

# Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

## Findings Report

---

conducted for the

# Prince William County Park Authority



by

**Leisure Vision**

(a division of ETC Institute)

725 W. Frontier Circle

Olathe, KS 66061

(913) 829-1215

February 2008

# Contents

Executive Summary.....	Section 1
Benchmarking	
Unmet Needs-Importance Matrix .....	Section 2
Cross-Tabular Data by	
Location of Residence .....	Section 3
Cross-Tabular Data by	
Amount of Additional Property Taxes	
Willing to Pay & Gender.....	Section 4
Cross-Tabular Data by	
Voting & Hispanic or Latino Ancestry .....	Section 5
Cross-Tabular Data by	
Household Type & Race/Ethnicity .....	Section 6
Cross-Tabular Data by	
Household Size & Age of Respondents .....	Section 7
Survey Instrument.....	Section 8

# **Recreation Needs Assessment Survey**

---

## **Executive Summary of Citizen Survey Results**

### **Overview of the Methodology**

The Prince William County Park Authority conducted a Recreation Needs Assessment Survey during January and February of 2008 to help establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Prince William County. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Prince William County Park Authority officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

#### **Methodology**

In January 2008, surveys were mailed to a random sample of 5,000 households throughout Prince William County. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 1,100 completed surveys, including at least 125 from each of the seven election districts. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 1,120 surveys having been completed, including at least 136 surveys from each of the seven election districts. ***This allows for statistically valid results from each of the seven election districts.***

The results of the random sample of 1,120 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-2.9%.

***The survey also paid close attention to matching the race and ethnicity of survey respondents to the census for Prince William County and was very successful in this regard.*** For example, 60% of residents are White/Caucasian according to the U.S. Census for Prince William County with 60% of survey respondents being White/Caucasian. Other comparisons of survey returns to the census include: African American/Black – census (19%) and survey (18%); Asian – census (8%) and survey (7%); and Hispanic/Latino –census (19%) and survey (17%).

***Last the ages of household respondents in the survey were very close to the actual ages of residents in Prince William County in the U.S. Census.*** The average household size in Prince William County (2.92 persons) is higher than the average household size of U.S. residents (2.61 persons). This is indicative of the County growing in youngsters under the age of 18 years of age and is reflective in respondents to the survey.

### **Cross-Tabular Analysis By Various Demographics**

To gain additional information regarding key short and long range strategic decision-making for the Prince William County park system, survey results were further broken down by key demographic factors: These factors which are all included in the report include breakdowns by:

- Location of residence in the 7 voting districts
- Household size and composition
- Hispanic or Latino Ancestry
- Gender
- Amount Willing to Pay in Additional Property Taxes

Prince William County has been provided an electronic data-base of all survey responses for on-going analysis including presentations in GIS formats.

### **National Benchmarking Data-Base**

Leisure Vision has an unparalleled data base of over 60,000 surveys from recreation needs assessment surveys across the country, including Virginia. National averages have been developed for numerous parks and recreation planning, management, and funding questions. Examples of large national and Virginia communities in our data base include:

- Albemarle County, VA
- Arlington County, VA
- Fairfax County, VA
- Loudoun County, VA
- Richmond, VA
- Roanoke County, VA
- Virginia Beach, VA
- Atlanta, GA
- Denver, CO
- Henderson, NV
- Mecklenburg County, NC
- Oakland County, MI
- Wake County, NC
- Westchester County, NY

***The following 2 pages summarize “Major Findings” from the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey, with the following pages summarizing survey findings from each question and demographic information:***

***Major Findings from the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey  
Prince William County, Virginia***

- ***Household respondents are supportive of purchasing land to preserve open space and green space for future generations.*** 79% of respondents were very supportive (57%) or somewhat supportive (22%) of purchasing land to preserve open and green space for future generations.

Out of 13 potential actions respondents would be willing to fund with their county tax dollars to improve the park system, purchasing land to preserve open space and green space for future generations rated as the most important action.

- ***Household respondents are supportive of fixing up/repairing existing outdoor park facilities.*** 84% of respondents were very supportive (61%) or somewhat supportive (23%) of fixing up/repairing existing outdoor park facilities.

Out of 13 potential actions respondents would be willing to fund with their county tax dollars to improve the park system, fixing up/repairing existing outdoor park facilities rated as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important action.

- ***Sixty-six percent of household respondents would vote in favor or might vote in favor to fund a dedicated tax for open space and parkland acquisition for the amount of tax funding they indicated they would pay.*** 46% of household respondents would vote in favor and 20% might vote in favor to fund a dedicated tax for open space. Only 12% indicated they would vote against with 20% not sure.

- ***The Prince William County Park Authority is the prime provider of parks and recreation services to County residents.*** From a list of 12 organizations, the Prince William County Park Authority is the prime provider of parks and recreation services to all county residents. Along with the schools the Park Authority rated as one of the top 2 providers of services to household members ages 17 and under. The Park Authority was the top provider of services to household members 18 and over

- ***Walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks are the most important facilities for households across the County. Soccer fields are the most important facility for youth.*** In all 7 voting districts, walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks were the two most important parks and recreation facilities to provide. Also, in all 7 voting districts youth soccer fields was the 1<sup>st</sup> most important sports field to provide.

