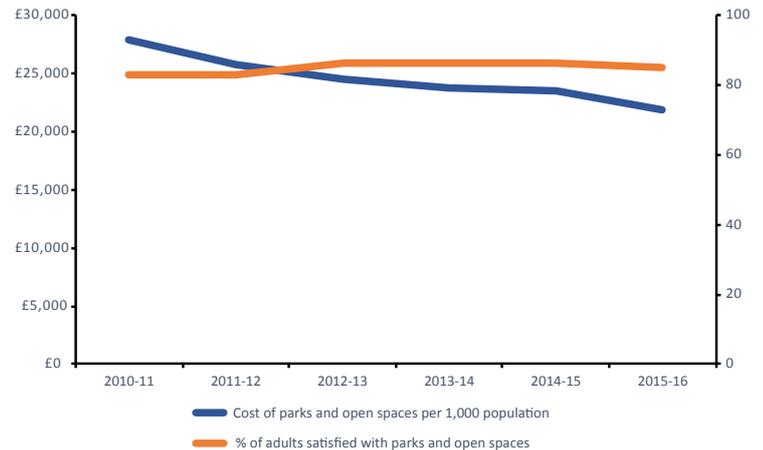


Parks Briefing 2017

Parks and green spaces, play an important role in the quality of life in local communities. In addition to the social and economic benefits delivered, the impact they have on promoting better health and wellbeing of the population and in reducing demand on other core services is well documented.

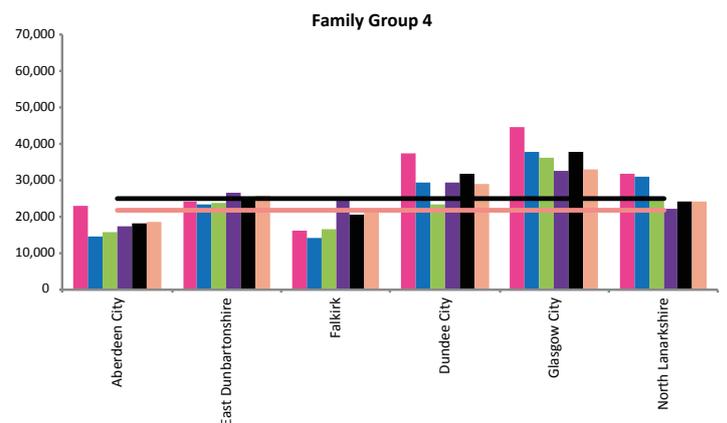
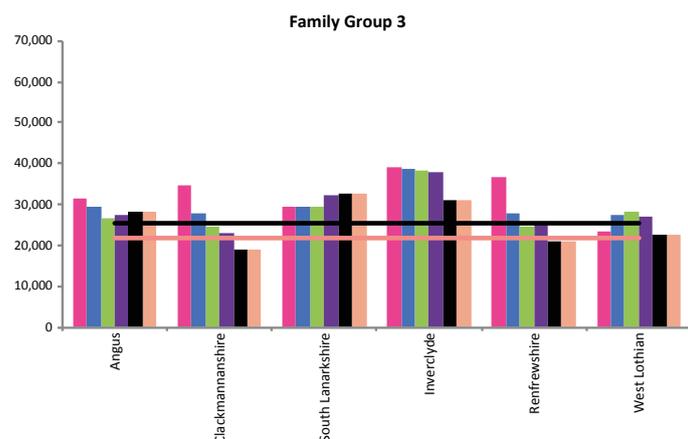
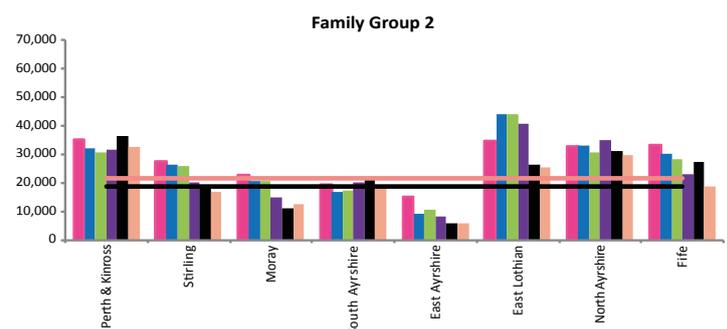
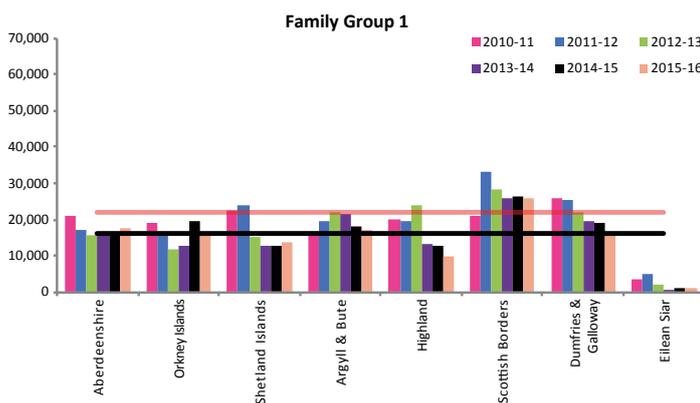
However, given there is little in the way of statutory protection for culture and leisure spending, parks services face a particularly challenging financial context across the coming period.

