

# Identifying the most important park features for children

**Associate Professor Jenny Veitch**  
Play Australia, 12 October 2023

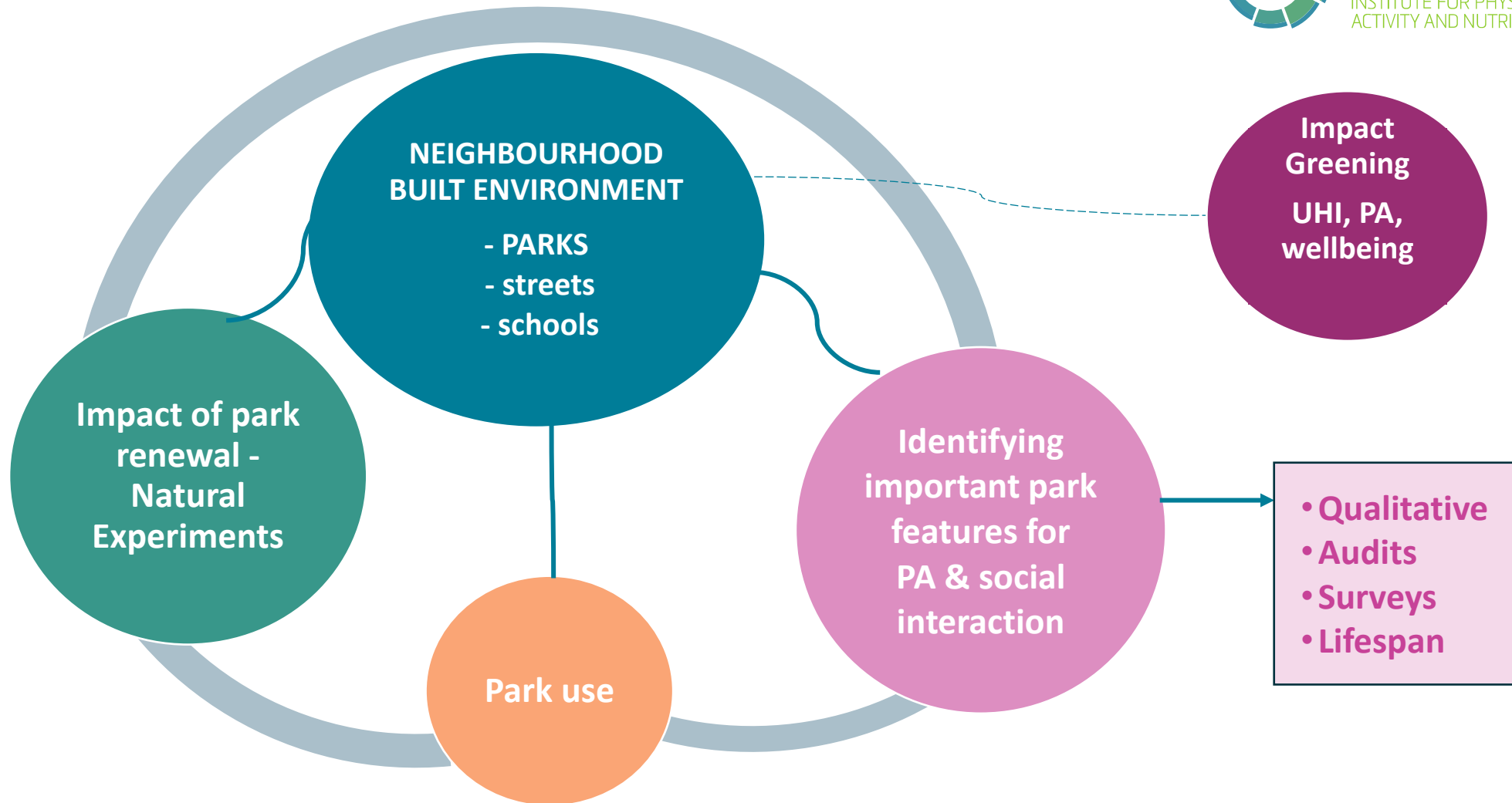




# Introduction

- **Highlights of ProjectPARK**
- **We worked with children to find out what's important to them**
- **Critical for creating optimal play spaces, future design and planning**

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



# Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition

A world-leading research institute

## Our purpose:

To conduct high quality, multidisciplinary nutrition & physical activity research to actively inform policy and practice to improve health, & build capacity in the field



# Physical activity – the miracle cure?

Physical activity reduces risk\* of:

- All cause mortality by 30%
- CVD by 35%
- Breast cancer by 20%
- Colon cancer 30%
- Type 2 diabetes 42%
- Depression 30%
- Slows the progression of cognitive decline in the elderly



\* Risk reduction across studies reported in Brown WJ, et al. Development of Evidence-based Physical Activity Recommendations for Adults (18-64 years). Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of Health, Aug 2012

GLOBAL ACTION PLAN ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY 2018-2030

## MORE ACTIVE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD



*Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030:  
more active people for a healthier world.  
Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018.  
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Worldwide, 1 in 4 adults & 3 in 4 adolescents (11–17 yrs)  
DO NOT MEET the global recommendations for  
physical activity set by WHO

### Global physical activity action plan 2018-2030

**Mission:** To ensure all people have access to safe & enabling environments & to diverse opportunities to be physically active in their daily lives....

