

# Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services Survey Summary

**Question 1: Name (responses not included in this summary)**

**Question 2: Sex**

70.2% women

29.8% men

**Question 3: Please indicate the number of persons living in your household including yourself:**

This question did not generate percentages of each age group but was a question asked to see if all age groups are represented in the survey. Based on the results, all age groups had fair, and almost representation.

**Question 4: Are you a resident of Portsmouth?**

YES 93.9%

NO 6.1%

**Question 5: What is your neighborhood or zip code?**

Data shows that all neighborhoods were well represented, we don't have an exact breakdown

**Question 6: How long have you lived in Portsmouth?**

Data shows that every possible answer was given...from 0 to 76 years. The range meant good representation. Lots of proud "All My Life" responses.

**Question 7: Were any of the parks, waterways, or recreation programs/activities in Portsmouth a factor in your decision as to where you decided to live?**

*98 out of 274 people who responded said yes - over 33%*

**Typical Comments on Question 7:**

*I prefer to live in Norfolk because there are more green spaces.*

*We chose to live near the Churchland Little League field to have a green space near by.*

*I wanted to live in a city during my retirement years where I had access to many free and open community programs and activities knowing that my income would be limited.*

*No. Though, they seems to be pretty nonexistent.*

*I like being next to City Park because my family can do fun activities and have family functions.*

*In fact, we almost decided AGAINST Portsmouth because of the lack of recreation.*

*Before buying my house, I had previously visited the Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve, and this helped to contribute to my positive overall perception of Portsmouth as well.*

*No, but I should of done my due diligence. Compared to other surrounding cities, it appears that they have a better parks and recreation department that is better developed.*

**Question 8: In Portsmouth, what recreation activities do you most enjoy?**

Eating Out	68.70%
Walking or jogging	68.40%
Relaxing at Home	66.10%
Enjoying Downtown Portsmouth (waterfront, "path of history", etc)	58.50%
Enjoying nature (birdwatching, nature trail, etc)	50.60%
Outdoor Family Event (such as a picnic)	49.70%
Water related activities (boating, fishing, swimming, etc)	45.30%
Going to the Movies	44.40%
Biking	40.60%
Shopping	40.10%
People Watching (non-structured activity such as sitting on a bench)	32.20%
Group Sport Activity (such as softball or soccer)	28.70%
Indoor Family Event (such as bowling)	26.90%

**Write In Responses: Concerts, gardening, work, crafts, golf, festivals, neighborhood events**

**Question 9: Of the items you selected in Question 8, how often do you enjoy these activities**

	daily/weekly	monthly	rarely	never
	<b>58.80%</b>	37.30%	3.60%	0.40%
	<b>75.10%</b>	13.80%	8.60%	2.40%
	<b>91.10%</b>	6.40%	1.50%	1.10%
	<b>35.10%</b>	28.80%	<b>30%</b>	6.20%
	<b>41.60%</b>	23.40%	26.40%	8.70%
	21.50%	34.30%	<b>39.50%</b>	4.80%
	<b>25.50%</b>	<b>28.20%</b>	<b>34.20%</b>	12.00%
	18.60%	<b>41.90%</b>	34.40%	5.10%
	<b>37.30%</b>	21.10%	24%	17.50%
	<b>52.20%</b>	31.00%	15.10%	1.60%
	<b>42.70%</b>	15.80%	29.40%	12.00%
	26.90%	13.90%	27.80%	<b>31.40%</b>
	14.70%	27.60%	<b>44.30%</b>	13.40%

**Question 10: How important are the following purposes / benefits of parks and recreation to you in**

## Portsmouth?

	Very or Somewhat Important	Neutral	Little or No Importance
Enhance community image and sense of place	92.1	5.1	2.8
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors	90.6	7.9	1.5
Protect the natural environment and preserve wildlife habitat	90.6	7.6	1.8
Connect people, building stronger families and neighborhoods	89.6	6.7	3.7
Promote healthy habits and exercise	88.5	7.8	3.7
Improve Health and Wellness	86.1	9.5	4.4
Ensure there is public green space near every home	81.9	15	3.1
Provide opportunities for lifelong learning	81.7	12.5	5.8
Build character and sportsmanship	79.5	14.2	6.3
Help older adults and people with disabilities remain active	78.7	13.1	8.2
Provide more access to waterfront activities	78.6	17.3	4.1
Promote Youth/Teen Physical/Social Development	75.3	13	11.7
Provide cultural opportunities	74.4	17.3	8.3
Adult sports Opportunities	60.8	25.3	13.9
Provide Before/After School Care	44.6	18.1	37.3

