



2017 NRPA AMERICANS' ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

Parks and recreation transforms our cities, towns and counties into vibrant, healthy communities and delivers on this mission by offering a wealth of opportunities focused on conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. For some people, parks and recreation is a way to improve their physical and mental health, a place to meet up with family and/or friends or an opportunity to reconnect with nature. For others, the local park and recreation agency delivers vital services, such as afterschool care that may allow parents to hold a job to ensure a brighter future for them and their family. With its vast, diverse offerings, parks and recreation provides a unique, personal experience for all.

Beyond delivering high-quality recreation opportunities, local park and recreation agencies play a critical role in protecting and celebrating the environment through the conservation of public lands, investing in green infrastructure, and advocating for land, water, trees, open spaces and wildlife in their role as environmental stewards. In addition, park and recreation agencies serve an important role in the climate resiliency strategies of many regions, helping cities, towns and counties to better withstand or recover quickly from natural disasters and climate change.

In 2016, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) launched a new annual survey study that investigates how Americans engage with their local park and recreation agency. Now in its second year, the ***NRPA Americans' Engagement with Parks Survey*** probes how Americans interact with parks, the key reasons that drive their use and the greatest challenges that prevent increased usage. Each year, the study will examine the importance of public parks in the lives of Americans, including how parks compare to other local government services and offerings. In addition, the study demonstrates how parks turn our local towns and cities into vibrant, dynamic communities, while illustrating that parks and recreation is a solution to many of the challenges facing our communities.

The key findings of the *2017 NRPA Americans' Engagement with Parks Survey* include:

- Americans, on average, visit their local park and recreation facilities almost twice a month. Nearly seven in 10 survey respondents report having visited a local park and/or recreation facility within a month of participating in the survey, including nearly half having done so within the previous seven days. Millennials and parents are more frequent park users.
- The reasons Americans visit their local park and recreation facilities are as diverse as they are: a place to be with family and friends, to be more physically active, to be closer to nature, to access quality, affordable child care and to learn a new skill or craft.
- What keeps people from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities is a lack of time, concerns about safety at and walking to/from the park, a lack of awareness of park locations/offerings and not finding programming that matches their interests.
- Eighty-five percent of Americans consider high-quality park and recreation amenities as an important factor when they are choosing a new place to live.
- More than nine in 10 Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important service their local governments deliver.
- Four in five Americans agree that NRPA's Three Pillars – Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity – represent what they see as the priorities for their local park and recreation agency.
- Ninety-five percent of Americans agree that it is important that their local government acts to protect the natural environment, including acquiring, constructing and maintaining local parks, trails and green spaces.
- Eighty-seven percent of Americans support their local government and park and recreation agency in investing in critical infrastructure that would make their regions more resilient and would improve their community's ability to withstand or recover quickly from natural disasters.

Americans' Engagement

with Parks and Recreation



92%

of Americans agree parks and recreation are **important local government services** (*comparable to police/fire/schools/transportation*)



4 in 5 Americans agree

that the NRPA Three Pillars of Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity represent what they see as the **priorities for their local park and recreation agency**



85%

of Americans seek **high-quality parks and recreation amenities** when they are choosing a new place to live

95%

of Americans say it is important for their local park and recreation agency **to protect the natural environment by acquiring and maintaining parks, trails, and green spaces**



87%

of Americans want their local park and recreation agency to **invest in critical infrastructure** that would improve their community's ability to **withstand or recover quickly from natural disasters**



KEY FINDINGS

WHEN DO AMERICANS VISIT THEIR LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES?

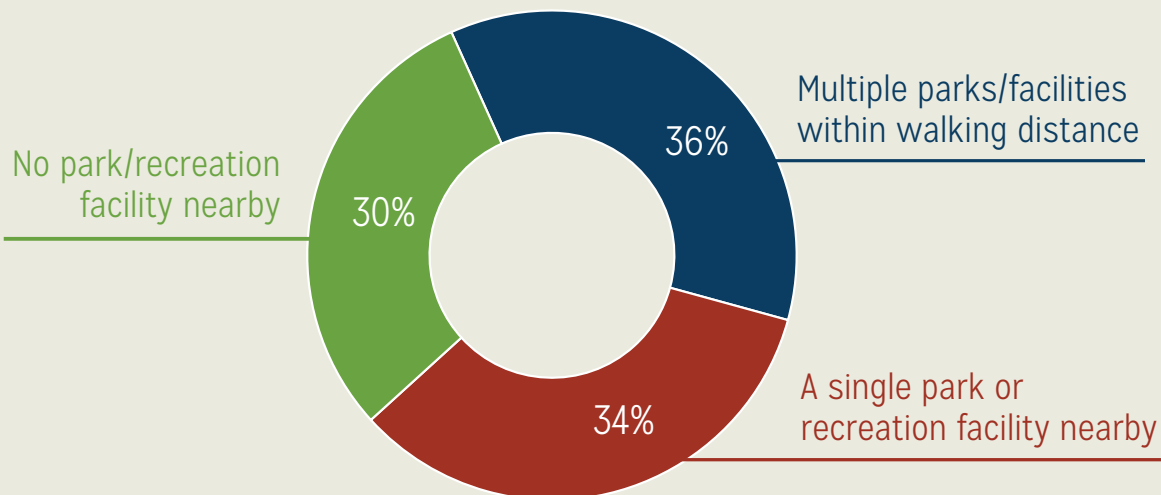
NRPA's vision is that "everyone will have easy access to park and recreation opportunities in sustainable communities." Easy access includes having a park, open space, recreation center or some other recreation facility nearby that they can safely travel to and from. Optimally, residents should be able to walk to and from a park or recreation facility in just a few minutes and without having to cross a heavily traveled road or go through some other sort of hazard. Americans flock to their park and recreation facilities when there are high-quality amenities and programming that match their needs and desires.

Seven in 10 Americans indicate that there is at least one local park, playground, open space or recreation center within walking distance of their home. Interestingly, people in the West and Midwest are more likely to report having a local park they could walk to: 75 percent and 84 percent, respectively. Conversely, only three in five survey respondents living in the South indicate that there is a park within walkable distance of their homes.

Americans also report a significantly greater nearby park availability if they identify as Hispanic (78 percent) and non-white (77 percent). Further, millennials (81 percent) and Gen Xers (73 percent) are significantly more likely to report having a park and/or recreation facility that is within walkable distance than do baby boomers (62 percent). The lower percentage reported by older Americans may, in part, reflect both a decline in mobility, associated with age, and lower awareness of park and recreation opportunities located near them.

7 IN 10 AMERICANS CAN WALK TO A LOCAL PARK, PLAYGROUND, OPEN SPACE OR RECREATION CENTER

(Percentage Distribution)

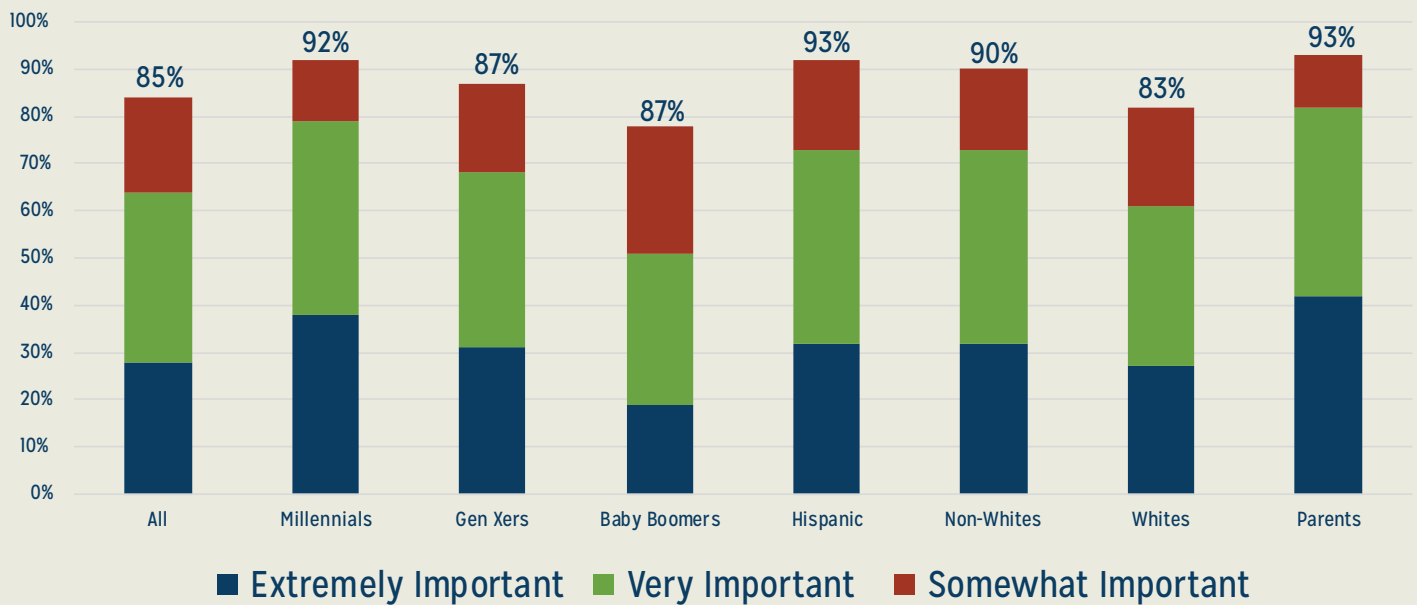


Having a park within walking distance not only provides opportunities to commune with nature, be physically active, and/or interact with friends and family, but also brings the community together. This impacts their level of physical activity, as well as plays a direct role in the decision they make on where to live.

