

Open Harbor: Views of the Boston waterfront

Findings from a survey of Boston voters on waterfront issues

The MassINC Polling Group

This project was sponsored by the Coalition for a Resilient and Inclusive Waterfront

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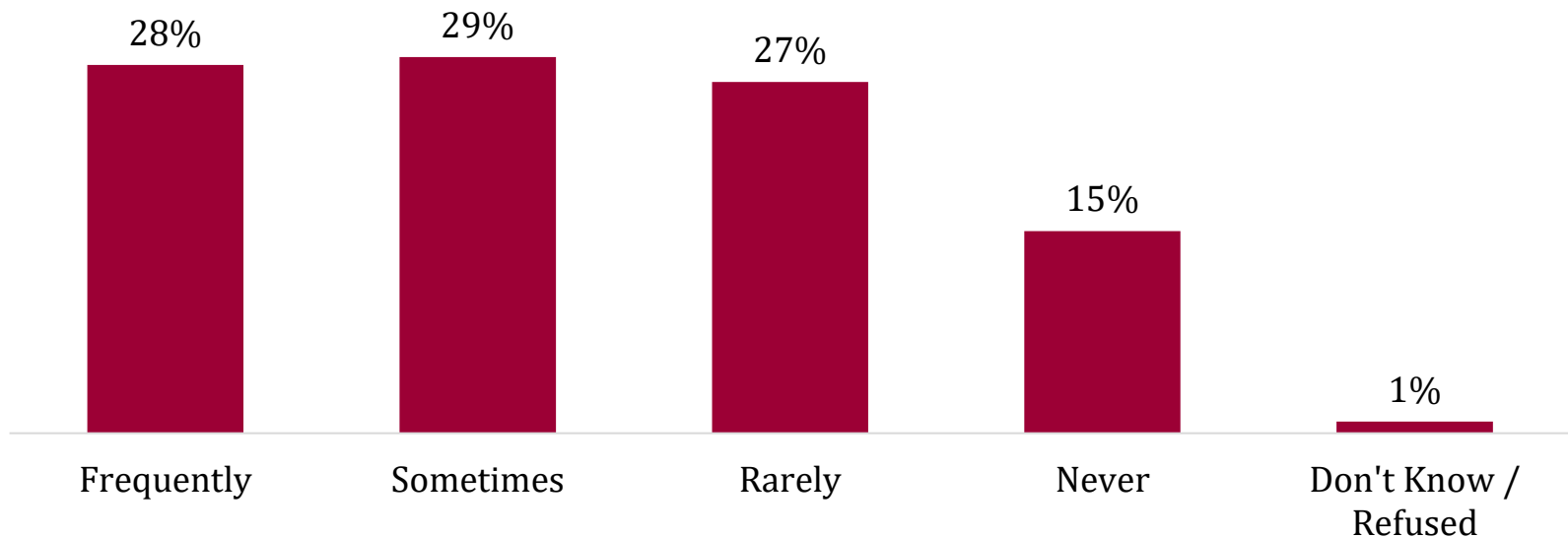
Survey Background

- Results based on a survey of 635 Boston likely voters. Oversamples of Black, Latino, and Asian voters were obtained to allow for separate analysis of each.
- Conducted June 10-16, 2021 via live telephone and online interviewing. Telephone interviews used voters lists as the sample source, while online respondents were drawn from an online panel.
- Results within race and ethnicity were weighted to age, gender, party registration, and education level for each group. Groups were then combined and weighted to the population parameters for the city as a whole by age, gender, party, race, education, and geography.
- This project was sponsored by the Coalition for a Resilient and Inclusive Waterfront.

Waterfront visit frequency

- Just over half of Boston likely voters say they visit the waterfront “frequently” or “sometimes” in a normal year.

Over half of likely voters say they visit at least “sometimes” in a normal year
% who say they visit the waterfront _____ in a normal year

