As has been discussed throughout this report, this may not always be the case with members of disadvantaged communities, even those with the same levels of interest and passion.

- **Meeting disadvantaged communities in facilities that they frequent works best for reaching them and engaging them in conversations.**

While disadvantaged community members may not always be able to attend scheduled listening sessions (even events with financial incentives), they want to share their experiences and be a part of conversations. An approach that worked very well for this effort was going to places where disadvantaged community members frequent, such as public libraries, parks, social service facilities, schools, housing authorities, senior centers, places of worship, and food donation centers.

Further, selecting locations for community listening sessions where outreach can be conducted preceding the event helps increase participation among community members. This concept was best illustrated in the Huntington Station Public Library, where the project team tabled immediately before the listening session and encouraged community members to attend.

- **Many people do not have time for anything outside of fulfilling day-to-day needs.**

During listening sessions and throughout all other forms of community outreach, disadvantaged community members reiterated that they simply do not have time to do anything other than work and live day-to-day. Several community members indicated that they suspected that this issue was worse in the Long Island Sound region than it might be in other locations, namely because expensive housing in the area caused many to have to work more than one job to support themselves and their families.

- **Reaching the people you really want to hear from can be complicated.**

Several of the community listening sessions were conducted with CBOs that specialize in community outreach or have developed trust within their communities. Even among

such organizations, there was discussion about the difficulty in reaching disadvantaged groups and those least often included in conversations about environmental justice. In many cases, community members feel that in-person community outreach is the strongest approach for reaching more people.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

- **Communities want to be involved in conversations and events, but more pressing, competing priorities often interfere with participation.**

Several of the community listening sessions had great levels of interest leading up to the event. At the time of the event, however, turnout rates were sometimes lower than expected. According to many of the community members in attendance, this was likely attributed to competing priorities, such as a need for child or elder care or opportunities for additional work hours.
- **Communities do not always know the best ways to connect with decision-makers.**

During several of the community listening sessions, attendees discussed what they perceived to be failed efforts to encourage local and state decision-makers to address issues. Several community members discussed trying to improve conditions in their communities by contacting legislators and other decision-makers, addressing topics that ranged from transportation to sewage issues. In many cases, community members feel that their efforts are not met with action. In the Medford community listening session, a local legislator was in attendance and recommended starting email campaigns in which multiple members of communities sent separate emails. The legislator noted that decision-makers are more likely to listen when they are hearing from numerous community members.
- **Some communities do not have access to clean beaches nearby, and the closest clean beaches are too far away or do not fall on public transit routes.**

In several of the community listening sessions, community members indicated that the beaches closest to disadvantaged communities are often not as clean; have nearby industry, which makes residents feel unsafe; or are privatized or restricted from the public. Some community members indicated that, although there may seem to be clean accessible beaches within driving distance, these beaches were *not* accessible to those experiencing the issues associated with disadvantaged communities, such as transportation issues or costs associated with travel or parking.
- **Privatization of the shoreline causes issues with access in most communities.**

The issue of private landownership limiting access was addressed in most community listening sessions and other forms of outreach. Although this seems to be a barrier to accessing the water in most communities, for communities on Long Island, this issue was often more top-of-mind.

- **Transportation is an issue on many levels.**

Transportation was a major issue that emerged in nearly all community listening sessions and additional community outreach. Some attendees discussed issues with limited routes, times, or bus or train stops. Attendees in some locations also indicated that the price of public transit had increased in their communities. In one conversation in New London, Connecticut, a member of the community put it quite succinctly when he pointed out, “I want to go fishing and do fun things, but the bus doesn’t work for me—it’s too expensive, doesn’t run all day on Saturdays, or go to the places I want to go. I give up.”
- **Community members indicated that minority groups are sometimes afraid of the water and that they feel this fear stems from exclusionary practices to prevent them from accessing the water.**

Several community listening sessions discussed the connections with fear of outdoor spaces, and water specifically, and being historically alienated from or denied access to water and nature. Community members discussed “all-White” beaches being in place during their lifetime and explained that living through such times passed fear and a sense of being unwelcome through generations. These conversations often led to discussions about the need for engaging disadvantaged communities on a generational level in order to repair historical damage.
- **Interaction with nature can have positive impacts on mental health.**

Many community members discussed the positive mental health impacts fostered by connections with nature. Some community members feel that the absence of these connections has likely led to more mental health issues in their communities. One participant noted that “there will be a learning curve” when bringing individuals who have been disconnected from nature back into natural spaces, but patience is needed to establish new connections.
- **More youth should be involved in environmental justice.**

Lack of youth involvement was a major topic during many conversations with community members. Community members feel that youth should be more involved in environmental justice efforts and stewardship for a number of reasons. Some community members indicated that they feel that change in attention *and* action would be far more likely if youth were involved and they encouraged youth involvement in their communities, including parents and guardians. Other community members feel that rises in mental health issues among youth might be lessened by getting youth more involved in environmental issues and outdoor recreation.

## **NEW HAVEN COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION**

The New Haven, Connecticut, community listening session was conducted on September 9, 2023, in collaboration with Junta for Progressive Action and Save the Sound, and it was held at the Junta for Progressive Action office’s outdoor space. While more than twenty people attended the New Haven community listening session, it is worth noting that many in attendance represented passionate and engaged groups who were invested in the efforts of the needs assessment. While some disadvantaged community members were in attendance, there was less representation from disadvantaged communities in this listening session compared to others.

Below is a summary of the findings and observations from the New Haven community listening session. Following the summary are several quotations from community listening session attendees that help illustrate some of the key findings and observations from the session.

### **ACCESS**

The New Haven community listening session included a discussion about limited access to green and blue spaces because of zoning, transportation issues, an abundance of private land and private parking, and issues with water quality associated with industrial sites in the area. Community members noted that accessing clean and safe waterways was especially difficult for those in disadvantaged communities. Outdoor spaces closest to disadvantaged communities were thought to be the most polluted by industry and illegal dumping. Some participants also indicated that they feel the onus for addressing such issues often falls on community members who are usually overburdened with increasing housing and food costs, among other things. Further complicating their ability to access waterways, community members noted that transportation issues, such as increasing transit prices, fewer public routes, and limited hours of operation, prevented many from being able to travel to cleaner, safer outdoor spaces.

Listening session attendees were also asked about possible solutions to some of the access issues that had been discussed. Participants suggested translating all components of signs and not only rules and regulations. Several attendees noted that they had seen signs in which only “do-not” phrases had been translated, and more welcoming language about best paths or how to access the water had not been translated. In addition, several attendees indicated that some local parks and outdoor spaces had begun closing at sunset, effectively excluding many who work long hours or have children in school. Participants suggested that there should be a focus on expanding hours to be more inclusive of different groups. Finally, community listening session attendees expressed that they feel that municipalities and legislators should be working harder to clean up natural spaces near disadvantaged communities so that the onus does not fall on the shoulders of already overburdened community members and, ultimately so that communities can better access natural resources.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

In addition to issues with access, concepts and understanding of environmental justice were discussed during the listening session. Some attendees stated that environmental justice was a

very simple concept that encompassed all communities being protected equally. Attendees mentioned that they feel that Black and Brown and non-English speaking communities are often not protected from environmental, social, or infrastructural issues in the same ways that more affluent communities are protected. Some participants noted that, before becoming more involved in their community, they had viewed environmental justice as the work of addressing issues in the environment, and only after attending events and listening sessions had they realized that environmental justice encompasses social issues, public health, and other topics that might not appear to some to be connected to the environment.

### **REACHING AND INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

A fair amount of the discussion at the listening session focused on how to reach disadvantaged community members who had historically been left out of conversations. Several attendees feel that the conversation needs to be more holistic so that community members can better understand the connections between the environment and seemingly unrelated but more pressing priorities, like flooding, housing, and public health. Some feel that community members are not always aware of the links between public health and environmental issues, and making this connection could be particularly effective in increasing engagement. This aspect of the discussion also addressed the fact that many community members want to be involved in conversations but simply do not have the personal capacity to focus on much more than everyday needs.

Some participants noted that, although community organizing can be powerful and effective in beginning processes to address the issues discussed, attendees feel that those in disadvantaged communities who do this work should be compensated for their time and effort, as it will surely be taking away from other priorities and adding additional burdens.

As could be seen in the attendees of the listening session in New Haven, some areas have a rich culture and history of active and passionate individuals working to promote concepts of environmental justice. These people play an integral part in making progress but should also be very open to listening to and learning from community members without bringing any preconceptions.

#### **Quotations from the New Haven Community Listening Session**

I have lived in different states. It always surprises me how much beach is private, but not just access to the beach itself but to transportation to get there, to access to education about it.

I think it is important to consider the cumulative effects of pollution. To build on that, there is the intersectional piece of environmental justice, which includes education, food, mental health, and all basic needs. Those are needed to get to justice.

Focus on the transportation and the cleanup, too. It really needs to be done together.

I would like to bring up the issue of feeling welcome at places that *are* publicly accessible. Signage makes

a difference about how welcome one feels: if you see rules off the bat, it is not welcoming, try encouraging positive reinforcement. You can still say the rules without being unwelcoming.

All the Spanish signs only seem to focus on the bad stuff. Do not do this or that. What about the “Welcome, enjoy!” type signs?

We had so many people tell us they wanted to be here. We had over 50 people respond, but if they have to work or take care of their kids, they can’t come to things like this.

We used to have free public transportation, but all of that is disappearing.

Some parks close at sunset. That’s when families can go to the park. Leaving them out feels exclusionary.

I feel like this always falls on the people who live in the cities. It feels like the municipalities don’t ever take any responsibility for cleaning things up and making the cities safer and cleaner places. They should be doing more of the work.



## **STONINGTON COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION**

The Stonington, Connecticut community listening session was conducted on November 5, 2023, at Calvary Church in Stonington. The Stonington listening session was one of the community listening sessions in which a CBO was not available to partner. To encourage community participation without a partner, Responsive Management staff emailed and passed out flyers at locations where people gathered in Groton and New London. These locations included places of worship, libraries, senior centers, and food pantry centers. In addition, a shuttle was provided at the Groton Town Hall to bring interested participants to the Stonington location. Distributed flyers included information about the event, the shuttle, a phone number to contact for help with transportation, and the provision of food and \$20 stipends for attending the event.

Note that while Stonington is not considered a disadvantaged community, limited capacity, space, and scheduling availability in New London and Groton (two communities of interest closest to Stonington) resulted in the project team having to expand the search region for available space for a listening session. Because of its proximity to New London and Groton, as well as the Mashantucket Pequot tribe, and along with the space and scheduling availability, the project team decided to conduct the listening session in Stonington. In order to ensure that feedback in the area represented disadvantaged communities, additional forms of outreach (including tabling events at libraries and church outreach) were conducted in Groton and New London).

The Stonington listening session had one of the smaller attendance numbers, when compared to the other listening sessions, perhaps because of the lack of a partnership with a trusted CBO or the community's lack of familiarity with the LISS. It is important to note when considering this information that despite limited attendance, many in surrounding communities were aware of the listening session and reached out before and following the event to find out how they could participate in the needs assessment or similar conversations. Further, several new partnerships were established as a result of the listening session.

Below is a summary of findings and observations from the Stonington community listening session. Following the summary are several quotations from community listening session attendees that help illustrate some of the key findings and observations from the session.

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The Stonington listening session began with a discussion about the history of the immediate area, Connecticut in general, and the Long Island Sound region. Listening session attendees discussed what they perceived to be a long history of racism, colonialism, and exclusion, especially, in their opinions, in Connecticut. Attendees feel that indigenous tribes in Connecticut, such as the Pequot, have been forced from their land and no longer have access to many natural spaces. Attendees also discussed complications in the region resulting from the fact that some of the local indigenous groups are not federally recognized and are therefore at even greater risk of losing access to nature and to resources.

## **ACCESS**

According to some participants in the listening session, several communities in the area are making efforts to prevent public access (such as through attempting to block the building of fishing piers) to prevent outsiders from accessing waterways in and around their communities. In addition, attendees discussed issues with large amounts of land being privately owned, further preventing access to natural areas. Attendees also discussed several local parks closing at sunset, effectively excluding many who have heavy work burdens or school-aged children.

Issues associated with water quality were also discussed as they relate to access. Several in attendance at the listening session indicated that there are nearby areas that are polluted and unsafe for recreation and cause issues with access, while others in attendance mentioned that there are still a number of misconceptions about the quality of nearby waterways, wherein some community members consider the quality bad even in locations where water quality has drastically improved. Safety issues with unnavigable paths and trash buildup on beaches were also discussed.

## **COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Stonington listening session participants expressed concern about the frontline communities in the area that they feel are being disproportionately impacted by flooding and sea level rise. Attendees were concerned that, unlike many of the wealthier coastal landowners in the area, many who live in frontline communities do not have the ability to relocate in times of extreme climate impacts. As with all of the other listening sessions, issues with competing and more pressing needs or priorities and the necessity to make environmental conversations more appealing were discussed.

Finally, regarding general community needs, attendees indicated that many communities in eastern Connecticut are in need of sustainability and resiliency projects.

## **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

There was a fair amount of discussion during the listening session about the importance of youth engagement. As was discussed in many other components of the needs assessment, attendees feel that youth engagement in most activities has declined. Some attendees feel that getting youth involved will encourage adult and community-wide participation in environmental events.

There was some discussion about the lack of stewardship and recreational use of the Sound by disadvantaged communities in eastern Connecticut being ascribed to historical racism and exclusion. Some noted that they had seen youth in disadvantaged communities being fearful of the outdoors, which attendees feel may stem from some groups not being permitted in outdoor areas and therefore never developing comfort in those areas.

## **REACHING AND INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

During the listening session, the topic of effectively reaching disadvantaged communities was discussed. Some attendees noted that environmental events often included the same faces and voices and were not always inclusive of the people who are most impacted by environmental justice issues. Some attendees suggested using trusted community leaders to reach non-English speakers, of which there are many in eastern Connecticut. Other attendees indicated that communities need more representation that looks like them and that prioritizes their needs. Finally, attendees at the community listening session indicated that perhaps the best way to reach those who have historically been left out of environmental conversations was to meet them where they are: libraries, community centers, churches, popular restaurants, and facilities that provide services in disadvantaged communities.

### **Quotations from the Stonington Community Listening Session**

Urgency is the enemy of trust. You have to take the time.

There are eco systemic issues that are ecologically important. Now they are getting fished out as bycatch for bait in the Sound. And so we need to be working holistically and systemically to deal with all of these issues.

We're having a great deal of difficulty just getting eastern Pequots on the map. They are not on the federal census as a separate entity because they are not federally recognized. It not only erased them but every other state-recognized tribe in Connecticut. We went to the meeting and very respectfully pointed out that here was a cluster of environmental justice communities that were not represented on the environmental justice screening tool, which was proudly presented by Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation as this wonderful way of identifying environmental justice communities.

Well preventing fishing piers and access is a thing that some city groups would like. Cities don't want outsiders coming into their neighborhoods.

I know there's a huge misperception of how bad water quality is in the Long Island Sound in parts of the state.

It has been very difficult to explain why the YMCA closure of Williams Beach from 8 to 4 every day in the summer when camp is in session is a hardship for families with children. That's when the kids are home from school and you'd like to be able to take them to the beach, and up until the summer before last, you could go to Williams Beach and the YMCA invested a lot in building that amphitheater there, and there's a questionable impact there, but nonetheless, they were investing in making a better community space in their eyes, and then they closed it.

I think on Sunday mornings, Saturday mornings, there's a huge amount of kids football, and it's a very diverse group of people. That would be a good time to talk to the community.

It sounds like kids need to get involved in this. Kids will be much more honest with you than adults will be, particularly if you work with the government, especially middle school kids. They get more conscious

of how the system works and how to work the system when they get older, but if you catch them young enough and have opportunities to engage in authentic ways so that they're planning this playground and park, they will be really involved.

It may start with a community garden or something that meets immediate needs, and then pretty soon, step by step, it will become about addressing community challenges such as sea level rise in communities that can't afford to move away. These are the challenges that really matter, and that will actually improve youth mental health and civic engagement lifelong.

## **MOUNT VERNON COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION**

The Mount Vernon, New York, community listening session was conducted on November 11, 2023, in collaboration with Environmental Leaders of Color and Save the Sound, and it was held at Mount Calvary CME Church in Mount Vernon. The Mount Vernon community listening session had more attendees than any other listening session conducted for the needs assessment. In attempts to increase public participation, partners shared information about the event on their websites and social media platforms, and Responsive Management staff and the LISS team shared flyers in-person at community centers in Mount Vernon. Community leaders also worked to share information about the event through their own social media platforms and through in-person outreach.

It is important to note that several local legislators and one state legislator were also in attendance at the Mount Vernon meeting. The addition of these legislators shaped the conversation in some ways, with many using the listening session to address infrastructure issues. Although the infrastructure issues raised during the session related to the waterway, they at times veered away from the larger purpose of the needs assessment.

Below is a summary of the findings and observations from the Mount Vernon community listening session. Following the summary are several quotations from community listening session attendees that help illustrate these points.

### **ACCESS**

Community members in Mount Vernon indicated that accessing the Long Island Sound, particularly the Hutchinson River (a tributary of the Long Island Sound that runs through Mount Vernon), was difficult for some community members. Some attendees mentioned issues with safety because of trash and debris buildup in some areas, as well as uncertainty about privatization of the shoreline. There was also some discussion about residents' long-term separation from nature resulting in fear of and lack of knowledge pertaining to water-based recreation, especially in communities of color, further complicating access to waterways.

Throughout the listening session there was discussion about the uncertainty of the safety of the water, especially with regard to water quality and a history of industrial and sewage runoff being found in the Hutchinson River. Many noted that this uncertainty likely limited communities trying to access waterways.

During the Mount Vernon listening session, an interesting conversation about access took place between a small group of people. One attendee asked if people *should be* accessing waterways. He explained that people were to blame for many of the water quality issues and all the trash and debris buildup issues. The attendee further argued that wildlife would likely be negatively impacted if more community members had access to the Long Island Sound and its tributaries. In response, several attendees argued that increased access can lead to greater stewardship, and, although it might take time to teach people how to care for waterways, the long-term benefits could far outweigh the concerns.

## **COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Community members discussed the need to get communities involved and educated about the environmental issues in Mount Vernon. Many attendees feel that behavioral changes will only occur with increased engagement and understanding. Some attendees feel that getting community members involved with water quality testing would be a great way to educate many about the issues in the community and allow them to see the progress that can be made when people come together. Further, attendees noted that there is a real desire to see shared natural spaces cleaned up, but there is confusion about who is responsible for such work.

As was the case in nearly all community listening sessions, attendees also discussed the fact that, especially for overburdened individuals, immediate needs often take precedence, so it is important to make environmental engagement easy and appealing.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Infrastructure issues were possibly the most discussed topic during the listening session. Most infrastructure discussion addressed the sewage system issues that have plagued Mount Vernon for more than 100 years, according to some in attendance. Attendees discussed issues with being able to finance much needed repairs and the fear of contamination in local waterways because of the faulty sewage system.

Some attendees indicated that having to work through an intermediary, such as an NGO or nonprofit, had complicated the process of repairing the system. Attendees feel that more progress could be made if funding was given directly to municipalities.

## **NATURE AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Several attendees discussed the positive impacts on mental health from connecting with nature. Some attendees also explained that they believe that increases in the number of individuals with mental health issues might, in some cases, be the result of a disconnection from the environment. Some noted that they would love to encourage time in nature or outdoor recreation for those with mental health issues, but the limited access to green and blue spaces prevented them from doing so. Others shared their experiences with seeing the development of stewardship and the increases in confidence and safety in recreation and spending time in nature they perceived as a result.

## **REACHING AND INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

Many of the attendees at the Mount Vernon listening session are aware that they are passionate and engaged in environmental work and advocacy but not necessarily representative of all of the voices of disadvantaged communities. Many attendees expressed that they have attempted to reach community members and met obstacles that often prevented meaningful and robust engagement. One attendee shared information about the steep decline in voting in Mount Vernon and how community engagement had seemed to decrease on multiple levels.

As the discussion about engagement continued, there was some disagreement about whether engaging youth first or engaging adult members of the community first would be the best approach. Some attendees were adamant that engaging youth would be the best way to get communities involved, although others questioned their interest and noted that working with schools could be difficult. In response to comments about working with schools, a Mount Vernon school board member and local school principal noted that they would love to support youth engagement. In contrast, some participants feel that adult engagement would be more productive, as adults could make decisions through voting and reaching out to legislators.

Finally, attendees noted that the most important thing that could be done to encourage engagement among community members is to continue to have discussions like the one that took place at the listening session. Attendees feel that more conversations will allow for more participation as more days and times are available for engagement and as word-of-mouth increases. In addition, attendees noted that continued outreach from organizations like the LISS would increase trust and familiarity, leading to further engagement.

#### **Quotations from the Mount Vernon Community Listening Session**

Our infrastructure is crumbling right underneath us. In 2020-2021, we got \$160 million from Governor Hochul, and that's really just a drop in the bucket. The total rebuild for the sewer infrastructure will probably cost about \$250 million, and this is due to bad management from prior administrations. This has been an issue for over a decade. Some things have been ignored before this administration's time. We have critical deadlines. If we do not meet critical deadlines, we're fined by the day. It's serious.

For this discussion about making sure our sewer lines are not contaminated, the watershed should be the first thing we address because it makes no sense to think about anything else if the watershed is being contaminated by sewage, right?

This is about behavioral change—people changing old behaviors to new behaviors to help the environment, and so on and so forth. I'm an old Mount Vernon born and raised resident but one thing I need you guys to think about is, "How do we foster and encourage behavioral change, sustainable practices, and green technology, while meeting people's immediate needs?" People are going to be worried about how they are going to feed their family, about their lights being cut off. They do not care about the environment. They are worried about their family right now. So how do we do what we're trying to do here today but also meet their basic needs?

Kids use social media, and they can start a movement. Once we start a movement with just a few, we could recruit others. But we have to start somewhere.

What I'm saying is get parents involved in a social gathering, i.e., a local juice bar event. Everything's a trickle-down effect. Get the parents and you'll get the kids.

There's also a lot of industrial pollution, serious industrial pollution. It's very hard to figure out how to deal with each one of these different industries along the Hutch that are polluting all kinds of chemicals, and all kinds of terrible stuff. We need help trying to figure that out.

The money needs to start coming directly to the municipalities. We do not need pass-throughs. We do

not need nonprofit organizations giving us money.

One way to keep that river clean is to make sure that the shoreline is clean, usable, and ready for everybody. What is the problem practically? Nobody, no single agency is willing to take responsibility for what's on there or leased there, or even try to find out: is it the Department of Transportation? Is it the Department of Energy? Is it the Department of Conservation? Who is it? Until you do that, you cannot make significant changes along that shoreline, because nobody's going to take responsibility. I promise you.

We can only get accountability when we show up in numbers. Numbers change the game with everything. Not to be political, but we just had an election, and we have 39,000 registered voters here in Mount Vernon. Less than 6,000 showed up to the polls. There was a time when every Democratic president candidate came to Mount Vernon because the numbers were so great. They knew there was a large number of Democrats who went to the polls, so they sent every incumbent and poller here. We've been letting that dwindle away in Mount Vernon. We have to get back to showing up in numbers because numbers always create an impact and get you the results you want. At Mount Vernon we can get anything we want as long as we demand it by showing up in numbers.



## **HUNTINGTON STATION COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION**

The Huntington Station, New York, community listening session was conducted on November 20, 2023, at the Huntington Public Library, Station Branch. CBOs and community leaders were not available or able to partner to conduct the Huntington Station listening session. To compensate, the LISS team and Responsive Management staff took several steps to encourage community participation. The project team conducted 2- to 4-hour tabling sessions, that provided information about the listening session and the LISS in general, at nearby public libraries, including the Huntington Station Public Library immediately preceding the listening session. In addition, the project team shared flyers at local schools, churches, housing facilities, and community centers. Some of this outreach resulted in additional conversations with community members, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. As a result of the additional in-person community outreach that preceded this listening session, there were more members of disadvantaged communities in attendance compared to other listening sessions. Providing on-the-spot Spanish translation during community outreach also resulted in several Spanish-speakers attending the event.

Below is a summary of the findings and observations from the Huntington Station community listening session. Following the summary are several quotations from community listening session attendees that help illustrate these points. Please note that some Spanish and French Creole language comments have been translated for this report.

### **ACCESS**

Community members indicated that they feel they have limited access to the Sound. Some attendees said that they had seen lots of trash and debris on the shoreline, especially during periods of flooding. Some noted that the buildup seemed unsafe and made accessing the water difficult. Many in attendance noted issues with transportation being a barrier to access. Specifically, there was discussion about the lack of public routes that went directly to beaches.

Community members also discussed issues with the amount of privately owned land on Long Island. Some mentioned that long travel times were required to reach beaches that were not privately owned. Further, attendees said that they are not always aware of, nor did they always understand, restrictions or “Residents Only” signs. Many indicated that they were fearful that accidental missteps would lead to trouble with landowners or law enforcement. As this listening session included many Spanish speakers, this last point is particularly important for two reasons: 1) not understanding restrictions could potentially be resolved with more translated signs and materials, and 2) trouble with law enforcement, as discussed in other chapters in this report, can be far more complicated for immigrants and non-English speakers.

The most frequently mentioned barrier to accessing the Sound was a lack of time. One attendee noted that, with travel time required to go to public beaches, some fees for entry, expenses associated with food, and parking to get to the Sound, many people, already overburdened with meeting daily needs, would have to pick up extra work just to visit the Sound.

## **COMMUNITY NEEDS**

When asked about what they feel their communities need in order to access the Sound, attendees listed a number of things. First among the needs for access were amenities to support gatherings for friends and family. Attendees noted that these additions would increase their own likelihood of recreation on the Sound and would likely be beneficial for others. Attendees also mentioned a need for more places to picnic and barbeque to avoid the often more expensive food options at nearby restaurants. In addition, attendees said that they would like to see more opportunities to canoe and kayak and more programs to teach people about water-specific recreation.

There was also discussion about fishing licenses at the listening session. Several attendees indicated that they were initially unaware that licenses were required for fishing in the Sound. One attendee indicated that, upon learning that licenses were required, he was surprised by how easily he obtained a license.

In addition to discussing needs for accessing the Sound, there was some discussion about the need for employment and financial resources.

## **EDUCATION AND INFORMATION**

Another community need that was discussed at length during the listening session, therefore warranting its own separate discussion in this chapter, was the need for programing, education, and information to introduce people to the Sound and how to use and access its natural resources. Many in the Huntington Station listening session indicated that they were initially completely unaware of the Sound. Although they knew there were nearby waterways, they were not aware of the specific waterbody or whether the waterway was accessible to the public. Further, attendees indicated that they were not aware of the LISS. Attendees said that the community would likely be interested in information about water quality, how to protect the Long Island Sound, and fishing.

## **REACHING AND INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

Community members feel that the best ways to reach them are to use places and platforms they frequent. Ideas offered by those in attendance included social media, community centers, existing events, markets, libraries, schools, and television. In addition, some suggested that more in-person outreach should be conducted. Several attendees also feel that involving schools by sharing information with students that will be sent home to families could be especially effective. Finally, attendees reiterated that all materials should be translated, particularly into Spanish, in Huntington Station.

**Quotations from the Huntington Station Community Listening Session**

I think addressing issues with time and having more places closer to me would help.

Do they have access to public transportation for certain beaches? I don't think so.

Places on the North Shore are beautiful and you can have groups.

If there are barbeques to hang out with family, to cook and stuff.

I did get a license. When I was starting to fish, I didn't have a license, but then I was talking to a friend of mine who was like you should probably get a license, it's really cheap, you can just go down to the place and get it, and boom! I got it. At first, when I started I didn't know you had to have a license.

If you can get transportation like you were saying, that is I think key right there. That's the most important thing. A lot of people would like to go, but they have a lot of issues to get there.

Sometimes parks will have signs that say, "residents only." I went there and I was walking and I was by myself and I felt like everyone was looking at me. I didn't realize it was a very strict area, so that was the only time I experienced that.

First of all, this summer we tried to stay away from public beaches because it's somewhat expensive. We literally went to beach all summer long and we only paid \$40 but we had to stay local so we tried to limit the budget and also, we brought our own food. If you do go, there are some things you can do to limit the cost, cook something, make a nice sandwich at home.

People don't know about certain things. It's done on purpose, mind you. But I think if we could introduce the people or get them into some sort of a program to explain things, maybe use social media, Facebook, Instagram; whatever else they use out there and get the information out there so people could be aware of certain things, that would help. I think that would be the next step.

I feel like on Facebook, information that is shared could be made public instead of private. It should be made available to everyone, because that's also easier for translation. If you're handing out flyers, the flyers might be in English, and some people won't understand. If you're posting it online you can auto translate that into any language you need. That's why you try different ways. If you want to talk to the older generation, I feel like it's mostly the community centers, or like even the supermarket for instance with a flyer, anything that's like visual and paper. If you want to reach millennials the younger generation, try Facebook and any other social media platform.

## **MEDFORD COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION**

The Medford, New York, community listening session was conducted on December 9, 2023, in collaboration with Dare to Dream Community Outreach, and it was held at St. Michael’s Recreation Center in Medford. The Medford community listening session had more than 30 attendees. The group consisted of a mix of the four groups discussed throughout this report, but most of those in attendance were either engaged in environmental work in their community or passionate about community building and improvement in general. Although Medford, Long Island is not directly on the Long Island Sound, feedback from other aspects of the needs assessment indicated that there were environmental justice needs that needed to be addressed in communities like Medford and Brookhaven.

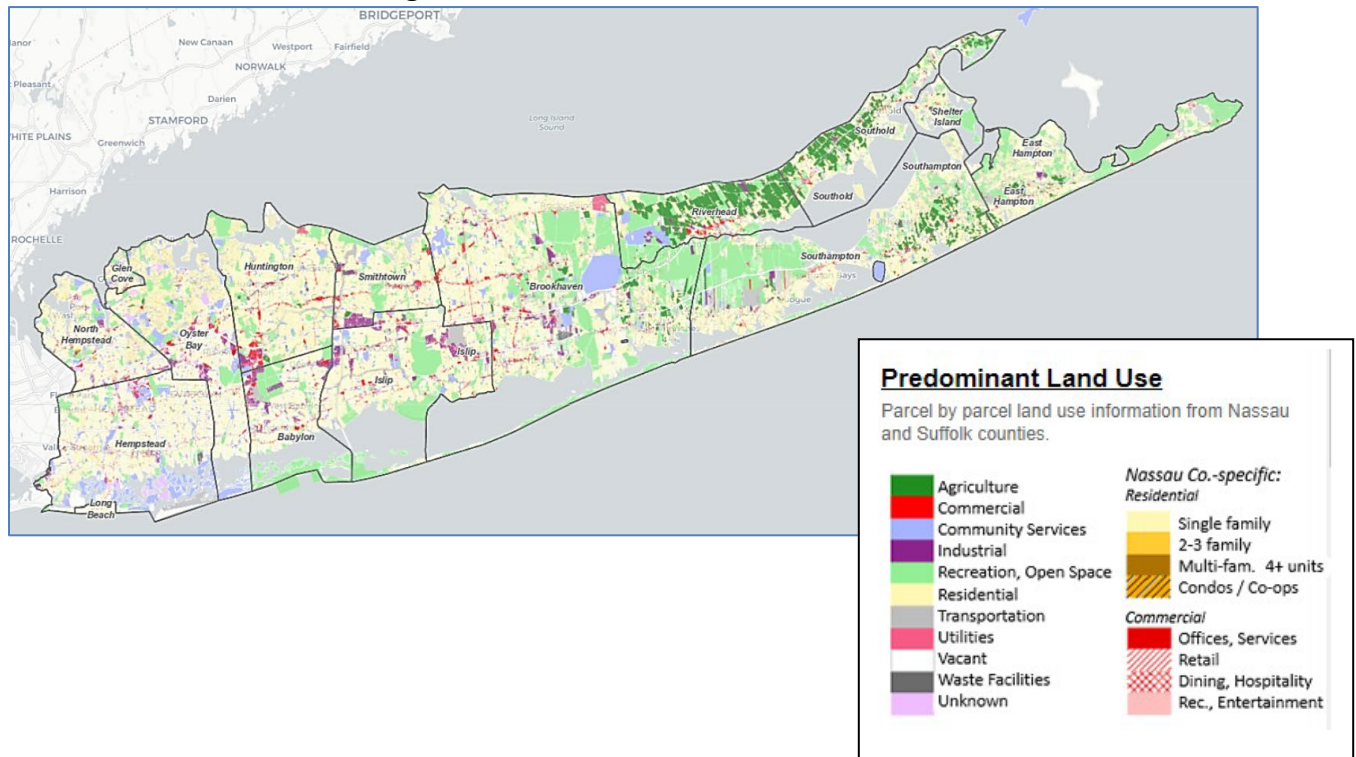
The following is a summary of the findings and observations from the Medford community listening session. Following the summary are several quotations from community listening session attendees that help illustrate these points.

