

# **INCLUSION IN THE OUTDOORS**

## **2022 RESEARCH REPORT**

Kyle Armstrong | Updated September 14, 2023



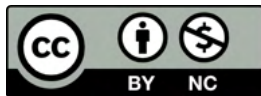
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## About the Author

Kyle Armstrong is the Project Director of Inclusion in the Outdoors and has led the initiative since March 2022, conducting all of the original research presented in this report. A Neenah, WI native, he earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Kyle currently lives in Neenah on his family's farm and looks forward to continuing the work of advancing outdoor inclusion.

## Author's Note

Although great effort has been made to conduct this research professionally and objectively, it was conducted in a limited scope with limited resources. Thus, this report is best thought of as a conversation starter, not as an authoritative representation of the complex issues it attempts to illuminate. The findings in this report are not novel: they are grounded in the deeply rooted and well-documented personal knowledge and experiences of members of marginalized communities. Furthermore, these findings are by no means an exhaustive list of the issues facing BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color) and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people or the factors potentially limiting their participation in outdoor activities, nor are BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people the only populations historically excluded from outdoor spaces. This research is also not meant to imply that outdoor activities are superior to other activities or that those who choose to not participate in them are deficient in any way.

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# Glossary

1. **Asexual:** Adjective used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction (e.g. asexual person). Sometimes shortened to "ace."
2. **BIPOC:** Acronym used to refer to Black, Indigenous and other People of Color based on the recognition of distinct identities within collective experiences of systemic racism.
3. **Cisgender:** An adjective used to describe people who are not transgender. A cisgender person is a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.
4. **Cis/Het:** Abbreviation used to refer to cisgender, heterosexual people.
5. **Demisexual:** Adjective used to describe a person who experiences sexual attraction to someone only after forming an emotional bond with them.
6. **Gender Identity:** a person's internal sense of their gender (male, female, or something else), distinct from sexual orientation and sex.
7. **Heterosexual:** Adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to people of a sex different than their own. Also: straight.
8. **Latinx:** Adjective used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina to describe a person of Latin American origin or descent.
9. **LGBT:** Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Q, I, A, 2S, and + are often added: Q for queer, I for intersex, A for asexual, and 2S for two-spirit, with the + added in recognition of additional non-straight, non-cisgender identities.
10. **Marginalized:** Adjective used to describe groups of people who have been systematically denied power and pushed to the margins of society.
11. **Non-binary:** Adjective used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of man and woman.
12. **Pansexual:** Adjective used to describe a person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to any person, regardless of sex or gender identity.
13. **People of Color:** A collective term for people of Asian, African, Latinx and Native American backgrounds, as opposed to the collective "White."
14. **Sexual Orientation:** A person's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to other people. Sexual orientations can include heterosexual (straight), lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other orientations.
15. **QTBIPOC:** Acronym for queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color, used to refer to BIPOC people who also identify as LGBTQ+.
16. **Queer:** Adjective used by some people whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (e.g. queer person). Once considered a slur, it has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ people to describe themselves and the community. However, it is not a universally accepted term even within the LGBTQ community.
17. **Transgender:** Adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

#### Glossary entries adapted from:

College of the Environment, [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Glossary](#), University of Washington; GLAAD Media Reference Guide, 11th Edition, [Glossary of Terms: LGBTQ](#), GLAAD; GLAAD Media Reference Guide, 11th Edition, [Glossary of Terms: Transgender](#), GLAAD

# Summary

*“Outdoors is healing,  
and people in our community are in dear need of healing.”*

- LGBTQ+ INTERVIEWEE

Centered on the beautiful and powerful Fox River in ancestral Menominee lands, hugging the shores of Wisconsin’s largest lake, dotted by scores of parks and crisscrossed by dozens of miles of trails, the Fox Cities of northeast Wisconsin contain rich and varied venues for outdoor recreation. With so many opportunities available, it is all the more concerning to find that some people don’t feel welcomed in these spaces and others avoid outdoor activities in them altogether. This report outlines findings suggesting that local Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people feel less welcomed in outdoor spaces and participate in outdoor activities less than their white, straight, and cisgender peers. These findings are in line with previous research and can likely be explained in large part by a long history of discrimination in the United States. They are concerning not only because outdoor activities are enjoyable pastimes or because all should have access to public outdoor recreational facilities; exposure to outdoors spaces also confers a wide range of cognitive and health benefits<sup>1</sup> that members of marginalized groups could benefit from. Furthermore, as the population diversifies, continued public support for conservation relies on younger, more diverse generations developing connections with nature as the Fox Cities’ BIPOC population is growing far faster than its white population<sup>2</sup> and 20% of Gen Z (born 1997–2013) identifies as LGBTQ+.<sup>3</sup> In short, inclusion in the outdoors is critical for justice, health equity, and the sustained vitality of the conservation movement.

The findings in this report represent the lived experiences of nearly 200 people from across the Fox Cities and beyond, gathered from March to August, 2022 through 1-on-1 conversations, focus groups, and a survey. Emphasis was put on listening to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ voices that have been historically excluded from participation in and discussions about outdoor spaces and activities. Their stories reveal a diversity of perspectives on the outdoors that is often missing from mainstream narratives. In case after case, the indignities suffered by members of marginalized groups attempting to enjoy outdoor spaces were made clear: suspicious looks, slurs and jeers, police being called on them for doing completely legal activities, and more. What is also clear is that many people from these same groups are, in fact, enjoying the outdoors and would like to end the perceptions that people of their identities don’t belong in these spaces. Both of these realities can be true simultaneously while highlighting distinct challenges for overcoming outdoor inequality.

A Hispanic woman said her family had been accosted at a farmer’s market for speaking Spanish and that it was difficult for many Hispanic parents to understand the outdoor opportunities available for their

<sup>1</sup> Schertz & Berman. “Understanding Nature and Its Cognitive Benefits”; Bratman. “Nature and mental health: An ecosystem service perspective.”

<sup>2</sup> Eilbert & Behnke. “Home is here”: Northeast Wisconsin’s surge in diversity forged by opportunities, grit and an inclusive vision.”

<sup>3</sup> Jones. “U.S. LGBT Identification Steady at 7.2%.”

children because few promotional materials are published in Spanish. A Black man said he had come to enjoy outdoor activities despite growing up in a treeless urban neighborhood with a mother who said “camping is not something you do on purpose,” echoing a common sentiment in Black culture. A Hmong community leader said that he and his family never walk down the street, preferring to drive in order to avoid racist harassment. A non-binary person lamented the way some cisgender people treat them and their partner out in public, saying “We have the right to have a nice day without getting glared at.”

Several members of Fox Cities outdoor organizations and nature center staff spoke about their experiences. Many expressed strong desire to be more inclusive of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people, but admitted to inaction due to not knowing who to reach out to and fear of offending members of marginalized groups. Others instead emphasized that outdoor spaces and activities are inherently equal and open to all, with one remarking, “With what we do there’s no discrimination possibility.” Handicapped accessibility was cited by staff as a sign of inclusion progress. One nature center director pointed to field trips from Milwaukee as an example of attracting diverse visitors. None could recall proactive efforts by their organizations to reach out to or include BIPOC or LGBTQ+ people, nor could any recall efforts to measure the diversity of their participants or visitors. One bright spot was Heckrodt Wetland Reserve [figure 1], which has partnered with the Menasha Joint School District to provide bilingual English/Spanish programming. Another was the Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes, who as an organization have prioritized training and inclusive outreach to achieve an inclusive vision.

## Project Background

In 2020, the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, Fox Cities Greenways, and East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission sponsored a keynote by Dudley Edmondson, a noted Black photographer, outdoorsman, and author, who spoke about the many factors that limit Black and Brown Americans’ interactions with the outdoors. That talk sparked further conversations among attendees about what could be done in the Fox Valley region to understand and address outdoor inequality. The Brigade of Neenah stepped up to host an AmeriCorps member (the author) dedicated to researching why disparities exist in the outdoors. The AmeriCorps phase of the project focused on the experiences of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people and culminated in a report-out event in August of 2022 featuring preliminary research findings and a panel discussion of residents with diverse lived experiences. This report provides more depth and detail on the research conducted in 2022 and adds additional historical context and analysis. A new phase of the project focused on advocacy and programming began in December 2022 in partnership with Multicultural Coalition, Inc., of Appleton.

## About the Fox Cities

The Fox Cities are a string of neighboring communities along the Fox River in northeast Wisconsin, settled by Europeans in the nineteenth century on Menominee lands. Although there is some debate about which communities constitute the Fox Cities, this research included Appleton, Combined Locks, Fox Crossing, Grand Chute, Harrison, Kaukauna, Kimberly, Little Chute, Menasha, and Neenah. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, their total combined population was 219,818.



Figure 1. The trilingual welcome sign at Heckrodt Wetland Reserve, Menasha, offers a taste of inclusive outdoor facility design.

## Key Findings

1. BIPOC people reported doing less outdoors—**less monthly activity** doing **fewer types of activities** in **fewer types of spaces**—than white people did.
2. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people reported **more barriers** to doing outdoor activities than white and cisgender/heterosexual (cis/het) people did, including racism, homophobia, and transphobia.
3. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people reported **fearing for their safety** in outdoor spaces. Several participants reported taking special measures to protect themselves in outdoor and rural areas, and BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people generally reported **feeling less safe in rural areas** than white and cis/het respondents did.
4. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people reported feeling more comfortable in **similarly identified groups**. Focus group participants repeatedly expressed that they feel safer with people who identify as they do—whether in race, sexual orientation, or gender identity—and that **seeing those people motivates them** to join in activities with them.
5. A long and well-documented **history of discrimination and violence** against BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people in the Fox Cities and United States contributed to today’s disparities. See “Historical Context” on page 9.

*Additional data is presented in Appendix A*

## Recommendations

These recommendations, presented in no particular order, are a combination of reactions to the findings in this research and recommendations from Dudley Edmondson. They are largely actions for institutions, including governments, schools and nature facilities to implement, but all people can play a role in promoting policies and modeling respectful behavior.

1. **Foster outdoor programming for and by marginalized groups**, where all or the majority of organizers and participants are members of a specific group. Events open to the public and attended primarily by white or cis/het people are not necessarily safe and welcoming to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people.
2. **Make all-gender** (gender neutral) **restrooms available at all facilities** that have restrooms. All-gender restrooms are crucial to fully including transgender people and ensuring they feel safe to use the toilet and change clothes.
3. **Be proactive about inclusion:** governments and outdoor organizations should reach out to diverse organizations and communities to listen, invite participation, offer resources, and find opportunities for partnership.
4. **Promote respectful outdoor behavior** to the public through public service announcements, on-site signage, and educational programming.
5. **Consistently reinforce a climate of inclusion** through condemnation of hate and displays of solidarity with marginalized groups. Neutrality in the face of hate is tacit support for hatred.
6. **Celebrate marginalized cultures and histories** in monuments, facility design, school curricula, media and events. Don't assume that what is mainstream or the status quo is inviting for all people.
7. **Integrate Spanish and Hmong** into programming, signage, and promotional materials and reach out to the Hispanic and Hmong-speaking communities directly.
8. **Invite BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people** to serve on the boards of environmental and conservation organizations and support their full participation.
9. **Have green spaces a reasonable distance** to people no matter where they live and provide accessible transportation options including sidewalks, bike paths, and public transit.
10. **Ensure all people have access** to the equipment necessary for outdoor activities by making free or low-cost gear available at outdoor facilities and through "gear banks."
11. **Support outdoor organizations** as they work to achieve inclusion, diversity, equity, and access (IDEA) goals. Provide the resources and patience necessary to help them learn and grow.
12. **Provide comprehensive diversity training** for all outdoor organization staff. Public-facing staff should understand how their words and actions can impact visitors and be ready to meet the needs of visitors who don't match the profile of a "traditional" visitor (i.e. white, cis/het, middle-class, Christian, able-bodied)

# Historical Context

The disparities we see today in the outdoors and across our society are neither natural nor accidental nor the result of consenting choices by members of affected groups. In many cases, they are the legacy of centuries of decisions made to intentionally segregate, demonize, and brutalize BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people and ignore their needs and accomplishments. While the codified discrimination that defined earlier eras has largely ended, the effects linger in the forms of prejudices, cultural norms, socioeconomic disparities, narratives and stereotypes that continue to result in many marginalized people being unable to access or feeling unwelcome in the outdoors (among many other impacts). The Fox Cities are no exception. This historical context forms the basis for key finding five.

Although these effects impact most or all BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people directly or indirectly, many of the most egregious injustices have been committed against Black people and in ways that particularly affect their ability and willingness to visit outdoor spaces and participate in outdoor activities. Thus, much of the discourse on outdoor inclusion and many of the examples listed here center around the Black experience, although this is not to in any way diminish the experiences of people of other identities.

## Land and Wealth

Relationships with outdoor spaces are inherently tied to the land where outdoor spaces exist. Land is not simply a location where outdoor activities occur; it is home, public meeting space, link to nature, and valuable means of sustenance and economic security. From colonization through the 20th century, land has been taken from or denied to BIPOC people in the United States. In the 18th and 19th centuries, as Indigenous lands were forcibly taken by European immigrants flooding onto the continent, the Indigenous people the land was stolen from, the Africans enslaved to till that land and the Chinese laborers who built railroads across it were all largely barred from owning it.<sup>4</sup> Although conditions improved for Black Americans during post-Civil War Reconstruction, the land situation actually worsened in the 20th century. Black agricultural land ownership peaked in 1910 and declined 90% by 1997 due to a combination of government policies<sup>5</sup>, while redlining, the policy that effectively barred BIPOC (and sometimes Jewish) people from



Figure 2. Redlining map of Milwaukee. The practice of redlining excluded BIPOC people from owning land in the 20th century. (Image Source: American Geographical Society Library)

<sup>4</sup> Adelman. "A Long History of Racial Preferences - For Whites."

