



Assessment and Analysis of Trail Impact and Usage 2018

Introduction:

Bella Vista is creating a trail network that will establish safe, continuous corridors throughout the community that promote outdoor recreation, facilitate non-motorized transportation and highlight the natural and cultural resources of the community. The trail network will complement Bella Vista's existing outdoor recreation facilities and serve to make Bella Vista an even greater place to live¹.

Project Summary:

A trail impact and usage study was conducted by a University of Arkansas doctoral student within the Department of Health and Human Performance over a two-week period during spring 2018. Data was obtained from a digital survey, sent out by the City of Bella Vista via social media sites. The Qualtrics digital survey administered was a modified version of the Rails to Trails Rural Non-Motorized Trail Survey (2015). Survey responses were anonymous. Margin of error was 5%, with a 95% confidence level.

The survey determined the following:

1. Characteristics of trail users. These included where the trail users live, their demographics and usage patterns (type of activity, length of activity, frequency of activity), and their perceptions of the trails in terms of safety, cleanliness and maintenance.
2. Which sections of the trail are used most frequently, amenities desired by trail users, and primary reasons for utilizing the trail (recreation, exercise, nature study, fishing, etc.).
3. The spending patterns of trail users, amount spent on outdoor goods, meals, and lodging in conjunction with their trail activities, and where overnight visitors stay.

According to the Center for Disease Control² and the World Health Organization³, having access to places for physical activity, such as parks and trails, encourages community residents to participate in physical activity and do so more often. This study further reinforces the benefits put forth by the National Trails Training Partnership⁴ that trails can bring to a community, making the community more livable, improving the economy through tourism and civic involvement, preserving and restoring open space, and providing opportunities for physical activity to improve fitness and mental health.

Analysis:

Analysis of user groups in the survey showed that 30% of trail users lived within the city limits of Bella Vista and within a six-mile radius of the trail. Results from the survey looking at frequency of trail use showed 73% of trail users living in Bella Vista reported using the trail regularly for 30 minutes to 2 hours each time. Eighty percent of those using the trail three to five times a week were from Bella Vista zip codes.

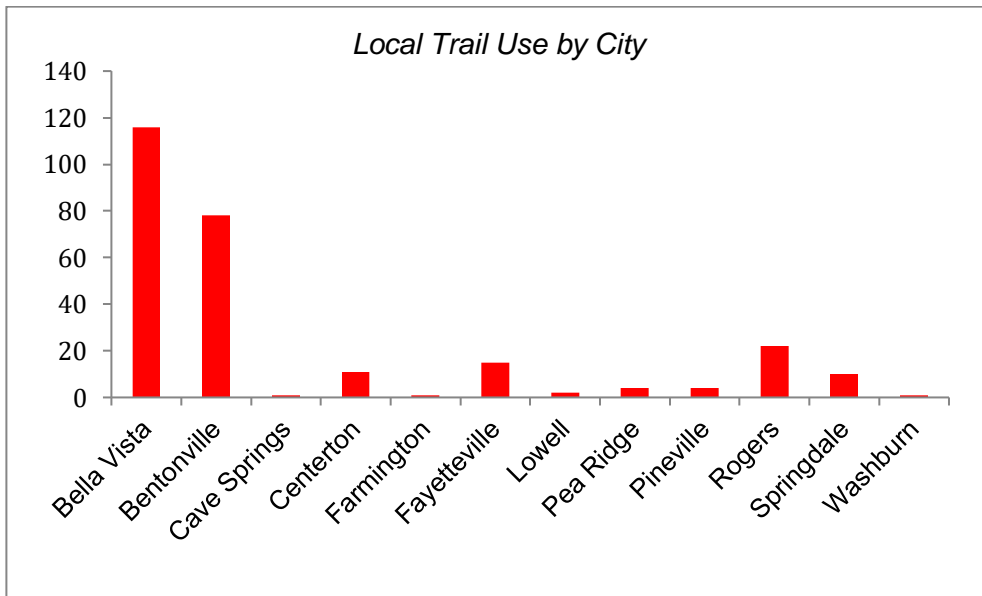
The primary age group of 36-45 represented 36% of users. This age group also most frequently reported using the trails with family or children. The most common activity reported was mountain biking, and most common use was recreation. Thirty-four percent of users also reported watching birds and wildlife while using the trails.

Trails in a local community offer many opportunities for physical activity on a recreational level. Ease of access at trailheads and road crossings reduce barriers for families, and also reduce vehicle usage. Most trail users reported feeling safe and secure on the trails and that trails are well-maintained and clean. Future amenities suggested, such as restroom areas, will also help reduce barriers to access, especially among families with young children.

Use of the trails was shown to have influenced purchases of outdoor-related goods, with users spending an average of \$2,715.14 in the past year. For those whose visit included an overnight stay, spending was split between the city and neighboring towns: 23% camped locally, 83% ate locally, and 47% shopped for food locally. Spending on overnight accommodations and food was an average of \$217 per night.

User Demographics:

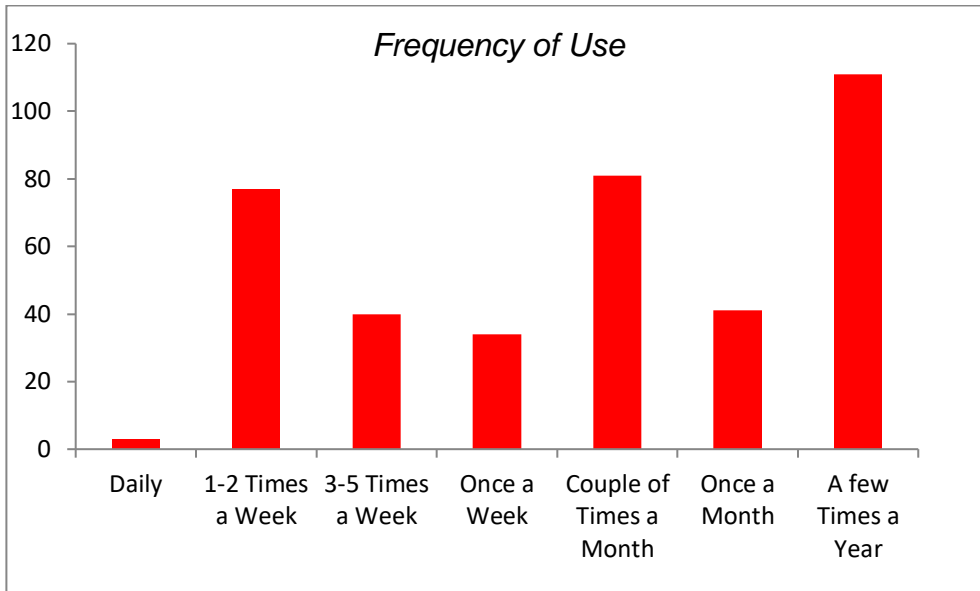
This study reported 387 trail users from 128 zip codes within 19 states. Seventy-three percent of trail users were from Arkansas. Bella Vista and Bentonville are shown to have the highest number of residents who use the trails in Bella Vista.



Usage patterns and activity types:

Twenty-seven percent of trail users reported using the trails a few times a year, which corresponds with out-of-town zip codes. These users also reported spending money on overnight stays.

For local usage, of those reporting frequencies of one to two times a week, 42% live in Bella Vista. Of those reporting frequencies of three to five times a week, 80% live in Bella Vista.



Higher frequency of use was seen in those living closer to the trails. The primary activity (75%) was reported as mountain biking, with 43% of users also using the trails for walking/running. Primary trail use (56%) was reported as recreational.

The Back 40 Loop (85%) and Blowing Springs (79%) trails had the highest user counts, with a significant relationship to users with out-of-town zip codes. Users from out of town accessed the main trails – The Back 40 Loop and Blowing Springs – more compared to users residing in Bella Vista. Blowing Springs trailhead had significantly more usage by out-of-town trail users than Bella Vista residents.

User perceptions:

Perceptions of cleanliness and maintenance were reported as excellent by 75% of trail users, and perceptions of safety and security were reported as excellent by 65% of users.

Future trail development:

Restroom areas were highest on the list of reported suggestions (58%), followed by a brew pub (50%).

