

# Report on Park Use and Stewardship

Stanley Park Ecology Society

2021-2022

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STANLEY PARK  
ECOLOGY SOCIETY



# Findings at a Glance

# 1

Stanley Park users are relatively diverse and over half reside in the West-End neighbourhood of Vancouver.

# 2

As people feel more connected to nature, they experience better physical and mental health and overall well-being. Almost all (98%) Stanley Park users feel connected to nature.

# 3

Participating in stewardship with Stanley Park Ecology Society contributes to happiness, life satisfaction, mental well-being and social connectedness.

# 4

The diversity of stewards increased from 2021 to 2022 in terms of both racial diversity and a greater representation of those not born in Canada in stewardship programs.

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## A. Location of Stanley Park

Stanley Park is a 1001 acre park located on a peninsula at the northwestern edge of downtown Vancouver, BC. Stanley Park is in a high-density neighbourhood with a much higher proportion of apartments than the rest of Vancouver. The main housing type (78%) in the neighbourhood adjacent to Stanley Park is high-rise apartments (greater than five stories tall).

The median household income within the Stanley Park neighbourhood is lower than the median household income for the rest of Vancouver (\$65,000 vs. \$82,000), however, this is likely partly because more households are single-person compared to the rest of Vancouver. The area has a predominantly white population with a lower proportion of visible minorities (28% vs. 55%) and a slightly lower proportion of immigrants (39% vs 42%) than the rest of Vancouver.

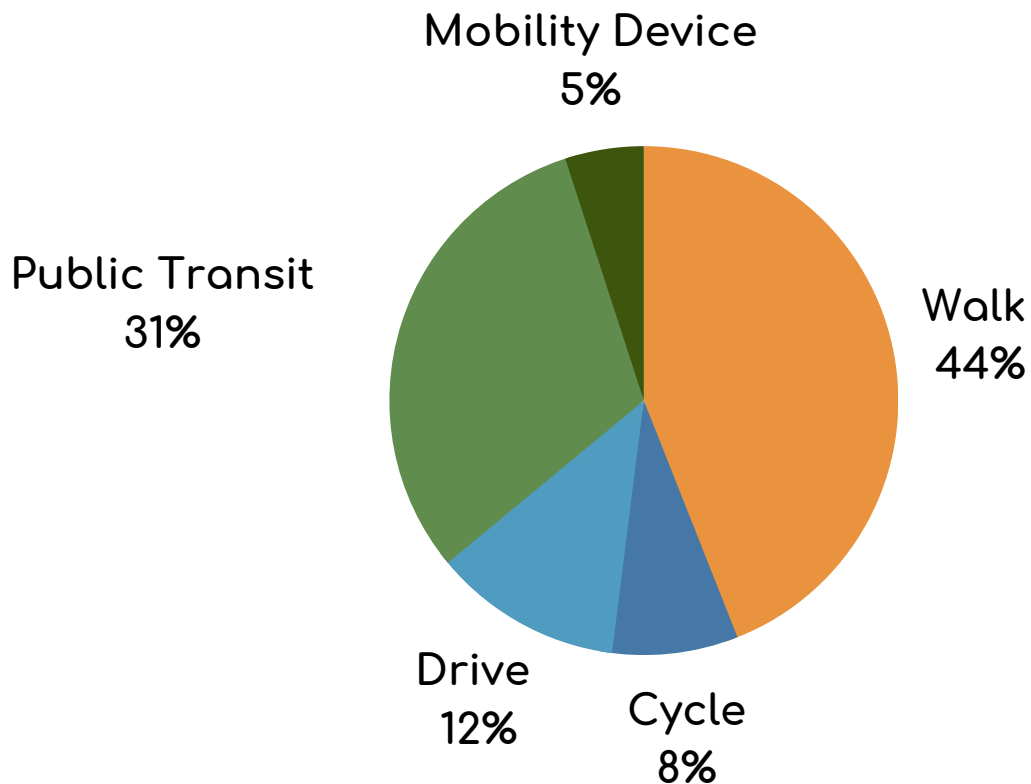


Google Maps

\*Data comes from the 2021 Census

## B. Overview of Stanley Park Users in 2022

### Transportation Modes of Park Users



**54%**

of park users are aged 55 years or older.

**42%**

of park users identify as a visible minority and 58% identify as white.

