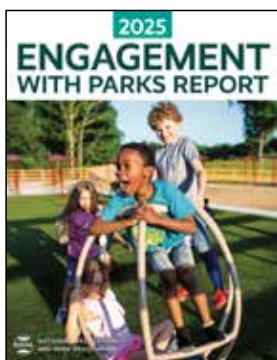


2025

ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS REPORT



NATIONAL RECREATION
AND PARK ASSOCIATION



Cover image: Children play at the Mabry Park in Marietta, Georgia.

Photo courtesy of Cobb County Parks, Marietta, Georgia.

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INTRODUCTION

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SOUTH GATE (CALIFORNIA) PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT



Two teens pick up trash in Southgate Park, California.

As stewards of public spaces and programming, the more than 10,000 U.S. park and recreation agencies foster community well-being by encouraging participation in activities that reflect community needs related to health and wellness, social connection, education, and family support. The professionals working at these agencies strive to build communities where everyone has access to, and can benefit from, these valuable resources and offerings.

Since 2016, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has conducted an annual survey to understand U.S. public perceptions about municipal park and recreation services. On behalf of NRPA, Wakefield Research surveyed a demographically and regionally representative sample of 1,000 U.S. adults ages 18 and older between August 27 and September 9, 2025. The margin of error for data contained in this report is ± 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The survey results form the basis of this annual *Engagement With Parks Report*. Inside, readers can gain insights into how local park and recreation facilities and offerings impact the lives of people nationwide.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 2025 *Engagement With Parks Report*



More than **227 million** adults or a household member in the United States visited a local park or recreation facility at least once between August 2024 and September 2025.



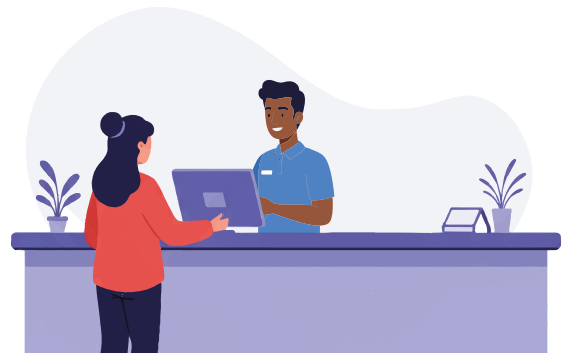
Approximately **3 in 5 (63%)** U.S. adults say they are highly likely to consider the availability of park and recreation services when choosing a place to live.



The **top reason** U.S. adults use park and recreation facilities is to spend time with family and friends.



Virtually **all survey respondents (99%)** report some feelings of belonging at their park and recreation spaces.



Approximately **2 in 3 adults (68%)** strongly agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local government.

PARK AND RECREATION ACCESS



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAWN THOMPSON, CPRP, NEPTUNE (NEW JERSEY) RECREATION

Neptune (New Jersey) Recreation summer rec campers enjoy a foam party.

U.S. residents visit park and recreation facilities to take advantage of myriad offerings and numerous benefits provided by those facilities. Public access to and use of these facilities vary by neighborhood depending on factors such as the number of parks available, parks' proximity to individuals/families and the availability of transportation options.

Visiting Parks and Recreation

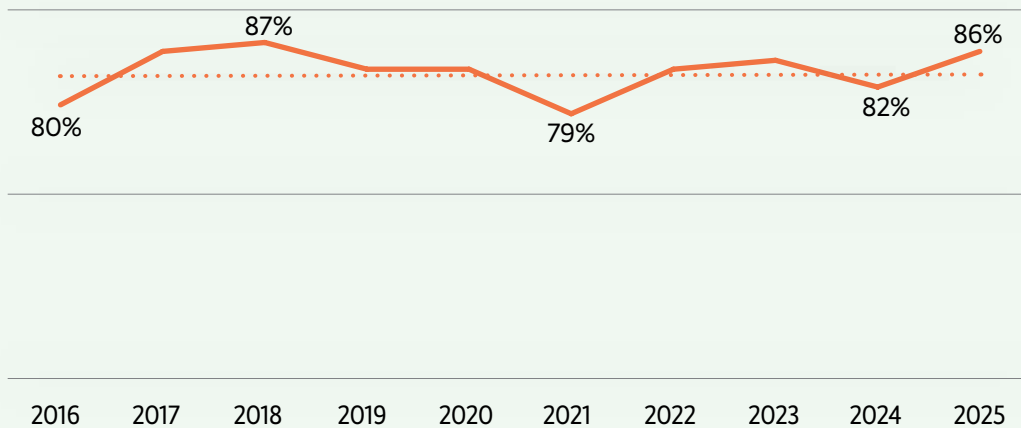
Between August 2024 and September 2025, 86 percent of survey respondents — an estimated 227 million adults or a household member in the United States — visited a local park or recreation facility at least once.[†] A slight 2 percent of respondents never visited.

Since NRPA's first *Engagement With Parks Report* in 2016, the share of the population visiting parks or recreation centers has remained consistently high, ranging between 79 and 87 percent.

†Note: This report uses an updated methodology to estimate the number of adults and household members visiting park and recreation facilities in the past year. As a result, population estimates may not be directly comparable with those in previous reports.

THE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION VISITING PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES AT LEAST ONCE WITHIN THE PAST YEAR HAS REMAINED HIGH OVER TIME.

% of respondents by reporting year



MOST SURVEY RESPONDENTS VISITED A LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY DURING THE PAST MONTH.

% of respondents

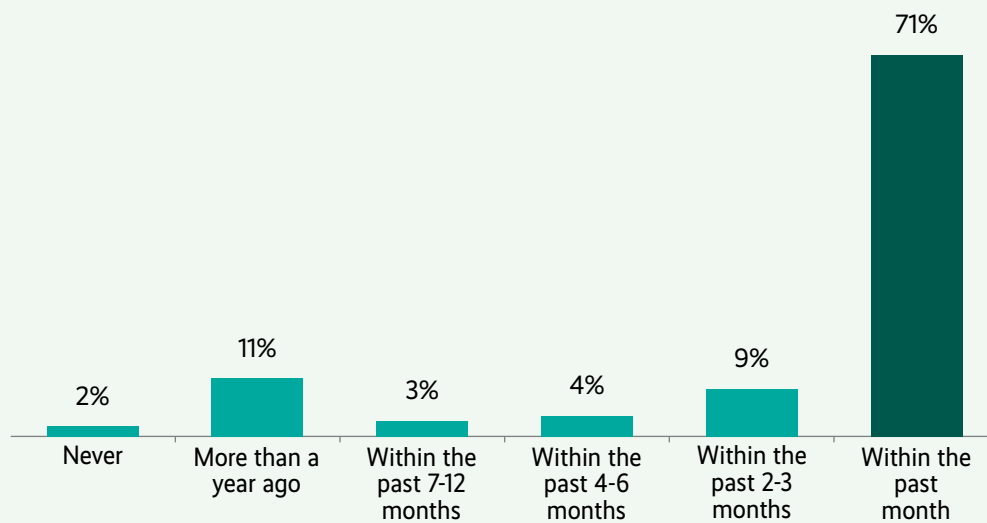


PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF KETTERING (OHIO) PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL DEPARTMENT



Youth participate in a dance class in Kettering, Ohio.

