



2022 ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS REPORT



Cover image: Families explore the Highlands Wetlands in Westerville, Ohio, looking for tadpoles and other natural treasures during a Park and Recreation Month program. Photo courtesy of Westerville (Ohio) Parks and Recreation.



The ceremonial first cannon ball at the brand-new Fitzmorris Recreation Center in Arvada, Colorado.

PHOTO COURTESY OF APEX PARK AND RECREATION DISTRICT, ARVADA (COLORADO)

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INTRODUCTION

Equitable access to parks is a high priority for Phoenix Parks, and providing high-quality playground equipment is crucial to mental and physical health for adults and children.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAM WALTZ, CITY OF PHOENIX PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and recreation improves the lives of millions of people each and every day. Public parks, trails, and indoor and outdoor recreation facilities promote better physical and mental health, serve as places for family and friends to meet, and are often oases where people can reconnect with nature. More than 165,000 full-time park and recreation professionals — in collaboration with hundreds of thousands of part-time, seasonal and volunteer workers — deliver innovative programming that supports childhood growth, celebrates our communities' diversity and addresses the many challenges that we face. Even during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic or in the midst of local natural disasters, 10,000 park and recreation agencies have been on the front lines of cities', towns' and counties' emergency responses to those challenges, offering nutritious meals, delivering important supplies and providing facilities for testing and vaccinations.

With vast, diverse offerings, parks and recreation also provides everyone with unique, personal experiences. For the young, their local park and recreation agency offers after-school and summer camp programming, introduces them to sports, and presents opportunities where youth can learn to embrace the outdoors and how to steward their natural surroundings. For older adults, parks and recreation provides ways to stay physically and mentally healthy and meet their neighbors. For everyone, parks and recreation offers ways to give back to their communities through service.

Since 2016, the Research team of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has conducted an annual survey to better understand how people connect with parks and recreation across the United States. The results from these surveys form the basis of NRPA's annual *Engagement With Parks Report*. The report series provides park and recreation professionals and advocates, policymakers and other key stakeholders with insights into how local parks and recreation facilities impact the lives of every person in our nation.

On behalf of NRPA, Wakefield Research surveyed 1,000 U.S. adults ages 18 and older between May 18 and May 30, 2022. The firm used quotas to ensure the responses reflected a reliable representation of the U.S. adult population. The margin of error for data represented in this report is +/-3.1 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2022 ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS REPORT:

275 million people

in the United States visited a local park or recreation facility at least once during the past year

Nearly 3 in 4 U.S. residents

have at least one local park, playground, open space or recreation center within walking distance of their homes

84% of U.S. adults

seek high-quality parks and recreation when choosing a place to live

9 in 10 people

agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local government

Nearly 3 in 4 adults

agree that equity should be an *extremely* or *very* important goal for their local park and recreation agency

KEY FINDINGS



Musicians from the Mariachi Institute of Chicago perform at the International Festival in Wheeling, Illinois.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WHEELING PARK DISTRICT.

PARKS AND RECREATION IS A PART OF EVERYONE'S LIVES, EVERY DAY

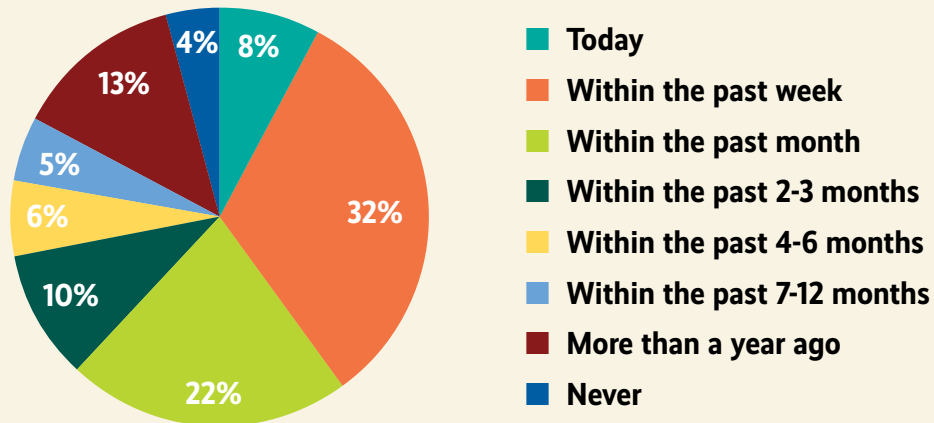
Local parks and recreation play a vital role in the lives of people throughout the United States. With tireless dedication, park and recreation professionals provide their communities with opportunities to play and unwind, be physically and mentally fit, enrich children's lives through activities and learning outside of school hours, and temper the effects of natural disasters and climate change through concerted conservation efforts.

The variety and breadth of vital programming, services and offerings that local park and recreation professionals provide are evident in the sheer number of people who visit parks and/or other recreation facilities every year. Eighty-three percent of survey respondents — the equivalent of 275 million people in the United States — visited a local park or recreation facility at least once during the 12-month period ending in May 2022.

Sixty-two percent of survey respondents report having visited their local park and/or recreation facility at least once within the past month of completing this survey, including 40 percent of people who visited a park and/or recreation amenity at least once within the prior week. Ten percent of survey respondents enjoyed a park and/or recreation amenity within the past two to three months of completing the survey. Six percent of respondents indicate their most recent visit was between four and six months of completing the survey; five percent report their most recent visit was between seven and 12 months of completing the survey.

275 MILLION PEOPLE VISITED A LOCAL PARK OR RECREATION FACILITY DURING THE PAST YEAR

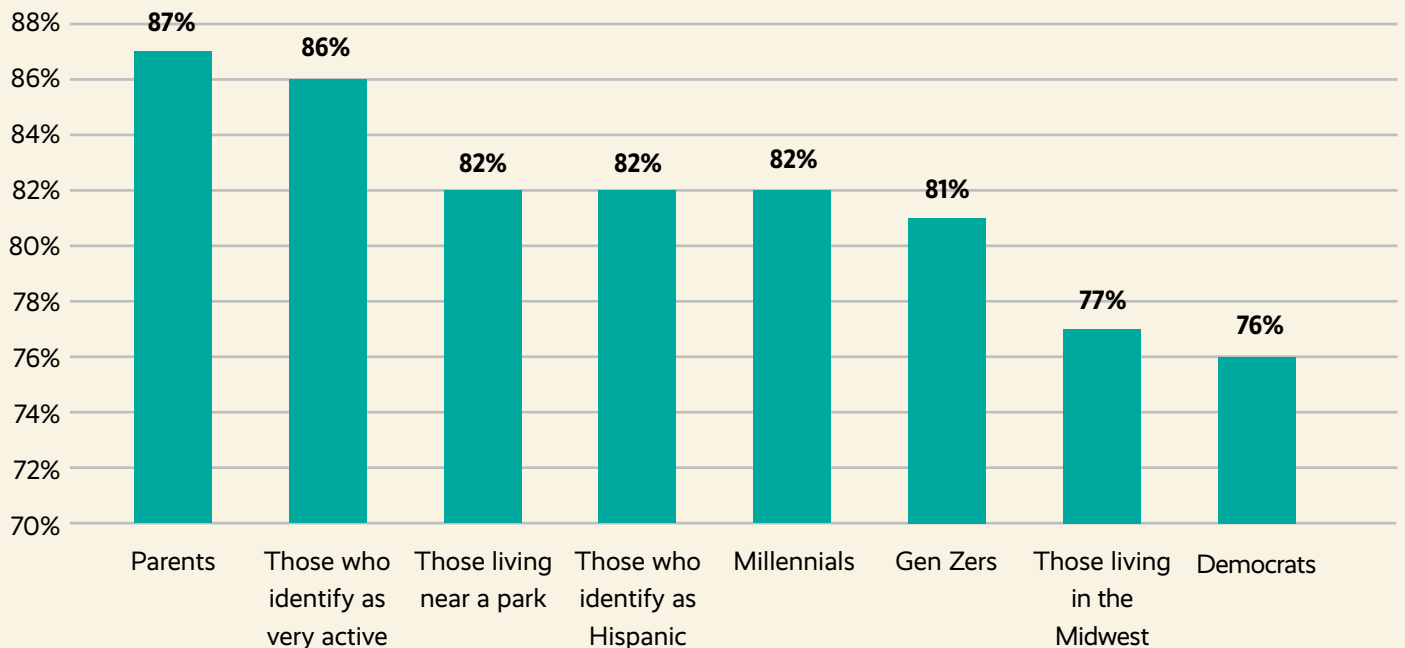
(Percentage Distribution of Most Recent Visit)



Some survey respondents are more likely to have visited their local park or recreation facilities within the past three months (February – May 2022), including parents, people who consider themselves to be active and those who live near parks.

