

Snapshot of Recreation in the First State



Introduction

Delaware's Division of Parks and Recreation is committed to providing Delaware's residents and visitors with safe, enjoyable outdoor recreational opportunities, along with environmental and cultural interpretive programs and experiences. Year round, visitors can immerse themselves in a variety of special places with natural, cultural and historical value. The Division stewards these irreplaceable public assets for today and for future generations. It strives to lead by example in all aspects of natural and cultural resource protection and management, offering technical and financial assistance so that other park and recreation providers may offer outdoor recreation experiences in communities around the state.

Our Residents' Needs and Opinions

The 2008 Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends Survey (ORPTS)¹ provides valuable information on the recreation preferences and needs of state residents.

Recreation Preferences

The majority of Delaware residents (91%) responding to the survey indicate that outdoor recreation is important to them personally. They cite a variety of reasons for participating in outdoor recreation activities, with for physical fitness emerging as the most popular response. Figure 1 illustrates the most commonly cited reasons for participating in outdoor recreation activities.

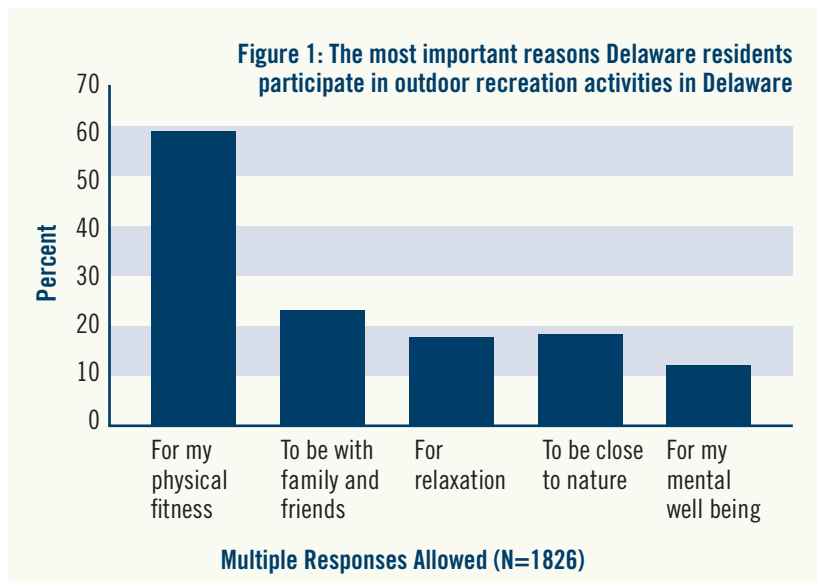
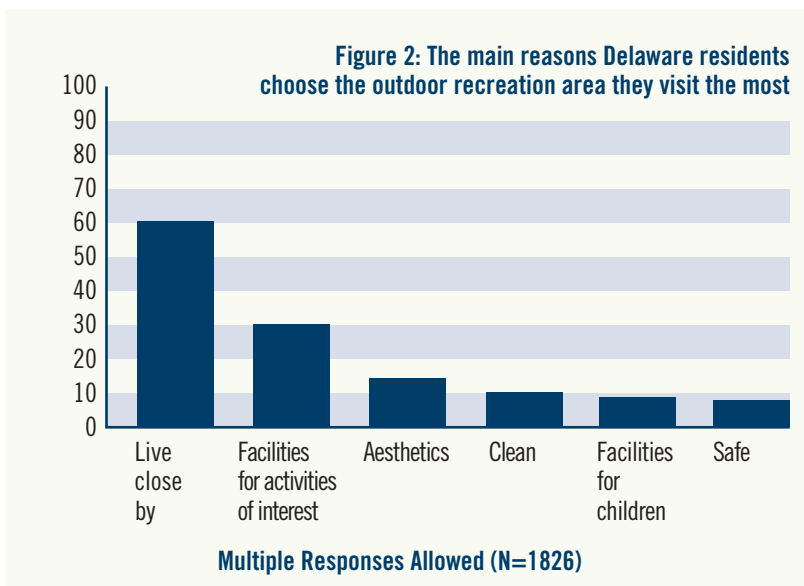


Figure 2 summarizes the most commonly cited reasons for respondents choosing the outdoor recreation area they visited most.

The facilities cited most often as desirable additions to community parks are more, cleaner, better bathrooms (13%); playgrounds for children ages two to five (12%); biking paths (12%); hiking/walking trails (12%); playgrounds for children ages six to 12 (12%); and outdoor public swimming pools (10%).

Access to Recreation Opportunities

More than three-fourths of survey respondents (78%) agree with the statement: “There are parks and/or outdoor recreation areas in or near my neighborhood that are easy to get to.” Seventy-two percent of those responding to a survey question about nearby recreation opportunities indicated that these nearby parks and outdoor recreation areas are among those facilities they visit most. Fifty-seven percent of those responding to a survey question about how they get to recreation sites indicate that they are able to walk, jog or ride a bike to a park or outdoor recreation area.



When asked what would lead them to participate more actively in outdoor recreation activities, survey respondents mentioned more recreation opportunities close to home (54%), more information about facilities and opportunities (42%), and more opportunity to participate in organized activities (36%).

Park Maintenance

A large percentage of Delaware residents (78%) responding to the survey rate the overall upkeep of parks and outdoor recreation areas in their community as “excellent” or “good.”

Funding Priorities

Since the majority of Delaware residents consider outdoor recreation important to them personally, it’s not surprising that the overwhelming majority of residents (96%) consider funding for public parks an important priority for state and local policymakers. Similarly, 88% indicate that acquiring more land for parks and open space in the state of Delaware should be an important priority.

Parks and Recreation Can Help Address Challenges Facing Our Residents

Parks and recreation programs provide a means for children and their families to be physically active and to live a healthy lifestyle. This is critical when you consider the childhood obesity epidemic nationally and in Delaware. Data from 2008 reveal that 39.7% of children ages two to 17 in Delaware are overweight or obese.² Parks and recreation programs provide children an outlet for engaging in positive activities.

Initiatives

The Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation has identified the need for resources devoted to strategic land acquisition, facility planning and design, facility construction, interpretive and educational programming, and exhibits and operational support. This will enable the Division to meet its objectives for sound park management and the public’s growing needs for outdoor recreation facilities and education.

References

1. The Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends Survey (ORTPS), a statewide telephone survey, informs development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Parks Resource Office, Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control manage the SCORP. For more information on the SCORP, visit <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/parks/Information/Pages/scorp.aspx>.
2. Nemours Health and Prevention Services. 2008 Delaware Survey of Children’s Health.