



Step it Up!

2024 Report



Step It Up! 2024 Report

Introduction

The 2024 Step It Up! program kicked off on April 30. The free, 8-week program offers guided group walks, paddle and kayaking opportunities, health tips, and more. Participants also have the option to set personal goals and report their physical activity. The goal of the program is to get community members active, visiting new parks, exercising outdoors more frequently, and improving their overall health.

Scheduled Step It Up! Events 2024

Group Walks

- April 30, 6:00-7:30 pm, Hemlock Crossing
- May 9, 6:00-7:30 pm, Grand River Park
- May 14, 6:00-7:30 pm, Upper Macatawa NA
- May 22, 6:00-7:30 pm, Connor Bayou
- June 2, 1:00-2:30 pm, Pigeon Creek Park
- June 4, 6-7:30 pm, Paw Paw Park – East
- June 12, 6:00-7:30 pm, Eastmanville Farm

On the Water

- Gabagouache Paddle | May 21, 6:00-7:30 pm, Connor Bayou | Open-house Style
- Group Kayaking | June 8, 1:00-3:30 pm, Hawthorn Pond | Open-house Style

Grand Explorers' Trail Race

- GET Race | June 22, 8:00-10:00 am, Grand River Park

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The Step it Up! challenge is completely free thanks to grant funding secured by the **Ottawa County Parks Foundation**. Thank you to our health and wellness sponsors Knight Watch, AAA Storage, and Priority Health!



Highlights



74% of participants reported an **improvement in their physical health** and **almost 80%** reported an **improvement in their mental health** as a result of participating in the program.

36% of program participants reported **participating in another Ottawa County parks program** since the start of the 2024 Step It Up! program.

59% of participants report **being more comfortable exercising outdoors** and **61%** reported **doing so more frequently** as a result of the program.

By the end of the program, **82%** of participants reported **meeting or exceeding the national health guidelines for weekly physical activity**. A 18% increase from the **64%** of participants who met the guidelines at the start of the program.

Looking Forward

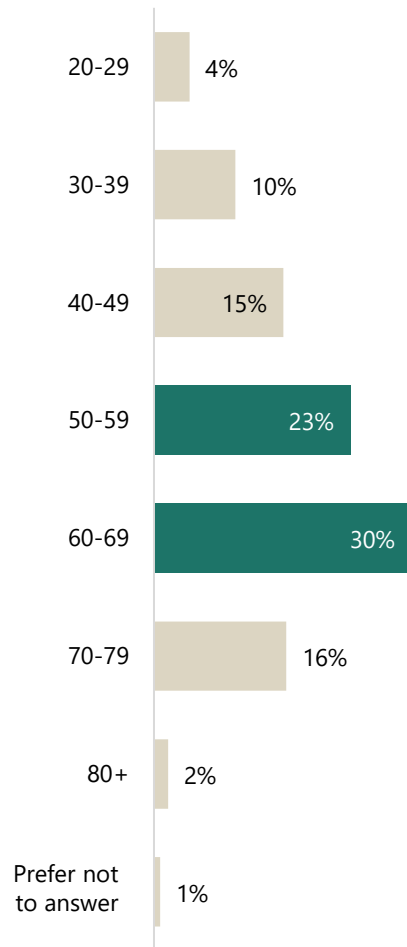
Less than half of participants (38%) reported **attending at least one group walk** while the number one suggested change is more activities and walks. Including more times or walks at different times may help increase walk participation.

Only **18%** of participants reported **using the strength training tips and guide** compared to 74% of participants using the healthy tips.

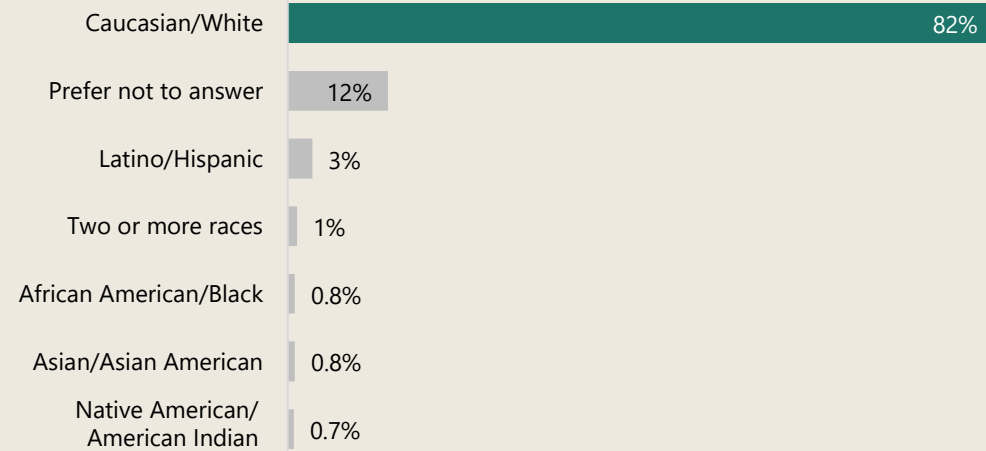
As only **29%** of participants are **under the age of 50**, it may be worth considering different ways to appeal to younger adults and families to increase their participation in the program.

Participant Demographics

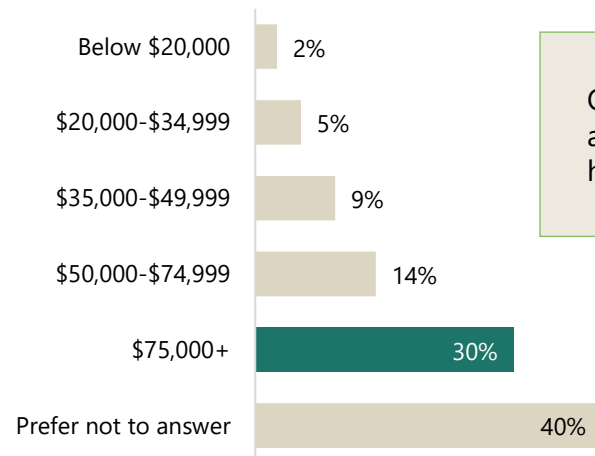
53% of participants are in the 50- to 69-year-old age group.



