



ASHE COUNTY

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028



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Acknowledgements

The Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) program is made possible by a U.S. Economic Development Administration State Tourism Grant which awarded \$6 Million to the State of North Carolina’s Supporting and Strengthening Resiliency in North Carolina’s Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Sectors Initiative. As a component of this Initiative, the North Carolina Department of Commerce’s Rural Economic Development Division (REDD) developed the CORE program. The CORE program offers strategic planning and technical assistance to help rural communities leverage North Carolina’s abundant outdoor recreation assets to bolster local economic vitality.



NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

The REDD announced the technical assistance program offering Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning and Asset Development services in late 2022. Communities from across the state applied to engage with strategic planning services and 34 local governments were accepted to participate. Main Street & Rural Planning (MS&RP) staff, who is responsible for facilitating strategic economic development planning and implementation services, worked with local government staff to communicate the goals of the program, identify local opportunities, and assemble a planning work group.

Cover Photo Credits: Mount Jefferson State Natural Area (top), New River State Park (bottom)

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Plan Adoption

Ashe County Board of Commissioners – September 18, 2023

Executive Summary

Through CORE, Ashe County collaborated with the N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and position communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposes strategies, goals, objectives, and actions that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.

The plan makes a total of 70 recommendations for action under 3 priority areas. These priority areas, identified by the local work group, include:

1. **Outdoor Infrastructure:** *To provide access for all to the county's outdoor amenities in a way that encourages conservation and preservation of the natural environment.*
2. **Communication & Activation:** *To promote the county's outdoor amenities and to educate new and existing users on available activities, recreation sites, and conservation principles.*
3. **Economic Impacts & Business Support:** *To utilize the county's outdoor amenities in a way that grows the local and regional economies.*

These recommendations should serve as guideposts for Ashe County as it considers future development efforts and should work in collaboration with other planning efforts undertaken by the county and related jurisdictions.

Background

There is a long tradition of outdoor recreation in North Carolina. From the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between there are incredible landscapes and unique places to pursue a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities generates a large economic impact. In recent years statistics show that participation in outdoor recreation is increasing, particularly in the wake of COVID-19.

Continued growth in participation leads to the opportunity for the increased economic impact of outdoor recreation, particularly in rural areas where many of the state's outdoor recreation assets are located. Also, there is great potential to expose and engage people that have historically not participated in outdoor recreation activities at the same rate as others. It is important for all individuals to have the opportunity and access to enjoy recreational pursuits, and to have an opportunity to benefit economically from outdoor recreation. These factors, combined with other on-going outdoor recreation initiatives across the state, make it an ideal time to think critically about how this sector can continue to be leveraged to benefit local economies.

Economic Impact

Outdoor recreation activity and associated expenditures generate a large economic impact. This is a broad economic sector that comprises a diverse range of industries including manufacturing, retail, arts, entertainment and recreation, as well as many supporting activities such as construction, travel and tourism, accommodation and food service, and many more.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis' Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, nationwide, in 2021, the outdoor recreation economy represented \$454.0 billion in current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), or 1.9 percent of the United States' total GDP. The outdoor recreation sector of the economy is growing at a faster rate than the overall economy. "Inflation-adjusted ("real") GDP for the outdoor recreation economy increased 18.9 percent in 2021, compared with a 5.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy, reflecting a rebound in outdoor recreation after the decrease of 21.6 percent in 2020. Real gross output for the outdoor recreation economy increased 21.7 percent, while outdoor recreation compensation increased 16.2 percent and employment increased 13.1 percent." Employment in the outdoor recreation industry increased in all 50 states during 2021.

At the state level, outdoor recreation contributed \$11.8 billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina's GDP. North Carolina ranked as the 11th highest state in "Value-Added Outdoor Recreation in Total outdoor recreation activities" in 2021. This included employment for over 130,000 individuals that resulted in over \$5.9 billion in total compensation. Employment in key industries within the outdoor recreation sector includes over 8,000 in

manufacturing, 44,000 in retail, 27,000 in accommodation and food service, and over 23,000 in arts, entertainment, and recreation.¹

Outdoor Recreation Participation

According to the 2022 Outdoor Industry Association ‘Outdoor Participation Trends Report’, “outdoor participation continues to grow at record levels. More than half (54%) of Americans ages 6 and over participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2021, and the outdoor recreation participant base grew 2.2% in 2021 to 164.2M participants. This growing number of outdoor participants, however, did not fundamentally alter long-term declines in high frequency or ‘core’ outdoor participation.”²

Studies show that approximately 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year.³ This includes more than 22.8 million visitors to North Carolina state parks in 2021 — three million more than any other year on record. Many parks, national forests, and other public recreation areas report increased visitation as well. These numbers represent a solid base of individuals participating in outdoor recreation



Photo 1: New River Outfitters, a canoe and kayak tour agency, along the North Fork of the New River

and contributing to associated economic activity. But there is still room to engage more individuals and continue to increase participation in outdoor recreation, particularly among populations that have not historically participated in outdoor recreation at levels comparable to others. Also, people increasingly want outdoor recreation opportunities that are convenient to

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2021>

² Outdoor Industry Association. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report.

<https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2022-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

³ The Citizen-Times. North Carolina outdoor recreation is a \$28 billion industry, poised for further growth. October 11th, 2019. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2019/10/11/outdoor-economy-conference-asheville-highlights-28-billion-industry/3923846002/>

where they live so they can participate on a regular basis without the need to travel long distances.⁴⁵



Photo 2: Ashe Park Pond Public Fishing Area

⁴ Headwaters Economics. Recreation Counties Attracting New Residents and Higher Incomes. <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/trends-performance/recreation-counties-attract/>

⁵ Outdoor Foundation. 2022 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. <https://outdoorindustry.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-Outdoor-Participation-Trends-Report.pdf>

Existing Plans Review

In an effort to complement and build upon subsequent community planning efforts, staff assembled and reviewed other relevant plans and documents. This review provides valuable insight and helps avoid duplication or contradictions of past planning proposals. The following documents were reviewed and considered during the CORE planning process.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Ashe County is located within the High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) Economic Development District (EDD). The HCCOG EDD's 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) indicated that existing outdoor amenities are an opportunity for the region. Under Priority 3, the plan states the intent to "Increase outdoor recreation opportunities" through development of "county-level outdoor recreation plans to guide facility improvements," improvement of "local parks to serve both residents and visitors," and expansion of "emergency response capacity." Further, Priority 5 expresses the intent to leverage the Blue Ridge Parkway, Outdoor Recreation Resources, and other "exceptional assets of the High Country District" through marketing, development of the supply chain, and support for local businesses. Identified projects related to Ashe County include the development of the Northern Peaks Trail, support for the Ashe County Industrial Park, and multiple tourism strategies promoting a variety of outdoor recreation activities in the County.

Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan

Ashe County completed and adopted a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan in November 2021 with assistance from McGill Associates. This plan looked at traditional parks and recreation programs and facilities as well as outdoor recreation assets and developed a comprehensive inventory of public lands, public facilities, and some private campgrounds and facilities throughout the county. Public input was taken into consideration via a community survey and a series of public meetings. The plan developed a series of recommendations ranging from accessibility, design, and maintenance of facilities to programming and marketing activities as well as an implementation action plan to guide the execution of those recommendations.

Comprehensive Land-Use Plan

In June of 2022 Ashe County completed a Comprehensive Land-Use Plan with assistance from NC Appalachian Regional Commission program staff. This plan looked at a variety of components related to traditional land-use planning and development strategies. Goal 5 – Tourism made a series of recommendations related to the ways in which outdoor recreation amenities should be promoted and managed for future growth. Goal 6 – Natural Environment highlighted ways that the county's outdoor assets could be utilized as a "community and economic resource" as well as prioritizing conservation efforts.

FLOW BETTER Project

In April 2022, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in partnership with Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, Watauga, and Wilkes Counties developed the Fixing Low Water Bridges for Emergency, Transportation, Technology, Equity, and Resilience (FLOW BETTER) plan to address concerns with flooding and access at key bridges throughout the region. The project was awarded \$10.7 million through the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary

Grant program. Project partners have also engaged with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and are advocating for creation of public river access along the North and South Forks of the New River in Ashe County where feasible during the replacement of the identified bridges.



Photo 3: Newly developed river access on the South Fork of the New River near NC-163



Setting

Ashe County (pop. 26,577) is located in the farthest corner of northwestern North Carolina and shares a border with Tennessee to the west and Virginia to the north. The County also borders Watauga, Wilkes, and Alleghany Counties and contains the three municipalities of Jefferson, Lansing, and West Jefferson. The recent widening of US Highway 221 has provided easier access traveling to and from the County and travel time is approximately 30 minutes to Boone and 1.5 hours to Winston-Salem.

The county boasts a variety of outdoor assets including the New River and New River State Park, Mount Jefferson and Elk Knob State Parks, Pond Mountain and Three Top Mountain Game Lands, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Cherokee National Forest, and more. A recently acquired 150 acre parcel at Paddy Mountain as well as another 150 acre parcel adjacent to the existing Ashe County Park will both provide new recreation experiences in the coming months and years.



Photo 4: View of Betseys Rock Falls overlook along the Blue Ridge Parkway

The future Northern Peaks State Trail will connect the Town of West Jefferson to the Town of Boone along a planned 40 mile trail beginning at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area in Ashe County. According to North Carolina State Parks, the northern peaks are also known as the “Amphibolite Mountains and include Howard Knob, Elk Knob, Snake Mountain, Three Top Mountain, Phoenix Mountain, Paddy Mountain, and Mount Jefferson.” The mountain chain contains the largest concentration of amphibolite substrate in western North Carolina producing unusually rich soils and giving rise to a high level of diversity in exotic flora and fauna.⁶ Groundbreaking for an initial trailhead in Ashe County is scheduled for Summer 2023.

⁶ North Carolina State Parks. (2023, July 17). *Northern Peaks State Trail*. Retrieved from NC Trails: <https://trails.nc.gov/state-trails/northern-peaks-state-trail>

Planning Process

Under the REDD, MS&RP Center staff facilitates the CORE strategic planning process with participation from the local government and an established local work group. This work group is comprised of individuals who have a vested interest in leveraging outdoor recreation to enhance economic development. The planning process employs established planning methods including presenting economic and associated data, asset mapping, economic driver identification, SWOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, business questionnaires, local work group discussions, and more. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

Situational Analysis

Prior to beginning the planning process, MS&RP Center staff identified and reviewed other local and regional planning projects including the 2021 Ashe County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2022 Ashe County Comprehensive Plan, 2022 FLOW BETTER USDOT RAISE Grant Application, 2020 NC State Parks Proposed Land Protection Plan, and others as needed. Additionally, staff reviewed a variety of demographic and market data sources available to NC Commerce that were used to influence the final recommendations of this report.

Local Work Group Establishment and Involvement

Prior to the first project meeting, the Ashe County CORE work group was asked to complete the Primary Planning Group Initial Questionnaire. This survey was designed by the NC MS&RP Center team to identify the priorities and opinions of the local work group. Results of the survey were shared at the first meeting to encourage and guide the initial discussion.

Beginning in March 2023, NC MS&RP Center staff met with the Ashe County CORE work group for a series of discussion sessions which included topics on local outdoor recreation assets and experiences, small business and entrepreneurship, and the outdoor industry. The work group was made up of individuals representing multiple departments within the Ashe County government, representatives from the three municipalities in the county, two local conservancy organizations, and representatives from the Ashe County Chamber of Commerce and Cooperative Extension office. All meetings were held in-person either at the Ashe County Courthouse or at the Ashe County Agricultural Building.

A full outline of the work group meetings can be seen in the table below.

Meeting Date	Topic(s)
March 30, 2023	Meeting #1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of the CORE process• Defining Outdoor Recreation and the OR Economy• Review of Work Group Survey

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Community Assets
May 4, 2023	Meeting #2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an Itinerary • Review of Community Survey • Creating a Vision
June 8, 2023	Meeting #3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Stakeholder Feedback • Review of Economic Positioning Statement • Review of Asset Mapping • Developing Goals for the Work Plan
July 20, 2023	Meeting #4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Objectives and Actions for the Work Plan • Identifying Potential Projects

Asset Mapping

During the initial work group meeting, staff facilitated an asset mapping exercise to identify key outdoor recreation and related business assets in the community. Following the exercise, MS&RP Center GIS staff created a map of these assets to assist in the planning process. The maps were then shared with the work group and refined throughout the process to ensure accuracy and to provide a geographic visualization of potential project areas.

These maps can be found in the appendices of this document.

Public Engagement

A community-wide survey was conducted as a part of the planning process to gauge community interest in outdoor recreation, opinions of existing and potential outdoor and business assets, economic impacts of outdoor recreation, and local opinions of tourism and community development. The results of



Photo 5: Footsloggers Outdoor & Travel Outfitters in Downtown West Jefferson

this survey were summarized and shared with the local work group at their second meeting and influenced the recommendations in this plan.

Additionally, the local project leads provided NC MS&RP Center staff with a list of additional community stakeholders who they felt could positively contribute to the planning project. These individuals represented outdoor recreation participants, local business owners, parks and recreation experts, and other fields. NC Commerce staff contacted these individuals and held one-on-one phone conversations to better understand ways in which the county may support growing the outdoor economy. A summary of these conversations was presented to the work group at the third meeting and used to inform the recommendations in this plan.

A summary of both the community survey and stakeholder interviews can be found in the appendices of this document.

Vision Statement Development

At the second meeting, the local work group was tasked with identifying an overarching vision for this project that would then help to define the goals, objectives, and actions of the final work plan. The group shared their ideas which were later crafted into a formal statement and shared for additional feedback at later meetings. The final Vision Statement agreed upon by the work group is shared below.

CORE Strategic Plan Development & Adoption

Building on the Vision Statement, the work group identified three primary focus areas with associated goals, objectives, and actions to be taken to continue moving the outdoor economy in Ashe County forward.

A draft of this document was produced in August 2023 and shared with the Ashe County CORE project local leads for review and comment. Following review, the Ashe County Board of Commissioners adopted the plan on September 18, 2023.



Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Ashe County will be responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting accomplishments on the objectives of this plan to the Rural Economic Development Division.

Plan Implementation

Maintaining a dedicated group to follow through after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan is critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies. This could be the same work group that helped develop this plan, or another similar group that is representative of the community and can advance the goals of this plan. The sustained presence of such a group builds social capital within the group that improves their ability to work together and effectively address common goals.

Furthermore, a dedicated group ensures continuity from planning stage through implementation, provides accountability to ensure that objectives are being met, and allows the community to react and respond quickly when an opportunity is presented. But this group should not be the sole entity responsible for implementing all the goals of the plan. Instead, the group should function as a convener and point of contact to connect to other individuals, organizations, and resources to help the broader community achieve these goals. Maintaining a regular meeting schedule will also help increase the effectiveness of the group, and the overall plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation to review progress on the goals, objectives, and action steps in this plan, via regular review sessions with the Strategic Planning team and other community stakeholders, is critical to ensuring it remains a viable, living document. REDD staff will periodically communicate and provide assistance as needed to help advance the goals and document the outcomes of the plan.



Vision Statement

Ashe County strives to support the outdoor economy through sustainable and inclusive practices that value long-term economic stability, conservation of our natural and cultural resources, and prioritization of infrastructure development. As we pursue community development, we remain committed to emphasizing quality of life for our residents and extending a warm welcome to visitors.



Analysis & Recommendations

Outdoor Infrastructure

Goal 1: *To provide access for all to the county's outdoor amenities in a way that encourages conservation and preservation of the natural environment.*

Objective 1.1: Provide additional mountain biking experiences for all skill levels throughout the county.

Action 1.1.1: Continue to develop the expansion project at Ashe County Park including a mountain biking skills course and trails for all skill levels.

Action 1.1.2: Research and apply for funding opportunities specific to mountain bike trail building.

Action 1.1.3: Identify and map additional sites for future mountain biking trails.

Action 1.1.4: Support installation of additional bicycle repair stations, bike racks, and other bicycle infrastructure at parks and other key locations in the community.

Action 1.1.5: Work to enhance and improve Lansing Park mountain bike trail to attract new and returning users.

Objective 1.2: Develop additional river access points and implement improvements to existing access points.

Action 1.2.1: Identify properties where new river access points can be developed on both the North and South Forks of the New River.

Action 1.2.2: Collaborate with NC State Parks on future park facilities development and protection of critical areas identified in the New River State Park General Management Plan.

Action 1.2.3: Where possible, coordinate with private property owners along the New River to install restroom access and other amenities for recreation participants.

Action 1.2.4: Develop a coordinated marketing and promotions effort for current access points and river uses to attract new users.

Action 1.2.5: Review Sheets Bridge river access point for potential for improvements and facilities.

Action 1.2.6: Advocate to NC Department of Transportation on the FLOW BETTER project to provide additional river access where possible during low water bridge replacements.

Action 1.2.7: Encourage entrepreneur to develop a shuttle service for people who bring their own boats or boards.

Action 1.2.8: Prioritize accessibility for all at any new or updated river access areas.

Action 1.2.9: Develop a coordinated effort to protect shrinking access to trout waters including a potential partnership with local churches located along streams to offer access.

Action 1.2.10: Advocate to NC Department of Transportation to improve informal pull-off areas for expanded parking and accessibility.

Objective 1.3: Formalize a plan for future maintenance of existing outdoor amenities among local jurisdictions.

Action 1.3.1: Encourage collaboration between local jurisdictions to plan for maintenance of any new or existing outdoor recreation amenities through development of a maintenance plan that includes funding and organization.

Action 1.3.2: Encourage formalization of a non-profit, volunteer organization to assist the local jurisdictions in advocating for, building, and maintaining the county's outdoor recreation assets.

Objective 1.4: Prioritize protection and expansion of existing hunting lands and identify additional areas for hunting.

Action 1.4.1: Collaborate with local jurisdictions, NC Wildlife Resource Commission, and local property owners to identify potential new hunting areas and opportunities to expand existing hunting areas.

Action 1.4.2: Identify locations for restrooms and other facilities near hunting access areas.

Objective 1.5: Provide additional hiking trails for all skill levels throughout the county.

Action 1.5.1: Collaborate with local jurisdictions, state agencies, and local property owners to identify new hiking areas throughout the county.

Action 1.5.2: Support NC State Parks and NC Wildlife Resources Commission efforts to create more trails on existing public areas including Three Top Mountain Game Land, Pond Mountain Game Land, and Elk Knob State Park.

Action 1.5.3: Research potential funding sources for new and expanded trails including advocating to the NC General Assembly for project funding.

Action 1.5.4: Prioritize opportunities for loop trails and day hiking opportunities throughout the county.

Action 1.5.5: Support efforts to develop long distance hiking opportunities throughout the county and region.

Action 1.5.6: Develop a coordinated marketing strategy for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail in Ashe County and with regional partners.

Action 1.5.7: Continue to support the development of the Northern Peaks Trail and prioritize completion of the connection between Paddy Mountain and Mount Jefferson.

