



2025 Socioeconomic Research of Rocky Mountain National Park

Report on 2025 Data Collection



Visitor on her off-road hand powered mobility device visiting Rocky Mountain National Park.

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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 typically conducted visitor surveys at 24 parks per year across the United States and associated territories. However, the 2025/2026 SEM Visitor Survey study period was impacted by unexpected timing constraints that reduced the total sample from 24 to 21 parks. Rocky Mountain National Park (Rocky Mountain) was selected as one of these units for 2025 implementation. This socioeconomic monitoring at Rocky Mountain uses a two-step survey methodology to capture a representative sample of park visitors during the off-peak season of this 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 at assisting 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 park and between the park 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 each year starting in 2022 at 24 NPS units across the country per year. The total sample of parks surveyed in the 2025/2026 sampling period was reduced from 24 to 21 to accommodate unexpected time constraints. Rocky Mountain National Park (Rocky Mountain) was selected as one of the 21 units studied in the 2025 sampling period. The study aims to deepen understanding of visitor demographics and characteristics at Rocky Mountain.

This report contains the data and findings collected from the Rocky Mountain SEM Visitor Survey in Fall 2025. 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 2025 SEM Visitor Survey sampling period are 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. As a caveat, the study was conducted during the 2025 Federal lapse in appropriations starting on October 1st, 2025. However, park amenities were mostly available for visitors during that time.

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. Unique to the 2025/2026 SEM Visitor Survey study period, 11 of NPS units were surveyed during their peak season, with another 10 NPS units surveyed during their off-peak season. Rocky Mountain was surveyed during its off-peak season to more fully understand visitation patterns at Rocky Mountain in off-peak seasons.

This report does not include spending data, despite it being collected as part of the study. For information regarding visitor spending at Rocky Mountain, please visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>.

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

Methods

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

- An onsite intercept survey conducted via tablet, and

- 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 by asking these high priority questions during the intercept survey.

Study Area

The Rocky Mountain local area map is shown in Figure 1. The local area around Rocky Mountain consists of the following counties in the state of Colorado: Larimer, Weld, Grand, Boulder, Gilpin, Jefferson, Broomfield, Adams, and Denver. Within Rocky Mountain, the study area was comprised of four locations. Table 1 lists those sites and the number of onsite intercept surveys completed at each. The distribution of surveyor effort across sites was determined based on historical visitor volumes and spatial distribution across the park's key areas. Where available, Visitor Use Statistics estimates for monthly visitation at each site were used to assign surveyors proportionally to reflect visitor use patterns. Park staff were consulted prior to the study launch to confirm that these metrics accurately captured visitor flows, ensuring that sampling efforts were focused on the most popular and representative locations.

