TORONTO

Trinity Bellwoods Park Public Life Study

November 2025


Dog Walkers
On-leash
Off-leash
Date:
Shift:
Travel count / age + gender locations
stionary mapping area
TORONTO

Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Toronto gratefully acknowledges that the area covered by Trinity Bellwoods Park is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of New Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat people and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The City of Toronto also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of New Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Volunteer Acknowledgement

This study was made possible by the contributions of our volunteers, who recorded 48 hours of public life observations in Trinity Bellwoods Park. We thank them for their time, expertise, and commitment.

Contributing Volunteers:

- Adrian Zhao
- Amanda Tafler
- Armin Jahromi
- Candice Maree Ferrer
- Diane Kim
- Emily Chan
- Faith Carrington Lopez
- Fiona Zhou
- Ivy Le
- Jada Chau
- Jaydon Ly
- Kieran Christie-O'Connor
- Lauren Bontridder
- Luxsha Nirmalananthan
- Maryia Marchanka
- Naaz Warsi
- Nahid Shaikh
- Nawa Tahir
- Nyandah Mamby
- Orcel Manalang
- Payton Meilleur
- Rayyan Mia
- Ryan Lee
- Safiyyah Memon
- Sara Lee
- Shameel Chankar
- Vince Ngo
- Yihan Lin
- Zahra Lokhandwala
- Zilin Jia

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Introduction

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Introduction

Why study Trinity Bellwoods Park?

Trinity Bellwoods Park is one of Toronto's most iconic and heavily used downtown parks. It serves as a vital corridor for walking and cycling, a gathering space for recreation and events, and a green refuge in a dense urban setting. With growing demand and evolving patterns of use, the City of Toronto is undertaking the Trinity Bellwoods Park Access and Circulation Study to improve how people move through and experience the park. This public life study provides foundational insight into how the park is used today, helping to inform future design decisions that will enhance accessibility, comfort and long-term resilience.

What is a public life study?

A public life study is a systematic approach to understanding how people use public space. It focuses on real-time observation of movement, behavior, and social interaction to reveal patterns that are often missed in traditional planning processes. By documenting consistent snapshots of who is present, how they move, and how they occupy space, the study helps identify opportunities to improve equity, usability, and the overall experience of public life in the park.

How we build insight from observation

Observations were gathered and analyzed through a four-step process. First, data was collected using standardized sheets. Then information was organized to identify patterns in how people use the space. Next, visuals were created to help compare different areas and activities. Finally, these patterns were interpreted to see how easily people move around, how comfortable and welcoming the spaces feel and how well each area supports different types of use. Observations were collected in spring and summer, consistently spanning a weekday (Tuesday) and a weekend day (Saturday).

Observation Zones

The study included six observation zones located near key entrances, pathways, and features of Trinity Bellwoods Park. The study focused on high-traffic areas where movement and gathering are most prominent. Observations were conducted during three time periods: 8am to 12pm, 12pm to 4pm, and 4pm to 8pm, capturing activity from morning through afternoon and into the early evening. Within each block, travel counts were recorded during short intervals at the start of every hour, while demographic and stationary mapping occurred during alternating hours.

Zones include:

A. Northwest entrance

B. North entrance

C. Off-leash area

D. West play spaces

E. Southeast entrances

F. Northeast entrance

Methods

Travel Counts

To capture movement patterns and mobility diversity, surveyors recorded the number of people passing a designated point over a 10-minute period. This included individuals using mobility aids (e.g. wheelchairs), babies in strollers, recreational cyclists, and other micro-mobility users such as rollerbladers and skateboarders.

Observed Age & Gender Counts

To understand who felt comfortable using the spaces, surveyors recorded perceived age and gender presentation of passersby at designated points. These observations were based on visual perception, not self-identification. Individuals perceived as nonbinary or whose presentation did not clearly align with binary categories were recorded as 'Gender Non Conforming'. Gender was not recorded for babies and toddlers. We acknowledge the limitations of visual estimation and the potential for misclassification.

Observed Stationary Activities & Postures

To understand how people engaged with the space, surveyors mapped the location of stationary individuals and recorded their activities and postures. Activities included eating/drinking, socializing, active recreation, and passive recreation (e.g. reading, photography). Postures were recorded as standing, formal sitting (on designed seating), informal sitting (on surfaces not intended for seating), and lying down.

Volunteer Recruitment & Training

To support seasonal observation efforts across zones, volunteers were recruited through targeted outreach to post-secondary institutions in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), including Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Toronto, George Brown College, and Seneca Polytechnic. This approach reflects standard practice in other public life studies, where student volunteers contribute to short-term observational research in public spaces.

Mandatory training sessions were held ahead of each seasonal observation period to ensure consistency in how observations were recorded. Each volunteer was paired with a City staff member for support before and during the study days. Volunteers received an honorarium in recognition of their time and contributions.

All synthesis, interpretation, and visualization were conducted by City staff.

Limitations

This study offers valuable insights into public life in the park, but several constraints may have influenced the results, including:

- **Seasonal timing:** Observations were limited to spring and summer, and do not reflect year-round use or long-term trends.
- **Weather conditions:** Cooler-than-average temperatures and rainfall during spring observations likely led to lower turnout in evening periods.
- **Event-based activity:**
    - Cherry blossom season and a one-time scream event drew atypical crowds to Zone E and Zone C during spring observations.
    - The farmer's market, held on Tuesday evenings and present in both seasonal studies, introduced high-capacity use in Zone A. This was included to assess the zone's ability to accommodate large gatherings and observe peak-use behavior, but may inflate weekday activity compared to typical use.
- **Methodological constraints:** Short observation windows and limited user representation may restrict the scope of insights.

These factors will be considered when interpreting results or applying recommendations.

Key Insights

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A park for gathering, not just going

Method: Mapping of Stationary Activities

Lingering, not just passing through

Socializing was the top observed activity across Trinity Bellwoods Park, especially in Zone B, the north entrance off Dundas Street West, and Zone E, the south entrances along Queen Street West at Strachan Avenue and Gore Vale Avenue. These zones also recorded the highest pedestrian volumes, reinforcing their role as key entry points and natural gathering areas. As part of a circulation study, this pattern is significant: pathways don't just move people, they lead to places where people choose to stay.

Summer shift toward staying

As the weather warmed, more people chose to spend time in the park rather than just move through it. While total observed visitors in Trinity Bellwoods Park decreased slightly from 24,566 in spring to 23,507 in summer, the number of people who stopped to sit, gather or relax grew by 37% from 3,501 to 4,813.

Meanwhile, those passing through the park dropped by 18% from 16,942 to 13,879. This seasonal shift towards staying longer suggests that summer conditions, such as warmer temperatures, shade and social activities, encourage people to linger, reinforcing Trinity Bellwoods Park's role as a social destination with popular gathering spots near entrances and along main paths.

Where people stay on their feet

Zone D, which includes the playground and west entrance off Crawford Street and Lobb Avenue, and Zone E, located at the south entrances off Queen Street West, recorded some of the highest standing counts in spring with 246 and 782 respectively. In Zone D, standing numbers remained high in summer at 328, likely reflecting parents or caregivers observing children rather than sitting. In Zone E, standing numbers dropped to 399 as informal sitting and lying down surged, suggesting a shift towards longer, more relaxed stays. These patterns point to different needs: Zone D may benefit from more formal seating to support supervision, while Zone E's shift highlights the value of informal, shaded gathering space.

Zones A and B, located at the park's northwest and north entrances from Dundas Street West, saw moderate to high rates of standing across both seasons. Zone A recorded 222 standing users in spring and 335 in summer, while Zone B saw 325 standing users in spring and 166 in summer. Despite seasonal fluctuations, these entrance zones appear to function as quick pause points and support passive, individual use. To improve comfort for brief stops, added formal seating near circulation paths may be beneficial.

Where people settle in

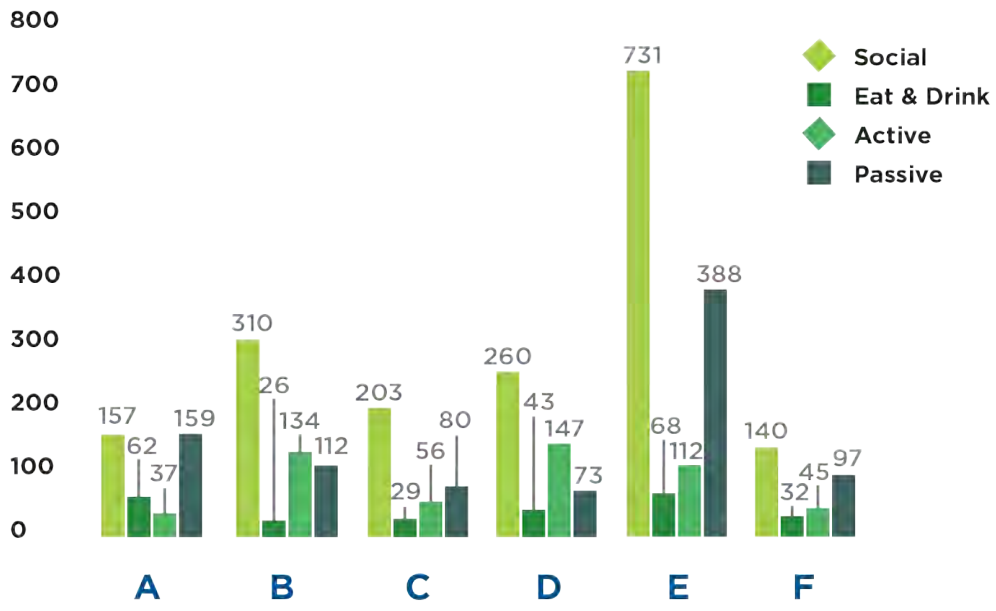
As summer arrived, the way people positioned themselves in the park changed noticeably. Zone E, located at the south entrances off Queen Street West, and Zone F, at the northeast entrance off Dundas Street West, saw the biggest shifts, with a sharp rise in lying down. Zone E jumped from 175 people informally sitting and 7 people lying down in spring to 695 informally sitting and 81 lying down in summer. Meanwhile, Zone F saw an increase from 95 people informally sitting and 19 people lying down in spring to 412 informally sitting and 87 lying down in summer.

These rises in informal postures and lying down near the south and northeast entrances signal a need to support relaxed, unstructured use of these spaces. These areas offer shade, softer surfaces and proximity to food vendors, making them natural spots for stretching out and staying longer. As summers grow hotter, maintaining and enhancing these informal gathering zones will be key to supporting comfort and climate resilience.

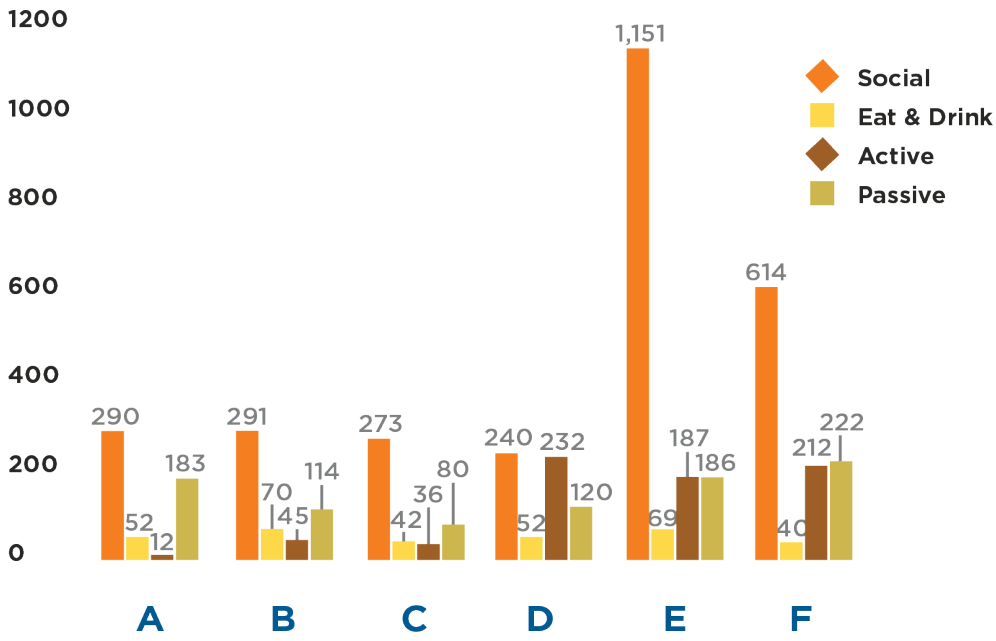
These patterns show how different areas support different ways of being together, from quick chats to afternoons stretched out in the sun.

A park for gathering, not just going

Observed stationary activities in spring

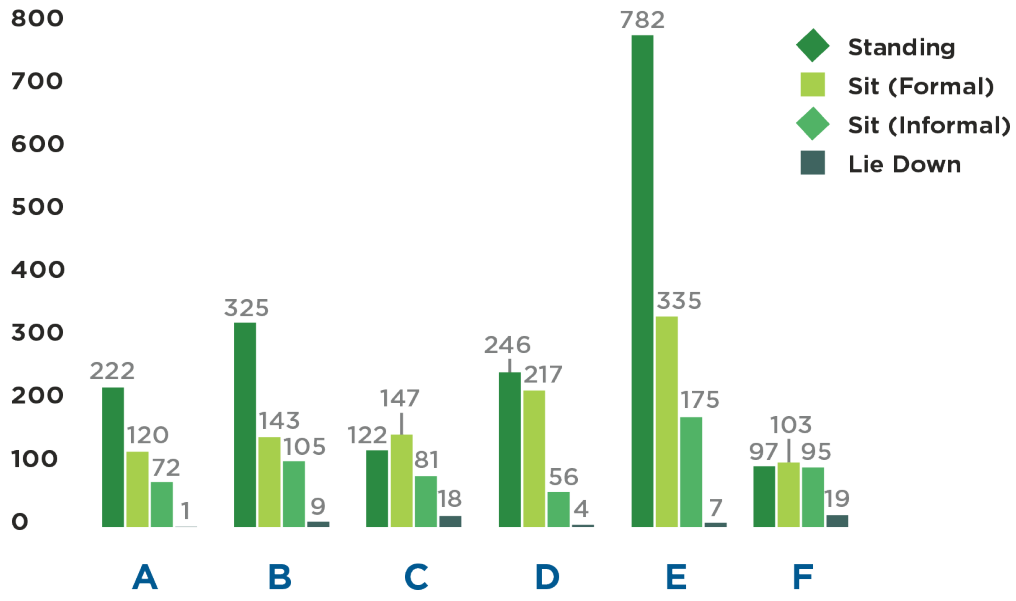


Observed stationary activities in summer

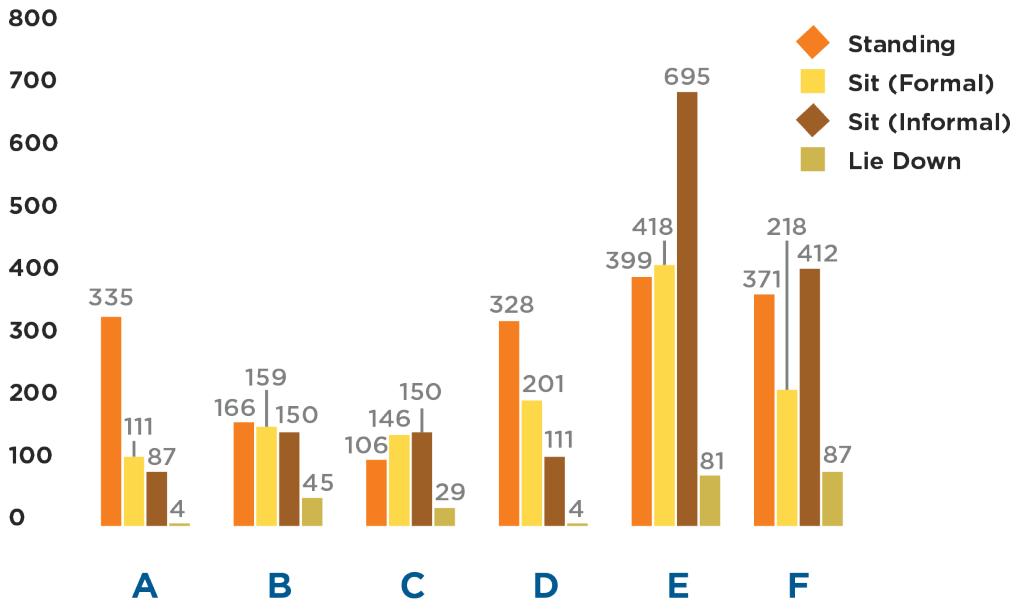


A park for gathering, not just going

Observed stationary postures in spring



Observed stationary postures in summer



The generational gaps

Method: Observed Age Counts

Young children

Children aged 0–4 accounted for a small portion of overall park users, but their presence closely followed the patterns of adults observed, particularly in Zones B and E. In spring, the highest number of children (35) was observed at the busy Queen Street West entrances in Zone E. By summer, the most dramatic increase occurred in Zone B, where young children grew more than threefold, from 18 to 58. This suggests that entrances with strong circulation flows are also key arrival points for families, where young children are most visible.

In summer, Zones A, B and E accounted for nearly 65% of all children observed (102 out of 157). By comparison, Zones D and F together recorded only 26 children. This echoes broader circulation findings: while adults disperse through the park, children remain clustered near primary entrances and gathering areas where family groups settle.

The patterns of young children reinforce entrances as social and spatial anchors in Trinity Bellwoods Park. These are not just points of passage but staging areas where families arrive, pause and often stay. Design elements such as stroller-friendly paths, shaded seating and nearby play features can support this tendency, ensuring that entrances remain welcoming and functional for families with young children.

Seniors

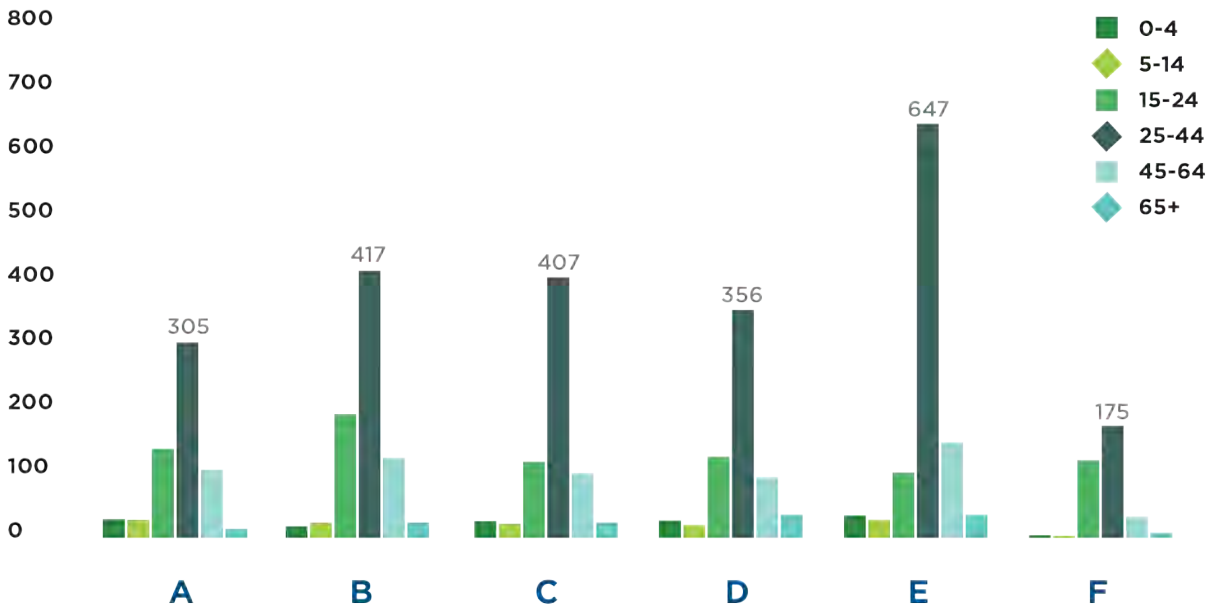
Seniors (65+) made up a small share of all visitors to Trinity Bellwoods Park. In spring, 142 seniors were observed across all zones, compared to 2,307 people aged 25–44. By summer, their total rose by 75% to 249. This growth suggests that seniors are not just passing through but increasingly choosing to spend time in the park as the weather warms.

Patterns of use also shifted between seasons. In spring, the distribution of seniors was more even across zones. In summer, nearly two-thirds of all seniors were observed in Zones A and B at the Dundas Street West entrances (164 out of 249). Interior areas like Zones C and D saw limited senior presence, with only 25 individuals combined. This reinforces the role of entrances not only as gateways but also as destinations where older adults feel comfortable lingering.

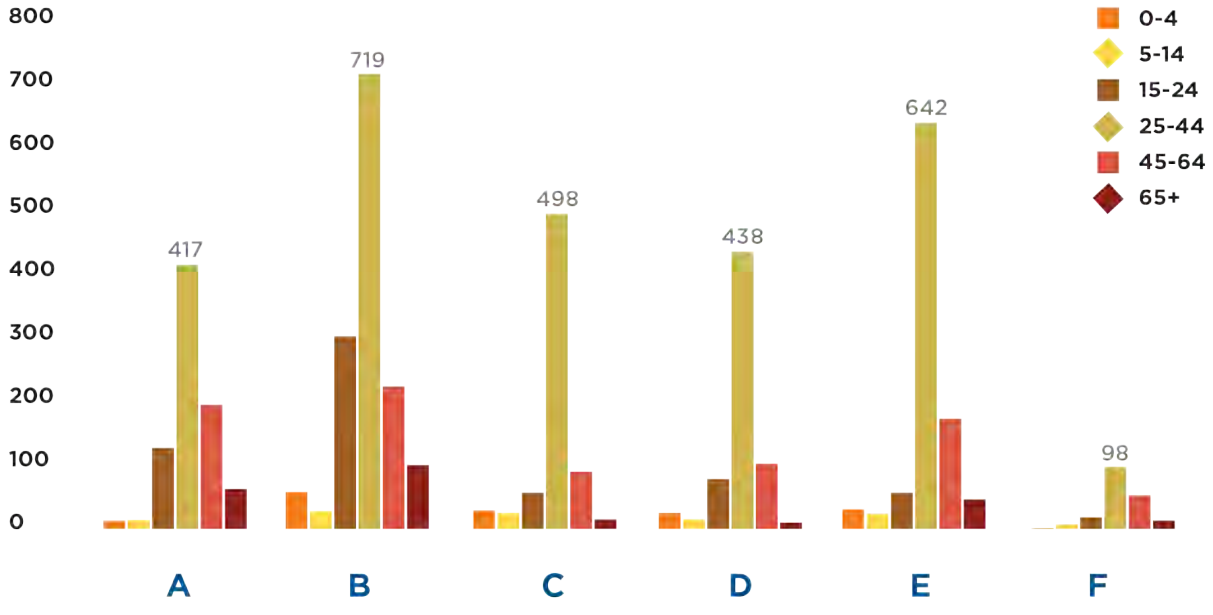
The seasonal shift towards entrances suggests that factors such as ease of access and available seating shape how seniors use the park. Where younger age groups were observed spreading more evenly across the site, older adults gravitated to areas with stronger anchors.

The generational gaps

Observed age counts in spring



Observed age counts in summer



The northeast no-go

Method: Travel Counts

Poor accessibility in Zone F

Zone F, at the park's northeast corner, stood out for its low overall use. Total travel volumes dropped by 80% from spring (2,635) to summer (509), marking the sharpest seasonal decrease across all zones.

