



2023 ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS REPORT



NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION



A child high-fives a mascot at an event in Denver, Colorado.

Photo courtesy of Denver Parks and Recreation

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Introduction

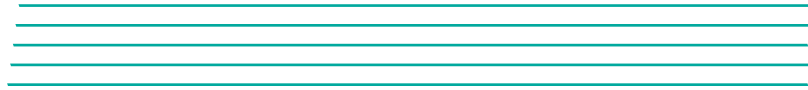


PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS

Adults skate on a ramp at a skatepark in Columbus, Ohio.

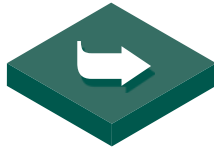
Parks and recreation fosters healthy and prosperous communities. Local public spaces are for people of all ages, incomes, races, ethnicities and abilities. Local parks provided a respite during the challenging times of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and continue to be places for rest, relaxation, celebration and fellowship. Local recreation, community and senior centers offer residents a place to exercise, learn and commune. They also provide children with out-of-school opportunities, giving parents peace of mind that their children are cared for while they fulfill work and life obligations.

Local park and recreation services and amenities are the result of the unwavering dedication of more than 160,000 full-time professionals and hundreds of thousands of part-time and seasonal workers that collaborate with legions of passionate volunteers. With more than 10,000 local agencies nationwide, people benefit from one of America's most essential offerings: parks and recreation.

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

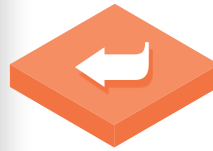
On behalf of NRPA, Wakefield Research surveyed 1,000 U.S. adults ages 18 and older between May 16 and May 28, 2023. The firm used quotas to ensure the respondents were a reliable and representative reflection of the U.S. adult population. The margin of error for data contained in this report is +/-3.1 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

Key Findings of the 2023 Engagement With Parks Report:

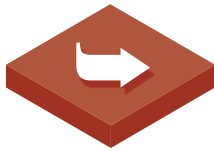


More than **280 million** people in the United States visited a local park or recreation facility at least once during the past year.

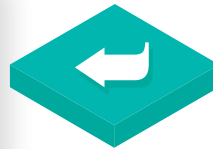
7 in 10 U.S. residents have at least one local park, playground, open space or recreation center within walking distance of their homes.



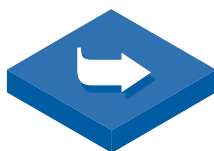
84% of U.S. adults seek nearby high-quality parks and recreation when choosing a place to live.



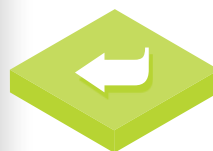
9 in 10 people agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local government.



Visitors who find their parks and recreational facilities to be inclusive visit nearly **2x as often** than do those who do not hold this view.



88% of U.S. adults agree it is vital for their local park and recreation agencies to engage with every member of their communities to ensure offerings meet their needs.



Key Findings



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SAN JOSE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES



Visitors interact with a park ranger in the City of San Jose, California.

Parks and Recreation Is a Part of Everyone’s Lives, Every Day

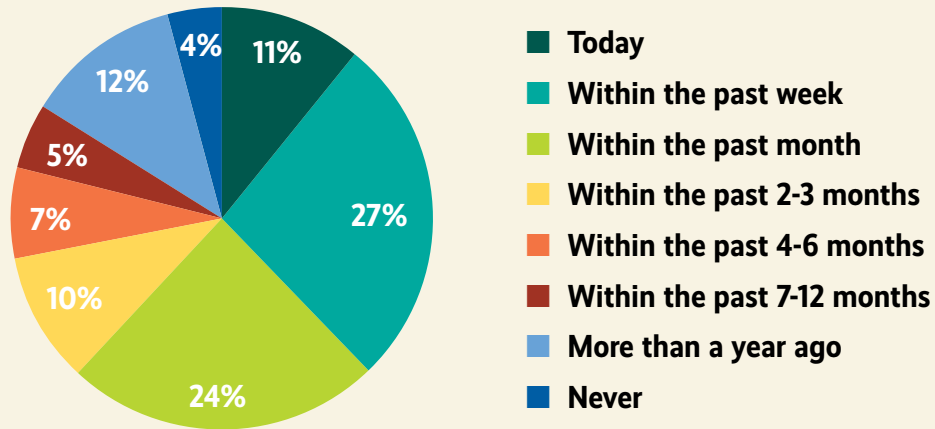
Local parks and recreation is a staple in communities across the country. These facilities provide a wide variety of opportunities for local residents. From offering spaces for families and friends to come together, to providing moments of peace in an otherwise busy life, to playing a vital role in healthy ecosystems and endeavoring to make those facilities inclusive to and accessible by all people, local parks and recreation offers something for everyone.

Thanks to diverse offerings, low- or no-cost programming, and the sheer number of sites from which to choose, local parks and recreation continues to play an integral role in the lives of the typical U.S. resident each year. Eighty-four percent of survey respondents — the equivalent of more than 280 million people in the United States — visited a local park or recreation facility at least once during the 12 months ending in May 2023.

Sixty-two percent of survey respondents visited their local park and/or recreation facility at least once within the past month of completing this survey, including 38 percent 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. Seven percent of respondents indicate that their most recent visit was between four and six months, and five percent report their most recent visit was between seven and 12 months before completing the survey.

MORE THAN 3 IN 5 PEOPLE VISITED A LOCAL PARK OR RECREATION FACILITY DURING THE PAST MONTH

(Percentage Distribution)

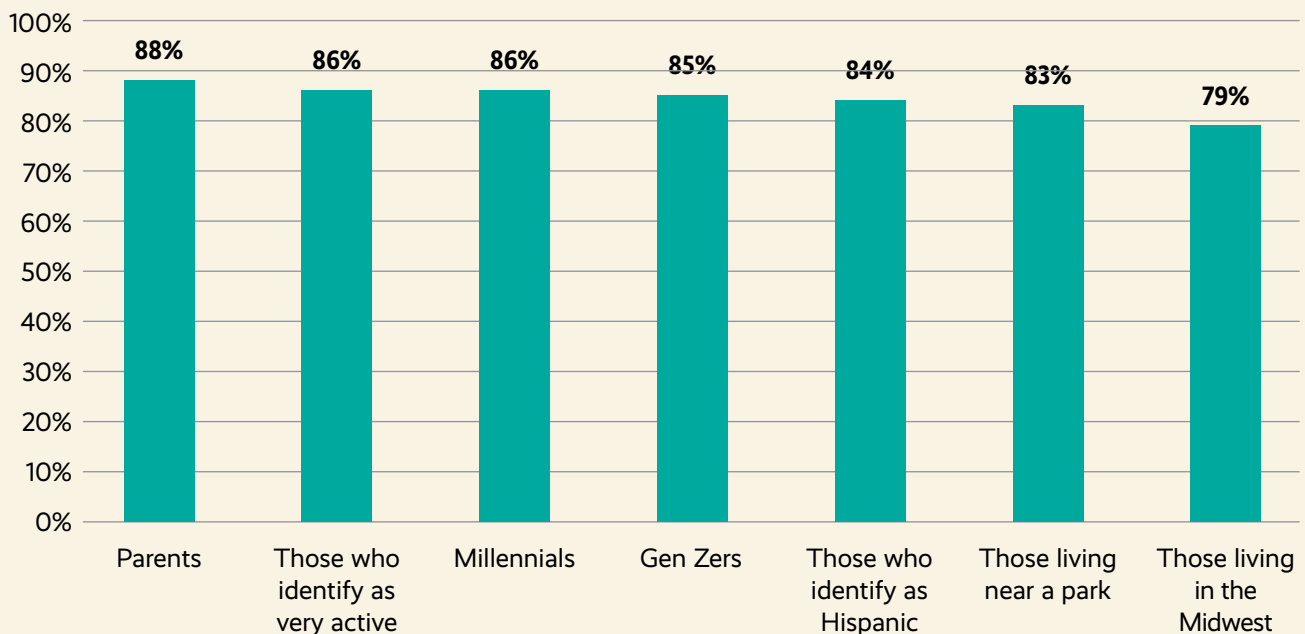


While a majority of respondents visited a park or recreation facility within the past three months, their demographics vary. Top local park or recreation facility visitors within the past three months by select demographics are:

- Parents (88 percent)
- Those who identify as very active (86 percent)
- Millennials (86 percent)
- Gen Zers (85 percent)
- Those who identify as Hispanic (84 percent)
- Those living near a park (83 percent)
- Those living in the Midwest (79 percent)

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

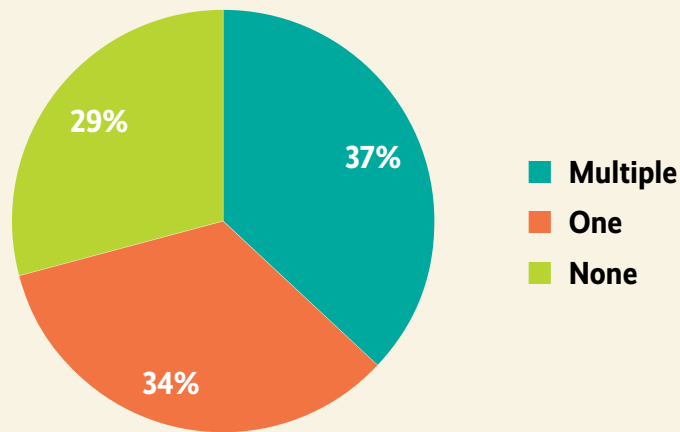
(Percent of Respondents)



Unsurprisingly, having nearby access to parks and recreational facilities leads to increased use of these offerings. Seventy-one percent of survey respondents say they live within a walkable distance of a park or recreation facility. Thirty-seven percent indicate that they live within a walkable distance of more than one of these areas. Twenty-nine percent of survey respondents — the equivalent of 97 million people in the United States — say they do not have walkable access to a park or other recreation facility.