Eighty-five percent of survey respondents say that the proximity to parks, playgrounds, open space or recreation centers is an important factor in their decision on the neighborhood or area where they live. This includes two in three people who say that having high-quality parks, playgrounds, open space or a recreation facility is “very important” or “extremely important” in where they choose to live. Park and recreation opportunities are a particularly strong driver when choosing a place to live for millennials, Gen Xers, those who identify as Hispanic or non-white, parents and those earning higher incomes.

NEARBY ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PARK AND RECREATION AMENITIES IS IMPORTANT TO AMERICANS’ DECISIONS ON WHERE THEY CHOOSE TO LIVE

(Percent of Respondents)



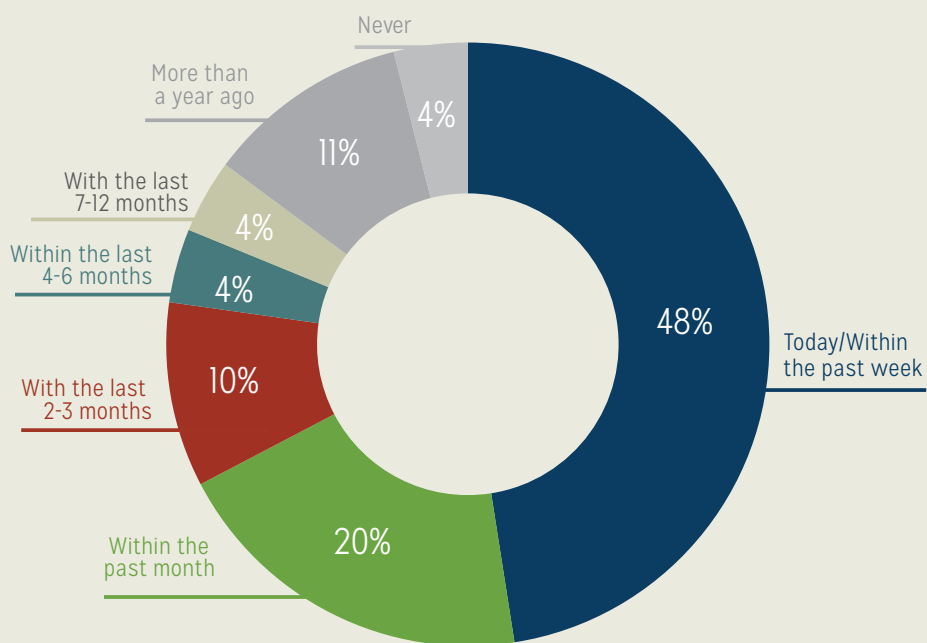
Eighty-six percent of Americans have visited a local park and/or recreation facility within the past year. Nearly half of the respondents report having visited a local park and/or recreation center at least once during the week prior to completing this survey. Another 20 percent had visited a park and/or recreation center sometime during the prior month, and 14 percent had their last visit sometime within two to six months before completing the survey. The remaining respondents said their interaction with their local parks is less frequent.

Those with the most recent park and/or recreation visits include (with the percentages reporting visits within a week of completing the survey):

- Millennials (63 percent)
- Gen Xers (47 percent)
- Those that reside in the Northeast (46 percent)
- Those that reside in the Midwest (51 percent)
- Parents (64 percent)

TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS VISITED A LOCAL PARK OR RECREATION FACILITY WITHIN THE PAST MONTH

(Percentage Distribution)



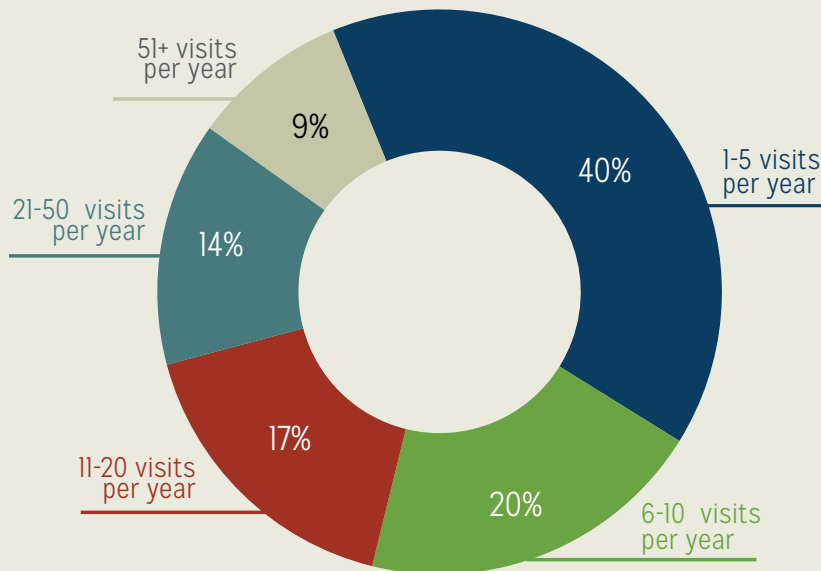
Parks and recreation is deeply engrained in the lifestyles of people throughout the United States. Some people visit their local parks once or twice a year, while others do so once or twice a week.

On average, Americans visit their local park and recreation facilities 22 times per year or nearly twice a month. Twenty percent of survey respondents report between six and 10 annual visits, with another 17 percent indicating between 11 and 20 visits within the past 12 months. Fourteen percent visited their local park and recreation facilities between 21 and 50 times over the past year, while nearly one in 10 indicate having done so at least 51 times over the past 12 months. Two in five survey respondents who indicate they visited a local park and/or recreation facility within the past 12 months report having visited said facilities between one and five times.

Who is more likely to be heavy users of local park and recreation facilities? Millennials, those who identify as Hispanic and parents are more likely to report more frequent visits to local park and recreation facilities. On the other end of the spectrum are baby boomers, who make far less frequent visits to their local parks.

ON AVERAGE, AMERICANS VISIT THEIR LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES TWICE A MONTH

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



FREQUENCY OF ANNUAL VISITS TO LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

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

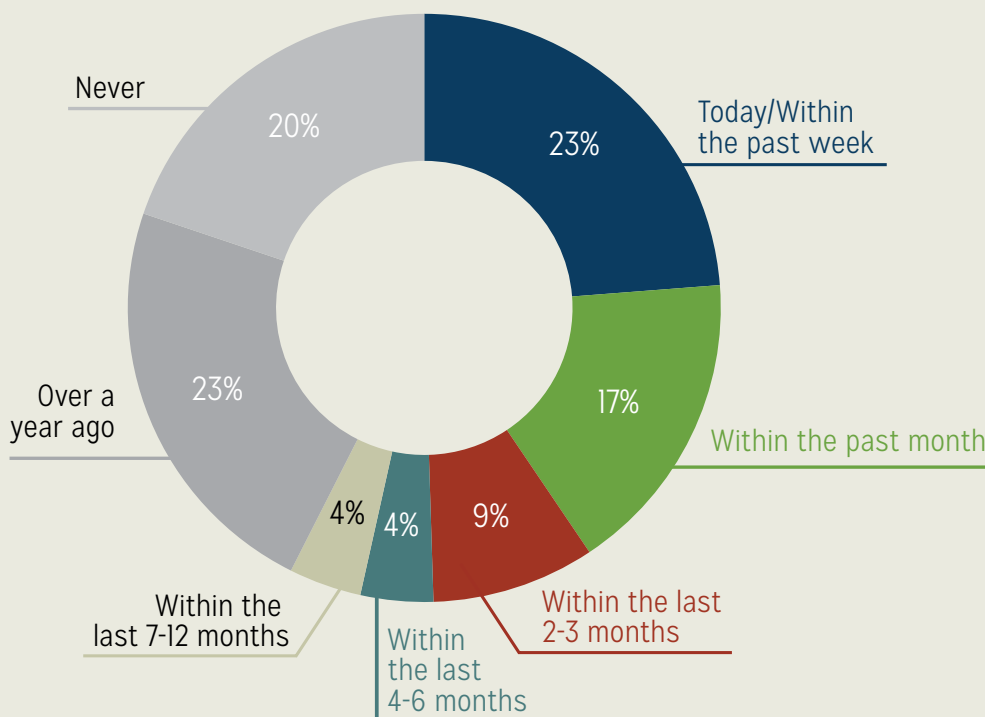
	All	Millennials	Gen Xers	Baby Boomers	Hispanics	Non-Hispanics	Whites	Non-Whites	Parents
Average number of visits	22.2	24.0	22.7	20.9	18.3	23.0	23.4	17.9	24.8
Median number of visits	8	10	8	6	10	8	10	6	10

