



# Online Survey Regarding the Geauga Park District

## March 2015

15-3045

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# Survey Methodology

This report presents the findings of an online survey conducted on behalf of the Geauga Park District and a total of 1,611 valid responses were completed by Geauga County residents and included the analysis. Once the questionnaire was designed, the Geauga Parks programmed the survey and provided a link to it on its web-site. Thus, the primary method for completion was through an online survey and 1,432 surveys were completed online and included in the data set. In addition, to accommodate older adults, the Amish population and other residents who might not have access to a computer, the Park District provided paper copies to Amish leaders, senior centers and the library. There were 179 paper surveys that were returned and included in the final data set.

The online survey was open for completion from February 17 to March 31, 2015. Two responses were allowed per household. To encourage responses, the Park District sent a post card to all households with Geauga County zip codes. Once the online survey closed, TRIAD was responsible for cleaning the data set which included checking for duplicate IP addresses, out-of-county responses, duplicate responses from different IP addresses, incomplete surveys, etc. There were a total of 145 responses that were not included in the final data set for one of the above reasons. Likewise, some of the paper surveys were not included because they were incomplete, copied incorrectly, etc.

The 2010 U.S. Census indicates that there are about 33,500 households in Geauga County, thus the survey had a completion rate of about 4.8%. Based on having 1,611 responses, the survey has a margin of error of +/- 2.45% at the 95% confidence level. The means that if this survey was conducted in the same way 100 times, 95 of those times, the results would only vary 2.5% in either direction of today's results.

TRIAD also conducted a random telephone survey for Geauga Park District in 2008 of 400 registered voters. The two surveys differ in the percent of respondents who indicated that visit the parks and the frequency of visiting. In today's online survey, only 3% of respondents indicated that they hardly ever or never use the parks, while 41% indicated that they visit the parks about once a week. In contrast, in the 2008 telephone survey, 16% of respondents had not been to one of the Geauga County parks in the past year, and only 16% visited the parks weekly. **Thus, this survey is essentially a survey of Geauga Park users.**

For this reason, we did not weight the data on any of the demographic or geographic variables since the variations we see compared to recent census data may in fact be more representative of park users overall, and with the exception of park use, the demographic characteristics of respondents are fairly similar to those of the adult population in Geauga County overall.

# Survey Purpose

The overall purpose of the survey was to obtain community input to aid the Geauga Park District in long-range planning. Some of the topics the survey explored were:

- Park use – how often residents visit, which parks they go to, where they get information about the parks.
- Satisfaction and attitudes towards the Geauga Parks – favorable/unfavorable rating, ratings on specific items such as protecting natural areas and providing recreational opportunities, etc. as well as opinion of the parks' importance the need for additional parkland and recreational opportunities, etc.
- Residents' suggestions for park improvements or changes.
- Interest in specific outdoor activities the parks could provide.
- Direction with regard for the top priorities for the park district and for more opportunities for residents to use and enjoy the parks.

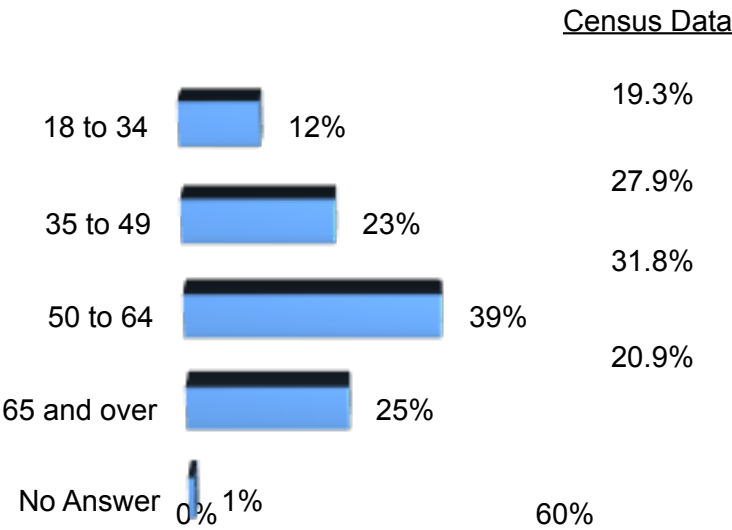
A number of demographic questions were also included in the survey and tables giving a breakdown of the results by these demographic subgroups follow the report.

# Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

- Age
- Have Children
- Gender
- Region

Just over a third of the respondents were under age 50 (35%) while just under two-thirds were age 50 and over (64%).

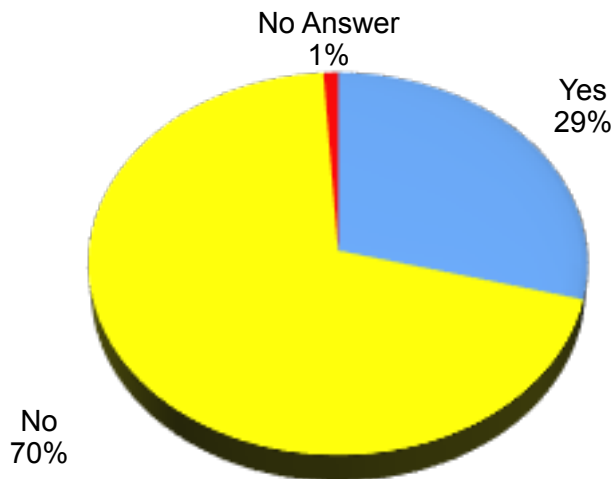
Q20 RESPONDENTS BY AGE



Even though most of the respondents are park users, the age distribution of survey respondents was somewhat similar to recent census counts of Geauga County adults by age. However, survey respondents tended to be little older with 64% age 50 and over compared to 53% in the overall population

**Nearly a third of respondents (29%) indicated that they have children under age 18 living at home with them.**

### Q21 HAVE CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18

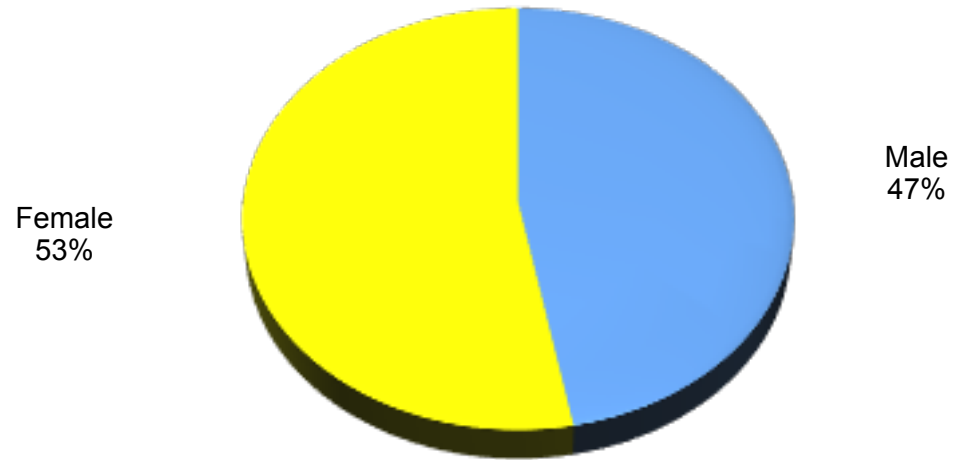


The other 70% do not have children under 18. The Census data shows that 33.6% of households in Geauga County have individuals under 18 years of age.

- Respondents between the ages of 35 and 49 were most likely to have children under age 18 (73%), followed by 18 to 34 year olds (42%). Therefore, keep in mind that there is a lot of overlap between 35 to 49 year olds and those with children.

**About half of the respondents were female (53%) and the other one-half were male (47%).**

## Q22 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS



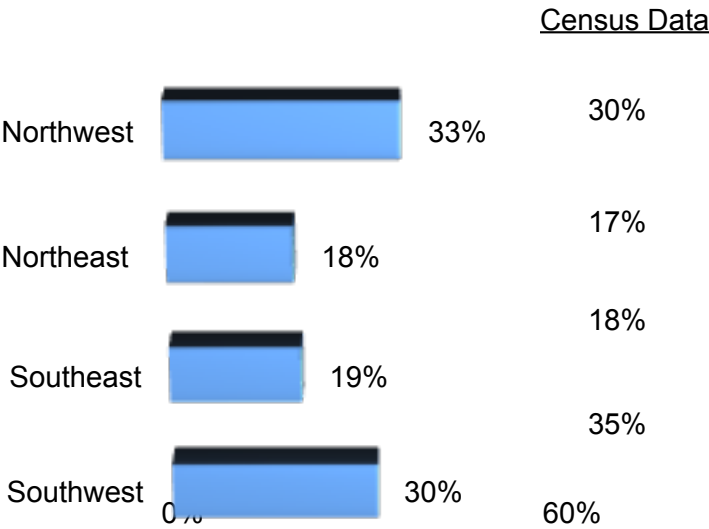
This is essentially the same as the 2010 census counts which shows the Geauga County adult population to be 52% female and 48% male.

- More men responded in the Northeast (52/48) and Southeast (56/44) regions.
- Respondents in the Northwest (45/55) and Southwest (40/60) were more apt to be women.



Similar to the population, most of the respondents live in western portion of the county.

Q24 RESPONDENTS BY REGION



For geographic analysis we divided the county into four regions which consist of the following townships, along with the cities and villages in each township. They were:

- Northwest – Chardon, Chesterland, Munson
- Northeast – Claridon, Hambden, Huntsburg, Montville, Thompson
- Southeast – Burton, Middlefield, Parkman, Troy
- Southwest – Auburn, Bainbridge, Newbury, Russell.

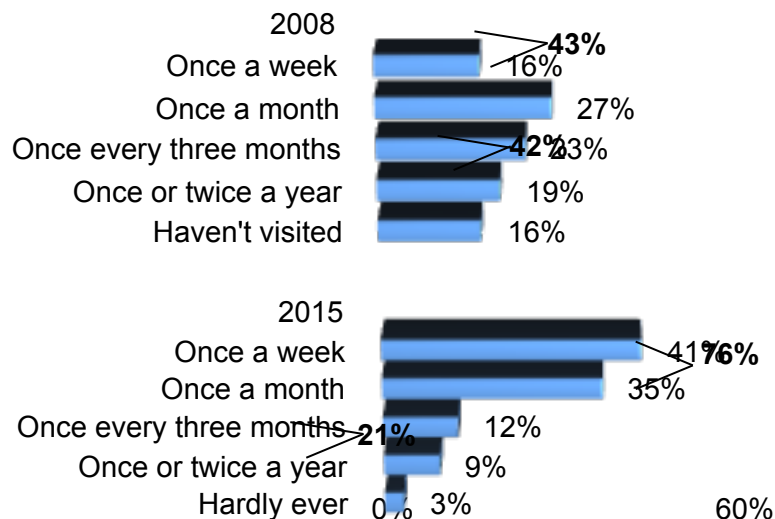
The distribution of survey respondents by region is similar to that of the population.

