

A photograph of a beach at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. In the foreground, a person in a wetsuit carries a surfboard. In the middle ground, a group of people are walking along the shore. The background shows some buildings and trees under a hazy sky.

Greater Sydney Outdoors Study



NSW Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to all Elders past, present and future.

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Hello Sydneyiders!

We conducted a Greater Sydney study to discover what you love to do during your recreation time.

The *Greater Sydney Outdoors Study* breaks down the results across five diverse Districts – helping us plan for a greater, more liveable Greater Sydney. Each District has its own unique attributes, which impact requirements for open space and recreation.

We are living increasingly busy lives and the time we have to enjoy the great outdoors is reducing. We spend a lot of time working, caring for families and participating in indoor activities. So when it comes to our spare time, we love using the great outdoors to relax, rejuvenate, socialise and have fun.

From picnicking in the park to swimming, visiting local playspaces or hiking through bushland, Sydney's communities love to spend their leisure time outdoors. The Greater Sydney Outdoors Study will inform how we improve the planning of Greater Sydney recreation spaces, so they enrich the lives of everyone who lives in and visits Greater Sydney.

Putting the spotlight on leisure and liveability

Outdoor recreation plays an important role in the lives of Sydneysiders. With busy lives and changes in living situations, our parklands and waterways are becoming very valuable for communities.

Water plays a particularly important role in many Sydneysiders' lifestyles – and not only for activities that directly involve waterways, like swimming or fishing. People also enjoy walking or relaxing in parks with lakes or other bodies of water, visiting spaces next to beaches and rivers, and being around constructed water features.

As Sydney grows, so too will the need for outdoor recreation areas to improve wellbeing and strengthen communities. For most Sydneysiders, outdoor recreation will take them beyond their doors, opening up increased opportunities for social interaction, exercise and enjoyment.

Focusing on time spent outdoors, the study identifies a number of recreation trends, which will help improve parklands and outdoor recreation areas across Greater Sydney.

Different Districts, different habits

Whether it's dog walking or bush walking, or a shared or solo activity, we want to provide suitable outdoor recreation areas across Greater Sydney, so everyone can make the most of the time they spend outdoors.

The *Greater Sydney Outdoors Study* offers an insight into the recreational habits and aspirations of those who live in Sydney, across five geographically and demographically diverse Districts. District boundaries, and their accompanying statistics, have been determined and informed by the Greater Sydney Commission's five *District Plans*.

Breathing new life into Sydney's outdoor recreation areas

Your feedback is informing the open space program for Greater Sydney. This means, the NSW Government – in partnership with councils – will plan, design and create open spaces that better meet your needs.



Greater Sydney Outdoors Study



What did we do?

We talked to and asked the people of Sydney about their personal outdoor recreation needs. Sydneysiders like being active through sport and recreation, so we wanted to know more about what you like to do when you're not playing sport.

Specifically, we asked Sydneysiders:

- What they like to do outdoors.
- How much they value open space.
- What they would like to see in their outdoor spaces.
- Their perspective on the availability and quality of outdoor recreation areas.

When we asked Sydneysiders to complete a 15-minute online questionnaire about recreation, we received over 6,800 responses.

We also met with focus groups of representatives from Greater Sydney's five Districts.

We already have a lot of information on sporting needs, and the District Sport Facility Plans for Greater Sydney are being prepared by the NSW Office of Sport currently.

What were the goals of the study?



- To understand how Sydneysiders use and value open spaces for recreation.
- To identify which recreation activities Sydneysiders would like their open spaces to provide.
- To understand the different requirements communities have for current and future recreation needs.
- To develop a clear picture of what Sydneysiders would like to see, to ensure recreation needs are met across Greater Sydney.

Greater Sydney at a glance

Summary of findings across all Districts



What we know

We know from other research there are positive links between the natural environment and good health. People are generally happier and healthier when they spend time outdoors.

People agree that outdoor recreation is great for physical and mental wellbeing, and that outdoor recreation spaces bolster communities by bringing them together.

What's important for Sydneysiders?

01 Personal Journey

People prefer to enjoy experiences on foot; visiting destinations, exercising and exploring.

02 Personal Choice

Sydneysiders prefer spaces that require no membership or schedule for use. This provides flexibility for people to organise activities as they please.

03 Diverse Expression

Spaces that provide opportunity for a variety of recreation activities are appreciated.

04 Inclusive Recreation

Improving universal access ensures everyone can collectively enjoy the outdoors, regardless of age, cultural background or physical ability.

05 Competing Priorities

When the opportunity for recreation arises, it's important to know it will be available.

What are your aspirations for Greater Sydney?

- More high quality, open spaces supported by good facilities.
- More opportunities for swimming and water-based activities in the local area.
- Larger open spaces, to provide greater opportunity for diverse, outdoor recreation activities.
- Open spaces that assist in building a greater sense of community.
- Improvements to walking and cycling networks, to help get to outdoor recreation areas without a car.
- Improvements to existing parks, to ensure they're being well utilised.
- Protection of existing open spaces and recreational areas for future communities.
- Open spaces that feel safe and provide for multiple uses.

The average journey time by car to outdoor recreation areas is 20-30 minutes.

This journey length indicates many Sydneysiders travel to other districts to enjoy outdoor recreation.

The average journey time walking to outdoor recreation areas is 15-20 minutes.

The average journey times differ across the regions.

What do Sydneysiders do?

MOST POPULAR ACTIVITIES



85%

Walking, hiking,
jogging or running



77%

Relaxing in
open spaces



64%

Gathering in
open spaces
for BBQs and
picnics etc.



53%

Swimming in public
waterways, such as
beaches and rivers



49%

Visiting
playspaces



34%

Walking
the dog



30%

Viewing,
creating or
performing art



27%

Playing self-
organised ball
games

What did Sydneysiders say?

KEY LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS

01 Parklands and Waterways

Sydney's parklands are highly popular

Many Sydneysiders visit local parklands more than once a week, taking part in a range of activities – from jogging, walking and relaxing, to barbeques, picnics and ball games.

Sydneysiders consider water important

About half of Sydneysiders enjoy outdoor recreation involving water at least once a week, with feasibility and travel being the biggest barriers.

02 Perceptions

Sydneysiders consider outdoor recreation areas to be important

70% of Sydneysiders consider open space to be an important factor in their lives.

More opportunities

58% would like to see more outdoor recreation areas close to where they live.

Better amenities

Supporting amenities – such as toilets and areas requiring shelter and shade – could be improved across all Districts.

03 Provision

How does it feel?

If outdoor recreation areas are not looked after, they start to feel unsafe. The busier an area is, the more care it needs.

Overcrowding isn't fun

When outdoor recreation areas are too popular, they become less enjoyable, as residents find themselves competing for the opportunity to relax and enjoy the day.

04 Limitations

Location of recreation activities

Preferred recreation activities are not always accessible within a reasonable distance, causing large travel times or an acceptance that these recreation opportunities are not available.

Getting there

A high number of people use the car to get to outdoor recreation areas, even when they prefer to be able to get there by foot. This can be due to a lack of pathway networks, or the distance required to travel.

How long do you have?

Both location and the ability to get there impact the time it takes to participate in any form of outdoor recreation.

05 Lifestyle

Local recreation

Sydneysiders prefer to have outdoor recreation areas close to where they live, and also to have recreation opportunities close to the workplace.

Desire for water

Water is viewed as a core part of the Greater Sydney lifestyle, with people across all Districts visiting water as often as possible.

Western City District at a glance

- It's the largest area of the five districts
- It's bounded by the Blue Mountains.
- It's comprised largely of protected natural areas and rural land.
- It's home to large national and state parks.
- Significant water bodies include the Nepean River, Colo River and South Creek.



The changing community*

WHO LIVES HERE?

1,070,000

people live in the Western City District.

- 28% of the District's residents are 0-19 years old.
- The least represented age group is +85 years old.
- Around 6% of the community are living with a disability.

30%

of people were born overseas.