Seventy-one percent of respondents visited their local park and/or recreation facility at least once within the past month of completing the survey, representing a 10-percentage-point

increase from 2024. The top visitors within the past month by select characteristic groups are displayed in the chart below.

GEN ZERS WERE THE MOST LIKELY GROUP TO HAVE VISITED A LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY DURING THE PAST MONTH.

% of respondents



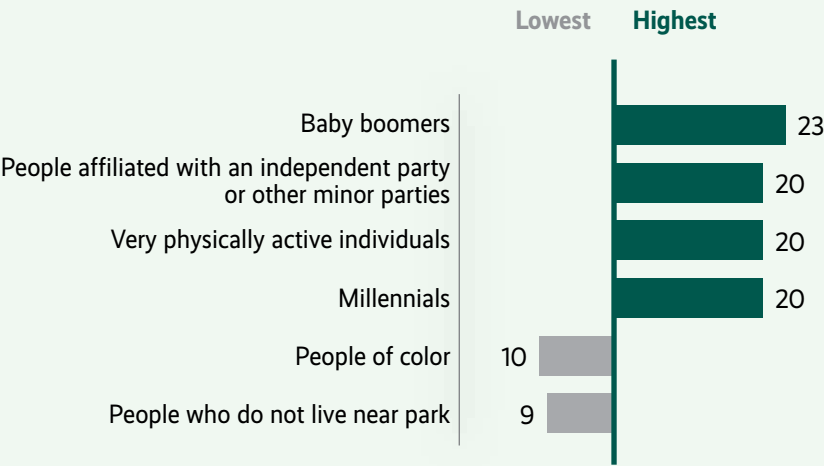
Frequency of Visits

On average, people visited their local park and recreation facilities 16 times during the previous 12 months of taking the survey. The group with the highest average number of visits was baby boomers (an average 23 times), and the groups with

the lowest number of visits were people of color (an average 10 times) and those not living near a park (an average 9 times). Five percent of all respondents were considered “power users,” because they used park and recreation facilities once a week or more.

THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST AVERAGE NUMBER OF PARK AND RECREATION VISITS VARIED BY GENERATION, POLITICAL AFFILIATION, ACTIVITY LEVEL, RACE AND PROXIMITY TO A PARK.

Average number of visits to park and recreation facilities during the past year



Note: The 2025 report covers the time period between August 27 and September 9, 2025, while the 2024 report covered the time period between June 24 and July 7, 2024.

A student sands a woodworking project in the welding and metal fabrication class at the Biddeford Regional Center for Technology School in Maine.



U.S. RESIDENTS WHO LIVE CLOSER TO PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND WHO ARE VERY PHYSICALLY ACTIVE VISIT THOSE FACILITIES MORE OFTEN THAN DO OTHER GROUPS.

Average and median number of visits to park and recreation facilities during the past year

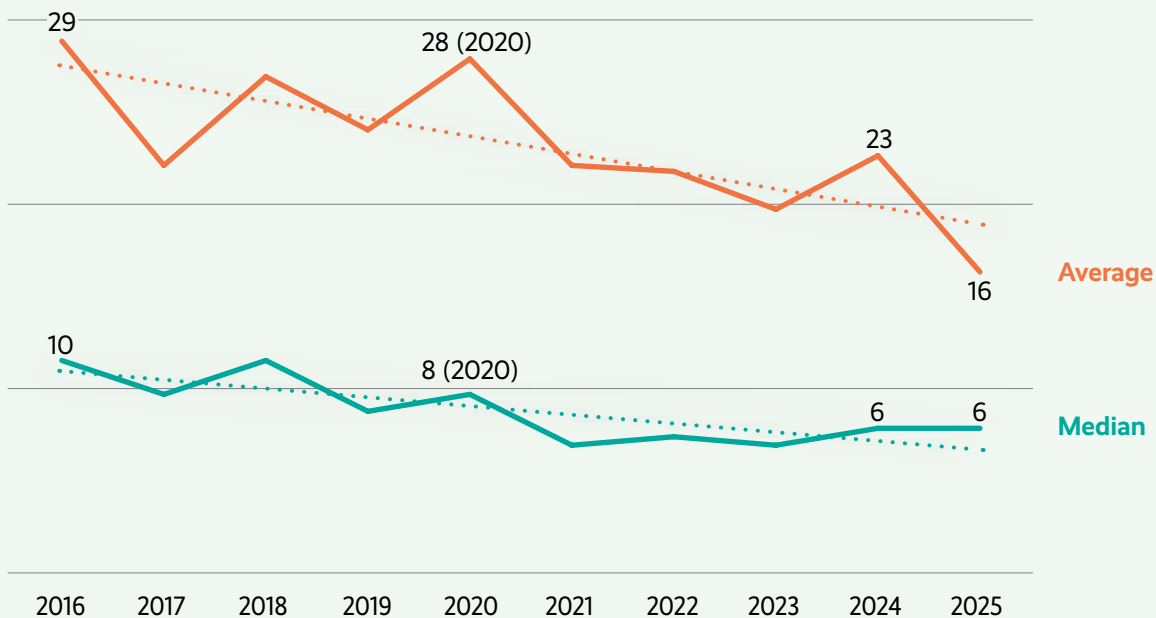
	Proximity to Park			Physical Activity	
	All	Live near park	Do not live near park	Very active	Somewhat/ Not active
Average number of visits	16	18	9	20	12
Median number of visits	6	7	4	8	5

Note: Unweighted median number of visits reported

Although more people visited park and recreation facilities in the past year, the average and median number of visits decreased during the past nine years of reporting.

AVERAGE AND MEDIAN NUMBER OF VISITS IN THE PAST YEAR HAVE DECREASED OVER TIME.

