



Visits to the Regional Park System in 2019

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, 49 regional trails, and eight 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.

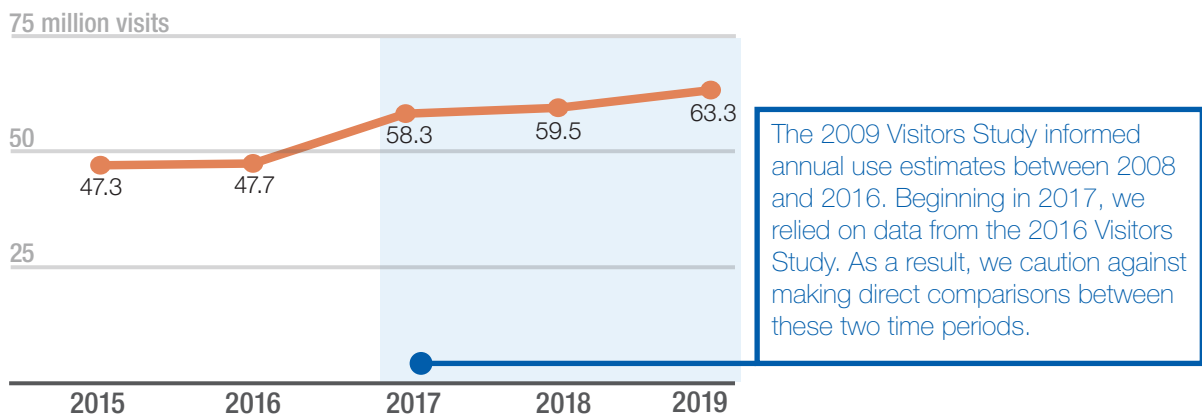
This report highlights the estimated number of visits to the Regional Parks System for 2019. Park agencies collect visitation data from each park and trail during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day). The Council uses the result to produce an annual estimate.¹ Due to Covid-19, the Regional Park System will not have a 2020 use estimate; the Regional Park System funding formulas will rely on 2019 estimate for the next two years.

Key Findings

- An estimated 63.3 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2019. This represents a 6.3% increase over 2018 and the most estimated visitation on record.
- The top-visited regional park was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with over 8 million visits, followed by Como Regional Park with about 3.8 million visits.
- Summer 2019 visitors to the Regional Park System included an estimated 12,000 scooter-riders and 387,000 cyclists. The regional system includes almost 400 miles of trails, with annual trail use reaching over 15 million visits.
- Campers made over 360,000 visits to campgrounds during 2019 in Carver, Anoka, Dakota, Scott and Washington Counties as well as within Three Rivers Park District. Campgrounds throughout most of the regional park system are open and accepting reservations in 2020.

People made an estimated 63.26 million visits to the Regional Parks System in 2019 (Figure 1), the most estimated visitation on record and a 6.3% increase over 2018 visits.

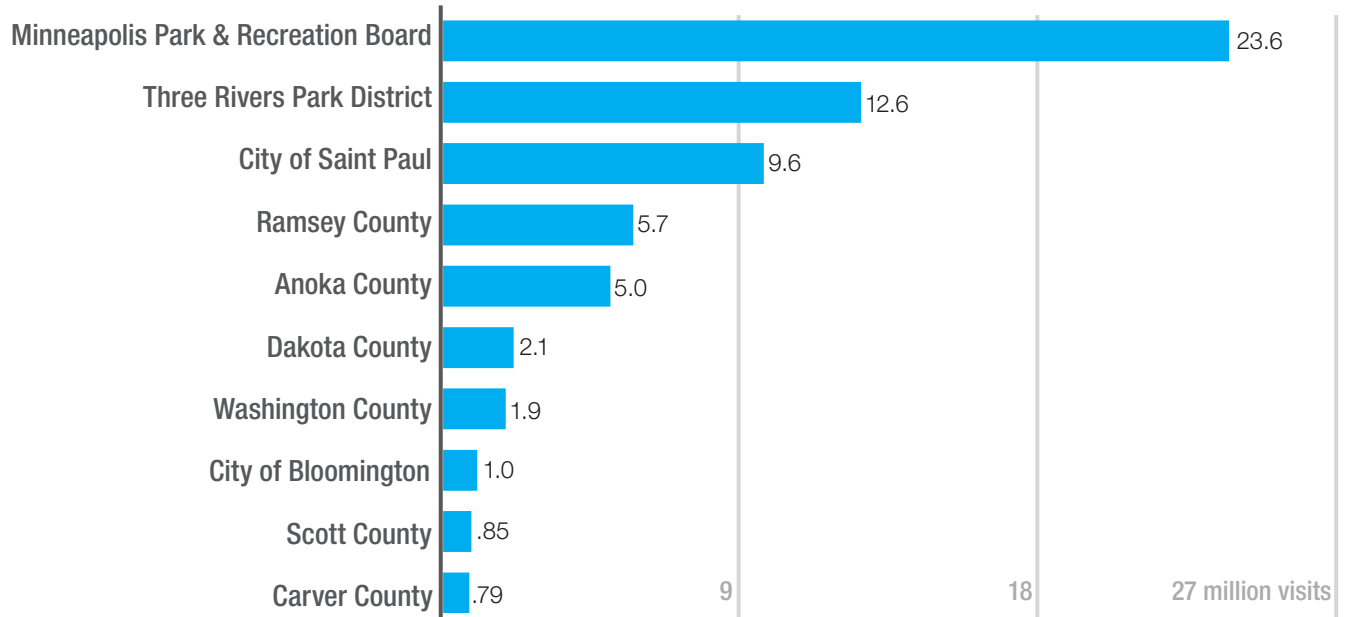
FIGURE 1. VISITS TO THE REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM



Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the ten agencies in 2019 with approximately 23.6 million visitors, followed by Three Rivers Parks District (12.6 million) and the City of Saint Paul (9.6 million) as shown in Figure 2.

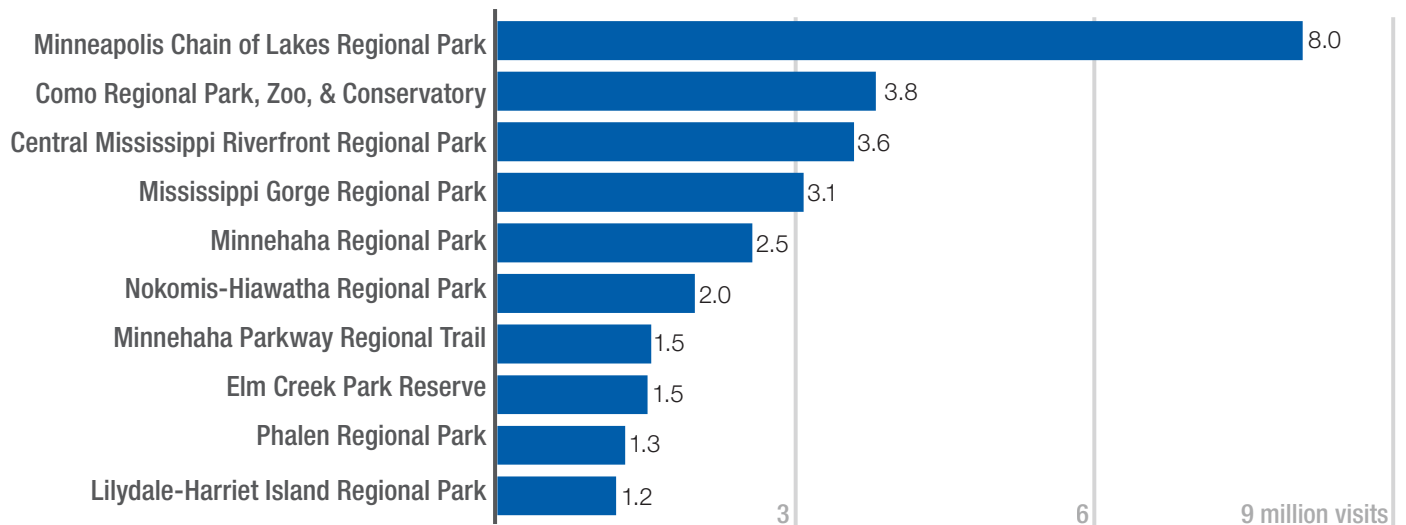
FIGURE 2. 2019 VISITS BY PARK AGENCY



Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

The most-visited regional park was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with roughly 8 million visits, followed by Como Regional Park, Zoo & Conservatory with about 3.8 million visits and Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park at 3.6 million visits (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. MOST VISITED REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS IN 2019