**Target:** **15% relative reduction** in global prevalence of physical **inactivity** in adults & teens by 2030



# MORE ACTIVE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD



*Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO*

# 2

## CREATE ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

### SPACES AND PLACES

Create and maintain environments that promote and safeguard the rights of all people, of all ages, to have equitable access to safe places and spaces, in their cities and communities, in which to engage in regular physical activity, according to ability.



|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | Strengthen the integration of urban and transport planning policies to <b>prioritize the principles of compact, mixed-land use, at all levels of government as appropriate, to deliver highly connected neighbourhoods</b> to enable and promote walking, cycling, other forms of mobility.... and the use of public transport.....   |
| 2.2 | <b>Improve the level of service provided by walking and cycling network infrastructure</b> , to enable and promote walking, cycling, other forms of mobility.... and the use of public transport.... with due regard for the principles of safe, universal and equitable access by people of all ages and abilities, and in alignment with other commitments  |
| 2.3 | Accelerate implementation of <b>policy actions to improve road safety and the personal safety of pedestrians, cyclists</b> , people engaged in other forms of mobility.... and public transport passengers, with priority to actions that reduce risk for the most vulnerable road users...   |
| 2.4 | Strengthen access to <b>good-quality public and green open spaces, green networks, recreational spaces</b> (including river and coastal areas) and <b>sports amenities</b> by all people, of all ages and of diverse abilities....  |
| 2.5 | Strengthen the <b>policy, regulatory and design guidelines and frameworks</b> .... to promote public amenities, schools, health care, sports and recreation facilities, workplaces and social housing that are designed to enable occupants and visitors with diverse abilities to be physically active in and around the buildings, and prioritize <b>universal access by pedestrians, cyclists and public transport</b> . |



# Why Parks? - Critical part of liveable cities



**Social connectedness**

**Physical activity**

**Contact with nature**

**Mitigate climate change**

**2050: 70% world's population live in cities**



A black and white photograph of a person's shadow cast on sand. The shadow is dark and elongated, showing the person's head, torso, and legs. The sand is light-colored and has a fine, granular texture. The text "What park features are most important?" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

**What park features  
are most important?**



# ProjectPARK

**Aim:** Identify the **relative importance** of **park features** that attract visitors to parks & enhances physical activity & social interaction among children, teens, & older adults



Winner, Parks and Leisure Australia, Vic/TAS Awards of Excellence, Research Project Award 2020  
Finalist, Parks and Leisure Australia, National Awards of Excellence, Research Project Award 2020

**Funding:** ARC Discovery Project: 2017-2020 (*DP170100188*)

**Investigators:** A/Prof J Veitch, Prof A Timperio, Prof K Ball, Prof B Deforche

# ProjectPARK

## Research design

Phase 1: Walk-along interviews in parks

Phase 2: Rating photos of park characteristics

Phase 3: Tasks to identify the **relative importance** of park features (adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis)



# PHASE 1: Walk-along interviews

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:  
**CHILDREN**  
8-12 YEARS



**30** completed a walk-along interview in a park to discuss park features

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:  
**TEENS**  
13-18 YEARS



**34** completed a walk-along interview in a park to discuss park features





# What children said...

## What I like about the park:

“Probably the **MORE RISKY THINGS**, the more risk taking things, not like full on dangerous, but they feel a **little bit scary. A thrill**”

Girl, 10 years

## What I like about the park:

“I like trees, water, stones and flowers because it’s **NATURAL** and it’s a **NICE place to be in**, and not like all roads and concrete”

Girl, 12 years


## My PERFECT park:

“Slides, monkey bars, flying foxes. Oh, it’s a **MASSIVE** climbing frame ..., 5 **MASSIVE** slides that go down, they’re waterslides”

Girl, 9 years

Article

# Exploring Children's Views on Important Park Features: A Qualitative Study Using Walk-Along Interviews

Jenny Veitch <sup>1,\*</sup>, Elliott Flowers <sup>2</sup> , Kylie Ball <sup>1</sup>, Benedicte Deforche <sup>3,4</sup> and Anna Timperio <sup>1</sup>



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Urban Forestry & Urban Greening

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ufug](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ufug)



Critical factors influencing adolescents' active and social park use: A qualitative study using walk-along interviews



Elise Rivera <sup>a,\*</sup>, Anna Timperio <sup>a</sup>, Venurs H.Y. Loh <sup>a</sup>, Benedicte Deforche <sup>b,c</sup>, Jenny Veitch <sup>a</sup>

## PHASE 2: Photo rating study

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:

**CHILDREN**

8-12 YEARS



**272** rated 42 photos of different park features

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:

**TEENS**

13-18 YEARS



**222** rated 40 photos of different park features

A water feature like a pond or lake



On a scale from 1 to 10, how much does the feature above make you want to do the following:

Does not make me want to 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Really makes me want to

Visit the park

Be active in the park

Be with other people in the park

A cafe or shop to buy food and drinks



On a scale from 1 to 10, how much does the feature above make you want to do the following:

Does not make me want to 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Really makes me want to