PARENTS AND THE VERY ACTIVE ARE MOST LIKELY TO HAVE VISITED A LOCAL PARK/RECREATION FACILITY WITHIN THE PAST THREE MONTHS

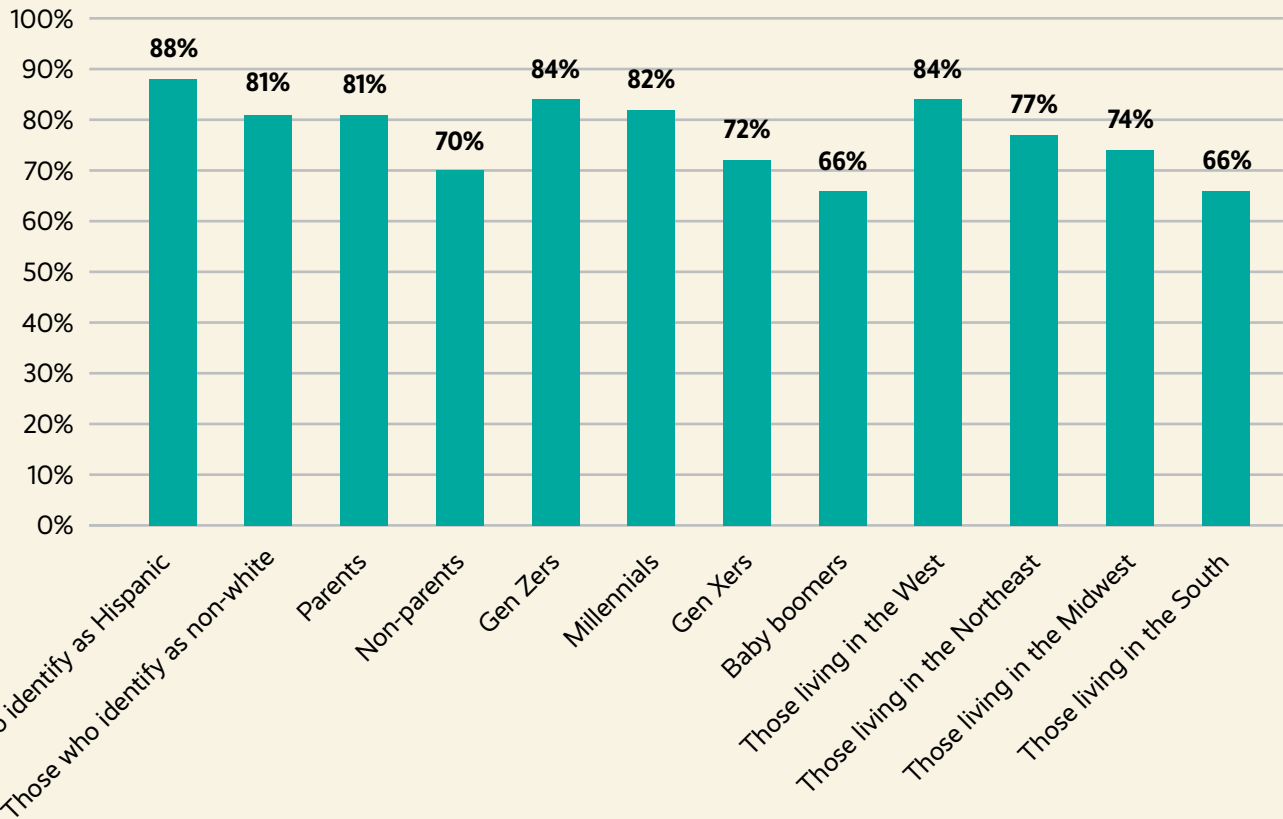
(Percent of Respondents)



People who live near parks and recreation facilities are more likely to be park and recreation users. Nearly three in four people in the United States live within a walkable distance to a park or recreation facility. Thirty-five percent live within a walkable distance to more than one of these areas. Slightly more than a quarter of survey respondents — the equivalent of more than 86 million people in the United States — do not have walkable access to a park or other recreation facility.

HISPANIC RESIDENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO CITE HAVING WALKABLE ACCESS TO A PARK OR RECREATION FACILITY

(Percent of Respondents)



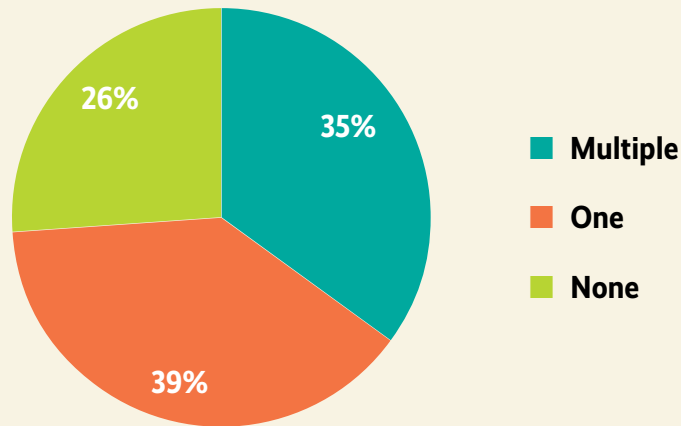
The percentage of people living near a park or other recreational opportunity varies significantly by region and demographics. Eighty-four percent of respondents in the West indicate that they can walk to a local park, while 77 percent of those in the Northeast and 74 percent in the Midwest report the same. Nearly two-thirds (66 percent) of respondents living in the South indicate that there is a park within a walkable distance of their homes.

Adults identifying as either Hispanic (88 percent) or non-white (81 percent) are more likely than those identifying as white (72 percent) to indicate they are within a walkable distance to a park. Additionally, parents are more likely than non-parents to say they live within walking distance to a park or other recreation opportunity (81 percent and 70 percent, respectively). Eighty-four percent of Gen Zers and 82 percent of millennials report being within a walkable distance to parks, while walkable access for Gen Xers (72 percent) and especially baby boomers (66 percent) is far less common.

U.S. adults and their families understand the importance of local parks and recreation. Five in six survey respondents indicate proximity to high-quality parks, playgrounds, open spaces or other recreation facilities is an important factor when choosing a neighborhood or area in which to live. Nearly 60 percent cite distance to these features as “extremely” or “very” important in their choice of residence. Unsurprisingly, survey respondents who already live near a park or recreation facility and those who identify themselves as “very active” indicate proximity to these areas is “extremely” or “very” important in their choice of residence (67 percent and 73 percent, respectively).

NEARLY THREE-QUARTERS OF U.S. RESIDENTS LIVE WITHIN A WALKABLE DISTANCE OF AT LEAST ONE LOCAL PARK OR OTHER RECREATION OPPORTUNITY

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents)

