

2023 Parks After Dark Evaluation Report

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2023 Parks After Dark Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Parks After Dark (PAD) is a program of Los Angeles County (County) designed to build resilient communities that re-envision parks as centralized “hubs” for the promotion of safety, equity, physical and mental health, as well as family and overall community well-being. PAD began at three parks in 2010 as a prevention strategy of the County’s Gang Violence Reduction Initiative and has since expanded to 34 parks. PAD extends hours of park operation (6-10 PM) during summer weekend evenings (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights) and offers a variety of free activities and resources for attendees of all ages. In 2022, PAD expanded to include one-day events during spring and winter school breaks.

PAD goals include: 1) decrease community violence and increase perceptions of safety; 2) facilitate cross-sector collaboration in park communities and county-wide; 3) increase social cohesion, and family and community well-being; 4) increase access to free recreational programming, health and social services that reflect the interests and needs of communities served; 5) increase physical activity and decrease chronic disease risk; 6) contribute to positive youth development; and 7) promote senior connectedness. PAD added Goals 6 and 7 in 2023, reflecting new strategic priorities. PAD also included community members in program design under Goal 4 and utilized community-driven safety approaches under Goal 1 in 2023. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (UCLA) used multiple data sources to evaluate the progress of PAD towards its seven goals. Key conclusions and evaluation findings for each goal are included below.

Goal 1: Decrease Community Violence and Increase Perceptions of Safety

Available evidence indicated that PAD attendees often felt safe at PAD events, even when they did not feel safe in their neighborhoods where PAD parks were located. The feelings of safety were due to the presence of Deputy Sheriffs, trusted park staff, and neighbors, as well as park features such as adequate lighting, clean facilities, and signage. Eight parks in the South Agency utilized community intervention workers through the Safe Passages Initiative, which facilitated feelings of safety and aimed to mitigate gang-related activity. In addition, analysis of crime data indicated that while average Part I (serious property and violent crimes) and Part II (non-violent and violent low-level offenses) crime rates in and around PAD parks were higher than that of Los Angeles County, PAD may have avoided a notable number of Part I and Part II crimes between 2010 and 2023, relative to comparison parks without PAD.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- As indicated in Los Angeles Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) crime data, the average Part I and Part II crime rates in and around PAD parks were higher than the average crime rates in and around all Los Angeles County parks from 2010 to 2023.
- Overall, difference-in-difference (DD) findings indicated a reduction in crime rates in PAD parks after implementation of PAD when compared to similar parks that did not implement PAD, with an estimated 74 fewer Part I crimes and 43 fewer Part II crimes between 2010 and 2023 in participating PAD parks and their surrounding communities.
- Estimated cost savings associated with the cumulative reduction of Part I crimes in participating PAD parks and their surrounding communities from 2010 to 2023 was \$10.472 million.
- As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 93% felt safe attending PAD. Among PAD attendees who expressed not feeling safe in their neighborhood, 64% felt safe at PAD.
- Attendees indicated the synergistic effect of multiple factors for creating a safe environment, and specifically identified Deputy Sheriffs (64%), park staff (52%), people around (44%), and the positive atmosphere (35%) as factors contributing to their feelings of safety at PAD.
- The majority of PAD attendees agreed that law enforcement engaged positively with community members (93%) and that the number of Deputy Sheriffs at PAD was “just right” (72%). More attendees indicated that there were “not enough” or that they did not see Deputy Sheriffs at PAD (17%), as opposed to “too many” (11%).
- Almost all attendees agreed that PAD improved the relationship of the community with Deputy Sheriffs (93%).
- In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD improved attendees’ perception of safety (9.0 of 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree); reduced gang violence and activity within participating PAD parks (8.5); reduced crime in participating PAD park communities (8.5); and improved relationships between community members and law enforcement (8.1).
- Overall, PAD partners agreed that PAD is an effective strategy to decrease community violence and increase community safety (8.6).
- In key informant interviews, LASD felt they were seen as much more approachable because of PAD. LASD cited challenges with staffing of Deputy Sheriffs that may hinder full engagement and consistency at PAD events. LASD felt PAD worked to improve relationships with the community and helped to “humanize” police.
- Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) staff emphasized the necessity of continuous and meaningful engagement from LASD, particularly for PAD attendees who may be distrusting of police presence. Intervention workers, through the Safe Passages Initiative, were noted to be a positive addition to ensuring attendee safety and feelings of ease at PAD.

Goal 2: Increase Collaboration among Different Stakeholders

PAD is led by DPR, in partnership with the County Board of Supervisors, Chief Executive Office (CEO), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Mental Health (DMH), LASD, Probation Department, Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), and other government agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs). PAD fosters communication and relationship-building amongst participating organizations as partners come together to offer meaningful services and programming at PAD events. Creative approaches to improve partner collaboration through PAD included stakeholder engagement meetings and community resource fairs.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- In key informant surveys, PAD partners strongly agreed that PAD improved collaborations between County departments and CBOs (9.3 of 10); collaboration between community-based organizations (9.1); and collaboration between County departments (9.0).
- Key informants also strongly agreed that relationships established through PAD have facilitated new and innovative work to reach shared goals (9.2).
- Opportunities for improving communication and cross-sector collaboration through PAD were identified by partners to include regular meetings/opportunities for relationship building (58%), increased marketing and outreach through more organization networks (58%), greater partner integration into PAD program planning (42%), and regular communication regarding PAD progress to partners (42%).
- In key informant interviews, PAD partners identified the innovative ways that PAD engages partners, including stakeholder engagement meetings and community resource fairs. PAD partners emphasized how community-based organizations are often deeply embedded in the community and offer insight into participant's needs. PAD partners also spoke about the importance of working together with other County partners while simultaneously advocating and aligning their own organizational missions.

Goal 3: Increase Social Cohesion and Family Bonding

PAD contributed to social cohesion and community well-being by providing opportunities for neighbors and families to socialize, spend quality time together, and develop positive relationships in a safe and inclusive environment. The great majority of PAD participants attended with their children. PAD offered access to families to participate in activities that they may not otherwise be able to afford.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 87% of PAD attendees reported attending PAD with children. Of those who attended with children, 43% reported attending with children ages 6-12, and fewer reported attending with children ages 0-5 (28%) or 13-18 (19%).
- The overwhelming majority of attendees reported that PAD increased quality time with family members (96%), provided a sense of belonging within the community (96%), and improved their relationship with their neighbors (94%).
- Of those attendees who identified as not living in a close-knit unified community, 72% agreed that PAD improved their relationship with neighbors.
- In key informant surveys, PAD partners strongly agreed that PAD helped County departments develop a positive relationship with the community (9.6 of 10); provided opportunities for family members to spend quality time together (9.5); improved the social well-being of participants (9.2); and improved relationships among community members (9.2).
- In key informant interviews, partners emphasized the necessity of tailoring programming to community needs; for example, by offering food and family-oriented activities (e.g., movie nights), PAD can further improve social cohesion and family bonding.

Goal 4: Increase Access to Quality Recreational Programming and Innovative Services

PAD increased access to free recreational programming by reaching residents of PAD zip codes and many others living throughout the County. PAD provided an array of entertainment, physical activity programming, and health and social services that attracted families and attendees of all ages. PAD had high levels of attendee and partner satisfaction.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- Attendance at PAD during the summer of 2023 was estimated by DPR to roughly include over 405,000 unique visits by Los Angeles County residents across all 34 parks.
- Most PAD attendees who responded to the summer 2023 participant survey were ages 26-39 (36%), female (63%), and Latinx (61%).
- Many PAD attendees visited the park frequently, independent of PAD, with 78% visiting at least daily or weekly.
- Most attendees learned about PAD because they lived in the area or were walking by (59%), but many learned through PAD flyers (24%) and word of mouth (21%).
- Favorite PAD activities included movie night (30%), organized sports and clinics (18%), concerts/music (17%), and jumper/games (10%), with variation in favorite activity by age and PAD park.

- The vast majority of attendees expressed high levels of satisfaction with 97% saying they would attend PAD again. 97% also said they would recommend PAD to others.
- Attendees found PAD to be important for their community (96%) and believed the variety of activities to be of interest to their community (96%).
- In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD provided opportunities for innovative services at County parks (9.2 of 10); provided participants with improved access to quality recreational programming (9.2); provided opportunities to provide services in novel or unique ways (9.0); and made it easier to engage hard-to-reach populations (8.7).
- In key informant interviews, partners emphasized the importance of providing tailored programming based on community needs. They spoke about the differences in community needs based on geographic location and specific park, emphasizing that specifically catering to each community creates participant retention and excitement about returning to PAD year after year.

Goal 5: Increase Physical Activity, and Decrease Chronic Disease Risk

PAD increased access to physical activity by providing free sports and exercise classes, with a diverse set of offerings for all ages. Most attendees who did not meet the recommended activity guidelines for their age participated in physical activity at PAD. PAD serves as a mechanism for introducing new methods to be physically active to the community. Assuming PAD physical activity levels were sustained year-round, findings indicated the likely reduction in disease burden and associated costs in high-need communities.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, most attendees (72%) participated in a physical activity at PAD, including team sports (56%), such as soccer, football, or basketball; walking club (36%); exercise classes (29%), such as dancing, boxing, Zumba, or mindful movement/yoga, and swimming (24%). Attendees noted participation in a wide variety of physical activity offerings and introduction to new modalities of exercise through PAD.
- Of attendees who did not meet the recommended activity guidelines for their age, 76% participated in physical activity at PAD.
- In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD provided attendees with adequate access to physical activity opportunities (9.3 of 10); improved physical well-being of attendees (9.0); encouraged continued physical activity in park programs throughout the year (8.8); and improved access to health education (8.6).
- Using a modified version of the Integrated Transport and Health Impacts Model (ITHIM), the level of physical activity at PAD, if sustained year-round, would primarily reduce

stroke and ischemic heart disease and lead to an overall decline of 20 years of life lost, 20 fewer years of disability adjusted life years, and avoidance of two premature deaths for the entire PAD population in 2023.

- Estimated cost savings due to reductions in chronic disease because of increased physical activity at PAD in 2023 were estimated at a total of \$2.974 million. The largest cost savings were due to reduction in morbidity in diabetes (32%) and heart disease (30%).
- In key informant interviews, DPR staff emphasized how PAD reduces barriers to being physically active by offering access to sports equipment, introducing new and innovative methods for engaging in physical activity, and by providing a non-competition and inclusive environment to support attendees.

Goal 6: Contribute to Positive Youth Development

PAD offers multiple avenues for youth to meaningfully engage and feel ownership in PAD activities. Opportunities through the DEO's Youth at Work program may lead to meaningful long-term recreational service careers, while helping youth build skills in the short-term (e.g., customer service, communication, understanding the importance of responsibility and accountability). Having dedicated programming such as teen zone activities gives youth a sense of belonging at PAD, encouraging their continued participation.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 36% of attendees who completed the survey were 10-25 years old, an increase from 2022 (28%).
- In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD offers a variety of youth-appropriate programming (8.8 of 10) and provides opportunities for positive youth development (9.0).
- Over 370 Youth at Work placements were made across the 34 PAD parks during fiscal year (FY) 2022-2023.
- In key informant interviews, DPR expressed how the Youth at Work program provides skill development and valuable work experience to participating youth, while fostering community connection. However, partners highlighted challenges with youth hiring processes and timeline. Additionally, partners mentioned how the teen zones and Our SPOT programming can be instrumental in connecting youth with one another in a safe space, but recognized that this programming was not available across all PAD parks or was not well attended by youth at certain parks. Partners emphasized the importance of further exploring opportunities to provide additional resources and services specifically to at-risk youth through PAD.

Goal 7: Promote Senior Connectedness

PAD largely helped to promote senior connectedness, although there was a need expressed by attendees and key informants to increase programming for older adults at some parks. Activities for older adults varied by park, and parks with dedicated senior centers and programming had better senior engagement.

These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

- As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 5% of attendees who completed the survey were 60+.
- In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD offers a variety of senior-appropriate programming (7.5 of 10) and provides opportunities for seniors to connect with one another and their community (8.2). In open-ended comments, partners mentioned dedicated programming for older adults (e.g. senior dances) at some parks, while at other parks, activities for seniors were incorporated into existing programming (e.g., an art class for all adults).
- In key informant interviews, partners mentioned successes and challenges in connecting with older adults during PAD and offered recommendations to improve senior-specific programming.

Conclusions

Overall, PAD has made significant progress in achieving its intended goals through the provision of quality recreational programming in a safe and family-friendly environment. Evidence demonstrates that PAD may have reduced crime and associated costs in PAD parks and their surrounding areas over time; encouraged meaningful collaboration between participating County departments and community organizations; contributed to feelings of well-being, family togetherness, and social cohesion; offered sports, entertainment, and other activities for children and adults with no barriers to participation; may have reduced the burden of disease and associated costs for attendees that participated in sports and exercise opportunities; and meaningfully engaged youth and seniors in programming.

Introduction

PAD Overview and UCLA Evaluation

Parks After Dark (PAD) is an innovative Los Angeles County (County) strategy for building resilient communities that re-envision parks as centralized “hubs” for the promotion of safety, equity, physical and mental health, as well as family and overall community well-being. PAD began in 2010 as the prevention strategy of the County’s Gang Violence Reduction Initiative. PAD is led by the County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), in partnership with the Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Probation Department, and Department of Public Social Services, with support from the Board of Supervisors, Chief Executive Office (CEO), Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department (LASD), and several other County and community-based partners.

PAD extends hours of park operation (6-10 PM) during summer weekend evenings (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights) and offers a variety of free activities and resources for attendees of all ages. Additionally, Deputy Sheriffs patrol all PAD parks and interventionists engage community members (eight parks in the South Agency) to ensure safety of attendees during PAD. PAD includes recreational activities (e.g., sports clinics, exercise classes, walking clubs), entertainment (e.g., concerts, movies), arts and educational programs (e.g., arts and crafts, cultural programs), teen clubs and activities, and health and social service resource access. DPR introduced new strategic priorities in 2023, including a focus on positive youth development, targeted senior engagement, inclusion of community members in program design, and community-driven safety approaches. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PAD events were not held in 2020 or 2021 but were re-launched in 2022. In 2022, PAD was expanded to include single-day events during winter and spring school breaks to better serve communities that have been economically or socially marginalized; these events were well-attended and continued with high participation and success in 2023.

The summer program originally started in three parks in 2010 and has since expanded to 34 parks, with periodic inclusion of new parks (see [Appendix B: Additional Data](#)). PAD parks cover a significant geographic area of Los Angeles County. PAD parks are located primarily in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, with the exception of El Cariso and Jesse Owens Parks, which are located within the City of Los Angeles, but operated by DPR. The communities where PAD parks are located have higher rates of economic hardship, obesity, and violence compared to the other areas of Los Angeles County (see [Appendix C: Service Use in Zip Codes around PAD Parks](#)).

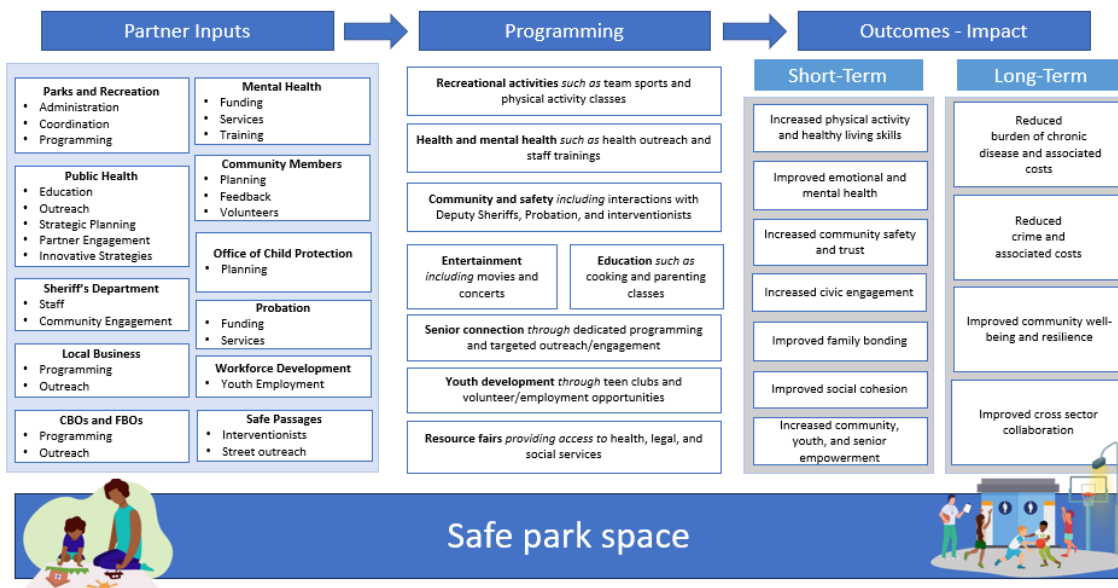
PAD goals include: 1) decrease community violence and increase safety; 2) facilitate cross-sector collaboration in park communities and county-wide; 3) increase social cohesion, and family and community well-being; 4) increase access to free recreational programming, health and social services that reflect the interests and needs of communities served; 5) increase physical activity and decrease chronic disease risk; 6) contribute to positive youth development; and 7) promote senior connectedness. PAD added Goals 6 and 7 in 2023, reflecting new strategic priorities. PAD also included community members in program design under Goal 4 and utilized community-driven safety approaches under Goal 1 in 2023. The evaluation findings in this report describe progress towards the seven goals outlined above by exploring relevant process and outcome indicators, while also including a dedicated chapter for spring and winter programming.

PAD Logic Model and Evaluation Approach

The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (UCLA) was selected to evaluate the 2023 PAD program. This evaluation follows a similar approach used in prior years with some adjustments and improvements. UCLA aimed to assess the outcomes of PAD given the multifaceted interventions included in the program.

The evaluation approach was aligned with the PAD logic model, which identifies PAD inputs (partners and resources), outputs (programming), and anticipated short- and long-term outcomes of the program (Exhibit 1), with a safe park space as foundational to all. The model indicates that partner inputs lead to the provision of programming, which consists of diverse activities which facilitate a sense of community. PAD programming is expected to lead to better outcomes including short-term outcomes, such as increased physical activity and improved emotional health, as well as long-term outcomes, such as reduced burden of chronic disease and crime, and their associated costs.

Exhibit 1: PAD Logic Model



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team, updated 2024.

Available data sources for the UCLA evaluation included Census 2020 data; spring, summer, and winter 2023 PAD participant surveys; Los Angeles Sheriff Department and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) crime data from 2009-2023; key informant interviews with DPR and participating partners from LASD, DPH, DMH, and DEO; and DPR administrative data. The data sources, analytic methods, and data limitations and challenges are available online in [Appendix A: Methods](#).

