



## RAMSEY PARKS & RECREATION

Summary of Recreation Opportunities Survey

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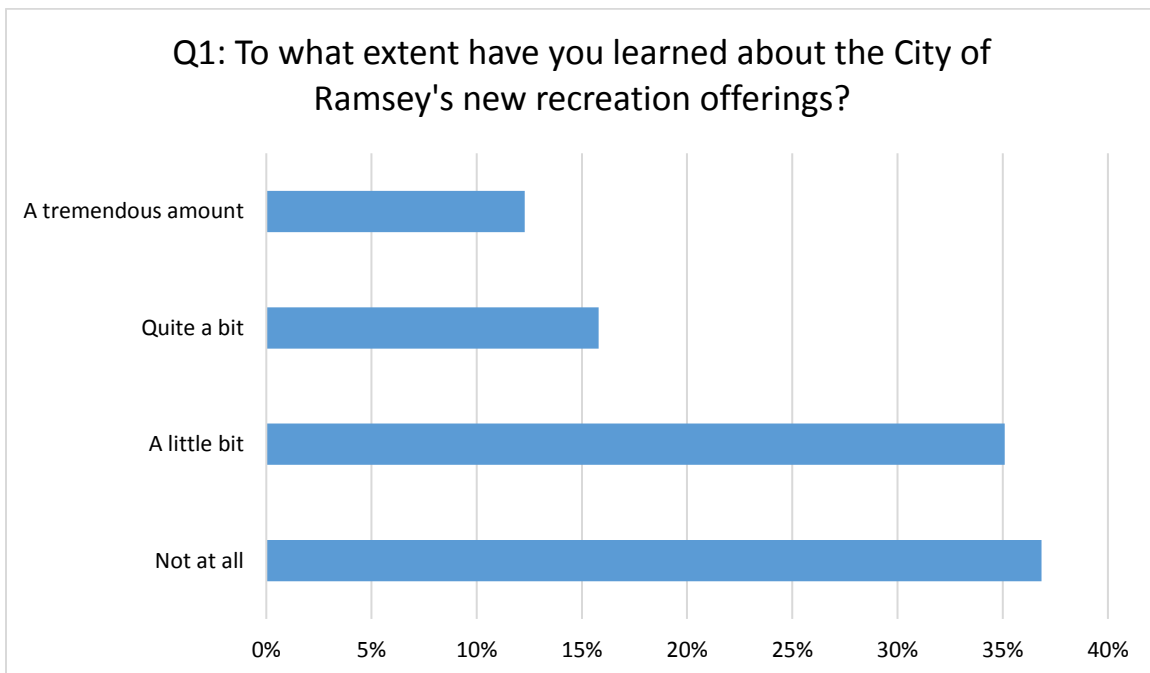
## BACKGROUND

A general questionnaire was created to determine the types of recreation programs community members would like to see the City of Ramsey offer. The survey was administered via the online website SurveyMonkey and was posted on the City website on the park events page. A total of 57 respondents completed the questionnaire between March and November 2017, with a majority of responses collected in March 2017. This response rate is approximately 3% of the total program participants in 2017.

