



2023 Socioeconomic Research of National Park Service Visitors

Report on 2023 Data Collection



Camping at Sweetwater Chickee on the Wilderness Waterway in Everglades National Park.

NPS / JANE GAMBLE

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Foreword

Understanding visitors to the diverse and treasured units across the National Park Service (NPS) System, and their interactions with each site, enables the NPS to better serve them. Equally, this foundational data at both park and national levels allows for a greater understanding of those public stakeholders that may not be able to visit or otherwise chose not to.

While the NPS historically has attempted to improve our understanding of park visitors and park visitation via survey methods, the annual Socioeconomic Monitoring (SEM) visitor survey applies survey methods with on-site visitors to understand national level results. This report provides a more comprehensive picture of park visitors across the service, and it lays the groundwork to understand visitor trends through time. In 2023, roughly 19,000 visitors completed surveys at 24 randomly selected parks. The types of data collected include visitor demographics, trip characteristics/planning (including spending), and experience evaluations. Information from these efforts will allow the NPS to provide data-driven insights into questions frequently asked by park superintendents and managers, by members of Congress, from national news media, and from diverse stakeholders that are interested in the composition and the representation of visitors to national parks. The NPS has not had this kind of information at an aggregate, service-wide level before. Each year this effort continues we will have a finger on the pulse of national park visitation. In time, the information will grow to levels where we can draw comparisons across regions, park types, and beyond.

Parks have already begun applying results at park-specific levels. This includes but is not limited to adjusting interpretive information based on visitor comments, updating multipliers such as vehicle occupancy within visitation estimates, and engaging with Congress to highlight the importance of park resources to visitors from across the nation. With a wealth of new data annually, we will use this information to adapt and improve visitor experiences, increase outreach and engagement efforts to those that otherwise would not visit parks, and better highlight the benefit our nation's natural, cultural, and recreation resources.

We would like to thank the American people and international visitors that voluntarily offered their time and insight as participants in this work. We are also very grateful to park staff and managers across the National Park System and to NPS leaders who helped champion and launch this important initiative. As a result of more than a decade of development and planning, we are enthusiastic that the benefits of SEM will help us further provide high quality visitor experiences while simultaneously protecting resources in national parks.



Abstract

A strong mandate and need for socioeconomic monitoring have been expressed in the National Park Service (NPS) strategic goals for science, in statements by NPS leadership, and in various official reports. Since such monitoring began in 2022, the NPS has conducted visitor surveys at 24 parks per year across the United States and associated territories. On the ground, the study uses a two-step survey methodology to capture a representative sample of park visitors during the peak season of each respective park unit. This process includes (1) an on-site intercept survey conducted via tablet, and (2) a post-trip survey (completed either by mail-back or online) for more in-depth trip details. The types of data collected include visitor demographics, trip characteristics/planning, and experience evaluations. Results are organized by these two survey instruments and are aimed to assist park managers in understanding current utilization and perception of park resources, assessing operations and potential issues, and facilitating communication and decision-making processes within The NPS unit and between it and its local partners and stakeholders.

Introduction

Social science research has become increasingly recognized as a crucial component of park planning, amplifying its significance for the National Park Service (NPS). With the ever-changing landscape of visitation and a desire to provide transformative visitor experiences, understanding the needs and expectations of the visiting public has become more important than ever. The agency seeks to provide the highest quality visitor experience while also protecting the important natural and cultural resources that make these sites special.

A pilot visitor study was conducted in 2015/2016 across selected park units throughout the United States. Building upon the insights gleaned from the pilot study, the Socioeconomic Monitoring Program (SEM) Visitor Survey has been carried out annually starting in 2022 at 24 NPS units across the country per year. The study aims to deepen understanding of visitor demographics and characteristics of National Park Service Visitors.

This report contains the data and findings collected from the SEM Visitor Survey in 2023. The study gathers data at a comprehensive agency level, addressing the informational needs of park managers throughout the National Park System. The data collected during the 2023 SEM Visitor Survey sampling period is intended to provide park managers with data-supported insights into their visitors while enabling data analysis at the agency level and beyond for future applications.

This study collects information about visitor use, aids in finding effective management solutions, and offers insights into the visitors who experience NPS sites. The findings empower NPS managers to better comprehend visitor behaviors, inform park operations, and identify areas for enhancing the visitor experience. Moreover, these results are intended to facilitate communication and foster informed decision-making processes, both within the NPS unit and in collaboration with local partners and stakeholders.

This year's findings have revealed a wealth of interesting, useful, and often positive information provided by park unit visitors. However, it is notable that some aspects of the national-level results are sensitive to the type of parks selected in each year's sample. This is particularly true for park location differences, such as state of origin, but this is less influential for more general components. Aggregation of multiple years of data will improve representativeness for all question types, including spatially dependent questions, through time. These considerations are discussed in more detail at the end of the report.

This report does not include spending data, which was also collected as part of the study. For detailed information regarding visitor spending, please refer to the Visitor Spending Effects report where results are presented.

The research was carried out by a team including Otak, Inc., RRC Associates, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana, and GAIA Environmental Consulting.

Methods

The following section describes the set of approaches applied to the 2023 SEM Visitor Survey. From park selection to on-the-ground intercepting techniques, the methods were based on rigorous research dating back to the original 2015/2016 pilot. Modifications to the survey design and sampling plans came as a result of this original pilot.

Park Eligibility and Stratification

Parks must meet one requirement to be considered eligible for participation in the SEM: a minimum of five years of Visitor Use Statistics (VUStats) reporting. Any park unit within the NPS that meets this minimum is considered eligible for the SEM Visitor Survey. Park selection is based on eight strata generated through filtering by two sets of park classifications, as seen below.

1. Park type (based on Congressional designation):
 - a. Natural
 - b. Recreation
 - c. Historic/Cultural - Urban (metro area more than or equal to one million in population)
 - d. Historic/Cultural - Non-urban (metro area less than one million in population)
2. Visitation size:
 - a. High visitation (top 80% of park visits within stratum)
 - b. Low visitation (bottom 20% of park visits within stratum)

Throughout the report, the phrases “NPS unit”, “unit”, or “park unit” are used to refer to NPS managed sites selected using these criteria for the SEM program.

Park Type

All eligible park units are assigned a park type based on the overarching primary congressional designation. The four park types are chosen to represent broad designation classifications of all available park types in the NPS. Sites within the “Historic/Cultural” park type are determined to be Urban or Non-urban based on the following definitions:

Urban parks are defined as:

A unit where the majority (50% or more) of the site is located within an Urban Area or within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with a population greater than one million people. Urban Areas and MSAs are as defined by the US Census Bureau.

Non-urban parks are defined as:

A unit where the majority of the NPS site (50% or more) is located outside of any Urban Area or MSA with a population greater than one million people. Urban Areas and MSAs are as defined by the US Census Bureau.

Visitation Magnitude

After defining park type, units are then assigned into the “high” or “low” visitation stratum based on a five-year average of VUStats data. Units in the initial pool are classified based on the 2013–2017 average. Any new park additions use the most recent five years of VUStats reporting data.

1. Within each park type stratum, units were sorted in descending order by overall visitation.
2. The top-ranked parks whose combined visitation account for 80 percent of the stratum’s visitation are the “high visitation” units. The remaining parks (whose combined visitation account for 20 percent of the stratum’s visitation) are the “low visitation” units.

Park Unit Selection

From each of the eight strata, three units are randomly selected for a total of 24 parks per year out of a possible 378 qualifying park units as of 2022. This represents a subset of the 424 total National Park Service managed units (Figure 1). This list of qualifying parks will increase as more parks become eligible for inclusion within the sampling frame.

Table 1. 2023 selected park units by strata.

Park Type	High Visitation	Low Visitation
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Canyon de Chelly NM	Aztec Ruins NM
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Fort Donelson National Battlefield	Tuskegee Airmen NHS
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Klondike Gold Rush NHP Alaska	Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS
Historic/Cultural, Urban	National Capital Parks-East	Stones River National Battlefield
Historic/Cultural, Urban	San Juan NHS	Mary McLeod Bethune Council House NHS
Historic/Cultural, Urban	Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial	Federal Hall National Memorial
Natural	Everglades NP	Great Basin NP
Natural	Cuyahoga Valley NP	Lassen Volcanic NP
Natural	Badlands NP	Dinosaur NM
Recreation	George Washington MP	Prince William Forest Park
Recreation	Golden Gate NRA	Greenbelt Park
Recreation	Delaware Water Gap NRA	Gauley River NRA

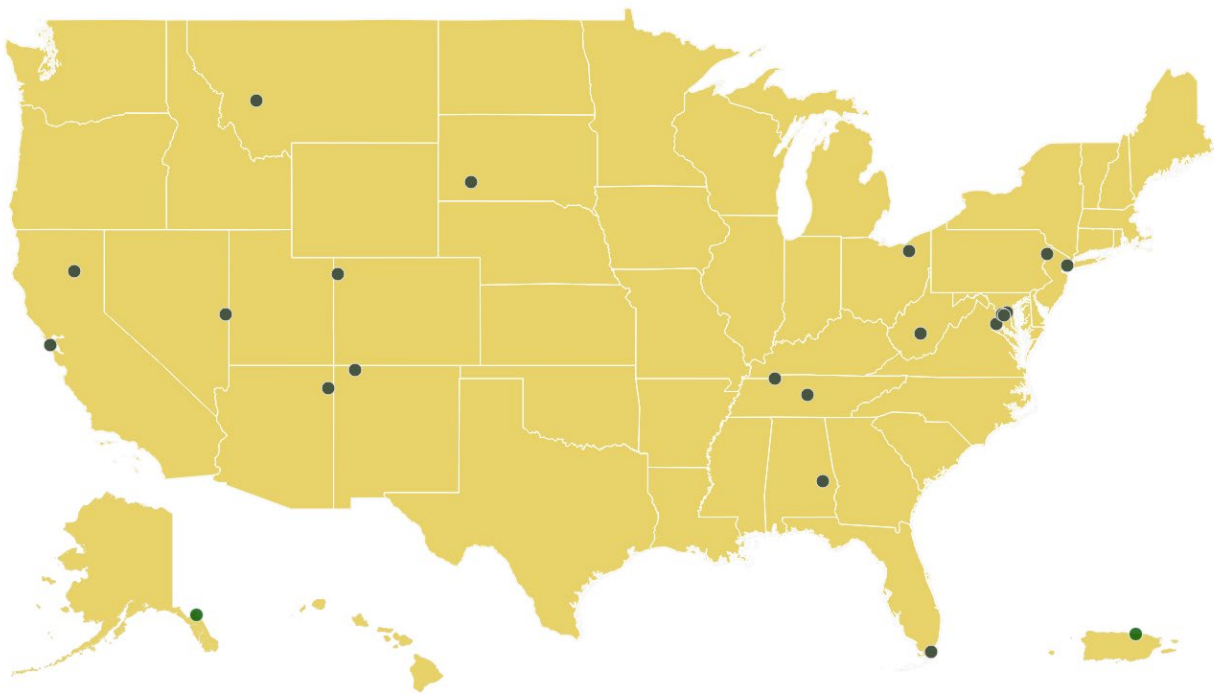


Figure 1. Map of NPS units sampled in 2023.

Survey Instruments

The SEM Visitor Survey methodology is designed to capture a representative sample of visitor information, characteristics, and behavior at each sampled park unit through:

1. An onsite intercept survey conducted via tablet, and
2. A post-trip follow-up survey (mail-back or online) for full trip details.

This comprehensive approach provides the necessary information to make on-the-ground decisions in park units using the intercept survey to capture visitor responses on higher priority information, while also capturing key in-depth information on visitor spending and trip characteristics for long-term planning from the post-trip survey. Additionally, the intercept survey is designed to be brief so as not to fundamentally affect visitors' experiences. The methods also permit a larger sample to be collected on key questions of interest on the intercept, when possible, by asking the questions that are of high importance and also appropriate and efficient for an in-person survey.

The survey instruments were developed through rigorous testing during the 2015/2016 pilot study and further refined based on results of the data collection. After the initial pilot study, question formats were modified and refined to improve respondent understanding and data quality from responses. Beginning in 2020, the SEM Visitor Survey questions were further improved by expert review and refined methodologies. The 2015/2016 pilot did not include an in-depth intercept survey

and was scoped for only a post-trip survey. Therefore, some questions needed to be reframed and reworded for the updated SEM Visitor Survey effort.

The post-trip survey was offered online as a new component of the SEM Visitor Survey starting in 2022, in addition to the original mail-back option used in the 2015/2016 pilot. This online offering was in part adopted to solve issues of international visitors not willing or able to mail surveys during or after their trip to the United States.

Some questions require the addition of local context for each park. For instance, accommodation types that are not offered in specific units are removed from their intercept survey. On other questions, all response options are built specifically for the NPS unit being sampled, such as locations visited within the unit on that day. Results of questions that are fully customized to individual park units are not included in this report; they can be found in the 24 separate park unit-level reports.

Park staff were consulted to determine whether language would be a possible barrier to survey participation among their visitors. As a result, both survey instruments were translated into Spanish, and offered in Spanish at eight of the 24 units sampled in 2023. At the remaining 16 park units, staff felt that the vast majority of visitor groups would have at least one individual comfortable taking the survey in English. Additional languages may be offered in the future, depending on visitor demographics at selected park units, to ensure that the survey is accessible to as many visitors as possible.

Data Collection

Intercept Survey

The on-site intercept survey is designed to rapidly collect visitor information as tablet-based responses, reaching the largest possible sample for the highest priority visitor information. These questions were also selected based on their efficiency and appropriateness for a brief, in-person survey.

The intercept sampling was conducted in each unit during one of its peak months (+/- 10% of peak visits to allow flexibility for various circumstances). A sample of visitors was intercepted while visiting different locations within the NPS units sampled for this study. Intercept site locations and volumes of surveyor effort were determined based on historic visitor volumes and distribution across the NPS unit's main areas with the intent to capture the most robust and representative sample for that NPS unit's peak month. Where feasible, Visitor Use Statistics estimates for monthly visitation per site were used to station surveyors proportionally across intercept site locations across a park unit. NPS staff were consulted prior to study launch to confirm visitor use statistics metrics to ensure the most popular and representative locations within each unit were captured in the sampling plan. Types of intercept site locations vary between NPS units, including trailheads, visitor centers, boat launches, historic sites, and others.

Surveyors approached potential respondent groups at the site to introduce the purpose of the study and ask them to participate in a short 5–7-minute survey about their experience in the NPS unit (NPS 2023a). Within the group, the adult with the next upcoming birthday was asked to participate. If the visitor was eligible (at least 18 years of age, not a park employee, and had not previously taken the survey) and agreed to participate in the study, the surveyor verbally administered the survey questions and recorded the responses on a handheld tablet device. If the visitor did not agree, surveyors asked if they would be willing to answer three non-response bias questions (see the Nonresponse Bias Analysis section, below). Upon complete or partial refusal, the surveyor would thank the visitor for their time, log the nonresponse, and approach the next visitor group.

At the end of the intercept survey, respondents were invited to participate in a post-trip survey by mail-back or online response. Those who agreed to participate were given an envelope containing a printed copy of the post-trip survey with a postage paid envelope for mailing it back, as well as a hyperlink and instructions for accessing it online. As part of the intercept protocol, surveyors logged a unique identifier (four-digit code) from the envelope into the tablet for future connection to the post-trip survey.