Source 1. *Bella Vista Trail and Greenway Master Plan (2015)*

https://www.bellavistaar.gov/document_center/Businesses/Economic%20development/Trails/BV-Trail-and-Greenway-Master-Plan.pdf

Source 2. *Center for Disease Control Physical Activity: Community Strategies*

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/community-strategies/index.htm>

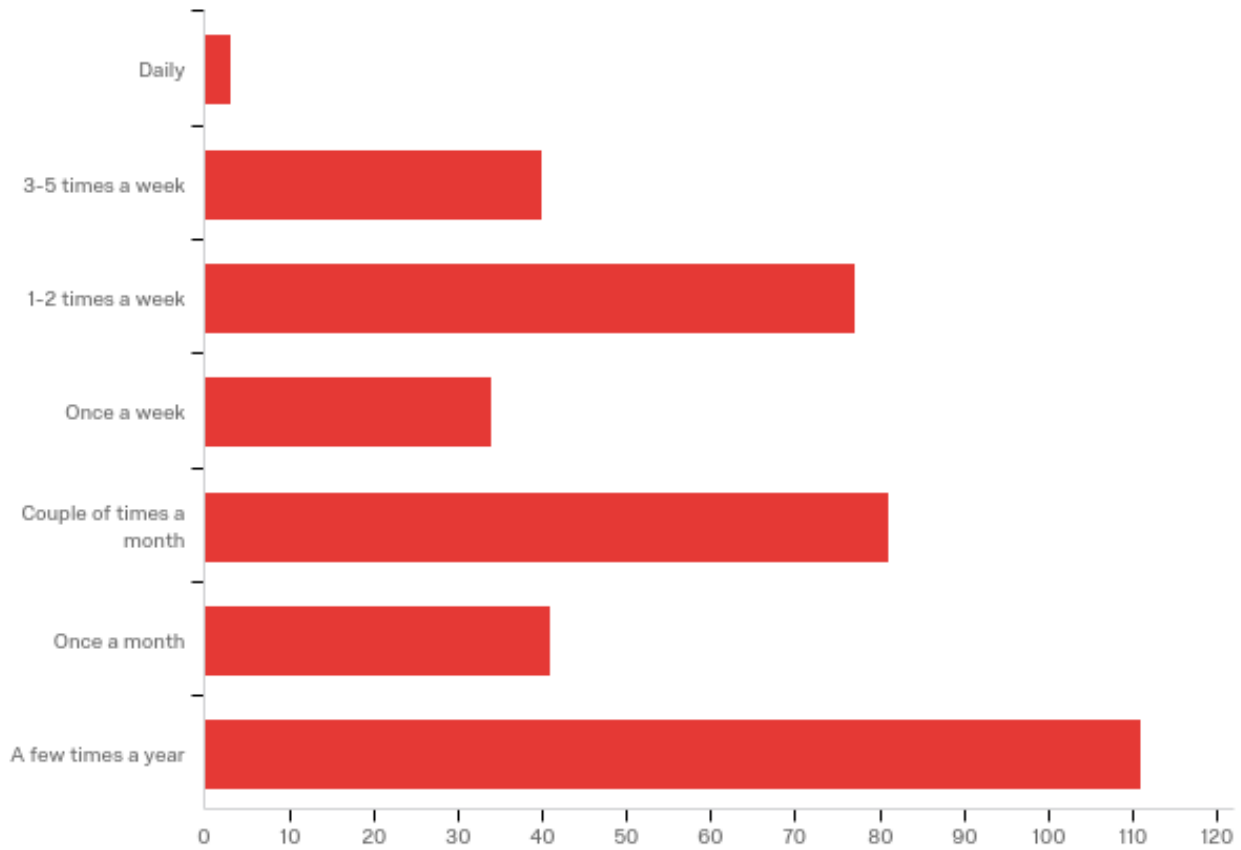
Source 3. *World Health Organization Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (2018-2030)*

<http://www.who.int/ncds/prevention/physical-activity/gappa/action-plan>

Source 4. *American Trails, National Trails Training Partnership (2018)*

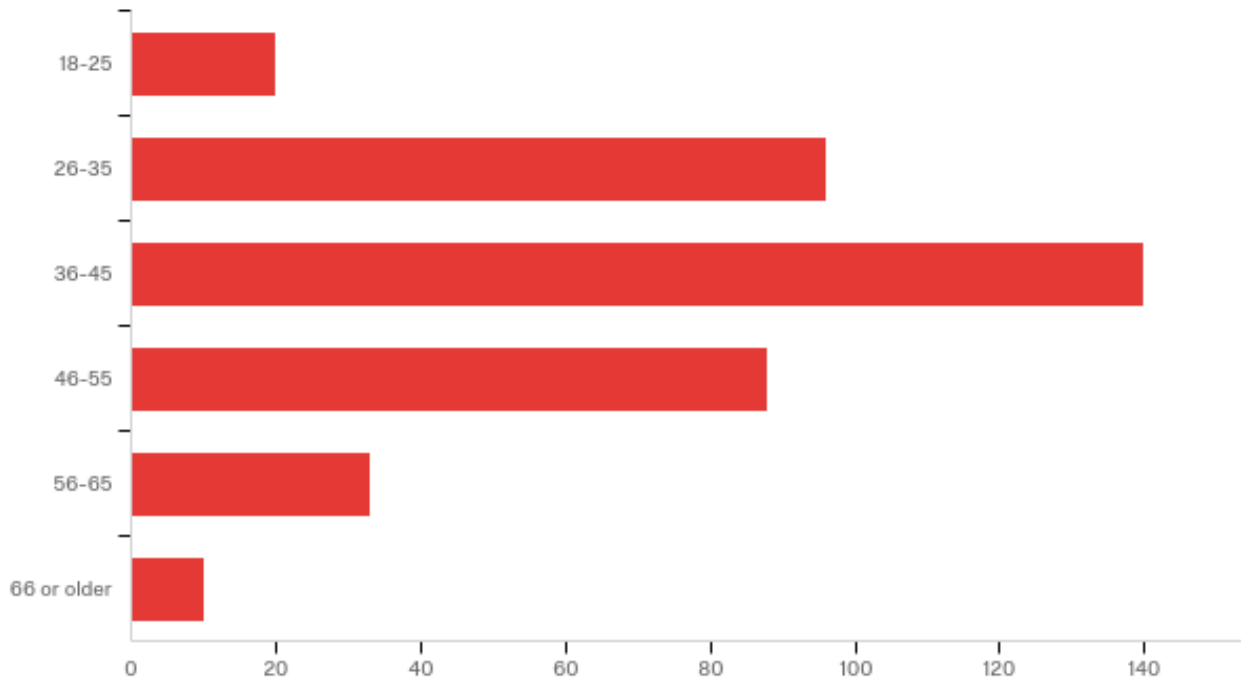
<https://www.americantrails.org/learn/http>

Q2 - How often on average do you use Back 40 or Blowing Springs Trails?



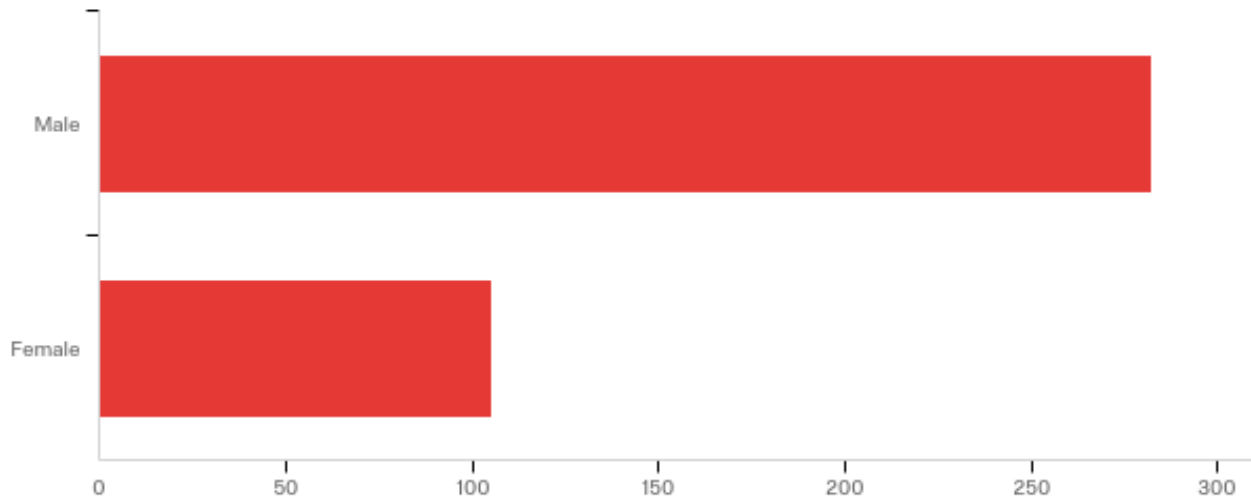
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Daily	0.78%	3
2	3-5 times a week	10.34%	40
3	1-2 times a week	19.90%	77
4	Once a week	8.79%	34
5	Couple of times a month	20.93%	81
6	Once a month	10.59%	41
7	A few times a year	28.68%	111

