Unearthing inequities:

News narratives about parks, people, and power

Presenter: Kim Garcia, MPH

Background: Inequities in access to, use of, and decision-making about parks and green space stem from a history of racist policies and practices that still endure today. However, the experiences of those most impacted by these inequities are not centered in the local or national discourse about parks, green space, and why they matter. We want to understand how park equity is — or isn't — portrayed in news coverage, because news narratives set the agenda and frame debate for the public and for policy makers, affecting how they understand what the issues are, what should be done about them, and, critically, who is affected by them.

Methods

- 1. We collected print news articles about parks and green space equity in U.S. outlets, from January 1, 2021 to October 15, 2022.
- 2. We developed a coding instrument to capture patterns and themes in coverage informed by conversations with stakeholders.
- 3. We conducted consensus conversations to ensure coding agreement was not by chance.

Results

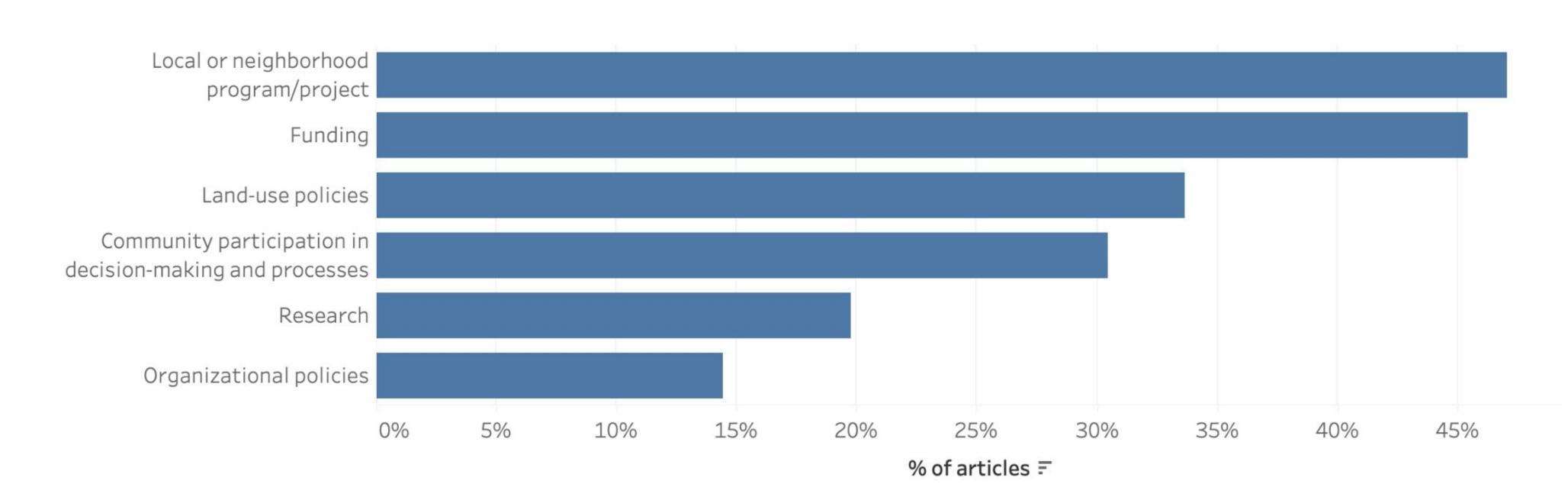


Fig. 1: Solutions that appeared in news about park equity.

While nearly half of articles described community-focused programs or projects (e.g. community gardens, tree planting, new playgrounds), less than one-third of articles described solutions that centered community engagement – a key component of park equity.

The majority of news coverage about parks and green space equity was driven by solutions ...



... but only one-third of articles focused on community engagement.

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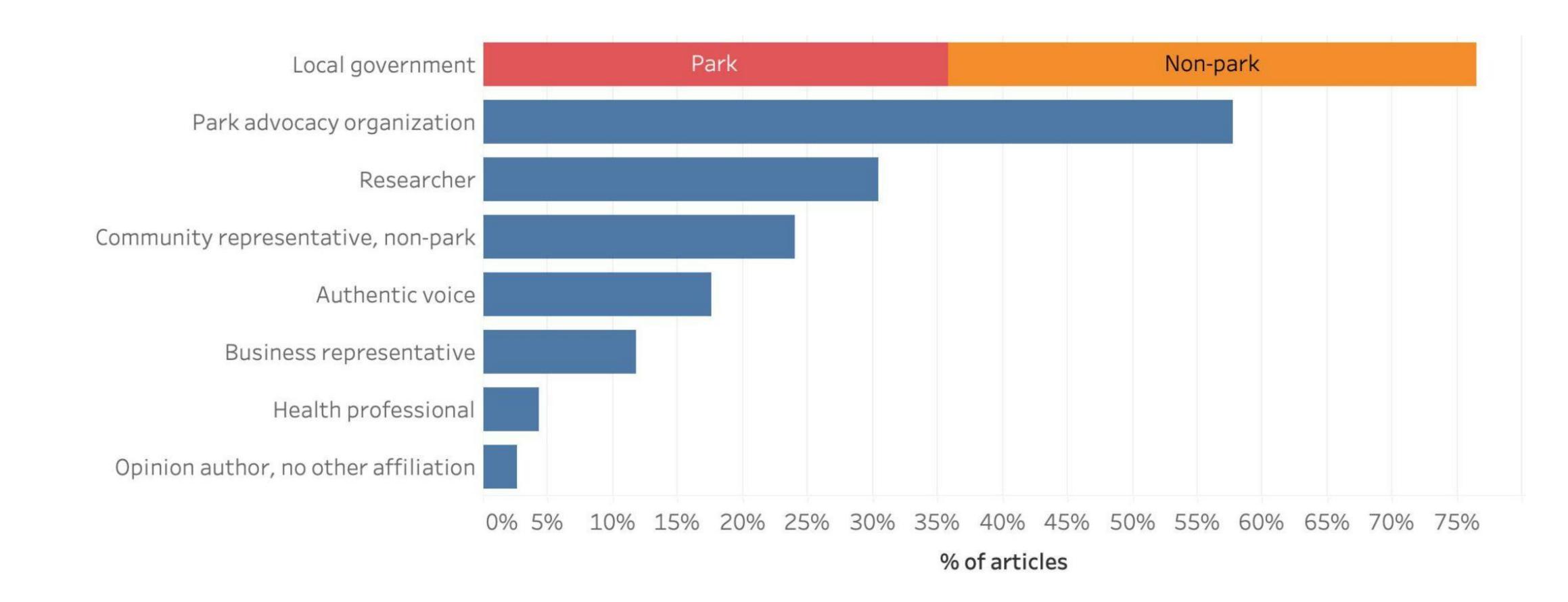


Fig. 2: Sources quoted in news about park equity.

Community residents appeared in about 1 in 5 stories about parks and green space equity, while government officials dominated.

What is park equity?

- **Distributional equity** is often the first thing people think about when they consider green space equity because it is the most readily quantifiable. This primarily covers *distribution and accessibility* of green spaces and amenities, public finance measures, allocation of resources, and prioritization of planning focused on achieving equity.
- **Procedural equity** involves *decision-making processes* that are transparent, equitable, and inclusive regarding who participates, how they are engaged, and how their input is valued and applied. Procedural equity covers processes that support the equitable and just provision of green spaces services and relates to all aspects, from placement to design, construction, and programming.
- Structural equity addresses underlying structural factors and policies that give rise to green space inequities in the first place. It makes a commitment to correct past harms and prevent future unintended consequences.

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Thank you to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Pamela Russo, and Katrina Badger.