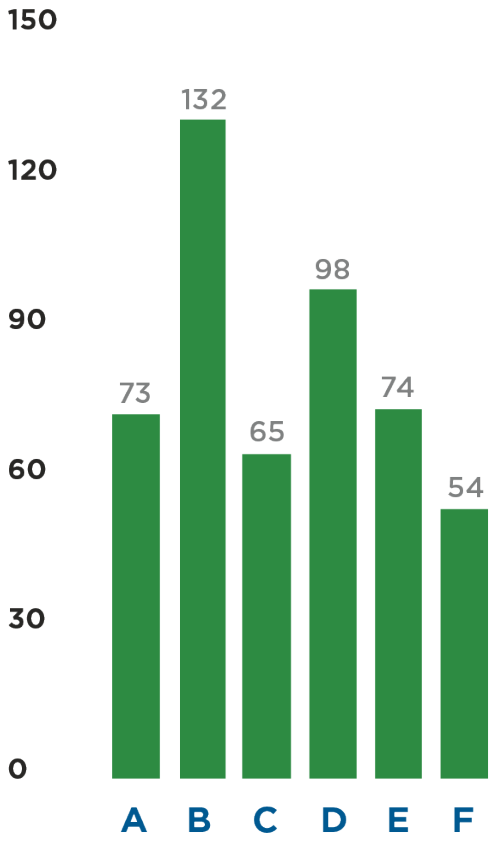
The decline was especially significant for mobility device users. In spring, 54 trips were observed in Zone F, but by summer this fell by just over 80% to 10. While other entrances such as Zone A and Zone B recorded stable or increased use from mobility device users, Zone F moved in the opposite direction, potentially suggesting barriers caused by the entrance not being located on a main street and the sidewalk only leading north to Dundas Street West rather than extending south along the east edge of the park.

Zone F was also the least used part of the park for seniors, both in spring and summer. Only eight seniors were observed in spring and 13 in summer, numbers that remained low even as senior presence across the park as a whole grew by 75% between seasons. While entrances like Zone B saw seniors quadruple over the same period, Zone F did not share in this growth, underscoring its limited appeal and accessibility.

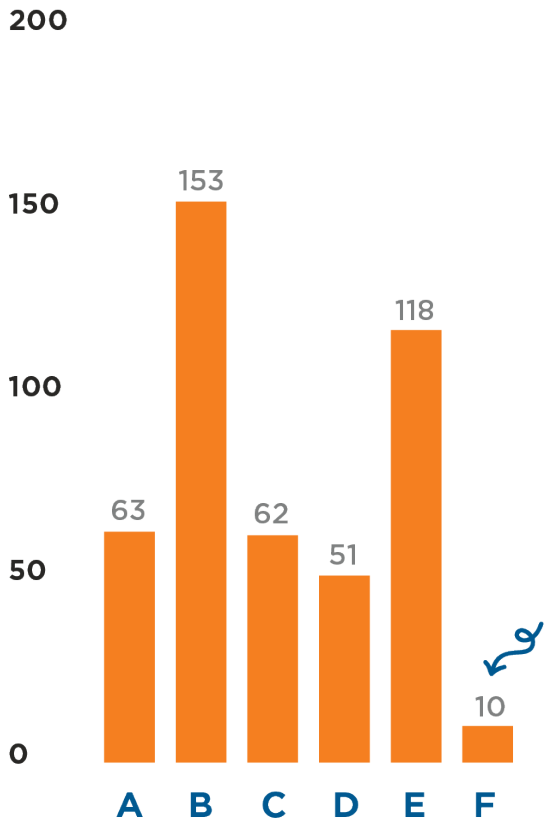
The pattern in Zone F shows how accessibility challenges influence whether an entrance feels welcoming or discouraging, especially for seniors, families, and mobility device users who depend on predictable, supportive infrastructure.

The northeast no-go

Assistive mobility patterns in spring



Assistive mobility patterns in summer



Lower assistive mobility use in Zone F signals a need for improvements to make the area more accessible

Spring strolls into summer stays

Method: Travel Counts and Mapping of Stationary Activities

The park's busiest pathways

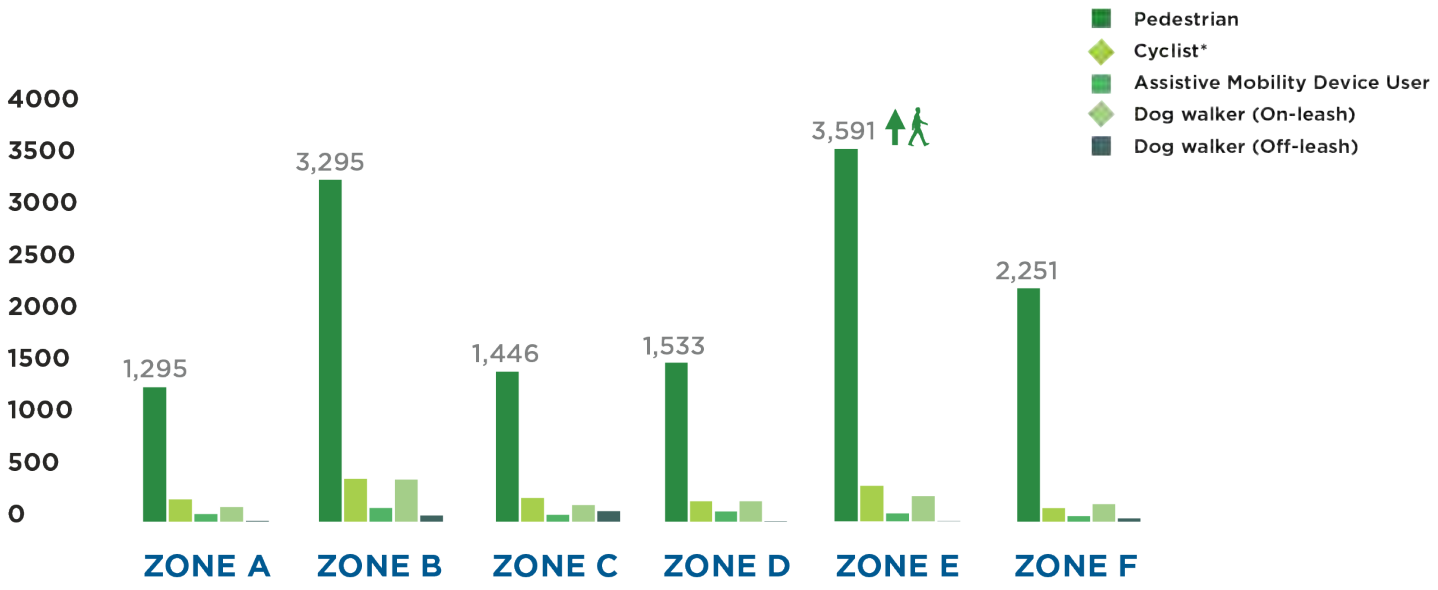
Zones A and D remained the park's key pass-through areas over both seasons. In spring, Zone A saw 1,295 pedestrians versus 415 stationary users, and Zone D recorded 1,533 pedestrians against 523 stationary users. By summer, these zones held their role as circulation corridors, with Zone A rising slightly to 1,539 pedestrians and Zone D dropping to 1,183, but in both cases continuing to record far more movement than lingering. The persistence of this imbalance suggests that despite overall seasonal shifts towards more stationary use elsewhere, these zones continue to function primarily as travel routes rather than destinations for stationary activity.

High-traffic areas

Entrances remained the highest-traffic locations, but volumes declined from spring to summer. Zone E led in both seasons, with 3,591 pedestrians in spring falling to 2,615 in summer. This was possibly impacted by visitors coming to see the cherry blossoms on the trees along the southeastern pathway during the spring sessions. Zone B followed closely with 3,295 pedestrians in spring and 3,024 in summer. Despite the drop in numbers, both zones still outpaced all others, underscoring their role as circulation anchors at Queen Street West and Dundas Street West. The seasonal dip suggests that while fewer people passed directly through the zones, many chose to stay once inside, signaling a shift from movement to lingering in these high-traffic areas.

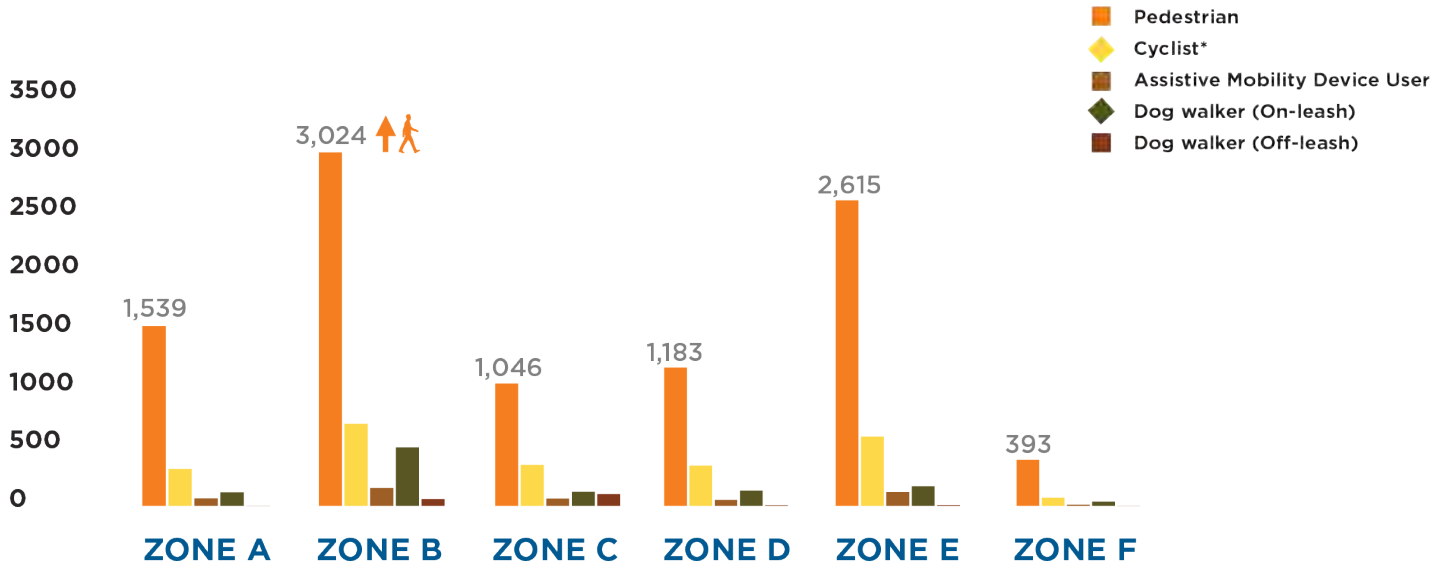
Spring strolls into summer stays

Moving in spring



*includes micro-mobility users such as rollerbladers and skateboarders.

Moving in summer



*includes micro-mobility users such as rollerbladers and skateboarders.

More stationary uses by summer

The most dramatic seasonal change occurred in stationary use, especially in Zone E, the park's southern entrances from Queen Street West. In spring, Zone E already had the highest stationary counts at 1,299, but that number climbed to 1,593 by summer, with nearly half engaged in informal sitting or lying down.

Zone C, which includes the pathways along the top of the bowl and the park's off-leash dog area, also saw a notable uptick, rising from 368 stationary users in spring to 431 in summer. Together, these increases reflect a broader seasonal trend: Zones C and E, primarily used as points of passage and entry in spring, also evolved into places to linger in summer, transforming from fast-moving gateways into sticky social hubs.

The Zone F summer surge

Although Zone F had the lowest observed stationary numbers in spring, it experienced the seasonal surge in a big way. While pedestrian travel dropped sharply from 2,251 in spring to just 393 in summer, stationary use surged from 314 to 1,088, with large increases in informal sitting (from 95 to 412) and lying down (from 19 to 87). Similar to other zones, the northeast corner became a space where people were far more likely to stop and linger despite the steep decline in movement. This reversal highlights the zone's peripheral character: its edges may be less used for circulation, but they offer more secluded areas for stationary activity, appealing to visitors seeking calm or informal seating when other areas become more crowded.

Seasonal story

These patterns show a clear seasonal shift in public life: spring activity leaned towards movement and circulation, while summer use tipped towards staying. Across all zones, stationary users rose from 3,501 to 4,813 people, while total travel volumes declined from 16,942 to 13,879 people.

Zones B and E illustrate this best, functioning as main entrances into the park in spring, then transforming into social destinations in summer. Their dual role highlights how entrances can anchor public life when designed with comfort and invitation in mind. Meanwhile, Zones A and D remained the most transient, reinforcing their roles as connective corridors.

The seasonal contrast underscores how environmental conditions modulate spatial use. Cooler spring weather supports circulation and kinetic activity, while summer's warmth and longer daylight encourage lingering and socializing. These findings support seasonally responsive design, such as shaded seating, water features and flexible programming to adapt spaces to shifting public needs.

Spaces worth savouring

Method: Mapping of Stationary Activities

Where people choose to eat

Eating patterns across Trinity Bellwoods Park show seasonal variation and shifting zone popularity. In spring, Zone E (along Queen Street West) recorded the highest number of eating events (68), followed by Zone A (62). These counts suggest that entrances and well-travelled edges often support food activity. Zones D and F saw fewer eating events, indicating that eating was less common in those areas.

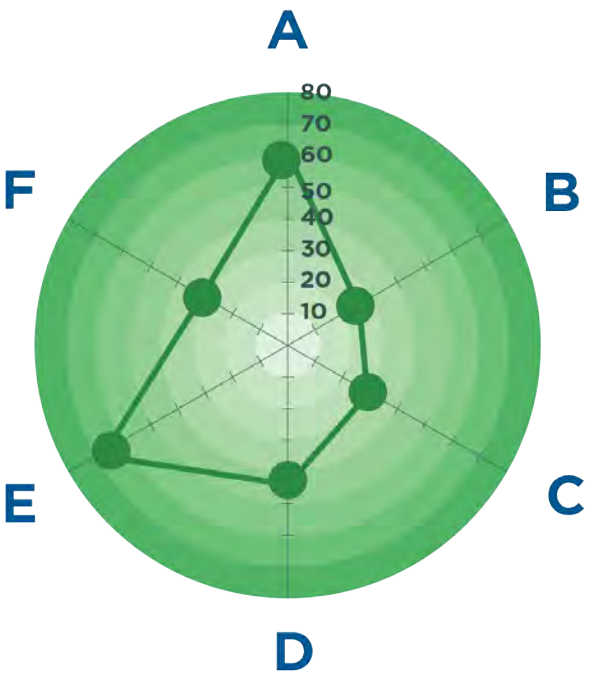
In summer, Zone E remained popular (69), while Zone B rose sharply from 26 to 70 eating events. This increase may reflect changing conditions such as shade or quieter surroundings that influence where people choose to eat.

Zones A and D maintained moderate activity, suggesting that well-used edges continue to attract food-related use even as other areas gain popularity.

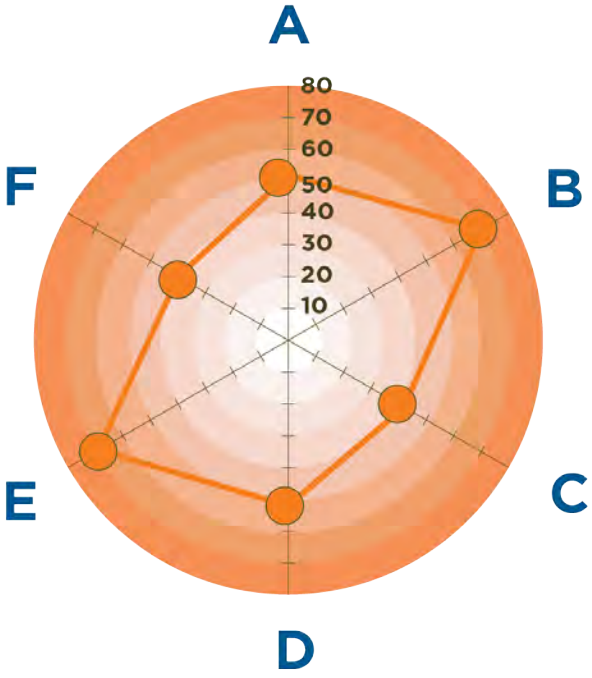
The overall pattern reflects a mix of convenience and comfort. Gateways like Zone A support quick stops, while Zones E and B appear to invite longer stays and social gathering. Together, these trends show how food-related activity supports both movement and lingering across the park.

Spaces worth savouring

Eating & drinking in spring



Eating & drinking in summer



Zone E consistently draws food activity, while Zone B surges in summer

Phantom riders

Method: Travel Counts

Cyclist behaviour and distribution

Cyclist activity across Trinity Bellwoods Park was concentrated in high-traffic entrances and central circulation zones, with clear seasonal shifts. In spring, Zone B recorded the highest number of cyclists at 413 followed closely by Zone E with 342 and Zone C with 228. By summer, cycling grew notably in the park's core, with numbers rising to 703 in Zone B and 594 in Zone E. Activity in Zones C and D remained moderate, suggesting that cyclists prefer routes that align with major entrances and direct pathways, using the park primarily as a connector.

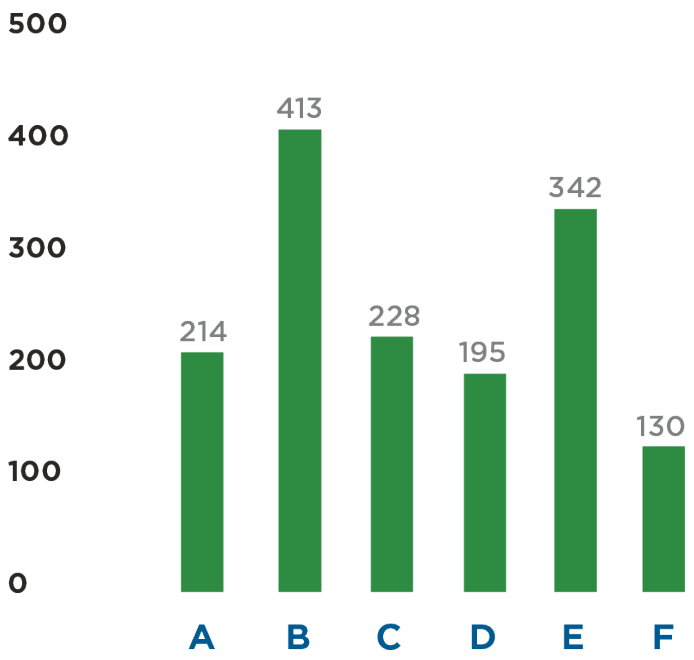
Cyclist counts were consistently lower than pedestrian travel, indicating that cycling is comparatively more transient and less social in nature. High pedestrian traffic on park pathways may also make the routes less appealing for cyclists. The patterns show a clear hierarchy: central entrances attract most cycling traffic, while intermediate zones see moderate use and peripheral areas receive minimal attention.

Cyclists absent from Zone F

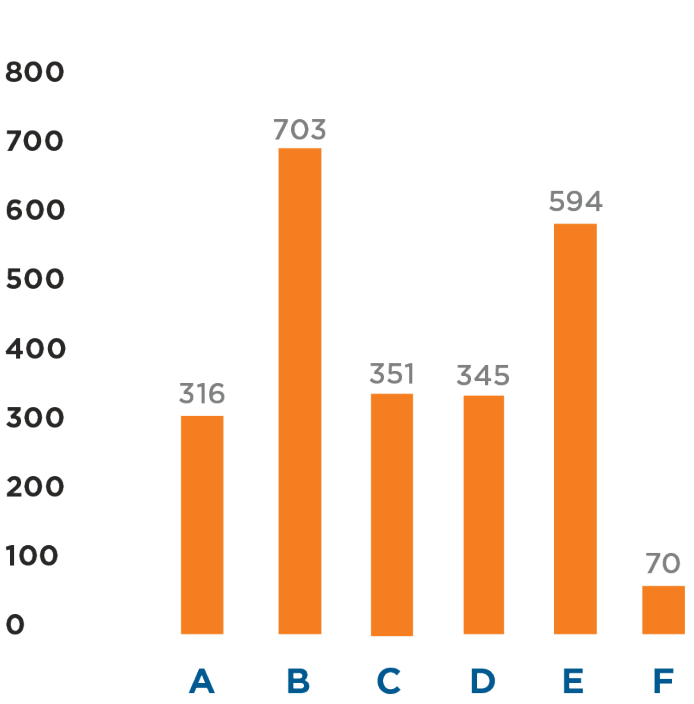
Zone F, the park's northeast corner, was effectively a no-go for cyclists. In spring, only 130 trips were recorded, falling to 70 in summer. This contrasts sharply with Zones B and E, where cycling remained robust and increased seasonally. The near absence of cyclists mirrors the seasonal decline in total travel in Zone F (from 2,635 to 509) and underscores the zone's peripheral, disconnected character. Limited path continuity and fewer sightlines likely contribute to the lack of cycling, reinforcing Zone F's role as a stationary or secluded edge rather than part of the active circulation network.

Phantom riders

Cyclists in spring



Cyclists in summer



Who let the dogs out?

Method: Travel Counts

Dog activity mirrors circulation

Dog-related activity in Trinity Bellwoods Park largely followed patterns of overall park travel, with entrances and central pathways serving as the main hubs. Zone B consistently drew the most on-leash dogs, rising from 406 in spring to 500 in summer, reflecting its role as a convenient access point for walkers.

Zone E also attracted significant on-leash activity. Peripheral zones, including Zone A and Zone F, recorded minimal dog activity, reinforcing their underused character and limited draw for walkers.

The Dog Bowl

The park's designated off-leash area in Zone C was a clear destination, showing consistent use across seasons. Off-leash dogs numbered 100 in spring and 101 in summer, even as total pedestrian travel in the zone decreased from 1,446 to 1,046. This stability indicates that while general circulation may fluctuate, the off-leash area attracts a loyal, returning user group.

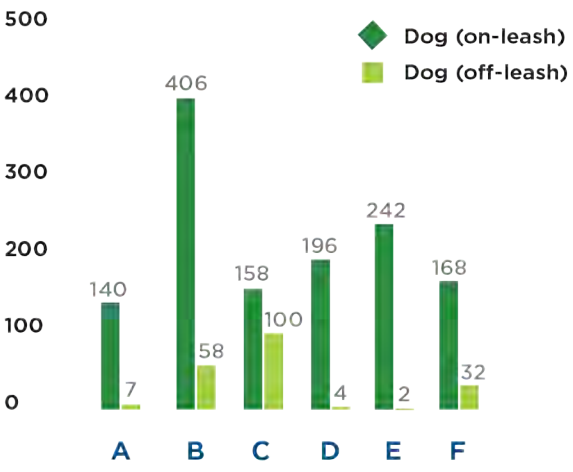
Both on-leash and off-leash activity in Zone C highlight the zone's dual function as a controlled play space for dogs that accommodates movement and lingering by dog owners.

Convenience versus loyalty

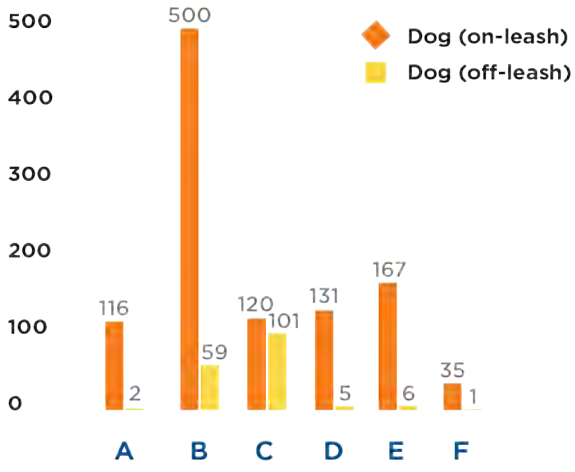
In summer, on-leash dog counts increased in high-traffic entrances like Zone B but dropped sharply in peripheral areas like Zone F. In contrast, on-leash activity in Zone C remained relatively stable, emphasizing the importance of dedicated amenities in driving repeated visits. Overall, dog activity illustrates a balance between route-based convenience, where walkers follow well-travelled paths near entrances, and loyalty to designated play areas, where owners and dogs consistently return regardless of broader seasonal trends.