Q3 - Please identify your age group



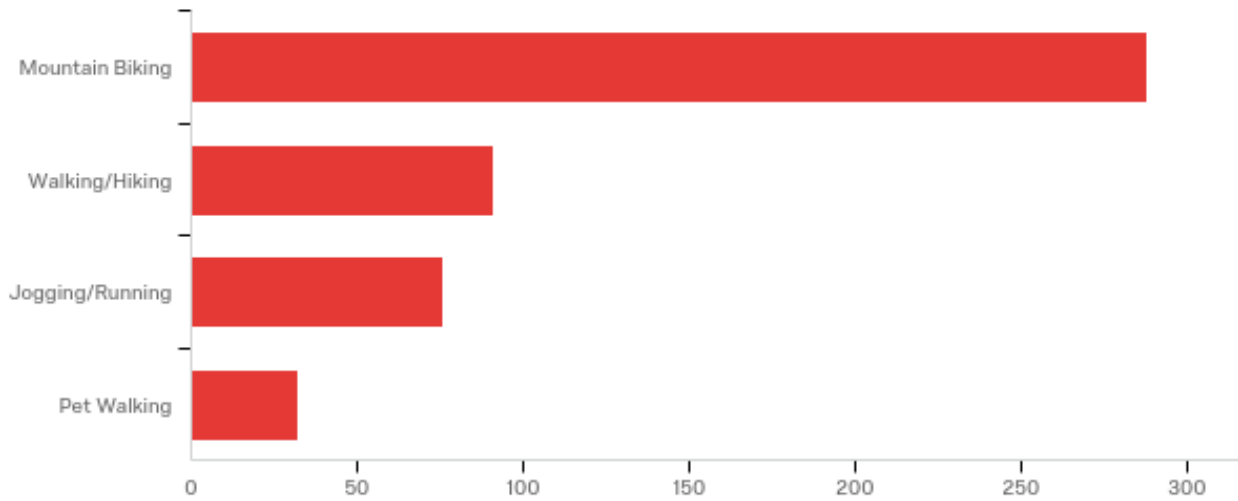
#	Answer	%	Count
1	18-25	5.17%	20
2	26-35	24.81%	96
3	36-45	36.18%	140
4	46-55	22.74%	88
5	56-65	8.53%	33
6	66 or older	2.58%	10

Q4 - What is your gender?



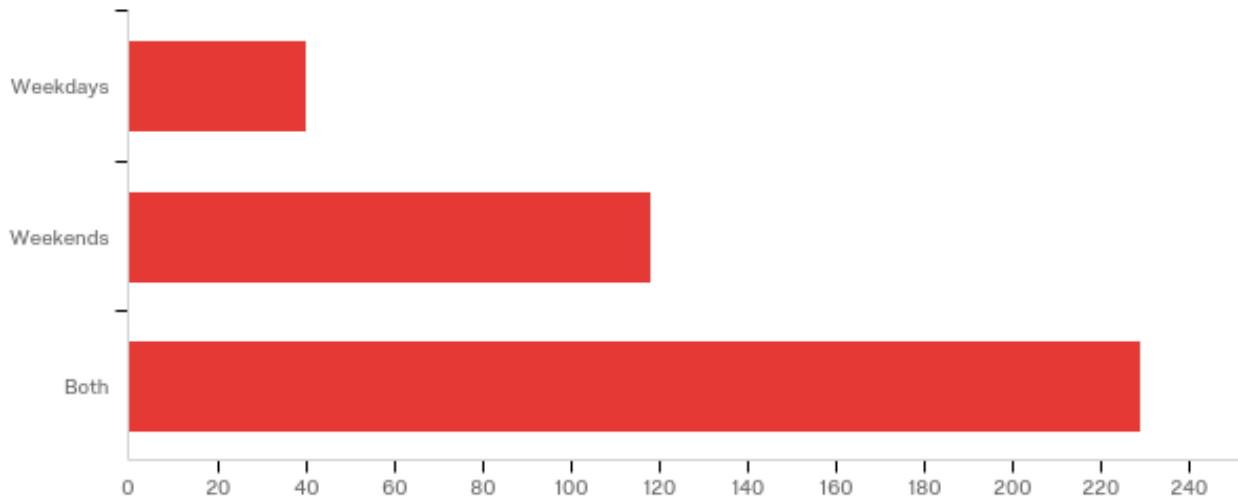
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	72.87%	282
2	Female	27.13%	105

Q5 - What is your primary activity on the trail? (Select all that apply)



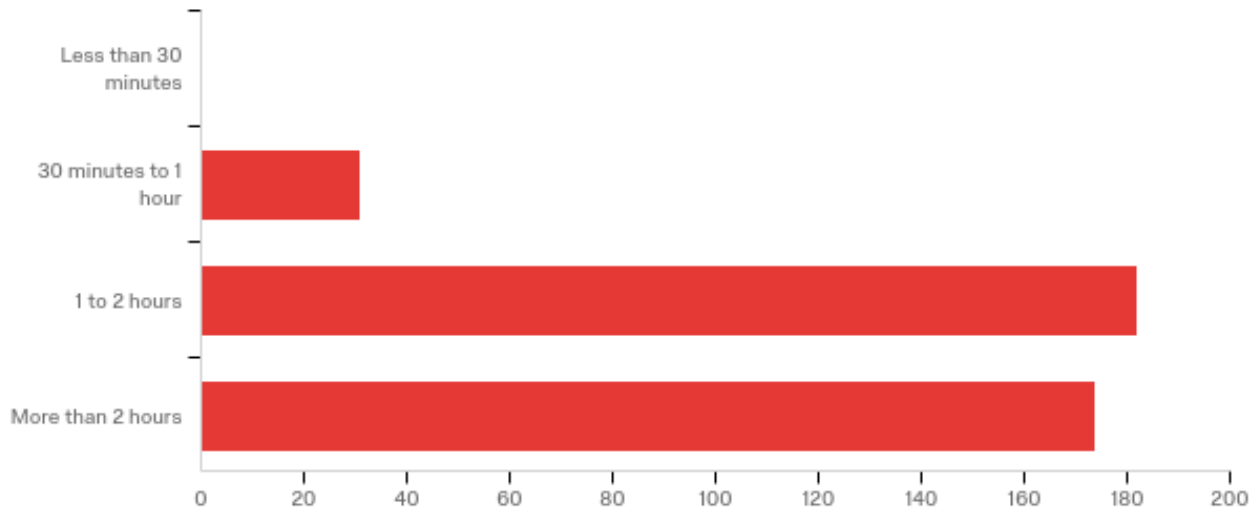
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Mountain Biking	74.42%	288
2	Walking/Hiking	23.51%	91
3	Jogging/Running	19.64%	76
4	Pet Walking	8.27%	32

Q6 - Generally, when do you use the trails?



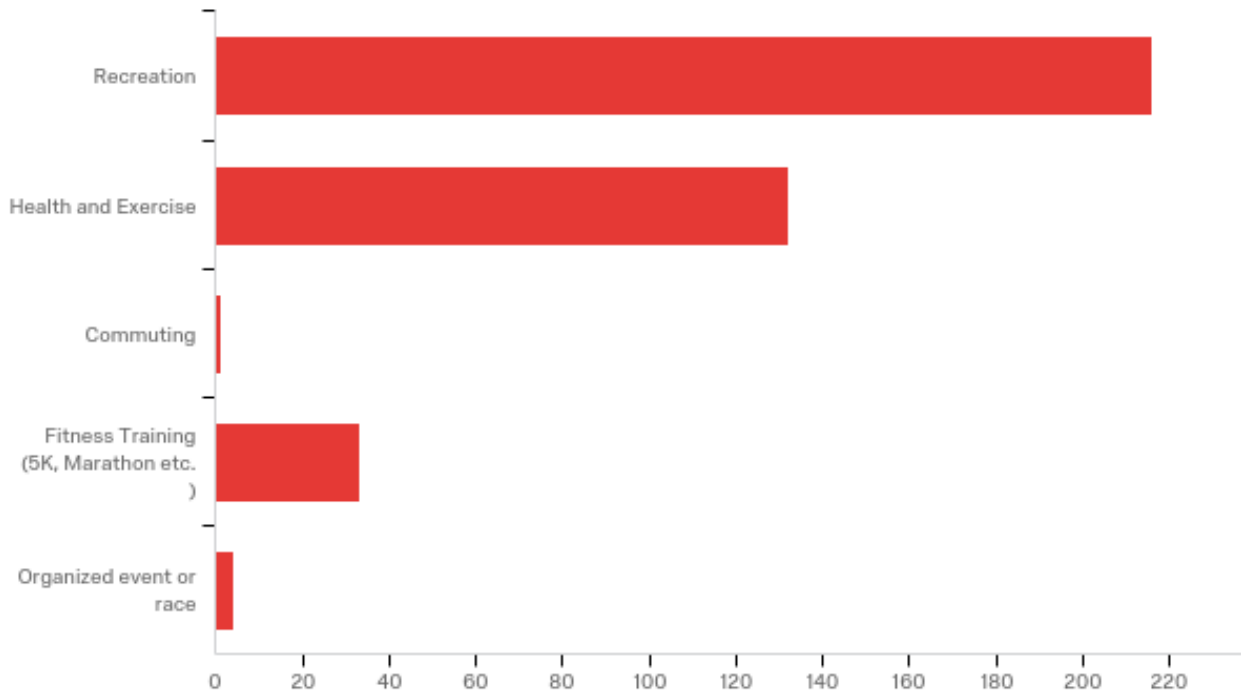
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Weekdays	10.34%	40
2	Weekends	30.49%	118
3	Both	59.17%	229

Q7 - How much time do you generally spend on the trails each visit?



