



## **PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE**

The following is public correspondence received by the City Clerk's Office after the posting of the original agenda. Individual contact information has been redacted for privacy. This may *not* be a comprehensive collection of the public correspondence, but staff makes its best effort to include all correspondence received to date.

To send correspondence to the City Council, on matters listed on the agenda please email [PublicComment@losaltosca.gov](mailto:PublicComment@losaltosca.gov)

**From:** [Roberta Phillips](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#); [City Council](#)  
**Subject:** Study Session May 9, 2023 Theater  
**Date:** Monday, May 8, 2023 12:10:57 PM

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Dear Council Members

1. The Study Session report does not show that a new theater in Downtown would be Financially feasible.

Just yesterday I saw the Children's Theater in Berkeley Ca, is closing due to lack of funds.

## Funding Shortfall Forces Bay Area Children's Theatre To Suspend Season

[dowhttps://patch.com/california/berkeley/funding-shortfall-forces-bay-area-childrens-theatre-suspend-season](https://patch.com/california/berkeley/funding-shortfall-forces-bay-area-childrens-theatre-suspend-season)

2. Housing is a higher priority . Our parking lots should be used for affordable housing

3. The loss of parking will result in the City asking the residents to build a parking garage or other parking facilities at a cost to residents. A survey done by LAR shows clearly that the community does not want to pay for a private theater regardless of their non-profit status.

4. There is no value shown for the cost of land nor how much the Los Altos Stage Company will pay to lease this very valuable asset worth millions of dollars.

5. The goal of the Downtown Vision Plan was to put more feet on the street.

That is being accomplished by the plan to build more housing downtown.

The Los Altos State Company has to be self-sufficient. There is no proof that is feasible.

6. The Bus Barn theater can stay where it is currently located and the Stage Company can raise donations to remodel. There is plenty of parking available.

The City has set it's priorities and a new theater downtown is not one of the priorities. We have many CIP projects in line ahead of a theater.

Sincerely

Roberta Phillips  
650-941-6940

**From:** [Los Altos Residents](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Cc:** [Gabriel Engeland](#)  
**Subject:** [External Sender]Study Session May 9, 2023 - Theater  
**Date:** Monday, May 8, 2023 8:34:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Screen Shot 2023-05-06 at 9.06.06 PM 2.png](#)

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Dear Mayor Meadows, Vice Mayor Weinberg, and Council Members Lee Eng, Fligor, and Dailey,

In November, 2021 Los Altos Residents (LAR) conducted a survey asking residents of Los Altos questions about their support for a new theater downtown and whether they were in favor of paying for its construction and/or operations and maintenance. We also asked questions about whether they wanted a theater to replace a parking plaza and whether they wanted to be able to vote on all these expenditures and give away of city land. We got 444 responses to our survey.

Here is an executive summary of what those Los Altans that responded to the LAR survey thought. We also attach the complete data including the survey questions so you can judge for yourself if they were biased or not.

## Executive Summary

- 444 Los Altos residents responded
- 43% would like a theater downtown; 39% would not
- 52% do not want a theater to replace a parking plaza
- 51% do not want city to contribute to construction
- 53% do not want city to contribute to operations & maintenance
- 50% want to vote on whether city land is used for a theater
- 53% want to vote on whether city contributes to construction
- 53% want to vote on whether city contributes to operations & maintenance

At the Study Session on May 9, 2023, AMS will report on the results of a survey it conducted for the Theater Working Group asking similar questions. AMS got 445 responses to its survey. However, only 81% of the responses AMS got were from Los Altans. So to compare the two surveys fairly, the LAR survey received 444 responses from Los Altans while the AMS survey only received 360 responses from Los Altans. LAR got input from 84 more Los Altans than AMS!

However here's the interesting thing: the respondents from the **Theater Working Group/AMS survey AGREE with the LAR survey respondents** on some very important points!!

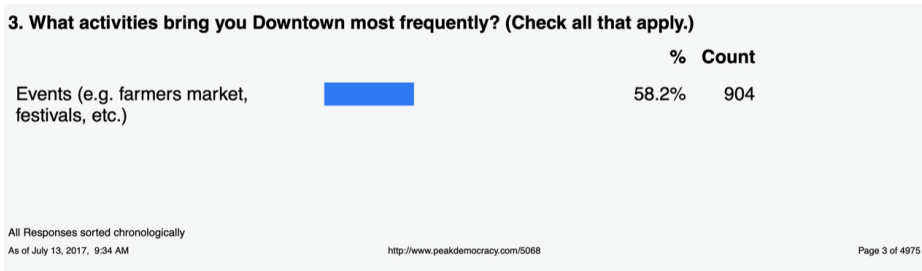
### **Of the Theater Gp/AMS respondents:**

- **the majority (44%) agree that only private donations should be used to support a new theater (versus 38% that disagreed)**
- **the majority (47%) do NOT want the city to provide funds towards the construction of a new theater (versus 40% that do)**
- **the majority (41%) do NOT want the city to financially support the**

## development and ongoing operations of a new theater (versus 37% that do)

These responses from both the LAR survey and from the AMS survey should be enough to convince you that your constituents do not want you to vote to spend any of their tax dollars for a new downtown theater.

We understand that you place great weight on the Downtown Vision Plan as justification for building a theater downtown. However the Downtown Vision Plan was adopted by a former Council in August 2018 - almost 5 years ago. And the surveys and community engagement that form the basis of the Downtown Vision Plan were all conducted in the **first half of 2017 - six years ago.**



(see the date in the lower right hand side)

A great deal has transpired since July 2017. We had a pandemic that resulted in a huge loss of jobs, and a change in the way people work - many people continue to work remotely at least 2 days per week if not all 5 days. Stores have closed and continue to close downtown - Oz Boutique, Runners High, Cook's Junction, Cover Story, to name a few recent closures. Restaurants now occupy much of our street parking spaces on Main and State Streets. California has lost and continues to lose population and the tech sector has been laying off thousands of people in the Bay Area which will likely lead to even more loss of population. More has seemingly changed than not changed since the 2017 surveys that form the basis of the Downtown Vision Plan were taken. Are these survey results/community engagement takeaways still valid? Who can accurately answer that question? Do you have complete confidence the conclusions from the consultant are still correct?

We have several other questions we think need to be addressed:

1. Why was notice of this May 9, 2023 Study Session not sent out to people on the email list for City Council meetings or mentioned in the City Manager Weekly Update? Notice of the May 9, 2023 Regular City Council meeting was sent out to this email list. It is the practice of City Staff to send out notices of Study Sessions to everyone on this email list - why was this Study Session excluded? It could be interpreted to look like an attempt to keep this Study Session "under the radar" hoping that it wouldn't come to the attention of interested parties such as LAR.
2. Would Council consider allowing the Theater Working Group to pay for and build a new theater where the Bus Barn Theater is currently located including allowing a larger footprint to accommodate the planned new theater, thus keeping the theater on the Civic Center Campus where it can take advantage of the parking afforded by the new Community Center?
3. Will the Council direct staff to conduct a survey and find out how many of your

constituents want to get rid of the parking spaces on Parking Plaza 2 - the parking plaza behind the Main Street Post Office, Chico's, the Discovery Shop, and the Rustic House - in order to build a theater?

4. Will we need to build required RHNA housing on that city-owned Parking Plaza?
5. Could we build a park for all the residents of the new condos downtown on that Parking Plaza?
6. Which of these options, park or theater, would benefit the most citizens and taxpayers of Los Altos?
7. What does funding the theater with "public/private" funds mean?
8. And exactly how much public funding are you willing to commit to?
9. Why are you even considering funding a new theater when the City apparently can't afford a desperately needed new police building?