PAD attendees completed a survey while attending summer PAD (n= 25,413). The number of respondents varied by park, ranging from 100 at Valleydale Park to 1,670 at Ted Watkins Park. UCLA created a unique identifier at the park-level to remove potential duplicate surveys (i.e., a survey completed by the same individual within a single PAD season). De-duplicated descriptives are presented in this report. Summer 2023 data is presented throughout this report, with specific breakdowns by individual park and PAD Group presented in [Appendix B: Additional Data](#). UCLA also presents analysis from the spring 2023 participant survey (n= 458) in a dedicated spring programming chapter (see chapter, Spring 2023 Programming) and winter 2023 PAD participant survey (n=3,577) in a dedicated winter programming chapter (see chapter, Winter 2023 Programming).

To measure the potential impact of PAD on crime rates, UCLA identified comparison parks in Los Angeles County that had similar geographic and population characteristics as PAD parks. UCLA first excluded parks that lacked open access, had no restrooms (e.g., proxy for minimum facilities required to host an event like PAD), or were not managed by Los Angeles City or

County. Among the remaining parks, UCLA developed a model to select comparison parks that matched population characteristics in surrounding Census Tracts and rates of Part I and II crimes (see [Appendix A: Methods](#) for more details about comparison park selection).

Key partners from participating County departments (DPR, LASD, DPH, DMH, DEO) offered their perspectives through key informant surveys (n=24) and interviews (17 interviews with n=55 key informants).

Goal 1: Decrease Community Violence and Increase Perceptions of Safety

Safety is a foundational goal of the PAD program model and therefore, PAD was designed to provide a safe space where community members could access high-quality programming and needed services. This chapter includes an assessment of the potential impact of PAD on crime in participating PAD parks and their surrounding communities. Potential impact on violence and crime was assessed using LASD and LAPD Part I and Part II crime data from 2010 to 2023 (when available) at the Census Tract level. Data included crime rates in PAD parks, and UCLA estimated the cumulative impact of PAD on crime using the difference-in-difference (DD) methodology, which examined crime rates in PAD and parks selected as comparison before and after PAD implementation. DD analysis is shown for PAD overall and by the seven PAD Groups, which are cohorts of PAD parks based on the year they first implemented PAD (2010, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2022). In 2022, Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park (PAD Group Seven) began implementing PAD and is now included in the crime analysis, as it has a minimum of two years of implementation data to assess trends.

The potential reduction in criminal justice costs was estimated using the cumulative change in numbers of Part I crimes from 2010 to 2013. Cost associated with Part I crimes were estimated using available literature. However, cost reductions associated with fewer Part II crimes were not calculated because cost data were only available for some Part II crimes.

Analysis of crime data were complemented with analyses of perceptions of safety and relationships between community members, LASD Sheriff Deputies, and community interventionists using summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, as well as key informant surveys and interviews conducted with participating partners.

Note that the data presented on changes in crime rates in this report are not directly comparable to prior evaluation reports due to necessary changes in approach, such as selection of comparison parks.

Part I and Part II Crime Rates

Part I crimes are defined as serious property and violent crimes and include homicide, aggravated assault, rape, larceny theft, robbery, grand theft auto, burglary, and arson. Part II crimes are defined as non-violent and violent low-level offenses such as drug abuse violations, disorderly conduct, non-aggravated assaults, and vandalism, among others. Part II crime rates

are subject to underreporting, and therefore, trends presented in this report likely underestimate rates of these crimes.

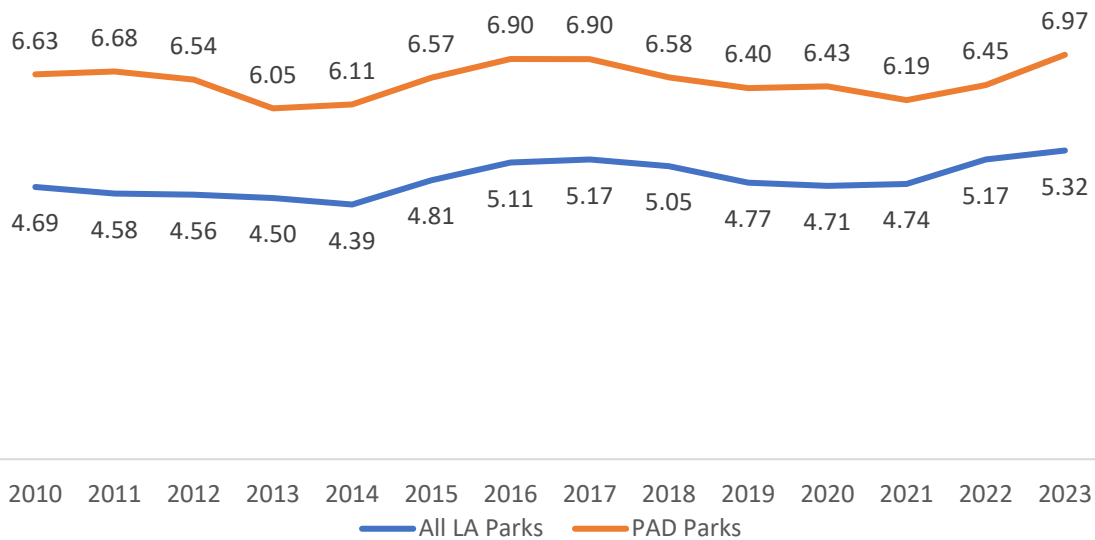
To estimate the potential impact of PAD on crime, comparison parks were identified from all Los Angeles County and City parks with facilities suitable for hosting PAD programming. Comparison parks were matched to PAD parks based on demographics, including race and ethnicity, household income, and crime rates in the communities living around the parks during the year prior to PAD implementation. Communities around the parks were defined as Census Tracts that were within a one-mile radius of the park. When a Census Tract was within one mile of multiple parks, it was attributed to the park with the shortest distance between the center of the park and center of the Census Tract.

Part I and Part II daily crime rates were calculated using the ratio of the number of crimes during the summer PAD period to the total population in the associated Census Tracts using LASD/LAPD and Census population data and dividing by the numbers of days in the PAD period. The PAD period was specific to the timeframe for the start and end of PAD programming for a given year, ranging from 50 to 72 days. UCLA calculated a daily crime rate for each park and each year to increase comparability of rates across parks and over time. This method addressed variations in park specific timelines during the summer months. See [Appendix A: Methods](#) for further details on crime data analysis methods.

Part I and Part II Crime Long-Term Trends

Long-term trends of crime during PAD were examined from 2010 to 2023. Exhibit 2 compares the average Part I crime rates around PAD parks and the average rates around all Los Angeles County parks (including PAD parks) from 2010 to 2023. These data demonstrated that PAD parks were intentionally selected from areas with high rates of crime. Data showed a notable upward trend in in Part I crime rates in Los Angeles County starting in 2021 and an escalation from 2022 to 2023, which was greater for PAD parks than all Los Angeles County parks.

Exhibit 2: Part I Daily Crime Rates per 100,000 Population, PAD Parks and All Los Angeles (LA) County Parks, 2010-2023

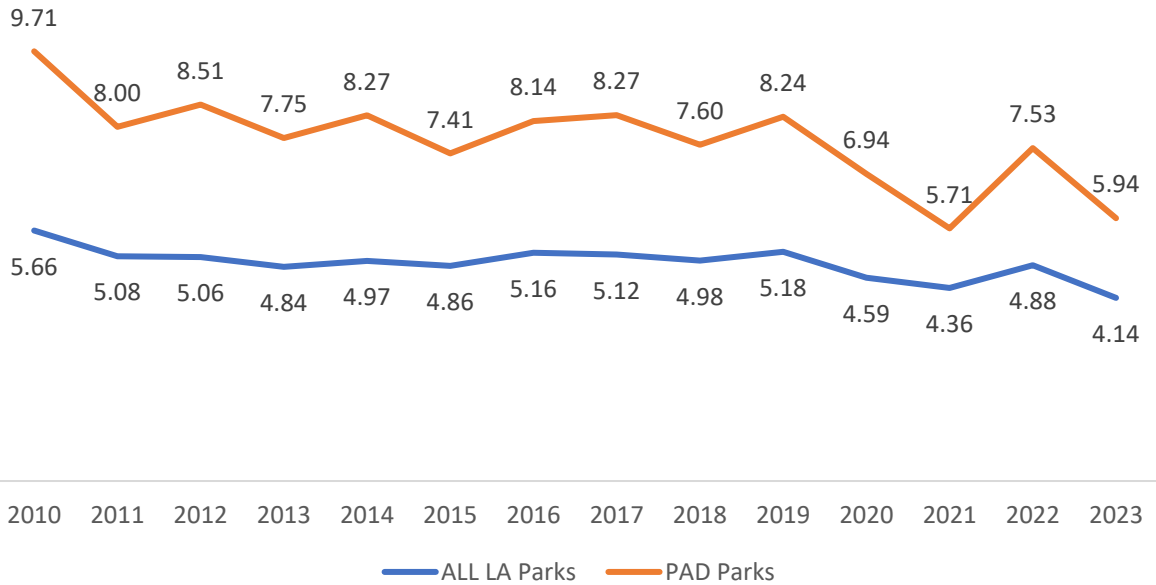


Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Data, 2010-2023.

Notes: Los Angeles County Parks includes PAD Parks. Crime rates are calculated for Census Tracts surrounding parks.

Exhibit 3 shows Part II crime rates around PAD parks and all Los Angeles (LA) County parks from 2010 to 2023. These trends are similar to Part I crime rates, with areas around PAD parks having higher rates of daily crime in comparison to all LA parks. Data show a decline in Part II crime rates overall and for PAD parks from 2022 to 2023.

Exhibit 3: Part II Daily Crime Rate per 100,000 Population, around PAD Parks and All Los Angeles (LA) County Parks, 2010-2023



Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Data, 2010-2023.

Notes: Los Angeles County Parks includes PAD Parks. Crime rates are calculated for Census Tracts surrounding parks.

Differences in Daily Crime Rates between PAD and Comparison Parks

UCLA conducted additional analysis to assess the potential role of PAD in changes in crime rates and numbers over time using DD methodology and regression analysis, which are distinct from the trends presented above. The findings are presented by PAD Group. See [Appendix A: Methods](#) for additional detail on the DD methodology.

Reduction in Rates of Part I and II Crimes

Exhibit 4 shows that the total change in predicted rate of Part I crimes relative to comparison parks was negative or declined for all PAD Groups except for Group Three, which included 12 parks (0.20 daily Part I crimes per 100,000 population) since implementation of PAD in 2015. The largest reduction was shown for Group Seven, consisting of one park (-1.40), followed by Group One and Group Five (-1.06 and -0.70, respectively) that collectively consisted of five parks.

Exhibit 4: Estimated Reduction in Predicted Rates of Daily Part I Crimes per 100,000 Population in PAD Parks by PAD Group by year and overall, 2010-2023

Year	Group One	Group Two	Group Three	Group Four	Group Five	Group Six	Group Seven
2010	0.06	-	-	-	-	-	-
2011	0.58	-	-	-	-	-	-
2012	-0.37	0.14	-	-	-	-	-
2013	-0.02	0.12	-	-	-	-	-
2014	0.02	-0.36	-	-	-	-	-
2015	-0.28	0.10	-0.49	-	-	-	-
2016	0.23	-0.01	1.06	-0.17	-	-	-
2017	-0.34	0.27	-0.67	0.29	0.27	-	-
2018	-0.39	-0.69	0.28	0.13	-0.62	-0.35	-
2019	0.21	0.13	-0.65	-0.29	0.81	0.39	-
2020	0.00	0.40	0.47	0.12	-1.31	-0.25	-
2021	-0.30	-0.26	0.21	-0.10	0.51	0.14	-
2022	-0.57	0.00	0.25	-0.37	-0.36	0.06	0.45
2023	0.12	0.10	-0.25	0.34	0.00	-0.10	-1.84
Total Change Per PAD Group	-1.06	-0.05	0.20	-0.03	-0.70	-0.12	-1.40

Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Data, 2010-2023.

Note: PAD parks were compared to similar comparison parks matched based on demographics, household income, and crime rates in the communities living around the parks during the year prior to PAD implementation.

Exhibit 5 shows the reduction in predicted daily Part II crimes per 100,000 population by PAD Group for every year PAD was in operation and relative to comparison parks. Total predicted Part II crimes declined in all PAD Groups except for Groups Two, Four, and Seven that had an increase of 0.40, 0.22, and 0.36 per 100,000 population, respectively. The largest reduction was seen among Group Five parks (-1.48 daily part II crimes per 100,000 population), followed by Group Three and Group Six (-0.47 and -0.42, respectively).

Exhibit 5: Estimated Reduction in Rate of Daily Part II Crimes per 100,000 Population in PAD Parks by PAD Group by year and overall, 2010-2023

Year	Group One	Group Two	Group Three	Group Four	Group Five	Group Six	Group Seven
2010	-0.31	-	-	-	-	-	-
2011	0.91	-	-	-	-	-	-
2012	0.05	0.79	-	-	-	-	-
2013	-0.83	-0.04	-	-	-	-	-
2014	0.41	0.03	-	-	-	-	-
2015	-0.23	0.15	-0.47	-	-	-	-
2016	-0.39	-0.34	0.57	0.02	-	-	-
2017	0.55	0.25	0.17	0.19	-0.60	-	-
2018	-0.65	-0.48	-0.27	0.08	0.67	-0.31	-
2019	-0.41	0.16	-0.15	-0.32	0.37	-0.33	-
2020	0.75	0.08	-0.40	0.06	-0.74	0.25	-
2021	-0.31	-0.43	-0.15	-0.11	-0.88	-0.05	-
2022	-0.61	0.33	0.55	-0.18	-0.13	0.57	0.26
2023	0.81	-0.11	-0.33	0.47	-0.17	-0.56	0.10
Total Change Per PAD Group	-0.27	0.40	-0.47	0.22	-1.48	-0.42	0.36

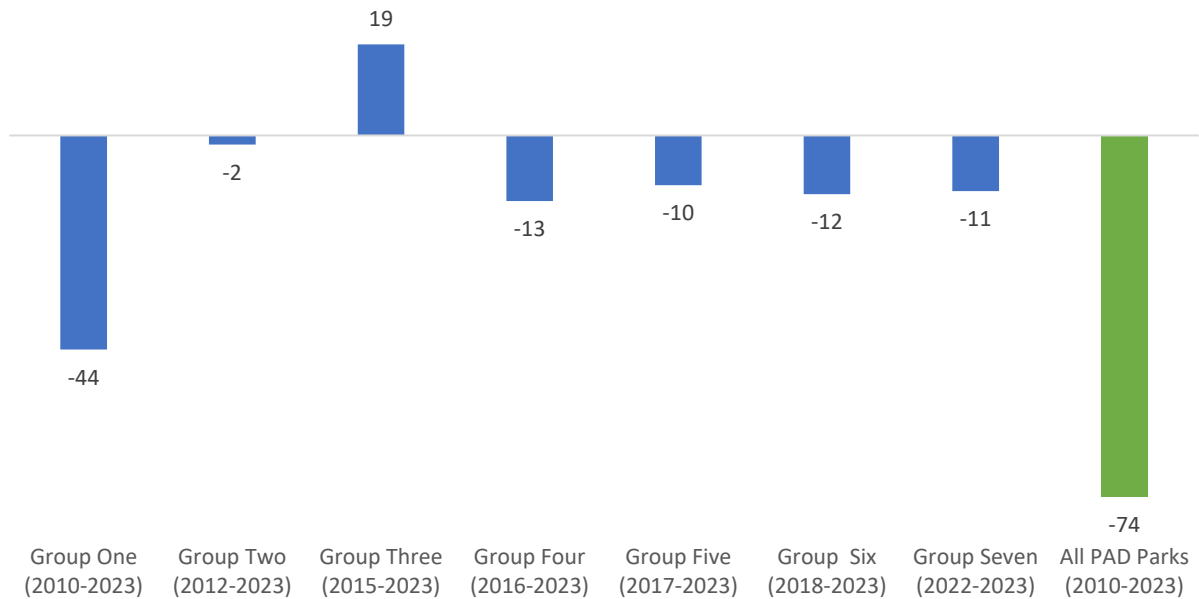
Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Data, 2010-2023.

Note: PAD parks were compared to similar comparison parks matched based on demographics, household income, and crime rates in the communities living around the parks during the year prior to PAD implementation.

Reduction in Number of Part I and II Crimes

Examination of the overall change in predicted number of crimes for the PAD program indicated a reduction of 74 Part I and 43 Part II crimes since PAD implementation in 2010 through 2023 and compared to comparison parks (Exhibit 6 and Exhibit 7). The cumulative reduction in Part I crime was greatest among Group One (44) and the cumulative reduction in Part II crime was greatest for Group Six (38).

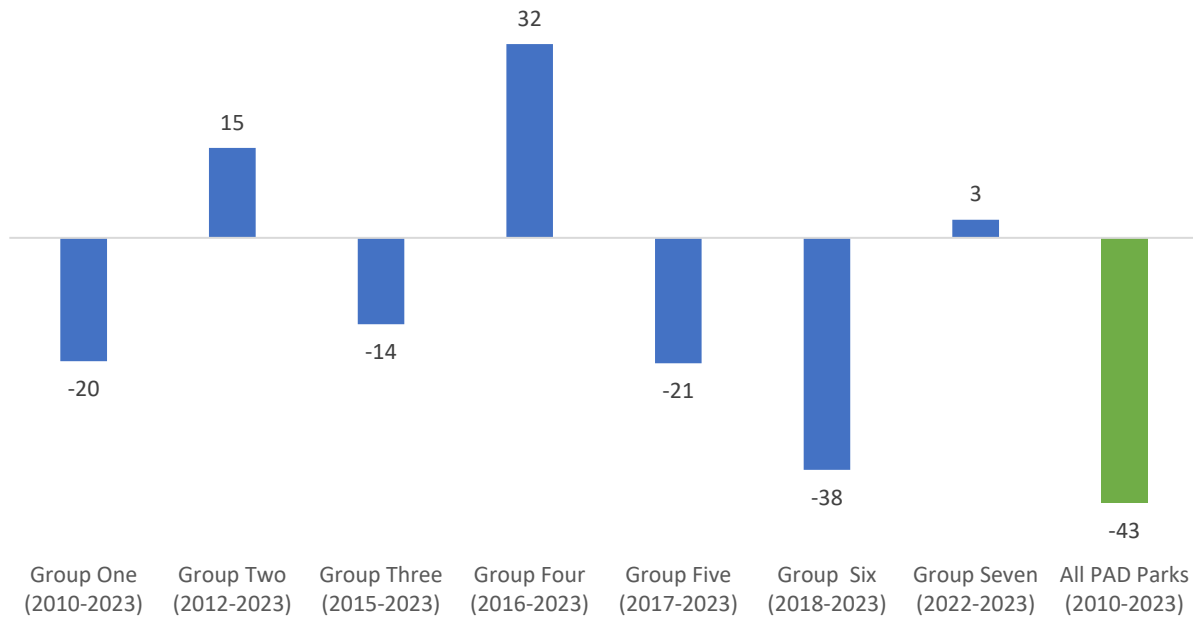
Exhibit 6: Estimated Reduction in Number of Part I Crimes versus Comparison Parks, 2010-2023



Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Data, 2010-2023.

