

Public Opinions and Attitudes

Introduction

The survey of Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California is a key component of the California Outdoor Recreation Planning Program, evaluating the demand for outdoor recreation resources and facilities in the state. The survey focuses on Californians' participation in and demand for a variety of outdoor recreation activities and their opinions, attitudes and values relating to outdoor recreation experiences. The collection of this data provides park and recreation professionals an insight into the evolving recreation needs of Californians.

The survey was first conducted in 1987 and has been repeated at five-year intervals. The methodology and most of the current survey questions are consistent with the earlier data collection efforts. This allows any significant recreation trends to be addressed through long-range planning efforts. The survey also quantifies unmet or latent demand, which are those activities that the survey respondent would do more frequently if given the opportunity. Parks and recreation providers will be better able to accommodate California's future recreation needs by focusing their efforts on these unmet demands.

Brief Description of the Survey Techniques

This 2007 survey used the same techniques as in years past in order to collect comparable data. The telephone survey participants were chosen at random and represent a statistically significant sample of all California adults. Out of the 2,780 respondents who completed the adult telephone survey, 1,222 of them also completed a longer mail-back survey and 397 of their 12-17 year old children completed the youth mail-back survey. It is important to note that while the adult survey is statistically representative of California's population, the youth survey is not. As in prior years, incentives were provided to encourage completion of the mail-back surveys. The telephone survey provided a sample that represents the characteristics, behaviors and opinions of California adults, age 18 and over. The telephone survey sample is also statistically representative of five major California regions - the Central Valley, San Francisco Bay area, Los Angeles, Other Southern California and Northern California - based on the populations residing in those regions during the 2000 census.

The survey also provided statistically valid statewide samples of several other demographic categories measured in the 2000 census, including age, ethnicity, level of education, marital status, income and gender.

Methodology Changes Since the 2002 Survey

The telephone, adult mail-back and the youth-mail back surveys were significantly revised in an effort to increase the response rates as compared to the 2002 survey. Most of the questions from prior surveys were asked again in 2007 to provide important trend data, several new questions were added. A series of questions about the levels and frequency of physical activity were added to help collect data on the relationship between health and outdoor recreation among Californians. Another multi-part question asked respondents their opinions on potential management actions on addressing and adapting to climate change and global warming.

A pre-survey technique not used in prior years convened a series of youth focus groups to improve and refine the youth mail-back survey. Due to the relatively small numbers of completed prior year surveys, findings from the focus groups were used to revise the survey and increased the number of completed surveys.

The survey instruments will appear in the appendix of the stand-alone Public Opinions and Attitudes survey report to be published in spring 2009.

Summary of the Preliminary Survey Results

This 2007 survey successfully met its goals for numbers of completed surveys and statistically representative samples of various census categories. Overviews of the three survey instruments are provided below, along with detailed descriptions of the questions and preliminary analysis of the findings.

Adult Telephone Survey Results

The telephone survey gathered 2,780 survey responses to 37 questions, including eight standard demographic questions on the respondents' education, marital status, household makeup, income, ethnicity, age, residence address and zip code. Several of the questions measured park visit frequency, two solicited respondent's satisfaction with park facilities, respondent's opinions on their current condition and the travel time from the respondent's home to their most frequent recreation destination. Two multi-part questions asked respondents about the facilities or amenities they used and what activities they did during their last park visit.

Nine questions asked respondents about their level, frequency and duration of physical activity, both during their park visit and anytime when they were not working during a typical week. Three questions asked whom the respondent usually visited a park with and how many were adults and how many were children. A multi-part question asked about children's participation in activities at the park.

Frequency of Park Visits Within the Last Year

California's park and recreation areas are well used. Eighty-eight percent of the telephone survey respondents had visited a park within the last six months. On average, respondents visited parks approximately 6 days in their most recent month surveyed and spent 8.5 hours during their last visit. The majority of these respondents reported visiting parks one or more times per week (35.5%) or once or twice a month (26.2%). Of the respondents who reported visiting a park more than one year ago, 25% said their last visit was one to 2 years ago and nearly 30% said their last park visit was five or more years ago.

| When Respondents Last Visited a Park | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| Characteristic | % | n |
| Visited within the last month | 73.7 | 2049 |
| Visited within the last 6 months | 14.3 | 397 |
| Visited within the last 12 months | 5.4 | 150 |
| Visited more than 1 year ago | 6.6 | 184 |
| * Adult Telephone Survey, n=number of survey respondents | | |

When asked about the amount of time they currently spend in outdoor recreation activities compared to five years ago, 37% of respondents reported spending more time, 32% reported about the same amount of time, and 31% reported spending less time participating in outdoor recreation activities.