# Park Use

- Frequency of Visiting the Parks
- Parks Visited Most Often
- Reasons for Not Going More Often
- Other Recreational Activities They Participate In

**Three-fourths of survey respondents (76%) visit the parks about once a month or more.**

### Q23 FREQUENCY OF VISITING PARKS IN GEAUGA COUNTY



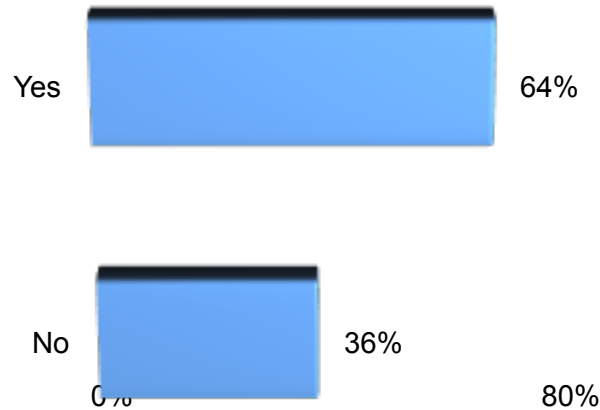
Two-fifths of the those completing the survey (41%) indicated that they visit parks in Geauga County about **once a week** with some volunteering that they go more often. Another 35% visit the parks about **once a month**. Just a fifth (21%) come to the parks **less often**. Only 3% of respondents indicated that they **don't visit at all or hardly ever visit** the parks. There are only 46 respondents in this subgroup making it too small for reliable analysis.

**As mentioned in the introduction, the response to this question is significantly different than what we saw in the 2008 telephone survey. Again, this is more a survey of park users than of the whole community.**

- There was little demographic variation on this. Park use was somewhat lower in the Southeast region (32% weekly, 33% monthly, 31% less often).

**About two-thirds (64%) indicated that they have attended a park-sponsored event or program in the past year.**

**Q5 ATTENDED AN EVENT OR PROGRAM SPONSORED BY  
THE GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT IN THE PAST YEAR**



Just over a third (36%) have not attended an event or program sponsored by the Geauga Park District in the past year.

Over half of all demographic groups said they have attended an event or program sponsored by the Geauga Park District in the past year.

- Program attendance was higher among those age 65 and over (71%) and respondents in the Southwest (71%).
- Also, those who go to the parks about once a week (74%) or once a month (71%) were more apt to have attended park programs or events in the past year than those who go the parks once every three months (51%).
- Just 19% of who visit the parks once or twice year have attended a park program or event in the past year.

## Respondents visit a number of different parks, but The West Woods is most popular.

Q3 GEAUGA DISTRICT PARKS RESPONDENTS USUALLY VISIT (Multiple Responses Accepted)					
Rank		%	Rank		%
12	Bass Lake Preserve	15	7	Observatory Park	19
11	Beartown Lakes Reservation	15	10	Orchard Hills Park	17
18	Bessie Benner Metzenbaum Park	5	13	Sunnybrook Preserve	12
2	Big Creek Park	32	4	Swine Creek Reservation	22
15	Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve	8	6	The Rookery	22
17	Chickagami Park	6	8	Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve	19
14	Eldon Russell Park	11	1	The West Woods	55
9	Frohring Meadows	18	20	Affelder House at The West Woods	2
3	Headwaters Park	28	19	Whitlam Woods	4
5	The Maple Highlands Trail	22	NA	Don't visit parks in Geauga County	1
16	Mountain Run Station	8	NA	Other	2

We asked respondents to limit their responses to three choices, but not everyone did. Regardless, the West Woods is overwhelmingly the most visited park with 55% choosing it as one of the parks they usually visit. Almost a third each visit Big Creek (32%) and Headwaters (28%) parks. Then there were 11 parks that between 11% and 22% of respondents said they usually visit.

The least visited parks were Whitlam Woods (4%), Bessie Benner Metzenbaum (5%), Chickagami (6%), Mountain Run (8%) and Burton Wetlands Nature Preserve (8%). Just 2% usually visit Affelder House at the West Woods.

Two percent or 41 respondents gave an 'other' response, 20 of whom indicated that they visit more than three parks or visit them all while five don't go to any parks in Geauga County. Other parks mentioned were Tupelo Pond (n=3), Pinebrook Preserve (2), Geauga Commons (2), Hambden (2), East Branch (1), Punderson (1), Russell Uplands (1), Western Reserve Trail (1), Lake Metroparks (1) and Cleveland Metroparks (1). One person did not answer.

**A fourth (24%) indicated that they pursue recreation other places.**

**Q8 OTHER THAN TIME, WHY DON'T YOU VISIT PARKS  
IN GEAUGA COUNTY OR VISIT THEM MORE OFTEN**  
(Multiple Responses Accepted)

Pursue recreation in areas other than parks

Don't offer programs or recreational activities  
I'm interested in

Lack information about parks/park  
programs

Poor health

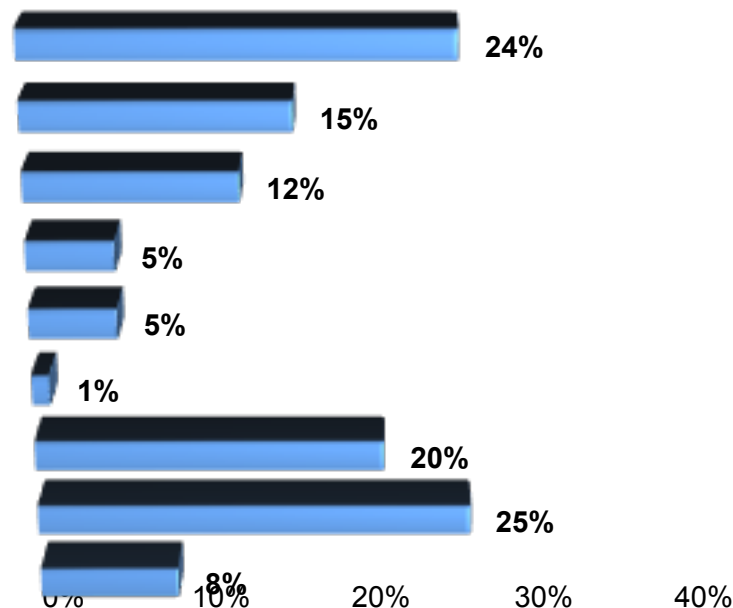
Parks are too far away

Don't like to participate in nature/outdoor  
activities

Do visit often

Other

No Answer



Respondents were asked 'other than not having enough time, why don't you visit parks in Geauga County or visit them more often.' In addition to the 24% who participate in recreation outside the parks, 15% of respondents indicated that the parks don't offer the programs and recreational activities they are interested in.

There were also 12% who don't have enough information about the parks, while 5% indicated that the parks in Geauga County are too far away. Five percent indicated that health problems prevent them from using the parks more often.

A fourth of the respondents (25%) gave 'other' responses and 7% of them said they don't have time, while some wrote in that they go to other parks (3%), weather is bad (2%), don't like how the parks are run (2%), enjoy their own yard (1%) or other activities (1%) and don't want to go alone (1%). Others wrote in things like the parks need more or longer trails, need to take better care of the trails, offer more programs or at different times and not enough to do. A complete list of these 'other' responses can be found at the back of the report.

There were some demographic differences.

- Over a fourth of those who visit the parks less than weekly (about 28%) indicated that they participate in other recreational activities outside the park and another fourth of those who visit the parks less frequently indicated that the parks don't offer the activities they are interested in.
- Males were also more apt to cite both of these reasons (30% and 19%) compared to females (20% and 12%).
- Respondents under age 50 were more apt to indicate that the parks don't offer the activities they are interested in (22%) than those age 50 and over (12%).
- A fifth of 18 to 34 year olds (21%) indicated that they lack information about the parks.

## When asked to name other recreational activities they participate in other than the parks, a wide variety of responses were given.

A follow-up question was asked to find out what kinds of recreational activities respondents participate in if they pursue recreation in areas other than the parks. Over half of respondents (n=905) answered this question, which includes many who did not indicate that they engage in recreational activities outside the parks. Therefore, the tables on the following two pages show three columns of responses to this question.

- The first column of responses are the percentages based on all of those who answered this question (n=905).
- In the second, or middle, column are the responses of just those who in the previous question indicated that they pursue recreation in areas outside the parks of which there were 393 respondents.
- The third column shows the percentage of responses given by the 246 respondents who indicated in the previous question that the parks don't offer programs or activities they are interested in as this might be helpful to the parks.

When we look at the tables on the following two pages, we see that for both all those who responded and just those who pursue recreation outside the parks, most of them indicated that they hike or walk (27% and 21%). Other activities mentioned by both of these groups with some frequency were:

- Biking (13% of all who responded and 12% of those who pursue recreation outside the parks)
- Fishing (10% and 13%)
- Swimming (9% and 10%)
- Hunting (8% and 14%) and
- Exercise (7% and 7%).

Looking at the 15% of respondents (n=246) who in the previous question indicated that they don't visit the parks more often because the parks don't offer programs or activities they are interested in, (the third column of responses), 18% participate in mountain biking and 19% in snowmobiling. Additionally, 9% of them each mentioned ATVs, 4-wheelers or dirt bikes and swimming while 7% each mentioned hunting, fishing and shooting. Also, 12% of them mentioned hiking or walking.



The responses of the kinds of recreational activities they participate in outside the parks are given in alphabetical order.