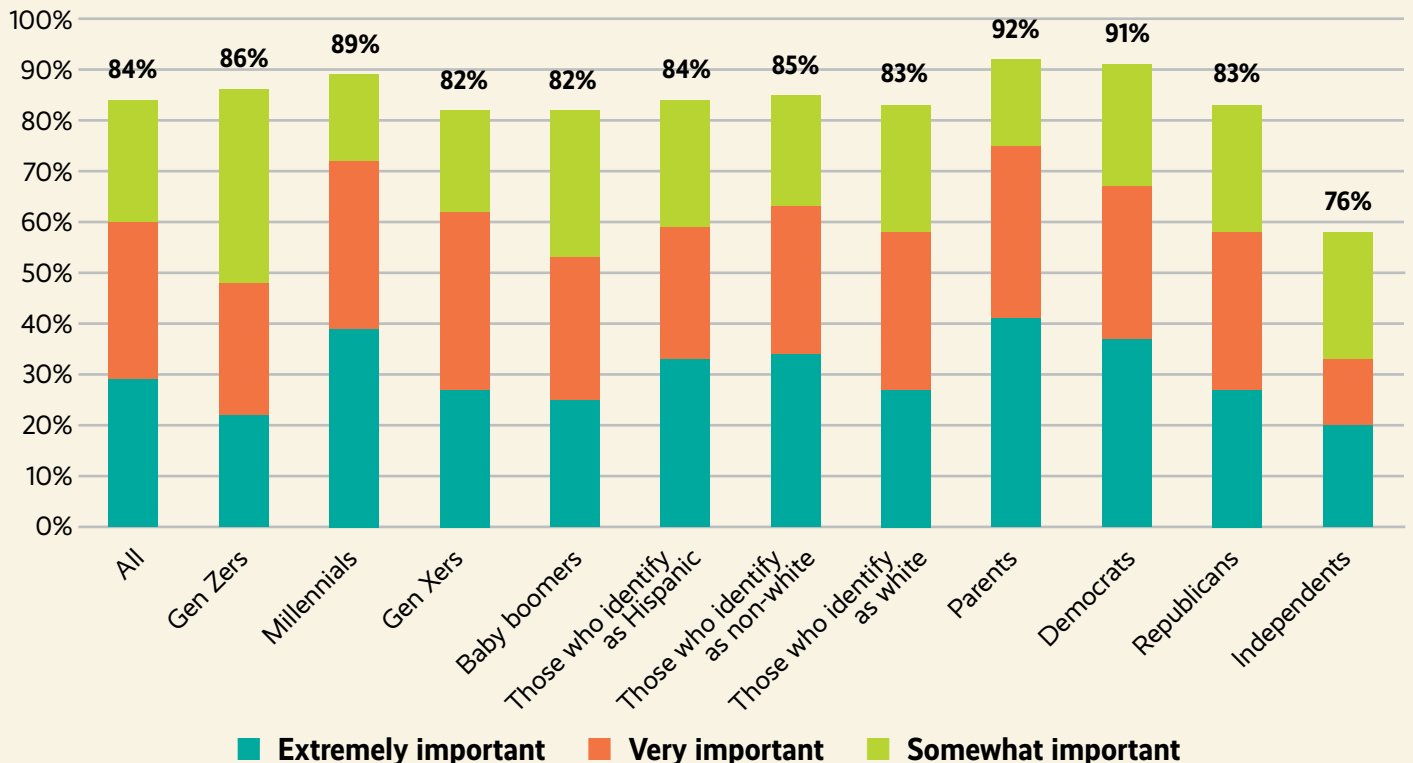


Additionally, top respondents considering proximity to a park or recreation opportunity when choosing where to live as “extremely” or “very” important include:

- Parents (74 percent of respondents)
- Millennials (71 percent)
- Democrats (67 percent)
- Working adults (65 percent)

ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PARK AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IS IMPORTANT WHEN CHOOSING WHERE TO LIVE

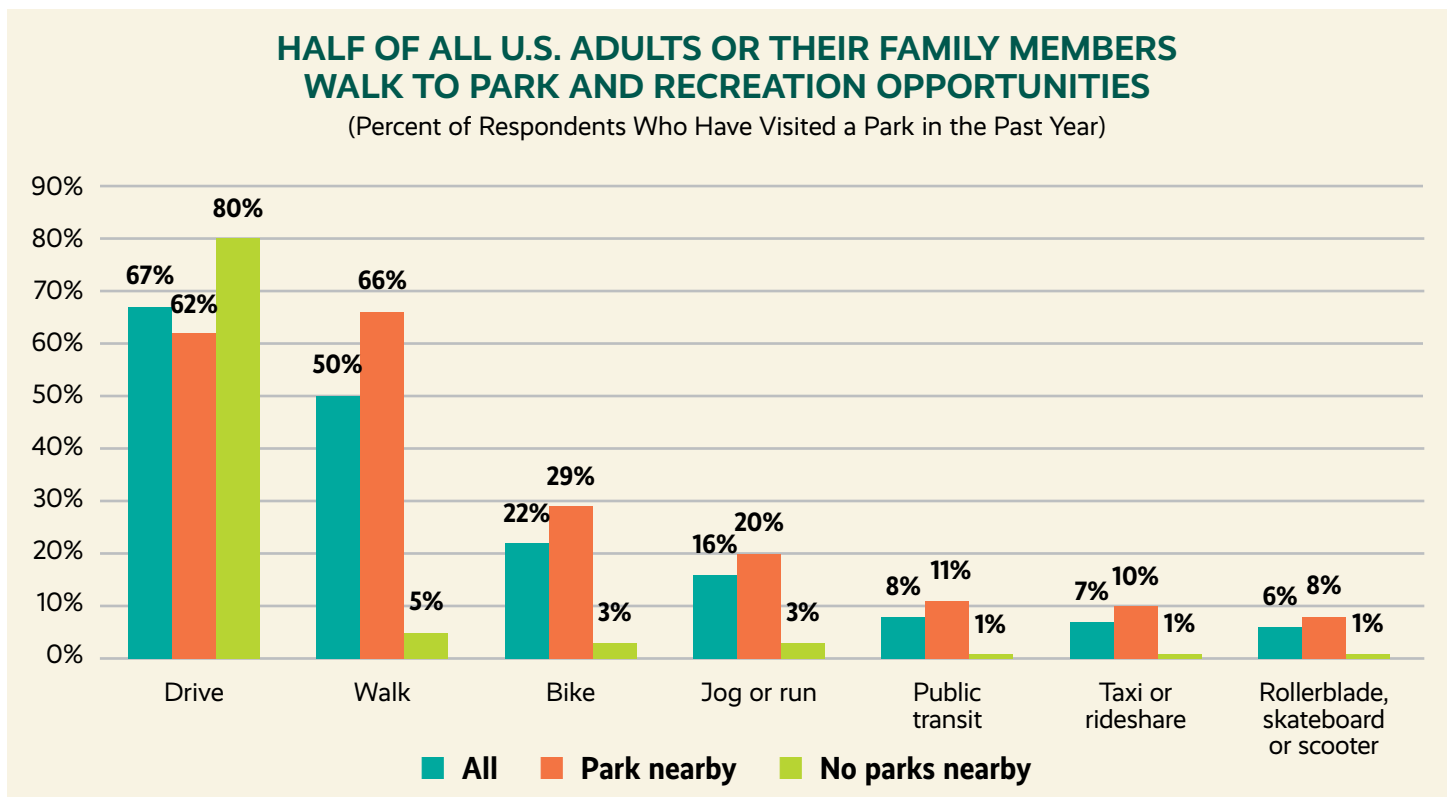
(Percent of Respondents)



Proximity to parks not only plays a role in where people live, but also it plays a role in how people travel to these destinations. While a majority of people travel by automobile to parks, playgrounds, open spaces or recreation centers, half of U.S. adults access these locations by walking. Other common travel methods include:

- Biking (cited by 22 percent of respondents)
- Jogging/Running (16 percent)
- Public transit, such as buses, trains or subways (eight percent)
- Taxi/Rideshare (seven percent)

Individuals living near at least one park are much more likely to arrive at that park by an “active” means (e.g., walking, biking, running), with walking being the most common method of transport. Sixty-six percent of respondents with at least one park nearby indicate they walk to local parks. Conversely, 80 percent of U.S. adults who do not live within a walkable distance to parks or recreation opportunities travel to those amenities by car.



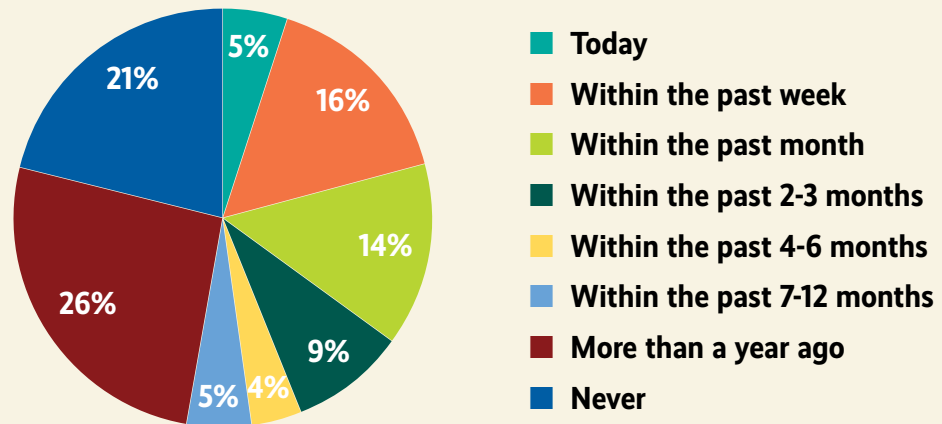
HOW PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH PARKS AND RECREATION

From sports leagues to swim lessons, volunteer opportunities to farmers markets, and community gardens to community festivals, park and recreation professionals strive to provide programming and offerings that meet the unique needs of the residents they serve. More than half of U.S. adults have personally — or have a member of their household who has — participated in a park and recreation offering in the past year. Eighty-three percent of survey respondents who report that they have personally participated — or have a member of their household who has participated — in a park and recreation program or offering within the past year did so within the past three months (February 2022 to May 2022).

