



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

LEEDS PARKS SURVEY: FINDINGS IN NUMBERS

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March 2018



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

SUMMARY

For many, visiting parks is an integral part of everyday life, reflecting the vital social role parks play. In 2016, a team at the University of Leeds undertook a public survey in partnership with Leeds City Council Parks & Countryside Service as part of a broader project investigating how Leeds parks have changed through time, how they are used today, and what their future prospects might be.

The survey focused on the use and experiences of, and expectations for, the 70 designated public parks in the city. A core feature of the survey was to ask respondents to identify their main park - i.e. the park they visited most frequently - which was not necessarily the park closest to where they live. The survey investigated uses of parks across the city and by different social groups, experiences and expectations of park-users and levels of satisfaction with parks and priorities for the future. Some 6,432 people responded to the public survey, which was available online and sent to 20,000 households across the city between June and November 2016.

Key findings highlight:

- Parks in Leeds are widely used and enjoyed by diverse social groups; some 91% of people had visited a park in the preceding year and, on average, people visited more than five parks per year throughout the city.
- Some 77% of park visitors reported very pleasant experiences and 90% were satisfied or very satisfied overall with their main park; the majority of park-users said they felt very safe using their park (57%).
- Public parks that meet designated quality standards are associated with enriched visitor experiences and higher levels of satisfaction and well-being.
- Half of park-users visited their main park at least once a week; the average visit lasted for between 30 minutes and two hours.
- Estimated adult visits to parks in the city in 2016 totalled nearly 45 million; of these, 63% were to the 63 designated 'community' parks and 37% were to the seven 'major' parks.
- There were significant variations in the use of parks and people's experiences of them across the city - notably in terms of the type and quality of the park, and by the age, disability status and ethnic group of the visitor.

The research highlights the importance of accessible, good quality parks and green spaces throughout the city, where people of all ages, cultures and abilities can enjoy the vital leisure, health and well-being benefits that parks afford.

Key recommendations include:

- Priority should be given to raising the standard of parks across the city to ensure access to good quality green space for all residents and visitors, playing due regard to the specific needs of particular social groups so that they can enjoy the full benefits of well-managed parks.
- Park managers should work closely in partnership with diverse organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure that their contribution and role is harnessed in support of good quality accessible urban parks.
- The differential experiences of park-users across the city should inform park management targets and strategies in ways that seek to ensure a quality park experience is available to all.
- To ensure that there is an equivalent service of accessible, quality parks across the city, managers should prioritise resources and seek investment to raise the level of all community parks to recognised standards.
- Park managers need to develop better understanding of the personal and social barriers to the full enjoyment of parks by older and disabled people who were much less likely to use parks.



91% OF RESPONDENTS VISITED A PARK IN THE PRECEDING YEAR.



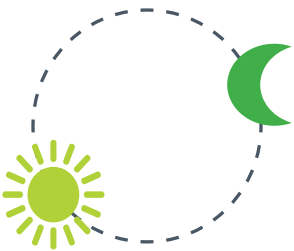
50% OF PARK-USERS VISITED THEIR MAIN PARK AT LEAST **ONCE A WEEK** IN THE SUMMER MONTHS.

45
MILLION

ESTIMATED **ADULT VISITS** TO PARKS IN LEEDS EACH YEAR. **63%** AT 'COMMUNITY PARKS', **37%** AT 'MAJOR PARKS'.



69% OF PARK-USERS USUALLY VISIT THE PARK **CLOSEST** TO WHERE THEY LIVE. **31%** TRAVEL TO ANOTHER PARK.



26% OF PARK-USERS **AVOIDED** THEIR MAIN PARK AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE DAY OR WEEK.



MORE PARK-USERS **WALK** TO THEIR MAIN PARK (**50%**) THAN **DRIVE** (**40%**).



94% OF PARK-USERS CHOSE A **LEEDS QUALITY PARK** AS THEIR MAIN PARK TO USE. ONLY **6%** USUALLY VISIT A PARK **BELOW** THESE STANDARDS.



ON AVERAGE, PARK-USERS VISIT **MORE THAN 5 PARKS PER YEAR** ACROSS THE CITY.



PARK-USERS NORMALLY STAYED FOR BETWEEN **30 MINUTES** AND **2 HOURS**.





90% OF PARK-USERS WERE 'SATISFIED' OR 'VERY SATISFIED' WITH THEIR MAIN PARK.