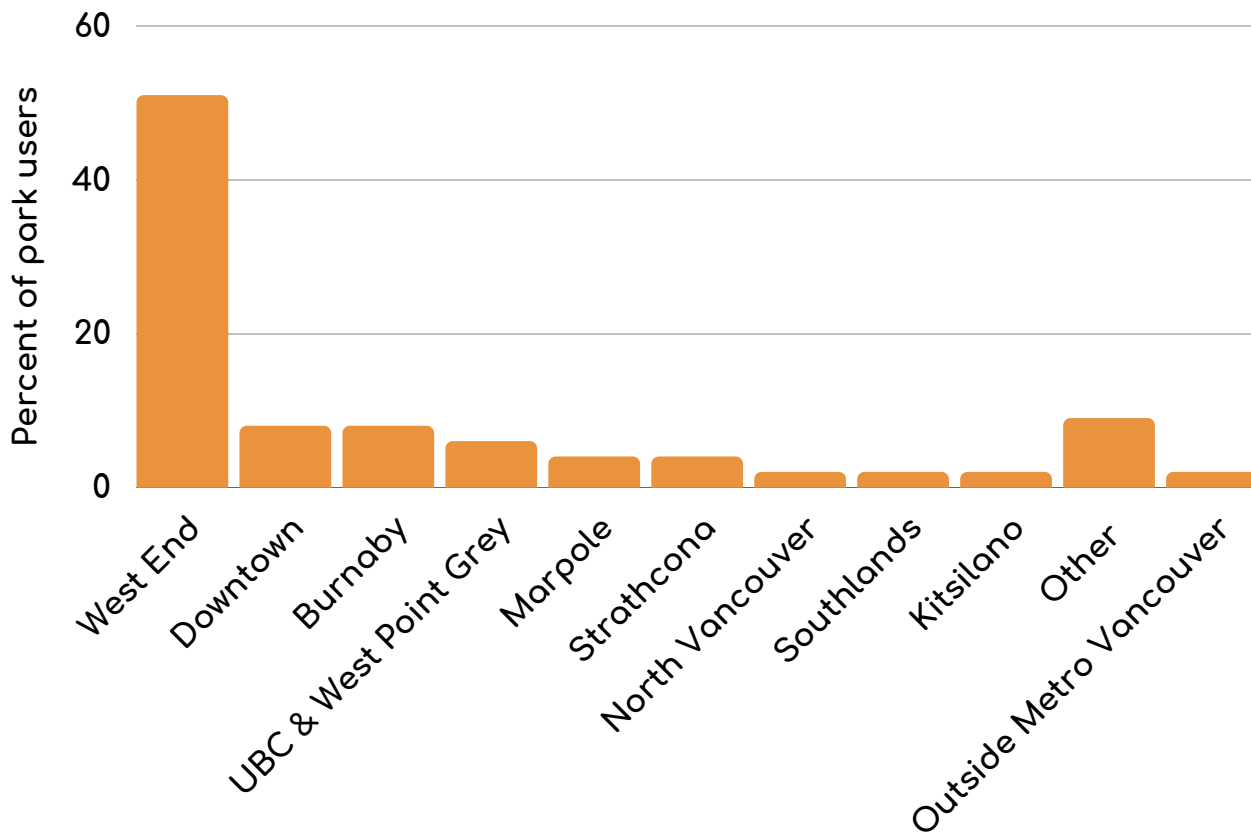
**70%**

of park users have a Bachelor's degree or higher education.

**52%**

of park users are born in Canada.

## C. Where Park Users Live



# 51%

of park users reside in the West-End neighbourhood.

# 12.5%

of park users travel to Stanley Park from outside of Vancouver.

# 8%

of park users reside in the Downtown.

## D. Activities in the Park

# 81%

of park users participate in at least one nature-based activity\* while visiting Stanley Park.

