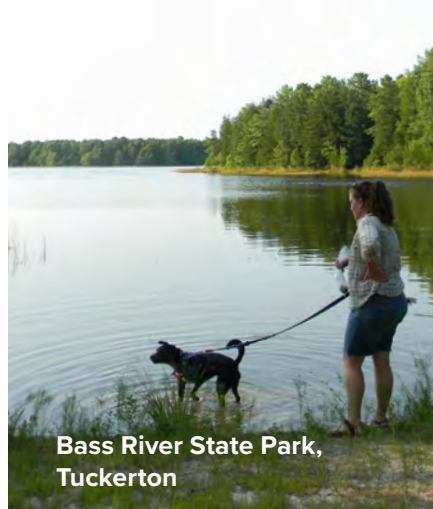




Colonial Park,
Franklin Township



Bass River State Park,
Tuckerton



Cavallo Park, Lambertville



Wiggins Waterfront Park,
Camden

2023–2027

Outside, Together!

A STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR
RECREATION PLAN FOR NEW JERSEY

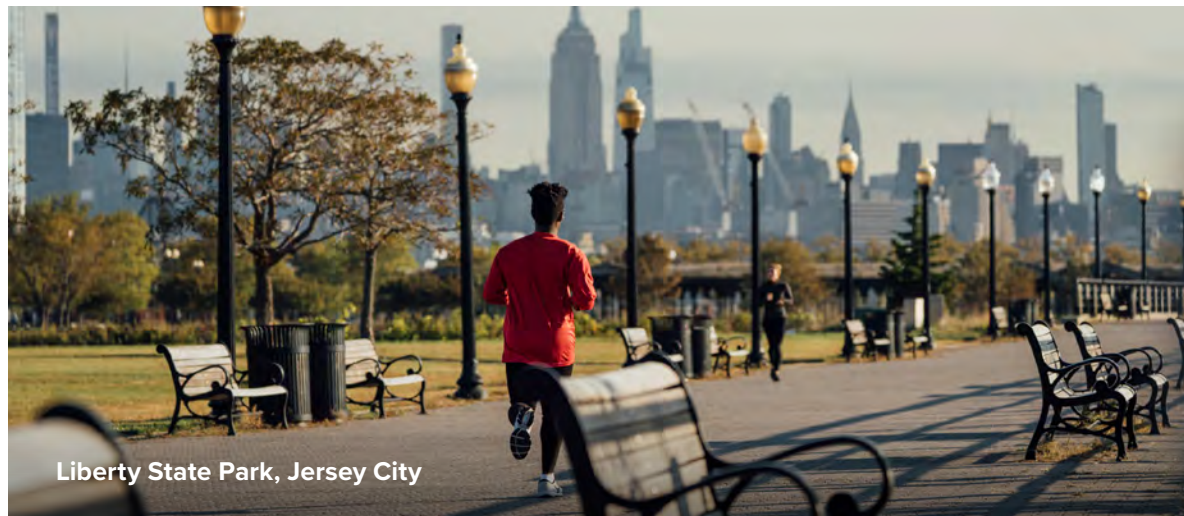
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
GREEN ACRES PROGRAM



Atlantic City Beach



Long Pond Ironworks
State Park, Hewitt



Liberty State Park, Jersey City



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Philip D. Murphy, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Shawn M. LaTourette, Commissioner

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Elizabeth Dragon, Assistant Commissioner

Priya Ratanpara, Project Manager

GREEN ACRES PROGRAM

Martha Sullivan Sapp, Director

December 2023



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, NW

Washington, DC 20240

1.1.B(2225)

(via email)

March 1, 2024

Honorable Philip D. Murphy
Governor of New Jersey
PO Box 001
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

We have reviewed the 2023-2027 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). We are pleased to inform you that we have approved this 5-year plan for outdoor recreation management, conservation, and development, including the Open Project Selection Process attached as a supportive document to the SCORP. Therefore, New Jersey has continued eligibility to receive and distribute federal funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program until December 31, 2027.

We wish to commend New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection- Green Acres Program staff for their efforts during the planning process and on the production of a high-quality document. Our hope is that the implementation of this plan will be beneficial to New Jersey's outdoor recreation needs and that additional efforts to maintain an ongoing, effective, and comprehensive outdoor recreation planning program will proceed in a timely and efficient manner. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the State in implementing the SCORP and in administering the LWCF financial assistance program.

Sincerely,

LAUREN IMGRUND
Digitally signed by LAUREN IMGRUND
Date: 2024.03.01 17:00:28 -05'00'

Lauren S. Imgrund
Associate Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement
National Park Service

cc: Ms. Elizabeth Dragon, State Liaison Officer, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection-
Green Acres Program
Missy Morrison, Acting Chief of State and Local Assistance Programs, National Park Service



State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 001

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0001

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

November 17, 2023

Mr. Charles F. Sams III
Director, National Park Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C St NW, Washington, DC 20240

Re: New Jersey's 2023-2027 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Dear Director Sams:

I am pleased to transmit *Outside, Together!*, the approved Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) developed by the New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection. This plan represents a significant milestone in ongoing efforts to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for all residents of New Jersey.

I certify that ample opportunity for public participation has taken place throughout the development of the SCORP. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has actively engaged with various stakeholders, including community members, organizations, and agencies, to ensure their voices were heard and their valuable input was incorporated into the final document. This inclusive approach has allowed New Jersey to create a plan that truly reflects the diverse needs and desires of our state's population.

This SCORP will serve as a guiding framework for future outdoor recreation initiatives, promoting accessibility, sustainability, and inclusivity. By implementing the strategies outlined in the SCORP, we aim to foster a deeper connection between our residents and the natural beauty our state has to offer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phil Murphy".

Philip D. Murphy, Governor



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lt. Governor

401 East State Street, 4TH Floor
P.O. Box 402, Mail Code 401-04
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0402
Tel. (609) 633-7000 • Fax (609) 633-1421
www.nj.gov/dep

SHAWN M. LATOURETTE
Commissioner

November 21, 2023

Dear New Jerseyans,

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is committed to protecting New Jersey's environment and providing high-quality, close-to-home recreation and open space opportunities for all New Jerseyans. I am excited to share *Outside, Together!* New Jersey's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan that we have developed with our partners after listening to you—New Jersey's residents—about how we can help improve your quality of life.

I want to extend my deepest appreciation to the dedicated members of the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee and the DEP, as well as the many advocates, stakeholders, and volunteers who have been tireless partners throughout the *Outside, Together!* process. Your contributions have been invaluable, and I am grateful for your unwavering support.

This plan, developed in collaboration with diverse voices and perspectives, sets forth a comprehensive 5-year strategy to meet and invest in our recreation and conservation needs statewide. We will prioritize the shared principles of expanding open space, enhancing environmental stewardship and conservation, prioritizing climate resilience, furthering equity by understanding the needs of our communities, and implementing innovative technology for a sustainable and resilient environment.

We recognize that our natural resources hold essential value in enhancing our state's economic well-being, promoting physical and emotional health, addressing social inequalities, and nurturing our spirit. Our commitment to outdoor recreation and conservation is an essential step towards building a stronger, more resilient, and equitable New Jersey for all.

While thorough planning is important, we know that, to achieve New Jersey's recreation and open space goals, it is vital that we continue to work together. It is only by building relationships and maintaining partnerships that we will ensure that New Jersey remains a wonderful place to live, work, and play for generations to come. As partners, we must be innovative in addressing environmental stewardship, land management, equity, funding, and technological challenges.

Therefore, let us work together to ensure every New Jerseyan has access to open space, a healthy environment, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. To explore additional opportunities for further collaboration, please do not hesitate to reach out to us through our Green Acres program on our website at www.NJGreenAcres.org by phone at (609) 984-0500 or by email at GreenAcres@dep.nj.gov.

My team and I look forward to working with you to ensure that New Jersey's special recreation and conservation resources can be enjoyed by all!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Dragon

Elizabeth Dragon

State Liaison Officer, National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
Chairwoman, Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee
Assistant Commissioner, Community Investment & Economic Revitalization, DEP

Acknowledgements

The following New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and State of New Jersey staff contributed to the preparation of the New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan:

OUTSIDE, TOGETHER! PARTNERSHIP

Elizabeth Dragon, Assistant Commissioner, DEP Community Investment and Economic Revitalization

Martha Sullivan Sapp, Director, DEP Green Acres Program

Priya Ratanpara, Project Manager, DEP Community Investment and Economic Revitalization

John Cecil, Assistant Commissioner, State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

David Golden, Assistant Commissioner, DEP Fish & Wildlife

BUREAU OF CLIMATE RESILIENCE & PLANNING

Nathaly AgostoFilion

Nick Angarone

Courtney Wald-Wittkop

BUREAU OF FRESHWATER WETLANDS & HIGHLANDS PERMITTING

Ryan Anderson

DIVISION OF BUDGET AND FINANCE

Hunter Nelson

Matt Parsons

DIVISION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Richard Hyjack

Peter Tenebruso

GREEN ACRES PROGRAM

Sharon Cost

Patrick Harlow

Fawn McGee

Mackenzie Piggott

Kimberly Rennick

John Thomas

FISH & WILDLIFE

Kathy Clark

Nancy Fury

Carole Stanko

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Kate Marcopul

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Mandy Futey

Kelley Heck

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS & DEVELOPMENT

Michael Russell

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH AND ANALYSIS

Alec Ayers

Pretti Kevin

Christine Schell

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Kandyce Perry

STATE PARKS, FORESTS & HISTORIC SITES

Robin Madden

Ben Trotter

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OFFICE OF INNOVATION

Edward Paulino, Innovation Fellow

Also assisting in the preparation of the 2023–2027 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan were the following individuals and organizations:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tricia Aspinwall, The Nature Conservancy,
New Jersey Chapter
Renata Barnes, Outdoor Equity Alliance & Friends
of Hopewell Valley Open Space
Gina Berg, New Jersey Pinelands Commission
William Caruso, Citizen
Jennifer Coffey, Association of New Jersey
Environmental Commissions
Tanya Dinova, Monmouth County Park System
William Foelsch, New Jersey Recreation
and Park Association
Apolonia Galie, Lower Forge Brewery
Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Highlands Council
John Hasse, Rowan University, Department
of Geography & Environment
Tom Hennigan, Jersey Off Road Bicycle Association
Lawrence Herrighty, New Jersey Outdoor Alliance
Jason Howell, Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Alex Ireland, New Jersey Audubon (2023)
Victor Klymenko, Borough of Roselle,
Director of Economic Development
Quinton Law, Camden Community Partnership
James Lyons, Economic Development &
Environmental Commissions of West Milford
Township
Taylor McFarland, Sierra Club
Juan Melli, Team Wilderness
Isabel Molina, New Jersey League of
Conservation Voters

Eileen Murphy, New Jersey Audubon (2022)
Dennis Toft, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce
Jay Watson, New Jersey Conservation Foundation
Donald Weise, New York–New Jersey
Trail Conference
Williams, Bryan, East Coast Enduro Association

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND TEAM

Scott Dvorak, New Jersey State Director
Heidi Cohen, Senior Program Manager
Joana Clark, New Jersey Senior Coordinator
Field/Operations Support
Jen Clinton, Senior Parks and Conservation
Economist
Justin Denis, Camden Program Director
Bryanna Fogel, Project Associate
Stephanie Flynn, Federal Grants Manager
Max Gray, Institutional Giving Director
Donna Kirkland, Senior Director of
Community Engagement
Will Klein, Associate Director, Parks Research
Linda Hwang, Senior Director, Strategy
and Innovation
Meera Velu, Parks and Conservation Planner
Kristen Weil, Senior Program Manager
for Geospatial Analysis
Lindsay Withers, Senior Cartography Manager
Jennifer Yip, 10-Minute Walk Campaign Manager

DESIGN

Miya Su Rowe, Rowe Design House

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The preparation (updating, revision) of this plan (study, analysis, etc.) was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578) as amended.

Legal Authority

New Jersey receives authorization to participate in the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program under provisions of N.J.S.A. 13:1B-65 and 13:1D-9(r). These state in part that "the Department of Environmental Protection shall in addition to the power and duties vested in it by this act or any other law have the power to, with the approval of the Governor, cooperate with, apply for, review and expend funds for the Federal Government."

The LWCF is administered in New Jersey by the State Liaison Officer (SLO) who is appointed by the Governor. The SLO for New Jersey is the Assistant Commissioner for Community Investment and Economic Revitalization within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). As SLO, the Assistant Commissioner has the authority and responsibility to apply for, accept and administer funds received from the federal government and used to pay for approved LWCF projects.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
I. Introduction	4
II. SCORP Vision	8
III. SCORP Planning Process – <i>Outside, Together!</i>	14
IV. New Jersey Now – Trends in Outdoor Recreation Participation & Conservation	18
PRINCIPLES	32
V. Principle 1: Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors.	34
VI. Principle 2: Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space.	42
VII. Principle 3: Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation . .	50
VIII. Principle 4: Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation.	56
IX. Principle 5: Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation	64
X. Principle 6: Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity	72
XI. Funding Opportunities.	78
XII. Project Selection.	82
APPENDICES	92
Appendix A: New Jersey Wetlands	93
Appendix B: New Jersey Land and Water Conservation Fund Projects.	94
Appendix C: New Jersey Residents’ Participation in and Attitudes Toward Outdoor Recreation	95
Appendix D: 2023 New Jersey Outdoor Recreation Focus Group Protocol and Summary	261
Appendix E: Access to New Jersey’s Outdoor Recreation Areas	273
Appendix F: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum	283
Appendix G: State of New Jersey: Department of Environmental Protection: Administrative Order 2022–12.	287
Appendix H: Executive Order 298	292
Appendix I: P.L. 2022, C. 76	296
Appendix J: Summary of Public Comment	306
References	310

Executive Summary

Outside, Together! A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for New Jersey (SCORP) serves as a framework for open space preservation and recreation planning in New Jersey. The SCORP provides direction on funding policies and priorities, supports funding requests, and guides statewide, regional, and local strategic planning across New Jersey.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), as the State's representative agency, has prepared the SCORP following the requirements of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. Updated every five years, the SCORP maintains the State's eligibility to receive funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) administered by the National Park Service (NPS), an agency within the United States (U.S.) Department of the Interior.

In keeping with prior SCORPs, the 2023–2027 SCORP was drafted to meet the following goals:

1. To assess the amount of open space available for current and future public recreational use and for the conservation of natural resources important to protecting New Jersey's biodiversity and quality of life;
2. To provide close to home park and recreation opportunities for residents statewide;
3. To present current information on the supply and demand for recreation and open space in New Jersey;
4. To implement open space and recreation planning policies and projects consistent with the State's environmental missions and goals;
5. To encourage open space and recreation planning by local governments and conservation organizations; and
6. To effectively use funds from the Garden State Preservation Trust, LWCF, Forest Legacy Program and other sources of funding which may become available.

In addition to these goals, this SCORP is guided by six principles as outlined in Administrative Order No. 2022–12, issued by DEP Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette in April 2022:

Outside, Together! Principles

- 1 Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors;
- 2 Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space;
- 3 Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation;
- 4 Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation;
- 5 Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation; and,
- 6 Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.

These principles distinguish the benefits the state's natural resources offer residents and also highlight the importance of ensuring these resources are accessible to all.

Public Participation

Public engagement was at the center of the preparation of the 2023-2027 SCORP. In April 2022, DEP Commissioner LaTourette signed Administrative Order 2022-12 outlining the importance of public involvement in drafting the SCORP. The Administrative Order directed the creation of an Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee to guide the development of New Jersey's SCORP and its recommendations. This Advisory Committee, consisting of stakeholders in outdoor recreation and conservation, identified challenges to and need for increasing and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities in the state.

The Administrative Order also directed selection of a consulting firm to assist with outreach, analysis, and development of the SCORP. After the DEP secured an NPS SCORP Planning Grant, DEP issued a request for consulting services, consequently selecting Trust for Public Land (TPL) as the consultant in September 2021.

Working with TPL, DEP held Advisory Committee meetings. Then, with TPL and survey research company Responsive Management, DEP reached out to New Jersey residents to ask for their perspectives and opinions on outdoor recreation and conservation. Over 15,000 residents provided information and comments in surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. Feedback gained from the community heavily informed this SCORP.

DEP further worked with TPL to complete geospatial analysis using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The maps created identify gaps in outdoor access and opportunities to guide New Jersey's ongoing conservation goals.

Through this outreach and research, this SCORP identifies opportunities and actions to further equity and environmental justice, climate resilience and sustainability, investments in ecotourism, technology in outdoor spaces, and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.

I. Introduction



New Jersey, lovingly known as the Garden State, is home to vibrant coastlines, dense forests, active farmlands, Wildlife Management Areas, over forty state parks, and thousands of neighborhood parks. These natural assets are critical to the health and vitality of the state. Open spaces promote improved water quality, reduce heat impacts through tree coverage, minimize flood damage, sustain biodiversity, and provide residents opportunities to engage with nature and enjoy outdoor recreation.

Since 2018, outdoor recreation and the use of public lands have increased exponentially throughout the country. This was especially true starting in 2020, when New Jersey residents found themselves spending more time outside due to COVID-19 restrictions. In 2021, outdoor recreation accounted for 1.5% of New Jersey's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equaling \$20.3 billion. Use of outdoor spaces continues to increase, with more and more residents taking advantage of the many open space resources the state has to offer.

The value of the state's natural resources is also strongly recognized and supported by New Jersey institutions. The state, despite being one of the most densely developed in the U.S., supports over 1.6 million acres of preserved open space and farmland, with about 10% of state land dedicated to parks, forests, historic sites, and other recreation areas.

As a committed leader in open space preservation, DEP will use this SCORP as the framework by which the state will continue to increase, improve, and support outdoor spaces and recreation for the next five years.

What is a SCORP

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a required planning document that qualifies the state for federal grant funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program managed by the National Park Service (NPS). The SCORP evaluates the supply of and demand for open space in the state and identifies outdoor recreation trends and issues. New Jersey must update the SCORP every five years to maintain LWCF program eligibility. The SCORP also serves as a framework to direct policy for federal and state open space acquisition and recreation funds.

The LWCF is one of the nation's most important programs for achieving this goal. LWCF protects land designated for national parks, wildlife refuges, forest, and trails; conserves working forests and ranchlands; supports local parks and playgrounds; preserves battlefields and other historic sites; and provides tools for communities to meet their diverse conservation and recreation needs. The LWCF does this through "Stateside" funding to support state park development and "Federal Side" funding to acquire lands for national parks.¹ "LWCF Stateside funding," or the State and Local Assistance program, also administers the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) grant program. LWCF Statewide funding provides matching grants to state and local governments for use in acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The ORLP grant program prioritizes projects located in economically disadvantaged areas lacking outdoor recreation opportunities, and the program supports creation of new outdoor recreation spaces and revitalization of existing parks to build close-to-home connections between people and the outdoors. New Jersey takes advantage of LWCF Stateside funding to create and maintain high-quality outdoor recreation areas throughout the state.

Preserving and Funding Open Space in New Jersey

The Green Acres program, administered by the DEP, is responsible for maintaining and distributing LWCF funds. From LWCF's inception in 1965, New Jersey has secured over \$136 million for open space acquisition and park recreation development. Through this funding, the state has completed 329 projects.

As the demand for outdoor recreation continues to grow, conservation and preservation of public lands are an essential part of building capacity for recreational spaces. In addition to managing LWCF funding, Green Acres also accomplishes its mission of open space preservation and recreational development by directing funds from state bonds and dedicated taxes. The Green Acres program has shown success from its start, consistently winning overwhelming support of voters for each of the 14 ballot measures, guaranteeing over \$3.3 billion in funding since 1961. The latest referendum, approved in 2014 with the help of a coalition of NGO partners (Keep It Green), also provides a Corporate Business Tax (CBT) dedication that permanently allocates 6% of collected taxes to open space, farmland, and historic preservation activities.

Green Acres was created in 1961 to effectively drive land preservation in the state. The program acquires open space and parkland for the state and also funds local land acquisition, park development, and stewardship projects across New Jersey. Areas of focus include improving urban parks, preserving historic sites, and protecting important state resource areas such as the Highlands, Pinelands, coastal zone, and natural heritage priority sites. The state land acquisition program was one of the first in the nation, underscoring New Jersey's early and enduring commitment to its natural resources.

Acquiring and preserving land in the Garden State is a complex and costly effort. To achieve open space protection for recreation and conservation, Green Acres fosters partnerships between local, state, and nonprofit entities by both coordinating with organizations and offering local and nonprofit grant programs with requirements for matching funds. Together with public and nonprofit partners, as of December 2022, Green Acres has directly protected 683,819 acres of open space and parkland and has funded 1,256 local and nonprofit park and stewardship projects in communities around the state.²

Green Acres also accomplishes preservation through the Tax Exemption Program. Established in 1974, the Tax Exemption Program offers certain nonprofits with ownership of natural open space properties a property tax exemption if they open their land to the public for recreation and conservation purposes. Through this program, 58 nonprofit organizations have made available more than 80,000 acres of open space to the public for recreational uses in 142 municipalities.

While Green Acres is one of the primary programs to administer funds and lead DEP preservation efforts, DEP accomplishes preservation goals through series of other mechanisms and programs:

- **Preserve New Jersey Act** – In addition to funding Green Acres' efforts, through the 2014 referendum and later legislation, the Act provides funding for stewardship and capital projects to be led and managed by DEP's State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites, and Fish & Wildlife programs. It also funds farmland preservation efforts by the Department of Agriculture and historic preservation planning and capital projects through the New Jersey Historic Trust.
- **Blue Acres** – Initiated in 1995, the Blue Acres program supports acquisition of flood damaged or flood prone homes, allowing the land to be converted to open space that acts as flood mitigation. As the state continues to experience stronger and more frequent storms resulting in increased flooding, the program has developed greater importance. After Superstorm Sandy in 2012 and Hurricane Ida in

2021, Blue Acres increased its efforts to aid residents in disaster recovery by purchasing damaged homes and properties.

- **Urban Parks funding** – Provided in the Fiscal Year 2021, Fiscal Year 2022, and Fiscal Year 2023 state budgets, this nonmatching grant funding is administered by Green Acres for land acquisition, park development, and historic preservation projects in Overburdened Communities.
- **New Jersey Trails Program** – established following the passage of the New Jersey Trails System Act in 1974, the Trails Program has helped to facilitate a network of trails to provide outdoor recreation and active transportation opportunities for all New Jersey residents, connecting residents to nature, to each other, and to the places where they live, work, play, and go to school. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 created the Recreational Trails Program, which has been administered by the New Jersey Trails Program since 1993, funding projects to develop, maintain, and restore trails and trail-related facilities throughout the state.

In addition to preserving land to support outdoor recreation in the state, New Jersey actively manages a State Park System that includes 40 state parks, 11 state forests, 5 recreation areas, 6 marinas, 4 golf courses and over 50 historic sites and districts encompassing nearly 454,000 acres of land. The State Park Service and State Park Police staffing and operating budgets are supported by New Jersey General Fund appropriations, and a portion of the Park System’s revenue is generated through camping and other recreational service fees. Additionally, the State Park Service and State Park Police pursue and secure various federal and state grants to enhance operating and programming services for the public. Such grants include the Federal Highway Administration Recreational Trails Program, National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund, New Jersey Homeland Security, and New Jersey Historic Trust funding.

New Jersey’s outdoor recreation system also includes 122 Wildlife Management Areas comprising 365,000 acres of land. New Jersey Fish & Wildlife manages these properties with revenues generated through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and with federal funds derived from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program. New Jersey Fish & Wildlife receives additional funding for management and public access projects from other outside grant programs such as North American Wetlands Conservation Act Grants, the New Jersey Department of Transportation’s I Boat NJ Program, and National Coastal Wetland Grants.

Through DEP programming and management, New Jersey has both preserved critical lands and waters for future generations and increased access to green spaces and parkland for urban and rural communities alike.



© CHRYSOTOPHER DAVIS

II. SCORP Vision



DEP has made great strides in protecting and preserving New Jersey’s natural, recreational, and historic resources, especially since the creation of the Green Acres program more than 60 years ago. These resources serve as spaces for outdoor recreation activities, which promote public health and improve the general welfare of New Jersey residents. As the environmental and social conditions of the state evolve, DEP has embarked on a process of adapting its approach to ensure that its goals meet current and future demand.

DEP’s mission is to safeguard and enhance New Jersey’s air, water, and land to protect the health of its residents and foster vibrant sustainable communities. Recognizing that DEP’s mission sits at the intersection of environmental, health, social, and economic improvement, Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette reorganized aspects of DEP between 2021 and 2022, establishing the Community Investment & Economic Revitalization (CIER) program within the Commissioner’s Office. While working in concert with traditional environmental media-based programs, CIER strengthens DEP’s overall investments in natural capital and community development to support sustainable economic growth that restores, preserves, and protects New Jersey’s natural, cultural, and historic resources consistent with DEP’s principle and priorities.

Through the formal recognition and reorganization of CIER in March 2022, DEP coalesced the Green Acres Program, Office of Natural Resource Restoration, Historic Preservation Office, Local Government Assistance, Community Collaborative Initiative, and Office of Economic Analysis and Development within the Commissioner’s Office to ensure the unification of DEP resources and focus areas to effectively address climate change, protect New Jersey’s water, revitalize the state’s communities, protect public health, and manage and promote natural and historic resources.

“The primary function of [DEP’s Community Investment & Economic Revitalization Program] is to strengthen investments in natural capital and support sustainable economic growth that restores, preserves, and protects natural, cultural, and historic resources while enhancing quality of life for all New Jerseyans.”

— AO 2022–12

With the same unified focus, the 2023-2027 SCORP vision was laid out through Commissioner LaTourette’s Administrative Order (AO) 2022–12 and a press conference on Earth Day 2022 ([Appendix G](#)). The AO 2022–12, which established the *Outside, Together!* initiative, underscores the importance of the SCORP as a comprehensive vision to unite the multi-tiered benefits of DEP’s conservation and outdoor recreation work. Importantly, the AO 2022–12 also defines six principles to guide the SCORP process.

The six principles direct DEP to look across all programs and environmental media in a comprehensive approach to achieve results valued by New Jerseyans and shaped by the regional characteristics of the state.



April 23, 2022 Earth Day Press Conference at Laurel Hill Park in Secaucus.

Outside, Together! Principles



Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors

DEP seeks to increase and ensure high-quality, safe, and easily accessible recreation and open space within a short walk, public transit ride, or drive from every neighborhood. New Jersey is a densely populated state that boasts numerous parks, outdoor recreation areas, and open spaces that give residents and visitors opportunities to decompress, celebrate special occasions, experience nature, and exercise. All New Jersey residents have the right to enjoy these outdoor resources, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, ability, economic status, and other diverse backgrounds. With relatively limited undeveloped land, New Jersey must be innovative in our natural resource and recreational planning. DEP believes it is important to collaborate with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and private partners to expand the acreage, quality of, and access to open space and recreation land. Investing in stewardship of our parks and open spaces is critical to improving the local environment and economy while providing health and quality of life benefits to residents.



Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space;

Climate change is an existential threat to our state. Maintaining New Jersey's existing natural lands and making targeted investments in open spaces are vital to the state's climate resilience. Through analysis of our assets and investments in infrastructure that provide ecosystem services, DEP can better promote the state's climate resilience. Proper stewardship of our parks, open spaces, forests, wetlands, and other natural lands increase the state's ability to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts such as flooding, wildfires, heat waves, and droughts. Additionally, land preservation adds to the resilience of our natural systems and habitats which support a vast array of species. DEP believes the state should serve as a model for sustainable solutions by implementing initiatives that build upon State and DEP efforts to inform residents about how to protect the natural environment.



Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation

A robust outdoor recreation economy contributes to the strength of local communities and attracts broader economic investments. Individuals and businesses throughout New Jersey can be enriched by promoting outdoor recreation and conservation areas as ecotourism sites, attracting visitors and stimulating local economic activity. Encouraging healthier communities and individuals through increased connection with nature can help attract high-quality employers and a sustainable workforce, and enhance community identity. New Jersey seeks to identify and promote natural and recreational assets, support environmental community restoration actions, encourage the next generation of environmental workforce stewards, and identify funding that enhances and connects outdoor activities to local, regional, and broader economic sectors.

4

Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation

Technology is ever-evolving, and the public's reliance on technological tools is growing. Constant connectivity, social media, and high-tech equipment are changing how people engage in outdoor recreation and how they experience and understand nature. Technology can connect us through shared experiences in the outdoors or guide us to nature for much-needed solitude, but it can also isolate us, depending on how and when it is used. Exploring technology's evolving uses will require constructive dialogue on how to achieve balance: how to respect the public's outdoor experiences while enhancing them in culturally and educationally relevant ways. New Jersey strives to consider best practices for implementing and leveraging social networks, especially how technology can support broader engagement and deepen our collective appreciation for the natural environment while maintaining the privacy, safety, and cyber security of our residents.

5

Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation

Everyone has the right to safe, close-to-home recreational opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, ability, economic status, and other diverse backgrounds. As the most densely populated and fourth most diverse state in the nation, New Jersey must work harder to meet the needs of its myriad residents by providing sufficient, high-quality recreation and open space opportunities for all. This is especially important in lower-income communities and communities of color, where there is a disparity in the amount and quality of open space and recreational opportunities compared to affluent white communities. New Jersey has identified and taken action to overcome obstacles that limit public access to urban parkland and open space; this includes ensuring operation and maintenance of existing facilities, increasing Green Acres acquisition and park development grant funding to our cities, passing Environmental Justice legislation, and creating a special Urban Parks grant program to benefit residents in Overburdened Communities. DEP acknowledges that more needs to be done, in partnership with stakeholders, to further inclusion and the public's sense of connection to their parks and open spaces.

6

Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity

Open space conservation offers numerous opportunities to strengthen outdoor recreation as well as fish, wildlife, and plant communities. DEP is committed to properly maintaining, monitoring, and managing public open spaces and recognizes that outdoor recreation can be enhanced when natural habitats and native species are part of the experience. This is especially true in open spaces near urban centers where the public's interactions with nature might be otherwise limited. DEP also recognizes the need to manage areas where public access and land conservation may conflict due to excessive or inappropriate use. Therefore, DEP commits to the conservation and restoration of lands, a nature-based solution that can increase biodiversity through preserving habitat connectivity. When properly coupled, natural resource preservation and outdoor recreation can improve the health and well-being of people while providing fish, wildlife, and plant communities with a multitude of life-sustaining and environmental benefits.

Objectives

Outside, Together! forms a larger initiative to involve all New Jerseyans in a participatory and collaborative process to plan and preserve outdoor spaces.



Outside, Together! Objectives

- Identify opportunities for expanding public access to recreation areas and facilities, and improving the user experience at existing recreation areas;
- Educate the public about the importance, needs, benefits, and availability of open space and outdoor recreation opportunities statewide;
- Identify high value open space and recreational needs and opportunities with particular focus on better serving the health and wellness of residents in underserved and Overburdened Communities³;
- Enhance the focus on the economic benefits of preservation, including those associated with climate resilience and sustainability, ecotourism, and biodiversity;
- Identify necessary policy, regulatory, and legislative actions to advance open space and outdoor recreation goals;
- Fully engage the public and key partners to ensure an informed approach to outdoor recreation and conservation;
- Encourage collaborative partnerships and programs to enhance open space and outdoor recreation at multiple levels of government; and
- Satisfy the NPS requirements so New Jersey continues to qualify for Federal LWCF opportunities.

America's Great Outdoors

New Jersey's objectives and goals for outdoor recreation align with larger federal ambitions to increase and improve conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities, as illustrated by the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a memorandum establishing the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, calling on the Secretaries of the U.S. departments of the Interior and of Agriculture, the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to develop a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda. This agenda is based on the following objectives:

1. Provide quality jobs, career pathways, and service opportunities;
2. Enhance recreational access and opportunities;
3. Raise awareness of the value and benefit of America's great outdoors;
4. Engage young people in conservation and the great outdoors;
5. Strengthen the Land and Water Conservation Fund;
6. Establish great urban parks and community green spaces;
7. Conserve rural working farms, ranches, and forests;
8. Conserve and restore our national parks, wildlife refuges, and forests;
9. Protect and renew rivers and other waters; and
10. Make the federal government a more effective conservation partner.

III. SCORP Planning Process

Outside, Together!



The *Outside, Together!* initiative recognizes the value of public engagement and collaboration, and developed the SCORP alongside a broadly representative group of community leaders, environmental advocacy organizations, environmental justice advocates, park and outdoor recreation advocates, and New Jersey residents.

Commissioner LaTourette's AO 2022-12 initiated the SCORP development process with the establishment of an Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee and decision to contract with a consulting firm to assist in outreach, data collection, and analysis. DEP opened a solicitation in May 2022 asking for outdoor recreation leaders to join an Advisory Committee to plan for the SCORP. A total of 25 individuals from various organizations joined together voluntarily to form the Committee, which represented stakeholders in outdoor recreation and conservation initiatives across New Jersey and, in Fall 2022, met with DEP in a series of meetings to discuss SCORP goals and ambitions. Together, DEP and the Advisory Committee evaluated current recreation resources; identified challenges, needs, and new opportunities for outdoor recreation improvements; and offered recommendations for policies, benchmarks, and actions to ensure a more equitable distribution of outdoor recreation and conservation funds and resources.

DEP also solicited for consulting services to assist the *Outside, Together!* Initiative with SCORP data analysis and community engagement. DEP had successfully applied for a SCORP Planning Grant that was awarded in September 2021. These matched grant funds allowed DEP to contract with Trust for Public Land (TPL) to help engage community members, especially those not traditionally engaged in outdoor recreation planning.

Survey

Following initial engagement with the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee, DEP worked with the New Jersey State Office of Innovation, TPL, and survey research firm Responsive Management to develop an online survey to understand the recreation and conservation needs of all New Jersey residents ([Appendix C](#)). This survey included a total of 22 multiple choice and open-ended questions that asked respondents about their use of outdoor spaces, obstacles to visiting outdoor spaces, and preferences for outdoor space development and funding.

Over 15,000 New Jersey residents responded to the survey.

The survey was administered online in English and Spanish, and open to responses for four weeks in March 2023. DEP advertised the survey by email through multiple distribution lists, including through the Office of Innovation's govDelivery platform. In addition, Advisory Committee members and TPL distributed the survey to their constituencies and partner community-based organizations. Survey respondents reached through this distribution were likely individuals who had an interest in outdoor recreation, and this sample is referenced in the document as "outdoor recreation stakeholders."

To gain a view of the general population, Responsive Management also distributed the survey to a random sample of individuals across New Jersey. This sample of survey respondents, intended to reflect the state's demographics, is referenced in the document as "general public."

All survey respondents reported living in New Jersey at the time of the survey, and all respondents—the general public and outdoor recreation stakeholders—are referenced in the document as "residents".

Focus Groups

To ensure engagement was reflective of the state's diverse demographics, TPL also facilitated a series of resident focus groups to better understand the perspectives of communities of color (specifically African American/Black and Hispanic/Latin American residents) in planning for parks and outdoor spaces ([Appendix D](#)).

The focus groups were conducted on weekday evenings, both in-person and online, in March 2023. One in-person and one online focus group were held for individuals who identified primarily as African American/Black ethnicity, and one in-person and one online focus group were held for individuals who identified primarily as Hispanic/Latin American.

A total of 28 individuals participated in the focus groups. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 68 years old, with an average participant age of 38. The majority of participants (79%) identified as female. Over a third of participants reported some form of disability (36%). Participants also lived primarily in a city (61%), with a minority reporting living in a suburb (11%).⁴

Discussion topics in the focus group guide included defining outdoor recreation, participation in and familiarity with outdoor recreation spaces in the local area and across the state, limitations to participation in outdoor recreation, and suggestions for improving outdoor recreation experiences and accessibility.



Stakeholder Interviews

DEP and TPL held several conversations with stakeholders throughout the SCORP process. Stakeholders were leaders in the community and outdoor recreation, including individuals involved with the Inclusive Healthy Communities in Nature disability working group, the New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) representatives, and several other individuals representing community organizations or groups involved with nature and outdoor recreation. Information gained through conversations with these stakeholders has informed the SCORP actions.

Mapping Inventory, Needs, and Opportunities

To further support a supply and demand analysis, DEP also contracted TPL to complete a needs and opportunities assessment.

TPL used data analysis methods developed through its ParkServe and ParkScore programs to map the spatial distribution of outdoor recreational resources in New Jersey. Maps were created first to identify locations of recreational sites (e.g., parks, open access lands, trails, and water access points). This allowed TPL to define areas that were within a quarter-mile walk to recreational areas and which areas were outside the quarter-mile walk. Then, demographic data was used to identify the populations that do and do not have close-to-home recreational access. The [Mapping Results](#) section later in this report highlights findings for the state. [Appendix E](#) provides further information on methods used and offers more detailed analysis. In addition to the maps and results shown in this report and appendices, TPL has provided DEP with statistics related to population demographics at the county and municipality level, as well as all geospatial data and maps.

TPL also completed a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) analysis to help stakeholders understand what recreation types exist in current open space and highlight potential opportunities to expand access to different types of outdoor recreation for more communities. Methodology and results of the ROS analysis are available in [Appendix F](#).

Public Review

An online copy of the Draft 2023 New Jersey SCORP was made available on the DEP website for public review and comment. Notice advertising the public review period was made to New Jersey residents, interested parties such as nonprofit land trusts and conservation organizations, and federal, state, and regional agencies. A summary of comments received from agencies, organizations, and individuals can be found in [Appendix J](#).

Ongoing Engagement

Outside, Together! recognizes that engagement with communities is a continual process. The SCORP planning process established relationships and started conversations with stakeholders and the public that DEP intends to foster with ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

IV. New Jersey Now

Trends in Outdoor Recreation Participation & Conservation



In the past five years, the United States has seen an exponential growth in residents participating in and making use of parks and outdoor spaces. Much of this growth came as a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, which initially limited indoor recreation options as governments enacted quarantine restrictions for public health and safety. Residents looked to the outdoors for ways to spend time and turned to public lands. Since March 2020, the number of Americans participating in outdoor recreation increased by 6.9%. Even as restrictions were lifted and indoor activities became more available in 2021, participation in outdoor recreation retained momentum across the nation. As of 2021, 164.2 million Americans participated in outdoor recreation.⁵

Mirroring the U.S., New Jersey has also seen a sustained increase in participation in outdoor recreation. In 2021, outdoor recreation accounted for 1.5% of New Jersey's total GDP, equaling \$20.3 billion. Boating, using a recreational vehicle, and snow-related activities contributed greatly to this number, totaling over \$1 billion for just these three activities. Gardening and outdoor concerts were also popular activities among New Jersey residents.⁶

Public Engagement Results – Trends in Outdoor Space Use and Priorities

Participation in outdoor recreation is matched by resident support of, and valuation of, outdoor spaces. This was discovered during public engagement for the SCORP, where thousands of residents shared their opinions about and experiences in outdoor areas in New Jersey. The information gained from engagement efforts is shared in the sections below.

Survey Results

Survey respondents consisted of a general population sample (general public) and regular users of New Jersey outdoor spaces (stakeholders). Opinions of and preferences for outdoor spaces were similar among both respondent samples. Some marked differences between stakeholder and general public responses occurred where stakeholders indicated a higher level of participation and importance in outdoor recreation. For a more detailed analysis of the survey and survey results, please refer to [Appendix C](#).

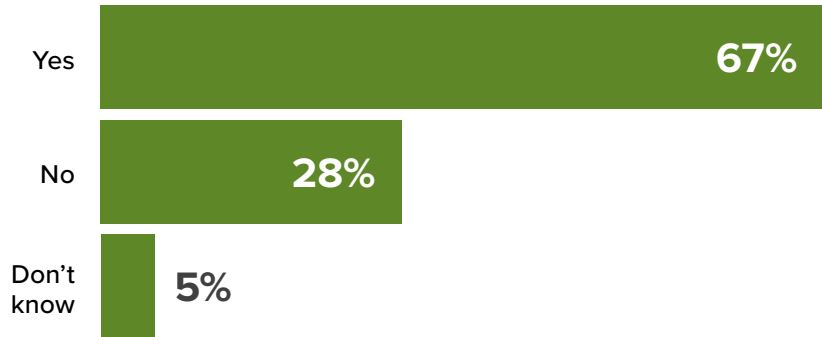
Over 83% of state residents rated outdoor recreation as important to them personally.

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents rated outdoor recreation as important. Over 83% of state residents rated outdoor recreation as important to them personally. Two thirds of residents further indicated that they feel they have a place to participate in outdoor recreation.

New Jersey residents' satisfaction with parks is also high.

81% of New Jersey residents are satisfied with the parks and outdoor recreation facilities that they visited in the state in the last year.

Do you have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that you are able to visit when you need to or want to? (General Public)



Do you have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that you are able to visit when you need to or want to? (Stakeholder)



Use of Outdoor Spaces

Residents most often use outdoor spaces to **take walks or hike** and **gather with friends**.

Residents will also sit quietly/meditate, visit a playground, and visit nature areas or centers. In keeping with these types of use, features most preferred in outdoor spaces included:

- trails
- sitting areas
- picnic areas
- playgrounds

Residents participate in these activities and make use of these features mainly in local parks (75%) and in the summer.



Getting to the Outdoors

Driving is the top way that New Jersey residents get to their outdoor recreation areas.

General public (66%)

Outdoor recreation stakeholders (85%)

Nonetheless, a relatively large percentage get a ride or walk to their favored outdoor spaces.

The typical time residents spend traveling to parks is about **thirty minutes**. A large majority of residents (57%) will also typically go to outdoor spaces with family.

Funding Priorities

Residents think it most important for funding to go to **maintaining existing park and recreation areas** and **protecting wildlife and plant habitats**.

New Jersey Residents Want More

Features: **trails, picnic areas, and sitting areas**

Types of Outdoor Spaces: **parks**, both local and state

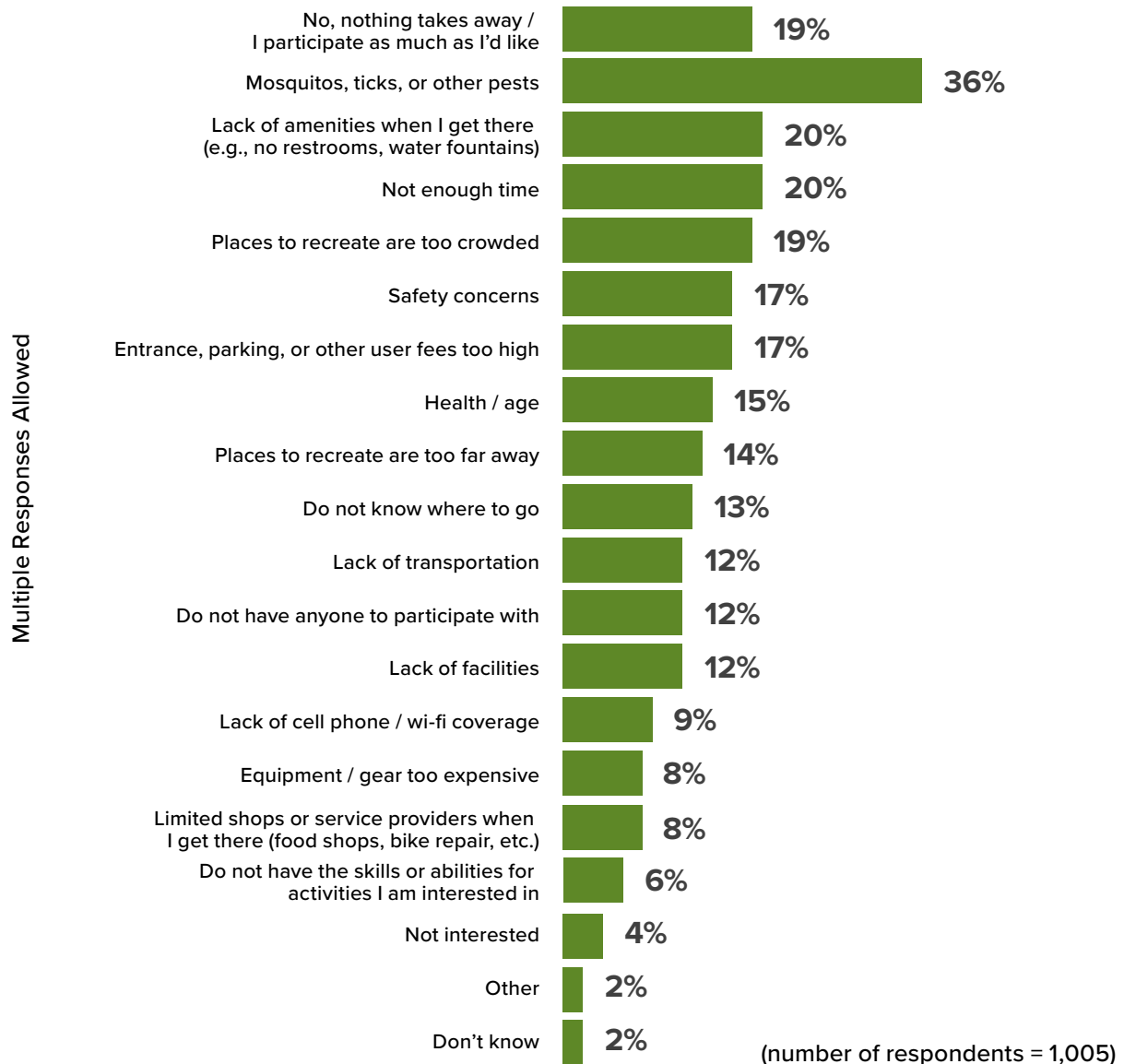
Amenities: **farmers' markets**

Barriers to Participation

Residents reported that the major constraint to visiting outdoor spaces are insects. This was followed by a lack of amenities in outdoor spaces, a lack of time, and too crowded facilities.

What Takes Away from Satisfaction with Outdoor Recreation?

In general, are there any things that take away from your satisfaction with outdoor recreation, or cause you not to participate in outdoor recreation as much as you would like, in New Jersey? (Residents)



Encourage More Participation

To encourage more visits to New Jersey outdoor spaces, residents asked for

- More information
- Passive features: picnic tables & visitor centers

Focus Group Results

Focus group participants represented a range of ages, with an average age of 38 years. The majority of focus group participants also lived in a large or small city, with most participants residing in Camden and Newark, New Jersey.

Almost all participants of the focus groups reported being fairly active users of outdoor spaces. One focus group participant said they rarely visited outdoor spaces due to a lack of interest. The spaces focus group participants visited the most were neighborhood parks, which included city and county parks. **Social connection** was a major theme of discussions, with participants emphasizing parks as acting as important conduits for community building and enjoying parks not just for exercise and play, but also as event spaces. Due to the social value in outdoor spaces, focus group participants expressed strong support for **inclusive programming**, including **cultural events, fairs with demographically diverse vendors, and various classes for communities of color.**

Engagement Summary

The public engagement DEP and its partners conducted in fall 2022 and spring 2023 included meetings with outdoor recreation stakeholders, an online survey, and focus groups. Information gained from each of these engagement methods revealed important trends on what encourages or prevents New Jersey residents from using the outdoor recreation opportunities available to them.

New Jersey residents place a high value on outdoor recreation and appreciate that outdoor spaces give opportunities for community gathering, as well as healthy activities like walking, meditating, or using a playground. Most important to residents are outdoor spaces closest to home: local and neighborhood parks. Residents in both the survey and focus groups also emphasized that events, like arts fairs or farmers' markets, appealed to them and encouraged visits to new places.

While residents showed appreciation for and consistent use of outdoor spaces, engagement also elicited discussion on the barriers to use. The barriers most mentioned between residents and stakeholders included:

OBSTACLES TO VISITING THE OUTDOORS



Lack of information



No reliable transportation



Expense



Changing needs

Residents and stakeholders identified several reasons for not visiting outdoor recreation areas. Two of the biggest reasons cited were that they either **1) did not know where to go** or **2) did not know what an outdoor space had to offer.**

Outdoor spaces can include many features, such as hiking trails or sports fields, or amenities like bathrooms and water fountains. Additionally, a park can host a festival or farmers' market. Most New Jersey residents gain information on outdoor spaces through word of mouth or through an internet search. **Stakeholders and residents expressed a desire for the State to create one comprehensive inventory of outdoor recreation areas that includes geographic location, as well as amenities, features, and events each park offers.**







NEW JERSEY NOW | 23

Residents and stakeholders also mentioned that they may not visit outdoor areas due to limited public transportation options or insufficient parking amenities. This sentiment applied mainly to outdoor spaces outside of the neighborhood, such as distant state parks or forests. Without a reliable public transit route or guarantee of affordable automobile parking, residents lacked incentive to visit more distant outdoor spaces.

Transportation contributes to the next difficulty in accessing outdoor areas: money. Costs to travel, along with park fees, can be a big deterrent to park visits. Over half of survey respondents reported that they spent money on outdoor recreation, typically on entrance, parking, or other user fees. In addition to use fees, visitors to state parks and wildlife management areas may also be required to pay for permits for hunting or fishing. Both the general public and outdoor recreation stakeholders disapproved of fees and park permits. This finding was confirmed in recent Wharton State Park survey.⁷

New Jersey residents' changing needs present another challenge for DEP to consider in its outdoor recreation planning. With climate change, many areas of the state have seen hotter days, causing residents to seek outdoor spaces with more cooling features and amenities like spray pads and water fountains.

WHAT DO NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS WANT?
 Residents and stakeholders said they'd participate more in New Jersey outdoor recreation if they had:

**Cultural events/
festivals/
celebrations**

**Programming
geared towards
populations of
color**

**Centralized
location for
detailed
information
on parks**

**More
communication
between the
State and
community
groups and Tribes**

**More reliable
and affordable
transportation
options**

**Reduced park
entry fees**

Conservation in New Jersey

The State of New Jersey values collaboration and accomplishes preservation efforts through strong partnerships with nonprofits, municipalities, and counties. Green Acres annually directs federal and state funding for land acquisition to nonprofits and local governments based on a set of criteria and priorities defined by DEP goals and objectives which are periodically revised as State and DEP goals evolve.

To help understand land use changes in the state, which can guide land acquisition efforts, DEP produces a land use map: [Land Use/Land Cover of New Jersey](#). DEP updates this map by identifying and classifying different land uses using aerial photography and mapping the results using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. Based on the land classifications identified in the Land Use/Land Cover map, between 2012 and 2015, New Jersey saw a loss in acres of farmland, forest, wetlands, and waters. In the same time period, the state experienced a growth in barren and urban lands, indicating increased urban development resulting in built-up lands ([Table 2](#)). These urban developments occurred primarily in five

counties: Middlesex, Mercer, Ocean, Monmouth, and Burlington (Table 3). Two of these counties—Ocean and Burlington—continued urban development following the trend set in prior years. (Note: the 2018 SCORP cited land use data from 2012. This 2023–2027 SCORP cites land use data from 2015.)

Though several New Jersey counties experienced increases in urban development in recent years, the State has steadily continued its preservation efforts, with preserved lands now representing over a quarter of the state’s land (see Table 1).

Table 1: Preserved and Developed Acreages by County

COUNTY	TOTAL ACREAGE	PRESERVED ACRES*	DEVELOPED ACRES*
Atlantic	390,815	119,262	67,845
Bergen	153,477	20,758	111,713
Burlington	525,003	224,090	110,321
Camden	145,651	31,149	76,445
Cape May	183,127	78,451	34,395
Cumberland	321,150	106,133	45,164
Essex	83,035	12,045	64,082
Gloucester	215,167	19,720	76,590
Hudson	32,982	3,836	23,797
Hunterdon	279,885	44,148	70,627
Mercer	146,432	27,217	72,216
Middlesex	202,860	24,625	117,880
Monmouth	310,834	50,231	146,301
Morris	308,084	84,731	121,381
Ocean	485,078	175,902	112,981
Passaic	126,921	50,295	47,411
Salem	222,159	33,186	28,148
Somerset	195,127	31,896	90,020
Sussex	342,589	130,433	54,839
Union	67,439	7,341	55,772
Warren	232,061	51,377	41,001
TOTAL	4,969,875	1,326,826	1,568,929

* Preserved Acres includes State-owned open space/parkland and Green Acres funded and/or encumbered county, municipal, and nonprofit lands (fee and easement). It also includes federal open space and land preserved through the Highlands Development Credit and Pinelands Development Credit programs. It does not include preserved farmland.

Sources for Preserved Acres: DEP Green Acres Program GIS Open Space Data December 31, 2022. Federal open space acres reported by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. HDC credit information provided by the Highlands Council. PDC credit information provided by the Pinelands Commission.

* Source for Developed Acres: [DEP 2015 Land Use/Land Cover Updated \(Urban Land Use Classification\)](#)

Table 2: New Jersey Statewide Land Use 2012–2015 Acreage Change

LAND USE TYPE	2012 ACRES*	2015 ACRES	ACREAGE CHANGE
Agriculture	545,594	543,506	–2,087
Barren Land	48,157	52,410	4,253
Forest	1,528,204	1,518,710	–9,494
Urban Land	1,558,525	1,568,929	10,404
Water	294,998	294,216	–781
Wetlands	994,398	992,103	–2,294

Source: [DEP 2015 Land Use/Land Cover Updated \(Urban Land Use Classification\)](#)

* 2012 Land Use acreage updated after last SCORP publication.

Table 3: Highest County Urban Land Increases 2012–2015

COUNTY	2012 ACRES*	2015 ACRES	ACREAGE CHANGE
Middlesex	116,502	117,880	1,378
Mercer	70,960	72,216	1,257
Ocean	111,935	112,981	1,045
Monmouth	145,315	146,301	986
Burlington	109,385	110,321	936
TOTAL	554,097	559,699	5,602

Source: [DEP 2015 Land Use/Land Cover Updated \(Urban Land Use Classification\)](#)

Since 2018, 24,369 acres of land in New Jersey have been preserved with Green Acres funding. This includes 17,159 acres of State-held land, 3,834 acres of local government land, and 3,403 acres of nonprofit land (Table 4).

Table 4: Green Acres Program Land Preservation 2018 - 2022 Acres Preserved

	STATE LAND	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	NONPROFIT	TOTAL
2018	6,582	1,406	887	8,876
2019	3,896	650	798	5,345
2020	3,296	603	617	4,515
2021	1,930	560	724	3,214
2022	1,456	615	376	2,447
Totals	17,159	3,834	3,403	24,396

Source: DEP Green Acres Database June 6, 2023

Population Trends and Demographic Changes

Since 2018, New Jersey's population has seen both increases and drops. Prior to 2020, the state experienced an increase in foreign-born immigration, making New Jersey the state with the second-highest population of foreign-born residents in the country.⁸ In this time period, urban areas also grew, with both foreign-born and younger residents relocating to cities.⁹ The state's population increase from immigration was then balanced out in 2019 with a population loss as residents began migrating to less expensive or warmer states. Between 2020 and 2022, the state then experienced rapid population decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic exacerbated the out-flow of residents from New Jersey to other U.S. states. Though New Jersey's population dropped significantly from COVID-19 and out-migration, immigration from other countries continued through 2022.¹⁰

Despite many population fluctuations, New Jersey has seen an overall 2.6% increase in population since 2018, and remains a largely diverse and urban state.

Table 5: Population 2018, 2022, 2034

COUNTY	2018	2022	PERCENT CHANGE	2034 PROJECTION*
Atlantic	275,753	273,176	-0.9%	282,900
Bergen	951,353	962,086	1.0%	1,065,500
Burlington	459,512	463,067	0.8%	472,700
Camden	522,513	522,982	0.1%	525,600
Cape May	93,384	94,621	1.3%	93,400
Cumberland	155,971	153,196	-1.8%	164,400
Essex	809,316	874,475	8.0%	840,100
Gloucester	299,200	303,198	1.3%	312,500
Hudson	693,538	744,105	6.8%	766,500
Hunterdon	128,365	128,728	0.3%	119,800
Mercer	375,350	390,124	3.9%	406,300
Middlesex	853,646	870,727	2.0%	965,000
Monmouth	638,701	643,265	0.7%	665,200
Morris	506,503	510,489	0.8%	548,000
Ocean	606,422	646,483	6.6%	665,700
Passaic	516,266	526,290	1.9%	542,500
Salem	64,864	64,254	-0.9%	59,800
Somerset	341,107	348,645	2.2%	378,700
Sussex	146,888	142,549	-3.0%	136,600
Union	565,061	581,509	2.9%	620,000
Warren	109,165	109,402	0.2%	102,100
Total	9,112,878	9,348,327	2.6%	9,733,400

Source: 2018 Esri Population Count, 2022 Esri Population Count, NJLWD Population Projection¹¹

* The 2034 projection was completed in 2014 and does not take into account population loss from COVID-19.

Table 6: Population Density

COUNTY	POPULATION	LAND (SQUARE MILES)	DENSITY (PERSONS/ SQUARE MILE)
Atlantic	273,176	611	447
Bergen	962,086	240	4,012
Burlington	463,067	820	565
Camden	522,982	228	2,298
Cape May	94,621	286	331
Cumberland	153,196	502	305
Essex	874,475	130	6,740
Gloucester	303,198	336	902
Hudson	744,105	52	14,439
Hunterdon	128,728	437	294
Mercer	390,124	229	1,705
Middlesex	870,727	317	2,747
Monmouth	643,265	486	1,324
Morris	510,489	481	1,060
Ocean	646,483	758	853
Passaic	526,290	198	2,654
Salem	64,254	347	185
Somerset	348,645	305	1,144
Sussex	142,549	535	266
Union	581,509	105	5,519
Warren	109,402	363	302
Total	9,348,327	7,765	1,204

Source: [DEP 2015 Land Use/Land Cover Updated \(Urban Land Use Classification\)](#)

Despite recent population declines, New Jersey remains a hub of culture and activity and supports 9.3 million residents who value outdoor recreation. With a growing foreign-born and urban population, the need for access to urban parks will increase. From participation trends, New Jerseyans are also visiting the state's parks, forests, and beaches more. This will require exploring ways to accommodate increased visitation with more maintenance efforts and programming.

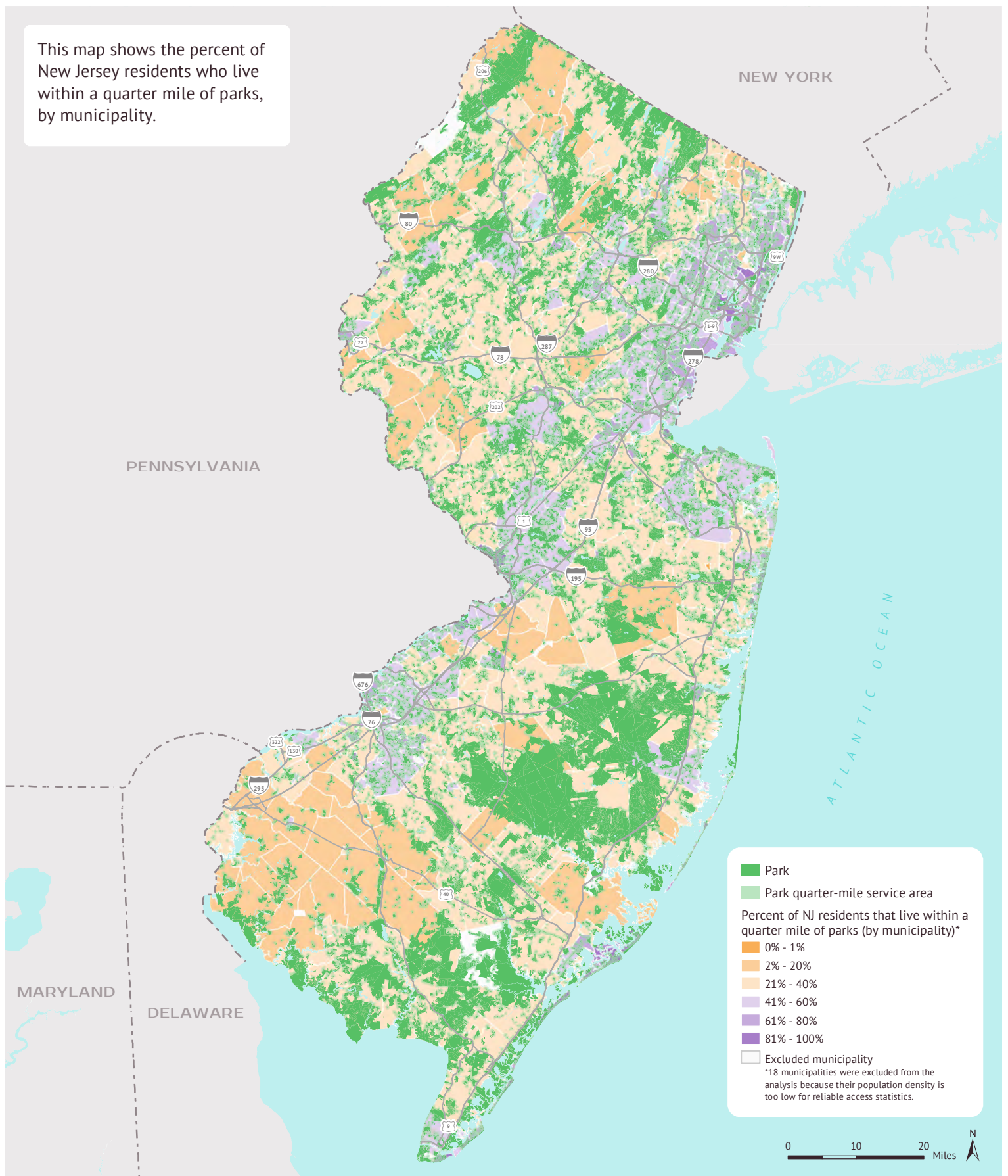


Mapping Analysis

The following park access statistics provide the percentage and number of individuals who live within a quarter mile walk of a public park or open space. These results are for the entire state of New Jersey. Results by municipality, statistics on access to specific recreation types (e.g., park, trail, or body of water), and statistics on park equity can be found in [Appendix E](#).

	PERCENT SERVED	NUMBER SERVED	TOTAL POPULATION
INDIVIDUALS within a quarter-mile walk (total)	48	4,518,629	9,328,564
INDIVIDUALS within a quarter-mile walk (by age)			
Kids age 19 and younger	49	1,087,720	2,230,806
20–64 years old	49	2,662,311	5,417,153
Over 64 years old	46	768,597	1,680,504
HOUSEHOLDS within a quarter-mile walk (by income)			
Low-income (under 75% median household income)	53	656,230	1,246,719
Middle-income (75–125% median household income)	47	379,216	798,942
High-income (over 125% median household income)	46	643,137	1,400,701
INDIVIDUALS within a quarter-mile walk (by race)			
White	43	2,065,877	4,779,201
Black	53	614,258	1,157,726
American Indian/Alaskan Native	49	5,407	11,139
Asian	47	448,179	959,393
Pacific Islander	50	971	1,941
Two or more races	48	144,252	301,752
Other race	54	39,173	72,938
Hispanic	59	1,200,541	2,044,488

This map shows the percent of New Jersey residents who live within a quarter mile of parks, by municipality.



Park access: quarter-mile walk

NEW JERSEY SCORP - OUTSIDE TOGETHER

June 23, 2023. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Special thanks to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



Principles



Each of the following six sections of the report (Sections V through X) focuses on a specific Principle and discusses its significance within the context of DEP's mission and goals. Throughout the *Outside, Together!* outreach effort, DEP solicited, and the public excitedly shared examples of projects and initiatives that demonstrate successful implementation of the Principles across New Jersey. We call these examples "Modeled Behaviors", and they are interspersed throughout the report.

The Modeled Behaviors represent projects and practices that successfully implement the Principles. In addition to the Modeled Behaviors, the report also includes also briefly calls out initiatives that represent the Principles in action. DEP hopes these examples inspire new ideas or generate energy for park practitioners to follow similar practices in our communities, as well as strengthen DEP's own commitment to uphold the Principles in its work. By emphasizing these Modeled Behaviors and other successful efforts, DEP hopes to collectively work towards building a better outdoor recreation future for New Jersey and the environment.

- 1** Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors;
- 2** Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space;
- 3** Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation;
- 4** Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation;
- 5** Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation; and,
- 6** Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.

V. Principle 1

Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors



Public outdoor recreation areas play a crucial role in promoting health, well-being, and economic prosperity for communities and greatly enhancing quality of life benefits for their residents. Nature and green spaces have been empirically tied to better health by encouraging active lifestyles that improve physical and mental wellness, enhancing local economies through jobs and tourism, and strengthening communities by engaging residents.¹² In addition, outdoor spaces provide residents with the environmental benefits of clean air and water and cooling the atmosphere during heat waves.

Since 1961, DEP and the Green Acres program have successfully preserved millions of acres of open space, resulting in an extensive network of state and local parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and water recreation areas. All Green Acres-funded open space and recreation areas are open to the public.

Along with its many outdoor resources, New Jersey hosts a diverse and growing population of residents who represent a range of ethnicities, nationalities, genders, incomes, and abilities. New Jersey residents actively use outdoor spaces to gather and spend time with family, decompress through exercise and meditation, and enjoy nature.

Over 83% of state residents rated outdoor recreation as important to them personally.

Currently, only about half (49%) of New Jerseyans are within a quarter-mile of a park. All individuals have a right to enjoy the outdoors, and DEP aspires to increase access to 100% so all New Jerseyans have easily accessible, healthy, and safe environments in which to recreate.

With limited land available, ensuring access to high-quality outdoor spaces has required resourceful thinking. Most New Jersey residents regularly visit local, city, and county parks. This holds true also for residents in urban areas who visit neighborhood parks within walking distance of their homes. As population density increases in urban areas, urban parks become increasingly important. In recognition of insufficient park investment in low-income and minority communities, Governor Murphy prioritized urban parks in the 2021 Green Acres and Urban Parks funding round, approving over \$100 million for the creation or improvement of parks or the acquisition of land for new outdoor recreation and conservation areas.¹³ Additionally, in April 2023, Governor Murphy recommended further Green Acres and Urban Parks funding—nearly \$100 million—to continue initiatives that develop and update parks and preserve open space.

The Urban Parks funding is just one way that DEP has worked with partners to increase access to outdoor recreation. Additionally, DEP has sought to increase access by promoting:

- Investment in vacant lands for park creation,
- Remediation of brownfields into parks,
- Green space connectivity through linear parks and greenways, and
- Stewardship of existing recreational spaces.

The cities of Newark and Camden, New Jersey both feature examples of formerly vacant lots that have been transformed into well-used outdoor recreation spaces. In Newark, thanks to a collaboration between DEP, local government, public schools, and community members, an undeveloped plot of land that had remained vacant for decades was revitalized into a multi-use green space: Nat Turner Park in the Central Ward. Similarly, in the City of Camden, vacant land was identified and subsequently remediated to build Gateway Park, a 25-acre linear riverfront park. In addition to connecting residents to nature and active outdoor recreation opportunities nearby, Gateway Park further connects communities through its paved multi-use trail, which links to the Circuit Trail, a network of trails paths linking various cities in the Delaware River watershed.

Modeled Behaviors

NAT TURNER PARK

In the 1970s, community activists from the Central Ward in Newark, NJ advocated for more green space due to the lack of major parks in the area. The City of Newark consequently secured several acres of vacant land across from the Felix Fuld Housing Complex and near the 18th Avenue elementary school. The site had previously been used for residences, light industry, and a working railyard. For decades, though, the land remained undeveloped. In 2002, Trust for Public Land led a collaborative effort with Central Ward community members, city agencies, and public schools to turn this urban brownfield into Nat Turner Park named after the leader of a 19th century slave rebellion. Through sustained community engagement, design of the nine-acre park incorporated outdoor amenities most valued by the community and art that reflects shared cultural motifs and celebrates Black history. After completion in 2009, in part with funding from Green Acres, the park became an anchor for positive change in the Central Ward.

Today Nat Turner Park provides recreation for 19,000 people in the neighborhood. Along with a playground, 400-meter regulation track, amphitheater, walking paths and lawn areas, the park includes more than 240 trees and other native plants that provide shade and improve air quality by removing particulates. The Friends of Nat Turner Park, established early in the park's creation, also continues to steward the park and ensure it supports community needs.



© J. AVERY WHAM PHOTOGRAPHY

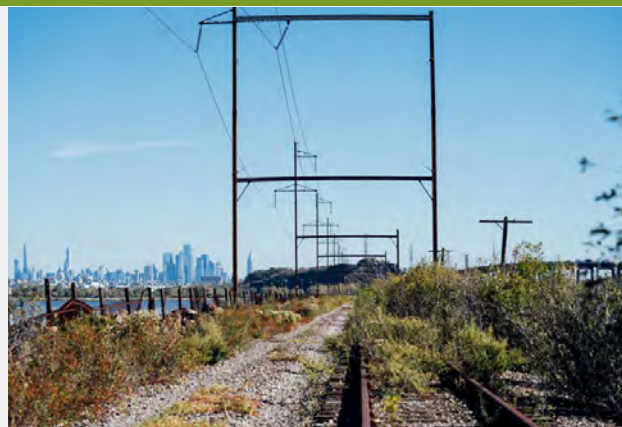
Connectivity, as seen with Gateway Park, is a key method of increasing outdoor recreation access. Connective outdoor spaces feature trails that allow for multi-modal transit options, like walking and biking. These parks bring together multiple green spaces, increasing the availability of features like fitness zones and play equipment. Another example of a connective outdoor space is The Greenway. The Greenway is a former railroad line that will be transformed into a nine-mile linear park in northern New Jersey.

Both Gateway Park and The Greenway are examples of connective outdoor spaces that also require remediation. Urban parks initiatives often necessitate cleanup or remediation due to the historic prevalence of existing pollutants in soil and groundwater. The topic of transforming abandoned land, former industrial sites, and brownfields into parks is further analyzed in the Principle 5 discussion (see [Section IX](#)).

THE GREENWAY

The Greenway is a nine-mile, 100-foot-wide linear corridor that spans Essex and Hudson counties. DEP's vision is to redevelop the blighted corridor into a multi-modal trail to connect over 1.5 million people to nature, hiking and biking opportunities, and a multitude of other community resources, including existing parks, schools, historic and cultural sites, and businesses. The Greenway began as a collaborative effort when communities along the abandoned rail line route advocated for a shared-use path to support active and passive recreation activities. With the support of residents, community organizations, and cities

like Newark and Jersey City, the Open Space Institute carried out years of sustained engagement that eventually led to successfully securing a purchase agreement for the property along the route—an unused length of track owned by Norfolk Southern Railway.¹⁴ In August 2022, the State of New Jersey purchased the corridor that runs through eight municipalities (Montclair, Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, Belleville, Newark, Kearny, Secaucus, and Jersey City). The DEP immediately initiated the project planning phase, bringing The Greenway another step closer to reality. Community and stakeholder engagement will continue to inform the project, as DEP works with the public to identify community priorities for connections along the planned route.



While creation of new, quality outdoor spaces is one method to increase outdoor recreation access, DEP also stresses the importance of stewardship to increase access to high-quality outdoor spaces. Using a definition of stewardship as work that goes “beyond routine operations and maintenance,” DEP currently advances stewardship, in part, by providing grants to local governments and nonprofits through Green Acres for this purpose.

Stewardship projects fall into two categories: (1) Creation, restoration, or protection of natural resource areas, including wetlands, meadows, and woodlands; and (2) Historic landscape restoration for properties listed on the New Jersey and/or National Historic Registers. Outdoor appurtenances for environmental education, nature observation, and public access, such as trails and interpretive signage, are conditionally eligible as part of a larger stewardship project.

Examples of Green Acres stewardship projects include pollinator gardens, installation of green infrastructure, natural resource restoration and creation, and historic landscape restoration. Stewardship thus provides spaces where outdoor recreationists can interact more closely with the state's many natural assets.

Truly increasing access to outdoor spaces demands that those spaces support individuals of all abilities. All park development and stewardship projects funded by Green Acres must, at a minimum, be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

In 2018, New Jersey passed “Jake's Law”, which requires the Department of Community Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Education, to create rules and regulations for completely inclusive playgrounds that generally exceed current state and federal standards required by the ADA. After passage

of Jake's Law, New Jersey has welcomed several new parks with all-inclusive play areas that are barrier free, socially inviting, and designed for all children to play interactively. Supporting inclusivity for all ages, DEP has also sponsored the installation of handicapped-accessible and/or adaptive trails for those with mobility issues. Additionally, New Jersey residents who are disabled may be eligible for YourPassNow, an annual Free Disability Pass, which provides free entrance for one calendar year to New Jersey state parks and forests that charge daily entrance fees.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

Outdoor recreation providers work hard to create welcoming and supportive environments for all visitors, enabling everyone to have safe and easy access to facilities, programming, and amenities. "Accessibility for All" refers to the concept of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have equal access to physical spaces, products, services, and information.



© PINELANDS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

- **Jake's Place playgrounds, Cherry Hill and Delran.** Challenge Grove Park in Cherry Hill includes an inclusive playground that features wide ramps and cushioned surfaces that accommodate wheelchairs, structures that build coordination and balance skills, and sensory and tactile play activities for learning. In Delran, the inclusive playground includes a fully ramped play-structure that provides access to individuals using mobility devices.
- **Passaic City's "Blue Parks" Initiative.** Consistent with the goals of Jake's Law, several parks in Passaic City have been designed to include features to accommodate safety and enjoyment for individuals with autism.¹⁵
- **Therapeutic Recreation.** Monmouth County Park System's Special Needs Program and Somerset County Park Commission provide summer camp day programs, adult day services, and other inclusive recreational opportunities for county residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities in order to enhance physical, cognitive, emotional and social functioning, as well as foster a sense of belonging to the community.
- **Rancocas Greenway Trail.** Burlington County's newest regional pathway offers a mix of outdoor recreation, scenic views along the Rancocas Creek, and over 30 new wheelchair ramps to make the trail accessible for mobility devices. This 100% wheelchair-accessible four-mile trail runs through towns of Delran, Riverside, and Delanco, and is the first segment of a larger planned 30-mile path.
- **Colonial Park Gardens.** This park in Somerset features a Fragrance and Sensory Garden that includes raised beds and Braille identifications that allow visitors to touch, smell, and identify the plants. The garden is specifically designed to be inclusive for individuals with visual and physical impairments, allowing them to engage with and appreciate the sensory appeal of plants and their surroundings.
- **Stags Adaptive Mountain Bike Trail.** Long Pond Ironworks State Park in West Milford offers a new accessible cycling trail that is the first of its kind in New Jersey. The trail was constructed with a wider design, keeping in mind the needs of individuals using adaptive cycles, which aid those with mobility impairments who wish to explore the outdoors.]

There has been a growing momentum across the state to expand the availability of inclusive outdoor spaces. In 2021, the Department of Human Service's Division of Disability Services launched the Inclusive Healthy Communities grant, a cross-sector public initiative that catalyzed outdoor recreation accessibility work and launched the Access Nature initiative, a working group of more than 60 outdoor recreation leaders and disability advocates from across the state.

Additionally with the additional Green Acres recommended by Governor Murphy in April 2023, \$7.4 million will go to a new funding category that provides incentive grants to counties for the development of Completely Inclusive Playgrounds as part of Jake's Law.

Increasing and ensuring public access to New Jersey's vast natural resources are central to supporting the general welfare of the state's residents. DEP strives to continue collaborations with public and private partners across New Jersey to foster the growth and quality of existing parks and utilize innovative techniques to create new outdoor spaces.

[**AccessNatureNJ.org**](https://AccessNatureNJ.org)

A mobile-friendly website with an interactive map to help people find accessible trails and scenic places. The tool is part of [The Pinelands Are for Everyone Project](#) led by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

Challenges

New Jersey faces a few challenges to advancing equitable access to exceptional open space and recreational opportunities for state residents. Some of the most visible challenges include land scarcity and development pressures. Between 2010 and 2020, New Jersey grew 5.6% in population density¹⁶. This increase in population has led to competing land use interests, with housing and commercial development prioritized over park and green space development. With limited availability of land, DEP must continue to explore innovative planning solutions to increase outdoor recreation access.

Changing open space needs present an additional challenge. For instance, with climate change leading to hotter days, New Jersey residents have increasingly sought cooler areas, resulting in overcrowding and additional maintenance needs in outdoor spaces that provide water features (See [Section VI](#) for more information on climate change impacts on outdoor recreation). The introduction of new technology can also result in demand for new infrastructure across outdoor recreation spaces, such as charging stations for electric vehicles.

Additionally, developing, maintaining, and improving parks and open space requires significant financial resources. Lack of financial investment can hinder the ability of the park owner to provide and regularly maintain high quality facilities and services for the public.

DEP can address these challenges by continuing community engagement to understand needs and by maintaining and developing new partnerships with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and private stakeholders to build upon existing programming and increase stewardship in the state's outdoor spaces.

Goals & Actions

Ensure that everyone in New Jersey has a high-quality, safe, and easily accessible outdoor recreation space within a short walk of their neighborhood

- Prioritize community outreach efforts to engage and understand the needs of local residents, particularly marginalized groups, and understand what amenities they would like to see in their neighborhoods
- Create deliberate policies and revise rules to address historical underinvestment in adversely stressed Overburdened Communities
- Work with the State and local groups to advance inclusive play in parks, complementing Jake's Law and other initiatives that broaden recreation opportunities for all
- Incentivize communities to partner with transportation agencies, notably New Jersey Transit and others, to identify transit hubs and include transit connections to parks, historic sites, water access areas

Provide guidance to recreation stakeholders on how to prioritize and where to locate new outdoor spaces and/or which existing spaces to upgrade

- Using environmental stressors data, identify and prioritize projects that target Overburdened Communities to ensure these communities have easily accessible recreation and open space opportunities that reduce stressors
- Identify priority lands for conservation and recreational development through publicly accessible mapping which shows where outdoor spaces are lacking and locations of public transit hubs
- Update the New Jersey State Trails Plan to enable government, nonprofit, and private land managers to better serve the needs of New Jersey's trail users and local communities, improve community connectivity, and increase outdoor recreation and active transportation opportunities

Expand access to outdoor recreation through redevelopment of spaces that have not been traditionally considered for parks (i.e., schoolyards and remediated brownfields)

- Encourage local governments and nonprofits to locate recreational facilities in tree-cleared areas and identify underused or undeveloped lands for restoration
- Develop parks on remediated brownfields, Known Contaminated Sites, and other contaminated lands
- Prioritize the demolition of dilapidated buildings to create open space and parks
- Prioritize the removal of expansive impervious surfaces in the creation of parks and in existing parks, as feasible
- Support community use of schoolyards during non-school hours
- Partner with municipalities and developers to incorporate open space into municipal plans and project designs
- Incentivize multi-use park designs, such as, athletic fields or courts to meet different sports interests
- Prioritize the enhancement of access to waters consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine and DEP goals

Financially and administratively support a high functioning, accessible outdoor recreation system while maintaining the integrity of the landscape and the experience for its users

- Explore aligning park fees with user ability to pay the fees
- Employ culturally appropriate engagement methods to reach new and more diverse populations
- Continue Green Acres funding
- Promote leveraging of public and private funds
- Encourage partnerships and volunteer opportunities for maintenance and stewardship
- Explore incentives to developers to incorporate open space and recreation facilities into their host communities



VI. Principle 2

Enhancing Climate Resilience and Sustainability Through Acquisition and Development of Open and Green Space



Climate change is projected to significantly impact New Jersey, with the most severe impacts posing an existential threat to the state's environment, economy, and population. The state anticipates seeing increased temperatures and precipitation, more extreme storm events, more frequent drought conditions, decreased biodiversity, and sea level rise.

These impacts could have devastating consequences for the state's natural resources, infrastructure, and overall sustainability, putting further stress on the population and the fulfillment of economic potentials inherent to the state. Further, climate change impacts could limit access to outdoor recreation opportunities through the flooding of outdoor spaces like parks and low-lying roads, make outdoor spaces undesirable due to excess heat, and cause the loss of biodiversity critical to recreational fishing and hunting.

With proper stewardship of natural resources such as open space conservation, land preservation, and community greening infrastructure, New Jersey can address climate challenges while simultaneously expanding access to outdoor recreation and natural areas. Natural areas and parks can help build climate resilience, especially when they are designed to accommodate excess precipitation, mitigate heat, or provide wildlife habitat. For example, parks with green stormwater infrastructure features like bioswales and natural features like meadowlands address flooding; wetlands and forests combat global warming by sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere; and tree canopies reduce extreme temperatures and improve air quality.

PARKS AS SOLUTIONS TO HEAT ISLANDS

"Heat islands" are urban areas that experience significantly higher temperatures due to a larger percentage of roads, structures, and other surfaces that absorb and reemit the sun's heat.¹⁷

The heat island effect exacerbates existing health-related disparities in environmental justice communities by increasing air pollution levels and heat-related illnesses.

Parks can help reduce the intensity of the heat island effect by providing tree shade and greenspace to reduce ambient temperatures and features like splashpads and pools so people can cool off.



Many New Jersey cities, like Newark, are heat islands. To reduce the heat island effect, DEP and partners across the state have been working together to improve parks with new landscaping or features. The NJ Tree Foundation recently partnered with the PSEG Foundation and Arbor Day Foundation to plant 30 trees in Ivy Hill Park in Newark.¹⁸ In January 2023, DEP also announced a \$355,500 grant through the Natural Climate Solutions Grant Program to the City of Linden for an urban tree restoration project that will plant 540 trees across eight Blue Acres-acquired and three Green Acres-funded city lots, minimizing the heat island effect while simultaneously removing carbon from the atmosphere, creating wildlife habitat, and enhancing greenspace for an environmental justice community.¹⁹

Amenities within parks, like pools and splashpads, are important recreational elements that can also reduce the number of heat-related illnesses in urban areas. In Camden, Green Acres pledged \$1.8 million to help renovate Whitman Park; the project includes a spray pad and covered pavilion for community members to cool down during high-temperatures days.²⁰

With a focus on the many co-benefits that outdoor spaces offer, DEP is working to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change through data-backed research, outdoor planning, open space preservation, stewardship of natural resources, and community engagement efforts.

To ensure policies and programs are based on sound information and data, in 2020, DEP published the first New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change, which summarizes the best available science on the past and forecasted impacts on the state. The report's findings, which project increased intensity and frequency of precipitation and flooding events and more frequent droughts, informed the State's first Climate Change Resilience Strategy.²¹

The Resilience Strategy establishes a framework for policy, regulatory, and operational revisions state agencies seek to advance across six climate resilience priority areas:

1. building resilient and healthy communities;
2. strengthening the resiliency of New Jersey's ecosystems;
3. promoting coordinated governance;
4. investing in information and increasing public understanding;
5. promoting climate-informed investments and innovative financing; and
6. developing a coastal resilience plan.

These resilience policy priority areas work in tune with DEP's land conservation, preservation, and stewardship goals. In particular, the Coastal Resilience Plan, developed by DEP in 2021, takes a close look at the coast and outlines ways for communities to build resilience and reduce risk through nature-based solutions. DEP is also infusing the goals of the Climate Change Resilience Strategy into its grantmaking process, encouraging and rewarding applicants who align their proposals with the Strategy.

DEP's Climate Resilience Implementation Action Plan, which builds on the Resilience Strategy, is forthcoming. The Action Plan will detail how the Strategy is being implemented and identify new, existing, and expanded policy, programmatic, and regulatory actions that will address climate change across New Jersey.²²

The 2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change also provided foundational information for DEP's *New Jersey's Global Warming Response Act 80x50 Report*, also released in 2020. The 80x50 goal comes from the State's Global Warming Response Act (GWRA), initially passed by the legislature in 2007 and updated again in 2019. GWRA requires DEP to assess New Jersey's greenhouse gas emissions, "and in collaboration with other state agencies, [present] recommendations for reducing emissions by 20% below 2006 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050." The report outlines a strategy for New Jersey to reach these goals including pursuing 100% clean energy, 100% light-duty electric vehicles, and electrifying 90% of buildings. It names open space preservation as a key "carbon gain" activity, and encourages the creation of incentives for private and public landowners to continue to preserve natural lands.²³

Approximately 80% of New Jersey residents reside in the coastal zone and must anticipate flooding impacts from sea level rise and severe storms, like Superstorm Sandy in 2012, and all New Jersey residents are vulnerable to extreme precipitation events, such as Tropical Storm Ida in 2021. Open space preservation can help protect coastal communities during flooding events by providing a safe place for water to flow, thus reducing impacts to homes and buildings.

DEP has always recognized the benefits of open spaces in addressing flood risks. Established in 1995 to support New Jersey's coastal and riverine communities, the Blue Acres program acquires flood-prone properties that it turns into open green spaces that can then act as flood hazard mitigation as well as passive recreation areas. Blue Acres takes a proactive approach to disaster preparedness that increases host community resilience through the strategic acquisition of lands that have been damaged, or may be prone to future damage, due to sea-level rise, storms, or storm-related flooding, or that may buffer or protect other lands from such damage.²⁴

CITY OF LINDEN, TREMLEY NEIGHBORHOOD BLUE ACRES RESTORATION

Linden, New Jersey is a highly urbanized area southwest of Manhattan, New York and located on the Arthur Kill tidal straight. Much of the city's land cover is impervious, leading to severe flooding during heavy rains and storms. During Superstorm Sandy, the Tremley neighborhood in Linden suffered devastating impacts after experiencing a 15-foot tidal surge, which destroyed many homes in the area.

In response to the damaging effects of the storm, Blue Acres acquired flood-damaged homes in the Tremley Point neighborhood and then focused on restoring the area. DEP collaborated with the City of Linden, Rutgers University, Princeton Hydro, Phillips 66, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, New Jersey Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership, and Envirosapes to implement an ecological restoration project. Partners in the restoration project enhanced the floodplain design through green infrastructure interventions that included the restoration of native coastal floodplain forest, meadow, and wetlands. As a result of this project, the Tremley neighborhood has improved storm resilience because of the natural buffers this green infrastructure provides, reducing storm surge and increasing the area's capacity to collect, infiltrate, and slow down stormwater runoff. The project also improves wildlife habitat and provides public recreation access, which are especially critical in urbanized areas.²⁵



© PRINCETON HYDRO

Strategic investments in conservation can also mitigate climate change's effects on biodiversity loss, focusing efforts on areas that sequester high amounts of carbon or provide habitat for diverse species. In the Pinelands region, DEP is working to restore 10,000 acres of Atlantic white cedar forests that have been greatly impacted by sea level rise and storm surge. Restoring these forests will increase habitat for globally rare flora and fauna, increase carbon capture and storage, and mitigate flooding impacts.²⁶

DEP also recognizes the essential role that green infrastructure has in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Green infrastructure includes vegetated swales, green roofs, cisterns, wet ponds, and infiltration basins. In 2004, New Jersey began requiring incorporation of nonstructural strategies (i.e., green infrastructure) into stormwater planning and designs, in addition to methods that improve the quality and reduce the quantity of stormwater. These requirements were expanded upon in 2021, including establishing an objective standard for performance.²⁷ In addition to stormwater management benefits, green infrastructure co-benefits include carbon sequestration and reducing greenhouse gases. The U.S. Climate

Alliance recently found that “New Jersey could store and sequester an additional 2 to 3 million metric tons of CO₂ by actively managing, enhancing, and protecting its natural and working lands.²⁸ In cities, planting trees reduces nearby temperatures and alleviates the urban heat island effect, which not only benefits residents by providing shade, reducing air pollution, and lowering surrounding temperatures; it also reduces energy costs due to a decreased need for air conditioning. By implementing green infrastructure measures, communities increase the climate resilience potential of their stormwater management systems and reduce the capital costs associated with traditional grey infrastructure.

Along with DEP’s active climate resilience and mitigation efforts, the State of New Jersey has also set ambitious goals to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt key sectors like energy and transportation for a more resilient economy. In 2023, Governor Murphy’s administration set an accelerated target of 100% clean energy in New Jersey by 2035, with a goal for 100% of new cars sold that year to be zero-emissions vehicles²⁹. DEP is helping meet statewide energy goals by installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and solar panels in State-managed parks to reduce the use of fossil fuels.³⁰

New Jersey provides implementation funding for some climate mitigation and adaptation projects through participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a multi-state, market-based program that establishes a regional cap on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Proceeds from CO₂ allowance auctions are used by states to invest in programs that further reduce greenhouse gases. Between 2021 and 2023, New Jersey’s RGGI Climate Investments have totaled \$113.8 million across more than 150 projects and sequestered the equivalent of over 32,700 metric tons of CO₂.³¹

RENEWABLE ENERGY IN PARKS

Several parks in New Jersey are using renewable energy on their buildings and facilities to reduce fossil fuel use, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce their energy costs in the long-term. The Monmouth County Park System installed solar photovoltaic systems on five facilities, including the Thompson Park Creative Arts Center and Equestrian Center.³² Additionally, state parks are installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, thanks to grants from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. Round Valley Reservoir has two EV stations in place, and new stations are coming online at Cheesequake State Park, High Point State Park, Wawayanda State Park, and in Batsto Village at Wharton State Forest.³³



DEP developed an online Flood Indicator Tool that maps indicators of potential flood risk on or near individual properties in New Jersey, including waterbodies, watercourses, U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Zones, and State Flood Hazard Areas. DEP encourages local governments and non-profit organizations to incorporate the Flood Indicator Tool into project planning efforts. The information in the tool facilitates proactive planning decisions such as preserving forested and flood-prone areas that build community climate resilience; DEP has used the tool to prioritize areas for land acquisition planning for New Jersey.³⁴

DEP also provides funding to communities through its Natural Climate Solutions Grant program which is funded through auction proceeds from RGGI. The program supports “on-the-ground implementation of projects that create, restore, and enhance New Jersey’s natural carbon sinks, such as salt marshes, seagrass beds, forests, urban parks and woodlands, and street trees.”³⁵

In addition to providing grant funding to communities, DEP and its partners are also working to close the knowledge gap around climate change causes and impacts, and the ways individuals and communities can prepare for them. In engaging New Jersey residents through their outreach, programming, and planning efforts, DEP helps raise awareness of climate change impacts, the co-benefits of open space protection, and stewardship of natural resources (including balancing conservation/preservation with public access).

Challenges

New Jersey’s geography causes it to experience high levels of climate threat. With more than 1,800 miles of coastline, the state’s numerous coastal communities face severe threats such as sea level rise, storm surge, and erosion.³⁶ Flooding and extreme weather, both exacerbated by climate change, threaten outdoor recreation industries by displacing residents and businesses, reducing access to open space and reducing people’s comfort levels outside (such as in cases of extreme heat).

Holistic adaptation and hazard mitigation measures for the state are costly and require significant investment in infrastructure, such as raising low-lying roads along the coast or ensuring wastewater infrastructure is prepared to handle sea level rise and peak flow during storm events.

These infrastructure investments are traditionally managed by other New Jersey state agencies, such as the Department of Transportation. To effectively address climate change, DEP’s strategies require high levels of interagency and community collaboration to identify and prioritize solutions and implement appropriate infrastructural responses. Successful collaboration with state agencies and communities will also require continued efforts to close the knowledge gap around climate change in New Jersey. Recent survey results have shown that, while there is some level of concern about the impacts of climate change, there is limited knowledge on how best to prepare for them.³⁷

Conservation efforts, especially those with climate co-benefits, are essential to the long-term maintenance and stewardship of outdoor recreation resources. However, New Jersey must continue to seek a balance between enhancing public access for outdoor recreation in green space and the conservation efforts needed to build climate resilience. Efforts like wetland restoration can increase biodiversity and reduce flooding impacts, but public access may need to be limited in vulnerable ecosystems.

DUNDEE ISLAND PARK



© EDWIN GANO, MKW + ASSOCIATES, LLC.

Dundee Island Park in Passaic City was redeveloped and opened in 2020. The park, which lies in the 100-year flood zone adjacent to the Passaic River, was designed to accommodate a rise in river levels without impeding nearby structures. Park features include a field house built on stilts to allow floodwaters to flow beneath it, and a soccer field, playground, and spray park built mainly on porous surfaces to facilitate water absorption. Within a year of the park being opened, the region was hit with a major storm. Due to the new green infrastructure, the park sustained minimal damage, only requiring a good cleaning before restarting operations.

Dundee Island Park will undergo a second phase of redevelopment to continue improving its climate resilient features. In this second redesign, the park will reclaim an old railroad right-of-way and bridge over the Passaic River, creating a walkway that crosses river and connects three existing parks as well as the cities of Garfield and Passaic. At completion, Dundee Island Park will support 30 acres of connected green space, providing much needed recreational facilities for the neighborhood and reinforcing climate-smart elements to help the park withstand periodic river flooding, minimize flood damage to the surrounding community, and reduce downstream flooding.

Goals & Actions

Ensure outdoor spaces are designed and enhanced to support climate resilience and habitat protection

- Identify natural assets that provide co-benefits to outdoor recreation and climate resilience
- Establish a funding dashboard and toolkit to support development of outdoor spaces as climate assets
- Incentivize climate risk evaluations in planning open spaces and outdoor recreation

Ensure best practices in climate resilience (stormwater management, heat island mitigation, flood management, air quality improvement, etc.) are integrated in park planning and design, especially in Overburdened Communities

- Obtain a high-level of community involvement to identify needs and the best solutions suitable to the community
- Prioritize funding for development and maintenance of climate resilience best practices
- Incentivize the use of regional planning initiatives like Resilient NJ to identify outdoor recreation and open space opportunities
- Encourage precautionary design considerations for increased durability and advanced safety measures for pre- and post- disaster preparedness
- Incentivize the use of design standards for stormwater management and green building materials

Clarify and, where appropriate, facilitate permitting processes for projects that provide climate benefits

- Create criteria that would allow for a streamlined permit application processes for DEP policies and rules
- Provide technical assistance to project sponsors to incentivize climate resilient designs and facilitate project permitting

Implement new and expanded initiatives that inform residents on how they can protect the natural environment

- Engage youth, especially in Overburdened Communities and EJ communities, in community science projects and workforce development projects
- Create materials that describe community climate benefits of parks and make that information available, such as signage in parks, on park websites, presentations to community groups
- Provide EV charging stations in parks.
- Develop partnerships with private and public entities and local residents to provide and share environmental education

Increase the availability of open space in urban areas

- Elevate alternative site options, like brownfields and Known Contaminated Sites, for new park development
- Provide information and technical assistance to communities to increase understanding of how brownfields can be transformed into parks, and what financial assistance is available

Use outdoor spaces to demonstrate scalable climate resilience interventions and to increase public awareness and outreach around these initiatives

- Prioritize open space acquisition and appropriate recreational development in floodways designed to accommodate significant stormwater capture
- Standardize understanding of green infrastructure and its value in all open space projects
- Share information and resources with New Jersey residents and integrate community engagement in outdoor space planning and development
- Use nature-based solutions installed in parks and park planning processes to inspire climate action

VII. Principle 3

Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation



New Jersey is uniquely situated to empower communities through investment in ecotourism and outdoor recreation due to an already diverse visitor base, proximity to urban centers, strong business community and exceptional environmental, historical, and cultural assets. The state's natural, historical, and cultural assets drive ecotourism and heritage tourism across the state and contribute to a dynamic outdoor recreation industry.

In traditional economic terms, outdoor recreation and related tourist industries attract non-local visitors who bring new income into the state through their support of local businesses. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation provided New Jersey \$10.7 billion in value added in 2021, or \$1,116 per resident.³⁸ In 2021, for example, lands managed by the National Park Service in New Jersey resulted in 5.6 million visitors who spent an estimated \$212 million across the state, supporting nearly 3,000 jobs, \$131 million in labor income, \$196 million in value added, and \$326 million in economic output.³⁹

In addition to preserving over 1.5 million acres of open space to date, New Jersey continues to actively invest in its cultural resources and historic sites, which convey the State's rich history and collective past. Continuing to invest in the state's rich history, and natural and cultural resources while introducing residents and visitors to these assets, the outdoor recreation industry offers New Jersey residents economic, environmental, social, and community benefits.

More than half of New Jersey residents surveyed said they would like to see more farmers' markets at the outdoor spaces they visit.

This economic value comes to communities in the form of new business development, expansion of existing businesses, or attraction of new employers and entrepreneurs. Creating and having open spaces that can host special events that celebrate the unique environment and culture of a place, such as festivals, farmers' markets, and artisan fairs, attract visitors to the area and provide agricultural and retail businesses opportunities for growth. A healthy outdoor economy also attracts a stewardship-minded workforce and can be used to draw new employees to the state, not only in outdoor recreation but also in fields such as park maintenance and security. Retirees are also drawn to living near outdoor access, boosting local economies.

HIGHLANDS REGION ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The Highlands region is a resource-rich area of New Jersey, covering nearly 860,000 acres across 88 municipalities in seven counties in northern part of the state. Land management in the Highlands is guided by a Regional Master Plan (RMP) and overseen by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) in partnership with DEP. The RMP covers a broad range of topics from natural and agricultural resources to water supply and future growth. As a regional planning agency, the Highlands Council is uniquely positioned to protect both natural resources and local economies.



To promote economic health and stewardship of the region, the Highlands Council developed and released an Economic Sustainability Plan in 2021. The plan includes a goal for reinforcing the Highlands region "as a center for natural resource protection, innovation, and technology," encouraging constituent communities to "collaborate with eco-tourism and heritage tourism efforts to promote [the] value of a natural and cultural resources in these sectors."⁴⁰ The region's many farms and the abundant opportunities for hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, canoeing and kayaking are major draws for both

visitors to the region and those who live in the Highlands. Investing in the preservation of these resources is vital to the future of the region as well as the entire state.

Hunterdon County's 579 Trail is an example of a program that leverages the goals of the Highlands Region Economic Sustainability Plan to support local businesses and communities. The 579 Trail links farms, wineries, and restaurants along County Route 579, highlighting the region's natural and agricultural resources and driving tourism and economic development in a rural area of the state. The updated website and marketing campaign attract visitors to family-friendly outdoor recreation and heritage tourism opportunities in New Jersey, as well as centralizing information for residents on local farmstands and community-supported agriculture opportunities.⁴¹

In November 2022, Governor Phil Murphy announced a \$25 million investment towards Revolutionary War historic sites in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to be celebrated in 2026.⁴² (New Jersey was one of the original 13 colonies and saw more battles during that war than any other colony.) The funds will be used to restore 10 sites across the state, including Washington Crossing State Park and Trenton's Old Barracks.

High-quality parks and recreation opportunities can improve the local economy by increasing neighborhood home values and property tax income for the community. They are also a boon to the small business community and other "Main Street" anchor institutions like restaurants, grocery stores, and locally owned retailers. Well-maintained outdoor spaces make nearby businesses more attractive and inviting and encourage visitors to linger in the area.

With ecotourism, the preservation of natural assets also delivers ecosystem services to communities. Trees in parks remove air pollution, sequester carbon, and mitigate heat islands; natural lands and permeable surfaces reduce stormwater runoff and provide recreational opportunities. These ecosystem services provide varied economic

benefits such as allowing individuals to avoid health care expenses and reducing the need for municipalities to spend money installing infrastructure like stormwater drains.

Additionally, the outdoor recreation industry provides many social and community benefits, including increasing the resiliency of local communities due to economic diversification.

Ecotourism promotes an increased connection to nature and outdoor recreation opportunities, both of which can stimulate healthy communities by increasing physical activity and the cascade of benefits that provides. Increasing access to greenspace improves residents' quality of life, including improving mental health and wellness. Both ecotourism and heritage tourism also enhance community identity and a "sense of place" by highlighting unique ecosystems and resources that define a community's character

In focus groups, New Jersey residents emphasized that outdoor recreation included connection to community.

and environment.⁴³ Heritage tourism, in particular, increases social cohesion by presenting connections to a shared past and highlighting collective stories and achievements.⁴⁴

Finally, inherent to its mission, both ecotourism and heritage tourism also support a sustainable, healthy environment and increase the environmental and cultural awareness of both residents and visitors. Many ecotourism and heritage tourism sites face a multitude of challenges: they are vulnerable to development pressures and climate change impacts, while historic preservation and land conservation efforts face

limited and diminished funding. Restoration efforts are needed to ensure these resources are available in the future. By providing a level of access that maintains their integrity and promotes their conservation, the outdoor recreation industry helps raise awareness of the challenges these resources face and the benefits they provide. Ultimately, tourism supports long-term protection of key sites while providing new and unique economic development opportunities.

PATERSON GREAT FALLS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

The Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park takes a unique approach to outdoor tourism, blending environmentally driven tourism with elements of cultural heritage for New Jersey. The Park is known for its natural beauty, with a 77-foot waterfall that flows in the Passaic River. The waterfall and surrounding 118 acres are also recognized as a National Natural Landmark. In the 18th century, the waterfall was used to produce hydropower, which supported a strong mill industry in Paterson. At the time, use of waterpower for industrial purposes was innovative, leading Paterson to play a significant role in the U.S. Industrial Revolution.⁴⁵



High-quality parks and recreation opportunities can improve the local economy by increasing neighborhood home values and property tax income for the community. They are also a boon to the small business community and other “Main Street” anchor institutions like restaurants, grocery stores, and locally owned retailers. Well-maintained outdoor spaces make nearby businesses more attractive and inviting and encourage visitors to linger in the area.⁴⁶

To assist communities in efforts to increase tourism, New Jersey continues to support land and historic preservation efforts. The State recently completed an update to its Historic Preservation Plan (2023–2028), which presents a framework to protect the “historic and cultural resources [that] are the physical embodiment of our state’s rich history and diverse communities.”⁴⁷ The Plan also recognizes that ecotourism and heritage tourism are linked, and sees the environmental community as partners, with historic preservation serving as a tool to lead an environmentally sustainable future.

Challenges

Although New Jersey has a large visitor base and strong business community and is proximally located to urban areas, the state lacks a coordinated, intentional approach to leveraging these assets. The State has not yet reached its full potential for supporting communities through investment in outdoor recreation and open space. The Advisory Committee noted the challenges of coordination and highlighted the need for ongoing program and project maintenance funding, connecting communities and the state with federal funding, concentrating on marketing, and assisting communities identify, market and share their cultural identity. While initial acquisition or capital dollars may be readily available, communities need longer-term support to meet their needs.

One of the challenges to successfully implementing ecotourism is balancing its environmental and economic benefits. There is an inherent risk of human impact on those resources when welcoming visitors at

potentially sensitive environmental and historic sites; however, the tradeoff is increased engagement with the natural world, appreciation for New Jersey's cultural resources, and the economic development potential of ecotourism (including new jobs, business creation or expansion, and the impacts of visitor spending).

Ecotourism raises necessary questions around community empowerment and equity in access. Access to nature and outdoor recreation increases residents' quality of life and has been shown to improve social determinants of health (e.g., through increased physical activity).⁴⁸ Leaders, practitioners, and partners in the ecotourism industry should strive to increase underserved communities' access to New Jersey's unique ecological and historic sites, increasing outdoor recreation access as well as building community wealth through new economic opportunities in the industry.

Residents engaged in focus groups mentioned several barriers to full participation in outdoor recreation. The most frequently mentioned barriers were limited transportation options, high expense of park fees and any associated travel costs, feeling unwelcome in unfamiliar outdoor spaces, and difficulties around finding information about amenities, events, and programming. Respondents hoped to see more inclusive programming to make these spaces feel more welcoming, including cultural events, demographic diversity in vendors at events, and classes or programs for more communities.

BIRDWATCHING

Birdwatching, or birding, is an important form of ecotourism for New Jersey, attracting visitors from all over the world to see rare and unique species that live in or migrate through the state. New Jersey is in the Atlantic Flyway, and is a focal point for spring and fall bird migration. It provides critical habitat to native and migratory bird species from the shoreline and coastal zone to forests and shrublands, capturing both the northern range of some species and southern range of others.⁴⁹ Birders have identified and documented 483 species in New Jersey, comparable to states like New York and North Carolina (which are nearly 6 times larger).⁵⁰



© JAY WATSON

Birding brings economic benefits to New Jersey, as birders spend money as they pursue their passion. For example, the nonprofit New Jersey Audubon hosts an annual World Series of Birding in May during the peak of the spring migration, helping to raise awareness of bird conservation and bring approximately \$10 million into the local economy in the process. In Cape May County alone, more than 470,000 tourists visit to seek out migratory birds, with an estimated economic impact of \$313 million each year between expenditures on lodging, food, recreation, and shopping.⁵¹

As an ideal location for recreation birding, New Jersey also has opportunities for equitable access to nature. Birding can occur nearly anywhere, the state is home to many high-quality, accessible birding areas that can accommodate people with various degrees of mobility. Advocates are working to make birding more accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities. For example, the nonprofit Birdability was established in 2021 and is collaborating with the National Audubon Society to map the accessibility features of birding locations around the world.

Goals & Actions

Promote a well-balanced and thriving outdoor recreation industry

- Encourage development of culturally appropriate amenities and services— including leases, concessions, programming, and events—to support deeper engagement and enjoyment at State-owned facilities
- Establish support for training New Jerseyans for careers in the outdoor recreation industry and conservation profession through a variety of methods
- Detail and develop a communication strategy demonstrating the economic benefits of parks, conservation, and open space, including job creation, economic development, and ecosystem services, to help build support for park creation and maintenance
- Establish an Office of Outdoor Recreation within the Department of Environmental Protection that coordinates efforts in economic development and ecotourism, open space, education and workforce development, public health and wellness
- Create incentives for communities to experience or learn about local environmental, cultural and historic assets

Increase support for and access to ecotourism sites

- Promote New Jersey’s natural beauty and recreational assets to a wider audience—both geographically and demographically
- Consider non-traditional funding opportunities to expand and enhance outdoor recreation and ecotourism sites, such as markets for carbon offsets or watershed/drinking water health, that recognize the value of ecosystem services
- Provide clear signage and information, both on-site and online, to assist visitors with public access, including transportation and parking options
- Form partnerships with private and public entities for marketing material or creating shared visitor trips and activities
- Collaborate with the New Jersey Department of State’s Division of Travel and Tourism to promote open space and recreation assets that benefit ecotourism

Elevate ecotourism and heritage tourism sites in environmental justice communities

- Provide opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs to connect with visitors through events like farmers’ markets, artisan fairs, and other community-centered, local gatherings.
- Provide training and technical assistance for communities to help them highlight their uniqueness and attract visitors
- Provide assistance for recreational and ecotourism businesses including strategic marketing for ecotourism.

Support the entry of minority-owned businesses into the ecotourism and heritage tourism industries

- Find points of entry for young or new minority business owners to begin building equity and experience in a growing international industry

VIII. Principle 4

Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation



New Jersey has a rich history in the field of technology. Its strategic location and abundant natural resources made it an ideal place for industrial growth in the early 20th century, enabling the state to play a crucial role in the Industrial Revolution through the development of textiles, ironworks, and transportation infrastructure. Thomas Edison had his laboratory in Menlo Park, where he invented numerous groundbreaking devices, including the phonograph and the incandescent light bulb.⁵² Bell Labs, located in Murray Hill, was also an important research center responsible for development of the transistor, the UNIX operating system, and the first cellular communication system.⁵³ Today, New Jersey continues to be a hub for technological innovation, fostering numerous technology startups, hosting research institutions, and continuing to make significant contributions and technological advancements.

It's no surprise then, that over the last decade, recreation providers in New Jersey have embraced technology to provide a better visitor experience, reach new audiences, improve the efficiency of their operations, and better manage their resources. Mobile technology has increased connections between people and changed the way people view the world. Recreation providers have created mobile applications that allow users to access information about facilities, programs, and events including maps, directions, hours of operation, and real-time updates on park conditions such as trail closures and weather alerts. Technology can support visitors returning to the outdoors and help increase opportunities for outdoor recreation in more communities.

DIGITAL KIOSKS

At trailheads, campgrounds, parks, and other recreation sites, information is posted at kiosks to provide visitors with the information they need to have a safe and enjoyable experience. Kiosks are built structures that contain space for bulletin-board signage and can range from a simple post-and-beam structure to a prefabricated aluminum or steel structure. A digital kiosk is a display or sign that typically includes a touch-screen interface that visitors can use to access information about the site, such as trail maps, hiking tips, safety information, park or trail regulations, and other important information. These digital displays may also include information about events, weather updates, and emergency contact information.

- **South Cape May Meadows Preserve Kiosk.** A refuge for native and migratory birds, the South Cape May Meadows is a 200-acre preserve situated between Cove Beach and Cape May Point State Park. It has long been a must-see for serious birders visiting the state to witness the impressive migrations of songbirds, loons, gannets, falcons and other raptors, butterflies, and dragonflies. The Nature Conservancy set up a digital kiosk at the preserve where visitors can access a downloadable, interactive map; see and hear birds commonly spotted in the area; learn about the history, ecology, and stewardship practices at the preserve; and even respond to a survey about their experience.



Providers are also able to learn more about visitors, which means greater potential to customize and enhance facilities and programming to meet a wide range of recreation needs and capacities. Location or proximity

data sourced from stationary devices, remote sensors, security cameras, and captured by cell phones is informing strategies to increase park and facility use and enhance the use of under-utilized areas.

Technology is also being deployed to help recreation providers manage their operations more efficiently. Sensors monitor water usage, implement energy-efficient lighting, and automate irrigation systems. The data from those sensors is linked to software that then manages maintenance schedules, tracks inventory, and, in some cases, monitors usage of facilities.

Technological breakthroughs have helped recreation providers stay ahead of evolving visitor interests and patterns while also improving the way they are meeting these needs. All recreation providers can benefit from digital tools—whether by knowing ahead of time which pavilions will need maintenance, where the local birding clubs consider to be the best places for bird watching, or measuring which social media promotions resulted in a jump in park visitation. The adoption of new technologies allows recreation providers to focus more on high-value activities and ultimately connect more people to the outdoors, especially those with no prior experience of the joys of outdoor recreation.

In New Jersey, DEP and other organizations across the state are using technology to enhance outdoor recreation experiences and help protect environmental and natural resources. For example, GIS technology is used to map state parks and forests and features such as trails, as well as analyze environmental data.⁵⁴ This helps visitors locate outdoor recreation opportunities and allows staff to identify areas that may be at risk from overuse or damage and to plan and manage built, natural, and cultural resources more effectively. DEP's [Statewide Trails Dataset](#) offers an inventory of publicly owned and managed trails throughout New Jersey which is updated annually. DEP has also developed several mobile apps that allow users to access environmental information and resources, like real-time information on air quality and beach closures.⁵⁵

TRAILS APPS

Today there are many mobile applications designed to assist hikers, runners, and other outdoor enthusiasts with navigating trails and recording their progress. These apps typically use GPS technology to track a user's location and provide information about the trail, including distance, elevation change, and difficulty level. Some trail apps also include features such as trail maps, photos, reviews, and social sharing functions. They can be helpful for discovering new trails, planning routes, and keeping track of personal fitness goals. However, many of these apps rely on crowd-sourced information which can result in inappropriate trail uses (such as through sensitive habitat or across property lines) being included, so it is recommended that users of crowd-sourced trail apps confirm trail locations, permitted uses, and boundary lines with the managing agency of the trail. Some examples of trails apps include:

- **AllTrails.** This is an online platform that helps users find and explore new trails and connects them to the routes best suited to their needs.
- **Trailforks.** This is a trail management system that offers a set of tools to inventory, maintain, promote, and showcase trail networks, events, and tourism destinations. Trail information is crowdsourced and moderated.

- **Trail Tracker – The Interactive Trails Map of NJ State Parks.** This tool helps park visitors plan their trips to NJ state parks, explore the range of available trails and activities, and find their way around while in the park and on trails. An interactive map allows users to track their current location, view trails and points of interest, search for park activities, and download PDF maps for offline use.
- **TrailLink.** This is an interactive map developed by Rails-To-Trails Conservancy that helps users locate top-rated wheelchair accessible trails in New Jersey. The trails have descriptions, maps, photos, and reviews from users.