### Some typical written responses:

*It would be nice to have a place where you can interact with people.*

*Growing up in Portsmouth, the Parks and Recreation was the greatest. In the summer (mostly high school students or grads) were employed to run a program at each school or ball park. There was arts and crafts and all kinds of sports. Softball tournaments with all playgrounds. Why can't the city do something like that for our kids today?*

*Need to provide activities, education, socialization, reinforcing family and morals. Regaining sense of pride. Prejudice is not only a racial thing. It includes age, physical appearance and social standing. We need to help all walks of life to enjoy this city.*

*We need safe places to go take walks outdoors*

*I do believe it is a city's responsibility to provide outlets for recreation and cultural opportunities for all citizens. That might be on a fee based service for some activities - and it does not mean a basketball court in every neighborhood - but within reasonable access for all citizens.*

*Connecting people and building families and neighborhoods is one of the visions, but the vision is somewhat distorted.*

*I am leary of having a park close to my home since they are nothing more than a gathering place for drug dealers.*

*More for the elderly to do*

*Our pets are residents here too, and they need a place to run and play safely.*

*All these ideas are great, but I would rather have more parks and greenspace than more programs. I believe that when people have access to nature, they become better and healthier people.*

*I do not find that Portsmouth has many all encompassing fun and exciting cultural events and activities to enjoy outside of seawall fest....*

*A lot of young families have said that as soon as the real estate market changes they are moving so their kids will have more things offered for them.*

*I really think the one thing Portsmouth and all of Hampton Roads communities are missing is community pools.*

*Provide plenty of smaller playgrounds for children within individual neighborhoods.*

*Provide alternatives to video games and television for people of all ages and to gang/criminal activity for youngsters*

**Question 11. What are the main reasons you use parks and recreation programs in Portsmouth?**

Enjoy outdoors and nature	73.30%
For exercise	52.30%
Picnic and general leisure activities	47.70%
Attend special events/concerts	46.20%
Participate in family activities	46.20%
Access to water	37.70%
Meet friends	33.10%
Use a specific facility at a park	28.30%
Play sports	25.80%
Continuing Education / Hobbies	18.80%
I don't use parks	6.50%

**Question 12. How often do you engage in outdoor activities and recreation?**

Never	1.50%
1-2 times per year	4.60%
3-4 times per year	7.70%
2 times a month	21.30%
3-4 times a month	21.30%
5 or more per month	44.80%

**Question 13. Check the outdoor activities you or your family most frequently participated in last year**

Walking, running, strolling, roller blading/skating	70.90%
Special Event (concert, festival)	45.40%
Sitting or relaxing on a park bench	43.60%
Bicycling (road)	36.50%
Playgrounds	33.10%
Boating / Fishing / Kayak / Canoe	32.80%
Picnicking	31.00%
Bird / Animal watching	30.40%
Watching outdoor sports activities in person	29.10%
Field Sports (soccer, baseball, football, etc)	26.70%
Swimming	26.10%
Nature Photography	19.60%
Golf	14.40%
Court Sports (basketball, volleyball, etc.)	10.70%
Tennis	10.10%
Bicycling (mountain bike)	9.80%
Skateboard	6.40%

