



Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission

2020 Resident Survey Report



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Introduction

This survey of Ottawa County residents was conducted to help build and guide the Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission's five-year Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan that will be released in 2021. The goals of the survey include:

- Gauge residents' perception and satisfaction with the overall parks system.
- Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community.
- Gauge residents' support for the County Parks' funding model/millage.

This collaborative project between the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Department and the Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department resulted in 4,471 survey responses from Ottawa County residents.

Methodology

Survey responses were collected electronically from March 10 through June 30, 2020 using Qualtrics. The survey was promoted to county residents through a number of channels including the Ottawa County Parks newsletter, Ottawa County website, GovDelivery, press releases, Facebook and Instagram posts, and through partner organization promotions. After identifying the need to diversify demographics of participants, special attention was given to promotion through partner organizations. Despite this, the demographics of survey respondents are not representative of Ottawa County's population demographics.

The survey results were obtained using a non-probability convenience sample of Ottawa County residents. As a result, the results of the survey represent the perceptions of the Ottawa County residents who opted to participate. The survey results may not be representative of all county residents.

A resident survey was also conducted in 2015 as part of the five-year Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan that was released in 2016. However, comparability between 2015 survey results and this survey are limited for two reasons. The first limitation is that the phrasing of some questions and answer options changed from 2015 to 2020. The second limitation is that both surveys involved a convenience sample design which is not representative of the Ottawa County resident population. Regardless, 2015 survey comparisons and any notable changes in respondent feedback that occurred between the 2015 and 2020 surveys are included throughout the report. Notable changes are defined as a 10 percentage point increase or decrease in the percent of respondents who answered "Strongly agree"/"Somewhat agree" or "Much more needed"/"More needed."

Survey responses were exported from Qualtrics into Excel and SPSS for cleaning, coding, and analysis purposes. Survey data was cross tabulated with demographic and recreation data from survey respondents and any notable findings are included throughout the report. Notable findings are defined as a 10 percentage point deviation from the response provided by all respondents.



Survey Results

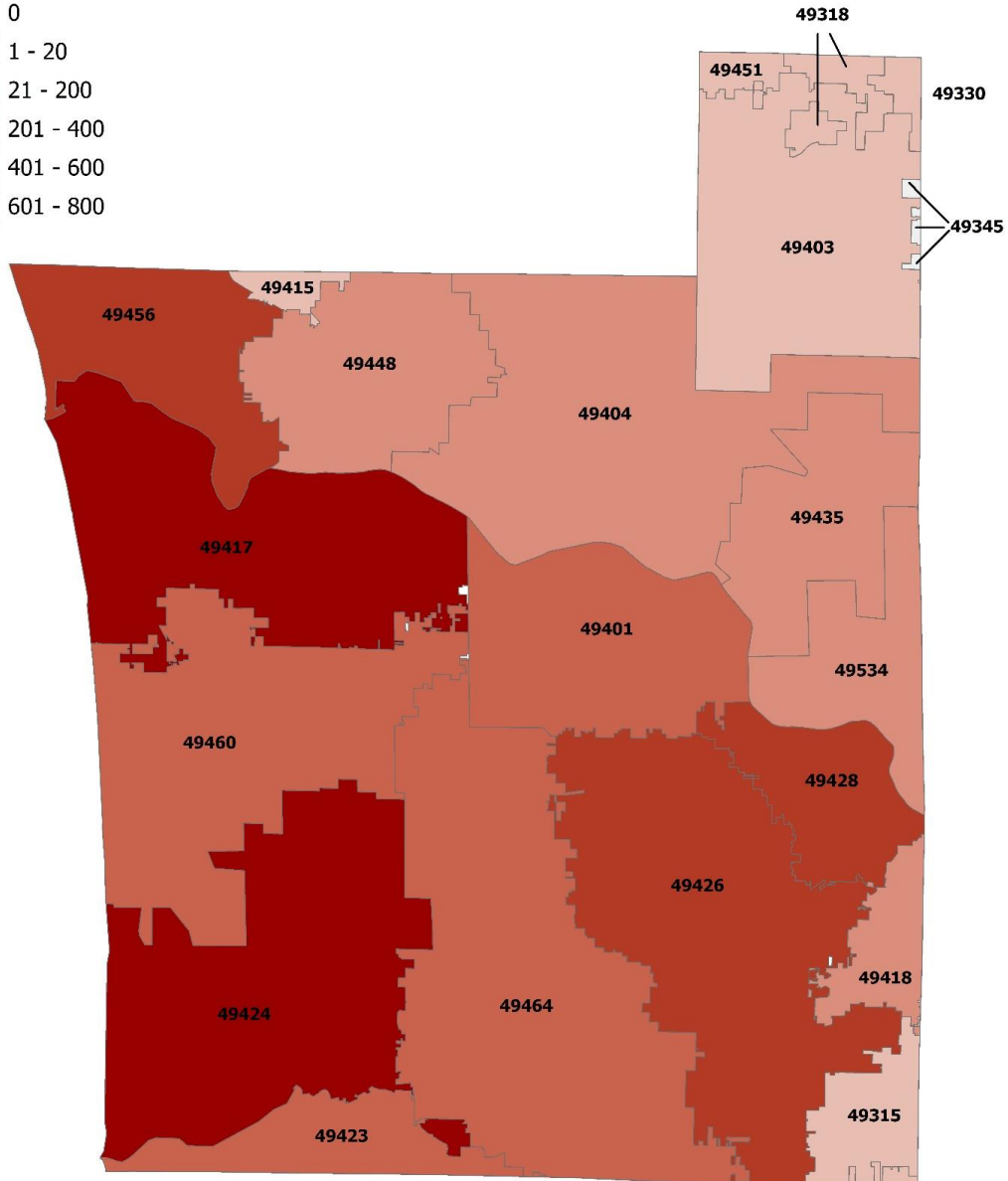
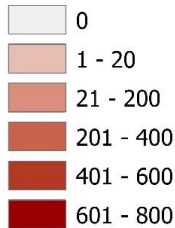
Demographics of respondents

To summarize the demographics of survey respondents:

- 61% identify as female
- 96% identify as white/Caucasian
- 94% own their own home
- 67% have a Bachelor's degree or higher level of education
- 42% have an annual household income of \$100,000+
- 38% live in a two-person household with no children
- 71% use social media websites everyday or most days

Over 600 respondents live in the **49417** or **49424** zip codes.

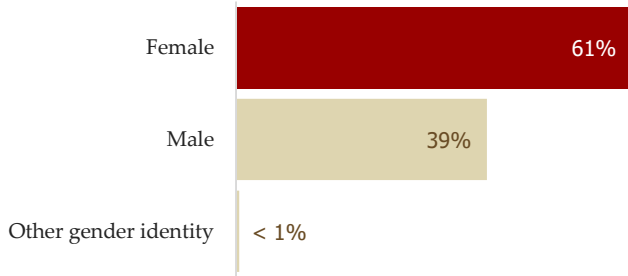
Number of Responses



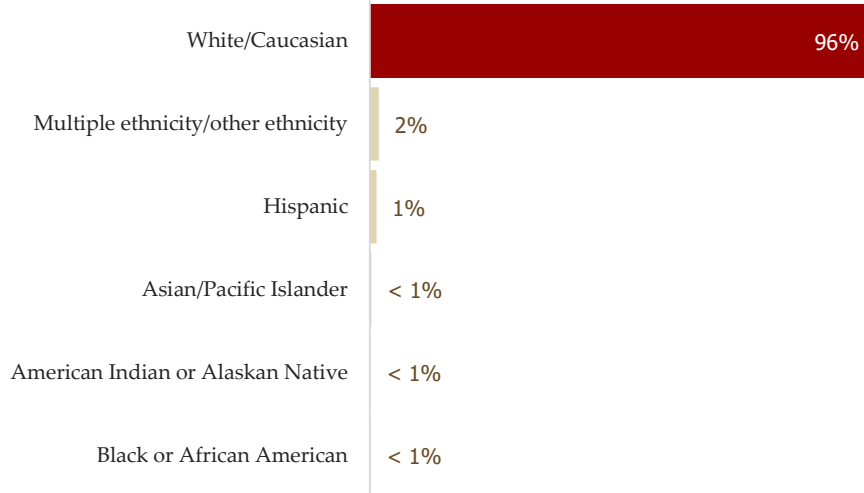


Demographics of respondents

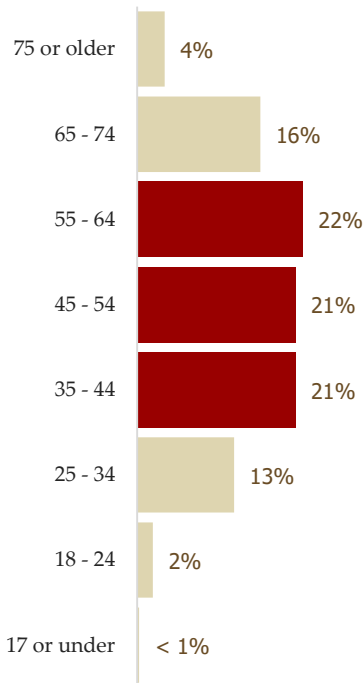
61% of respondents identify as **female**.
In 2015, 54% of respondents identified as female.