These patterns mirror those observed in other park activities, such as lunchtime gatherings. Just as visitors choose familiar entrances or specific seating areas to eat, dog owners demonstrate loyalty to favoured zones, highlighting a shared dynamic of returning to reliable, well-supported destinations rather than dispersing evenly across the park.

Dog activity in spring



Dog activity in summer



Seasonal shifts in gender presence

Method: Observed Gender Counts

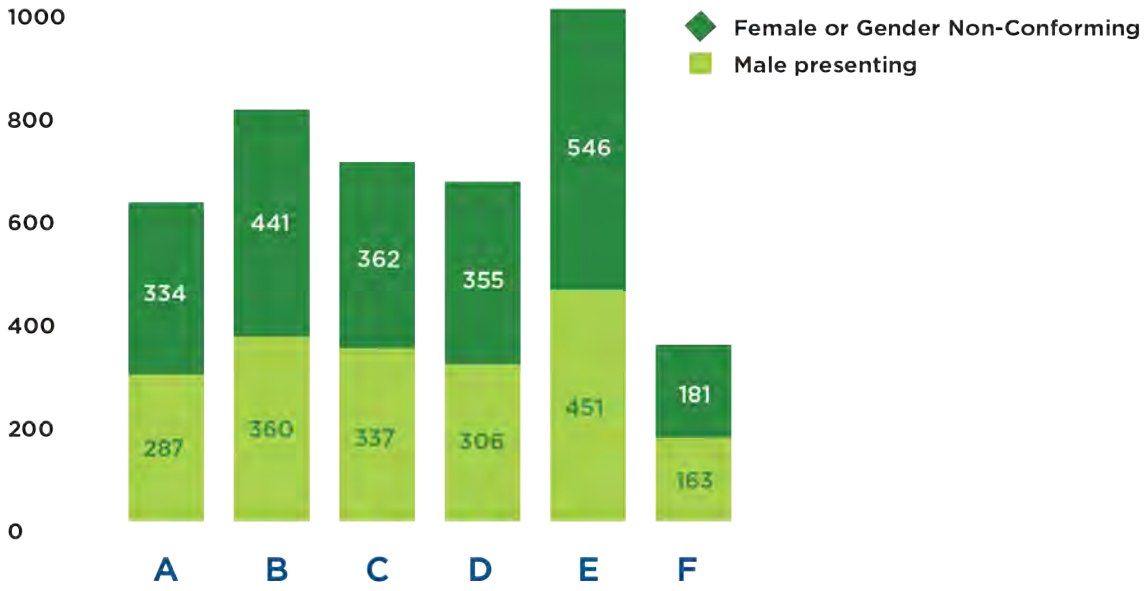
Gender, seasonality & the comfort to stay

The gender distribution of visitors was balanced across Trinity Bellwoods Park. In spring, female or gender non-conforming visitors slightly outnumbered male-presenting visitors in all zones. This pattern reversed in summer, with male-presenting visitors more present in all zones but Zone A.

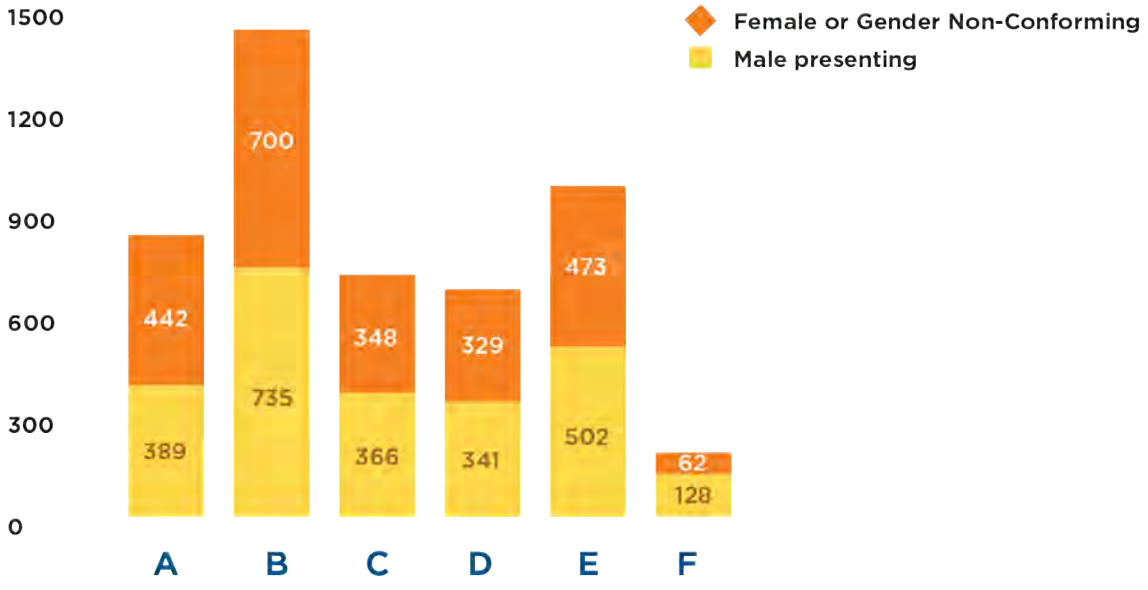
Zone F experienced the most pronounced seasonal shift in gender composition. In spring, female or gender non-conforming visitors slightly outnumbered male-presenting visitors (181 versus 163). By summer, both groups declined, reflecting the broader drop in travel activity, but the decrease was steeper among female or gender non-conforming visitors, falling to 62 compared to 128 male-presenting visitors. This shift suggests that summer use of Zone F may be more strongly shaped by male-presenting visitors, and that comfort or perceived safety may play a role in how different groups engage with the northeast corner of the park.

Seasonal shifts in gender presence

Observed gender counts in spring



Observed gender counts in summer



Zone Profiles

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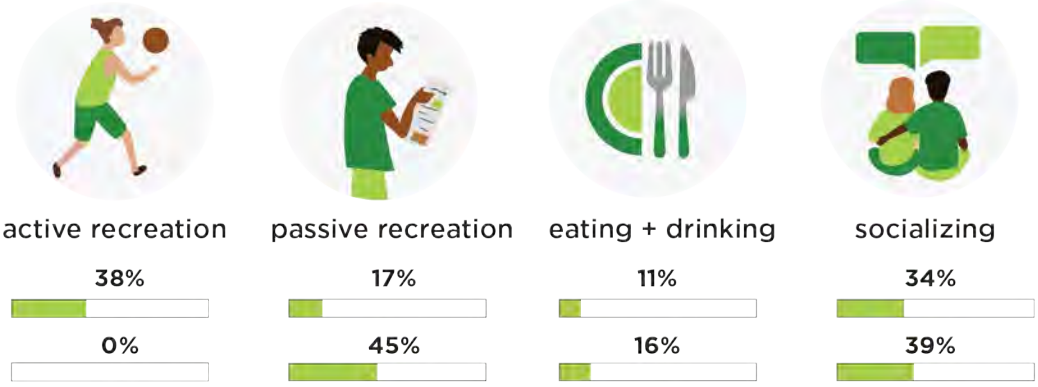
Zone A: Northwest entrance

Located at the corner of Shaw Street and Dundas Street West.

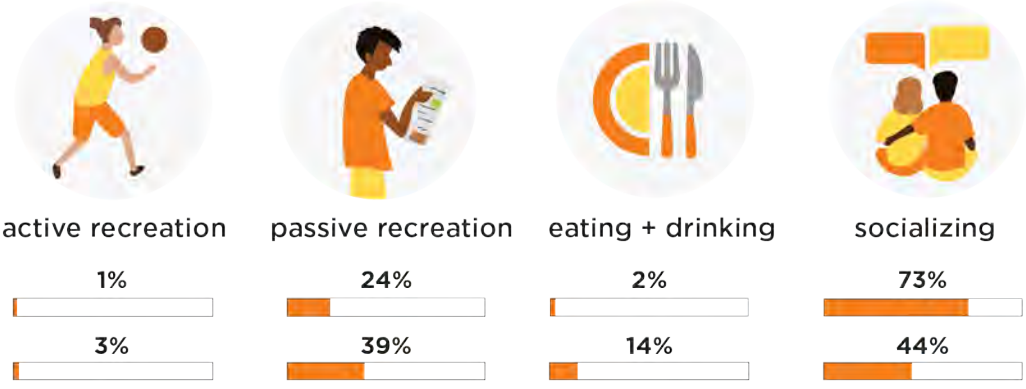
Highlights

- Zone A is primarily a movement corridor with moderate lingering.
- Adults aged 25–64 dominate; children and seniors are minimal.
- Socializing and passive recreation are the main stationary activities, with an uptick during Trinity Bellwoods Farmers' Market operating hours.

Top activities in spring

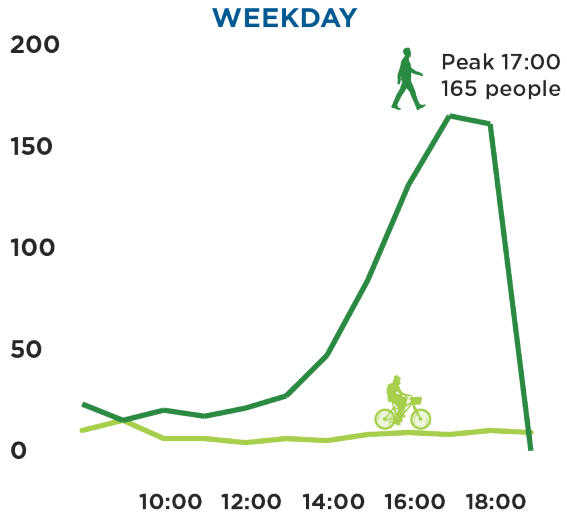


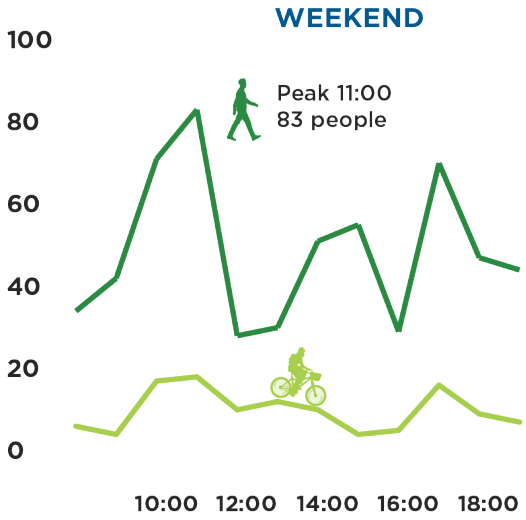
Top activities in summer



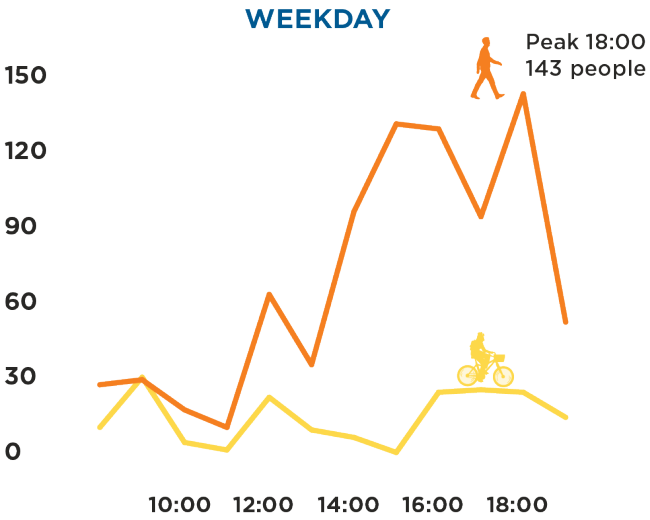
Zone A: Northwest entrance

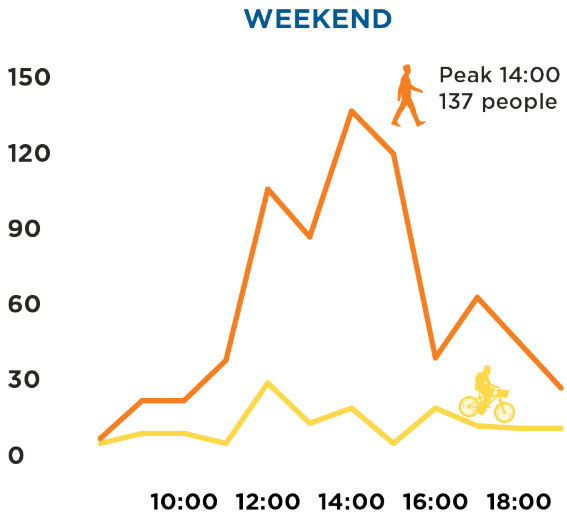
Moving in spring





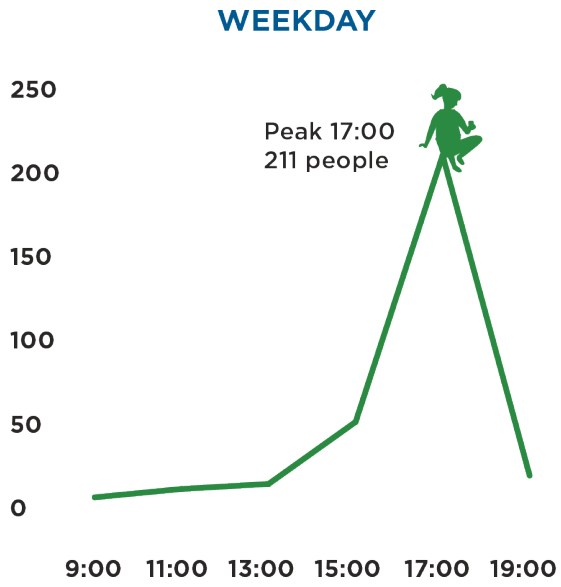
Moving in summer

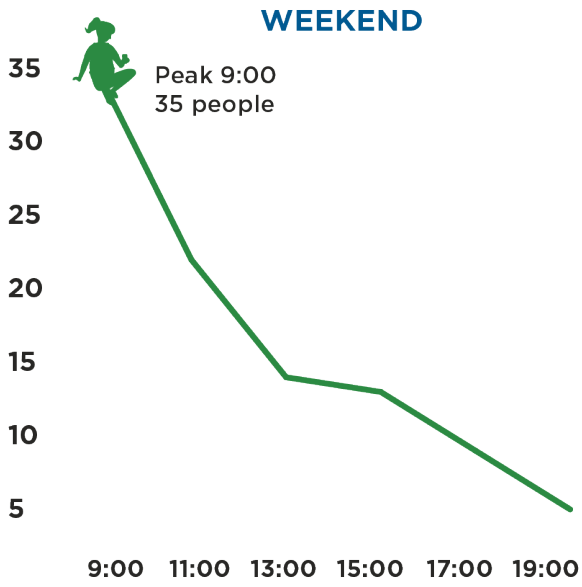




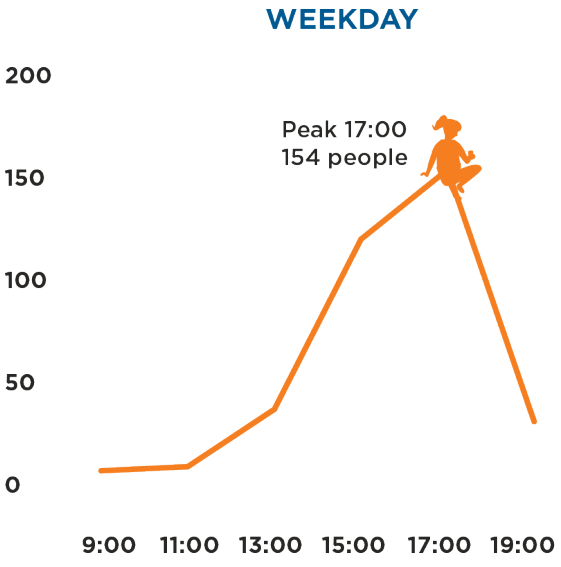
Zone A: Northwest entrance

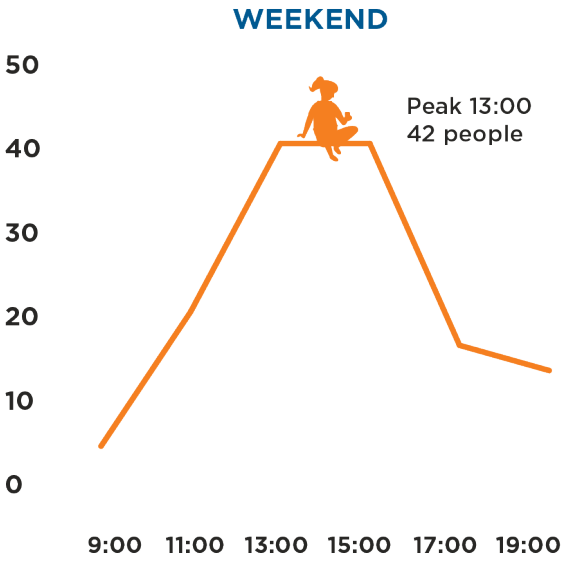
Staying in spring





Staying in summer





Zone A: Northwest entrance

Seating in spring

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

10

people sitting

WEEKEND

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

6

people sitting

Seating in summer

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

5

people sitting

WEEKEND

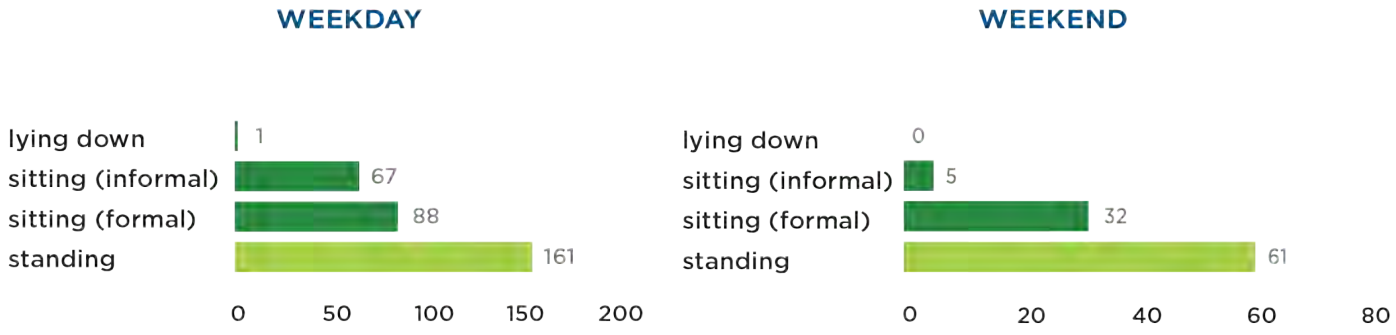
For every **10 people standing,** there were...

8

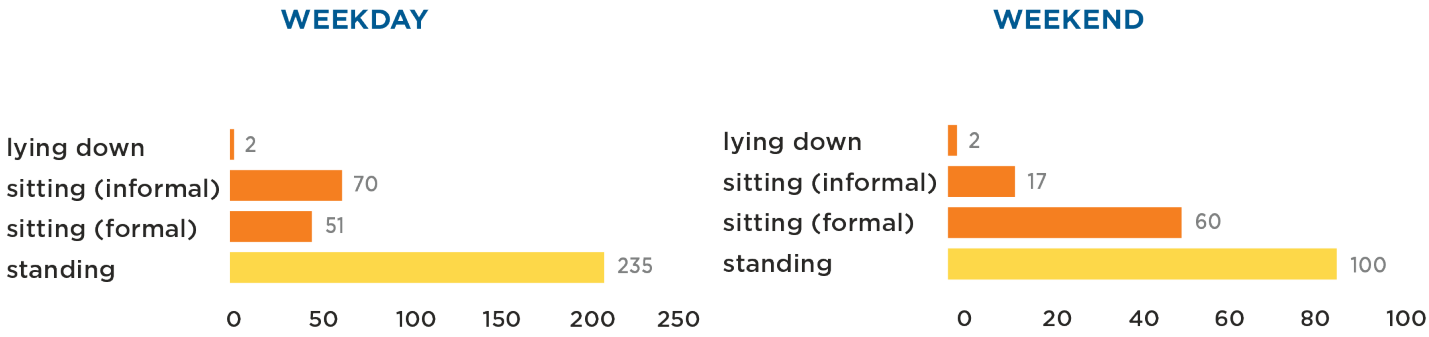
people sitting

Zone A: Northwest entrance

Positions in spring

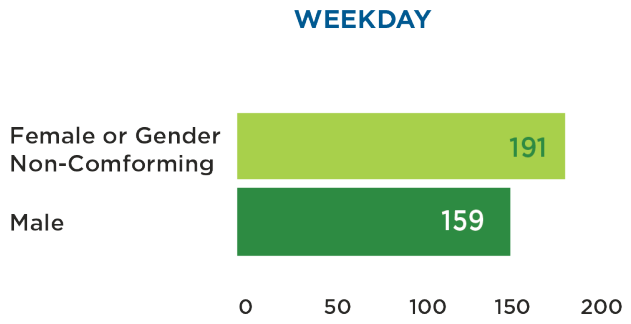


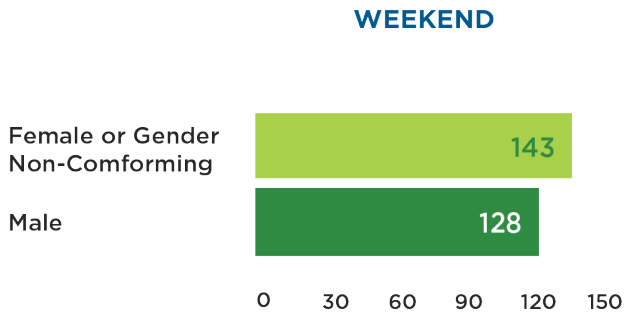
Positions in summer



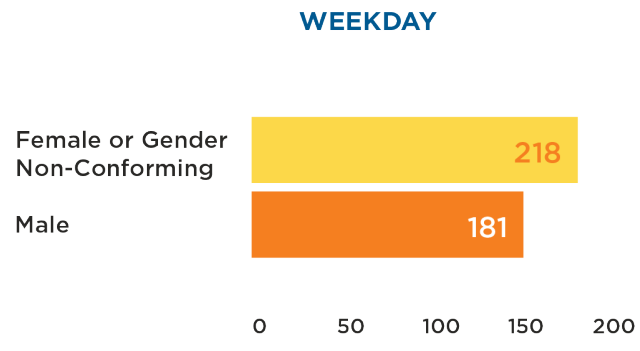
Zone A: Northwest entrance

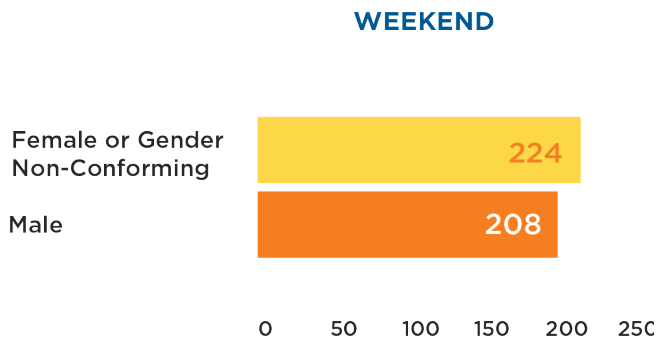
Observed gender presentation in spring





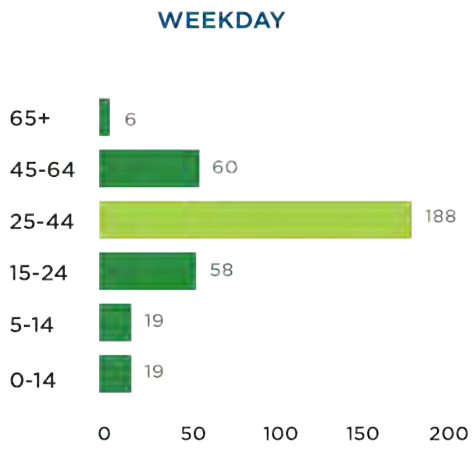
Observed gender presentation in summer

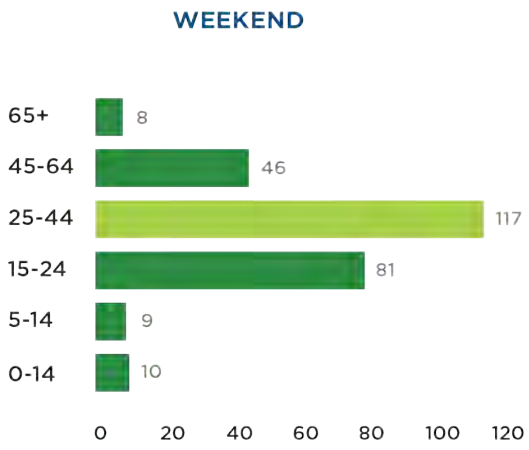




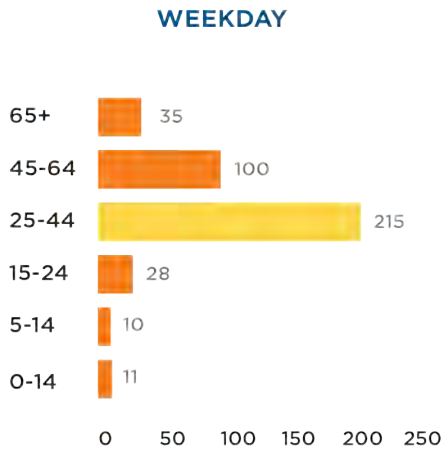
Zone A: Northwest entrance

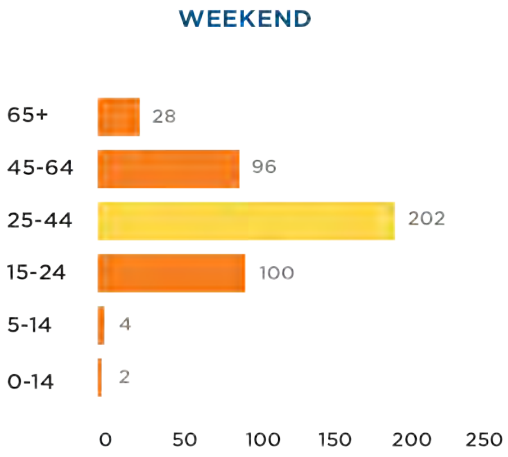
Observed age presentation in spring





Observed age presentation in summer





Zone B: North entrance

Located at Dundas Street West, across from Montrose Avenue

Highlights

- Zone B is the busiest hub in the park, combining high movement with substantial lingering.
- Adults aged 25–44 dominate, with strong summer engagement from younger adults aged 15–24.
- Socializing and passive recreation are dominantly observed, each holding clear space in the zone.
- The stickiness ratio and sitting patterns confirm Zone B's dual role as a gateway and a social node.