### **ACCESS**

Issues with transportation to and from the Sound are a major barrier to access, according to most listening session attendees. Discussion addressed limited public transportation overall, with little to no public routes that go to beaches and waterways, as well as a lack of bus and train stops throughout the region. Some attendees indicated that they had previously reached out to legislators about the lack of places to wait for public transit but had not received follow-up about the issues.

In addition to issues with transportation, there was discussion about the lack of public access on Long Island, particularly in the nearby community of Brookhaven. Attendees noted that many areas where one could potentially access the water were privatized, and even in public areas, there were limited or expensive parking, signs indicating that the beach was only for resident use, and limited sidewalks for accessing the beach on foot. Attendees recommended using a map to illustrate the limited public shoreline access in the Brookhaven area. (The map below, from Long Island Index Maps, shows land use throughout Long Island to illustrate this point.) As is shown below, in the Brookhaven area, a great deal of land along the Sound is residential and privately owned.

**Predominant Land Use on Long Island**



Additional discussion about access addressed historic exclusion of minority groups on Long Island. Attendees referred to racist and exclusionary practices that had prevented indigenous groups, such as the Setalcott Nation, and Black and Brown people from using the waterways. Many noted that these practices had promoted fear in minority groups in the region, which had then been passed on to other family members generationally. A local legislator in attendance mentioned that, even in private areas, the mid-tide line marked the end of private land, but attendees indicated that the risks were far too great for people of color to “test” that notion.

**COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Some attendees suggested that outdoor events and recreation activities should be promoted to multiple generations of families in order to address the generational harm that had been done by years of systemic racism and colonization.

There was discussion about what defines a disadvantaged community. Some attendees feel that not many communities on Long Island fit their understanding of “disadvantaged.” One attendee explained to the group that there are numerous indicators used to define disadvantaged communities and shared her own experience as it related to such indicators. In response, some attendees indicated that they would like more information about disadvantaged communities and environmental justice.

---

## **NATURE AND MENTAL HEALTH**

When asked about their best water-based memory at the top of the listening session, many attendees referred to the peace that being near the water brought them. The links between mental well-being and connecting with nature were further discussed throughout the listening session. Many attendees feel that having access to the peace that nature brings can be integral for positive mental health. Attendees also discussed the concept of a natural path to stewardship associated with nature and well-being: spending time in nature improves mental well-being, which results in an increased desire to spend time in nature, which leads to efforts to protect and share nature in order to continue to improve mental well-being.

## **WATER QUALITY**

Discussion addressed concerns about water quality in the area. Some attendees discussed increased cancer rates in disadvantaged communities around the Sound and attributed the issue to industrial waste in waterways. Attendees indicated that they had tried to reach out to state and federal officials about their concerns, but again, they had received little to no response.

In addition, community members expressed interest in creating ways for community members to test and monitor water quality on their own.

## **REACHING AND INCLUDING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

Community members indicated that they need follow-up. Many noted that they feel that very little comes out of these discussions, which can lead to a feeling of hopelessness in some cases. Attendees stressed that returning to the community for additional conversations and to show how their engagement impacted the LISS's environmental management plan could lead to increased engagement from the community and trust in the LISS.

On a different note, there was a fair amount of discussion during the listening session about getting information from communities to legislators. One local legislator advised community members to send numerous emails from individual accounts instead of sending petitions or adding multiple people to one email. The legislator indicated that more emails were harder to ignore.

Finally, attendees discussed the need to connect with the large number of Spanish speakers in the area. Some attendees indicated that limited translated materials made any effort difficult and suggested that translations should be a focus to engage more Spanish speakers.

**Quotations from the Medford Community Listening Session**

How can a group like yours study why there is a higher incidence of cancer in some zip codes? How can we find out more information about that?

A lot of the buses don't go to the actual water. They don't go to Wildwood State Park, they don't go to Smith Point, they don't go to the ones that are around in these places, and people have to walk a long way to get to the water.

The more people that know about [public health and water quality issues], hopefully we can find an answer so we can save not only our brothers and sisters, but hopefully our children and grandchildren.

I grew up on Long Island and I know we didn't always go to the water because my mother had a fear of water. I find a lot of people of color have a fear of water. Not everyone, but many folks don't know how to swim or engage with water. I think we need to start with encouraging people to learn how to swim or be comfortable in water and then work from there.

If the youth don't know the environment, then they're not going to advocate to protect it or improve it for themselves or future generations.

One of the main things we have to do is decolonize the water. Most of the shoreline has been privatized so we don't have access. We are literally told we are not allowed to be there. There are very limited places where we are allowed to enjoy the water or even touch the water.

It would be great not only having a youth program, but a multigenerational program. Adults are scared of water too, and some of us don't know how to swim.

It's not a lack of interest. It's not a lack of access. It's not a lack of education. It's the fact that we were restricted from those spaces.

We overlaid the Long Island Sound with the incorporated boundaries, and it was 7% public. It was really startling. I think if you do that it will inform this work when you see what is actually publicly accessible. It's not a lot. We have slivers.

If you have accessibility, you are going to care more because you're going to be there. You're going to want to do things there. You're going to make sure it's there for everyone else to care about.

Sometimes sending it to multiple elected officials because you don't know who's going to be the one to hear your voice and advocate for you.

I think it also takes money. You have to bring money in, you can't just come in and ask people to give their time and knowledge without actually having resources. Whatever action comes out of this has to be able to be implemented.

## **ADDITIONAL OUTREACH**

In addition to the listening sessions with communities, other forms of community outreach were conducted throughout the region. These additional forms of community outreach were planned based on findings from earlier phases of the assessment and focused on locations where community members were likely already gathered.

The locations where additional community outreach was conducted included existing events, such as a harvest festival in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone meeting in Stamford, Connecticut; local libraries in Groton and New London in Connecticut and Port Jefferson, Riverhead, Huntington Station, and others, in New York; local places of worship in Connecticut and New York; and a public housing task force in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Regarding the last item, project team members were invited to the task force meeting to gather additional perspectives from a community leader who participated in the interview phase, and the task force is supporting the project by planning a final community input session in Bridgeport with three public housing developments (the results of which will be issued as an addendum to this report).

The findings from these additional forms of outreach are included in this report: through survey data collected during these community outreach efforts and in location-specific notes that were included in the in-depth interview chapter (note that some of this outreach was conducted in the in-depth interview format previously described in this report).

It is stated throughout this report in the findings for most chapters, but it should be reiterated here that the most successful engagement with disadvantaged community members who were not previously engaged in environmental justice work occurred in these in-person additional forms of outreach. The most successful engagement often occurred at public libraries, which, according to many community members and CBOs, have become hubs for disadvantaged communities across the region and the country because they offer access to social workers, internet, business and entrepreneurial classes, English as a second language classes, and many other resources.



## **LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, the lessons the project team learned throughout the needs assessment are discussed. In addition, recommendations for further work with disadvantaged communities and CBOs are discussed.

The recommendations presented in this chapter are sorted into two major groups: 1) recommendations from the project team based on the findings from the needs assessment, and 2) recommendations from CBOs. Some of the recommendations from CBOs include advice on how to reach and engage disadvantaged communities. As many of the CBO recommendations came before completion of the project, many were integrated into the needs assessment.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

Throughout the needs assessment process, the project team learned several lessons about relationship building and involving disadvantaged communities in conversations. Many of these lessons came early in the project and shaped the process in later phases.

Lessons learned about relationship building and reaching and engaging community members can be seen on the following pages.

**RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING: LESSONS LEARNED**

- **Meaningful engagement requires a lot of time and resources to build connections and relationships.**

This effort started with a request from the LISS to participate in interviews or other aspects of the needs assessment, which some CBOs indicated was difficult for them in terms of planning and capacity. Investing time and working around scheduling conflicts is integral to relationship-building with CBOs and community members and can be valuable in trust-building.

- **Communities and CBOs want transparency around the potential and realized outcomes of their participation.**

Communities are far more likely to participate in conversations and activities if they understand what is and is *not* possible as a result of such engagement. Once engaged, people also want to understand how their input is being used. It is important to be transparent about what was heard, what can be done, and what cannot be done, as well as what the next steps and opportunities are for future engagement. People understand not everything can be done, but it is important to explain why different outcomes are possible; otherwise, inaction can feel like disregard.

- **Partnering with CBOs that have existing and trusted relationships within communities can lead to the most meaningful conversations and frequently results in increased community engagement.**

While partnering with CBOs and partners bolstered public engagement in numerous ways, the relationships required for this kind of partnership often require time and connection-building and should always include compensatory arrangements for time and effort.

- **With limited staff, funding, and capacity, and with additional efforts to address issues in their communities, many groups did not have the ability to partner or collaborate on events or even designate time for conversations related to the needs assessment.**

Some CBOs do not have enough capacity to conduct work outside of their immediate mission without general operations or other programmatic funding support. In response to an invitation to work with the LISS on community listening sessions, one interviewee commented that “funding is nice, but funding does not create time.”

Note that issues with time and capacity were not just limited to community groups from disadvantaged areas. In the early stages of this assessment, some staff from larger NGOs and state and federal agencies had difficulty designating time to speak about the needs assessment, and some better-resourced organizations also cited low capacity as a barrier to engagement. Most groups that were engaged in this process shared that any support with making connections and providing resources is helpful.

- **Conversations should be ongoing; community conversations must not be one-and-done.**

Relationships will only be established through trust-building and time. Single conversations will not create collaborations or relationships. Many CBOs and members who participated in this process shared that they want a series of events and opportunities to engage. Ongoing conversations build greater trust and provide the opportunity to ensure evolving community needs and priorities are included in and informing decision-making processes and future activities.

- **Identifying avenues for continuous feedback will be essential for building trust.**

According to most CBOs, the importance of providing open doors and showing up often cannot be overstated. Communities will begin to recognize the LISS, have the opportunity to learn that they will be safe at their events, and see them as a resource if avenues for feedback remain open. Finding opportunities to continue to show up without specific requests and offering support that does not require additional work for communities and CBOs is incredibly important for community engagement, particularly in underserved areas. Ongoing feedback can be gathered through these developed relationships, which will support the LISS in staying in-step with community priorities.

- **Many communities on the Long Island Sound, which are further inland and not included in this current project's efforts, are experiencing issues related to environmental justice and could benefit from the LISS's resources and programming.**

Throughout this project, the project team learned about communities on the Long Island Sound not included in this effort, due to being located further inland that are experiencing social, infrastructural, and environmental issues similar to those discussed in this report. Although outside of the coastal boundary, many of these nearby communities are nonetheless connected to the Sound in some way.

**REACHING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITY MEMBERS: LESSONS LEARNED**

- **Libraries proved to be a great way to meet many community members where they were already located.**

Tabling at a library and offering a small gift card as an incentive for providing input was a very successful way to reach many community members who indicated they did not have time or might not have otherwise heard about a community meeting or event.

- **Written and spoken translation services are necessary for engaging English as a Second Language and non-English speaking communities.**

Providing materials and resources and holding community conversations in English leaves out a significant portion of the population, in particular many of the communities that have historically been overburdened and underrepresented. In this way, not speaking other languages can be a barrier and a factor in limited engagement in some communities.

- **A multimodal approach to data collection is essential to communicate with the public, in particular to ensure reaching overburdened groups.**

In terms of data collection and developing an understanding of community needs and the best methods for sharing resources, materials, programs, and funding, community members need to be met where *they* are. For this reason, future outreach should include many different modes, and those modes most often cited as best by community members who participated in this effort include social media posts and in-person outreach in locations where community members frequent. Distributing information through existing channels, like established Facebook pages and trusted community group pages, is another way to reach communities.

- **The ability to pivot plans and finances is essential for working with disadvantaged communities.**

To be responsive to community needs, plans and funding should be flexible. Small on-the-spot sponsorships could be extremely beneficial to communities.

- **Disadvantaged communities are tired of being studied and want to see action.**

Throughout interviews and discussions, the project team was frequently told that communities are tired of being studied and of feeling like the work and time it requires to participate in surveys and community meetings yield little to no results. Communities are interested in seeing and participating in action to address identified issues.

- **Every community has its own unique issues and needs.**

Each community, even those near one another, have distinct needs and experiences, and community members in the same community might have different priorities. While it is important to also understand similarities and how some issues might be able to be addressed through regional collaboration, it is integral that all relationships are built on listening and learning about unique factors and not leading with preconceptions.

➤ **People want to engage in activities.**

Across all aspects of the project, it was clear that people want to be involved in a wide variety of activities related to the environment. CBOs believe, and survey data confirm, that people in disadvantaged communities want to participate in environmental activities and events; however, it was also stressed that being engaged has to be easy, beneficial, and must not provide additional burdens.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Qualitative and quantitative analyses of the survey responses, in-depth interviews, and community listening sessions and other outreach have led to the following recommendations. There are many actions, large and small, that the LISS can take to help achieve their goals of creating and maintaining relationships with CBOs and members from disadvantaged communities.

Recommendations based on the needs assessment cover the below list of topics and can be found on the following pages.

- Relationship building
- Reaching and engaging community members
- Community needs
- CBO needs

Following the recommendations , are a series of recommendations that came from in-depth interviews with CBOs and community representatives.

---

**RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING: RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Continue to follow-up with CBOs and members engaged through this process, and identify avenues for further developing relationships, building trust, and gathering continuous feedback.**

A major part of this effort should be continuing to follow up and build relationships with groups that took part in needs assessment conversations to ensure that the LISS maintains an understanding of frequently changing community needs and priorities. Getting on existing community group meeting agendas, some of which were identified through this process, is one way to continue this effort.

- **Join community events and support community efforts when possible.**

Throughout every aspect of this project, conversations indicated that there are few things as important to relationship- and trust-building as being available and engaged. The LISS should try to be involved in community events and continue to show up in the communities where many of these conversations have started.

- **Dedicate time to building relationships.**

Throughout the assessment process, interviewees mentioned that projects and efforts often took several years. The LISS should be willing to put a 5-year (or more) plan in place to continue to focus on and build relationships. As one interviewee commented, “Urgency is the enemy of trust.”

- **Build relationships with community leaders and connectors to reach communities.**

Many disadvantaged communities have legitimate concerns about trusting government organizations and larger agencies. It is often useful to collaborate with connectors instead of directly approaching the community.

- **Hire designated staff to focus on connecting with CBOs and communities.**

Throughout all aspects of the assessment, it was highlighted that creating relationships with disadvantaged communities and CBOs takes time and patience. A full-time employee dedicated only to this work who could be on the ground all of the time, attending existing events and building relationships, would support the LISS in building trust, which would support meaningful engagement and would allow the LISS to stay in step with and develop programs, resources, and funding to meet community priorities and needs.

- **Relationship-building and developing an understanding of how to support the work of CBOs should be the responsibility of the LISS.**

Whereas the LISS has multiple organizations involved, many smaller community organizations are limited to very few employees. Even with funding opportunities available for CBOs, some simply do not have the capacity to take on new projects or do anything more than what they are currently doing. Additionally, many groups need partnerships and collaboration that is aligned with their strategic direction. It is important that the LISS works to understand how to support ongoing work at the local

level and limit any burdens placed on CBOs as part of its efforts to advance environmental justice. The LISS can and should develop programs specifically for different groups that do not require the groups to take on many additional responsibilities. The burden should be on the LISS to make connections and offer support for programs and projects.

➤ **Hire an extension agent to cover Queens and The Bronx.**

Currently, eastern Connecticut, western Connecticut, Westchester, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties have assigned extension professionals. Hiring an extension professional to work in Queens and The Bronx could help create relationships and increase familiarity with the LISS in the region.

➤ **Incorporate environmental justice into all themes in the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP).**

Tying all of these things together with environmental justice would be helpful for future outreach and efforts and potentially allow for more flexibility. More flexibility will ultimately aid in relationship-building.



## **REACHING AND ENGAGING COMMUNITY MEMBERS: RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Attend existing community gatherings to speak with leaders, decision-makers, and other community groups.**

Scheduled community meetings can be a great opportunity to bring decision-makers and concerned groups and individuals together; however, note that transportation and more pressing needs often prevent disadvantaged community members from attending meetings and gatherings.

- **To engage community members, meet them where they are.**

Utilize available spaces and events where community members gather. Throughout this project, libraries proved to be a good way to do this; participants also recommended posting information on social media, sharing flyers and other information in community meeting places, and attending existing events. Other places that proved to be good locations to meet community members included food pantries, places of worship, social services facilities, housing complexes, and schools.

- **Engage communities in all decision-making that will impact them throughout the entire decision-making process.**

Some groups explicitly recommended that cities and other governments should gather community input for all decision making, from beginning to end, that could potentially impact community members. One CBO offered the example of a city spending three years getting community input to build a playground, but not seeking any community input on the installation of cell phone towers in Bridgeport.

- **Focus on organizing communal or family events on the Sound, especially in New York.**

The survey with community members yielded findings that New York residents are more interested in group-related events on the Sound, such as those that include family and friends. According to community conversations, some of the larger immigrant groups around the Sound in New York are thought to be more collectivist. Based on quantitative and qualitative findings, events that involve larger groups and promote a sense of community might be especially effective, especially in the Bronx and Queens.

---

**COMMUNITY NEEDS: RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Share more information about and develop more events around water quality and ways to safely access and recreate in the Sound.**

Many communities requested information or asked questions about water quality and how to recreate in the Sound, including information on the fish that are safe to eat and information on safe subsistence fishing practices. The LISS can immediately work with other partners to meet this need.

- **Provide the “why” for fishing rules and regulations and focus on training and lessons for subsistence anglers.**

Subsistence fishing was discussed throughout many interviews. There is some concern that people who rely on fishing harvests as a primary source of food are not always consuming safe fish or adhering to fishing rules and regulations. Some interviewees cautioned that focusing on and reiterating rules and regulations risks promoting a sense of punishment and can be a deterrent to fishing participation. Some suggested that a better approach might be conducting webinars and providing information that explains why some fish are unsafe, why bag limits exist for certain fish, and the reasoning behind other rules and regulations.

In addition, the most common response to not understanding fishing or shellfishing rules and regulations was that the rules and regulations relate to unfamiliar tools and techniques (this constraint was selected by 39% of disadvantaged respondents), showing that there is a need to educate about fishing techniques, overall.

- **Help provide signs and materials in different languages.**

Several CBOs indicated that they need help providing signs and information in different languages. The LISS can potentially assist in this work directly or work to connect CBOs with organizations or agencies that might be able to assist with sign creation and translation of materials.

As one interviewee noted, even among Spanish-speakers who also speak English, the provision of Spanish speakers, text, and information promotes a sense of “all are welcome.” It is additionally important for all materials and signs to be in accessible language. Acronyms and niche language can feel intimidating or unwelcoming.

- **Conversations with community members and CBOs should end with specific plans for the future.**

CBOs expressed the need for the LISS to use what was heard, categorize it, and identify solutions for these issues and come back to share the things that can be done to support project and mission efforts.

- **Be careful when including the press.**  
Although including the press can help increase visibility for issues, in some instances, community members will not be comfortable and open with the press attending discussions.
- **Make engagement appealing to people with competing priorities.**  
Many members of disadvantaged communities have competing and more pressing priorities, such as work and childcare duties. To make engagement as appealing as possible, incentives such as childcare, gift cards, transportation, and food should be a part of community engagement, and engagement should generally not come with requests for additional work from participants (such as taking surveys or participating in cleanup efforts, unless the event was specifically mentioned as a cleanup event).
- **Get youth involved.**  
In some communities, there was much concern about the lack of youth involvement in environmental causes. Many feel that engaging youth and promoting involvement in environmental efforts and outdoor activities will organically spread to parents and other members of communities. The LISS should plan youth-specific events when possible and continue their efforts to connect with local schools and teachers.
- **Focus on water and air quality, and the interconnectivity of the two, as they are major concerns for many interviewees.**  
Many participants stressed the connections between these, as well as the inextricable links between climate change, public health, and environmental and social issues, along with the importance of stressing these connections. Many CBOs and members in particular stressed the importance of making connections between the environment and health and other everyday issues and priorities to reach underserved communities with competing priorities.
- **Focus on nature cleanup projects.**  
Many respondents expressed concern about trash and illegal dumping and were interested in participating in cleanup events. Attending events like this could also encourage a sense of ownership and stewardship and further encourage overall participation in events and use of the Sound.
- **Although many social and infrastructure issues selected by survey respondents as being a priority in their community may seem outside of the LISS's purview, there is an opportunity to meet some of these community needs by working with CBOs.**  
With more than 50% of disadvantaged respondents selecting them in the survey as important issues, the social or infrastructural issues respondents would like to see addressed in their communities include lower food costs, more affordable housing, more local jobs, and greater access to healthy food. It is worth noting that the environmental-based issue that rated the highest in importance was cleaning up creeks, waterways, and natural paths. While some of these issues may seem outside of the LISS

purview, there is an opportunity to meet some of these needs by working with CBOs on community gardening projects and assisting in nature- and water-based cleanup efforts.

➤ **Increase the visibility of outdoor events and recreation opportunities and offer events where people can interact with people like them.**

When presented with a list of potential encouragements and asked which ones would inspire them to participate in outdoor and environmental events, disadvantaged respondents indicated that they would be more likely to participate if they knew about the events and if there were more events with people like them (selected by more than a third of disadvantaged respondents in the survey). Advertising events with clear directions to locations, planning many different types of events, and creating events for specific groups, such as women, people of color, or Spanish speakers, could all increase event attendance.

➤ **Provide information about different types of events (family events and science-themed events were specifically mentioned) and the health of the Long Island Sound.**

Disadvantaged respondents most often indicated that they would like information about outdoor or environmental events, information about the health of the Long Island Sound, information about children and family events, and information about science-related events. All of these responses were selected in the survey by more than 30% of disadvantaged respondents, when they were asked to indicate the types of information that interested them the most.

➤ **Consider developing a long-term plan to enhance understanding of communities outside of the scope of this project, including those further inland and not in the watershed.**

Many communities that are further inland are connected to the Sound in some way. Many of these communities also experience the social, infrastructural, and environmental issues discussed in this report. Although outside of the coastal or watershed boundary, many of these communities could benefit from resources and programs provided by the LISS. Additional efforts with outreach and development of understanding of these communities should be considered as a long-term goal for the LISS.

➤ **Support or develop programs that give people greater confidence in and around the Sound, including swimming lessons.**

Community members expressed concerns about the safety of water and their safety in water. For some, this serves as a major barrier to recreation and use of the Sound. Based on all forms of data collection, community members want to spend time in nature. Supporting programs that help increase personal comfort could reduce some of these barriers and help support the desire to spend time in nature. Further, as many communities of color have historically been denied access to the waterways, programs that involved swimming lessons and similar activities could be particularly beneficial in bringing such communities into recreation and use of the Sound.

**CBO NEEDS: RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Serve as an intermediary to connect different groups.**

Although the LISS will not be able to meet all needs and issues raised through this process, the LISS could work with other groups to respond to existing needs in a more holistic way. As the LISS partnership includes a number of different organizations with different connections, the LISS could be extremely helpful to CBOs by making introductions, suggesting which groups should work together, and connecting groups with similar projects, needs, or missions with one another.
- **Assess and work around internal barriers and issues with capacity.**

Not all community feedback will result in change—the LISS does not have the ability or the scope to address all community needs. It is important to understand, from an internal perspective, what is possible and how to address internal capacity barriers that might improve resources and collaborations in the future.
- **Create guides for identifying needs and solutions.**

Many communities and CBOs noted that many of them are not necessarily scientists or completely aware of all of the possible solutions to their needs. Many feel that they could benefit from a resource that describes possible needs and supports those needs with visions for possible solutions.
- **Use direct email communication to contact nonprofits and CBOs about funding and grant opportunities.**

Larger funding databases can be difficult to navigate and will often return numerous results that groups do not qualify for. Direct email communication can be a helpful way to communicate grant opportunities to CBOs and help reduce the time burden required to search databases.
- **When developing funding initiatives, work with CBOs to develop funding priorities and project ideas to ensure that initiatives are responsive to existing needs.**

Some CBOs indicated that they are not always certain how to use funding or the best approach to address needs through projects. Working directly with CBOs to create plans and understand the best use and assignment of funding could be extremely beneficial to many.
- **Try to be more comfortable with taking risks when it comes to funding and supporting frontline CBOs.**

There needs to be more comfort with risk. Funding should be more flexible, and work should be measured by achievements rather than on whether initial budget proposals exactly match specific work items. There should be more collaboration between funders and grantees, overall. Perhaps most importantly, participants feel that funding directed at environmental justice issues and CBOs should be advanced payment, rather than reimbursement-based.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

Interviewees offered their own recommendations on how to address many of the CBO priorities and barriers discussed during the in-depth interviews. Throughout this section, some of their recommendations are discussed.

### **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Interviewees feel that people want to understand how their input is used. Groups and agencies should be transparent about what was heard, what was done, what could not be done, and why something could not be done. The lack of feedback results in a feeling of being dismissed or ignored among community members.
- CBOs feel that the LISS may be in a unique position to help foster collaboration and relationship building between different CBOs, and between CBOs and local, state, and federal government agencies.
- Collaboration should be used. CBOs feel that there is power in numbers, and collaboration can amplify impacts. When funders see alignment and cohesion on a common issue, supporting that issue seems more straightforward. On the other hand, multiple groups working on different things can make being a part of efforts seem overly complex.

### **LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

- When speaking with communities, interviewees feel that it is important to make connections between marginalization and environmental justice issues.
- Some suggested starting with something tangible when talking about a big issue like climate change. Tell the story of wetlands and waterways and emphasize their importance in connecting people and communities.
- Some feel that the best strategy can be to prove that something is financially responsible. Effusive conversations about nature do not resonate with everyone, but potential financial gains resonate with most. Some people have had success showing how something environmentally friendly is financially advantageous.
- Interviewees feel that discussions around environmental issues need to be purposeful and meaningful to different groups. Interviewees mentioned that in some locations, it might be better to talk about the Long Island Sound, whereas in other locations, it might work better to speak about a nearby part of the watershed instead of the Sound as a whole. One interviewee asked, “What does ‘conservation’ mean in an urban environment?” Some feel that taking the approach of talking about increased frequency of flooding, for example—something everyone sees and experiences—can make climate

change feel more tangible and help communities understand the connections between social and environmental justice where they might not otherwise.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Some interviewees suggested partnering with libraries and schools as a bridge to the community. Many feel that getting students involved will ultimately lead to parents, which can spread through the community (note that some interviewees also said the opposite parent to student approach could also work). Teachers are a major asset and should be used more to engage communities and bring communities together.
- Interviewees suggested taking advantage of available spaces and events where community members gather and keep them involved every step of the way.
- Suggestions were made to connect with communities through community boards and community group meetings and to attend seemingly unrelated events in communities to connect with community members.
- Door-to-door communication, up-to-date newsletters, and emailing were all suggested as good methods to contact community members.
- Interviewees also suggested that community-building events could be successful through the use of incentives: instead of having people come to a meeting and sit in a room, event organizers could pay for food trucks and offer prizes to encourage people to use QR codes to give feedback.
- Interviewees discussed the importance that organizations continue introducing youth in urban areas to the environment and continue to foster a better understanding of the importance of being a steward. Providing opportunities to make connections between issues that urban areas experience and the environment, particularly with youth, would be beneficial.
- Some encouraged job development and creation as a way to connect with communities. They noted that positions within organizations should be paid when possible and give students and community members the opportunity to take responsibility for and have career development in conservation fields.
- Many interviewees feel that connecting with the communities must be done through a localized approach. Interviewees noted that no two communities are the same; each community must be met where they are. There is a great deal of diversity and many languages spoken in the “mini country” that is New York City. Every single community needs to be approached individually.
- Interviewees often agreed that it is important to bring fun, joy, and optimism into environmental justice work in order to engage more members of the public.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many of the recommendations mentioned below were incorporated into the needs assessment process. For example, participants in the community listening sessions were paid for their time and offered additional incentives, such as lunches or dinners for attending. The project team also conducted presentations of findings from the needs assessment in which all CBOs and community members who had provided their contact information were invited to attend. The presentations took place virtually and were scheduled at different times of the day in order to offer participation options that might work best for different schedules. In addition, the LISS team is working with several new CBO partners to begin to implement other recommendations made during the needs assessment process.

- Interviewees feel that communities should be involved in all aspects of the needs assessment and all future assessments. This could potentially encourage future use of resources and tools.
- Sharing the results of the needs assessment in a digestible way will be extremely important, some interviewees noted. Some feel that the findings of the needs assessment should be available to CBOs and community members.
- During some interviews, participants suggested that the LISS reach out with ideas to communities after the needs assessment and be available to provide tools and resources – keeping open lanes of communication and being responsive are particularly important.
- Many interviewees mentioned that people need to see something coming from their involvement. They should be paid for their time, and they should be able to see that their effort is leading to something.
- Interviewees recommended that the LISS think about ways to bring as many people to the table as possible through engaging new or different groups and through incentivizing participation in conversations with organizations and groups.
- Several interviewees feel that opportunities and connections should be discussed as often as issues, this approach can help promote a sense of hope and potential accomplishment.



## SOURCES

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. 2023. *CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index*. <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>.
- American Fisheries Society. 2022. *Perspectives from Fisheries Social Scientists: Mixed Methods as a DEIJ Tool*.
- American Immigration Council. 2020. *Immigrants in Connecticut*. <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-connecticut>.
- Audubon Atlantic Flyway. 2023. *Conservation History of Long Island Sound*. <https://ct.audubon.org/conservation/conservation-history-long-island-sound>.
- Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. 2023. *Explore the Map*. <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#6.98/30.53/-101.258>.
- Connecticut Data. 2023. *Environmental Justice Distressed Municipalities 2022*. [https://data.ct.gov/Environment-and-Natural-Resources/Environmental-Justice-Distressed-Municipalities-20/i3nv-pfw9/data?no\\_mobile=true](https://data.ct.gov/Environment-and-Natural-Resources/Environmental-Justice-Distressed-Municipalities-20/i3nv-pfw9/data?no_mobile=true).
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. 2022. *Distressed Municipalities*. [https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/About\\_DECD/Research-and-Publications/02\\_Review\\_Publications/Distressed-Municipalities](https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/About_DECD/Research-and-Publications/02_Review_Publications/Distressed-Municipalities).
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. 2023. *What is an Environmental Justice Community*. <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Environmental-Justice/05-Learn-More-About-Environmental-Justice-Communities#:~:text=In%20CT%2C%20an%20environmental%20justice,of%20the%20federal%20poverty%20level>.
- Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. *County Languages*. [extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEMHS/\\_docs/Plans-and-Publications/EHSP0087--DCPCountyLanguageDoc.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEMHS/_docs/Plans-and-Publications/EHSP0087--DCPCountyLanguageDoc.pdf).
- Data USA. 2023. *Westchester County, NY*. <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/westchester-county-ny>.
- Department of Energy. 2023. *Justice40 Initiative*. <https://www.energy.gov/justice/justice40-initiative#:~:text=DOE%20calculates%20the%20DAC%20score,score%20for%20each%20census%20tract>.
- Department of Marine Sciences, University of Connecticut. 2020. *Water Quality Data in Long Island Sound: Stakeholder Needs and Opportunities for Collaborative Data Management, Sharing, and Visualization*.
- Dvirka and Bartilucci Consulting Engineers. 1999. *Manhasset Bay Water Quality Improvement Plan*.
- Economic Innovation Group. 2023. *Distressed Communities*. <https://eig.org/distressed-communities/>.
- Immigration Research Initiative. 2023. *Immigrants in the Long Island Economy: Overcoming Hurdles, Yet Still Facing Barriers*. <https://immresearch.org/publications/longisland/>.
- Long Island Index Map. 2023. *Predominant Land Use*. [www.longislandindexmaps.org](http://www.longislandindexmaps.org).