Action 1.5.8: Research the possibility of a multi-use trail connection between the community of Warrensville and the Town of Lansing.

Action 1.5.9: Work to expand the existing trails at Lansing Park.

Objective 1.6: Design and build greenways for connectivity in key areas of the county.

Action 1.6.1: Prioritize the development of a greenway connecting the Towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson along the US-221 corridor.

Action 1.6.2: Research the feasibility of a future greenway connection from the Towns of Jefferson and West Jefferson to the community of Warrensville.

Communication & Activation

Goal 2: To promote the county's outdoor amenities and to educate new and existing users on available activities, recreation sites, and conservation principles.

Objective 2.1: Develop a unified brand and marketing campaign to promote leave no trace principles to both locals and visitors using outdoor amenities in the county.

Action 2.1.1: Continue to support the Keep Ashe Beautiful campaign and work to expand those efforts.

Action 2.1.2: Develop a marketing campaign to encourage trash and recycling efforts around outdoor areas including information regarding local convenience center locations.

Action 2.1.3: Promote Leave No Trace principles and host education events at local recreation areas.

Action 2.1.4: Create and implement a uniform facility design for outdoor recreation assets throughout the county.

Objective 2.2: Develop a coordinated marketing effort between communities and outdoor sites to promote the county's outdoor recreation assets.

Action 2.2.1: Coordinate with local tourism partners, including tourism-oriented businesses, to develop a better digital presence for maps and information about outdoor recreation amenities.

Action 2.2.2: Identify a point agency to lead a collaborative effort between all Ashe County local governments, state agencies, and other partners to unify messaging and branding around outdoor recreation amenities.

Action 2.2.3: Prioritize the inclusion of leave no trace and other conservation principles in all promotional efforts.

Action 2.2.4: Utilize QR codes on any new or updated signage for easier digital access.

Objective 2.3: Design and implement wayfinding and blueway signage to guide and educate outdoor recreation participants.

Action 2.3.1: Research and identify funding opportunities for wayfinding and blueway signage.

Action 2.3.2: Coordinate with all local governments and state agencies to ensure consistency of signage throughout the county.

Action 2.3.3: Prioritize the inclusion of safety information on new or updated signage.

Objective 2.4: Coordinate with local and regional emergency services personnel in outdoor recreation planning initiatives.

Action 2.4.1: Advocate to service providers and government agencies to expand cell service and broadband connectivity in remote recreation areas.

Action 2.4.2: Research and implement best practices for safety methods in other recreation communities.

Objective 2.5: Develop a marketing strategy to promote the county as a road and gravel cycling destination.

Action 2.5.1: Utilize the High Country Council of Government's 2014 High Country Regional Bicycle Plan as a starting point for promoting road and gravel cycling routes in the county.

Action 2.5.2: Develop and promote a Share the Road campaign to educate locals and visitors about bicycle safety and awareness.

Action 2.5.3: Identify and promote routes in the county for road and gravel cycling that showcase local businesses, attractions, and other amenities and that are deemed most safe for riders.

Action 2.5.4: Advocate to the NC Department of Transportation to provide bike lanes where feasible during repaving or new construction projects.

Action 2.5.5: Implement signage and road markings in popular cycling areas to promote awareness and safety.

Action 2.5.6: Support installation of additional bicycle repair stations, bike racks, and other bicycle infrastructure at key locations in the county.

Economic Impacts & Business Support

Goal 3: To utilize the county's outdoor amenities in a way that grows the local and regional economies.

Objective 3.1: Identify and support local entrepreneurship efforts around outdoor recreation in the county.

Action 3.1.1: Identify a local entrepreneur to operate a shuttle service for outdoor participants in the county.

Action 3.1.2: Identify a local entrepreneur to operate bicycle and equipment rentals in the county.

Action 3.1.3: Identify an outfitter that would be willing to operate along the North Fork of the New River.

Action 3.1.4: Develop partnerships with local colleges and universities for outdoor workforce training to address the needs identified by existing and potential businesses.

Action 3.1.5: Develop partnerships with the Ashe County School System, Wilkes Community College, local scouting groups, churches, and others to engage local youth in outdoor recreation participation, entrepreneurship opportunities, and workforce education.

Objective 3.2: Promote the Ashe Industrial Park to outdoor gear manufacturers.

Action 3.2.1: Support the Ashe County Economic Development Commission in efforts to attract outdoor sector manufacturers.

Action 3.2.2: Develop a partnership with the [Outdoor Business Alliance](#) to better understand the needs of outdoor oriented businesses.

Action 3.2.3: Attend the [Outdoor Economy Conference](#) and other outdoor industry trade shows to promote Ashe County for business.

Action 3.2.4: Identify local and regional small businesses and entrepreneurs who may be interested in expanding their businesses.

Objective 3.3: Continue support of existing small businesses in the county and expand those efforts where possible.

Action 3.3.1: Include local guide services and outfitters in updated marketing efforts.

Action 3.3.2: Collaborate with the Ashe County Chamber of Commerce to develop a subcommittee that specifically supports the needs of outdoor businesses in the county.

Action 3.3.3: Host an annual outdoor recreation forum with all private, public, and non-profit partners in the county.

Action 3.3.4: Continue and expand promotion of Fish Ashe, Hike Ashe, and Canoe Ashe brochures and online maps; Develop a Bike Ashe map and guide.

Action 3.3.5: Ensure that all outdoor guides and itineraries showcase local businesses where applicable to encourage maximum economic impacts.

Objective 3.4: Collaborate with the Ashe County Cooperative Extension office to support and expand agritourism efforts in the county.

Action 3.4.1: Identify ways to support agricultural businesses year round.

Action 3.4.2: Promote the choose-and-cut map created by the Ashe County Christmas Tree Association.

Action 3.4.3: Identify potential winter activities that could be hosted by local organizations or businesses such as ice skating or curling events.

Objective 3.5: Organize a local working group to meet regularly and continue to move forward the outdoor economy in the county.

Action 3.5.1: Continue regular meetings of the Ashe County CORE work group to begin implementation of actions identified in this plan.

Action 3.5.2: Invite other critical partners to participate in the working group and ensure diverse and equitable representation of county residents, businesses, and others.

Action 3.5.2: Participate in the Building Outdoor Communities initiative led by the [Made by Mountains](#) organization.



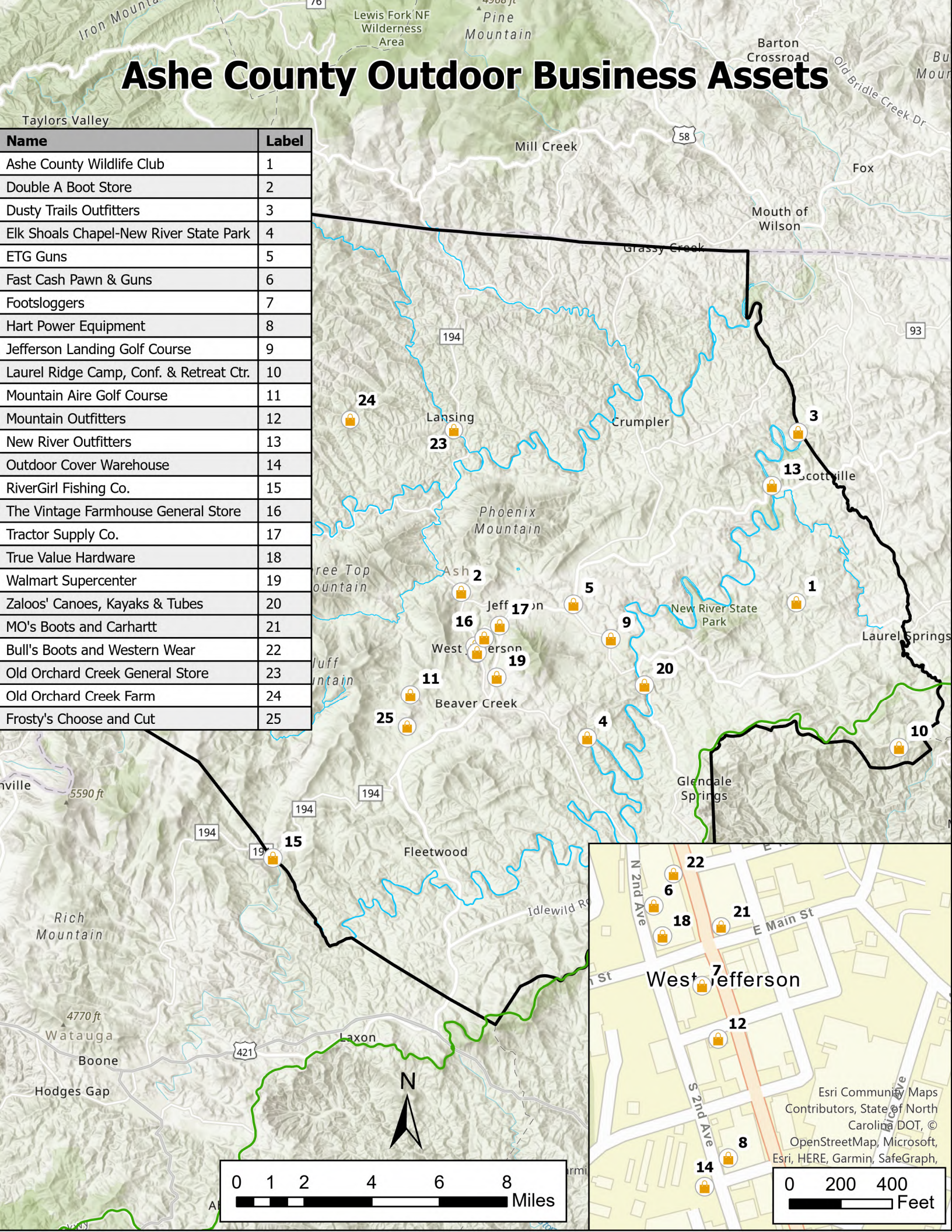
Appendix I

Ashe County Asset Mapping

The following maps highlight outdoor recreation related businesses as well as dining and lodging options throughout Ashe County. Community-wide maps were created along with a magnification of downtown West Jefferson where a number of businesses are clustered.

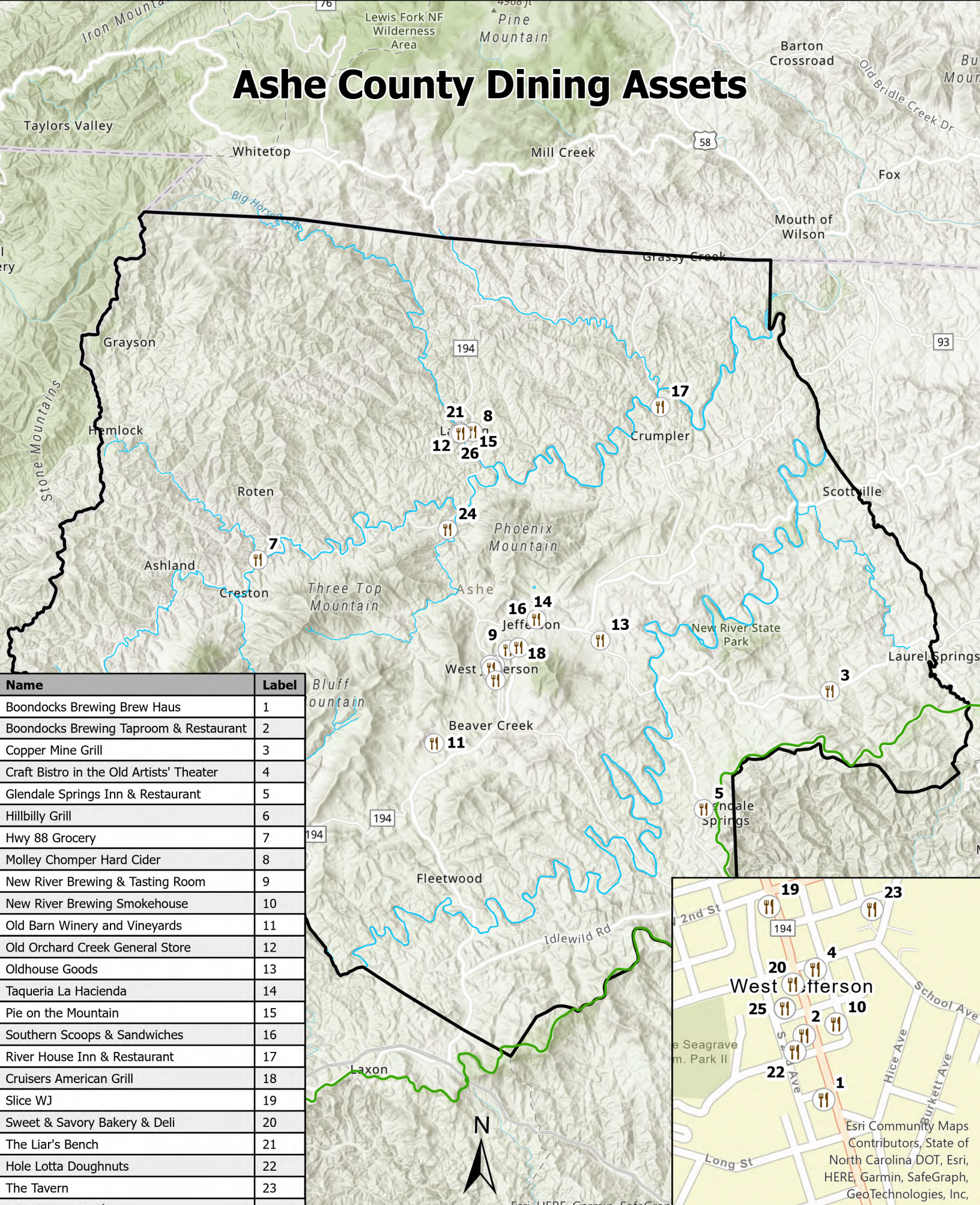
Ashe County Outdoor Business Assets

Name	Label
Ashe County Wildlife Club	1
Double A Boot Store	2
Dusty Trails Outfitters	3
Elk Shoals Chapel-New River State Park	4
ETG Guns	5
Fast Cash Pawn & Guns	6
Footsloggers	7
Hart Power Equipment	8
Jefferson Landing Golf Course	9
Laurel Ridge Camp, Conf. & Retreat Ctr.	10
Mountain Aire Golf Course	11
Mountain Outfitters	12
New River Outfitters	13
Outdoor Cover Warehouse	14
RiverGirl Fishing Co.	15
The Vintage Farmhouse General Store	16
Tractor Supply Co.	17
True Value Hardware	18
Walmart Supercenter	19
Zaloos' Canoes, Kayaks & Tubes	20
MO's Boots and Carhartt	21
Bull's Boots and Western Wear	22
Old Orchard Creek General Store	23
Old Orchard Creek Farm	24
Frosty's Choose and Cut	25

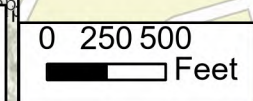
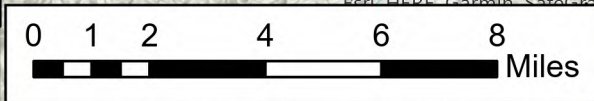


Esri Community Maps
 Contributors, State of North
 Carolina DOT, ©
 OpenStreetMap, Microsoft,
 Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph,

Ashe County Dining Assets

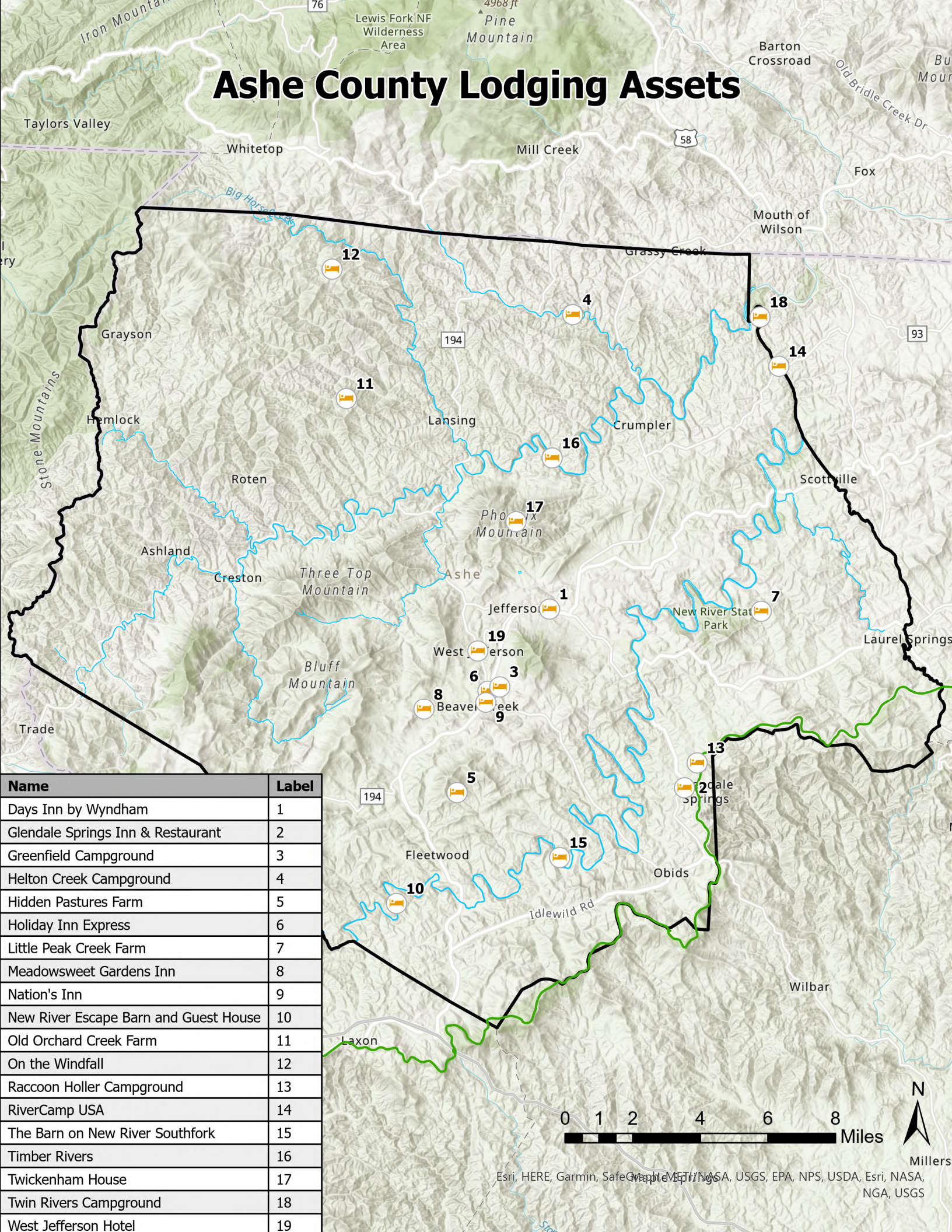


Name	Label
Boondocks Brewing Brew Haus	1
Boondocks Brewing Taproom & Restaurant	2
Copper Mine Grill	3
Craft Bistro in the Old Artists' Theater	4
Glendale Springs Inn & Restaurant	5
Hillbilly Grill	6
Hwy 88 Grocery	7
Molley Chomper Hard Cider	8
New River Brewing & Tasting Room	9
New River Brewing Smokehouse	10
Old Barn Winery and Vineyards	11
Old Orchard Creek General Store	12
Oldhouse Goods	13
Taqueria La Hacienda	14
Pie on the Mountain	15
Southern Scoops & Sandwiches	16
River House Inn & Restaurant	17
Cruisers American Grill	18
Slice WJ	19
Sweet & Savory Bakery & Deli	20
The Liar's Bench	21
Hole Lotta Doughnuts	22
The Tavern	23
Whistle Stop Café	24
Third Day of Christmas	25
Loghouse at Lansing	26

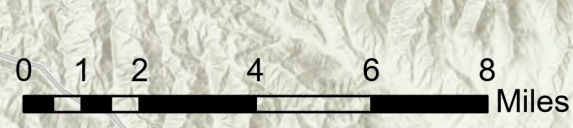


Esri Community Maps Contributors, State of North Carolina, DOT, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, US Census Bureau, USDA

Ashe County Lodging Assets



Name	Label
Days Inn by Wyndham	1
Glendale Springs Inn & Restaurant	2
Greenfield Campground	3
Helton Creek Campground	4
Hidden Pastures Farm	5
Holiday Inn Express	6
Little Peak Creek Farm	7
Meadowsweet Gardens Inn	8
Nation's Inn	9
New River Escape Barn and Guest House	10
Old Orchard Creek Farm	11
On the Windfall	12
Raccoon Holler Campground	13
RiverCamp USA	14
The Barn on New River Southfork	15
Timber Rivers	16
Twickenham House	17
Twin Rivers Campground	18
West Jefferson Hotel	19



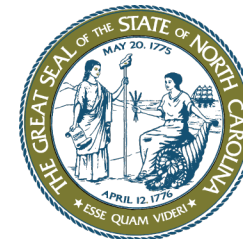
Appendix II

Community Survey

The following is a summary presentation given to the local work group on the results of the community-wide outdoor recreation economy survey.