Top activities in spring

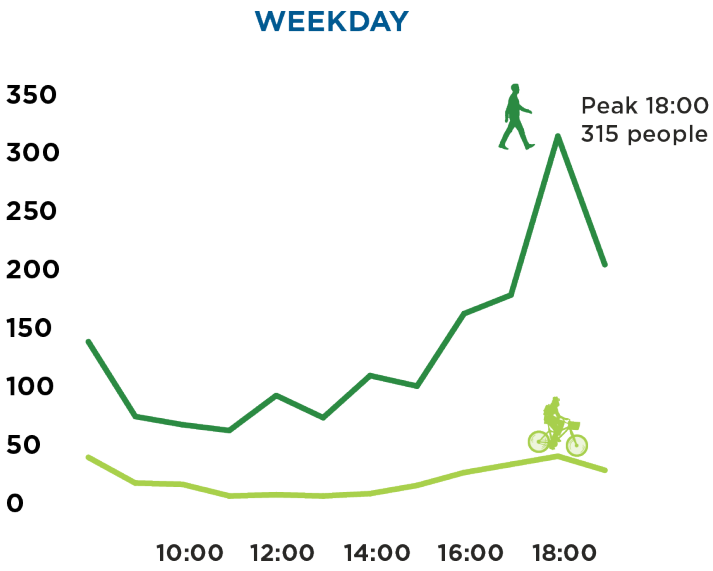
	active recreation	passive recreation	eating + drinking	socializing
WEEKDAY	37%	28%	6%	29%
WEEKEND	15%	14%	4%	68%

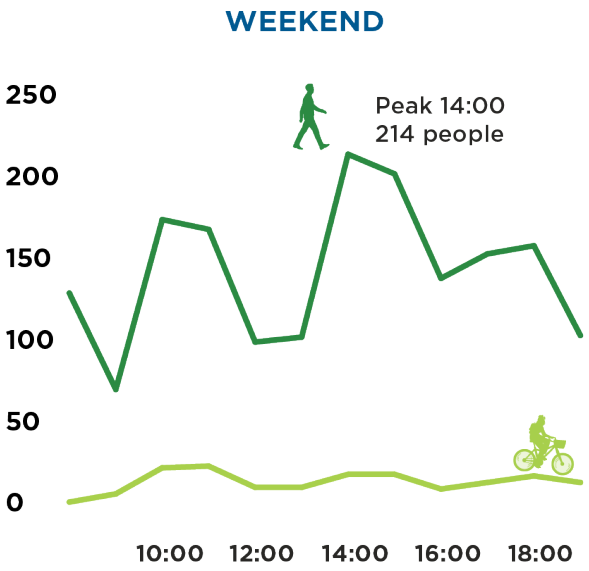
Top activities in summer

	active recreation	passive recreation	eating + drinking	socializing
WEEKDAY	8%	34%	14%	44%
WEEKEND	9%	16%	13%	62%

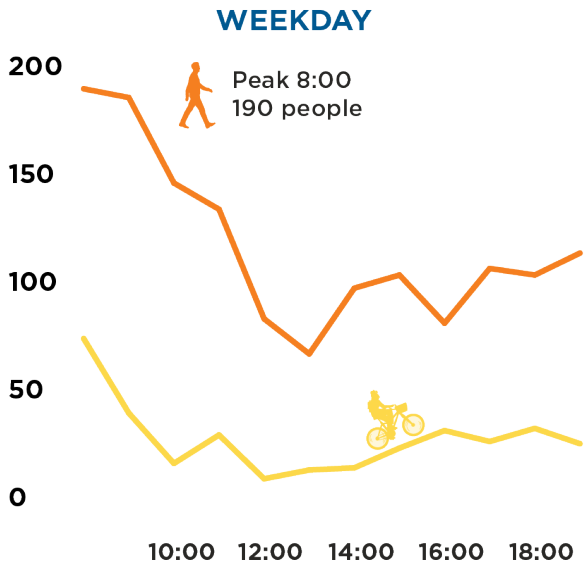
Zone B: North entrance

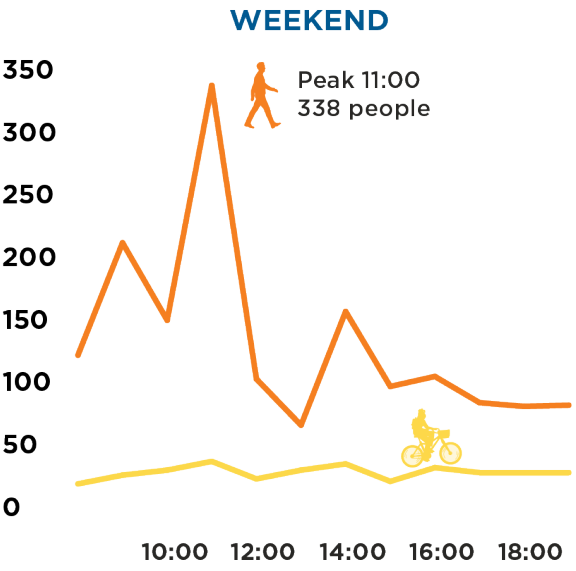
Moving in spring





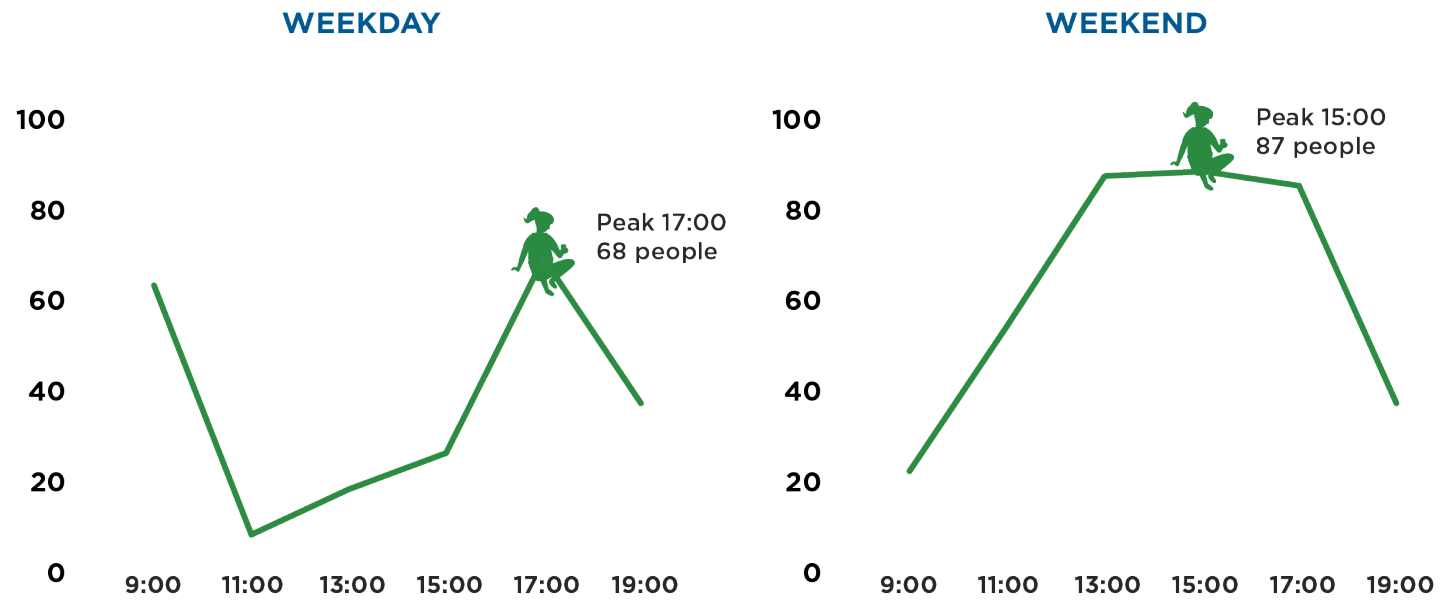
Moving in summer



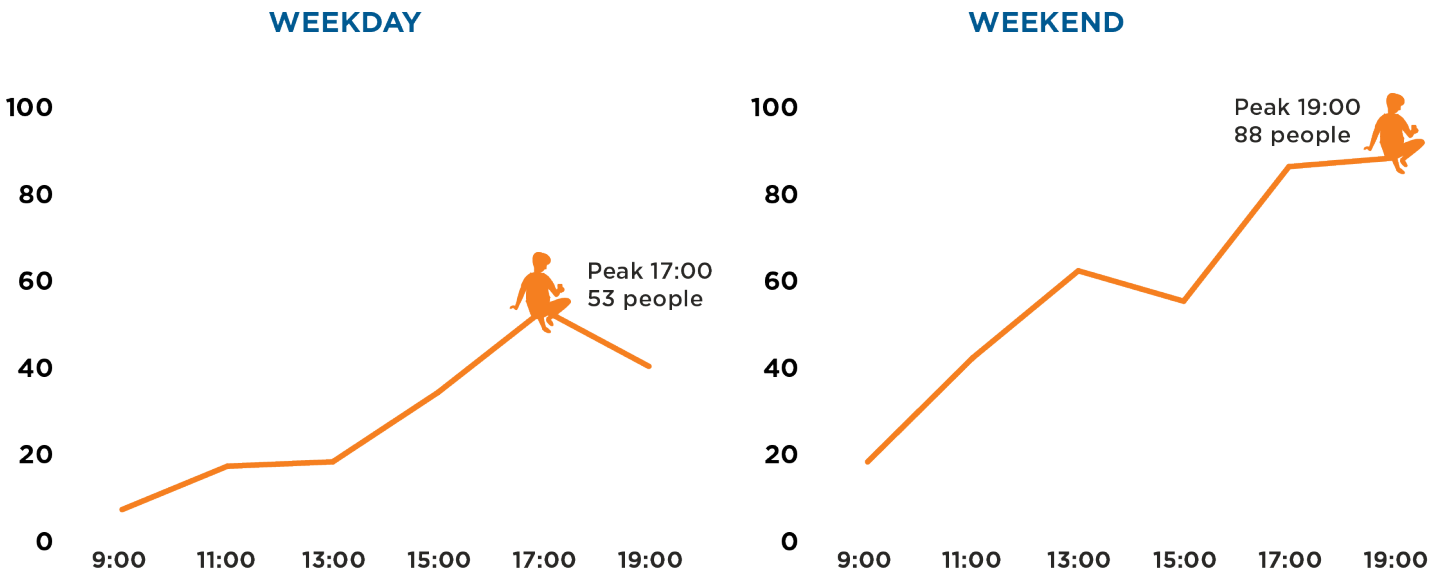


Zone B: North entrance

Staying in spring



Staying in summer



Zone B: North entrance

Seating in spring

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

34

people sitting

WEEKEND

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

3

people sitting

Seating in summer

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

48

people sitting

WEEKEND

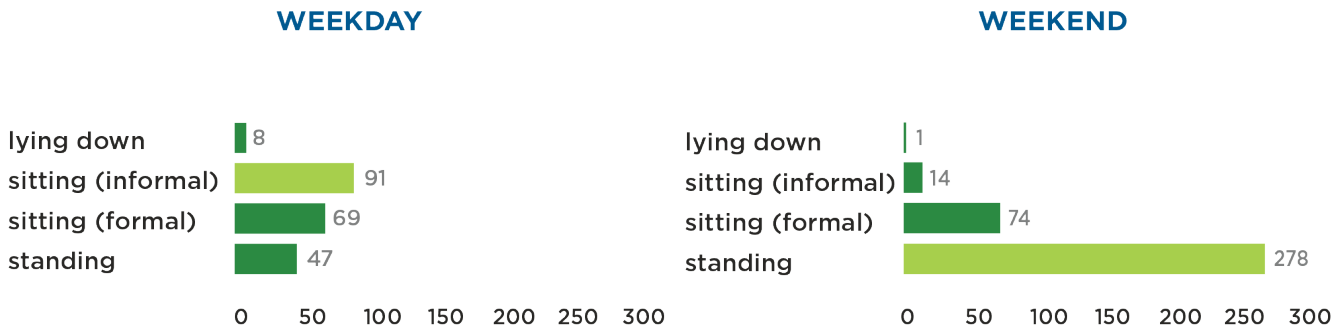
For every **10 people standing,** there were...

13

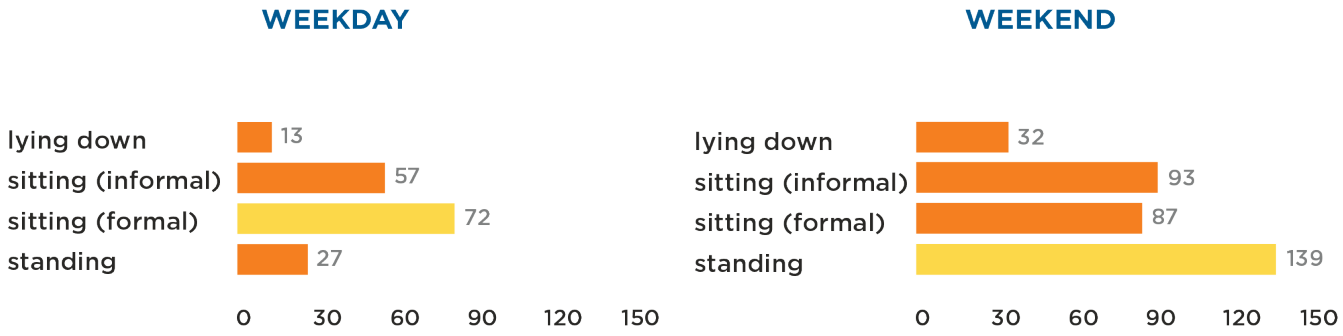
people sitting

Zone B: North entrance

Positions in spring

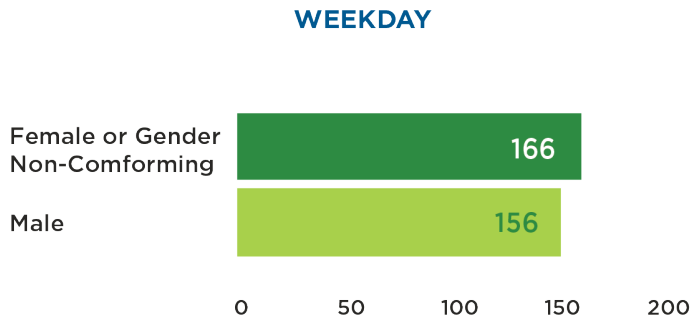


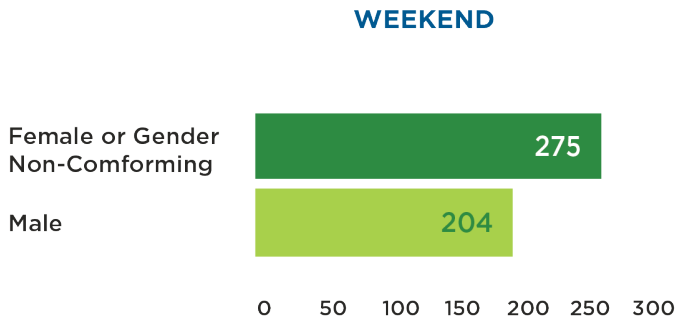
Positions in summer



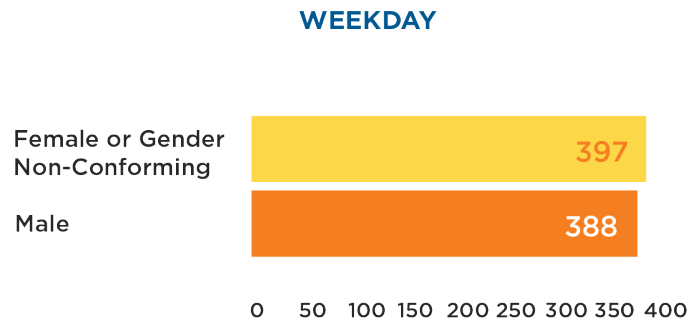
Zone B: North entrance

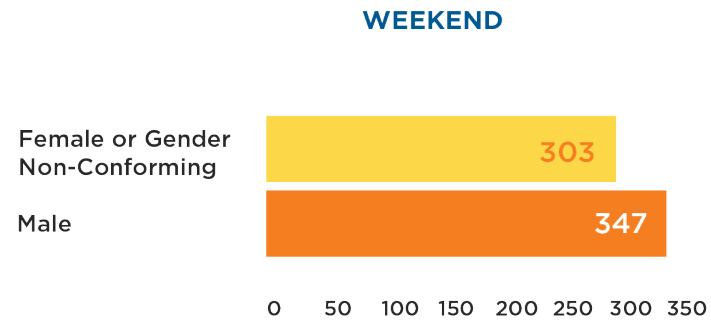
Observed gender presentation in spring





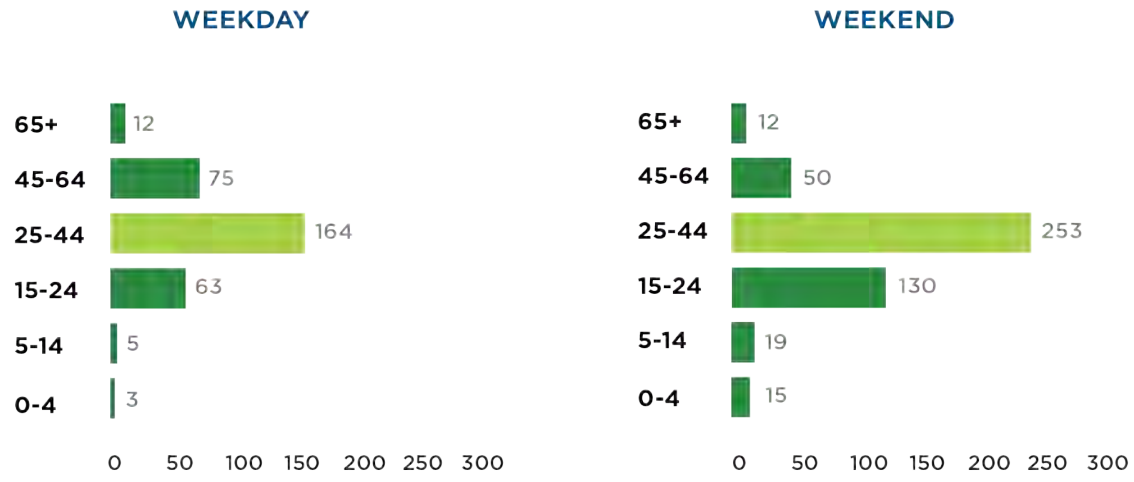
Observed gender presentation in summer



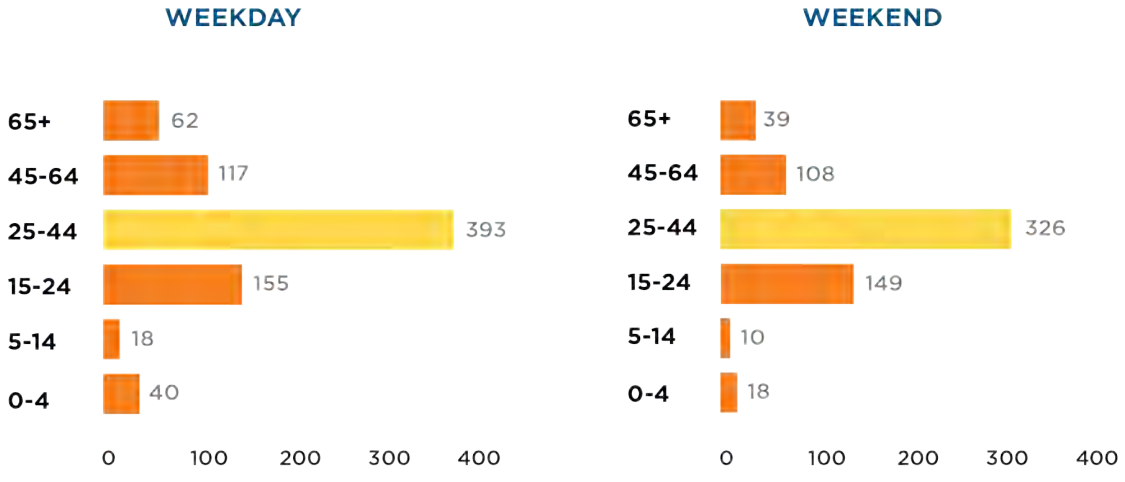


Zone B: North entrance

Observed age presentation in spring



Observed age presentation in summer



Zone C: Off-leash area

Located near the centre of the park, north of the Trinity Circle

Highlights

- Zone C is a destination zone anchored by the off-leash dog area, designed for lingering rather than pass-through use.
- Lingering and varied sitting, both formal and informal, signal strong, sustained engagement.
- Adults 25–44 are most present, with young adults and families adding moderate age diversity.
- Stickiness and sitting patterns confirm Zone C as a loyalty-driven hub, distinct from circulation-focused zones.

