



## Visits to the Regional Park System in 2021

The Metropolitan Council produces estimates of visits to the Twin Cities Regional Parks System annually, collaborating with 10 partner agencies. These agencies include cities, counties, and special parks districts, which work with the Council to protect natural resources and provide outdoor recreation for public enjoyment. The Council provides long-range system planning, investment, and regional coordination.

The Regional Parks System is composed of regional parks and trails that are nationally renowned for their beauty, size, and variety of features. With 44 regional parks, 12 park reserves, 55 regional trails, and 8 special recreation features, the Regional Parks System provides a wealth of opportunities for recreation, exercise, and fun. It also preserves significant green space and wildlife habitat.

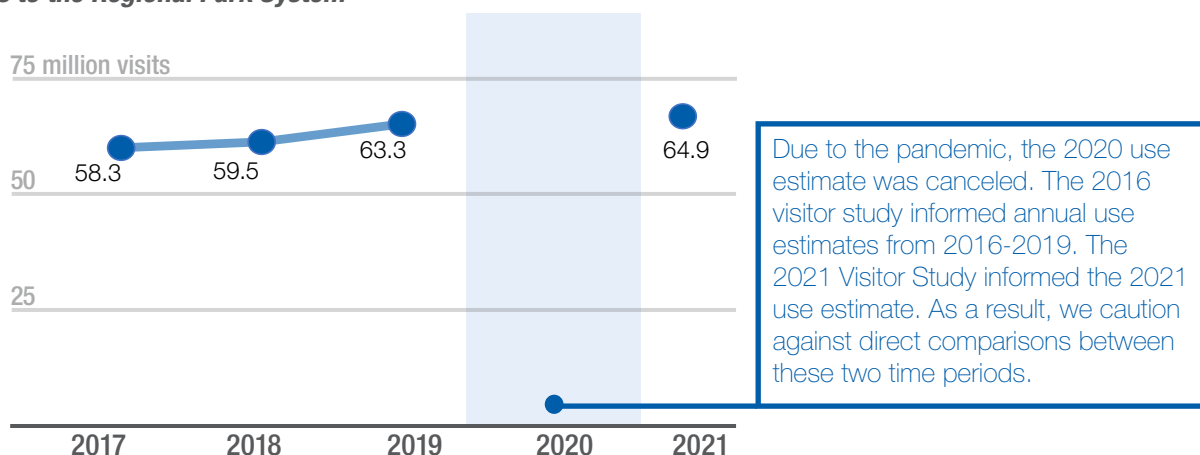
This report highlights the estimated number of visits to the Regional Parks System for 2021. Park agencies collect visitation data from each park and trail during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day). The Council uses the result to produce an annual estimate.<sup>1</sup>

### Key Findings

- People made an estimated 64.9 million visits to the Regional Parks System in 2021 (*Figure 1*). This represents a 2.6% increase over 2019 and the most estimated visitation on record.
- The top-visited regional park was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with more than 7.5 million visits, followed by Como Regional Park with about 4.5 million visits.
- Trail visits grew 11% over 2019. The regional system includes 415 miles of trails, with annual trail use reaching more than 16 million visits.
- With the continued pandemic in 2021, fewer special events were held in regional parks. Special events decreased by almost one-third from 2019.