These are just some of the questions we think you should address before any action is taken on a new downtown theater including funding any more new surveys on whether the Los Altos Stage Company can successfully raise the money to build a theater with "public/private" or even with only private funds. If they can't raise enough money to fund a survey, it would appear unlikely they could raise the tens of millions needed to build a new theater.

While we believe that most of you favor a new downtown theater, both surveys show that the majority of Los Altans do not want you to vote to pay any of our tax dollars towards the construction, development or operations of a new theater. Moreover, we believe the majority of Los Altans would prefer their tax dollars be used instead on resolving our budget deficit and, for example, funding all the deferred maintenance that has left most of the city-owned buildings in sad shape (police building, City Hall, Los Altos Youth Center, Grant Park Community Buildings/Senior Center to name a few). We believe they would prefer that you spend our tax dollars to bring our two fire stations into compliance. We understand our police force needs to hire nine (9) police officers to be fully staffed and we believe that public safety and crime prevention is at the top of most of your constituents expectations from its City government. We also believe we need to hire staff for City departments because we understand that many of the department are significantly understaffed.

It seems to Los Altos Residents that these items are all "must haves" and that a new theater is a "nice to have" but is not required especially when a theater already exists and has been successfully putting on productions.

We would urge you to listen to the viewpoint of **all** of your constituents - including those who responded to the LAR survey AND those who responded to the Theater Group/AMS survey. Again, the majority of all respondents from both surveys do NOT want the City to fund the construction, development or the ongoing operations of a new theater.

We hope you will take our concerns into consideration when you take up a new theater for discussion at the May 9, 2023 Study Session.

Sincerely,

Freddie Wheeler  
Co-founder, Steering Committee  
Los Altos Residents  
[www.LosAltosResidents.org](http://www.LosAltosResidents.org)

# Survey of Residents of Los Altos Regarding Downtown Theater

November 1, 2021

# Executive Summary

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# Objective & Methodology

- Objective
  - Gather resident opinions to present to Council for consideration during discussion of downtown theatre proposal
- Methodology
  - Survey link posted on Nextdoor, emailed to approximately 1 500 fellow residents
- Duration
  - Two weeks

# Survey email from Los Altos Residents

**CALL TO ACTION:**

**PLEASE TAKE THIS DOWNTOWN THEATER SURVEY**

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to solicit your thoughts about a live performance theater in downtown Los Altos. As you may have read in the Town Crier, a New Theater Working Group has been formed and will soon seek approval from the City Council to build the theater on one of the downtown parking plazas.

The aggregated data from this survey will be provided to the City Council when this topic is scheduled to go before them.

We welcome your thoughts and opinions. To make your voice heard, please [click on this link](#).

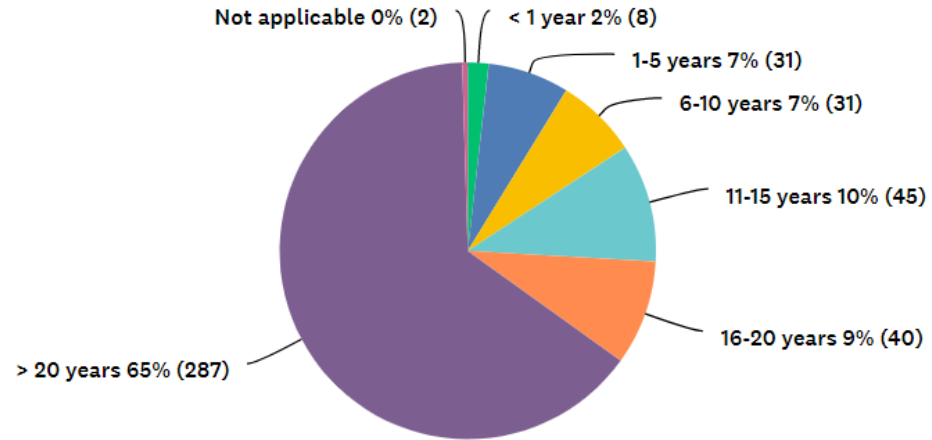
**THANK YOU!**

# Resident Responses

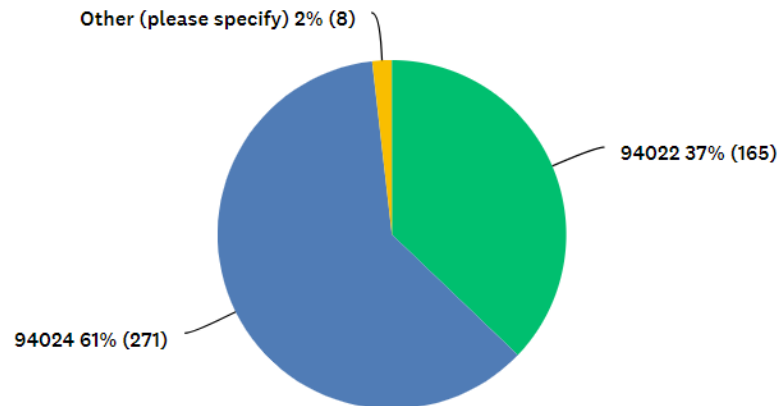
Aggregated data for respondents who identified as residents

# Demographics

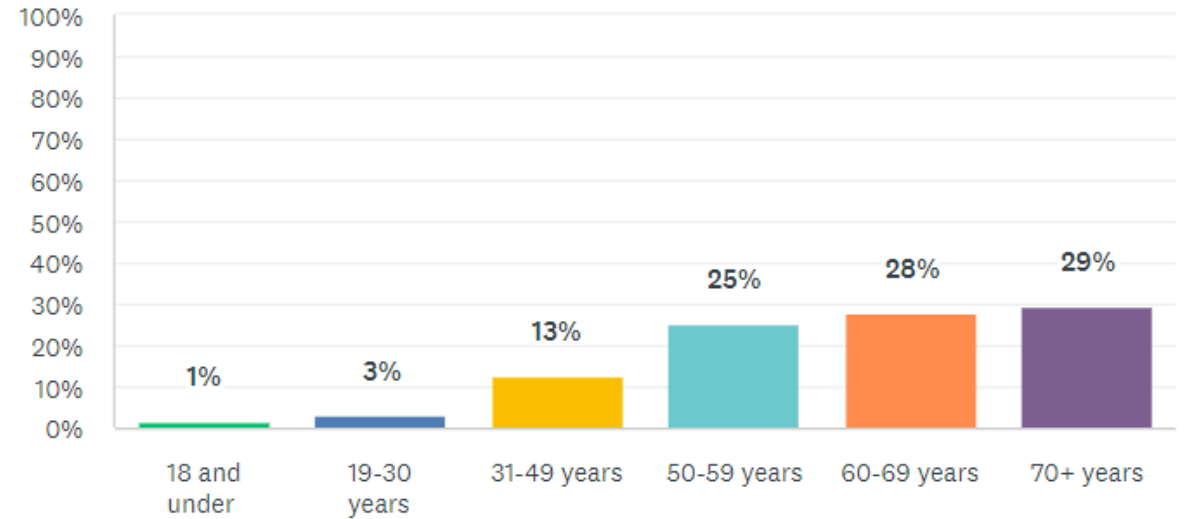
- Q2: How long have you lived in Los Altos?