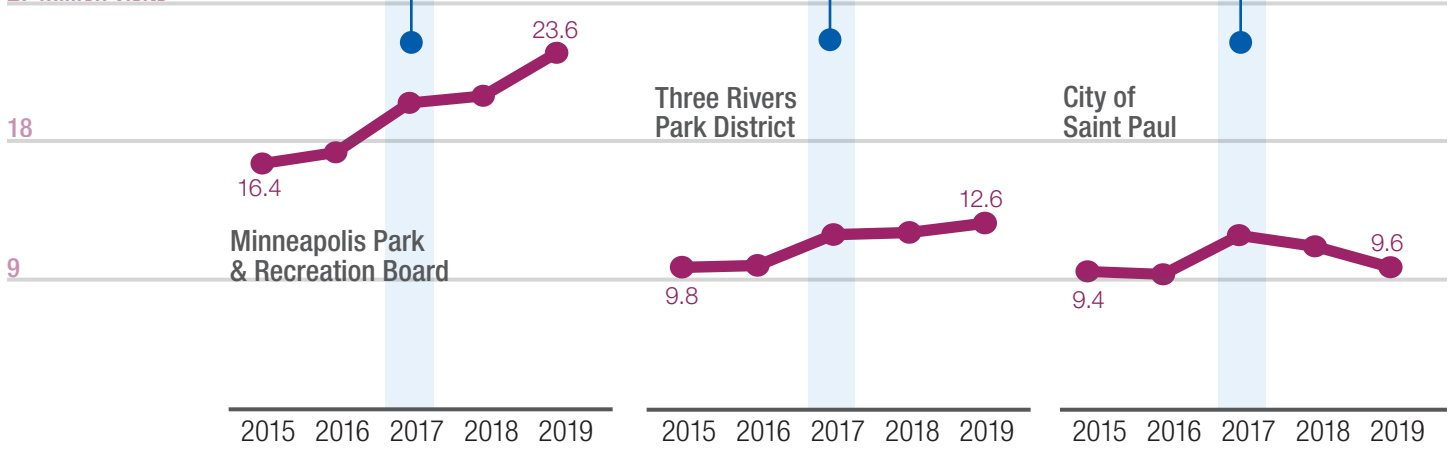
Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board showed the largest gain in visitation with 2,810,000 more visits in 2019 compared with 2018 (Figure 4). Other parts of the system with large gains between 2018 and 2019 include Ramsey County (911,000 more visits), the Three Rivers Park District (592,000 more), and Anoka County (377,000 more). Ramsey County had the largest percentage increase in visitation at 19%, followed by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (13.5%), and Washington County (11.5%). Nearly all agencies reported their highest visitation to date in 2019.

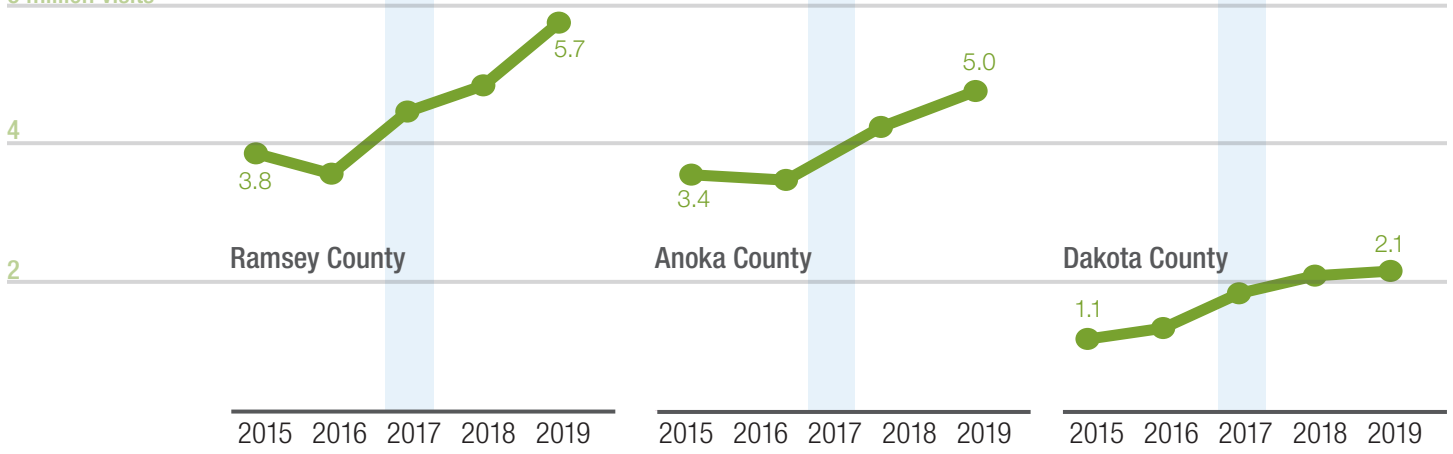
FIGURE 4. RECENT VISIT TRENDS BY PARK AGENCY (1/2)

The 2009 Visitors Study informed annual use estimates between 2008 and 2016. Beginning in 2017, we relied on data from the 2016 Visitors Study. As a result, we caution against making direct comparisons between these two time periods.