<sup>5</sup> Francis, Hamilton, Mitchell, Rosenberg, and Stucki. "Black Land Loss: 1920-1997."

receiving home loans, ensured that they would either be unable to afford homeownership or unable to invest in their neighborhoods [figure 2]. Segregation, difficulties building wealth, and alienation from land and nature inevitably followed.<sup>6</sup>

Today, the sum of these policies has resulted in starkly different economic realities for the descendants of the white colonists and the descendants of those they displaced or excluded: the Black homeownership rate is 29% lower, and the Hispanic homeownership rate 27% lower, than the white homeownership rate<sup>7</sup> while the median Black household possesses one-eighth the net wealth of the median white household.<sup>8</sup> The median Indigenous household likely possesses just 1/32 the wealth of the median white household.<sup>9</sup> Governments subsequently underinvested in the segregated BIPOC neighborhoods created by the land policies outlined above, building fewer and lower-quality parks and pools and contributing to the disparities in nature access. This means that not only do many BIPOC households have less access to land and nature, but they also have significantly less wealth with which to afford the free time, entry fees, transportation, and gear necessary for many outdoor activities. Today, 78% of BIPOC Wisconsin residents live in nature-deprived areas compared to 13% of white Wisconsinites.<sup>10</sup>

## Segregation and Intimidation

Even if BIPOC people did have the means to access a natural space historically, they might not have been allowed in. BIPOC visitors were barred from entry or forced into segregated facilities at national and state parks and many other places of outdoor recreation like beaches, swimming pools, and campgrounds well into the middle of the 20th century.<sup>11</sup> Integration of public pools was particularly contentious due to the intimate nature of sharing water in a confined space, with police forcefully turning away BIPOC swimmers until legally mandated integration drove racist white swimmers to private pools and led to the closure of numerous facilities, resulting in a significant racial gap in swimming abilities.<sup>12</sup> Segregation led BIPOC people to develop alternative recreation habits based around what was accessible to them, habits which have been passed down to younger generations. They also developed their own enclaves of free recreation. Black resorts, like Lake Ivanhoe in Wisconsin, were established by and for Black people to provide the access to outdoor recreation that many white US Americans took for granted.<sup>13</sup>

Even if they had been able to access outdoor spaces, some might not have wanted to due to the negative associations. As Carolyn Finney writes, “Fear and mistrust of forests and other green spaces revealed a fear and mistrust of what these spaces represent in the eyes of a black person hobbled by repressive rules, cultural norms, racist propaganda, and the possibility of death.”<sup>14</sup> That perception of a possibility of death comes from not just the history of Jim Crow-era lynchings in outdoor spaces, but also the risk of

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<sup>6</sup> University of Richmond. *Introduction*.

<sup>7</sup> Henderson. *Black Families Fall Further Behind on Homeownership*

<sup>8</sup> Harris & Wertz. *Racial Differences in Economic Security: The Racial Wealth Gap*.

<sup>9</sup> Feir, Moreno, and Vogel. “Data from a Native CDFI yield new insights on wealth gap in Indian Country.”

<sup>10</sup> Rowland-Shea, Doshi, Edberg, & Fanger. *The Nature Gap: Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America*.

<sup>11</sup> Moore. *Historic Discrimination to Blame for Diversity Gap in US Parks, Expert Says*

<sup>12</sup> Martin. *Racial History of American Swimming Pools*.

<sup>13</sup> Bezucha. “‘What I felt there was free’: State to commemorate Black-founded resort community and haven.”

<sup>14</sup> Finney. *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*. 55

violence from land owners or police, who in a string of highly publicized cases have been called on Black people doing normal activities outdoors, such as bird watching, barbecuing and camping.<sup>15</sup> LGBTQ+ people have been given reason to fear and mistrust outdoor spaces as well: it was in a national forest that Julianne Williams and Laura Winans, two lesbian hikers, were murdered by a man who “hates gays”<sup>16</sup> and transgender people are generally four times as likely to be victims of violent crime as cisgender people.<sup>17</sup>

These issues are not far removed from the Fox Valley. Appleton was known to be a sundown town—a municipality where BIPOC people were not allowed after dark—as late as 1961 [figure 3].<sup>18</sup> The Wisconsin Hmong community’s outdoor interactions are still influenced by the racist fallout from the 2004 Chai Vang hunting incident, including a possible retaliatory murder,<sup>19</sup> as well as anti-Asian attacks inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>20</sup> In 2022, a gay woman was called a gay slur, thrown into a bonfire and strangled in Green Bay.<sup>21</sup> Local BIPOC leaders said the police have also been called on them without justification for gathering in local parks. Events like these can reinforce the narratives that outdoor spaces are dangerous for members of marginalized groups and that they don’t belong there.



Figure 3. Appleton Evening Crescent headline, 1915. BIPOC people were kept out of Appleton for much of the 20th century. (Image Source: Appleton Post-Crescent)

## Representation and Narratives

The narratives repeated about outdoor spaces can be just as powerful a deterrent to outdoor activity as active discrimination can be. The resulting low interest and lack of representation among affected groups can then reinforce harmful narratives of non-belonging for future generations, creating a vicious feedback loop.

The root of the modern narrative that the outdoors are for straight, white men lies in earlier narratives and layers of history. What was perhaps the first of these narratives dates back to the early colonies, when John Northrop, the first governor of Massachusetts colony, argued that white men had the “civil right” to steal American land from Indigenous people and settle on it.<sup>22</sup> This idea eventually crystallized into Manifest Destiny, the belief that it was divine will that the white men of the United States should colonize the North American continent, displacing Indigenous peoples along the way. These ideas were

<sup>15</sup> Levenson. *The realities of being a black birdwatcher*

<sup>16</sup> Marquis. “Man Is Charged in 2 Killings That U.S. Calls Hate Crime.”

<sup>17</sup> “Transgender people over four times more likely than cisgender people to be victims of violent crime.”

<sup>18</sup> *A Stone of Hope: Black Experiences in the Fox Cities.*

<sup>19</sup> Saulny. “Hmong, Shaken, Wonder if a Killing Was Retaliation”

<sup>20</sup> Soellner. “Coronavirus in Wisconsin: Asian Americans fend off xenophobia.”

<sup>21</sup> Padgett. “Prison Guard Accused of Violent Anti-LGBTQ+ Crime Gets Plea Bargain.”

<sup>22</sup> Taylor. *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection.* 12

rooted in white supremacy, a concept that was also intimately connected with the early conservation movement through eugenicists like Madison Grant, a founding father of the national parks who believed that the preservation of nature was inherently linked to the preservation of the “Nordic race.”<sup>23</sup> Outdoor activities also came to be viewed as masculine and even as a way to prevent homosexuality in boys, discouraging women and LGBTQ+ people from participation.<sup>24</sup>

That able-bodied, straight white men like Grant created spaces and movements for people like themselves isn’t particularly surprising, and this exclusive strain of leadership has persisted. A 2014 study of environmental and conservation organizations found that their leaders were overwhelmingly male and white.<sup>25</sup> Although more recent studies have shown significant increases in representation in these positions,<sup>26</sup> the impact of this long-standing lack of diversity will be felt for years to come. Diverse representation in leadership matters, both because diverse leaders can challenge assumptions that hinder inclusion and because their visibility can inspire similarly identified members of the public to participate in their organizations or pursue similar careers. Similarly, people not fitting the model of straight white men have been historically hard to find in media, including outdoor advertising. A 2004 study found: “Magazine advertisements are noticeably lacking in depictions of Black models hiking, camping, and participating in other outdoor recreation activities.”<sup>27</sup>

Just as powerful as the narratives that are being told are the ones that are neglected and untold. Like environmental organization leaders, National Park Service rangers are overwhelmingly white.<sup>28</sup> However, the first people patrolling US national parks were Black US Army troops known as Buffalo Soldiers, posted to the West after the Civil War [figure 4].<sup>29</sup> This crucial role that Black people played in the creation of parks that their descendents would feel unwelcome in is an ironic example of the erased history of marginalized people who have enjoyed and stewarded outdoor spaces. Consider also one of the most iconic figures of American outdoor mythology: the cowboy. That the original cowboys were Mexican cattle hands called *vaqueros*,<sup>30</sup> or that a quarter of the cowboys working in the American West after the Civil War were Black,<sup>31</sup> are stories almost never depicted in whitewashed 20th century media portrayals of the “wild west.”



Figure 4. Buffalo soldiers on patrol in Yosemite National Park, 1901. Black Buffalo soldiers were the first to patrol national parks. (Image Source: National Park Service)

<sup>23</sup> Wagner and Meldon. “Madison Grant.”

<sup>24</sup> Kennedy. “Stigma, Stereotypes, and Status: How Male North American Outdoor Educators Understand and Experience Masculinity.”

<sup>25</sup> Taylor. “The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations.”

<sup>26</sup> Puritty. “2022 NGO and Foundation Transparency Report Card.”

<sup>27</sup> Martin. “Apartheid in the Great Outdoors: American Advertising and the Reproduction of a Racialized Outdoor Leisure Identity.”

<sup>28</sup> “By the Numbers.”

<sup>29</sup> “Buffalo Soldiers.”

<sup>30</sup> Library of Congress. “Vaqueros.”

<sup>31</sup> Porter. *The Negro on the American frontier*.

These stories are also rarely memorialized in monuments to the people and narratives our society has deemed worthy of preservation. Just seven of the nearly 600 Wisconsin outdoor state historical markers commonly found in parks and along highways commemorate Black history and none have been erected to commemorate LGBTQ+, Latinx, or Hmong history (an initiative began in 2022 to add more markers representing marginalized history).<sup>32</sup> The presence of Indigenous people before and after colonization is also often ignored. Shattuck Park in Neenah, WI features a ring of historical plaques detailing a timeline of the city's founding [figure 5] that begins with the arrival of white settlers in 1820 and makes no mention of the existence of the Menominee people who called the land home.

Through these examples, it becomes clear that not only have members of marginalized groups been physically excluded from outdoor spaces, but they have also been erased from history, portrayals, and leadership of outdoor spaces, further perpetuating the myth that the outdoors is the domain of straight, white men and inhibiting interest in the outdoors from those who don't fit that model.



*Figure 5. Neenah's Shattuck Park. Outdoor monuments like these often omit the history of marginalized groups.*

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<sup>32</sup> Bezucha, "What I felt there was free"

# Methods

**Notes on scope:** The project included background reading, direct conversations with individuals with technical expertise and lived experiences relevant to the project, an online survey, and focus groups. All data was gathered from March to August of 2022. The geographic area covered includes the Fox Cities as defined by Appleton, Combined Locks, Fox Crossing, Grand Chute, Harrison, Kaukauna, Kimberly, Little Chute, Menasha, and Neenah, WI.

## Focus Group Procedures

Focus groups were conducted in partnership with local organizations that had experience with the target demographic groups in order to leverage their established cultural competence and community trust. Host organizations recruited participants, provided facilitators, scheduled sessions, and provided space to host sessions. In compensation, these organizations were given \$300 per session hosted. Focus group questions are listed in Appendix B.

Four focus groups were ultimately conducted for the project:

- 2 BIPOC youth sessions hosted by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley, one at their facility in Appleton and one at their facility in Menasha
- 1 LGBTQ+ youth session hosted by YouthGo at their facility in Neenah
- 1 LGBTQ+ adult session hosted by Diverse & Resilient at their facility in Appleton

In order to maximize participant comfort and candor:

- Each session was designed for a single demographic group
- Only members of the target group were allowed to participate
- Facilitators were members of the target groups
- Only participants' self-identified first names were used during the session, and all participants were guaranteed anonymity

As an incentive and as fair compensation for their time, participants were each given \$20 cash, while facilitators were each given \$40 cash. Light refreshments were provided at each session.

Two facilitators were recruited to run each session: a scribe and a moderator. Sessions were audio recorded. Recordings and scribe notes were analyzed later to identify recurring themes and supporting quotations. Demographic data was recorded through an anonymous survey given at the end of each session.

## Focus Group Participants

Participants were recruited by host organization staff. A total of 34 participants participated in the four sessions. All participants in the youth sessions were between the ages of 11 and 17, while adult session participant ages ranged from 18 to 50 and several participants did not provide their age. Participants largely fell into two categories: cisgender/heterosexual Black youth and white LGBTQ+ people. For a breakdown of participants by race, gender, and sexual orientation, see tables 1-3.

Table 1: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT RACE/ORIGIN							
Session	Total*	Black	East Asian	Indigenous	Latinx/Hisp.	White	Other**
BIPOC youth 1	8	7	1	2	1	1	1
BIPOC youth 2	12	11	1	-	1	4	-
LGBTQ+ youth	6	-	-	-	1	5	-
LGBTQ+ adult	8	-	-	-	-	8	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>

\* Rows may not add up to total because participants could select more than one racial identity

\*\* One participant marked "other" and did not specify a race

Table 2: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT GENDER IDENTITY							
Session	Total*	Female	Male	Non Binary	Bi-gender	Other	Transgender**
BIPOC youth 1	8	-	8	-	-	-	-
BIPOC youth 2	12	9	3	-	-	-	-
LGBTQ+ youth	6		4	1	1	-	3
LGBTQ+ adult	8	1	5	2	-	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>

\* Rows may not add up to total because participants could select more than one gender identity in addition to transgender identity

\*\* Transgender identity was listed as a separate question in the questionnaire and is presented together with gender merely for visual simplicity

Session	Total*	Demi/Asexual	Pan/Bisexual	Gay/Lesbian	Straight	Queer
BIPOC youth 1	8**	-	-	-	2	-
BIPOC youth 2	12**	-	-	1	10	-
LGBTQ+ youth	6	1	3	2	-	-
LGBTQ+ adult	8	1	3	5	-	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>

\* Rows may not add up to total because participants could select more than one option

\*\* Some participants did not provide a response for sexual orientation. In the first session, many seemingly accidentally skipped the page of the questionnaire with this question

## Survey Procedures

A questionnaire was created using Google Forms and was available online from May 14 to July 1, 2022. The survey was also available in person on iPads at the Appleton Hmong American Day festival on May 14 and the Appleton Juneteenth festival on June 12. English, Hmong, and Spanish versions were available. See Appendix A for a list of the questions in English.