- Around 36% of the population speak a language other than English at home, primarily Vietnamese and Arabic.

WHO WILL LIVE HERE IN 2036?

1,534,450

people will live in the Western City District.

- The Western City District is forecast to increase by 27% (that's around 464,450 people).
- The most significant increase will be in the number of people aged 65-84 years.

72%

increase in single person households.

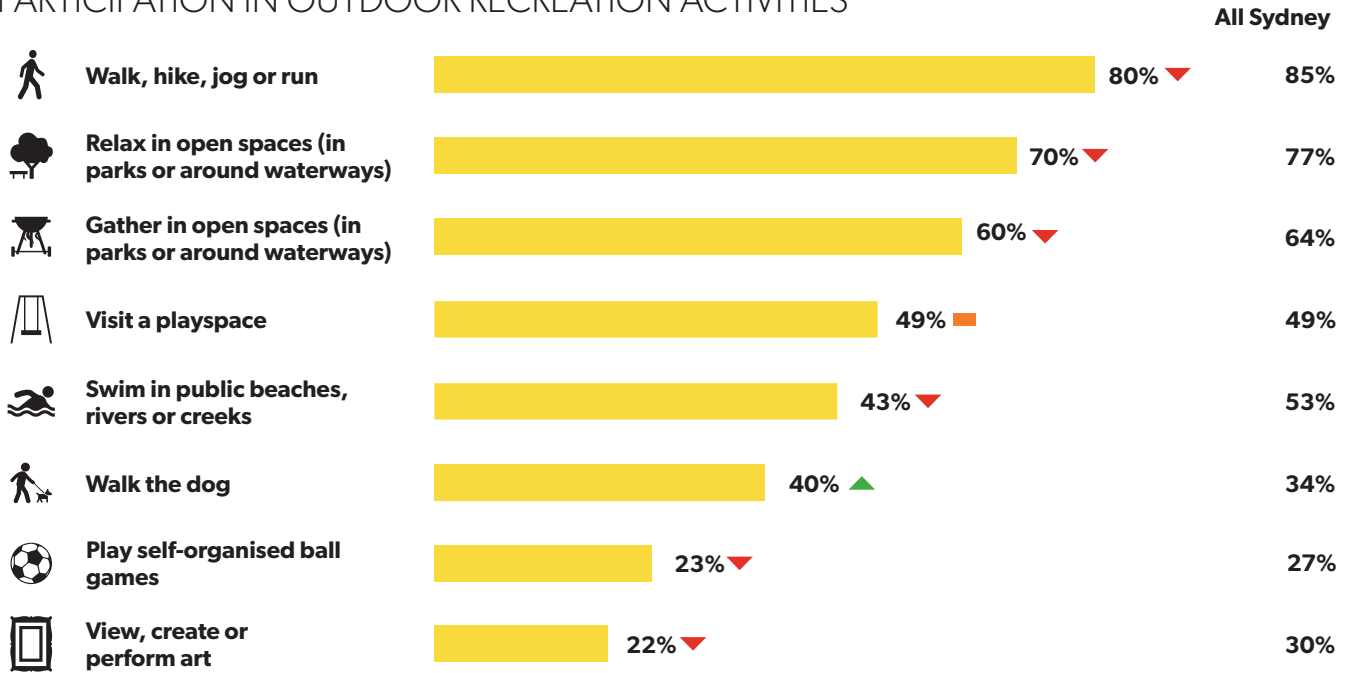
- Growth in single person households is expected in the local government areas of Camden, Liverpool and Wollondilly.

*Statistics for Western City District and all Districts to follow sourced from the Greater Sydney Commission's five District Plans.

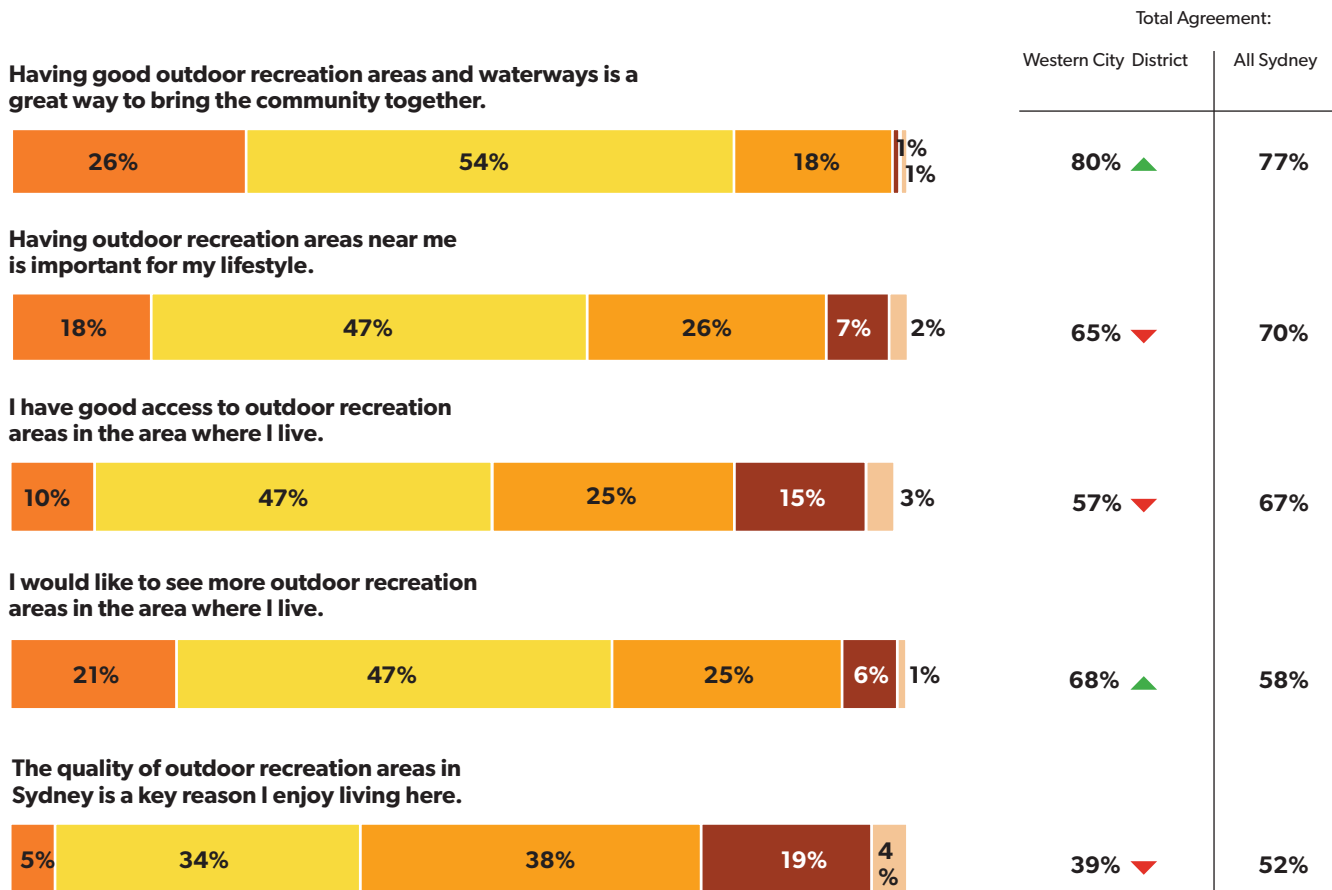


What do Western City District residents love to do?

PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES



ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS AND WATERWAYS

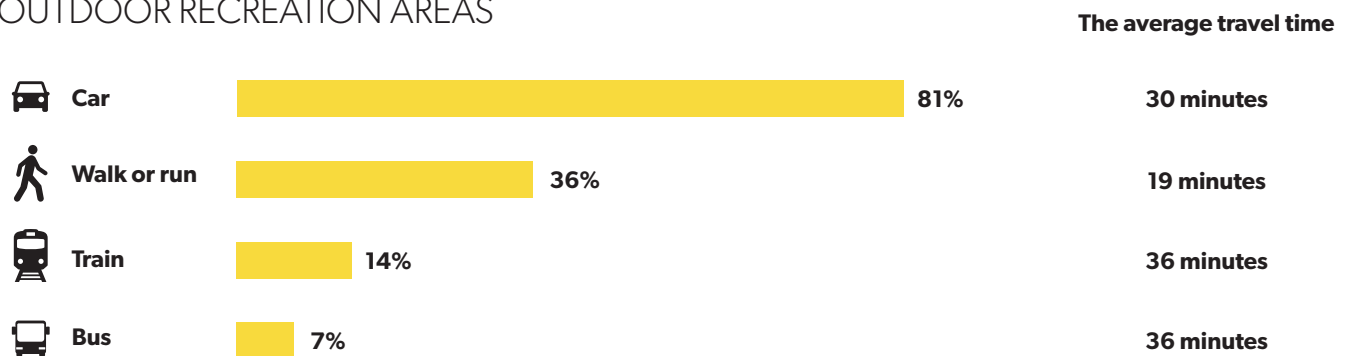


(Note: These numbers have been rounded for simplicity)

How do Western City District residents feel about their recreation opportunities?

Western Sydney residents feel they have less access when it comes to outdoor recreation opportunities. They'd like to see more recreation areas closer to where they live.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS



Living in the Western City District comes with less opportunities for water-based activities.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO WATERWAYS



What would Western City District residents like to see?

- More open spaces in the local area, to help increase participation in outdoor recreation.
- Open spaces that assist in building a greater sense of community.
- Higher quality parks, with good facilities.
- Improvements to walking and cycling networks, to enable getting around without a car.
- Protecting existing open spaces and other recreational areas for future communities.
- More opportunities for swimming and water-based activities in the local area.
- Open spaces that feel safe and provide for multiple uses.

Central City District at a glance

- It contains a variety of heritage outdoor spaces, such as Parramatta Park.
- The district is intersected by the M2/M7 and M4 motorways.
- Significant water bodies include Parramatta River, Cattai Creek and Parramatta Lake.
- Is bordered by the Hawksbury River to the north, Western Sydney Parklands to the south west, and Duck Creek to the south east.



The changing community

WHO LIVES HERE?

971,000

people live in the Central City District.

- The most prominent age group is 5-19 years.
- The least represented age group is +85 years old.
- Around 5% of the community are living with a disability.

47%

of people were born overseas.

- 50% of the population speak a language other than English in their homes, primarily Arabic and Mandarin.

WHO WILL LIVE HERE IN 2036?

1,521,500

people will live in the Central City District.

- The most significant increase will be in the number of people aged 5-19 years.

81%

increase in single person households.

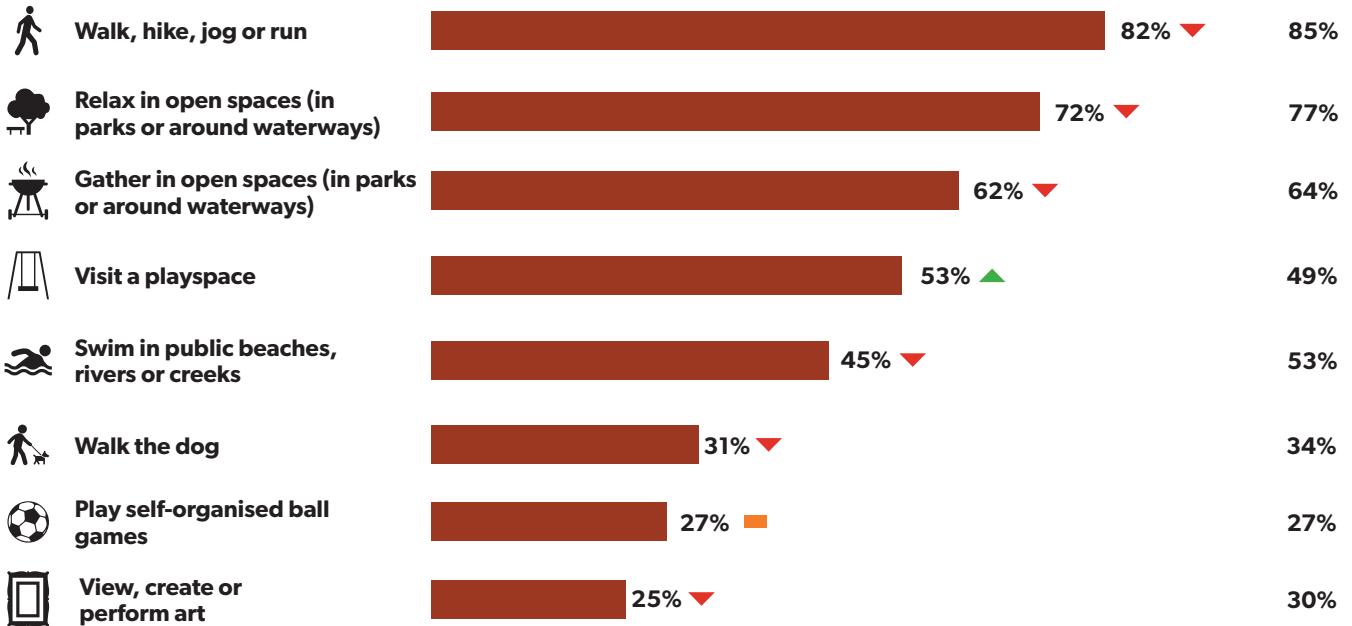
- The Hills and Parramatta local government areas are projected to see the largest increase in people aged 20-24 years across the District between 2016 and 2036.



What do Central City District residents love to do?

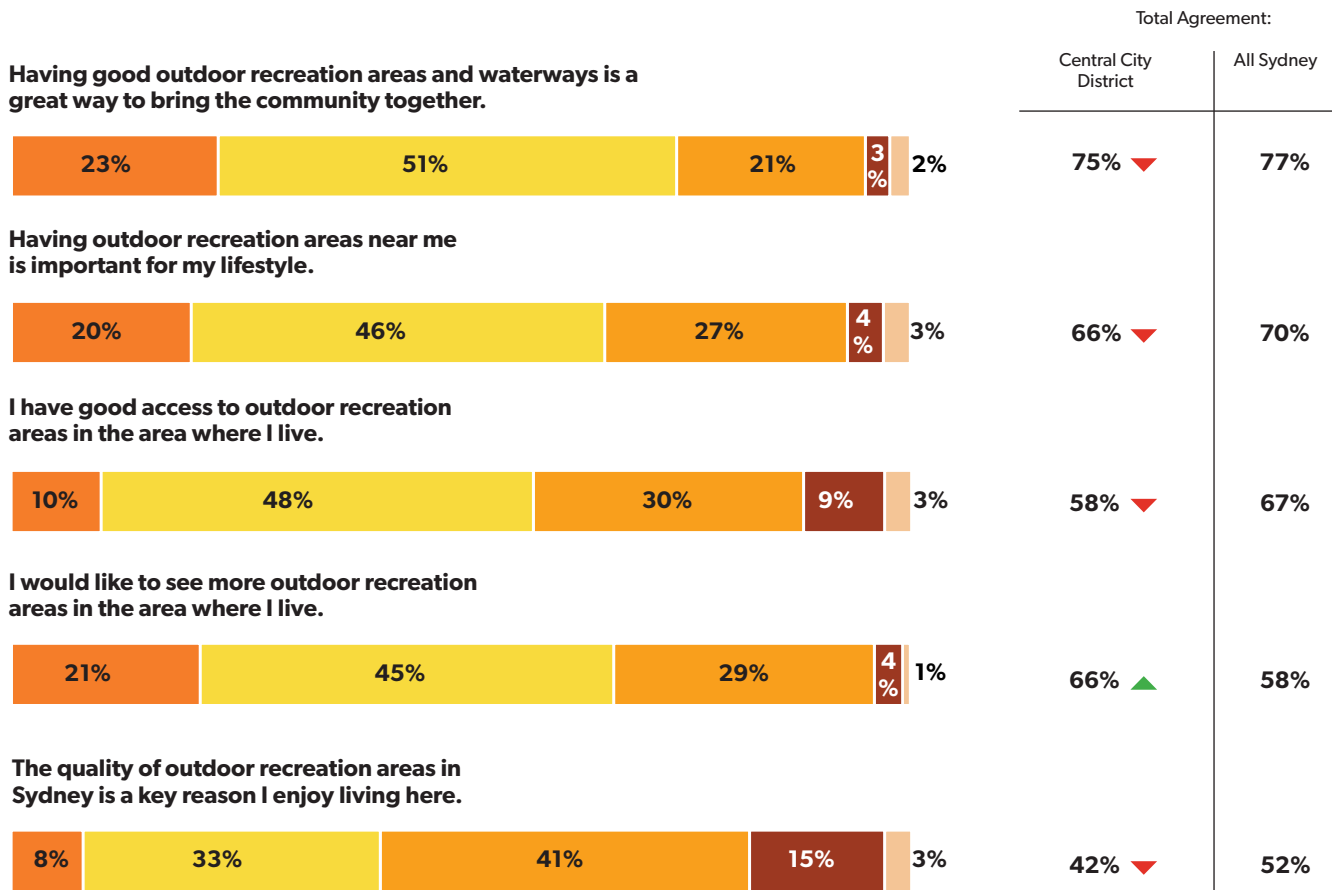
PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