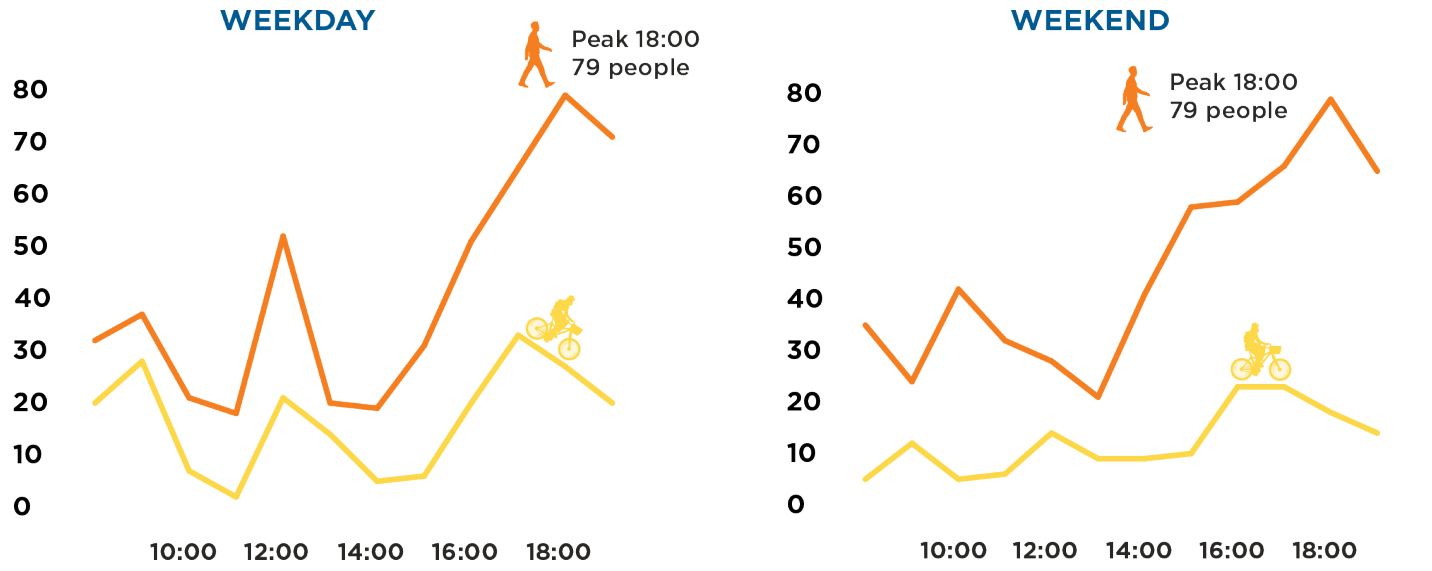
Top activities in spring

Top activities in summer

Zone C: Off-leash area

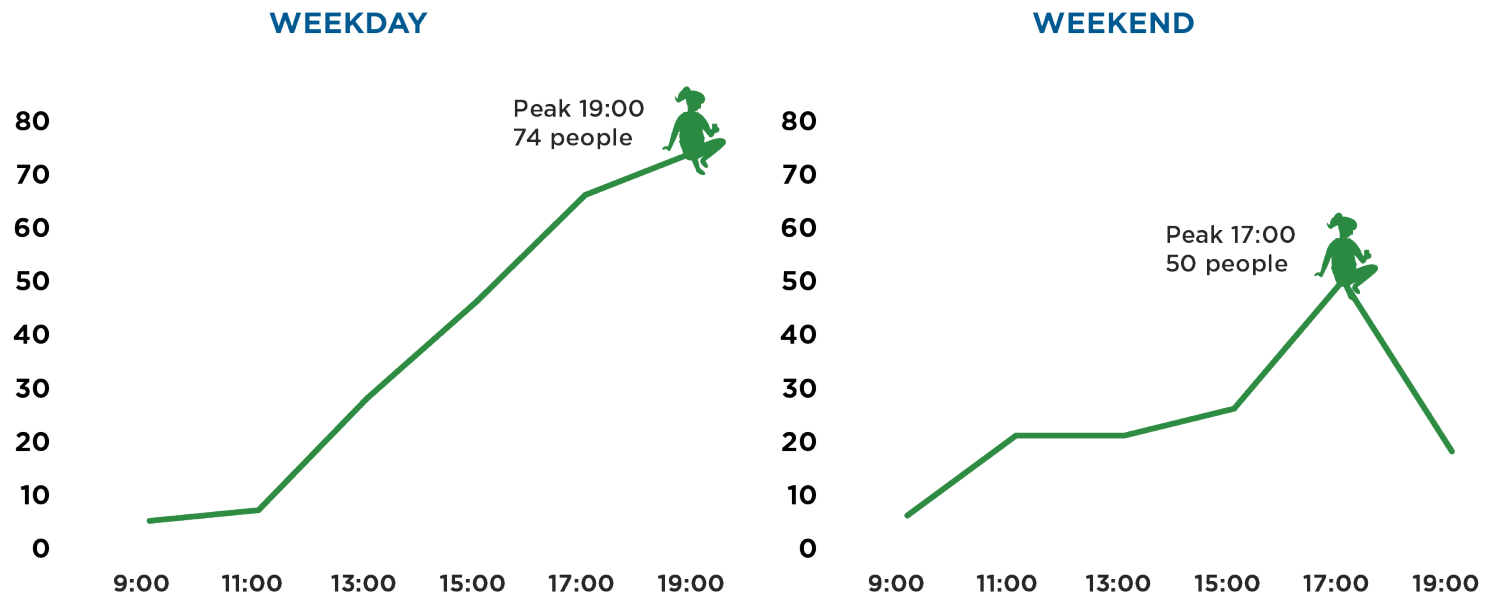
Moving in spring

Moving in summer

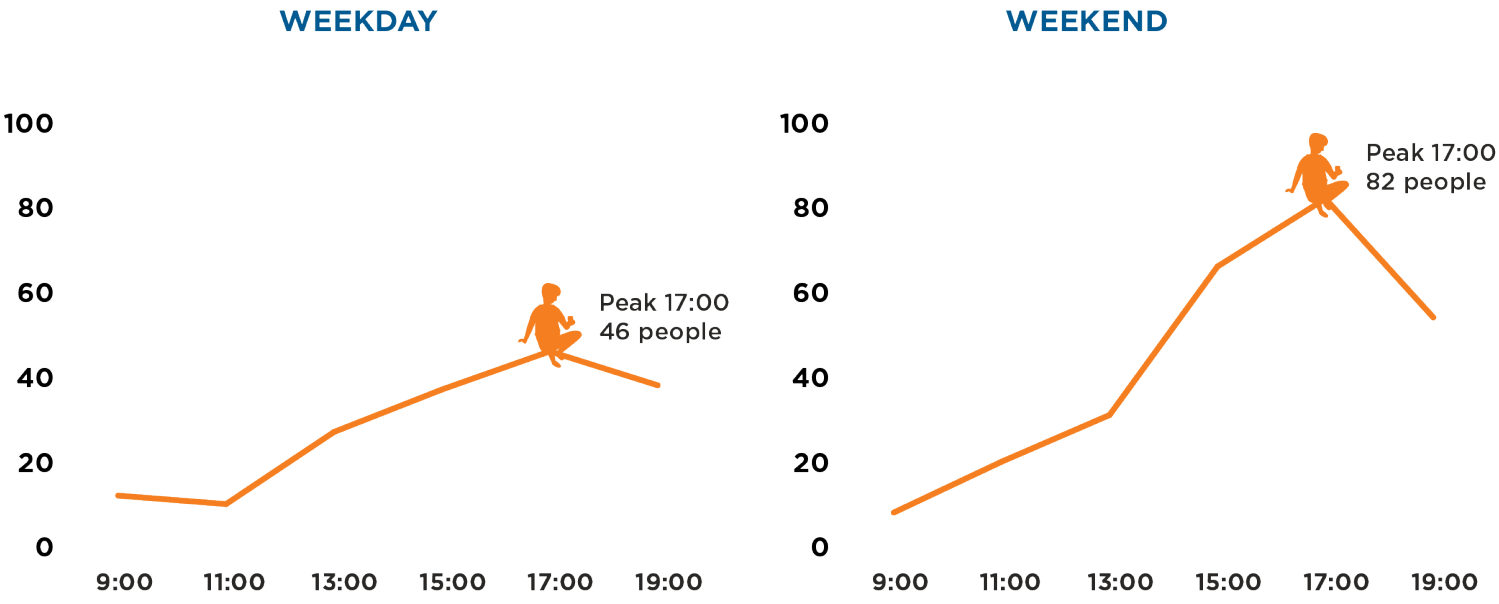


Zone C: Off-leash area

Staying in spring



Staying in summer



Zone C: Off-leash area

Seating in spring

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

15

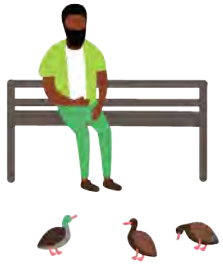
people sitting

WEEKEND

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

25

people sitting



Seating in summer

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

18

people sitting

WEEKEND

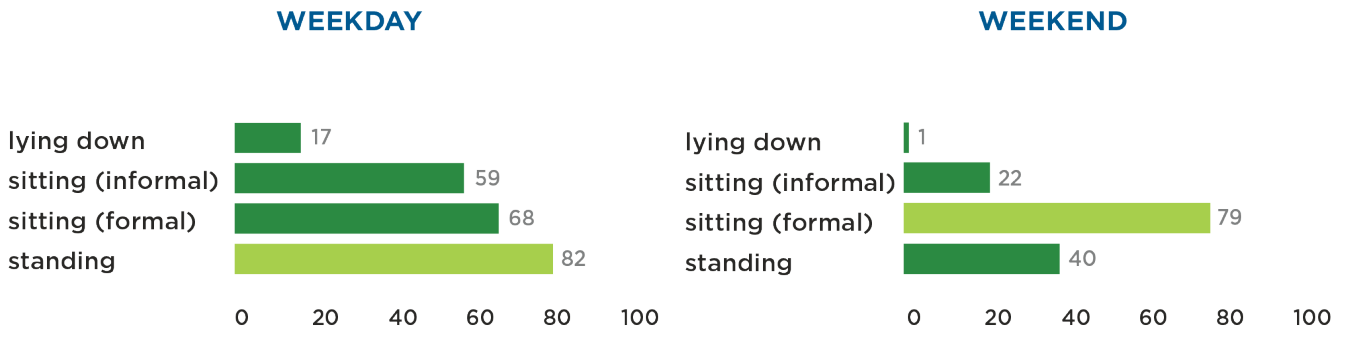
For every **10 people standing,** there were...

39

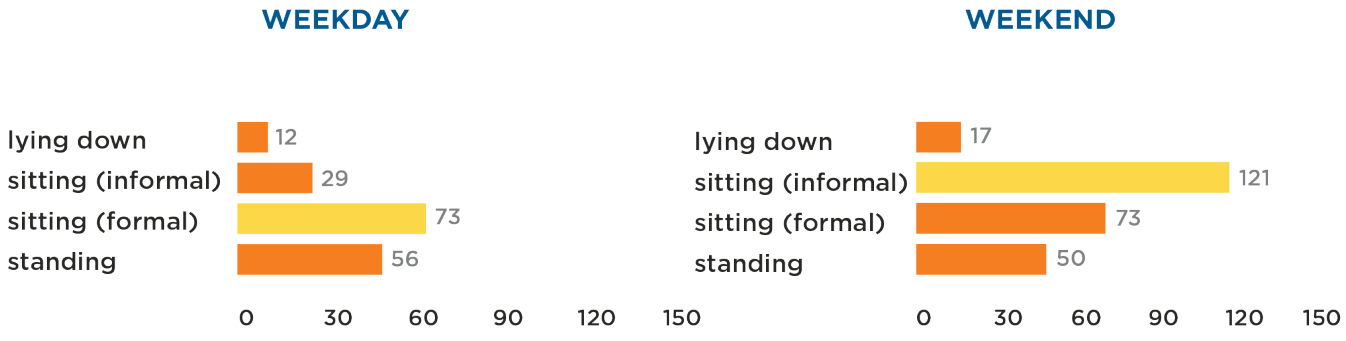
people sitting

Zone C: Off-leash area

Positions in spring

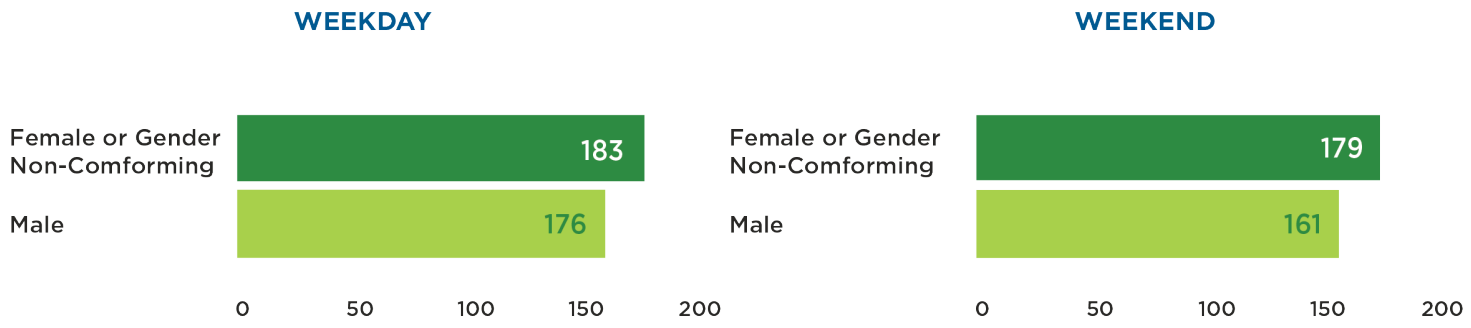


Positions in summer

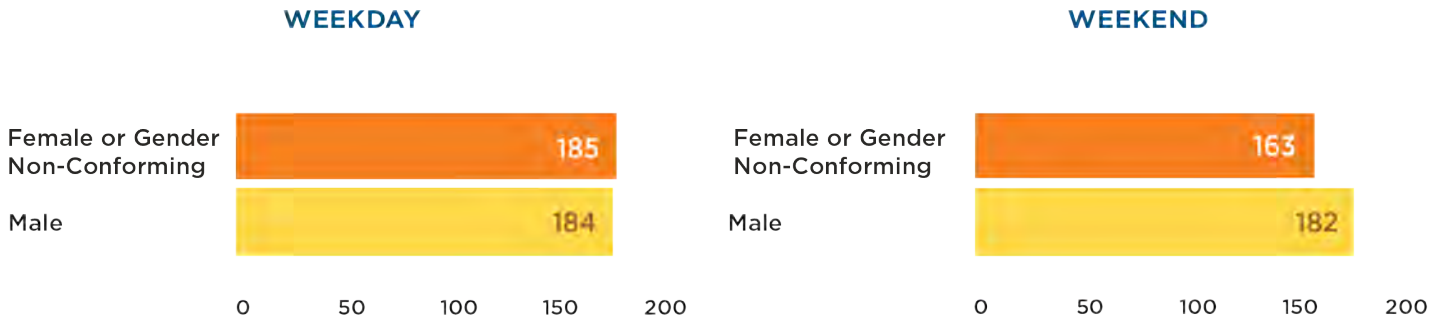


Zone C: Off-leash area

Observed gender presentation in spring

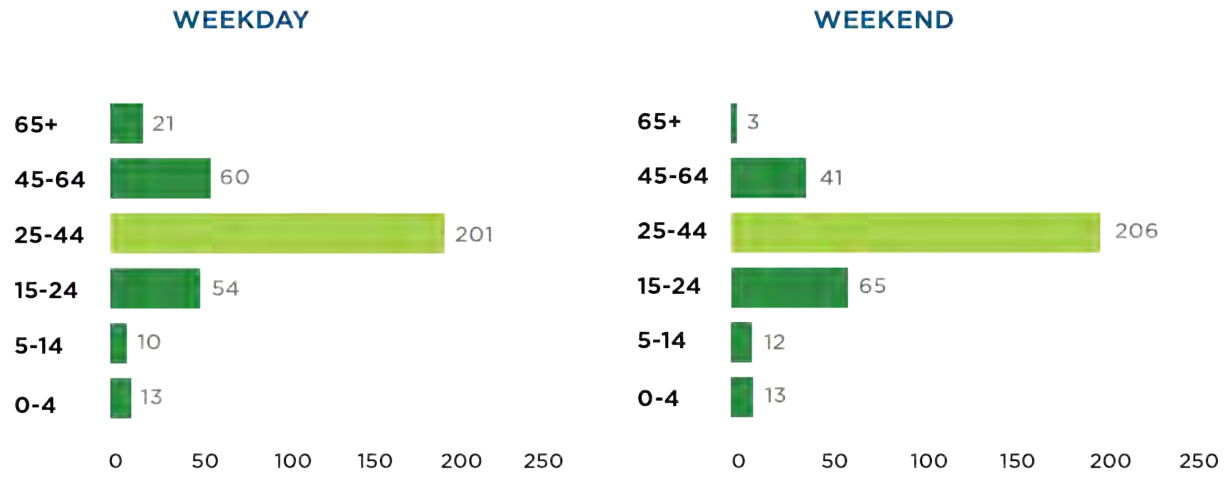


Observed gender presentation in summer

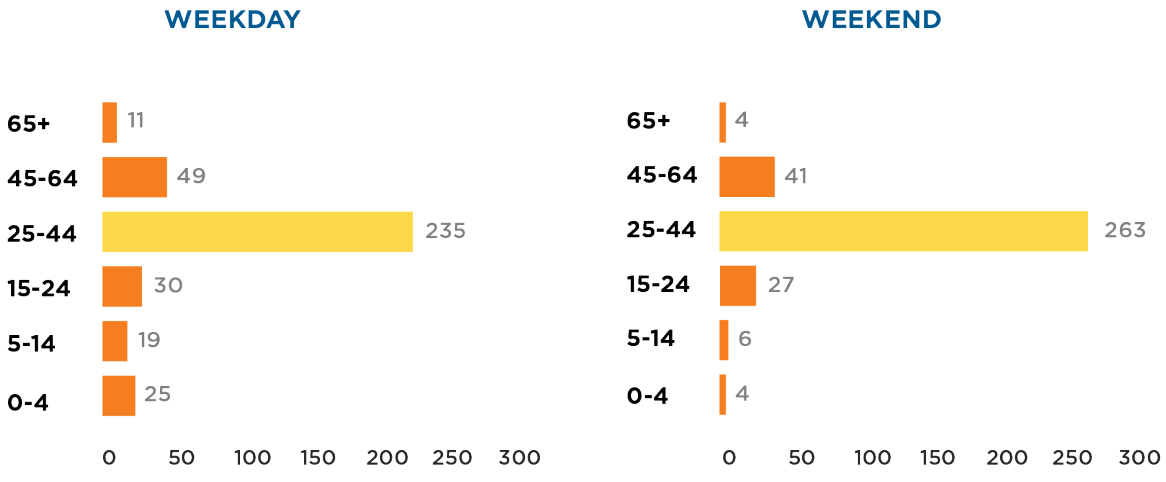


Zone C: Off-leash area

Observed age presentation in spring



Observed age presentation in summer



Zone D: West play spaces

Located near the intersection of Crawford Street and Lobb Avenue

Highlights

- Balances movement and lingering, functioning as a transitional area with casual stopping points.
- Despite active play features, children are notably underrepresented. Adults 25–64 dominate, with only modest presence from families and younger age groups.
- Socializing and active play at the playground, wading pool, and sports pad are the primary draws, with little eating or passive use.
- Modest rises in informal lingering, especially on the summer weekend, point to adaptive use: people are making do with limited seating, signaling demand for more comfortable ways to stay.

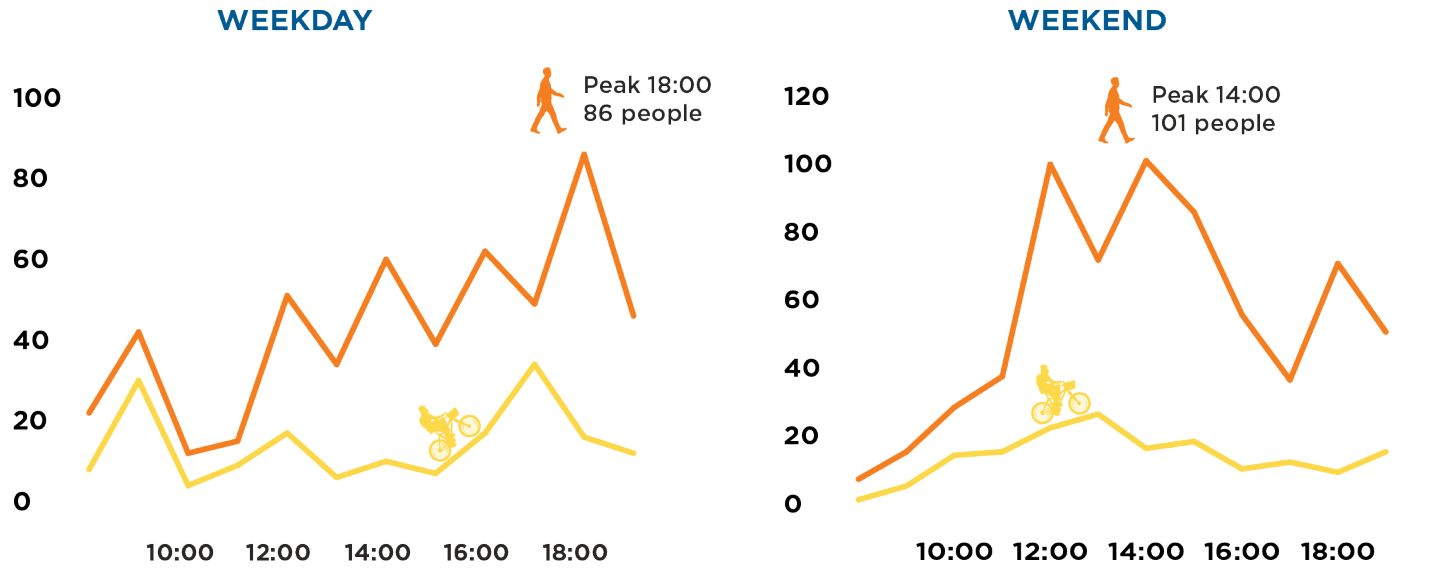
Top activities in spring

Top activities in summer

Zone D: West play spaces

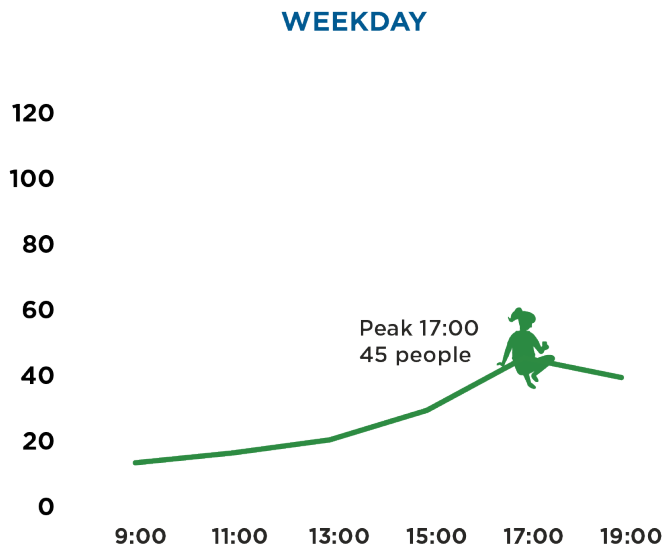
Moving in spring

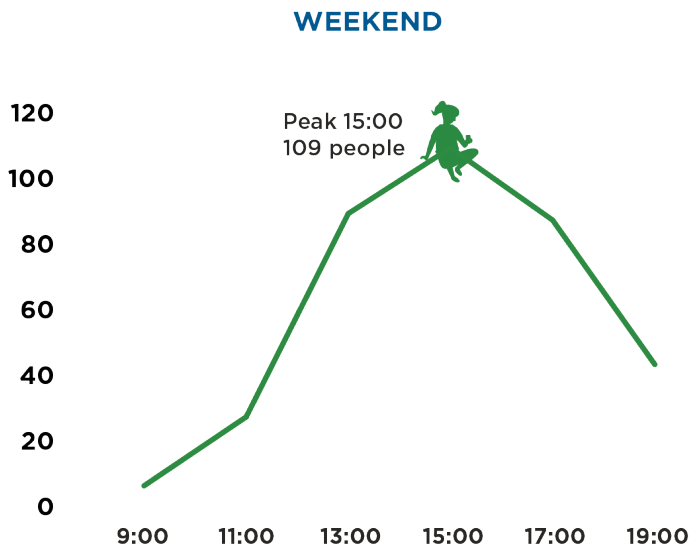
Moving in summer



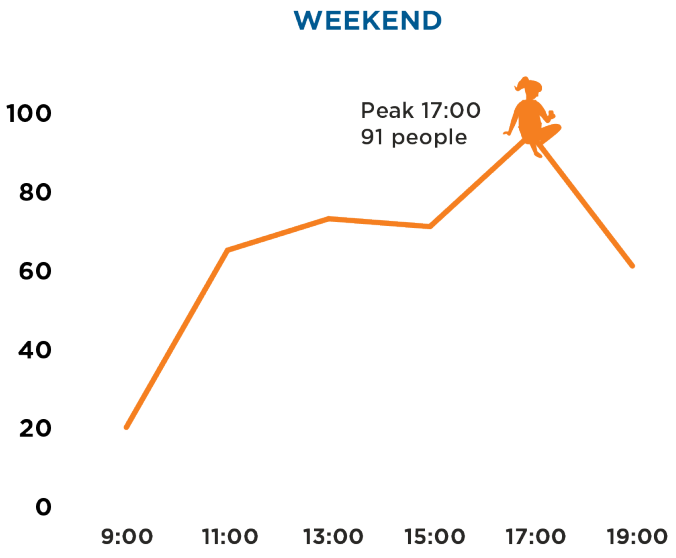
Zone D: West play spaces

Staying in spring





Staying in summer



Zone D: West play spaces

Seating in spring

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

13

people sitting

WEEKEND

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

10

people sitting

Seating in summer

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

8

people sitting

WEEKEND

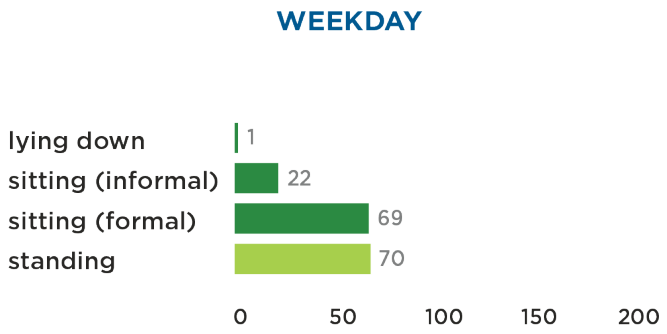
For every **10 people standing,** there were...