85% OF MAJOR PARK-USERS HAD **VERY PLEASANT EXPERIENCES** COMPARED WITH 69% OF COMMUNITY PARK-USERS.



77% OF MAJOR PARK-USERS NORMALLY STAYED FOR **OVER AN HOUR** COMPARED WITH 44% OF COMMUNITY PARK-USERS.



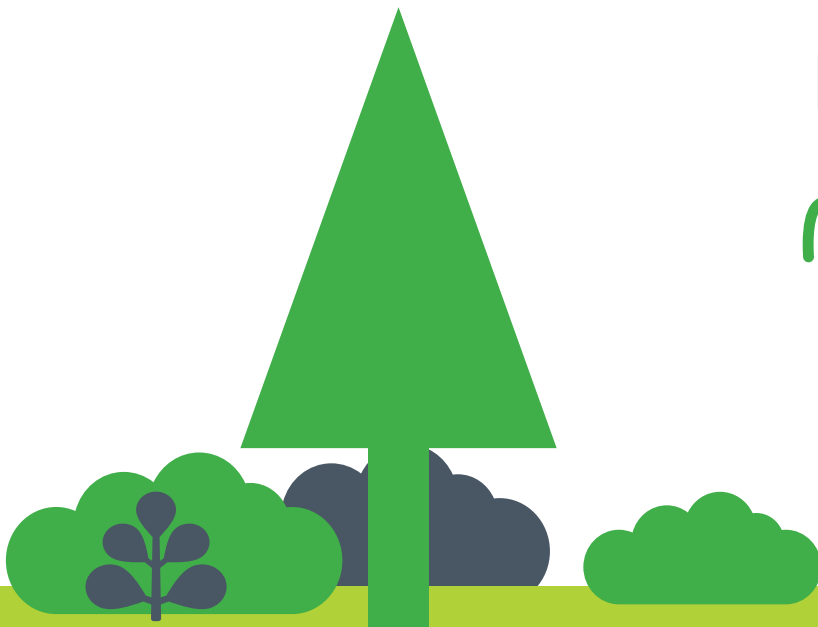
44% OF MAJOR PARK-USERS RATED THEIR MAIN PARK IN **EXCELLENT CONDITION** COMPARED WITH 23% OF COMMUNITY PARK-USERS.



VISITORS TO LEEDS QUALITY PARKS WERE **MORE LIKELY** TO RATE SPENDING TIME IN THEIR PARK AS IMPORTANT TO **THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE** THAN VISITORS TO PARKS **BELOW** THIS STANDARD.



PEOPLE HAVE A **DIFFERENTIAL EXPERIENCE** OF PARKS ACROSS THE CITY.



VISITORS HOPE THAT THE QUALITY OF PARKS **IMPROVE**, AND THAT GOOD QUALITY PARKS **REMAIN** AT THESE STANDARDS.



WALKING TO PARKS **DECREASES WITH AGE** WHILE TRAVELLING BY CAR **INCREASES WITH AGE**.



PEOPLE AGED OVER 75 AND DISABLED PEOPLE WERE **SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY** TO HAVE VISITED A PARK IN THE PRECEDING YEAR.



DISABLED PARK-USERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO TRAVEL BY **CAR (52%)** THAN **WALK (27%)**.



MALES AND FEMALES ARE **JUST AS LIKELY** TO HAVE VISITED A PARK.



PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS ARE **JUST AS LIKELY** TO HAVE VISITED A PARK.



