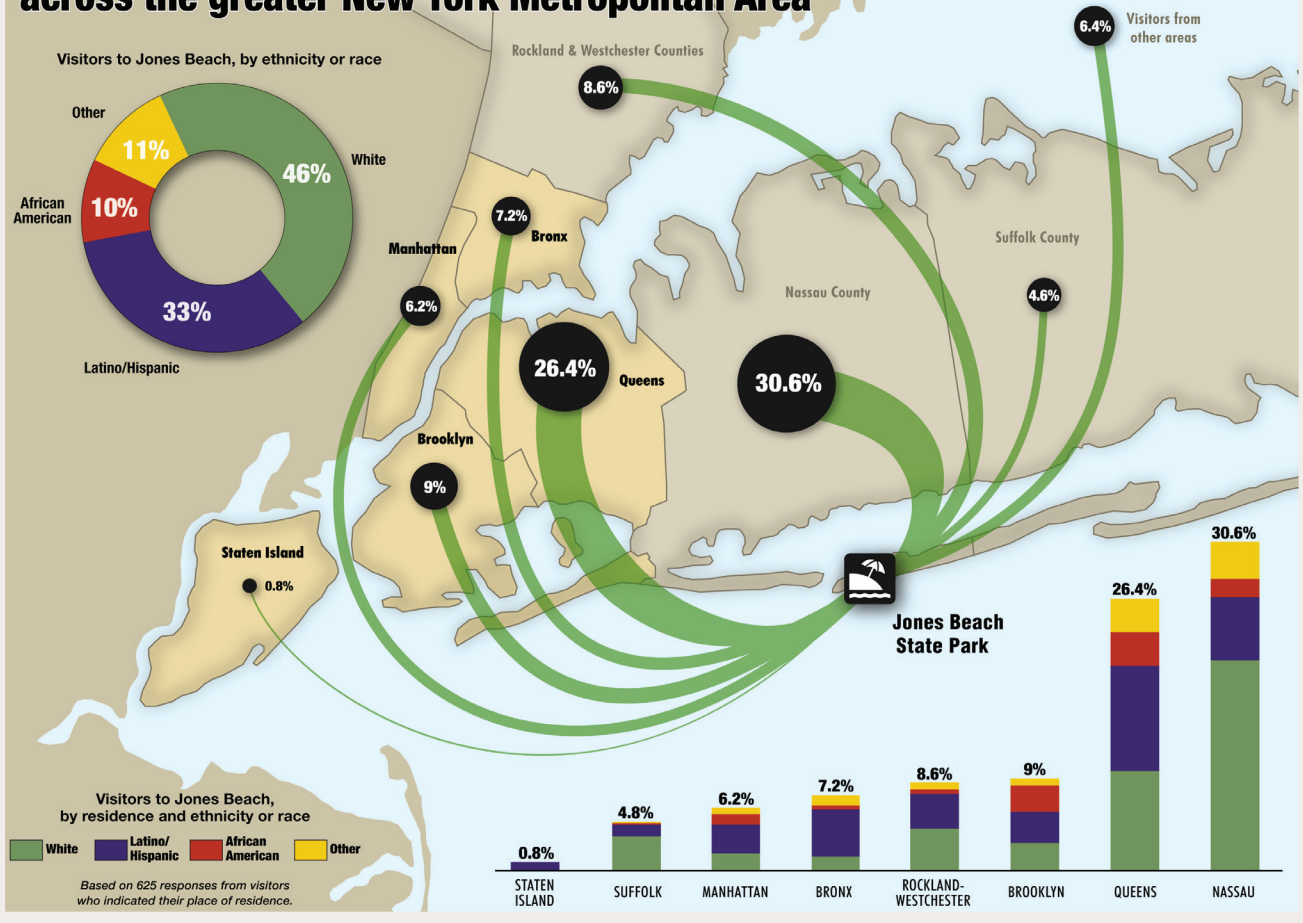


The Pulse of Parks:

Visitation Demographics at Jones Beach State Park

A REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE'S ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK STATE PARKS SUMMER 2013

Visitors to Jones Beach State Park are ethnically diverse and come from across the greater New York Metropolitan Area



“I depend on this park,” said a resident of Flushing.

“Without Jones Beach, I wouldn’t live in New York City,” said a person from the Bushwick section of Brooklyn.

Visitors to Jones Beach come from the entire metropolitan area

Nearly half (49 percent) of surveyed park visitors live in New York City. Queens alone accounted for 26 percent of all visitors, with the largest numbers coming from Astoria, Fresh Meadows, and Jamaica; 23 percent came from the other boroughs combined. Another 30 percent lived in Nassau County, 8 percent in Rockland-Westchester, and 5 percent in Suffolk County. Other state and out-of-state locations contributed smaller numbers of visitors.