Rocky Mountain National Park Local Area Map

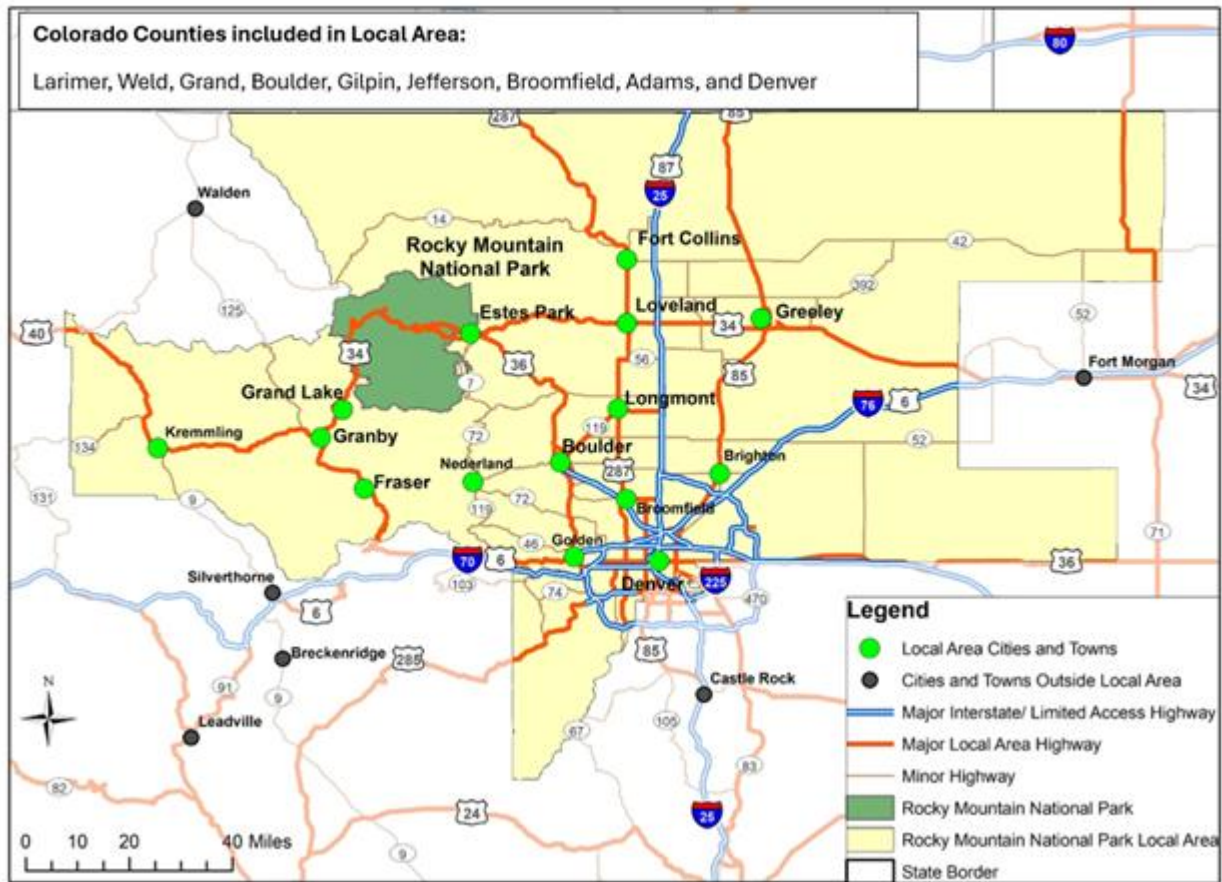


Figure 1. Rocky Mountain local area map.

Table 1. Intercept surveys conducted within Rocky Mountain.

Intercept Site	Completed Intercept Surveys	
	Number of Surveys	Percent of Surveys
Bear Lake Parking Area	467	39.5%
Kawuneeche VC	316	26.7%
Alpine VC	266	22.5%
Wild Basin	133	11.3%

Sampling Period and Procedure

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. The intercept sampling was conducted during the period of September 26 through October 7, 2025. A sample of visitors were intercepted while visiting Rocky Mountain across the designated locations listed in Table 1, above. The majority of respondents were visitors on foot at these locations.

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 Rocky Mountain (NPS 2025). 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 Rocky Mountain 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 Non-Response Bias Analysis section, below). Upon complete or partial refusal, the surveyor would thank the visitor for their time, log the non-response, 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):

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, four 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 Rocky Mountain. Each surveyor worked 10 seven-hour days (approximately six hours of data collection and a one-hour lunch break) and rotated among several sites. Each surveyor had two days off during the 12-day sampling window.

Table 2. Response outcomes — Rocky Mountain intercept survey.

Outcome	Total
Eligible visitors contacted	1,297
Complete refusals	75
Partial refusals (non-response bias questions completed)	40
Intercept surveys completed	1,182
Post-trip surveys distributed	1,177
Intercept response rate	91.1%
Post-trip acceptance rate	99.6%

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 2025). 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' identifying 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 respondents 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 response rates for the post-trip survey.

Table 3. Response outcomes — Rocky Mountain post-trip survey.

