

## Memorandum

To: Interested Parties  
 From: Will Klein, Director of Parks Research, Trust for Public Land  
 Date: May 20, 2026  
 Re: National Survey on Outdoor Public Spaces

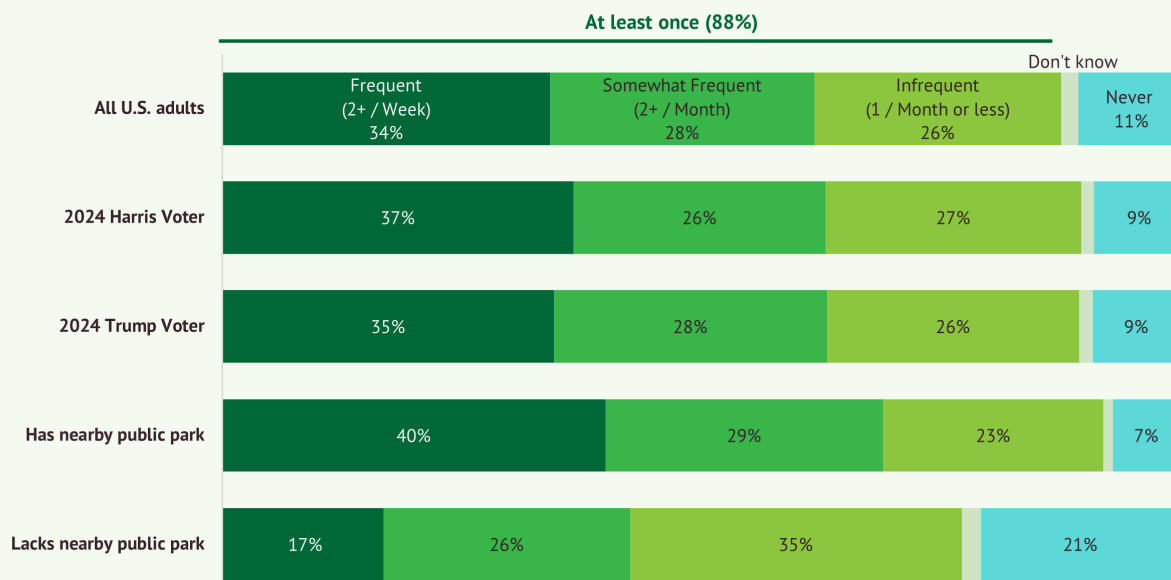
Trust for Public Land (TPL) commissioned a survey conducted by YouGov of 4,000 Americans to understand public opinions and behavior about local parks and other outdoor public spaces such as trails, open-access schoolyards, and natural areas.

Our survey shows there remains near-unanimous support for affordable and local outdoor recreation. This support is widespread across demographic and ideological lines. The survey's findings suggest a reason for this – overwhelming majorities of U.S. adults value and use local parks and green spaces, with a majority wanting to spend more time outdoors in 2026. The findings also revealed the versatility of local parks and green spaces. Over the past year, public outdoor spaces were the most common type of place in America where people exercised. Additionally, they were the most popular 'third place' (somewhere other than work or home) for regular social gathering, narrowly beating out restaurants, bars, and cafes.

### 88% of Americans visited local parks and other outdoor public spaces.

About nine-in-ten Americans visited a local park, natural area, open-access schoolyard or trail in the past year. A third of U.S. adults reported spending at least 20 minutes in nature and other green spaces multiple days per week, including 37 percent of 2024 Harris voters and 35 percent of 2024 Trump voters. A growing body of research finds that 20 minutes a day can significantly improve health<sup>1</sup>. Adults without a nearby public park or outdoor space were half as likely to meet this goal (17 vs. 40 percent) and were three times as likely to have never spent time in nature as those who live near a public park (21 vs. 7 percent).