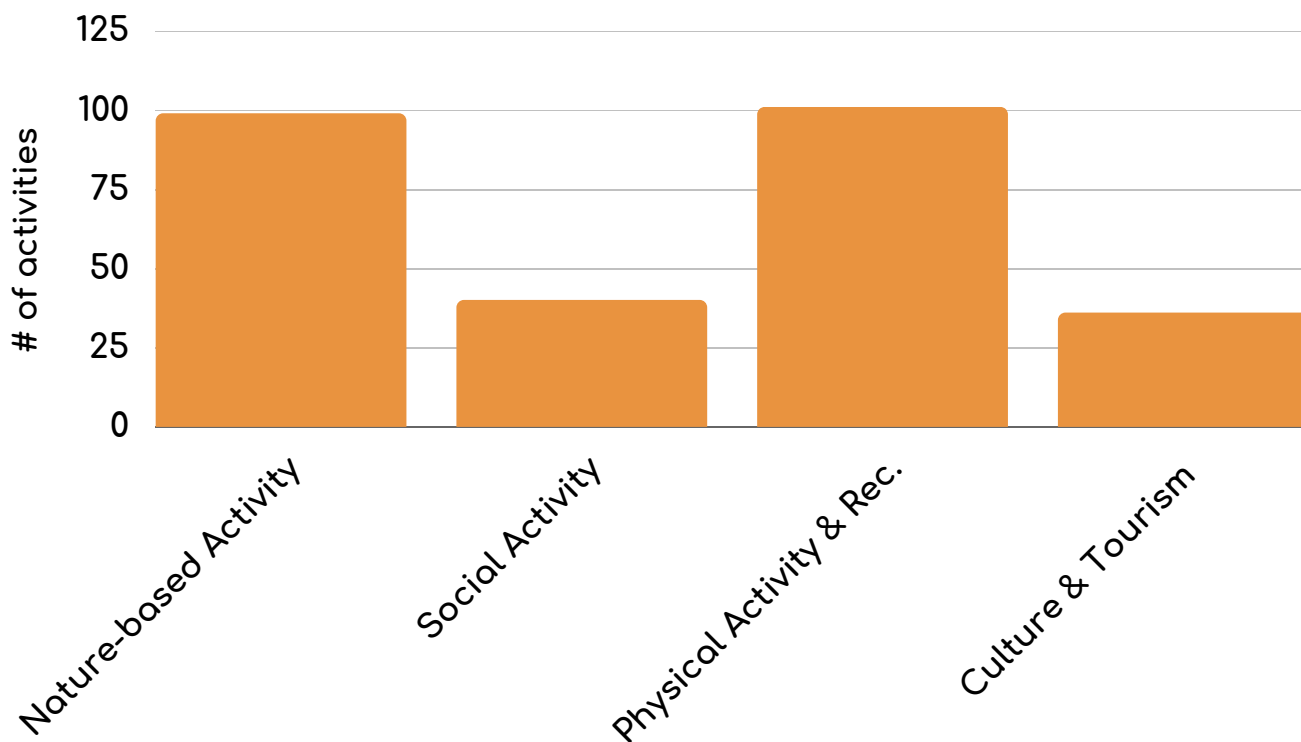
# 80%

of park users report walking along the seawall when visiting Stanley Park.

Nature-based activity includes:

- walking in a natural area,
- practicing a self-organized nature activity,
- tending to a garden and attending a nature program

### Activity Types in Stanley Park



# Benefits from Park Use

From surveys of park users across Cornerstone Parks, it was found that there is a significant relationship between nature connectedness and mental health, physical health and overall well-being. Therefore, as people feel more connected to nature, their health and well-being improve. From the surveys of Stanley Park users, almost all of the respondents feel connected to nature on some level and, therefore, receive health benefits from their time spent within the park.

Park users who engage in nature-based activities feel even more connected to nature, suggesting that participation in nature activities at Stanley Park may improve well-being and mental and physical health.

## A. Nature Connections in Stanley Park

# 98%

of park users feel connected to nature on some level, where 60% feel strongly connected to nature, and 38% feel connected on some level.

Of those who report engaging in a nature-based activity, 63% feel strongly connected to nature, 3% higher than general park users.

"I live nearby, so I can experience the calm and quiet and animal spirits of the Park. I love living nearby and visit the park on a daily basis."

*Stanley Park User 2022*



## Park Elements that Inhibit Nature Connections

**40%**

of park users say that cars make them feel least connected to nature.

**17%**

of park users say that crowds in the park make them feel least connected to nature.

**10%**

of park users say that noise makes them feel least connected to nature.

**10%**

of park users say the concession/food stalls make them feel least connected to nature.

## Park Elements that Foster Nature Connections

**29%**

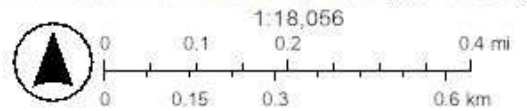
of park users say that the place in the park where they report feeling most connected to nature is Beaver Lake.



“Walks with friends or family are the most meaningful as it allows me to have a change of pace in my life and step back to enjoy nature. It has brought a lot of comfort and peace to me in the past.”