- ***Adult fitness and wellness programs are the most important programs for households across the County. Youth sports programs are the most important program for youth.*** In all 7 voting districts adult fitness and wellness programs are the most important adult programs for residents. In 5 voting areas youth sports programs are the most important youth programs for residents, with youth learn to swim programs being the most important in the Occoquan and Neabsco areas.
- ***Improving physical health and fitness is the most important benefit to respondent households from parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs.*** This benefit rated number 1 out of 10 potential benefits to households. With increasing childhood obesity problems and an aging baby boomer population who are very interested in physical health and fitness activities this benefit will remain important.
- ***Making the County a more desirable place to live, preserve open space and the environment, increase property values in surrounding areas, and help reduce crime are the most important benefits to the future of Prince William County from parks, trails, recreation facilities, and programs.***

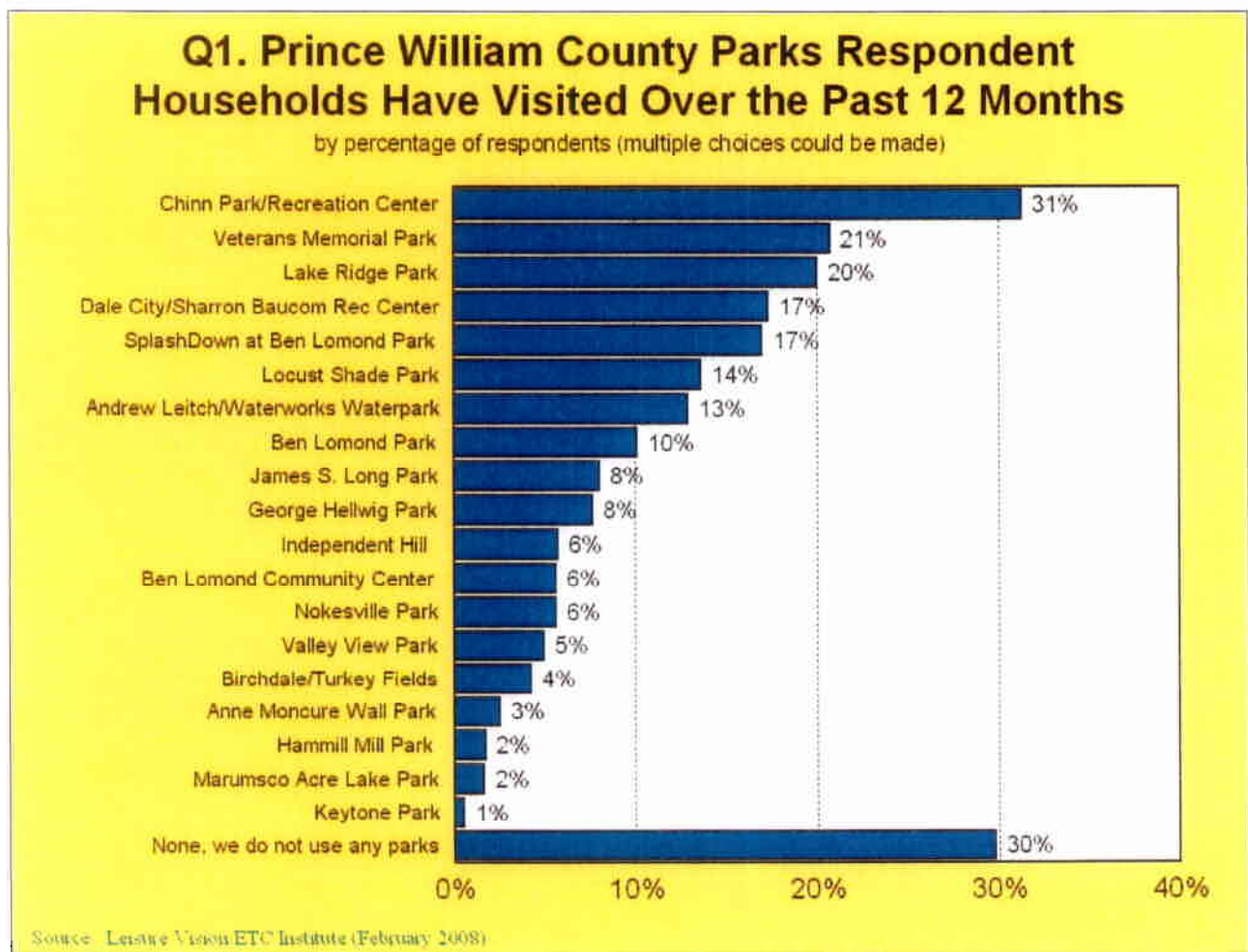
Make Prince William County a more desirable place to live rated 1<sup>st</sup> out of 10 potential benefits regarding the future of Prince William County, with fairly equal and strong support preserving open space and the environment, increase property values in surrounding areas, and help reduce crime.

- ***Unmet citizen needs exist for a wide range of parks, trails and recreation facilities and programs.*** As two examples, walking and biking trails and small neighborhood parks both have over 30,000 households who have needs for these facilities indicate their needs are only being 50% or less being met. In more than half of the 23 program areas the percentage of respondents who indicated their needs are 0% being met is greater than the percentage who indicate their needs are 100% being met.