*During the past 12 months, how often did you spend meaningful time (20 minutes or more) in outdoor public spaces, such as parks, natural areas, trails, or open-access schoolyards?*



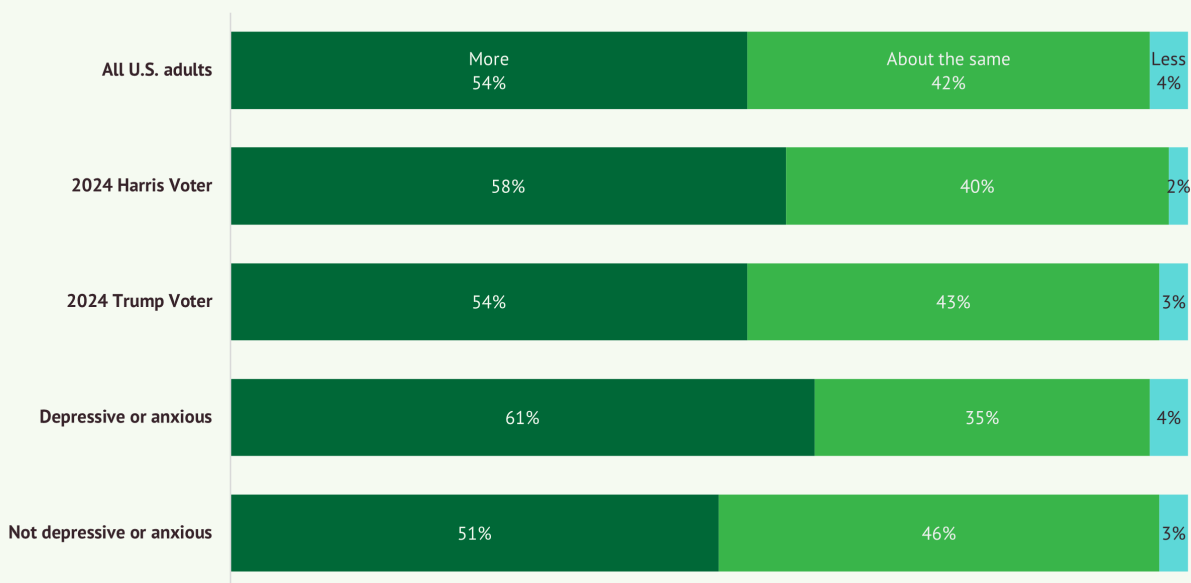
Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026

Nearby park: Is there at least one outdoor public space, such as a park, natural area, trail, or schoolyard that is open outside of school hours, within a 10-minute walk of your home?

Frequent: "Basically every day", "A few times a week"; Somewhat Frequent: "A few times a month"; Infrequent: "Once a month", "Less than once per month"

**More than half of Americans want to spend more time in parks and outdoor public spaces in 2026.** 54 percent of U.S. adults, including 58 percent of 2024 Harris Voters and 54 percent of 2024 Trump voters, reported wanting to spend more time in outdoor public places this year. 42 percent of U.S. adults are satisfied with their outdoor time, while only 4 percent of U.S. adults wanted to spend less time outdoors. This interest was particularly notable among adults who self-reported ever having had a depressive or anxiety disorder, with 61 percent wanting to spend more time outdoors this year compared to only 35 percent ‘about the same’ and 4 percent less.

*Would you like to spend more, less, or about the same amount of time in outdoor public places this year?*



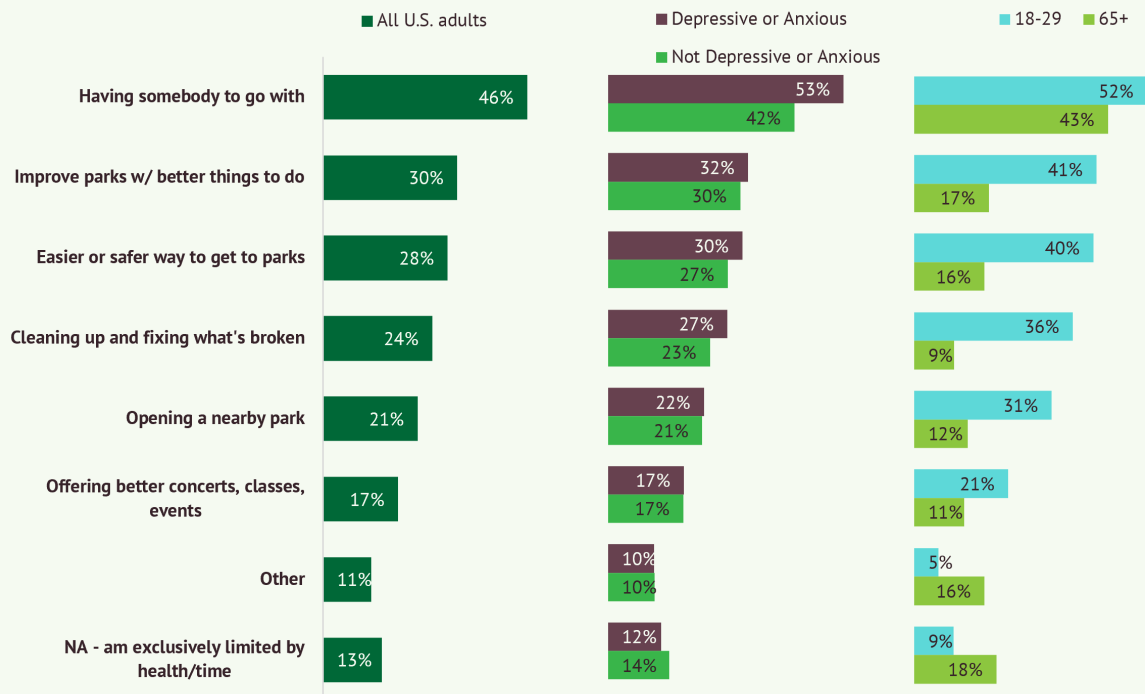
Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026

