Mapping controversies on mountain biking in the Collserola Natural Park (Barcelona)



Cycling and Society Anual Symposium
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The practice of mountain biking in the Serra de Collserola Natural Park. A controversy mapping

PI: Dr. Albert Arias-Sans
Project number: 22S09549-001
Funded by the Barcelona Science Plan 2020-2023
Research team: Albert Arias-Sans, Wilbert den Hoed, Tomás S. Criado and Aina Molist
www.cimcoll.org

AIMS of the PROJECT

1. To **analyse in depth the characteristics of the sportive and recreational practice of mountain biking** in Collserola.

2. Explore the disputes of a socio-technical nature in the environment of mountain biking in order to identify and describe the relationships at stake, the agencies, the interests, the arguments and the effects through the **controversy mapping.**

Controversy as an object for inquiry

“Controversy is all the manifestations by which the representativity of the spokesman is questioned, discussed, negotiated, rejected, etc.”

Michel Callon (1986)

"A controversy is a situation in which a disagreement between several parties - each party uses specialized knowledge and none succeeds in imposing certainties - is staged in front of a third. A controversy is characterized by a tangle of questions, facts and varied values, as well as by the fact that a definition of the technical and the social is at play simultaneously.”

Seurat & Tari (2021)

“Such events take many forms but arise when the rationales and reassurances of environmental science and policy fail to convince those affected by what is at issue – whose direct experience and/or knowledge of it contradicts prevailing expertise – or to allay their concerns.”

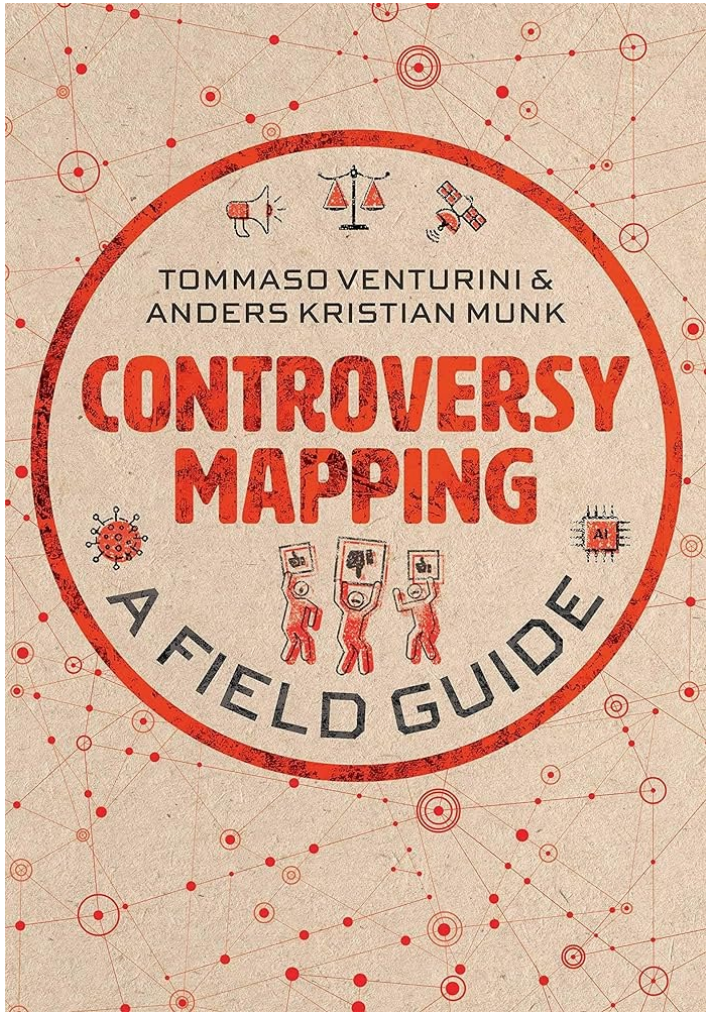
Sarah Whatmore (2009)

Controversy as a method

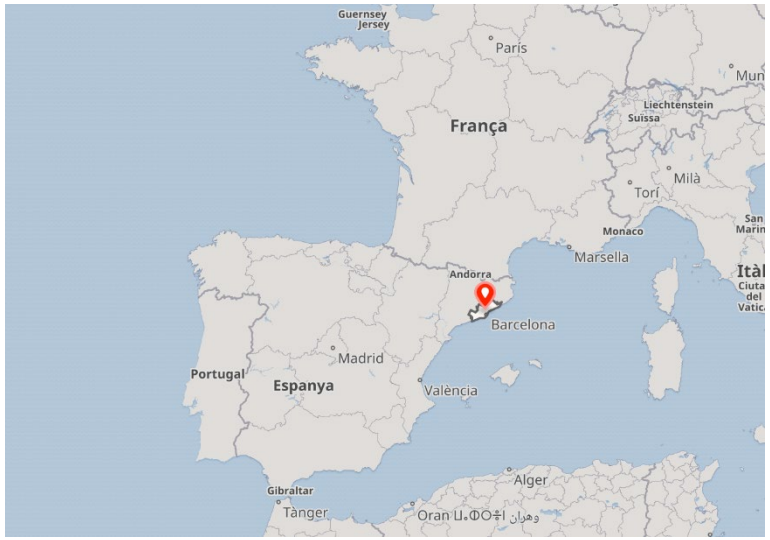
- Inductive method, radically empirical, with a symmetrical view that prevents predefining the role and importance of each of the agencies, describing courses of action between heterogeneous associations - human and non-human.

- Emphasize how politics is deployed, through which devices and mechanisms power is produced and distributed, in what way tourism orders reality.

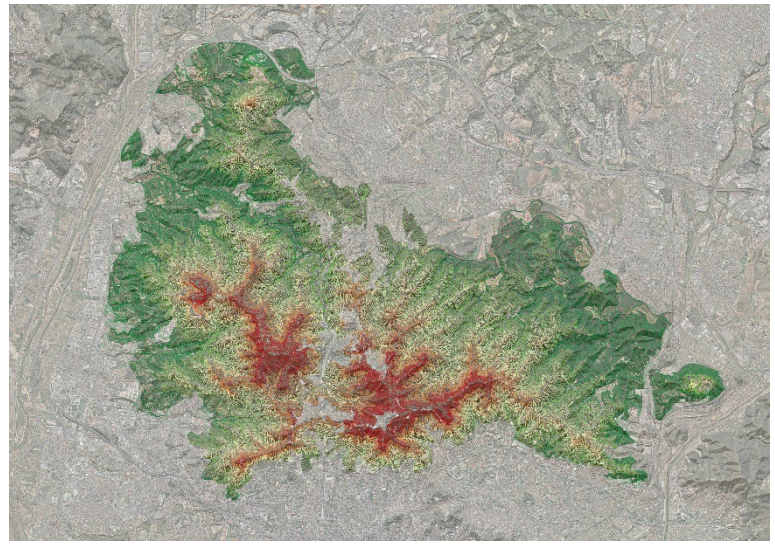
- Explore how *matters of fact* are constructed, considering political and technical documents not as a starting point but as a point of dispute in a process of scientific and technical construction by those who claim to have the best solution for the common problems.