Good programming leads to the public having greater engagement with their local park and recreation agency. Park and recreation agencies program a wide variety of offerings and activities that entice residents to more frequently visit and use these resources. These activities include, but are not limited to, sports leagues, summer camps, before/afterschool care and classes/courses.

Forty-one percent of survey respondents (or a member of their household) have participated in one or more park and recreation activities or programs within a month of participating in this survey. Another 13 percent have done so sometime between two and six months. The percentage of respondents who personally have (or have had a member of their household) 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 and who are millennials.

HALF OF AMERICANS HAVE PERSONALLY PARTICIPATED IN OR HAVE HAD A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER PARTICIPATE IN A PARK & RECREATION OFFERING/PROGRAMMING IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS

(Percentage Distribution)



HOW AMERICANS ENGAGE WITH THEIR LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION RESOURCES

The range of reasons that draw Americans to visit their local parks demonstrates agencies' broad mission to serve as the centerpiece of healthy, thriving, connected-to-nature communities. Whether it's to spend time with friends and family, to improve their health or to reconnect with nature after a hectic week, the reasons people visit their local park and recreation facilities can be as diverse as they are.

The most cited reason people gather at their local park and recreation facilities is to be with family and friends (61 percent). While a majority of survey respondents from every major demographic group studied identifies "hanging out with their family and friends" as a reason they go to the park, this reason particularly resonates with millennials (66 percent), those respondents living in the South (64 percent) and with parents (69 percent).

Fifty-six percent of people who visited park and/or recreation facilities over the past year did so to exercise or to increase their level of physical activity. The percentage of respondents linking exercise with their decision to visit a park does not change significantly across various demographic groups, including age, race/ethnicity or whether they are a parent.

More than half of Americans visit their local parks based on a desire to be closer to nature. Baby boomers (56 percent), whites (57 percent) and people without children (56 percent) are more likely than other population segments to cite nature as a major reason they go to their local parks.

Millennials and parents are more likely than baby boomers and non-parents to cite a desire to experience excitement and adventure as reasons to go to their local park. Overall, just over a third of survey respondents cite a desire to experience excitement and adventure as a reason for visiting their parks. This percentage rises to 46 percent and 45 percent for millennials and parents, respectively.

Other reasons people visit their local park and recreation facilities include:

- To learn a skill or craft (13 percent)
- To have someone care for my children while at work (seven percent)

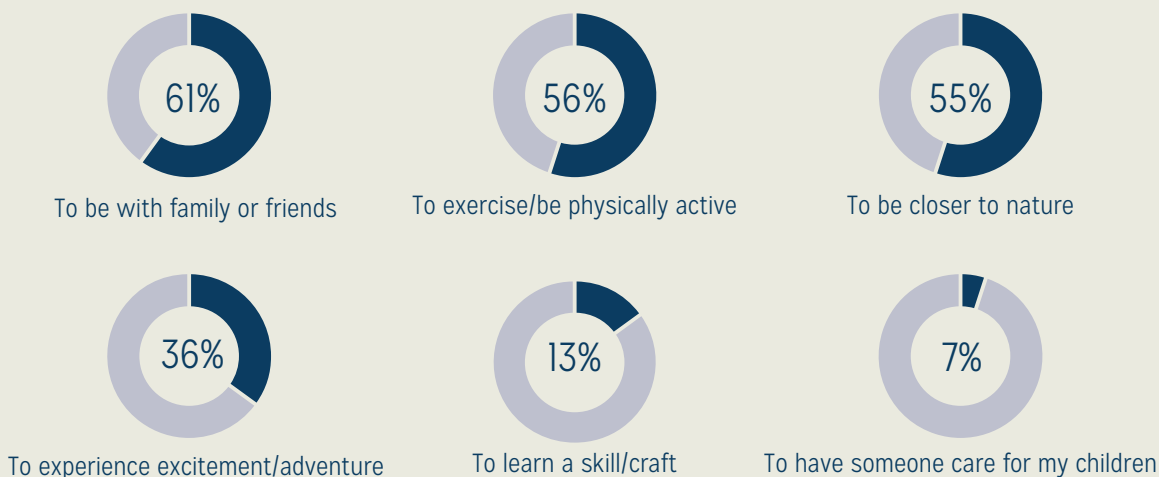


The fact that people visit their local park and recreation facilities for an array of reasons, and that these factors differ significantly by demographic segments, highlights the importance of park and recreation professionals doing all they can to fully understand the constituents they serve. For example, the interests, desires and needs of millennials do not match those of baby boomers. Delivering a one-size-fits-all offering to their community guarantees low satisfaction and underutilization of the agencies' facilities and programming.

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

TOP REASONS WHY WE GO TO PARKS IS TO BE WITH FRIENDS/FAMILY, TO BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE AND TO RECONNECT TO NATURE

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



The reasons people visit their local park and recreation facilities track closely with what they identify as their favorite activities. More than three-quarters of Americans who indicated visiting some sort of park or recreation facility over the past year did so at a local park, playground, dog park or some other local open space. Just over half of survey respondents walked, jogged, biked and/or hiked on a local trail (53 percent), while 33 percent visited a local swimming pool/aquatic center or where playing some sport (e.g., basketball, golf, tennis) with family and friends.

Other activities that Americans partake in at local park and recreation facilities include:

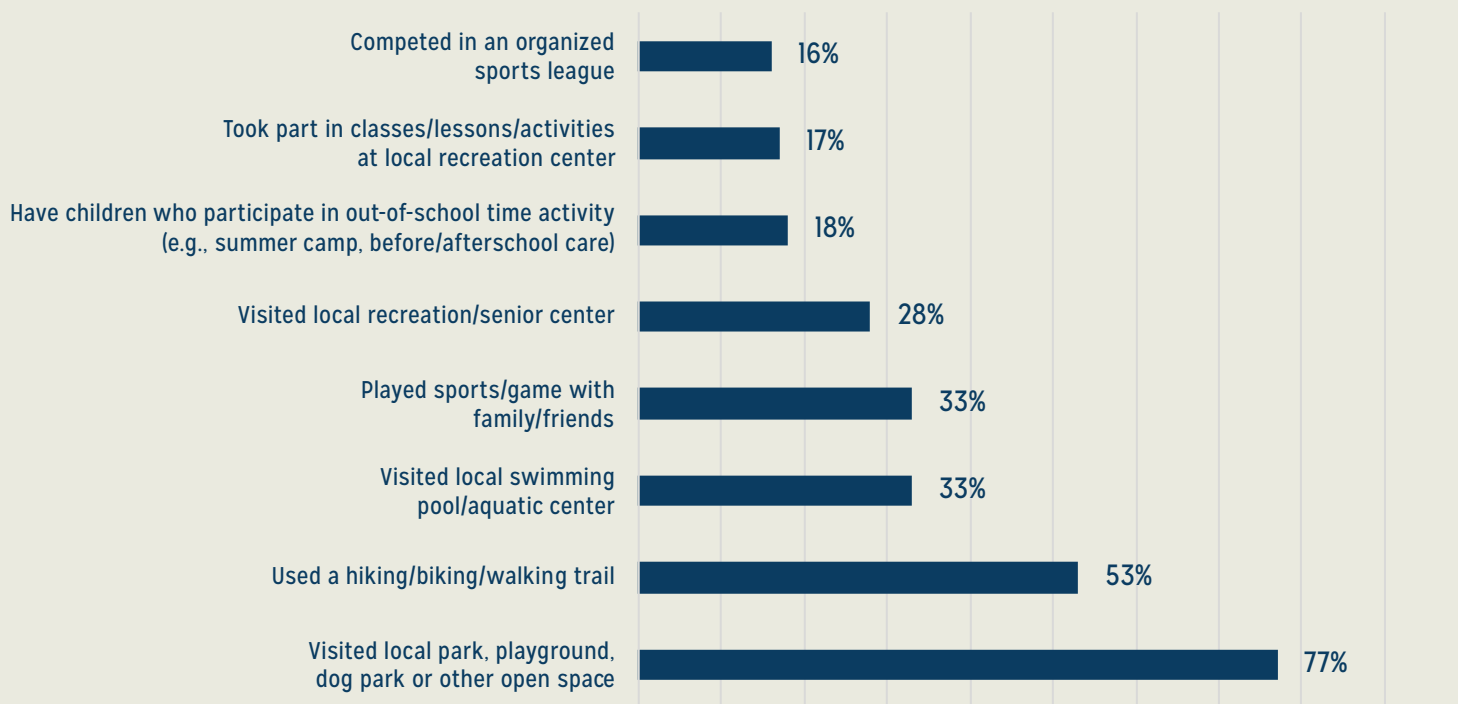
- Visiting the local recreation/senior center (28 percent)
- Having children participate in out-of-school time programs (e.g., summer camp, before/after school care) (18 percent)
- Taking part in classes or other activity at a local recreation center (17 percent)
- Participating in local sports leagues (16 percent)