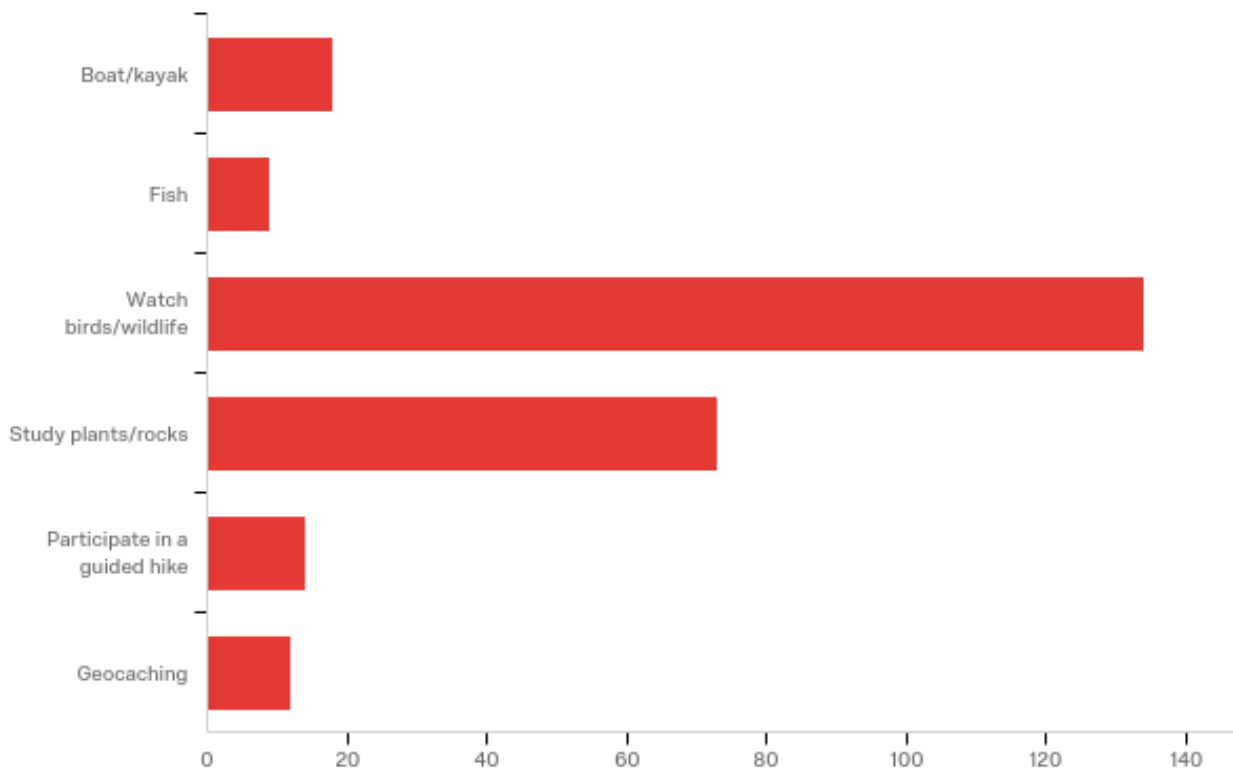
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Less than 30 minutes	0.00%	0
2	30 minutes to 1 hour	8.01%	31
3	1 to 2 hours	47.03%	182
4	More than 2 hours	44.96%	174

Q8 - What is your primary use of the trail?



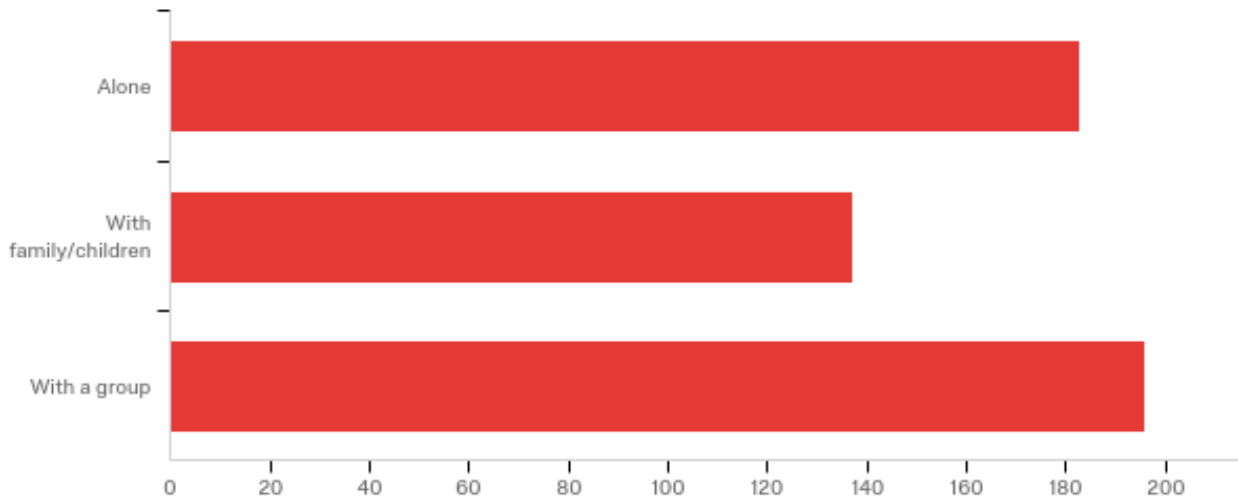
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Recreation	55.96%	216
2	Health and Exercise	34.20%	132
3	Commuting	0.26%	1
4	Fitness Training (5K, Marathon etc.)	8.55%	33
5	Organized event or race	1.04%	4

Q9 - During your trail visits, do you... (select all that apply)



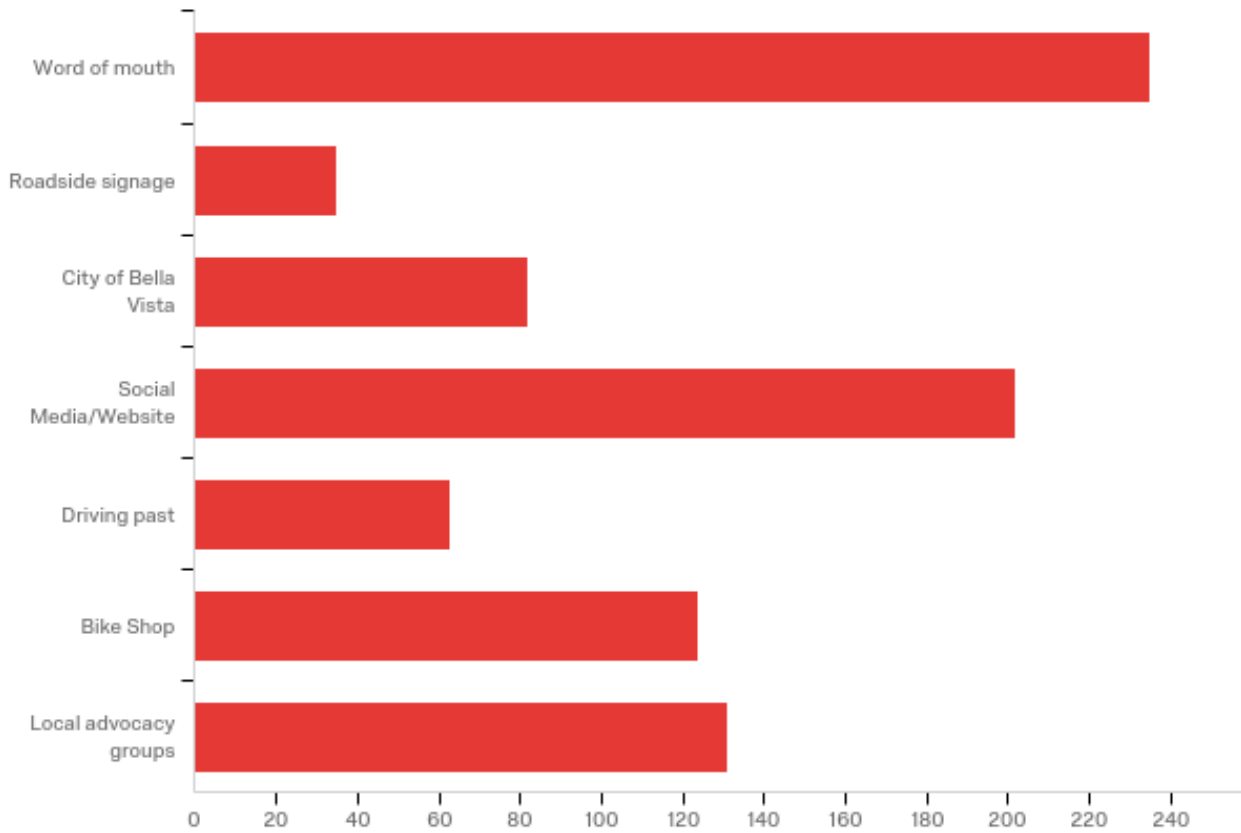
#	Answer	%	Count
2	Fish	3.46%	9
6	Geocaching	4.62%	12
5	Participate in a guided hike	5.38%	14
1	Boat/kayak	6.92%	18
4	Study plants/rocks	28.08%	73
3	Watch birds/wildlife	51.54%	134