As an incentive, respondents were offered an option to enter a drawing for prizes upon completion of the survey. A prompt at the end of the questionnaire directed them to the drawing entry form, which was a completely separate Google Forms document from the questionnaire to maintain anonymity. One \$50 prize and five \$20 prizes were offered, with recipients chosen at random from those who completed the entry form.

Data was exported from Google Forms into Google Sheets and analyzed using Sheets functions, including pivot tables. All charts were created in Sheets.

## Survey Respondents

Survey respondents were self-selecting and efforts were made to reach out to BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people specifically. A total of 137 responses to the survey were received. Respondents who did not work or live in the Fox Cities were disregarded, leaving 115 local responses. For a breakdown of respondents by race, gender, and sexual orientation, see tables 4-6.

**Note about identity of SE Asian respondents:** Based on answers about language and religion, and taking into consideration the demographics of the region, it seems reasonable to conclude that most, if not all of the respondents in the SE Asian category are of Hmong descent.

Table 4: SURVEY RESPONDENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION*						
Asexual	Bi/Pansexual	Gay/Lesbian	Queer	Straight	Other	Prefer Not to Say
1	12	9	6	80	1	5

\* Numbers in this table may not add up to the total number of respondents because respondents could select more than one option

Table 5: SURVEY RESPONDENT GENDER IDENTITY*				
Female	Male	Non Binary	Other	Transgender**
76	43	5	1	6

\* Numbers in this table may not add up to the total number of respondents because respondents could select more than one option

\*\* Transgender identity was listed as a separate question in the questionnaire and is presented together with gender merely for visual simplicity

Table 6: SURVEY RESPONDENT RACE*									
Black	East Asian	Latinx / Hisp.	Indigenous / Native	Pacific Islander / Hawaiian	Middle East / N. African	South Asian	SE Asian	White	Prefer not to say
14	4	14	5	2	1	1	15	73	3

\* Numbers in this table may not add up to the total number of respondents because respondents could select more than one option

**Demographic categories for findings:** Of the race/origin categories, only Black, Latinx, SE Asian, and white received enough responses to analyze and display separately. Some respondents are counted in more than one racial category because they reported more than one race. The “All BIPOC” category includes all responses reporting at least one non-white identity, including Black, Latinx, and SE Asian; the “white” category only includes responses from those who selected “white” and no other race/origin. The “LGBTQ+” category includes all responses reporting a gender identity other than cisgender and/or sexual orientation other than heterosexual. See Table 7 for the number of responses in each category.

Table 7: SURVEY PARTICIPANT COUNTS IN DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES								
Black	Latinx	SE Asian	All BIPOC	White	QTBIPOC	LGBTQ+	Cis/Het	White Cis/Het
14	14	15	48	65	12	29	79	46

# Findings

Data from both the survey and focus groups are presented here under common findings, listed in no particular order, with charts and tables created from survey data and quotes taken from both survey short answer questions and the focus groups. These data and findings represent the responses of survey takers and focus group participants who shared their experiences for this research; while this information is authentic, it may or may not accurately represent the broader population.

**Note about intersectionality:** The identities of any individual are multi-faceted and interact with each other across race, gender, sexuality, and more. QTBIPOC individuals (those sharing both LGBTQ+ and BIPOC identities) experience two levels of marginalization simultaneously, while white cis/het individuals (those sharing white, cisgender, and heterosexual identities) experience three levels of privilege simultaneously. Their distinct experiences warranted separate categories for analysis.

**Note about selection of findings:** Data were selected based on relevance to the report and on strength of correlations and patterns; not all data collected from all focus group and survey questions are included here. Additional data is presented in appendix A.

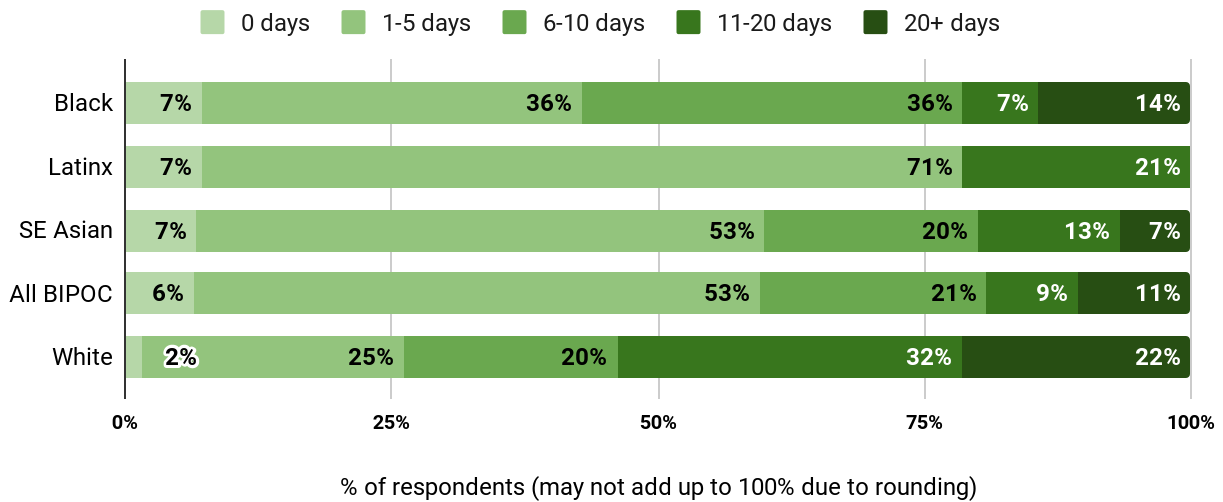
## 1: BIPOC people reported doing less outdoors than white people did

The key impetus for this project was the concern that members of marginalized groups participate in outdoor activities less than dominant group peers. Survey results suggest that there is indeed a disparity among respondents in outdoor activity levels between BIPOC and white people, with 54% of white respondents reporting 11 or more days of outdoor activity per month compared to only 20% of BIPOC respondents [figure 6], as well as doing fewer types of activities [figure 7 & table 8] and visiting fewer types of outdoor spaces [figure 8 & table 9]. LGBTQ+ respondents actually reported greater variety of outdoor activities than cis/het respondents. See appendix A for the corresponding data for LGBTQ+ and cis/het respondents.

Latinx respondents notably reported the lowest average activity levels of the racial groups. In interviews, Latinx community leaders said that working to support families both in the United States and in countries of origin in Latin America is the top priority of many local Latinx people, to the exclusion of what might be considered leisure activities, like outdoor recreation. Many local Latinx people provide that support through outdoor farm and construction work that might make the outdoors feel like a place for labor, not for fun or relaxation. Furthermore, language barriers, including a lack of local Spanish-language media, make it difficult for native Spanish speakers to access information about outdoor spaces and activities.

**Figure 6: Monthly Outdoor Activity, by Race**

*In an average month, I do outdoor activities on \_\_\_\_ days*



Looking at individual activities in table 8, “walked outdoors / hiked” was by far the most popular across all groups. “Picnicked / gathered outdoors” showed the widest variation, with 79% of white respondents but only 45% of BIPOC respondents reporting participation. Reflecting the relatively low participation of BIPOC respondents, only two activities garnered more than 50% participation from BIPOC respondents (walking and biking) compared to six over 50% for white respondents.

There is wide variation in outdoor activity choice among demographic groups. Among racial groups, white and SE Asian respondents reported the greatest average number of outdoor activities, with over six each, compared to an average of 4.8 for all BIPOC respondents [figure 7]. SE Asian responses diverged from other BIPOC respondents in several categories, likely reflecting the preference for outdoor activities in the historically agrarian culture of the many Hmong people living in the Fox Cities. Since arriving from Laos and Thailand as refugees following the Vietnam War, Hmong people in the Fox Cities have shown enduring affinity for hunting, fishing, and gardening. Over half of all the BIPOC survey respondents reporting participation in hunting or fishing were SE Asian, despite SE Asians making up less than one third of the BIPOC respondents.

Table 8: **PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST YEAR, BY RACE**

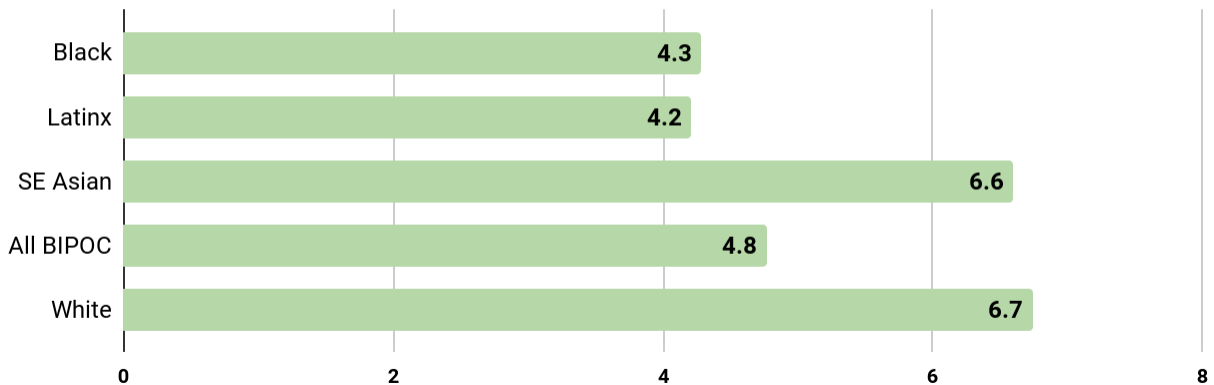
*In the past year, I have...*

Darker shades indicate higher shares of respondents reporting the corresponding activity

Activity	All BIPOC	White
biked	57%	68%
camped	27%	35%
canoed / kayaked	29%	44%
fished / hunted / shot bow or gun	22%	29%
gardened / farmed	41%	73%
jogged / run outdoors	35%	29%
motorboated / sailed	8%	26%
observed nature / birded / done outdoor photography	49%	71%
picnicked / gathered outdoors	45%	79%
played sports outdoors	43%	35%
skied / snowboarded / snowshoed	4%	20%
swam / waded outdoors	31%	52%
walked outdoors / hiked	78%	94%

**Figure 7: Number of Outdoor Activities, by Race**

*Average number of activities selected in response to "In the past year, I have..."*



BIPOC respondents also reported visiting fewer types of outdoor spaces than white respondents. As with activities, however, SE Asians were the exception, with an average number of destinations comparable to the white group [figure 9]. BIPOC respondents were notably less likely to say they had visited a campground, state or national park, pool / beach, nature center / nature preserve, or trail, with the share of BIPOC respondents reporting visiting those spaces 20% lower than the corresponding white share [table 9]. City or county park was the most commonly visited location for all groups, while public community garden was least commonly visited for all groups.

**Figure 8: Number of Outdoor Space Types Visited, by Race**

*Average number of spaces selected in response to "In the past year, I have visited a..."*

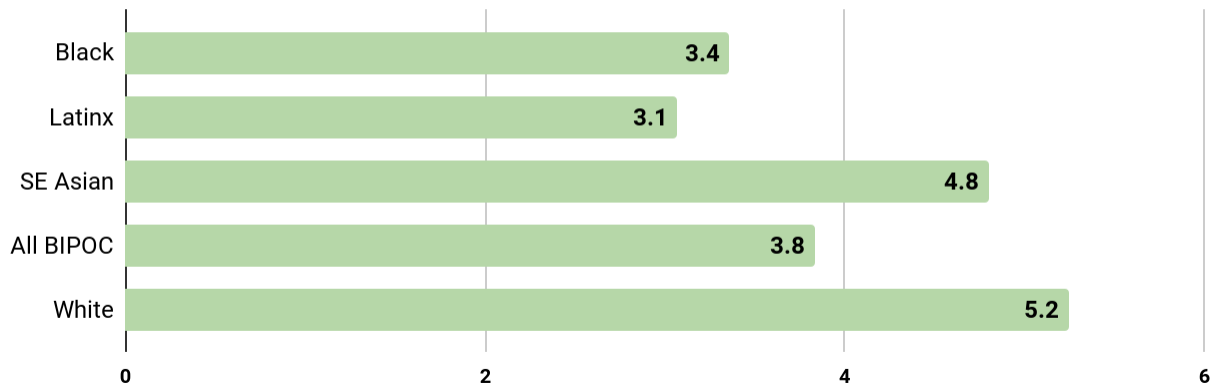
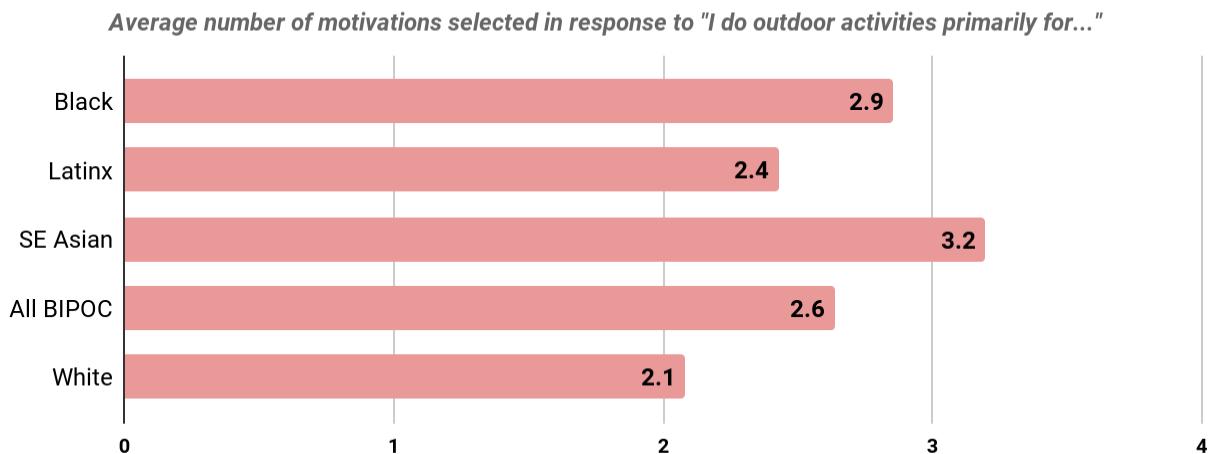