Average and median number of visits to park and recreation facilities during the past year by reporting year



Proximity to Park and Recreation Facilities

Most survey respondents (75%) live within a walkable distance of at least one park or recreation facility, including 31 percent who live within a walkable distance of multiple

facilities. It follows that 24 percent of them — the equivalent of approximately 63 million adults or household members in the United States — **do not** live within a walkable distance to a park or other recreation facility.†

3 IN 4 U.S. RESIDENTS (75%) LIVE WITHIN A WALKABLE DISTANCE OF AT LEAST ONE PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY.



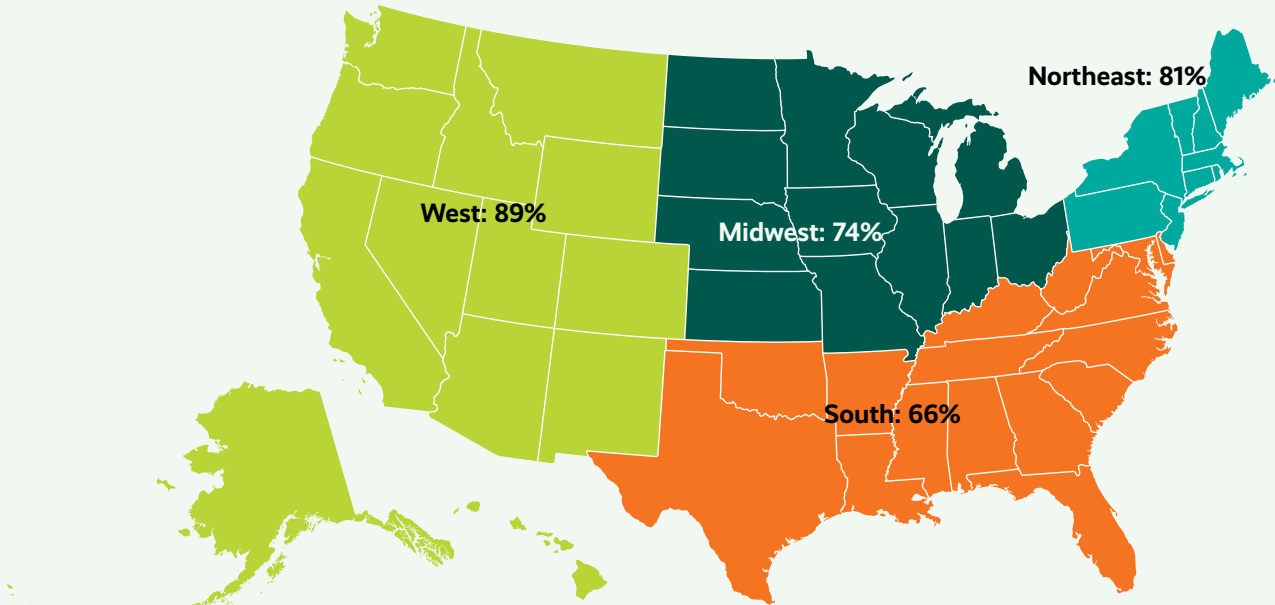
The perceived availability of park and recreation facilities within a walkable distance (as self-defined by survey respondents) varies by region. Compared to residents in the South, those living in the West and Northeast are more likely to have at least one facility to which they can walk. The percentage of respondents in the West who have walkable access to parks increased by 11 percentage points since the 2024 report. Also, a larger share of respondents from urban (90%) and suburban (71%) areas reported having walkable facilities compared to the share from rural areas (49%).



A local artist live spray paints during West Side Arts in Champaign, Illinois.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAMPAIGN PARK DISTRICT (ILLINOIS)

RESPONDENTS IN THE WEST AND NORTHEAST ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THOSE IN THE SOUTH TO HAVE PARK AND RECREATION CENTERS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE* OF THEIR HOMES.
% of respondents within walking distance to at least one park and recreation facility, by region



*“Walking distance” was self-defined by survey respondents

†Note: This report uses an updated methodology to estimate the number of adults and household members that do not live within a walkable distance to a park or recreation facility. As a result, estimates may not be directly comparable with those in previous reports.

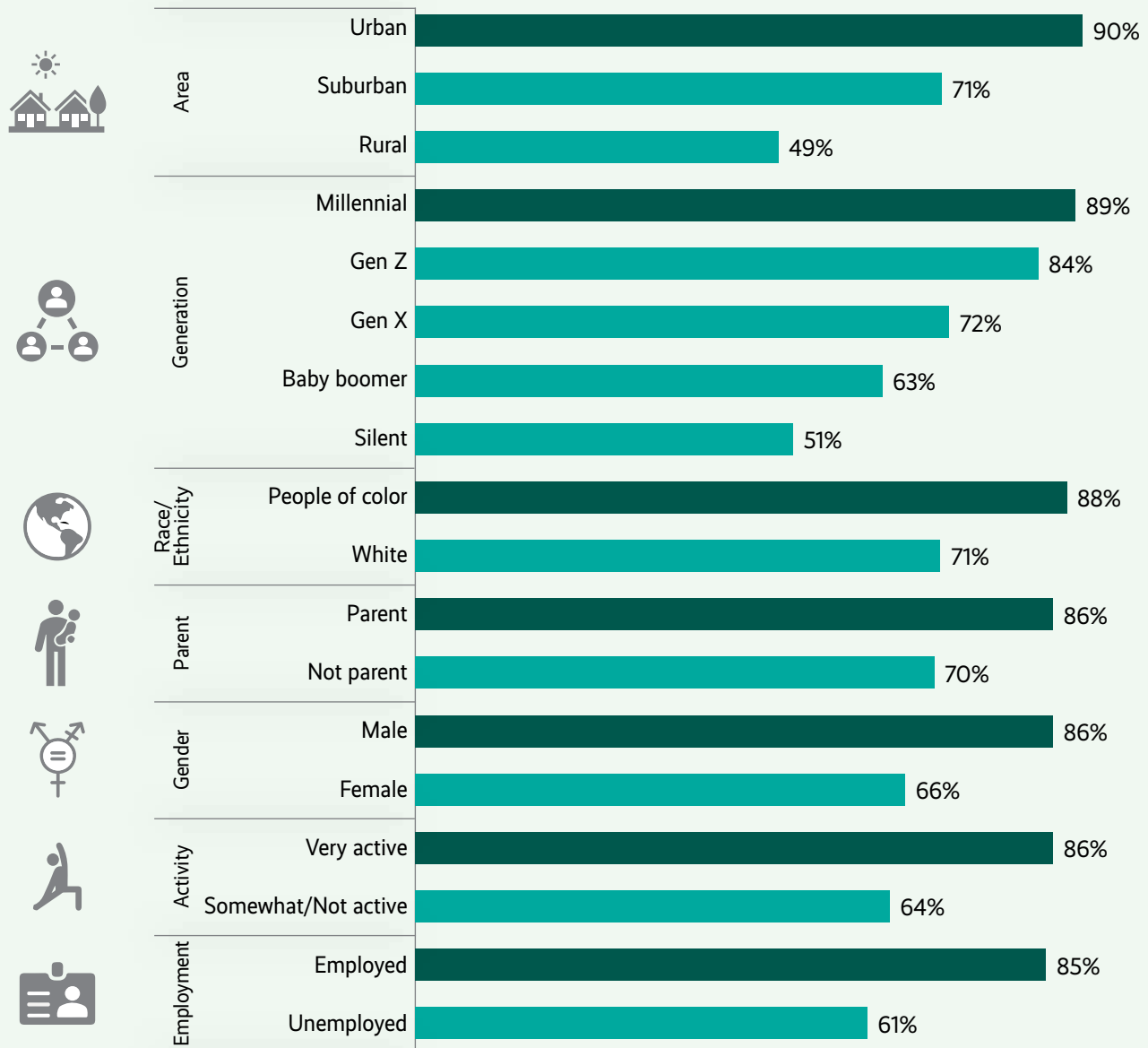
Aside from regional differences, walkability to park and recreation facilities varies among other groups, as summarized in the chart below.

