

City-County Health Department &
Community Health Care Center, Inc.

Great Falls



Neighborhood

Survey Report



2012



CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE CENTER, INC.

From the Cascade County Health Officer



December 2012

Dear Community Member,

Your health, and the health and safety of every citizen in Cascade County, is of the utmost importance to the City-County Health Department. Our goal and vision is Health People in a Healthy Community. In 2011, the Health of Cascade County report found that more residents of Cascade County are overweight or obese than Montana overall. These findings led community members to identify obesity as one of the three top health priorities for Cascade County in the Community Health Improvement Plan. The findings in this report suggest opportunities for ways to decrease obesity in our community.

The obesity epidemic is a complex problem. There are some communities across the nation who are making positive progress. Successful communities have found environmental and policy changes at the population level to be most effective in winning the battle and turning back the obesity trend. Examples of these changes are diverse and can be adapted for a particular population. Some of the successful programs that have been put into practice include:

- Implementing community wide efforts to encourage Work Place Wellness programs. Work Place Wellness programs help employees to be healthier and make wiser nutritional and physical activity choices.
- Adopting Complete Streets Policies that require City and County planners to consider more than just gas and diesel powered vehicles when designing their plans for street maintenance. This ensures that a community's infrastructure is built and maintained in a way that encourages people to get out and be physically active.
- Passing ordinances that require licensed establishments to post the nutritional content of the foods they are serving to community members. This allows community members to be more conscientious about the calories they are consuming.
- Developing joint use agreements throughout their communities so that facilities that are designed for physical activity can be used on a regular basis by community members. An example in our community is the cross-country skiing and snowshoeing that is allowed around the perimeter of the Black Eagle golf course.

The 2012 Neighborhood Survey Report provides feedback from over 800 people living and working in Cascade County. The survey specifically asked about opportunities for physical activity in the neighborhood and workplace. The results will be used to inform community partners in their efforts to move the Community Health Improvement Plan forward in achieving its goal to reduce the number of Cascade County residents who are overweight or obese.

I welcome your questions and comments! Feel free to contact me at 791-9260 or through email at athompson@cascadecountymt.gov.

A special thank you goes to Janelle Olberding, the City-County Health Department Preparedness and Communications Assistant, who designed the report and analyzed the qualitative data.

Sincerely,

Alicia M. Thompson
Cascade County Health Officer

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Introduction

Community Health Improvement

In 2011, Cascade City-County Health Department (CCHD) released a Community Health Assessment, which presented data on eight different areas of health in Cascade County. As a result of that work, CCHD and partnering community agencies and organizations developed and are currently implementing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The plan identifies three priority health issues and sets goals, objectives and strategies to help improve each issue. The health priorities were chosen during a community meeting held in April 2011. The meeting was attended by individuals representing local agencies and organizations. The health priority areas chosen were: 1) Increase Access to Care, 2) Reduce Overweight and Obesity, and 3) Reduce Substance Use and Abuse.

ACHIEVE

In January of 2012, CCHD, Great Falls and Cascade County were among 15 communities chosen for the Action Communities for Health Innovation and EnVironmental Change (ACHIEVE) program. The opportunity to become an ACHIEVE community provided the opportunity for CCHD to work with other local groups, like Get Fit Great Falls, to reduce the burden of chronic disease in Cascade County. Being an ACHIEVE community gives CCHD additional resources to help accomplish the goals outlined in the CHIP.

How will this happen? One part of the ACHIEVE grant was to put a Community Health Action Response Team (CHART) together. The CHART is made up of community leaders who all live and work in Cascade County. They developed a community action plan (CAP) that focused on the health priority area of reducing overweight and obesity. There are two specific ways the CAP will help do this:

1) through encouraging the passage of a Complete Streets policy in the City of Great Falls and Cascade County, and 2) through encouraging and supporting workplace wellness programs at employers throughout our community.

The Neighborhood Survey

The Neighborhood Survey, which was developed by CCHD in conjunction with the Get Fit Great Falls coalition and the CHART team, sought to measure community members views, thoughts, ideas and concerns about the priority health issue of overweight and obesity. The questions and response choices in this survey reflect two of the six best management categories given by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent obesity : create safe communities that support physical activity and encourage communities to organize for change.*

This survey was sent out by email and is a snowball sample of our community. Thus, the results of are not scientific and cannot be generalized to the population. The results in this report reflect the opinions of those who filled out the survey. The survey was completed by 836 individuals. Not every person who responded answered every question, and there are some questions that allowed more than one response. When results are presented in this report, the number of people who responded to the question is noted (n=number of responses). There is also a number in parenthesis behind the page headlines; these are the question number on the survey that is being described. The survey tool can be viewed online at <http://www.cchdmt.org/?p=chi&n=achieve>.

*Reference available.



ACHIEVE
Healthy Communities

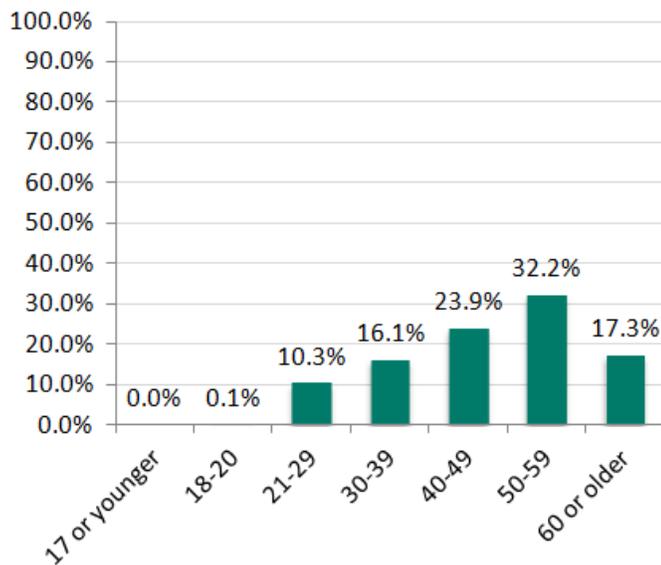
ACTION COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH, INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Demographics

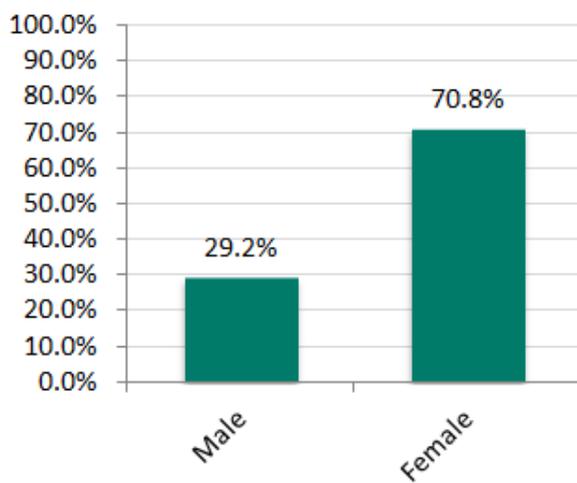
Survey Respondents (1,313)

The vast majority of respondents to this survey were white females, and most responders reported being between the ages of 40 and 60. According to the 2011 Cascade County Community Health Assessment, over 90% of Cascade County residents are white. This survey, however, received responses from a larger majority of women and those over 40 to be a true representative sample of Cascade County.