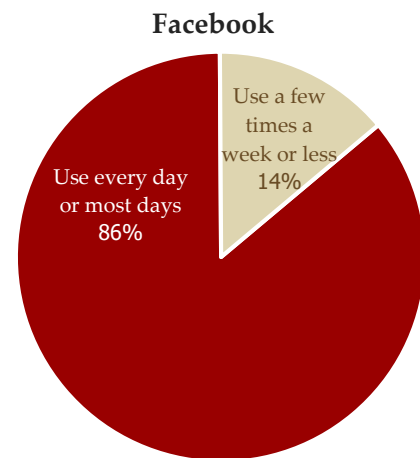
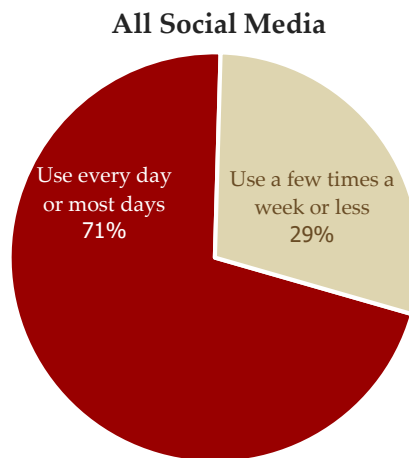
96% of respondents identify as **white or Caucasian**.
In 2015, 95% of respondents identified as white or Caucasian.



64% of respondents are **between 35 and 64 years of age**. In 2015, 65% of respondents were in this same age range.



71% of respondents use some form of social media **every day or most days**, with Facebook being the most frequently used social media site. **86%** of respondents who use Facebook report using it **every day or most days**. In 2015, 57% of respondents reported using Facebook every day or most days.



Notes:

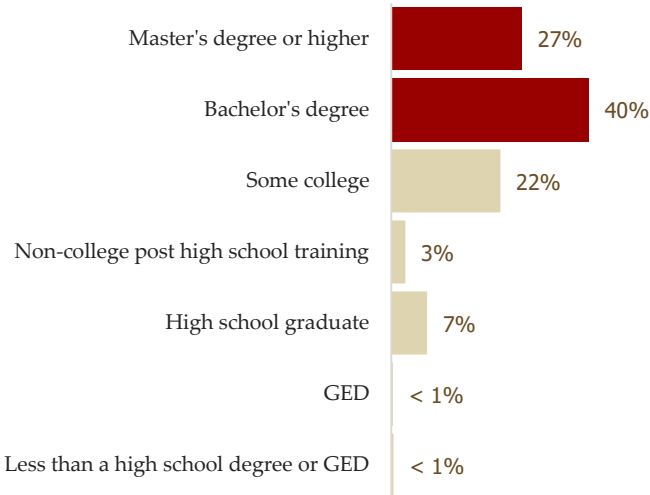
1. Total responses by question: 3,845 – gender and age; 3,784 – race/ethnicity; 3,876 – social media usage; 2,965 – Facebook usage.

2. The social media graphs were created by combining the responses from 2 questions. Prepared by: Ottawa County Planning & Performance Improvement (July 2020)

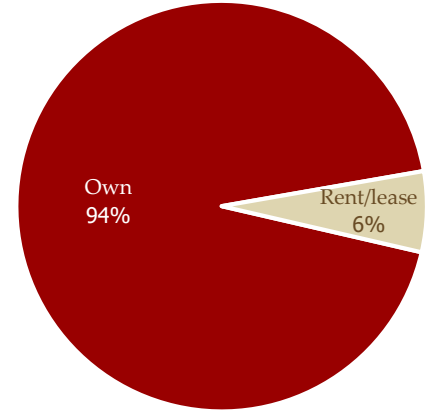


Demographics of respondents

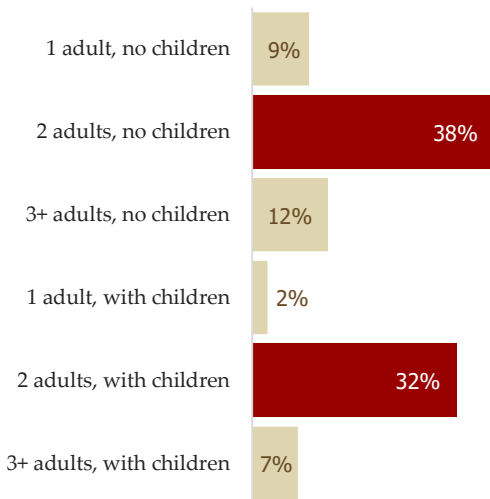
67% of respondents have a **Bachelor's degree or higher**.



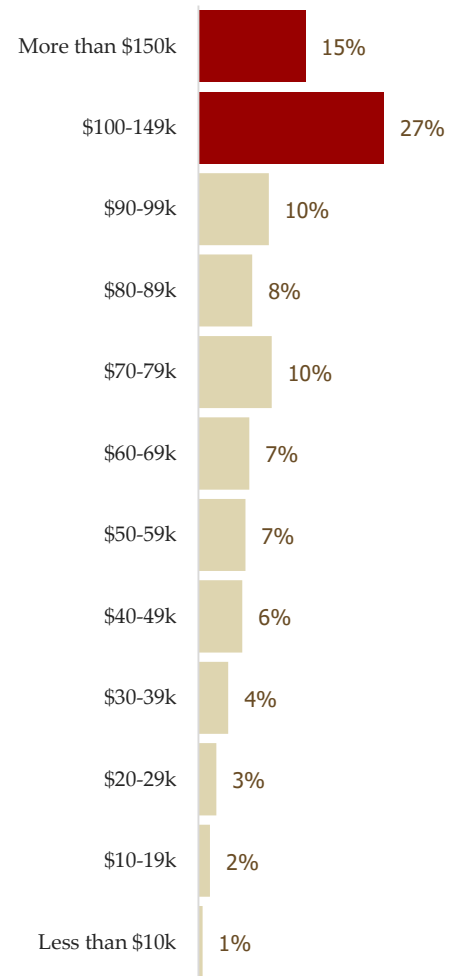
94% of respondents **own their home**. In 2015, 92% of respondents owned their home.



70% of respondents live in a household with **2 adults**. 59% of respondents live in a household with no children. In 2015, 67% of respondents lived in a household with no children.



42% of respondents have an annual household income of **\$100,000 or more**. In 2015, 26% of respondents had an annual household income of \$100,000 or more.



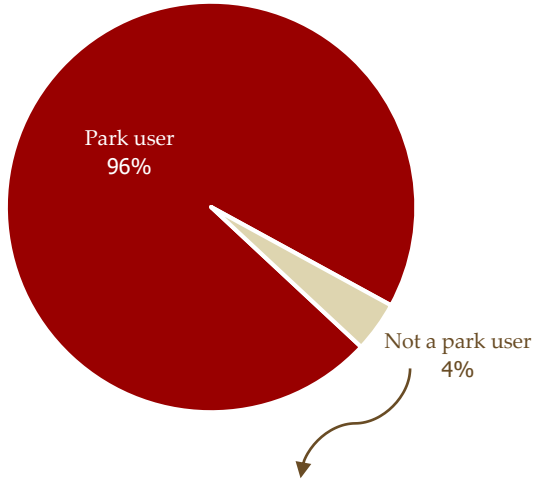
Notes:

- Total responses by question: 3,794 – educational attainment; 3,810 – home ownership; 3,661 – household composition; 3,495 – household income.
- The household composition graph was created by combining the responses from 2 questions.

