



# Parks After Dark

Evaluation Brief | July 2023

# WHAT IS PARKS AFTER DARK?

Parks After Dark (PAD) is a Los Angeles County initiative led by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) in partnership with other County departments and community-based organizations. PAD is implemented in Los Angeles County areas with high levels of violence, obesity, and economic hardship. During the 13th year of PAD and after a two-year halt in programming because of the COVID-19 pandemic, 34 DPR parks hosted the program between June and August 2022. PAD was offered three nights a week for eight weeks, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings.

## PAD Goals

- 1 Decrease community violence and **INCREASE SAFETY**
- 2 Facilitate **CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION** in park communities and countywide
- 3 Increase **SOCIAL COHESION** and **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING**
- 4 Increase access to **FREE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL SERVICES** that reflect the interests and needs of communities served
- 5 Increase physical activity and **DECREASE CHRONIC DISEASE RISK**
- 6 Contribute to **POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**
- 7 Achieve **COST SAVINGS**



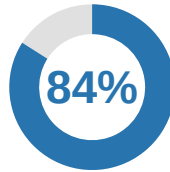
# ATTENDEES

*"I've been coming to Parks After Dark with my son since he was 2<sup>1/2</sup>; he is now 7 years old. I love that they have things for him to participate in that are free. I live paycheck to paycheck and this is great for families that are on a budget ... thank you so much for these programs!!!"*