All Sydney



ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS AND WATERWAYS

Strongly agree (orange) | Agree (yellow) | Neither agree or disagree (light orange) | Disagree (dark orange) | Strongly disagree (light brown)

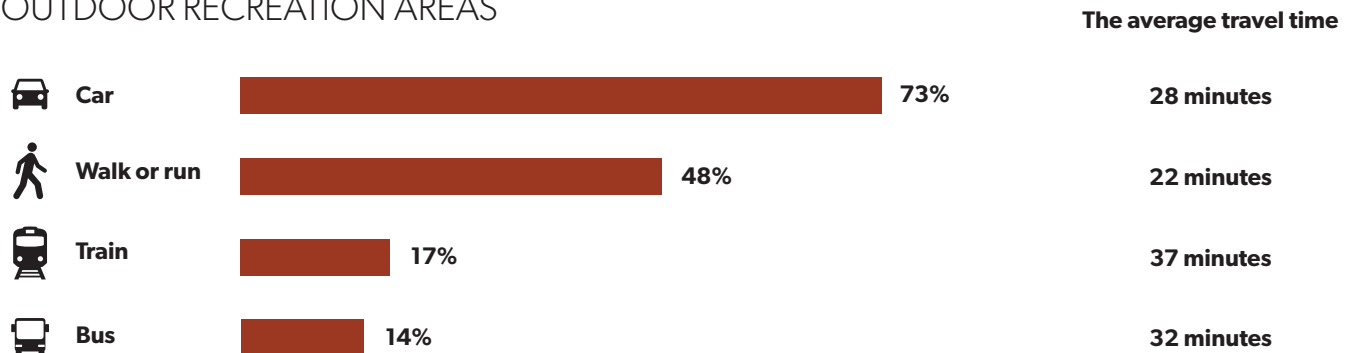


(Note: These numbers have been rounded for simplicity)

How do Central City District residents feel about their recreation opportunities?

Central City District residents feel many local, outdoor recreation areas are not large enough for their community's needs. They express a need to escape the hustle and bustle of living in a city environment.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS



They'd also like to see more opportunities for swimming and water-based activities in local areas.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO WATERWAYS



What would Central City District residents like to see?

- More high quality, open spaces in the local area, supported by good facilities.
- More opportunities for swimming and water-based activities in the local area.
- Open spaces that feel safe and provide for multiple uses.
- Improvements to walking and cycling networks that are enjoyable to use.

Eastern City District at a glance



- **It houses, iconic beaches and harbours.**
- **Its suburbs range from high density areas to historic neighbourhoods.**
- **It's home to many regionally significant facilities and destinations including Sydney Harbour and the Centennial Parklands.**
- **It has a significant amount of public transport infrastructure, such as major train stations, bus networks and dedicated cycleways.**

The changing community

WHO LIVES HERE?

1,013,200

people live in the Eastern City District.

- 5-19 years old is the most common age group.
- The least represented age group is +85 years old.
- Around 4% of the community are living with a disability.

47%

of people were born overseas.

- 41% of the population speak a language other than English at home, primarily Mandarin.

WHO WILL LIVE HERE IN 2036?

1,338,250

people will live in the Eastern City District.

- The most significant increase will be in the number of people aged 65-84 years.

Single person households are expected to remain the dominant household type.

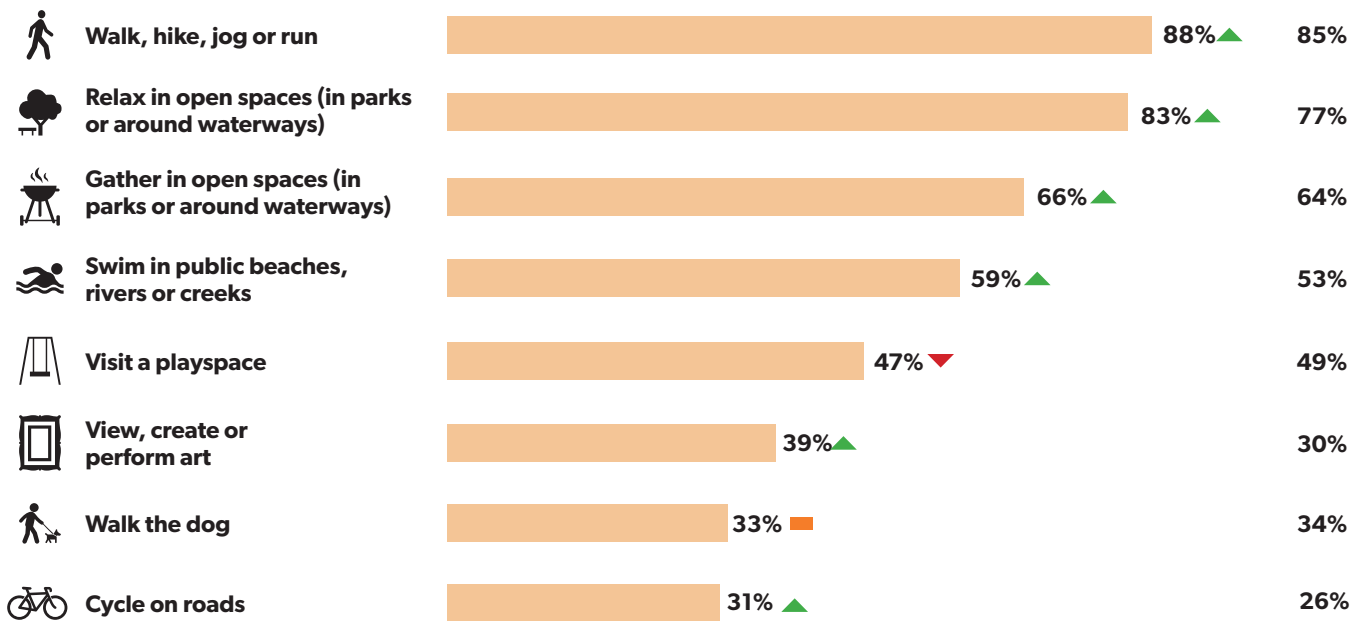
- The largest growth in single person households is projected to occur in Strathfield, Burwood and Sydney.



What do Eastern City District residents love to do?