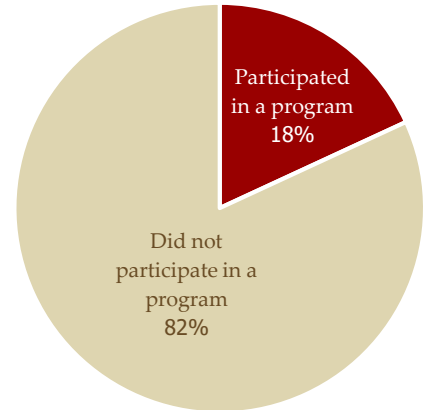


Parks Usage and Recreation Data

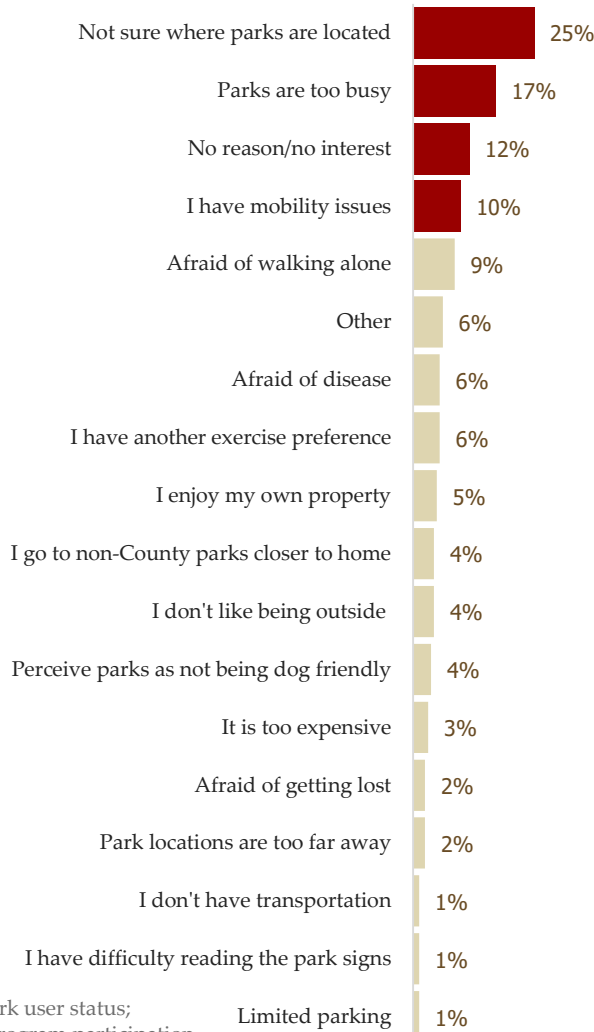
96% of respondents consider themselves to be a **park user**.



18% of respondents reported they or their children have **participated in a program** at the nature center or other park site in the past year.



10% or more of respondents who do not consider themselves to be a park user cite the reasons as **unsure of park locations, parks being too busy, lack of interest, or mobility issues**.



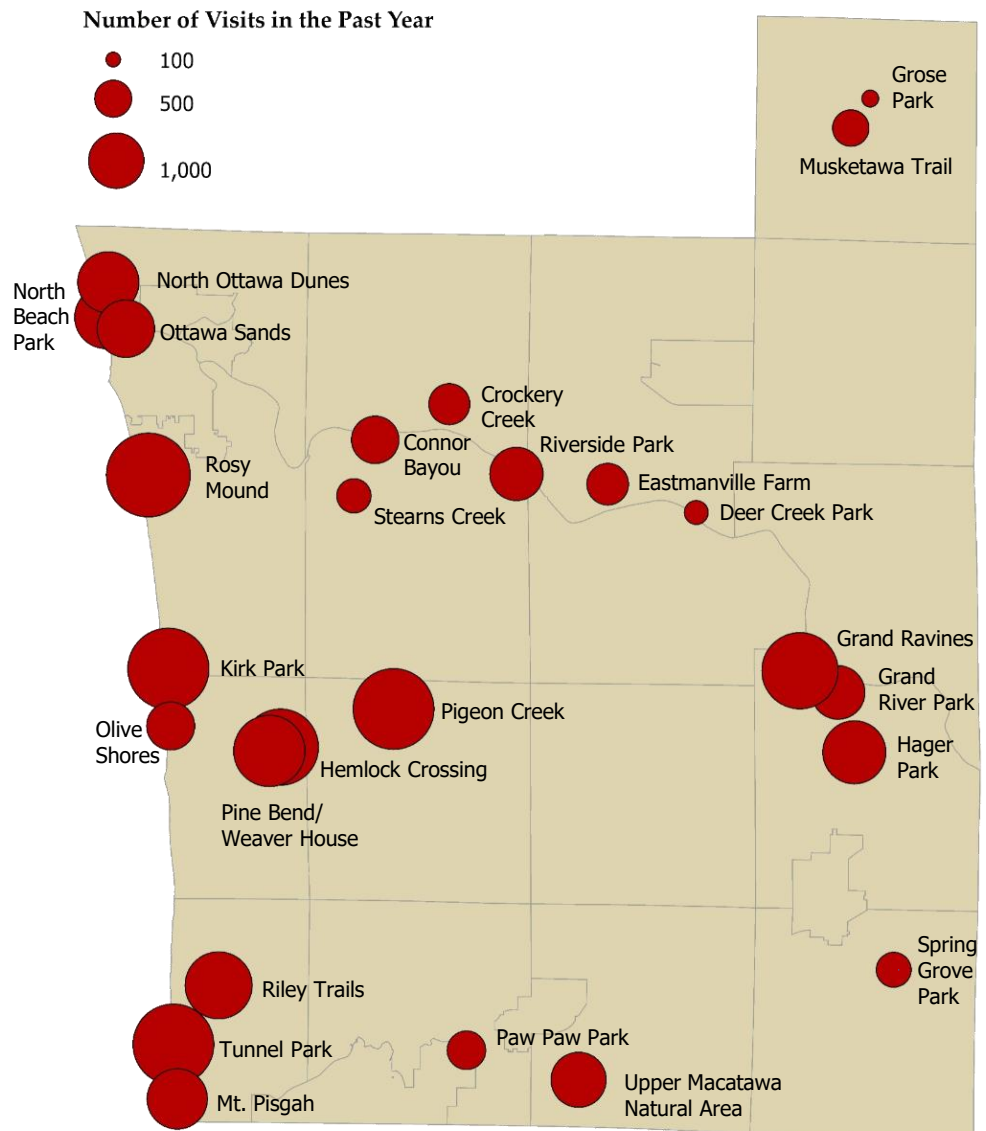
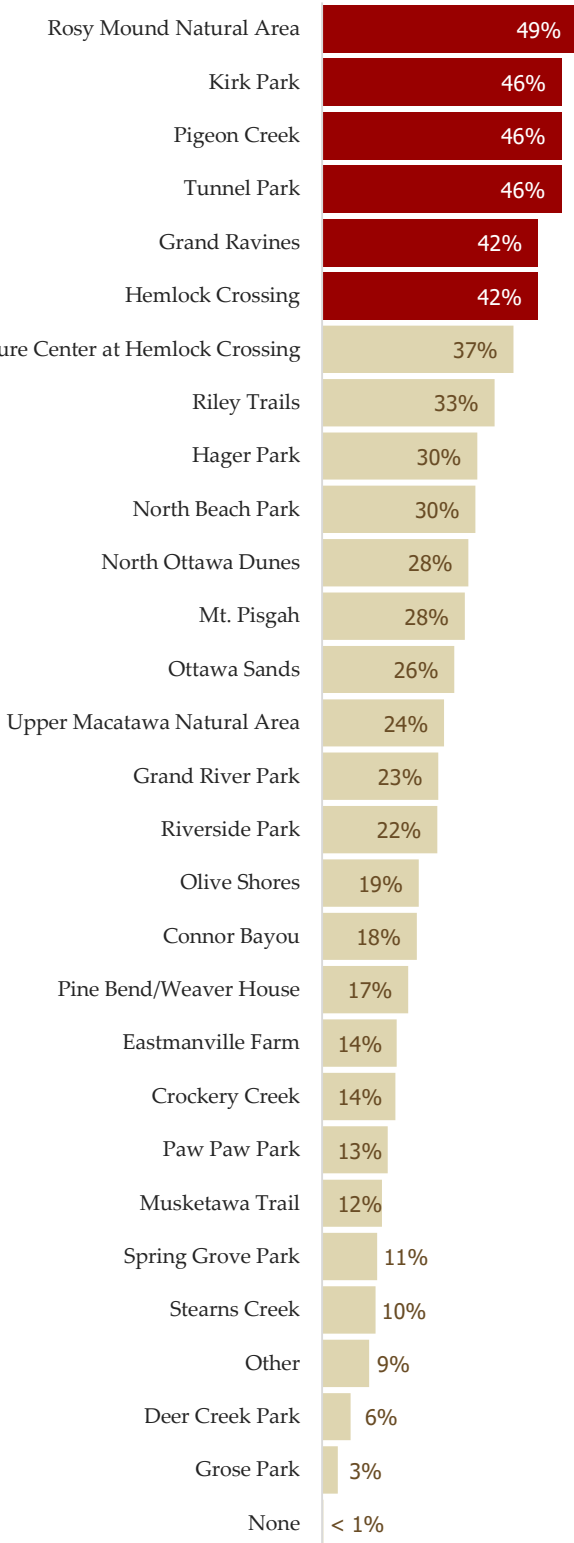
Notes:

- Total responses by question: 4,471 – park user status; 161 – reasons not a park user; 4,302 – program participation.
- Respondents could select multiple reasons for not being a park user as well as write in their own reason. Open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized. “Other” responses are included in the Appendix.