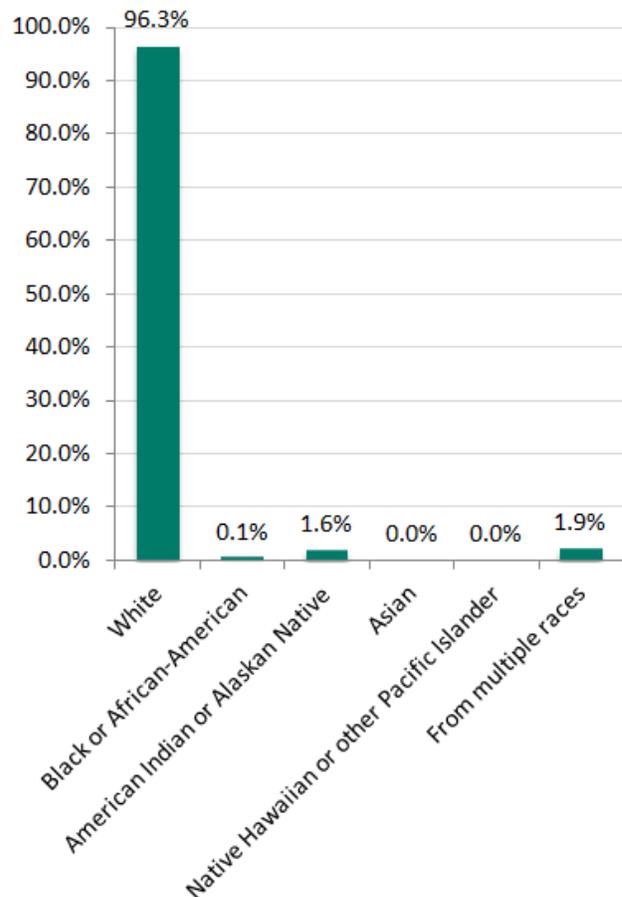
Age (n=832)



Sex (n=753)



Race (n=733)

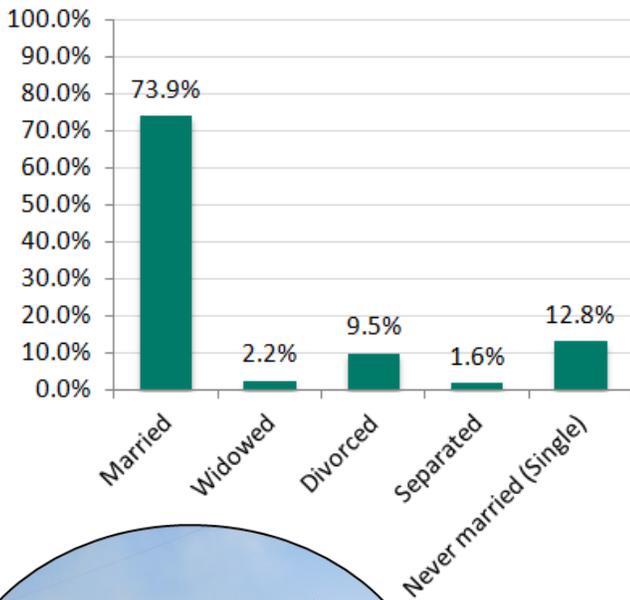


Demographics

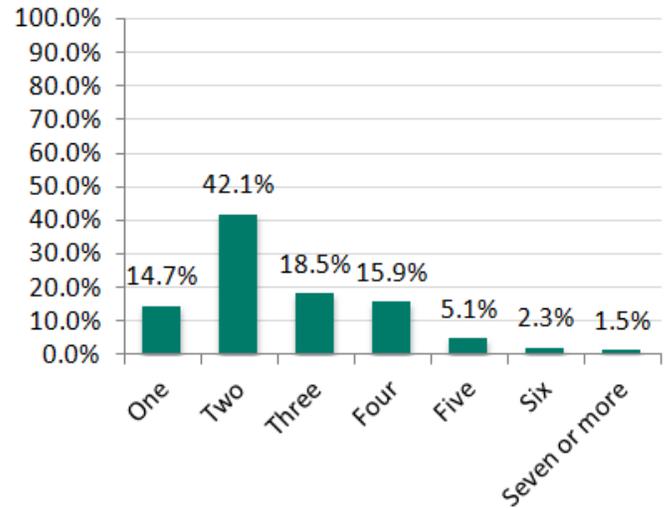
Household (32, 35, 37)

Most survey respondents reported being married and living in a household of two people, including the respondent. Most respondents reported a yearly household income of over \$23,050. These figures are comparable to what was reported in the 2011 Cascade County Community Health Assessment.

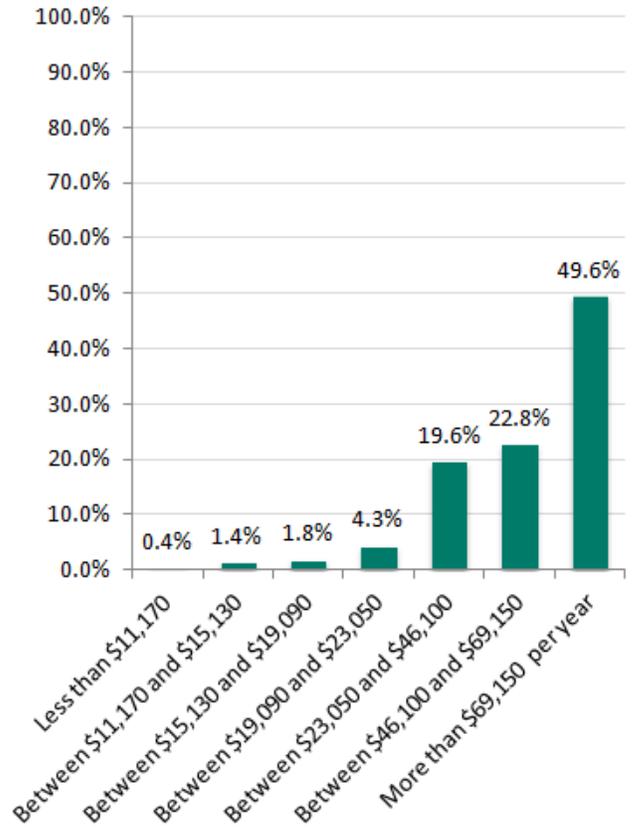
Marital Status (n=740)



Household Size (n=750)



Yearly Household Income (n=705)



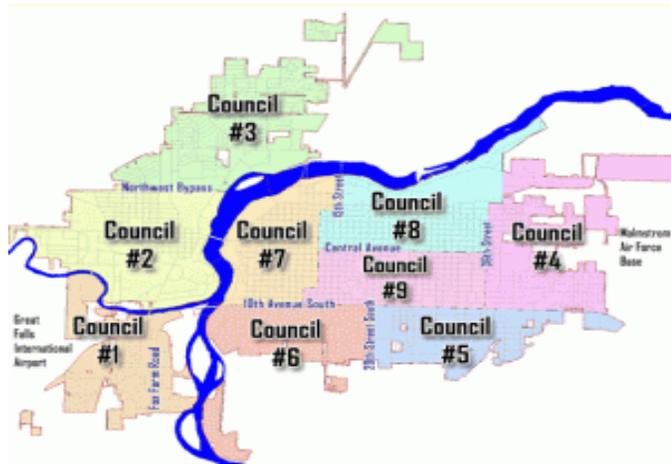
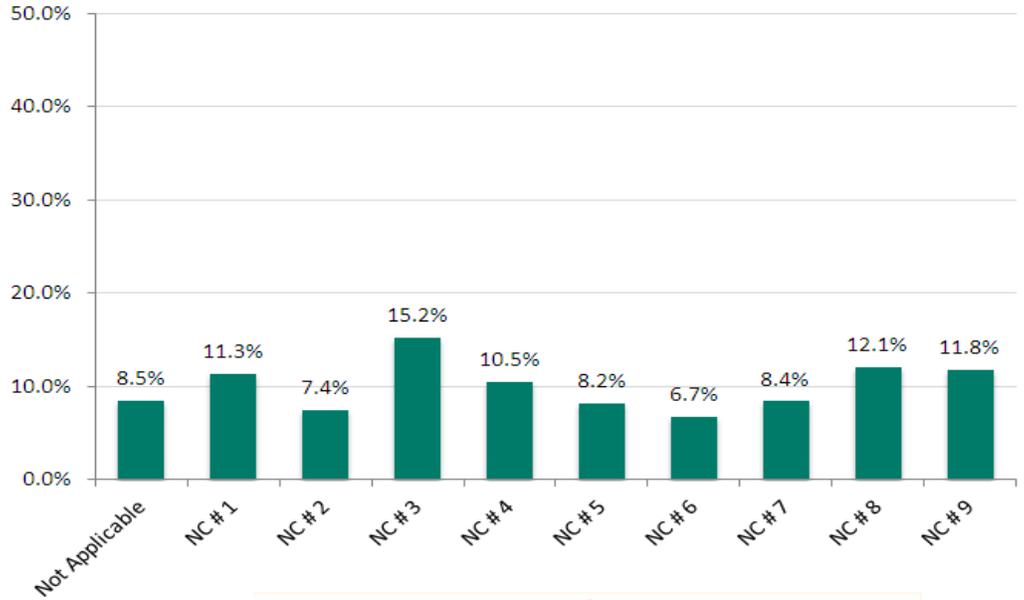
Neighborhood