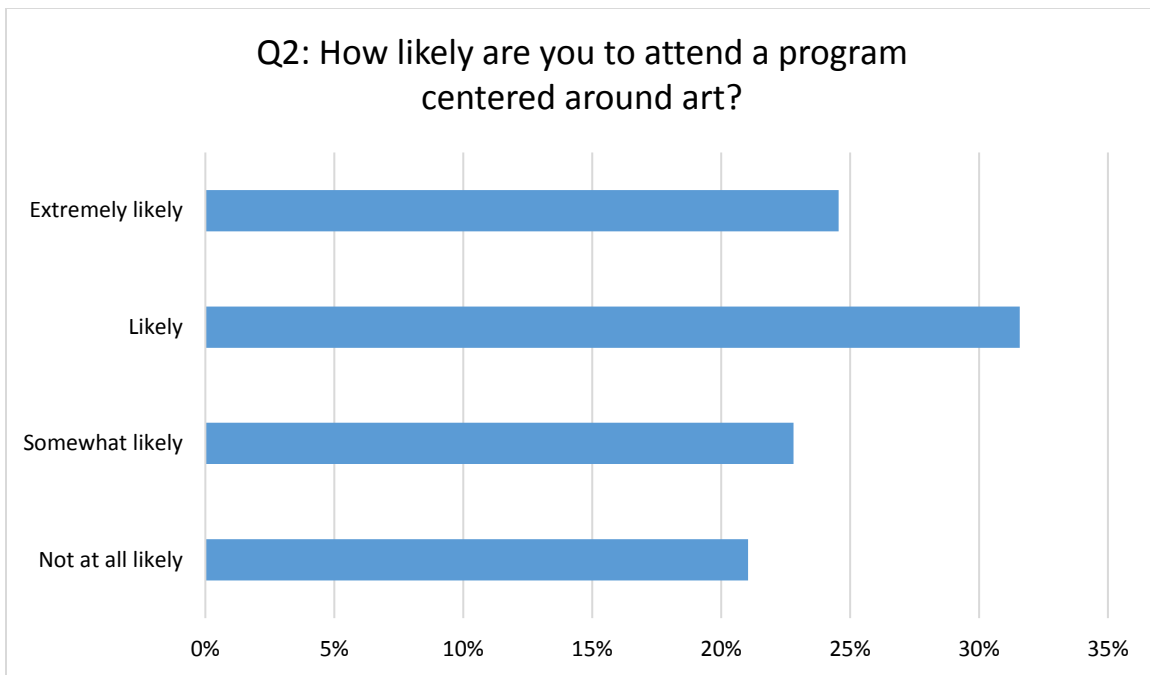
Although the results can be useful in planning the future of recreation programs in Ramsey, it must be taken into account that this data is not representative of the population as a whole. Since the questionnaire was posted on the park events webpage, most respondents were likely previous participants or those that had visited the website to learn about current offerings. All questionnaires were anonymous to aid in yielding honest responses.

The first portion of this report shows results for multiple choice questions, with the second portion being the open-ended question, “What would you like to see the City offer in terms of recreation programs?” Respondents were required to answer all 10 questions in the recreation opportunities survey and the open-ended question was also required for all post-event questionnaires.

When analyzing the open-ended question, key words were counted to determine the weight respondents put on various areas. The top ten recurring words were: yoga (23), kids (16), parks (14), fitness (12), outdoors (10), sports (10), activities (8), classes (8), art (8), and community (7). Results are visualized on the cover page, with larger words having greater weight. While this shouldn’t be a means to determine what to offer, it does provide insight into what people are looking for the City to offer.



With a majority of respondents completing the questionnaire in March 2017 (just two months after light programming began), it seems reasonable that just over 35% had learning “nothing at all” regarding recreation offerings, while 12% had learned “a tremendous amount.” In the future, it would be beneficial to determine which outlets people have learned about City offerings as well as their preferred outlets (i.e. Facebook, emails, Ramsey Resident, mailings, etc.). Staff could also benefit to see how this data changes over time, especially following various marketing initiatives or special events.