Satisfaction with Park Facilities

Public support for park and recreation programs, areas and facilities is necessary to the protection, improvement and development of existing and new facilities. People are likely to advocate for areas and facilities that meet their needs. Overall, the majority of respondents were satisfied with the park facilities and services currently available to them; in fact, less than 3% reported any dissatisfaction.

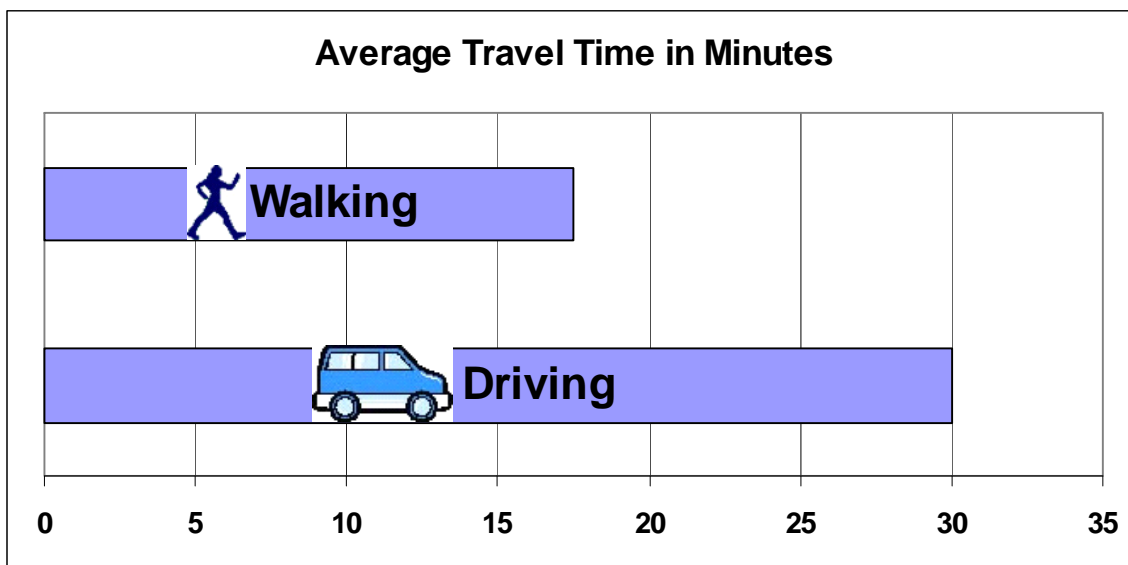


Condition of Park Facilities

California's population growth can make it increasingly difficult for park and recreation providers to keep up with the demand. However, among respondents who have lived in California for at least 5 years, 34% believe the overall condition of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities have improved over the last five years and 38.4% thought their condition had remained the same.

Travel Times

All Californians should have access to park and recreation facilities within walking distance of where they live and work. On average, respondents spent 30 minutes driving and 17 minutes walking to the place they most often went. However 28.4% spent more than 20 minutes and of those, 9.2% spent more than 60 minutes driving to the place they most often went for recreation. This reflects the need for access to facilities closer to where people work and live. Other modes of transportation that respondents used to get to parks included bicycles, public transportation, wheelchairs and skateboards.