Neighborhood Pride

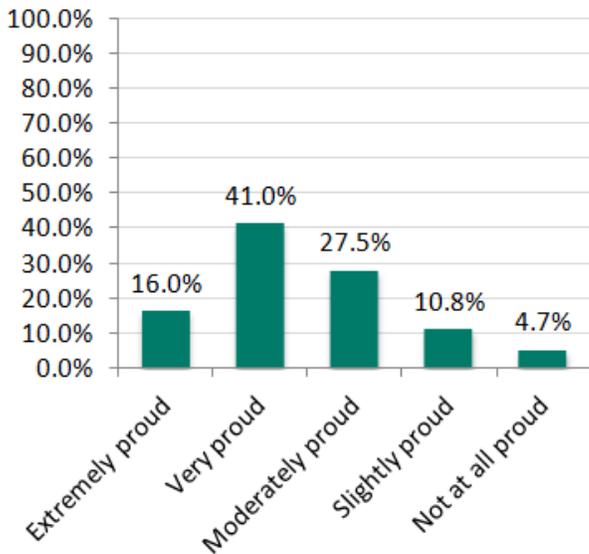
(34, 10, 11)

Respondents were fairly evenly distributed by neighborhood council. Of those that responded “Not Applicable” many live outside of the city limits and others were unsure of which neighborhood council they live in. Responses indicate that most respondents are proud of their neighborhoods, but many do not feel a “very strong” or “extremely strong” sense of community.

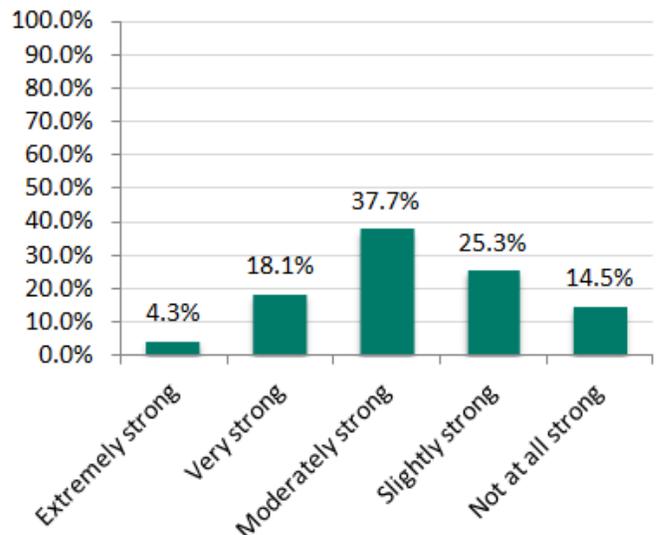
Neighborhood Council (n=646)



Neighborhood Pride (n=724)



Sense of Community (n=722)



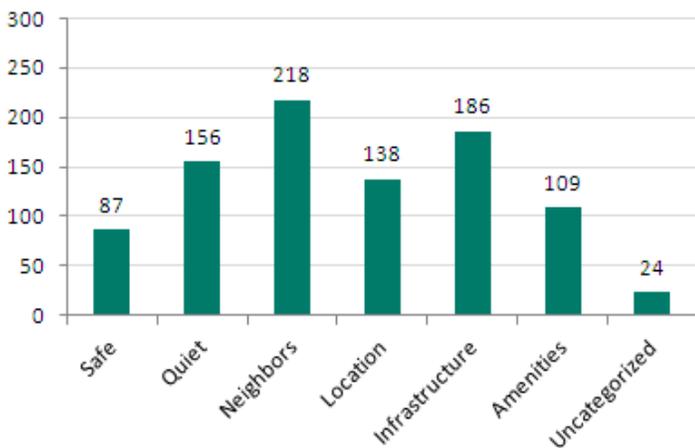
Neighborhood

Neighborhood Satisfaction (12, 13)

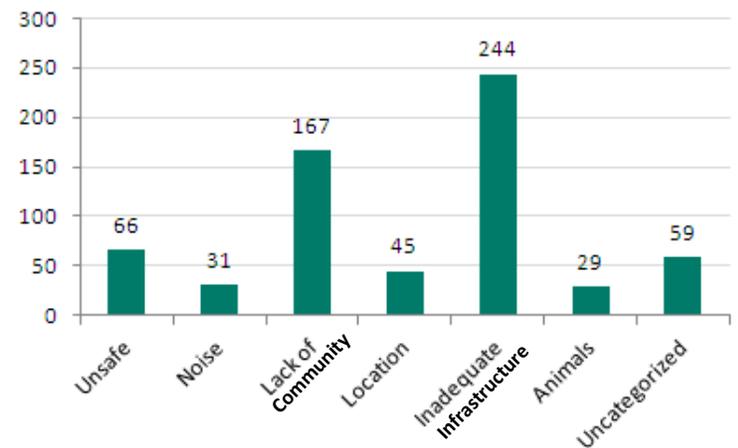
Of 607 total responses to the question “What do you like most about your neighborhood?” 583 could be placed into one or more of the following categories:

- **Safety**, including low crime rate.
- **Quiet**, which includes the ideas of peace and privacy.
- **Neighbors**, including other residents and neighborhood business owners. Also included in this category are statements such as “sense of community” and descriptions of people caring for their homes and property.
- **Location**, meaning the area of the city or out of town.
- **Infrastructure**, including streets and sidewalks, maintenance, traffic, cleanliness and lot size.
- **Amenities**, meaning proximity to things like parks, schools, shops and events.

What do You Like Most About Your Neighborhood? (n=607)



What do You Like Least About Your Neighborhood? (n=581)



Of 581 total responses to the question “What do you like least about your neighborhood?” 510 could be placed into one or more of the following categories:

- **Unsafe**, including crime and other unsafe characteristics including speeding traffic.
- **Noise**, including lack of privacy.
- **Lack of sense of community**, including issues with neighbors and neighbors’ actions, transient neighborhood populations and other actions by people that make the neighborhood unpleasant.
- **Location**, including having too far to commute, not being near to amenities and living out of city limits (if this was expressed as a negative).
- **Inadequate infrastructure**, which includes issues with lighting, streets, sidewalks, maintenance, lot size, parking, zoning and traffic flow.
- **Animals** includes any comments regarding noise and safety issues caused by animals.

Many uncategorized responses addressed stray animals, windy conditions and disagreeable weather.