## ***Prince William County Parks Visited Over the Past 12 Months***

From a list of 19 Prince William County parks, respondents were asked to indicate all of the parks their household has visited over the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The Prince William County parks visited by the highest percentage of respondent households are: Chinn Park/Recreation Center (31%), Veterans Memorial Park (21%), Lake Ridge Park (20%), Dale City/Sharron Baucom Rec Center (17%), and SplashDown at Ben Lomond Park (17%).** Seventy percent (70%) of respondent households have used at least one of these 19 parks over the past 12 months.

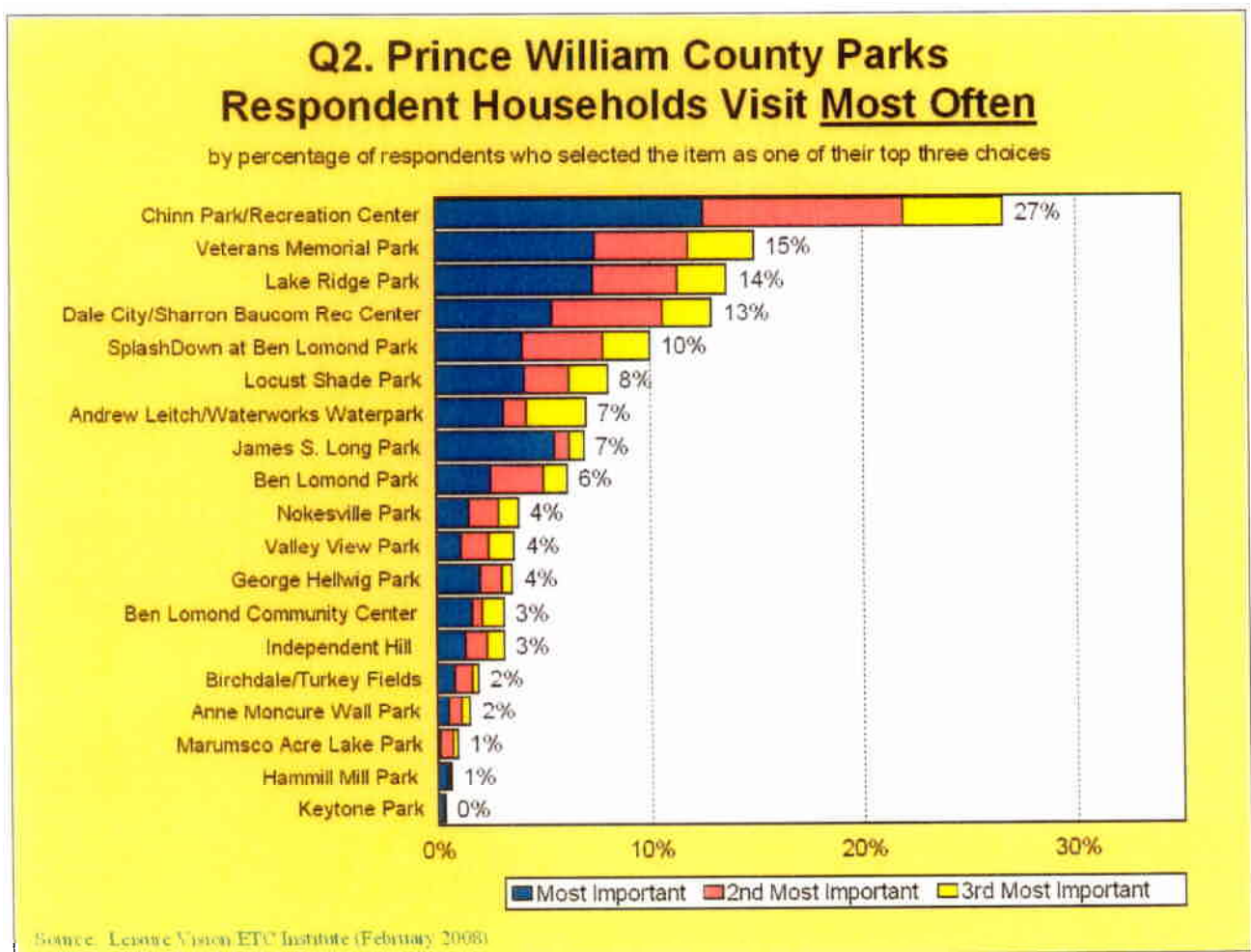


***70% of respondents have visited Prince William County parks which compares favorably with our national benchmarking averages of 72% for local park systems.***

### ***Prince William County Parks Visited Most Often***

From a list of 19 Prince William County parks, respondents were asked to select the three parks their household visits most often. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Based on the sum of their top three choices, the County parks that respondent households have visited most often are: Chinn Park/Recreation Center (27%), Veterans Memorial Park (15%), Lake Ridge Park (14%), and Dale City/Sharron Baucom Rec Center (13%).** It should also be noted that Chinn Park/Recreation Center had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the park they visit most often.