- Long Island Sound. 2023. *A Regional Needs Assessment to Help Build a Sustainable and Resilient Long Island Sound*.
- Migration Policy Institute. 2023. *Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States*. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20immigrants%20comprised%2013.6,share%20they%20comprised%20in%202019.>
- Nassau County Sheriff's Department. 2021. *Language Access Plan*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/<https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35856/Language-Access-Plan-2021P>.
- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. 2020. *Long Island Sound Futures Fund*.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 2023. *NOAA Regional Collaboration Network Announces Climate and Equity Pilot Projects*.
- New York State Education Department. 2019. *A Guide to Community-Based Organizations for Immigrants*.
- New York State Education Department. 2021. *Nassau County Public School English Language Learners Enrollment (2020-21)*. <https://data.nysed.gov/ell.php?year=2021&county=28>.
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority .2023. *Disadvantaged Communities*. <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/ny/Disadvantaged-Communities>.
- New York Department of State. 2023. *Long Island Sound Coastal Management Program*. <https://dos.ny.gov/long-island-sound-coastal-management-program>.
- New York State Official Website. 2015. *Top Languages Spoken at Home by the Limited English Proficient Population*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/[https://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/dcp/assets/files/pdf/data-tools/census/acs/top\\_lang\\_2014pums1yr\\_nyc.pdf?r=4](https://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/dcp/assets/files/pdf/data-tools/census/acs/top_lang_2014pums1yr_nyc.pdf?r=4).
- Responsive Management. 2022. *Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Missouri*. Study conducted for the Missouri Department of Conservation.
- Responsive Management. 2022. *Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Nevada*. Study conducted for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.
- Responsive Management. 2021. *Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Ohio*. Study conducted for the Ohio Division of Wildlife.
- Responsive Management. 2022. *Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Oklahoma*. Study conducted for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.
- Responsive Management. 2022. *Massachusetts Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Conservation*. Study conducted for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.
- Responsive Management. 2021. *Philadelphia Metro Statistical Area Residents' Attitudes Toward Fishing*. Study conducted for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.
- Ruff, Joshua. 2023. *Diasporas in Suburbia: Long Island's Recent Immigrant Past*. Long Island History Journal, St. Joseph's College, Long Island Museum.

- <https://lihj.cc.stonybrook.edu/2009/articles/diasporas-in-suburbia-long-islands-recent-immigrant-past/>.
- Stony Brook University Center for Survey Research, Department of Political Science. 2006. *Public Perception of Long Island Sound Watershed Residents*.
- United States Census Bureau. 2023. *Urban and Rural*. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/urban-rural.html>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2022. *American Community Survey*. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2023. *Persistent Poverty in Counties and Census Tracts*. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2023/acs/acs-51%20persistent%20poverty.pdf>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2023. *SS4A Underserved Communities Census Tracts (Historically Disadvantaged Communities)*. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/99f9268777ff4218867ceedfabe58a3a>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2023. *Quick Facts New York*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NY/PST045222>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2023. *Quick Facts Connecticut*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CT/PST045222>.
- United States Geological Survey. 2017. *Long Island Population*. <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/new-york-water-science-center/science/long-island-population>.
- United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. *EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool*. <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>.
- University of Connecticut. 2023. *Connecticut Environmental Justice Screening Tool*. <https://connecticut-environmental-justice.circa.uconn.edu/>.
- The Urban Initiative. 2005. *Immigrants in Connecticut: Labor Market Experiences and Health Care Access*. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/51746/311256-Immigrants-in-Connecticut.PDF>
- Water Words that Work. 2022. *2022 National Waterways Literacy Survey*.
- Westchester County Government. 2023. *Spanish Speakers in Westchester County*. [https://planning.westchestergov.com/census-language Spanish Westchestergov.com](https://planning.westchestergov.com/census-language/Spanish%20Westchestergov.com).
- WSHU. 2023. *These are the Long Island's "disadvantaged communities" set for climate funding*. <https://www.wshu.org/long-island-news/2023-03-29/these-are-long-islands-disadvantaged-communities-set-for-climate-funding>.
- Yale Center for Language Study. 2023. *The Languages of New Haven*. <https://cls.yale.edu/languages-new-haven>.

## APPENDIX A. EXPLORATORY PHASE

The exploratory phase of the project focused primarily on developing an understanding of the region overall and specifically of disadvantaged communities and CBOs on the Long Island Sound. Included in this phase of the project were an evaluation and review of previous social science findings and needs assessments conducted in the Long Island Sound region; an analysis of environmental justice mapping tools, definitions, and indicators of disadvantaged communities; a review of previous surveys conducted by Responsive Management about outdoor recreation needs and opinions among minority groups; and a series of interviews with the LISS's current contacts, experts and professionals in the field, individuals and groups who have experience working closely with disadvantaged communities and CBOs, and those conducting concurrent efforts with disadvantaged communities.

Based on findings from this phase of the project, as well as Responsive Management's experience with natural resource and environmental surveys, and through collaboration with the LISS team, a discussion guide for interviews with CBOs and community leaders was created (note that these interviews are discussed in other sections of the report but were not a part of the exploratory phase). Additionally, communities within each state were prioritized for community outreach (note that this marked the preliminary phase of prioritizing communities for outreach—communities would be further prioritized based on feedback in the next stage of in-depth interviews with CBOs and community leaders). While survey data collection encompassed all areas identified as disadvantaged or having environmental justice issues in the Long Island Sound region, community listening sessions and additional outreach took place in specific locations based on findings from this phase of outreach, collaboration with the LISS team and CBOs who were interviewed later in the process, and other components, such as residents' capacity for participating in listening sessions, space to conduct community gatherings, and schedule availability.

In this chapter, components of and findings from the exploratory phase are discussed.

On the following page is a list of some of the sources of information that were utilized or reviewed during the exploratory phase of the project. Further discussion of each component is included later in the chapter. Following the list, specific aspects of the exploratory phase are discussed.

<b>Resources for Exploratory Phase and Research Review</b>
Public Perception Survey of Long Island Sound Watershed Residents.
Long Island Sound Study Regional Needs Assessment to Help Build a Sustainable and Resilient Long Island Sound.
Water Words that Work National Literacy Survey.
The Nature Conservancy Informal Needs Assessment notes from 2022 Community Conversations.
Project through National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration North American Regional Team to pilot different community participation incentives with a focus on underserved communities and climate resilience.
Manhasset Bay Water Quality Improvement Plan-repeat of 1999 study.
Pilot shuttle bus program in Suffolk County with Stonybrook University.
Perspectives from Fisheries Social Scientists: Mixed Methods as a DEIJ Tool.
New York State Education Department: A Guide to Community-Based Organizations for Immigrants.
University of Connecticut, Connecticut Environmental Justice Risk Mapper.
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation updated list of distressed communities.
United States Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping.
Centers for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index.
Department of Energy Justice40 Initiative
Economics Innovation Group Distressed Communities mapping tools.
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Distressed Municipalities information.
Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development Distressed Municipalities information.
Supplemental research from Responsive Management's previous work.
Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) discussion and meeting.
Series of in-depth interviews with professionals.

## **EXPLORATORY PHASE INTERVIEWS WITH EXISTING CONTACTS AND PARTNERS**

During the exploratory phase of the assessment, Responsive Management associates conducted 18 interviews with the LISS's current contacts, experts and professionals in the field, individuals and groups who have experience working closely with disadvantaged communities and CBOs, and those conducting concurrent efforts to hear from disadvantaged communities about a number of different topics. Interviews ran concurrently with other aspects of the exploratory phase.

The purpose of this initial round of interviews was to:

- develop a better understanding of the impressions of community and CBOs' needs with interviewees who had worked directly with CBOs or communities,
- establish the best approach for supporting and collaborating on concurrent efforts in the region,
- understand any information partners and local environmental justice practitioners would most like to gain from the environmental justice needs assessment,
- gather information about impressions of which communities were experiencing the most environmental justice issues,
- and, finally, for introductions to organizations and leaders operating directly within disadvantaged communities, thereby assisting in the development of a list of community-based organizations and leaders with whom the next round of in-depth interviews would be conducted (these interviews are discussed throughout this report).

All interviewees for this project can be classified into four primary categories (listed below). The in-depth interviews conducted during the exploratory phase were exclusively with individuals and groups from the third category: existing partners and local environmental justice practitioners that provided some early information about their impressions of the region; those that have conducted, or are conducting, similar work in the region to that of this needs assessment; and those with established connections to disadvantaged community leaders and CBOs. In cases of the latter, interviewees often provided names and contact information of CBOs and community leaders, and in some cases they arranged introductions between the project team and CBOs and community leaders. In this way, the exploratory phase began the snowball sampling technique that was used throughout this project to reach as many CBOs and community leaders as possible, including those whom the project team was previously unfamiliar with.

1. Those currently living in disadvantaged communities (includes members of the public, some community leaders, and some representatives from CBOs).
2. Those who previously lived in disadvantaged communities and have first-hand experience with the environmental justice issues faced by communities but are not currently experiencing environmental justice issues (includes some concerned residents, some legislators or community leaders, and some representatives from CBOs).

3. Those who are invested in environmental justice and aided in developing an early understanding of the region and in efforts to reach community members and CBOs (includes professionals from NGOs or state, federal, or local agencies, as well as partners of the LISS, those who participate in the LISS workgroups, and those who have conducted outreach in the region).
4. New partners with whom the LISS team is in the early stages of relationship development.

### **INTERVIEWEE EXPERIENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION**

The first portion of the in-depth interview guide focused on learning more about the interviewee. Although many of the interviewees work for larger NGOs and federal, state, and local organizations, some of them indicated that they were experiencing staffing, funding, and capacity issues. Some interviewees also noted difficulties with reaching the public and CBOs even with greater available resources. Interviewees often indicated that although they had undertaken efforts to connect with disadvantaged communities, they had faced many obstacles in relationship building mostly attributed to their own issues with capacity combined with CBOs' issues with capacity, time, and staffing. Many interviewees noted that they would benefit from a group that could assist them in making connections with disadvantaged communities.

### **INTERVIEWEE EXPERIENCE WITH AND PERCEPTIONS OF CBOs**

When asked about their experiences with CBOs and issues the CBOs might be facing, many interviewees focused on the need for capacity building and funding assistance. Regarding funding, interviewees stressed that grants and funding were still being awarded to larger, more resource-rich organizations, even as language about meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities was being added to many grants. Interviewees said that providing capacity building and step-by-step grant assistance (that includes project planning, grant planning, application assistance, and grant writing and management assistance) would be extremely beneficial to smaller CBOs with limited resources. In addition, some interviewees feel that grant reviewers and funding groups need diversification—with some interviewees mentioning concerns that change is not likely in the awards that are given if change is not happening in those responsible for awarding the grants. Finally, most interviewees stressed the importance of streamlining the entire grant process. Some feel that many grants are overly complicated and hard to understand, even among those who work with grant writing teams and regularly apply for this type of funding.

Outside of capacity and funding needs, interviewees also mentioned that they have heard from some CBOs that engaging and reaching their communities is a barrier for many CBOs. Some interviewees attributed these issues to a lack of education and awareness among members of the public. In addition to issues with outreach and connecting in general, some interviewees noted that they have received feedback from CBOs that feel they need assistance communicating about environmental justice, specifically. Interviewees noted that they believe some CBOs could benefit from templates and information that is ready to share directly with

the public. Some interviewees also mentioned that they feel that CBOs and communities alike are in need of multi-benefit projects that bring jobs and opportunities to communities.

### **INTERVIEWEE PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES**

When asked specifically about community needs and priorities, many interviewees discussed the need for more and greater access to educational materials in different languages. In addition to feeling these materials need to be available to everyone, interviewees mentioned the need for materials specifically for subsistence anglers in many areas. Interviewees feel that many of these anglers are refugees and immigrants, Spanish speakers (in Connecticut, it was suggested that a large portion of Spanish speakers were of Puerto Rican descent), Southeast Asians, Syrian and Afghan refugees, and Eastern Europeans who might be new to the area and unaware of rules and regulations. Many are concerned about the safety of these anglers, as they may not be aware of the dangers associated with fishing in some waterways and for some specific species. Interviewees additionally cautioned that many of these groups need to be approached in a way that is sensitive to their cultural needs and that information and outreach should be tailored to the needs of these groups to really reach the intended audience.

Among those exploratory phase interviewees who had connections with disadvantaged communities and CBOs, it was noted that they have heard from disadvantaged communities that communities are tired of being studied. Some indicated that they had received feedback from communities that those communities are frequently being studied but are rarely seeing action or results stemming from the studies. Some feel that communities want to see action that meets their urgent needs and improves the natural world around them. This lack of follow-through, these interviewees feel, leads to distrust in large organizations and feelings of hopelessness and disempowerment.

When discussing the needs of communities, interviewees also stressed the importance of supporting leaders and champions in disadvantaged communities. Some suggested providing workshops to empower leaders and provide resources. Others emphasized the importance of recognizing and empowering all types of leaders, including nonprofit administrators, religious leaders, community gardeners, outspoken neighbors, and many others.



## RESEARCH AND INFORMATION REVIEW

The next component of the exploratory phase included a review of general information about the area and a review of previous social science research conducted in the Long Island Sound region (excluding social science surveys conducted by Responsive Management, which is detailed in its own section later in this chapter). Some of the general findings from this phase of the review are included below and highlight general information about the region, public perceptions of the Long Island Sound watershed, and issues related to the environment in communities near the Sound. Note that much of the previous research conducted in the region included all residents and did not focus on disadvantaged groups or communities.

### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE LONG ISLAND SOUND REGION

Before reviewing research and work done in the Long Island Sound region, the project team reviewed data from the United States Census Bureau and the EPA to develop an overall understanding of the population and characteristics of communities within the region. Some of the key information is shown below. Note that some of the information shown below begins to illustrate environmental justice issues that communities might be facing (further discussed later in the chapter).

- The region is densely populated with 8 million residents directly within the watershed and 23.8 million people living within 50 miles of the shore.
- The population has seen an increase since the COVID 19 pandemic.
- There are many older residents, with some communities ranking in the 95 to 100 percentiles when compared to the United States as a whole.
- There are many minority groups within the region.
- There are many non-English speaking residents in the region.
- The region contains some of the most disadvantaged communities in the United States.
- There are many older housing structures and industrial sites along the Sound.
- There are wealth disparities throughout the region, with some communities representing some of the wealthiest in the country and others living below the poverty line.

### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT RESIDENTS OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND REGION

Numerous sources report high rates of non-English speakers, foreign-born residents, and minority groups in the Long Island Sound region that have surpassed national rates. In an effort to better understand which groups can be found throughout the region, and in turn potentially develop future materials and programming based on such information, the project team further researched which demographics could be found in different areas, as well as which languages are being spoken in those areas.

The following graphics illustrate some of the groups that can be found in the region, as well as some of the languages spoken in different locations. Data from numerous sources, including the 2020 United States Census, reports and publications from Yale and Stony Brook Universities, the Immigration Research Initiative, the Urban Institute, and state and city

governments, were combined to develop these graphics. Note that in addition to the information presented below, interviews with partners from the region (and later with CBOs) further yielded information about the groups and languages that can be seen in the Long Island Sound region.

### Demographic Characteristics of Regions and Cities

#### **New York City**

The Bronx: 44% Black, 56.6% Hispanic, 34% foreign-born residents mostly from Mexico, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, in addition to West Africa (Nigeria)  
Queens: 20% Black, 28.2% Hispanic, 27.9% Asian  
47% foreign-born residents mostly from Mexico, China, Jamaica, Ecuador, Haiti

#### **Westchester County**

Significantly higher percentages of Black residents (17% throughout county with some cities at 62%) and Hispanic residents (with over 26% in the county)  
Largest immigrant group from Latin America, (Mexico, Guatemala, and Ecuador), with others from China and Jamaica  
Up to 27% foreign-born residents

#### **Long Island**

Brookhaven: 16.7% Hispanic  
Huntington Station: 31.9% Hispanic  
21% of economic output from immigrants, but 48% of Hispanic men and 35% Hispanic Women in Long Island make more than what is considered low wage in the US  
16% Foreign Born in Suffolk County  
22.8% foreign born in Nassau County

#### **Eastern Connecticut**

Significantly higher percentages of Hispanic and Black residents (30% Hispanic in some cities and up to 20% Black)  
Large number of Chinese and Haitian immigrants

#### **Western Connecticut**

Over 7% Asian in some communities  
Up to 30% Black and nearly 40% Hispanic in some cities  
23% foreign-born residents in the region  
More than 60 languages spoken in New Haven City Schools  
Large immigrant populations from Dominican Republic, Poland, India, Jamaica, Haiti

#### **Central Connecticut**

Nearly 50% Hispanic in some cities  
Nearly 40% Black in areas  
21% foreign-born residents  
Most common countries of origin are India, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Poland, Italy, and Ecuador

### Languages Spoken in Regions and Cities

<p><b>New York City</b> Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, Russian, and French Creole The Bronx: Bengali, Kru, Ibo, and Yoruba Queens: Large group of Mandarin speakers</p>	<p><b>Westchester County</b> Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, and Jamaican Patois</p>
<p><b>Long Island</b> Latin American Spanish Suffolk County: French Creole, Italian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese Nassau County: Mandarin, Italian, Persian (Farsi), Korean, Hatian Creole</p>	<p><b>Eastern Connecticut</b> Latin American Spanish, Mandarin, French Creole, Polish</p>
<p><b>Western Connecticut</b> Latin American Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish Significant numbers of Hindi speakers, Jamaican Patois, and French Creole New Haven has a significant number of Mandarin speakers</p>	<p><b>Central Connecticut</b> Latin American Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish Also significant numbers of Hindi speakers, Jamaican Patois, French Creole, and Italian</p>

### PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE LONG ISLAND SOUND WATERSHED BASED ON PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE REGION

Next, the project team reviewed social science research and other similar projects that have been conducted in the region (including the 2022 National Waterways Literacy Survey, the 2006 Public Perceptions of Long Island Sound Watershed Residents, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Long Island Sound Future’s Fund, and information collected during an informal needs assessment conducted by The Nature Conservancy) to begin to understand public perceptions about the watershed. Some of the primary perceptions that related to the efforts of the needs assessment are shown below.

- Overall, New York and Connecticut residents who reside further away from the Sound are more likely to think the Sound has poor water quality when compared to those who live closer to the Sound.

- New York and Connecticut residents who reside further from the Sound also more often think the Sound is not a safe place for recreation.
- Some residents think fish caught in the Sound are unsafe for consumption.
- In general, some findings suggest that those who live closer to the Sound, recreate in the Sound more often, and practice more positive environmental behaviors (not washing cars in their driveways, not using pesticides on lawns, not emptying pet waste outside) rate the quality of the water and fish higher than those who live further from the Sound.
- Knowledge of the Sound is lower in minority groups when compared to the population as a whole.
- The term “environmental justice” polled poorly in the 2022 National Waterways Literacy Survey. First, respondents in the survey were asked to define environmental justice, and then rank the importance of environmental justice as a topic community leaders deal with (compared to water pollution, exposure to toxic chemicals, wildlife conservation, protecting wetlands/marshes/swamps, and conserving undeveloped land and farmland). Nearly 60% of respondents incorrectly defined environmental justice, with respondents of color being less likely than others to correctly define the term, and environmental justice ranked lowest among the topics provided in the survey.
- Disadvantaged groups seem to be more concerned with water quality, water pollution, health, and safety than non-disadvantaged groups.

#### **ISSUES RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT IN COMMUNITIES NEAR THE LONG ISLAND SOUND**

Next, the project team reviewed information about the environmental issues in communities near the Long Island Sound. Sources reviewed to better understand environmental issues included the Audubon Atlantic Flyway’s *Conservation History of Long Island Sound*, information from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, The Department of Energy, the University of Connecticut, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, the New York Department of State, and the United States Census Bureau.

- Sea level rise and coastal flooding are major issues in the area.
- Stormwater management is an issue for many due to increasingly severe weather and storm events.
- Coastal erosion and impacts from development cause issues for some communities around the Sound.
- Wildlife issues in the region include habitat loss and degradation, shifting seasons and species, tree loss, and invasive species.

## REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY MAPPING TOOLS AND INDICATORS OF DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

The next component of the exploratory phase included a review of mapping tools and definitions related to environmental justice, social vulnerability, and disadvantaged community indicators. This information is presented below, along with several maps that identify issues throughout the region.

### INDICATORS OF DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

According to the Department of Energy, Justice40 Initiative,<sup>xiv</sup> there are 8 categories with several indicators in each category that are used to identify disadvantaged communities. As the Justice40 Initiative played a role in supporting projects and efforts like the environmental justice needs assessment, this review began with developing an understanding of the disadvantaged indicators established through the initiative. The Justice40 indicators are shown below<sup>xv</sup> and were found throughout communities in the Long Island Sound region.

<p><b>Climate Change</b>                      &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected agricultural loss rate</li> <li>• Expected building loss rate</li> <li>• Expected population loss rate</li> <li>• Projected flood risk</li> <li>• Projected wildlife risk</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<p><b>Legacy Pollution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have at least one abandoned mine land, or;</li> <li>• Formerly used defense sites</li> </ul> <p>&gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to hazardous waste facilities</li> <li>• Proximity to superfund sites</li> <li>• Priorities list</li> <li>• Proximity to risk management plan facilities</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>
<p><b>Energy</b>                      &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• energy cost</li> <li>• PM2.5 in the air</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<p><b>Transportation</b>                      &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diesel particulate matter exposure</li> <li>• Transportation barrier</li> <li>• Traffic proximity and volume</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>
<p><b>Health</b>                      &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asthma</li> <li>• Diabetes</li> <li>• Heart disease</li> <li>• Low life expectancy</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<p><b>Water and Wastewater</b>                      &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underground storage tanks and releases</li> <li>• Wastewater discharge</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>
<p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced historic underinvestment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Workforce Development</b>                      &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p>

<p>(redlined) OR                  &gt;=90<sup>th</sup> percentile for at least one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing cost</li> <li>• Lack of green space</li> <li>• Lack of indoor plumbing</li> <li>• Lead</li> </ul> <p>AND &gt;= 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low-income</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic isolation</li> <li>• Low median income</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> </ul> <p>AND &lt; 10% people older than 25 have a high school diploma</p>
--	--

**ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF MAPPING TOOLS**

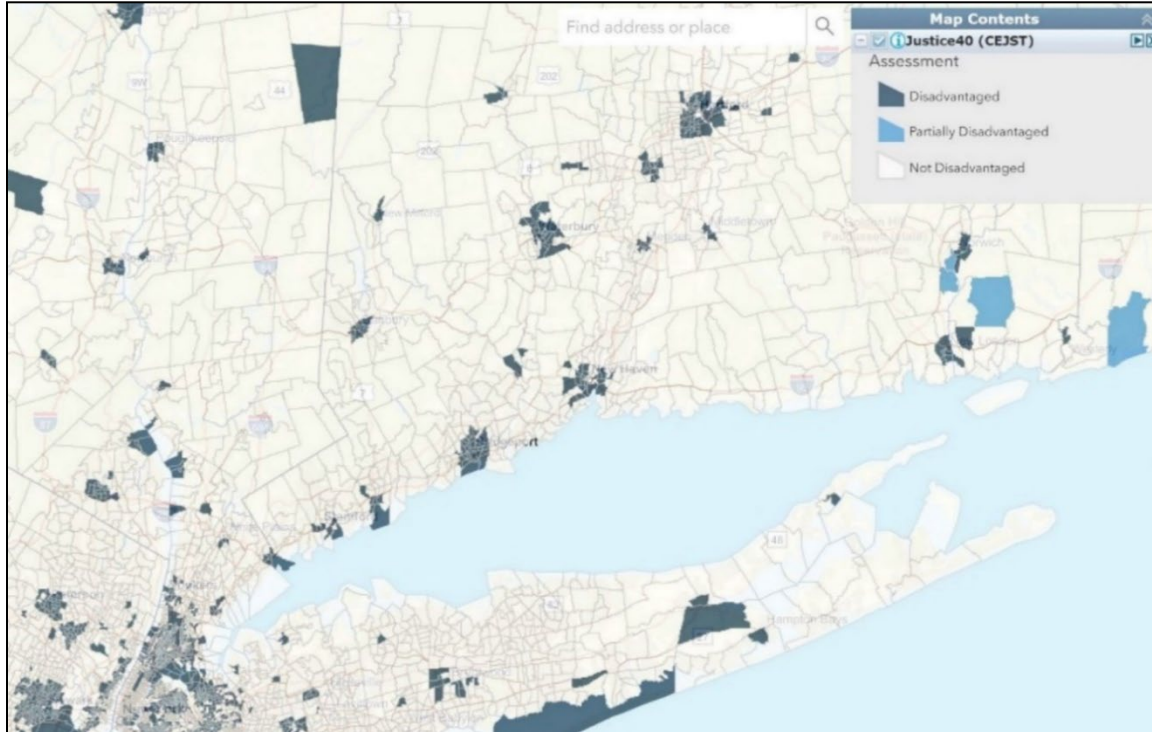
Next, mapping tools were used to identify disadvantaged communities and to develop a better understanding of the compounding environmental justice issues that might be impacting some communities in the region.

Maps from several sources were used to better understand the region, including maps from EPA EJScreen, the Centers for Disease Control and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the Economic Innovation Group, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Several of these maps that especially highlight the environmental justice issues in the region and the communities most impacted by them are described in the following pages.

The first series of maps from the EPA EJScreen shows disadvantaged communities and how single issues impact communities within the region. A review of the single-topic maps quickly reveals patterns indicating that some communities are simultaneously impacted by numerous environmental justice indicators.

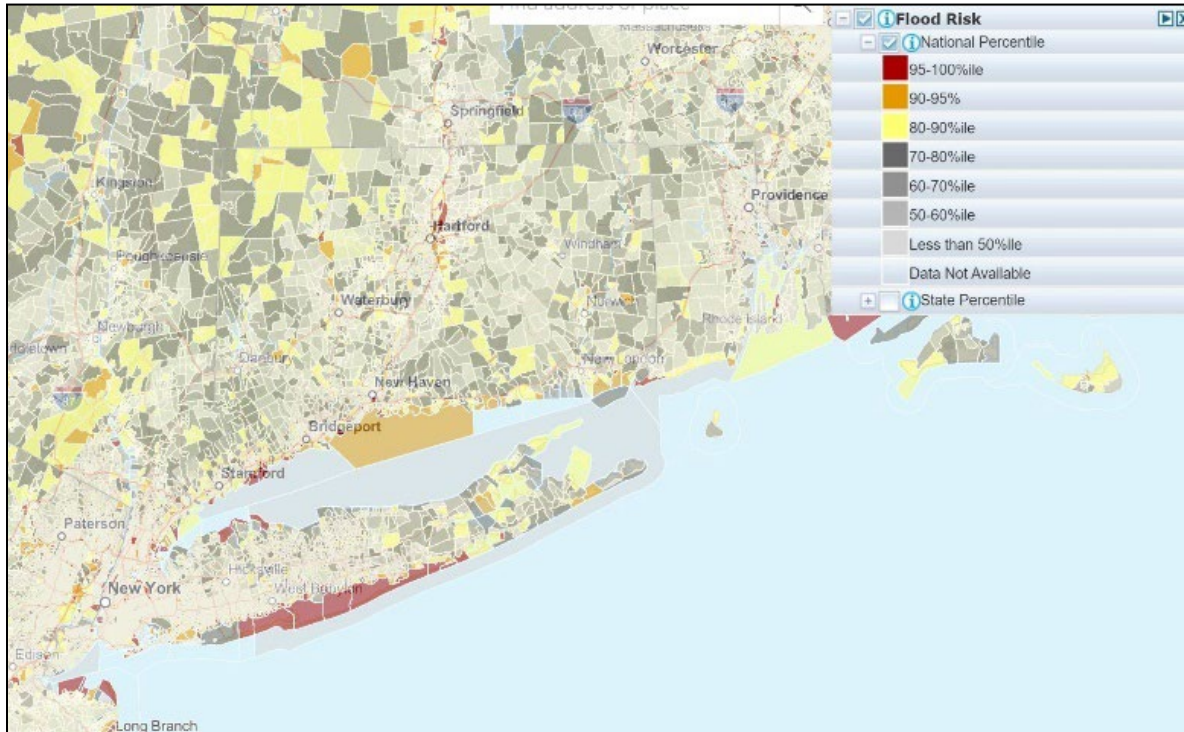
Some of the communities identified as disadvantaged in the Long Island Sound region are New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Groton, and New London in Connecticut, and Westchester County, the Bronx, Queens, and Riverhead on Long Island in New York.

### Disadvantaged Communities on the Long Island Sound



The map below shows flood risk throughout the region. Early in the exploratory phase, the project team started to receive feedback about the issues caused by increased flooding in the region. Some of the communities most often mentioned as having flooding issues were New Haven, Bridgeport, New London, the Bronx, and Queens. Here, these communities, with several others in the region, are seen to be in the 90<sup>th</sup> to 100<sup>th</sup> percentile when compared to the national percentile. These communities include Bridgeport, Stamford, New Haven, Groton, and New London in Connecticut, and Westchester County, The Bronx, and Queens in New York.

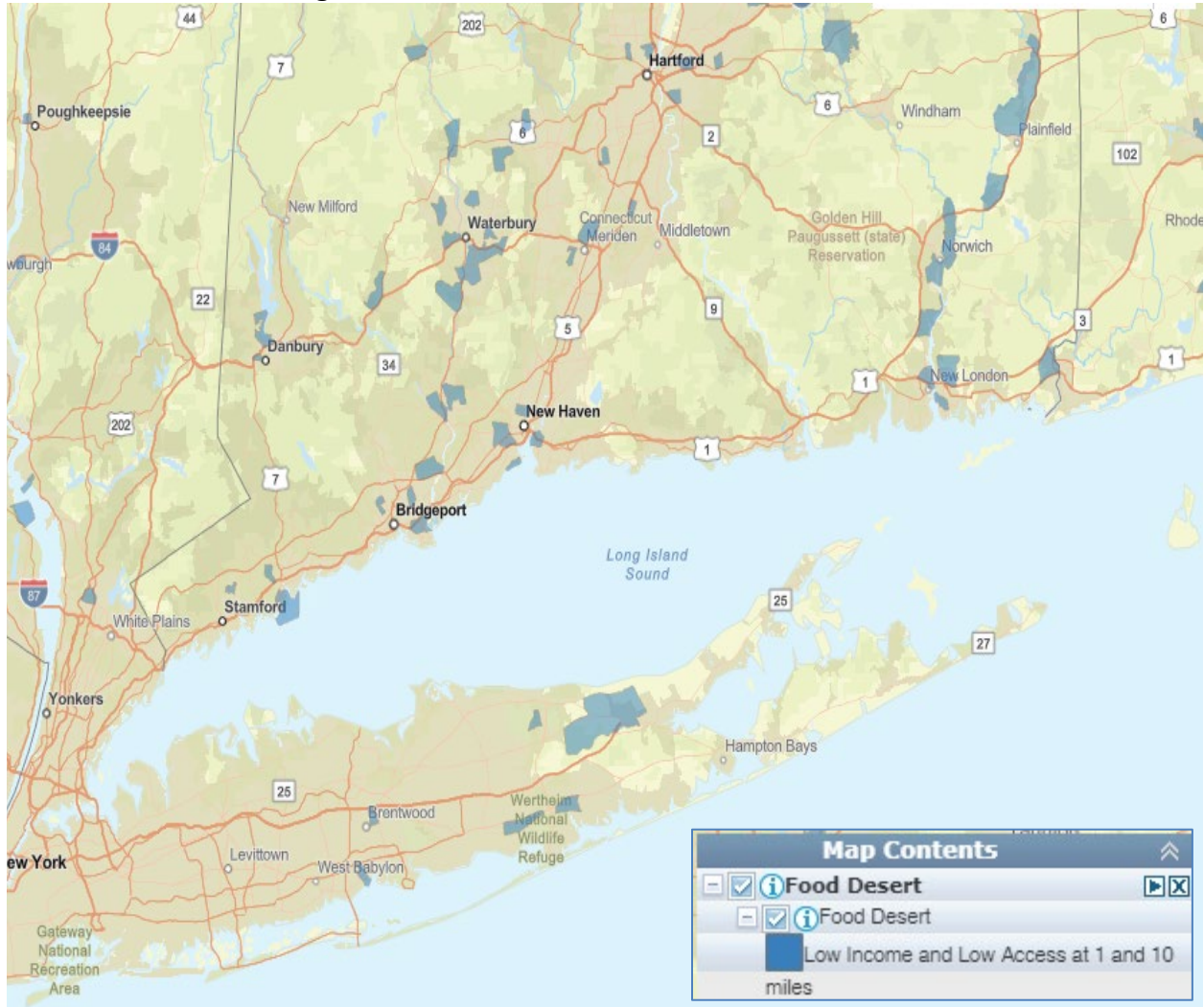
### Flood Risk on the Long Island Sound





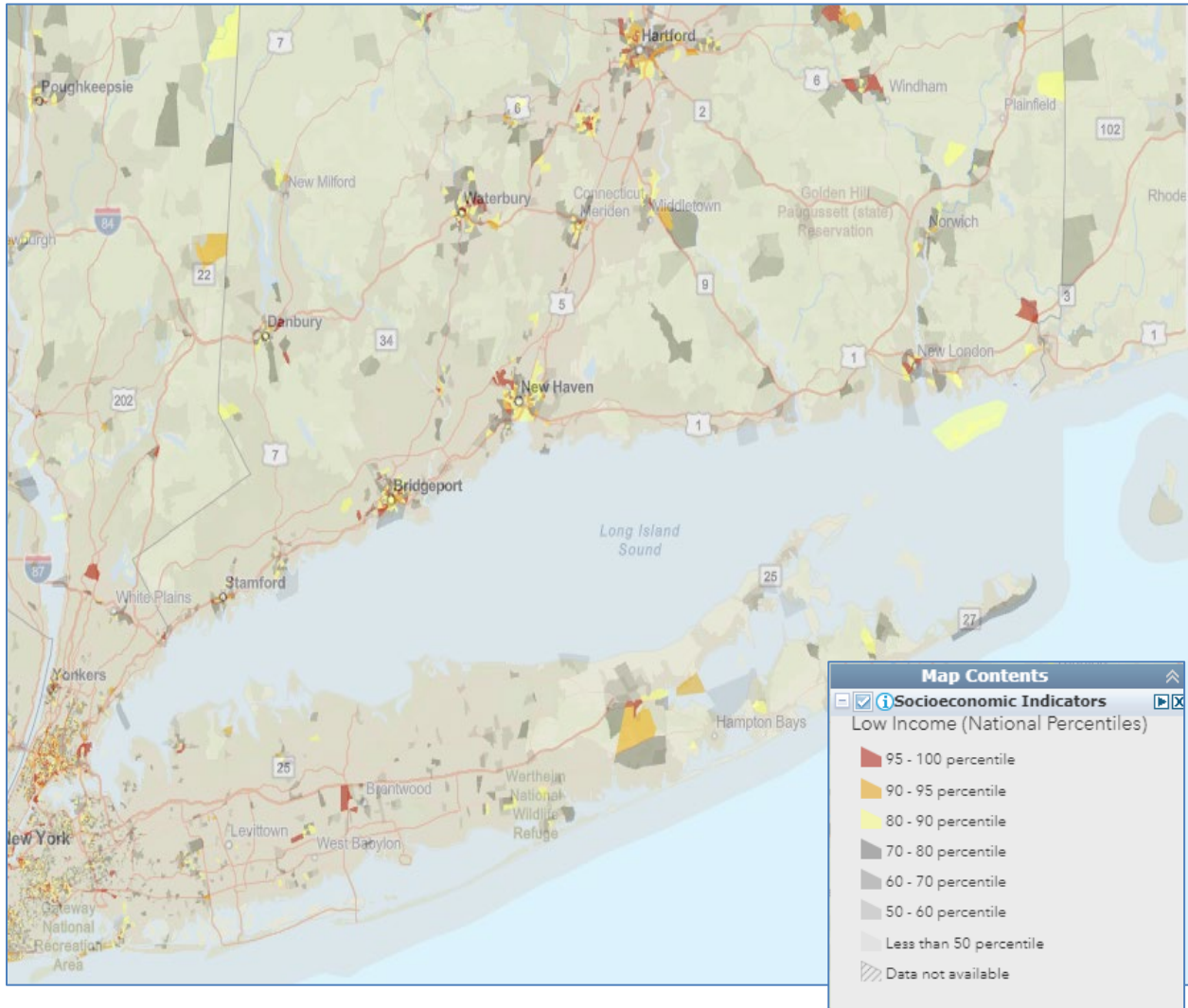
Some of the communities shown to be food deserts are New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Groton, and New London, as well as Riverhead in Long Island.

