

Enchanted Circle Trails Final Survey Results

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The LOR Foundation, whose goal is to enhance livability and quality of life in the Intermountain West through community-driven solutions, provided funding for this research to help communities better understand the use of trails and pathways, and to make informed choices about investing in and managing this infrastructure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Headwaters Economics and RRC Associates conducted this survey in partnership with the Taos Land Trust. The purpose of this study is to collect public feedback on trails in the Enchanted Circle, which includes Taos County, New Mexico and the towns of Eagle Nest and Angel Fire in Colfax County, New Mexico. The research is intended to help stakeholders prioritize improvements for the trails network based on resident usage, satisfaction, reasons for living in the area, and suggestions for improvement.

This report contains reliable information regarding the opinions of a representative sample of county residents, including those who use and do not use trails, a variety of user types, long-time residents and newcomers, locations around the county, and incomes and ages.

Data from this survey show that trails are an essential part of daily life in the Enchanted Circle:

- Two out of three residents used trails in the last year.
- Residents use trails almost every day in the summer and almost every other day in the winter.
- More than half of residents' weekly physical activity occurs on trails.
- Three-quarters of residents support the development of an expanded and better connected trail system in the Enchanted Circle.
- Two-thirds of residents identified proximity to trails and paths as an important factor influencing their decision on where to live.

Survey respondents identified several opportunities to increase trail use and satisfaction:

- There is strong interest in safer separation of bikes and pedestrians from traffic (such as sidewalks, wide shoulders, and bike lanes), with half of residents saying they would use trails more if these safety features were implemented.
- There is strong interest in more trails in and around residential areas and improved accessibility, with one in three residents saying they would use trails more if they lived closer to them.
- There is strong interest in more broadly shared information about trails. One in three residents do not use trails because they are unsure where they are.

The Enchanted Circle's trails are a core amenity that are closely integrated with respondents' health, quality of life, and historic ranching and farming activities. Access to trails also provides increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and public land accessibility and protects the rural setting and natural beauty of the area, which many respondents feel is essential to their decision to live in Taos County.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to collect public feedback on the Enchanted Circle trail system. The research and subsequent analysis are intended to help local stakeholders prioritize future improvements for the trails network based on resident usage, satisfaction, reasons for living in the area, and suggestions for improvement. This report contains reliable information that communicates the opinions of a representative sample of county residents, including those who use and do not use trails, a variety of user types, long-time residents and newcomers, and a range of incomes and ages. This information can be used to help plan the future of trails in Taos County and the Enchanted Circle.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using two primary methods: 1) a mail-back survey sent to a random sample of residents (the “invitation sample”) in the subject area (respondents could send their paper survey back or complete the survey online); and 2) an open-link online survey for members of the public who were not part of the invitation sample. The analysis herein primarily focuses on responses from the combined invitation and open link online samples, as responses were generally similar between the two samples.

The primary list source used for the invitation sample mailing was a list purchased from a third-party list vendor, Gravis Marketing, a marketing agency that specializes in political polling. Gravis provides consumer lists for U.S. addresses as well as automated robocalls. Use of the Gravis list for this study included renters in addition to homeowners, as well as residents who are not registered to vote in addition to registered voters. Follow-up reminder robocalls were utilized for this study to further encourage survey response.

A total of 3,000 surveys were mailed to a random sample of Taos County residents in January 2016. The final sample size for the statistically valid survey (with responses either via mail survey or online survey) was 265; the open link survey received an additional 99 responses. Due to the relatively small sample size and similar response patterns between the two samples, the invitation survey and open link survey results are combined and discussed in aggregate throughout the report. This combined sample of 364 has a margin of error of approximately +/- 5.1 percentage points for questions at 50 percent response.¹

The underlying data were weighted by age and ethnicity to ensure appropriate representation of Taos County residents across different demographic cohorts in the sample. Using the U.S. Census 2014 American Community Survey five-year estimates, the age and ethnicity

¹ For the total invitation sample size of 265, margin of error is +/- 5.14 percent calculated for questions at 50% response (if the response for a particular question is “50%”—the standard way to generalize margin of error is to state the larger margin, which occurs for responses at 50%). Note that the margin of error is different for every single question response on the survey depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various segments, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a general comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

distribution within the overall respondent sample was matched to the 2014 demographic profile of Taos County, within the limitations of the statistical weighting process.²

Due to variable response rates by some segments of the population, the underlying results, while weighted to best match the overall demographics of residents, may not be completely representative of the Hispanic and Native American communities.

The survey also asked several open-ended questions to elicit more in-depth comments from respondents on their opinions and experiences. For various open-ended questions throughout the report, a brief summary of open-ended responses from the survey is provided with word clouds and random samplings of comments. The final open-ended question in the survey is analyzed in more depth, with an examination of recurring themes supported by relevant groupings of comments. A full listing of comments is available.

² The use of statistical weighting is intended to “fine-tune” or adjust the responses such that they are representative of the intended population of interest, but without fundamentally changing the overall results. Applying too high (or too low) of a weighting factor can result in substantial differences between the overall unweighted and overall weighted results. As such, from time to time, a more moderate weighting factor for certain sub-groups of the overall sample might be applied than what would otherwise be suggested from raw weighting calculations. In other words, the process of weighting responses is done deliberately and with thought towards how much the overall results change because of the weighting process, and certain adjustments to the weighting factors might be made.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This section details the demographic and residential characteristics of the overall sample of respondents.

- Gender. The sample had a higher proportion of females (65 percent) than males (35 percent).
- Age. More than a quarter (29 percent) of respondents are under age 45, with an additional 43 percent between the ages of 45 and 64. Twenty-eight percent are age 65 or older. The average age was 55.7 years old, consistent with the somewhat older age profile of respondents.
- Annual Household Income. Greater than half of the respondent households (55 percent) reported annual earnings of less than \$50,000. Roughly a quarter (27 percent) said their income is between \$50,000 and \$99,999 per year, and 18 percent reported annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more.
- Ethnicity. Slightly more than half of respondents were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (55 percent).
- Race. Most respondents identified themselves as white (82 percent). An additional 16 percent said they are some “other” race, 1 percent are Asian, and 1 percent are Native American.
- Primary Residency. Ninety-one percent of respondents consider the Enchanted Circle their primary residence.
- Length of Residence in the Enchanted Circle per Year. Consistent with the high proportion of respondents indicating that the Enchanted Circle is their primary residence, a strong majority (92 percent) said they typically live in the area all year. Three percent indicated that they reside in the area between seven and eleven months each year, and four percent live there less than six months.
- Location of Residence. Approximately a quarter of respondents (23 percent) live in the Town of Taos. One in five lives in Ranchos de Taos, and 14 percent live in El Prado. Other common residence locations include Questa (8 percent), some other area of New Mexico (5 percent), Red River (4 percent), or Angel Fire (1 percent). Twenty-four percent of respondents said they live in some other area in the Enchanted Circle. “Other” areas frequently mentioned in the open-ended comments include Arroyo Hondo, Arroyo Seco, Taos Canyon, Valdez, and Valle Escondido.

- Number of Years Lived in the Enchanted Circle. Almost half of respondents have lived in the Enchanted Circle for more than 20 years (46 percent). An additional 37 percent have been in the area between five and 20 years, and 11 percent have lived in the Enchanted Circle for under five years.
- Total Number of Household Members. The largest share of respondents reported that there are two people living in their home (44 percent), while 19 percent indicated that they live alone. Sixteen percent said there are three people in their home, and twenty-one percent said there are four or more people in their home. On average, 2.6 individuals live in respondent households.
- Number of Household Members Age 18 or Under. More than half of the sample (59 percent) do not have household members under the age of 18. Those who do have children more frequently report having one or two children (32 percent) as opposed to three or more (9 percent).
- Household Need for ADA-Accessible Facilities. Eight percent of respondents indicated that their household has a need for ADA-accessible facilities.
- Business Ownership. Approximately a quarter (24 percent) of respondents identified themselves as business owners in Taos County.

Figure 1: Respondent Demographic Profile

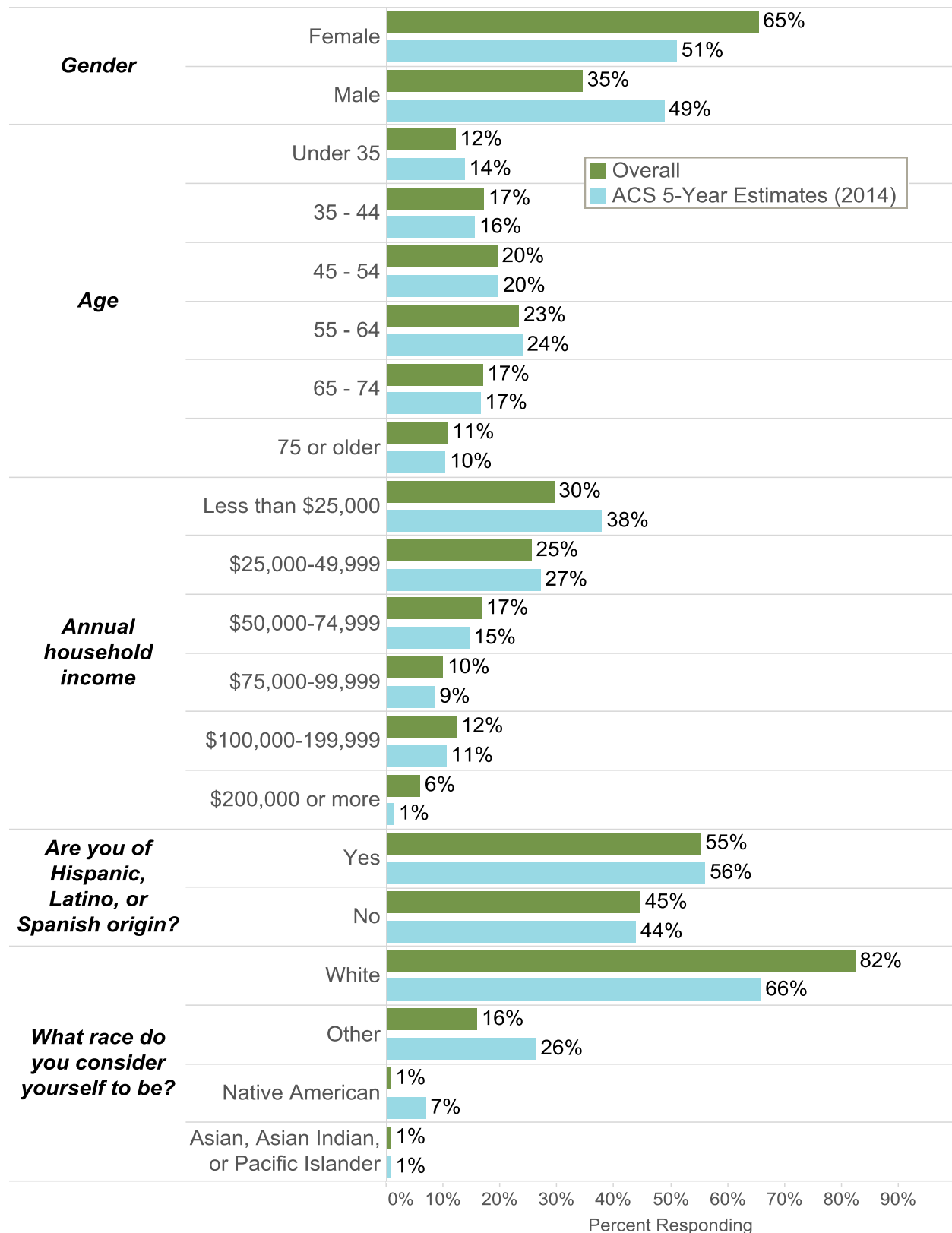
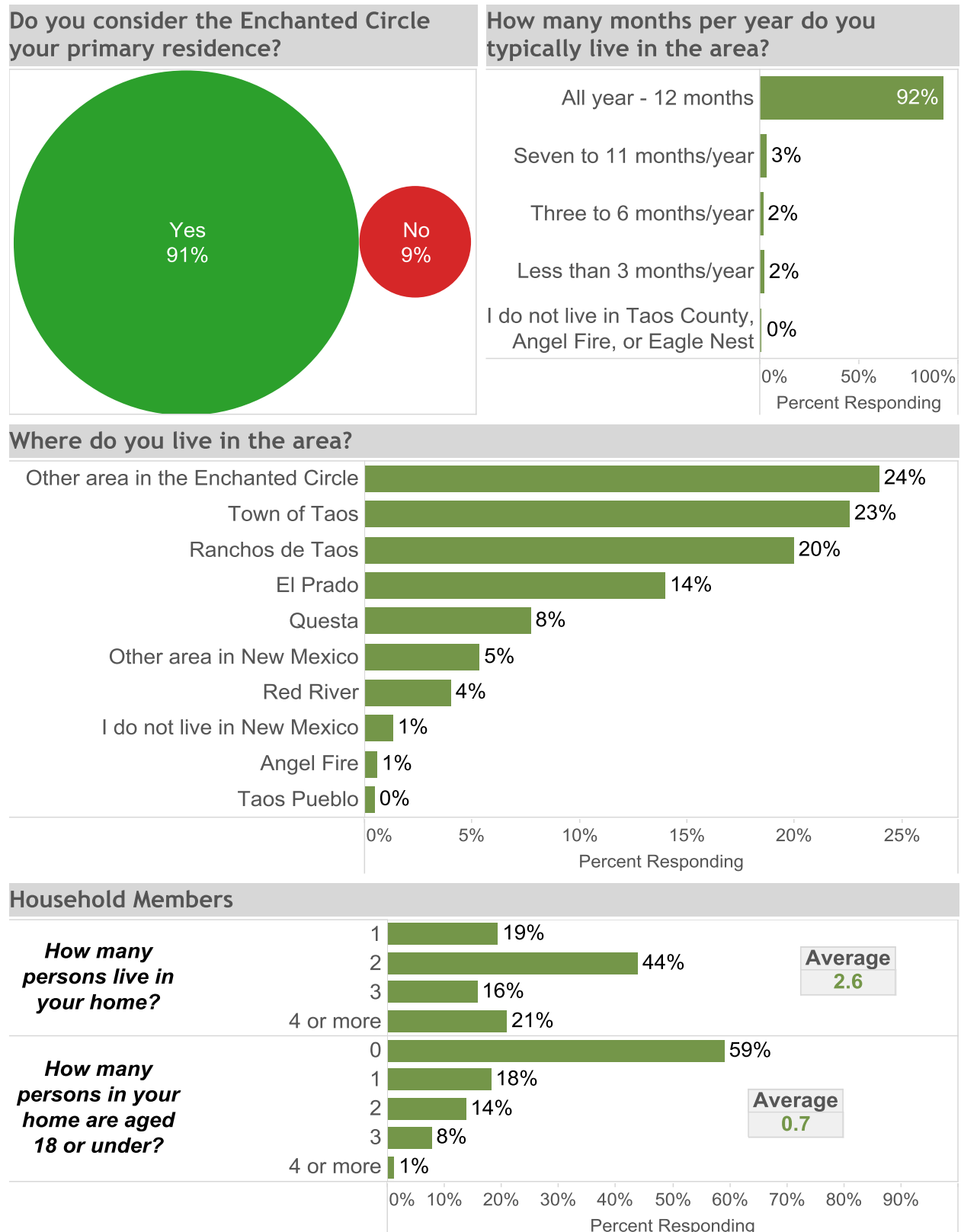


Figure 2: Residential Profile



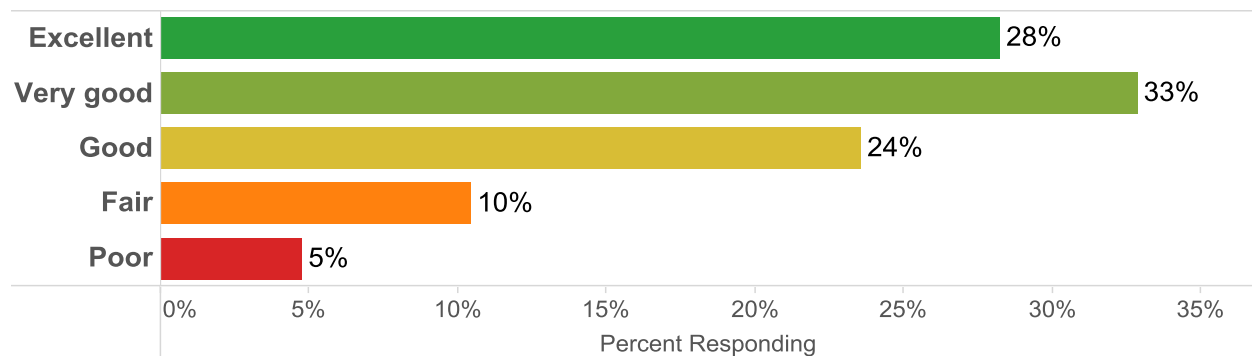
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A section of the survey asked respondents a variety of questions about their health and participation in physical activity during summer 2015. This section of the survey details the findings from these questions.

