

People on Benches

Brief 1_How We Sit in Public

Understanding Benches: Motivation & Approach

1. Project Motivation

This project began with a simple question:
Who uses public benches, and how do they sit?

Benches look ordinary, yet they quietly reveal **social patterns**. I documented different bench types and interviewed users about their choices, feelings, and habits. Through these observations, benches became a lens for understanding how comfort, privacy, and social presence are negotiated in **shared public space**.



2. How I Collected the Data

(1) Survey Insights

To understand people's preferences, I conducted a short survey asking why they chose a particular bench:

1. Why did you choose this bench?
2. What are you doing now?
3. How do you feel sitting here right now?
4. If this feeling were a **color**, what **color** would it be?
5. Where do you sit on this bench?
6. How long do you usually stay here?
7. Any short comment or thought about this bench?

(2) The 3/4 Polished Seat



Across most benches, the same physical trace appears: the **three-quarter position**—neither the center nor the far edge—is the most worn and polished.

This suggests a shared, almost unconscious preference for a seat that feels safe, semi-private, and slightly offset from full exposure. The choice is never verbalized, yet it leaves a visible mark on the surface of the bench.

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2. How I Collected the Data

(3) Observation Diary for Wheelchair Users

Near the Entrance

1. Two middle-aged women **10:22 AM**
(both wearing headscarves)
chatting
2. One middle-aged man **1:00 PM**
(wearing dark brown jacket, khaki trousers)
Drinking coffee
3. Young mother with stroller **3:37 PM**
(wearing khaki sweater and jeans)
Sitting quietly
4. Two young women **3:43 PM**
(one in a white hoodie and jeans, the other in a black coat with plaid scarf)
taking selfies together

Near the Entrance

5. Three teenage boys **4:10 PM**
(both wearing school uniforms)
chatting and playing with their phones
6. One middle-aged man **12:25 PM**
(wearing black suit)
Sitting briefly, smoking quickly before leaving
7. Couple **6:40 PM**
(man in grey hoodie, woman in a white blouse with black skirt)
leaning against each other, sharing earphones
8. Two young men **3:06 PM**
(one in a one in a brown leather jacket, the other in a blue denim jacket)
chatting and smoking

Deeper in the Park

1. Young man **11:50 AM**
(wearing black jacket, jeans)
smoking
2. Young man **1:15 PM**
(wearing blue sweater, grey trousers)
eating a sandwich
3. Elderly woman **10:20 AM**
(wearing navy wool coat, grey scarf)
Sitting quietly and watching the scenery.
4. Middle-aged woman **4:17 PM**
(wearing camel coat)
typing on his phone

Deeper in the Park

5. Two young women **5:30 PM**
(one in army green jacket, the other in dark orange jacket)
chatting and smoking
6. Three young friends **3:45 PM**
(two women, one man, all in dark coats)
sitting together, chatting
7. Couple **6:58 PM**
(both wearing black hoodie)
kissing
8. Young man **1:50 PM**
(wearing black jacket, blue jeans)
Drinking costa coffee

(4) Photographic Documentation



Understanding Benches: Motivation & Approach

2. How I Collected the Data

(4) Photographic Documentation



Bench Typology

Entrance Area — Metal Benches

- (1) Close to the path
- (2) Many people pass by
- (3) Users: women chatting, parents with strollers, short-stop smokers
- (4) **Gendered pattern observed:** many women appear in caregiving roles, often pushing strollers or accompanying children.



Mid-Park — Wooden Benches

- (1) Quieter
 - (2) Mostly individuals
 - (3) Users: people eating lunch, reading, drinking coffee, on their phones
- Couples** often prefer the **grass** instead of the bench, choosing open space for more comfort and intimacy.



Inner Area — Benches with Tables

- (1) Groups of **older men gather daily**
- (2) Activities: card games, long conversations
- (3) Small social community formed
- (4) **Gendered pattern observed:** Women pushing strollers alone at the entrance contrast sharply with groups of men playing cards in the deeper area. This simple difference in how each group occupies space reveals a subtle form of **gender inequality** in bench usage.



Survey Breakdown

1. Who did I interview?

I interviewed 15 bench users of different ages and backgrounds. Participants included students, office workers, baristas, service staff, and retirees. Ages ranged from 18 to 75.

2. Why did they choose this bench?

Participants selected their benches for reasons such as:

- (1) shade or sunlight 2/15
- (2) quietness 8/15
- (3) habit 2/15
- (4) convenience 6/15
- (5) waiting for someone 1/15 (multiple-choice)

These environmental and personal factors strongly shaped their choices.

3. What color did people choose for their feeling?

When asked to describe their feeling as a color, **yellow** was the most frequently chosen color. Participants associated it with **warmth**, **calmness**, and quiet **happiness**.

4. What are you doing now?

People were:

- (1) eating or drinking 4/15
- (2) checking their phone 5/15
- (3) resting 7/15
- (4) talking 4/15
- (5) reading / thinking 1/15
- (6) smoking 1/15 (multiple-choice)

It shows that benches serve as **small pauses** in daily life — a space for people to slow down, relax, and take a breath.