### Food Deserts on the Long Island Sound



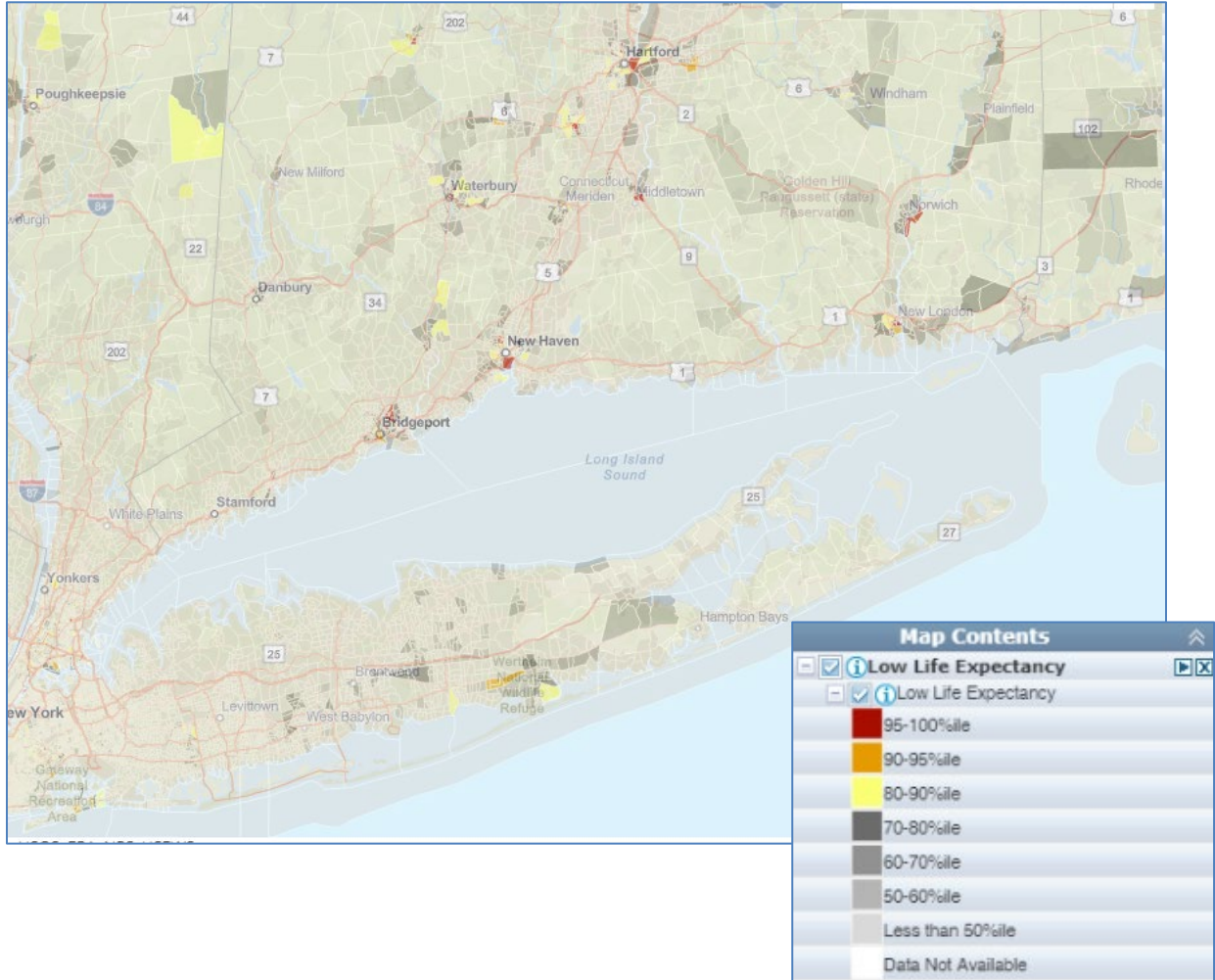
Some of the communities with the greatest low income percentiles in the map below are the communities that have consistently appeared in maps shown earlier in this report. Again, the communities most impacted by low incomes are: New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Groton, and New London in Connecticut; Riverhead in Long Island, and Westchester County, the Bronx, and Queens in New York.

### Percentiles of Low Income on the Long Island Sound



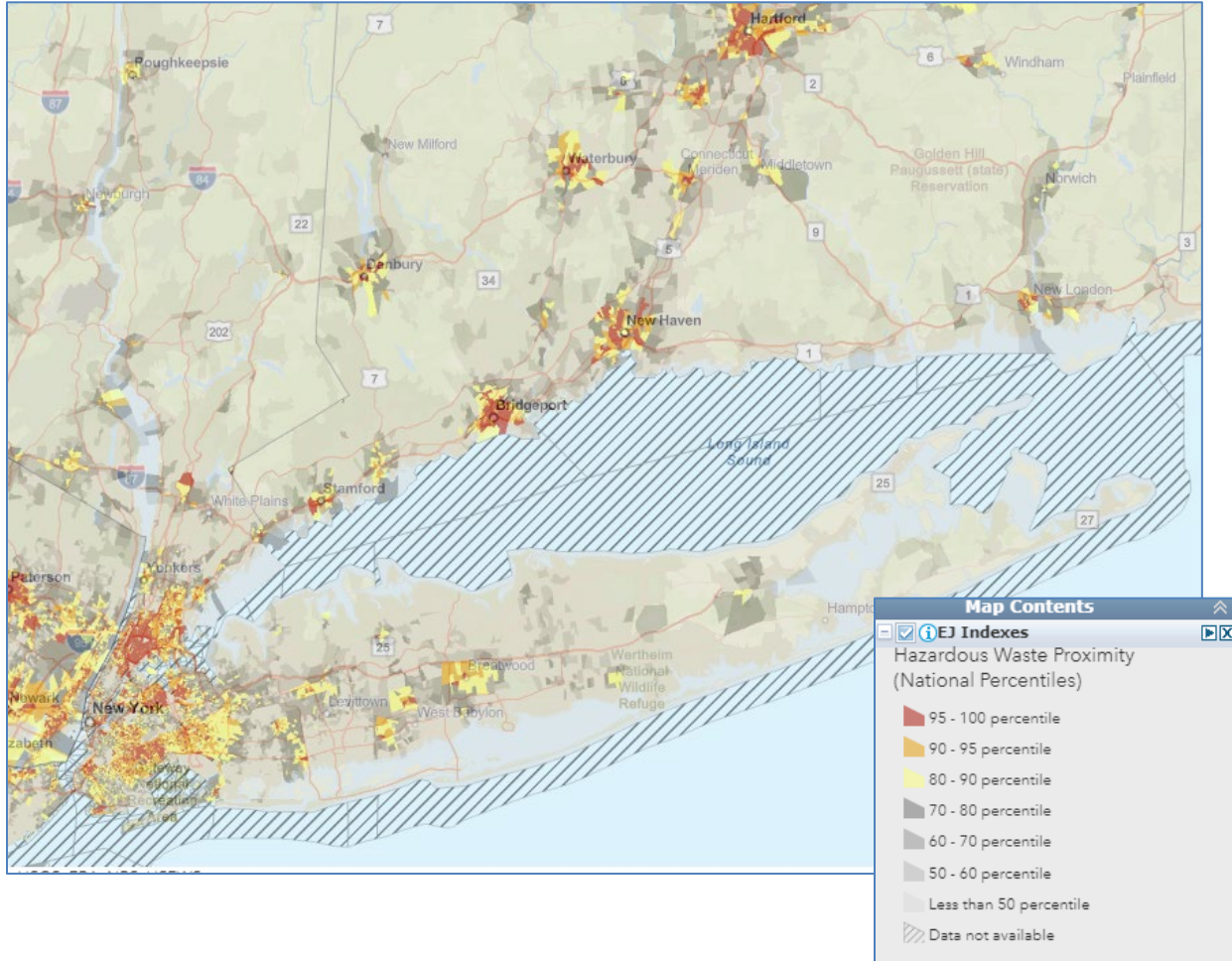
In the map below, several Connecticut communities are shown to be in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher for low life expectancy. Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London all show low life expectancy in the highest percentiles.

### Percentiles of Low Life Expectancy on the Long Island Sound



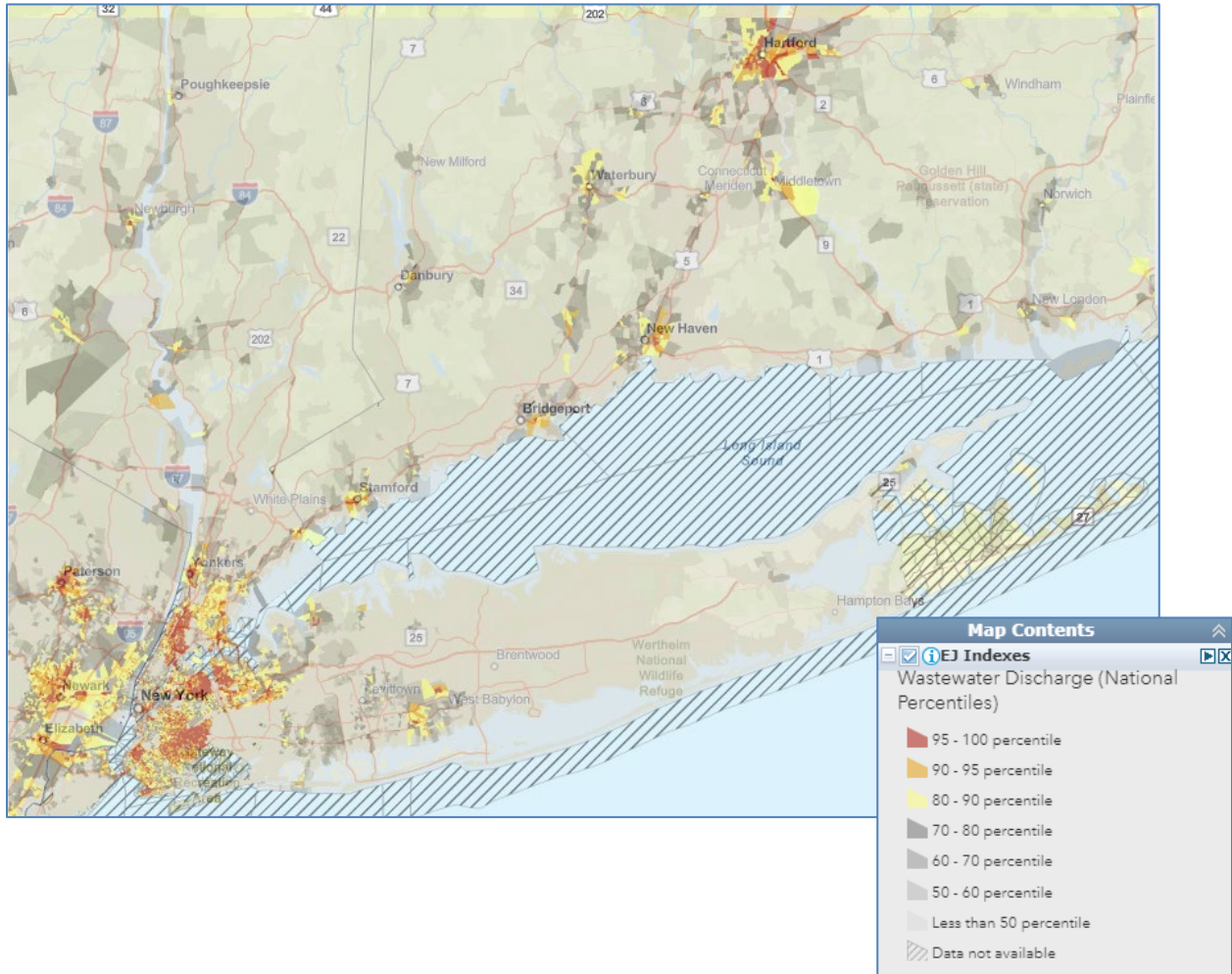
Some of the Long Island Sound communities in closest proximity to hazardous waste are New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Groton, and New London in Connecticut, and Westchester County, the Bronx, and Queens in New York.

### Percentiles of Hazardous Waste Proximity on the Long Island Sound



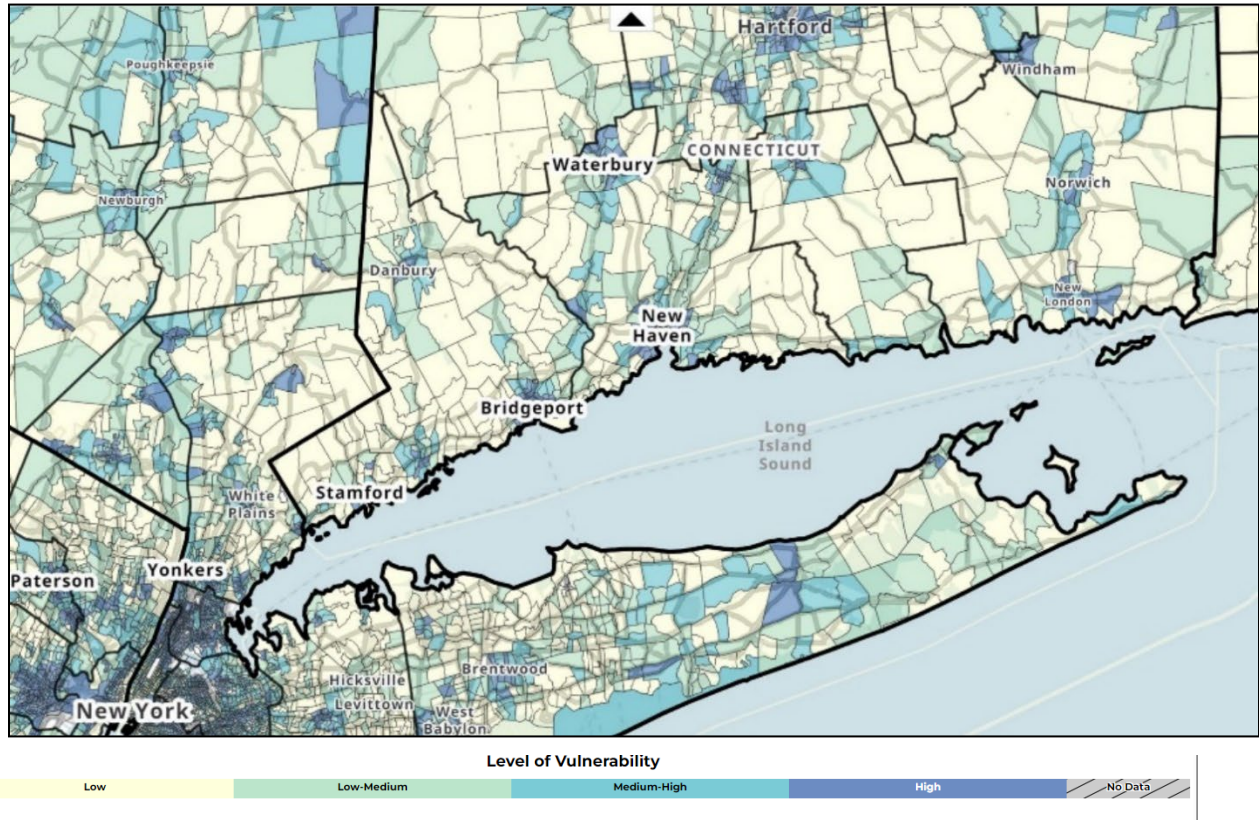
In the final single-topic map from the EPA EJScreen, percentiles of wastewater discharge are shown. As with all other single-topic maps shown here, the same communities in Connecticut and New York are shown to be in the highest percentile: New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Groton, and New London in Connecticut, and Westchester County, the Bronx, and Queens in New York.

### Percentiles of Wastewater Discharge on the Long Island Sound



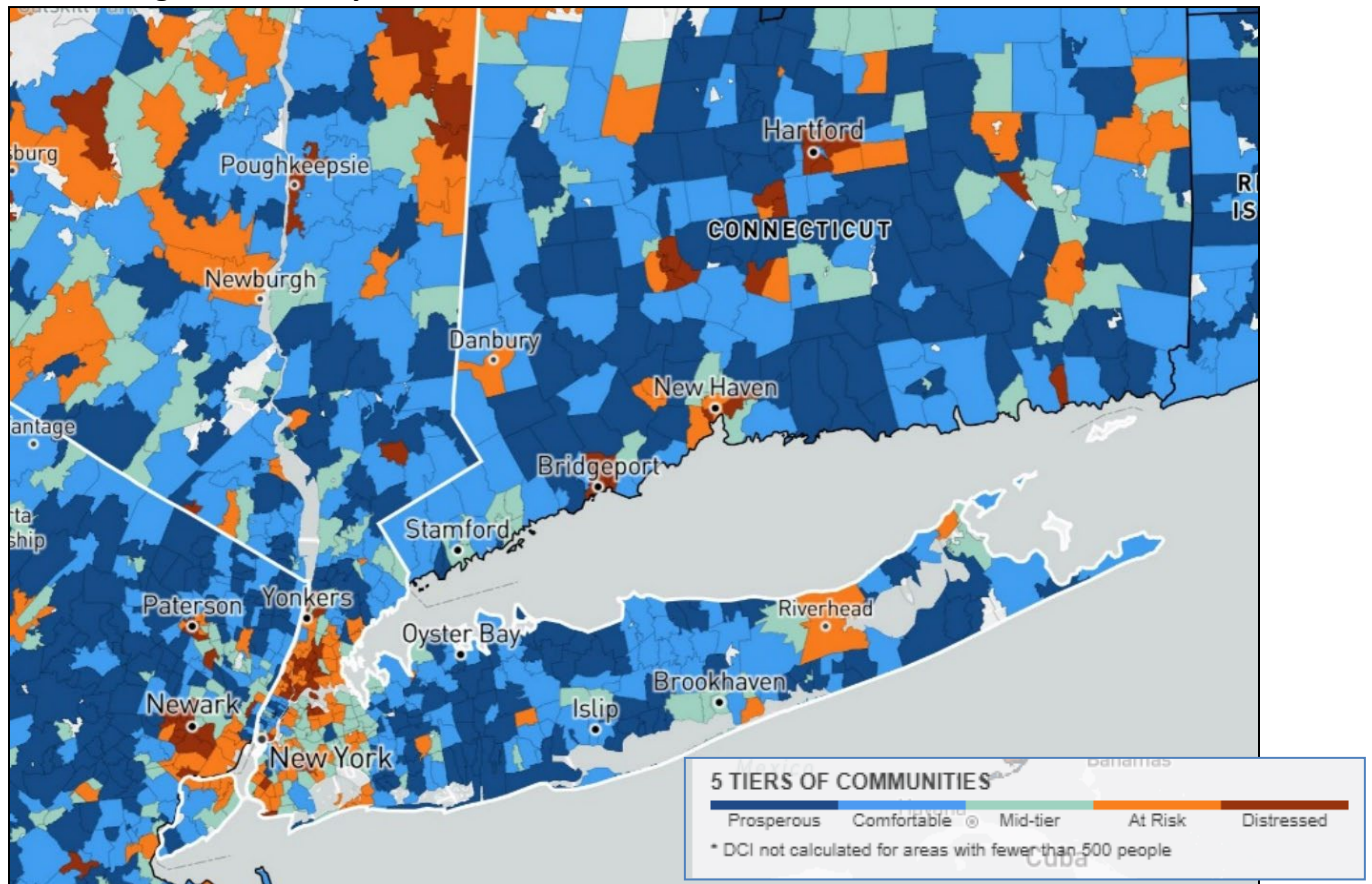
In the Vulnerability Index map shown below, the Centers for Disease Control and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry show a composite of several indicators: housing type and transportation; racial and ethnic minority status; socioeconomic status; and household characteristics. The map reveals several locations on the Long Island Sound with high levels of vulnerability, particularly in areas near New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Groton, and New London in Connecticut and Westchester County, Riverhead in Long Island, and New York City in New York.

### Vulnerability Index in the Long Island Sound



The map on the next page, from the bipartisan public policy organization the Economic Innovation Group, includes seven components: no high school diploma, housing vacancy rates, adults not working, poverty rate, median income ratio, change in employment, and change in establishments. Older urban areas and midsize cities were often shown to have the greatest rates of poverty and environmental justice issues, with several Long Island Sound communities being classified as at-risk or distressed according to the metrics.

### Disadvantaged Community Index

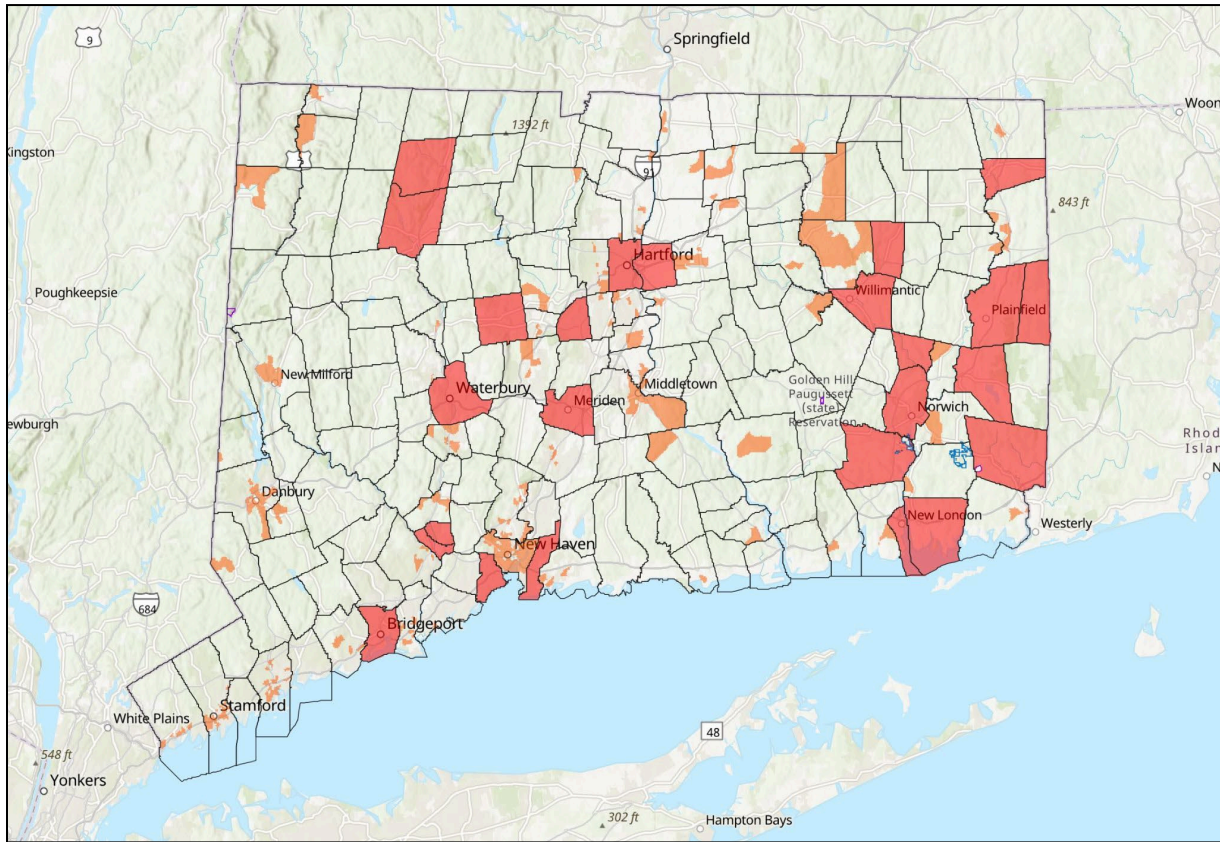


Several Connecticut-specific maps and lists were used to better understand distressed communities within the state. A map of Connecticut 2022 Environmental Justice Communities from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the 2022 Environmental Justice Census Blocks Group is shown on the following page.

The map used different metrics to identify distressed municipalities. Statewide distressed municipalities were shown including several communities on the Long Island Sound.

The table that follows the map, lists distressed municipalities in Connecticut from the 2020 Census and American Community Survey and used multiple metrics to define communities.

**Connecticut Environmental Justice Communities**

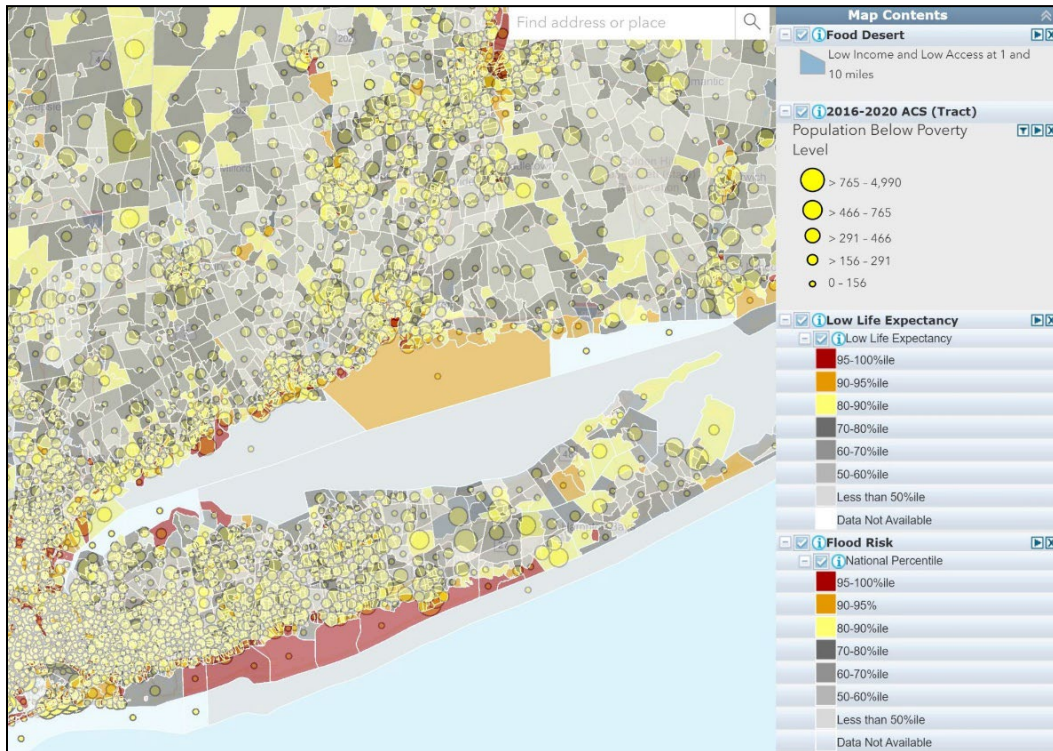


<b>Distressed Municipalities in Connecticut from 2020 Census and American Community Survey</b>	
Ansonia	New Britain
Bridgeport	New London
Chaplin	Norwich
Derby	Sprague
East Hartford	Torrington
Griswold	Waterbury
Hartford	Windham
Montville	

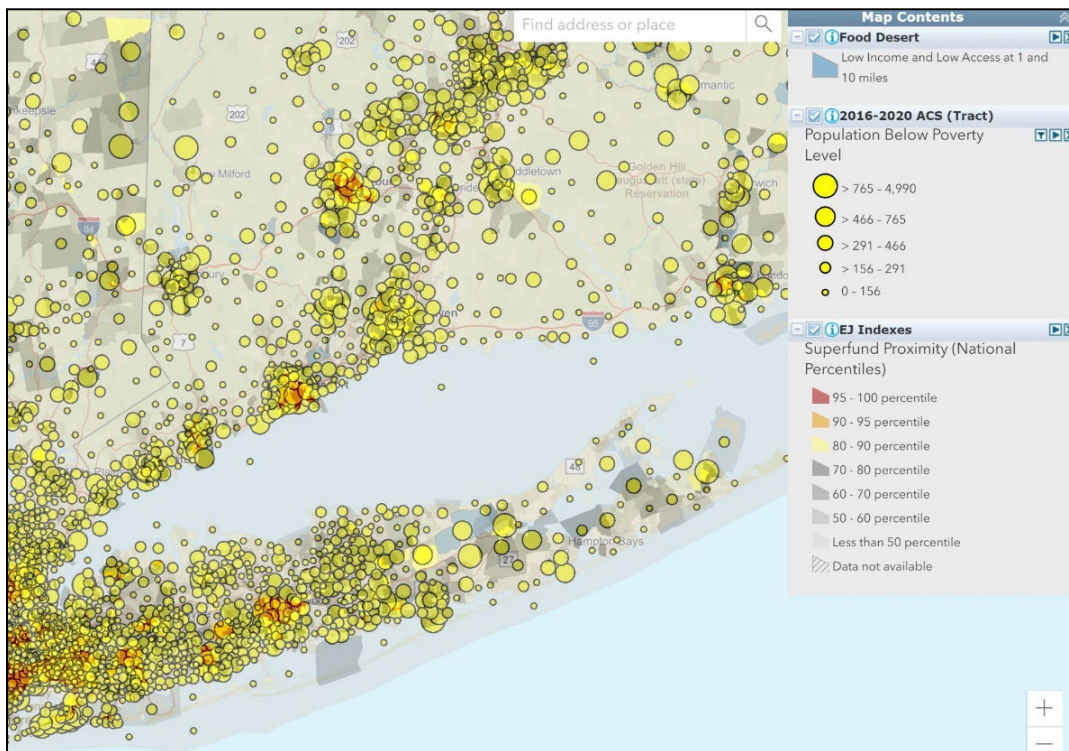
As can be seen in the maps shown on the following pages, there are many cumulative burdens in specific locations. Pollution, distressed demographic characteristics, and environmental burdens often simultaneously impact the same communities. In the two maps that follow, from the EPA EJScreen, different characteristics that illustrate this concept can be seen.