Baby boomers are more likely than millennials to say their favorite experience is simply visiting a local park/playground/dog park/other open space (81 percent versus 75 percent). Millennials are significantly more likely than baby boomers, however, to play sports with family/friends at a park (44 percent), visit a swimming pool/aquatic center (44 percent), have children in an out-of-school time program (24 percent), compete in an organized sports league (25 percent) and take part in classes or other activity at a local recreation center (23 percent).

Similarly, parents are significantly more likely than non-parents to visit a swimming pool/aquatic center (46 percent), play sports with friends/family (43 percent), visit their local recreation center (32 percent), have children in an out-of-school time program (42 percent), take a class/lesson (24 percent) and compete in an organized sports league (25 percent). Respondents who identify as Hispanic are statistically more likely to visit their local swimming pool/aquatic center, play sports with family and friends, participate in organized league sports, and have their children enrolled in out-of-school time activities.

AMERICANS' FAVORITE PARK AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES

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



CHALLENGES TO GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH PARKS AND RECREATION

As much as Americans use their local park and recreation facilities, nearly three-quarters of survey respondents indicate that there is at least one barrier or challenge that keeps them from enjoying these community resources even more. These barriers represent challenges (and perhaps opportunities) for park and recreation professionals to identify solutions to improve further the accessibility of their offerings to the public.

The biggest enemy keeping Americans from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities is time. Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents indicate that a lack of time prevents them from enjoying their local park and recreation facilities more than they already do. This issue is particularly acute for both millennials and Gen Xers (44 percent and 42 percent, respectively) and those currently employed (46 percent).

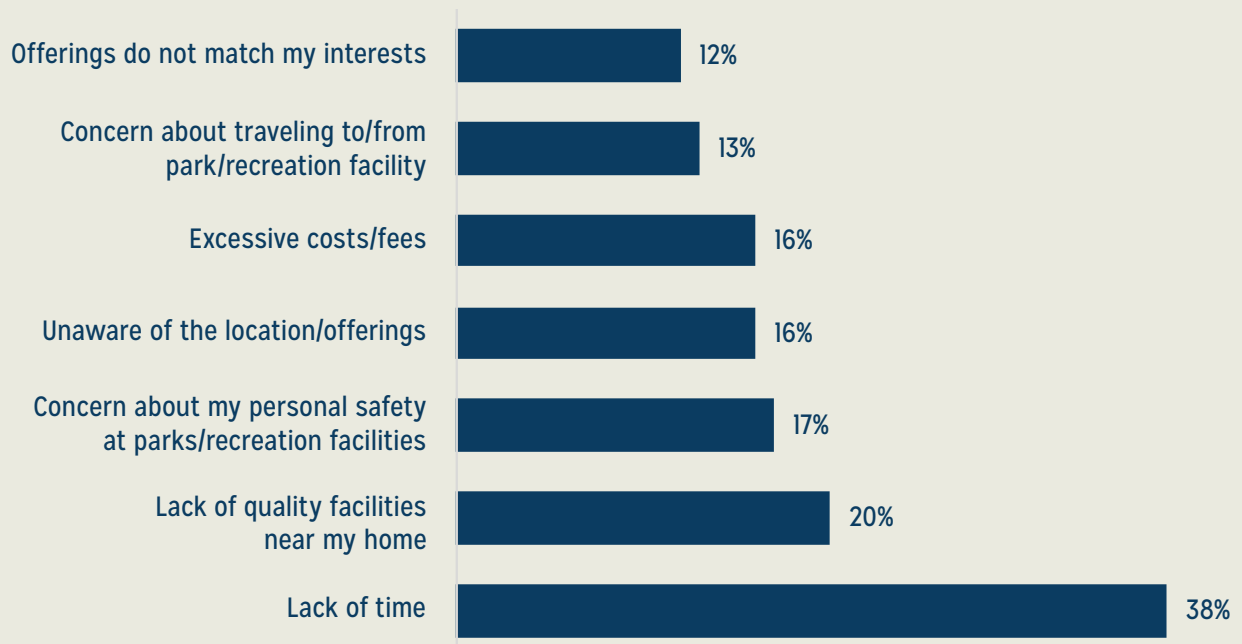
Beyond time, there are other issues that keep people away from parks. This includes the second biggest concern noted: a lack of quality facilities near one's home (20 percent). A higher percentage of millennials (29 percent) and parents (27 percent) are more likely to report a lack of quality park and recreation opportunities near where they live.

Other top 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 (17 percent)
- Being unaware of the park location or offerings (16 percent, including 23 percent of millennials)
- Not having offerings at local parks/recreation facilities that match their area of interest (12 percent, although the percentages are higher for millennials (19 percent), parents (18 percent) and those that identify as Hispanic (22 percent))
- Excessive costs/fees (16 percent, with higher percentages for millennials, parents and those that identify as either Hispanic or non-white)

TOP BARRIERS KEEPING AMERICANS FROM GREATER ENJOYMENT OF LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION FACILITIES

(Percent of Respondents)



IMPORTANCE OF PARKS AND RECREATIONS TO OUR COMMUNITIES

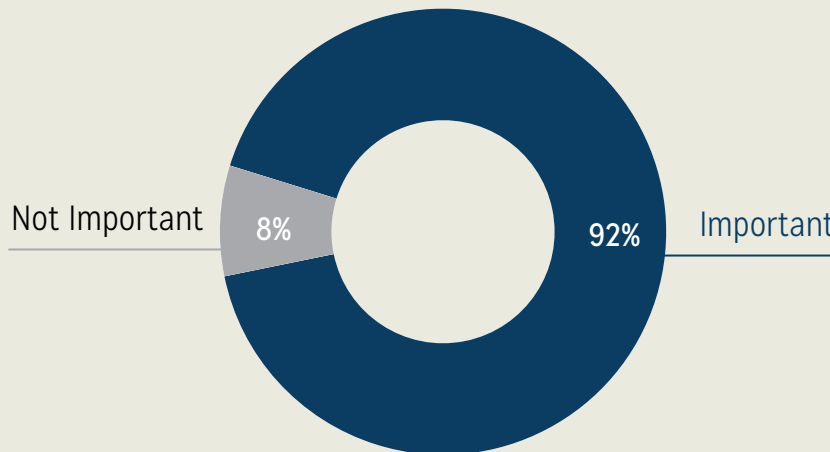
Even in this era of political divisiveness, Americans consider the many services delivered by their local government as vital for their day-to-day life. This includes services that promote public safety, the education of children, social welfare, utilities and transportation. Also on the list of important offerings delivered by their local governments are those delivered by their local park and recreation agency.