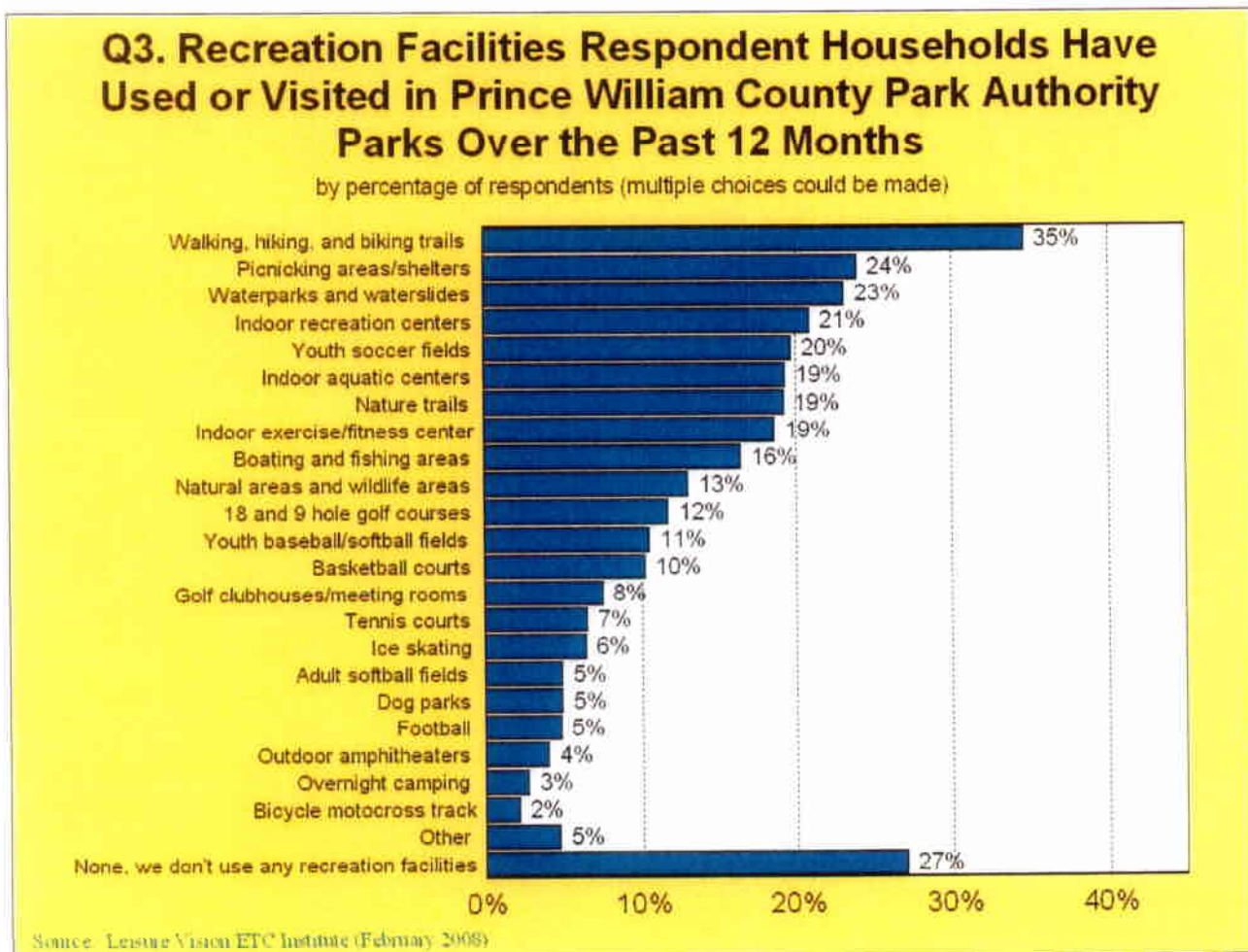
***The Chinn Park/Recreation Center was the most visited facility or park in 5 of the 7 voting districts.***



## ***Recreation Facilities Used at Prince William County Park Authority Parks Over the Past 12 Months***

From a list of 22 various recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate all of the facilities their household has used at Prince William County Park Authority parks over the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The Prince William County Park Authority recreation facilities used by the highest percentage of respondent households are: walking, hiking and biking trails (35%), picnicking areas/shelters (24%), and waterparks and waterslides (23%).** Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondent households have used at least one of these 22 recreation facilities over the past 12 months.