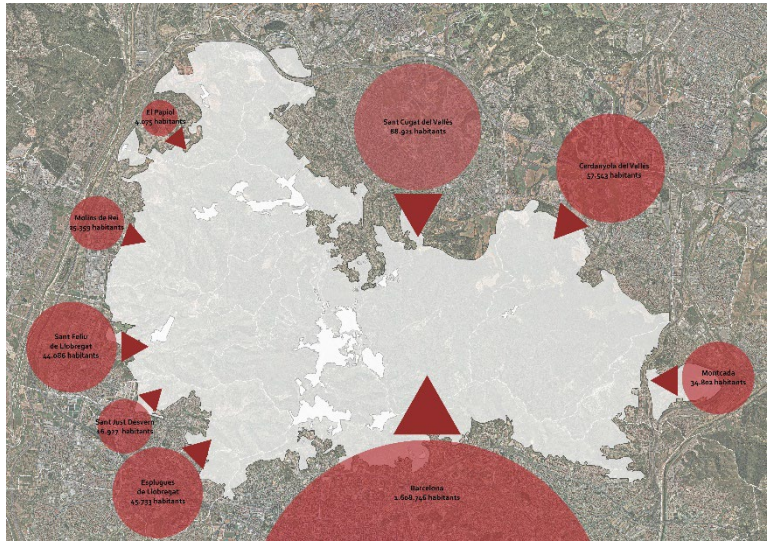


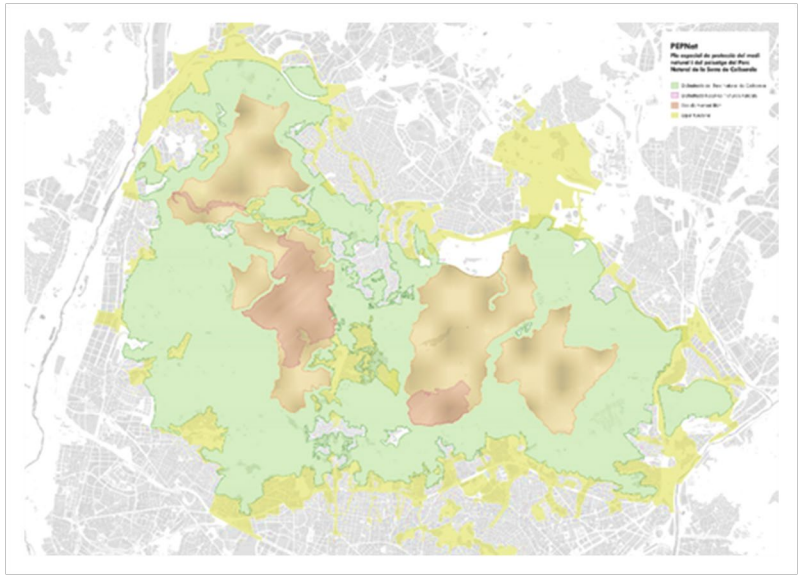
Collserola, an overview

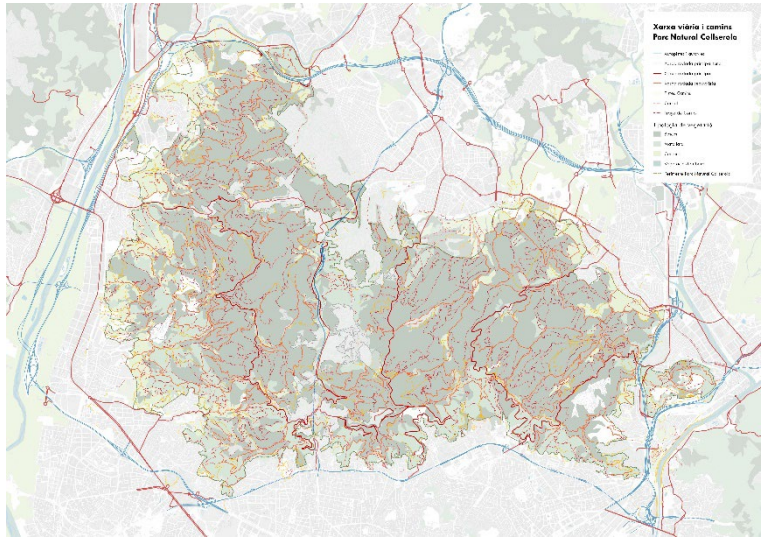




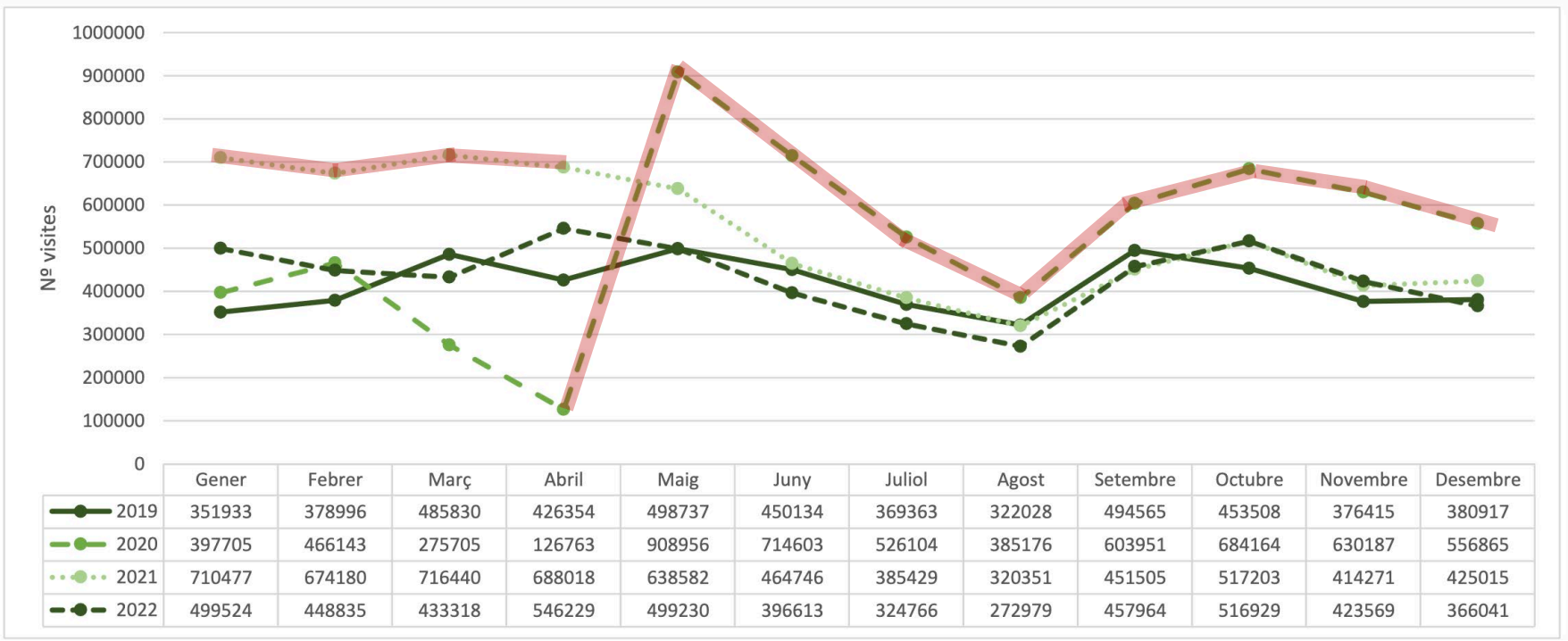








Collserola, a highly visited natural area



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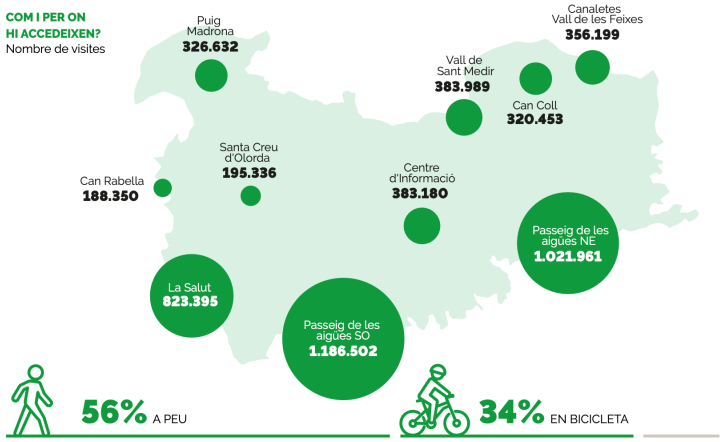
2020	397705	466143	275705	126763	908956	714603	526104	385176	603951	684164	630187	556865
2021	710477	674180	716440	688018	638582	464746	385429	320351	451505	517203	414271	425015
2022	499524	448835	433318	546229	499230	396613	324766	272979	457964	516929	423569	366041

2022



COVID-19 overcrowd

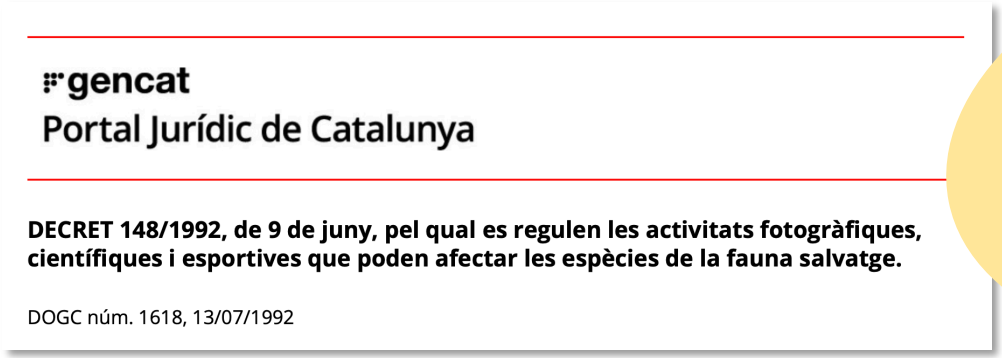
2 million aditional visitors between may 2020 and may 2021

5M
visits/year

33%
bike riders

Cycling regulation in Collserola

1992

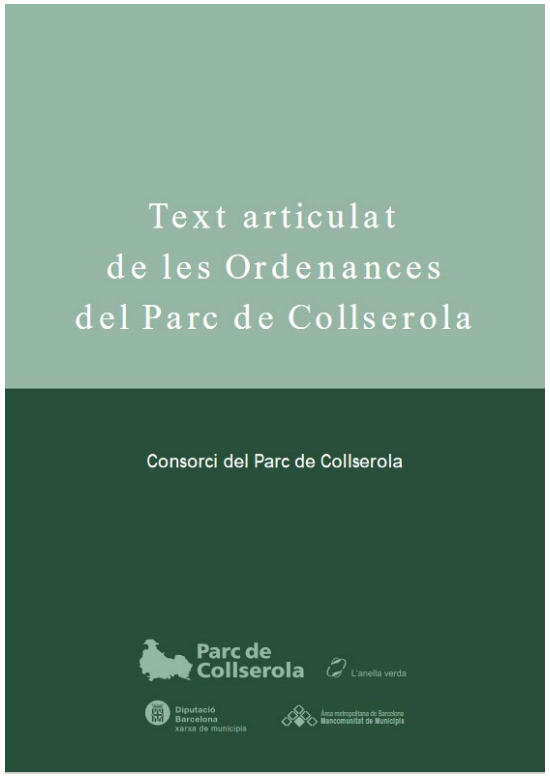

gencat
Portal Jurídic de Catalunya

DECRET 148/1992, de 9 de juny, pel qual es regulen les activitats fotogràfiques, científiques i esportives que poden afectar les espècies de la fauna salvatge.

DOGC núm. 1618, 13/07/1992

Catalan legal framework to regulate MTB (among other activities) in natural protected areas

2000



Art. 1 2 . - Cyclists

1. You can only cycle on the itineraries and tracks signposted for this purpose: **main roads, forest tracks and walking paths with a width of more than three meters.**
2. It is expressly **forbidden to cycle on single-tracks**, streams, cross-country, paths less than three meters wide and roads specialized for other uses.
3. Under no circumstances **may you ride at a speed higher than 20 km/h** or organize or participate in cycling races.
4. Cyclists who ride on the **Park's roads have the obligation to respect pedestrians, without causing them discomfort and respecting their preference.**

