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3 in 4 Americans say they live within walking distance of a local park or other recreational facility.

Americans on average visit their local park and recreation facilities more than twice a month.

78% Americans indicate they want to increase park and recreation funding.

85% of Americans support efforts such as the 10-minute walk campaign.

68% Americans visited a local park and/or recreation facility within a month of participating in the survey.

More than 9 in 10 Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important local government service.

76% of Americans are more likely to vote for politicians who make park and recreation funding a priority.
Parks and recreation is an ingrained part of American life. Public parks and recreation facilities serve as places where people can improve their physical and mental health, meet up with family and/or friends or reconnect with nature. With vast, diverse offerings, parks and recreation provides a unique, personal experience for all. For the young, their local park and recreation agency supplies a home for out-of-school time programming, sponsors a sports league where they learn the value of teamwork and joy of accomplishment, and offers opportunities where they learn to love the outdoors and protect their natural surroundings. For older adults, parks and recreation is where they can stay physically and mentally well and have options to give back to their communities through service.

Parks and recreation transforms our cities, towns and counties into vibrant, healthy communities; it delivers on this mission by offering a wealth of opportunities focused on conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. In turn, the value of high-quality public park and recreation opportunities is well-recognized. When deciding where they want to live, Americans prefer communities that feature well-maintained parks, vast trail networks, pools and other recreation facilities. They also understand that everyone in their communities should be able to enjoy everything that parks and recreation offers.

In 2016, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) launched an annual survey that investigates how Americans engage with their local park and recreation agencies. Each year, the study examines the importance of public parks in the lives of Americans, including how parks compare to other local government services and offerings. Now in its third year, the 2018 Americans’ Engagement with Parks Report looks at how Americans interact with parks, the key reasons driving this interaction and the greatest challenges that prevent increased usage. Additionally, this year’s study addresses the level of interest in improving accessibility to high-quality park and recreation facilities, including the public’s support of local officials who advocate for parks and increased funding for them.

Key findings of the 2018 Americans’ Engagement with Parks Report include:

- Americans, on average, visit their local park and recreation facilities more than twice a month. Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents report having visited a local park and/or recreation facility within a month of participating in the survey.
- Three in four Americans live within a 10-minute walk of a local park or other recreational facility. Eighty-five percent of Americans support efforts such as the “10-Minute Walk Campaign,” whose mission is to ensure every person has access to a great park within a 10-minute walk from their home.
- Eighty-five percent of Americans consider high-quality park and recreation amenities important factors when choosing a new place to live.
- More than nine in 10 Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important local government service.
- Seventy-six percent of Americans are more likely to vote for local politicians who make park and recreation funding a priority.
- Seventy-eight percent of survey respondents indicate they want their local governments to increase park and recreation spending, especially if it helps ensure all Americans are within a 10-minute walk to a great park.
PARKS AND RECREATION IS A PART OF AMERICANS’ LIVES

Everyone living in the United States should have easy access to great parks and recreation opportunities. Easy access includes having a park, open space, recreation center or other recreation facility nearby to and from which people can travel safely. Vibrant and dynamic communities are those in which residents can walk to and from well-maintained park and recreation amenities in just a few minutes without having to cross heavily traveled roads or navigate some other pedestrian hazard.

The good news is that most Americans actually do live near a park or other recreational opportunity. The bad news is that this is not the case for everyone. Three in four Americans indicate that there is at least one local park, playground, open space or recreation center within walking distance of their homes. However, the percentage of survey respondents living near a park or other recreational opportunity can vary significantly by region and respondent demographics.

For example, 84 percent and 81 percent of survey respondents in the West and Northeast regions, respectively, report that they can walk to a local park, with 77 percent of those living in the Midwest reporting the same. Only about three in five respondents living in the South indicate there is a park within walking distance of their homes.

Americans also are more likely to report a nearby park if they identify as Hispanic (84 percent) or non-white (83 percent). Further, millennials (82 percent) and Gen Xers (79 percent) are significantly more likely to report having a park and/or recreation facility that is within walking distance than are baby boomers (65 percent).