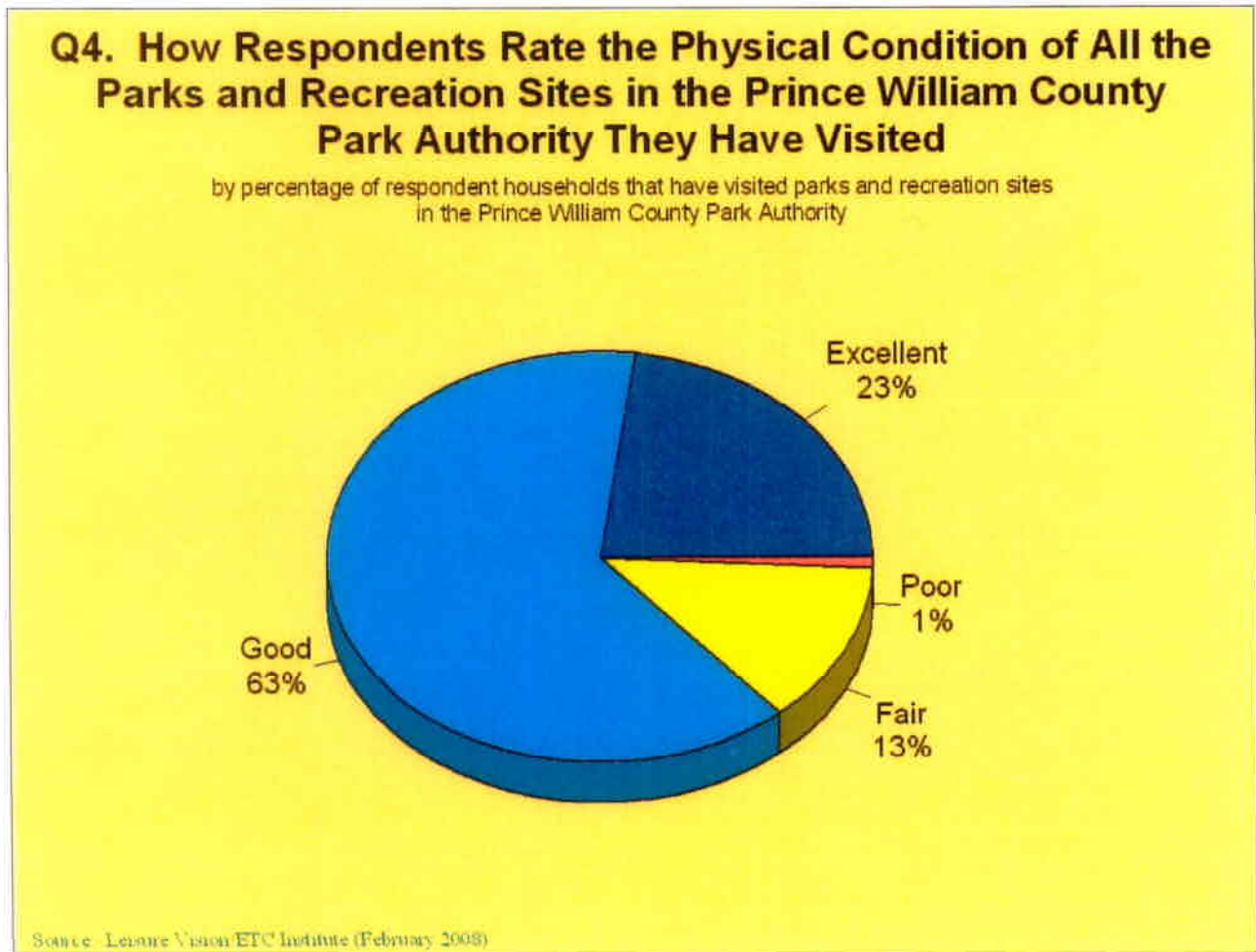


***In all 7 voting districts walking and biking trails are the most used or visited facility in Prince William County parks.***

### ***Physical Condition of All County Parks and Recreation Sites Visited***

Respondents were asked to rate the physical condition of all the parks and recreation sites they have visited in the Prince William County Park Authority. The following summarizes key findings:

- **Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondent households that have used parks and recreation sites in the Prince William County Park Authority rated them as either excellent (23%) or good (63%).** An additional 13% rated the parks and recreation sites as fair, and only 1% rated them as poor.