In addition to producing interactive online tools, DEP also uses modern technologies on the ground to physically enhance the state's outdoor spaces or gain more information to support them. New Jersey, with its rich history, features many historical sites. For example, on June 28, 1778, the largest single-day battle of the Revolutionary War was fought on land that is now Monmouth Battlefield State Park. To gain a clearer picture of the historical events that took place on sites like these, archaeologists who obtain permission from the State can deploy geophysical technology like ground-penetrating radar and metal detectors to discover material remains left behind. In the case of Monmouth Battlefield State Park, archaeologists identified artifacts such as buttons, cartridges, bayonets, shrapnel, and more. Archaeologists then excavated, identified, and mapped the location of each artifact using GIS and GPS. Through these analyses, archaeologists were able to pinpoint where specific events related to the battle took place on the landscape. Because of this technology, visitors can now experience the events of this iconic battle at reenactments at the site. Historically accurate militiamen march and drill just as the Revolutionary War soldiers did over 200 years ago.⁵⁶

Disclaimer: The technology described above is used only after obtaining appropriate and necessary licenses and credentials. Usage of State property without obtaining proper licenses and credentials is prohibited.

With over 130 miles of coastline, the beach is also an integral part of outdoor enjoyment for many in New Jersey. In addition to serving as recreation spaces, beaches, filled with sand that absorbs wave energy, serve as one of the first lines of defense against coastal flooding during storms. The result of this protection, though, is erosion or loss of sand. Fortunately for surfers, picnickers, seaside readers, and the millions of people who visit New Jersey beaches every year, DEP, with the help of the New Jersey Geological Water Survey (NJGWS), identifies beaches with significant erosion and uses a range of seismic technologies to locate and delineate sand shoals that can be used to replenish beaches. The beach nourishment process requires collecting samples and data on the thickness of a sand shoal, its composition, and its location, followed by analysis of geographic layers on a beach to determine suitable sand placement. The entire beach nourishment process can take several years and, thanks to technology, the beauty of New Jersey's coastline is maintained for generations of beach goers to enjoy.⁵⁷

New Jerseyans and DEP are excited to continue to harness new technologies for use across the state, and when it comes to the many outdoor recreation programs, services, and amenities offered by DEP, technology can increase the excitement, safety, and ecological considerations of outdoor recreation activities. To bring this principle to life, New Jersey recognizes that the focus is not on technology alone, but rather how it helps people add value to their outdoor recreation experiences. DEP aims to use technology to improve visitor experience, customer service, and resource management.

The use of social media sites for information on outdoor recreation among residents was significantly high, suggesting the importance of embracing these platforms for reaching new audiences.

Customer service can be enhanced by social media technologies from a communications and public outreach perspective, to engage with visitors, promote events and share information about parks and facilities. This is also a way to hear directly from visitors, engage in more regular dialogue, and encourage visitors to record their experiences for others to access. These technologies can improve the overall outdoor experience by making it more convenient, immersive, and personalized.

New Jersey is also focused on ensuring that park facilities and amenities are well-maintained and safe for public use. Digitized and online maintenance management systems can manage equipment and inventory, help increase water and energy efficiencies by monitoring use, and schedule preventive maintenance. The costs of this maintenance can be easily tracked and the data can be used for planning, fundraising, and engagement.

Challenges

While technology offers many benefits to New Jersey, there are also several challenges in implementing and using it effectively. For agencies that are undertaking this transformation, it involves a willingness to evaluate and challenge information technology usage and infrastructure, operating processes, organizational talent, and core competencies. Some of the most common challenges include cost of purchasing and maintaining technology; staff training, as existing staff may lack the skills or knowledge needed to effectively use new technology; access to technology, as some communities may not have reliable internet access or mobile phone coverage; and privacy concerns related to collecting and using personal data from park visitors. Overall, DEP and outdoor recreation providers must carefully consider the costs, benefits, and challenges of technology adoption to ensure that it supports their mission and enhances the quality of services they provide.



© JOHN RAE

LIVECAMS

Livecams, also known as webcams, capture and transmit real-time video and audio over the internet. They are typically connected to a computer and can be accessed remotely by other users via a web browser. In some cases, livecams can enable real-time communication between users. In outdoor recreation spaces, livecams are used to drive visitation and tourism, to promote specific places and experiences, and even to educate. Livecams can be found in natural areas and wildlife habitats, along trail corridors, and in popular destination sites. Some examples in New Jersey include:



© DUKE FARMS

- **New Jersey in the House!** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism launched this digital hub for people to experience the sights, sounds, and spirit of New Jersey. It incorporates multiplatform components, including a free downloadable music playlist and livecams at tourist destinations like Cape May Zoo and Paterson Great Falls National Historic Park that allow would-be travelers to have virtual experiences across the state.
- **Batsto Village.** Batsto Village is an historic site in Wharton State Forest with buildings and structures dating back to 1766. The Batsto Citizens Committee maintains an informational website about the historic village, and the site features two live camera feeds showing aerial views of the site, which is surrounded by rivers, streams, and numerous lakes and ponds for canoeing.
- **Barnegat Lighthouse.** On New Year's Day in 1859, the lighthouse at Barnegat Lighthouse State Park began warning vessels of the shoals extending from the shoreline. Today this maritime site on the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail invites visitors to climb the 217 steps to take in the awe-inspiring views from the top of the historic building. Visitors can also catch the views *without* climbing the steps thanks to four cameras at the top of the lighthouse that transmit live images to a display in the interpretive center.
- **Bird cameras.** These livecams are used to connect people to the diverse and intimate world of birds. Cameras are typically broadcast from bird nests or feeders, showing viewers how birds lay their eggs and how hatchlings grow up. One of the most popular bird cameras in New Jersey, hosted by nonprofit Conserve Wildlife Foundation New Jersey, is the Duke Farms Eagle Cam, which shows views of a Bald Eagle nest. Additional bird cameras include the Friends of Island Beach State Park's Pete McLain Osprey Cam and the Palmyra Cove Nature Center's Falcon Cams, among many others.
- **The Illegal Dumping Program.** DEP loans camera systems to selected municipalities to deter illegal dumping and keep communities clean. The program is a direct result of community feedback from environmental justice communities.

Goals & Actions

Use technology to make New Jersey parks, forests, wildlife refuges, beaches, and other recreational spaces more accessible for all user types

- Use trailcams/parkcams to inform users on open space conditions and trail status
- Create informational video campaigns on features and potential risks (e.g., pests, poisonous plants, etc.) in public outdoor spaces
- Ensure consistency between all State agencies in information and maps for State-managed outdoor recreation spaces
- Update DEP's database of Recreation and Open Space Inventories (ROSI) to support virtual accessibility through providing images, feature availability, etc. for each Green Acres-funded property
- Partner with and incentivize municipalities and counties to provide virtual accessibility to their parks and open spaces
- Develop interactive mapping that allows users to identify features or amenities (e.g., ADA-compliant trails, BBQ pits, birdwatching, water access) in advance of visiting

Enhance experiences in outdoor recreation spaces by increasing public safety and comfort through strategic use of technology

- Expand free public wi-fi in parks across the state, with notable emphasis on communities and locations currently lacking such services
- Consider deploying other technologies, like safety call boxes

Identify ways to use technology to overcome obstacles in participating in outdoor recreation

- Use interactive signs to inform and broaden information-sharing to out-door recreation users
- Incorporate universal design principles to enhance experiences, such as including braille and audio options on signs and providing audio tours
- Collaborate with community development groups, municipalities, outdoor recreation stakeholders, and social media influencers to advertise park events and programs on social media

Explore implementing new technologies in outdoor spaces across the state

- Pilot real-time parking spot capacity tracking
- Explore including real-time status updates for State-managed outdoor spaces through the New Jersey State Park Service website (e.g., flooding, nearby wildfires, hunting activity status, bridge outages, trail access concerns, etc.)
- Explore anonymized cell-phone tracking data to understand outdoor space use and better prioritize management needs
- Create online forums to collect residents' suggestions for how to enhance their enjoyment of parks
- Provide on-site and online visual representations of planned park projects to create excitement and enhance residents' understanding of upcoming park improvements



IX. Principle 5

Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation



DEP's central mission is to improve New Jersey for all residents. All residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, ability, and economic status have a right to live, work, learn, and recreate in a clean and healthy environment.

Investment in natural, cultural, and historic capital across the state raises New Jersey residents' standard of living and promotes sustainable growth and long-term economic vitality in the state's communities. Open and green space is a precious commodity throughout New Jersey, especially in densely developed areas of the state and in the state's urban communities. With many communities lacking sufficient green spaces, tree cover, parks, and outdoor recreational opportunities, New Jersey is committed to ensuring equity and environmental justice in creating and expanding the state's open space and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Outdoor recreation spaces support positive health and social outcomes by providing areas for fitness, relaxation, and community connection. A growing body of literature recognizes these benefits, stressing the importance of providing quality outdoor spaces to the public.⁵⁸

Unfortunately, access to recreational spaces, and what they offer in amenities and features, varies across racial and economic lines. As described in a 2022 report by TPL, "neighborhoods where residents predominantly identify as people of color have access to an average of 44% less park acreage than predominantly white neighborhoods, and low-income neighborhoods also average 42% less park acreage per person than high-income neighborhoods."⁵⁹

In addition, communities with a higher percentage of lower-income and minority residents suffer from inequitable access to clean water and clean air and experience a higher concentration of pollution and toxic exposure resulting from a legacy of unwanted land uses, such as hazardous waste landfills and industrial operations. Cumulative exposure to such environmental burdens heavily disadvantages communities and leads to poor health outcomes and lower life expectancies for residents.

In New Jersey, areas with minority, low-income, or Native American populations that experience concentrated environmental stressors and disparities in open space and recreational opportunities are communities in need of environmental justice.

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, economic status, or ability.

“Fair treatment” means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, and commercial operations or policies.

“Meaningful involvement” means that people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health.

— DEP, Environmental Justice

Environmental justice communities are Overburdened Communities subject to adverse cumulative stressors as defined by New Jersey's Environmental Justice Law. Overburdened Communities are block groups where at least 35% of households are low-income, at least 40% of residents identify as a minority, or at least 40% of households have limited English proficiency.⁶⁰ As of 2021 U.S. Census data, 338 municipalities in New Jersey have overburdened block groups within their municipal boundaries, totaling about 5 million residents. Many Overburdened Communities are located in dense urban areas where discriminatory planning practices such as redlining promoted racial segregation and drove inequitable distribution of resources, including parks. As New Jersey residents increase their visits to outdoor spaces, DEP acknowledges the need to equitably provide outdoor recreation spaces to all New Jersey residents.

LIBERTY STATE PARK

Liberty State Park, one of the New Jersey's most visited parks, overlooks the New York Harbor area, capturing views of the Statue of Liberty and skylines of both Jersey City and Manhattan. The land constituting Liberty State Park once supported the Lenape Tribe who used the waterfront for hunting and fishing.⁶¹ Following European settlement, the site became a transportation hub and, in the late 1800s, supported active waterfront industries and railroads lines associated with the Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal. After industry declined, the site was abandoned, becoming a derelict dumping ground.



Recognizing the value in the site, Jersey City native and civic leader Morris Pesin spearheaded the effort to secure the waterfront property for a park.⁶² Using state and federal funds, the land was transformed into Liberty State Park, which opened in 1976 and presented the public with new green recreational space. Since opening, the park has expanded in size. The now 1,212-acre park is a valued, well-used resource for New Jersey residents, a rare destination for both sightseers looking for city skylines and birders seeking shorebirds along the salt marsh.

Liberty State Park is an outstanding example of reclaimed land in the heart of an urban area that brings nature and recreational space to thousands of nearby residents and millions of visitors. In support of continued stewardship of the park, in 2022, Governor Murphy signed the Liberty State Park Conservation, Recreation, and Community Inclusion Act that directs \$50 million to park investments. These funds will be used to revitalize and improve the park for future generations.

Environmental justice has been central to DEP's mission to promote public health and general welfare in the state. Accordingly, DEP has a history of advancing environmental justice goals into its programming and policies.

In May 1998, former DEP commissioner Robert Shinn established the Environmental Equity Task Force, now referred to as the Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC). The Task Force, comprised of DEP representatives and environmental justice advocates, created one of the State's first environmental justice policies and developed processes to expand the public's role in decision-making.⁶³ EJAC continues to provide a forum for integrating environmental justice into DEP programs.

In 2003, DEP also officially established an Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ). The OEJ's aim is to "improve the quality of life in New Jersey's most vulnerable communities by educating and empowering communities who are often outside of government decision-making processes."⁶⁴ The OEJ achieves this goal by guiding State and DEP's programs to implement environmental justice practices.

DEP further increased its role in developing environmental justice policies for program implementation with Environmental Justice Executive Order No. 23 (EO 23), signed by Governor Murphy in 2018.⁶⁵ EO 23 directs DEP to guide all New Jersey executive branch departments and agencies to consider environmental justice in their missions and responsibilities in order to "make New Jersey stronger and fairer for all residents and promote equity."

A key element of environmental justice is to empower residents to meaningfully participate in decision-making. To further EO 23, for over two years, DEP engaged environmental justice leaders, local stakeholders, and members of Overburdened Communities to gather input that informed its report, *Furthering the Promise: A Guidance Document for Advancing Environmental Justice Across State Government*. *Furthering the Promise* directly acknowledges the role of parks in public health and considers how Overburdened Communities lack an adequate quantity of parks, suffer from an absence of high-quality parks, and generally lack tree canopy which reduces environmental stressors like the heat island effect.

This guidance document, along with principles and goals developed with EJAC and the OEJ, frames DEP's recent efforts to address the relative absence of the public health benefits of green spaces in Overburdened Communities. DEP specifically aims to work with partners to increase the supply of outdoor recreation spaces and improve the quality of existing spaces in Overburdened Communities.

With Overburdened Communities generally concentrated in urban areas, Green Acres developed the Urban Parks Grant program, which provides funding for land acquisition, park development, and historic preservation in Overburdened Communities. Projects recently funded throughout the state will create new open space and recreational opportunities and rehabilitate existing parks and historic facilities, while also protecting critical wildlife habitats and increasing access to nature.⁶⁶

DEP strongly values partnerships and collaboration. Based off this ethic, in 2019, DEP formally launched the Community Collaborative Initiative (CCI). The goal of CCI is to promote sustainable, vibrant, and resilient community development in environmental justice communities through partnerships with local governments and community-based groups. DEP liaisons embedded in environmental justice communities engage in a community stakeholder process to identify and plan for sites to remediate and revitalize the urban neighborhoods through environmental, economic, and quality of life endeavors. The Camden Collaborative Initiative helped spearhead this program in 2013 by working with DEP's Office of Brownfield and Community Revitalization (OBCR) Brownfield Development Area (BDA) program to restore and enhance the City of Camden by transforming blighted contaminated sites into environmental resources.

CRAMER HILL WATERFRONT PARK

In 2021, the City of Camden opened Cramer Hill Waterfront Park, a testament to environmental justice and a notable example of interagency and community partnership. The Cramer Hill neighborhood in Camden houses primarily Puerto Rican and Spanish-speaking residents. The 62-acre Waterfront Park overlooking the Cooper and Delaware rivers was formerly the Harrison Avenue Landfill, open from 1952 to 1971. After shutting down, the landfill was never properly closed or capped, and daily illegal dumping at the site led to additional pollutant release in surrounding lands and waters. Consequently, Camden and Cramer Hill residents actively avoided the site for health and safety reasons and sought cleanup for years. In 2016, DEP was able to finally initiate restoration using Natural Resource Damage funds obtained by the Office of Natural Resource Restoration. Restoring the site and designing it into the Waterfront Park took coordinated effort between the neighboring school (Mastery High School), nearby businesses, the Camden Housing Authority, and the adjacent Salvation Army KROC Center to determine mutual interests and opportunities for employees, residents, and visitors. Camden Waterfront Park now connects residents to natural wetland and water resources and features amenities including hiking and biking trails, a kayak launch, a picnic area, a large playground, and a sensory garden. The park is also part of a larger envisioned 30-mile regional shared-use trail in New Jersey called the Delaware River Heritage Trail and the 3,000-mile East Coast Greenway.



Brownfield remediation is one of the major means of improving environmental quality and outdoor access in Overburdened Communities. In 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded the State of New Jersey four grants totaling \$6.5 million to address contaminated sites, including brownfields. The federal government recognizes this funding, part of the Justice40 Initiative, is a tool to further equity for Overburdened Communities.

While increasing supply and quality of outdoor recreation spaces are critical to increasing access, equitable access also includes building community connection to these spaces. Individuals identifying as minorities frequently report concerns of being harassed in parks or not feeling welcomed.⁶⁷ Participants of focus groups engaged for this SCORP affirmed this sentiment, voicing a need for more representation in recreational spaces.

To make outdoor spaces more inviting, focus group participants stressed a need for events and programming produced by members of their community.

Understanding the important role outdoor recreation plays in the health and vitality of communities, several organizations across New Jersey provide educational and workforce development programs to low-income and minority communities to encourage participation in outdoor recreation. These organizations, which include Team Wilderness and Outdoor Equity Alliance, play a significant role in connecting residents of Overburdened Communities to outdoor spaces.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO THE OUTDOORS

Several organizations across New Jersey support outdoor recreation by increasing community connection to nature through group activities, educational programming, and training. A few example organizations are described below.

- **Team Wilderness** connects urban youth to more distant open space and wilderness experiences. Based in Jersey City, the organization uses an experiential educational model that puts youth directly on trails or in the water so they can learn about the environment through play.
- **Outdoor Equity Alliance** links people of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, and income levels to the outdoors and natural world. Through partnering with other organizations and businesses, OEA develops educational and training programs to help individuals build skills in environmental careers like urban forestry, restoration, and soil and water evaluation.
- **Black Girls Hike Too!** began as a meetup of like-minded Black women who wanted to comfortably enjoy the outdoors together. The group has since grown and aims to create safe outdoor experiences for Black, Indigenous, and women of color through group hikes in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.



In addition, several national nonprofits support programs in New Jersey that connect underrepresented communities to the outdoors.

- **Justice Outside** seeks to transform the outdoor environment movement by providing resources and networks to Black, Indigenous, and people of color interested in supporting outdoor and environmental projects, programming, and policies.
- **Latino Outdoors** engages Latino communities with outdoor opportunities by organizing group outings, producing communications that share regenerative outdoor experiences with community members, and supporting outdoor skills training and other professional development opportunities.
- **Outdoor Afro** seeks to reconnect Black people and communities to nature through diverse activities like fishing, gardening, or backpacking.
- **Greening Youth Foundation** engages underrepresented youth and young adults with educational programming and experiences in the outdoors.

DEP similarly seeks to remove barriers to outdoor recreation and make opportunities more inviting. New Jersey Fish & Wildlife's **Sisters Afield** invites women of color with children to learn about and participate in fishing in the state.

In addition to increasing representation through programming and events, bringing equity to outdoor spaces includes recognizing the history every community has with the land. To foster respect for and inclusivity within public outdoor spaces, it's important to officially acknowledge New Jersey's Tribal Nations, as well as their historic and current relationships to the land. At Abbott Marshlands in Mercer County, the Tulpehaking Nature Center does this by including signage that recognizing the Tribal history of the land.

Black Heritage Trail. The New Jersey Historical Commission will establish a Black Heritage Trail to connect museums and sites honoring New Jersey’s Black heritage and accomplishments.

Cohanzick Nature Reserve. Native American Advancement Corporation has partnered with New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the New Jersey Chapter of The Nature Conservancy to establish a new nature reserve. The goal of the reserve is to support a public Nature Center that will host a series of conservation programs for all ages to share indigenous knowledge and stewardship practices.

Challenges

Though both New Jersey and the federal government currently offer funding and programming geared towards environmental justice efforts such as brownfield remediation, stakeholders revealed that many municipalities are unsure of how to assess project feasibility in their region. Local governments do not have a clear baseline for the cost and effort to begin and complete remediation. Additionally, they lack knowledge of how to access funding sources. With these constraints, local governments are less likely to propose environmental remediation projects that could benefit Overburdened Communities in the form of outdoor recreational space.

When a municipality can successfully develop a new park or remediate a former industrial area, an added concern for local communities is displacement. Parks and green spaces are highly sought amenities that increase the desirability of a location, which then leads to increased housing prices and displacement of low-income community members.⁶⁸ Referred to as “green gentrification,” this displacement can further social and environmental injustices and lead to continued inequitable access to outdoor spaces.

Planning and developing open spaces to address the history of pollution and cumulative environmental stressors in Overburdened Communities will require continued thoughtful engagement with residents in these communities, environmental and environmental justice leaders, Tribal Nations, and local governments.

Goals & Actions

Ensure diverse perspectives in open space planning, cultural programming, outreach and engagement, interpretation and storytelling, and funding

- Analyze New Jersey's existing open spaces to determine where Black, Brown, and Indigenous narratives should be uplifted
- Ensure communities engaged in New Jersey's open space planning are representative of the state's diverse demographics
- Develop culturally and educationally inclusive signage and interpretative materials that identify current and historical connections to the land
- Increase diverse representation in marketing efforts to show that nature and the outdoors are welcoming to all
- Refine evaluation criteria for existing land acquisition and park development to prioritize funding in Overburdened Communities and environmental justice communities, especially those that are subject to adverse cumulative stressors
- Establish culturally relevant information sharing-processes to help communities identify and acquire suitable sites for open space development

Maximize space made available for parks, particularly in our dense urban communities, through use of non-traditional sites

- Evaluate and implement best practices in support of open space redevelopment in urban communities (pocket parks, vacant lots, urban community gardens, green alleys, and rights-of-ways, etc.)
- Allow, incentivize, and support brownfield redevelopment into parks and open spaces through State funding opportunities
- Evaluate Green Acres rules to see how non-traditional open spaces might be supported with Green Acres funds

Support capacity-limited municipalities and Overburdened Communities in identifying and securing state and federal funds to develop and steward open spaces

- Using environmental stressors data, identify Overburdened Communities subject to adverse cumulative stressors to ensure that project identification and prioritization offer these communities with easily accessible opportunities and mechanisms to lesson stressors
- Develop comprehensive and standardized guidelines for state and federal grant funding applications
- Consider grant-writing and technical support for capacity-limited municipalities
- Engage with municipalities and community groups to establish stable funding sources and entities responsible for municipal park maintenance

Welcome all communities to outdoor recreation with inclusive programs and events

- Review and update programming to appeal to New Jersey's diverse population
- Identify opportunities to offer free or subsidized trips and/or admittance to State-managed outdoor recreation spaces
- Ensure reduced park fees are provided to those who can benefit the most
- Collaborate with NJ Transit and other transportation partners to explore low-cost/low-carbon transit options for transportation-limited communities

X. Principle 6

Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity



Natural land cover in New Jersey include forested areas like the Pinelands, Highlands, agricultural lands, grasslands, rivers and lakes, wetlands, and urban parks. These landscapes, which New Jersey actively conserves, support a rich diversity of plant and wildlife species and habitats that are essential for healthy ecosystems and, in turn, contribute to the health and vitality of New Jersey residents.

Diverse ecosystems provide regulating services such as improving air and water quality that significantly improve the health of residents and the environment. They also attract and support pollinators, which are critical to maintaining New Jersey's agricultural and plant life. Biodiversity is also important for public health due to its role in improving our immune system functionality and maintaining the provision of ecosystem service benefits that help sustain life on Earth. Increasing people's contact with biodiversity-rich nature builds their resilience and makes them less susceptible to diseases.⁶⁹

With outdoor recreation, biodiversity enhances experiences such as fishing, hunting, birding, and wildlife observation. Protecting open space and natural areas that allow diverse species to thrive and flourish is essential to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

To better understand biodiversity across the state, DEP maintains a database of rare biodiversity, tracking the location and status of more than 800 rare species and ecological communities.⁷⁰ The Biotics Database informs the New Jersey Natural Heritage Program, which in turn is part of NatureServe, an international network of Natural Heritage Programs and Conservation Data Centers.⁷¹ The Database helps DEP monitor the status of endangered species or species of concern and preserving key Natural Heritage Priority Sites, essential to maintaining New Jersey's biodiversity. Created to help prioritize conservation areas that are key to protecting biodiversity, the Natural Heritage Priority Sites are ranked based on their significance for biological diversity using information from the Database. As of 2021, 343 Natural Heritage Priority Sites have been identified in New Jersey.⁷²

Another important data source for biodiversity in the state is the New Jersey Conservation Blueprint, created by the Rowan University Geospatial Research Lab, The Nature Conservancy, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Twenty-one conservation-focused public and nonprofit organizations participate in the Research Lab, making the Blueprint a model for collaboration across the state. The Blueprint is a data-driven, interactive mapping tool for land use professionals to "accelerate preservation of the most important remaining natural and cultural land resources that support healthy and vibrant communities in New Jersey." It presents four priority models that characterize and rank land to identify the most important places to preserve agriculture, ecology, and water quality while meeting community green space needs.⁷³

When asked to rank the importance of a range of outdoor recreation priorities, "Protecting wildlife and plant habitats" ranked in the top two, behind "maintain existing park and recreation areas."

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Invasive species out-compete native species and thrive in areas where they have no natural predators. Proper management and removal of invasive species are important tools for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, and a series of programs in New Jersey spearhead strategies to meet those goals.



FoHVOS New Jersey
Invasive Species
Strike Team

DEP's Environmental Protection Fund supports the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). PRISM creates invasive species strategies, hosts trainings, and organizes internships and volunteer programs to mitigate invasive species in ecosystems of the Lower Hudson region.⁷⁴

PRISM is hosted by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, which launched its Invasives Strike Force in 2013. As part of this effort, in 2018, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference initiated Conservation Dogs. In this program, trained dogs sniff out invasive plant and insect species, detecting invasive species early and before infestations become persistent.⁷⁵

Further south in New Jersey, the Friends of the Hopewell Valley Open Space maintains another invasive species management effort, the Invasive Species Strike Team. This team works with the Morris County Park Commission to protect forests in the Highland region and educate residents in invasive species removal.⁷⁶

In addition to collecting and sharing data, DEP is helping maintain biodiversity in New Jersey through land conservation and enhancing wildlife connectivity. For example, the Green Acres program preserves and enhances the state's environment, and its historic, scenic, and recreational assets, including protecting open space and providing outdoor recreational facilities for residents and visitors. Since its establishment in 1961, Green Acres has been a national leader in land preservation and continues to acquire open space for state ownership and to provide funding to local governments and nonprofits to acquire land, develop/redevelop parks, and conduct natural resource stewardship projects. The program has protected more than 683,000 acres and financed the creation of hundreds of recreation development projects.⁷⁷ In 2023 alone, the Green Acres program recommended the investment of more than \$92 million in funding to local governments and nonprofit land trusts "to acquire open space, develop parks, and perform stewardship activities on parks in every county in New Jersey."⁷⁸ This is in addition to ongoing direct state acquisition successes.

In further support of enhancements to biodiversity, the New Jersey Forest Service created the State Forest Action Plan, which assesses the state's forest resources and synthesizes the latest research on potential solutions to key challenges, such as fragmentation, invasive species, and climate change. The 2020 Plan update identified which tree, plant, and animal species have declined over time, and stated that enhancing biodiversity is foundational to proper management of forests.⁷⁹

Another pertinent plan that informs efforts at sustaining biodiversity is the State's Wildlife Action Plan, drafted by New Jersey Fish & Wildlife. The Wildlife Action Plan assesses the status of and challenges to the state's wildlife and habitat health, and outlines actions necessary for long-term conservation. The plan recognizes the negative impact that development has had on native New Jersey species, naming habitat loss as the greatest threat to the state's wildlife (including acreage lost overall or conversions to landscape types that don't meet the needs of wildlife species). The Wildlife Action Plan recognizes conservation as an essential tool for their protection going forward.⁸⁰

To improve wildlife habitat connectivity in the state, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife is leading the Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) strategic planning efforts. CHANJ offers tools and resources to help prioritize land protection, guide habitat restoration and management, and identify ways to mitigate barrier effects on wildlife and their habitats.⁸¹ CHANJ relies on mapping layers created as part of the Wildlife Action Plan to identify core habitats, then uses GIS analysis to predict and rank the difficulty of wildlife movement between those habitats.⁸²

WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey created a wildflower meadow restoration on 31 acres of the South Branch Preserve in Mount Olive Township. This project converted four former agricultural fields to a native wildflower meadow to support the habitat for pollinator species, in particular the Monarch butterfly, a species which is in danger of being lost in New Jersey. Creation of the wildflower meadow required removal of invasive plant species and planting of native wildflowers.



D&R Greenway Land Trust is improving biodiversity and function at its Hillman Preserve, located at Pennington-Rocky Hill Road in Hopewell Township, by creating a multi-season meadow. The meadow will provide for pollinators and increase human interest along the Lawrence-Hopewell trail extension. Invasives will be removed, and a native species seed mix will be planted.

BOBCAT ALLEY

Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are an endangered species in New Jersey, nearly having gone extinct in the 1970s. Bobcats suffer from habitat loss, which is worsened by a lack of connectivity between existing habitat.



To address habitat loss and support bobcats and other species, The Nature Conservancy is working with conservation partners to protect nearly 3,500 acres within Bobcat Alley, a 96,000-acre corridor that connects the Highlands region of New Jersey to the Appalachian Range at Kittatinny Ridge. Nearly 1,650 acres have already been protected in Bobcat Alley, a greenway featuring creeks and mixed forest, suitable habitat for bobcats that will help the species thrive when protected.

The New Jersey Appalachian Mountains are a critical pinch point in the migration pathway of many important bird, mammal, and amphibian species. Protecting land in the New Jersey Appalachians contributes to biodiversity on a continental scale.

Preservation efforts in Bobcat Alley center on providing wildlife habitat for and protection of both the endangered bobcat as well as other migratory wildlife species. In addition, these land protection efforts will also provide many additional environmental co-benefits to New Jersey communities. The forested ridges and valleys of Bobcat Alley have been identified as a priority for land protection because they represent some of the most climate resilient lands in New Jersey, allowing for species to adapt in the face of a changing climate. Protecting forest land will also increase the carbon sequestration of the area and improve water quality in Delaware River tributaries, while also providing new hiking trails in Sussex and Warren counties.⁸³

Challenges

In managing its natural resources, New Jersey faces several challenges that impact biodiversity. Climate change disrupts species distribution, increases invasive species, and creates harsher environments for native species (such as through elevated temperatures, increased precipitation, and ocean acidification). New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the U.S., and a third of its land area is already developed.⁸⁴ The impacts of urbanization and development pressure have led to fragmented habitat that impedes wildlife survival.

New Jersey must also balance the need to protect flora and fauna while allowing human use and access to natural areas. Finding that balance is especially important as DEP works to increase the level of access that underserved populations have to nature and open spaces. Flora and fauna have decreasing habitat available as development pressure and urbanization increase, limiting their distribution and ability to move across the landscape.

A loss of biodiversity causes social and economic impacts in addition to environmental ones, such as decreases in nature-based tourism. Protecting New Jersey's unique landscapes is essential to sustaining the state's \$37.3 billion tourism industry.⁸⁵ Outdoor activities were a key driver for attracting visitors in New Jersey, especially during recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.⁸⁶

COLUMBIA LAKE DAM REMOVAL

While dams are important for providing clean drinking water, providing flood storage, and supporting agricultural and manufacturing activities, there are many dams across the country that have become obsolete and environmentally harmful. The NJ Statewide Dam Removal Partnership, a collaboration of nonprofits and government agencies, has identified and prioritized dams for removal across the state based on the expected ecological benefits once removed⁸⁷.



As the owner of the Columbia Lake Dam, DEP began the drawdown of Columbia Lake in Warren County in 2018 to prepare for the removal of this obsolete dam. For more than a century, this dam prevented American Shad, an important native fish species, from reaching their historic spawning grounds, and created barriers for American Eel to move unimpeded through their habitat. After removing the 18-foot-high, 330-foot-long dam, more than 10 miles of river were restored to natural flow.⁸⁸ In the year following the dam's removal, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife biologists conducted a survey and found American Shad 9.5 miles upstream from the dam in Blairstown. In addition to benefitting fish passage, New Jersey residents now have improved access to outdoor recreation, with increased hiking, fishing, and hunting opportunities in the area and improved access for kayakers and canoeists.⁸⁹

The project is one example of a broader strategy involving conservation partners across the region working to improve connectivity for aquatic species.⁹⁰

Goals & Actions

Protect and enhance habitat and habitat connectivity for native New Jersey species, especially those considered rare, threatened, and endangered

- Maintain, monitor, and manage public open spaces in ways that support and balance ecosystem health and outdoor recreation access
- Identify opportunities to enhance biodiversity through recreation and stewardship programming and events
- Apply and incentivize Integrated Pest Management to improve biodiversity in New Jersey outdoor spaces
- Explore use of multiple models of land management, including Indigenous practices, in support of biodiversity

Develop educational programming on biodiversity in New Jersey

- Highlight co-benefits of biodiversity to outdoor recreationists, particularly to those who have had limited exposure to nature by providing culturally sensitive education in multiple languages
- Develop a volunteer program to increase community engagement in addressing biodiversity challenges like invasive species and habitat fragmentation
- Collaborate with land management partners to provide training in support of volunteer program

Steward lands to ensure they function as integrated ecological assets

- Reconnect ecosystems through strategic open space investments such as land acquisition
- Consider removal of abandoned roads and trails, where appropriate, to bolster ecological function while discouraging illegal dumping and off-road vehicle abuse
- Increase engagement with elected officials and policymakers to raise awareness of challenges to biodiversity

Continue to permanently protect important lands for biodiversity, habitat connectivity, and climate resilience for the co-benefits to humans through ecosystem services and recreation benefits

- Implement Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) through DOT wildlife mitigation projects
- Prioritize land conservation projects that support endangered species habitat

XI. Funding Opportunities



DEP actively works with local governments and nonprofit and private partners to expand the creation and stewardship of parks and open spaces. A major way DEP accomplishes this is by offering grants and loans geared towards preservation and conservation of open lands, natural spaces, and historic sites; stewarding of outdoor resources; development of recreational areas; and remediation of polluted lands. A full list of DEP-sponsored grants and loans can be found on the agency's website at <https://dep.nj.gov/grantandloanprograms/#full-list-of-grants-and-loans>.

In addition to DEP funding sources, several other New Jersey State agencies offer programs or grants that can support outdoor recreation programming and projects (Table 7). Federal grants and programs often can be used in conjunction with these State funding sources (Table 8).

Further, several private foundations also support regional conservation and preservation work throughout New Jersey. Philanthropic foundations, such as the William Penn Foundation, may either offer their own funding for open space projects or act as a project partner to help smaller organizations solicit and obtain state and federal funding. In addition, utility companies, such as New Jersey American Water and businesses, like REI, may offer funding opportunities to nonprofits and the State to further land conservation projects. Funding opportunities from these institutions are publicly advertised and typically include an application process.

Table 7: State Funding Sources

AGENCY	GRANT	DESCRIPTION
New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services	<u>Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant</u>	A funding opportunity provided to New Jersey communities and nonprofit organizations seeking to promote and implement community initiatives that support individuals with disabilities
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJ DCA)	<u>Local Recreation Improvement Grant</u>	A competitive grant that supports improvement and repair of public recreation facilities including local parks, municipal recreation centers, and local stadiums. The grant exists to provide quality outdoor recreational space to underserved communities
NJ DCA, New Jersey Historic Trust	<u>Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Fund</u>	Fund was established by legislation in 2016 to provide an annual source of matching grants from the state's Corporate Business Tax for historic preservation projects
New Jersey Department of State, Division of Travel & Tourism	Cooperative Marketing Grant	A collaboration between the New Jersey travel industry and the Division of Travel and Tourism, whose goal is to promote New Jersey as a premier travel destination. Funding will be provided to promote and market specific tourism opportunities in New Jersey
New Jersey Department of Transportation	<u>Municipal Aid (NJ DOT)</u>	A competitive program intended to provide municipalities with transportation-based grants to supplement their transportation programs

AGENCY	GRANT	DESCRIPTION
New Jersey Department of Transportation	<u>Safe Streets to Transit</u>	In 2006, New Jersey announced a comprehensive Pedestrian Safety Initiative. One element of that initiative administered by NJDOT is the Safe Streets to Transit program. This program provides funding to counties and municipalities to improve access to transit facilities and all modes of public transportation
New Jersey Economic Development Association (NJEDA)	<u>Brownfields Loan Program</u>	Program offers a competitive loan with low-interest financing of up to \$5 million for comprehensive coverage of brownfield revitalization projects

Table 8: Federal Funding Opportunities

AGENCY	GRANT / PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
National Park Service (NPS)	<u>Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP)</u>	A competitive program funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) that targets funding to economically disadvantaged urban communities with severely limited access to outdoor recreation. Funds available for New Jersey projects are administered by DEP's Green Acres Program
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	<u>Recreational Trails Program</u>	Program funds states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities. Funds available for New Jersey projects are administered by DEP's Green Acres Program
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	<u>Conservation Innovation Grant</u>	A competitive program that supports the development of new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands. Through creative problem-solving and innovation, CIG partners work to address our nation's water quality, air quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat challenges, all while improving agricultural operations
USDA	<u>New Jersey Conservation Stewardship Program</u>	Program builds on existing conservation efforts while strengthening operations by connecting project leads with USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) liaisons who develop conservation plans to facilitate goal setting
USDA	<u>Urban & Community Forest Program (UCFP)</u>	A technical, financial, and educational assistance program dedicated to urban forestry. Reworked as a result of the Inflation Reduction Act, UCFP is now funded at \$32 million annually and will provide project implementation grants. The program takes aim at delivering nature-based solutions for climate issues, environmental justice, and green jobs

AGENCY	GRANT / PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)	<u>Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program</u>	Funding for construction of wildlife crossings over or under busy roads; part of new Safe System Approach aimed at increasing traveling public safety and reducing economic impact of wildlife crashes with the linked benefit of improving species survival
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	<u>Brownfields Program</u>	Program that provides a series of loans directed at assessment, cleanup, and related job training for projects seeking to remediate brownfields. Program works in collaboration with other funding sources, including other EPA programs, other federal partners, and state agencies
U.S. EPA	<u>Climate Pollution Reduction Grants</u>	In 2023, the EPA announced a \$3 million award for New Jersey to plan innovative strategies to cut climate pollution and build clean energy economies across the state. Additionally, EPA launched a competition for \$4.6 billion in funding to implement projects and initiatives included in the plans. New Jersey is eligible to receive that implementation funding because it has opted in to receive the planning grant
U.S. EPA	<u>Environmental Justice Government to Government Program</u>	Provides funding at the state, local, territorial, and tribal level to support government activities that lead to measurable environmental or public health impacts in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms
U.S. Forest Service	<u>Forest Legacy Program</u>	Administered in partnership with state agencies to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands through conservation easements or fee land purchases
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	<u>Delaware Bay Coastal Program</u>	Achieves voluntary habitat conservation and restoration through technical and funding assistance
USFWS	<u>State Wildlife Grants</u>	Provide funding to conduct research, surveys, and species and habitat management in support of wildlife species with the greatest conservation needs as identified in applicable State Wildlife Action Plans

XII. Project Selection



Identification of areas of natural and recreational significance in New Jersey has been an ongoing effort by all levels of government and a number of conservation organizations. The issues and examples presented in each of the previous chapters provide a framework of criteria to prioritize project funding, whether for the DEP's own conservation and park development efforts, for its allocation of federal funding, or for those proposals submitted to the DEP for acquisition, park development, and stewardship grant consideration.

To address the principles identified in the SCORP in an equitable manner, New Jersey's open space and recreation funding is divided into state, local government, and nonprofit assistance programs. Green Acres uses state preservation funds to acquire land directly. Funding for local government projects consists of matching grants and low-interest loans, while nonprofit projects are eligible for matching grants. Local government and nonprofit projects are further divided into land acquisition and park development. Federal funding assistance, through programs such as the LWCF and Forest Legacy Program, is allocated to both state and local government projects.

In selecting preservation and park projects, the DEP considers and incorporates the criteria of federal funding programs as well as state priorities. Green Acres' state, local, and nonprofit programs are also guided by their own respective statutes, regulations, and policies. The consideration outlined below seek to unite these directives.

The LWCF is an important component of New Jersey's open space and recreation program. Despite having one of the strongest state open space and recreation funding programs in the nation, New Jersey's public conservation and recreation demand exceeds funding availability. New Jersey has some of the highest per acre land values in the nation, and preservation, stewardship, and recreation project costs will continue to grow. The LWCF has had a substantial impact on New Jersey parks and recreation opportunities, by allowing the State to preserve more land and build more recreation facilities. In New Jersey, 329 projects have received LWCF monies, representing an investment of \$136 million since the inception of the LWCF in 1965.

LWCF monies are allocated for both state land acquisition projects and state park and wildlife management area capital projects for public outdoor recreation purposes. Potential LWCF projects are evaluated using several factors, including:

- Future use and management of the project area;
- Potential project period, as drawn from the projected project schedule or the complexity of its scope;
- Regional or statewide significance; and
- Consistency with the policies set forth in this SCORP.

State Land Acquisitions

The Green Acres State Land Acquisition program serves as the land acquisition agent for the DEP. It acquires land for state parks, forests, natural areas, preserves, historic sites, and wildlife management areas.

Green Acres acquires land for the State using the following process:

- **Project Approval/Funding:** Project areas are submitted to the Garden State Preservation Trust for approval. The New Jersey Legislature appropriates the project funds. Amounts for funding for each project area are based on policy initiatives, ongoing projects, funding demand and land costs.

- **Project Identification:** Recommendations of lands to be acquired are made by the DEP's Fish & Wildlife; State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites; and the Office of Natural Lands Management, as well as conservation organizations, local governments, and the public. Many properties are brought to the attention of the state through property offerings of sale or donation by property owners.
- **Project Evaluation:** Using GIS, land offers are mapped and evaluated using P.L. 2022, C. 76 ([Appendix I](#)), which directs the prioritization of state land acquisitions. DEP further reviews properties based on SCORP priorities, including mitigating climate change, impacts for Overburdened Communities, environmental impact, and natural resource values. The offers are then submitted for Potential Land Management review.
- **Potential Land Management Review:** The offers are circulated to State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites, Fish & Wildlife, and the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust to ascertain management interest and potential ownership. Information on parcels where there is no state interest is shared with local governments and conservation organizations. Opportunities for cooperative management are explored as appropriate.
- **Project Assignment:** Once agency interest has been established, the project is assigned to a Green Acres project manager. The project manager orders appraisal(s) and a title search for the property. Preliminary site assessment work to investigate previous land uses and the potential for environmental contamination is performed by Green Acres staff. Appraisals are reviewed by Green Acres appraisal staff to determine the fair market value of a property.
- **Purchase Decision/Purchase Offer:** The project manager makes a purchase offer based on the property's fair market value. Upon acceptance, a contract is drafted and a survey of the property is ordered and reviewed by Green Acres survey staff upon receipt.
- **Closing and Property Assignment:** After all due diligence is complete, Green Acres and the property owner close on the property using state and, when appropriate, federal funding. Once the State takes title, the property is assigned to either DEP's Parks, Forests & Historic Sites; Fish & Wildlife; New Jersey Natural Lands Trust; or an appropriate preservation partner for operation and management.

Local and Nonprofit Proposals

The DEP's Green Acres Local and Nonprofit Assistance Program provides matching grants and loans to enable local governments and nonprofits to acquire land, develop parks, and steward natural areas. Local and nonprofit projects most likely to receive state funding are those that meet a demonstrated public need and support the DEP's mission and SCORP Principles. Proposals can exemplify these goals through:

- A robust project plan;
- Inclusive community engagement;
- Consistency with relevant state and local plans, programs, policies, and ordinances;
- Accessible and environmental design considerations; and
- Responsible proposed use of funding.

Project Plan

To ensure that local and nonprofit projects meet the needs of New Jersey residents, project planning and the resultant funding applications should include input from the population to be served and specifically discuss how recreation needs will be met, the geographic reach of the project, and how proposed facilities will benefit the intended user groups. To be competitive, proposals should highlight how the project will provide significant recreation benefits for multiple user groups.

When planning new projects, applicants are encouraged to consider the reclamation and restoration of vacant industrial or commercial sites, including contaminated sites and landfills, for the purpose of creating outdoor recreation and conservation areas. Transforming these lands revitalizes the environment, communities, and quality of life. Additional components applicants are encouraged to consider include:

- ecotourism or heritage tourism;
- trails, bike paths, or greenways;
- community gardens;
- clean and renewable energy;
- rehabilitation or redevelopment of existing facilities;
- historic preservation; and
- climate mitigation and resilience efforts.

All proposals should aim to be cost-effective by considering the cost of future maintenance, the lifespan of proposed facilities, donations of labor and materials, and other public or private funds that can be obtained to cover project and maintenance expenses.

Green Acres-funded acquisition, park development, and stewardship projects must be completed within two years of approval, so applicants should include a commensurate timeline, both to balance community expectations and to anticipate reasonable cost and workload considerations during that time period.

Community Engagement

Applicant outreach during the project planning stage is critical to accurately identify the needs and priorities of the target community. Garnering the support of multiple stakeholder groups is important for the DEP's understanding of a project's local investment, commitment, and potential long-term success. Successful proposals will demonstrate public support and engagement through letters from relevant groups and documentation of input received during public engagement efforts. Outreach methods must include and yet go beyond a public hearing; they may include online surveys, in-person surveys, focus groups, mailers, open houses, design charrettes, idea boards, and social media posts. Most importantly, input must be solicited in a manner that is familiar to and convenient for the community to achieve optimal engagement. Beyond documenting their public engagement efforts, applicants should indicate how their final proposal incorporates community input.

Applicants should also reach out to local and county officials, commissions, and planning groups for suggestions and feedback during project planning. Relevant parties may include recreation staff and

advisory boards, environmental commissions, historic preservation committees, open space committees, and local interest groups.

Consistency with Plans, Programs, Policies, and Ordinances

Applicants should also demonstrate consistency with local land use plans, regional planning efforts, and state planning goals. Regional planning efforts that may be evaluated include regional trail plans, redevelopment plans, DEP-approved public access plans, and special area master plans (e.g., Highlands, Meadowlands, Pinelands plans). Other planning considerations, such as transportation, business, and tourism, should be addressed, as they also improve meaningful public access and the user experience. Parks or natural areas located by transit hubs or schools, or those that reflect the cultural needs of the community, can also enhance a proposal's competitiveness.

Project Design

DEP requires that all proposals ensure site accessibility and strongly encourages applicants to propose projects that exceed ADA requirements where possible, such as Completely Inclusive Playgrounds. In addition, DEP recommends that projects that propose buildings or structures within a park follow LEED™ Green Building Rating System principles, which include the use of construction materials with recycled content, water-use reduction equipment, clean energy, renewable energy, energy efficient technologies, and indoor air quality considerations.

Principle 1: Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jerseyans

The DEP supports expanding outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities throughout New Jersey to meet the needs of the entire state's population. With consideration of the goals expressed in Principle 1, the DEP supports expanding outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities through the reclamation and restoration of vacant industrial or commercial properties, including landfills, brownfields, other contaminated sites, as well as expansive impervious parcels. Consideration should also be given to all Principles discussed in this SCORP, which will result in more successful applications that expand the public's access to recreation and conservation lands.

Proposals must have meaningful public access; this can include serving a large and/or varied population and offering both passive and active recreation options. Applicants should plan for how future generations will be satisfied by different forms of recreation, and how unique features of the property or community being served will make the park development impactful. This is especially important in Overburdened Communities subject to cumulative adverse stressors; applications for these areas should emphasize how the project will revitalize the community through such things as demolition of safety hazards (such as dilapidated buildings), removal of impervious surfaces, remediation of known contaminants, and cleanup of solid waste. Being located across from a school or a transit hub, or reflecting the unique cultural needs of the community, can also enhance a proposal's competitiveness.

As an incentive, the DEP gives priority consideration to local government applicants that have not previously received Green Acres funding. This is intended to encourage first-time applicants to expand the inventory of parks and open spaces that are then available to all New Jersey residents.

Principle 2: Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and recreational development

Reducing and responding to climate change is a top statewide priority and a particular focus for the DEP. Open space and park development projects can help contribute to climate mitigation and resilience. Projects that meet the objectives of Principle 2 are those that include innovative strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the park design.

Proposals should reflect an applicant's commitment to climate resilience and sustainability by incorporating relevant local, regional, and state planning initiatives and goals. Applicants should consult with local and county officials, commissions, and planning groups that have incorporated climate resiliency measures into their respective plans. Local governments and nonprofit applicants should highlight in applications their "best practice" policies, ordinances, or plans that establish climate mitigation and resilience criteria.

Proposals should also consider the state's open space and land use plans and laws, which include the following:

- Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act;
- Coastal Zone Management Rules;
- Flood Hazard Area Control Act;
- Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act;
- New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan);
- NJMAP/Conservation Blueprint;
- Furthering the Promise: A Guidance Document for Advancing Environmental Justice Across State Government; and
- Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan.

Examples of climate mitigation and resilience efforts that proposals should include are those that aim to:

- enhance wetlands;
- revegetate riparian areas;
- establish living shorelines;
- incorporate green infrastructure or native tree plantings; or
- remove impervious surfaces or expand upstream flood attenuation potential (regardless of a present plan, ordinance, or regulatory jurisdiction).

Also, proposed facilities should be in already cleared areas, located where topography is suitable, use pervious surfaces when available, and retain, enhance, or establish vegetative buffers to minimize impacts on sensitive areas. Facility design should also incorporate natural features to adapt for sea level rise.

To assist project sponsors with incorporating climate mitigation and resilience strategies, the DEP offers several tools:

- *New Jersey's Global Warming Response Act 80x50 Report*, which identifies carbon sequestration as an important climate mitigation and resiliency tool and promotes the maintenance and expansion of the state's tree canopy;
- New Jersey's Flood Indicator Tool, which identifies flood-prone areas;
- Resilient NJ, an assistance program to support local and regional climate resilience planning; and
- the Climate Change Resilience Strategy.

Principle 3: Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation

The DEP is committed to fostering sustainable development and economic opportunities while preserving natural resources, providing recreation, and enhancing the well-being of New Jersey residents. Projects that meet the objectives of Principle 3 provide significant ecotourism or heritage tourism potential and meet a community or region's recreational needs.

To be competitive, the proposal that claims an ecotourism benefit should demonstrate that local communities were actively engaged and involved in the planning, development, and management of the proposal. This includes ensuring that community voices are heard, and that their input and perspectives shaped the direction of the proposal. It is especially important to create ecotourism ventures where the local community will be partnering, leading, or attending to projects that promote local biodiversity and historic and cultural interpretations. The DEP encourages proposals that create space for communities to celebrate and preserve their cultural heritage and traditions by promoting local arts, crafts, culinary traditions, storytelling, and other cultural expressions; this empowers the community to not only benefit economically but also preserve their identity and pride. Proposals should further the efforts and partnerships with local organizations that provide resources and training to community members and visitors.

Proposals should show accessibility for all individuals regardless of their ability to participate and enjoy the ecotourism experience. Proposals should include what amenities and programs will be included in the project, such as nature and historic interpretation; historic preservation; trails, bike paths, or greenways; enhanced access to waters; and community gardens.

The DEP's commitment to environmental conservation recognizes the importance of raising awareness about ecological importance and implementation of conservation in ecotourism activities for visitors and community members. As such, proposals for projects that protect critical natural habitats, restore degraded ecosystems, make thriving environments for abundant biodiversity, ensure flood protection, improve surface and groundwater, and preserve significant historic resources should also include interpretive elements to foster a sense of stewardship among visitors, community, and stakeholders.

Sustainable buildings and practices can also create learning environments and ecotourism opportunities. If a project proposes facilities with clean and renewable energy technologies, redevelopment of existing facilities, or restoration of vacant land, information should be included on how the project encourages environmental awareness and improves the community's quality of life.

Additionally, proposals should document the potential economic impact and economic longevity of ecotourism opportunities. This can include analysis on user fees, local employment generation, entrepreneurship promotion, capacity for current local businesses, and potential revenue distribution.

Principle 4: Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation

The DEP recognizes the immense potential of technology in advancing conservation efforts and enhancing outdoor recreation experiences. Technology allows projects to be innovative in meeting the DEP's conservation and outdoor recreation mission while enhancing visitor experience.

Projects that meet the goals of Principle 4 look at using technology to enhance public engagement and citizen participation in conservation and outdoor recreation efforts. Outreach methods can include interactive websites, mobile apps, social media platforms, and online forums that enable public feedback, data submission, and virtual participation in planning. This improves data analysis, visualization, and sharing, allowing for more informed decision-making and collaboration between different stakeholders during project design and after project completion.

The DEP encourages the use of varied technologies that are accessible to a wide range of users, including individuals with disabilities. Proposals should document technology that improves accessibility for all individuals regardless of ability and exceed ADA requirements. Proposals that incorporate enhanced accessibility features such as screen readers, closed captions, and alternative formats to make technology tools inclusive should be documented and explained.

The DEP has a mission to protect critical wildlife habitats, unique natural areas and land types, biodiversity, historic resources and provide protections for flooding and surface and groundwater quality. As such, the DEP embraces technologies that further improve data collection, analysis, environmental monitoring, and land/facility management. Applicants should document technology measures it has or will take to meet their recreation/conservation goals, ensuring that technology does not compromise natural resources or the public's outdoor experience.

With consideration to the objectives of conservation and outdoor recreation, applicants should assess the environmental impacts of proposed technology solutions, such as energy consumption, waste generation, and carbon emissions.

Principle 5: Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation

The DEP has a mission to improve New Jersey for all residents, particularly those in communities with environmental concerns. The Environmental Justice Law passed in 2020 added a targeted approach to

this mission and, in its 2021 funding round, Green Acres began to prioritize projects in Overburdened Communities that are subject to adverse cumulative stressors. Through special budgetary support, the DEP has been able to offer a category of funding entitled *Urban Parks* for areas with the greatest need. These areas are generally understood to be Urban Aid municipalities with Overburdened Communities that are higher than the 50th percentile for total environmental and public health stressors and contain less close-to-home open space/recreation than other communities.

To meet the objectives of Principle 5, proposals should identify solutions to community access, environmental, and climate concerns. To understand the stressors that a community faces, applicants should use the DEP's Environmental Justice Mapping, Assessment and Protection Tool and engage with the community/user groups to be served by the project. Successful applications will document how the proposed facilities and geographic reach of the proposal will meet the community's needs, especially if it provides expanded public access to water, varied forms of recreation, and the in-demand recreational facilities that are lacking in many Overburdened Communities.

Applicants should demonstrate planning consistency through consultations with local and county officials and local interest groups, and adherence to land use plans and regional planning efforts, while keeping in mind that inequities of environmental and climate issues are typically compounded by a lack of maintenance staff and time to address the issues.

To revitalize communities and quality of life, the DEP supports projects that reclaim and restore vacant industrial or commercial sites, including contaminated sites and landfills, to create outdoor recreation and conservation areas. Proposals that include such a project should emphasize how the project will improve the property through removal of safety hazards, dilapidated buildings, and impervious surfaces; remediation of known contaminants; and clean-up of solid waste. Proposals should highlight if restoration of the site's unique natural features may help protect the area from flooding and improve surface and groundwater quality.

Principle 6: Continuing the commitment to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity

Conservation and environmental protection goals are the core of the DEP's mission. Continuing commitment to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity is crucial for maintaining the health, resilience, and functionality of ecosystems. In consideration of the goals of Principle 6, proposals should protect or restore critical wildlife habitat, unique natural areas and land types, and biodiversity. To do this, projects should include buffers for protected areas that preserve habitats, critical ecosystems, and biodiversity hotspots and should develop and implement programs focused on the conservation of endangered and threatened species. The DEP also encourages ecological restoration projects that rehabilitate degraded habitats and restore native flora and fauna—such as reforestation, wetland restoration, and invasive species removal—to restore ecosystem functionality and enhance biodiversity. Projects that aim to enhance wetlands, revegetate riparian areas, establish living shorelines, incorporate green infrastructure or native tree plantings, remove impervious surfaces, or expand upstream flood attenuation potential are all encouraged. To ensure the viability of strategies, applicants should propose data collection and analysis on species distribution, abundance, and population trends to measure the effectiveness of management actions.

Applicants should complete meaningful outreach to governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and special interest groups whose knowledge and understanding can be invaluable when planning a project to meet biodiversity goals.

Proposals should also consider the state's open space and land use plans and laws, including the following:

- Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules;
- Coastal Zone Management Rules;
- Flood Hazard Area Control Act Rules;
- Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act Rules;
- New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan);
- Scientific Report on Climate Change; and
- 2020 NJ State Forest Action Plan (NJ SFAP).

These plans assess the state's forest resources and provide forest owners, land managers, and other natural resource professionals with the ability to make informed decisions about forest resources across the state. New Jersey's State Wildlife Action Plan further offers a strategic and cost-effective approach to conserve the state's wildlife resources for the future while identifying species of greatest conservation need in New Jersey.

DEP Resources

To assist project sponsors, the DEP provides readily available tools and data to analyze land parcels and understand the resources and stressors in a community or area. Applicants can use these tools to inform and explain how their proposals further the DEP's mission and the Principles. Tools include:

- [Landscape Maps in ArcGIS Online](#),
- [NJMAP/Conservation Blueprint](#),
- [New Jersey's Flood Indicator Tool](#), and
- [Environmental Justice Mapping, Assessment and Protection Tool](#) and data brought together in the appendices of this report, such as open space deficits and walkability indexes.

One Final Thought

New Jersey has invested a great deal of time and effort into the creation of this SCORP. The DEP consulted with experts, evaluated data, and solicited input from residents across the state, taking extra care to listen to those who have been historically underrepresented. As a result, the DEP now has a better understanding of what New Jersey residents need, what the state's special natural resources require, and how to continue to meet our environmental protection mission. New Jersey will continue to be a national leader in the provision of open space and recreation opportunities for its residents, while ensuring the land, water, and air are protected for future generations.

Appendices



Appendix A

New Jersey Wetlands

The 2023–2027 New Jersey Wetland Program Plan describes the history of the extensive work that New Jersey has accomplished over the past ten years, and outlines goals, actions, and activities for the next five years in New Jersey. The New Jersey Wetland Program Plan (WPP) 2023–2027 is an update to the second WPP (2019–2022) approved by the USEPA Region 2 Director of Clean Water in 2019. The first Wetland Program Plan 2014–2018 served to integrate the diverse efforts of the DEP’s multiple programmatic efforts to analyze, assess, preserve, and protect freshwater and coastal wetland resources.

Appendix B

New Jersey Land and Water Conservation Fund Projects

May 2023

PROJECTS FUNDED	LWCF
242 Development Projects	\$ 63,863,526
84 Acquisition Projects	\$ 71,917,450
3 Planning Projects	\$ 547,500
329 Projects	\$ 136,328,476

LWCF PROJECTS FUNDED

County	# of Projects	Acres Acquired	LWCF Invested
Atlantic	14	7,188	\$ 6,247,071
Bergen	22	2,136	\$ 3,696,023
Burlington	12	4,202	\$ 3,017,750
Camden	21	57	\$ 5,378,008
Cape May	17	6,093	\$ 3,897,204
Cumberland	10	15,620	\$ 4,970,689
Essex	24	0	\$ 6,797,574
Gloucester	3	39	\$ 858,508
Hudson	21	615	\$ 14,619,655
Hunterdon	8	966	\$ 11,698,544
Mercer	15	6	\$ 2,301,253
Middlesex	12	0	\$ 3,485,023
Monmouth	31	686	\$ 10,154,752
Morris	20	3,166	\$ 7,166,806
Multi**	22	28,085	\$ 18,903,909
Ocean	13	5,702	\$ 7,675,571
Passaic	13	0	\$ 4,842,195
Salem	4	2,217	\$ 977,327
Somerset	8	500	\$ 721,878
Sussex	14	3,704	\$ 9,630,177
Union	16	0	\$ 1,693,494
Warren	9	952	\$ 7,595,065
	329	81,934	\$ 136,328,476

** Located in two or more counties.

* Data in this table is grants that closed September 2018 through May 2023. In progress grants are not accounted for in this table.

* This data was provided by DEP's Federal Funds Department.

Appendix C

New Jersey Residents' Participation in and Attitudes Toward Outdoor Recreation

New Jersey Residents' Participation in and Attitudes Toward Outdoor Recreation



2023

Conducted for the
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
and *Outside, Together!* Program

In partnership with the
Trust for Public Land and Responsive Management

New Jersey Residents' Participation in and Attitudes Toward Outdoor Recreation

2023

Responsive Management National Office

Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director
Martin Jones, Senior Research Associate
Tom Beppler, Senior Research Associate
Steven J. Bissell, Ph.D., Qualitative Research Associate
Andrea Criscione, Senior Research Associate
Patrick Doherty, Research Associate
Gregory L. Hughes, P.E., Research Associate
Amanda Center, Survey Center Manager
Dunya Shihab, Survey Center Manager
Alison Lanier, Business Manager

130 Franklin Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
540/432-1888
Email: mark@responsivemanagement.com
www.responsivemanagement.com

Responsive Management would like to thank Meera Velu of Trust for Public Land for her input, support, and guidance on this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and *Outside, Together!* (a program of the DEP), in partnership with Trust for Public Land, to measure New Jersey residents' experiences with and opinions on recreation. The results of this study will be used to assist in the development of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

The overall surveying effort consisted of two survey groups (which were kept separate and analyzed separately):

- A sampling of the general population of New Jersey (also referred to as residents).
- A sampling of New Jersey outdoor recreation stakeholders.

The survey wording was developed by the DEP and Trust for Public Land and provided to Responsive Management for coding into survey form. As part of the extensive quality control measures of the surveying effort, the questionnaire contained error checkers and computation statements to ensure quality and consistent data.

The general population survey was conducted in March of an online sample that was representative of New Jersey residents overall. Responsive Management obtained 1,005 completed questionnaires in the survey of New Jersey residents.

For the stakeholder survey, Responsive Management provided online links for the survey that the DEP sent to people and groups with which it is involved. The survey was active from February to March 2023, and Responsive Management obtained 14,858 completed questionnaires in the stakeholder survey.

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management.

After the surveys were obtained, the Survey Center managers and statisticians checked each completed survey to ensure clarity and completeness and to filter out any invalid respondents. This entailed a review of survey responses to identify red flags. Also, open-ended responses to the final question asking for additional comments were used to identify and remove invalid respondents.

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG RESIDENTS

Residents' ratings of the importance of outdoor recreation are generally high, with about a third giving its importance the highest rating. The overwhelming majority (83%) give a rating above the midpoint. The mean rating is 7.8, and the median is 8.

OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES IN NEW JERSEY AMONG RESIDENTS

Walking/hiking and gathering with friends and family are the two most popular outdoor activities by far. In a second tier are sitting quietly/meditating, visiting a playground, and visiting nature areas or centers—all done by 40% or more of residents.

Four features are used much more than the others: trails, sitting areas, picnic areas, and playgrounds.

Visitation at local/city/county parks is high: almost three quarters of New Jersey residents visit them. This is followed by two more areas visited by a majority: state parks/forests/game lands and waterfronts.

TIMING OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW JERSEY BY RESIDENTS

Summer is the most active season among residents. Spring and fall are at about equal levels in residents' activity levels.

RESIDENTS' OUTDOOR RECREATION PRIORITIES IN NEW JERSEY

Residents' priorities for outdoor recreation were explored by asking them to rate the importance of various aspects of recreation. Two are at the top with mean ratings of 8.4: maintaining existing park and recreation areas and protecting wildlife and plant habitats.

The top responses regarding features New Jersey residents want to have more of in the state are trails, picnic areas, and sitting areas. Furthermore, parks, both local and state, top the list of recreation areas residents want to see more of in New Jersey, along with state forests and game lands.

Farmers markets top the list of New Jersey residents' most desired amenities at the places they visit: more than half say that they would like to see more farmers markets at the outdoor spaces they visit.

RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW JERSEY

Satisfaction levels are high: 81% of New Jersey residents are satisfied with the parks and outdoor recreation facilities that they visited in the state in the last year. Only 4% (summed on unrounded numbers) are dissatisfied.

CONSTRAINTS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION AMONG RESIDENTS

Mosquitos/ticks and the like make up the top constraint to participation or enjoyment of participating in outdoor recreation in New Jersey. Along with this top item, lack of amenities, lack of time to participate in outdoor recreation, and crowding make up the top constraints.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG RESIDENTS

The survey listed possible encouragements to participating in outdoor recreation. More information is the top encouragement among residents. Also high on the list are passive features such as picnic tables and visitor centers that people can access.

ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG RESIDENTS

Driving is the top way that New Jersey residents get to their outdoor recreation areas. Nonetheless, a relatively considerable percentage get a ride or walk to their favored outdoor spaces. About a half hour is the typical travel time. The median typical travel time is 30 minutes.

The survey asked a basic question about whether people feel that they have a place to participate in outdoor recreation when they want to. Two thirds indicate that they do.

OUTDOOR RECREATION COMPANIONS AMONG RESIDENTS

A large majority of residents (57%) typically go to outdoor spaces with family. Nonetheless, among the general population of New Jersey, 17% typically go to outdoor spaces alone.

OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPENDITURES AMONG RESIDENTS

Just over half of New Jersey residents spent money on outdoor recreation in the 12 months previous to the survey, typically on use fees.

RESIDENTS' INFORMATION SOURCES

Among residents, the internet and word of mouth are the top preferred ways to get information on outdoor recreation.

STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

The results of the stakeholder survey show some marked differences from residents. Among the differences, they tend to place a higher importance on outdoor recreation, and they have higher participation rates in the various activities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Methodology.....	1
Survey Sampling Overview.....	1
Questionnaire Design	1
Sampling Procedures	1
General Population Survey	1
Stakeholder Survey.....	1
Data Analysis.....	1
Presentation of Report Results	3
Resident Survey Results	5
Perceived Importance of Outdoor Recreation Among Residents	5
Outdoor Recreation Activities in New Jersey Among Residents	7
Timing of Outdoor Recreation in New Jersey by Residents	34
Residents' Outdoor Recreation Priorities in New Jersey.....	38
Residents' Satisfaction With Outdoor Recreation in New Jersey	56
Constraints to Outdoor Recreation Participation Among Residents	59
Encouragements to Participate in Outdoor Recreation Among Residents.....	61
Access to Outdoor Recreation Among Residents.....	63
Outdoor Recreation Companions Among Residents.....	67
Outdoor Recreation Expenditures Among Residents.....	68
Residents' Information Sources	71
Demographic Information of Residents	74
Stakeholder Survey Results	86
Perceived Importance of Outdoor Recreation Among Stakeholders	86
Outdoor Recreation Activities in New Jersey Among Stakeholders	88
Timing of Outdoor Recreation in New Jersey by Stakeholders	99
Stakeholders' Outdoor Recreation Priorities in New Jersey.....	107
Stakeholders' Satisfaction With Outdoor Recreation in New Jersey	119
Constraints to Outdoor Recreation Participation Among Stakeholders.....	121
Encouragements to Participate in Outdoor Recreation Among Stakeholders	125
Access to Outdoor Recreation Among Stakeholders	128
Outdoor Recreation Companions Among Stakeholders	133
Outdoor Recreation Expenditures Among Stakeholders	135
Stakeholders' Information Sources.....	137
Demographic Information of Stakeholders.....	141
About Responsive Management	158

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and *Outside, Together!* (a program of the DEP), in partnership with Trust for Public Land, to measure New Jersey residents' experiences with and opinions on recreation. The results of this study will be used to assist in the development of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

SURVEY SAMPLING OVERVIEW

The overall surveying effort consisted of two survey groups (which were kept separate and analyzed separately):

- A sampling of the general population of New Jersey (also referred to as residents).
- A sampling of New Jersey outdoor recreation stakeholders.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The survey wording was developed by the DEP and Trust for Public Land and provided to Responsive Management for coding into survey form. The questionnaire was programmed to branch and substitute phrases in the survey based on previous responses to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data collection. The same survey was used for both stakeholders and residents. Responsive Management conducted pretests to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic.

A Spanish-language version of the survey, with a translation provided by Trust for Public Land, was used for surveying those who preferred to take the survey in Spanish.

SAMPLING PROCEDURES

The sampling was of two groups: the general population and stakeholders. Each is detailed separately below.

GENERAL POPULATION SURVEY

The general population survey was conducted of an online sample that was representative of New Jersey residents overall. The survey was conducted in March, and Responsive Management obtained 1,005 completed questionnaires in the survey of New Jersey residents.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

For the stakeholder survey, Responsive Management provided online links for the survey that the DEP sent to people and groups with which it is involved, such as recipients of its newsletter. The survey was active from February to March 2023, and Responsive Management obtained 14,858 completed questionnaires in the stakeholder survey.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management.

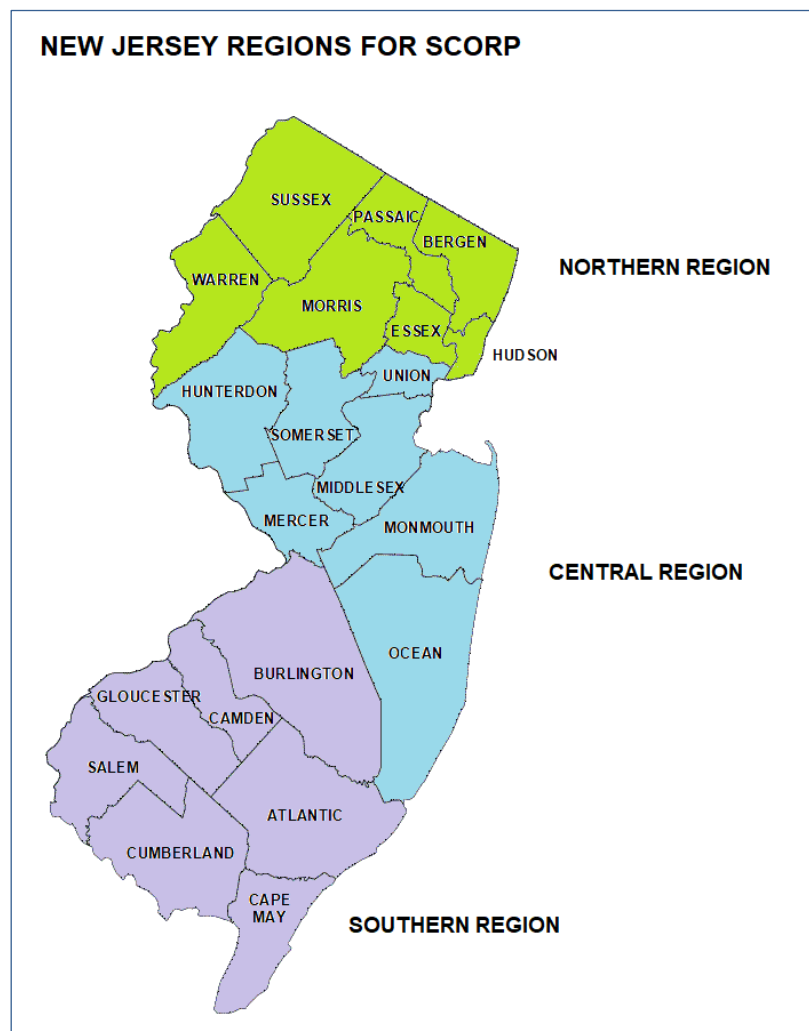
As part of the extensive quality control measures of the surveying effort, the questionnaire contained error checkers and computation statements to ensure quality and consistent data. Additionally, Responsive Management uses an additional question to identify and filter out those who are not taking the survey seriously or bots that may be automatically generating illegitimate results.

Finally, after the surveys were obtained, the Survey Center managers and statisticians checked each completed survey to ensure clarity and completeness and to filter out any invalid respondents. This entailed a review of survey responses to identify red flags, such as surveys that were completed in an unrealistically brief timeframe, which suggests that respondents were clicking through responses without reading and evaluating the questions, or “straight-lining” of responses, which is when respondents select (for example) the first or same response options throughout the survey. Also, open-ended responses to the final question asking for additional comments were used to identify and remove invalid respondents.

Surveys of questionable quality were removed, and more surveys were then obtained to replace those that were removed. This process was repeated on those newly obtained surveys.

The data analysis included a regional analysis. The regions were selected by the DEP, as shown in the accompanying map. Thumbnail maps are included on all results that include the regions for the reader’s convenience.

Because the sample size was quite high for the stakeholder survey, those results also include a breakdown by county. There was not enough sample in each county to show general population results at the county level.



PRESENTATION OF REPORT RESULTS

The results of the resident survey and the stakeholder survey are presented separately in the report. The resident survey results are presented first, followed by the stakeholder survey results.

In examining the results, it is important to be aware that the questionnaire included several types of questions:

- Single or multiple response questions: Some questions allow only a single response, while other questions allow respondents to give more than one response or choose all that apply. Those that allow more than a single response are indicated on the graphs with the label, "Multiple Responses Allowed."
- Scaled questions: Many questions (but not all) are in a scale, such as a 0 to 10 numeric scale.
- Series questions: Many questions are part of a series, and the results are primarily intended to be examined relative to the other questions in that series (although results of the questions individually can also be valuable). Typically, results of all questions in a series are shown together.

Some graphs and tabulations show an average, either the mean or median (or both). The mean is simply the sum of all numbers divided by the number of respondents. Because extremely high or low numbers relative to most of the other responses may affect the mean, the median is also typically shown. The median is the number at which half the sample is above and the other half is below. In other words, a median of 25 minutes means that half the sample gave an answer of more than 25 minutes and the other half gave an answer of less than 25 minutes.

Most graphs and tables show results rounded to the nearest integer; however, all data are stored in decimal format, and all calculations are performed on unrounded numbers. For this reason, some results may not sum to exactly 100% because of this rounding on the graphs. Additionally, rounding may cause apparent discrepancies of 1 percentage point between the graphs and the reported results of combined responses (e.g., when "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" are summed to determine the total percentage who are satisfied).

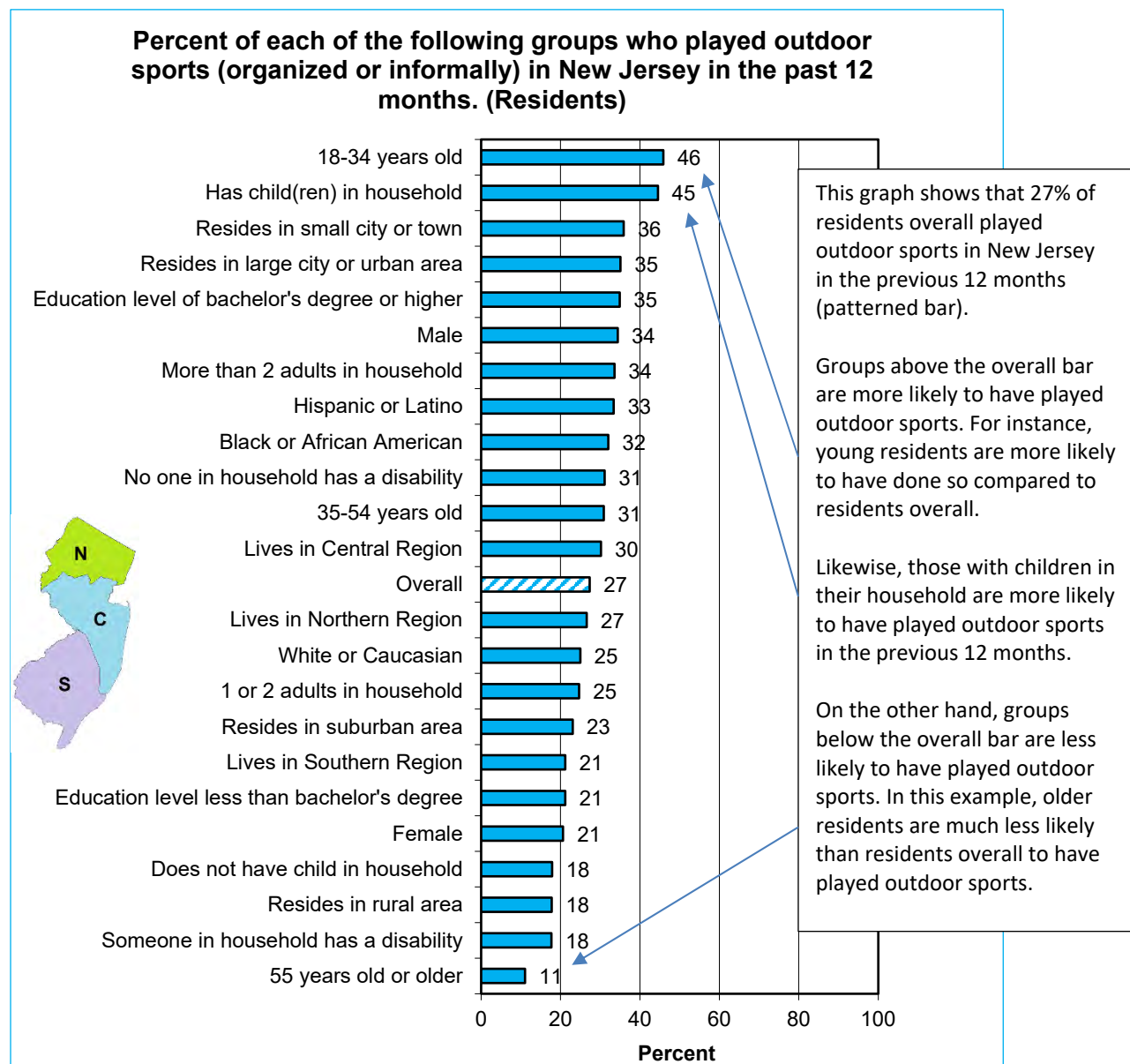
In addition to tables and graphs depicting the results of the individual survey questions, the report includes special graphs that show how various demographic groups responded to certain questions, hereinafter simply referred to as demographic analyses graphs. Not all the questions were analyzed in this way; questions chosen for these analyses are those deemed to be of the most interest or utility. The demographic variables used in these analyses are gender, age, ethnicity, number of adults in the household, presence of a child in the household, presence of a household member with a disability, education level, type of residential area (urban-rural continuum), and region of residence. The example on the following page shows how to interpret these graphs.

This example shows the percentage of various groups who played outdoor sports over the previous 12 months. Among New Jersey residents overall, 27% played outdoor sports, as shown by the patterned bar. Those groups shown above the overall bar have a higher percentage who

played outdoor sports, compared to residents overall. Meanwhile, those groups below the overall bar have a lower rate of participation in outdoor sports, compared to residents overall.

When one group is above the overall bar (for instance, in this example, males), its counterpart or one of its counterparts (in this instance, females) typically will be below the overall bar. The distance from the overall bar matters, as well. If a group is close to the overall bar (for instance, those who live in the Central Region in this example), then the group should not be considered markedly different from respondents overall. A rule of thumb is that the difference should be 5 percentage points or more for the difference to be noteworthy.

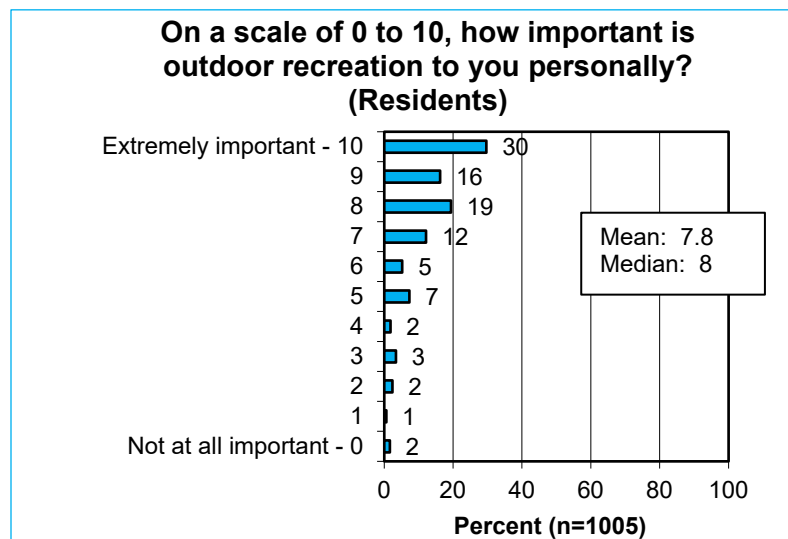
Note that the characteristics are not meant to describe a single person or a person that has all the traits. Rather, the analysis looks at groups defined by the individual characteristics, which sometimes are mutually exclusive.



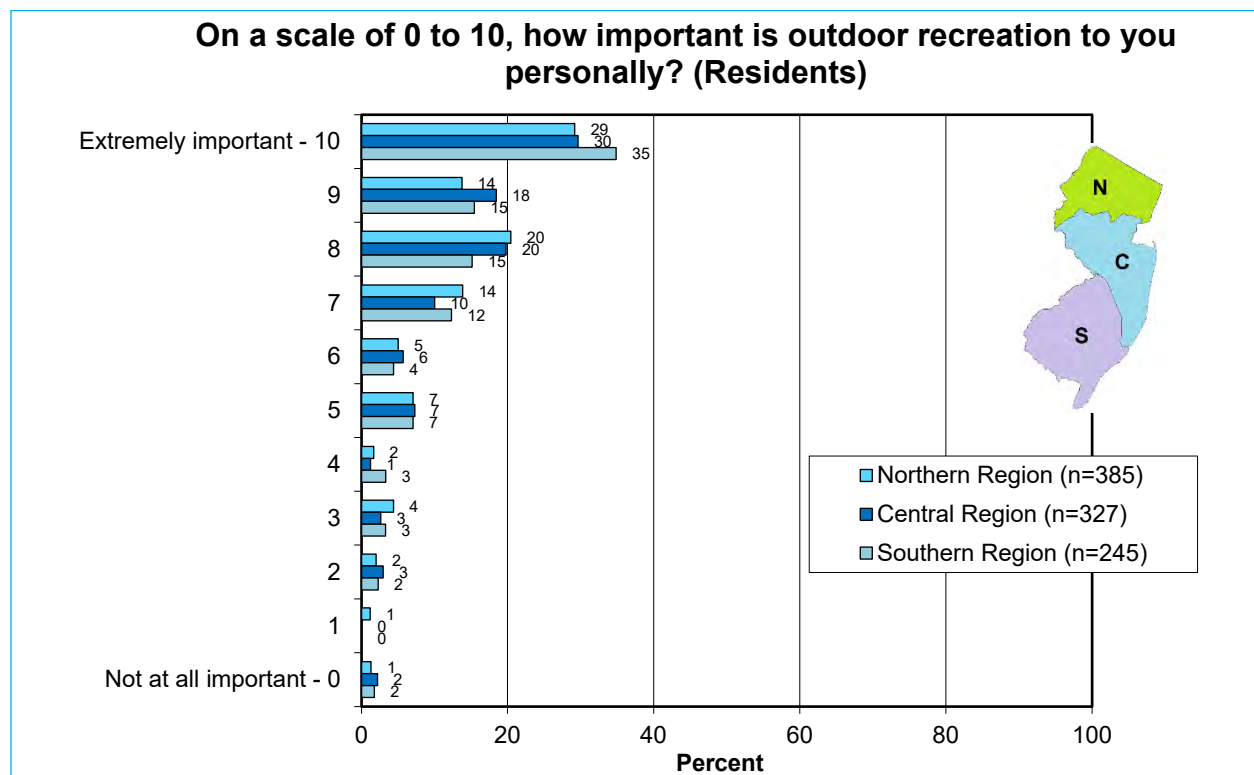
RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the survey of the general population of New Jersey (also referred to as residents) are presented in this section separate from the stakeholder survey results, which follow the general population results. The results are presented thematically, not in the order that the questions were given in the survey, starting with the importance that residents place on outdoor recreation.

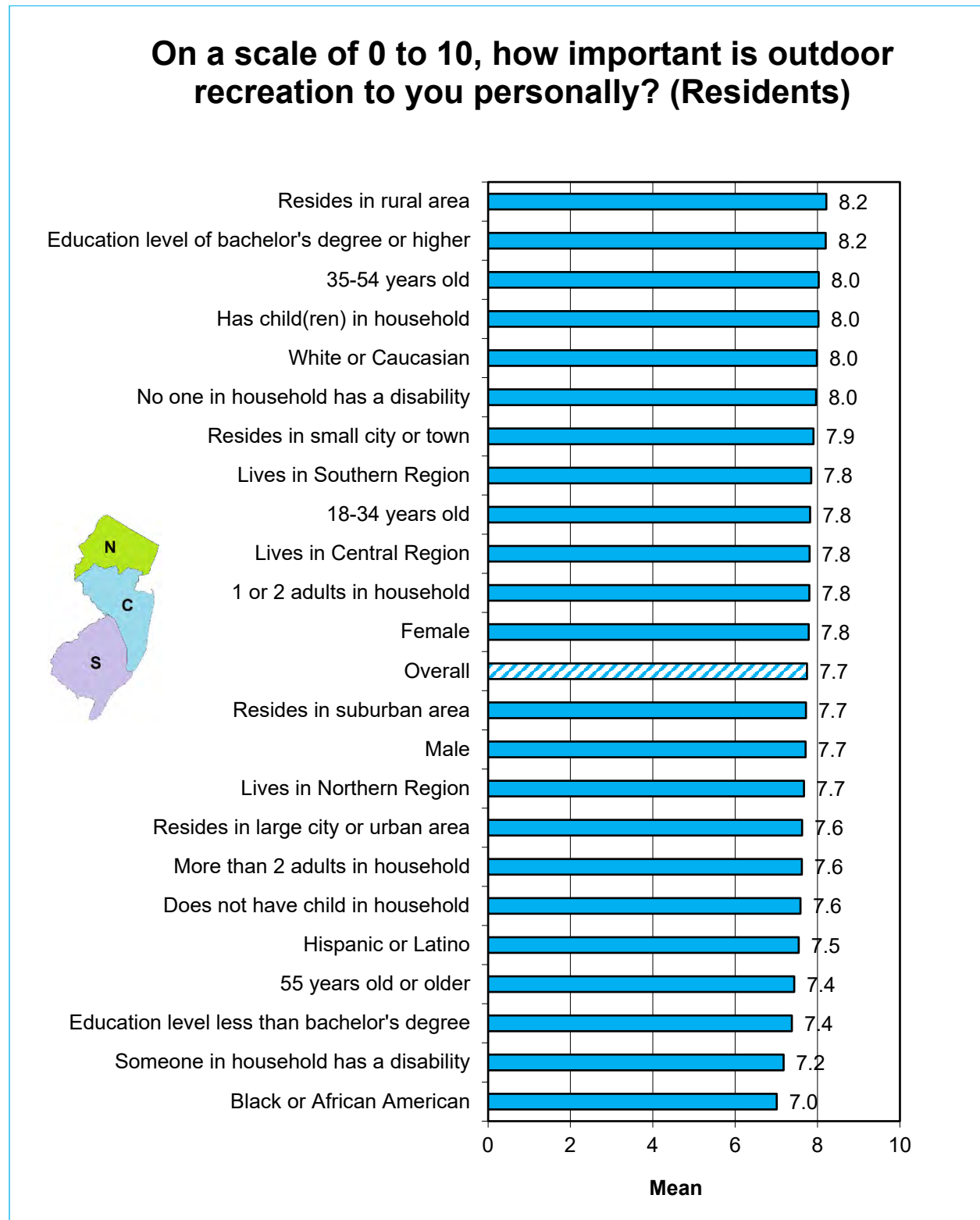
PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG RESIDENTS



Residents' ratings of the importance of outdoor recreation are generally high, with about a third giving its importance the highest rating. The overwhelming majority (83%) give a rating above the midpoint. The mean rating is 7.8, and the median is 8. In the regional results, the Southern Region has a slightly higher percentage giving the highest rating.

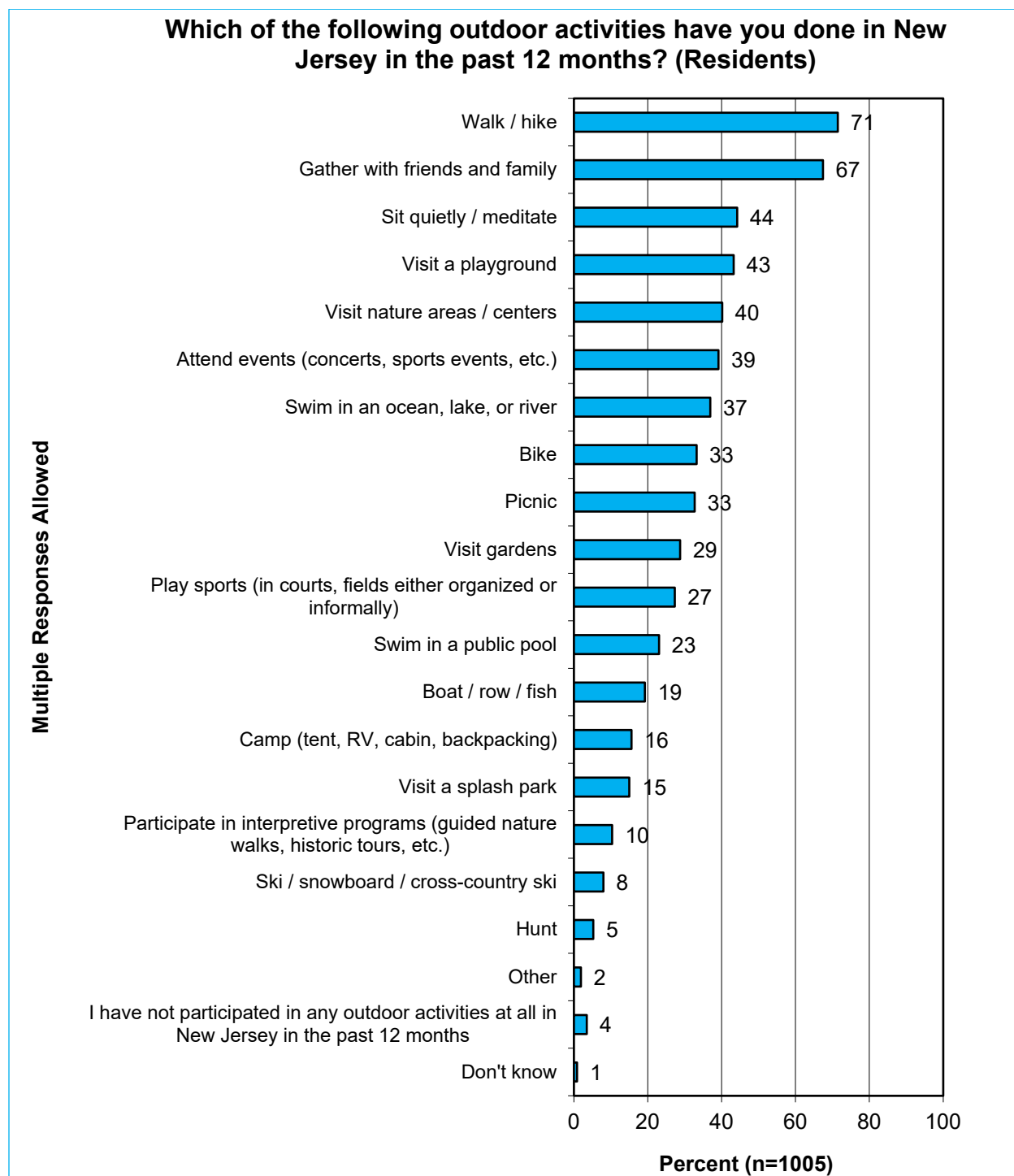


The demographic analyses graph for this question shows mean ratings given by the various groups. The highest mean ratings are those living in a rural area and those in the higher education bracket.



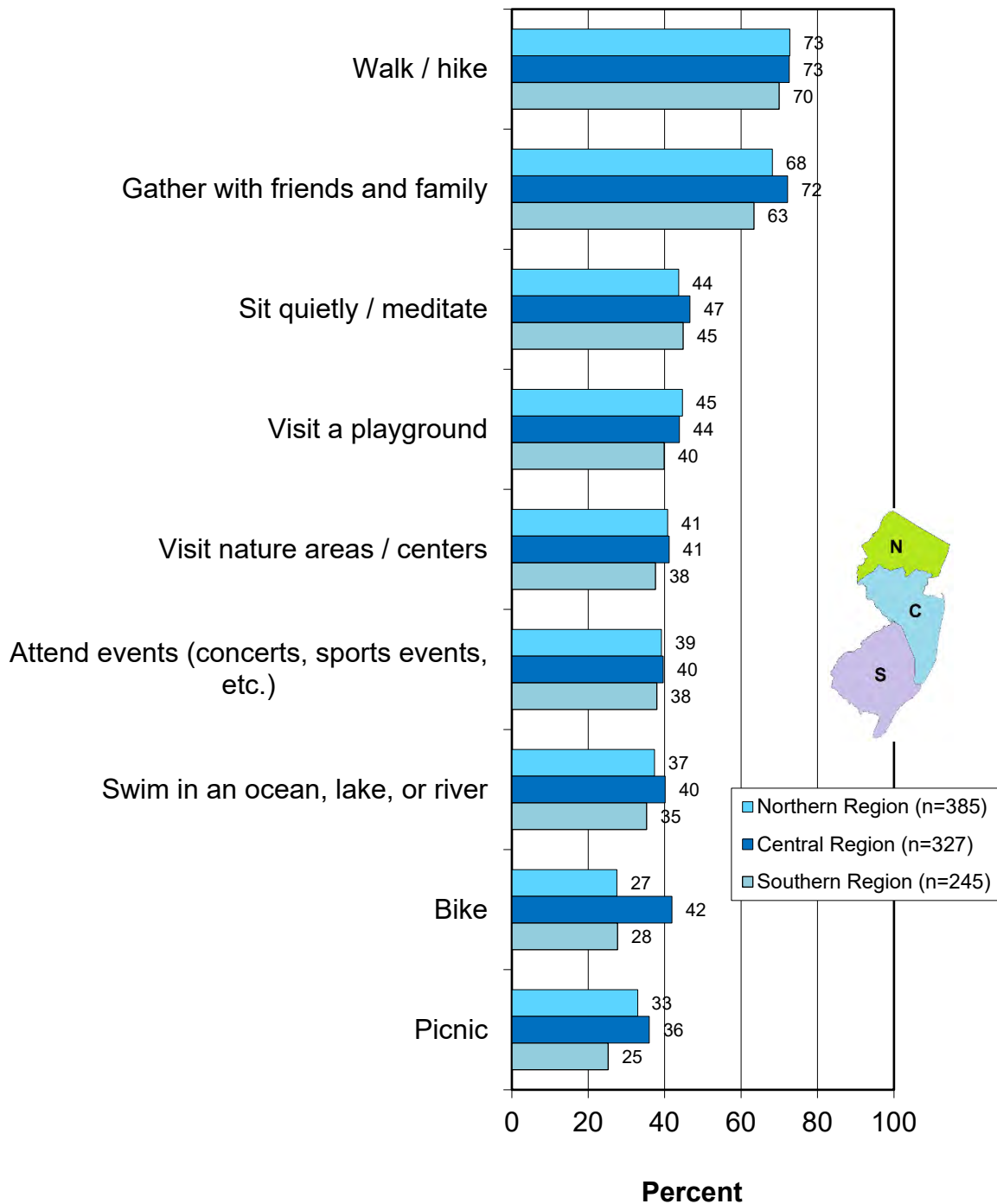
OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES IN NEW JERSEY AMONG RESIDENTS

Walking/hiking and gathering with friends and family are the two most popular outdoor activities by far. The full list is shown in the graph; these activities were presented to the respondents in the survey. In the regional results, biking is markedly higher in the Central Region than in the others. Following the regional results are demographic analyses graphs showing the characteristics of people who participate in the various activities.



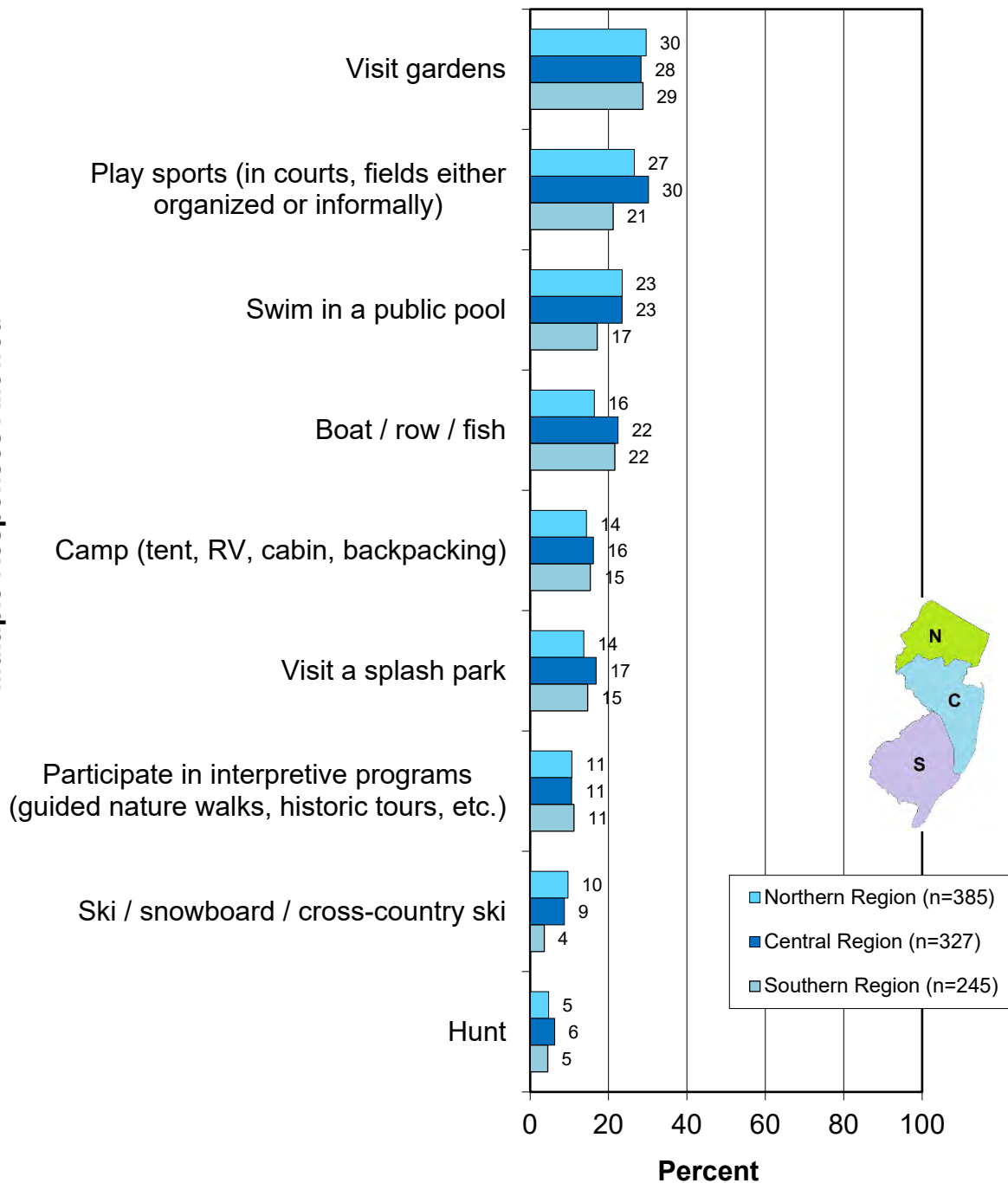
Which of the following outdoor activities have you done in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 1) (Residents)

Multiple Responses Allowed

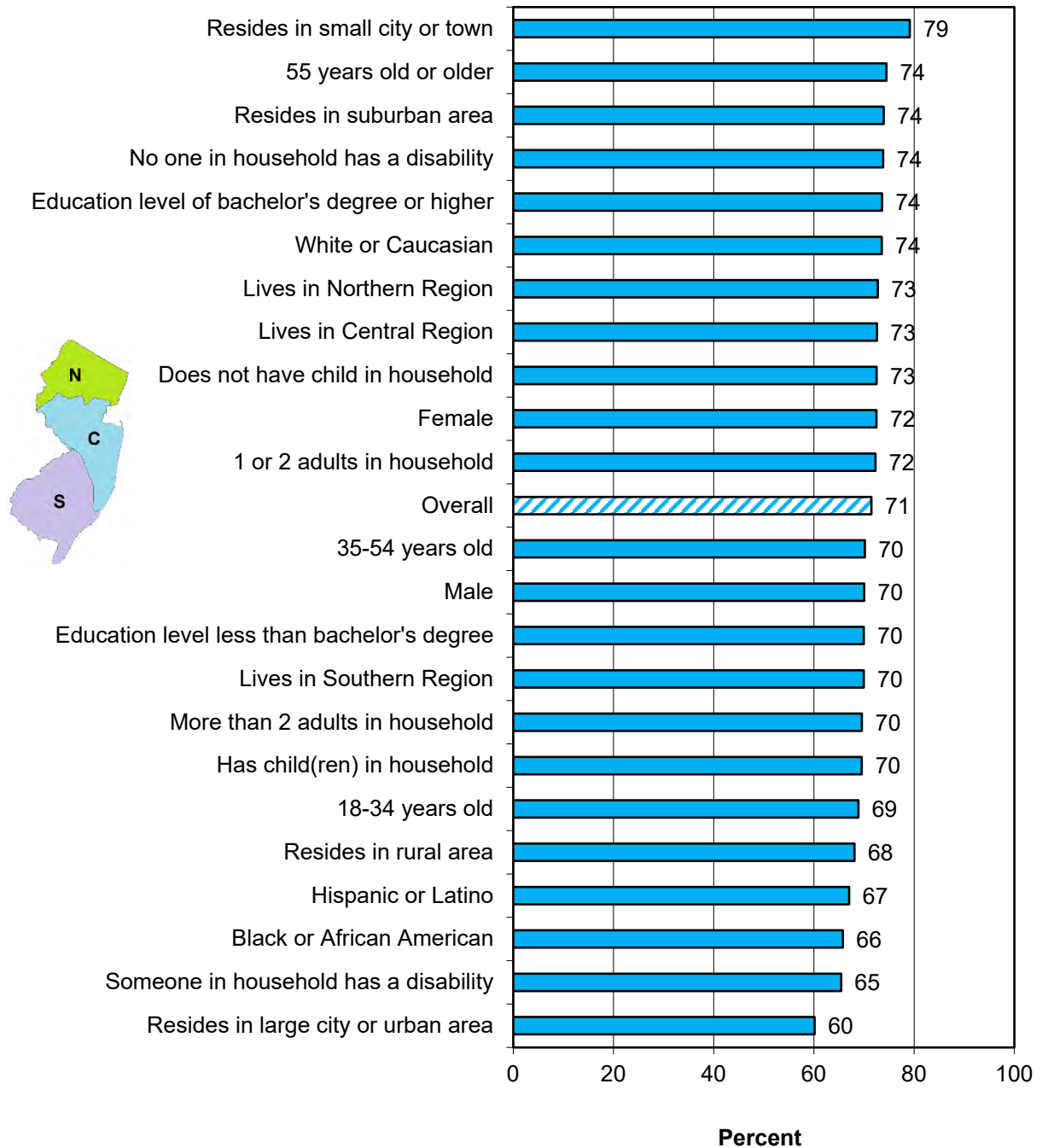


Which of the following outdoor activities have you done in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 2) (Residents)

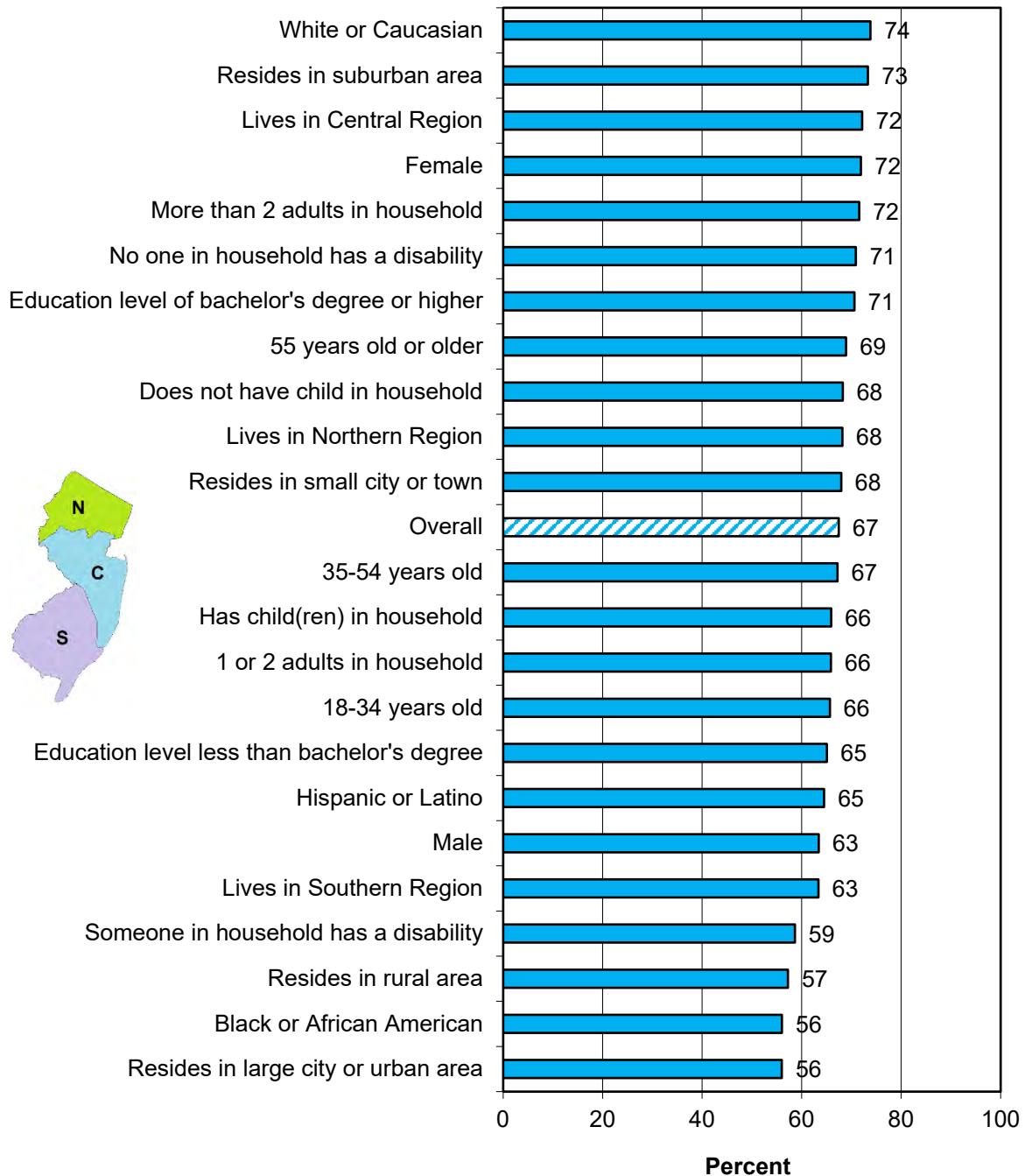
Multiple Responses Allowed



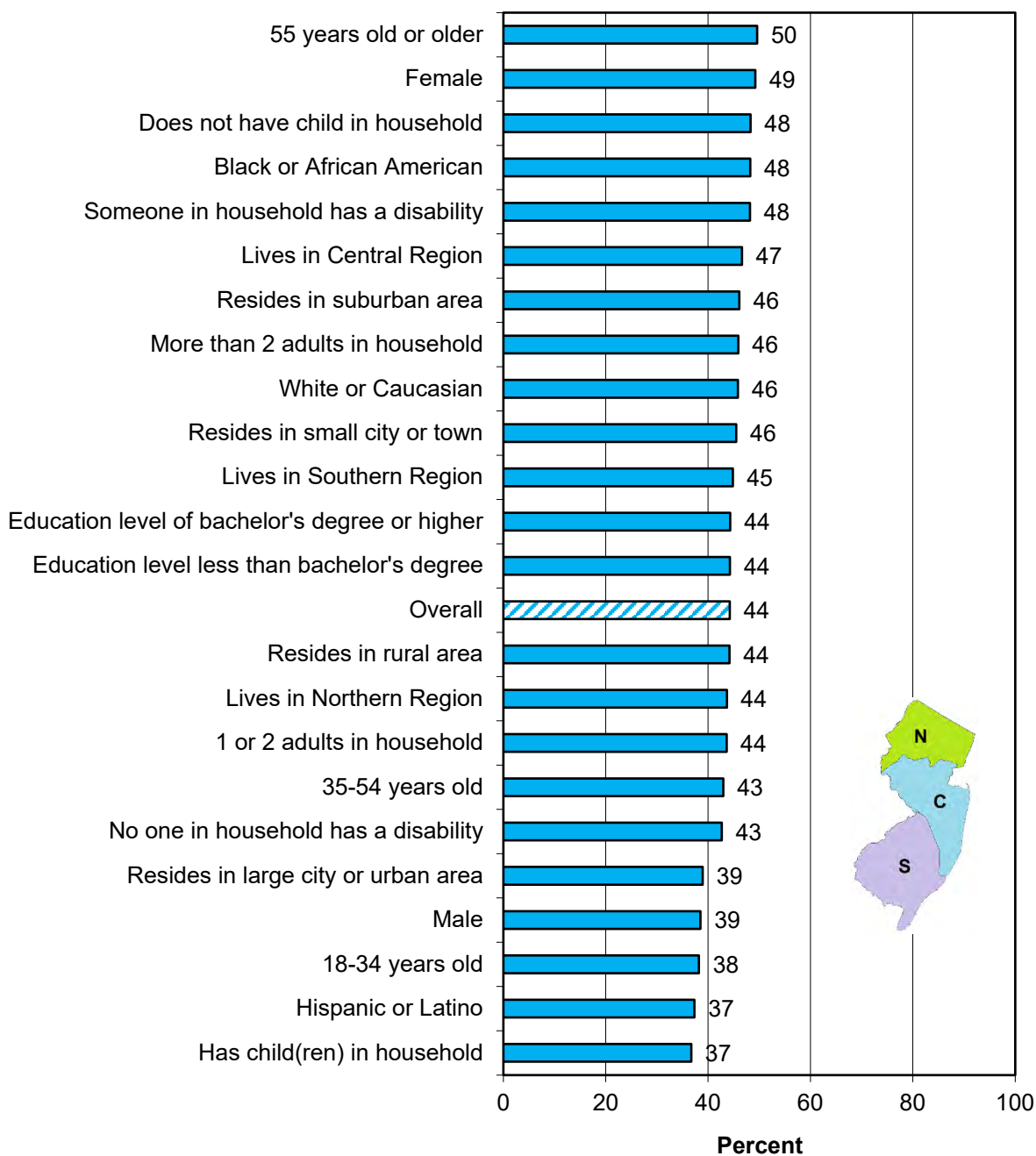
Percent of each of the following groups who went walking or hiking in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