Note: PAD parks were compared to similar comparison parks matched based on demographics, household income, and crime rates in the communities living around the parks during the year prior to PAD implementation.

Exhibit 7: Estimated Cumulative Change in Number of Part II Crime versus Comparison Parks, 2010-2023



Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Data, 2010-2023.

Note: PAD parks were compared to similar comparison parks matched based on demographics, household income, and crime rates in the communities living around the parks during the year prior to PAD implementation.

Estimated PAD Cost Savings Due to Reduced Crime

UCLA estimated costs associated with Part I crimes in 2023 dollars. See [Appendix A: Methods](#) for additional details. UCLA estimated a cumulative decrease of \$10,472,000 in associated costs based on the estimated cumulative reduction of 74 Part I crimes in PAD parks and the surrounding community from 2010-2023 (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: Estimated Cumulative Reduction in Costs Associated with Reduction in Part I Crimes in Census Tracts In and Surrounding PAD Parks, 2010-2023

	Proportion of Crime Types in PAD Surrounding Areas (2010-2023)	Cost Per Crime, 2023	Estimated Cumulative Cost Savings from PAD, 2010-2023
Robbery	18.3%	\$240,574	\$3,270,000
Aggravated assault	16.8%	\$217,428	\$2,713,000
Larceny-theft	40.8%	\$64,242	\$1,942,000
Murder	0.2%	\$10,031,965	\$1,520,000
Burglary	7.1%	\$118,578	\$628,000
Motor-vehicle theft	15.5%	\$17,502	\$201,000
Rape	0.8%	\$324,388	\$188,000
Arson	0.4%	30,480	\$10,000
Total			\$10,472,000

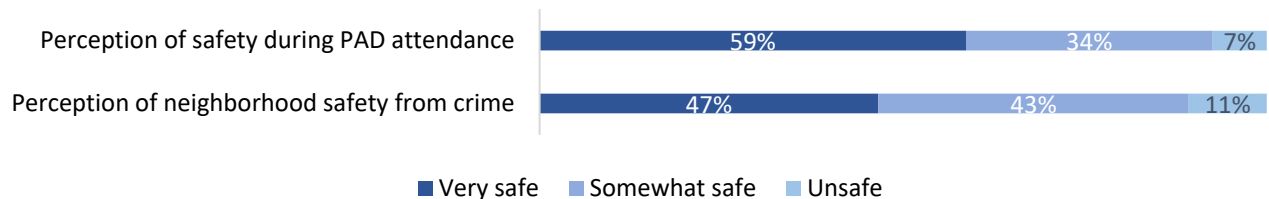
Source: Los Angeles County Sheriff Department (LASD) and Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) data, 2010-2023. Note: Costs were obtained from available literature and inflated to 2023 dollars.

PAD Attendees on Perceptions of Safety and Satisfaction with Law Enforcement

As indicated in the summer 2023 survey, the majority of attendees perceived PAD parks to be very safe (59%) and an additional 34% perceived them to be somewhat safe (Exhibit 9).

PAD attendees perceived their neighborhoods as very safe (47%) less often than they perceived PAD as very safe (59%).

Exhibit 9: PAD Attendees’ Perceptions of Safety at PAD Parks and in their Neighborhoods in Percentages (%), Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

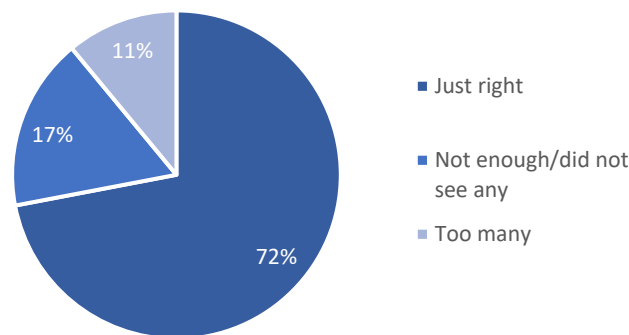
Among PAD attendees who expressed not feeling safe in their neighborhood, 64% felt safe at PAD (data not shown).

"I can say that there is a nucleus of people and families that come every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, because they know when they come to PAD, it's a safe haven..."

– Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Most PAD attendees (72%) reported that the number of Deputy Sheriffs at PAD parks was just right. More attendees indicated that there were not enough or that they did not see any Deputy Sheriffs at PAD (17%), as opposed to there being too many (11%; Exhibit 10). Almost all PAD attendees agreed that PAD improved the relationship of the community with Deputy Sheriffs (93%; data not shown).

Exhibit 10: PAD Attendees on Number of Deputy Sheriffs Present at PAD in Percentages (%), Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

There were several factors that contributed to PAD attendees' feelings of safety. Most attendees (65%) identified Deputy Sheriffs as contributing to feelings of safety, but other factors included park staff (51%), people around (44%), the positive atmosphere (35%), and the community intervention workers (12%; Exhibit 11). Only 2% of PAD attendees said none of these elements contributed to their feelings of safety while at PAD.

Exhibit 11: PAD Attendees on Factors that Contributed to Feelings of Safety in Percentages (%), Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

Note: Multiple responses possible.

In open ended comments, attendees emphasized how multiple factors contributed to perceptions of a safe environment while at PAD and elaborated on the “how” and “why.” For example, the presence of Deputy Sheriffs, park staff, large gatherings, and the positive atmosphere were reassuring to attendees. Additionally, park amenities, such as lighting and spacing, helped attendees feel comfortable in their environment. Signage also created clear designations and guidance for PAD attendees. Illustrative comments related to feelings of safety are highlighted in Exhibit 12.

Exhibit 12: Selected Illustrative Comments about PAD and Park Safety, Summer 2023

“I honestly feel great with the staff in the park they are awesome and so friendly.” (Sorensen Park)
“The amount of people made it safe.” (Ted Watkins Park)
“A safe space to hangout.” (Belvedere Park)
“Good lighting and spacing [made it safe].” (Jackie Robinson Park)
“[Sheriffs are] always here to watch us and keep us safe.” (Rimgrove Park)
“Positive energy, and all the people.” (East Rancho Dominguez)

Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

Factors that contributed to a lack of safety as indicated by PAD attendees included limited involvement by Deputy Sheriffs while at PAD or children left unsupervised, in addition to inadequate lighting, concerns about gang activity, and visible substance use at some parks. For example, some open-ended comments mentioned not enough Deputy Sheriff presence, with an attendee at Roosevelt Park suggesting “PAD could add just a few more Deputy Sheriffs around the area” and an attendee at San Angelo Park noting “police don’t show up. I only see the staff.”

Some attendee responses referred to a lack of rapport and historical distrust between community members and law enforcement – emphasizing the need for continued engagement and trust building activities between Deputy Sheriffs and community members. For example, an attendee at Charter Oak Park noted “Deputy sheriffs make me feel unsafe” and an attendee at Eugene A. Obregon Park noted “[Sheriffs] should leave immediately.” These comments allude to factors that take time and dedicated energy to resolve, suggesting the importance of

strategic collaboration and relationship building between LASD and DPR PAD staff. South Agency parks have had successful outcomes from the presence of community intervention workers; best practices from this Pilot program can be implemented across all PAD parks to expand benefits.

PAD Key Informants on Safety and Crime

In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD improved attendees' perception of safety (9.0 of 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree); reduced gang violence and activity within participating PAD parks (8.5); reduced crime in participating PAD park communities (8.5); and improved relationships between community members and law enforcement (8.1; Exhibit 13). Overall, PAD partners agreed that PAD is an effective strategy to decrease community violence and increase community safety (8.6).

Exhibit 13: PAD Key Informants on PAD Effectiveness in Decreasing Community Violence and Increasing Community Safety



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

Key informants commented on the specific factors they believed contributed to PAD attendees' sense of safety, which included homegrown relationships with community intervention workers; active Sheriff Deputy presence and engagement; presence of park staff and community members; as well as the organized nature of PAD programming.

"PAD transforms parks into a safe community space through programming that is meaningful to community... [PAD includes] trusted staff, people gathering in positive activities. [Safety is a result of] a combination of law enforcement presence - when Deputies are there to also engage and build trust - and community intervention workers providing safe passages, de-escalation, and engaging community members, are important for safety at PAD." – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Role of Law Enforcement and Deputy Engagement at PAD

LASD Parks Bureau has had a continuous presence at PAD events since the program's inception in 2010. Each year, LASD has coordinated directly with DPR to understand park needs, as well as safety and security priorities of each park. LASD utilizes a scheduling sergeant to coordinate Deputy Sheriff assignments for PAD events. The scheduling sergeant directly communicates to participating Deputy Sheriffs on the importance of acting as a "community caretaker" and their role to actively interact and engage with PAD attendees.

While Deputy Sheriff involvement has varied by park, during key informant interviews, Deputy Sheriffs described intentional activities such as handing out small toys and candy to facilitate youth comfort with police presence. Trust and rapport building with PAD attendees and park staff is a high priority for LASD but is challenged with Deputy Sheriff schedules and irregular assignment to specific PAD parks. LASD noted the importance of park staff to provide expectations for what they'd like to see from LASD deputies. DPR noted the need to "find the right spaces for Deputy Sheriffs and build on their strengths." For example, one park noted success with having Deputy Sheriffs stationed at park entranceway to welcome attendees, and another noted success with having Deputy Sheriffs actively walking around during movie nights to hand out popcorn, while engaging with PAD attendees.

LASD expressed some inherent challenges interacting with the community and approaching attendees because in some areas, community members may be uncomfortable with their presence. They noted that this can be mitigated through community intervention worker presence. Overall, Deputy Sheriffs emphasized that PAD events promoted social cohesion and provided opportunities for family bonding to keep children out of violence. Deputy Sheriffs felt they were viewed as "more approachable" because of PAD and had an opportunity to interact with the community in new and non-traditional ways.

DPR staff emphasized the need to have Deputy Sheriff presence throughout the duration of the event when possible.

Role of Community Interventionists and DPH at PAD to Promote Safety

The Safe Passages Initiative, funded by DPH's Office of Violence Prevention, contracts community-based organizations (CBOs) to hire community interventionists who ensure youth, teens, and families can get to and from PAD parks safely and can enjoy PAD and other park programming. Interventionists work to engage gang-impacted youth in PAD, provide crisis intervention services at the parks as needed, and work in partnership with park staff, law enforcement, and communities to monitor and ensure safety. The initiative allows those who may not be as comfortable with law enforcement to have the opportunity to engage in PAD

activities in a safe manner due to interventionist presence. Interventionists are community members who often have direct lived experience with gang activity and/or prior gang involvement. This initiative was offered at eight parks in summer 2023, including: Allen Martin, Athens, Bethune, Jesse Owens, Mona, Roosevelt, Salazar, and Ted Watkins.

In key informant interviews, community intervention workers were often cited as having a unique understanding of community dynamics and events, and as a result, kept PAD park staff abreast of potential issues. In terms of the initiative's impact, one key informant noted: "parks where organic relationships with homegrown intervention agencies are fostered and respected see a reduced amount of gang crime at the parks."

In addition to the Safe Passages Initiative, DPH's Office of Violence Prevention focused on crisis response and community engagement at PAD events. Staff had a dedicated table and were available to PAD attendees and vendors to maintain a comfortable environment and de-escalate situations as they arose.

Goal 2: Increase Collaboration among Different Stakeholders

This chapter presents an assessment of the cross-sector collaboration in PAD using key informant surveys and interviews with participating PAD partners. Key informants included individuals involved in PAD administration and implementation, those assisting with strategic planning, as well as those who directly provided programming. Key informants were from DPR, DPH, DMH, LASD, DEO, and community-based organizations, with the majority from DPR.

Departments and Agencies that Collaborated in PAD

DPR is the lead agency for PAD. DPR provided overall administration, hosted PAD at their park facilities, planned programming, and conducted daily operations. DPR works in close collaboration with LASD, DPH, DMH, and a variety of other County departments and CBOs. Exhibit 14 describes departments and agencies that collaborated in PAD and their roles and involvement.

Exhibit 14: Departments and Agencies that Collaborated in PAD

Department/Agency	Role/Involvement
Community-based organizations (CBOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided access to services and resources that are tailored to community needs. • Often embedded in the community and have an understanding of unique dynamics.
Chief Executive Office (CEO) of Los Angeles County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided strategic support and funding for PAD.
Department of Mental Health (DMH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended PAD events and provided information about services and resources they provide, such as hotlines and training for youth on how to recognize mental health signs and symptoms in loved ones. • Provided training for PAD staff on burnout and self-care, as well as crisis and trauma response.
DPH - Community Health Services (CHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed and employed programming, such as walking clubs and public health outreach initiatives, and services, such as vaccination clinics.
DPH - Injury & Violence Prevention (IVPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental since PAD's inception, particularly regarding vision and adaptation of the Safe Passages Initiative. • Assisted with strategic planning.

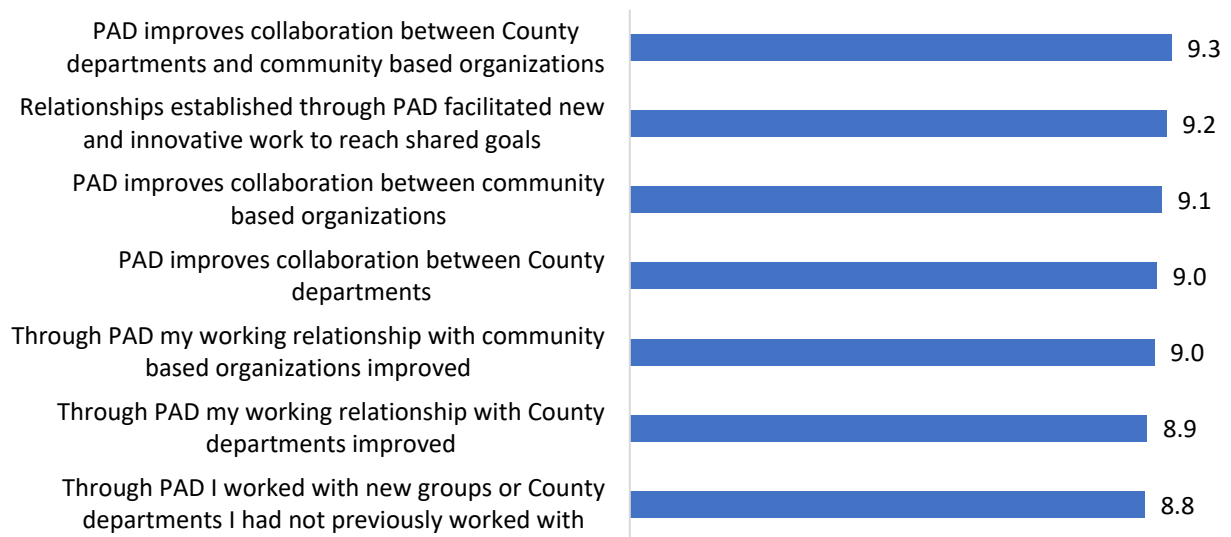
Department/Agency	Role/Involvement
LASD Deputy Sheriffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrolled the parks and engaged with community members during PAD, providing safety resources and part of the crime mitigation strategy.
Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orchestrated the Youth at Work program.

Source: Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

Perceptions of Cross-Sector Collaboration in PAD

Overall, participating partners had opportunities to work with new groups in interesting and innovative ways during and through PAD. In key informant surveys, PAD partners strongly agreed that PAD improved collaborations between County departments and CBOs (9.3 of 10); collaboration between CBOs (9.1); and collaboration between County departments (9.0; Exhibit 15). Department staff that collaborated closely to implement PAD in the field, particularly DPR, gave the highest collaboration scores.

Exhibit 15: PAD Key Informants on Increased Collaboration Amongst Participating Stakeholders



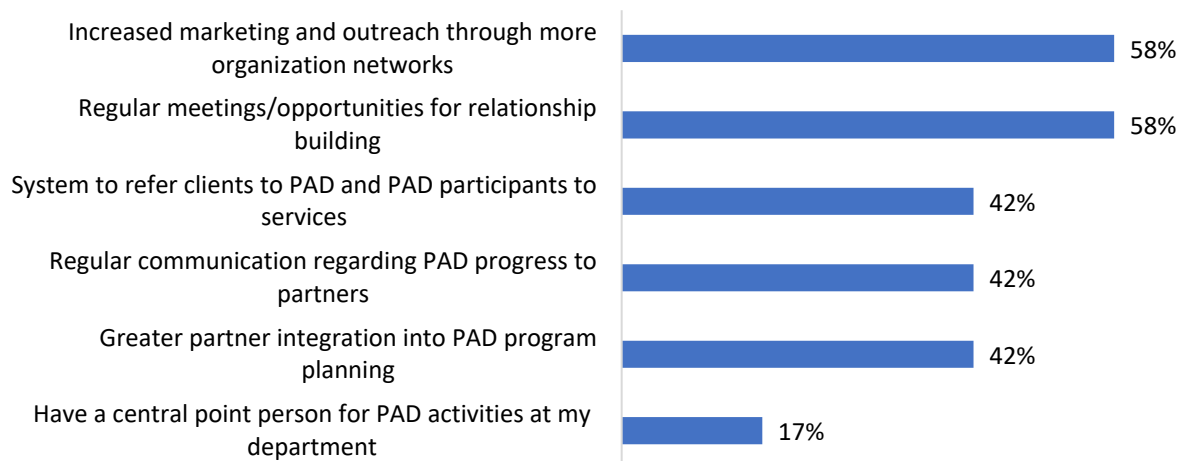
Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

"...through the inception of PAD, we've always wanted to collaborate with others, other departments, other nonprofits because we knew way back when that to have the robust programming and to reach out to our communities, we would need our partners to help. We just didn't have the resources to do all the things that we thought would be important. And since then, I think the number of partners that we have in all of our PAD Parks has grown exponentially. I think that the partnerships have really enhanced the program that we offer. I think we've been reaching out to not just the community around the park, but even a little further and I think that the types of programming being offered has been really new and exciting things that the Park Department would not be able to do on its own." – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

In key informant surveys, participating partners provided feedback on cross-sector collaboration through PAD and how to improve it. Participating partners often emphasized the importance of improving communication between PAD stakeholders to facilitate implementation and delivery of PAD programming. Participating partners identified specific ways to improve communication, which included: increasing marketing and outreach through more organization networks (58%), regular meetings/opportunities for relationship building (58%), system to refer clients to PAD and PAD participants to services (42%), and regular communication regarding PAD progress to partners (42%; Exhibit 16).