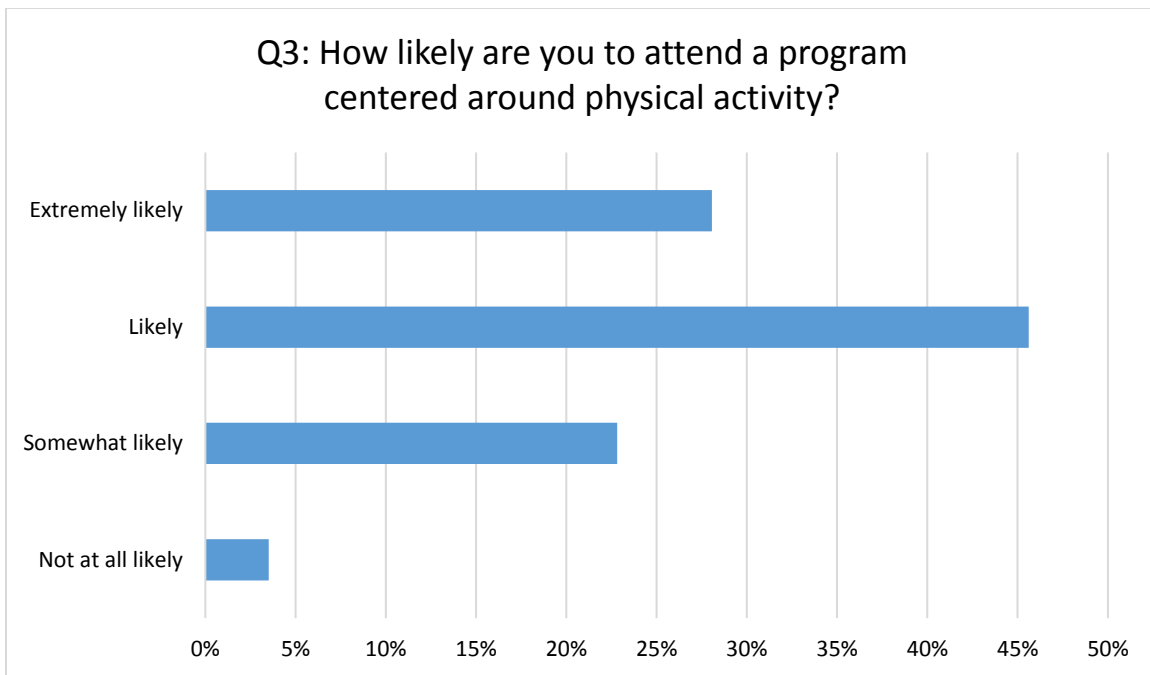
With over half of respondents saying they would be “likely” or “extremely likely” to attend an art program, it is worthwhile to offer various art classes for different ages. There are not many options for residents to pursue art in the area outside of school programs and personal endeavors.

Survey responses for individual Art in the Park classes show positive feedback for previous offerings. In 2017, free youth art classes were offered in conjunction with The Draw Sumer Event Series. Nearly 90% of respondents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the program content. Feedback was very positive, with highlights included below:

- We love art in the park! Great way to learn and meet friends in our community! \*BONUS\* no cost! We are [grateful]!!!
- Excellent art project that taught us a new way to watercolor and was so easy for all ages
- This was a great project for a variety of ages. I wish that I could have done it with my daughters!
- We love all the art events at the Draw And, the free art in the park events are amazing!! Thank you!

Art classes were offered throughout the year and all but one (wine and canvas night) were open to people of all ages. One participant of the June plein air painting class remarked, “I have always been afraid to do some plein air painting but this little intro was perfect to get me started. Very low key relaxed atmosphere.” Survey results seem to show that people want introductory classes that require little to no previous experience. Participants are focused on learning something new and having fun, rather than creating a high quality piece of art. Family-based and youth classes are also popular options, as offerings are affordable and inclusive.

Some classes had lower attendance than others, showing which areas may be of less interest to the community. Classes that may seem intimidating or requiring skill (such as stained glass) were cancelled due to low registration. This was noted and similar classes are not being offered in 2018. But as programming expands, there may be a small market for unique, skills-based art classes.