### Food Deserts, Population Below Poverty Level, Low Life Expectancy, and Flood Risk on the Long Island Sound



### Food Desert, Population Below the Poverty Level, and Proximity to Superfund on the Long Island Sound



## **FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH**

One of the final aspects of the exploratory phase involved a review of previous research conducted by Responsive Management to better understand the needs of disadvantaged communities as they relate to the relevancy of their state fish and wildlife organizations and access to and use of natural resources.

Below is a list of previous studies that were reviewed:

1. Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Missouri, conducted for the Missouri Department of Conservation, 2022
2. Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Nevada, conducted for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, 2022
3. Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Ohio, conducted for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, 2022
4. Finding Pathways to Increasing Conservation Relevance in Oklahoma, conducted for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, 2022
5. Massachusetts Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Conservation, conducted for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, 2022
6. Philadelphia Metro Statistical Area Residents' Attitudes Toward Fishing, conducted for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, 2021

This research conducted by Responsive Management indicated that among minority groups and disadvantaged communities, many of the reasons to enjoy natural resources overlapped with those of White residents in their states. For example, primary reasons for wanting to be outdoors for Black residents in urban centers included for fresh air, for mental and emotional health, and for relaxation and quiet—three reasons that also rated high with White residents. In contrast, however, Black residents in urban centers often listed not feeling safe, not knowing where to go, and being concerned about costs associated with outdoor recreation as major constraints to outdoor activities. These same responses did not rate as high among White residents. One study found that Hispanic residents are much more likely than any other group to feel that the outdoors can be unsafe.

Black and Hispanic residents across multiple studies consistently rated various fish and wildlife agencies lower than did White residents when asked if agencies shared values with people like them, listened to people like them, and could be considered a trusted source of information. In several studies, Hispanic populations consistently had not heard of state agencies as often as had non-Hispanic populations. Black and Hispanic residents also indicated lower accessibility to outdoor recreation than did White residents.

Across all of the studies examined here, when a survey asked about interest in participation in outdoor recreation, the numbers were consistent across all groups. Nearly everyone wants to participate, and, in many cases, Black and Hispanic residents indicated more interest in participating in outdoor recreation than did White residents.

## **PRIORITIZING COMMUNITIES FOR IN-PERSON OUTREACH**

As a final step in the exploratory phase, the LISS team and Responsive Management worked in collaboration to analyze preliminary findings up to this point and began to develop a list of communities that should be prioritized for later in-person outreach. The next stage of this project, the in-depth interviews with CBOs and community leaders, would help further establish the list of communities to prioritize for in-person outreach. (Note that these communities were prioritized for in-person outreach, whereas survey data collection would include all disadvantaged communities in the region. Survey sample is further discussed in Appendix B, which details the methodology of the needs assessment.)

While the list of communities in which in-person outreach would be conducted would be finalized during later phases of the project, and would depend on community capacity, scheduling, availability of space, established trust within the community, and other factors, as a starting point, several communities emerged as needing to be prioritized for in-person outreach. These early findings pointed to conducting in-person outreach in Bridgeport, Groton, Hartford, Stamford, Waterbury, Willimantic, New London, and New Haven in Connecticut, and the Bronx, Queens, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Brookhaven, and Huntington Station in New York. Note also that indigenous communities from the Long Island Sound region, both federally recognized and unrecognized, including, but not limited to, the Mashantucket Pequot, Matinecock, Montaukett, Narragansett, Setalcott, Unkechaug, and Shinnecock nations, were also prioritized for outreach.

As is shown throughout this report, community capacity and the timeline of this needs assessment did not allow for in-person outreach in every community of interest. An important finding from this work is that some communities need more time and, in some cases, more resources in order to participate in important conversations about environmental justice. Although in-depth interviews were conducted later in the needs assessment process with individuals from most of the communities that emerged as priorities during this phase, several communities were not able to robustly participate and should be the initial focus of continued outreach. These communities include Hartford, Stamford, Waterbury, Willimantic, Queens, and New Rochelle. In addition, future outreach should focus on relationship development and trust building with all indigenous nations in the region.

## **APPENDIX B. PROJECT METHODOLOGY**

This chapter details the three components to this project that entailed gathering data: the personal interviews of community-based organizations and leaders, the community listening sessions and additional community outreach, and the survey of disadvantaged community members in the Long Island Sound.

### **PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

Qualitative data collection for this project included a series of more than 50 in-depth interviews. The personal interviews were completed by Zoom teleconference, telephone, or in-person. Some interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format, with a Responsive Management research associate and the participant, while others included members of the LISS team and other interested individuals and groups with available resources for CBOs and leaders. Members of the LISS team and partners introduced themselves at the beginning of interviews and asked follow-up questions (if needed) and answered interviewee questions about the LISS and available resources.

Personal interviews are an accepted technique for the qualitative exploration of attitudes, opinions, perceptions, and behaviors. They provide insights, new hypotheses, and understanding through the process of interaction.

### **SAMPLING FRAME**

Interviewees included representatives from CBOs, community leaders, legislators, staff from local and state organizations that work directly with community members, and organizations and individuals conducting similar work with disadvantaged communities, among others.

The list of interviewees was created through a collaborative and ongoing process. The initial sample list included CBOs and community leaders that the LISS team had worked with or tried to reach in the past, CBOs the LISS team was interested in connecting with, and suggested contacts from the first round of exploratory phase in-depth interviews. From there, subsequent contacts were added when suggested by CBOs and leaders, found during internet or in-person searches by the project team, and/or as the LISS team made new contacts during events and outreach unrelated to the needs assessment.

### **SCHEDULING**

Potential in-depth interview participants were contacted by Responsive Management staff primarily by email, with telephone calls also used to supplement the email outreach and reach those for whom an email address could not be obtained. Potential participants were sent a scheduling questionnaire designed by Responsive Management staff. The scheduling questionnaire included all pertinent project information and allowed potential participants to indicate a day and time for the interview that would work with their schedule. Additional email and telephone attempts were made to contact all who did not respond to the scheduling questionnaire.

Potential participants who completed the scheduling questionnaire and agreed to participate were emailed or called with a confirmation that included the date and time. This helped encourage robust participation among those contacted for the interviews.

In addition, in some cases in which reaching a particular contact proved difficult or a contact was not responsive to initial invitations to participate in interviews, members of the LISS team and participants from the first round of exploratory phase in-depth interviews provided Responsive Management research associates with email or phone introductions to CBOs and community leaders. The introductions were followed by emails from the project team that included the scheduling questionnaire. Additional email and telephone attempts were made to contact all who did not respond to the introduction email or scheduling questionnaire.

The scheduling questionnaire also linked to all primary LISS team members' emails and schedules to include the team in as many interviews as possible.

### **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

The interviews were conducted using a discussion guide designed to encourage interviewees to share their opinions about environmental and social issues in different cities and towns, personal and organizational capacity and technical needs, and resources that might be needed in specific areas. The discussion guide was created in collaboration with the LISS team members and partners and was based in part on the findings from the exploratory phase of project and the experience of the project team with natural resources and environmental issues.

### **INTERVIEWING PROCEDURES**

Each interview was facilitated by either Amanda Center or Madeline Duda of Responsive Management. Because an important goal of this project was to foster connections and aid in relationship-building while minimizing any additional burdens, the project team established two primary contacts for the interviewing process to encourage CBOs and community leaders to feel more comfortable with continued communication and additional questions or requests, while being assured that the staff member they were communicating with was versed in their specific needs.

Each interview was conducted using the aforementioned discussion guide, which allowed for consistency in the data collection. The interviews allowed extensive open-ended responses to be given. The facilitators asked probing follow-up questions, and they observed the emotional responses to topics—aspects that cannot be measured in a quantitative survey. Qualitative research sacrifices reliability for increased validity. Qualitative findings cannot be replicated statistically as can a survey (which has high reliability); however, they provide a more valid understanding of the topics or issues of concern in the project (they have high validity).

The facilitators, through the use of the discussion guide, kept the interviews within design parameters without exerting a strong influence on the replies to the questions. In this sense,

the interviews were partially non-directive discussions that exposed the spontaneous attitudes, insights, and perceptions of participants regarding the subject matter.

The interviews also included introductions to the LISS team members and partners, and discussions about the LISS's and other organizations' available resources that could potentially benefit the interviewee. In effect, the interviews served as both a method for collecting qualitative data and as a means of creating connections between CBOs and community leaders and the LISS team.

### **INTERVIEW DATES**

Most of the interviews discussed in this report were conducted in June through December 2023 via Zoom teleconference or telephone. In a small number of cases in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Mount Vernon, New York, interviews were conducted in-person. In-person interviews were conducted November 3 through November 15, 2023.

### **ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

Responsive Management conducted qualitative analyses of the interviews through direct observation of the interviews by the facilitators themselves, through an analysis of all notes taken during interviews, as well as through later observation and analysis of the recordings (when CBOs or leaders consented to be recorded) by other analysts. The organization and development of findings entailed a final review of the personal interviews as part of the qualitative analyses.

## **COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS AND ADDITIONAL OUTREACH**

To obtain input from any residents from disadvantaged communities who chose to provide it, Responsive Management helped facilitate five community listening sessions and numerous other types of community outreach.

Many interviewees had advised the project team of the importance of working with trusted local groups and individuals in disadvantaged communities; therefore, the team attempted to collaborate with a CBO or community leader, when possible, to conduct the community listening sessions. In some cases, a CBO or community leader was not available or able to partner to conduct the community listening sessions.

The listening sessions were publicized on social media, in-person, and through sharing of information and flyers at local community gathering spaces (libraries, schools, social service organizations, places of worship, and others). Additionally, emails were sent by the project team to all CBOs and community leaders in the region and other participants from the exploratory phase interviews with community connections. The emails encouraged participation in the listening session among the recipients and requested that recipients share information about the listening sessions with members of their communities.

The listening sessions were held in New Haven and Stonington in Connecticut on September 9 and November 5, 2023, respectively, and in Mount Vernon, Huntington Station, and Medford in New York on November 11, November 20, and December 9, 2023, respectively. The New Haven listening session was conducted in partnership with Save the Sound and Junta for Progressive Action, the Mount Vernon listening session was conducted in partnership with Save the Sound and Environmental Leaders of Color, and the Medford listening session was conducted in partnership with Dare to Dream Community Outreach. All listening sessions included materials in Spanish, as well as immediate Spanish translation of spoken components of the sessions.

CBOs were not able or available to partner for two community listening sessions: Stonington, Connecticut and Huntington Station, New York. Without a CBO to partner with, additional steps were taken to encourage participation in these listening sessions. For the Stonington meeting, Responsive Management staff distributed flyers about the session at churches, a food center, a senior center, and libraries in Groton and New London, Connecticut, and provided a free shuttle service (also shown on the flyer) to bring community members from the Groton, Connecticut, Town Hall to the Stonington listening session. Note that while Stonington is not considered a disadvantaged community, limited capacity, space, and scheduling availability in New London and Groton (two communities of interest closest to Stonington) resulted in the project team having to expand the search region for available space for a listening session. Because of its proximity to New London and Groton, as well as the Mashantucket Pequot tribe, and the space and scheduling availability, the listening session was held in Stonington, Connecticut.

For the Huntington Station listening session, staff members distributed flyers at churches, schools, public housing facilities, and tabled for 2- to 4-hour intervals at several libraries in the

area with materials about the LISS, the environmental justice needs assessment, and flyers for the listening session.

Each listening session was facilitated by Responsive Management staff, members of the LISS Staff, and partner representatives (where applicable). Each session began with a brief presentation or explanation of the needs assessment and by asking listening session participants to take the needs assessment survey by scanning a QR code. Paper surveys were also available for those who preferred them or did not have a device with which to scan the QR code.

After allowing time to complete the needs assessment survey, the presentation addressed the purpose of the project, the parties conducting the listening session and their resources, and findings from the project so far. The listening sessions, guided by a series of questions developed for the conversations, were then opened to encourage public discussion and comments. While the conversations were guided by these questions, an important aspect of the listening sessions was that project team members did not presume to know the community issues and allowed the conversation to develop organically and earnestly.

Community listening sessions were held in a CBO's outdoor spaces in New Haven, at churches in Stonington and Mount Vernon, at a library in Huntington Station, and at a community recreation center in Medford. Each session lasted approximately 2 hours.

Examples of the flyers used to promote the listening sessions are shown below.





**USTED ESTÁ INVITADO A UNA CENA Y CONVERSACIÓN COMUNITARIA SOBRE CÓMO MEJORAR LA EQUIDAD EN LA REGIÓN Y EL ACCESO A LONG ISLAND SOUND**

**Los residentes recibirán una tarjeta de regalo por participar en la conversación!**

*Analicemos los desafíos actuales de la justicia ambiental y las oportunidades para abordarlos. Miembros de grupos ambientales locales y regionales estarán presentes para escuchar inquietudes y responder preguntas, así como también para presentar los materiales, programas y recursos existentes.*

**¿CUANDO?**  
Sábado  
Dec. 9 2-4pm

**¿DÓNDE?**  
St. Michael's  
Community Center, 102  
Wilson Avenue  
Medford, NY 11763

Su participación en esta encuesta respaldará esta conversación.

También estarán disponibles actividades divertidas y manualidades!

In addition to the listening sessions with communities, other forms of community outreach were also conducted throughout the region. These additional forms of community outreach were planned based on findings from earlier phases of assessment and focused on locations where community members were likely already gathered. These locations included existing events, such as a harvest festival conducted by a CBO in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone meeting with Stamford, Connecticut, residents; local libraries in Groton and New London in Connecticut and Port Jefferson, Riverhead, Huntington Station, and others in New York; local places of worship in Connecticut and New York; and a public housing task force in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Staff members were invited to the task-force meeting to gather additional perspectives by a community-based leader who participated in the interview phase of the research, and the task force is supporting staff members in planning a final community input session in Bridgeport with residents from three public housing developments. The findings from the community listening sessions in Bridgeport will be provided in a later addendum to this report.

Community listening sessions were recorded for later analysis. The listening session and additional outreach contents were analyzed qualitatively for this report. As appropriate for research entailing observation and discussion, no quantitative statistical analyses were conducted on the comments from the community listening sessions.

## **SURVEY OF RESIDENTS OF DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES IN THE LONG ISLAND SOUND**

The quantitative data collection for this project consisted of a multi-modal survey of New York and Connecticut residents in disadvantaged communities and was conducted in-person and via a web-based platform.

The surveys were conducted for the LISS to evaluate residents' awareness and use of and attitudes toward the Long Island Sound, their opinions about environmental and social issues impacting their communities, their engagement in outdoor and environmental events, and their preferences for use of the Sound and outdoor and environmental events, among other topics.

The general population survey of New York and Connecticut residents from disadvantaged communities was conducted September through December 2023.

Specific aspects of the survey methodology are discussed below.

### **DESIGN OF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES**

Two survey questionnaires were developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the LISS team, based in part on the previous phases of the project, including the personal interviews and the exploratory phase, and the project team's familiarity with natural resource and environmental issues. Each of the questionnaires was administered either in person or online. The survey questionnaires did not contain different questions, but the in-person survey was slightly shorter, with agreed-upon questions removed for easier administration.

The survey questionnaires were computer coded in an online platform and a paper version of the survey was also available. An important aspect of Responsive Management's survey platform is that the computer controls which questions are asked and allows for immediate data entry in the online versions of each survey. The paper versions of the survey contained written directions that guided the respondent through the survey.

Additionally, the questionnaires included proprietary error checkers and internal quality control checks to help ensure that the data obtained were of high quality. The survey is included as Appendix E.

## **SURVEY SAMPLES**

The samples of New York and Connecticut residents in disadvantaged communities (online) were obtained from and are maintained by Marketing Systems Group, a firm that specializes in providing scientifically valid samples for surveys. Using the environmental justice indicators described in this report, the online sample provider targeted individuals with zip codes from Long Island Sound region communities designated as disadvantaged using these indicators. In addition, communities identified during the needs assessment process, such as several Long Island communities, that might not qualify using indicators only, were also included based on needs assessment feedback about environmental issues and wealth disparities in the locations.

These samples were supplemented by attendees at listening sessions and other forms of community outreach who were paid a small stipend for participating in the survey.

## **MULTI-MODAL SURVEY ADMINISTRATION**

The survey efforts for this project consisted of a closed online survey effort and an in-person survey effort. In this context, “closed” means that only those specifically invited and contacted could complete the survey. For the in-person survey, the survey used an open link, which could be shared with others as needed.

For the in-person survey, listening session attendees and members of the public met during other forms of community outreach were spoken to directly and offered a small stipend to encourage them to take the survey. In some cases, a Responsive Management staff member administered the survey directly to the respondent, and in other cases, the respondent either used a QR code to access the survey or completed the survey on paper. In addition to these efforts, some CBOs and community leaders shared survey links and QR codes directly with their contacts in communities.

All data collected from written surveys were entered into the computer coded survey by Responsive Management staff.

## **SURVEY QUALITY CONTROL**

After all surveys were obtained, research associates and statisticians checked each survey to ensure clarity and completeness. Additionally, analysts reviewed all individual survey responses to identify other illegitimate responses. For example, surveys that were completed in an unrealistically brief timeframe suggest that respondents were clicking through responses without reading and evaluating the questions. A related concern, “straight-lining,” is when respondents select (for example) the first or same response options throughout the survey. Surveys of questionable quality were removed prior to data analysis.

Responsive Management obtained the number of completed interviews by mode for each survey, as shown in the accompanying table. With regard to the success of different modes, because screeners and qualifiers that help target the desired audience in an online format might exclude individuals who participated in in-person surveys by attending community

listening sessions, for example, the incidence of disadvantaged respondents is 100% among online respondents and 40% among respondents who participated in the survey in-person. These totals are also shown in the below table.

Total Completed Questionnaire Interviews		
Survey Mode	Completed Interviews	Percentage of Interviews Conducted with Disadvantaged Respondents
In-Person Surveys	169	40%
Online Surveys	527	100%

**ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY DATA**

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. Throughout this report, findings of the surveys are reported at a 95% confidence interval.

For the survey of the overall sample of adult New York and Connecticut residents of disadvantaged communities on the Long Island Sound, the sampling error is estimated to be at most plus or minus 3.715 percentage points. The sampling error was calculated using the formula described below, with a sample size of 696 responses. Due to a lack of a finite population size, an excessively large number was used to calculate the maximum sampling error.

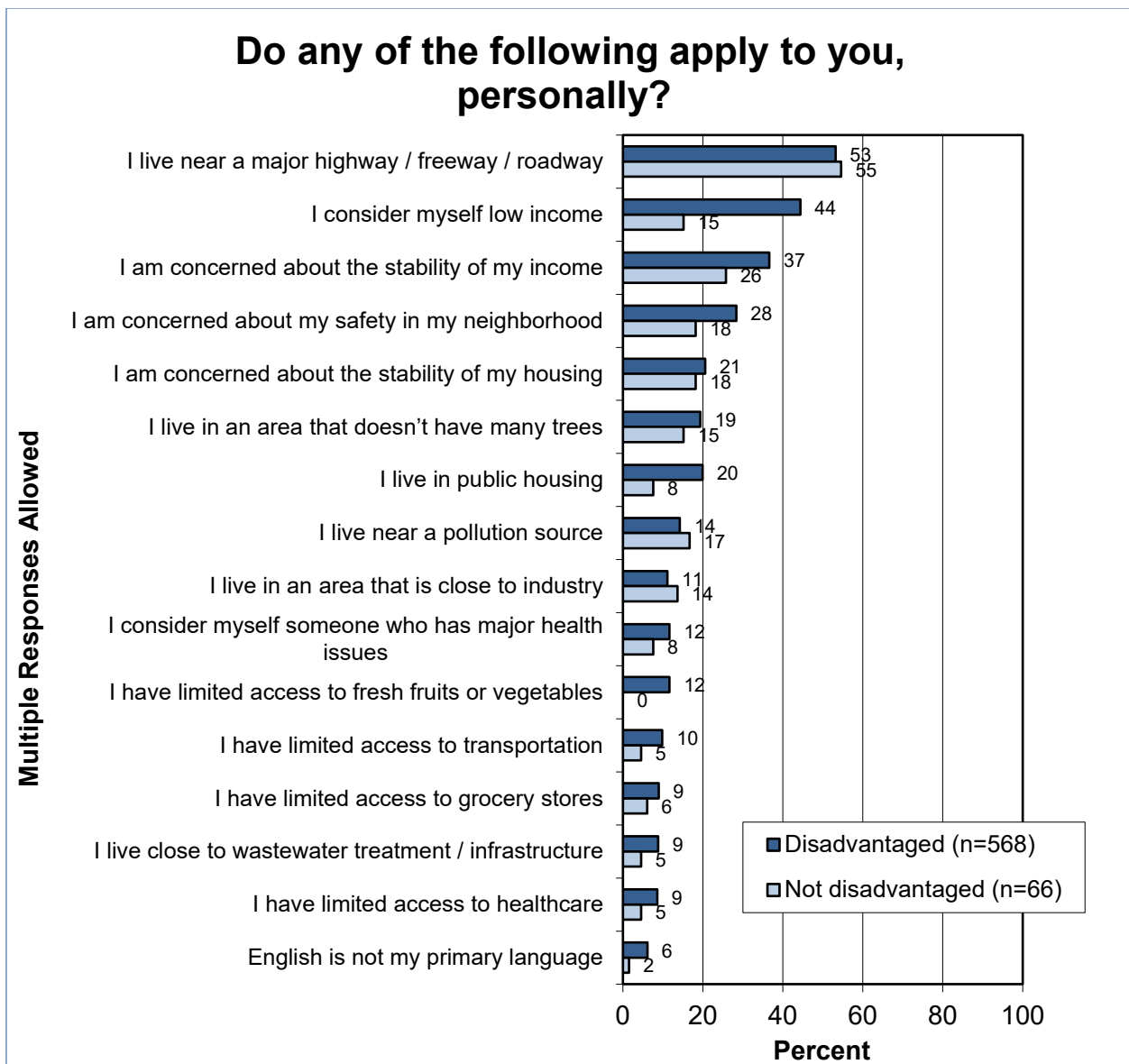
**Sampling Error Equation**

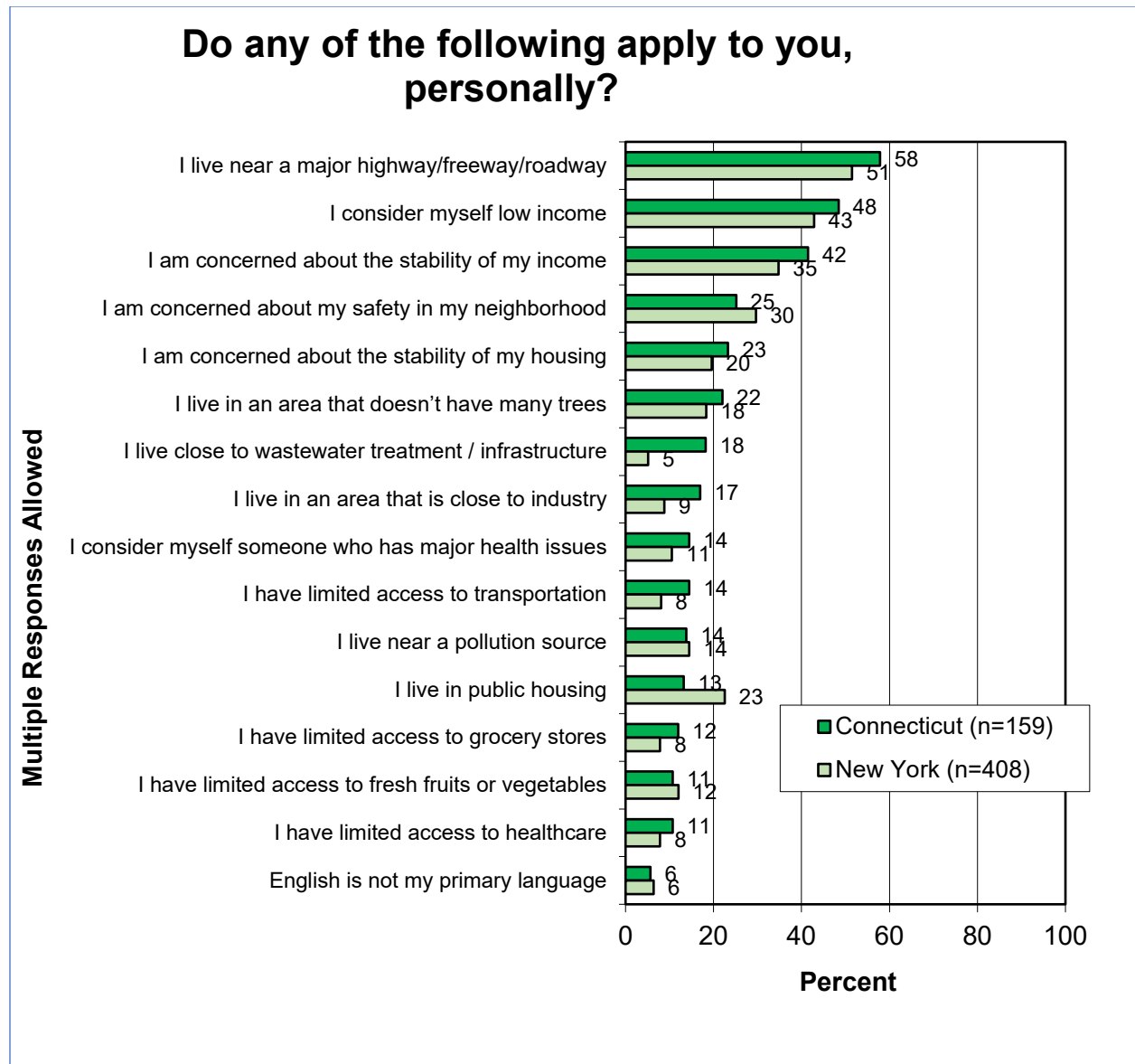
$B = \left( \sqrt{\frac{N_p(.25)}{N_s} - .25} \right) (1.96)$	<p>Where: B = maximum sampling error (as decimal)</p> <p>N<sub>p</sub> = pop. size (i.e., total number who could be surveyed)</p> <p>N<sub>s</sub> = sample size (i.e., total number of respondents surveyed)</p>
<p>Derived from formula: p. 206 in Dillman, D. A. 2000. <i>Mail and Internet Surveys</i>. John Wiley &amp; Sons, NY.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> This is a simplified version of the formula that calculates the <i>maximum</i> sampling error using a 50:50 split (the most conservative calculation because a 50:50 split would give maximum variation).</p>	

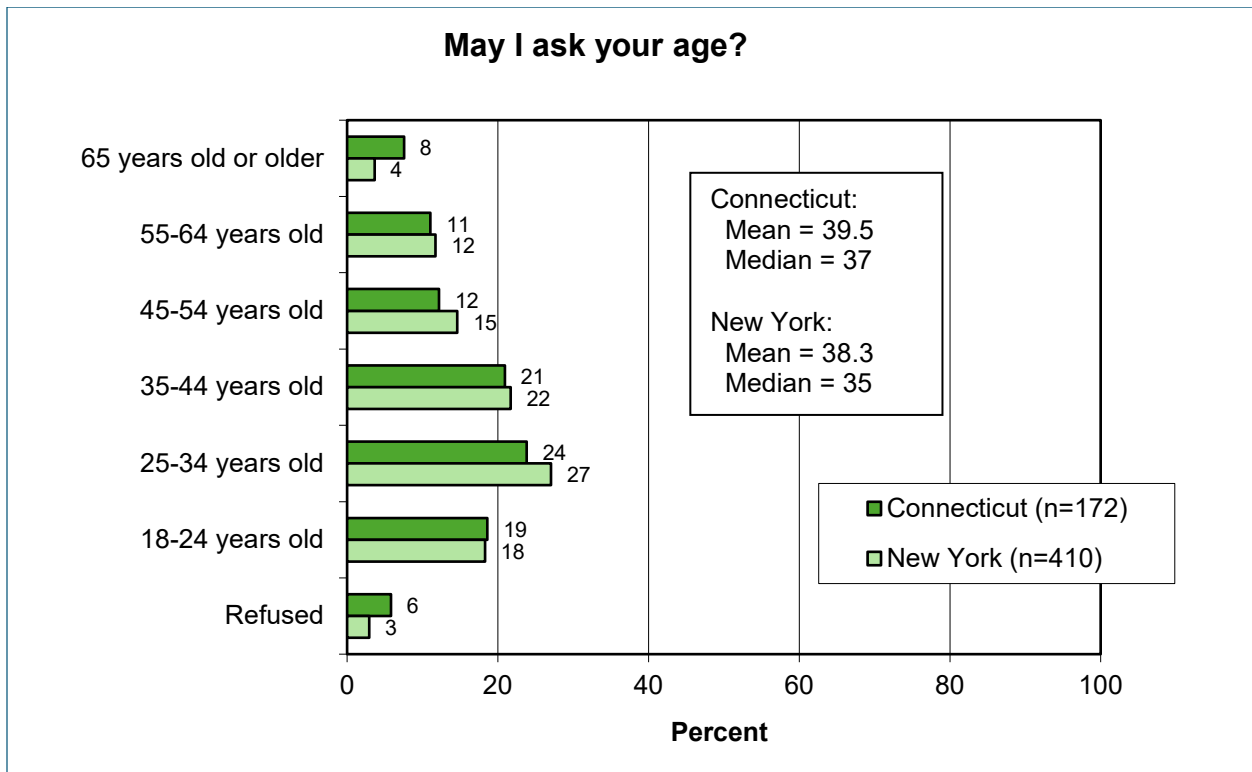
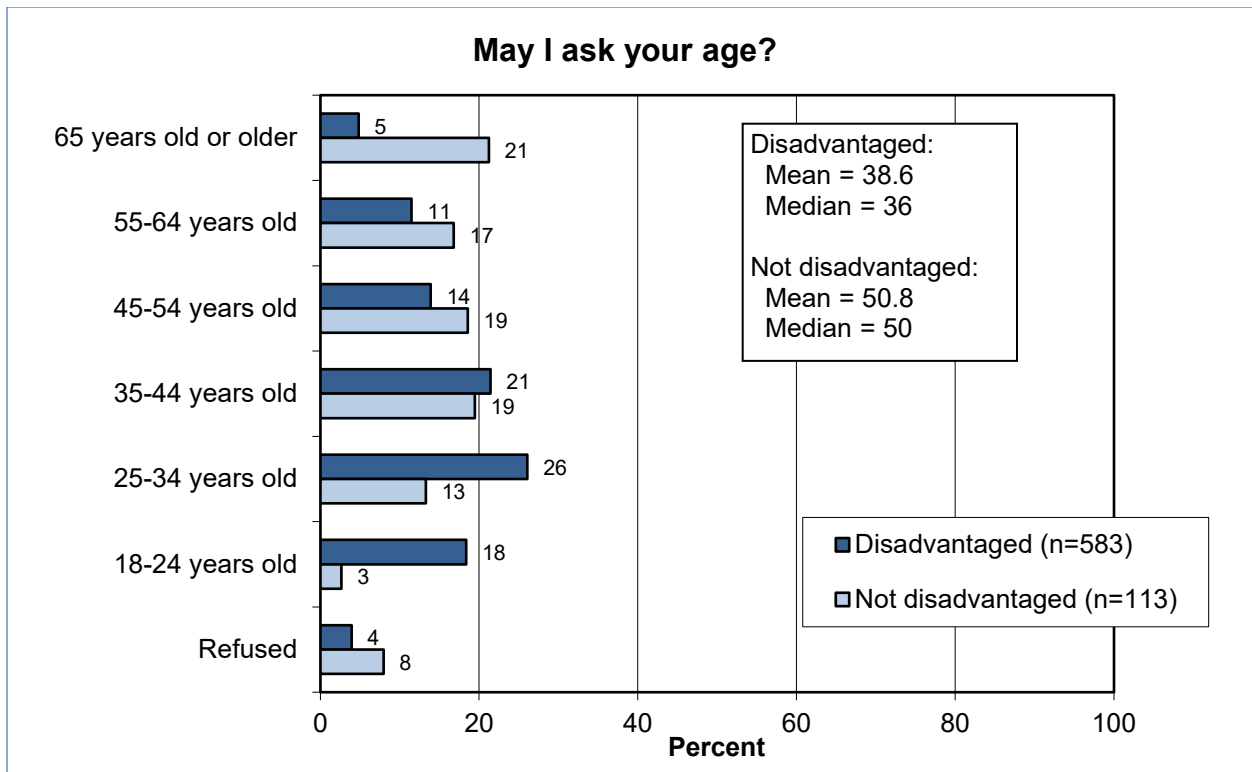
### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