Exhibit 16: Activities to Improve Communication and Cross-Sector Collaboration by PAD Key Informants



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Multiple responses possible.

In key informant interviews, partners commented on how other key stakeholders could be better involved in PAD implementation and planning. Key informants spoke about the value of working together with County partners to promote PAD while simultaneously advocating and aligning with their own mission. CBOs are often very familiar with the community and have deeply embedded relationships with community members. These pre-existing relationships can be used to form great partnerships with PAD and have been known to be very successful in helping to provide equitable services that are accessible for PAD communities. DPR park staff emphasized the importance of working together to create successful PAD programming.

PAD Activities to Promote Cross-Sector Collaboration

PAD aimed to improve cross-sector collaboration in innovative ways, including stakeholder engagement meetings and community resource fairs. Stakeholder planning meetings were held in the spring of 2023, before PAD's June kickoff date, to encourage involvement of County departments, local leaders, and community-based organizations. These meetings were held at most PAD parks and at the regional level and allowed all PAD stakeholders to have an active role in planning the program. The goals of the stakeholder meetings included: understanding and prioritizing community needs, gathering commitments for services, and planning specific PAD activities. Undertaking planning/community engagement efforts in a collaborative and transparent way allowed DPR to build and sustain strong relationships with PAD stakeholders, demonstrated accountability, and contributed to better overall outcomes for communities.

In addition, prior to the launch of PAD, DPR organized a community resource fair, where County departments, community organizations, and other County agencies could outreach to the PAD community. Resource fairs aim to be representative of community needs and differed by park.

In key informant interviews, park staff emphasized the opportunity for County departments to promote PAD through their various outreach channels. Park staff also spoke about the usefulness of holding a PAD kickoff event before the start of every summer program. The kickoff event helps parks to understand advertising and marketing opportunities, to generate more interest in the community, and allows parks to collaborate across agencies on best practices.

"One thing LA County does have is they do have a media following. So, if we can get that [PAD] out there and with the departments that we partner with, they can get it [word spread] out there." -Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

"I think it's worth having a strategic conversation with other County departments you know, having a fresh conversation with them, especially since there's so many more initiatives now in the County that could align with Parks After Dark." -Key Informant, Department of Public Health

"It's just a great collaboration, because when we work with each other they're able to get their messages out as well as we are, you know about health, safety, mental health, physical health. There's a lot of components to PAD and with that being said, we encompass a whole lot in the services needed [by] patrons and they're glad that they [County Departments/CBOs] are here." -Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Goal 3: Increase Social Cohesion and Family Bonding

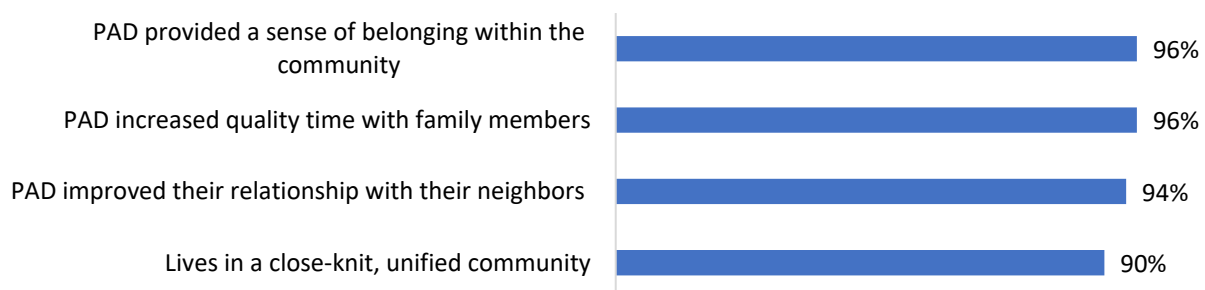
PAD provided an opportunity for families and neighbors to socialize, spend quality time together, and develop a positive sense of community in a safe public space. This chapter uses the summer 2023 PAD participant surveys to assess the impact of PAD on social cohesion and family bonding, including level of attendance by families, opportunities for family bonding, perceptions of social cohesion in neighborhood, and opportunities to know neighbors at PAD. Additional information was provided from key informant surveys and interviews conducted with participating partners.

PAD Participant Perceptions of Social Cohesion and Family Bonding

As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 87% reported attending PAD with children. This varied by park but was consistently the majority of attendees, with the low being 70% at El Cariso and the high being 95% at Ted Watkins Park (see [Appendix B: Additional Data](#) for breakdowns by individual park and PAD Group). Of those who attended with children, 43% reported attending with children ages 6-12, and fewer reported attending with children ages 0-5 (28%) or 13-18 (19%). The overwhelming majority (96%) of attendees reported that PAD provided a sense of belonging within the community (Exhibit 17).

Many PAD attendees (96%) reported that PAD increased quality time with family members. In addition, the vast majority reported that PAD improved their relationship with their neighbors (94%) and reported a high level of social cohesion as indicated by their perceptions that they lived in a close-knit and unified community (90%, Exhibit 17). Of the individuals who identified as not living in a close-knit unified community, 72% agreed that PAD improved their relationship with neighbors (data not shown).

Exhibit 17: PAD Participants Perceptions of Social Cohesion in Percentages (%), Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

In the open-ended responses, comments were overwhelmingly positive and were greatly appreciative of PAD and its beneficial effects on family quality time and community unison (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 18: Selected Illustrative Comments about Family Attendance and Bonding during PAD, Summer 2023

PAD increased family quality time	"It's nice I think it's great for the kids." (Colonel Leon H. Washington Park)
	"For me these events are very comfortable [and] more for my daughter. Thank you for making [her] vacation something special." (Roosevelt Park)
	"Spend time with my family outside of the house." (Valleydale Park)
	"[PAD] is so amazing and we are so grateful for all of the activities they provide." (Charter Oak Park)
PAD unified community	"Brings community together and provide quality activities in our neighborhood." (Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park)
	"Very positive group of people! This is a great concept that should be continued! This has a huge impact on our community." (San Angelo Park)
	"Positive atmosphere and the community are engaging in activities." (Steinmetz Park)
	"This is a great community event. I'm visiting family in the area for an extended stay and love this park." (George Lane Park)

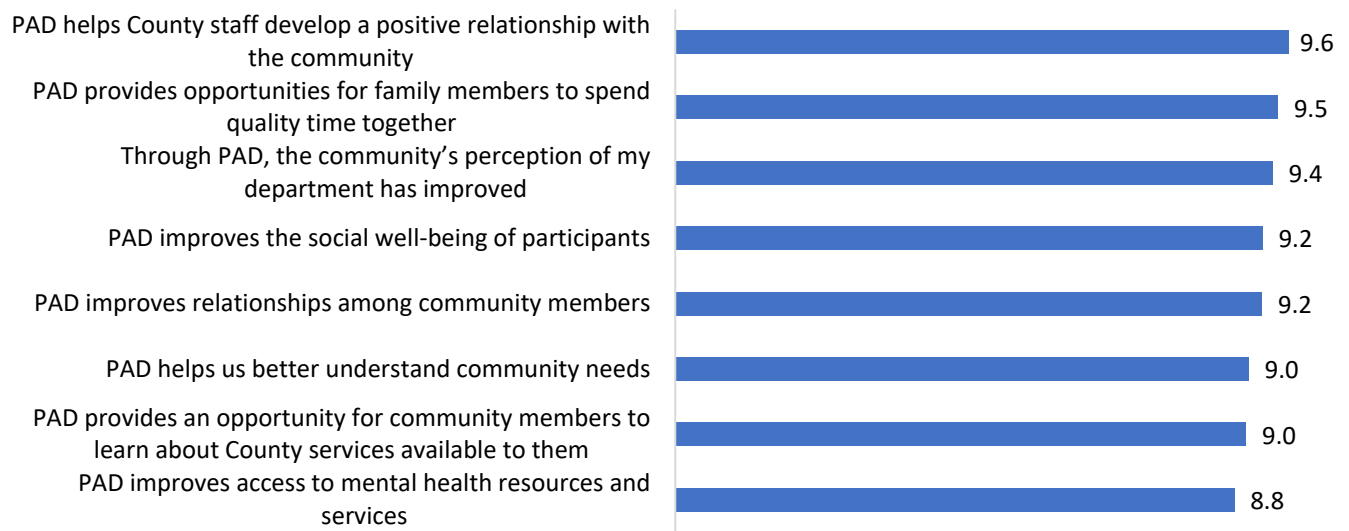
Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

Respondents highlighted how PAD's programming provided safe opportunities for families to go outside and spend time together, "keeping their children busy" and "out of trouble." Many comments mentioned the accessibility of PAD, noting that PAD offered quality time outside of the home and activities that some respondents could not otherwise afford. Comments also emphasized the importance of PAD in encouraging community interaction, uniting community members through providing opportunities to build rapport and support networks, especially for their children.

PAD Key Informants on Social Cohesion and Family Bonding

In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD improved aspects of social cohesion and family bonding, with partners strongly agreeing that PAD helped County departments develop a positive relationship with the community (9.6 of 10); provided opportunities for family members to spend quality time together (9.5); improved community’s perception of their department (9.4); improved the social well-being of participants (9.2) and improved relationships among community members (9.2; Exhibit 19).

Exhibit 19: PAD Key Informants on PAD Impact on Social Cohesion and Family Bonding



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

In key informant interviews, examples of social cohesion and family bonding were a common theme among the stories shared with DPR staff; see Exhibit 20 for specific examples shared.

Exhibit 20: Key Informant Illustrative Quotes on PAD Promoting Social Cohesion and Community Well-being

Key Informant Role/Department	Illustrative Quote
Department of Public Health	"PAD has become a holistic strategy for the community. It creates a safe space and is a basic right."
Department of Parks and Recreation	"Throughout the last 14 years we have seen generations of families continue to attend PAD events. We have seen families grow up and have their own kids. It's a good indicator that PAD has been a success."
Department of Parks and Recreation	"PAD parks and staff have become a part of the community. Attendees trust park staff and view them as family. They feel as though they can come to park staff and ask anything."
Department of Parks and Recreation	"PAD is a safe space for families to come together after mom and dad are off of work. It creates a carnival-like, family friendly environment."

Source: PAD Key Informant Interviews, January-March 2024.

In key informant interviews, DPR staff noted how even after PAD programming ended, PAD often had spillover effects, bringing individuals from the community to more park programming throughout the year. DPR staff described efforts to better understand and to assess community needs. Specific strategies included utilizing PAD participant surveys to understand attendee feedback of what they would like to see at future events, as well as directly interacting with attendees at PAD events to gather verbal feedback. Key informants emphasized the necessity of tailoring programming to community needs in an effort to increase social cohesion and family bonding through PAD. They also emphasized the importance of expanding and evolving PAD programming to become even more family oriented.

"By bridging the gap and coming together, we create social cohesion. Our motto is 'Creating community through people, parks, and programs.'" – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Goal 4: Increase Access to Quality Recreational Programming and Innovative Services

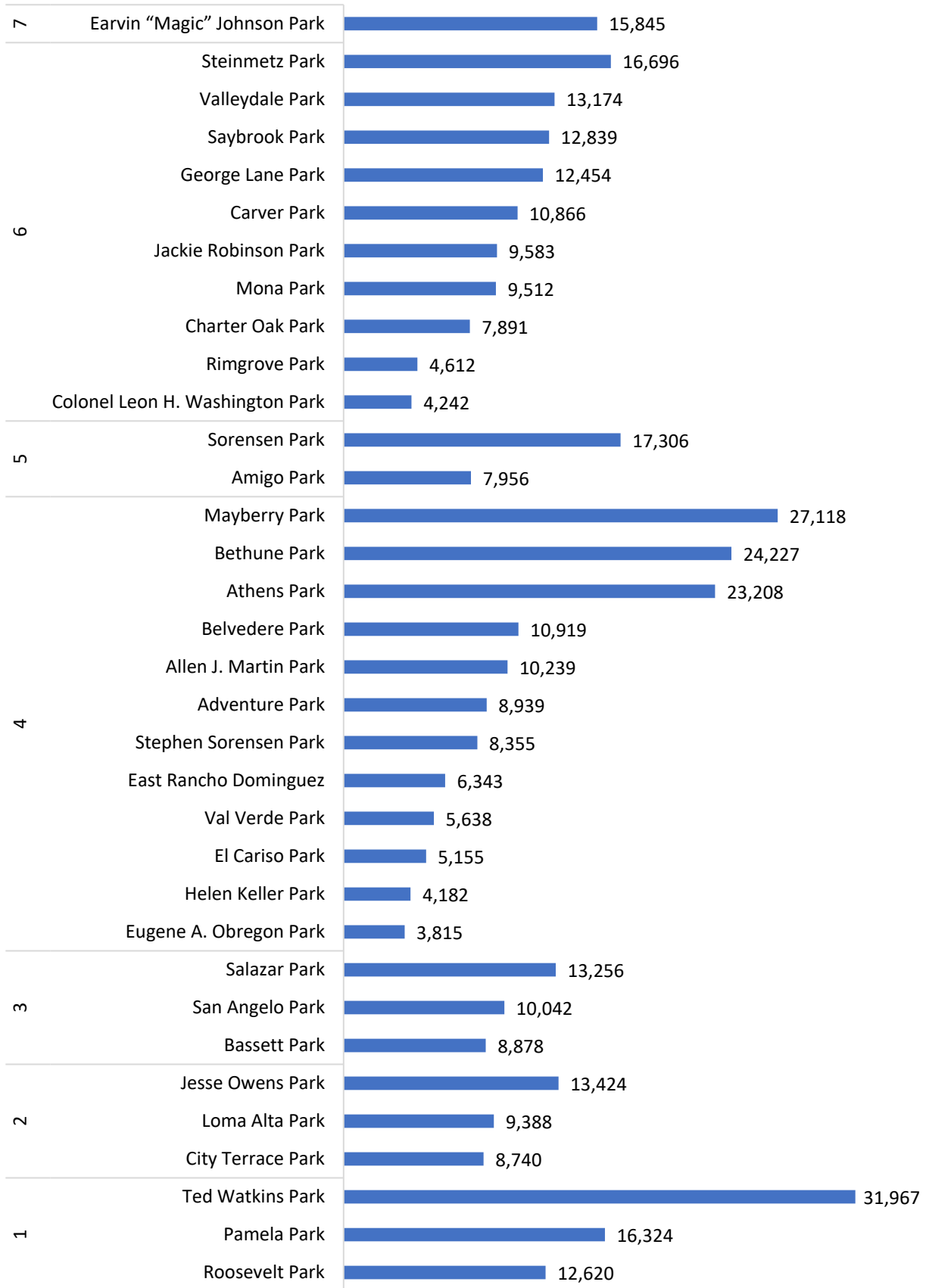
PAD aimed to provide access to free quality recreational programming that included innovative and unique services broadly across Los Angeles County. The success of PAD in achieving this goal was assessed using PAD attendance data from DPR, summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, key informant surveys, and interviews conducted with participating partners. This chapter provides data on PAD estimated attendance, as well as reach, outreach, and attendee and partner satisfaction.

PAD Estimated Attendance and Reach

PAD Attendance

An estimated 405,000 unique visits were made during the summer 2023 PAD season across all 34 parks, with an average of 11,000 visits per park. Total PAD attendance varied greatly by park, ranging from 3,815 visits at Obregon Park to 31,967 visits at Ted Watkins Park (Exhibit 21).

Exhibit 21: Total PAD Visits by Park and PAD Group, Summer 2023



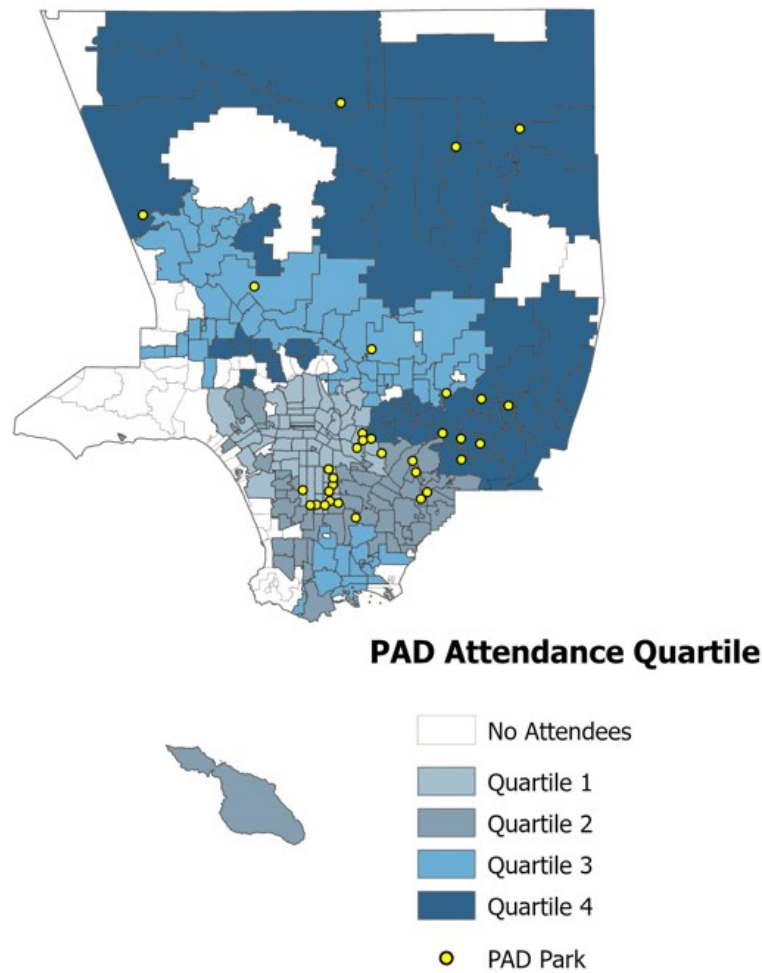
Source: Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) PAD attendance data, Summer 2023.

Notes: Parks are presented by PAD Group – which is the year in which they started hosting PAD. PAD visit numbers are higher than number of unique individuals attending park events as the same person may have attended multiple days; attendance was estimated by PAD park staff.

PAD Reach

UCLA used the residence zip code of PAD attendees who responded to the survey to assess the reach of PAD parks throughout Los Angeles County in 2023 (Exhibit 22). The map shows areas of the County with the lowest (Quartile 1) to highest concentration (Quartile 4) of PAD attendees. Data showed that attendees primarily resided in the zip codes immediately surrounding PAD parks (Quartile 4). However, data showed that there were attendees from other areas and the program reached almost half of all zip codes (49%) in Los Angeles County.

Exhibit 22: Zip Code of Residence of PAD Participant Survey Respondents in Los Angeles County, Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=18,667).

