

Equity conversation

Stories are important data: Observations from recent parks research

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Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Statistics offer a partial story

- *This table shows:*
 - A difference in how white and “non-white” visitors feel about park and trail safety during one visit in summer 2016.
 - Little data disaggregation and outdated naming terms.
 - How might statistics “hide” the impact of safety events?

Concerned About Safety	Total (n=5459)	Ethnicity	
		Caucasian (n=4295)	Non-Caucasian (n=836)
Not at all	91%	*92%	85%
Very little	8%	7%	*14%
Moderately	1%	1%	<1%
Substantially	<1%	<1%	1%

Results from 2016 Visitor Study,
“On this park/trail visit, were you concerned about your safety?”

Qualitative data give important context

Qualitative research can ask:

- What does it mean to feel concern about safety?
- Could these meanings look different to different communities?
- What are the ripple effects of a one-time event?

Qualitative data analyzes:

Stories

In-depth observations

Photos

Emphasizes:

Meanings – What does safety mean?

Feelings – How does this event impact the person?

Histories- How does a safety event fit with my community's history?

Safety Findings: Youth & Parks Research

Safety meanings: Research found 9 dimensions of safety:

- “We can’t know it’s safe unless we get more information.” (e.g., ice fishing)

Safety involves events *and* feelings:

- The world feels unsafe right now because of strangers.
- “My kids were targeted by police in the parks. It is frightening.”
- “I get the message I don’t fit in here.”

Community histories shape experiences of safety:

- Severe racist incident affects entire community for years
- One family member’s incident informs wider community
- “I know someone who got hurt sledding. It’s dangerous”

Reflection question:

How can hearing perspectives on meanings, feelings and histories help us to create a more welcoming regional park system?