Time Spent Physically Active in Parks and During Non-work Hours

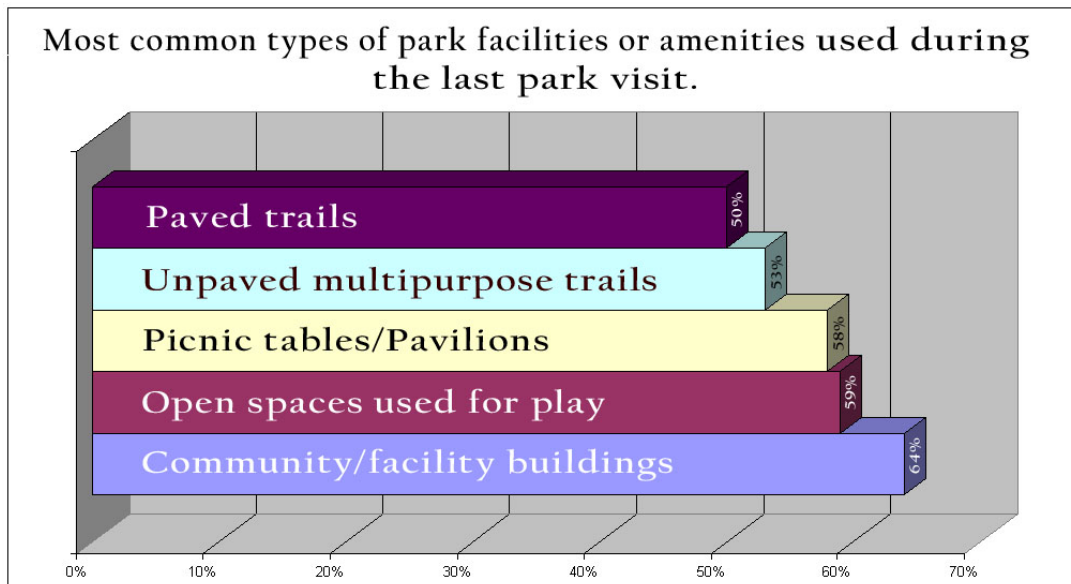
Forty-eight percent of the respondents reported spending over 31 minutes being physically active in parks, demonstrating the importance of recreation areas in promoting physical activity. Of these, 22% said they spent more than 2 hours

being physically active in parks. The majority of respondents reported participating in light (36%) to moderate (41%) levels of activity when visiting a park. In fact, only 9% said they mostly sat while at parks. Light physical activity includes standing and walking or strolling at a slow pace.

In general, the majority of respondents (77%) participated in other physical activities or exercises during the past month. Eighty-seven percent reported participating in moderate activity for at least 10 minutes at a time and 52% reported participating in vigorous physical activity. The majority of respondents who participated in moderate physical activity reported doing so three times per week (21%) and most commonly spent an average of 72 minutes in the activity. Moderate physical activities include playing tennis and walking at a moderate pace. The majority of respondents who participated in vigorous physical activity also reported doing so three times per week (25%) and most commonly spent an average of 74 minutes in the activity. Vigorous physical activities include jogging or playing soccer or basketball.

Facility Types Used and Activity Types

In order to adequately provide for current and future users, park and recreation professionals must understand which types of facilities are used the most and which are in the greatest demand. The most commonly used facility types included community/facility buildings, open spaces to play, picnic tables/pavilions, unpaved multipurpose trails and paved trails. Fewer than 20% of respondents reported using amusement (e.g., park train ride) areas (19%), tennis or basketball courts (19%), dog park areas (16%), botanical gardens (15%) or skate parks (6%).



The most common activities adult respondents participated in were walking (49%), playing (30% - e.g., Frisbee, playing catch with a ball, kite flying, playing with children), sedentary activities (24%) and eating/picnicking (24%).

Respondents participated the least in fishing (5%), active water sports (4%), tennis (2%), martial arts/tai chi/yoga (<1%) and in-line skating (<1%).

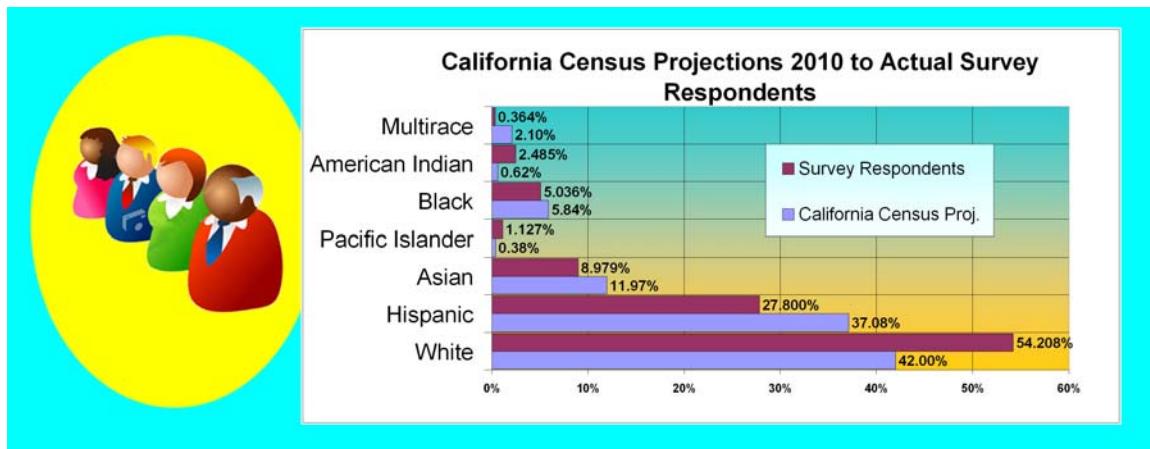
Adults reported that their park companions under the age of 18 most frequently participated in playing (e.g., Frisbee, playing catch, kite flying, playing with children) (73%) followed by sports (e.g., baseball, soccer, football, basketball) (37%), walking (22%) and picnicking/eating (21%).