Unfortunately, not everyone lives near a public park. Moreover, even for the more fortunate ones who do, nearby parks are not always well-maintained or meet the specific needs and desires of surrounding communities. Closing this gap is one of the reasons the National Recreation and Park Association, The Trust for Public Land and the Urban Land Institute have launched the 10-Minute Walk Campaign. This campaign is a nationwide movement to ensure every person in every community across the U.S. lives within a 10-minute walking distance of a great park. Through a collective national voice, mayoral endorsements and local community action, the 10-Minute Walk Campaign aims to increase park quality, park funding and park access within a 10-minute walk of one’s home.

Americans strongly support the goals of the 10-Minute Walk Campaign and want their local communities to participate in the program. Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents indicate they would support their communities’ participation.
in the 10-Minute Walk Campaign, with nearly seven out of 10 strongly supporting the initiative. Indeed, backing for the campaign is solid across nearly every segment of the U.S. population, with particularly robust support from:

- Millennials (75 percent strongly support)
- Gen Xers (74 percent)
- Parents (75 percent)

Nearby access to great parks and quality recreation opportunities also drive people’s decisions about where they choose to live. Eighty-five percent of survey respondents indicate that having a nearby park, playground, open space or recreation center is an important factor in deciding where they want to live. This includes nearly three in five who report that nearby high-quality parks, playgrounds, open space or recreation facilities play a “very important” or “extremely important” role in where they choose to reside.

The availability of high-quality parks and recreation opportunities is an important factor across all segments of the U.S. population. It is particularly important for millennials, Gen Xers, those who identify as Hispanic or non-white, parents and those earning higher incomes.
**PARK AND RECREATION USAGE**

Most Americans have a close relationship with parks and recreation. Two-thirds of survey respondents report they visited a local park or other recreational facilities at least once within a month of completing the survey. Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents had visited a local park and/or recreation facility within the past year. These visits can be a frequent occurrence: nearly half of respondents report visiting a local park and/or recreation center at least once during the week prior to completing this survey. Another 22 percent had visited a park and/or recreation center sometime during the previous month, and 14 percent indicate their most recent visit was within the previous two to six months.

Those who interact with parks and recreation most often include (with the percentages reporting visits within a week of completing the survey):
- Millennials (57 percent)
- Gen Xers (45 percent)
- Parents (58 percent)
- Respondents who identify as Hispanic (52 percent)

Parks and recreation is deeply engrained in the lifestyles of people throughout the United States. Some people visit their local parks once or twice a year, while others do so once or twice a week.

On average, Americans visit their local park and recreation facilities 27 times per year, or more than twice a month. Nineteen percent of survey respondents report between six and 10 annual visits, with another 16 percent between 11 and 20 visits within the past 12 months. Eighteen percent visited their local park and recreation facilities between 21 and 50 times over the past year, while one in 10 indicate having done so at least 51 times over the past 12 months. Fewer than two in five survey respondents who visited a local park and/or recreation facility within the past 12 months report having visited those facilities between one and five times.
Quality programming leads to greater engagement with local park and recreation agencies. Park and recreation agencies program a wide variety of offerings and activities that drive residents to visit and use these resources more frequently. These activities include, but are not limited to, sports leagues, summer camps, before/afterschool care and classes/courses.

Thirty-six percent of survey respondents indicate that they (or a member of their household) have participated in one or more park and recreation activities or programs within a month of completing this survey. Another nine percent have done so sometime between two and six months. The percentage of respondents (or a household member) who have personally participated in a park and recreation agency activity within the past six months increases for those who are parents, who are employed, who identify as Hispanic or non-white and who are millennials.

### Americans Visit their Local Parks and Recreation Facilities an Average of 27 Times a Year

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen Xers</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Non-Whites</th>
<th>Parents</th>
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<td><strong>Average number of visits</strong></td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median number of visits</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly Half of Americans Have Personally—or Have a Household Member Who Has—Participated in a Park and Recreation Offering/Programming in the Past Six Months

(Percentage Distribution)

- **Within the past week**: 21%
- **Within the past month**: 17%
- **Within the last 2–3 months**: 21%
- **Within the last 7–12 months**: 28%
- **Over a year ago**: 13%
- **Never**: 9%
HOW AMERICANS ENGAGE WITH PARK AND RECREATION AMENITIES

The reasons that draw Americans to their local parks demonstrate local park and recreation agencies’ broad mission to be the centerpiece of healthy, thriving, connected-to-nature communities. Whether spending time with friends and family, improving their health or reconnecting with nature after a hectic week, the reasons people visit their local park and recreation facilities are as diverse as they are.