Notes: Zip codes were ordered by most to least attendees, then divided evenly into four groups, or quartiles. Quartile 1 includes zip codes with the fewest participants from those zip codes and Quartile 4 had the most participants from those zip codes. Each yellow dot represents a PAD park. There were 6,746 attendees who were from zip codes not in LA County, had erroneous or non-existing zip codes based on the current records under the US Postal Service (e.g., realignment/reassignment), or left the zip code field blank.

PAD Attendee Characteristics in 2023

The majority of PAD attendees who responded to the summer 2023 survey were 26-39 years old (36%), female (63%), and Latinx (61%; data not shown). Some respondents were youth or young adults; 36% of respondents were ages 10-25.

There were some variations in these characteristics by individual parks, as well by PAD Group. These variations most likely reflected variations in population characteristics in the surrounding park areas. For example, 76% of attendees at Jesse Owens Park identified as Black/African American, whereas 51% of attendees at Steinmetz Park identified as Asian/Pacific Islander. See [Appendix B: Additional Data](#) for breakdown by individual park and PAD Group.

Exhibit 23 shows illustrative photos of PAD attendees in summer 2023.

Exhibit 23: Selected Photos Depicting Characteristics of PAD Attendees, Summer 2023



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team Site Visits, Summer 2023.

Note: Children play basketball together at El Cariso Park (top left), families engage in cap decorating activity at El Cariso Park (top right), young PAD attendees paint posters at Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park (bottom left), and children follow instructor on the biking course at Loma Alta Park (bottom right).

In summer 2023 surveys, attendees noted PAD activities to be “very nice for the whole family,” and that attendees can have a “good time together as a family.” Recognizing cost as a barrier to participation in quality and structured recreational and physical activity programming, attendees expressed gratitude for access to free opportunities for recreation through PAD (Exhibit 24).

Exhibit 24: Selected Illustrative Comments Reflecting Characteristics of PAD Attendees, Summer 2023

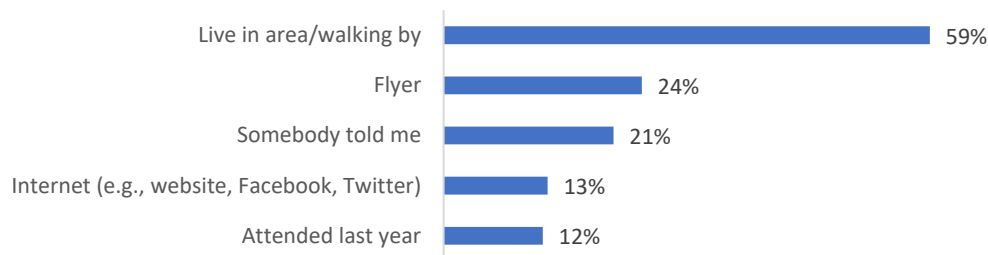
“The staff does a great job entertaining kids and adults of all ages.” (Loma Alta Park)
“Very nice for the whole family.” (Mayberry Park)
“Education for the community as well as a fun and inviting atmosphere.” (Bassett Park)
“I love what you guys do for the community and accept everybody individually [and] equally...it is good that everyone has a good time together as a family.” (Carver Park)
“I am satisfied with whatever is offered because it is really nice to be able to get all these free services.” (Salazar Park)

Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

PAD Outreach

Outside of PAD, the vast majority of PAD attendees (78%) visited a PAD park weekly (46%) or daily (32%; data not shown), based on summer 2023 survey data. Most individuals learned about PAD because they lived in the area or were walking by the park (59%), but others learned about PAD through flyers (24%) and word of mouth (21%; Exhibit 25).

Exhibit 25: PAD Participants’ Reports of How They Learned about PAD, Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

Note: Multiple responses possible.

Most PAD participants attended or planned to attend PAD once a week (32%) or all/most nights in the summer season (41%; data not shown).

Attendees highlighted how important it was to deploy other outreach methods to get more community members to attend PAD activities. Most who mentioned PAD outreach activities discussed the need for more advertising and the need to increase outreach on the internet and social media. By doing so, this will help keep individuals informed and up to date on changing weekly activities and events, as well as with events specific to their surrounding park. Some attendees highlighted how despite living in the community, individuals may still be unaware of PAD, suggesting the importance of banners and signage near streets and in popular community gathering places (Exhibit 26).

Exhibit 26: Selected Comments about PAD Attendance and Outreach, 2023

PAD attendance	"It already provides a safe and fun environment. With amazing staff we've known for years because of PAD" (Jackie Robinson Park)
	"Please keep this every year. Love the activities for our family time." (San Angelo Park)
	"I've been coming to this park for 10 years." (Salazar Park)
	"This was our first year living in California and I really enjoyed the event. I came twice a week." (Loma Alta Park)
PAD outreach	"Community outreach/getting the word out there. It's so incredible, I wish more people would come!" (Jackie Robinson Park)
	"Park needs social media to let people know about activities." (Adventure Park)
	"More activities and more advertising to have a more broad range of people be involved and know about PAD." (Mona Park)
	"The marketing, I feel like many people could have knowledge that this type of events exists. The music is amazing but if I wasn't attending an event here, I wouldn't know about it." (San Angelo Park)
	"Better advertising. It was difficult to find specific information about the schedule at my local park. Most of the flyers discussed general information in LA County, but not specific to my location, and there were events I missed." (Loma Alta Park)
	"Being active with the community to get others to feel more comfortable in the area." (Saybrook Park)
	"More visibility and get more out so more families can know about this great program!" (Sorensen Park)

Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

PAD Programming

PAD offers a wide variety of programming and services at parks throughout Los Angeles County. These had varied widely in the past based on the individual parks and demographic composition of the target population and surrounding park neighborhood. In summer 2023, PAD introduced more standardized programming across all parks, which required 1) at least two special events, 2) five (community parks) to seven (regional parks) standard programs each day, and 3) three additional programs each day. Standard programs included categories such as: sports, wellness/fitness, arts/culture, education, movies or concerts, targeted youth, children, or adult programming.

The PAD participant survey data were analyzed to determine which programs drew the most attendees to participate in PAD and were thus most popular. These activities were also analyzed by age and whether participants attended with children or alone.

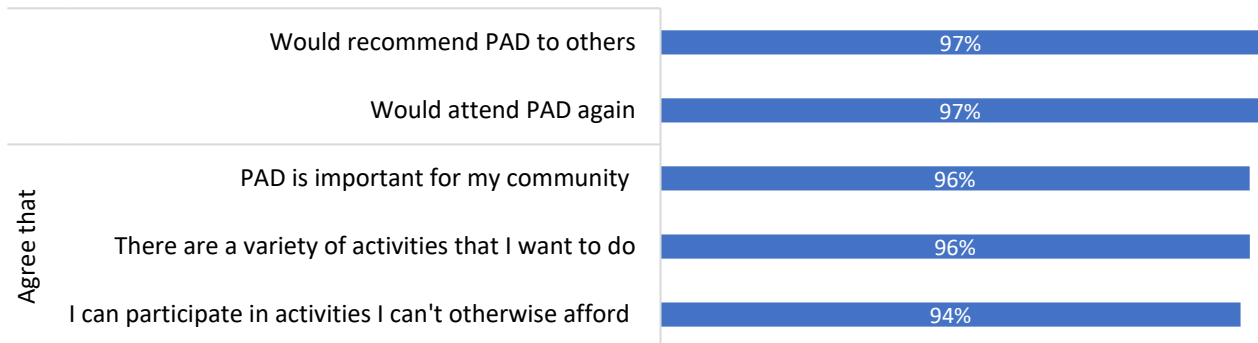
When asked about favorite activity, the most popular activities were movie night (30%) and concerts/music (17%). Commonly mentioned forms of exercise included organized sports and clinics (18%), jumper/games (9%), and swim/water sports (5%; data not shown).

Perceptions on PAD’s Value

PAD Attendee Perceptions

As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, the overwhelming majority of PAD attendees would recommend PAD to others (97%) and would attend PAD again (97%). PAD attendees found PAD to be important for their community (96%). PAD attendees indicated that PAD not only provided a variety of activities that were of interest to the community (96%), but also provided affordable, accessible activities they otherwise would not be able to afford (94%, Exhibit 27).

Exhibit 27: Perceptions of PAD Attendees on Value of PAD, Summer 2023



Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

In the open-ended responses, many attendees expressed their appreciation and enjoyment of PAD. The atmosphere, the program, and the accessibility of PAD to the community were all highlighted as positive aspects. Many expressed a desire to return to the next season of PAD and to share this opportunity with others in their social networks (Exhibit 28).

Exhibit 28: Selected Comments about PAD Value, Summer 2023

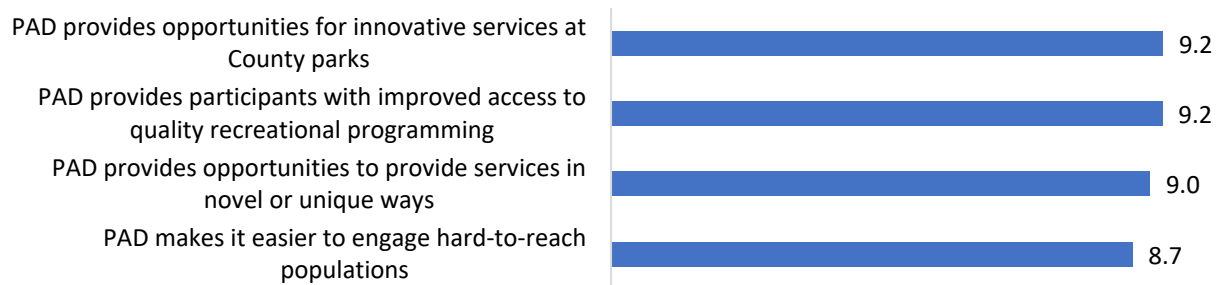
"Thank you for these resources for our children God bless you" (Saybrook Park)
"I appreciate all the activities; doing an awesome job" (Allen J. Martin Park)
"Continue to provide community resources" (Belvedere Park)
"The park is amazing. We are looking forward to the horse riding." (Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park)
"I think it could improve a lot of people's mental health." (Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park)
"Community engagement" (East Rancho Dominguez)
"Communities coming together" (Jesse Owens Park)
"[PAD provides] experiences that we wouldn't normally do as a family!" (Loma Alta Park)

Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

PAD Key Informant Perception

In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD provided opportunities for innovative services at County parks (9.2 of 10); provided participants with improved access to quality recreational programming (9.2); provided opportunities to provide services in novel or unique ways (9.0); and made it easier to engage hard-to-reach populations (8.7; Exhibit 29).

Exhibit 29: PAD Key Informants on PAD Satisfaction and Impact



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

In key informant interviews, DPR staff noted that parks often serve as “community hubs” and provide new opportunities to co-locate services and provide new and innovative services for the community. They mentioned that parks and PAD events are staples in the community because they work to provide centralized services in communities where they might not be able. Parks work to fill the gap in these communities by providing unique, creative, and targeted programming during PAD.

"The street team is always present in the community promoting PAD and informing PAD of the different services that people are looking for when they choose to come to the park. Because we know that making a commitment to come to the park, whether it's every concert or every movie or every family night, is a choice that people are making and it's a really positive one and we want to make sure that we're maximizing that by getting out there and educating." – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

"And I think it's a good thing, you know, exposing the community and a lot of these youth to different activities and programs that we couldn't do without PAD. So it's always good to, you know, expose kids to different things so they'll, you know, you can at least change them if they're on the fence you pull them towards the correct way and give them positive things to do." – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

"PAD has strengthened communities, it brings people together, provides free access to programs, especially educational/recreational programs that are not available or are too far when people get out of work." – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Goal 5: Increase Physical Activity, and Decrease Chronic Disease Risk

PAD offers a wide variety of free physical activity programs in communities with high rates of obesity. PAD offerings include a diverse selection of physical activity programming including sports clinics, mindful movement (e.g., yoga), as well as grassroots efforts like community dances. Physical activity programming is often tailored to be age appropriate, such as youth-specific sports clinics or adult soccer tournaments.

The majority of attendees participate in physical activity at PAD. Assuming attendees maintain that level of activity throughout the year, PAD has the potential to reduce the incidence of chronic disease in the community, which may lead to estimated cost reductions for disease burden.

This chapter includes an assessment of access to physical activity through PAD using summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, DPR attendance data, and key informant surveys and interviews. The potential impact of PAD on disease burden and associated cost reductions was estimated using a modified version of the Integrated Transport and Health Impacts Model (ITHIM). This potential impact could only be estimated from 2022 to 2023 using ITHIM. Further details on ITHIM methods are provided in [Appendix A: Methods](#).

Attendees' Routine Physical Activity

PAD attendees reported on their routine levels of physical activity independent of PAD, as well as participation in physical activity while attending PAD. As indicated in Summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, almost one-third of attendees (29%) noted they routinely had at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity for five or more days per week. This percentage was highest for males (33%). Approximately 7% of PAD respondents indicated not having any routine weekly physical activity (data not shown).

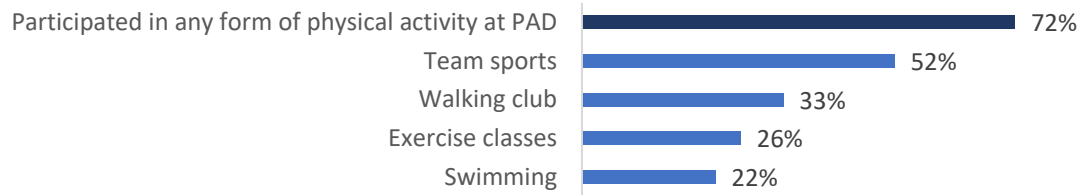
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services physical activity guidelines indicated at least 60 minutes/day for youth ages 16 and under and 30 minutes for five days a week for adults ages 17 and older. When comparing PAD attendees' routine level of activity with these guidelines, 47% of adults and 10% of youth PAD respondents met recommended levels of routine physical activity (see [Appendix B: Additional Data](#) for breakdowns by individual park and PAD Group). Overall, 41% of attendees met physical activity guidelines.

The majority (76%) of respondents who did not meet the recommended activity guidelines for their age participated in physical activity through PAD (data not shown).

Attendees' Physical Activity during PAD

Most (72%) attendees participated in a physical activity at PAD, including team sports (52%) such as soccer, football, or basketball; walking club (33%); an exercise class (26%), such as dancing, boxing, or Zumba; and/or swimming (22%; Exhibit 30).

Exhibit 30: Attendees' Physical Activity at PAD and by Type of Activity in Percentages (%), Summer 2023

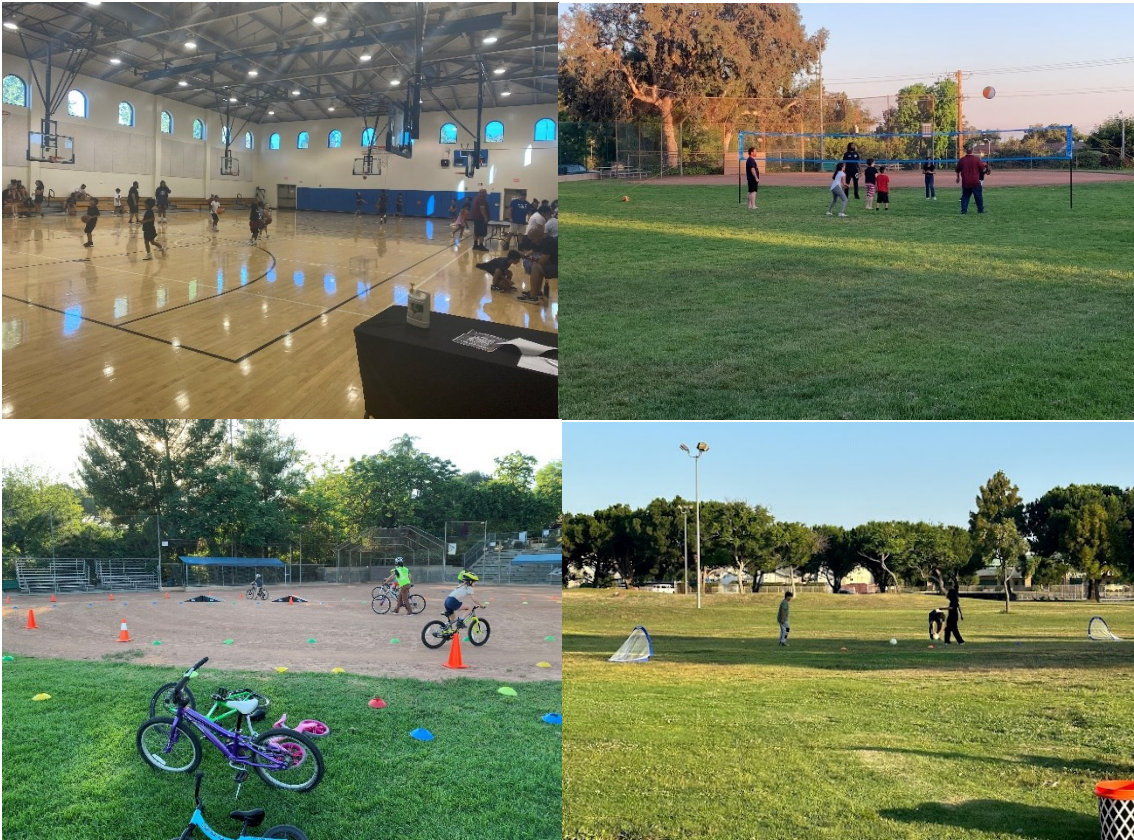


Source: Summer 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=25,413).

Note: More than one response allowed.

Select photos demonstrating physical activity at PAD are highlighted in Exhibit 31.

Exhibit 31: Selected Photos of Physical Activity at PAD, Summer 2023



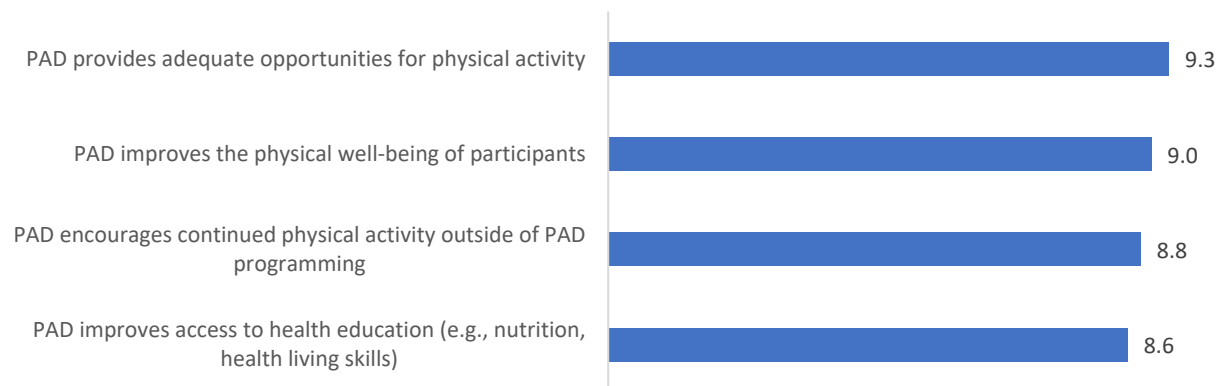
Source: UCLA Evaluation Team, Summer 2023.