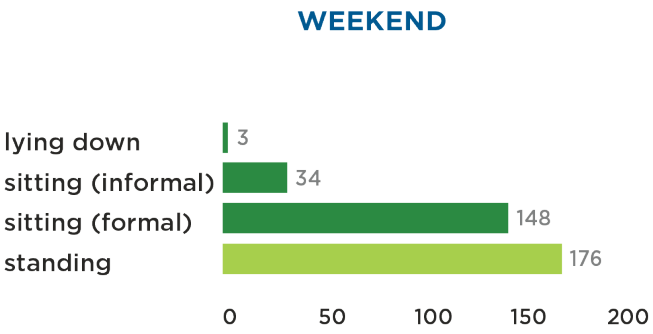
11

people sitting

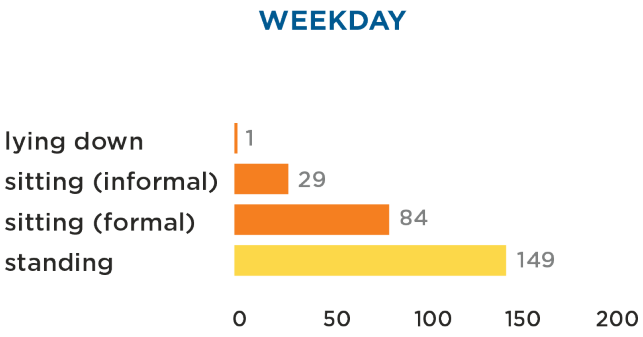
Zone D: West play spaces

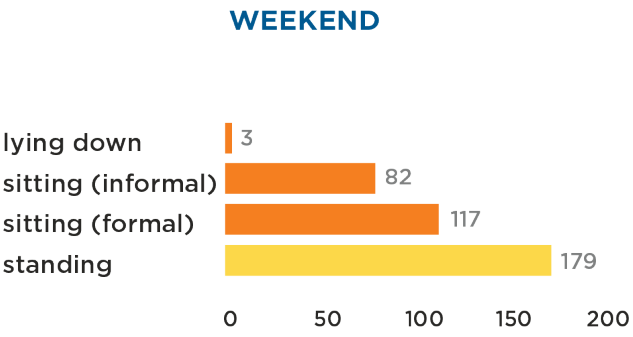
Positions in spring





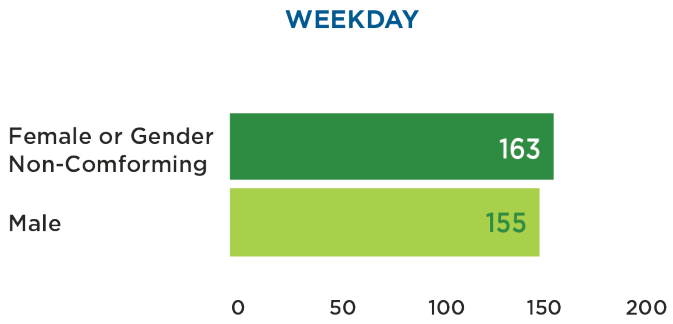
Positions in summer

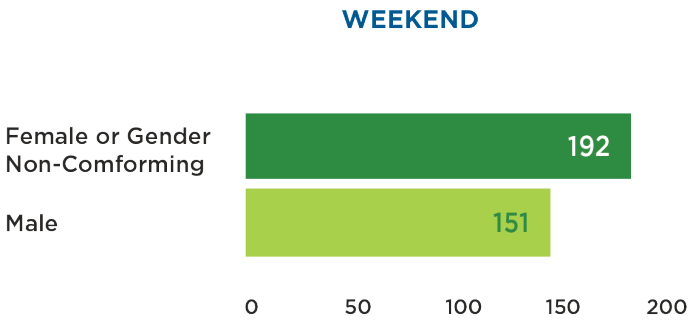




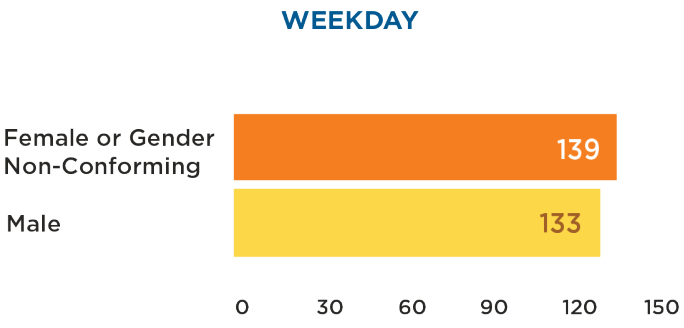
Zone D: West play spaces

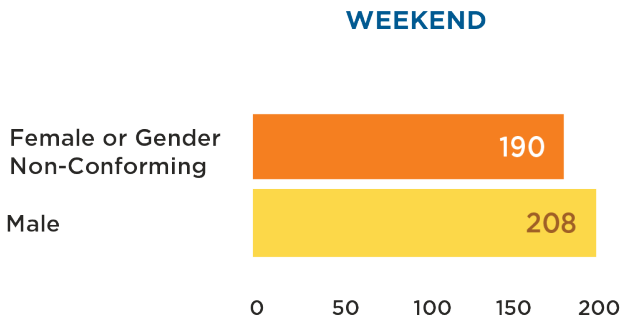
Observed gender presentation in spring





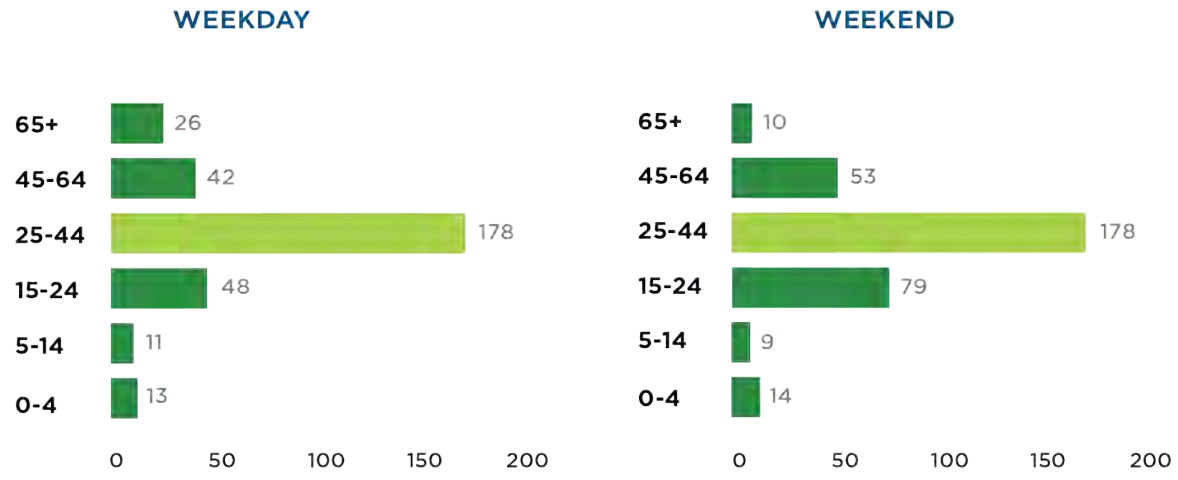
Observed gender presentation in summer



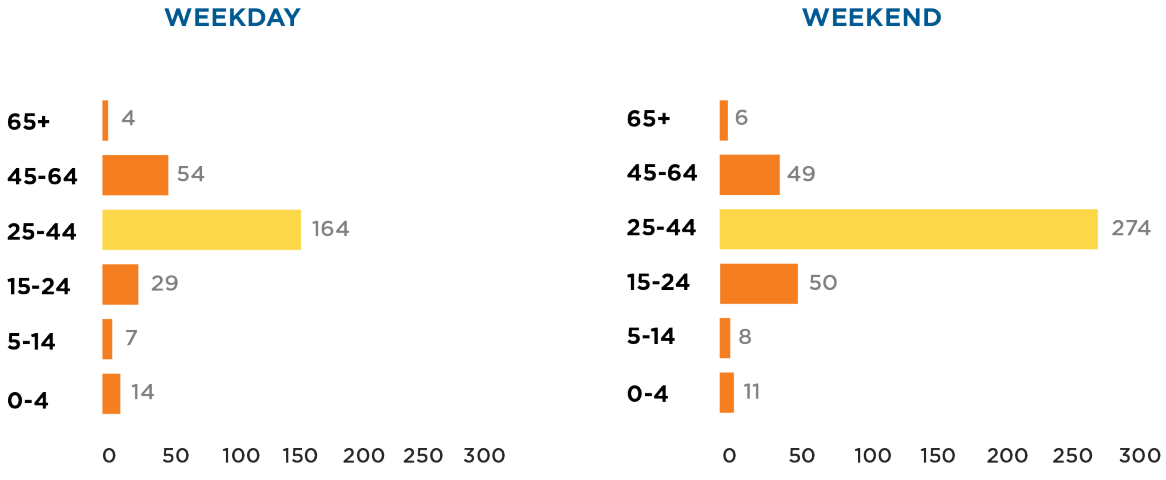


Zone D: West play spaces

Observed age presentation in spring



Observed age presentation in summer



Zone E: Southeast entrances

Located along Queen Street West and Gore Vale Avenue

Highlights

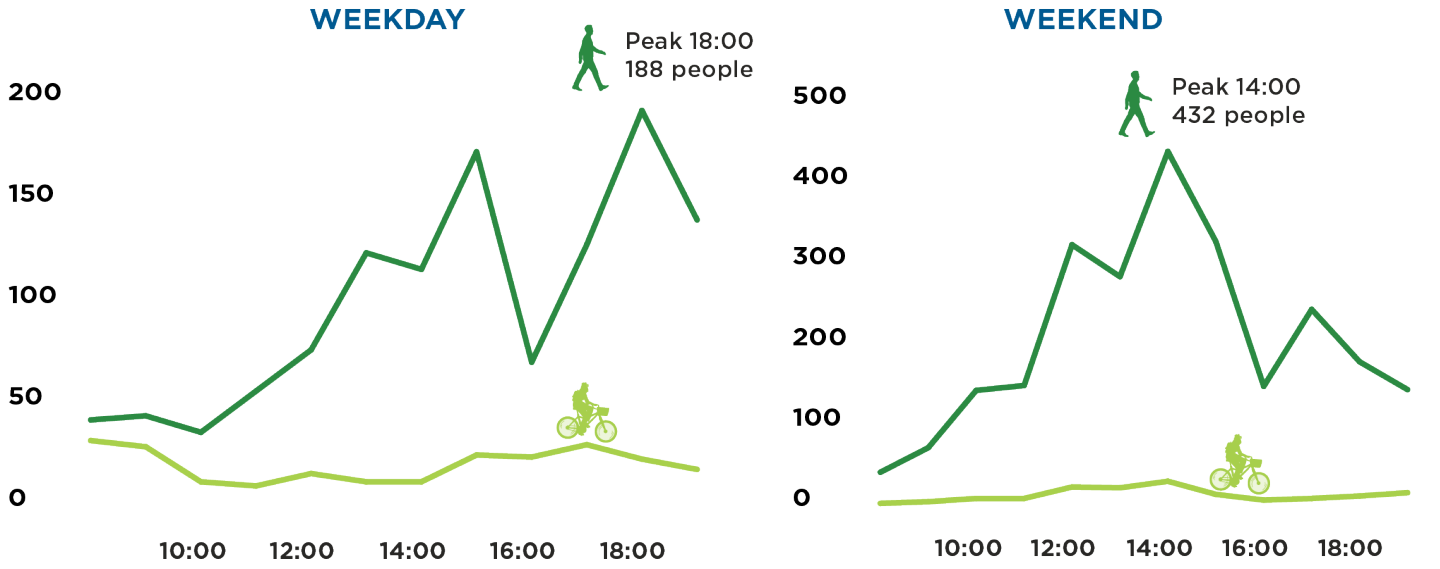
- The primary park hub combines circulation, socializing, and lingering, making it the central gathering space.
- Adults aged 25–44 are the most observed, though the zone attracts a wide range of ages overall.
- Sitting patterns indicate that this area is especially conducive to extended stays, underscoring its importance for public life and comfort.
- Engagement rises in summer, particularly on weekends, highlighting the zone's role as a social anchor within the park.

Top activities in spring

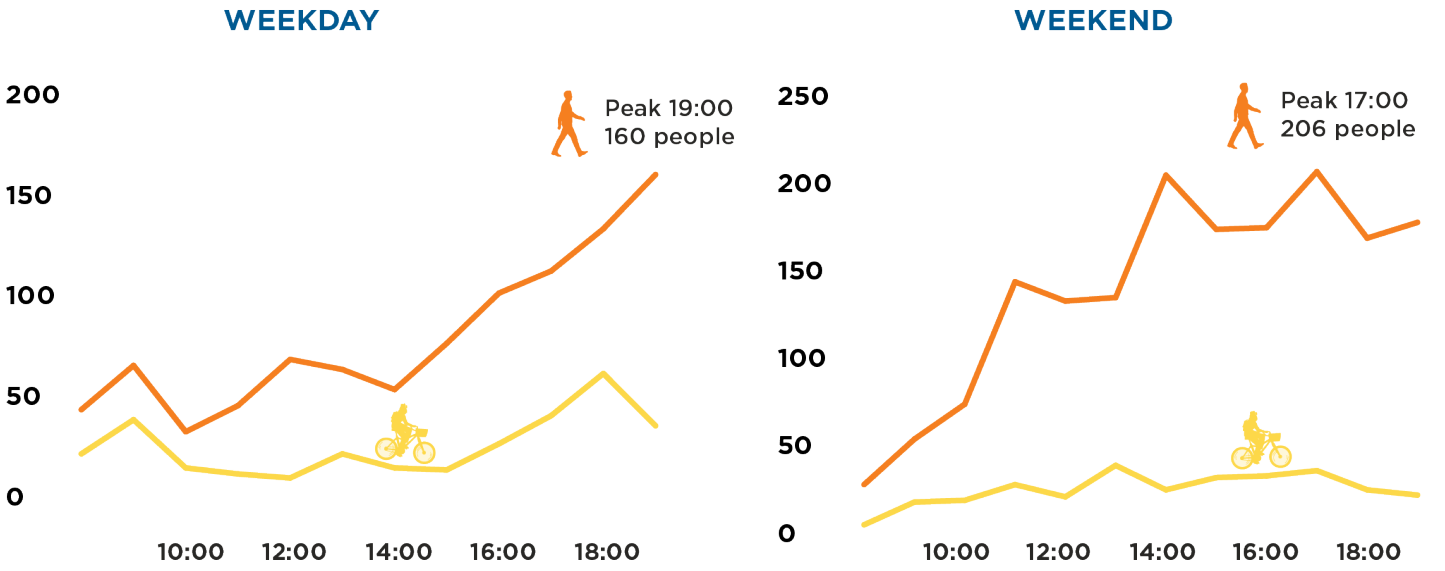
Top activities in summer

Zone E: Southeast entrances

Moving in spring

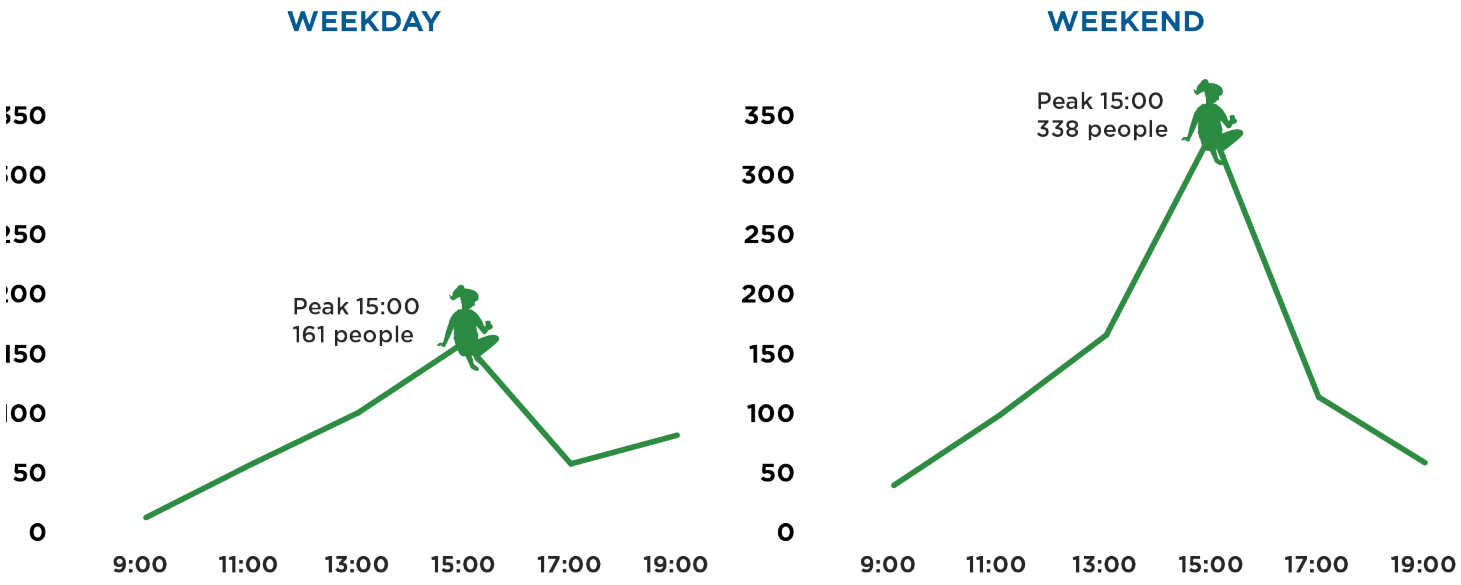


Moving in summer

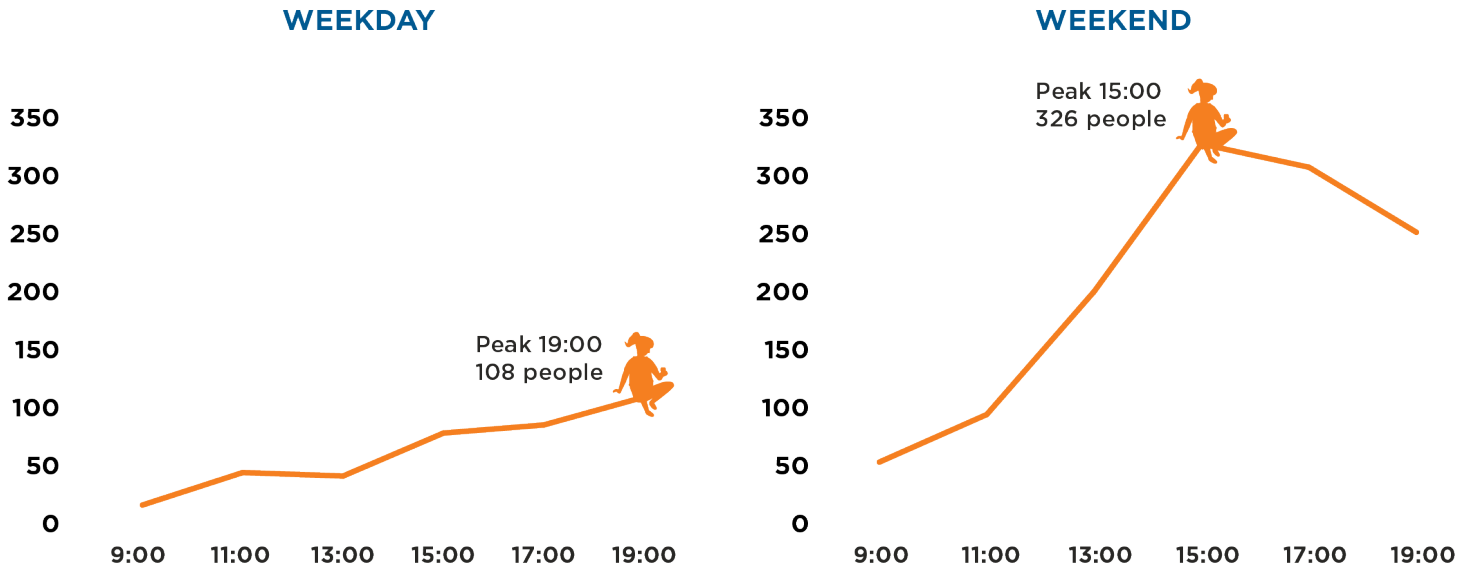


Zone E: Southeast entrances

Staying in spring



Staying in summer



Zone E: Southeast entrances

Seating in spring

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

13

people sitting

WEEKEND

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

4

people sitting

Seating in summer

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing,** there were...