Parks Usage and Recreation Data

The **five most visited parks** during the last year remained the same as in the 2015 survey, with Grand Ravines being a new addition (tied for 5th).

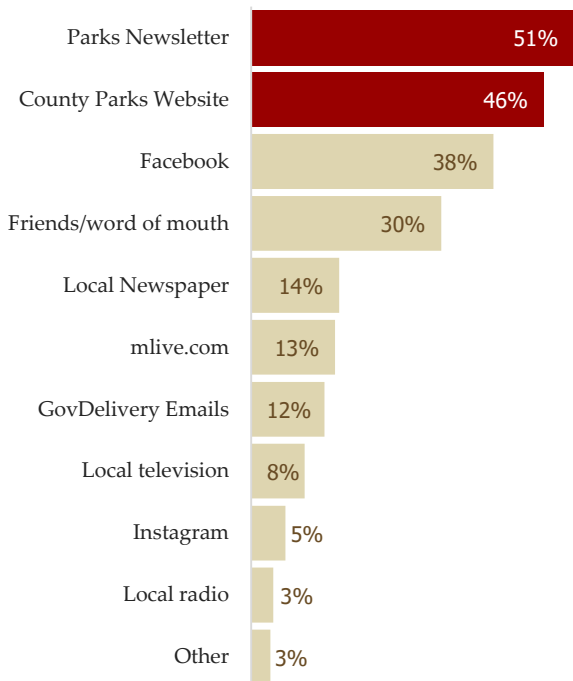


Notes:
 1. Total responses by question: 4,198 – parks visited.
 2. Respondents could select multiple parks and write in other parks. Open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized; they are included in the Appendix.

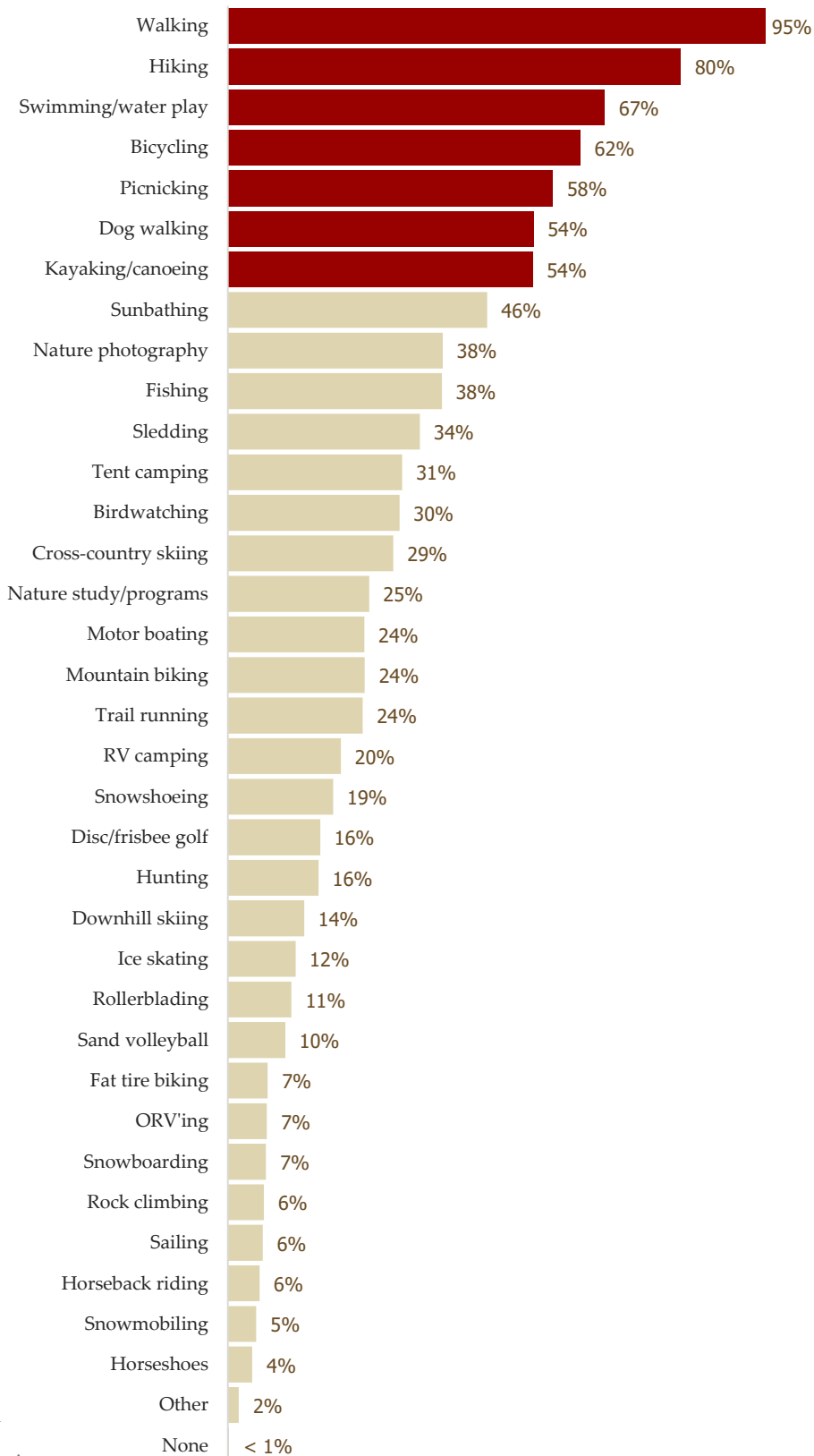


Parks Usage and Recreation Data

Around 50% of respondents report getting most of their information about the activities of Ottawa County Parks & Recreation from the **Parks Newsletter** or the **County Parks Website**.



Respondents report participating in a wide array of natural resource-based activities, whether they participate in them at an Ottawa County Park or elsewhere.



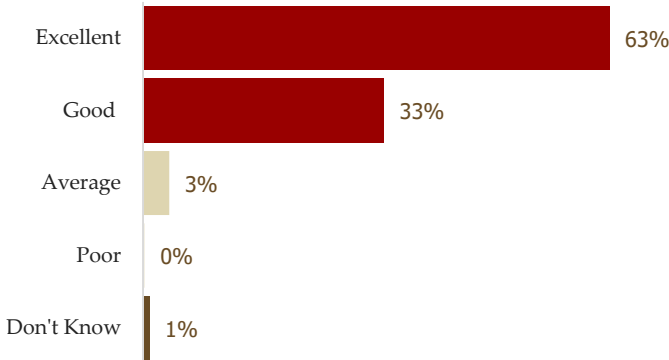
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: 3,840 – information source; 3,915 – natural resource based activities.
2. Respondents could select multiple sources and activities as well as write in other sources or activities. Open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized. “Other” responses are included in the Appendix.

