

Parks Evaluation Goals & Questions

Goal: Understand the use of Somerville parks, with particular focus on equity in access to modern parks with engaging features for all residents.

Data: observations of park use, permit data from Parks & Rec calendar, ACS data

Specific aims and research questions:

- Who uses the parks? During which times?
 - Perceived age, gender, race/ethnicity
- How do people use parks for unstructured recreation (i.e. not permitted times)
- How active are people in the parks?
 - What features promote activity
 - Which parks need renovation or improvement, and what type of improvement?
- How does permitting affect park accessibility for unstructured play?

Observation Method

- Each selected park observed at 3 points in time during three windows:
 - Weekday 3-5, Weekday 5-7, Weekend 3-5
- Data collected on individual user activity and demographics as well as overall park conditions
- User demographics are based on enumerator-perceived age, gender, and race or ethnicity

Sedentary
Inactive games or reading
Sitting or lying down
Standing still

Light
Walking or stretching
Gardening
Swinging, playing catch, or assisting children

Moderate
Biking or scooting
Yoga or Tai Chi
Climbing/sliding

Vigorous
Aerobics/strengthening
Jumping, tag, chasing, or jogging
Playing sports

Subj. #	Subsect. #/descrip.	Gender			Age Group				Ethnicity				Activity Level			
		Female	Male	Other/ Other	Child	Teen	Adult	Senior	Latino	Black	White	Other/ Other	Sed.	Light	Mod.	Vigorous
1																
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																

North Street Playground DAY OF WEEK _____ DATE _____ OBSERVER _____
 TIME: 3:00PM - 5:00PM () 5:00-7:00PM () # of users at count start ___ # of users at count end ___

PRIMARY USERS: Org./Group Families Individuals
 SECONDARY USERS: Org./Group Families Individuals

CONDITIONS OF TARGET AREA

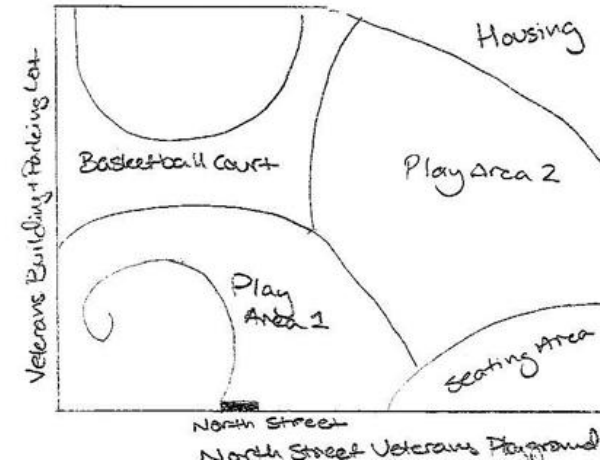
Is it **accessible?** (e.g., not locked or rented) Yes No
 Are **languages other than English** being spoken? Yes No
 Is a **drinking fountain** available and functional? Yes No
 Is **lighting** available? Yes No

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS / OBSERVATIONS

Describe how the park is being used, in a sentence or two:

Particular positives and negatives about the park:

Weather during observation:



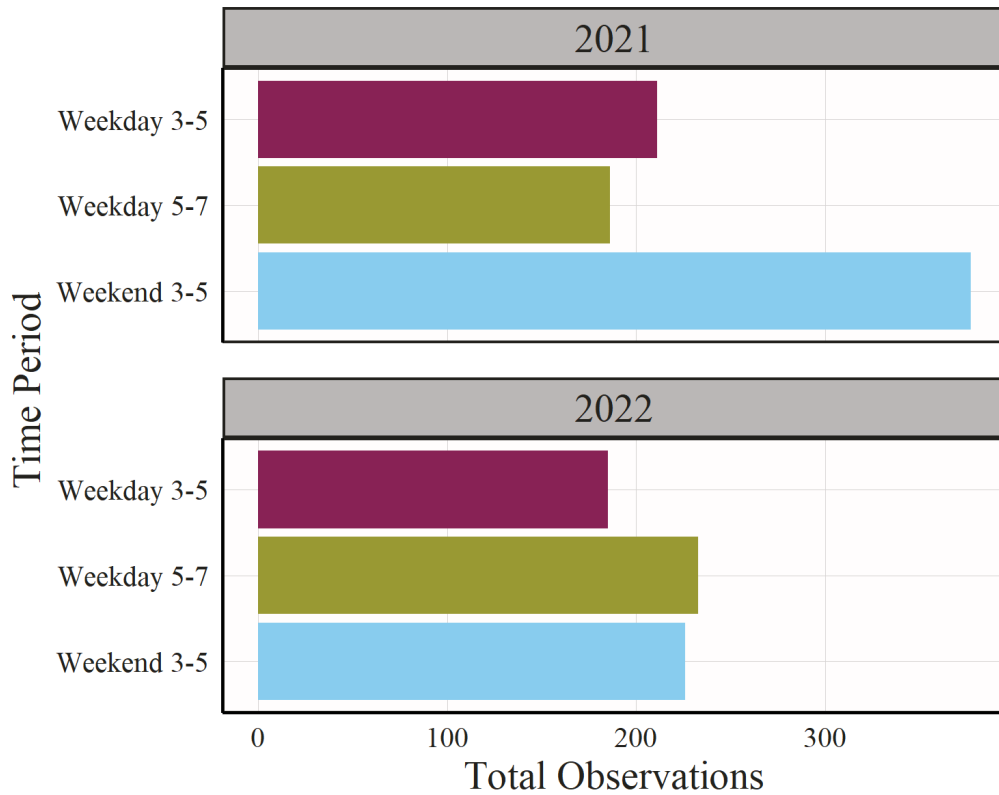
Suggested methods:

If busy, try:
 Subsection 1: Basketball court
 Subsection 2: Play Area 1
 Subsection 3: Play Area 2
 Subsection 4: Seating Area

If quiet, try:
 Screenline method: visualize a line across the entire length of the park, and move it slowly from the left to the right side of the park. Count each park user as they cross your screen line.

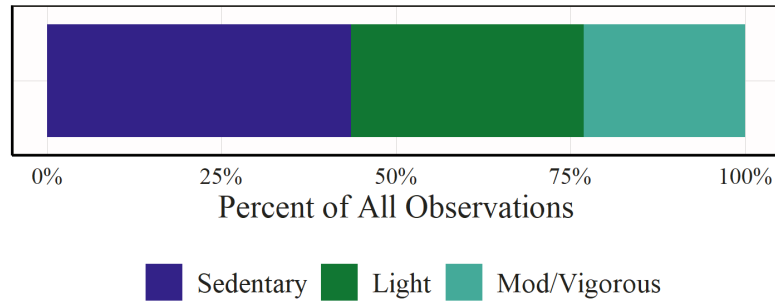
Total People Observed

- Total of 20 parks observed
 - 13 in each year
 - 6 observed across both years
- 60% Playgrounds, 25% Passive Parks, 15% Athletic Fields



Park	Land Use Type	2021 Obs	2022 Obs
Albion	Playground	63	--
Allen	Playground	--	11
Central Playground	Playground	--	44
CHP	Playground	13	31
Corbett	Playground	--	19
Draw	Athletic Field	38	49
Foss	Athletic Field	323	217
Grimmons	Playground	31	--
Hoyt	Playground	93	51
Junction	Passive	6	--
LouAnne	Passive	--	36
Marshall	Playground	33	--
MaxpacSquare	Passive	26	--
Mystic	Playground	23	--
North	Playground	78	69
Nunziato	Athletic Field	--	26
Osgood	Playground	--	20
Otis	Playground	25	16
Partners	Passive	22	--
Prospect	Passive	--	55

Overall Activity Level in Parks



- Playground primary use parks have highest activity level, largely due to active children
 - Allen St was observed while a Headstart group was playing in it
- While passive parks like Junction and Prospect Hill have high levels of sedentary activity, when a passive park is available to a group, it can easily be used actively
 - Lou Ann David observed just after programming at TAB building lets out, leading to higher activity levels
- Foss Park fell into both categories of having very active people in the park and more sedentary behaviors

Policy Recommendation:

1. Prioritize upkeep and addition of features in parks near preschools and programming for children

Notes: Overall activity level is not significantly different between 2021 and 2022., at the 5% level.