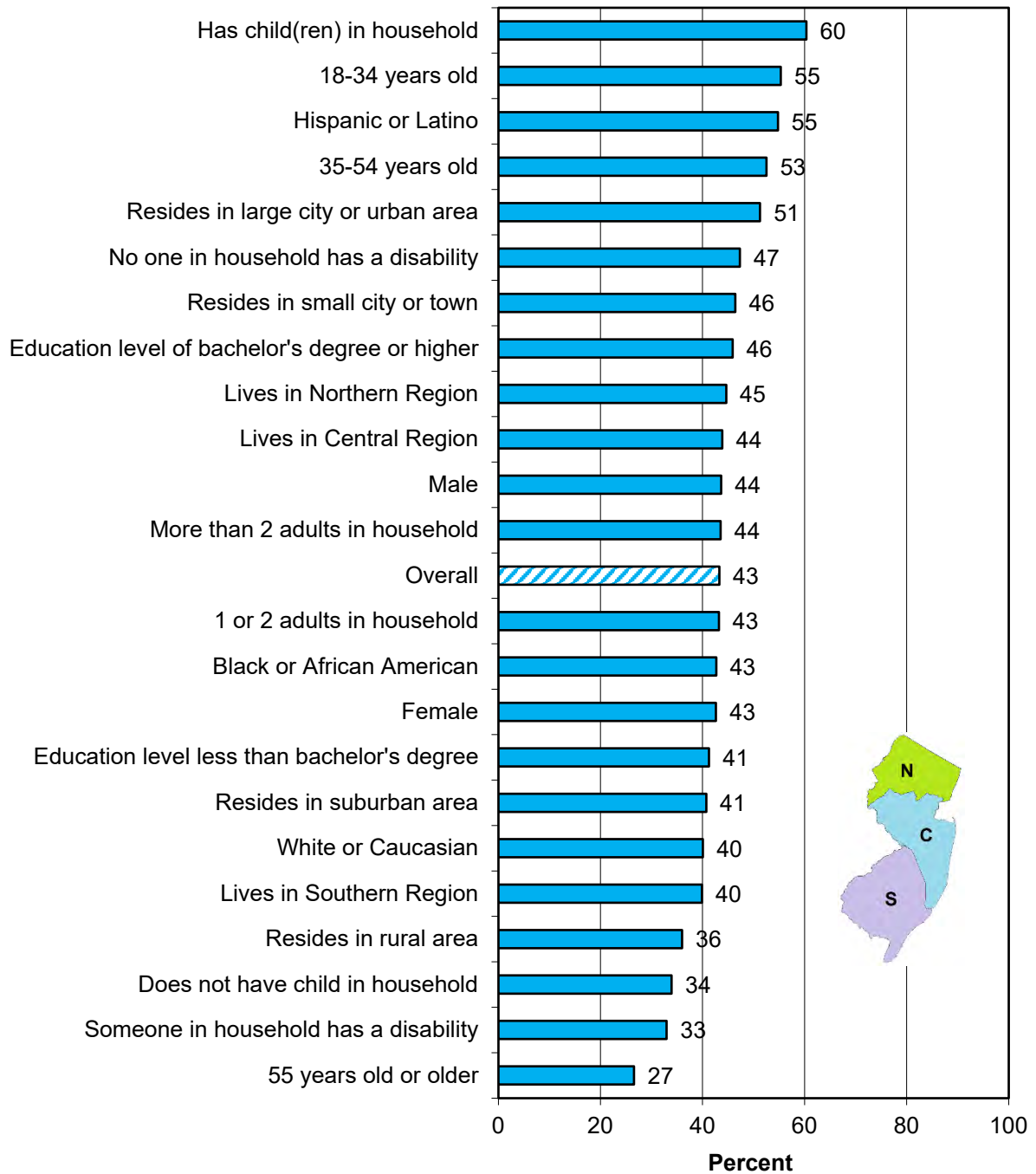
Percent of each of the following groups who gathered with family and friends outdoors in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



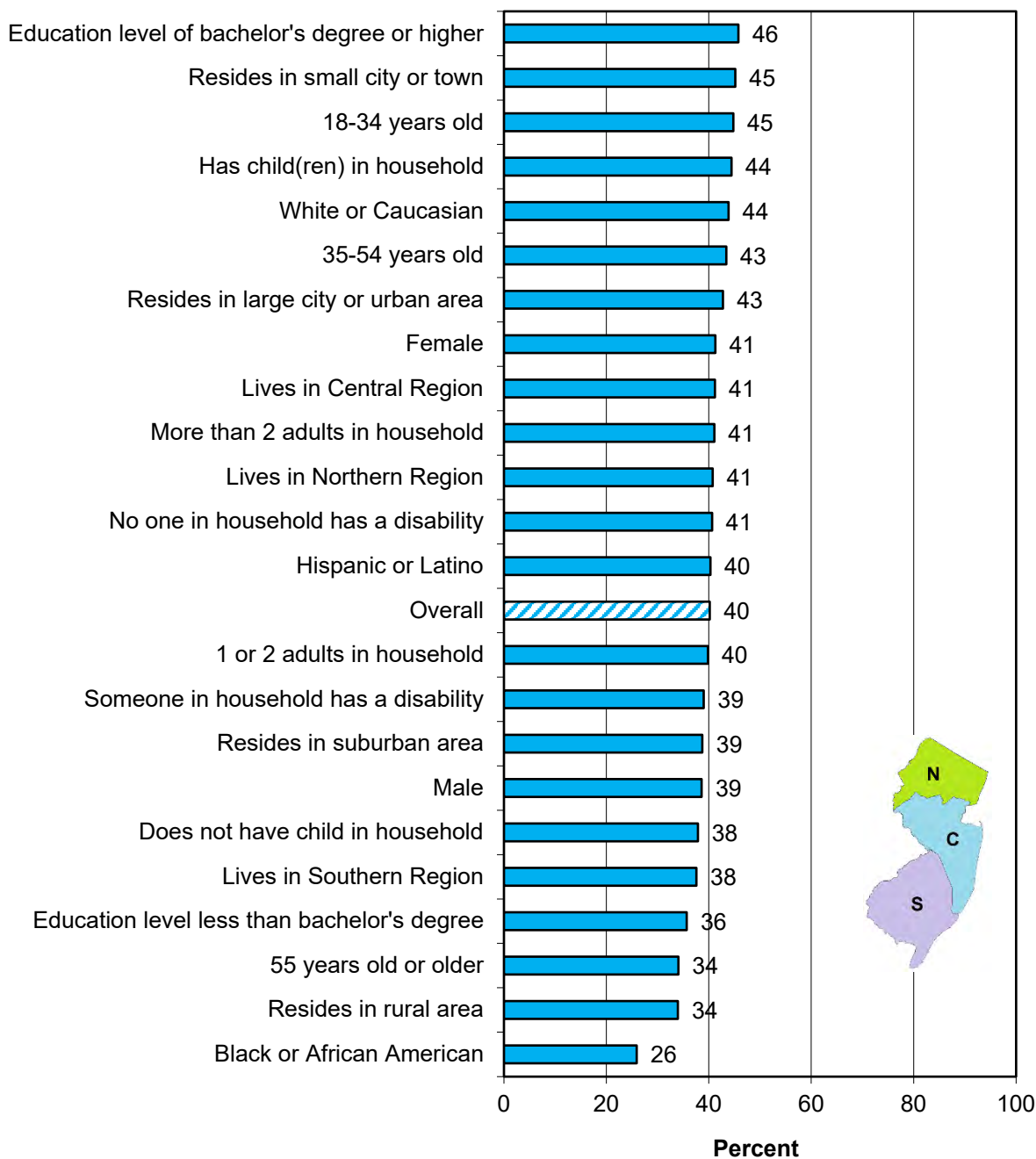
Percent of each of the following groups who sat quietly or meditated outdoors in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



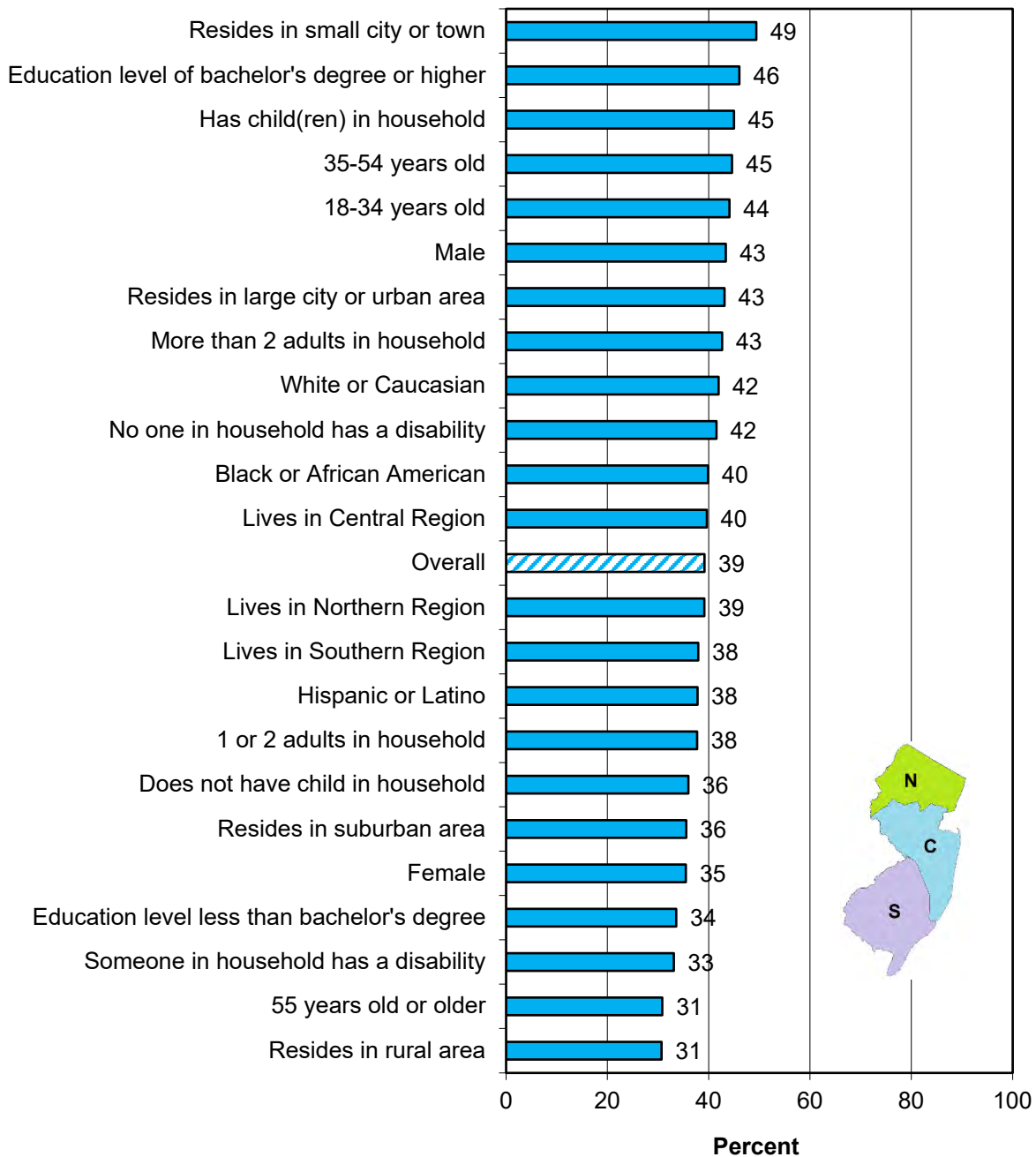
Percent of each of the following groups who visited a playground in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



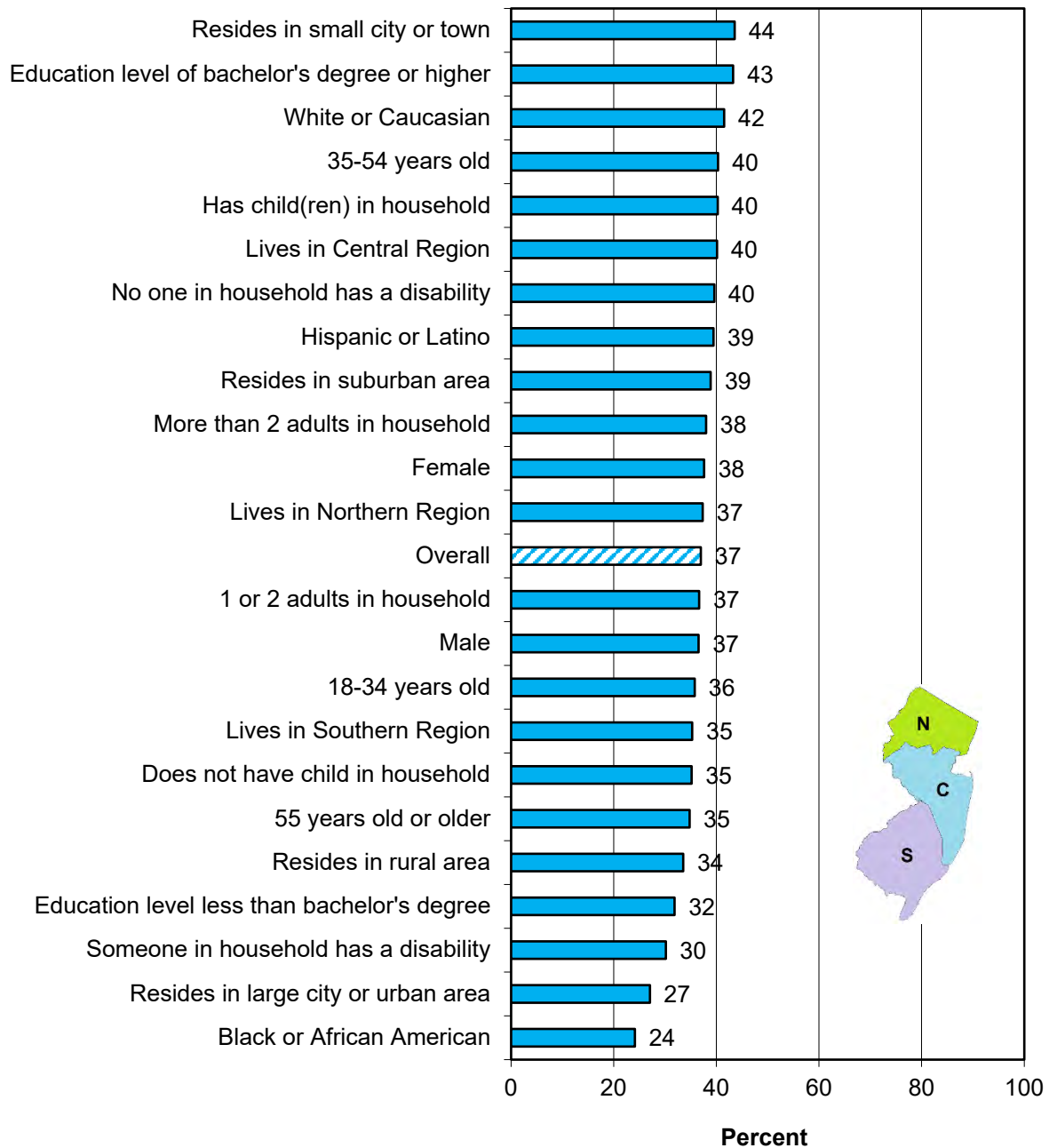
Percent of each of the following groups who visited a nature area or center in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



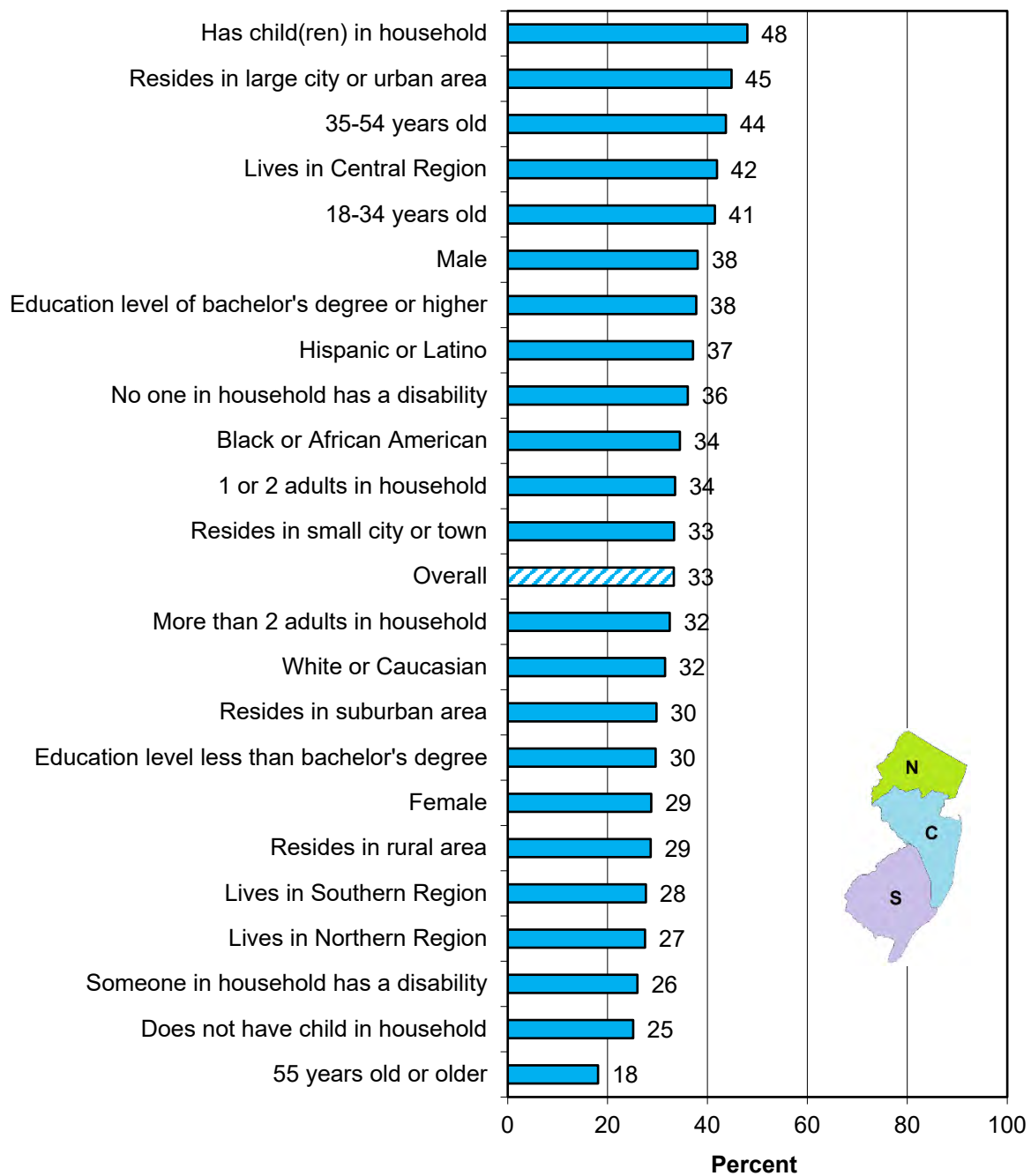
Percent of each of the following groups who attended outdoor events (such as concerts or sporting events) in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



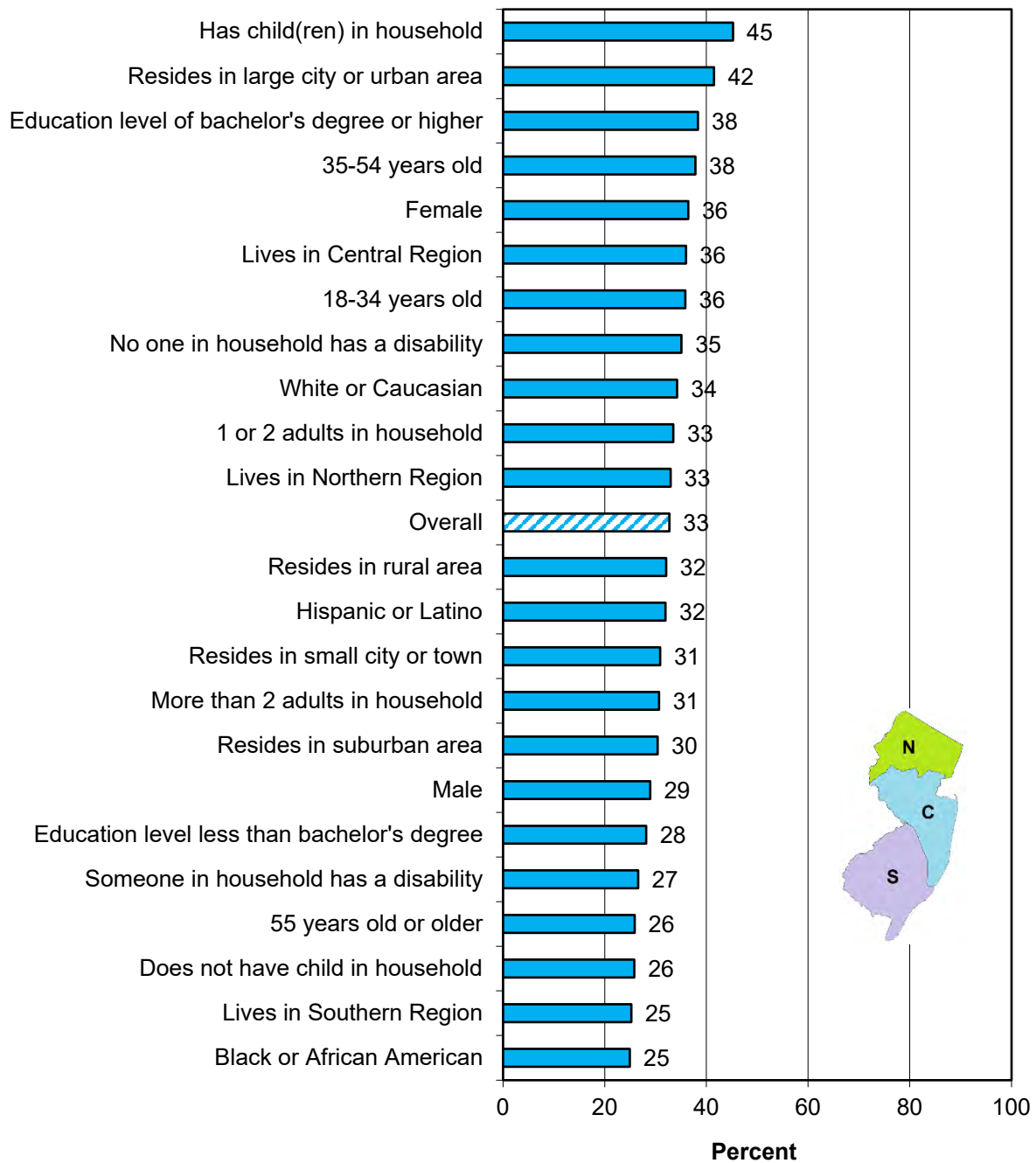
Percent of each of the following groups who went swimming in an ocean, lake, or river in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



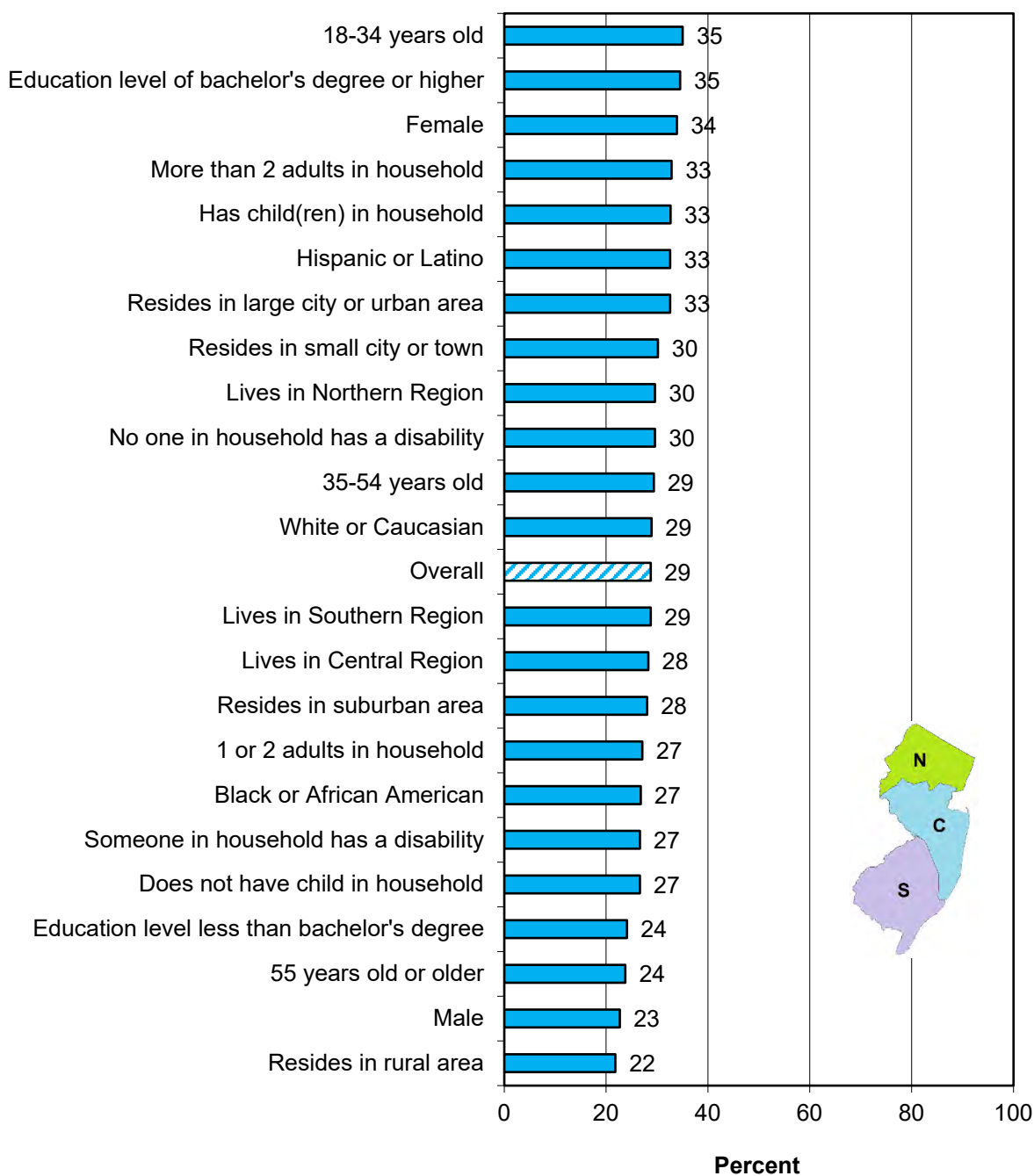
Percent of each of the following groups who went biking in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



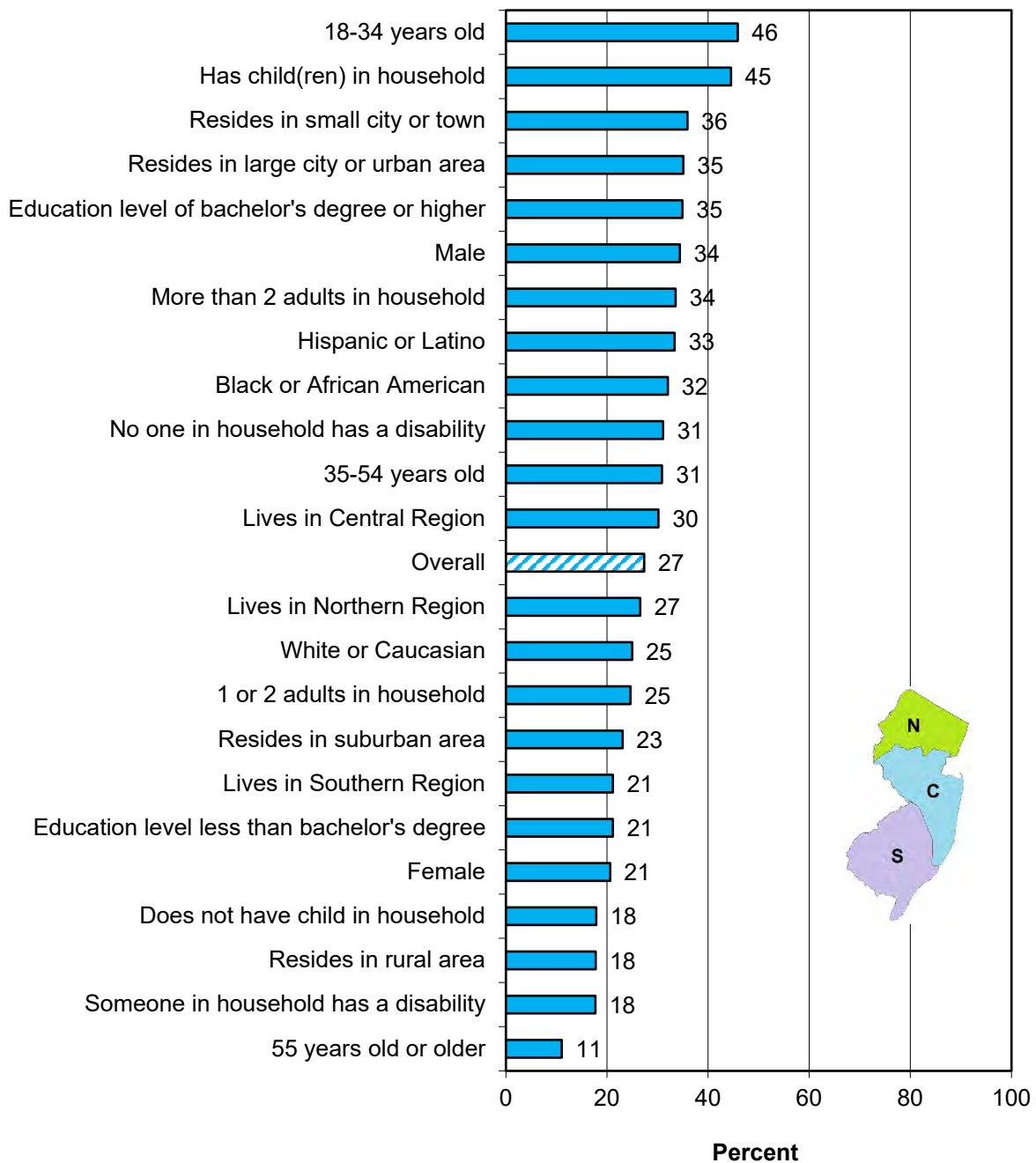
Percent of each of the following groups who went picnicking in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



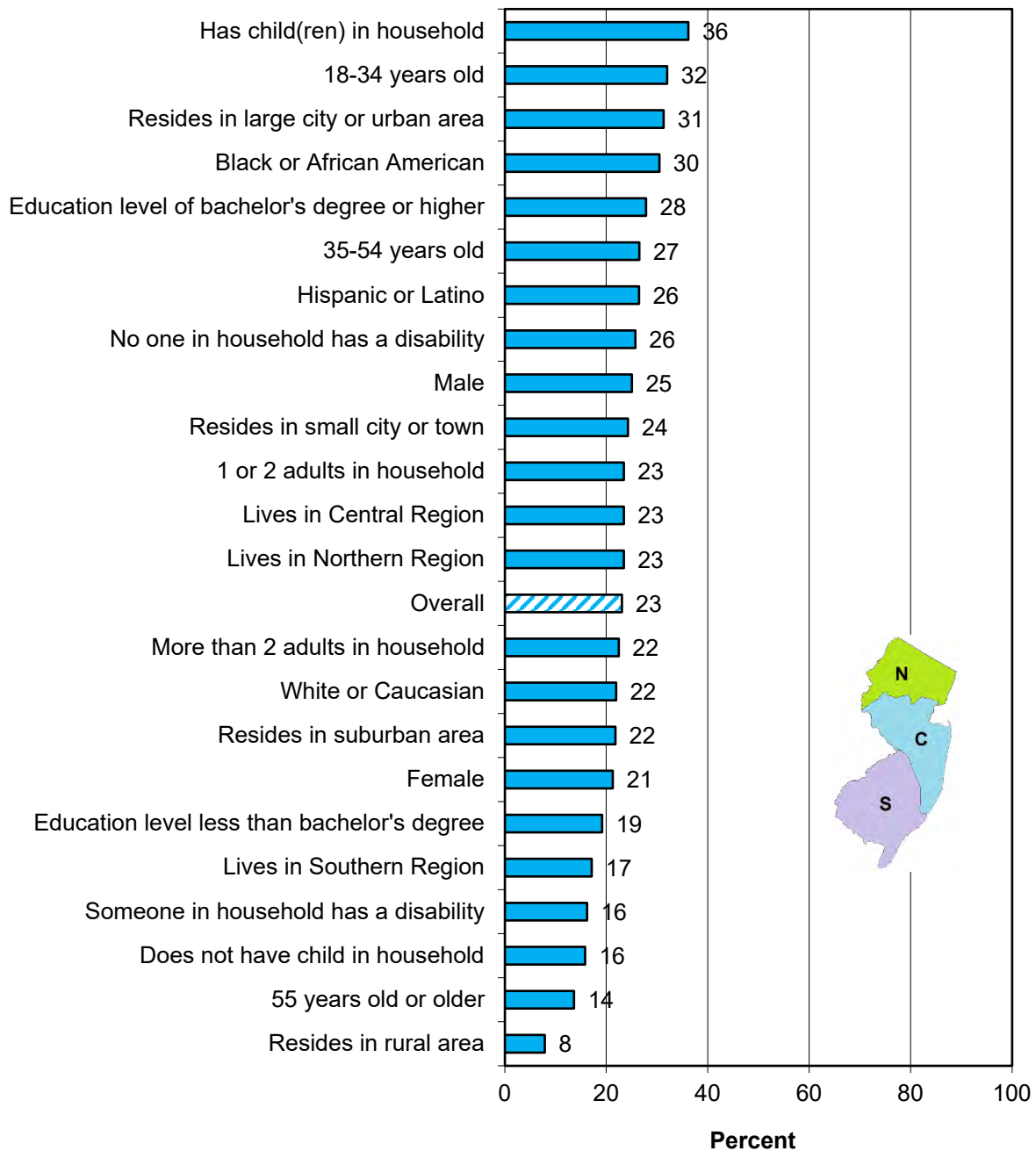
Percent of each of the following groups who visited gardens in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



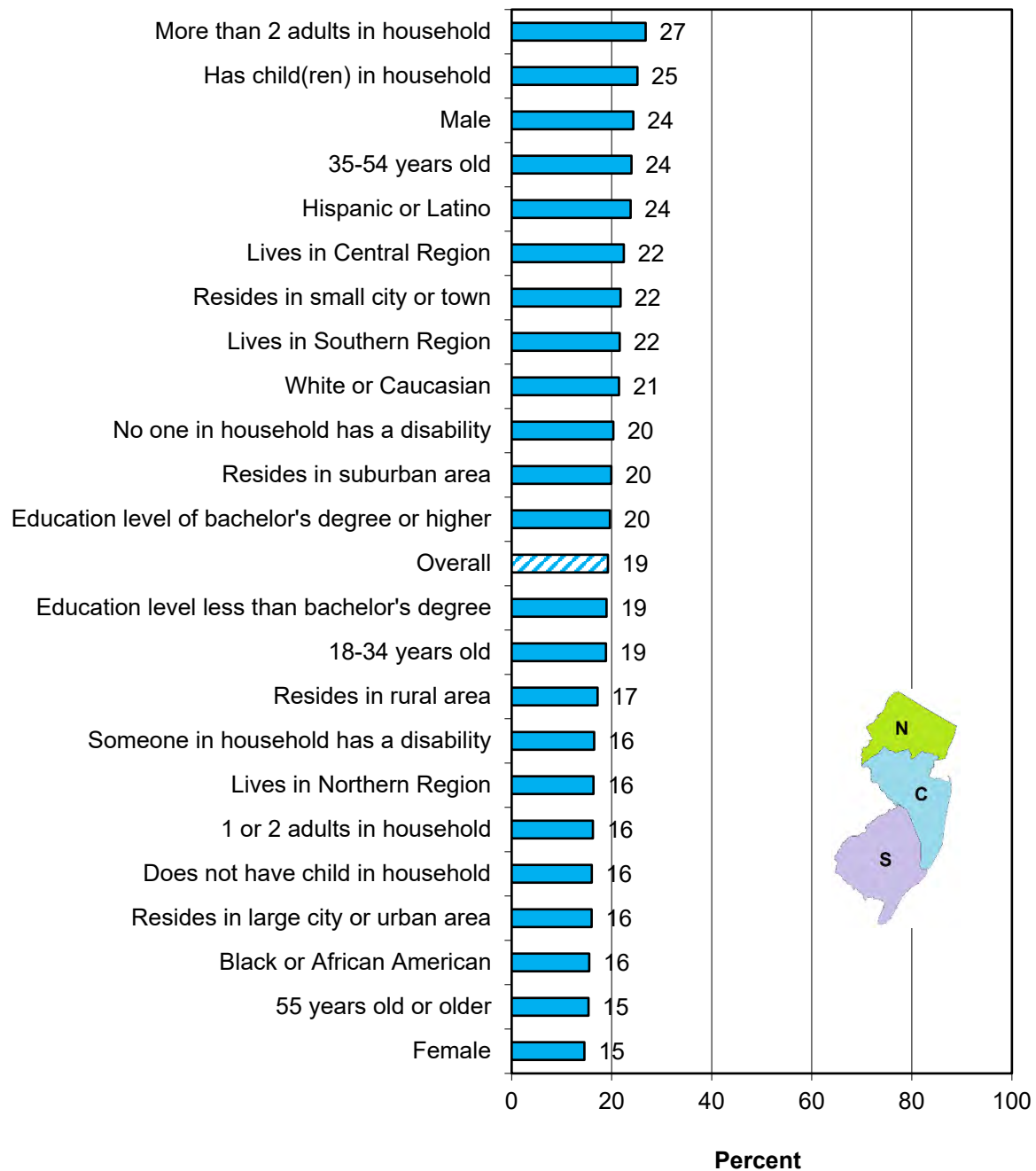
**Percent of each of the following groups who played outdoor sports (organized or informally) in New Jersey in the past 12 months.
(Residents)**



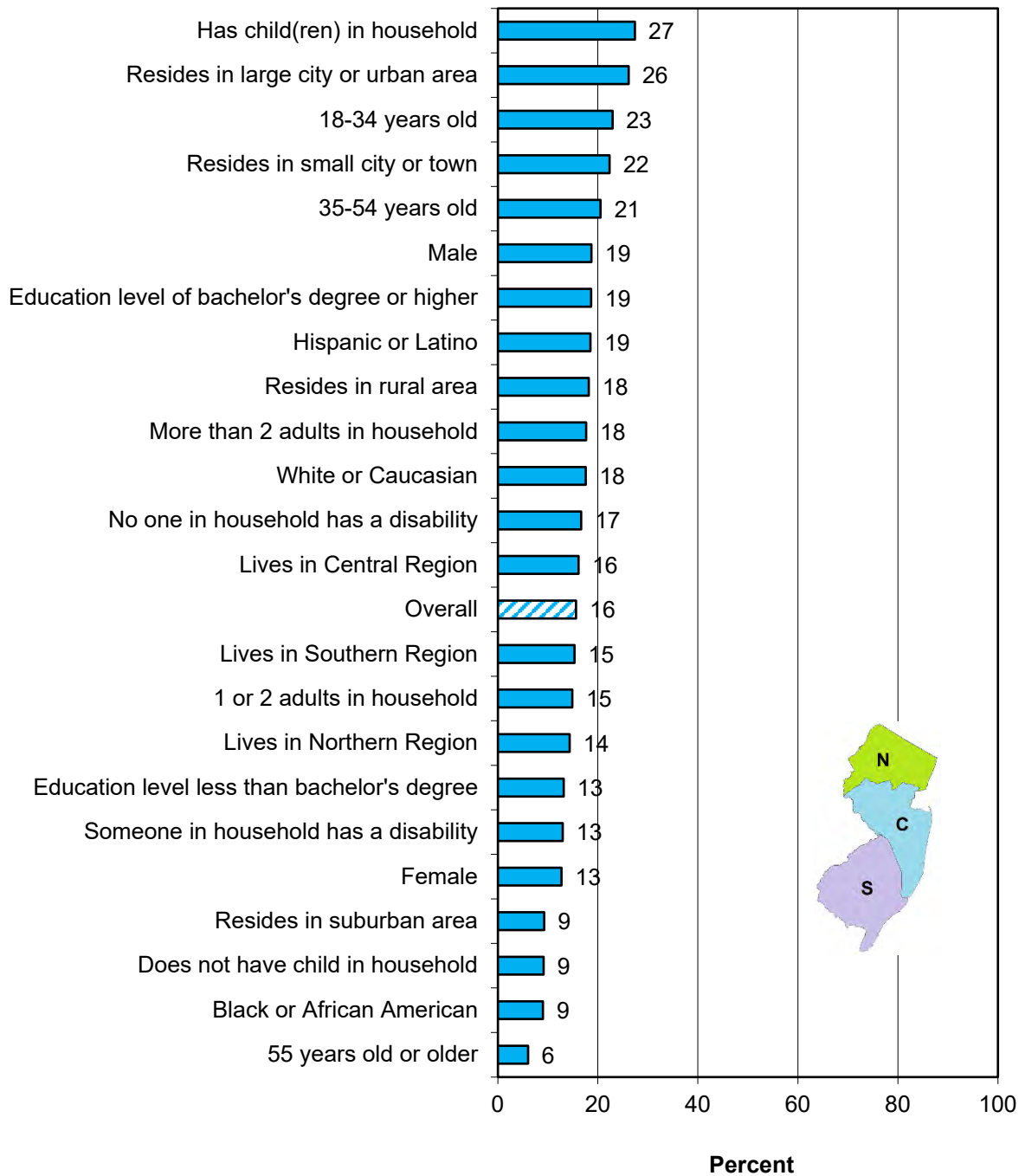
Percent of each of the following groups who went swimming in a public pool in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



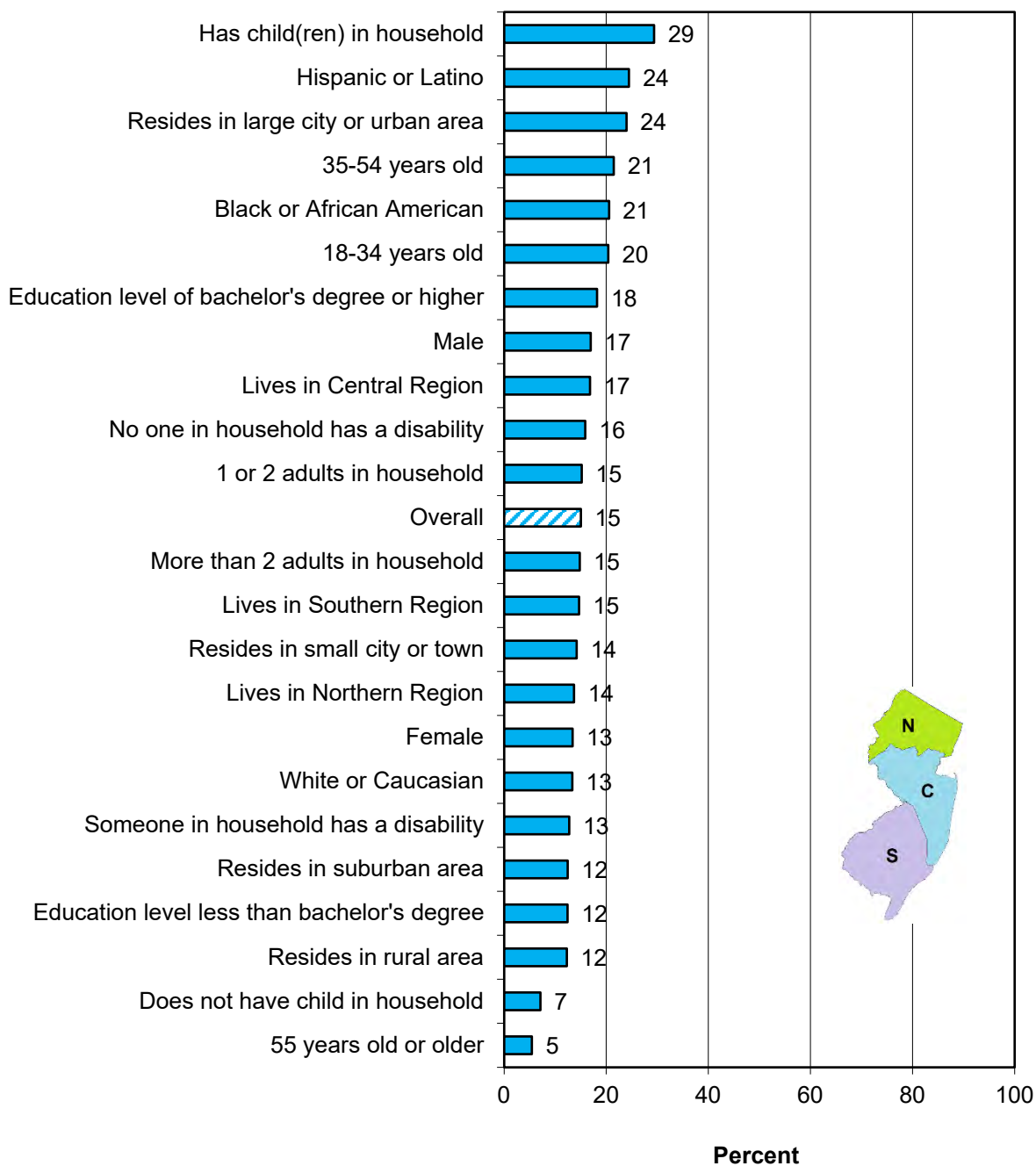
Percent of each of the following groups who went boating, rowing, or fishing in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



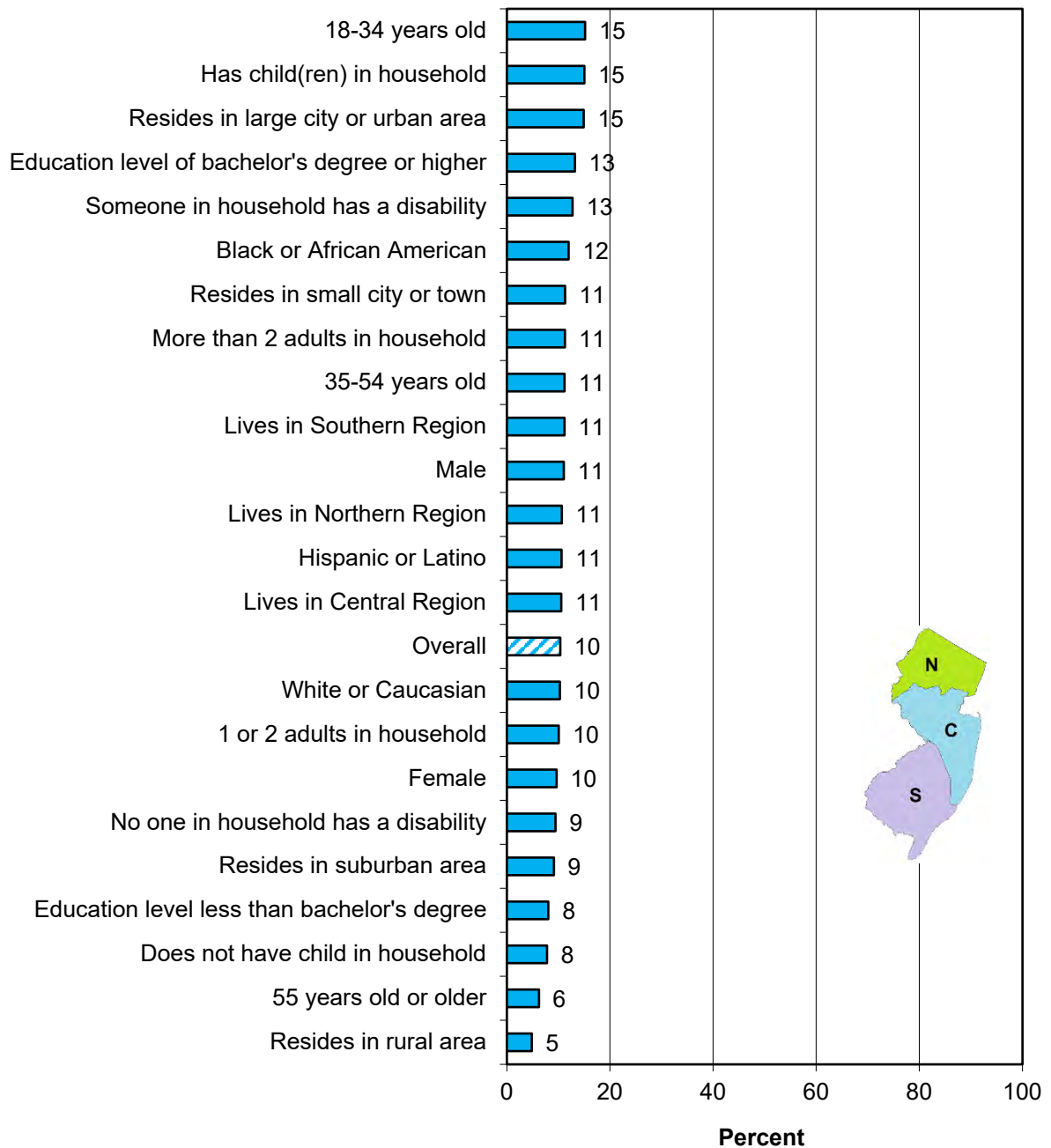
Percent of each of the following groups who went camping in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



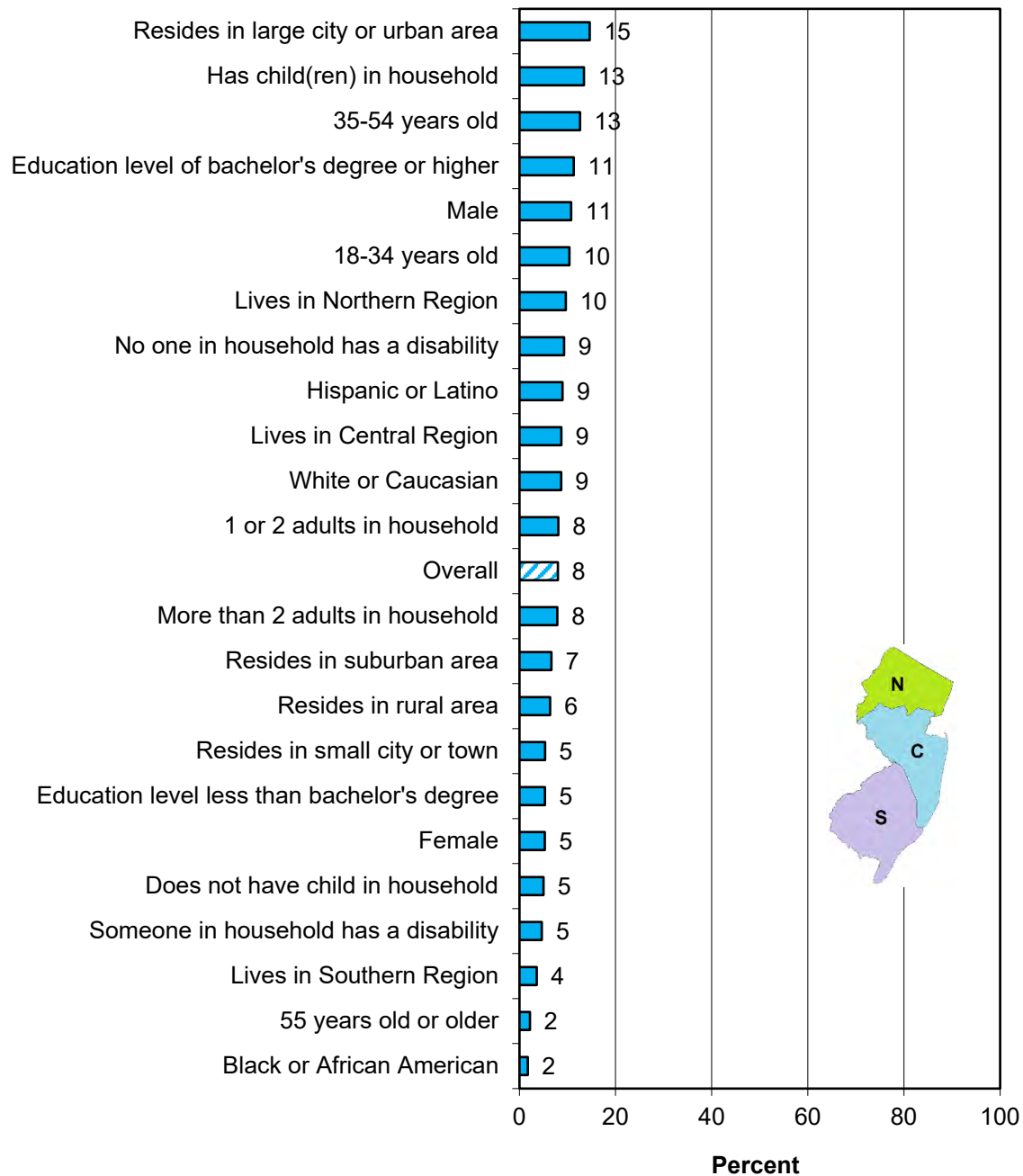
Percent of each of the following groups who visited a splash park in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



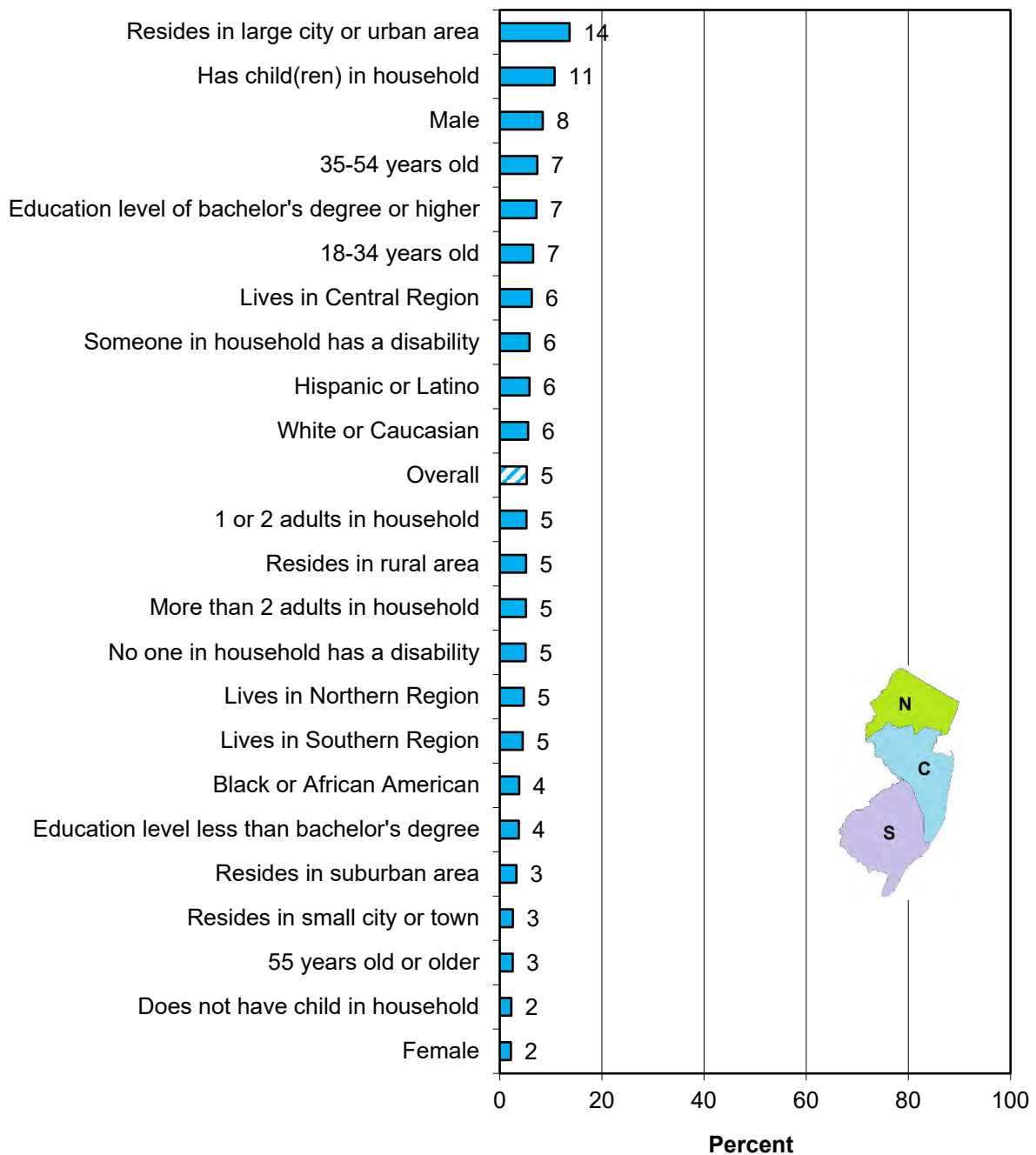
Percent of each of the following groups who participated in an interpretive program (such as a guided nature walk or historic tour) in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



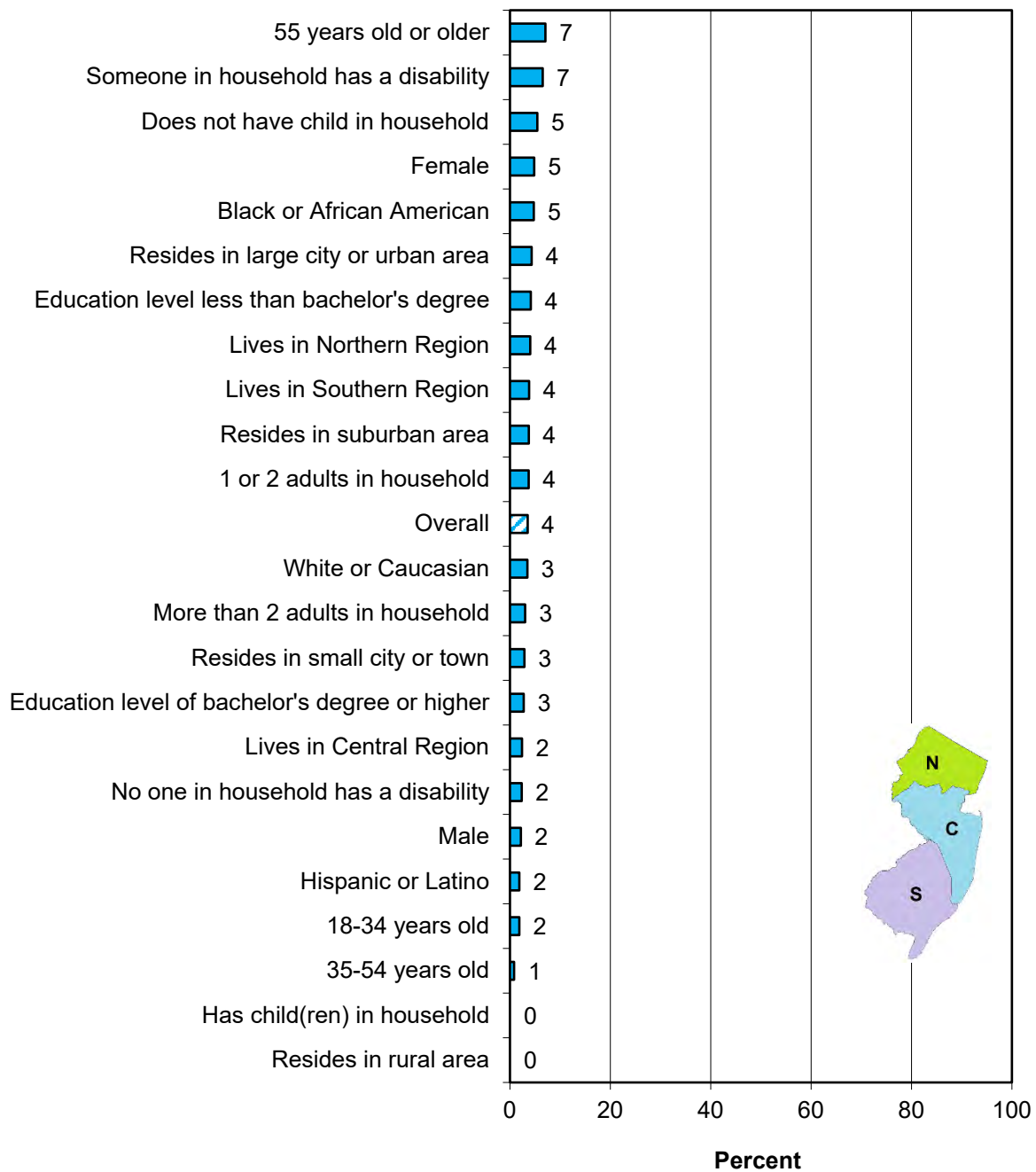
**Percent of each of the following groups who went skiing, snowboarding, or cross-country skiing in New Jersey in the past 12 months.
(Residents)**



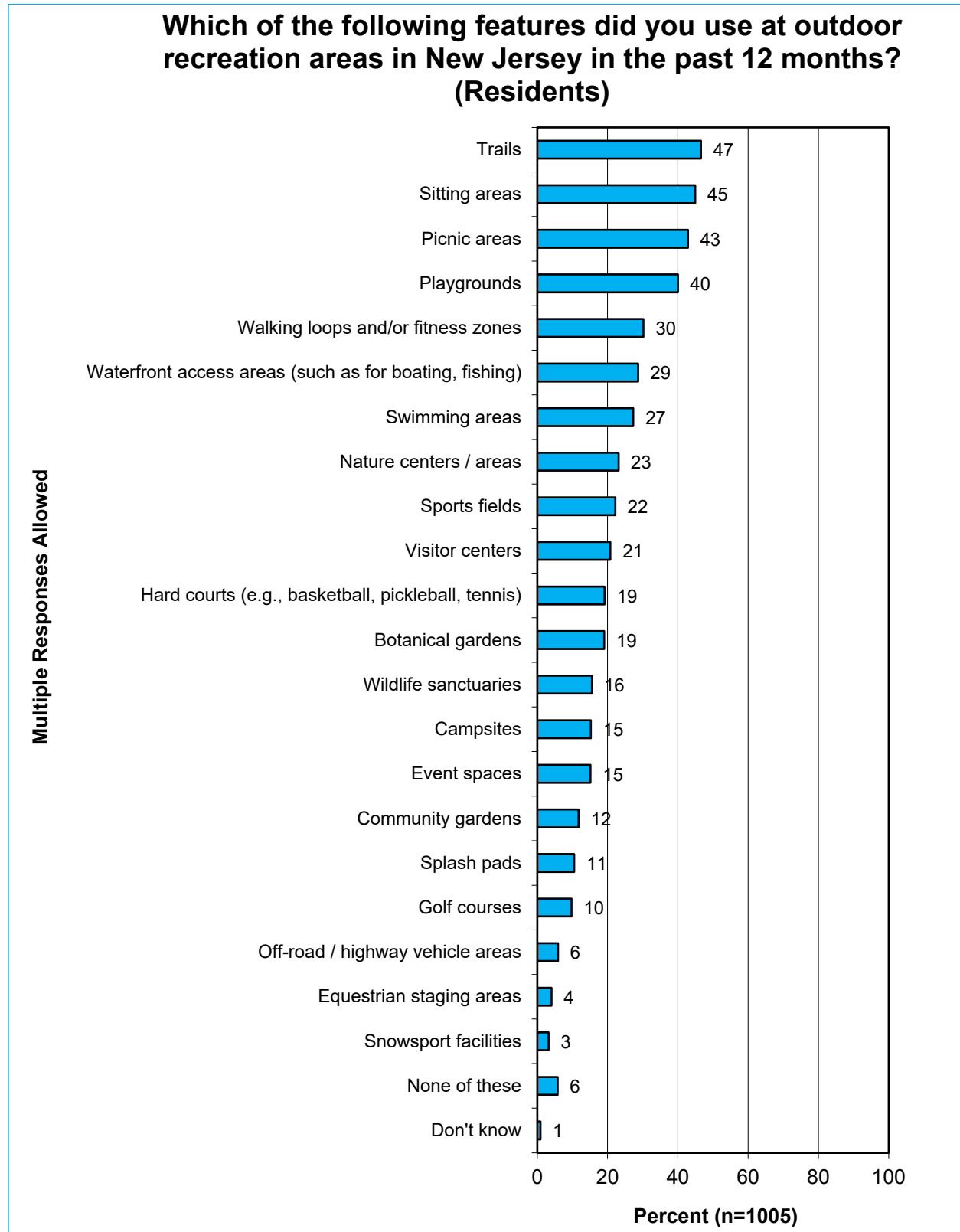
Percent of each of the following groups who went hunting in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



Percent of each of the following groups who did not participate in any outdoor activities in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)

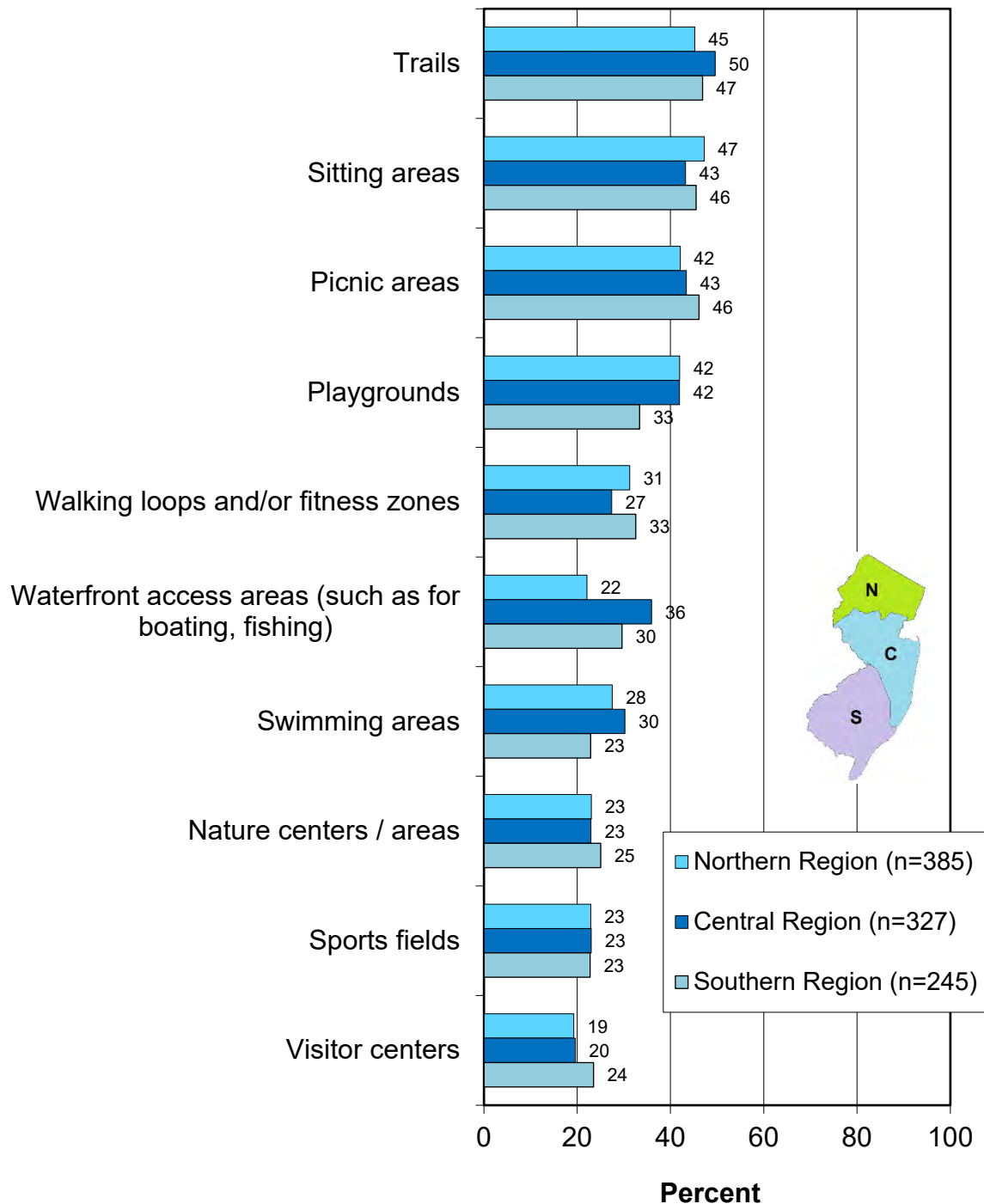


Four features are used much more than the others: trails, sitting areas, picnic areas, and playgrounds. The regions are similar on this question, although Southern Region residents are slightly less likely to use playgrounds compared to residents of the other regions.

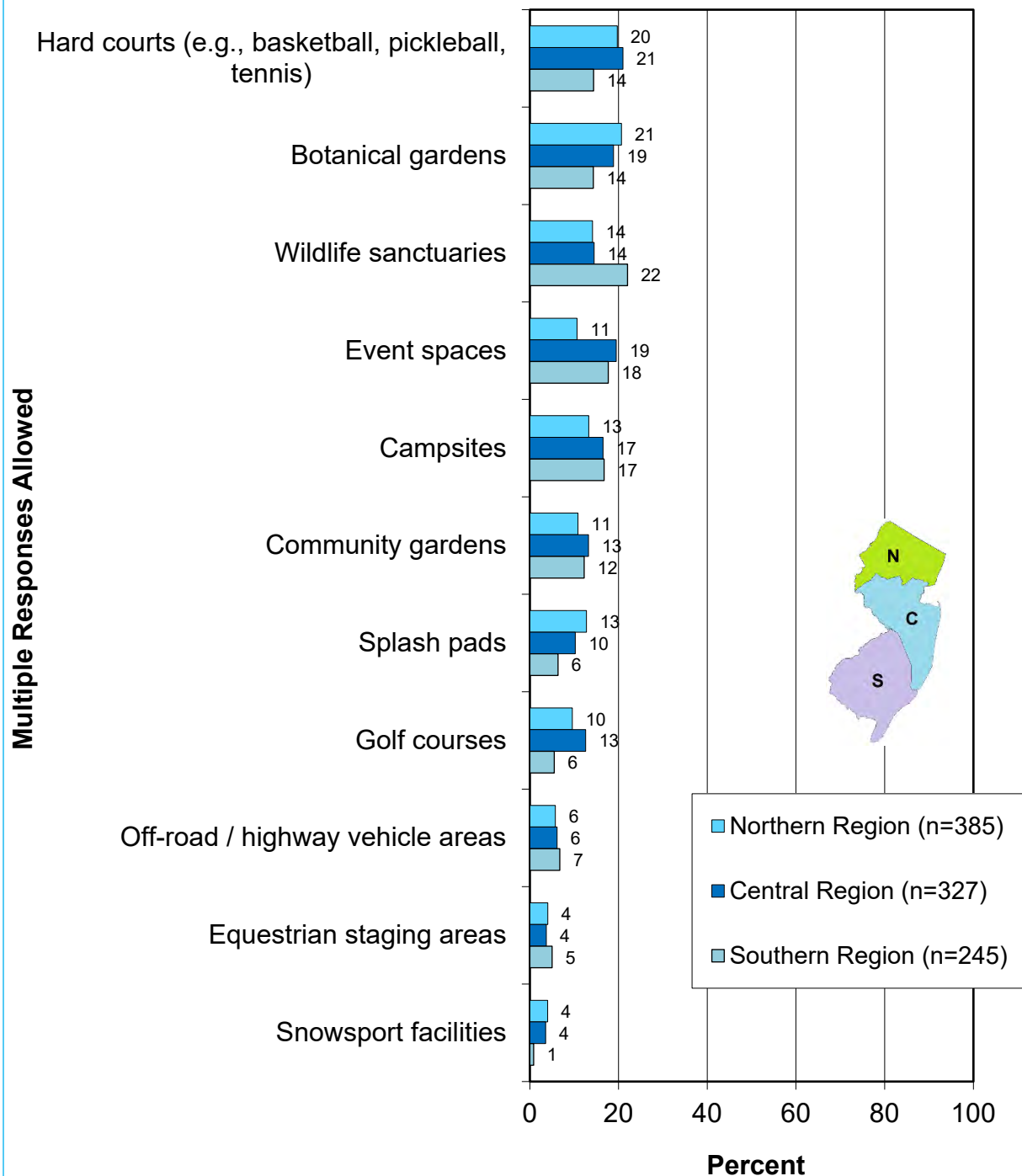


Which of the following features did you use at outdoor recreation areas in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 1) (Residents)

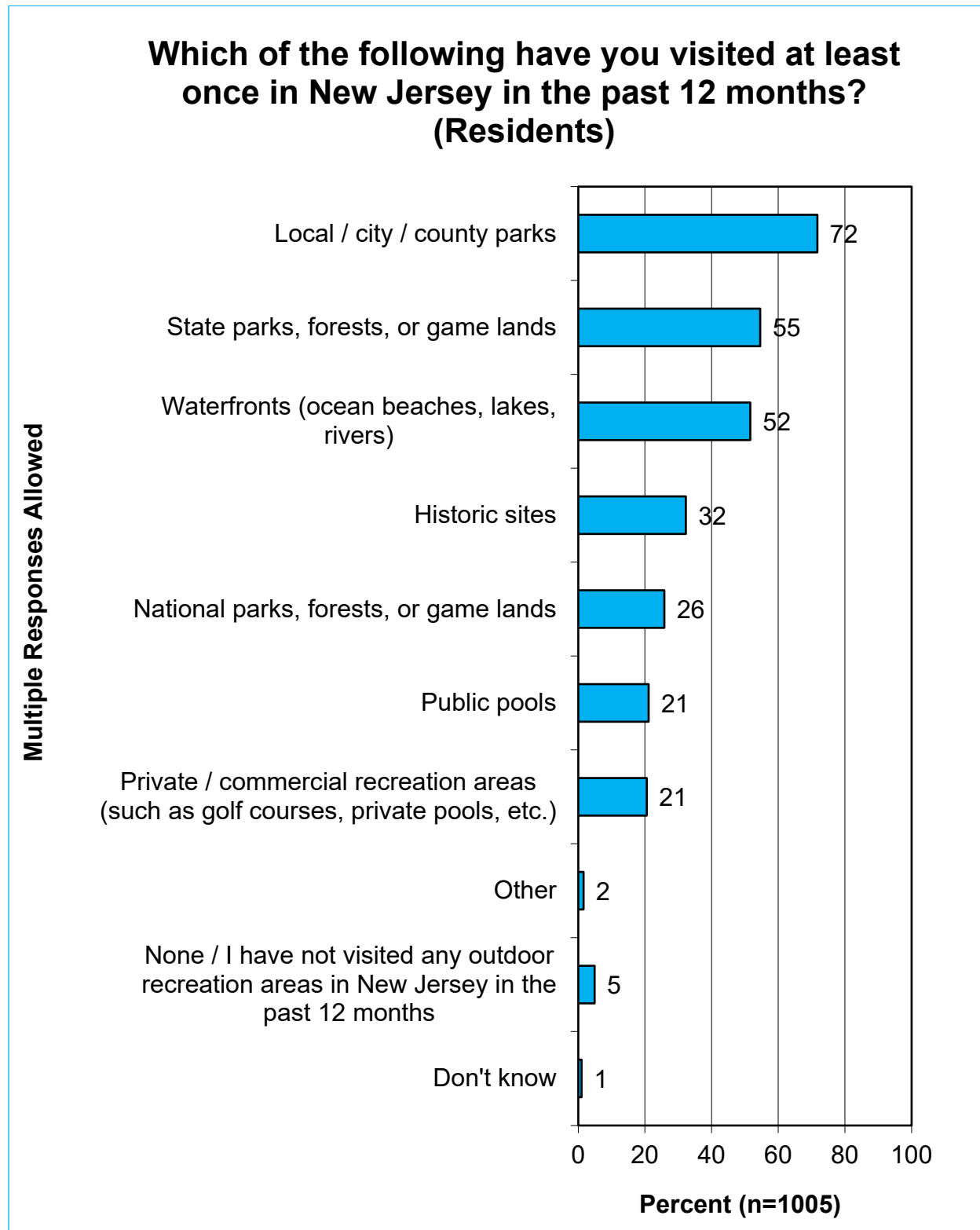
Multiple Responses Allowed



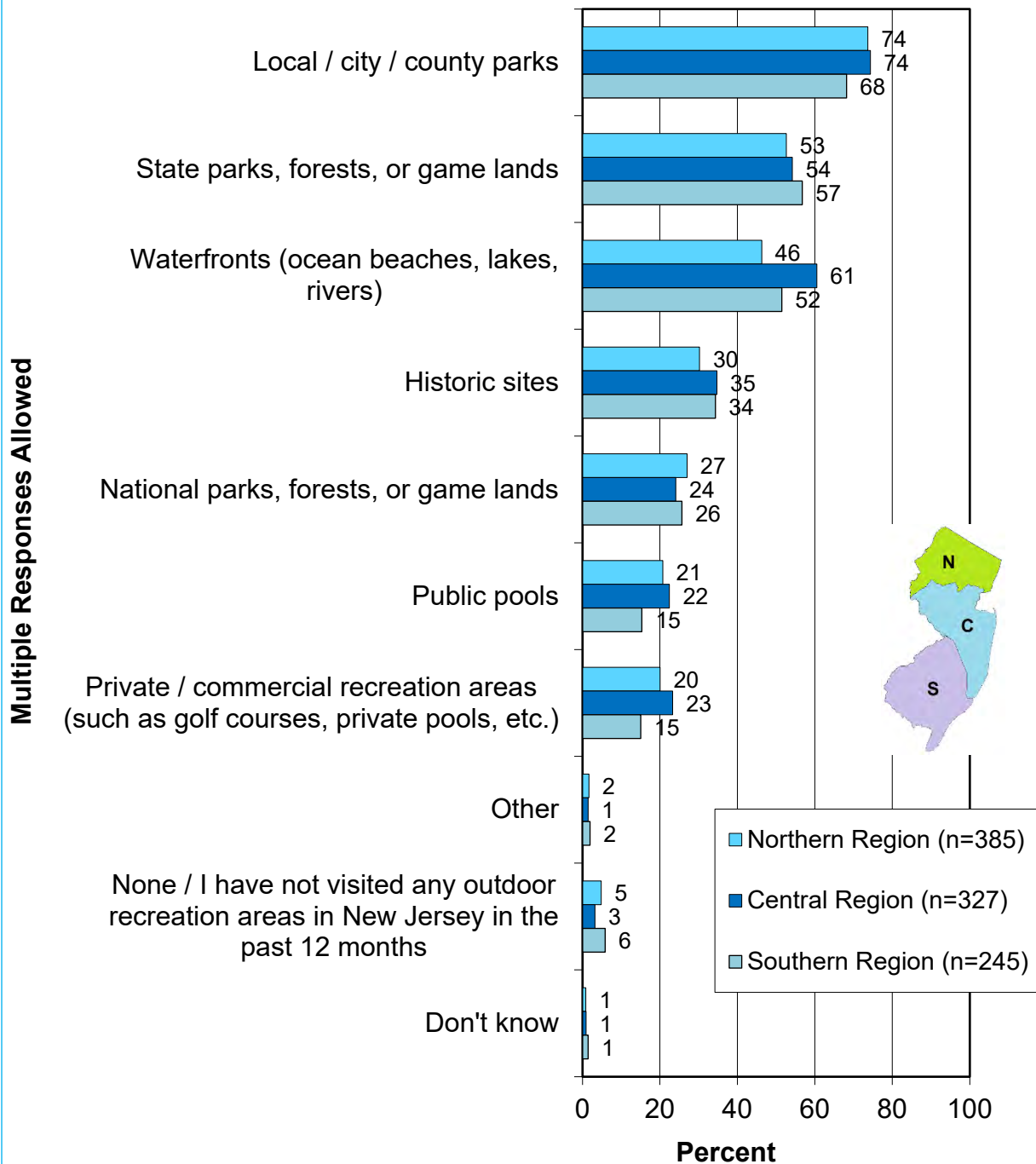
Which of the following features did you use at outdoor recreation areas in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 2) (Residents)



Visitation at local/city/county parks is high: almost three quarters of New Jersey residents visit them. This is followed by two more areas visited by a majority: state parks/forests/game lands and waterfronts. A marked regional difference is that Central Region residents more often visit waterfronts than do the residents of the other regions.

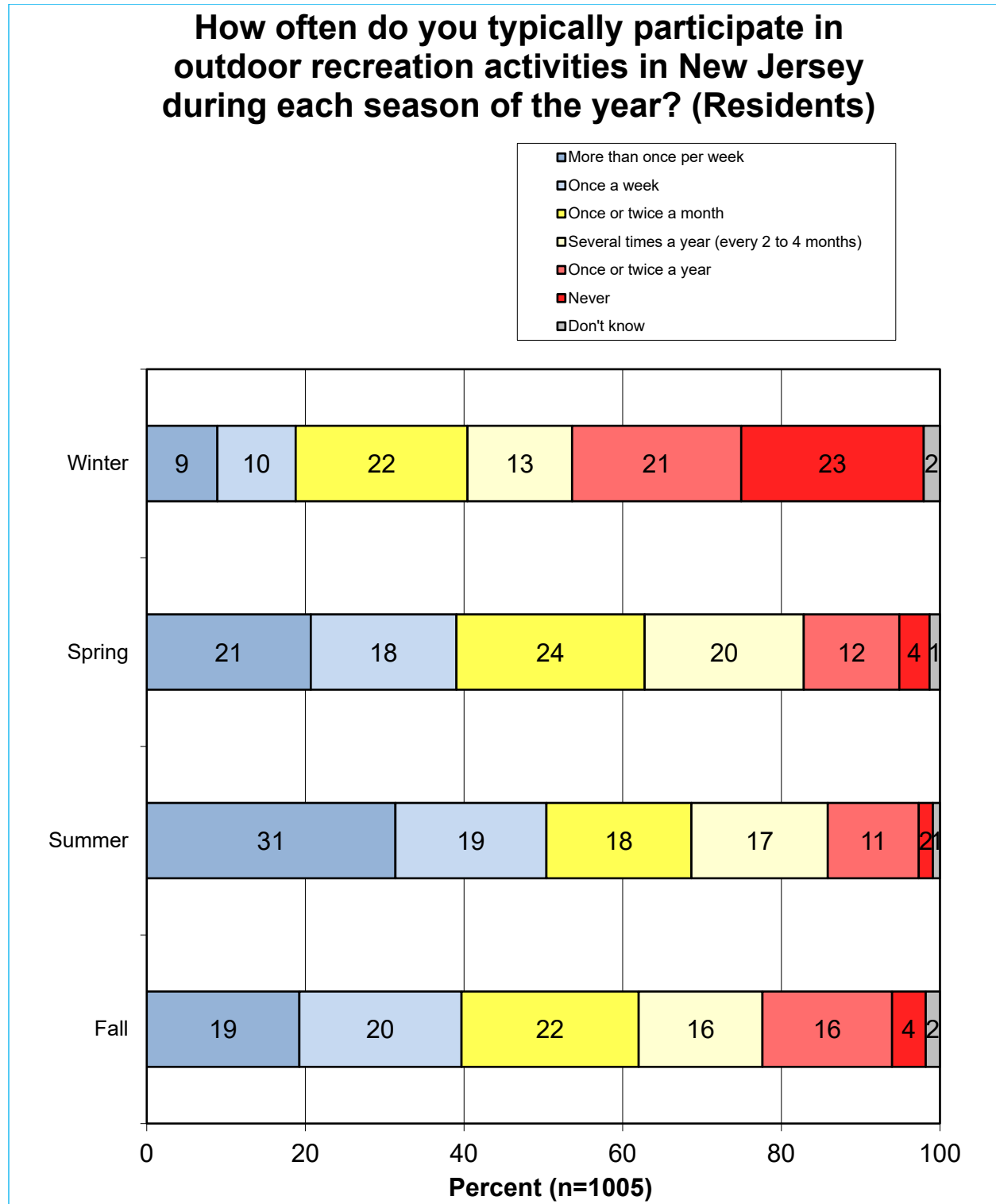


Which of the following have you visited at least once in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Residents)

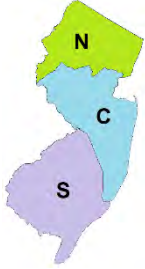


TIMING OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW JERSEY BY RESIDENTS

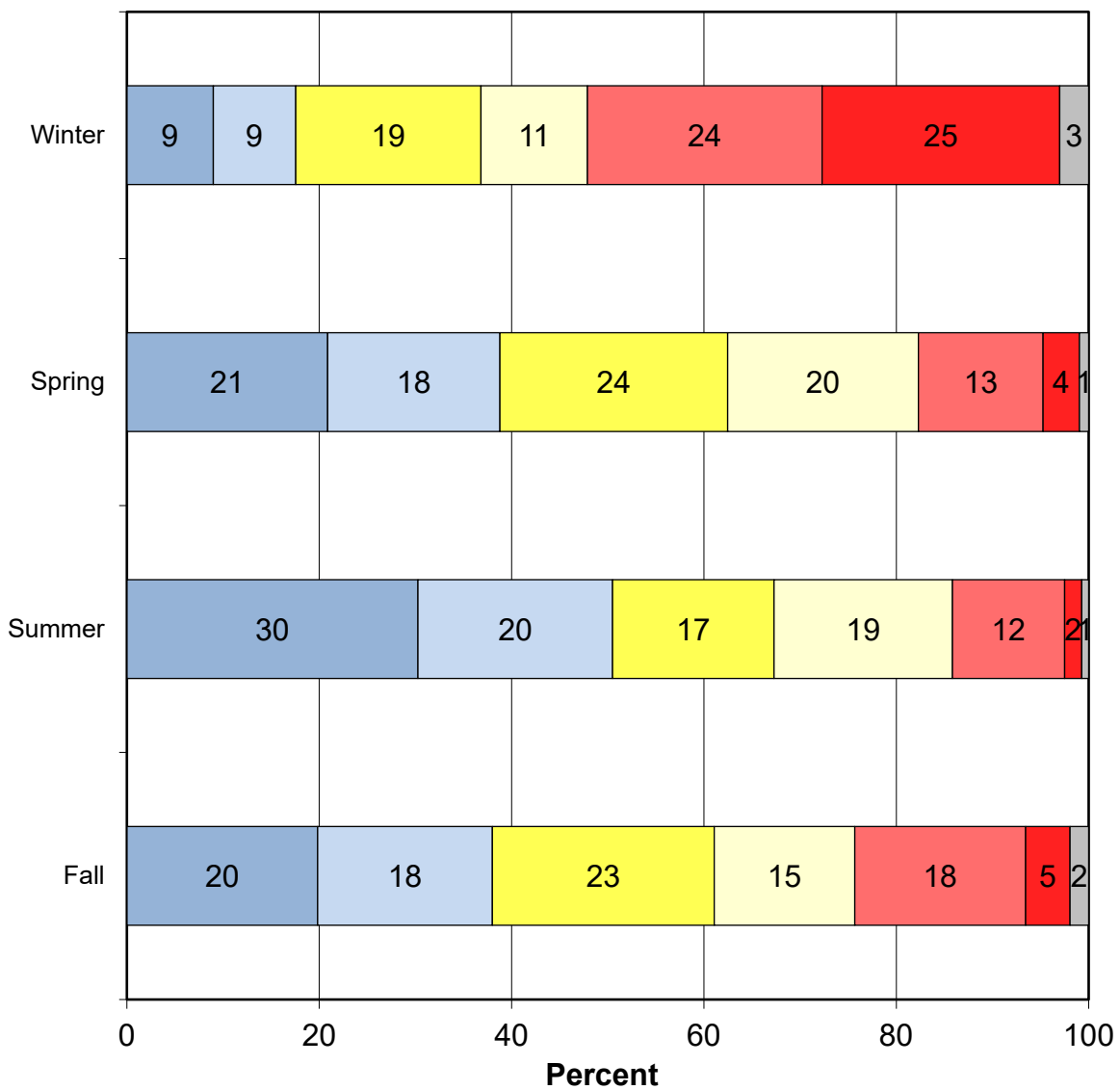
Summer is the most active season among residents. Spring and fall are at about equal levels in residents' activity levels. This holds true across the regions.



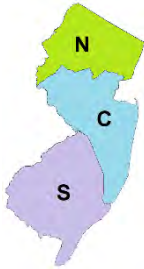
How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Northern Region) (Residents)



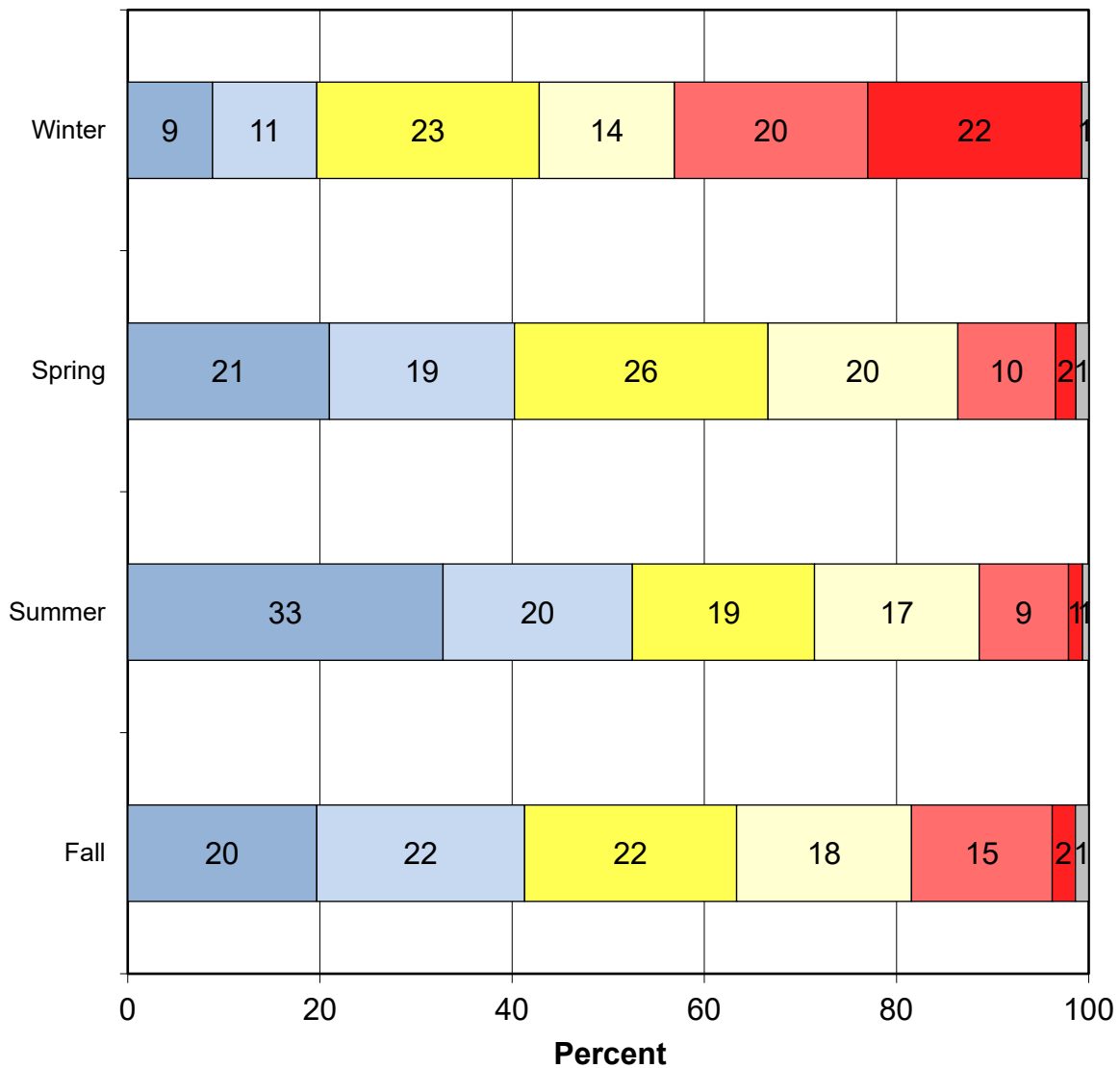
- More than once per week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)
- Once or twice a year
- Never
- Don't know



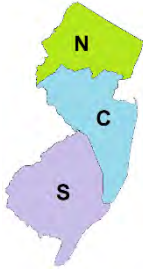
How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Central Region) (Residents)



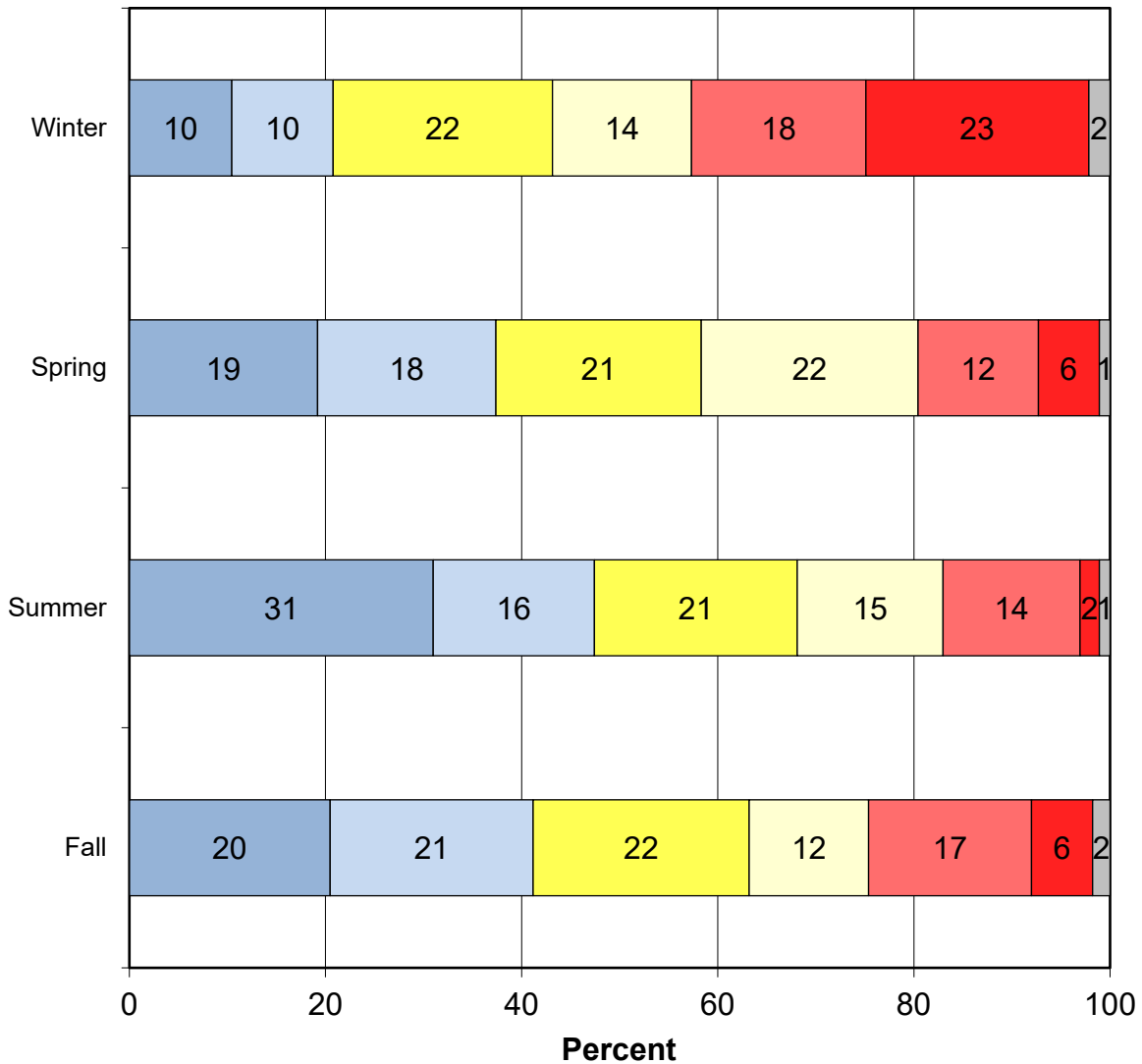
- More than once per week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)
- Once or twice a year
- Never
- Don't know



How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Southern Region) (Residents)



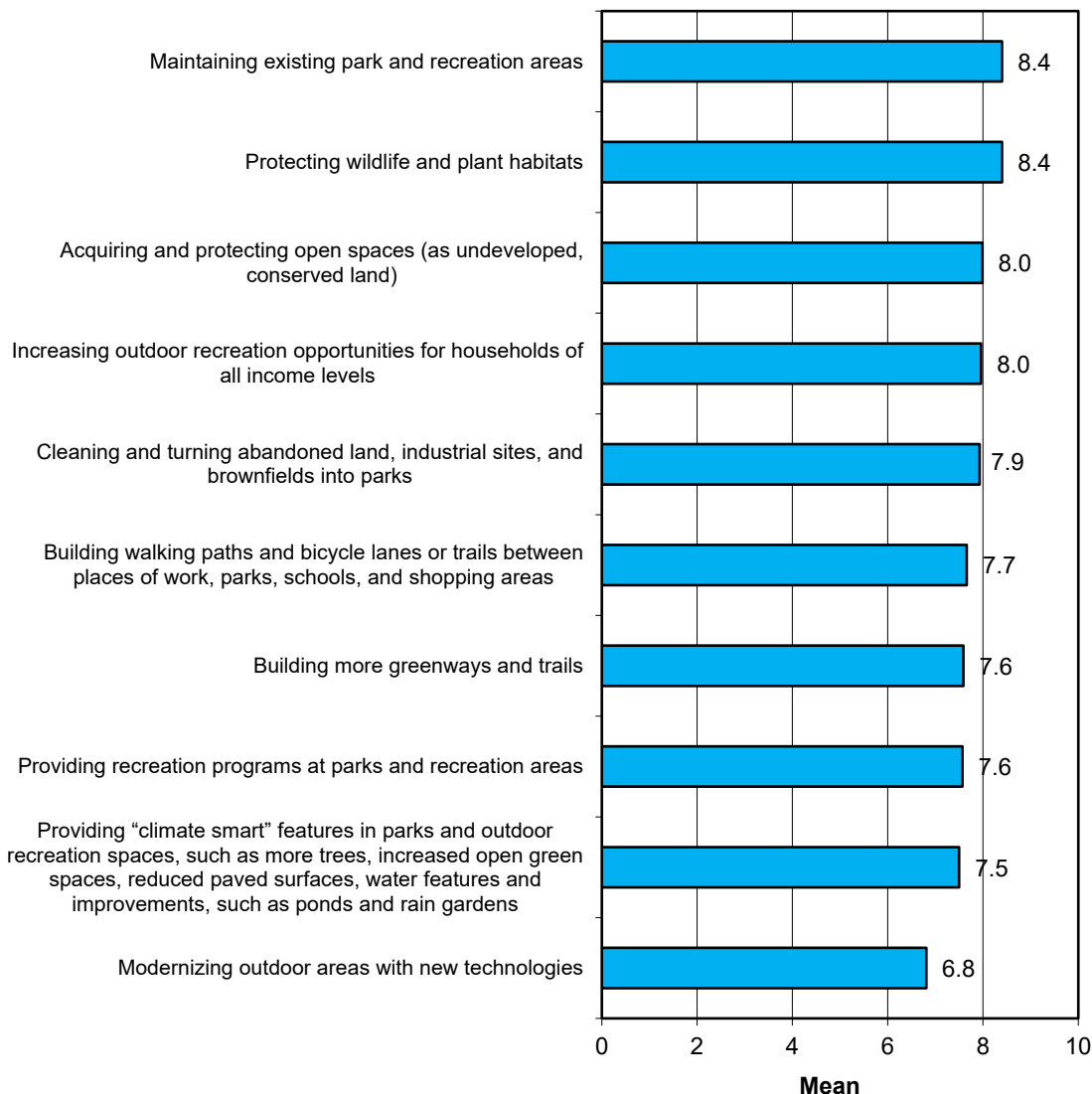
- More than once per week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)
- Once or twice a year
- Never
- Don't know



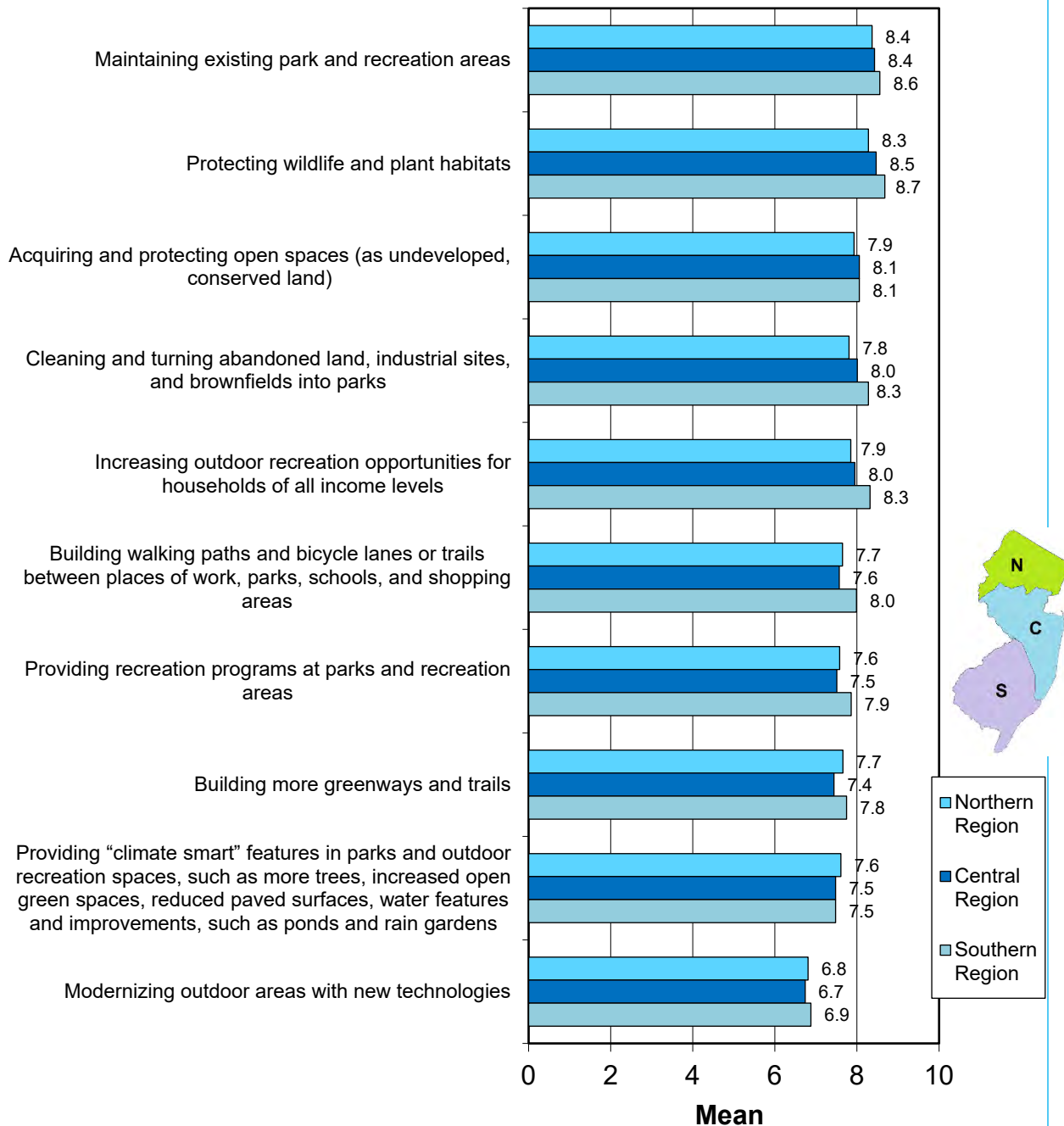
RESIDENTS' OUTDOOR RECREATION PRIORITIES IN NEW JERSEY

Residents' priorities for outdoor recreation were explored by asking them to rate the importance of various aspects of recreation. Two are at the top with mean ratings of 8.4: maintaining existing park and recreation areas and protecting wildlife and plant habitats. Nearly all were highly rated, as all but one item has a mean rating of 7.5 or higher (on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important). The regions do not differ markedly on this series of questions. Also included in this section are demographic analyses graphs for all of the questions in this series.