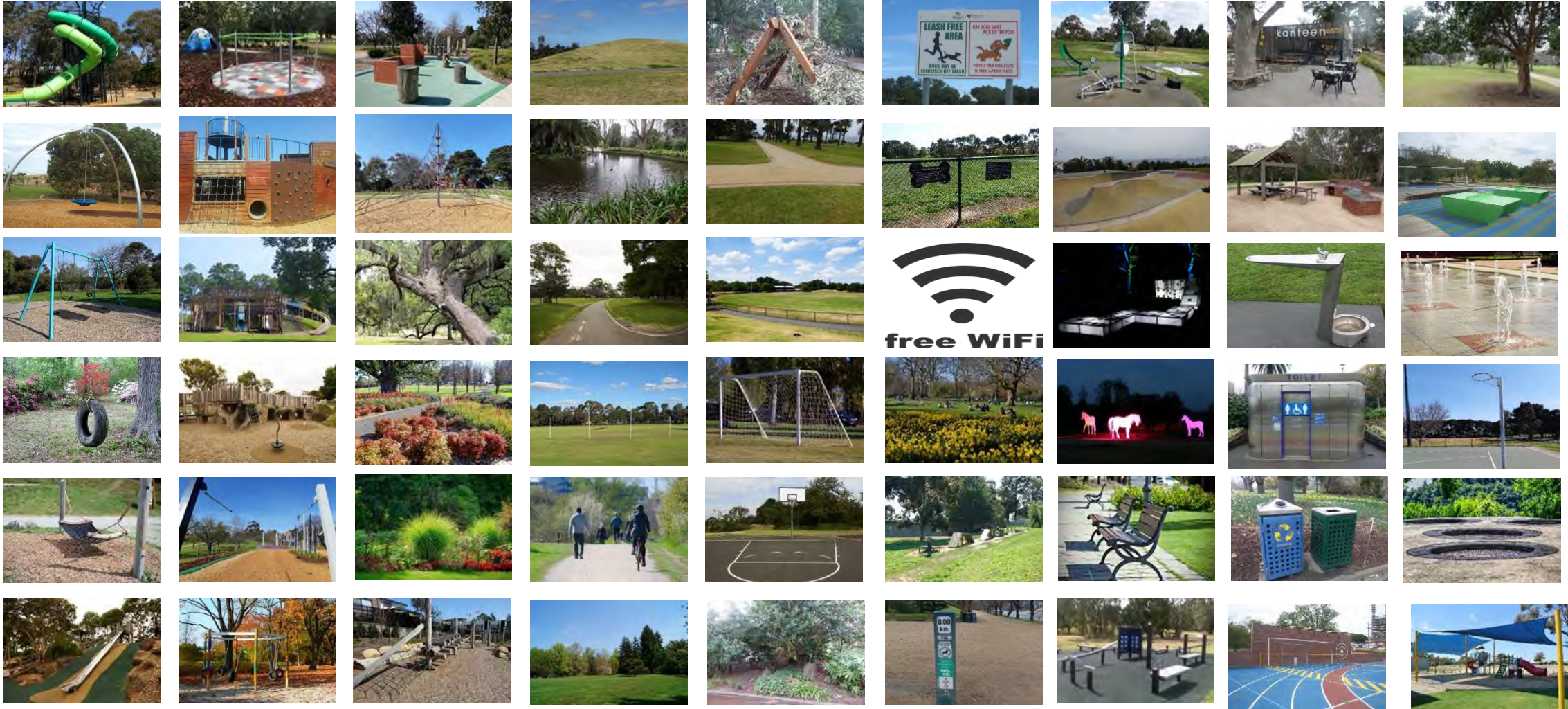
Visit the park

Be active in the park

Be with other people in the park



# CHILD





# CHILD photo rating study: Physical Activity



**Large adventure playground**  
(9.5)



**Obstacle course** (9.1)



**Giant slide** (8.9)



**Flying fox** (8.7)



**Things to climb**  
(8.5)



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## Urban Forestry & Urban Greening

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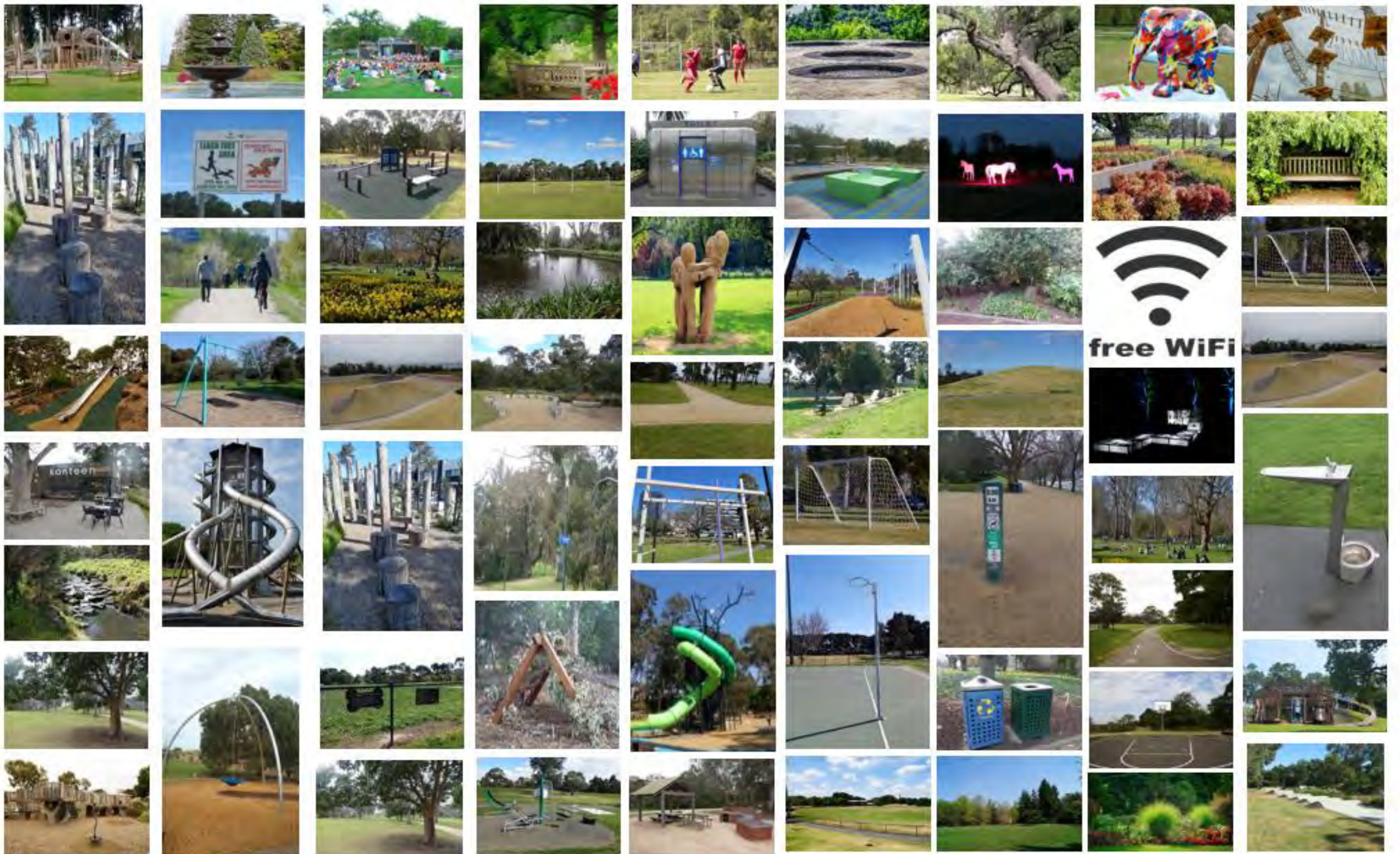