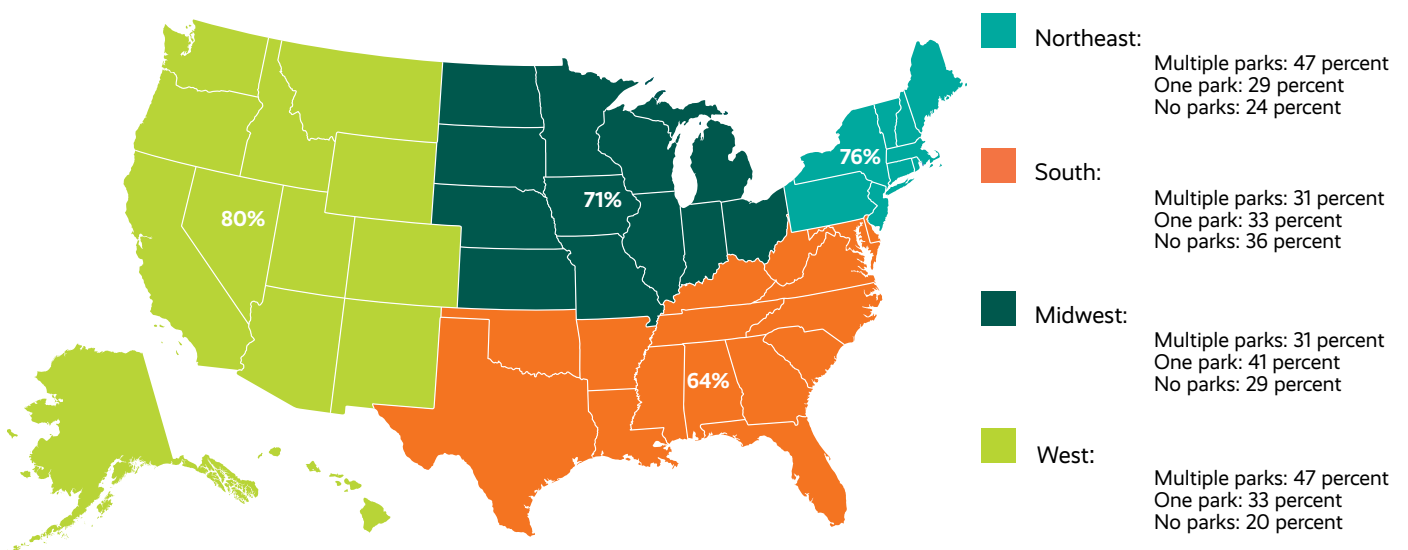
7 IN 10 U.S. RESIDENTS SAY THEY LIVE WITHIN A WALKABLE DISTANCE OF AT LEAST ONE LOCAL PARK OR RECREATION FACILITY

(Percentage Distribution)

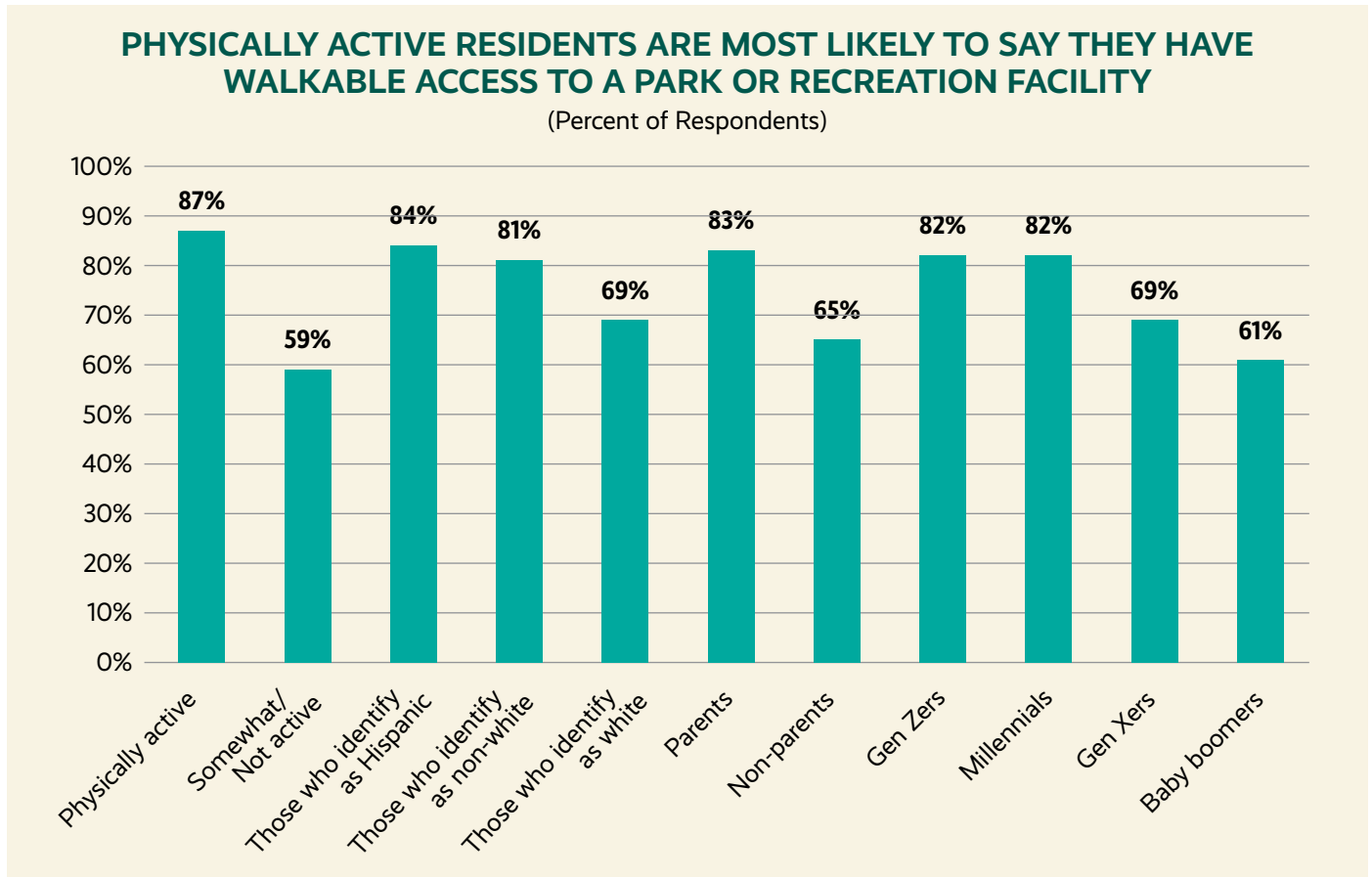


The perceived availability of parks and recreation facilities within a walkable distance varies by region. Four in five respondents in the West report that they can walk to a local park, while 76 percent of those in the Northeast and 71 percent in the Midwest indicate the same. Only 64 percent of respondents living in the South say there is a park within walking distance of their homes.

PERCENT OF U.S. RESIDENTS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF A PARK OR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, BY REGION



Respondents who regard themselves as very physically active are far more likely than their less-active counterparts to say they are within walking distance of a park or recreation facility. Adults identifying as Hispanic (84 percent) and non-white (81 percent) are more likely than their white peers (69 percent) to say they have walkable access to a park. Additionally, parents are more likely than non-parents to live within walking distance of a park or other recreational opportunity (83 percent compared to 65 percent, respectively). Eighty-two percent of Gen Zers and millennials report having walkable access to parks, while access for Gen Xers (69 percent) and, especially, baby boomers (61 percent) is far less common.



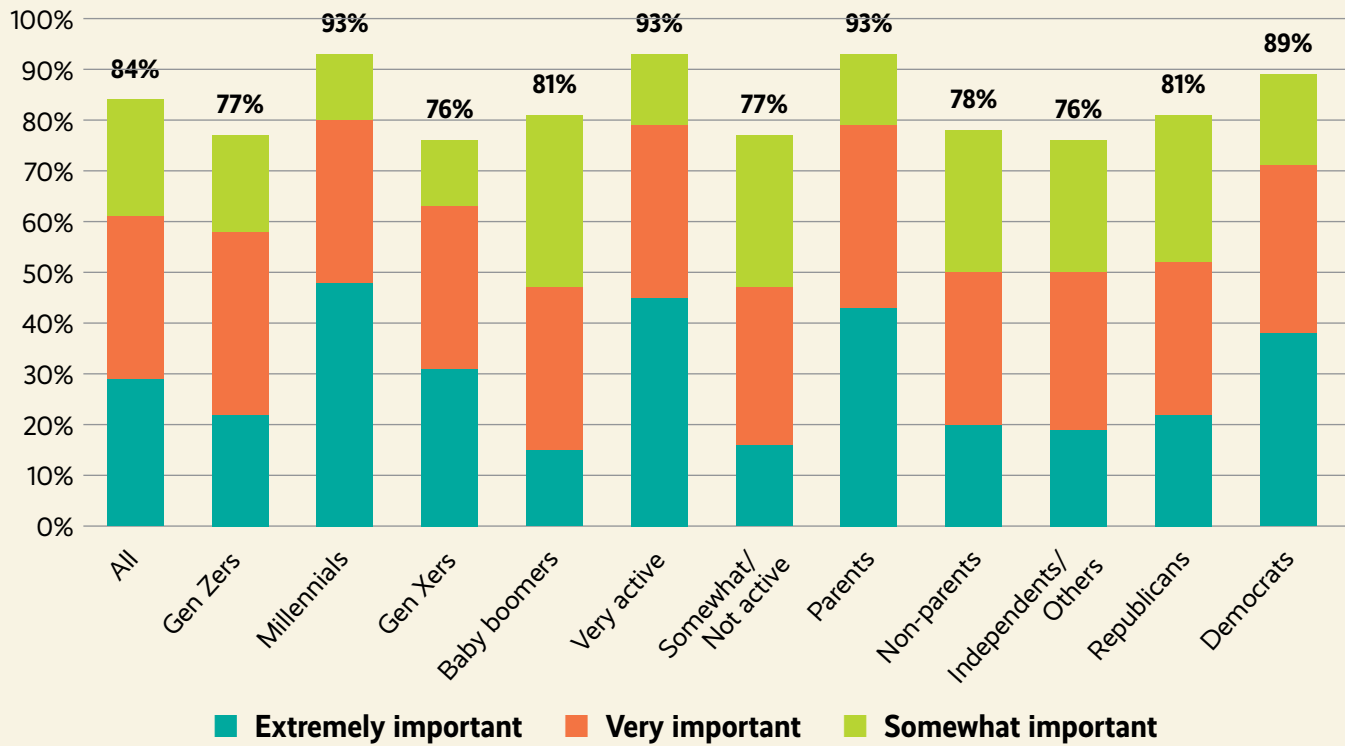
Local park and recreational opportunities shape a neighborhood. Eighty-four percent of survey respondents say proximity to high-quality parks, playgrounds, open spaces or other recreation facilities is important when choosing a neighborhood or area in which to live. A desire to live near high-quality park and recreation opportunities is common across nearly every segment of the U.S. population.