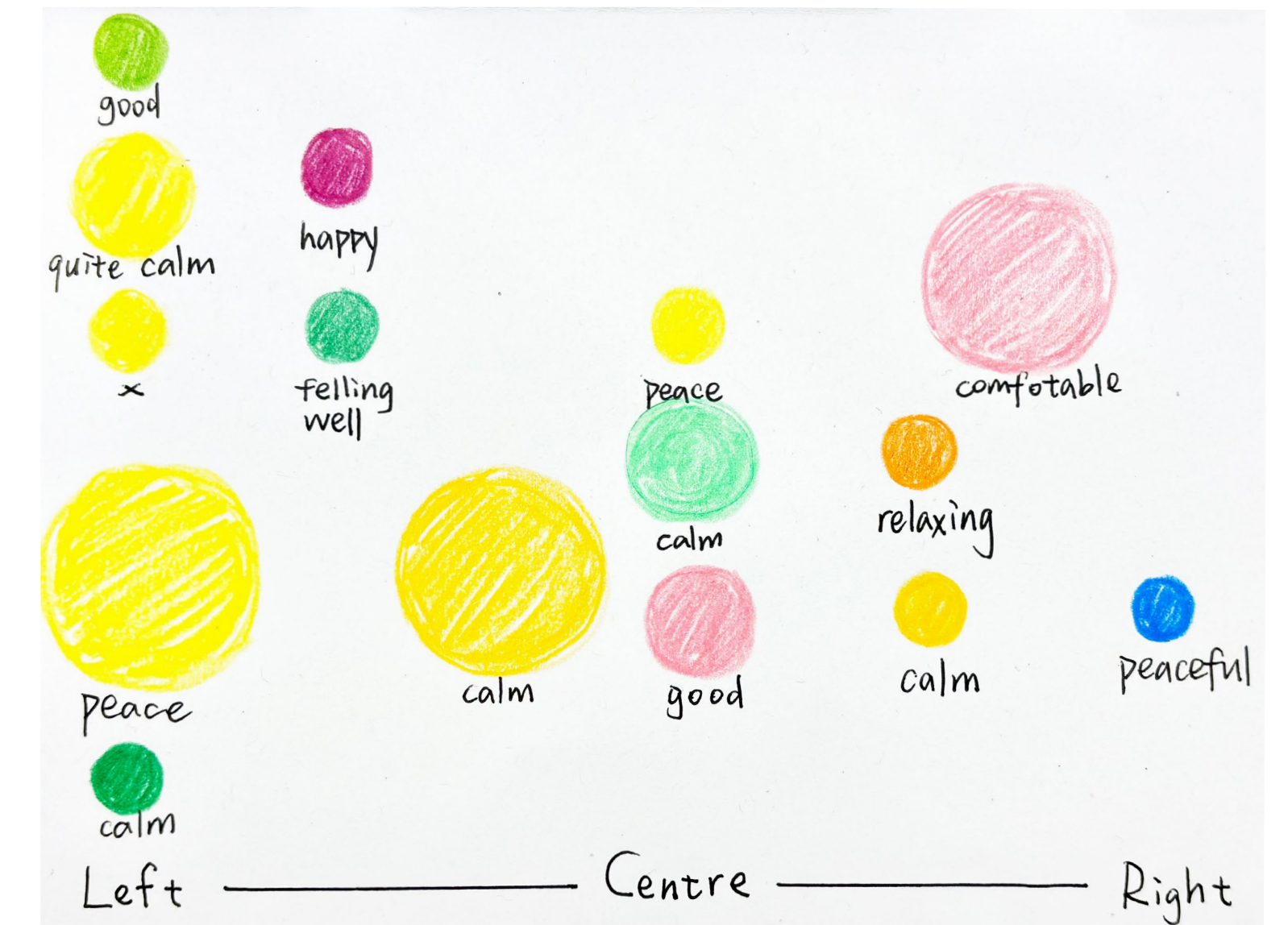
3. Any short comment or thought about this bench?

I'm happy I am here! 😊

Very good, relaxing

I like bench, bench very nice, very silver very metallic, this bench cold and cool.

4. Mapping Emotions on Benches



The **position** of the circle corresponds to where they sat, and the **color** was freely chosen from a box of colored pencils to express their mood at that moment. The **size** of each circle shows how long they stayed:

- Small — **5–15** min
- Medium — **15–30** min
- Large — more than **30** min



The base of the emotion map is created by layering all bench photos at 10% opacity. This muted background preserves the shared structure of the benches without competing with the data, allowing the colors, positions, and durations to stand out clearly.

Yellow appears most often, expressing warmth, ease, and quiet comfort—feelings that match the restful, low-energy nature of bench use. Many of those who chose yellow also sat in the three-quarter position, reinforcing its association with comfort. Taken together, the colors, time, and seating positions reveal how people seek balance and small moments of relief in public space.

Bench User Profile

Personal Archive Format

I chose the archive format to connect each person's photo with their survey responses and on-site behavior.

By placing photographs alongside short written notes, each profile gives shape and personality to the data. It reminds us that every dot on the emotion map represents someone with a routine, a rhythm, and a way of occupying the bench.

The archive also makes the diversity of users visible—students taking a break, workers eating lunch, retirees enjoying the afternoon, and people pausing between errands.

Small details that would disappear in purely statistical charts—where they sat, what they were doing, how they felt—are preserved here.

In this way, the archive becomes a bridge, linking numbers with lived experience and turning a simple act of sitting into a portrait of everyday life.



Character 01

- 1** **Date:** 09/10/2025 **Time:** 14.22
Occupation: Customer Service
- 2** **Bench Chosen:** Metal Benches
Exact Sitting Position: Right middle
What You Were Doing: Resting
Duration: 5-15min
- 3** **Why This Bench:** Quiet
How You Felt: Relaxing
Emotion Color: Orange
- 4** **Posture:** Sitting with legs spread wide
Surroundings: His bicycle was in front of him
- 5** **Any short comment or thought about this bench?**

*Very good,
relaxing*