Parents account for the highest percentage of survey respondents who personally participated in — or have a member of their household who participated in — a park and recreation program or offering within the past three months (89 percent). Close behind at 88 percent are Gen Zers, millennials, those identifying as very active and working adults.

MORE THAN HALF OF U.S. ADULTS HAVE PERSONALLY — OR HAVE A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER WHO HAS — PARTICIPATED IN A PARK AND RECREATION OFFERING/PROGRAMMING IN THE PAST YEAR

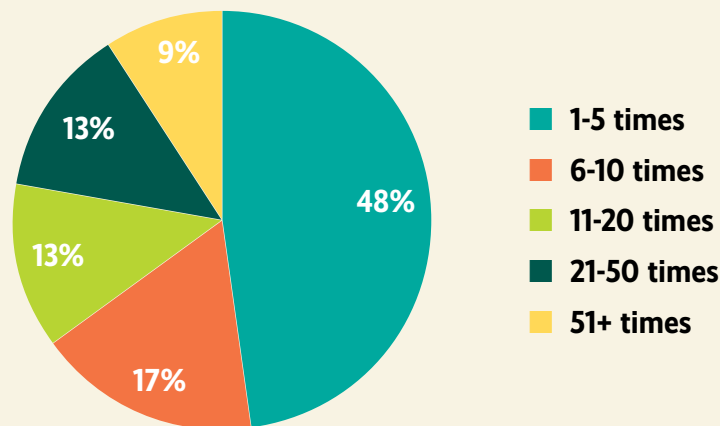
(Percentage Distribution of Respondents)



On average, people visited their local park and recreation facilities 22 times between June 2021 and May 2022 (an average of nearly twice a month). However, the frequency of these visits varied significantly. Seventeen percent of survey respondents visited a local park facility between six and 10 times within the past 12 months, while 13 percent made between 11 and 20 visits during the same time period. Another 13 percent visited their local park and recreation facilities between 21 and 50 times during the past year, while nearly 10 percent did so at least 51 times.

PEOPLE VISITED THEIR LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES ON AVERAGE NEARLY TWICE A MONTH

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Visited a Park/Recreation Facility During the Past Year)



Those who identify as Hispanic, non-white and as baby boomers visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities most frequently, registering 25 visits per year on average. The typical adult in the United States visits their local parks or recreation facilities every other month.



A child does a belly flop into the pool before a “Float n’ Flick” event at Alga Norte Aquatics Center in Carlsbad, California.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CASSIE LEE

FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS VISIT THEIR LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AN AVERAGE OF 22 TIMES A YEAR

(Average and Median Number of Visits over the Past Year)

	All	Gen Zers	Millennials	Gen Xers	Baby Boomers	Those Who Identify as Hispanic	Those Who Identify as Non-White	Those Who Identify as White	Those Who Live Near a Park
Average number of visits	21.9	21.1	19.2	20.2	24.7	25.2	24.5	21.2	23.3
Median number of visits	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

The diverse offerings that local park and recreation professionals bring to community members provide individuals and families opportunities to create lasting memories and participate in some of their favorite activities. For nearly three-quarters of survey respondents, this means visiting a local park, playground, dog park or other local open space. Gen Xers (79 percent), baby boomers (77 percent) and those residing in the Midwest (77 percent) are most likely to indicate that visiting a local park, playground, dog park or other local open space is their favorite park and recreation activity. Hiking, biking and walking on local trails is the second-most popular activity, with 53 percent of all survey respondents (including 59 percent of Gen Xers and 57 percent of baby boomers) indicating so.

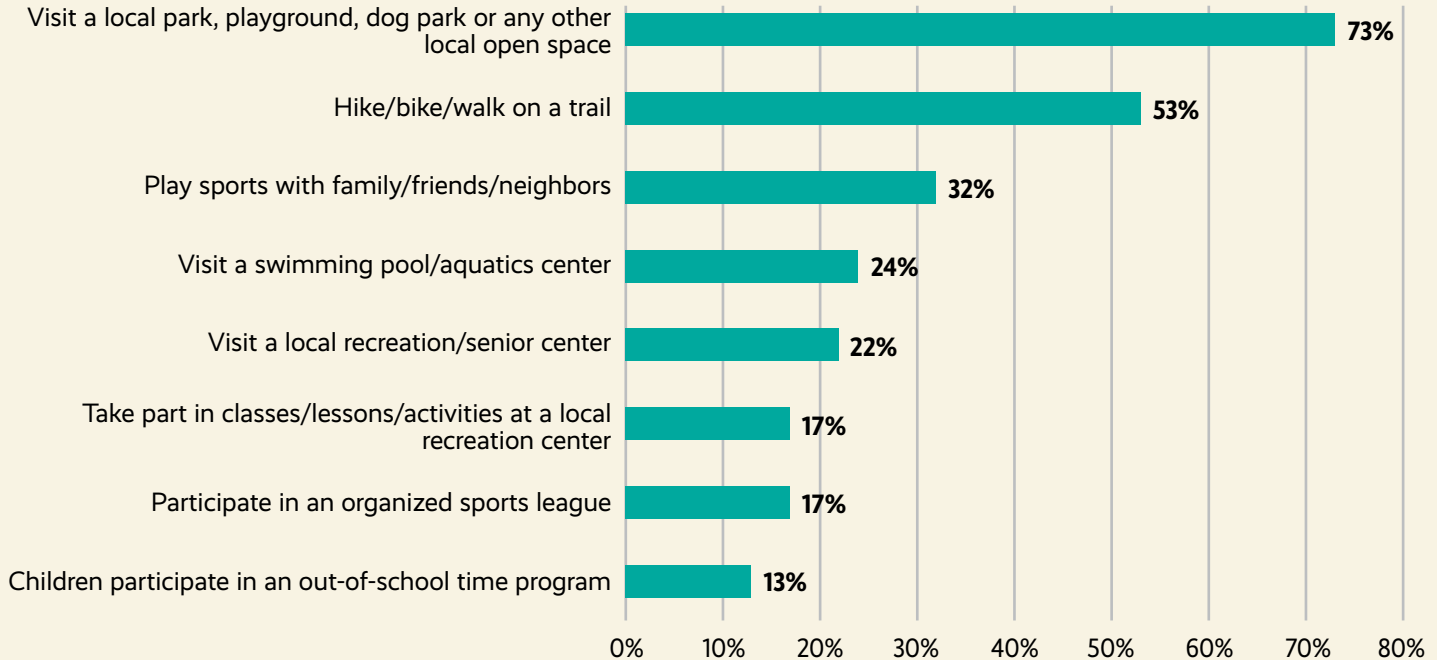
One-third of survey respondents report that playing sports — such as basketball, golf and tennis — with friends, family members and neighbors is a favorite park and recreation activity. Forty-four percent of Gen Zers, 42 percent of those who consider themselves very active, 41 percent of millennials and 41 percent of parents indicate that playing sports with friends and/or family is a top activity.

Other favorite park and recreation activities include:

- Visiting a local swimming pool/aquatics center (cited by 24 percent of respondents)
- Visiting a local recreation center (or senior center) (22 percent)
- Taking part in classes/lessons/activities or any other offering at a local recreation center (17 percent)
- Participating in an organized sports league (17 percent)
- Children in the household participating in an out-of-school time program (e.g., summer camp, before-/after-school care) (13 percent)

VISITING PARKS AND TRAILS REMAINS FAVORITE PARK AND RECREATION ACTIVITY

(Percent of Respondents Who Personally Have — or Have a Household Member Who Has — Visited a Local Park/Recreation Facility During the Past Year)



Knowing what motivates an individual or family to visit a local park and/or recreation facility helps agencies customize their offerings to the specific needs, wants and desires of their community members. Four main reasons for visiting local parks and recreation facilities stand out: being with family and friends, exercising and being physically fit, taking a break from day-to-day stresses, and being closer to nature.

Fifty-four percent of survey respondents indicate being with family and friends is a key reason for visiting local parks and recreation facilities. Parents (60 percent) and those between 18 and 34 years of age (60 percent) are most likely to cite family and friends as the main driver. The desire to exercise and be physically fit is a key factor for 53 percent of survey respondents. This is especially true for those who consider themselves already very active (63 percent) and those living in the Midwest (also 63 percent).

Fifty-two percent of U.S. adults indicate they visit a park and/or recreation facility to take a break from the day-to-day stresses of life. Half cite their desire to be closer to nature as a key reason.