### Children's ratings of park features that encourage park visitation, physical activity and social interaction

Jenny Veitch <sup>a,\*</sup>, Kylie Ball <sup>a</sup>, Elliott Flowers <sup>b</sup>, Benedicte Deforche <sup>c,d</sup>, Anna Timperio <sup>a</sup>









# TEEN photo rating study: Physical Activity



Large things to climb  
(8.1)



Large adventure playground  
(7.9)



Outdoor fitness  
equipment (7.7)



Large slide (7.5)



Netball/  
basketballs courts (7.4)

# PHASE 3: Adaptive Choice Based Conjoint Analysis

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:

**CHILDREN**

8-12 YEARS



**252** completed a survey to identify the relative importance of park features

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:

**TEENS**

13-18 YEARS



**244** completed a survey to identify the relative importance of park features



# Adaptive Choice Based Conjoint (ACBC) Analysis

Identified the relative importance of park features for influencing choice of park for a) visiting, b) physical activity, c) social interaction

- Quantitative market research technique used to examine how much people value different characteristics of a product in their decision to choose it
- Decision-making scenarios - consider a range of co-existing park features *jointly* as opposed to assessing each feature in isolation
- Interactive process
- Comparable to real-world choices

# Adaptive Choice Based Conjoint (ACBC) Analysis

Participants identified their preference for parks that included **different combinations** of selected park features (e.g., grassy open space) and levels (e.g., large, medium, little-to-no grassy open space)



Identification of **features** that had greatest influence on choice of park to visit, be active & social **relative to other features**

| <b>BE <u>ACTIVE</u> IN PARKS: Feature</b>     | <b>Level</b>   |
|---|--|
| Water feature like a pond, lake or creek      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Water feature like a pond, lake or creek</li> <li>2) No water feature</li> </ol>   |
| Peaceful and relaxed setting                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Peaceful and relaxed setting</li> <li>2) Not a peaceful or relaxed setting</li> </ol>  |
| Gardens, landscaping and plants               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Attractive gardens, landscaping and plants</li> <li>2) No gardens, landscaping or plants</li> </ol>  |
| Barbecue or picnic area with shade and tables | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Barbecue or picnic area with shade and tables</li> <li>2) No barbecue or picnic area</li> </ol>  |
| Walking paths                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Walking paths</li> <li>2) No walking paths</li> </ol>  |
| Well maintained grass                         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Well maintained grass</li> <li>2) Poorly maintained grass</li> </ol>   |
| Fountain                                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Fountain</li> <li>2) No fountain</li> </ol>  |
| Birdlife                                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lots of birdlife</li> <li>2) Some birdlife</li> <li>3) No birdlife</li> </ol>  |
| Shady trees                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lots of shady trees</li> <li>2) A few shady trees</li> <li>3) No shady trees</li> </ol>  |
| Grassy open space                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Large grassy open space area</li> <li>2) Medium grassy open space area</li> <li>3) Little to no grassy open space area</li> </ol>                              |
| Signage, information or maps                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lots of signage, information boards or maps</li> <li>2) Some signage, information boards or maps</li> <li>3) No signage, information boards or maps</li> </ol> |

# PROCEDURE



# 1

## Build your own question

From this list, please choose **6 park features** that would most likely encourage you **to visit** a park?

- Birdlife
- Water feature like a pond, lake or creek
- A peaceful and relaxed setting
- Shady trees
- Gardens, landscaping and plants
- A barbecue or picnic area with shade and tables
- Signage, information or maps
- Walking paths
- A cafe or shop to buy food or drinks
- A fountain
- Grassy open space

Back

Next



## 2

## Select preferred feature level

For the feature(s) listed, please select the **feature level** that would **most likely** encourage you **to visit** a park.

| Feature           | Feature Level   |
|-------------------|---|
| Birdlife          | <input type="radio"/> Lots of birdlife<br><input type="radio"/> Some birdlife<br><input type="radio"/> No birdlife                                      |
| Shady trees       | <input type="radio"/> Lots of shady trees<br><input type="radio"/> A few shady trees<br><input type="radio"/> No shady trees                            |
| Grassy open space | <input type="radio"/> Large grassy open space<br><input type="radio"/> Medium grassy open space<br><input type="radio"/> Little to no grassy open space |

Back

Next

## 3

## Screening questions (6) - showing different park profiles

Here are profiles of **different parks** that you might like **to visit**. For each profile, indicate whether or not you would like **to visit** this park.