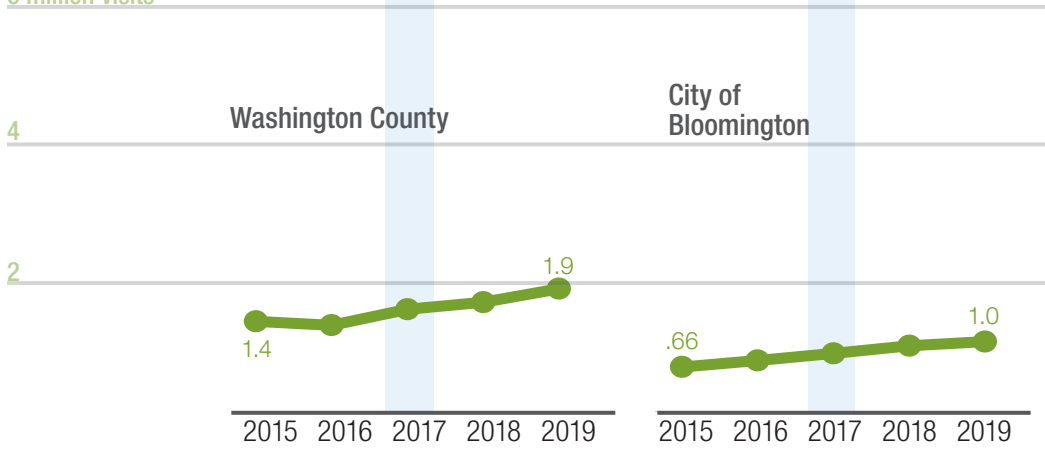
27 million visits



6 million visits



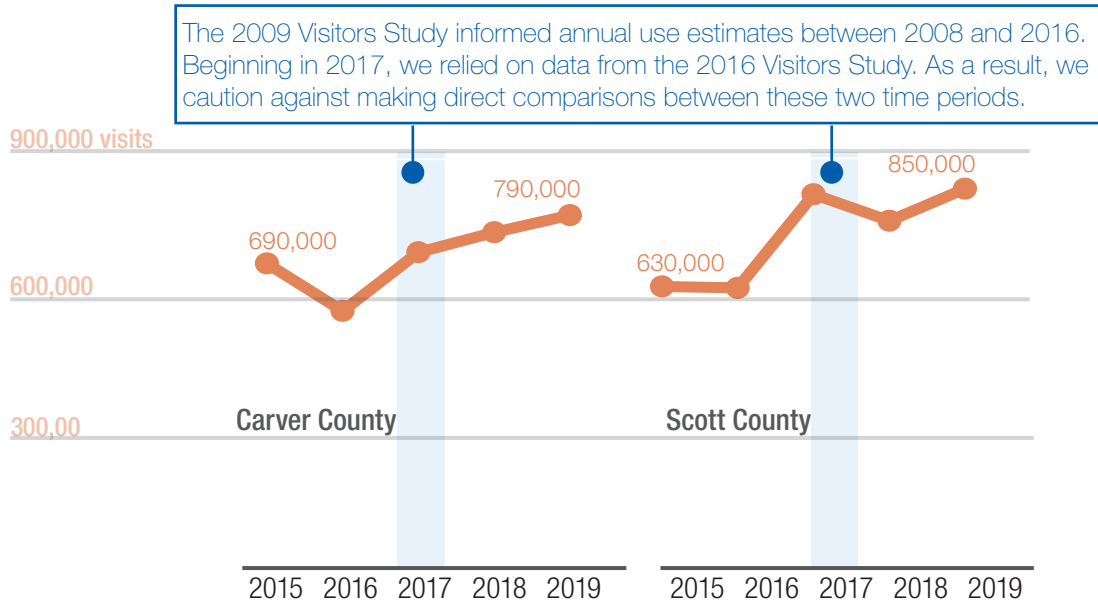
6 million visits



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Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

FIGURE 4 (continued). RECENT VISIT TRENDS BY PARK AGENCY (2/2)



Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.

Endnote

¹For a description of how the estimate is produced and usage statistics for each park and trail see the [2019 Regional Park System Use Estimate: Methodology Report \[PDF\]](#). For detailed estimates by agency see [2019 Regional Park System Use Estimate: Appendix Tables \[PDF\]](#).

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