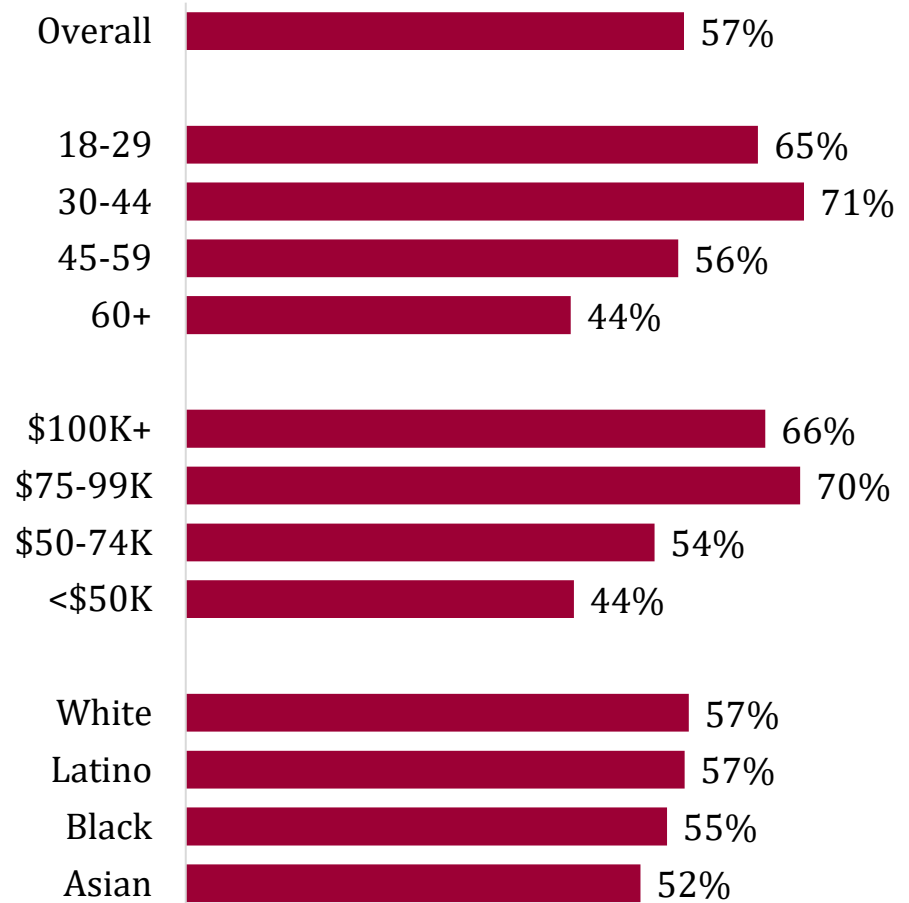


Who visits the most often?

- Younger people are more likely to report visiting the waterfront “frequently” or “sometimes”.
- People with higher incomes report more frequent visits.

Differences in waterfront visit frequency

% who say they visit the waterfront “frequently” or “sometimes” in a normal year



How people see the waterfront now

- The two open-ended questions show the importance of open space as a benefit, and threats to that open space as a concern.

Biggest benefits, challenges show tension in waterfront use / future

% who mentioned each topic in open ended responses

Most important benefits of waterfront

Enjoying the outdoors	43%
Recreation and exercise	36%
Environmental benefits and protections	27%
Providing jobs to local residents	21%
Tourism	21%
<i>Don't Know / Refused</i>	4%
<i>Other</i>	4%

Biggest issues facing the waterfront

Too much development	31%
The impacts of climate change	28%
Gentrification	15%
Lack of affordable attractions and dining	14%
Too hard for residents to get to	13%
It does not provide enough jobs for local residents	8%
It is not welcoming to people like me	7%
<i>Other</i>	9%
<i>Don't Know / Refused</i>	10%

Challenges facing the waterfront

- Voters agree that climate change issues are central to the future of the waterfront, with work to do on accessibility and diversity.

Voters weigh in on challenges facing the waterfront

% who agree with each of the following statements

	Strongly agree	Total agree
Protecting the waterfront against climate change is vital to Boston's economy	62%	85%
I feel welcome on the waterfront	47%	80%
The waterfront can help protect the city against the effects of climate change	46%	73%
It's easy to get to the waterfront on public transportation	33%	62%
The activities and dining on the waterfront are affordable to me	21%	55%
waterfront developers are creating public spaces everyone can access	26%	49%
The city's racial diversity is reflected in the waterfront's activities	23%	38%
It's easy to drive and park at the waterfront	15%	31%

Support for waterfront policies

- Voters offer support for a range of changes to waterfront policies, with open spaces drawing the strongest support.

Broad support for a range of waterfront-related policy changes

% who say they would support or oppose _____

	Total support	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Total oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	<i>Don't Know / Refused</i>
...the creation of new open spaces for the public to use on the waterfront?	87%	68%	19%	10%	5%	5%	3%
...additional city government funding for climate change protections for specific neighborhoods in Boston	83%	61%	22%	12%	4%	7%	5%
...city government creating a set of climate change and community benefit standards for all developers to use who want to build on the Boston waterfront?	81%	62%	19%	14%	5%	9%	5%
...appointing a cabinet level official to focus on Boston waterfront issues?	76%	42%	34%	15%	7%	8%	9%

Waterfront for all to use

- There is very broad agreement with the idea that common waterfront use is more important than maximizing taxable development. This echoes the open ended question, where development was the top concern.

