



HEALTH

***Programming,
Community Involvement,
and Park Safety:***

What matters in getting people more active?

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Background

- **Moderate physical activity is recommended for at least 150 minutes/week for adults and 420 minutes/week for children.**
- **Many people do not meet these recommendations, so finding additional ways to facilitate physical activity is important**
- **Neighborhood parks could be used to meet physical activity guidelines**
- **What determines whether parks are used for physical activity?**

Purpose

- **What programming is available at neighborhood parks?**
- **Who is served by park programs?**
- **Are there differences in park offerings and park use by neighborhood characteristics, like population density, race/ethnicity, and income level?**
- **What are the facilitators and barriers to park use?**

Methods

- **Data collected from two similar studies:**
 - **20 out of 51 parks included in a randomized, controlled intervention trial to see whether community involvement can increase park use and physical activity.**
 - **12 parks studied after Prop K improvements.**

Methods

- **Surveys of Park Directors (n=51).**
- **Observations of 30 parks using SOPARC.**
- **Surveys of park users and local residents in respective park neighborhoods (n=4,257).**
- **Ran bi-variate correlations between factors: number of people observed, number of park programs, number of organized activities observed, population density, park size, existence of park advisory board, perceptions of safety, population characteristics.**

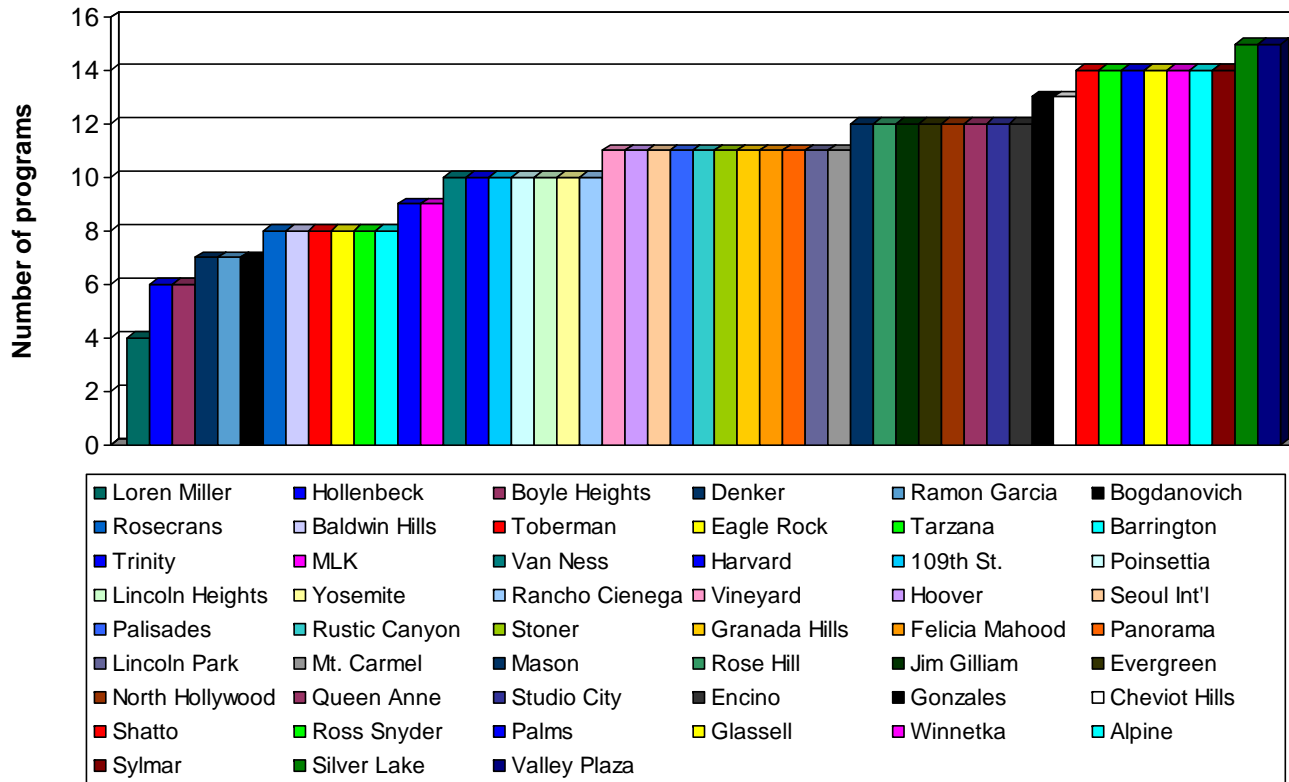
Outline

- **Park programs- How do they vary and do they influence park use?**
- **Observations- Does park use have anything to do with management, programming, community involvement, safety, and demographics?**
- **Implications for parks and their role in physical activity.**