Many residents desire close access to local park and recreation opportunities when choosing where to live. In fact, 86 percent

of survey respondents say proximity to high-quality parks, playgrounds, open spaces or other recreation facilities is at least a somewhat important factor when deciding what neighborhood or area in which to live. Sixty-three percent say that it is highly important.

LIKELIHOOD OF LIVING WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE TO PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES VARIES BY AREA, GENERATION, RACE/ETHNICITY, PARENTAL STATUS, GENDER, LEVEL OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT.

% of respondents



Note: Displaying results for top seven demographic groups with representation of 85% and above; unweighted percentages for area are reported.



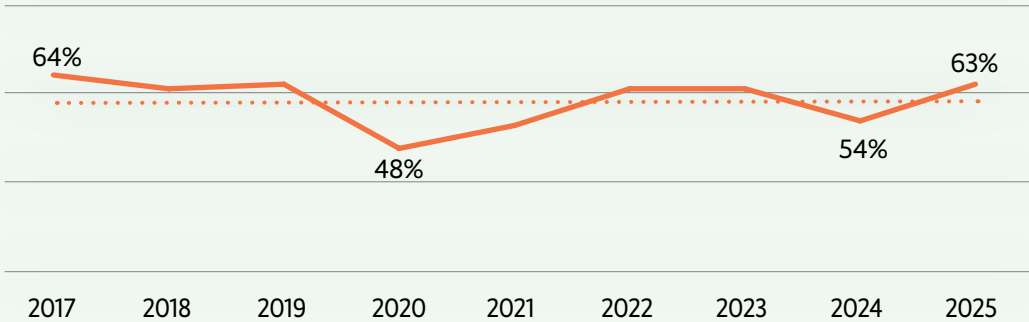
Youth participate in a skateboarding activity in Los Angeles, California.

ABOUT 3 IN 5 U.S. RESIDENTS (63%) SAY PROXIMITY TO PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT WHEN CHOOSING A PLACE TO LIVE.



THE HIGH IMPORTANCE PLACED ON PROXIMITY TO PARKS WHEN CHOOSING WHERE TO LIVE HAS REMAINED CONSISTENT DURING THE PAST NINE YEARS.

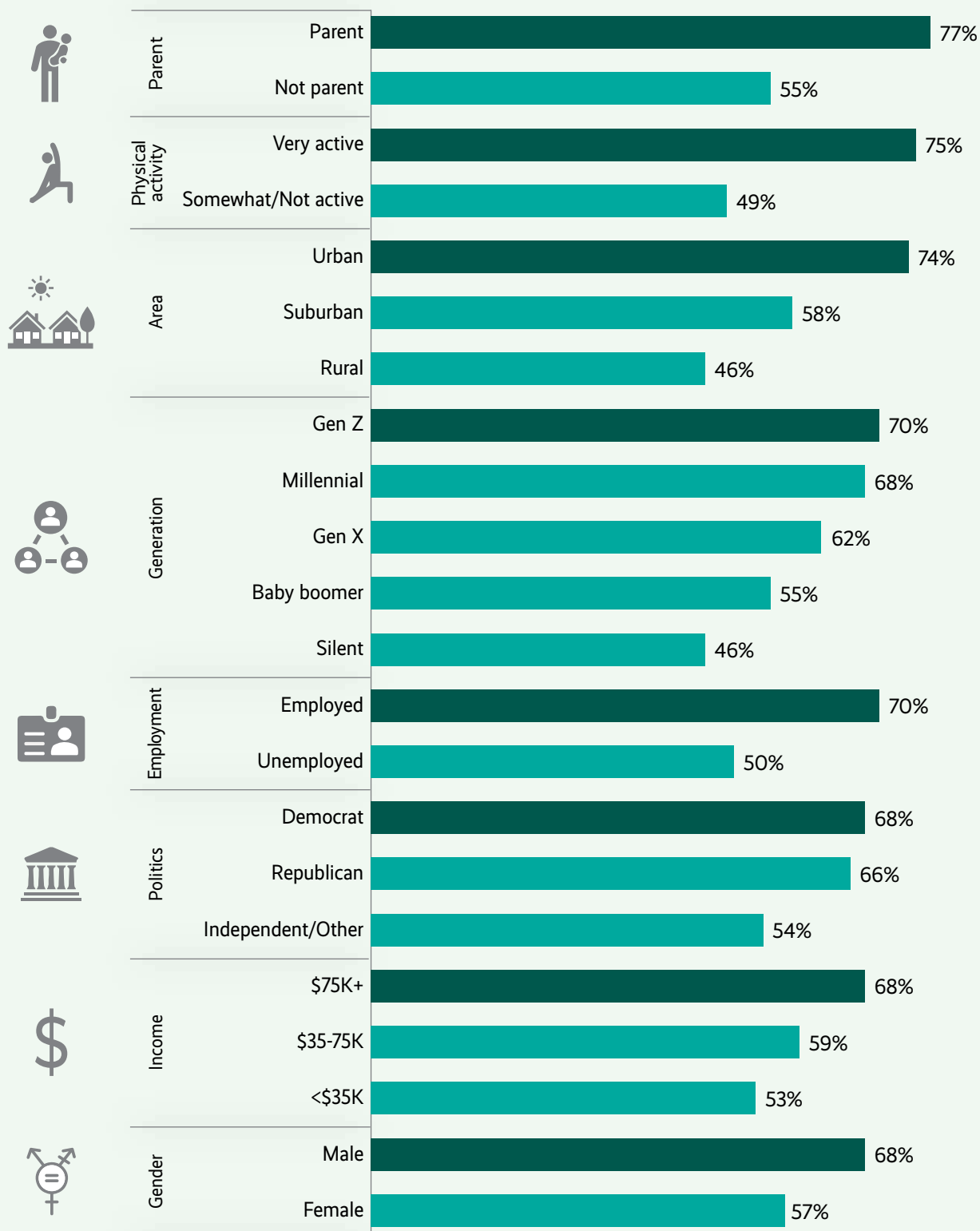
% of respondents by reporting year



Notable differences emerge when comparing the percentage of respondents within different groups who place high importance on proximity to park and recreation facilities when choosing where to live.