Note: PAD attendees play a basketball game at El Cariso Park (top left), families play a game of volleyball at Loma Alta Park (top right), PAD attendees enjoy the biking track at Loma Alta Park (bottom left), and a family sets up a soccer game at Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park (bottom right).

PAD Key Informants on Physical Activity during PAD

In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD provided attendees with adequate access to physical activity opportunities (9.3 of 10); improved the physical well-being of participants (9.0); increased enrollment in other physical activity park programs throughout the year (8.8); and improved access to health education (8.6; Exhibit 32).

Exhibit 32: PAD Key Informants on PAD Effectiveness in Improving Access to Physical Activity and Health Education



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

In interviews, DPR staff and DPH partners emphasized how PAD provides an opportunity for the community to try new and innovative physical activities (e.g., yoga, sports clinics) without cost barriers or commitment. PAD provides a positive environment and encouragement for physical activity, with an emphasis on participation and fun, instead of competition and outcomes. Accessibility was a key component of PAD physical activity programming. PAD offers a safe space for community members to engage and learn about different types of physical activity programming that may be of interest to them. Activities like the DPH-led walking club encouraged participants to walk at their own pace and interact with others, while they discovered new paths and trails within their community. Public health nurses who lead the walking clubs simultaneously engage the participants through motivational interviews and discuss health promoting behaviors. Other structured sports clinics and activities offered access to equipment such as balls, bikes, and inflatables that attendees may not otherwise be able to utilize. There are opportunities to improve and continue involvement in physical activity at PAD by offering incentives for regular participation (e.g., a raffle for a prize at the end of the 8-week period).

“We brought people out to the park that haven't been here in years because they wanted to play, and you know there wasn't no certain level that they had to be at to play. They just got in and enjoyed themselves.” -Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

“For the youth we actually offered a teaching plan for basketball. So they were here learning the fundamentals of basketball for free where they didn't have to, you know pay a trainer to do it because we have the training.” -Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Potential Impact of PAD on Disease Burden

The potential impact of PAD on disease burden was estimated using ITHIM. ITHIM was originally developed to assess the impact of different modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling on years of life lost (YLL), years living with disability (YLD), and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) for a number of chronic conditions. However, ITHIM can also be used to measure the burden of disease averted due to participation in PAD.

UCLA used ITHIM to estimate the impact of physical activity on premature mortality, disability, and associated costs using available PAD data. UCLA used the age, gender, and number of participants at PAD, as well as length, type, and frequency of routine physical activity outside of PAD and physical activity during PAD.

A number of assumptions were necessary in ITHIM to assess the impact of PAD on disease burden, which are detailed in [Appendix A: Methods](#).

The estimated impact of participation in PAD physical activity programs on chronic disease burden was calculated assuming PAD participants engaged in physical activity once a week and year-round (Exhibit 33). The data indicated that PAD physical activities would save two premature deaths and reduce years of life lost and disability adjusted life years by 20 years each. These numbers varied by type of condition and were highest for stroke and ischemic heart disease.

Exhibit 33: Estimated Change in Burden of Disease from PAD Physical Activity by Chronic Condition Type, Summer 2023

	Rate (per Million Population)	Disease Burden	34 Existing PAD Sites
Ischemic Heart Disease			
Premature deaths	-47	5%	-1
Years of Life Lost (YLL)	-559	6%	-10
Years Living with Disability (YLD)	-48	6%	-1
Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)	-607	6%	-11
Hypertensive Heart Disease			
Premature deaths	-9	5%	0
YLL	-131	6%	-2
YLD	-14	5%	0
DALYs	-145	6%	-3
Stroke			
Premature deaths	-81	5%	-2
YLL	-1093	6%	-20
YLD	0	7%	0
DALYs	-1093	6%	-20
Depression			
Premature deaths	0	3%	0
YLL	0	3%	0
YLD	-247	3%	-5
DALYs	-247	3%	-5
Diabetes			
Premature deaths	-8	5%	0
YLL	-128	6%	-2
YLD	-169	6%	-3
DALYs	-297	6%	-5
Breast Cancer			
Premature deaths	-2	0%	0
YLL	-37	2%	-1
YLD	-10	2%	0
DALYs	-48	2%	-1
Colon Cancer			
Premature deaths	-2	2%	0
YLL	-32	2%	-1
YLD	-7	2%	0
DALYs	-40	2%	-1
Dementia			
Premature deaths	-15	4%	0
YLL	-83	4%	-2
YLD	-217	4%	-4
DALYs	-299	4%	-6
All Causes			
Premature deaths	-81	2%	-2
YLL	-1093	1%	-20
YLD	0	0%	0
DALYs	-1093	1%	-20

Source: ITHIM outcomes using 2023 Summer PAD Participant Survey data and DPR Attendance Estimates.

Notes: Negative numbers indicate reductions in disease burden. Disease burden shown represents the fraction of cases or deaths from each condition that would be avoided if people exercised in PAD types of physical activities once per week for an entire year.

Estimated PAD Cost Savings Due to Increased Physical Activity

Exhibit 34 shows an estimated \$2,974,000 in savings in 2023, attributable to reduced burden of disease among 55% of PAD participants who attended PAD more than once in 2023 and participated in physical activities. The largest cost savings were estimated for reduction in morbidity in diabetes (32%), heart disease (30%), and dementia (19%).

Exhibit 34: Estimated Cost Savings Associated with Reduced Burden of Disease in PAD, 2023

Condition	Estimated Cost Savings from PAD (2023 Dollars)
Diabetes	\$945,000
Heart disease	\$907,000
Dementia	\$577,000
Stroke	\$223,000
Depression	\$221,000
Colon and rectum cancer	\$54,000
Breast cancer	\$47,000
Total	\$2,974,000

Source: Summer 2023 PAD participant survey data inputted into ITHIM model.

Notes: Estimated savings assume that PAD participants attend PAD and participate in physical activity at least once a week (55% of all participants). Of those, 44% attend once a week and 56% attend more than once a week (average of 2.5 visits per week), as indicated in the Summer 2023 PAD participant surveys. The model assumes that physical activity afforded by PAD continued for the entire year. The model assumes participation in physical activity at PAD levels for an entire year and measures reduced burden of disease and costs associated with that decrease.

Goal 6: Contribute to Positive Youth Development

In 2023, PAD added Goal 6, reflecting new strategic priorities to provide opportunities for youth to positively engage with parks and their community.

This chapter primarily uses key informant surveys and interviews conducted with participating partners, as well as DPR administrative data and the summer 2023 PAD participant survey, to understand youth involvement at PAD.

Youth Programming and Employment at PAD Parks

Our SPOT and Teen Clubs

Twelve PAD parks offer a free after-school program called Our Social Places and Opportunities for Teens (SPOT), for teens 12-18, “providing a fun, safe and supportive place where teens can check-in daily, Monday through Friday all year long” as described [by DPR](#) (see [Appendix B: Additional Data](#)). Our SPOT offered a variety of workshops, intramural sports leagues, and social action activities. As highlighted [by DPR](#), Our SPOT programs were seen as “safe havens for teens to connect on societal issues they care about, take on social action projects, explore interests, take special interest classes, and socialize.” In addition to Our SPOT programs, 15 PAD parks had teen clubs.

Youth at Work Program

The Department of Economic Opportunity facilitates the Youth at Work program, which provides youth (14-24 years old) with paid work experience, in addition to soft skills training, such as interviewing and financial literacy. DPR is a worksite placement for the Youth at Work program, to support Los Angeles County Parks, and PAD is a primary program that youth employees support. In fiscal year 2022-2023, over 370 youth were placed across 32 PAD parks (Exhibit 35). Placements were aligned with individual interests, taking the youth’s geographic proximity to the park into consideration.

Exhibit 35: Youth at Work Placements by PAD Park, 2022-2023

1-10	Amigo Park, Athens Park, Bassett Park, Belvedere Park, Bethune Park, Carver Park, City Terrace Park, East Rancho Dominguez, Helen Keller Park, Jackie Robinson Park, Loma Alta Park, Earvin “Magic” Johnson, Mona Park, Obregon Park, San Angelo Park, Saybrook Park, and Val Verde Park
11-20	Adventure Park, Allen Martin Park, Charter Oak, Mayberry Park, Pamela Park, Rimgrove Park, Roosevelt Park, Salazar Park, Sorensen Park, Steinmetz Park, Ted Watkins, and Valleydale Park
More than 20	George Lane Park, Jesse Owens Park, and Stephen Sorensen Park

Source: Los Angeles County Department of Economic Opportunity, Youth at Work placements, Program Year 2022-2023 (July 1, 2022- June 30, 2023).

Note: Colonel Leon Washington and El Cariso Parks did not have any Youth at Work placements.

Exhibit 36 depicts selected photos of youth taking ownership in PAD activities.

Exhibit 36: Selected Photos Depicting Youth during PAD, Summer 2023



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team Site Visits, Summer 2023.

Note: Teens speak with one another during an Our SPOT activity at City Terrace Park (left), and a youth volunteer assists with a raffle for prizes at Val Verde Park (right).

Perceptions of PAD Youth Attendees

As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 36% of attendees who completed the survey were 10-25 years old, which was an increase of 8% from 2022 (28%). In summer 2023, 17% of attendees were 10-15 years of age and 19% of attendees were 16-25 years old.

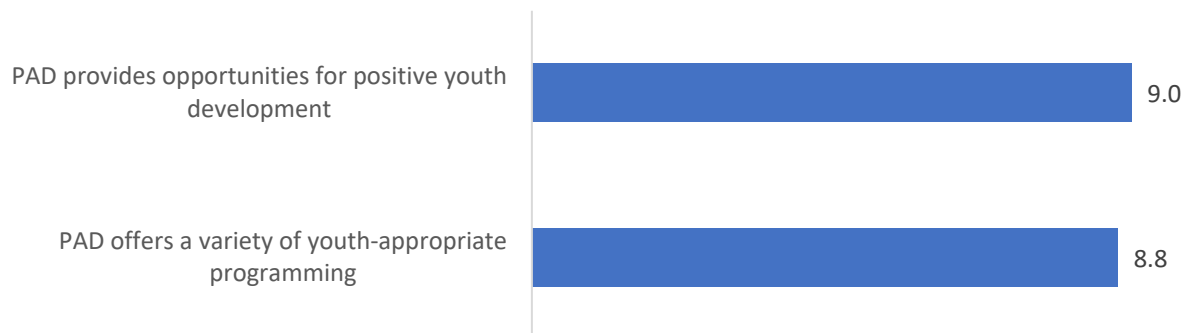
In general, PAD perceptions in the participant survey were similar across age groups. For example, 96% of attendees ages 10-25 years old would attend PAD again (compared to 97% overall) and 94% felt a sense of belonging at PAD (96%, respectively).

However, differences existed for youth in survey questions related to physical activity and preferred programming. More youth (ages 10-25) participated in physical activity at PAD (79%), compared to the overall PAD average (72%). Younger attendees (ages 10-25) also had variation in their favorite activities, which included movies and sports programming, compared to adults who more often preferred concerts.

PAD Key Informant Perception on Youth Involvement at PAD

In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD provides opportunities for positive youth development (9.0 out of 10) and offers a variety of youth-appropriate programming (8.8; Exhibit 37).

Exhibit 37: PAD Key Informant Survey Perceptions on Positive Youth Development



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

Perceptions on PAD Youth Involvement and Programming

In key informant interviews, DPR partners commented on how Our SPOT has been helpful in supporting PAD activities, as teens may assist DPR staff with PAD set-up, and since many teens are already at the park for Our SPOT, they are more apt to participate in PAD.

PAD partners noted that while PAD greatly benefits youth, there could be increased engagement of this population. For example, one partner noted “programming benefits only those that are willing to participate. Youth development is difficult in a social setting since youth look to their peers for validation instead of adults/employees.” Another respondent mentioned, “it would be nice to see youth, specifically teens, involved in the decision-making process of what activities are offered in the teen zones.”

Similar themes were in comments from participant surveys. For example, attendees noted how they would like to see more resources for youth, including “more resource booths for youth at risk” (Ted Watkins Park), in addition to “more job resources for young adults and teens” (Loma Alta Park). PAD attendees also mentioned how they would like to see more PAD activities specifically for teens, such as “sports for teens 14-18” (Steinmetz Park), or “a gaming room for teens” (Rimgrove Park). PAD parks without dedicated teen clubs or Our SPOT programming may expand their reach to youth by including more activities that specifically target this demographic and appeal to their interests (e.g., youth sports league, DJ classes).

Perceptions on Youth at Work

In key informant interviews, partners expressed that the Youth at Work program helps to expand staff capacity for PAD, especially during the summer season. Additionally, DEO expressed how the partnership with DPR has been “one of the most successful County partnerships,” due to hours that work well for youth schedules (e.g., evenings and weekends), diversity of activities offered at parks, and an opportunity for youth to spend time outside.

Furthermore, over 100 youth have obtained long-term employment with DPR since the inception of the Youth at Work program. The Youth at Work program serves as a pipeline for entry level positions within County departments, supporting the [Countywide Youth Bridges Program \(CYBP\)](#) for at-risk youth.

“They usually work with very well with the park supervisors, the staff... they feel like they learn a lot from [PAD] and we do get a repetitive number of kids who maybe worked one particular fiscal year and they'll want to come back the next fiscal year when funding is available.” – Key Informant, Department of Economic Opportunity

“PAD provides opportunities for youth to work and/or volunteer. This provides them with a sense of belonging and/or ownership of the program and they know they are a key component to the success of the program.”
– Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

While there are many positives to the Youth at Work program, key informants emphasized that the timeline to onboard youth to their park placements does not necessarily align with the PAD schedule. The Youth at Work program works on a fiscal year timeline, with new placements in July, whereas PAD starts in June; this creates a challenge for training new workers and for consistency in youth employees. Additionally, Youth at Work resources are not equally distributed across all PAD parks due to the geographic location of available youth workers.

Goal 7: Promote Senior Connectedness

In 2023, PAD added Goal 7, reflecting new strategic priorities to provide opportunities for older adults to socialize with one another and the surrounding community at PAD, in order to foster feelings of senior connectedness. This chapter primarily uses key informant surveys and interviews conducted with participating partners, as well as DPR administrative data and additional information from the summer 2023 PAD participant survey, to describe PAD's efforts to facilitate senior connectedness.

Dedicated Senior Programming at PAD Parks

Across all 34 parks participating in PAD, [nine parks](#) had a dedicated senior center, five of which provided nutrition assistance. Parks with a dedicated senior center ranged in geographic location, but include four South Agency parks (East Rancho Dominguez, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Amelia Mayberry, and Adventure), three East Agency parks (Ruben F. Salazar, William Steinmetz, and Bassett), and two North Agency parks (El Cariso and Stephen Sorensen). Several other PAD parks had programs and activities for older adults, such as cultural classes and events, field trips and inter-generational experiences, and group walks (Belvedere, Val Verde, and Valleydale).

In key informant interviews, partners noted how PAD activities for seniors varied by park, as some parks had specific senior programming (e.g., senior resource workshops), while others adapted programming so that seniors could be included (e.g., art class for all adults). According to partners, parks with a dedicated senior center and regular programs and activities for older adults, most often had greater senior attendance at PAD.

Key informants further noted that some PAD parks utilized a dedicated senior resource booth to connect them to age-appropriate community-based services. Some parks also had success with older adults volunteering during PAD (e.g., staff activity booths, passing out flyers, engaging with PAD attendees), in order to expand DPR staff capacity. Additionally, partners mentioned how older adults served as an outreach tool to bring others to PAD, as they told their family and friends and came together as a group.

Perceptions of Social Cohesion by PAD Senior Attendees

As indicated in summer 2023 PAD participant surveys, 5% of attendees who completed the survey were 60 years of age or older. In participant surveys, seniors who attended PAD reported positive perceptions around social cohesion and connectedness. For example, the vast majority of attendees 60 years of age and older agreed they lived in a close-knit neighborhood

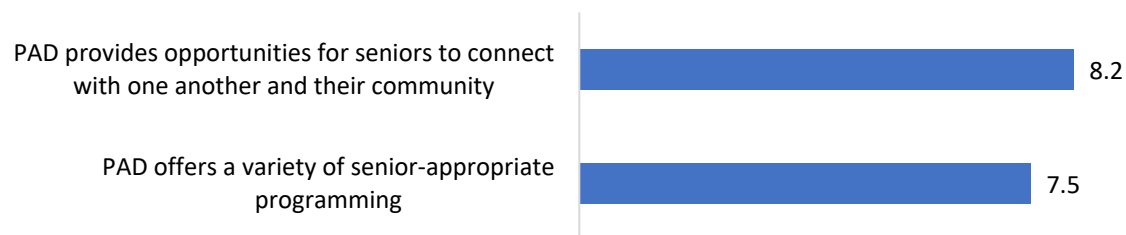
(91%), had a sense of belonging in the community (96%), and experienced a positive family atmosphere while attending PAD (96%, data not shown).

Attendees 60 years of age and older preferred concerts (35%) and movies (22%) more than sports or exercise classes (9%, data not shown), when compared to all PAD survey participants.

PAD Key Informants on Senior Programming at PAD

In key informant surveys, PAD partners agreed that PAD provided an opportunity for seniors to connect with one another and their community (8.2 out of 10) and offered a variety of senior-appropriate programming (7.5; Exhibit 38).

Exhibit 38: PAD Key Informant Survey Perceptions on Senior Connectedness



Source: PAD Key Informant Survey (n=24), November 2023-January 2024.

Note: Perception rating using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree.

In key informant interviews, some partners mentioned how it was difficult to have consistent programming during PAD for older adults, due to limited resources and staff capacity. However, partners emphasized the importance of having at least one dedicated event for seniors per PAD season (e.g., a senior dance); this was viewed by DPR staff as “more manageable” and often had high senior turnout as it was planned in advanced and well-advertised. Similarly in participant surveys, events and activities specifically catered towards seniors were viewed as a useful strategy for improving senior engagement. For example, one PAD attendee noted: “We had a senior dance and weekly activities that brought out a great senior group not seen in past years.”

A concern brought up by DPR key informants was transportation and access to PAD. While some PAD parks are within walking distance of the community, there are others that need to be accessed by vehicle or public transit, which older adults may not have access to. Additionally, some key informants mentioned how the current PAD time frame may be too late in the evening for older adults. Key informants also specifically mentioned a need for dedicated mental health resources for seniors, particularly around grieving.