82% of participants are Caucasian/White.



30% of participants have an annual household income of \$75,000 or more.



Of respondents that chose to answer, 49% have an annual household income of over \$75,000

Notes:
Total responses by question: 838 – age group; 841 – race; 841 – income

Participant Demographics

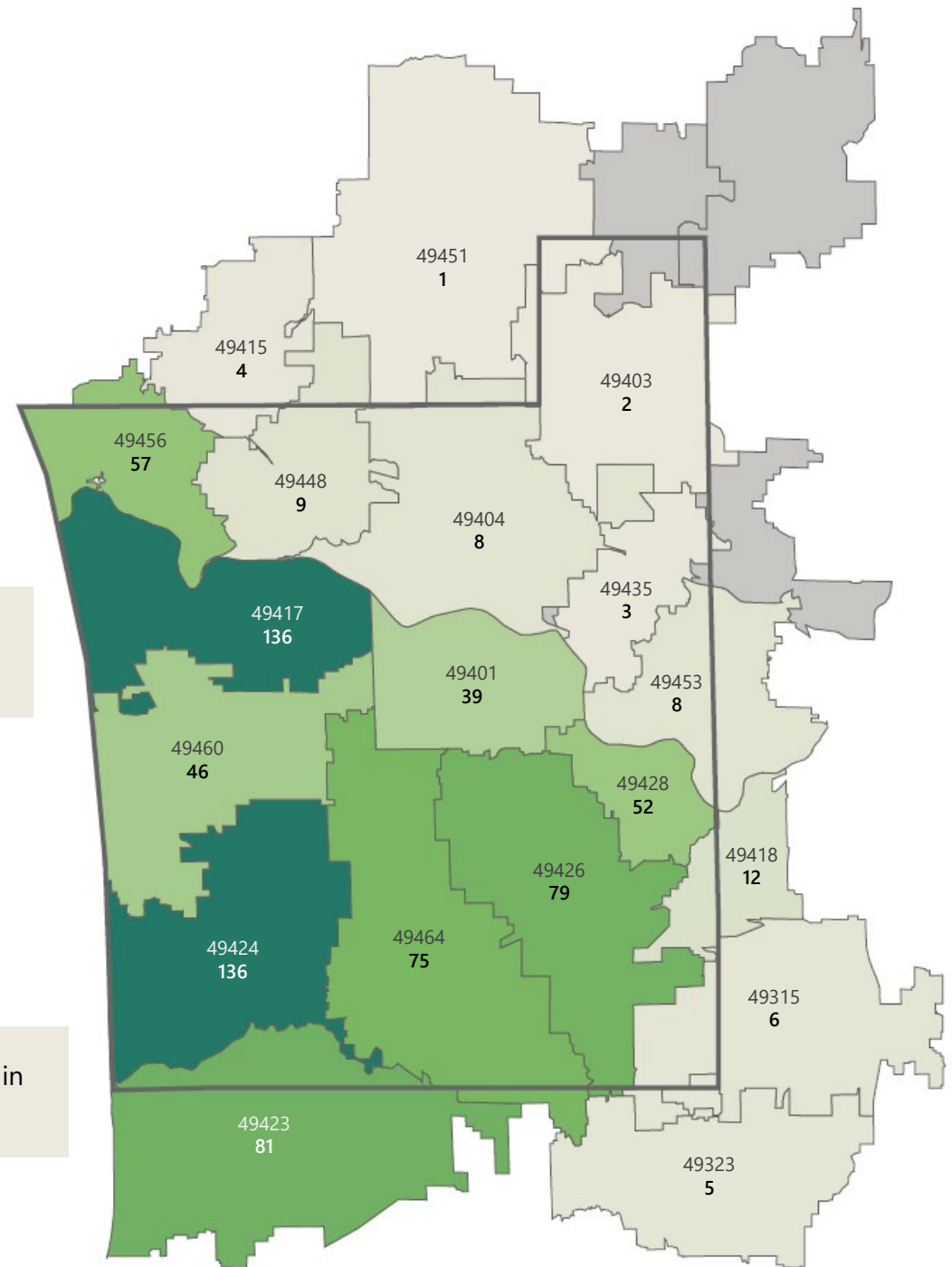
91% of participants live in a zip code that is at least partially located in **Ottawa County**.

Zip codes outside of Ottawa County where five or more participants live:

- 49419—Hamilton—7 participants
- 49441—Muskegon—7 participants
- 49444—Muskegon—6 participants
- 49408—Fennville—5 participants
- 49504—Grand Rapids—5 participants

16% of participants live in **49417**.

26% of participants live in either **49424** or **49423**.