HIGH IMPORTANCE OF PROXIMITY TO PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES WHEN CHOOSING A PLACE TO LIVE VARIES WITHIN DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

% of respondents



Note: Displaying unweighted percentages for area.

Traveling to Park and Recreation Facilities

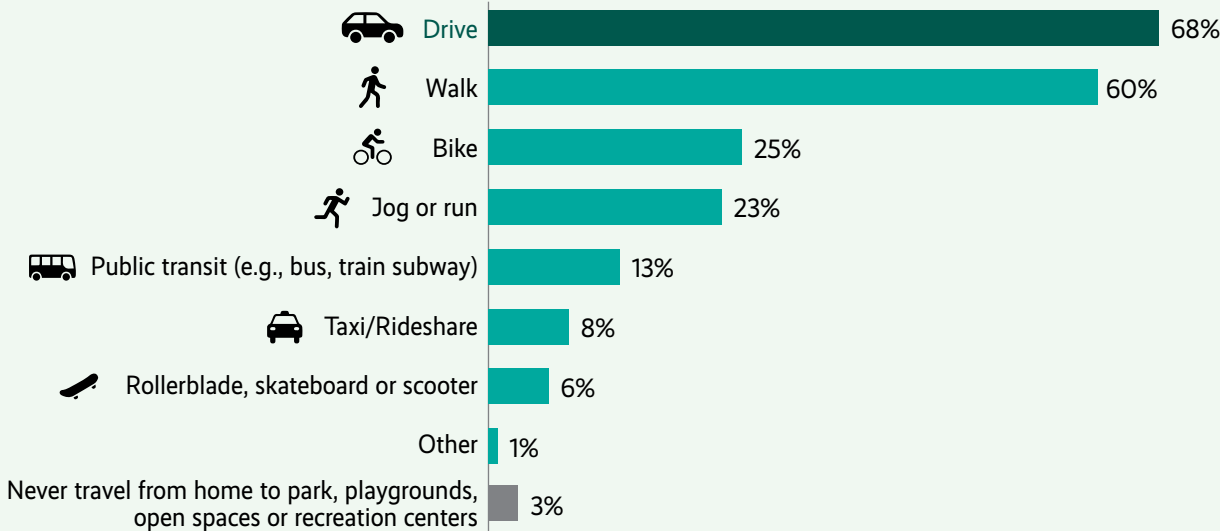
People use many forms of transportation to travel to parks, playgrounds, open spaces and recreation centers — and for several reasons. While many people travel by automobile to these areas (68%), more than half of U.S. adults access these locations by walking (60%).

Seventy-eight percent of U.S. adults who do not live near park and recreation offerings and 73 percent who live in rural areas drive from home to those amenities.

Close proximity to a park and living in an urban area increase the likelihood that people use active means of transportation (e.g., walking, biking, running, skateboarding) to visit these areas.

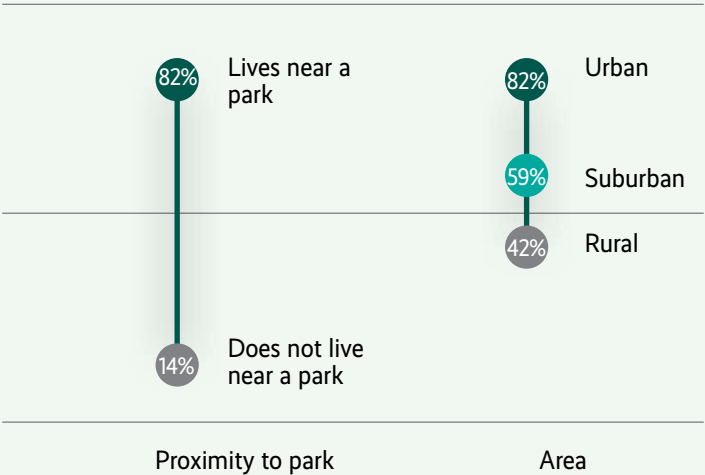
MOST RESPONDENTS DRIVE TO PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES.

% of respondents



CLOSE PROXIMITY TO PARKS AND LIVING IN AN URBAN AREA INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD THAT PEOPLE WILL TRAVEL TO PARKS BY “ACTIVE” MEANS.

% of respondents traveling to park and recreation facilities by active means



Note: Active means include travel by walking, biking, running, roller-blading, skateboarding and by scooter.

PARK AND RECREATION USE



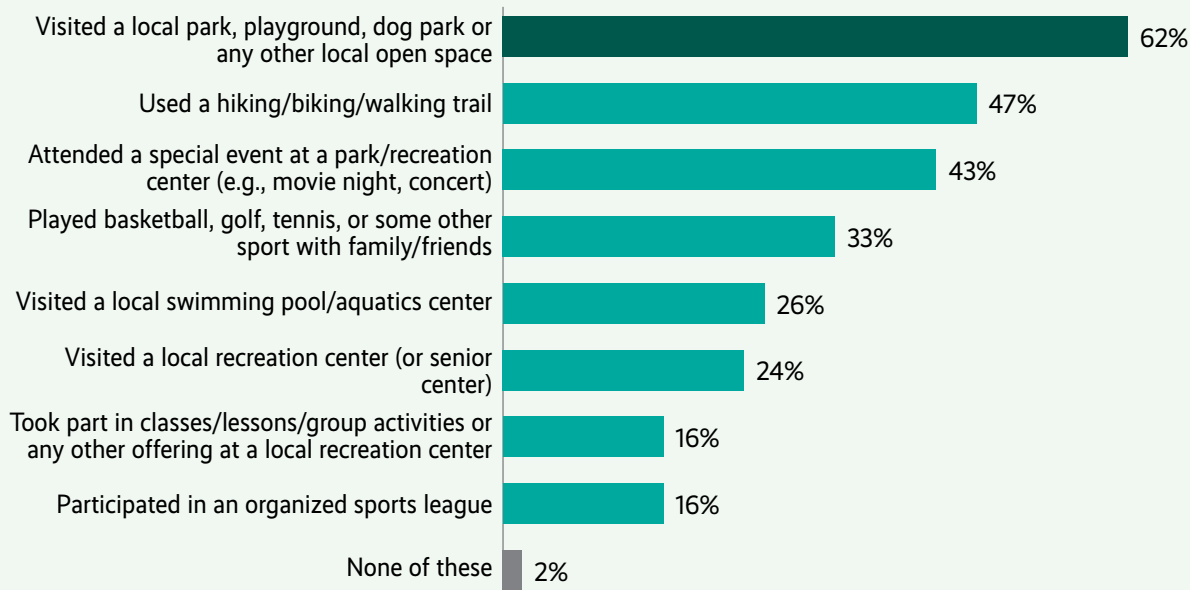
PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF WINTerset (IOWA) PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