Q9 Kinds of Recreation Pursue Outside the Parks (Multiple Responses Accepted)			
	Of Those Who Responded N= 905 %	Pursue Rec Other Places N=393 %	Don't Offer Activities of Interest N=246 %
Archery	1	1	2
ATV, 4-wheelers, dirt bikes	4	5	9
Backpacking	1	2	--
Baseball, soccer, basketball, volleyball	4	5	5
Biking, bike riding, bicycling	13	12	6
Bird watching, photography, hikes	4	4	1
Boating, jet ski	5	6	5
Bowling	1	1	--
Camping	6	7	4
Canoeing/kayaking	6	5	5
Children's activities, sports, rec programs	2	3	1
Cross-country skiing	6	5	6
Disc golf, Frisbee golf	1	1	3
Dog walking, events	1	1	2
Downhill skiing	3	3	2
Exercise programs, YMCA, community center, gym, fitness workout, cross-fit, yoga, water aerobics	7	7	5
Fishing	10	13	7
Gardening	4	3	3
Golf	4	3	3

**Hiking or walking was mentioned most often (27%), even by those who pursue recreation in areas other than the parks (21%).**

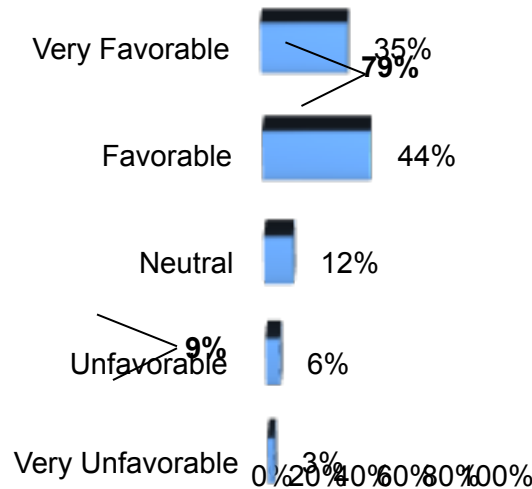
<b>Q9 Kinds of Recreation Pursue Outside the Parks (Continued)</b>			
	<b>Of Those Who Responded N= 905 %</b>	<b>Pursue Rec Other Places N=393 %</b>	<b>Don't Offer Activities of Interest N=246 %</b>
Hike or walk	27	21	12
Holden Arboretum, Lake Metroparks	2	2	1
Horseback riding, equine, bridle trails	5	5	3
Hunting	8	14	7
Ice skating	1	1	1
Motorcycle riding	1	2	2
Mountain biking	5	7	18
Music, concerts, plays, museums, movies, theater, dancing	6	5	1
Photography	1	1	3
Playgrounds	1	1	1
Rock climbing	1	2	2
Running	4	4	4
Sailing	2	2	1
Shooting	3	3	7
Sledding, tubing	1	1	2
Snowshoeing	1	1	3
Snowmobiling	5	5	19
Sports, sports events	3	4	1
Swimming	9	10	9
Tennis	1	1	2
Travel	2	3	1
Other	6	3	2

# Ratings For Geauga Park District

- Favorable/Unfavorable Opinion
- Overall Rating and Specific Ratings for the Parks
- Encourage More Use Among Seniors and Families
- Source of Park Information

**About four-fifths of respondents (79%) have a favorable opinion of the Geauga Park District.**

## Q1 OVERALL OPINION OF THE GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT

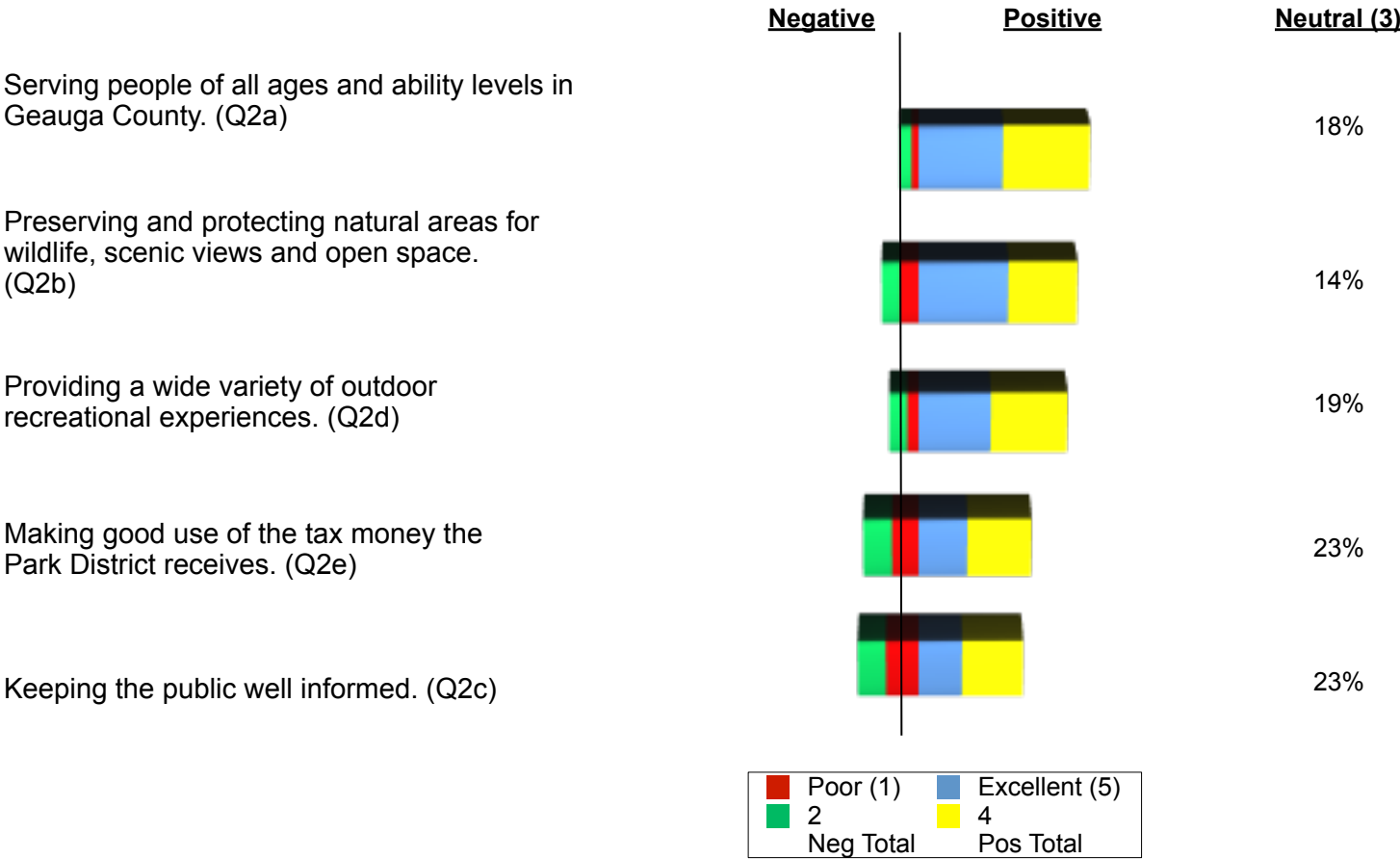


Of this 79% with a positive opinion of the Geauga Park District, 35% have a **very favorable** opinion of the parks and 44% have a **favorable** opinion. Just 9% have an **unfavorable** opinion of the parks while 12% have a **neutral** opinion. This is a very good rating.

- A large majority of nearly every subgroup indicated that they have a favorable opinion of the park district.
- The only exception was those who hardly ever or never go to the parks (35% favorable, 35% neutral and 27% unfavorable. But again, there are just 46 respondents in this subgroup so the results are not as reliable.
- The Geauga Parks' **very** favorable rating increased with the frequency of visiting the parks from 20% among those who visit the parks about once or twice a year to 41% among those visit about once a week.
- Also, 42% of respondents in the Southwest region have a very favorable opinion of the Geauga Park District compared to about a third of respondents in the rest of the county.

Two-thirds or more rated the parks positively on three of the five specific items.

**SPECIFIC RATINGS FOR THE GEAUGA PARKS**  
**(Scale of 1 to 5)**



Respondents were asked to rate the parks on these five specific items using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 meant poor and 5 meant excellent. Looking at the percent who rated each item positively (a '4' or a '5'), the Geauga Parks received their best ratings on ...

- Serving people of all ages and ability levels in Geauga County (73% positive, with 36% rating this excellent)
- Preserving and protecting natural areas for wildlife, scenic views and open space (69% positive, with 39% rating this excellent) and
- Providing a wide variety of outdoor recreational experiences (66% positive, with 32% rating it excellent).

Less than a fifth rated each of these three items negatively, that is a '1' or a '2'.

About half also gave the Geauga Park District positive ratings on the remaining two items (a '4' or '5'), while a fourth rated each one negatively (a '1' or '2'). They were:

- Making good use of the tax money the Park District receives (51/25; positive/negative) and
- Keeping the public well informed (48/28).

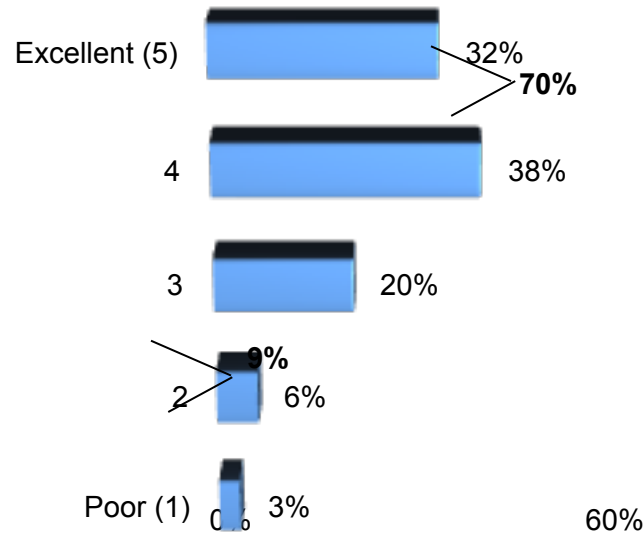
Another fourth (23% each) rated these two items a '3' so they were neutral. Even these ratings are fairly good. The Geauga Parks could do more to keep the public informed.

Demographically we find that ...

- On serving all people, providing a wide variety of outdoor recreational experiences and making good use of the tax money, the positive ratings increased with frequency of park use. Also, females gave the parks higher ratings on these three items than males.
- On preserving natural areas and keeping the public informed, frequent park users gave these items somewhat lower ratings (65% and 45% positive) than those who use the parks monthly or less often. In addition, respondents age 50 and over rated both of these items lower than respondents age 18 to 49.

**When asked to rate the Geauga Parks overall on that same 1 to 5 scale, 70% gave the Park District a positive rating overall.**

#### **Q4 OVERALL RATING FOR THE GEAUGA PARK DISTRICT ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5**



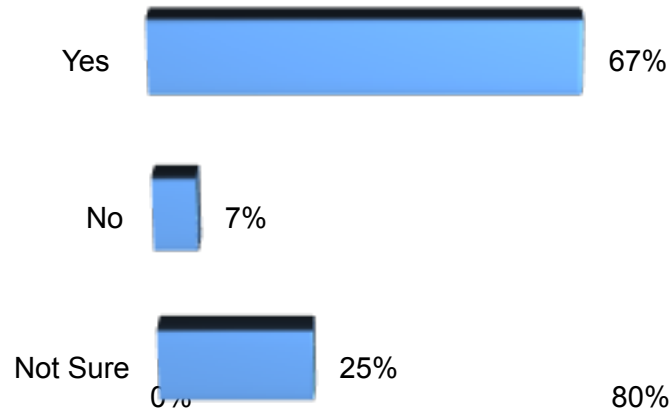
A third (32%) rated the Geauga Park District overall a '5' while 38% gave the parks an overall rating of '4'. Only 9% gave the parks overall a negative rating of '1' or '2'.

- Here too the excellent rating (a '5') increased with frequency of park use.
- Also, 40% of respondents from the Southwest region rated the parks overall as excellent, while this decreased to about 28% in the other three regions.
- Females were more apt to rate this a '5' (37%) than males (26%).

This too is a very good rating.

**Two-thirds of all respondents (67%) were satisfied with the events or programs offered by the Park District.**

**Q6 SATISFIED WITH EVENTS OR PROGRAMS  
OFFERED BY THE GEAUGA PARKS**



Just 7% indicated that they are not satisfied with the programs or events offered by the parks while a fourth (25%) weren't sure.