Table 9: TYPES OF SPACES VISITED IN THE PAST YEAR, BY RACE		
<i>In the past year, I have visited a...</i>		
Darker shades indicate higher shares of respondents reporting visiting the corresponding space		
Type of Space	All BIPOC	White
campground	29%	50%
city or county park	86%	94%
public community garden	22%	32%
state or national park	57%	82%
public outdoor pool / beach	41%	61%
nature center / nature preserve	43%	79%
outdoor historic or cultural site	41%	41%
public bike or hiking trail	49%	77%

## 2: BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people reported more barriers to doing outdoor activities than white and cis/het people did

BIPOC respondents reported more reasons for not doing outdoor activity than white respondents, with SE Asian respondents reporting more than 3 deterrents on average to white respondents' 2 [figure 9]. LGBTQ+ respondents also reported more deterrents than cis/het respondents [figure 10]. These findings should not be surprising in light of the historical context detailed earlier in this report. Nearly 30% of BIPOC respondents reported racism as a deterrent and 27% of LGBTQ+ respondents reported homophobia and/or transphobia as deterrents [table 10]. "Lack of free time / too busy / schedule conflicts" was the top reported deterrent for all demographic groups, with nearly or over 50% of respondents in each group reporting it.

**Figure 9: Number of Deterrents, by Race**



**Figure 10: Number of Deterrents, by Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation**

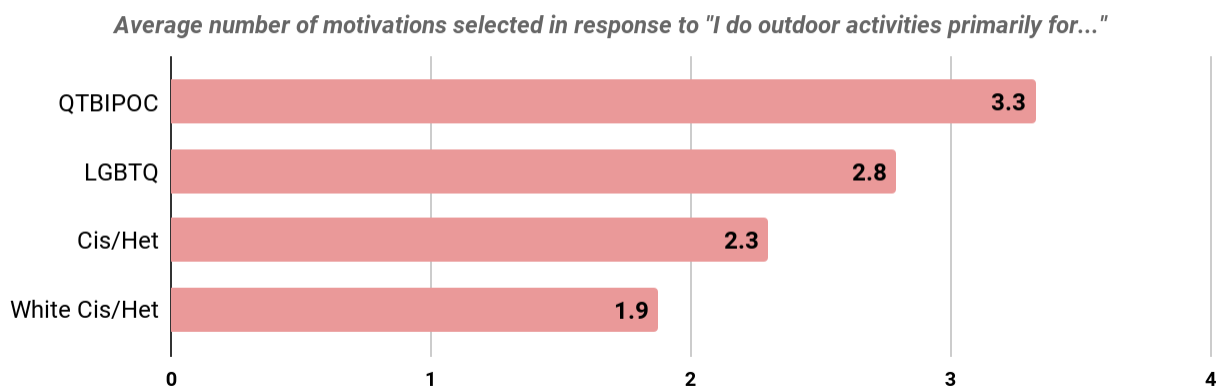
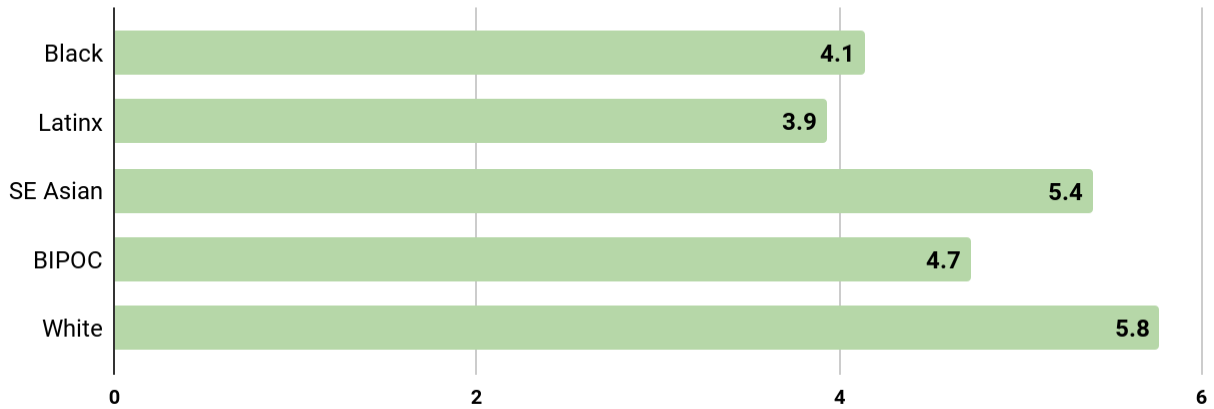


Table 10: <b>SHARE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING SELECTED DETERRENDS</b> <i>In the past year I have not done outdoor activities as much as I wanted due to...</i>				
Darker shades indicate higher shares of respondents reporting the corresponding deterrent				
<b>DETERRENT</b>	<b>All BIPOC</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>LGBTQ+</b>	<b>Cis/Het</b>
cost / not enough money	<b>25%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>
fear of homophobia	<b>6%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>0%</b>
fear of racism	<b>29%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>11%</b>
fear of transphobia	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0%</b>
health risks / personal health reasons	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>13%</b>
lack of free time / too busy / schedule conflicts	<b>52%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>48%</b>
lack of handicap accessibility	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>
lack of information / unaware of options	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>24%</b>
lack of local facilities	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>
lack of transportation options	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>
language barrier / lack of information in my language	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
nobody to go with	<b>25%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>20%</b>
safety concerns	<b>25%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16%</b>
unfamiliarity / inexperience / fear of embarrassment	<b>21%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>16%</b>
N/A I have done activities as much as I wanted	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>16%</b>

BIPOC respondents, particularly Black and Latinx respondents, conversely reported fewer reasons for engaging in outdoor activity than white respondents when given a list to select from: 4.75 motivations per person for BIPOC respondents vs. 5.8 per person for white respondents [figure 11]. SE Asian respondents were again an exception with 5.4 motivations, nearly as many as white respondents. There was less variation between LGBTQ+ and cis/het respondents [figure 12]. There was also not much variation in the motivations selected between demographic groups, with “fun / enjoyment / pleasure” being the top motivation in all groups [table 11].

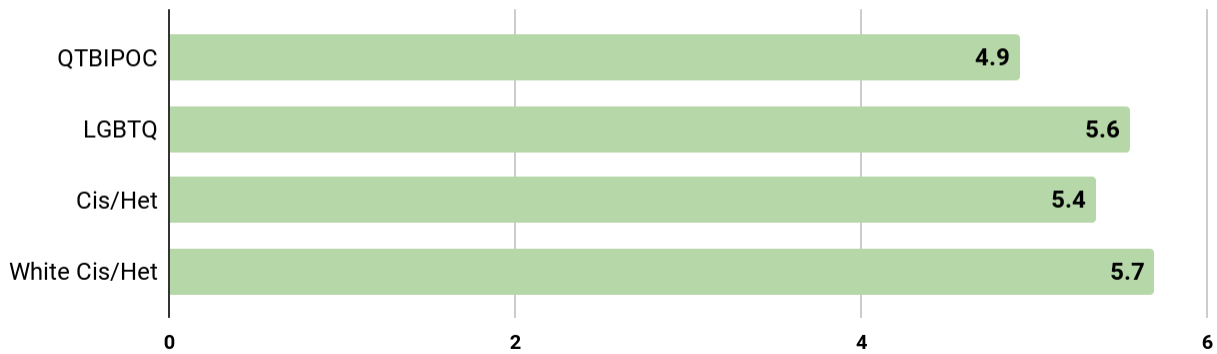
**Figure 11: Number of Motivations, by Race**

*Average number of motivations selected in response to "I do outdoor activities primarily for..."*



**Figure 12: Number of Motivations, by Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation**

*Average number of motivations selected in response to "I do outdoor activities primarily for..."*



**Table 11: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS REPORTING SELECTED MOTIVATIONS**

*I do outdoor activities primarily for...*

Darker shades indicate higher shares of respondents reporting the corresponding motivation

MOTIVATION	All BIPOC	White	LGBTQ+	Cis/Het
adventure / challenge	49%	41%	43%	46%
connection with nature	57%	82%	80%	69%
fun / enjoyment / pleasure	80%	94%	87%	89%
food / finding things to eat	14%	12%	10%	15%
mental health / happiness	69%	82%	80%	78%
physical health / fitness / exercise	59%	79%	63%	76%

relaxation / leisure	65%	82%	80%	74%
socialization / being with friends & family	55%	85%	77%	71%
tradition / part of culture	6%	14%	10%	13%
work / to make money	8%	0%	7%	3%
N/A I don't do outdoor activities	2%	0%	3%	0%

### 3: BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people reported fearing for their safety in outdoor spaces, especially in rural areas

Being in public spaces exposes members of marginalized groups to profiling, harassment, and worse, leaving many to feel uneasy. Perceptions of rural areas as especially unsafe for members of marginalized groups surfaced in many conversations. BIPOC adults reported adjusting their behavior to avoid stopping in rural areas, including holding their bladder to avoid using rest stops in rural areas for fear of being racially profiled. LGBTQ+ respondents reported only feeling comfortable fully expressing their identities in urban areas. The subtext is that people living in rural areas are perceived as more likely to hold prejudices against marginalized groups or to take actions to harm individual members of those groups. As the urban heart of the Fox Cities, Appleton was frequently cited as more accepting than surrounding communities.

***“...it gets worse when you leave the city. Then people sometimes make actions to make you uncomfortable.”***

- BIPOC youth respondent (gave written responses but did not participate in focus group)

***“Out where I live is not as open-minded, and there’s a lot of days that I break the gender norms because I love makeup and that is not well-received a lot of the time out there... Appleton I definitely come to because it is typically more accepting.”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

***“When I was at my job I was not fully out to everyone there, but the people who came in and would harass me knew my dead name\*, and they would call me that, so if they were in the building, I would have to remove myself from the area.”***

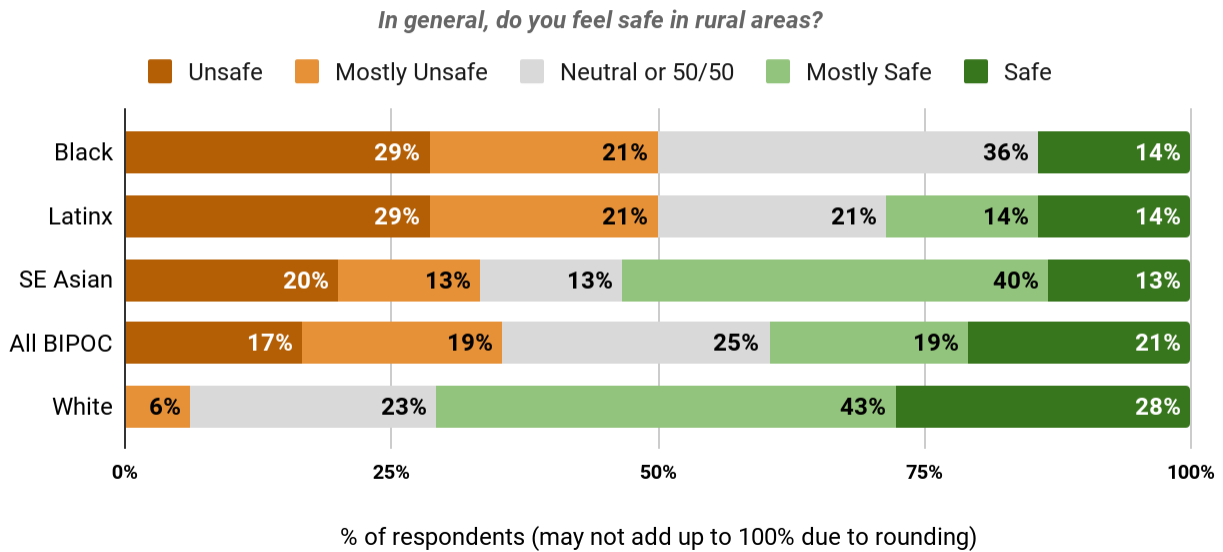
- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

\*Dead name is a term for a transgender person’s name assigned at birth

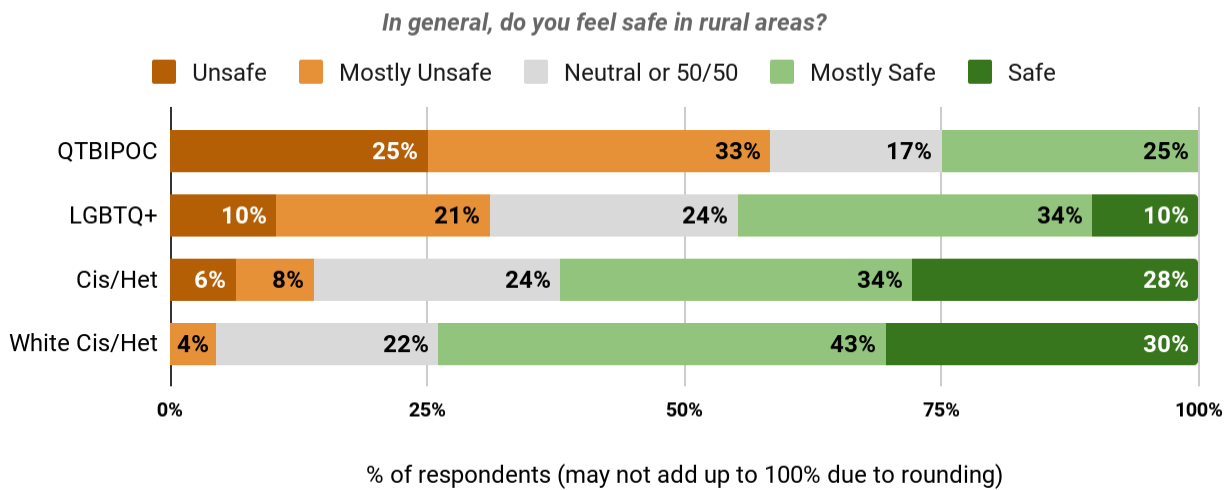
The disparity in these sentiments is clear in figures 13 and 14, with white and cis/het respondents significantly more likely to say they feel safe in rural areas. The difference is less clear with regard to

urban areas, as shown in figures 15 and 16. Black respondents reported the lowest safety ratings among racial groups for both urban and rural areas. When the average safety ratings for urban and rural areas are compared by demographic group, it becomes clear that most of the marginalized groups measured have a preference for urban areas, with the exception of SE Asians [figure 17]. It is possible that the use of the word “urban” in the questionnaire evoked the idea of cities significantly larger than the Fox Cities, which are sometimes perceived as less safe than mid-sized communities like the Fox Cities. This might have resulted in lower urban safety ratings than if respondents had been focused on the Fox Cities versus the surrounding rural areas.