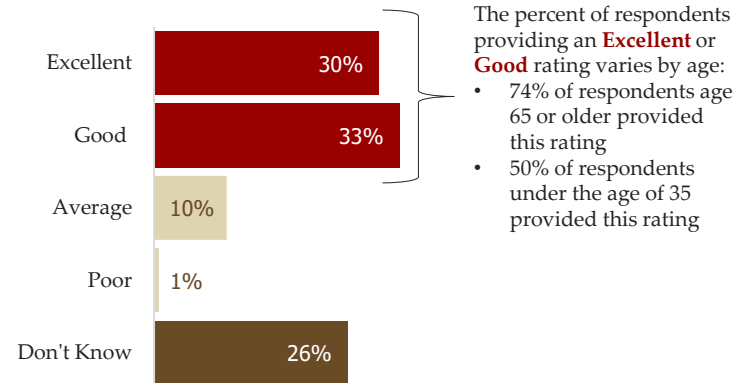


Survey Goal 1: Gauge residents' perception and satisfaction with the overall parks system

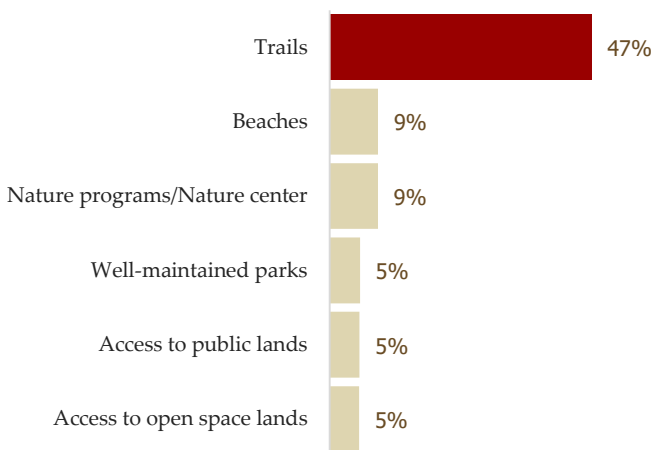
96% of respondents rate the job being done by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation in providing recreational spaces to citizens of Ottawa County as **Excellent** or **Good**.



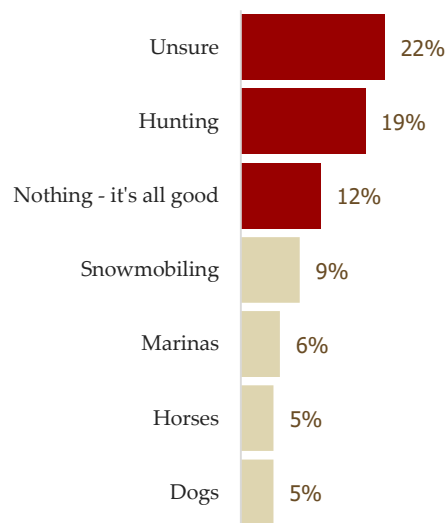
63% of respondents rate the job being done by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation in providing educational programs to citizens of Ottawa County as **Excellent** or **Good**. 26% of respondents indicated that they **Don't Know**.



47% of respondents report the **most valuable** service/program offered by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation as **Trails**.



12% or more of respondents report the **least valuable** service/program offered by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation as **Unsure, Hunting or Nothing – it's all good**.

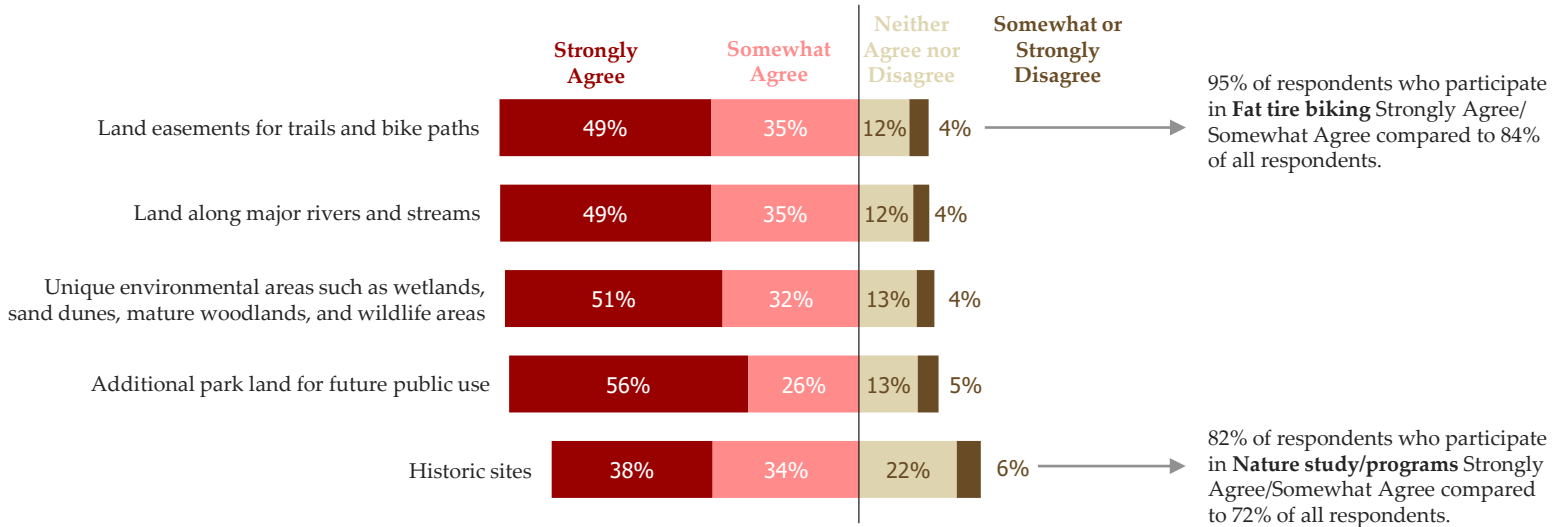


Notes:
 1. Total responses by question: 4,304 – recreational spaces rating and educational programs rating; 2,749 – most valuable service/program; 2,169 – least valuable service/program.
 2. The most valuable and least valuable service/program were open-ended questions. Responses were reviewed and categorized; they are included in the Appendix. The graphs reflect responses provided by 100 or more people.

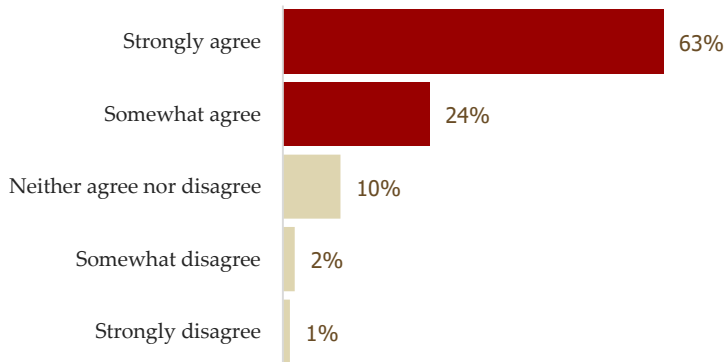


Survey Goal 2: Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community

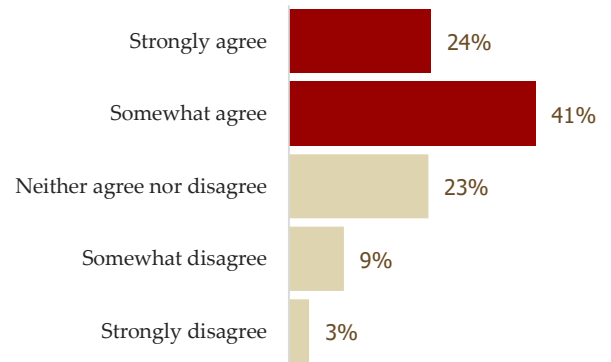
Respondent feedback regarding whether Ottawa County Parks & Recreation should **acquire the following types of land**.



87% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that Ottawa County Parks & Recreation should **support a regional trail system** linking different communities for walkers, bicyclists, and rollerbladers.



65% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that Ottawa County Parks & Recreation should **consider the needs of tourists** when planning future park facilities.