OUTDOOR RECREATION COMMUNITY SURVEY

Ashe County



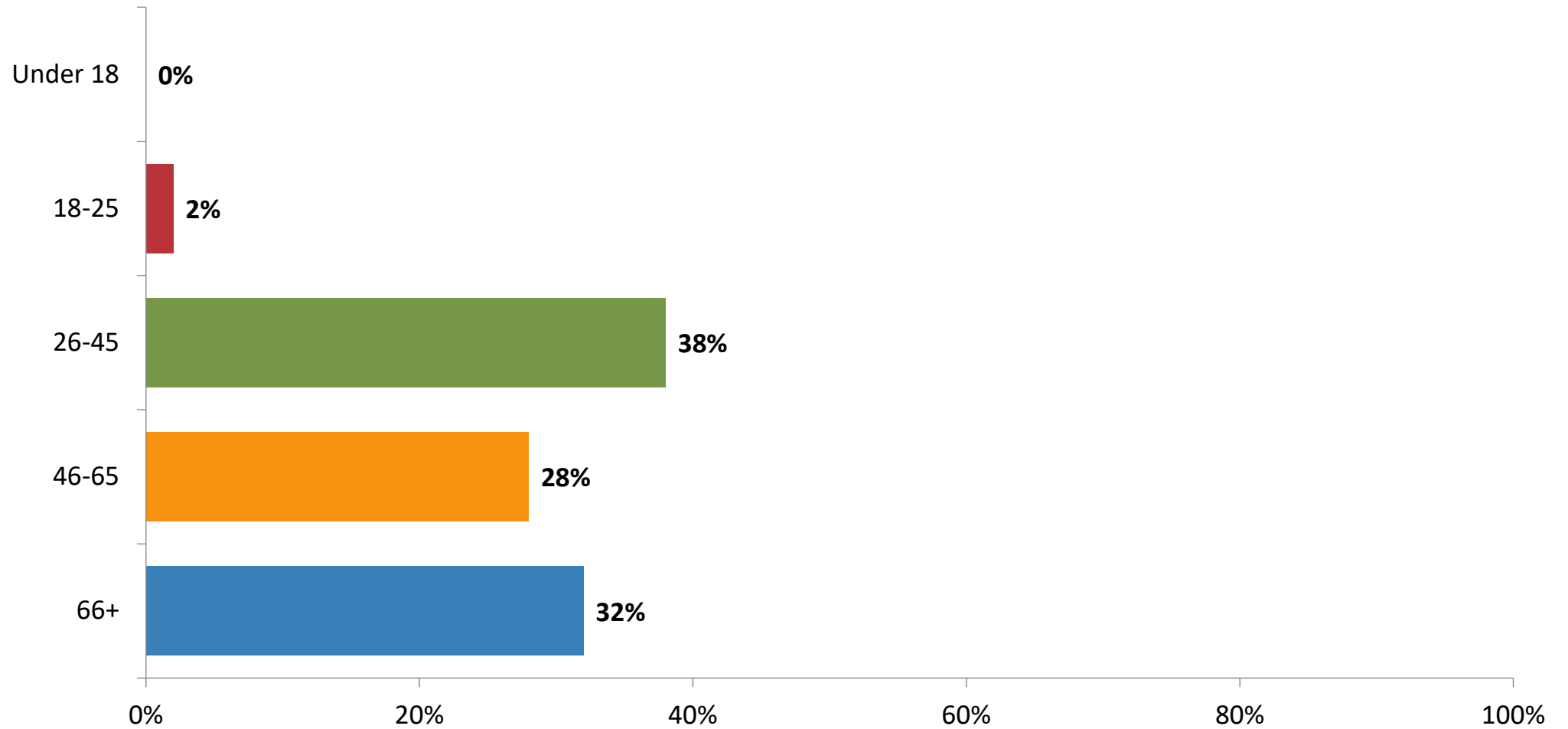
NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT of
COMMERCE

Why a survey?

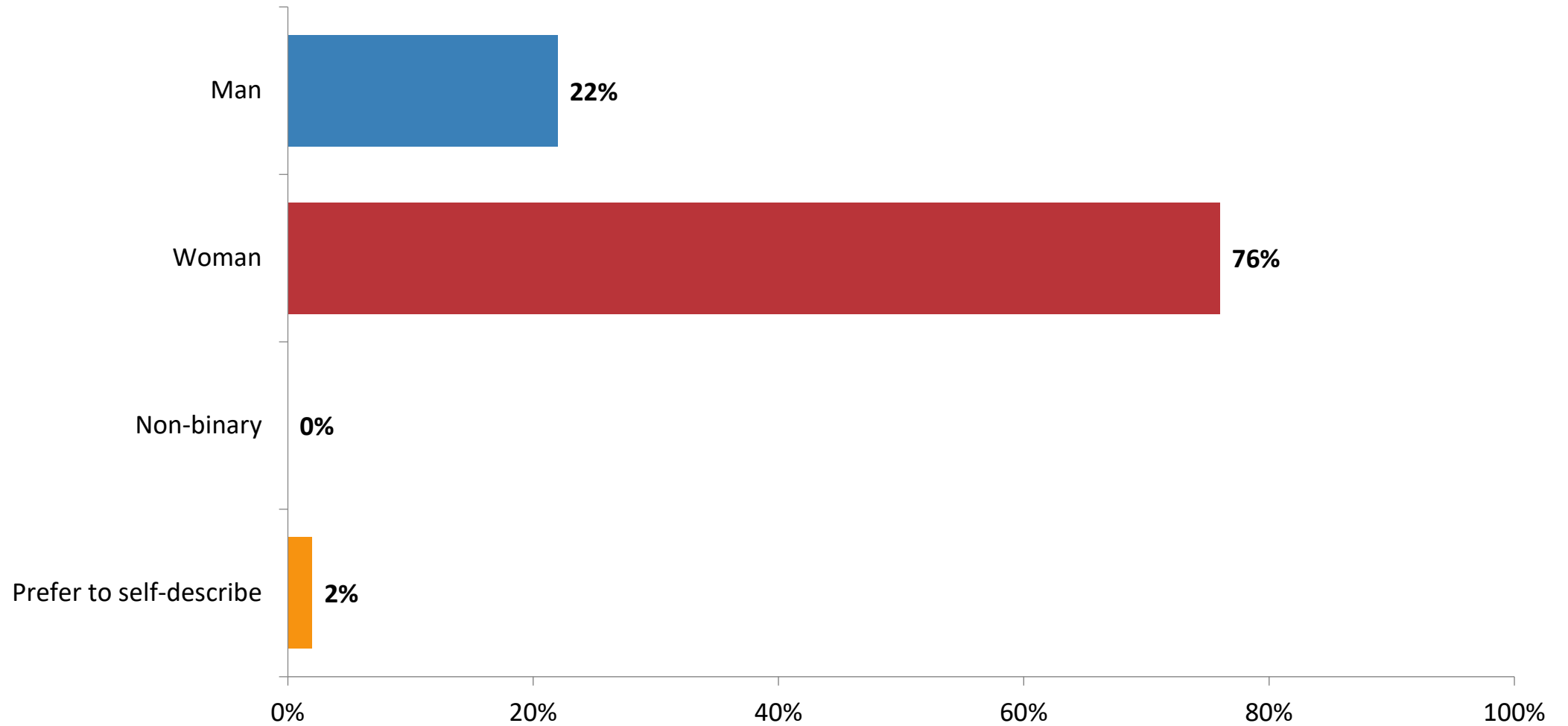
- What does outdoor recreation mean for the community?
- How does it compare to the work group's goals?