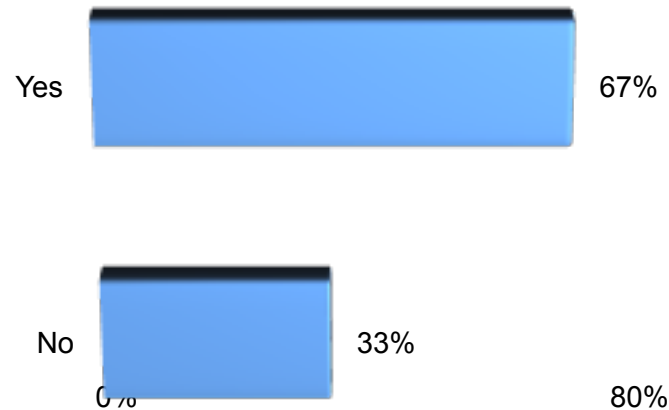
- Satisfaction with the park programs and events offered was high across all subgroups, especially among frequent (75%) and moderate (71%) park users.

When we look only at the 64% of respondents who have attended park programs or events in the past year, 82% were satisfied with the programs and events offered while only 6% were not and 12% weren't sure. Just 42% of those who haven't attended any park programs were satisfied with the programs offered while 48% weren't sure. And only 9% were not satisfied. The quality or variety of programs does not seem to be a reason for not participating in park programs, but lack of awareness might be a contributing factor.



**Two-thirds (67%) think the Park District should do more to encourage families and children to use the parks.**

**Q12 SHOULD THE PARK DISTRICT DO MORE TO ENCOURAGE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN TO USE THE PARKS**

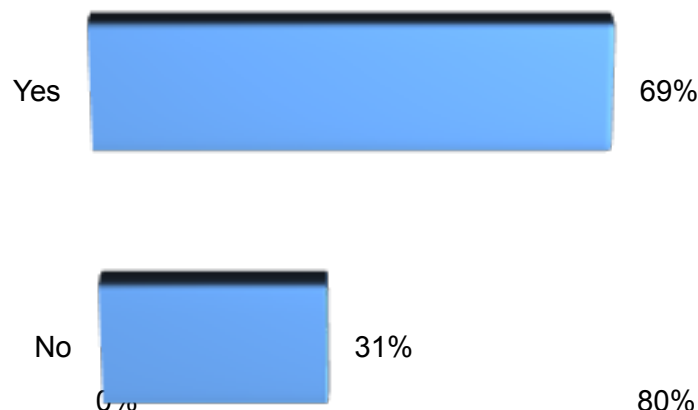


A third (33%) do not think the parks should do more to encourage families and children to use the parks.

- Park users who visit once a month (70%) or once every three months (74%) were more likely to think the parks should do more to encourage families and children to use the parks than those who use the parks weekly (63%) or only once or twice a year (62%).
- There was little difference between respondents with children under age 18 (69%) and those who don't have children (66%).

**Similarly, 69% think the parks should do more to encourage seniors to use the parks.**

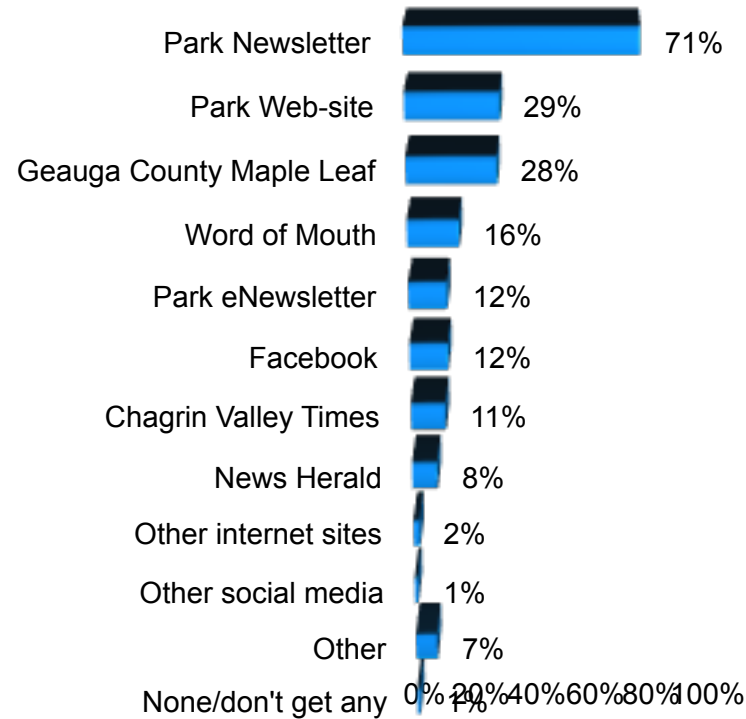
**Q13 SHOULD THE PARK DISTRICT DO MORE TO ENCOURAGE SENIORS TO USE THE PARKS**



- Here too those who use the parks once a month (71%) or once every three months (74%) were more apt to think the parks should do more to encourage seniors to use the parks. This percentage decreased to 67% among weekly users and to 65% among those who use the parks once or twice a year.
- Importantly, 76% of respondents age 65 and over indicated that the parks should do more to encourage seniors to use the parks. Perhaps seniors would be interested in some different types of programs or more accessibility to the parks. There were some comments that a paved trail had been removed.
- The percent who think the parks should encourage seniors to use the parks was also slightly higher among those who don't have children (71%), females (71%) and respondents in the Northwest region (73%).

**The *Voices of Nature* newsletter was overwhelmingly the main source of information about the parks (71%).**

**Q18 TWO MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARKS  
(Multiple Responses Accepted)**



Second to this was the park web-site (29%) while 12% rely on the park e-newsletter. Print media is used by some residents: Geauga County Maple Leaf (28%), Chagrin Valley Times (11%) and the News Herald (8%). Just 16% indicated a main source of their information is from word of mouth sources.

‘Other’ sources given were visit the parks or own observations (n=20), park bulletin boards (n=7), and board meetings or park employees (n=16). The Geauga Times Courier (n=21) and Chesterland News (n=15) were also mentioned.

- 18 to 34 year olds were less likely to rely on the park newsletter (47%) and more likely to rely on Facebook (31%).

# Priorities for Geauga Park District

- Top-of-Mind Improvements
- Interest in Outdoor and Recreational Activities
- Opportunities Parks Could Offer More Of or More Often
- Most Important Things for Parks To Do

## **Survey respondents suggested a wide variety of improvements or changes they would like to see in the Geauga Parks or its programs.**

Before we presented respondents with lists of uses or priorities for the parks, they were first asked to give their own opinion of changes or improvements they would like to see the parks make. Many gave more than one response. We coded their responses into more than 60 different answers and then grouped them into four areas for improvement.

### **Park Leadership/Management**

The call for better leadership, someone with a conservation background, less politics or infighting was the single response given most often (13%). Another 6% said parks should or need to go back to the old mission and 3% said the parks are good now, keep things the way they are. It was clear in the survey here, and in other questions, that some number of residents are not happy with the leadership of the parks.

And while some wrote to stop buying so much land, others wrote to buy more land or allow more access to park land. Some suggested specific items for park management, such as improve signage, don't use chemicals, enforce leash laws, etc. There were also 3% who want more or better information about the parks.

### **Focus on Conservation**

A number of respondents advocated for a stronger focus on preserving and protecting parkland and habitat, or on conservation and less on recreation. Others were against the development of more active recreational uses of parkland, from playgrounds to snowmobile trails to hunting and drilling.

### **More Development**

At the same time, a number of respondents would like to see more development. Many of these responses were trail-related and included suggestions for more, better, longer walking trails, as well as trails for bikes, snowmobiles, horses, buggies and adults. Others were interested in hunting, fishing, canoeing, camping, shooting, winter activities, while others would like to see more recreation areas with playgrounds, ball fields or kids areas in the parks. Some also mentioned specific park improvements such as better restrooms, trashcans and shelters.

### **More Programming/Events**

The fourth area of comments called for more park programming. Some residents would like more nature-related programs or naturalist-led hikes, while others suggested more programming for seniors, families, teens/ tweens and kids or for arts, crafts, photography and food. Some would like more events or some offered at different parks.

**When asked what improvements or changes they would like to see, many mentioned something related to park leadership or management.**

<b>Q7 IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE PARKS OR PROGRAMS</b> <b>(Multiple Responses Accepted)</b>	
	<b><u>All Respondents</u></b>
<b>Park Leadership/Management</b>	<b>%</b>
Better leadership, need someone with a conservation background, less infighting, less politics, don't like get rid of Grendell, Oros, Shumway	13
Return the parks to the way they were, go back to old mission	6
Keep things the way they are, good the way they are	4
Keep community informed about what's going on, more advertising of programs, more notice	3
Acquire/ buy more land	2
Stop buying land, have enough, drive up prices	2
Open more land to the public, allow access to more land	2
Longer hours at parks, offer programming in the evening, at different times	1
Improve/add signage for trails, plants, animals, need maps	1
Keep the costs down, stop taxing us so much, don't waste taxpayer money	1
Enforce dog leash laws, make owners clean up after dogs, more signs	1
Allow use of dead trees for firewood, harvest trees	1
Do not use chemicals, herbicides, poison (at Frohring Meadows)	1
Control invasive species	<1
Quit draining Headwaters Park, East Branch, hold water in Lake Chickagami between Nash Road and 168	<1
Collect tax that was eliminated	<1
More community involvement in decision making	<1
More staff, naturalists	<1
Need more park rangers, be more visible	<1

**A number of respondents specifically said the parks should focus more on conservation, while others don't want or want less active uses in the parks.**

<b>Q7 IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE PARKS OR PROGRAMS (Multiple Responses Accepted)</b>	
	<b><u>All Respondents</u></b>
<b>Focus on Conservation</b>	<b>%</b>
More focus on conservation, keep it natural, protect parkland, nature	11
No ATVs, snowmobiles, motorized vehicles/sports	6
More focus on conservation, less on recreation	3
No playgrounds, ball fields, etc. don't need	3
Want fewer/less active recreational activities	2
Allow passive recreation only	2
No drilling, fracking	2
No hunting, trapping	2

## Many respondents also suggested additional development in the parks.

Q7 IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE PARKS OR PROGRAMS (Multiple Responses Accepted)	
	<u>All Respondents</u>
<b>More Development</b>	%
Mountain bike trails	5
Allow hunting, controlled hunting, deer, turkey waterfowl	4
Add snowmobile trails, ATV trails	4
Improve, add more hiking/walking trails, need better longer trails, connect them	4
Offer more variety, more recreation areas, activities – baseball, soccer, tennis, playgrounds	4
More separate bridle trails, events for horse owners, no bikes on bridle trails	3
Maintain trails, keep them clean of snow, add gravel	2
Add winter activities – cross country skiing, sledding hill, toboggan run	2
Pave the paths/trails, improve access for, disabled, older adults, strollers, got rid of only	1
Dog parks, off the leash dog park, events for dog owners	1
Allow fishing, more fishing, offer lessons, events, tournaments	1
More camping, overnight, tent, backpacking	1
Add shooting, gun range, target shooting	1
Add more trashcans at parks, on trails	1
More access for canoes, kayaks, organize trips, allow boating access	1
More buggy trails, pave the trails, (Burton to Tare Creek)	1
More bicycling opportunities, more, longer bike paths	1
Need more at Observatory Park, Improve Whitlam Woods, add observation deck at Frohring Meadows, blinds at Bass Lake	1
Disc golf courses	1
Provide swimming	<1
More bathrooms, modern	<1
Improve shelters, add running water, fireplaces, more covered picnic areas	<1
More game management, control animal population, deer coyote	<1
Restore Monarch butterfly field	<1