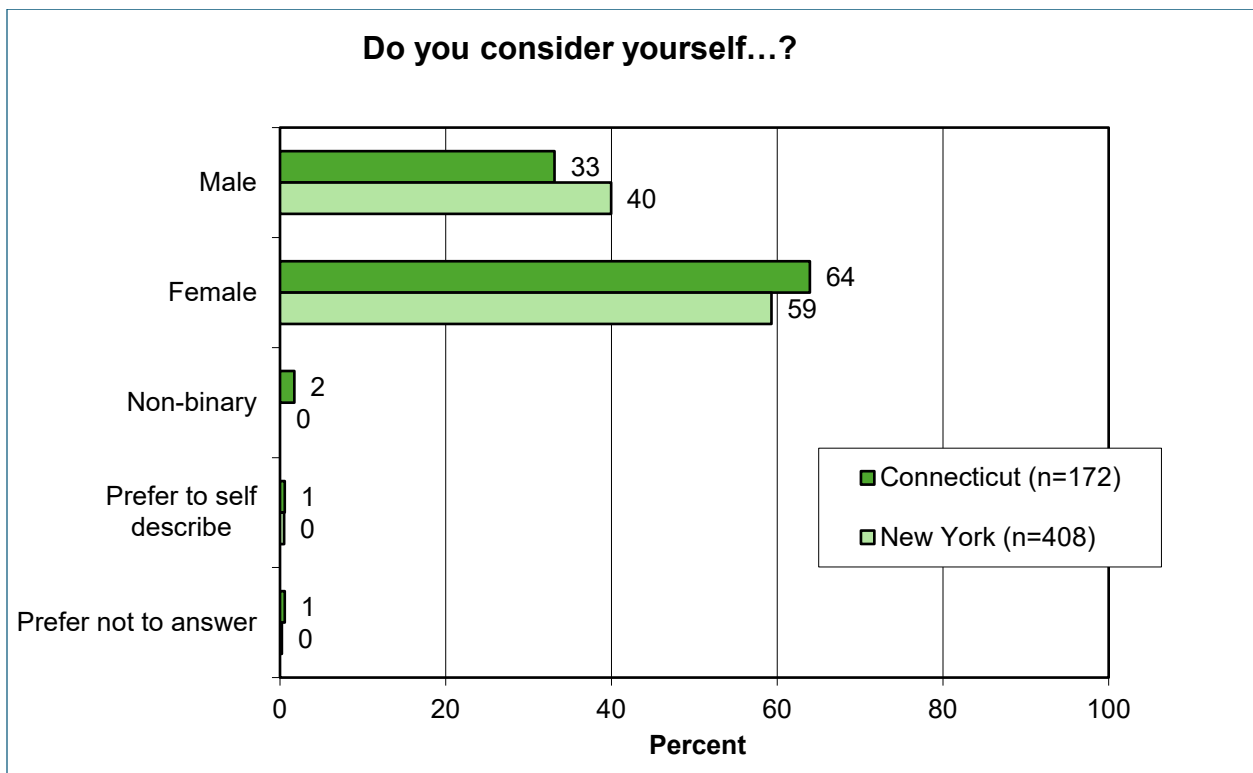
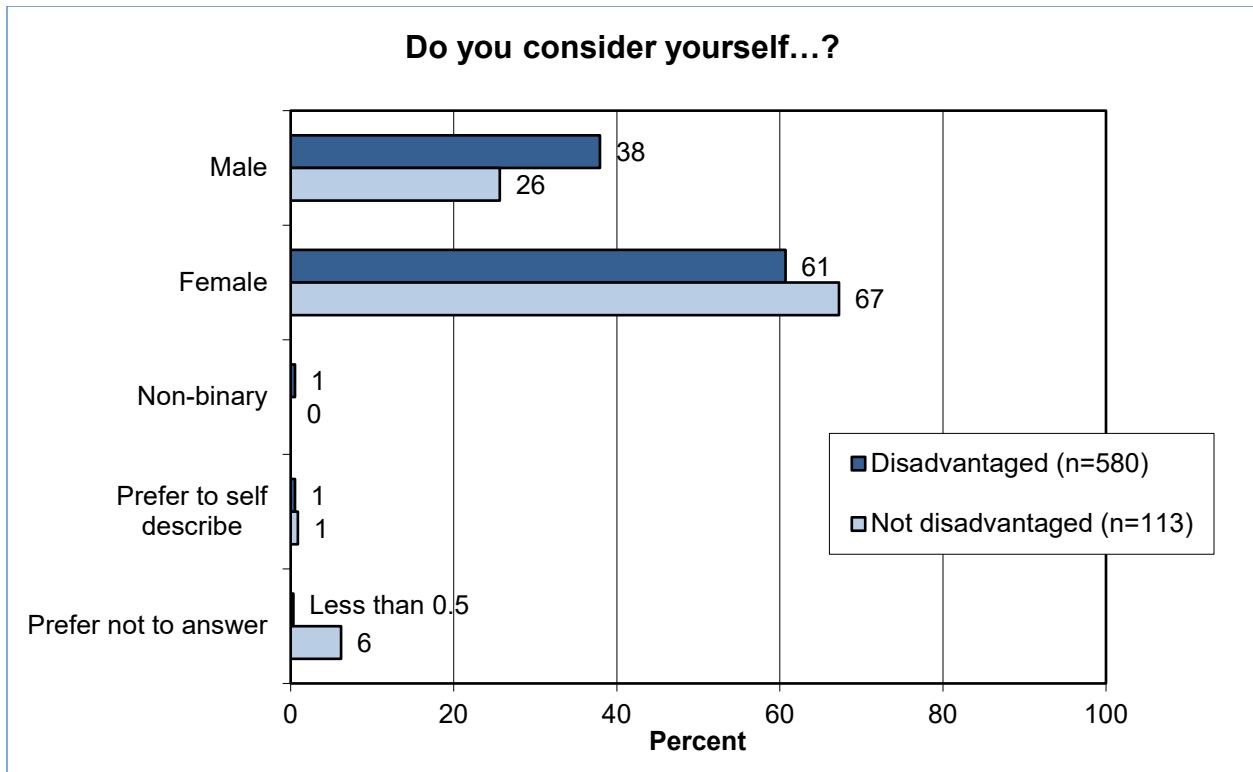
The data in this section were primarily collected for crosstabulations and demographic analyses, but the results are shown here on their own. The data collected include:

- Situational or quality-of-life characteristics (some of which were used to classify respondents as disadvantaged or not).
- Age.
- Gender.
- Ethnicity.
- Education level.
- Household income.



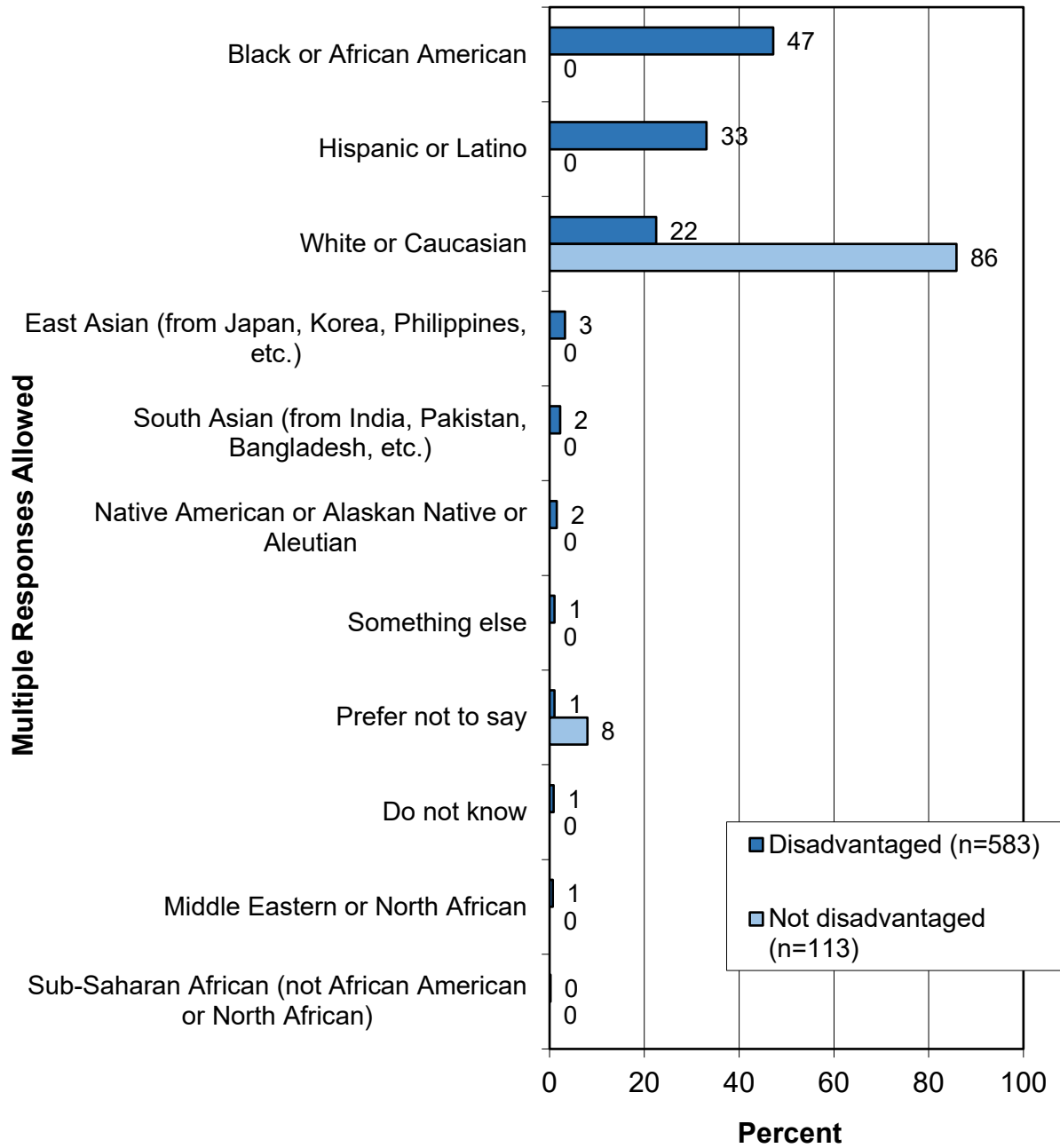


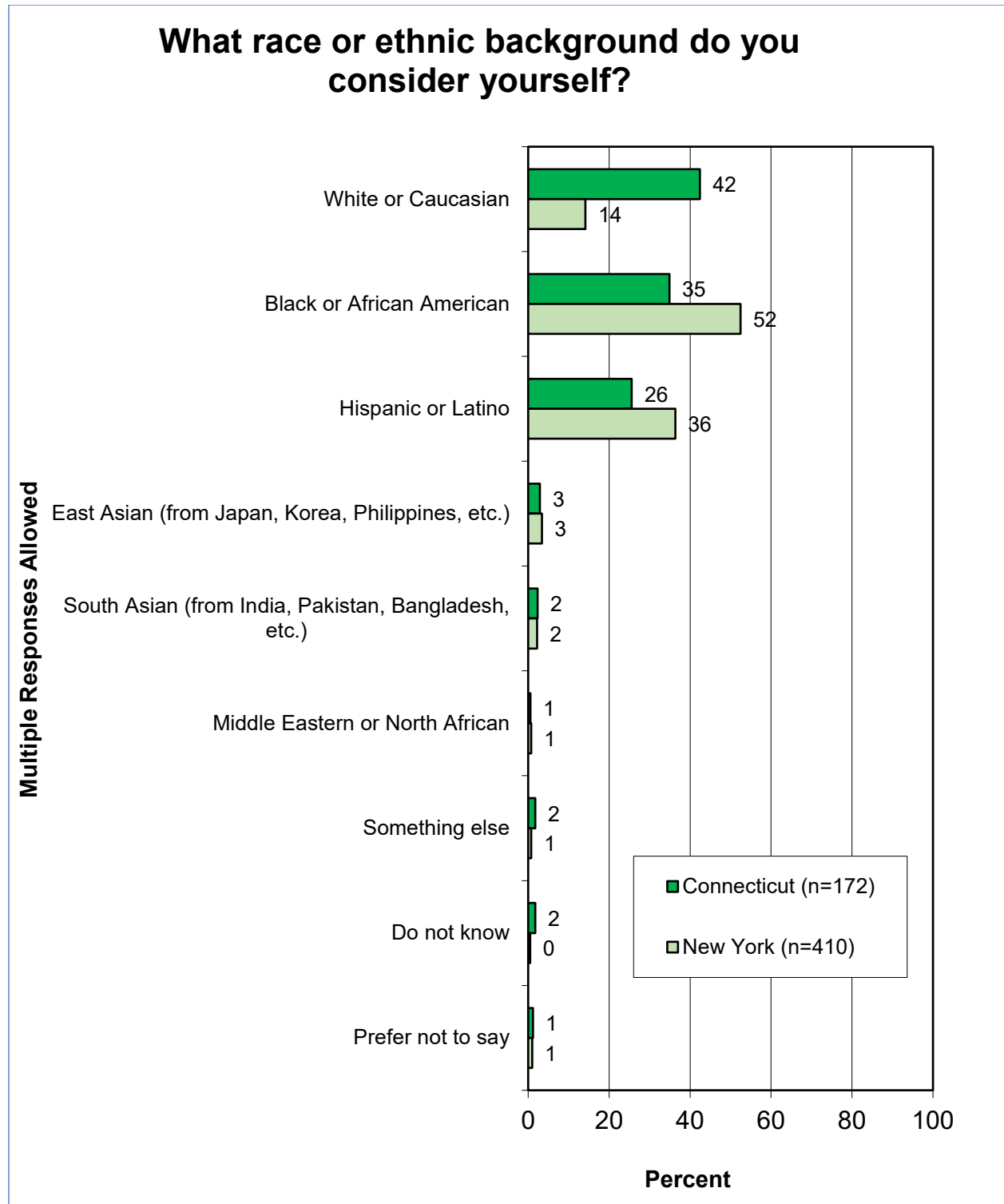


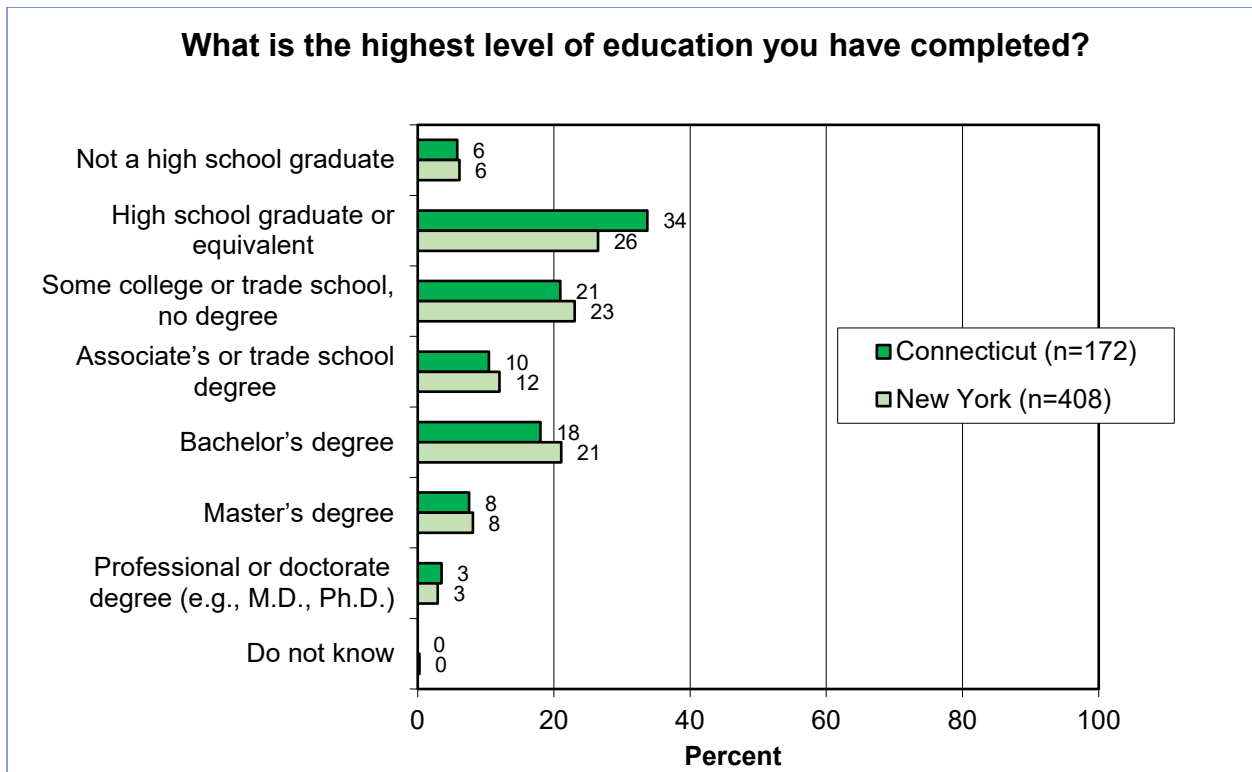
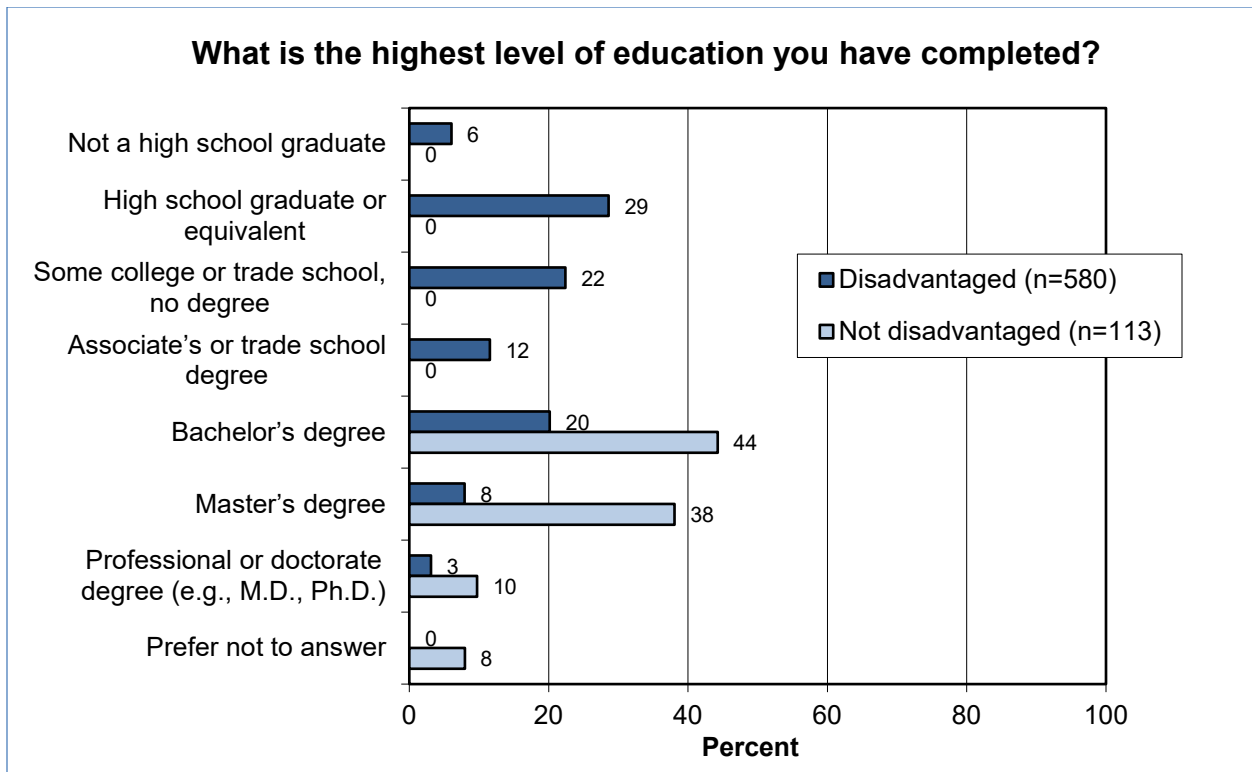


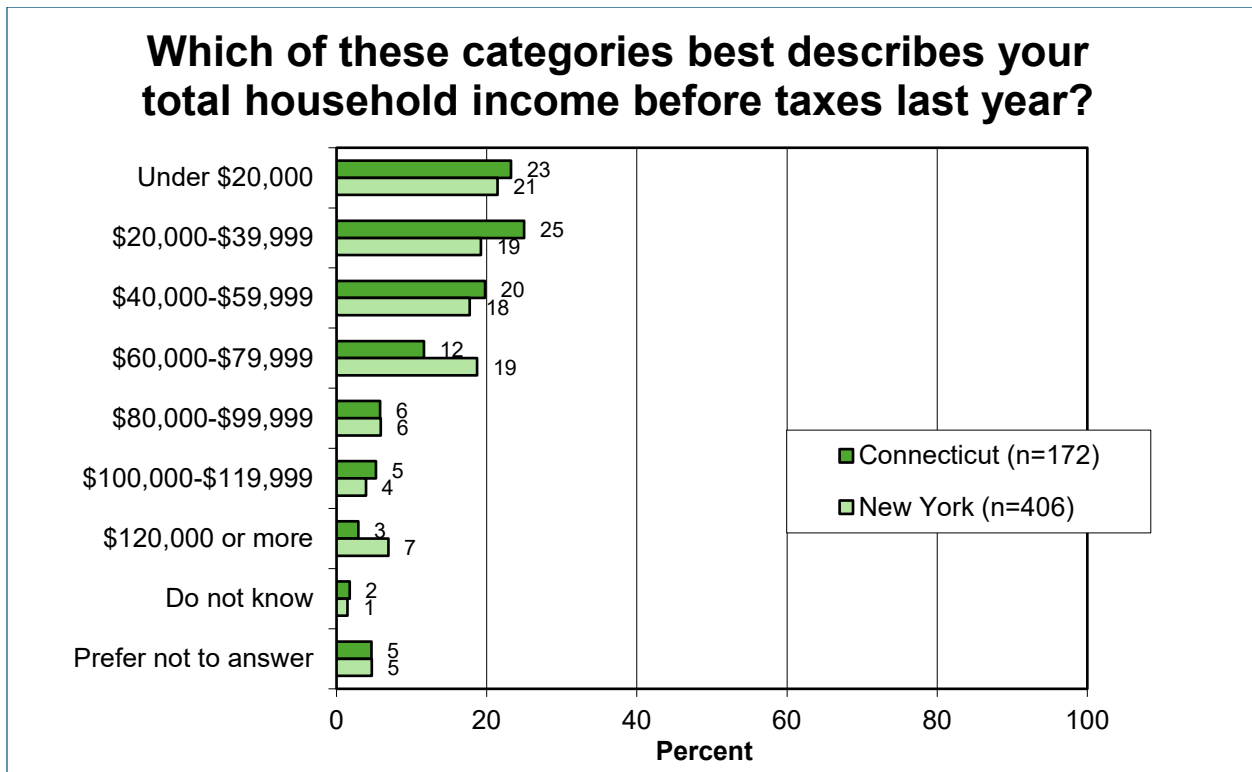
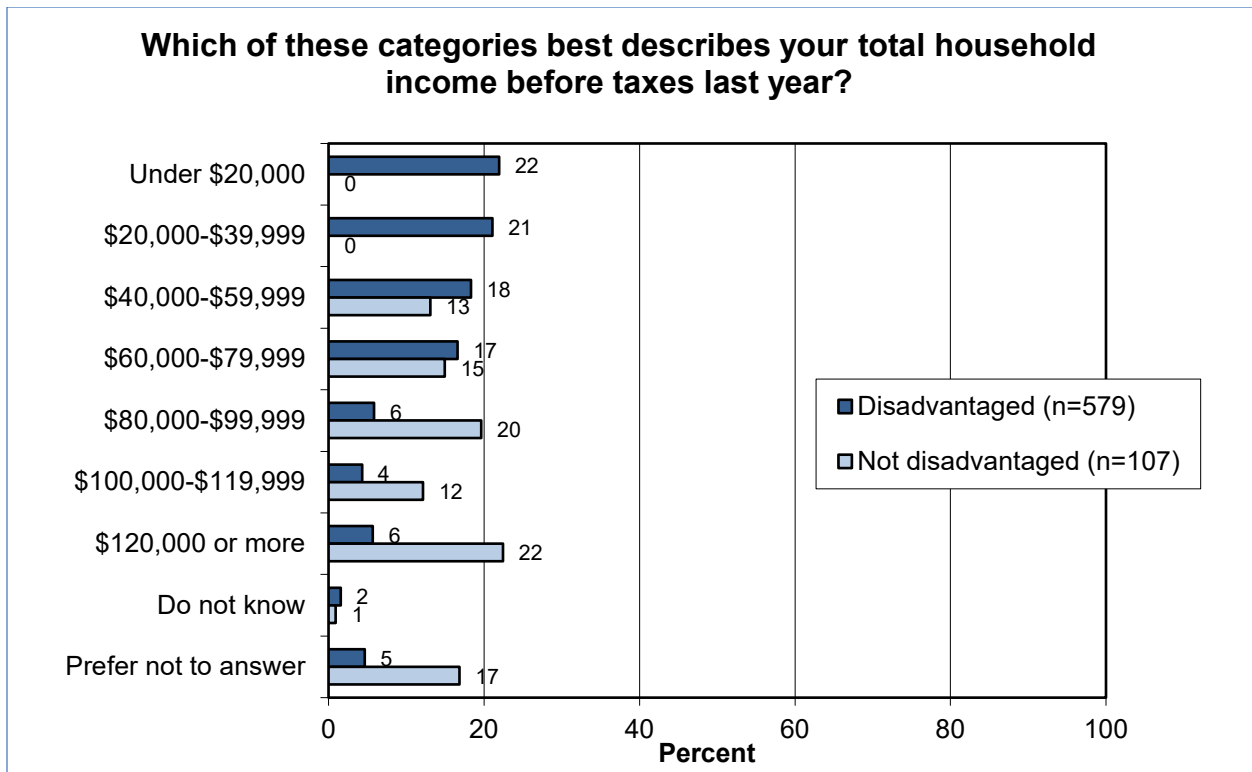


### What race or ethnic background do you consider yourself?









## APPENDIX C: OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The tables below show responses from community members to open-ended questions in the quantitative survey. Responses are presented verbatim, albeit with some minor edits to correct obvious misspellings. Also, responses are presented in alphabetical order to make the qualitative analysis of verbatim results easier for the reader. For each question, tables of responses by disadvantaged respondents are shown, followed by tables of responses from those who are not disadvantaged.

<b>You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts? (Disadvantaged)</b>
a better and smarter sewage system ! and less garbage laying around. we have one heavy rainy day and its flooded everywhere. That is very bad.
Actually flooded subdivision subway systems streets sidewalks
Aggressively target brownfield sites that are in flood zones for cleanup
Alot of changes
As someone who lives in NYC, features like closing subways and putting dams by the beaches and rivers would help a lot.
Because it be hard to drive or leave out the house
better builds within houses and deeper sewers
better clearing of debris from drains.
better drainage
Better drainage
better drainage / sewer system and also a means to get home if / when the trains flood
Better drainage so when it does rain heavily, there won't be flooding in the streets.
better drainage system
Better drainage system for the highways.
Better drainage.
Better draining system to prevent flooding
Better infrastructure
Better infrastructure and preparedness from the city
Better infrastructure for drainage
Better sewer care
better structures in cities to guide the water so it doesn't flood neighborhoods
Better support systems in place, Sandy and Katrina have shown us the worst that can happen.
Better trash pick ups to stop the trash from clogging the drains to prevent floods.
BETTER WATER QUALITY IN THE CITY SAFER AND CLEANER TO SWIM IN
Better water holding structure with buildings especially basements. And more sturdy leveled buildings
Better water quality. Provide more resources to prevent water flooding.
Beverage drainage, choice, the water wave
Build better draining systems and dams
building walls around it
Clean drains and sewers
Cleaning of the underground drainage pipes
Clear gutters and add more in places with intense flooding
Climate change, air pollution

<b>You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts? (Disadvantaged)</b>
concerned with ocean rise
Create easy and economical infrastructures that helps those problems
Create more tunnels for floods and drains
Creo que estoy bien pero no se la verdas
Directing engineers to figure out to direct water in way that doesn't come inland, takes a lot; who is going to get the jobs when the construction does start? Going to be a company that someone knows?
don't know
drain cleaning and runoff control
Essential create barriers to help mitigate flooding issues
First of all, I think we'll be creating greater awareness about littering, they clog the hydrants and drains, because today there are still people who throw trash on the streets
Generally sewer grates, storm drains, and drainage systems are not maintained. Streets end up flooding and disgusting polluted water ends up in the sound.
Hacer mantenimiento a las a las alcantarillas para que al momento de lluvias continuas no se tapen las cañerías y evitar inundaciones y contaminación
Have better drains so full streets are not flooded
Have more grassy areas ....
honestly, i don't even know where one could start but, the trains need not to be affected every time it rains too much
I am unsure
I can't tell but I know its a problem that needs to be fixed
I don't know
I don't know exactly but I would guess something along the line of making sure that beach erosion and land reclamation.
I feel as though a lot of the sewage draining need to be cleaned so that water flows properly away from your homes and sidewalks so that people do not get trapped and wind up, drowning in basement or any of that type of stuff thank you
I have heard that plants in the water ie grasses and trees can help reduce flooding but I am no expert
I have more dams and sewage to help prevent flooding in my area.
I think changes that need to be made to reduce flooding/related impacts could include making areas where extra water could be stored so that less water would be in the streets to prevent streets from flooding.
I think the sewer systems need to be expanded and kept clear to minimize the backup of water, I would also like to see some more natural flood reduction features.
I think the sewers need a lot of maintenance
I think there needs to be more drainers in the ground.
I think there should be more drains and sewers placed.
I think they should fixed the sewer. Or cleaned it to reduce flooding.
I think we need more drainage, and also cleaner environment that is filled with debris to help all of this
I think we need to fix our sewers situation, too much garbage is floating around which causes all the water to get stuck when we're in a heavy rain season.
I want to see a lot less trash and no illegal dumping of trash in my community.
I wish I knew
I would like the walkways fixed so it's less prone to flooding.
I would love to see more clean water everywhere because sometimes the water can turn brown which is bad for your skin and health.
I'm not an expert but maybe a better sewerage systems and making sure the draining covers are not blocked so water can flow better
I'm not exactly sure but I'm always worried something may happen because I am close to large bodies of water.