Neighborhood

Neighborhood Safety

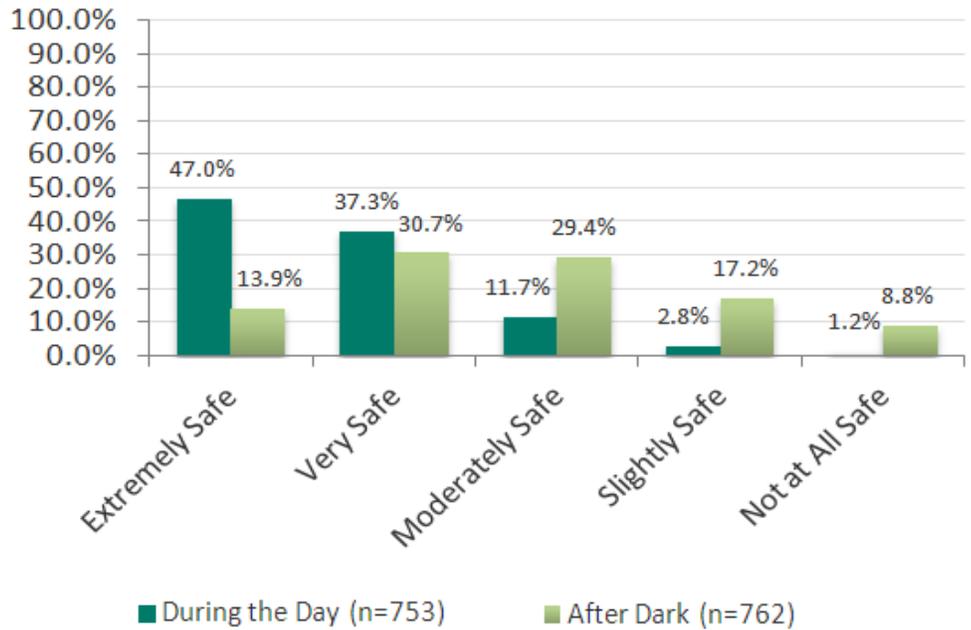
(21, 22, 23, 24)

Survey respondents were asked to rate how safe their neighborhoods were to walk in. Respondents were asked to indicate how safe the neighborhood was during the day, after dark and for children during and day and after dark.

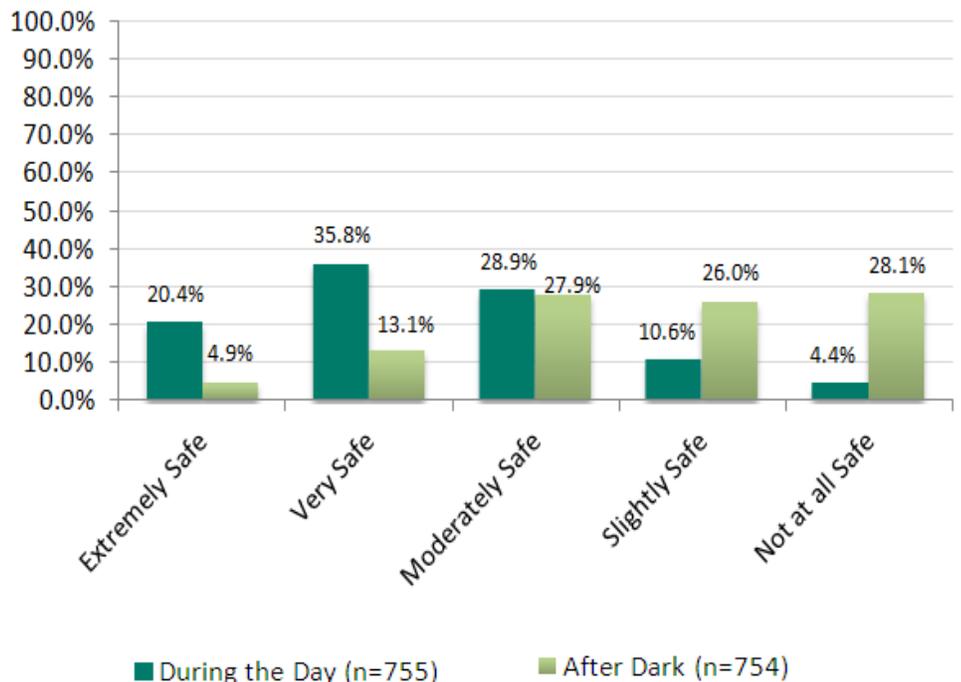
Responses indicate that most residents feel fairly safe to walk, and let their children walk, in their neighborhood during the day. This sense of safety decreases after dark, especially for children.



Safe to Walk



Safe for Children 12 or Younger to Walk

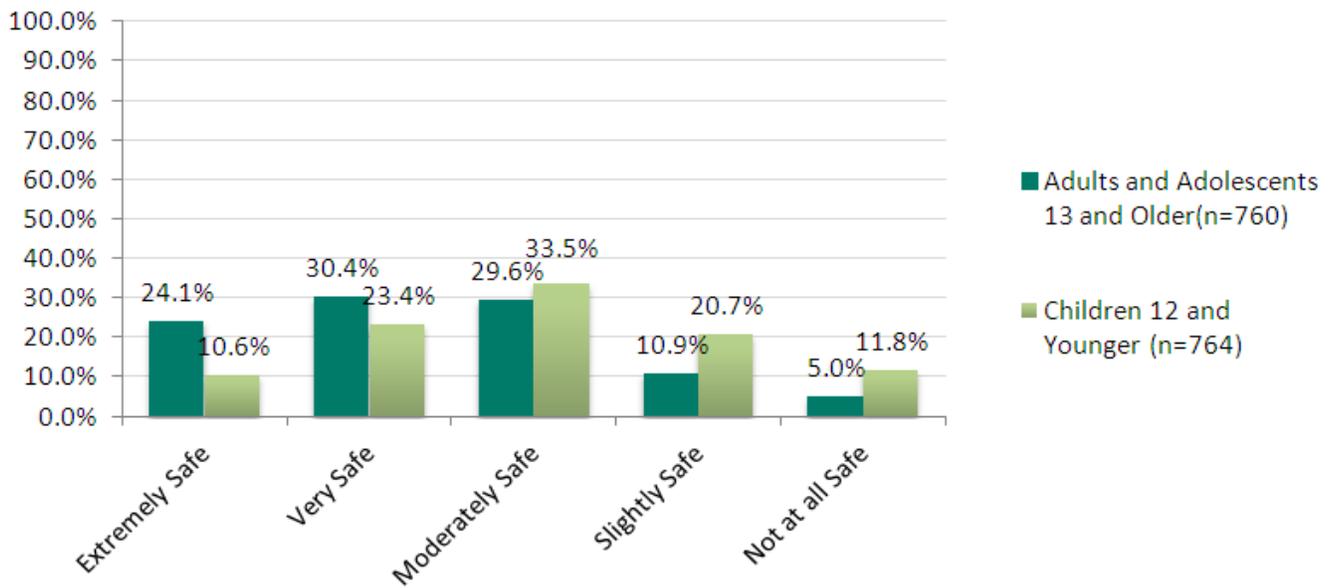


Neighborhood

Neighborhood Safety (25, 26)

Survey respondents were asked about the perceived safety of their neighborhood for riding bicycles. Responses indicate that most individuals believe their neighborhoods are at least moderately safe for adolescents and adults (ages 13 and older) to ride bicycles. The neighborhoods seem to be less safe for children aged 12 and under to ride bicycles, however.

Safe to Ride a Bicycle

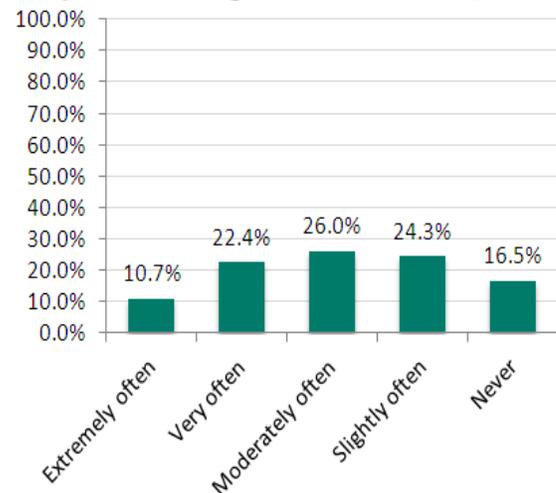


Parks (20)

Most respondents do not visit their neighborhood parks on a regular basis. For those that answered that they never visited parks, the most common reason given was that there are no parks near where the respondent lives.