Overall Health

When asked to rate their overall health, respondents were highly positive, with 28 percent responding “excellent,” 33 percent responding “very good,” and 24 percent responding “good.” Only 15 percent indicated that their health is “fair” or “poor.”

Figure 3: Would you say in that in general your health is...



Participation in Physical Activity/Exercise

Respondents were asked if they participated in any physical exercise or activities during a typical summer month in 2015 other than their regular job. Most respondents (89 percent) indicated that they did, while 10 percent did not and an additional 1 percent were unsure. When asked to specify what type of activity or exercise they participated in, respondents most frequently mentioned hiking, walking, biking, and gardening, as depicted in the word cloud in Figure 4 below.

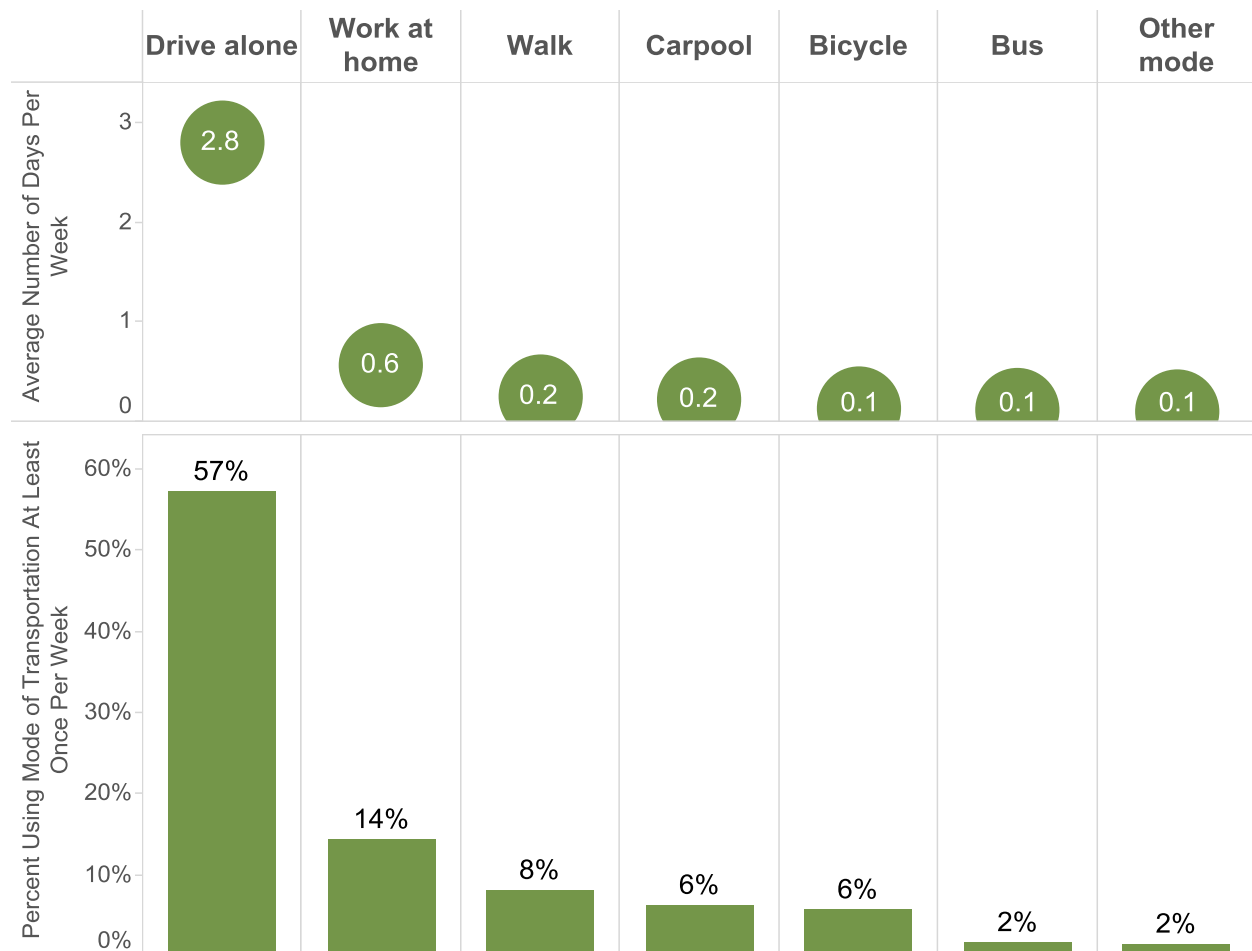
Respondents participated in their selected activity for an average of 4.1 times per week during summer 2015, indicating a relatively high frequency of participation. Twenty-two percent reported typically doing their activity one or two times per week, 38 percent three or four times, and 40 percent five or more times per week. Participation in the activities also typically had a fairly lengthy duration, as respondents reported an average of 2.5 hours devoted towards their activity or exercise each time. Roughly a third overall (32 percent) took part in their activity for under an hour, 37 percent for one to two hours, and 31 percent for more than two hours; hiking, gardening, fishing, farming, and mountain biking tend to have the longest duration of participation.

When asked to estimate how much of their physical activity time in summer 2015 took place on trails and paths, respondents reported an average of 56 percent.

DAILY TRAVEL AND COMMUTING

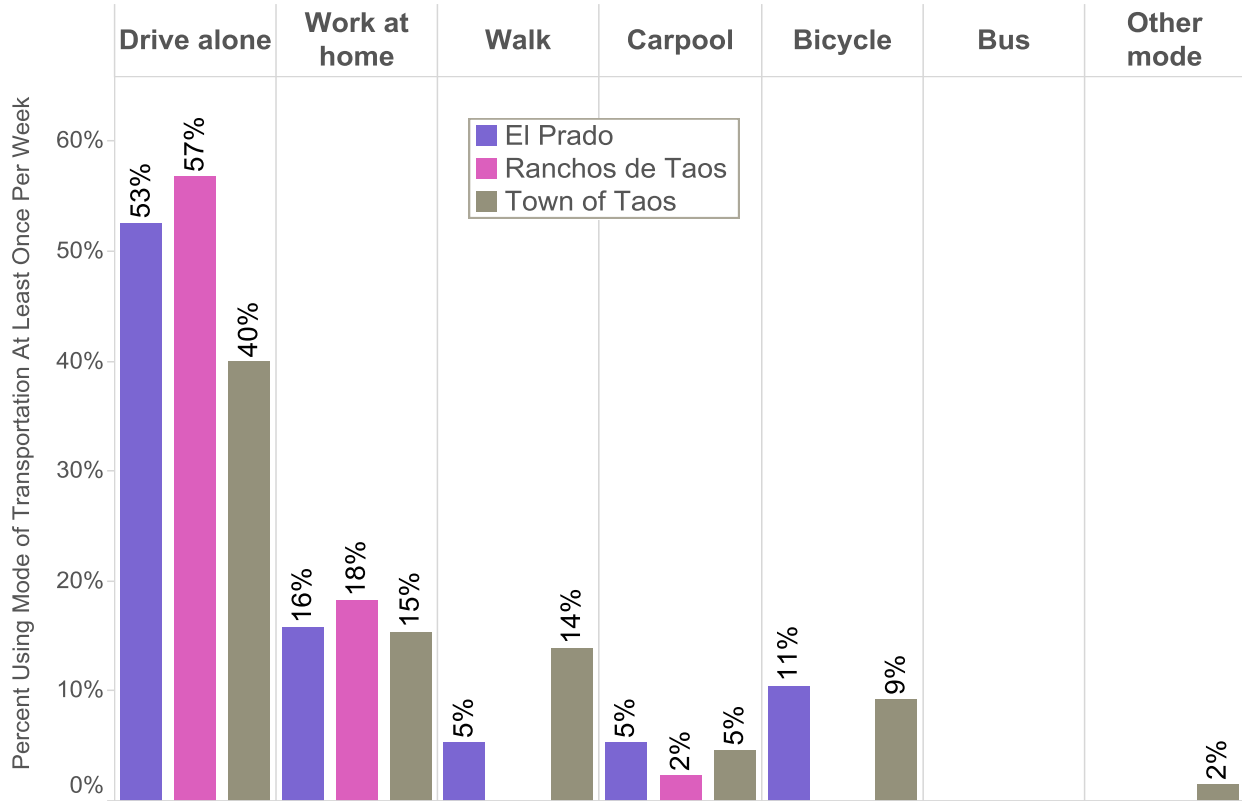
Respondents were asked to indicate the average number of days per week they typically use various transportation modes to get to work during the summer. As illustrated in Figure 5 below, driving alone is the most common method of commuting among respondents, with 57 percent using this transportation mode at least once per week and an average usage of 2.8 days per week. Working at home is somewhat common, with 14 percent staying home at least one time a week and an average of 0.6 days worked from home each week. Eight percent walk to work at least once a week (0.2 days on average), 6 percent carpool at least once (0.2 days), and 6 percent bike at least once (0.1 days). Taking the bus (2 percent) was selected by few respondents as a frequently used commuting method.

Figure 5: Typical Number of Days Using Transportation Modes to Commute to Work During Summer



This question was also analyzed for residents of different cities in Taos County (Figure 6).

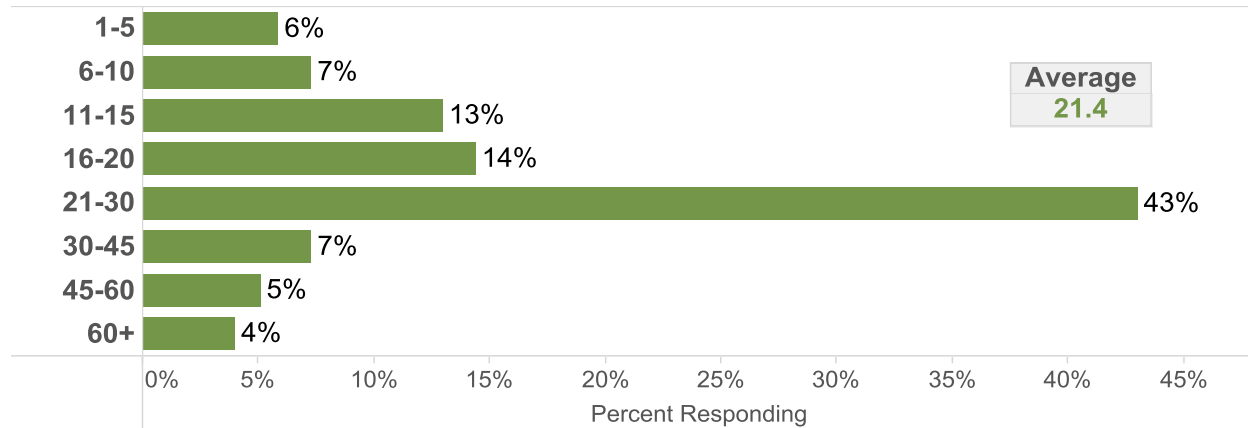
Figure 6: Typical Proportion of Days Using Transportation Modes to Commute to Work During Summer By Location of Residence



Residents of the Town of Taos were considerably less likely to indicate that they drive to work alone at least once a week during the summer (40 percent) than residents of El Prado (53 percent) or Ranchos de Taos (57 percent). Taos residents were more likely to use alternative forms of transportation at least once a week, most notably walking (14 percent). Respondents living in El Prado were most likely to report that they commute via bicycle at least once a week (11 percent).