Q10 - Generally, when you visit the trail are you ... (select all that apply)



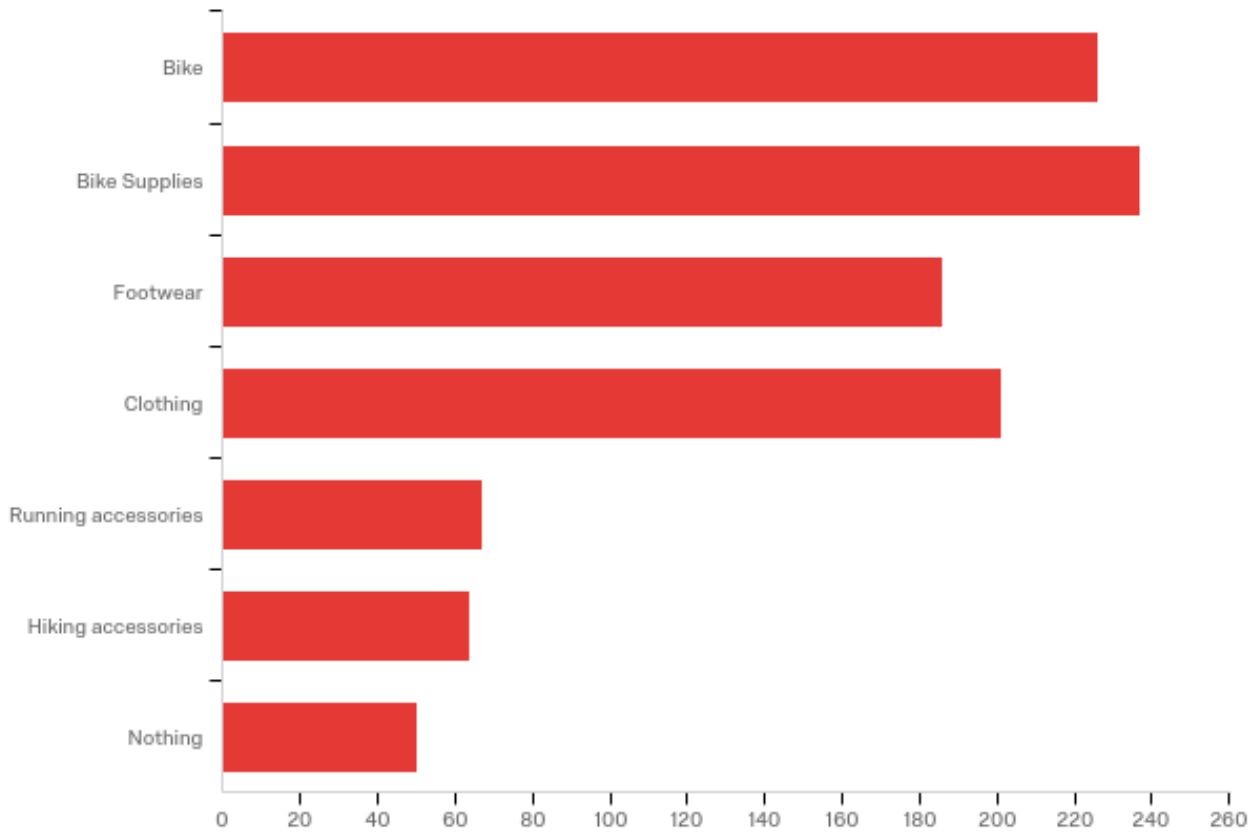
#	Answer	%	Count
3	With a group	50.78%	196
1	Alone	47.41%	183
2	With family/children	35.49%	137

Q11 - How did you find out about the trail? (select all that apply)



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Word of mouth	60.88%	235
4	Social Media/Website	52.33%	202
7	Local advocacy groups	33.94%	131
6	Bike Shop	32.12%	124
3	City of Bella Vista	21.24%	82
5	Driving past	16.32%	63
2	Roadside signage	9.07%	35

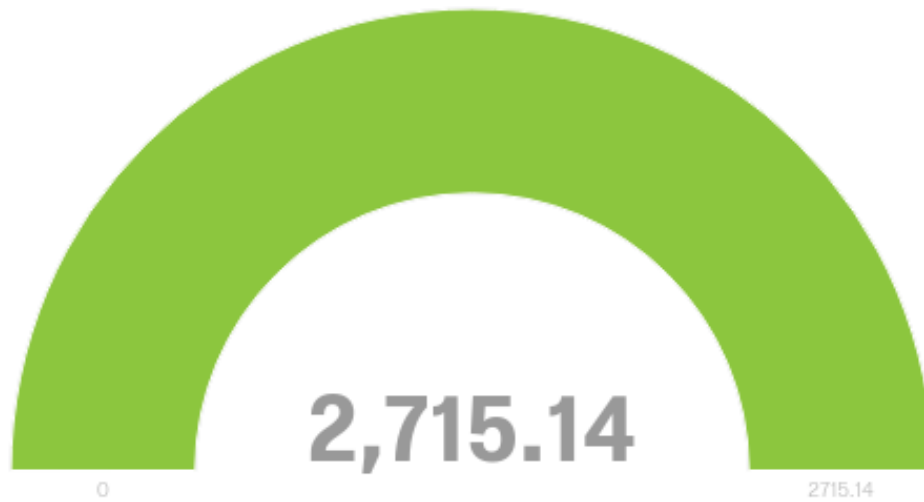
Q12 - Has your use of the trail influenced your purchase of... (select all that apply)