“This is America,” said a man from the Bronx. “At Jones Beach there is a friendly crowd. People are out with family and friends. It’s a diverse place. I feel welcome here.”

“The first time I visited this park with my wife,” said a man originally from El Salvador, “I finally felt like I belonged in this country. We played in the ocean with hundreds of other folks. Somehow this made me feel special.”

Jones Beach serves New Yorkers from all walks of life

Americans of diverse ethnic background visit Jones Beach: 46 percent of survey respondents self-identified as white, 33 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 10 percent as African American or black, and smaller percentages as members of other groups.

Park goers make repeated visits

About 42 percent of the surveyed visitors said they came to the park several times a week, and 36 percent came several times a month. People’s engagement with the park is lasting: 50 percent had been coming to Jones Beach for more than two decades, and 33 percent for more than three. Interviewees who had come as youngsters with their parents and grandparents were enjoying the beach with their children and grandchildren.

“Jones Beach has a special meaning to me because it makes me think of my childhood, just going with my family as a child and swimming, all of us being together,” said a woman from Roslyn Heights. “It makes me feel like a kid again.”

How investment in Jones Beach would serve the public interest

Results of the two surveys indicate that Jones Beach State Park is a beloved, family-oriented, welcoming destination for a broad swath of Americans who live throughout the New York metropolitan area. It is easily accessible to city dwellers, for whom outdoor recreation is understood to have both physical and mental health benefits. Many people so value it that they visit frequently each season and throughout their lives.

Recent investment of \$11 million enabled repairs to the boardwalk and the West Bathhouse building and swimming pool. The park needs more than \$50 million to restore dilapidated swimming pools and bathhouses, update inefficient and failing utility systems, and repair crumbling roads and walkways.

Continued investment in Jones Beach would ensure that this historic state park can offer high-quality, affordable, family-friendly recreation for its millions of loyal visitors.



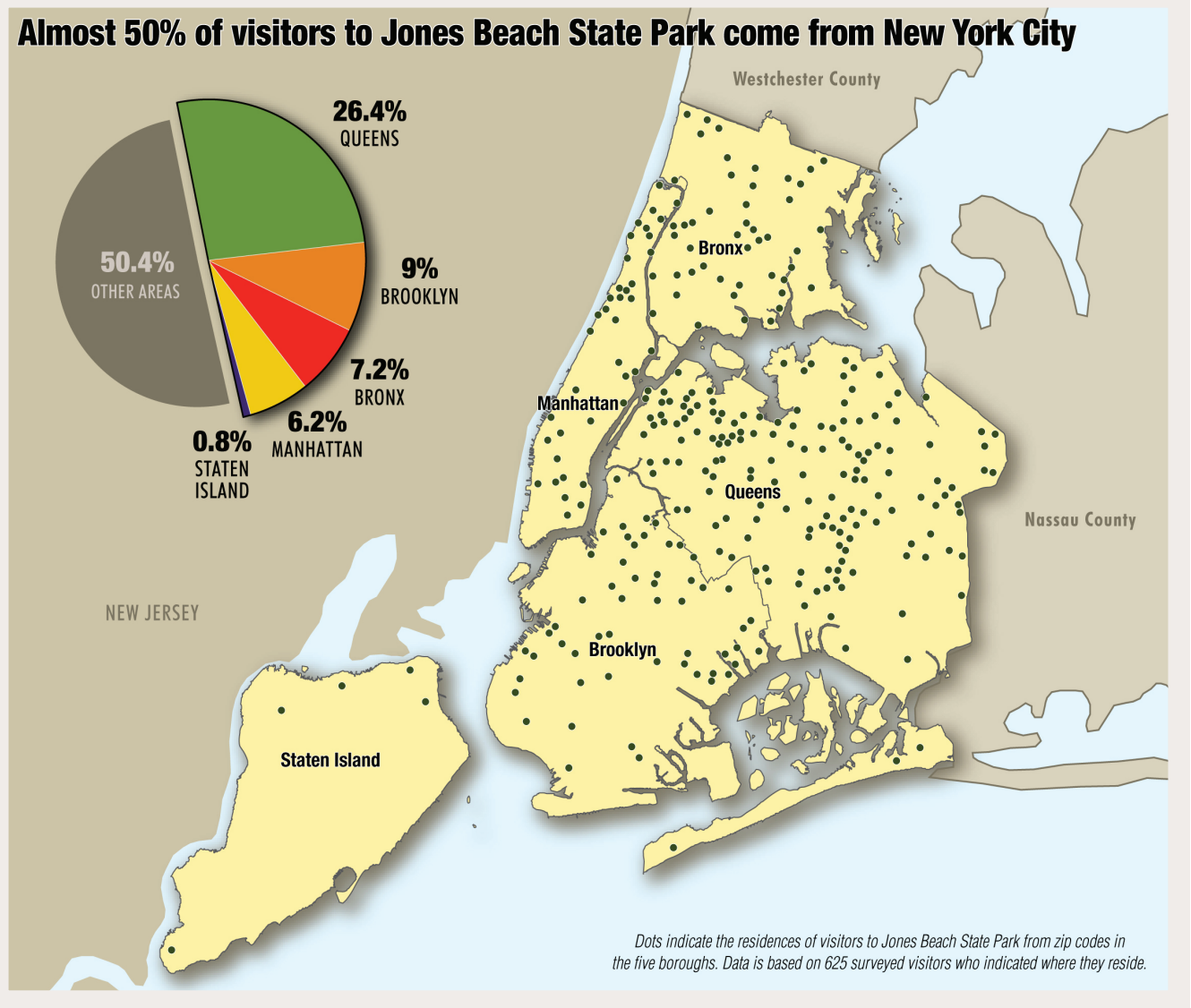
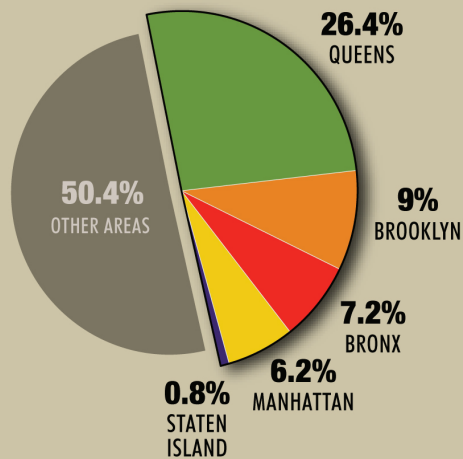
BACKGROUND New York’s 179 state parks have long been identified primarily by their immediate geographic locations. However, many park visitors and constituency groups are willing to travel across regions to enjoy the state’s wonderful natural, cultural and recreational treasures. State parks located in and around the New York metropolitan area are valued destinations for millions of city residents.