A child swings on a playground in Winterset, Iowa.

Park and recreation offerings vary by agency, and families and individuals use them differently. Sixty-two percent of the more than 227 million adult or household members visited a local park, playground, dog park or other local open space within the past 12 months. Parents (75%), millennials (73%) and people who are employed (72%) were the top users of parks in these ways. Hiking, biking and walking on local trails was the second-most popular activity, with almost half of all survey respondents (47%) taking advantage of these offerings.

VISITING A LOCAL PARK, PLAYGROUND, DOG PARK OR OTHER LOCAL OPEN SPACE ARE THE TOP USES OF PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES.

% of respondents reporting ways they use park and recreation facilities



Regarding park and recreation programming, 63 percent of respondents and/or a member of their households participated in activities sponsored by park and recreation departments, such as sports leagues, summer camps, out-of-school care and classes/lessons. This figure is equivalent to more than 82 million households in the United States.[†] Respondents who are parents (81%), millennials (76%), Gen Zers (75%), those identifying as very physically active (71%), and those identifying as Hispanic (70%) and/or members of their households were the most likely groups to have participated

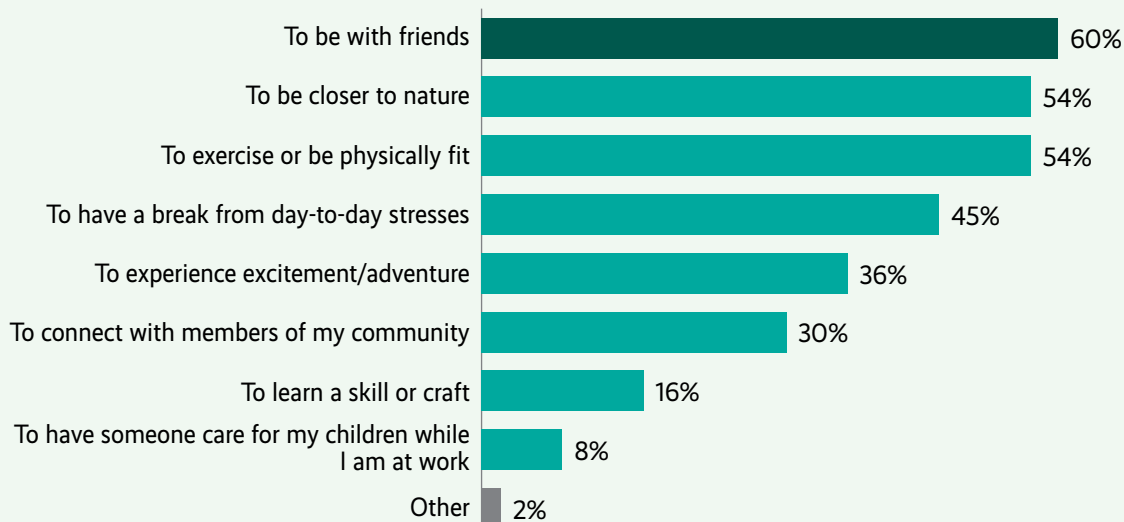
in a park and recreation program in the past three months of taking the survey.

Reasons for Park and Recreation Use

People engage with park and recreation amenities and programming for various reasons, including social connection, physical and mental health benefits, and opportunities for new experiences and learning. The top reason is to be with family and friends, cited by 60 percent of respondents.

BEING WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS IS THE TOP REASON THE PUBLIC USES PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES.

% of respondents reporting reasons they use park and recreation facilities



[†]Note: This report uses an updated methodology to estimate the number of households participating in park and recreation activities. As a result, estimates may not be directly comparable with those in previous reports.

Obstacles to Park and Recreation Use

Obstacles may hinder residents from taking full advantage of their local park and recreation facilities. Overall, 71 percent reported at least one obstacle kept them from using park and recreation opportunities as much as they would have liked during the past year. Forty-one percent of U.S. adults say lack of time kept them from fully enjoying their local park and recreation facilities. Lack of time consistently has been the top obstacle reported for the past nine years of the survey.

Other significant obstacles cited include age, health and mobility issues, disabilities, bad weather and lack of transportation.

Parents (71%) and Gen Zers (68%) were the most likely groups to cite family and friends as their primary motivation for accessing parks and recreation.

LACK OF TIME IS THE TOP OBSTACLE TO USING PARKS AND RECREATION.

