

Stomping Grounds

A Utah City Parks and Recreation Survey: A Needs Assessment

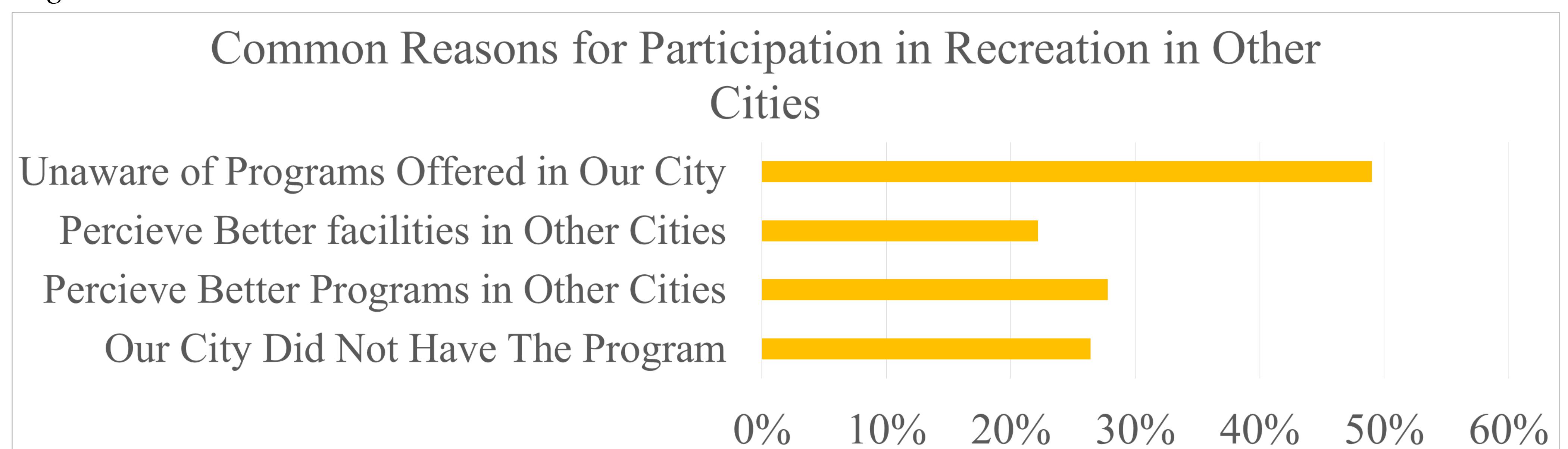
Survey Background & Administration

The economic, social, health and aesthetic benefits of sustained neighborhood parks and recreation are aplenty. If neighborhood recreations are to be successful, however, they must reflect the needs of the community (Crompton, 2008), and surveying is one of the best tools for need assessments (Crompton, 2009).

The Parks and Recreation division of a local Utah city contracted the Community Research Extension (CRE) of the Center for Community Engaged Learning to conduct a city-wide survey of their residents' recreation activities. The survey illustrates a *bottom-up* approach to planning and change. This information is intended to supplement a needs assessment for the City's Master Plan .

A total of 441 residents completed the survey. The survey asked multiple questions that assessed current recreation use (frequency, location, activity, etc.), current barriers & reasons for non-use and desires for future recreation in the City.

Figure 1.



The Community Research Extension

The Community Research Extension (CRE) is reputable for high standards in community-based research, as well as for their passion. From study development to final reporting, members of the CRE approach every project willingly and thoughtfully. It has been an invaluable experience learning from such exemplary individuals. They have been a source of inspiration to me as both an aspiring researcher and a humanitarian. I appreciate them all.

Resident's Current Recreational Use

Respondents visit **City Parks** (87.2%), use **City area Trails** (82%) and participate in **City Recreation** activities (77.6%).

Barriers/Reasons for Recreational Non-use

PARKS. Lacking the time (34.2%) was the primary reason identified in the survey. Following, was the perception that other parks they visit meet all of their needs (32.4%).

RECREATION. The survey assessed why those who do not participate in the City's Recreation, choose not to do so. Unawareness was most commonly selected. Results are illustrated in *Figure 2*.

ACCESS. About 18 percent of respondents reported either having a disability or that someone in their household has a disability. The barriers expressed by this demographic include uneven surfaces, accessible pathways to get to parks, playgrounds, etc. and that they were unaware of any inclusive/adaptive recreation opportunities available in their city.

Discussion

The survey allowed residents an opportunity to inform the City what their needs and preferences were for the future planning of their community. The most common barrier to participation the City's recreation was simply being unaware of the opportunities. The majority of residents utilize local trails and recreation, but the local parks and playgrounds are used most often. Residents also prioritize their maintenance above other recreation activities and places; also increasing access & opportunities for those with disabilities

Wants & Needs for Future Recreation

Resident's most valued recreation in the City was also assessed. Respondents were asked how they would divide \$10 across various parks, facilities, trails and/or programs. The option that received, on average, the highest dollar amount was "improving existing parks & playgrounds" (\$5.22). *Figure 2* illustrates the four areas that received the most monetary contributions.

Figure 2.

"If you had \$10 to spend on additional city parks, facilities, trails and/or programs, how would you divide it?"

- Improving Existing Parks & Playground
- Indoor Pool
- Recreational Center
- Athletic Courts