FIGURE 1

### Annual Visits to the Regional Park System

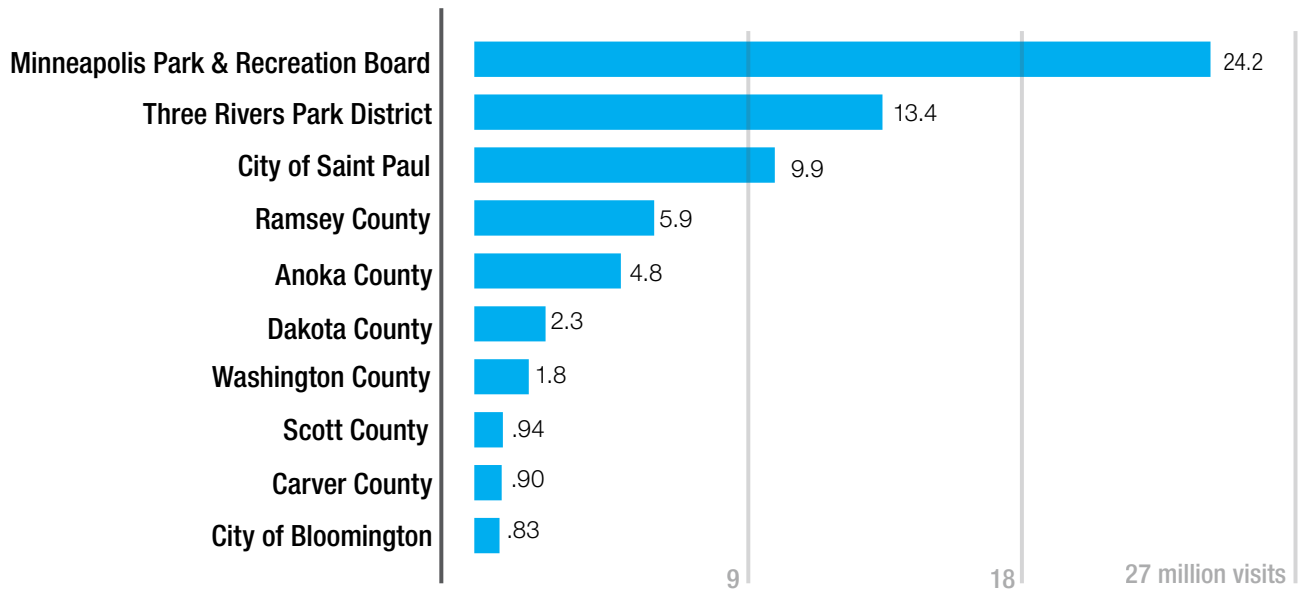


Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the 10 agencies in 2021 with approximately 24.1 million visitors, followed by Three Rivers Parks District (13.4 million), and the City of Saint Paul (9.9 million), as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

**2021 Visits by Parks Implementing Agency**

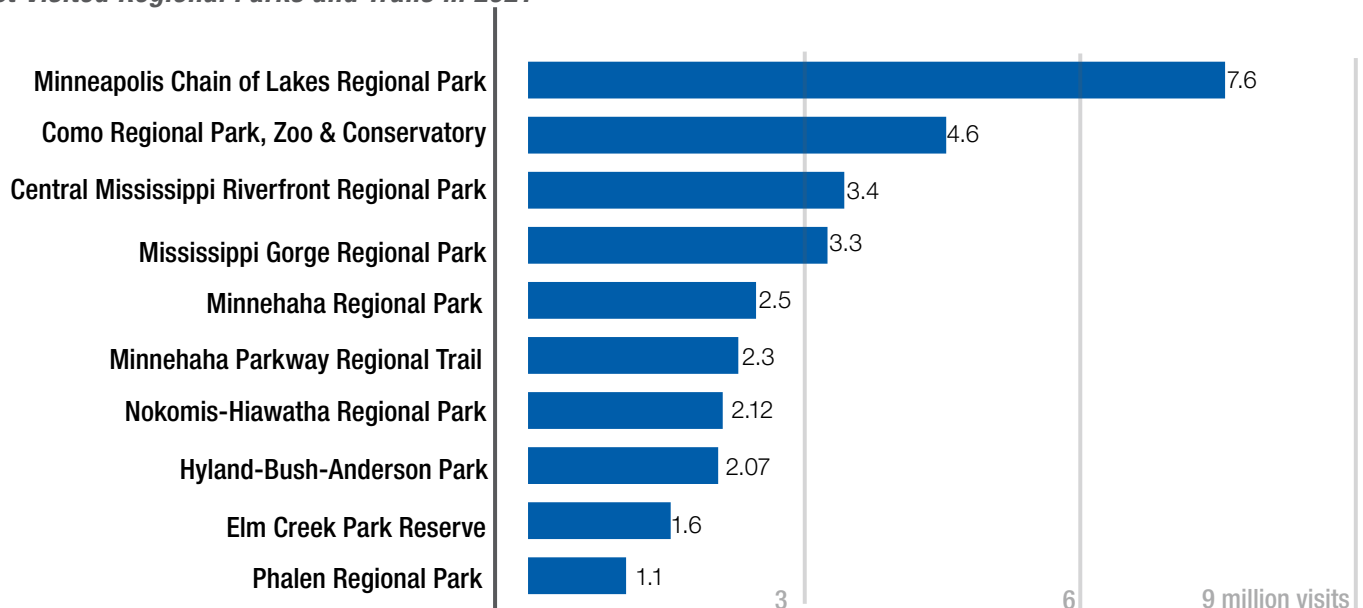


Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

The most-visited regional park was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with roughly 7.6 million visits; followed by Como Regional Park, Zoo & Conservatory with about 4.5 million visits; and Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park at 3.4 million visits (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