**Depressive or anxious:** Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you had a depressive or anxiety disorder (including major depression, dysthymia, minor depression, acute stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, phobia, or panic disorder)?

### The biggest barrier to spending more time outside? Having somebody to go with.

Of respondents who want to spend more time outdoors in the coming year, a near-majority of U.S. adults (46 percent) – and a majority of both young people and those self-reporting ever having anxiety or depression – reported that ‘having somebody to go with’ would motivate them to do so. Improving the quality of existing parks and creating safer routes to those parks rounded out the top three.

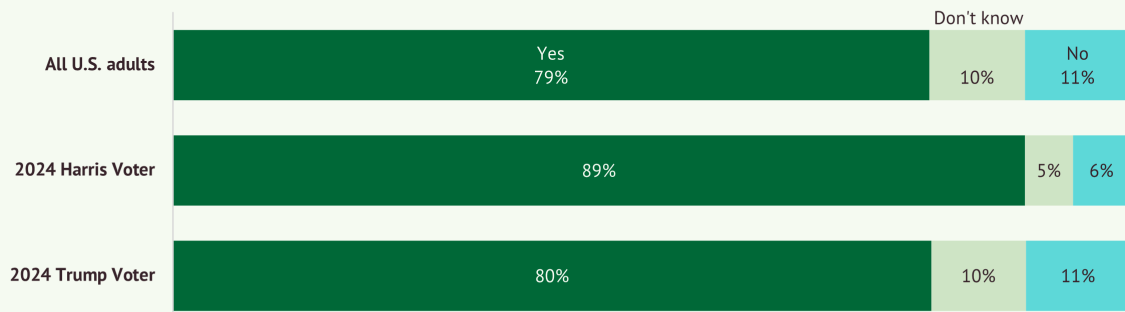
What would need to change in order for you to spend more time in outdoor public spaces? Check all that apply.



Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026; 2,146 adults (2,221 unweighted) who want more time outside  
**Depressive or anxious:** Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you had a depressive or anxiety disorder (including major depression, dysthymia, minor depression, acute stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, phobia, or panic disorder)?

**By an 8:1 margin, Americans agree local parks are part of their community's essential infrastructure.** 79 percent of U.S. adults agree that local parks – including open-access schoolyards, trails, and natural areas – are part of their community essential infrastructure. A super-majority of both 2024 Harris (89 percent) and Trump (80 percent) voters agreed. Only 11 percent disagreed, while 10 percent said they did not know.

*Do you consider your local parks – including open-access schoolyards, trails, and natural areas – to be part of your community's essential infrastructure?*