Visitor Group Characteristics

To plan and manage appropriate facilities, it is important to understand whom Californians commonly recreate with. Respondents primarily went to parks with family (56%) or both family and friends (31%). Fewer than 15% of respondents went alone, with a pet or an organized group. Other companions mentioned by respondents were a care provider, co-workers, daycare children and a personal trainer. While the number of companions who accompanied respondents to parks varied, respondents most commonly went to parks with two other companions over the age of 18 and no one under the age of 18.

Respondent Demographics

Fifty-one percent of the survey respondents were male and 49% were female. The majority were 25 to 44 years old (44%), of White ethnicity (59%), married (53%) and living as a couple with one or more children under the age of 18 at home. Most respondents had earned a Bachelor’s degree (26%), were employed full-time (45%) and earned between \$50,000 and \$74,999. The majority of respondents lived in Los Angeles (27%), Southern California (25%) and the San Francisco Bay area (21%). On average, they had lived in California for 31 years and in their current community for 16 years. The survey had quotas of respondents from five geographic areas based on the percentage of the state’s population living in those areas during the 2000 census. The chart below also compares the survey respondents’ ethnicity to the state’s projected ethnic makeup for 2010.



Adult Mail-back Survey Results

Respondents who agreed to complete the adult mail-back survey were asked eleven multi-part questions. The general topics included facility preferences, activity participation and demand, willingness to pay for favored activities and their preferred types of outdoor recreation areas.

The survey asked respondents why they engaged in their favorite outdoor recreation activity and asked for their opinions on several recreation-related statements and the possible privatization of recreation-related activities and services. They were asked what kind of emphasis governmental recreation providers should place on various recreation management activities. A 26-part question also asked which if any of several potential barriers discouraged them from being physically active in a park. A final question asked respondents' opinions on various management actions to address climate change.

More detailed descriptions of the questions and preliminary findings from the 1,222 completed adult mail-back surveys are included below.

Providing Park Facilities and Services

This question asked respondents how important they thought it was to provide each of 23 park and recreation facilities and services in California. The choices ranged from community swimming pools to off-highway areas.

Respondents rated the following seven facilities and services as the most important:

| Importance of California Park and Recreation Facilities and Services. | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Facility/Service¹ | Importance | | |
| | Mean | Mode | N² |
| Play activity areas for tots and young children | 4.2 | 5 | 1222 |
| Wilderness type areas where no vehicles or development are allowed | 4.1 | 5 | 1221 |
| Areas and facilities for environmental and outdoor education programs | 4.1 | 5 | 1221 |
| Multi-use turf areas for field sports such as softball, baseball, soccer, and/or football | 4.1 | 5 | 1220 |
| Picnic sites for large groups | 4 | 4 | 1221 |
| Trails for multiple, non-motorized activities such as hiking, mountain biking or horseback riding | 4 | 5 | 1220 |
| Hard surface trails for biking, jogging, and fitness walking | 4 | 5 | 1221 |
| ¹ Rated on a scale from 1 = not at all important to 5 = very important. ² N is the # of responses. | | | |