## Respondents suggested a variety of types of programming.

Q7 IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE PARKS OR PROGRAMS (Multiple Responses Accepted)	
	<u>All Respondents</u>
<b>More Programming/Events</b>	<b>%</b>
More programs about nature, conservation, protect, plants, animals, caring for nature	3
More programs for children, families, toddlers	3
More programs (non-specific or non-nature)	2
More hikes, naturalist-led hiked, organized, group hikes	2
More kids activities, school programs, scouting, summer /day camps	2
Add more events, need more at different parks (Frozen, concerts)	2
More arts programs, craft programs	1
Programs for teens, young adults, tweens	1
Programs for senior citizens	1
Bring back Shutterbugs, photography group	<1
Offer gardening, farming, food programs	<1

## The survey also measured the level of interest in 24 specific recreational or outdoor activities.

Later in the survey, respondents were presented a list of 24 different recreational opportunities or outdoor experiences. They were asked to rate their level of interest in each one on a scale of 1 to 5 where one meant not interested at all and 5 meant extremely interested. These 24 items fell into roughly four equal groups based on the percent who rated each one a '5' or a '4', i.e., the percent extremely or very interested.

Interest was highest in the more passive, and perhaps what might be considered more traditional, uses of public metro parks with hike and bike trails leading the list with 78% rating this a '4' or a '5'.

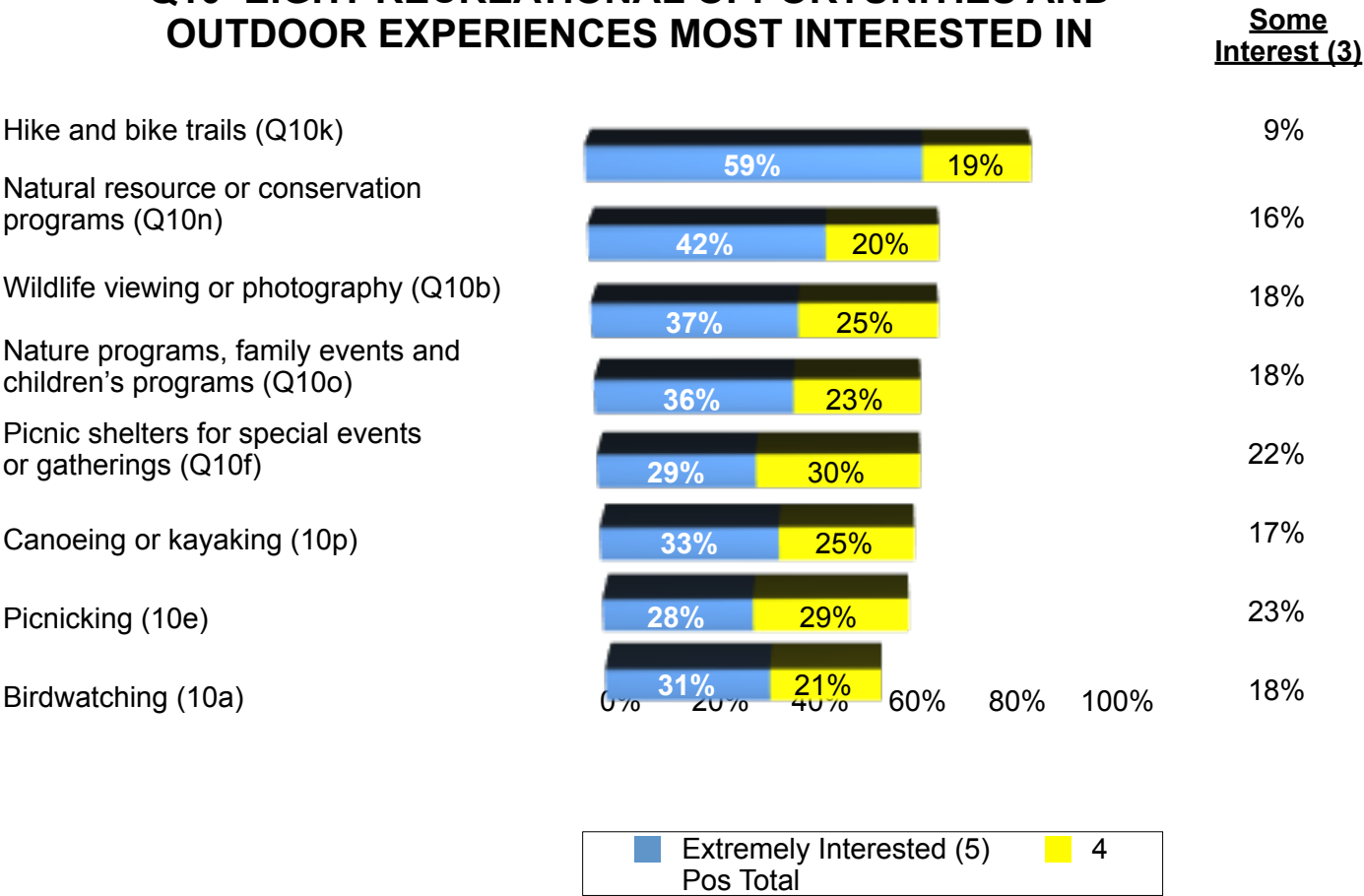
- Interest in hike and bike trails was very high among weekly (87%), monthly (82%) and once every three months (73%) park users, while it dropped to 44% among once or twice a year park users. This was also the top response among all demographic subgroups.

As shown in the graph on the following page, over half of all respondents were also extremely or very interested in ...

- Natural resource or conservation programs (62%)
  - Wildlife viewing or photography (62%)
  - Nature programs, family events and children's programs (59%)
  - Using a picnic shelter for a special event or gathering (59%)
  - Canoeing or kayaking (58%)
  - Picnicking (57%) and
  - Birdwatching (52%).
- 
- A majority of nearly all subgroups were also extremely or very interested in 6 of these 7 activities. The exception was birdwatching, which appealed more to residents age 50 and over (60%) than younger residents (35%).
  - The other exception was 18 to 34 year olds. Only about half of them were interested in wildlife viewing (49%), conservation programs (51%) or nature programs (52%). But about two-thirds of them were interested in picnicking (63%) and using the picnic shelters (65%) as well as canoeing or kayaking (69%).
  - A majority of those who use the parks once every three months or once/twice a year were interested in picnicking (59% and 50%) and using the picnic shelters for special events (64% and 60%).

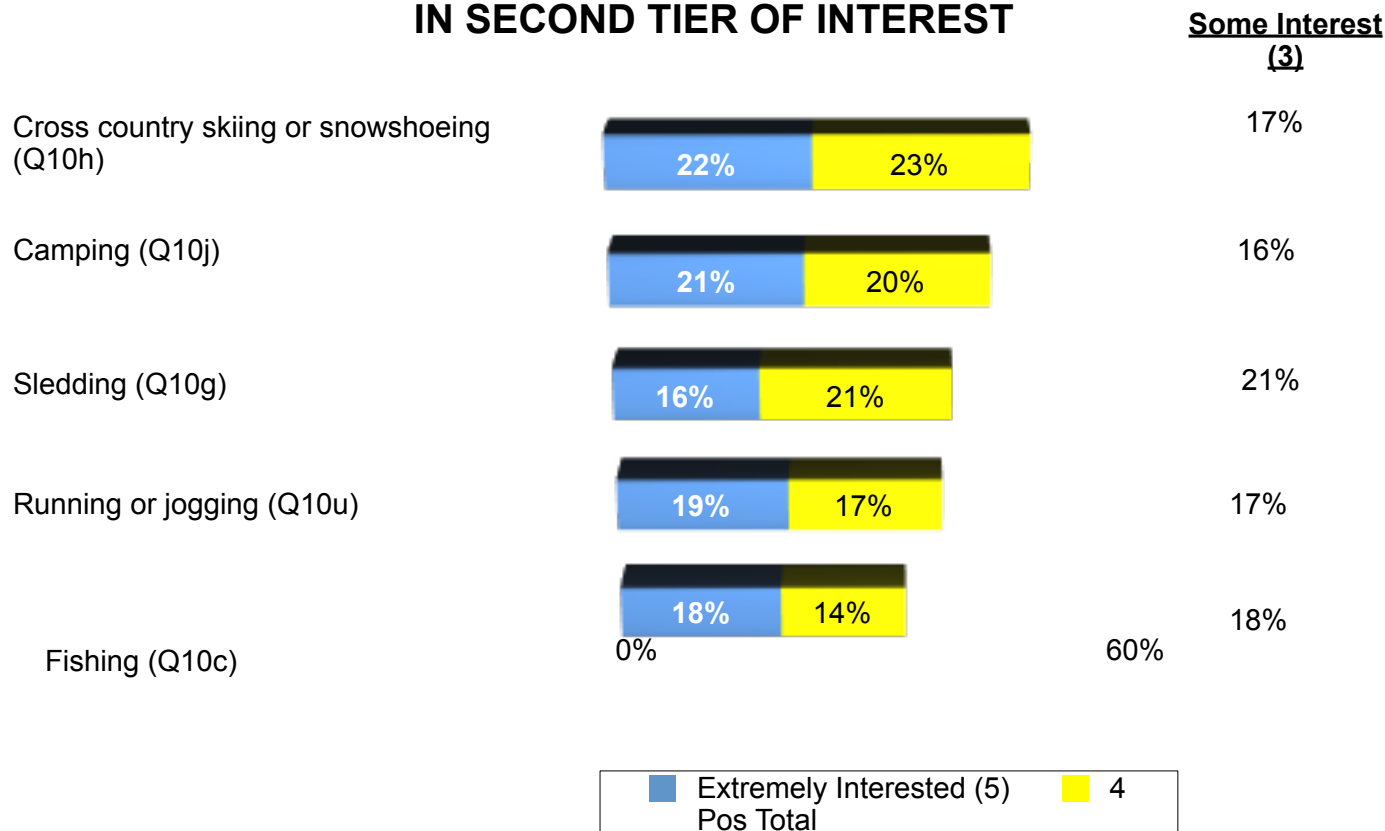
In the first group were eight recreational or outdoor experiences that a majority of respondents were extremely or very interested in.

