Racial Equity in NYC Parks: Neighborhoods of Color have 28% Less Park Space than White Neighborhoods

Margot Draillard-Vandenberg

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It may be time to re-examine New York’s City’s lush parks reputation.

With nearly 40,000 acres of municipal parks – 20 percent of the city’s total area – New York’s parks are well-known and appreciated. Moreover, 99% percent of the population is within a 10-minute walk of a public-access parks.

However, new research from the Trust for Public Land shines a different light on park accessibility and equity. The Trust for Public Land – a non-profit that looks to protect, create, and bring attention to public green spaces – released their most recent [ParkScore Index](https://parkserve.tpl.org/mapping/pdfs/New%20York_NY.pdf) at the end of last year. Their report for New York City examines five main features: acreage, access, investment, amenities, and equity.

The study reveals that those living in neighborhoods predominantly populated by people of color have access to 28% less nearby park space than those living in neighborhoods predominantly populated by white people. That’s because despite nearly all New Yorkers’ easy access to parks, these parks aren’t configured in the same way. People of color in New York might have the same access to parks as the rest of the population, but those parks are smaller. This means less park space as well as fewer park amenities, such as playgrounds and rec centers for those living in these neighborhoods.

Take the Upper West Side and Jackson Heights. The Upper West Side, which has a nearly 70% white population, has easy access to Central Park, one of the largest parks in the city that totals 834 acres. That is over 400 times more park space than Jackson Heights’ largest park, Travers Park. Travers Park, which serves a population that is about 20% Asian and 65% Hispanic, is only a mere 2 acres.

Larger, greener parks have been found to have a large impact on city and person, including having an [important impact upon positive mental health](https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2022/03/31/park-green-space-health-not-all-the-same/1971648731801/) and [the city’s ecological health.](https://www.brooklynbridgepark.org/places-to-see/how-large-parks-help-everyone/%5D) The ParkScore Index data reveals that the simple existence of a park does not guarantee equal access and suggests a need for New York to re-examine how it is distributing its green spaces.