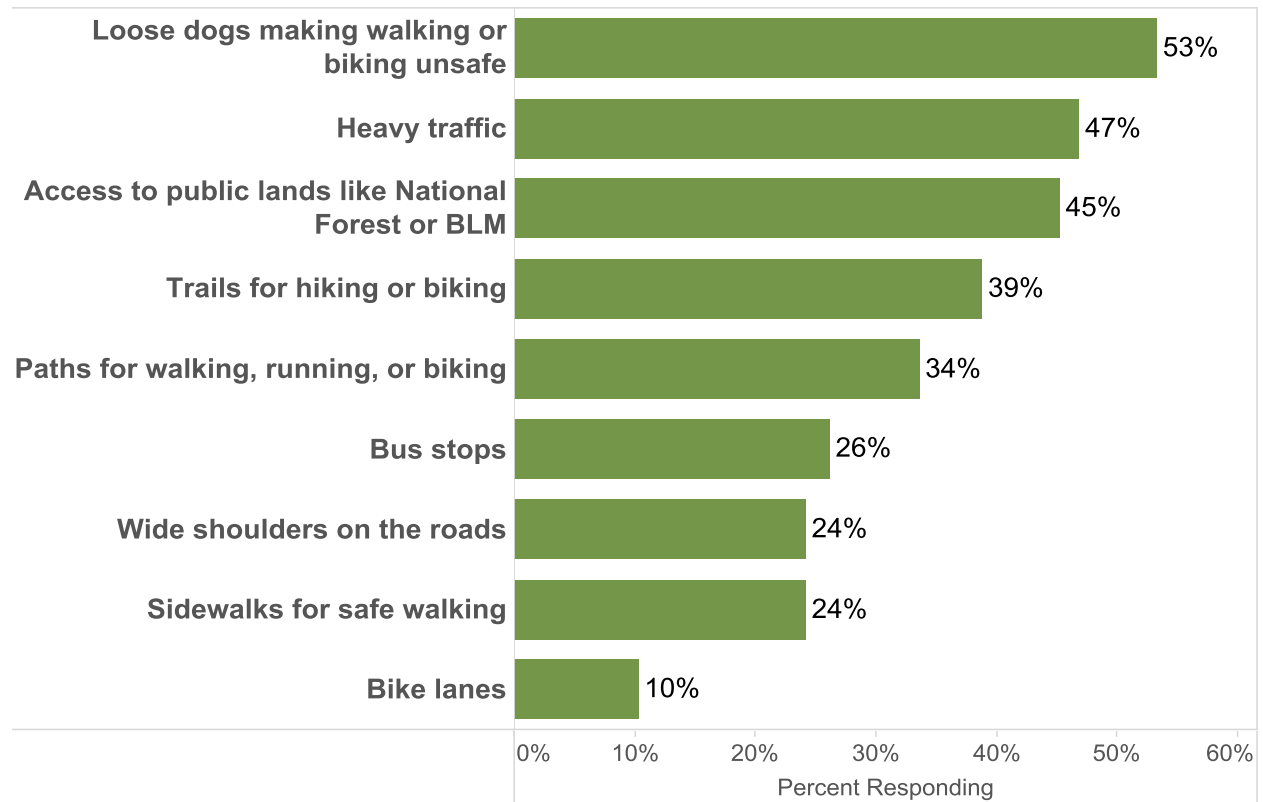
Respondents who walked or biked for transportation during the past month were asked how many minutes they usually walked or biked each way. The largest share spent between 21 and 30 minutes walking or biking each way (43 percent), with an average time of 21.4 minutes. Thirteen percent spent ten minutes or less walking/biking to their destination, 27 percent between 11 and 20 minutes, and 16 percent more than half an hour.

Figure 7: Number of Minutes Walked/Biked for Transportation Each Way



Lastly, to evaluate the amenities and challenges in close proximity to respondents' homes related to trail and pathway usage, a question asked, "within a 15-minute walk of your home, are there any of the following?" Some of the barriers identified included loose dogs making walking or biking unsafe (53 percent of respondents indicated this is close to their home) and heavy traffic (47 percent). However, respondents also identified a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities located close to their home, such as access to public lands like National Forest or BLM (45 percent), trails for hiking or biking (39 percent), and paths for walking/running/biking (34 percent). Roughly a quarter reported the presence of bus stops (26 percent), wide shoulders on the roads (24 percent), and sidewalks for safe walking (24 percent) nearby. Only 10 percent said bike lanes were close to their home, reflecting a potential area for improvement and expansion.

Figure 8: Within a 15-minute walk of your home, are there any of the following?



TRAIL USE

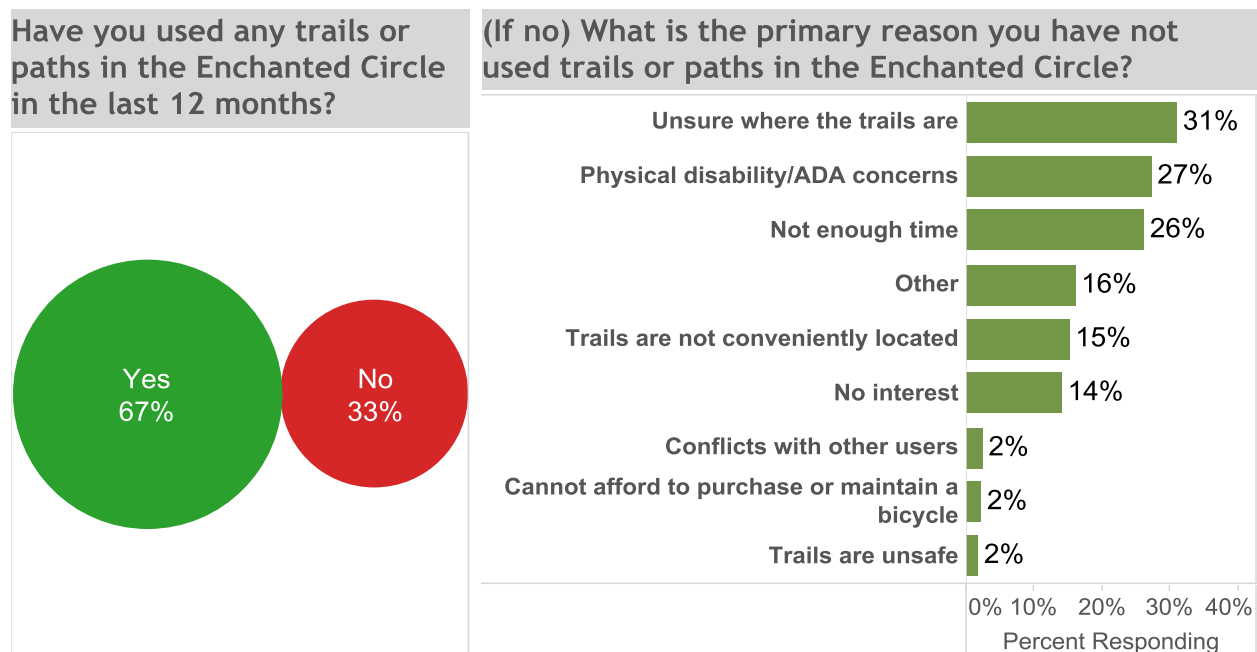
A primary goal of the survey research is to document the usage patterns of the Enchanted Circle trail system. Those who indicated that they have used trails in the past year were asked a series of additional questions including usage by activity, locations used, satisfaction with trails, methods of learning about trails, and factors that would encourage increased trail usage. Those who have not used trails in the past year were asked to identify reasons for not using the trails and factors that would encourage trail usage. The findings from each of these questions are discussed in the section below.

Recent Use of Trails

Figure 9 shows that two-thirds of respondents (67 percent) indicated that they have used trails in the Enchanted Circle during the last 12 months.

Among those who said they have not used trails in the Enchanted Circle, the three most common reasons cited for not using trails were uncertainty about the location of the trails (31 percent of those not using trails, or 10 percent of the overall sample), a physical disability/ADA concerns (27 percent, 9 percent of overall sample), or not having enough time (26 percent, 9 percent of overall sample). Other reasons include some other reason (16 percent, 5 percent of overall sample), the lack of convenience of trail location (15 percent, 5 percent), or a lack of interest (14 percent, 5 percent). Few respondents identified conflicts with other users, an inability to purchase or maintain a bicycle, or a perception that the trails are unsafe (each 2 percent) as major deterrents.

Figure 9: Enchanted Circle Trail Usage in Last 12 Months



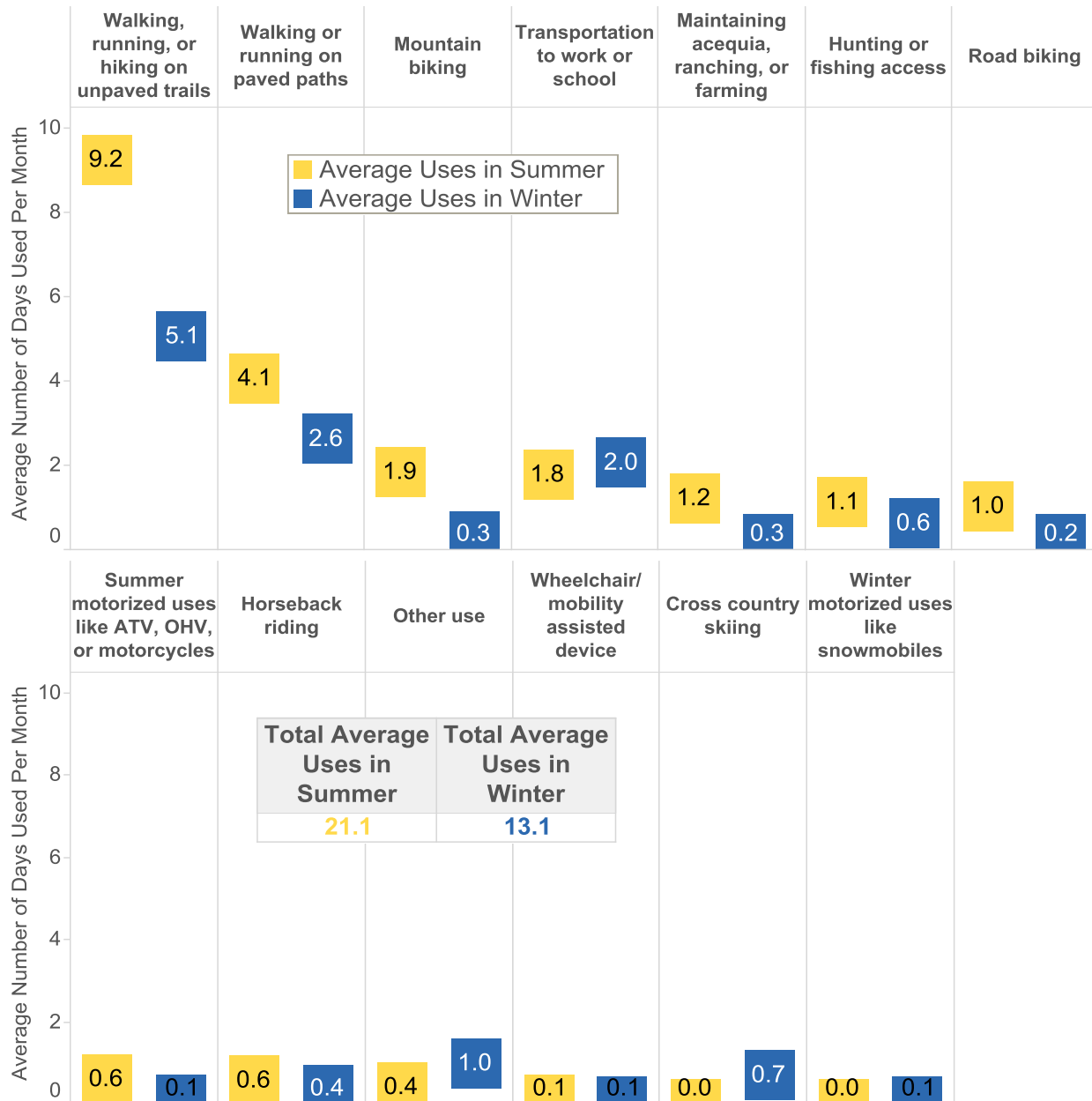
Trail Usage by Activity

Respondents estimated the number of days per month, on average, that they use the Enchanted Circle trail system, both during the summer (May through October) and the winter (November through April). Figure 10 on the following page depicts the average number of days used per month among overall respondents. Average usage is considerably higher during summer (21.1 days on average) than winter (13.1 days on average). These averages indicate that respondents use trails almost every day during summer months and almost every other day during winter months.

Recreation is the most common reason why residents use of trails, but non-recreational uses like transportation and maintaining acequias are also among the top five uses.

Walking, running or hiking on unpaved trails, and walking or running on paved trails are the most popular summer activities, with 9.2 days and 4.1 days of participation per month on average, respectively. These are also the most popular winter activities, though with lower participation levels (5.1 days and 2.6 days, respectively). Respondents also reported a higher level of summer participation in mountain biking, maintaining acequia/ranching/farming, hunting or fishing access, road biking, summer motorized use, and horseback riding. Not surprisingly, higher participation was noted for cross country skiing and winter motorized use during winter months. Average monthly use of trails for commuting was generally similar between summer months (1.8 days) and winter months (2.0 days).

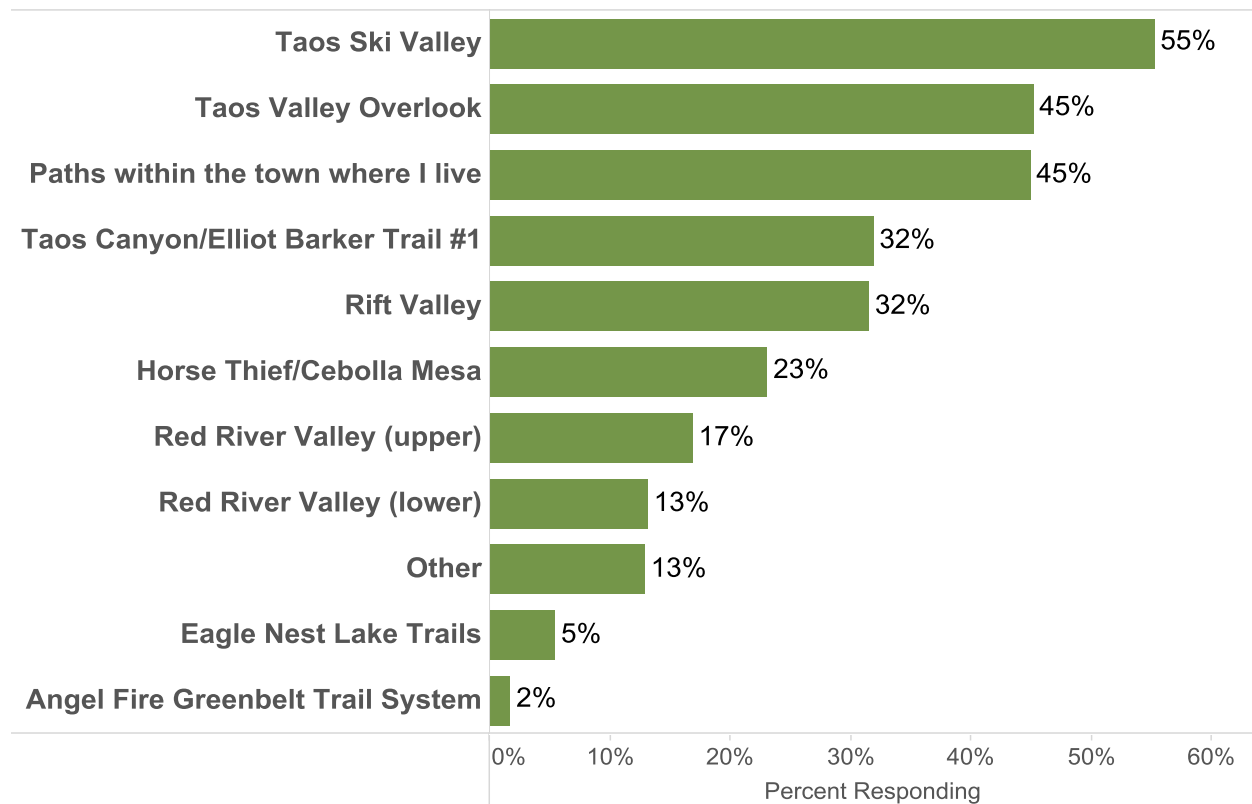
Figure 10: Monthly Trail Usage by Activity