% of respondents reporting obstacles for using park and recreation facilities

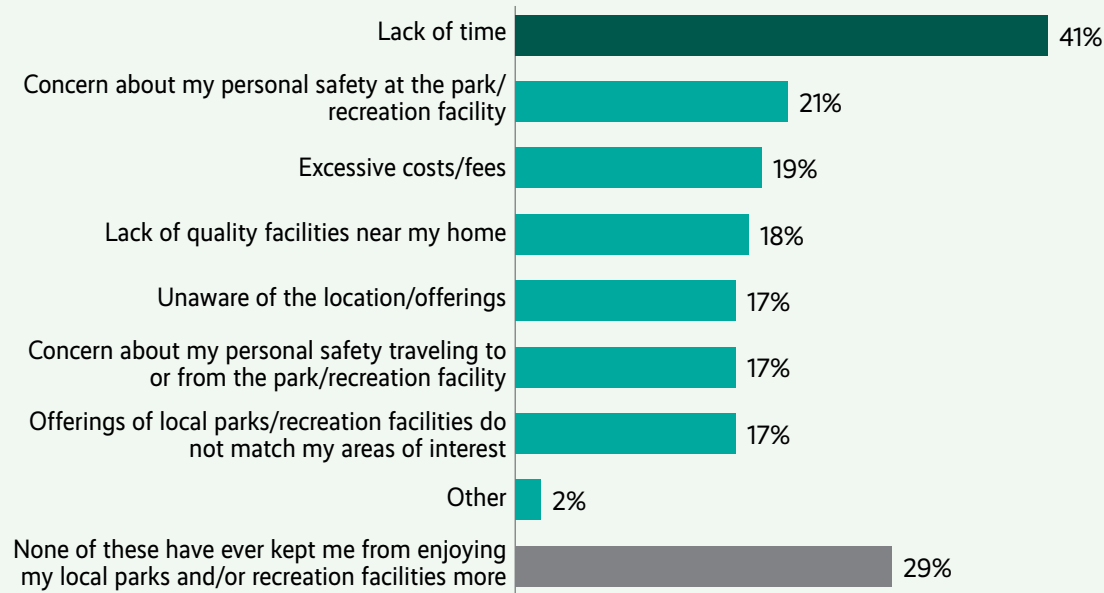


PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF ASHEVILLE (NORTH CAROLINA) PARKS AND RECREATION



Patrons celebrate at a ribbon cutting for Murphy-Oakley Inclusive Playground in North Carolina.

“FEELING OF BELONGING” IN PARKS AND RECREATION

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF HIGH POINT (NORTH CAROLINA) PARKS AND RECREATION



A coach lifts a player in celebration during a youth football league game in High Point, North Carolina.

Safe, accessible and welcoming spaces can impact a person’s perception and use of park and recreation facilities. Overall, 99 percent of respondents reported at least some feelings of belonging at their park and recreation facilities.

NEARLY THREE-QUARTERS OF U.S. ADULTS (72%) FEEL **SAFE** AT THEIR PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES.

% of respondents

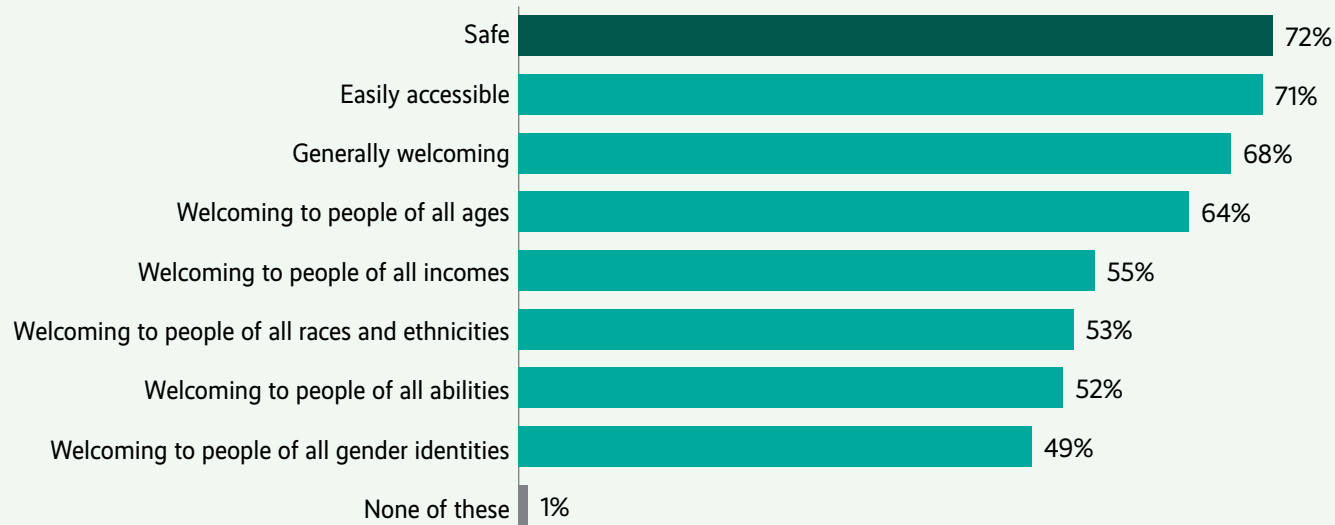


PHOTO COURTESY OF VICENTE ZUNIGA

School-age kids roller skate at the Mervin Morris Park Tennis Courts in San Lorenzo, California.

Feeling like one's identity is included at park and recreation facilities can influence whether one uses those amenities. People who experience accessible and welcoming parks and recreation facilities visit those places more often than those who do not share the same experiences. For example, respondents who felt like their parks were easily accessible visited a park twice as much (20 times), on average, than did those who did not feel their parks were easily accessible (10 times).

RESPONDENTS WHO **EXPERIENCED** ACCESSIBILITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING VISITED PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES, ON AVERAGE, MORE OFTEN THAN DID THOSE WHO **DID NOT HAVE THESE EXPERIENCES**.

Average number of times respondents visited park and recreation facilities in the past year



EXPERIENCES OF BELONGING IN PARKS AND RECREATION VARY BY GENERATION, RACE, INCOME AND GENDER.

% of respondents reporting experiences of inclusion and belonging by select demographics

Experienced	Generation		Race		Income		Gender	
Safe	Gen Z	68	White	72	\$75K+	76	Men	77
	Millennial/Gen X	75	People of color	71	\$35-75K	70	Women	68
	Baby boomer	70			<\$35K	63		
Easily accessible	Gen Z	66	White	71	\$75K+	71	Men	72
	Millennial	71	People of color	70	\$35-75K	72	Women	69
	Gen X	74			<\$35K	66		
	Baby boomer	70						
Generally welcoming	Gen Z	66	White	67	\$75K+	71	Men	69
	Millennial	73	People of color	70	\$35-75K	68	Women	67
	Gen X	66			<\$35K	58		
	Baby boomer	65						
Welcoming of all ages	Gen Z	59	White	67	\$75K+	64	Men	59
	Millennial	58	People of color	54	\$35-75K	67	Women	68
	Gen X	62			<\$35K	57		
	Baby boomer	71						
Welcoming of all races/ethnicities	Gen Z	48	White	55	\$75K+	53	Men	48
	Millennial	50	People of color	44	\$35-75K	55	Women	57
	Gen X	49			<\$35K	50		
	Baby boomer	59						
Welcoming of all incomes	Gen Z	46	White	59	\$75K+	55	Men	49
	Millennial	44	People of color	39	\$35-75K	56	Women	60
	Gen X	59			<\$35K	52		
	Baby boomer	64						
Welcoming of all abilities	Gen Z	47	White	55	\$75K+	54	Men	50
	Millennial	48	People of color	42	\$35-75K	52	Women	54
	Gen X	54			<\$35K	47		
	Baby boomer	55						
Welcoming of all gender identities	Gen Z	46	White	51	\$75K+	52	Men	45
	Millennial	48	People of color	43	\$35-75K	50	Women	53
	Gen X	47			<\$35K	40		
	Baby boomer	53						

Note: Green bold text indicates a statistically significant difference between group categories.