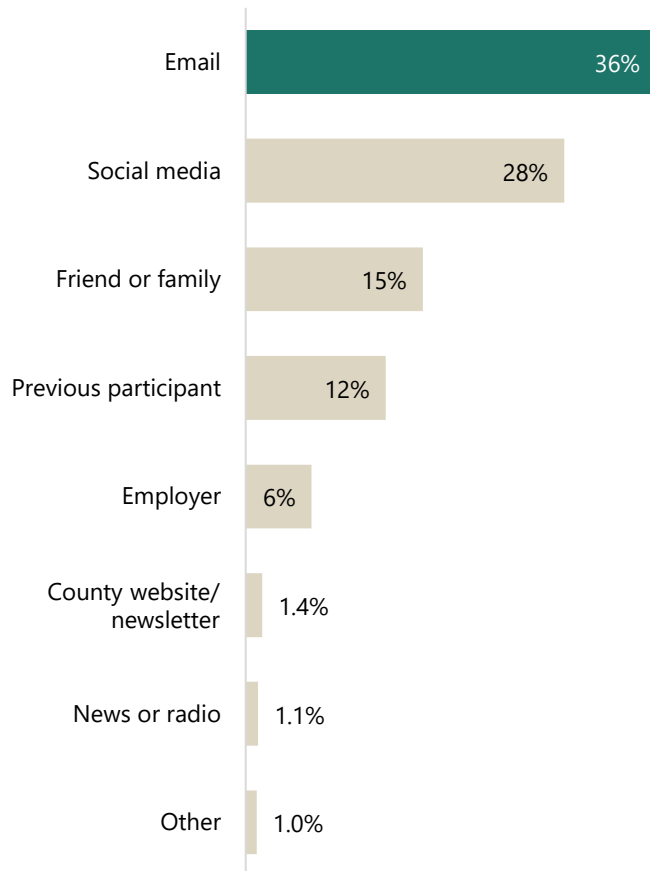
Notes:

Total responses by question: 837 – zip code.

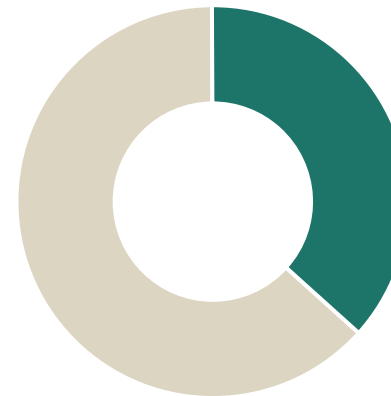
Enrollment Rates

841 people enrolled in Step It Up! in Spring 2024.

36% of participants heard about the program through email.



37% of people enrolled had previously participated in Step It Up!



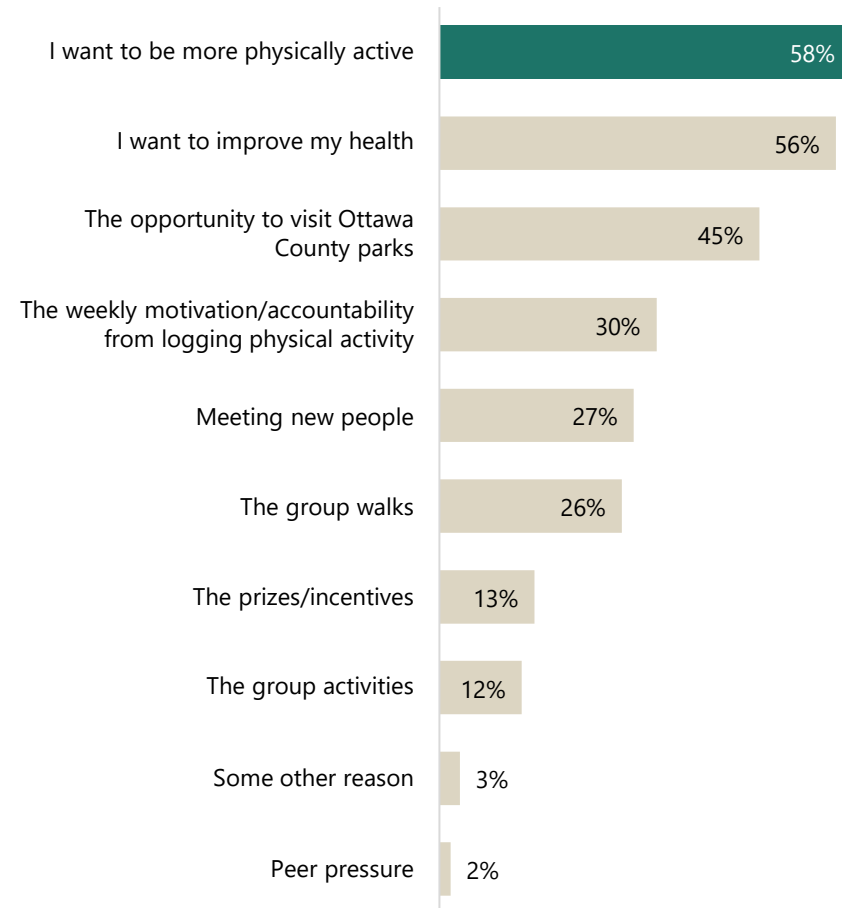
“
Loved this last year! Looking forward to it again! :)
”

Notes:
Total responses by question: 841 – previous participant status; 839 – learned about the program

Motivation & Goals



58% of participants identified “I want to be more physically active” as one of their reasons for participating in Step It Up!



“

Need to get back on track. I've enjoyed this in the past, it's a great way to get out and explore the parks and possibly connect with others while promoting good health.

”

“

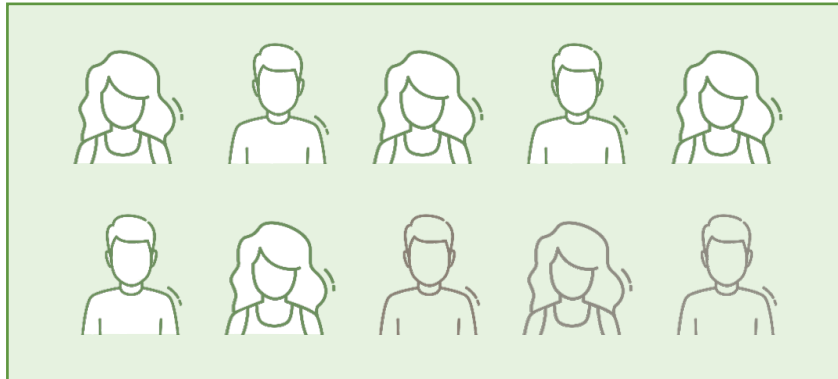
Thank you for doing this. Whenever I participate in something like this it makes me more aware of how much I am moving and makes me want to move more than I normally would.