Locations Used Most Often

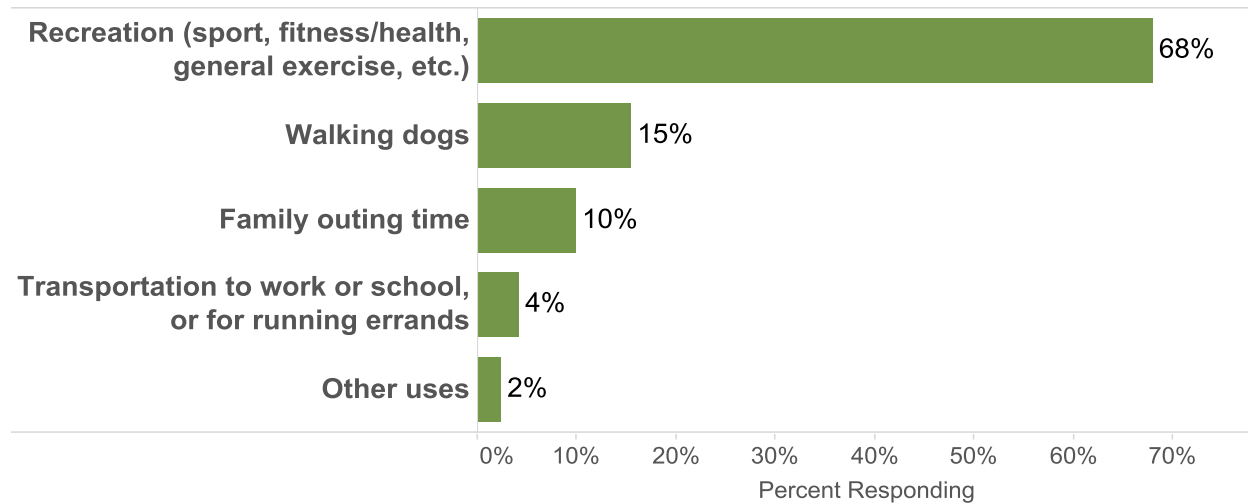
Respondents who indicated that they have used trails in the past year were asked to identify the locations of Enchanted Circle trails that they use most frequently. The most popular trail location is Taos Ski Valley (with 55 percent of respondents utilizing trails in this area), followed by Taos Valley Overlook and paths within the respondents' town of residency (each 45 percent). The Taos Canyon/Elliot Barker Trail #1, Rift Valley (each 32 percent), and Horse Thief/Cebolla Mesa (23 percent) are also commonly used.

Figure 11: Locations of Enchanted Circle Trails Used Most Often



When asked to indicate the percentage of total trail usage attributable to various purposes, respondents identified recreation as their top purpose by far (68 percent on average), followed by walking dogs (15 percent) and family outing time (10 percent). Smaller amounts of usage are attributable to transportation to work or school or for running errands (4 percent) or other uses (2 percent).

Figure 12: Percentage of Overall Trail Usage for Various Activities



Satisfaction with Trail System

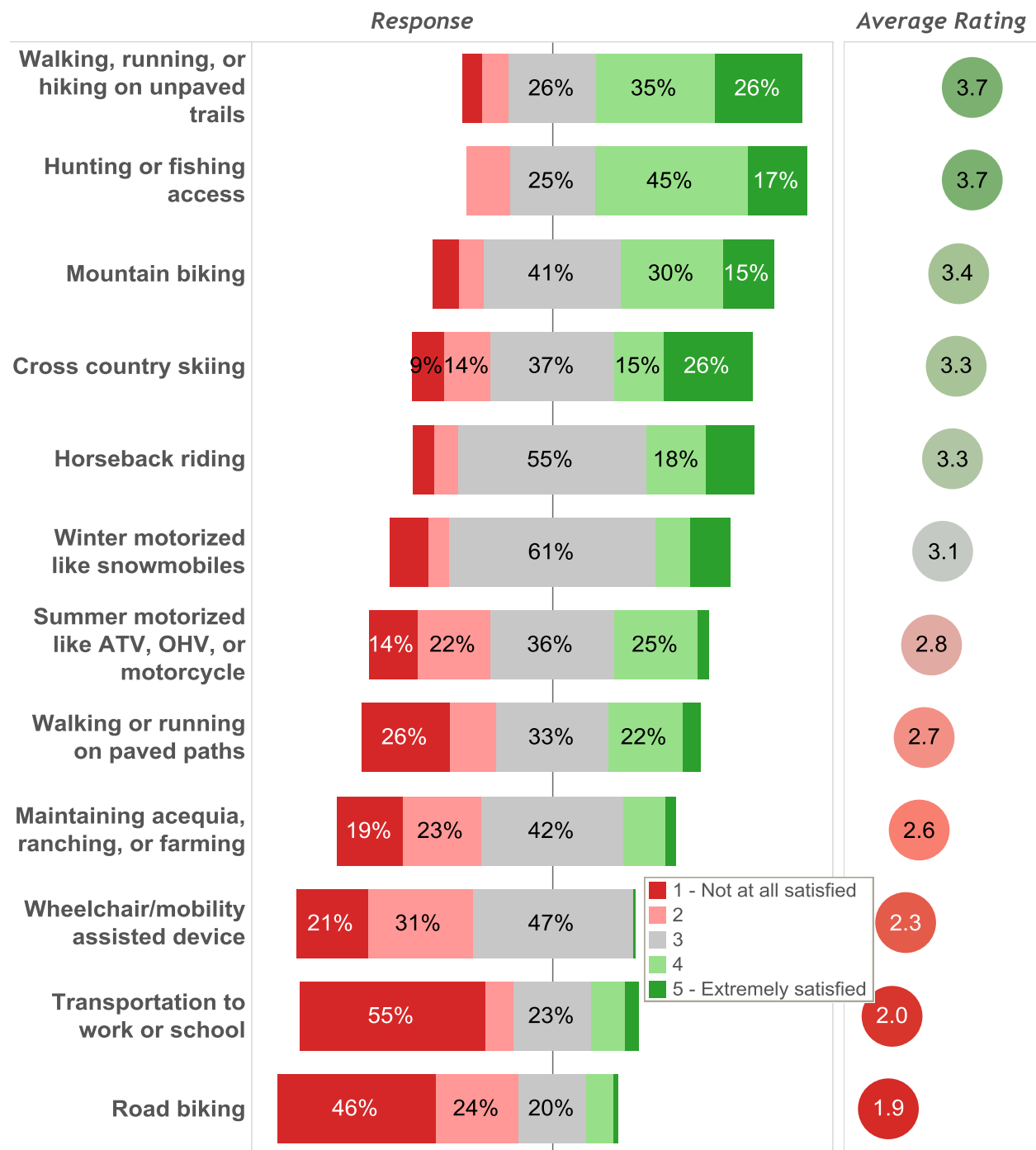
Respondents who use trails rated their satisfaction with various trail activities on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “not at all satisfied” and 5 means “extremely satisfied.” Figure 13 on the following page illustrates the share of respondents selecting each rating for each activity, with “1” and “2” responses depicted in dark and light red (indicating the respondent is dissatisfied) and “4” and “5” responses depicted in light and dark green (indicating the respondent is satisfied). Each activity is sorted in relation to the others based on their average satisfaction ratings, which are shown on the right side of the graph.

The activities receiving the largest share of “4” and “5” responses and highest average satisfaction ratings include:

- Walking/running/hiking on unpaved trails (average rating 3.7; 61 percent rated 4 or 5)
- Hunting or fishing access (3.7 average; 62 percent)
- Mountain biking (3.4 average; 45 percent)
- Cross country skiing (3.3 average; 40 percent)
- Horseback riding (3.3 average; 32 percent)

Activities receiving relatively lower satisfaction ratings include summer motorized use (average 2.8), walking or running on paved paths (2.7), maintaining acequia/ranching/farming (2.6), wheelchair/mobility assisted device (2.3), transportation to work or school (2.0), and road cycling (1.9). Each of these activities received a larger share of respondents providing a “1” or “2” rating than the share providing a “4” or “5” rating, indicative of general dissatisfaction with the trail system for these uses. Future improvements on trails to better accommodate these specific activities may boost the overall degree of satisfaction felt by respondents.

Figure 13: Satisfaction with Trail System



Respondents answered an open-ended question following the satisfaction ratings asking, “What makes you satisfied or dissatisfied with the current trail system?” A random sampling of twenty comments is presented below to provide a general idea of specific responses. Ten comments indicating satisfaction with trails were selected, and ten comments indicating dissatisfaction with trails were selected. Overall, respondents who are satisfied with the trail system mentioned beautiful scenery, adequate maintenance, cleanliness, and variety as positive qualities of the trails network. On the other hand, those who feel dissatisfied overall identified poor conditions/maintenance, lack of signage, lack of bike lanes/shoulders and dangerous conditions for road biking, excessive motorized use, and a desire for more trails as factors reducing their satisfaction.

Sampling of Comments Indicating Satisfaction

- *“Beautiful views, trails seem well maintained*
- *“Clean, well maintained, lack of motorized vehicles”*
- *“Good proximity to where I live; generally well maintained.”*
- *“Love the scenery that Taos has to offer when going for a walk or hiking.”*
- *“Many good hiking trails”*
- *“Paths are well maintained - obstructions such as tree limbs are removed and rain runoff controlled”*
- *“Scenic and well maintained”*
- *“Scenic, unpopulated, rugged”*
- *“US Forest trails are maintained very well, and their signage continues to improve”*
- *“We can walk into the forest around our house and go for miles in any direction. There's usually a game trail or old road, but we don't mind bushwhacking.”*

Sampling of Comments Indicating Dissatisfaction

- *“Almost no bike paths or paved or surfaced paths”*
- *“Dangerous roads, no bike lanes, shoulders (where they are) badly maintained, not enough signage”*
- *“I am dissatisfied with the lack of continuous trails in the area. Almost all one has to drive to.”*
- *“Lack of maintenance”*
- *“Mostly their maintenance...I think especially with bike through ways in town we are lacking. Thanks for asking.”*

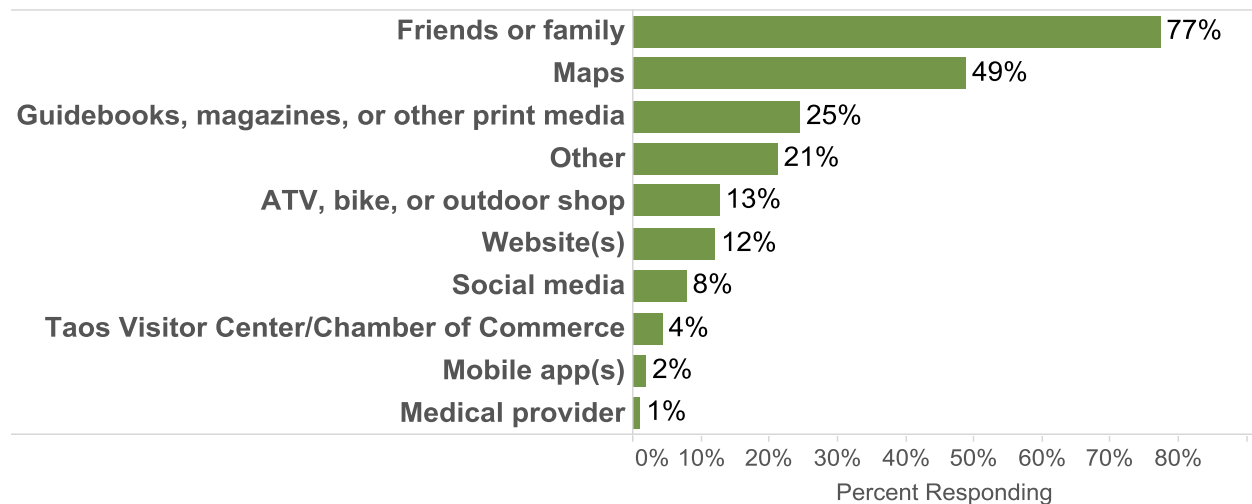
Sampling of Comments Indicating Dissatisfaction (Continued)

- *“Need more of them with adequate signage for global visitors”*
- *“Parking is a challenge. Safe parking, too. Too much breaking and entering of cars.”*
- *“Taos town paths are few and poorly maintained. They are better in the mountain areas, but most are very steep.”*
- *“Too many areas DO allow ATVs, not enough are limited to non-motorized. In town: not enough bike lanes or sidewalks.”*
- *“Trash left behind, need more trash cans”*

Learning About Trail Location

Trail users were also asked to identify the forms of communication through which they learn about the location of trails within the Enchanted Circle. The top method of learning by far is friends or family (77 percent). A map (49 percent), guidebooks/magazines/print media (25 percent), ATV/bike/outdoor shop (13 percent) and the web (12 percent) were also mentioned fairly frequently.