The most-often cited reason people gather at their local parks and/or recreation facilities is to be with family and friends (62 percent). While a majority of survey respondents from every major demographic group identifies “hanging out with their family and friends” as a reason they go to a local park, this factor resonates particularly with those respondents living in the Midwest (68 percent) and those who are parents (71 percent).

Fifty-four percent of respondents who visited parks and/or recreation facilities over the past year did so to exercise or increase their level of physical activity. The percentage of respondents linking exercise with their decision to visit a park does not vary significantly across age, race/ethnicity or parental status.

More than half of Americans visit their local parks to be closer to nature. Gen Xers and baby boomers (54 percent and 53 percent, respectively), women (55 percent) and those without children (53 percent) are more likely than other survey respondents to cite nature as a major reason they visit their local parks.

Millennials (45 percent) and parents (42 percent) are more likely than baby boomers and non-parents to cite a desire to experience excitement and adventure as a reason to visit their local parks. Overall, one-third of survey respondents cites a desire to experience excitement and adventure as a reason for visiting their parks. Other reasons people visit their local park and recreation facilities include:

- To learn a skill or craft (11 percent)
- To have someone care for my children while at work (three percent)
- To exercise (54 percent)
- To have a quiet place to think or relax (49 percent)
- To take advantage of leisure activities (38 percent)
- To improve their health (54 percent)
- To experience excitement and adventure (33 percent)
- To be closer to nature (53 percent)
- To meet other people (42 percent)
- To use or play a sport (50 percent)
- To be closer to home (49 percent)
- To spend time with others (62 percent)
- To get away from home (56 percent)
- To socialize (49 percent)
- To reduce stress (60 percent)

The fact that people visit their local park and recreation facilities for a variety of reasons—and that these factors differ significantly by demographic segments—highlights the importance for park and recreation professionals to do all they can to know the constituents they serve. For example, the interests, desires and needs of millennials may not match those of other age groups.
of baby boomers. Delivering a “one-size-fits-all” offering to a community guarantees low satisfaction and underutilization of a park and recreation agency’s facilities and programming.

One resource that can assist agencies with understanding the residents they serve is the NRPA Facility Market Report. These customized reports provide detailed demographic and market research data on residents living near park and recreation facilities. In addition, surveys, community meetings and interactive engagement tools can provide valuable feedback to help identify the optimal mix of program and service offerings for a community.

The reasons people visit their local park and recreation facilities track closely with what they identify as their favorite activities. For three-quarters of Americans this means visiting a local park, playground, dog park or some other local open space. Just over half of survey respondents report they walked, jogged, biked and/or hiked on a local trail (51 percent) in the past year, while 28 percent visited a local swimming pool/aquatic center or engaged in some sports activity (e.g., basketball, golf, tennis) with family and friends.

Other activities that Americans enjoy at local parks and recreation facilities include:

- Visiting the local recreation/senior center (21 percent)
- Taking part in classes or other activities at a local recreation center (16 percent)
- Participating in local sports leagues (15 percent)
- Having children participate in out-of-school time programs (e.g., summer camp, before/afterschool care) (13 percent)

Survey respondents who are Gen Xers or baby boomers are more likely to indicate their favorite experience is simply visiting a local park/playground/dog park/other open space (79 percent and 77 percent, respectively) than are millennials (68 percent). Millennials are significantly more likely than baby boomers, however, to play sports with family/friends at a park (39 percent), visit a swimming pool/aquatic center (32 percent), have children in an out-of-school time program (23 percent), compete in an organized sports league (21 percent) or take part in classes or other activity at a local recreation center (21 percent). Similarly, parents are significantly more likely than non-parents to visit a swimming pool/aquatic center (40 percent), play sports with friends/family (37 percent), have children in an out-of-school time program (42 percent), take a class/lesson (20 percent) or compete in an organized sports league (25 percent).
The vast majority of Americans is satisfied with the park and recreation amenities and offerings available in their communities. Ninety-two percent of survey respondents report being pleased with the park and recreation amenities and offerings available in their communities.