Chess 2.50%  
Disc Golf / Ultimate Frisbee 2.50%

**Question 15: Do the existing programs and facilities meet your needs?**

Yes: 43.2%  
No: 56.8%

**General, Overall Impressions:**

*If you don't have a boat or play golf or tennis, what is there for an adult to do?  
I am sick of driving to other cities to walk/hike.  
Most facilities are not local to my neighborhood and in areas of town that I do not wish to go to.  
Do not feel safe going to parks anymore  
So many of these "parks" you listed are just empty fields.  
Most of my family's "rec" time is spent walking in our neighborhood with its overgrown, cracked, and often non-existent sidewalks  
Waste of money.. If people want to use them, then let them and not the taxpayer support the programs  
Waste of Tax payer Money to keep these open  
The parks and rec programs are a joke in this city and everyone in City Hall who has anything to do with them should be embarrassed by the condition of the ballfields  
Antiquated & Subpar  
I do not think our resources are sufficient.*

**" I didn't know all these places existed:"**

*I was really surprised to see all of the places listed. I really didn't know that all of these were available.  
Although many of these may not be of interest to me because of my age, etc., I do think that it would be helpful to make all of these places better publicized. It's also interesting to see this long list after hearing occasionally, "There's nothing for my kids to do in Portsmouth."  
Dont't know anything about the programs because they are not advertised.  
I didnt know all of these places existed.  
Really not sure because I am unaware of what the facilities offer.  
The aren't a lot of facilities near me. In fact, I've never even heard of over half of the parks you listed  
I know little about them. They could probably benefit me, if I would only look into them to see what's happening.  
I don't know enough about most of these programs and facilities.*

**Programming:**

*Could we have kayak rental at City Park? I would like more trails to hike. More lectures and learning opportunities.  
Hoffler Creek needs bathrooms.  
It would be benfit if City of Portsmouth had a track that was OPEN TO THE PUBLIC because it's not fair that we paid taxes on tracks & basball fields that we CAN'T USE AT ALL.  
The waterfront is a valuable resource narrowly accessible to the average citizen  
I love the skateboard park in Cradock, but another one would be great, especially at City Park. I would gladly volunteer time and labor to make this happen*

**Activites.....too much? Not enough?**

*I would like for my kids to participate in sports year round if possible but I feel that what p&r offers isn't enough or isn't advertised well enough  
I wish there were more activities to keep people busy/active besides stting around.  
Most programs are geared toward children/family not for singles.*

*Just would like to see a lot more offered*

*Would like more small parks within the neighborhood with things to do*

*We live in Churchland and the facilities in Churchland are mainly aimed at group sports (i.e. baseball, soccer, football). We need a general use facility that has more to offer.*

*Although i'm a lot older and not engaged in as many athletic activities, i know that the kids in my neighborhood have no place to play. This forces them to hang on corners and may lead to opportunities for mischief*

**Question 16: When accessing Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services, how far do you have to travel for the majority of your outdoor recreational needs and programs/activities**

Less than 1/4 mile	9.40%
Less than 1/2 mile	8.10%
Less than 1 mile	17.20%
Less than 5 miles	45.30%
More than 5 miles	20.10%

**Question 17: Is this travel distance...**

Just Right	78.50%	Too Far	21.50%
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**Question 18: How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the level of park, open space, and facility maintenance in Portsmouth?**

5 (very satisfied)	8%
4	21.40%
3 (neutral)	33.50%
2	13.70%
1 (unsatisfied)	17.30%
Don't know	6.10%

**Question 19: What are the main reasons you DO NOT use parks and recreation facilities in Portsmouth more often?**

Don't know what's available	44.10%
Feel unsafe	35.30%
Lack of facilities	34.60%
Do not know where they are located	33.60%
Poorly maintained	24.80%
Too far away, not conveniently located	23.80%
Not interested / No time	17.80%
Too crowded	9.10%
Limited transportation	4.50%

**COMMENTS:**

*I have a very full life, am fortunate to be in relatively good health, and am able to meet many of my recreational needs in my own verdant neighborhood. A significant number of my fellow Portsmouth residents do not have those advantages.*

*Not open late enough*

*Portsmouth does not offer the activities my family and I enjoy - hiking trails (serious trails) and canoeing (no rental facilities).*

*There is just nothing there*

*I'm just busy*

*Parks need repairs*

*Too limited. Only have City Park for picnics, grilling out, etc*

*We have nothing in our neighborhood except a playground that is located in the sun. There is nowhere for adults and families to walk to and relax, perhaps picnic under a tree.*

*Loud abusive and crude (music)? that I am deeply offended by having to hear!!!!*

*Poorly behaved patrons*

*Too many kids*

*People do not monitor their children or follow safety rules that are in place.*

*The only facility for seniors is a "clique" where not everyone is welcome.*

*Yea right - do you know where most of these neighborhood parks and rec centers are - safety?*

**Question 20: How do you feel dogs should be accommodated in public spaces?**

Designate off-leash areas and enforce leash laws	31.30%
Enforce current laws requiring dogs to be leashed in parks	35.80%
Create special off-leash areas in several parks	32.90%

*A model dog park to me would be the one at the PETA building in Norfolk.*

*Will not visit parks w/ dogs without leashes*

*1 or 2 parks in the city designated for dogs. Children and dogs often don't mix.*

*Tried for years to open a real dog park. Every dog owner (of which I am not) wants one - but no neighborhood wants to host!*

*Really, i'd love dogs to be off leash but i think there are too many irresponsible owners and wouldn't trust most of them to take care of their dogs off leash!*

*I believe animals have the right to be in parks also as long as people clean up after them and they don't attack anyone. As for leashes let them run free.*

*That should be on certain day*

*Need dog parks but each park should have designated area that each owner scoops the poop*

*Happy as is.*

*Dogs should be prohibited in parks with athletic fields and at the wildlife preserve. In other public spaces, dogs should be leashed.*

*My child was chased by a pocketbook dog.*

*We need a dog park or TWO*

**Question 21. How familiar are you with the services provided by the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services?**

Not Familiar	36.20%
Somewhat Familiar	54.10%
Very Familiar	9.80%

**Question 22. Check the Top 4 indoor activities you or your family participated in or watched last year.**

Cardio Training / Workout	44.90%
Exercise Classes	42.90%
Watching games in person	31.10%
Swimming / Diving	31.10%
Basketball	28.70%
Arts & Crafts Classes	27.20%
Yoga / Aerobics	24.80%
Dancing	19.30%
Weightlifting	15.40%
Volleyball	10.60%
Indoor soccer	6.70%
Gymnastics	3.50%
Hockey	2.80%
Racquetball	2.00%

**Question 23. How often do you participate in programs provided by the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services?**

Never	50.20%
1 - 2 times per year	25.70%
3 - 4 times per year	14.30%
1 - 2 times per month	1.60%
3 - 4 times per month	2.90%
5 or more times per month	5.20%

**Question 24. Do you participate in activities or use facilities that are NOT provided by the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services? If so, why?**

I prefer private facilities (i.e. YMCA, Fitness Center, etc.)	37.60%
The requested activity/activities are not available at City sponsored facilities	35.00%
Safety is a concern at City sponsored facilities	33.60%
Location of City sponsored facilities isn't convenient	29.60%
Condition of City sponsored facilities	23.00%
I prefer public facilities in other cities	16.40%
I use military facilities	13.30%
I prefer to participate in non-City sponsored activities	4%
I only participate in City sponsored programs and facilities	2.70%

*Activities at the Beazley Center and Y fit my schedule and provide physical activity that I enjoy. but that is not to say that I would attend city activities if I know they are provided.*

*Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk because they are larger, safer, and nicely kept.*

*Public facilities often aren't open to meet my schedule.*

*Norfolk seems to welcome you and you know about their programs.*

*Virginia Beach has a GREAT parks and rec program.*

*I don't know what is available*

*I would use city facilities if they offered what the Y and fitness centers offer. Thanks*

*No facility near my neighborhood (Churchland)*

*We need rec centers like Virginia Beach has, Big, clean, multi-use for all ages, not little special use places scattered about the city.*

*I am unsure what your facilities have to offer!*

*I have talked to people that have went to these places and takened their children and were not happy with how they were treated .*

*City sponsored facilities raise my prersonal property tax rate to un acceptable levels. The community facilities do not provide enough common benefit to Portsmouth to warrant the expense.*

*The real answer is the City Council does not support the Department and provide the funding needed to have quality facilities and programs!*

**Question 25: How do you get most of your information on recreational activities?**

word of mouth, newspaper, on-line