Parks with >25% Moderate or Vigorous Activity, 2021 and 2022 combined data

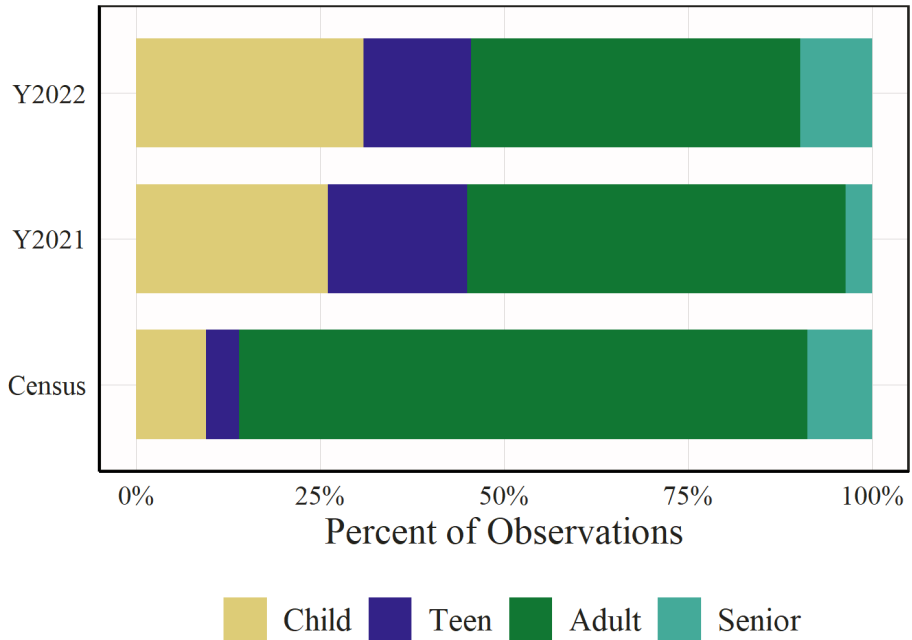
	Mod/Vig Obs	Total Obs	Percent
Allen	8	11	72.73
Corbett	9	19	47.37
North St	68	144	47.22
Chuckie Harris	13	44	29.55
Foss	133	532	25
LouAnn	9	36	25

Parks with >50% Sedentary Activity, 2021 and 2022 combined data

	Sedentary Obs	Total Obs	Percent
Maxpac Square	18	26	69.23
Nunziato	18	26	69.23
Junction	4	6	66.67
Grimmons	19	31	61.29
Prospect	33	55	60
Foss	273	532	51.32
Draw	44	87	50.57

Park Use by Perceived Age

Fig 2a. Perceived Age in Park Observations and 2020 ACS
Age Representation in Somerville