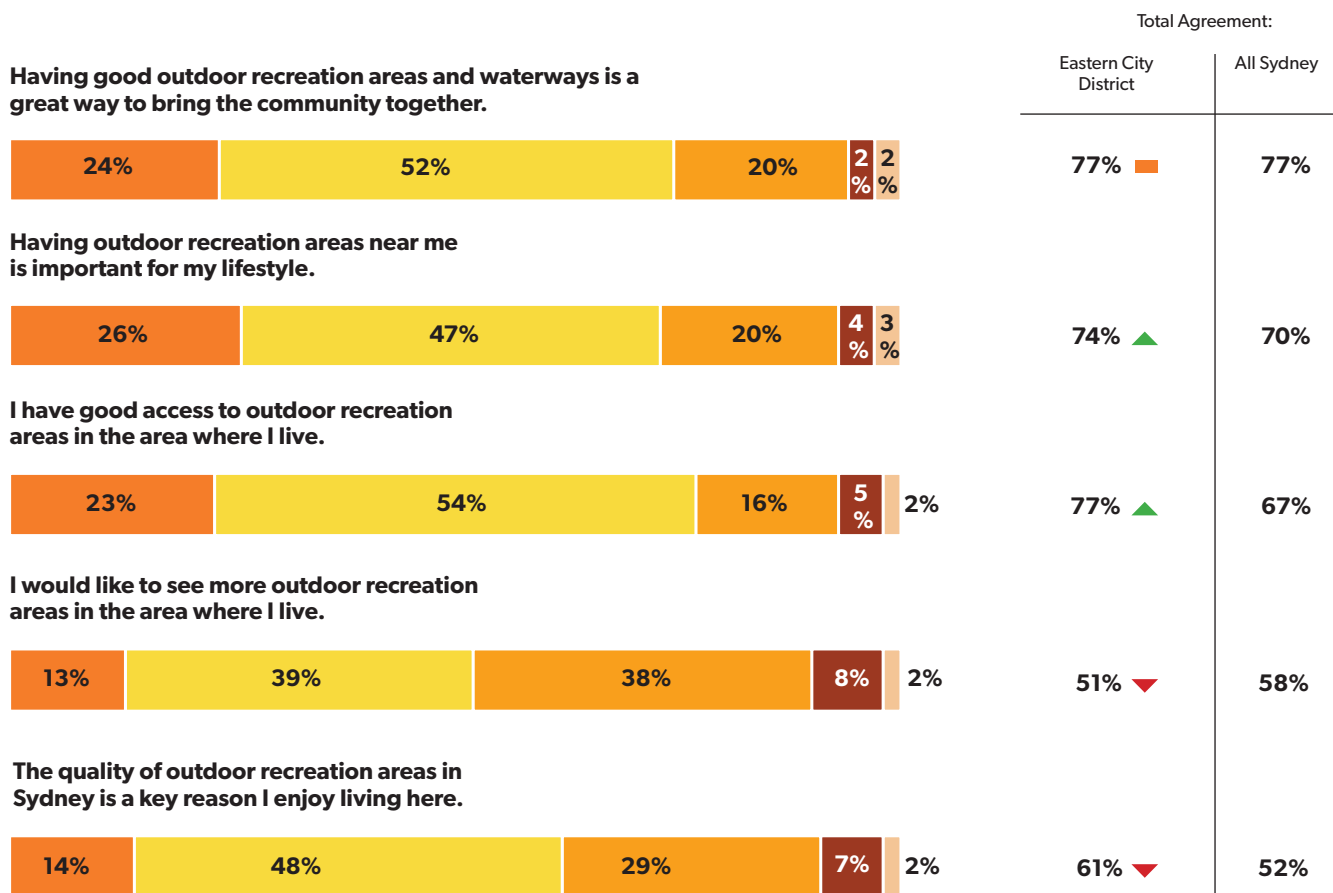
PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

All Sydney



ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS AND WATERWAYS

Strongly agree (dark orange) | Agree (yellow) | Neither agree or disagree (light orange) | Disagree (dark red) | Strongly disagree (light red)

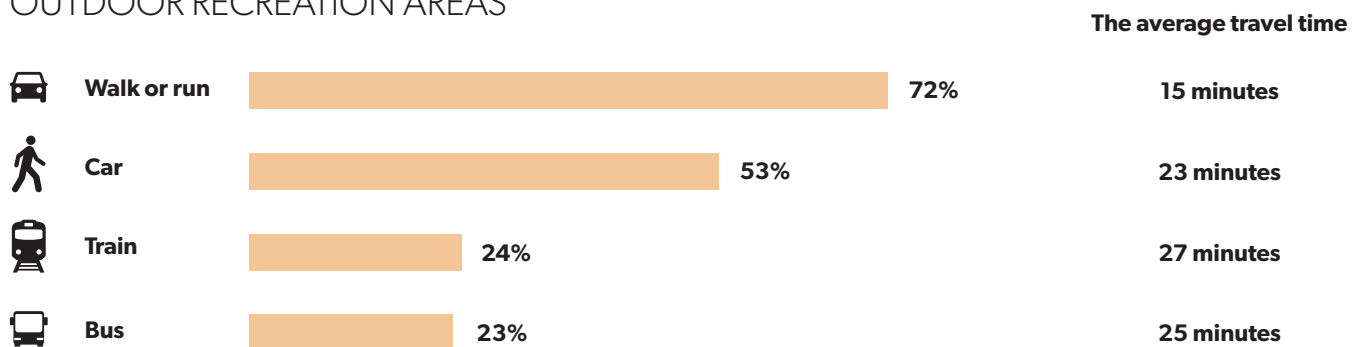


(Note: These numbers have been rounded for simplicity)

How do Eastern City District residents feel about their recreation opportunities?

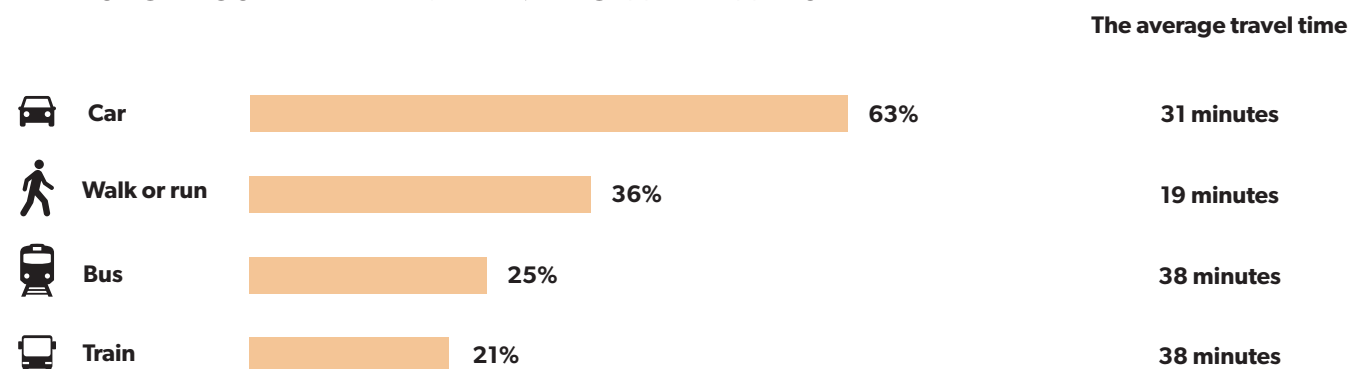
For convenience, they often choose not to drive, but to walk or use public transport to get to outdoor recreation areas.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS



With open spaces conveniently located, outdoor recreation areas are a key reason Eastern City District residents are the most active.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO WATERWAYS



What would Eastern City District residents like to see?

- Improvements to walking and cycling networks, to help get to outdoor recreation areas without a car.
- Open spaces that feel safe and provide for multiple uses.
- More high quality, open spaces in the local area, supported by good facilities – especially for areas of high development.
- More opportunities for swimming and water-based activities in the local area, especially on the Parramatta River and Cooks River.
- Improvements to existing parks, to ensure they're being well utilised.

North District at a glance

- **Bushland covers around 48% of the District.**
- **It features iconic beaches, from Manly to Palm Beach.**
- **It contains many leafy suburbs and streets.**
- **Significant water bodies include the Hawkesbury River and Sydney Harbour.**



The changing community

WHO LIVES HERE?

