

Characteristics of trail users

The Cheese Country Trail is a multiuse trail system that meanders through 48 miles of rural Wisconsin, from Monroe to Belmont and Mineral Point. It is open to motorized and non-motorized uses, including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility terrain vehicles (UTVs), snowmobiles, off-road dirt bikes, mopeds, motorcycles, horses and horse-drawn conveyances, bicycles, and hikers.

Local stakeholder groups and Cooperative Extension collaborated to study the number, characteristics, and perceptions of Cheese Country Trail users, with the goal of improving users' trail experiences and helping local businesses and governments create tourism-related economic development strategies. During the 12-month study (Nov. 2010–Oct. 2011), 74 local volunteers spent more than 1,400 hours collecting data. They conducted a total of 683 two-hour trail observations and 730 face-to-face interviews.

This is one of three "Results at a Glance" fact sheets that highlight key information from the full report.

Motorized trail use is an enjoyable form of outdoor recreation for all ages, particularly for older adults.

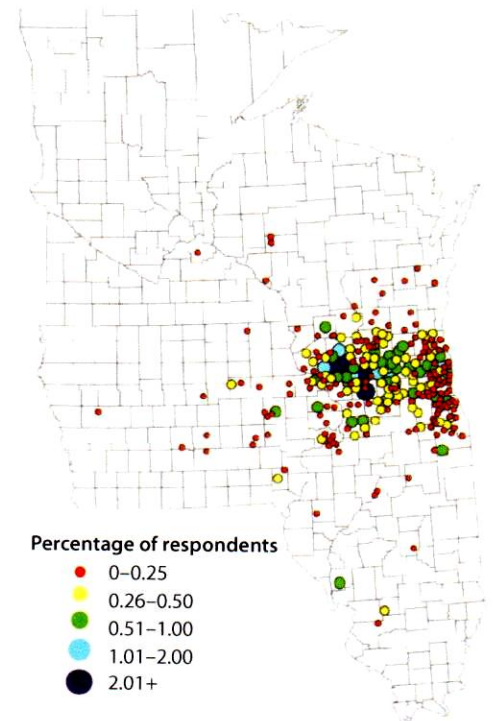
Trails that connect communities provide a unique way for these recreationists to enjoy Wisconsin's beautiful outdoor landscape.

These trails also help develop tourism in rural communities. Communities throughout Wisconsin host non-local trail riders, and in return, these trail riders spend money in local restaurants, taverns, gas stations, and hotels. Finding out more about Cheese Country Trail users and their spending helps trailside communities make the most of the trail.

User demographics

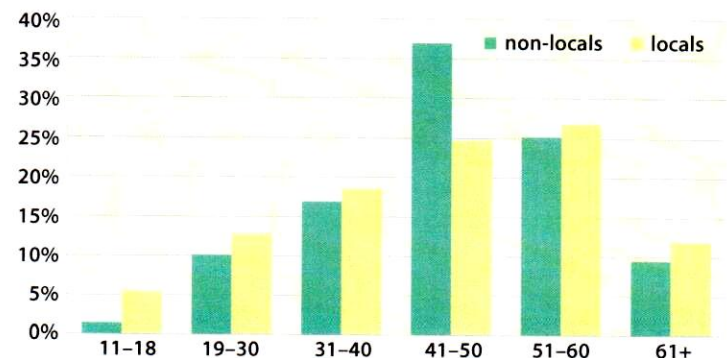
- Two-thirds of all trail users were from outside the local three-county region (figure 1).
- The average age of trail users was in the mid-40s. Non-local trail users were generally older than local trail users (figure 2).
- Non-local trail users were more apt to be college educated and had significantly higher household incomes than local trail users (figure 3).

Figure 1. Community of origin



- All 733 respondents were from the US.
- 724 total from WI, IA, IL, and MN
 - 2 each from IN, OH, and SC
 - 1 each from FL, MI, NC, TX, and VA

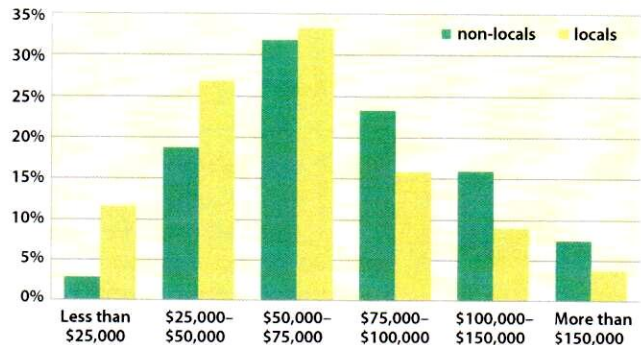
Figure 2. Age profile



Trail usage

- During the 12-month study period, 98,000 people used the trail. Most people used the trail between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and almost 75% of visits occurred on weekends or holidays (figure 4).
- ATV, UTV, and snowmobile use are the primary activities on the trail.
- There was some snowmobile activity during the winter of 2010–2011, but it was hampered by lack of snow and trail closures.
- The Cheese Country Trail was the primary reason most non-local users visited Green, Lafayette, or Iowa Counties (figure 5).

Figure 3. Annual household income



For more information

To learn more about the Cheese Country Trail, visit the Tri-County Trails website: www.tricountytrails.com.

For more “Results at a Glance,” see *Economic Impacts and Future Directions*.

The full report is available on the Green County UW-Extension website: <http://green.uwex.edu>.

Figure 4. Number of visitor-days per month

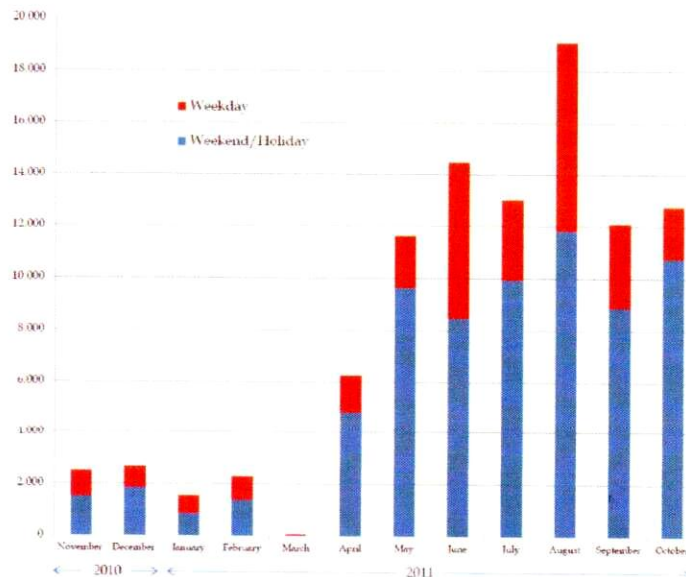


Figure 5. Trip motivation