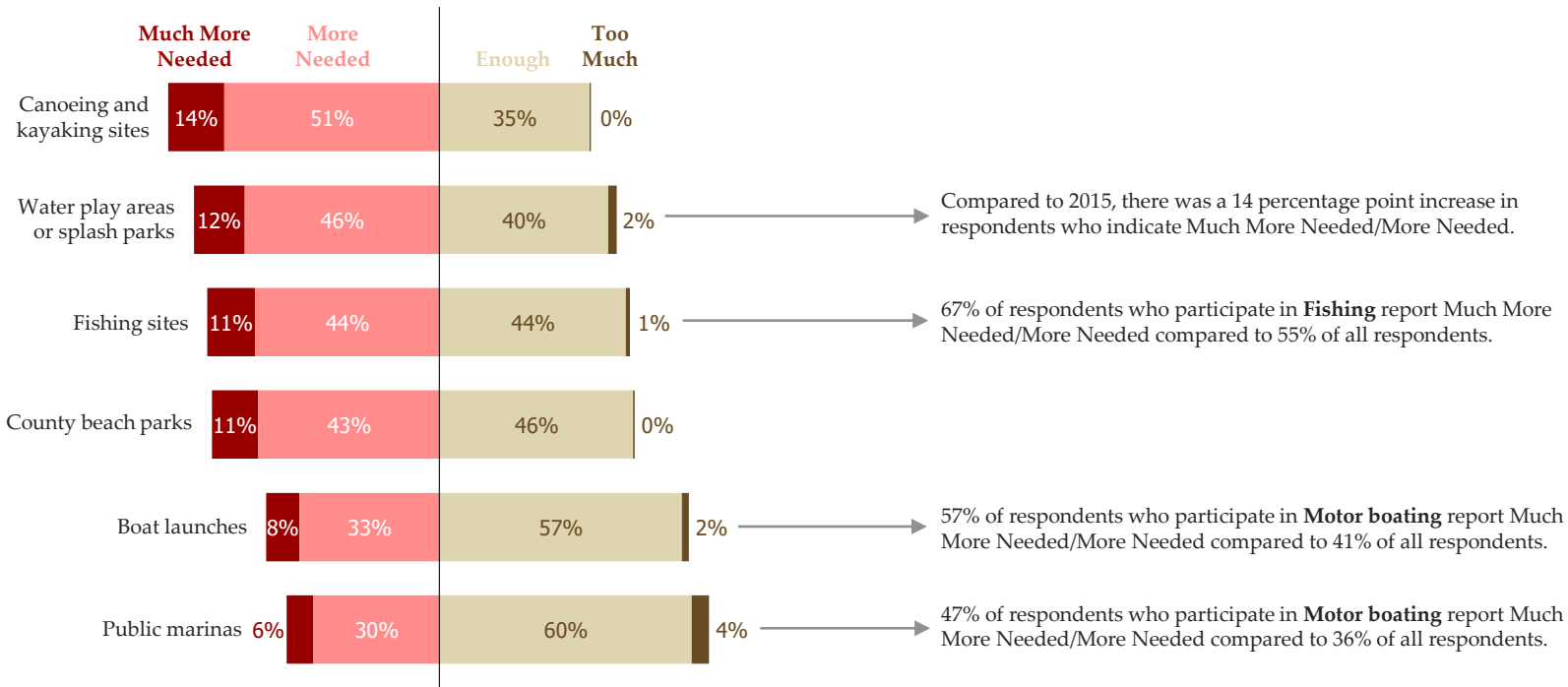
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: between 3,955 & 4,168 – land acquisition; 4,185 – regional trail system; 4,174 – consider needs of tourists.

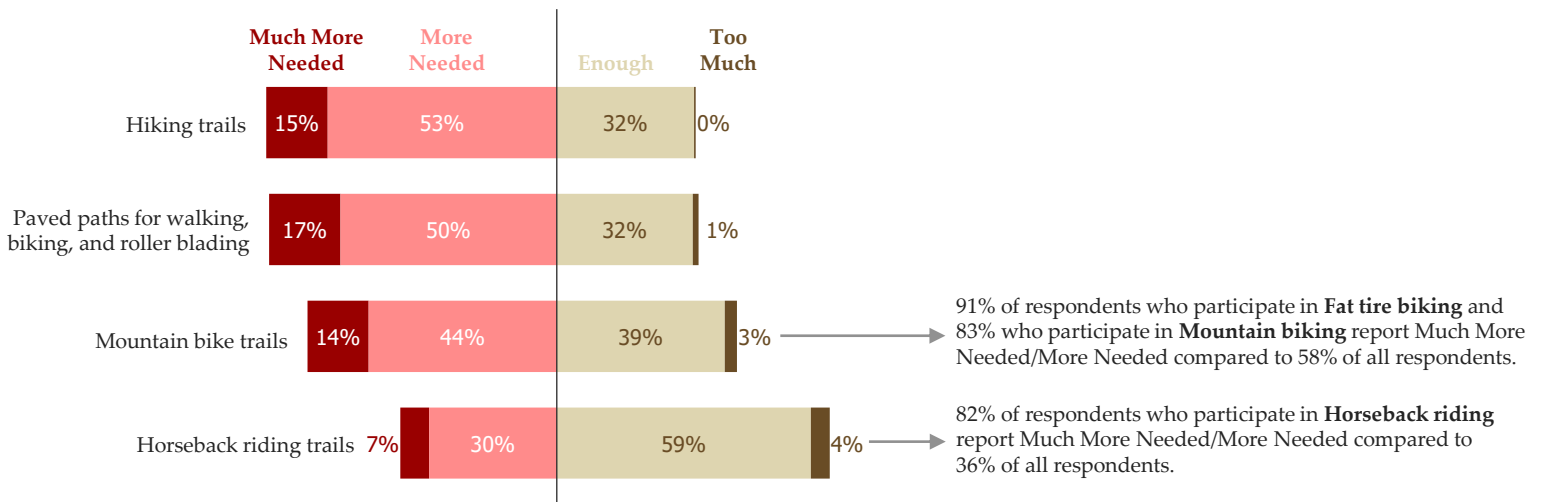


Survey Goal 2: Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community

Respondent feedback regarding the need for more of the following types of **water facilities** in Ottawa County.



Respondent feedback regarding the need for more of the following types of **trails** in Ottawa County.



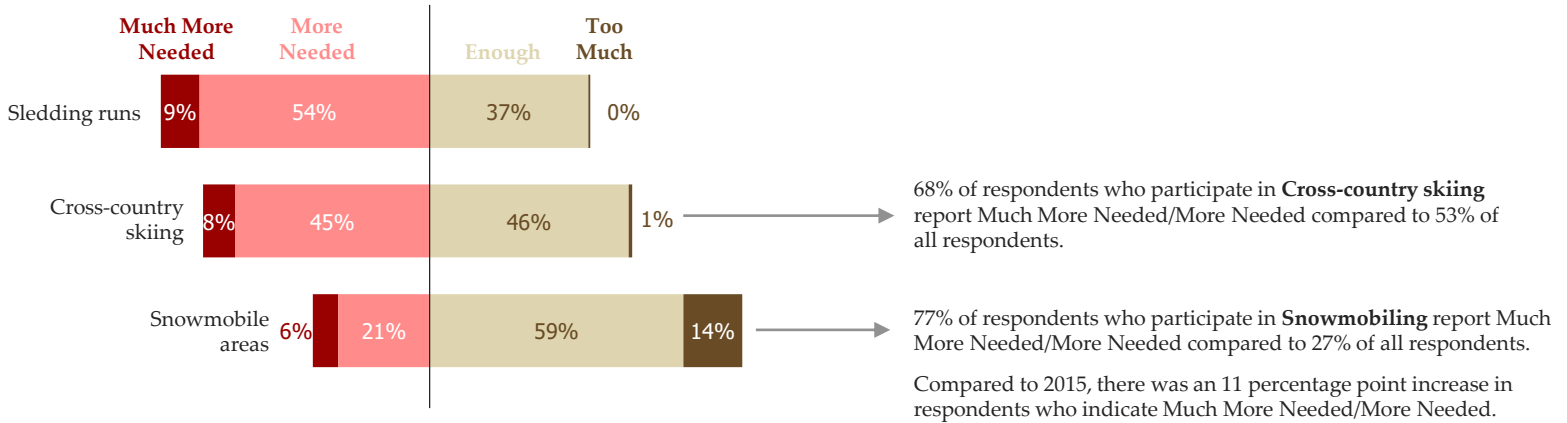
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: between 4,082 & 4,102 – water facilities; between 4,082 & 4,096 – trails.
2. Respondents could select “Undecided/Don’t Know” as an option. These responses were omitted from the analysis and graphs.