61 Responses

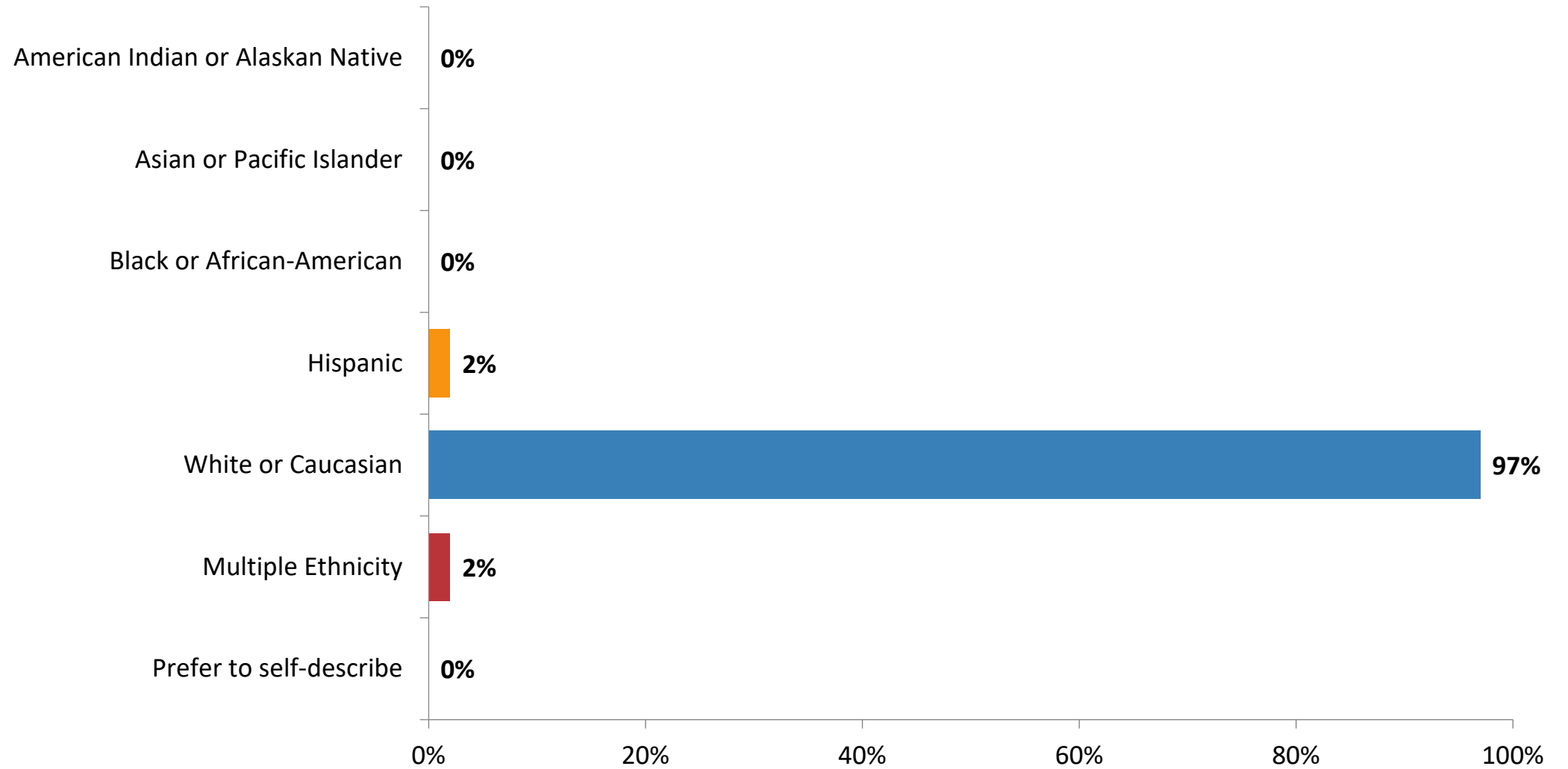
Demographics: Age



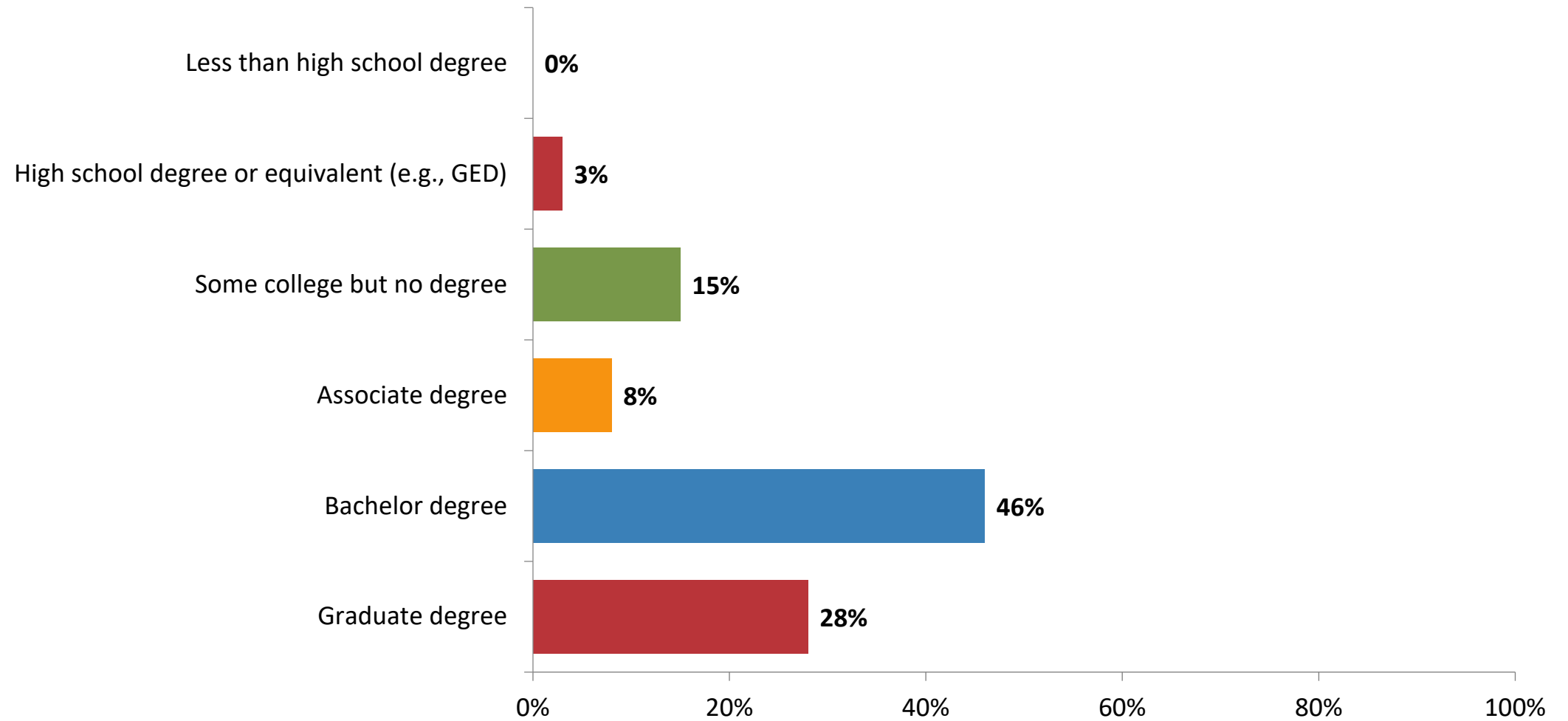
Demographics: Gender



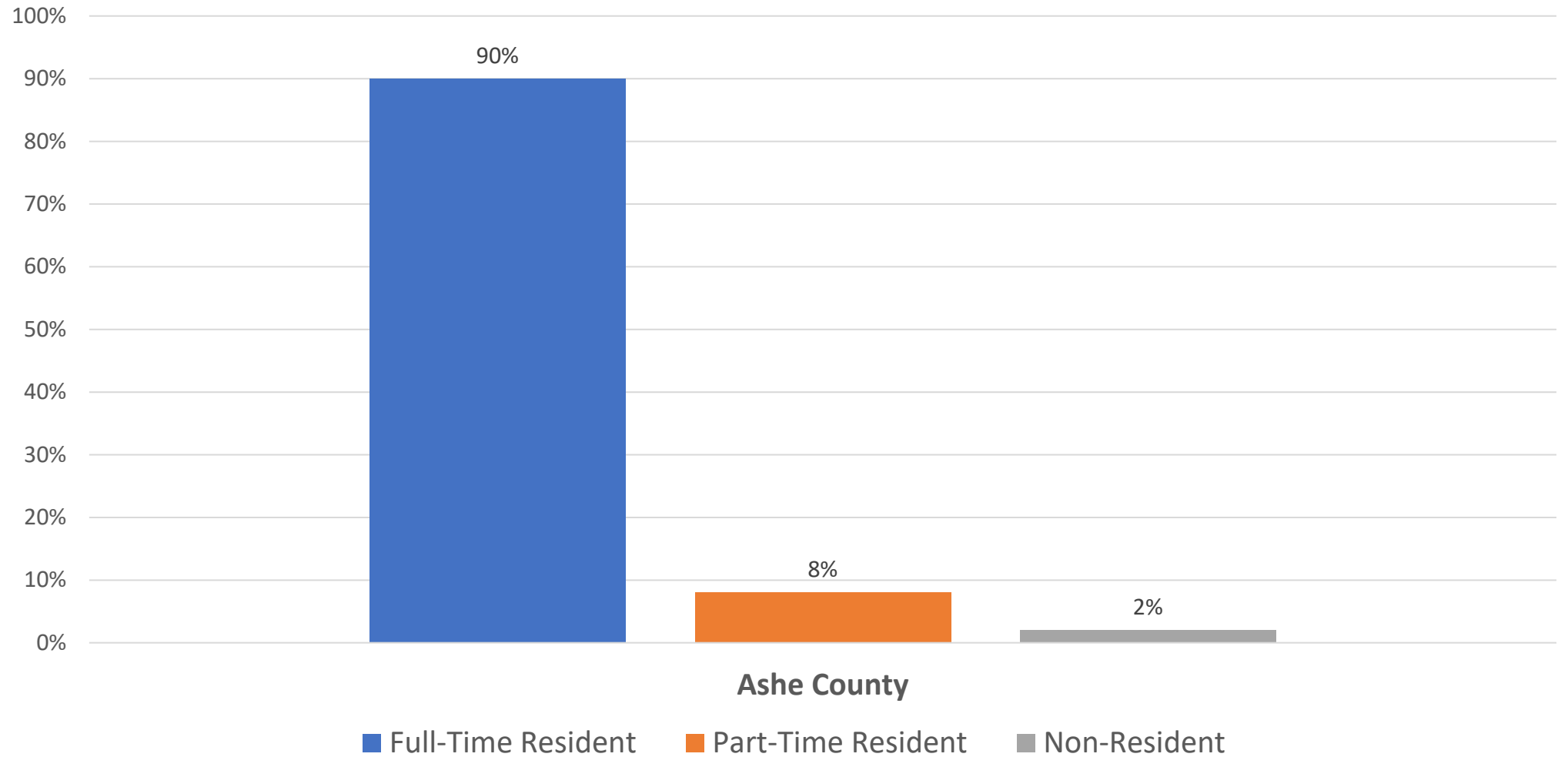
Demographics: Race



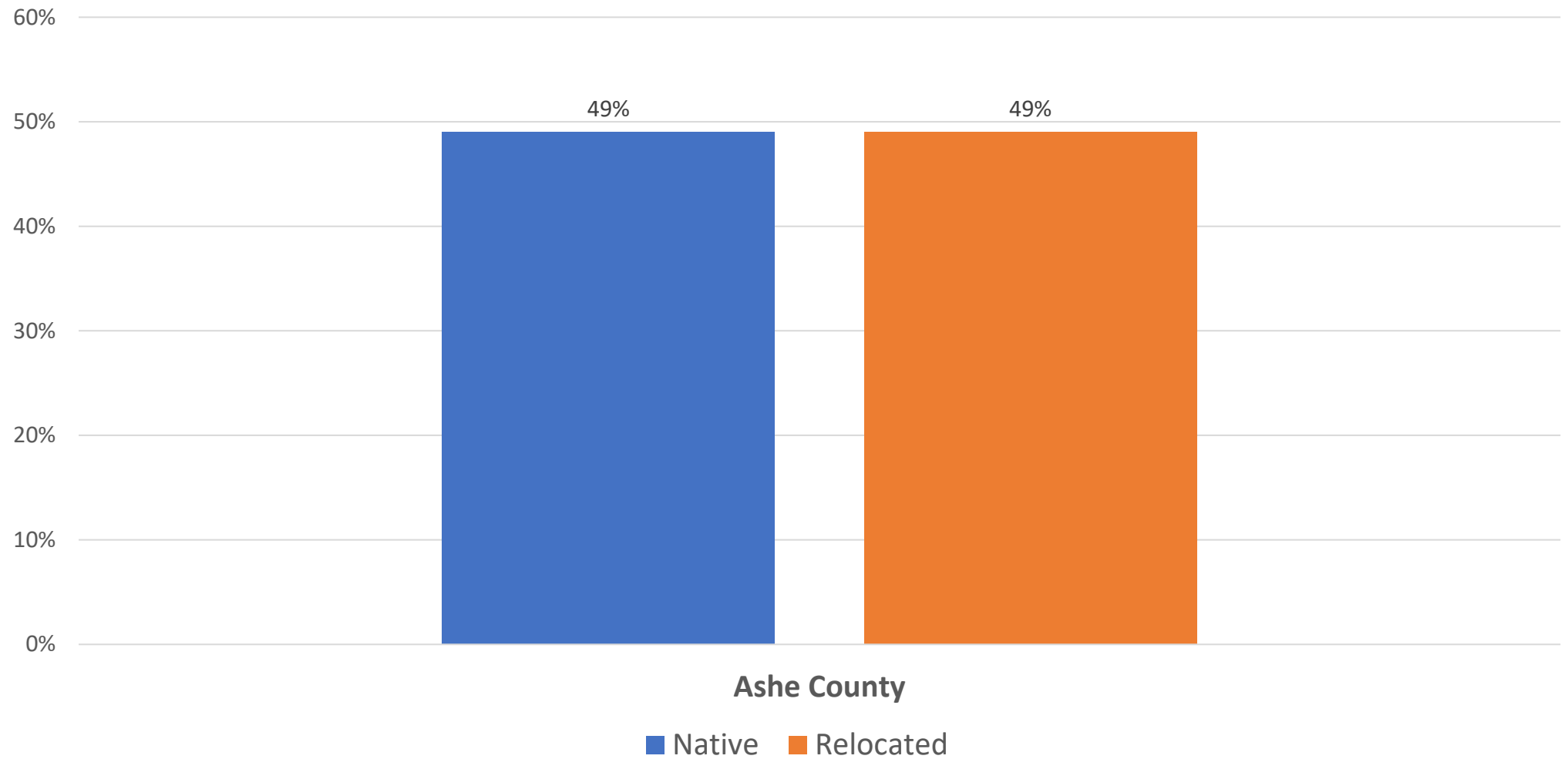
Demographics: Education



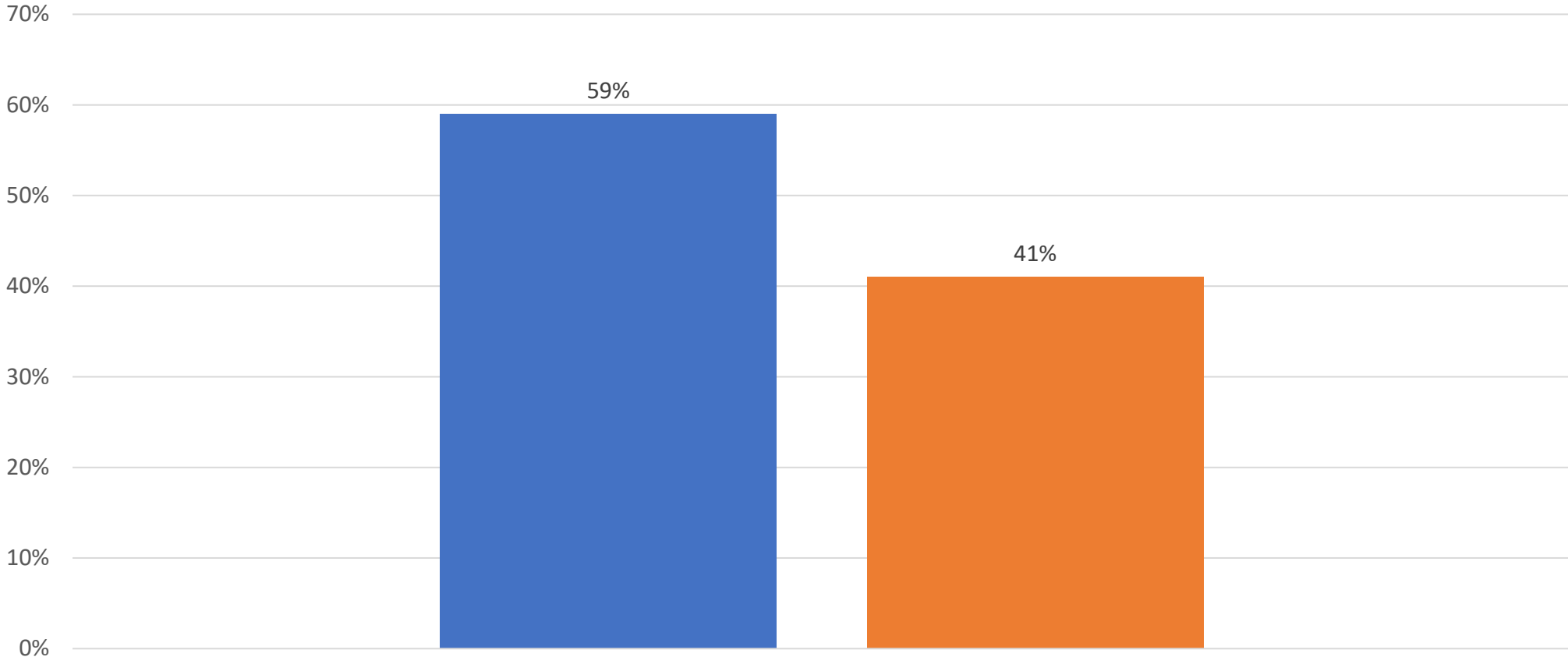
Resident Status



Resident Status



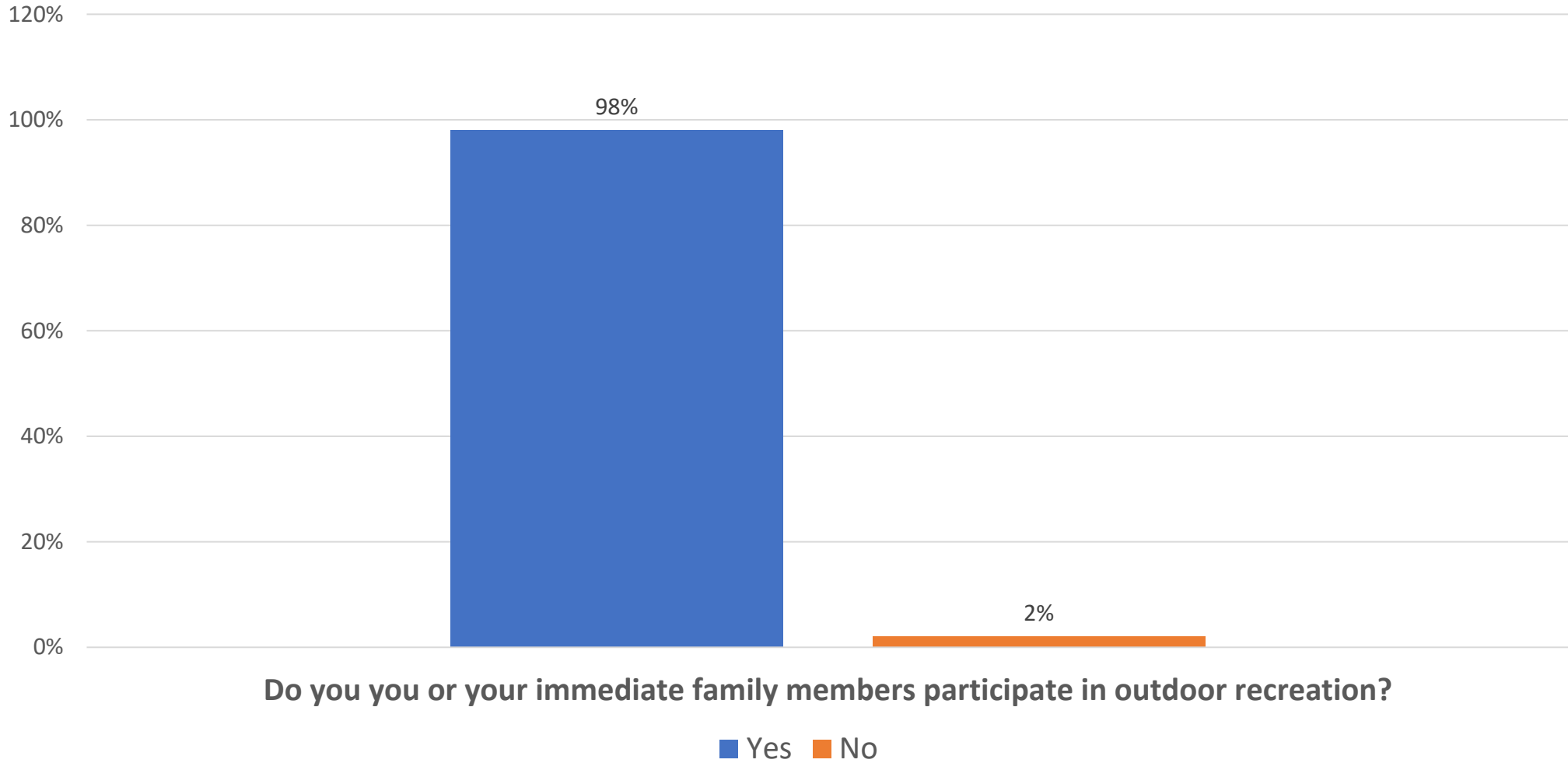
Employment Status



Do you work in Ashe County?

■ Yes ■ No

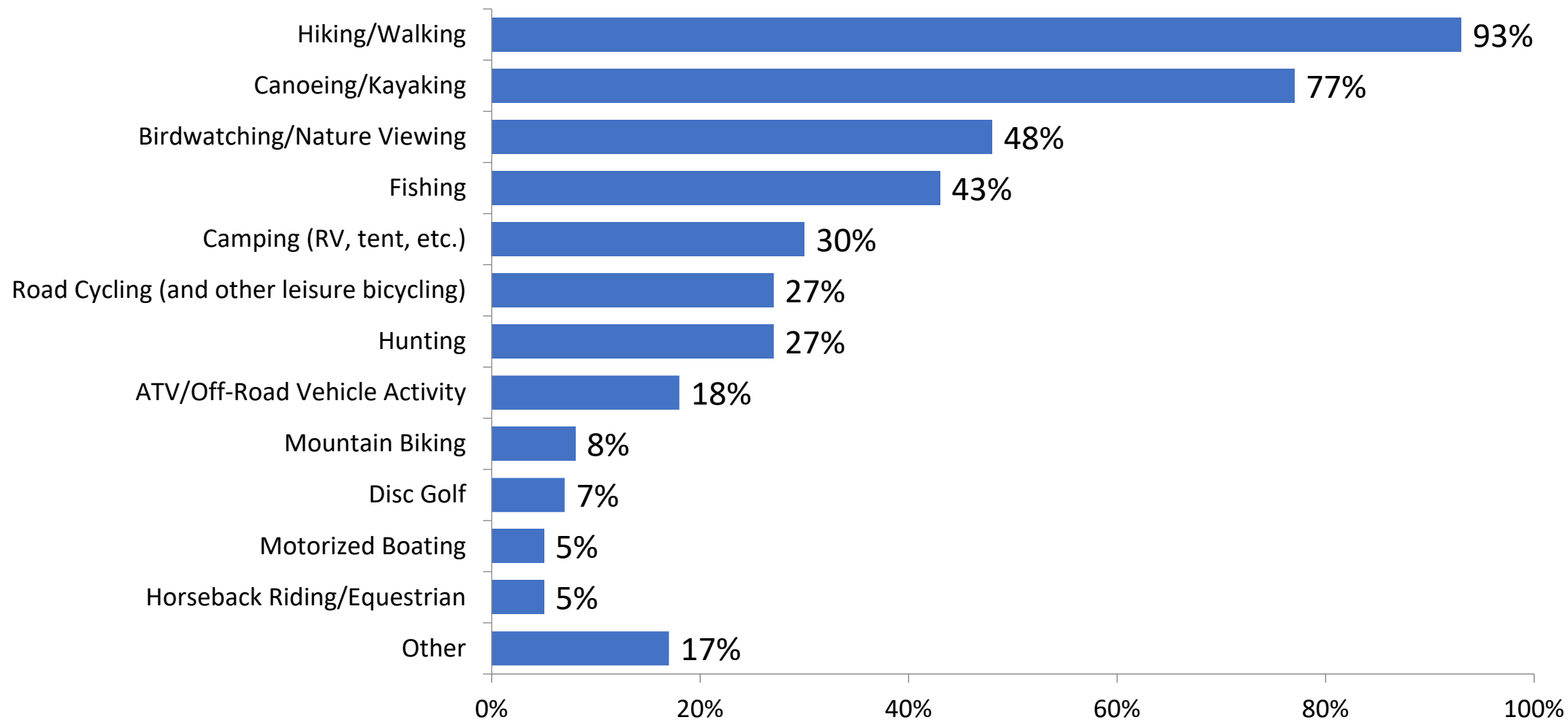
Outdoor Participation



If YES...