More than 60 percent of survey respondents say distance to these features is “extremely” or “very” important in their choice of residence. Unsurprisingly, survey respondents who are parents and those who identify themselves as very active indicate that proximity to these areas is “extremely” or “very” important in their choice of residence (both 79 percent). Other segments for which the availability of quality park and recreation opportunities is extremely or very important include:

- Millennials (cited by 80 percent of respondents of that cohort)
- Working adults (70 percent)
- Those identifying as non-white (69 percent)
- Those living in the Northeast (68 percent)
- Those living near a park (68 percent)

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

(Percent of Respondents)



Adults dress for a sock hop at the Bayview Senior Resource Center in Pensacola, Florida.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PENSACOLA PARKS AND RECREATION

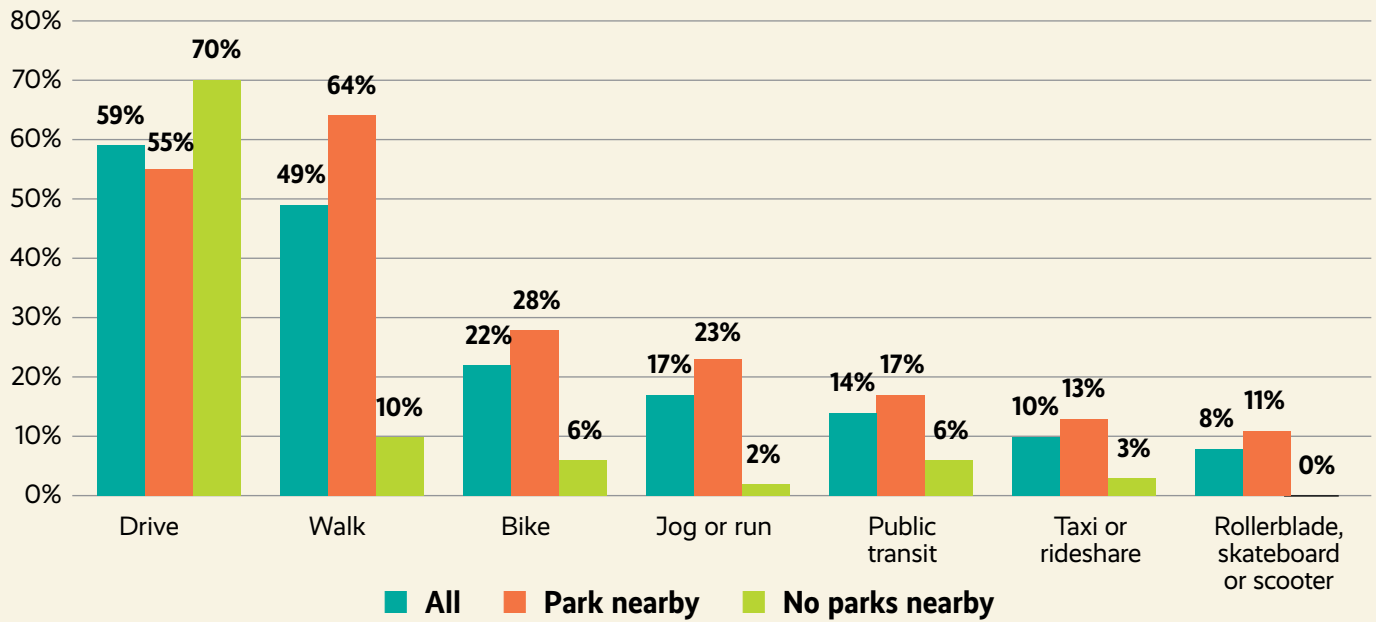
Traveling to parks, playgrounds, open spaces or recreation centers takes many forms for many reasons. While a majority of people travel by automobile to these areas (59 percent), nearly half of U.S. adults access these locations by walking. Other common travel methods include:

- Biking (cited by 22 percent of respondents)
- Jogging/Running (17 percent)
- Public transit, such as a bus, train or subway (14 percent)
- Taxi/Rideshare (10 percent)

Proximity to at least one park increases the likelihood that people visiting these areas do so by “active” means (e.g., walking, biking, running). Sixty-four percent of respondents with at least one park nearby say they walk to local parks. Conversely, 70 percent of U.S. adults who do not live within walking distance of parks or recreation opportunities drive to those amenities.

HALF OF ALL U.S. ADULTS OR THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS WALK TO PARK AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

(Percent of Respondents Who Have Visited a Park During the Past Year)



Parks and Recreation Is a Healthy Habit for Nearly Everyone

The number of options local park and recreation agencies offer their residents resulted in more than 280 million visitors during the past year. Some users opted for a more passive, relaxing visit, while others sought active participation. Nearly three in five U.S. adults have personally participated — 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 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 2023 to May 2023).

Millennials and those respondents who identify as Hispanic are most likely to indicate 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 three months (92 percent). Following close behind are parents (91 percent), those identifying as very active (90 percent), Gen Zers and those living in the Northeast (both 89 percent).

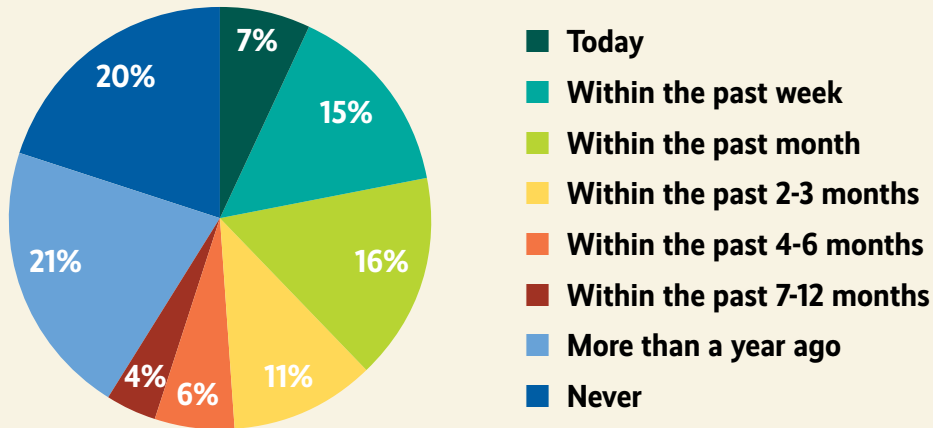
PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF PEARLAND PARKS AND RECREATION



A child running the bases on a field in Pearland, Texas.

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

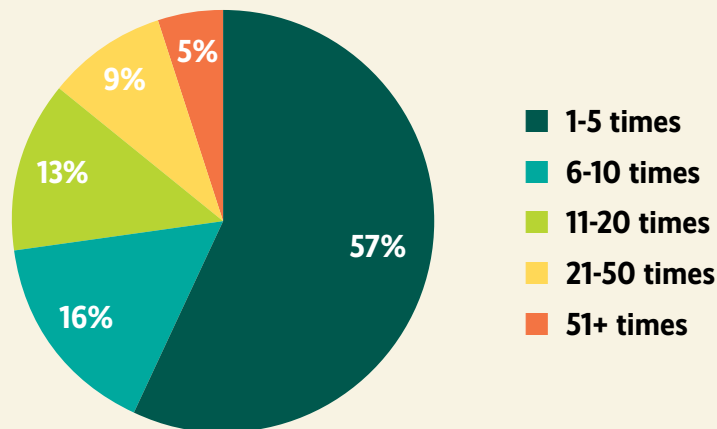
(Percentage Distribution)



On average, people visited their local park and recreation facilities 20 times between June 2022 and May 2023. However, the frequency of these visits varied significantly. Sixteen percent of survey respondents report they 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 nine percent visited their local park and recreation facilities between 21 and 50 times during the past year, while five percent (more than 16.7 million people) did so at least 51 times. Baby boomers visited their local parks and/or recreation facilities much more often than did any other generational group, logging 33 visits per year on average. The typical adult in the United States visits their local parks or recreation facilities nearly every other month.