Therefore, four potential outcomes were possible when intercepting visitors (see Table 2 for national results):

1. Complete refusal, refused to answer any questions, including non-response bias questions;
2. Partial refusal, answered non-response bias questions but nothing further;
3. Completed intercept, but refused to take post-trip survey; or
4. Completed intercept and took post-trip survey.

During the sampling period, two to seven surveyors were stationed simultaneously at different sampling sites. Start times varied day-to-day and by location to capture a diverse sample of visitors across the unit. Typically, each surveyor worked 10 seven-hour days (approximately six hours data collection and one-hour lunch break) and rotated among several sites. The sample target was 400 complete post-trip surveys at most units and 800 completed post-trip surveys at three parks with higher intercept complexity (Everglades National Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area). Smaller park units (including Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site) only had one to two locations to survey; therefore, a smaller number of surveyors were stationed for more days to aim for the same completion target. Most park units had a 12-day sampling window; some park units with low visitation were extended to try to capture a larger sample.

Table 2. National response outcomes – 2023 SEM intercept survey.

Outcome	Total
Eligible visitors contacted	23,220

Outcome	Total
Complete refusals	2,801
Partial refusals (non-response bias questions completed)	1,575
Intercept surveys completed	18,844
Post-trip surveys distributed	17,335
Intercept response rate	81.2%
Post-trip acceptance rate	92.0%

Post-trip Survey

The post-trip survey was distributed to participating respondents who completed the intercept survey and then agreed to take a follow-up survey after completing their trip to the NPS unit. This method extended data collection and asked participants to complete the survey after their visit, either through a provided postage-paid envelope, or online via a provided survey link. The post-trip survey covers visitor trip spending details, travel patterns, and perceptions of their recent visit (NPS 2023b). Both the intercept survey and the post-trip survey were tagged with a unique identifier (four-digit code) for each respondent so their onsite intercept responses could be paired with their post-trip responses. Numbers were assigned at random to the individual. The use of this code allows the data to be joined, while keeping all surveys confidential and removing respondents' identifiable information. Joining the two datasets provides a more complete picture of in-park experiences and post-visit perceptions.

At the end of the intercept survey, respondents were asked for their physical mailing address or email address. This allowed for a reminder postcard or email to be sent to all contacts who provided contact information about a week following the end of each onsite data collection period. This postcard or email thanked respondents for their original participation and encouraged them to complete the post-trip survey if they had not already done so.

Three weeks after postcard mailing, a second contact (with the same unique IDs) was delivered to all outstanding addresses/emails, noting that the individual's completed questionnaire had yet to be received. The mailed survey packets included replacement surveys and postage-paid, self-addressed return envelopes. A final contact was mailed/emailed to all remaining non-respondents four weeks after sending the second contact (i.e., first full replacement survey). Table 3 shows national response rates for the post-trip survey.

Table 3. National response outcomes – 2023 SEM post-trip survey.

Outcome	Total
Post-trip surveys distributed	17,335
Valid post-trip surveys completed	5,363
Response rate	30.9%

Nonresponse Bias Analysis

To account for potential biases between respondents and non-respondents, three questions were asked of eligible visitors contacted who did not wish to participate in the survey. The responses to these three questions can then be compared to both the larger group of respondents who completed the intercept survey, and the smaller group who completed both the intercept and post-trip surveys.

The Office of Management and Budget recommends testing for non-response bias when a response rate is less than 80%. Table 4 shows response rates for both the intercept and post-trip surveys for each individual park unit included in 2023 data collection. Nonresponse bias testing was conducted on unit-specific datasets, where needed, based on this 80% response rate threshold; these results can be found in the 24 separate unit-level reports.

Table 4. NPS unit-specific response outcomes: 2023 SEM intercept and post-trip surveys.

Park Type	Unit	Intercept Survey Response Rate	Post-trip Survey Response Rate
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Aztec Ruins NM	81.2%	30.9%
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Canyon de Chelly NM	77.2%	41.7%
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Fort Donelson National Battlefield	68.6%	24.8%
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Klondike Gold Rush NHP Alaska	82.4%	29.8%
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Tuskegee Airmen NHS	73.8%	31.4%
Historic/Cultural, Non-Urban	Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS	98.6%	55.6%
Historic/Cultural, Urban	Federal Hall National Memorial	82.2%	36.0%
Historic/Cultural, Urban	Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial	93.3%	34.6%
Historic/Cultural, Urban	Mary McLeod Bethune Council House NHS	87.9%	44.6%
Historic/Cultural, Urban	National Capital Parks-East	81.8%	50.0%
Historic/Cultural, Urban	San Juan NHS	93.1%	36.3%
Historic/Cultural, Urban	Stones River National Battlefield	75.7%	24.6%
Natural	Badlands NP	97.5%	44.9%
Natural	Cuyahoga Valley NP	80.0%	52.7%
Natural	Dinosaur NM	81.2%	23.2%
Natural	Everglades NP	94.4%	35.0%
Natural	Great Basin NP	94.7%	42.6%

Park Type	Unit	Intercept Survey Response Rate	Post-trip Survey Response Rate
Natural	Lassen Volcanic NP	82.2%	21.0%
Recreation	Delaware Water Gap NRA	85.3%	29.3%
Recreation	Gauley River NRA	73.0%	25.9%
Recreation	George Washington MP	82.4%	29.8%
Recreation	Golden Gate NRA	72.3%	16.8%
Recreation	Greenbelt Park	87.1%	22.9%
Recreation	Prince William Forest Park	74.4%	19.9%
	Overall National Average	81%	31%

At a national level, the intercept survey response rate of 81% indicates that concern over intercept nonresponse is muted. However, the national response rate for respondents who accepted a post-trip survey was lower at 31%. Due to the lower post-trip survey response rate, bias testing was conducted on the national dataset to evaluate differences between the full set of respondents who participated only in the onsite intercept survey (intercept-only respondents) and those eligible visitors who participated in the full survey (full survey respondents). Results of the bias testing are shown in Tables 5 through 7.

A chi-square test for homogeneity was performed for each of the three questions to evaluate differences between the groups. Chi-square test for homogeneity is a statistical test used to determine whether there is a significant association between categorical variables. It compares observed data with expected frequencies to assess if any deviations are due to chance. A p-value of .05 is used as the indicated threshold of this significance; p-values of .05 or lower indicate significant difference between groups.

The distribution of responses among full survey respondents and intercept-only respondents differed significantly for all three non-response bias questions. Given this significance, the post-trip survey represents each group at a lower rate than would be expected (i.e., local residents (26.3%), international visitors/non-US residents (5.6%), and day visitors (42.5%)) based on their proportion among intercept survey respondents (i.e., 31.9%, 9.8%, and 52.8%, respectively). Results of the bias testing are shown in Tables 5 through 7.

Table 5. Post-trip survey non-response bias question: “Are you a permanent or seasonal/second home resident of the local area around this NPS unit?”.

Response	Frequency: Full survey respondents	Percent: Full survey respondents	Frequency: Intercept-only respondents	Percent: Intercept-only respondents
Yes	1402	26.3%	4313	31.9%
No	3921	73.7%	9208	68.1%

p-value: <.001

Table 6. Post-trip survey non-response bias question: “Do you currently live in the United States?”.

Response	Frequency: Full survey respondents	Percent: Full survey respondents	Frequency: Intercept-only respondents	Percent: Intercept-only respondents
Yes	5024	94.4%	12192	90.2%
No	298	5.6%	1328	9.8%

p-value: <.001

Table 7. Post-trip survey non-response bias question: “On this trip away from home, have you [and your personal group] stayed, or will you stay overnight away from your permanent residence either in this NPS unit and/or within the local area?”.

Response	Frequency: Full survey respondents	Percent: Full survey respondents	Frequency: Intercept-only respondents	Percent: Intercept-only respondents
Yes	3062	57.5%	6386	47.2%
No	2261	42.5%	7130	52.8%

p-value: <.001

Data Combinations

Upon completion of the 2023 SEM Visitor Survey field season, individual datasets were developed for each site. This included creating a separate cleaning procedure for each unit, as some questions varied by response options and unit-specific sites and locations. However, most of the survey questions were used throughout the study and their data included in the final dataset to ensure consistency across all sites. Dataset cleaning procedures considered the future joining procedure for the national dataset by ensuring exact coding and naming of items such as:

- 1) Variable names between units
 - a. Response options specific to each unit were named distinctly from national-sample variables.
- 2) Value labels within responses
 - a. Coding was maintained throughout each survey to ensure ease of matching during the combination process.
- 3) Tracking of additions/removals per question
 - a. Some response options were removed from the base survey based on availability at the NPS unit (e.g., accommodation types, activities). These were documented and maintained for final dataset combinations.

Once each unit-specific dataset was created, a source file of the SEM national dataset was developed by combining the 24 unit-specific datasets. Because of the maintained consistency, almost all data cleaning was done through the unit-specific files rather than the national dataset. Question labels were renamed to say “this NPS unit” in the national dataset, where an individual site name was included in the unit-specific data. All graphs and tables are labeled with this format throughout the report.

National-Level Data Weighting

Data for the national report is intended to be representative of different park types within the National Park System by collecting data on peak season visitors across the country. As previously described in the Park Unit Selection methods, park units are sampled using a stratified random sample approach in which all park units within a stratum have equal probabilities of selection. However, within each stratum, the number of visits to any given park may vary greatly. For example, within the high visitation Historic/Cultural Non-urban stratum, Klondike Goldrush experienced a peak month visit (August 2023) of 286,567, while Fort Donelson recorded 18,356 (May 2023). As such, for estimates to be representative of all peak season visits to park units within the system, estimations should account for 1) a stratum’s visits as a proportion of visits nationwide, and 2) a park unit’s visits as a proportion of visits to its stratum’s three sampled units.

Limitations

As with any research study, limitations and assumptions exist. Because this study uses a sample of park units across the country by type and size, there are some limitations, including:

- 1) The study is intended to represent all NPS visitors, over time, across the system based on park unit size and type. Because representation is meant to be focused on these two categories, some results, such as state of origin, may not be as geographically distributed as expected. Therefore, results are generalizable only to the types and sizes of park units sampled and to individual park units, not yet regionally.
- 2) Calculating results for regions, park unit types, and park unit sizes will require data from additional years.
- 3) Outliers were not removed from the dataset, so responses may be higher or lower than anticipated in open-ended numeric values (e.g., nights spent). To preserve the dataset, measures of central tendency are limited to median values. Means are not included.
- 4) Not all variables from the NPS unit-specific datasets are displayed for the national data. Questions which required a high degree of unit-specific customization are not included in this report.

Results

Intercept Survey Results

The following section provides results of the visitor intercept surveys conducted in the 24 NPS units from March through September 2023. All results are presented in this report, regardless of sample size, which varies by question. Caution is recommended in the interpretation of figures with sample size lower than n=30. Categories on some questions may not sum to 100% due to rounding differences and/or the opportunity to select more than one response option. Furthermore, sample sizes displayed are unweighted while all results displayed are weighted by peak month visits as described in the methods section.

Questions 1–2: Visitor Residency

First, respondents were asked to indicate if they were permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around where they were surveyed. Permanent and seasonal residents were then asked for their ZIP code within the local area. Respondents who do not reside permanently or seasonally in the local area were asked if they currently live in the U.S., and if so, for their ZIP code. Figure 2 depicts responses to this group of questions.

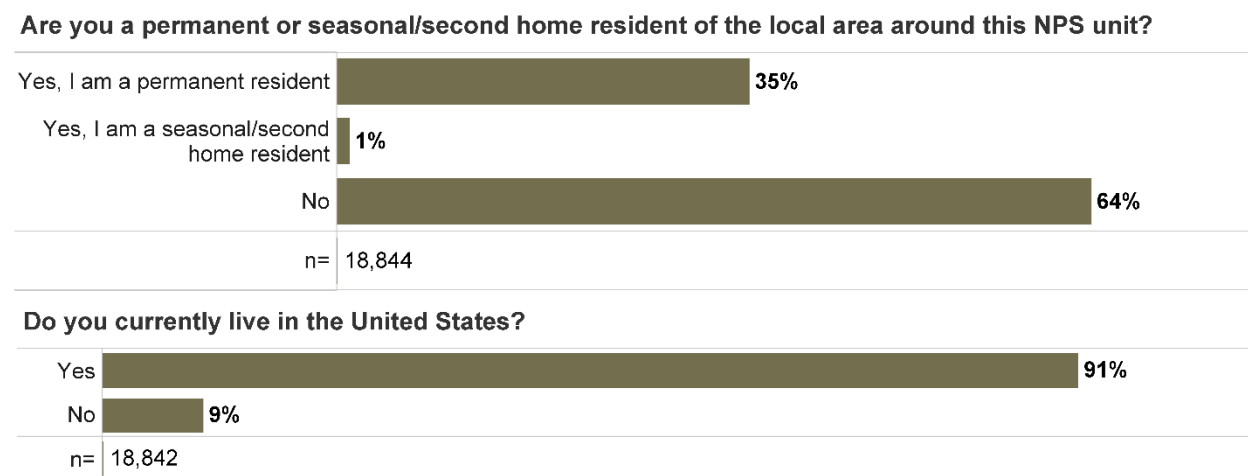


Figure 2. Respondent residency status of domestic visitors surveyed at NPS units in 2023.

- Just over one-third of respondents (a combined 36%) stated that they were either permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around the NPS unit where they were surveyed.
- Most respondents (91%) stated that they currently live in the United States.

Question 3: Trip Purpose

Respondents who are not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area were asked about the overall purpose for their trip away from home (Figure 3).

[If not local/seasonal resident] Was your visit to this NPS unit...?