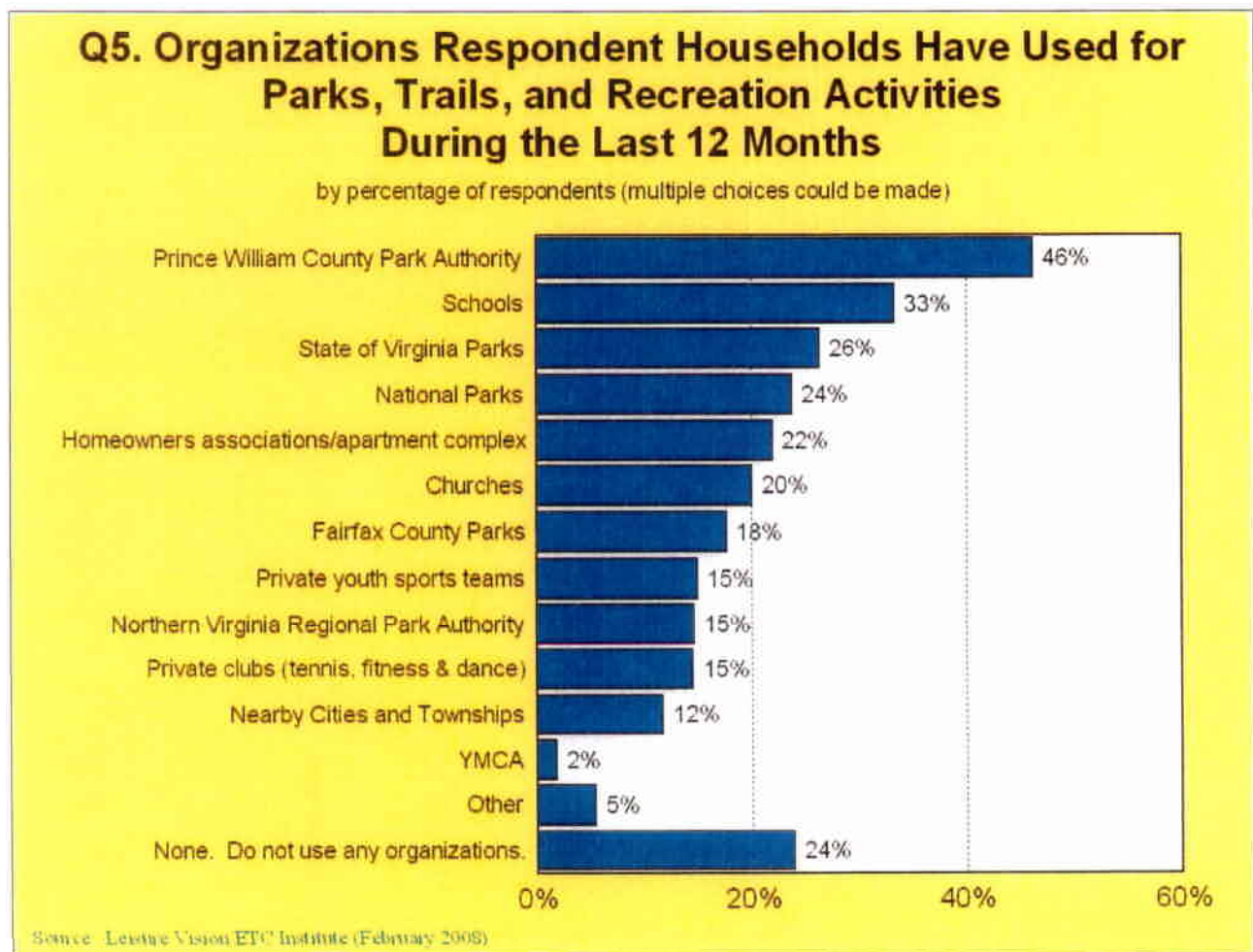


***Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondent households that have used parks and recreation sites in the Prince William County Park Authority rated them as either excellent or good which is slightly higher than the national benchmarking average of 84%. Opportunities for higher excellent ratings exist.***

## ***Organizations Used for Parks, Trails and Recreation Activities***

From a list of 12 organizations, respondents were asked to indicate all of the organizations they have used for parks, trails, and recreation activities during the past 12 months. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The organizations that the highest percentage of respondent households have used for parks, trails, and recreation activities during the past 12 months are: the Prince William County Park Authority (46%), schools (33%), State of Virginia Parks (26%) and National Parks (24%).** It should also be noted that 76% of respondent households have used at least one of these organizations.