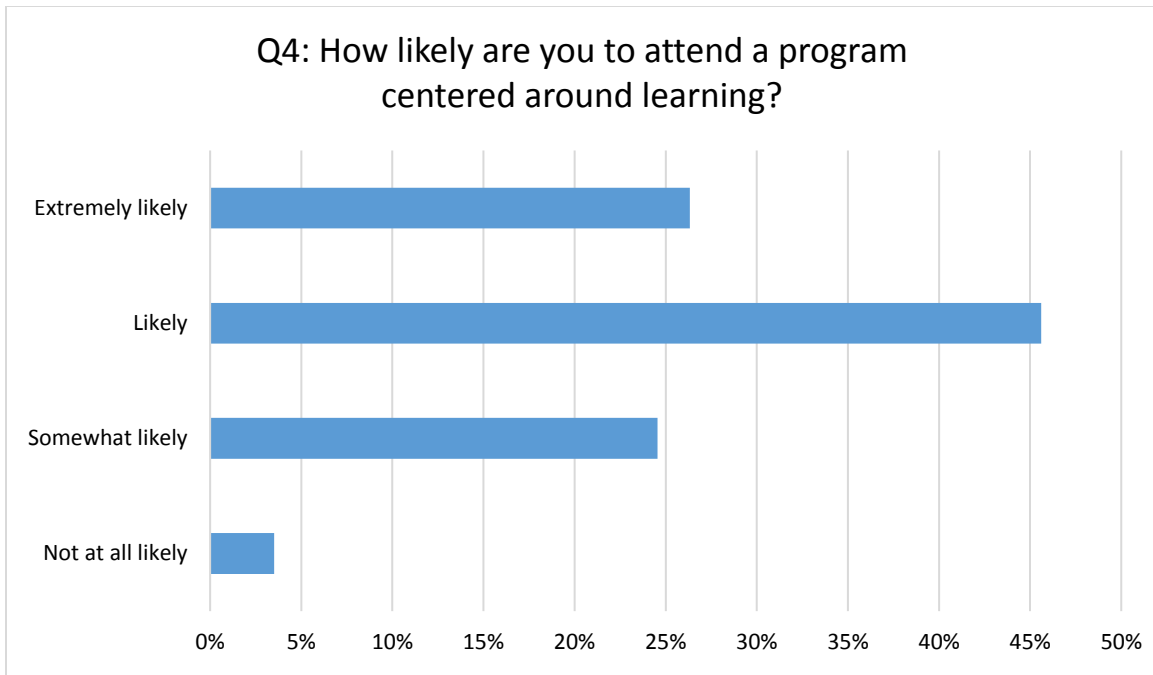
Without a public community or recreation center in Ramsey, residents have few options for formal fitness programming outside of the often specialized private sector. Every questionnaire includes the question, “What would you like to see the City offer in terms of recreation programs?” And many responses relate to formal physical activity, ranging from yoga and walking clubs to group fitness and a recreation center. This feedback shows the need to offer fitness programming, but finding a facility can be difficult. Realistically, only yoga and similar are the only classes that can be offered at City Hall due to carpeting. All other classes, such as Zumba or kickboxing, must be held at park buildings or school gyms with hard flooring.

In 2017-2018, yoga was offered for up to three days per week and had attendance from five to over 30 people per session. Feedback was very positive regarding instructors. One participant said “this instructor is awesome. She presents in such a welcoming and fun way.” Most yoga participants who also completed surveys repeatedly asked for continuing and adding more yoga classes. Another respondent had attended numerous programs and said, “I enjoyed the yoga. I also enjoyed the movie in the park recently. I think it's great to see the increase in community activities. I've participated in the bird watching, movie in the park, and yoga. All have been wonderful. Thank you!”

Another fitness opportunity in 2017 was a Zumba class held July – October at PACT Charter School. While attendance was lower (three to twelve participants per session) it was well received. The fee was \$5 per class, which is lower than most gym or recreation centers would offer for a drop-in class rate. Participants appreciated the ability to pay for one session at a time, either ahead via credit card or day-of by cash or check.

Physical activity programs can also include youth sports and recreational adult leagues. Although the Anoka-Ramsey Athletic Association has a large number of participants, they do not offer introductory preschool-age programs. This is a potential area of exploration, as there is limited staffing and equipment needs. Adult recreational leagues are an area that can be pursued in partnership with neighboring cities, but often require hiring and training referees/officials.

In the future, other fitness opportunities may include: Pilates, boot camps, strength, cardio kickboxing, aerobics, core, and senior-focused classes. Until there is a dedicated fitness/recreation facility, classes should require little to no equipment due to storage and transportation.