**Most Visited Regional Parks and Trails in 2021**

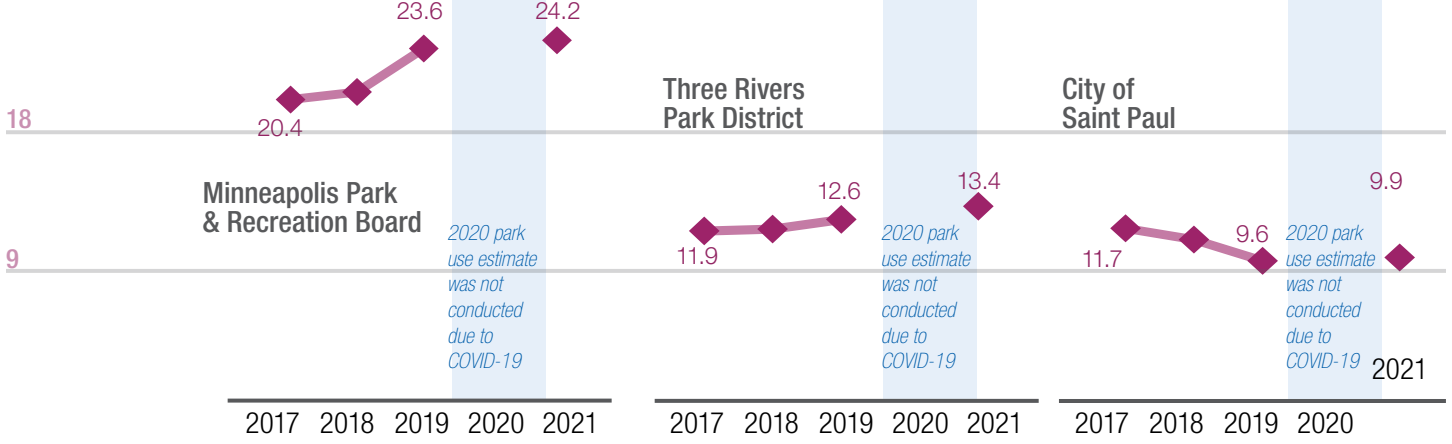


Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

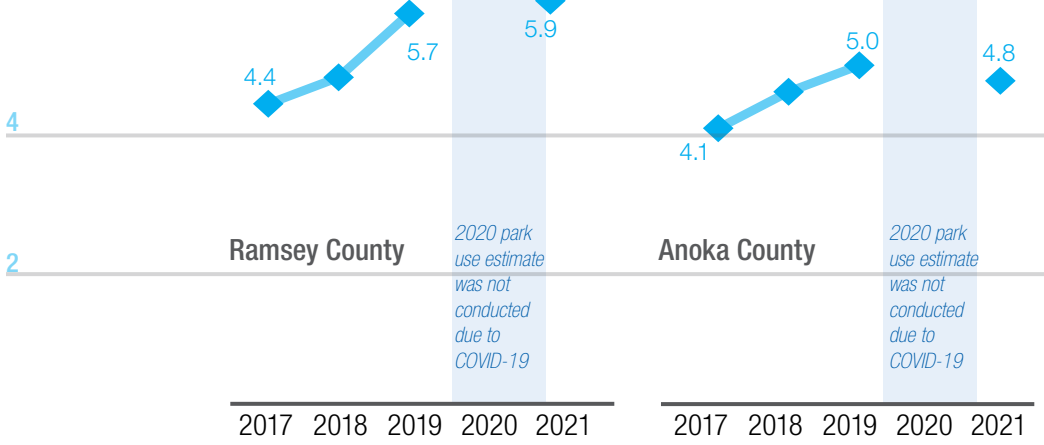
The Three Rivers Park District showed the largest gain in visitation, with 821,010 more visits in 2021 compared with 2019 (Figure 4). Other parts of the system with large gains between 2019 and 2021 include Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (516,900 more visits), Dakota County (214,120 more), and Saint Paul (213,970 more). Carver County had the largest percentage increase in visitation at 13.9%, followed by Scott County (11%), and Dakota County (10%). Anoka and Washington counties, as well as the City of Bloomington, had decreased visitation.