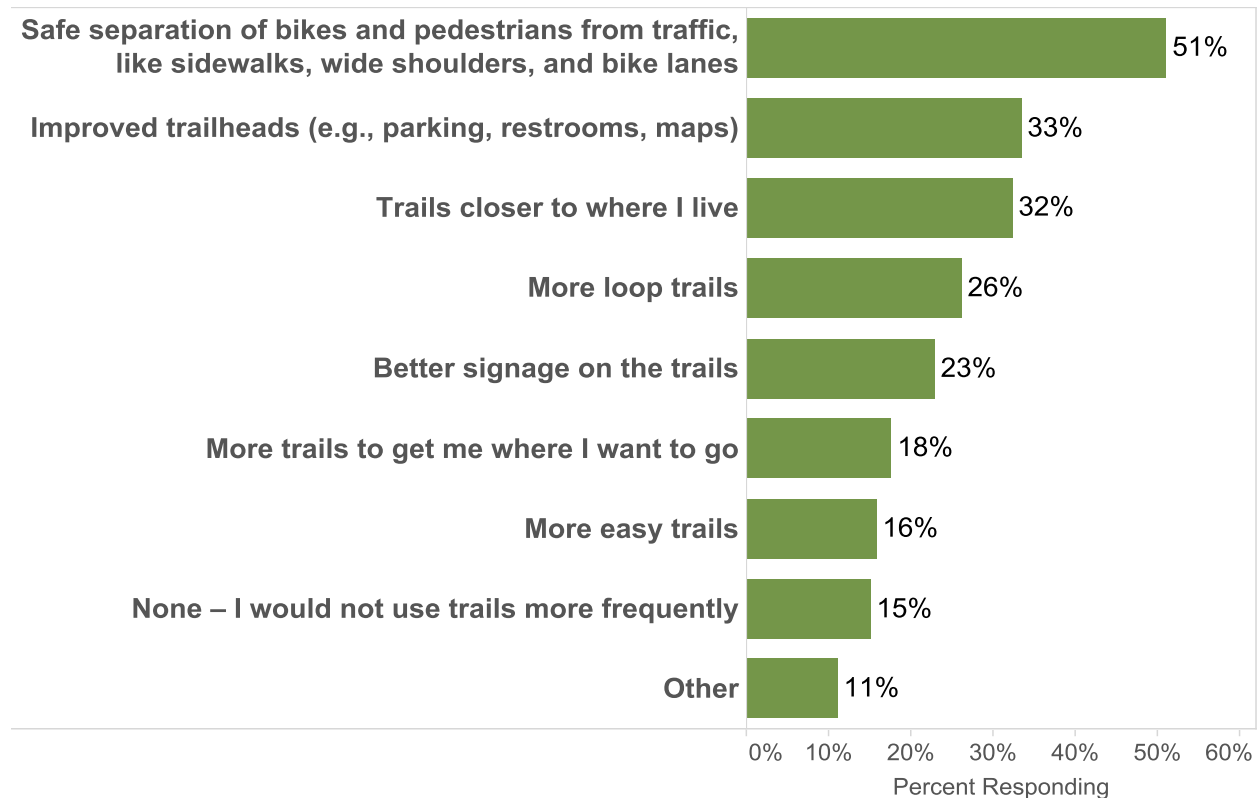
Figure 14: Learning About Trail Location



Infrastructure that Would Encourage Increased Usage

All respondents, both users and non-users of trails, were asked to identify improvements and changes related to infrastructure that would encourage them to use the Enchanted Circle trail system more in the future. More than half of respondents cited safe separation of bikes and pedestrians from traffic such as sidewalks, wide shoulders, and bike lanes (51 percent), by far the top infrastructure improvement that would encourage more usage. Roughly a third of respondents selected improved trailheads (33 percent) and closer trails to their home (32 percent), followed by more loop trails (26 percent), better signage on trails (23 percent), more trails (18 percent), and more easy trails (16 percent). An additional 15 percent indicated that they would not use trails more frequently despite infrastructure improvements. These results, coupled with the open-ended comments from above, reflect a community desire for safer pathway and trail options in town for cyclists and pedestrians.

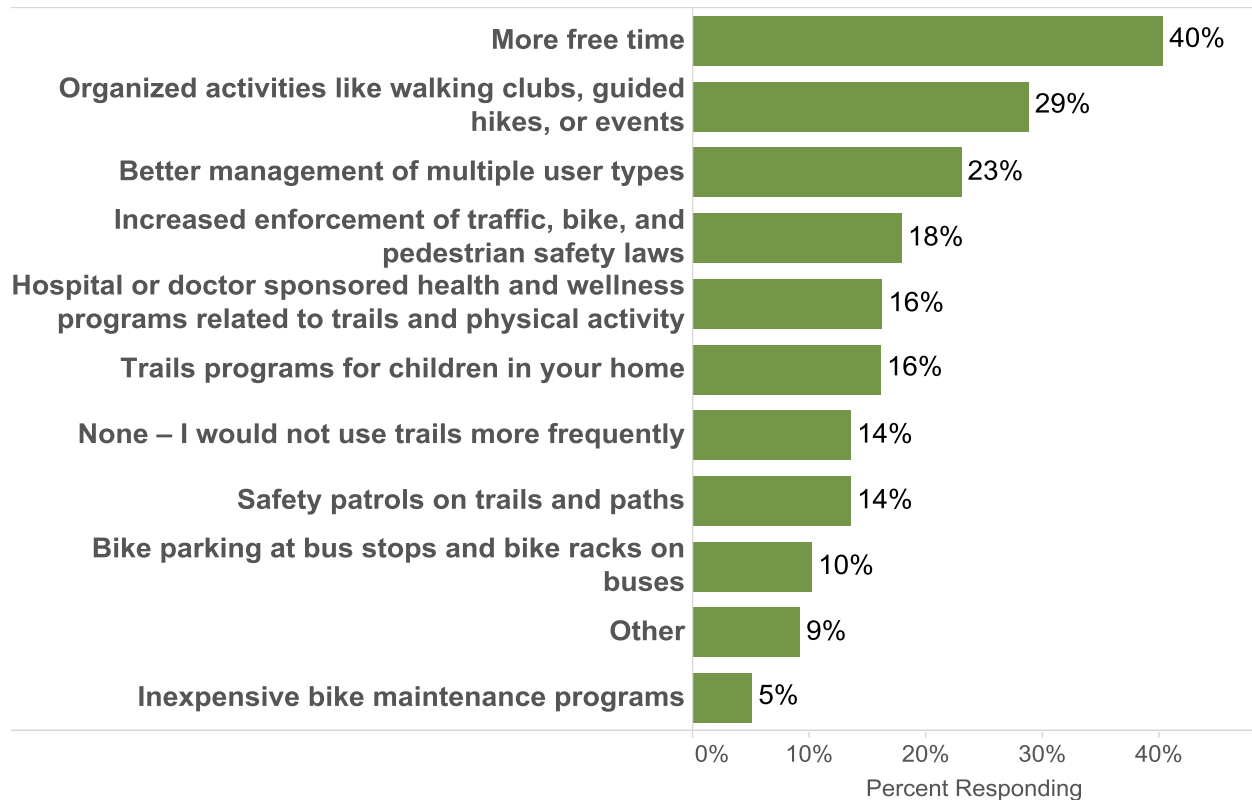
Figure 15: Infrastructure that Would Encourage Increased Trail Usage



Programs that Would Encourage Increased Usage

Respondents were also asked to identify trail and path related programs that would most encourage them to use Enchanted Circle trails and pathways more frequently. Most commonly mentioned was more free time (40 percent of respondents), followed by organized activities like walking clubs/guided hikes/events (29 percent) and better management of multiple user types (23 percent). More modest shares selected increased enforcement of safety laws (18 percent), hospital or doctor sponsored health and wellness programs, trails programs for children (each 16 percent), safety patrols on trails and paths (14 percent), and bike parking at bus stops/bike racks on buses (10 percent). Few respondents felt that inexpensive bike maintenance programs would encourage them to use trails more (5 percent). Fourteen percent indicated that they would not use trails more frequently despite the introduction of trail and path related programs.

Figure 16: Programs that Would Encourage Increased Trail Usage



LIVING IN THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE

A section of the survey had respondents identify some of the influential factors in their decision to move to or stay in the Enchanted Circle as well as live in their current residence. Key findings from these questions are summarized below.

Influential Factors in Decision to Move to/Stay the Enchanted Circle

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of eleven amenities and characteristics of the Enchanted Circle in their decision to move to or stay in the area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “not at all important” and 5 meaning “extremely important.” Responses are illustrated in Figure 17, with the dark and light red segments representing “1” and “2” responses (indicating the item was not important) and light and dark blue segments representing “4” and “5” responses (indicating the item was important). Items are sorted in descending order by their average importance ratings, which are depicted in the right column.

The following items received very high average ratings and strong shares of “4” and “5” ratings, indicating that they are highly important to respondents’ decisions to live in the Enchanted Circle:

- Outdoor recreation (4.4 average rating; 89 percent provided a 4 or 5 rating)
- Access to rivers and streams (4.2 average; 81 percent)
- Access to public lands (4.2 average; 75 percent)
- A safe and secure community (4.2 average; 80 percent)
- Friends in the community (4.0 average; 74 percent)
- Area trails and paths (4.0 average; 67 percent)

Although area trails and paths ranks somewhere in the middle (6th out of 11 attributes), trails are integral to residents’ outdoor recreation, access to rivers and streams, and access to public lands, which are the top three most important attributes.

A second tier of importance ratings, somewhat lower in comparison but still quite high on an objective basis, included the following items: the arts and culture (3.7), cost of housing to buy/rent, and public school quality (each 3.6).

Finally, the lowest-rated categories include local and state tax rates and ease of starting or operating a business (each 3.1). These factors were rated as relatively less influential in the decision to move to or stay in the Enchanted Circle. Generally, respondents seem to be focused most on local recreational opportunities and safety and character of the local community in their decision to live in the area.

Figure 17: Importance of Factors in Decision to Move to or Stay in the Enchanted Circle

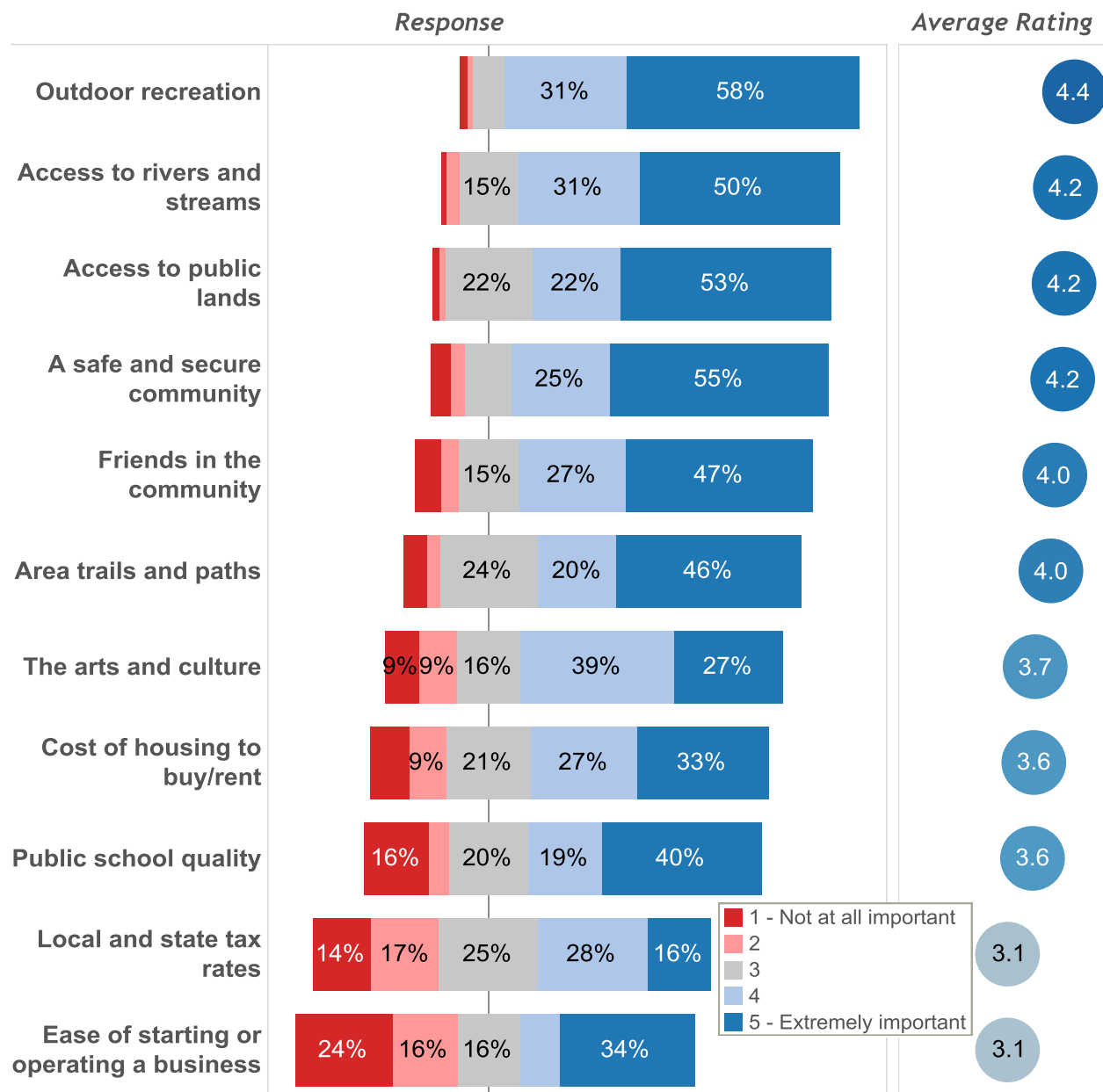


Figure 18: Were there any other important considerations in your decision to move to or stay in the Enchanted Circle?



Influential Factors in Decision About Location of Residence

In a similar question, respondents rated ten amenities and characteristics of their community in their decision about the location of their current residence on the same scale, where 1 is “not at all important” and 5 is “extremely important.” Results are shown in Figure 19. The items that received the highest average ratings and largest shares of “4” and “5” responses from respondents include:

- Overall feeling of safety and security (average rating 4.2; 78 percent rated 4 or 5)
- Close proximity to public lands (3.9 average; 63 percent)
- Cost of housing to buy/rent (3.8 average; 67 percent)
- Close proximity to trails or paths (3.7 average; 57 percent)
- Close proximity to rivers and streams (3.6 average; 54 percent)
- Within a reasonable commute to work (3.6 average; 57 percent)

Items that were rated somewhat lower but were still fairly important to respondents in their residence location decision include an engaged neighborhood (3.4), sidewalks/safe places to walk (3.3), and an easy walk/bike ride to other destinations in the community (3.2). Proximity to the bus system received a low average importance rating (2.4), and the share of respondents indicating that this item was unimportant (57 percent) far outnumbered the share indicating it was important (24 percent).

Similar to their decision to locate in the Enchanted Circle, respondents noted that community safety and proximity to public lands were highly important to where they chose to live. Close proximity to trails or paths was also rated as the fourth most important attribute, indicating that the trail system factored into their decision on where to live.