”

Notes:
Total responses by question: 841 – reason for participating. Participants could select multiple reasons for participating.

Motivation & Goals

Nearly 7 out of 10 (66%) of participants chose to **set a weekly physical activity goal**.



“

Great motivation to get outside, explore other parks and exercise outside.

”



75% of participants who chose to set a weekly physical activity goal reported **achieving the goal they set by the end of the program**.



44% of participants who chose to set a goal in addition to the physical activity goal reported **achieving the additional goal they set by the end of the program**.



Notes:
Total responses by question: 841 – goal setting & reporting; 115 – goal achievement; 113 – other goal achievement.

Activities & Participation

The Step It Up! group walks and activities continued this year with group walks at parks throughout Ottawa County. Participants also had the opportunity to participate in a group paddle session and a group kayaking session.

38% of participants report **attending at least one group walk.**



“

As I'm new to the area I loved reading about the group walks and descriptions of the parks. Because I was so busy moving to our new house I wasn't able to participate but they sounded great and really made me want to visit the parks once things settle down! Thanks for the motivation to get walking again!

”

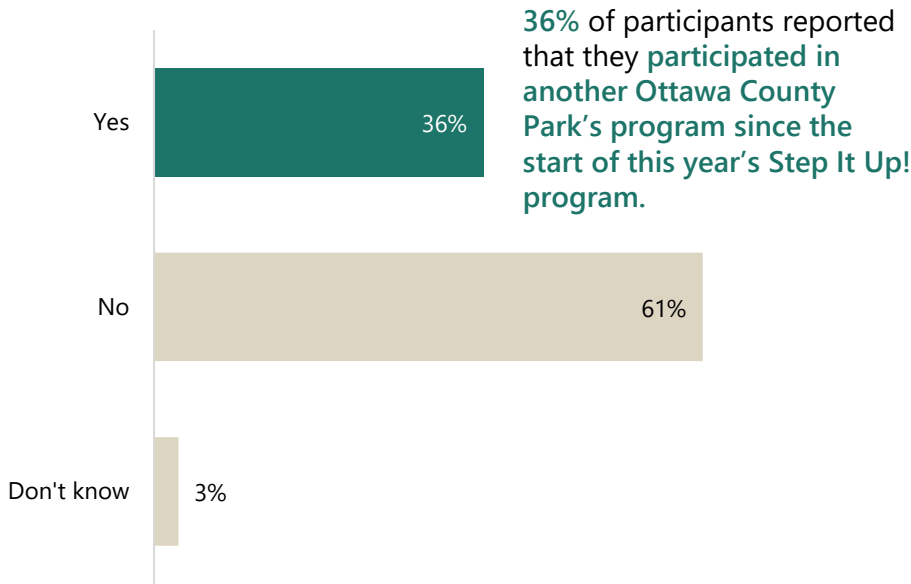


Notes:

Total responses by question: 148 – group walk attendance.

Activities & Participation

45% of participants reported that they **visited an Ottawa County Park that they had not visited before** while in the Step It Up! program.

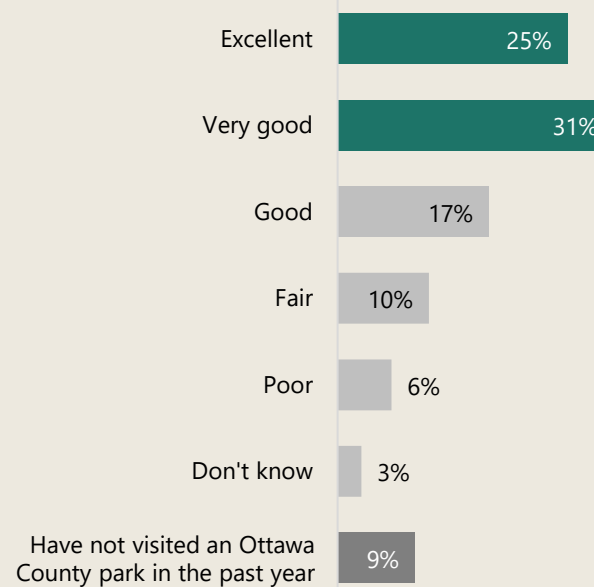


“

I love this program. It has opened my eyes to more parks that I want to visit. My schedule just did not coordinate well at the times of the group activities. I hope to participate more next year. This program is a great motivator. I suggested it to friends and family.