Recent Visit Trends by Park Agency (1/2)

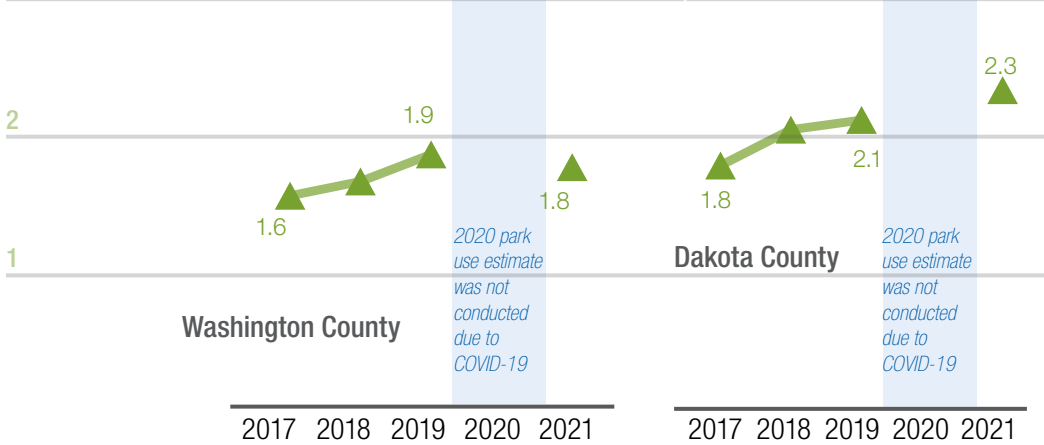
27 million visits



6 million visits



3 million visits



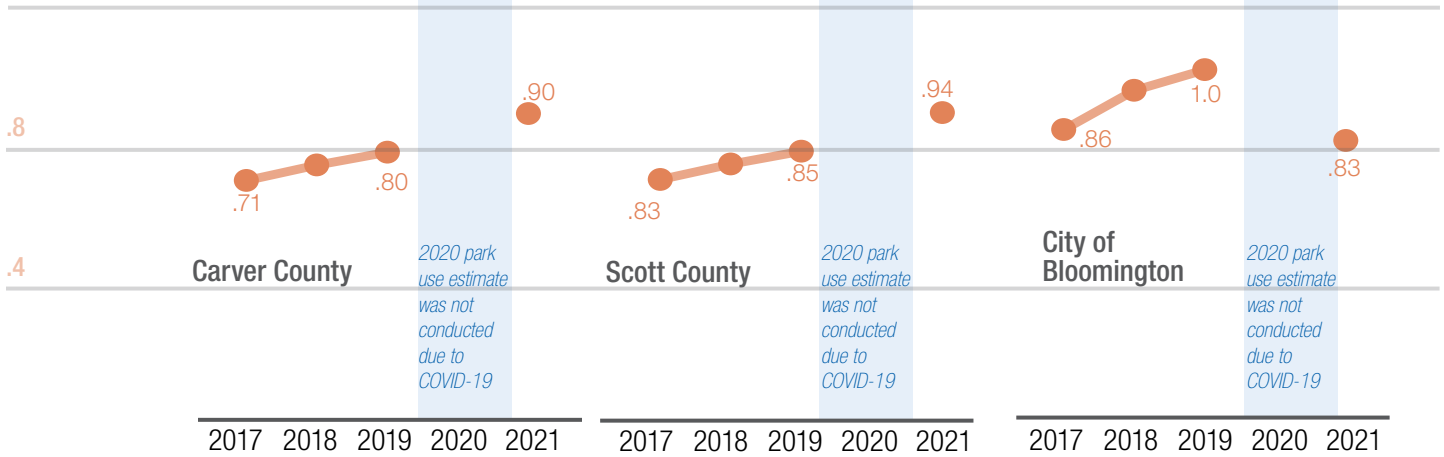
Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

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FIGURE 4 (continued)

Recent Visit Trends by Park Agency (2/2)