How often do you visit the parks in your neighborhood? (n=745)



Neighborhood

Access to Physical Activity (16, 14)

Most survey respondents reported that they do not have access to a fitness center, gym or physical activity classes in their neighborhoods. Forty-six respondents specified “Other.” Most of these answers stated that the fitness center, gym or class in question was not within the respondent’s neighborhood.

Five hundred twenty-seven respondents wrote in suggestions for changes that could improve the physical activity level of people in their neighborhood. Each was placed in one of thirteen categories.

Biking amenities include bike paths, lanes and parking.

Education/neighbors includes responses aimed at increasing awareness about physical activity. Responses in this category also suggest that a better sense of community would help improve neighborhood physical activity levels.

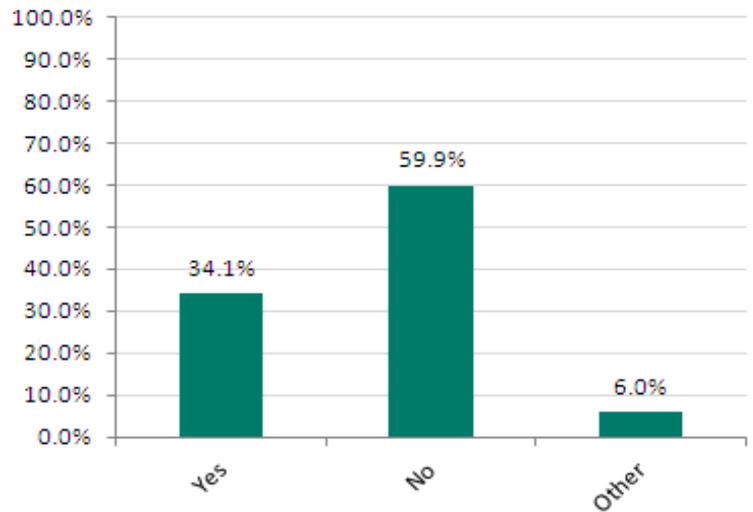
Safety features includes features like lighting and signage.

Sidewalks includes suggestions such as adding sidewalks or improving existing sidewalks.

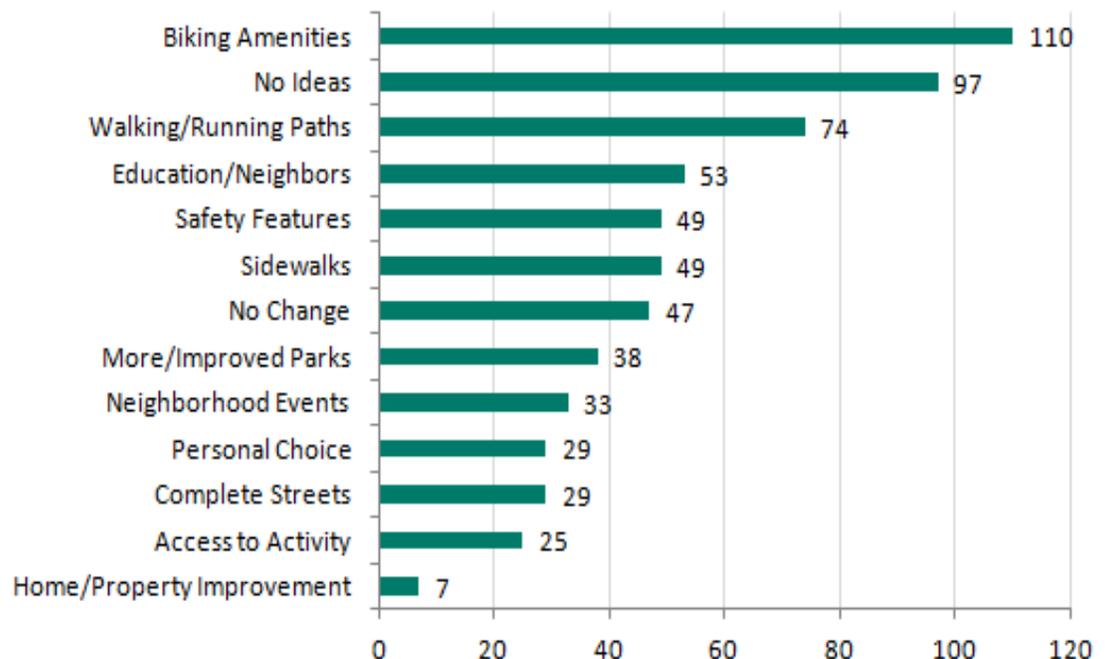
Complete Streets is a policy that make streets easily accessible for all users—pedestrians, bicyclists, public transport and private vehicles.

Access to activity includes paths or trails that would create easier walking or biking access to parks or the River’s Edge Trail.

Access to Fitness Center, Gym, Physical Activity Classes in Your Neighborhood (n=765)



What Changes Can Improve the Physical Activity Level of People in Your Neighborhood? (n=527)



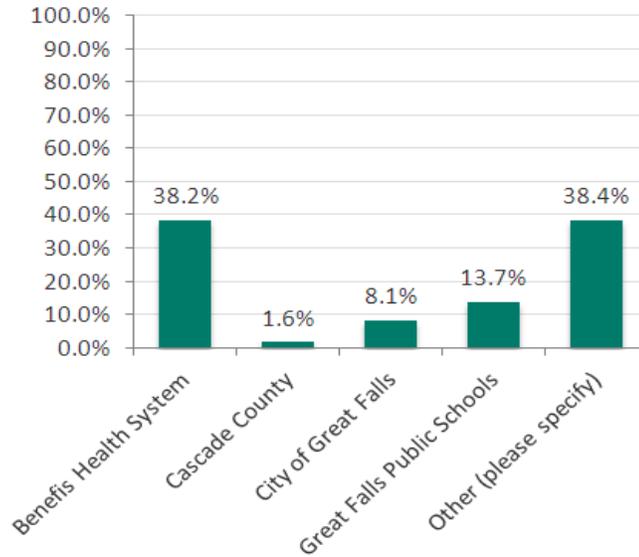
Worksites

Employment Status and Worksite (2, 3, 4, 5)

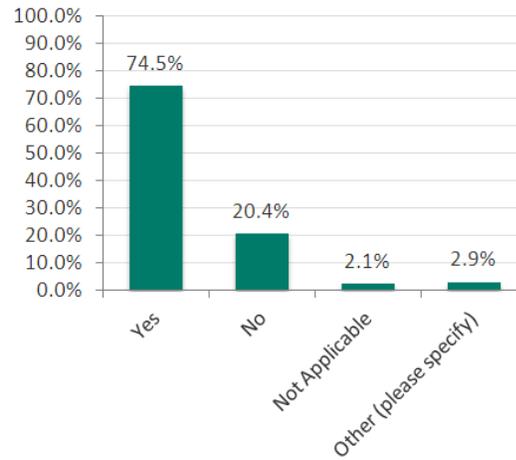
The vast majority of survey respondents (92.8%) work at least part-time. Most (76.9%) of these work 40 or more hours per week. The majority of respondents are employed by Benefis Health System. Other respondents come from workplaces in the private, government and non-profit sectors.

Although many workplaces do not offer their own fitness centers or gyms, most of the employers represented in these responses do have some type of worksite wellness program.