An overwhelming 92 percent of Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important service provided by their local government. Beyond the higher percentage of survey respondents who support this proposition, most interesting is that this strong support spans every segment of the population:

- Generations – millennials (94 percent), Gen Xers (95 percent) and baby boomers (88 percent)
- Race – those that identify as white (91 percent) or non-white (94 percent)
- Ethnicity – those that identify as Hispanic (94 percent) or non-Hispanic (91 percent)
- Household formation – households with children (96 percent) and those without children (89 percent)
- Political views – Democrats (93 percent), Republicans (93 percent) and independent (90 percent)

AMERICANS AGREE THAT PARKS AND RECREATION ARE AN IMPORTANT SERVICE PROVIDED BY THEIR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(Percentage Distribution)

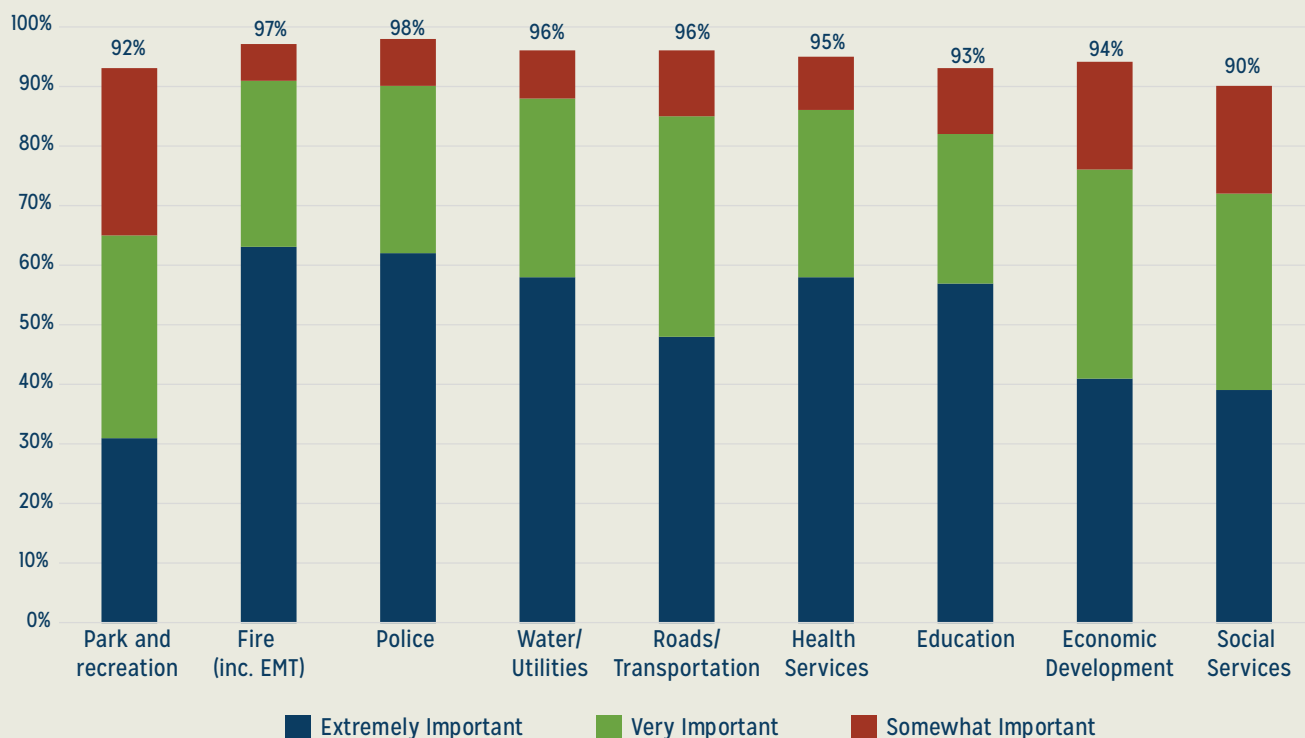


Americans place nearly the same level of importance on parks and recreation as they do on virtually every other major service delivered by their local government. Whereas 92 percent of survey respondents view parks and recreation as an important service provided by local government, other services compare favorably, including:

- Public safety: Fire/EMT (97 percent) and Police (98 percent)
- Water/Utilities (96 percent)
- Roads/Transportation (96 percent)
- Health services (95 percent)
- Education (93 percent)
- Economic development (94 percent)
- Social services (90 percent)

AMERICANS AGREE THAT PARKS AND RECREATION ARE AN IMPORTANT SERVICE PROVIDED BY THEIR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(Percentage Distribution)



The widespread support for parks and recreation is because of the many ways these valuable resources impact our communities. It may be the local corner park where friends and family meet on a sunny weekend afternoon or the walking or biking trail where we blow off steam after a hard day at work. These agencies are leaders in their communities in providing valuable services for children, including before and afterschool care and summer camps, and hosting sports leagues that teach the importance of physical activity, the thrill of victory and the value of teamwork.

The diverse offerings of 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](#), providing a clear vision of the mission of parks and recreation in our towns and cities.

Americans agree that the NRPA Three Pillars represent what they see as key goals for their local park and recreation agency, with nearly equal percentages seeing each pillar as a critical function of their local agency.

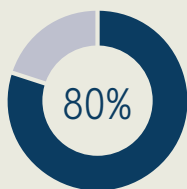
- Eighty percent of survey respondents rate as either “extremely” or “very” important that their local park and recreation agency focuses on **health and wellness**, including providing residents with improved access to healthy food and increased opportunities for physical activity.
- Seventy-nine percent of Americans see it as “extremely” or “very” important for their agency to devote resources to **conservation**, including protecting open spaces and engaging their communities in conservation practices.
- 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 the benefits of local parks, regardless of race, age, income or any other characteristic.

Americans’ support for the NRPA Three Pillars is just as solid for nearly every segment of the U.S. population. Nevertheless, there are segments that are more likely to see the Pillars as areas of focus for their local park and recreation agencies. Examples include:

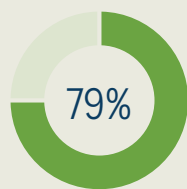
- Millennials: Health and Wellness (87 percent), Conservation (83 percent) and Social Equity (84 percent)
- Non-whites: Health and Wellness (84 percent), Conservation (77 percent) and Social Equity (82 percent)
- Hispanics: Health and Wellness (85 percent), Conservation (78 percent) and Social Equity (83 percent)
- Parents: Health and Wellness (87 percent), Conservation (85 percent) and Social Equity (86 percent)

AMERICANS VIEW THE NRPA THREE PILLARS AS THEIR PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY’S PRIORITIES

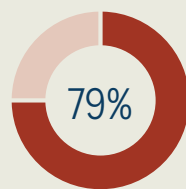
(Percent of Respondents Indicating the Pillars Are Either “Extremely” or “Very” Important)



Health & Wellness



Conservation



Social Equity

Support for the NRPA Three Pillars is not a partisan issue. In fact, solid majorities of people who identify themselves as Democrats, Republicans or independents also agree that the Pillars represent what they see as the key priorities for their local park and recreation agencies.

- Democrats: Health and Wellness (84 percent), Conservation (82 percent) and Social Equity (85 percent)
- Republicans: Health and Wellness (82 percent), Conservation (76 percent) and Social Equity (78 percent)
- Independents: Health and Wellness (75 percent), Conservation (80 percent) and Social Equity (76 percent)

Taking a more detailed look at what the NRPA Three Pillars entail, Americans reaffirm their support for the broad, vital mission

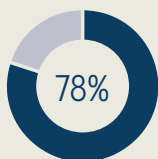
of park and recreation agencies. Specifically, they agree that their local agencies should consider the NRPA Three Pillars when designing, funding and delivery their offerings to the community.

In terms of health and wellness, survey respondents indicate that it is “extremely” or “very” important that agencies offer facilities and services that improve both mental health (75 percent) and physical health (78 percent). Younger, non-white and/or Hispanic Americans are most likely to support one or both of these goals.