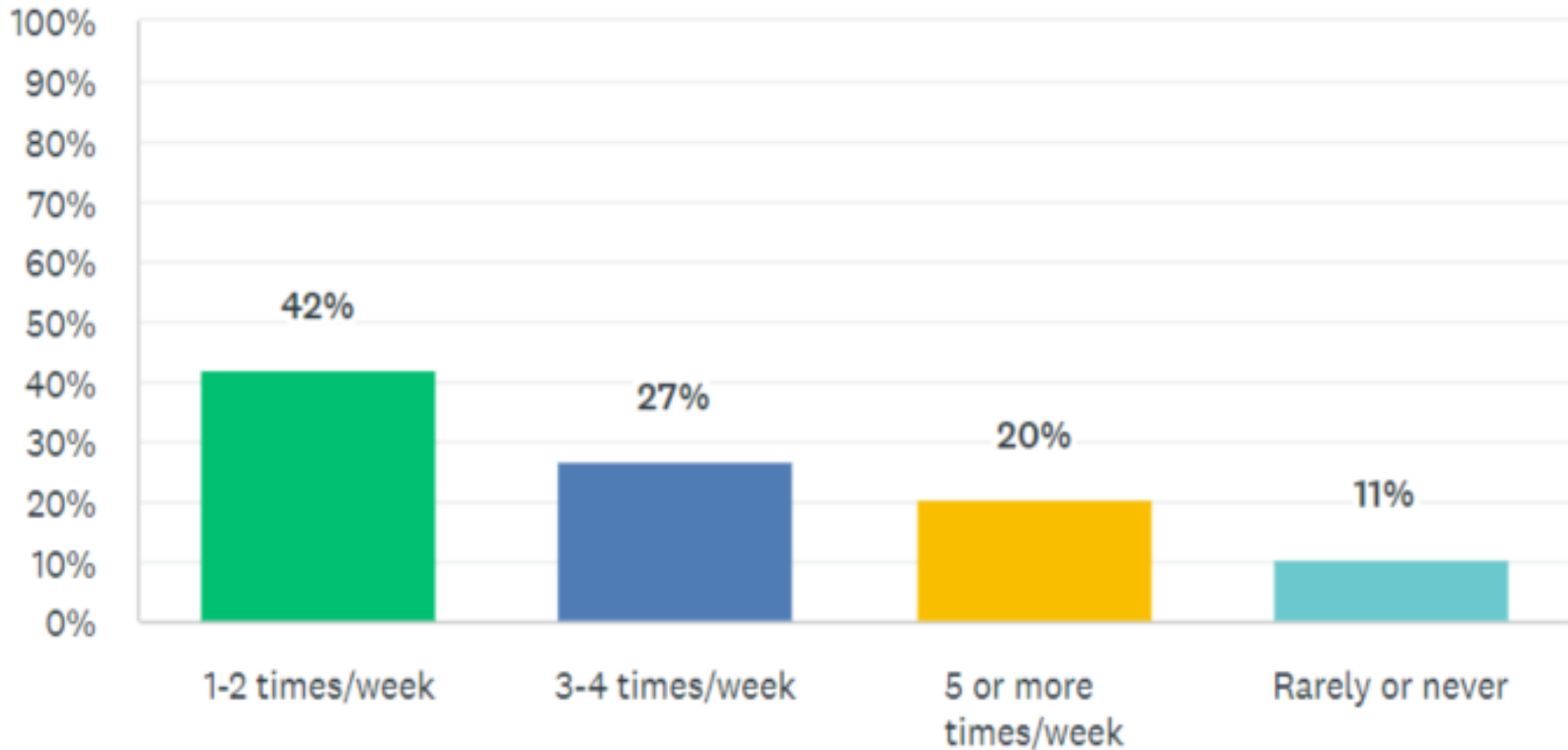
- Q3: My zip code is?



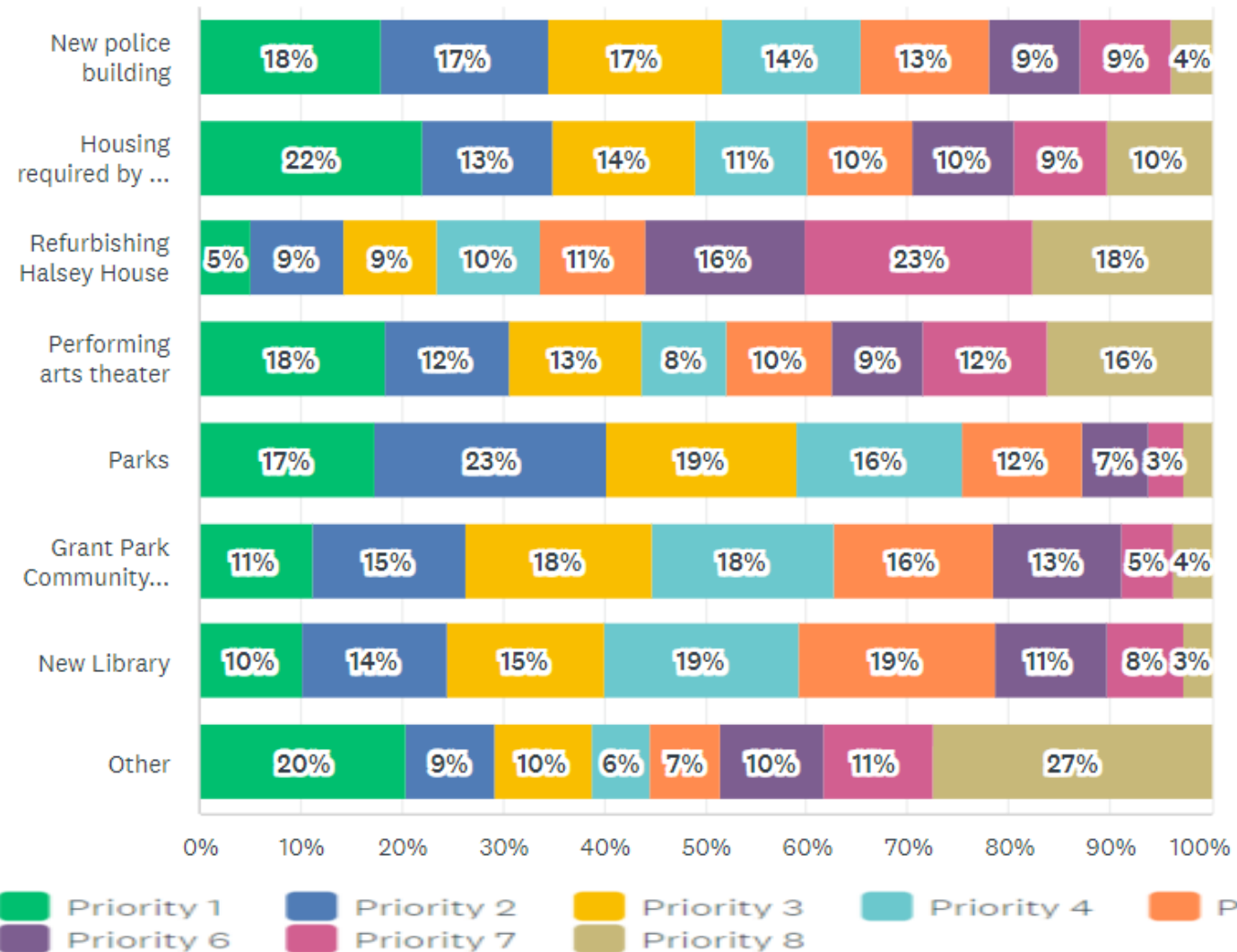
- Q4: My age group is:



# Q5: I visit downtown Los Altos



# Q6: Please rate the following in terms of where the city should spend city funds and resources:



# Q6: Tallying priorities 1, 2, 3 tells us residents want to spend money on

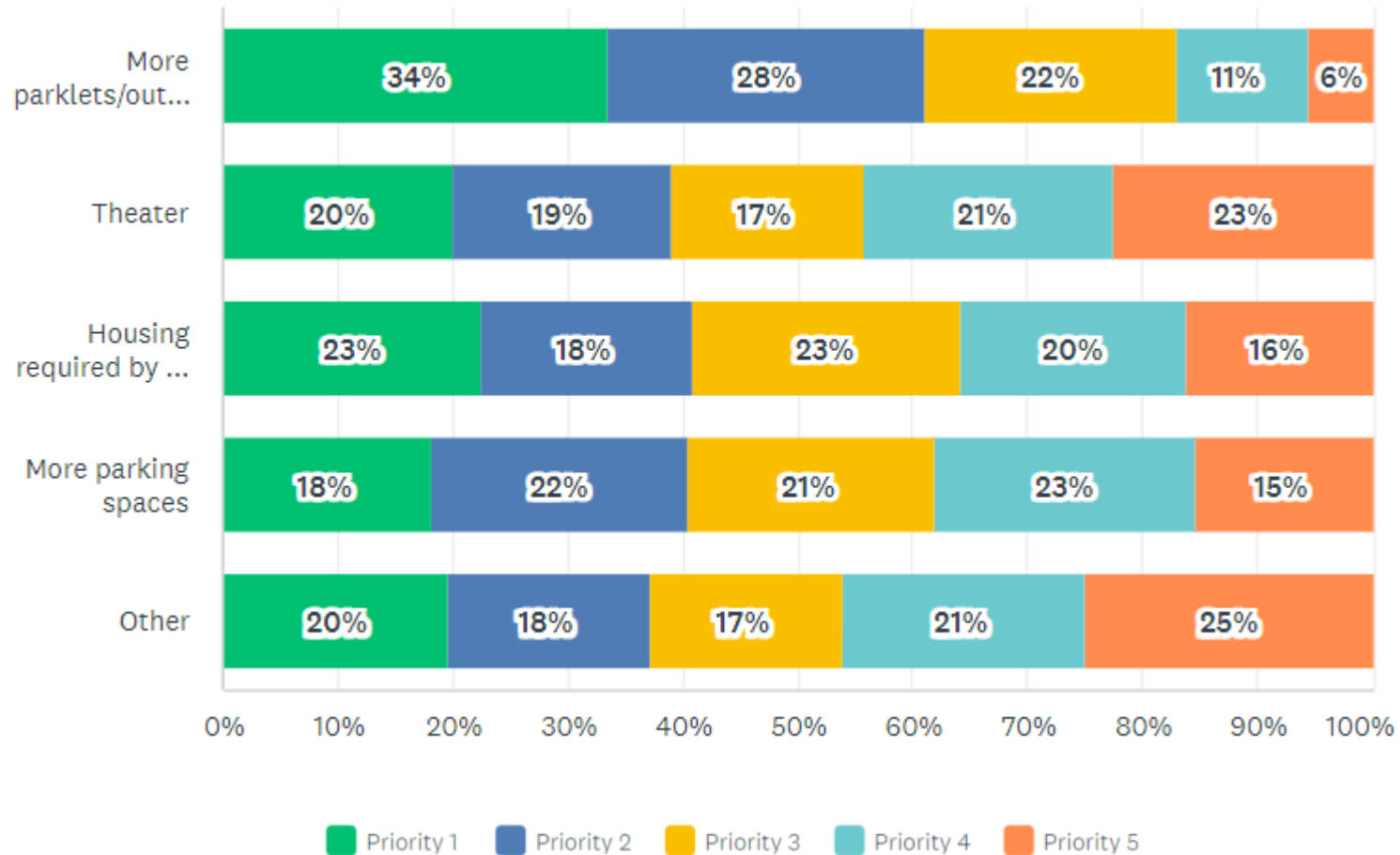
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#1 Parks	59%
#2 New police building	52%
#3 Housing	49%
#4 Grant Park	44%
#5 Theater	43%
#6 Library	39%
Other*	39%
#7 Halsey House	23%

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\* Includes 152 random comments, e.g., pool, parks, more parking. See attachment.

# Q7: Please rate the following in terms of land use in downtown Los Altos:





## Q7: Tallying priorities 1, 2, 3 tells us residents prioritize land use as follows:

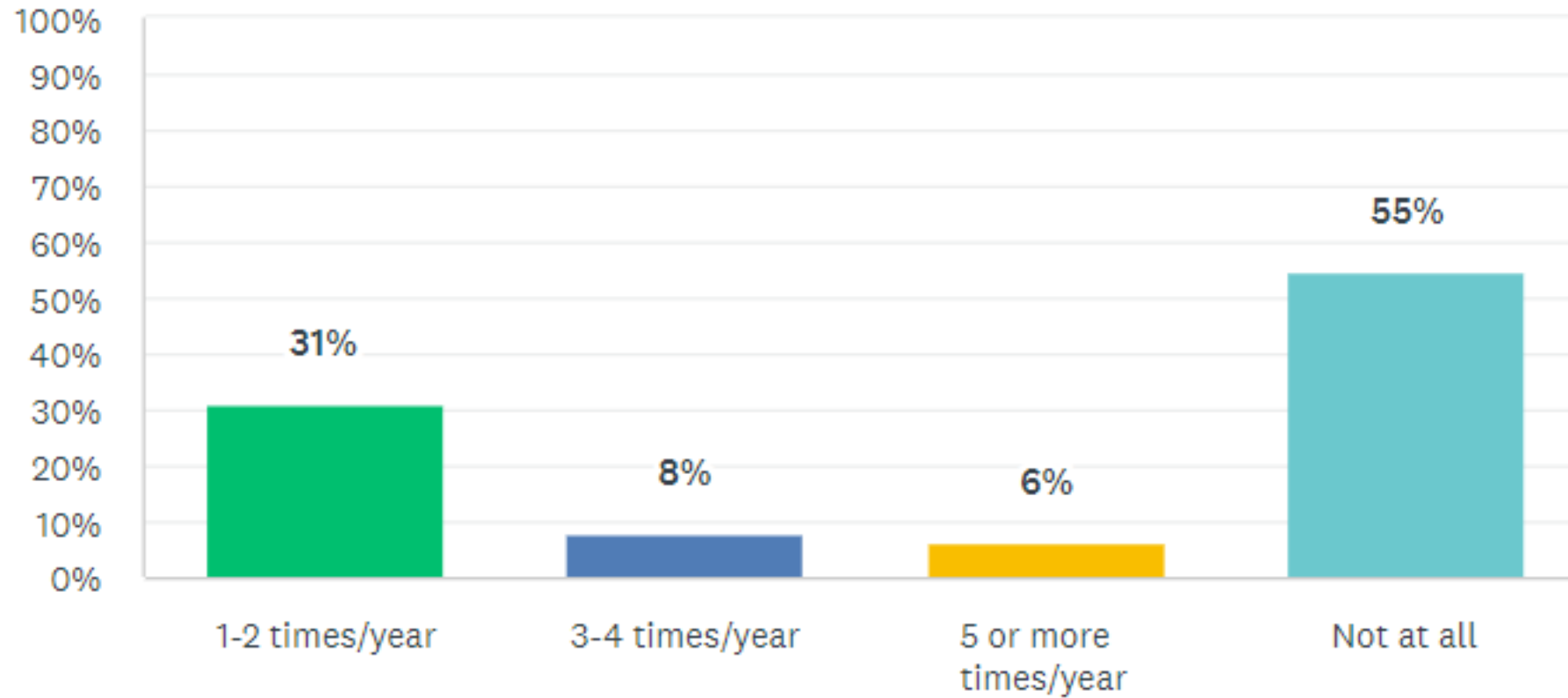
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#1	More parklets	84%
#2	Housing	64%
#3	More parking	61%
#4	Theater	56%
#5	Other*	55%