ON AVERAGE, PEOPLE VISITED THEIR LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES EVERY MONTH OR MORE

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



FREQUENT VISITS TO LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

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

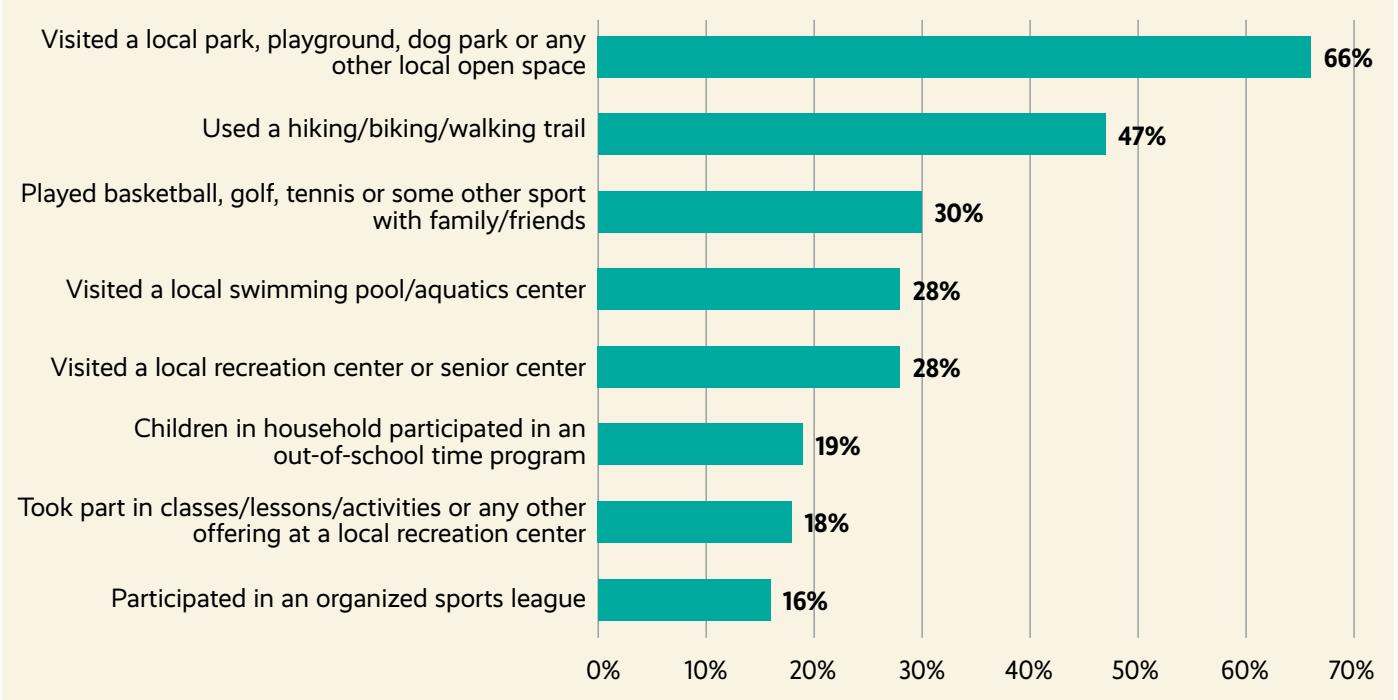
	All	Gen Zers	Millennials	Gen Xers	Baby Boomers	People Who Identify as Hispanic	People Who Identify as Non-White	People Who Identify as White	People Who Live Near a Park	People Who Do Not Live Near a Park
Average number of visits	19.7	13.6	18.7	12	32.5	17	13	20.1	21.1	13.5
Median number of visits	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	4

Whether the goal is a relaxing afternoon at the park, a challenging workout at the recreation center, a friendly game of softball at the field or a computer class at the community center, visitors' options for activities at park and recreation facilities are many and varied. For two-thirds of survey respondents, a local park, playground, dog park or some other local open space is their destination of choice. Baby boomers and those living in the Midwest (both 74 percent) are the respondents most likely to say that visiting a local park, playground, dog park or any 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 nearly half of all survey respondents indicating they take advantage of these offerings.

Thirty percent 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-five percent of millennials, 42 percent of parents and 38 percent of those identifying themselves as very active indicate that playing sports with friends and/or family is a top activity.

VISITING PARKS AND TRAILS REMAINS A FAVORITE PARK AND RECREATION ACTIVITY

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



Other favorite park and recreation activities include:

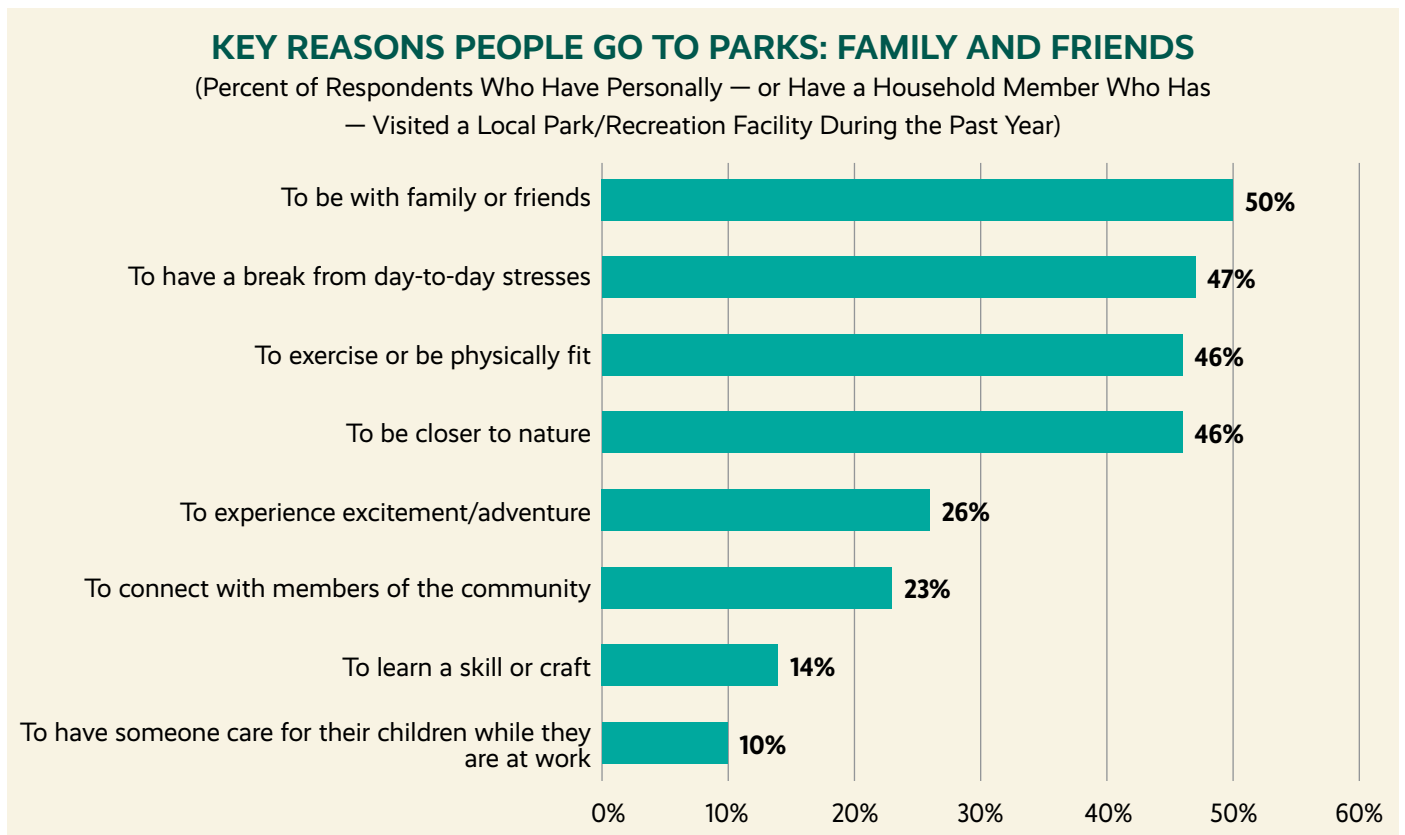
- Visiting a local swimming pool/aquatics center (cited by 28 percent of respondents)
- Visiting a local recreation center (or senior center) (28 percent)
- Children in the household participating in an out-of-school time program (e.g., summer camp, before-/after-school care) (19 percent)
- Taking part in classes/lessons/activities or any other offering at a local recreation center (18 percent)
- Participating in an organized sports league (16 percent)

Local park and recreation professionals strive to provide facilities and programming that satisfy the diverse populations of the communities they serve. Parks and recreation can mean different things to different people, including why they engage with their local amenities and programming.

The most common reason U.S. adults visit their local parks and recreation facilities is to be with family and friends. Fifty percent of survey respondents say being with family and friends is a key reason for visiting local parks and recreation facilities. Visitors identifying as Hispanic (57 percent), those living in the Midwest and parents (56 percent) are most likely to cite family and friends as their primary motivation for accessing parks and recreation. Forty-seven percent of U.S. adults indicate that they visit a park and/or recreation facility to take a break from the day-to-day stresses of life, while 46 percent say their desire to be closer to nature is a critical reason. The desire to exercise and be physically fit is crucial for 46 percent of survey respondents; this is especially true for those who regard themselves as very active (56 percent).

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

- To experience excitement/adventure (cited by 26 percent of respondents)
- To connect with members of the community (23 percent)
- To learn a skill or craft (14 percent)
- To have someone care for children while the respondent is at work (10 percent)



Parks and Recreation Is for All

Parks and recreation is for all. Ensuring safe, accessible, inclusive and welcoming spaces is a top priority for park and recreation professionals. Nonetheless, not every community member feels welcome all the time.