Q10 EIGHT RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND  
OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES MOST INTERESTED IN



**A third and nearly half were extremely or very interested in five other park activities.**

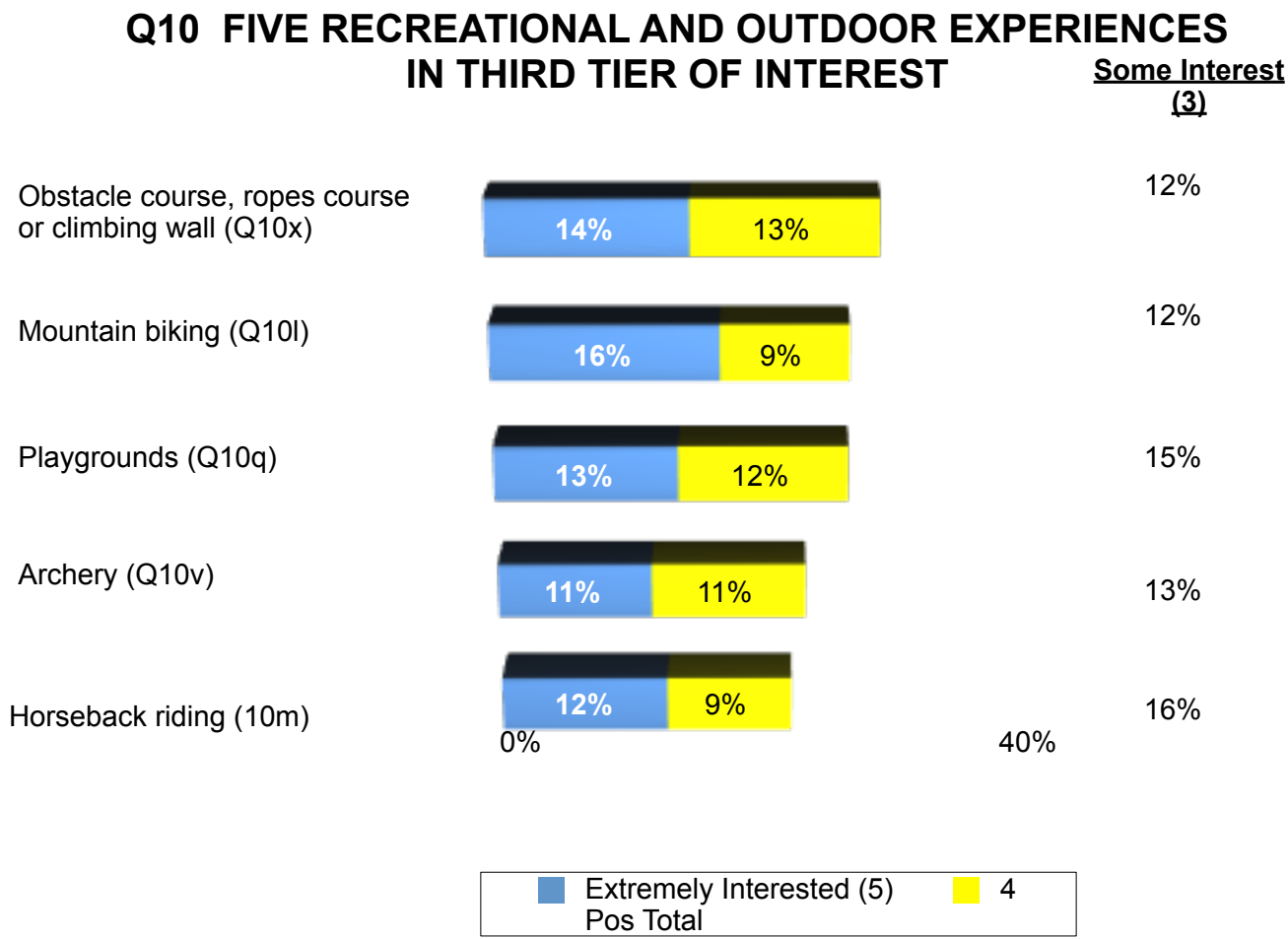
## Q10 FIVE RECREATIONAL AND OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES IN SECOND TIER OF INTEREST



These five activities were more recreational, but still less intrusive uses of the parks.

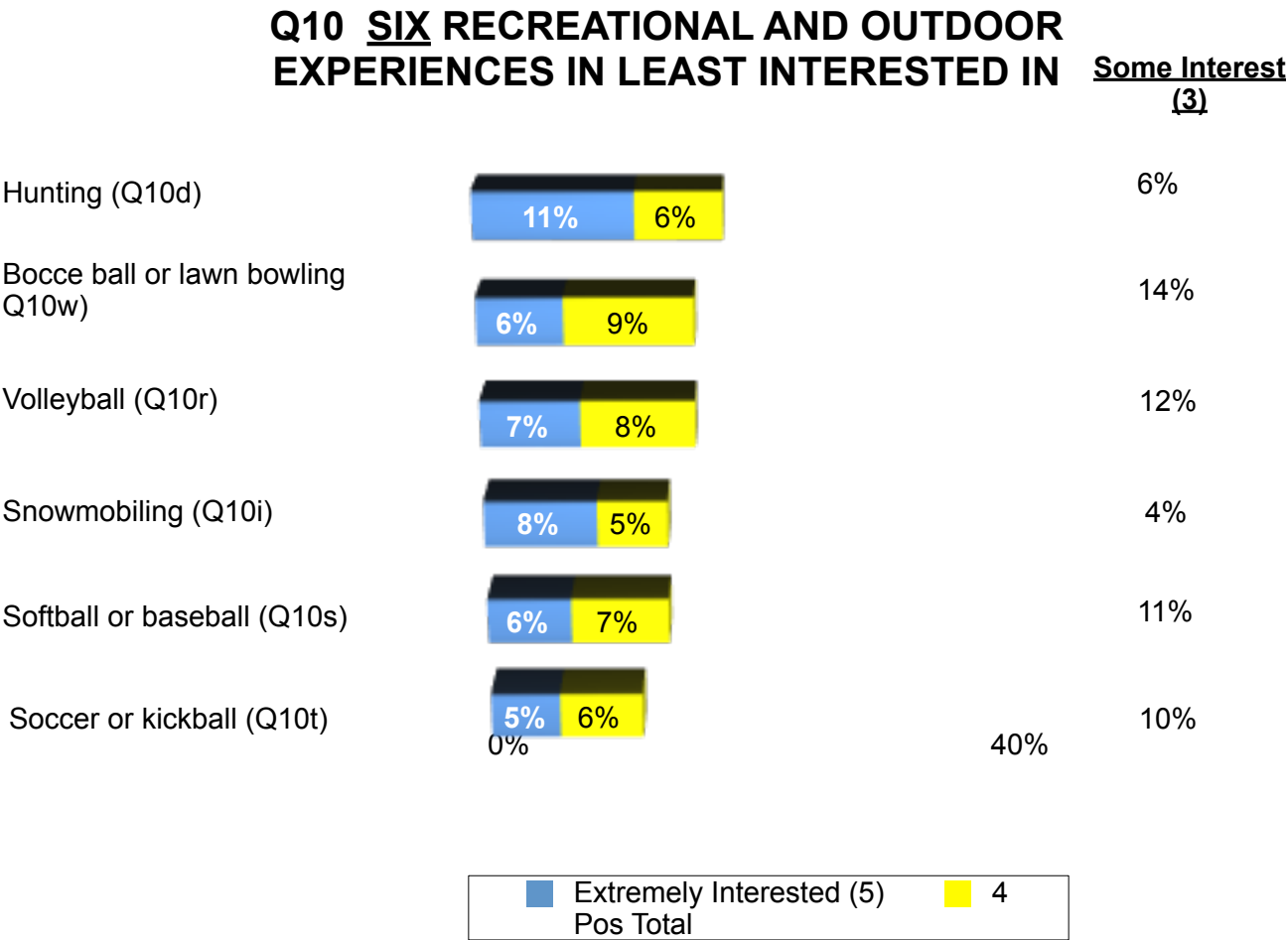
- About half of weekly (56%) and monthly (47%) park users are interested in cross country skiing or snowshoeing.
- About half of those who use the parks once every three months were interested in sledding (47%), while 42% were interested in camping, 38% in fishing and 36% in running.
- Of these 5 items, those who use the parks once/twice a year were more interested in camping (35%) and fishing (36%). Residents under age 50 were also more interested in these five activities, particularly, camping (60%) and sledding (56%).

Interest decreased to between a fifth and a fourth for the five activities below.



- With the exception of horseback riding, interest in each of the other four items was higher among residents under age 50 and those with children. In fact, about two-fifths of residents under age 50 were interested in the climbing wall, ropes or obstacle course (44%), mountain biking (41%) and playgrounds (38%).
- Interest in archery was higher among residents in the Southeast (30%) and Northeast (27%) regions.
- There was little variation for interest in horseback riding.

Less than a fifth were interested in the remaining six activities.



- Interest in these six activities was somewhat higher among those use the parks less frequently and adults under 50, but it was still less than a fourth in most cases.
- The one exception was for hunting where a third of those who use the parks once every three months (35%), 18 to 34 year olds (35%) and residents in the Southeast (31%) were interested in this as were 43% of those who hardly ever go to the parks and 28% of males.

**The top four things that respondents think are the most important for the Geauga Parks to focus on were also the top four with the highest level of interest.**

<b>Q11 MOST IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL OR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES THE PARKS SHOULD FOCUS ON IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS</b>	
	<b>All Respondents %</b>
Hike and bike trails	58
Natural resource or conservation programs	50
Nature programs, family events and children's	50
Wildlife viewing or photography	43
Birding/bird watching	38
Picnic shelters for special events or gatherings	28
Canoeing or kayaking	24
Picnicking	22
Camping	21
Fishing	20
Cross country skiing or snowshoeing	18

After rating their level of interest in those 24 activities, respondents were asked to choose the five things that they think are most important for Geauga Parks to focus on. Consistent with the park activities respondents are most interested, the four things ranked highest as what the parks should focus on in the next 10 years were hike and bike trails (58%), conservation programs (50%), nature programs (50%) and wildlife viewing (43%).

Second to these were seven more items that between a fifth and two-fifths indicated should be most important focuses for the park district. They included: birdwatching (38%), picnic shelters (28%), canoeing or kayaking (24%), picnicking (22%), camping (21%), fishing (20%) and cross-country skiing (18%).