Figure 19: Importance of Factors in Decision About the Location of Your Current Residence

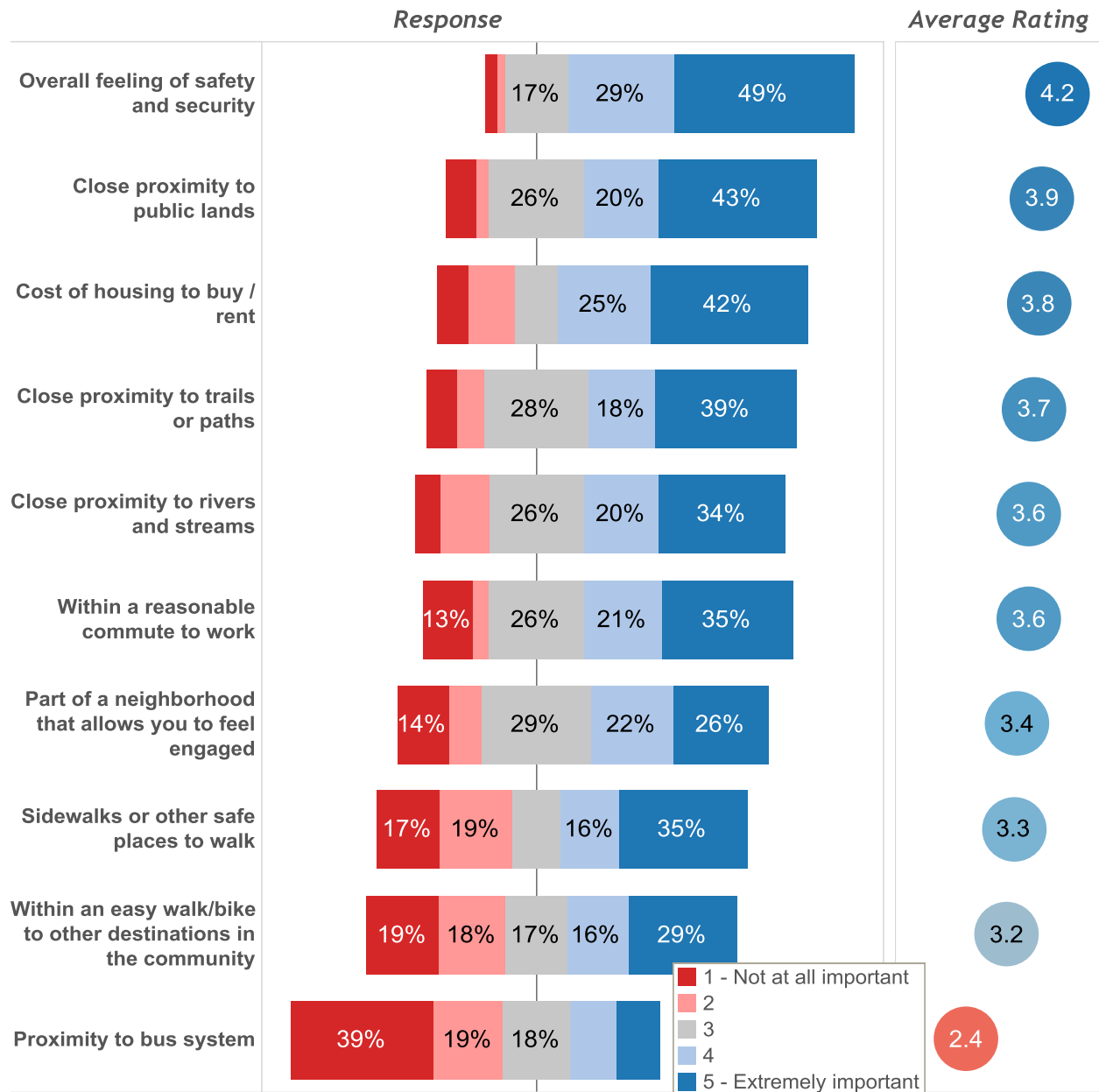
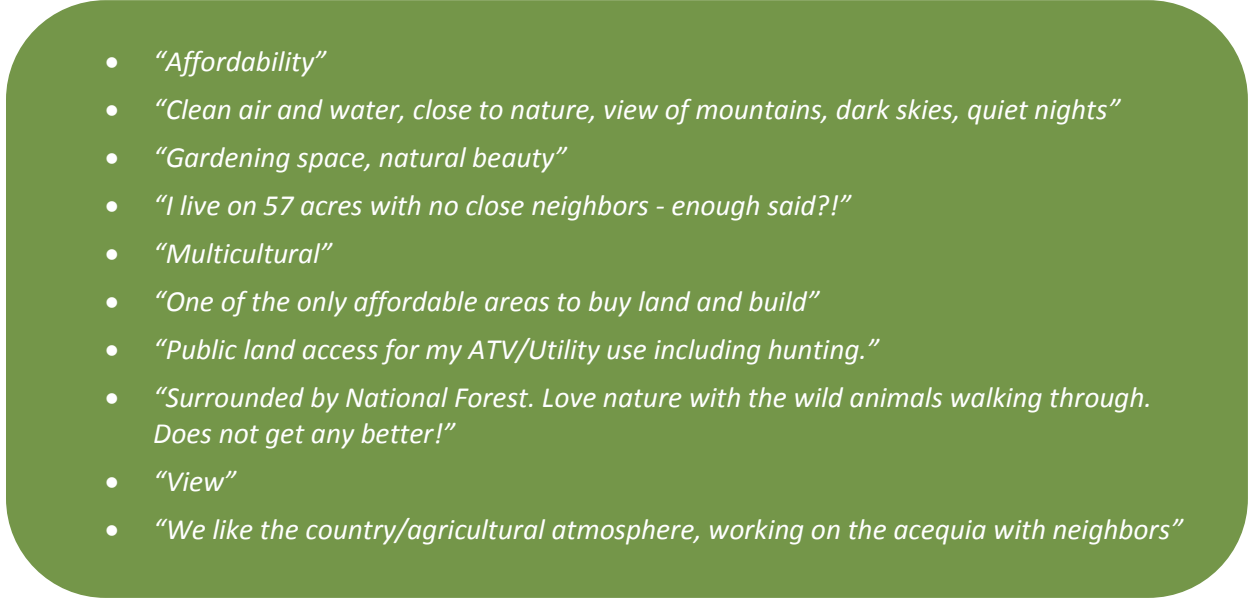


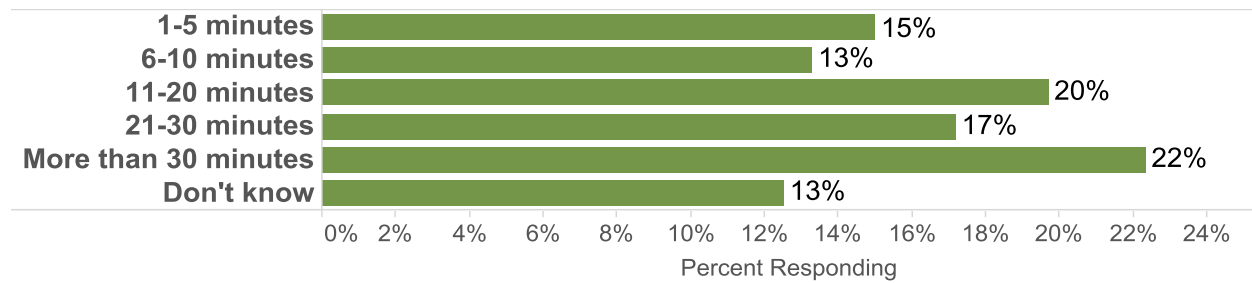
Figure 20: Additional Important Considerations in Decision on the Location of Your Current Residence



Walking Distance from Trail System to Home

Respondents indicated approximately how much time it would take them to walk to a path, trail, or other public lands from their residence. Just more than a quarter are very close to trails or public lands, with a 10-minute walk or shorter to access them (28 percent). Twenty percent said it would take 11 to 20 minutes, 17 percent 21 to 30 minutes, and 22 percent more than 30 minutes. An additional 13 percent didn't know.

Figure 21: About how long would it take you to walk to a path, trail, or other public lands from your home?



PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS TO TRAILS

In a final section of the survey, respondents answered several questions regarding the future of trails in the Enchanted Circle, including opinions of future trail development and an allocation of potential future funding towards various components of trails. The results from each question are discussed below.

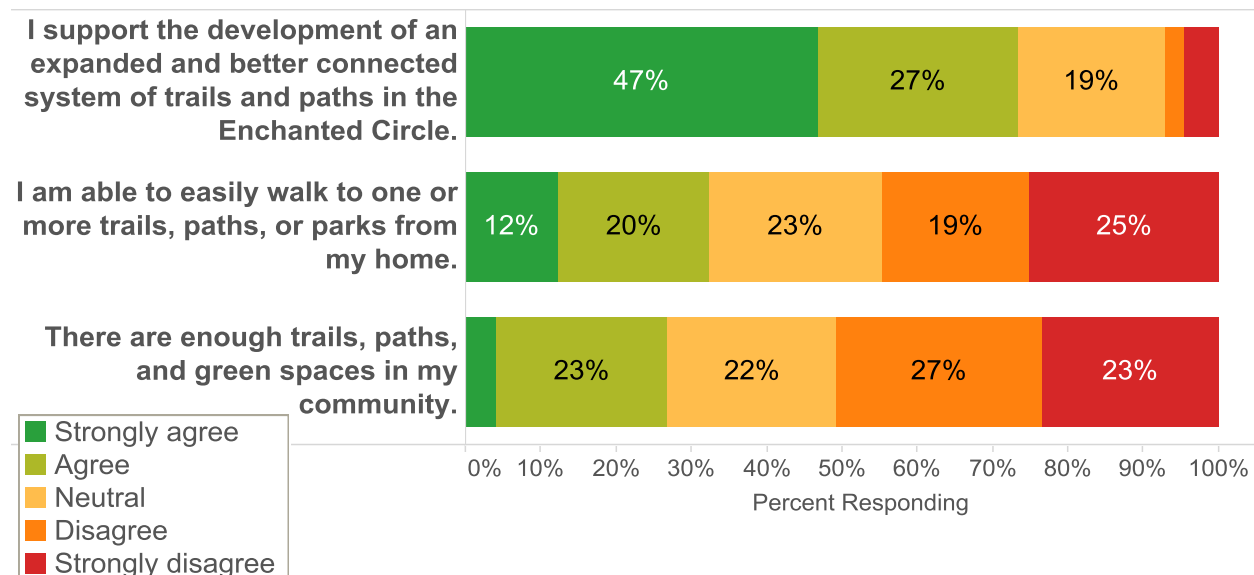
Opinions of Future Trail Development

Respondents rated their level of agreement with three statements about future trail development in the Enchanted Circle on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is “strongly disagree” and 5 is “strongly agree.” The first, “I support the development of an expanded and better connected trail/pathway system in the Enchanted Circle,” received strong agreement, with roughly three-quarters of respondents (73 percent) providing a “4” or “5” rating and an average rating of 4.1. Seven percent of respondents disagreed with this statement (provided a “1” or “2” rating).

Lower levels of agreement were noted for “I am able to easily walk to one or more trails, paths, or parks from my home.” Only a third (32 percent) of respondents rated this statement as a “4” or “5” and the average agreement rating was 2.7. Forty-five percent disagreed. Agreement with “there are enough trails, paths, and green spaces in my community” was also low, with only a quarter of respondents (27 percent) providing a “4” or “5” rating and a 2.6 average. In contrast, half of respondents (51 percent) disagreed with this statement.

Consistent with other findings throughout the survey, these results illustrate a community desire for expanding the trail system and improving local accessibility.

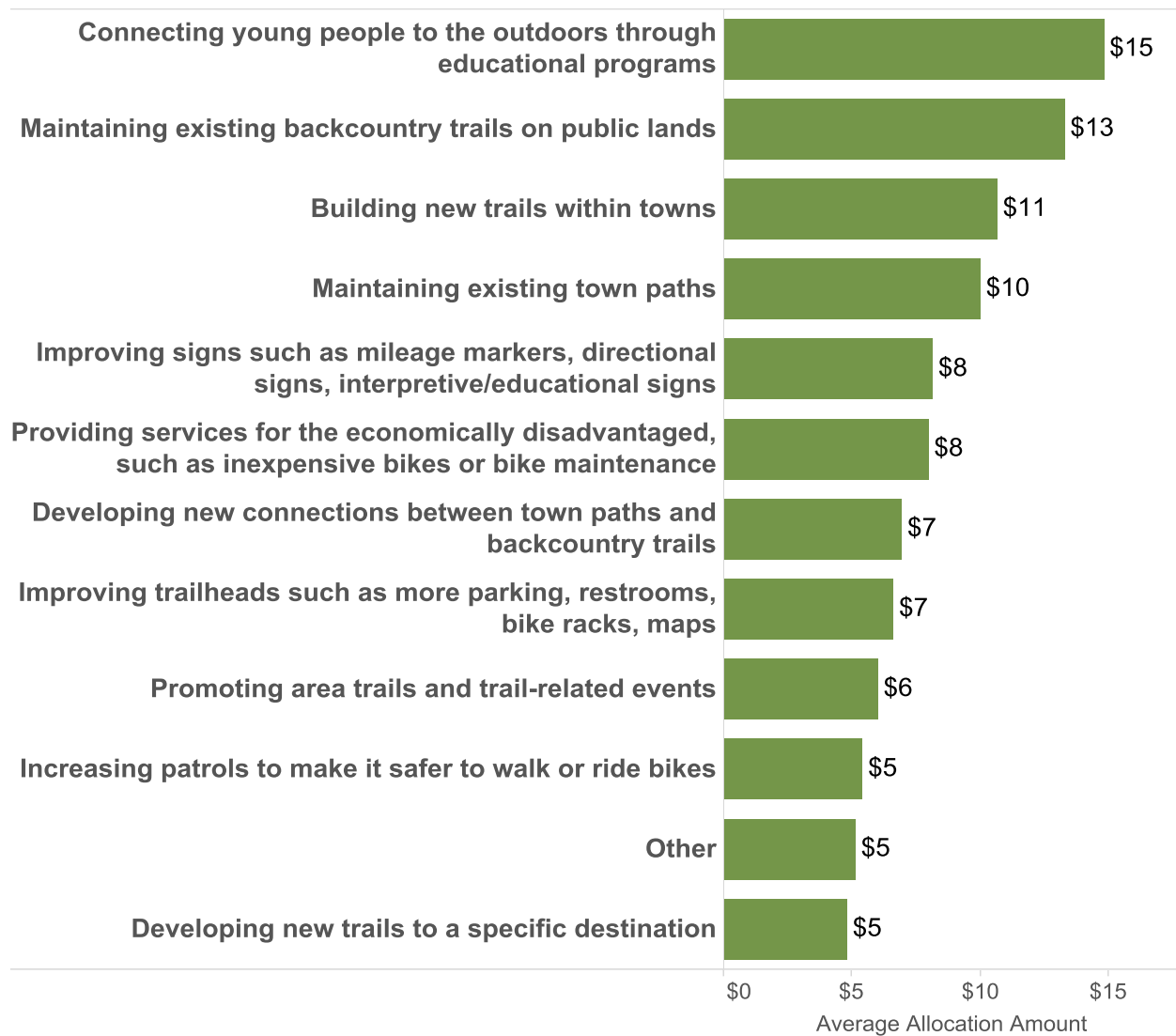
Figure 22: Level of Agreement with Statements about Enchanted Circle Paths and Trail Development



Allocation of Future Funding

Respondents were asked, “If you had \$100 to spend on trails and paths, how would you allocate that \$100 across the following categories?” and provided a list of eleven options. As illustrated in Figure 23 below, respondents allocated the largest sum on average towards connecting young people to the outdoors through educational programs (\$15), followed by maintaining existing backcountry trails on public lands (\$13), building new trails within towns (\$11), and maintaining existing town paths (\$10). Improving signs (\$8), providing services for the economically disadvantaged (\$8), connecting town paths and backcountry trails (\$7), and improving trailheads (\$7) also received moderate allocations.