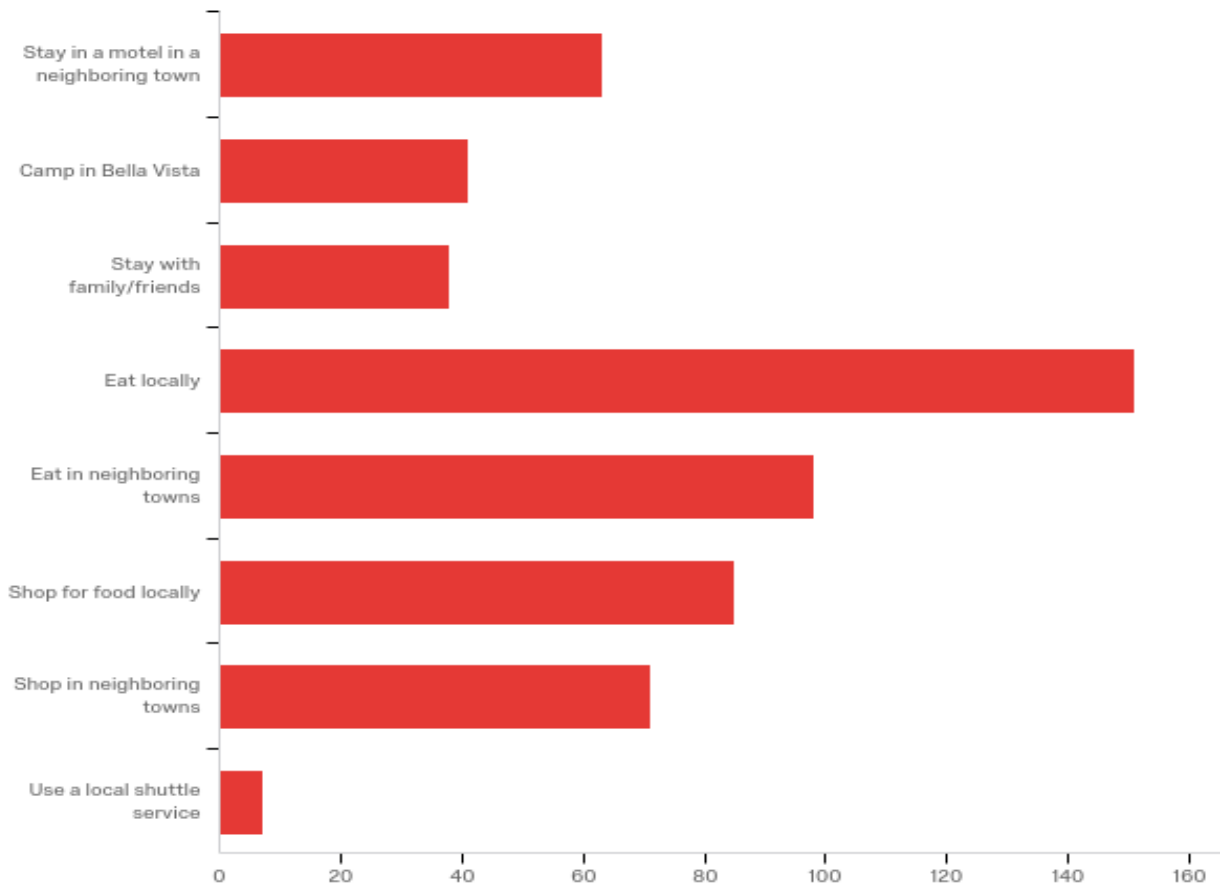
#	Answer	%	Count
2	Bike Supplies	61.56%	237
1	Bike	58.70%	226
4	Clothing	52.21%	201
3	Footwear	48.31%	186
5	Running accessories	17.40%	67
6	Hiking accessories	16.62%	64
7	Nothing	12.99%	50

Q13 - Approximately how much did you spend on the above items in the past year?

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Count
1	Approximately how much did you spend on the above items in the past year?	0.00	25000.00	2715.14	3329.11	345



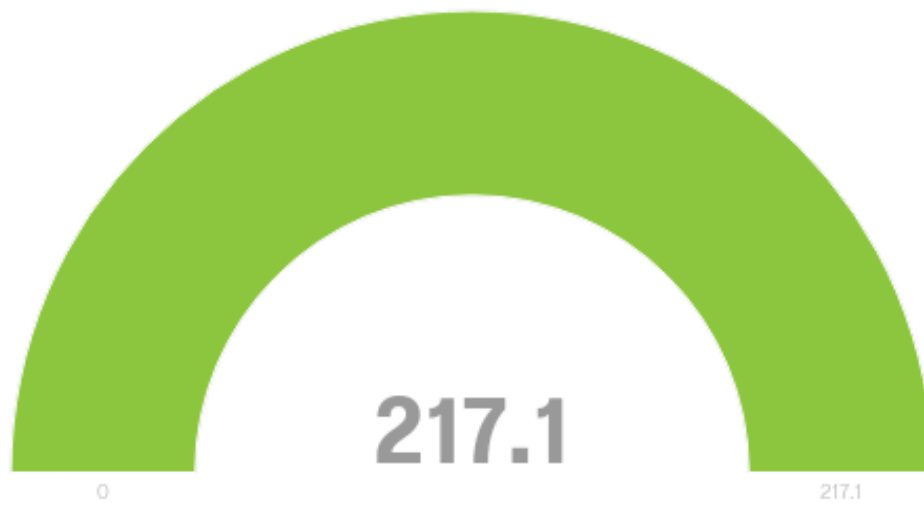
Q14 - If your visit to the trail includes an overnight stay, do you...



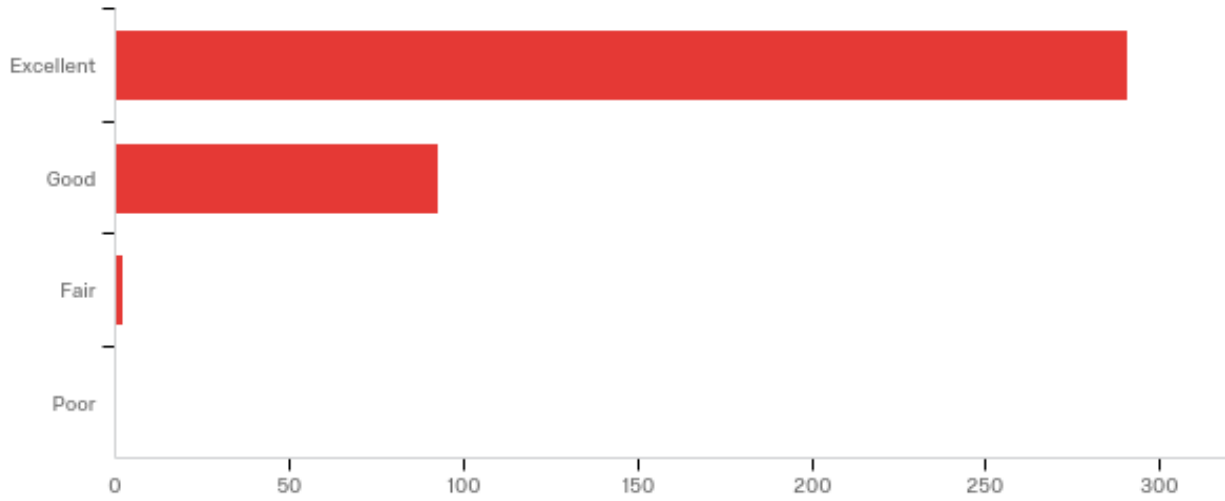
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Stay in a motel in a neighboring town	34.62%	63
2	Camp in Bella Vista	22.53%	41
3	Stay with family/friends	20.88%	38
4	Eat locally	82.97%	151
5	Eat in neighboring towns	53.85%	98
6	Shop for food locally	46.70%	85
7	Shop in neighboring towns	39.01%	71
8	Use a local shuttle service	3.85%	7

Q15 - Approximately how much do you spend on overnight accommodations and food per visit?

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Count
1	Approximately how much do you spend on overnight accommodations and food per visit?	0.00	3500.00	217.10	362.86	184

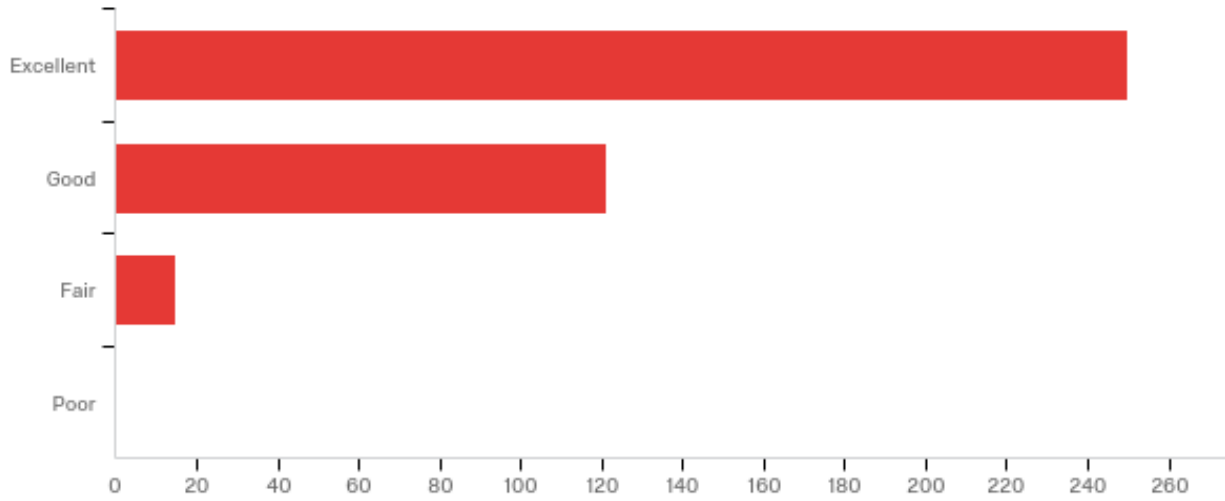


Q16 - What is your opinion of the maintenance, and cleanliness of the trail?