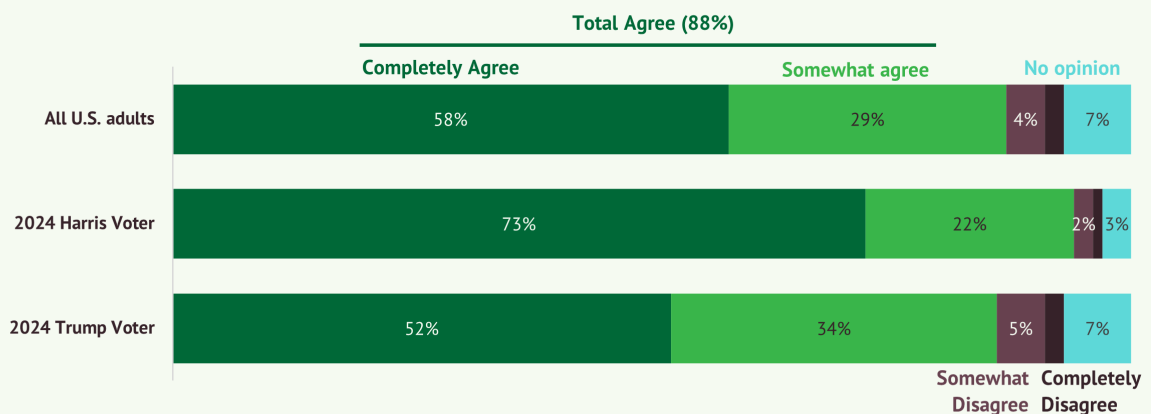
Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026

### **88% of Americans agree – it is important to invest in affordable outdoor recreation**

Nearly 9 in 10 U.S. adults either completely or somewhat agree that it is important for their community to continue investing in affordable outdoor recreation so that everyone, regardless of economic ability, can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. Only 6 percent disagreed. The support was near unanimous regardless of ideology, with 95 percent of 2024 Harris voters and 86 percent of 2024 Trump voters in agreement.

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?*

*It is important for my community to continue investing in affordable outdoor recreation – such as parks, trails, open-access schoolyards, and natural areas – so that everyone, regardless of economic ability, can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors.*

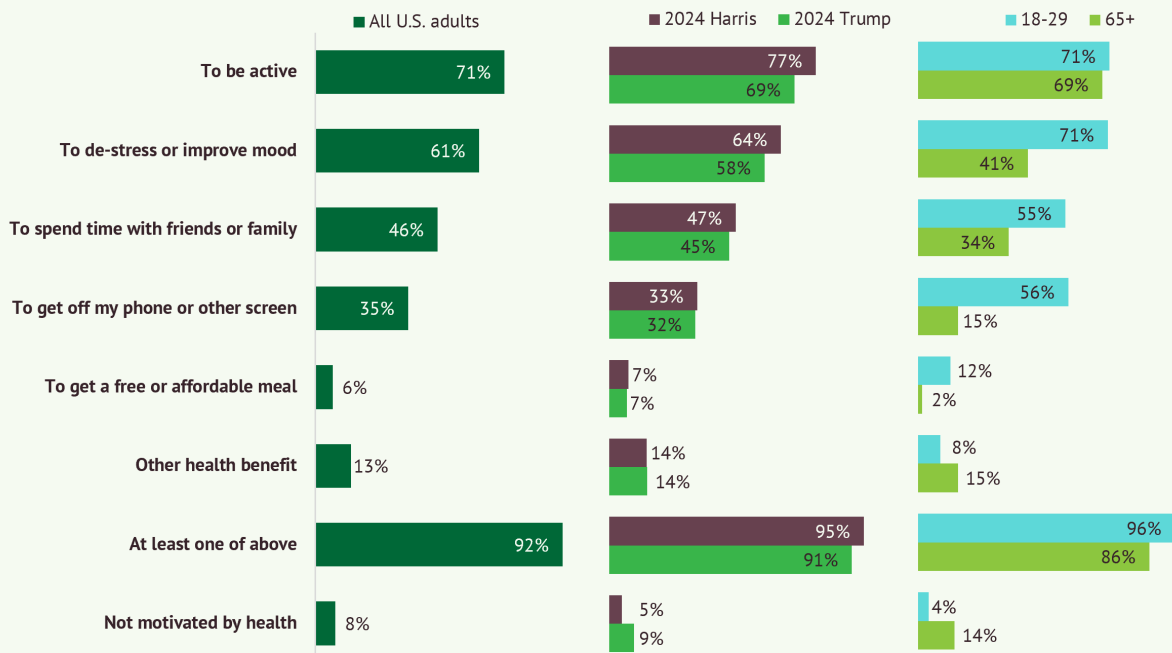


Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026

### Nine in ten Americans are motivated by health to spend time in local parks and nearby nature.

92 percent of U.S. adults reported that improving their health motivated them to spend time outside last year. Being active – whether walking, exercise or sports – was the most popular motivation and the only factor that was similarly influential regardless of age (71 percent of young adults; 69 percent of seniors). De-stressing was second most popular (61 percent), followed by socializing with friends and family (46 percent). Avoiding screen time showed the sharpest distinction by age. It was a strong motivator for a majority of young adults wanting ‘green time, not screen time’ (56 percent) but only 15 percent of seniors.