Strengthening cycling regulation. 2010 - 2021

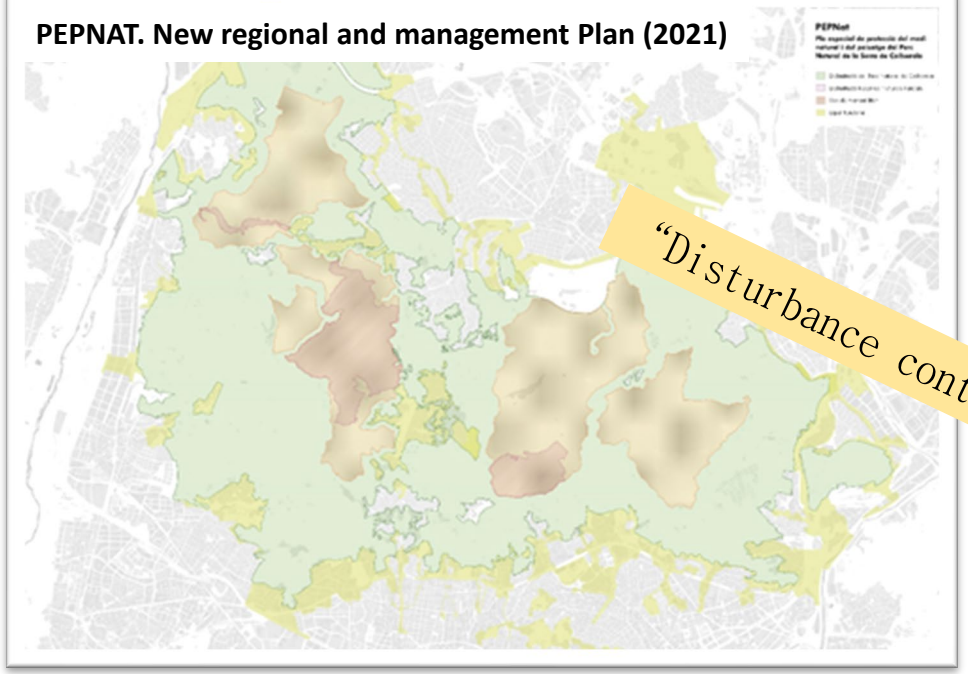
Sanctioning regime act (2018)

Parc de Collserola
Consorci del Parc Natural de la Serra de Collserola
Crta. de l'Església 92. 08017 Barcelona
T: 932 806 672 F: 932 806 074
www.parcnaturalcollserola.cat

Article 1.- Justificació

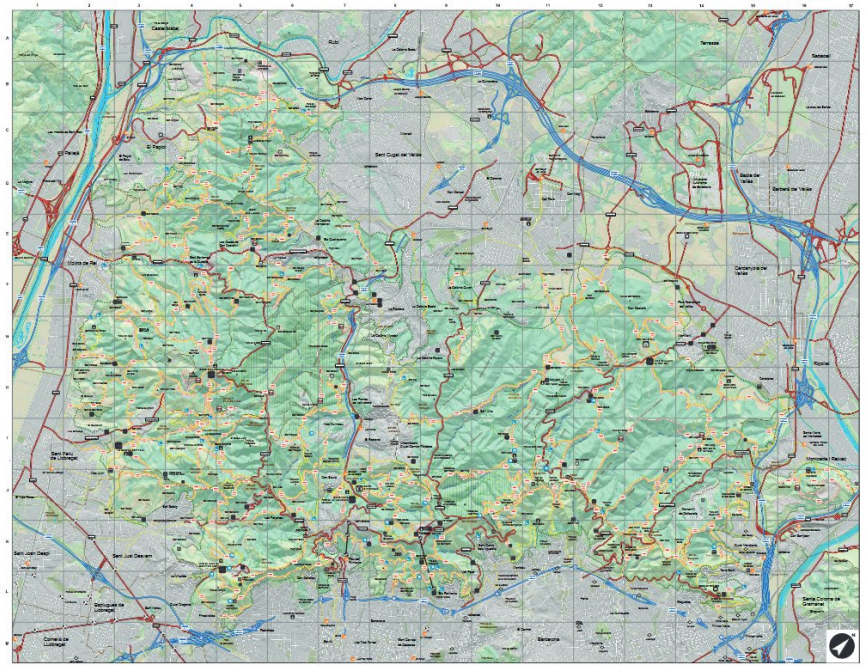
La regulació recollida en aquesta ordenança té com a finalitat indicar les pautes de comportament a seguir respecte a la circulació en bicicleta pel Parc Natural de la Serra de Collserola, amb l'objectiu principal de protecció del patrimoni natural. L'ordenança només fa referència a la regulació de la circulació de bicicletes, sense cap mecanisme d'ajuda o impuls. Queda exclosa la resta de cicles i vehicles no motoritzats que no estan autoritzats a circular pel Parc Natural de la Serra de Collserola.

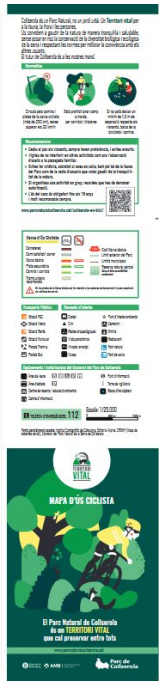
PEPNAT. New regional and management Plan (2021)



"Disturbance control"

New map for cycling uses (250 km of trails, adding 10 km+). 2018





New communication campaign to promote better conviviality



Strengthen cycling regulation. Issue mapping

CiMColl

Context

- Higher requirements for nature conservation (Natural Park declaration in 2010)
- Higher fragility of natural space, drought episodes, wildfire risks, etc.
- Rise of number of visitors in the park (Covid-19 as a peak)
- Rise of number of e-Bikers and broader digital mediation (media, route devices…)

Arguments

Protection of the natural environment, fauna, flora, water, soil

Friction with other users in shared space: hikers, runners...

Higher intensity and accessibility to a more extensive territory

Actions

Territorial planning and regulation of activities

Sanctioning capacity and new enforcement rules

Communicative action to address behaviour

Knowledge regarding impacts

Strengthen cycling regulation. Issue mapping

CiMColl

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TECHNICAL, SCIENTIFIC AND POLITICAL DISAGREEMENT

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CiMColl survey to mountain bikers (2023)

Methodological procedures

Initial filter question

Do you practice mountain biking in the Collserola Natural Park? (Includes MTB, CX, Enduro, Gravel, eBike. Does not include road cycling.). Only affirmative response continue the questionnaire

Issues

24 questions in **4 sections** with an estimated response time of **10 minutes**

SECTION 1: Characteristics of cycling practice
SECTION 2: Use of space in Collserola
SECTION 3: Opinions on riding in Collserola
SECTION 4: Sociodemographic profile

Survey Dissemination

Online survey via Google Forms software
Period: October 2023
Dissemination locations:

- Private WhatsApp groups of cyclists (initially 5) + snowball sampling + Twitter + Instagram
- Two days of fieldwork: with QR codes and very few interviews conducted (4)