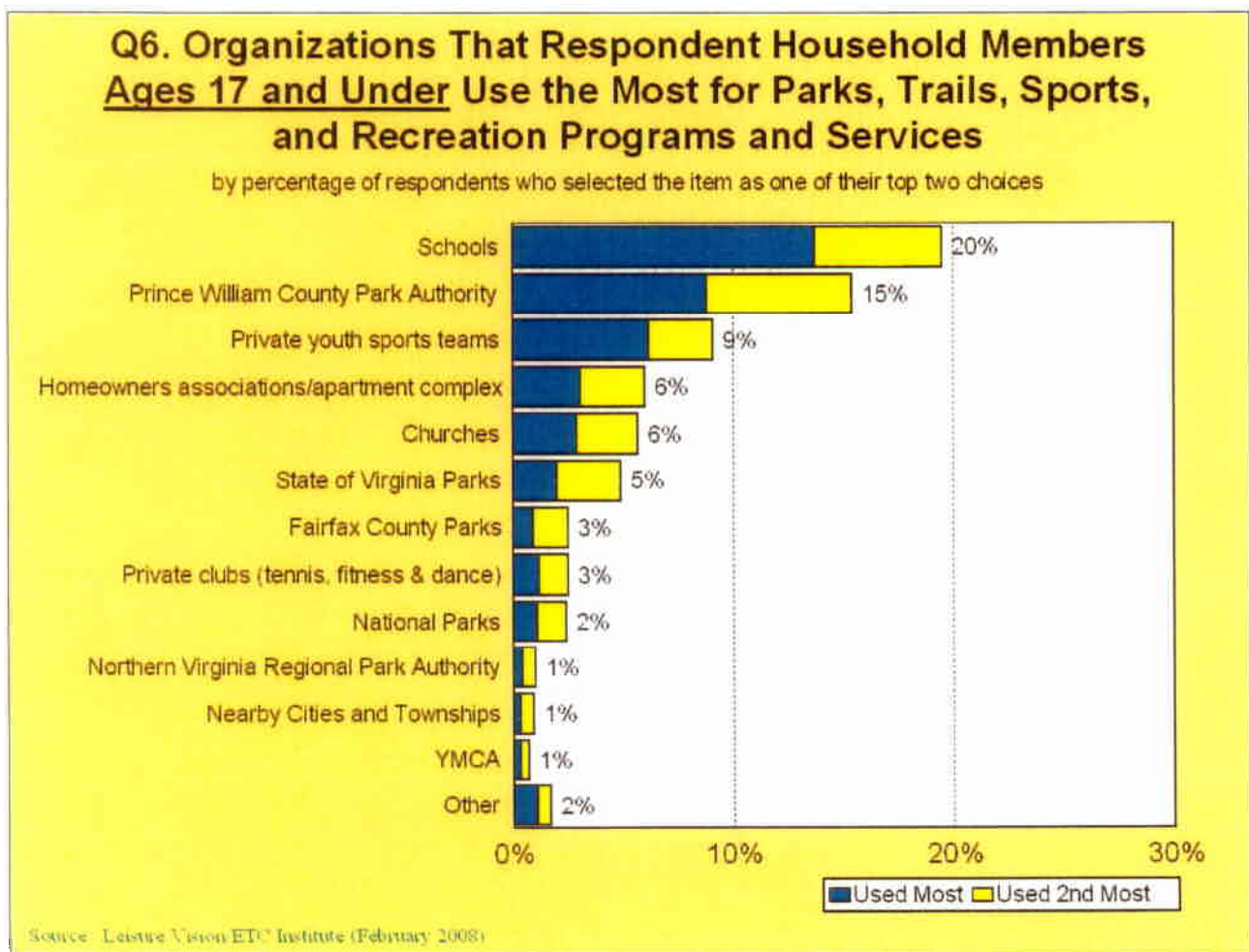


***Many respondents use more than one provider. The Prince William County Park Authority is the chief provider in all 7 voting districts.***

### ***Organizations Used the Most for Ages 17 and Under***

From a list of 12 organizations, respondents were asked to select the two organizations they use the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services for household members ages 17 and under. The following summarizes key findings:

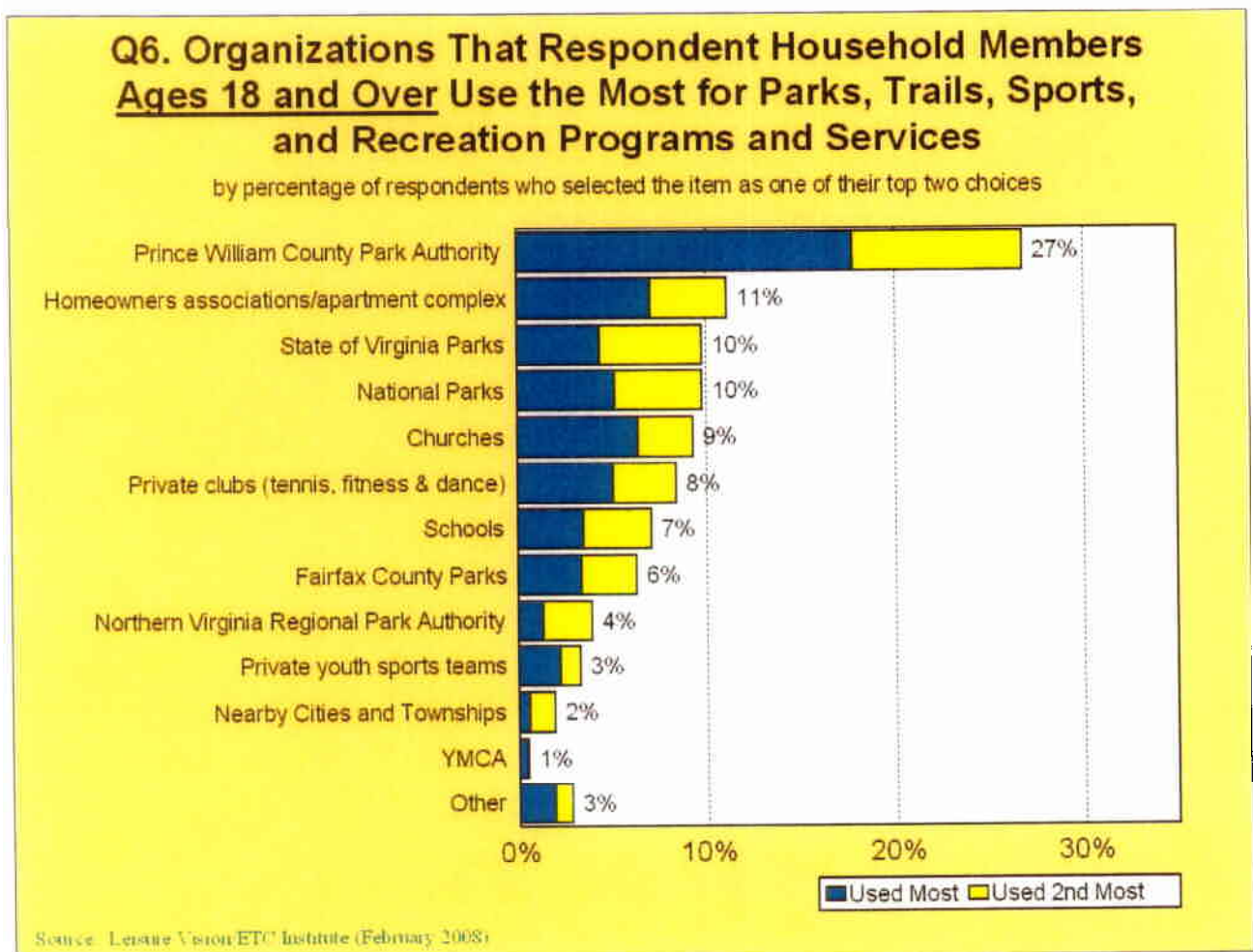
- **Based on the sum of their top two choices, the organizations used the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services by household members ages 17 and under are: schools (20%), Prince William County Park Authority (15%) and private youth sports teams (9%).** It should also be noted that schools had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the organization used the most by household members ages 17 and under.