Additional reasons for visiting local parks and/or recreation facilities include:

- To experience excitement/adventure (cited by 30 percent of respondents)
- To connect with members of the community (22 percent)
- To learn a skill or craft (13 percent)
- To have someone care for children while the respondent is at work (five percent)

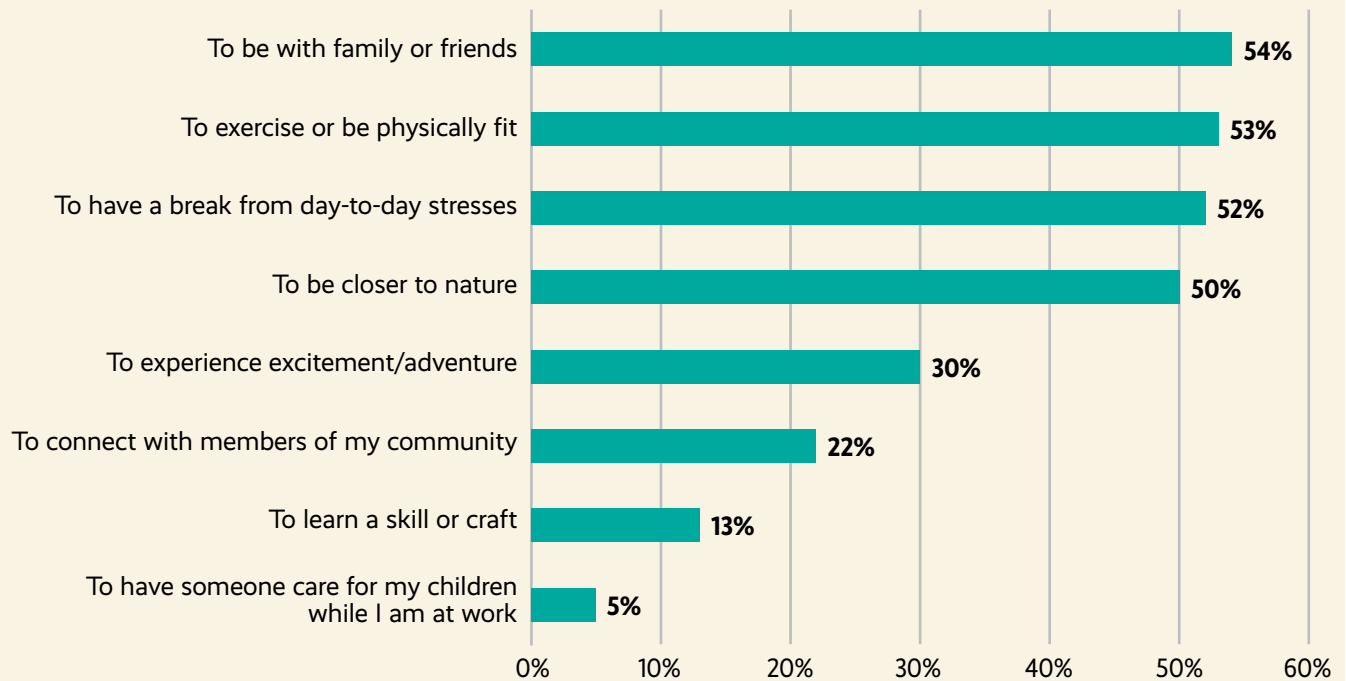


Local youth work with artist Cody Wombold to paint a wall during Community Day at Wells Park in Henderson, Nevada.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF HENDERSON PARKS AND RECREATION.

KEY REASONS WHY WE GO TO PARKS: FAMILY AND FRIENDS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, STRESS REDUCTION AND NATURE

(Percent of Respondents Who Have Personally — or Have a Household Member Who Has — Visited a Local Park/Recreation Facility During the Past Year)



Slightly more than three in four survey respondents indicate there were barriers that kept them from experiencing parks and recreation opportunities as much as they would have liked to during the past year. While COVID-19-related reasons led in 2021, lack of time returned as the most frequently cited barrier keeping people from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities in this year's survey. Thirty-seven percent of survey respondents indicate lack of time as a reason for keeping them from visiting parks and other recreation facilities — the same percent as in 2019.



A child smiles while playing under the water at the Northeast Creek Park Splash Pad in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KEVIN REOPELLE

Perhaps not surprisingly, obstacles related to the pandemic remain high on the list. Slightly greater than a third of respondents report pandemic-related obstacles kept them from enjoying local parks and recreation opportunities during the past year. Other frequently cited barriers include:

- Concerns about personal safety at the park and recreation facility (cited by 20 percent of respondents)
- Lack of quality facilities near the respondent's home (16 percent)
- Unaware of the location/offering (15 percent)
- Concerns about personal safety when traveling to/from the park and recreation facility (15 percent)
- Offerings at local parks and/or recreation facilities do not match interests (14 percent)
- Excessive costs and/or fees (14 percent)

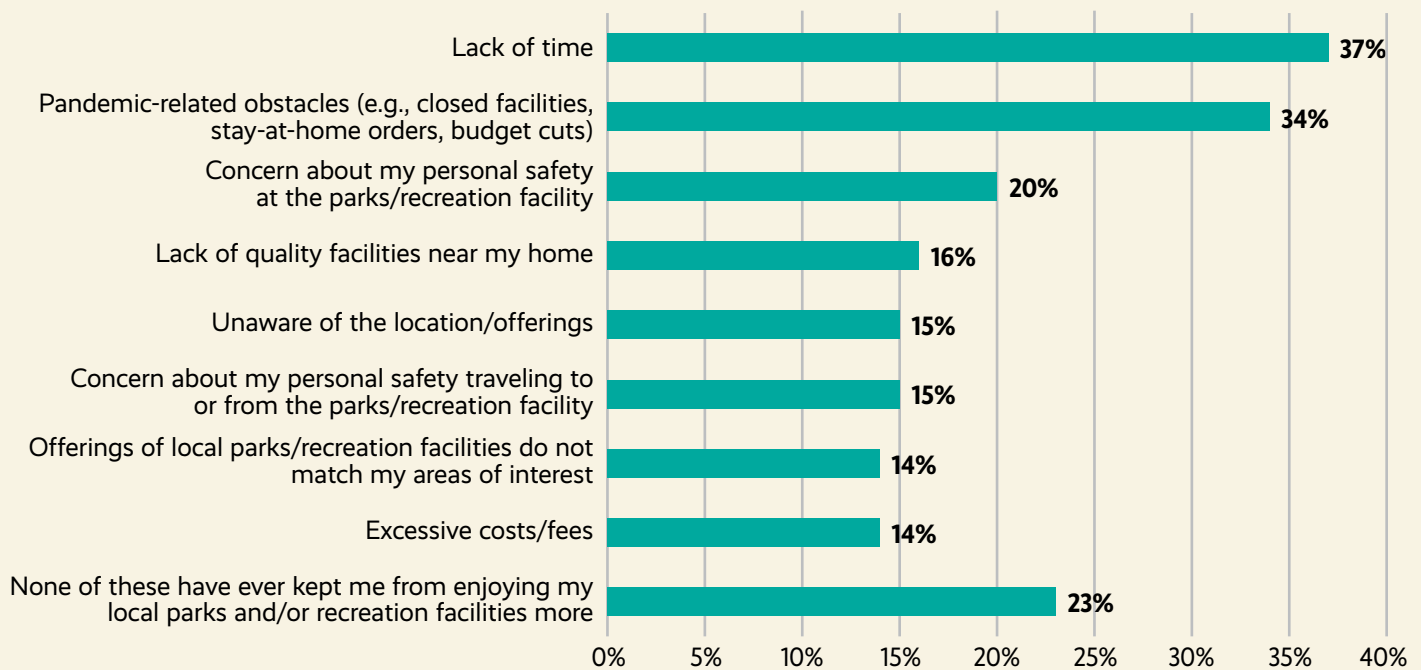
Scenic views of tidal marshes and an abundance of wildlife highlight trips on the unique and beautiful James River at Jamestown Island in Williamsburg, Virginia.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES CITY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

LACK OF TIME AND PANDEMIC OBSTACLES KEPT PEOPLE FROM GREATER ENJOYMENT OF PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

(Percent of Respondents)