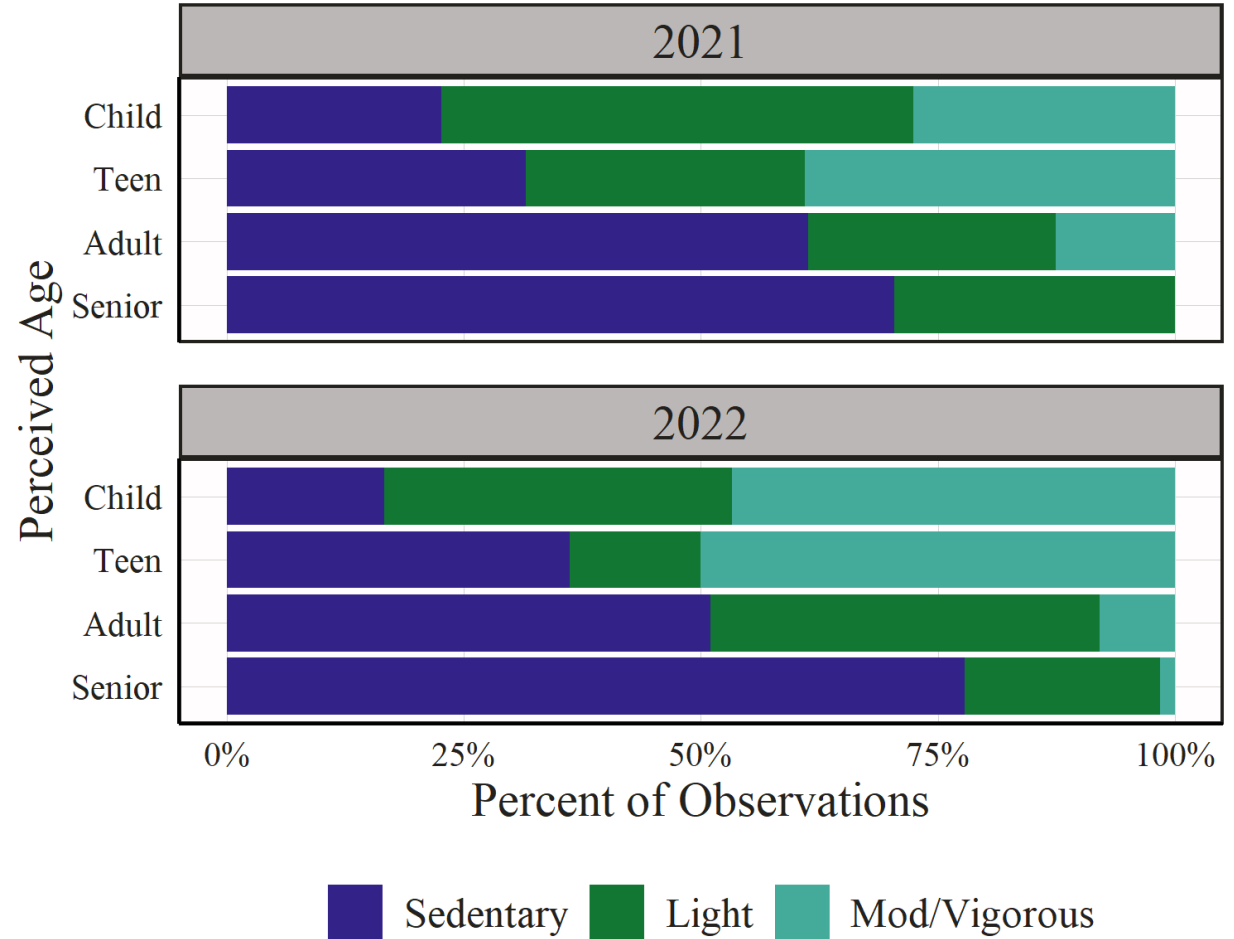


- Adults are underrepresented in parks and much less active compared to children and teens
- Older adults are not active in parks

Policy recommendation:

1. Provide opportunities for adults to be active while watching kids and conduct outreach to promote these opportunities
2. Offer more programming for older adults in parks

Fig 2b. Activity Level by Perceived Age, 2021 and 2022



Notes: 1) Age is perceived. Studies show that observers are significantly less able to guess the age of people of races/ethnicities different to their own.

Park Use by Perceived Race/Ethnicity

Fig 2a. Perceived Race in Park Observations and 2020 ACS
Race Representation in Somerville