### ***Organizations Used the Most for Ages 18 and Older***

From a list of 12 organizations, respondents were asked to select the two organizations they use the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services for household members ages 18 and older. The following summarizes key findings:

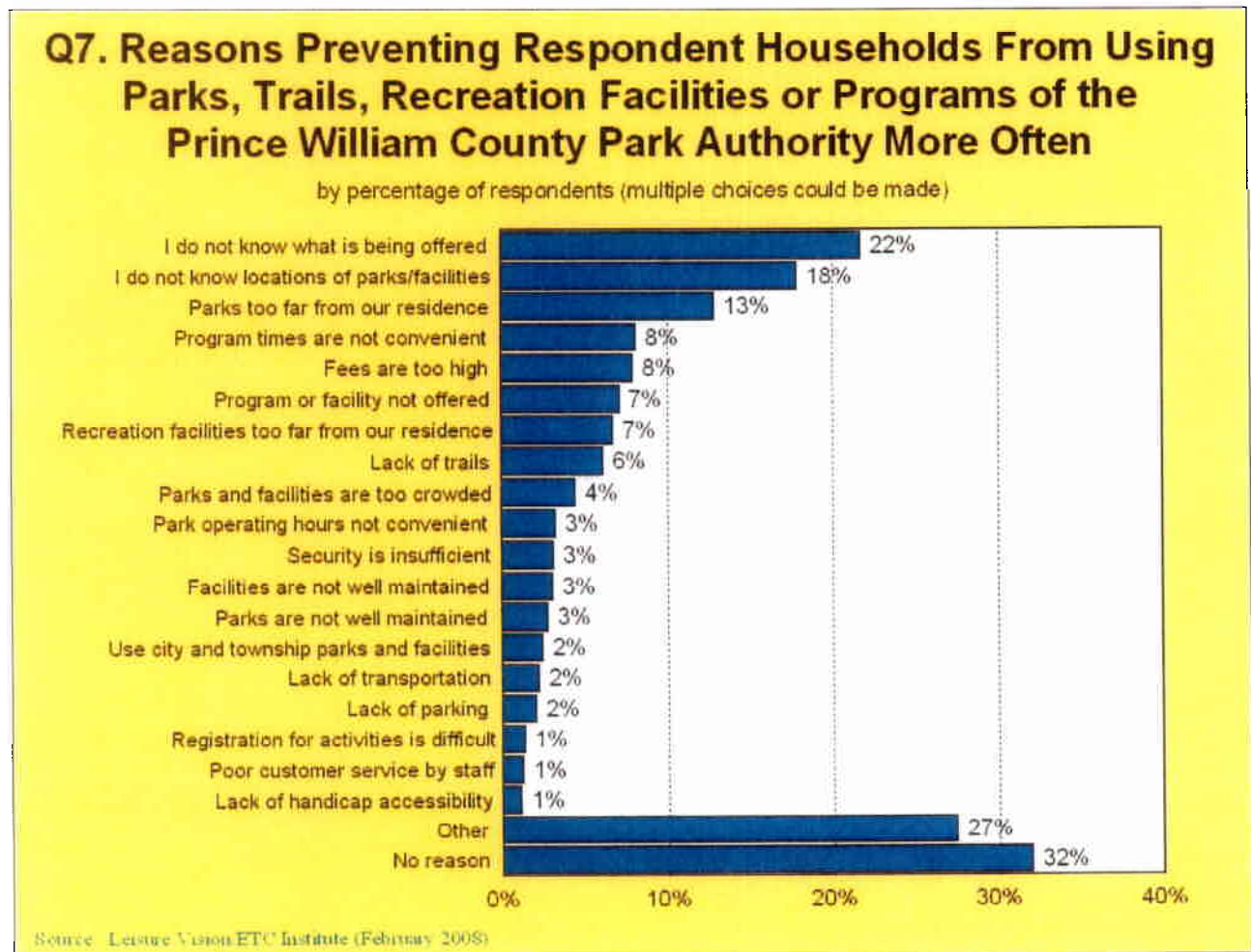
- **Based on the sum of their top two choices, the organizations used the most for parks, trails, sports, and recreation programs and services by household members ages 18 and older are: Prince William County Park Authority (27%), homeowners associations/apartment complex (11%), State of Virginia Parks (10%) and National Parks (10%).** It should also be noted that the Prince William County Park Authority had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the organization used the most by household members ages 18 and older.



### ***Reasons Preventing the Use of Facilities or Programs More Often***

From a list of 19 options, respondents were asked to select all the reasons preventing their household from using parks, trails, recreation facilities or programs of the Prince William County Park Authority more often. The following summarizes key findings:

- **The reasons preventing the highest percentage of respondent households from using Prince William County Park Authority parks, trails, recreation facilities and programs more often are: “I do not know what is being offered” (22%), “I do not know locations of parks/facilities” (18%) and “parks too far from our residence” (13%). It should also be noted that 27% of respondents selected “other”, with the top reason being “too busy/not enough time”.**



***Opportunities exist to improve marketing of parks and recreation programs and activities. Only 1% of respondents indicate poor customer service as a reason preventing additional usage.***