*In the past year, which of the following health benefits have motivated you to spend time in a local park, trail, open-access schoolyard, or natural area? Check all that apply.*

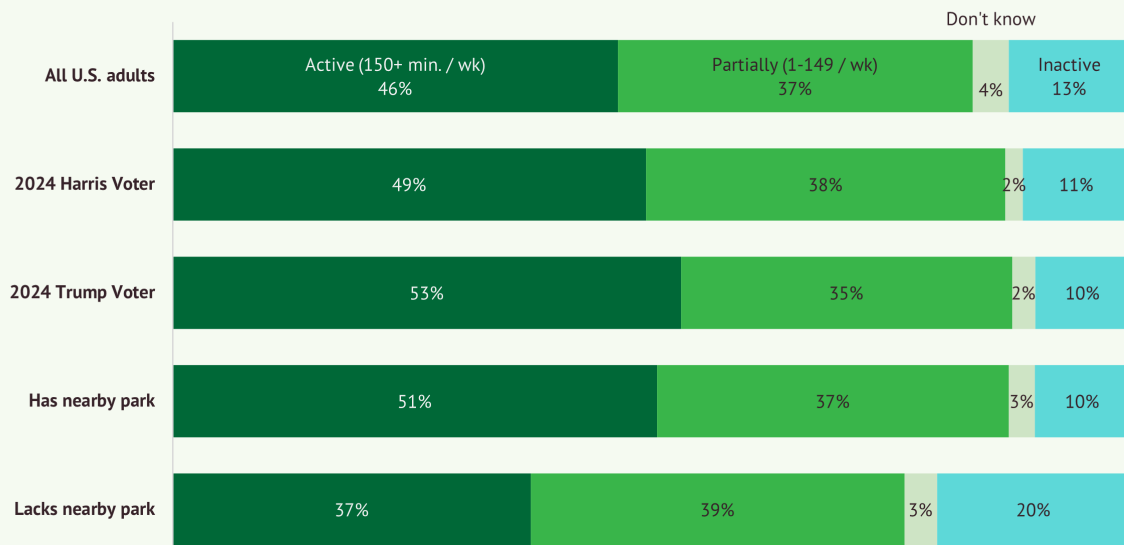


Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026; 3,523 respondents (3,504 weighted) who spent time outdoors.

## Having a park within walking distance of home increases likelihood of meeting physical activity guidance by 35%.

U.S. adults with a park or other outdoor public place within a 10-minute walk of their home are 35 percent more likely to report meeting the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommended dose of 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity (51 percent to 37 percent). Americans without a park within walking distance of home are twice as likely to be inactive as those who do (20 percent – 10 percent).

*Over the past year, about how often did you participate in any physical activities or exercises such as running, calisthenics, golf, gardening, or walking for exercise during a typical week? Please exclude physical activity from your regular job.*



Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026

Inactive: "Almost never or never"; Partially: "Less than 1 hour per week", "1 – 2.5 hours per week". Active: "2.5 -5 hours per week", "5+ hours per week"

Nearby park: Is there at least one outdoor public space, such as a park, natural area, trail, or schoolyard that is open outside of school hours, within a 10-minute walk of your home?