Figure 23: If you had \$100 to spend on trails and open space, how would you allocate that \$100 across the following categories?



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON TRAILS

At the end of the survey, respondents were provided with an opportunity to write in any additional comments about trails and paths in the Enchanted Circle area. A multitude of comments were received, and these should be read in their entirety in order to gain a full understanding of the ideas expressed. However, some common themes did emerge and have been summarized below along with a sampling of relevant verbatim comments. A full listing of verbatim comments is available.

Improve safety for walking and biking by adding bike lanes or shoulders on roads and adding new pathways/increasing pathway connectivity in town.

- *"I am afraid to ride my bike around here. The supposed bike lanes in town are about a foot wide and lead you right into storm drains. I have seen many a rider nearly be hit by cars when they realize they have to swerve into traffic to avoid them. I would love to see real effort put into making this a bike-friendly town."*
- *"I don't road bike, but I do drive to TSV quite often during warmer months. Something needs to be done to make the road safe for bikes AND realistically convenient for cars. Just having a "share the road" sign does not work. Either shoulders need to be built or bikes need to be banned on Ski Valley Road."*
- *"I would like to see more walking paths in town. The paths should be cleared in winter."*
- *"I'm a super active person and would like to feel safer on my bike. I didn't ride when I moved here some years ago, but finally started riding my road bike again. There are few places I feel safe enough to ride with confidence and ease."*
- *"More safe bike and pedestrian trails linking county to town."*
- *"Really would love more in town paths for people to walk and bike in all of the towns in Taos County"*
- *"Roadway shoulders are non-existent, if they were improved it would be safer for cyclists and pedestrians, therefore increasing that activity."*
- *"There are plenty of USFS trails around the Enchanted Circle. Priority should be given to making communities walker friendly and safe for biking. We currently do not bike in Taos because it feels too dangerous. There are many places where sidewalks or the few bike lanes end abruptly, and this is unsafe. It also makes planning routes difficult."*
- *"We desperately need to make our town bike friendly, both for residents as well as tourists - not just painted lanes but designated bike paths and loops."*

Maintain, improve, and clean up existing trails.

- *“Even though I don't hike the trails as much as I once did, my family includes folks down to age 3. They all love the Red River area, and all do extensive walking, hiking. I would love to see Red River get money allocated to improve our jeep and walking trails. I still jeep on as many trails as I feel safe, and feel is not damaging to my jeep, but hate that due to low maintenance, there are several jeep trails that I no longer am able to enjoy.”*
- *“I would love public areas to be cleaner and better maintained”*
- *“Just maintain or improve existing trails”*
- *“Reopening Middlefork Rd. and much better maintenance of existing trails for easier and safer OHV use would provide a more positive experience for locals and tourist alike”*
- *“We have great hiking trails. Let's keep them maintained.”*

Establish and maintain a high quality, well-connected trail system to serve the needs of locals and attract visitors.

- *“Because tourism is such a large part of the economy of the Enchanted Circle, good quality trails are extremely important. Good quality trails include signage, maintenance, access, and promotion.”*
- *“Building and improving the trail systems in and around the town of Taos would be of great benefit to the local residents as well as encouraging/increasing economic tourism to the area by individuals and families.”*
- *“My husband and I are avid users of the Taos area trails. We believe that Taos could benefit from an enhanced, well-maintained, hike/bike trail system that would promote Taos as being an outdoor recreational destination.”*
- *“Trails are underutilized here. We can promote what we have and improve it to help bring more tourists to our area.”*

Improve trail signage.

- *“Forming local groups to help maintain trails & signage in their own local area in order to relieve forestry personnel for more pressing ventures”*
- *“Need more signage - trailhead markers and markers where trails split, etc.”*
- *“Signage could be greatly improved on backcountry trails”*

Keep up the good work.

- *“As you can see by my birth year - I'm not likely to be hiking or discovering new trails. But I am grateful for associations such as yours that take time and effort to better surroundings and have the youth in mind. Best of luck with this endeavor. God bless you.”*
- *“Glad to see the Taos Land Trust taking initiative to make our trail systems better as it is a significant part of my lifestyle and much of our community”*
- *“I appreciate the trails in this spectacular area. I am very grateful to be living here!”*
- *“I use trails often and they contribute to my quality of life! Thank You!”*
- *“Keep up the good work! What you do is incredibly important. I believe that the vast majority of people who live in Taos County live here because of the beauty and access to nature, so preserving land as a resources is vital for the culture as well as for the environment itself.”*
- *“THANK YOU FOR ALL THE GREAT EFFORT TO MAINTAIN AND EXPAND OUR TRAIL SYSTEMS!!!”*

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey show clear areas of strength and opportunities for improvement related to the trail system in the Enchanted Circle. Trails are used by about two-thirds of residents, and those who do use the trails are on them frequently. Trails provide access to some of the most valued assets in the region: outdoor recreation, public lands, and rivers. Trails contribute to the area's quality of life as recreational assets and by supporting a healthy community: respondents report that more than half of their physical activity occurs on trails.

Strong support exists for expanding and better connecting trails in the Enchanted Circle. The greatest needs are in residential areas, where there is strong interest in for making cycling and walking safer from cars and dogs. Residents are also very supportive of investments in education and programs to connect young people to the outdoors.

Unpaved trails for walking or hiking, hunting/fishing access, and mountain biking provide the trail system's highest levels of satisfaction, while transportation to work or school and road biking options are least satisfactory.

Trails are popular in Taos County and the Enchanted Circle, and investing in and improving these trail resources will enhance the quality of life and overall health of residents, as well as provide opportunities for additional amenities for visitors to the area.

APPENDIX: RESULTS BY ETHNICITY, INCOME, AND RESIDENCE

As noted in the survey results, across Taos County the majority of residents use trails and support improving and expanding the trail system. Residents' support for trails, access to trails, and needs for improvements vary, however, between Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents, between the highest- and lowest-income respondents, and between communities within the county. These findings are relevant for developing effective outreach efforts and for prioritizing the location and types of trail-related investments.

This appendix summarizes the results that are most informative for trail planning and outreach.

We find the following trends related to trail use and access:

- Hispanic respondents and low-income respondents are less likely to use trails, but among those Hispanic and low-income respondents who *do* use trails, they use them just as often as non-Hispanic and high-income respondents.
- Hispanic respondents and low income respondents are much less likely to have trails and paths within easy walking distance, and much less likely to have bike or pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks or wide shoulders near their homes. This is likely contributing to relatively low use among these residents.
- Respondents from the town of Taos and nearby are much less likely than those living in other parts of the Enchanted Circle to have trails and parks within an easy walk of their home.
- A lack of access has a particularly significant effect on the lowest income residents, with low income residents who live within an easy walk of trails nearly twice as likely to have used trails in the previous year.

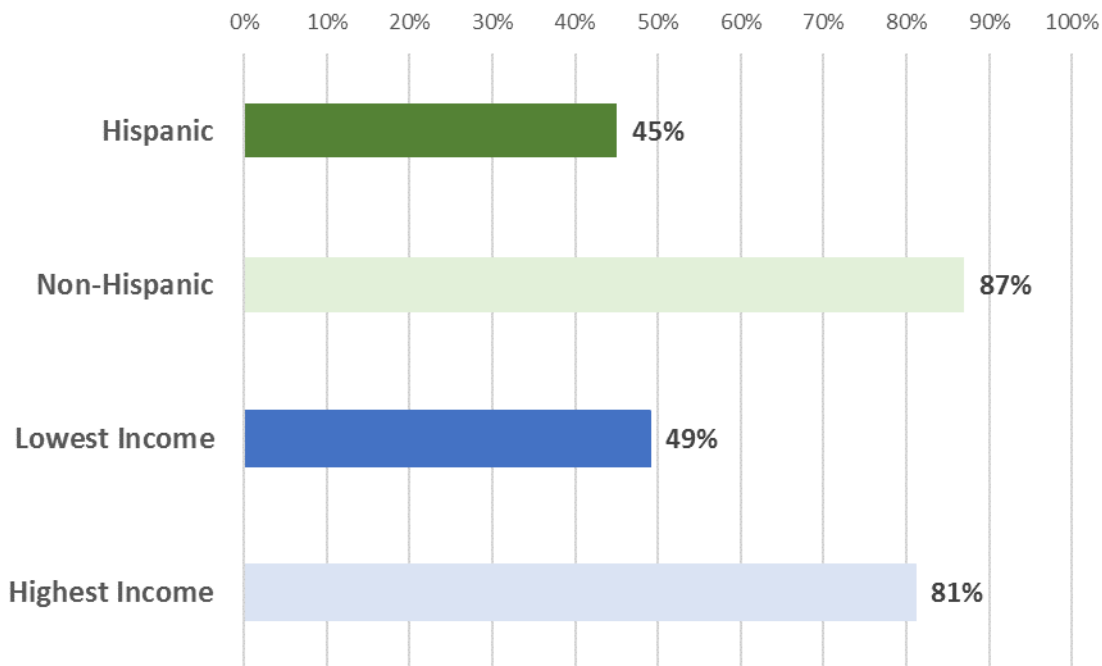
We find the following trends related to factors most likely to increase respondents' trail use:

- Hispanic respondents most often identified the following factors as likely to increase their trail use: having trails closer to where they live, hospital- or doctor-sponsored wellness programs such as prescribed exercise, and trail-based programs for kids.
- Low income respondents most often identified the following factors as likely to increase their trail or pathway use: safe separation of bikes and pedestrians from traffic, having trails closer to where they live, and organized activities like guided hikes.
- Respondents from the city of Taos and nearby communities are much more likely than respondents from other parts of the Enchanted Circle to identify greater enforcement of traffic laws as a factor that would increase their use of trails and pathways.

Trail Use

Two-thirds of Enchanted Circle respondents have used trails in the past year, with little variation by location of residence within the area. Hispanic respondents and low income respondents, however, are significantly less likely to use the trails (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Proportion of Respondents, by Subcategory, Who Used Trails in the Previous Year.



Forty-five percent of Hispanic respondents have used trails in the previous year compared to 87 percent of non-Hispanics. There also is a significant difference in use between highest- and lowest-income respondents, with 81 percent of the highest income respondents using trails in the previous year compared to 49 percent of the lowest income respondents.

Among those respondents who *do* use the trails, however, the survey does not show significant differences in how often they use them, regardless of season, across ethnicity, income, or location of residence. In other words, once residents are on the trails, they use them often.

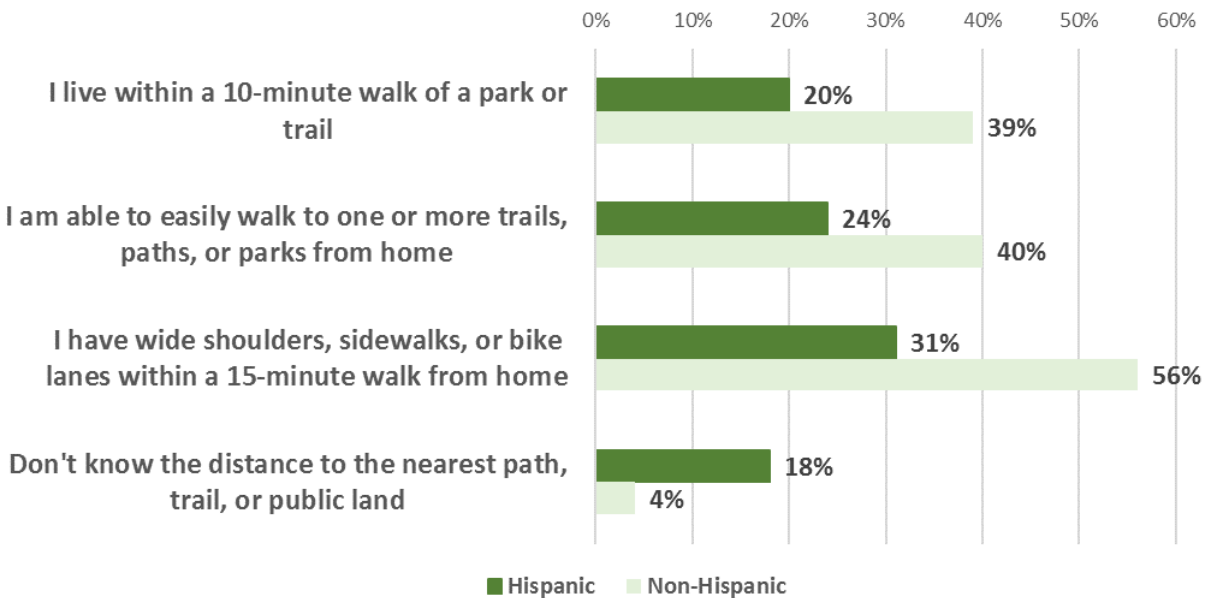
There are differences in *how* respondents use trails. Across all respondents, the most common type of use is for recreation (68 percent of trail time). Hispanic respondents, however, are significantly more likely also to use trails as family outing time (17 percent of trail time for Hispanic respondents versus 6 percent of trail time for non-Hispanics).

Hispanic respondents also generally conduct less of their overall physical activity on trails or pathways (47 percent versus 63 percent for non-Hispanic respondents). There is no difference across income or location of residence in the share of physical activity that occurs on trails or pathways.

Proximity and Access to Trails and Safe Infrastructure

The differences in trail use may be related to differences in access to trails. On average, Hispanic and low income respondents have less access to trails, paths, and bike or pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks and wide shoulders (see Figure 25).

Figure 25. Difference in Access to Trails, Paths, and Public Lands Between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Respondents.

