

# Assessment and Evaluation of Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Activities in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

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## Background

- Outdoor recreation activities have been shown to reduce risk of heart disease, type II diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and many other chronic health conditions [1]
- Regular recreational activity has also been shown to improve mental and social well-being [2]
- Understanding patterns of community usage of outdoor recreational facilities thus plays an important role in understanding overall community health

## Objective

- To identify patterns of utilization of parks and recreational trails; specifically by geographic area, recreational activity, and self-reported assessment of available facilities

## Methods

### Recruitment

Randomized sample of 1,000 postal addresses, stratified by postal route, across thirteen towns in Luzerne County.

### Survey

Survey used to develop the Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [3] adapted to reflect locally available facilities. Respondents provided basic demographic information, describe which activities they participate in, and rate their experiences with local facilities.

### Data Collection

27 question survey distributed via mail; collected from March –April 2014.

### Data Analysis

75 surveys returned, yielding a response rate of 7.5 %. Data from each survey was compiled and analyzed for descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel.

## Results

- The average respondent to the survey administered was a married white male, above the age of 55.
- A majority of individuals who responded owned their own transportation (99% of respondents) and worked full time (57% of respondents).
- Very few respondents reported poor health (6% of respondents).

Figure 1

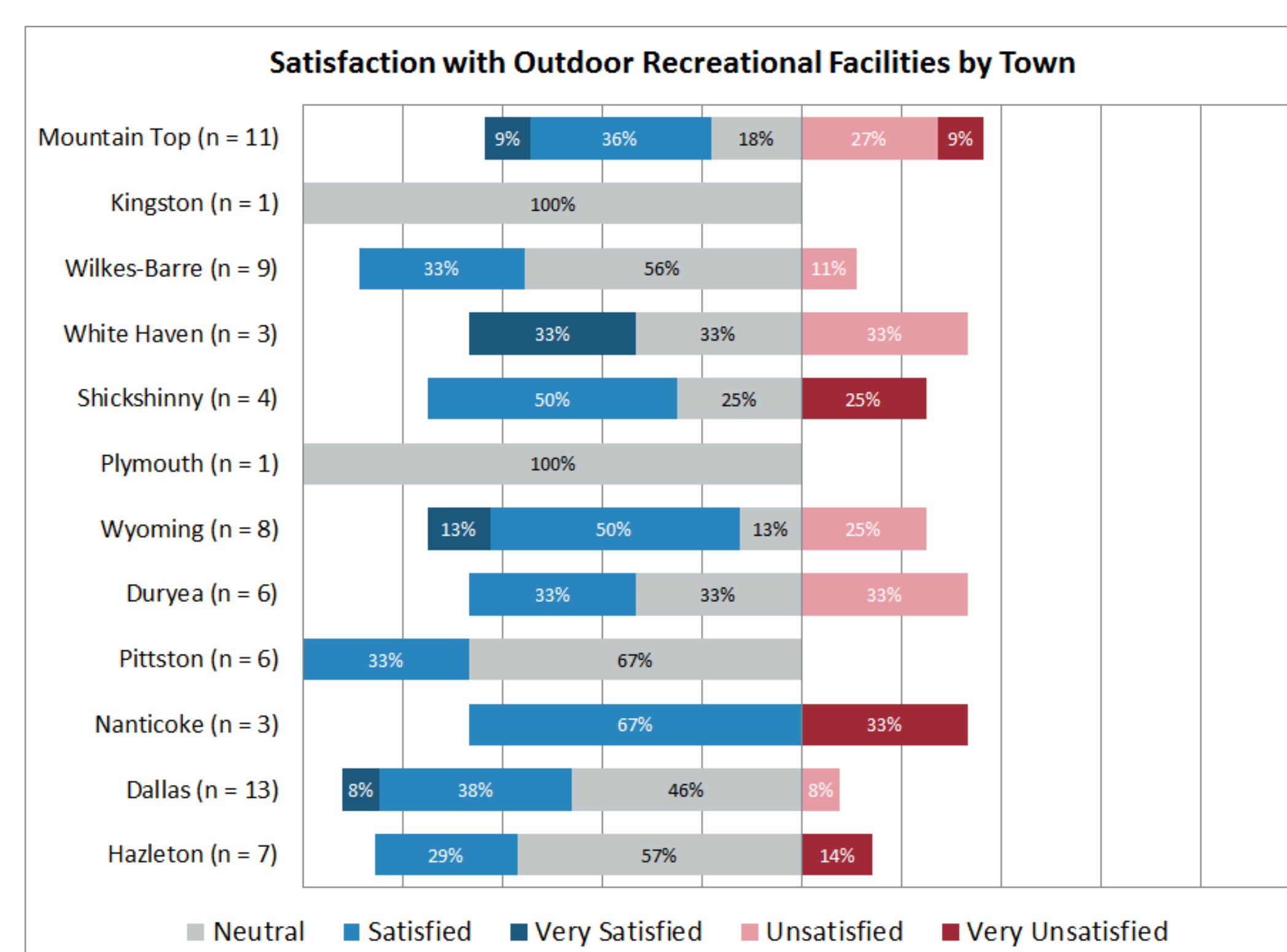
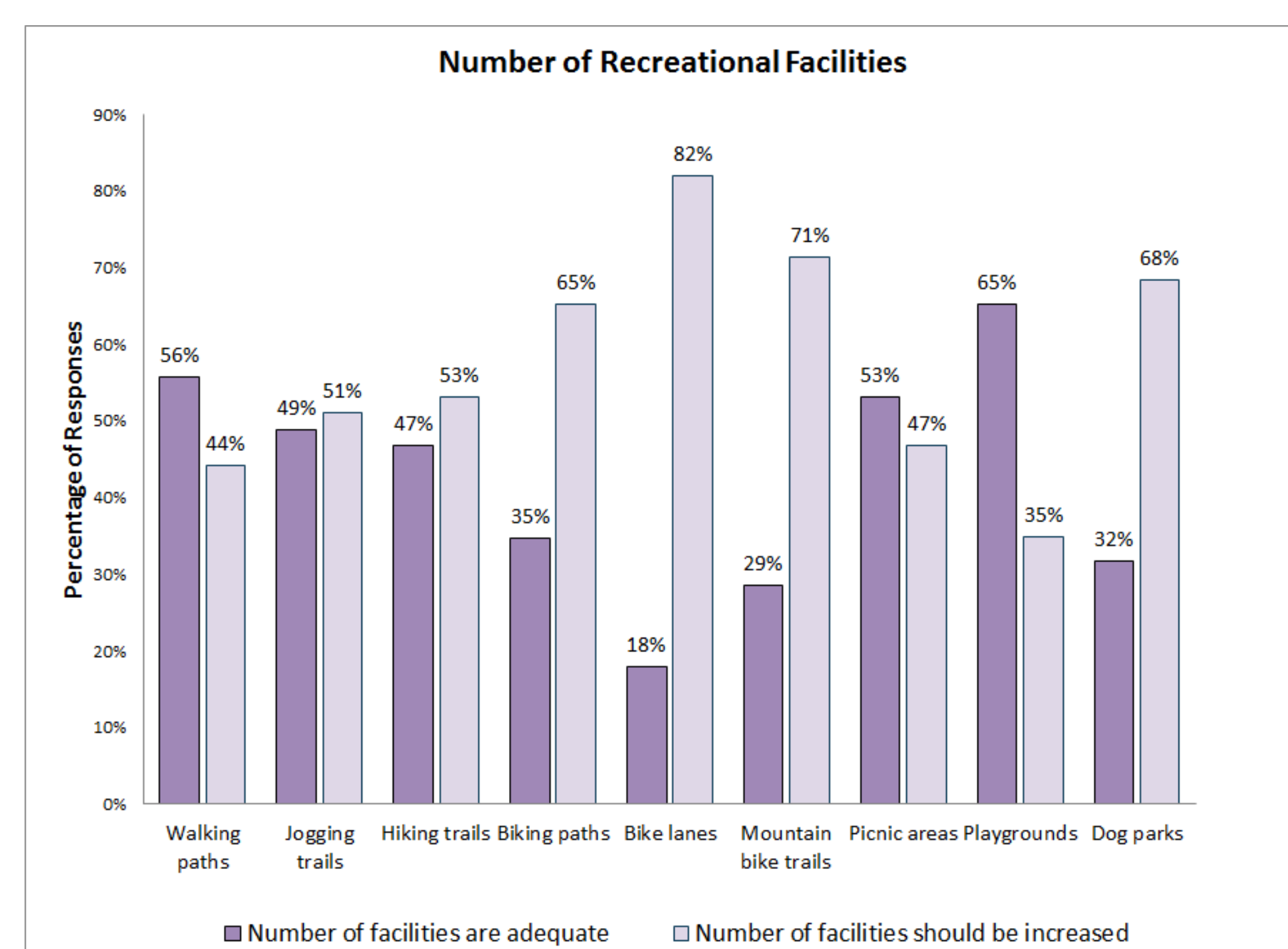