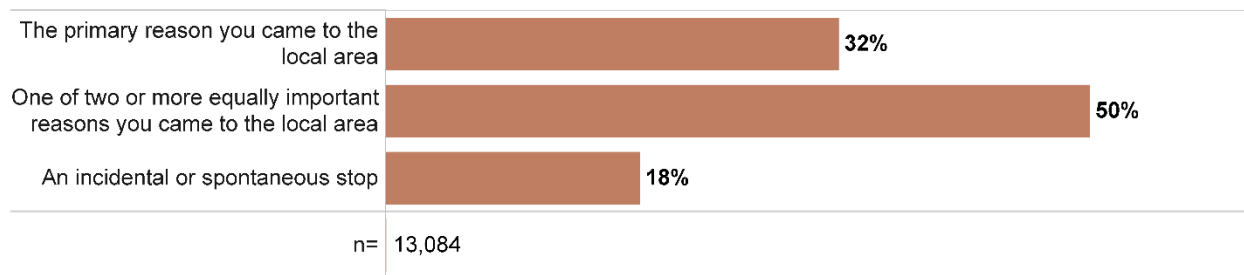


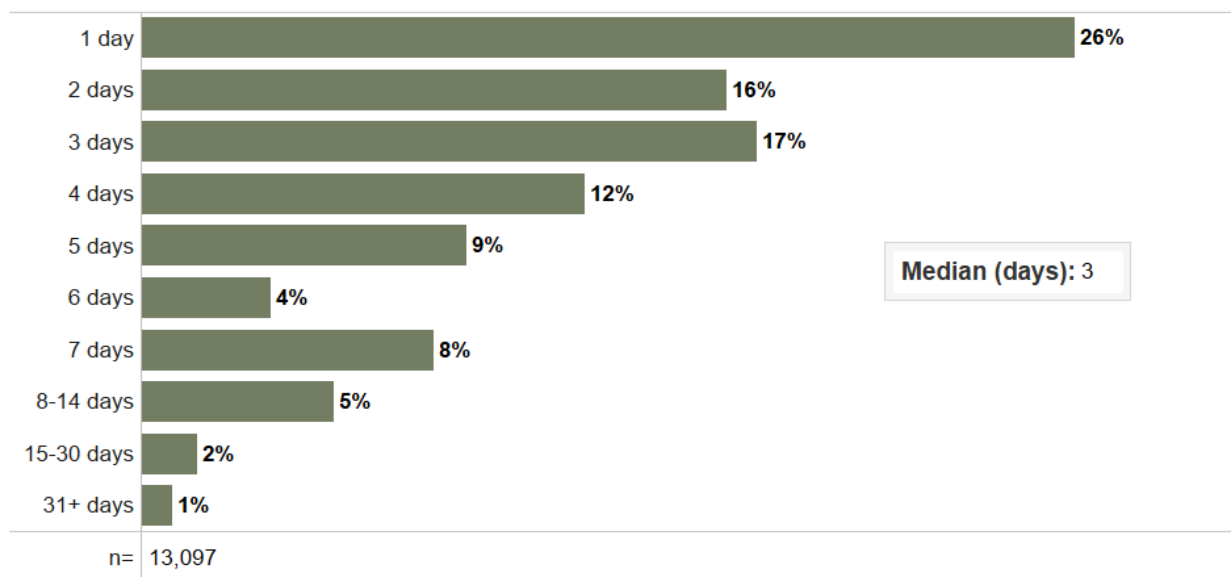
Figure 3. Role of NPS units in overall trip purpose.

- Half (50%) of non-local respondents stated that their visit to the site was one of two or more equally important reasons that brought them to the area.
- For around one-third (32%) of non-local respondents, visiting the site was the primary reason for their trip to the area.
- The remaining 18% indicated their visit to the site was an incidental or spontaneous stop while they were already in the area.

Question 4: Length of Stay

Respondents who are not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around the NPS unit were also asked how many days they planned to spend within that local area, including days spent in the NPS unit. All respondents, regardless of residency, were asked whether they would be staying overnight away from their permanent residence within the local area. Responses to both of these questions are depicted in Figure 4.

[If not local/seasonal resident] How many days are you planning to spend in the local area (including the days you spend in this NPS unit) on this trip away from home?



On this trip away from home, have you stayed, or will you stay overnight away from your permanent residence in this NPS unit and/or within the local area?

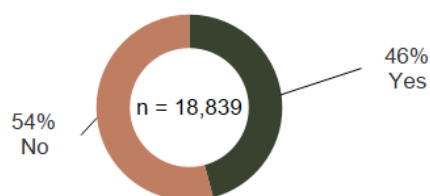


Figure 4. Time spent in the local area around NPS units.

- More than one-fourth of non-local respondents (26%) spent one day in the local area, while 16% spent two days, and 17% spent three days. The median length of stay was three days.
- Additionally, just under half of all respondents (46%; including permanent/seasonal residents) had stayed or planned to stay overnight away from their permanent residence in the unit and/or in the local area.

Questions 5-6: Overnight Visitors

If respondents indicated that they stayed overnight in the local area, they were asked about the type(s) of accommodation they used or planned to use while there (Figure 5). Because of park unit selection, some categories' responses (e.g., lodging in this NPS unit) are impacted by the number of sampled park units that have the specified lodging options available.

[If staying overnight in local area] On this trip, what type of accommodations do you expect to use while in the local area? Please mark all that apply

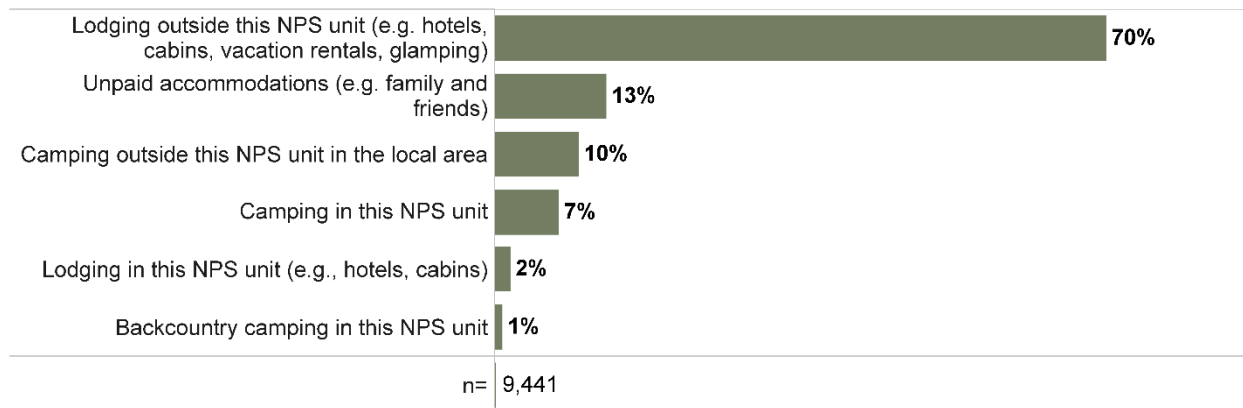


Figure 5. Accommodation types used by overnight visitors within NPS units and in the local area surrounding it.

- Many NPS units do not have overnight accommodations inside the site and rely on nearby communities and properties for overnight stays. Of the 24 units sampled during the 2023 season, 13 parks (54%) offer some form of in-park accommodations, while 11 units do not offer any overnight stays within the site.
- Just under three-fourths of overnight respondents (70%) stayed in lodging outside of the NPS units sampled (e.g. hotels, cabins, vacation rentals, glamping [high-end camping]).
- This was followed in prevalence by other unpaid accommodations (13%), camping outside the NPS unit sampled (10%), and camping inside the NPS unit sampled (7%).
- Only 2% of respondents stayed in lodging within NPS units (Note: only six of the 24 units sampled during the 2023 season offer lodging).
- Similarly, only 1% of respondents camped in the backcountry within NPS units (Note: only seven of the 24 units sampled during the 2023 season permit backcountry camping.)

Respondents were then asked to indicate the number of nights they spent or would spend in each accommodation type (Figure 6).

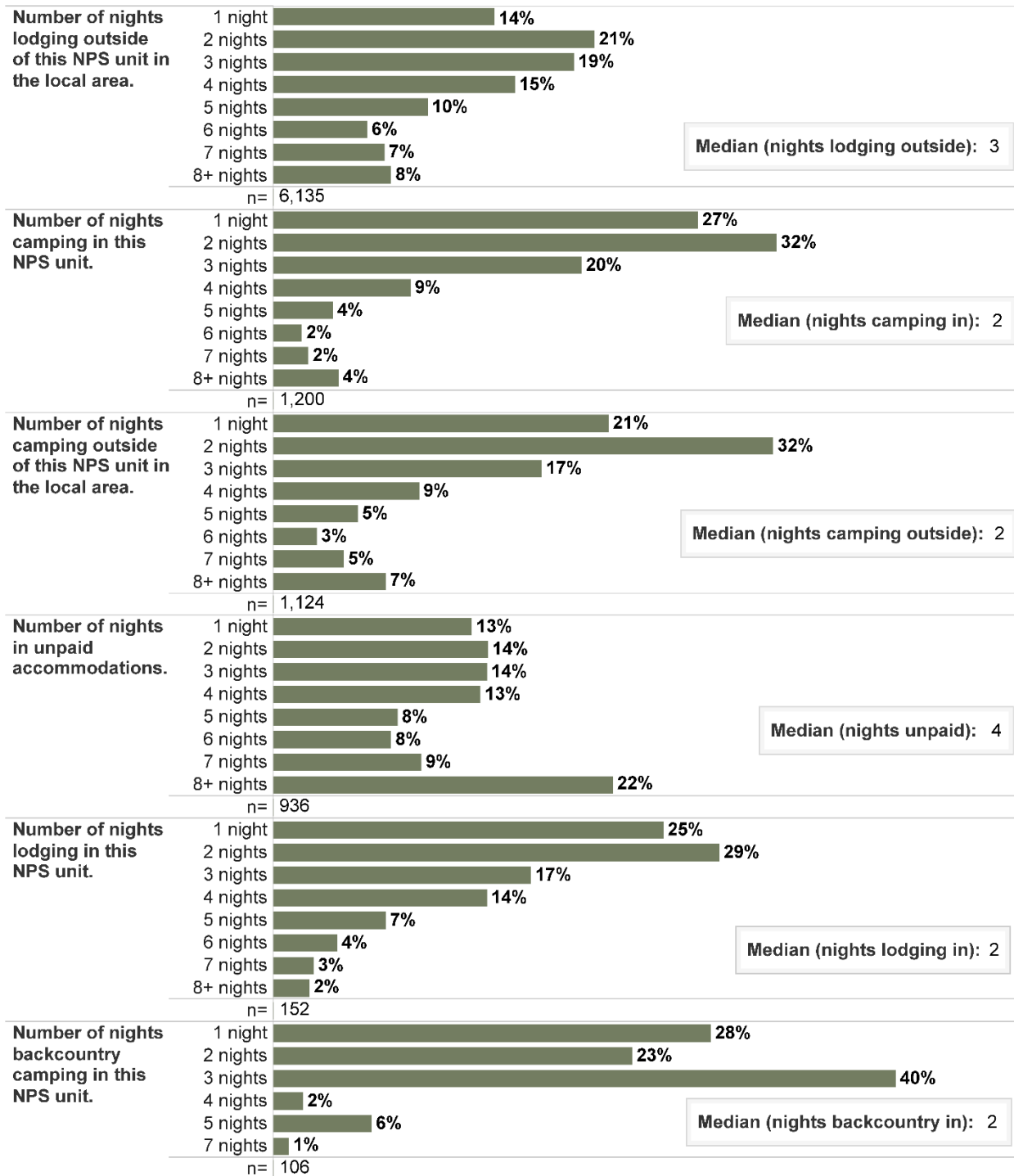


Figure 6. Number of nights spent within NPS units and in the local area surrounding it, by accommodation type. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 9.

- Among the 70% of overnight respondents who stayed in lodging outside of NPS units (per Figure 5), median length of stay is three nights.

- Among the 13% of overnight respondents who stayed in unpaid accommodations outside of NPS units (per Figure 5), median length of stay is four nights.
- Among the 10% of overnight respondents who camped outside of NPS units (per Figure 5), median length of stay is three nights, with most staying two nights.
- Among the 7% of overnight respondents who camped inside NPS units (per Figure 5), median length of stay is two nights. A larger share of respondents camped inside units for one night (27%) compared to outside the NPS unit (21%).
- Among the 2% of overnight respondents who stayed in lodging inside of NPS units (per Figure 5), median length of stay is two nights.
- Among the 1% of overnight respondents who camped in the backcountry of NPS units (per Figure 5), median length of stay is two nights.

Questions 9-11: Party Characteristics

Respondents were asked to indicate how many adults (18 or older) and children (under 18) were in their personal group during their visit to the NPS unit where they were surveyed (Figure 7). A personal group was defined as the visitor and companions with whom they visited the NPS unit, such as a spouse, family, and/or friends, but respondents were informed not to account for the larger group with whom they may have traveled, such as a school, church, scout, or tour group.

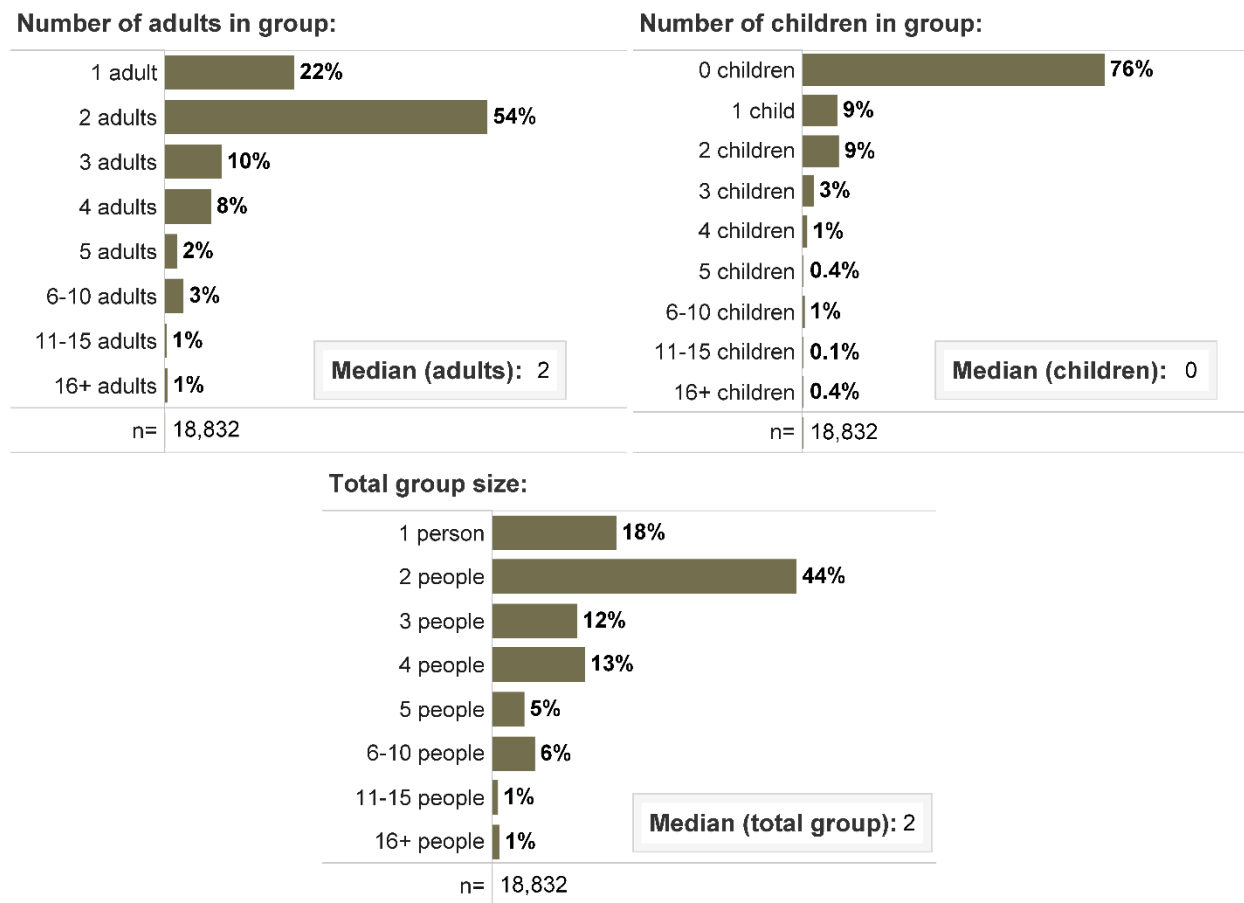


Figure 7. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group, and total group size, while visiting NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 10.

- The median number of adults per group was two. Most groups (54%) included two adults.
- Most groups (76%) did not include any children.