With a capital backlog approaching \$1 billion, New York’s state parks suffer from broken and outdated facilities, the result of decades of insufficient funding for regular maintenance and infrastructure improvement. Recognizing the parks’ importance to all New Yorkers, Governor Cuomo and the state legislature have taken first steps to remedy the problem.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY To evaluate the merits of continued investment, the Alliance for New York State Parks commissioned a study of Jones Beach State Park. The study, aimed at finding out who visits the park and how they value it, was conducted by the Public Space Research Group at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Researchers conducted a quantitative demographic survey over three days in July 2012. The survey adhered to standard protocols for random sampling, data collection, and analysis, and the results (based on 625 responses) can be considered statistically reliable. The researchers then interviewed visitors over four days in representative locations in the park. This qualitative survey’s open-ended questions were designed to elicit information about how and why people used the park; 164 visitors were interviewed.

Almost 50% of visitors to Jones Beach State Park come from New York City



“When you are walking in the park, you feel that you are walking in something great,” said a parkgoer describing the significance of the site.

About Jones Beach

The park was built in the 1920s as a recreational destination for the growing working class of the city and western Long Island. Led by Robert Moses, the Long Island State Park Commission chose to develop an entirely public site, without private homes, clubs, or marinas. It is world famous for its splendid beach and Art Deco buildings.

Jones Beach is still one of metropolitan New York’s best outdoor recreational assets. Visitors come early to fish or stroll the boardwalk; midday, young parents help toddlers build sand castles; in the afternoon, swimmers enjoy the clear water; come evening, many visitors go to concerts or play in league softball games. Its great expanse of sand and unbroken horizon make Jones Beach especially appealing to residents of the world’s greatest city. Even on busy days, patrons can find their own space. “When you see the last kid, walk ten more minutes and plant yourself,” suggested one regular visitor.

The park is listed in both the New York State and national registers of historic places. Nevertheless, in 2012 the Cultural Landscape Foundation named Jones Beach to its annual list of the nation’s Significant Threatened and At-Risk Landscapes.



More information

This study is one of three efforts to obtain data that in recent years the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has lacked staff and funding to collect. The other studies involve Harriman State Park and Walkway Over the Hudson.

The Alliance for New York State Parks works to protect and enhance state parks and historic sites for present and future generations.

Visit www.osiny.org/alliance.

Protect Their Future: New York's State Parks in Crisis describes the status of state parks.

Open Space Institute



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