Park Characteristics

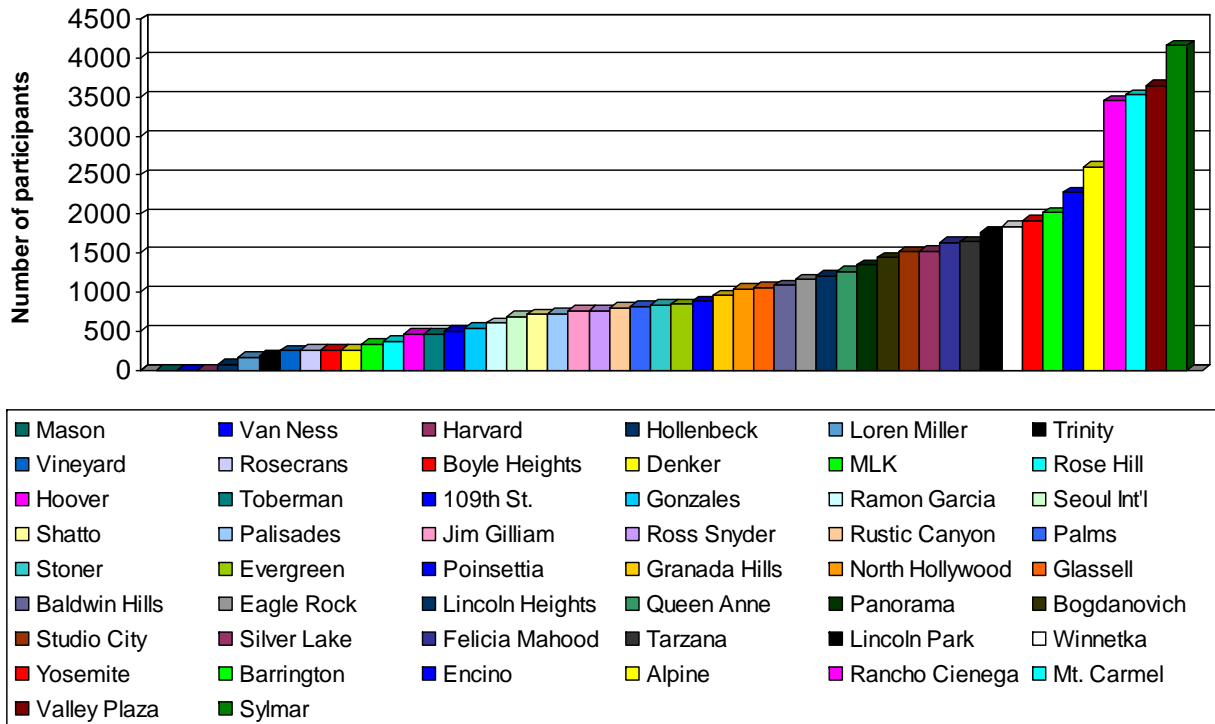
- **All parks have full-time staff that run recreational programming and events, and manage park.**
- **All parks are supposed to have a Park Advisory Board (PAB).**
- **Population within a 1 mile radius of the parks varies from 5,075 to 119,172 (avg 37,009 residents/3.14 sq miles).**
- **Acreage ranges from less than 1 acre to 64 acres (avg 12.5 acres).**
- **Number of people per park acre (counting those within 1 mile of park) varies from 110 to > 148,000 (Median = 4500 persons per park acre).**

Number of Park Programs Varies from 4-15



Weak positive association with park size and existence of park advisory board

Program Participation by Park Varies Dramatically



of participants associated with

- Size of park
- % white

Negatively associated with

- % households in poverty
- % Hispanic

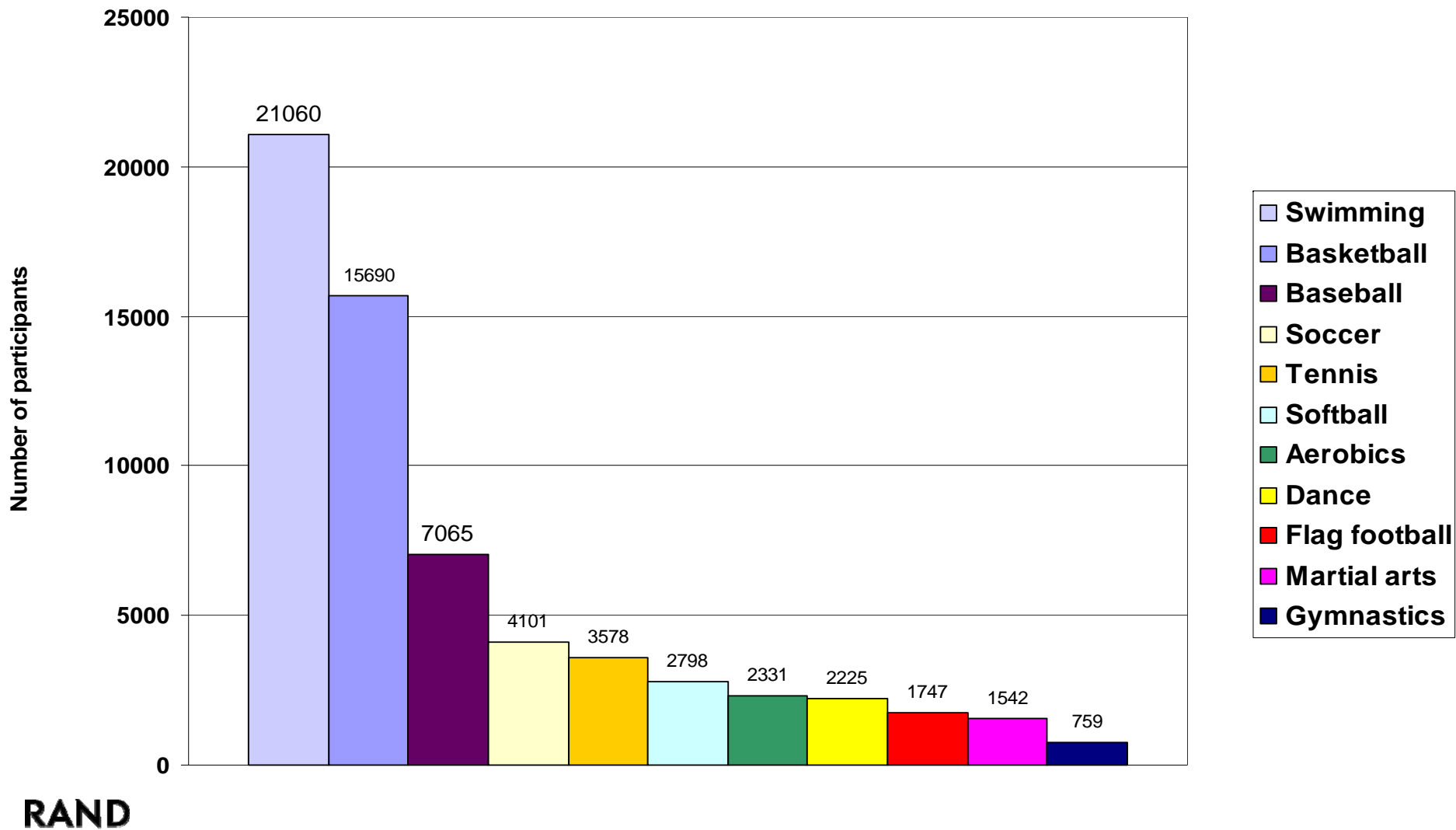
**Cheviot Hills reported 27,230 program participants