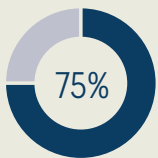
IMPORTANT NRPA PILLAR TACTICS FOR PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES

(Percent of Respondents Indicating the Tactic Is Either “Extremely” or “Very” Important)

Health & Wellness

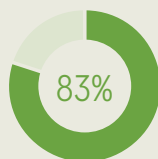


Offering facilities and services that improve physical health

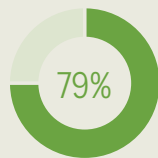


Offering facilities and services that improve mental health

Conservation

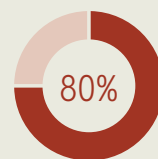


Conserving the natural environment

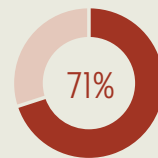


Protecting open space

Social Equity



Ensuring all members of the community have equitable access to parks, recreation facilities and programs



Addressing the needs of underserved populations

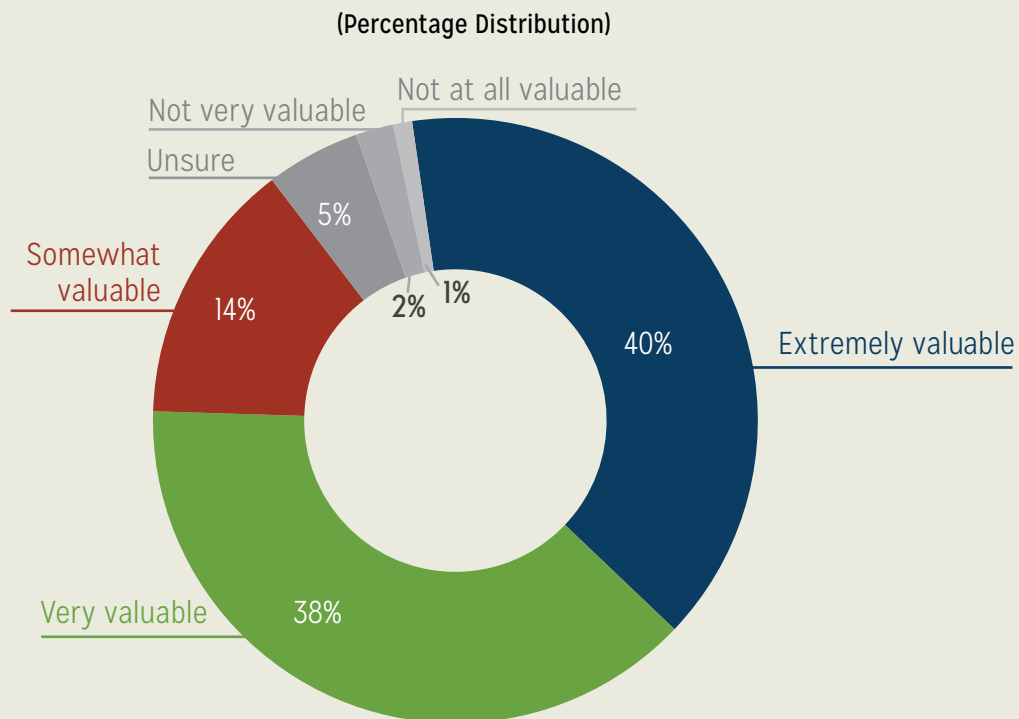
Similarly, survey respondents agree that the two conservation-oriented tactics – conserving the natural environment and protecting open space – should be important considerations for park and recreation agencies as they design, fund and deliver their services. Eighty-three percent say it is “extremely” or “very” important that agencies work to conserve the natural environment, while 79 percent agree that agencies need to protect open space. Millennials and parents of children are most likely to support either conservation tactic.

In terms of social equity, 77 percent of survey respondents see it as “extremely” or “very” important that their park and recreation agency ensures that all members of their community have equitable access to parks, recreation facilities and programming. In addition, 71 percent of Americans agree that their local agency must address the needs of the underserved population in their community. The populations most likely to support the tactics linked to the social equity pillar are millennials, those that identify themselves as either non-white or Hispanic and parents.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

As seen with the solid, broad-based support for NRPA's Conservation Pillar, creating a thriving environment through conservation practices is important to most Americans. Having easy access to nature and natural resources in local parks, trails and waterways is even more valuable. More than nine in 10 Americans attach a high value to having access to nature and natural resources, such as those delivered by the local parks, trails and waterways located in their community. This includes 78 percent of survey respondents who say these resources are either "very" or "extremely" valuable. Among those placing an even greater value on the connection to nature delivered by parks and recreation are millennials (94 percent), Gen Xers (95 percent), those that identify as Hispanic (96 percent) and parents (97 percent).

AMERICANS AGREE THAT LOCAL PARKS, TRAILS AND WATERWAYS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES ARE VALUABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

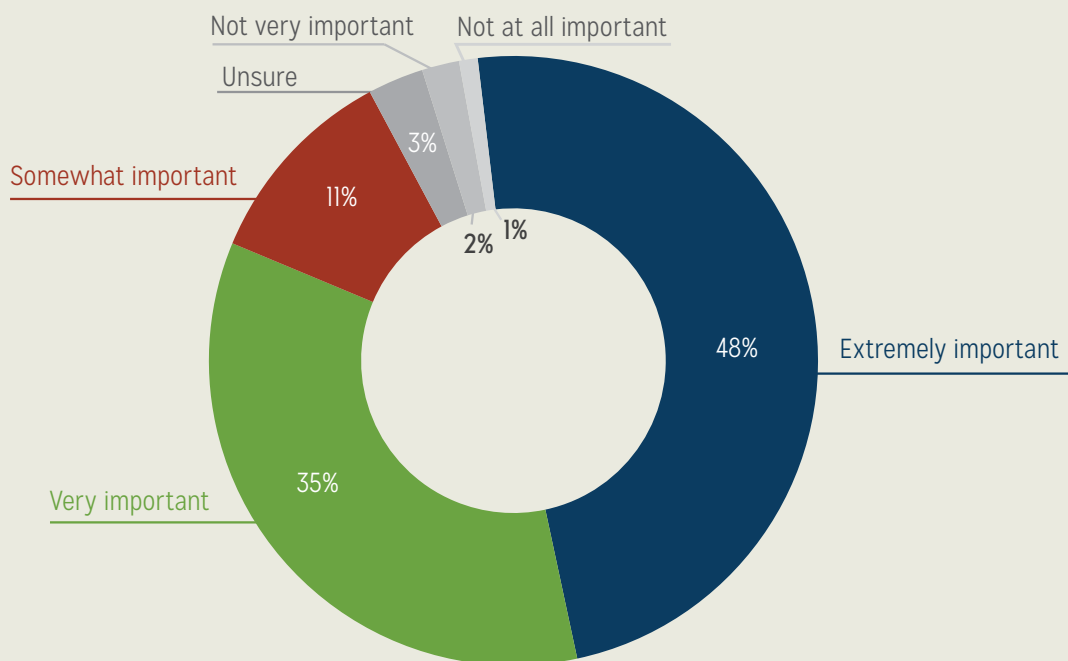


Americans place a high value on the protection of the natural environment in their communities. In turn, there is widespread agreement among survey respondents that their local government should work to protect natural resources, such as fresh air, clean water and unpolluted green spaces through the acquisition and maintenance of local parks, trails and green spaces adjacent to lakes, rivers and waters.

Ninety-five percent of Americans agree that it is important their local government acts to protect the natural environment. In fact, just under half of survey respondents would characterize local government acquisition, construction and maintenance of local parks, trails and green spaces to be “extremely important.” The agreement that protection of the natural environment is a key local government role is so strong that there are few differences in this support across key demographic groups, including by generation, race, ethnicity, household formation and political affiliation.

AMERICANS SUPPORT THEIR LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH THE ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE OF LOCAL PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES

(Percentage Distribution)