**Figure 13: Sense of Safety in Rural Areas, by Race**

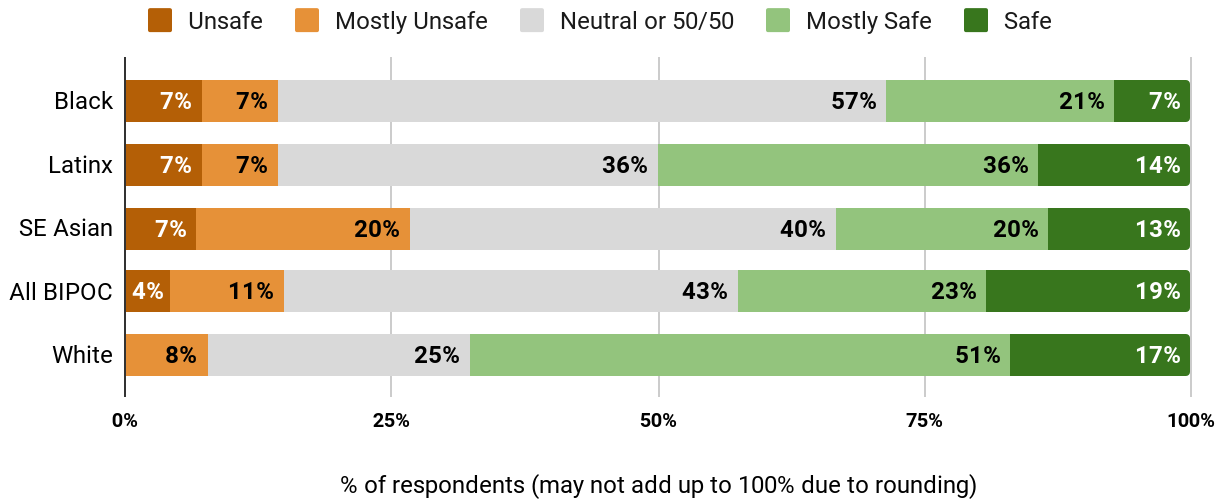


**Figure 14: Sense of Safety in Rural Areas, by Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation**



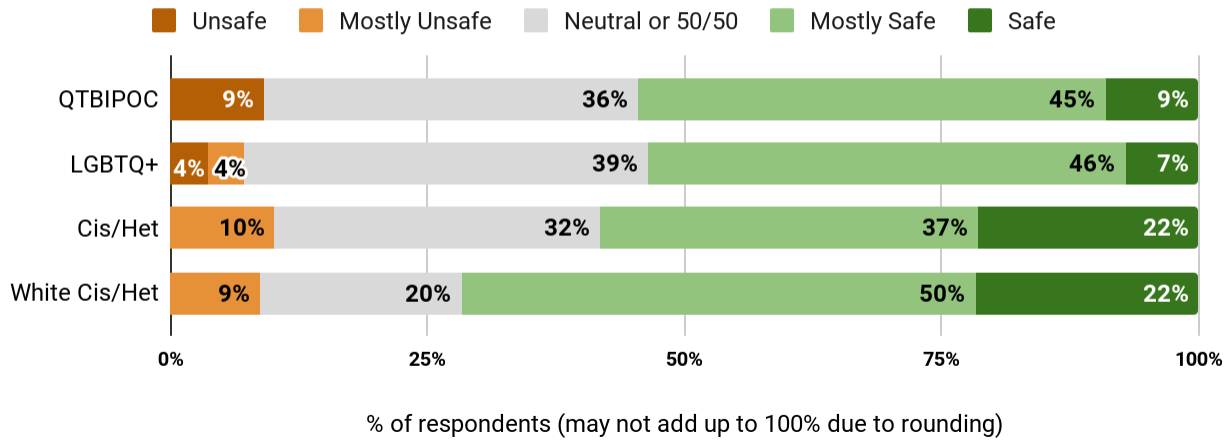
**Figure 15: Sense of Safety in Urban Areas, by Race**

*In general, do you feel safe in urban areas?*

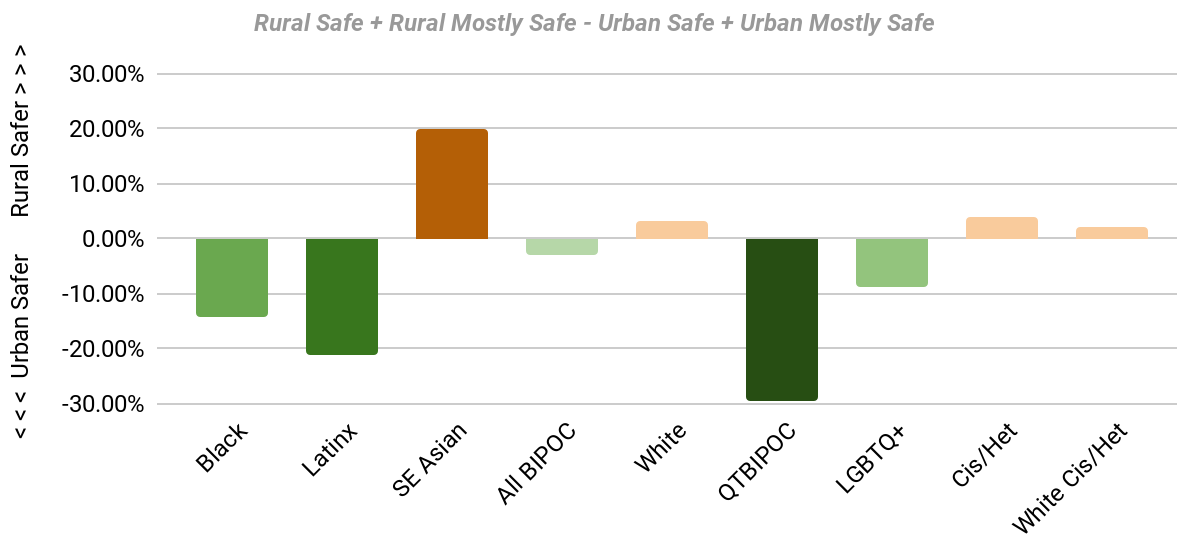


**Figure 16: Sense of Safety in Urban Areas, by Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation**

*In general, do you feel safe in urban areas?*



**Figure 17: Difference in Average Rural and Urban Safety Rating**



## 4: BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people reported feeling more comfortable in similarly identified groups

Whether expressed as a desire for programming exclusive to members of their identity group or as an aversion to members of the dominant culture, many focus group respondents said they feel more comfortable in the presence of similarly-identified people. Some said they only wanted to participate in activities where a majority of respondents shared their identity. Notably, several transgender participants said that they don’t necessarily feel fully comfortable around non-trans LGBTQ+ people.

***“When I see more Black people it makes me want to go outside.”***

- BIPOC youth focus group participant

***“If it’s just a big group of caucasian people, [I] won’t go outside.”***

- BIPOC youth focus group participant

***“I get uncomfortable around a big group of white people because in my past I have dealt with a lot of racial discrimination so since I have dealt with that I feel like I built up a barrier. So I can communicate with white people, but I can’t get as close because I still have that barrier. It’s like a cultural barrier.”***

- BIPOC youth focus group participant

***“For me to get out more... if it’s with friends or if I know it’s LGBTQ-friendly, that’s the only way I’ll go out and join an activity, pretty much.”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

***“Hiking groups with a focus on POC/interracial groups.”***

- Survey respondent, answering “What changes or improvements in the Fox Cities would make you more likely to do outdoor activities as much as you want to?”

# Conclusion

*“I wanted to talk because what I say will stay in your head, and I hope something is going to happen. I don’t know when, but something is going to happen.”*

- LATINX INTERVIEWEE

As this report outlines, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ residents of the Fox Cities feel less welcomed in outdoor spaces and participate in outdoor activities less than their white, straight, and cisgender peers. With so many local outdoor resources available and with such great potential benefits of closing these disparities for justice, public health, and conservation, this report’s findings should be of concern to all in the Fox Cities.

Concern, however, is wholly insufficient to address the depth and breadth of the issues contributing to the inequality outlined in this report, let alone the needs of marginalized groups not included, like elderly people and people living with disabilities. Only collective action, especially from members of the dominant culture—white, straight, cisgender, able-bodied, with stable income—will move the Fox Cities to a better future. Thankfully, all can play a role—governments, organizations, and individuals alike—in taking action to make the Fox Cities a place where all people feel safe and included in the outdoors. By learning about and teaching the history that led to this moment, listening to and empowering those who have been left out of decision making, and embracing and implementing an inclusive vision of who belongs in outdoor spaces and in the Fox Cities, change can happen.

This report and the Inclusion in the Outdoors initiative are not the endgame for that change; they are merely tools to educate local leadership, challenge assumptions, and bring together people and organizations that have for too long worked apart. It is up to the readers of this report and the people of the Fox Cities to advocate for and achieve the vision of a region where all can freely enjoy the outdoors.

If you or your organization are interested in advancing outdoor inclusion for all, please send an email to [inclusionoutdoors@gmail.com](mailto:inclusionoutdoors@gmail.com).

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# Appendix A:

## Additional Findings

### Sizeism and fat-shaming discourage some large-bodied respondents from taking part in outdoor activities

*“People are incredibly rude, judgmental, and uncaring towards fat people and particularly fat women. It becomes more detrimental to my physical and mental health to try and enjoy the outdoors around others because of the stigma.”*

- Survey respondent

*“I know it’s not uncommon to hear in the LGBT community, but especially the gay community things of ‘you’re too big’ or ‘why are you wearing that’ like ‘you should hide yourself more’ type of comments really make it a little less welcoming to do things outside.”*

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

### Visible symbols make LGBTQ+ participants feel safer

LGBTQ+ focus group participants said that seeing symbols of LGBTQ+ acceptance like rainbow flags displayed in public made them feel safer and more likely to visit businesses or spaces with the flags displayed. Acknowledgement of pronouns similarly signaled safety.