“We are all social creatures and as many of us age, we lose connections. PAD senior programming helps create social connections with the most vulnerable.” – Key Informant, Department of Parks and Recreation

Spring 2023 Programming

This chapter summarizes spring 2023 PAD participant survey data (n=458) as it relates to each of the first five PAD goals.

Programming for Parks After Dark ran from March 23rd to April 15th, 2023 from 6 PM to 9 PM, where attendees could engage in free activities such as canvas painting, family dance, music performances, fitness, and musical instrument classes.

Participant survey data was analyzed to capture information on attendee safety perceptions, family and community well-being, access to free recreational programming and services, among other items related to PAD goals.

2023 Spring PAD Participant Survey Findings

Spring PAD Attendee Characteristics

The majority of PAD attendees who took the survey at Spring PAD were between the ages of 26 to 39 (42%), female (67%), and identified as Hispanic or Latinx (68%). More than 3 out of 4 attendees (77%) identified English as their primary language spoken at home, followed by Spanish (21%).

Spring PAD attracted individuals who were regular visitors of parks, with 63% of attendees visiting parks on a weekly (42%) or daily basis (21%). More than half of all attendees (51%) lived within the same zip code as a PAD park (see [Appendix B: Additional Data](#) for breakdown by PAD park). Notably, San Angelo (82%) and Carver (82%) Parks had the highest proportion of attendees who shared the same zip code as the park.

Spring PAD also attracted families, with 80% of attendees attending PAD with children. The majority of children (60%) were between the ages of 6-12, followed by 0-5 (53%) and 13-18 (24%).

Goal 1: Decrease Community Violence and Increase Safety

Most attendees (95%) reported feeling safe while at Spring PAD. Factors that contributed to attendees' feelings of safety at Spring PAD included: park staff (54%), people around (48%), Deputy Sheriffs (46%), and a positive atmosphere (47%). 94% of attendees reported agreement that Deputies engaged positive with community members at Spring PAD. Exhibit 39 shows select photos related to park safety and law enforcement at Spring PAD.

Exhibit 39: Selected Photos about Park Safety and Law Enforcement, Spring 2023



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team Site Visits, Spring 2023.

Note: A law enforcement car parked outside the park vicinity and supervising the PAD event at Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park (left), and Deputy Sheriffs greeting PAD attendees at City Terrace Park (right).

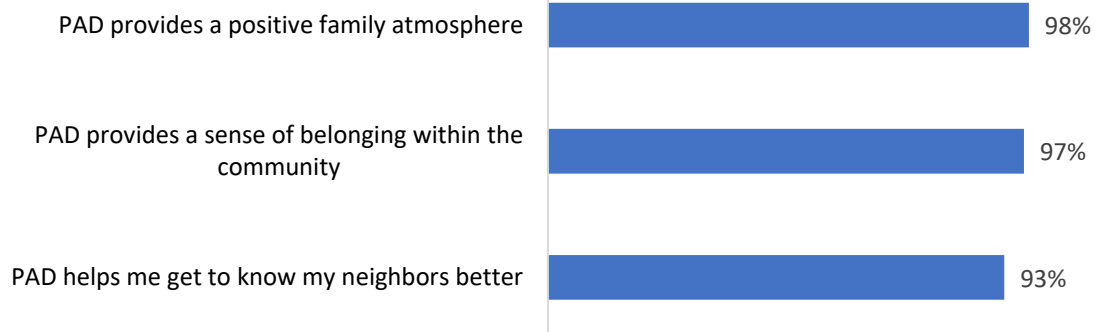
Goal 2: Facilitate Cross-Sector Collaboration in Park Communities and County-wide

Similar to summer programming, Spring PAD required cross-sector collaboration for implementation. LASD provided Deputy Sheriffs for patrol and engagement with attendees. Services offered by DPH included educational events, as well as referrals to additional health and wellness opportunities within the community. Community-based organizations also set up booths to provide information on available social services and resources within the surrounding area.

Goal 3: Increase Social Cohesion and Family and Community Well-being

Attendees overwhelmingly reported positive feedback regarding community relationships and social cohesion while attending PAD. Most attendees (86%) were in agreement that they live in a close-knit or unified neighborhood. However, this varied by park group, as 77% of attendees in Group 6 were in agreement with this statement, in comparison to 93% of attendees in Group 5. More than nine out of ten attendees (93%) agreed that they got to know their neighbors better and 97% felt a sense of belonging in the community. Additionally, almost all attendees (90%) reported that they felt that they had someone they could talk to during a crisis and 98% agreed that there was a positive family atmosphere while in attendance of PAD (Exhibit 40). Exhibit 41 shows select photos related to social cohesion and family bonding at Spring PAD.

Exhibit 40: Attendee Perspectives on Social Cohesion and Family and Community Well-being at PAD, Spring 2023



Source: Spring 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=458).

Exhibit 41: Selected Photos about Social Cohesion and Family Bonding at PAD, Spring 2023



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team Site Visits, Spring 2023.

Note: PAD attendees working together to assemble plant baskets at Pamela Park (left); attendees gather together for skits and acting in front of an audience at George Lane Park (right).

Goal 4: Increase Access to Free Recreational Programming, Health and Social Services that Reflect the Interests and Needs of Communities Served

Spring PAD was promoted via flyers posted in or around the community. Exhibit 42 shows the spring specific flyer used to inform community members about activities and events during PAD. Social media, such as Facebook groups or Instagram posts, and the DPR PAD specific website were additional tools used to promote PAD.

Exhibit 42: Parks After Dark Flyer, Spring 2023

The flyer is for 'Spring Parks After Dark' events. At the top, it features the 'dpsr' logo and the text 'SPRING PARKS AFTER DARK' with 'COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION' below it. There are two circular logos on the right. Below the title is a row of four photos: a man painting a child's face, people at a craft table, a man and woman dancing, and a woman holding a baby. The main text is split into two columns: 'THURSDAY ART & CULTURE' and 'SATURDAY MUSIC & DANCE'. Under Thursday, it lists 'COMMUNITY Zone' with activities like 'FAMILY CANVAS PAINTING', 'TIE-DYE STATIONS', 'CHALK AND MURAL ART', 'WIND CHIME CRAFT ACTIVITY', and 'FREE SNACKS!'. Under Saturday, it lists 'FAMILY Zone' and 'TEEN Zone' with activities like 'FAMILY DANCE', 'FAMILY FITNESS THROUGH MUSIC', 'FAMILY KARAOKE', 'MUSIC INSTRUMENT CLASS', and 'FREE ENTERTAINMENT & PERFORMANCES'. The dates 'MARCH 23 - APRIL 15, 2023 | 6 TO 9PM' are prominently displayed. A paragraph describes the events as free and family-friendly. At the bottom, it says 'VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION' and provides the URL 'PARKS.LACOUNTY.GOV/SPRINGPAD'. The footer lists five supervisors: Hilda L. Solis, Holly J. Mitchell, Lindsey Horvath, Janice Hahn, and Kathryn Barger, with the text 'MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM' above them.

THURSDAY
ART & CULTURE

COMMUNITY Zone

- FAMILY CANVAS PAINTING
- TIE-DYE STATIONS
- CHALK AND MURAL ART
- WIND CHIME CRAFT ACTIVITY
- FREE SNACKS!

SATURDAY
MUSIC & DANCE

FAMILY Zone | TEEN Zone

- FAMILY DANCE
- FAMILY FITNESS THROUGH MUSIC
- FAMILY KARAOKE
- MUSIC INSTRUMENT CLASS
- FREE ENTERTAINMENT & PERFORMANCES

MARCH 23 - APRIL 15, 2023 | 6 TO 9PM

Parks After Dark returns for the spring season with FREE activities at 34 LA County Parks. Bring your family and friends and explore all the art and culture activities we have to offer. Dust off your dancing shoes and join us for a night full of music and dance and a variety of free activities for the whole family!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION
PARKS.LACOUNTY.GOV/SPRINGPAD

MADE POSSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM

Hilda L. Solis
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Holly J. Mitchell
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Lindsey Horvath
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

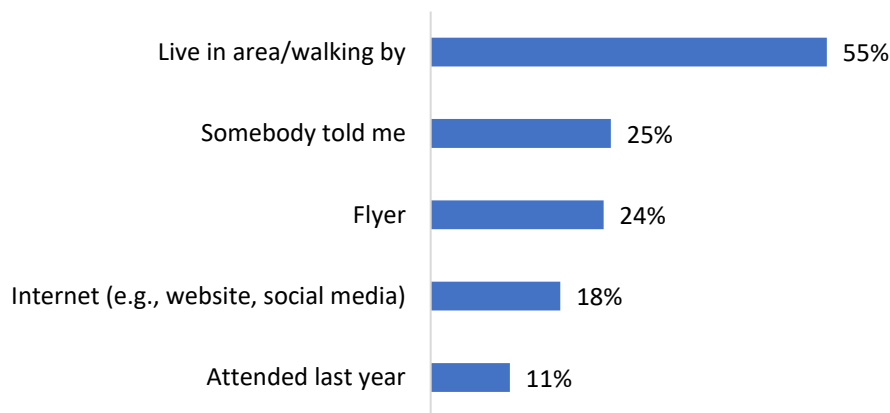
Janice Hahn
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Kathryn Barger
LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Source: Department of Parks and Recreation, Spring 2023.

The majority of attendees found out about PAD due to living in the area or walking by (55%), followed by someone telling them (25%), and flyers (24%; Exhibit 43). Notably, three out of four attendees (75%) at Bassett Park found out about PAD due to living in the area or walking by the park. Additional methods of outreach included via organizations in the community (e.g., library or school), or from work (e.g., work in area). Attendees also provided suggestions to increase advertisement of PAD, with an attendee from Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park writing, “more social media presence” and an attendee from Loma Alta Park suggesting “adding more details to flyers that state time events happen and what activities are happening [on] each date... Would love to attend all events as I am new to the neighborhood.”

Exhibit 43: PAD Attendees on Outreach Method, Spring 2023



Source: Spring 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n=458).

Note: Multiple responses possible.

Most attendees (70%) planned to attend PAD once or twice during the spring season (39%) or once a week (31%). Most attendees (74%) reported that they would most like to attend PAD on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. 96% of attendees agreed that they can access resources they need (e.g., health, social services), while 93% of attendees agreed that they can participate in activities they couldn't otherwise afford. Most attendees (97%) also agreed that there were a variety of activities to do while at PAD.

Goal 5: Increase Physical Activity and Decrease Chronic Disease Risk

29% of attendees spent three days per week exercising (walking, biking, gardening, jogging, or playing sports) and 40% of attendees spent, on average, 30 minutes doing these activities per day. The types of physical activity attendees engaged in while at PAD were team sports (52%), exercise classes (30%), and participating in the walking club (28%). The majority of attendees (46%) reported participating in these activities once or twice this season, while 34% reported participating in these activities once a week. The type of physical activity attendees engaged in varied by PAD Group, as 67% of attendees in PAD Group 6 engaged in team sports. Comments from attendees mentioned the "spring jubilee" as their source for physical activity, in addition to suggestions for future events, with an attendee from Earvin "Magic" Johnson Park writing, "More exercise [classes] for adults."

Spring PAD Satisfaction

Nearly all attendees would participate in spring PAD again (97%) and would recommend PAD to others (98%). For example, in open ended comments, an attendee from Charter Oak Park noted that PAD creates a “fun atmosphere,” while an attendee from Loma Alta Park commented, “It’s fantastic!” The top three favorite activities of attendees during the spring season were movies (24%), followed by arts and culture (20%), and sports (16%).

Winter 2023 Programming

This is the third iteration of the winter PAD programming since PAD expanded programming to the winter season in 2018. This chapter summarizes winter 2023 PAD participant survey data (n=3,577) as it relates to each of the PAD goals. For winter participant survey results by park and PAD Group, please refer to [Appendix B: Additional Data](#).

All 34 parks participated in PAD during the winter season. PAD was held from December 1-16, 2023, on Fridays from 4-8 PM or on Saturdays from 11-4 PM or 4-8 PM. Attendees could engage in free activities such as sled runs, arts and crafts, carnival games, a holiday photo booth, and enjoy free hot chocolate and snacks. Programming revolved around the theme of “Winter Wonderland” for the 2023 season.

2023 Winter PAD Participant Survey Findings

Winter PAD Attendee Characteristics

PAD attendees who took the survey were most likely to be between the ages of 26 to 39 (50%), female (75%), and identified as Hispanic/Latinx (62%). 64% of attendees identified English as the primary language spoken at home, but more than 3 in 10 attendees (34%) identified Spanish as their primary language at home.

Many PAD attendees (66%) visited the park either on a weekly (43%) or daily (23%) basis outside of PAD during the winter season. Notably, more than half of all attendees (59%) lived within the same zip code as a PAD park. Group 1 parks (64%) and Group 3 and 6 parks (61%) had the highest proportion of attendees who shared the same zip code as a PAD park.

Winter PAD also attracted families, as 92% of attendees attended with children. Of attendees attending with children, children were most often in the age range of 6-12 (69%) followed by 0-5 (50%), and 13-18 (21%).

Goal 1: Decrease Community Violence and Increase Perceptions of Safety

As indicated in the winter 2023 surveys, 60% of PAD attendees perceived PAD parks to be very safe during PAD attendance, and an additional 35% perceived PAD parks to be somewhat safe. In contrast, 47% of PAD attendees perceived their neighborhoods as very safe, and an additional 45% perceived PAD parks to be somewhat safe. Notably, among PAD attendees who expressed not feeling at all safe in their neighborhood, 64% felt safe at PAD.

The overwhelming majority of PAD attendees (93%) agreed that Deputy Sheriffs positively engaged with community members during PAD. Additionally, close to 7 in 10 attendees (69%) felt that the number of Deputy Sheriffs was “just right.” In addition to Deputy Sheriffs contributing to attendees’ feelings of safety while at PAD (62%), other factors included: park staff (58%), people around (42%), the positive atmosphere (32%), and community intervention workers (11%, data not shown). In open-ended comments, attendees mentioned not being alone and having people around as added layers of safety, in addition to park amenities, such as lighting. For example, a Belvedere Park attendee mentioned how “the area was in an enclosed area,” which made them feel safe while in attendance at PAD. Exhibit 44 is select photos of law enforcement during winter PAD.

Exhibit 44: Selected Photos of Deputy Sheriffs at PAD, Winter 2023



Source: UCLA staff site visits, Winter 2023.

Note: Multiple Deputy Sheriffs with a child attendee at Earvin “Magic” Johnson Park (left), and Deputy Sheriffs interacting with families at Bethune Park (right).

Goal 2: Increase Collaboration among Different Stakeholders

Similar to summer programming, winter PAD required cross-sector collaboration for implementation. LASD provided Deputy Sheriffs for patrol and engagement with attendees. Services offered by DPH included educational events, as well as referrals to additional health and wellness opportunities within the community. Community-based organizations also set up booths to provide information on available social services and resources within the surrounding area.

Goal 3: Increase Social Cohesion and Family Bonding

Most attendees (88%) agreed that they live in a close-knit or unified neighborhood. There was variation across park groups; 92% of PAD Group 5 (Amigo and Sorensen Parks) agreed that they live in a close-knit or unified neighborhood, compared to 86% of PAD Group 2 (City Terrace,

Jesse Owens, and Loma Alta Parks). Of those attendees who felt they did not live in a close-knit neighborhood, more than three out of every four attendees (76%) agreed that PAD helped them get to know their neighbors better. See Exhibit 45 for select photos of family and community bonding at PAD.

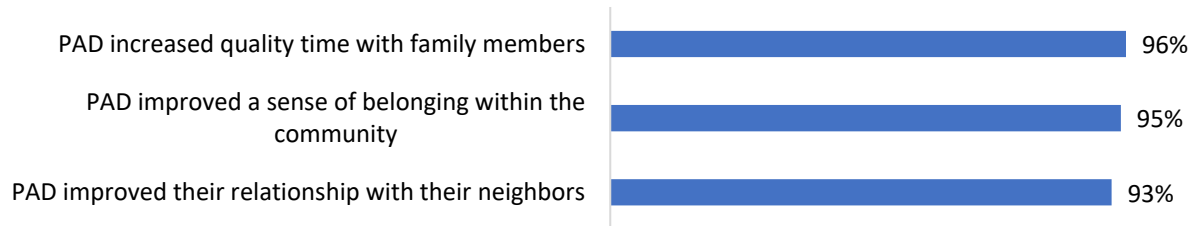
Exhibit 45: Selected Photos of Family and Community Bonding at PAD, Winter 2023



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team Site Visits, Winter 2023.
 Note: Group of young children at a cookie decorating table (left), and families gathered around jumpers/bounce houses at San Angelo Park (right).

Attendees overwhelmingly reported positive feedback related to community relationships and feelings of social cohesion while attending PAD. For example, an attendee at Steinmetz Park mentioned, “I think it’s great for the community to come together.” Most attendees agreed there was a positive family atmosphere when attending PAD (96%), felt a sense of belonging in the community (95%), and agreed that they got to know their neighbors better (93%; Exhibit 46).

Exhibit 46: Attendee Perspectives on Social Cohesion and Family and Community Well-being at PAD, Winter 2023

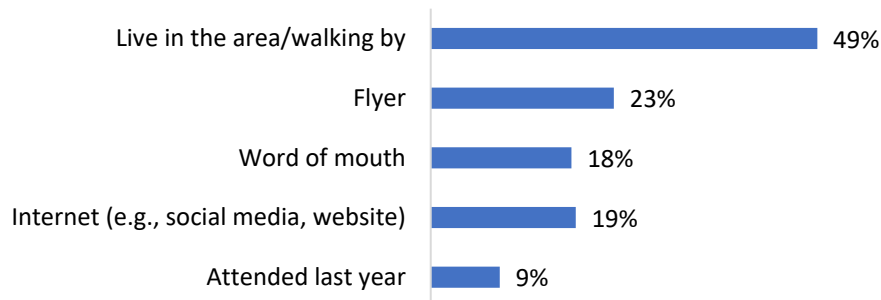


Source: Winter 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n= 3,577).

Goal 4: Increase Access to Quality Recreational Programming and Innovative Services

Almost half of all attendees found out about PAD by living in the area or walking by (49%), followed by flyers (23%), or because someone told them (18%; Exhibit 47). Notably, 69% of attendees at Bethune Park found out about PAD due to living in the area or walking by. Additional methods of outreach included via community institutions or groups (e.g., library, school, neighborhood council) and through park activities, such as cheerleading or other sports.

Exhibit 47: PAD Attendees on Outreach Method, Winter 2023



Source: Winter 2023 PAD Participant Surveys (n= 3,577).