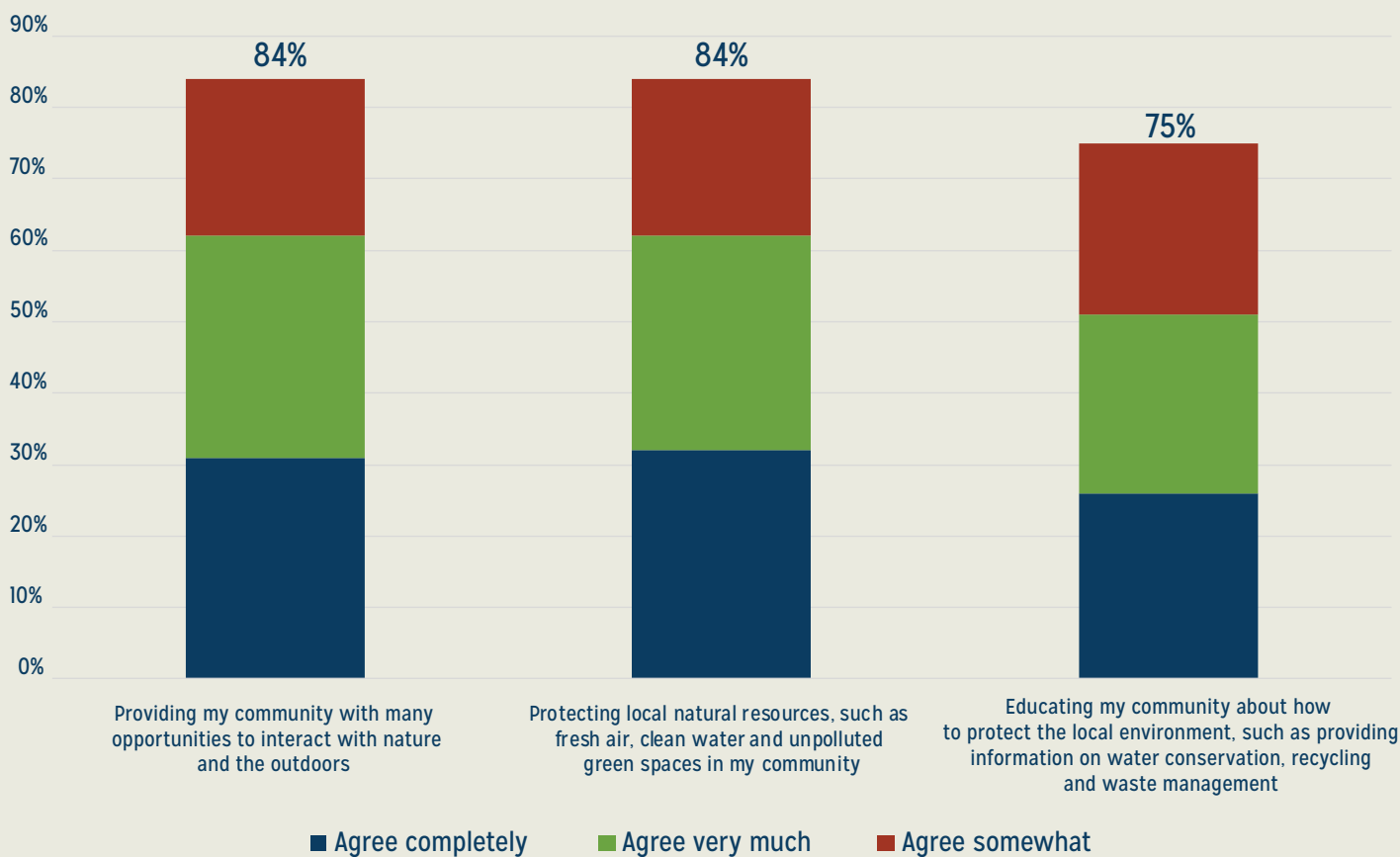
Whereas the local park and recreation agency may not be the only department within a local government tasked with protecting natural resources in the community, it is often the most visible agency in this role. In turn, park and recreation agencies and professionals play an important role in connecting the community to nature, including delivering important educational opportunities that inform residents about their role in protecting the environment. Survey respondents indicate their park and recreation agency is delivering on this promise.

The public not only indicate their park and recreation agency is doing a good job in its conservation and education efforts, but they have a great appreciation for why these efforts are necessary. Among statements that indicate survey respondents have high levels of agreement are that their local park and recreation agencies do a “good job”:

- Protecting local natural resources, such as fresh air, clean water and unpolluted green spaces that are important to my community (84 percent)
- Providing my community with many opportunities to interact with nature and the outdoors (84 percent)
- Educating my community about how to protect the local environment, such as providing information on water conservation, recycling and waste management (75 percent)

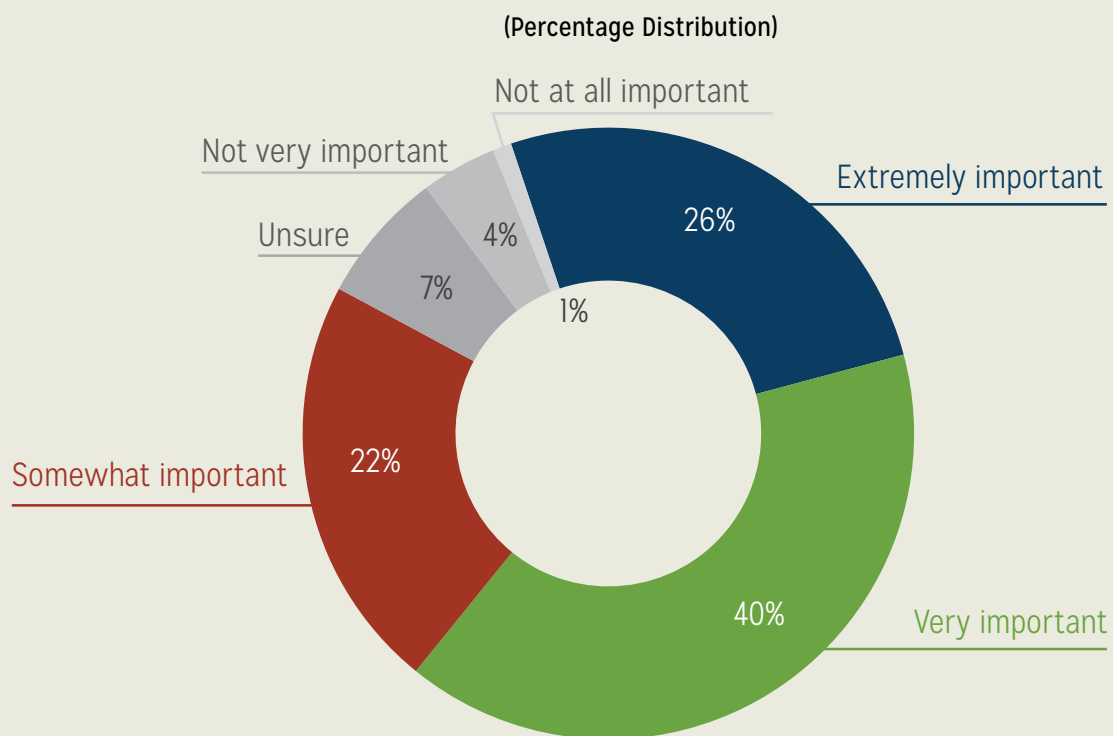
AMERICANS AGREE THAT PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES EXCEL IN CONNECTING THEM WITH NATURE

(Percent of Respondents)



Not only do Americans see park and recreation as successfully connecting their communities to nature, they also view them as conduits to strengthen this bond. This includes a great desire for their local park and recreation agency to offer guided nature walks, environmental education, nature-focused youth camps or service days, such as tree planting and river cleanup. Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents agree that it is important their local park and recreation agency provide these types of programs and scheduled activities to engage community members more closely with nature and the outdoors. Support for this type of programming rises further among millennials, Gen Xers, individuals who identify as Hispanic and parents.

AMERICANS AGREE THAT IT IS IMPORANT THAT THEIR LOCAL PARK AND RECREATION AGENCY PROVIDE PROGRAMS TO ENGAGE COMMUNITY MEMBERS MORE CLOSELY WITH NATURE



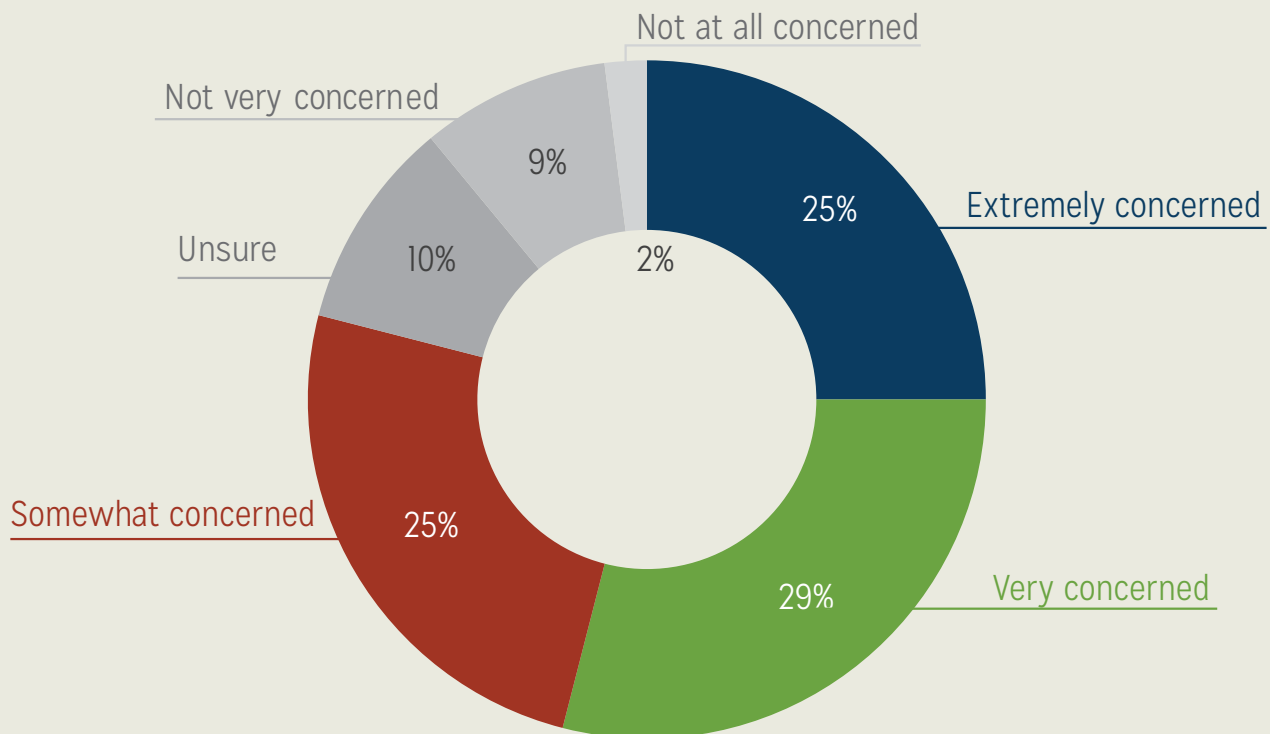
STEWARDS OF HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Park facilities often serve functions far above and beyond being a source of fun and relaxation. They can play a vital role in a region's ability to be resilient from natural disaster. Virtually everywhere in the United States is subject to extreme weather conditions, with greater percentages of Americans experiencing such events each year because of climate change and growing populations living in particularly fragile locals. Potential weather events may vary by region but can include flooding, severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, blizzards, droughts, extreme temperatures (both hot and cold) and wildfires.