RAND

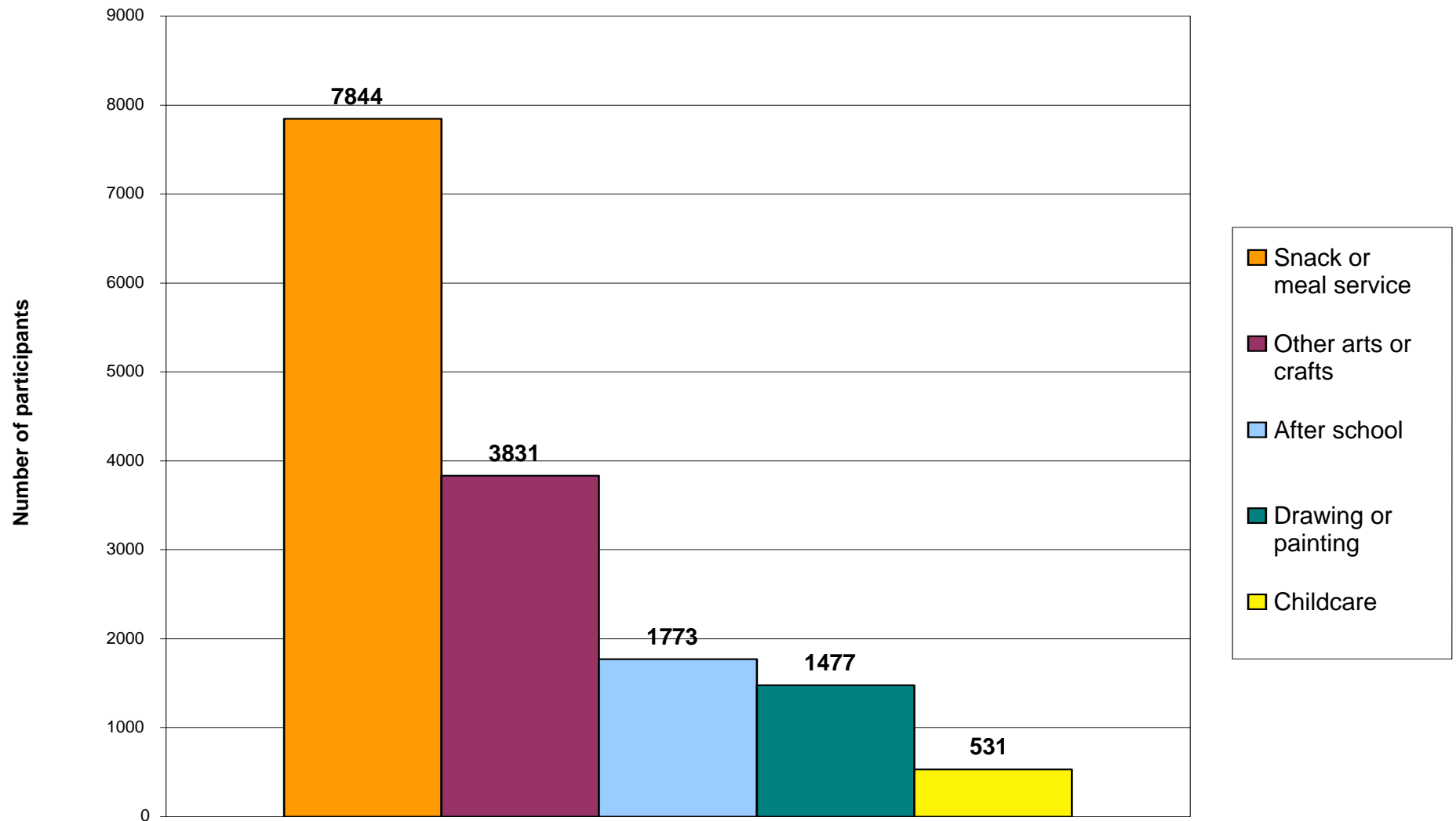
Note: Does not include 12 parks from Prop K study

65,084 Reported Participants in Physical Activity Programs

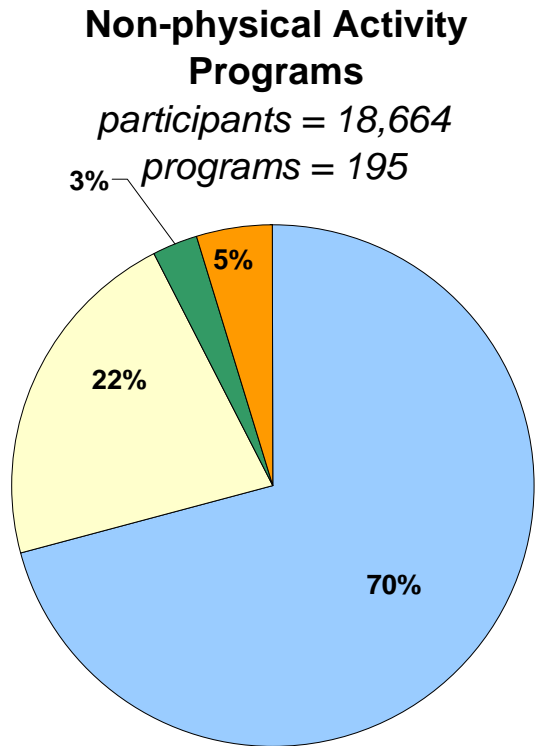
(83% children or teens)



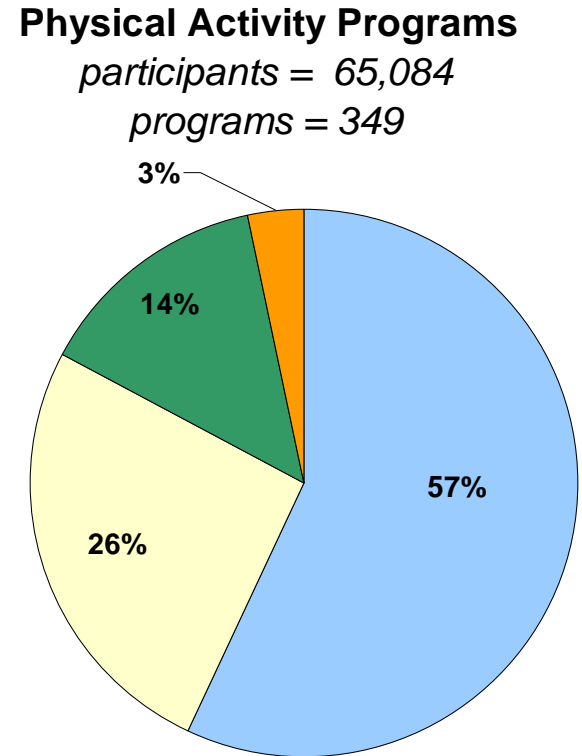
18,664 Reported Participants in Non-physical Activity Programs