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents describe their local parks and recreation facilities as easily accessible. Those saying that their local parks and recreation facilities are easily accessible include:

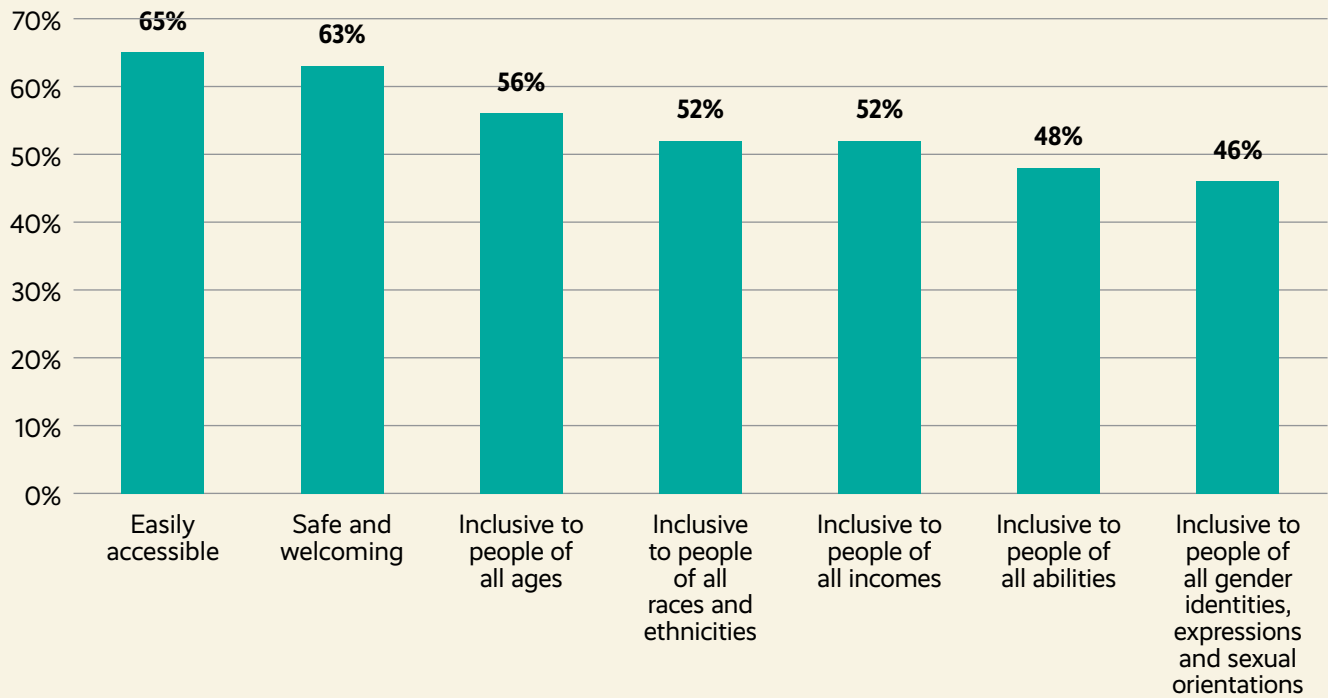
- **Members of various generations** – Gen Zers (51 percent), millennials (54 percent), Gen Xers (68 percent), baby boomers (78 percent)
- **Members of different racial backgrounds** – Those who identify as non-white (58 percent), those who identify as white (67 percent)
- **Members of various ethnicities** – Those who identify as Hispanic (50 percent)

U.S. adults also describe their park and recreation experiences as:

- Safe and welcoming (cited by 63 percent of respondents)
 - o **Generation** – Gen Zers (49 percent), millennials (61 percent), Gen Xers (66 percent), baby boomers (68 percent)
 - o **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (49 percent), those who identify as white (67 percent)
 - o **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (52 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all ages (cited by 56 percent of respondents)
 - o **Generation** – Gen Zers (46 percent), millennials (49 percent), Gen Xers (58 percent), baby boomers (64 percent)
 - o **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (46 percent), those who identify as white (59 percent)
 - o **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (44 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all races and ethnicities (cited by 52 percent of respondents)
 - o **Generation** – Gen Zers (43 percent), millennials (51 percent), Gen Xers (46 percent), baby boomers (60 percent)
 - o **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (44 percent), those who identify as white (54 percent)
 - o **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (46 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all incomes (cited by 52 percent of respondents)
 - o **Generation** – Gen Zers (44 percent), millennials (48 percent), Gen Xers (48 percent), baby boomers (61 percent)
 - o **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (43 percent), those who identify as white (54 percent)
 - o **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (46 percent)
 - o **Income** – Those who make less than \$35,000 annually (47 percent), those who make between \$35,000 and \$75,000 (51 percent), and those who make more than \$75,000 (54 percent)
 - o **Employment** – Working (49 percent), not working (56 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all abilities (cited by 48 percent of respondents)
 - o **Generation** – Gen Zers (42 percent), millennials (45 percent), Gen Xers (49 percent), baby boomers (53 percent)
 - o **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (43 percent), those who identify as white (49 percent)
 - o **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (38 percent)
 - o **Household formation** – Households with children (47 percent)
- Inclusive to people of all gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations (cited by 46 percent of respondents)
 - o **Generation** – Gen Zers (46 percent), millennials (43 percent), Gen Xers (44 percent), baby boomers (52 percent)
 - o **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (38 percent), those who identify as white (49 percent)
 - o **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (36 percent)
 - o **Household information** – Households with children (45 percent)

U.S. ADULTS SAY THEIR LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES ARE ACCESSIBLE, SAFE, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE

(Percent of Respondents Who Have Visited a Local Park/Recreation Facility During the Past Year)



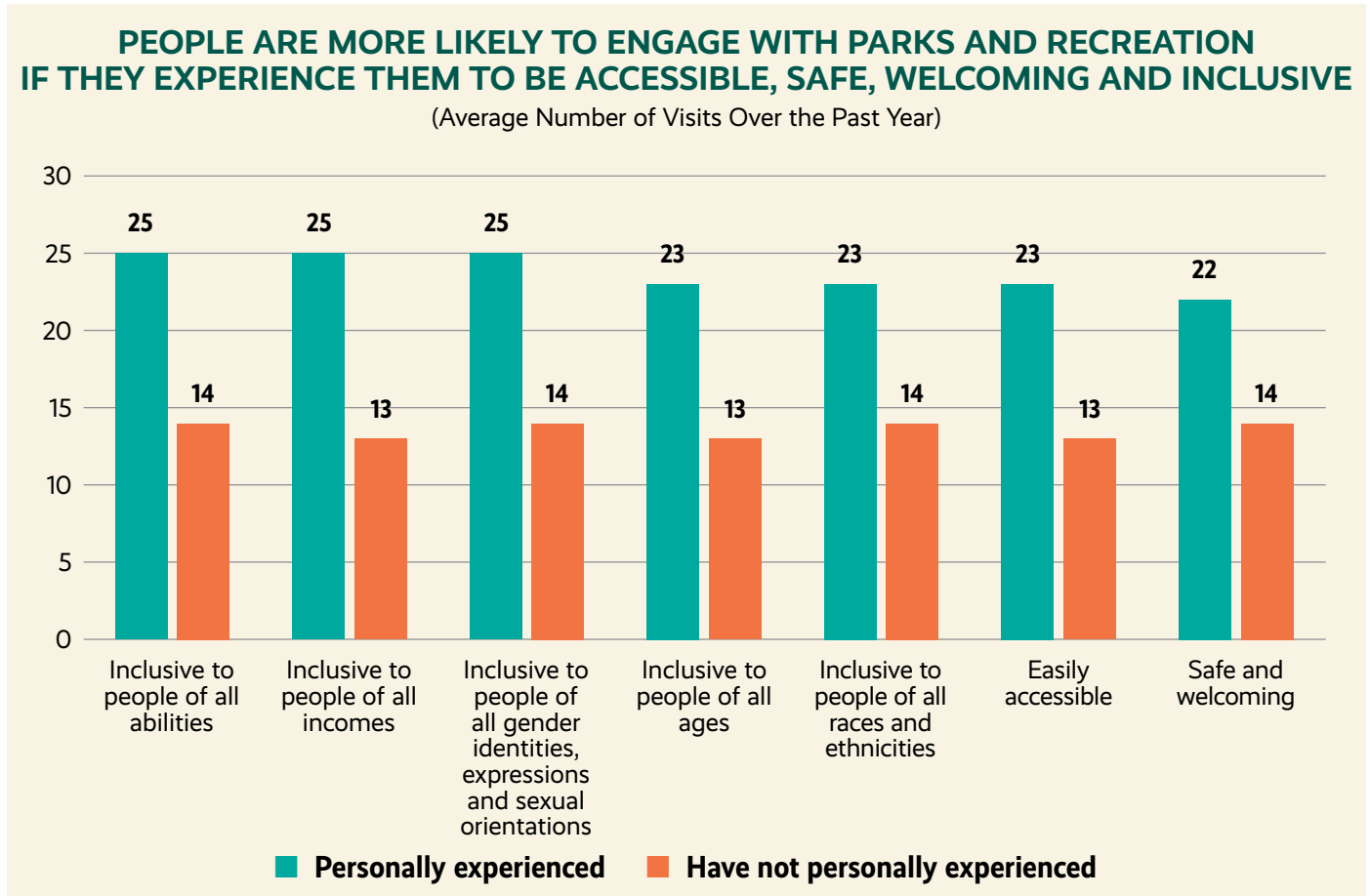
Feeling welcome at parks and recreation facilities drives one's usage of those areas. People who experience safe, accessible and inclusive parks and recreation facilities visit those places far more often than do others who do not share the same experiences. U.S. adults who find that their local parks and recreation facilities are inclusive to those with all abilities visited those locations, on average, 25 times during the past year — nearly twice as often as did those who did not find these facilities to be inclusive (less than 14 times).