Four in five Americans indicate they are concerned about their community's ability to withstand or recover quickly from natural disasters, including 54 percent of survey respondents who are "very" or "extremely" concerned about their community's resiliency. Among those that are more likely to be "very" or "extremely" concerned are millennials, individuals who identify as either Hispanic or non-white and parents.

MOST AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY'S ABILITY TO WITHSTAND OR RECOVERY QUICKLY FROM NATURAL DISASTERS

(Percentage Distribution)



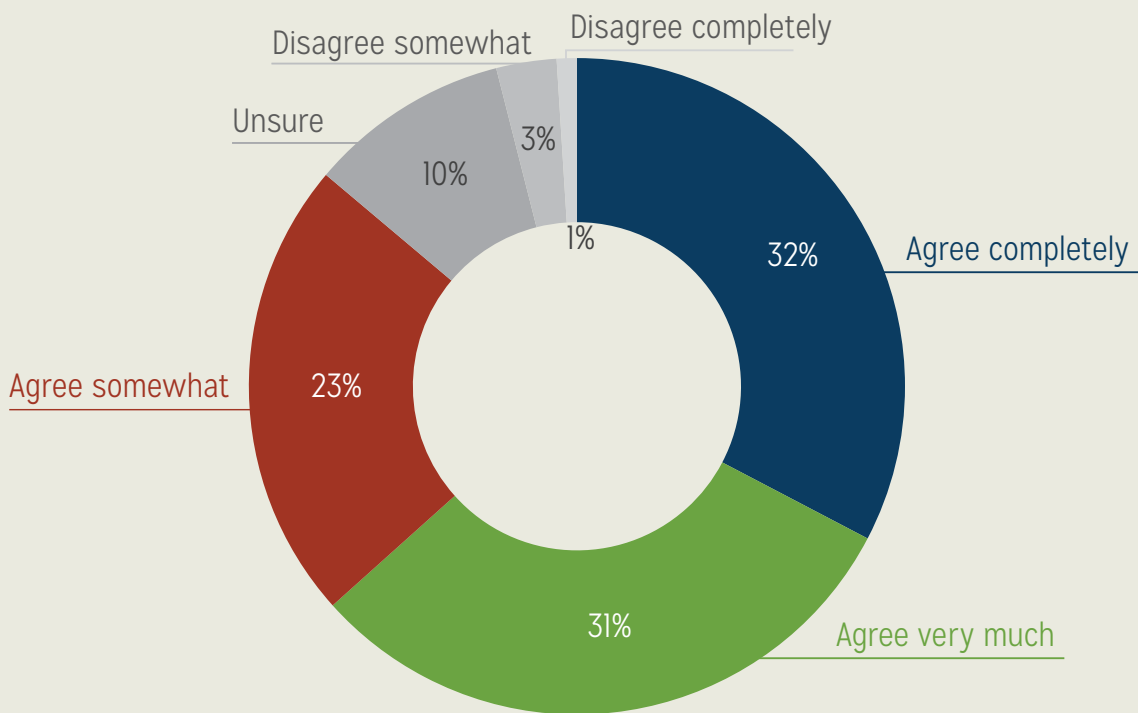
As a result, Americans are nearly united in their support of their local government, including their local park and recreation agency, to make critical infrastructure investments that would improve their community's ability to withstand or recover quickly from natural disasters. A few examples include:

- Parks doubling as flood control areas
- Selecting vegetation in open spaces that mitigate pollution from stormwater runoff
- Cultivating tree canopies in urban areas that help lessen the heating effects
- Planting drought-resistant plants
- Using recreation/community facilities to serve as emergency centers during excessive heating/cooling events or during and after a natural disaster.

Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents agree that the local government and park and recreation agency should make the needed investments to ensure their community is more resilient to natural disasters.

AMERICANS AGREE THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND PARK & RECREATION AGENCIES SHOULD INVEST TO MAKE THEIR COMMUNITIES MORE RESILIENT

(Percentage Distribution)



CONCLUSION

Parks and recreation is an essential element of American life. Six out of seven people have visited a local park and/or recreation facility within the past year, with visits averaging twice each month. This frequent, regular and all-inclusive engagement demonstrates how parks and recreation is a core element that transforms our cities, towns and counties into vibrant, healthy communities. Americans back this belief with their wallets since having access to high-quality park and recreation amenities is an important factor they consider when searching for a new place to live.

The secret to parks and recreation's success is its diversity of facilities and service offerings that include parks, trail networks and recreation facilities that deliver critical programs for every segment of the community. What park and recreation means to an individual can differ greatly from person to person. Where some people may see their local park as a place to stay physically fit, blow off some steam, meet up with friends or reconnect with nature, others turn to their local agency for indispensable services that improve lives. This includes out-of-school time programs that provide afterschool care for millions of children, programming that keep older adults active and healthy, and other essential offerings to target the most vulnerable members of our cities, towns and counties.

Parks and recreation serves as the primary connection to nature for many Americans, whether to be a welcomed outdoor respite from the day-to-day drudgery of working indoors or an information resource that broadens their understanding of the role we all play in protecting our environment. Americans agree that their local governments – and, in particular, their local park and recreation agency – should further protect natural resources through the acquisition, construction and maintenance of local parks, trails and green spaces. They also support greater investments by local park and recreation agencies to make their community more resilient to natural disasters resulting from severe weather events and climate change.

With their focus on conservation, health and wellness, and social equity, local park and recreation agencies touch the lives of every resident they serve, delivering effective and efficient solutions to the many challenges facing our communities. Hence, parks and recreation is not a luxury, but a valuable contributor to the American way of life.

Despite the vast, positive impact that parks and recreation has on Americans' lives, agencies throughout the United States face significant funding challenges. Local governments deliver many valuable services to their constituents, including public safety, education and transportation. Park and recreation agencies must compete with these other local government agencies for finite budget dollars. A recently released NRPA study confirmed what many already suspected: local government officials do not always view parks and recreation as a funding priority. These survey results demonstrate that public officials are not answering their constituents' call when they give park and recreation the short end of the stick.

Park and recreation professionals should use the results from the *2017 Americans' Engagement with Park Survey* to deliver this vital message: The American public highly values the work that park and recreation agencies deliver to their community every day and strongly supports their mission. The public's strong and broad-based support for parks and recreation solidifies the case to local political leaders, stakeholders and the media for larger and more stable funding.



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The *2017 Americans' Engagement with Parks Survey* is an annual survey research series of 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 understand better Americans' use of local park and recreation facilities and their willingness to fund these resources.

To explore these issues, the National Recreation and Park Association Research Department created a 38-question survey and engaged Wakefield Research to collect responses using an online survey from 1,000 randomly selected American adults who are an accurate representation of U.S. adults ages 18 and above. The margin of error of the response 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 their content.





22377 Belmont Ridge Road
Ashburn, VA 20148
800.626.NRPA (6772)
www.nrpa.org