But a closer look at the data suggests that there is room for improvement. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicate they are “completely” or “very” satisfied with local park and recreation offerings while another 30 percent are only “somewhat” satisfied.

Satisfaction with local park and recreation offerings varies significantly by survey respondent characteristics.

• **Income**: 55 percent of those whose household income is less than $35,000 and 68 percent of those whose income is over $75,000 are “completely” or “very” satisfied with their local park and recreation offerings.

• **Household formation**: Two-thirds (67 percent) of respondents who are parents and 59 percent of non-parents are “completely” or “very” satisfied.

• **Location**: 65 percent of respondents who live near a park and 52 percent who do not are satisfied.

• **Race**: 65 percent of those who identify as white and 55 percent of respondents who identify as non-white indicate they are “completely” or “very” satisfied.

• **Gender**: 67 percent of males and 57 percent of females are satisfied with their local park and recreation offerings.
CHALLENGES TO GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS AND RECREATION

As much as Americans use their local park and recreation facilities, not everyone can take advantage of these amenities as frequently as they would like. Indeed, three-quarters of survey respondents indicate that there is at least one barrier or challenge that prevents them from fully enjoying these community resources. These barriers represent challenges—and perhaps opportunities—for park and recreation professionals to identify solutions to improve the public’s accessibility to their agencies’ offerings.

Lack of time is the most frequently cited barrier keeping Americans from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities. Forty-five percent of survey respondents indicate that lack of time prevents them from enjoying their local park and recreation facilities more than they already do. This issue is particularly acute for Gen Xers (50 percent).

Additional barriers are preventing people from taking full advantage of their park and recreation facilities and programs. Among them are a lack of quality facilities near one’s home and being unaware of the location/offerings of local parks and recreation departments (each cited by 17 percent of respondents). Larger shares of respondents who are millennials and parents report a lack of quality park and recreation opportunities near where they live, as well as being unaware of location/offerings, as reasons for not enjoying their local parks and recreation facilities as much as they could.

Other frequently cited barriers that prevent people from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities include:

- Concern about personal safety at the park or recreation facility (16 percent of respondents)
- Not having offerings at local parks/recreation facilities that match their areas of interest (11 percent)—although the percentages are higher for millennials (15 percent), those living in the West (15 percent) and those who identify as Hispanic (18 percent)
- Excessive costs/fees (14 percent, with higher percentages for millennials, parents and those who identify as Hispanic)

BROAD SUPPORT FOR PARKS AND RECREATION AND ITS MISSION

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

An overwhelming 91 percent of Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local governments. The robust support for parks and recreation comes from every segment of the population:

- **Generations**: Millennials (90 percent), Gen Xers (95 percent) and baby boomers (91 percent) agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by local government.
- **Race**: Both those who identify as white (92 percent) and those identifying as non-white (91 percent) support parks and recreation.
- **Ethnicity**: Those who identify as Hispanic (90 percent) or non-Hispanic (92 percent) also favor local government provision of parks and recreation.
- **Household formation**: Respondents with children (94 percent) and those without children (91 percent)
support parks and recreation as a locally provided service.

- **Political affiliation:** Locally provided parks and recreation is supported regardless of political party: Democrats (96 percent), Republicans (90 percent) and independents (87 percent)

Americans place nearly the same level of importance on parks and recreation as they do on almost every other major service delivered by their local governments. Whereas 91 percent of survey respondents view parks and recreation as an important service provided by local government, other services that compare favorably include:

- Public safety: Fire/EMT (96 percent) and Police (96 percent)
- Water/Utilities (96 percent)
- Roads/Transportation (97 percent)
- Health services (95 percent)
- Education (95 percent)
- Economic development (94 percent)
- Social services (91 percent)

**Americans Agree that Parks and Recreation is an Important Service Provided by Their Local Governments**

*Percentage Distribution*

- Important local government service: 91%
- Not an important local government service: 9%
Americans interact with parks and recreation in many ways: the corner park where friends and family meet on a sunny weekend afternoon, a cultural festival celebrating the diversity of a community, the walking or biking trail that keeps residents physically and mentally fit. Park and recreation agencies are leaders in providing valuable services for children in communities—including before- and after-school care and summer camps—and hosting sports leagues that teach the importance of physical activity, the thrill of victory and the value of teamwork. For older Americans, parks and recreation promotes healthy lifestyles and provides ways for them to give back to their communities via volunteer opportunities.