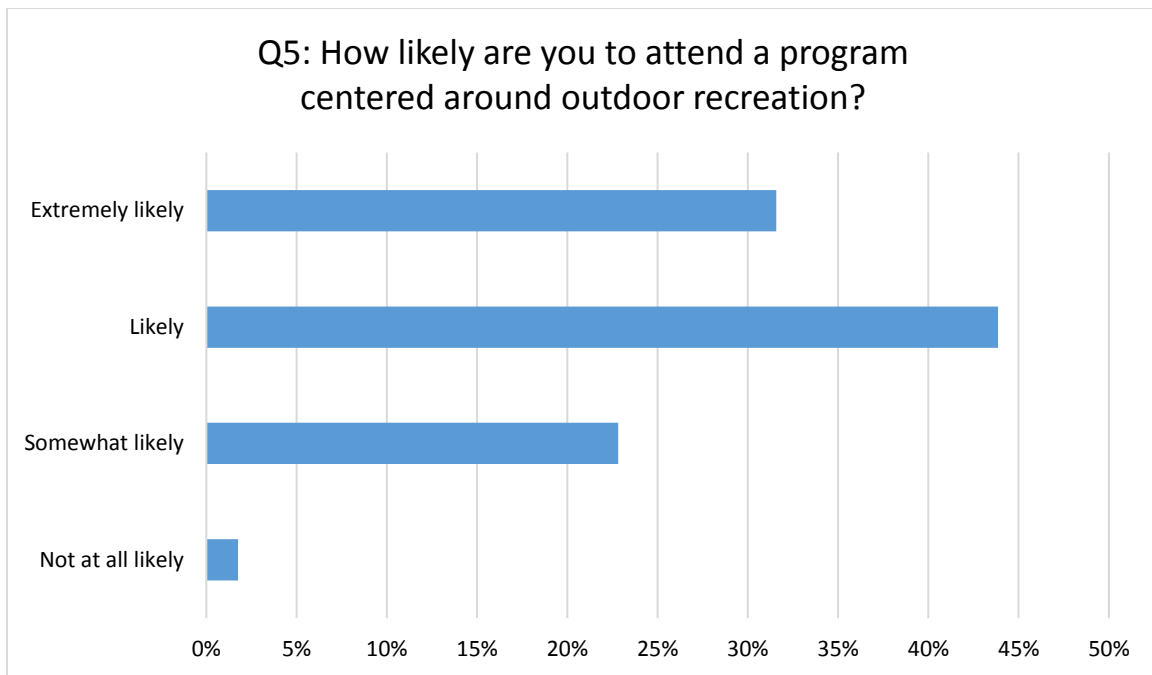


While opportunities for learning can include many different areas, most parks and recreation agencies focus learning/education-based programs on adults and seniors. When programs are catered to seniors or older adults, fees are often nominal to eliminate barriers to participation. One-fourth of survey respondents said they are “extremely likely” to attend a program centered on learning, which shows this could be a reasonable path to follow for future programs.

Senior or 55+ programs are a popular category to add for education and general programs, since that is a growing segment of the population that wants to stay active and involved in their community. Potential areas of education programs could include defensive driving, personal finance, a history series, nutrition, health and wellness, among others. Some senior centers offer programs for older adults and their care givers on topics such as offering care or a support group for those with memory loss.

Another avenue is outdoor or nature education. Offering a Lunch with a Naturalist series could be popular, as some cities or nature centers offer it on a monthly or even weekly basis. Wargo Nature Center offers this program and has a different topic for each session. The following is from their website:

Bring your lunch and join a naturalist for our Lunch with a Naturalist series. These monthly presentations will include local natural history information and possibly a relaxing stroll on the trails at Wargo. Any equipment that may be needed will be provided. Pre-registration is not required.