”

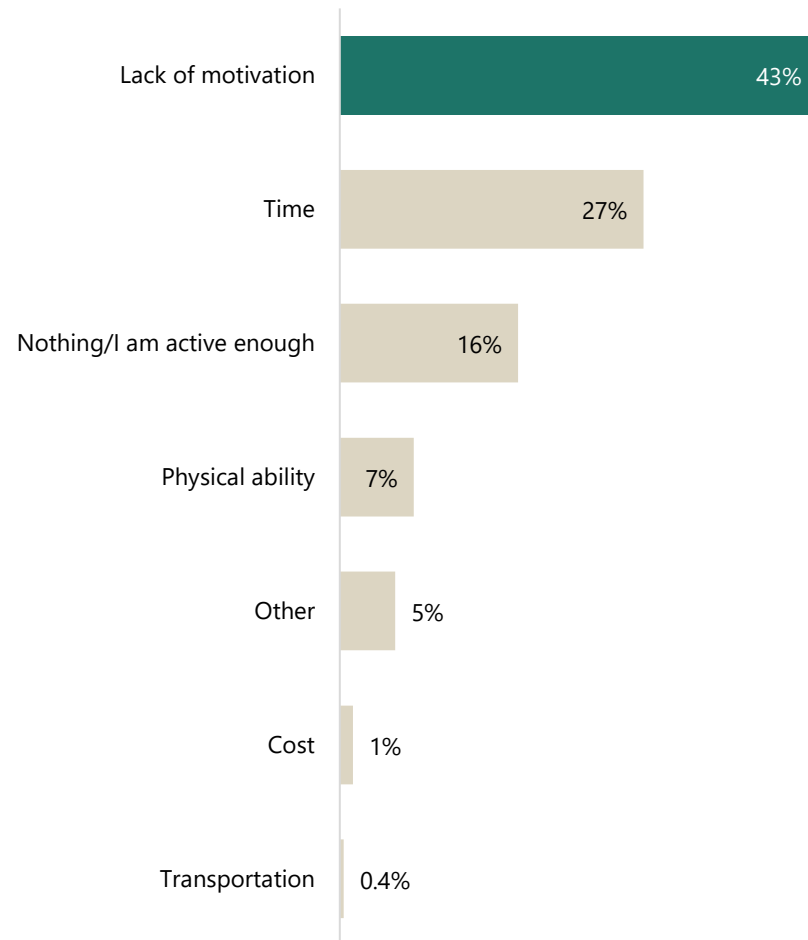
56% of participants rated Ottawa County parks as **excellent** or **very good** before participating in Step It Up!



Notes:
Total responses by question: 148 – park program; 148 – park visitation during program; 841 – parks rating.

Physical Activity & Strength Training

43% of participants reported that a **lack of motivation** was an active barrier to exercise.



“

I've always enjoyed walking in the woods and have done it my whole life. I don't have a dog currently so my walks have fallen by the wayside. I'm hoping this will get me back into the habit.

”

“

Love this idea. I am motivated to exercise if I have people to do it with consistently

”



Notes:

Total responses by question: 838 – barriers to physical activity.

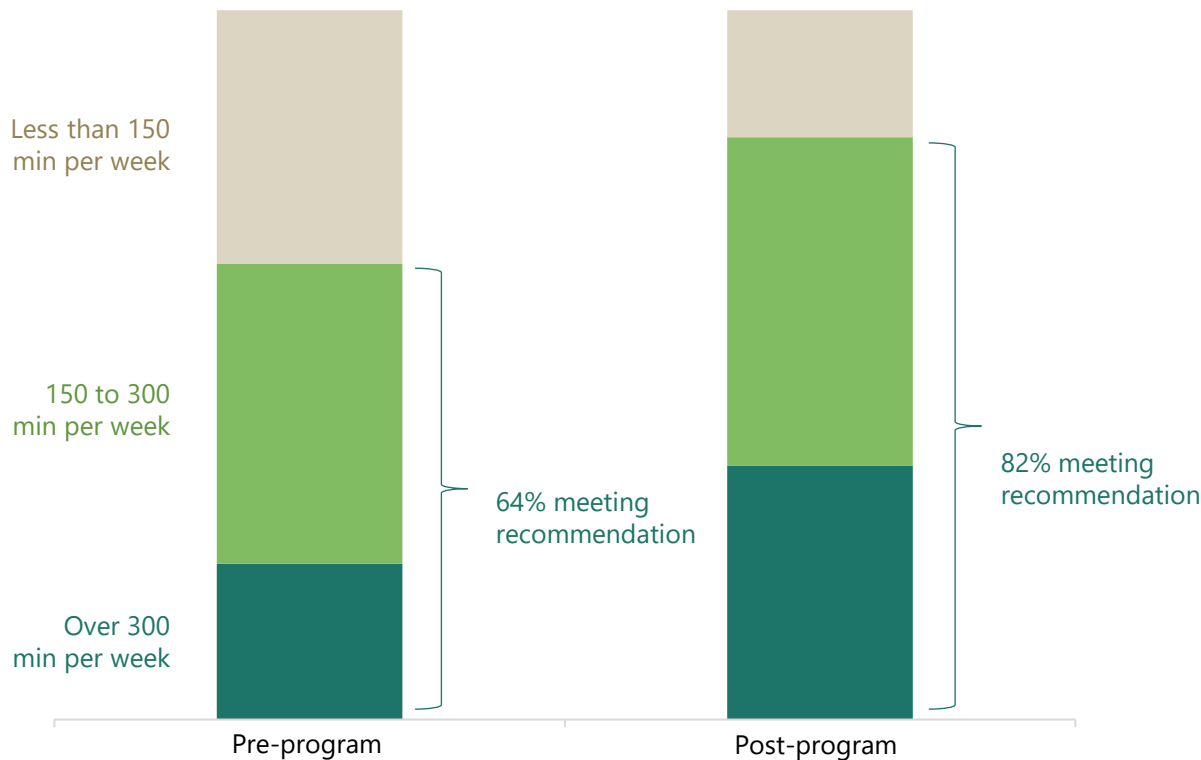
Physical Activity & Strength Training

National health guidelines recommend that adults get at least **150 minutes (2.5 hours) to 300 minutes (5 hours) of physical activity per week.**

Before starting the Step It Up! program, **64%** of participants reported meeting this recommendation.