Local park and recreation agencies unite communities through their tireless efforts in the areas of conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. The National Recreation and Park Association ties these concepts together into its Three Pillars—Health and Wellness, Conservation, and Social Equity—a clear vision of the mission of parks and recreation in our towns and cities.

Support for the NRPA Three Pillars is solid across nearly every segment of the U.S. population. Nevertheless, some survey respondents are more likely than others to see the Three Pillars as areas of importance for their local park and recreation agencies:

- **Millennials**: 86 percent consider Health and Wellness, 76 percent view Conservation and 81 percent indicate Social Equity as important areas for these agencies.
- **Those that identify as non-white**: 86 percent view Health and Wellness, 79 percent consider Conservation and 84 percent indicate Social Equity are important.
- **Those that identify as Hispanic**: Health and Wellness (85 percent), Conservation (73 percent) and Social Equity (82 percent) are viewed as important.
- **Parents**: 83 percent consider Health and Wellness, 79 percent view Conservation and 81 percent indicate Social Equity important.

Survey respondents agree that NRPA’s Three Pillars represent what they see as key goals for local park and recreation agencies, with nearly equal shares viewing each pillar as a critical agency function:

- Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents support their park and recreation agency devoting efforts to improve Social Equity—including ensuring access for all people in their communities to be able to take advantage of the benefits of local parks, regardless of race, age, income or any other characteristic.
- Seventy-seven percent of Americans consider devoting resources to Conservation—including protecting open spaces and engaging their communities in conservation practices, as either an “extremely” or “very” important endeavor for their local park and recreation agency.

Americans Agree that Parks and Recreation Is an Important Local Government Service

(Percent of Respondents)

<table>
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<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
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<tr>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads/Transportation</td>
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<td>96%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire (inc. EMT)</td>
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<td>Social services</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important local government service.
Support for the NRPA Three Pillars is not a partisan issue, with solid support across the political spectrum:

- **Democrats**: Health and Wellness (83 percent), Conservation (86 percent) and Social Equity (87 percent)

- **Republicans**: Health and Wellness (76 percent), Conservation (71 percent) and Social Equity (72 percent)
COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL SUPPORT

Local governments face the challenge of meeting the many needs and desires of their constituents in a tight fiscal environment. Local political leaders must make tough decisions on how to allocate tax revenues, so it is crucial that local government policymakers understand parks and recreation’s mission and the level of importance constituents place on it.

The success and growth of community park and recreation agencies often hinge on political support. Two-thirds of Americans believe their highest-ranking local political leader (e.g., mayor, county executive, county president) supports local parks, with 44 percent of respondents describing this support as very strong. Notably, more than one-quarter of survey respondents are unaware of the level of parks and recreation support from their local political leaders.

Survey respondents are more likely to perceive strong support for parks and recreation by their local political leaders if those respondents earn a higher income, are parents, identify themselves as Hispanic or are Republicans. Conversely, respondents may be less certain of the level of support their local political leaders have for parks and recreation if they earn a lower income, identify themselves as non-white, do not live near a park or are Democrats.

Local political leaders who make parks and recreation a cornerstone of their agendas are likely to be rewarded at the ballot box. Seventy-six percent of Americans are more likely to vote for a local politician—a mayor, county executive or a member of the local council—if that politician makes park and recreation funding a priority. A mere 16 percent of survey respondents indicate that a local politician’s views about parks and recreation play no role in whether they would vote for the candidate.

It is noteworthy that Americans’ desire that local politicians support park and recreation funding is solid across nearly every segment of the population:

- **Generation:** Millennials (73 percent), Gen Xers (76 percent) and baby boomers (76 percent)
- **Household formation:** Parents (80 percent) and non-parents (73 percent)
- **Political affiliation:** Democrats (81 percent) and Republicans (76 percent)
- **Where they live:** Near a park (78 percent) and not near a park (69 percent)
- **Household Income:** Under $35,000 per year (76 percent) and over $75,000 (79 percent)

Finally, the vast majority (92 percent) of Americans who support the 10-Minute Walk Campaign is also more likely to vote for a local politician who makes park and recreation funding a key priority.
One way local political leaders can demonstrate their support is by securing greater and more stable funding for their local park and recreation agencies. Today’s park and recreation agencies are remarkably efficient in delivering a wide variety of offerings and services. According to NRPA Park Metrics and the 2018 NRPA Agency Performance Review, the typical park and recreation agency has annual operating expenditures of $78.26 for each resident in their community. This translates into less than $7.00 per month for each resident.