Respondents were then asked to provide the age of each member of their group (Figure 8). These data show the true age distribution of respondent groups sampled at NPS units.

What are the ages of each of the adults and children in your group?

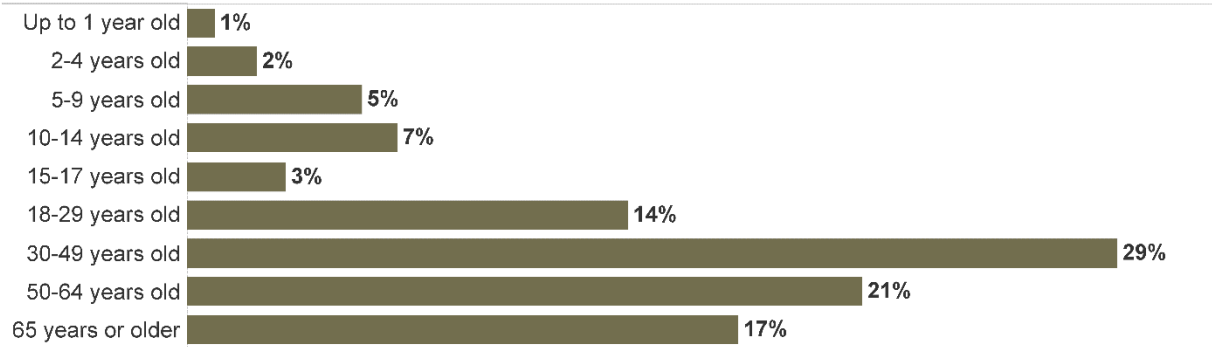


Figure 8. Age distribution of all members of respondent's personal group while visiting NPS units.

- The most common age of the adults and children in a personal group was 30-49 years old (29%), followed by 50-64 years old (21%), and 65 years or older (17%).
- Children (i.e., visitors under 18 years old) accounted for a combined total of just 18% of group members.

Questions 13-18: Park Use Characteristics

Respondents were asked to indicate which type of entrance fees applied to them personally on their most recent trip to the NPS unit where they were surveyed (Figure 9).

On this trip to this NPS unit, which one of the following entrance fees applied to you personally?

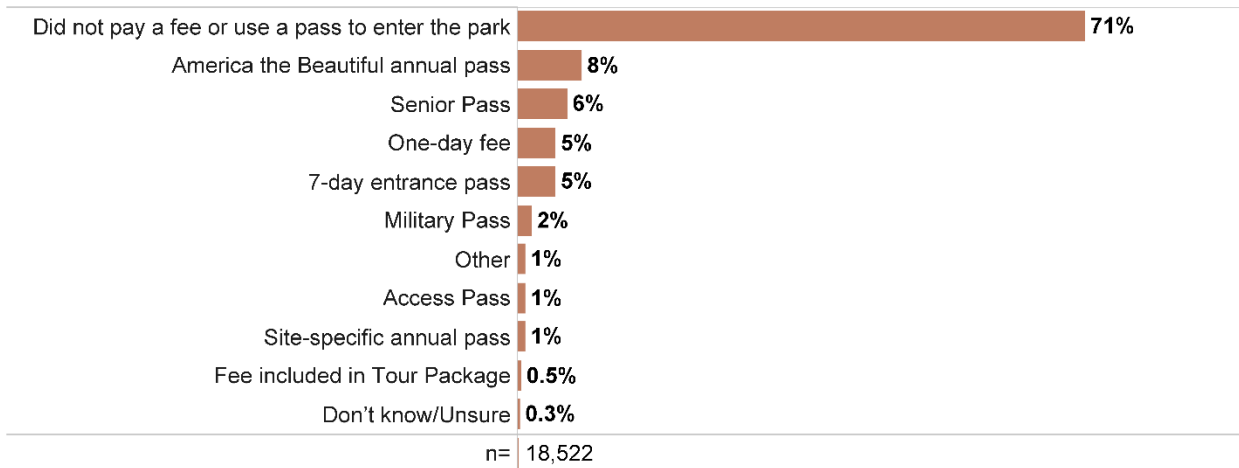


Figure 9. Entrance fees paid to enter NPS units on the most recent trip.

- This question was moved in 2023 to the intercept survey to capture all park unit types, including those that do not require a pass.

- Just under one out of ten respondents (8%) reported using an America the Beautiful annual pass, and another 8% entered using a Senior Pass, Access Pass, or Military Pass.
- In contrast, 71% of respondents reported not using any type of pass product at the NPS unit they were surveyed. This is largely due to several units sampled in 2023 that do not require paid passes to enter or use the site.

Then, respondents were asked to indicate if they planned to visit the NPS unit where they were surveyed for more than one day, and then a series of follow-up questions about the length of time they might spend in the NPS unit (Figure 10 and Table 8).

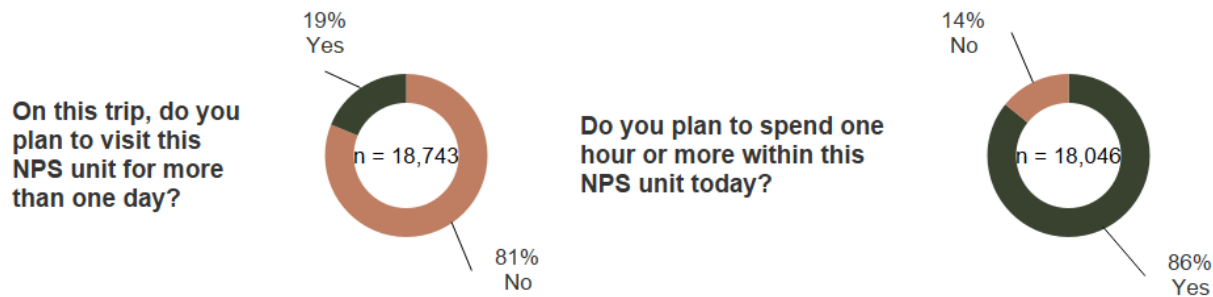


Figure 10. Length of time spent within NPS units on this trip.

Table 8. Length of time spent within NPS units on this trip.

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
[If not planning to spend one hour or more] How many minutes do you plan to spend within the NPS unit today?	2357	30
[If planning to spend one hour or more] How many hours do you plan to spend within the NPS unit today?	14989	3
[If planning to visit more than one day] How many days do you plan to spend within the NPS unit on this trip?	3993	2
[If planning to visit more than one day] On how many different days do you expect to enter the NPS unit?	3928	2

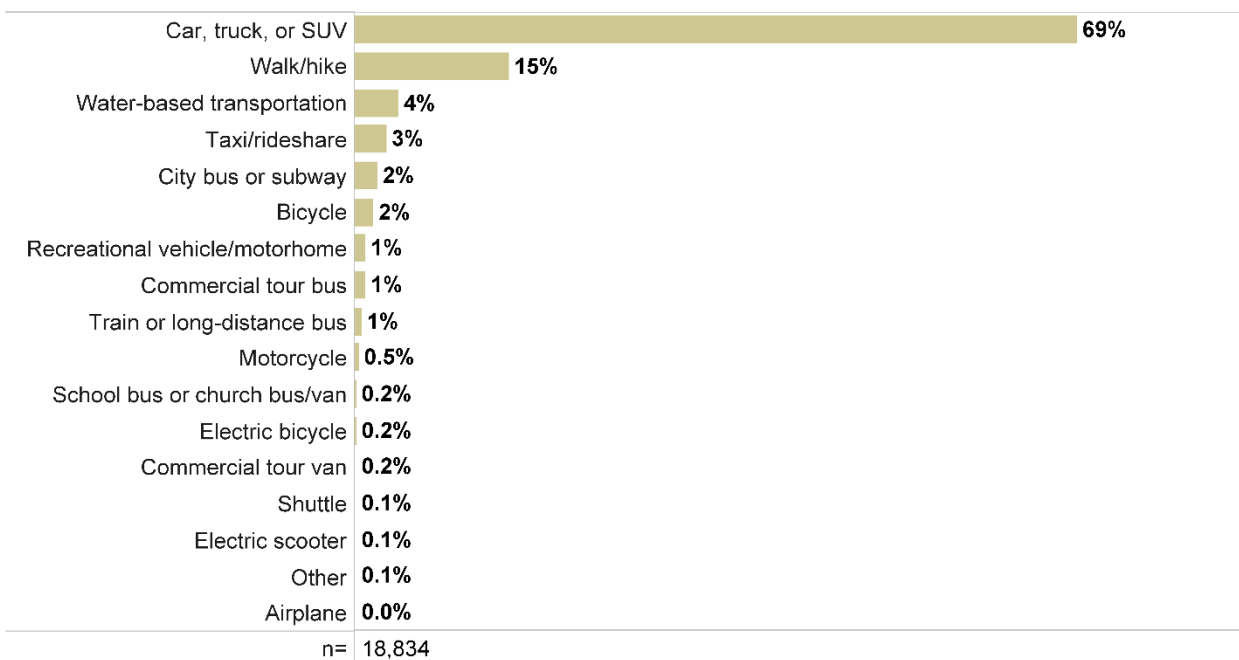
- A majority of respondents (86%) planned to spend one hour or more within the NPS unit on the day they were surveyed. Among these visitors, median length of time spent in the NPS unit “today” was three hours.
- Among the 14% of respondents who planned to spend less than an hour within the NPS unit on the day they were surveyed, the median length of anticipated visit was 30 minutes.

- Additionally, most respondents (81%) were planning to spend just a single day in the NPS unit they were surveyed on their trip. Among the 19% of respondents who planned to visit for more than one day, the median length of visit was two days.
- Those respondents who spent more than one day in the NPS unit were also asked on how many different days they expected to enter the NPS unit; the median answer was two days.

Question 19: Transportation

Respondents were asked about the form of transportation they used to enter the NPS unit on the day they were surveyed (Figure 11).

Which of the following forms of transportation did you personally use to arrive or enter this NPS unit today?



[If entered by water] Which of the following forms of water-based transportation did you use to arrive or enter this NPS unit?

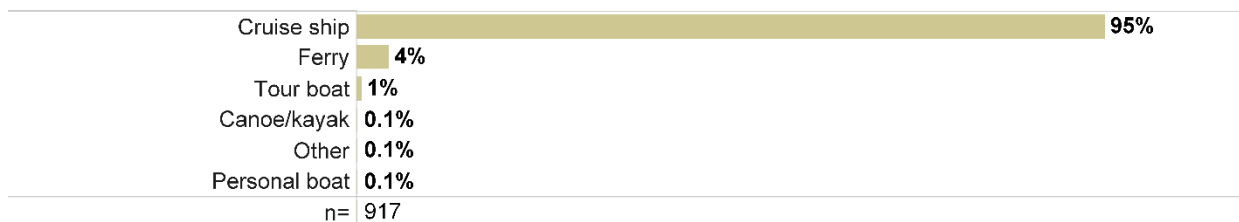


Figure 11. Form of transportation used to enter NPS units on the day of the survey.

- The majority of respondents (69%) reported that they used their car, truck, or SUV to enter the NPS unit on the day of the survey.

- This was followed distantly by walking/hiking into the NPS unit (15%) and water-based transportation (4%).

If respondents entered the NPS unit using a multi-passenger private vehicle (i.e., car, truck or SUV, recreational vehicle or motorhome, or motorcycle), they were asked to indicate how many people were traveling in or on that vehicle (Figure 12).

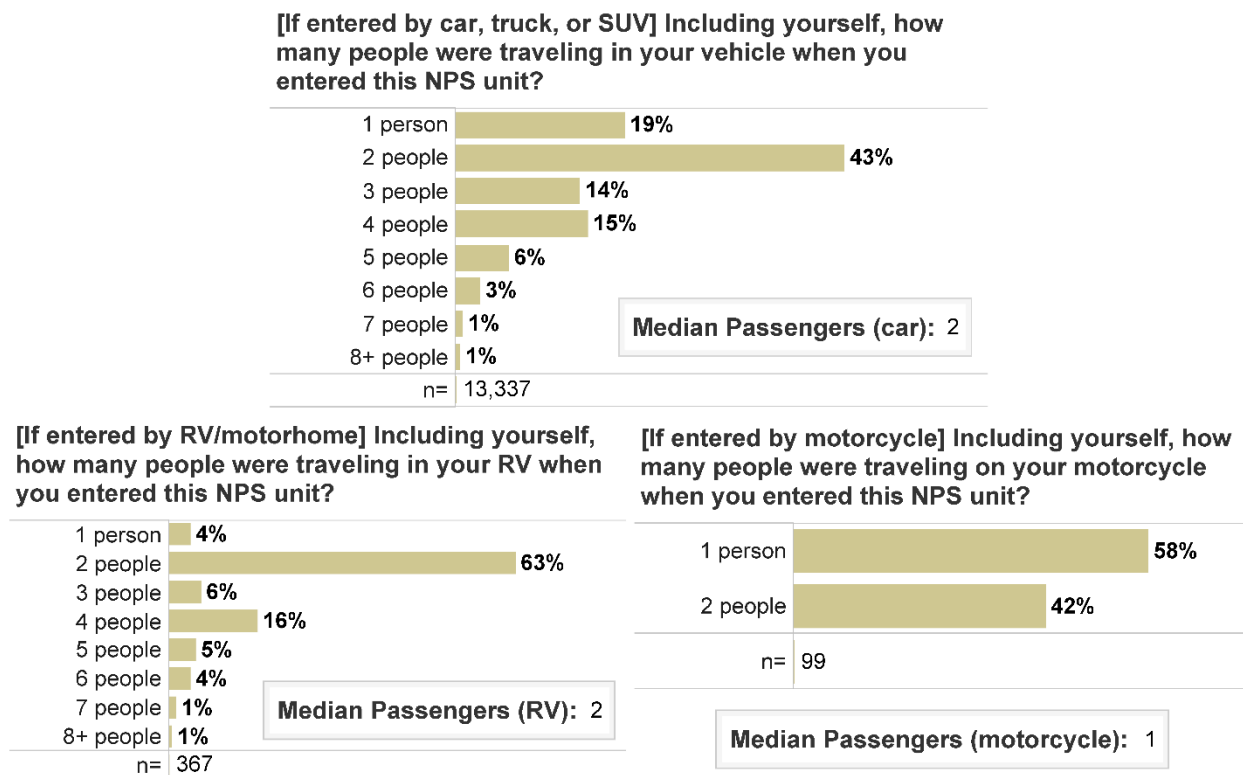


Figure 12. Number of people in or on respondent's vehicle when entering NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 11.

- Just under half (43%) of respondents traveling by car reported two people. The next most common group size was one person (19% each), followed by four people (15%).
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents entering the NPS unit by RV/motorhome reported traveling in a group of two people, followed by four people (16%) or three people (6%).
- Most motorcyclists (58%) were traveling on their own.

Question 21: Previous Visits to the NPS unit

Respondents were asked if they were first time visitors to the NPS unit where they were surveyed. Repeat visitors were then asked how many visits they have made to the NPS unit they were surveyed in the last 12 months and the last five years (Figure 13).