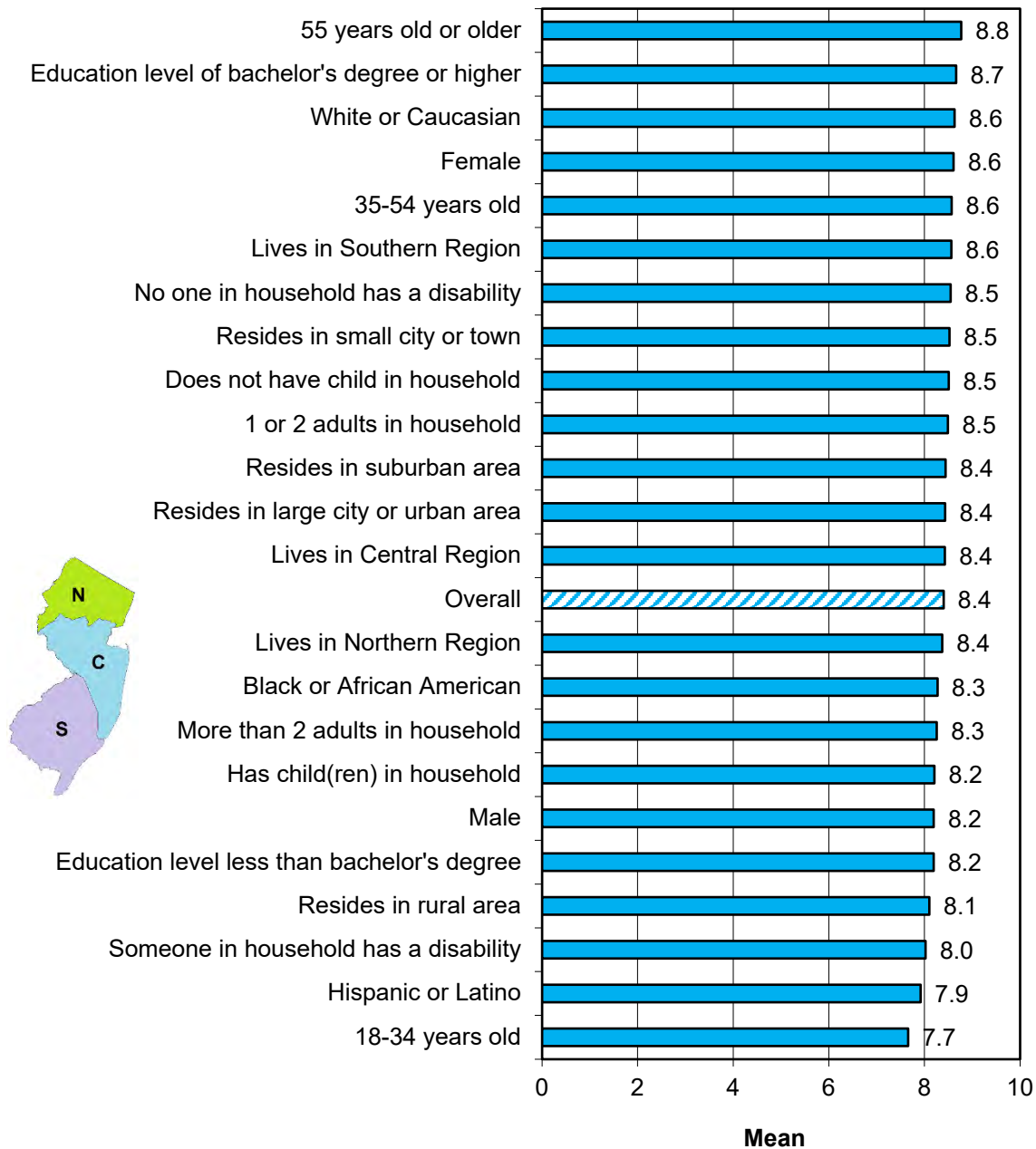
Outdoor recreation agencies and organizations in New Jersey spend their time and effort in many different areas. Please rate how important you think each of the following areas should be for outdoor recreation. (Residents)



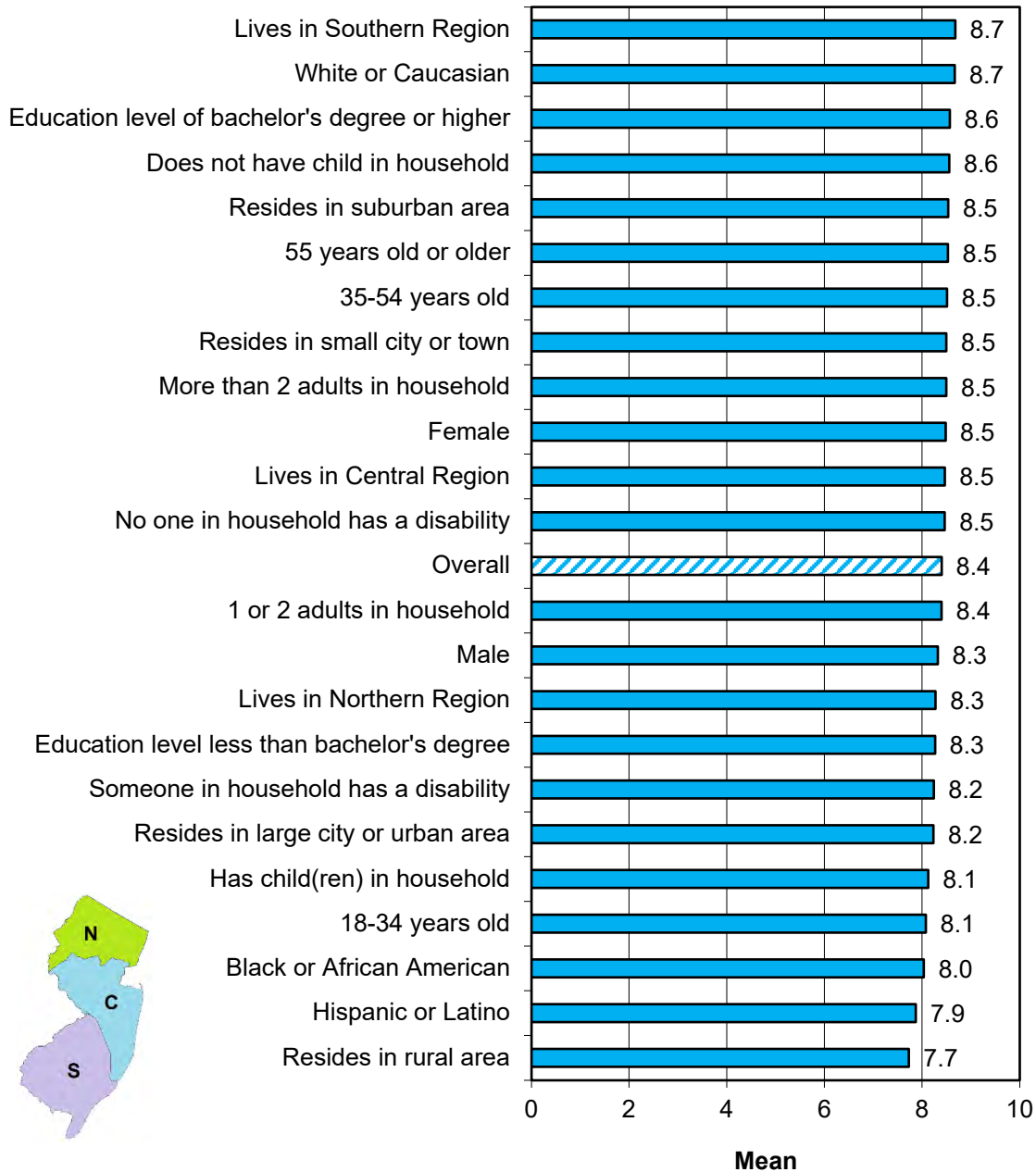
Outdoor recreation agencies and organizations in New Jersey spend their time and effort in many different areas. Please rate how important you think each of the following areas should be for outdoor recreation. (Residents)



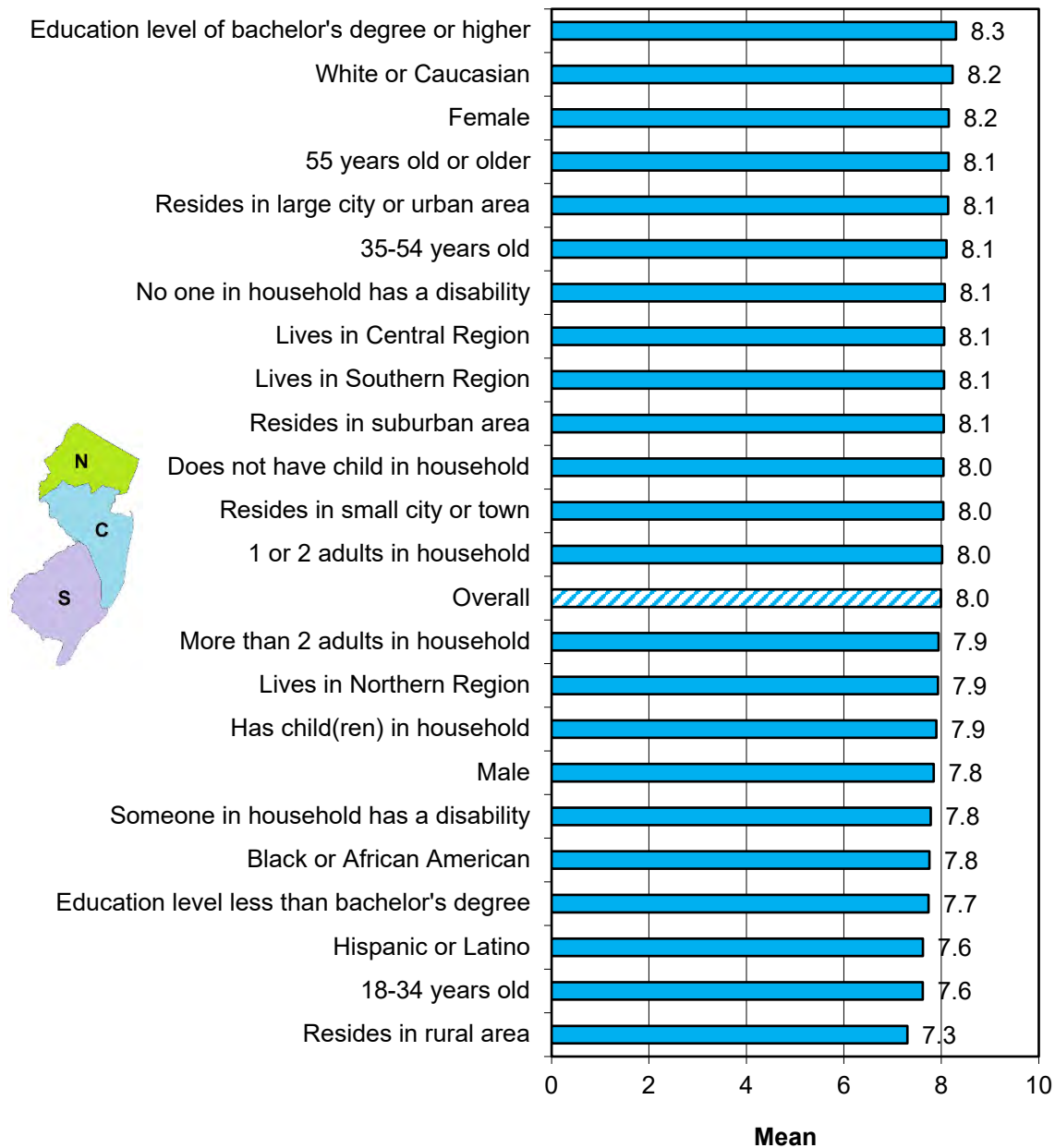
**Maintaining existing park and recreation areas.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor
recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where
0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)**



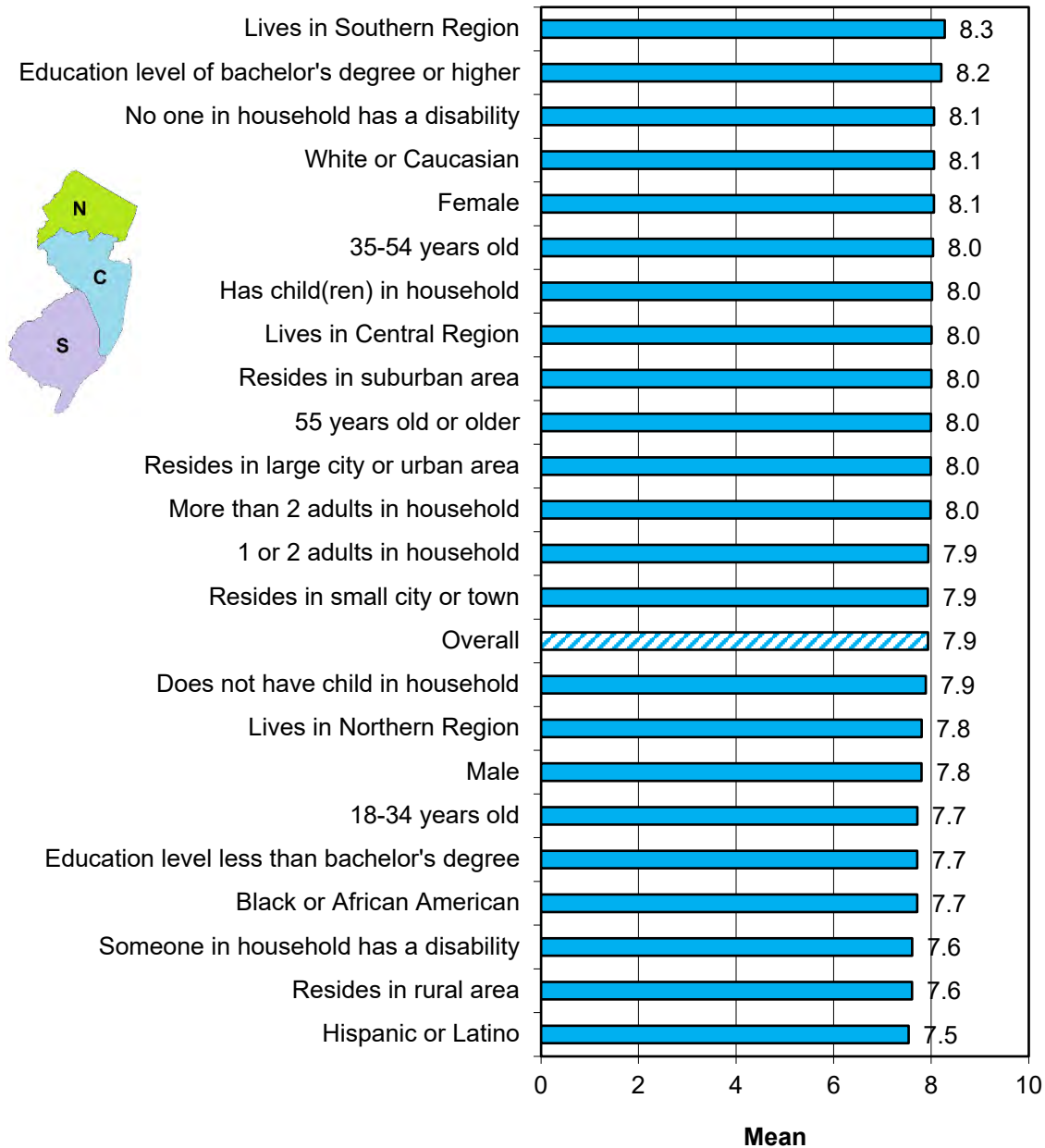
Protecting wildlife and plant habitats.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)



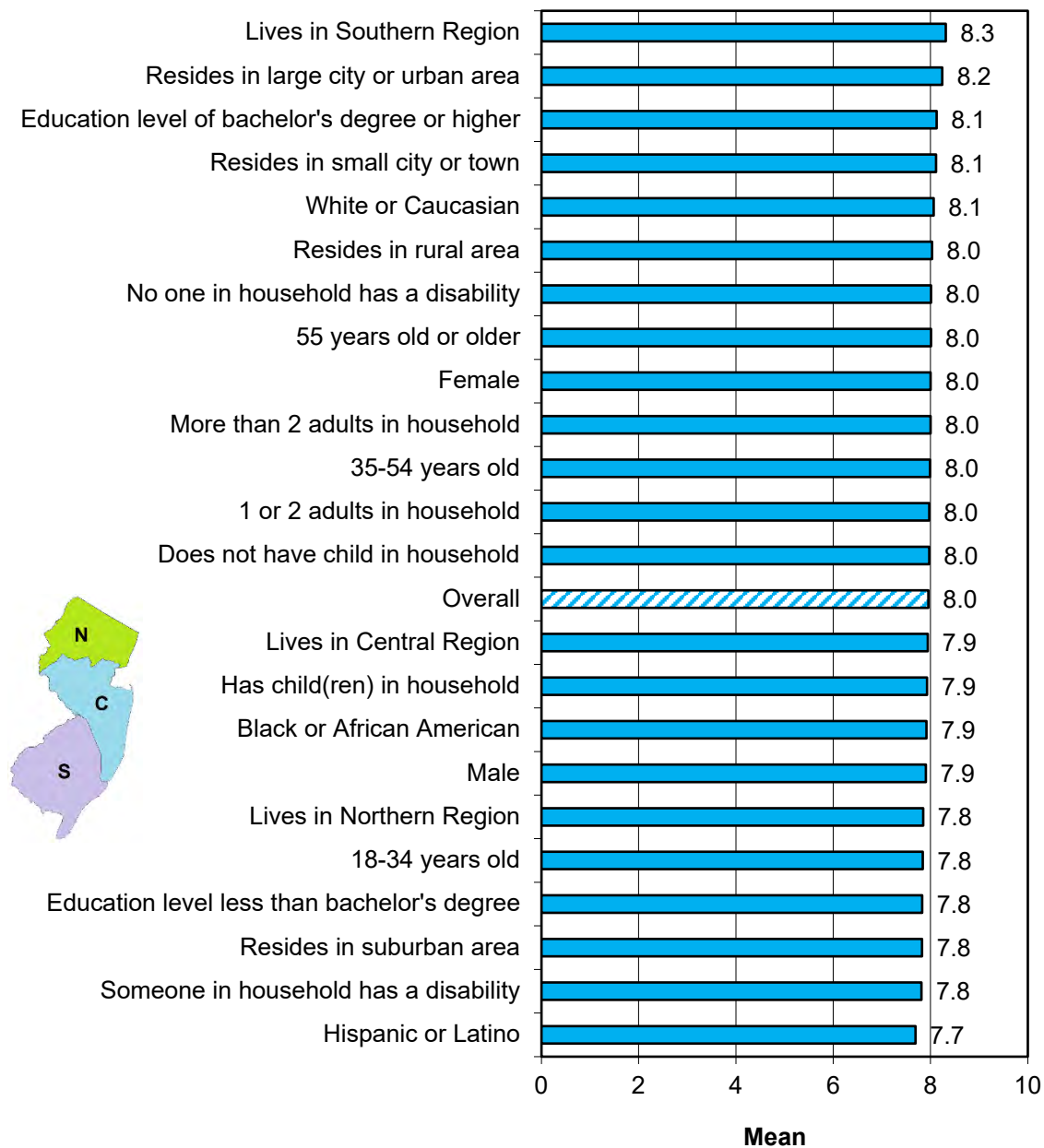
Acquiring and protecting open spaces.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor
recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where
0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)



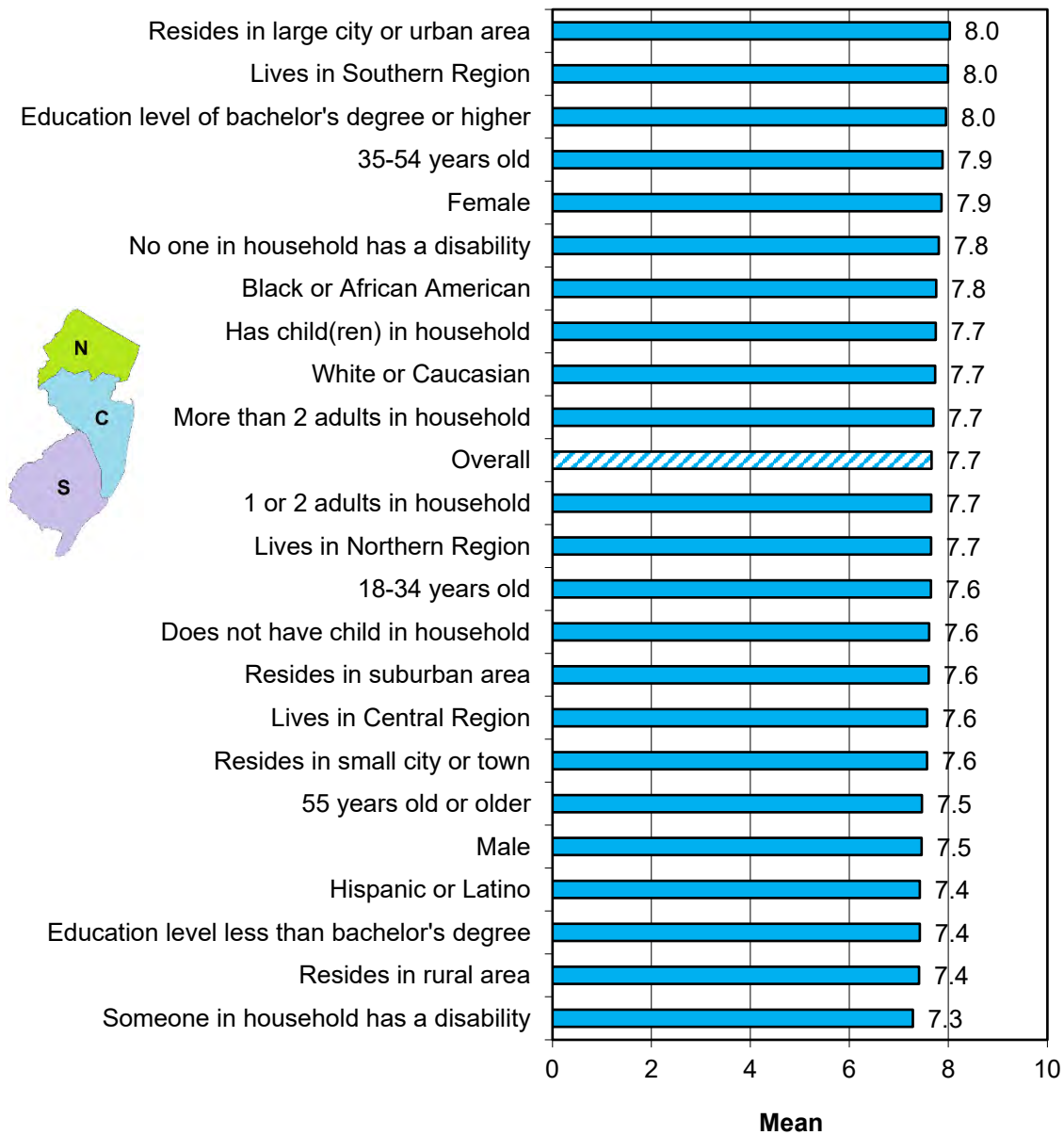
Cleaning and turning abandoned land, industrial sites, and brownfields into parks. (Please rate how important this should be for outdoor recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.) (Residents)



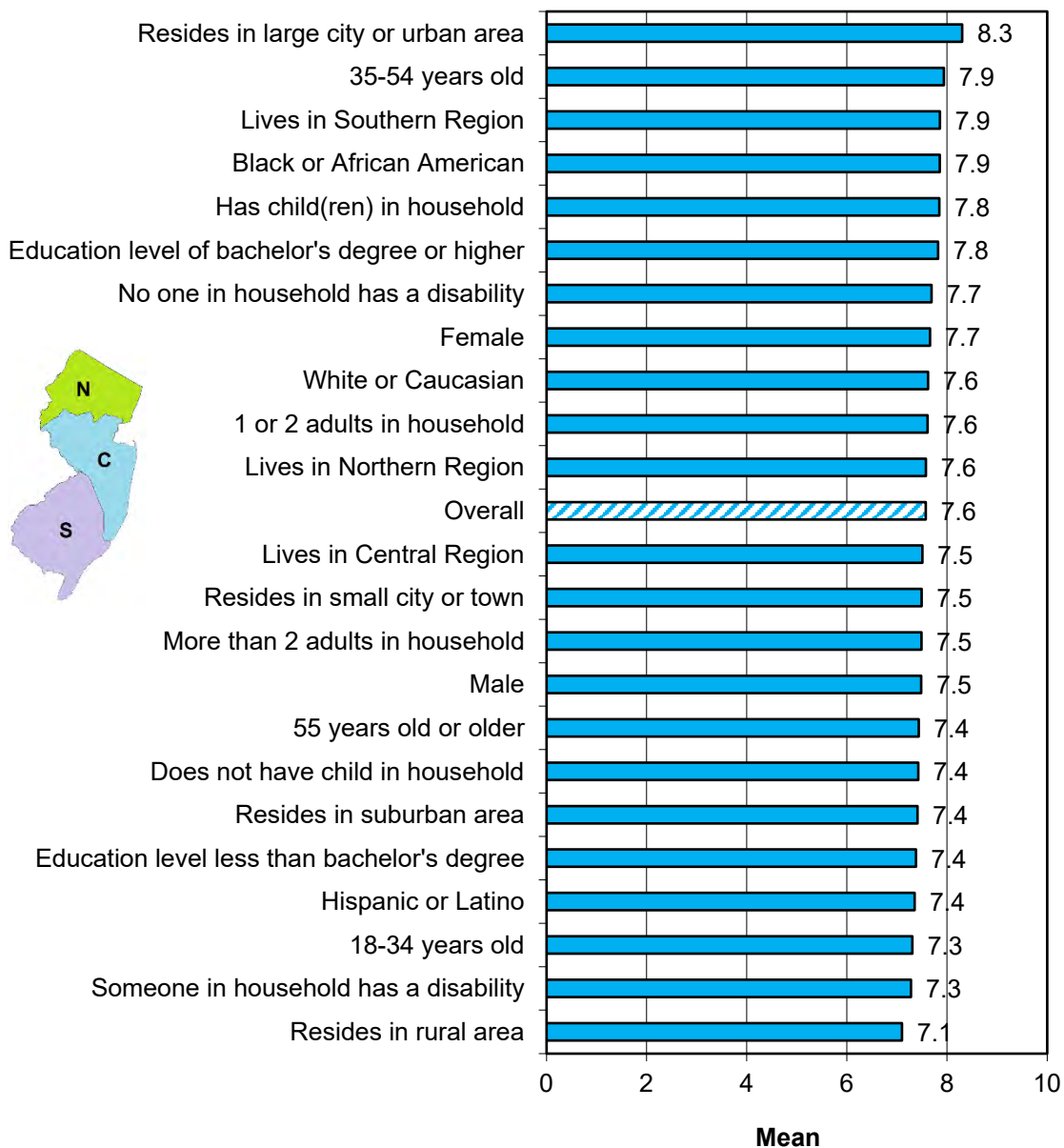
Increasing outdoor recreation opportunities for households of all income levels. (Please rate how important this should be for outdoor recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.) (Residents)



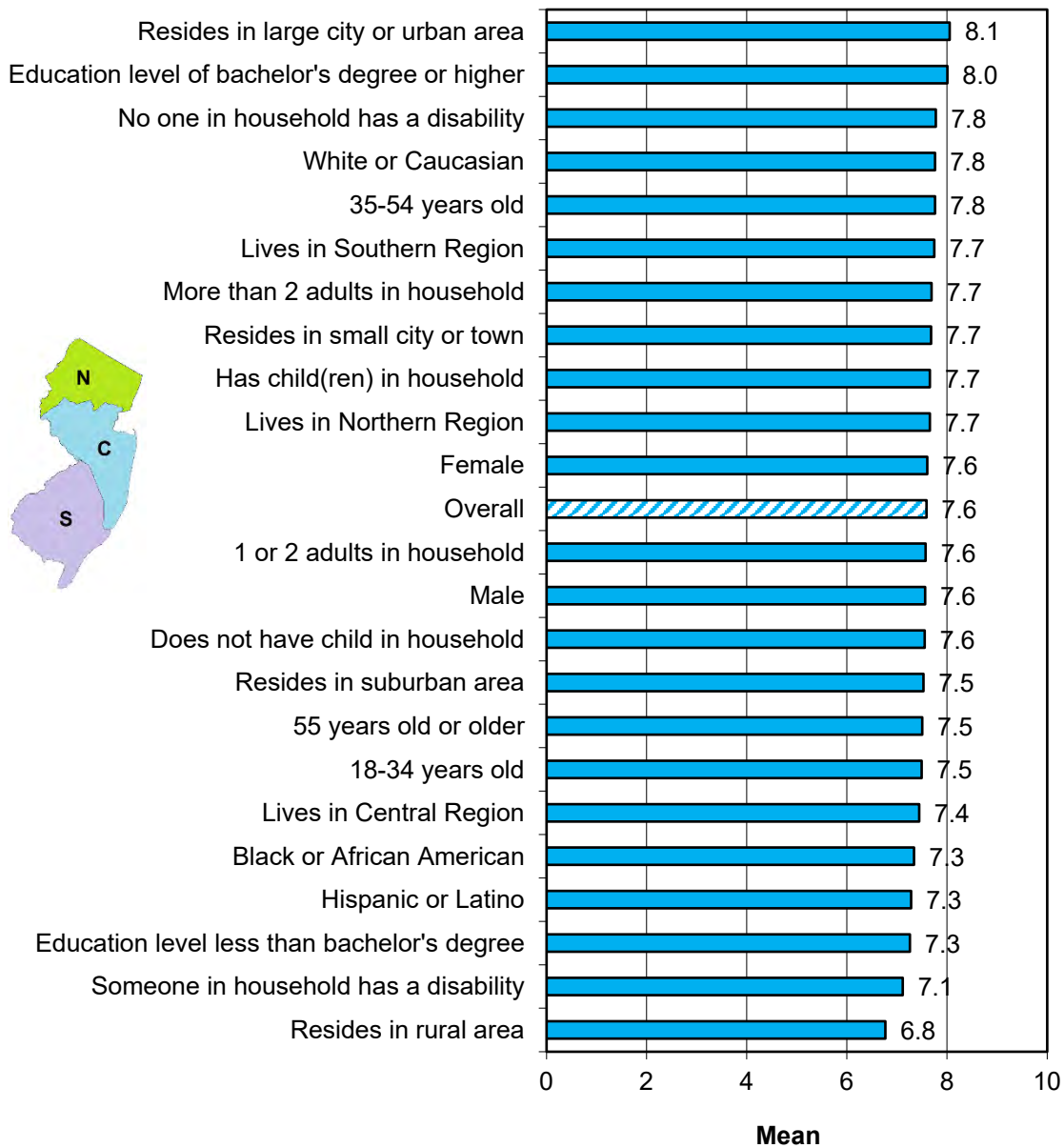
**Building walking paths and bicycle lanes or trails between places of work, parks, schools, and shopping areas.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)**



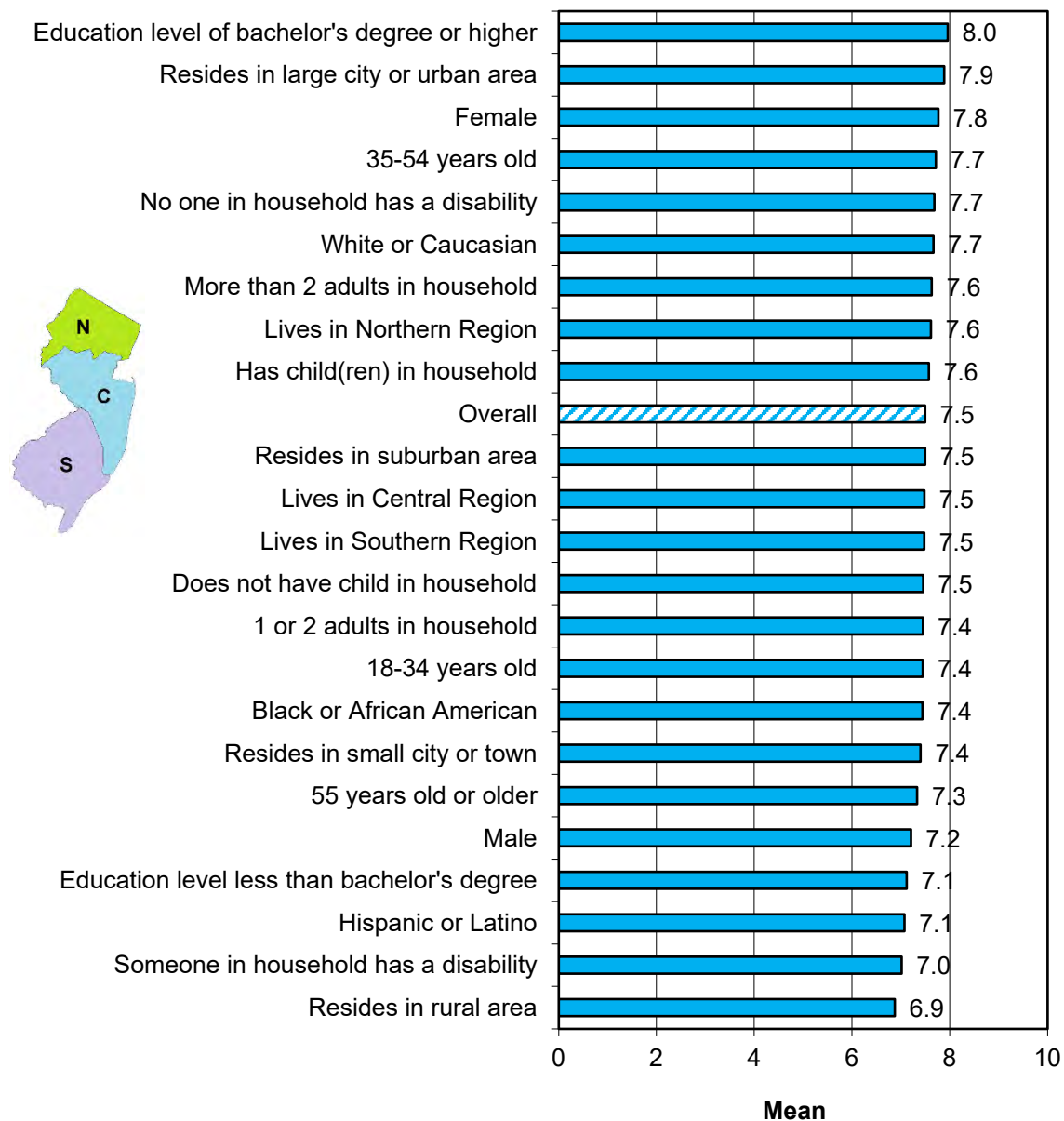
**Providing recreation programs at parks and recreation areas.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor
recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where
0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)**



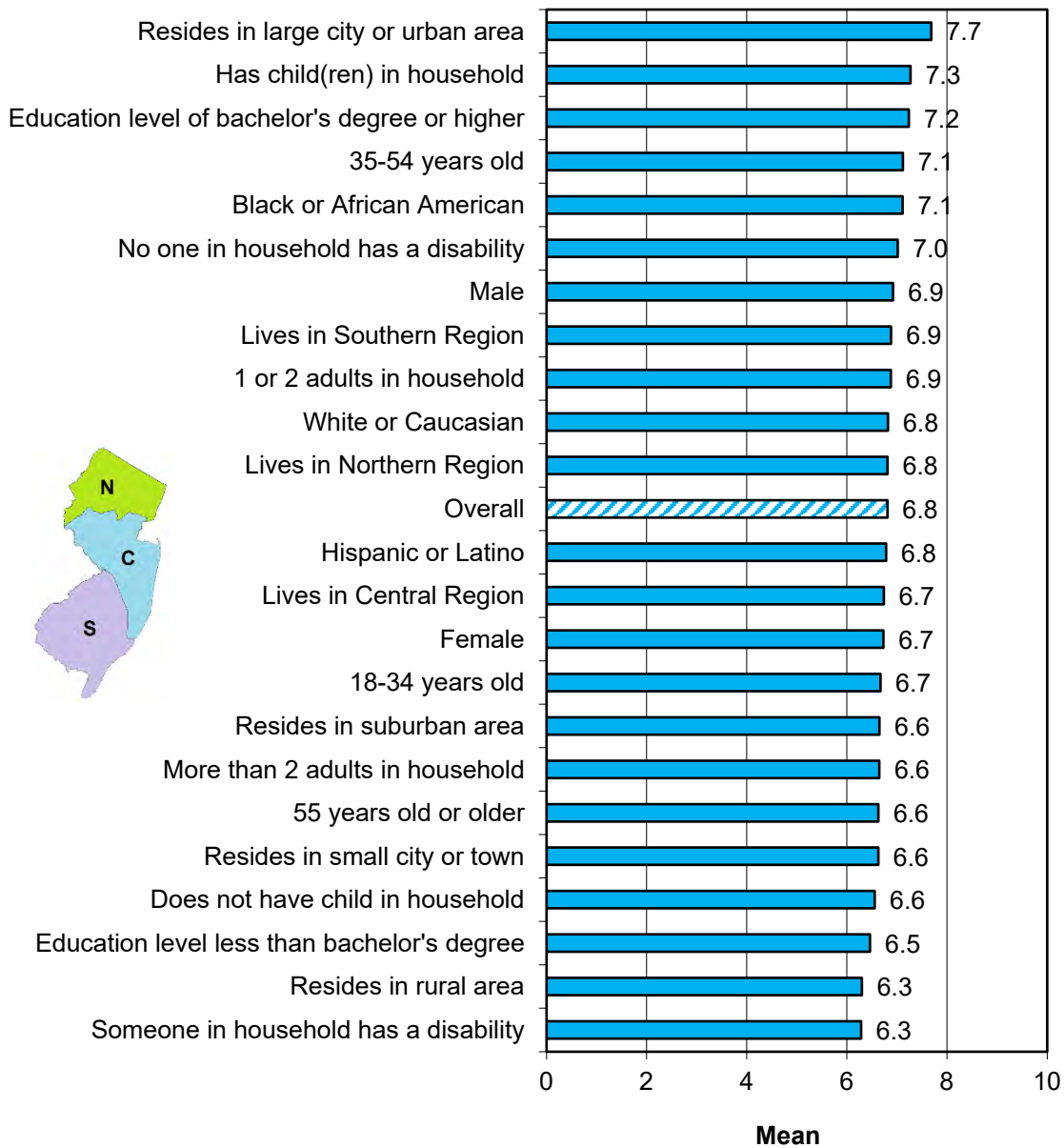
Building more greenways and trails.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)



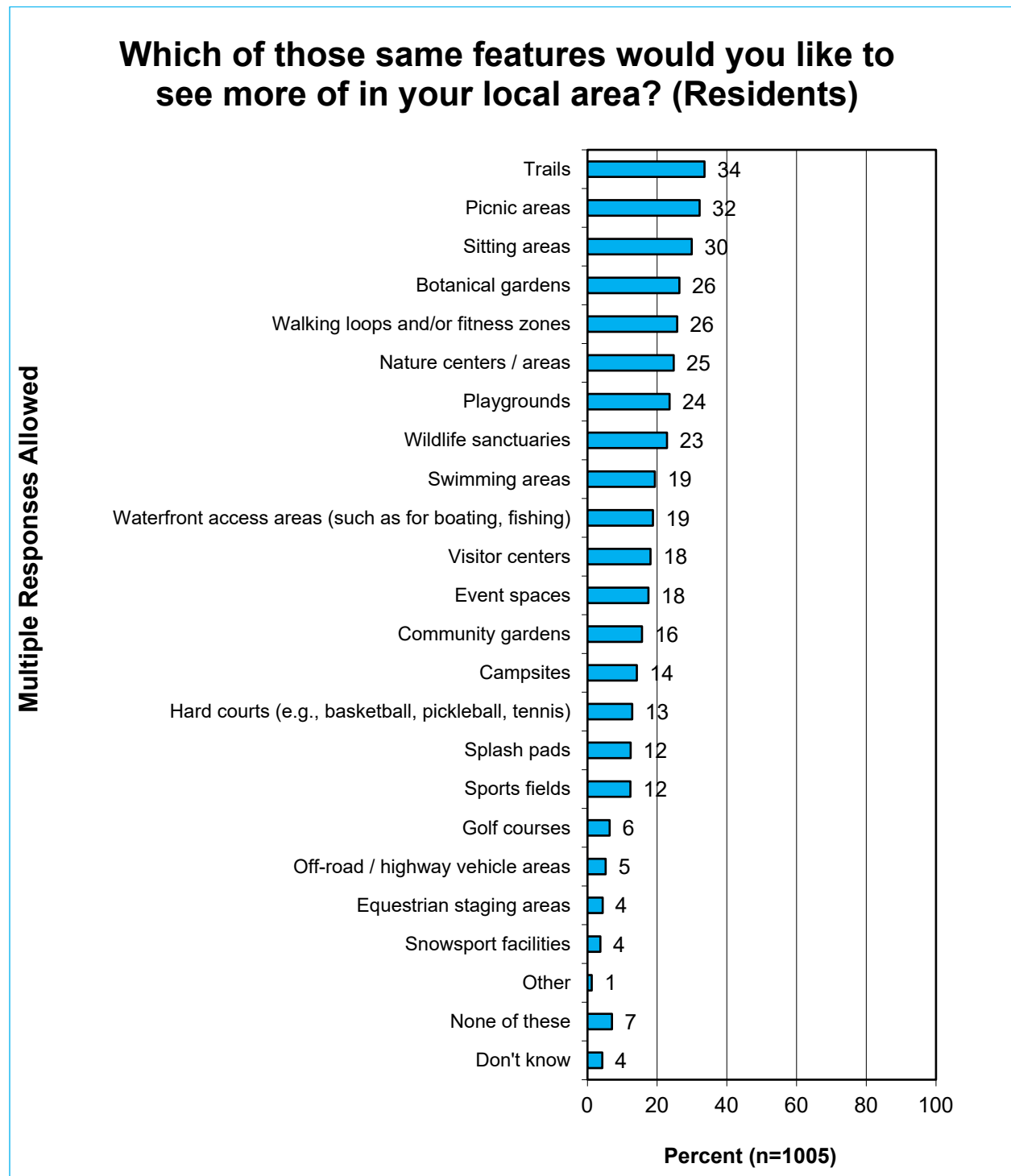
Providing “climate smart” features in parks and outdoor recreation spaces. (Please rate how important this should be for outdoor recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.) (Residents)



**Modernizing outdoor areas with new technologies.
(Please rate how important this should be for outdoor
recreation efforts in New Jersey, on a scale of 0 to 10, where
0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important.)
(Residents)**

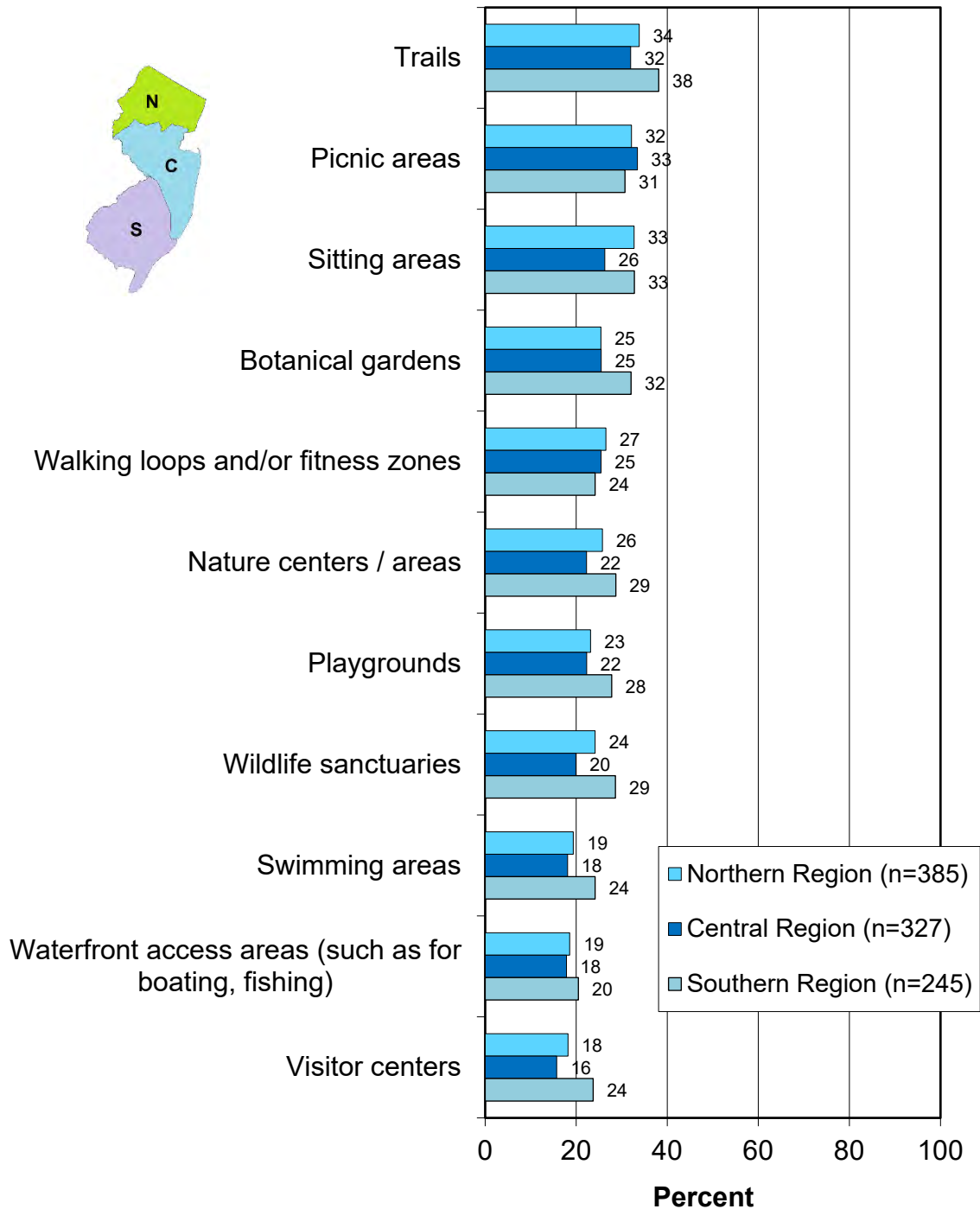


Previously, the results showed that walking/hiking and gathering with friends and family are the two most popular outdoor activities by far. This fits well with the top responses regarding features New Jersey residents want to have more of in the state: trails, picnic areas, and sitting areas. Southern Region residents have a higher percentage wanting almost every feature, with the notable exception of sports fields (wanted by Central Region residents more than the other regions' residents).

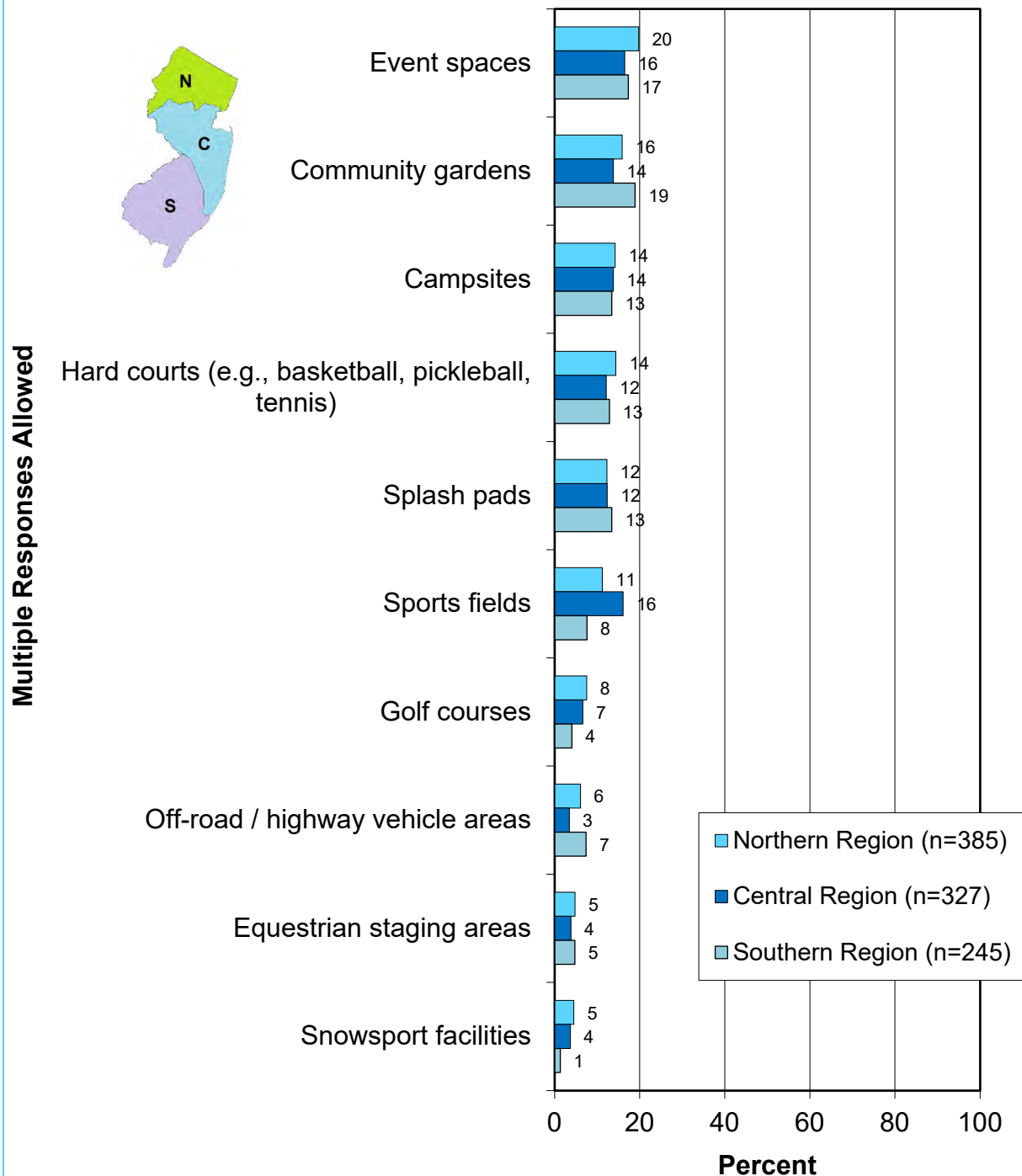


Which of those same features would you like to see more of in your local area? (Part 1) (Residents)

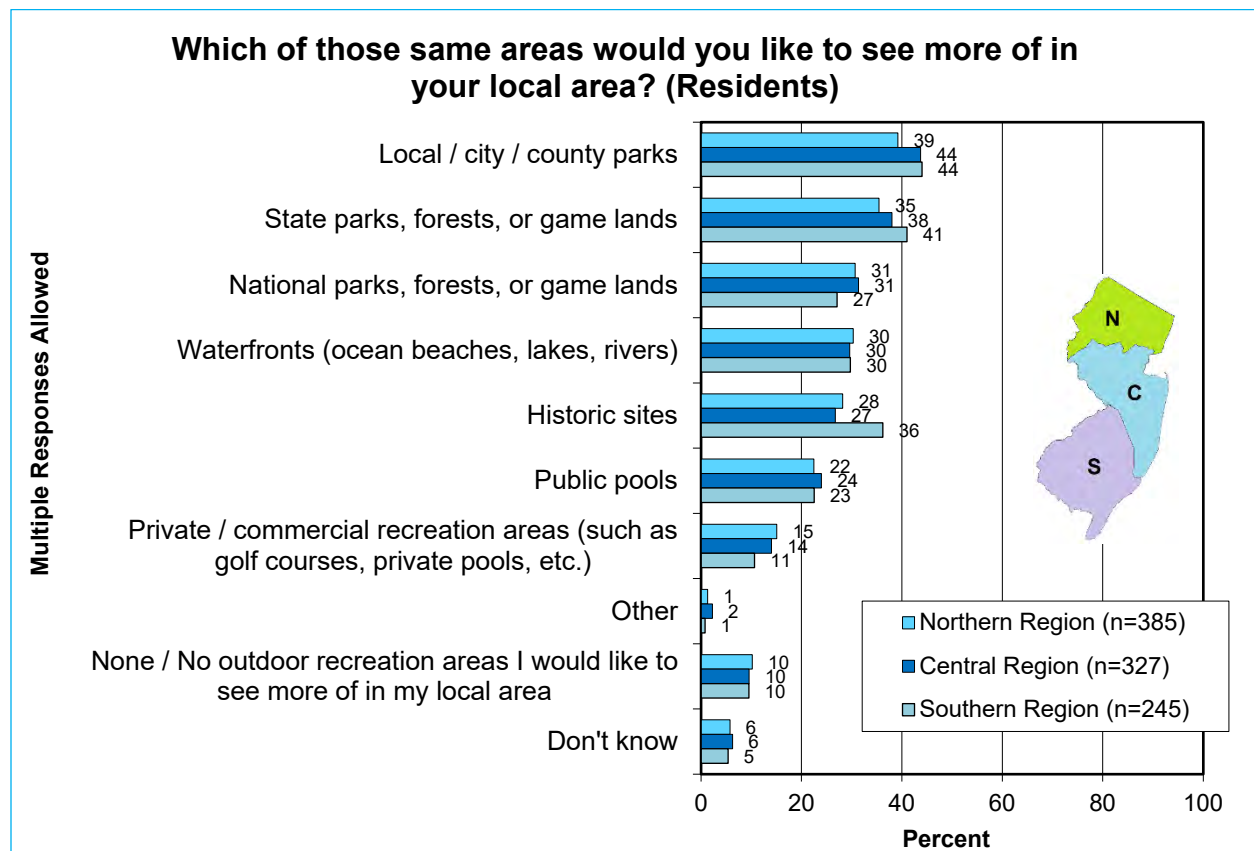
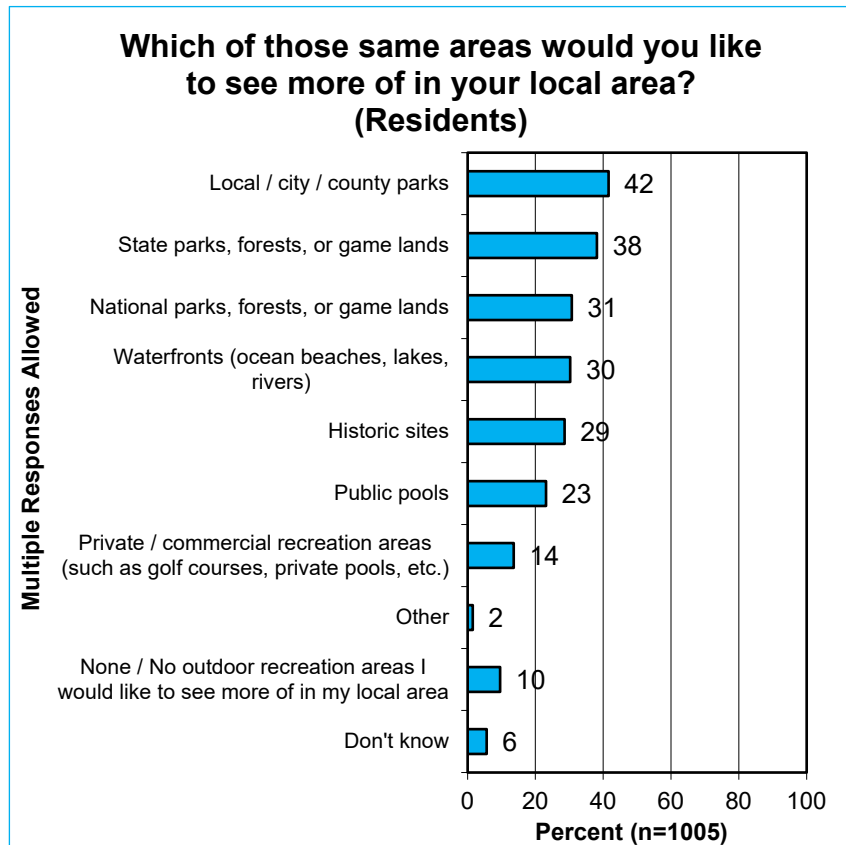
Multiple Responses Allowed



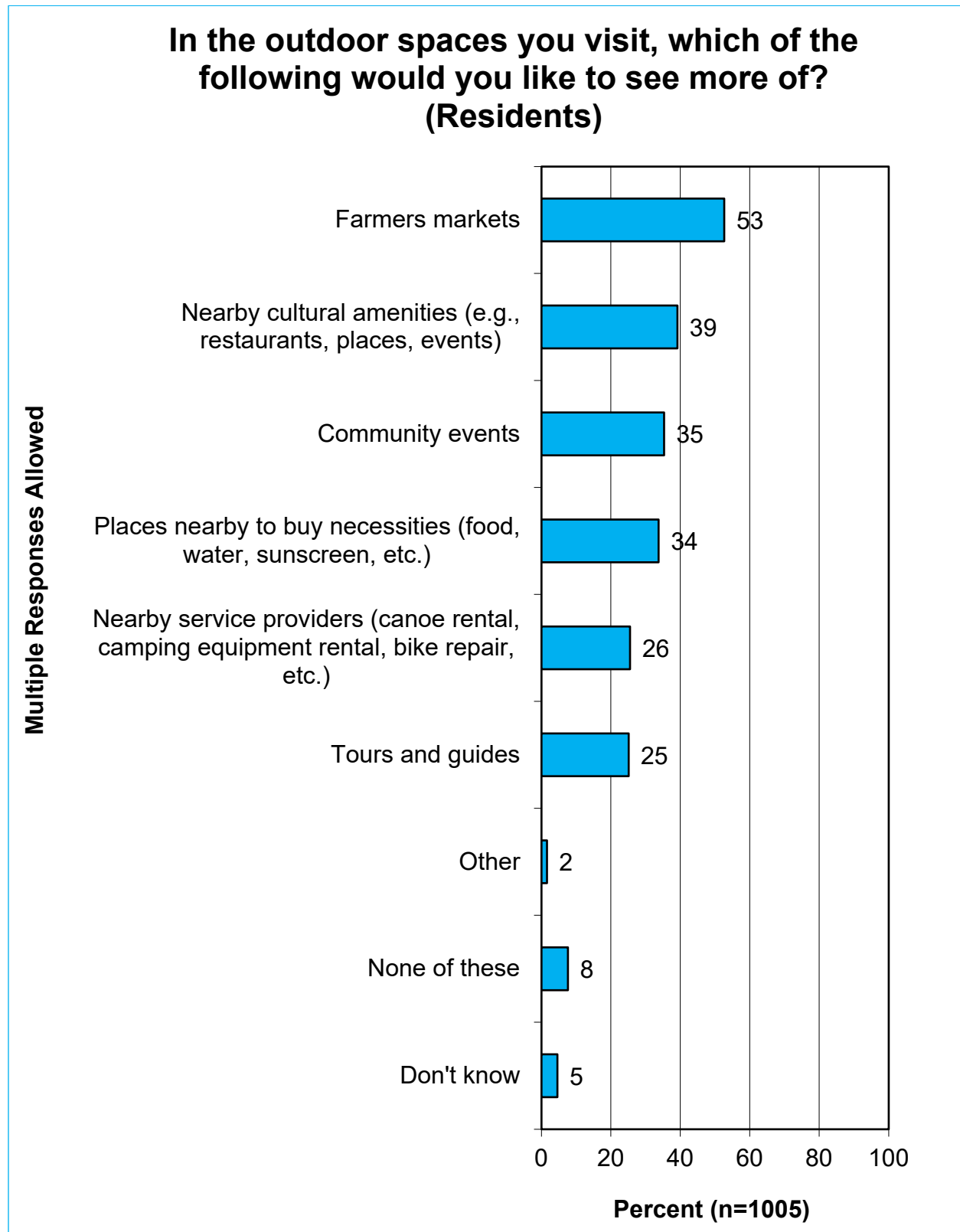
Which of those same features would you like to see more of in your local area? (Part 2) (Residents)



Parks, both local and state, top the list of recreation areas residents want to see more of in New Jersey, along with state forests and game lands. In a second tier are national areas (parks, forests, game lands), waterfronts, and historic sites. Southern Region residents are particularly interested in historic sites.

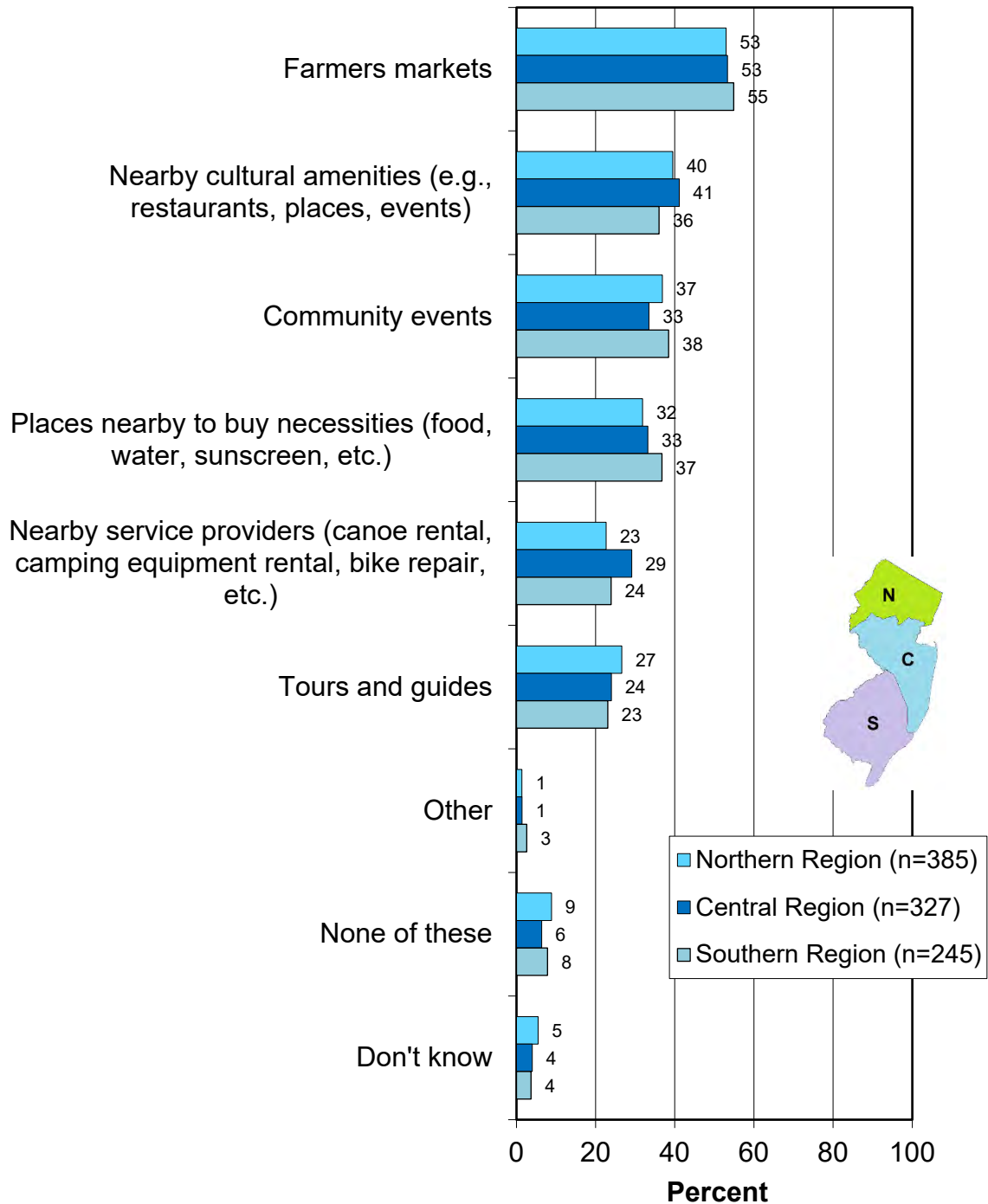


Of the six amenities presented to residents, farmers markets top the list of their most desired: more than half say that they would like to see more of them at the outdoor spaces they visit. The regional results do not show great differences.

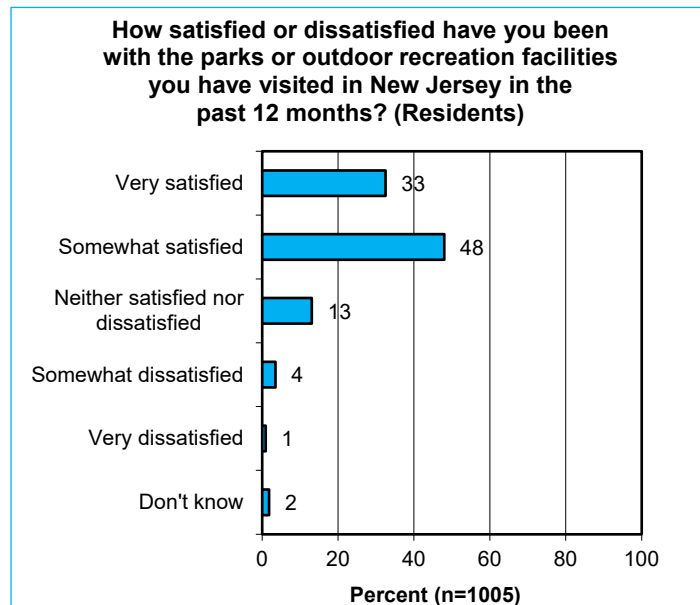


**In the outdoor spaces you visit, which of the following would you like to see more of?
(Residents)**

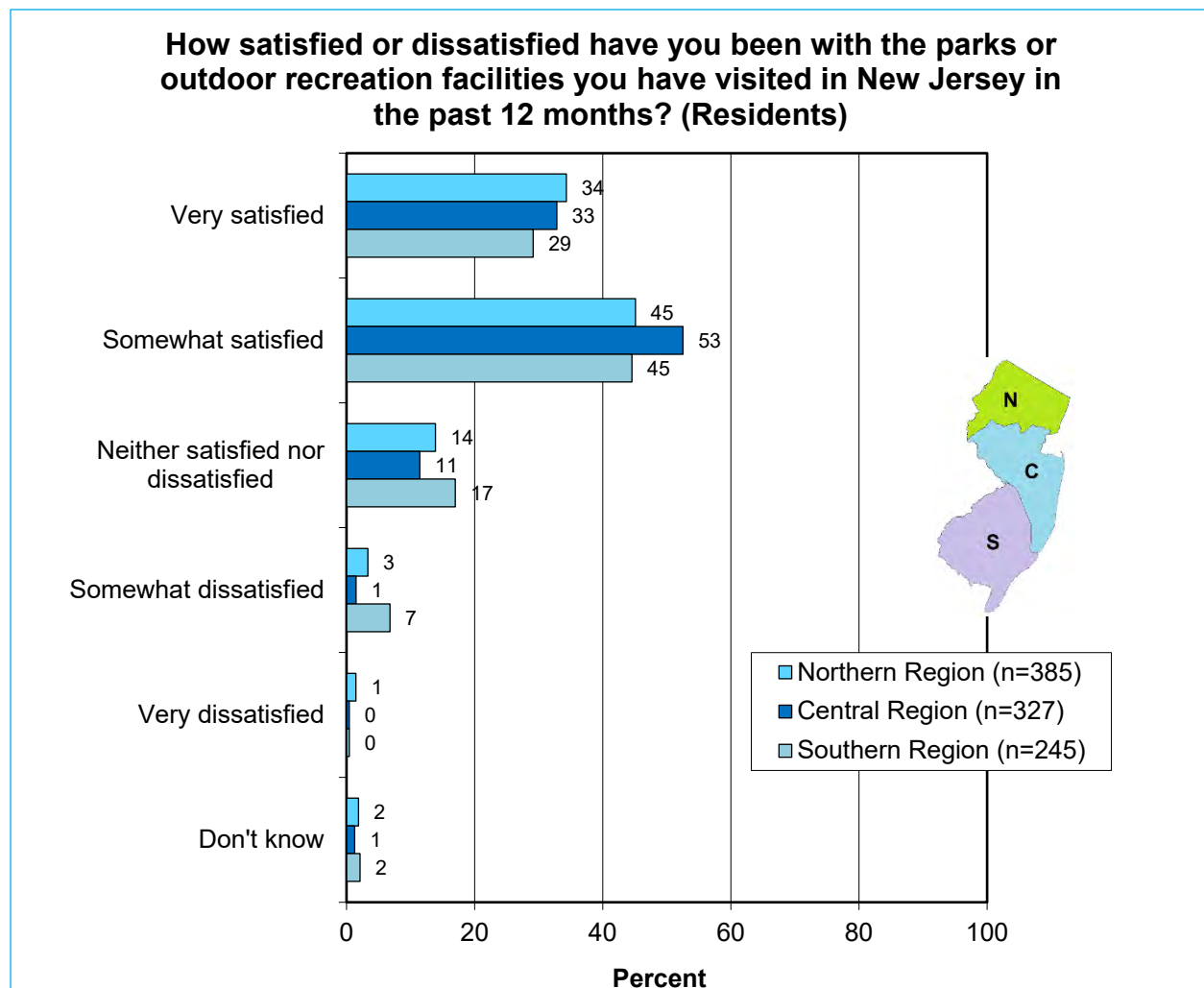
Multiple Responses Allowed



RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW JERSEY

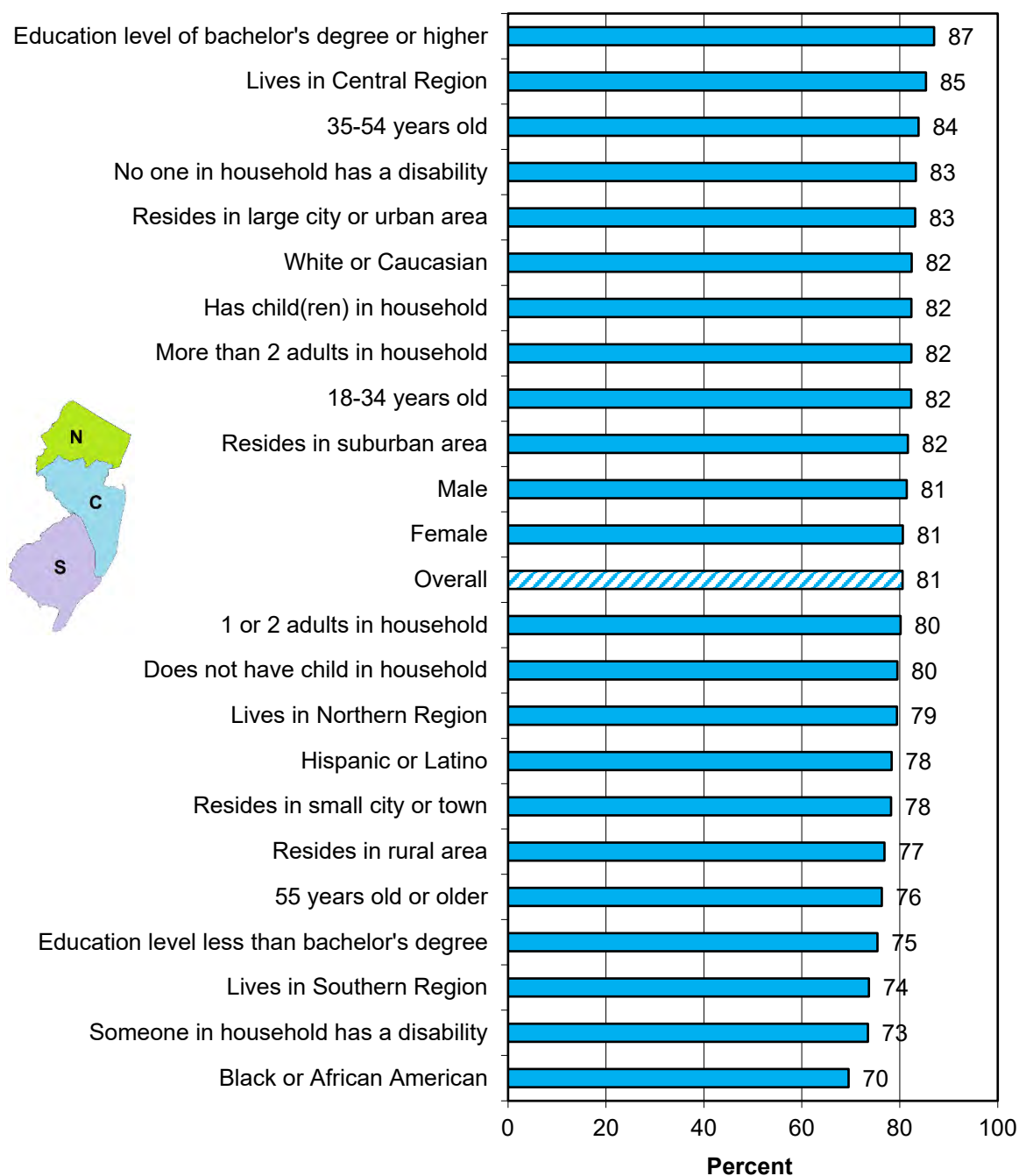


Satisfaction levels are high: 81% of New Jersey residents are satisfied with the parks and outdoor recreation facilities that they visited in the state in the last year. Only 4% (summed on unrounded numbers) are dissatisfied. Central Region residents are more satisfied than are residents of the other regions.

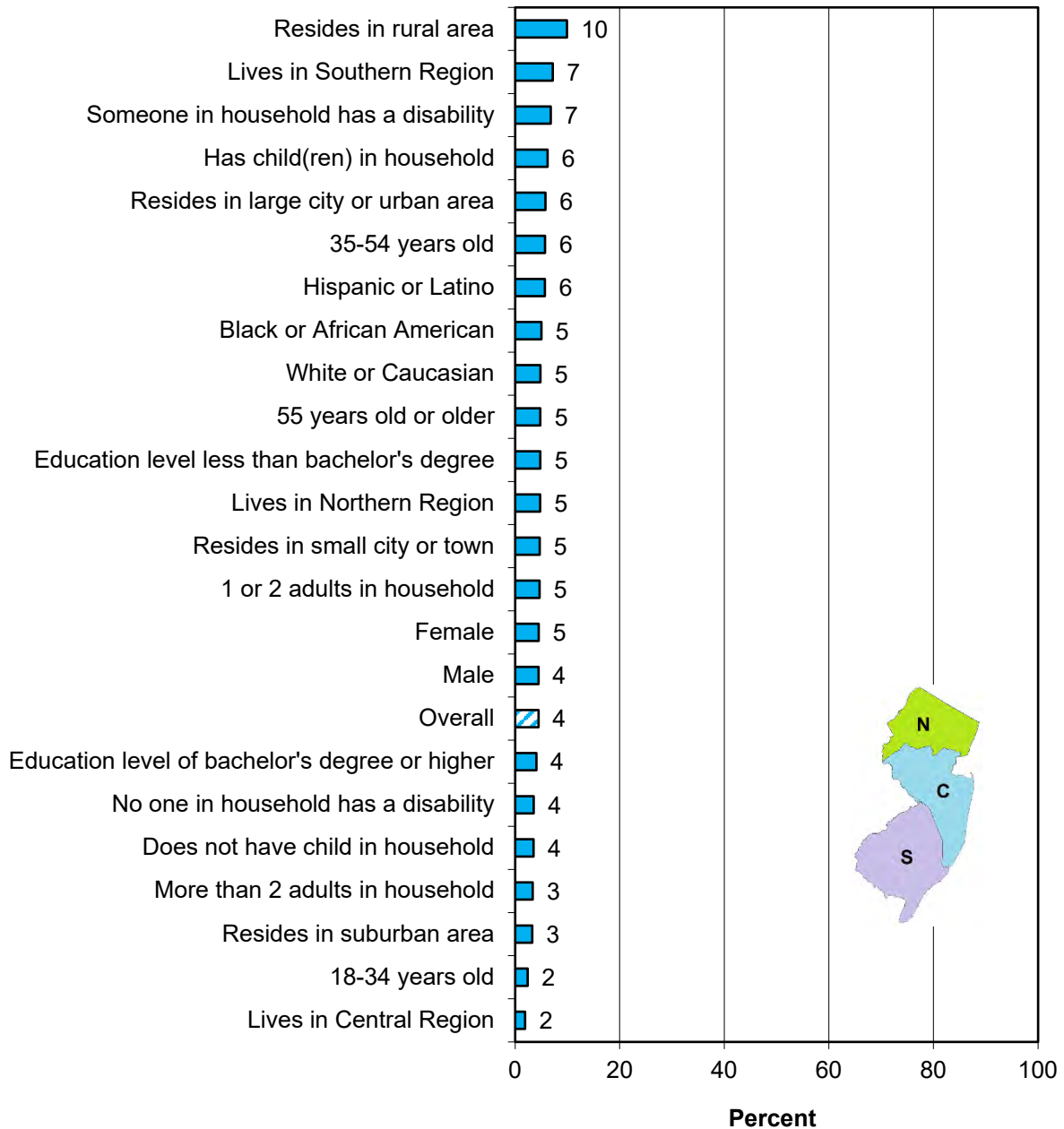


Demographic analyses graphs are included for this question.

Percent of each of the following groups who are very or somewhat satisfied with the parks or outdoor recreation facilities they have visited in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)

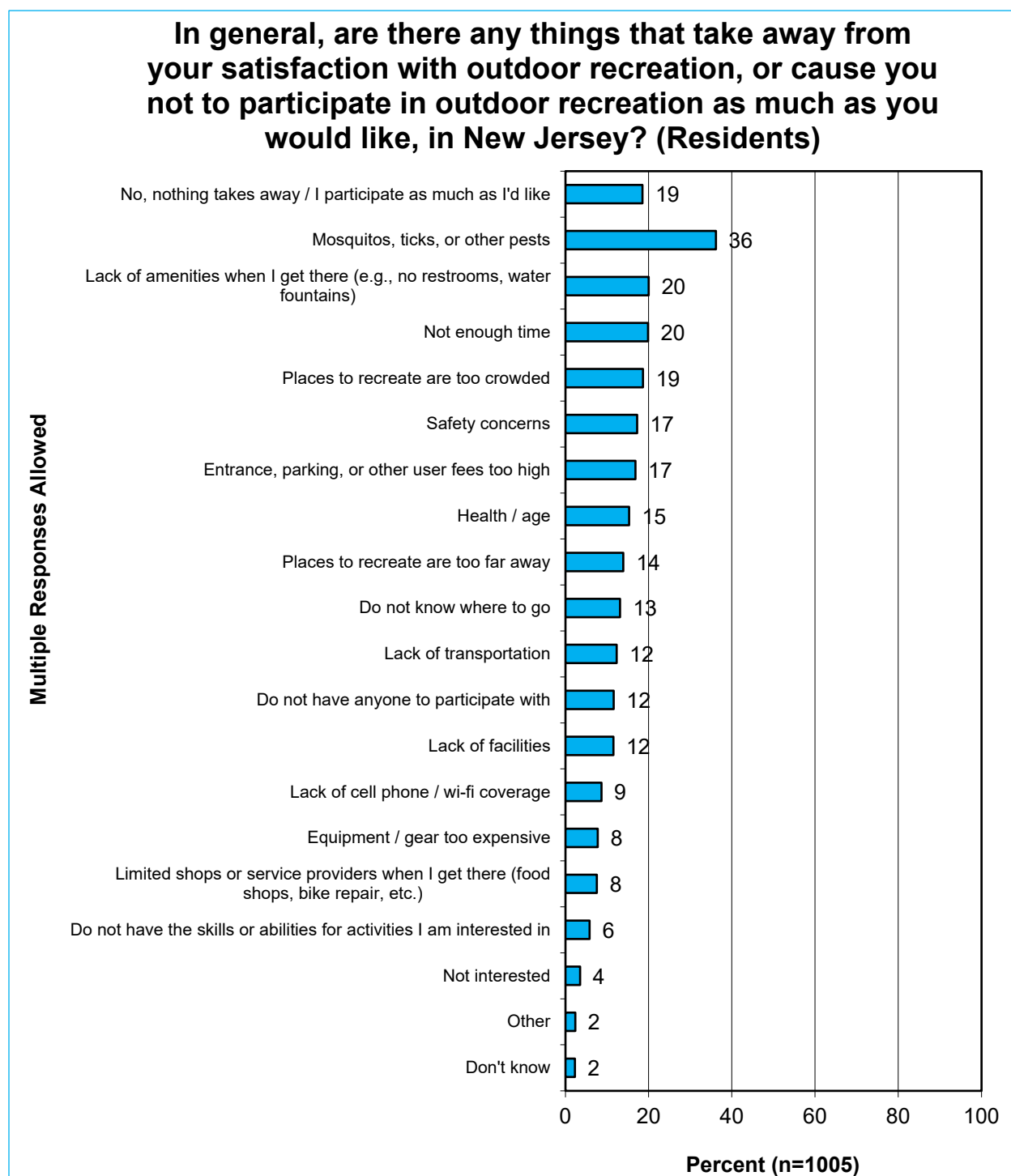


Percent of each of the following groups who are very or somewhat dissatisfied with the parks or outdoor recreation facilities they have visited in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)

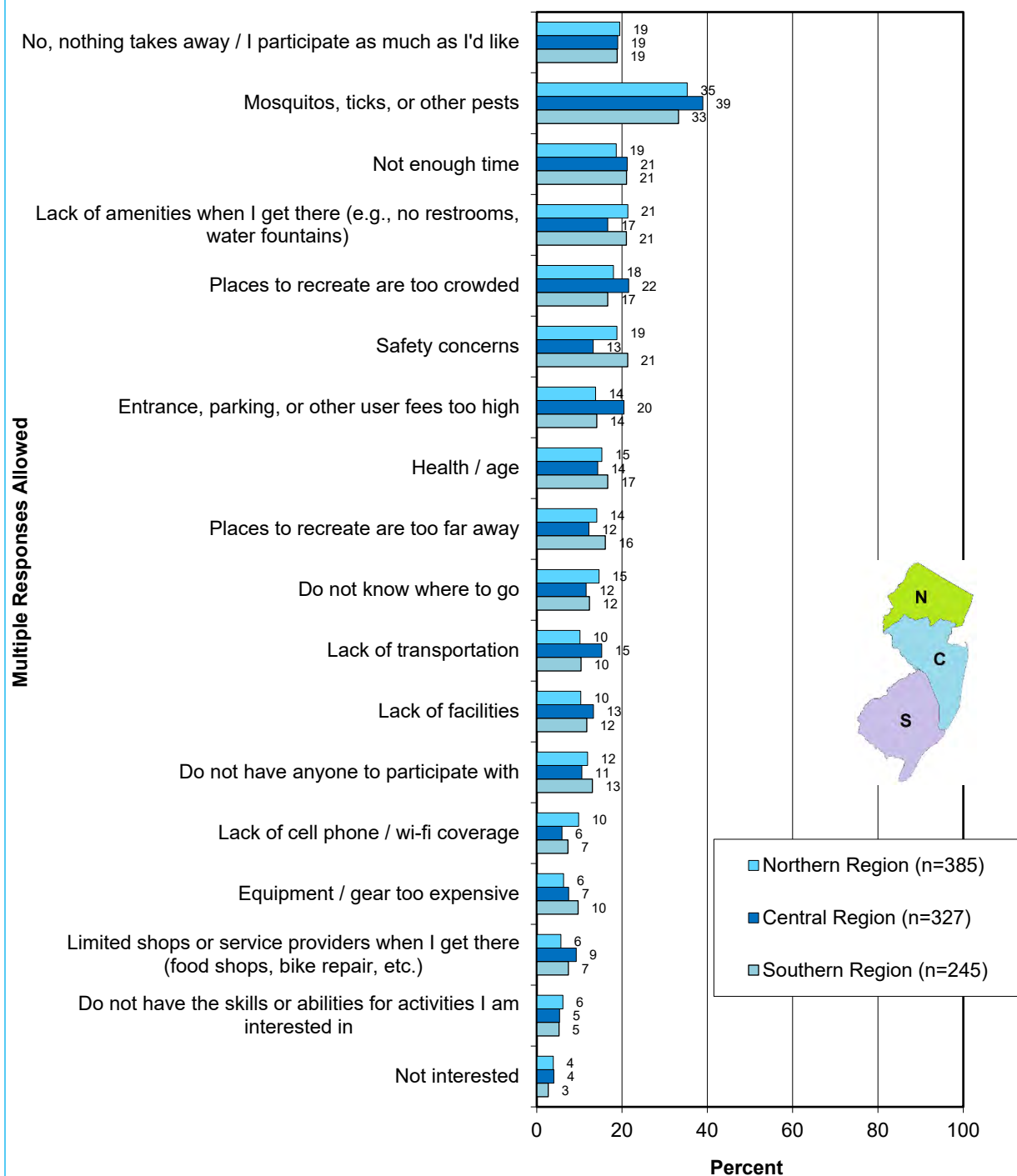


CONSTRAINTS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION AMONG RESIDENTS

Mosquitos/ticks and the like make up the top constraint to participation or enjoyment of participating in outdoor recreation in New Jersey. Along with this top item, lack of amenities, lack of time to participate in outdoor recreation, and crowding make up the top constraints. Regional results are shown following the statewide graph below.

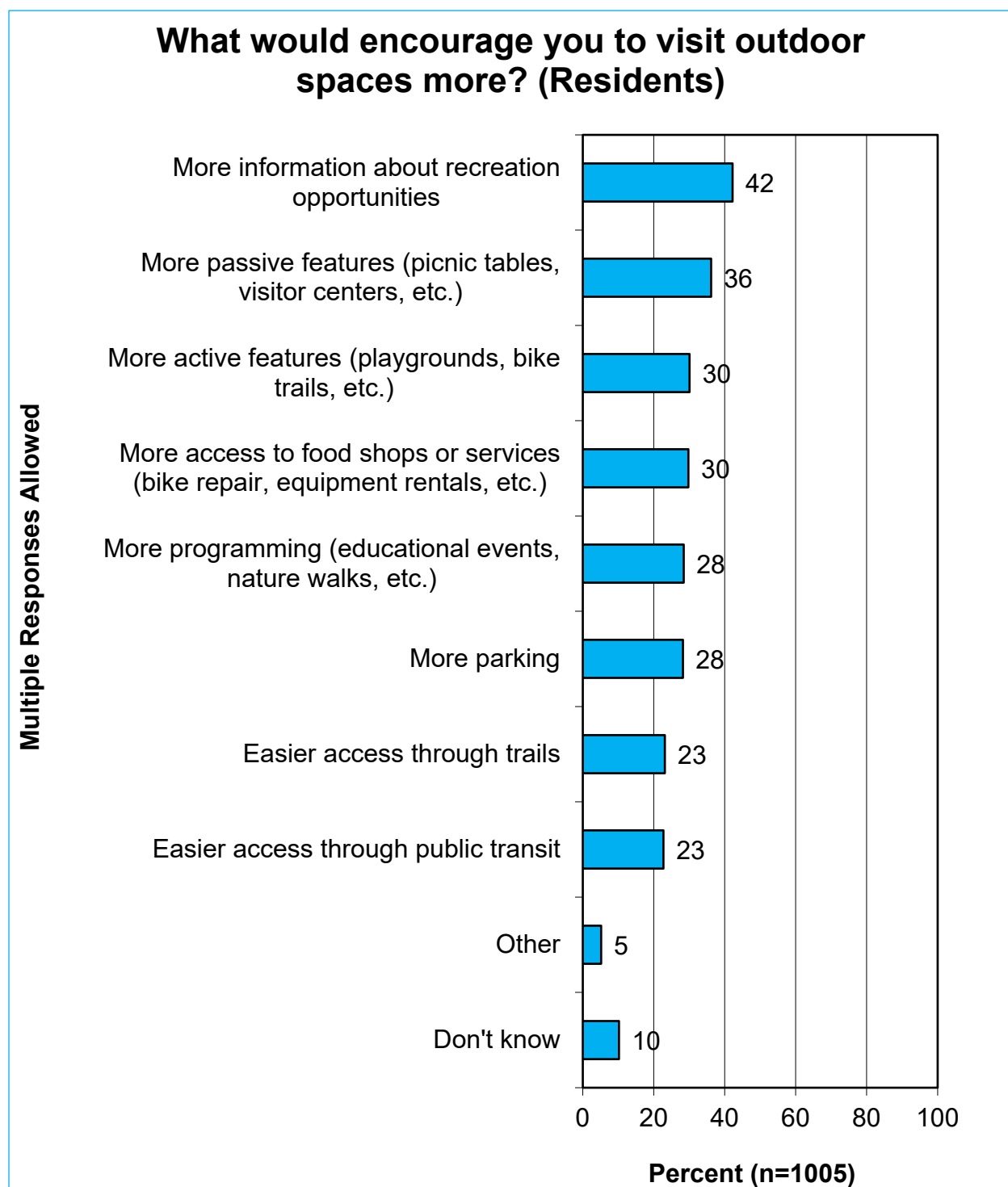


In general, are there any things that take away from your satisfaction with outdoor recreation, or cause you not to participate in outdoor recreation as much as you would like, in New Jersey? (Residents)

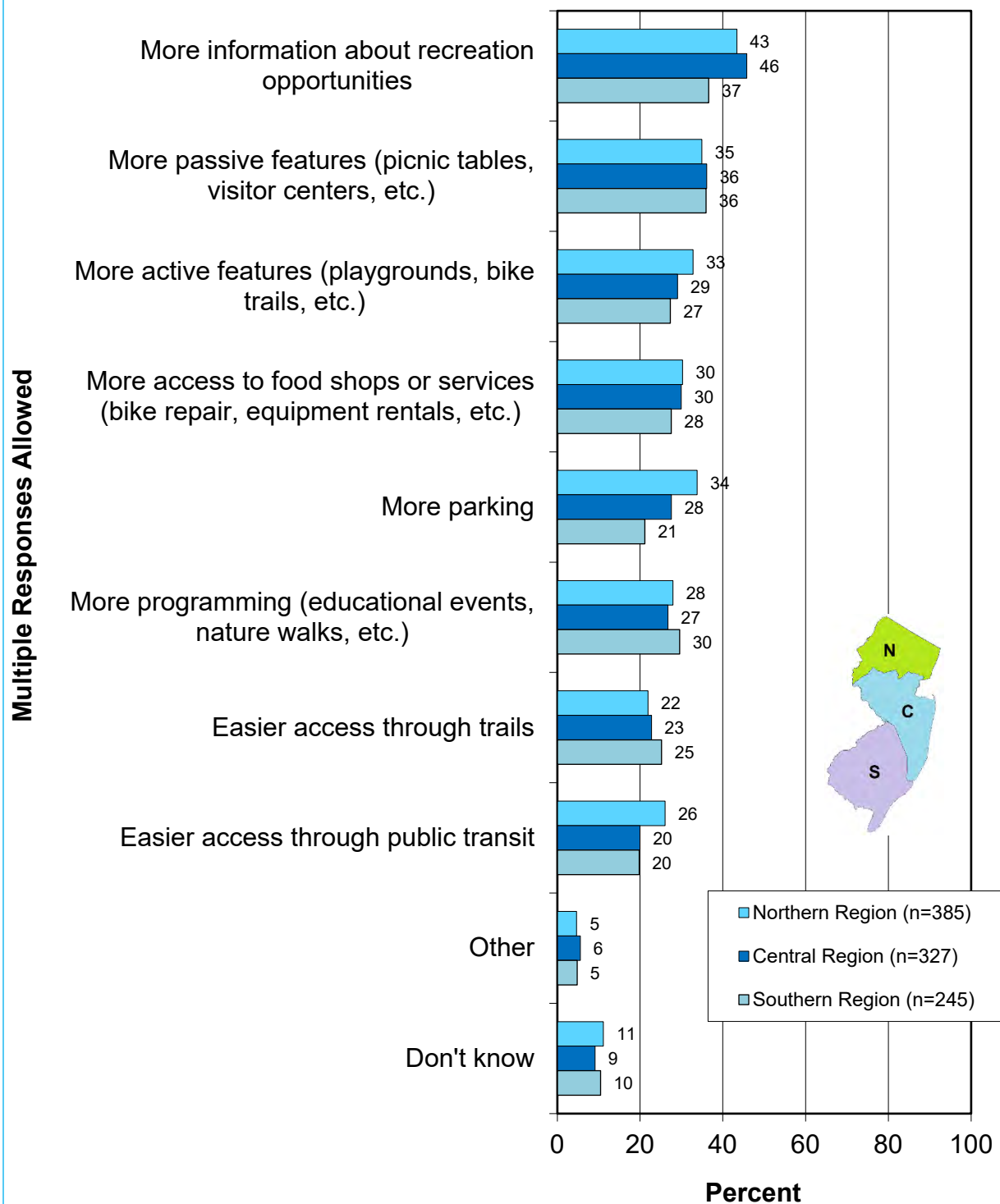


ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG RESIDENTS

More information is the top encouragement among residents. Also high on the list are passive features such as picnic tables and visitor centers that people can access. The graph shows the full list of possible encouragements that were presented in the survey. Regional results follow the graph below.

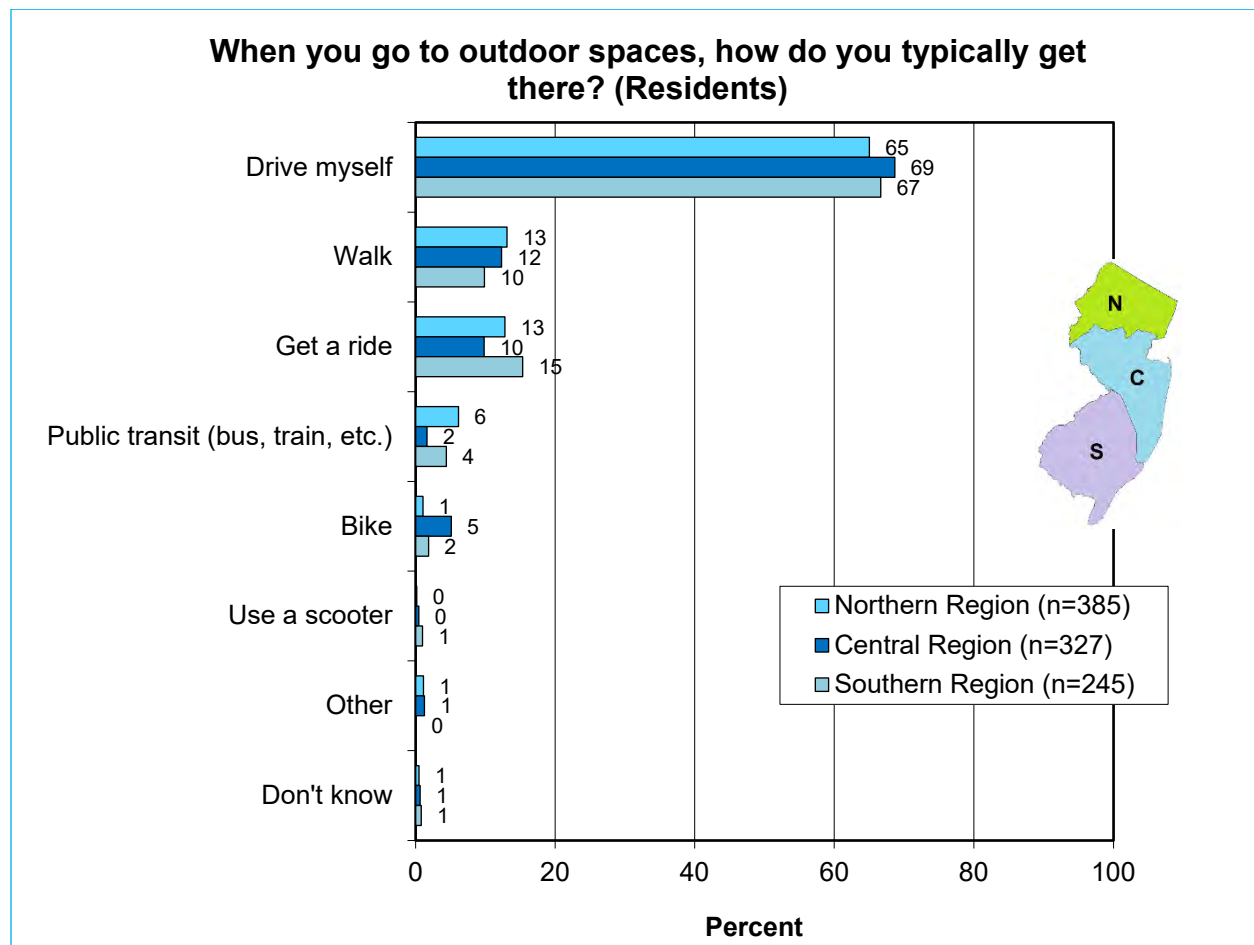
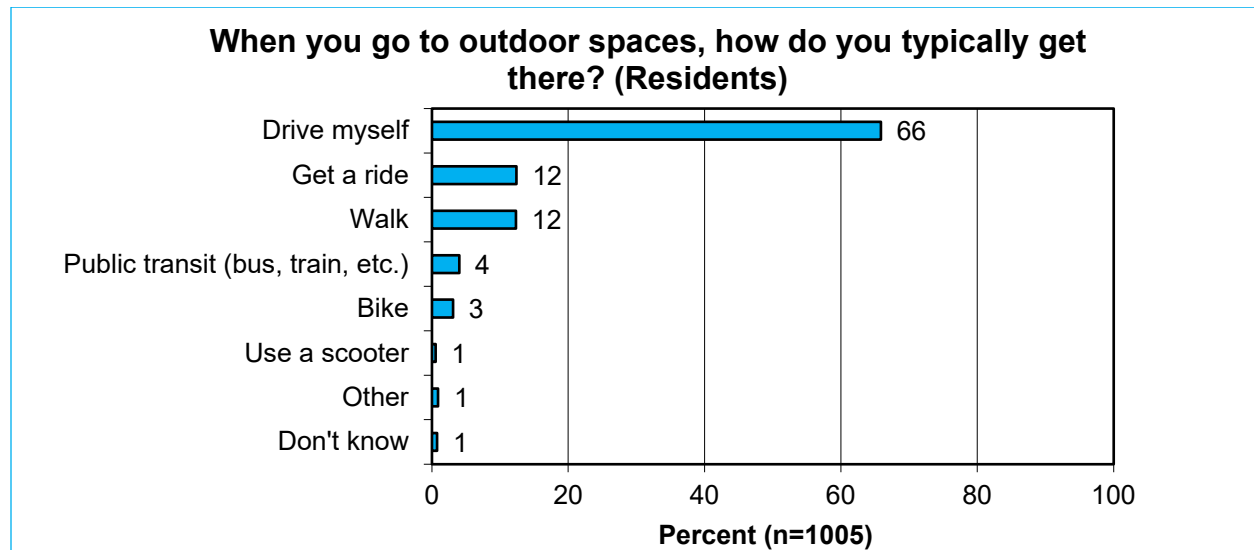


What would encourage you to visit outdoor spaces more? (Residents)

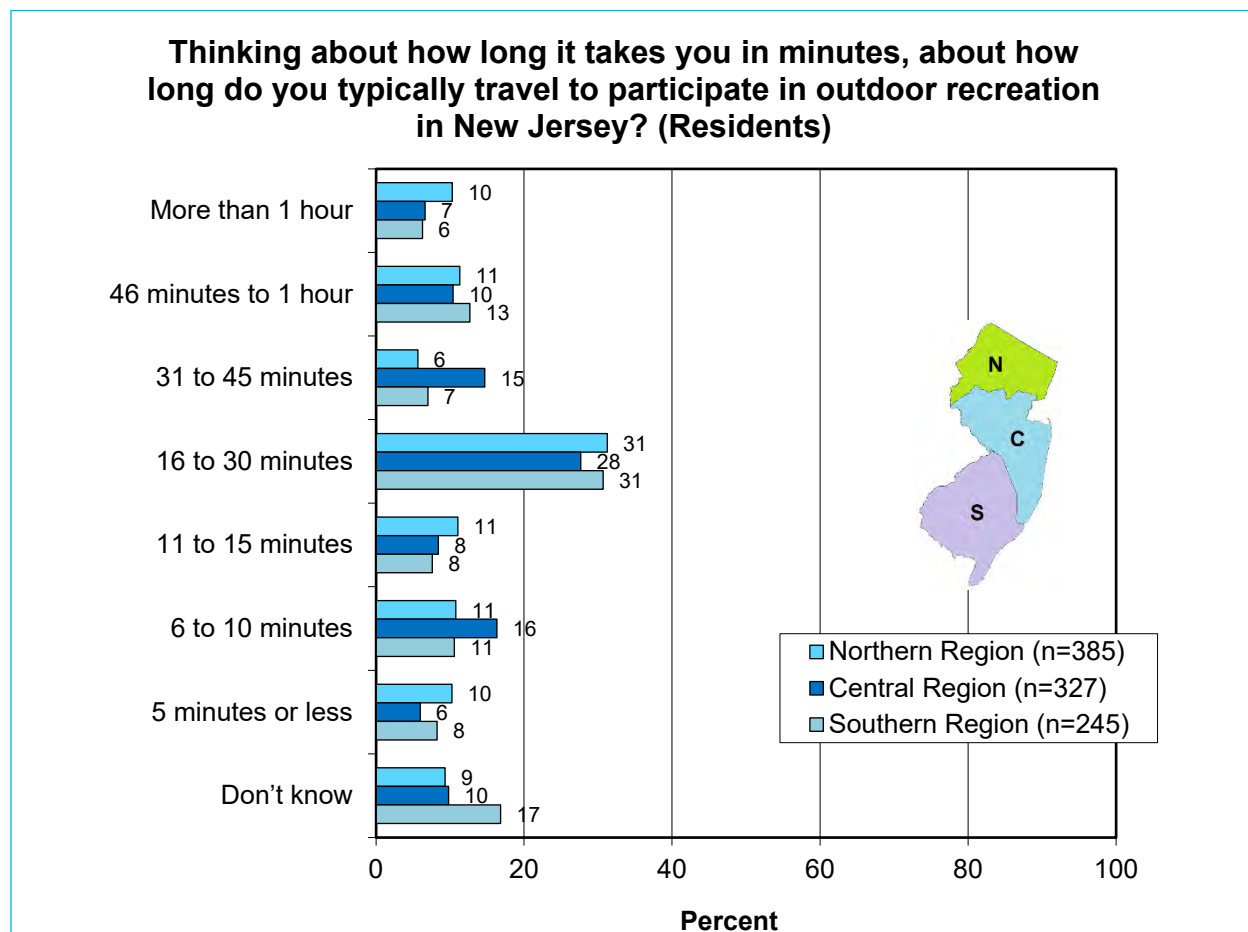
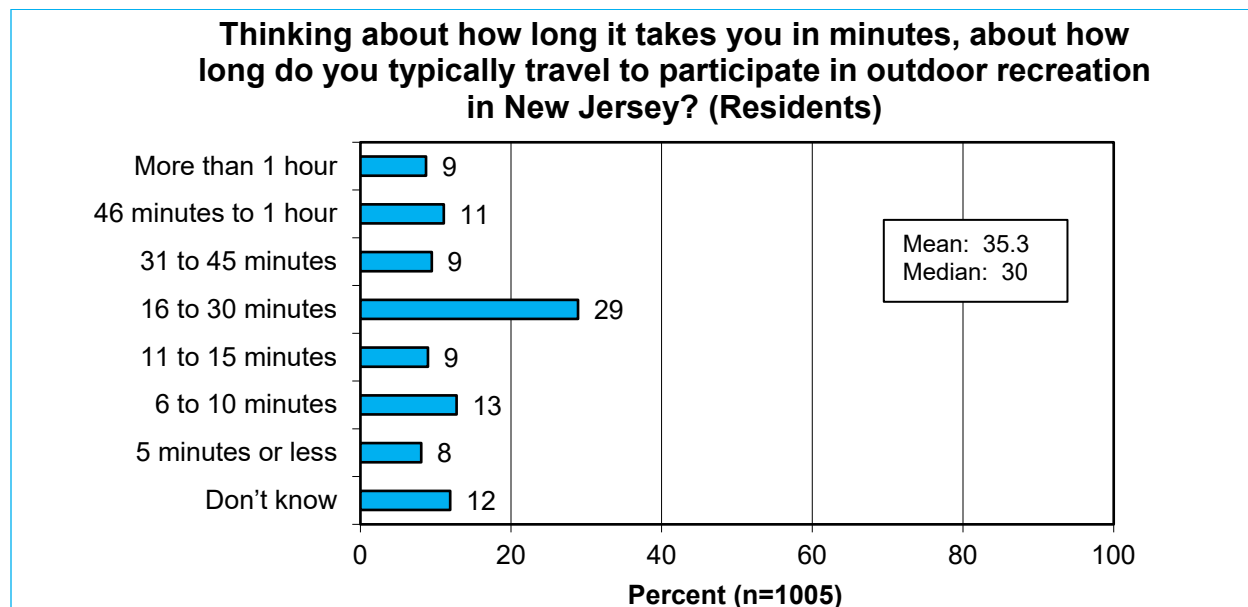


ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG RESIDENTS

A relatively considerable percentage get a ride or walk to their favored outdoor spaces, although driving is still the top way to get to the sites among residents. Regional results are included.

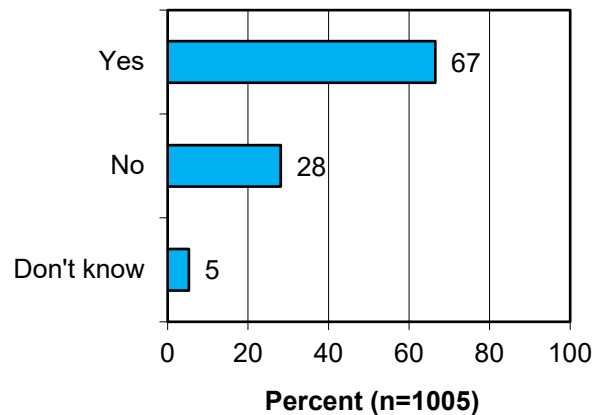


From 16 to 30 minutes is the most common timeframe that was selected regarding typical travel time to get to outdoor recreation spots. The mean is 35.3 minutes, and the median is 30 minutes. The regional results are shown below as well.

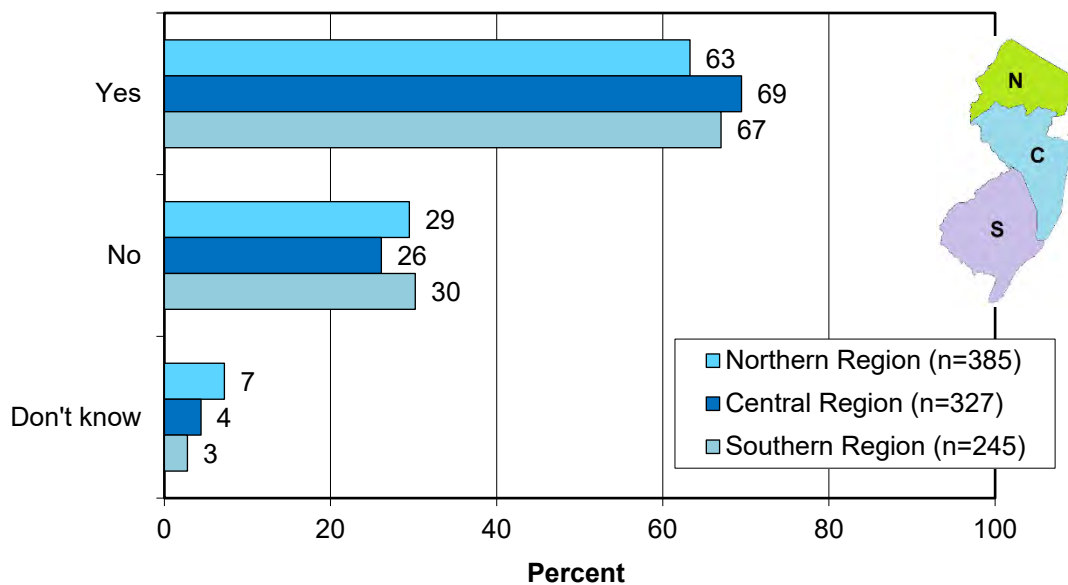


In the final question examined in this section, the survey asked a basic question about whether people feel that they have a favorite place to participate in outdoor recreation when they want to. Two thirds indicate that they do, and the results are not greatly different among the regions. A demographic analyses graph is included on the following page.

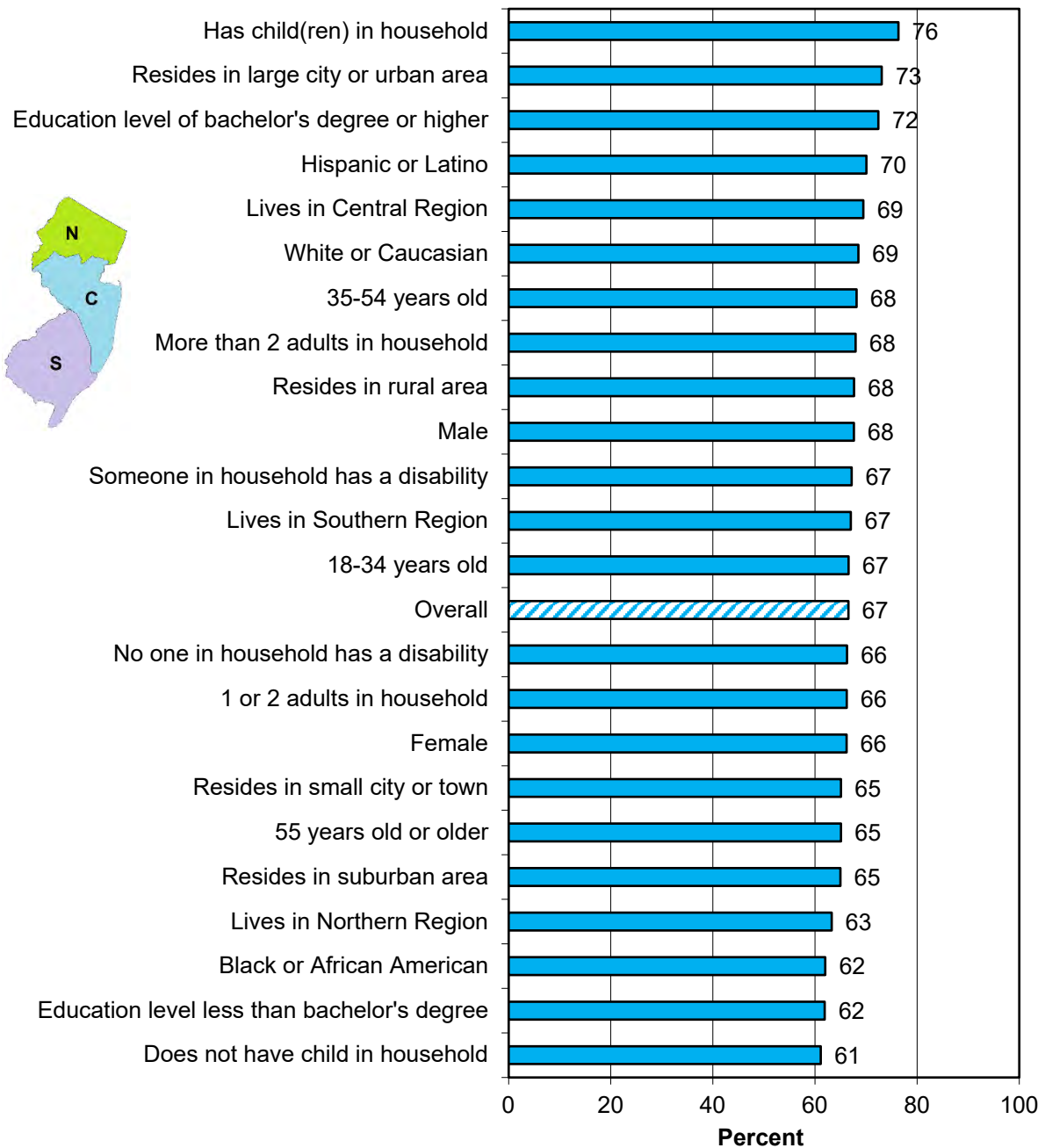
Do you have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that you are able to visit when you need or want to? (Residents)



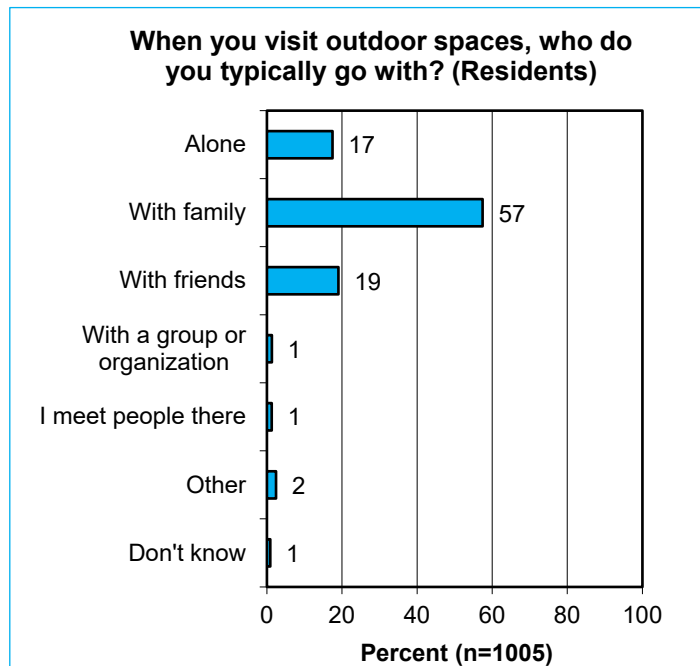
Do you have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that you are able to visit when you need or want to? (Residents)



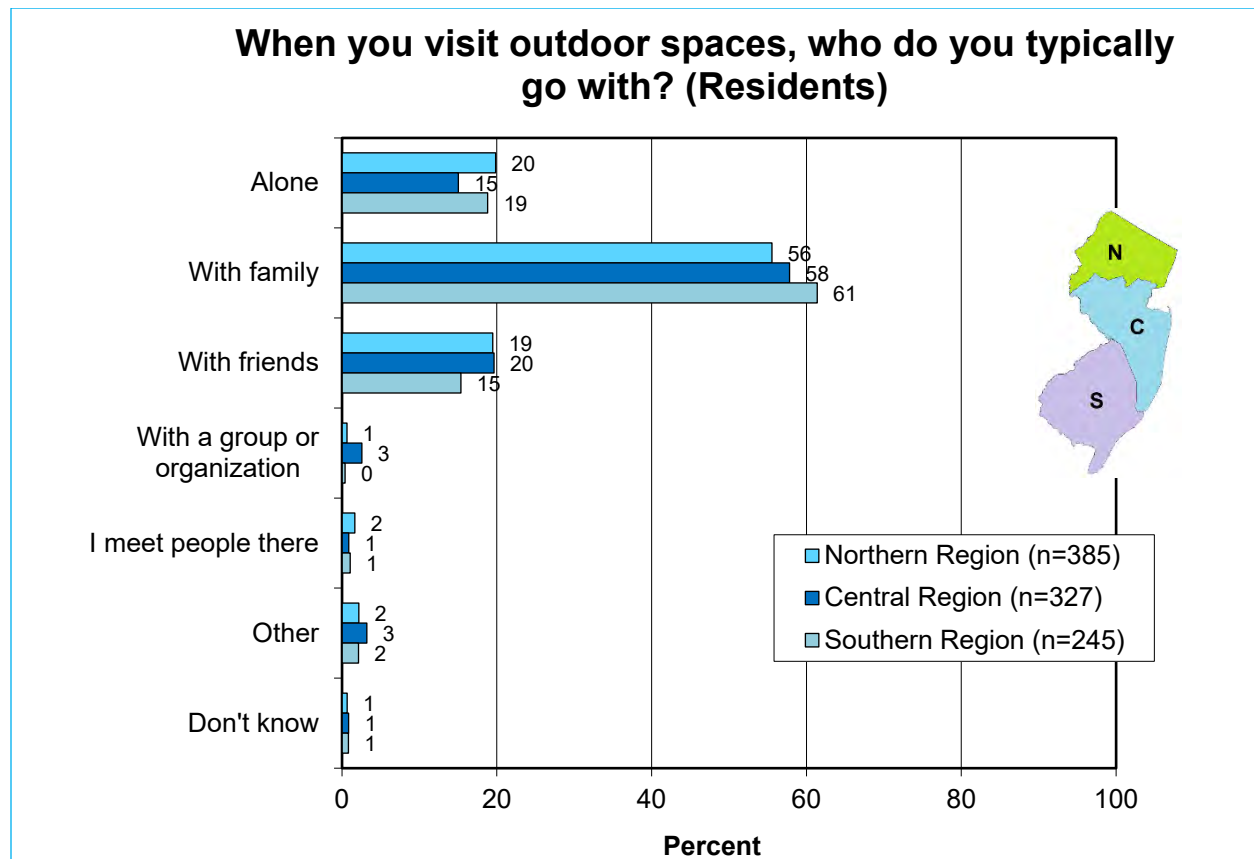
Percent of each of the following groups who have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that they are able to visit. (Residents)



OUTDOOR RECREATION COMPANIONS AMONG RESIDENTS



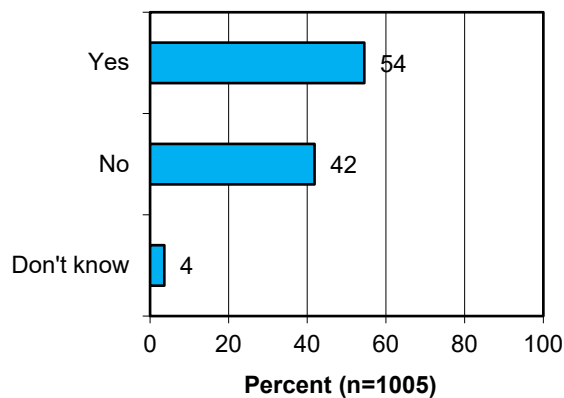
A majority of residents (57%) typically go to outdoor spaces with family. Nonetheless, among the general population of New Jersey, 17% typically go to outdoor spaces alone. The regional results are below.



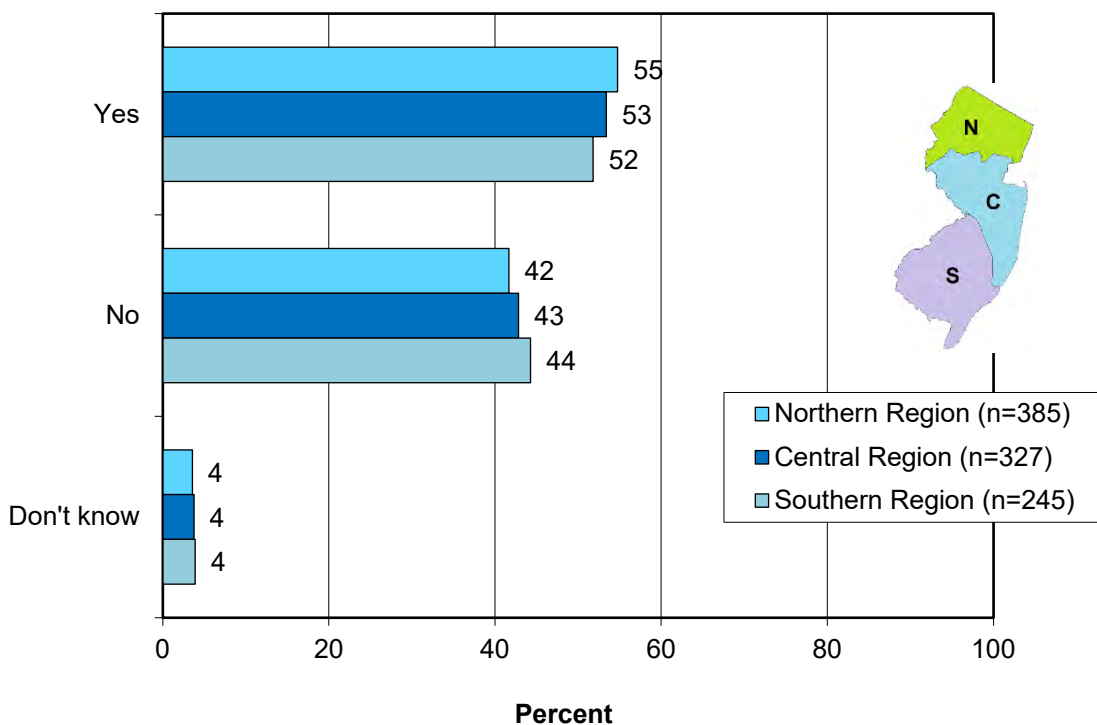
OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPENDITURES AMONG RESIDENTS

Just over half of New Jersey residents spent money on outdoor recreation in the 12 months previous to the survey, typically on use fees. The regions are not markedly different from one another regarding spending on outdoor recreation; however, what they spent on differs, as Northern Region residents are much less likely to have user fees for their recreation.