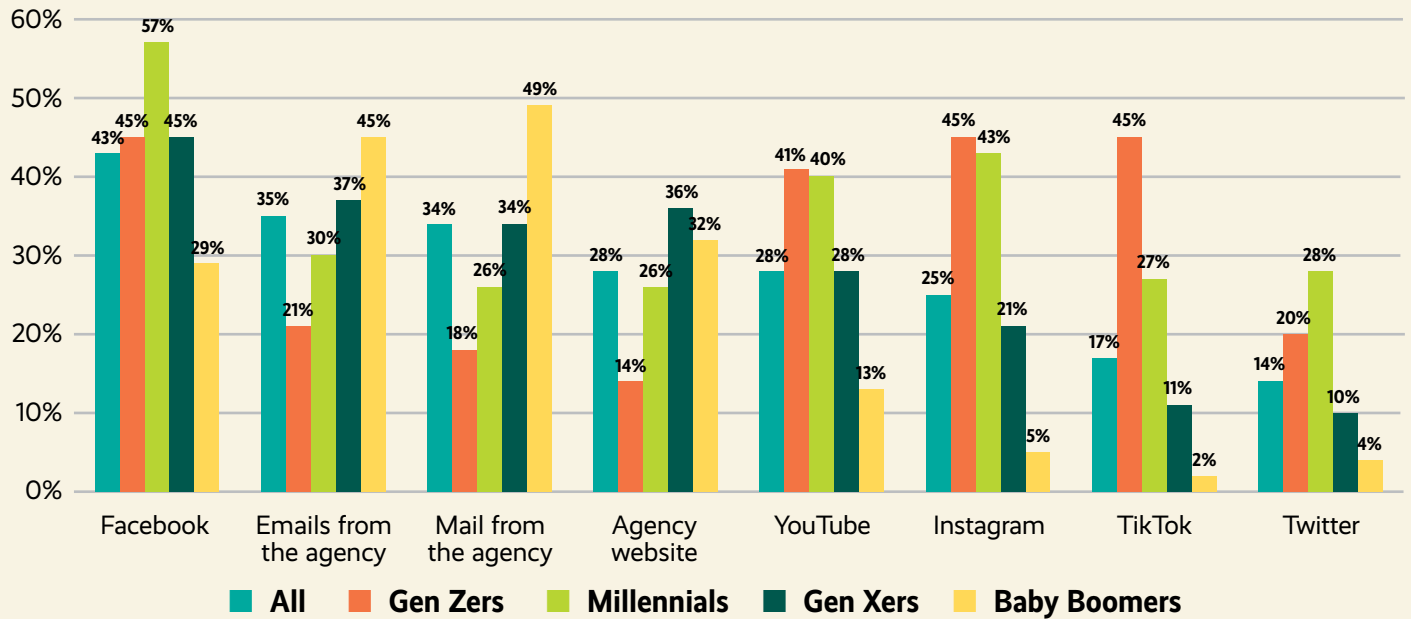
Park and recreation professionals bring a multitude of high-quality programming and facilities to the residents of their communities. As noted above, however, 15 percent of respondents indicate they are unaware of these offerings. Identifying the most efficient and effective ways to reach every member of the community is of vital importance.

Forty-three percent of residents prefer learning about local park and recreation amenities, programming and services through Facebook. Thirty-five percent prefer to learn about these opportunities via email. A slightly smaller share — 34 percent — look to traditional mailings for the latest park and recreation schedules. Additional methods for online communication preferences include:

- Agency website (cited by 28 percent of respondents)
- YouTube (28 percent)
- Instagram (25 percent)
- TikTok (17 percent)
- Twitter (14 percent)

PREFERRED METHODS FOR LEARNING ABOUT LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION AMENITIES, PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES VARY BY GENERATION

(Percent of Respondents)



PARKS AND RECREATION: CREATING VIBRANT, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Parks and recreation transforms our cities, towns and counties into vibrant, healthy communities. The overall mission of the more than 10,000 agencies and more than 165,000 full-time park and recreation professionals country-wide is to enrich the lives of every member of their communities. Guiding them are NRPA's Three Pillars of Conservation, Equity, and Health and Wellness.

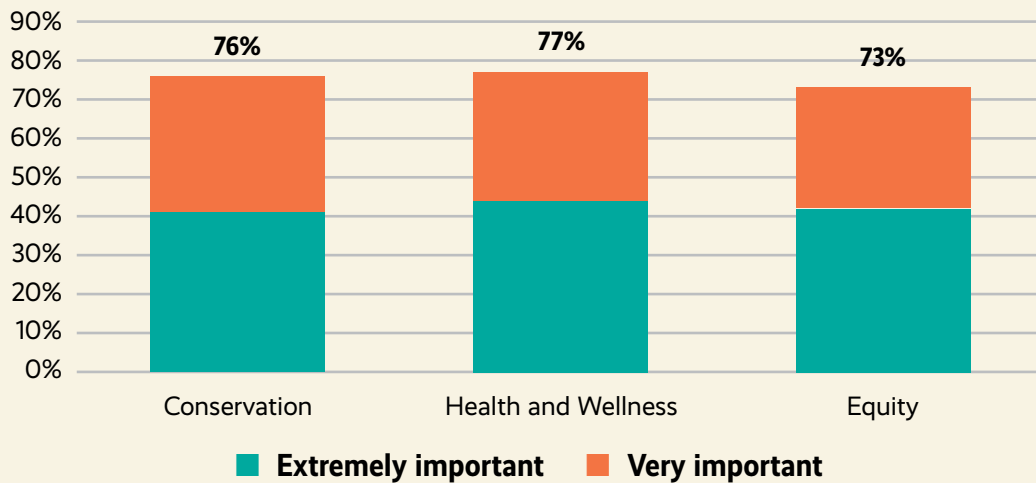
- **Conservation:** Creating a nation of resilient and climate-ready communities through parks and recreation
- **Equity:** Striving for a future where everyone has fair and just access to quality parks and recreation
- **Health and Wellness:** Advancing community health and well-being through parks and recreation

People agree that NRPA's Three Pillars represent what they want as the guiding principles for their local park and recreation agency. Nearly equal shares of survey respondents view each pillar as a critical agency function:

- Seventy-six percent of respondents rate Conservation as either an "extremely" or "very" important area on which their local park and recreation agency should focus.
- Seventy-three percent of respondents rate Equity as either an "extremely" or "very" important area on which their local park and recreation agency should focus.
- Seventy-seven percent of respondents rate Health and Wellness as either an "extremely" or "very" important area on which their local park and recreation agency should focus.

THE PUBLIC VIEWS NRPA'S THREE PILLARS AS IMPORTANT PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY PRIORITIES

(Percent of Respondents Indicating the Pillars Are Either "Extremely" or "Very" Important)



All people deserve access to high-quality parks and recreation opportunities that are accessible, safe, welcoming and inclusive to all. Slightly less than three-quarters of U.S. residents indicate their local parks and recreation facilities are easily accessible. Nearly seven in 10 say these areas are safe and welcoming.

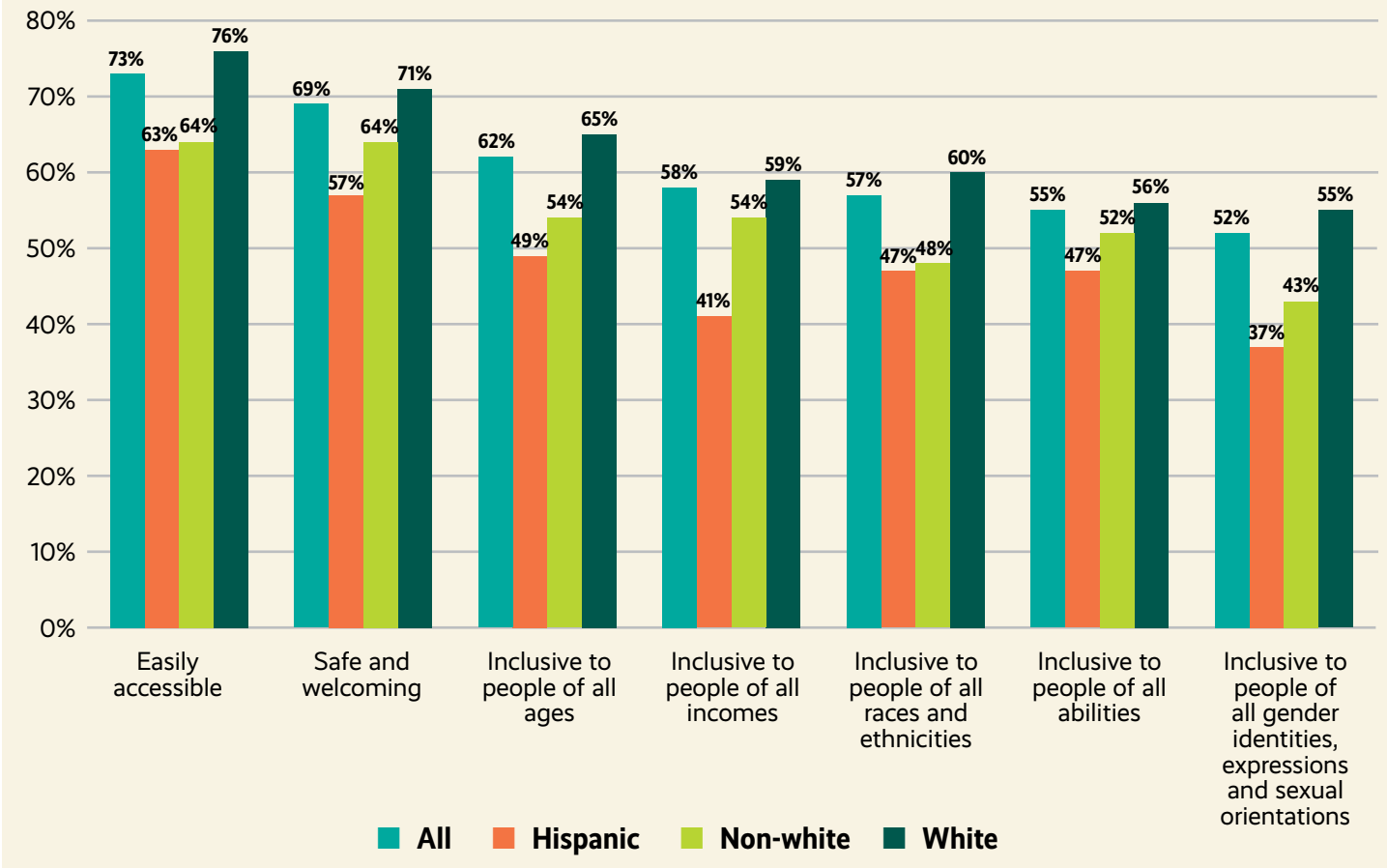
Survey respondents report they experience varying degrees of inclusivity at their local parks and recreation facilities. The percentage of people indicating that their local parks and recreation facilities are:

- Easily accessible (cited by 73 percent of respondents)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (63 percent), millennials (65 percent), Gen Xers (75 percent) and baby boomers (82 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (64 percent), those who identify as white (76 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (63 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (70 percent)
- Safe and welcoming (69 percent)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (60 percent), millennials (65 percent), Gen Xers (72 percent) and baby boomers (74 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (64 percent), those who identify as white (71 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (57 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (67 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all ages (62 percent)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (48 percent), millennials (53 percent), Gen Xers (62 percent) and baby boomers (76 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (54 percent), those who identify as white (65 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (49 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (54 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all incomes (58 percent)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (46 percent), millennials (50 percent), Gen Xers (56 percent) and baby boomers (71 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (54 percent), those who identify as white (59 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (41 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (51 percent)
 - o Political views – Democrats (54 percent), Republicans (61 percent), Independents/Other (60 percent)

- Inclusive to people of all races and ethnicities (57 percent)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (46 percent), millennials (50 percent), Gen Xers (51 percent) and baby boomers (73 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (48 percent), those who identify as white (60 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (47 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (53 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all abilities (55 percent)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (52 percent), millennials (48 percent), Gen Xers (54 percent) and baby boomers (63 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (52 percent), those who identify as white (56 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (47 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (50 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations (52 percent)
 - o Generation – Gen Zers (34 percent), millennials (49 percent), Gen Xers (48 percent) and baby boomers (65 percent)
 - o Race – Those who identify as non-white (43 percent), those who identify as white (55 percent)
 - o Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (37 percent)
 - o Household formation – Households with children (47 percent)

EXPERIENCES WITH PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES DIFFER BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

(Percent of Respondents)



PARKS AND RECREATION IS ESSENTIAL

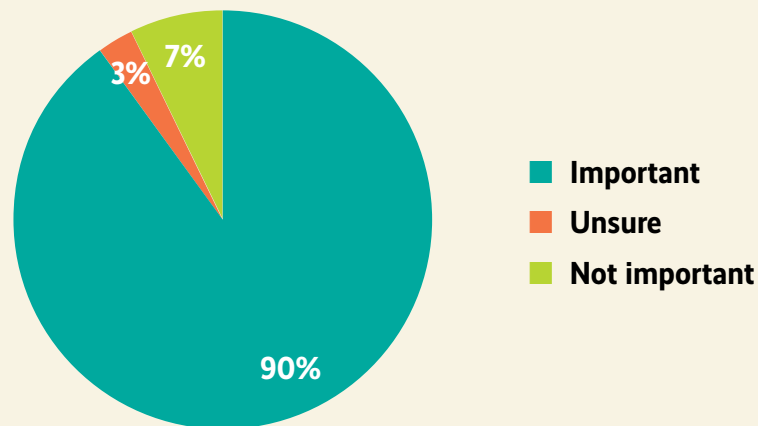
Local governments deliver a broad array of critical services that promote public safety, the education of children, social welfare, utilities and transportation. Another vital service provided by local governments is the programming and offerings from local parks and recreation.

Nine in 10 U.S. adults agree parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local governments. This robust support for parks and recreation spans every segment of the population:

- Generation – Gen Zers (81 percent), millennials (90 percent), Gen Xers (91 percent), baby boomers (93 percent)
- Race – Those who identify as non-white (84 percent), those who identify as white (91 percent)
- Ethnicity – Those who identify as Hispanic (88 percent)
- Household formation – Households with children (94 percent)
- Political views – Democrats (94 percent), Republicans (88 percent), Independents/Other (85 percent)
- Region – Northeast (90 percent), South (88 percent), Midwest (92 percent), West (90 percent)
- Proximity to a park – Live near a park (91 percent), do not live near a park (84 percent)

THE PUBLIC AGREES THAT PARKS AND RECREATION IS AN IMPORTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents)

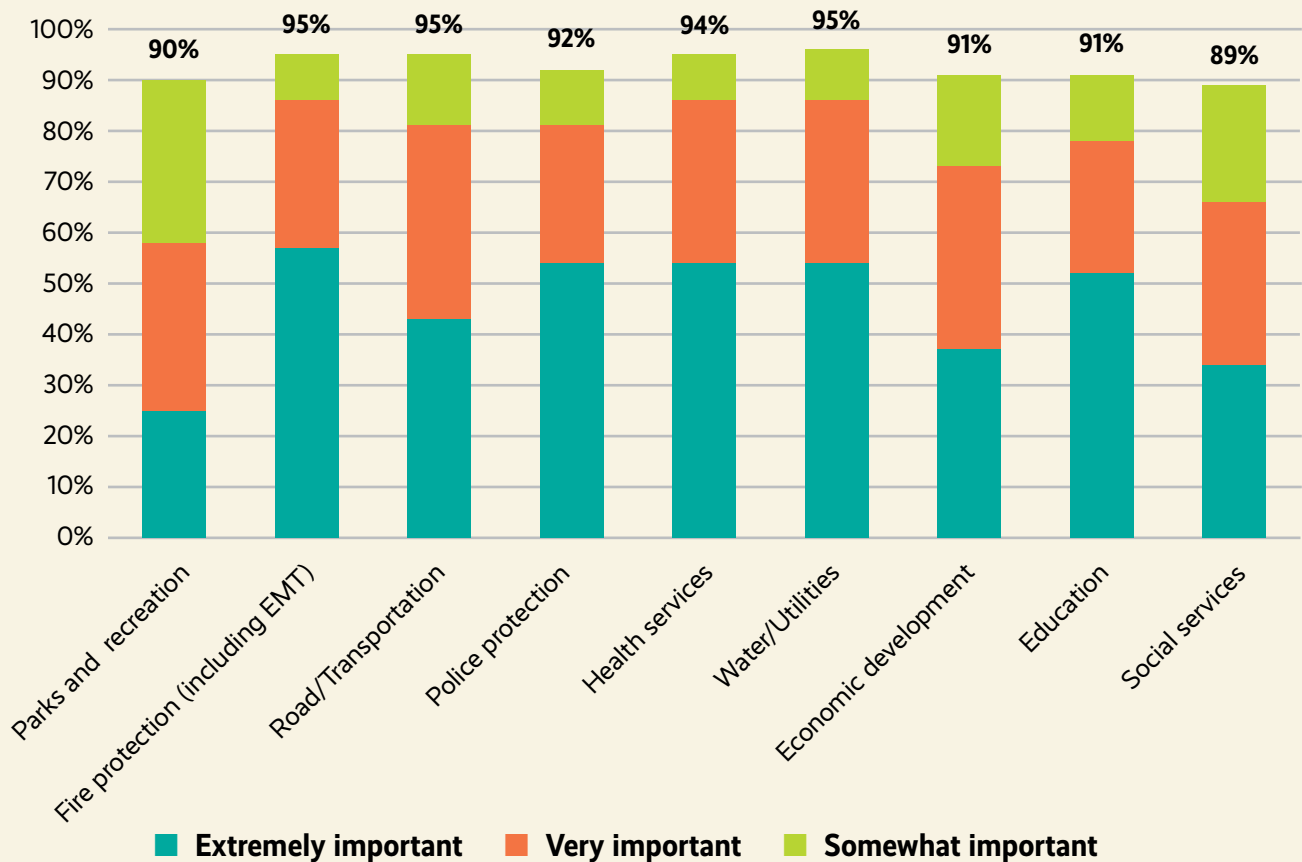


Survey respondents place nearly the same level of importance on parks and recreation as they do on virtually every other major service delivered by their local governments. Whereas 90 percent of survey respondents view parks and recreation as an important service provided by local government, other services compare favorably, including:

- Fire protection (including an emergency medical technician) (cited by 95 percent of respondents)
- Roads/Transportation (95 percent)
- Health services (95 percent)
- Water/Utilities (95 percent)
- Police protection (93 percent)
- Economic development (92 percent)
- Education (92 percent)
- Social services (89 percent)

PEOPLE RATE PARKS AND RECREATION AS HIGHLY AS THEY DO OTHER MAJOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

(Percent of Respondents)



While the “traditional” components of parks and recreation continue, the parks and recreation of today looks very different than that of the 20th century. The more traditional elements of sports fields and leagues, parks and trails, summer camps and community pools are now also part of a vast set of indispensable amenities, programming and services. Many of these “new” roles include park and recreation facilities serving as emergency shelters and distribution points for essential supplies during extreme weather or natural disasters, planning and developing parks and open spaces that minimize the impacts of flooding by becoming floodplains and having the capacity to capture and store excess floodwater, and an increasing focus on the mental health of residents through targeted programming and services.

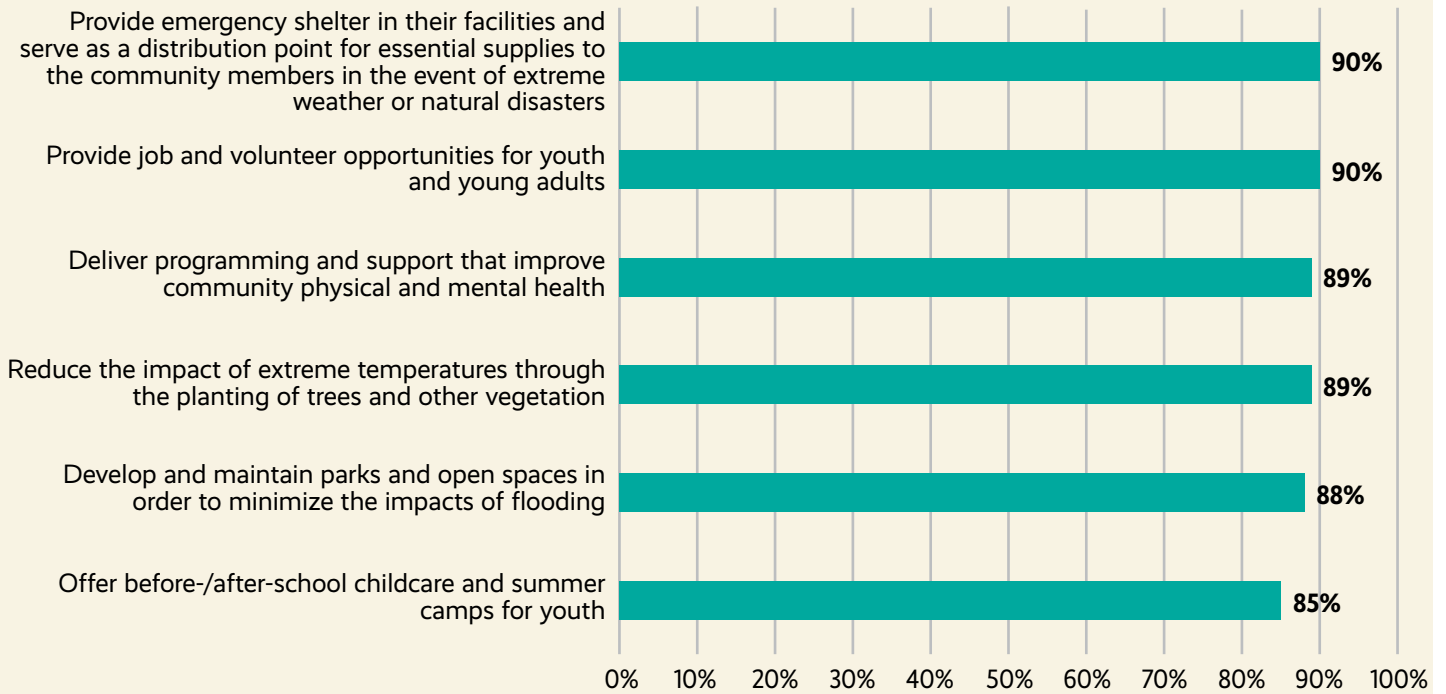
U.S. adults know the importance of both the traditional park and recreation amenities, programming and services and the amenities, programming and services of an innovative agency. Nine in 10 survey respondents agree that providing emergency shelter in their facilities and serving as distribution points for essential supplies to community members in the event of extreme weather or natural disasters are important roles for park and recreation agencies to play. Ninety percent of survey respondents also agree on the importance of their parks and recreation providing job and volunteer opportunities for youth and young adults, such as lifeguarding jobs, camp counselor roles and junior ranger roles.

U.S. adults also want their local park and recreation agency to:

- Deliver programming and support that improve community physical and mental health (cited by 89 percent of respondents)
- Reduce the impact of extreme temperatures through the planting of trees and other vegetation (89 percent)
- Develop and maintain parks and open spaces to minimize the impacts of flooding (88 percent)
- Offer before- and/or after-school childcare and summer camps for youth (85 percent)

PEOPLE WANT THEIR LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY TO DELIVER VITAL SERVICES THAT SUPPORT THEIR COMMUNITY

(Percent of Respondents Saying It Is Important for Their Local Park and Recreation Agency to Play a Role)



Older adults participate in an aerobics class at the Milander Aquatic Center in Hialeah, Florida.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF HIALEAH DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

CONCLUSIONS



Local youth play a game of futsal in Judkins Park in Seattle, Washington.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIA INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Parks and recreation is essential. The more than 10,000 local park and recreation agencies in the United States make their communities strong, healthy and resilient. Their emphasis on conservation, equity, and health and wellness — as well as their ability to deliver effective solutions to the many challenges facing those communities — highlights how parks and recreation is not a luxury; it is an indispensable part of the infrastructure in our cities, towns and counties.

As proof, consider the 275 million people who visited a local park and/or recreation facility at least once within the past year. Having nearby access to parks, trails and recreation amenities — along with relevant programming that meets the needs and desires of a community — drives greater usage of those facilities. In addition, the availability of high-quality park and recreation amenities and programming is critical for many people when choosing a place to live.

Parks and recreation's success results from its vast offerings of parks, trail networks and other recreation facilities that deliver critical programs for every segment of a community. Each person's relationship with parks and recreation is unique. Some people flock to their local park to stay physically fit, meet with friends and family, or reconnect with nature. Others depend on their local park and recreation agency for indispensable services that improve their lives.

But there remains much work to do. One-hundred million people do not live within a walkable distance of at least one park or recreation facility. Further, many survey respondents indicate they have felt unwelcome at a park or recreation facility or say the infrastructure and programming are not inclusive. Parks and recreation is for everyone — regardless of age, income, race, ethnicity, ability, gender identity or sexual orientation. Professionals, advocates and political leaders have the opportunity to narrow any accessibility or inclusivity gaps through greater community engagement and addressing inequitable funding and infrastructure investments that have deprived millions of people of access to parks and recreation.

The *2022 NRPA Engagement With Parks Report* makes clear this point: people place a high value on the programs and services that park and recreation agencies deliver to their local communities every day and strongly support their mission. The public's strong and broad-based support for parks and recreation solidifies the case made to local political leaders, stakeholders and the media for greater and more sustainable funding for this essential function.

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Disc Golf is fun any time of year at Hazel Landing Park in Carmel, Indiana.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CARMEL CLAY PARKS AND RECREATION

ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations, including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation and conducts research with two goals. First, NRPA creates and analyzes data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA develops data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public. The NRPA Research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more at nrpa.org/Research.

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