(1 of 6)

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Park is not well maintained or clean  | Park is well maintained and clean   | Park is not well maintained or clean  | Park is well maintained and clean   |
| A peaceful and relaxed setting  | Not a peaceful or relaxed setting   | A peaceful and relaxed setting  | Not a peaceful or relaxed setting   |
| Sense of safety from strangers and undesirable people   | Feeling unsafe from strangers or undesirable people   | Feeling unsafe from strangers or undesirable people   | Sense of safety from strangers and undesirable people   |
| Some birdlife   | No birdlife   | Some birdlife   | Lots of birdlife  |
| Little to no grassy open space  | Medium grassy open space  | Large grassy open space   | Medium grassy open space  |
| Large park size   | Medium park size  | Small park size   | Medium park size  |
| <input type="radio"/> I would like to visit this park.<br><input type="radio"/> I would <b>not</b> like to visit this park. | <input type="radio"/> I would like to visit this park.<br><input type="radio"/> I would <b>not</b> like to visit this park. | <input type="radio"/> I would like to visit this park.<br><input type="radio"/> I would <b>not</b> like to visit this park. | <input type="radio"/> I would like to visit this park.<br><input type="radio"/> I would <b>not</b> like to visit this park. |



## 4

## Choice tournament tasks (13) - choose between 2 parks

From these two parks (2nd and 3rd columns), which **one** would you prefer **to visit**? (We've grayed out any park features that are the same, so you can just focus on the differences between the two parks).

(1 of 13)

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Birdlife  | <b>Lots of birdlife</b>                                | Lots of birdlife                                |
| A peaceful and relaxed setting                  | <b>A peaceful and relaxed setting</b>                  | A peaceful and relaxed setting                  |
| Shady trees                                     | <b>A few shady trees</b>                               | No shady trees                                  |
| Gardens, landscaping and plants                 | <b>No gardens, landscaping and plants</b>              | No gardens, landscaping and plants              |
| A barbecue or picnic area with shade and tables | <b>A barbecue or picnic area with shade and tables</b> | A barbecue or picnic area with shade and tables |
| Grassy open space                               | <b>Medium grassy open space</b>                        | Little to no grassy open space                  |
|   | <input type="radio"/>                                  | <input type="radio"/>                           |



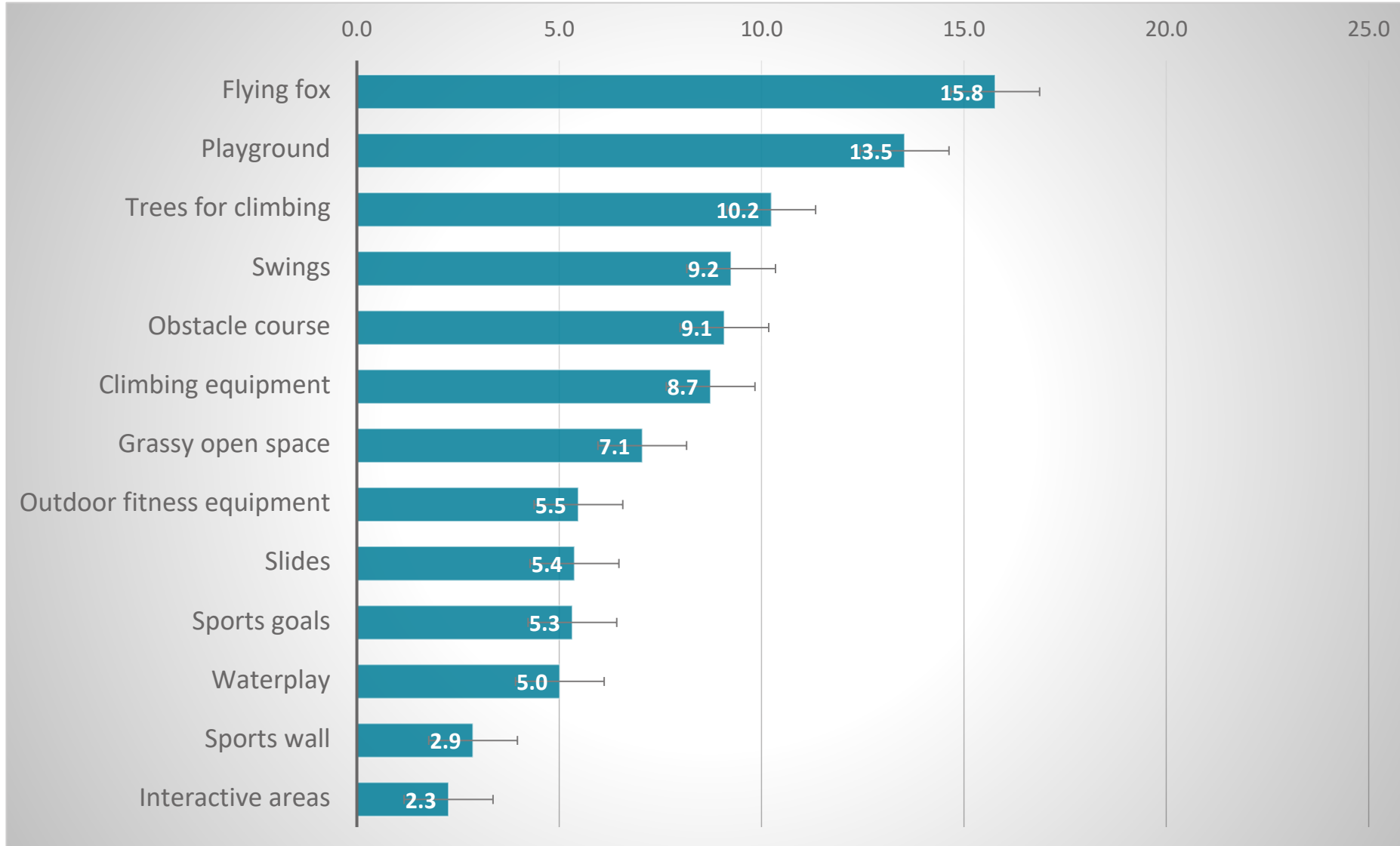


# DATA ANALYSIS

- Hierarchical Bayes Estimation: 2 parameters (Sawtooth Software)
  - **Part-worth utility scores:** desirability of a feature level (within features)
  - **Average relative importance scores (%):** impact that a feature has on choice