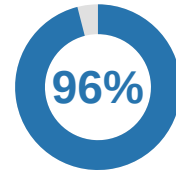
– PAD attendee



More than  
**137,500** visits  
were made during  
summer 2022



attended with children



would attend PAD again  
and would recommend  
PAD to others

## PAD Reach



**38%** live outside area



**62%** live in zipcode of PAD park

PAD Park



## Attendees were...

**65%**  
female

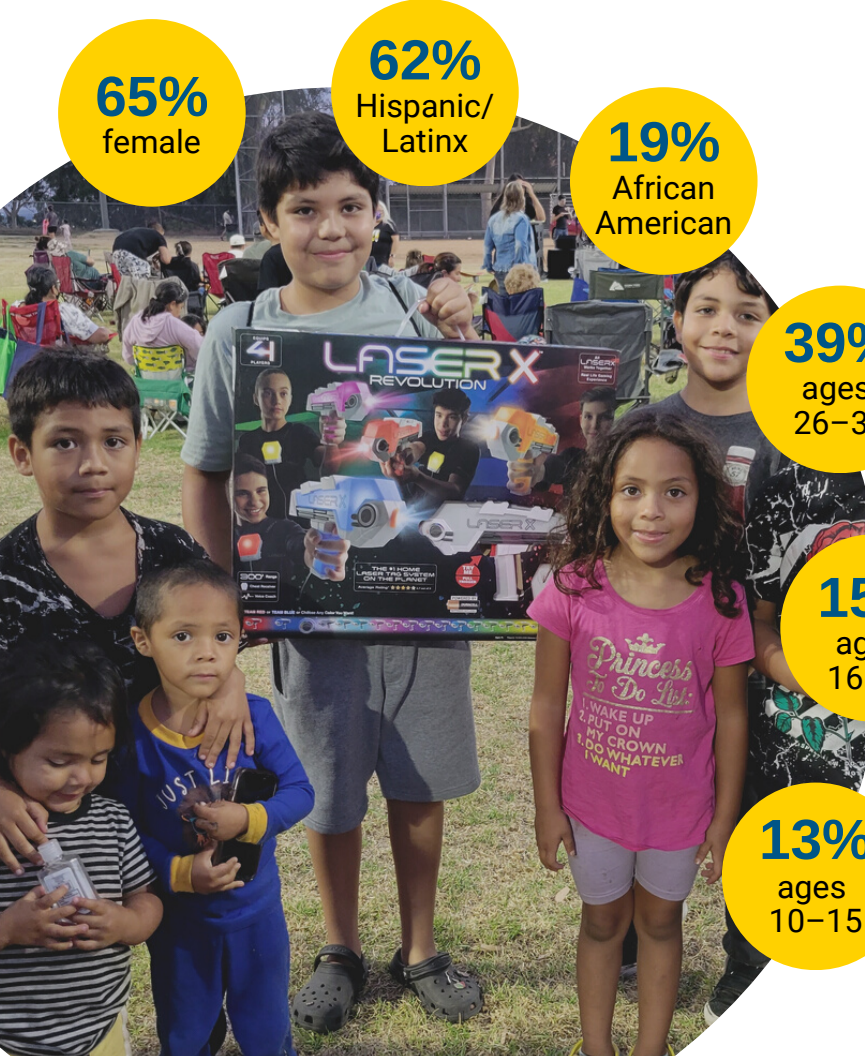
**62%**  
Hispanic/  
Latinx

**19%**  
African  
American

**39%**  
ages  
26–39

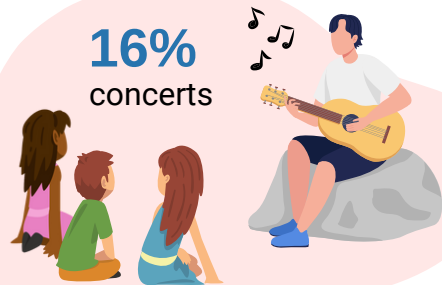
**15%**  
ages  
16–25

**13%**  
ages  
10–15



## Top Activities:

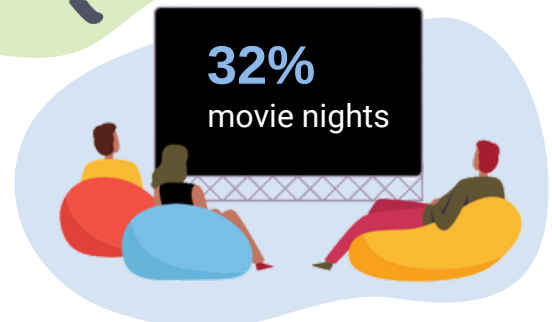
**16%**  
concerts



**17%**  
sports clinics  
and games



**32%**  
movie nights



# OUTCOMES

## Improved social cohesion

**94%**

of attendees agreed PAD increased chances to spend quality time with family

**93%**

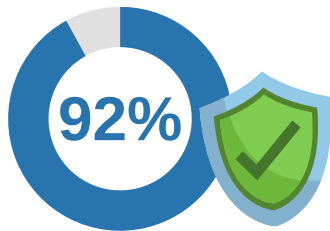
agreed PAD provides a sense of belonging within community

**91%**

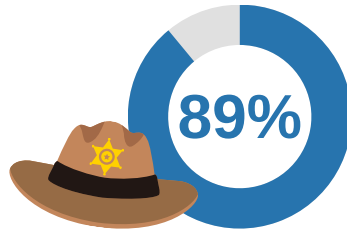
agreed PAD helps to get to know neighbors better



## Reduced crime



of attendees felt safe at PAD



agreed that Deputy Sheriffs positively engaged with community members at PAD

**115**

Part I crimes avoided between 2010 and 2022 (serious and violent crimes; e.g., homicide)

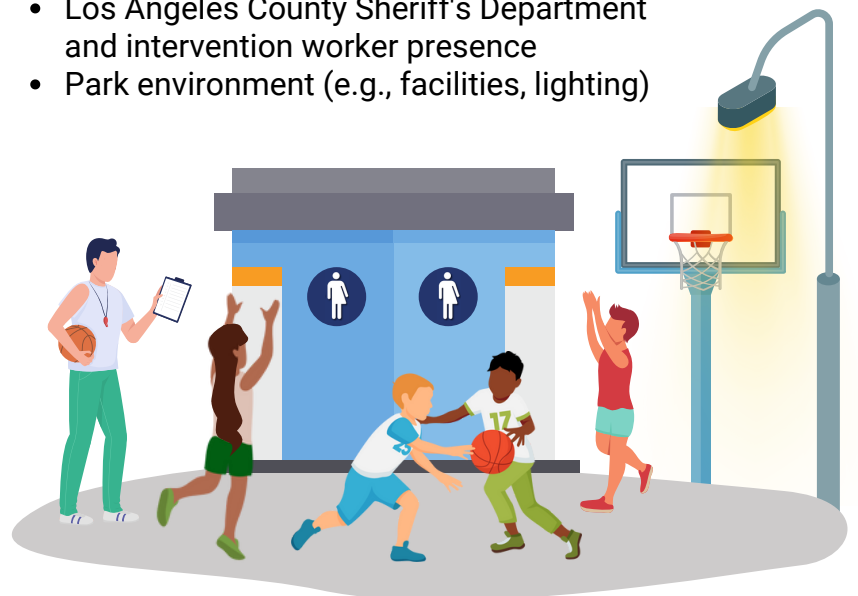
**74**

Part II crimes avoided between 2010 and 2022 (nonviolent crimes; e.g., petty theft)



## Contributors to feelings of safety:

- Park staff
- Positive atmosphere
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and intervention worker presence
- Park environment (e.g., facilities, lighting)



*"We've had a lot of people actually write in to our department just saying how much this has saved their teenager from going in the wrong direction, or parents even talking about how they didn't have finances to take their kids on vacation for the summer ... So PAD was the place that they took their kids for all the fun over the summer."*

— Key informant, Department of Parks and Recreation



## Reduced burden of disease

**81%**

participated in physical activity at PAD



Team sports



Walking club



Swimming



Exercise classes



## Estimated reduction in disease burden:

**11**

more years of life expectancy added

**11**

fewer years of disability estimated

## Cost Savings

PAD is estimated to have saved millions of dollars associated with crime and disease burden reduction.

**\$9.9 million** Estimated criminal justice costs

**+ \$1.5 million** Estimated chronic disease costs

**\$11.4 million** Total estimated costs avoided

**– \$3.3 million** Total program expenditures

**= \$8.1 million** Total estimated cost savings



Key PAD  
partners include:



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION



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*Information in this brief is based on PAD participant surveys and estimates of attendance by PAD parks. Surveys were completed by some PAD attendees over the age of nine.*

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The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research is part of the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health.

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