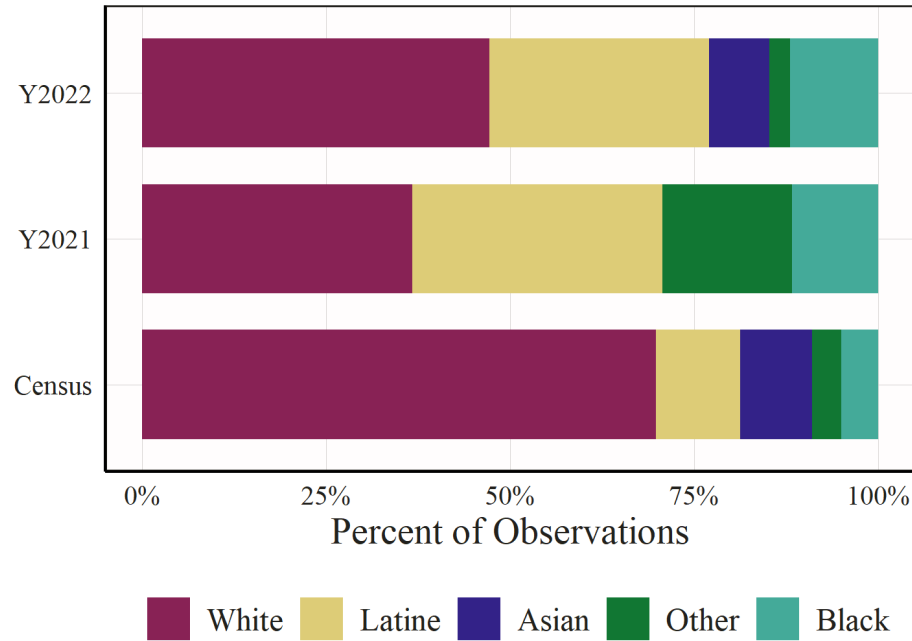
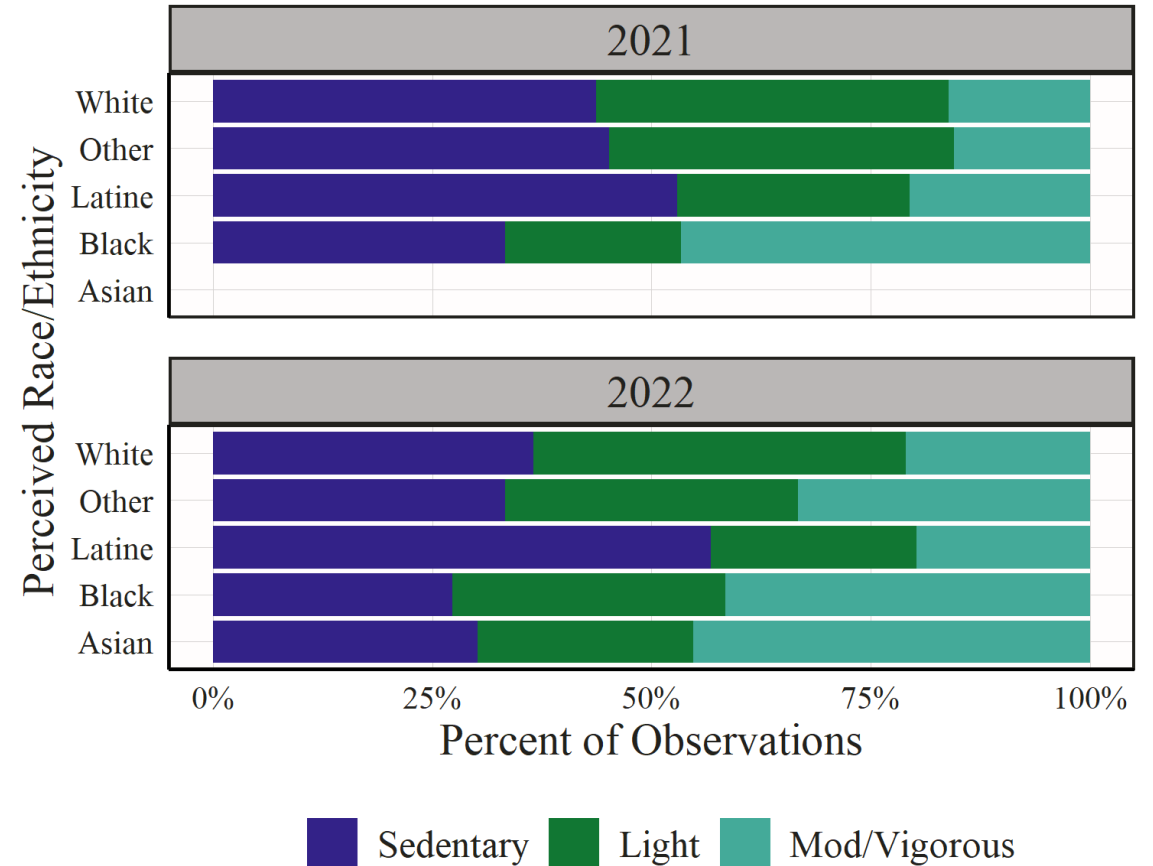


Fig 2b. Activity Level by Perceived Race/Ethnicity, 2021 and 2022



- Black and Latino/a/e residents are over-represented in public parks
- Differences in methodology make ACS and SOPARC data difficult to compare

Policy recommendation:

1. People of color use the parks in Somerville. Continue to work on creative ways to engage communities who use the parks in future design or other changes to the space.

Notes:

- 1) Race is perceived. Studies show that observers are significantly less able to guess the race of people of races/ethnicities different to their own. However, our team of observers were able to take contextual clues into account when assessing race, including language.
- 2) Asian was not a category in the 2021 SOPARC evaluation.

Permitting & Unstructured Recreation

Field	Percent of Weekday 5-8 PM Time Permitted
ESCS Field	100.0
Winter Hill Field	99.4
Capuano Field	95.8
Nunziato Field	75.0
Trum Diamond A	73.2
Trum Diamond B	58.9
Lincoln Park Field	50.0

Park Observation Data:

- People observed working out, playing in fields during unpermitted times on weekends
- Permitted activity doesn't always occur as planned – e.g. day we observed Winter Hill from 5-7, it was permitted for SYSL but was open for a family who was playing there

Policy Recommendation:

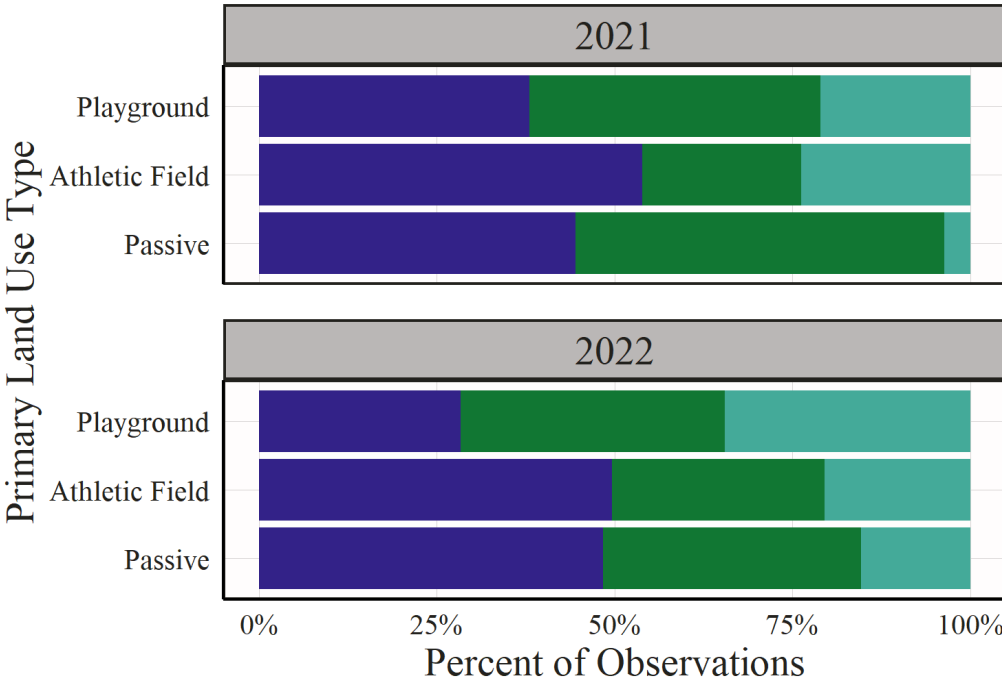
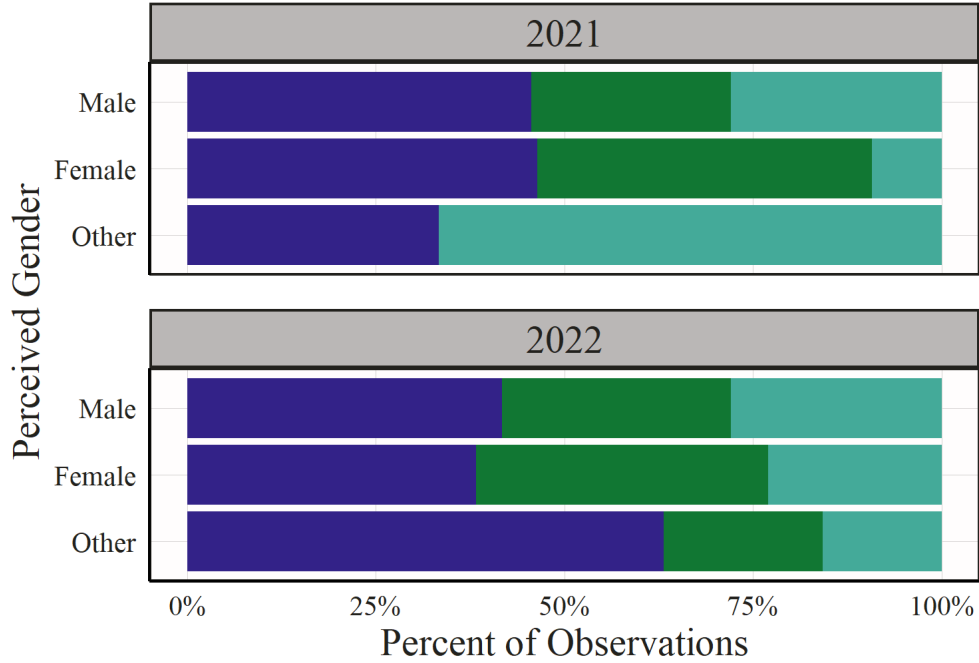
As more fields come online in Somerville to better support high demand:

1. Consider preserving some field time for unstructured access for the public
2. Consider lighting as part of this intervention, to create a welcoming and safe space.

Activity Level by Perceived Gender and Park Type

Although 2021 found a disparity in activity level between female-appearing and male-appearing park users, the difference was minimal in 2022 observations.

In both year, playgrounds saw the most vigorously active use. Data shows that so-called 'passive' parks can still be spaces for light to moderate activity, especially for children.



■ Sedentary ■ Light ■ Mod/Vigorous

■ Mod/Vigorous ■ Light ■ Sedentary