Outcome	Total
Post-trip surveys distributed	1,177
Valid post-trip surveys completed	498
Response rate	42.3%

Non-Response 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%. With an intercept survey response rate of 91.1%, concern over intercept non-response is muted. However, because the post-trip survey response rate (42.3%) did not meet the minimum threshold, bias testing was conducted to evaluate differences between those respondents who completed the full survey (both intercept and post-trip), and those who only completed the intercept portion.

A chi-square test for homogeneity was performed for each of the three questions to evaluate differences between the groups. The 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 0.05 is used as the indicated threshold of this significance; p-values of 0.05 or lower indicate significant difference between groups.

The distribution of responses among full survey respondents and intercept-only respondents differed significantly for one question: 1) country of residence. Therefore, international visitors are not as well represented in the full survey sample (2.0%) as desired, when compared to their proportion among respondents that only completed the intercept survey (5.7%).

Results of the bias testing for the post-trip survey are shown in Table 4 through Table 6.

Table 4. Post-trip survey non-response bias question: “Are you a permanent or seasonal/second home resident of the local area around Rocky Mountain?”. Note: p-value = 0.263.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	114	22.9%	176	25.7%
No	384	77.1%	508	74.3%

Table 5. Post-trip survey non-response bias question: “Do you currently live in the United States?”. Note: p-value = 0.001.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	488	98.0%	645	94.3%
No	10	2.0%	39	5.7%

Table 6. Post-trip survey non-response bias question: “On this trip away from home, will you [and your personal group] stay overnight away from your permanent residence either in Rocky Mountain and/or within the local area?”. Note: p-value = 0.217.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	391	78.5%	516	75.4%
No	107	21.5%	168	24.6%

Results

Results are presented separately for both the intercept and post-trip surveys throughout the following section. To preserve the data for additional analyses, outliers for open-ended numeric questions (e.g., nights spent, days in local area, etc.) have not been removed. Given these outliers, medians are shown instead of means throughout the report, in order to better represent the central tendency. To note, some amenities/programs/services may not have been fully available to visitors during the Federal lapse of appropriations during which the survey occurred. Responses to questions on those topics may have been slightly impacted as a result.

Intercept Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 1,182 visitor intercept surveys conducted in Rocky Mountain from September 26 through October 7, 2025. 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. Some questions were omitted because they were not applicable to this report.

Question 1: Previous Visits to Rocky Mountain

First, respondents were asked if they were first time visitors to Rocky Mountain. Repeat visitors were then asked how many visits they have made to Rocky Mountain in the last 12 months and the last five years (Figure 2).