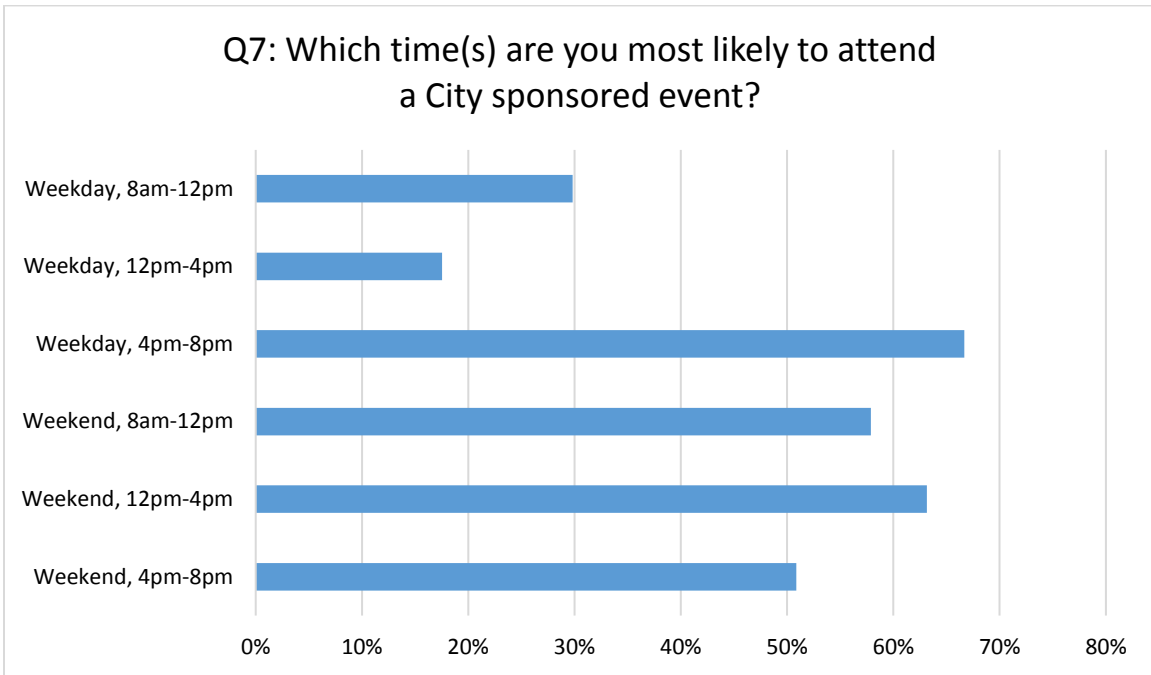
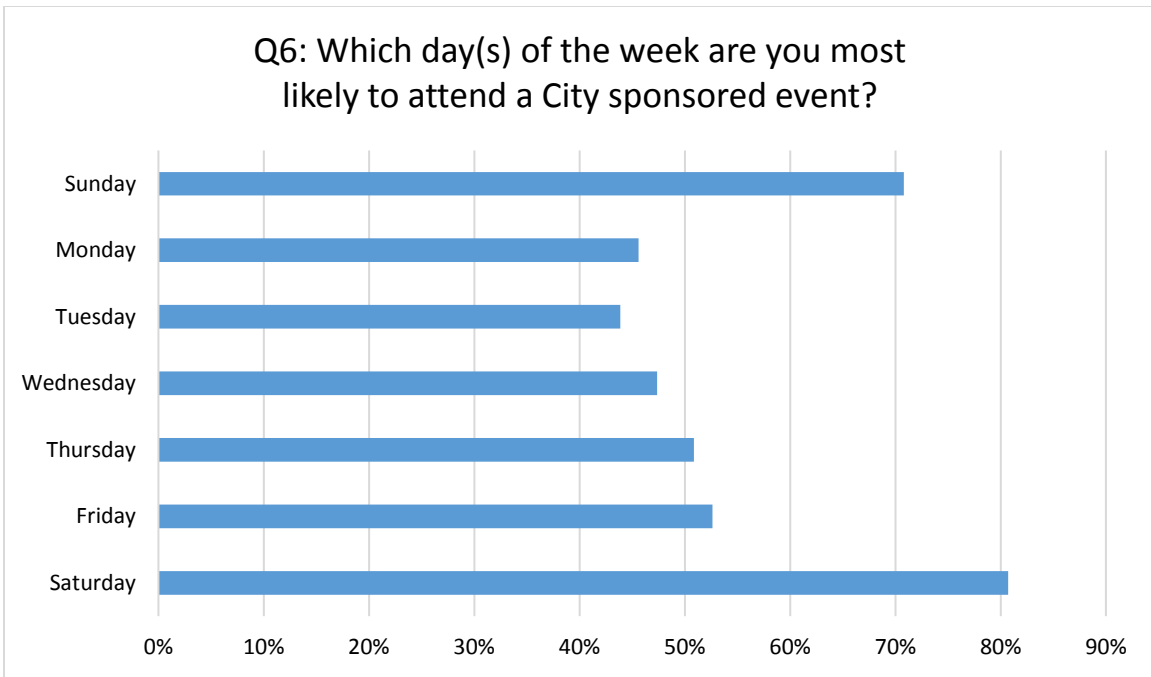
Outdoor recreation is a major program area for recreation agencies, especially in Minnesota. Over 70% of respondents say they are “likely” or “extremely likely” to attend an outdoor recreation program. Ramsey has ample parks and open space that can host such programs, but the difficult aspect is finding instructors and any potential equipment needs.