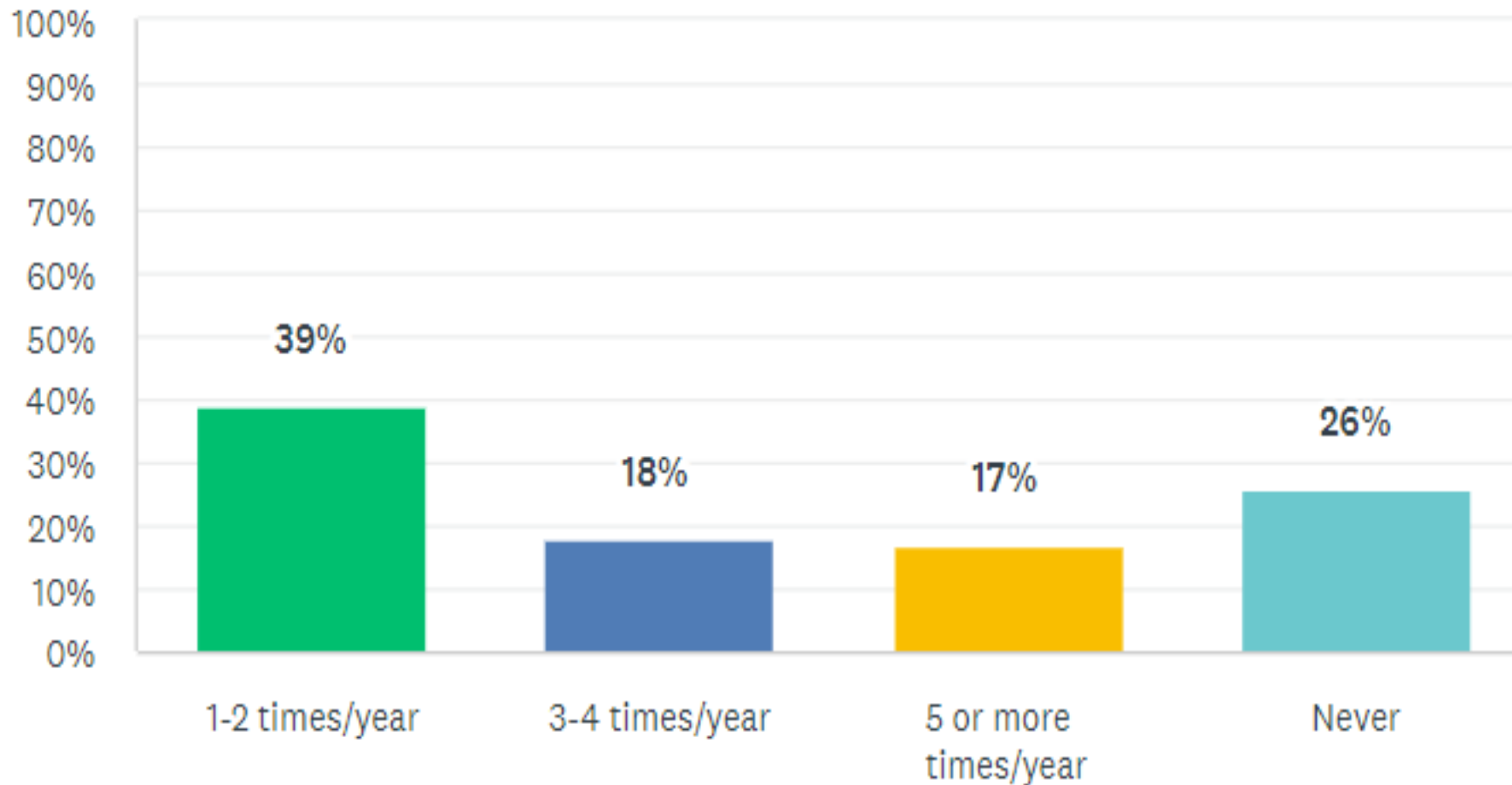
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\* Includes 112 random comments, e.g., pool, dog parks, more parking. See attachment.

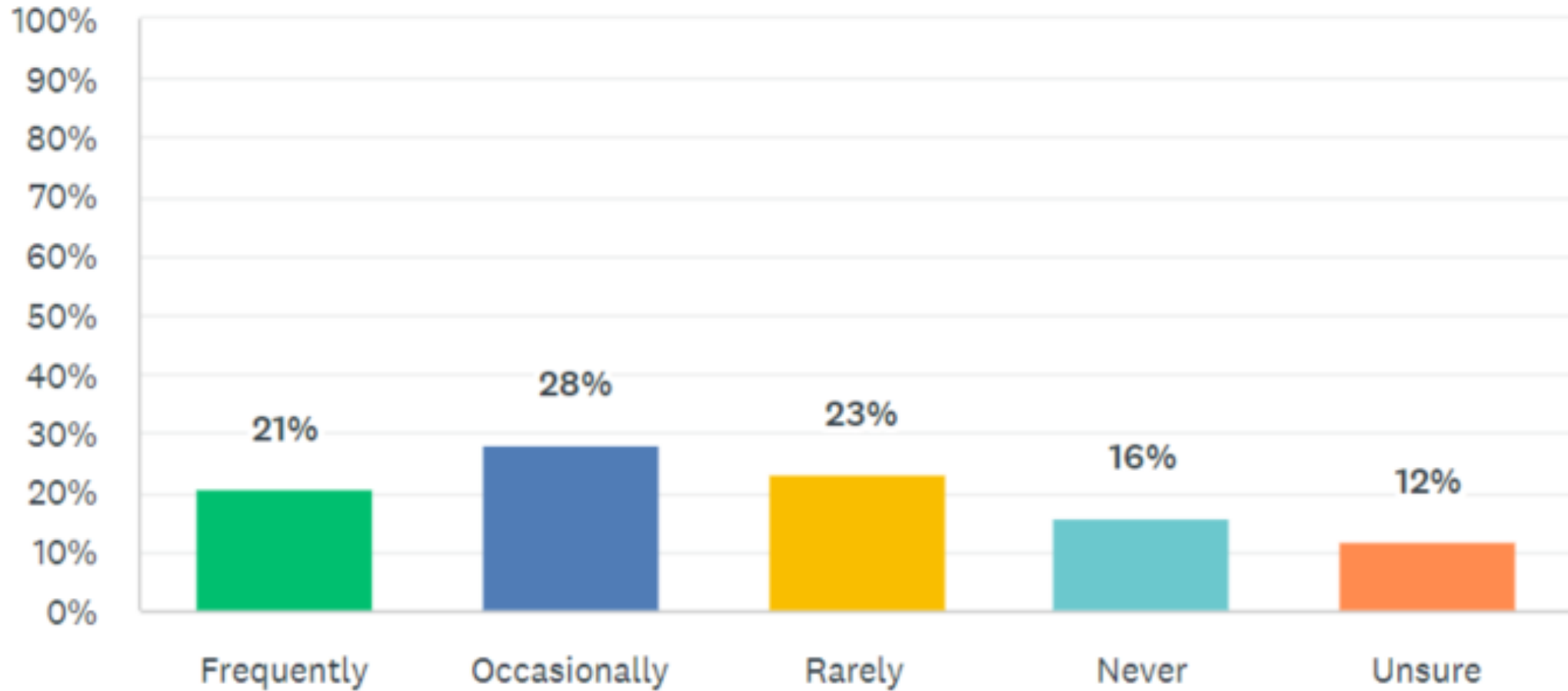
# Q8: Pre-COVID, I attended live performances at Bus Barn Theater