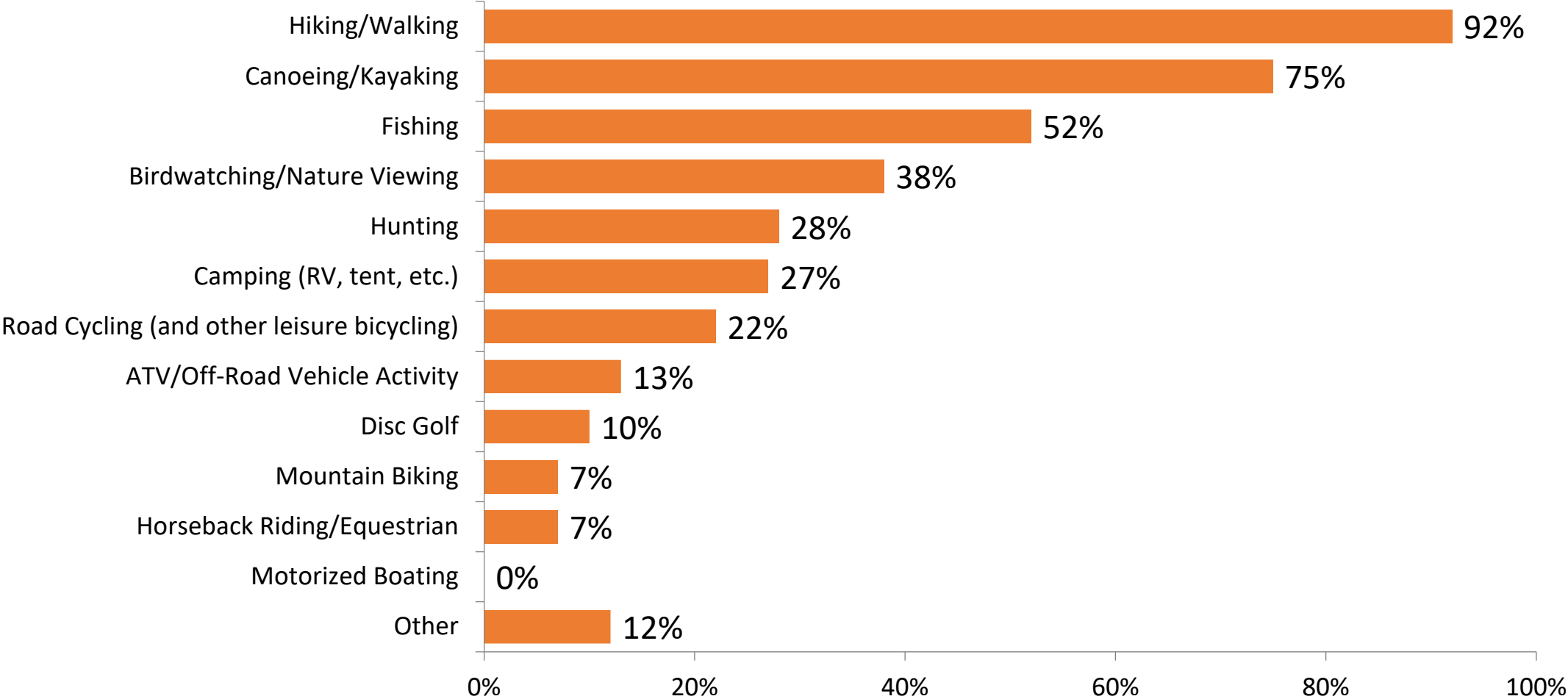
Primary Activities

Which outdoor recreation activities do you participate in regularly? (select all that apply)

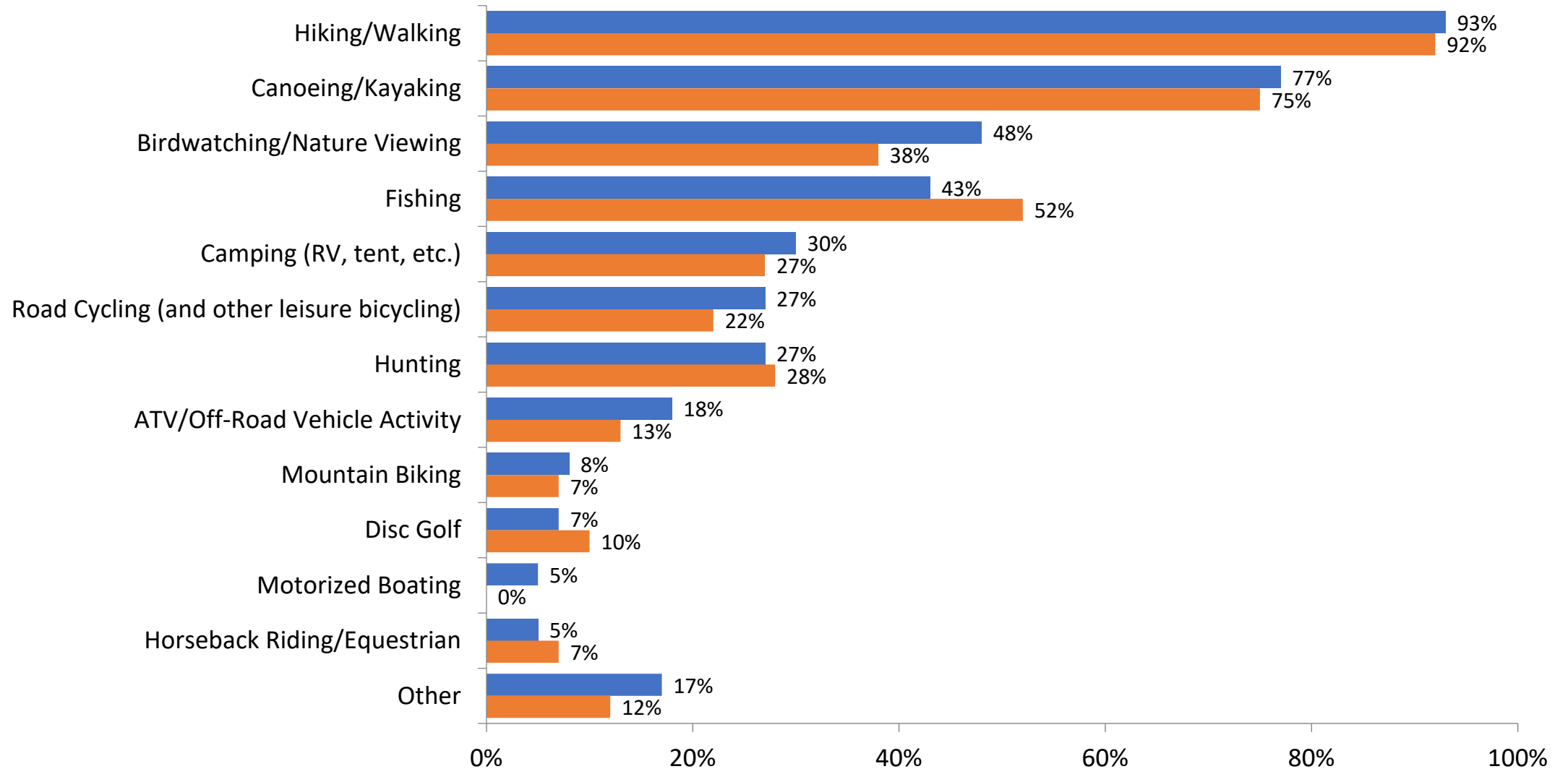


Available Activities

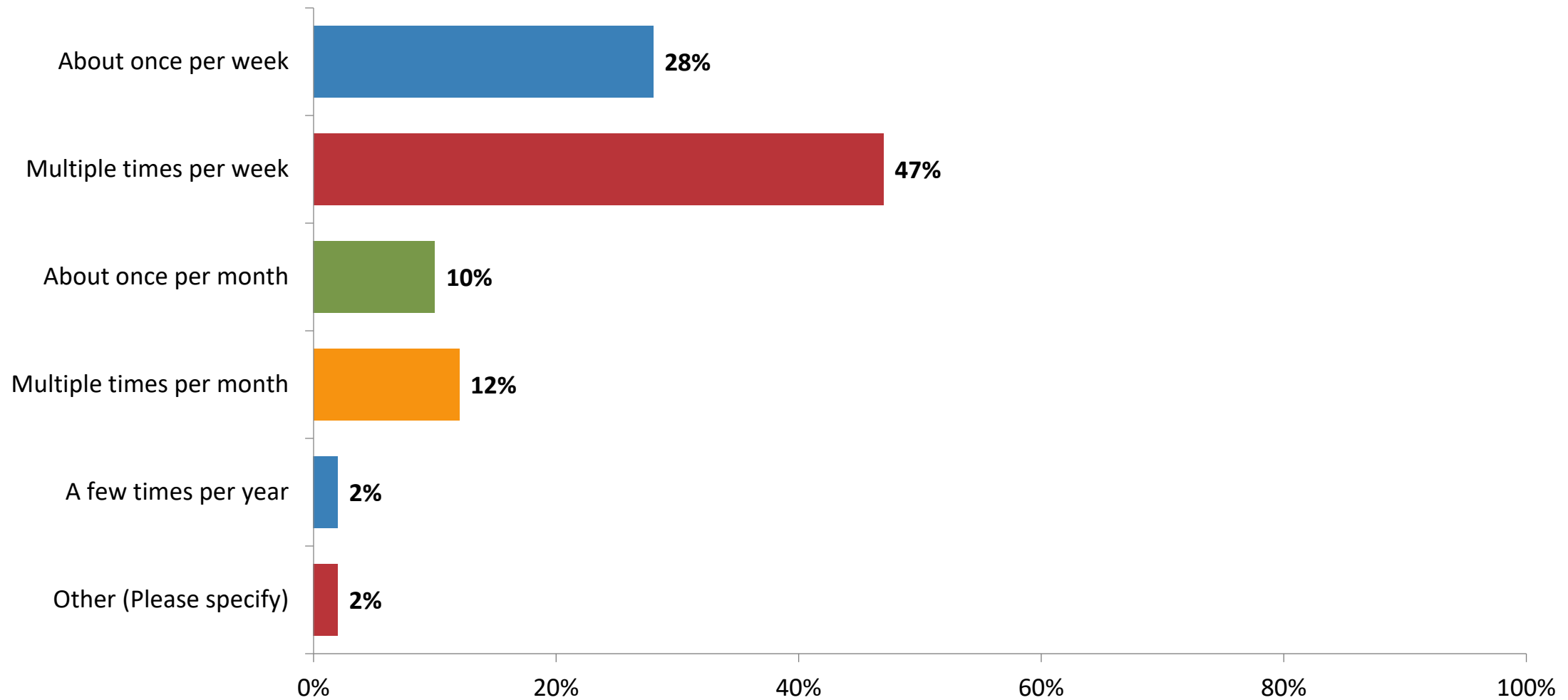
Of the activities that you participate in regularly, which are available to you in Ashe County?



Primary vs. Available Activities



Participation Frequency



Favorite Recreation Areas

New River/State Park	36
Mt. Jefferson	21
Blue Ridge Parkway	14
Ashe County Park	9
Elk Shoals	7
West Jefferson Municipal Park	6
Lansing Park	6

Cook Memorial Park (Todd)	4
Private Property	4
Foster-Tyson Park	3
Country Roads (walking)	2
Helton Creek	2
Pond Mountain	2
Grayson Highlands	2
Virginia Creeper Trail	2
State Parks	2
Walking Trails	2
Fleetwood	2
Mountains-to-Sea Trail	2
Crumpler	
West Jefferson (walking)	
Doughton Park	
Elk Knob State Park	
Three Top Preserve	
Trout Streams	
Forests	
Riverview Community Center	
Parks & Rec Facilities	
Virginia River Bike Trail	
Grassy Creek	
Big Horse Creek	
Gem Valley	

Desired Improvements

More/Improved Public River Access (boating, fishing)	19
Parking Availability	6
More Trails	6
Greenway/Trails Connecting to Town	4

Bike Lanes/Connectivity between Towns	3
Splash Pad for Toddlers	2
Public Swimming Pool	2
Sidewalks Improved/Repaired	2
Picnic Areas	2
Upgraded Park Facilities/Restrooms	2
Opportunities for Youth	
Expanded Dog Park	
Extend VA Creeper Trail to Lansing	
More Bike Trails	
More Horse Trails	
Low Bridge on River (dangerous, near Fleetwood PO)	
River Clean Up (trash)	
Updates to WJ Municipal Park	
Easier Trails (Mild to Moderate)	
Expand Town Park	
Restrooms at Elk Shoals	
Trail Maintenance	

Desired Facilities

More Trails	6
Bike Path/Lanes Connecting Towns	6
Greenway	6
Public Swimming Pool	6
More River Access Areas (boating and fishing)	6
Leisurely Walking Trails	5
More Parks (Along North Fork)	4
Splash Pad (toddlers)	4

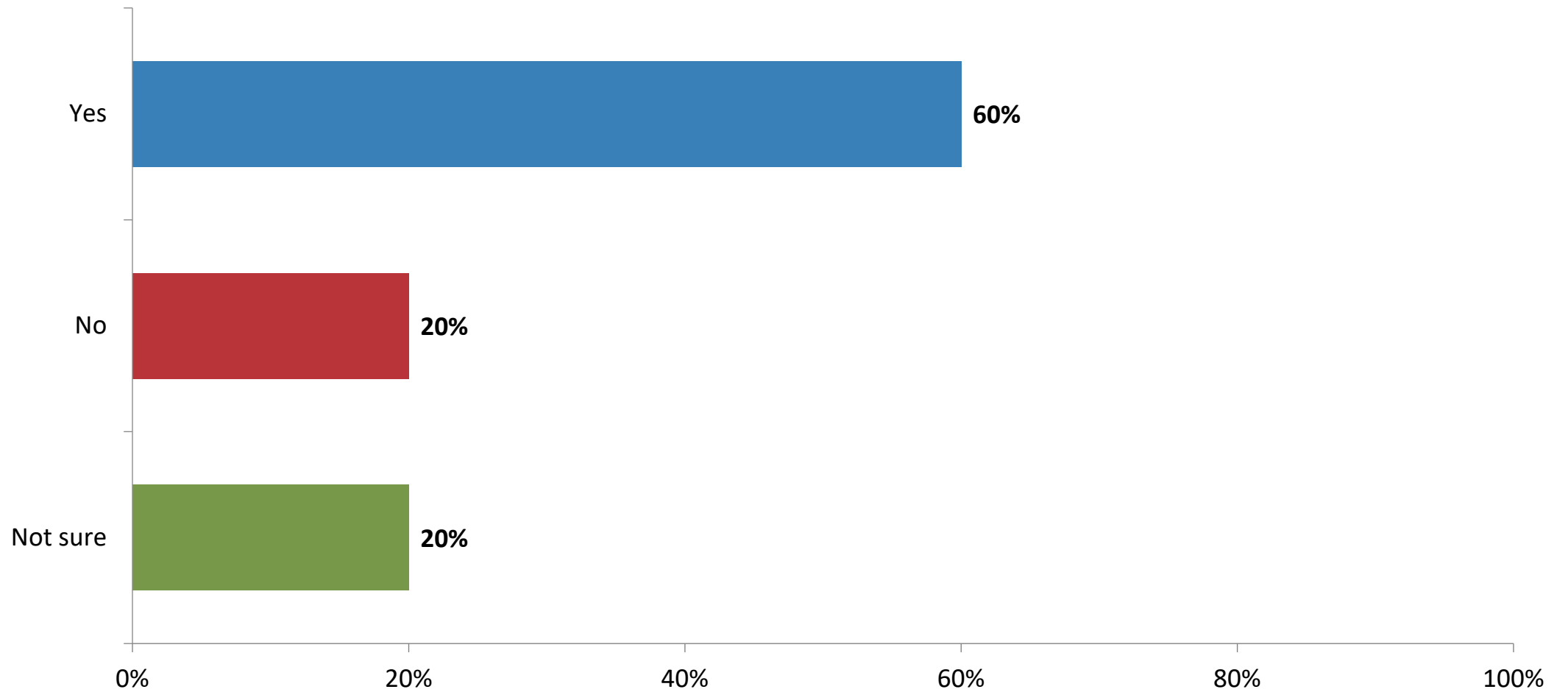
More Sidewalk Connectivity (WJ and Jefferson)	3
Camp Sites (Mt. Jefferson, along River)	3
Mountain Bike Trails	3
Complete Paddy Mountain/Three Top Trails	3
Seasonal Snow Slope (Ashe Co Park)	2
Outdoor Music Venue/Amphitheater	
More Trees (Ashe Co Park)	
Outdoor Activities/Facilities (Riverview)	
ATV Trails	
More Events at Ashe Park (Archery)	
Campground with Full Hookups	
Recreation Center	
Restroom Facilities at Trailheads	
Handicap Accessibility at Facilities (Lansing Playground)	
Bike Trails along former VA Creeper Rail Line	
Traffic Slowed in Jefferson	
Parking in Downtown WJ	
Trails/Parks in Jefferson	
Enhance Historic Assets	
Disc Golf Course	
Long Distance Running Trails	

Desired Activities

Options for Youth	4
Pickleball	3
Outdoor Fitness Classes	2
Zip-Lining/Ropes Course	2
Swimming Classes/Activities	2

Outdoor Dining Options (on river)
Rock Hunting
Water Aerobics
Nature Classes for Adults
Activities for/with Pets
Senior Games
Equestrian Activities
Archery
Golf

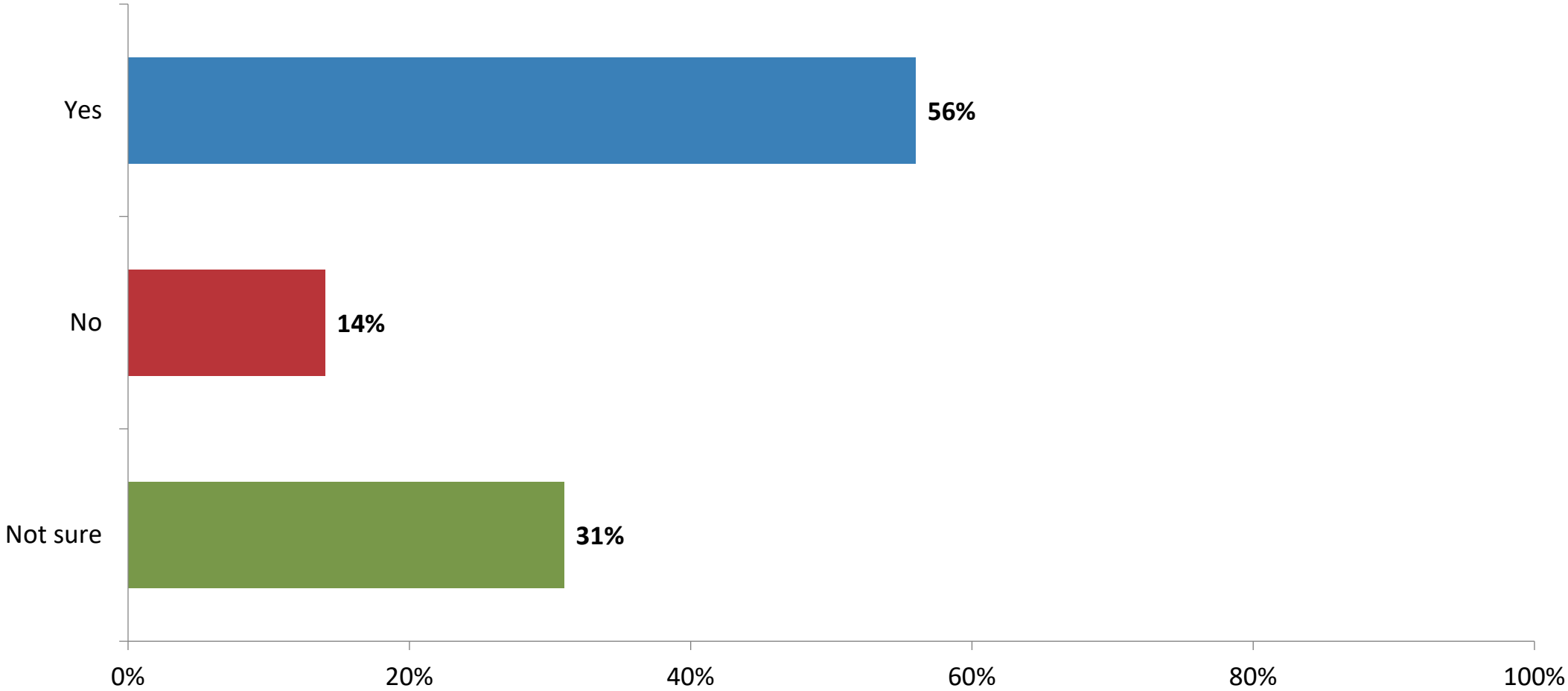
Activities for All Ages



Activities for All Ages – If NO

Youth/Children Activities	4
Public Pool	3
ADA Compliant Trails	2
Senior Activities	2
Easy, Flat Walking Paths	
Bike Lanes	
Nature Trails for Birdwatching/Flowers	