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF PALM COAST PARKS AND RECREATION

The average annual number of visits by survey respondents based on their experience were as follows:

- Inclusive to people of all incomes (25 times with the experience vs. 13 times without that experience)
- Inclusive to people of all gender identities, expressions and sexual orientations (25 vs. 14 times)
- Inclusive to people of all ages (23 vs. 13 times)
- Inclusive to people of all races and ethnicities (23 vs. 14 times)
- Easily accessible (23 vs. 13 times)
- Safe and welcoming (22 vs. 14 times)



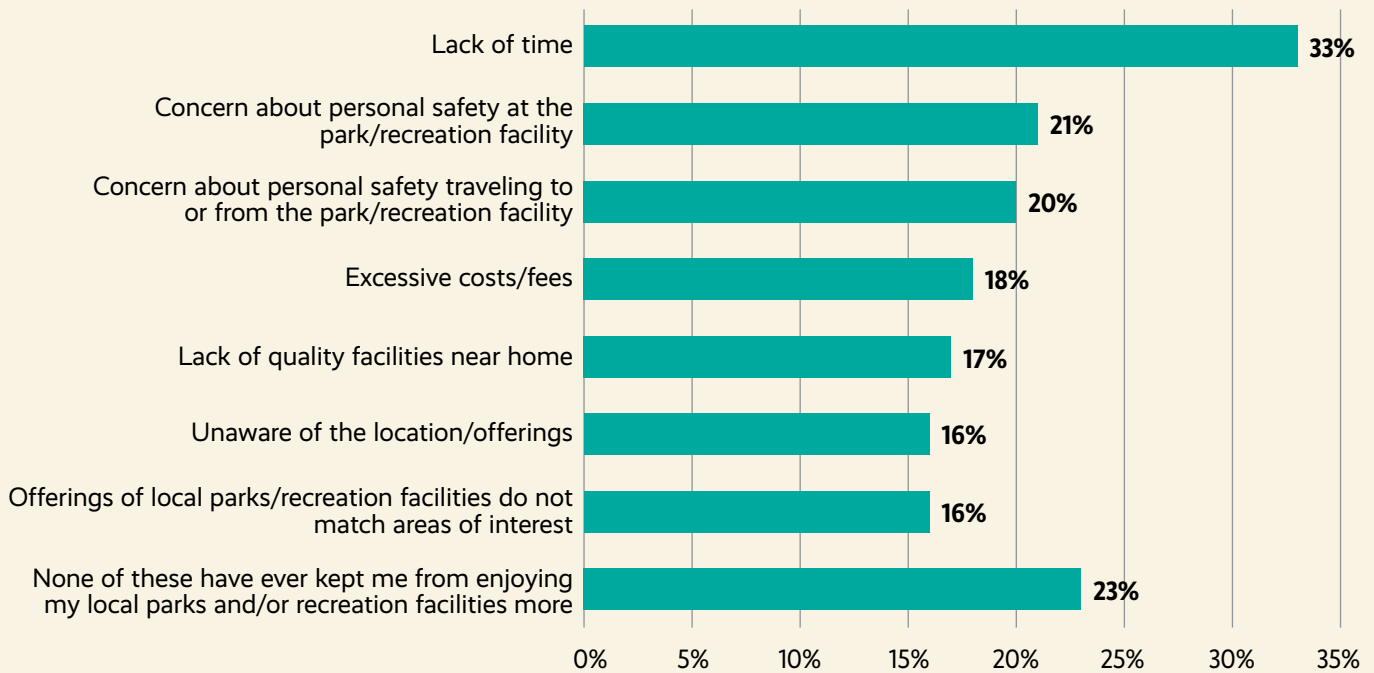
Aside from the experiences expressed above, additional obstacles may hinder residents from taking full advantage of their local parks and recreation facilities. Just more than three in four U.S. adults say some barriers kept them from experiencing park and recreation opportunities as much as they would have liked during the past year. One in three U.S. adults say lack of time kept them from fully enjoying their local parks and recreation facilities.

Other frequently cited barriers include:

- Concerns about personal safety at the park and recreation facility (cited by 21 percent of respondents)
- Concerns about personal safety when traveling to/from the park and recreation facility (20 percent)
- High costs and/or fees (18 percent)
- Lack of quality facilities near the respondent's home (17 percent)
- Unaware of the location/offers (16 percent)
- Offerings at local parks and/or recreation facilities do not match interests (16 percent)

3 IN 4 PEOPLE REPORT OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT GREATER ENJOYMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

(Percent of Respondents)



NRPA's Three Pillars

Parks and recreation means many different things to different people. NRPA's Three Pillars of Conservation, Equity, and Health and Wellness summarize the broad impact of numerous programs, offerings and benefits provided by the more than 10,000 agencies and more than 165,000 full-time park and recreation professionals nationwide:

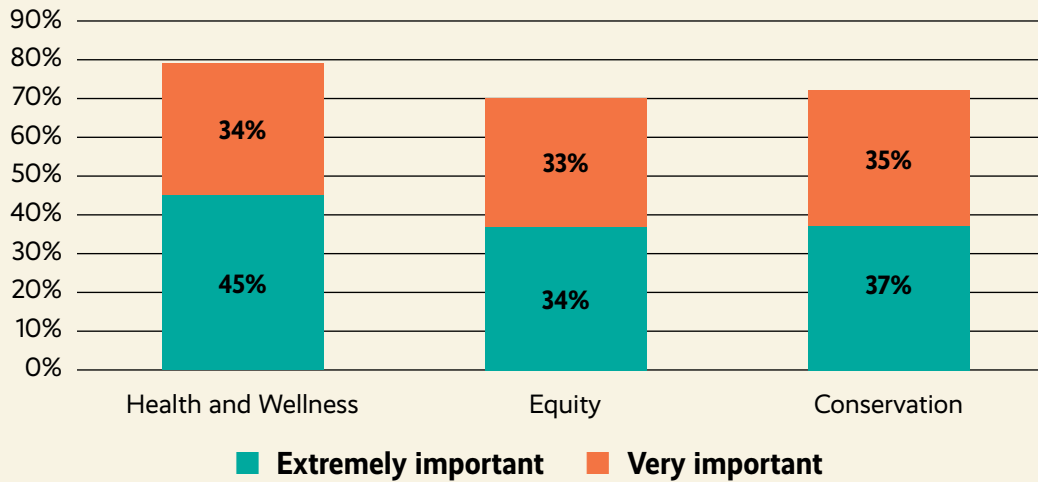
- **Conservation:** Creating a nation of resilient and climate-ready communities through parks and recreation
- **Equity:** Striving for a future where everyone has fair and just access to quality parks and recreation
- **Health and Wellness:** Advancing community health and well-being through parks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

Nine in 10 people agree that NRPA's Three Pillars are important guiding principles for their local park and recreation agencies. The most vigorous agreement for each of these principles includes:

- Seventy-two percent of respondents rate Conservation as either an "extremely" or "very" important area on which their local park and recreation agencies should focus.
- Seventy percent of respondents rate Equity as either an "extremely" or "very" important area on which their local park and recreation agencies should focus.
- Seventy-nine percent of respondents rate Health and Wellness as either an "extremely" or "very" important area on which their local park and recreation agencies 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)



Parks and Recreation: An Important Local Government Service

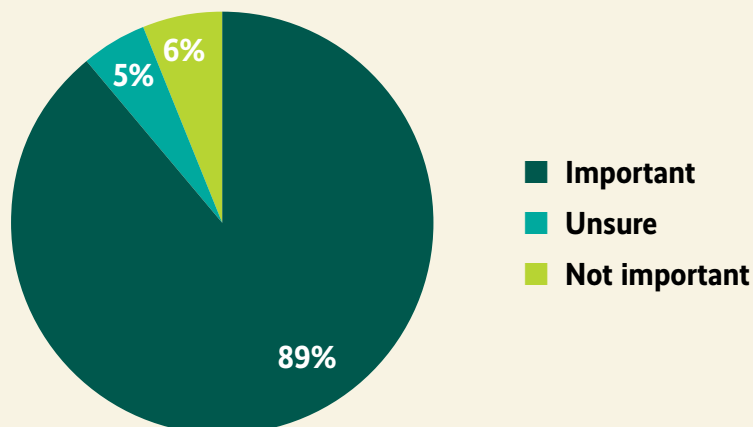
From small towns to big cities and rural counties to large special districts, park and recreation departments are a vital local government service.