Americans are overwhelmingly in favor of local governments increasing financial support for public park and recreation services, particularly if it helps ensure all residents in their community would be able to walk to a great park within 10 minutes. Seventy-eight percent indicate they want their local governments to increase park and recreation spending. Among that share, 31 percent would “definitely” support increased spending while another 46 percent would “probably” support it. The typical hike suggested by survey respondents is to increase to $8.00 per resident each month, or a 22 percent increase from the current median.

Americans across all demographic segments support greater funding for local parks and recreation.

- **Generation**: Millennials (83 percent), Gen Xers (82 percent) and baby boomers (71 percent) all support greater funding levels for parks and recreation.
- **Household formation**: 85 percent of parents and 75 percent of non-parents support increased levels of parks and recreation funding.
- **Political affiliation**: Democrats (85 percent) and Republicans (73 percent)
- **Where they live**: Near a park (81 percent) and not near a park (67 percent)
- **Household income**: Respondents with income less than $35,000 per year (68 percent) and those earning over $75,000 (82 percent) are in favor of increased government funding for their local park and recreation agency.
Aside from local government funding and revenue generated from fees, park and recreation agencies benefit greatly from the efforts of local community members, including volunteering, donations and lobbying local officials. Two in five Americans make some sort of contribution of time or money in support of their local parks. Among the largest contributors to parks and recreation are:

- Millennials (53 percent)
- Parents (49 percent)
- Those who identify as Hispanic (58 percent)
- Republicans (45 percent)

The most widely reported contributions include:

- **Volunteering**: park clean-up or build, picking up litter, planting trees, mowing or some other sort of maintenance activity
- **Donating money**: supporting local parks and recreation services
- **Advocacy**: lobbying for park improvements or programs, contacting local government officials, campaigning for increased park funding, organizing neighbors to support parks
- **Sharing feedback**: attending a neighborhood meeting or event to provide input about local parks and recreation.

![Two in Five Americans Donate Time and Money to Support Local Parks and Recreation](chart.png)
CONCLUSION

Parks and recreation is a vital part of American life. Americans visit local park and recreation facilities more than twice each month, on average, and seek places to live that are near high-quality parks and recreation amenities. With their focus on health and wellness, conservation and social equity, local park and recreation agencies touch the lives of every resident in the communities they serve, delivering effective and efficient solutions to the many challenges facing our cities, towns and neighborhoods. Parks and recreation is not a luxury; it is a valuable contributor to the American way of life.

The public agrees that park and recreation agencies provide a vital service offered by local governments. However, the benefits of parks and recreation can only reach those who can easily access them. The good news is that many Americans already live within a 10-minute walking distance of a park. But this is only part of the story: one in four people do not have a nearby park to which they can walk. Further, parks that may be in walkable distance for many residents may not be well-maintained or could lack the specific features and programming that address their needs and desires.

Park and recreation advocates, public officials and the general public must work together to fill these gaps. One such step is embracing the ideas behind the “10-Minute Walk Campaign,” which aims to increase park access, quality and funding for facilities within a 10-minute walk of every American. The 2018 Americans’ Engagement with Parks Report findings demonstrate not only overwhelming support for such initiatives, but also a willingness to pay more in taxes to ensure their success. These survey results should empower all park and recreation advocates to make a strong case to local policymakers and the public.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The 2018 Americans’ Engagement with Parks Report is the third annual research survey from the National Recreation and Park Association focused on the general public’s interaction with parks and recreation. The goal of this research series is to better understand the American public’s use of local park and recreation facilities and its willingness to fund these resources.

To explore these issues, the National Recreation and Park Association’s Research Department created a 28-question survey and engaged Wakefield Research to collect responses using an online survey from 1,000 randomly selected American adults. The survey sample is an accurate representation of U.S. adults aged 18 and older. The margin of error for the response rate is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

The NRPA Research Department created the survey instrument and final report and is solely responsible for the report’s content.