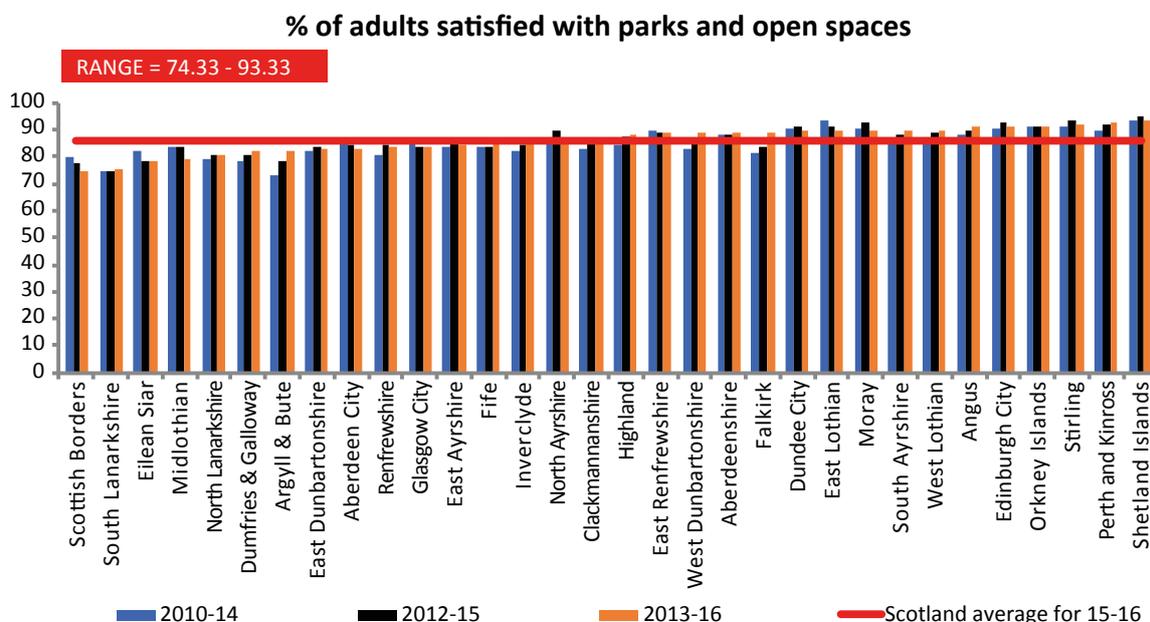
Spend on parks and open spaces is reflected as spend per 1,000 population. Over the six-year period from 2010/11 to 2015/16, this has reduced in real terms by 20.1%, from £27,814 to £22,232. There has been a year-on-year reduction across the period, with the rate of reduction accelerating in the last 12 months. Meanwhile satisfaction has risen since the base year, although there has been a slight reduction in the past 12 months.



Variation

Costs vary significantly between authorities. In 2015/16 the range in costs across councils was £960 - £40,942. However, when excluding Islands councils which have significantly lower costs, the range was £5,515 - £40,942. The range across councils has narrowed since the base year due to a reduction in costs at the higher end. The geographical nature of authorities is important in understanding the variation, with urban authorities reporting significantly higher costs as can be seen in the Family Group graphs below (councils are grouped by rurality). Satisfaction levels also vary considerably across Scotland, but there are no systematic effects of deprivation, sparsity or council size on satisfaction levels.





Work within Family Groups has identified the following local factors as important in interpreting the variation between authorities:

- Local political and strategic priority given to the role of culture and leisure in supporting improvement in wider outcomes, e.g. health and wellbeing, educational outcomes, tackling inequality, economic development, community empowerment, etc.
- Scale of provision and level of service
- Service delivery model and level of in house and trust delivery
- Staffing composition, level and roles
- Level of volunteering, community involvement and asset transfer
- Income generation capacity

Sharing Practice—2016 Benchmarking Event

The resourcing and shape of parks services across Scotland vary according to local **strategic and political priorities**, and **stage in the investment cycle**. The **service structure** is also important, in terms of whether services are organised centrally or via neighbourhood structures, and whether they are delivered in-house or through a trust. A growing focus for many authorities in line with the **Community Empowerment agenda** is the emphasis given to ‘friend’s groups’ and other voluntary and community organisations in the design and delivery of services.

Service Redesign

All councils are using service reviews to inform significant service redesign, and the way in which parks design their services varies across the country depending on the size, demography and priorities of each area. To deliver efficiencies, some services like **South and East Ayrshire** are placing greater focus on how to provide high quality parks and open spaces with lower maintenance levels (for example through different types of shrubs and landscaping). Other services, for example **Scottish Borders**, have integrated services and are focusing on being more innovative and creative by working in partnership. Meanwhile, **Perth & Kinross** have redefined staff roles so that parks officers now community engagement officers that target volunteers and funding.



Useful Links

Presentation: [Aberdeen Parks Service](#)

Presentation: [Falkirk Parks Service](#)

Explore the LGBF data by service, across councils and over time using the [My Local Council Tool](#)



Case Studies

- [Falkirk Open Strategy Investment Programme](#)

For further information about the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, please visit www.improvementservice.org.uk/benchmarking or email jacqueline.greenlees@improvementservice.org.uk.