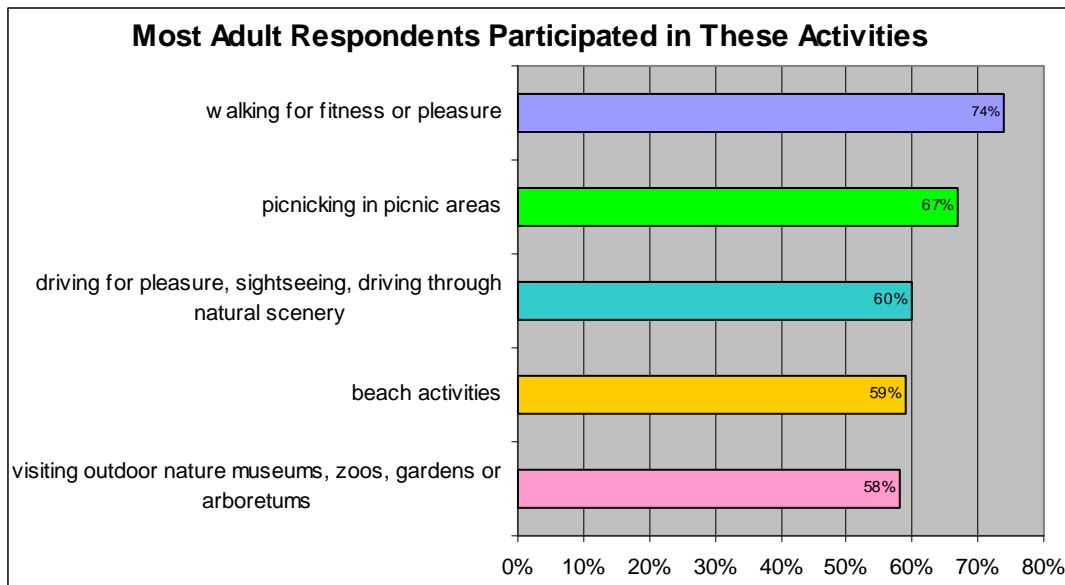
Facilities rated as the least important were:

| Importance of California Park and Recreation Facilities and Services. | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Facility/Service¹ | Importance | | |
| | Mean | Mode | N² |
| Areas for the legal use of off-highway vehicles such as motorcycles, dune buggies, 4-wheel drive vehicles, or all-terrain vehicles | 2.9 | 3 | 1220 |
| Public hunting areas especially managed for waterfowl like ducks and geese | 2.5 | 1 | 1219 |

¹ Rated on a scale from 1 = not at all important to 5 = very important. ² N is the # of responses.

Activity Participation and Demand Rates

Californians enjoy a diverse range of recreation opportunities. The most popular activity among adult respondents is walking for fitness or pleasure. On average, adult respondents spent more days during the past 12 months walking for fitness or pleasure (73 days) and jogging or running for exercise (61 days) than any other activity.



When asked which recreation activities they would like to participate in more often, the majority of adult respondents chose: 1) walking for fitness or pleasure (46%), 2) camping in developed sites with facilities such as toilets and tables (45%), 3) bicycling on paved surfaces (45%) and 4) day hiking on trails (44%).

When asked how much they would be willing to pay to participate in their favorite activity, second favorite activity, and third favorite activity, adult responses varied greatly. Adults said they would be willing to pay between \$0 (using play equipment/play structures/tot lots) and \$16-20 (sail boating) for their favorite activity; between \$0 (outdoor photography) and \$5-10 (target shooting/including

pistol and skeet) for their second favorite activity and between \$0 (Jogging and running for exercise on trails, streets, sidewalks) and \$5-10 (backpacking/motor boating) for their third favorite activity.

When asked about the importance of a variety of items to their favorite activities, adult respondents rated the following as the most important: 1) to have fun, 2) to be with family and friends, 3) to relax and 4) to view the scenic beauty. Adult respondents rated “meeting new people” as the least important factor for participating in their favorite activity.

Outdoor Recreation Area Visitation

Respondents were then asked for the number of days they had visited four types of outdoor recreation areas within the last year. The areas included: 1) highly developed parks and recreation areas, 2) developed nature-oriented parks and recreation areas, 3) historical or cultural buildings, sites, or areas and 4) natural and undeveloped areas. The majority of adult respondents reported visiting each of these areas 1 to 5 days during the past 12 months.

| Days Respondents Visited Recreation Areas During the Past 12 Months. | | | | | | |
|---|----------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Outdoor Recreation Area Type | 0 | 1-5 | 6-10 | 11-20 | 21-50 | >50 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Highly developed parks and recreation areas | 9.9 | 31.8 | 14.0 | 13.3 | 14.9 | 16.1 |
| Developed nature-oriented parks and recreation areas | 12.3 | 41.5 | 15.0 | 11.5 | 9.0 | 10.0 |
| Historical or cultural buildings, sites, or areas | 22.2 | 47.9 | 13.3 | 6.0 | 2.6 | 8.0 |
| Natural and undeveloped areas | 21.9 | 41.2 | 11.4 | 9.4 | 6.2 | 9.9 |
| * Adult Mail-Back Survey | | | | | | |

Parks and Recreation Opinion Statements

Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with various statements concerning outdoor recreation lands and facilities in California, ranging from statements of need for recreational areas to opinions about the impact that recreation and park agencies have on creating jobs and helping the economy.