Voters prioritize accessibility and open space over waterfront development

% who agree with each statement

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
The waterfront should be accessible to everyone, even if it means less land for developers to build on	76%	79%	75%	68%	71%
We should maximize taxable development on the waterfront even if it means less land for the public to use	16%	14%	17%	19%	21%

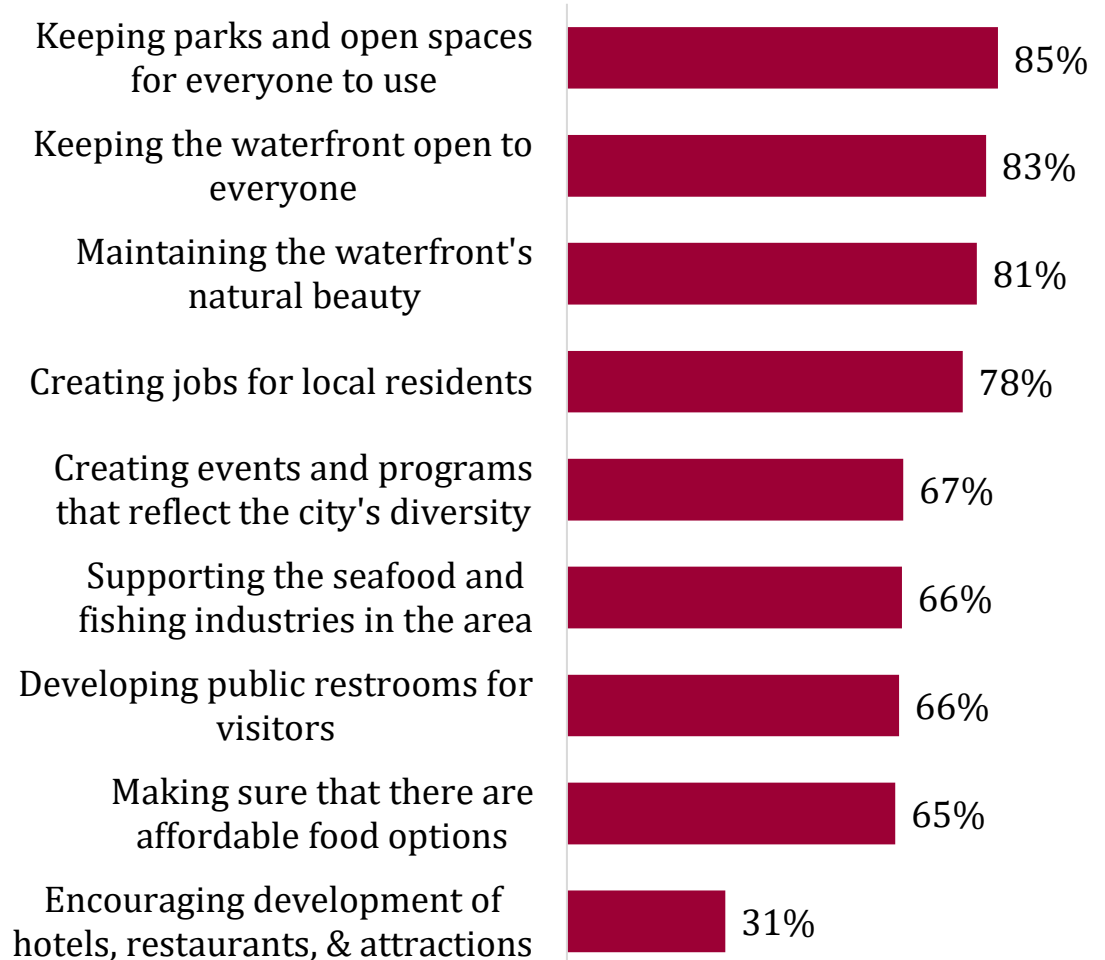
Voter priorities for the next mayor

- Voters identify a clear set of priorities for the next mayor of Boston.
- The order of these items supports results from many other questions in the poll.

Q: Should each of the following be a major priority, a minor priority, or not a priority for the next mayor when it comes to the Boston waterfront?

Waterfront priorities for the next mayor

% who call each a "major priority" for the next mayor



Differences in waterfront priorities

- There is agreement on many priorities like keeping the waterfront open and accessible, while elsewhere (diverse programming, seafood industry, affordable dining) there are wide gaps in importance levels.

Some agreement, other differences on priority levels for the next mayor

% who call each a "major priority" for the next mayor

	Overall	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Keeping parks and open spaces for everyone to use	85%	85%	89%	85%	80%
Keeping the waterfront open to everyone	83%	81%	88%	89%	80%
Maintaining the waterfront's natural beauty	81%	81%	80%	92%	73%
Creating jobs for local residents	78%	71%	90%	89%	80%
Creating events and programs that reflect the city's diversity	67%	58%	82%	82%	67%
Supporting the seafood and fishing industries in the area	66%	62%	73%	75%	61%
Developing public restrooms for visitors	66%	62%	67%	80%	73%
Making sure that there are affordable food options for families along the waterfront	65%	57%	78%	82%	68%
Encouraging development of hotels, restaurants, and attractions	31%	26%	35%	51%	34%



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