



**National Recreation
and Park Association**

Parks & Recreation Fees and Charges Survey Report: 2010



NRPA Parks & Recreation Fees and Charges Survey Report: 2010

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Executive Summary

Over the past 20 years, most surveys conducted with public park and recreation directors identified insufficient operating budgets as the major challenge. In many cities and counties the tax funds made available have not been commensurate with the increasing demand for services. The range of services delivered is more extensive and has evolved from a heavily subsidized social welfare services to a profitable revenue generating mechanism (Crompton, 1999). Many directors are looking for guidance in setting these fee structures which prompted the current report.

The National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) in conjunction with NC State University conducted an online survey designed to provide a national perspective on parks and recreation department's fees and charges. U.S. Census Bureau statistical data were used to classify municipalities and counties by their geographical locations and governing units which resulted in an initial data file of 9,642 census units with populations greater than 2,500 residents. 3,052 NRPA member agencies were then matched with their corresponding census regions and assigned to their appropriate population stratum (i.e., geographic location, agency type, & population size) to facilitate the selection of a nationally representative sample.

Applying this sampling technique, the sample was formed to apply proportional allocation to the eight different stratum groups. This proportional allocation created a random sample of 500 providers. Oversampling of providers in each stratum was used to ensure that each stratum had the proper allocation of providers with valid contact information (to eliminate providers with no email address, phone number). The random draw of the sample (500) was done using Excel's randbetween command, creating the following allocation breakdown:

Census Region/Government Unit	Sample Needed
Northeast/County	20
Northeast/Municipality	44
Midwest/County	51
Midwest/Municipality	112
South/County	60
South/Municipality	133
West/County	25
West/Municipality	55

On June 3rd a pilot version of the survey was sent out to six different agencies of varying geographic locations and government units to ensure survey functionality and to solicit feedback on survey questions and their interpretation. By June 11th all pilot information had been completed.

On June 16th a survey introduction letter was sent out to a representative sample of agencies. The letter included a rationale behind the study and the importance of completing the survey.

Surveys were sent out to the final sample on June 24th. The survey was made available to the sample between June 24th and August 20th. Email reminders were sent out every 3-4 days to departments who had not completed the survey. 216 departments fully completed the survey yielding a response rate of 43.2%.

In the presentation of the data, we use the median as the descriptive statistic of reference. The median refers to the number that is in the middle of the distribution of numbers. This infers that 50% of the numbers in the data will be above the median, and 50% of the numbers in the data will be below the median. The median is less sensitive to extreme scores (outliers) and highly skewed distributions than the mean.

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