Programs Serve Mainly Children and Teens

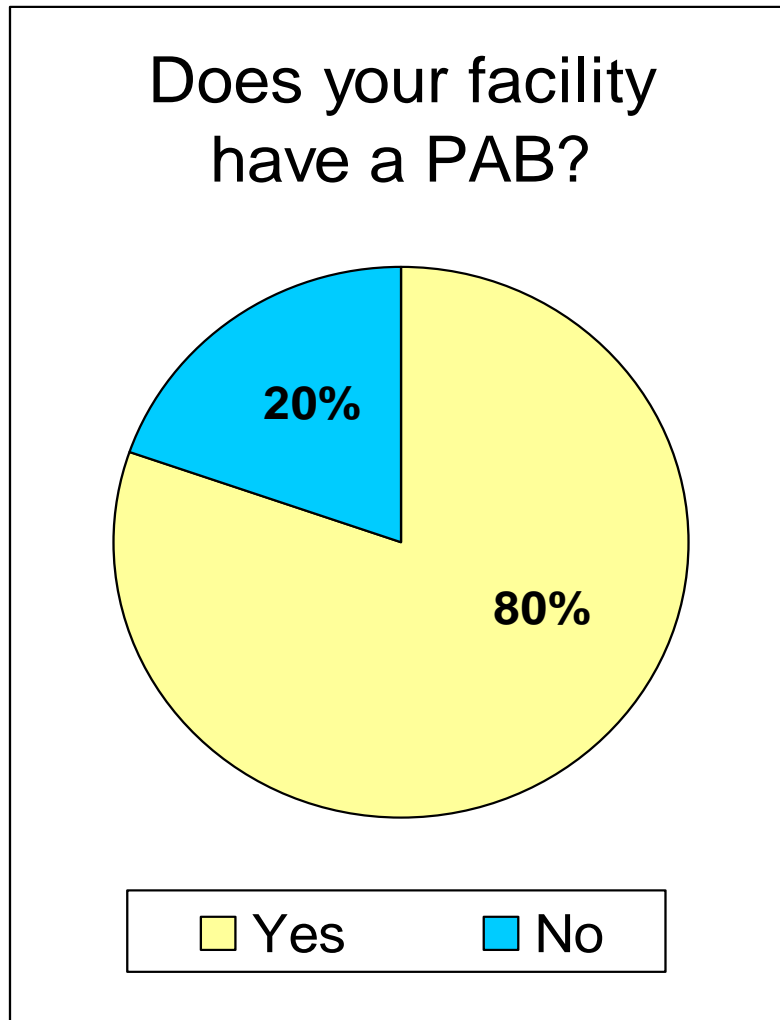


Children Adolescents
Adults Seniors



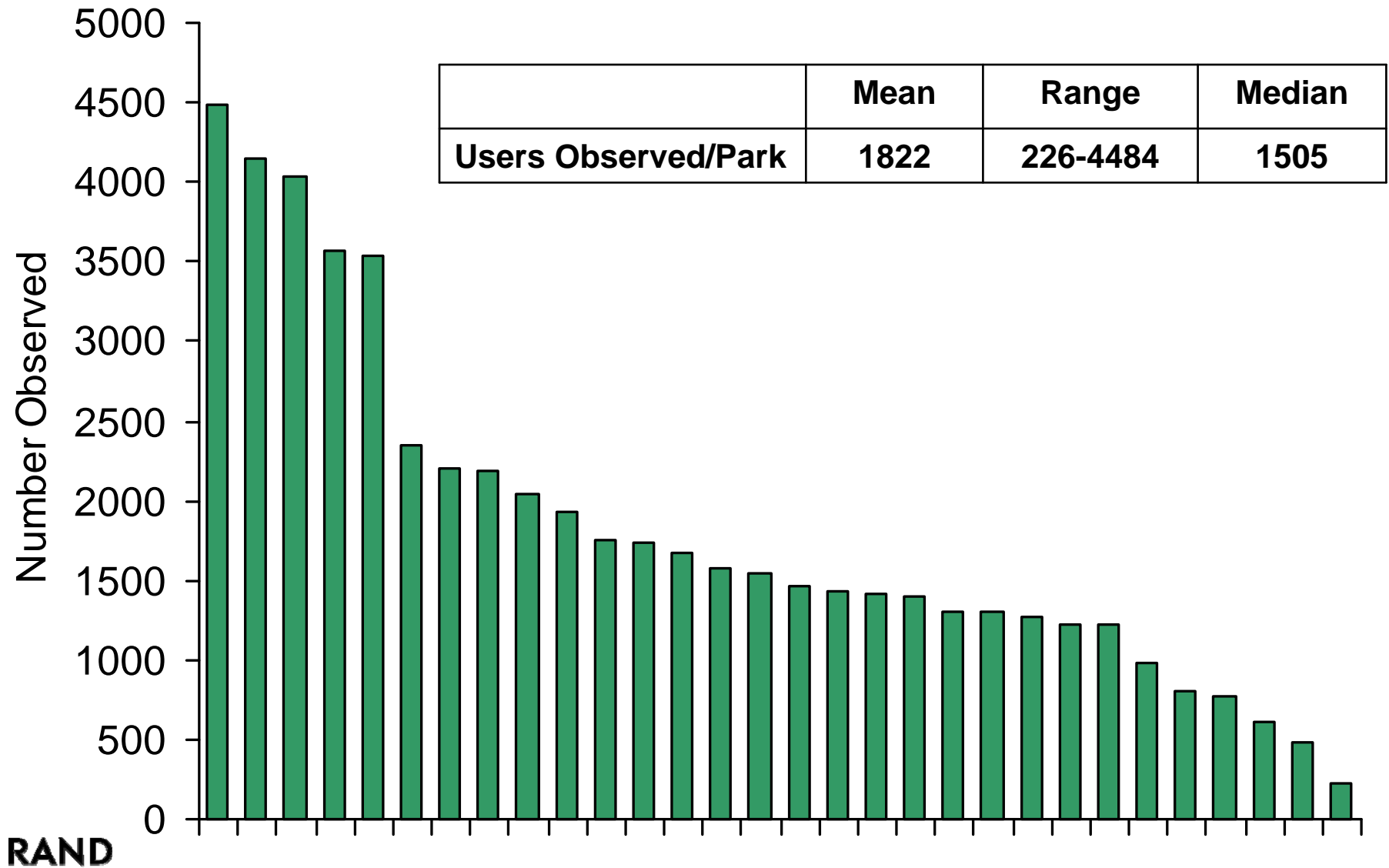
Children Adolescents
Adults Seniors

PAB Presence and Functions



1. # Annual Meetings
 - Average: 4
 - Range: 1 – 8
2. # Annual Events
 - Average: 1
 - Range: 0 – 5
3. PAB / Park staff relationship
 - Average: 4.0
 - Range: 0 – 5
4. Almost 40% of PABs participated in fund-raising

Number Park Users Observed