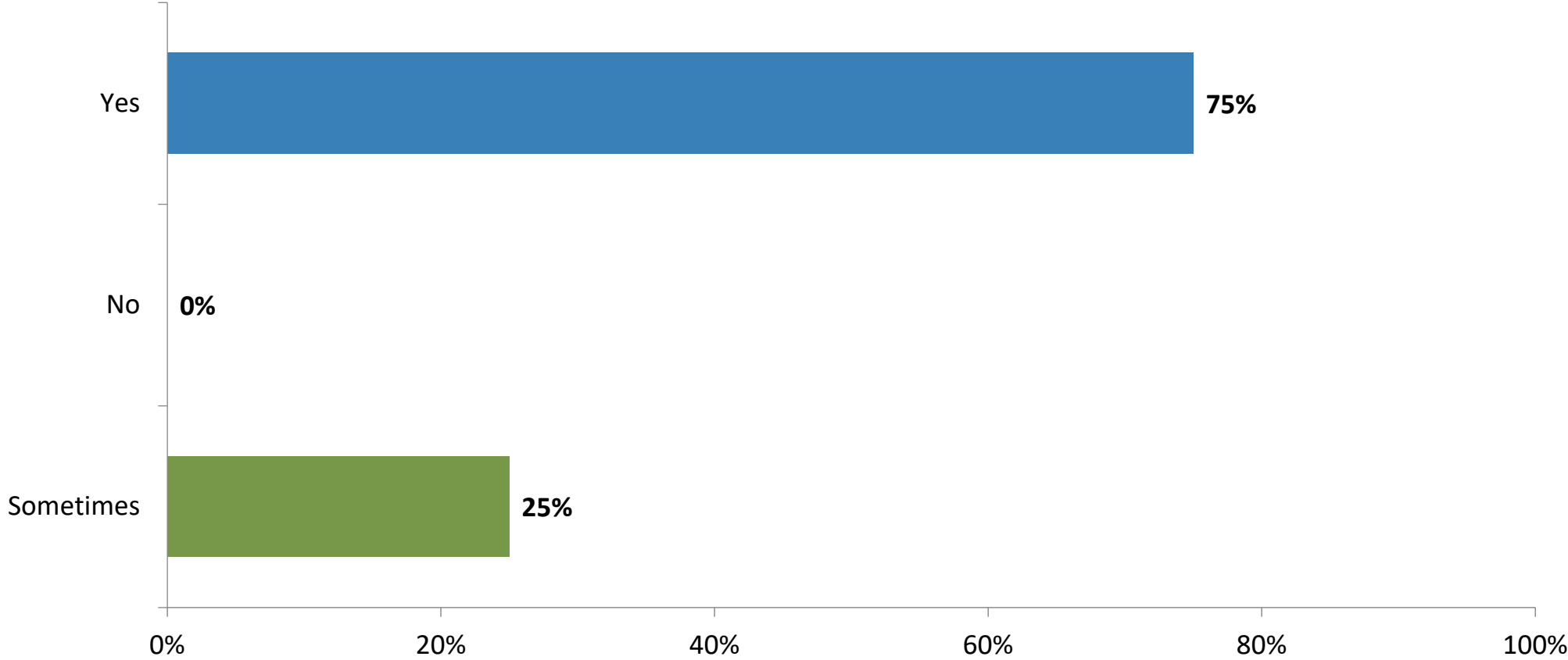
Activities for All Skill-Levels



Activities for All Skill-Levels – If NO

Senior Activities	3
Beginner/Entry Level Activities	2
Activities for Disabled	2
Youth Activities	

Vacation Recreation



Favorite Destinations

Activities/Geographies

Beach	14
Blue Ridge Mountains	3
Hiking Trails	3
Bike Trails	3
Lakes	2
Outdoor Pools	2
Kayaking/Canoeing	2
Rivers	2
Greenways	2
Scuba Diving	
Surf Fishing	
Rail Trails	
Camp Sites	
Ski Slopes	
Zoos	
Water Parks	
Skating Rinks	
ATV Parks	
Museums	
Historic Sites	

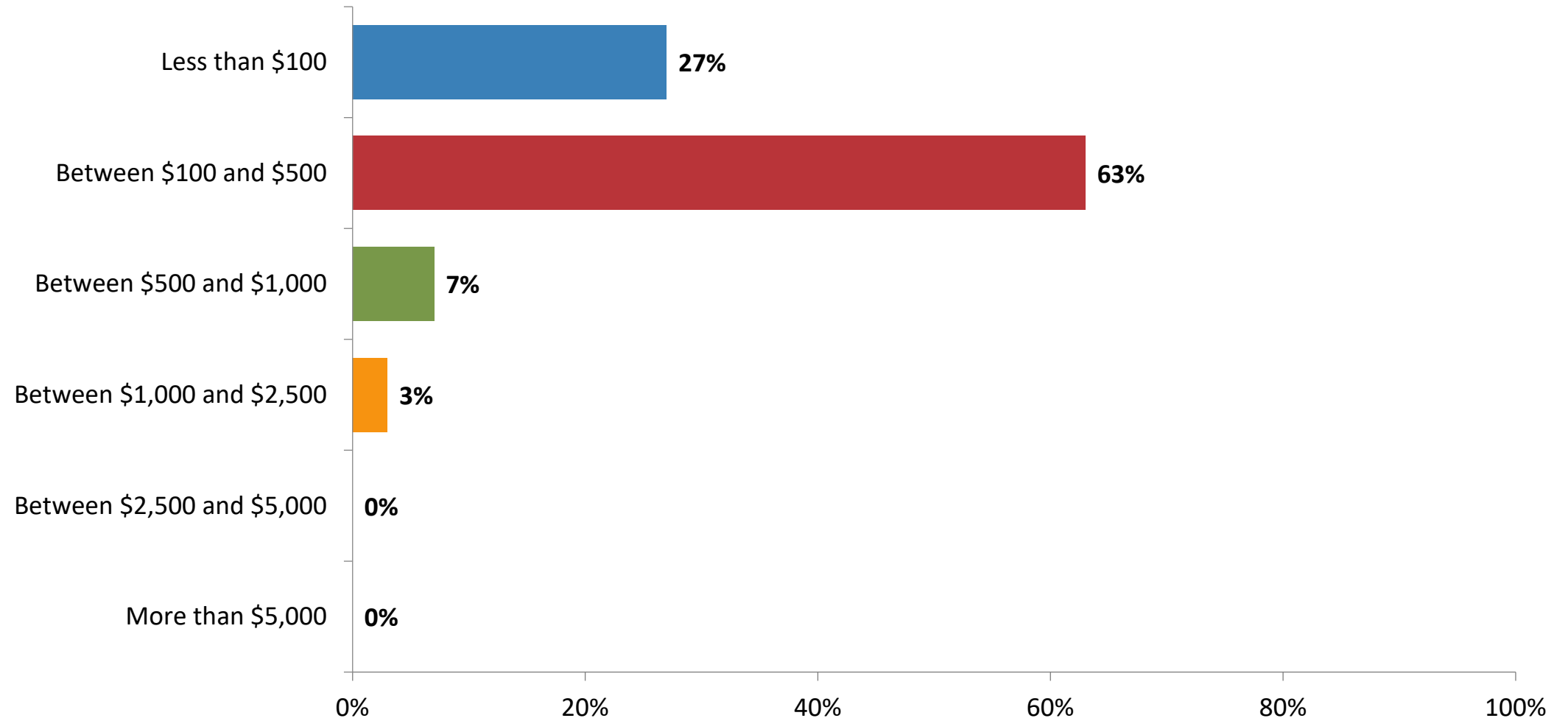
Towns/Destinations

Florida	3
Outer Banks	2
Virginia	2
Pigeon Forge, TN	2
Wilkes County, NC	2
Massachusetts	
Gatlinburg, TN	
Greensboro, NC	
Chapel Hill, NC	
Winston-Salem, NC	
Blowing Rock, NC	
Jackson Hole, WY	
Toas, NM	
Boone, NC	
Topsail, NC	
Cherokee, NC	
Bryson City, NC	
St. Simons Island, GA	
Colorado	
New Mexico	
Watauga County, NC	
Caribbean	

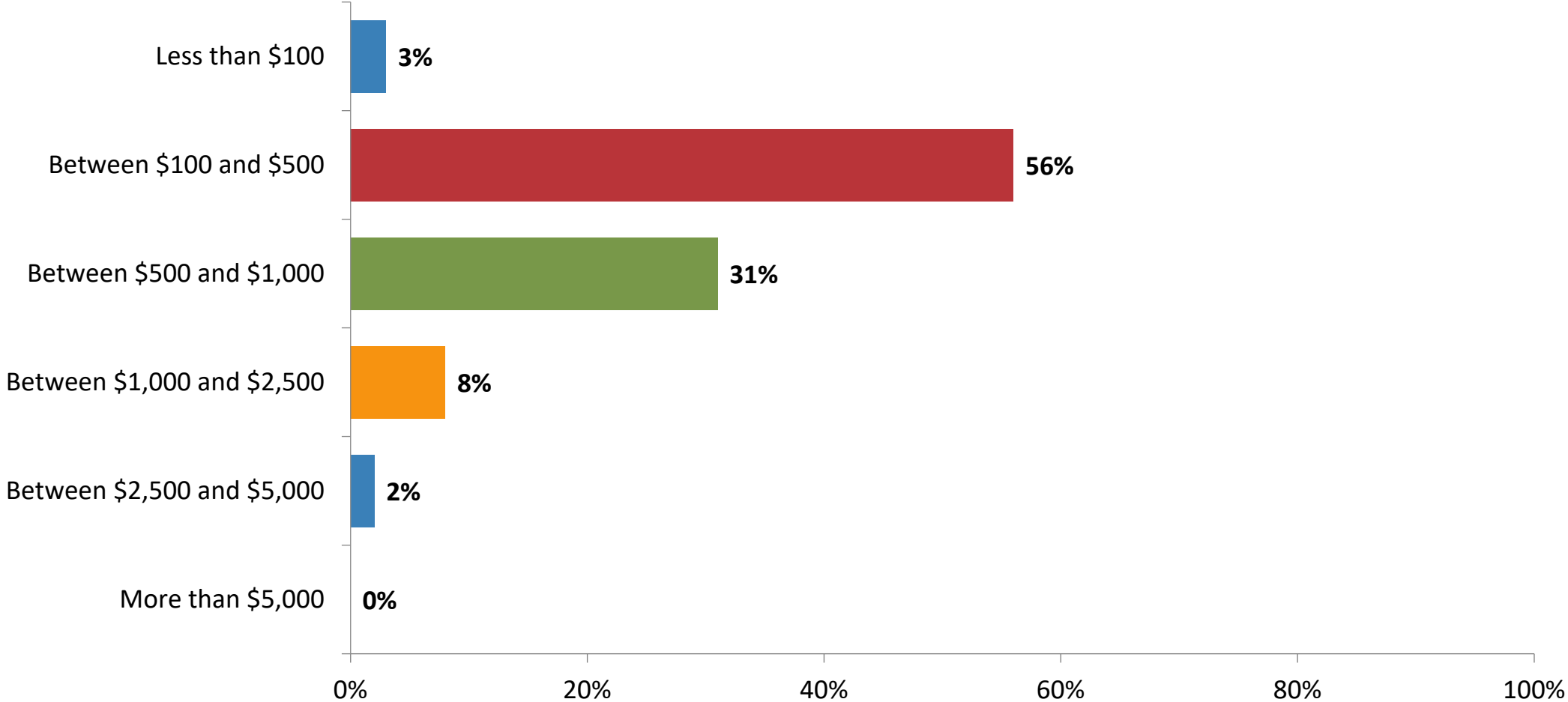
Parks/Attractions

State Parks	5
National Parks	4
Blue Ridge Parkway	4
Linville Gorge	3
Grayson Highlands	3
Middle Fork Greenway	2
Kerr Scott Lake	2
Grandfather Mountain	2
Great Smoky Mountains National Park	2
Elk Knob State Park	
Julian Price Park	
Lake Ridge RV Resort	
Dan River	
Uwharrie National Forest	
Doughton Park	
Mount Mitchell State Park	
Country Park - Greensboro, NC	
Barber Park - Greensboro, NC	
Umstead Park - Chapel Hill, NC	
Pritchard Park - Chapel Hill, NC	
Westwood Park - Chapel Hill, NC	
Reynolda Village - Winston-Salem, NC	
Lake Norman	
Gauley River - WV	
Appalachian Trail	
The Block - Wilkesboro	
Jeffersonal National Forest	
Whitetop Mountain	
Wilson Creek Gorge	

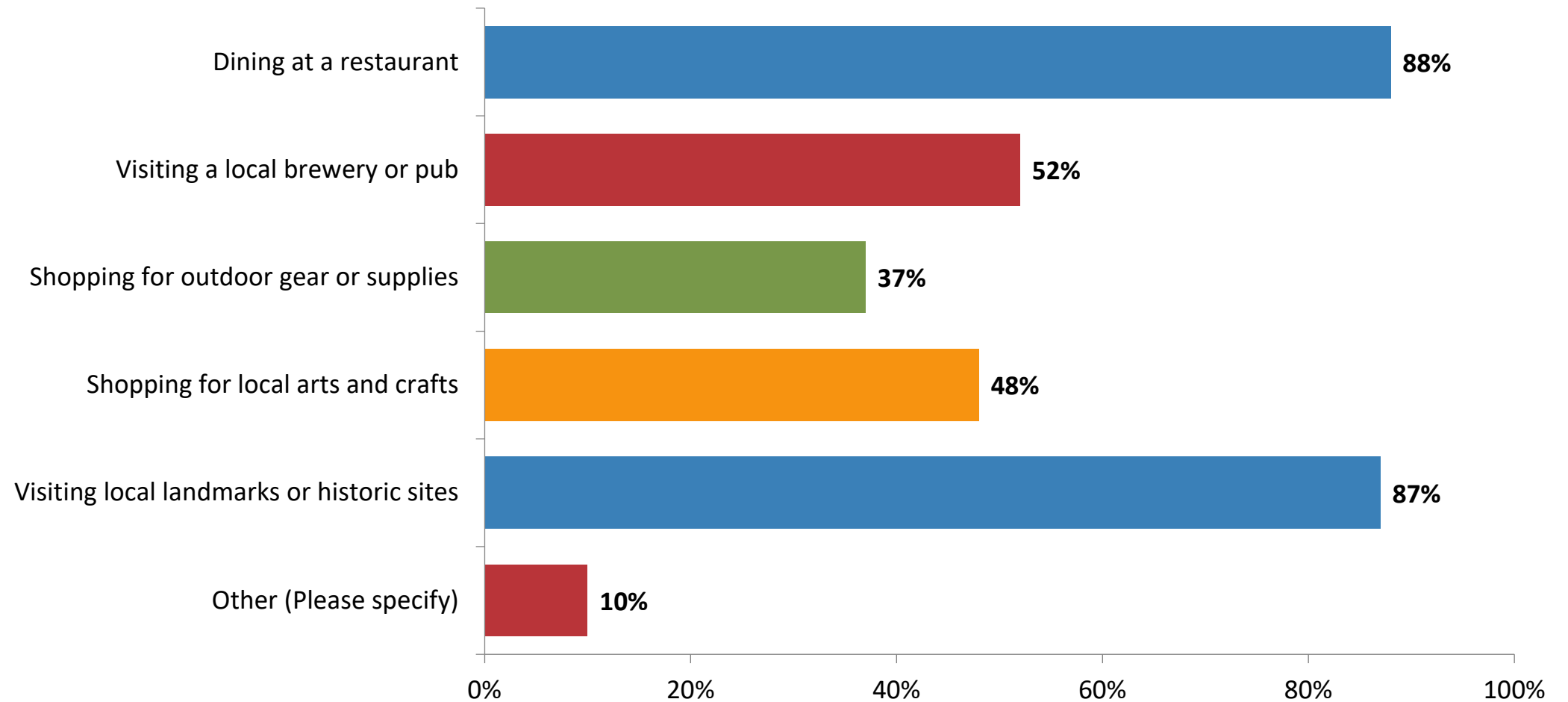
Day Trip Spending



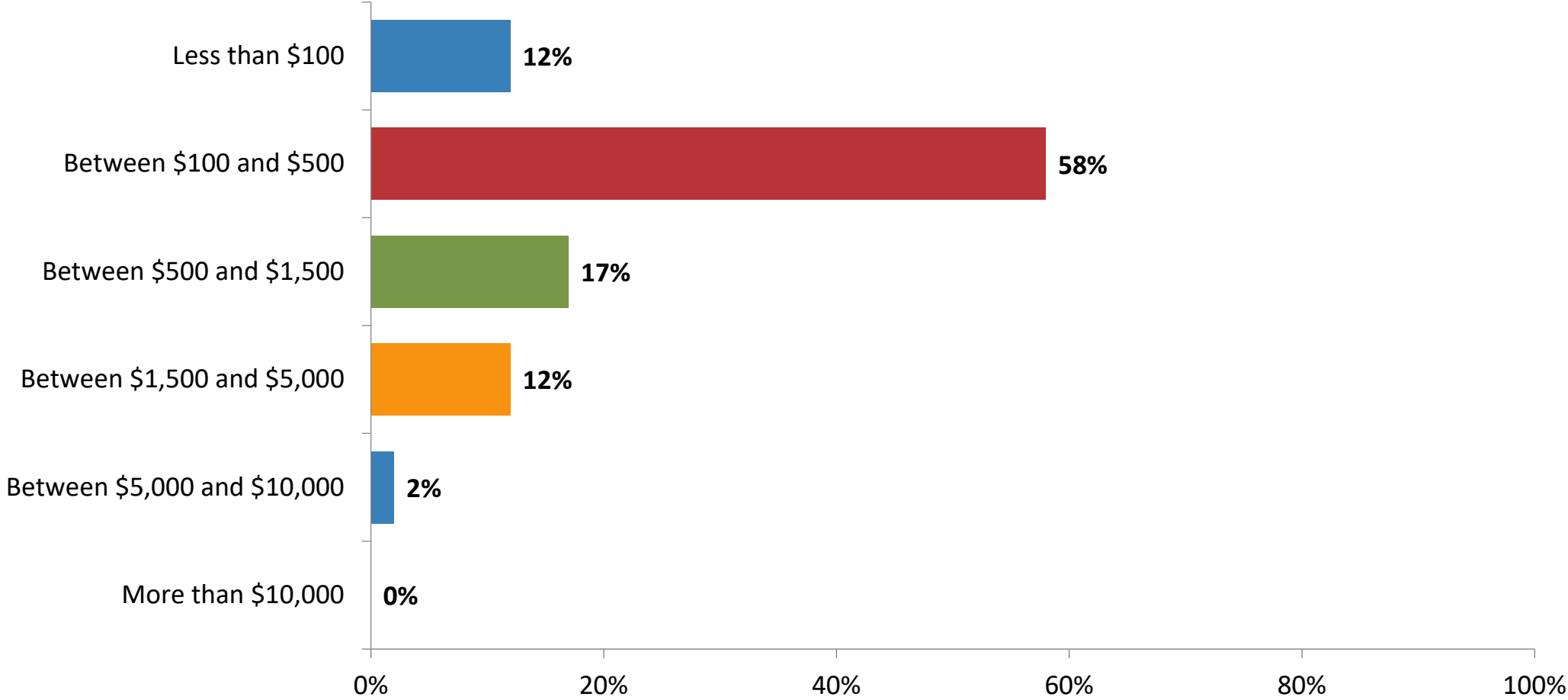
Overnight Trip Spending



Peripheral Activities



Annual Outdoor Spending



Outdoor Supply Shopping

<u>Stores</u>	
Online	15
Amazon	12
Wal-Mart	10
Footsloggers	7
REI	7
Mountain Outfitters	7
Mast General Store	2
Sporting Goods Stores	2
Cabellas	2
Bass Pro Shop	2
Sports Academy	
CampMor	
Canoe/Kayak Shops	
Cook's Sports	
Dollar General	
Bike Shops	
Goodwill	
Mo's Boots	
Second Hand Stores	