Note: Multiple responses possible.

The top three favorite activities of attendees included: movies (29%), followed by sports (19%) and jumper/games or concerts (13%). Movies were popular across all age groups, whereas jumper/games were most popular amongst youth. Due to the winter season, some comments from attendees acknowledged that their favorite activities were the “Winter Wonderland” events, such as having snow in the park (Exhibit 48). Open-ended comments also noted suggestions for more activities catered towards teens/young adults.

Exhibit 48: Selected Photos of “Winter Wonderland” Programming, Winter 2023



Source: UCLA Evaluation Team Site Visits, Winter 2023.

Note: Families interacting with a dressed-up reindeer and Santa Claus at Salazar Park (left), and a child poses for a photo with a dressed-up Santa Clause at Sorenson Park (right).

The great majority (94%) of attendees agreed that they can participate in activities they couldn't otherwise afford through PAD, and 97% agreed that there was a variety of activities that they want to do while at winter PAD.

Goal 5: Increase Physical Activity, and Decrease Disease Risk

While physical activity programming was not the primary focus of winter PAD, attendees reported increased access to physical activity through available winter programming with 32% participating in a walking club, 55% in team sports, and 23% in an exercise class. In open-ended comments, attendees noted participating in other activities such as snow play or other holiday activities, and sports such as pickleball, baseball, or soccer. 42% of attendees reported spending about 30 minutes engaged in physical activity (data not shown).

Winter PAD Satisfaction

Nearly all attendees would participate in winter PAD again (96%) and would recommend PAD to others (97%). For example, in open-ended comments, attendees from Adventure Park noted that “every event has been great” and that they are “definitely coming to more events.”

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This report describes the findings of the evaluation of PAD in 2023. The findings describe how PAD succeeded in achieving its seven goals including 1) decrease community violence and increase perceptions of safety; 2) facilitate cross-sector collaboration in park communities and county-wide; 3) increase social cohesion, and family and community well-being; 4) increase access to free recreational programming, health and social services that reflect the interests and needs of communities served; 5) increase physical activity and decrease chronic disease risk; 6) contribute to positive youth development; and 7) promote senior connectedness.

Goal 1: Decrease Community Violence and Increase Perceptions of Safety

UCLA examined the impact of PAD on violence and safety by analyzing data from participant surveys, key informant surveys and interviews with PAD partners, and administrative crime data. The existing evidence indicated that PAD attendees felt safe at PAD even when they did not feel safe in their neighborhoods where PAD parks were located, emphasizing how the PAD environment offers protective factors to support positive perceptions of safety. The feelings of safety were due to the presence of Deputy Sheriffs, intervention workers, friendly park staff, and community members, as well as park features such as adequate lighting, clean facilities, and signage. These perspectives were corroborated by PAD partners, including DPR park staff and Deputy Sheriffs, who indicated PAD has a positive influence in decreasing community violence and increasing perceptions of safety. In addition, analysis of crime data indicated that while average Part I and Part II crime rates in and around PAD parks were higher than that of Los Angeles County, PAD parks and surrounding communities may have avoided an estimated 74 Part I crimes and 43 Part II crimes between 2010 and 2023, relative to a group of comparison parks without PAD.

Recommendations to further decrease community violence and increase perceptions of safety include:

- ***Encourage active Deputy Sheriff assignment and engagement with PAD park communities:*** Scheduling conflicts and limited LASD Deputy Sheriffs availability may create challenges to sufficiently staffing PAD events. Despite this, it is important to ensure consistency of Deputy Sheriff assignment by park, in order to better facilitate trust and rapport building with community members, who are often regulars at PAD

events. Consistent assignment will help to encourage Deputy Sheriffs to actively engage with the community during their PAD shift. Opportunities for Deputy Sheriffs to more actively participate in PAD include: walking around to make their presence known (i.e., instead of sitting in patrol car), interacting with youth, facilitating PAD activities, and/or introducing special events, such as movie night or concerts. It may be beneficial for PAD staff to organize specific responsibilities and interactions between Deputy Sheriffs and PAD attendees based on their particular park and community needs. Regular and consistent communication between DPR staff and Deputy Sheriffs can help delineate realistic expectations for LASD active engagement and ensure ongoing accountability.

- **Expand community interventionist activities to more parks:** Currently, the Safe Passages Initiative is implemented in eight South Agency parks. Recognizing that not all communities are comfortable with the presence of Deputy Sheriffs, other options such as community intervention workers can help to facilitate feelings of safety. Intervention workers often have a deep understanding of community dynamics and events, work collaboratively with PAD staff to anticipate any potential safety concerns, and have community buy-in and may be able to do unique work based on their connections. It is important to identify priority locations for the Safe Passages Initiative and expand interventionist activities in these locations, as funding allows.
- **Encourage Deputy Sheriff and community interventionist collaboration:** Encourage communication between law enforcement and interventionists, for greater community benefit through shared information on recent local events and safety concerns.
- **Adequately plan for available safety resources:** Sufficient LASD staffing has been a consistent challenge. It is important to create and utilize a plan for Deputy Sheriff recruitment prior to PAD program start and ensure resources are available for all PAD parks to have needed LASD coverage. When LASD resources are particularly limited, alternative strategies should be explored and implemented (e.g., assign Deputy Sheriffs based on park size/need, increase DPR staff and volunteers to facilitate feelings of safety). Referring to crime rates and perceptions of safety from the PAD participant survey can help prioritize parks for more targeted safety resources.

Goal 2: Increase Collaboration among Different Stakeholders

Discussions with key informants indicated that PAD implementation fostered communication, collaboration, and relationship-building amongst participating organizations. Key informants strongly agreed that PAD improved relationships between County departments and community members, as well as communication and collaboration amongst PAD partners. Collaboration was supported through activities such as stakeholder engagement meetings and community resource fairs.

Recommendations to further facilitate cross-sector collaboration include:

- **Early and year-round planning and convening of partners:** Bring leadership from key departments together to strategically align resources and efficiently address community needs. It is important to involve individuals who implement PAD as they can offer “on the ground” perspective and experience. Continue to hold frequent stakeholder engagement meetings to serve as facilitators for resources available and relationship building.
- **Diverse and regular partner communication:** Promote frequent and active communication through a variety of modalities including regular updates via email, as well as Zoom and in-person meetings. PAD partners should work together to promote PAD while simultaneously advocating and aligning with their own missions. Attendees are particularly interested in understanding what resources might be available from partners at PAD; active promotion of the specific services and programming by partners may be helpful for improving attendance.
- **Grow and share participating partner network:** Expand partnerships within communities to include well-known businesses and services that have existing relationships with PAD attendees. It may be helpful to provide a county wide list/resource guide with approved vendors and services available to share knowledge across partners and PAD parks. A system to refer clients to PAD and PAD participants to services may allow for more synergy and realized outcomes.

Goal 3: Increase Social Cohesion and Family Bonding

Key informants and PAD attendees indicated that PAD contributed to social cohesion and community well-being by providing opportunities for neighbors and families to socialize, spend quality time together, and develop positive relationships. The vast majority of attendees brought children to PAD, and PAD removed access issues to a wide variety of family-friendly activities.

Recommendations to further increase social cohesion and community well-being include:

- **Promote and implement diversity and inclusion:** Integrate initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion in programming by including individuals from various ages, races and ethnicities, and other groups who may be commonly excluded or underrepresented. Work to better understand community differences in order to provide more tailored programming. Understand that while there may be regional similarities, all communities are diverse and have different needs.
- **Collect and integrate community feedback and develop targeted programming to address community needs:** Systematically solicit community feedback and conduct needs assessments, creating more spaces for dialogues to identify population needs through additional relationships with community-based organizations and County

departments. Use this information to develop PAD programming and services relevant to community needs, which contributes to family bonding and social cohesion during PAD. Build rapport with families and the community to better understand participant needs; utilize park staff perspectives who work closely with frequent park visitors.

Goal 4: Increase Access to Quality Recreational Programming and Innovative Services

PAD administrative data, key informant interviews, and participant surveys showed that PAD increased access to free recreational programming by reaching residents of PAD zip codes and many others living throughout the County, with over 405,000 estimated visits across all 34 parks in 2023. PAD provided a diverse mix of entertainment, physical activity programming, and health and social services that attracted families and participants of all ages. PAD had high levels of participant and partner satisfaction. Attendees found PAD to be important for their community. Key informants agreed that PAD is a pleasant and welcoming space to offer services and provided attendees in high-need communities with improved access to quality recreational programming.

Recommendations to further increase access to free recreational programming and health and social services include:

- **Utilize a variety of outreach strategies to increase reach and retention:** It may be beneficial to outreach beyond the communities where PAD parks are located and to utilize a wide variety of modalities, including social media platforms, as well as local schools and CBOs who have relationships with potential attendees. Outreach should be conducted well in advance of the start of PAD so potential attendees can plan accordingly. Use a customizable flyer template for each PAD park with outlined dates and events; attendees are more apt to attend when they know in advance the activities and programs that will be offered on a specific date.
- **Implement dedicated and reliable staffing models:** Volunteers and youth workers can address elevated staffing needs during PAD but need to be recruited and trained prior to PAD. Similarly, dedicated park staff need to be hired in a timely manner to assist with planning, administration, engaging stakeholders, and smoother program implementation. Work to streamline the hiring process for a quicker turnaround. Strategies to promote retention should be utilized (e.g., relationship building, offering incentives). Provide opportunities for youth workers to apply for long-term employment when appropriate. Adequate staffing has been a continuous challenge at PAD parks and current staff may experience burnout or mental fatigue due to the workload of providing quality PAD programming for eight weeks straight.

- ***Expand and evolve types of PAD programming available:*** Provide new types of services based on community needs and wants. Work to provide more dedicated sports programming for all ages as well as cultural programming and talents to showcase and provide a learning opportunity for attendees. Encourage community involvement and leadership in provision of programming where possible.

Goal 5: Increase Physical Activity, and Decrease Chronic Disease Risk

PAD administrative data, key informant surveys and interviews, and participant surveys highlighted that PAD increased access to physical activity through a diverse array of free sports and exercise classes, which were age appropriate and targeted community interests. The majority of attendees who did not meet the recommended physical activity guidelines for their age participated in physical activity at PAD. Key informants emphasized “spillover effects,” such as increased enrollment in other physical activity park programs throughout the year and continued involvement in interests developed directly as a result of PAD. PAD findings indicated the likely reduction in disease burden in PAD high-need communities if physical activity levels were sustained year-round.

Recommendations to further increase physical activity and decrease disease risk include:

- ***Ensure physical activity offerings that are in alignment with attendee interests and demographics:*** Increase physical activity offerings that cater to specific youth, adult, and senior (where applicable) interests. Generally speaking, sports leagues are particularly popular for youth and adult men. Sports programming should be feasible and consider whether the park has appropriate space and equipment. Utilize participant survey data and event-specific attendance numbers to understand which physical activity offerings are most popular with attendees by park.
- ***Utilize marketing to promote health and physical activity:*** Increase marketing campaigns to promote health and physical activity for youth and adult attendees. Recognizing that cost is often a barrier to participation in organized physical activity programming, outreach should emphasize accessibility of activities in a safe environment at zero-cost to attendees.
- ***Offer popular PAD programming year-round:*** Provide year-round physical activity programming based on attendee interest at PAD parks in order to maximize impact on chronic disease. PAD is a powerful opportunity to introduce new and creative ways for the community to engage in physical activity.
- ***Utilize community expertise and training:*** Community members who are involved in high school or college-level recreation teams and leagues may appreciate the opportunity to “give back” by leading sports clinics and training sessions at PAD.

- ***Encourage regular, consistent participation in physical activities throughout PAD season:*** There are opportunities to improve and continue involvement in physical activity at PAD by offering incentives for regular participation (e.g., a raffle for a prize at the end of the 8-week period).

Goal 6: Contribute to Positive Youth Development

PAD administrative data and key informant surveys and interviews support PAD as a positive program for youth. DPR offers dedicated youth programming, such as teen zone activities, to help create a sense of belonging at PAD. PAD helps youth volunteers and employees through the Youth at Work program build skills (e.g., customer service, accountability) and explore potential recreational career pathways.

Recommendations to further contribute to positive youth development through PAD include:

- ***Explore establishing a youth leaders/peer leadership program:*** Youth at Work varied in success by park and was dependent on geographic location. Recognizing that the Youth at Work program stops at the end of the fiscal year (June) and new assignments occur in July, the program structure creates inherent challenges when trying to staff and ensure PAD coverage. Establishing a dedicated leadership/employment program specifically for PAD would help solve challenges with the Youth at Work program ending during the middle of the PAD season, while also ensuring appropriate staff coverage. Youth could develop their skills, have mentorship, and receive compensation for their efforts.
- ***Ensure relevant teen zone programming:*** Programming should be catered to teen interests to ensure engagement and active participation. When teens feel included, they are more apt to be regular participants. Teens often have extensive social networks and can encourage other teens to participate in PAD events.

Goal 7: Promote Senior Connectedness

PAD administrative data and key informant surveys and interviews support PAD as a positive program for seniors. Findings indicated that older adults enjoy “giving back” to their community through volunteer opportunities at PAD. Older adults enjoyed dedicated senior activities, such as a senior PAD dance. However, data showed that participation may be challenging for some parks that do not have established older adult involvement and networks.

Recommendations to further improve senior connectedness through PAD include:

- ***Ensure at least one dedicated senior event at PAD:*** Senior dances were notably successful at parks who had prior senior engagement and programming.

- **Identify and address barriers to participation:** It is important for PAD staff to think of transportation and other barriers that may prevent older adults from partaking in PAD activities and events. Foster partnerships/collaborations with different County agencies or organizations in the area to provide services to older adults during PAD or to facilitate them getting to PAD may be helpful. Dedicated outreach and engagement efforts for senior populations may help spread the word about PAD and improve senior participation.

Conclusions and Overall Recommendations

Overall, PAD has made significant progress in achieving its intended goals through the provision of quality recreational programming in a safe and family-friendly environment. Evidence demonstrates that PAD may have reduced crime and associated costs in PAD parks and their surrounding areas over time; encouraged meaningful collaboration between participating County departments and community organizations; contributed to feelings of well-being, family togetherness, and social cohesion; offered sports, entertainment, and other activities for children and adults with no barriers to participation; may have reduced the burden of disease and associated costs for attendees that participated in sports and exercise opportunities; and meaningfully engaged youth and seniors in programming.

The evaluation findings indicated the following overarching recommendations:

- **Adequate support staff for PAD continues to be a challenge:** Due to long County hiring processes and capped 18-hour work weeks for non-exempt employees, some PAD parks may face staffing challenges. In recent years, consistent volunteer participation has been limited. While youth workers help support staff, they are limited in their responsibilities. Vendors can help to cover some staffing gaps, but at an expense. Each park should strategically plan for their staffing needs in advance, with support from County leadership.
- **Dates and times may need to be reconsidered based on available data and individual park experience:** It might be strategic to consider offering Saturday programming during the daytime (e.g., from 2-6 PM) or offer two-day events to hone in on available resources that are often limited (e.g., staffing). Furthermore, some parks emphasized the challenges they face keeping high levels of engagement in late evening hours. Park staff emphasized that late evenings may become a safety concern for youth and staff who are responsible for disassembling PAD stages/equipment and need to clean the park (particularly as law enforcement isn't present past event end).
- **Communities vary dramatically and a "one size fits all" approach is not effective for PAD:** There may be similarities within a region, but the needs of a particular agency are

often different which makes it challenging to have a “one size fits all” approach. PAD was designed for the surrounding community and should therefore take into consideration the community’s unique characteristics and needs, as well as the park’s culture, facilities, and geographic location. Ultimately, parks know their needs best and can benefit from close collaboration with their community members and partners.

- ***Utilize a variety of marketing and engagement strategies for PAD, including but not limited to:*** Parks found greatest success with flyers that were tailored to the specific park offerings at their park. A customizable template with PAD branding may be a helpful strategy to share with each individual park. Some parks mentioned self-marketing strategies, such as using Eventbrite or Groupon for PAD “registration” which would help parks have an active database and ability to predict attendance and adjust for anticipated crowds.
- ***It is necessary to build PAD programming from the ground up:*** It is important to understand what participants are requesting, particularly how it relates to the community’s overarching needs. PAD programming and activities are most successful when they take into consideration attendees’ perspectives. Community-based organizations and interventionists are often deeply embedded in communities and have knowledge around culture, perspectives, and attitudes— they are a strong resource for DPR staff for planning and implementation. Furthermore, park staff frequently have trust and rapport built with regular park goers— tapping into these existing relationships is critical. There are opportunities for PAD to provide different cultural programming and talents to showcase and provide a learning opportunity for attendees; to have more dedicated sports programming for all ages; and to facilitate community connection to job programs/trades/potential career opportunities.
- ***Necessity of department or park champion:*** Champions know how to facilitate tough conversations, gather necessary/needed resources, and move priorities forward. These exist in County departments and at individual park sites— champions have been foundational to PAD reaching the outcomes that it has. Furthermore, key informant interviews highlighted numerous examples of individuals motivated to make PAD a success and stepping out of the traditionally assigned roles to contribute to efforts.
- ***Procurement processes may create additional obstacles/cause delays:*** It would be helpful to create a database of all County approved vendors that details what services they provide. When nearby parks have the same schedule and need for vendors, there can be limited options to choose from and parks feel as though they are competing with one another. Vendors can help address some of the DPR staffing challenges and fill any gaps in the provision of programming.
- ***Necessity of starting the PAD planning process early:*** It is critical to assess staffing needs, and to consider providing technical assistance on potential resources and County

hiring processes early. Furthermore, by having a clear vision for programming, staff can begin to contract vendors and get the necessary resources for implementation. The end of fiscal year falls once PAD has started and it can be challenging to get purchase orders approved in a timely manner; this is an important consideration to incorporate into the planning process.

- ***Importance of trust building with and utilizing existing relationships within the community:*** PAD managers and staff know their community well and CBOs may have deep relationships and are able to outreach to their clients about PAD (word of mouth). PAD can be a “win-win” for the CBOs within a community, for example, CBOs are able to promote their agenda in alignment with PAD and gain publicity.
- ***Food is a significant draw, despite a limited dedicated budget:*** The vast majority of key informants emphasized that food is a big attraction at PAD, however there is a limited budget to provide food and oftentimes staff have to restrict the number served or offer “snacks” as opposed to actual meals. Many PAD staff implement creative solutions to provide food to their community. Partnering with local restaurants and stores within the surrounding area to sponsor food offerings may be an opportunity.

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Appendices are available online. For additional details on evaluation methods – please see [Appendix A](#). For additional data, including survey descriptives by park and PAD Group – please see [Appendix B](#). For information regarding mental health, probation, and social service use in zip codes around PAD parks – please see [Appendix C](#).