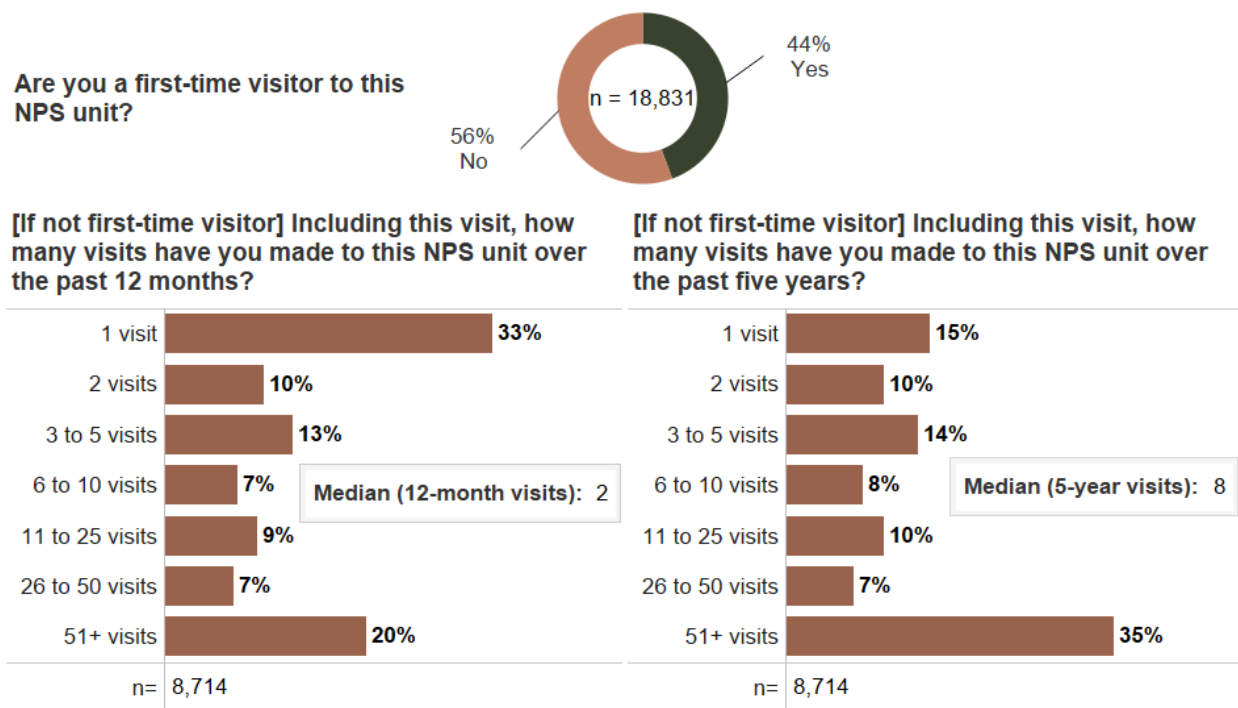


Figure 13. Previous visits to NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 12.

- Most respondents (56%) were repeat visitors to the NPS unit they were surveyed.
- Among repeat visitors, a plurality (33%) had not visited in the prior 12 months.
- However, the majority of repeat visitors (85%) had visited at least one prior time in the past five years.
- The median number of visits made in the past five years was eight, including the current trip; 52% of repeat visitors had made more than 10 visits in the past five years.

Question 22: Previous Visits to Other NPS Units

Finally, respondents were asked how many visits they made to other NPS sites over the past 12 months (Figure 14).

How many visits have you made to other NPS sites over the past 12 months?

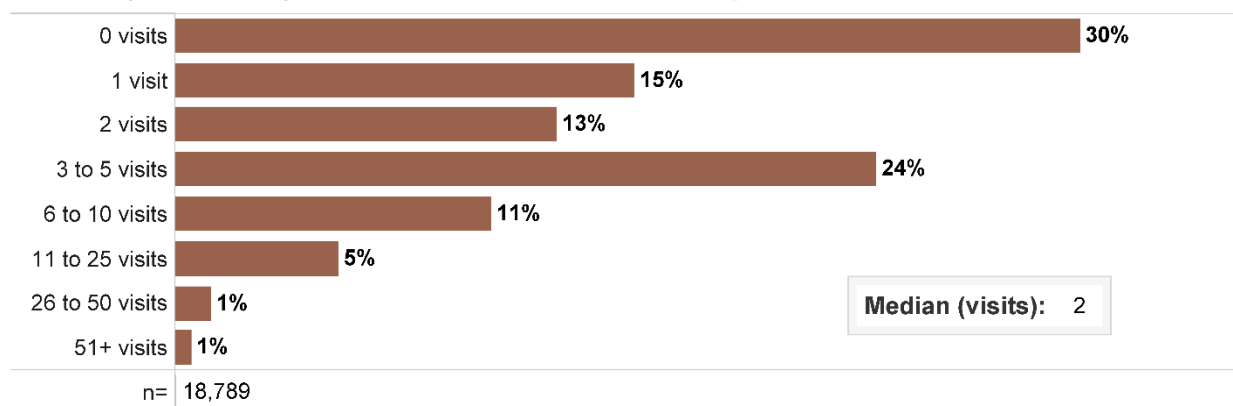


Figure 14. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 13.

- Over two-thirds of respondents (70%) had made at least one visit to other NPS site(s) in the past year.
- The median number of visits made to other NPS site(s) in the past 12 months was two, though a combined 42% had made three or more visits in the past year.

Post-trip Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 5,363 post-trip visitor surveys received by mail-back or online following fieldwork conducted in 24 NPS units in 2023. Again, caution is recommended in the interpretation of figures with sample size lower than $n=30$, and categories on some questions may not sum to 100% due to rounding differences and/or the opportunity to select more than one response option.

Questions 1–2: Information about NPS units

First, respondents were asked what sources they used to obtain information about the NPS unit they were surveyed prior to their trip, and whether they had the information they needed on their trip (Figure 15).

Prior to this trip, how did you obtain information about this NPS unit? Please mark all that apply

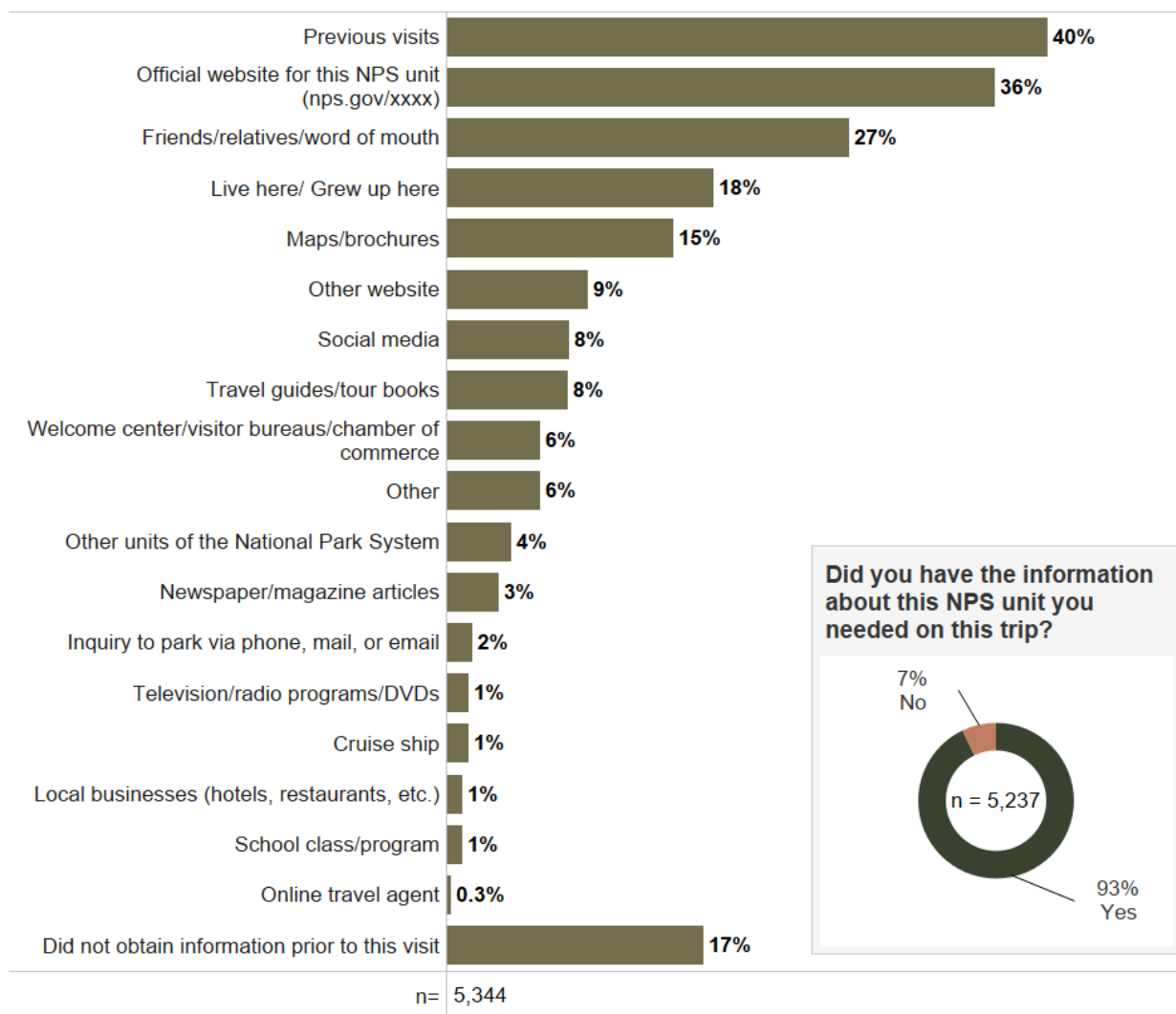


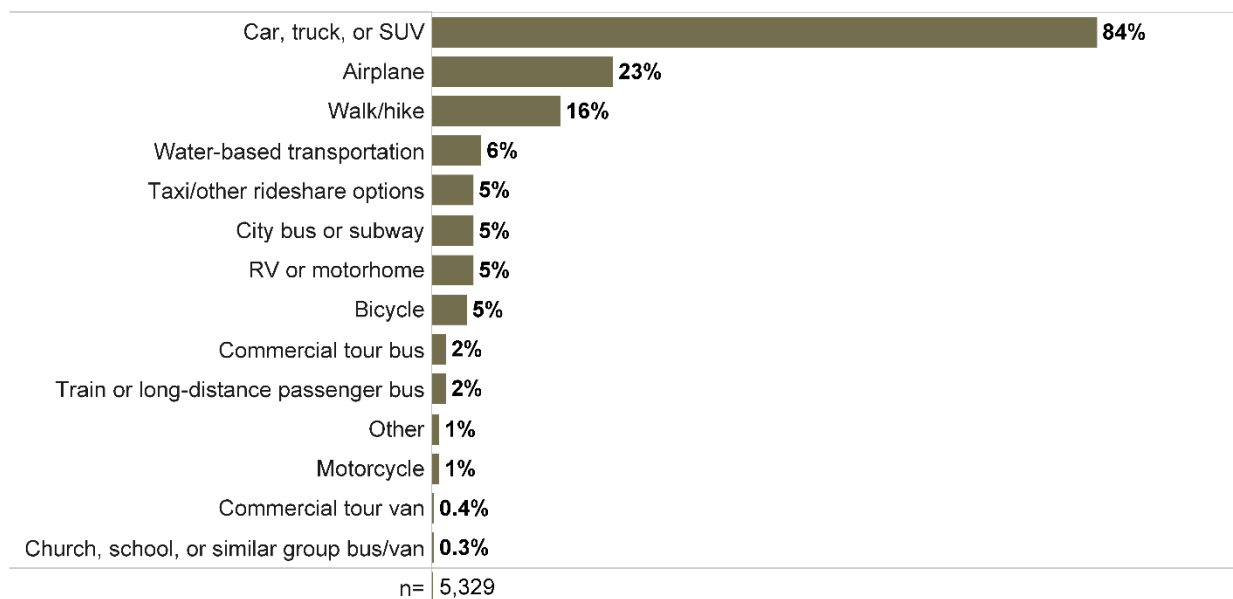
Figure 15. Sources used to obtain information about NPS units prior to the trip.

- The most used resource was previous visits (40%). The second most common source was the official NPS website for the NPS unit (36%), followed by friends/relatives/word of mouth (27%), live here/grew up here (18%), and maps/brochures (15%).
- In a follow-up question, 93% of respondents said that they had the information about the NPS unit they were surveyed that they needed on their trip, while 7% indicated that there was information that they needed but did not have.
- In an open-ended follow-up question, those who did not have the information they needed on this trip were asked to elaborate.

Question 3: Transportation

In the intercept survey, respondents indicated a mode of transportation they used to enter the NPS unit on the day of the intercept. In the post-trip survey, respondents were asked to select all forms of transportation they personally used to travel from their home to the NPS unit on their trip (Figure 16).

Please list all forms of transportation you personally used to travel from your home to this NPS unit on this trip. Please mark all that apply



[If used water-based transportation] Type(s) used. Please mark all that apply

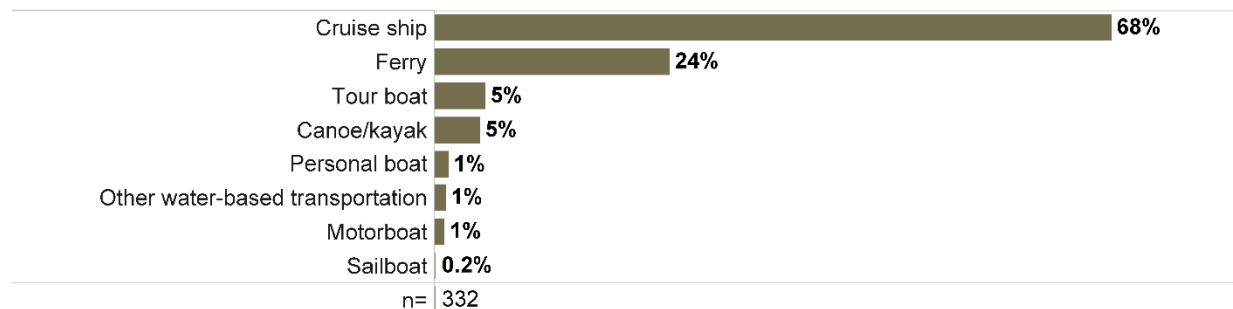


Figure 16. Forms of transportation used to travel from home to NPS units on the recent trip.

- Nearly all respondents (84%) used a personal vehicle, such as a car, truck, or SUV, at some point during their trip from home to the NPS unit.
- The second most common mode of travel was airplane (23%), followed by walking/hiking (16%).

Question 4: Travel Party Composition

Respondents were asked what type of group they were with during their visit to the NPS unit on the day of the survey (Figure 17).

What type of group were you with, during your visit to this NPS unit on the day you were contacted for this survey?