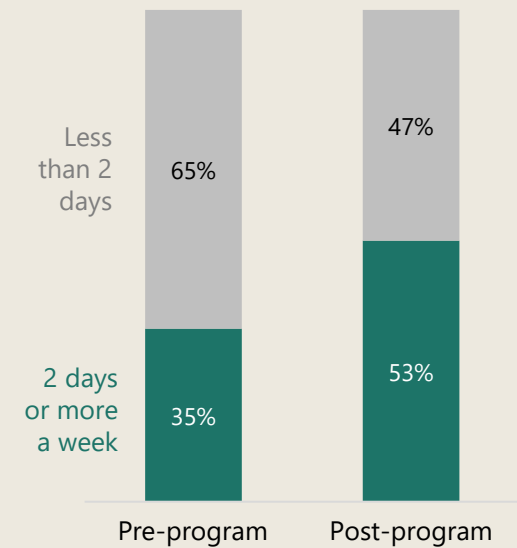
At the end of the program, **82%** of participants reported meeting this recommendation.

“
My Apple Watch helps me to know how much I am exercising and I was surprised that I have actually been doing more than I thought I was. Got back into Bicycling as a result of this program as well.
”



National health guidelines recommend that adults do **muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week.**

Before starting the Step It Up! program, **35%** of participants reported meeting this recommendation.

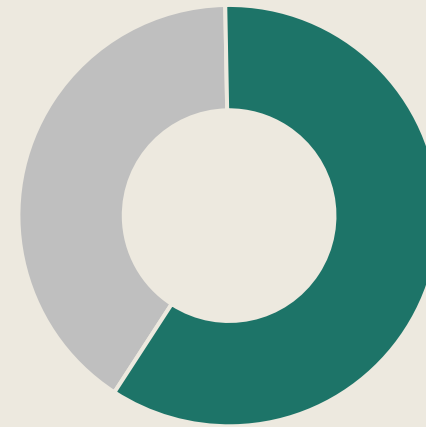
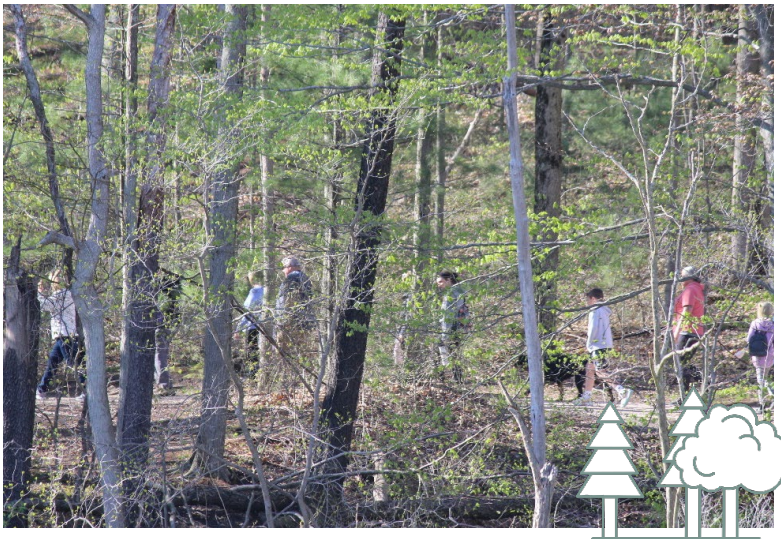
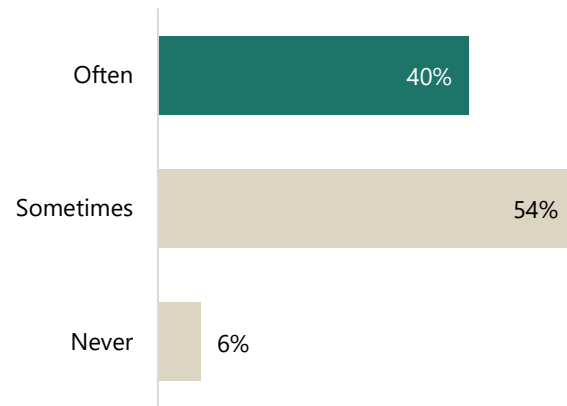


At the end of the program, **53%** of participants reported meeting this recommendation.

Notes:
Total responses by question: 123 – physical activity; 145 – strength training.

Physical Activity & Strength Training

40% of participants exercised outdoors **often** before participating in Step It Up!



59% of participants reported that they are **more comfortable exercising outdoors** as a result of Step It Up!