Nearly nine in 10 U.S. adults agree parks and recreation is an important service their local government provides. This robust support for parks and recreation spans every segment of the population:

- **Generations** – Gen Zers (84 percent), millennials (95 percent), Gen Xers (84 percent) and baby boomers (90 percent)
- **Race** – Those who identify as non-white (91 percent), those who identify as white (88 percent)
- **Ethnicity** – Those who identify as Hispanic (88 percent)
- **Household formation** – Households with children (93 percent)
- **Political views** – Democrats (94 percent), Republicans (89 percent), Independents/Other (79 percent)
- **Region** – Northeast (90 percent), South (87 percent), Midwest (92 percent) and West (89 percent)
- **Proximity to a park** – Live near a park (92 percent), do not live near a park (81 percent)

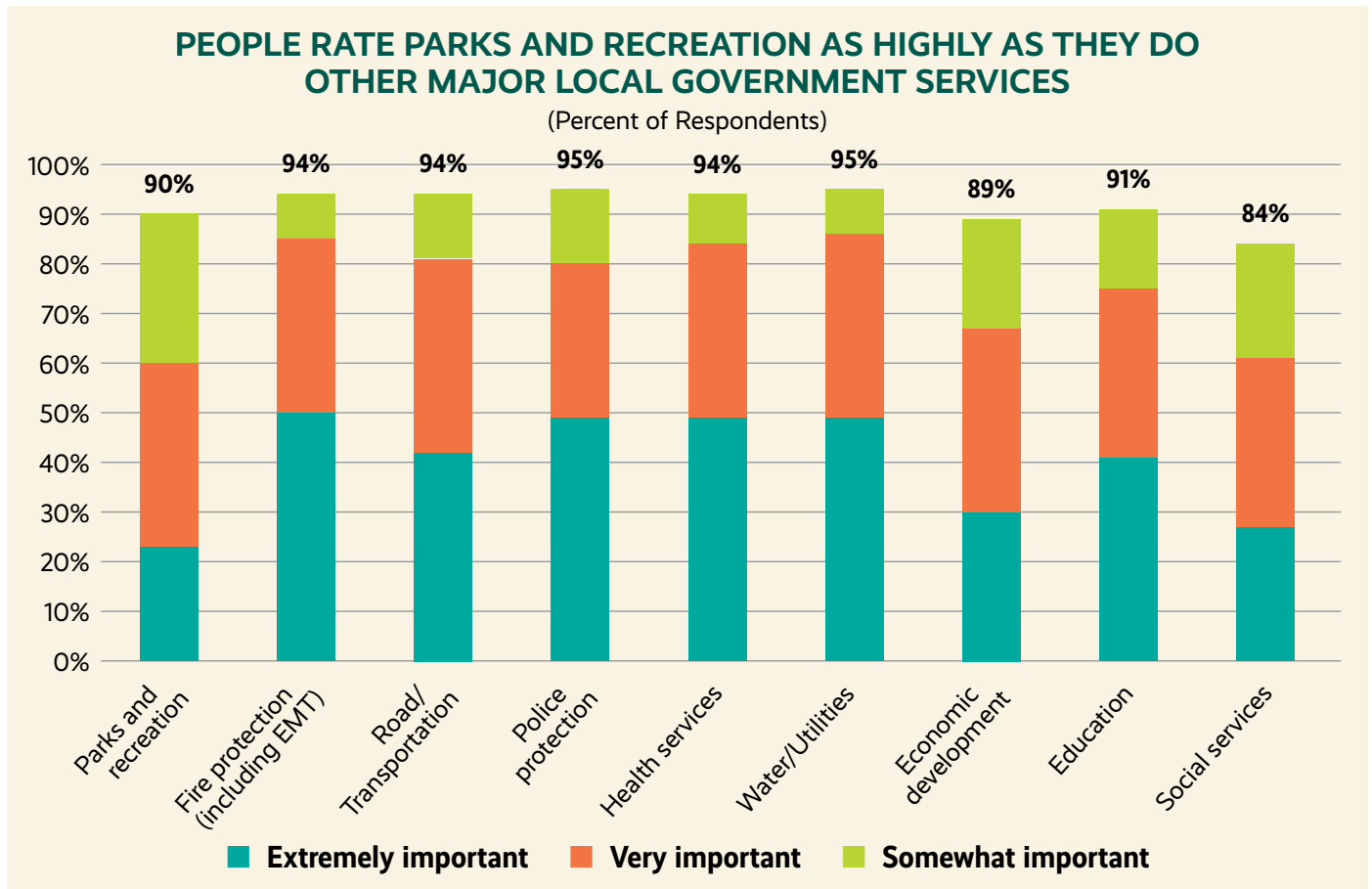
PEOPLE AGREE PARKS AND RECREATION IS AN IMPORTANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE

(Percentage Distribution of Respondents)



People hold park and recreation agencies at virtually the same high level of importance that they do other major services delivered by their local governments. Whereas 89 percent of survey respondents view parks and recreation as an important service provided by local government, other services compare favorably, including:

- Water/Utilities (cited by 95 percent of respondents)
- Police protection (95 percent)
- Fire protection (including an emergency medical technician [EMT]) (94 percent)
- Roads/Transportation (94 percent)
- Health services (94 percent)
- Education (91 percent)
- Economic development (89 percent)
- Social services (84 percent)



Park and recreation agencies provide low- and no-cost opportunities to every member of the communities they serve. Funding sources for park and recreation operations vary greatly by agency; however, support from the local jurisdiction’s general fund tax base is most common. Sufficient and sustainable funding from local and state governments is critical to ensure parks, facilities and programming provided by parks and recreation remain ubiquitous, accessible and affordable.

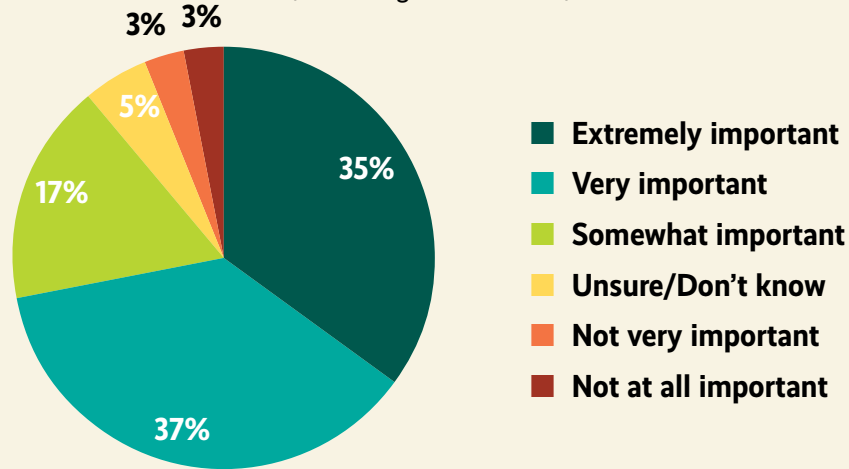
Nine in 10 adults agree that their local and state governments must sufficiently fund local park and recreation agencies to ensure every community member has access to the amenities, infrastructure and programming offered. Nearly three-quarters of these adults say this funding is “extremely” or “very” important.

Additionally, those respondents who believe that sufficiently funding a park or recreation agency is important include:

- Parents (95 percent of respondents)
- Those living near a park (95 percent)
- Those identifying as “very active” (95 percent)
- Gen Zers (95 percent)
- Those identifying as non-white (94 percent)
- Millennials (94 percent)

THE PUBLIC SAYS LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES IS IMPORTANT

(Percentage Distribution)



Community engagement is a vital component of a successful park and recreation agency’s efforts to ensure programming and amenities meet the needs and desires of every person in the jurisdiction it serves. These activities may take the form of meetings and events, surveys, focus groups and other relationship-building undertakings that make sure an agency hears views from every segment of the community.

Eighty-eight percent of U.S. adults indicate that their local park and recreation agencies must engage directly with the public to ensure every community member has access to amenities, infrastructure and programming that meet their specific needs and desires. More than two-thirds of respondents agree this engagement is “extremely” or “very” important.

Groups with the strongest desire for local park and recreation agencies to engage directly with the public include:

- Millennials (82 percent of respondents indicating “extremely” or “very” important)
- Those identifying as very active (82 percent)
- Parents (81 percent)
- Those identifying as non-white (79 percent)

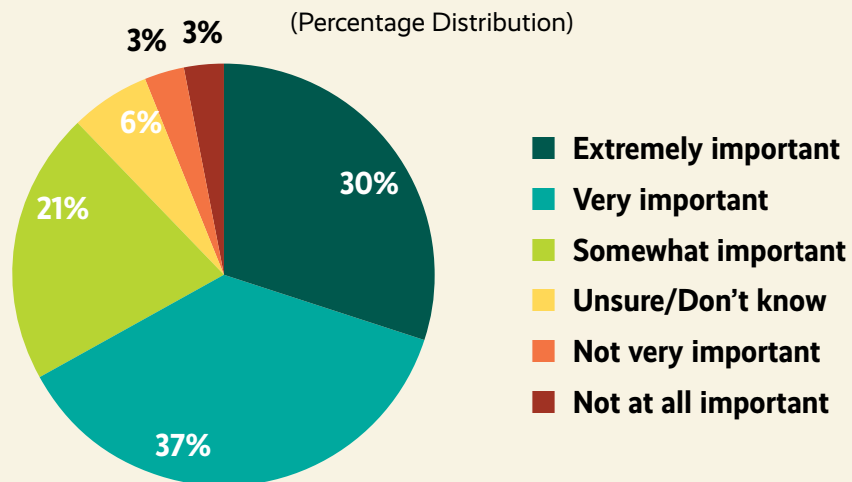


PHOTO COURTESY OF DENTON PARKS AND RECREATION



Two participants in a community walk are pictured in front of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

PEOPLE SAY IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PARKS AND RECREATION TO ENGAGE WITH ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ENSURE AMENITIES AND PROGRAMMING MEET THEIR SPECIFIC NEEDS AND DESIRES