886,550

people live in the North District.

- 5-19 years old is the most common age group.
- The least represented age group is +85 years of age.
- Around 3% of the community are living with a disability.

39%

of people were born overseas.

- 29% of the population speak a language other than English at home, primarily Mandarin and Cantonese.

WHO WILL LIVE HERE IN 2036?

1,082,900

people will live in the North District.

- The most significant increase will be in the number of people aged 65-84 years.

39%

increase in single person households.

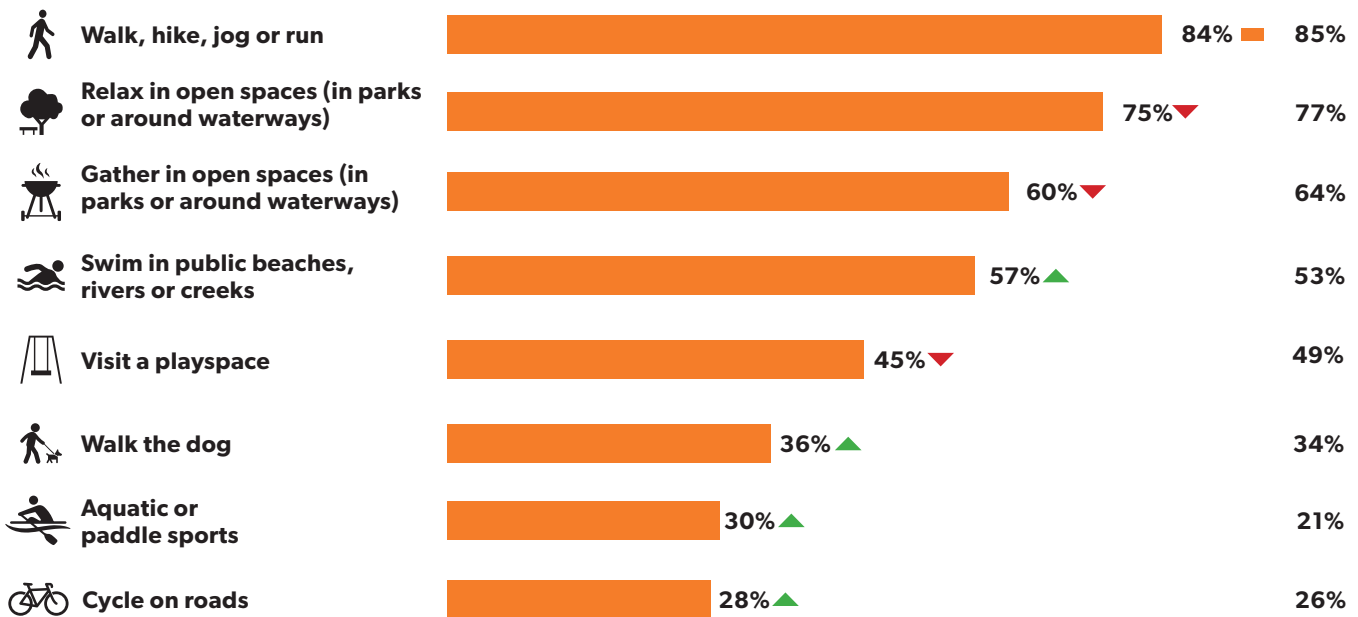
- Couples with children are expected to remain the dominant household type in the district by 2036.



What do North District residents love to do?

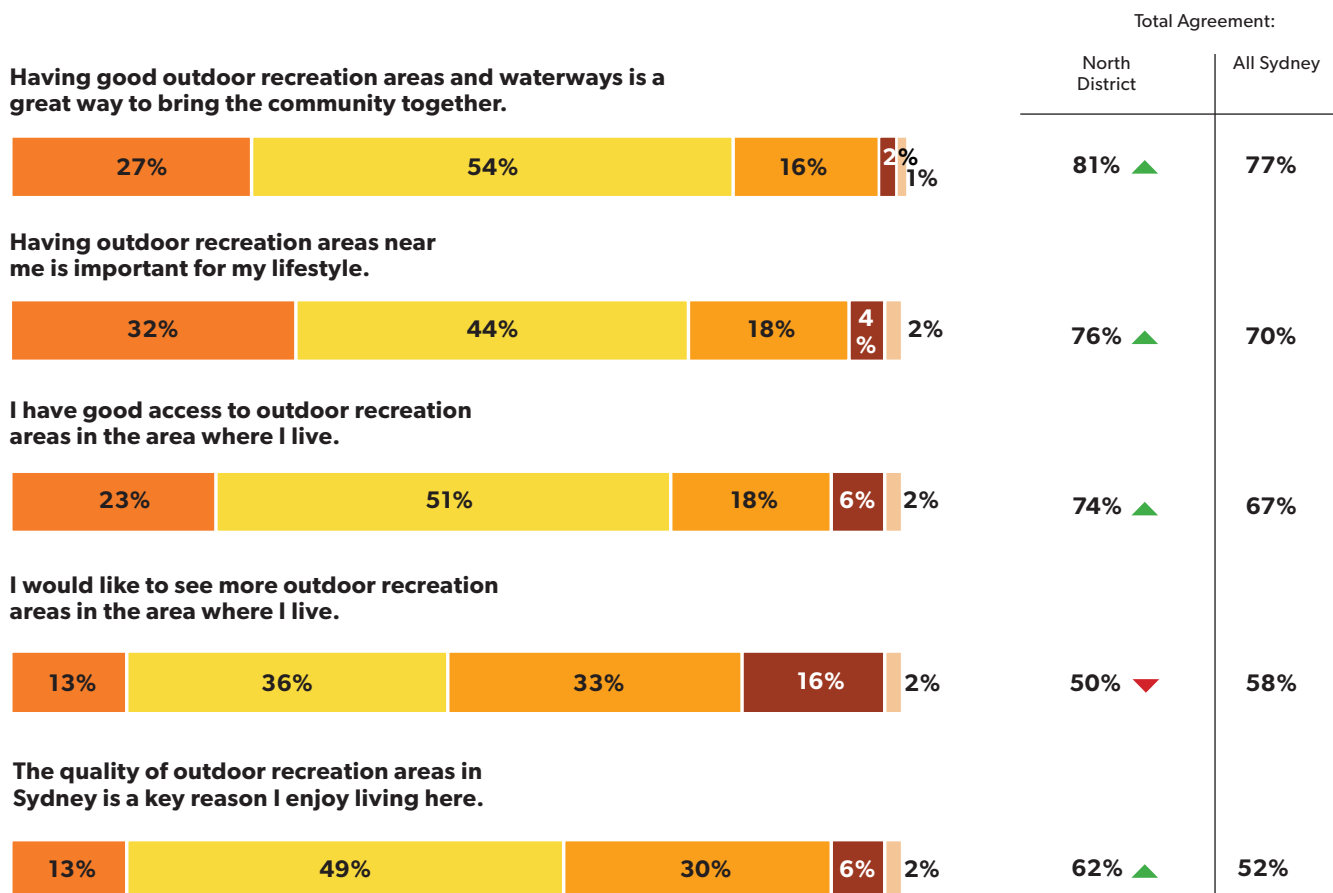
PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES

All Sydney



ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS AND WATERWAYS

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

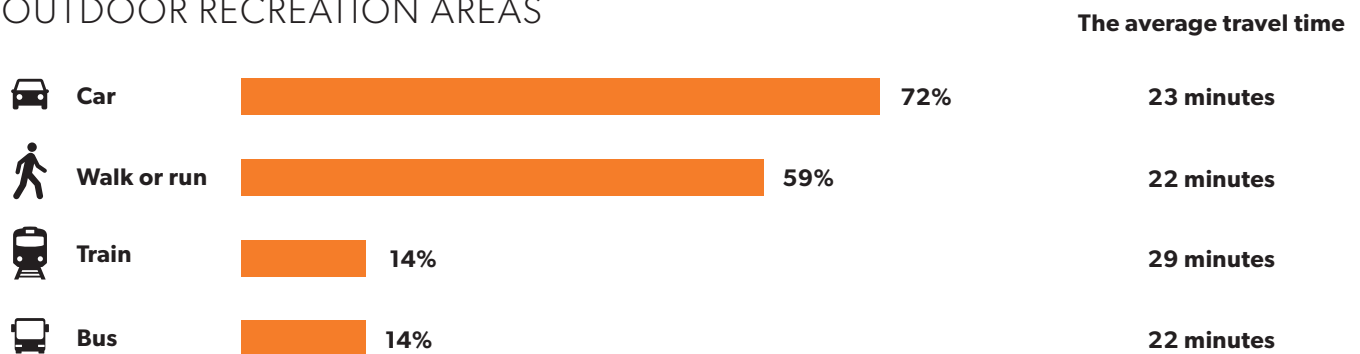


(Note: These numbers have been rounded for simplicity)

How do North District residents feel about their recreation opportunities?