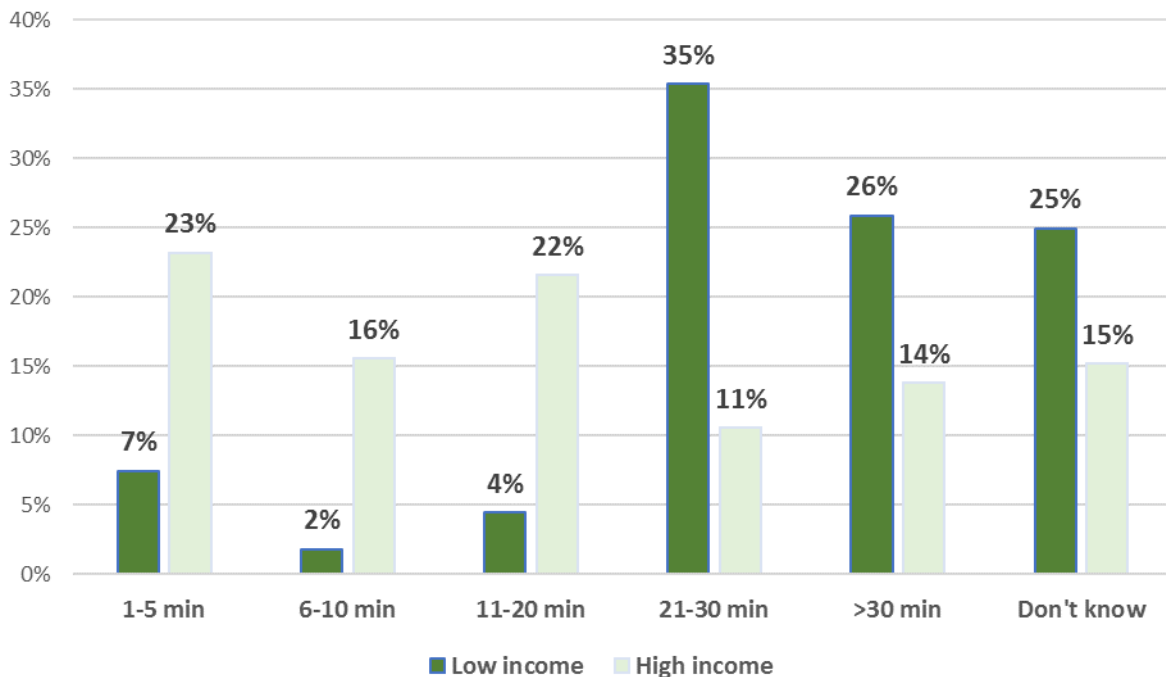


Hispanic respondents are significantly less likely to live within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail (20 percent of Hispanics versus 39 percent of non-Hispanics) and are less likely to agree with the statement, “I am able to easily walk to one or more trails, paths, or parks from my home” (24 percent of Hispanic respondents versus 40 percent of non-Hispanic respondents). Hispanic respondents also are significantly less likely to have wide shoulders, sidewalks, or bike lanes within a 15-minute walk of their home (31 percent of Hispanic respondents versus 56 percent of non-Hispanic respondents).

Hispanic respondents are significantly less likely to know how far they live from the nearest path, trail, or public land area. When asked how long it would take to walk to one of these areas, 18 percent of Hispanic respondents responded “Don’t know” compared to four percent of non-Hispanic respondents. This finding suggests that some of the differences in access to trails and pathways may be due to a lack of awareness about nearby facilities.

Figure 26 highlights the substantial differences in walking time to paths, trails, or other public lands between low and high income respondents. Low income respondents are much less likely to live within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail (9 percent of lowest income respondents versus 39 percent of highest income). Low income residents are much more likely to have at least a 20-minute walk to the nearest path (81 percent of low income respondents versus 25 percent of high income respondents).

Figure 26. Approximate Length of Time It Takes to Walk to a Path, Trail, or Other Public Lands from Home for Low-Income Versus High-Income Respondents.



Low income respondents also are less likely to live within a 15-minute walk of places with wide shoulders, sidewalks, or bike lanes (19 percent of lowest income respondents versus 54 percent of highest income respondents).

Taos area respondents are significantly less likely than respondents living in other parts of the Enchanted Circle to have parks or trails within an easy walk from their home (21 percent versus 50 percent). Nineteen percent of Taos area respondents report living within 10 minutes of a park or trail, compared to 42 percent of respondents outside Taos.

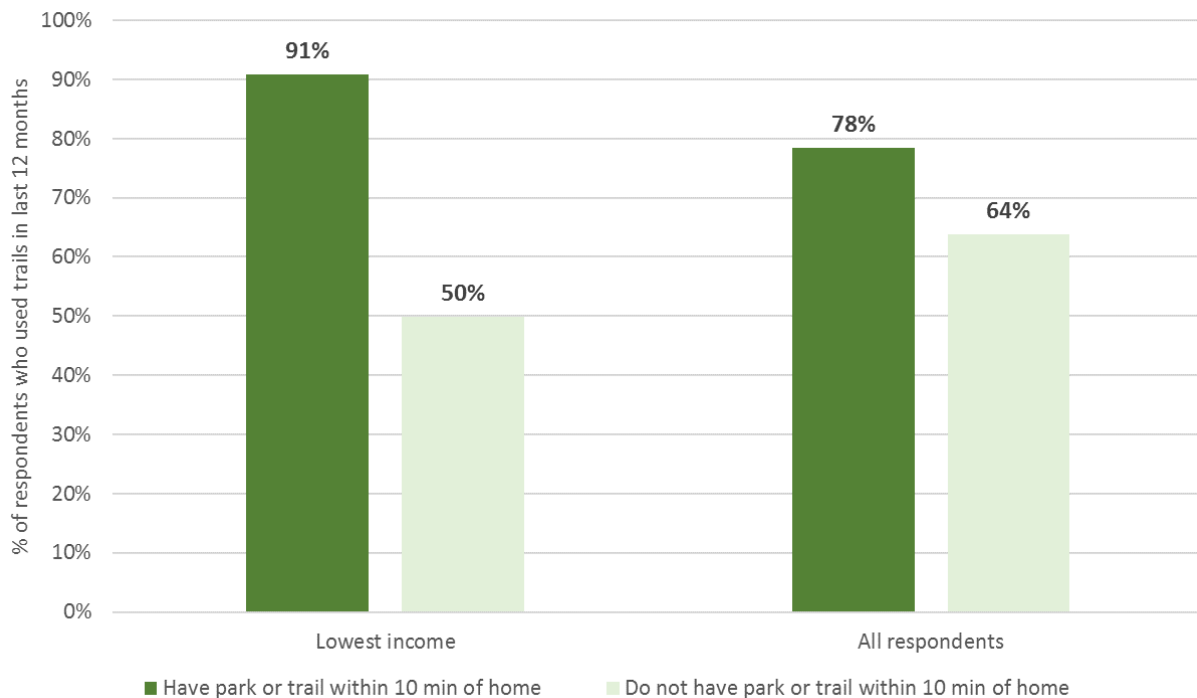
People Who Live Close to Trails Are More Likely to Use Them

Low income residents who live within 10 minutes of a trail are significantly more likely to have used trails in the previous year. Among low income residents who live within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail, 91 percent have used trails within the previous year. Only 50 percent of low income residents who do not live within a 10-minute walk of trails used trails in the previous year (Figure 27).

For comparison, the average respondent who lives within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail is slightly more likely to have used trails in the previous year. Seventy-eight percent of those who live within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail have used trails within the previous 12 months compared to 64 percent trail use for those who do not live within a 10-minute walk. This difference is not statistically significant.

Among Hispanic residents trail use is very similar between those who live within a 10-minute walk of trails and parks and those who do not (46 percent trail use for those who live nearby and 50 percent trail use for those who do not live nearby).

Figure 27. Trail use for those who live close to and far from trails, for low income respondents and all respondents.



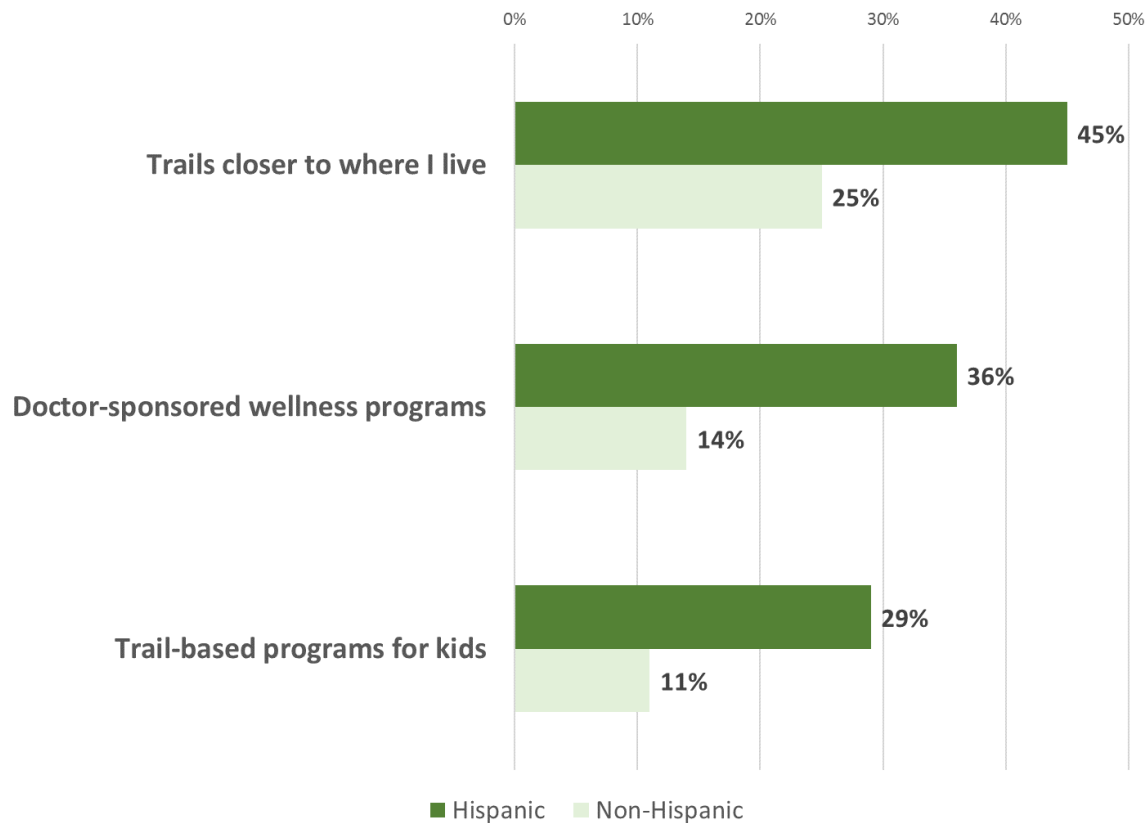
Factors that Would Increase Trail Use

The overall survey found no significant differences across our sub-samples in the reasons why respondents do not use trails. But it did show important differences in factors that could increase trail use.

Across all respondents, creating safe separation of bikes and pedestrians from traffic is the top infrastructure-related factor that would increase use of trails and paths (56 percent of all respondents), followed by having trails closer to where people live (35 percent). The most common program-related factors likely to increase trail use are organized activities like walking clubs or guided hikes (29 percent) and hospital- or doctor-sponsored wellness programs (26 percent).

Figure 28 (next page) highlights differences in factors that respondents report most likely to increase their use of trails. Hispanic respondents are significantly more likely to prioritize having trails closer to where they live, identified by 45 percent of Hispanic respondents compared to 25 percent of non-Hispanic respondents. Hispanic respondents are significantly more likely to prioritize hospital- or doctor-sponsored wellness programs (36 percent versus 14 percent of non-Hispanic respondents) such as a prescribed walking program. We also find greater support among Hispanic respondents for trail-based programs for kids (29 percent of Hispanic respondents versus 11 percent of non-Hispanic respondents), although this difference is not statistically significant.

Figure 28. Factors most likely to increase trail use for Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents.



Among low-income respondents, the top three infrastructure-related factors that would increase trail use are safe separation of bikes and pedestrians from traffic (41 percent), having trails closer to where they live (36 percent), and trailhead improvements like more parking and maps (21 percent). Among low income respondents the most commonly cited program-related factors that would increase trail use are organized activities (36 percent), having more free time (29 percent), and having trail-based programs for kids (25 percent).

Taos-area respondents are more likely to identify increased enforcement of traffic, bike, and pedestrian safety laws as a factor that would increase trail use (26 percent versus 8 percent of respondents outside Taos). They are also more likely to identify a need for trails closer to where they live (42 percent of Taos respondents versus 22 percent of those outside Taos).

Support for Expanding and Improving Trails

Seventy-three percent of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “I support the development of an expanded and better connected system of trails and paths in the Enchanted Circle.” A significant difference exists, however, between Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents (60 percent of Hispanic respondents in support versus 88 percent of non-Hispanic respondents in support).

A significant difference also exists between lowest income (60 percent supporting) and highest income (90 percent supporting) respondents.

There is no difference in support between the Taos area (El Prado, Ranchos de Taos, Town of Taos) and areas outside Taos (Angel Fire, Questa, Red River, Taos Pueblo, other areas): 76 percent support trails within the Taos area, 79 percent outside.

Methods

Although the results in this appendix are statistically significant and care was taken to develop a representative sample, these findings do not necessarily characterize all residents of the area.

As in the main survey report, these data are weighted by age and ethnicity to ensure the sample reflects current Taos County residents. As a robustness check, all frequencies were calculated using the mail sample only, as well as the combined random and web-based samples. Statistical testing was calculated using the combined mail and web-based samples.

We used t-tests to determine whether differences in responses to questions were meaningfully different between different types of respondents. This test compares means between groups, taking into account the variation in responses within each group.

“Low income” respondents are those who report an annual household income of \$25,000 or less (30 percent of the sample). “High income” respondents are those who report an annual household income of \$100,000 or more (18 percent of the sample).

We define “Taos area” respondents as respondents living in El Prado, Ranchos de Taos, Town of Taos. Residents of Angel Fire, Questa, Red River, Taos Pueblo, and other areas were classified as non-Taos area respondents.

Conclusions

Looking across all respondents, trail use and support for trails is relatively high. But closer analysis of Hispanic respondents’ and low income respondents’ preferences reveals important differences. These differences have implications for the effectiveness of strategies to increase trail use and physical activity, and for future support for expanding trails.

Hispanic respondents and low income respondents do not use trails nearly as often, are less likely to support expanding the trails network, and are much less likely to have trails and pathways near where they live. While there are many probable reasons behind this pattern, significant differences in access to trails undoubtedly contributes to a lack of use. This research suggests that investments in bike and pedestrian infrastructure should identify and prioritize areas that are not well served now.

These results suggest that low income residents are more strongly affected than other Enchanted Circle residents when trails are not located in their communities. This may be due to several factors such as having less leisure time or not having access to a vehicle. It also suggests

that locating trails in areas with more low income residents may lead to large gains in trail use and physical activity.

This research also implies that programming and outreach related to trails, such as organized hikes, walking clubs, wellness programs run by medical professionals like prescribed walking, and trail-based programs for kids might be particularly effective with groups who presently use trails less. This outreach might also help address a lack of knowledge about local trails among Hispanic respondents.

The design of new trails can also reflect the needs of currently underserved groups. For example, investing in trails suitable for a prescription trails program, or for family outings, may be effective in encouraging use among Hispanic residents.

Growing a broader user base of trail users and supporters can start with more specific community conversations to learn about the reasons behind the patterns observed in this survey.

Initial conversations may be focused on learning more about the types of kids' programs and other organized trail activities most likely to interest new users, and the medical based programs that would be most effective at getting otherwise inactive people on the trails. A recurring theme of a need for improved safety might be addressed by identifying those places that currently are barriers for bike and pedestrian travel using traffic and accident monitoring data, particularly around connections to schools and between neighborhoods. Conversations with residents would also reveal places that are perceived as unsafe and to improve these conditions.

While these results show significant variation between different groups of Enchanted Circle residents, overall people are using the trails regardless of ethnicity, income, or location of residence. Targeting trail-related programs and infrastructure investments will further increase trail use and support.