<b>You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts? (Disadvantaged)</b>
I'm not quite sure
I'm not sure, but there are always floods on my side of town during heavy rainfall.
I've seen some changes in the flooding area they have been doing things I build blockades to stop the flooding
I'm not sure there's certain streets in East Haven flood after storms
Improve drainage systems
improved canals, sewers and waterways to prevent flooding happening
Improved drainage systems, review impact of heavy rain to subway system
Improved garbage collection
Improved infrastructure and draining resources
Improving sewage systems to prevent overflow and further contamination into waterways. Also the implementation of green infrastructure.
Increasing the natural space along riverbanks and in flood plain to enable safer riverine flooding. Returning vegetation to this land helps to increase water infiltration, decrease the likelihood of flooding and reduce damage when the river does flood.
It impacts the transit systems and impacts getting home or family home
Last month there was an incident with a flood due to too much rain.
law makers to do better
Less flooding
Less garbage clogging natural waterways
Less pot holes, more flood warnings.
Less water being used. It is a huge problem in my area.
Like insurance and emergency service help
Limpiando las alcantarillas.
Limpiar más las calles para que la basura no retenga el agua.
Make more drain holes
Make more rain gardens
Make properties more stronger to withstand these storms that take issue out
Make sure drainage is done correctly. And no new projects without addressing the flooding, drainage and related impacts will be approved.
Making more people aware.
Maybe redirection...of areas...with water problems....by using trees. ..landscaping..
More drainage on the streets to prevent flooding
More drainage to reduce flooding
More green infrastructure to combat flooding
More preparation to prevent flood waters from rising and not draining properly like better drainage when it comes to the sewer.
More sewer drains
n/a
nearly every time it pours or blizzards my Verizon phone and internet go out. so I'd like Verizon and con ed to fortify their stuff so it stops happening. even for copper landlines.
Need to do something with sewer block age
No idea my apologies
no tirar basura donde sea mas personal de limpieza en toda partes
none
Not sure, but my basement floods whenever we have a torrential downpour
Our Sewers cleaned and cleared out. Routing of water to the Sound, especially when the rainfall is heavy. This would hopefully stop water coming back in the town heavy. Also, stop the overflow of the creeks that runs near homes and they'll get water damage

<b>You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts? (Disadvantaged)</b>
Perhaps a sewer change if some sort that could help the environment
Personal choice
Planting more grass to reduce flooding impact. Add more drainage areas near driveways.
Pollution from big companies, treating the water for getting rid of toxins
Put things in place like fortified shelters just in case of an emergency flood
Rain water takes a long time to be drained after rain. Whenever cars drive by, water splashes onto the sidewalk.
Restore estuaries, stop or slow glacier melt, buffer zones
Sewers need to be able to remove excess water. There are sewers that are not being maintained properly, resulting in water having nowhere to go.
Somehow develop a way that houses around here wouldn't suffer any floods, due to the fact that very likely for houses to get flooded because of the way streets are build around here
Stop dumping garbage inside of the sewers that is definitely one change that would reduce flooding
Stop wasting water
Street cleaning all year long.
stronger dams and solutions to climate change
Structures that have low stability should be reinforced, especially near waterways. This way, heavy rainfall doesn't lead to flooding immediately
The amount of residency near lakes or oceans
The amount of trash on the streets block all the sewers. We need to keep our communities clean.
THE INFRASTRUCTURE SHOULD BE IMPROVED
The new rules
The same areas are constantly flooding during medium to heavy rainfall. These same areas that are constantly always flooding are preventable and always cause traffic, closures, and detours...address the problem upfront instead of costing more in taxpayers money to clean up the mess after
The sewers need to be kept clean
The streets are not level or even so there is intense flooding in some areas even with the slightest rainfall.
The streets need to be free of trash.
To fix the drains
To fix the sewers
Upkeep on the streets so the places where the water should get drained doesn't get clogged.
We need flood proof facilities. We need more waste water management supply high quality clean and fresh water. Infrastructure rise to prevent flooding impacts
Weather alerts for heavy rains
When it rains it floods a lot in my area
When it rains very hard, one area of the street gets so flooded it makes it very unsafe to walk through the water onto the sidewalk.
When it rains, the streets get flooded Aaliyah and it goes on to the sidewalks so I think they need to fix that a little bit
When there's a lot of rain the Boys and Girls Club gets leaks. Rain from ceiling in homes. Infrastructure to withstand. Half of bronx river near Yonkers flooded, shut down roads, people had to leave cars in most recent flooding in September. Exit 1 in Bronx. Flooding is an issue in all surrounding areas
With the technology we have in 2023 we should be able to create some kind of very large sewer or exit for the water to get out from



Are there specific beaches, waterways, or areas that you are NOT currently using or visiting, but you would especially like to use? (Disadvantaged)
access to the Quinnipiac River at Front street, NOT just the park at Grand Ave bridge.
All of them.
All over the place. I want to explore as much as I can
Any
Anything near the city
Beaches with clean water
Beardsley park
Beautiful water
Bluff point
Bronx river
Calf Pasture Beach
Cape May y Stone harbar en Nueva Jersey
Central Park
City island
City island beach
Coney island
Coney Island
Coney Island beach
Coney Island far Rockaway Beach
Cosey Beach in East Haven
Cove island sound
CT River
Do not know
Don't know
Don't know of any
Eastern point
George Washington bridge
Glen island
Glen Island
Greenwich beaches have a very high non resident fee
Hammonasset
Hawaii
Hiking in local beach, expensive for daily us for hiking and dog park access.
Housatonic River
Hudson beach
Hudson River
I don't like touching any water from the Hudson river, nor central park water, Orchard beach, and. C
I don't use Brooklyn and long Island or Bronx
I use Branford, Guilford and Madison beaches because they are accessible by bike and train.
I wanted to go to the beaches in Long Island beach this summer but I didn't. Not familiar with the n
I would like to use Rockaway beach .Rockaway beach looks like a beautiful site that seem Serene.it a
I would love more to fire island
I'm not sure
I'm not currently using or visiting at this moment
In new jersey American dream
It's a beach near a neighborhood
it's a common area and a very vast land
It's probably a beach it has a shoreline in the fishing area

Are there specific beaches, waterways, or areas that you are NOT currently using or visiting, but you would especially like to use? (Disadvantaged)
its near or in Southold
John beach
Jones
jones beach
Jones beach
Jones Beach
Jones beach or others
Lago
Lido beach
Light house
lighthouse
Lighthouse Point
Long Beach
Long island beach
Long Island beach cause u need a ID that shows u live in the Long Island area
Long Island City
Long Island sound
Long Island sound for sure
Long Wharf
Mamaroneck Harbor
Marina beach
me encantaría que hicieran más playa
Milford
Montauk
More than likely.
More trails
Morris Cove, Lighthouse Point, Hammonasset, Farm River Branford, Cosey Beach, Quinnipiac River for
Mucho playas
Orchard beach
Ocean
Ocean beach
Ocean Beach
Ocean beach park
Orchard beach too dirty!
Orchard
orchard beach
Orchard beach
Orchard Beach
orchard beach - last time i went there it was v dirty
Orchard Beach and Coney Island Beach because it's dirty and the water is horrible water be nasty
Orchard Beach and Rye Playland beach
Orchard beach Bien sucio
Orchard Beach will be the place that I have not used
Orchard beach. The water needs to clean of garbage.
Orchard beaches
Orchard beach
Park near my house.
Parques

Are there specific beaches, waterways, or areas that you are NOT currently using or visiting, but you would especially like to use? (Disadvantaged)
Pleasure beach
Robert Moses
Rockaway Beach and Jones beach
rockaways, Riis field
Roosevelt Forest, Short Beach, and Long Beach
Rye Beach
Seaside park
Seaside Park
Shore line by Mamaroneck
Shoreline
Short beach Stratford CT
Si hay playas y picinas y lo visito no todos los Dias pero quando puedo
Smell of the water smelling dirty
Sound shore area
South Beach
Staffordville lake
The beach in West Haven
The closest beach in my area is Orchard beach , it is over populated/ crowded and the water is absolutely gross
The Easton river
The Hudson area
The jersey shore
The only Beach that I know of is Jones Beach without a love to visit but I'm not currently using it
The park by orchard beach.
the shoreline
There are no specific beaches per say, just pay attention to the ones already there that need a once
There are no specific beaches.
There are no specific ones
There aren't any I can think of
There is a specific beach called Bradford Beach.
Theres was a beach I went to a friend get together but I forgot the name
To walk around the boardwalk.
Too crowded
very beautiful rivers, mountains and dogs to have a good experience
Virginia Beach
wading beach
Waterways
Weed Beach, Point Beach
West Haven
West haven beach
West Haven Beach but they charge too much to park
West haven beach, I would like to visit more often but it's not very clean
West River
Yea but not in Bridgeport - for example there are places in fairfield
Yes faster routes and better passages
Yes Florida Beach
Yes orchard beach
Yes, I like to visit the long Island beach
Yes, sea side shore

<b>What information did you see about activities and events? (Disadvantaged)</b>
A lot of fishing events and activities
A lot of information on social networks
All types of information
Alot about global warming
An ad for forest.org
Asking people to clean up
Barbecue and fishing
Bath
beach cleanup
Beach, development
Beaches n parks
Beautifying Ocean Beach
Birds of Prey presentation with emphasis on waterway raptors
Boating ,Yoga on platform, Regatta Boat Races
Camping
Childrens happy , more peace , Good people
Clean up the beach
Clean up the waterways events.
Different events in the summer at a local park
Don't remember
Fairs
Fairs held in Huntington village and Heckscher park
Family activity
Fishing excursions boat tours
Fishing tournament
Going green
Good information also information
Great vacation
Groups of people getting together to clean up the public places
Halloween Beach Clean, Estuary Day, Teacher Webinar
He's very smart we have a fishing event today
Help save the sound
Hiking trails with guides and the rates
How new events would be coming
I always see advertisement about these activities in t.v ads for upstate NY sites.
I don't know
I don't see any about activity events
I dot really remember
I get CT Audubon info via email
I have seen information about nature and national parks.
I like to go to the park.
I saw a event for July 4th and firework celebrations.
I saw about the dates and time about where it's being held
I saw an ad for campsite on YouTube
I saw an advertisement about Long Island sound holding a clean up!
I saw information about a family day hosted in the park
I seen that they have cleaner water for people to actually go fishing which is my favorite thing to do.
I the car is on a oversized shirt

<b>What information did you see about activities and events? (Disadvantaged)</b>
I wanted to know what ways I can access transportation
I'm not going anywhere else bc princess I'm so tired and king and I
I'm not sure
I'm on a number of email lists so I receive notifications when a number of events like this are available in the area
I've mainly seen ads for beach events like concerts, or cruise trips along a river. Nothing much.
I've seen things online about beach clean ups. They weren't in my area though.
Information about when and what time events or activities would take place
Information on cleaning up Highway and signs for volunteers
It was a beautiful fun experience
It was a online ad I see and word of mouth about cleaning the shore line
Just a lot of information
Just commercials on the area
Just flyers banners with date an time by very often
Just that they were helping the community and there was a website
La vez que estaban en la fiesta
Learning clean ways to help water events to talk about the pollutants
Limited info on these events
Local fishing events
Local posters asking for volunteers to help join the event
Location, time of event, & different fun activities like rides and games
Nature walking Gardening
Norwalk Calf pasture summer activities and concerts in social media. Facebook agenda.
Not much
Not much, mostly just cleaning up trash from the beach and water to prevent sea creatures from getting killed.
Not sure
Park departments
Parks and recreation
Playas y agua
reunión de familia y amigos
Safer waterway activities and more insight on greenery
Signs or someone I saw in a paper or on a pamphlet.
Solo lo Que está cera de aqui nada mas
Something to do with the water supply
Telling you how to better yourself and your communities
That fishing and shell fishing is one of the most common activities that are held at the Long Island waterways
The activities and how fun it is
The AKA sorority
The date and what and where the activity are these are big helps
The Long Island Sound is being cleaned up
They are going to be doing some guarding and also very nice walks in the park with nature
They are having events planning.
They don't show up enough for me to remember a lot about them
this was foe a training on how to recycle ... mainly for children
Through billboards - they change quickly before you can look
Time place activities
Todo
Videos
Volleyball event next year

<b>What information did you see about activities and events? (Disadvantaged)</b>
Walking through beach Cleaning the beach Fishing Boating
Watch
We learned how to reduce, re-use, and recycle.
Weekend family events
West River Water Festival with free canoeing along the West River.
Where to go and when
Yes like schools coming together for events for the children

The question about optimism was removed from the survey when surveying had already begun. However, numerous open-ended responses had already been received, and these responses are shown below.

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
A lot of negative things that go on around me
A lot of people are very selfish and stubborn.
A lot people in my community don't take the environmental issues seriously. I guess it's either because they don't care or it's not effecting them personally.
Alot of people don't think about what's best for the world
amazing
As time goes on hoping inflation gets better
Bc they don't change
Because everything changes day by day and anything can happen
Because I am worried about the way national politics are trending.
Because I know I know there are people out there making the effort to change things.
Because it is a bit challenging to achieve in this area.
Because it need to and everything
Because it sometimes doesn't happen
Because it's been like that for over 30 years
Because it's been this way as long as I remember. Poor neighborhoods don't see these changes often.
Because more housing developments are being built.
Because no one does anything to stop the littering n waste of our area
Because no one in a position to do anything about it, cares about doing anything about it
Because nobody has made the change before
Because nothing has happened thus far
Because nothing is being done to fix it
Because of community
Because of how our current financial system is set up. It's hard for people to afford things. There's no jobs out here so it means communities like mine don't have priority when they are trying to fix things
Because of humans
because of past experience
Because of people
Because of the community that we live in
Because once people get in power they forget all the promises
Because our government doesn't seem to have monies for that they just use the money for issues that don't concern the people in the country at this time that's what it seems to aboard taxpaying person right now because our issues aren't being addressed
Because people are always going to pollute and have no incentive not to

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
Because people are coming together to make it a better place
Because people are more concerned
Because people don't learn until it's too late
Because people in my neighborhood don't really care about the community
Because right now, things have been getting worse.
Because the amount of trash and illegal dumping of trash has gotten alot worse in the community and it would be difficult to continuously maintain people from illegally dumping trash.
Because the community is getting better so that leads to change for the better
Because the community is lacking the effort to grown the community Because of various hardships
Because the community wants better
Because the economy in our city is getting worse.
Because the law it's just do some people
Because the people who make the actual decisions, do not want things better. That's not part of their plan.
Because the rate is slow
because there is less support from the concerned government agency
Because there isn't enough people that care
Because there's always hope
because they never change
Because they only think about themselves.
Because they're doing a good job
Because things haven't changed so far
Because we all humans have not done a good job so far of taking care of the Earth.
Because we currently don't have access to these things
Because we have been saying this for years yet nothing really has been done
Because we look for a brighter future
Before things change for the better they need to get fix the crime around my neighbourhood
Better entertainment
Better tree areas and more access
Cause for years nothing has been done
Cause it doesn't seem possible
Cause of the neighborhood so far
Cause they don't care
Cause they don't care about poor people
Cause things don't always stay new
Change is difficult
Climate change
Climate change is a complete disaster and continues to receive limited attention given the urgency and scale of the problem.
Corruption
Crime rate
Crime rate, gentrification, homelessness and pollution.
Depending on the government
Depends on participation of community
depends on the politician
Do not feel like it is much of a priority for people.
Dysfunctional political systems
Every generation is getting smarter
Everyone should come together for the kids.
Food trucks are likely to remain at Long Wharf and therefore likely trash from customers of these trucks will

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
continue to litter.
For a long time they take out tax dollars and give us crap
For years there have been changes, but very little.
Hard to get things done with the local politics
Hope is everlasting
Hope is never lost and ignorance can be changed with knowledge and tolerance
How long does one need to bring these ideas to fruition? The past years are already wasted. Talking every year about making things happen does no good for everyone. Decisions need to be made and worked on so be the next year they are done.
I am a wait and see type of person
I am unsure
I believe that because not a lot of people would be willing to come in together as a community to learn and participate.
I believe that things will change
I believe things can change for the better
I do feel optimistic
I don't feel more optimistic because the community doesn't really care to much for it.
I don't feel more optimistic because the youth is taking over.
I don't feel more optimistic. I feel equally
I don't feel optimistic
I don't feel optimistic that things will change
I don't have faith in my community
I don't know
I don't see a lot of change but know it can happen and it's hard when people aren't open to trying to help, so it's hard to be very optimistic
I don't see any changes that have been made lately
I don't see any reason to feel more optimistic
I don't see legislators taking a big leap toward ensuring funding is available for the groups doing this important work
I don't see many changes
I don't think people are listening or funding is low
I don't think people care as much about saving our Mother Earth and it's sad
I don't think the authorities are in any hurry to change things in the community.
I feel as though many people want it to become better. The more people that want to better the community, the more hope we have.
I feel good about my community, and I think we'll come together soon
I feel like for years now things have only gotten worse, but at the same time they have gotten better as well. They have improved so much from before, but I feel like there's still so much to improve and not that i'm not grateful or anything, because I so very am, but I can't wait until we can finally be at a place to say we're doing okay.
I feel like the government has other priorities and local officials don't have the funds to make the community better
I feel not as optimistic as sometimes people don't hear about these events for changes and don't come or are not as involved.
I feel optimistic because there's a lot of potential in my community.
I feel the community can change and have positive outcomes
I feel the community hasn't been first priority is the inflation that is what is important to most just money.
I have lived in my house for 37 years and I can see a big difference in the neighborhood safety and overall living conditions



<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
I have not been to an event to know
I just do
I just haven't seen the results to be 'very 'optimistic.
I know nothing about these events.
I know things are changing and everything is going green so hopefully that will help the environment
I know what the Bible says about what is happening in the world before Jesus returns and things will get increasingly worse until he comes
I live in an extremely noisy area that was designated as a highway after I moved here.
I live on the south Bronx where resources are very scarce
i see a lot of concern in addressing the issues
I see it for myself
I see people are taking the environment much more seriously
I see the changes
I see the work to improve the community in real time.
I see too much erosion in our shoreline so I don't believe they will be available in the future
I think community will change.
I think its going to get worse before it gets better. Hopefully I am wrong.
I think people are realizing the benefits of having a clean surrounding
I think the environment is in a very delicate situation and it would need big motion from society and government to have real changes, which I don't see happening.
I think there's a lack of caring about these issues that
I used to work at a local program center who worked on getting rid of a highway in my area. I was involved for about 10 years, I eventually had to leave that job. It took a few years after I left to finally get the highway reduced to streets allowing access to a park in the community. At this pace it appears not many changes will occur in a timely manner.
I'm not sure change is a priority for available resources.
I'm not sure I have the confidence in the local government to actually make the changes. I believe the community wants it.
I'm not sure it's a widely shared interest
I'm not sure my community would like these things.
I've been a resident for thirty years and have not seen much change
I've given up on a lot of things
I've lived here 20 years and nothing much has changed.
I've lived out here for 33 years. Haven't seen much done for this area. Only homeless shelters and things we don't need.
idk bro
If changes like the ones mentioned in the previous question are implemented, that would be fantastic. But I see that it would need to happen by local leaders or in partnership with local leaders rather than solely by big environmental organizations or entities.
If everyone comes out and be involved their learn more and wanna do more
If everyone will work together as a team and have an positive mindset one day the community will get better.
If I had more information about what goes on, events, and invites and a way to get to and from
If program like yours presentation on the subject I believe so
In time if all people in the community get involve.
In time things getting better sowing and surely
it always helps to be optimistic
It depends
It feels like not many people want change enough
It going to take a lot of time and hard effort

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
It may be easier for many people.
it no longer matters if you've lived in an apt and had a relationship with your landlord for 25 years. if they want to raise the rent and/or get you out they will try. just an overall less people based society.
It starts by people wanting a change and to better themselves and the neighborhood first and most people just don't care.
It takes funding to build a better community and there is not enough funding
It will never happen
It's a repressed low income are.
It's a vulnerable community that isn't given enough consequences for failing to maintain the community.
It's an uphill battle to get both residents and city officials on the same page and to promote and provide positive changes.
It's so much damage done in this neighborhood
It's the city I live in
it will get better in time
It's always about politics when it comes to these things.
just having hope
Just I don't think we are doing enough
La gente lo vuelve a joder
lack of care
Lack of change noticed
Lack of help from other members in the community
Lack of money or interest from local governments
Lot of the people are not friendly
Lots of caring people
Love the environments
Man out here playing God
Many individuals do not care about it
Maybe my community is too low income to care about maybe not
more housing being built
More people are aware
More people are becoming aware of their negative impact on the environment and they are changing their behavior for the better.
Most people in it are bad.
Most residents don't seem to have an interest in these things
My community still needs to do better, but I am still hopeful for the future
My current feelings are based on past practice. Its just not a primary focus.
need more competent people in office
need to see action
New buildings might bring more residents that care about bettering the community
New York City and New York State are in a state of decline
No leadership in community
No one cares
no one does anything to change
Not enough community involvement need more advertising
Not enough money to fund the community
Not enough people interested!
not much change has happened even though there's always been talk about bettering the environment
not much for older people to do when cant participate in sports
Not much has been done in this community.

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
not sure
Not sure
Not until someone with money comes to change things
officials only do what they want they don't take into consideration suggestions from tax paying residents
optimism is a great tool for developing
Our community leaders need to listen and not be distracted on what's going on outside. That is a hard thing to do.
People are aware of what's happening, which is the first step in changing the community.
People are greedy
People are not great and they usually make things worse
People are starting to care about the environment more
People are very stuck in their own ways. Minds cannot always be changed.
People are very stuck in their ways and will not change.
PEOPLE NEED TO CARE MORE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT
People change and so things will get better as we want better for ourselves
People in the community are willing to meet and discuss changes that will better the community
People want this and will help
Polarity in society and lack of resources or valuing community by those looking for just economic advancement
Politicians do not care about my community.
Politics
population is increasing and a lot of people don't respect rules
Por que no hacen mucha cosa ayudar
Porque creo que mi ciudad es un lugar grandioso y lleno de personas muy trabajadoras y comprometidas
realistically I live in The Bronx so what can I expect ?
reality based social activity is often a thought based concept with little action but many meetings/conferences/planning committees et al.
Seeing more action. Right now seeing phantom homes starting to be addressed, optimistic something is happening
Some folks have a hard time understanding the disproportionate impact of communities of color and environmental injustices.
Some people don't care
Some people don't care about these things and continue to litter and do it on purpose. These kinds of people will always hinder our chances for improvement
Sometimes things improve, sometimes they don't.
Starting to see some changes
That's a community will get better and have better people in it
The area I live in as a 31 yo male, is the same area I was born and raised in. I've seen the progress of the cleanliness of the community, the comrades of the people that have remained here in upholding annual events in tradition, over the decades
The area is just not doing well. I don't see it changing anytime soon
The city is growing too fast , too many new people
The city talks a good game but doesn't really do much.
The community has come together to help each other and I see new trees along side streets are being planted
The community has to be willing to work together in order to permit the change. It will be harder than expected.
The community is very divided
The community residents are committed to changes
The future is unknown so who knows what changes happen in a few years from now.
The government has to be more involved. They don't care about the environment.

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
The mindset of our community
The people in the community will probably ruin it
The population is increasing and we're already the largest city in the country
The question should be - how much money is coming into the state to make improvements of the sound?
The relief of covid
The town leaders are more focused on other topics than the waterways.
The water is not good and I'm not sure how long that will take to fix
There are bigger problems in my community that would come first.
There are many ways that our community are placing energy, saving equipment for earths climate
there does not appear to be any leadership
There hasn't been a change for years and it only got worse
There have been many petitions that have been ignored.
There is a lot of corruption involved
There is not community support in the area.
There is still areas that needs to be cleaned up
there aren't enough funds to focus on many things that need to be changed in my community
There's been no change for years
Theres a lot going on all over the world.
These things need time and consistency
They haven't happened yet
They won't
things are getting better
Things don't change for lower income people and that's just the reality of it
things had stayed the same for years
Things have been the same for a while and I feel that's just how it would be for a minute.
Things I've heard people saying about how the damage we have done on the earth is irreversible, makes me feel somewhat pessimistic. I still have some hope, though.
things never really change around here
this has been an issue for a long time and it seems that no one really cares
This is ct...the state where we charge ridiculous amounts of money for objects you have paid taxes on multiple times and could lose for not paying your newest tax bill, even though you have paid for said item in full a few times over
Time will tell
To be honest I think it's going to take a very long time for things to fully change around here. The people in charge think by building all these expensive luxury apartments that it's going to flush the poor out. In reality most people require money to move. That said, I'm seeing the homeless population growing here the more unaffordable places are becoming. If for some reason the government ever decides they don't need submarines anymore and electric boat shuts down, there's going to be thousands of people without jobs. This place could easily turn into Detroit. Let's just hope things progress for the better.
Too many homicides
Too much criminality
Town leaders/politicians are focusing on other aspects
Unsure
Wait and see
We are getting more climate change aware
We are polluting the waters more now then we did previously. Were burning Fossil fuels illegal dumping of toxic hazardous material into the ocean killing us and the wildlife
We are solving Climate Change and Global Warming
We have very competent local leaders.

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Disadvantaged)</b>
We need more people
we need to do more
well, the entire world is going crazy
We have some good leaders that will make it better
When I go into different neighborhoods traveling I see a lot of rebuilding and other improvements. I live in a good neighborhood but it's a little out of date with WiFi technology and other small buildings that need to be upgraded. Reconstruction seems to be slow.
With inflation, it's less likely it will be good.
With people who are passionate about changing things
With the current issues and divide amongst neighbors, it's kind of hard to say what to look towards
You just have to believe
you just have to think positive

The tables below show responses from non-disadvantaged community members to open-ended questions in the quantitative survey. Responses are presented verbatim, albeit with some minor edits to correct obvious misspellings. Also, responses are presented in alphabetical order to make the qualitative analysis of verbatim results easier for the reader.

<b>What environmental changes would you like to see to improve the natural world in your community? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
Eliminating pesticides and life blowers
Better/easier recycling- plastic bags and styrofoam in particular
Less uncontrolled development
Reduce air pollution and noise pollution from the airport
restoring the massapequa lakes
Road runoff pollutes waterways/ better engineering & phytoremediation are needed

<b>You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
A living shoreline to prevent storm erosion. Separate the combined sewers so storm water can be directed to wetlands. More catch basins to collect storm water during heavy rain events.
Acquisition of waterfront properties plus flood controls to protect built areas
Better drainage requirements for asphalt, more porous materials, regular cleaning of storm drains and sewers, make shorelines more resilient through best environmental practices and if beneficial more breakwaters and barriers.
Better drainage.
Better riverbank and shoreline infrastructure to handle intense rainfall and flooding. Current infrastructures are old and wearing down.
Building stronger barriers and stop pollution
Educating people on how to protect their own property. Regular cleaning and maintenance of storm Sewers. Heavy Tickets for polluting these sewers.
Education on how to reduce impacts
i am big believer in reclaiming hard surfaces and restoring grasslands, estuaries, and the intertidal zone (replacing bulkheads, building bioswales, eelgrass restoration, etc)
I think waterways should be dredged, roadways need better drainage
Improve the environment, I think this is the main environment I live in
Improvements to drainage and general water management, as well as new infrastructure and building taking

<p><b>You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts? (Not Disadvantaged)</b></p>
<p>that and rising sea levels into account. Ultimately, this is an issue that requires us to address bigger climate change issues as a larger society</p>
<p>Letting mother nature do her thing and educating the public about how it was done back in the day. Mary through a series of workshops at the library, or just pamphlets or signs in neighborhoods.</p>
<p>managed retreat from flood prone areas - conserving/restoring wetlands to provide somewhere for that water to go.</p>
<p>Many of my neighbors were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. More needs to be done by the state and government to help with relief for natural disasters</p>
<p>More barriers and advanced warning</p>
<p>More dams</p>
<p>More drainage systems and stable groundwork.</p>
<p>More open spaces with trees and plants</p>
<p>More permeable surfaces and green spaces; less development close to waterways</p>
<p>More plants to absorb water, more trees for shade, less trash on ground, more opportunities for students in the community</p>
<p>More protection can be added around</p>
<p>My neighborhood floods whenever there is a heavy downpour, impacting travel and quality of life</p>
<p>Protect existing wetlands regionwide, and restore wetlands that have been destroyed — in the Mystic River Watershed and beyond. Update culverts.</p>
<p>Refurbishing marsh lands, supporting oyster beds, laws and education to support less concrete and more natural ways to responsibly handle rainwater.</p>
<p>Saving lives during hurricanes</p>
<p>Start building a regional network of communities that will be subject to sea level rise and creating strategies for short- and long-term impacts.</p>
<p>take flooding and heavy rainfall in consideration when doing any new large development, and create water gardens and other means of better controlling heavy rain episodes.</p>
<p>The Blind Brook in my neighborhood floods often, and last year two people drowned when their car was swept away. There needs to be a way to manage the flooding during severe weather.</p>
<p>To plant lots of trees to protect the environment</p>
<p>Too much urban flooding in New Haven. Replace lawns with trees and deep rooted plants to absorb water</p>
<p>We need better sloped roadways &amp; sewage systems or catch basins.</p>
<p>whatever engineers beleve doable</p>
<p>A living shoreline to prevent storm erosion. Separate the combined sewers so storm water can be directed to wet lands. More catch basins to collect storm water during heavy rain events.</p>
<p>Acquisition of waterfront properties plus flood controls to protect built areas</p>
<p>Better drainage requirements for asphalt, more porous materials, regular cleaning of storm drains and sewers, make shorelines more resilient through best environmental practices and if beneficial more breakwaters and barriers.</p>

<p><b>Do you have any health concerns related to eating fish or shellfish you catch in the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways? (Not Disadvantaged)</b></p>
<p>bacteria in the water</p>
<p>Heavy metals, biomagnification</p>
<p>Polluted waters</p>
<p>pollution</p>

<b>Are there specific beaches, waterways, or areas that you are NOT currently using or visiting, but you would especially like to use? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
Any north shore beach that is 'resident only'
Bay Street Parklet in Mystic by Isham St boat launch is marked pvt with ropes while the wall is pvt
Beaches at state parks (often very crowded)
Beaches in nyc
Beaches in Westchester
Calf Pasture Beach
Coney Island beach but it usually not that sanitary
David welds
Gilgo
Glen island beach
Greenwich beaches
hammonasset state park
Harkness State Park--very long drive
Howard Jones
Hutchinson River in Mount Vernon
I do not use any. I have double vision & cannot drive anywhere
I would like Greenwich to issue a non-resident permit for Todd's Point and I would like to see New R
I would like to see less trash and less sewage overflow. I'm also concerned about the flesh eating b
I'm not sure of the name all the locations that's why I said it be easier if these things were adver
Jones Beach
Lighthouse point park
Mail Dam area of Huntington Harbor
Massapequa preserve and other nearby lakes and the path next to the Wantagh parkway
Mattituck inlet
More beaches
no
No
None
None in particular
none that i can think of at this time
Norwalk Islands
not specifically
nothing
orchard beach
Orchard Beach
Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park waterways
Orchard beach.
Redfall
Rocky Neck State Park
Rye Town Beach
Smithtown beaches
South shore
St. Mary's by the sea
Sunken Meadow Park
This question is confusing - I already answered that I use the Sound frequently... Favorite beach is
Tod's Pt
Town beaches outside my area
Weed Beach and Pear Tree Beach in Darien

<b>Are there specific beaches, waterways, or areas that you are NOT currently using or visiting, but you would especially like to use? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
West Haven beach
Any north shore beach that is 'resident only'
Bay Street Parklet in Mystic by Isham St boat launch is marked pvt with ropes while the wall is pvt

<b>You indicated that you don't feel welcome in the environmental community. What changes, if any, would make these events feel more welcoming? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
If groups partnered with no environmental groups to expand the scope of people

<b>You indicated that you are concerned about your or your family's safety at outdoor activities and events. What are the reasons you are concerned about safety at outdoor activities and events? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
I just don't want them getting sick and dying
In general, crime is not punished any more. Only the victims suffer while the guilty go free.