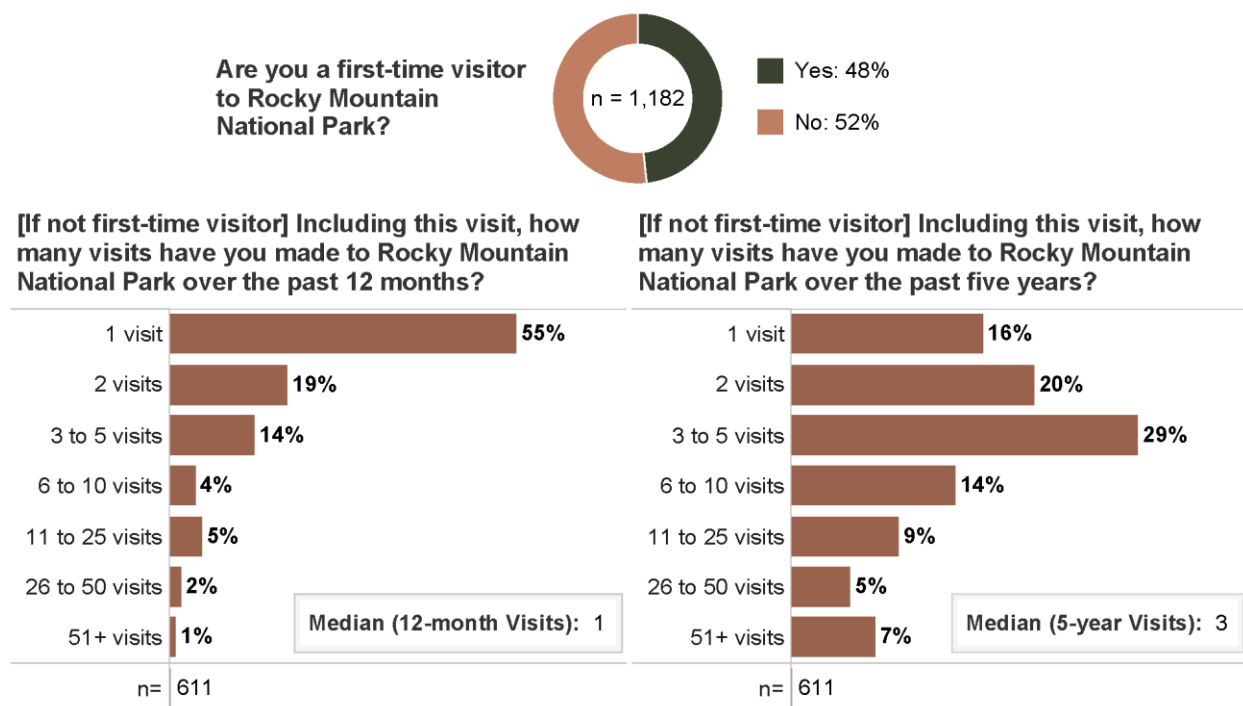


Figure 2. Previous visits to Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 8.

- Just over half of respondents (52%) were on their first ever trip to Rocky Mountain.
- Among the 48% of respondents who were repeat visitors, the majority (55%) were on their first visit in the past 12 months (i.e., had last visited more than a year ago).
- However, more than four in five of repeat visitors (84%) had visited at least one prior time in the past five years.
- The median number of visits made in the past five years was three, including the current trip; 21% of repeat visitors had made more than 10 visits in the past five years.

Question 2: Previous Visits to Other NPS Units

Respondents were then asked how many visits they made to other NPS sites over the past 12 months (Figure 3).