**Only about a tenth or less said the remaining 13 items should be one of the top five focuses for the Geauga Parks in the next 10 years.**

<b>Q11 MOST IMPORTANT RECREATIONAL AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES THE PARKS SHOULD FOCUS ON IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS</b>	
	<b>All Respondents %</b>
Hunting	12
Running or jogging	11
Obstacle course, ropes course or climbing wall	11
Horseback riding	10
Playgrounds	10
Mountain biking	9
Sledding	7
Snowmobiling	7
Archery	6
Bocce ball or lawn bowling	4
Volleyball	3
Softball or baseball	3
Soccer or kickball	2
Other	12

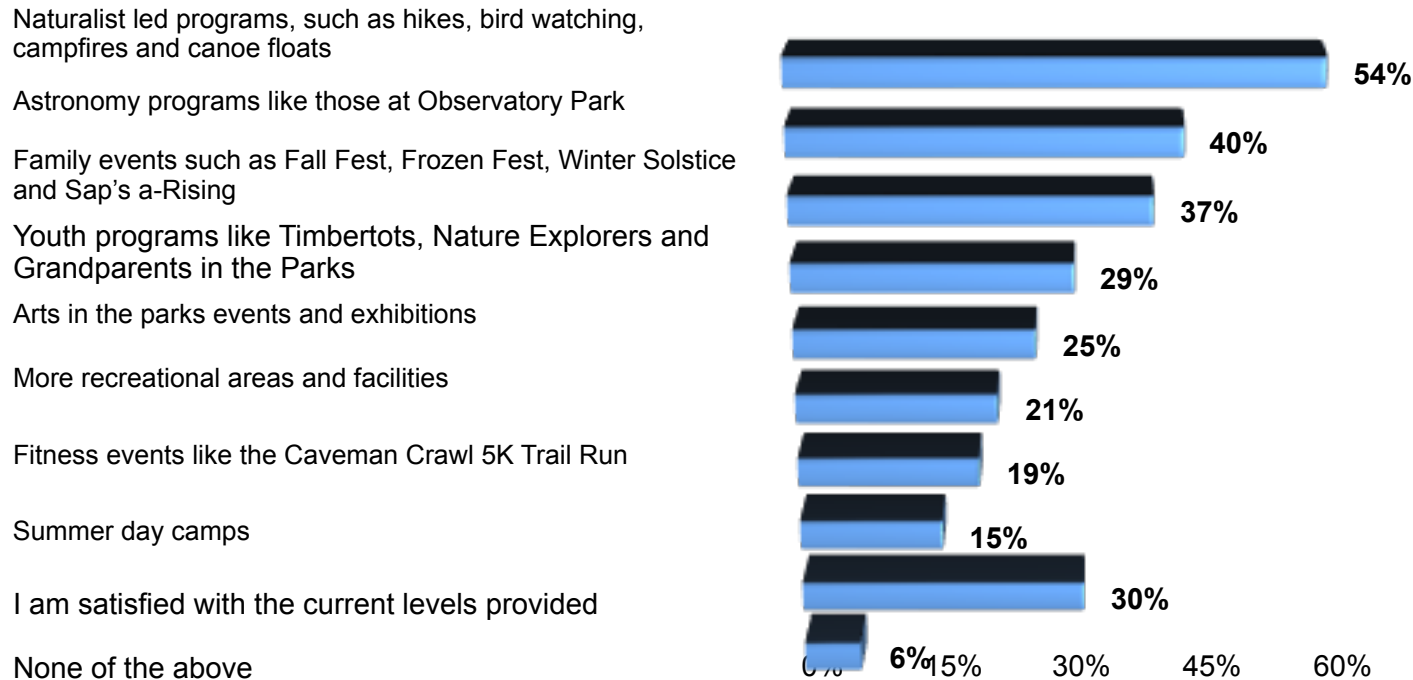
Just over a tenth mentioned hunting (12%), running (11%) and an obstacle or ropes course (11%).

Some of the 'other' responses were: ATV/4-wheeler trails, hiking trails without bikes, swimming, shooting range, connect the parks and kids' activities. A number of others wrote to conserve or protect land or buy more land, better management needed, etc. A complete list of the 'other' responses can be found at the back of the report.



**The was some interest in the parks offering more of their programs or offering them more often.**

### **Q15 OPPORTUNITIES YOU WOULD LIKE THE PARKS TO OFFER MORE OF OR MORE OFTEN**

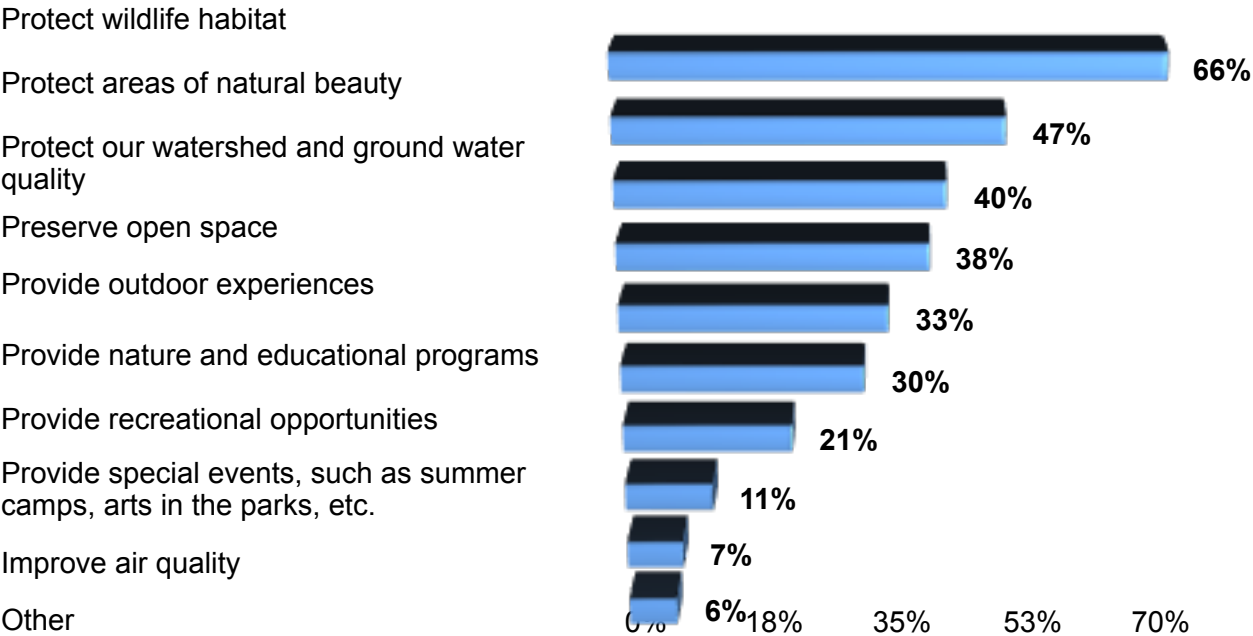


Over half (54%) were interested in the parks offering more naturalist-led programs. About two-fifths would like more astronomy programs (40%) and family events (37%) while a fourth each would like more youth programs (29%) and arts in the parks (25%). Also, 30% indicated that they are satisfied with the current levels of programming provided.

- The biggest difference on this question was by whether they have children. Those who don't have children were more apt to want the parks to offer more naturalist-led programs, astronomy programs and arts in the parks, while those with children expressed more interest in more family events, youth programs and recreational areas.

Protect wildlife habitat emerged as the most important thing for the parks to do.

Q14 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR THE GEAUGA PARKS TO DO  
(Multiple Responses Accepted)



Respondents were presented with a list of nine different ways the parks contribute to the county and were asked to indicate the three that they think are most important for the Geauga Parks to do. Most people limited their responses to three.

The top response by far was protecting wildlife habitat with 66% choosing this response. Second was protecting areas of natural beauty (47%) while a two-fifths each chose protecting our watershed and ground water quality (40%) and preserving open space (38%) as most important.

About a third each chose providing outdoor experiences (33%) and providing nature and education programs (30%) as most important.

Scoring lower in importance was providing special events (11%) and recreational opportunities (21%). While residents seem to like outdoor experiences, nature programs and recreational activities, they are not viewed as top priorities. In fact, the four items that said 'protect' or 'preserve' rated higher than the four items that said 'provide.'

There were some demographic differences.

- The top two responses for those who use the parks were protecting wildlife habitat and protecting areas of natural beauty, while those who hardly ever visit the parks were more apt to choose providing outdoor experiences (59%) and more recreational opportunities (33%). But again, there are only a small number of respondents in this subgroup.
- Respondents age 35 to 49 and those with children were also more apt to choose providing more outdoor experiences as a most important (45% and 43%) than overall.
- However, for all subgroups, protecting wildlife habitat scored highest.

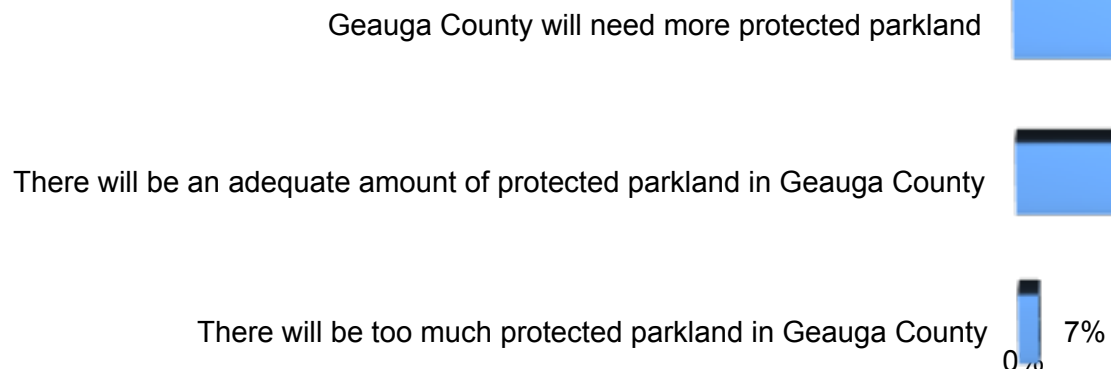
There were 6% who wrote in an 'other' response to this question or did not answer. Some made specific suggestions for more development (n=26), more park programs (12), more outdoor opportunities (6) or more access to park land (4). There were 19 who wrote that the parks should conserve, protect or buy more land. Three people said to control animal or wildlife population. And there were 17 people who thought all of the choices were important or wanted to give more than three responses.

# Attitudes toward Geauga Parks

- Amount of Parkland in the Future
- Importance of the Parks

**A majority of respondents think Geauga County will need more protected parkland in the next 10 years.**

**Q16 THINKING ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF PARKLAND IN GEAUGA COUNTY, DO YOU THINK THAT IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS ....**

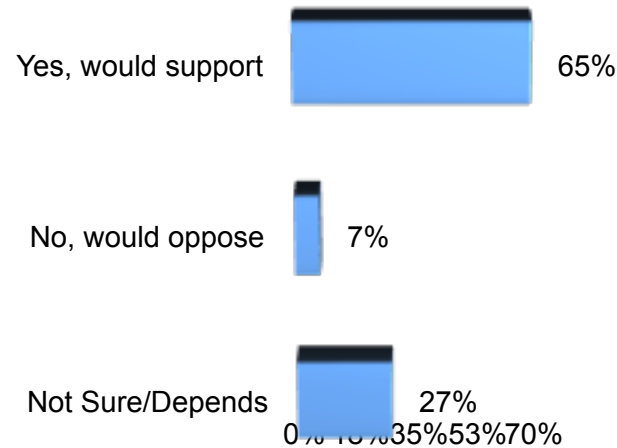


This question first told respondents that the Geauga Park District has approximately 10,000 acres of parkland now. When asked about the need for parkland in the next 10 years, 58% indicated that the county **will need more** protected parkland. A third (34%) think there will be **an adequate amount** of protected parkland in the county. Just 7% said there **will be too much** protected parkland in the county in the next 10 years.