<u>Towns</u>	
West Jefferson	7
Boone	3
Johnson City, TN	
Bristol, TN	
Damascus, VA	
Wilkesboro	

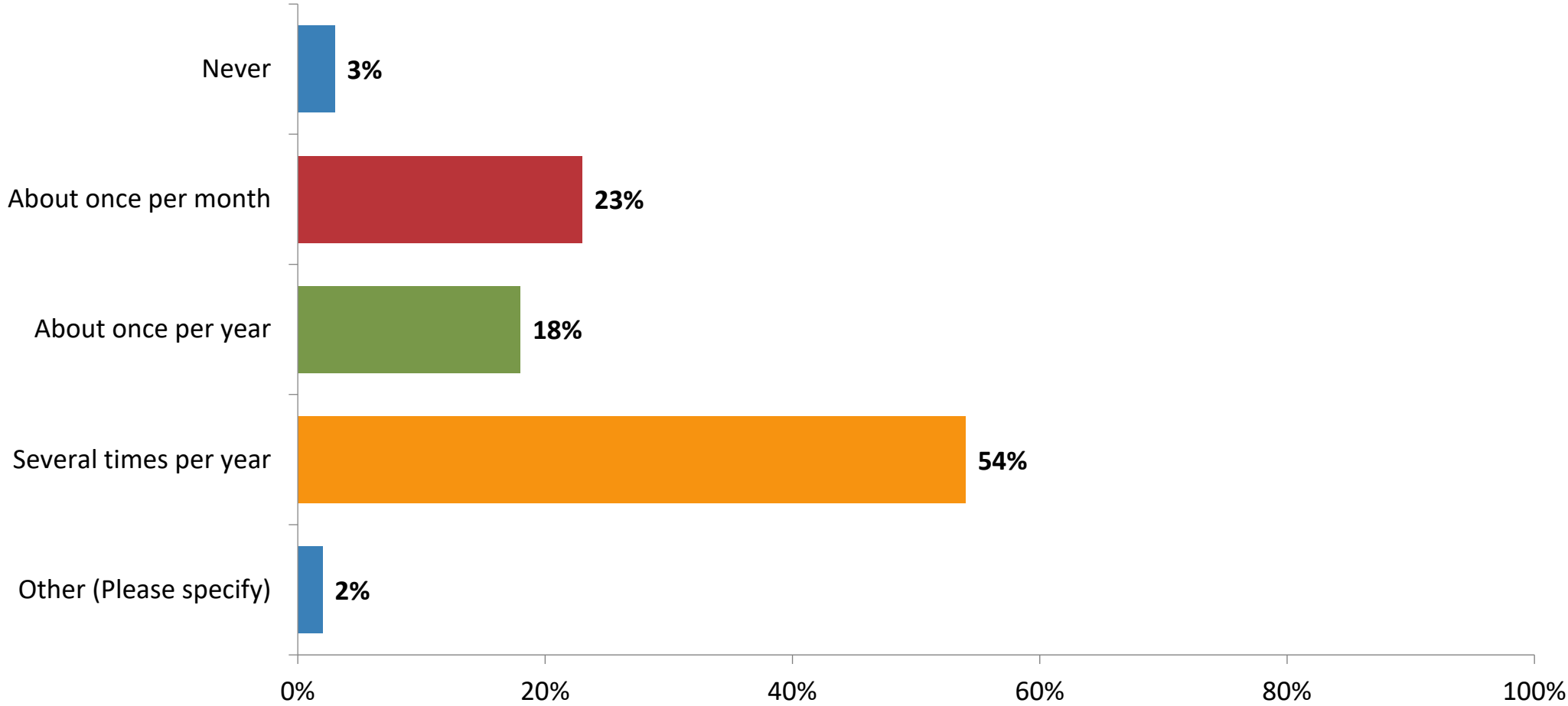
Needed Businesses

Bike Shop	16
Fishing Guide Service	8
General	5
Tackle Shops	4
No	4

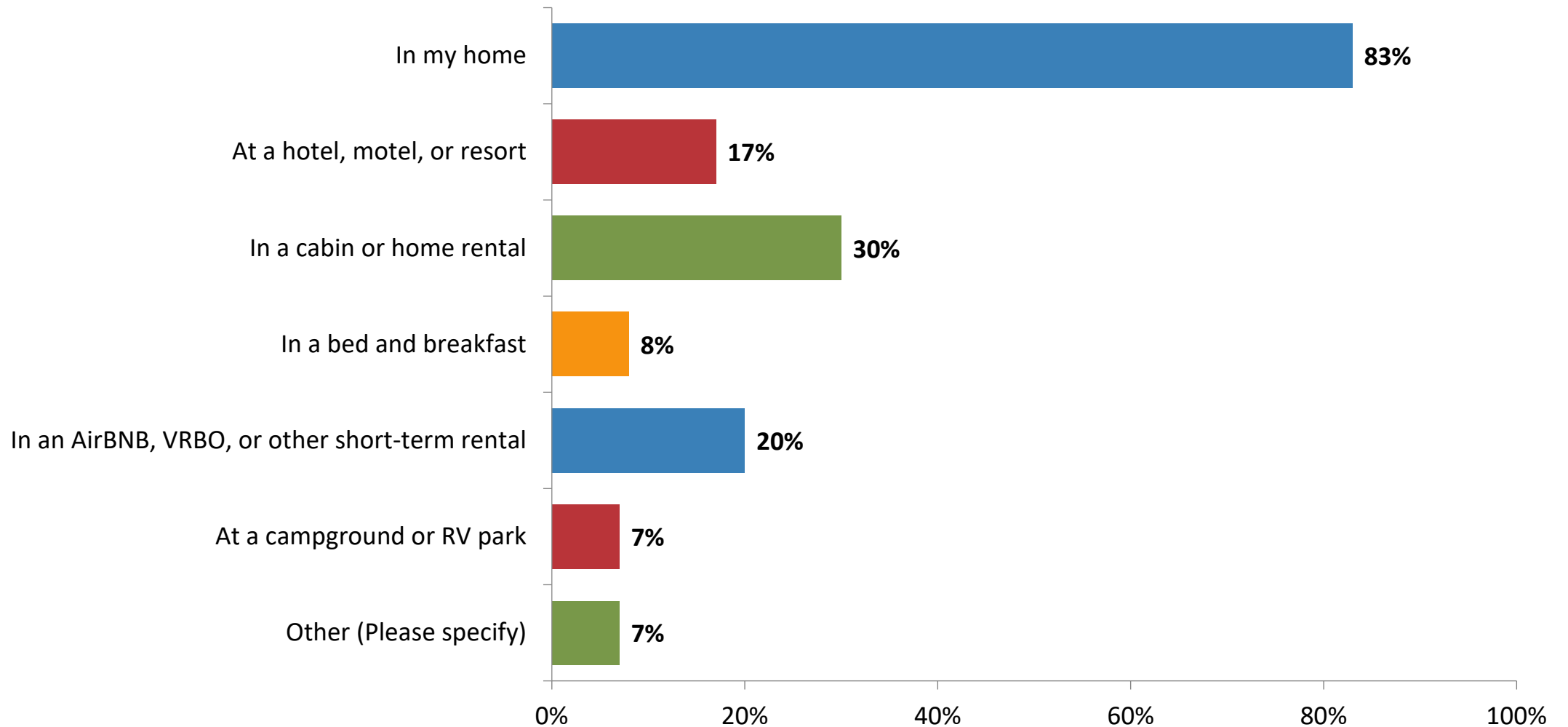
Clothing/Shoes	2
Kayak Rentals	
Mast General Store	
Camper Dealer	
Tourism Information Services	
Second Hand Outdoor Supply	
Shuttle Service	
Restaurants	
Horse Stables	

TOURISM (ALL RESPONSES)