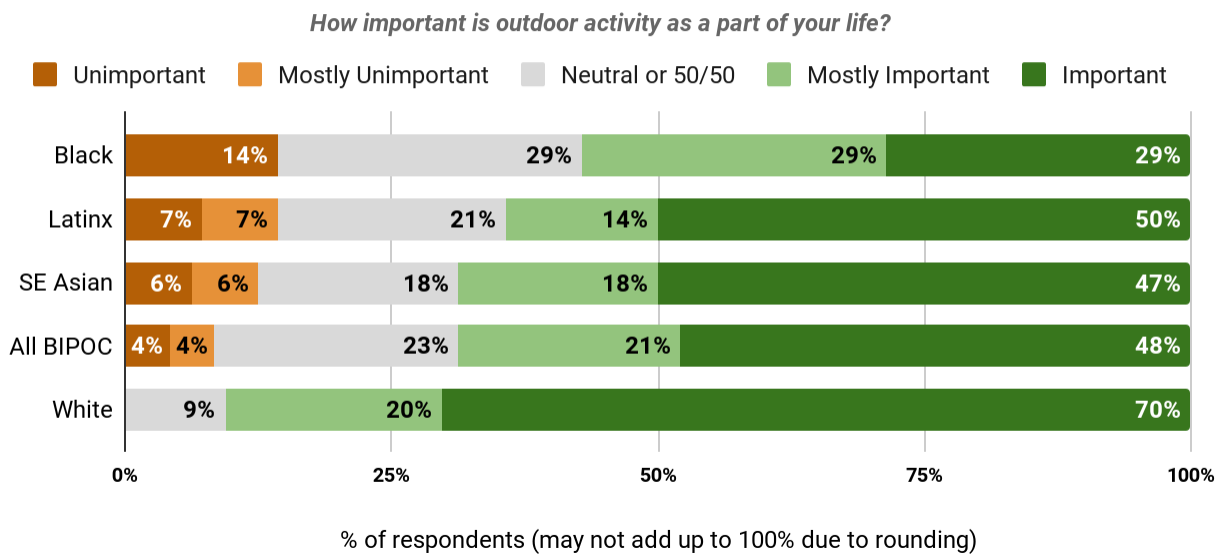
*“...on the paperwork, it had pronouns. It’s just like those tiny things that [make me feel like] “Oh, I’m not threatened anymore.”*

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

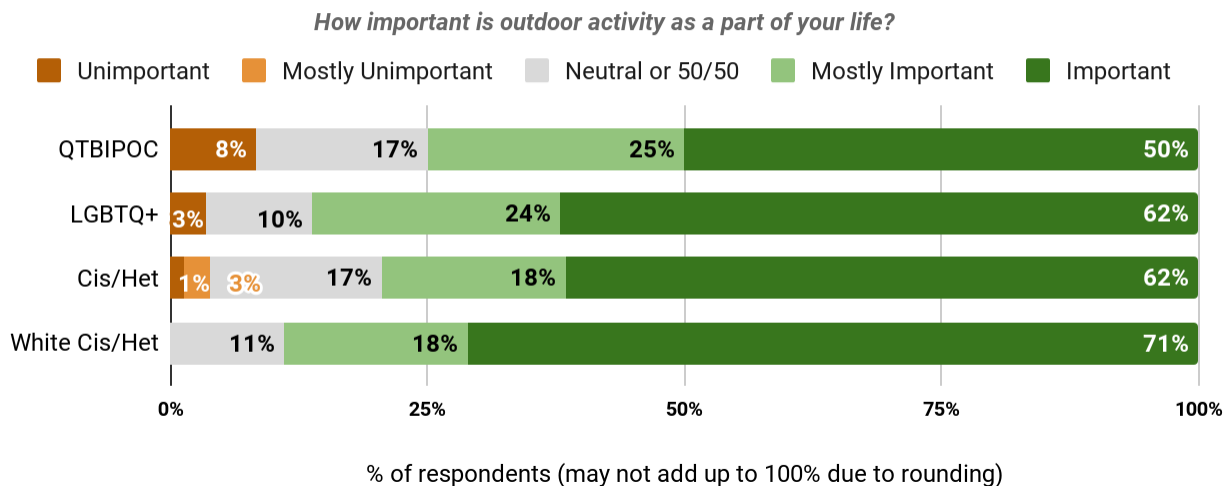
## White respondents significantly more likely to say outdoor activity is important in their lives than BIPOC respondents

White respondents were significantly more likely to say outdoor activity is important in their lives than BIPOC respondents, with 90% of white respondents rating outdoor activity as “important” or “mostly important” compared to 69% of all BIPOC respondents and 58% of Black respondents [figure 18]. No significant difference was seen between LGBTQ+ and cis/het respondents [figure 19].

**Figure 18: Importance of Outdoor Activity, by Race**



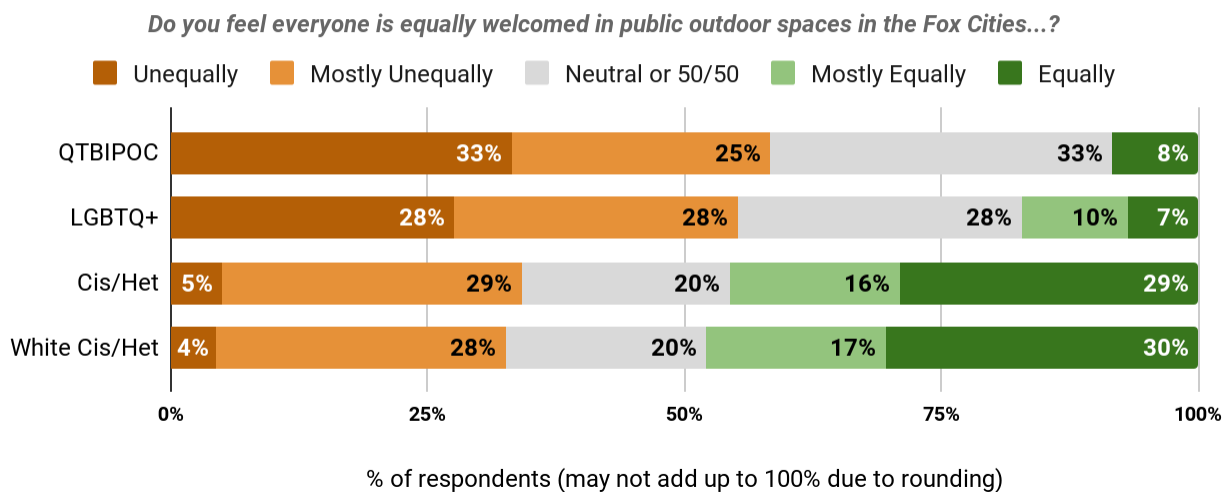
**Figure 19: Importance of Outdoor Activity, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**



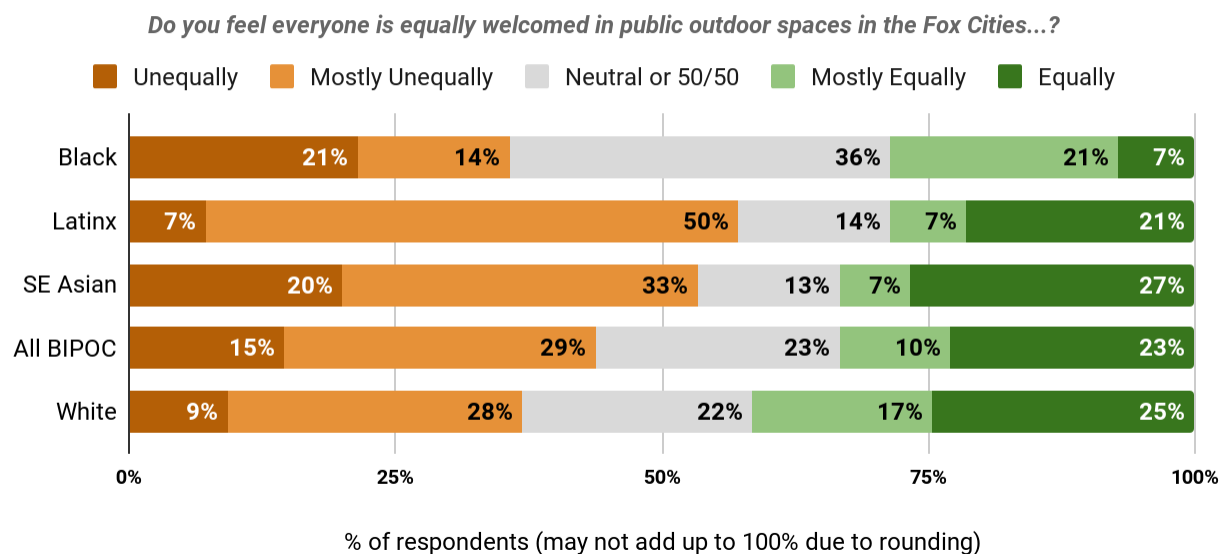
## LGBTQ+ respondents significantly less confident than cis/het respondents that all people are equally welcomed in outdoor spaces

LGBTQ+ respondents reported significantly less confidence that all people are equally welcomed in outdoor spaces than cis/het respondents [figure 20]. Just 17% of LGBTQ+ respondents said people are “mostly equally” or “equally” welcomed in outdoor spaces, compared to 45% of cis/het respondents. There was also significant variation among BIPOC responses [figure 21].

**Figure 20: Sense of Welcome Outdoors, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**



**Figure 21: Sense of Welcome Outdoors, by Race**



## Young, Black participants face racist harassment

Black youth reported facing racist treatment like being harassed, singled out, and called racial slurs in schools and feel that school staff don't take it seriously.

***“People just call me ‘monkey’ all the time. I really got used to it, but I’m not supposed to”***

- BIPOC youth focus group participant

***“There’s a lot of kids who think it’s okay to use racial slurs and then it leads up to really bad things”***

- BIPOC youth focus group participant

***“I think they [school administrators] don’t believe us when we actually say these kids are saying [racial slurs]”***

- BIPOC youth focus group participant

## Participants perceive Appleton as safer and more tolerant than surrounding communities

In many conversations with members of marginalized groups, Appleton was described as an outlier in the region for inclusion, often framed in contrast to other mid-sized cities like Green Bay and Oshkosh. DEI practitioners cited Appleton's early efforts to promote inclusion, embodied by the City of Appleton's DEI Coordinator position, along with other potential factors such as the presence of Lawrence University.

***“I had this big pride sign in my window... and [my kids] made me take the sign down just because they’re afraid for me, but that’s precisely why I come down to Appleton, I feel safer here.”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

***“In downtown Appleton there are a lot of Black-owned shops and restaurants that provide in a sense that it is possible to be accepted as a minority in the Fox Valley.”***

- BIPOC youth respondent (gave written responses but did not participate in focus group)

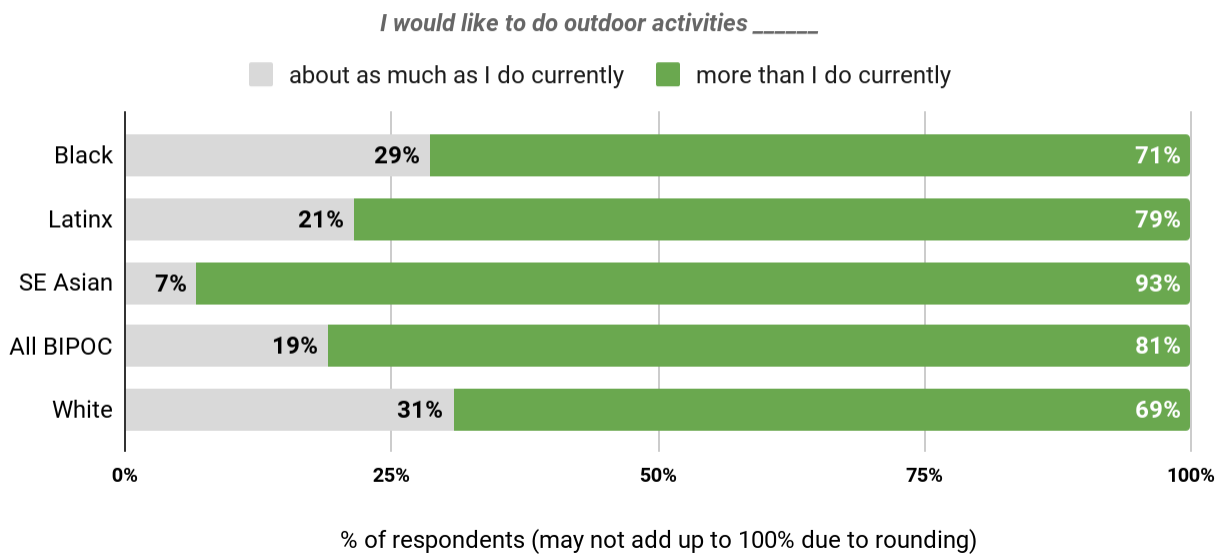
***“I feel a lot more comfortable in Appleton than most places in the general vicinity”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

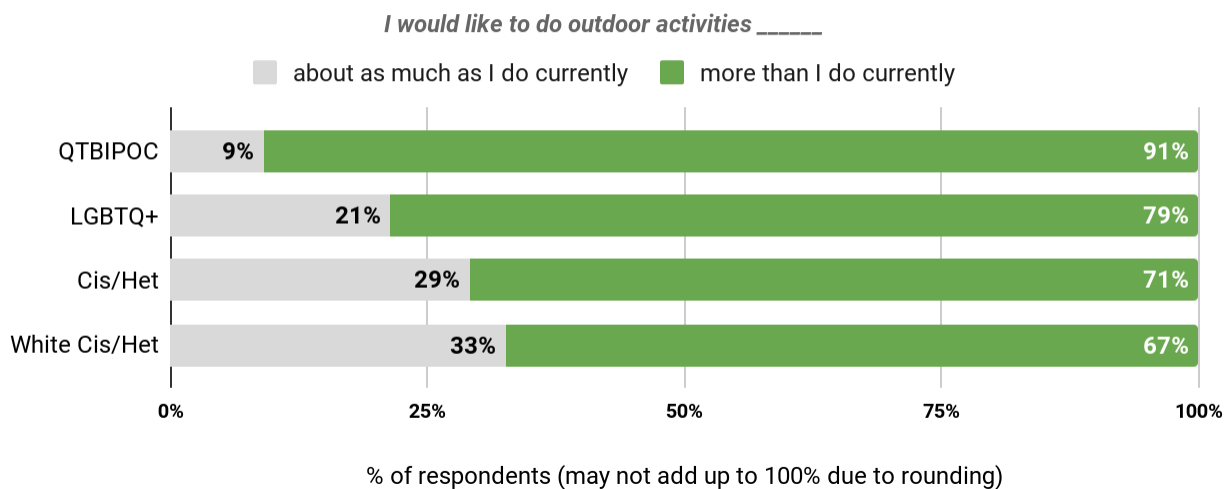
## Most respondents want to increase their outdoor activity levels

When asked if they would like to do outdoor activities more, less, or as much as they do currently, SE Asian respondents were most likely to say “more than I do currently,” with 93% responding thusly [figure 22]. BIPOC respondents were more likely than white respondents to want to increase their outdoor activity level, although there was a significant difference between SE Asian, Black, and Latinx respondents. LGBTQ+ respondents were slightly more likely than cis/het respondents to want to increase their outdoor activity level [figure 23]. QTBIPOC respondents were more likely than either BIPOC or LGBTQ+ respondents to want to increase activity. No respondents of any group selected “less than I do currently.”