# Results: CHILDREN

## Relative importance scores for PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



# ProjectPARK

IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:

**CHILDREN**

8-12 YEARS

**ADVENTURE  
CHALLENGE  
CLIMBING**

**TOP  
10**

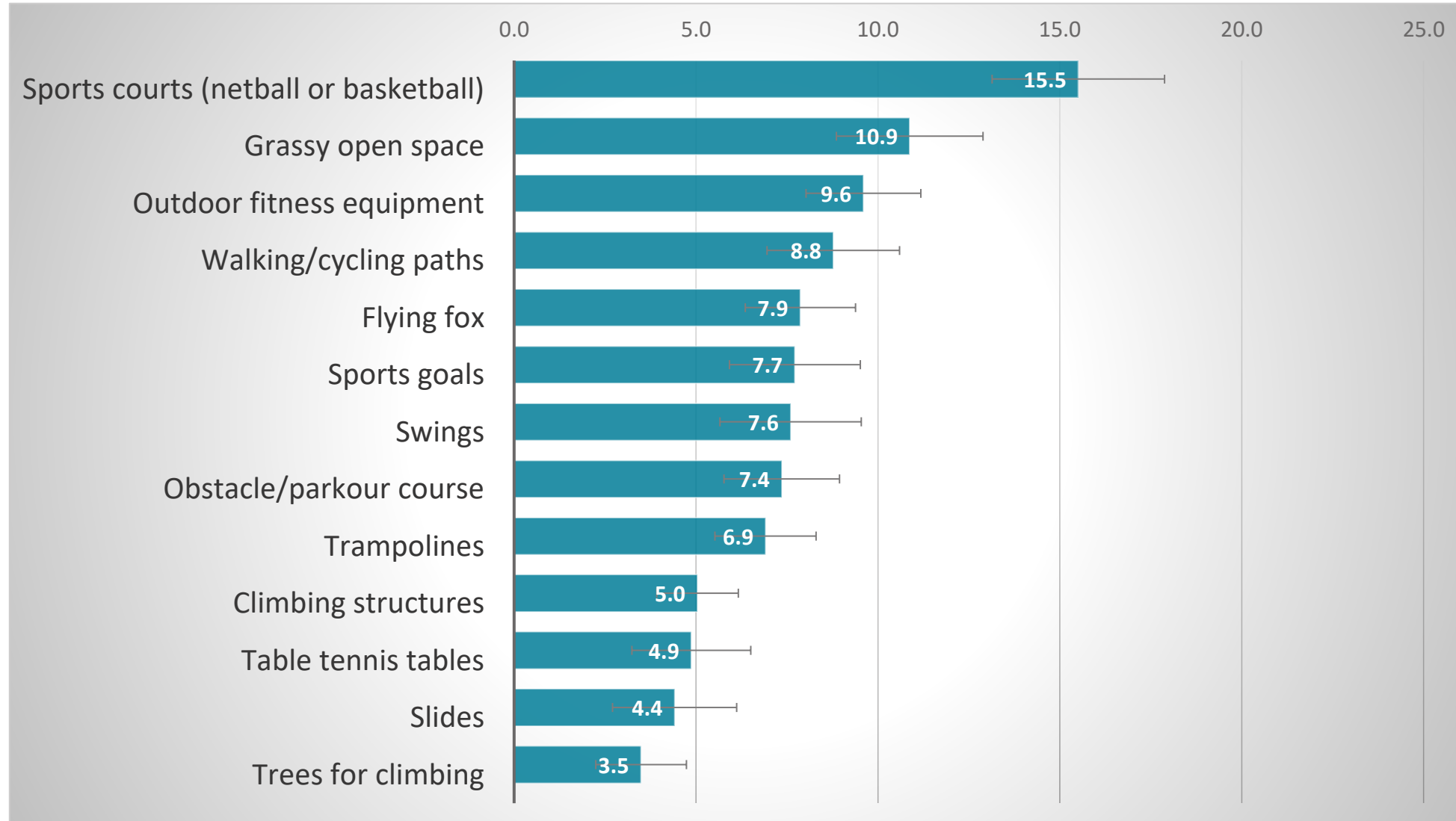
## Features that encourage CHILDREN to be active in parks

- 1 **Long** flying fox (15.8%)
- 2 **Large** adventure playground (13.5%)
- 3 Lots of trees for climbing (10.2%)
- 4 **Large** round swings (9.2%)
- 5 Obstacle course/parkour area
- 6 **Large** climbing equipment
- 7 Outdoor fitness equipment
- 8 **Giant** slides
- 9 Sports goals
- 10 Water play areas



# Results: ADOLESCENTS

## Relative importance scores for PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR:  
**TEENS**  
13-18 YEARS

GRASSY SPACES  
SPORTS  
FRIENDS  
CAFE

#### Visit parks

- 1 Large swings (16.3%)
- 2 Large grassy open space (10.3%)
- 3 Café (9.6%)
- 4 Sports goals
- 5 Trampolines
- 6 Quiet, private place to hang out
- 7 Outdoor fitness equipment
- 8 Giant slides
- 9 Obstacle course/parkour
- 10 Table tennis tables