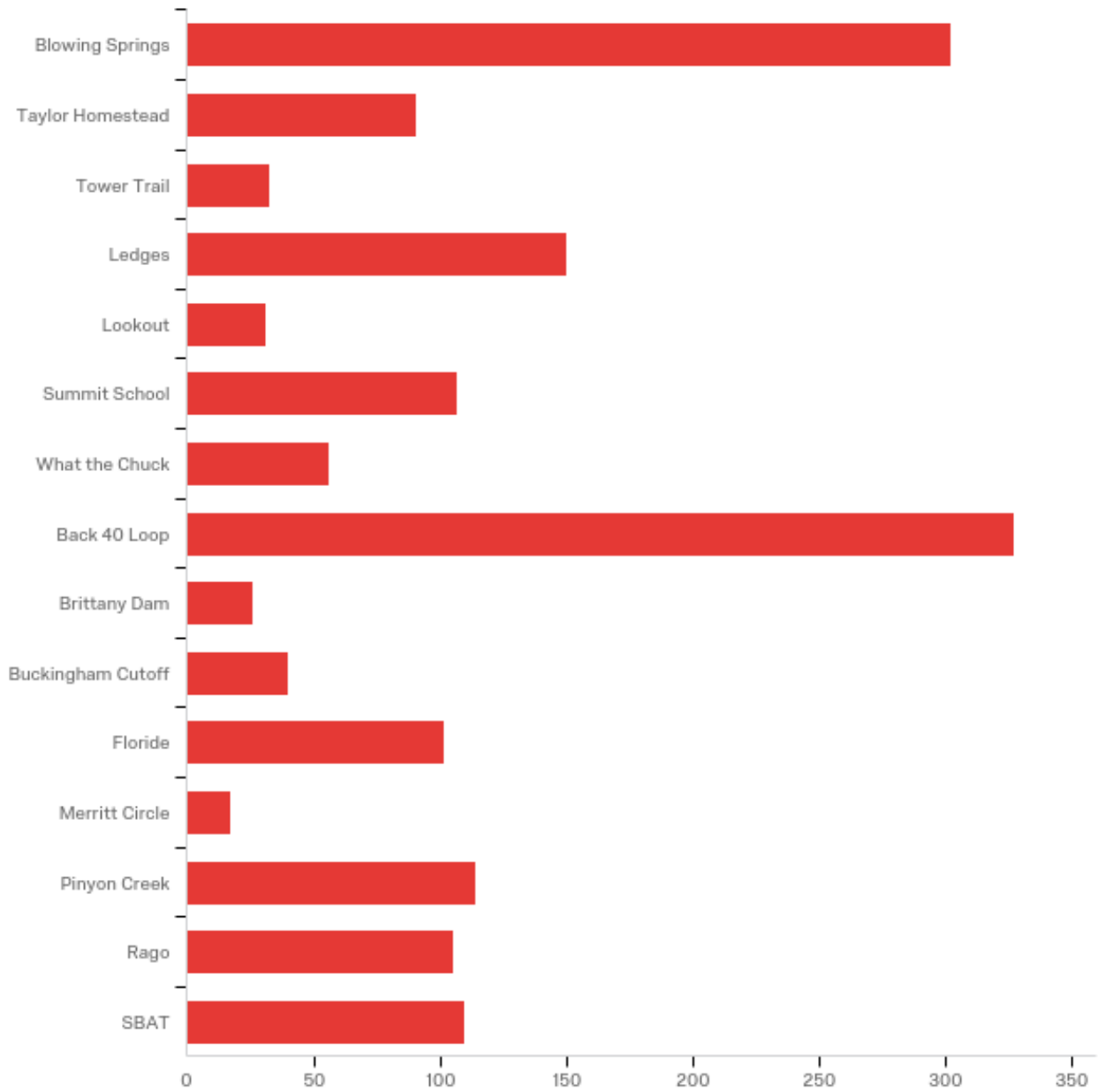
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Excellent	75.39%	291
2	Good	24.09%	93
3	Fair	0.52%	2
4	Poor	0.00%	0

Q17 - What is your opinion of the safety and security of the trail?



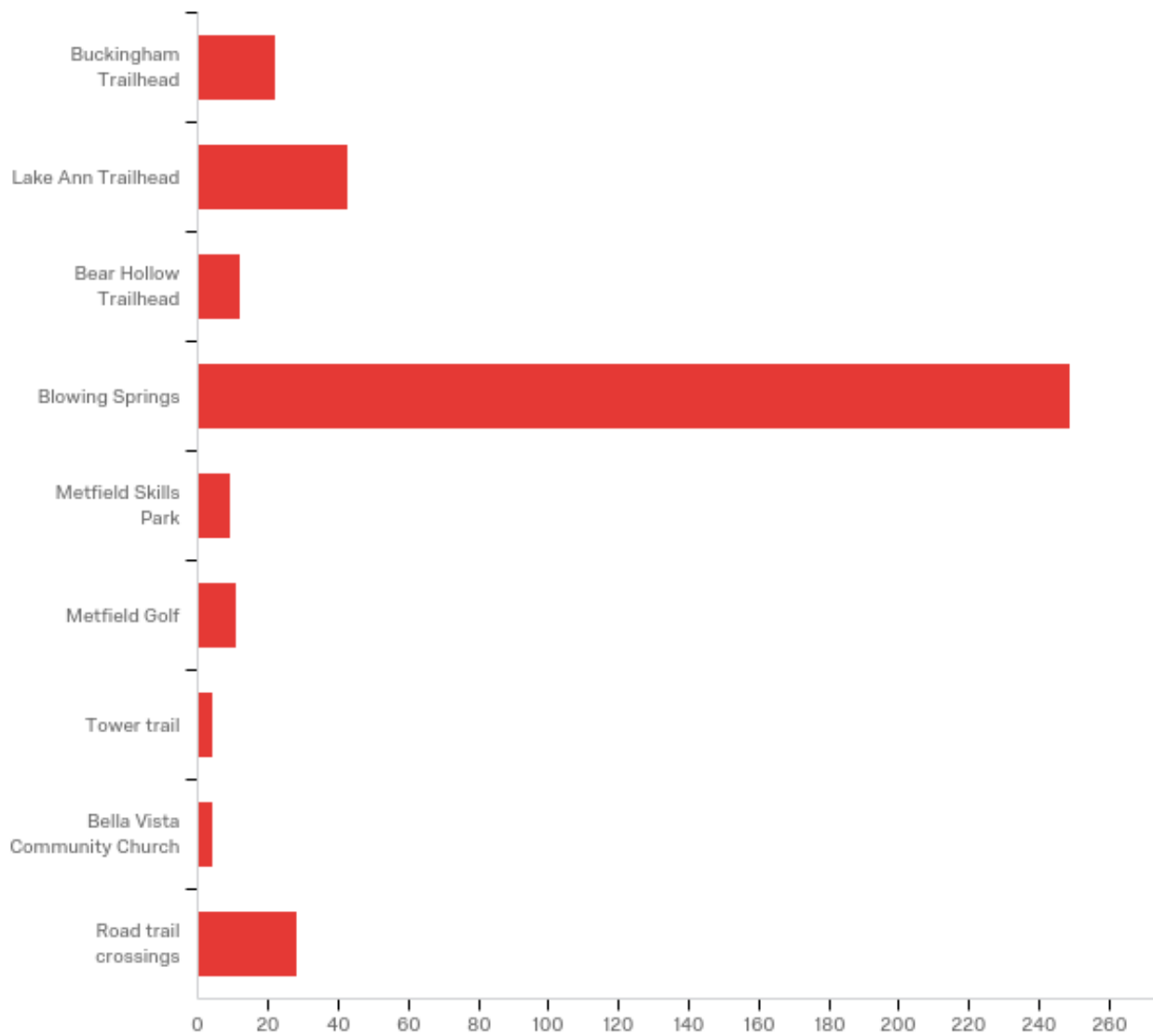
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Excellent	64.77%	250
2	Good	31.35%	121
3	Fair	3.89%	15
4	Poor	0.00%	0

Q18 - Which sections of the trail do you use most often?