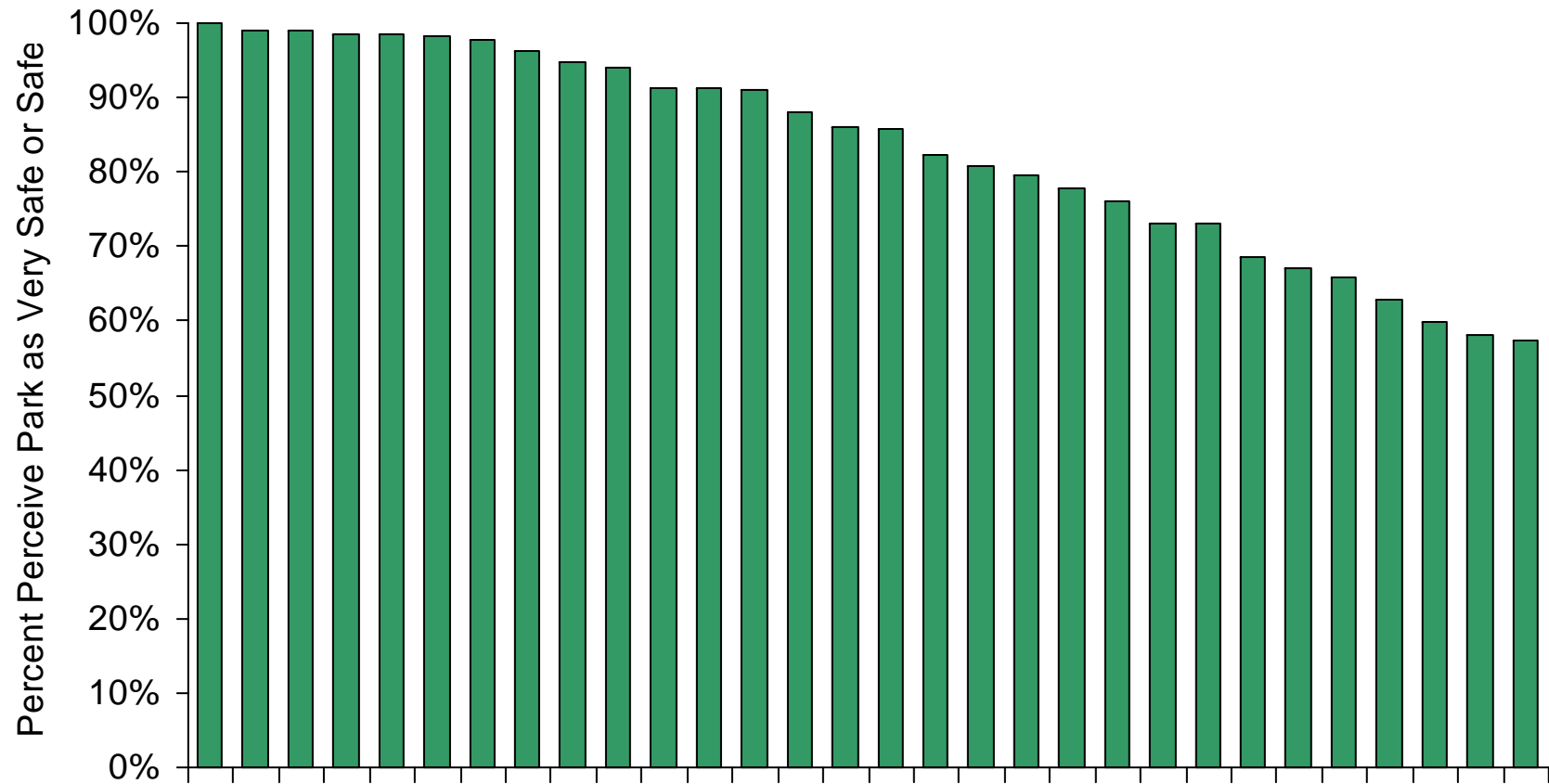
Factors NOT Associated with Number of Park Users

- **Population density of the surrounding neighborhood**
- **Acreage of the park**
- **Existence of a PAB**
- **Percent of households in poverty**
- **Park user and residents' perceptions of park safety**

Weak Associations with Park Use

- **More people observed if park offers more programs**
- **More park users observed in Latino neighborhoods**
- **Fewer park users observed in African American neighborhoods**