In 2017, a few outdoor recreation opportunities were offered in partnership with Anoka County Parks and staff at Wargo Nature Center. Classes offered included birding, canoeing, kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding. The birding class was offered three times in the spring when there is minimal tree coverage. It was held at Lake Itasca trailhead, Rum River Central Park, and Sunfish Lake Park. While there was low attendance, it received very positive feedback. One participant said, “[the instructor’s] obvious personal interest in birding was inspiring,” while another said “staff was very personable and knowledgeable. He was patient considering my son (age 12) had to attend as well and was somewhat distracting. He was patient and shared relevant information.”

The stand-up paddleboarding class had full participation with seven people. It was held at Sunfish Lake Park and Anoka County Parks brought paddleboards, paddles, and life jackets. The instructor taught the basics and ensure all were comfortable on the water. They then moved into more free-time and exploring the lake. One person said it was “lots of fun. Two hours was just the perfect amount of time as was the Sunfish Lake location.” Numerous participants said the instructor was “terrific, knowledgeable, patient, and very helpful.” The kayaking class was cancelled due to weather.

Although Anoka County Parks received positive feedback, it was difficult to schedule and work with them as their programs must come first. Their staff was not always receptive on expanding programming to Ramsey parks. Due to this, they are not currently a 2018 partner and a new instructor was selected for the 2018 stand-up paddleboarding classes.

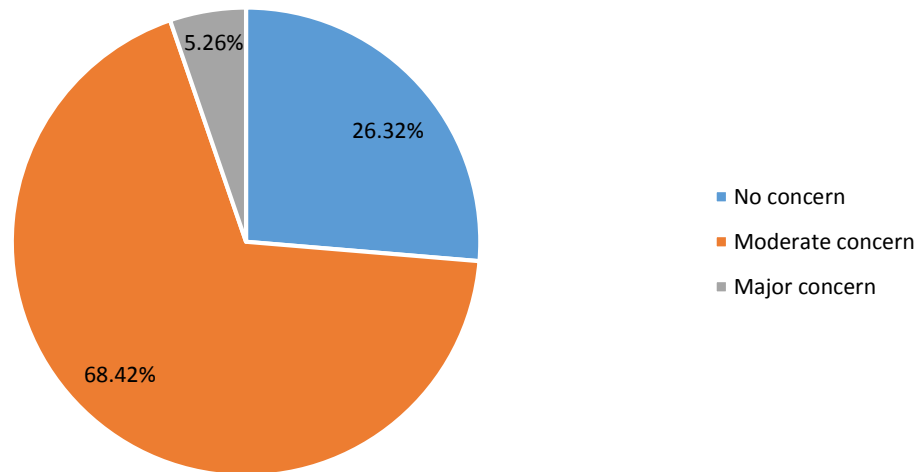
In the future, assuming instructor and equipment availability works out, potential outdoor recreation programs could include: canoeing/kayaking, camping, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, nature walks, fishing, birding, maple syruping, or full moon hikes. For some programs, it may be beneficial to structure it as a special event in order to increase attendance.



Although these responses can give some insight into which days and times may be best suited for programs, it will also depend on the target demographics and instructor/facility availability. Some programs will have a best suited time of day, such as mornings or evenings for outdoor summer sports and fitness. While others may have attendance vary based on the season.

Elmcrest Park is often unavailable on weekends in the summer due to soccer and graduation parties or other groups reserving the community building.