- Groups more likely to think more protected parkland will be needed included weekly park users (75%), respondents in the Northwest (64%) and Southwest (65%) regions and 50 to 64 year olds (65%).
- Groups less likely to think more parkland will be needed included those who go the parks once every three months (43%) or once or twice a year (24%), respondents in the Southeast (45%) and Northeast (52%) regions, 35 to 49 year olds (50%), those with children (49%) and males (54%).

**Two-thirds (65%) would support the Geauga Parks if a unique piece of property became available that the District wanted to buy.**

**Q17 WOULD YOU SUPPORT THE PARKS BUYING A PIECE OF PROPERTY THAT HAD UNIQUE NATURAL HABITATS, WOULD CONNECT THE PARKS OR PROVIDE MORE RECREATIONAL USES**



Only 7% would be opposed to the parks buying a piece of property that became available and had unique natural habitats, would connect the parks or provide more recreational uses. The remaining fourth (27%) weren't sure.

- A majority of nearly all subgroups indicated that they would support this, especially weekly park users (75%) and those in the Southwest region (75%).
- Just 39% of those who go to parks only a couple of times a year would support the parks buying this kind of property while 22% were opposed and 36% weren't sure.
- Those who don't go to the parks tended to oppose buying more land (20/33), but 37% weren't sure.
- Also, four-fifths of those who think the parks will need more land in the future would support the parks buying a unique piece of land (81%). Conversely, only 10% of those who think the parks will have enough land 10 years from now would support the parks buying more. Those who think the parks will have an adequate amount of land in the next 10 years were divided (48% would support it and 42% not sure).

## There was significant agreement with five statements about the Geauga Parks.

### Q19 AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS ABOUT THE PARKS

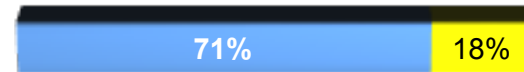
Neither /  
Disagree

It's important for Geauga County to have a good park system. (Q19a)



2% / 2%

Gauga Park District is important to maintaining the quality of life for Geauga County residents. (Q19e)



7% / 2%

Gauga Park District provides a lot of opportunities for people to connect with nature. (Q19c)



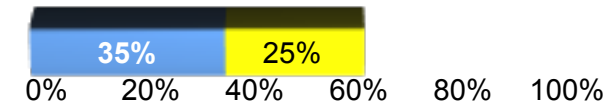
8% / 3%

With the ongoing growth in Geauga County, we need to preserve land for the future. (Q19d)



9% / 8%

It is important to have recreational opportunities in the parks. (Q19b)



15% / 24%

Strongly Agree   Agree  
Pos Total

Nearly everyone agreed *that it's important for Geauga County to have a good park system* (96%) with 81% **strongly** agreeing.

There were also 89% each who agreed with two more statements. In particular, 71% **strongly agreed** that *the Park District is important to maintaining the quality of life for Geauga County residents*, another 18% agreed. And 49% **strongly agreed** while 40% agreed that *the Park District provides a lot of opportunities for people to connect with nature*.

Two-thirds (67%) also **strongly agreed** that *with the ongoing growth in Geauga County, we need to preserve land for the future*, another 16% agreed. Agreement was lowest that *it's important to have recreational opportunities in the parks*, but even here 60% agreed with 35% **strongly agreeing**.

Demographically, we find that ...

- With the exception of those who visit the parks once or twice a year or hardly ever, two-thirds or more of all subgroups strongly agreed that it's important for Geauga County to have a good park system. Maintaining a good park system is clearly valued by Geauga County residents.
- With these same two exceptions, over half of every subgroup strongly agreed that the parks are important to the quality of life in Geauga County and that we need to preserve land for the future.
- About half or less of respondents in all subgroups strongly agreed that the Park District provides a lot of opportunities for people to connect with nature. But disagreement with this was also low across the board. Therefore, it doesn't seem like people are unhappy with this.
- There was a little more disagreement that it's important to have recreational opportunities in the parks (24%). As we might expect, younger residents (71/17) and those with children (70/15) were more apt to agree with this than adults aged 50 and over (53/28) and those who don't have children (56/27).
- Also, just 51% of weekly park users think it's important for the parks to offer recreational opportunities while 31% disagreed.



## Key Findings

Overall the survey results are quite positive for the Geauga Park District. Residents use the parks and give the parks very good ratings.

- 41% visit the parks about once a week and 35% visit about once a month.
- 64% have attended a park program or event in the past year.
- 79% have a favorable opinion of the Geauga Parks and 70% give the parks an overall rating of excellent or good.
- Of the specific items, the Park District was rated higher on serving people of all ages and ability levels (73% positive), preserving and protecting natural areas (69%) and providing a wide variety of outdoor recreational experiences (66%).
- Areas for improvement are keeping the public informed (48% positive) and making good use of its tax money (51% positive).

Many park users get their information from the park newsletter (71%) while others rely on the park web-site (29%), or e-newsletter (12%). The Geauga County Maple Leaf was the paper chosen most often (28%). The Park District should continue its publications and make sure they contain the information residents are looking for.

There was also a high level of agreement with five statements about the parks. Looking at the first two, it certainly seems that residents value the Geauga Parks as a large majority of residents **strongly agreed** with both of them.

1. It's important for Geauga County to have a good park system (81%) and
2. The Park District is important to maintaining the quality of life for Geauga County residents (71%).
3. Two-thirds also strongly agreed that *with the ongoing growth in Geauga County, we need to preserve land for the future* (67%). Consistent with this, 58% think Geauga County will need more protected parkland in the next 10 years and 65% would support the parks in buying more land if a piece of property became available that had unique natural habitats, would connect the parks or provide more recreational uses.

Many also agreed with the other two statements ...

4. Geauga Park District provides a lot of opportunities for people to connect with nature (89%) and
5. It's important to have recreational opportunities in the parks (60%).

## Key Findings - Continued

When asked to choose the three things they think are most important for the Geauga Parks to do, the four items that started with 'protect' or 'preserve' scored higher than those that said 'provide'. And for the most part, this was true of all demographic groups. The four in which more than two-fifths rated as **most important** for the Geauga Parks to do were:

- Protect wildlife habitat (66%)
- Protect areas of natural beauty (47%)
- Protect our watershed and ground water quality (40%) and
- Preserve open space (39%).

A third or less rated the remaining five things as one of the three most important things for the parks to do:

- Provide outdoor experiences (33%)
- Provide nature and educational programs (30%)
- Provide recreational opportunities (22%)
- Provide special events, such as summer camps and arts in the parks (11%) and
- Improve air quality (7%).

This is not to say these things are not important, they are just not as important as protecting natural areas for wildlife, water quality and personal enjoyment.

Along with this, the top four recreational or outdoor activities that people were most interested in and were rated as most important for the parks to focus on over the next 10 years were:

- Hike and bike trails (58%)
- Natural resource or conservation programs (50%)
- Nature programs, family events and children's programs (50%) and
- Wildlife viewing or photography (43%).

These are all more passive, and perhaps, what might be thought of as more traditional uses of the parks.

## Key Findings - Continued

Second to these in importance were:

- Birdwatching (38%)
- Picnic shelters for special events or gatherings (28%)
- Canoeing or kayaking (24%)
- Picnicking (22%)
- Camping (21%)
- Fishing (20%) and
- Cross country skiing (18%).

With regard to programs that the Geauga Parks could offer more of or offer more often, interest was highest in naturalist-led programs such as hikes, birdwatching, campfires and canoe floats (54%). Additionally, a fourth or more of respondents would like more ...

- Astronomy programs (40%)
- Family events (37%)
- Youth programs (29%) and
- Arts in the parks events and exhibitions (25%).

Near the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked to suggest changes or improvements they would like to see in the parks, many of their responses were covered in later lists. However, a number of the responses referenced what seems to be a recent change in the direction of the parks. These comments called for better leadership of the parks, the need for someone with a conservation background, less politics, return to the old mission, protecting nature or parkland, more focus on conservation and less recreational development. As a result of this, some residents want more information or to be kept informed of what the parks are doing or planning.

<b>Q8 OTHER REASONS FOR NOT VISITING THE PARKS OR NOT VISITING MORE OFTEN</b>		
	<b>All Respondents</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No time	107	7
Go to other parks	46	3
Bad weather	37	2
Don't like how parks are run	32	2
Offer more programs at different parks, not enough to do	18	1
Enjoy doing other things, have other interests	14	1
Don't want to go alone, no one to go with, don't always feel safe, scared to go alone, need more rangers,	12	1
Enjoy my own yard/acreage/land	10	1
Need to take better care of trails	10	1
Would like mountain bike trails	14	1
Get bored with current trails, would like longer trails	8	<1
Lazy, forget about the parks, never get around to it, just moved here	8	<1
Longer hours at Nature Center	7	<1
Am older, handicapped, limited access	6	<1
Dates/times of programs/activities don't always work	5	<1
Don't drive, no transportation	5	<1
Need more hiking trails	4	<1
Keep dogs on leash	4	<1
Would like an off-the-leash dog park, more dog friendly	3	<1
No spraying, scares me, don't want kids around	3	<1
Use is restricted	3	<1
More canoe trips, kayak access	2	<1
Avoid holidays, when crowded	2	<1
Other	20	1

Q11 OTHER RESPONSES FOR THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE GEAUGA PARKS TO FOCUS ON		
	All Respondents	
	N	%
Conservation, preservation, protect land preserve nature	42	3
Buy more land	13	1
Educational programs, for children, naturalist-led	13	1
Hiking trails (no bikes)	13	1
Passive recreation only (observe nature, yoga)	13	1
ATV / 4-wheeler trails	10	1
Dog parks/events/hikes/walks	9	1
Better management, leadership	8	<1
Swimming	6	<1
Disc golf	5	<1
Variety of physical activities (tennis, pickle ball)	5	<1
Expand/connect trails for bikes, keep them clear	4	<1
Improved access to the parks, wheelchair access, all ages	4	<1
Have plenty of playgrounds, places for volleyball, bocce now	4	<1
Shooting/gun range	4	<1
Kids activities (camps, playgrounds)	3	<1
No drilling/fracking	3	<1
Trapping, trapping education	3	<1
Music festivals	3	<1
Astronomy, star gazing	3	<1
Golf	2	<1
Mountain bike trails	2	<1
Backpacking	2	<1
Horse trails	2	<1
Ice skating	2	<1

Additionally, one person each mentioned art classes, programs for senior citizens, teen/young adult programs, programs after 6:00 p.m., geocaching, harvest timber, tap maple trees, make parks more visible, need multi-use areas, and need a coyote control program.