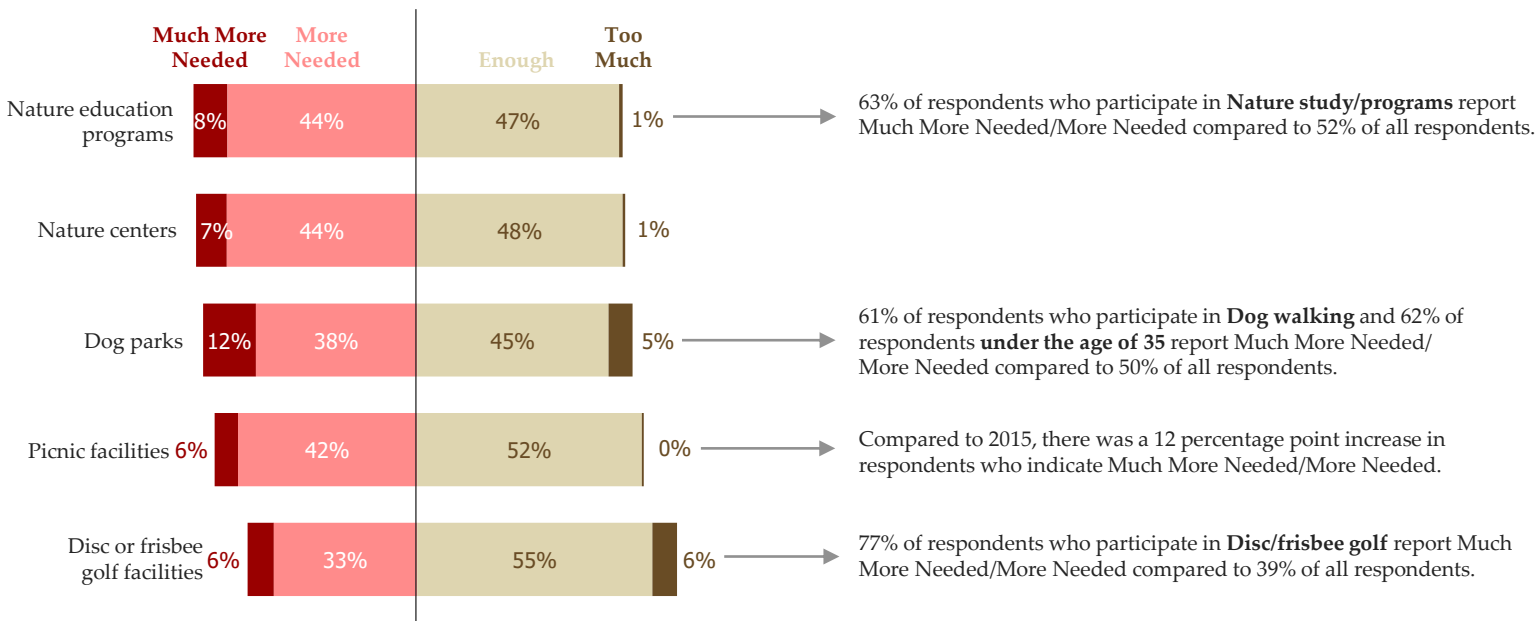


Survey Goal 2: Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community

Respondent feedback regarding the need for more of the following types of **winter sports activities** in Ottawa County.



Respondent feedback regarding the need for more of the following types of **other park activities/facilities** in Ottawa County.



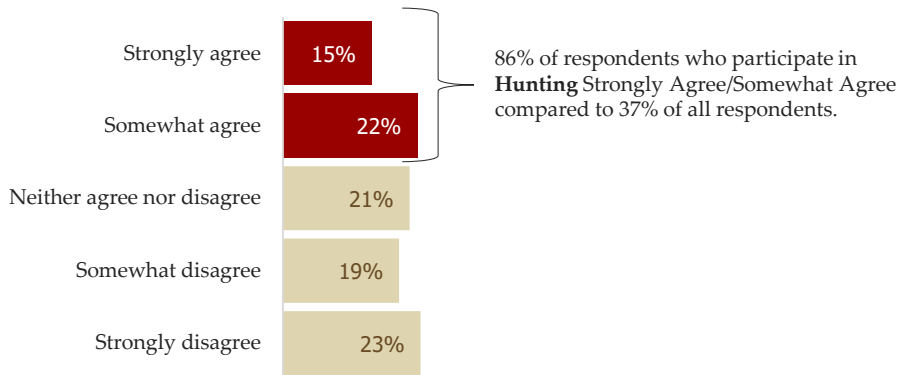
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: between 4,084 & 4,094 – winter sports activities; between 4,084 & 4,091 – other park activities/facilities.
2. Respondents could select “Undecided/Don’t Know” as an option. These responses were omitted from the analysis and graphs.

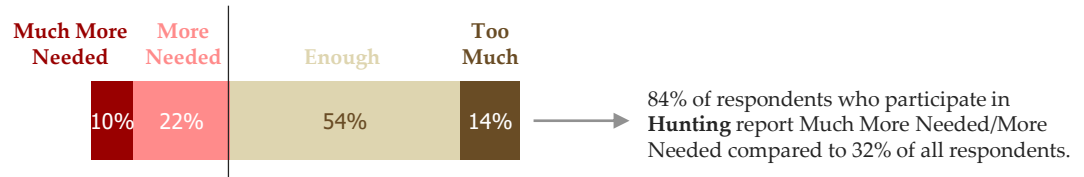


Survey Goal 2: Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community

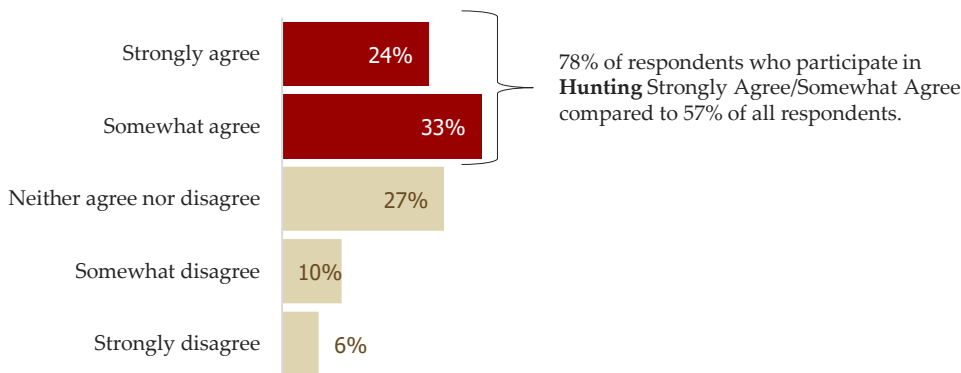
37% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that hunting should be allowed in unimproved portions of county parks and open space lands.



Respondent feedback regarding the need for more **hunting areas** in Ottawa County.



57% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that deer numbers should be reduced as necessary to protect vegetation in high quality natural areas.



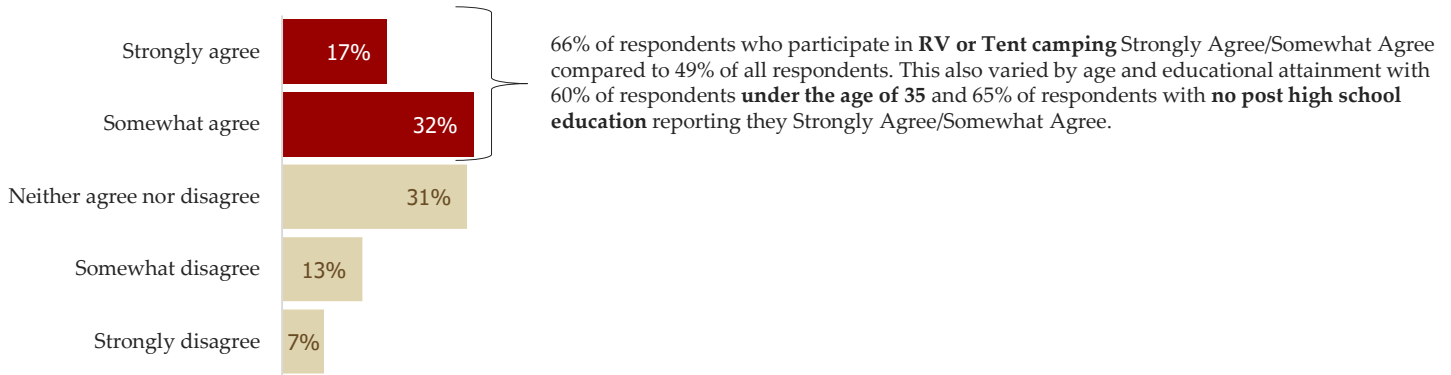
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: 4,185 – hunting allowed; 4,083 – hunting areas need; 4,187 – deer number reduction.
2. Respondents could select “Undecided/Don’t Know” as an option for the “more hunting areas needed” question. These responses were omitted from the analysis and graphs.

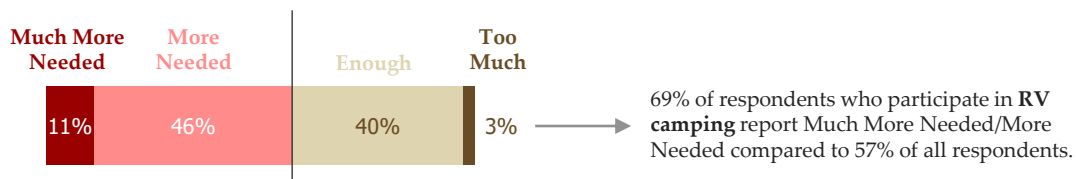


Survey Goal 2: Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community

49% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that **overnight camping** opportunities should be provided at properties managed by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation.