26

people sitting

WEEKEND

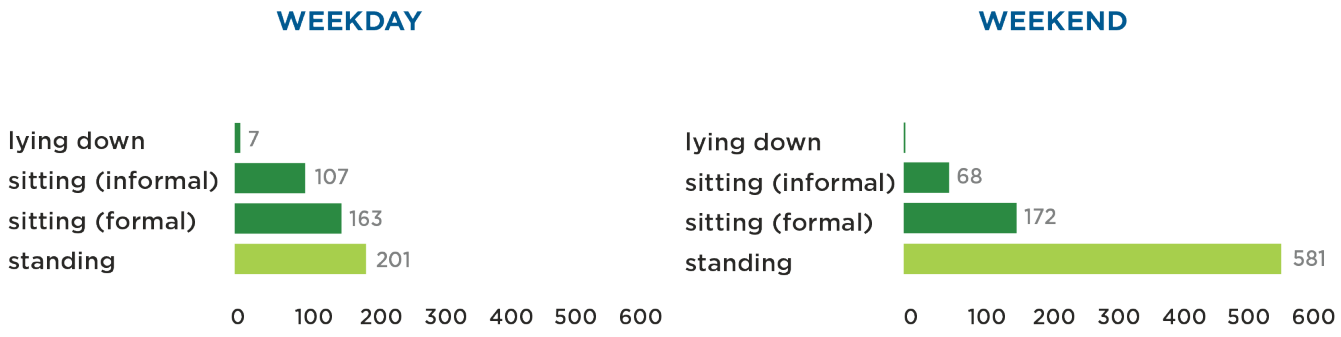
For every **10 people standing,** there were...

29

people sitting

Zone E: Southeast entrances

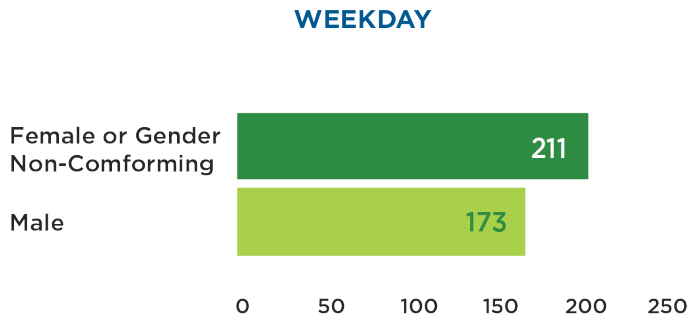
Positions in spring

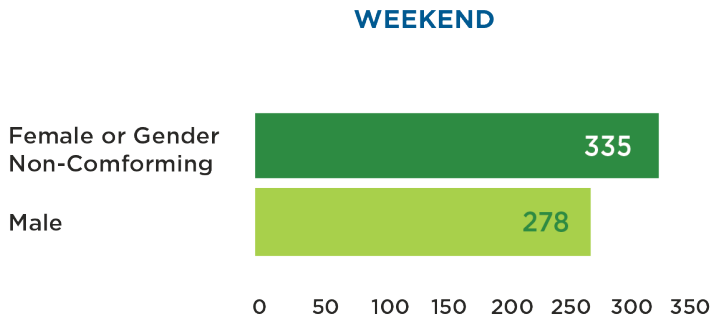


Positions in summer

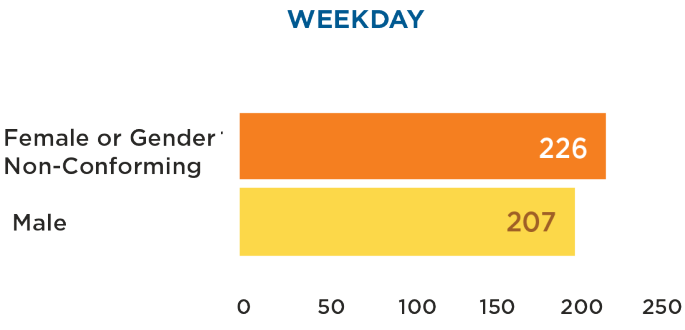
Zone E: Southeast entrances

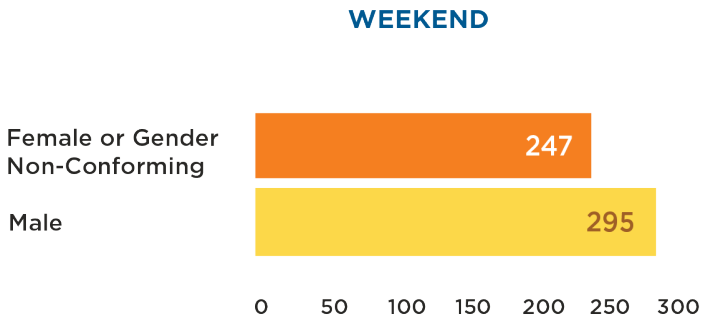
Observed gender presentation in spring





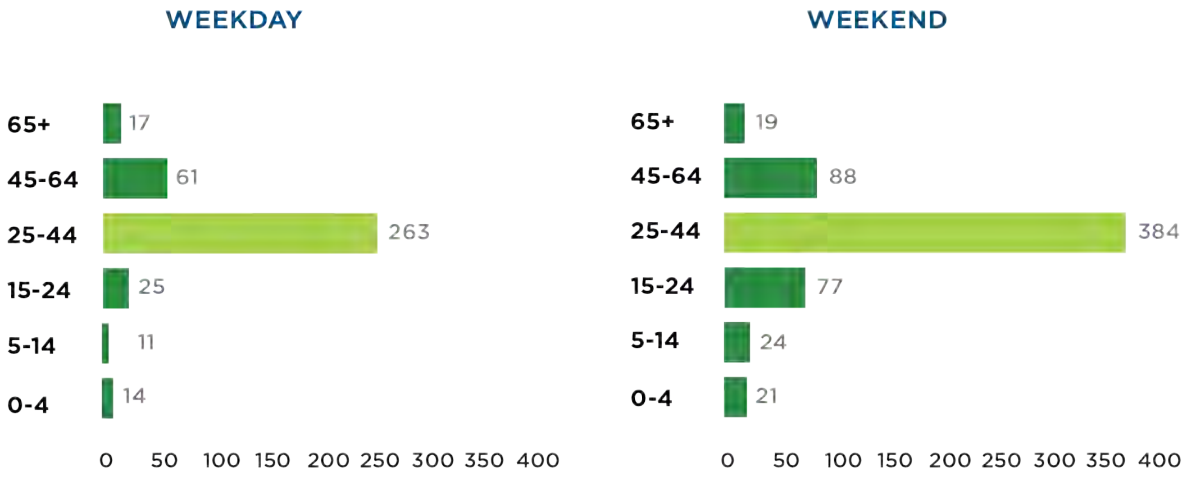
Observed gender presentation in summer



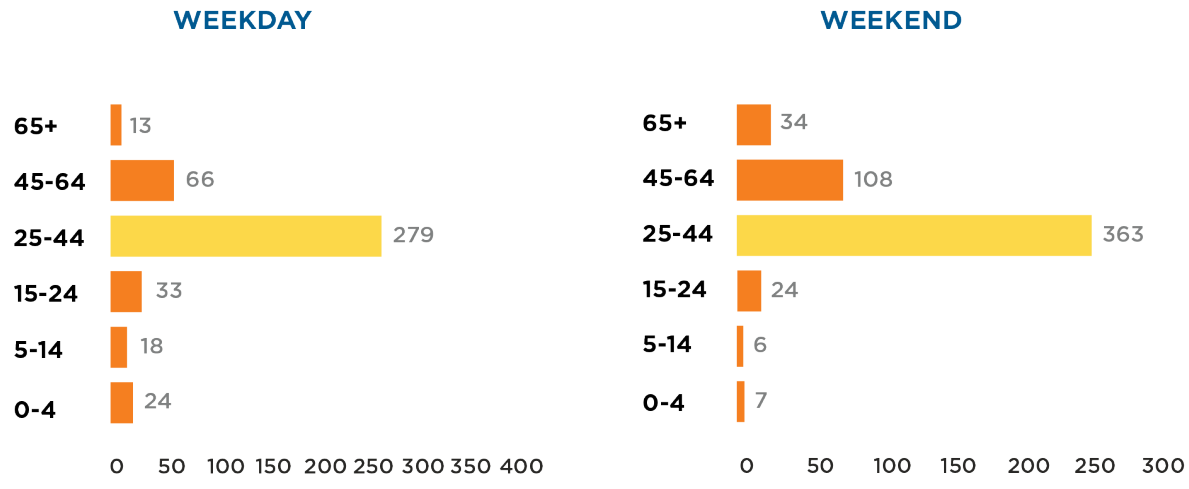


Zone E: Southeast entrances

Observed age presentation in spring



Observed age presentation in summer



Zone F: Northeast entrance

Located at the corner of Dundas Street West and Gore Vale Avenue

Highlights

- Seasonal differences are evident in how the area is used: visits are shorter and transitional in spring, while summer brings longer stays and more socializing and active recreation.
- Desire lines reveal that people want to reach this peripheral section, but the formal paths don't allow comfortable access.
- With limited seating, visitors adapt by taking up informal postures and improvising places to sit, either spreading out on the grass or arriving with portable chairs.
- Children and seniors were least observed, underscoring gaps in use that may stem from programming choices as well as barriers of comfort and accessibility.

Top activities in spring

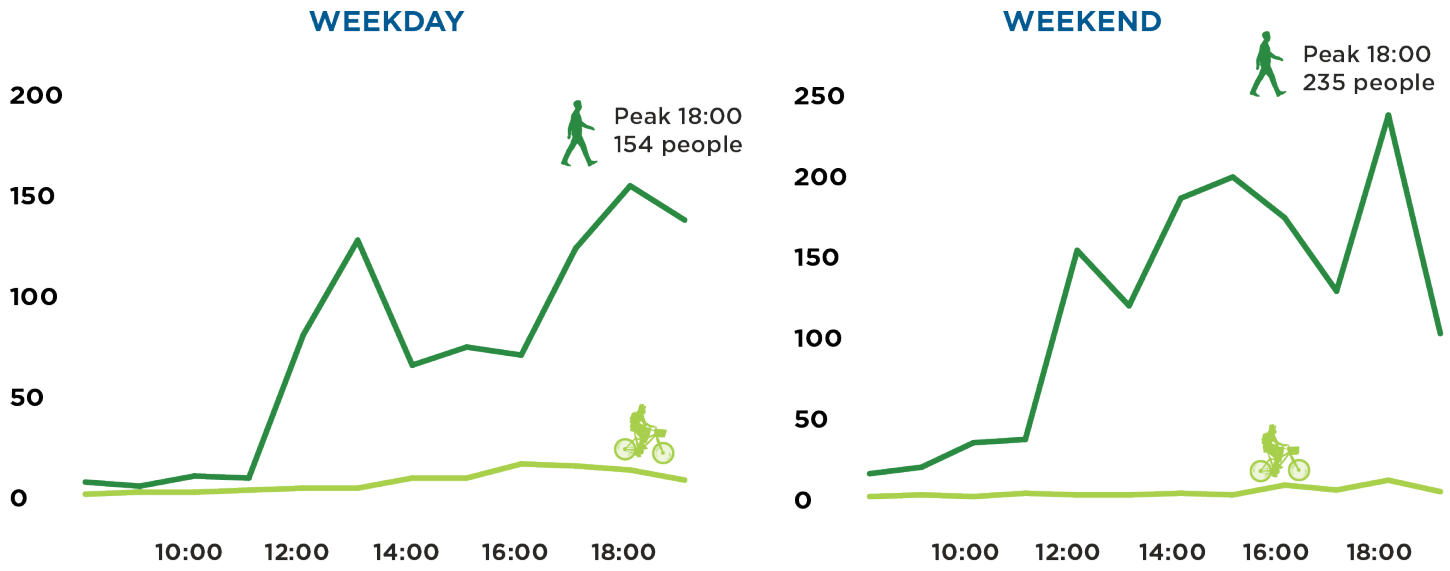
	active recreation	passive recreation	eating + drinking	socializing
WEEKDAY	14%	24%	14%	49%
WEEKEND	17%	53%	0%	30%

Top activities in summer

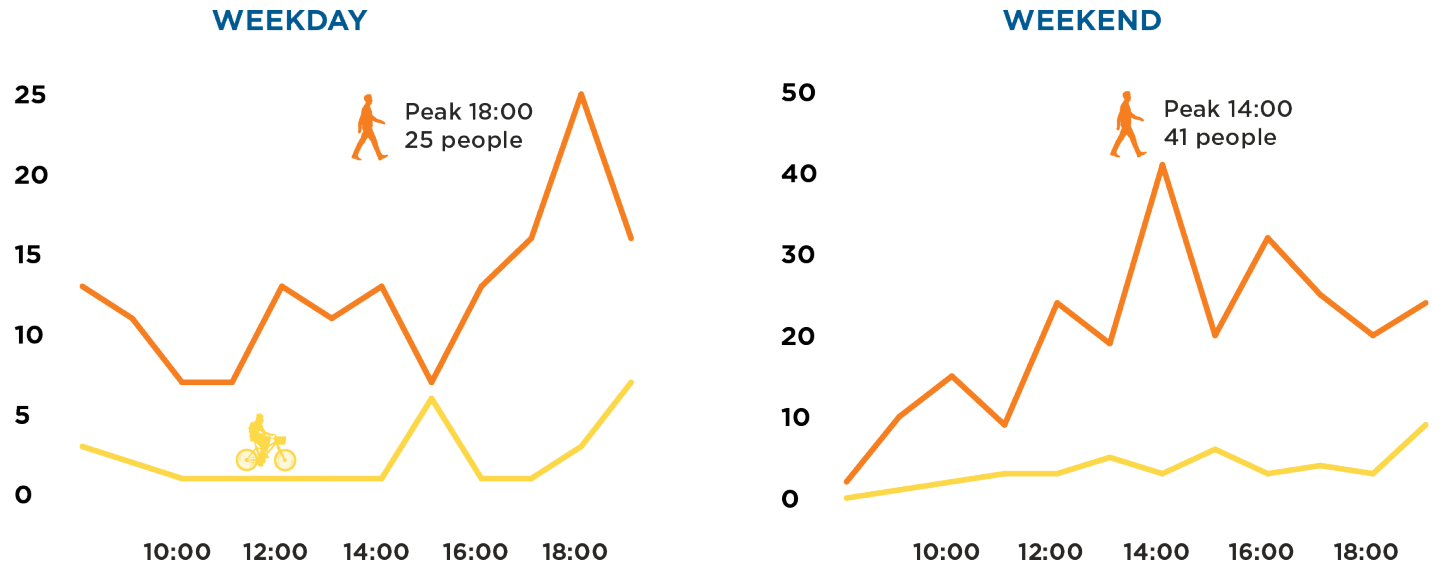
	active recreation	passive recreation	eating + drinking	socializing
WEEKDAY	22%	27%	1%	49%
WEEKEND	18%	16%	5%	61%

Zone F: Northeast entrance

Moving in spring

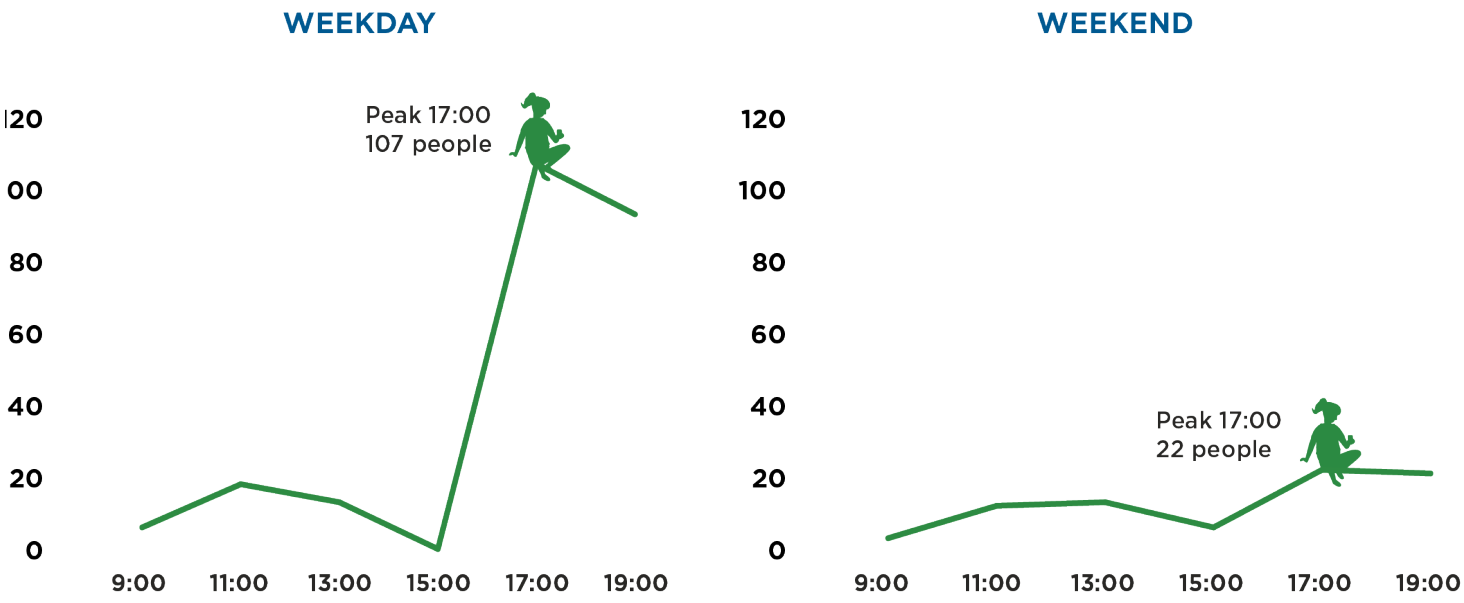


Moving in summer

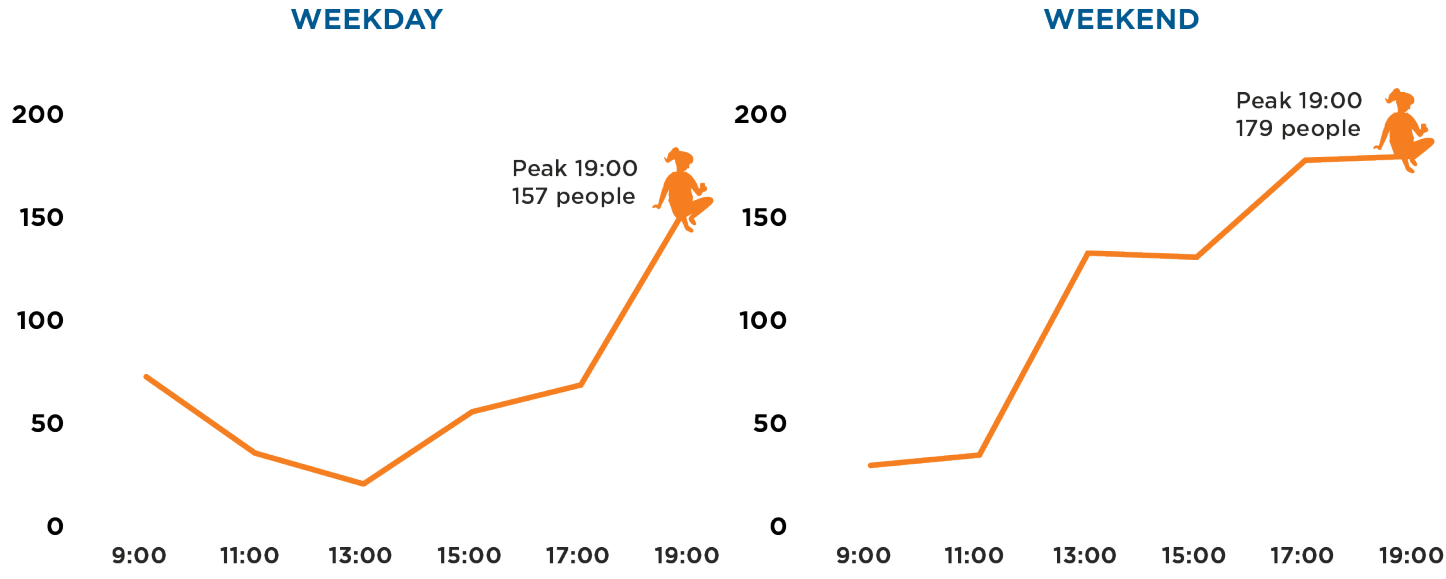


Zone F: Northeast entrance

Staying in spring



Staying in summer



Zone F: Northeast entrance

Seating in spring

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing**, there were...

26

people sitting

WEEKEND

For every **10 people standing**, there were...

11

people sitting

Seating in summer

WEEKDAY

For every **10 people standing**, there were...

14

people sitting

WEEKEND

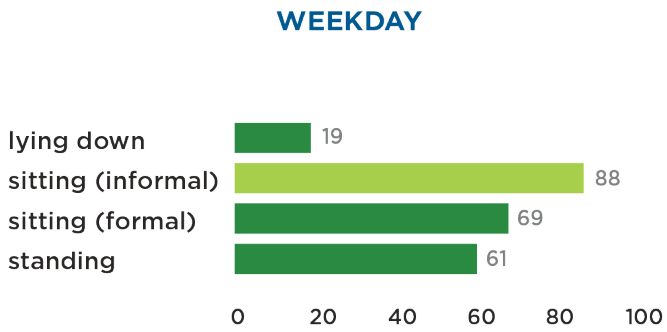
For every **10 people standing**, there were...

