

Millions of Americans lack access to quality parks

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

Match these famous parks with their cities.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. Gorky Park | a. Copenhagen |
| 2. Central Park | b. Sydney |
| 3. Regents Park | c. Moscow |
| 4. Centennial Park | d. Vancouver |
| 5. Tivoli Gardens | e. New York |
| 6. Stanley Park | f. London |

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

godsend
access

amenities
drastic

fallout
cutback

mindset
wellbeing

curtail
unprecedented

- _____ is the right or opportunity to have or use something that will bring you benefits.
- A _____ is something that you are very grateful for because it helps you in a difficult situation.
- If you _____ something, you reduce or limit it.
- _____ is the satisfactory state that someone should be in, involving things such as being happy, healthy and safe.
- _____ are things that make it comfortable or enjoyable to live or work somewhere.
- A _____ action or change has a very big effect.
- A _____ is a reduction in something such as the amount of money available to spend.
- If something is described as _____, it has never happened before.
- _____ is the unpleasant effects of something that has happened.
- A person's _____ is the way they think about things.

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

- What percentage of the residents of Washington and Minneapolis are within a ten-minute walk of a park?
- How many American children have no access to nearby green spaces?
- By what percentage have some park commissioners been asked to reduce their budgets for the current financial year?
- How many miles of streets could be opened to pedestrians and cyclists in New York City?
- What percentage of citizens in Charlotte and Oklahoma City are within a ten-minute walk to a park?
- How many park commissioners took part in the survey run by the National Recreation and Park Association?

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Millions of Americans lack access to quality parks, report reveals

Low-income households and people of colour in cities are least likely to live near decent green spaces

Nina Lakhani

20 May, 2020

- 1 Years of patchy investment in public parks has left 100 million Americans, including 27 million children, without access to decent nearby green spaces during the coronavirus lockdown, a new report reveals.
- 2 Local parks have been a godsend to many people during the pandemic as schools, gyms and walking trails have closed to minimize physical contact and curtail the spread of the virus. Multiple studies have shown that spending time in green spaces reduces stress and improves physical and psychological wellbeing for adults and children.
- 3 But the annual parks score index by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has revealed wide disparities in access. For instance, 98% of residents in Washington, in Minneapolis and in Saint Paul, Minnesota are within a ten-minute walk of a park, compared to less than 50% of those in cities like Charlotte, North Carolina, Mesa, Arizona and Oklahoma City.
- 4 Even within cities, access to green spaces – like access to healthy food, healthcare and good schools – is also inequitable, with low-income households and people of colour least likely to live close to parks with basic amenities like toilets, playgrounds and basketball courts.
- 5 For instance, in New York City, where in April the Mayor, Bill de Blasio, pledged to open 100 miles of streets to pedestrians and cyclists, the places with least per-capita park access include Morris Park in the Bronx and Corona in Queens – which are both predominantly black and brown neighbourhoods where coronavirus has hit hard.
- 6 As summer edges closer, it's clear that public parks will play a crucial role in providing safe, affordable leisure spaces for millions of people unable to work or travel. Yet, evidence detailed in the report suggests park services could face drastic cutbacks as local governments face unprecedented economic challenges as a result of the shutdowns.
- 7 A survey of 300 park commissioners in mid-April by the National Recreation and Park Association found that about half had already been instructed to slash budgets by 10% to 20% for the current financial year. Nationwide, the parks system took years to recover from budget cuts after the Great Recession that derailed planned improvements and expansions. The economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic is expected to be both deeper and longer.
- 8 "Park supporters are gearing up for a fight," said Bill Lee, the senior vice-president at TPL, which is calling on the federal government to provide financial aid for parks in the next recovery bill. "We need our parks, and we will not allow park systems to be collateral damage from the Covid-19 pandemic."
- 9 For environmental justice activists, there is some hope. The unprecedented crisis could enhance appreciation for parks – and encourage a wave of local activism to fight for fair access. Rue Mapp, the founder and CEO of Outdoor Afro, said: "This is an opportunity for us to rethink public lands and to get people out of the mindset that nature is somewhere that you have to drive to."

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4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- Why are local parks described as a 'godsend'?
 - because residents in most cities in the US have access to a park
 - because schools, gyms and walking trails have closed during the pandemic
 - because they can curtail the spread of the coronavirus
- Why is access to green spaces often problematic for low-income households and people of colour?
 - because they have less access to healthy food, healthcare and good schools
 - because those green spaces often lack basic amenities
 - because they are unlikely to live close to parks
- What effect could coronavirus have on US parks?
 - Their budget could be drastically reduced, and this will affect improvements and expansions.
 - They could provide a safe leisure space for people to avoid the spread of the coronavirus.
 - They could be forced to charge visitors to enter.
- What possible benefit might the coronavirus crisis have?
 - It might encourage local activism.
 - It might encourage people to drive to parks.
 - It might make people appreciate parks more.

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

- an adjective meaning *inconsistent and not always of the same quality* (para 1)
- a noun meaning *a difference between things* (para 3)
- an adjective meaning *unfair because people are not treated equally* (para 4)
- a verb meaning *promise seriously and publicly to do something* (para 5)
- a verb meaning *reduce something by a large amount* (para 7)
- a verb meaning *prevent something from continuing in the way that it was planned* (para 7)
- a three-word phrasal verb meaning *prepare yourself for an activity* (para 8)
- a two-word noun phrase meaning *harm to something that was not the intended or expected target* (para 8)

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6 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1. minimize | a. financial aid |
| 2. curtail | b. budgets |
| 3. play | c. the spread of the virus |
| 4. face | d. physical contact |
| 5. provide | e. economic challenges |
| 6. slash | f. a crucial role |

7 Word-building

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

- _____ in public parks has been patchy for many years. [INVEST]
- Public parks provide safe, _____ leisure spaces for millions of people. [AFFORD]
- The Trust for Public Land is calling on the government to provide financial aid for parks in the next _____ bill. [RECOVER]
- Parks can help to improve _____ wellbeing. [PSYCHOLOGY]
- Some environmental _____ are optimistic. [ACTIVE]
- They believe that enhanced appreciation for parks could lead to a wave of local _____. [ACTIVE]

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Parks are just places for people to sit and do nothing.
- Parks are too crowded to be enjoyable.
- Why waste money on parks when there are more important things to spend money on?