#### Be active in parks

- 1 Sports courts (15.5%)
- 2 Large grassy open space (10.9%)
- 3 Outdoor fitness equipment (9.6%)
- 4 Walking/cycling paths
- 5 Long flying fox
- 6 Sports goals
- 7 Large swings
- 8 Obstacle course/parkour area
- 9 Trampolines
- 10 Large things to climb

Research | [Open Access](#) | [Published: 09 October 2021](#)

## Understanding children's preference for park features that encourage physical activity: an adaptive choice based conjoint analysis

[Jenny Veitch](#) , [Kylie Ball](#), [Elise Rivera](#), [Venurs Loh](#), [Benedicte Deforche](#) & [Anna Timperio](#)

Health & Place 70 (2021) 102617



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Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Health and Place

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/healthplace](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/healthplace)



Important park features for encouraging park visitation, physical activity and social interaction among adolescents: A conjoint analysis

Elise Rivera<sup>a,\*</sup>, Anna Timperio<sup>a</sup>, Venurs HY Loh<sup>a</sup>, Benedicte Deforche<sup>b,c</sup>, Jenny Veitch<sup>a</sup>



## Children

- Long flying fox
- Large adventure playground
- Trees for climbing

## Teens

- Large swings
- Large grassy open space
- Sports courts

## Adults

- Sense of safety
- Good maintenance
- Paths

## Older Adults

- Shady trees
- Peaceful & relaxing
- Paths

We have created **USER FRIENDLY** summaries of the findings

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# ProjectPARK

## IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR: CHILDREN

ProjectPARK: a study with children 8-12 years to identify the park features they consider to be most important for their park visitation, park-based physical activity and social interaction (2017-2020)



30 completed a walk-along interview in a park to discuss park features



272 rated 42 photos of different park features



252 completed a survey to identify the relative importance of park features

### TOP 10 FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO VISIT PARKS<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Large adventure playground
- 2 Giant slides (i.e. long curly slide)
- 3 Interactive areas (e.g. touch-sensor illuminated statues)
- 4 Obstacle course or parkour area to climb on
- 5 Long flying fox
- 6 Things to climb (i.e. climbing structures)
- 7 Water play area
- 8 Long slides
- 9 Large swings (i.e. 360° swing)
- 10 Trees for climbing

### TOP 10 FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE SOCIAL INTERACTION IN PARKS<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Large adventure playground
- 2 Interactive areas (e.g. touch-sensor illuminated statues)
- 3 Obstacle course or parkour area to climb on
- 4 Giant slides (i.e. long curly slide)
- 5 Water play area
- 6 Things to climb (i.e. climbing structures)
- 7 Table tennis table
- 8 Café
- 9 Long slide
- 10 Swings you can use in a group (i.e. swings in a circle)

<sup>1</sup>Based on photo ratings only. <sup>2</sup>Particularly for girls. <sup>3</sup>Particularly for boys.

### TOP 10 FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO BE ACTIVE IN PARKS

- 1 Long flying fox
- 2 Large adventure playground
- 3 Lots of trees for climbing
- 4 Large round swings<sup>2</sup>
- 5 Obstacle course or parkour area to climb on<sup>3</sup>
- 6 Large climbing equipment
- 7 Outdoor fitness equipment
- 8 Giant slides
- 9 Sports goals<sup>3</sup>
- 10 Water play area<sup>3</sup>

For all outcomes, children valued large adventure playgrounds and equipment that provided opportunities for climbing and physically challenging play

[deakin.edu.au/ipan](http://deakin.edu.au/ipan)

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Investigators: A/Prof Jenny Veitch, Prof Anna Timperio, Prof Kylie Bell, Prof Benedicte Debruche  
Funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP170100188)  
Jenny Veitch is supported by an Australian National Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship (ID 101928) Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 001338

# ProjectPARK

## IMPORTANT PARK FEATURES FOR: TEENS

ProjectPARK: a study with teens 13-18 years to identify the park features they consider to be most important for their park visitation, park-based physical activity and social interaction (2017-2020)



34 completed a walk-along interview in a park to discuss park features



222 rated 40 photos of different park features



244 completed a survey to identify the relative importance of park features

### TOP 10 FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE TEENS TO VISIT PARKS

- 1 Large swings (i.e. 360° swing)
- 2 Large grassy open space
- 3 Café<sup>1</sup>
- 4 Sports goals<sup>1</sup>
- 5 Trampolines<sup>2</sup>
- 6 Quiet, private place to hang out
- 7 Outdoor fitness equipment
- 8 Giant slides<sup>2</sup>
- 9 Obstacle course or parkour area to climb on<sup>3</sup>
- 10 Table tennis tables<sup>1</sup>

### TOP 10 FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE SOCIAL INTERACTION IN PARKS

- 1 Café
- 2 BBQ/picnic area
- 3 Sports courts (netball or basketball)
- 4 Traditional swings<sup>3</sup>
- 5 Large grassy open space
- 6 Sports goals<sup>1</sup>
- 7 Long flying fox<sup>2</sup>
- 8 Interactive areas (e.g. touch-sensor illuminated statues)
- 9 Trampolines
- 10 Giant slides

<sup>1</sup>Particularly for males. <sup>2</sup>Particularly for females. <sup>3</sup>Swings were more important for females than males, particularly group swings in a circle