Level of Perceived Park Safety Varies Across Parks

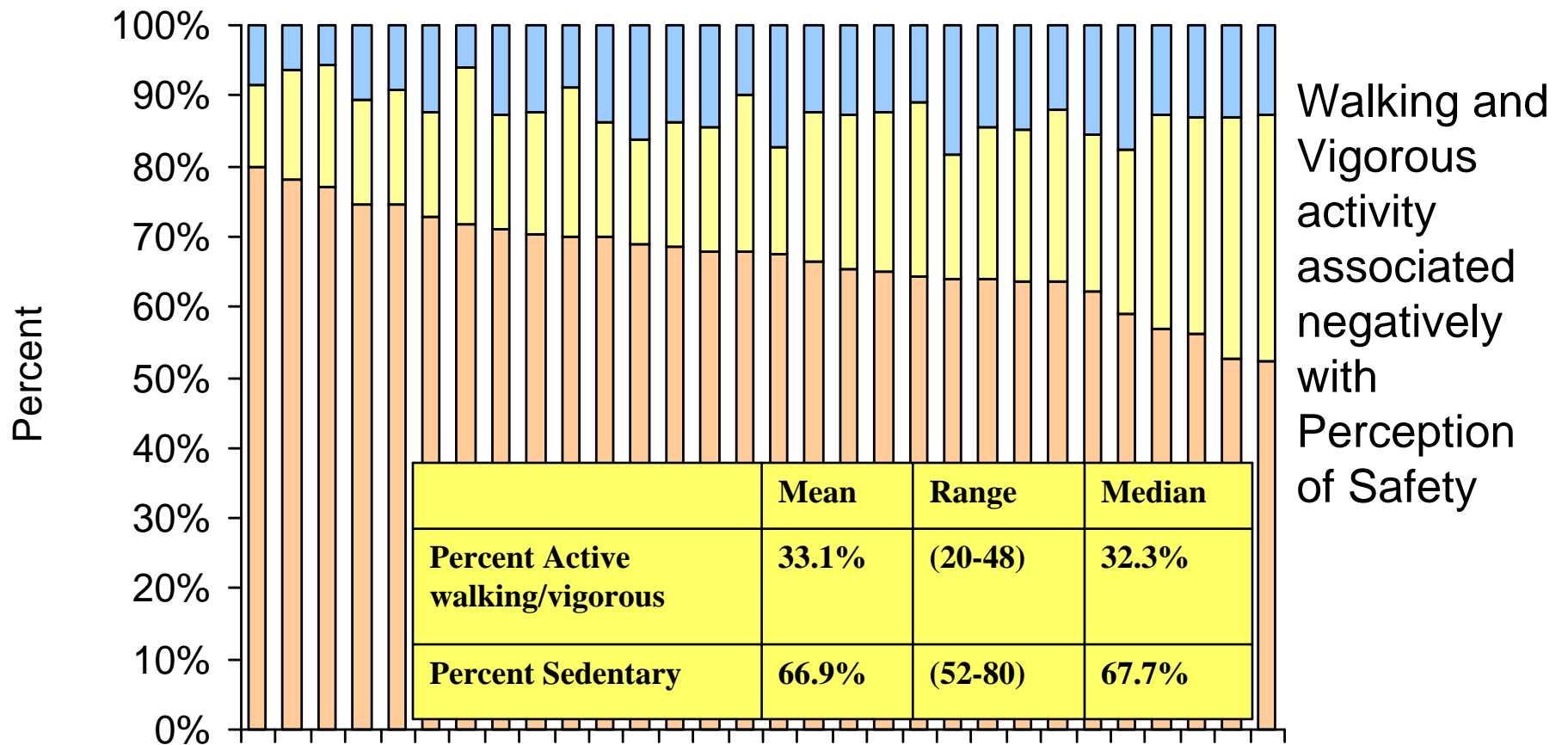


Factors Associated with Perceptions of Park Safety

- **Negatively associated with:**
 - **% households in poverty**
 - **Population density**
- **Lower levels of moderate-to-vigorous activity observed in parks perceived as safer**
- **Safety not associated with park use, the number of programs, the existence of a PAB, park size, or the number of organized activities observed**