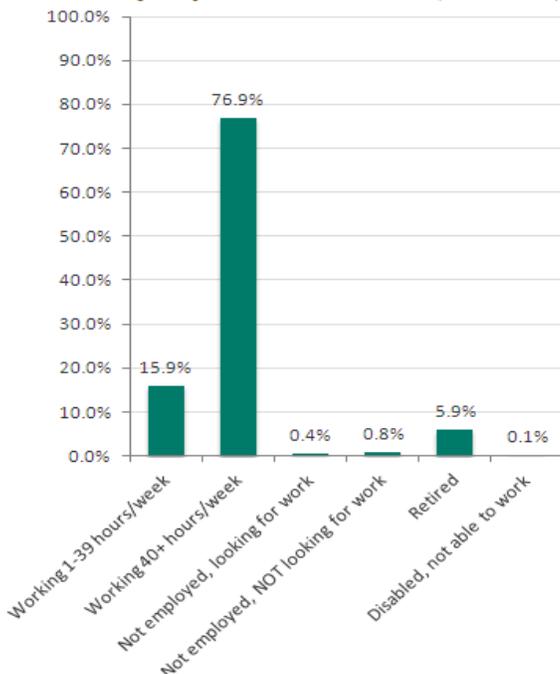
Who is your employer? (n=505)



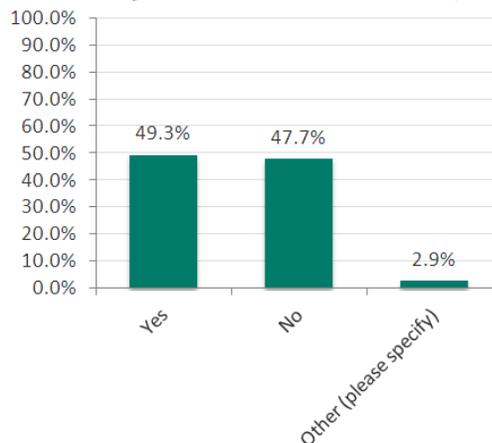
Worksite Wellness Program (n=754)



Employment Status (n=830)



Access to Fitness Center, Gym, Physical Activity Classes at Work (n=754)



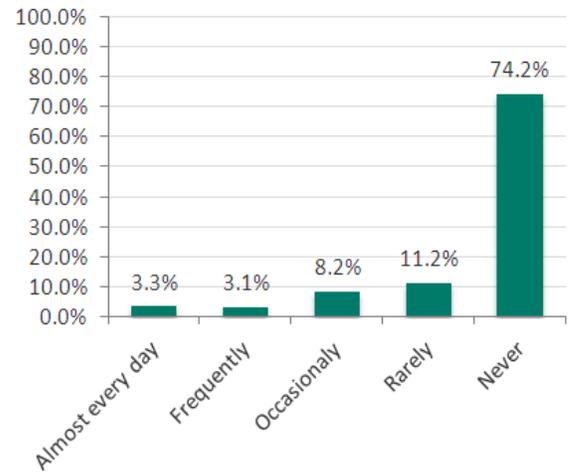
Worksites

Commuting and Alternate Modes of Transportation (6, 7, 8, 9)

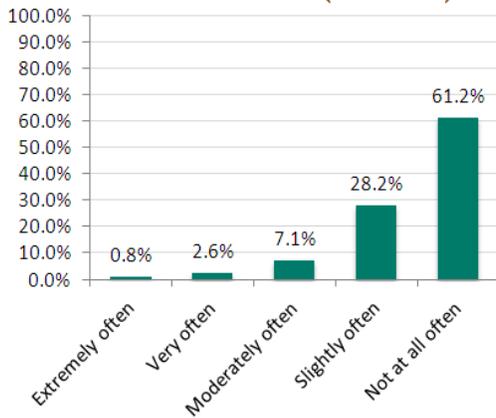
Though most respondents reported that their workplaces provide bicycle parking, most do not walk or bicycle to work. However, many respondents reported that this is because they live out of town, must transport children or need their vehicles at work.

Many also reported that although their workplaces do not encourage using stairs or alternate modes of transportation, these things are not discouraged.

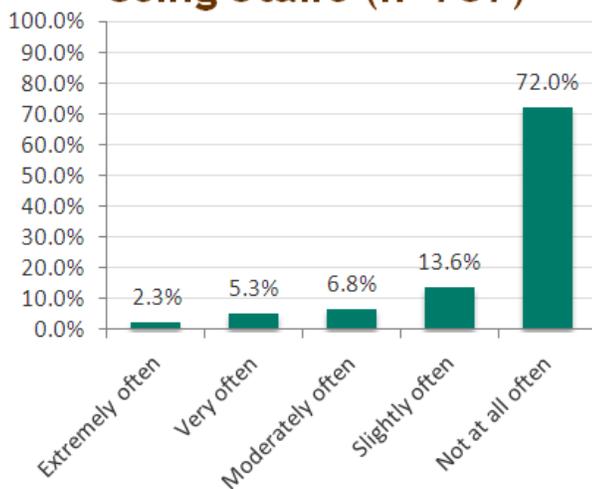
Walk or Bicycle to Work (n=732)



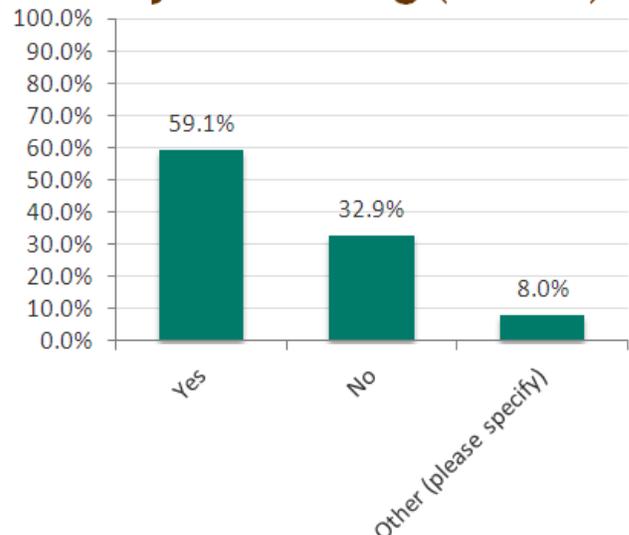
Workplace Encourages Non-Motorized Commutes (n=719)



Workplace Encourages Using Stairs (n=737)



Workplace Provides Bicycle Parking (n=748)

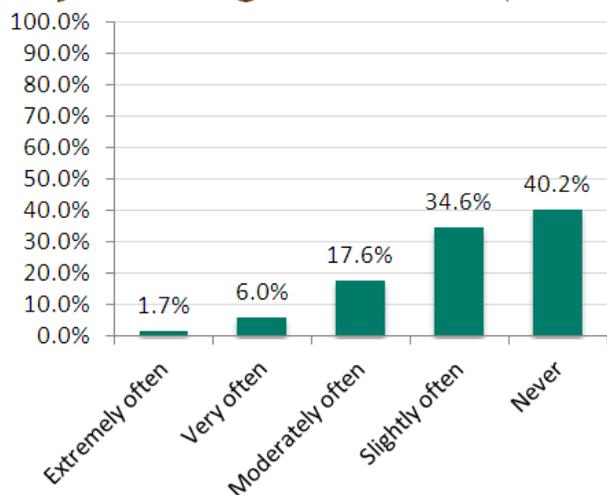


Community Involvement

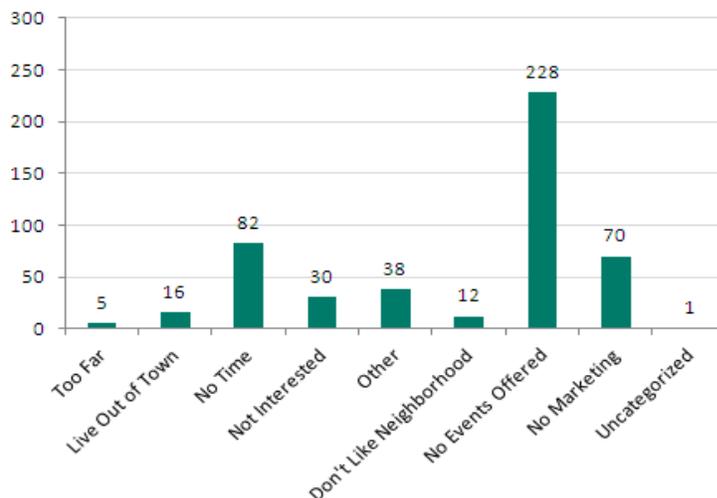
Neighborhood Events (17, 18, 19)

A majority (74.8%) of survey respondents never or only slightly often attend events in their neighborhood. Of the 471 individuals who answered why they did not attend events, a great many said this was because there were no events offered in their neighborhood.