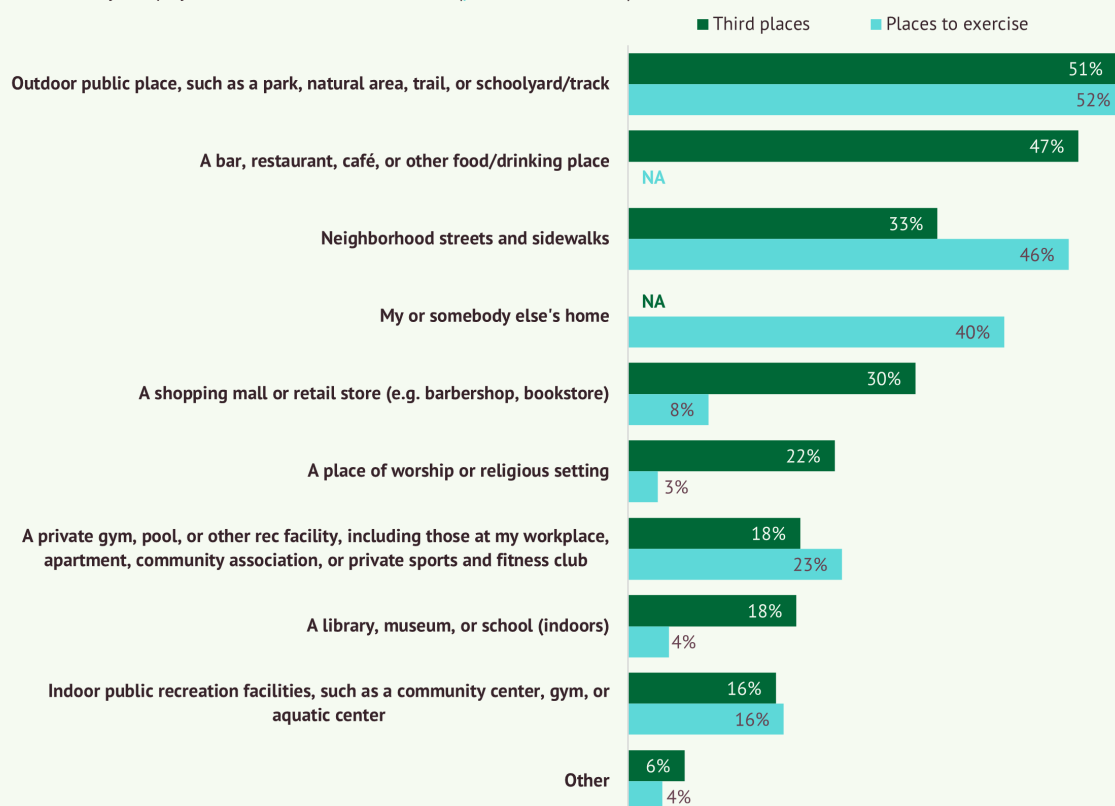
**In 2025, parks and other outdoor places were both the most popular ‘third places’ and places for exercise in the country.**

The polling revealed the versatility of parks and other outdoor public places, such as natural areas, trails, or schoolyards. In 2025, these outdoor spaces were the most popular ‘third place,’ a place other than work or home, as well as the most popular place for exercise and physical activity.

58 percent of U.S. adults reported having a place in their local community – other than work or home – that they go to regularly, often referred to as ‘third places.’ 35 percent reported not having a third place, while 7 percent were not sure. Of adults with at least one third place, parks and other outdoor places were the most popular (51 percent), narrowly edging out bars, restaurants, and cafes (47 percent).

84 percent of U.S. adults reported at least some physical activity or exercise in a typical week (excluding their regular job). Of these adults, parks and other outdoor places were the most popular setting (52 percent), followed by neighborhood streets and sidewalks (46 percent) and home (40 percent). Private gyms, including those in apartment complexes or office buildings, were slightly more popular than public recreation centers (23 percent vs 16 percent). 8 percent of adults exercise in shopping malls.

Check up to three. Over the past year, what were the places you...  
 ....regularly visited other than your work or home? (*third places*)  
 ....did your physical activities or exercises? (*places to exercise*)



Source: Trust for Public Land / YouGov Survey of 4,000 U.S. adults conducted March 2026.  
 Third places = 2,391 respondents (2,332 weighted) with at least one third place  
 Places to exercise = 3,358 respondents (3,341 weighted) with at least some activity

## Methodology

The National Survey on Outdoor Public Spaces is a web-based survey administered by YouGov and sponsored by Trust for Public Land. YouGov interviewed 4,346 respondents from their opt-in panel representative of U.S. adults between March 16 - March 24, 2026. The sample was then weighted to represent 4,000 Americans by gender, age, race/ethnicity, education to match nationally representative targets based on the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample. The sample was further post-stratified on 2024 presidential vote and a four-way stratification of gender, age, race, and education. The estimated credibility interval (analogous to margin of error) for the full sample is +/-1.87%. The Harris voter subsample has a credibility interval of +/-2.7% and the Trump voter subsample has a credibility interval of +/-3.1%. The full survey and methodologies are available upon request.

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<sup>i</sup> Coventry, P. A., Brown, J. E., Pervin, J., Brabyn, S., Pateman, R., Breedvelt, J., ... & White, P. L. (2021). Nature-based outdoor activities for mental and physical health: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *SSM-population health*, 16, 100934.