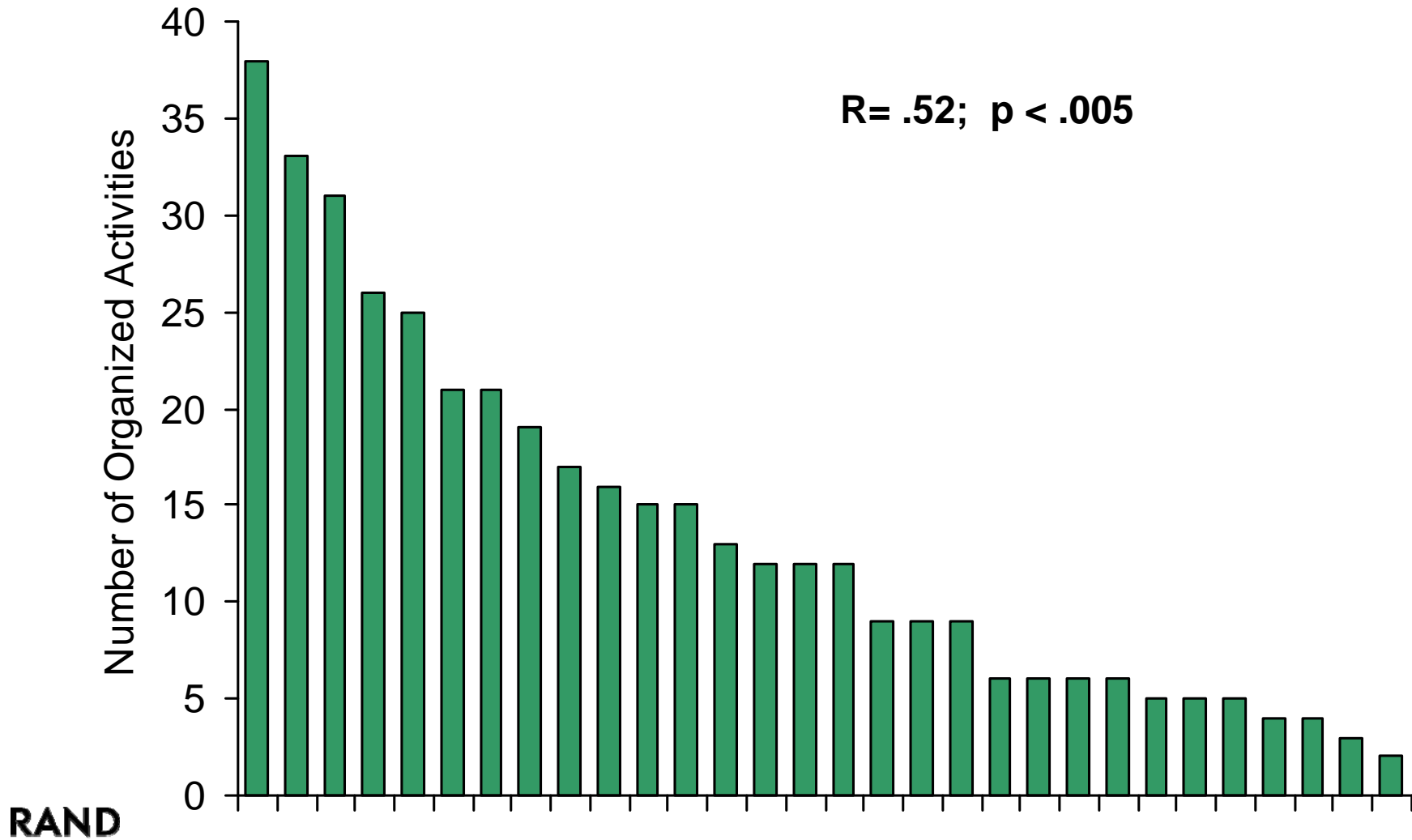
Activity Level of Park Users

Sedentary
 Walking
 Vigorous

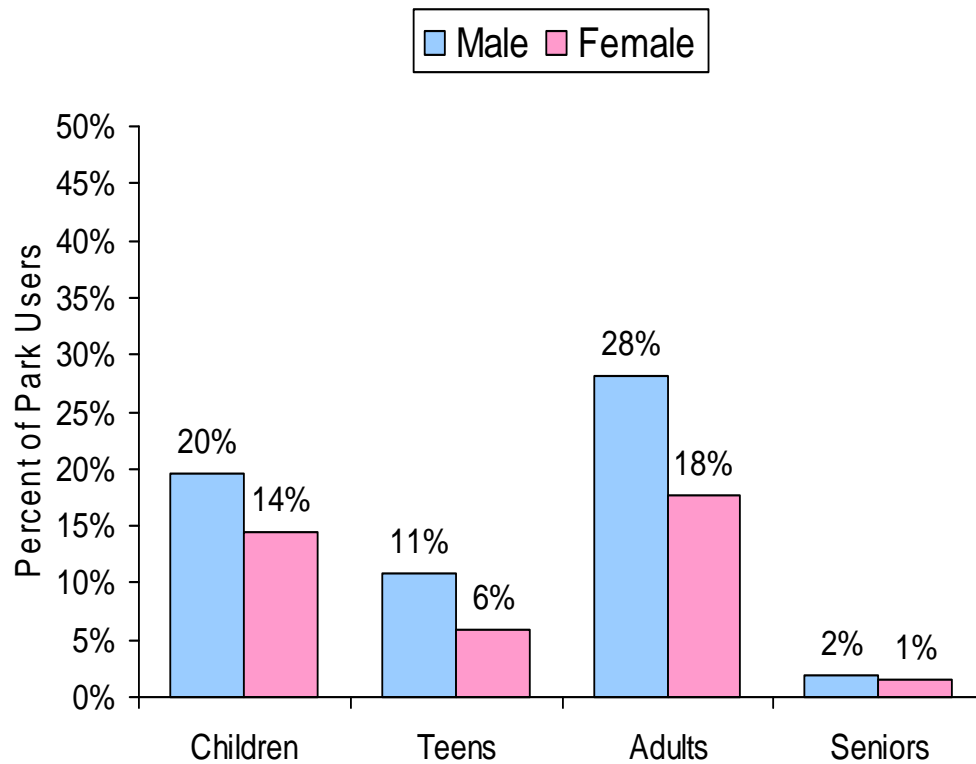


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Observed Organized Activities Strongly Associated with Number of Park Users