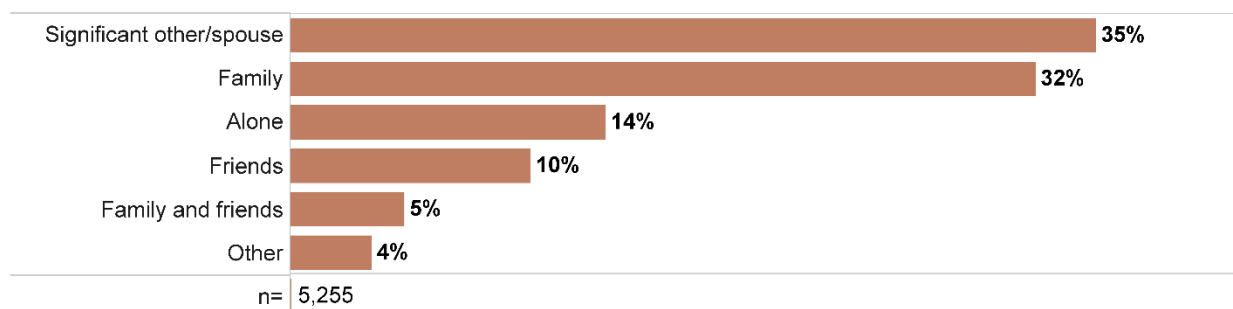


Figure 17. Travel party composition during visit.

- Over a third of respondents (35%) visited the NPS unit with their significant other or spouse on the day of the survey.
- Just under a third of respondents (32%) explored the NPS unit with their family, and another 14% visited the NPS unit alone.

Questions 11-13: Trip Characteristics

Respondents were asked if they visited other National Park Service sites on their trip away from home (Figure 18).

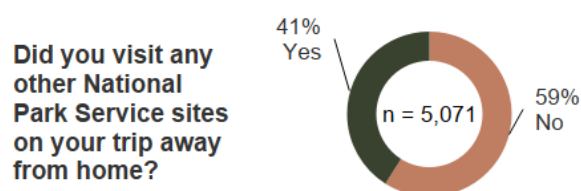
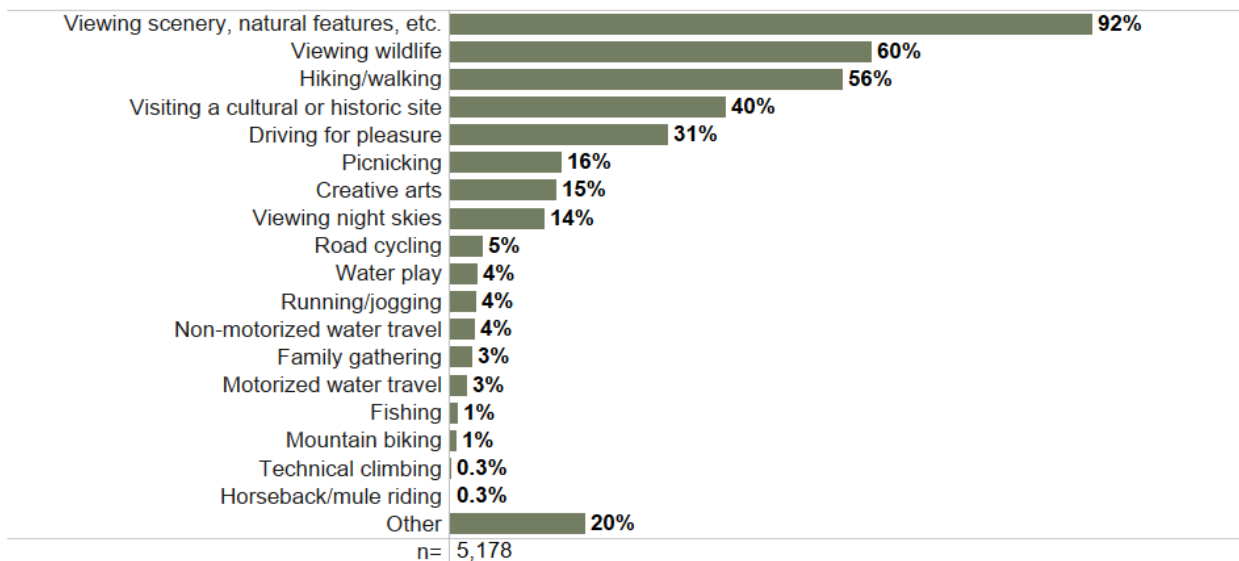


Figure 18. NPS sites visited on trip away from home.

- Under a half (41%) of all respondents had visited other NPS sites on their trip, while 59% identified the NPS unit they were surveyed at as the only NPS site they visited while away from home.
- In an open-ended follow-up question, those who had visited other NPS sites on their trip were asked to list which one(s).

Survey respondents were then asked to identify all activities that they participated in while visiting NPS units, and which of those was their primary activity (Figure 19).

On this trip, in which of the following activities did you personally participate in while visiting this NPS unit? Please mark all that apply



And which was your primary activity during your visit to this NPS unit on the day you were contacted for this survey?

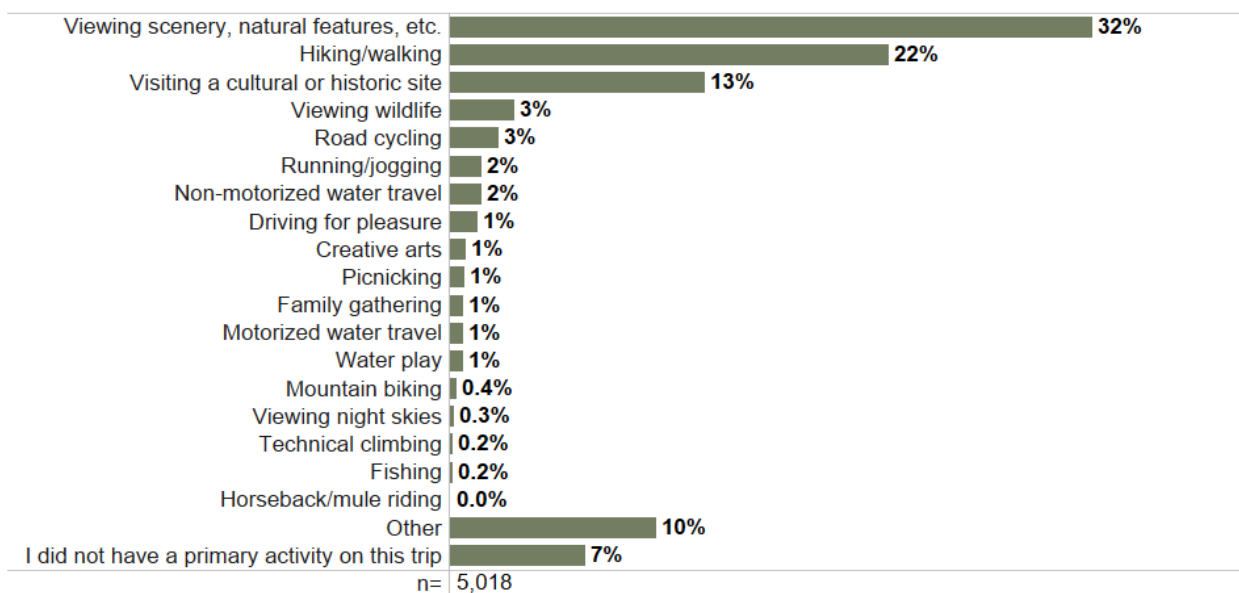


Figure 19. Participation in activities at NPS units.

- Almost all respondents reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (92%), and a majority reported viewing wildlife (60%) and hiking/walking (56%).

- Fishing, mountain biking, technical climbing, and horseback/mule riding were all uncommon activities (reported by 1% or fewer of respondents).
- Most respondents (32%) reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. as their primary activity, followed by hiking/walking (22%).
- One in five respondents (20%) reported that they participated in “other” activities, which, in addition to activities outside those listed above, included NPS activities unique to that site (i.e., visit a farm/farm experience, train excursions, airplane viewing, etc.).
- Notably, while nearly everyone reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. during their trip (92%), only around one-third respondents (32%) identified this as their primary activity.

Questions 14–15: Reasons to Visit

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of various reasons to visit the NPS unit where they were surveyed on their trip and were then asked which of those was the most important reason for them to visit that unit (Figure 20).

How important to you were each of the following reasons or motivations for visiting this NPS unit on this trip?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - Not at all important	2 - Slightly important	3 - Moderately important	4 - Very important	5 - Extremely important
To spend time with family/friends	4,938	10%	4%	11%	29%	46%
To view wildlife or natural scenery	5,009	4%	4%	14%	32%	46%
To relax	4,955	5%	7%	19%	32%	36%
To get physical exercise	5,001	7%	10%	24%	29%	30%
To visit a National Park Service site	4,964	15%	12%	21%	24%	27%
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	4,951	13%	12%	24%	29%	23%
To learn more about American history and culture	4,961	14%	16%	23%	26%	21%
To learn more about nature	4,895	14%	17%	25%	26%	17%
To experience solitude	4,892	26%	18%	24%	20%	13%
To view dark night sky/stars	4,659	49%	16%	17%	10%	8%
Other (if specified)	668	23%	1%	4%	13%	60%

And which was the most important reason for you to visit this NPS unit on this trip?

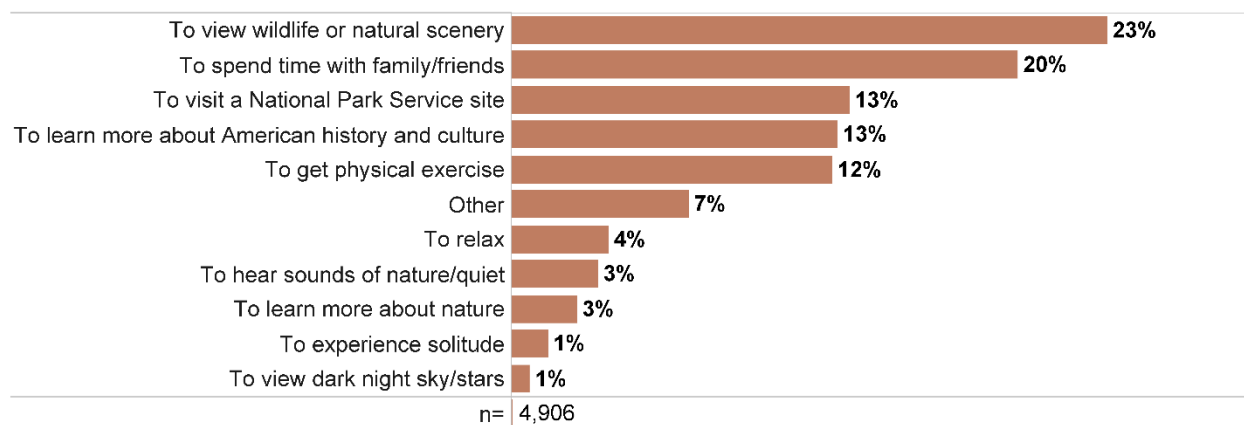


Figure 20. Reasons or motivations to visit NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 14.

- Most respondents chose “to spend time with family and friends” (46%) and “to view wildlife or natural scenery” (46%) as extremely important reasons for their trip to NPS units.
- Other important reasons rated were “to relax” and “to get physical exercise” (36% and 30% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- The most common response about the most important reason was “to view wildlife or natural scenery” (23%), followed by “to spend time with family/friends” (20%), and “to visit a National Park Service site” (13%).

Questions 16–18: Programs, Services, and Learning

Respondents were asked to identify all programs and services in which they personally participated in the NPS unit they were surveyed during their trip (Figure 21).

On this trip, in which of the following programs and services did you personally participate within this NPS unit? Please mark all that apply

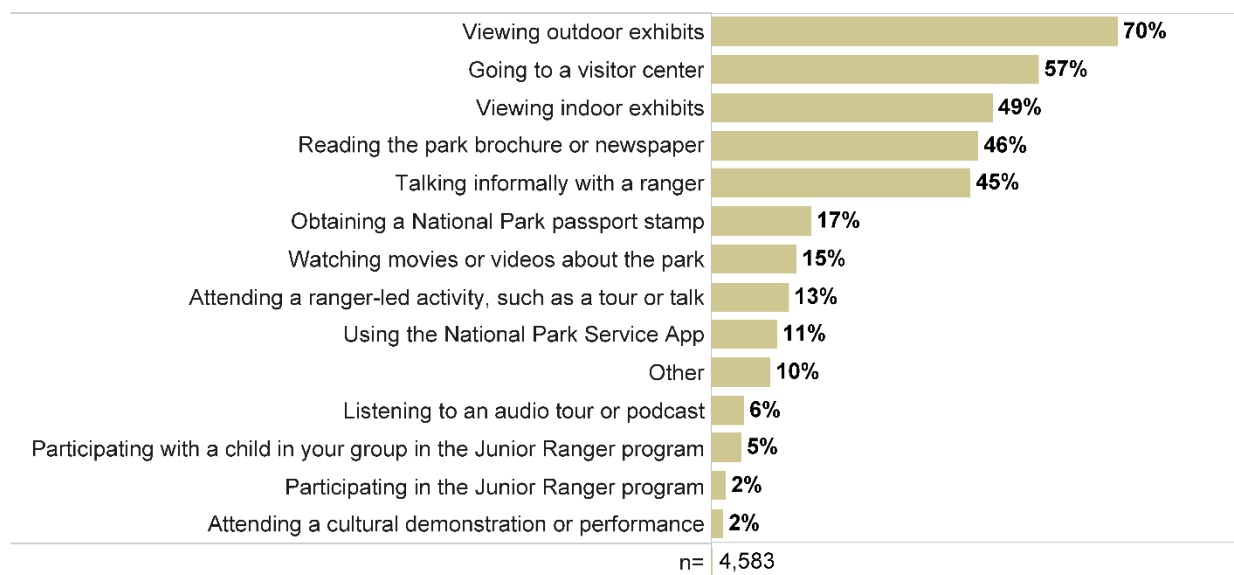


Figure 21. Participation in programs at NPS units.

- The two most-used programs were viewing outdoor exhibits and going to a visitor center, with 70% and 57% of respondents reporting participating in each of them, respectively.
- Several other programs were engaged in by just under half of respondents: viewing indoor exhibits (49%), reading the NPS unit brochure or newspaper (46%), or talking informally with a ranger (45%).

Two follow-up questions asked if respondents learned anything from park unit staff, programs, and/or exhibits about American history, nature, and/or culture, and what specific subjects they would like to learn about in the future (Figure 22).

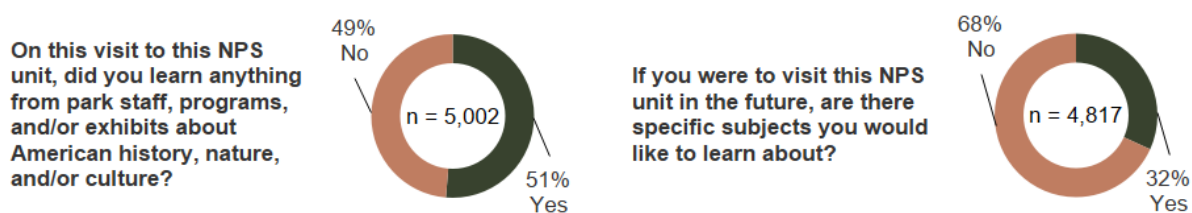


Figure 22. Learning in NPS units.

- Over half of respondents (51%) reported that they learned something from park unit staff, programs, and/or exhibits about American history, nature, and/or culture.
- Nearly a third of respondents (32%) reported that if they were to visit the NPS unit in the future, there are specific subjects they would like to learn about.
- Respondents who said yes to either of these two questions were asked to elaborate.