These data show that:



Baby boomers and Gen Xers were more likely to experience park and recreation facilities that were welcoming of all incomes than were Millennials. Baby boomers were also more likely to experience facilities that were welcoming to all ages compared to Millennials.



People identifying as white were more likely to experience park and recreation facilities that were welcoming of all ages, races/ethnicities, income and abilities than were people of color.



People in a higher income bracket were more likely to experience park and recreation facilities that were safe and welcoming of all ages and genders than were those with lower incomes.



Women were more likely than men to experience park and recreation facilities that were welcoming of all ages, race/ethnicities, incomes and genders. However, men were more likely to feel safe than women.

VALUE OF PARKS AND RECREATION



PHOTO COURTESY OF ISEBELLE BRENES

Park and recreation departments are crucial components of a broader system of public services across towns, cities and counties. In fact, most U.S. adults (95%) at least somewhat agree that parks and recreation is a valuable service provided by their local governments, and 68 percent strongly agree. The top supporters are parents (77%), those who are very physically active (76%), people with incomes greater than \$75,000 (75%), and those living near a park (74%). Adults consider parks and recreation to be as highly valuable as economic development and slightly more valuable than social services. This notable perceived value of parks and recreation has increased over time.

The Palm Coast Parks and Recreation Maintenance team installs a new basketball backboard in Palm Coast, Florida.

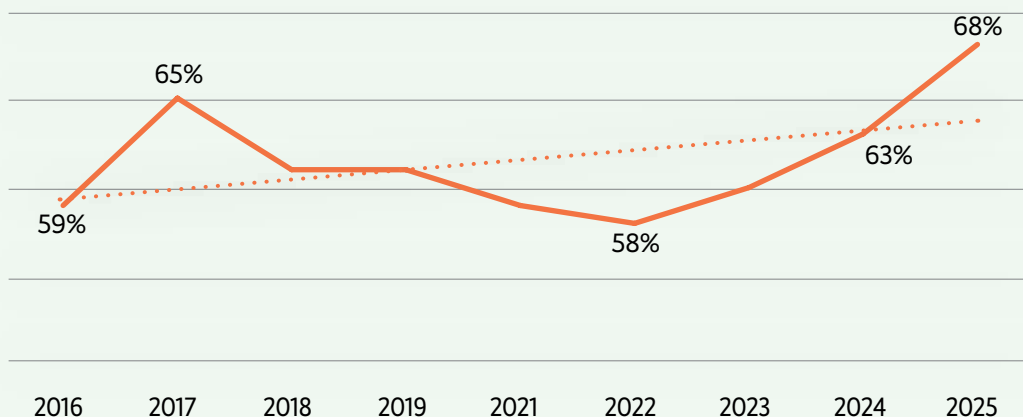
RESPONDENTS CONSIDER **LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES** TO HAVE COMPARABLE VALUE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

% of respondents reporting high value of local public services



THE PERCENTAGE OF U.S. ADULTS WHO PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON PARKS AND RECREATION HAS INCREASED OVER TIME.

% of respondents reporting high value of local park and recreation agencies by reporting year



Note: This question was not asked in the 2020 survey.

Funding for Parks and Recreation

Most respondents (92%) believe local and state governments should sufficiently fund local park and recreation agencies to ensure every community member has access to amenities, infrastructure and programming. Nearly three-quarters of these adults (74%) consider this funding highly valuable; this level of support has been consistent since 2023.

Those who place a high value on park and recreation services and believe it should be sufficiently funded tend to be:



Parents (84%)



Hispanic (82%)



Between 35 and 44 years of age (82%)



Very physically active (81%)



College graduates (80%)

NRPA'S THREE PILLARS: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, EQUITY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

NRPA's Three Pillars are central to organizational efforts to support the role of parks and recreation in advancing the well-being of individuals and communities nationwide. They can serve as focus areas for park and recreation agencies in program development and community engagement. Each of the pillars has a mission:

- **Health and Well-Being:**
Advancing community health and well-being through parks and recreation
- **Equity:** Striving for a future in which everyone has fair and just access to park and recreation facilities
- **Environmental Resilience:**
Creating a nation of resilient and climate-ready communities

Between 87 and 96 percent of respondents at least somewhat agree that NRPA's Three Pillars should be essential goals for their local park and recreation agencies. Between 68 and 82 percent say that aiming to bolster health and well-being, environmental resiliency and equity are highly essential goals.



A young girl reads to a horse at Tradewinds Park and Stables in Coconut Creek, Florida, for the Pony Tales program.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHERINE GARCÉS

MOST RESPONDENTS CONSIDER NRPA'S THREE PILLARS TO BE HIGHLY ESSENTIAL GOALS FOR THE FIELD OF PARKS AND RECREATION.

% of respondents reporting how essential goals are for park and recreation agencies



CONCLUSION

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CITY OF HIGH POINT (NORTH CAROLINA) PARKS AND RECREATION.



A group of people participate in a trunk-or-treat event in North Carolina.

Parks and recreation serves as a vital community hub within the array of local public services. It offers invaluable resources to the more than 227 million adults or household members who visited park and recreation spaces during the past year. Parks and recreation's role in promoting health and wellness, fostering social connections, and providing educational opportunities and family support positively impacts communities. Despite the many benefits people gain from park and recreation facilities, programs and services, work must continue to ensure every community member has access to those facilities and feels included in park and recreation spaces.

This report provides evidence that the U.S. public strongly supports and values the spaces, activities and services that parks and recreation provides to communities. Park and recreation professionals can use the data and analysis in this report as sources to guide their communications with municipal leaders, stakeholders and the media when making the case for increased funding and resources for their essential community services. Professionals also may find these data useful in guiding open dialogue with community members to address obstacles to park use, explore ways to create more welcoming spaces and address the needs of their communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Samantha Serrano, Melissa May, Dianne Palladino, Danielle Doll, Vitisia Paynich, Lindsay Reeves, Alexandra Klein, Kim Mabon and Kate Anderson for your contributions to this report. Thank you also to the many park and recreation agencies who provided the images featured throughout this report.

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, environmental resilience, 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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