As of 2019, there were over 8.7 million residents of New York, and 1,700 total parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities. They ranged from the behemoth Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, spanning over 2,700 acres, to the highly-trafficked Central Park in Manhattan, with reported foot traffic of 25 million per day (not counting horse hooves), to the tiny Luke J. Lang Square in Queens, with an area comparable to the size of a car – just 1/1000th of an acre. With over 19,000 total park acreage across the five boroughs, the New York City Parks Department has a formidable responsibility in keeping these parks clean and safe for New Yorkers. According to the dataset of the NYC Parks crew’s daily tasks maintained by NYC Parks and NYC Open Data, they’re working hard at it.

**Which parks get all the (time and) attention?**

In total, NYC Parks crew members spent at least TK person-hours in 2019 in cleaning and maintaining the city’s parks. The sectors of the city requiring the greatest number of person-hours were Manhattan’s Districts TK and TK, followed by Brooklyn’s TK and TK – home to popular areas of Central Park and Prospect Park, respectively. Interestingly, the pattern remains when considering the number of hours per person. In other words, Central Park and Prospect Park do have more crew members cleaning them up, but they’re still putting in long hours.

[exhibit]

**But, what about the addition of personnel mandated by the NYC Parks regulations update in 2018?**

Funny you should ask! The number of working hours per crew member per park has decreased since 2015, following what appears to be changes wrought by the updated regulations. A number of additional NYC Parks inspectors were added at the end of TK, possibly resulting in the pattern we see here. The average number of hours per crew member per park decreased from 2017 to 2018, while the number of crew members per park increased over the same period. The park’s new hires appear to have lightened the load for crew members on average, reducing their time per park from TK in 2015 to its lowest point of TK hours in 2018.

[exhibit]

However, there seems to be an interesting phenomenon here – although the average number of crew members per park per visit seems to have gradually returned to 2015 levels from its 2018 peak, the amount of time per crew member per visit has still remained close to its 2018 low. It seems that crew members now put in the same number of hours on average per visit as when they had more co-workers to help them. However, this pattern does seem to differ across boroughs:

[exhibit]

When it comes to other differences between boroughs, it seems that they remain in step with each other in the ebbs and flows of personnel and hours devoted to park cleanliness and maintenance. While certain boroughs have more trafficked parks, it seems that when there are increases or decreases in resources, they are felt by all the boroughs.

[exhibit]

Finally, it might help to understand which types of cleaning and maintenance demand the most of NYC Parks employees. There are certain types of incidents that are common and especially important to keeping NYC Parks up to Parks Inspection Program (PIP) health and safety standards – and, of course, up to the standards that keep the people, pets, and flora and fauna who visit them comfortable. Animal waste, dumping, medical waste, and broken glass all pose risks. NYC Parks also tracks graffiti removal.

How much in park area does each new Yorker have? 0.002 of an acre

Takeaways:

* There was a sudden increase in the number of crew members in 2018, which resulted in fewer hours per cre member?