Did you spend any money to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Residents)

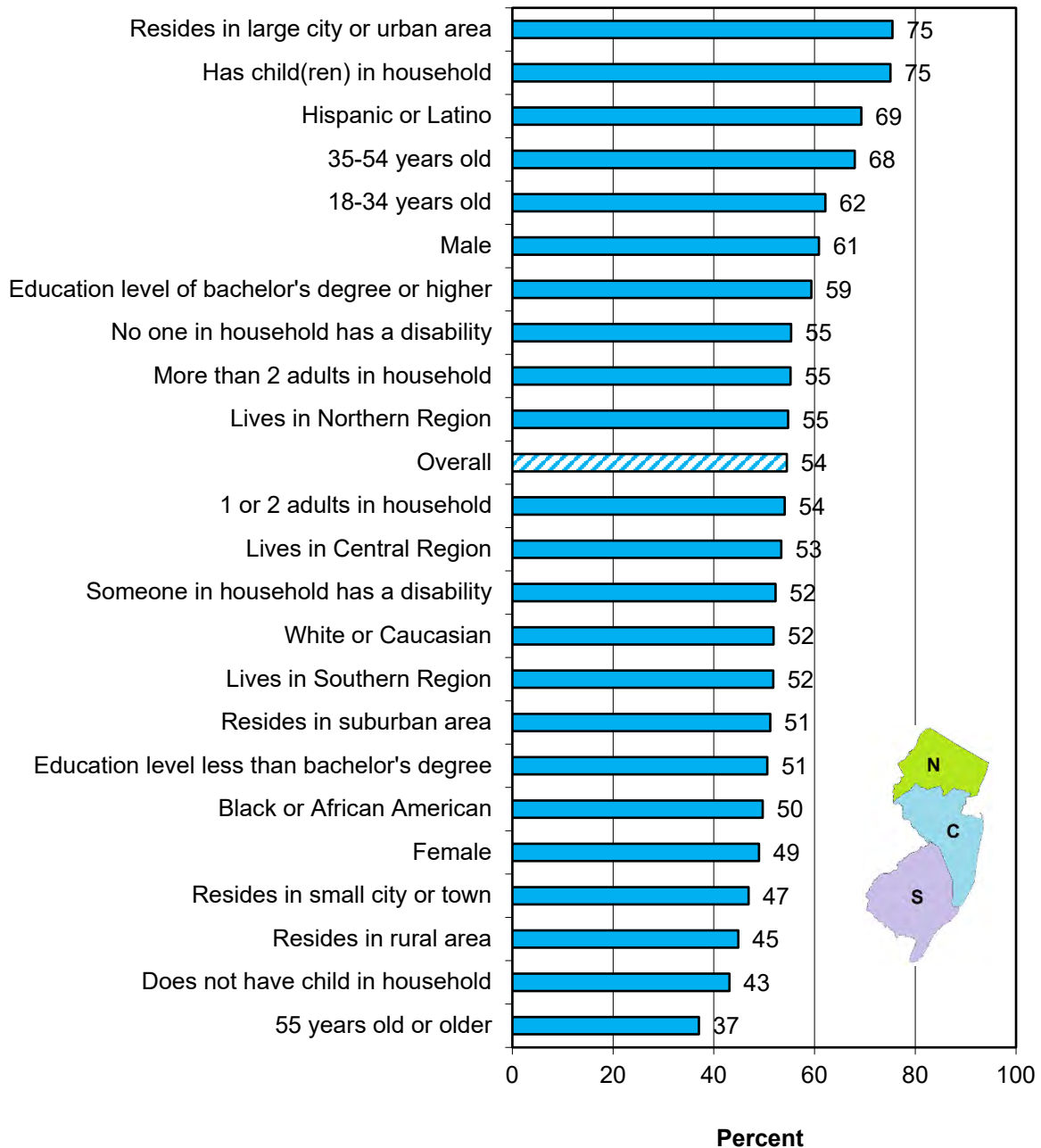


Did you spend any money to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Residents)

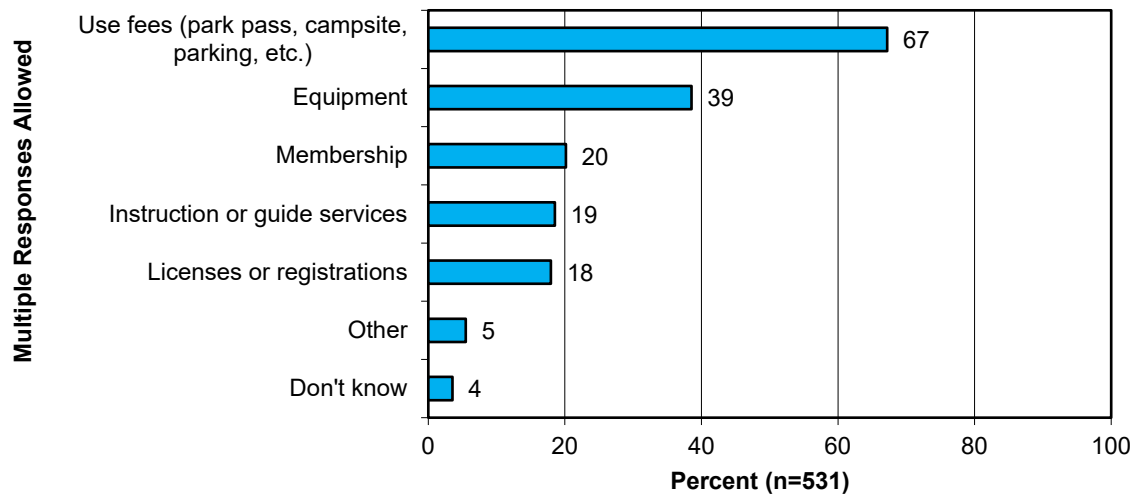


The demographic analyses graph shows that urban residents and those with children in their household are particularly likely to have spent money on outdoor recreation in the previous 12 months.

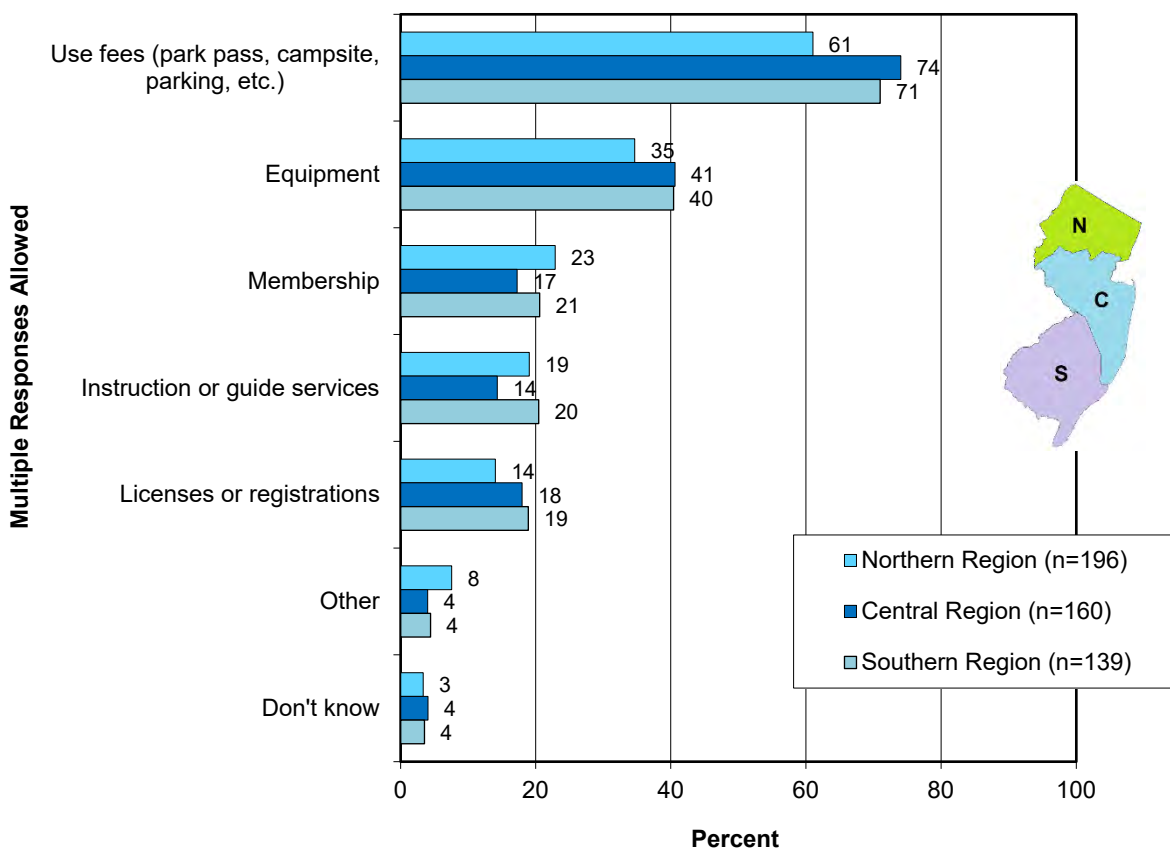
Percent of each of the following groups who spent money to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months. (Residents)



What did you spend money on to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Asked of those who spent money on outdoor recreation in NJ in the past 12 months.) (Residents)

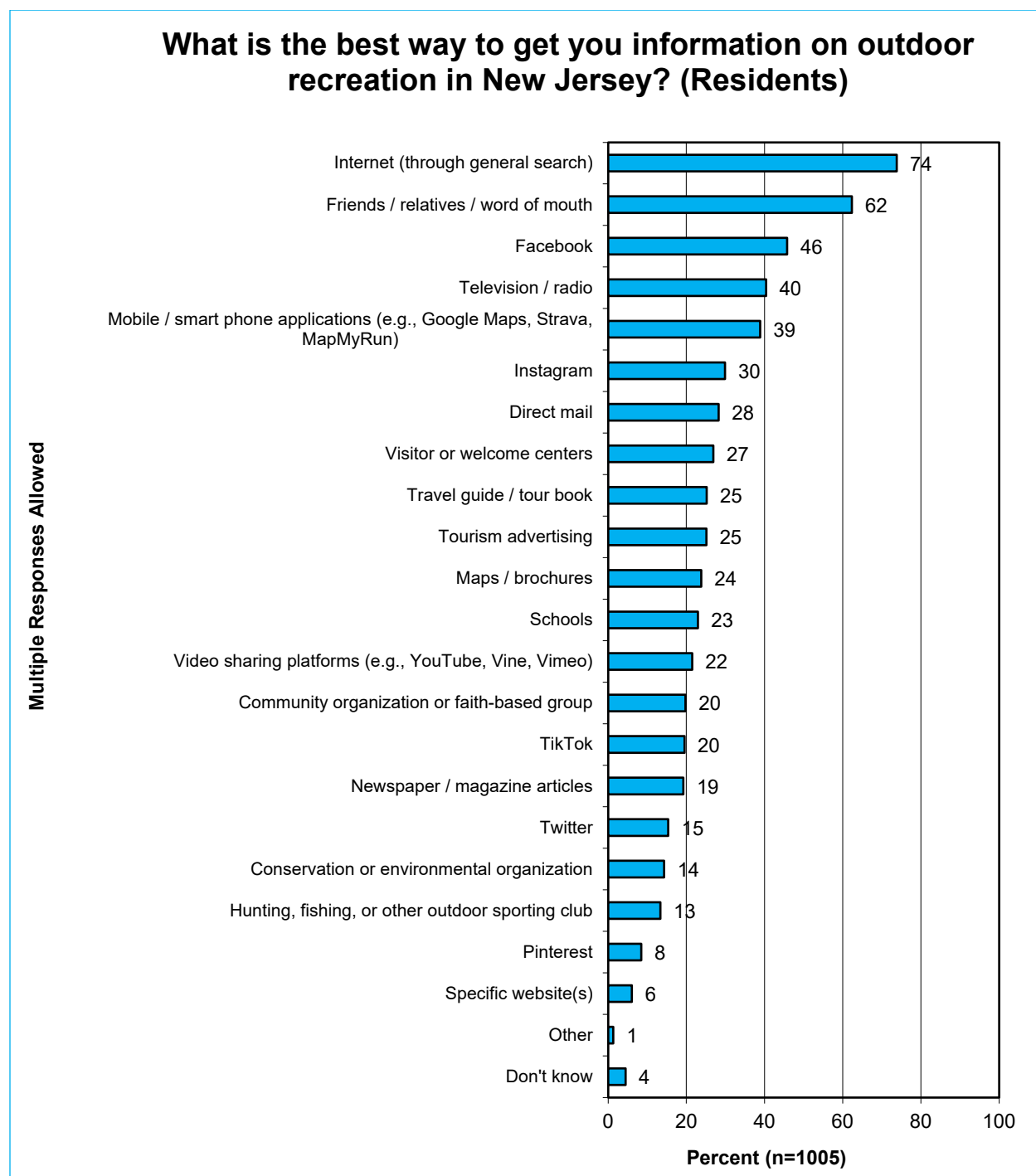


What did you spend money on to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Asked of those who spent money on outdoor recreation in NJ in the past 12 months.) (Residents)



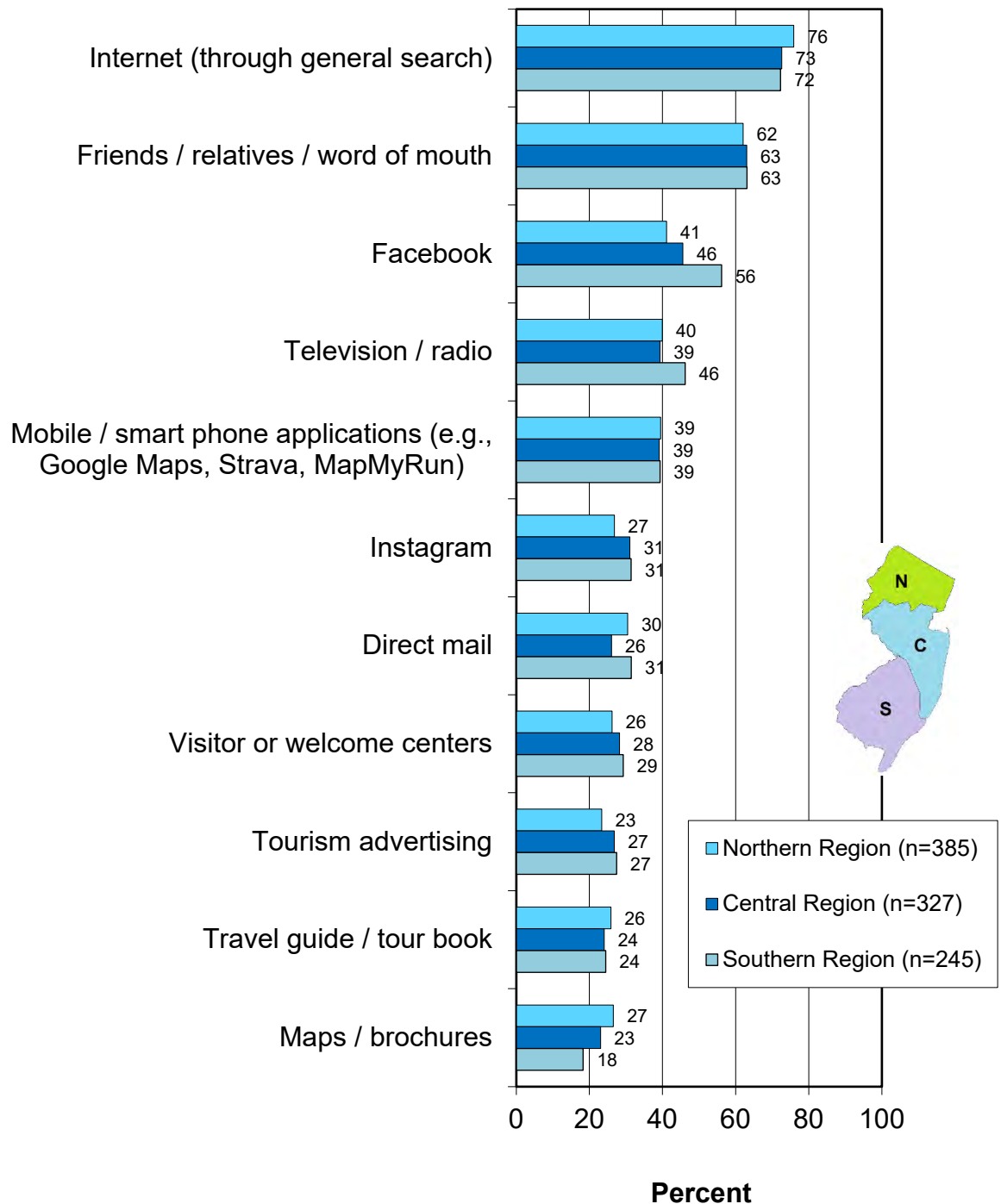
RESIDENTS' INFORMATION SOURCES

Among residents, the internet and word of mouth are the top preferred ways to get information on outdoor recreation. These results are consistent among the regions.

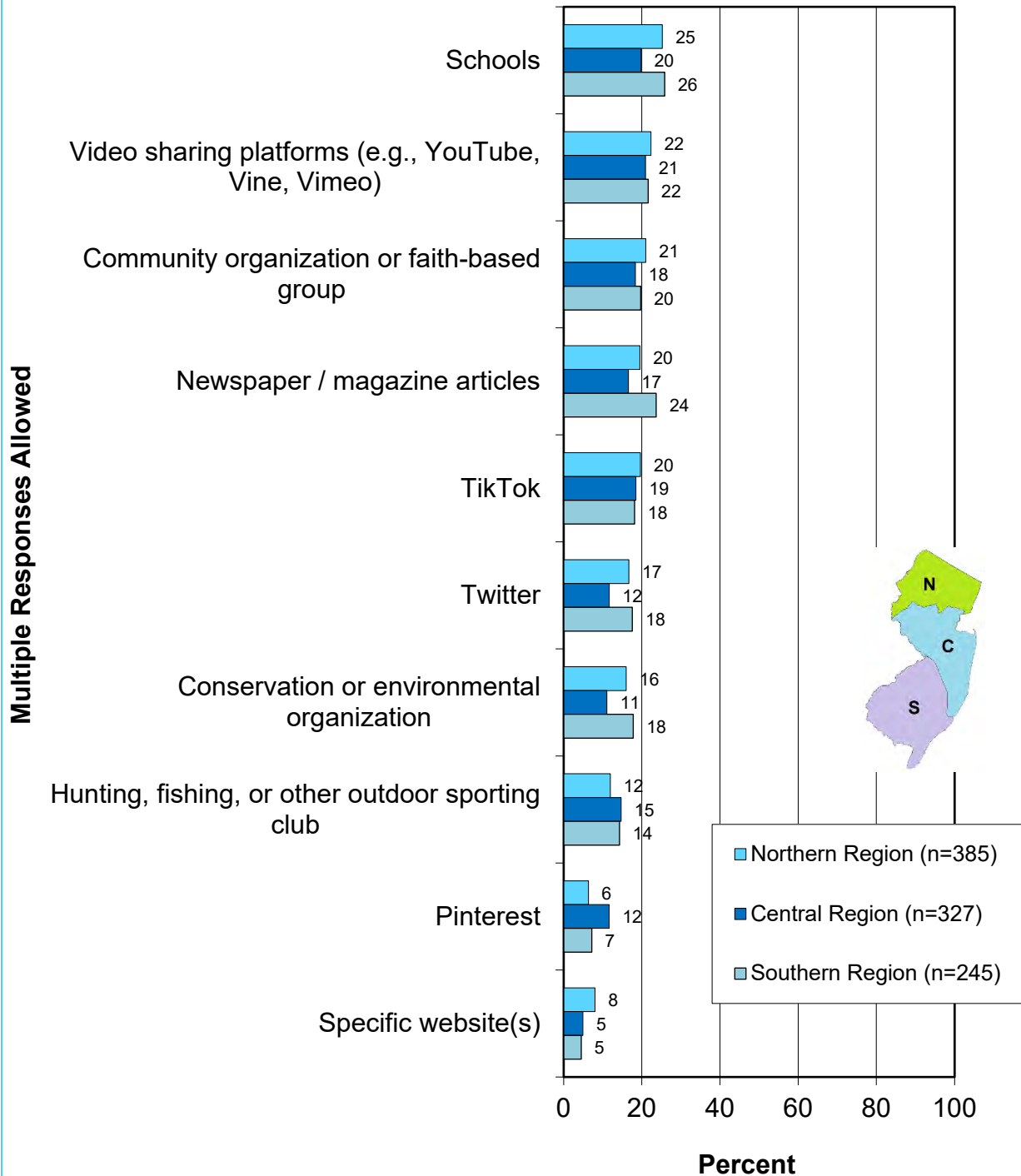


What is the best way to get you information on outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Part 1) (Residents)

Multiple Responses Allowed



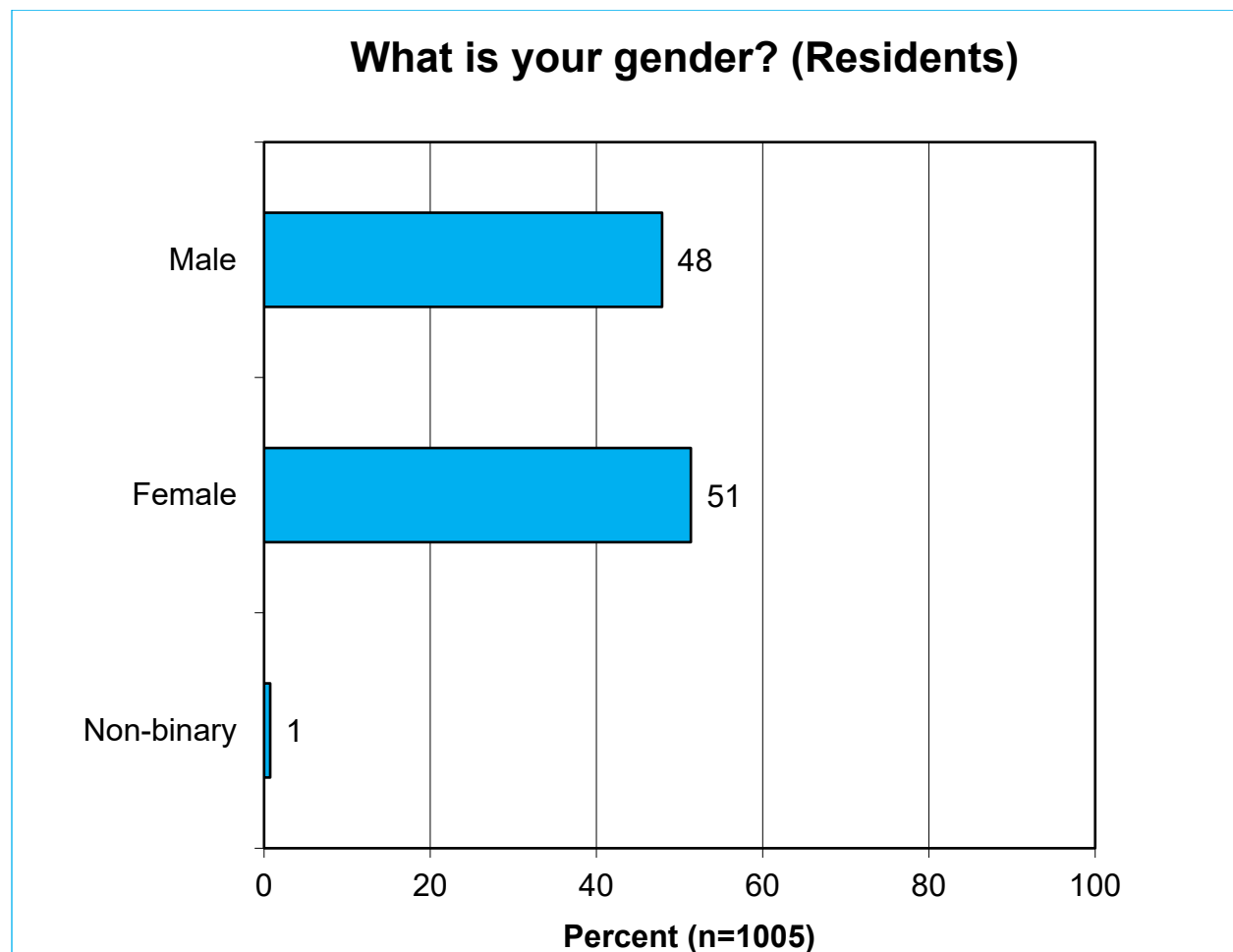
What is the best way to get you information on outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Part 2) (Residents)



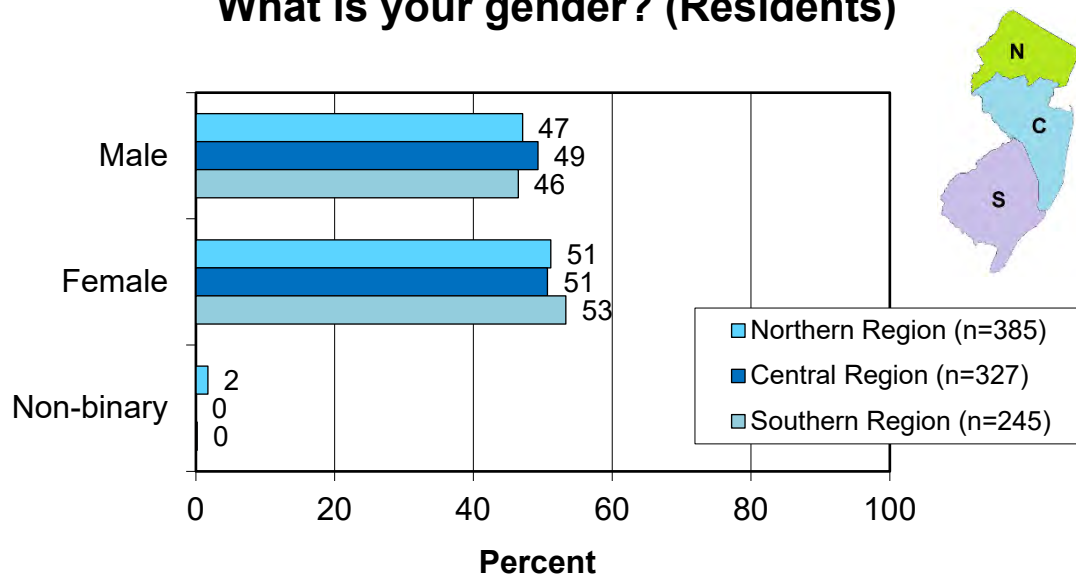
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESIDENTS

The following demographic information was obtained:

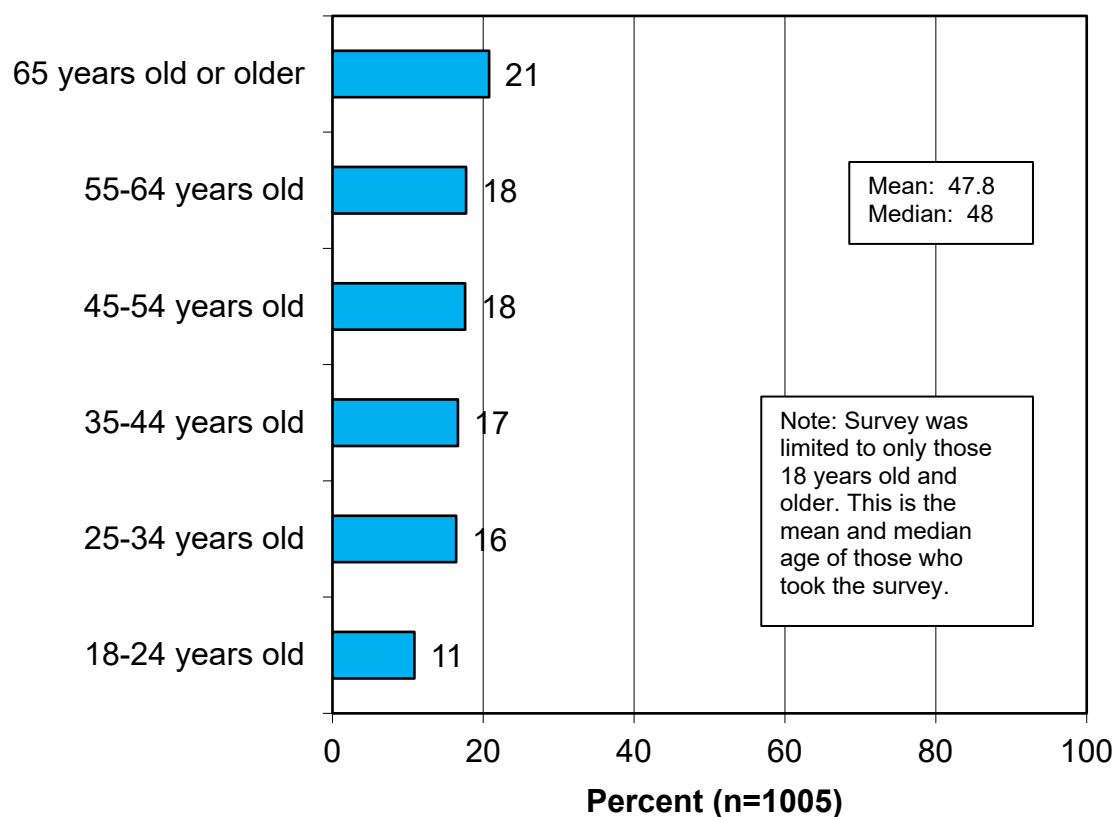
- Gender.
- Age.
- Numbers of adults and children in the household.
- Presence of people with disabilities in the household.
- Ethnicity and languages primarily spoken.
- Education.
- County of residence.
- Type of residential area.

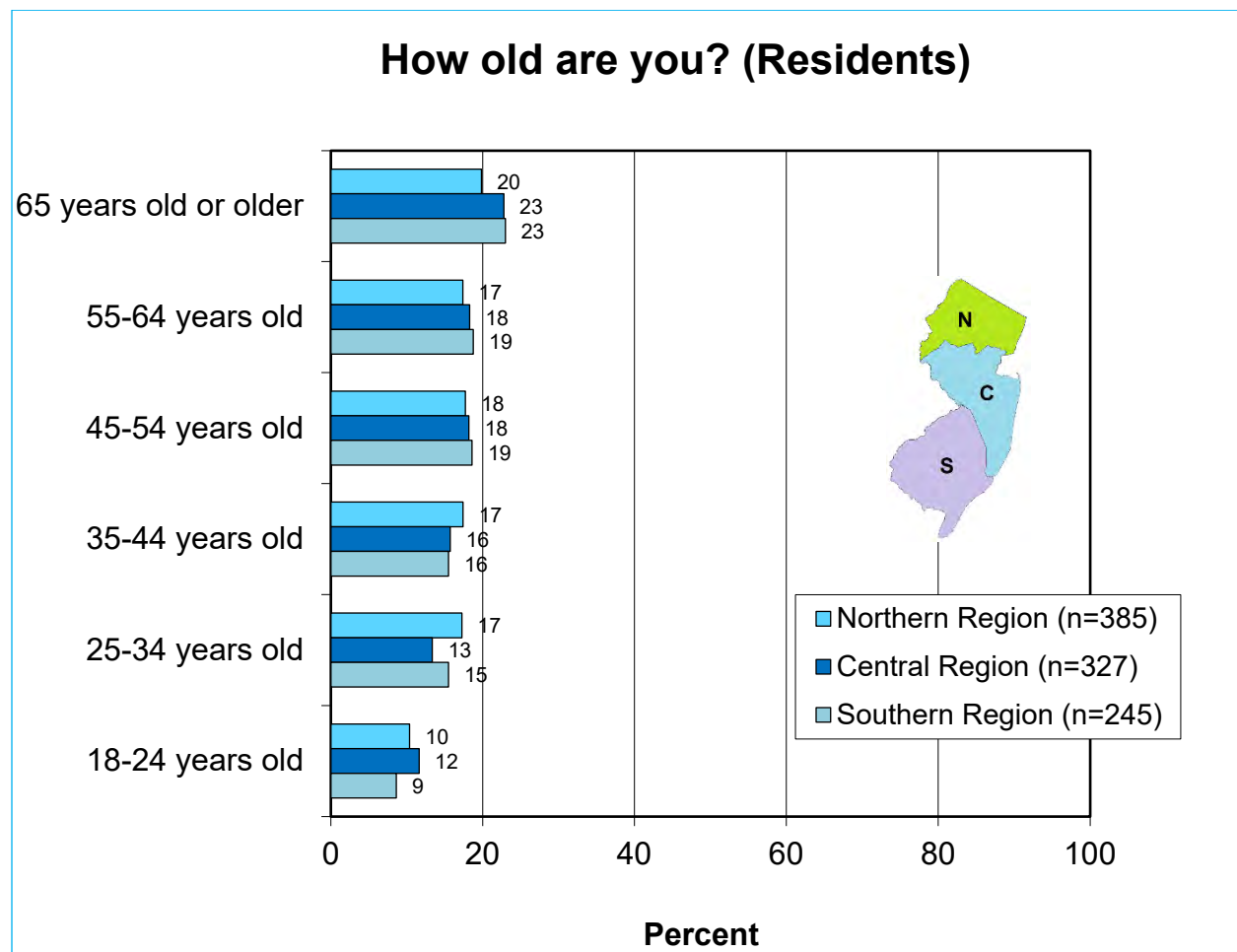


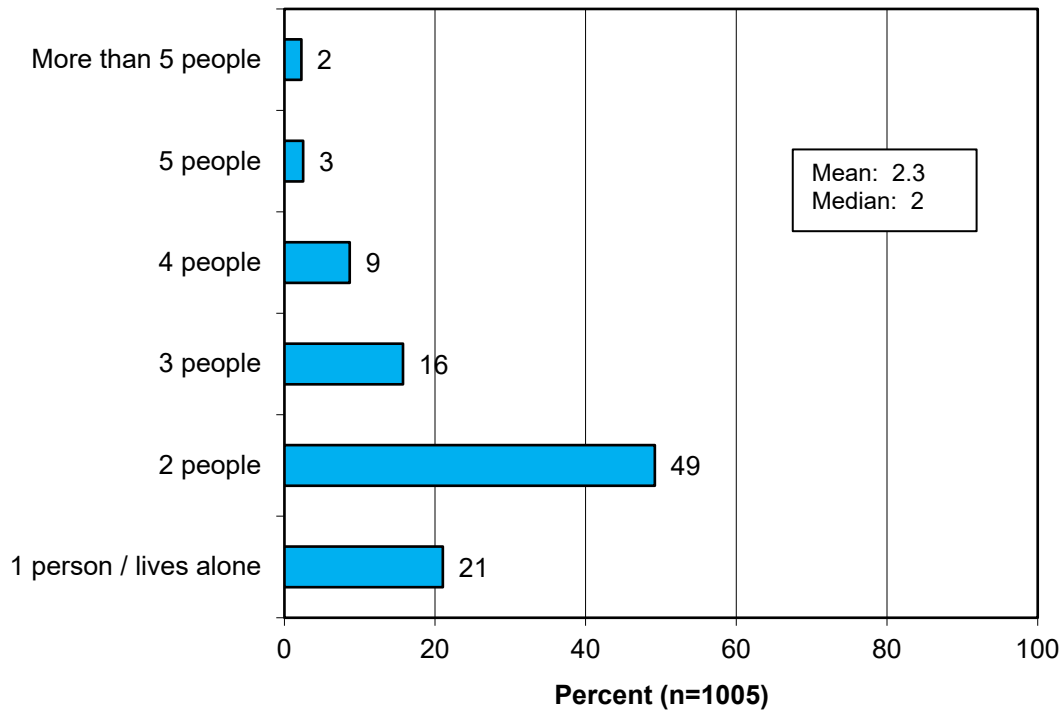
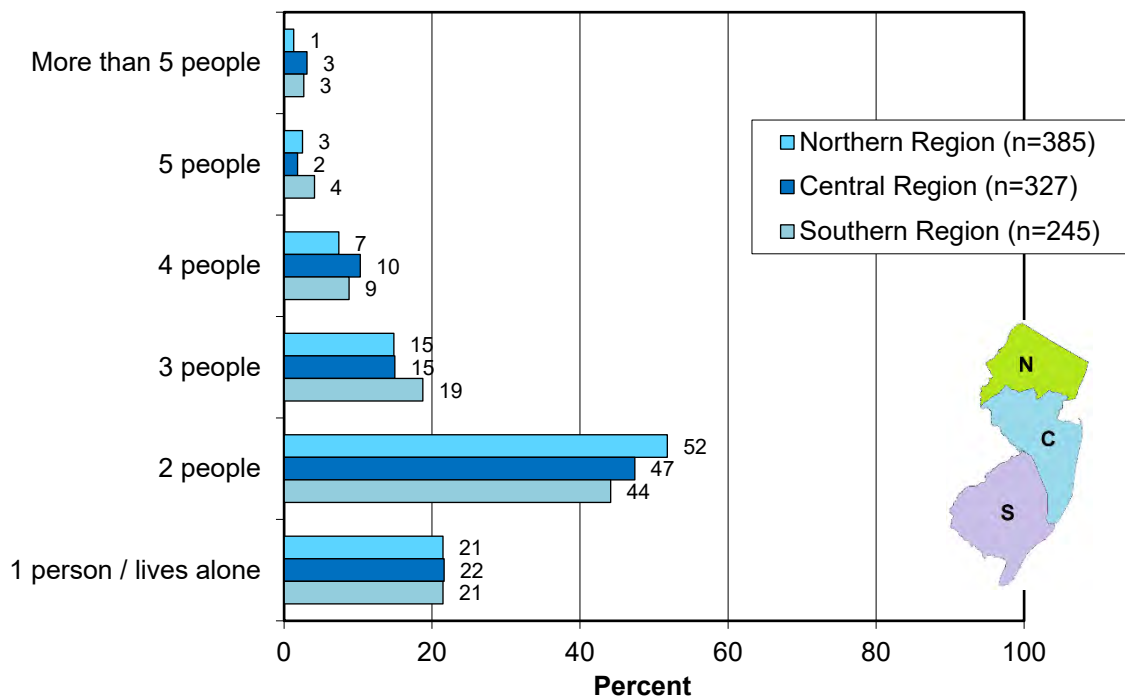
What is your gender? (Residents)



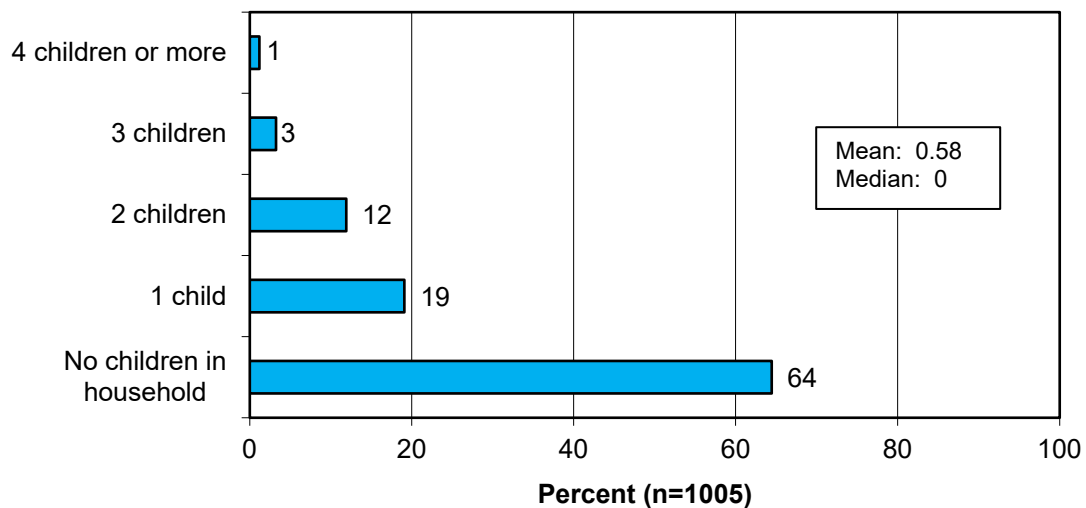
How old are you? (Residents)



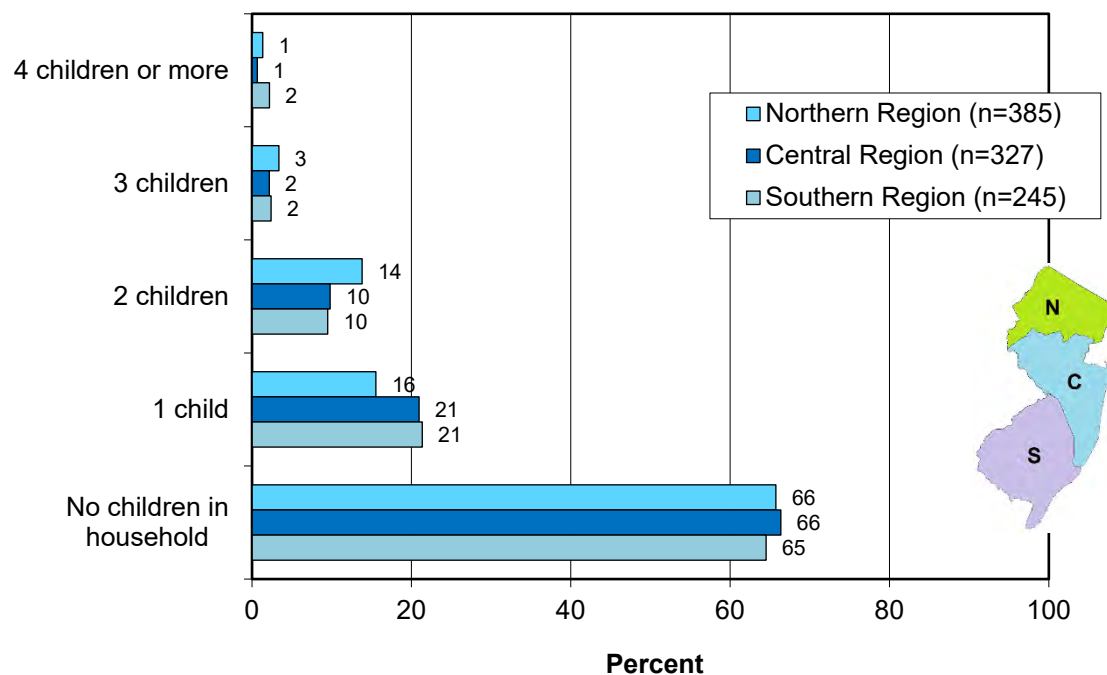


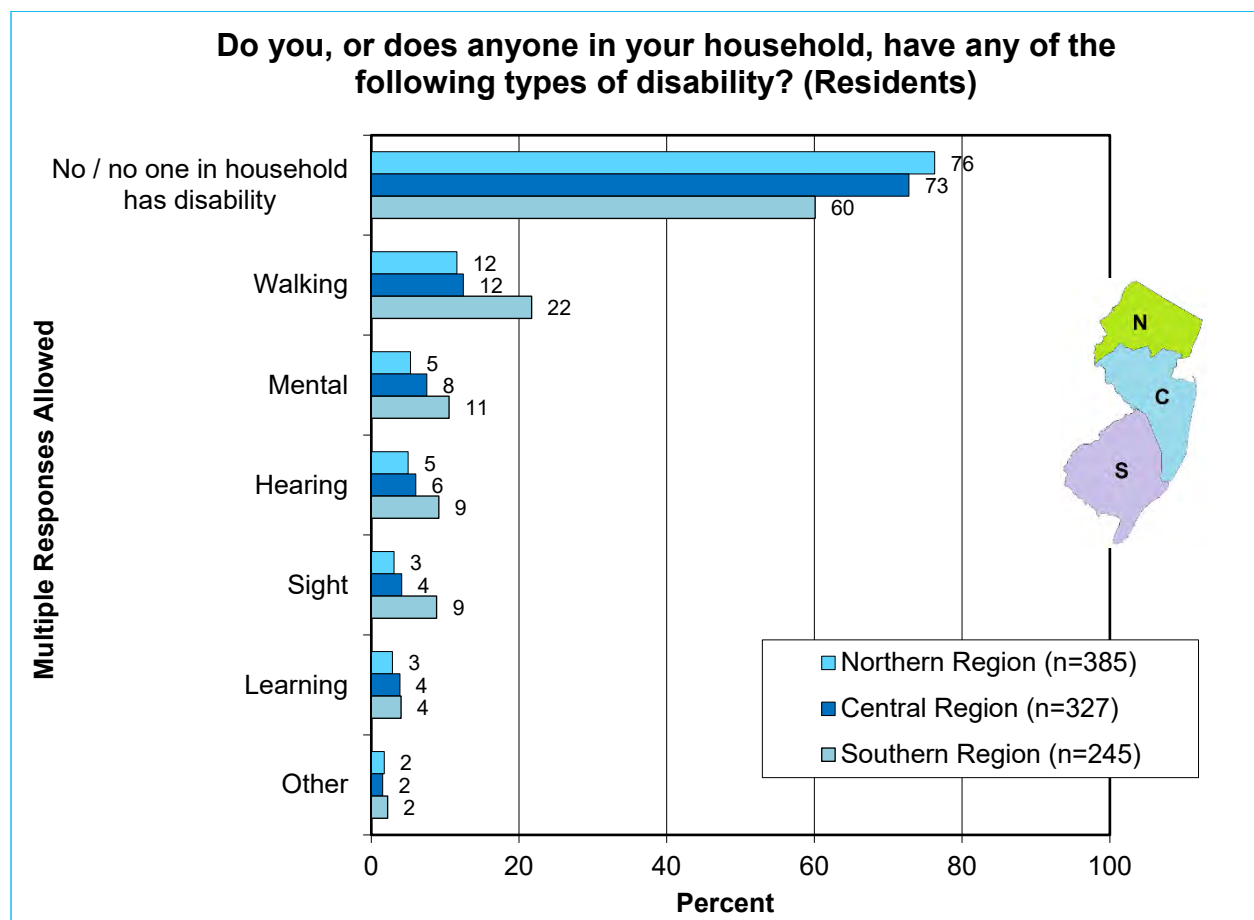
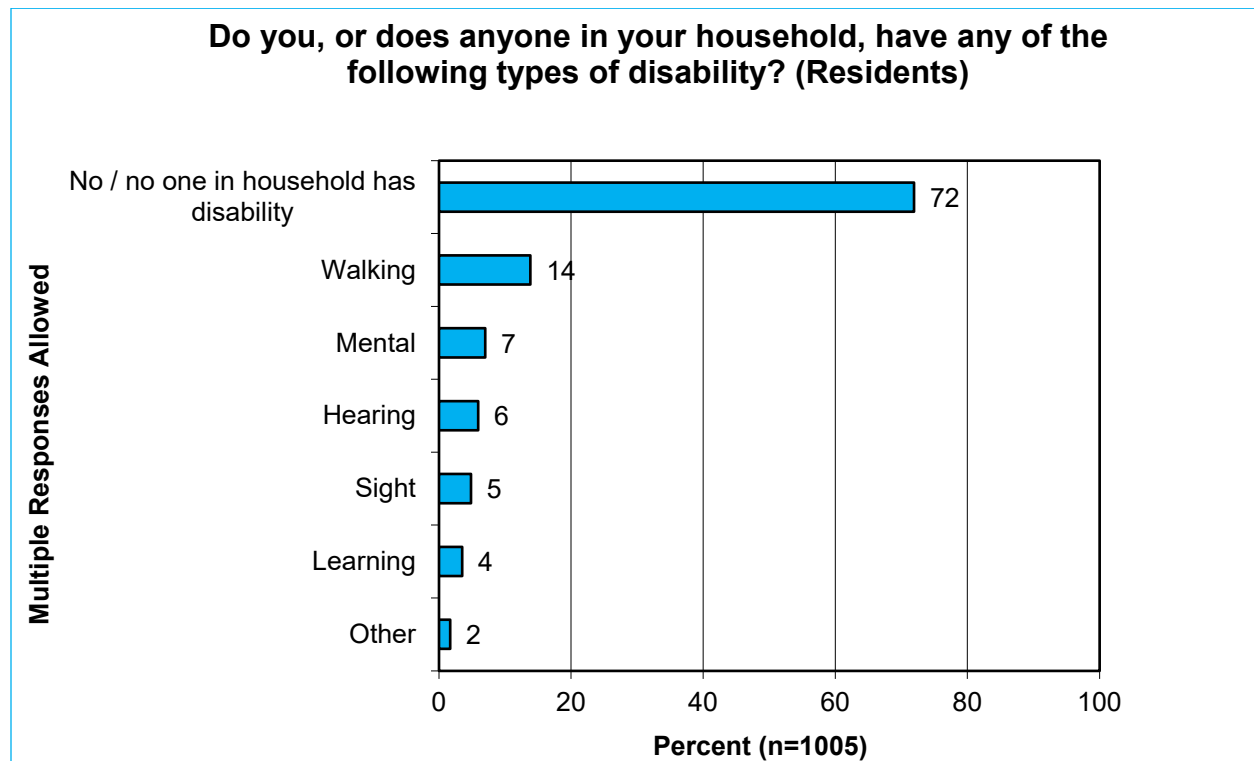
How many adults ages 18 and older currently live in your household, including yourself? (Residents)**How many adults ages 18 and older currently live in your household, including yourself? (Residents)**

How many children ages 17 and younger live in your household? (Residents)

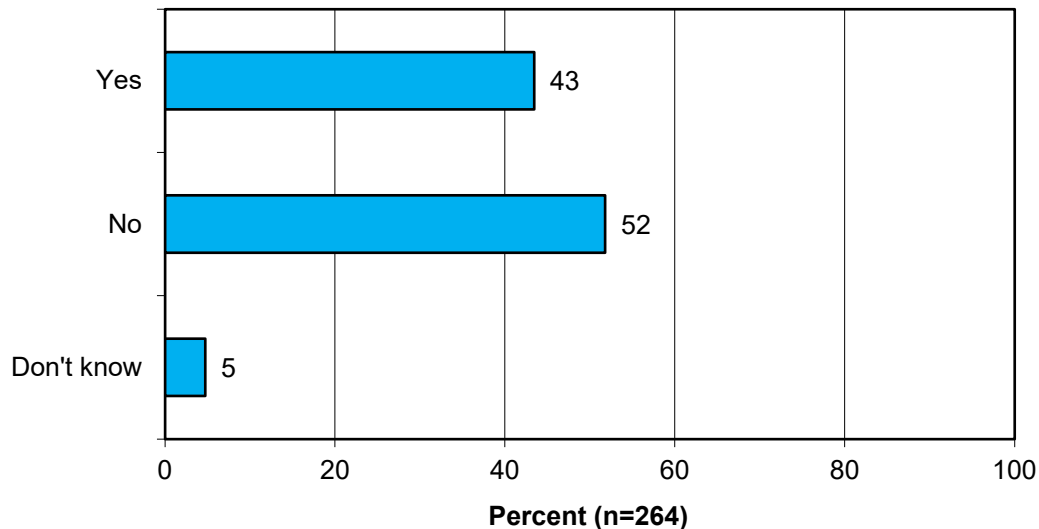


How many children ages 17 and younger live in your household? (Residents)

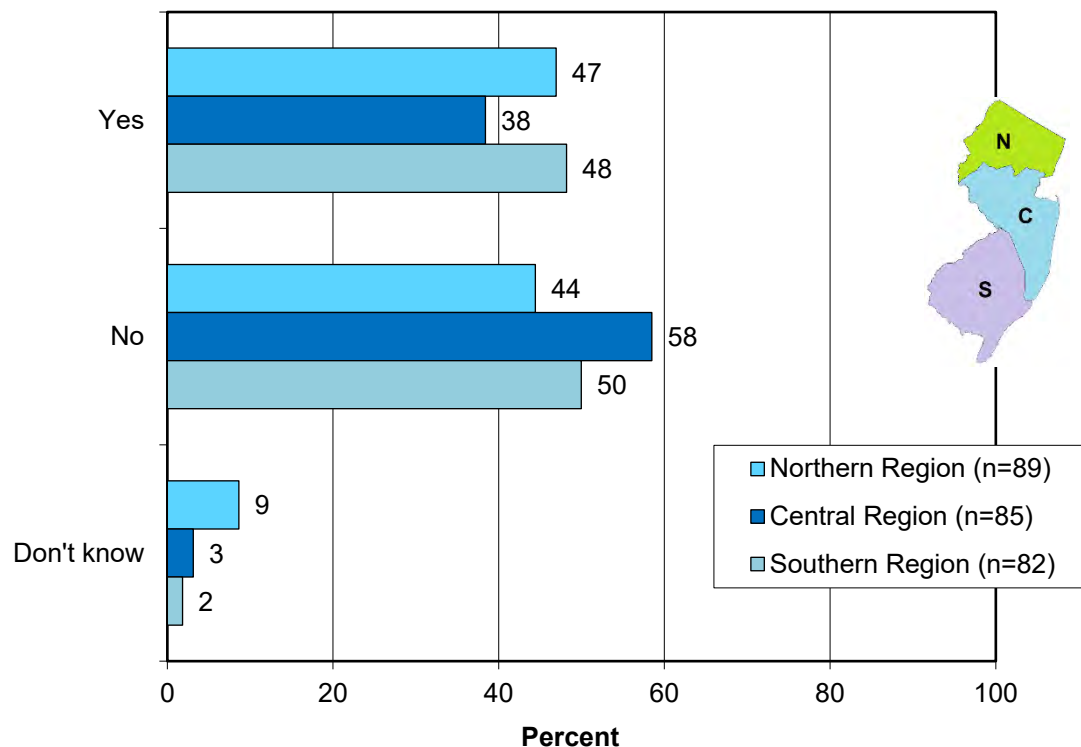


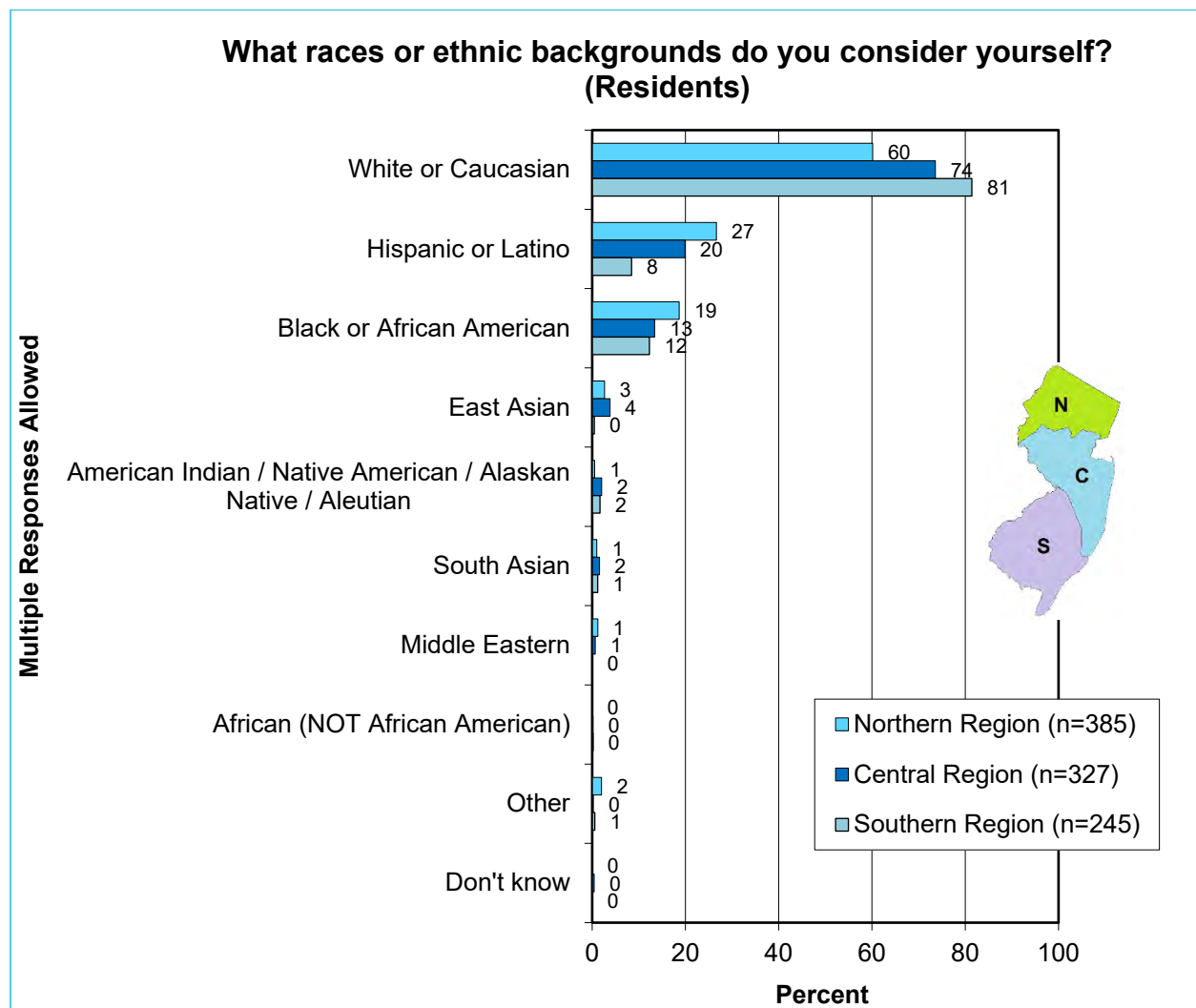
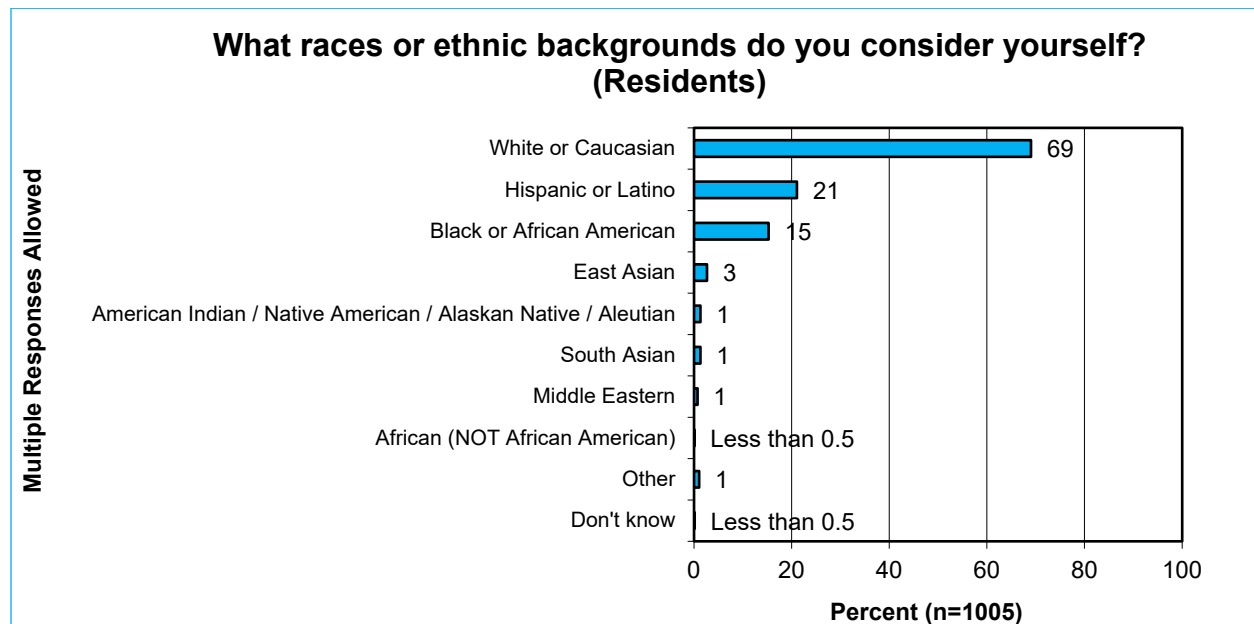


Does the disability impact your ability, or the ability of others in your household, to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Asked of those with a disability or whose household has a person with a disability.) (Residents)

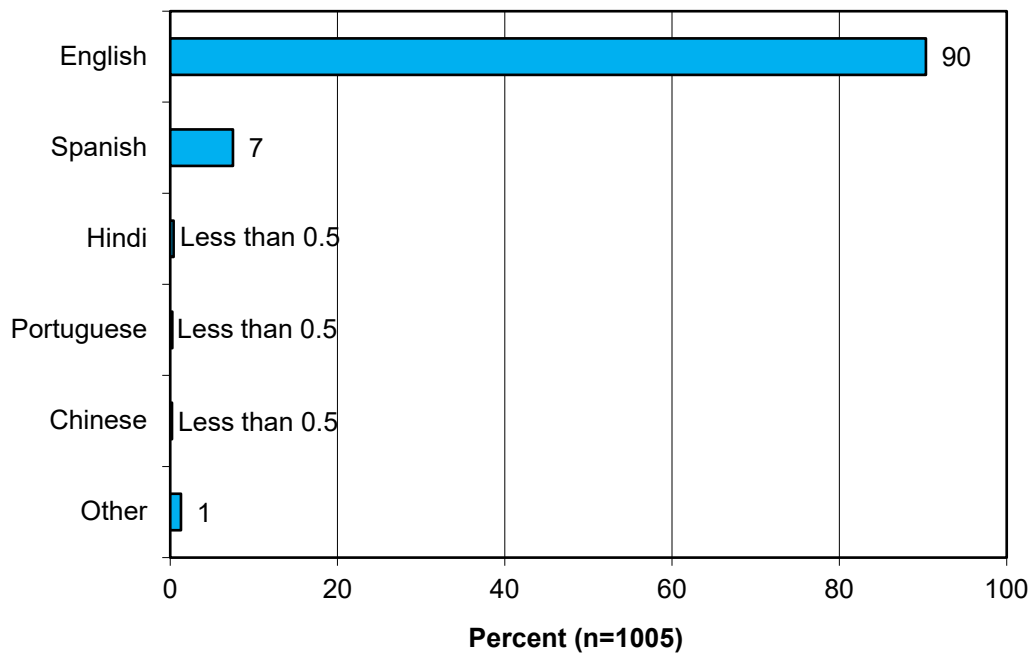


Does the disability impact your ability, or the ability of others in your household, to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Asked of those with a disability or whose household has a person with a disability.) (Residents)

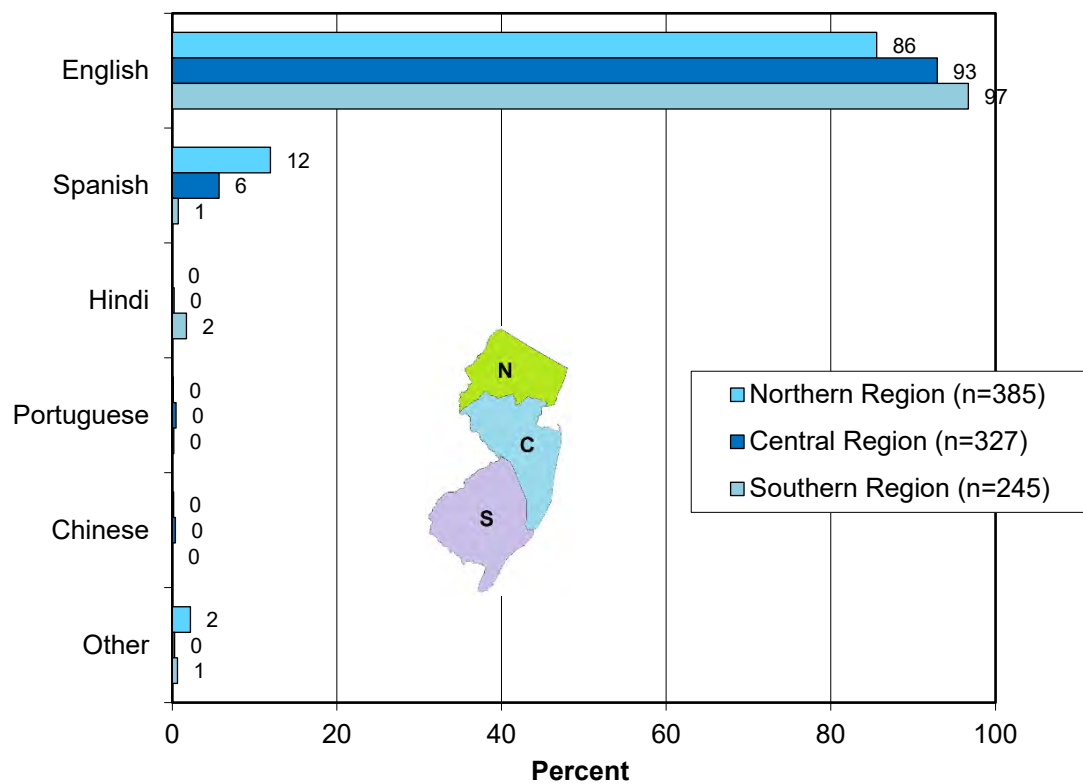




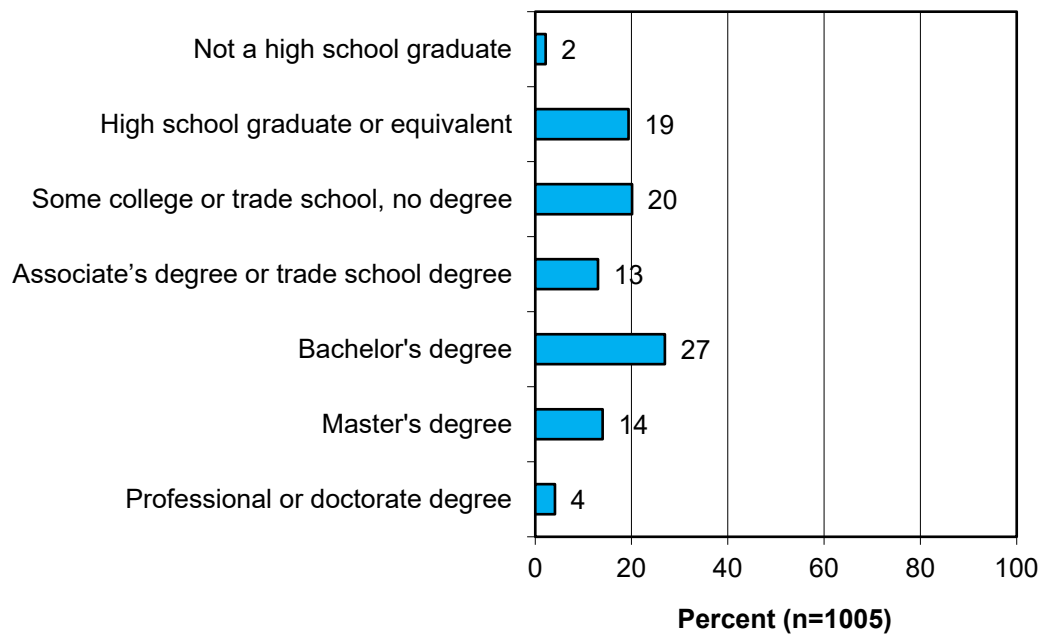
What language is spoken most in your home? (Residents)



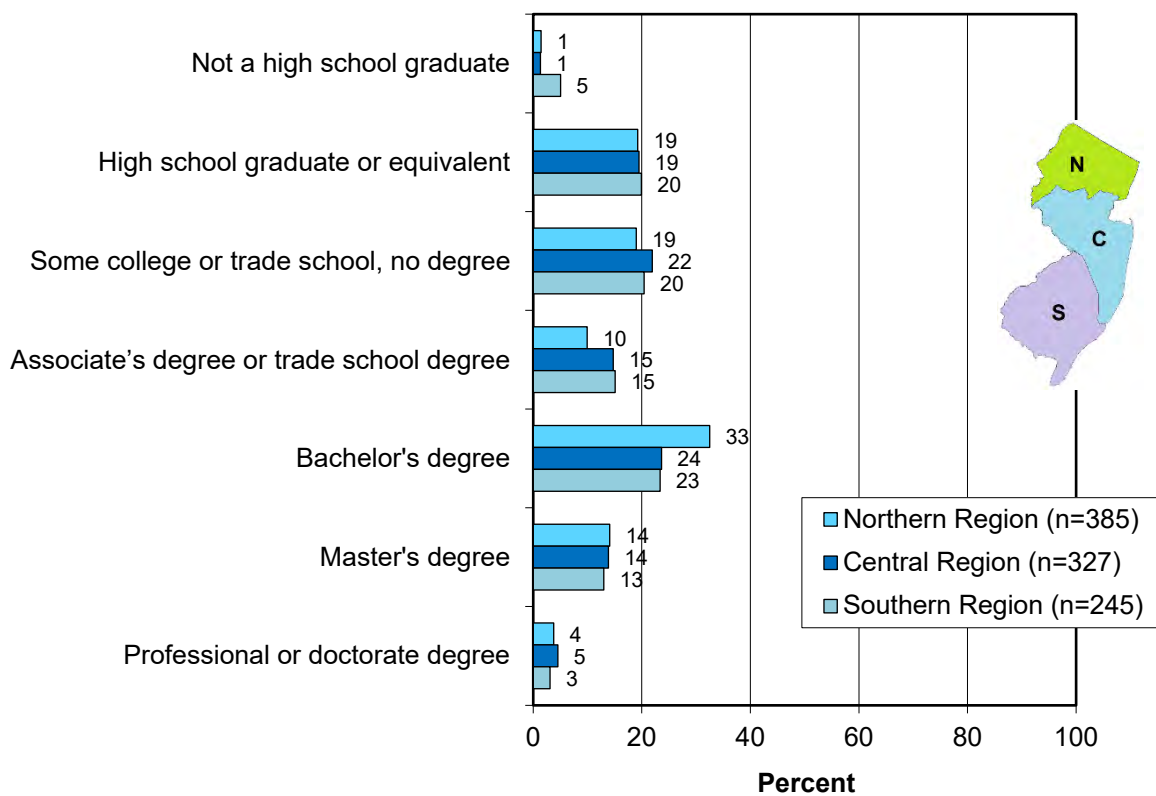
What language is spoken most in your home? (Residents)



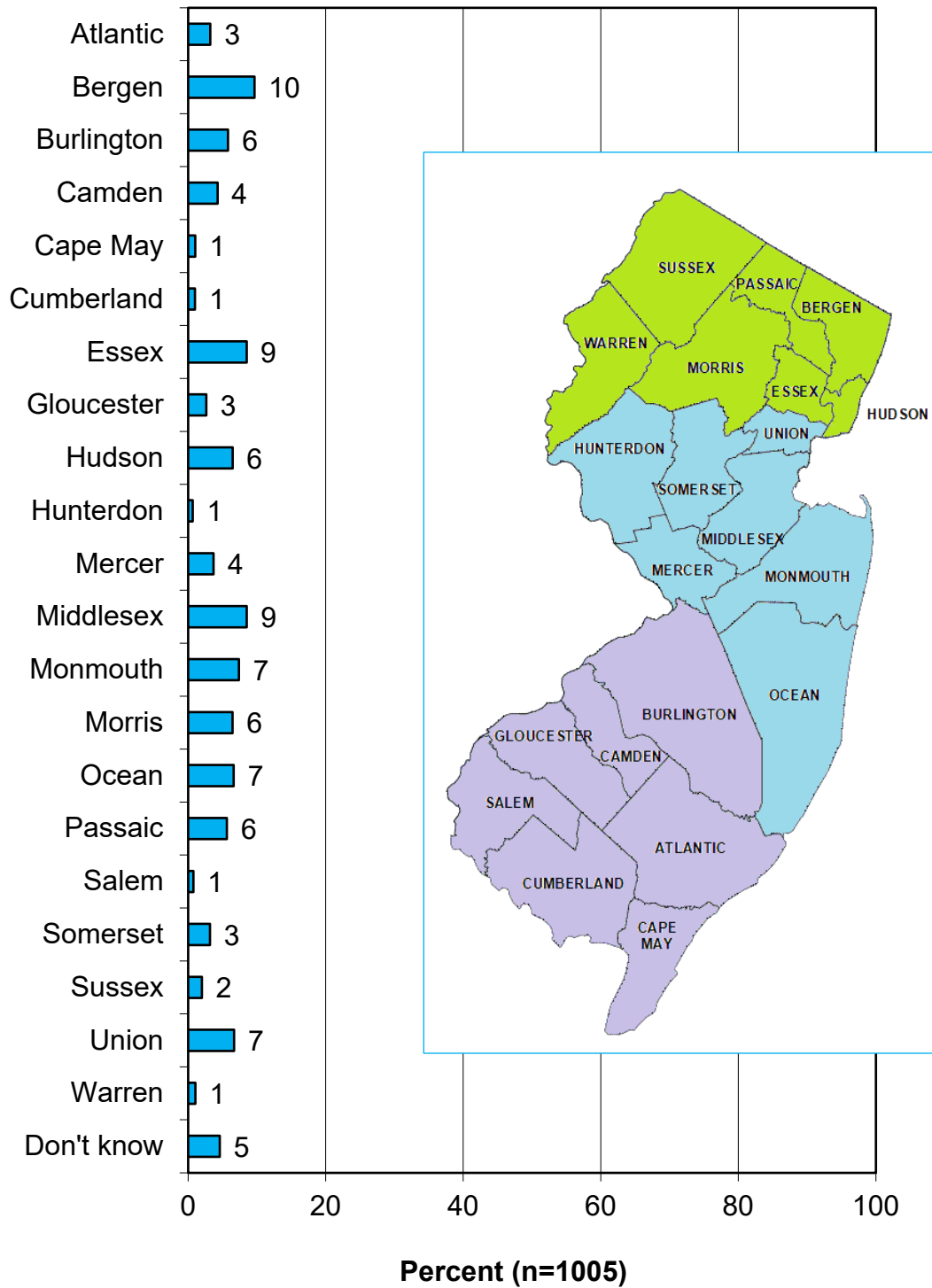
What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Residents)

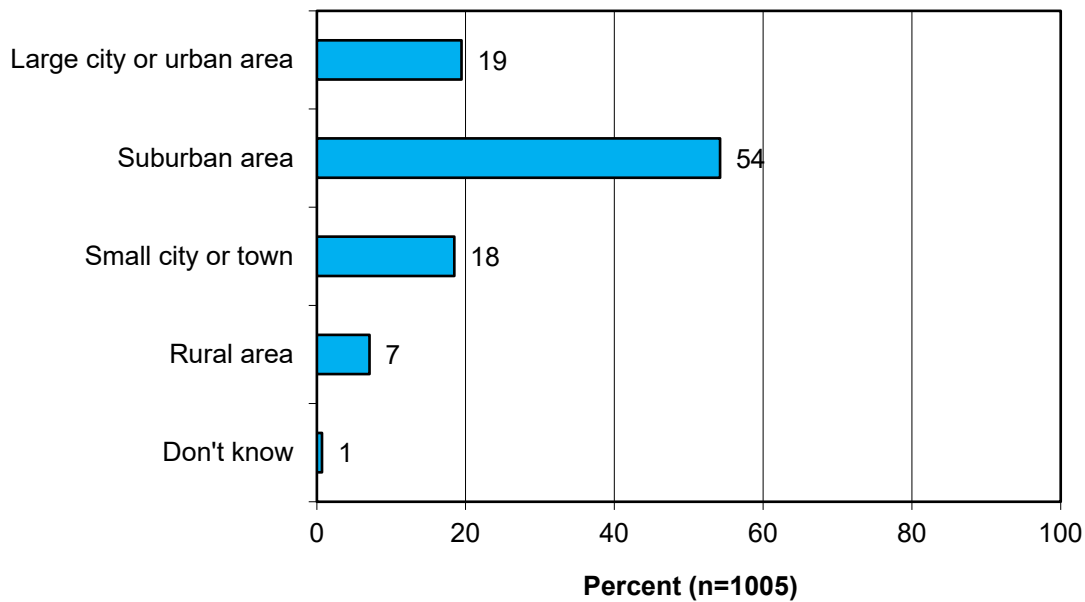
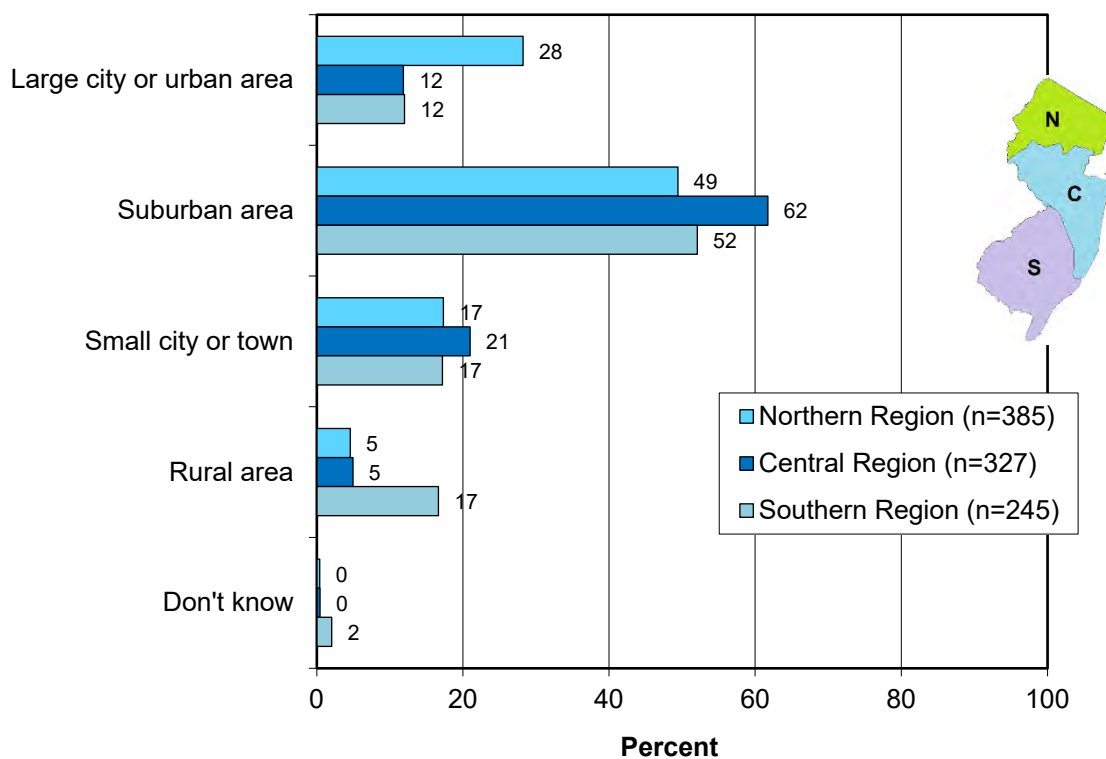


What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Residents)



What county do you live in? (Residents)



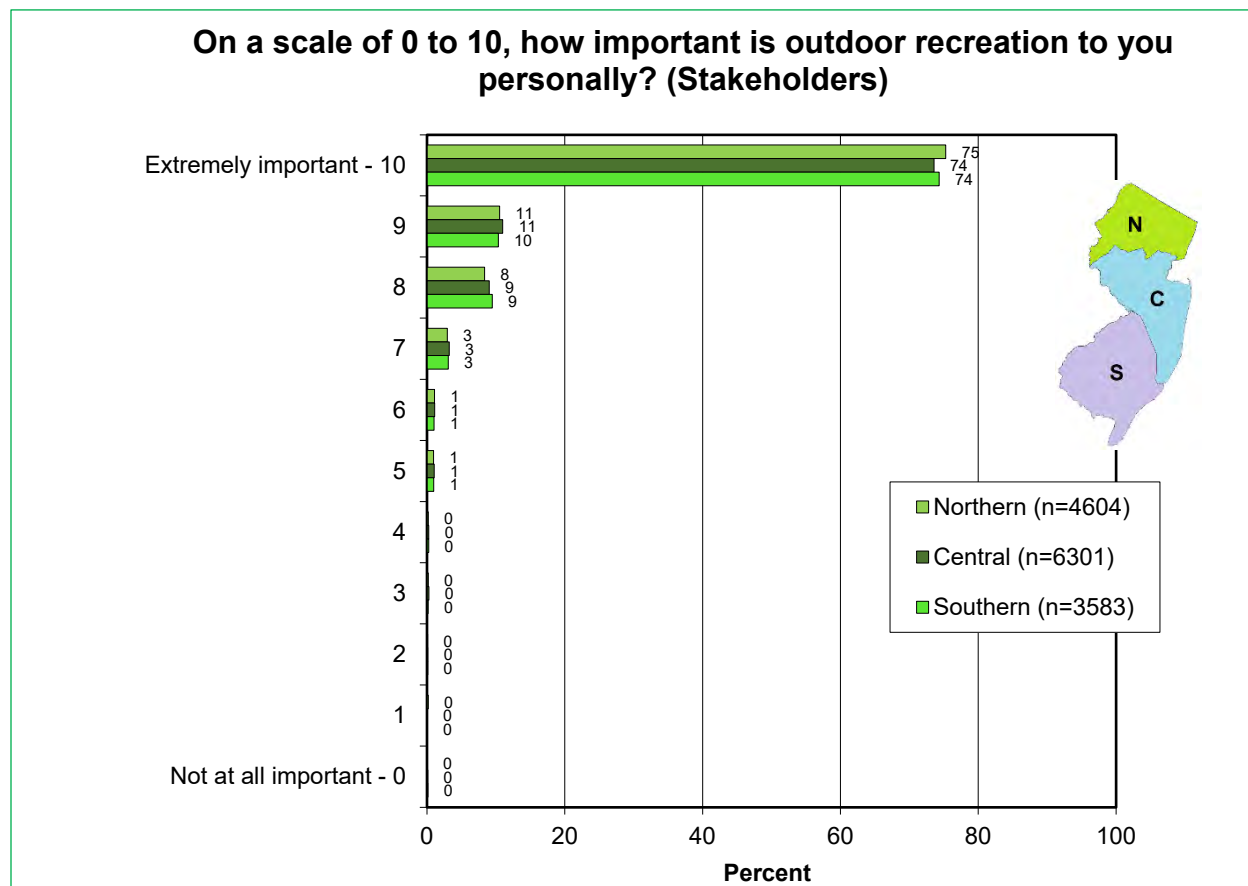
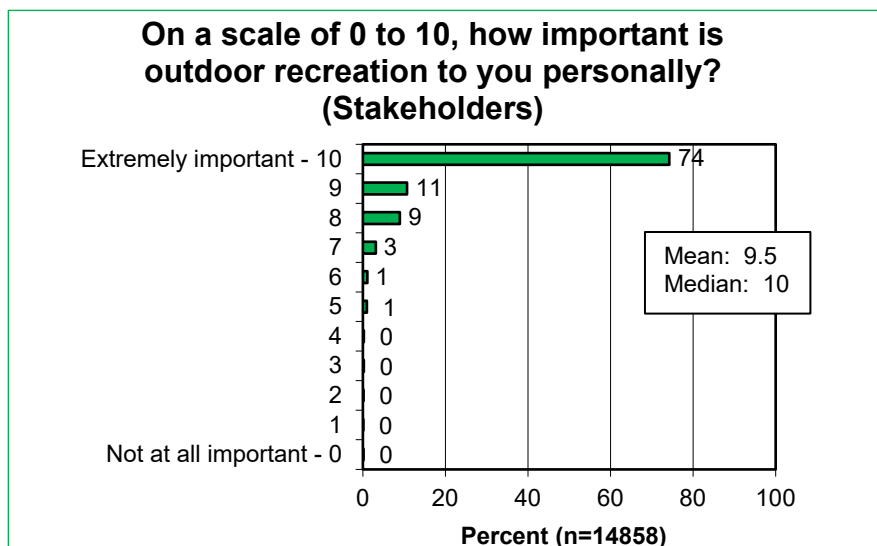
Which of the following do you consider your place of residence to be? (Residents)**Which of the following do you consider your place of residence to be? (Residents)**

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY RESULTS

The stakeholder survey results are presented in this section, following the same thematic organization of the resident survey results above.

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

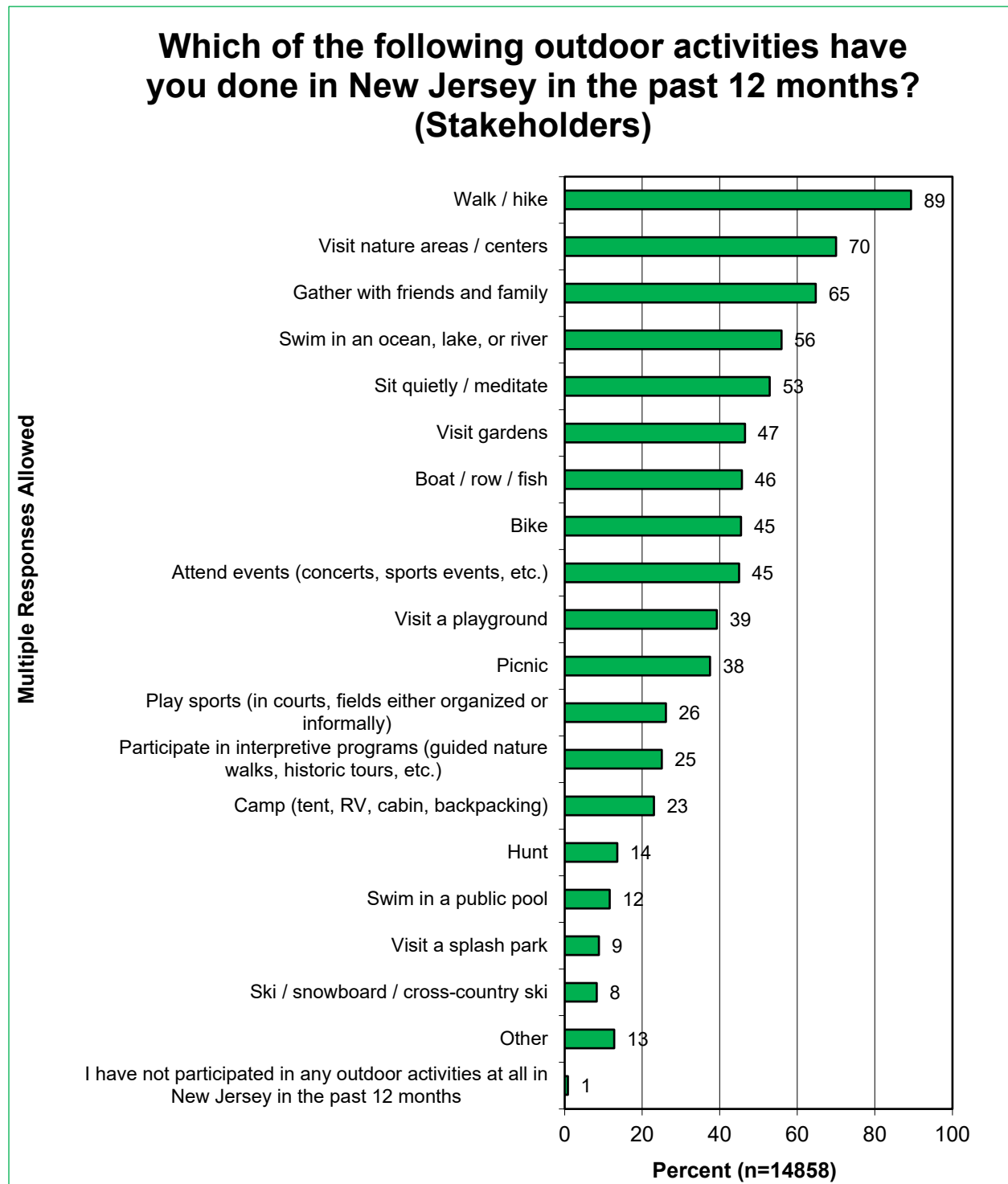
Among stakeholders, outdoor recreation is highly important, with almost three quarters giving its importance the highest rating. Less than 1% of them give a rating of less than the midpoint. The regional results are also shown, with county results tabulated on the next page.



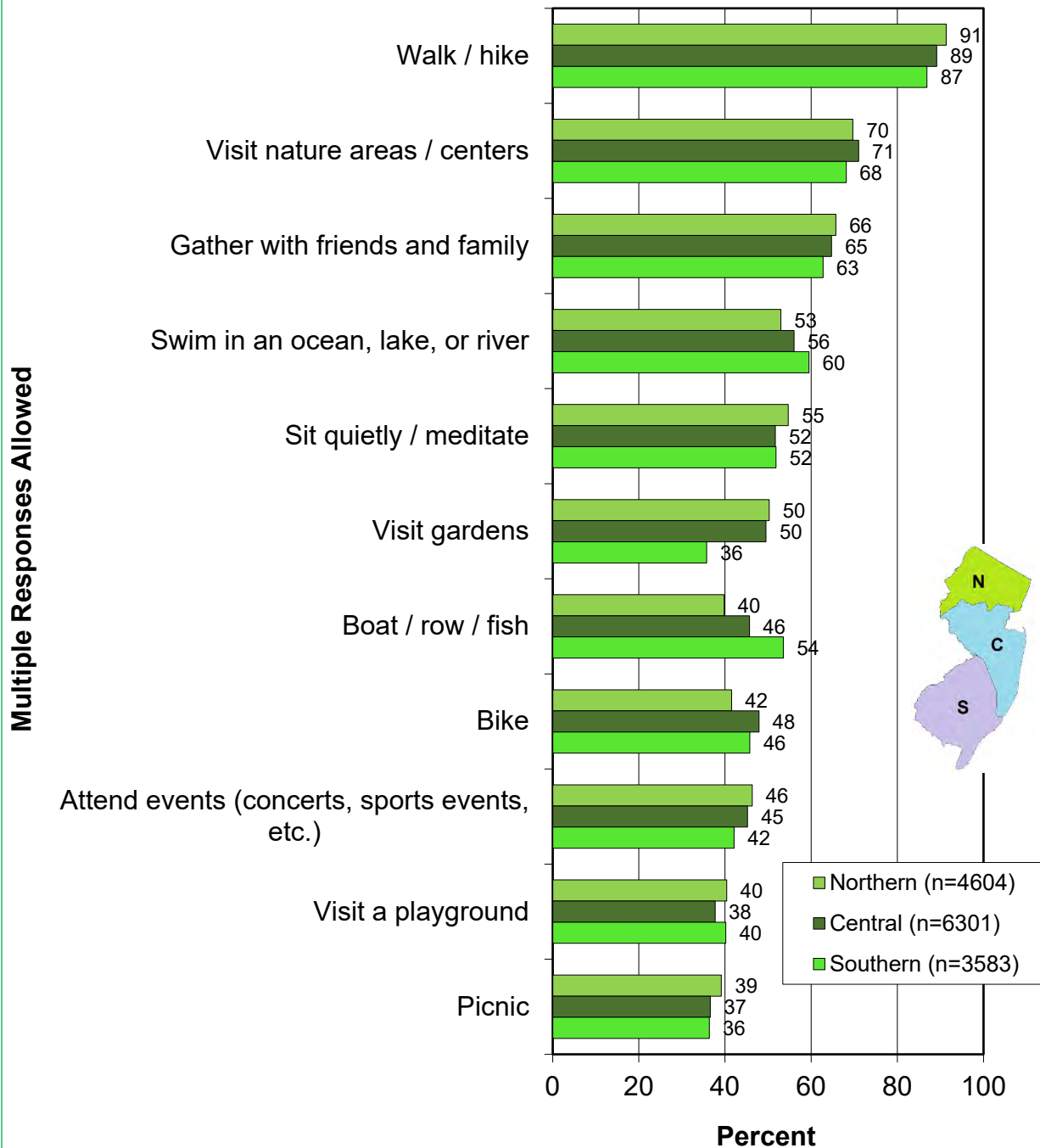
On a scale of 0 to 10, how important is outdoor recreation to you personally? (Stakeholders)											
	Extremely important - 10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Not at all important - 0
Atlantic	79	8	8	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bergen	73	12	9	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Burlington	74	11	10	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	71	12	11	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cape May	74	13	6	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cumberland	74	8	11	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Essex	73	12	8	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Gloucester	76	9	9	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hudson	71	10	12	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hunterdon	80	9	8	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mercer	73	11	9	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Middlesex	69	12	10	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Monmouth	76	10	9	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Morris	78	11	6	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ocean	74	10	9	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Passaic	74	11	8	4	2	0	1	0	0	1	0
Salem	75	10	10	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	72	13	10	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sussex	80	8	8	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Union	73	11	8	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Warren	80	6	10	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Statewide	74	11	9	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES IN NEW JERSEY AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

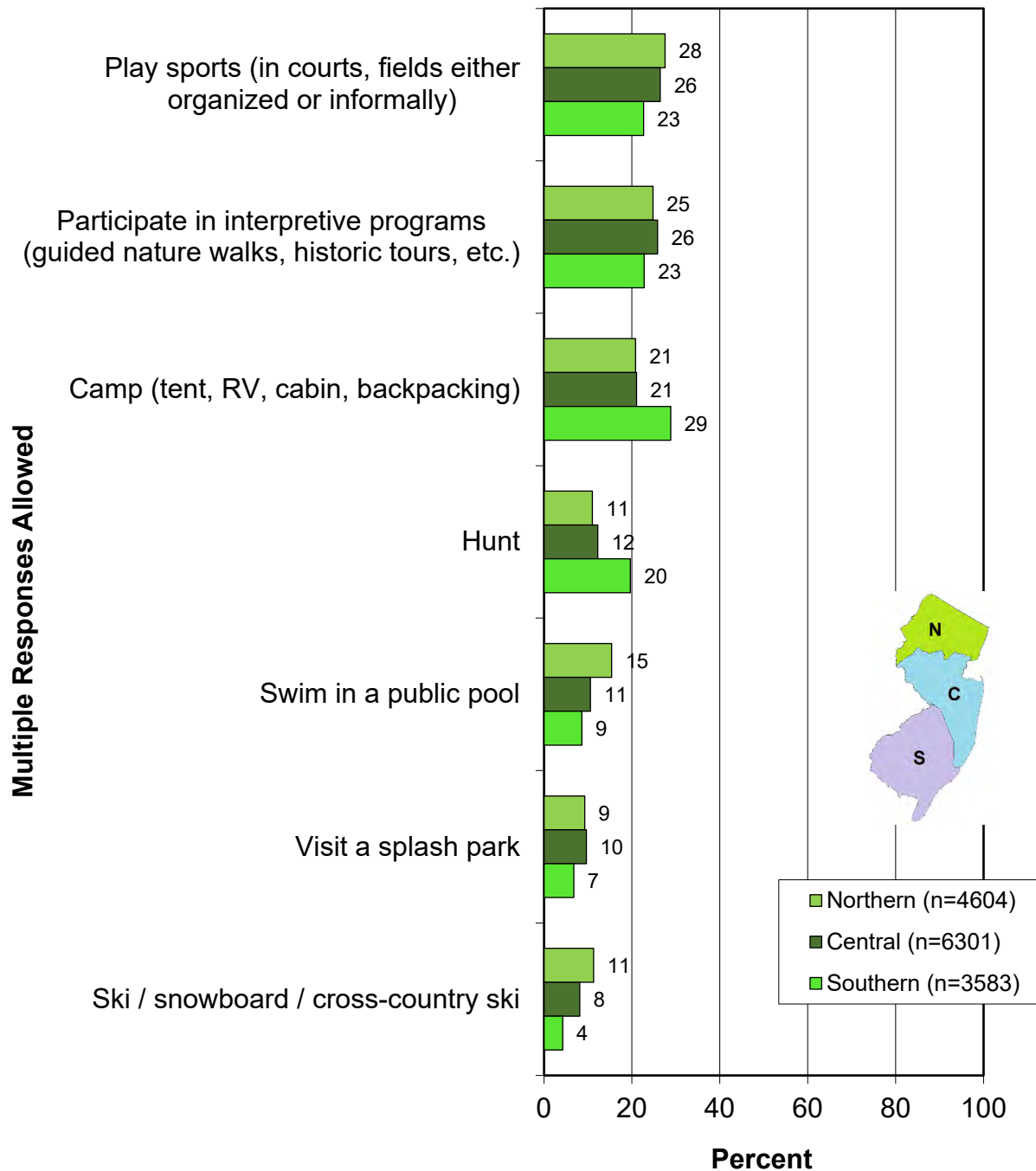
Walking/hiking is the most popular activity among stakeholders: 89% do so. Two other activities have a high rate of participation: visiting nature areas or nature centers and gathering with friends and family—both done by about two thirds. The regional results are shown on two graphs on the succeeding pages, with the county tabulation following those graphs.



Which of the following outdoor activities have you done in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 1) (Stakeholders)

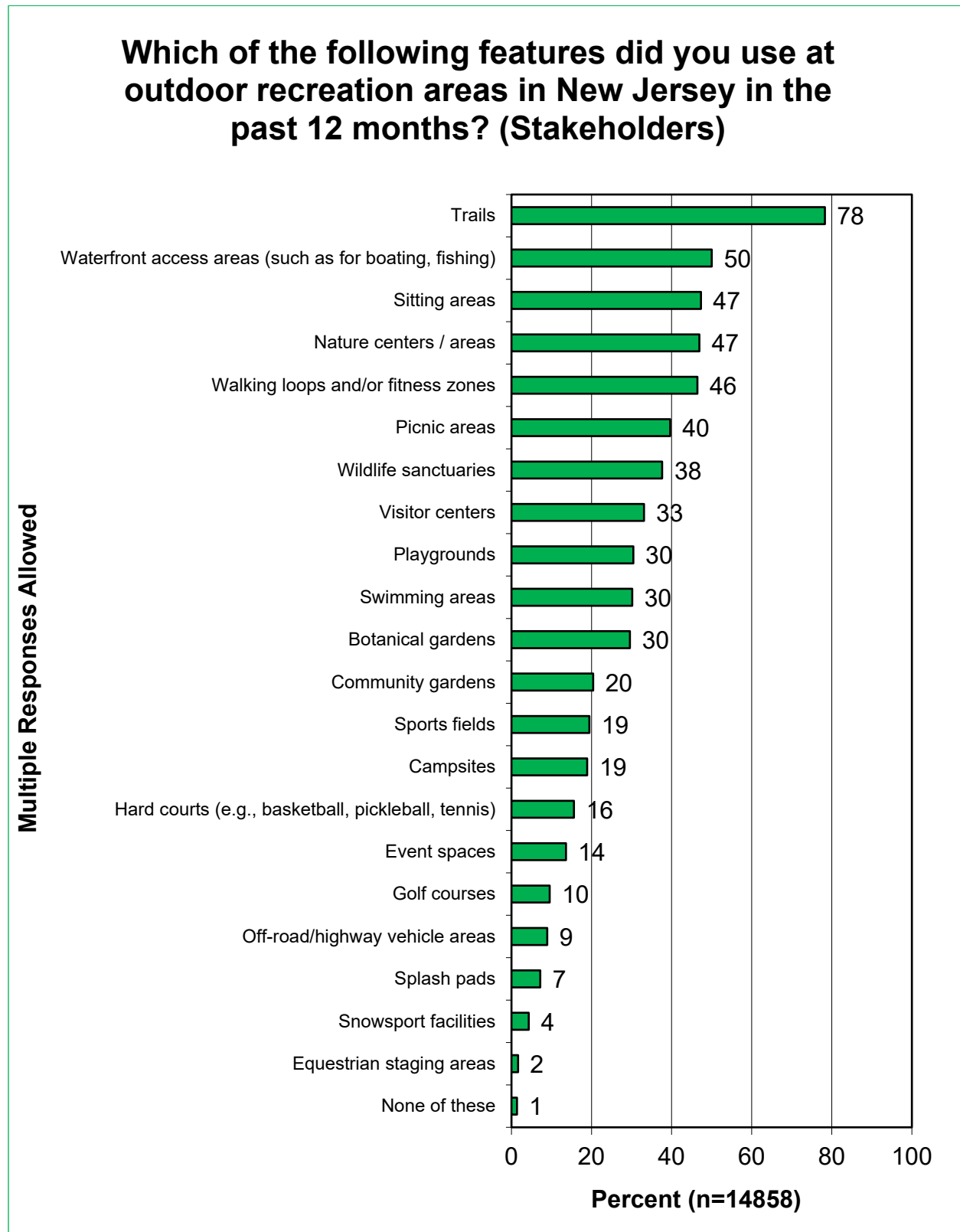


Which of the following outdoor activities have you done in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 2) (Stakeholders)

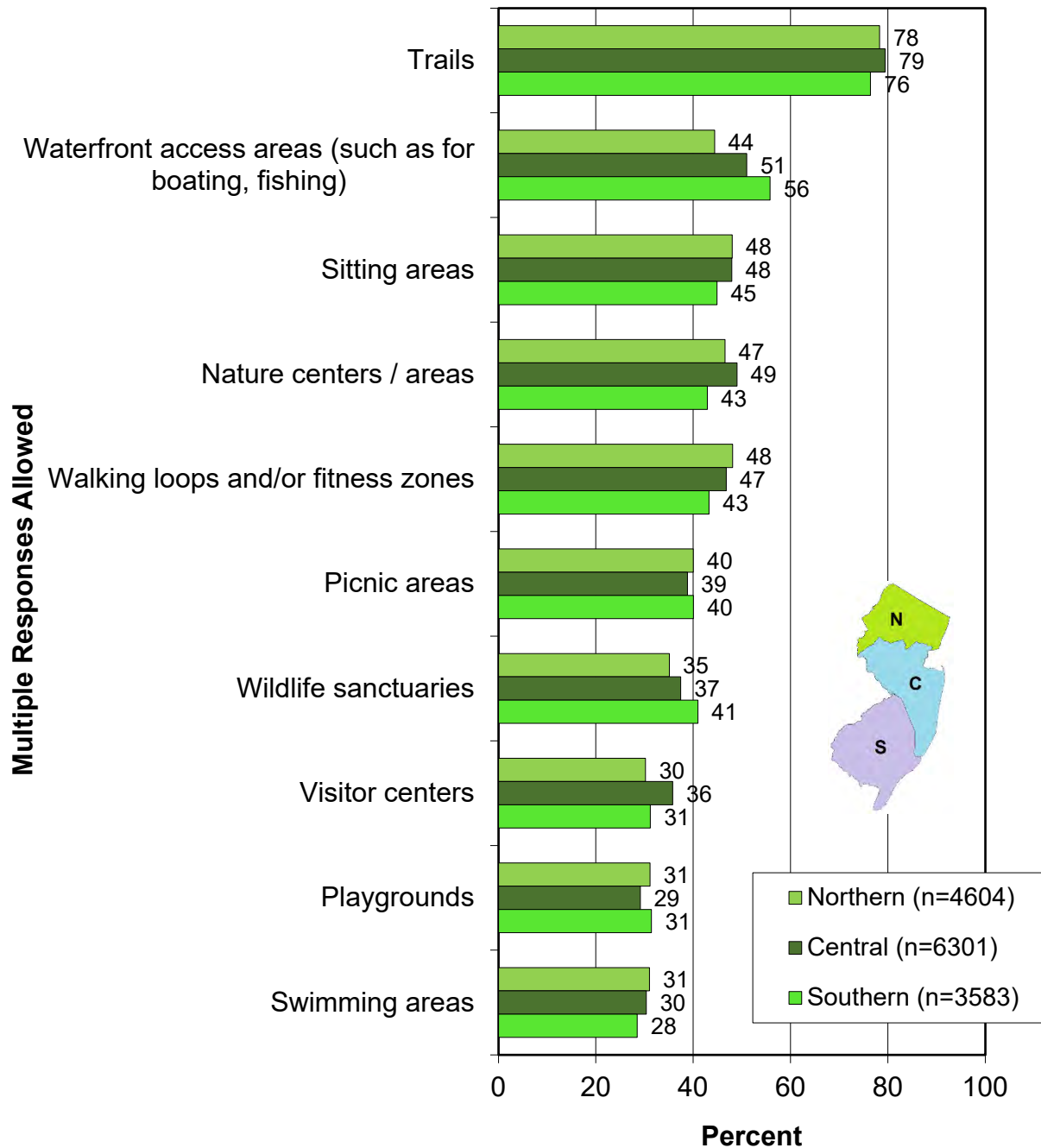


Which of the following outdoor activities have you done in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)																		
	Walk / hike	Visit nature areas / centers	Gather with friends and family	Swim in an ocean, lake, or river	Sit quietly / meditate	Visit gardens	Boat / row / fish	Bike	Attend events (concerts, sports events, etc.)	Visit a playground	Picnic	Play sports (in courts, fields either organized or informally)	Participate in interpretive programs (guided nature walks, historic tours, etc.)	Camp (tent, RV, cabin, backpacking)	Hunt	Swim in a public pool	Visit a splash park	Ski / snowboard / cross-country ski
Atlantic	85	73	65	65	55	35	61	55	41	41	39	23	24	29	23	7	4	5
Bergen	90	71	65	49	55	49	35	41	44	42	38	30	23	17	7	17	9	11
Burlington	91	70	66	59	53	39	50	45	44	42	39	23	28	28	17	6	6	5
Camden	86	68	64	58	54	37	45	44	44	44	36	25	20	28	14	13	8	4
Cape May	86	68	61	73	54	33	66	57	46	33	33	24	24	25	24	9	6	5
Cumberland	82	66	55	46	45	24	67	39	32	27	32	11	19	34	35	5	8	4
Essex	91	67	70	51	58	56	25	43	54	45	37	30	23	17	4	25	11	10
Gloucester	85	64	58	59	50	36	53	38	42	38	34	23	18	31	19	9	9	3
Hudson	92	65	71	44	62	52	22	47	46	50	43	29	21	15	4	21	17	8
Hunterdon	94	74	66	54	57	48	47	51	42	35	37	26	29	25	18	7	4	9
Mercer	90	70	64	50	53	55	36	50	42	38	40	25	26	19	9	14	8	9
Middlesex	86	69	64	47	49	52	41	41	44	39	37	27	25	20	10	10	11	6
Monmouth	91	72	63	63	54	51	48	51	47	37	35	27	26	21	12	9	10	9
Morris	93	72	65	56	52	53	44	42	46	36	39	28	27	24	12	13	8	12
Ocean	85	69	64	67	48	36	65	48	47	36	34	23	24	24	18	6	9	6
Passaic	91	69	64	58	53	60	48	34	47	38	38	25	26	18	10	10	6	11
Salem	86	59	59	49	39	30	57	49	31	42	35	23	21	30	27	10	9	3
Somerset	91	75	68	50	53	61	34	49	46	38	39	29	26	21	8	14	12	11
Sussex	90	69	62	60	53	36	60	41	42	33	42	20	29	33	25	5	7	17
Union	91	70	66	53	51	52	34	47	48	45	36	32	27	17	9	18	12	8
Warren	92	73	61	54	49	36	63	45	42	37	39	25	24	30	29	13	8	10
Statewide	89	70	65	56	53	47	46	45	45	39	38	26	25	23	14	12	9	8

Trails are the features of outdoor recreation areas that are most used by stakeholders. Also high on the list are waterfront access areas, sitting areas, nature centers/areas, and walking loops/fitness zones. Regional and county results are presented as well.