Questions 19–20: Use of Devices

Two survey questions were focused on the use of electronic devices, their importance, and the quality of service provided. First, respondents were asked which personal electronic devices they used while in the NPS unit they were surveyed (Figure 23).

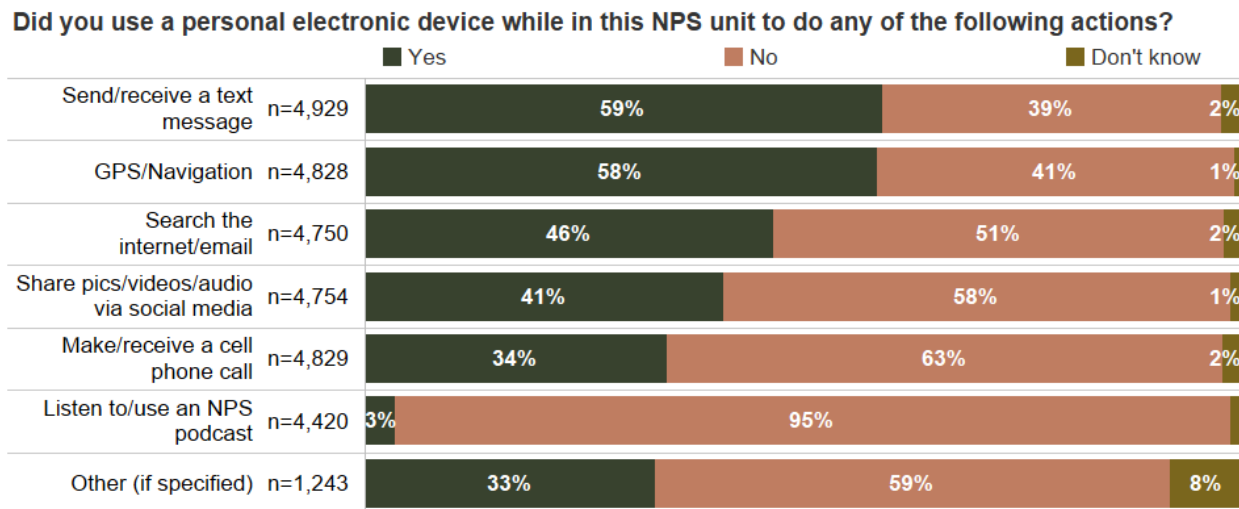


Figure 23. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 15.

- Over half of respondents (59%) reported using their personal device to send/receive a text message, and about the same (58%) reported using it for GPS/navigation.
- Conversely, only 3% of respondents listened to or used an NPS podcast.

Then, respondents were asked to rate both the importance of each of these electronic device uses (Figure 24), and the quality of their service (Figure 25).

How important to you was it during your visit to this NPS unit to use personal electronic devices to do each of the following?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - Not at all important	2 - Slightly important	3 - Moderately important	4 - Very important	5 - Extremely important
Send/receive a text message	4,883	26%	18%	23%	18%	15%
GPS/Navigation	4,831	25%	8%	16%	21%	29%
Search the internet/email	4,800	36%	18%	23%	13%	10%
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	4,769	50%	19%	17%	8%	6%
Make/receive a cell phone call	4,863	34%	18%	21%	14%	13%
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	4,539	72%	13%	10%	3%	2%
Other (if specified)	793	70%	4%	5%	6%	14%

Categories sorted in descending order by percent answering "Yes" to "Did you use a personal electronic device while in the park to do any of the following actions?" (With "Other" anchored at bottom)

Figure 24. The importance of the use of personal electronic devices while visiting NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 16.

- The most important device uses were GPS/navigation and sending/receiving a text message (29% and 15% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- Listening to and using an NPS podcast was rated as extremely important only by 2% of respondents, and not at all important by 72% of respondents.

How would you rate the quality of service to do each of the following?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - No service	2 - Poor	3 - Average	4 - Good	5 - Very good
Send/receive a text message	3,130	8%	14%	21%	24%	34%
GPS/Navigation	3,024	6%	10%	20%	26%	38%
Search the internet/email	2,836	11%	16%	21%	23%	29%
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	2,227	12%	14%	20%	22%	32%
Make/receive a cell phone call	2,690	10%	15%	21%	21%	31%
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	1,165	22%	15%	20%	16%	26%
Other (if specified)	367	19%	10%	19%	15%	37%

Categories sorted in descending order by percent answering "Yes" to "Did you use a personal electronic device while in the park to do any of the following actions?" (With "Other" anchored at bottom)

Figure 25. Quality of service for personal electronic devices while visiting NPS units. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 17.

- GPS/navigation was rated as very good or good by 38% and 26% of respondents, respectively. However, 6% of respondents reported that they had no service for this.
- Under a fifth of respondents (ranged from 6% to 22%, depending on the service) reported that they also had no service to use any of the actions presented.
- In general, most respondents rated their use of most electronic options as good to very good. All options except listening/using an NPS podcast had over 50% responding with either option.

Question 21: Physical Difficulties

Respondents were asked if anyone in their personal group had a physical condition that made it difficult to access or participate in activities or services during their visit to the NPS unit they were surveyed. If such a condition was identified, respondents were asked to specify the type of difficulty (Figure 26).

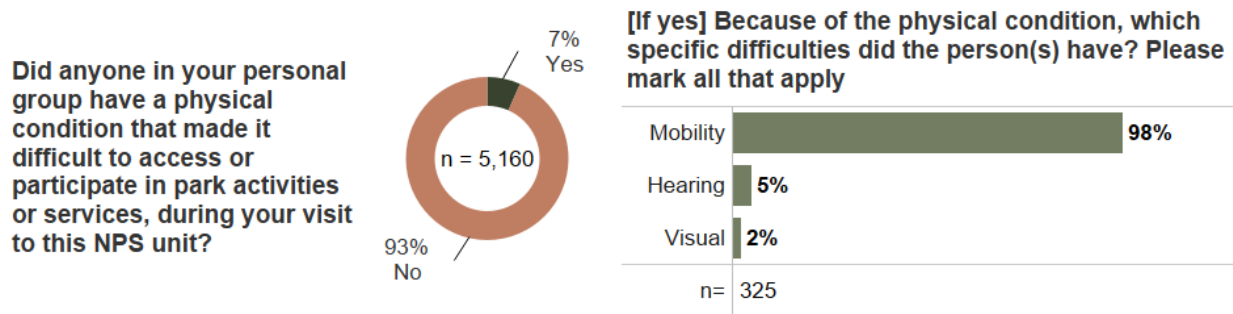


Figure 26. Physical difficulties while visiting NPS units.

- Most respondents (93%) reported that no members of their personal group had a physical condition that made it difficult to access or participate in activities or services during their visit to the NPS unit they were surveyed.
- Among the 7% of respondents who identified at least one difficulty, 98% reported mobility issues in their group, with small portions also reporting hearing and/or visual difficulties.

Questions 24-27: Visitor Experience

Respondents were asked if their visit to the NPS unit met their expectations (Figure 27).

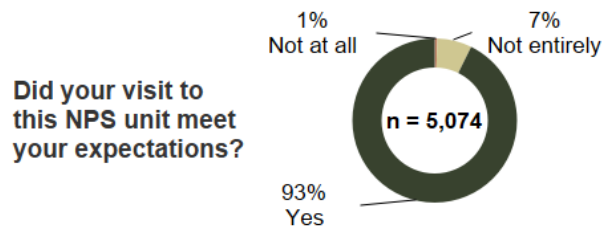


Figure 27. Meeting visitor expectations at NPS units.

- Most respondents (93%) reported that their visit to the NPS unit they were surveyed met their expectations, while 7% of respondents said it did not meet their expectations entirely, and 1% of respondents indicated that it did not meet their expectations at all.
- In an open-ended follow-up question, respondents were asked to elaborate on their responses.

Respondents were then given several statements about the NPS unit where they were surveyed and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each given statement (Figure 28).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Somewhat Disagree	3 - Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 - Somewhat Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
This NPS unit is a safe place to visit	5,001	1%	2%	3%	15%	79%
Historical and cultural features in this NPS unit are well maintained/preserved	4,588	1%	4%	12%	32%	50%
Vandalism and crime are not a problem at this NPS unit	3,936	5%	11%	22%	19%	42%
Natural resources in this NPS unit are in pristine condition	4,865	2%	8%	16%	35%	39%
Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors' experience at this NPS unit	4,468	27%	25%	27%	14%	7%
This NPS unit is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities	3,404	22%	26%	31%	16%	5%
This NPS unit is too crowded	5,052	28%	27%	26%	16%	4%
The entrance fee for this NPS unit is too high	2,281	43%	17%	29%	8%	3%

Figure 28. Rating the NPS park unit experience. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 18.

- From all the statements listed, “This NPS unit is a safe place to visit”, “Historical and cultural features in this NPS unit are well maintained/preserved”, and “Natural resources in this NPS

unit are in pristine condition” received the most consensus from respondents (94%, 82%, and 74% of respondents, respectively, strongly or somewhat agreed with these statements).

- Conversely, negative statements such as “The entrance fee for this NPS unit is too high” and “This NPS unit is too crowded” received the least support, with only a little over 10% and 20% of respondents either somewhat or strongly agreeing with these statements, respectively.

Next, respondents were asked to rate the quality of park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in the NPS unit they were surveyed at (Figure 29).

How would you rate the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in this NPS unit?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - Very poor	2 - Poor	3 - Average	4 - Good	5 - Very good
Outdoor recreation	3,501	0.3%	1%	7%	24%	68%
Assistance from park employees	3,760	1%	2%	7%	23%	67%
Value for entrance fee paid	2,133	0.1%	1%	12%	23%	64%
Ranger programs	1,405	2%	2%	11%	23%	62%
Park map or brochure	4,036	1%	1%	8%	29%	61%
Visitor Center	3,952	1%	2%	11%	27%	60%
Learning about nature, history, or culture	4,114	1%	2%	10%	29%	58%
Walkways, trails, and roads	4,881	1%	2%	9%	32%	57%
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	4,313	0.3%	2%	13%	33%	52%
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	1,956	1%	3%	13%	39%	44%
Restrooms	4,313	2%	6%	18%	34%	40%
Commercial services in the park	2,423	3%	10%	27%	32%	29%
Other services (if specified)	206	11%	10%	14%	20%	45%

Figure 29. Rating the quality of specific NPS unit facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 19.

- Over half of respondents (ranging from 52% to 68%) rated outdoor recreation, assistance from park unit employees, value for entrance fee paid, ranger programs, park map or brochure, visitor centers, learning about nature, history, or culture, walkways, trails, and roads, and exhibits as very good.
- Of those who used, campgrounds and/or picnic areas, restrooms, and commercial services in the park unit, fewer than half of respondents rated them as very good.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate overall quality of the NPS unit facilities, visitor services, and recreation opportunities (Figure 30).

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in this NPS unit?

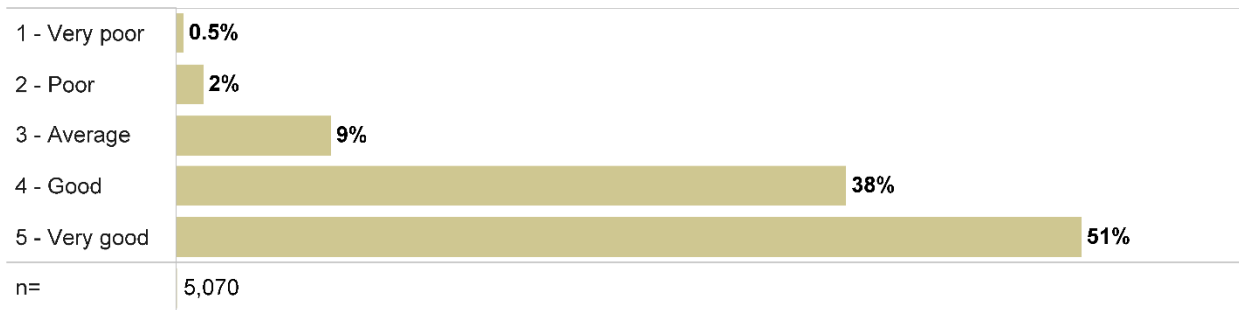


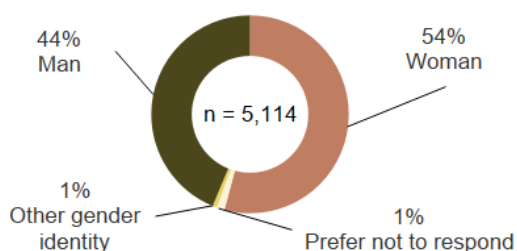
Figure 30. Rating overall quality of NPS unit facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

- About half of respondents (51%) rated the quality of the NPS unit facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in NPS units as very good, and another 38% rated them as good.
- Almost 90% of respondents rated the overall quality as very good or good.

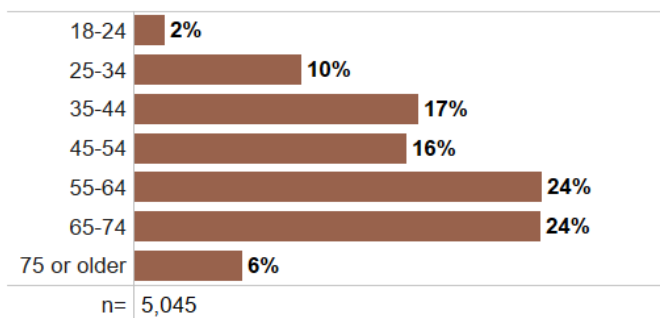
Questions 30-38: Background/Demographics

In the final section of the post-trip survey, respondents were asked various questions about their personal and household demographics. Figure 31 depicts descriptive statistics for respondent gender, age, and education.

What is your gender?



What is your age?



What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

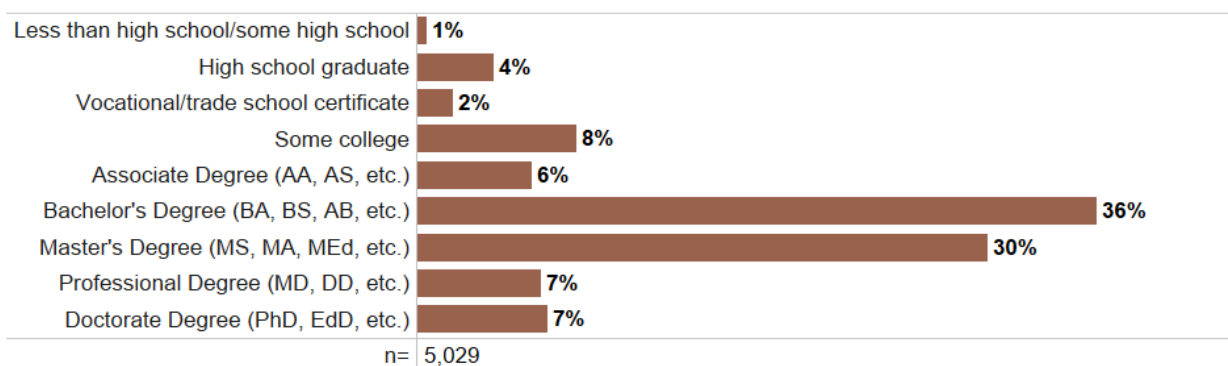
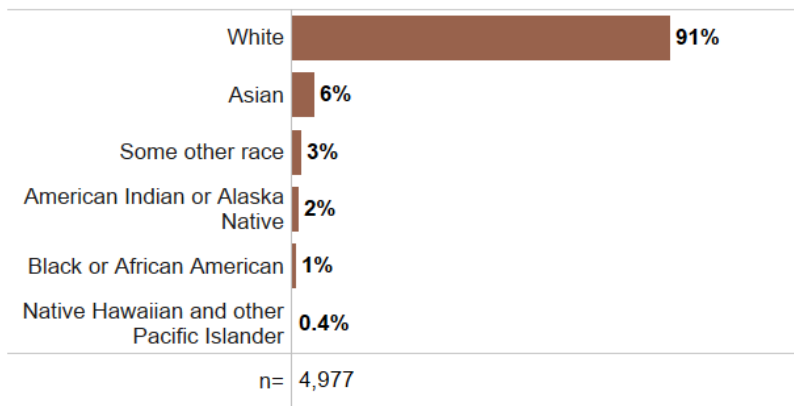


Figure 31. Respondent demographics: gender, age, and level of education.