*SPES Steward 2022*

# Stanley Park locations that facilitate nature connections



## B. Health Benefits of Visiting Stanley Park

Those who report feeling strongly connected to nature rate both their mental health and physical health higher than overall park users.

# 63%

of park users rate their mental health as Very Good or Excellent.

"I believe parks like Stanley Park are crucial to society's well-being and personal connection to nature, especially since the majority do not have a backyard/garden."

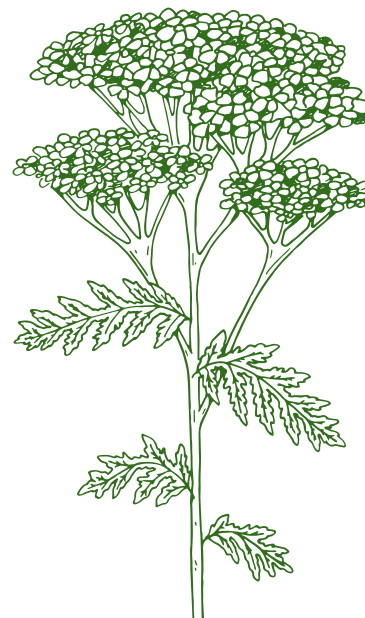
*SPES Volunteer 2021*

# 92%

of park users have felt cheerful or in good spirits for half the time or more since spending time in the park.

# 82%

of park users have felt calm and relaxed for half of the time or more since spending time in the park.



# Park Restoration & Stewardship

Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) promotes awareness of and respect for the natural world through collaborative leadership in environmental education, research, and conservation in Stanley Park.

## A. Stanley Park Ecological Improvements

	2021	2022	Total
Area of park space restored from invasive species removal	10480m <sup>2</sup>	570m <sup>2</sup>	11050m <sup>2</sup>
# of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers planted	1040	581	1621



## B. Stanley Park Ecology Society Volunteer Stewards

Much of the restoration done within Stanley Park is conducted by volunteer stewards working with the Stanley Park Ecology Society. From surveys with stewards and data collected by Stanley Park Ecology Society, we found that:

# 4410

volunteer hours were dedicated to park restoration in the 2022 season.

# 35%

of SPES stewards in 2022 participate in stewardship activities on a regular basis.



33% of stewards participated in stewardship activities 11 times or more per year.

Photo credit: Stanley Park Ecology Society



## C. Benefits from Stewardship

From our surveys, we also found that not only does the environment benefit from stewardship, but there are a host of benefits for Stanley Park stewards.

# 96%

of stewards say that participating in stewardship contributes to their mental well-being.

# 100%

of stewards feel that participating in stewardship contributes to feeling connected to living things and the environment.

# 89%

of stewards feel that stewardship helps them develop and maintain social connections, and 89% of stewards say that stewardship programs make them feel a sense of belonging to a community.

# 98%

of stewards say that participation contributes to feeling happy and satisfied.



Participating in stewardship activities contributes more strongly to health and well-being outcomes than general park recreation. The 2022 Survey of SPES Stewards revealed that:

# Only 67%

of stewards say that recreation activities contribute to developing and maintaining social connections compared to participating in stewardship activities (89%).

# Only 63%

of stewards say that recreation activities contribute to a sense of belonging to a community compared to participating in stewardship activities (89%).



"Just reinforcing how much participating in the stewardship program at Stanley Park helped with my mental health, meeting awesome people, and plus exercising! :D"

*SPES Volunteer 2021*

When stewards were asked how they feel in Stanley Park, the most common responses are:

“ Happy, Relaxed, Peaceful, Amazed and Appreciative ”



Photo credit: Park People, 2022

"Having lived in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, I realized how important each of their major parks was to me. The heat of the summer in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal drove me to parks because the park canopy made the parks 5 or 10 degrees cooler than the asphalt and concrete of the city."

*SPES Steward 2021*



## D. Pro-Environmental Behaviour in Stewards

Those participating in stewardship activities are also engaged in other types of pro-environmental behaviour, some of which are newly adopted and possibly inspired by their work with SPES.

# 98%

of stewards say their participation allows them to give back to nature and address environmental impacts.

# 44%

of stewards say they started teaching other people about environmental issues since being involved in stewardship.

# 88%

of stewards say that they started performing additional environmental actions at home (i.e., recycling/composting, using less electricity) since being involved in stewardship.