Respondent feedback regarding the need for more **camping facilities** in Ottawa County.



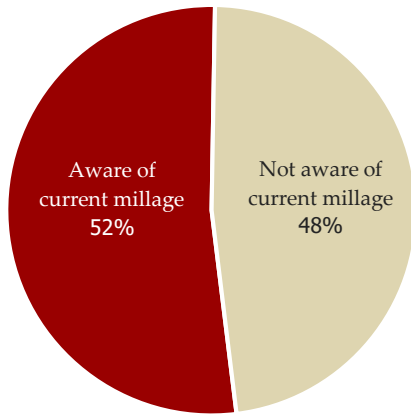
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: 4,180 – overnight camping opportunities; 4,086 – need for camping facilities.
2. Respondents could select “Undecided/Don’t Know” as an option for the “more camping facilities needed” question. These responses were omitted from the analysis and graph.



Survey Goal 3: Gauge residents' support for the County Parks' funding model/millage

52% of respondents are **aware that there is currently a special 10-year millage** that is dedicated specifically to help fund Ottawa County Parks & Recreation. In 2015, 59% of respondents were aware of the millage.

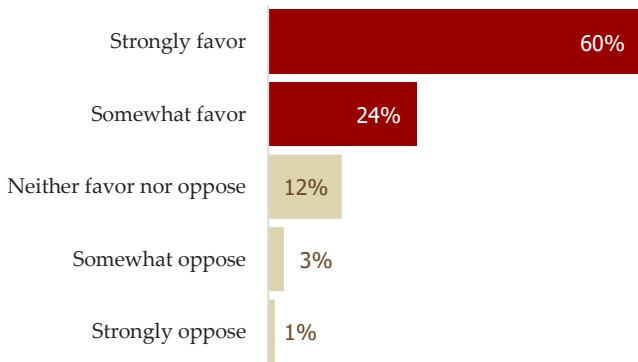


The percent of respondents who are **aware of the current millage** varies by age, educational attainment, and home ownership:

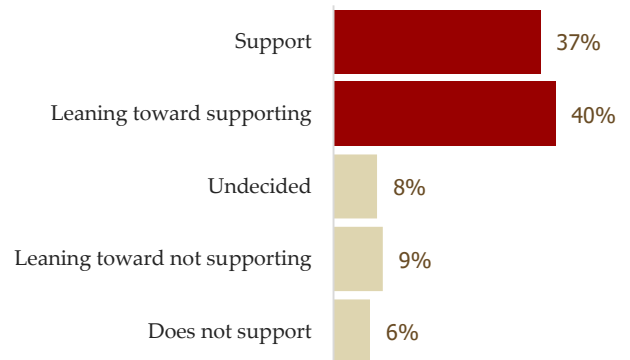
- 63% of respondents **age 55 or older** are aware
- 33% of respondents **under the age of 35** are aware
- 40% of respondents with **no post high school education** are aware
- 35% of respondents who **rent/lease** their primary residence are aware

Age and home ownership are correlated with a larger percent of respondents under the age of 35 renting/leasing their primary residence.

84% of respondents **Strongly favor** or **Somewhat favor** the current parks millage. In 2015, 87% of respondents strongly favored or somewhat favored the millage.



77% of respondents indicate they would **Support** or are **Leaning toward supporting** an increased millage that would assure continued expansion and new development of the Ottawa County Parks system.



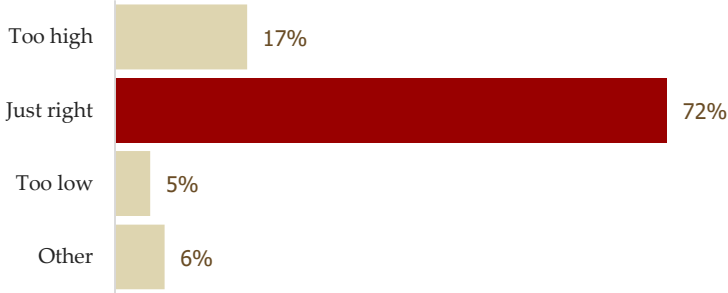
Notes:

1. Total responses by question: 3,863 – millage awareness; 3,974 – millage favor; 3,958 – millage support.



Survey Goal 3: Gauge residents' support for the County Parks' funding model/millage

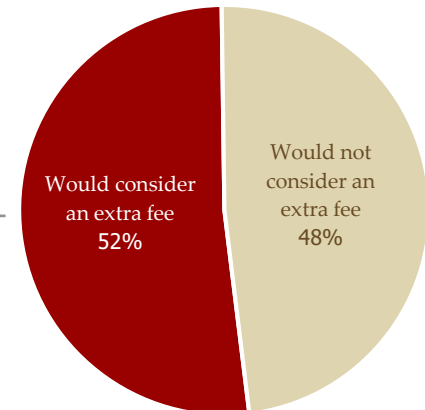
72% of respondents describe the annual pass cost for county residents to enter lakeshore parks and to use the boat launch at Riverside Park in the summer months as **just right**.



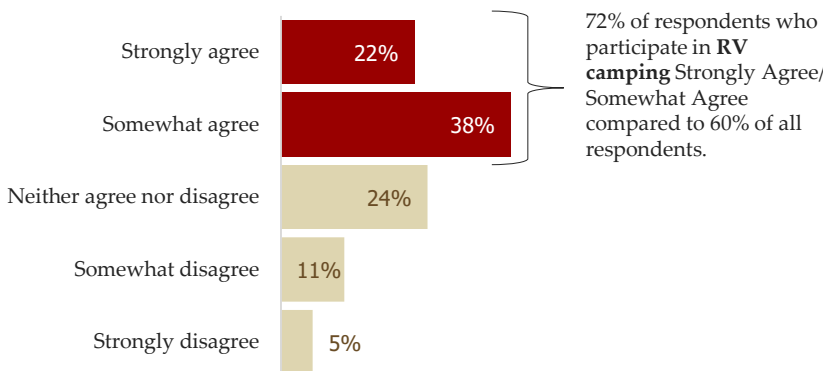
52% of respondents would **consider paying an extra fee** to use special facilities offered at the park that cost more to operate, such as groomed cross-country ski trails, dog parks, or single-track mountain biking trails.

The percent of respondents who would **consider paying an extra fee** varies by whether they would support an increased millage:

- 63% of respondents who support an increased millage provided this response
- 35% of respondents who do not support an increased millage provided this response



60% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that revenue-producing facilities such as campgrounds or marinas should be developed to help finance the Ottawa County Parks & Recreation system.



Notes:

1. Total responses by question: 3,921 – existing fees; 3,872 – extra fees; 4,180 – develop revenue-producing facilities.
2. Respondents could write in other thoughts about the annual pass cost. Open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized; they are included in the Appendix.



Summary of Survey Results

Parks Usage and Recreation Data



3 of the 6 most visited parks are **located along the Lake Michigan shoreline**.

80% or more of respondents **walk** or **hike**.

The **Parks newsletter** and **website** are the most frequently reported channels for obtaining information about the activities of Ottawa County Parks & Recreation.

Survey Goal 1: Gauge residents' perception and satisfaction with the overall parks system



96% of respondents rate the job being done by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation in providing recreational spaces to citizens of Ottawa County as **Excellent** or **Good**.

Trails are identified by respondents as the **most valuable service/program offered**.

Survey Goal 2: Ensure long-term goals of the Plan reflect the desire of the community



87% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that Ottawa County Parks & Recreation should **support a regional trail system** linking different communities.

Less than 50% of respondents **Strongly agree** or **Somewhat agree** that **hunting** should be allowed in unimproved portions of county parks and open space lands or that **overnight camping** should be provided at properties managed by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation.

Over 60% of respondents report that **Much More** or **More** of the following **activities/facilities** are needed in Ottawa County:



- Hiking Trails

- Paved Paths



- Canoeing/Kayaking Sites



- Sledding Runs

Survey Goal 3: Gauge residents' support for the County Parks' funding model/millage



52% of respondents are **aware of the current Parks millage**.

84% of respondents **Strongly Favor** or **Somewhat Favor** the current Parks millage.

72% of respondents think the **annual pass cost** is **Just Right**.