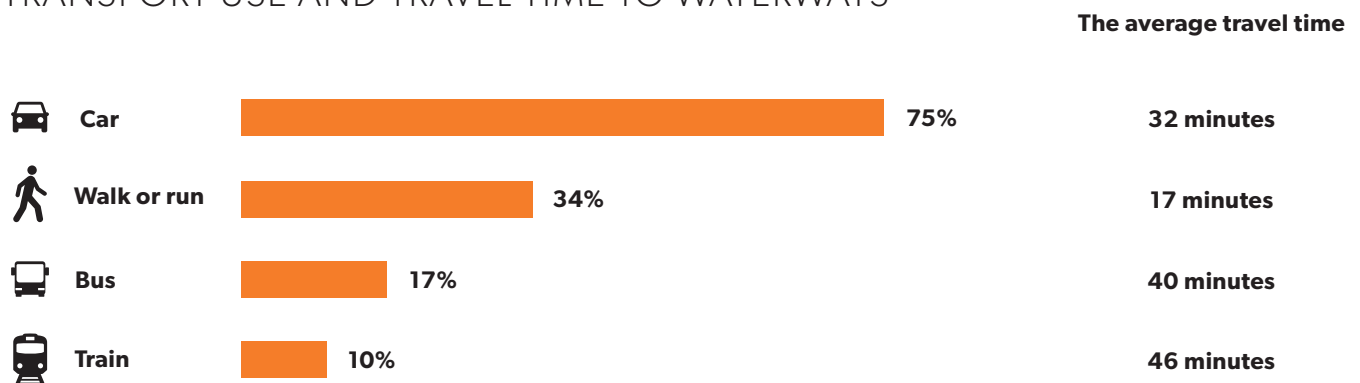
There are recreation opportunities available to North District residents, but they can be difficult to get to other than by car.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS



Residents are, however, appreciative of how close the water is and try to take advantage of it as much as possible.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO WATERWAYS



What would North District residents like to see?

- Improvements to walking and cycling networks, to help get to outdoor recreation areas without a car – especially through bushland areas.
- Open spaces that feel safe and provide for multiple uses.
- Larger open spaces, providing diverse opportunities for a range of outdoor recreation activities.
- Improvement and extension of tracks along the foreshore.

South District at a glance

- It's home to beaches, bushland and parks.
- It hosts vibrant communities and cultural events.
- It's home to Botany Bay, Georges River and Port Hacking.
- It contains metropolitan rural land and protected areas.
- Significant parks include the Royal National Park and Heathcote National Park.



The changing community

WHO LIVES HERE?

741,250

people live in the South District.

- 5-19 years old is the most common age group.
- The least represented age group is +85 years old.
- Around 5% of the community are living with a disability.

35%

of people were born overseas.

- 47% of the population speak a language other than English at home, including Arabic, Vietnamese, Greek, Cantonese and Mandarin.

WHO WILL LIVE HERE IN 2036?

945,350

people will live in the South District.

- The number of residents aged over 65 years old are expected to make up around 19% of the population in the South District by 2036.

46%

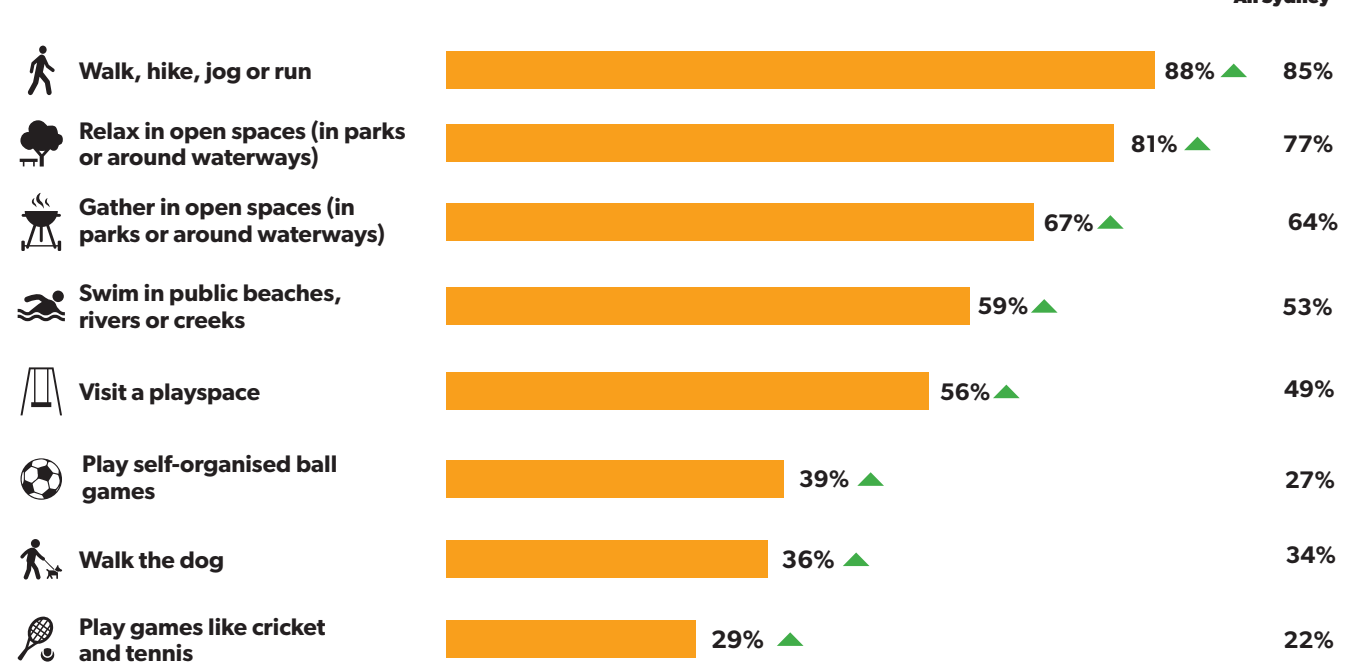
increase in single person households.

- Couples with children are expected to remain the dominant household type in the District by 2036.