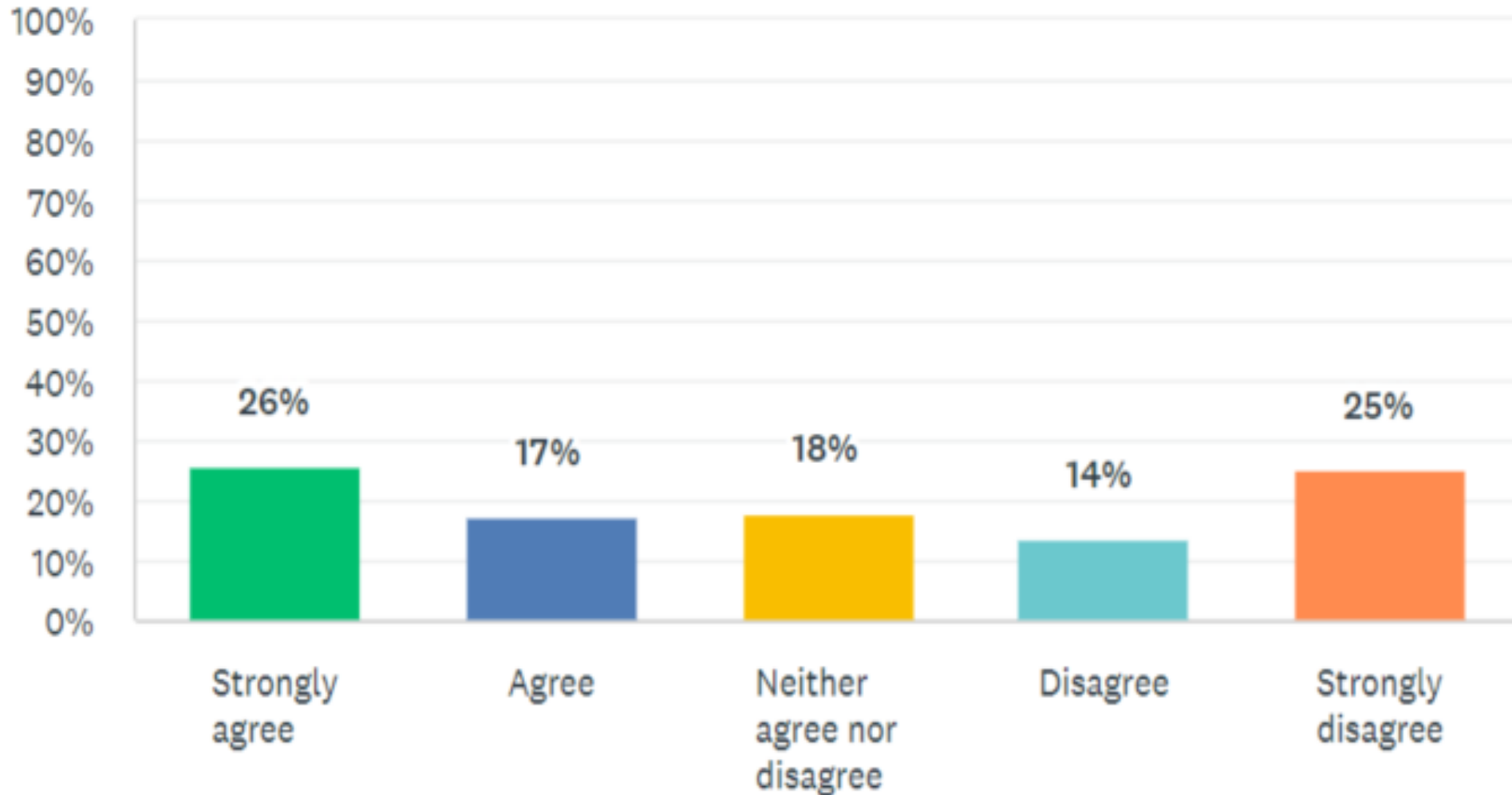
Q9. Pre-COVID, I attended live performances at live theaters such as Mt. View Center, Oshman JCC, Hillbarn, Lucie Stern, etc.



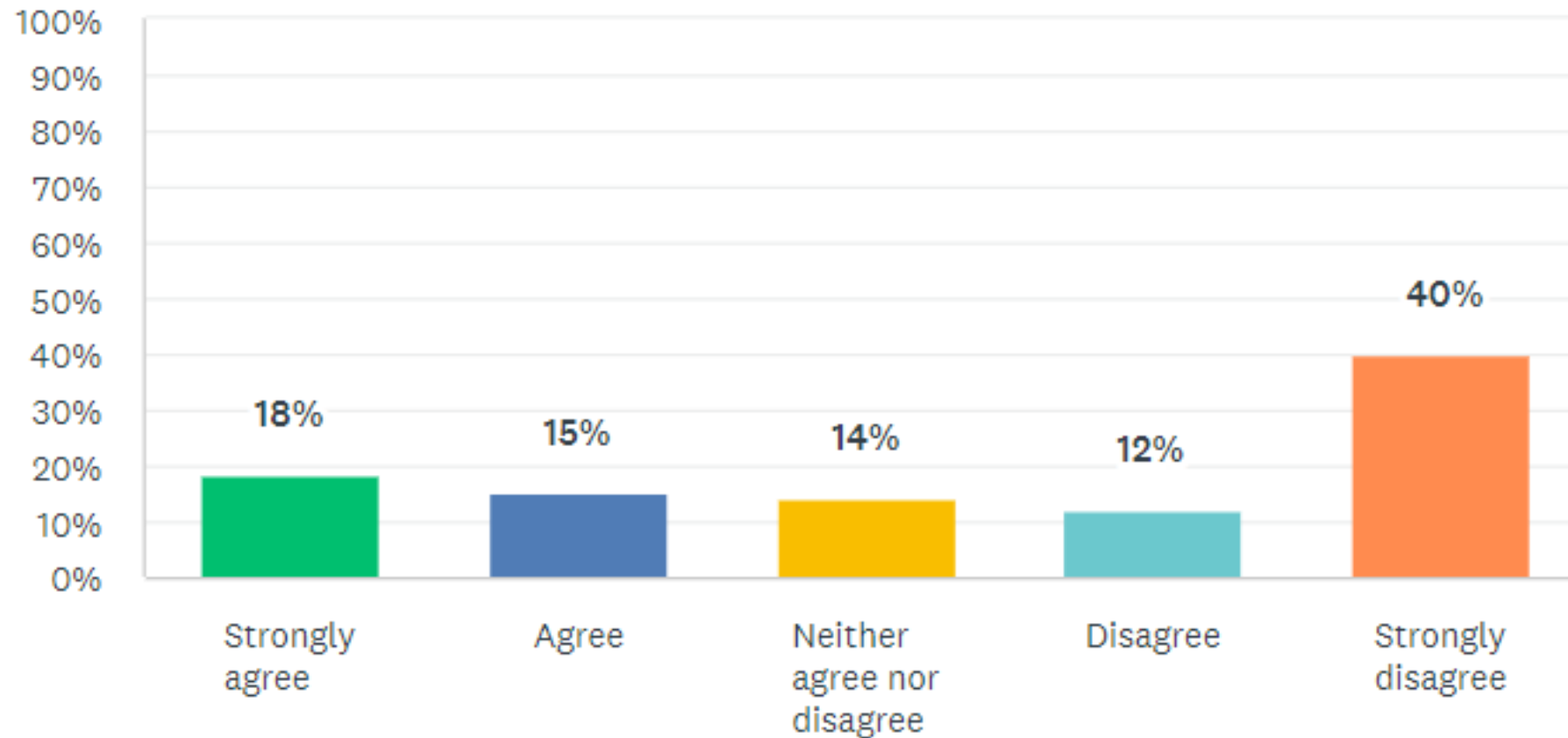
# Q10: I would attend live performances at a theater in downtown Los Altos.