**Figure 22: Desired Outdoor Activity Level, by Race**



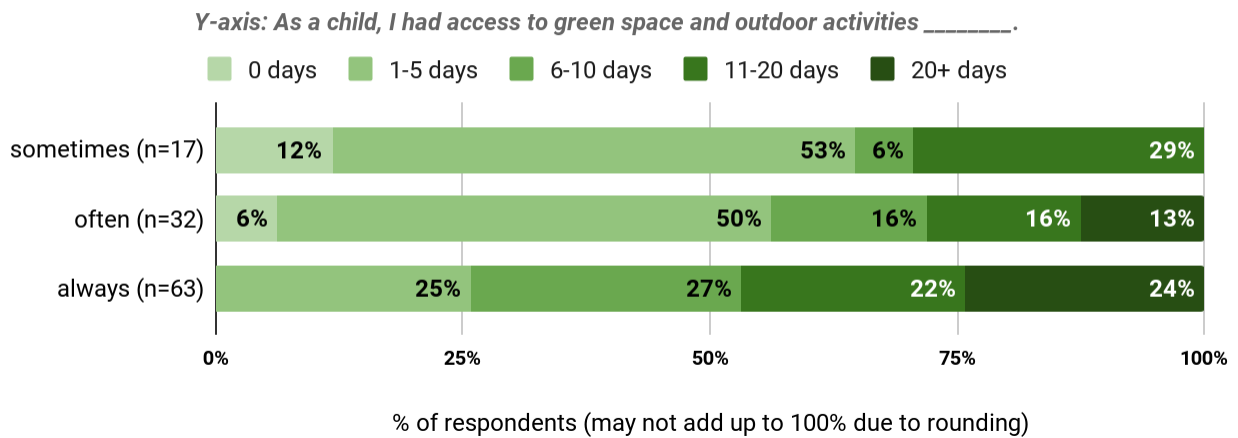
**Figure 23: Desired Outdoor Activity Level, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**



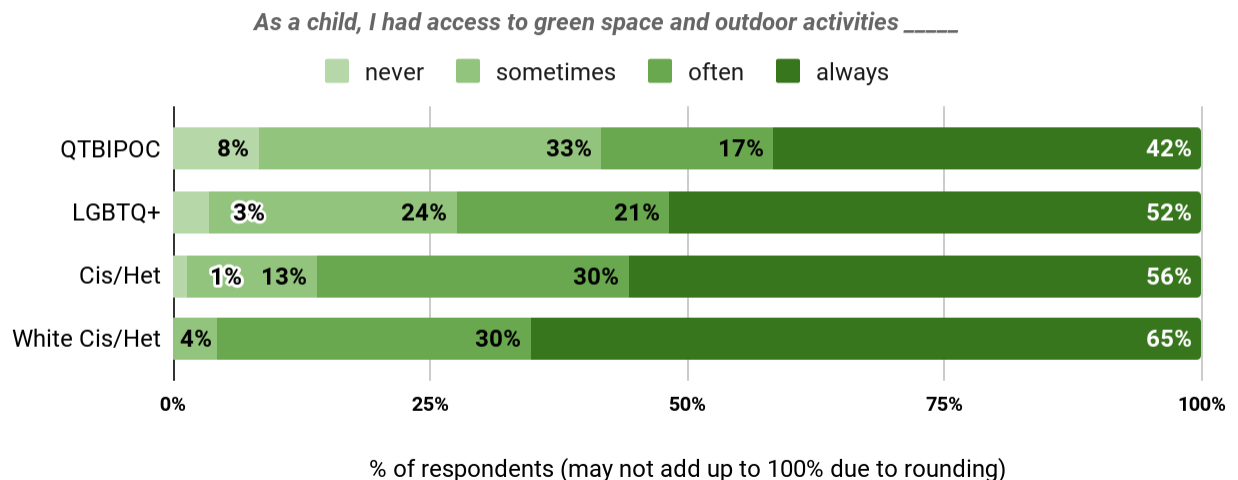
## Respondents who reported greater childhood access to green space and outdoor activities reported greater average monthly outdoor activity levels

24% of respondents reporting they “always” had access to green space and outdoor activities as children reported average monthly activity exceeding 20 days per month, compared to none of those who “sometimes” had such access [Figure 24]. Only two respondents selected “never,” so there was insufficient data to display that response as a separate category in the chart. As figure 26 shows, however, this finding can be largely attributed to race, as white respondents were significantly more likely than BIPOC respondents to say they “always” or “often” had access to outdoors activities as a child. Interestingly, LGBTQ+ respondents were also less likely to say they had access than cis/het respondents [figure 25].

**Figure 24: Current Monthly Activity Level, by Childhood Access to Outdoors**

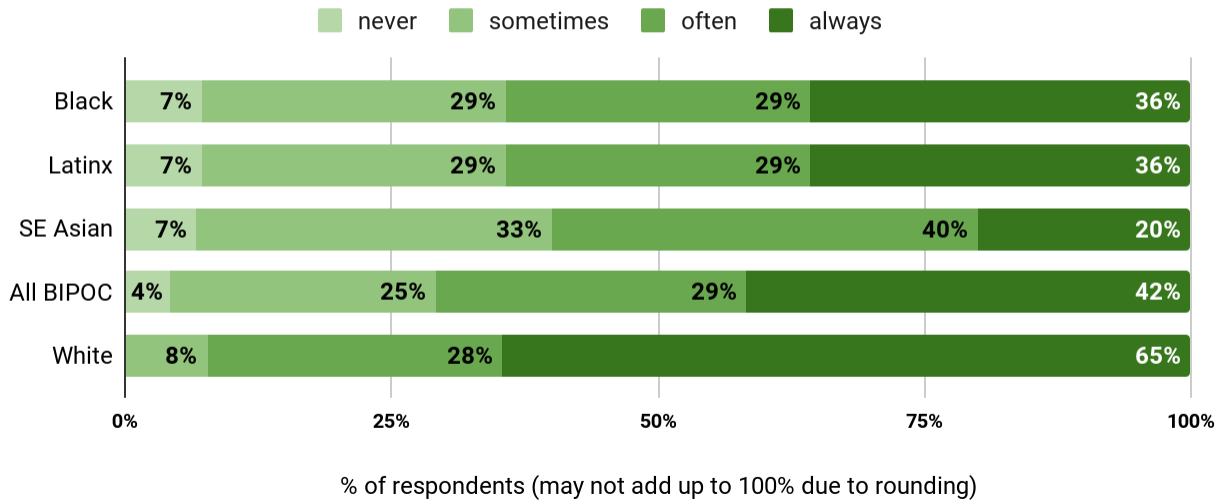


**Figure 25: Childhood Access to Outdoors, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**



**Figure 26: Childhood Access to Outdoors, by Race**

*As a child, I had access to green space and outdoor activities \_\_\_\_\_*



## Outing is a risk for transgender people

Fears of outing and harassment, both from meeting people who knew them pre-transition or from legal requirements, pose risks for transgender people in public. As noted in “Historical Context,” transgender people face significantly higher risks of violence than cisgender people.

***“When I was at my job I was not fully out to everyone there, but the people who came in and would harass me knew my dead name, and they would call me that, so if they were in the building, I would have to remove myself from the area.”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

***“When I had my name legally changed, it was a requirement that they put my full dead name in the newspaper... which is not a good idea considering how dangerous it is for trans people”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

***“Even walking down the street, if I’m walking with someone who only knows me as [new name] and someone I knew from high school says “Hey, [dead name]” ... what if I lose both of these people because I didn’t tell one that I’m trans and the other doesn’t like that I’m trans?”***

- LGBTQ+ adult focus group participant

## Some respondents find it difficult to access green space without a car

Latinx respondents were most likely to say they feel it's easy to get to a public green space without a car, with 79% responding "easy" or "mostly easy" and only 7% responding "not easy" [figure 27]. QTBIPOC respondents were least likely to agree, with only 50% saying it was "easy" or "mostly easy," however in no group did more respondents select "not easy" than "easy" [figure 28]. LGBTQ+ respondents were significantly more likely than cis/het respondents to respond "not easy" or "mostly not easy"

While lack of public transit connections to outdoor spaces beyond city limits have been mentioned as barriers to access, respondents who said they "often" use alternative transport options actually reported higher monthly outdoor activity than those who "sometimes" or "never" do [figure 29].

***"I would need to travel by car to get to the places I want to go."***

- Survey respondent

***"...many love Heckrodt, but use the public bus system - there is no bus that stops at Heckrodt. In order for them to get to heckrodt they have to get dropped at a bus stop several blocks away and walk to Heckrodt, which is unsafe on a busy road with no sidewalk."***

- Survey respondent

***"Más transporte público"*** (translation = "More public transit")

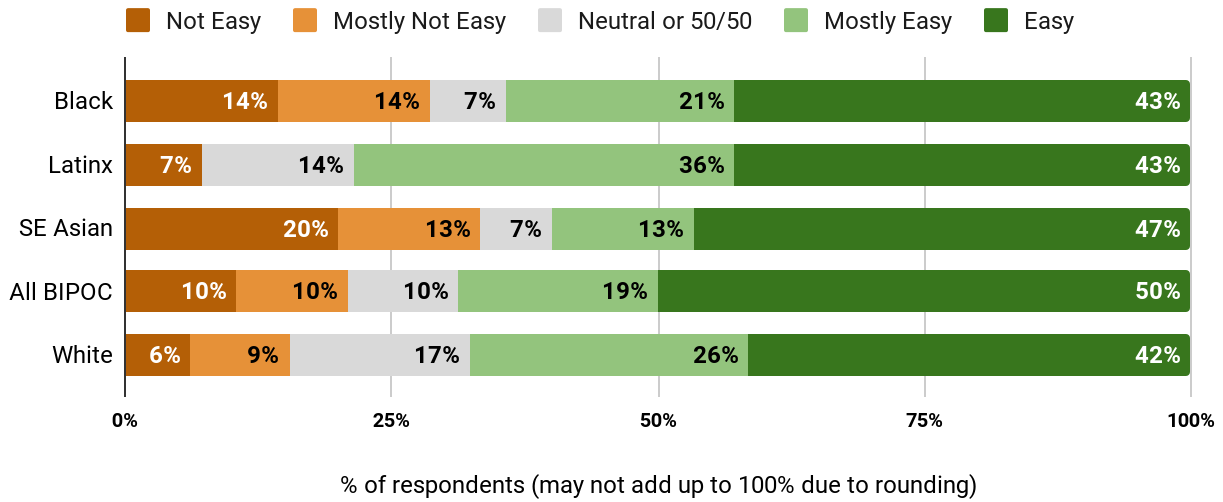
- Survey respondent, answering "What changes or improvements in the Fox Cities would make you more likely to do outdoor activities as much as you want to?"

***"Access for disabled elderly via a transit system"***

- Survey respondent, answering "What changes or improvements in the Fox Cities would make you more likely to do outdoor activities as much as you want to?"

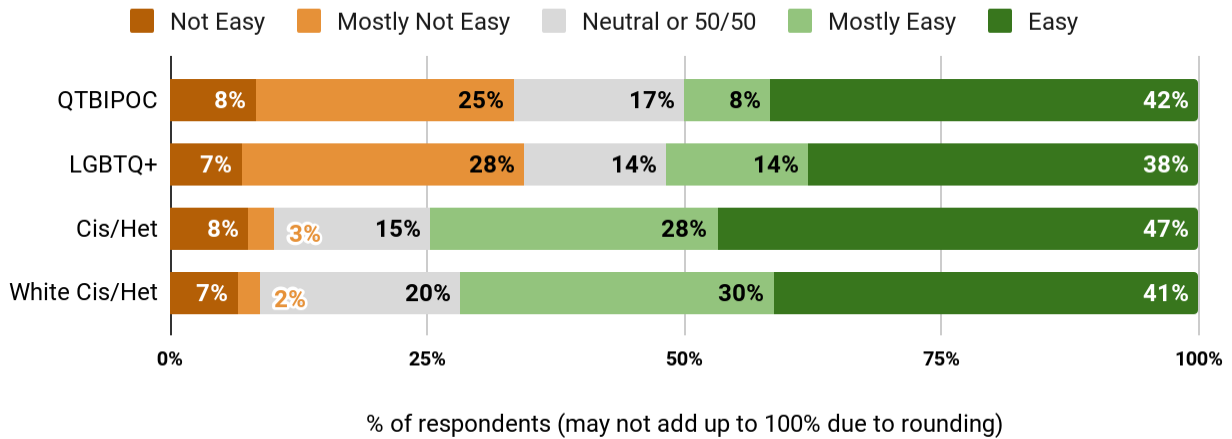
**Figure 27: Ease of Access to Greenspace, by Race**

*Do you feel it's easy to get from your home to a public green space (park, trail, playground, etc.) without a car?*



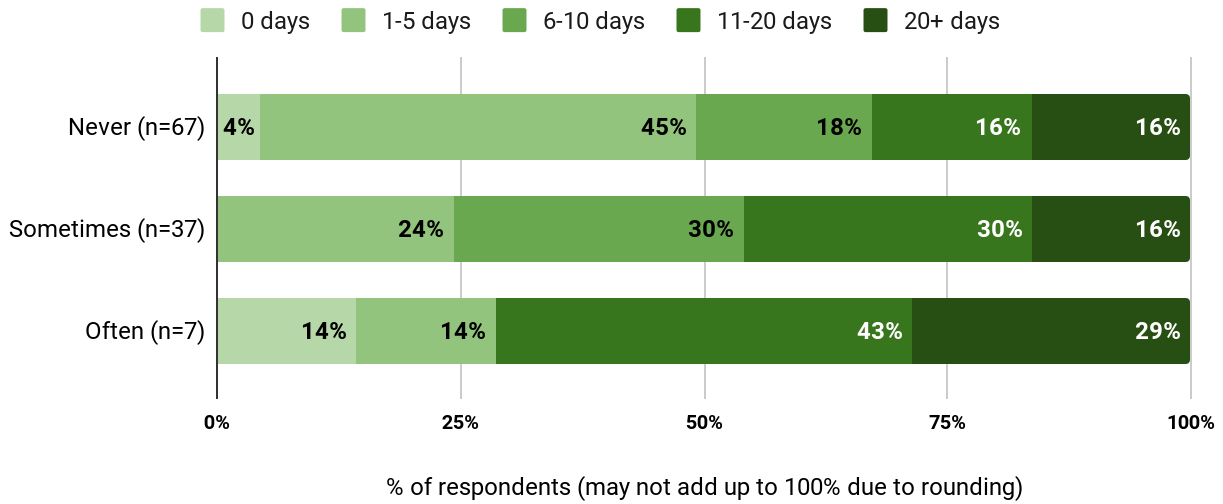
**Figure 28: Ease of Access to Greenspace, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**