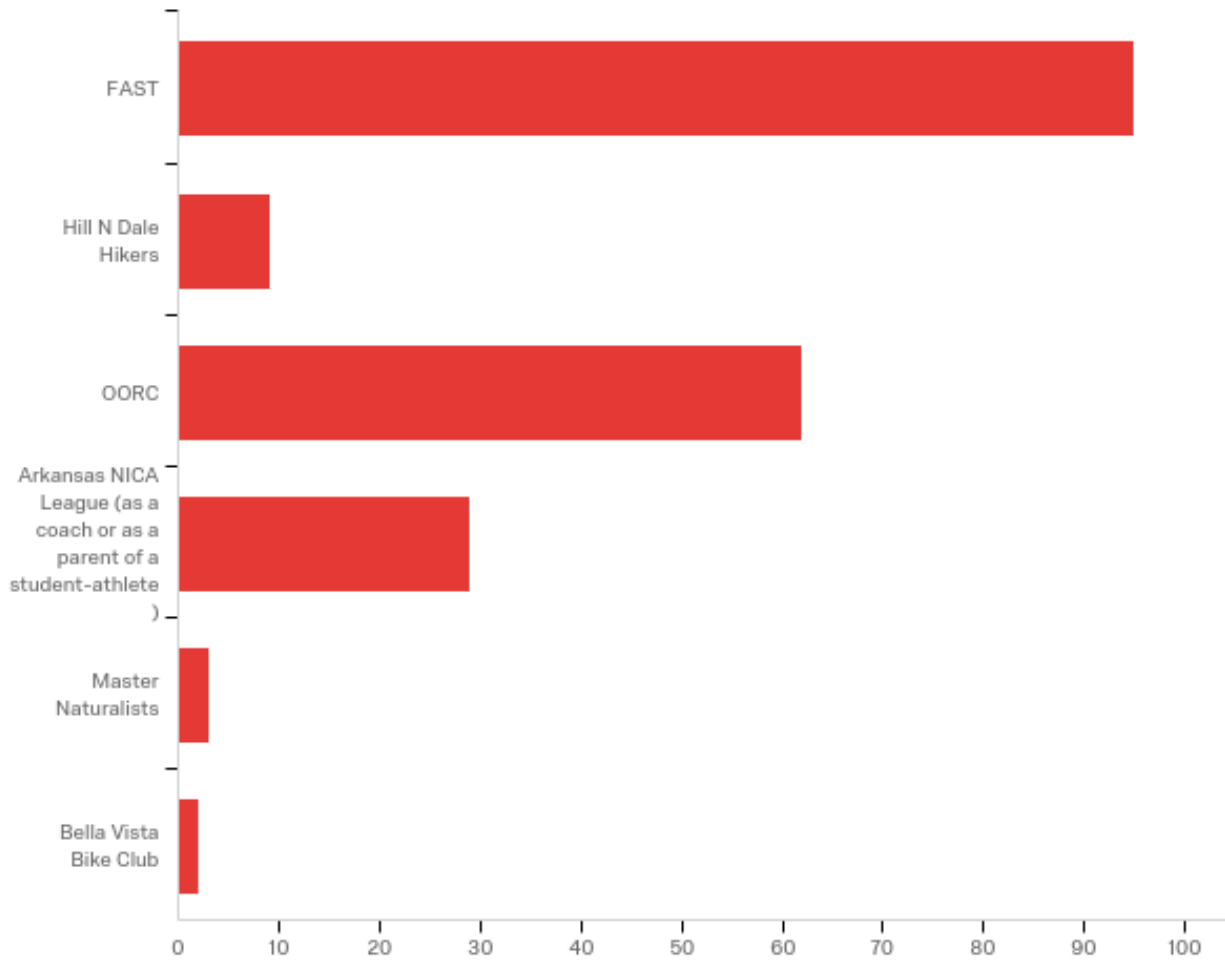
#	Answer	%	Count
8	Back 40 Loop	85.16%	327
1	Blowing Springs	78.65%	302
4	Ledges	39.06%	150
13	Pinyon Creek	29.69%	114
15	SBAT	28.65%	110
6	Summit School	27.86%	107
14	Rago	27.34%	105
11	Floride	26.56%	102
2	Taylor Homestead	23.70%	91
7	What the Chuck	14.58%	56
10	Buckingham Cutoff	10.42%	40
3	Tower Trail	8.59%	33
5	Lookout	8.07%	31
9	Brittany Dam	6.77%	26
12	Merritt Circle	4.43%	17

Q19 - Which access point do you generally use?



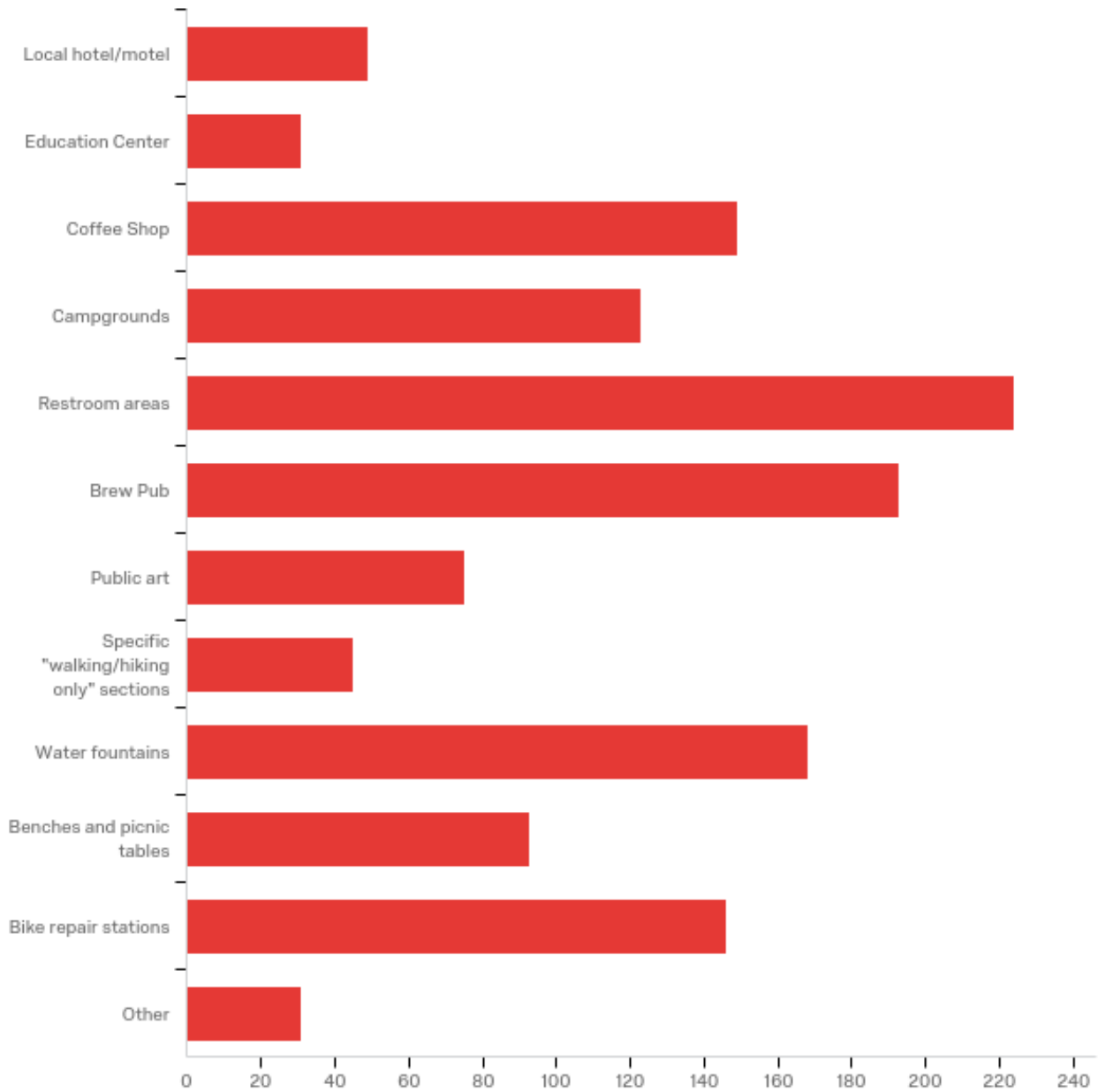
#	Answer	%	Count
4	Blowing Springs	65.18%	249
2	Lake Ann Trailhead	11.26%	43
9	Road trail crossings	7.33%	28
1	Buckingham Trailhead	5.76%	22
3	Bear Hollow Trailhead	3.14%	12
6	Metfield Golf	2.88%	11
5	Metfield Skills Park	2.36%	9
7	Tower trail	1.05%	4
8	Bella Vista Community Church	1.05%	4

Q20 - Are you a member of any of these local groups?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	FAST	64.63%	95
3	OORC	42.18%	62
4	Arkansas NICA League (as a coach or as a parent of a student-athlete)	19.73%	29
2	Hill N Dale Hikers	6.12%	9
5	Master Naturalists	2.04%	3
6	Bella Vista Bike Club	1.36%	2

Q21 - Are there any future amenities you would like to see as users of these trails?



#	Answer	%	Count
8	Restroom areas	62.75%	224
9	Brew Pub	54.06%	193
12	Water fountains	47.06%	168
6	Coffee Shop	41.74%	149
3	Bike repair stations	40.90%	146
7	Campgrounds	34.45%	123
2	Benches and picnic tables	26.05%	93
10	Public art	21.01%	75
1	Local hotel/motel	13.73%	49
11	Specific "walking/hiking only" sections	12.61%	45
5	Education Center	8.68%	31
4	Other	8.68%	31