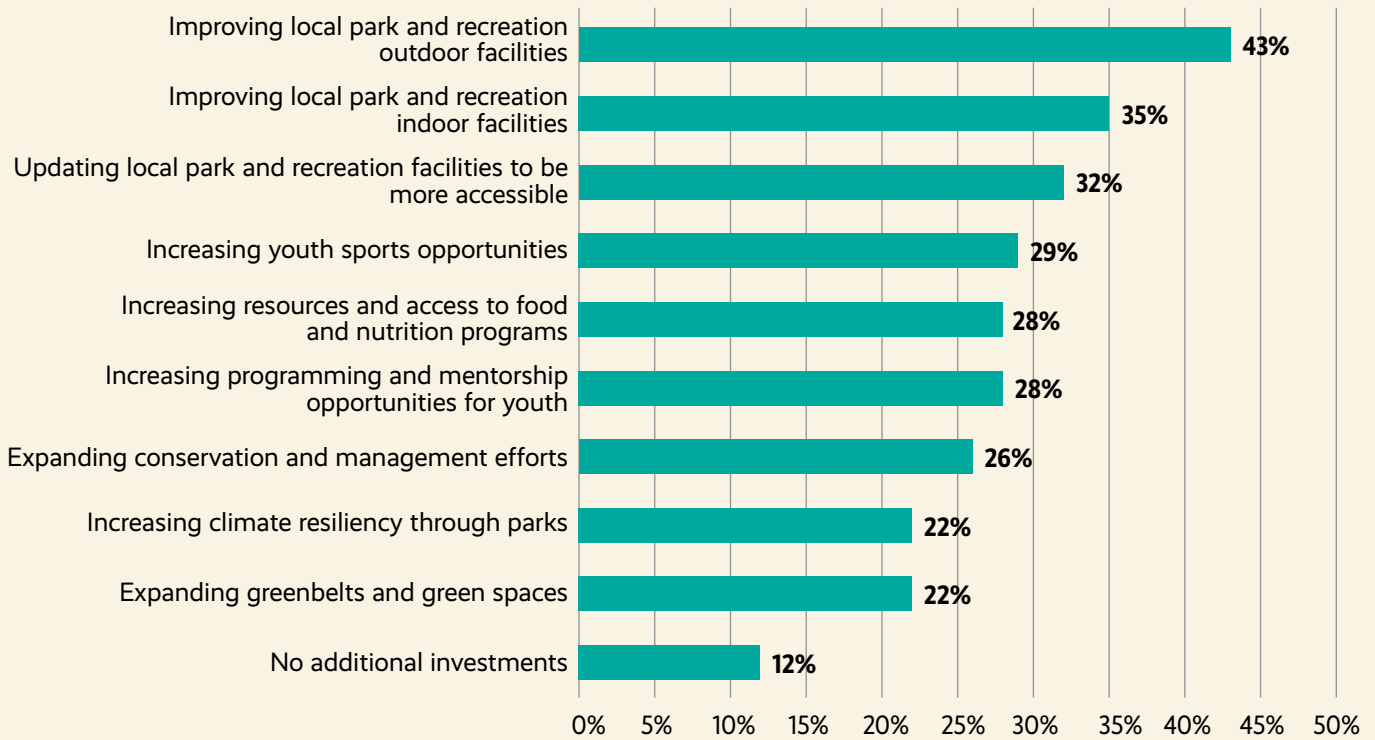


High-quality parks and recreation is the result of continual investment in both new and refurbished amenities and programming. Nine in 10 U.S. adults support their local governments making additional investments in parks and recreation. Favored investments include:

- Improving local park and recreation outdoor facilities (e.g., parks, trails, playgrounds, sports fields) (cited by 43 percent of respondents)
- Improving local park and recreation indoor facilities (e.g., recreation centers, gyms, indoor aquatics centers) (35 percent)
- Updating local parks and recreation facilities to be more accessible (32 percent)
- Increasing youth sports opportunities (29 percent)
- Increasing programming and mentorship opportunities for youth (28 percent)
- Increasing resources and access to food and nutrition programs (28 percent)
- Expanding conservation and management efforts (26 percent)
- Expanding greenbelts and green spaces (22 percent)
- Increasing climate resiliency through parks (22 percent)

MOST U.S. ADULTS FAVOR ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS TO ENHANCE PARK AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMING

(Percent of Respondents)



Every resident of a city, town or county has the power to support the vitality of parks and recreation in their communities. As such, it is vital that a local park and recreation agency gains its community's trust — and mutual respect is vital for advocacy. More than half of all survey respondents have contributed to their local parks in some manner. The typical park and recreation agency logs 3,000 hours of volunteer work annually — in large cities, the number of volunteers expands exponentially. Whether through time, money and/or talents shared, this legion of volunteers contributes to the success of their communities.

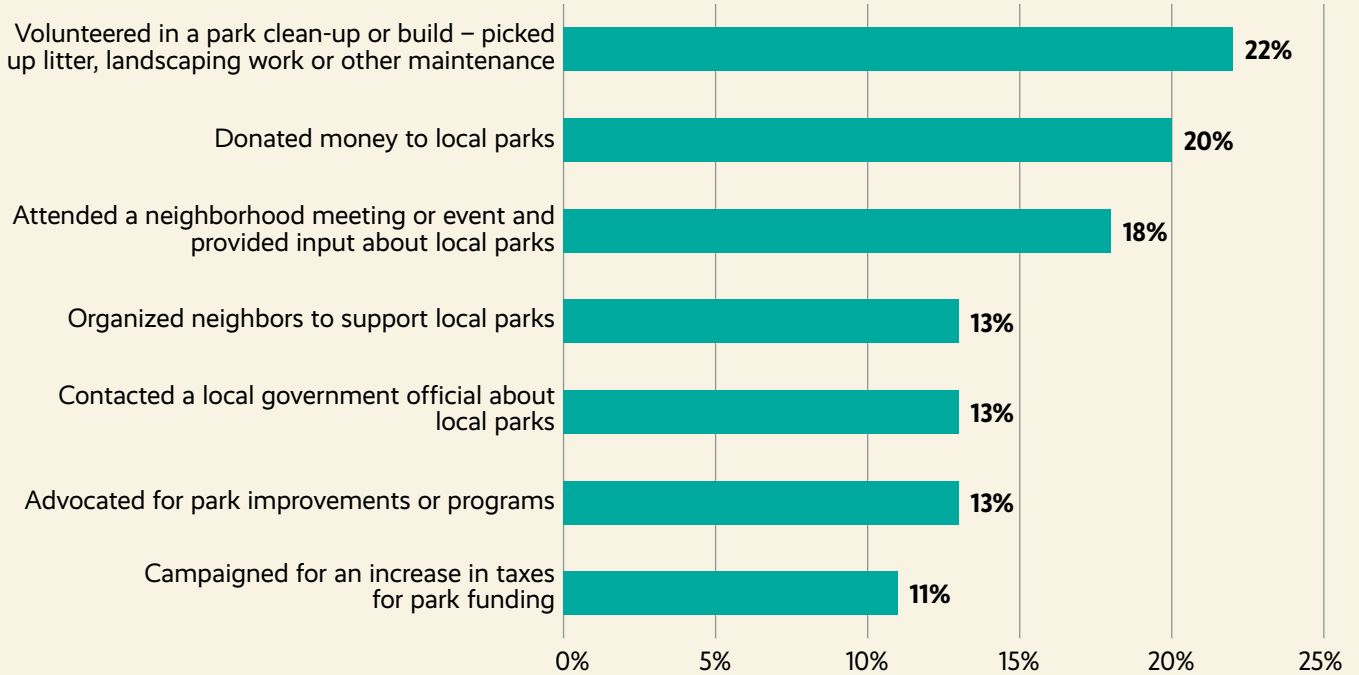
Within the past year, the public contributed to their local parks by:

- Volunteering in a park clean-up or build — picking up litter, landscaping work or other maintenance (cited by 22 percent of respondents)
- Donating money to their local parks (20 percent)
- Attending a neighborhood meeting or event and providing input about their local parks (18 percent)
- Organizing neighbors to support their local parks (13 percent)
- Contacting a local government official about local parks (13 percent)
- Advocating for park improvements or programs (13 percent)
- Campaigning for an increase in taxes for park funding (11 percent)

Very active residents, parents, millennials and Gen Zers were most likely to have taken steps to contribute to support local parks and recreation, with at least 70 percent of each cohort having supported their local parks in some form.

MORE THAN HALF OF RESIDENTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE VITALITY OF PARKS AND RECREATION DURING THE PAST YEAR

(Percent of Respondents)



Adults participate in a workout in a recreation center in Ottawa, Kansas.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OTTAWA RECREATION COMMISSION

Conclusions

Attendees play games at the esports lounge at the Lone Tree Hub in Lone Tree, Colorado.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUTH SUBURBAN PARKS AND RECREATION



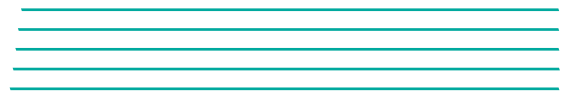
Communities grow and thrive thanks to park and recreation professionals. The beneficial opportunities and experiences that these passionate and dedicated individuals deliver are evident in the more than 280 million people who visited their local parks and facilities over the past year. Whether residents visit a park or recreation facility once a month or walk on local trails daily, they understand the vital role their park and recreation agency plays in their lives and the lives of their neighbors.

Parks and recreation provides families and friends with areas to meet, offers spaces for improved physical and mental health, and presents opportunities for those of all ages to learn and flourish. As with all things, areas of growth exist for parks and recreation. Continued work must be done so every community member feels included, safe and welcome in park and recreation spaces.

Encouraging open dialogue from residents can strengthen trust in a community. Professionals who turn that resident feedback into results can create and nurture life-long passionate park and recreation advocates. But to be able to make those requests a reality, attaining sufficient and sustainable park and recreation funding is critical.

Park and recreation professionals can use the results from the *2023 Engagement With Parks Report* as proof of the strong support they have among residents and the valued services they provide in their local communities. The information in this report also serves as a tool to use when speaking to local political leaders, stakeholders and the media for increased funding and resources. The data presented in this report series are not only a snapshot-in-time of the public's engagement with their local parks and recreation facilities, but also a reminder of their continued, unwavering support of the tireless work of park and recreation professionals.

Acknowledgments



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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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