How often do you attend events in your neighborhood? (n=752)



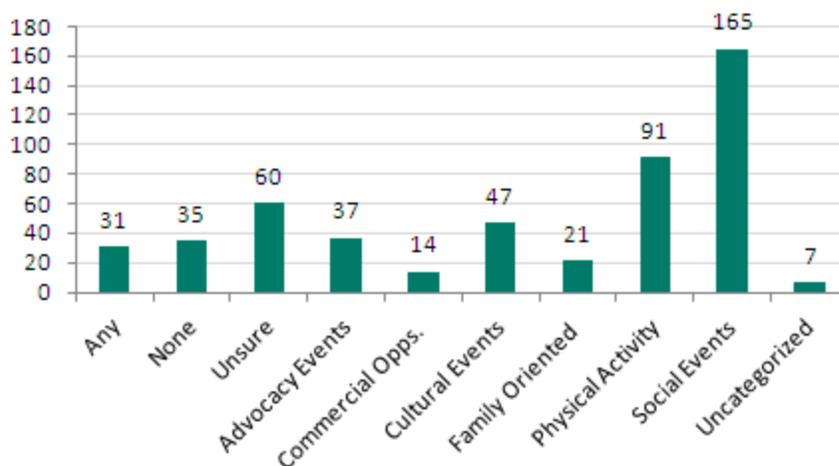
Why Don't You Attend Events in Your Neighborhood? (n=471)



When asked what types of neighborhood events they would attend, of 407 total responses, 325 could be placed into at least one of the following categories:

- Any
- None
- Unsure
- **Advocacy events**, including neighborhood watch and improvement meetings, neighborhood cleanups, wellness checks and fundraisers.
- **Commercial opportunities** including farmers' markets and neighborhood garage sidewalk sales.
- **Cultural events** include live music, parades, classes and historical tours.
- **Family-oriented events** include any event specifically geared towards children and families.
- **Physical activity**, including events such as neighborhood walks, runs, hikes, sports and fun days.
- **Social events**, including block parties, street dances, barbeques, picnics, potlucks and other social gatherings.
- **Uncategorized**; most uncategorized responses indicated that there are plenty of activities offered within the city and separate neighborhood activities are unnecessary.

What Types of Neighborhood Events Would You Attend? (n=407)



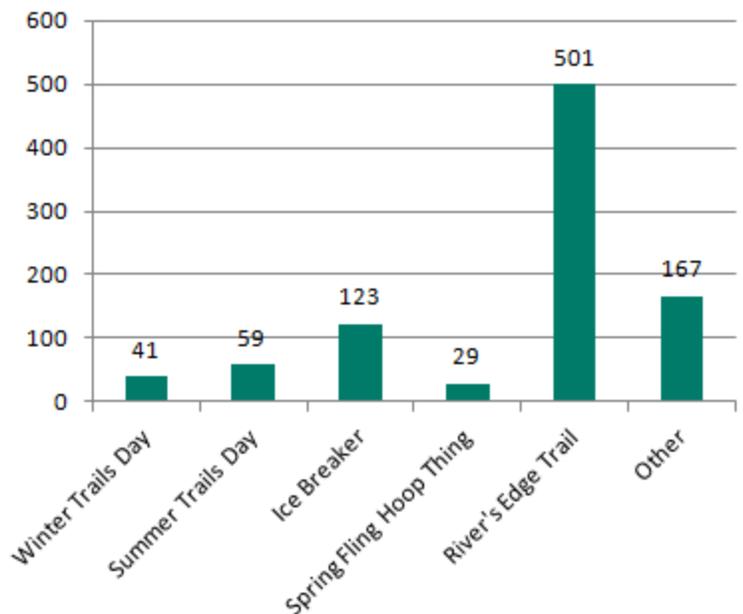
Community Involvement

Organized Community Physical Activity Events (15)

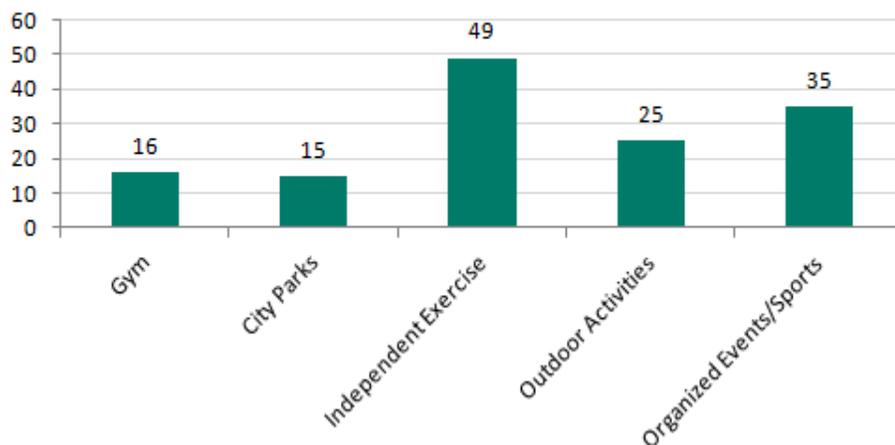
Respondents indicated which, if any, community events promoting physical activity they participated in during the last year. The majority of respondents (501) reported walking or biking on the River's Edge Trail. Over one quarter of respondents gave other answers; 81% of these could be placed in at least one of the following categories:

- **Gym**, including home, work and commercial fitness centers.
- **City parks**, includes any activities that specifically take place in a city park, including the dog park and skate park.
- **Independent exercise**, which includes activities done independently or in small groups, not organized by any specific agency or organization. These activities include, but are not limited to, walking, biking, golf and jogging.
- **Outdoor activities**, including activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, kayaking, gardening and skiing.
- **Organized events/sports**, which includes formally organized events that were not listed in the response choices such as Relay for Life, Harvest Thunder Triathlon, Burn the Bird and Senior Olympics. Organized sports are also included in this category.

Event Participation (n=608)



Which Other Events did You Participate in Over the Past Year? (n=167)



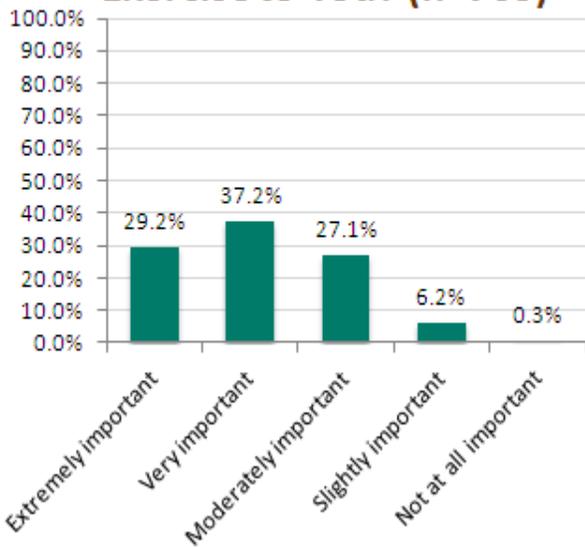
Physical Activity

Leisure Time Physical Activity

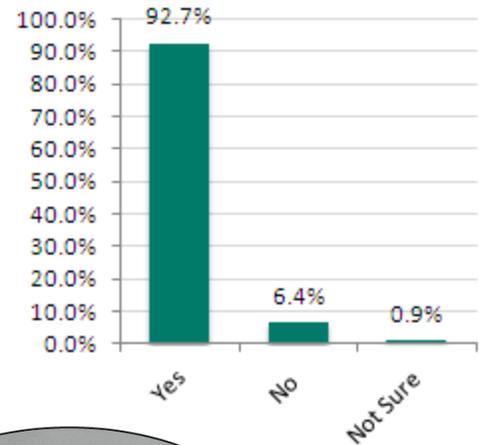
(27, 28, 29, 30)

Survey respondents were asked about their attitudes and habits regarding physical activity. Most respondents reported that exercise was at least moderately or very important, and over 90% report that they participated in some type of leisure time physical activity in the last month.