### Q8: How much of a concern is program cost?



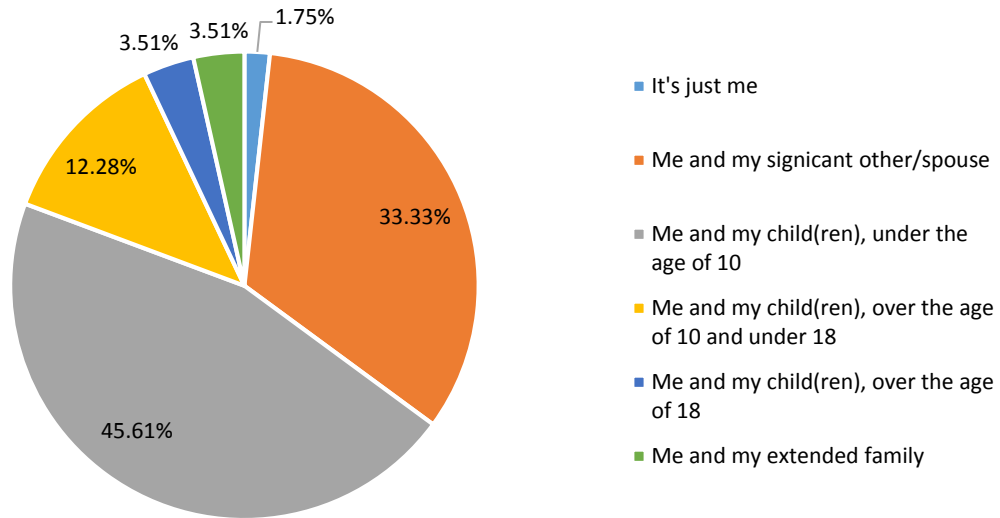
Fee-setting is another concern for future programming. In 2017, most programs were free or low cost compared to neighboring organizations. This was in hopes of increasing attendance for such new programs. Although 75% of respondents say program cost is a “moderate” or “major concern” this may be due to people not wanting to spend too much money on something when they don’t know what they will receive. This aspect of recreation programs should be continued to be evaluated, as fees can be a turning point or barrier for participation.

In 2016, annual wages in Ramsey was \$47,527, slightly under the average in Anoka County (\$49,918). Median household income was \$86,800 in Ramsey, compared to \$70,900 in Anoka County. In 2015, approximately 3.5% of Ramsey lived below the poverty level (income of \$24,250 per year for a family of four), 4.5% between 100% and 149%, and 5.2% between 150% and 184% of the poverty line. Overall, Ramsey residents are in a good financial position, which shows that people are more likely to participate in fee-based recreation programs.

The fee-setting pyramid is a tool to determine pricing, which includes the following factors: access, responsibility, anticipated impacts, social value, and benefit. Benefit is the largest consideration, with programs providing the most *community* benefit having the lowest fees and cost recovery and programs with the most *individual* benefit having highest fees and cost recovery.

Another aspect to consider is establishing a fee-assistance program. Many agencies offer financial assistance to those who qualify, but there is not a uniform policy as communities have varying needs and available resources. Fee assistance is necessary to allow all users who want to participate in a program do so. Eliminating economic barriers is key to growing an involved community, as well as enriching people’s lives through parks and recreation. Communities may fund these programs through community foundations, grants, sponsors, or other program revenues.

### Q9: Which best describes your family in Ramsey?



Ramsey is the second fastest growing city in Anoka County and is increasingly becoming a place to call home for younger families. A majority (nearly 80%) of survey respondents describe their family as “me and my significant other/spouse” or “me and my child(ren), under the age of 10.” This shows there could be opportunities for family-based programs or community events, such as a summer or winter kids/family fest. A great number of survey respondents, both from the recreation opportunities and general program surveys, stated they wanted youth and family activities. One response that sticks out is from a parent expressing interest in “a recreational center (YMCA) as [they] currently drive to the Y in Elk River or Andover. [They] live in Ramsey, but unfortunately have to support businesses and programs in the other cities because Ramsey is so lacking in family/child oriented programs and facilities.”

Age groups often classify programs, as program categories can be standard throughout the lifespan. Preschool is typically ages 1-5 years, youth ages 5-12 years, and teen ages 12-18 years. Most recreation agencies seem to focus on preschool and youth programs, although teen programs may be offered if they have a teen center.

According to 2015 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 29.95% of Ramsey’s population is under the age of 20. This is a large group that could benefit from recreation programming, as the primary recreation activities for youth in the area are private sports associations or school activities.

### Population by Age