The majority agreed with all statements except for two: 1) recreation areas for camping or overnight use are needed and 2) private businesses should provide some of the outdoor recreation services at government owned facilities. The majority said they neither disagreed nor agreed with these statements. Statements that received the highest levels of agreement were: 1) recreation programs help improve people’s health, 2) fees collected at each park, wildlife

and recreation area should be spent on that area and 3) rules and regulations in parks and outdoor recreation areas should be enforced.

Privatization Preferences

This question solicited respondents' opinions on privatizing nine types of recreational work and services currently performed by government recreation providers. The most support was reported for: 1) rental of recreational equipment such as boats, camping equipment, 2) food services such as the sale of ready-to-eat food and beverages and 3) sponsorship of contests, races, and special events.

Governmental Emphasis on Park and Recreation Facilities, Programs, Services

The majority of adult mail-back survey respondents said that the most governmental emphasis should be placed on: 1) cleaning up pollution of the ocean, lakes, rivers and streams in park and recreation areas, 2) maintaining or caring for park and recreation areas, 3) protecting natural resources, 4) protecting historic resources and 5) remodeling and improving existing facilities. Providing more organized activities/special events and building new facilities were perceived as needing about the same emphasis they were currently receiving.

| The Amount of Emphasis State and Federal Government Outdoor Recreation Agencies in California Should Place on Aspects of Outdoor Recreation. | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|
| Idea | Less Emphasis | | About the Same Emphasis | | More Emphasis | | Don't Know/ Unsure | |
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| Cleaning up pollution of the ocean, lakes, rivers and streams in park and recreation areas | 2.1 | 26 | 14.1 | 171 | 77.8 | 945 | 6.0 | 73 |
| Maintaining or caring for park and recreation areas | 1.5 | 18 | 21.8 | 265 | 71.9 | 874 | 4.9 | 59 |
| Protecting natural resources | 2.5 | 31 | 20.5 | 250 | 71.5 | 870 | 5.4 | 66 |
| Protecting historic resources | 2.9 | 35 | 25.2 | 307 | 66.6 | 810 | 5.3 | 65 |
| Remodeling and improving existing facilities | 2.5 | 31 | 25.1 | 305 | 65.2 | 793 | 7.2 | 87 |
| Buying additional parkland and open space for recreation purposes | 6.4 | 78 | 33.0 | 401 | 50.2 | 610 | 10.4 | 127 |
| Providing educational programs | 5.3 | 64 | 38.5 | 468 | 49.3 | 599 | 6.9 | 84 |
| Providing more organized activities and special events | 10.5 | 127 | 44.1 | 536 | 36.0 | 438 | 9.4 | 114 |
| Building new facilities | 10.6 | 128 | 45.8 | 556 | 34.0 | 412 | 9.6 | 117 |
| * Adult Mail-Back Survey, n=number of respondents | | | | | | | | |

Physical Activity and Recreation Constraints

Gang activity, alcohol and drug use in parks, and poorly maintained parks were perceived as the most limiting factors to respondents' physical activity. The least limiting factors were handicap accessibility and the availability of commercial visitor services. This new question asked about the potential barriers to respondents being more physically active in a park. The 26 choices included limited park hours, cost of the activity and a lack of public transportation to the park.