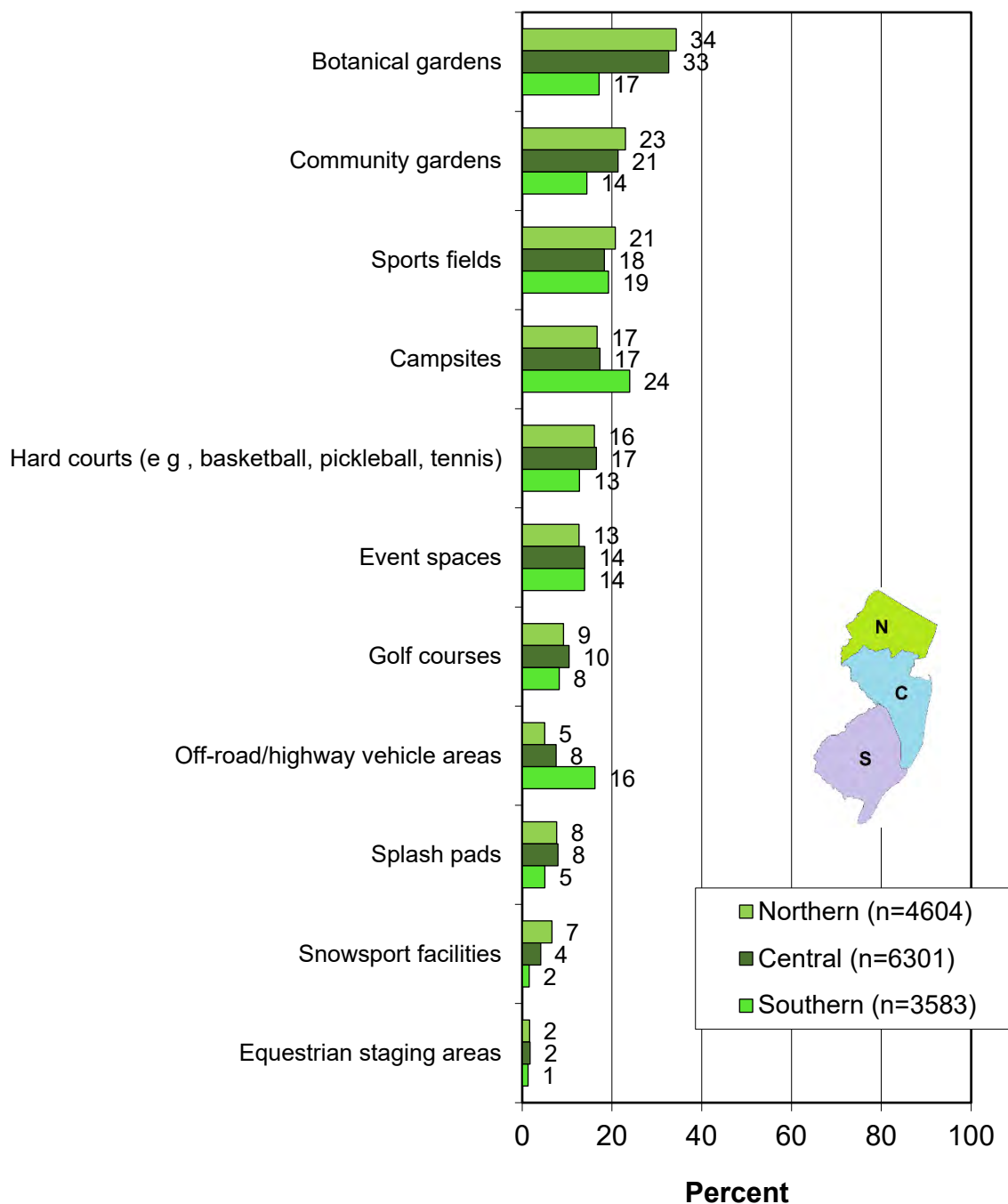


Which of the following features did you use at outdoor recreation areas in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 1) (Stakeholders)



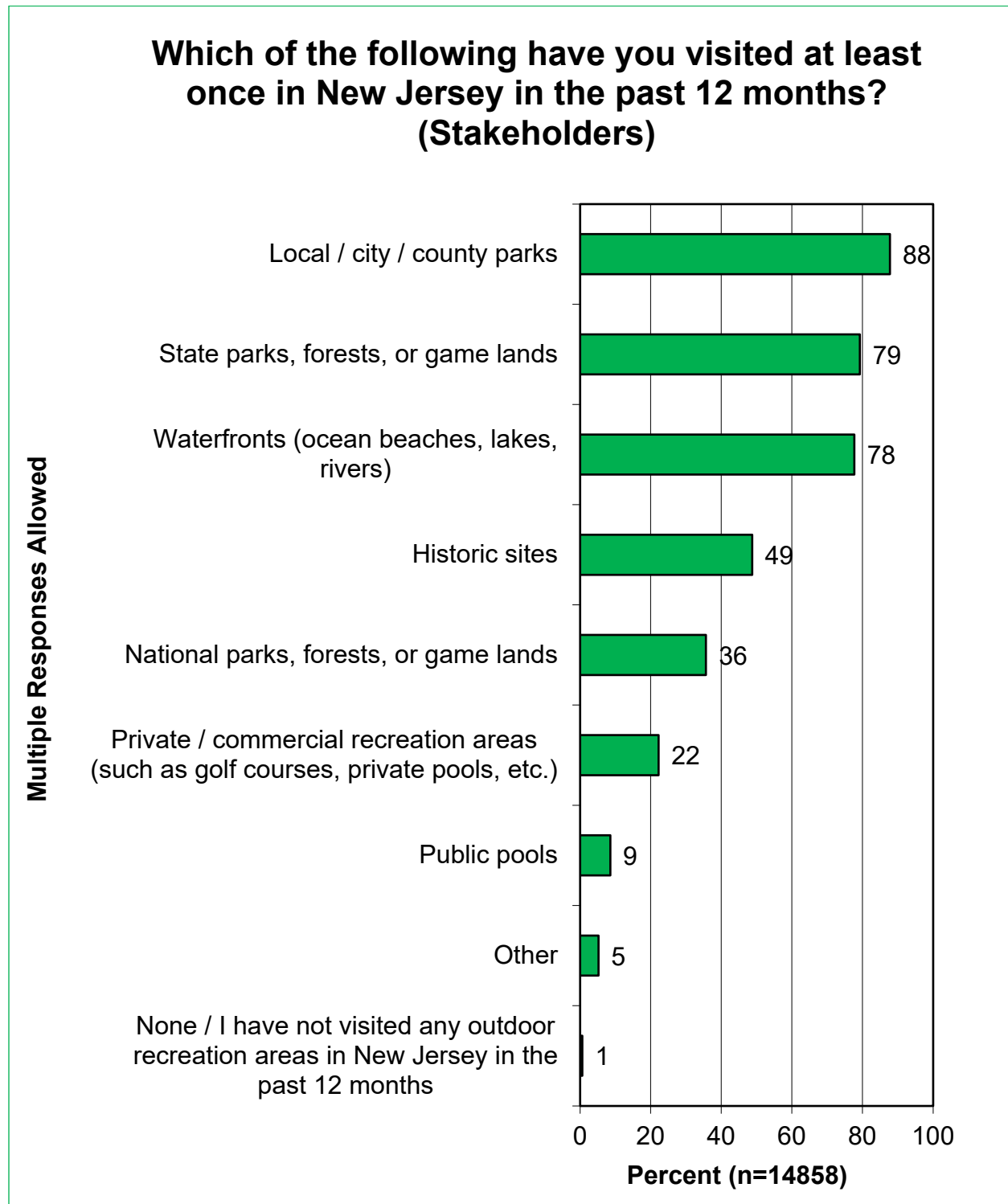
Which of the following features did you use at outdoor recreation areas in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Part 2) (Stakeholders)

Multiple Responses Allowed

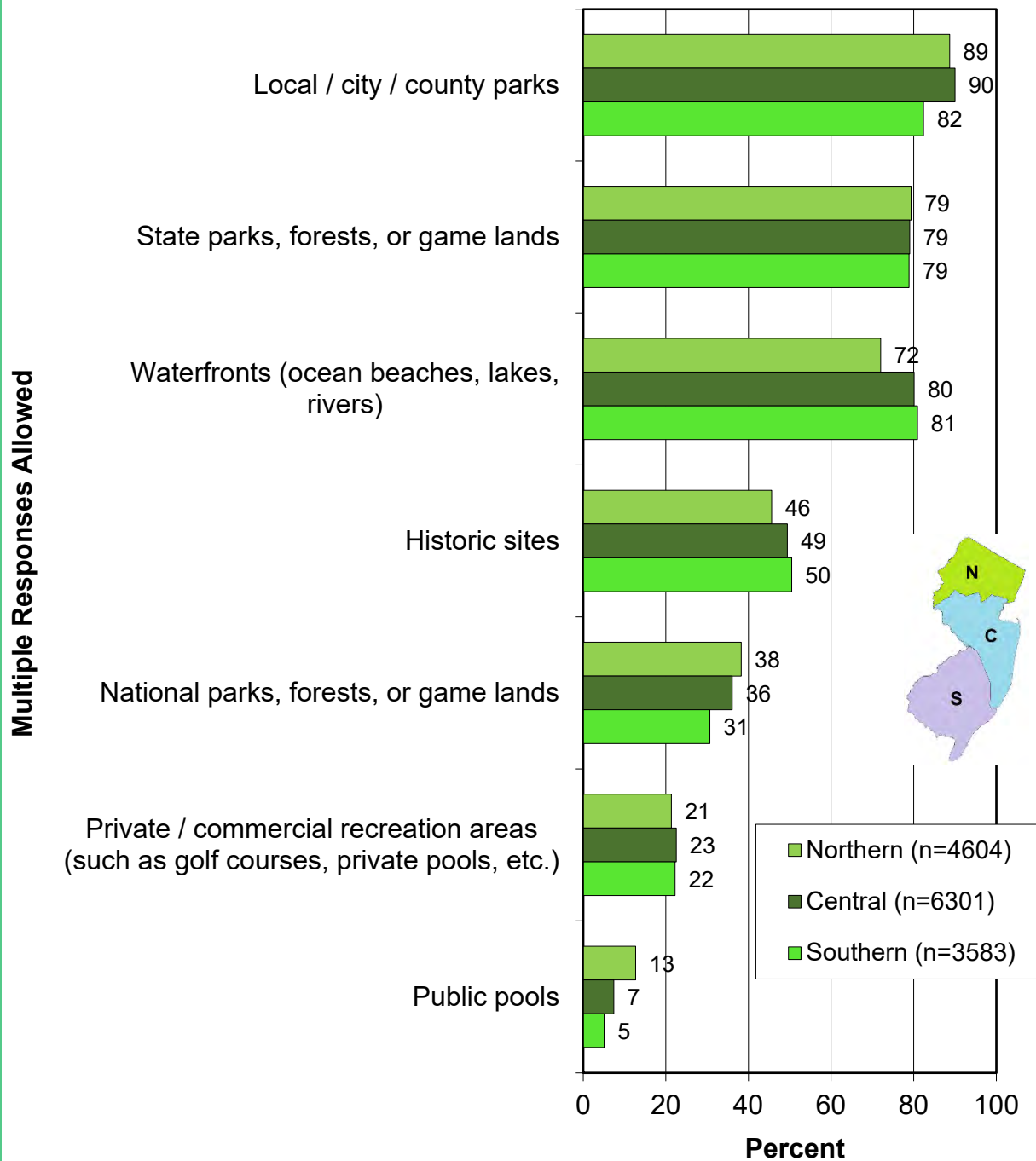


Which of the following features did you use at outdoor recreation areas in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)																					
	Trails	Waterfront access areas (such as for boating, fishing)	Sitting areas	Nature centers / areas	Walking loops and/or fitness zones	Picnic areas	Wildlife sanctuaries	Visitor centers	Playgrounds	Swimming areas	Botanical gardens	Community gardens	Sports fields	Campsites	Hard courts (e.g., basketball, pickleball, tennis)	Event spaces	Golf courses	Off-road/highway vehicle areas	Splash pads	Snowsport facilities	Equestrian staging areas
Atlantic	75	61	42	47	40	38	49	35	31	32	17	16	21	25	12	12	10	17	3	3	1
Bergen	75	41	49	52	51	39	36	29	33	28	34	22	23	13	17	12	10	5	8	6	2
Burlington	80	54	50	48	43	45	41	37	32	26	21	16	19	23	13	15	9	17	4	2	2
Camden	76	49	46	40	48	41	38	32	36	32	17	17	20	24	13	17	6	16	6	2	1
Cape May	71	69	44	47	38	35	50	26	25	43	13	13	20	20	15	14	10	14	5	1	0
Cumberland	76	64	33	36	33	35	37	20	23	22	10	8	11	28	7	9	8	17	6	0	1
Essex	76	34	54	44	56	38	30	29	37	35	35	30	21	15	18	15	8	4	9	5	1
Gloucester	76	54	46	38	46	39	36	26	31	23	18	12	20	25	14	14	9	17	7	1	1
Hudson	68	38	59	40	50	45	29	26	36	31	29	29	21	11	20	13	5	4	16	7	1
Hunterdon	88	56	46	53	47	41	45	33	26	26	32	17	15	19	15	12	11	6	4	5	4
Mercer	81	40	50	48	46	43	36	34	31	25	36	24	17	16	15	16	10	6	8	2	2
Middlesex	75	47	49	49	48	40	34	34	30	24	35	25	18	17	17	14	9	6	8	3	1
Monmouth	82	56	50	50	49	36	34	42	28	33	33	21	18	18	17	14	12	7	8	5	2
Morris	84	46	45	47	48	40	39	32	27	32	37	23	22	18	16	13	12	5	7	8	1
Ocean	74	67	44	47	38	36	42	37	26	41	21	15	18	19	14	14	10	14	7	3	1
Passaic	76	49	45	52	41	42	37	34	28	30	53	25	20	16	15	15	10	6	4	7	3
Salem	74	52	33	30	47	33	33	18	36	23	10	4	19	26	8	9	2	6	7	1	1
Somerset	83	38	47	48	53	39	37	32	30	25	44	28	20	16	20	12	11	5	11	5	2
Sussex	86	55	42	40	38	42	36	31	28	33	23	12	16	26	12	10	8	7	4	12	3
Union	78	40	51	50	53	40	34	34	35	34	33	23	23	16	21	15	11	4	10	6	2
Warren	86	61	38	43	44	37	39	30	31	28	20	13	19	23	10	11	9	5	5	4	2
Statewide	78	50	47	47	46	40	38	33	30	30	30	20	19	19	16	14	10	9	7	4	2

Visitation rates at various areas are shown. Local parks lead the list among stakeholders, closely followed by state parks/forests/game lands and waterfronts. Regional results show almost no marked differences except regarding visiting waterfronts—done by Central and Southern Region stakeholders more than Northern Region stakeholders. Tabulated county results are also shown.



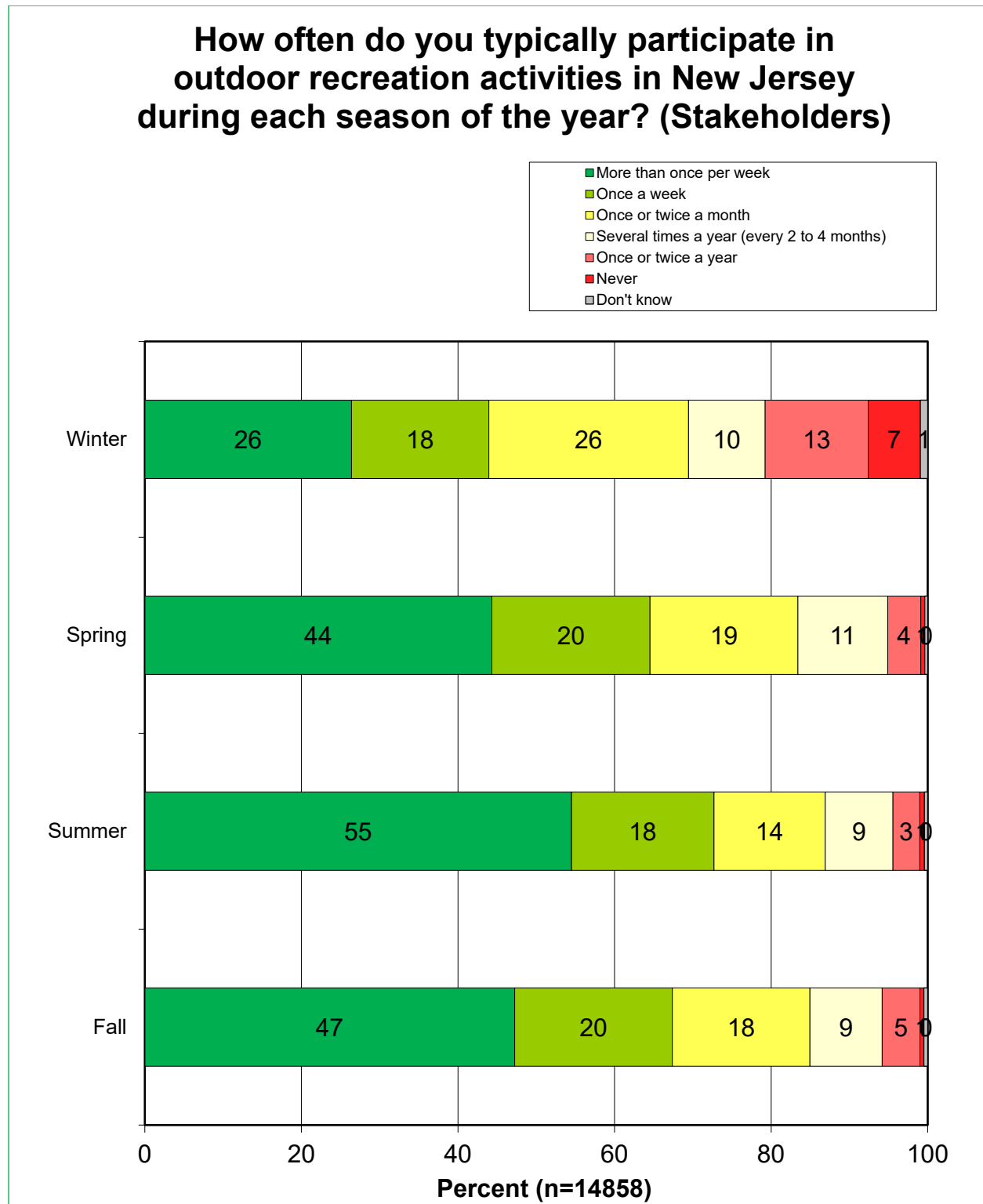
Which of the following have you visited at least once in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)



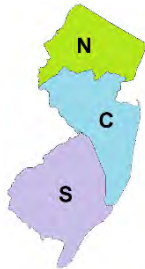
Which of the following have you visited at least once in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)							
	Local / city / county parks	State parks, forests, or game lands	Waterfronts (ocean beaches, lakes, rivers)	Historic sites	National parks, forests, or game lands	Private / commercial recreation areas (golf courses, private pools, etc.)	Public pools
Atlantic	85	82	86	52	36	24	3
Bergen	92	73	70	42	30	22	13
Burlington	84	80	79	56	32	22	3
Camden	85	77	81	48	27	21	9
Cape May	79	79	90	49	35	21	6
Cumberland	67	84	75	41	29	23	4
Essex	94	69	70	44	30	20	21
Gloucester	83	74	78	48	28	24	4
Hudson	93	71	72	38	31	17	19
Hunterdon	90	90	78	49	38	25	4
Mercer	91	77	73	52	27	19	10
Middlesex	91	77	79	48	36	20	8
Monmouth	92	78	86	54	44	23	7
Morris	91	84	75	52	45	24	11
Ocean	83	83	89	46	35	21	3
Passaic	84	84	72	49	36	22	8
Salem	78	85	80	47	27	21	5
Somerset	94	76	73	46	35	29	10
Sussex	73	94	71	47	55	22	3
Union	94	73	73	47	37	24	15
Warren	82	92	75	46	54	19	10
Statewide	88	79	78	49	36	22	9

TIMING OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW JERSEY BY STAKEHOLDERS

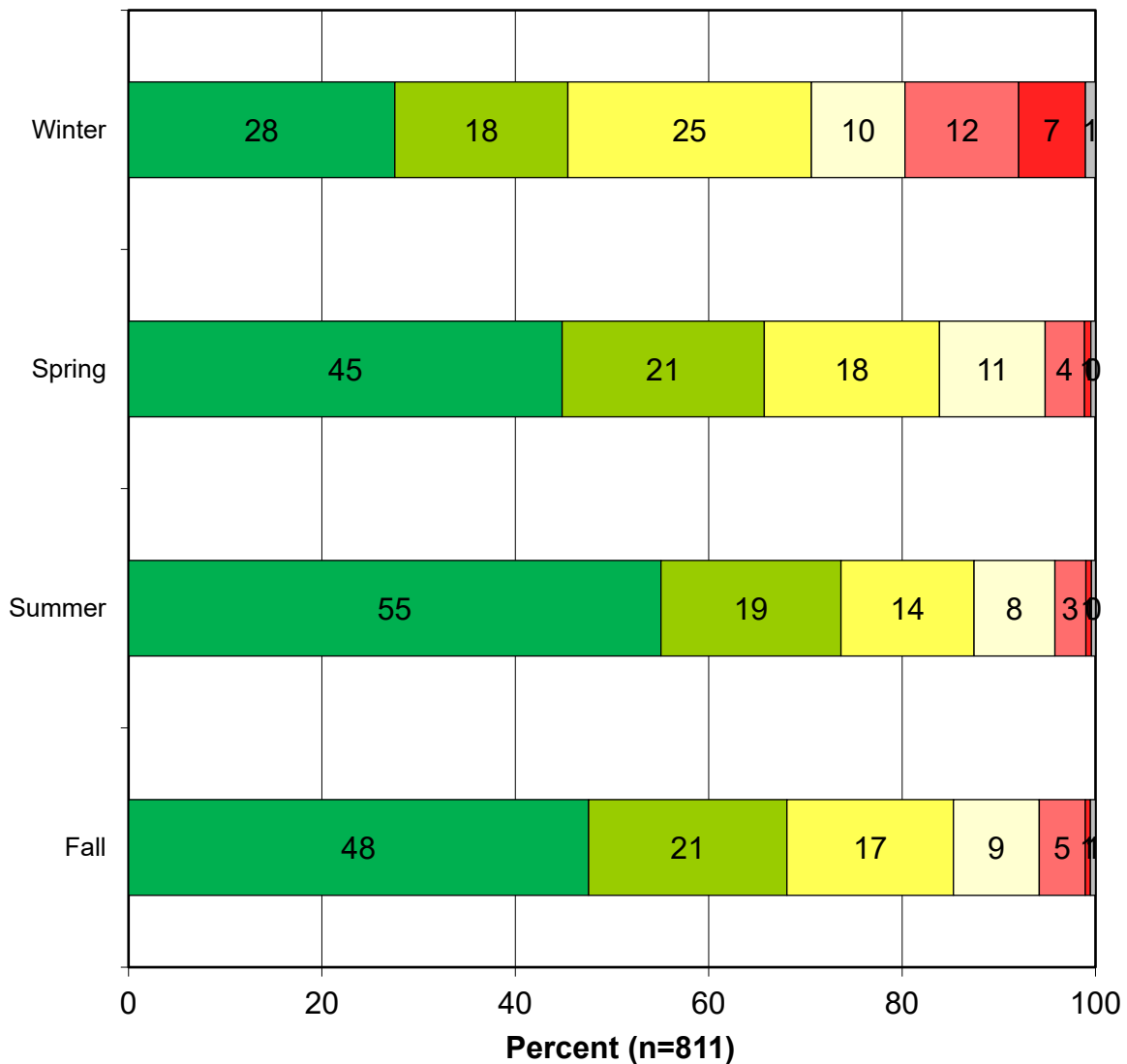
Summer is the season of the most outdoor activity by stakeholders in New Jersey, with spring and fall also having much activity. Each region is shown on its own graph, with county results presented in tables.



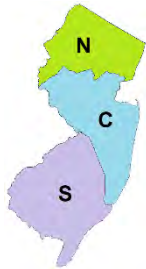
How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Northern) (Stakeholders)



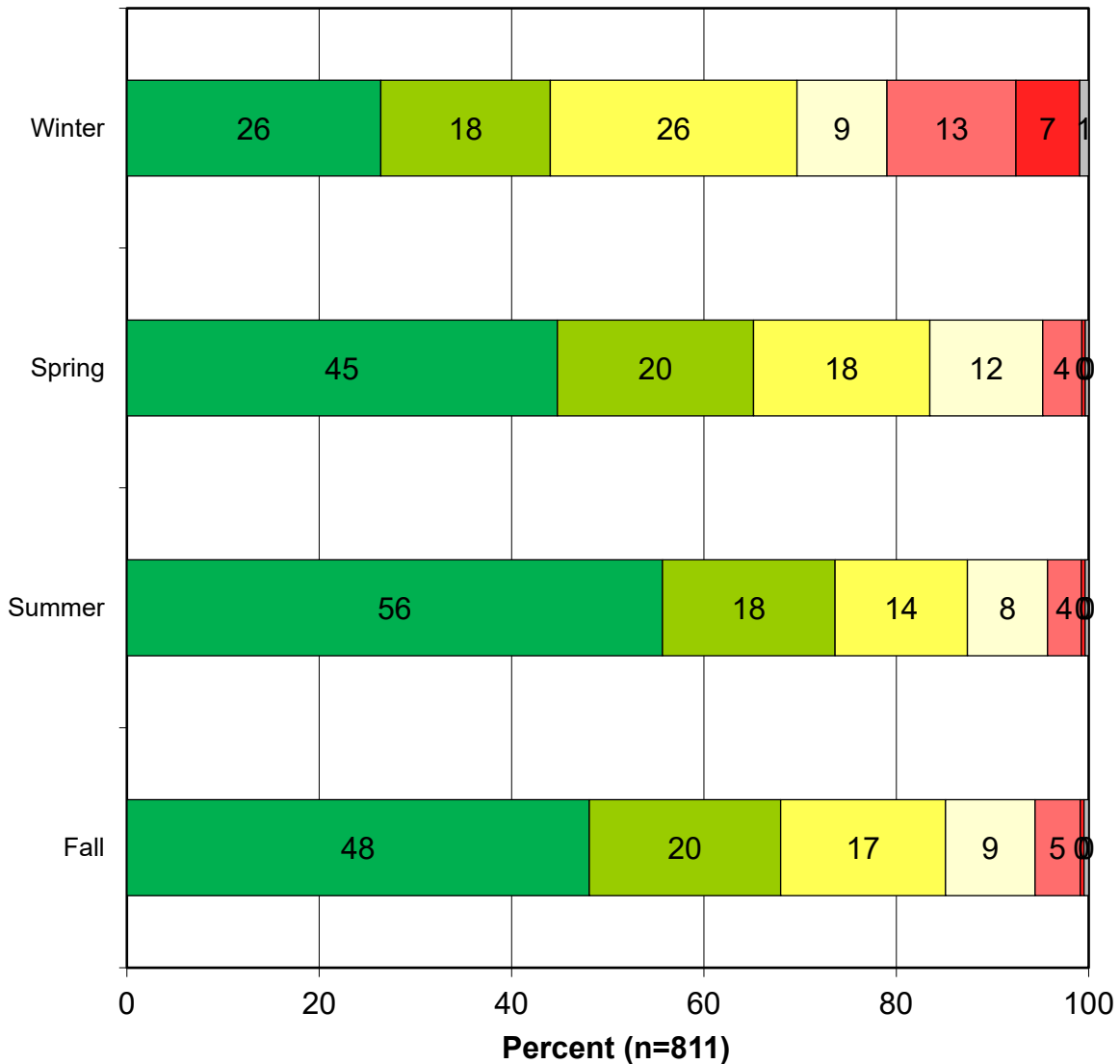
- More than once per week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)
- Once or twice a year
- Never
- Don't know



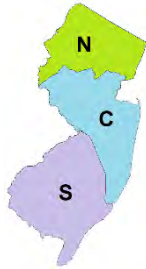
How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Central Stakeholders)



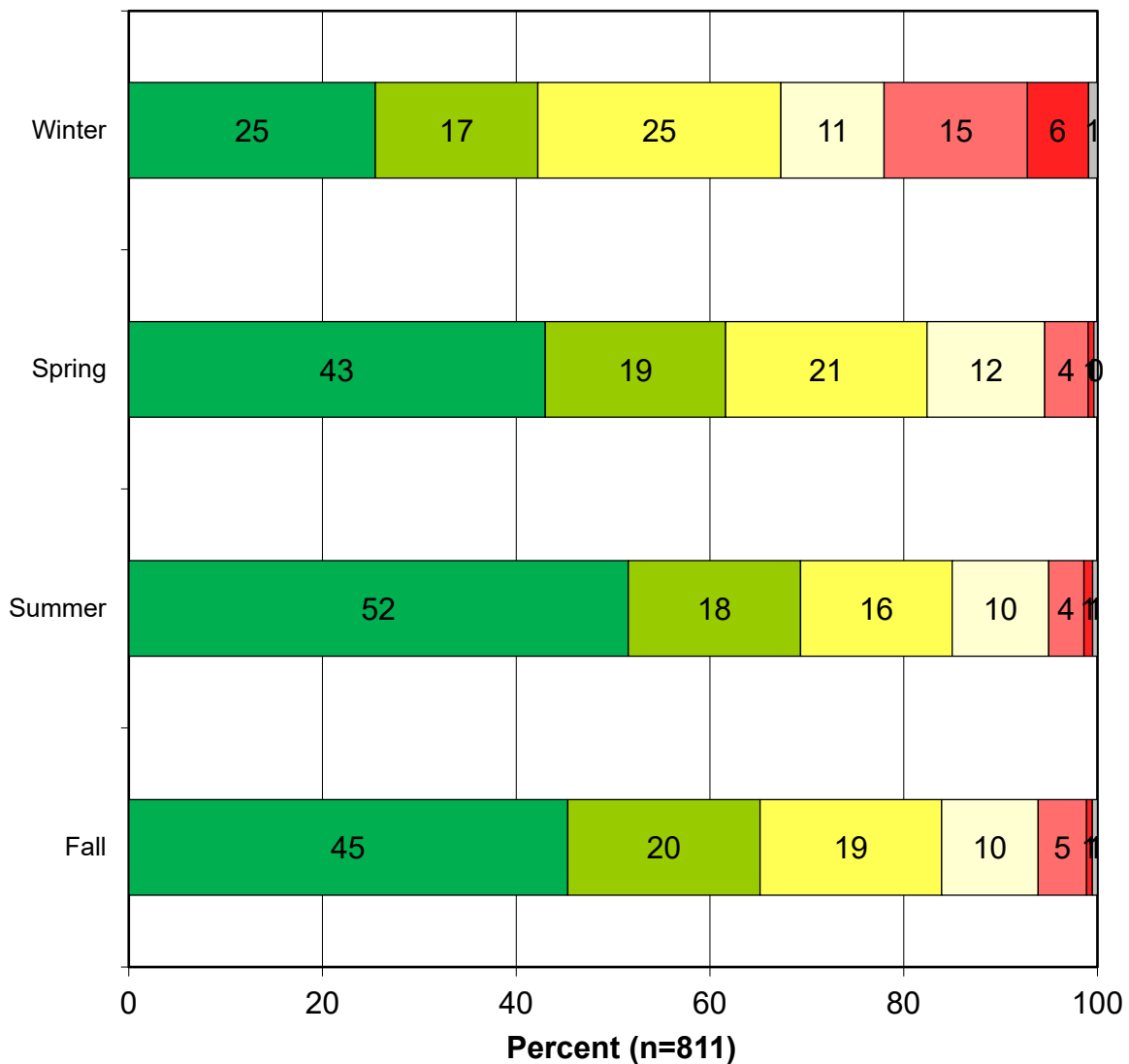
- More than once per week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)
- Once or twice a year
- Never
- Don't know



How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Southern) (Stakeholders)



- More than once per week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)
- Once or twice a year
- Never
- Don't know



How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Stakeholders)					
		Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Atlantic	More than once per week	30	47	52	50
	Once a week	18	19	19	20
	Once or twice a month	24	20	17	18
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	9	10	8	9
	Once or twice a year	13	3	3	3
	Never	5	0	0	0
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Bergen	More than once per week	26	41	49	43
	Once a week	16	20	19	20
	Once or twice a month	27	20	17	21
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	11	13	10	10
	Once or twice a year	12	5	4	5
	Never	7	1	1	1
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Burlington	More than once per week	24	41	48	43
	Once a week	18	19	19	20
	Once or twice a month	24	21	16	19
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	11	13	11	11
	Once or twice a year	15	5	4	5
	Never	7	0	1	1
	Don't know	1	0	1	1
Camden	More than once per week	22	40	50	40
	Once a week	15	19	18	22
	Once or twice a month	27	21	16	19
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	13	14	11	11
	Once or twice a year	16	5	4	7
	Never	6	0	1	1
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Cape May	More than once per week	37	64	72	66
	Once a week	20	14	11	12
	Once or twice a month	18	14	10	12
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	7	7	5	7
	Once or twice a year	12	2	2	2
	Never	5	0	1	0
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Cumberland	More than once per week	33	44	56	50
	Once a week	16	20	19	20
	Once or twice a month	22	22	15	18
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	6	10	7	7
	Once or twice a year	15	4	3	4
	Never	7	1	1	0
	Don't know	0	0	0	0

How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Stakeholders)					
		Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Essex	More than once per week	24	43	56	44
	Once a week	20	22	17	21
	Once or twice a month	23	16	13	17
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	12	13	10	11
	Once or twice a year	12	5	4	6
	Never	8	0	1	1
	Don't know	1	1	0	1
Gloucester	More than once per week	20	38	48	40
	Once a week	15	19	18	21
	Once or twice a month	30	23	17	22
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	11	14	11	10
	Once or twice a year	15	5	4	5
	Never	8	1	2	1
	Don't know	1	1	1	1
Hudson	More than once per week	24	41	56	47
	Once a week	18	19	16	17
	Once or twice a month	23	18	12	16
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	11	14	10	11
	Once or twice a year	14	6	5	7
	Never	9	1	1	1
	Don't know	1	1	1	1
Hunterdon	More than once per week	35	53	60	56
	Once a week	18	20	16	18
	Once or twice a month	25	15	15	15
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	8	8	7	8
	Once or twice a year	10	3	1	3
	Never	4	0	0	0
	Don't know	0	0	0	0
Mercer	More than once per week	27	46	56	48
	Once a week	16	21	18	20
	Once or twice a month	26	18	13	17
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	9	10	9	10
	Once or twice a year	13	4	4	4
	Never	7	0	1	1
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Middlesex	More than once per week	21	38	50	41
	Once a week	15	18	17	18
	Once or twice a month	25	21	16	21
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	12	16	11	12
	Once or twice a year	17	6	4	7
	Never	9	0	0	0
	Don't know	1	0	1	1

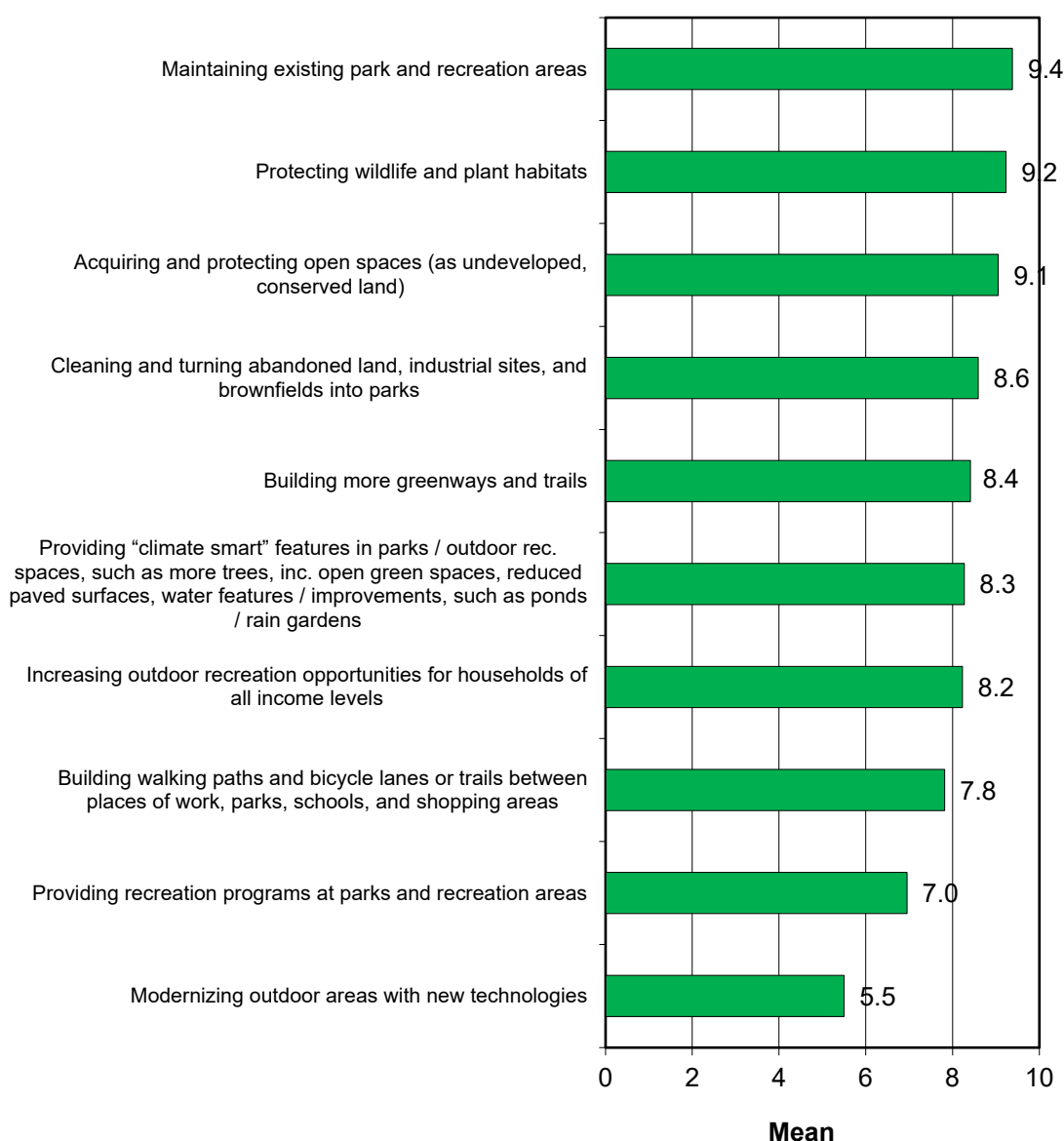
How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Stakeholders)					
		Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Monmouth	More than once per week	30	48	58	51
	Once a week	19	21	18	20
	Once or twice a month	24	16	13	16
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	8	10	7	7
	Once or twice a year	12	4	3	4
	Never	6	0	0	0
	Don't know	1	0	1	1
Morris	More than once per week	28	47	57	50
	Once a week	18	23	21	23
	Once or twice a month	27	18	12	17
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	9	8	6	7
	Once or twice a year	12	3	2	4
	Never	6	0	0	0
	Don't know	1	0	1	1
Ocean	More than once per week	27	45	59	50
	Once a week	17	20	17	20
	Once or twice a month	25	20	12	16
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	9	12	8	10
	Once or twice a year	15	3	3	4
	Never	6	0	1	0
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Passaic	More than once per week	28	47	58	47
	Once a week	17	18	15	21
	Once or twice a month	23	18	14	16
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	9	11	8	9
	Once or twice a year	12	4	3	6
	Never	9	1	1	1
	Don't know	2	0	1	1
Salem	More than once per week	25	43	49	44
	Once a week	15	19	15	19
	Once or twice a month	23	20	19	18
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	17	12	11	10
	Once or twice a year	14	3	4	6
	Never	4	2	1	1
	Don't know	2	1	1	2
Somerset	More than once per week	23	42	51	45
	Once a week	18	23	21	22
	Once or twice a month	29	19	15	18
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	10	11	8	9
	Once or twice a year	12	4	4	5
	Never	8	1	0	1
	Don't know	1	1	0	1

How often do you typically participate in outdoor recreation activities in New Jersey during each season of the year? (Stakeholders)					
		Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Sussex	More than once per week	36	52	58	57
	Once a week	17	21	20	20
	Once or twice a month	26	18	15	15
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	7	8	5	6
	Once or twice a year	9	2	2	2
	Never	4	0	0	0
	Don't know	1	0	0	0
Union	More than once per week	22	43	54	46
	Once a week	20	21	19	22
	Once or twice a month	28	16	13	15
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	11	13	9	10
	Once or twice a year	13	5	4	7
	Never	7	0	0	0
	Don't know	1	1	0	0
Warren	More than once per week	31	49	55	55
	Once a week	22	22	24	19
	Once or twice a month	25	18	11	16
	Several times a year (every 2 to 4 months)	7	7	8	7
	Once or twice a year	11	3	2	3
	Never	4	0	0	0
	Don't know	0	0	0	0

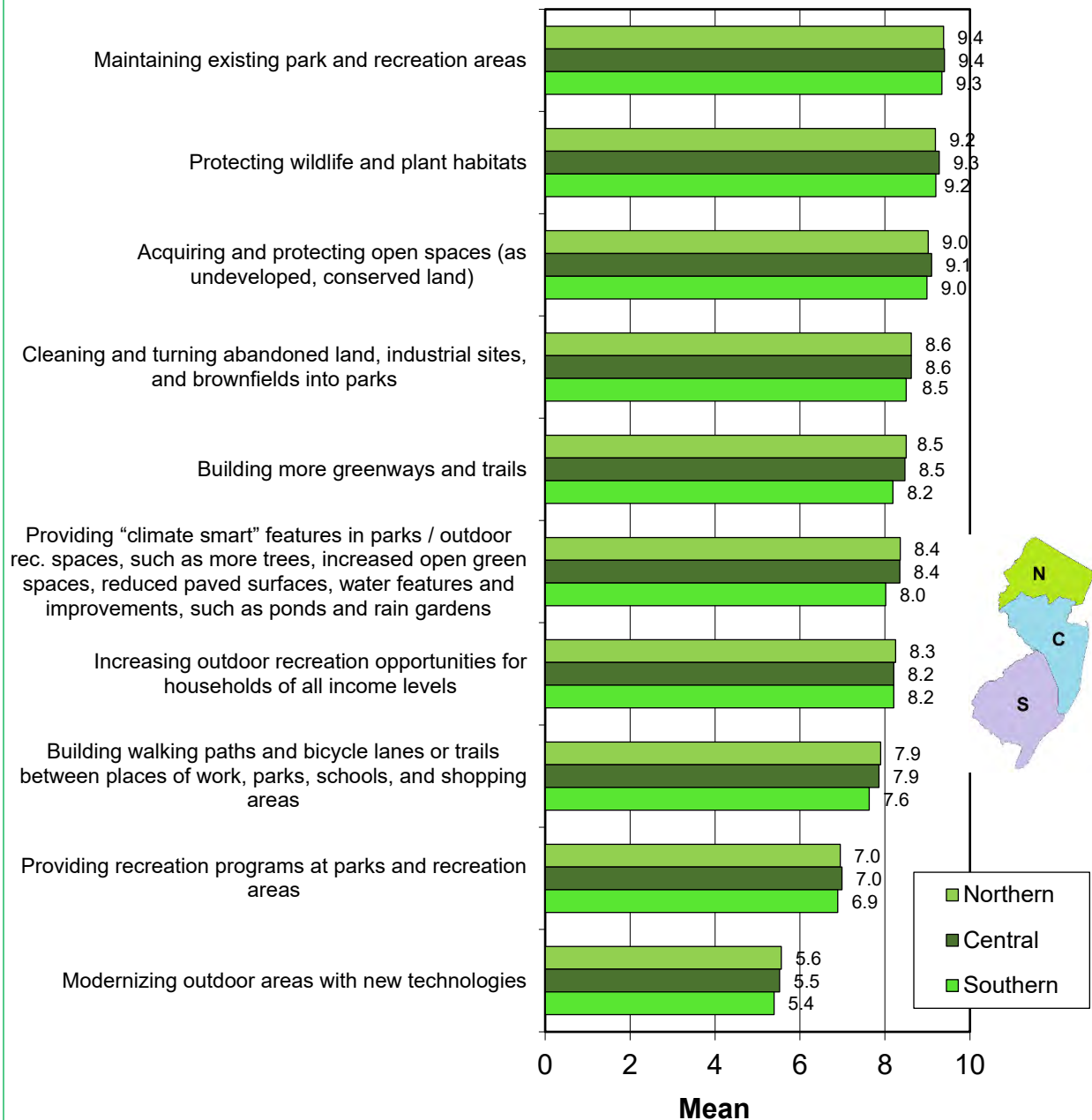
STAKEHOLDERS' OUTDOOR RECREATION PRIORITIES IN NEW JERSEY

Stakeholders rated the importance of various aspects of outdoor recreation. The ranking shows the prioritization of the items: maintaining existing parks and recreation areas is the highest priority, getting a mean rating of 9.4 on a 0 to 10 scale (0 = not at all important; 10 = extremely important). Also with mean ratings above 9.0 are protecting wildlife and plant habitats and acquiring/protecting open spaces. Regional and county results follow.

Outdoor recreation agencies and organizations in New Jersey spend their time and effort in many different areas. Please rate how important you think each of the following areas should be for outdoor recreation. (Stakeholders)

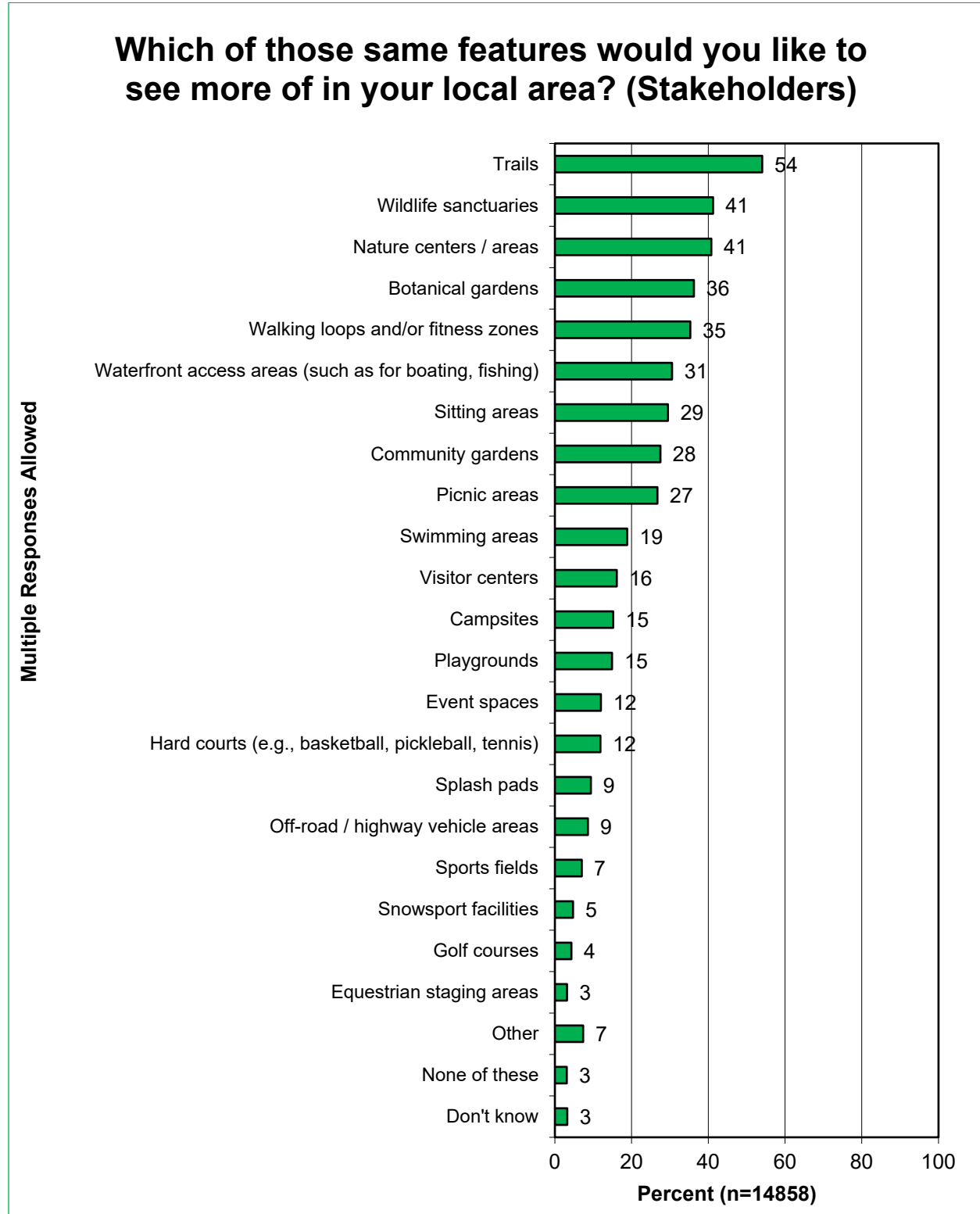


Outdoor recreation agencies and organizations in New Jersey spend their time and effort in many different areas. Please rate how important you think each of the following areas should be for outdoor recreation. (Stakeholders)



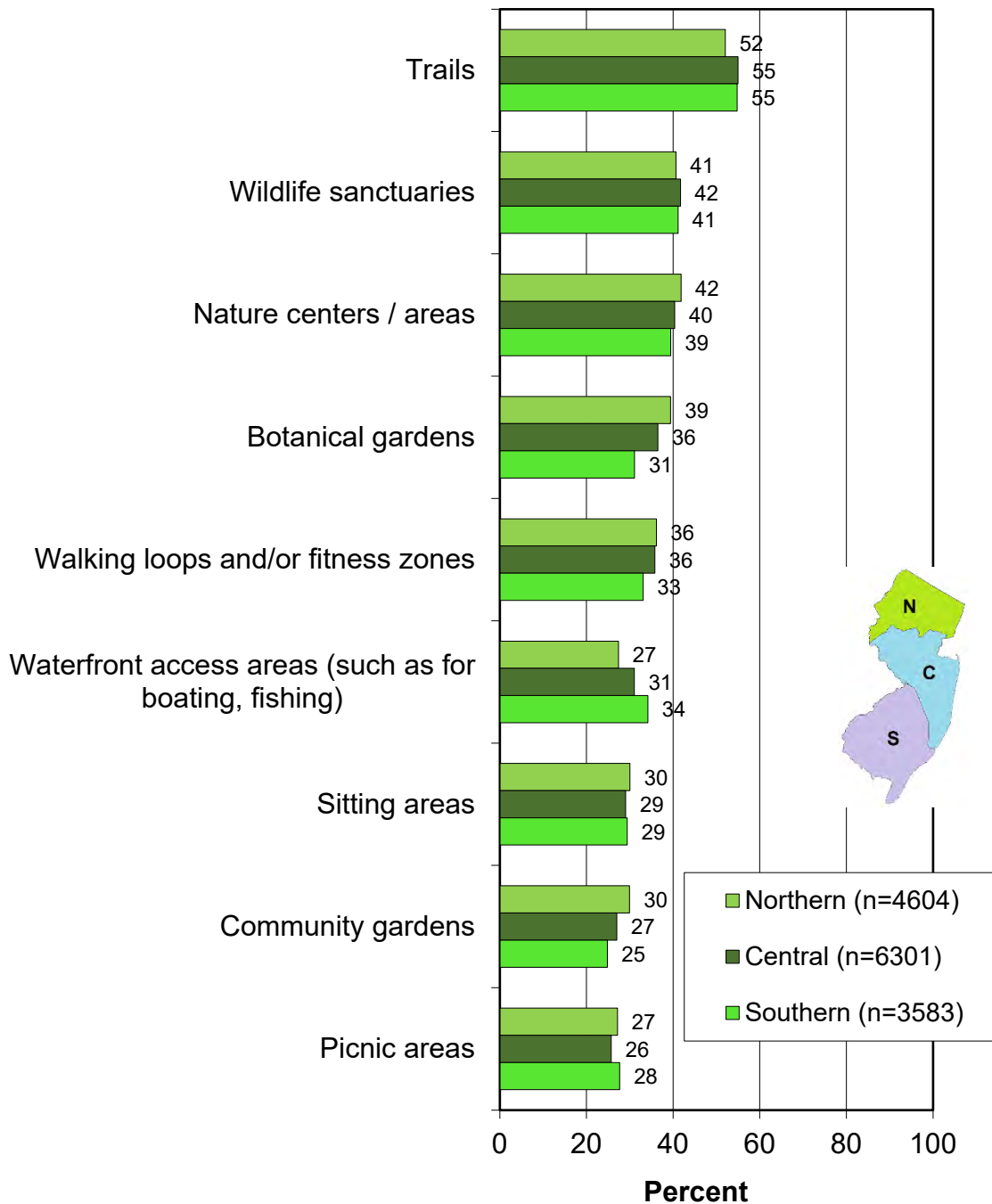
Outdoor recreation agencies and organizations in New Jersey spend their time and effort in many different areas. Please rate how important you think each of the following areas should be for outdoor recreation. (Stakeholders)										
	Maintaining existing park and recreation areas	Protecting wildlife and plant habitats	Cleaning and turning abandoned land, industrial sites, and brownfields into parks	Increasing outdoor recreation opportunities for households of all income levels	Acquiring and protecting open spaces (as undeveloped, conserved land)	Building walking paths and bicycle lanes or trails between places of work, parks, schools, and shopping areas	Providing recreation programs at parks and recreation areas	Building more greenways and trails	Modernizing outdoor areas with new technologies	Providing climate smart features in parks and outdoor recreation spaces
Atlantic	9.3	9.2	8.5	8.2	8.9	7.7	6.9	8.1	5.4	7.8
Bergen	9.4	9.2	8.7	8.3	9.1	8.0	7.1	8.7	5.8	8.5
Burlington	9.4	9.3	8.5	8.2	9.1	7.7	6.9	8.3	5.4	8.2
Camden	9.4	9.3	8.7	8.4	9.1	8.0	7.0	8.4	5.6	8.4
Cape May	9.2	9.1	8.1	8.0	8.8	7.2	6.7	7.7	5.0	7.6
Cumberland	9.3	9.1	8.1	8.0	8.8	7.0	7.0	7.8	5.3	7.4
Essex	9.4	9.2	8.9	8.7	9.1	8.4	7.3	8.6	6.0	8.7
Gloucester	9.3	9.1	8.4	8.2	8.9	7.4	6.8	8.1	5.4	7.8
Hudson	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.6	9.0	8.5	7.3	8.8	6.0	9.0
Hunterdon	9.4	9.2	8.4	8.0	9.0	7.5	6.5	8.6	4.7	8.2
Mercer	9.4	9.3	8.6	8.5	9.0	8.1	6.9	8.5	5.4	8.6
Middlesex	9.4	9.3	8.8	8.4	9.1	8.0	7.3	8.5	6.0	8.6
Monmouth	9.4	9.4	8.7	8.1	9.2	7.8	7.0	8.5	5.3	8.4
Morris	9.3	9.2	8.5	8.1	9.0	7.8	6.7	8.5	5.1	8.3
Ocean	9.4	9.3	8.5	8.1	9.1	7.6	7.0	8.2	5.7	8.0
Passaic	9.5	9.3	8.6	8.3	9.0	7.9	7.1	8.4	5.9	8.2
Salem	9.4	9.3	8.6	8.1	8.8	7.4	6.9	8.4	5.4	8.0
Somerset	9.4	9.2	8.6	8.3	9.1	8.0	6.9	8.7	5.5	8.3
Sussex	9.4	9.0	8.0	7.8	8.8	7.0	6.6	7.9	4.9	7.5
Union	9.5	9.2	8.9	8.3	9.1	8.2	7.2	8.5	5.8	8.4
Warren	9.4	9.2	8.3	7.7	9.1	7.2	6.3	8.2	4.8	7.9
Total	9.4	9.2	8.6	8.2	9.1	7.8	7.0	8.4	5.5	8.3

Commensurate with previously presented results that showed walking/hiking to be the top activity among stakeholders and trails to be the most-used feature, trails are the feature that stakeholders want to see more of in their local area. Also in the top tier are wildlife sanctuaries and nature centers/areas. Regional and county results are shown, as well.



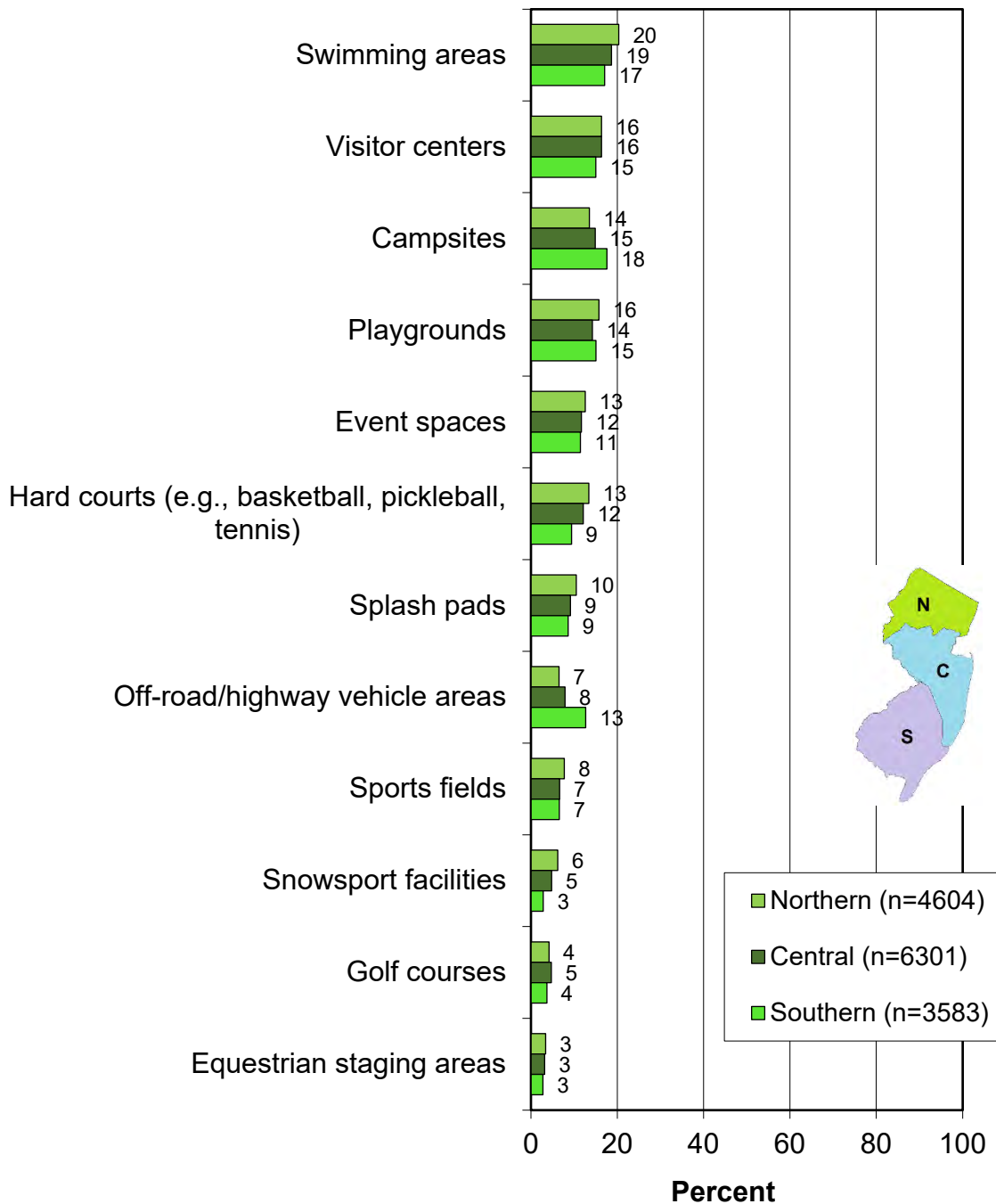
Which of those same features would you like to see more of in your local area? (Part 1) (Stakeholders)

Multiple Responses Allowed

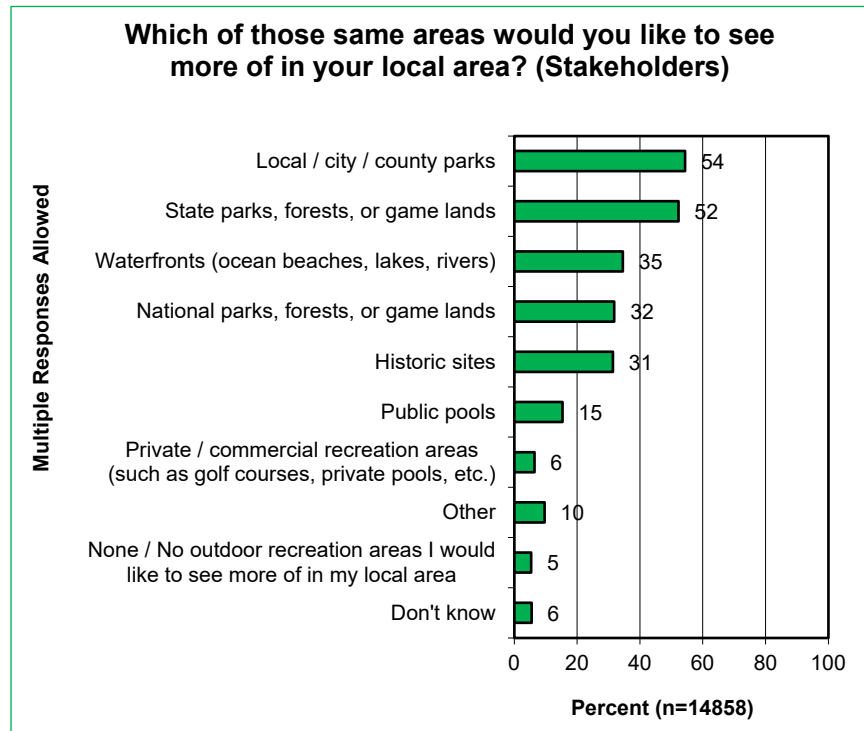


Which of those same features would you like to see more of in your local area? (Part 2) (Stakeholders)

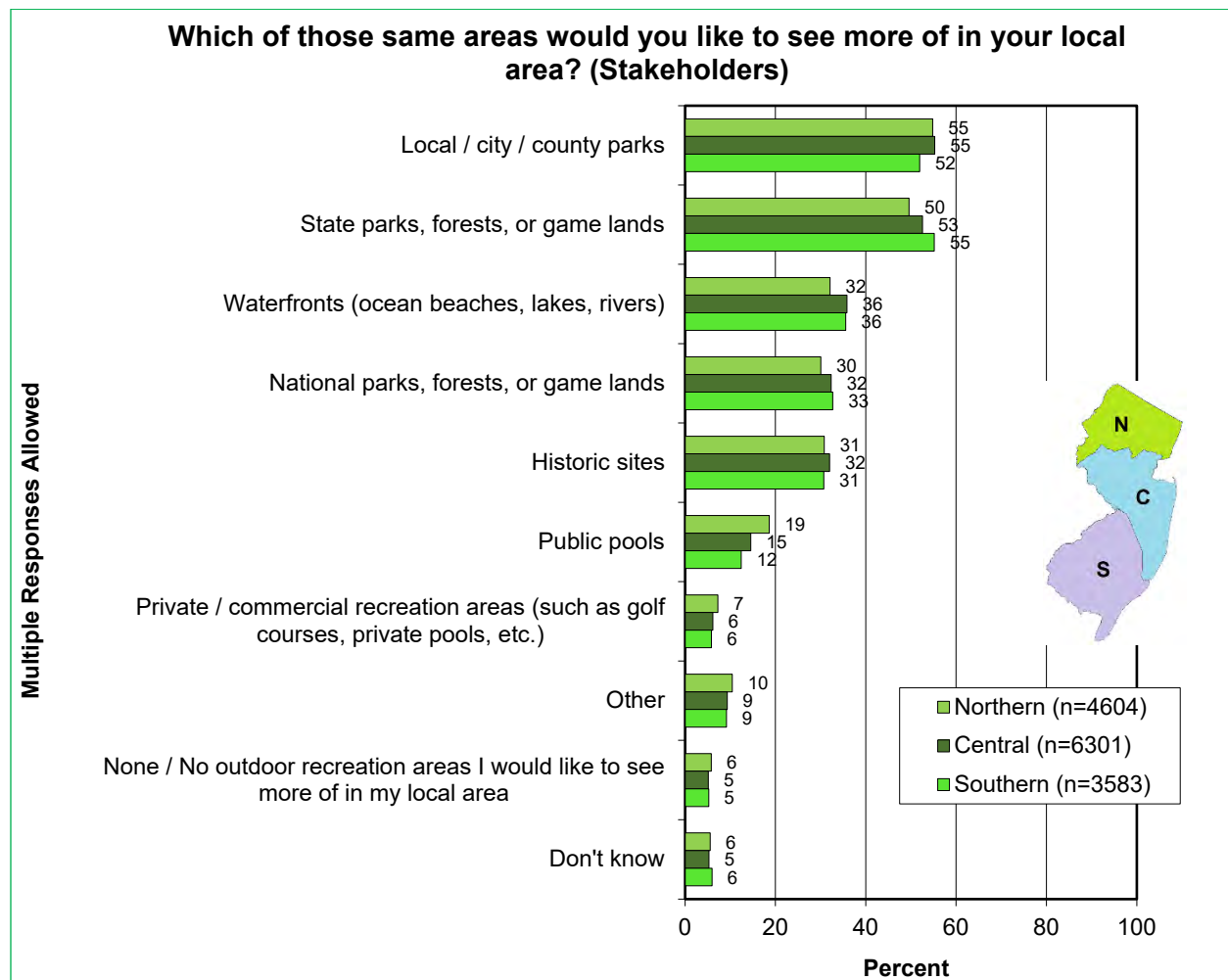
Multiple Responses Allowed



Which of those same features would you like to see more of in your local area? (Stakeholders)																					
	Trails	Wildlife sanctuaries	Nature centers / areas	Botanical gardens	Walking loops and/or fitness zones	Waterfront access areas (such as for boating, fishing)	Sitting areas	Community gardens	Picnic areas	Swimming areas	Visitor centers	Campsites	Playgrounds	Event spaces	Hard courts (e.g., basketball, pickleball, tennis)	Splash pads	Off-road/highway vehicle areas	Sports fields	Snowsport facilities	Golf courses	Equestrian staging areas
Atlantic	51	39	38	28	33	33	26	24	26	16	15	16	15	13	11	7	15	6	4	3	3
Bergen	52	42	45	40	37	25	33	31	27	19	15	12	16	11	15	11	5	7	5	4	3
Burlington	59	42	41	31	33	34	33	24	30	17	17	18	14	12	8	9	13	6	3	3	3
Camden	55	43	43	35	36	28	31	32	31	17	15	15	17	12	11	9	9	8	3	4	2
Cape May	45	42	37	27	27	41	22	20	19	16	11	15	9	8	7	5	10	5	1	4	2
Cumberland	48	36	31	25	28	40	29	20	29	19	15	25	19	12	6	11	19	10	4	7	4
Essex	52	39	42	44	41	21	35	37	32	22	20	11	19	16	15	15	5	9	7	4	4
Gloucester	56	41	39	31	35	36	31	23	27	18	13	19	16	10	11	10	15	6	2	4	3
Hudson	50	45	49	52	40	32	42	44	37	29	18	12	23	18	21	14	3	14	8	4	4
Hunterdon	59	45	44	32	32	31	23	21	23	19	16	16	9	10	11	6	9	4	4	4	5
Mercer	55	41	41	39	33	23	32	29	27	21	15	15	15	12	9	9	7	5	4	2	3
Middlesex	57	44	45	41	39	33	31	30	29	17	19	15	17	13	14	10	7	9	5	6	3
Monmouth	51	44	38	35	36	33	29	27	24	18	15	15	12	11	11	8	7	7	6	5	3
Morris	56	41	39	37	32	28	24	25	23	17	14	15	12	12	11	8	7	7	5	4	2
Ocean	51	40	35	32	33	42	27	23	25	20	17	16	13	11	12	9	12	6	3	6	2
Passaic	47	40	46	36	39	31	29	28	28	19	21	17	17	12	11	8	7	8	6	5	5
Salem	61	38	37	33	33	39	18	18	23	10	17	18	19	7	10	7	9	6	1	2	2
Somerset	60	42	42	39	39	24	29	30	27	16	17	14	15	12	16	11	5	8	6	4	3
Sussex	49	34	33	32	32	27	22	19	21	22	14	15	11	10	11	8	12	3	9	4	4
Union	57	35	42	38	39	22	31	29	25	18	16	11	19	12	14	12	6	8	5	5	4
Warren	55	41	36	31	31	36	22	23	24	18	12	17	13	8	9	6	9	6	6	4	3
Statewide	54	41	41	36	35	31	29	28	27	19	16	15	15	12	12	9	9	7	5	4	3

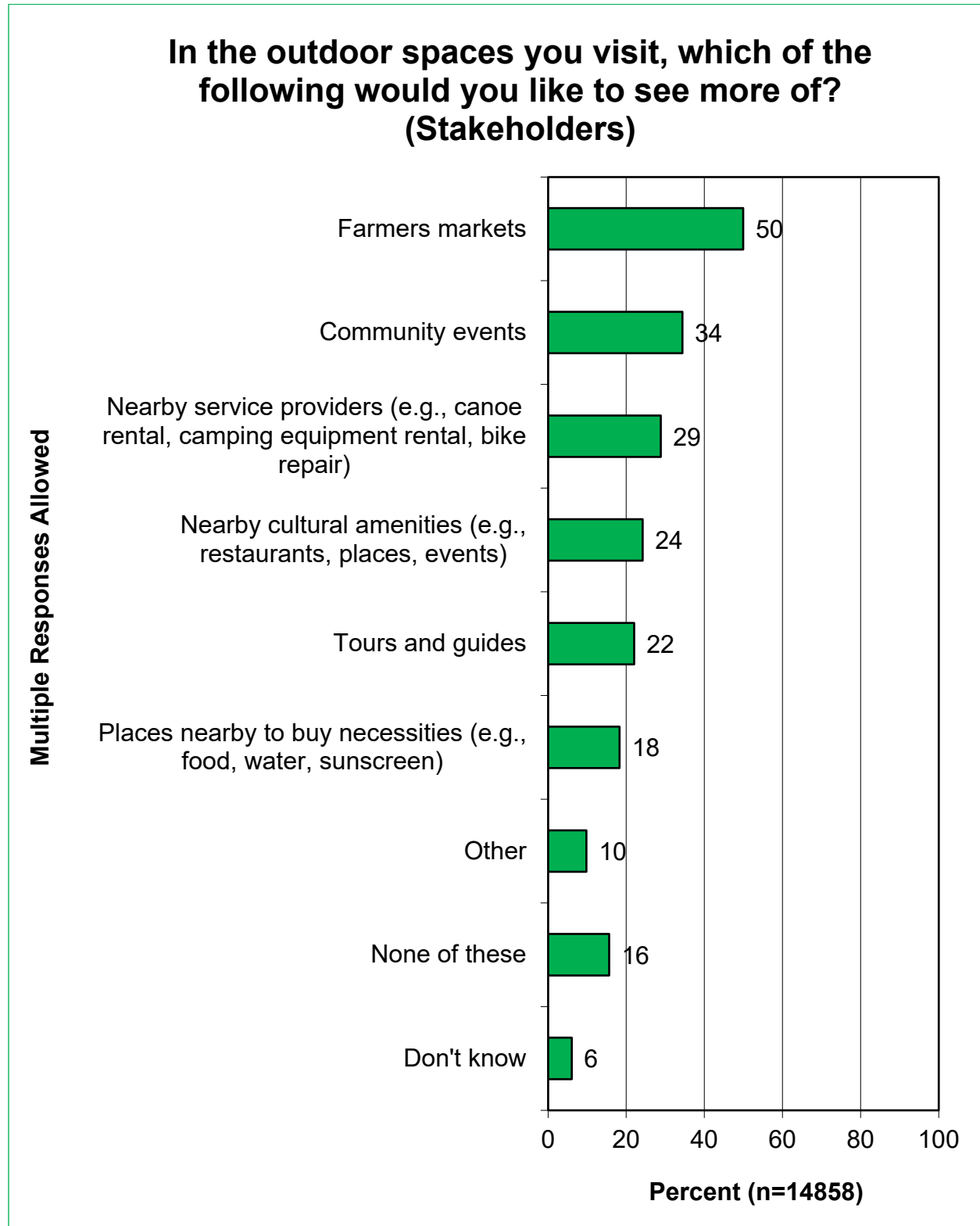


Parks top the list of areas that stakeholders want to see more of in their local area, both local parks and state parks/forests/game lands. Regional results show only slight differences. County results are included, too.



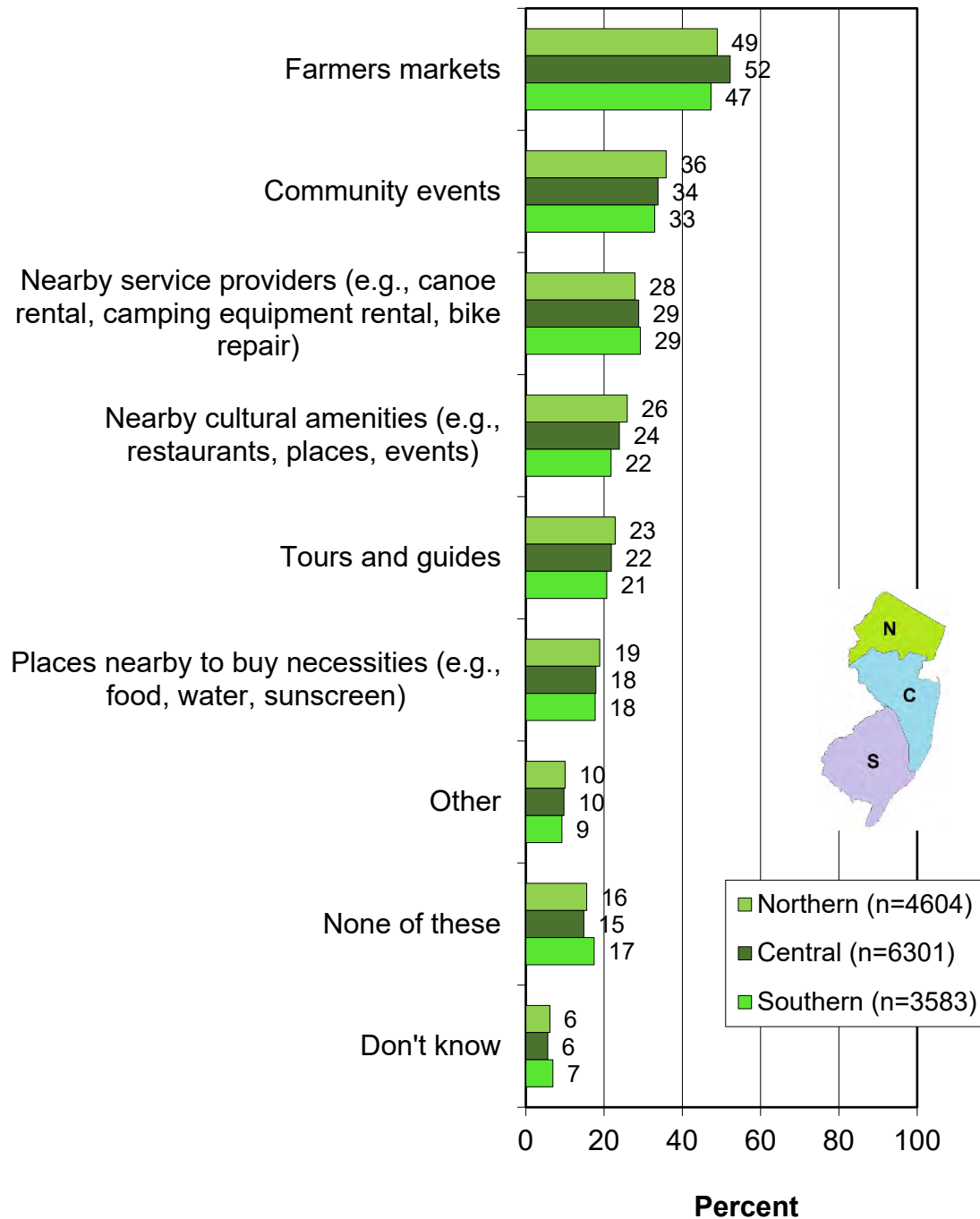
Which of those same areas would you like to see more of in your local area? (Stakeholders)							
	Local / city / county parks	State parks, forests, or game lands	Waterfronts (ocean beaches, lakes, rivers)	National parks, forests, or game lands	Historic sites	Public pools	Private / commercial recreation areas (golf courses, private pools, etc.)
Atlantic	51	49	32	33	28	11	4
Bergen	61	48	34	29	34	16	7
Burlington	54	55	37	33	35	14	7
Camden	57	53	34	31	31	14	5
Cape May	38	55	31	32	24	12	5
Cumberland	41	60	38	34	27	11	8
Essex	55	43	29	28	29	24	8
Gloucester	53	57	38	32	30	10	6
Hudson	69	51	43	33	36	32	10
Hunterdon	53	57	28	31	34	15	7
Mercer	55	49	31	30	29	16	4
Middlesex	58	53	39	33	35	15	7
Monmouth	56	50	40	32	33	15	6
Morris	56	52	30	31	28	14	6
Ocean	50	56	42	33	30	11	6
Passaic	48	49	30	31	31	19	9
Salem	50	70	40	42	28	10	6
Somerset	57	54	29	37	31	16	5
Sussex	36	51	29	29	29	16	6
Union	62	50	30	30	31	17	7
Warren	46	62	31	33	28	10	5
Statewide	54	52	35	32	31	15	6

Stakeholders indicated the amenities of outdoor spaces that they want more of in New Jersey. Half of them would like to see more farmers markets, while about a third want to see more community events. The full listing is shown in the graph, which is followed by the regional and county results.



**In the outdoor spaces you visit, which of the following would you like to see more of?
(Stakeholders)**

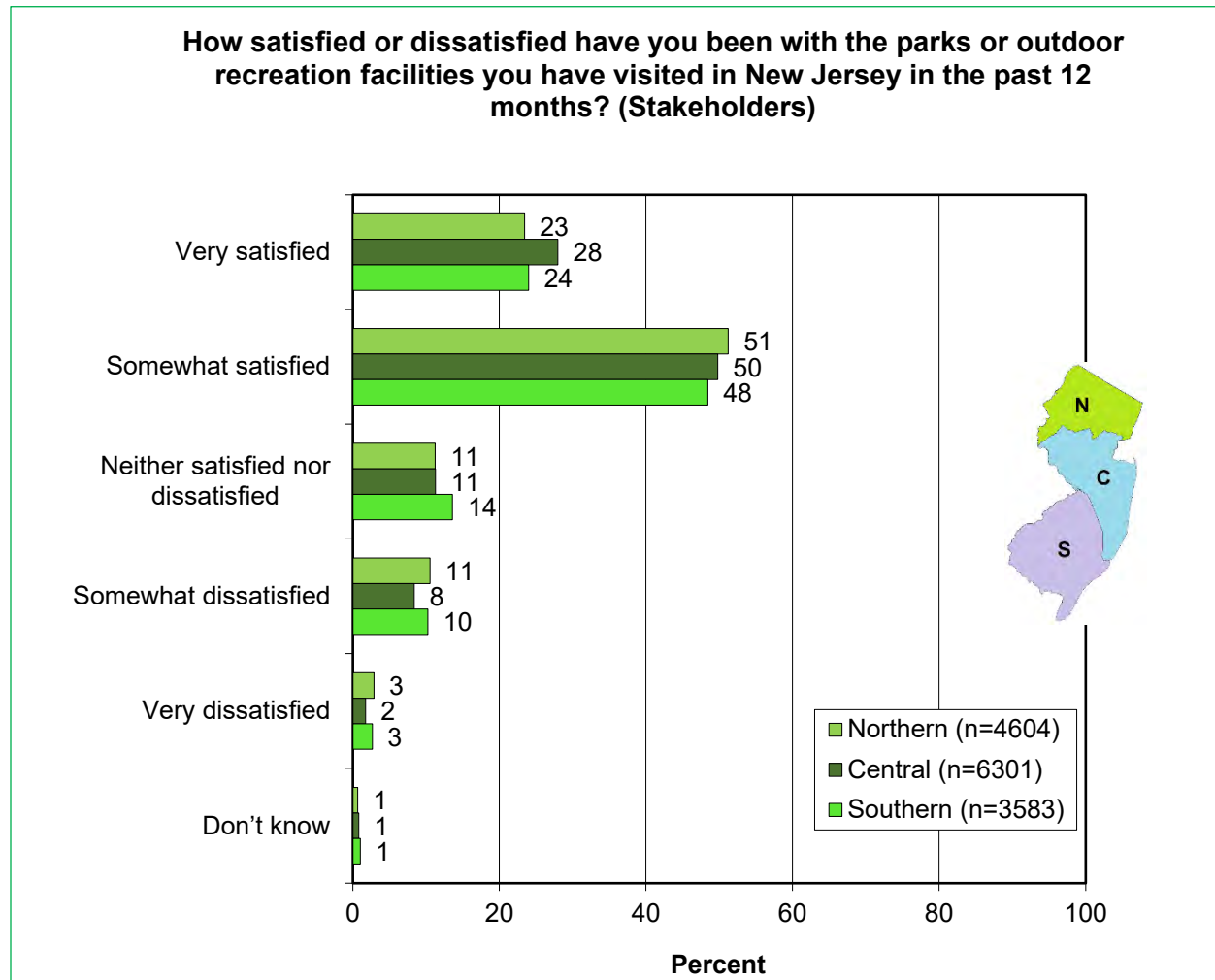
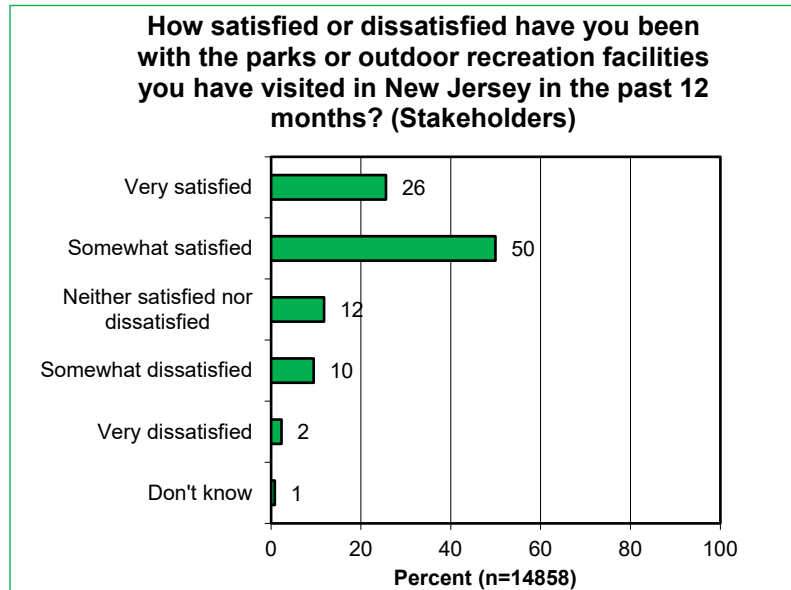
Multiple Responses Allowed



In the outdoor spaces you visit, which of the following would you like to see more of? (Stakeholders)						
	Farmers markets	Community events	Nearby service providers (canoe rental, camping equipment rental, bike repair, etc.)	Nearby cultural amenities (e.g., restaurants, places, events)	Tours and guides	Places nearby to buy necessities (food, water, sunscreen, etc.)
Atlantic	50	33	26	20	20	15
Bergen	52	36	31	28	22	21
Burlington	46	35	31	22	25	18
Camden	48	37	31	25	22	21
Cape May	48	22	20	20	17	13
Cumberland	43	28	32	23	20	19
Essex	56	43	28	29	25	23
Gloucester	50	34	28	19	15	17
Hudson	59	44	31	36	24	25
Hunterdon	43	31	25	21	20	13
Mercer	51	36	28	25	22	19
Middlesex	56	37	32	27	24	21
Monmouth	54	31	28	21	21	16
Morris	43	33	24	21	22	14
Ocean	56	31	28	23	20	17
Passaic	49	36	30	28	25	22
Salem	42	25	33	20	16	19
Somerset	47	37	30	27	24	17
Sussex	38	26	26	20	22	14
Union	49	36	31	25	21	23
Warren	40	27	23	20	17	12
Statewide	50	34	29	24	22	18

STAKEHOLDERS' SATISFACTION WITH OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW JERSEY

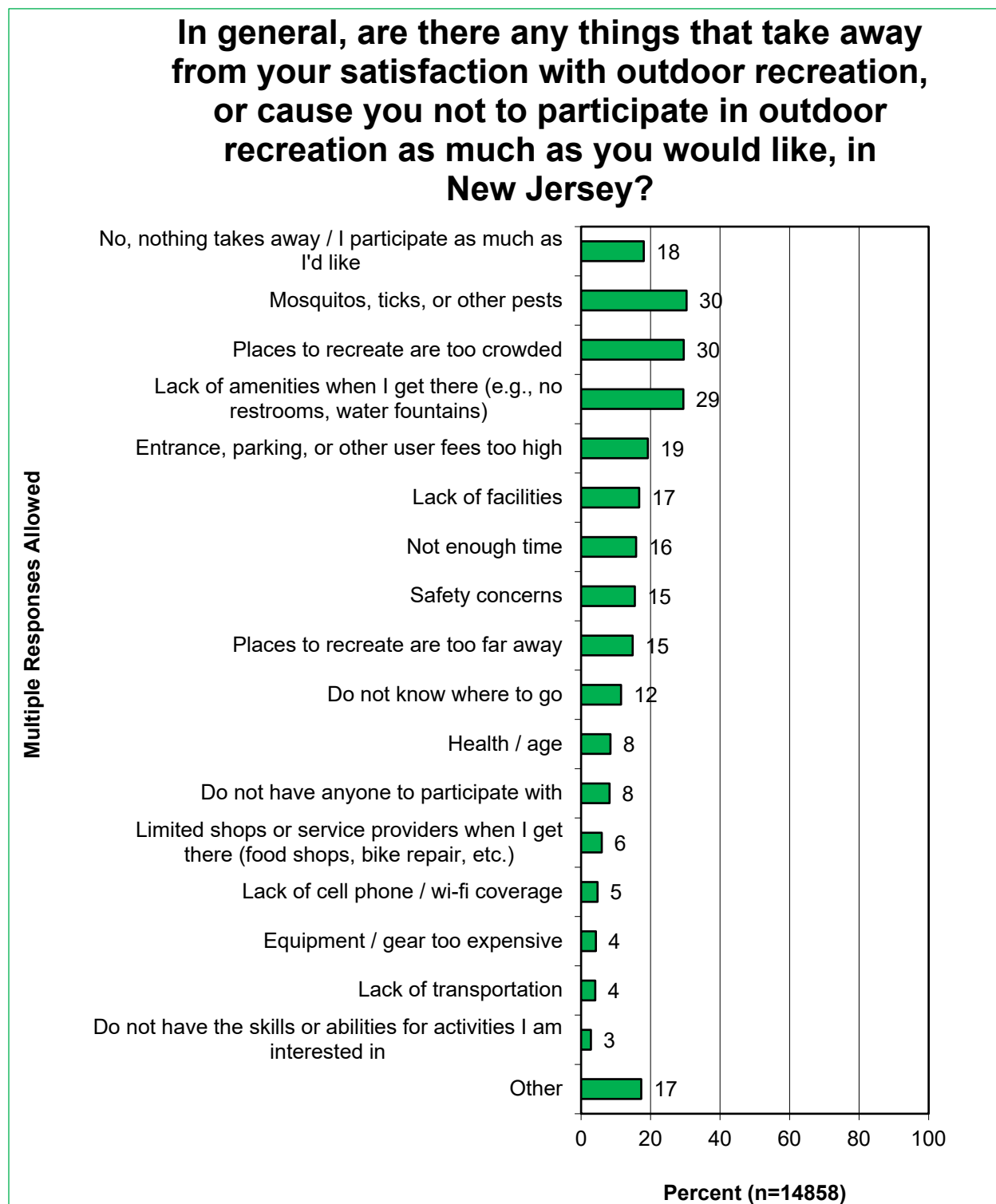
Just more than three quarters of stakeholders (76%) have been satisfied with the parks and recreation facilities in New Jersey that they have visited in the past 12 months. Only 12% of them have been dissatisfied, and most of that is just *somewhat* dissatisfied rather than *very* dissatisfied. The regions are quite similar to one another in their ratings. County results are tabulated on the following page.



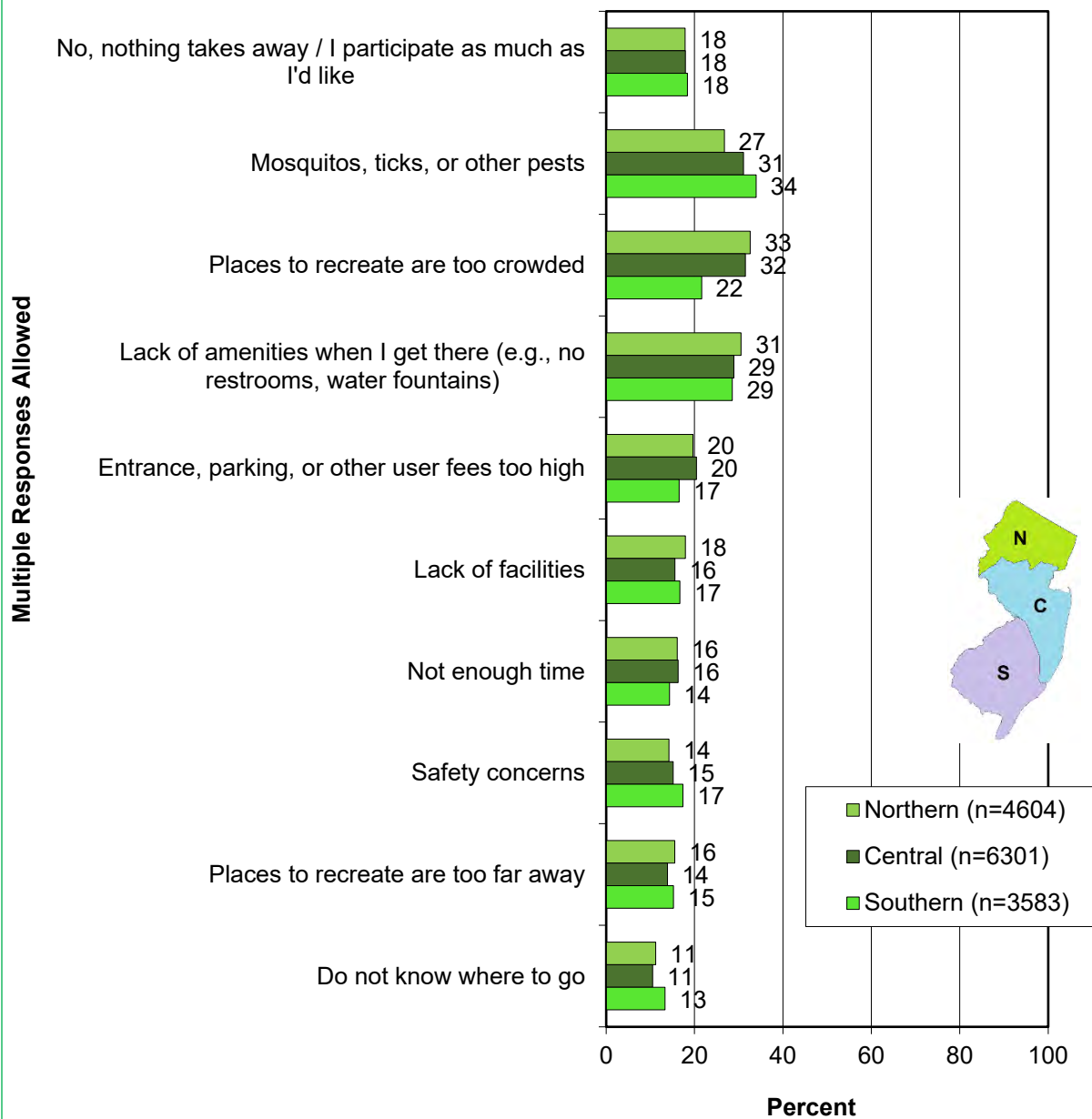
How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with the parks or outdoor recreation facilities you have visited in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)					
	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Atlantic	28	47	11	11	2
Bergen	21	53	12	10	3
Burlington	27	47	14	9	2
Camden	21	52	12	11	3
Cape May	29	44	15	10	2
Cumberland	16	48	15	16	4
Essex	23	56	10	7	3
Gloucester	20	52	14	8	3
Hudson	16	55	14	12	3
Hunterdon	28	46	11	11	3
Mercer	32	48	9	8	2
Middlesex	20	55	13	9	2
Monmouth	39	46	9	5	1
Morris	30	50	10	7	2
Ocean	26	49	13	9	2
Passaic	17	50	12	17	4
Salem	24	39	20	14	2
Somerset	25	54	11	8	1
Sussex	28	46	11	10	3
Union	20	53	12	12	3
Warren	24	45	9	17	4
Statewide	26	50	12	10	2

CONSTRAINTS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

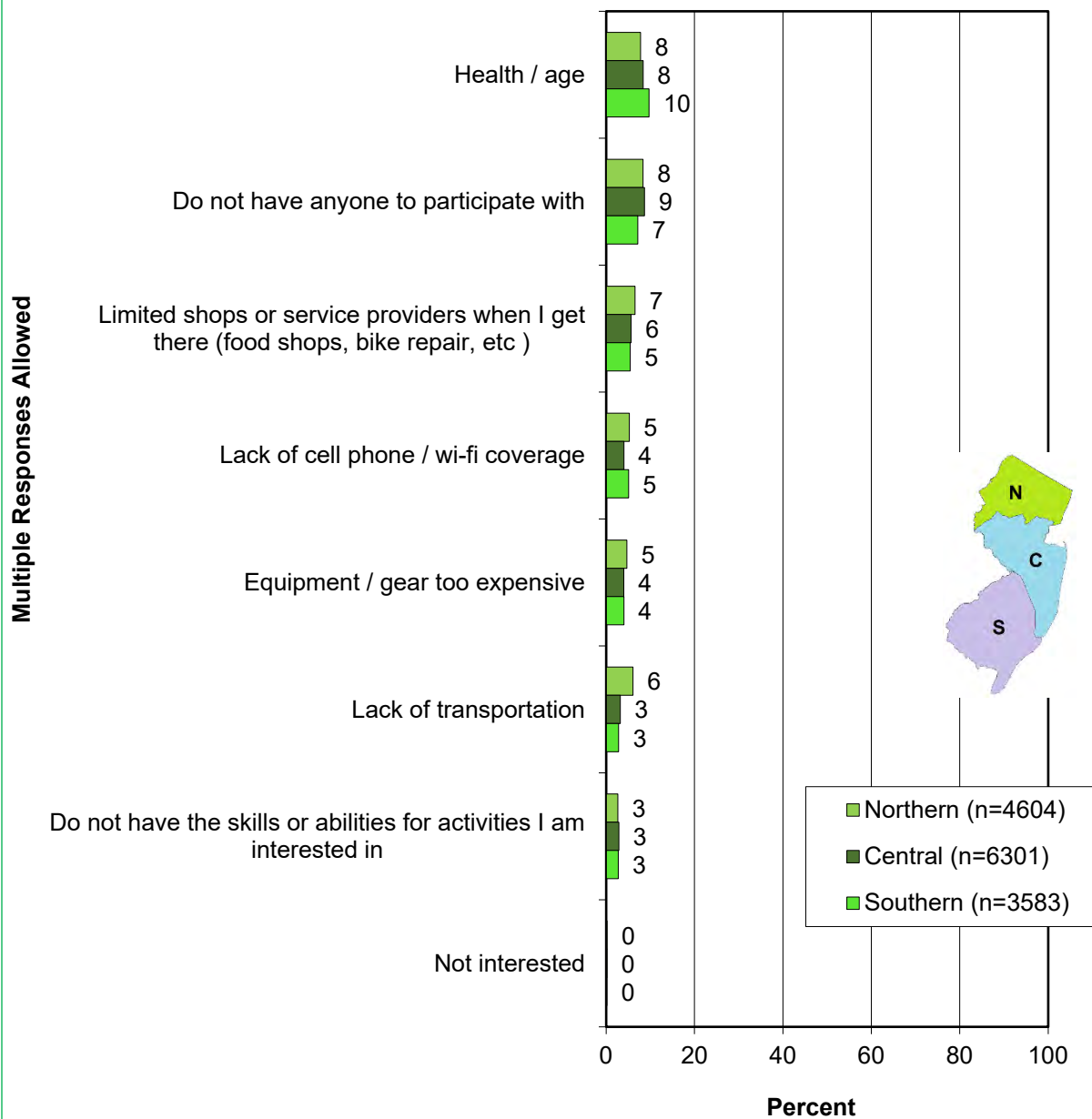
Three constraints stand out above the rest: mosquitos, ticks, and so forth; crowding; and lack of amenities at recreation places. The full list is shown in the graph. Regional and county results are presented on the following pages.



In general, are there any things that take away from your satisfaction with outdoor recreation, or cause you not to participate in outdoor recreation as much as you would like, in New Jersey? (Part 1) (Stakeholders)



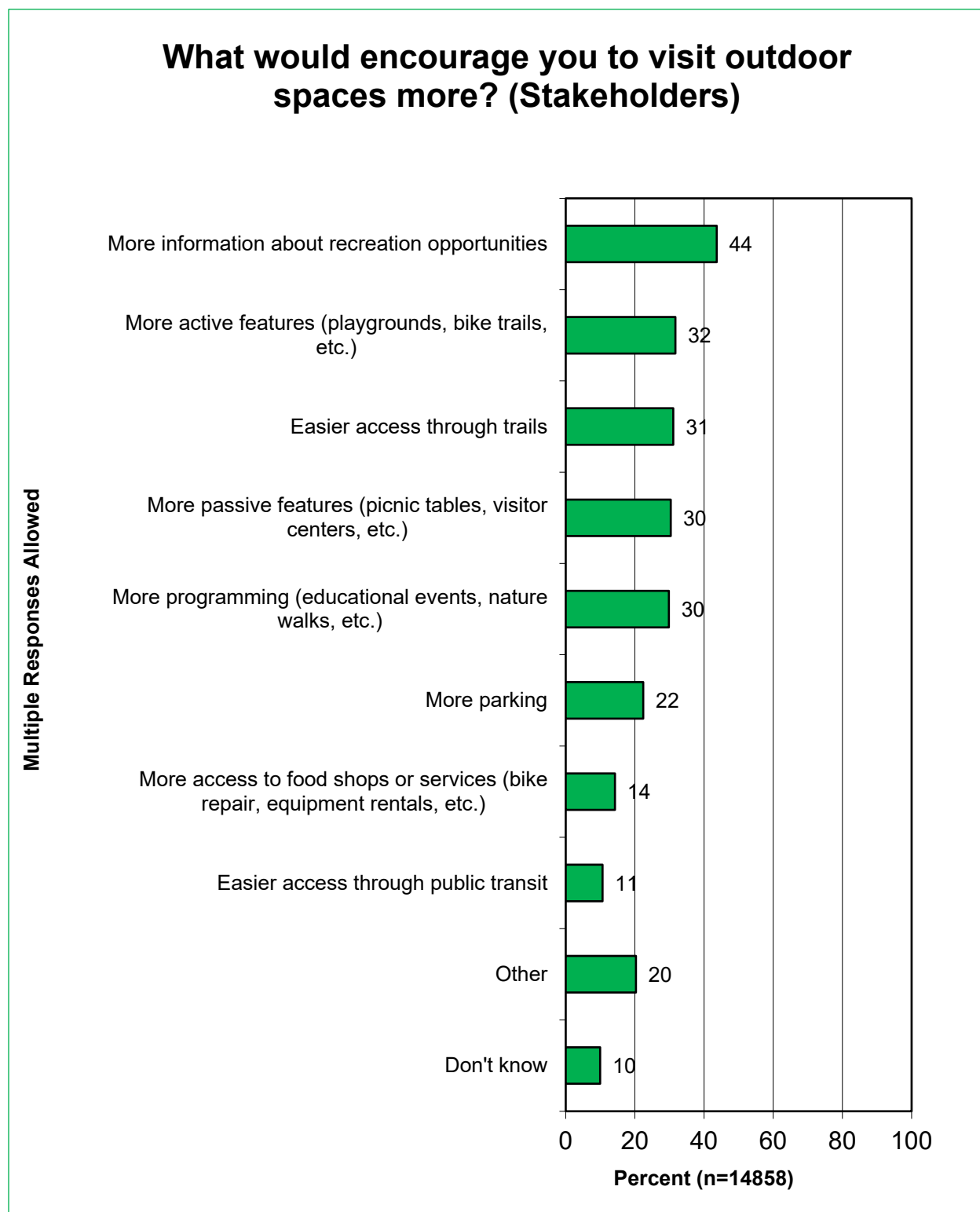
In general, are there any things that take away from your satisfaction with outdoor recreation, or cause you not to participate in outdoor recreation as much as you would like, in New Jersey? (Part 2) (Stakeholders)



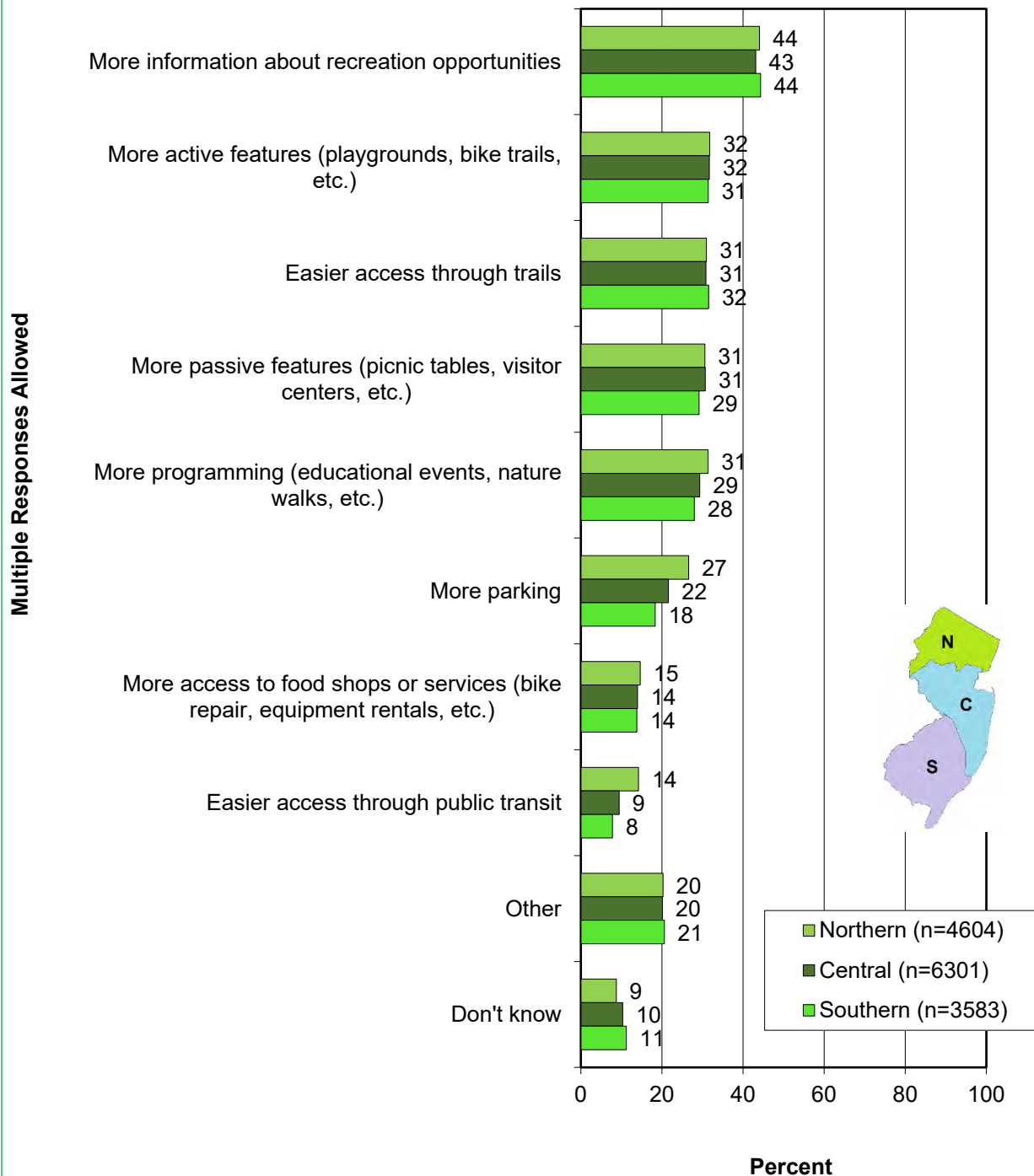
In general, are there any things that take away from your satisfaction with outdoor recreation, or cause you not to participate in outdoor recreation as much as you would like, in New Jersey? (Stakeholders)																		
	No, nothing takes away / I participate as much as I'd like	Mosquitos, ticks, or other pests	Places to recreate are too crowded	Lack of amenities when I get there (e.g., no restrooms, water fountains)	Entrance, parking, or other user fees too high	Lack of facilities	Not enough time	Safety concerns	Places to recreate are too far away	Do not know where to go	Health / age	Do not have anyone to participate with	Limited shops or service providers when I get there (food shops, bike repair, etc.)	Lack of cell phone / wi-fi coverage	Equipment / gear too expensive	Lack of transportation	Do not have the skills or abilities for activities I am interested in	Not interested
Atlantic	24	32	20	27	15	14	12	15	11	11	8	8	4	4	2	3	2	0
Bergen	17	29	36	33	22	19	18	14	18	11	7	9	7	6	5	5	2	0
Burlington	18	36	23	30	16	15	16	16	15	14	11	7	5	5	4	3	3	0
Camden	15	37	22	33	18	18	16	20	19	16	9	8	6	5	4	3	3	0
Cape May	24	29	21	23	17	19	12	15	7	7	10	5	5	6	2	2	3	0
Cumberland	19	29	21	25	14	19	13	17	12	9	12	6	6	9	7	1	3	0
Essex	15	28	29	34	19	18	17	17	19	12	6	9	7	5	5	9	4	0
Gloucester	17	35	22	26	19	17	14	19	17	14	10	9	7	5	5	2	2	0
Hudson	12	28	36	37	20	24	14	21	32	14	7	10	9	5	6	21	2	0
Hunterdon	21	19	36	25	16	14	19	10	10	10	7	6	5	4	3	2	2	0
Mercer	18	36	29	30	18	15	17	20	13	10	9	9	6	4	6	5	3	0
Middlesex	14	33	31	33	25	19	17	18	21	14	8	10	6	6	4	5	3	0
Monmouth	21	30	32	25	22	13	16	11	11	8	9	8	5	3	4	2	3	0
Morris	21	25	30	26	18	16	17	12	11	12	9	9	6	4	4	2	3	0
Ocean	19	35	30	27	21	16	14	14	11	9	9	9	5	4	3	2	2	1
Passaic	17	24	30	32	22	20	15	16	11	11	9	7	8	7	5	4	4	1
Salem	19	28	15	27	15	23	11	19	27	17	6	6	6	7	3	3	1	0
Somerset	16	29	33	31	19	15	17	17	14	11	8	10	5	4	4	2	3	0
Sussex	23	27	33	24	19	13	12	10	6	6	9	6	4	5	3	2	1	0
Union	15	27	33	33	19	18	17	17	19	14	8	9	9	3	4	6	4	0
Warren	21	23	35	25	17	14	14	10	9	10	7	8	3	4	6	3	2	1
Statewide	18	30	30	29	19	17	16	15	15	12	8	8	6	5	4	4	3	0

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

More information is the top item that would encourage more outdoor recreation participation. Regional and county results are also presented.



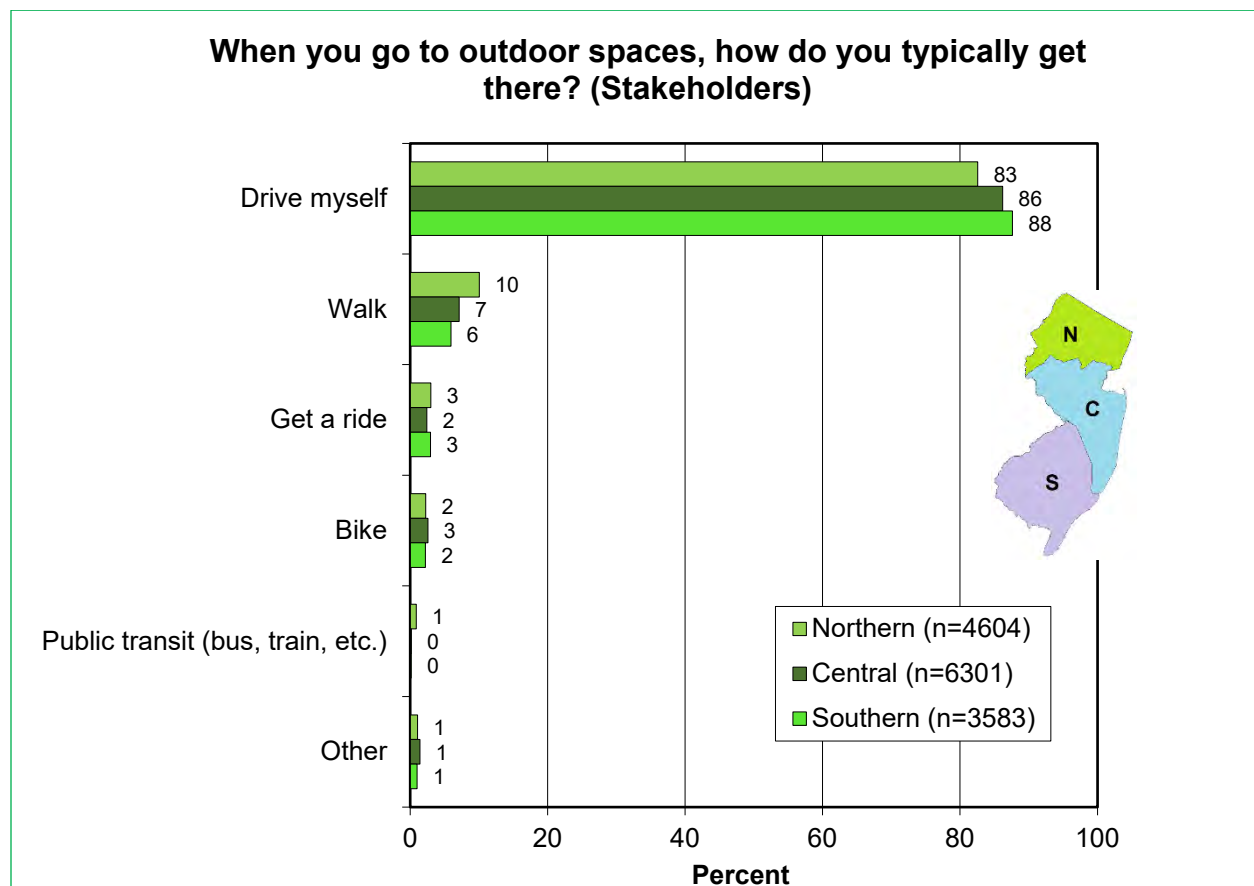
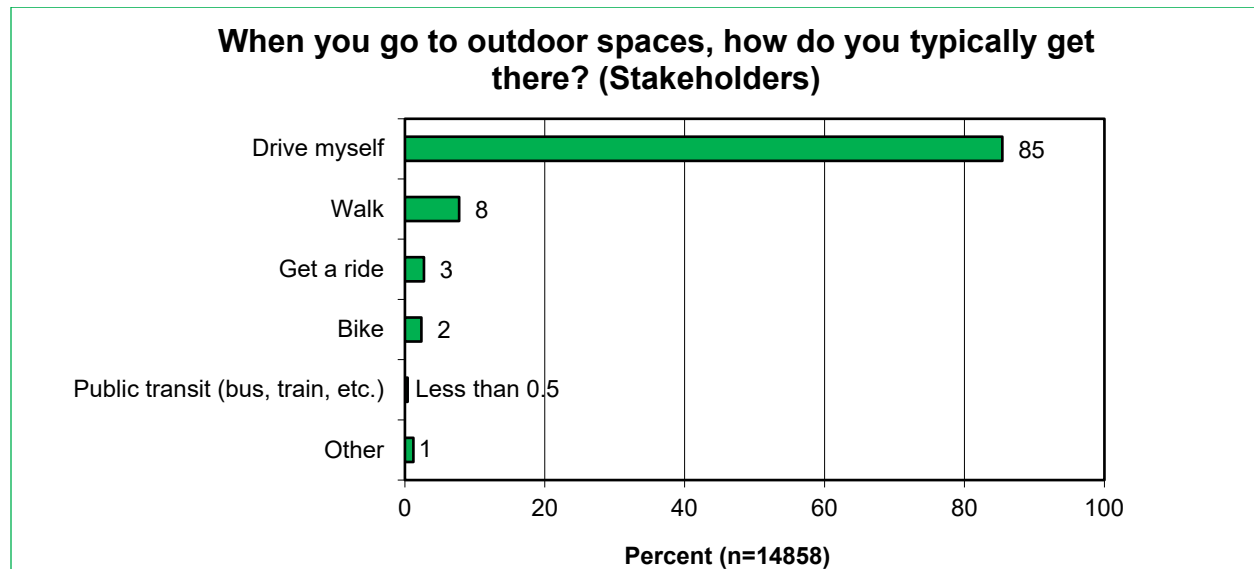
What would encourage you to visit outdoor spaces more? (Stakeholders)



What would encourage you to visit outdoor spaces more? (Stakeholders)								
	More information about recreation opportunities	More active features (playgrounds, bike trails, etc.)	Easier access through trails	More passive features (picnic tables, visitor centers, etc.)	More programming (educational events, nature walks, etc.)	More parking	More access to food shops or services (bike repair, equipment rentals, etc.)	Easier access through public transit
Atlantic	40	30	24	26	28	17	12	7
Bergen	46	32	31	33	32	32	15	11
Burlington	45	31	33	32	30	17	14	9
Camden	48	34	34	32	29	21	16	12
Cape May	37	28	26	24	26	21	12	3
Cumberland	41	32	29	26	25	16	14	4
Essex	48	37	31	33	35	28	19	20
Gloucester	47	29	32	29	27	19	12	6
Hudson	49	35	31	37	35	25	22	38
Hunterdon	38	28	35	28	27	21	9	7
Mercer	41	33	36	30	31	20	15	11
Middlesex	50	33	33	35	34	27	17	13
Monmouth	40	30	28	28	27	17	13	9
Morris	44	29	33	27	29	22	10	9
Ocean	41	30	27	31	23	19	14	6
Passaic	44	32	31	35	33	34	17	11
Salem	41	38	43	25	20	18	17	5
Somerset	45	32	31	31	32	23	12	8
Sussex	35	27	26	25	30	20	10	7
Union	48	37	30	32	34	27	16	13
Warren	35	28	32	23	25	20	7	8
Statewide	44	32	31	30	30	22	14	11

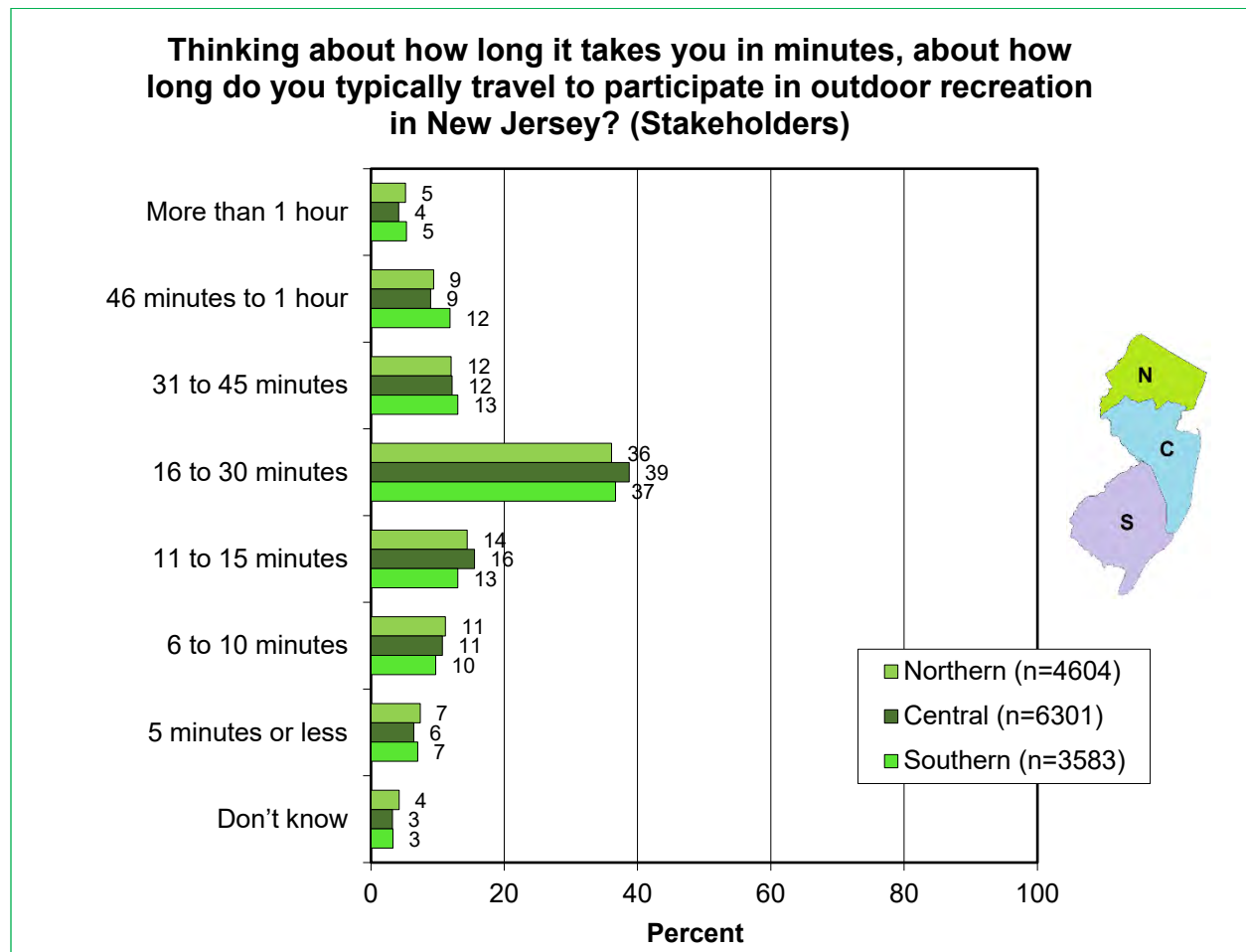
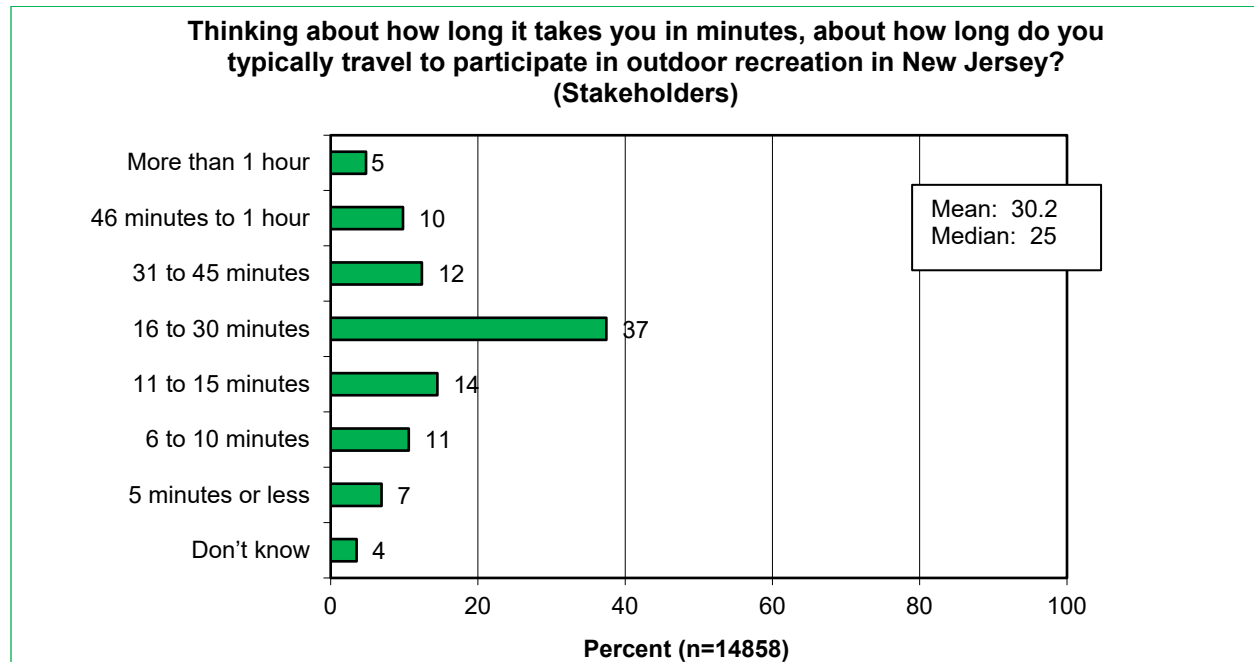
ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

While the vast majority of New Jersey stakeholders typically drive to get to outdoor spaces where they recreate, a not insubstantial percentage walk to them. The highest rate of walking is in the Northern Region.