*Do you feel it's easy to get from your home to a public green space (park, trail, playground, etc.) without a car?*



**Figure 29: Monthly Outdoor Activity, by Alternative Transport Usage**

*Y-axis: Do you rely on public transit, bicycle, walking and/or mobility aid to get to places outside your home?*

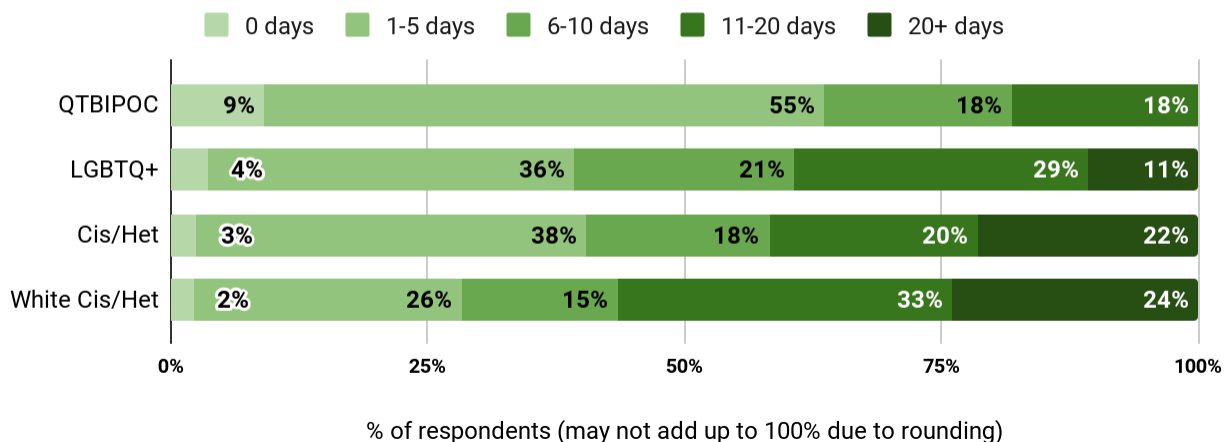


## LGBTQ+ respondents reported greater variety in outdoor activities than cis/het respondents

Although LGBTQ+ respondents were less likely to report the highest level of outdoor activity (20+ days per month), their average activity levels were comparable to cis/het respondents [figure 30]. LGBTQ+ respondents also counterintuitively reported greater variety of outdoor activities done [table 12 & figure 31] and outdoor spaces visited [table 13 & figure 32].

**Figure 30: Monthly Outdoor Activity, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**

*In an average month, I do outdoor activities on \_\_\_\_ days*



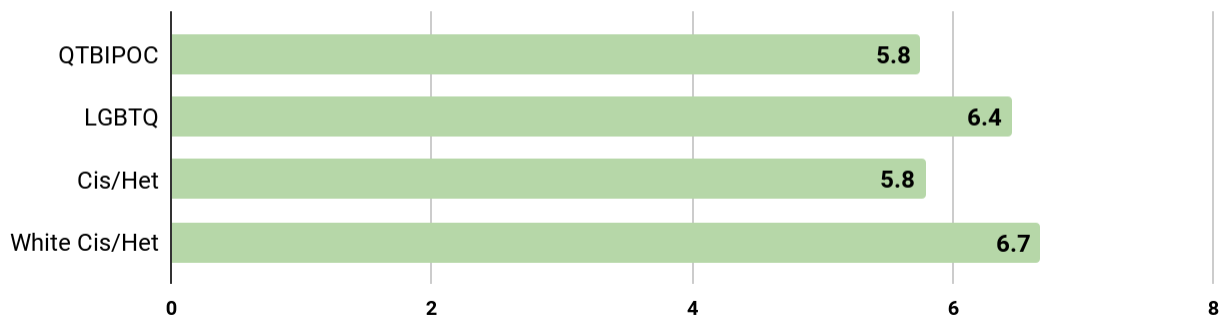
**Table 12: PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST YEAR, BY GENDER IDENTITY/SEXUAL ORIENTATION**  
*In the past year, I have...*

Darker shades indicate higher shares of respondents reporting the corresponding activity

Activity	LGBTQ+	Cis/Het
biked	57%	65%
camped	33%	31%
canoed / kayaked	40%	36%
fished / hunted / shot bow or gun	27%	28%
gardened / farmed	47%	64%
jogged / run outdoors	33%	31%
motorboated / sailed	13%	21%
observed nature / birded / done outdoor photography	73%	58%
picnicked / gathered outdoors	87%	56%
played sports outdoors	37%	40%
skied / snowboarded / snowshoed	20%	11%
swam / waded outdoors	53%	40%
walked outdoors / hiked	93%	85%

**Figure 31: Number of Outdoor Activities, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**

*Average number of activities selected in response to "In the past year, I have..."*



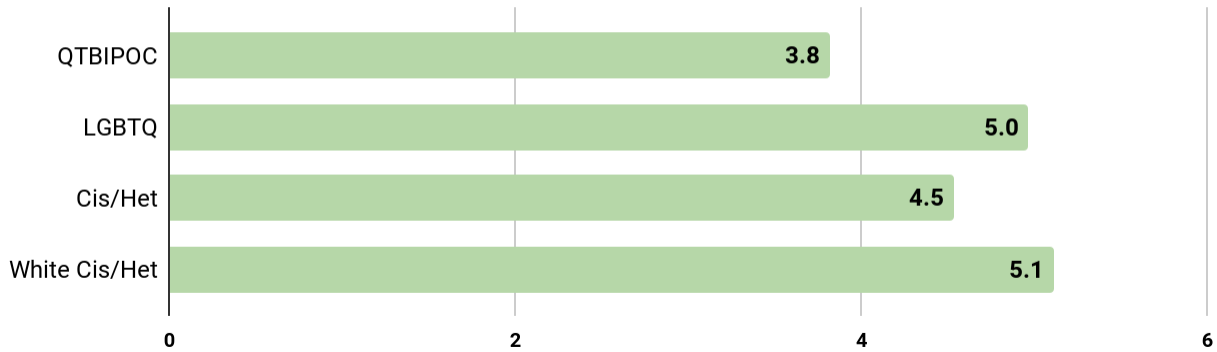
**Table 13: TYPES OF SPACES VISITED IN THE PAST YEAR, BY GENDER IDENTITY/SEXUAL ORIENTATION**  
*In the past year, I have visited a...*

Darker shades indicate higher shares of respondents reporting the corresponding activity

Type of Space	LGBTQ+	Cis/Het
campground	47%	40%
city or county park	87%	91%
public community garden	30%	26%
state or national park	73%	70%
public outdoor pool / beach	47%	55%
nature center / nature preserve	67%	61%
outdoor historic or cultural site	43%	40%
public bike or hiking trail	70%	63%

**Figure 32: Number of Space Types Visited, by Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**

*Average number of spaces selected in response to "In the past year, I have visited a..."*



# Appendix B: Survey Questions (English)

1. Please select a language // Por favor seleccione un idioma // Thov xaiv ib hom lus

2. In the past year, I have... (check all that apply)

*We want to know what outdoor activities you have participated in recently*

- biked
- camped
- canoed / kayaked
- fished / hunted / shot bow or gun
- gardened / farmed
- jogged / run outdoors
- motorboated / sailed
- observed nature / birded / done outdoor photography
- picnicked / gathered outdoors
- played sports outdoors
- skied / snowboarded / snowshoed
- swam / waded outdoors
- walked outdoors / hiked
- none
- Other:

3. In the past year, I have visited a... (check all that apply)

*We want to know what public outdoor facilities you have visited recently*

- campground
- city or county park
- public community garden
- public outdoor pool / beach

- nature center / nature preserve
- outdoor historic or cultural site
- public bike or hiking trail
- state or national park
- none
- Other:

4. I do outdoor activities primarily for... (check all that apply)

*We want to know why you do outdoor activities*

- adventure / challenge
- connection with nature
- fun / enjoyment / pleasure
- food / finding things to eat
- mental health / happiness
- physical health / fitness / exercise
- relaxation / leisure
- socialization / being with friends & family
- work / to make money
- tradition / part of culture
- N/A I don't do outdoor activities
- Other:

5. (optional) Say more about why you do outdoor activities

6. In the past year I have not done outdoor activities as much as I wanted due to... (check all that apply)

*We want to know what barriers keep you from the outdoors*

- cost / not enough money
- fear of homophobia
- fear of racism
- fear of transphobia
- health risks / personal health reasons
- lack of free time / too busy / schedule conflicts
- lack of handicap accessibility
- lack of information / unaware of options
- lack of local facilities
- lack of transportation options
- language barrier / lack of information in my language
- nobody to go with
- safety concerns
- unfamiliarity / inexperience / fear of embarrassment
- N/A I have done activities as much as I wanted
- Other:

7. (optional) Say more about why you have not done outdoor activities

8. In an average month, I do outdoor activities on \_\_\_\_\_ days.

Mark only one. *If your activity is inconsistent/seasonal (e.g. only in summer), pick the number that you feel best represents your overall activity.*

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+

9. I would like to do outdoor activities \_\_\_\_\_. Mark only one.

- more than I do currently
- about as much as I do currently
- less than I do currently

10. As a child, I had access to green space and outdoor activities \_\_\_\_\_. Mark only one.

- never
- sometimes
- often
- always

Select the number 1 to 5 that best matches your answer to the question.

For example, in the first question:

- 1 = unsafe
- 2 = mostly unsafe
- 3 = neutral or 50/50
- 4 = mostly safe
- 5 = safe

*Safe in rural areas: "Safe" is defined as free from threats of physical harm and harassment. "Rural areas" are defined as areas outside of cities and large villages.*

11. In general, do you feel safe in rural areas?

Mark only one.

- 1 Unsafe
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Safe

12. How important is feeling safe in rural areas to you? Mark only one.

- 1 Unimportant
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 Important

*Safe in urban areas: "Safe" is defined as free from threats of physical harm and harassment. "Urban areas" are defined as cities and large villages.*

13. In general, do you feel safe in urban areas?

Mark only one.

- 1 Unsafe  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Safe

14. How important is feeling safe in urban areas to you? Mark only one.

- 1 Unimportant  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Important

15. Do you feel it's easy to get from your home to a public green space (park, trail, playground, etc.) without a car? Mark only one.

- 1 Not easy  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Easy

16. How important is being able to easily get from home to a public green space without a car to you? Mark only one.

- 1 Important  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Unimportant

17. Do you feel everyone is equally welcomed in public outdoor spaces in the Fox Cities, regardless of their race/ethnicity/origin, gender, or sexual orientation? Mark only one.

- 1 Unequally

- 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Equally

18. How important is everyone being equally welcomed in outdoor spaces to you? Mark only one.

- 1 Unimportant  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Important

19. How important is outdoor activity as a part of your life? Mark only one.

- 1 Unimportant  
 2  
 3  
 4  
 5 Important

20. Race / Origin: How do you identify? Select all that apply

- Black / African-American / African  
 East Asian  
 Latinx / Hispanic  
 Native American / First Nations / Indigenous  
 Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander  
 Middle Eastern / North African  
 South Asian  
 Southeast Asian  
 White / Caucasian  
 Prefer not to say  
 Other:

21. What language do you usually speak at home? Select all that apply

- English
- Hmong
- Spanish
- Other:

22. Do you live and/or work in the Fox Cities?

Select all that apply

*For this survey, the Fox Cities include: Neenah, Menasha, Fox Crossing, Appleton, Grand Chute, Little Chute, Kimberly, Combined Locks, Harrison, and Kaukauna*

- Live in the Fox Cities
- Work in the Fox Cities
- Neither
- Other:

23. What is your age?

- 12 or younger
- 13-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

24. Gender: How do you identify?

Mark only one.

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Other:

25. Are you transgender?

Mark only one.

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

26. Religion: How do you identify?

Mark only one.

- Agnostic / Atheist
- Buddhist
- Catholic
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Protestant
- Sikh
- Shamanist
- Spiritual non-religious
- Prefer not to say
- Other:

27. Sexual orientation: How do you identify?

Mark only one.

- Asexual
- Bisexual / Pansexual / Omnisexual
- Gay / Lesbian
- Queer
- Straight / Heterosexual
- Prefer not to say
- Other:

28. Do you rely on public transit, bicycle, walking and/or mobility aid (e.g. wheelchair) to get to places outside your home?

Mark only one.

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

(Optional) What changes or improvements in the Fox Cities would make you more likely to do outdoor activities as much as you want to?

# Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

1. Imagine someone like you is moving to the Fox Cities and is curious about what to do outdoors. What advice would you give them?
2. What do you hear from people of a generation older than you—maybe your parents, guardians, or grandparents—about outdoor activities and being outdoors?
3. Imagine you've been invited to go camping with friends at a state park. What might go through your head?
4. What in our community currently helps you get outdoors or makes you more likely to want to go outdoors?
5. What in our community currently makes it harder for you to get outdoors or makes you less likely to want to go outdoors?
6. Let's imagine we were in charge of recreating our community to allow people like you to enjoy the outdoors to the max. What changes in the community would we need to make that happen?