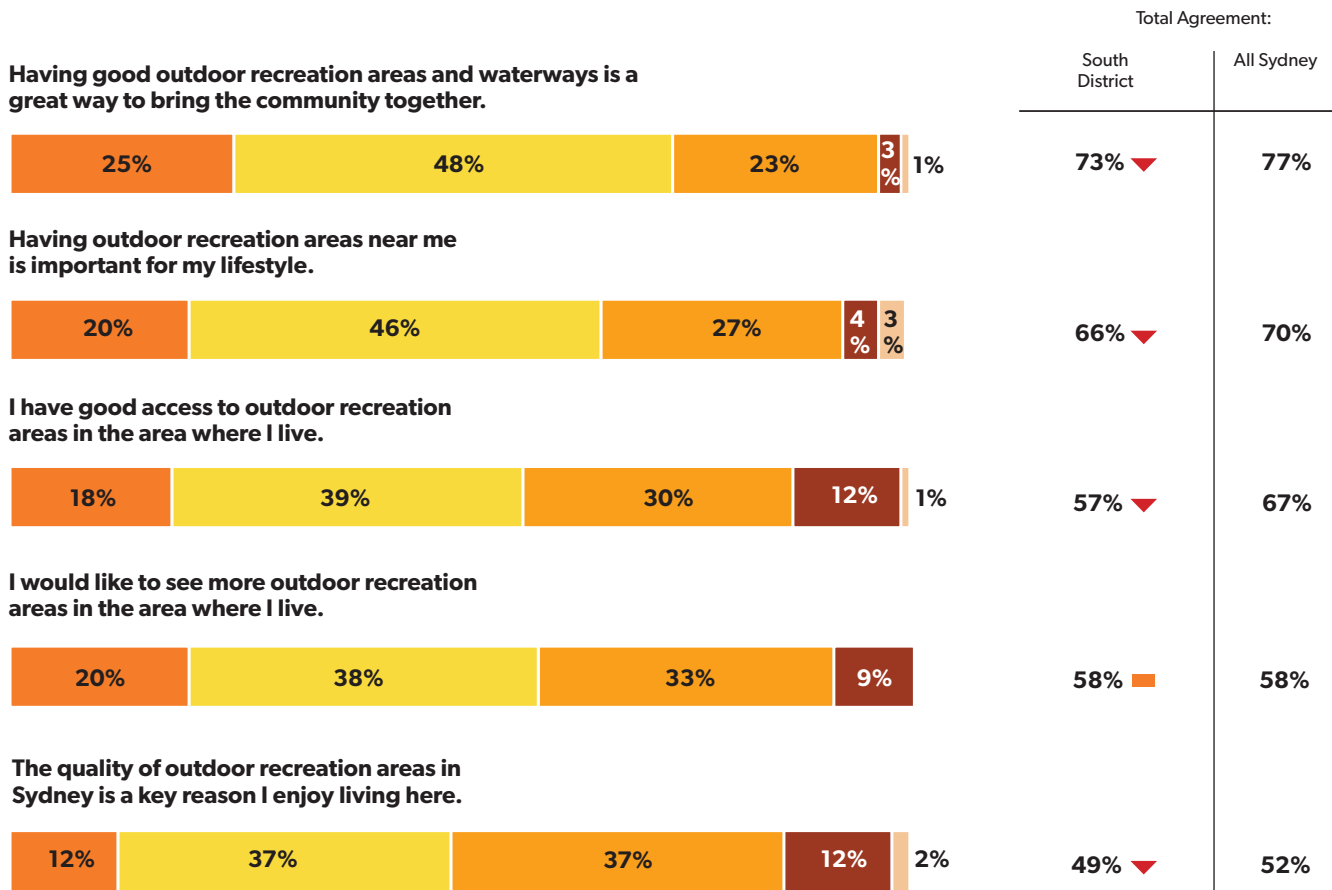


What do South District residents love to do?

PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES



ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS AND WATERWAYS

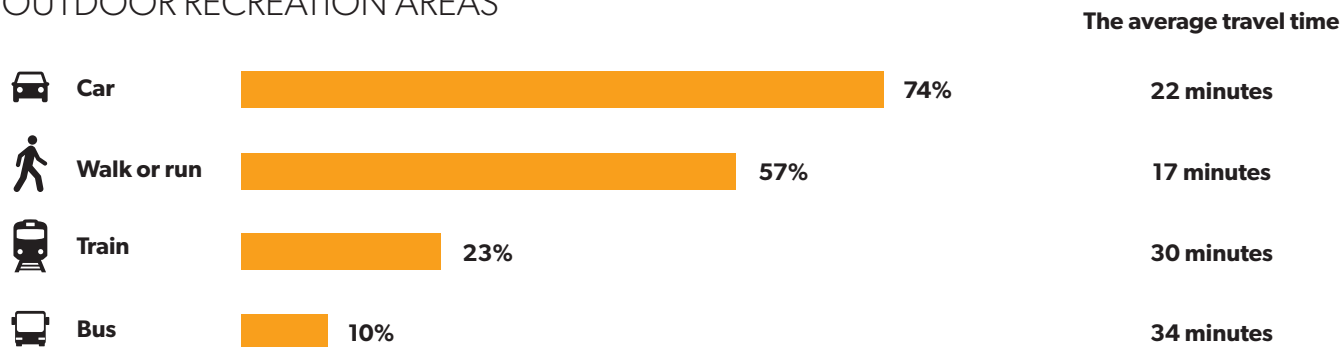


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How do South District residents feel about their recreation opportunities?

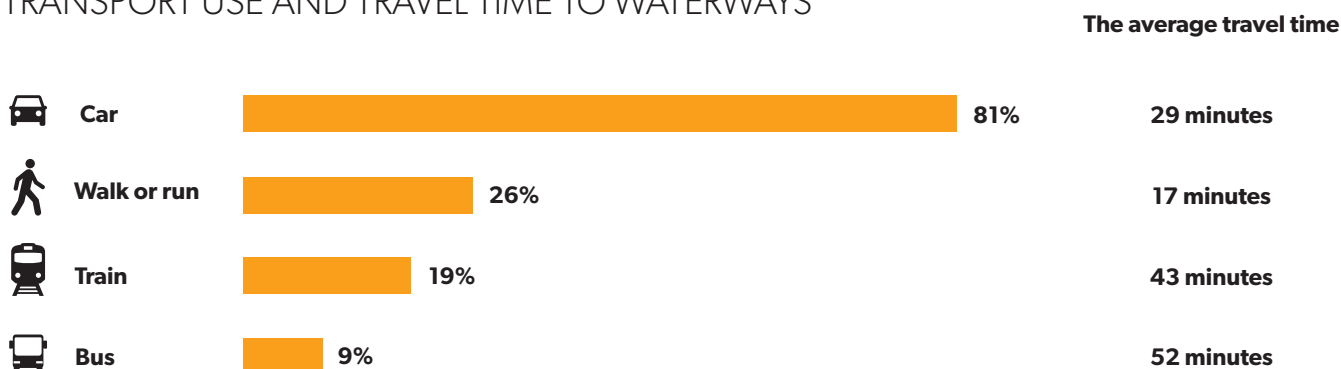
South District residents would like to have more opportunities to walk to recreation areas.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS



They also feel that many places are very popular on weekends – making it hard to get a private spot.

TRANSPORT USE AND TRAVEL TIME TO WATERWAYS



What would South District residents like to see?

- More high quality, open spaces in the local area, supported by good facilities – especially for areas of high development.
- Progress on the delivery of key projects and large regional open spaces.
- Improvements to existing parks, to ensure they can be well utilised.

***Let's make
Greater Sydney's
outdoor recreation
areas incredible!***



As our communities change and people seek areas for rest and relaxation outside of their own homes, open spaces have become even more important.

We're committed to planning outdoor recreation areas and waterways that respond to the broad, shifting recreation needs of those who live in Greater Sydney.

Understanding what Greater Sydney had to say

You told us what activities you engage in for outdoor recreation. We now have a better understanding of how you get to outdoor recreation areas and whether you're happy with the open spaces available in your community. We also have a clearer idea of what can be done to improve outdoor recreation areas, and what we can include when we plan new ones.

The results and findings from the *Greater Sydney Outdoors Study* will be used for future work in the provision of outdoor recreation areas. This study will be shared with local councils to help inform their recreation planning, as well as with other government bodies to assist with policy and guideline development. While there are common trends and opportunities for improvement across Greater Sydney, the information collected will inform the unique requirements for each district. This will help ensure Greater Sydney's outdoor recreation areas respond to the requirements of those who use them.

Where to from here?

If you would like to find out more about the Greater Sydney Outdoors Study, you can contact the Department of Planning and Environment on our website. We've also created a series of videos showcasing community members from Greater Sydney enjoying their recreation time.

www.planning.nsw.gov.au/gsos