### TOP 10 FEATURES THAT ENCOURAGE TEENS TO BE ACTIVE IN PARKS

- 1 Sports courts (netball or basketball)
- 2 Large grassy open space<sup>1</sup>
- 3 Outdoor fitness equipment<sup>2</sup>
- 4 Walking/cycling paths
- 5 Long flying fox
- 6 Sports goals<sup>1</sup>
- 7 Large swings (i.e. 360° swing)
- 8 Obstacle course or parkour area to climb on
- 9 Trampolines
- 10 Large things to climb (i.e. climbing structures)

In all three phases, teens tended to prefer park features that were large, adventurous, and challenging, such as a long flying fox

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Funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP170100188)  
Jenny Veitch is supported by an Australian National Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship (ID 101928) Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 001338



# Interviews with Stakeholders

- 23 key stakeholders employed in park design, planning and management
- Explored factors contributing to decision making and design of new parks and strategies for translating evidence to policy and planning practice

Veitch et al. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*  
(2020) 17:49  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-020-00952-5>

International Journal of Behavioral  
Nutrition and Physical Activity

**RESEARCH** **Open Access**

**Increasing translation of research evidence  
for optimal park design: a qualitative study  
with stakeholders**

 Check for updates

Jenny Veitch<sup>1\*</sup>, Emily Denniss<sup>1</sup>, Kylie Ball<sup>1</sup>, Harriet Koorts<sup>1</sup>, Benedicte Deforche<sup>2,3</sup> and Anna Timperio<sup>1</sup>



# Closing

→ **What I know....**

→ **What I hope....**

→ **What's next?**

Natural experiments

Virtual reality studies

Collaborative work with industry

Different settings (e.g. schools)





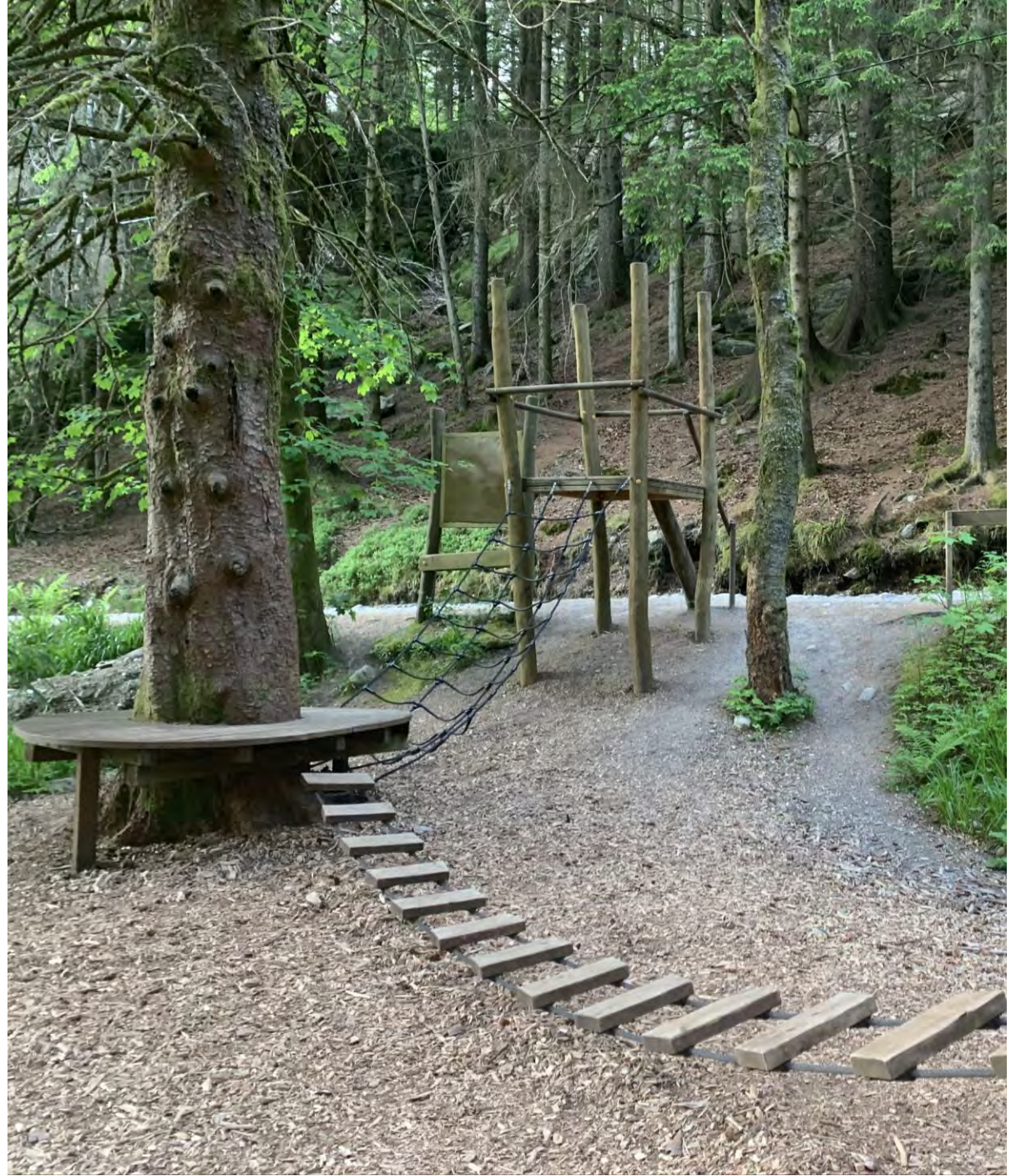


















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**Resources:** <https://ipan.deakin.edu.au/impact-and-resources/#research>



[deakin.edu.au/ipan](https://deakin.edu.au/ipan)

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