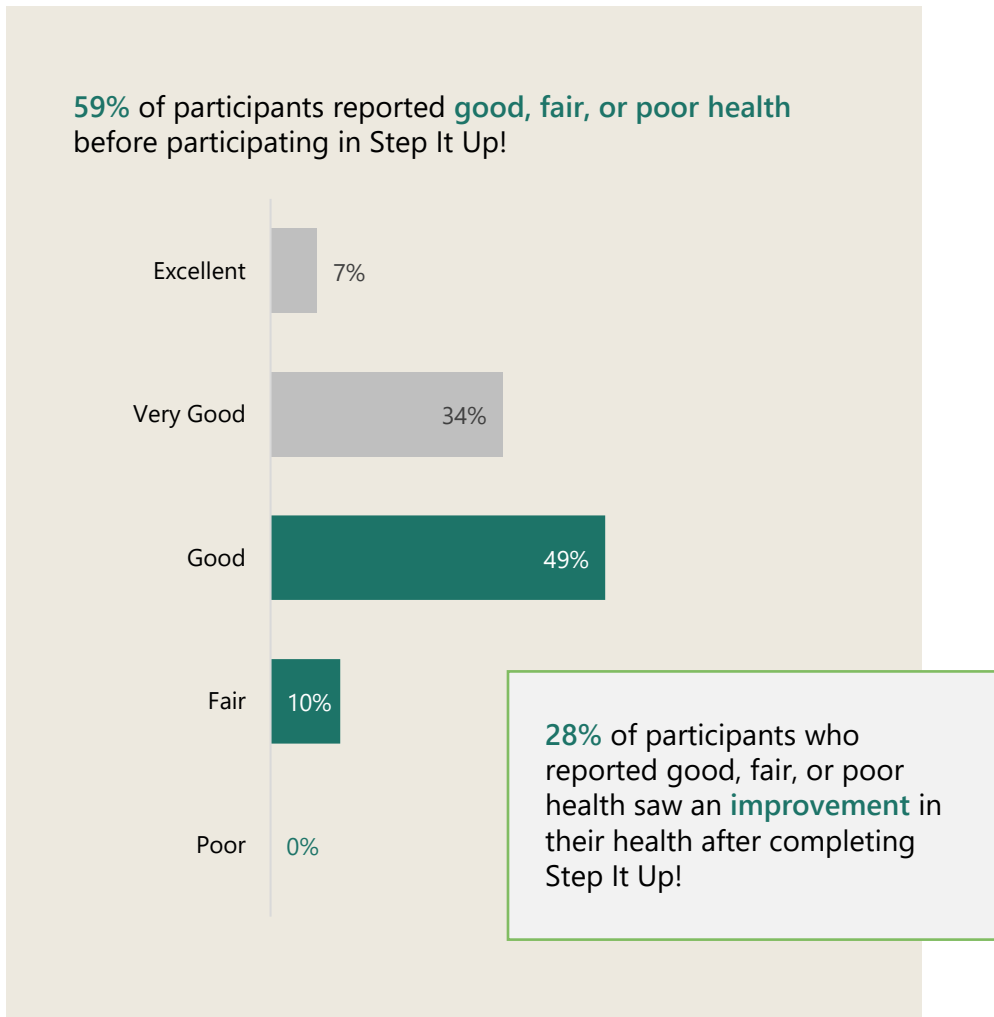


61% of participants reported that they are **exercising outdoors more frequently** as a result of Step It Up!

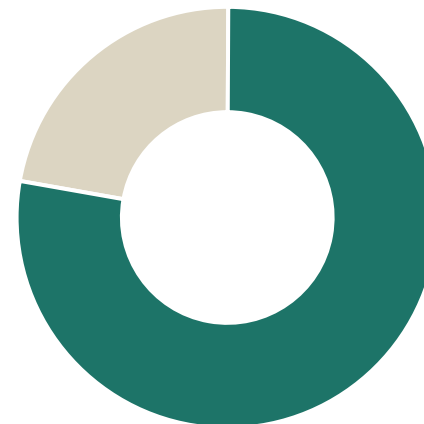
Notes:

Total responses by question: 841 – pre-program frequency of exercise; 148 – post-program frequency & comfort of exercise.

Mental & Overall Health Impact



74% of participants reported that their **overall health improved** as a result of participating in Step It Up!



78% of participants reported that their **mental health improved** as a result of participating in Step It Up!

Notes:
Total responses by question: 147 – health rating; 148 – health improvement; 148 – mental health improvement.

Tips & Guides

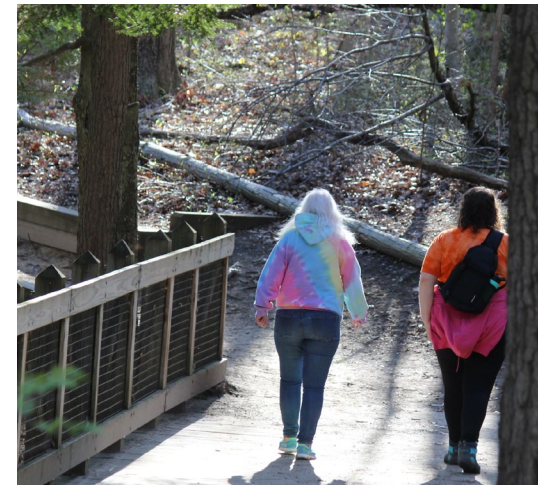
Post-program feedback indicates that **18%** of participants reported **using the strength training guide and tips.**

74% of participants reported **using the healthy tips** shared in the weekly emails.

Strength & Fitness Tips

The Step it Up! program has partnered with EcoTrek Fitness to provide participants with flexibility and strength training tips. EcoTrek Fitness created these great videos that demonstrate a variety of techniques!

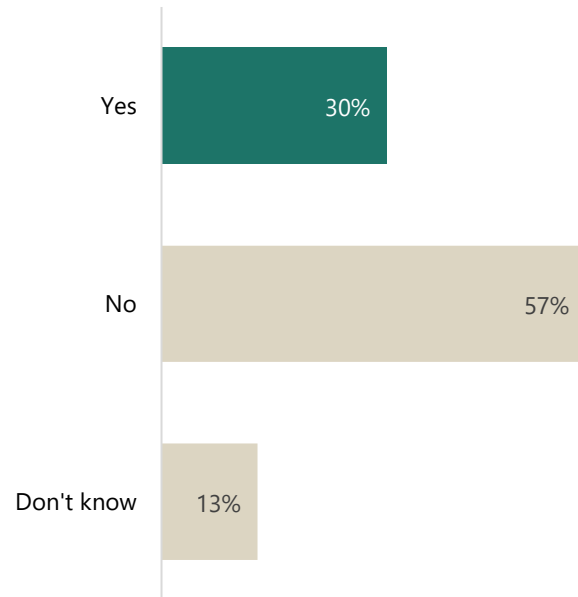
- Full Warm Up Video
- Ankle Flicker & Ankle Rocker
- Arm Swings & Chin to Chest
- Phone Pole Shoulder Squeeze & Chair Stepback
- Trunk Rotations & Knee Circles
- Slo-Mo Knee Kicks & Forward Fold