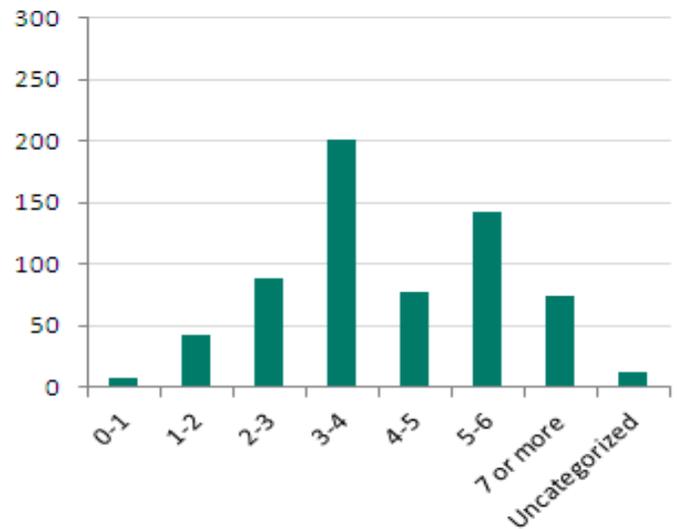
How Important is Exercise to You? (n=763)



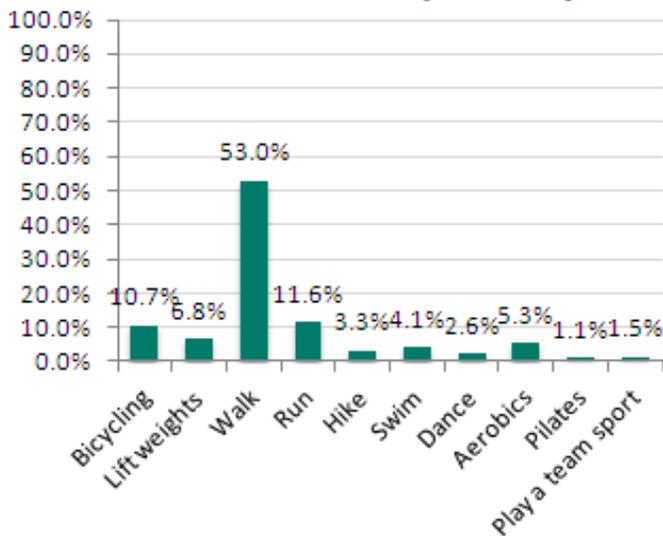
Leisure Time Physical Activity (n=762)



How Many Times do You Exercise in One Week? (n=650)



What Do You Most Often Do for Exercise? (n=662)



The majority of respondents (over 50%) reported that they walk most often for exercise. Common additional answers given, other than those listed, include gardening, golf, yoga, elliptical and Zumba.

Conclusion

Putting It All Together

The 2012 Health of Cascade County Report revealed that over 40% of our community's residents are overweight and over 23% are obese, making lowering obesity rates one of the top health priority areas identified in the 2011-2014 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).^{*} Many of the Neighborhood Survey's 39 questions were aimed at finding ways to address this issue in our community. Specific to this report are the respondents' experiences related to: 1) workplace wellness programs and 2) physical/recreational activity opportunities in and around their neighborhoods. These are two strategies for reaching objectives in the CHIP and are also top priorities for the Community Health Action Response Team's Community Action Plan (CAP). Further, these strategies for preventing obesity are recommended by the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In this first Neighborhood Survey Report, experiences and opinions of over 800 individuals who live and work in Great Falls and Cascade County were used to provide a snapshot of the fitness and recreation opportunities available in our community. Though the results are not generalizable to all city and county residents, they provide

Strength

Out of 608 responses, 501 indicated they used the River's Edge Trail at least once in the past year (p. 12).

Area for Improvement

The report indicates that more biking amenities can improve physical activity levels. Nearly one quarter (21%) of answers said that things such as bike paths, lanes and parking can improve physical activity levels within neighborhoods (p. 8).

insights into how workplace wellness programs can be improved and physical activity increased in our neighborhoods.

A few very specific and significant findings are apparent. Many respondents agree that more, improved and safer opportunities for walking and biking should be included with any city improvements. Another finding states that respondents feel there is not much opportunity for physical activity in their own neighborhoods. Many interesting suggestions were offered for potential improvements including bike lanes, paths and parking; sidewalk additions and repairs; and better access to amenities like the River's Edge Trail, walking paths and parks.^{*}

Moving Forward

It is essential to understand the issues and areas of concern that exist in our community so that information can be put to use to make improvements. The data can be used to identify what resources and barriers to physical activity do and do not exist in our neighborhoods. This information may assist our citizens and leaders to make informed decisions regarding policies that might be implemented to improve Cascade County residents' quality of life. Results may influence future decisions on other key points in the CHIP, such as establishing joint-use agreements among public and private facilities for increased physical activity or recreational use. Additionally, this information can help Cascade City-County Health Department realize their

Conclusion

Strength

Nearly three quarters (74.5%) of respondents say their employer offers a worksite wellness program. Approximately half (49.3%) have access to a fitness center, a gym or physical activity classes at work (p. 9).

Area for Improvement

Only 38.7% of respondents indicate their workplaces even “slightly often” encourage non-motorized commutes. Use of stairs is only even “slightly encouraged” by 28% of employers (p. 10).

vision of Healthy People in a Healthy Community by encouraging passage of a Complete Streets policy and supporting worksite wellness programs throughout the county.

It will take a collective shift in political will to make

substantial changes in the culture of our communities. We know from the experiences of other communities that certain activities are essential parts to successfully achieve a healthier community. In order to increase physical activity communities must be safe and supportive of physical activity. Organizing for change makes the cultural shift happen. These two management categories encompass many of the best strategies such as:

- Improving safety and access to outdoor recreation facilities, including traffic safety.
- Enhancing infrastructure for bicycles and walking.*
- Creating zones for mixed-use development, as in the Complete Streets programs.*
- Organizing for change with coalitions and partnerships allowing various

sections and individuals within the community to come together and provide valuable input and consensus for “what needs change” and “how to logically go about change.”*

This survey information further aids the collaborative efforts of Cascade County, the City of Great Falls, the Get Fit Great Falls coalition, the Community Health Action Response team and many other partners as they continue to address residents’ needs and concerns towards improvements in our community. Continuing assessment and identification of the strengths and weaknesses in the area is important in making Cascade County a healthier and safer place to live!

Periodic future neighborhood surveys will encourage a continuous assessment of residents’ attitudes and experiences towards addressing the health and safety needs in our community. These surveys provide valuable information for the strategies used in the continual march towards fulfilling the current and future objectives and strategies, which, in addition to reducing obesity and its associated risks, will improve the quality of life for residents in Great Falls and Cascade County.

Area for Improvement

Forty-eight percent of respondents never attend a neighborhood event. The biggest reason—228 of 471 responses—was that none are offered (p. 11).

Ideas for Improvement

Of 407 respondents, only 35 said they would attend no events; 375 different ideas for neighborhood events were given (p.11).

References

City-County Health Department. (2011). "2011 Cascade County Community Health Assessment." Cascade County, MT. [http://www.cchdmt.org/UserFiles/File/2011%20Cascade%20County%20Community%20Health%20Assessment\(1\).pdf](http://www.cchdmt.org/UserFiles/File/2011%20Cascade%20County%20Community%20Health%20Assessment(1).pdf).

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