When you go to outdoor spaces, how do you typically get there? (Stakeholders)						
	Drive myself	Walk	Get a ride	Bike	Public transit (bus, train, etc.)	Scooter
Atlantic	89	5	2	3	0	0
Bergen	85	8	4	2	0	0
Burlington	88	6	3	2	0	0
Camden	83	9	4	2	0	0
Cape May	83	10	1	4	0	1
Cumberland	92	3	3	1	0	0
Essex	77	14	3	3	2	0
Gloucester	92	3	3	1	0	0
Hudson	54	27	6	6	5	0
Hunterdon	89	7	2	1	0	0
Mercer	82	9	3	3	0	0
Middlesex	87	7	2	1	0	0
Monmouth	86	7	2	3	0	0
Morris	89	6	2	1	0	0
Ocean	89	5	2	3	0	0
Passaic	84	9	4	2	0	0
Salem	91	2	3	4	0	0
Somerset	88	7	2	3	0	0
Sussex	92	5	1	1	0	0
Union	80	13	3	3	0	0
Warren	95	3	1	1	0	0
Statewide	85	8	3	2	0	0

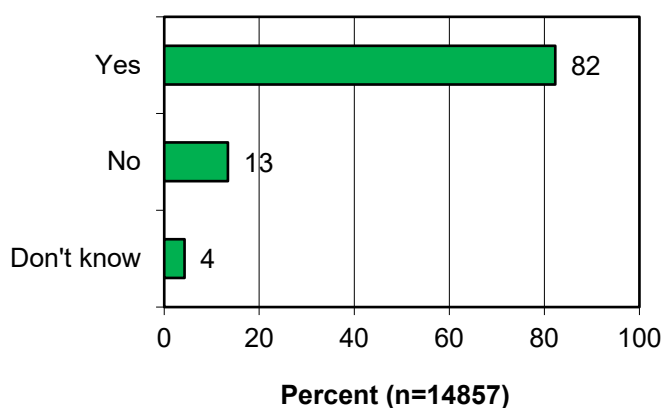
The typical travel time among stakeholders is just under a half hour: the median travel time is 25 minutes. Nonetheless, about a quarter typically drive more than a half hour.

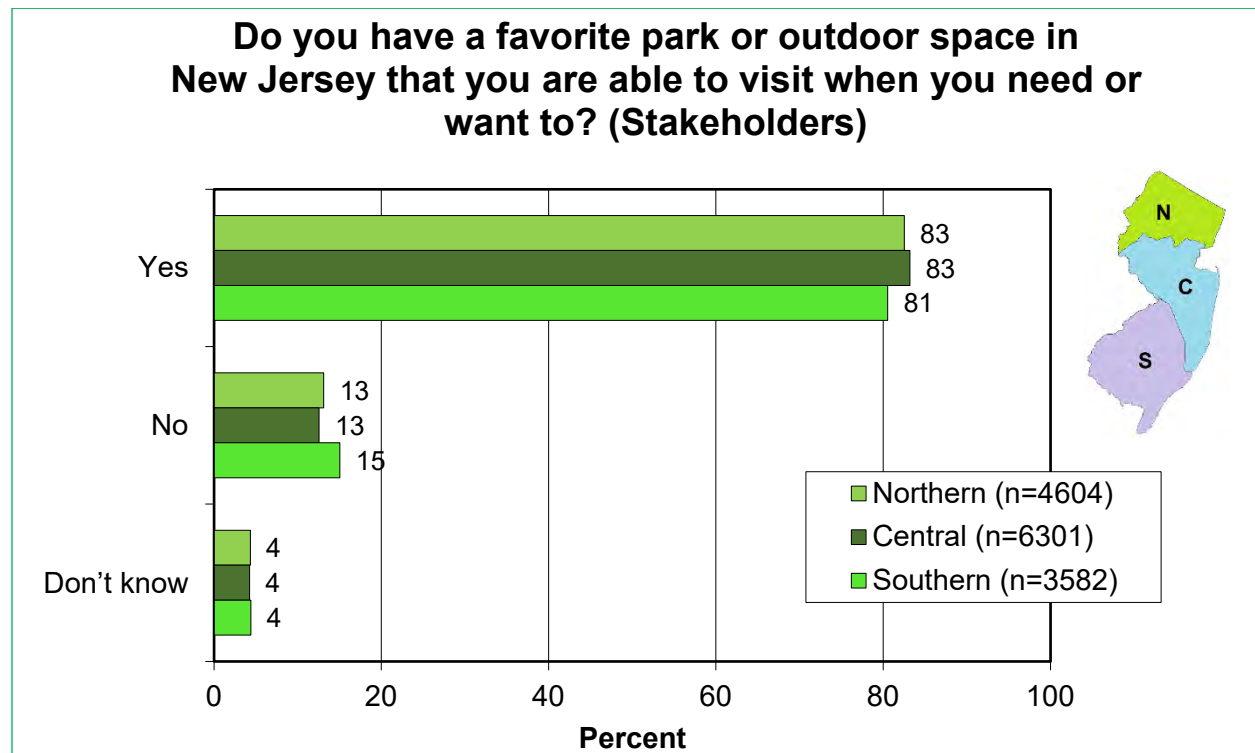


Thinking about how long it takes you in minutes, about how long do you typically travel to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Stakeholders)							
	More than 1 hour	46 minutes to 1 hour	31 to 45 minutes	16 to 30 minutes	11 to 15 minutes	6 to 10 minutes	5 minutes or less
Atlantic	3	6	13	43	14	8	9
Bergen	6	10	13	35	13	11	6
Burlington	6	12	14	38	13	9	7
Camden	7	14	15	32	10	11	7
Cape May	2	7	8	35	21	15	9
Cumberland	6	11	15	36	12	11	6
Essex	5	9	13	30	15	14	10
Gloucester	7	17	12	35	13	9	6
Hudson	7	15	13	30	11	12	6
Hunterdon	3	7	8	42	18	10	7
Mercer	4	9	9	35	20	13	7
Middlesex	6	12	18	35	11	8	6
Monmouth	4	6	8	43	18	13	7
Morris	3	8	12	43	15	10	7
Ocean	3	8	12	44	14	9	6
Passaic	7	12	11	32	15	10	10
Salem	5	10	14	38	14	8	6
Somerset	4	9	14	37	16	12	6
Sussex	4	6	9	42	18	11	9
Union	5	14	18	28	13	9	8
Warren	4	6	13	43	15	10	4
Statewide	5	10	12	37	14	11	7

Finally, this section looks at a most basic question about whether people feel that they have a favorite place to participate in outdoor recreation when they want to. Fortunately, the large majority of stakeholders indicate that they have such a place: 82% respond affirmatively. These results are consistent across the regions (next page). County results are also shown.

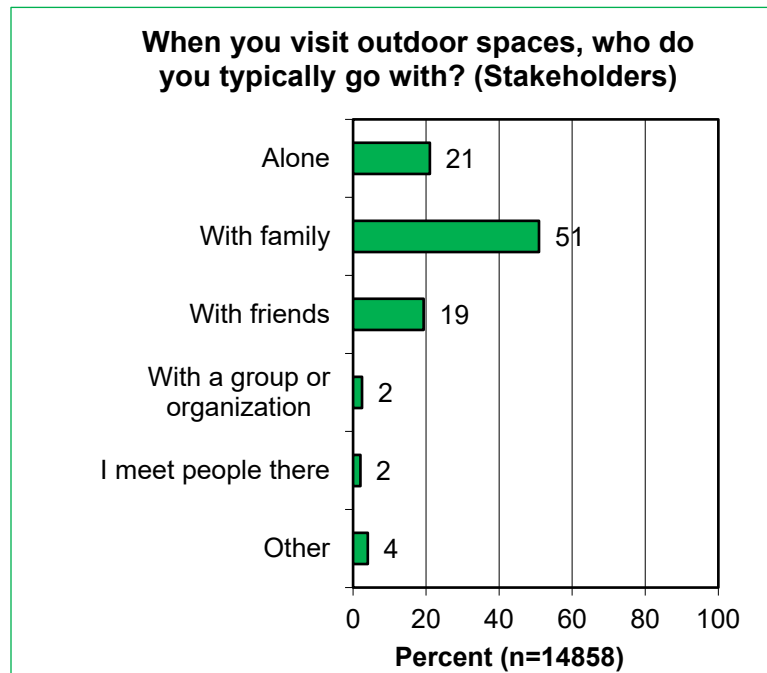
Do you have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that you are able to visit when you need or want to? (Stakeholders)



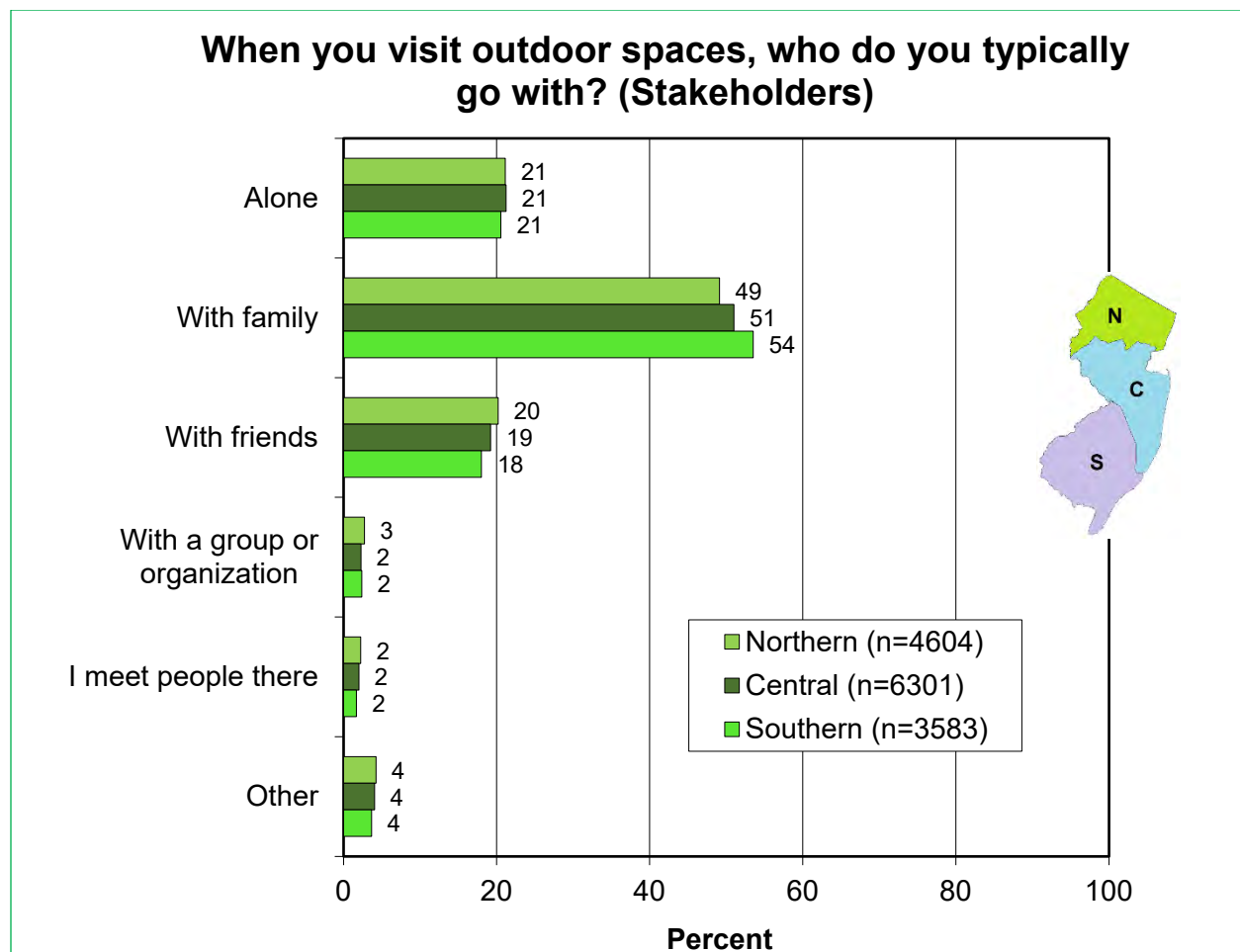


Do you have a favorite park or outdoor space in New Jersey that you are able to visit when you need or want to? (Stakeholders)			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Atlantic	84	12	4
Bergen	80	15	5
Burlington	81	15	4
Camden	80	14	5
Cape May	85	13	3
Cumberland	79	14	7
Essex	82	13	5
Gloucester	77	20	3
Hudson	81	14	5
Hunterdon	83	14	3
Mercer	85	11	5
Middlesex	79	16	5
Monmouth	87	10	3
Morris	84	11	4
Ocean	83	13	4
Passaic	84	12	4
Salem	75	17	8
Somerset	84	13	3
Sussex	86	11	3
Union	80	13	7
Warren	81	16	3
Statewide	82	13	4

OUTDOOR RECREATION COMPANIONS AMONG STAKEHOLDERS



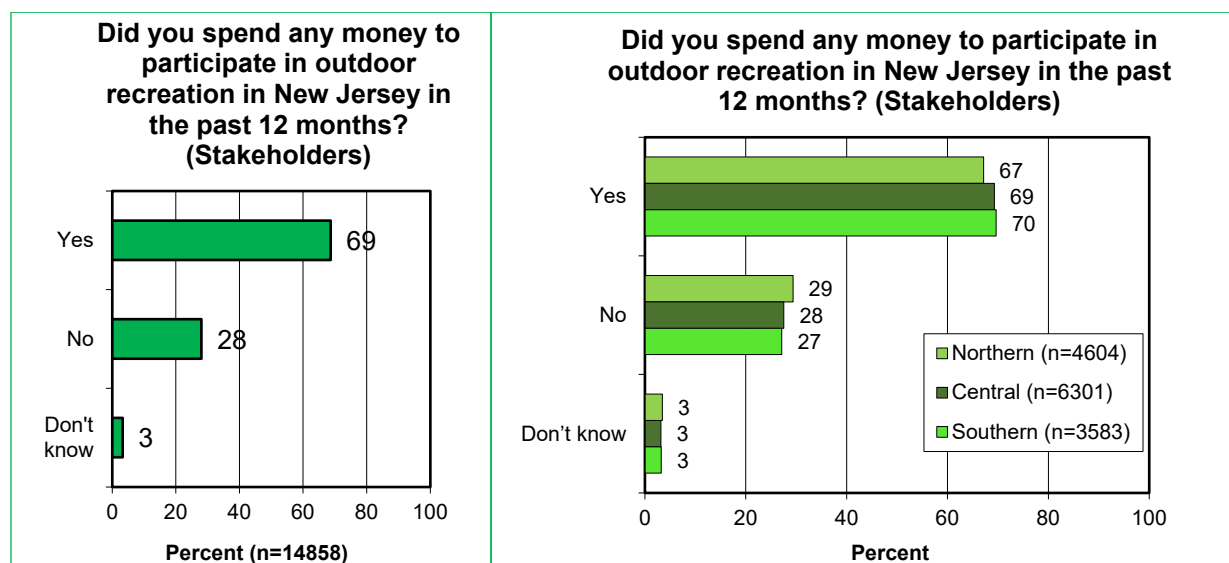
About a fifth of stakeholders typically go to outdoor spaces alone. Otherwise, half primarily go with family, and about a fifth typically go with friends. Note that this question allowed only one response to be selected. The region and county results follow.



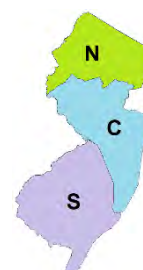
When you visit outdoor spaces, who do you typically go with? (Stakeholders)						
	Alone	With family	With friends	With a group or organization	I meet people there	Other
Atlantic	21	54	18	3	1	2
Bergen	19	52	20	3	2	4
Burlington	20	54	18	2	2	4
Camden	22	53	17	3	2	3
Cape May	25	50	19	0	2	4
Cumberland	20	49	20	3	2	5
Essex	21	50	19	3	2	4
Gloucester	19	55	18	2	2	4
Hudson	22	48	22	2	3	3
Hunterdon	21	52	18	4	1	4
Mercer	21	52	18	3	2	5
Middlesex	22	52	19	3	2	3
Monmouth	23	50	19	2	2	4
Morris	20	48	21	3	2	5
Ocean	18	51	22	1	2	5
Passaic	22	47	21	4	3	4
Salem	15	59	20	1	1	4
Somerset	23	48	21	2	2	4
Sussex	25	44	21	2	3	6
Union	20	53	18	2	2	5
Warren	24	53	16	2	2	4
Statewide	21	51	19	2	2	4

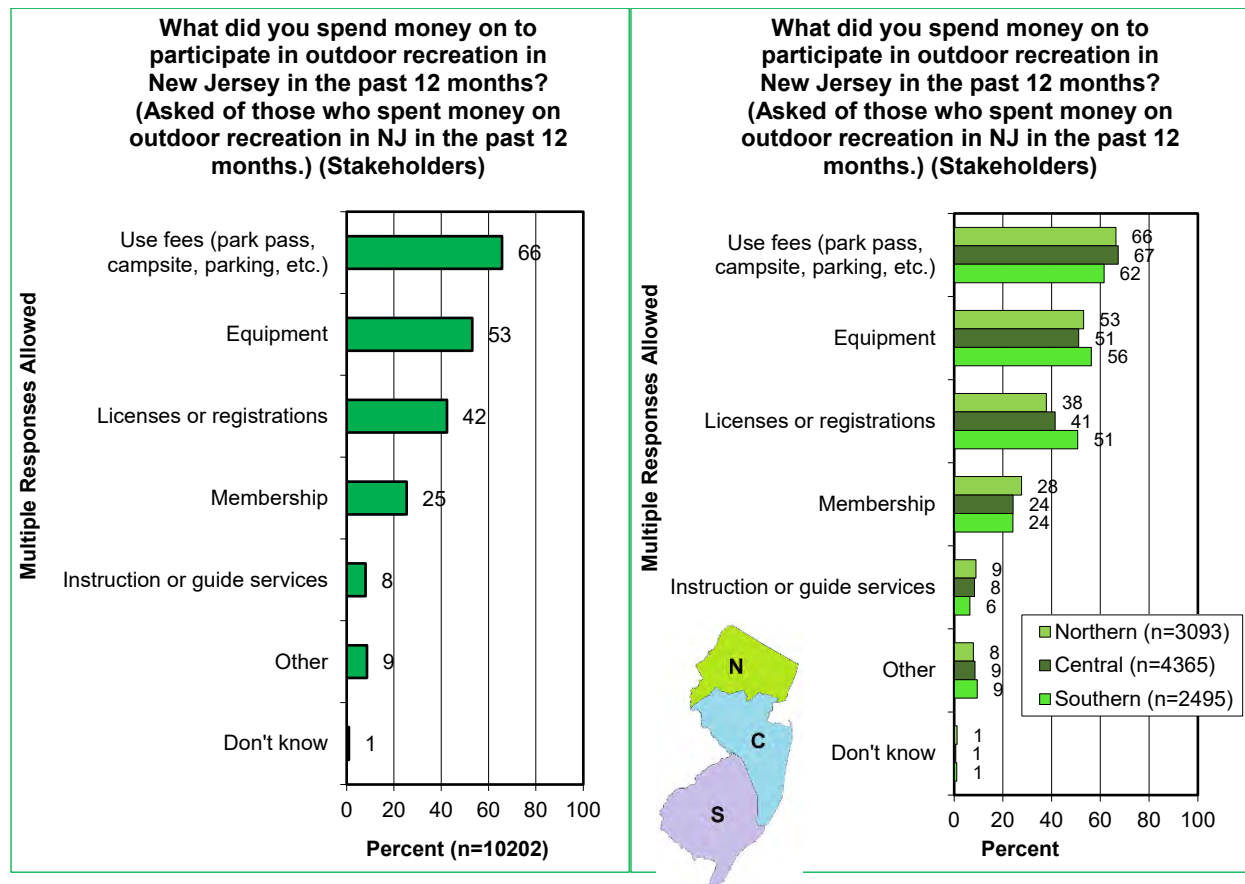
OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPENDITURES AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

Just over two thirds of stakeholders spent money on outdoor recreation in the 12 months previous to the survey. The regions are consistent, with no marked differences. The county results are included, too. Use fees topped the list of items on which they spent money (graphs and tables on the following pages).



Did you spend any money to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)			
	Yes	No	Don't know
Atlantic	72	26	3
Bergen	67	30	3
Burlington	68	29	4
Camden	67	29	4
Cape May	76	22	3
Cumberland	79	20	1
Essex	65	31	5
Gloucester	67	29	3
Hudson	59	37	4
Hunterdon	67	29	4
Mercer	68	28	4
Middlesex	66	31	4
Monmouth	70	27	3
Morris	71	27	3
Ocean	75	22	3
Passaic	67	28	5
Salem	70	27	3
Somerset	66	31	3
Sussex	70	28	3
Union	69	27	4
Warren	71	27	2
Statewide	69	28	3

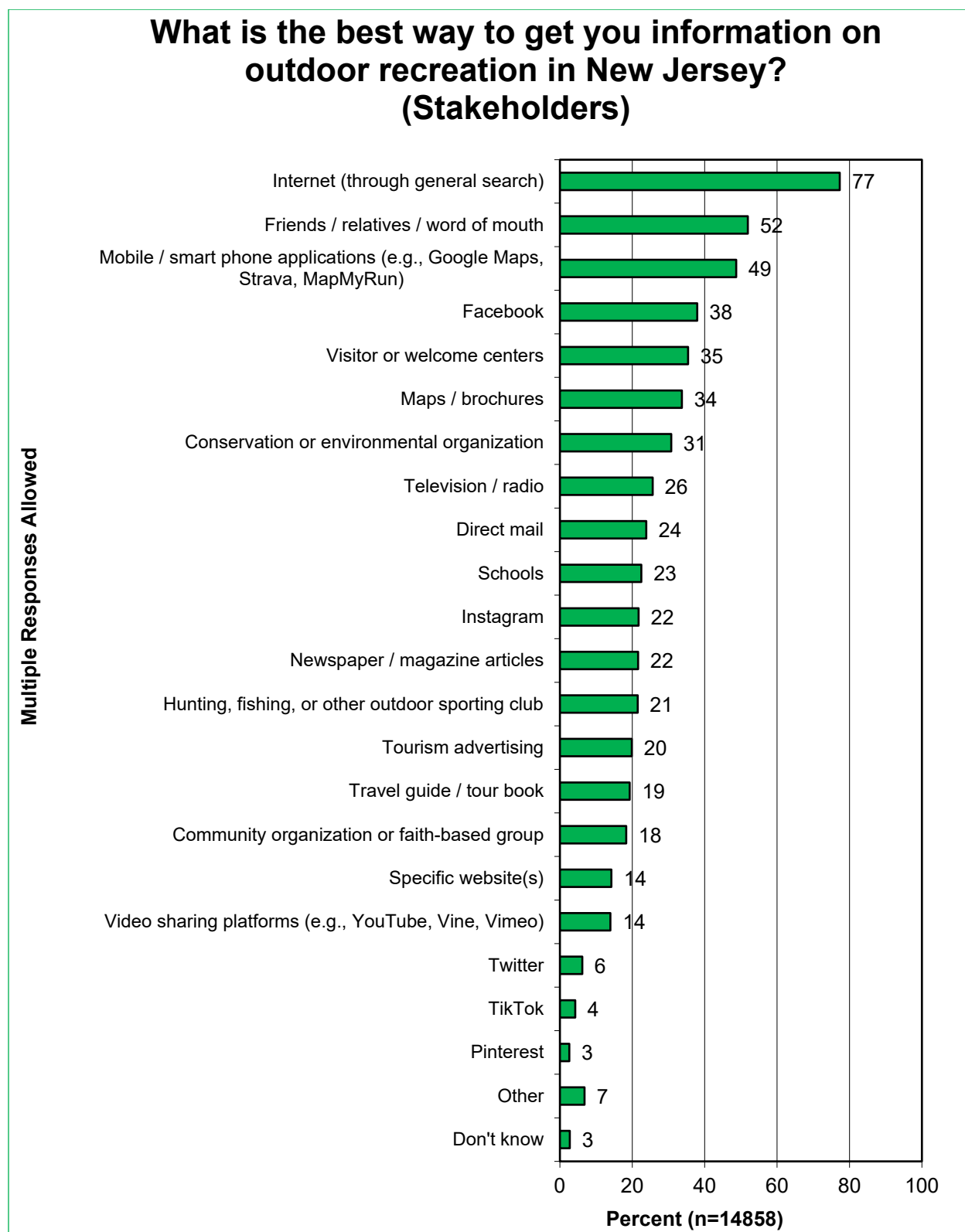




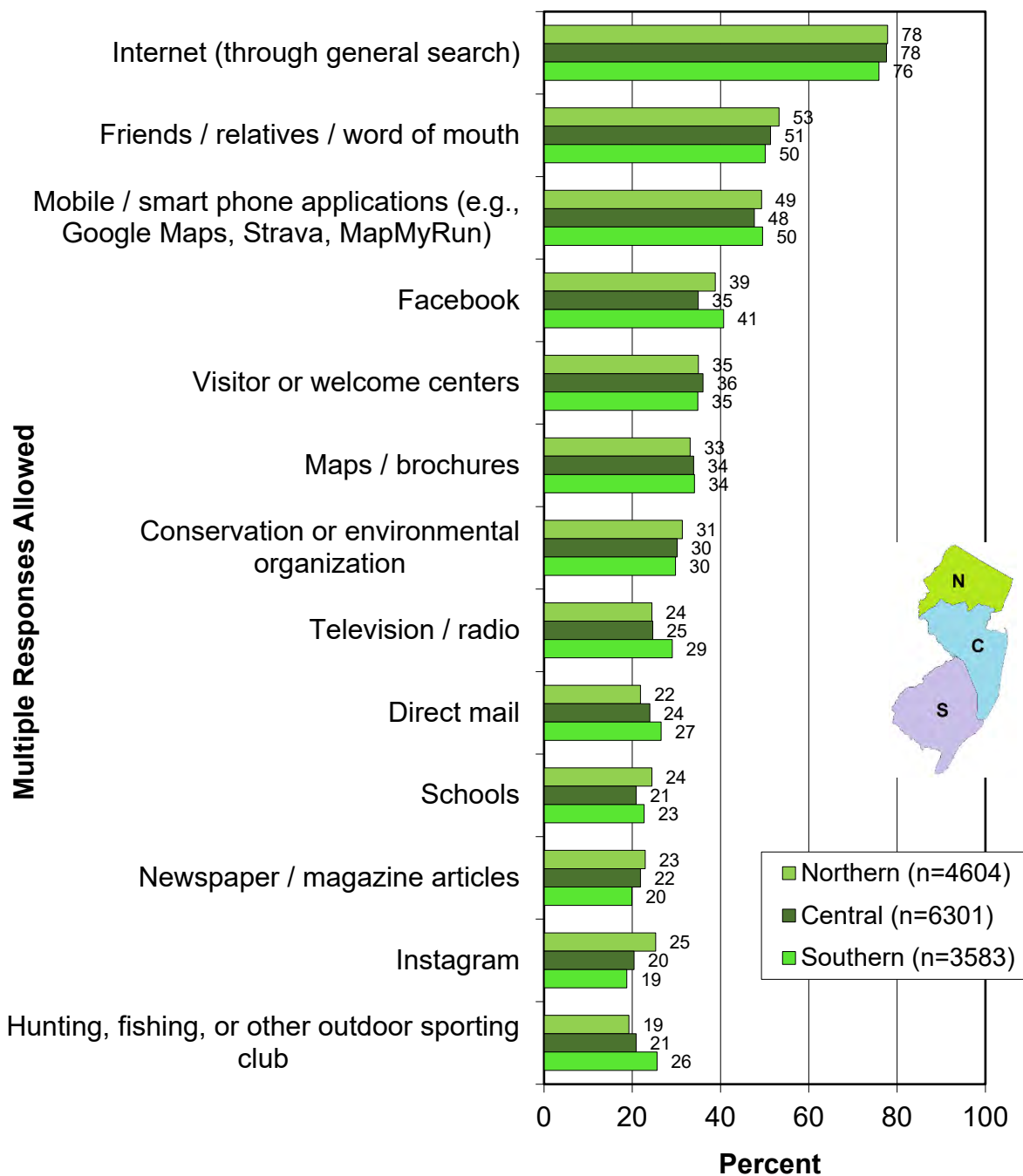
What did you spend money on to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey in the past 12 months? (Stakeholders)					
	Use Fees (park pass, campsite, parking, etc.)	Equipment	Licenses or registrations	Membership	Instruction or guide services
Atlantic	63	58	55	24	7
Bergen	68	50	34	29	8
Burlington	64	52	46	23	7
Camden	67	52	41	26	6
Cape May	55	65	60	26	5
Cumberland	56	67	63	23	4
Essex	69	46	24	28	8
Gloucester	58	58	55	22	9
Hudson	74	44	20	19	12
Hunterdon	66	59	50	27	7
Mercer	68	47	31	24	7
Middlesex	70	50	38	24	8
Monmouth	65	50	42	24	12
Morris	67	55	41	31	11
Ocean	66	55	54	23	7
Passaic	62	57	43	32	8
Salem	53	58	63	25	4
Somerset	67	51	32	25	8
Sussex	62	63	53	22	9
Union	71	45	37	25	9
Warren	57	63	62	22	5
Statewide	66	53	42	25	8

STAKEHOLDERS' INFORMATION SOURCES

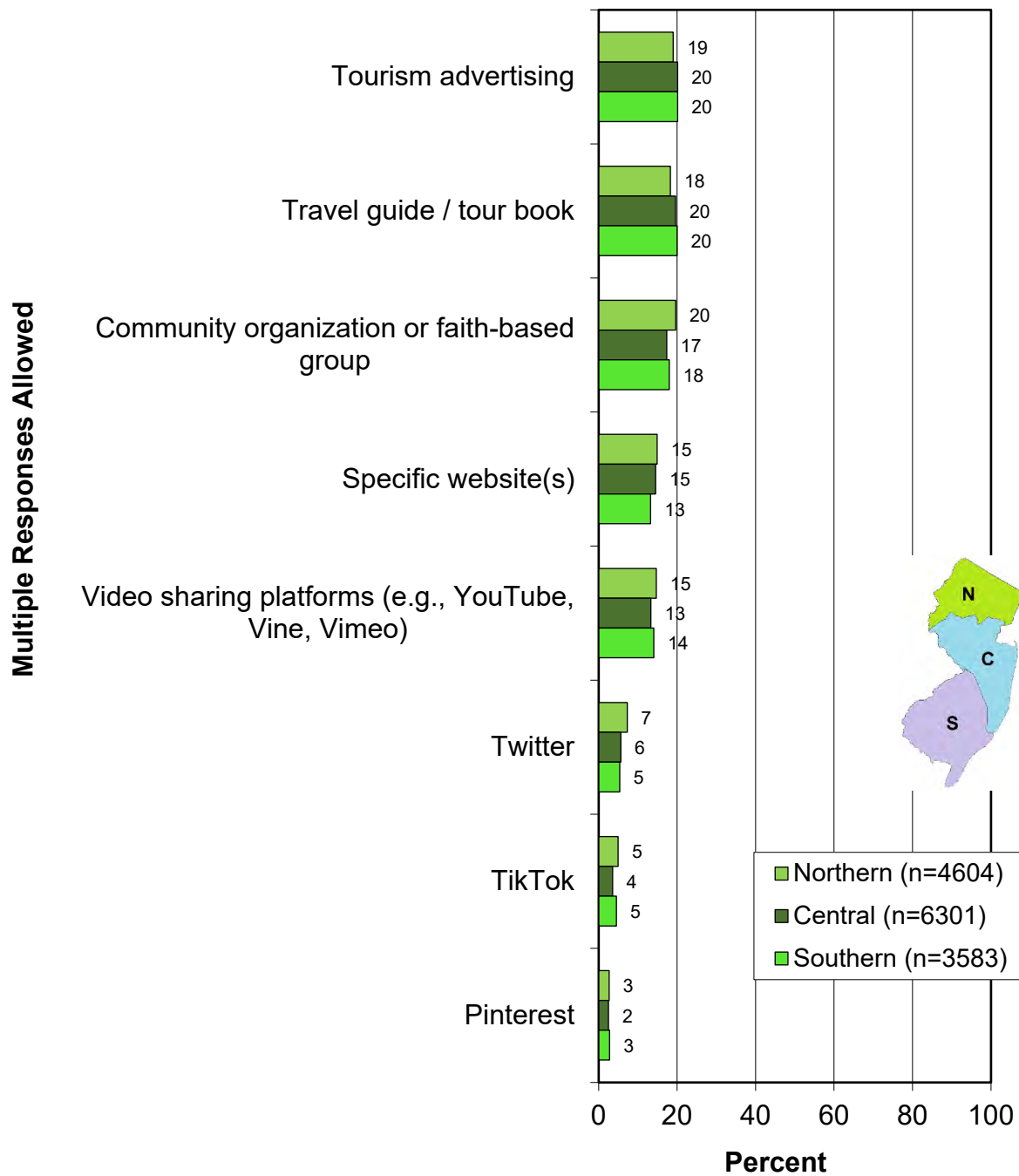
Preferred information sources are shown in the graph, with the internet in general leading the way. Region results are shown in two graphs, with county results following in a table.



What is the best way to get you information on outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Part 1) (Stakeholders)



What is the best way to get you information on outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Part 2) (Stakeholders)

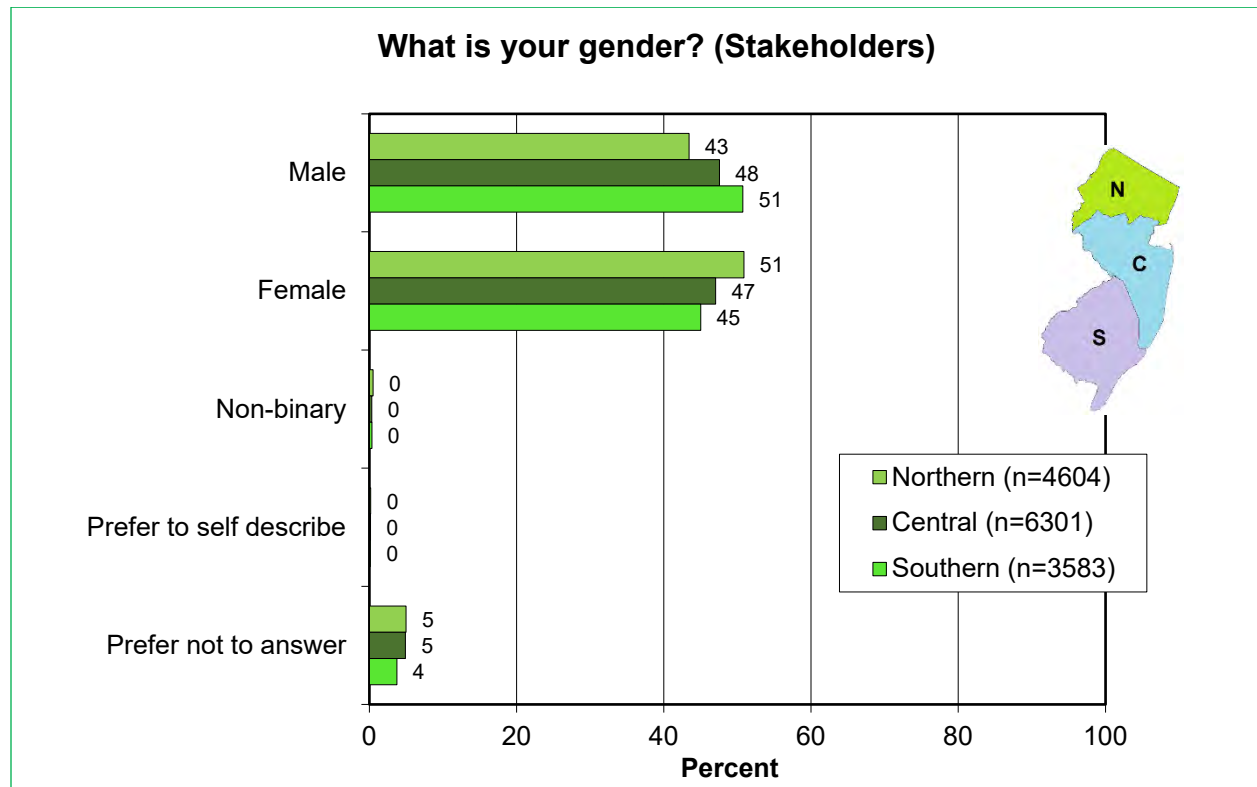
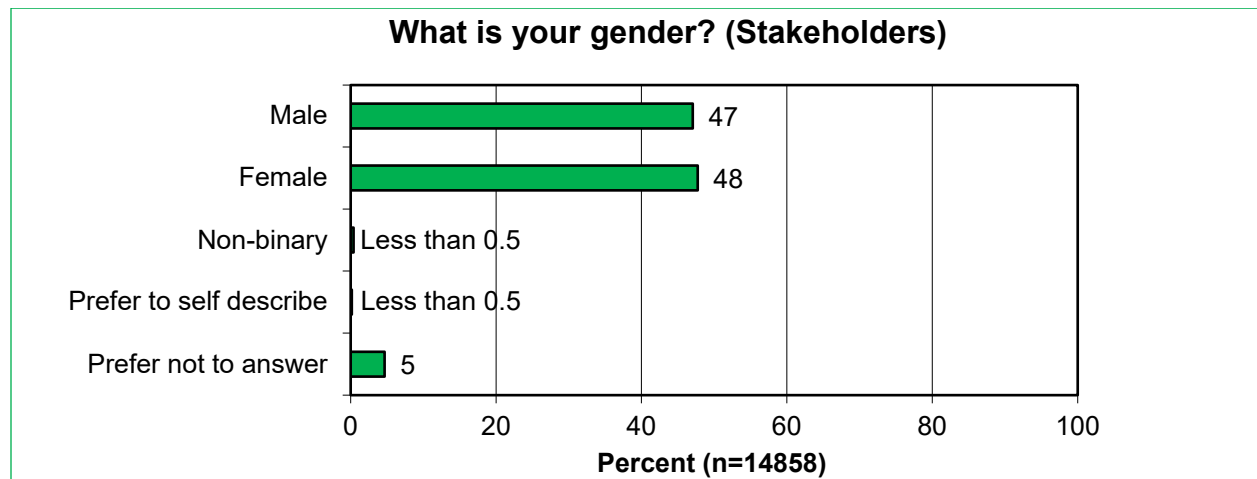


What is the best way to get you information on outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Stakeholders)																					
	Internet (through general search)	Friends / relatives / word-of-mouth	Mobile / smart phone applications (e.g., Google Maps, Strava, MapMyRun)	Facebook	Visitor or welcome centers	Maps / brochures	Conservation or environmental organization	Television / radio	Direct mail	Schools	Instagram	Newspaper / magazine articles	Hunting, fishing, or other outdoor sporting club	Tourism advertising	Travel guide / tour book	Community organization or faith-based group	Specific website(s)	Video sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube, Vine, Vimeo)	Twitter	TikTok	Pinterest
Atlantic	77	48	51	43	35	33	33	30	22	24	16	24	27	22	22	18	10	14	6	4	2
Bergen	79	53	49	36	34	31	31	26	23	24	23	27	16	18	21	19	13	16	7	4	3
Burlington	76	51	50	40	37	36	31	31	26	22	19	19	23	19	18	18	14	14	5	5	3
Camden	77	52	49	37	34	33	28	27	27	23	20	19	20	21	19	19	16	15	6	6	3
Cape May	75	49	47	35	33	37	30	26	21	19	13	29	29	19	25	17	13	10	2	1	2
Cumberland	74	48	50	44	32	37	30	29	28	22	23	20	35	21	20	17	12	13	6	4	3
Essex	78	55	49	39	35	30	30	26	28	30	33	23	12	21	19	27	13	16	11	7	3
Gloucester	74	48	50	43	35	33	28	29	32	22	17	16	27	19	22	19	13	15	6	5	4
Hudson	74	50	49	34	29	25	28	26	20	28	38	21	12	18	12	25	13	15	12	8	2
Hunterdon	78	53	46	34	33	38	34	15	15	20	16	19	23	15	13	14	15	11	3	2	1
Mercer	77	52	47	33	37	34	31	21	23	23	22	23	17	20	19	20	16	13	6	4	2
Middlesex	79	50	51	34	38	35	29	31	28	23	18	23	20	21	22	20	14	15	6	5	3
Monmouth	76	50	46	33	37	34	31	25	25	18	22	22	20	19	20	16	15	12	5	2	2
Morris	80	55	49	37	36	38	33	21	21	23	21	20	20	17	18	17	18	14	6	4	2
Ocean	78	52	49	39	37	35	29	29	25	20	19	22	28	23	23	16	12	14	6	4	3
Passaic	76	54	53	48	39	34	33	28	23	23	26	26	22	24	19	18	15	14	6	5	2
Salem	77	50	51	50	29	28	27	26	24	33	27	15	38	20	13	12	9	15	7	5	2
Somerset	77	52	46	34	33	31	29	21	22	22	20	21	15	19	16	17	16	12	6	4	2
Sussex	75	51	48	43	36	39	32	22	17	22	19	23	30	18	17	17	15	14	4	4	3
Union	78	52	49	38	35	30	28	24	25	24	25	22	18	21	17	20	14	16	6	4	3
Warren	78	52	48	37	34	35	32	21	15	19	17	16	35	16	19	12	19	15	6	4	3
Statewide	77	52	49	38	35	34	31	26	24	23	22	22	21	20	19	18	14	14	6	4	3

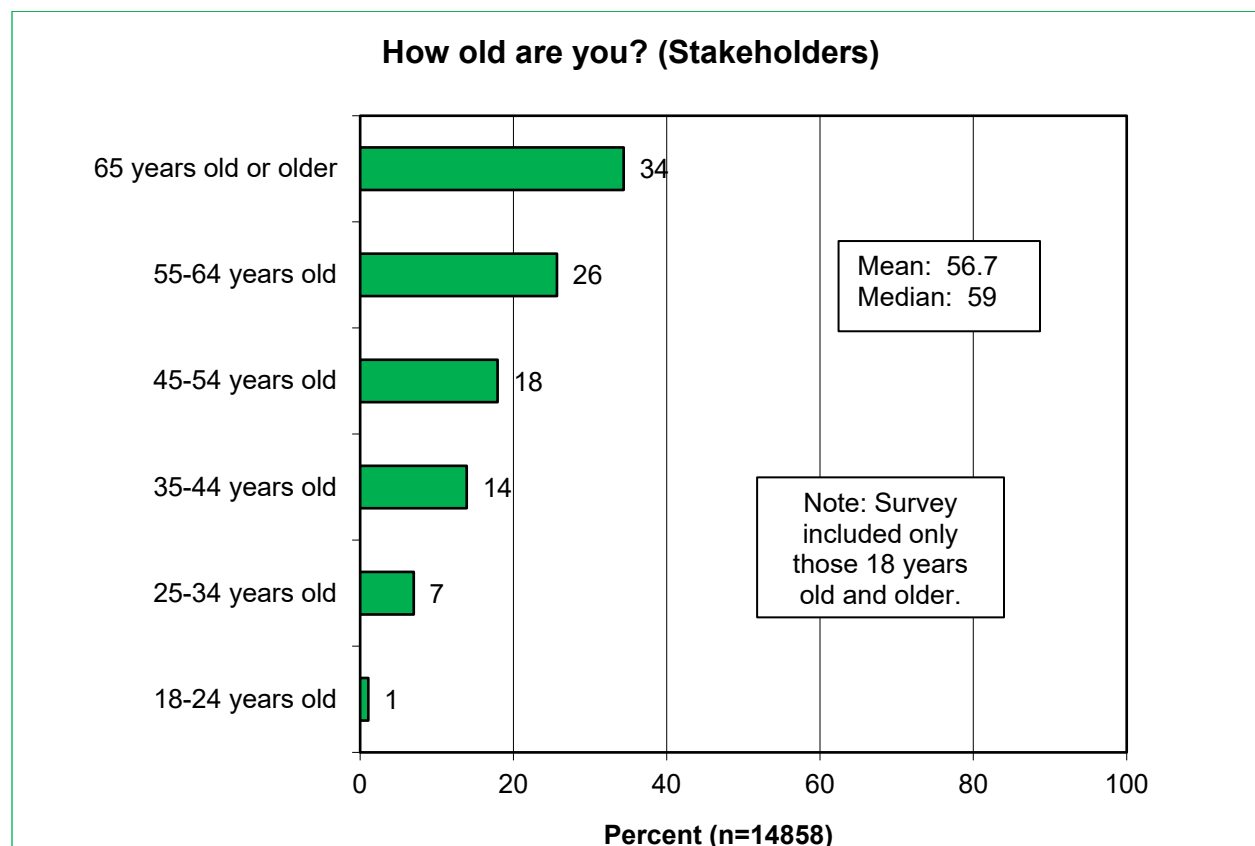
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

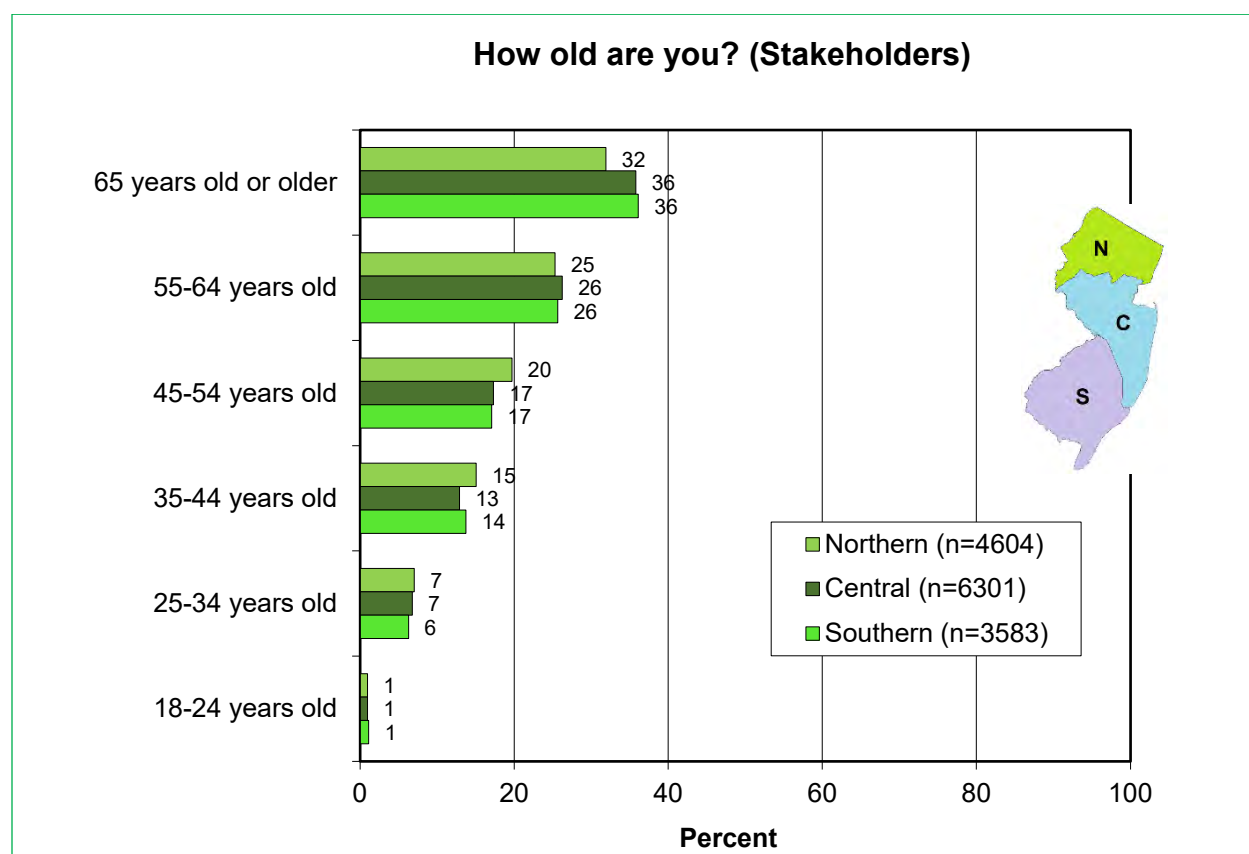
The following demographic information was obtained:

- Gender.
- Age.
- Numbers of adults and children in the household.
- Presence of people with disabilities in the household.
- Ethnicity and languages primarily spoken.
- Education.
- County of residence.
- Type of residential area.



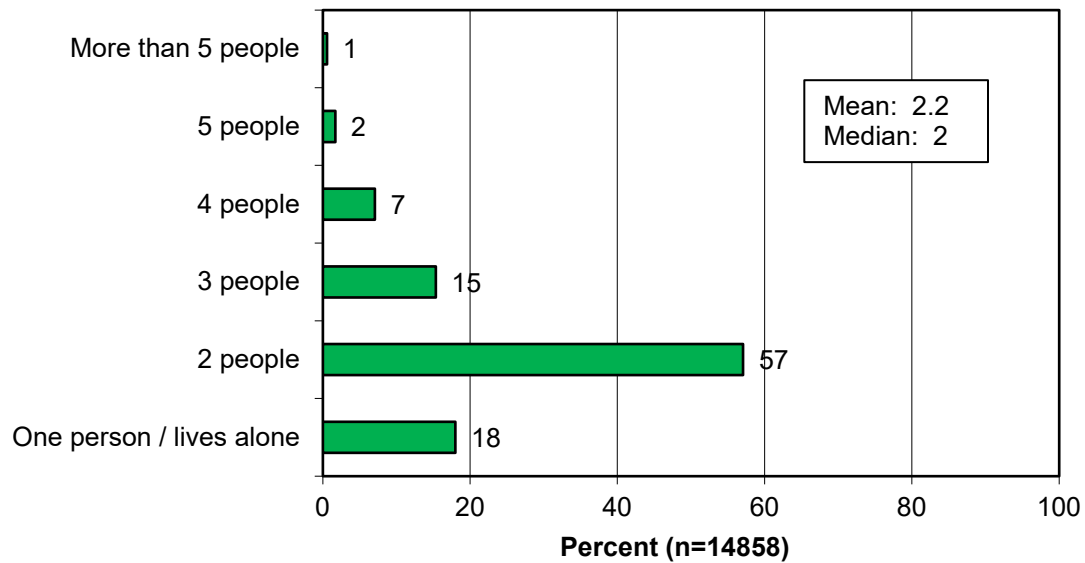
What is your gender? (Stakeholders)					
	Male	Female	Non-binary	Prefer to self describe	Prefer not to answer
Atlantic	53	43	0	0	4
Bergen	43	50	1	0	7
Burlington	47	48	0	0	4
Camden	48	48	1	0	3
Cape May	59	36	0	0	5
Cumberland	60	36	0	0	4
Essex	37	58	0	0	4
Gloucester	52	45	0	0	3
Hudson	34	60	1	0	4
Hunterdon	46	48	0	0	5
Mercer	39	55	0	0	6
Middlesex	49	45	1	0	4
Monmouth	48	47	0	0	4
Morris	45	49	0	0	5
Ocean	55	39	0	0	5
Passaic	45	50	0	0	4
Salem	51	46	1	0	3
Somerset	44	50	0	0	5
Sussex	49	45	0	0	5
Union	45	50	1	0	5
Warren	58	38	0	0	4
Statewide	47	48	0	0	5



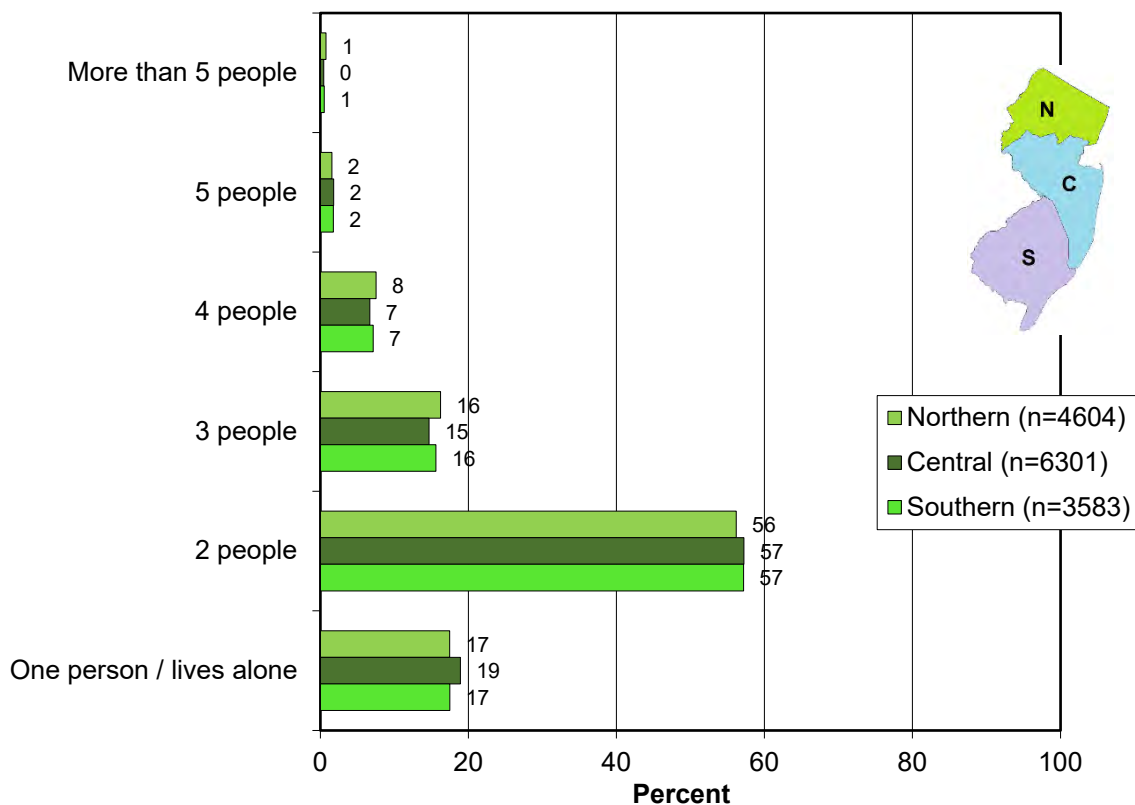


How old are you? (Stakeholders)						
	65 years old or older	55-64 years old	45-54 years old	35-44 years old	25-34 years old	18-24 years old
Atlantic	40	25	15	13	6	1
Bergen	37	24	18	15	6	1
Burlington	36	27	17	14	6	1
Camden	34	24	18	15	8	1
Cape May	46	28	13	7	5	1
Cumberland	29	29	22	12	5	2
Essex	26	23	23	20	7	1
Gloucester	37	25	17	13	6	1
Hudson	22	21	21	22	13	1
Hunterdon	34	28	19	11	8	1
Mercer	33	26	18	14	8	1
Middlesex	35	25	18	14	8	1
Monmouth	39	28	16	12	5	1
Morris	33	29	19	11	6	1
Ocean	42	25	15	10	6	1
Passaic	34	27	18	12	9	1
Salem	26	22	21	27	5	0
Somerset	32	27	18	16	6	1
Sussex	36	25	17	14	7	1
Union	31	26	21	16	6	1
Warren	32	26	23	13	5	1
Statewide	34	26	18	14	7	1

How many adults ages 18 and older currently live in your household, including yourself? (Stakeholders)

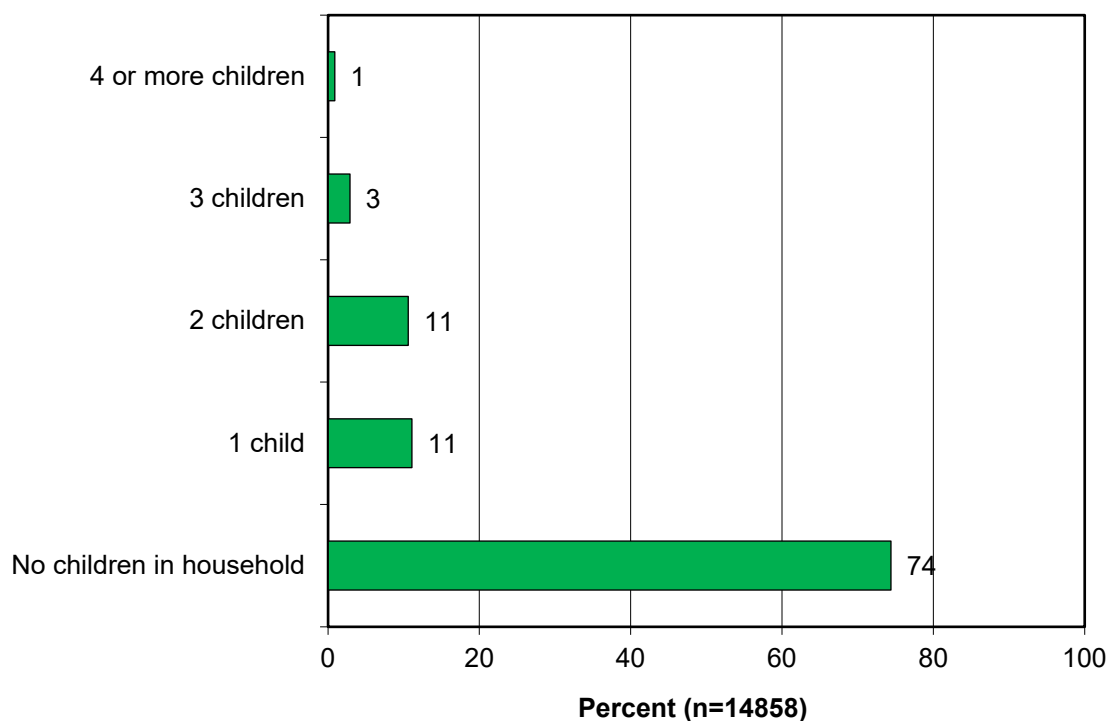


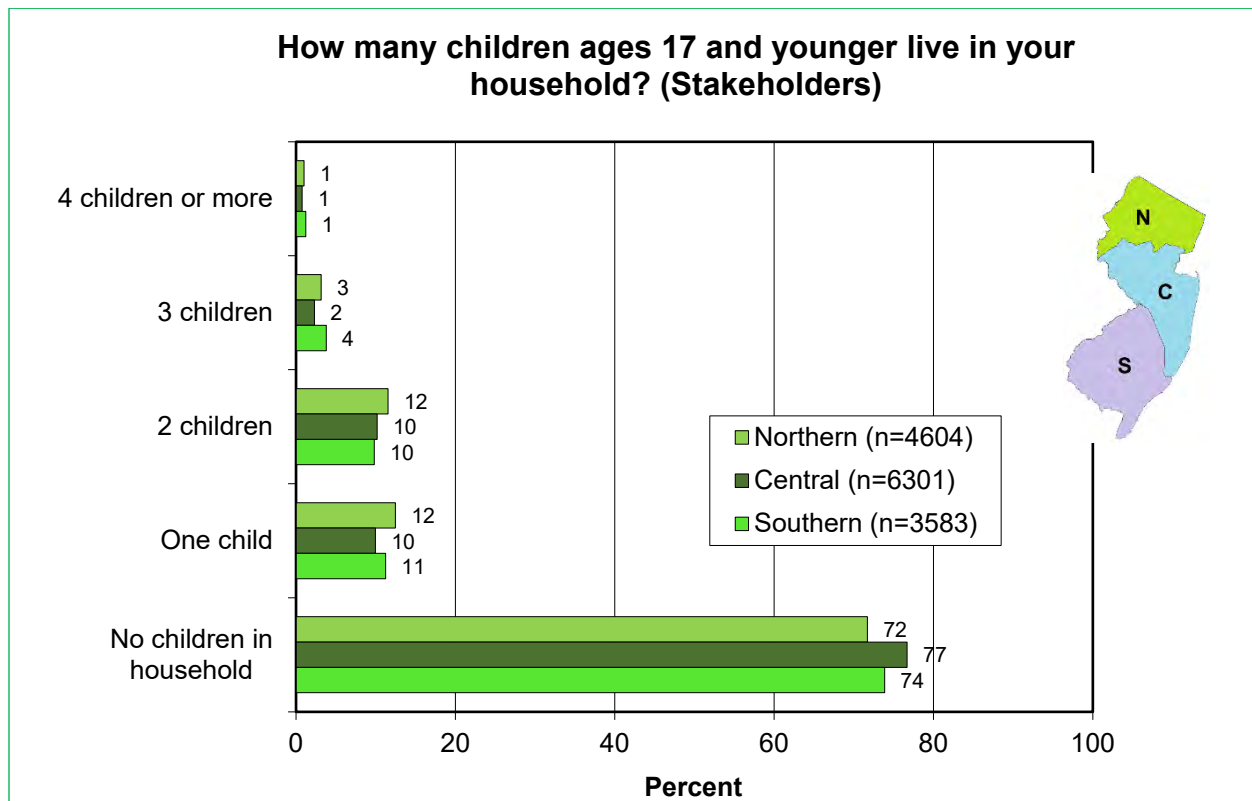
How many adults ages 18 and older currently live in your household, including yourself? (Stakeholders)



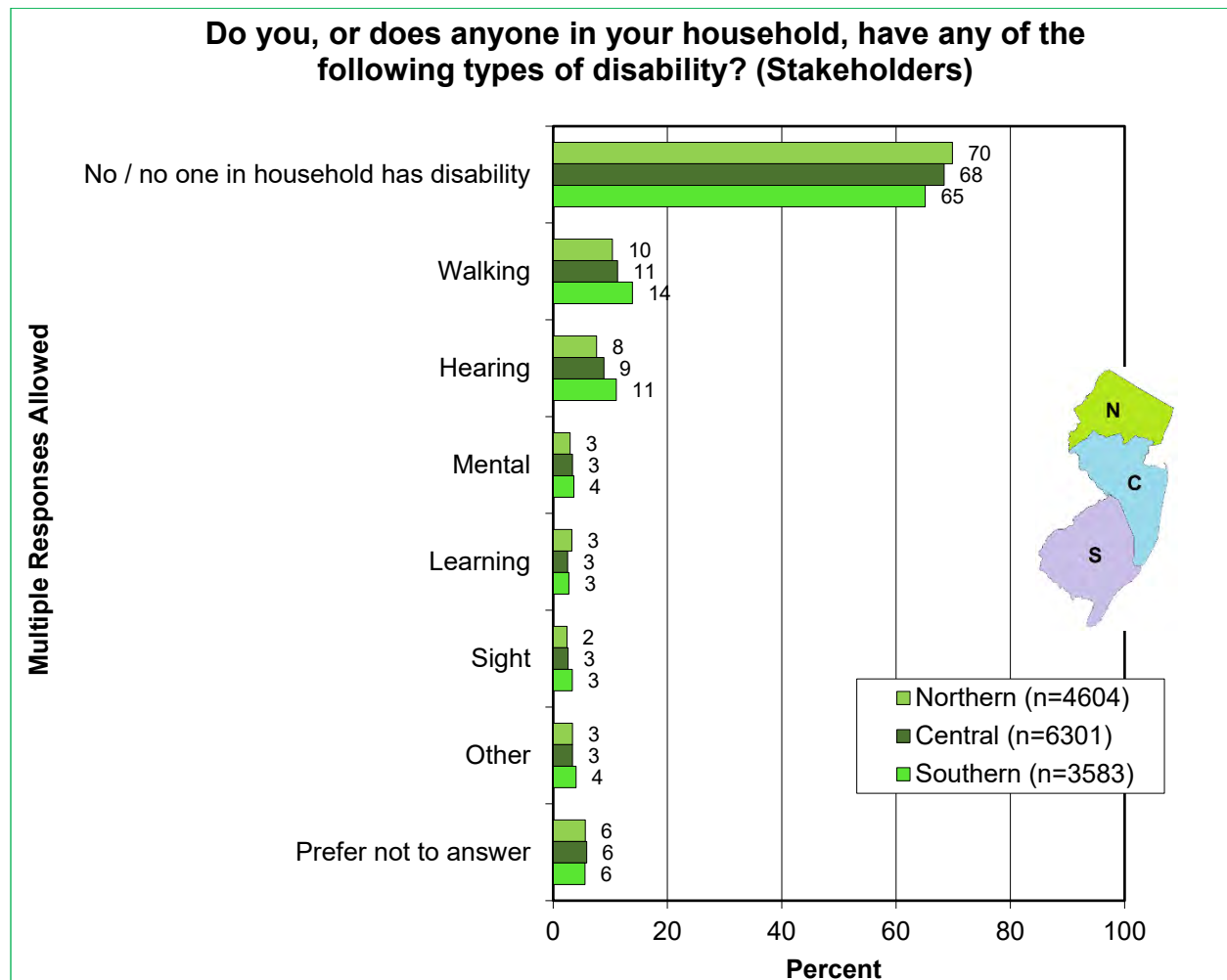
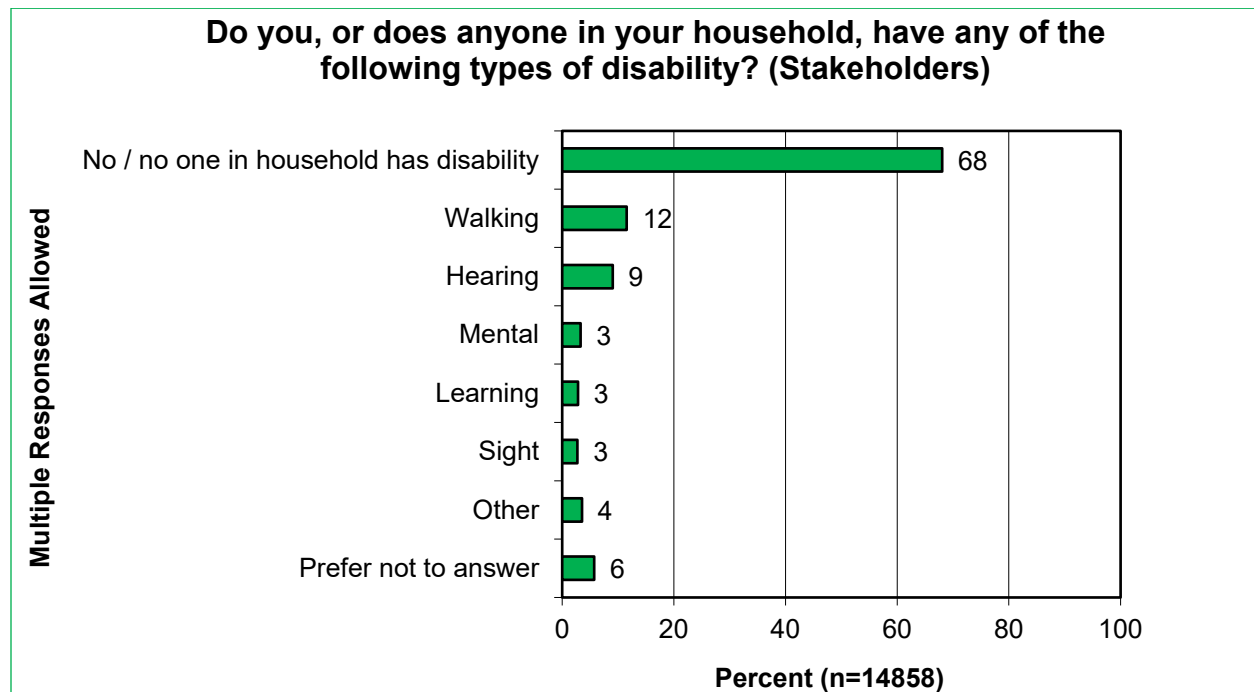
How many adults ages 18 and older currently live in your household, including yourself? (Stakeholders)						
	More than 5 people	5 people	4 people	3 people	2 people	One person / lives alone
Atlantic	1	1	8	13	59	18
Bergen	1	2	8	19	53	18
Burlington	0	2	6	15	58	18
Camden	0	2	8	17	55	18
Cape May	0	2	5	16	56	20
Cumberland	1	1	6	13	60	19
Essex	0	1	8	13	58	19
Gloucester	1	2	9	18	54	15
Hudson	1	2	4	10	57	25
Hunterdon	0	2	6	15	60	16
Mercer	0	2	6	13	59	19
Middlesex	1	2	6	18	54	19
Monmouth	0	2	7	13	58	18
Morris	0	2	8	18	59	13
Ocean	1	2	6	14	57	20
Passaic	2	1	8	17	53	19
Salem	1	1	6	18	62	13
Somerset	0	1	7	13	58	21
Sussex	1	2	7	16	57	17
Union	1	2	8	17	53	18
Warren	1	1	10	16	58	14
Statewide	1	2	7	15	57	18

How many children ages 17 and younger live in your household? (Stakeholders)



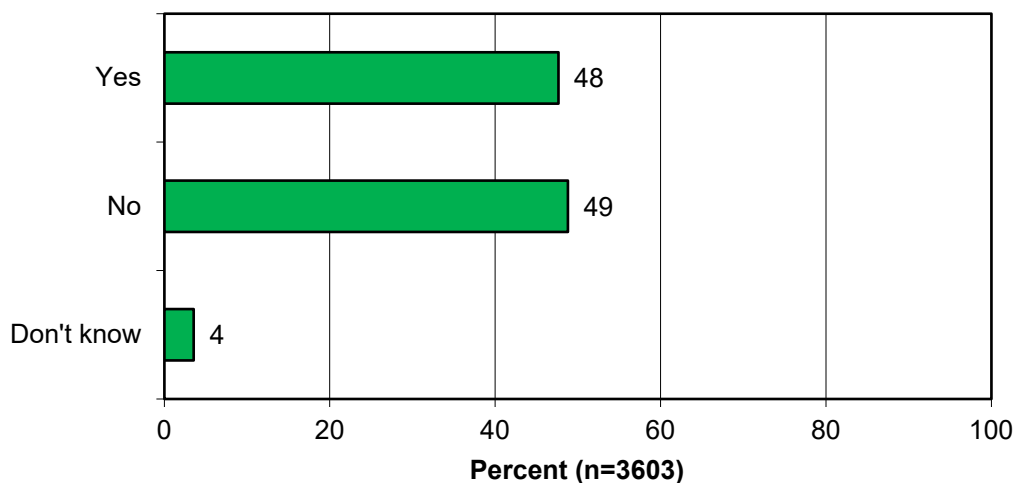


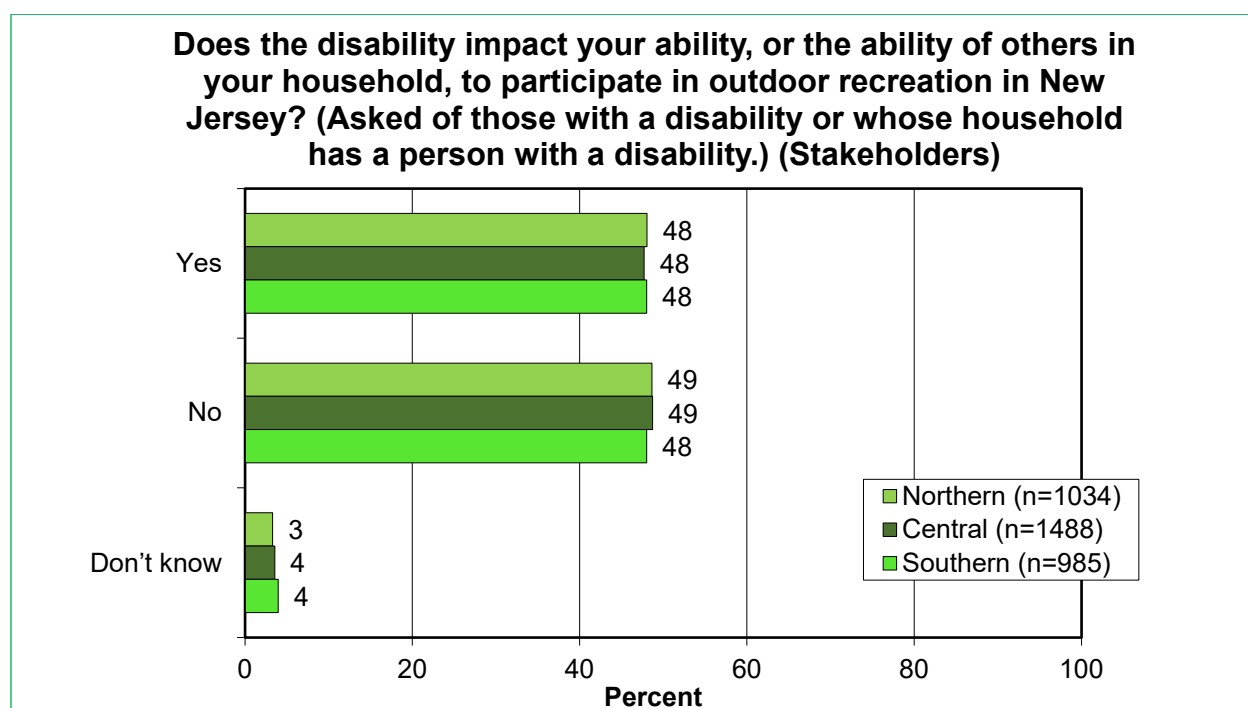
How many children ages 17 and younger live in your household? (Stakeholders)					
	4 or more children	3 children	2 children	1 child	No children in household
Atlantic	1	4	9	8	78
Bergen	1	4	12	11	72
Burlington	1	3	9	12	75
Camden	2	4	12	12	71
Cape May	1	3	6	8	83
Cumberland	1	3	12	11	73
Essex	2	3	15	16	64
Gloucester	2	4	9	13	72
Hudson	1	3	10	14	72
Hunterdon	1	4	9	11	75
Mercer	1	2	11	10	77
Middlesex	1	2	10	11	76
Monmouth	1	2	9	8	80
Morris	1	3	12	13	73
Ocean	1	2	8	8	82
Passaic	1	3	9	11	77
Salem	1	4	17	18	59
Somerset	1	3	13	11	72
Sussex	1	3	11	11	74
Union	1	3	14	14	68
Warren	1	5	13	10	73
Statewide	1	3	11	11	74



Do you, or does anyone in your household, have any of the following types of disability? (Stakeholders)						
	No / no one in household has disability	Walking	Hearing	Mental	Learning	Sight
Atlantic	68	12	8	4	2	4
Bergen	71	11	8	2	2	2
Burlington	64	15	13	4	2	4
Camden	66	12	9	4	4	2
Cape May	65	14	13	2	1	1
Cumberland	67	13	10	4	4	4
Essex	70	8	6	4	5	2
Gloucester	63	17	13	4	3	4
Hudson	72	8	5	3	3	2
Hunterdon	75	7	7	3	3	2
Mercer	65	11	8	5	3	2
Middlesex	68	13	9	4	2	3
Monmouth	70	11	10	2	2	2
Morris	69	11	8	3	3	2
Ocean	65	14	12	3	2	4
Passaic	66	12	10	3	4	4
Salem	69	10	10	2	5	1
Somerset	71	9	6	3	2	3
Sussex	67	12	8	2	4	1
Union	68	10	7	4	4	2
Warren	73	11	10	3	2	4
Statewide	68	12	9	3	3	3

Does the disability impact your ability, or the ability of others in your household, to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Asked of those with a disability or whose household has a person with a disability.) (Stakeholders)



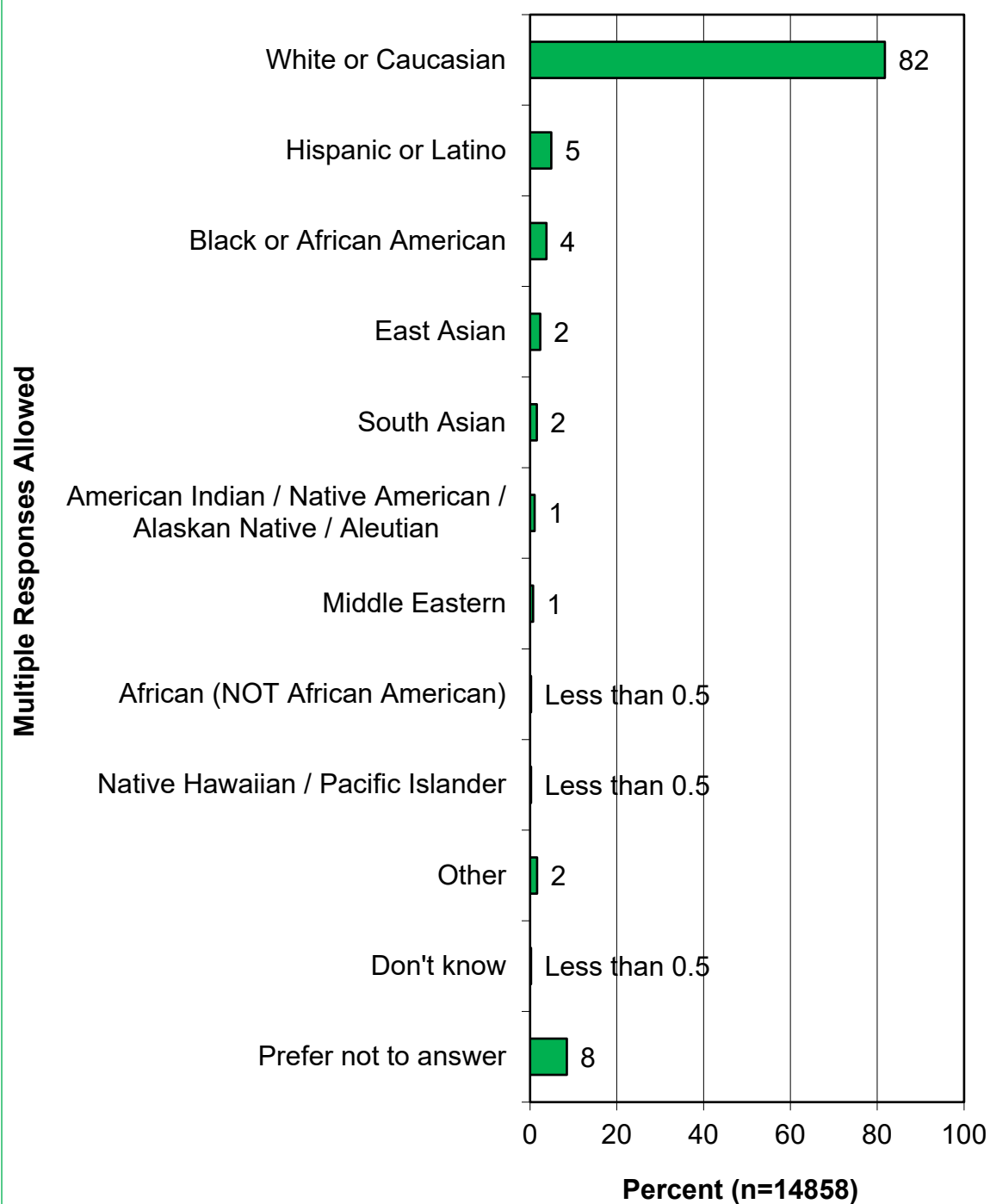


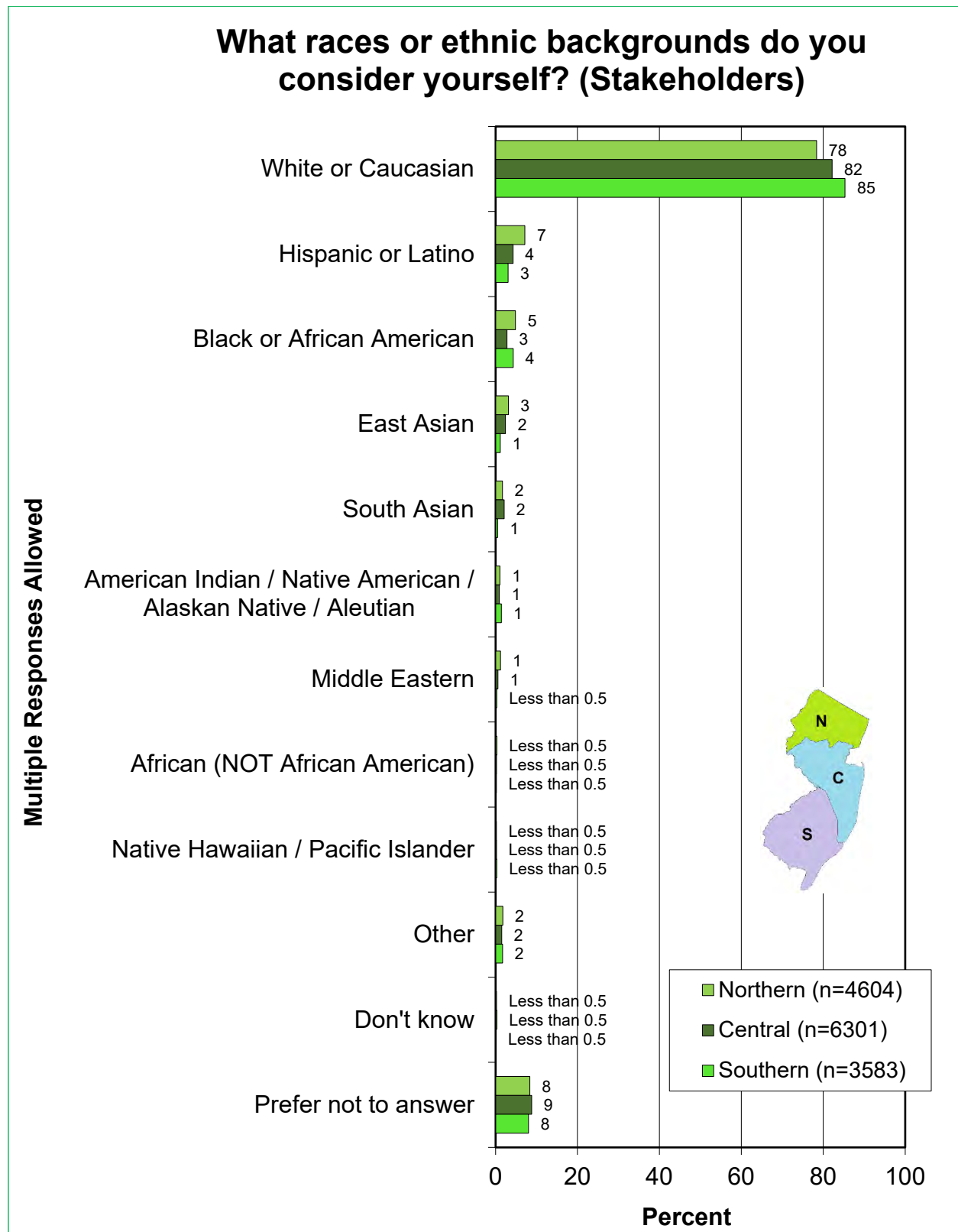
Does the disability impact your ability, or the ability of others in your household, to participate in outdoor recreation in New Jersey? (Asked of those with a disability or whose household has a person with a disability.) (Stakeholders)

	Yes	No	Don't know
Atlantic	49	50	2
Bergen	46	51	3
Burlington	50	45	5
Camden	48	47	5
Cape May	42	55	3
Cumberland	48	47	5
Essex	43	54	3
Gloucester	50	47	3
Hudson	53	43	4
Hunterdon	48	51	1
Mercer	48	49	4
Middlesex	52	46	3
Monmouth	47	49	3
Morris	49	47	4
Ocean	48	50	3
Passaic	51	46	3
Salem	36	64	0
Somerset	46	48	6
Sussex	53	45	2
Union	43	50	7
Warren	42	55	3
Statewide	48	49	4

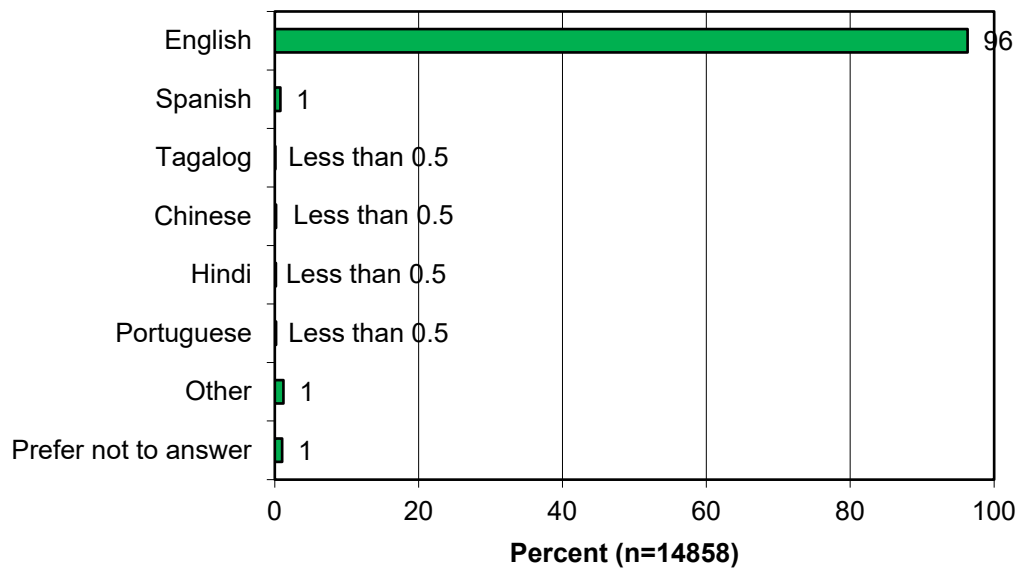
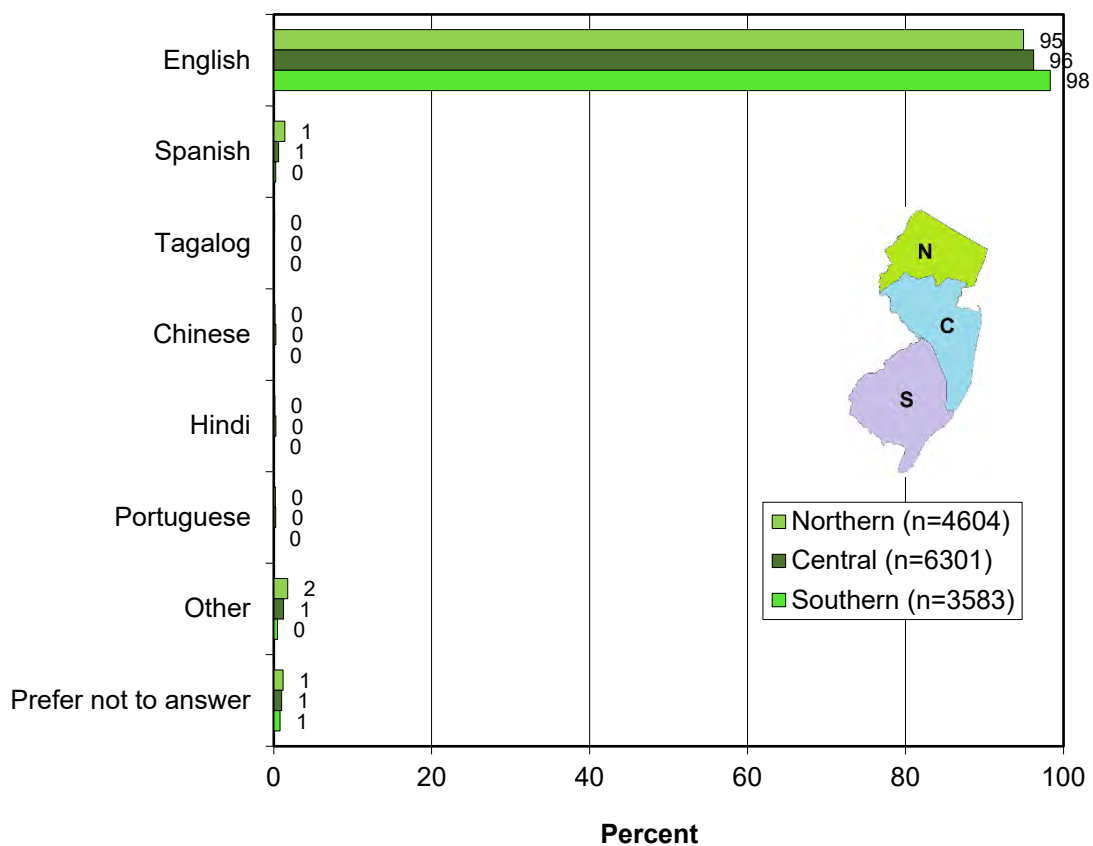


What races or ethnic backgrounds do you consider yourself? (Stakeholders)



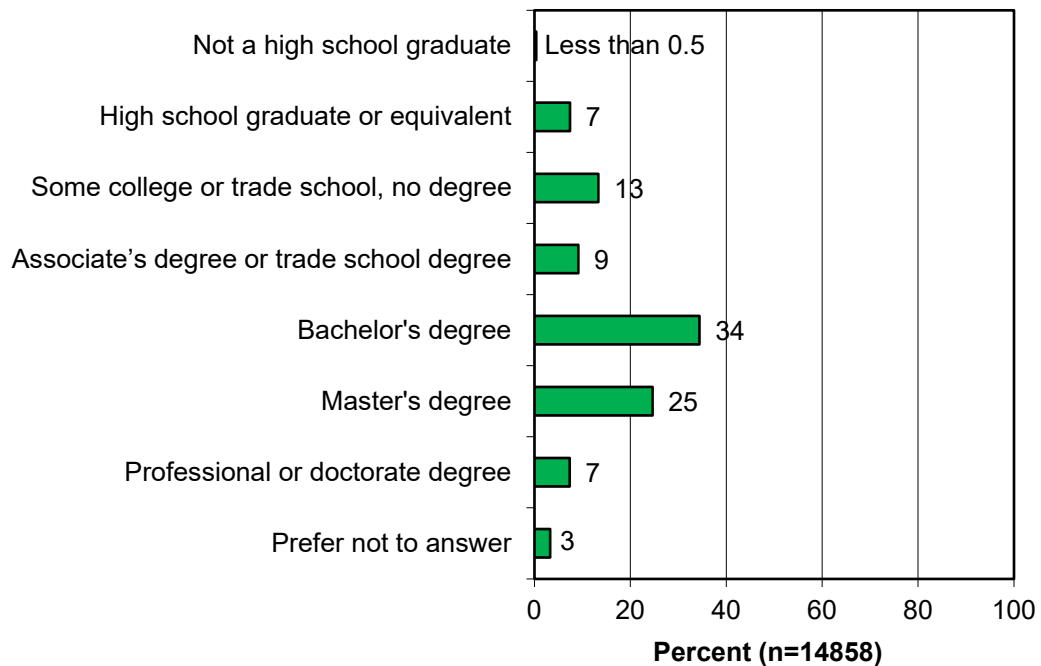


What races or ethnic backgrounds do you consider yourself? (Stakeholders)										
	White or Caucasian	Hispanic or Latino	Black or African American	East Asian	Other	South Asian	American Indian / Native American / Alaskan Native / Aleutian	Middle Eastern	African (NOT African American)	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
Atlantic	87	3	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
Bergen	81	7	2	5	2	2	0	2	1	0
Burlington	86	3	5	2	2	1	2	0	0	0
Camden	83	4	6	2	2	1	1	0	0	0
Cape May	87	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	1
Cumberland	84	7	2	1	2	1	4	0	1	0
Essex	64	10	17	5	2	1	2	1	0	0
Gloucester	86	2	4	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hudson	65	16	6	6	2	4	1	1	0	1
Hunterdon	88	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Mercer	81	4	5	2	1	3	1	0	0	0
Middlesex	73	7	4	4	2	5	1	1	0	0
Monmouth	87	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0
Morris	84	4	1	2	2	1	0	1	0	0
Ocean	87	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
Passaic	81	8	3	1	1	2	1	2	0	0
Salem	88	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Somerset	81	5	2	4	1	3	0	1	0	0
Sussex	87	4	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Union	76	7	7	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
Warren	87	4	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Statewide	82	5	4	2	2	2	1	1	0	0

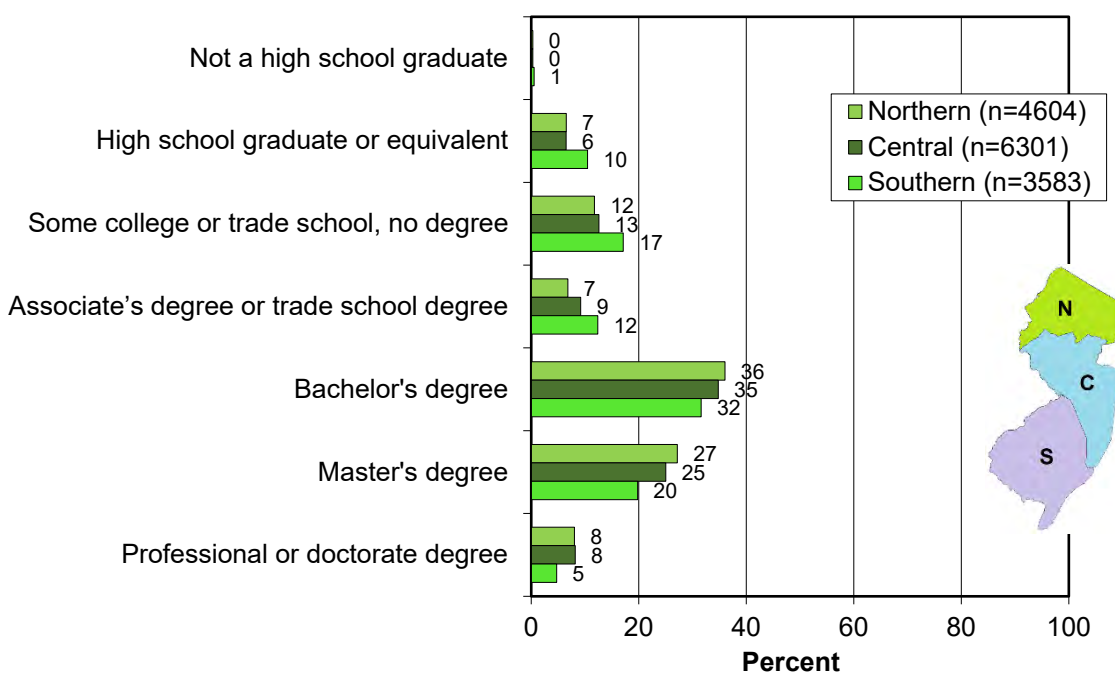
What language is spoken most in your home? (Stakeholders)**What language is spoken most in your home? (Stakeholders)**

What language is spoken most in your home? (Stakeholders)								
	English	Spanish	Chinese	Portuguese	Hindi	Tagalog	Other	Prefer not to answer
Atlantic	98	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Bergen	93	1	0	0	0	0	3	2
Burlington	98	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Camden	98	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Cape May	99	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cumberland	97	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Essex	95	2	0	1	0	0	2	1
Gloucester	99	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Hudson	91	3	0	0	1	0	3	1
Hunterdon	97	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mercer	96	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Middlesex	94	1	0	0	1	0	3	1
Monmouth	98	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Morris	96	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Ocean	98	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Passaic	95	2	0	0	0	0	2	1
Salem	99	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Somerset	95	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Sussex	98	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Union	94	2	0	1	0	0	2	1
Warren	98	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Statewide	96	1	0	0	0	0	1	1

**What is the highest level of education you have completed?
(Stakeholders)**

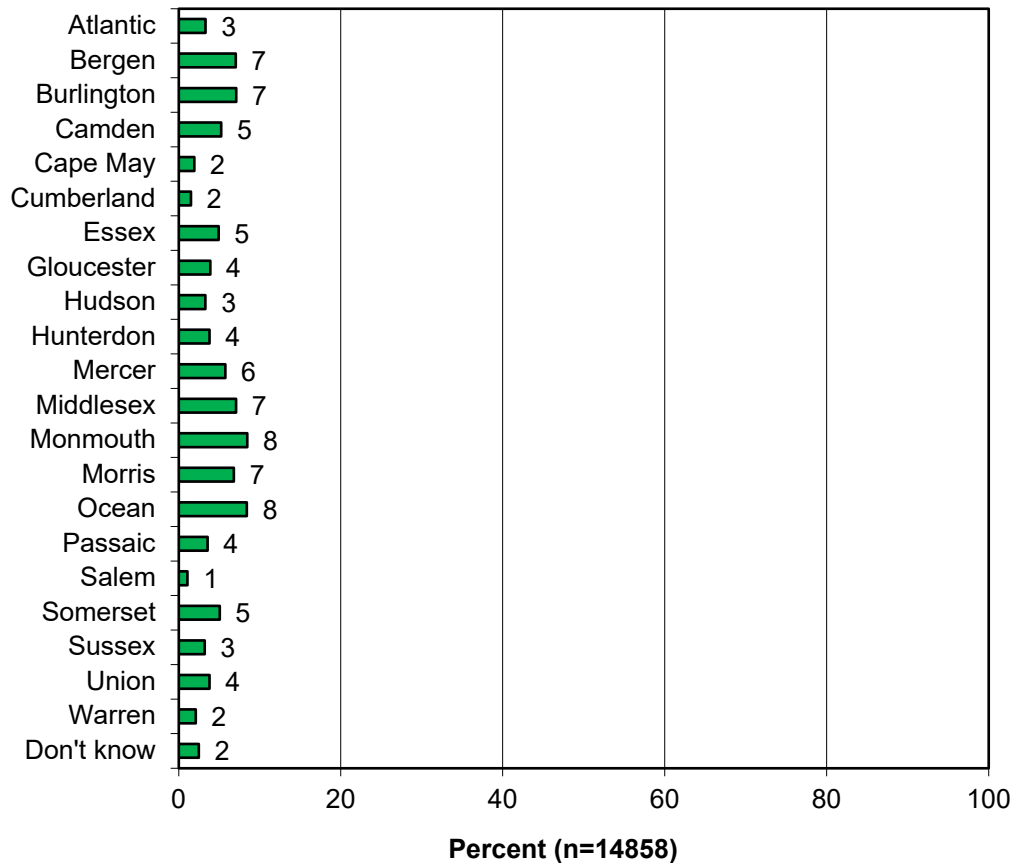
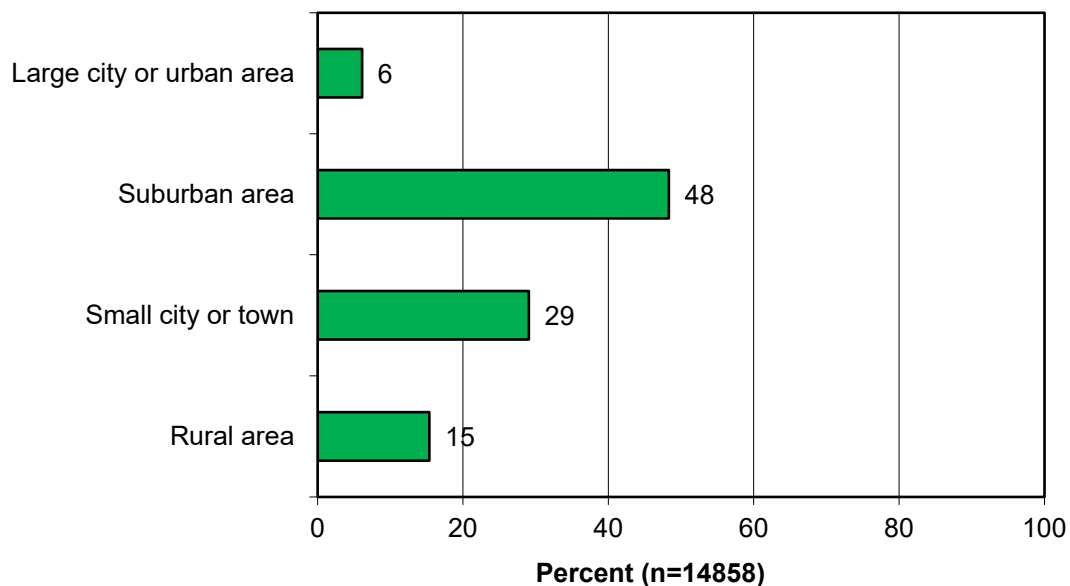


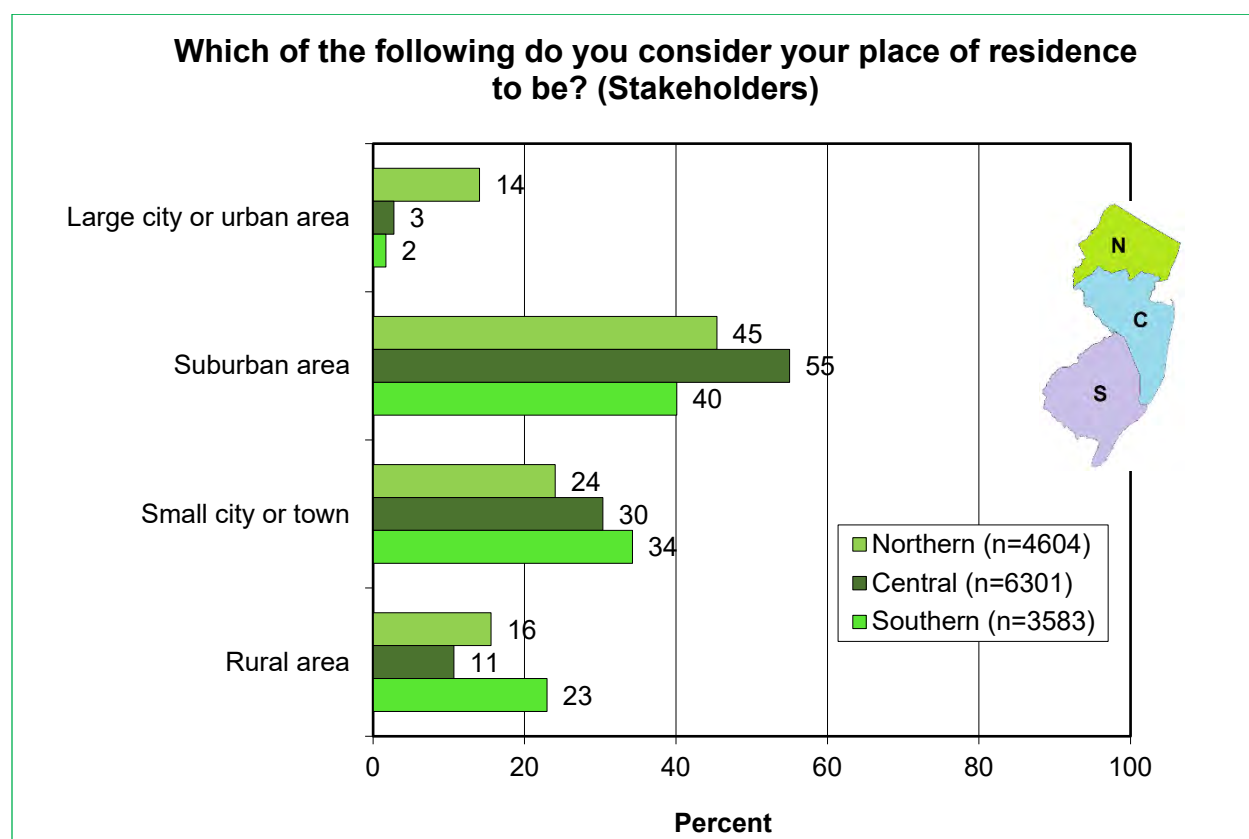
What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Stakeholders)



What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Stakeholders)

	Not a high school graduate	High school graduate or equivalent	Some college or trade school, no degree	Associate's degree or trade school degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Professional or doctorate degree
Atlantic	0	10	17	12	31	22	5
Bergen	0	6	11	8	35	27	9
Burlington	0	9	15	11	33	22	4
Camden	0	9	14	11	35	23	5
Cape May	1	12	18	12	29	19	6
Cumberland	2	16	23	16	28	9	4
Essex	0	5	7	4	34	35	12
Gloucester	1	12	20	15	28	17	5
Hudson	1	4	7	6	41	29	10
Hunterdon	0	5	9	9	40	25	9
Mercer	0	4	8	9	34	28	13
Middlesex	0	8	14	10	32	24	8
Monmouth	0	6	12	10	36	25	7
Morris	0	6	10	5	39	28	7
Ocean	0	10	19	11	33	18	4
Passaic	0	8	15	7	35	24	8
Salem	1	10	23	13	30	16	4
Somerset	0	4	9	6	37	31	9
Sussex	0	9	20	11	33	20	3
Union	0	7	10	6	35	28	11
Warren	0	11	20	11	34	20	3
Statewide	0	7	13	9	34	25	7

What county do you live in? (Stakeholders)**Which of the following do you consider your place of residence to be? (Stakeholders)**



Which of the following do you consider your place of residence to be? (Stakeholders)				
	Large city or urban area	Suburban area	Small city or town	Rural area
Atlantic	2	25	44	27
Bergen	6	66	26	1
Burlington	1	46	31	22
Camden	4	63	26	7
Cape May	1	15	59	24
Cumberland	4	16	32	46
Essex	21	61	16	0
Gloucester	1	44	34	20
Hudson	74	7	17	0
Hunterdon	0	17	25	56
Mercer	4	69	21	5
Middlesex	5	63	28	3
Monmouth	2	58	33	7
Morris	1	58	29	11
Ocean	1	44	43	11
Passaic	12	45	25	18
Salem	0	4	28	67
Somerset	2	64	26	8
Sussex	0	12	23	65
Union	8	64	27	0
Warren	0	10	28	62
Statewide	6	48	29	15

ABOUT RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT

Responsive Management is an internationally recognized survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Our mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies, businesses, and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers, and the public. Focusing only on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues, Responsive Management has conducted telephone, mail, and online surveys, as well as multi-modal surveys, on-site intercepts, focus groups, public meetings, personal interviews, needs assessments, program evaluations, marketing and communication plans, and other forms of human dimensions research measuring how people relate to the natural world for more than 30 years. Utilizing our in-house, full-service survey facilities with 75 professional interviewers, we have conducted studies in all 50 states and 15 countries worldwide, totaling more than 1,000 human dimensions projects *only* on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues.

Responsive Management has conducted research for every state fish and wildlife agency and every federal natural resource agency, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Additionally, we have also provided research for all the major conservation NGOs including the Archery Trade Association, the American Sportfishing Association, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Dallas Safari Club, Ducks Unlimited, Environmental Defense Fund, the Izaak Walton League of America, the National Rifle Association, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, and the Wildlife Management Institute.

Other nonprofit and NGO clients include the American Museum of Natural History, the BoatUS Foundation, the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, and the Ocean Conservancy. As well, Responsive Management conducts market research and product testing for numerous outdoor recreation manufacturers and industry leaders, such as Winchester Ammunition, Vista Outdoor (whose brands include Federal Premium, CamelBak, Bushnell, Primos, and more), Trijicon, Yamaha, and others. Responsive Management also provides data collection for the nation's top universities, including Auburn University, Clemson University, Colorado State University, Duke University, George Mason University, Michigan State University, Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University, Oregon State University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, Stanford University, Texas Tech, University of California-Davis, University of Florida, University of Montana, University of New Hampshire, University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, Yale University, and many more.

Our research has been upheld in U.S. Courts, used in peer-reviewed journals, and presented at major wildlife and natural resource conferences around the world. Responsive Management's research has also been featured in many of the nation's top media, including *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, CNN, National Public Radio, and on the front pages of *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

responsivemanagement.com

Appendix D

2023 New Jersey Outdoor Recreation Focus Group Protocol and Summary

New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Outdoor Recreation Minority Focus Groups – Summary Report

On behalf of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP), Trust for Public Land (TPL) facilitated a series of focus groups with New Jersey residents identifying as African-American/Black and Hispanic/Latin American. The goal of these focus groups was to understand minority use of and perspectives on parks and outdoor spaces in the state.