Climate Change Opinion Statements

Adult respondents were in agreement with all of the following management actions except "do nothing," where 54% strongly agreed that this was not a solution:

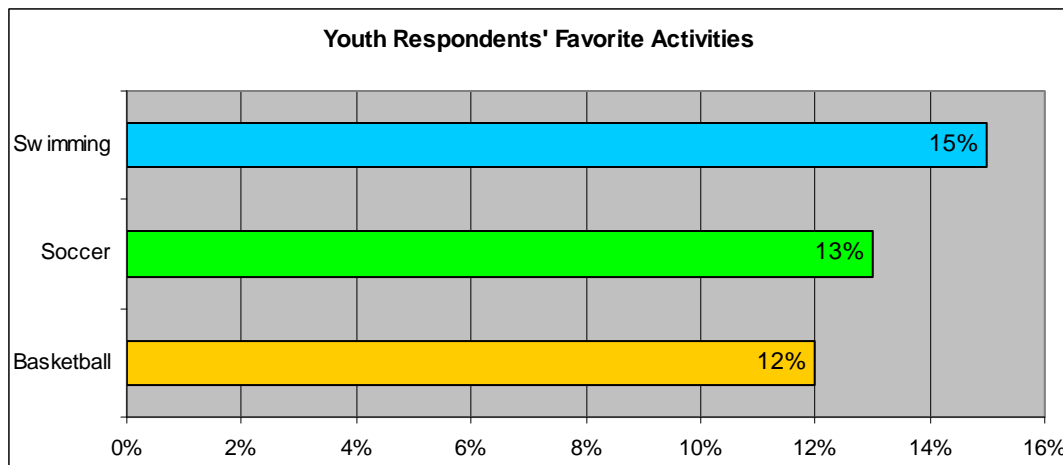
- 1) reduce climate-changing gases
- 2) anticipate the effects of climate change
- 3) educate Californians
- 4) do nothing.

Youth Mail-Back Survey Results

Adult respondents who completed the telephone survey were also asked if they had any children between the ages of 12-17 living at home. The adult was asked for their permission to send a youth activities survey to one of the children. The mail-back youth survey generated 397 completed responses to its 10 questions. The questions all dealt with outdoor recreation activity preferences, participation and demand and asked for the reasons why youth participated in those activities and what may have prevented their participation in others. Due to the limited number of surveys returned, the results are not representative of California's youth. However, the data collected still provide insight into youth activity patterns and preferences and is therefore included in this summary.

Favorite outdoor activity

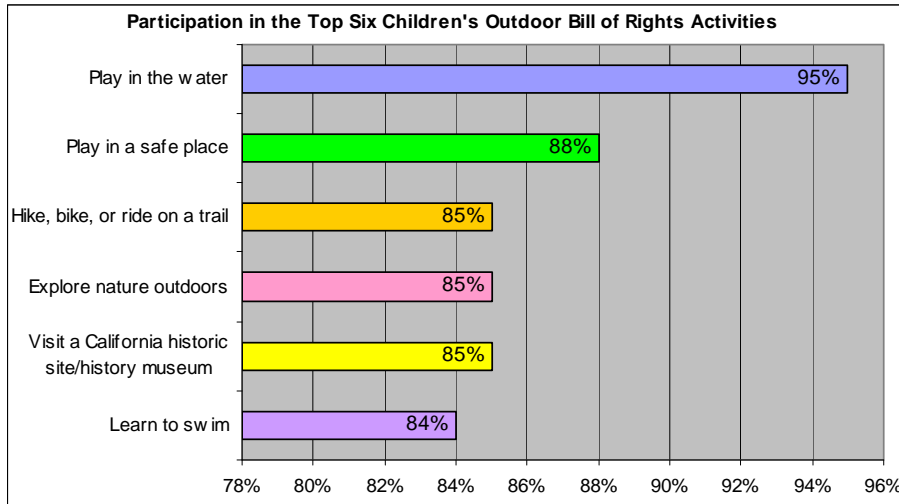
The favorite activity question was open-ended and therefore yielded diverse responses. The most common outdoor activity reported was swimming (15%), followed by soccer (13%) and basketball (12%). When asked why these activities were their favorites, the majority of youth respondents said it was for fun and enjoyment (83.9%) and to do something with their friends and family (68%). Only 50% said their activity was their favorite because they could be outside.



The majority of youth respondents participated in their favorite activity with friends (86%) and immediate family members (57%). It is interesting to note that approximately 35% participated in their favorite activity by themselves. Thirty-two percent of youth respondents reported equal participation in their favorite activity in other areas or parks both in and outside of their neighborhood, but within their town or city. Less than 12% of youth participated in their favorite outdoor activity in their own yard. Other open-ended responses were reported with the most common location being school.

Activity participation and demand rates

When responding to a question about the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights activities, at least 80% had either played in the water, played in a safe place, hiked/biked/rode on a trail, explored nature outdoors, visited a California historic site/museum and/or learned to swim. The lowest participation was reported for catching a fish. However, nearly 58% had reported doing this, which still reflected the majority of respondents.