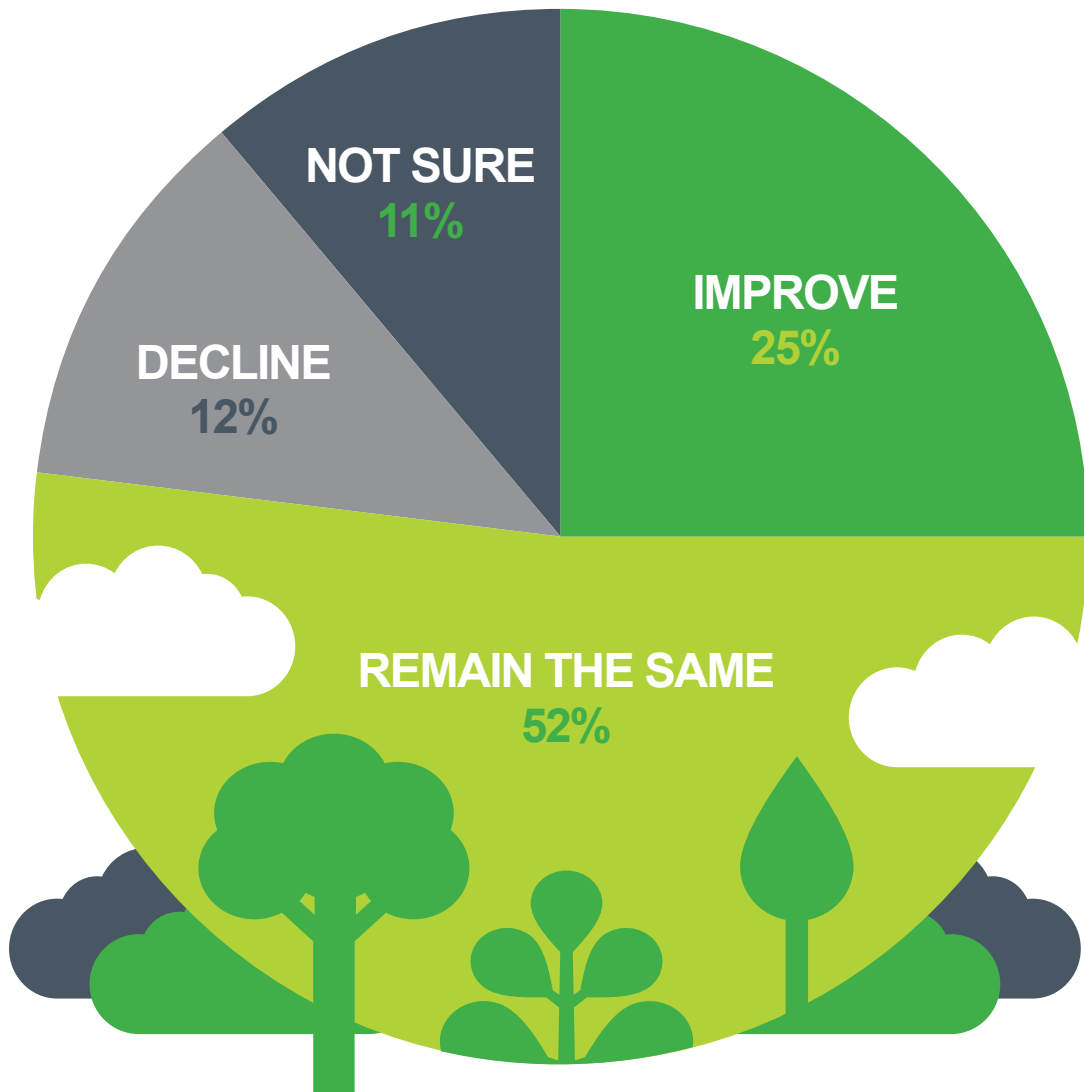
A CONCERN FOR GREATER **PERSONAL SAFETY** IN PARKS **DECREASES WITH AGE**.



57% OF PARK-USERS FEEL **'VERY SAFE'** VISITING THEIR MAIN PARK.



IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS, HOW DO YOU EXPECT THE CONDITION OF YOUR PARK TO CHANGE?



MORE PARK-USERS EXPECT THEIR PARK TO **IMPROVE** THAN **DECLINE**, BUT THE MAJORITY EXPECT IT TO **REMAIN THE SAME** OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS.



PARK USER'S TOP FIVE PRIORITIES



#1 - KEEP PARKS CLEAN



#2 - KEEP EXISTING FACILITIES OPEN OR IMPROVE THEM



#3 - KEEP PARKS FREE TO ENTER



#4 - EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN PARKS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES



#5 - TACKLE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND CRIME



ABOUT THE STUDY

This survey was part of an Arts & Humanities Research Council funded research project exploring the past, present and future of urban public parks.

A total of 6,432 people responded to the public survey between June and November 2016. The survey was available online and sent to 20,000 households across the city. The findings are representative of the Leeds population in terms of gender and ethnicity.

This summary is drawn from the Leeds Parks Survey: Full Report, which outlines the full survey findings and methods. To download the full or the summary research reports free of charge please visit the project website.

The project curated a digital archive of images of parks over time, including photographs submitted by members of the public, which is accessible via the Leodis website: www.leodis.net

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

www.futureofparks.leeds.ac.uk | [@leedsparksstudy](https://twitter.com/leedsparksstudy) 



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