Recruitment

Adults ages 18 and older who identified as either African American/Black or Hispanic/Latin American were invited to participate in the focus groups.

NJ DEP's Office of Environmental Justice and TPL field coordinators sent focus group invitations through email and in-person outreach using flyers and a recruitment letter that provided background and purpose on the sessions. Individuals interested in participating were directed to call or email indicating their interest. Participants selected included a diverse range of ages. Confirmed participants were given further details on the focus group locations and logistics via phone and email.

Times and Locations

A total of four focus groups were conducted on weekday evenings, with two groups in-person and two online:

- Thursday, March 16 from 6:00 to 7:30pm at TPL's office in Newark, New Jersey
- Tuesday, March 21 from 6:00 to 7:30pm at LUCY Center in Camden, New Jersey
- Wednesday, March 22 from 5:30 to 7:00pm virtually on Zoom
- Monday, March 27 from 5:30 to 7:00pm virtually on Zoom

One in-person and one online focus group was held for individuals who identified primarily as African American/Black ethnicity and one in-person and one online focus group was held for individuals who identified primarily as Hispanic/Latin American.

The in-person focus groups were conducted at facilities easily accessible to transit and main roads. Neither location required rental fees.

Stipend

As a thank you for participation in the discussions, all focus group participants were paid a \$100 stipend. Since focus groups took place during the dinner hour, participants of in-person sessions were also provided food and water.

Demographics

Focus group participants represented a range of ages, with the youngest participant 18 years old and the oldest 68 years old. Over two fifths of participants were under the age of 30 (43%). The average age of all participants was 38 years.

The majority of participants (79%) identified as female. Participants also all lived primarily in a city (61%), with a minority reporting living in a suburb (11%).

Almost all participants worked either full-time (43%) or part-time (40%). Those working full-time worked an average of 42 hours a week, and a fourth of the full-time-working participants worked 50 hours a week. Participants working part-time (40%) worked an average of 23 hours a week.

On average, participants lived in households with two adults and one child. Younger participants reported having more children, and over a third of participants (39%) reported having a household with three to five children.

Over two fifths of participants reported no disability (43%), and over a third reported some form of disability (36%). Over a tenth of participants (11%) reported having a walking disability, another 11% reported having a mental disability, and 14% reported having either a visual, hearing, or respiratory disability.

Discussion Questions

Discussion topics in the focus group guide included defining outdoor recreation, participation and familiarity with outdoor recreation spaces in the local area and the state, limitations to participation in outdoor recreation, and suggestions for improving outdoor recreation experiences.

Key Points

When asked what “outdoor recreation” meant to them, participants in all groups voiced the common themes of **community and connection in addition to activities, such as social sports.**

The social connection participants feel to parks and outdoor spaces was emphasized through discussion on events, which participants said frequently brought them out, and a **desire to see more inclusive programming** that would make outdoor spaces more welcoming. Suggestions participants gave for types of **inclusive programming included cultural events, fairs with demographically diverse vendors, and classes advertised to participants’ communities.**

Participants visited outdoor spaces both by themselves and with families, and all groups expressed a **desire to see outdoor spaces with a diversity of attractions that could invite a range of ages.**

Several barriers were mentioned for why participants did not use outdoor spaces. The most mentioned barriers included

- **Limited transportation options** – Participants could not comfortably travel to many outdoor spaces.
- **Expense – Park fees and travel costs limited participant visits** to outdoor spaces outside of their home city.
- Lack of safety – **Participants did not feel welcome in unfamiliar outdoor spaces.**
- No information – Participants did not know where to learn more about activities in spaces. **Participants requested a central location to find information on amenities, events, and programming in outdoor spaces.**

Last, participants in all groups generally visited neighborhood parks the most. They voiced a wish to see **more funding for their city parks and a hope that their local parks could also be attractive to outside visitors.**

African-American/Black Affinity Focus Groups

Meaning of Outdoor Recreation

When participants were asked what they thought of when they think of “outdoor recreation”, individuals responded with:

- fresh air
- community
- laughter
- events
- health
- sports (basketball, soccer, tennis)

Participation – Outdoor Spaces Visited

Every participant reported that they visited parks or outdoor spaces multiple times a week. Throughout the discussion, outdoor spaces within the participants' neighborhoods were referenced the most. These spaces included city and county parks within walking distance or a short drive from participants' homes. Pocket parks, or small-sized parks in unusual spaces, like alleyways, were also referenced.

All participants said they visited neighborhood parks regularly with their families or on their own to exercise, as nearby parks are affordable, accessible places. Participants with children also emphasized that neighborhood parks were preferred places for their kids to engage in healthy play.

One participant reported that she was disabled. While she did not present her disability as a barrier to participation in outdoor spaces, the participant preferred visiting her neighborhood park around the corner and typically only visited outdoor spaces a fifteen-minute drive away.

Multiple participants voiced preferring to visit parks with a variety of amenities, like playgrounds, trails, and benches.

Participation – Typical Activities

Participants engaged in a range of both active and passive activities in outdoor spaces. Parks were used mostly for exercise and social gatherings. Specifically, participants would visit a playground with children, use sports fields or courts, use exercise equipment, walk on trails, and meet with friends and family.

During discussion, events were cited often and generated excitement; events participants referenced included music festivals, farmers' markets, sports tournaments, garden events, and park tours.

Familiarity with Outdoor Spaces in the State (e.g., forests, parks with camping, beaches, etc.)

If participants attended parks outside of their city of residence, they would do so mainly to attend public events, such as fireworks, or private celebrations, such as reunions or birthday parties. Several participants noted that they most appreciated outdoor spaces with a diversity of amenities that could appeal to a range of ages; such amenities include playgrounds, fields for picnic or sports play, walking paths, benches, and gardens.

The maximum distance participants were willing to travel to an outdoor space was thirty minutes. Beaches were visited only once or twice a year, due to difficulty in access and cost of travel.

Forests were visited even less, with only a few participants remarking that they had experience in such spaces. If forests were visited, it was either due to work or by happenstance, when traveling to another destination.

Frequency of Participation

For most, participation in outdoor spaces depended on the time of year and location, with all participants agreeing that the summer months generated the most use. A number of participants, in contrast, noted no limitations to use, and said they used their neighborhood parks either every day or multiple times a week throughout the four seasons. Participants who visited every day either did so to walk their dog, take their children to the playground, or walk through on the route to work.

For outdoor spaces further away, participants remarked that they would only visit a few times a year for specific events or particular amenities, such as hiking trails.

Information Sources

Participants said they gained information about parks and outdoor spaces through friends or social media (e.g., Facebook or Instagram), with word of mouth dominating for the majority of participants in the groups.

If participants used social media, they would visit the pages of local community groups. A minority of participants stated they used television to find more information.

Barriers to Participation

Throughout the focus group discussions, participants shared a variety of reasons for why they did not visit an outdoor space. With neighborhood parks, participants mentioned that they avoided parks that were not well maintained and became filled with litter. Pests, and lack of facilities like bathrooms or water fountains, were also cited as reasons to avoid some neighborhood parks.

Other reasons participants repeated that prevented visits to outdoor spaces included feeling like the spaces were too crowded or that they lacked a general sense of safety.

For local and distanced outdoor spaces, participants all agreed that a lack of information on available amenities, programming, and events contributed heavily to limited visits.

What Would Encourage More Use of Outdoor Spaces?

The discussion on barriers to outdoor space use generated exploration into what could bring participants to more outdoor spaces. Generally, participants voiced wanting a welcome environment, one that looks inclusive, with similar community members

Programming to activate parks. This could include events with vendors from their community. Goods, like blankets and balls, available at affordable fees for rental or purchase.

Wishes: phone charging station, more investment to increase maintenance, more programming to activate parks, amenities (bathroom, trashcans, poop bags, sinks and fountains), ADA park, signs on history, lights

Want to feel comfortable in a park: seating, welcome environment—looks inclusive (no fencing)

Wishes: park with different amenities, not just one open field. Interactive elements (signage). Programs and goods available at affordable fees (like blankets and balls). Events – vendors

Hispanic/Latin American Affinity Focus Groups

Meaning of Outdoor Recreation

When participants were asked what they thought of when they think of “outdoor recreation”, individuals responded with:

- Family
- Peace
- Nature
- Connection
- Community
- Learning
- Renewal
- Regeneration
- Sports (marathons, canoeing, basketball, soccer)

Participation – Outdoor Spaces Visited

Almost all participants had visited an outdoor space recently, within the past month or week. Like participants in the African American groups, outdoor spaces most visited were neighborhood parks. Several participants mentioned that they often visited a new waterfront park in the City of Camden. Two participants noted that their work involved gardening and engaged in creating additional green outdoor spaces for the community.

One participant couldn’t remember the last time she went to a park on her own, outside of her work activities. Another participant voiced that she did not typically visit outdoor spaces and could not recall when she last visited.

Participation – Typical Activities

When participants visited outdoor spaces, they did so mainly to participate in active recreation or a social activity. Active recreation referenced included walking, running, hiking, dancing, using the playground, or using the exercise area. Social activities mentioned included

A few participants also engaged in passive recreation, such as meditating, visiting botanical gardens, or watching birds.

Participants also preferred outdoors spaces with a variety of amenities, such as playgrounds, rowing, and fields.

Familiarity with Outdoor Spaces in the State (e.g., forests, parks with camping, beaches, etc.)

Several participants mentioned that they would travel outside of their city to visit outdoor spaces with amenities not available to them locally. This included botanical gardens, parks with hiking trails, parks with skateboard areas, and spaces with swimming areas. Due to proximity and availability, many participants located in Camden would travel to Philadelphia to seek out these spaces. Participants emphasized that they did not have diverse spaces close to them and that parks outside of their local area were cleaner and less crowded.

Participants did not visit forests or camping areas.

Frequency of Participation

Participant use of outdoor spaces varied heavily. Some participants, working near parks or in green spaces, visited them several times a week, if not every day. Participants with children also visited parks often. For participants working full-time, use of outdoor space was limited to outside of their work hours or on the weekend.

Most participants also reported reducing frequency of visits to outdoor spaces in the winter.

Information Sources

Participants gained information about parks and outdoor spaces primarily through word of mouth, flyers, and social media.

Barriers to Participation

Participants voiced barriers to participation in neighborhood parks as well as outdoor spaces far from home. For nearby spaces, participants would not visit due to time restrictions at parks, weather, crowdedness, lack of maintenance resulting in unclean spaces, lack of amenities, and a lack of safety due to presence of homeless people or drug users.

For spaces farther from home, the most mentioned reason that participants did not visit was due to a lack of reliable transportation and expenses. Since fees are required for many parks and outdoor spaces, that in addition to transportation costs made travel to spaces too expensive.

In addition, the majority of participants voiced that they did not visit unfamiliar outdoor spaces because they felt unwelcome, like outsiders. One older participant recalled a past incident when she and her family had been asked to leave a park because they “did not belong there.”

Other participants mentioned hearing similar stories, and that they were too scared to camp or take a bus to a remote location.

What Would Encourage More Use of Outdoor Spaces?

Participants all stated that outdoor spaces that invited a diversity of experiences would encourage them to visit more. This would include parks with amenities like playgrounds, water fountains, trails, and a dog park. Most also mentioned that cleaner spaces with bathrooms would encourage additional visits.

Many participants expressed that outdoor spaces were places to find cultural connections and community. To invite this, participants suggested that parks could present more inclusive programming led by people in the community, such as arts and crafts, workshops with children, cultural events, and markets or fairs with community vendors. Participants said events and programming led by the community would help them see others like themselves and feel safer in spaces.

Several participants also mentioned that programming at all hours of the day and information on available programming and events would help them visit spaces more.

Last, more transportation options and incentives, like no fees, to make travel to distant outdoor spaces more affordable and convenient.

New Jersey State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Outdoor Recreation Focus Group Guide

Objective: Understand what DEP has done well and where the department/state can improve in outdoor recreation programming and planning.

Goals: Identify

- how historically underserved populations engage in outdoor recreation and use outdoor spaces in New Jersey;
- what may limit use of outdoor spaces in the state (e.g., programming, location, quality, transportation, tech limits); and
- what residents want from outdoor spaces and recreation opportunities.

Find how residents relate to the following themes: technology, stewardship (volunteer, donation), equity (park access and availability), ecotourism (cultural/neighborhood identity, desire for commerce), climate change (green infrastructure), biodiversity.

Thank you all for attending this focus group to explore outdoor recreation in New Jersey. My name is _____, and I'll be moderating the session today with _____, who will be assistant moderator and notetaker. We're with Trust for Public Land and are working with the New Jersey *Outside, Together!* program, which is led by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Planning (DEP) and community partners. We're holding this focus group to better understand how residents feel about and have experienced outdoor spaces in the state.

How many of you have participated in a focus group before?

This will be an interactive discussion. I will ask questions, and you can respond to me as well as to one another. I'll be here to facilitate the conversation. Anything said here should not leave the room. While we're notetaking and recording today to make sure we capture the experiences shared here, we won't use names or any other identifying information in our summaries of the discussion. We want you to feel comfortable and to share your views and experiences openly. There are no right or wrong answers, and you do not have to agree with everyone else in the room.

Since we only have about an hour and a half here together, I may ask you to keep your contributions short to be mindful of time left. I also ask that everyone turn off their phones for the length of this session to limit outside disturbance.

Let's start by introducing ourselves. Please share your first name and where you're from.

What does outdoor recreation mean to you? [6:10 pm]

- 1) What comes to mind when you think of outdoor recreation? How would you describe outdoor recreation?

From here on, let's think of outdoor recreation as any activity you do outside for fun, like walking, bird watching, hanging out with friends or family. [6:30 pm]

- 2) What types of outdoor activities do you do? Why?
- 3) Where do you typically go for outdoor recreation? Why there?
- 4) How much time do you spend outdoors doing these activities?
- 5) How often do you go outdoors for these activities?
- 6) If you do not go outside for recreation, why not?
- 7) What would make going outside for recreation more attractive? (more information through apps, websites etc.; cell coverage; better transportation; programming; better maintenance, amenities)

There are many places you can go to for outdoor recreation: [reference areas people had brought up in earlier discussion]. There are also neighborhood parks, state parks with trails or camping, forests, community or botanical gardens, beaches, fishing and boating areas, etc. [7:00]

- 8) Are you familiar with any of these types of spaces? Which ones? Where are they?
- 9) Do you spend time at any of these spaces? Why/why not?
- 10) What would make you want to spend more time in X type of space?

Appendix E

Access to New Jersey's Outdoor Recreation Areas: Methods and Key Findings by Trust for Public Land

To support the *Outside, Together!* A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for New Jersey (SCORP), New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) contracted Trust for Public Land (TPL) to complete an analysis identifying areas with the greatest need for accessible outdoor recreation opportunities. This analysis helps to inform park planning efforts.

Methods

The analysis conducted by TPL used GIS to understand outdoor recreation in New Jersey. Many of the maps created focus on identifying needs for outdoor recreation. These maps use data providing the location of recreational sites (e.g., parks and open access lands, trails, and water access points) to identify areas lacking recreational access and use demographic data to locate the populations with the greatest need within these areas.

Inventory of recreational resources

Data within New Jersey:

- Parks: Green Acres provided open access protected lands data, which were updated with some parks from TPL's ParkServe database.
- Trails: New Jersey trails [from DEP](#)
- Water:
 - Access to tidal waterways [from DEP](#)
 - Access to fishing [from DEP](#)

Data outside of New Jersey were also compiled so that New Jersey residents within a quarter mile of a park that falls outside of the New Jersey boundary are considered as having park access:

- Parks: Pennsylvania parks data from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR). New York parks data from TPL's ParkServe database
- Trails: Pennsylvania trails from PA DCNR, New York trails were acquired from AllTrails.
- Water: In New York, boat launch points and public fishing parking sites were provided using data assembled by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Pennsylvania water access points were provided by PA DCNR.

Measuring access

Quarter-mile service areas: DEP uses a quarter mile as a standard, therefore the service areas in this analysis are all built out to a quarter mile. Each recreational asset was buffered by 100 feet, and an “access point” was placed wherever this buffer intersected the road network. For assets farther than 100 feet from a road, increasingly larger buffer sizes were used until most assets had access points. (Some water recreation points and trails did not receive access points after a visual inspection revealed them to be inaccessible.) The access points were used as the starting points to build the quarter-mile service areas. Esri’s Street Map Premium was used as the road network to build the quarter-mile service areas using Network Analyst in ArcPro with “Walking” as the restriction. This considers roads where walking is not allowed and other obstacles such as highways and water.

Demographic statistics: Esri 2022 US Census Block Groups were used to calculate the population and demographics of residents within the quarter-mile service areas. Populations were determined based on the proportion of the block group that overlaps the service area. This method assumes an even population distribution across the block group, but areas in which people do not live (water, industrial areas, zero population blocks, etc.) were removed from the block groups to increase accuracy. Of the 564 total municipalities in New Jersey, eighteen municipalities with low population density were removed from the analysis due to a lack of enough block groups for reliable population estimates; Thus the analysis presented below examines 546 municipalities. Demographics were broken down by race/ethnicity, income, and age.

Results by Municipality

Park access

For this analysis, a quarter-mile walk is calculated based on the percentage of people living within a quarter mile of a public park. Statewide, less than half (48%) of New Jersey residents have access to a park within a quarter-mile walk of home. At the municipality level, however, the picture looks different—in Seaside Park borough 100% of residents live within a quarter-mile walk of a park, while in Farmingdale Borough no residents have access to a close-to-home park. Of the 546 New Jersey municipalities analyzed, residents in 309 municipalities have less park access than the statewide average of 48%.

There are several ways to determine which areas of the state have the highest need for more recreational resources. One approach is to compare individual municipalities based on the total population that lives outside of a quarter-mile walk to a park. For example, when comparing Toms River to Galloway, about 76,000 people in Toms River and 32,000 people in Galloway do not have close to home park access. This approach points to Toms River having a greater need for parks.

A different approach compares municipalities based on the percentage of the population that lives outside of a quarter-mile walk to a park. When comparing Toms River and Galloway, about 79% of the population in Toms River and 87% of the population in Galloway do not have close to home park access. This second approach points to Galloway having a great need for parks.

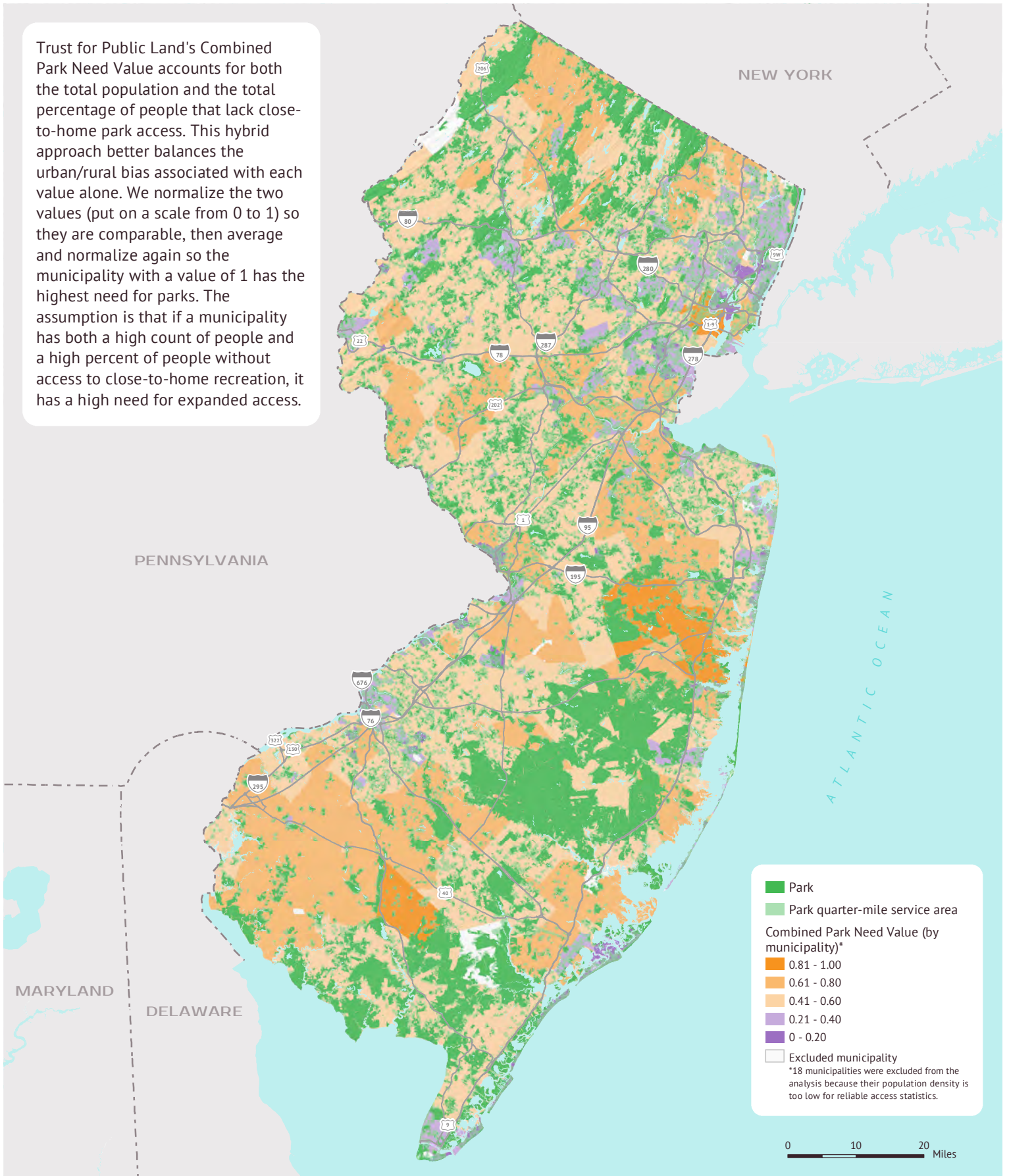
TPL’s approach is to combine these two analyses. Each municipality is compared based on both the number of people not served by a park and the percentage of the population not served. We produce a combined need value to indicate the municipalities’ need for parks by normalizing the two values (set the values to fall between 0 and 1) so they are comparable, then average and normalize again so the municipality with a value of 1 has the highest need for parks (Table 1). The assumption is that if a municipality has both a high

count of people and a high percent of people without access to close-to-home recreation, it has high need for expanded access. Lakewood, Newark, and Toms River rise to the top of this list.

Table 1. New Jersey Municipalities with the Highest Need for Parks

Name	Total population	Population outside a quarter-mile walk of a park	Percent of population outside a quarter-mile walk of a park	Combined Park Need Value
Lakewood	139,627	95,542	68.4	1.00
Newark	315,149	127,748	40.5	0.98
Toms River	96,266	75,787	78.7	0.96
Vineland	60,172	51,069	84.9	0.87
Jackson	58,487	49,162	84.1	0.86
Galloway	36,983	32,106	86.8	0.78
Woodbridge	104,787	61,497	58.7	0.75
Egg Harbor	48,225	37,346	77.4	0.74
Willingboro	31,546	26,980	85.5	0.74
Brick	73,959	49,676	67.2	0.74

Trust for Public Land's Combined Park Need Value accounts for both the total population and the total percentage of people that lack close-to-home park access. This hybrid approach better balances the urban/rural bias associated with each value alone. We normalize the two values (put on a scale from 0 to 1) so they are comparable, then average and normalize again so the municipality with a value of 1 has the highest need for parks. The assumption is that if a municipality has both a high count of people and a high percent of people without access to close-to-home recreation, it has a high need for expanded access.



Park access in a quarter-mile walk: Combined Need Value

NEW JERSEY SCORP - OUTSIDE TOGETHER

June 27, 2023. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Special thanks to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



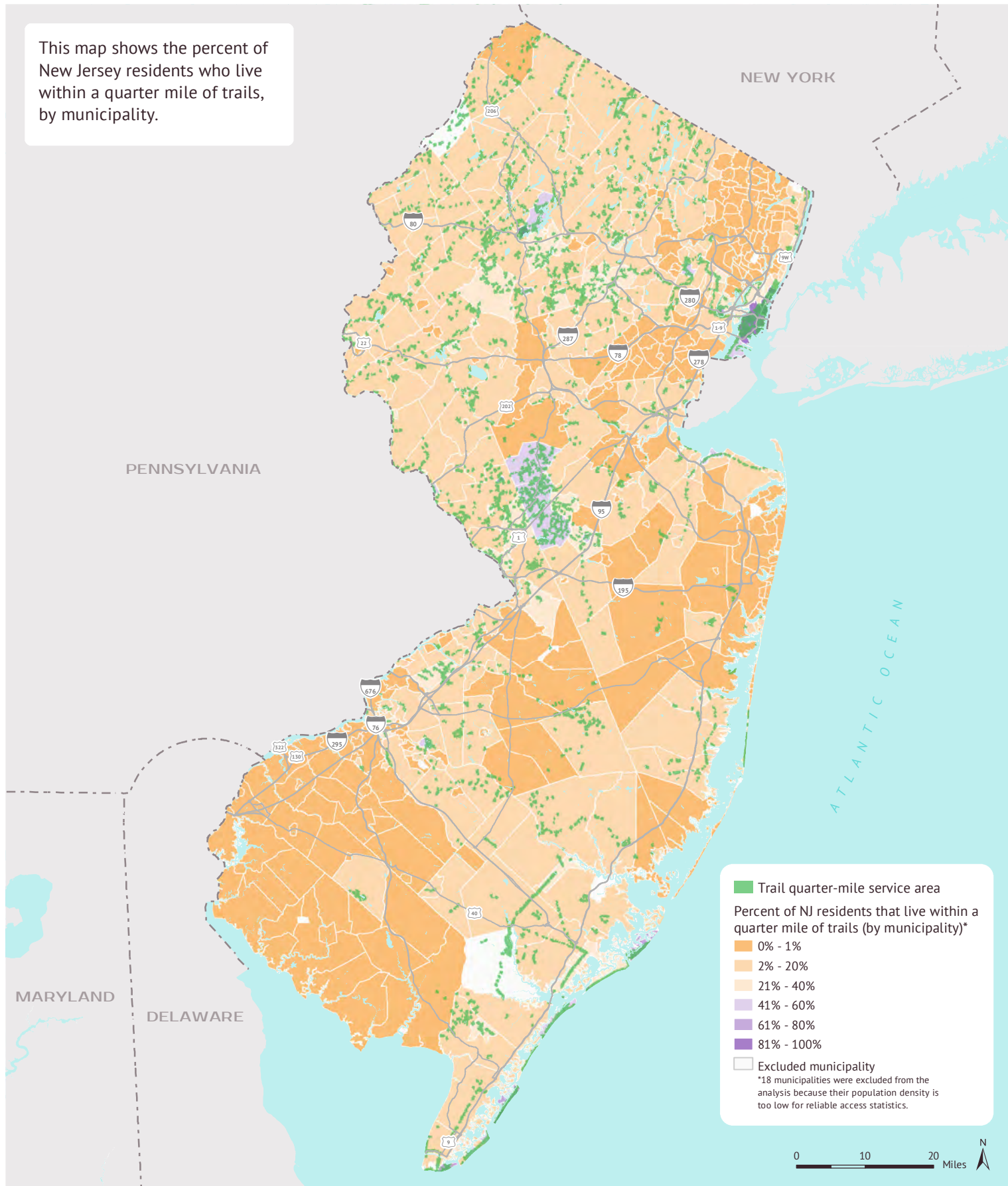
Water and trail access

Residents live within a quarter mile of water or trails access points in about half of the New Jersey municipalities analyzed (275 and 264, respectively). Among the municipalities that lack access to both water and trails (defined as less than 1% of population in a quarter-mile walk), many also lack quarter-mile-walk park access. Table 2 lists the top 10 municipalities that do not have access to trails and water, and also have a high combined need for close-to-home parks. Vineland and Jackson are at the top of this list.

Table 2. New Jersey Municipalities with the Highest Need for Outdoor Recreation Access

Name	Total population	Percent of population outside a quarter-mile walk to trail access	Percent of population outside a quarter-mile walk to water access	Population outside a quarter-mile walk of a park	Percent of population outside a quarter-mile walk of a park	Combined Park Need Value
Vineland	60,172	100.0	99.9	51,069	84.9	0.87
Jackson	58,487	99.7	99.2	49,162	84.1	0.86
North Hanover	8,349	99.9	99.6	8,020	96.1	0.71
Monroe, Gloucester County	37,567	100.0	100.0	29,688	79.0	0.71
Mansfield, Burlington County	8,819	100.0	100.0	8,360	94.8	0.71
New Hanover	6,159	100.0	100.0	5,948	96.6	0.71
Upper Pittsgrove	3,389	100.0	99.7	3,342	98.6	0.71
Farmingdale	1,484	100.0	100.0	1,484	100.0	0.71
Elk	4,455	100.0	100.0	4,342	97.5	0.70
South Harrison	3,375	100.0	99.7	3,243	96.1	0.69

This map shows the percent of New Jersey residents who live within a quarter mile of trails, by municipality.



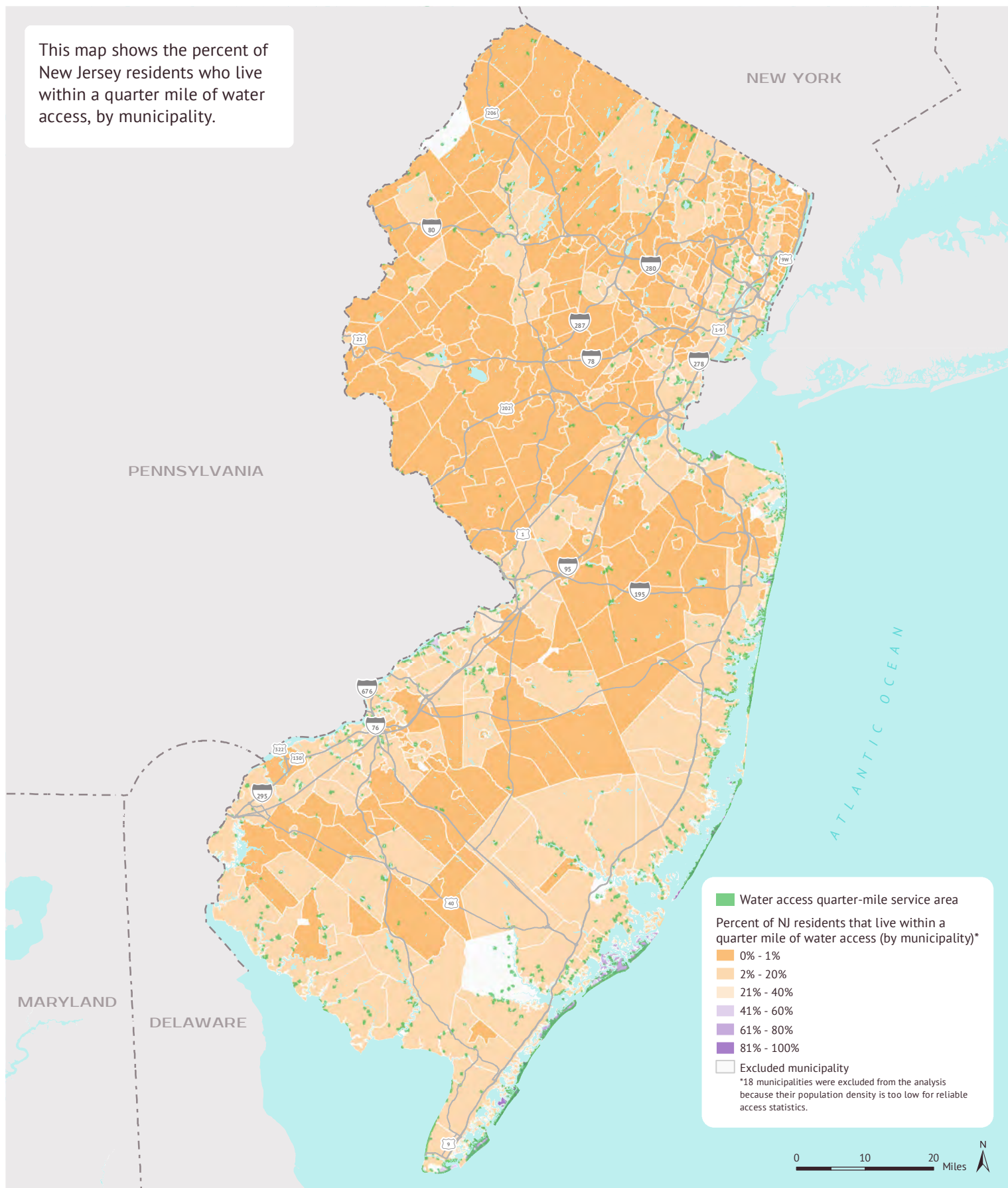
Trail access: quarter-mile walk

NEW JERSEY SCORP - OUTSIDE TOGETHER

June 23, 2023. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Special thanks to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



This map shows the percent of New Jersey residents who live within a quarter mile of water access, by municipality.



Water access: quarter-mile walk

NEW JERSEY SCORP - OUTSIDE TOGETHER

June 23, 2023. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Special thanks to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



Equity in Outdoor Recreation Access

The New Jersey Environmental Justice Law creates a definition to screen populations who are potentially in need of environmental justice. Specifically, Overburdened Communities (OBCs) are US Census block groups with:

- At least 35% low-income households; or
- At least 40% of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or
- At least 40% of the households have limited English proficiency.

As part of the law, DEP developed the Environmental Justice Mapping, Assessment, and Protection (EJMAP) tool, a publicly available interactive online map that identifies OBCs in the state and allows users to examine the presence and location of relevant environmental and public health stressors affecting an OBC.

One of the stressors evaluated in the EJMAP is *Lack of Recreational Open Space*. DEP measures this stressor as OBC block group the population per acre of open space within a one quarter mile of the block group, or the acreage of open space in a quarter mile per person.

To determine the OBCs that experience the Lack of Recreational Open Space (OS) stressor, DEP first calculates the population per acre of open space within all block groups or applicable tribal areas, regardless of whether they are designated as an OBC or not. A higher value of population per acre of open space means that a large number of people uses the same acre of open space, indicating a need for more open space acreage. DEP then calculates the median value of population per acre of open space for non-OBC block groups by county and also by state. These medians are used for comparison to determine if an OBC is adversely stressed for the OS stressor. For each county, if the state non-OBC median value is lower (fewer number of people per acre of open space) than the county, then the state value is used as the geographic point of comparison. Otherwise, the county median non-OBC population per acre of open space is used for comparison. This scaled comparison means that if the county has a relatively high population per acre of open space compared to the state, the state median is used so that more OBCs are identified as lacking recreational open space, which accounts for the disparity a county may face in recreational access. Any OBC with a population per acre higher than the appropriate comparison value is considered adversely stressed for the OS stressor.

TPL built on this lack of recreational open space framework by incorporating the quarter-mile walk metric. This approach identifies the OBCs experiencing the OS stressor that also lack quarter-mile walk access to parks, trails, or water. Using the demographic apportionment methods described in the [“Methods: Measuring Access”](#) section above, Esri block groups were used to determine the population of OBCs experiencing the OS stressor in each municipality (OS OBC population in Table 3). This population measurement gives an estimate of how many people living within an OBC experience the OS stressor for each municipality. Then, the population is further divided into the number of people in an OBC experiencing the OS stressor who also live outside of a quarter-mile walk to parks, trails, or water. To calculate the Combined Recreation Need, both the number of people without quarter-mile access to recreation and the percentage of people without quarter-mile access to recreation are compared. Both values are normalized (setting the values to fall between 0 and 1) and then averaged to calculate the Combined Recreation Need score. The final values by municipality are shown in Table 3.

This list represents municipalities where OBCs are experiencing a lack of open space acreage, as well as low quarter-mile walk access to any form of recreation (parks, trails, and water access points). These two views of recreational access highlight where increased open space acreage is needed most in addition to well-distributed recreational resources.

Table 3. New Jersey Municipalities with OBCs Experiencing the Least Acreage and Access to Recreational Open Spaces

Municipality	Total population	Population in OS OBC	Percent population in OS OBC	OS OBC population outside quarter-mile walk to any recreation	% OS OBC population outside quarter-mile walk to any recreation	Combined Recreation Need for OS OBC population
Newark	315,149	294,107	93.3	121,537	41.3	0.71
Lakewood	139,627	95,543	68.4	70,524	73.8	0.66
Vineland	60,172	50,428	83.8	42,160	83.6	0.59
Edison	107,748	74,586	69.2	49,800	66.8	0.54
Old Bridge	67,508	16,013	23.7	14,652	91.5	0.52
New Hanover	6,159	4,248	69.0	4,247	100.0	0.52
Maurice River	6,155	3,031	49.2	3,031	100.0	0.51
Mansfield, Burlington County	8,819	1,857	21.1	1,857	100.0	0.51
Woodbridge	104,787	76,814	73.3	47,377	61.7	0.50
North Hanover	8,349	3,877	46.4	3,772	97.3	0.50

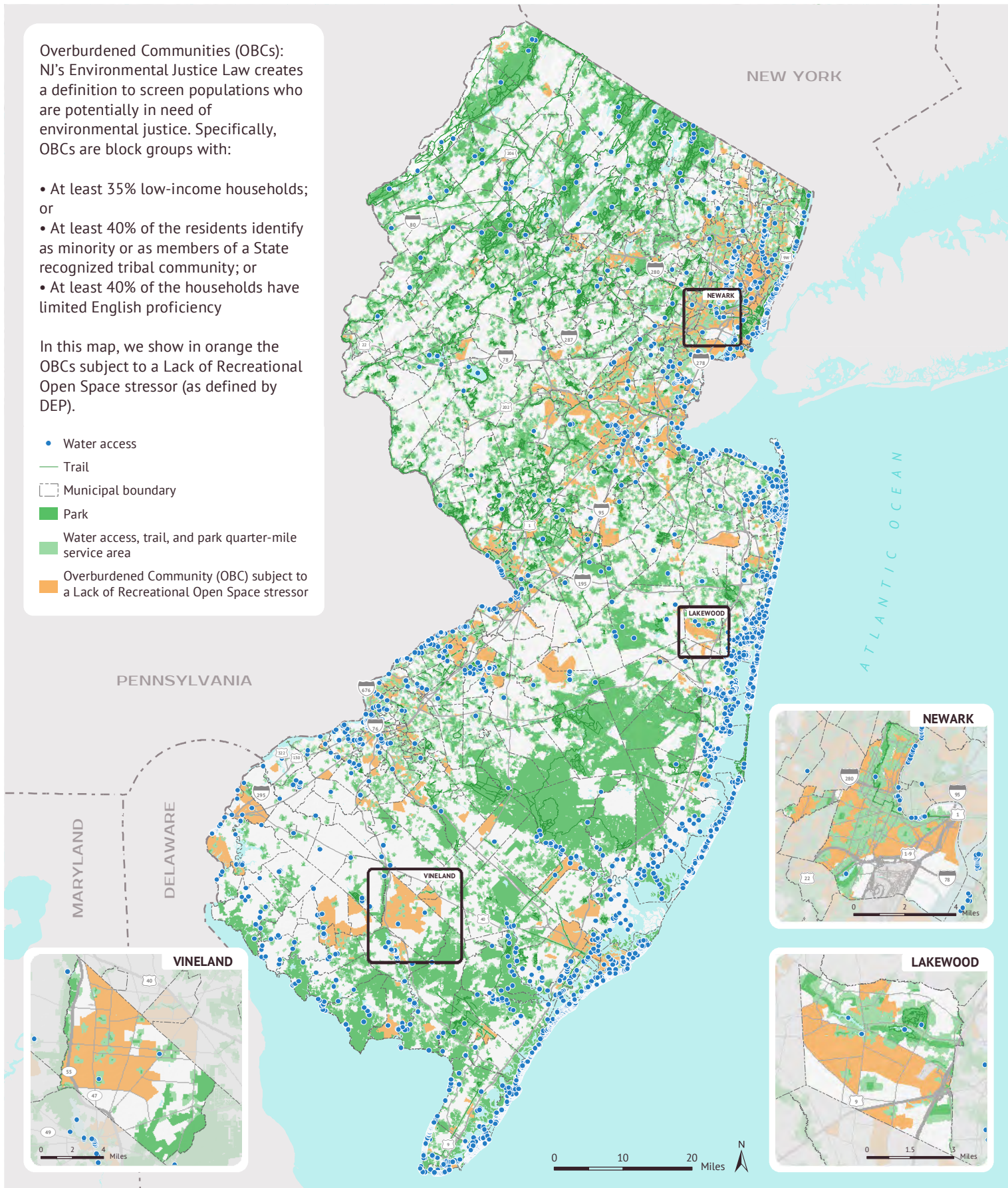
* “Quarter-mile walk to any recreation” measures access to parks, trails, and water access points, with parks representing the majority of recreation sites.

Overburdened Communities (OBCs): NJ's Environmental Justice Law creates a definition to screen populations who are potentially in need of environmental justice. Specifically, OBCs are block groups with:

- At least 35% low-income households; or
- At least 40% of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or
- At least 40% of the households have limited English proficiency

In this map, we show in orange the OBCs subject to a Lack of Recreational Open Space stressor (as defined by DEP).

- Water access
- Trail
- Municipal boundary
- Park
- Water access, trail, and park quarter-mile service area
- Overburdened Community (OBC) subject to a Lack of Recreational Open Space stressor



Trail, park, and water access and Overburdened Communities

NEW JERSEY SCORP - OUTSIDE TOGETHER

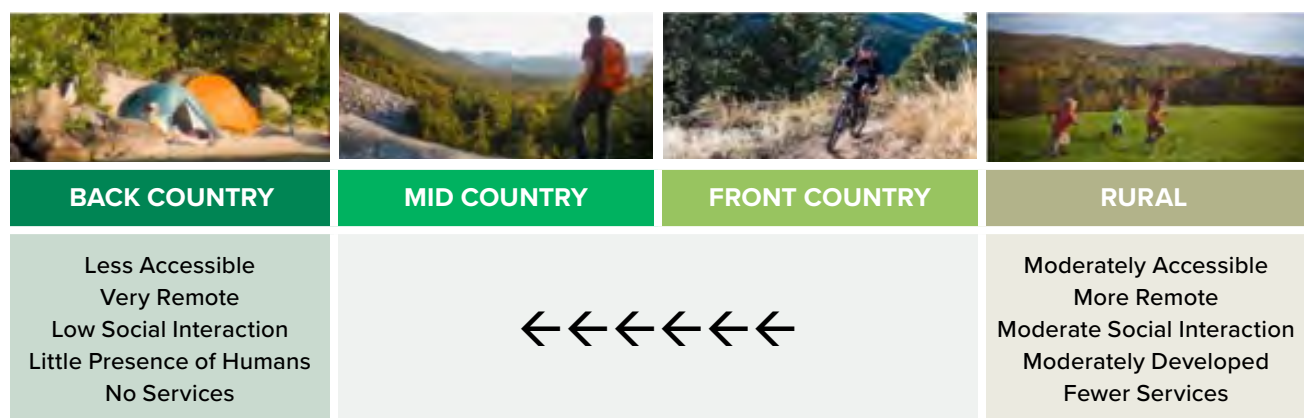
August 18, 2023. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Special thanks to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



Appendix F

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a classification system developed by the US Forest Service to support planning on forest lands. These classifications help stakeholders determine the potential recreation opportunities these lands can provide. The ROS classifies forest service lands based on the physical setting (type of access, size, and distance from nearest road), the social setting (user density), and managerial aspects of the lands. The premise behind the ROS is that recreation providers can provide specific recreation experiences when they manage for certain characteristics of settings. Trust for Public Land (TPL) has adapted the original methodology to focus on understanding opportunities to expand access to New Jersey open space. TPL's adapted methodology uses distance from roads, data on land use classifications, and data on the existing open space system to assess where there are unprotected lands that are both undisturbed and remote. Acquisition of these lands could expand recreational access, increase habitat connectivity, and protect areas that have yet to be altered by human disturbance.



ROS Classifications:

- Spectrum of remoteness: each of these types is based on distance from roads.
 - **Rural:** Areas within a quarter mile of paved roads, which can support biking or hiking activities.
 - **Front country:** Areas at least a quarter mile from paved roads. These areas are often used for mountain biking and hiking.
 - **Mid country:** Areas at least a half mile from paved roads. Mid country trips include long hikes in bigger parks.
 - **Back country:** Areas at least a mile away from paved roads. Back country includes overnight backpacking trips.
- Land cover types:
 - **Urban:** As defined by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Land Use/Land Cover 2015 (updated August 2019).
 - **Disturbed:** Disturbed land includes mining quarries, industrial land uses, and coal, oil, or gas extraction.

- **Agriculture:** As defined by DEP Land Use/Land Cover 2015 (updated August 2019).
- **Water:** As defined by DEP Land Use/Land Cover 2015 (updated August 2019).

GIS methods and source data:

The first step to build the statewide ROS raster (a raster is one of the two main file types used for digital images) is to divide roads into road types and use Euclidean distance to classify areas based on their distance from different road types. Roads are split into three types—*local roads*, *major roads*, and *highways*—and three separate Euclidean distance rasters are created. Euclidean distance assigns every 50x50-meter pixel in the state with a value corresponding to the distance from the nearest road. The three Euclidean distance rasters are reclassified to correspond with ROS types—suburban, rural, front country, mid country, and back country. These types are assigned ROS values in ascending order. They are then combined using the Cell Minimum tool in GIS which results in one raster that has the lowest ROS value for each pixel. In other words, if one pixel is assigned as “front country” based on its distance from *local roads* and also assigned as “back country” based on its distance from *highways*, the “front country” classification is assigned because it has a lower ROS value. The final step is to layer the land types *urban*, *water*, *disturbed*, and *agriculture* onto the raster so that each area of the state is classified by ROS class and incorporates human disturbance.

Each ROS class is summarized by whether or not it falls in a park, as well as by county, to develop the ROS results table.

- Roads: Roads inside New Jersey are sourced from [DEP](#). Roads outside of New Jersey are sourced from Esri’s Street Map Premium
- Disturbed land:
 - Coal, oil, and gas extraction areas [from DEP](#)
 - Sand and gravel mining quarries [from DEP](#)
 - Areas where the LABEL12 field includes “Industrial and commercial complexes” or “Industrial” of [DEP Land Use/Land Cover 2015 \(updated August 2019\)](#)
- Urban, Water, and Agriculture: From the TYPE15 field of [DEP Land Use/Land Cover 2015 \(updated August 2019\)](#)

Results:

Many criteria are considered when deciding where to acquire new open space: plant and wildlife habitat, water resource protection, existing nearby recreational assets, land ownership, cost, etc. The ROS adds one more layer for consideration: a measure of remoteness of lands that are not altered by resource extraction or agriculture. By looking at the ROS outside of New Jersey open space, we can see where there are opportunities to expand access to areas that are not yet disturbed by human activity and can provide a remote natural experience.

New Jersey has 323,000 remote acres that are currently outside of the existing open space system ([Table 1](#)). The counties with the most opportunity to expand access to remote natural experience are Burlington, Ocean, and Atlantic counties.

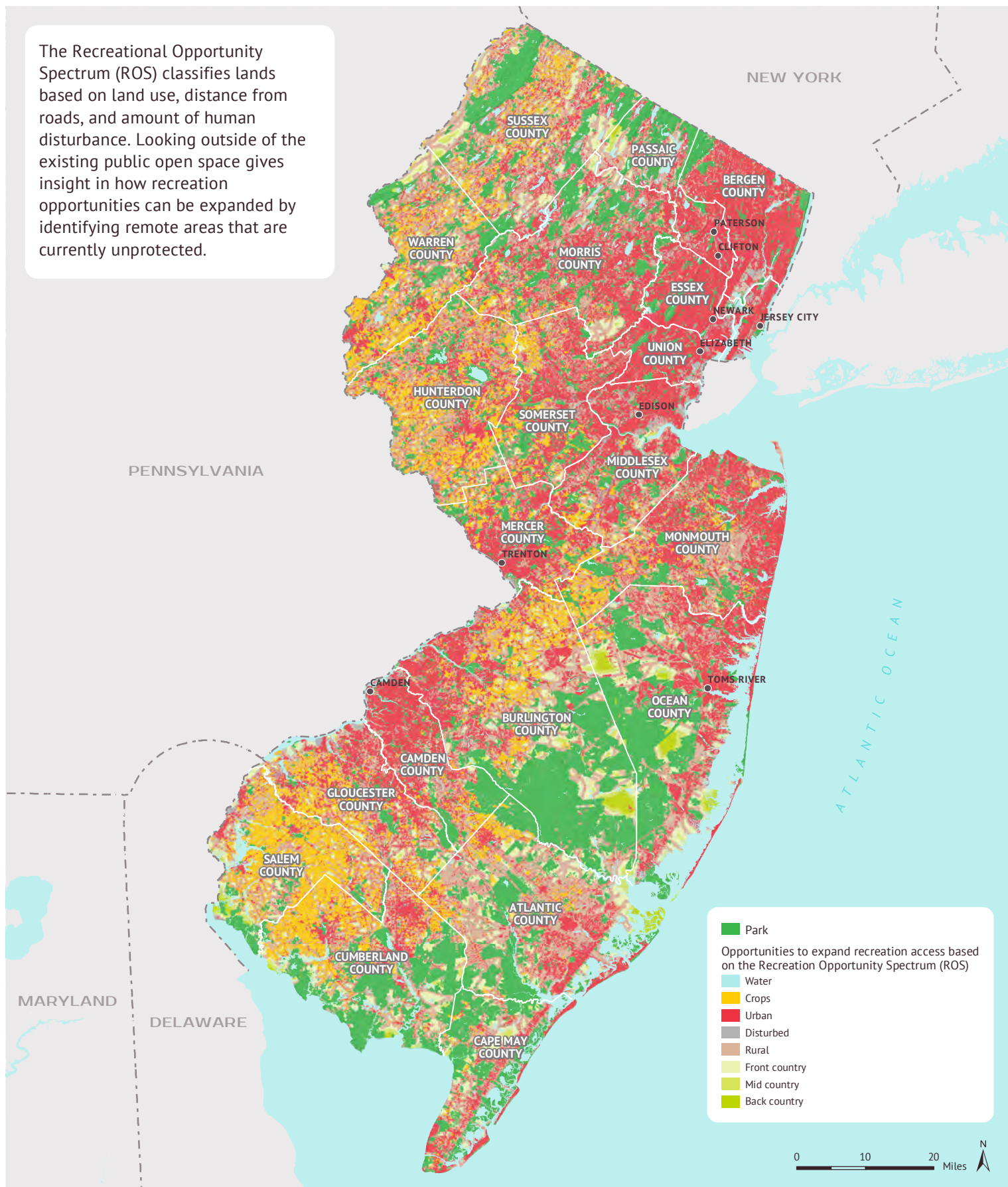
These contiguous undisturbed areas far from roads can also be important for habitat and water quality protection. We recommend this layer be used in conjunction with the [New Jersey Conservation Blueprint](#),

New Jersey Natural Heritage Priority Sites, and other complementary spatial analyses as a consideration for future land protection. In addition, some of these unprotected remote areas are adjacent to existing open space, creating an opportunity to expand connectivity.

Table 1: Remote Acreage Outside of Existing Open Space by County

COUNTY	BACK COUNTRY	MID COUNTRY	FRONT COUNTRY	TOTAL REMOTE ACRES
Atlantic County	4,654	3,802	31,753	40,209
Bergen County	0	13	197	210
Burlington County	5,748	10,696	36,469	52,912
Camden County	0	14	1,915	1,929
Cape May County	36	2,119	14,093	16,248
Cumberland County	919	4,466	27,070	32,455
Essex County	0	0	112	112
Gloucester County	0	737	11,406	12,142
Hudson County	0	0	5	5
Hunterdon County	0	34	7,703	7,736
Mercer County	0	0	2,260	2,260
Middlesex County	0	284	5,033	5,316
Monmouth County	0	1	3,704	3,705
Morris County	0	630	10,210	10,840
Ocean County	9,295	11,362	28,096	48,754
Passaic County	639	1,912	4,999	7,550
Salem County	1,802	3,348	20,606	25,756
Somerset County	0	306	3,666	3,971
Sussex County	89	3,162	30,111	33,361
Union County	0	0	27	27
Warren County	26	1,292	16,676	17,995
TOTAL STATE	23,208	44,176	256,110	323,495

The Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classifies lands based on land use, distance from roads, and amount of human disturbance. Looking outside of the existing public open space gives insight in how recreation opportunities can be expanded by identifying remote areas that are currently unprotected.



Opportunities to expand recreation access based on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)

NEW JERSEY SCORP - OUTSIDE TOGETHER

June 23, 2023. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Special thanks to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



Appendix G

State of New Jersey: Department of Environmental Protection
Administrative Order 2022–12



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

401 East State Street

P.O. Box 402, Mail Code 401-07

Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420

Tel. (609) 292-2885 • Fax (609) 292-7695

www.nj.gov/dep

PHILIP D. MURPHY

Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER

Lt. Governor

SHAWN M. LATOURETTE

Commissioner

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2022-12

WHEREAS, on April 22, 1970, the first “Earth Day,” the Legislature created the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1D-1, *et seq.*, and empowered DEP to “formulate comprehensive policies for the conservation of the natural resources of the State, the promotion of environmental protection and the prevention of pollution of the environment of the State;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislature declared, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:8A-2, that the “provision of lands for public recreation and the conservation of natural resources promotes the public health, prosperity and general welfare and is a proper responsibility of government;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislature declared, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1L-2, “that the provision of recreational programs to all segments of the public enhances the public health, prosperity and general welfare and is a proper responsibility of the State;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has charged the DEP with acquiring, planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining state parks and forests pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1L-2, and with promoting and encouraging the expansion and development of recreational programs on a Statewide and local basis pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.1; and

WHEREAS, open and green space is a precious commodity throughout New Jersey, which is especially constrained within densely developed areas of the state and within the state’s urban communities, many of which lack sufficient green spaces, tree cover, parks, and outdoor recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, all residents of the State of New Jersey, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, color, or national origin, have a right to live, work, learn, and recreate in a clean and healthy environment; and

WHEREAS, tourism in New Jersey is a multi-billion dollar industry, generating more than \$40 billion in spending annually in recent years, and of that, more than \$5 billion in annual spending on recreation, generating thousands of jobs each year; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey’s natural, cultural, and historic resources contribute to the breadth of destinations, visitors, events, and spending that supports the state’s tourism industry, including through DEP’s management of over two hundred State Parks, Forests, Historic Sites, Natural and Wildlife Management Areas across more than one-million acres throughout New Jersey; and,

WHEREAS, recognizing that DEP's mission sits squarely at the intersection of environmental, health, social and economic improvement, the Commissioner reorganized aspects of the Department between 2021 and 2022, establishing DEP's Community Investment & Economic Revitalization program, the primary function of which is to strengthen investments in natural capital and support sustainable economic growth that restores, preserves, and protects natural, cultural, and historic resources while enhancing quality of life for all New Jerseyans; and

WHEREAS, the Department represents the State in the development and implementation of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, a condition of eligibility for National Park Service Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund assistance, which must identify statewide recreation needs and opportunities and articulate a comprehensive responsive strategy; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the critical value of engaging the public and collaborating with a plurality of stakeholders with interest in the preservation, planning, and improvement of the state's natural, cultural, and historic resources, DEP wishes to establish a working group comprised of diverse voices, experiences and viewpoints who would together engage with DEP and its professionals in formulating the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; and

NOW THEREFORE, I, Shawn M. LaTourette, the State's Commissioner of Environmental Protection, by virtue of the authority vested in me by N.J.S.A. 13:1B-3 and 13:1L-4, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. Guided by the following principles, DEP shall develop *Outside, Together! A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for New Jersey* (Plan), which shall be produced in its final form by or before December 2023:
 - a. Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors;
 - b. Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space;
 - c. Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation;
 - d. Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation;
 - e. Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation; and,
 - f. Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.
2. There is hereby created, within the Office of the Commissioner, the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee, which is convened by the Commissioner for the limited and express purpose of providing advice and recommendations to DEP and its professionals to inform DEP's development of *Outside, Together!* and whose sole goal shall be to help ensure that the Plan is responsive to and likely to meet the diverse needs of the public.
3. The Advisory Committee shall be chaired by DEP's Assistant Commissioner for Community Investment and Economic Revitalization (Chair), who shall solicit public



interest in service on the Advisory Committee and recommend to the Commissioner the appointment of Advisory Committee members and the formation of subcommittees responsible for advancing aspects of *Outside Together!* consistent with the principles and objectives established herein. The Chair shall solicit participation from individuals that represent business, nonprofit, environmental, and governmental entities, including relevant State agencies, chambers of commerce, conservation organizations, environmental justice organizations, business organizations, academic institutions, and county or local park stewards. The Advisory Committee shall also include representatives of the DEP Parks, Forestry & Historic Sites, Fish & Wildlife, and Green Acres programs.

4. The Advisory Committee shall aid DEP in the development of a Plan that meets the following objectives:
 - a. Identify opportunities for expanding public access to recreational assets and offerings, and improving the user experience at existing recreational assets;
 - b. Educate the public about the importance, needs, benefits and availability of open space and outdoor recreation opportunities statewide;
 - c. Identify high value open space and recreational needs and opportunities with particular focus on better serving the health and wellness of residents in underserved or overburdened communities;
 - d. Cultivate awareness and appreciation of the economic benefits of preservation, conservation, and recreation, including the co-benefits of promotion ecotourism, building resilience to climate change and extreme weather, improving sustainability, and enhancing biodiversity;
 - e. Identify policy, regulatory and legislative actions that could advance open space and outdoor recreation goals;
 - f. Encourage collaborative partnerships and programs to enhance open space and outdoor recreation at multiple levels of government;
 - g. Satisfy the National Park Service requirements to that New Jersey continues to qualify for Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund opportunities; and, importantly,
 - h. Fully engage the public to ensure an informed, inclusive, and equitable approach to the forgoing principles and objectives.
5. The Advisory Committee shall:
 - a. Be formed by the Chair within 60 days of the date of this order, comprised of individuals and subcommittees as directed herein;
 - b. Convene for the first time within 90 days of the date of this order and, thereafter, at frequent intervals as the Chair may determine to present, consider, and advance the development of *Outside, Together!* as directed herein;



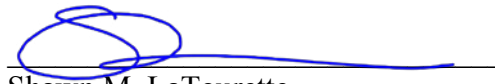
- c. Contract with an appropriate consulting firm to assist DEP in the development of *Outside, Together!* through data collection and analysis, as well as the production of outreach and other materials as may be directed by the Chair;
 - d. Immediately engage with stakeholders and the public through a series of ongoing outreach and engagement sessions intended to cultivate public awareness and ensure a full and adequate appraisal of New Jerseyans needs;
 - e. Provide multiple paths for stakeholders and the public to participate and inform development of *Outside, Together!*, such as surveys, polling, community engagement sessions, and focus group conversations;
 - f. Create or aggregate inventories and assessments of current recreation resources and identify needs and new opportunities for outdoor recreation improvements;
 - g. Create recommended policies, benchmarks, and actions to ensure fairer and more equitable distribution of outdoor recreation and conservation funds and resources;
 - h. Present the preliminary draft of *Outside, Together!* to the Commissioner for review no later than April 22, 2023; and,
 - i. Finalize *Outside, Together!* by or before of December 2023 for its ultimate submission to the National Park Service.
6. Each member of the Advisory Committee shall serve at the pleasure of the Commissioner and may be excused by the Commissioner with or without cause and shall not be compensated by the DEP or the State for their service on the Advisory Committee unless such service is attendant to their preexisting State employment.
7. DEP staff is hereby directed, upon the request of the Chair, to provide such information or support to the Advisory Committee as the Chair may determine necessary.

Nothing in this Order shall be construed to confer any legal rights upon persons or entities whose activities are regulated by DEP or any other state entity, or be construed to supersede any federal, state, or local law or create a private right of action on behalf of any person or entity or be used as a basis for legal challenges to rules, approvals, permits, licenses, policies or other actions or inaction by DEP or any other state entity.

All previous Administrative Orders that are inconsistent with this Administrative Order are hereby superseded and repealed.

This order shall take effect immediately.

Dated: April 22, 2022


Shawn M. LaTourette
Commissioner



Appendix H

Executive Order 298

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 298

WHEREAS, National Trails Day, founded by the American Hiking Society in 1991 and celebrated annually on the first Saturday in June, is a day of public events that highlights the importance of the National Trails System and promotes increased trail use and volunteer trail stewardship; and

WHEREAS, the "provision of lands for public recreation and the conservation of natural resources promotes the public health, prosperity and general welfare and is a proper responsibility of government," N.J.S.A. 13:8A-2; and

WHEREAS, "the provision of recreational programs to all segments of the public enhances the public health, prosperity and general welfare and is a proper responsibility of the State," N.J.S.A. 13:1L-2; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") is responsible for acquiring, planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining state parks and forests pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1L-2, and empowered to promote and encourage the expansion and development of recreational programs on a statewide and local basis pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.1; and

WHEREAS, open and green space is a precious commodity throughout New Jersey, which is especially constrained within densely developed areas of the State and within the State's urban communities, many of which lack sufficient green spaces, tree cover, parks, and outdoor recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, all residents of the State of New Jersey, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, color, or national origin, have a right to live, work, learn, and enjoy recreational opportunities in a clean and healthy environment; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's natural, cultural, and historic resources contribute to the breadth of destinations, visitors, events, and spending that supports the State's tourism industry, including over two hundred State Parks, Forests, Historic Sites, Natural and Wildlife Management

Areas across more than one million acres of public land throughout New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Governor Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Oliver have prioritized the addition and revitalization of green and open spaces throughout New Jersey by facilitating more than \$400 million of State investment in local parks, open space, and natural resource restoration projects since 2018; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection recently established the Community Investment & Economic Revitalization program within DEP, the primary function of which is to strengthen investments in natural capital and support sustainable economic growth that restores, preserves, and protects natural, cultural, and historic resources while enhancing quality of life for all New Jerseyans; and

WHEREAS, DEP represents the State in the development and implementation of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, a condition of eligibility for National Park Service Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund assistance, which must identify statewide recreation needs and opportunities and articulate a comprehensive responsive strategy; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the critical value of engaging the public and collaborating with a multitude of stakeholders with interest in the preservation, planning, and improvement of the State's natural, cultural, and historic resources, the Murphy Administration launched *Outside, Together! A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for New Jersey* pursuant to DEP Administrative Order No. 2022-12;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI, Acting Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. The first Saturday in June is declared National Trails Day in the State of New Jersey.

2. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to confer any legal rights upon entities whose activities are regulated by State entities; nothing shall be construed to create a private right of action on behalf of any such regulated entities; and nothing shall be used as a basis for legal challenges to rules, approvals, permits, licenses, or other action or inaction by a State entity. Nothing in this Order shall be construed to supersede any federal, State, or local law.

3. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
 4th day of June,
 Two Thousand and Twenty-two, and
 of the Independence of the
 United States, the Two Hundred
 and Forty-Sixth.

[seal]

/s/ Nicholas P. Scutari

President of the Senate, Acting Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor

Appendix I

P.L. 2022, C. 76

CHAPTER 76

AN ACT concerning the preservation of lands for certain public purposes, and amending and supplementing P.L.1999, c.152.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. Section 2 of P.L.1999, c.152 (C.13:8C-2) is amended to read as follows:

C.13:8C-2 Findings, declarations relative to open space, farmland, and historic preservation.

2. The Legislature finds and declares that enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of New Jersey is a paramount policy of the State; that the acquisition and preservation of open space, farmland, and historic properties in New Jersey protects and enhances the character and beauty of the State and provides its citizens with greater opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and education; that the lands and resources now dedicated to these purposes will not be adequate to meet the needs of an expanding population in years to come; that the open space and farmland that is available and appropriate for these purposes will gradually disappear as the costs of preserving them correspondingly increase; and that it is necessary and desirable to provide funding for the development of parks and other open space for recreation and conservation purposes.

The Legislature further finds and declares that agriculture plays an integral role in the prosperity and well-being of the State as well as providing a fresh and abundant supply of food for its citizens; that much of the farmland in the State faces an imminent threat of permanent conversion to non-farm uses; and that the retention and development of an economically viable agricultural industry is of high public priority.

The Legislature further finds and declares that there is an urgent need to preserve the State's historic heritage to enable present and future generations to experience, understand, and enjoy the landmarks of New Jersey's role in the birth and development of this nation; that the restoration and preservation of properties of historic character and importance in the State is central to meeting this need; and that a significant number of these historic properties are located in urban centers, where their restoration and preservation will advance urban revitalization efforts of the State and local governments.

The Legislature further finds and declares that there is growing public recognition that the quality of life, economic prosperity, and environmental quality in New Jersey are served by the protection and timely preservation of open space and farmland and better management of the lands, resources, historic properties, and recreational facilities that are already under public ownership or protection; that the protection and preservation of New Jersey's water resources, including the quality and quantity of the State's limited water supply, is essential to the quality of life and the economic health of the citizens of the State; that the acquisition of flood-prone areas is in the best interests of the State to prevent the loss of life and property; that the preservation of the existing diversity of animal and plant species is essential to sustaining both the environment and the economy of the Garden State, and the conservation of adequate habitat for endangered, threatened, and other rare species is necessary to preserve this biodiversity; that there is a need to establish a program to serve as the successor to the programs established by the "Green Acres, Farmland and Historic Preservation, and Blue Acres Bond Act of 1995," P.L.1995, c.204, nine previous similar bond acts enacted in 1961, 1971, 1974, 1978, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1989, and 1992, and various implementing laws; and that any such successor program should support implementation of Statewide policies, goals, and strategies concerned with and emphasizing the importance of preserving open space, sensitive environmental areas, critical wildlife habitat, farmland, and historic resources.

The Legislature further finds and declares that the citizens of the State have indicated their very strong support for open space, farmland, and historic preservation efforts not only in the past approval of State Green Acres bond acts and numerous county and municipal dedicated funding sources for those purposes, but most recently in 1998 with the approval of an amendment to the New Jersey Constitution that provides for a stable and dedicated source of funding for those purposes for the next decade and beyond.

The Legislature therefore determines that it is in the public interest to preserve as much open space and farmland, and as many historic properties, as possible within the means provided by the 1998 constitutional amendment; that of the open space preserved, as much of those lands as

possible shall protect water resources and preserve adequate habitat and other environmentally sensitive areas; that, in recognition of the recommendations of the Governor's Council on New Jersey Outdoors, it is a worthy goal to preserve one million more acres of open space and farmland in the Garden State in the next decade to protect the quality of life for New Jersey residents; and that, to accomplish that goal, it is also in the public interest to create the Garden State Preservation Trust and to enable it to raise revenue for those purposes, and to delegate to it such other duties and responsibilities as shall be necessary to further the purposes of the constitutional amendment and to advance the policies and achieve the goals set forth in this preamble.

2. Section 24 of P.L.1999, c.152 (C.13:8C-24) is amended to read as follows:

C.13:8C-24 Office of Green Acres established.

24. a. (1) There is established in the Department of Environmental Protection the Office of Green Acres. The commissioner may appoint an administrator or director who shall supervise the office, and the department may employ such other personnel and staff as may be required to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the department and the office pursuant to this act, all without regard to the provisions of Title 11A, Civil Service, of the New Jersey Statutes. Persons appointed or employed as provided pursuant to this subsection shall be compensated in a manner similar to other employees in the Executive Branch, and their compensation shall be determined by the Commissioner of Personnel.

(2) The Green Acres Program in the Department of Environmental Protection, together with all of its functions, powers and duties, are continued and transferred to and constituted as the Office of Green Acres in the Department of Environmental Protection. Whenever, in any law, rule, regulation, order, contract, document, judicial or administrative proceeding or otherwise, reference is made to the Green Acres Program, the same shall mean and refer to the Office of Green Acres in the Department of Environmental Protection. This transfer shall be subject to the provisions of the "State Agency Transfer Act," P.L.1971, c.375 (C.52:14D-1 et seq.).

b. The duties and responsibilities of the office shall be as follows:

(1) Administer all provisions of this act pertaining to funding the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes as authorized pursuant to Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 7 of the State Constitution;

(2) Continue to administer all grant and loan programs for the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes, including the Green Trust, established or funded for those purposes pursuant to: P.L.1961, c.45 (C.13:8A-1 et seq.); P.L.1971, c.419 (C.13:8A-19 et seq.); P.L.1975, c.155 (C.13:8A-35 et seq.); or any Green Acres bond act; and

(3) Adopt, with the approval of the commissioner and pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations:

(a) establishing application procedures for grants and loans for the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes, criteria and policies for the evaluation and priority ranking of projects for eligibility to receive funding for recreation and conservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys, any conditions that may be placed on the award of a grant or loan for recreation and conservation purposes pursuant to this act, and any restrictions that may be placed on the use of lands acquired or developed with a grant or loan for recreation and conservation purposes pursuant to this act. The criteria and policies established pursuant to this subparagraph for the evaluation and priority ranking of projects for eligibility to receive funding for recreation and conservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys may be based upon, but need not be limited to, such factors as: protection of the environment, natural resources, water resources, watersheds, aquifers, wetlands, floodplains and flood-prone areas, stream corridors, beaches and coastal resources, forests and grasslands, scenic views, biodiversity, habitat for wildlife, rare, threatened, or endangered species, and plants; degree of likelihood of development; promotion of greenways; provision for recreational access and use; protection of geologic, historic, archaeological, and

cultural resources; relative cost; parcel size; and degree of public support; and

(b) addressing any other matters deemed necessary to implement and carry out the goals and objectives of Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 7 of the State Constitution and this act with respect to the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes; and

(4) Establishing criteria and policies for the evaluation and priority ranking of State projects to acquire and develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys, which criteria and policies may be based upon, but need not be limited to, such factors as: protection of the environment, natural resources, water resources, watersheds, aquifers, wetlands, floodplains and flood-prone areas, stream corridors, beaches and coastal resources, forests and grasslands, scenic views, biodiversity, habitat for wildlife, rare, threatened, or endangered species, and plants; degree of likelihood of development; promotion of greenways; provision for recreational access and use; protection of geologic, historic, archaeological, and cultural resources; relative cost; parcel size; and degree of public support.

3. Section 25 of P.L.1999, c.152 (C.13:8C-25) is amended to read as follows:

C.13:8C-25 Biennial progress report to Governor, Legislature by the trust.

25. Within one year after the date of enactment of this act, and biennially thereafter until and including 2008, the Garden State Preservation Trust, after consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection, the State Agriculture Development Committee, the New Jersey Historic Trust, the Pinelands Commission, and the Office of State Planning in the Department of Community Affairs, shall prepare and submit to the Governor and the Legislature a written report, which shall:

a. Describe the progress being made on achieving the goals and objectives of Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 7 of the State Constitution and this act with respect to the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes, the preservation of farmland, and the preservation of historic properties, and provide recommendations with respect to any legislative, administrative, or local action that may be required to ensure that those goals and objectives may be met in the future;

b. Tabulate, both for the reporting period and cumulatively, the total acreage for the entire State, and the acreage in each county and municipality, of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes and of farmland preserved for farmland preservation purposes that have been applied toward meeting the goals and objectives of Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 7 of the State Constitution and this act with respect to the acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes and the preservation of farmland;

c. Tabulate, both for the reporting period and cumulatively, the total acreage for the entire State, and the acreage in each county and municipality, of any donations of land that have been applied toward meeting the goals and objectives of Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 7 of the State Constitution and this act with respect to the acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes and the preservation of farmland;

d. List, both for the reporting period and cumulatively, and by project name, project sponsor, and location by county and municipality, all historic preservation projects funded with constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part;

e. Indicate those areas of the State where, as designated by the Department of Environmental Protection in the Open Space Master Plan prepared pursuant to section 5 of P.L.2002, c.76 (C.13:8C-25.1), the acquisition and development of lands by the State for recreation and conservation purposes is planned or is most likely to occur, and those areas of the State where there is a need to protect water resources, including the identification of lands where protection is needed to assure adequate quality and quantity of drinking water supplies in times of drought, indicate those areas of the State where the allocation of constitutionally dedicated moneys for farmland preservation purposes is planned or is most likely to occur, and provide a proposed schedule and expenditure plan for those acquisitions, developments, and allocations, for the next reporting period, which shall include an explanation of how those acquisitions, developments, and allocations will be distributed throughout all geographic regions

of the State to the maximum extent practicable and feasible;

f. List any surplus real property owned by the State or an independent authority of the State that may be utilizable for recreation and conservation purposes or farmland preservation purposes, and indicate what action has been or must be taken to effect a conveyance of those lands to the department, the committee, local government units, qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organizations, or other entities or persons so that the lands may be preserved and used for those purposes;

g. List, for the reporting period, all projects for which applications for funding under the Green Acres, farmland preservation, and historic preservation programs were received but not funded with constitutionally dedicated moneys during the reporting period, and the reason or reasons why those projects were not funded;

h. Provide, for the reporting period, a comparison of the amount of constitutionally dedicated moneys annually appropriated for local government unit projects for recreation and conservation purposes in municipalities eligible to receive State aid pursuant to P.L.1978, c.14 (C.52:27D-178 et seq.) to the average amount of Green Acres bond act moneys annually appropriated for such projects in the years 1984 through 1998; and

i. Tabulate, both for the reporting period and cumulatively, the total acreage for the entire State, and the acreage in each county and municipality, of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes that protect water resources and that protect flood-prone areas.

4. Section 26 of P.L.1999, c.152 (C.13:8C-26) is amended to read as follows:

C.13:8C-26 Allocation of funds appropriated; conditions.

26. a. Moneys appropriated from the Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund to the Department of Environmental Protection shall be used by the department to:

(1) Pay the cost of acquisition and development of lands by the State for recreation and conservation purposes;

(2) Provide grants and loans to assist local government units to pay the cost of acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes; and

(3) Provide grants to assist qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organizations to pay the cost of acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

b. The expenditure and allocation of constitutionally dedicated moneys for recreation and conservation purposes shall reflect the geographic diversity of the State to the maximum extent practicable and feasible.

c. (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 5 of P.L.1985, c.310 (C.13:18A-34) or this act, or any rule or regulation adopted pursuant thereto, to the contrary, the value of a pinelands development credit, allocated to a parcel pursuant to P.L.1979, c.111 (C.13:18A-1 et seq.) and the pinelands comprehensive management plan adopted pursuant thereto, shall be made utilizing a value to be determined by either appraisal, regional averaging based upon appraisal data, or a formula supported by appraisal data. The appraisal and appraisal data shall consider as appropriate: land values in the pinelands regional growth areas; land values in counties, municipalities, and other areas reasonably contiguous to, but outside of, the pinelands area; and other relevant factors as may be necessary to maintain the environmental, ecological, and agricultural qualities of the pinelands area.

(2) No pinelands development credit allocated to a parcel of land pursuant to P.L.1979, c.111 (C.13:18A-1 et seq.) and the pinelands comprehensive management plan adopted pursuant thereto that is acquired or obtained in connection with the acquisition of the parcel for recreation and conservation purposes by the State, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part may be conveyed in any manner. All such pinelands development credits shall be retired permanently.

d. (1) (a) For State fiscal years 2000 through 2004 only, when the department, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization seeks to acquire lands for recreation and conservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part or Green Acres bond act moneys in whole or in part, it shall conduct or cause to be conducted

an appraisal or appraisals of the value of the lands that shall be made using the land use zoning of the lands (i) in effect at the time of proposed acquisition, and (ii) in effect on November 3, 1998 as if that land use zoning is still in effect at the time of proposed acquisition. The higher of those two values shall be utilized by the department, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization as the basis for negotiation with the landowner with respect to the acquisition price for the lands. The landowner shall be provided with both values determined pursuant to this subparagraph.

A landowner may waive any of the requirements of this paragraph and may agree to sell the lands for less than the values determined pursuant to this paragraph.

(b) After the date of enactment of P.L.2001, c.315 and through June 30, 2004, in determining the two values required pursuant to subparagraph (a) of this paragraph, the appraisal shall be made using not only the land use zoning but also the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands subject to the appraisal (i) in effect at the time of proposed acquisition, and (ii) in effect on November 3, 1998 as if those rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards are still in effect at the time of proposed acquisition.

(2) The requirements of this subsection shall be in addition to any other requirements of law, rule, or regulation not inconsistent therewith.

(3) This subsection shall not:

(a) apply if the land use zoning of the lands at the time of proposed acquisition, and the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands at the time of proposed acquisition, have not changed since November 3, 1998;

(b) apply in the case of lands to be acquired with federal moneys in whole or in part;

(c) apply in the case of lands to be acquired in accordance with subsection c. of this section;

(d) apply to projects funded using constitutionally dedicated moneys appropriated pursuant to the annual appropriations act for State fiscal year 2000 (P.L.1999, c.138); or

(e) alter any requirements to disclose information to a landowner pursuant to the "Eminent Domain Act of 1971," P.L.1971, c.361 (C.20:3-1 et seq.).

e. Moneys appropriated from the fund may be used to match grants, contributions, donations, or reimbursements from federal aid programs or from other public or private sources established for the same or similar purposes as the fund.

f. Moneys appropriated from the fund shall not be used by local government units or qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organizations to acquire lands that are already permanently preserved for recreation and conservation purposes, as determined by the department.

g. Whenever lands are donated to the State by a public utility, as defined pursuant to Title 48 of the Revised Statutes, for recreation and conservation purposes, the commissioner may make and keep the lands accessible to the public, unless the commissioner determines that public accessibility would be detrimental to the lands or any natural resources associated therewith.

h. Whenever the State acquires land for recreation and conservation purposes, the agency in the Department of Environmental Protection responsible for administering the land shall, within six months after the date of acquisition, inspect the land for the presence of any buildings or structures thereon which are or may be historic properties and, within 60 days after completion of the inspection, provide to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office in the department (1) a written notice of its findings, and (2) for any buildings or structures which are or may be historic properties discovered on the land, a request for determination of potential eligibility for inclusion of the historic building or structure in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. Whenever such a building or structure is discovered, a copy of the written notice provided to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office shall also be sent to the New Jersey Historic Trust and to the county historical commission or advisory committee, the county historical society, the local historic preservation commission or advisory committee, and the local historical society if any of those entities exist in the county or municipality wherein the land is located.

i. (1) Commencing July 1, 2004 and until five years after the date of enactment of P.L.2001, c.315, when the department, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit

organization seeks to acquire lands for recreation and conservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part or Green Acres bond act moneys in whole or in part, it shall conduct or cause to be conducted an appraisal or appraisals of the value of the lands that shall be made using the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands subject to the appraisal (a) in effect at the time of proposed acquisition, and (b) in effect on November 3, 1998 as if those rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards are still in effect at the time of proposed acquisition. The higher of those two values shall be utilized by the department, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization as the basis for negotiation with the landowner with respect to the acquisition price for the lands. The landowner shall be provided with both values determined pursuant to this paragraph. A landowner may waive any of the requirements of this paragraph and may agree to sell the lands for less than the values determined pursuant to this paragraph.

(2) The requirements of this subsection shall be in addition to any other requirements of law, rule, or regulation not inconsistent therewith.

(3) This subsection shall not:

(a) apply if the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands at the time of proposed acquisition have not changed since November 3, 1998;

(b) apply in the case of lands to be acquired with federal moneys in whole or in part;

(c) apply in the case of lands to be acquired in accordance with subsection c. of this section; or

(d) alter any requirements to disclose information to a landowner pursuant to the "Eminent Domain Act of 1971," P.L.1971, c.361 (C.20:3-1 et seq.).

j. The department shall adopt guidelines for the evaluation and priority ranking process which shall be used in making decisions concerning the acquisition of lands by the State for recreation and conservation purposes using moneys from the Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund and from any other source. The guidelines, and any subsequent revisions thereto, shall be published in the New Jersey Register. The adoption of the guidelines or of the revisions thereto, shall not be subject to the requirements of the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).

k. In making decisions concerning the acquisition of lands by the State for recreation and conservation purposes using moneys from the Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund, in the evaluation and priority ranking process the department shall accord three times the weight to acquisitions of lands that would protect water resources, and two times the weight to acquisitions of lands that would protect flood-prone areas, as those criteria are compared to the other criteria in the priority ranking process.

l. The department, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations that establish standards and requirements regulating any activity on lands acquired by the State for recreation and conservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys to assure that the activity on those lands does not diminish the protection of surface water or groundwater resources.

Any rules and regulations adopted pursuant to this subsection shall not apply to activities on lands acquired prior to the adoption of the rules and regulations.

C.13:8C-25.1 Submission of Open Space Master Plan.

5. a. Within one year after the date of enactment of P.L.2002, c.76 (C.13:8C-25.1 et al.), and annually thereafter, the Department of Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Office of State Planning in the Department of Community Affairs and the Pinelands Commission, shall prepare and submit to the Governor and the Legislature an Open Space Master Plan, which shall indicate those areas of the State where the acquisition and development of lands by the State for recreation and conservation purposes is planned or is most likely to occur, and those areas of the State where there is a need to protect water resources, including the identification of lands

where protection is needed to assure adequate quality and quantity of drinking water supplies in times of drought, and which shall provide a proposed schedule and expenditure plan for those acquisitions and developments for the next reporting period, which shall include an explanation of how those acquisitions and developments will be distributed throughout all geographic regions of the State to the maximum extent practicable and feasible.

b. The department shall provide any information the Garden State Preservation Trust deems necessary in preparing its biennial report pursuant to section 25 of P.L.1999, c.152 (C.13:8C-25).

6. Section 38 of P.L.1999, c.152 (C.13:8C-38) is amended to read as follows:

C.13:8C-38 Acquisitions, grants with respect to farmland preservation.

38. a. All acquisitions or grants made pursuant to section 37 of this act shall be made with respect to farmland devoted to farmland preservation under programs established by law.

b. The expenditure and allocation of constitutionally dedicated moneys for farmland preservation purposes shall reflect the geographic diversity of the State to the maximum extent practicable and feasible.

c. The committee shall implement the provisions of section 37 of this act in accordance with the procedures and criteria established pursuant to the "Agriculture Retention and Development Act," P.L.1983, c.32 (C.4:1C-11 et seq.) except as provided otherwise by this act.

d. The committee shall adopt the same or a substantially similar method for determining, for the purposes of this act, the committee's share of the cost of a development easement on farmland to be acquired by a local government as that which is being used by the committee on the date of enactment of this act for prior farmland preservation funding programs.

e. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 24 of P.L.1983, c.32 (C.4:1C-31) or this act, or any rule or regulation adopted pursuant thereto, to the contrary, whenever the value of a development easement on farmland to be acquired using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part is determined based upon the value of any pinelands development credits allocated to the parcel pursuant to P.L.1979, c.111 (C.13:18A-1 et seq.) and the pinelands comprehensive management plan adopted pursuant thereto, the committee shall determine the value of the development easement by:

(1) conducting a sufficient number of fair market value appraisals as it deems appropriate to determine the value for farmland preservation purposes of the pinelands development credits;

(2) considering development easement values in counties, municipalities, and other areas (a) reasonably contiguous to, but outside of, the pinelands area, which in the sole opinion of the committee constitute reasonable development easement values in the pinelands area for the purposes of this subsection, and (b) in the pinelands area where pinelands development credits are or may be utilized, which in the sole opinion of the committee constitute reasonable development easement values in the pinelands area for the purposes of this subsection;

(3) considering land values in the pinelands regional growth areas;

(4) considering the importance of preserving agricultural lands in the pinelands area; and

(5) considering such other relevant factors as may be necessary to increase participation in the farmland preservation program by owners of agricultural lands located in the pinelands area.

f. No pinelands development credit that is acquired or obtained in connection with the acquisition of a development easement on farmland or fee simple title to farmland by the State, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part may be conveyed in any manner. All such pinelands development credits shall be retired permanently.

g. (1) (a) For State fiscal years 2000 through 2004 only, when the committee, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization seeks to acquire a development easement on farmland or the fee simple title to farmland for farmland preservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part, it shall conduct or cause

to be conducted an appraisal or appraisals of the value of the lands that shall be made using the land use zoning of the lands (i) in effect at the time of proposed acquisition, and (ii) in effect on November 3, 1998 as if that land use zoning is still in effect at the time of proposed acquisition. The higher of those two values shall be utilized by the committee, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization as the basis for negotiation with the landowner with respect to the acquisition price for the lands. The landowner shall be provided with both values determined pursuant to this subparagraph.

A landowner may waive any of the requirements of this paragraph and may agree to sell the lands for less than the values determined pursuant to this paragraph.

(b) After the date of enactment of P.L.2001, c.315 and through June 30, 2004, in determining the two values required pursuant to subparagraph (a) of this paragraph, the appraisal shall be made using not only the land use zoning but also the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands subject to the appraisal (i) in effect at the time of proposed acquisition, and (ii) in effect on November 3, 1998 as if those rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards are still in effect at the time of proposed acquisition.

(2) The requirements of this subsection shall be in addition to any other requirements of law, rule, or regulation not inconsistent therewith.

(3) This subsection shall not:

(a) apply if the land use zoning of the lands at the time of proposed acquisition, and the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands at the time of proposed acquisition, have not changed since November 3, 1998;

(b) apply in the case of lands to be acquired with federal moneys in whole or in part;

© apply in the case of lands to be acquired in accordance with subsection e. of this section;

(d) apply to projects funded using constitutionally dedicated moneys appropriated pursuant to the annual appropriations act for State fiscal year 2000 (P.L.1999, c.138); or

(e) alter any requirements to disclose information to a landowner pursuant to the "Eminent Domain Act of 1971," P.L.1971, c.361 (C.20:3-1 et seq.).

h. Any farmland for which a development easement or fee simple title has been acquired pursuant to section 37 of this act shall be entitled to the benefits conferred by the "Right to Farm Act," P.L.1983, c.31 (C.4:1C-1 et al.) and the "Agriculture Retention and Development Act," P.L.1983, c.32 (C.4:1C-11 et al.).

i. (1) Commencing July 1, 2004 and until five years after the date of enactment of P.L.2001, c.315, when the committee, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization seeks to acquire a development easement on farmland or the fee simple title to farmland for farmland preservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys in whole or in part, it shall conduct or cause to be conducted an appraisal or appraisals of the value of the lands that shall be made using the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands subject to the appraisal (a) in effect at the time of proposed acquisition, and (b) in effect on November 3, 1998 as if those rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards are still in effect at the time of proposed acquisition. The higher of those two values shall be utilized by the committee, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization as the basis for negotiation with the landowner with respect to the acquisition price for the lands. The landowner shall be provided with both values determined pursuant to this paragraph. A landowner may waive any of the requirements of this paragraph and may agree to sell the lands for less than the values determined pursuant to this paragraph.

(2) The requirements of this subsection shall be in addition to any other requirements of law, rule, or regulation not inconsistent therewith.

(3) This subsection shall not:

(a) apply if the Department of Environmental Protection wastewater, water quality and watershed management rules and regulations and associated requirements and standards applicable to the lands at the time of proposed acquisition have not changed since November 3,

1998;

(b) apply in the case of lands to be acquired with federal moneys in whole or in part;

(c) apply in the case of lands to be acquired in accordance with subsection e. of this section;

or

(d) alter any requirements to disclose information to a landowner pursuant to the "Eminent Domain Act of 1971," P.L.1971, c.361 (C.20:3-1 et seq.).

j. The committee and the Department of Environmental Protection, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), shall jointly adopt rules and regulations that establish standards and requirements regulating any improvement on lands acquired by the State for farmland preservation purposes using constitutionally dedicated moneys to assure that any improvement does not diminish the protection of surface water or groundwater resources.

Any rules and regulations adopted pursuant to this subsection shall not apply to improvements on lands acquired prior to the adoption of the rules and regulations.

7. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved August 29, 2002.

Appendix J

Summary of Public Comment

DEP posted the SCORP for public comment from September 18 to October 18, 2023. During this period, 772 residents and representatives from government agencies and conservation organizations submitted written comments. Comments received were primarily from residents or organizations based in New Jersey; however, a number of residents from across the U.S. also submitted comments.

DEP thanks all commenters for their submissions, all of which were thoughtfully read and carefully considered. Many comments shared similar content; when possible, those were grouped together in the summary below. Revisions were made to the document as appropriate for clarification. No substantive changes to the body of the document were made at this time. Instead, the inclusion of the comment summary will allow the DEP and its partners to consider which of the many creative ideas and innovative suggestions may work on the individual, local, and state levels. We will use the SCORP—and the suggestions it inspired—to guide our ongoing collaborative efforts to provide open space and recreation for all.

General Support for SCORP and Parks/Open Spaces in the State

Several New Jersey residents responded enthusiastically to the SCORP, expressing appreciation for the outdoor spaces close to them. These commenters noted that they greatly enjoyed their parks, highlighting the positive physical and mental health benefits that parks and open spaces provide, especially to children. Additionally, the commenters voiced agreement with SCORP goals and reiterated support for continued protection and care of the state's outdoor spaces. Additionally, several New Jersey organizations that are focused on conservation, land use, and outdoor recreation voiced their agreement with the SCORP principles and outlined goals.

Requests and Recommendations to Improve Existing Parks

In addition to recognizing the wealth of outdoor recreational resources in New Jersey, many commented that use and enjoyment of these spaces could be bettered through several physical or operational improvements. Suggested improvements included adding specific amenities and features in all parks, increasing information on outdoor recreational sites in the state, and introducing new programming. Some commenters also requested improvements to specific types of recreational spaces, like campgrounds or historic sites.

PARK AMENITIES & FEATURES

Amenities most requested in comments included restrooms, water fountains, and playgrounds. For park features, a substantial number of comments requested the addition of new walking and/or biking trails (more on trails discussed below). A smaller number of comments suggested adding vending areas, pickleball courts, and gym equipment to existing outdoor spaces. Additionally, a few comments suggested that parks include better signage to inform visitors about the history of land or park rules.

DISC GOLF

There were many enthusiastic responses to the SCORP from residents inside and outside of the state who were in favor of adding new disc golf courses in New Jersey. Many comments requested it be added as a

recreational priority (both in terms of funding and access), especially because it is affordable, accessible, and encourages exercise. Many commenters specifically requested the Stafford Woods disc golf course be protected in Voorhees Township.

PROGRAMMING

Several commenters identified programmatic needs within state parks, including environmental education for youth and seniors regarding stewardship, conservation, urban gardening, and outdoor skills. Commenters also identified collaboration opportunities with libraries and schools and suggested increasing cultural event programming.

INFORMATION NEEDS

Commenters identified information gaps both online and at recreation sites. Some of the online information deficits included maps or lists of state and local outdoor resources; licensing requirements; outdoor recreation opportunities for tourists; employment opportunities; amenities available at parks, such as bathrooms; and maps or lists of accessible parks and trails. Commenters focused on on-site information deficits included the need for consistent trail markings, signage to mitigate littering, and information on trail difficulty.

CAMPING SITES

Commenters regarding camping asked for improvements at existing facilities, such as increasing the number of campgrounds, providing more RV accessibility, improving access to electric services, and upgrading older facilities.

HISTORIC SITES/HERITAGE TOURISM

Commenters asked the DEP to restore historic sites; prevent future loss of historic lands; add amenities, like bathrooms and trash cans, to improve user experiences at historic sites; and invest in Revolutionary War sites. Commenters encouraged coordination with tourism entities and investment in agritourism and heritage tourism sites.

WATER QUALITY

Several commenters asked that DEP address stormwater runoff in the plan and prioritize cleaning waters for fishing and reducing ocean pollution.

Comments on specific parks or trails

DEP received a substantial number of comments on specific parks or trails in the state. These comments asked for new features to be installed, such as playgrounds, docks for water activities, basketball courts, and urban gardens. Several comments also expressed concern about nearby development encroaching on outdoor spaces, the deteriorating quality of trails, and risks of flooding and related damage to recreational areas.

Several commenters were residents requesting to build skate parks in the borough of Somerville. Commenters identified the benefits of skate parks, especially in flood prone areas.

Comments on specific trails asked for more trails to be built, either to connect to existing parks and greenways, or to improve safety by creating separate pedestrian and bicycle trails.

Access

Access was a major theme in about a third of the comments received. Commenters discussed access for all and methods to safely reach parks without a car, including increased public transportation—especially for those with disabilities—ensuring sidewalk availability, and increasing the number of trails and greenways.

Several commenters also asked for more or better access to coastal and water resources and state forests.

ACCESS FOR ALL

Commenters addressed the importance for state parks and trails to accommodate safe use for individuals of all abilities. To do this, commenters asked for improvements in wheelchair accessibility in playgrounds and trails, inclusion of appropriate facilities for older adults in park design, providing accessible bathrooms, and offering more park programming for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

A substantial number of comments were submitted by New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania residents and nonprofits supporting sustainable transportation and trail development. Major themes of these comments included the need to update the New Jersey State Trails Plan to better serve community needs, prioritize projects with active transportation elements, increase funding for trails, and establish stronger relationships with New Jersey Department of Transportation and New Jersey Transit. These comments also offered recommendations for actions DEP could take to improve trails across the state and suggestions for DEP to include accessible trails in its project selection criteria, park planning, and park design.

A handful of comments on trails also included requests for more walking and biking trails in specific places in the state. Several commenters asked for specific trails to be included as examples of valuable recreational and cultural assets in the SCORP; these trails included the D&R Canal State Park, East Coast Greenway, and National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Trail.

Several trail comments also focused on cycling in New Jersey and recognized that trails can connect places throughout the state, that additional bike lanes are needed (especially for commuters), and that there is a need for more mountain bike and gravel bike trails.

Climate Change

Comments were received regarding the need to align parks and recreation planning with climate resiliency goals; features of parks, such as splashpads and shade trees, that can mitigate climate impacts for residents; and education around climate change threats. Comments also highlighted specific parks where flood remediation or protection is needed; showed appreciation for DEP's Blue Acres program; and acknowledged the importance of green infrastructure. A few comments also identified a need for a public engagement plan to educate residents on the threats of climate change and the benefits of park stewardship in meeting resilience goals.

Funding

Many comments cited the need for increased park funding generally, with most responses asking that funding be allocated to maintain and improve existing facilities before investing in anything new, especially state-owned campgrounds. There were requests for funding for specific issues such as deer overpopulation, park accessibility, collaborations with schools and libraries, increasing natural play surfaces (rather than synthetic turf), and dam removal.

Natural Land Preservation/Support for Biodiversity

Many New Jersey residents and representatives of conservation organizations commented on land preservation needs and goals in the state. Commenters emphasized the need to maintain natural wild areas and preserve natural lands; protect wildlife and provide habitat; preserve and restore streams and wetlands; reduce open space loss due to housing and recreational uses (e.g., sports fields/courts); and balance access and conservation. Some of the reasons given included protecting and enhancing habitat connectivity; maintaining and enhancing passive recreational use; ecological restoration; increasing biodiversity; and maintaining pervious surfaces. Many expressed concerns about the rate and amount of development in New Jersey (especially warehouse development) and its impact on natural land preservation. Maintaining biodiversity in the Pinelands was specifically mentioned as a key priority. The Highlands Core Forest was also identified as the largest and most biologically diverse forest in the state.

Several commenters also asked DEP to prioritize land conservation and acquisition for a specific purpose (to protect connected habitats) or in a specific area (along National Wild and Scenic Rivers).

A small group of commenters requested that no artificial turf be used in any state parks or in parks funded by Green Acres.

A few commenters also recommended DEP collaborate with other state departments or agencies to further goals outlined in the SCORP.

Use

The SCORP comments on park and trail use included many passionate, divergent opinions from different interest user groups. Many commenters shared both concern and support for all-terrain/off-road vehicle users as well as hikers, and for both birdwatchers and hunters. Concerns around use included off-leash dogs; increasing community engagement around parks; and logging on public lands.

Commenters wanted to see increased access to land and water for recreational use, whether through accessing existing state land; new land acquisition; remediation, especially in urban areas; or other redevelopment opportunities. Some of the recreational uses requested by commenters include visiting parks at night (astronomy), croquet, outdoor ice skating, saltwater fishing from the shoreline, clamming on Sundays, preserving existing/supporting new horse farms; and skiing.

Regarding the overlap of use and technology, one commenter concerned about park safety suggested using drones for surveillance. Another expressed concern over the cost of adopting technology use in parks. Another commenter recommended using bike/pedestrian counters for data collection to inform policy and planning decisions.

References

- 1 National Park Service. "Protecting Lands and Giving Back to Communities." *Land and Water Conservation Fund*. December 2022. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm>.
- 2 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "About Green Acres." November 2022. <https://dep.nj.gov/greenacres/about-us/>.
- 3 New Jersey's Environmental Justice Law defines Overburdened Communities as U.S. Census block groups where at least 35% of households are low-income, at least 40% of residents identify as a minority, or at least 40% of households have limited English proficiency.
- 4 Demographic information for focus group participants was obtained from voluntary questionnaires. Participants may not have answered all questions.
- 5 Outdoor Foundation. *2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report*. 2022. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2022-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>.
- 6 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. "Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021." November 2022. <https://www.bea.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/orsa1122.pdf>.
- 7 Wharton State Forest. "Visitor and Vehicle Use Survey," September 28 to November 11, 2022. <https://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/wharton/images/surveyresponses.jpg>.
- 8 Montalto, Nicholas. "(BLOG POST) Immigrants Keep New Jersey Growing – New Jersey Business Immigration Coalition." *New Jersey Business Immigration Coalition*, 20 Nov. 2021, njbusinessimmigration.org/blog-post-immigrants-keep-new-jersey-growing.
- 9 Riley Yates, NJ Advance Media for NJ.com, et al. "N.J. Is Growing And Getting More Diverse, New Census Numbers Show." *Nj*, 13 Aug. 2021, www.nj.com/news/2021/08/nj-is-growing-and-getting-more-diverse-new-census-numbers-show.html.
- 10 Evans, Tim, and Tim Evans. "New Jersey Losing Population for the First Time in Four Decades | New Jersey Future." *New Jersey Future | Working for Smart Growth: More Livable Places and Open Spaces*, 17 Jan. 2020, www.njfuture.org/2020/01/16/new-jersey-losing-population.
- 11 New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. 2014. Population and Labor Force Projections. Projections of Total Population by County: New Jersey, 2014 to 2034. <https://www.nj.gov/labor/labormarketinformation/assets/PDFs/dmograph/lfp/2014table1.xlsx>.
- 12 Van Wagoner, Chris. "Why City Parks Matter - Powerful Tools for Cities | City Parks Alliance." *City Parks Alliance*, 21 July 2019, <https://cityparksalliance.org/about-us/why-city-parks-matter/>.
- 13 New Jersey Office of the Governor. "Governor Murphy Announces Over \$100 Million Investment in Urban Parks, Playgrounds, and Open Spaces Across New Jersey," 20 October 2021, accessed May 1, 2023, <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20211020a.shtml>.
- 14 <https://www.openspaceinstitute.org/places/essex-hudson-greenway>; <https://www.essexhudsongreenway.org/>.
- 15 Nicholas Katzban, North Jersey Media Group. "Passaic's Push for More Inclusive Playgrounds Nears End of First Phase." *NorthJersey*, 28 February 2017, <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/passaic/2017/02/27/passaics-push-more-inclusive-playgrounds-nears-end-first-phase/98350422/>.
- 16 United States Census Bureau QuickFacts. "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: New Jersey." *Census Bureau QuickFacts*, www.census.gov/quickfacts/NJ.
- 17 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Heat Island Effect," <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands>.
- 18 Kiefer, Eric. "Dozens of Trees Planted at Ivy Hill Park in Newark," Patch. April 26, 2023. <https://patch.com/new-jersey/newarknj/dozens-trees-planted-ivy-hill-park-newark>.
- 19 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Murphy Administration Awards \$24.3 Million Through Its Natural Climate Solutions Grant Program, News Release, 18 January 2023, www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2023/23_0003.htm.
- 20 Spark, Fabio. "Whitman Park Athletic Complex Opens in Camden City | Camden County, NJ," 15 September 2022, <https://www.camdencounty.com/whitman-park-athletic-complex-opens-in-camden-city/>.
- 21 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change," June 30, 2020, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/nj-scientific-report-2020.pdf>.
- 22 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, "Climate Change: Statewide Resilience Action Plans," <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience-action-plans.html>.

- 23 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "New Jersey's Global Warming Response Act: 80x50 Report: Evaluating our progress and identifying pathways to reduce emissions 80% by 2050." Version 1.0. October 15, 2020. <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/nj-gwra-80x50-report-2020.pdf>.
- 24 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Blue Acres," accessed April 27, 2023, <https://dep.nj.gov/blueacres/>.
- 25 New Jersey Section of American Water Resources, Association. "Linden Blue Acres Green Infrastructure & Floodplain Restoration." <https://njawra.org/page-1780344>.
- 26 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Murphy Administration to Restore 10,000 Acres of Atlantic White Cedar Forests, Enhancing State's Resilience to Climate Change," 23 September 2021, accessed April 27, 2023, https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2021/21_0029.htm.
- 27 New Jersey Future. "It's Official: NJDEP Amends State Stormwater Rules to Require Green Infrastructure," 11 March 2020. Accessed April 27, 2023. <https://www.njfuture.org/2020/03/11/its-official-njdep-amends-state-stormwater-rules-to-require-green-infrastructure/>.
- 28 State of New Jersey. "Natural and Working Lands Strategy Scoping Document," 2021, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/nj-nwls-scoping-document.pdf>.
- 29 State of New Jersey. "Governor Murphy Announces Comprehensive Set of Initiatives to Combat Climate Change and Power the "Next New Jersey," 15 February 2023, accessed April 27, 2023. <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/approved/20230215b.shtml>.
- 30 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Murphy Administration Announces Plans to Install Electric Vehicle Charging Stations at Six State Parks, Forests," News Releases, 27 September 2022, accessed April 27, 2023, https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2022/22_0038.htm.
- 31 New Jersey RGGI Climate Investments. ArcGIS Dashboard, <https://njdep.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/71e62ee3de2d4a6585bf4766881406c6>.
- 32 Monmouth County Park System. "Solar Energy Projects," <https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/page.aspx?ID=3887>.
- 33 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Murphy Administration Announces Plans to Install Electric Vehicle Charging Stations at Six State Parks, Forests," 27 September 2022. https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2022/22_0038.htm.
- 34 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "New Jersey's Flood Indicator Tool." <https://dep.nj.gov/inland-flood-protection-rule/flood-tool/>.
- 35 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "RGGI Natural Climate Solutions Grants: Blue and Green Carbon Projects," accessed April 27, 2023, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/mitigation/ncs-grant.html>.
- 36 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "What Climate Change Means for New Jersey," EPA 430-F-16-032, August 2016, <https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/climate-change-nj.pdf>.
- 37 Eagleton Institute of Politics and NJ Climate Change Alliance. "Climate Change Attitudes in New Jersey," April 2019. Accessed April 28, 2023. https://njadapt.rutgers.edu/images/Eagleton-NJCCA-NJ-Climate-Poll-report_04-25-19.pdf.
- 38 U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>; U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021, 5-Year Estimates, <https://www.data.census.gov>.
- 39 National Park Service, "Visitor Spending Effects – Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending: Economic Contributions to the New Jersey Economy," <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.
- 40 New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council. *New Jersey Highlands Economic Sustainability Plan*, March 2022, https://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/master/economic-sustainability/final/esp_final_2022.pdf.
- 41 Hunterdon County Route 579 Trail. <https://hunterdon579trail.com/>.
- 42 State of New Jersey. "Governor Murphy Announces \$25 Million Investment into New Jersey's Historic Sites," November 29, 2022, <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562022/approved/20221129a.shtml>.
- 43 Greedy, R.D., Perry, E.E., Goralnik, L. and Fitzpatrick, J., 2022. Nature-Based Placemaking: A Natural Asset Focused Community Vibrancy Roadmap. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership*, 14(1).
- 44 Tourism Economics and the New Jersey Historic Trust, "Heritage Tourism in New Jersey," 2019. [https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/documents/touring/TE%20-%20NJHT%20Designed%20Report%20\(Reduced\)%2012-02-2022.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/documents/touring/TE%20-%20NJHT%20Designed%20Report%20(Reduced)%2012-02-2022.pdf).
- 45 National Parks Conservation Association. "Paterson Great Falls," <https://www.npca.org/parks/paterson-great-falls-national-historical-park>.
- 46 National Park Service. "Paterson Great Falls NHP: Recreation Visits 2016-2022," *Stats Report Viewer*, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20\(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)?Park=PAGR](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=PAGR).
- 47 New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. "New Jersey Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, 2023–2028," <https://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/4sustain/njhpp.htm>. Note: The State also developed a plan specific to Heritage Tourism, created in 2010 (https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/touring/plan/master_plan_table_of_contents.shtml).

- 48 Wolf, Kathleen L., Monika M. Derrien, Linda E. Kruger, and Teresa L. Penbrooke. "Nature, outdoor experiences, and human health." In: Selin, Steven; Cervený, Lee K.; Blahna, Dale J.; Miller, Anna B., eds. 2020. *Igniting research for outdoor recreation: linking science, policy, and action*. General Technical Report PNW-GTR-987. Portland, OR: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 257 p. 987 (2020): 85-100.
- 49 "Atlantic Flyway." <https://www.audubon.org/atlantic-flyway>.
- 50 eBird, "New Jersey: Sightings," <https://ebird.org/region/US-NJ?yr=all&m=&rank=mrec>.
- 51 Saulsbery, Gabrielle, and Gabrielle Saulsbery, "Bird Watching: A Fly-by-night Business Worth More Than \$300M in NJ (Updated)." *NJBIZ*, 17 March 2022, njbiz.com/bird-watching-a-fly-by-night-business-worth-more-than-300m-in-nj.
- 52 Thomas Edison Center at Menlo Park. "Thomas Edison and Menlo Park." 2023. <https://www.menloparkmuseum.org/history>.
- 53 Britannica. "Bell Laboratories," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bell-Laboratories>.
- 54 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. New Jersey State Park Service, "Parks by Location," <https://nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/map.html>.
- 55 The Official Web Site for The State of New Jersey. "NJ Mobile Apps Directory," https://www.nj.gov/nj/home/mobile/mobile_app.html.
- 56 Friends of Monmouth Battlefield. "Annual Reenactment of the Battle of Monmouth." June 2023. <https://www.friendsofmonmouth.org/reenactment.html>.
- 57 New Jersey Geological Survey Information Circular. "Sand Resources for Shore Protection Projects in New Jersey," <https://www.nj.gov/dep/njgs/enviroed/infocirc/sand.pdf>.
- 58 Shukla, Shivani. "Racial Disparities in Access to Public Green Space," *Chicago Policy Review*, 25 Jan. 2023, <https://chicagopolicyreview.org/2020/09/23/racial-disparity-in-access-to-public-green-space/>.
- 59 "Parks and an Equitable Recovery." *Trust for Public Land*, 13 September 2022, <https://www.tpl.org/parks-and-an-equitable-recovery-parkscore-report>.
- 60 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Environmental Justice. "What are Overburdened Communities (OBC)?" <https://dep.nj.gov/ej/communities/>. A "block group" is a statistical division of a U.S. Census tract, generally defined to contain between 600 and 3,000 people. United States Census Bureau. "Glossary." April 2022. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#par_textimage_4.
- 61 Lenox, Steve. "Once Used as Hunting, Fishing Grounds, Native American Body Calls for Preservation of Liberty State Park | Jersey City, NJ News TAPinto." *TAPinto*, 12 October 2020, <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/jersey-city/sections/economic-development/articles/once-used-as-hunting-fishing-grounds-native-american-body-calls-for-preservation-of-liberty-state-park>.
- 62 <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/12/nyregion/morris-pesin-80-civic-watchdog-who-founded-liberty-state-park.html>.
- 63 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Historical Overview of DEP's Environmental Justice Program," <https://nj.gov/dep/ej/docs/historical-overview-njdep-environmental-justice-program.pdf>.
- 64 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Environmental Justice," 20 April 2023, <https://dep.nj.gov/ej/>.
- 65 Executive Order No.23, <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-23.pdf>.
- 66 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Urban Parks Grants: Project Descriptions 2021," *Green Acres Program*, <https://nj.gov/dep/greenacres/pdf/urban-parks-press-package-20211020.pdf>.
- 67 Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, et al. *New Jersey Access to Open Space Report*, prepared for New Jersey Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, <https://njbikeped.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Report-draft-3.0.pdf>.
- 68 Anguelovski, Isabelle, et al. "Green Gentrification in European and North American Cities." *Nature Communications*, Nature Portfolio, 2 July 2022, doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-31572-1.
- 69 Marselle, M.R., Lindley, S.J., Cook, P.A. et al, "Biodiversity and Health in the Urban Environment," *Current Environmental Health Reports*, Springer Science+Business Media, 12 May 2021, 8, 146–156, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-021-00313-9>.
- 70 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Office of Natural Lands Management, "Database of Rare Biodiversity," accessed May 17, 2023, <https://nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/database.html>.
- 71 NatureServe, "The NatureServe Network," accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.natureserve.org/natureserve-network>.
- 72 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of GIS. "Natural Heritage Priority Sites in New Jersey," last updated November, 8, 2021, <https://njogis-newjersey.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/njdep::natural-heritage-priority-sites-in-new-jersey/about>.
- 73 New Jersey Conservation Blueprint. accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.njmap2.com/blueprint/>.
- 74 Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management. "About Us," accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.lhprism.org/about-us>.

- 75 Smith, William. "Conservation Dogs Program." *New York – New Jersey Trail Conference*, October 28, 2022, <https://www.nynjtc.org/content/conservation-dog-program>.
- 76 Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space. "Morris County Park Commission – Protecting Highlands Forests," November 17, 2018, <https://www.fohvos.info/invasive-species-strike-team/morris-county-park-commission-protecting-highlands-forests/>.
- 77 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, "Green Acres Program: Local and Nonprofit Assistance Program," <https://dep.nj.gov/greenacres/local-government-and-nonprofit-assistance/>.
- 78 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Green Acres Program: Local and Nonprofit Assistance Funding Project Descriptions 2023," accessed April 28, 2023, <https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/greenacres/pdf/2023-ga-press-package.pdf>.
- 79 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection NJ Forest Service. "New Jersey State Forest Action Plan," December 2020, <https://nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/forest/njsfap/docs/njsfap-final-12312020.pdf>.
- 80 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife. "New Jersey's Wildlife Action Plan," March 2018, https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/wp-content/uploads/njfw/wap_plan18.pdf.
- 81 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife. "Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey Guidance Document," Version 1.0, April 2019, Accessed April 27, 2023, https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/wp-content/uploads/njfw/chanj_guidance.pdf.
- 82 Galetto, J. Morton and Citizen's United Maurice River. "Light at End of the Tunnel," July 2021, <https://www.cumauriceriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CHANJ-web-version.pdf>.
- 83 The Nature Conservancy. 2022 Year in Review, November 2022, <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-jersey/stories-in-new-jersey/a-year-in-review/>. The Nature Conservancy, "Center for Resilient Conservation Science," <https://crcs.tnc.org/>.
- 84 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of GIS. Land Use/Land Cover of New Jersey 2015, <https://gisdata-NJDEP.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/6f76b90deda34cc98aec255e2defdb45/about>.
- 85 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation: New Jersey," <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/fhwar/publications/2011/fhw11-nj.pdf>.
- 86 Tourism Economics. "Economic Impact of Tourism in New Jersey 2021," Prepared for VisitNJ. accessed April 28, 2023, https://visitnj.org/sites/default/files/Economic_Impact_of_Tourism_in_New_Jersey_2021_Final.pdf.
- 87 New Jersey Dams. "Columbia Lake Dam," accessed May 17, 2023, <https://njdams.org/columbia-lake-dam/>.
- 88 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. "Removal of Columbia Lake Dam in Warren County to restore large portion of Paulins Kill to free-flowing conditions, benefitting migratory fish and public recreation," July 12, 2018, https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2018/18_0061.htm.
- 89 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife. "Columbia Lake Dam Removal Project," accessed May 17, 2023, <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/columbia-lake-dam-removal-project/>.
- 90 The Nature Conservancy. "Stories in New Jersey: Removing Dams and Reconnecting Rivers," accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-jersey/stories-in-new-jersey/the-columbia-lake-dam/>.