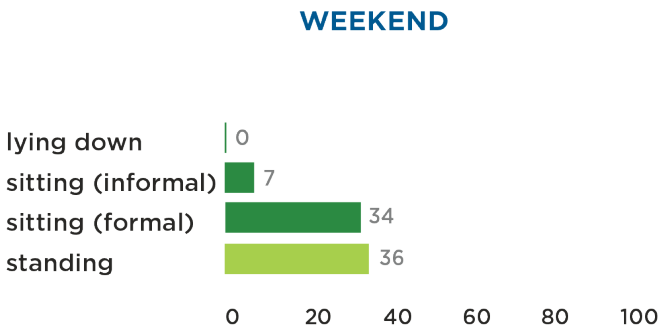
20

people sitting

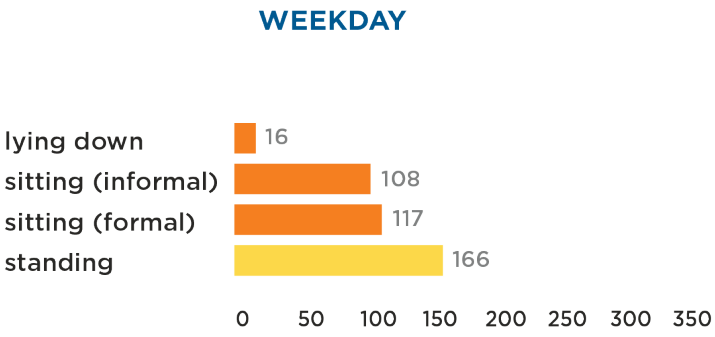
Zone F: Northeast entrance

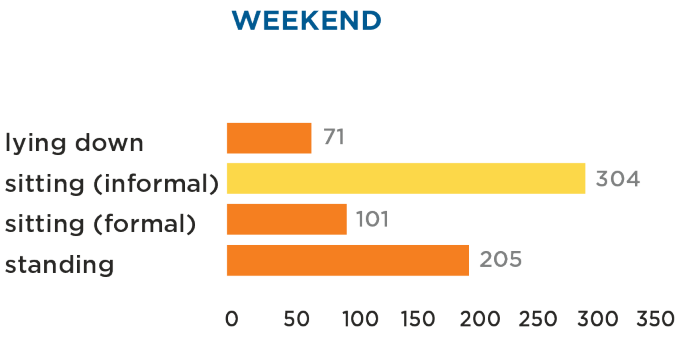
Positions in spring





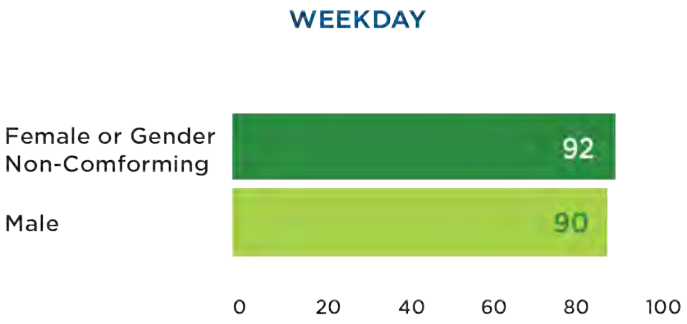
Positions in summer

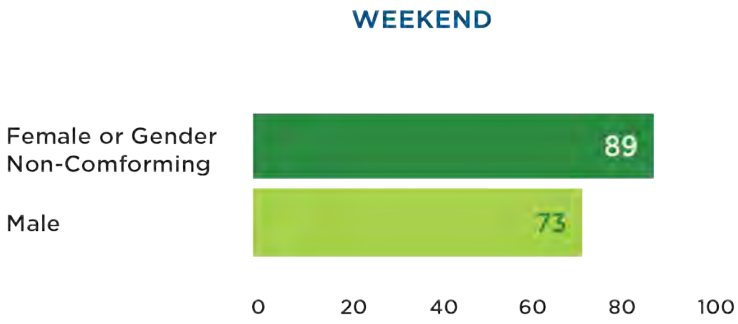




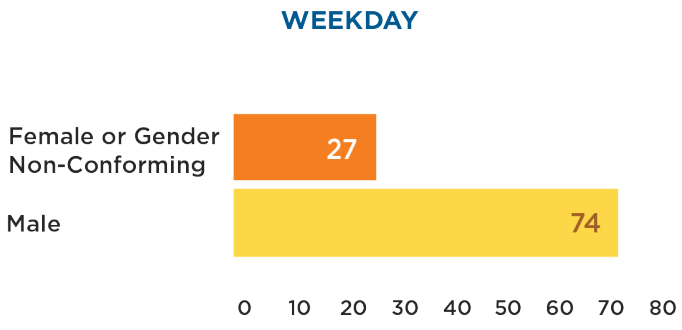
Zone F: Northeast entrance

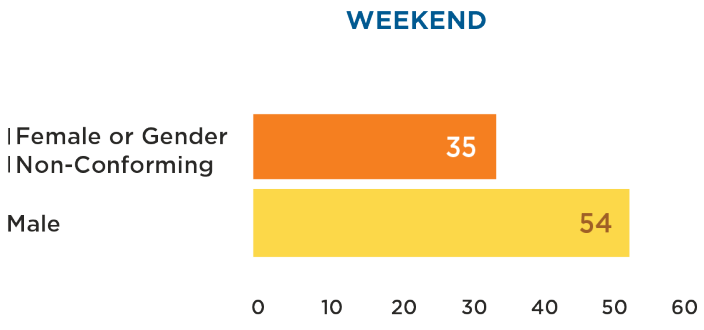
Observed gender presentation in spring





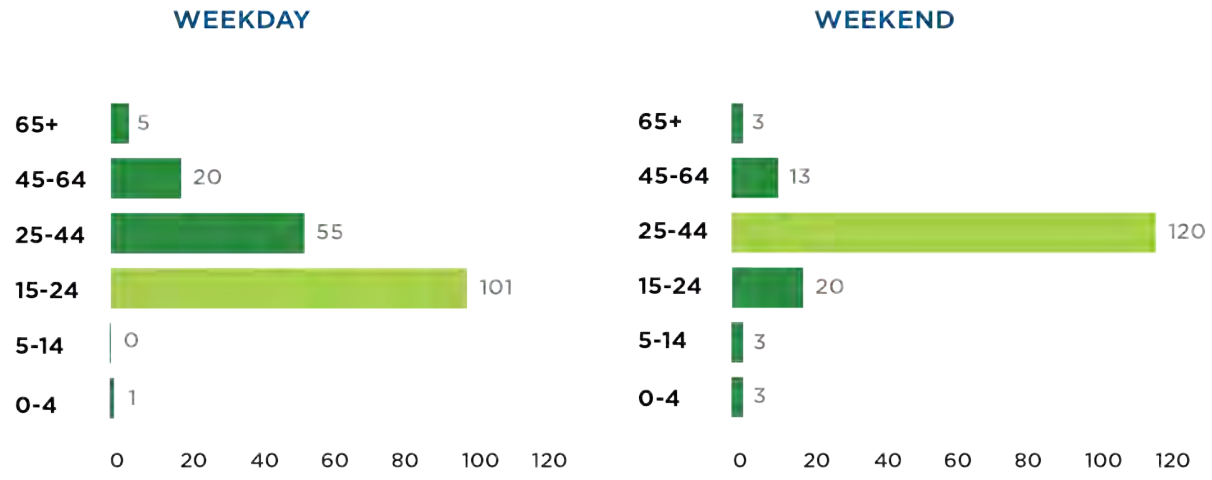
Observed gender presentation in summer





Zone F: Northeast entrance

Observed age presentation in spring



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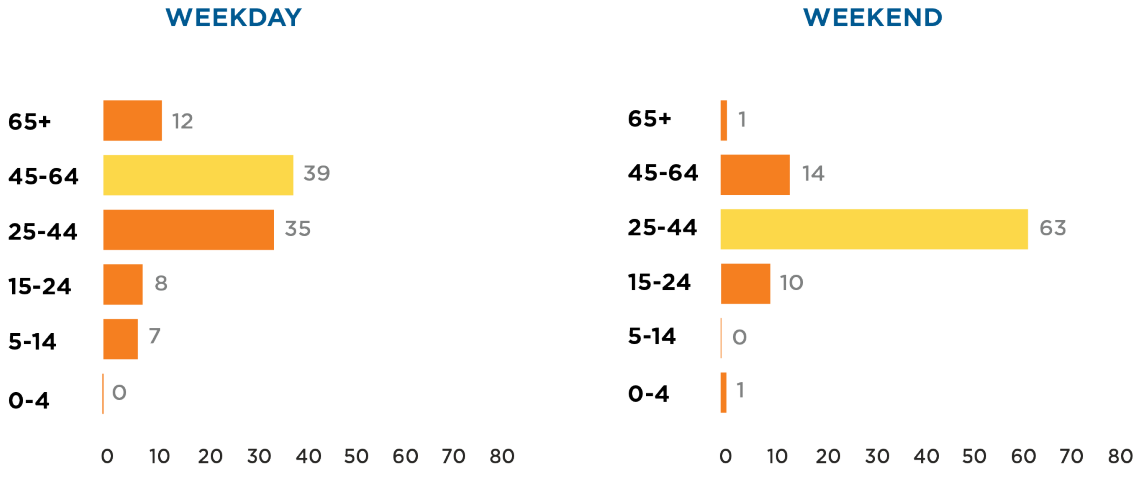


PUBLIC LIFE SURVEYOR

Design Implications

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Design Implications

From commons to corridors: designing for pause and passage

Across Trinity Bellwoods Park, a clear shift emerges from visitors passing through to pausing for extended periods of time. Stationary activity grew by 37 per cent from spring to summer, while travel dropped by 18 per cent. This shows that the park is more than a passage on a commute, it is a destination. This change suggests that comfort, shade and proximity to food and social anchors such as stores and play areas increasingly shape how people occupy the park in the summer months. The design challenge is to support this natural tendency to stay, and to do so comfortably.

Even as overall travel dropped by 18 per cent from spring to summer, several zones sustained high movement volumes among pedestrians and cyclists. These areas continue to function as key circulation corridors, but in a park increasingly defined by lingering, movement should be designed to coexist with pause. Since movement data was aggregated by zone rather than route, consistent high travel volumes signal a need to assess overall capacity and circulation, not to isolate specific paths, but to understand how entire zones support or constrain movement.

Zone B and Zone E, the park's main entrances, show the highest pedestrian and cyclist volumes across both seasons. Zone B saw a summer spike in cyclists (703, up from 413), while Zone E sustained high pedestrian counts (2,615 in summer, 3,591 in spring). These zones are under pressure to perform multiple roles: gateway, thoroughfare and social gathering space.

Design response: Prioritize circulation improvements that relieve congestion and accommodate diverse modes of travel. Widen primary pathways to reduce bottlenecks and support shared use by pedestrians, cyclists and mobility device users. Introduce gentle curves or textured paving near gathering areas, creating

tactile and auditory feedback that naturally slow high-speed users like e-bikes. In Zone E, introduce picnic-style surfaces and maintain open green spaces can absorb overflow without disrupting movement.

Zone A and Zone D host the Trinity Bellwoods Farmers' Market and play spaces, respectively, and show steady pedestrian and cyclist activity. Zone A saw a summer rise in cyclists (316, up from 214), while Zone D maintained consistent travel across modes. These zones function as connectors, but their design can invite more than transit.

Zone A: Corner with untapped potential

Located at the northwest corner of the park at the intersection of Dundas Street West and Shaw Street, Zone A functions primarily as a movement corridor for visitors and commuters. Despite steady travel activity and pedestrian activity that sees a notable increase during hours when the Trinity Bellwoods Farmers' Market is operating, lingering is often brief and largely informal. Adults dominate, with minimal child or senior presence. This indicates that the zone functions as a connector, rather than a destination.

Design response: **Introduce soft edges like planting buffers and accessible, shaded seating along circulation routes, which can invite quick pauses without interrupting travel flows. Introducing accessible seating can make this corridor more welcoming to seniors and caregivers, advancing a broader goal of entrances also serving as gathering spaces.**

Zone B: Gateway under social pressure

The bustling northern entrance near the traffic intersection at Dundas Street West and Montrose Avenue sees high travel volumes through a wide, paved entrance. It is also popular for lingering, with people standing or sitting at picnic tables, particularly near paths or areas near food vendors on Dundas Street West. Formal seating fills quickly. Parents and children are drawn to the area, with the number of children tripling from spring to summer.

Design response: **Expand formal seating, especially in shaded areas with greenery, near the Dundas Street West entrance to support families, seniors and casual gatherings. Prioritize accessible seating at grade and stroller-friendly edges to reinforce Zone B's role as a social anchor. Additional picnic tables can relieve pressure on limited benches. Open sightlines can make pausing feel safe for parents supervising children in the area.**

Zone C: Destination off-leash area

Zone C is anchored by the off-leash area, and it sustains strong stationary use across seasons. Although total travel counts are moderate throughout the off-leash area, the paths surrounding the perimeter of the dog bowl are well-used by various modes of travel. Cyclist counts rose in summer (351, up from 228 in spring), suggesting growing multimodal use. Visitors linger longer here than in most other zones, with consistent return use by dog owners and residents enjoying its hills and views.

Design response: **Strengthen connections between the dog bowl and surrounding path network by improving pathway legibility through clear surfacing and intuitive wayfinding. Where paths converge or diverge, use texture and tone to signal hierarchy and directionality. Let desire lines become formalized, not erased. Add shaded seating and resting alcoves along perimeter paths to support repeat visitors and those who linger, especially as a retreat during summer months.**

Zone D: Play area surrounded by travellers

The play spaces near the intersection of Crawford Street and Lobb Avenue see an exciting balance of movement and pause. High standing counts in the area indicate parents and caregivers watching children without seating to provide comfort. There is consistent presence across age groups, pointing to the area's potential as a family hub.

Design response: **Zone D functions as a play-focused node within a high-circulation zone, where pause and movement intersect. To support caregivers supervising children and seniors, introduce shaded seating alcoves oriented towards the playground edge under tree canopy or integrate shade structures that complement the park's material palette. Use durable, low-maintenance surfaces like precast concrete or wood-slat benches with armrests to support varied mobility needs.**

To reduce friction between lingerers and through-movement, reconfigure adjacent pathways with widenings and differentiated textures. Low planting buffers or edge treatments such as timber edging or bioswale bands can gently delineate play-adjacent zones from commuter routes. These elements should be visually porous to maintain sightlines but offer enough spatial cueing to guide behaviour. Lighting upgrades can further support evening use and intuitive navigation.

Zone E: Southern social anchor

The south side of the park, from its iconic gated entrance to Trinity Circle and the tennis courts, functions as the heart of social activity. Both movement and lingering are high, but summer patterns show a dramatic rise in informal sitting and lying down, jumping from 182 to 776 users. Shade, grass and proximity to vendors make this a natural hub for eating, resting and spontaneous gathering.

With 642 observed individuals aged 25–44 in summer, this zone draws a dominant cohort of adults, pointing to a strong appetite for casual meetups, flexible seating and shaded respite. In contrast, the lower presence of children under the age of 5 (35 in spring, 31 in summer) and adults aged 65+ (36 in spring, 47 in summer) suggests a missed opportunity to support broader age inclusivity.

Design response: Zone E demonstrates the power of entrances as social anchors. Strengthening comfort through shade trees, picnic-style surfaces and accessible seating can support spontaneous socializing while offering retreat from summer heat. Pairing seating with adjacent open green space allows for overflow, accommodating informal groupings without crowding circulation paths. These lawns act as pressure valves during peak times, absorbing spillover from programmed zones and encouraging relaxed use.

To invite a wider age range, address the accessibility gap at the southeast corner ramp, which may limit entry for strollers and mobility devices. Regrading and resurfacing this entrance with a gently sloped, universally accessible path can unlock access for caregivers, seniors and those with mobility aids. Accessible surfaces and seating should be available, directly connected to pathways and located near the open grass lawns where gathering happens. Gathering tables that accommodate larger groups, strollers and mobility devices can further support intergenerational use.

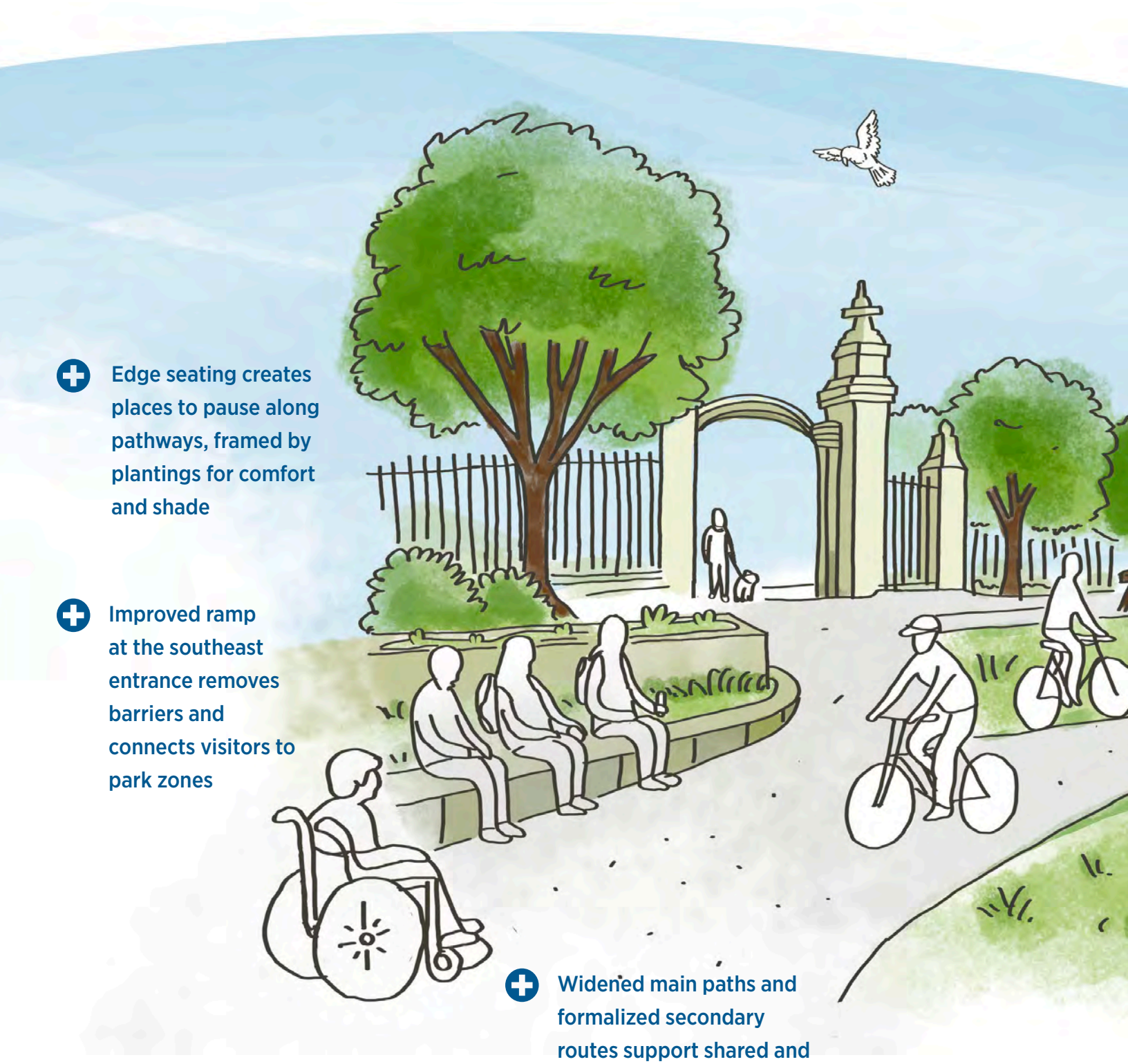
Zone F: Quiet corner with missing pieces

The northeast corner of the park, located near the intersection of Dundas Street West and Gore Vale Avenue, shows low travel but rising stationary use in summer. While some park goers may visit the area for its features such as the baseball diamond, washrooms or artificial ice rink, other visitors choose to sit or lie down here, signaling interest in its quieter character.

Design response: **Zone F can be enhanced to support its current role as a quiet retreat with accessibility features for users seeking calm within a busy park. Upgrading paths can reconnect this quiet zone to the wider park. Where informal foot traffic has carved desire lines, these should be formalized with accessible surfacing. This not only improves comfort and navigation but also strengthens Zone F's connection to the rest of the park. Introducing more seating, shade and clear wayfinding can enhance its role as a restful, accessible corner.**

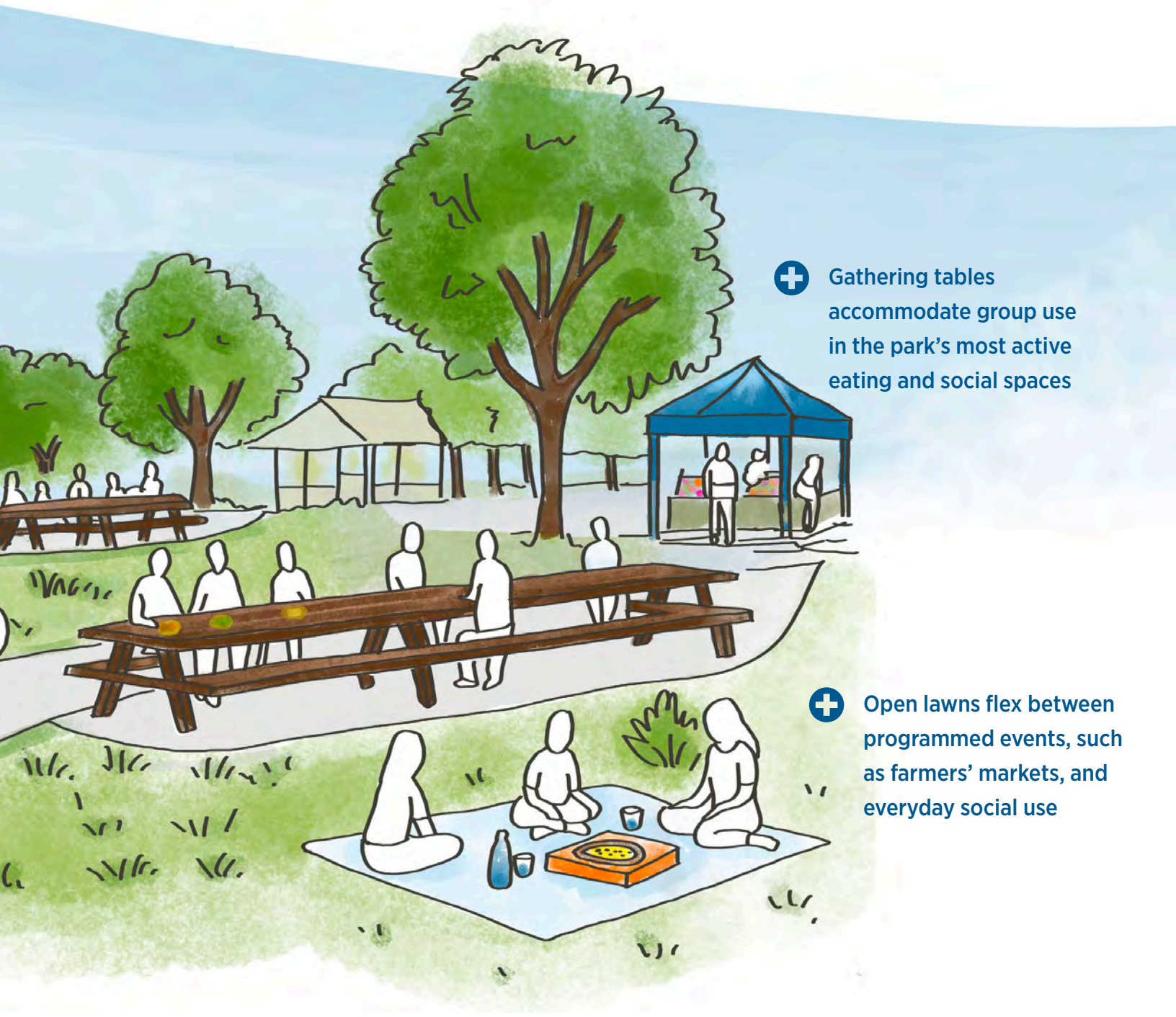
Design responses in action

Illustrated interventions based on posture, activity, and comfort patterns



- Edge seating creates places to pause along pathways, framed by plantings for comfort and shade
- Improved ramp at the southeast entrance removes barriers and connects visitors to park zones
- Widened main paths and formalized secondary routes support shared and accessible movement

This illustration shows design responses explored in the Public Life Study and is not a reflection of the final recommendations of the Trinity Bellwoods Park Access and Circulation Study.



Gathering tables accommodate group use in the park's most active eating and social spaces

Open lawns flex between programmed events, such as farmers' markets, and everyday social use

Next Steps

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Next steps

What will happen with the results?

The Trinity Bellwoods Park Public Life Study provides a foundation for understanding how people use and move through one of Toronto's most well-loved parks. The insights capturing patterns of movement, lingering, activity types and user demographics across zones will inform the Trinity Bellwoods Park Access and Circulation Study, which will include strategic directions for improving the park's functionality, accessibility and overall visitor experience.

The Access and Circulation Study will provide recommendations to address circulation and access challenges across the park. This includes:

- Identifying opportunities to enhance existing pathways and entrances, and add new connections where needed, and improve accessibility.
- Evaluating areas with potential safety risks, including steep slopes, pedestrian-cyclist conflicts and inadequate lighting, and recommending improvements.
- Exploring enhancements to signage and wayfinding to improve orientation and accessibility for all users.
- Considering how circulation improvements can improve connectivity to park facilities and support both everyday use and the park's variety of programmed events, while protecting environmental and heritage features.
- Continuing to work with the public to ensure recommendations reflect the needs and priorities of the park's diverse users.

The findings will guide the development of a comprehensive, long-term strategy for Trinity Bellwoods Park, balancing functionality, safety, sustainability and preservation of the park's unique character, providing the City with a roadmap for improving access and circulation for years to come. Through this process, the City aims to ensure that Trinity Bellwoods Park remains welcoming, safe and accessible for all visitors, while continuing to support its vibrant recreational, social and cultural life.

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