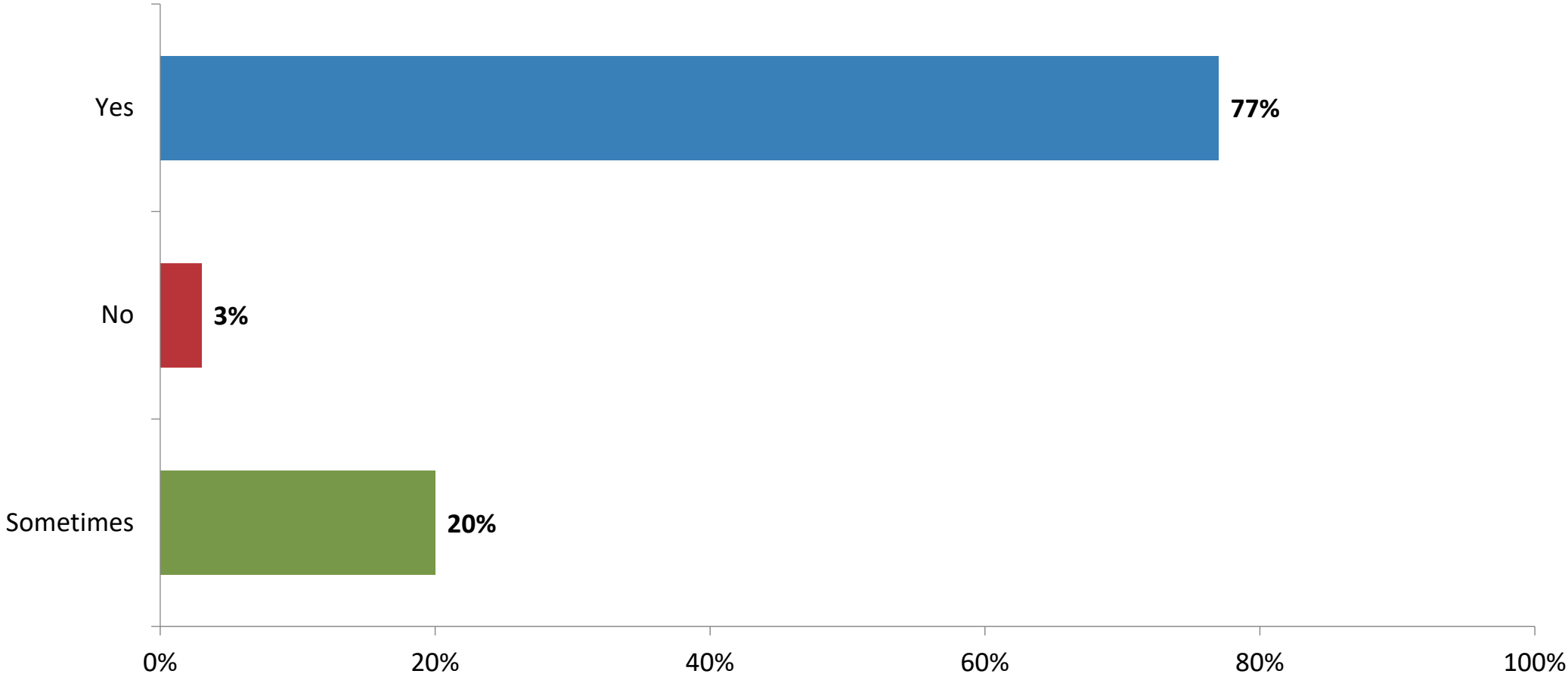
Visitor Frequency



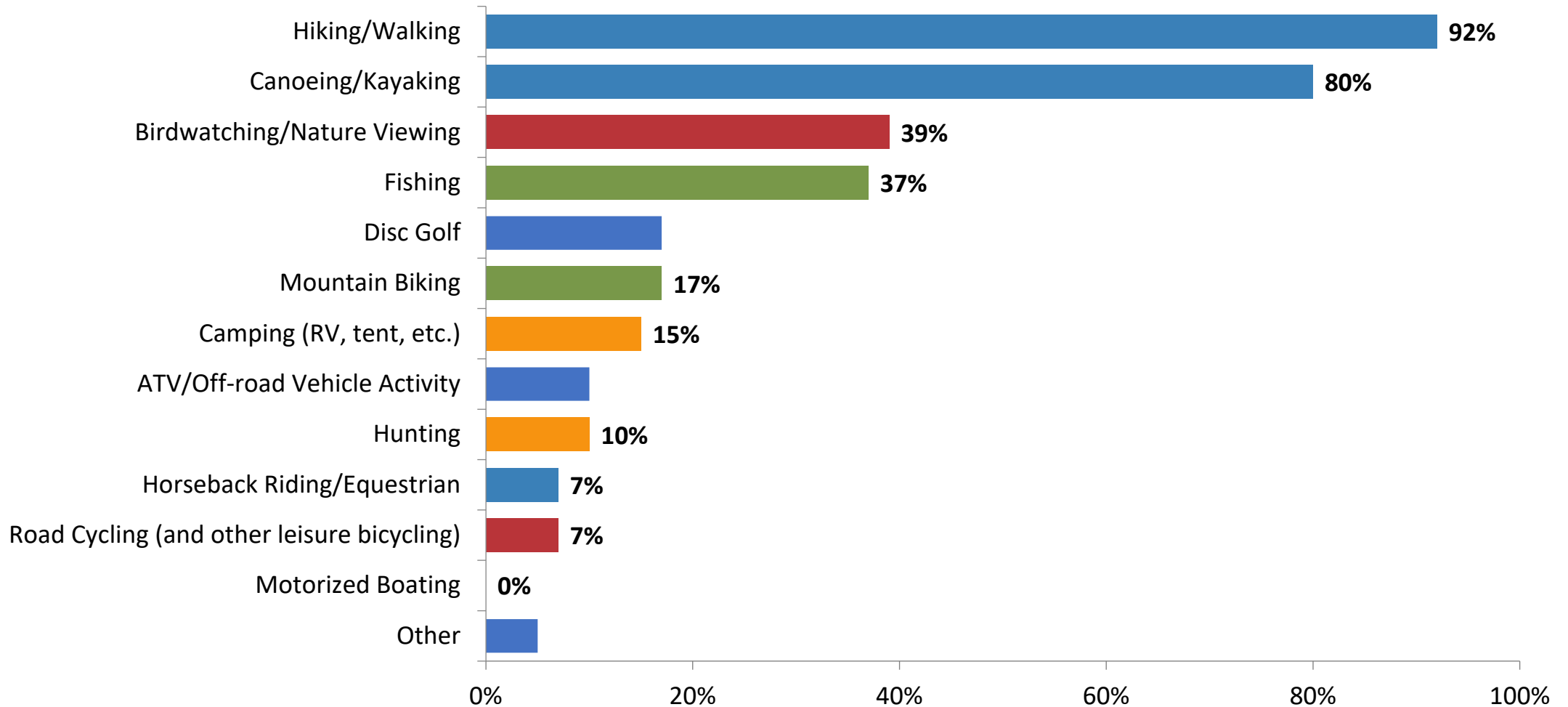
Lodging



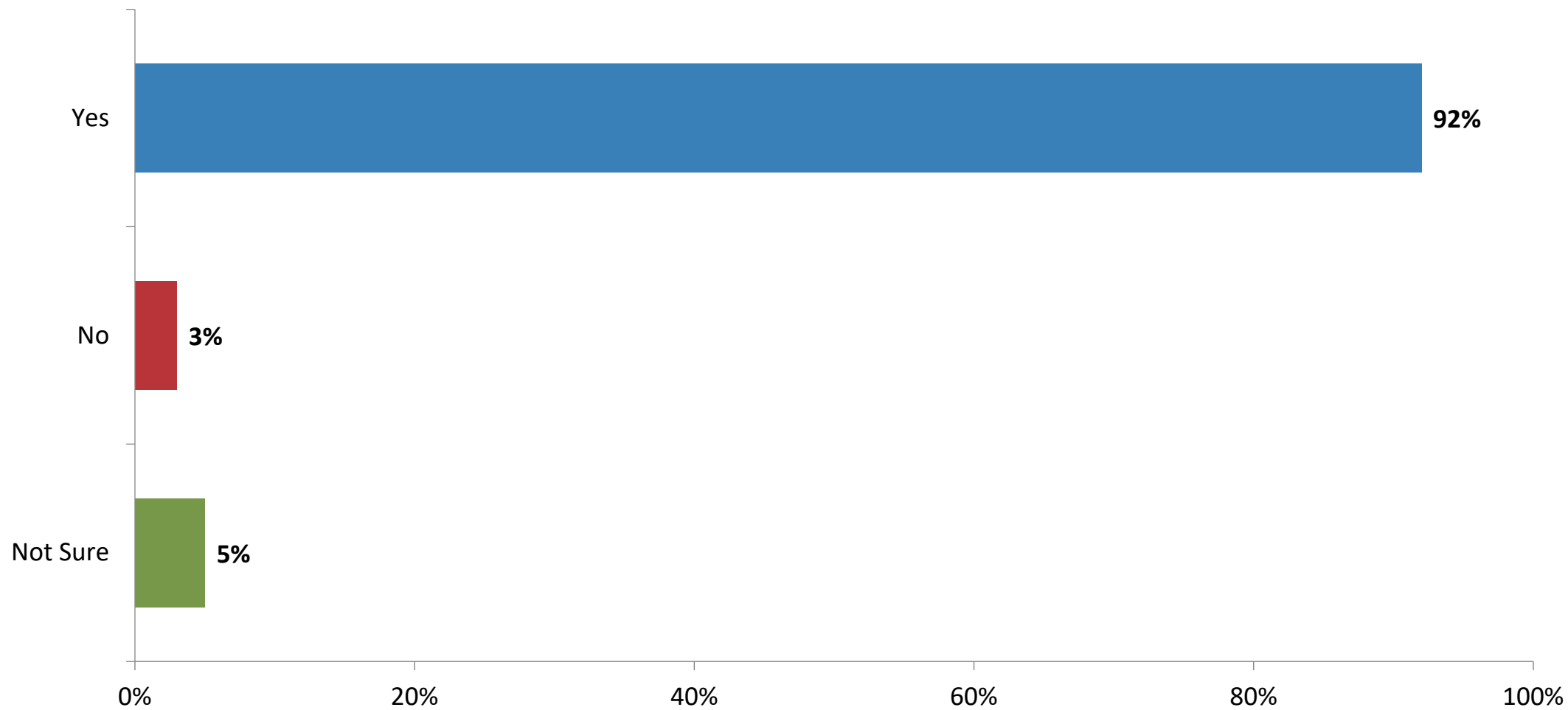
Visitor Outdoor Participation



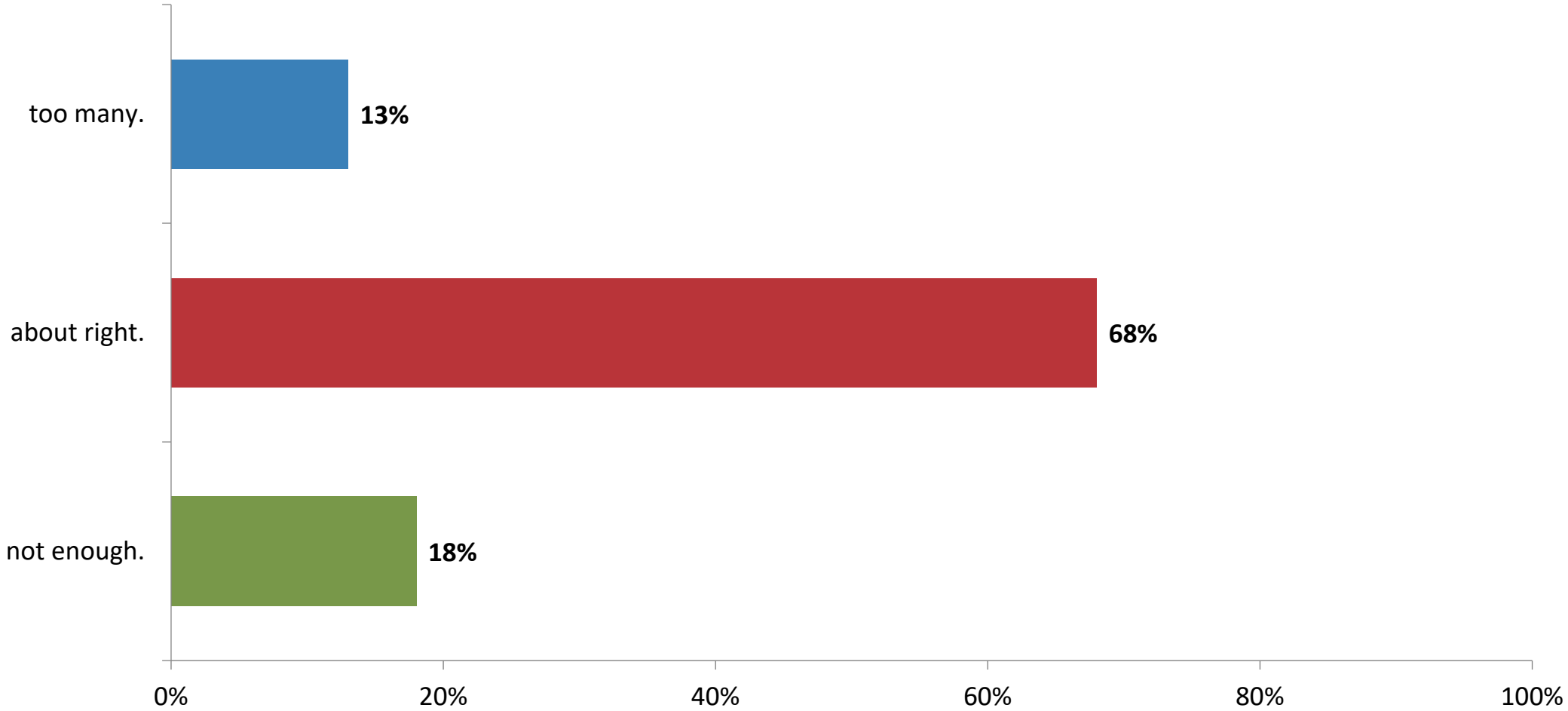
Visitor Outdoor Participation



Tourism



Current Visitors



Current Visitors

Too Many:

COVID brought many new visitors and some now fear overcrowding. Some believe that an emphasis on visitors is leading to a loss of local culture and identity. Housing availability and affordability is a major concern due to short term rentals and second homeowners. Some have concerns about parking in the downtown areas. Others mention land taxes have increased and tourism has forced some locals out of jobs.

13%

About Right:

This group see the benefits of tourism but worry that the county does not have the infrastructure (roads, housing) to support an influx of new visitors. They think there should be a balance between serving locals and serving visitors. They also worry about impacts to the natural amenities with too many users. However, many believe there is room for strategic growth and are not opposed to tourism under the right conditions.

68%

Not Enough:

These folks see the positive impacts on the county and their businesses from tourism and visitor spending. They are proud of the community and want to share it. They do acknowledge that there are some who disagree and that more people can bring challenges, but they believe the positives outweigh the negatives.

18%

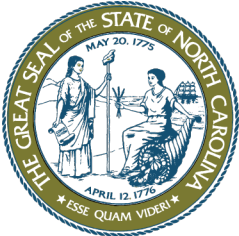
Appendix III

Stakeholder Interviews

The following is a summary presentation given to the local work group on the stakeholder interviews conducted by the NC MS&RP Center staff.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Ashe County



NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT of
COMMERCE

Interviews

- Conducted five interviews
- Ashe County residents with an interest in outdoor recreation and community development
 - Small Business Owners
 - Outdoor Enthusiasts
 - Volunteers

Activities

- Need more leisurely biking options for beginners; including greenways and bike lanes in towns
- Mountain biking trail options; currently looking at Paddy Mountain
- More variety in cycling options; gravel, road, mountain at all skill levels

Amenities

- Railroad Grade Road in Todd is great for beginners; perceptions of safety issues
- Parking; need parking availability in some areas (Todd, certain river access points)
- More connectivity via trail systems, greenways, and sidewalks
- Extend the Creeper Trail
- More river access points; easier access and parking

Facilities

- Hiking options closer to town; excitement around Northern Peak State Trail and Paddy Mountain projects
- US 221B repaving will incorporate the Northern Peaks Trail with bike/ped/ADA access
- Activities from kids or youth after 6pm; downtown businesses close, nowhere to hang out

Services

- Cleanup efforts around county; Keep Ashe Beautiful is a great campaign, but issue is ongoing
- Would like to see more education of private landowners around conservation efforts; clear cutting is a concern
- County could create maps or information that can be shared with businesses and visitors; hiking, biking, river maps that show difficulty and length of activity

Businesses

- Cost of business is better in Ashe County; sales are good
- Restaurant scene is improving; still would like more variety – especially a quality breakfast option
- Need fishing supply store; new one possibly opening (Gun and Rod Outdoors)
- Some would like a bike shop but uncertain of demand
- Businesses have short and inconsistent hours; miss out of Sunday and after-hours traffic
- Whitewater Center putting new facility in Grayson

Lodging

- Would like to see more camping options; one person saw this as an opportunity and has considered opening one
- Need a more traditional hotel and conference space
- Workforce housing is a major concern; short-term rentals are a threat, West Jefferson has restrictions
- Increase the occupancy tax and do more with that funding

Marketing

- **DO NOT BECOME BOONE**; people are torn between wanting more visitors/residents/business and maintaining the tranquil nature of the county
- Biggest markets are Greensboro, Charlotte, Raleigh; 10-15* cooler for recreating
- Lots of word-of-mouth marketing
- Visitor levels seem to be returning to pre-pandemic numbers
- Boone area cycling groups don't ride in Ashe County as much as they could; opportunity for promotion

Appendix IV

Meeting Agendas

The following are the meeting agendas for the Ashe County CORE work group meetings.



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



**ASHE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT**

**Ashe County
Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)
Thursday, March 30 | 12:00 pm**

Agenda

Introductions

Presentation

- What is the outdoor recreation economy?
- Explanation of CORE process

Work Group Survey Results

- Discussion: What does outdoor recreation mean for the community?

Understanding the Community Assets

- Identification of outdoor recreation assets in the community

Next Steps

- Distribute Community Survey
- Future Meeting Dates:
 - Meeting #2: Thursday, May 4 – 12:00pm
 - Meeting #3: Thursday, June 8 – 12:00pm
 - Meeting #4: Thursday, July 13 – 12:00pm

Adjourn



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



**ASHE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT**

**Ashe County
Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)
Thursday, May 4 | 12:00 pm**

Agenda

Exercise

- Building an Itinerary for Outdoor Experiences
- What are the impacts? What is missing?

Community Survey Results

- What does outdoor recreation mean for the community?
- How does it compare to the work group's goals?

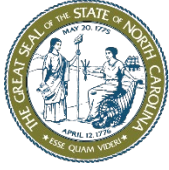
Visioning

- What is the ultimate vision for outdoor recreation in the community?

Next Steps

- Review Stakeholder Comments
- Develop a Vision, Goals, and a Work Plan
- Upcoming Meetings
 - Meeting #3: Thursday, June 8 – 12:00pm
 - Meeting #4: Thursday, July 13 – 12:00pm

Adjourn



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



**ASHE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT**

**Ashe County
Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)
Thursday, June 8 | 12:00 pm**

Agenda

Review Stakeholder Feedback

- Comments from local stakeholders

Review Asset Mapping

- Drafts of mapping from initial discussion

Review Vision Statement Draft

- Additional language to 2021 Parks & Rec Master Plan

Begin to Develop the Work Plan

- Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Tasks

Next Steps

- Continue to Develop Work Plan
- Identify Key Projects
- Meeting #4: Thursday, July 14 – 12:00pm

Adjourn



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



**ASHE COUNTY
GOVERNMENT**

Ashe County
Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE)
Thursday, July 13 | 12:00 pm

Agenda

Continue to Develop the Work Plan

- Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Tasks

Identify Key Projects

- What are the key projects that can move the community towards their goals?
- What is needed to further these projects?

Next Steps

- Draft the Final Report
- Present to County Commissioners

Adjourn

Appendix V

Funding and Resource Guide

The following is a guide of potential funding sources and other resources for outdoor recreation and outdoor economy development created by the NC MS&RP Center staff to assist CORE communities in implementation.

**NORTH CAROLINA MAIN STREET AND RURAL PLANNING CENTER
 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES AND RESOURCES
 FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
 (Revised August 2023)**

*** The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center recommends contacting listed entities directly for more information about their programs. The inclusion of a program on the list is not an endorsement by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. ***

Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
NC Land & Water Fund	These grants have been used in all 100 N.C. counties to help ensure clean drinking water, protect natural habitat and preserve our unique natural and cultural resources for future generations.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://nclwf.nc.gov/apply
North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)	Awards matching grants to local governments for parks, public beach access, and improvements in state parks. The statewide program helps local governments reach their park and public access goals to improve the quality of life in their communities.	Grants - The North Carolina General Assembly funds PARTF each year at different levels.	1:1 Match for Local Government Projects; Funds also available for NC State Parks projects and the Coastal and Estuarine Water Beach Access Program	https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/parks-recreation-trust-fund/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund
NCDNCR, Division of Parks and Recreation - Recreational Trails Program Grant	The intent of the RTP is to help fund trails and trail-related recreational needs at the State level for projects that are construction ready for grant funding.	Grants – past grant amounts awarded between \$10k-\$100k	Past years have required a 25% Match of RTP Funds Received	https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) - America the Beautiful Challenge	Intended to streamline grant funding opportunities for new conservation and restoration projects around the U.S., the America the Beautiful Challenge consolidates funding from multiple federal agencies and the private sector to enable applicants to conceive and develop large-scale projects that address shared funder priorities and span public and private lands.	Grants - Approximately \$85 million	Non-federal match helps demonstrate broad support for the project and may be required by the federal funding requirements. Dependent of federal agency funding.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/america-beautiful-challenge
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Transportation Alternatives	Provides funding for a variety of generally smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities; recreational trails; and more.	Grants	Variable	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/
U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Recreational Trails Program	Provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

National Forest Foundation Matching Awards Program	The MAP program supports action-oriented projects that enhance outdoor experiences, forest and ecosystem health, and engage local communities in caring for their public lands.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	1:1 nonfederal cash match	https://www.nationalforests.org/grant-programs/map
US Fish & Wildlife Service - Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program	Programs that distribute funding annually to state agencies and Tribes to manage fish, wildlife, and habitats, evaluate and enhance species of greatest conservation need, and provide recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, shooting, and boating. Local governments and orgs. may have to partner with state agencies to access these funds.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.fws.gov/program/wildlife-and-sport-fish-restoration
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Acres for America	Walmart’s Acres for America program stands today as the leading public-private land conservation partnership in the United States. The partnership began in 2005, when Walmart and NFWF joined forces to establish Acres for America as a groundbreaking effort to	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	All grant awards require a minimum 1:1 match of cash or contributed goods and services.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/acres-america

	support and catalyze the conservation of lands and wildlife habitat of national significance, and to benefit local communities and local economies.			
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Outdoor Heritage NC - North Carolina Schools Go Outside (GO) Grant	Created to address the main barrier to getting kids outside during the school day – funding. Qualifying for grants require instructors demonstrate how the experience will address topics currently being taught in class and that the experience meets the goals of the Outdoor Heritage Trust Fund plan.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.outdoorheritage.nc.gov/grants/ For questions, contact ohac.grants@nc.gov
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - The Land and Water Conservation Fund	The LWCF provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects. LWCF grants can be used to acquire land for a public park; to develop outdoor recreation and support facilities; or a combination of both. A project must be located on a single site.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	An applicant must match the grant with a minimum of 50 percent.	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/land-and-water-conservation-fund
Department of Natural and	Can be used to build accessible facilities or	Local governments can request a	An applicant must match the	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/accessibility-parks-grant

<p>Cultural Resources - Accessibility for Parks Grant</p>	<p>adapt existing facilities that meet the unique needs of children and veterans with physical and developmental disabilities.</p>	<p>maximum of \$500,000 with each application.</p>	<p>grant with \$1 of local funds for every \$5 of grant funds. The value of in-kind services, such as volunteer work, cannot be used as part of the match.</p>	
<p>Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program</p>	<p>The purpose of the program is to provide grants to acquire and/or develop public lands for outdoor recreation purposes consistent with the purposes of LWCF, but with the further specific goals of funding projects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are located within or serve an Urbanized Area (population of 50,000 or more) as designated by the Census Bureau from the 2010 Census; and • Are in, or are directly accessible to, neighborhoods or communities 	<p>Grants – Funding Amounts Vary</p>	<p>ORLP grant projects must be cost-shared with non-federal funds at a minimum ratio of 1:1.</p>	<p>https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/outdoor-recreation-legacy-partnership-program</p>

	that are underserved in terms of parks and recreation resources and where there are significant populations of people who are economically disadvantaged.			
NCDOT - IMD Feasibility Studies Program	Feasibility studies for eligible project types including paved trails, greenways, shared-use paths, sidepaths, and sidewalks.	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary	A local match is not required; however, it may be a factor to consider for a competitive grant cycle.	https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/IMD-Feasibility-Studies-Program.aspx
Athletic Brewing Co. – Two for the Trails	ABC donates 2% of sales to protect and restore trails, and other projects that enhance access to the outdoors. Any registered LLC eligible, with preference given to 501(c)(3) non-profits.	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary	Not specified	https://athleticbrewing.com/pages/two-for-the-trails
Fox Factory Trail Trust	Provide grants to organizations helping to preserve the places we love to play. The goal is to bring together diverse communities to build, maintain, and expand	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.trailtrust.com/

	access to trails for both mountain biking and power sports. 501(c)(3) Non-Profits eligible.			
NCDEQ – Water Resources Development Grant Program	This program provides cost-share grants and technical assistance to local governments in NC. Applications for grants are accepted for 7 eligible project types: general navigation, recreational navigation, water management, stream restoration, water-based recreation, Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) stream restoration projects and feasibility/engineering studies.	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary depending on project type - \$200,000 maximum recommended for “State & Local Projects”	50 percent matching limit	https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program
T-Mobile Hometown Grants program	T-Mobile is committing up to \$25 million over the next 5 years to support small towns across America by funding community projects. Program will help fund projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in your	Grants – maximum \$50k per town	Not specified	https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants

	town. For example, this might include the town square pavilion, a historic building, an outdoor park, a ball field, etc.			
NCDEQ – Div. of Coastal Management - Coastal Management Beach & Waterfront Access Program	Provides matching grants to local governments for projects to improve pedestrian access to the state's beaches and waterways. Eligible applicants include local governments in the 20 coastal counties and their municipalities that have public trust waters (ocean, estuarine or riverine waters) within their jurisdictions.	Grants	Local Match Required	https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/coastal-management/coastal-management-beach-waterfront-access-program/beach-waterfront-access-grants
PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program	The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle infrastructure projects and targeted initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride. PeopleForBikes accepts grant applications from non-profit organizations with a focus on bicycling, active transportation or community development; from city or county	Grants - up to \$10,000	Do not require a specific % match, but do look at leverage and funding partnerships very carefully. We will not consider grant requests in which PFB funding would amount to 50% or more of the project budget.	https://www.peopleforbikes.org/grant-guidelines

	agencies or departments and from state or federal agencies working locally.			
North Carolina Community Foundation	The North Carolina Community Foundation (NCCF) is the only statewide community foundation serving North Carolina and has administered over \$243 million in grants since 1988. With more than \$440 million in assets, NCCF sustains over 1,200 endowments and partners with a network of affiliates to award grants and scholarships in communities across the state.	Grants	Each grant resource administered by the NCCF will have different specifications.	https://www.nccommunityfoundation.org/
Occupancy Tax used for non-marketing purposes	Will be dependent of legislation that dictates how local occupancy tax dollars are allocated.	Tax	n/a	Consult local Tourism Development Authority or comparable board regarding how local occupancy tax funds are collected and allocated.
USDA-RD - Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program	This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly	Grants and Loans	Varying match rates dependent upon various factors	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/nc

	development of the community in a primarily rural area. Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and / or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.			
East Coast Greenway Alliance - Complete the Trails Program	The Alliance is seeking proposals for trail projects that can successfully apply CTP funding towards expanding the East Coast Greenway State Trail. This grant is for the purpose of planning, construction, promotion, and maintenance of component trails of the North Carolina Trails System.	Grant	Not Specified	https://www.greenway.org/complete-the-trails-nc

In addition to the above list, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) in partnership with Oregon State University has compiled a list of national outdoor recreation funding and technical assistance resources. Some resources may be duplicated between the MS&RP and ORR resource guides. The inclusion of a program on the list is not an endorsement by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. This list of resources is available via the below link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ucp7AQQQTHa8x0eWYL-ID53AvJU628dE/view>