<b>What information did you see about activities and events? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
Audubon Society activities
Beach and trail cleanups
beach clean ups, some bird watch walks
clean up beaches
Clean ups
Clean ups locations on Instagram
clean-up events advertisements
Cleanups
DEEP emails
Description of event and schedule
Direct emails from organizations putting on events.
dk
flyer
From Pollinator Pathway, Parks and Recs in Fairfield, Sound Waters in Stamford, Norwalk river alliance, FFld public library
i often see about beach cleanups and other things from environmental groups and also from communications from the oyster bay town supervisor
in the newspaper-I believe
Like walking in the neighborhood
local clean up events sponsored by Norwalk River Rowing
Lots! I work for a related org, so see lots of emails and social media in particular.
Mostly beach cleanups
NESS events, some events at local land conservation sites
Newsletters, emails from environmental groups.
NYC Parks events for nature walks
NYC parks will have volunteer events
On Facebook events like this are posted you just have to be in different groups
online-instagram
Pamphlets, online PD, in person PD, events
Rivere restoration



<b>What information did you see about activities and events? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
Save the Sound announcements, Peconic Land Trust, ReWild LI, East End Beacon
Social media and organization mailing lists I'm on
Some beach cleans up, birdwatching tours, walking tours
Sporadic information about events happening at larger venues (for instance, Jones Beach)
the Save The Sound email list is pretty good
To help come pick up the trash
Usually urban parks like Ft Trumbull St Pk

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
It takes a lot of time to activate change with government
because change takes a long time and can easily be undone
Because cleaning up the water from dangerous bacteria is very expensive and required Federal or State money.
Because I am an optimistic person by nature and the community has some good leaders
Because I don't think there's hope
Because rich people own New York and do not pay taxes.
Change happens slowly
Citizen interest
Climate change
Climate change is a constant worry
Climate change issues are global and very little being done to reverse the trend at the scale needed. Impacts aren't in the future but happening now.
Concern that developers are taking over. Not enough citizens care about our environment.
doesn't seem like people care
Environmental groups working together with elected officials
Every year environmental issues get worse since I was born
Everything costs money and most of the focus is on affordable housing development and migrants.
Have not seen it yet
Human Population growth and environmental changes such as the irreversible melting of polar ice caps.
I always have hope but things in life make it hard
I am a very positive person.
I don't think New Haven has enough affordable housing and it is a big issue. I worry about the environmental impact of all the non affordable housing being built here as well
I feel like most people haven't lived outside of town or in such an urbanized town that they don't see the impacts of each new store and road on the community.
I have not seen many positive changes. Crime is high, cost of living is high. People are not kind. Driving anywhere takes forever to get to your destination and people do not pay attention while driving. It's scary to drive on our roadways
I live in a higher income community where decisions seem to be driven by and controlled by money and most likely won't change.
I live in Brookhaven (Crookhaven) change only happens when a politician can gain from it
I think it all depends on who is in charge and willing to put plans into actions.
I'm 70 and I have seen improvement since late 60's but lately not so good. Every time it rains, shell-fishing, fishing, swimming are closed due to sewage overflow. This one thing getting fixed would help a lot of other problems.
I'm an eternal optimist!
It is challenging to afford to live and work in this part of Connecticut. The way people have moved around since 2020 and how that has impacted the availability of affordable housing in the area connects to a lot of the issues I find most challenging (needing to commute a long distance, which impacts traffic, with impacts air quality,

<b>Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community? (Not Disadvantaged)</b>
which impact climate change, which all impact peoples ability to have time to connect with Long Island Sound, etc.) and I don't see an easy way out of that cycle. I also do not have a lot of faith in the politicians in Bridgeport and don't feel that addressing these types of challenges is the top priority for those in charge.
it just can't keep getting worse so i have to be hopeful
Just seems like the mood of the country is not to move forward on these kinds of things.
Lack of funding to make positive changes. People don't care about nature. People litter on the street and in the parks and don't face any consequences. People don't care about the well being of our planet and fellow human beings.
Lack of interest and money
Lack of political will to truly address existing pollution, prevent future pollution along with the lack of readily available information/education about these topics available to the general public.
Life is pretty good in Old Lyme just the way it is.
limited contributors
Money! Towns restrict beaches and more people can't afford to use them.
more education to the public and school kids. More public awareness of environmental problems
Most people here in Stonington seem to like it the way it is. More users will mean crowded access points
Mount Vernon is resistant to change.
Not much funding
NYC is always in a fiscal crisis.
NYC too much to fix, too much paperwork, too much bureaucracy
over building of high density residences
past history
People are hesitant to get involved
People are more aware of a clean environment
People are more educated now about the environment and there are more advocacy regarding rules, regulations and use of natural spaces.
people not educated enough on sciences and too individualistic and lazy to care about human impact on nature
Politicians don't care
Politics sometimes get in the way of good intentions
Programs cost money and we are spending far too much money on illegal entrants to our country. Money for programs goes to them and not those that supply the money.
The government is not concerned
The march of 'Progress'.
The neighborhood is being built up which gives me hope
The politicians in West Haven do not prioritize things like these
the shoreline in coastal Westchester is largely private land behind gated or effectively-gated / parking-enforced communities with very deep resources to protect their privileged access
there are people who don't want to act and participate in taking care of the sound/beach but are some of the worst offenders sadly. even if a person is from the inner city, visiting the beach should inspire all to keep it clean and worthy of proper care. Maybe have programs that bring people out to the beach from farther away to teach just how valuable the sound is
There is no regional approach to sea level rise. We are just one Super Sandy away from an environmental catastrophe. All the goals you have described in your questionnaire are meaningless if our lands our inundated either by flooding or sea level rise.
Those with access to and/or ownership of resources have no motivation to share
Too much red tape and stupid expense attached to doing good things
Wave the parking fees and residents requirements

## APPENDIX D: DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Discussion Guide for Expert Interviews Conducted for the Long Island Sound Study

#### *Introduction:*

Responsive Management is supporting the Long Island Sound Study in building relationships with local groups to better understand needs of communities in the Sound. LISS has recognized that there is a need to more purposefully plan its efforts to make advances in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice and ensure those principles are met and prioritized within its environmental work, specifically to ensure that the Long Island Sound and its benefits and LISS resources are available to everyone.

If you're not familiar, the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) is a national estuary program formed in 1985 as a bi-state (CT and NY) partnership consisting of federal and state agencies, user groups, concerned organizations, and individuals, all dedicated to restoring and protecting Long Island Sound.

- **(SHARED AS NEEDED) Long Island Sound:** A critical estuary nestled between New York and Connecticut. The Sound is one of the region's largest estuaries; with over 1,320 square miles, it is home to more than 170 species of fish, 1,200 species of invertebrates, and countless species of birds and other animals. The coastline stretches more than 600 miles and is home to more than 23 million people who live at least 50 miles from it. The watershed also includes major urban centers, including New Haven, Stamford, and parts of New York City.

We're reaching out to community groups, leaders, and communities in the Long Island Sound watershed in New York and Connecticut to get direct feedback about what is needed and the role LISS can play in providing tools and resources directly to communities.

Although the Long Island Sound Study may not be able to meet every need put forth in this process, their intention and goals through this process are:

- 1) to start conversations with many community groups to build ongoing relationships so LISS can better serve communities along the Sound by 1) developing long-term collaborative relationships with communities, community leaders, and groups that facilitate understanding of environmental issues and how LISS can employ their own work, funding, and resources to address such issues; and 2) through illustrating and bringing to light the specific environmental issues faced by communities that are located on Long Island Sound or associated waterways.
- 2) to partner with and fund several local groups in areas that have historically been underserved and overburdened to support further conversations to better understand existing needs, and collaboratively find intersections between these needs and LISS' work.

While Long Island Sound Study's capacity does not include the ability to make actionable changes with regard to all environmental issues or stressors, but for those issues, projects, or programs LISS and SG are not able to work with directly, they hope to be an intermediary that connects communities with the resources and organizations that *can* make actionable change. We'd love to ask you a number of questions to better understand your organization, what's going on in your community, and potentials for collaboration and partnership.

**I. Role in Community, Organizational Barriers, & Capacity Building Needs**

- A. First, we'd love to learn a little bit more about you, your organization, and your work. Could you share about your organization, your role, and what you're working on in your community?
- B. Are there any specific barriers you face in your work? Are there any changes that would allow you to do more for your community?
- C. Are there any specific capacity building needs you have, personally or within your organization?
- D. Are there any trainings, technical assistance, or support you would benefit from?

**II. Community Needs & Assets; Connection to LIS**

- A. What's going well in your community? What would you like to see more of?
  1. What projects/successes are you the most proud of?
  2. What are community members most proud of and interested in protecting?
- B. What's not going well in your community? What would you like to see less of?
  1. What kind of environmental stressors have you experienced in your community? (PROMPT IF NECESSARY): (If needed:) By environmental, we mean anything that relates to the natural world and the impact of human activity on its condition.
    - Water pollution (including safe fishing spots/water quality)
    - Trash/illegal dumping including marine debris
    - Air pollution
    - Lack of public access to green and blue spaces
    - Flooding
    - Sewage backups
    - Urban heat island effect
    - Development impacts (energy developments, etc.)
    - Increasing water levels/erosion
    - Drought
    - Intense rainfall events
    - Climate change
    - Any other environmental issues you're experiencing in your community?

2. What social and/or infrastructure issues have you experienced in your community? (NOTE: SEPARATE PUBLIC HEALTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE IF NECESSARY. PROMPT FOR SOCIAL ISSUES AND ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF WATER-RELATED ISSUES.)
    - Lack of local jobs/job training
    - Housing
    - Transit inaccessibility/costs
    - Energy costs
    - Drinking water quality issues
    - Public health
    - Waste management issues
    - Public safety/crime/violence
    - Noise pollution
    - Any other social or infrastructure issues you're experiencing in your community?
  3. What other issues are top of mind in your community?
    - a) What is your community most interested in talking about?
  4. Why do you think these issues, both the environmental and the social and/or infrastructure have not been addressed or have not been addressed as adequately or fully as you think they should be? (**Prompt as necessary**)
- C. Do you feel like members of your community use the Long Island Sound shoreline or waterway? Other nearby waterways (might be more connected to local waterways than LIS as a whole)?
1. For what reasons/purposes?
  2. How often?
  3. Any specific locations?
  4. Do members of your community have to travel to get to the Sound? If so, how, and how long does it take to get there?
  5. What barriers exist for community members regarding use of the Sound and its benefits?
- D. Is there anything else that you would like us to know about your community?

### III. Existing/Concurrent Efforts

- A. What kinds of efforts are there or have there already been to address existing issues in your community?
  1. Is there anything that would make these efforts more effective?
- B. What existing conversations/efforts are already happening that you're aware of that we should plug into/coordinate with/be aware of - related to LIS or other issues in your community?

**IV. Solutions Development**

- A. If you had 10 million dollars to improve your community, how would you spend it? (Prompt: In other words, what does your community need the most to get to where it wants to be?)
- B. Are there any specific tools or resources with regard to environmental stressors you think your community could benefit from?
- C. Are there any environmental programs, tools, or resources you would like to see more of? Explain.
- D. How could your community's access to the Sound and its resources / other nearby waterways specifically be improved?
  1. What would ideal access to the Sound look like in your community?
  2. What are the barriers to these ideals? (In other words, are there ways to use the Sound or areas you would like to access on the Sound or associated waterways, but you aren't able to?)

**V. Ongoing Connections + Next Steps**

- A. What are the best ways or places to connect with your community to make sure they are aware of and can access different opportunities such as funding?
  1. What are the best ways to get ongoing/consistent feedback on existing resources, programs, or funding? (At existing events, texts, phone calls, door to door, community spaces, etc.?)

*Invite LISS/NYSG staff to make any connections between their work and issues raised in the conversation -- especially existing programs, funding sources, etc.*

*We would love to stay in touch and be a resource.*

- B. Based on the conversation we have had today; in what ways do you think LISS could better support your efforts in your community?
  1. What would be the most useful information LISS can provide?
  2. How can this current effort best support your community and LIS benefits in your area?
    - a) How can this effort be most useful in your area?
- C. Would you be interested in funding to conduct surveys with community members you work with / host a workshop with LISS to present the findings/get further feedback?

This work will involve funding to support one-one-one interviews with 50-100 community members and a workshop with community members where LISS and RM will share what was heard in the process directly from community members, and LISS will share more about their programs and potential next steps to integrate what was shared. We want to partner with and support local groups to be the ones to lead these conversations to ensure that we're coordinating with existing efforts, and to make sure our process to understand and better support community engagement is not further burdensome. We also want to let local groups drive these conversations and tailor these conversations as much as possible to what different communities are most interested in talking about.

**VI. Is there anything we didn't ask you that you think we should have?**

**VII. Closing comments or anything else you would like to share.**

# APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

## LISS (2023) Environmental Justice Needs Assessment Survey

---

### Introduction

In an effort to better understand the needs of communities around the Long Island Sound, the Long Island Sound Study estuary program (LISS), with research firm, Responsive Management, is conducting this survey to find out more about your community and your needs as they relate to environmental justice. Your input will help LISS better understand the needs of your community and how their programs and services may be of use to you.

Your responses will be kept completely confidential and will not be associated with your name or personal information in any way. This survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes, depending on your responses.

Throughout the survey, please feel free to indicate if you are not sure or do not know how to answer a question or skip any question you would prefer not to answer. Thank you for your time and participation.

Please click "Next" below to begin.

If you are on a mobile device and do not see a "Next" button, please click the small forward arrow at the bottom right of your screen to continue and to move forward throughout the questionnaire.

### Location

**First, which state do you live in?**

- Connecticut
- New York
- Somewhere else

**Logic: Hidden unless: #1 Question "First, which state do you live in?" is one of the following answers ("Connecticut", "New York")**

**What is your zip code?**

---

**Specifically, which town or city do you live in?**

---



## EJ Indicators

### Do any of the following apply to you, personally?

(Check all that apply.)

- I live near a pollution source
- I live near a major highway/freeway/roadway
- I live in public housing
- I live in an area that doesn't have many trees
- I live in an area that is close to industry
- I live in an area that is close to wastewater treatment and other public infrastructure that makes noise or produces odors
- I consider myself low income
- I have limited access to transportation
- I have limited access to fresh fruits or vegetables
- I have limited access to grocery stores
- I have limited access to healthcare
- I consider myself someone who has major health issues
- I am concerned about my safety in my neighborhood
- I am concerned about the stability of my housing
- I am concerned about the stability of my income
- English is not my primary language
- None of these

## Environmental Stressors

**What environmental changes would you like to see to improve the natural world in your community?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Better quality of surrounding waterways for things like fishing and swimming
- Better water quality, in general
- Less trash/illegal dumping (including trash or debris in waterways)
- More natural places with water, trees, plants, and parks
- More/easier access to natural places with water, plants, and parks
- More outdoor programs and opportunities to get outside
- Reduction in flooding and related impacts
- More trees or tree canopies throughout the community that would combat increased temperatures and heat
- Taking more actions to address beach erosion
- More protection for the community from rising water levels
- Conserve water to prepare for and/or prevent drought
- Prevent damage and impacts from intense rainfall events
- Greater resiliency to climate change (Resiliency is a capacity to withstand or recover quickly from environmental difficulties)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Thinking about things differently, which changes would make life better for you, PERSONALLY?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Better quality of surrounding waterways for things like fishing and swimming
- Better water quality, in general
- Less trash/illegal dumping (including trash or debris in waterways)
- More natural places with water, trees, plants, and parks
- More/easier access to natural places with water, plants, and parks
- More outdoor programs and opportunities to get outside
- Reduction in flooding and related impacts
- More trees or tree canopies throughout the community that would combat increased temperatures and heat
- Taking more actions to address beach erosion
- More protection for the community from rising water levels
- Conserve water to prepare for and/or prevent drought
- Prevent damage and impacts from intense rainfall events
- Greater resiliency to climate change (Resiliency is the capacity to withstand or recover quickly from environmental difficulties)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: (#5 Question "What environmental changes would you like to see to improve the natural world in your community?" is one of the following answers ("Reduction in flooding and related impacts") OR #6 Question "Thinking about things differently, which changes would make life better for you, PERSONALLY?" is one of the following answers ("Reduction in flooding and related impacts"))**

**You indicated that you would like to see changes made to reduce flooding and related impacts. Specifically, what changes do you think need to be made to reduce flooding and related impacts?**

---

## **Priority Environmental Stressor**

Validation: Max. answers = 3 (*if answered*)

**Of the environmental changes that you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community?**

If you selected fewer than three, please indicate which single environmental change you think should be the top priority for your community.

(Select only three.)

- Better quality of surrounding waterways for things like fishing and swimming
- Better water quality, in general
- Less trash/illegal dumping (including trash or debris in waterways)
- More natural places with water, trees, plants, and parks
- More/easier access to natural places with water, plants, and parks
- More outdoor programs and opportunities to get outside
- Reduction in flooding and related impacts
- More trees or tree canopies throughout the community that would combat increased temperatures and heat
- Taking more actions to address beach erosion
- More protection for the community from rising water levels
- Conserve water to prepare for and/or prevent drought
- Prevent damage and impacts from intense rainfall events
- Greater resiliency to climate change (Resiliency is the capacity to withstand or recover quickly from environmental difficulties)
- The environmental change I indicated

## Social Stressors

**What changes would you like to see in your community that would allow for fair and equal access to opportunities and resources?**

(Check all that apply.)

- More local jobs
- More job training
- More jobs that focus on the environment and/or climate change
- More housing
- More affordable housing
- More energy efficient housing
- Updates to existing housing
- More public transportation
- Easier to access public transportation
- More affordable public transportation
- More public routes for transportation
- Greater access to healthy food
- Greater access to grocery stores
- Lower food costs
- Create more separation between my home and pollution sources (for example, by planting trees or building parks)
- Create more separation between my home and the highway (for example, by planting trees or building parks)
- Create more green spaces near my home by planting trees, flowers, and plants and creating more parks
- Improve access to natural areas near my home so that more people can visit green spaces and waterways
- Clean up creeks, waterways, and natural paths
- More affordable energy costs
- Improvements to drinking water quality
- Improvement to air quality or efforts to reduce air pollution
- Improvements to sewage systems that would prevent backup
- Less development impacts (for example energy developments)
- Address public health concerns such as asthma, chronic disease rates
- Improve waste management systems
- Focus on public safety to decrease crime and violence
- Take steps to reduce noise pollution
- Provide support for getting access to more social programs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

## Priority Social Stressors

Validation: Max. answers = 3 (if answered)

### **Of the changes you selected, which three do you think should be the top three priorities in your community?**

If you selected fewer than three, please indicate which single environmental change you think should be the top priority for your community.

(Select only three.)

- More local jobs
- More job training
- More jobs that focus on the environment and/or climate change
- More housing
- More affordable housing
- More energy efficient housing
- Updates to existing housing
- More public transportation
- Easier to access public transportation
- More affordable public transportation
- More public routes for transportation
- Greater access to healthy food
- Greater access to grocery stores
- Lower food costs
- Create more separation between my home and pollution sources (for example, by planting trees or building parks)
- Create more separation between my home and the highway (for example, by planting trees or building parks)
- Create more green spaces near my home by planting trees, flowers, and plants and creating more parks
- Improve access to natural areas near my home so that more people can visit green spaces and waterways
- Clean up creeks, waterways, and natural paths
- More affordable energy costs
- Improvements to drinking water quality
- Improvement to air quality or efforts to reduce air pollution
- Improvements to sewage systems that would prevent backup
- Less development impacts (for example energy developments)
- Address public health concerns such as asthma, chronic disease rates
- Improve waste management systems
- Focus on public safety to decrease crime and violence
- Take steps to reduce noise pollution
- Provide support for getting access to more social programs
- The change that would allow for fair and equal access to opportunities and resources that I indicated

## Use of Long Island Sound

### Have you ever, or do you currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways?

Use can include recreation, fishing, shellfishing, walking along the shoreline, sunbathing, family gathering, picnicking, or any other activity in which you access the water.

- Yes, I use the Long Island Sound
- Yes, I use nearby waterways, but I don't know if they are a part of the Long Island Sound
- I use other nearby waterways that are NOT a part of the Long Island Sound
- I do not use the Long Island Sound or other nearby waterways
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #11 Question "Have you ever, or do you currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways?" is one of the following answers ("Yes, I use the Long Island Sound", "Yes, I use nearby waterways, but I don't know if they are a part of the Long Island Sound")**

### How frequently do you use the Long Island Sound and other nearby waterways?

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Do not know

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists. Hidden unless: #11 Question "Have you ever, or do you currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways?" is one of the following answers ("Yes, I use the Long Island Sound", "Yes, I use nearby waterways, but I don't know if they are a part of the Long Island Sound")**

**For what purpose did you, or do you, use the waterway?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Fishing
- Shellfishing
- Boating (motorized)
- Boating (non-motorized, such as a kayak or canoe)
- Swimming
- Spending time in nature with friends and/or family
- Spending time in nature walking or exploring
- Walking along the shoreline
- Sunbathing
- Family gathering
- Picnicking
- Closely observing, photographing, or trying to identify birds, wildlife, insects or aquatic life
- Camping
- For spiritual or religious purposes
- For personal reflection
- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists. Hidden unless: #13 Question "For what purpose did you, or do you, use the waterway?" is one of the following answers ("Fishing", "Shellfishing")**

**When you fished, would you say the primary purpose of your fishing was...?**

- For relaxation
- For a primary source of food for myself or my family
- To catch a few fish or shellfish to eat
- For the sport
- To spend time with family and friends
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Logic: Hidden unless: #14 Question "When you fished, would you say the primary purpose of your fishing was...?" is one of the following answers ("For a primary source of food for myself or my family", "To catch a few fish or shellfish to eat")**

**Do you have any health concerns related to eating fish or shellfish you catch in the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways?**

- Yes (What concerns do you have?): \_\_\_\_\_
- No
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #13 Question "For what purpose did you, or do you, use the waterway?" is one of the following answers ("Fishing", "Shellfishing")**

**Do any of the following make it difficult for you to understand fishing and/or shellfishing rules and regulations?**

(Check all that apply.)

- The rules and regulations, in general
- Rules and regulations that relate to techniques that I am not familiar with (e.g., use of specific types of bait, fishing poles, leads)
- I don't know where to find rules and regulations
- Frequently changing rules and regulations
- Rules and regulations are not available in my preferred language
- I am not concerned about the rules and regulations
- None of these
- Do not know

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists. Hidden unless: #11 Question "Have you ever, or do you currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways?" is one of the following answers ("Yes, I use the Long Island Sound", "Yes, I use nearby waterways, but I don't know if they are a part of the Long Island Sound")**

**Would you say you are able to use the Long Island Sound and/or other nearby waterways as often as you would like, nearly as often as you would like, not as often as you would like?**

- As often as I would like
- Nearly as often as I would like
- Not nearly as often as I would like
- Do not know



**Logic: Hidden unless: #11 Question "Have you ever, or do you currently use the Long Island Sound or any other nearby waterways?" is one of the following answers ("I use other nearby waterways that are NOT a part of the Long Island Sound", "I do not use the Long Island Sound or other nearby waterways", "Do not know")**

**Why have you not used the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Problems with transportation
- Costs associated with use of waterways
- Don't know where to go
- Don't feel safe
- Crowding at outdoor spaces
- Limited access to waterways
- Don't have time/competing priorities
- You or someone in your household has a physical disability that makes accessing some areas difficult
- Don't feel welcome
- Need training/gear
- Concerns about health issues from eating fish or shellfish
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know
- I'm not interested in using the Long Island Sound or other nearby waterways

**Logic: Hidden unless: #17 Question "Would you say you are able to use the Long Island Sound and/or other nearby waterways as often as you would like, nearly as often as you would like, not as often as you would like? " is one of the following answers ("Nearly as often as I would like", "Not nearly as often as I would like")**

**Why have you not used the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways as often as you would like?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Problems with transportation
- Costs associated with use of waterways
- Don't know where to go
- Don't feel safe
- Crowding at outdoor spaces
- Limited access to waterways
- Don't have time/competing priorities
- You or someone in your household has a physical disability
- Do not feel welcome
- Need training/gear
- Concerns about health issues from eating fish and shellfish
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: (#18 Question "Why have you not used the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways?" is one of the following answers ("Don't feel welcome") OR #19 Question "Why have you not used the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways as often as you would like?" is one of the following answers ("Do not feel welcome"))**

**Are there any specific reasons why you don't feel welcome to use the Long Island Sound or nearby waterways?**

If yes, please explain.

---

## **Ideal Use of the Long Island Sound**

**If you could use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for any purpose, what would you most like to use the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways for?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Fishing
- Shellfishing
- Boating (motorized)
- Boating (non-motorized, such as a kayak or canoe)
- Swimming
- Spending time in nature with friends and/or family
- Spending time in nature walking or exploring
- Walking along the shoreline
- Sunbathing
- Family gathering
- Picnicking
- Closely observing, photographing, or trying to identify birds, wildlife, insects or aquatic life
- Camping
- For spiritual or religious purposes
- For personal reflection
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**What changes do you think would make it easier for residents of your community to access the Long Island Sound and other nearby waterways?**

Consider purposes like recreation, fishing, shellfishing, walking along the shoreline, sunbathing, family gathering, picnicking, or any other activity in which you access the water.

(Check all that apply.)

- Knowing where to go
- More events I'm interested in
- More events that included people like me (e.g., family events, women-only events)
- More parking
- Signs in my language
- More methods of transportation
- More methods of inexpensive transportation
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Are there specific beaches, waterways, or areas that you are NOT currently using or visiting, but you would especially like to use?**

If yes, please list the area or describe it to the best of your ability.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participation in Events**

Different groups in the area conduct activities and events to get community members involved in being outdoors and thinking about the natural world. These types of activities and events include educational opportunities on the shore, boating and birding events, beach clean-ups, learning to fish events, kayaking and canoeing activities, camping in the park or on beaches, nature walks and others.

For the remainder of the survey, when we say "activities or events," we mean water-related or environmental events like those listed here.

Have you ever been to or participated in any activities or events like those described here?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists. Hidden unless: #24 Question "Have you ever been to or participated in any activities or events like those described here?" is one of the following answers ("No")**

**Why do you think you have not participated in any of these types of activities or events?**

(Check all that apply.)

- I don't feel welcome in environmental community
- I have not been aware of activities and events
- I don't have transportation to attend activities and events
- I am not interested in attending activities and events like this
- I don't have enough time to attend activities and events
- I have other priorities that occupy my time and energy
- I am concerned about my or my family's safety at outdoor activities and events
- I don't feel like events like this result in change
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #25 Question "Why do you think you have not participated in any of these types of activities or events?" is one of the following answers ("I don't feel welcome in environmental community")**

**You indicated that you don't feel welcome in the environmental community. What changes, if any, would make these events feel more welcoming?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Logic: Hidden unless: #25 Question "Why do you think you have not participated in any of these types of activities or events?" is one of the following answers ("I am concerned about my or my family's safety at outdoor activities and events")**

**You indicated that you are concerned about your or your family's safety at outdoor activities and events. What are the reasons you are concerned about safety at outdoor activities and events?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**How interested are you in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about your local waterways and environment?**

- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Neither interested or uninterested
- Somewhat uninterested
- Very uninterested
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #28 Question "How interested are you in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about your local waterways and environment?" is one of the following answers ("Very interested", "Somewhat interested")**

**What types of activities or events would you most be interested in participating in?**

(Check all that apply.)

- Clean-ups of beaches and waterways
- Events that combine wellness/personal health activities with nature
- Exploring parks and outdoor areas to learn more about native plants and wildlife
- Nature walks
- Presentations about environmental topics
- Videos about environmental topics
- Art-themed events (taking part in local art projects about the environment)
- Recycling and reuse events where you can learn about what materials can be recycled and how to recycle them
- Resource fairs where you can learn more about potential resources such as funding and collaboration that could be beneficial to your community
- Canoeing, kayaking, or other boat tours of local waterways
- Camping on the beach
- Family fun days with events and prizes and opportunities to learn more about local waterways
- Outdoor recreation events like fishing, where you can learn about species, safety, and regulations
- Gardening (such as lessons on how to garden, help with starting local gardens, dietary lessons, fresh and local fruit and vegetable giveaways)
- Foraging excursions with opportunities to learn about wild local food sources
- Tree or native plant planting events
- Wildlife monitoring events
- Science-related events where you can participate in hands-on scientific work
- Other volunteering events
- Do not know
- None of these

## Information about Events

**Have you ever seen advertisements or information about activities and events like those described here?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #30 Question "Have you ever seen advertisements or information about activities and events like those described here?" is one of the following answers ("Yes")**

**What information did you see about activities and events?**

---

**Are there any services or resources that would encourage you to participate in water-related or environmental activities and events like these?**

(Check all that apply.)

- No, I do not think any service or resource would encourage me to participate
- No, I do not feel I would need a service or resource to participate in activities and events
- Stipends
- Childcare
- Providing equipment or tools necessary to participate (e.g., fishing rods, bait, kayaks, protective gear, clothing)
- Food
- Transportation to and from activity or event
- Knowing the impact your participation will have on your community/the environment
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know

**Do you have an idea of what the ideal outdoor activity or event related to your local waterway or environment would look like? If yes, please describe it.**

---

## Future Outlook

**Overall, how optimistic or pessimistic are you that things will change for the better in your community?**

- Very optimistic
- Somewhat optimistic
- Neither optimistic nor pessimistic
- Somewhat pessimistic
- Very pessimistic
- Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #34 Question "Overall, how optimistic or pessimistic are you that things will change for the better in your community? " is one of the following answers ("Somewhat optimistic", "Neither optimistic nor pessimistic", "Somewhat pessimistic", "Very pessimistic")**

**Why do you not feel more optimistic that things will change for the better in your community?**

---

## Outreach

### What is the best way to let you know about opportunities and other materials that might be of interest to you?

You are not being signed up for anything by answering these questions. We would just like to find out more about the best methods to reach the community.

(Select only one.)

- Long Island Sound Study website
- Email
- Organizational newsletter
- Local newspaper
- Social media
- Listserv
- A different website (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Flyers or handouts
- In-person
- Something else (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- I am not interested in information or materials

**Logic: Hidden unless: #36 Question "What is the best way to let you know about opportunities and other materials that might be of interest to you?" is one of the following answers ("Long Island Sound Study website", "Email", "Organizational newsletter", "Local newspaper", "Social media", "Listserv", "A different website (please specify)", "Flyers or handouts", "In-person", "Something else (please specify)")**

### What types of information or materials, if any, would you be interested in?

You are not being signed up for anything by answering these questions. We would just like to find out more about the types of information you are interested in.

(Check all that apply.)

- Information about the health of the Long Island Sound and nearby waterways
- Information about outdoor and/or environmental events
- Information about science-related events
- Information about opportunities for community funding for environmental work
- Information about children and family events
- Information about how to get involved with improving the Long Island Sound
- Information about eco-friendly landscaping
- Information about project planning
- Information about grant planning or writing
- Information about changes made or actions taken as a result of this study
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## Demographics

Thank you so much for your time. We have just a few more questions for you.

**Logic: Show/hide trigger exists. Hidden unless: (#36 Question "What is the best way to let you know about opportunities and other materials that might be of interest to you?" is one of the following answers ("Long Island Sound Study website", "Email", "Organizational newsletter", "Local newspaper", "Social media", "Listserv", "A different website (please specify)", "Flyers or handouts", "In-person", "Something else (please specify)") OR #28 Question "How interested are you in participating in or attending future activities or events relating to learning about your local waterways and environment?" is one of the following answers ("Very interested", "Somewhat interested"))**

Your responses to this survey will be completely anonymous, but as you have expressed interest in participating in future activities and events or receiving information, would you like to sign up for newsletters and emails that will provide you with information?

- Yes  
 No  
 Do not know

**Logic: Hidden unless: #38 Question "Your responses to this survey will be completely anonymous, but as you have expressed interest in participating in future activities and events or receiving information, would you like to sign up for newsletters and emails that will provide you with information?" is one of the following answers ("Yes")**

What is your email address where we can send you information about resources and upcoming events related to your local waterways and environment?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider yourself...?

- Male  
 Female  
 Non-binary  
 Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prefer not to answer

What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_



**Which of these categories best describes your total household income before taxes last year?**

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$119,999
- \$120,000 or more
- Do not know
- Prefer not to answer

**What race or ethnic background do you consider yourself?**

(Check all that apply.)

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaskan native or Aleutian
- Native Hawaiian
- Middle Eastern or North African
- East Asian (from Japan, Korea, Philippines, etc.)
- South Asian (from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.)
- Sub-Saharan African (NOT African American or North African)
- Something else (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Do not know
- Prefer not to say

**What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Not a high school graduate
- High school graduate or equivalent
- Some college or trade school, no degree
- Associate's or trade school degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional or doctorate degree (e.g., M.D., Ph.D.)
- Do not know
- Prefer not to answer

**Thank You!**

**Thank You! On behalf of the Long Island Sound Study, thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.**

## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> World Health Organization. 2023. *Climate Change*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health#:~:text=These%20climate%2Dsensitive%20health%20risks,those%20with%20underlying%20health%20condition.>

<sup>ii</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. *Climate Change and Human Health: Who's Most at Risk?* <https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-human-health-whos-most-risk>.

National Institute of Health. 2021. *Front Public Health*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8450438/>.

<sup>iii</sup> The White House. 2023. *Justice40: A Whole-of-Government Initiative*.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>.

United States Department of Justice: Office of Public Affairs. 2011. *A Commitment to Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/commitment-environmental-justice>.

United States Department of Labor: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy. 2023. *Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/resources/environmental-justice>.

<sup>iv</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. *Learn About Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. 2023. *Environmental Health Disparities and Environmental Justice*. <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/translational/justice/index.cfm>.

<sup>v</sup> Environmental Protection Agency. 2024. *Learn About Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice#definitions>.

<sup>vi</sup> Long Island Sound Study. 2023. *Environmental Justice Work Group*.

<https://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/environmental-justice-work-group/>.

<sup>vii</sup> World Health Organization. 2023. *Climate Change*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health#:~:text=These%20climate%2Dsensitive%20health%20risks,those%20with%20underlying%20health%20condition.>

<sup>viii</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. *Climate Change and Human Health: Who's Most at Risk?* <https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-human-health-whos-most-risk>.

National Institute of Health. 2021. *Front Public Health*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8450438/>.

<sup>ix</sup> The White House. 2023. *Justice40: A Whole-of-Government Initiative*.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>.

United States Department of Justice: Office of Public Affairs. 2011. *A Commitment to Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/commitment-environmental-justice>.

United States Department of Labor: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy. 2023. *Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/resources/environmental-justice>.

<sup>x</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2023. *Learn About Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. 2023. *Environmental Health Disparities and Environmental Justice*. <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/translational/justice/index.cfm>.

<sup>xi</sup> Environmental Protection Agency. 2024. *Learn About Environmental Justice*.

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice#definitions>.

<sup>xii</sup> Long Island Sound Study. 2023. *Environmental Justice Work Group*.

<https://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/committees/environmental-justice-work-group/>.

<sup>xiii</sup> United States Department of Energy: Office of Energy Justice and Equity. 2024. *Justice40 Initiative*.

<https://www.energy.gov/justice/justice40-initiative>.

<sup>xiv</sup> Department of Energy. 2023. *Justice40 Initiative*. <https://www.energy.gov/justice/justice40-initiative#:~:text=DOE%20calculates%20the%20DAC%20score,score%20for%20each%20census%20tract.>

---

<sup>xv</sup> United States Department of Energy: Office of Energy Justice and Equity. 2024. *Justice40 Initiative*. <https://www.energy.gov/justice/justice40-initiative>.