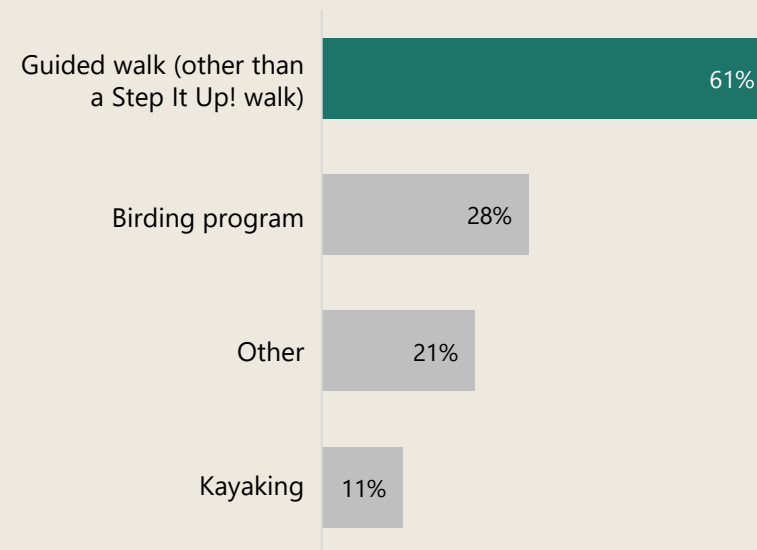
Notes:
Total responses by question: 148 – strength training guide;148 – healthy eating tips.

Post-Program Participation

30% of previous Step It Up! participants reported that they **have participated in another Ottawa County Parks program** since participating in Step It Up!



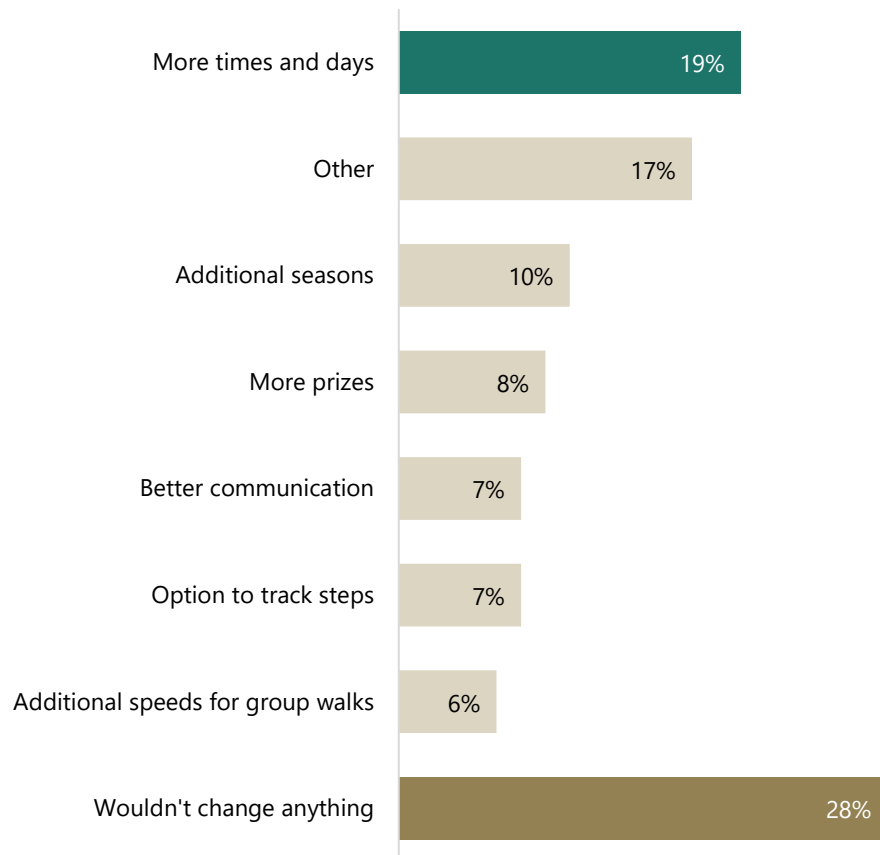
61% of previous participants who reported participating in an Ottawa County Parks program since participating in Step It Up! reported participating in a **Guided Walk**.



Other responses include snowshoeing, fire starting, volunteer opportunities, and other activities.

Suggestions & Additional Comments

19% of participants said they would **add additional or different days and times for guided walks** when asked what they would change about Step It Up!



28% of participants, when asked what they would change about the program, said that **they wouldn't change anything**.

“

We got so far behind that a few of us and even the end of the group leader (I forget the person's technical name) also couldn't find and catch up with the group, or even knew which way to go. So maybe fix that or possibly make a third group for people in the middle of the fast vs slow group. Because I was sure I could keep up in the fast group but they were really fast and slow was much too slow. So fortunately I wasn't alone but did get displaced a couple times and our leader did say something. Overall I really enjoyed it and thank you for doing this!!!!

”

“

I am in my 80's, have cardiomyopathy/heart failure and am the caregiver for my husband, who has Alzheimer's. I always had the desire to do more physically, but often felt overwhelmed, overly tired and unsure of myself. I did not accomplish as much as I would have liked (heat and humidity are NOT my friends) but I made good strides in improving my energy, mental outlook and well being. I walked more than I thought I could. The Step It Up program helped me get motivated to find the time to care for myself. I am very grateful! Thank you.

”

Notes:

Total responses by question: 72 – what would you change.

One response fell into two categories.

Thank you to our health & wellness sponsors:

