



rails-to-trails conservancy

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As Nation Celebrates Trails, Experts Say Being Active Outside Is A Good Move for Well-Being

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy releases survey data showing Americans spent on average more than 90 minutes being active outside on Celebrate Trails Day, underscoring role of trails as vital to a healthy nation

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) today announced results from its latest survey of outdoor activity showing the role the nation’s trails can serve in helping Americans become more physically active—a goal that can help reduce the risk of at least 20 chronic diseases and conditions and protect against severe COVID-19.

The national nonprofit organization surveyed people across the country who took part in Celebrate Trails Day on April 24, the nation’s annual celebration of the spring trail season, and found that those who participated reported spending more than 139,000 minutes combined being physically active outside—an average of 111 minutes per person. Ninety percent of participants reported spending more than 30 minutes active outside on Celebrate Trails Day, exceeding physical activity guidelines that recommend individuals get 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per day, five days per week, through activities such as a brisk walk or bike ride.

“The nation’s multiuse trails—spaces where we can walk, run, bike or simply enjoy nature—are an easy, accessible way for people to get outside, whether that’s right in their neighborhood or a road trip away. Trails make it easier to build regular outdoor activity into our daily routines—on Celebrate Trails Day and every day,” said Ryan Chao, president of RTC.

The majority of those who took part in Celebrate Trails Day indicated that they frequently get outside on trails (64% report weekly, 21% report daily), that they typically seek out trails as spaces to be physically active (88%), and that they were physically active five or more days per week (55%).

“While we’ve always celebrated trails as vital to healthy, thriving communities, this past year has shown how important trails are to our well-being. Experts continue to point to the outdoors as being the safest place to connect with family and friends, and new research suggests that even just a few minutes a day of physical activity is enough to help counteract the most severe effects of COVID-19. When you layer on top of that the mental health benefits of being in nature, it’s clear how important trails are in inviting even more people to get outside—promising both joy and resilience while they do it,” said Chao.

Analyses of trail count data and public opinion polling since the start of the pandemic illustrate the significance of the nation's 40,000 miles of multiuse trails. In 2020, trail use nationwide increased 51% compared with the year prior. More than 86% of people that have responded to an ongoing opinion poll being conducted by RTC since September 2020 (among 1,500 participants to date) say that having access to the outdoors has reduced their stress.

"It can be easier to make healthy choices when communities create safe, convenient and equitable places for physical activity such as trails," said Ken Rose, acting branch chief of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. "By adapting Active People, Healthy Nation strategies, including creating trail networks, communities help all people integrate physical activity into their daily lives, regardless of race, education, socioeconomic position, disability status, sexual orientation or geographic location."

More than 170 partner organizations and over 3,500 people from 48 states and Washington, D.C., reported taking part in Celebrate Trails Day and celebrating in ways that were most accessible to them—such as finding a nearby trail, visiting an open space that allowed them to safely distance, or participating virtually. Survey results for Celebrate Trails Day represent 1,411 responses gathered via SurveyMonkey between April 25, 2021, and May 11, 2021.

[Creative ideas for getting outside](#), tips for recreating responsibly this spring and summer, and direct access to RTC's free trail-finder app, [TrailLink.com](#), can be found on RTC's [Celebrate Trails Day website](#). RTC is encouraging people to continue to use the nation's trails to build routine physical activity into their day-to-day lives and to connect with [CDC's Active People, Healthy Nation campaign](#) for resources to help more people meet physical activity guidelines.

Celebrate Trails Day is the annual celebration of the spring trail season, recognized on the fourth Saturday in April. The national celebration is organized by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong. RTC is dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Follow #CelebrateTrails on social media for updates and connect with RTC at [railstotrails.org](#) and [@railstotrails](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Active People, Healthy Nation is a national initiative led by CDC to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027. Learn more at cdc.gov/physicalactivity/activepeoplehealthynation.