"It's a small yet meaningful way I can give back to nature and my community by helping to preserve and take care of this land we call home for future generations."

*SPES Steward  
2021*

# Fostering Inclusion in the Park

Access to high-quality, large urban parks is not shared equally among Vancouver residents. Therefore, SPES is attempting to identify who is underrepresented both within the park and in stewardship programs to help inform strategies to foster inclusion. From surveys conducted in 2022, we found that:

## 42%

of park users identify as a visible minority.

## 35%

of park users have a disability.

## 44%

of park users are born outside of Canada, and almost half of those born outside of Canada are newcomers to Canada (i.e. have lived in Canada for less than 5 years).

## 71%

of park users have a Bachelor's degree or higher, whereas 45% of Vancouverites have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

## Only 13%

of park users are between the age of 18-29, and 0% were under 18.



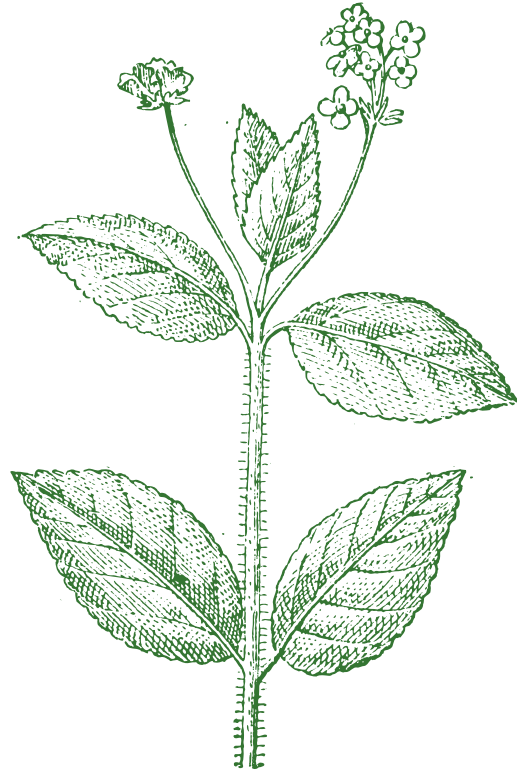
From 2021 to 2022, there seemed to be an increase in racial diversity and representation from those not born in Canada in stewardship programs.

# 14%

increase in SPES stewards who identify as a visible minority from 2021 to 2022.

# 4%

increase in SPES stewards who are born outside of Canada.



"Stanley Park is a Vancouver ICON and should be accessible to ALL people. No matter what their physical abilities or disabilities may be. ALL people should have EQUAL access..."

*Stanley Park User 2022*

To increase the inclusivity of Stanley Park and SPES programs, SPES has undertaken the following actions:

- Created programs for underserved youth through collaborations with Environmental Youth Alliance, Red Fox Society, and PALS Autism Society (PASS), and local schools, offering programs to underserved youth to meaningfully connect them with nature, promote the next generation's scientific literacy, and
- Collaborative programming designed with and for LGBTQIA2S+ and BIPOC community.

"I just wanted to say thank you, and we had a lot of fun, and the Youth really got involved and were engaged, and it was amazing!"

*Red Fox Society*



Photo credit: Stanley Park Ecology Society

# Appendix

## What are Cornerstone Parks?

Cornerstone parks are rich in biodiversity, increase our cities' resilience to climate change, and provide the deep connections to nature that people need to ensure their mental and physical well-being to the millions of urban Canadians who visit them yearly. These parks are stewarded and animated by communities to maintain and enhance the benefits these green spaces provide to society and the environment.

Cornerstone Parks is Canada's only national network dedicated to maximizing the impact and influence of Canada's large urban parks.

## How was this data collected?

Park People conducted these surveys in collaboration with our Cornerstone Park partners: Stanley Park Ecology Society in Vancouver; High Park Nature Centre in Toronto; Les Amis de la montagne in Montréal.

One survey was designed for participants of park stewardship programs (activities related to caring for the land, i.e. invasive species removal, tree planting, and plant and wildlife inventory) and was conducted online in 2021 and 2022.

The goal was to better understand the impacts that stewardship participants perceive on their well-being and behaviour.

The second survey was designed for general park visitors and was conducted in 2022 (and 2021 for High Park only). This survey aimed to better understand how people use the park and how connected users feel to nature.

Park People and external data consultants Spatialists completed data analysis.

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