

Most people in Plaza de la República came with other people, which favored sociability and also the perception of security. On the other hand Plaza de la Madre users visited the plaza accompanied by others but not as often as the Plaza de la República user. Most people that came accompanied in Plaza de la Madre were women and who gathered in order to socialize and felt secure being accompanied by each other.

When it was asked, “under what conditions would you not visit this plaza?” both plaza users mentioned that lack of security would be cause for not visiting the plaza. In Plaza de la Madre other categories such as rain, if it were not well maintained, or crowded; or too hot, but these answers were stated with a low frequency. The same reasons were also mentioned in Plaza de la República but an additional answer was the lack of public transportation. It is important to mention that students who are one of the main users of the plaza depend in public transportation to access the College and therefore visit the plaza. In reference to public transportation, although mentioned in low frequency by participants, its absence is critical for young people to access the area.

The final question about security issues asked if the participants felt that visiting the plaza at night was unsafe. The question asked was how they would feel if they had the chance to visit the plaza at night. For both plazas, most answers indicated that participants did not feel uncomfortable visiting both plazas at night, although Plaza de la República user mentioned a higher comfort in doing this than Plaza de la Madre users. People presence, the presence of police surveillance, and being accompanied by others were the main reasons Plaza de la República users felt secure and visited the plaza at night. On the other hand in Plaza de la Madre, especially woman, felt that lack of security in the sector and lack of police surveillance made them feel unsafe. Therefore, feeling safe involved the presence of others in the Plaza and being accompanied by others, the same as observed the other plaza.

In Plaza de la Madre, during noon hours almost no activities were observed in the plaza, which increased the perception of lack of security. Most women that went to the plazas were generally engaged in groups, and if they arrived alone they made sure that the plaza was being used by others and especially by male joggers who could assist them, if necessary. Presence of natural surveillance was particularly important for women when using public spaces. Particularly, woman felt more threatened in Plaza de la Madre than Plaza de la Republica, due to the lack of continuous police surveillance and due to the neighborhood robbery and assault rates. In close proximity to the plaza are “poor barrios”. Therefore, some women mentioned that walking through the barrios to arrive the plaza is often dangerous because many people have been assaulted. Woman expressed more fear and they avoid wearing any jewelry or dressing very stylishly because they do not want to attract a robber’s attention.

In general, this subject has showed that people feel safer in Plaza de la República then Plaza de la Madre. This can be confirmed by people presence during longer periods and at later hours of the day in Plaza de la República. The presence of many people at peak hours enhanced the feeling of security in the user of this plaza, also the constant police surveillance. In Plaza de la Madre, lack of police monitoring of the plaza and the presence of barrios close to the area reduced the sense of security comfort in people. Security issues, therefore, are determinant conditions for drawing people to plazas and inviting social contact.

16.7 User's Profile

In order to understand the users in both plazas, and create a user profile, participants were asked their age, gender, occupation and the highest grade of education they have research. Asking this information also allowed knowing the users' needs and preferences in the public settings and who participated in the interviews.

In Plaza de la Madre there was not a predominant user, which evidence that the users in Plaza de la Madre were more diverse and heterogeneous. The largest group (30%) of users were between 18-29 years old while ages 30-39 and 50-59 each composed 20% of the users, respectively. It can be said that most users in Plaza de la Madre were adults. In Plaza de la República, most users were young people between the age of 18 and 29 years, teenagers and children (which were less than eighteen years old), were the second most visible age group in Plaza de la República. It was also found that adults and elderly were not the main users of the plaza. Therefore, Plaza de la Madre is more adult and elderly-orientated environment and Plaza de la República a more youthful environment. Perhaps because Plaza de la República is more popular among young people it results in a more active engagement space. In both plazas most users were woman. In Plaza de la Madre, professionals visit the plaza more; in Plaza de la República most users are students, of whom most have completed high school. Plaza de la República is a popular young person's environment and Plaza de la Madre is a more adult setting.

In sum, young people and children are more attracted to Plaza de la Republica due to the different amenities of the plaza and due to the location next to the CUNIBE College. Plaza de la Madre is a more adult orientated environment, which mainly use the plaza for exercising purposes. It is also important to note that most users from Plaza de la Madre are neighbors of the sectors and contrarily, many visitors of the plaza come from different areas of the city. Predominant users of both plazas are female and generally use those public spaces accompanied by others. The existing conditions of both plazas attract therefore, very different users to them.