Sample size n= 408

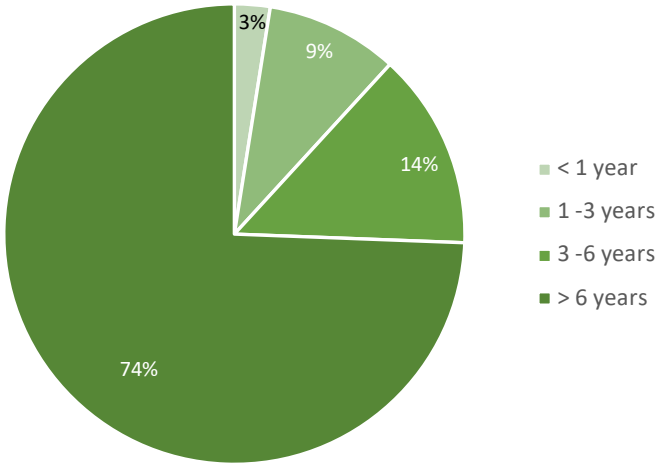
User profile

92% Male

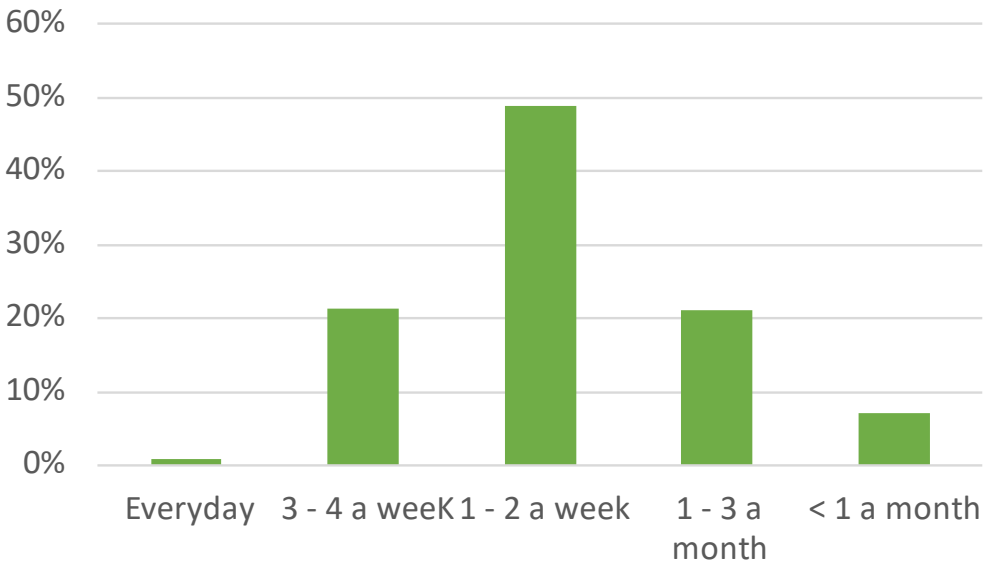
Average age **42,5 years**

25 % member of cycling club

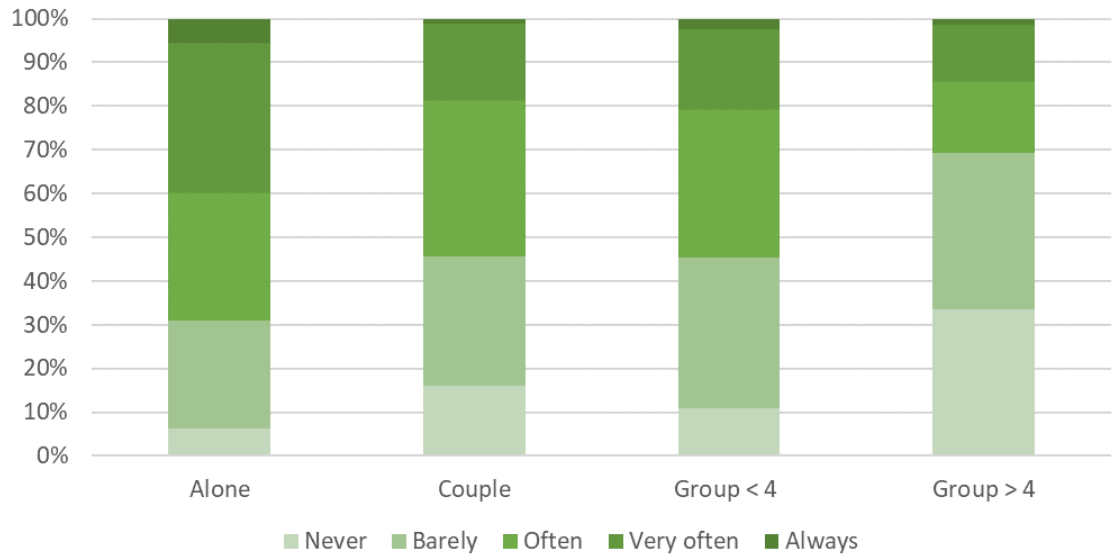
How long do you ride in Collserola



Riding frequency

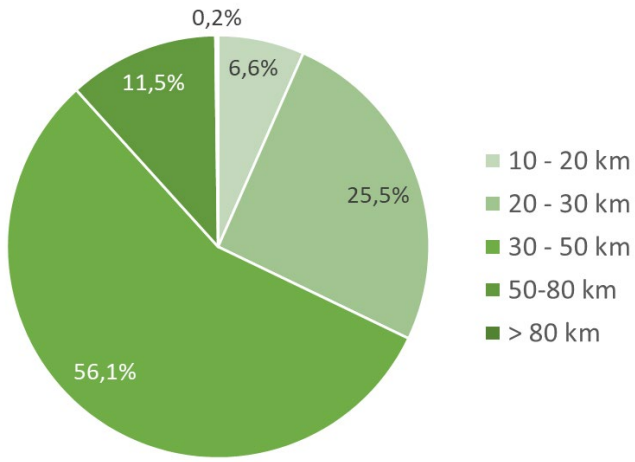


Number of people riding with

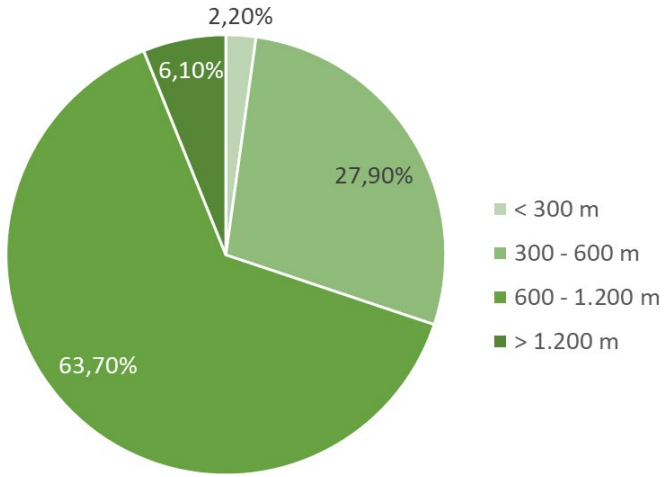


Distance, elevation and surface

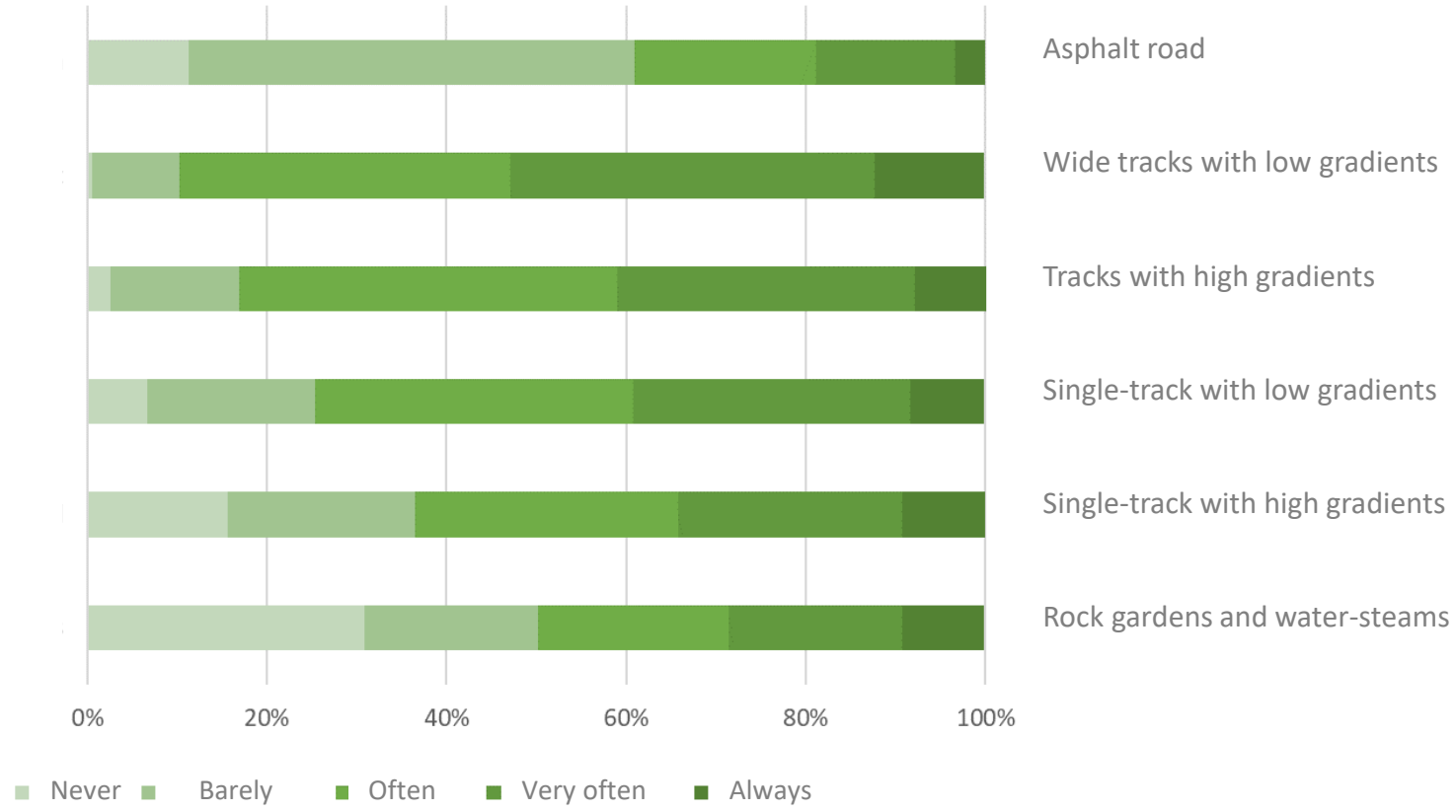