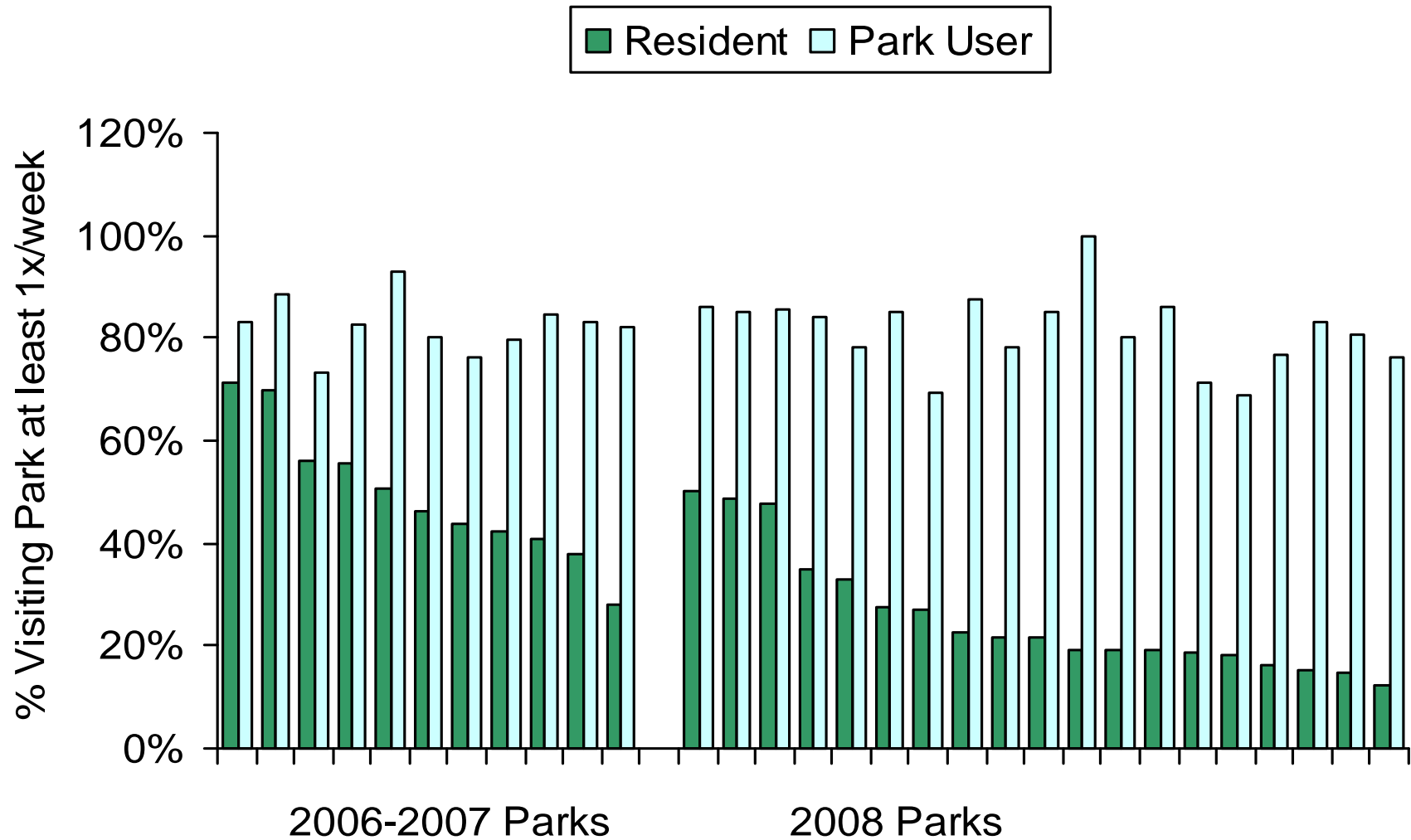


Park Users by Age Group and Gender



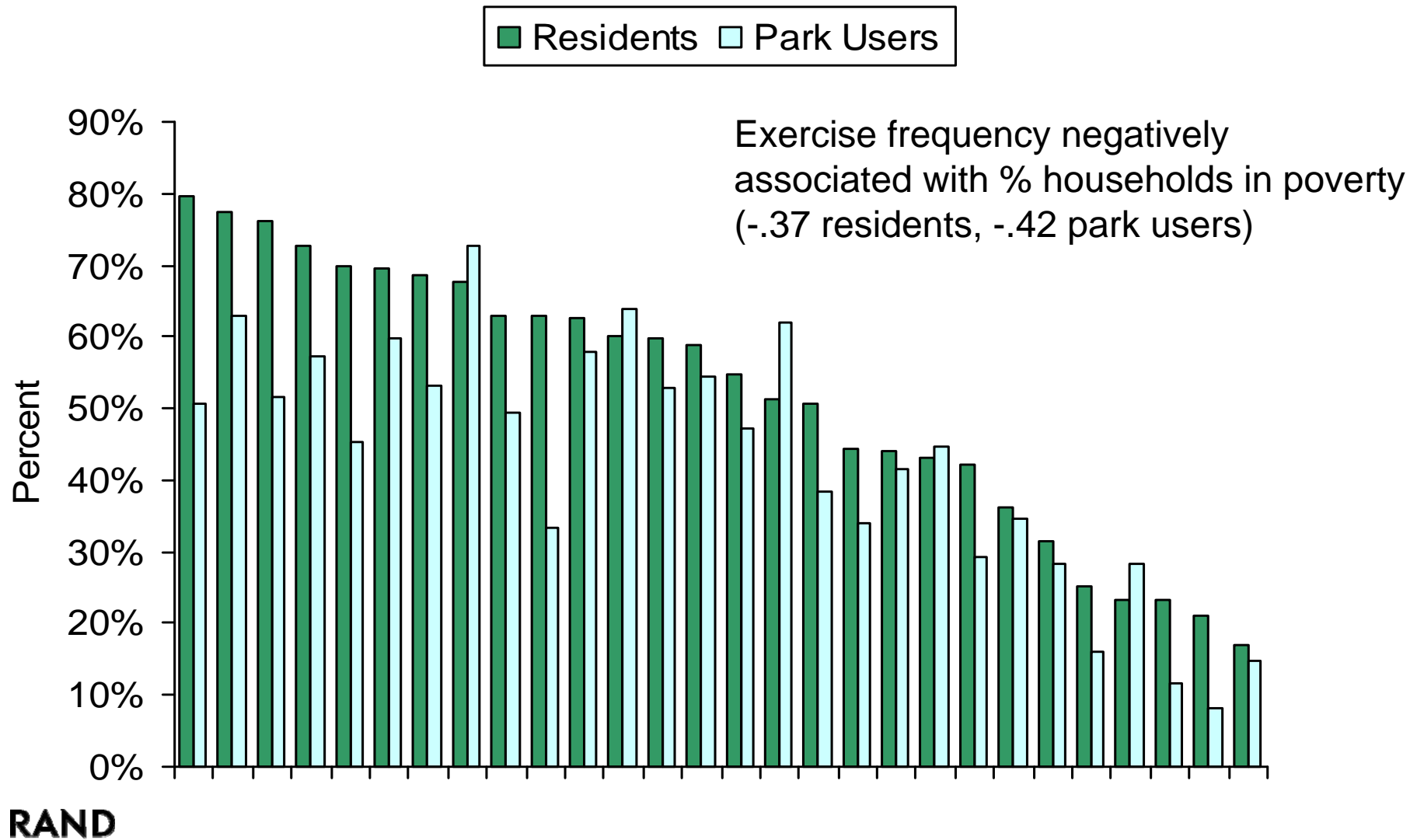
- **More women in parks perceived as safe.**
- **More women in smaller parks.**

No Correlation Between Visiting Park at Least 1 x/week and Other Factors



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Percent exercising on a regular basis



Parks With the Highest Use

- **Unique features (lake, water feature)**
- **More organized activities observed**
- **Lower income areas**







Marketing Analysis

- **Parks do not widely advertise services or hours.**
 - **Heavy reliance on word of mouth**
- **61% of residents and 46% of park users do not know park staff**
- **Park hosts events on selected holidays- not routinely**
- **Hours becoming more limited with budget cuts**
- **Many parks fence off fields and limit use to groups who buy permits**

Limitations

- **Only 30 parks to date- Effect sizes limited to large effects only**
- **Parks assessed in different seasons, although weather variation is not large**

Summary

- **Parks serve a fraction of the local population, and mainly target children**
- **Park use is associated most strongly with organized activities**
- **Perceptions of safety not associated with park use**
- **Parks are not managed to maximize use, but often discourage use to preserve lawns and reduce maintenance costs**

Conclusion

- **Local demographics and community characteristics marginally associated with use.**
- **Investment in programming and unique features appear to be associated with increased use.**
- **Regardless of budgets, marketing orientation of management has the potential to increase park use.**