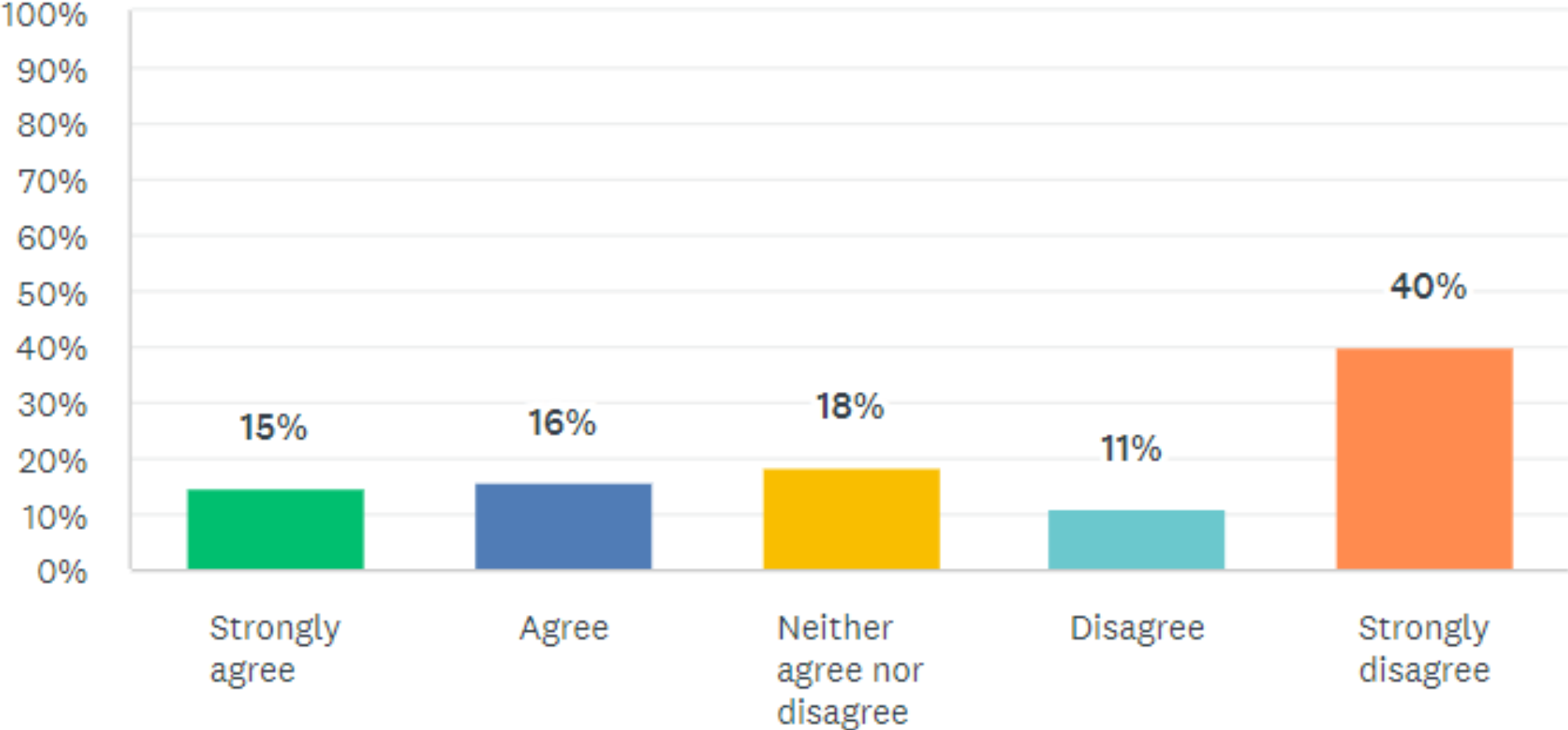
# Q11: I would like to have a live performance theater downtown.



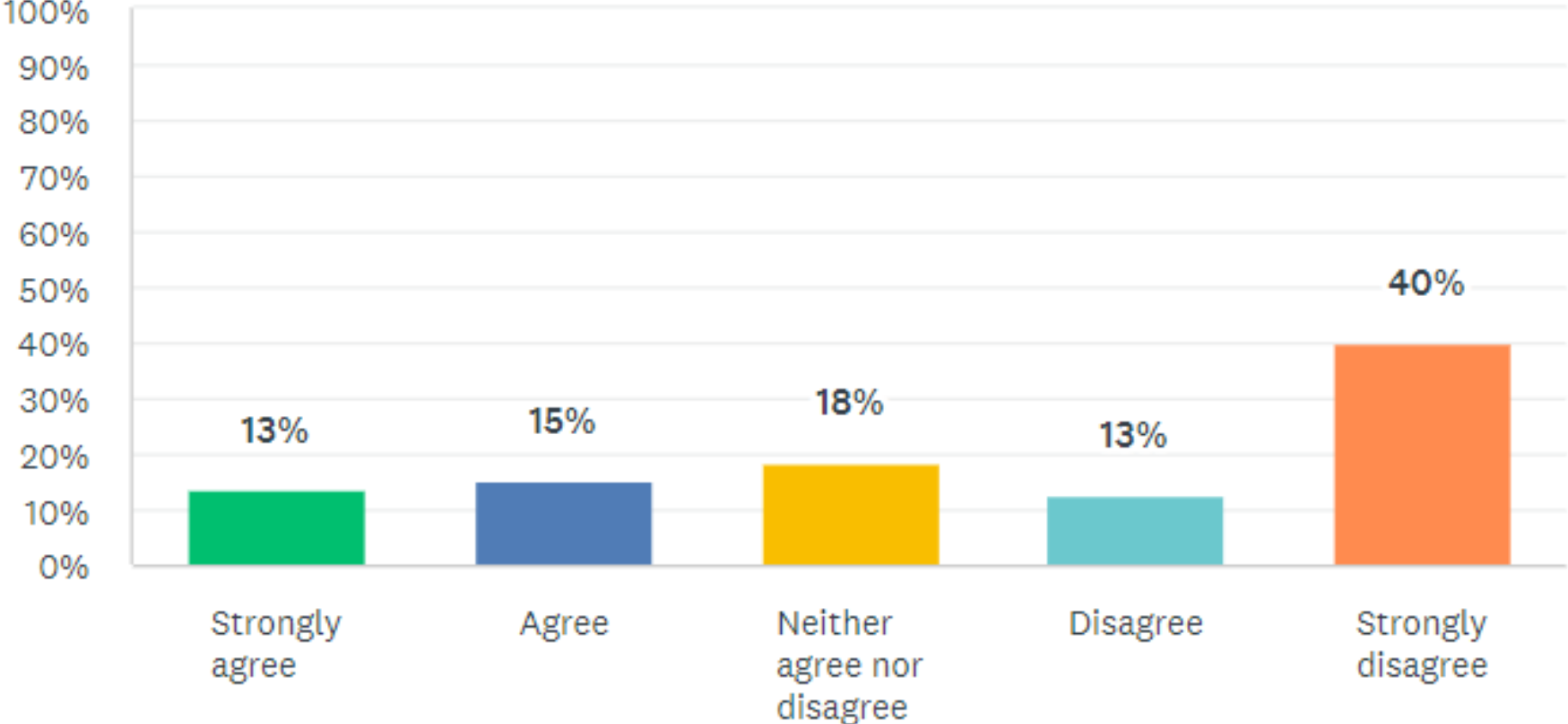
Q12: I want the city to allow a theater to replace a downtown parking plaza (for example, Plaza #2 behind the Main Street Post Office).



Q13: I want the city to provide funding from the city budget toward the cost of construction of a downtown theater.