Figure 3



- Many people acknowledged that they would like trails that were closer to their homes. These same individuals had decided to cut down on gas use because of gas prices.
- The most common reasons preventing respondents from pursuing outdoor recreational activities included: work, family responsibilities, and lack of knowledge about local parks and trails

Figure 2

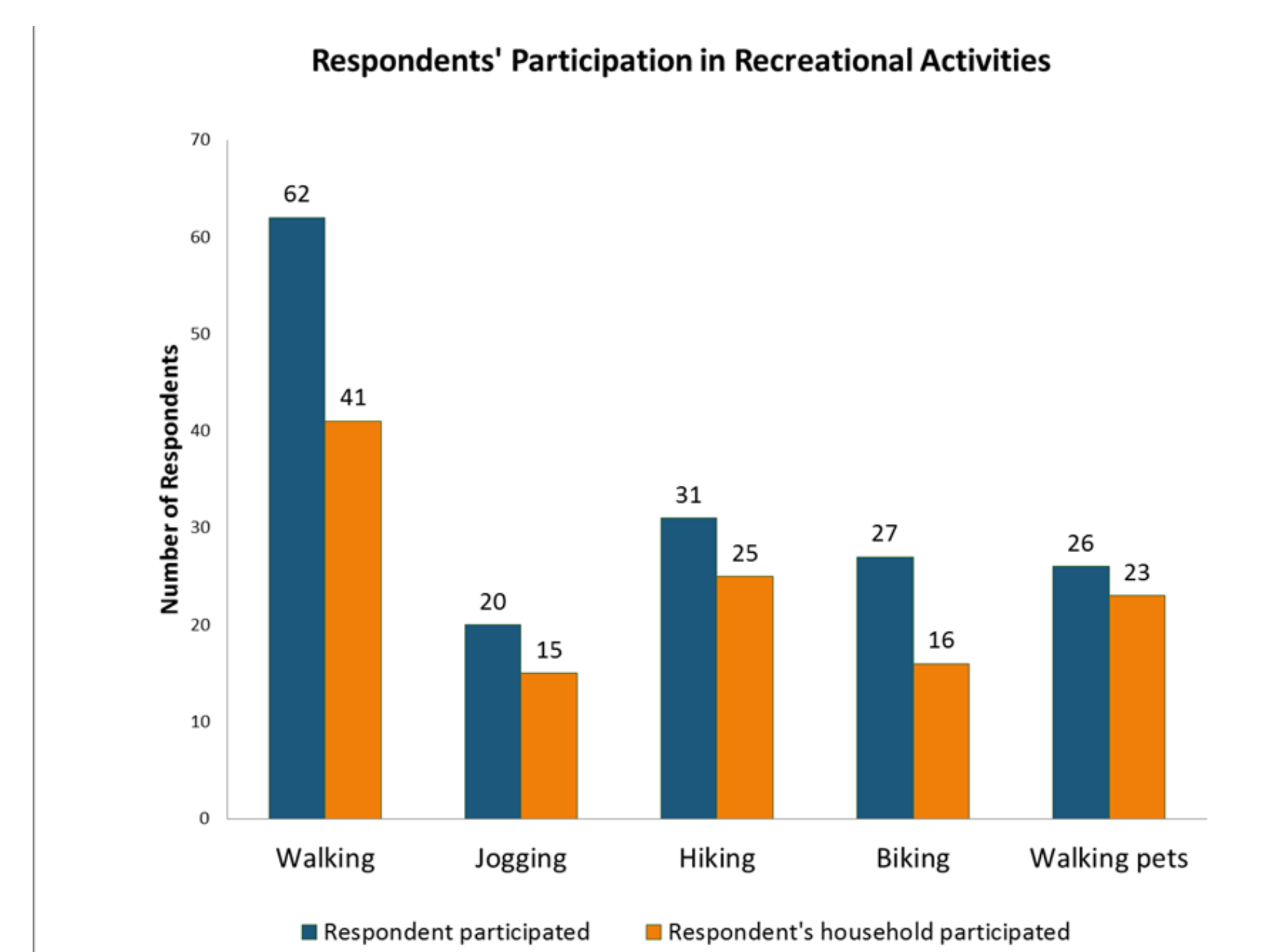
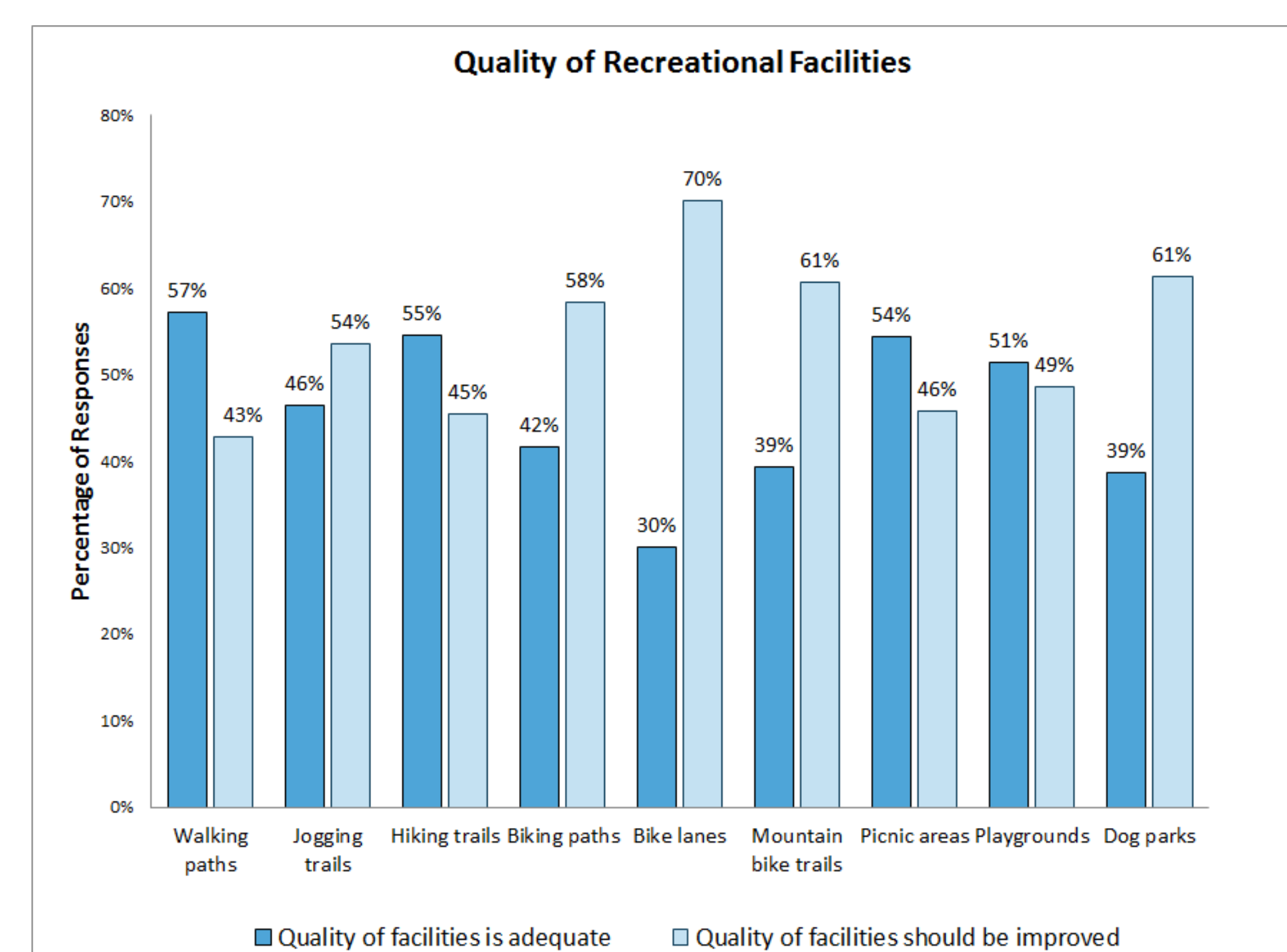


Figure 4



## Discussion

- Varied distribution of satisfaction with outdoor facilities (Fig. 1)
- Towns with multiple dissatisfied respondents: Mountain Top, Wyoming, Duryea
- May suggest either a lack of awareness about nearby facilities, or a general lack of facilities within these geographic areas
- Most popular activity: walking; least popular activity: jogging (Fig. 2)
- Relative age of respondents may explain this distribution
- Most participants indicated that overall, the number of facilities should be increased and the quality of those facilities should be improved (Fig. 3, 4)
- Only facilities for which majority of candidates thought current number and quality of facilities were adequate: walking paths, picnic areas
- Facilities with the greatest relative need: biking paths, bike lanes, mountain bike trails, dog parks

## Limitations & Future Research

- Relatively small sample size; 67 surveys returned due to incomplete addresses.
- Future research should focus on data collection from a more representative, larger sample size .
- Future research should focus on community members' experiences at specific locations and facilities.

## Acknowledgements

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## References

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- [3] Graefe AR., Mowen AJ., Trautwein NE., Covelli EA. Outdoor Recreation in Pennsylvania: Resident Survey. Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management, The Pennsylvania State University. 2009.