1.2 million visits

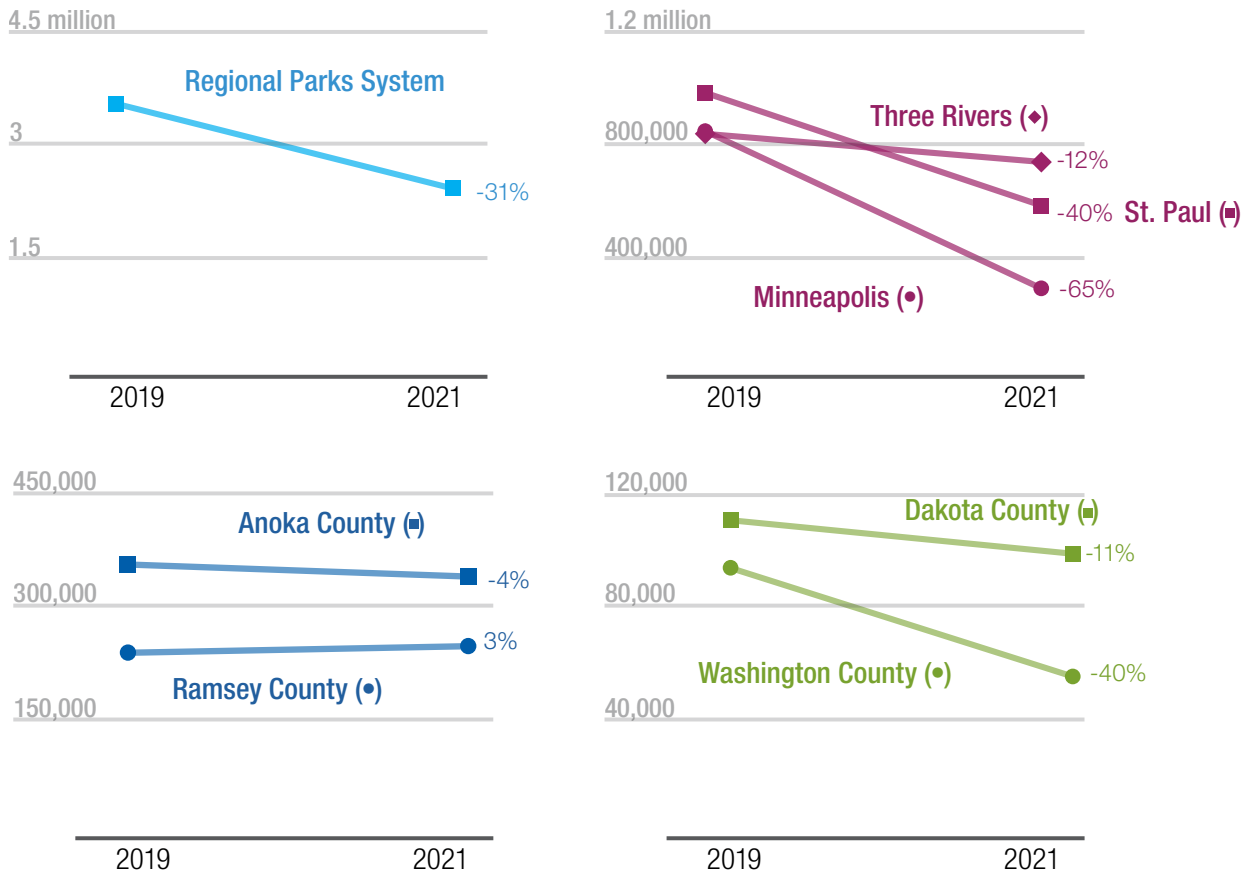


Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

The pandemic had an effect on organized special events. Special events decreased 1.1 million, a drop of 31%. This ranged from a drop of 4% in Anoka County to a decrease of 65% for Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. One agency, Ramsey County, had an increase of 3%.

FIGURE 5

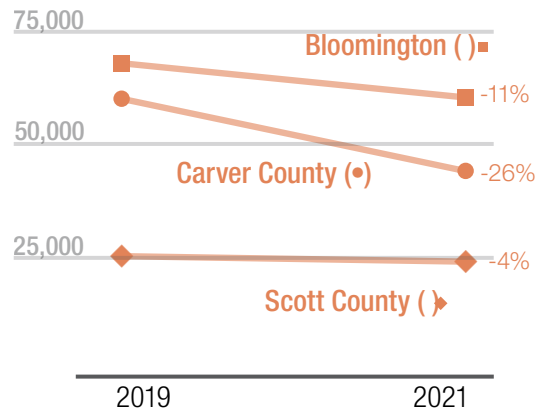
COVID-19 Effects on Special Events (1/2)



Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

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**COVID-19 Effects on Special Events (2/2)**



Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

**Endnote**

<sup>1</sup>For a description of how the estimate is produced and usage statistics for each park and trail see the **2021 Regional Park System Use Estimate: Methodology Report [PDF]**. For detailed estimates by agency see **2021 Regional Park System Use Estimate: Appendix Tables [PDF]**.

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