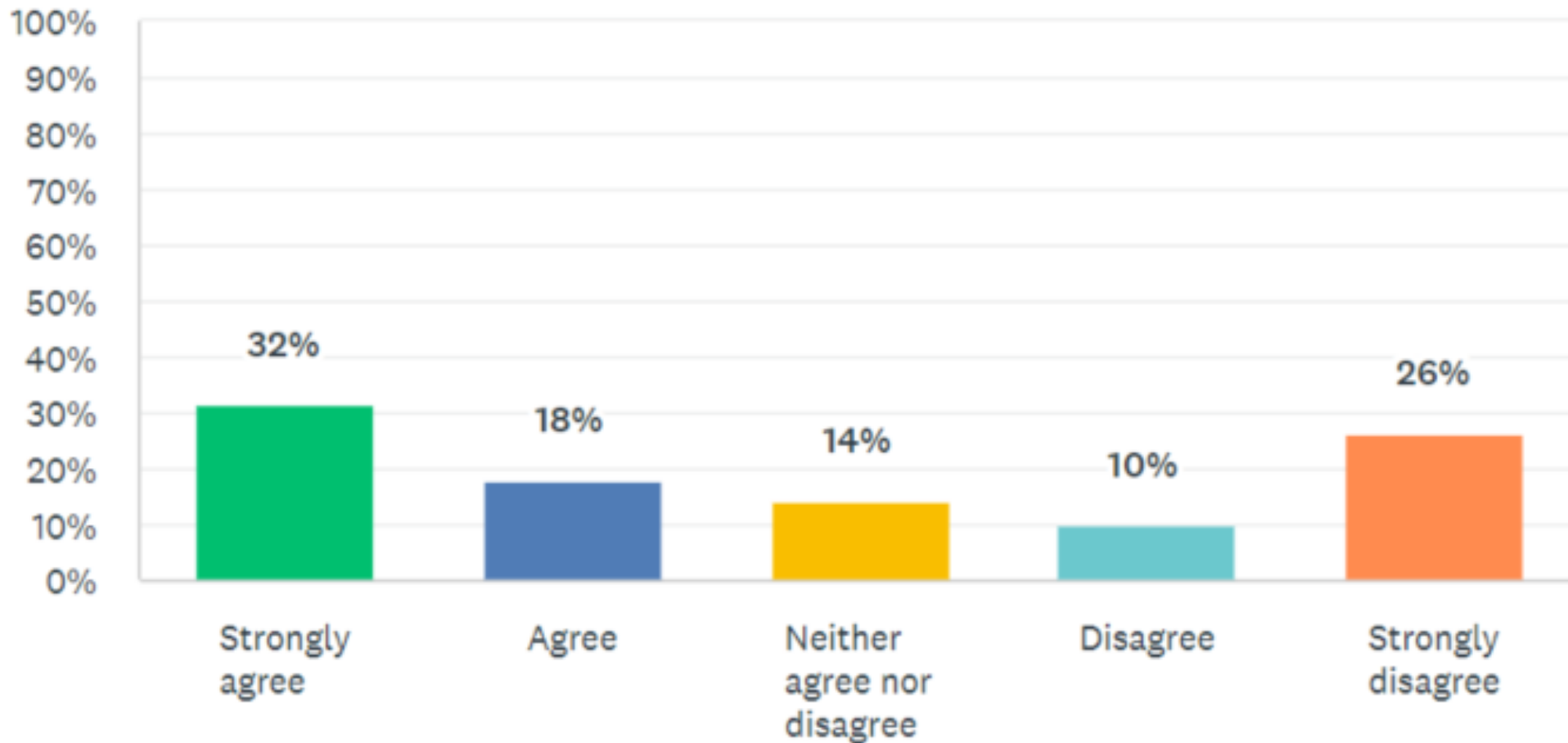


Q14: I want the city to provide funding from the city budget toward the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater.

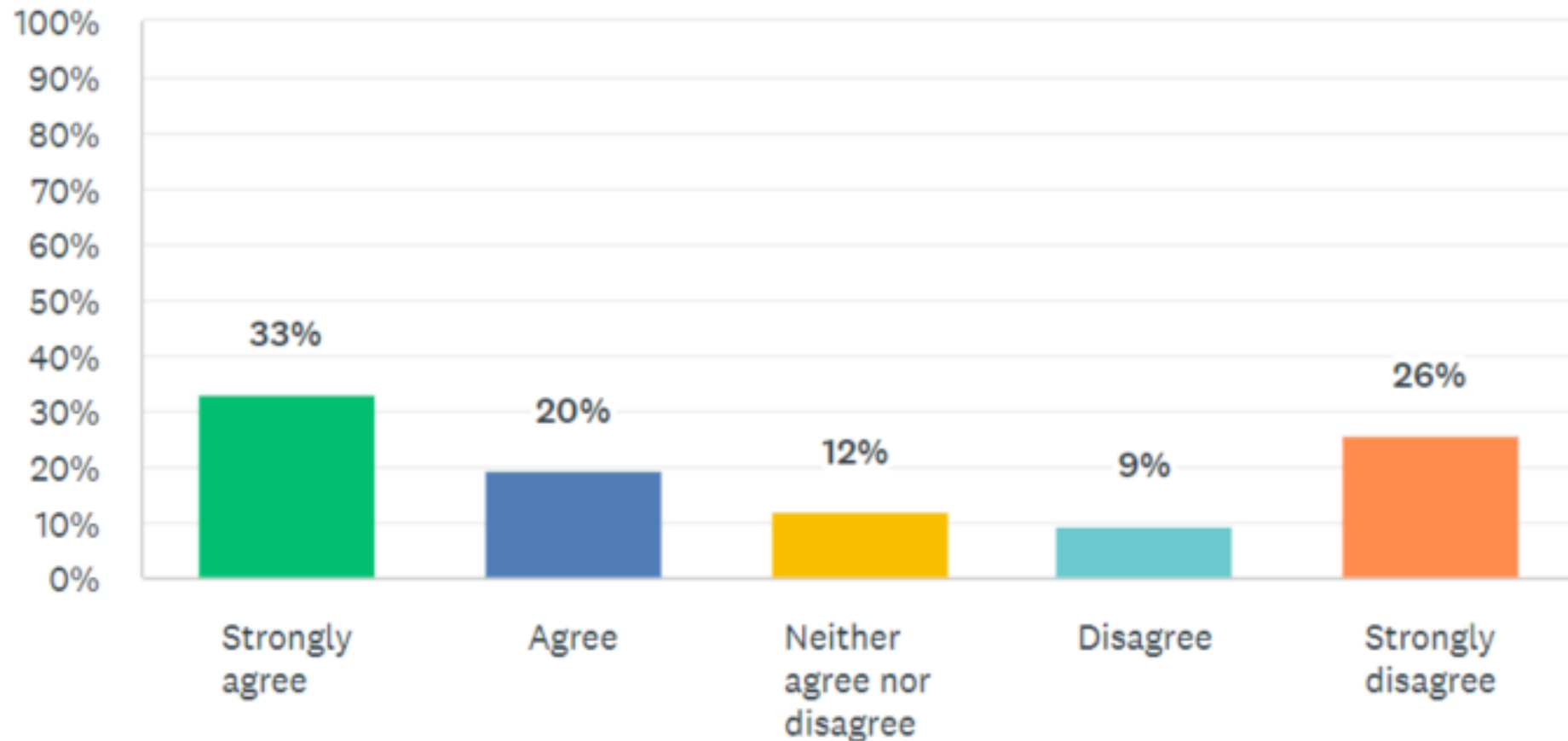




Q15: I want to vote in a citywide election on whether to use city-owned land (for example, Parking Plaza #2 behind the Main Street Post Office) for a theater.



Q16: I want to vote in a citywide election on whether the city should provide any funding from the city budget toward the cost of construction of a downtown theater.



Q17: I want to vote in a citywide election on whether to provide any funding from the city budget for the ongoing maintenance and operating expenses of a downtown theater.