When asked which activities they participated in during the past 12 months, at least 75% reported walking on streets/sidewalks/paths/trails in their community, swimming in a pool, jogging or running and playing in a park. Fewer than 10% of youth reported participating in hunting, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing.

Among the activities they would like to participate in more, the majority chose horseback riding (47%), sledding/ice-skating/snow play (45%), snowboarding (45%), swimming in a pool (45%) and jet skis or wave runners (45%).

When youth respondents were asked to select actions that could help them participate in outdoor activities more often, the majority said that: 1) providing more recreation areas closer to their home (65%), 2) providing areas for activities that are just for kids their age (56%) and 3) providing equipment (56%) would increase their participation. Providing safer ways to get to recreation areas close to their home was only perceived as helpful by 37% of youth respondents.

When asked about constraints to their activity participation, 41% of the youth respondents said they were too busy to participate in outdoor activities and 49.6% said they were sometimes too busy. In addition, 47% would sometimes rather be on the internet and 47% indicated it is sometimes too hot or cold outside. One in four youth (25%) do not have a family member to do outdoor activities with.

Demographics

Youth respondents were approximately 53% male and 47% female. The ages of the respondents were relatively well distributed with approximately 17% in each age category of 13, 14, 15, and 16. The majority of youth respondents were of White ethnicity (39%). However, Asians (25%) and Hispanics (20%) also represented a substantial portion of respondents. In addition, nearly 31% of youth respondents resided in Los Angeles County.

Overall Recommendations

Although Californians are regularly visiting parks, they also feel they need more maintenance and care. This focus should include law enforcement efforts, pollution control, and overall maintenance for facilities.

Because Californians visit a diverse range of types of parks, from natural to cultural and developed to remote or wilderness focused, this diversity should be maintained.

Locale is important. Recreation providers should continue to evaluate the accessibility of local parks for all citizens in California. Having local parks will continue to encourage increased use by local community members.

A large majority of Californians are physically active – and therefore, parks and recreation facilities and areas/resources should continue to provide increased access and promote safe and accessible venues for physical activity.

Although Californians are generally pleased with existing facilities, park and recreation providers should continually seek ways to provide a safe environment as well as maintain existing facilities. Additionally, continuing to provide access to trails or safe walking routes, hiking activities will help meet the demands of outdoor recreation participants in California.

Californians are concerned about the health of the environment, with more than two-thirds suggesting that pollution, maintenance of existing facilities, and preservation of cultural and historic heritage should become areas of primary focus by recreation and park providers.

Californians believe that private businesses should continue to provide rental equipment, food services, and sponsorship of events on publicly managed facilities and resources. Approval of private services is increasing, however most Californians believe the job of law enforcement and management of areas should remain with the public park and recreation agencies.

Californians think park and recreation agencies should address climate change by education, reducing greenhouse gases, and management actions to mitigate the impacts. They agree that doing nothing is not an option. Therefore, agencies

providing park resources and recreation should play a proactive role in education and mitigating the impacts of global climate change.

Youth generally participate in activities in and around their neighborhoods or in their community, therefore providing safe and accessible local recreation activities for all youth should remain a high priority.

Youth continue to enjoy access to safe venues for walking, bicycling, etc. including paths, trails, sidewalks, access to swimming pools, and playing in a park. Access to safe and local venues for these activities should remain a high priority for continued youth participation.

Youth identified an increased desire to have greater access to snow play activities (sledding, ice skating, snow boarding), swimming in a pool, and motorized water sports. Opportunities for winter activities for youth from both urban and rural environments should be maintained.

It appears youth are participating in 6 of the 10 activities identified by the COBR. Programs should continue to focus on all 10 activities and continue to pay special attention to wildlife viewing (catch or view fish), celebrating their heritage, camping overnight, and playing on a team.

Because youth appear to be “too busy” often times to participate in outdoor activities, park and recreation professionals should continue to provide accessible activities close to home and in safe environments, and providing the equipment necessary to participate.

Full-Length Public Opinions and Attitudes Survey Report

This chapter presents a preliminary analysis of the data available while this Plan was prepared. A more detailed analysis and interpretation of the survey findings will be published in the survey report in spring 2009. This final report will include comparisons with prior survey data, an analysis of regional responses, and concluding recommendations for addressing the outdoor recreation needs identified in the survey.