- Post-trip survey respondents were slightly more likely to be women than men (54% vs 44%). Another 1% had another gender identity, while 1% preferred not to disclose their gender identity.
- The most common age categories were 55-64 (24%), 65-74 (24%), and 35-44 (17%). The least represented age group were 18-24 (only 2% of the participants surveyed).
- Most survey respondents reported obtaining higher education, with a combined 80% having some college degree, and a plurality (44%) holding a master's degree or higher.

Respondents were also asked to identify their race(s) and if they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin (Figure 32).

What is your race? Please mark all that apply



Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin?

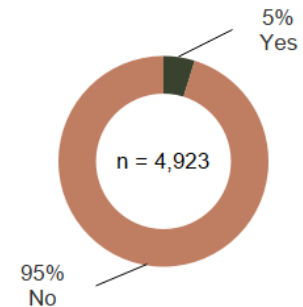
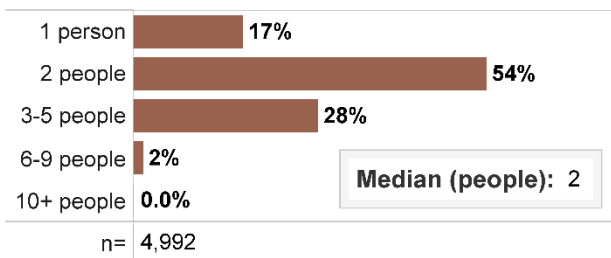


Figure 32. Respondent demographics: race and ethnicity.

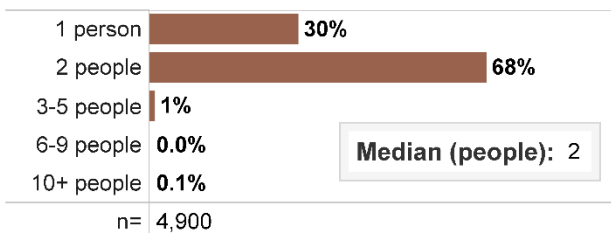
- Most respondents were White (91%) and not of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (95%)
- Asians were the second most common racial group, accounting for 6% of respondents.

At a household level, respondents were asked to report annual income and number of contributors, as well as how many people (adults and children) live in their household (Figure 33).

Including yourself, how many people are in your household?



Including yourself, how many people contribute to your annual household income?



Which category best represents your annual household income?

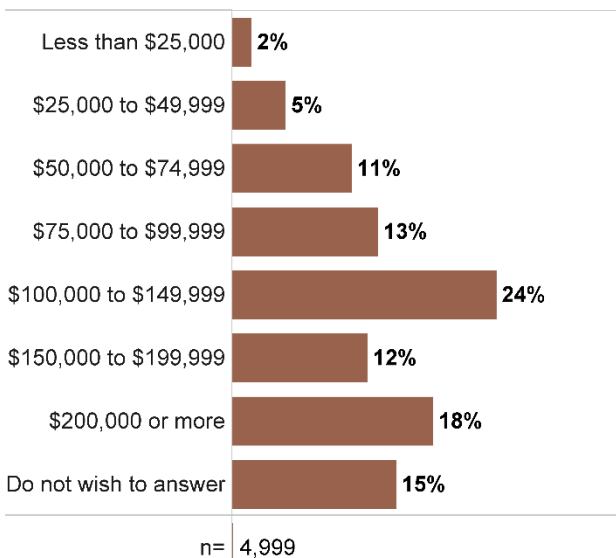


Figure 33. Household demographics: annual household income and household size. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 20.

- Over half of respondents (54%) had two people in their household, followed by three to five people (28%).

- In addition to obtaining higher education, visitors surveyed at NPS units also reported relatively high income levels. About a quarter of respondents (24%) reported that their annual household income was between \$100,000 to \$149,999, and 18% earned \$200,000 or more.
- Most respondents (68%) came from a dual-income household.

Finally, respondents were asked about their language preference (Figure 34).

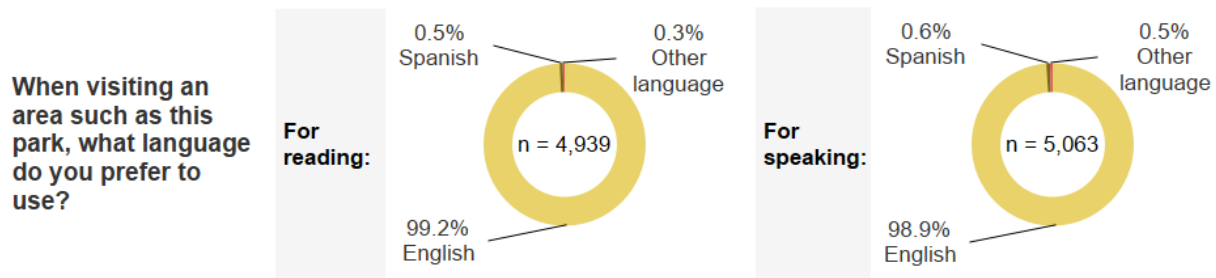


Figure 34. Respondent's language preference.

- While 5% of respondents were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish, the overwhelming majority of respondents (99.2%) preferred to use English both for reading and speaking when visiting an NPS unit.
- Under 1% of respondents preferred Spanish for either reading and/or speaking.

Discussion and Conclusions

The following section highlights the key findings from the 2023 SEM Visitor Survey conducted at 24 park units across the United States. Because this represents only the second year of data collection for such a comprehensive study, the 2023 SEM Visitor Survey results will form the baseline for future studies to be compared against and further analysis to be conducted. At present these results could be compared with individual park unit studies and some insights from the Comprehensive Survey of the American Public. Future iterations of the SEM Visitor Survey are discussed within this section as well.

National Findings

The 2023 SEM Visitor Study has continued to build an expanding source of insight into national-level topics that were previously challenging to estimate through individual park unit studies of different methods and with varied questions. Since 2022, this ongoing monitoring program has collected over 40,000 surveys from visitors across all NPS regions. With additional parks studied annually across the sampling stratum of the Service's diverse park types, this study improves the agency's ability to compare nationwide results through time. This year's findings have revealed a wealth of interesting, useful, and positive information provided by park unit visitors. Similar to 2022, results from visitors to NPS units were positive overall. However, national-level results are sensitive to the type of parks selected in each year's sample. More heavily visited parks (i.e. Golden Gate NRA in 2023 and Rocky Mountain NP in 2022) represent a larger sample of peak visitors, skewing national results towards the visitor profiles of these larger park types. This is particularly true for park location differences, such as state of origin, but this is less influential for more general components. Aggregation of multiple years of data will improve representativeness for all question types, including spatially dependent questions, through time.

Consistent with past results, visitor services and key visitor experience statements continue to be ranked very high across the NPS. Respondents overwhelmingly perceive NPS sites as safe, peaceful, and scenic places to spend quality time with friends and family. This perception further reaffirms the role that park units have played for decades, confirming that visitors still recognize and value these qualities. Furthermore, respondents believe that the sites are well-preserved culturally, historically, and naturally. This attests to the agency's dual mission of ensuring enjoyment for people while preserving our precious resources, a balance that respondents seem to acknowledge. Additionally, respondents expressed overwhelmingly positive views about the quality of facilities and services offered across the sampled park units. While continuous improvements are always beneficial, visitors consistently rated the existing offerings very positively.

Regarding trip characteristics, a significant proportion of respondents indicated that they were visiting a particular site for at least the second time. The high percentage of repeat visitation demonstrates that park units continue to attract and retain visitors. However, it is crucial to recognize that first-time visitors still represent a considerable portion of visitors. This year, just under half of all respondents were first-time visitors to that particular park unit. This emphasizes the need to provide a high-quality experience for new visitors, introducing them to what park units have to offer and

acclimating them to the park system. Striking a balance between meeting the expectations of repeat visitors and catering to the needs of newcomers is a key strategy for upholding the agency's mission.

Once again, most visitors did not feel crowded at the sampled park units during the study period. This perception may vary by park unit and type, but it confirms for the second year in a row that visitors are having a genuinely positive experience at most units. While addressing perceptions of crowding remains a priority at certain popular locations, findings continue to suggest that this can be a very unit-specific challenge. This may warrant further, more topic-specific research in the future.

The results from this study extend across the agency, serving as a foundation for ongoing monitoring of visitor perceptions and service improvements across the country. This year's study represents a continued commitment to socioeconomic monitoring, providing the most detailed data on park visitors to this point. The data collected will continue to be analyzed in various ways, from examining open-ended comments to conducting crosstabulation and segmentation of visitor types. This rich dataset will provide ongoing benefits to the agency and future research endeavors. As this report represents the second year of comprehensive data collection for the SEM Visitor Survey, the program continues to grow, collecting results to be used well into the future. Producing an expanding wealth of data means data that is increasingly representative of NPS visitation across not just park type and sampling strata but also location and region.

Future Research and Reports

Future research is a pivotal aspect of the SEM Visitor Survey. The third year of data collection for the survey commenced in February 2024, and intercept surveys will be finished in the fall of 2024 across 24 park units. Post-trip surveys will continue to be received through the fall of 2024. Once the 2024 dataset is finalized, a similar report summarizing findings from the next set of representative park units will be produced.

Additionally, a meta-analysis of the SEM Visitor Survey is currently underway as of September 2024. This research seeks to better understand the current performance and question efficacy of the SEM Visitor Survey, as well as better understand the differences between visitor response by key characteristics (i.e. park unit strata, visitor type, etc.). The results of this research will help inform any necessary refinements to the SEM Visitor Survey, including items such as modifications to current methodologies or survey design updates and better understand of best practices for aggregating data over time spans that produce the data most representative of the service as a whole for various question types.

Looking ahead, the SEM Visitor Survey has the opportunity to explore trends through time and make comparisons across different grouping categories, such as by region, size, and park unit type. This opportunity to aggregate multiple years of data could assist in addressing sampling concerns and limitations on representativeness of the sample across these various groupings. Additional weighting considerations will be necessary for multi-year analyses. While national-level statistics provide annual insight for comparison, the accumulation and verification of sufficient data within areas of interest will produce datasets representative of regions, park designations, and more.

References

National Park Service (NPS). 2023a. 2023 socioeconomic monitoring of National Park Service Visitors: Visitor intercept survey. <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2305803>

National Park Service (NPS). 2023b. 2023 socioeconomic monitoring of National Park Service Visitors: Visitor post-trip survey. <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2305804>

Appendix A: Accessible Tables

This appendix contains accessible tables with tabular data from figures found in the body of the report.

Table 9. Data from Figure 6 Number of nights spent in the local area around this NPS unit, by accommodation type.

Accommodation Type	Sample Size (n)	Median
Backcountry Camping in this NPS unit	106	2
Camping in this NPS unit	1200	2
Camping outside this NPS unit	1124	2
Lodging in this NPS unit	152	2
Lodging outside this NPS unit	6135	3
Unpaid accommodations	936	4

Table 10. Data from Figure 7. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group, and total group size, while visiting this NPS unit.

Age Category	Sample Size (n)	Median
Adults	18832	2
Children	18832	0
Total group size	18832	2

Table 11. Data from Figure 12. Number of people in respondent's vehicle when entering this NPS unit

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
[If entered by car, truck, or SUV] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your vehicle when you entered this NPS unit?	13337	2
[If entered by RV/motorhome] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your RV when you entered this NPS unit?	367	2
[If entered by motorcycle] Including yourself, how many people were traveling on your motorcycle when you entered this NPS unit?	99	1

Table 12. Data from Figure 13. Previous visits to this NPS unit.

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to this NPS unit over the past 12 months?	8714	2
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to this NPS unit over the past five years?	8714	8

Table 13. Data from Figure 14. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year.

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
How many visits have you made to other NPS sites over the past 12 months?	18789	2

Table 14. Data from Figure 20. Reasons or motivations to visit this NPS unit.

Rating Category	Sample Size (n)
To visit a National Park Service site	4964
To experience solitude	4892
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	4951
To learn more about nature	4895
To learn more about American history and culture	4961
To spend time with family/friends	4938
To get physical exercise	5001
To view wildlife or natural scenery	5009
To relax	4955
To view dark night sky/stars	4659
Other (if specified)	668

Table 15. Data from Figure 23. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting this NPS unit.

Device Use	Sample Size (n)
Make/receive a cell phone call	4829
Send/receive a text message	4929
Search the internet/email	4750
GPS/Navigation	4828
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	4754
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	4420
Other (if specified)	1243

Table 16. Data from Figure 24. The importance of the use of personal electronic devices while visiting this NPS unit.

Device Use	Sample Size (n)
Make/receive a cell phone call	4863
Send/receive a text message	4883
Search the internet/email	4800
GPS/Navigation	4831
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	4769
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	4539
Other (if specified)	793

Table 17. Data from Figure 25. Quality of service for personal electronic devices while visiting this NPS unit.

Device Use	Sample Size (n)
Make/receive a cell phone call	2690
Send/receive a text message	3130
Search the internet/email	2836
GPS/Navigation	3024
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	2227
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	1165
Other (if specified)	367

Table 18. Data from Figure 28. Rating this NPS unit experience.

Rating Category	Sample Size (n)
This NPS unit is a safe place to visit	5001
This NPS unit is too crowded	5052
Natural resources in this NPS unit are in pristine condition	4865
The entrance fee for this NPS unit is too high	2281
Vandalism and crime are not a problem at this NPS unit	3936
This NPS unit is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities	3404
Historical and cultural features in this NPS unit are well maintained/preserved	4588
Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors' experience at this NPS unit	4468

Table 19. Data from Figure 29. Rating the quality of this NPS unit facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

Rating Category	Sample Size (n)
Visitor Center	3952
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	4313
Restrooms	4313
Walkways, trails, and roads	4881
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	1956
Assistance from park employees	3760
Park map or brochure	4036
Ranger programs	1405
Value for entrance fee paid	2133
Commercial services in the park (food, lodging, gifts, rental, etc.)	2423
Other services (if specified)	206
Learning about nature, history, or culture	4114
Outdoor recreation (sightseeing, camping, bicycling, boating, hiking, etc.)	3501

Table 20. Data from Figure 33. Household demographics: annual household income and household size.

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
Including yourself, how many people are in your household?	4992	2
Including yourself, how many people contribute to your annual household income?	4900	2