Average riding distance



Average elevation gain

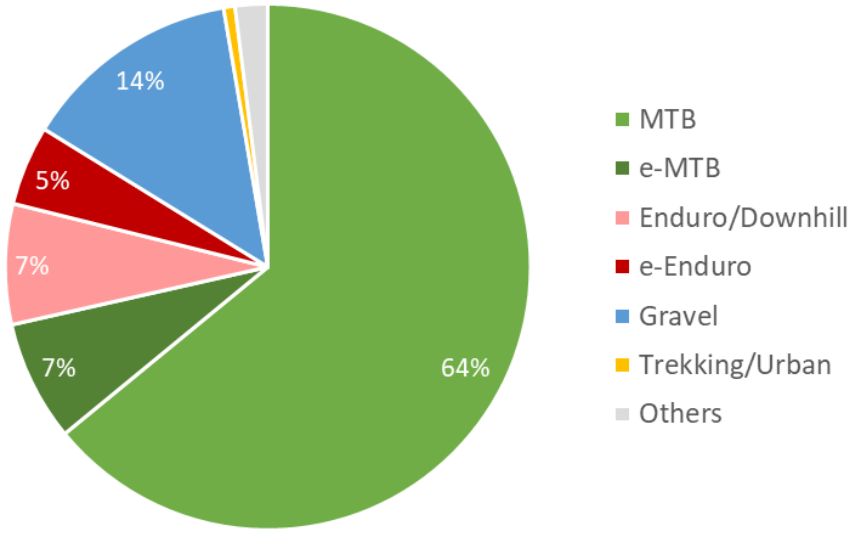


Surface types

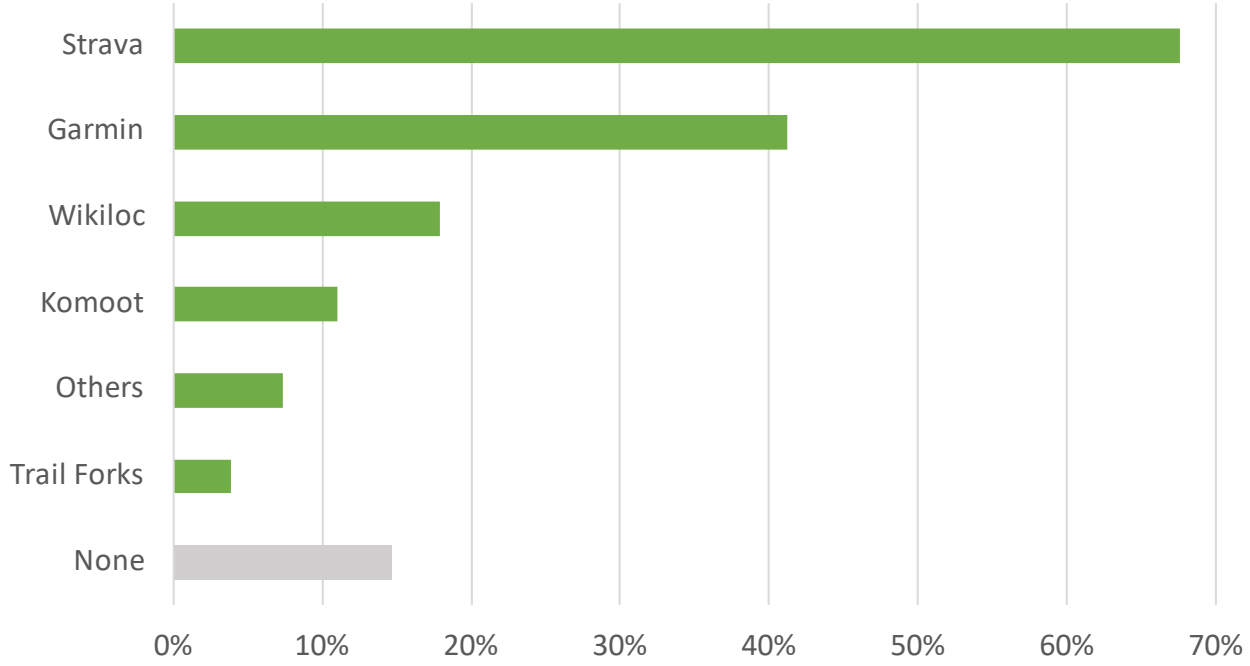


Type and media tracker use

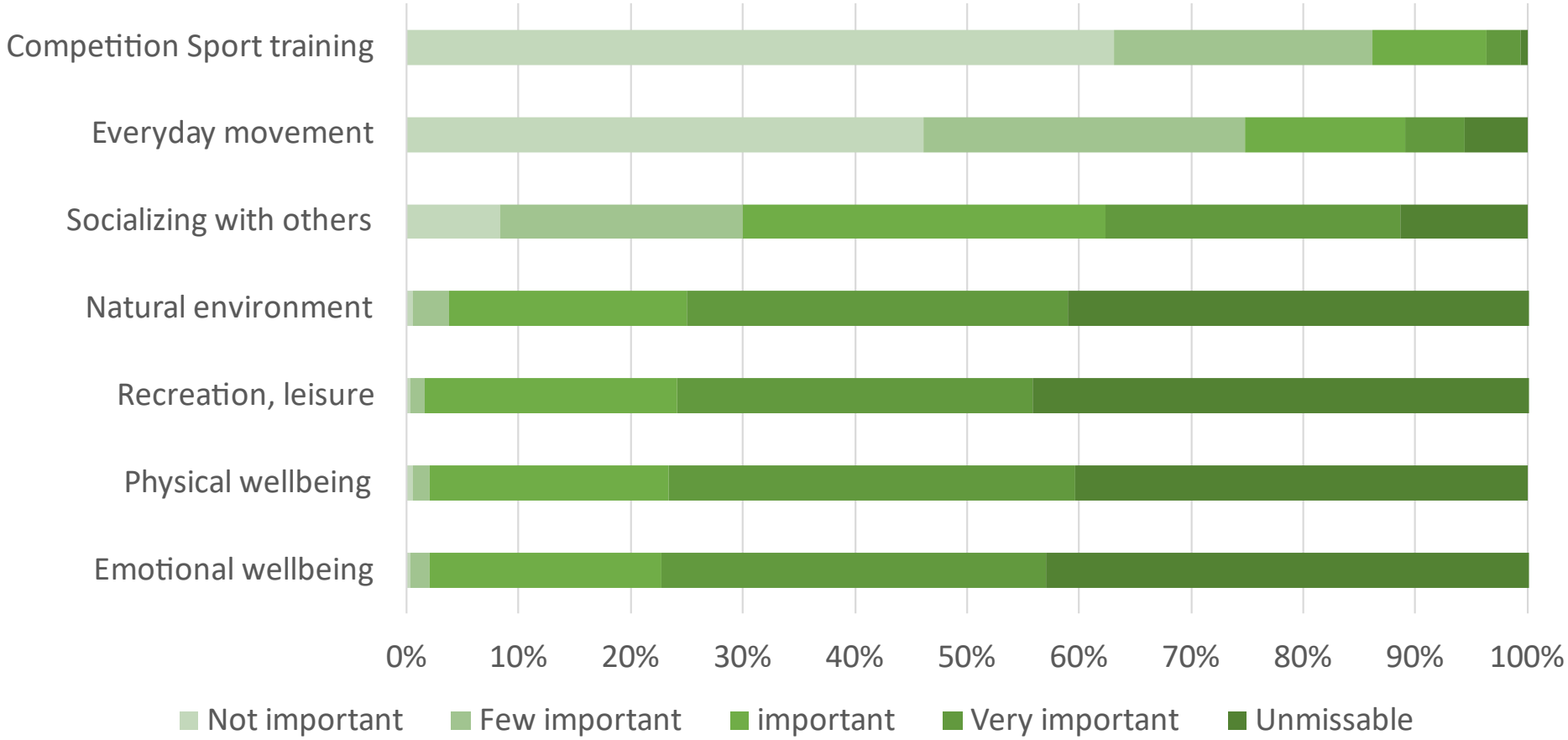
Main type of bike



Media activity tracker use

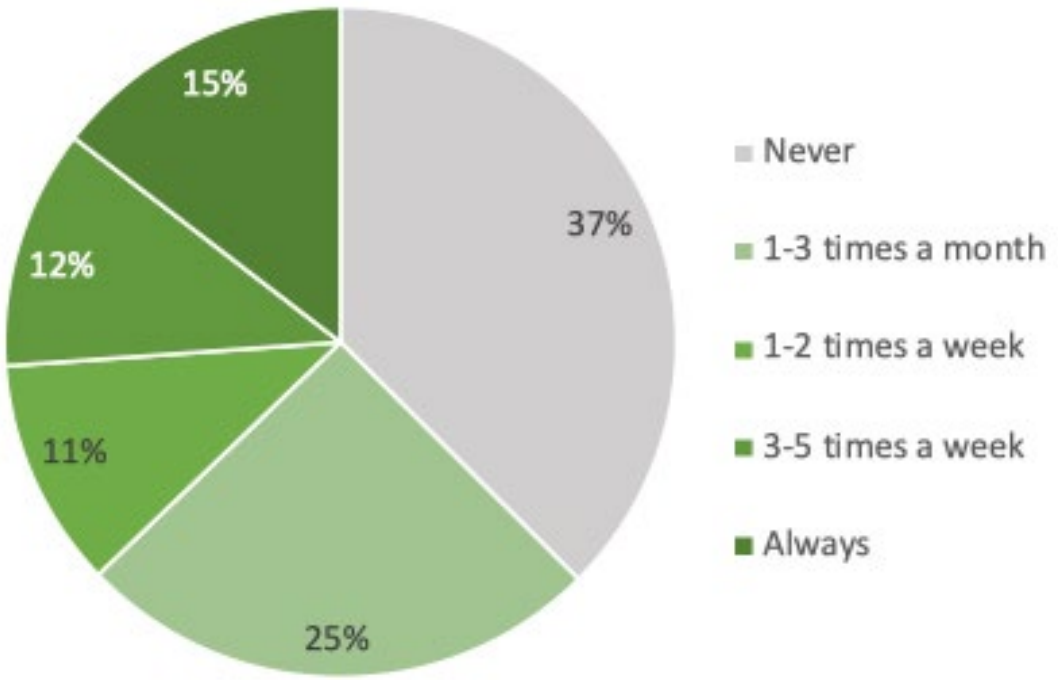


Riding motivation

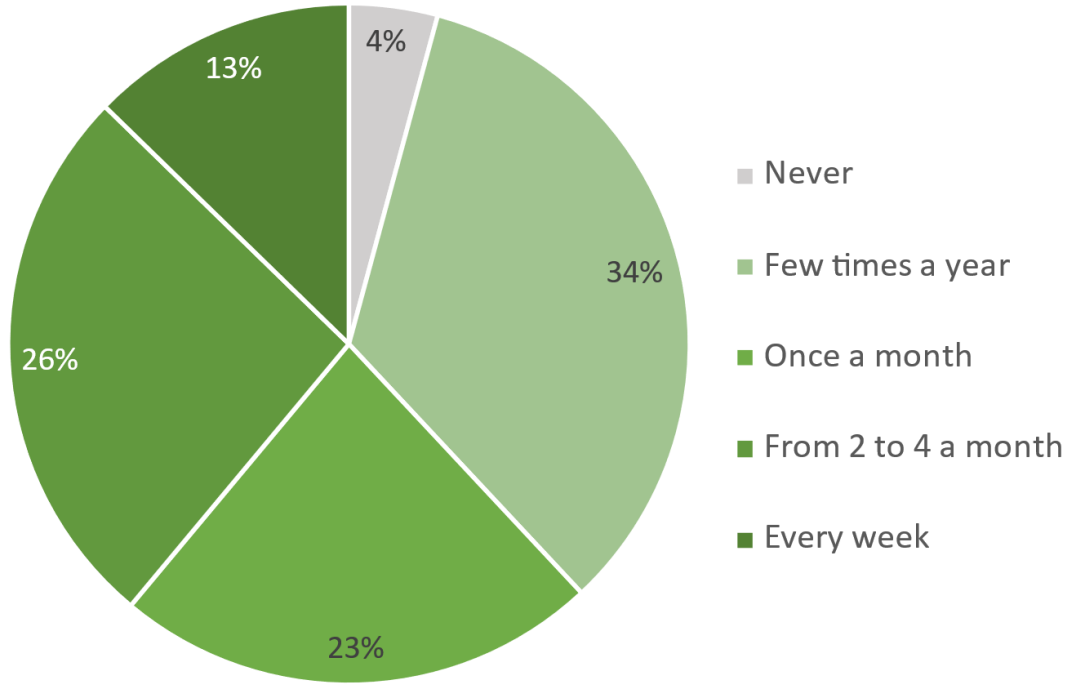


Everyday and recreational mobility

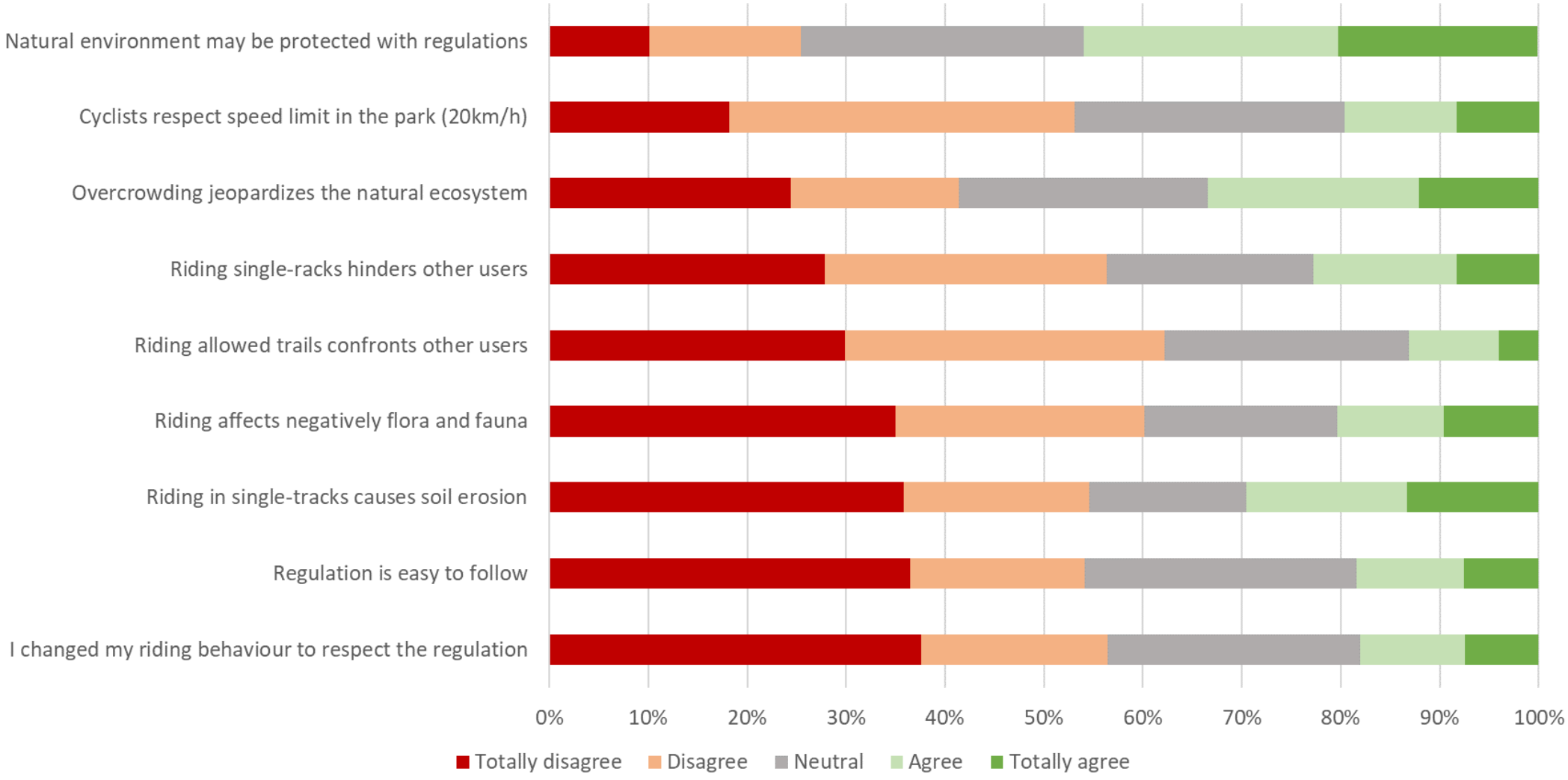
Everyday bike ride mobility



Visiting other metropolitan natural areas



Opinions on riding in Collserola



Preliminary results

- Non-allowed tracks are higher in total km but lesser intense in term of overall use
- There is no homogeneous use of the cycling network in the park. Concentrations occur where different social uses intersect in space, hindering the walking / running uses.
- Motivation is related mainly to personal wellbeing, both physical and psychological; related to leisure and sociability (although it can be a lonely activity) and the relation to nature.
- There is confrontation on the need for environmental and ecological protection but there is a dispute on what is it and how it might be technically managed
- MAMILs are very akin as socio-demographic profile but differ in practices, opinions and awareness regarding mountain biking.

Thanks for your attention!

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