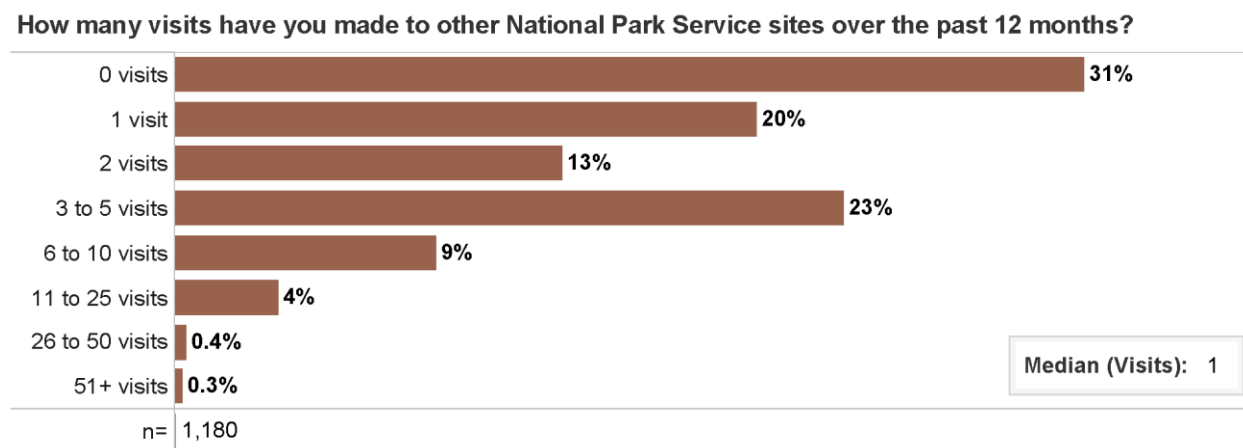


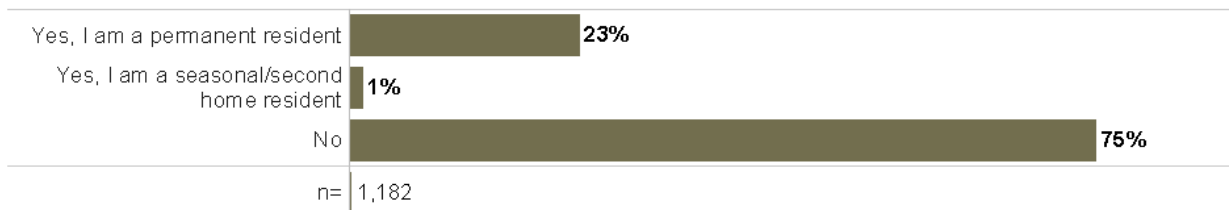
Figure 3. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 9.

- More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) 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 one, though a combined 37% had made three or more visits in the past year.

Questions 3-4: Visitor Residency

Respondents were asked to indicate if they were permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Rocky Mountain. 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 4 depicts responses to this group of questions.

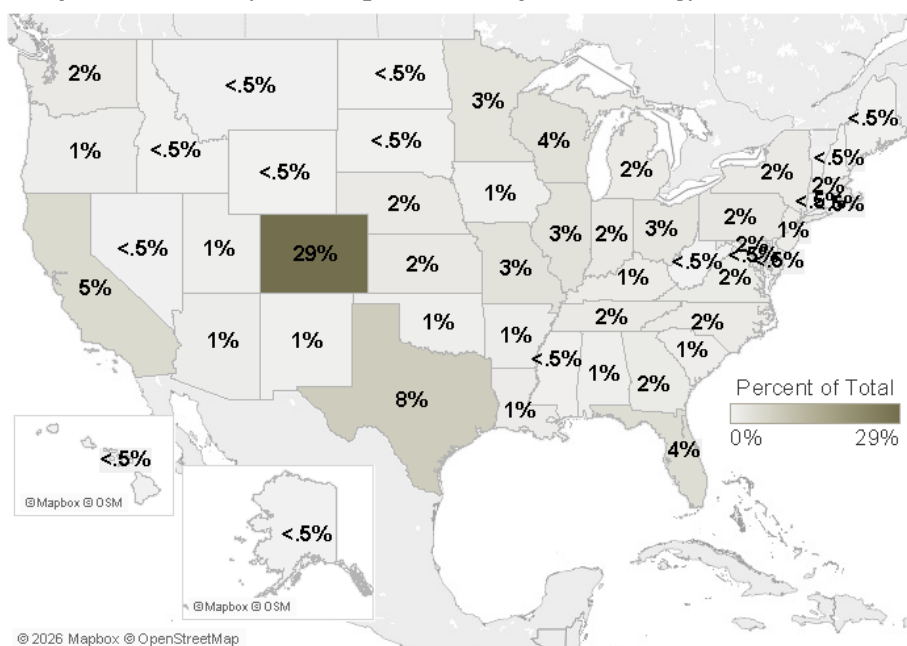
Are you a permanent or seasonal/second home resident of the local area around Rocky Mountain National Park?



Do you currently live in the United States?



Respondent States (Percentage of U.S. respondents only)



Top 10 States

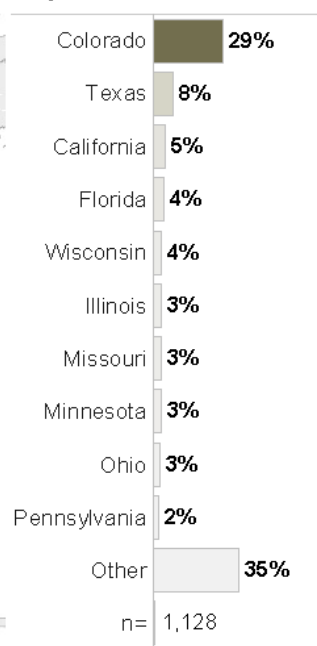


Figure 4. Respondent residency status and geographic origin of domestic visitors surveyed at Rocky Mountain.

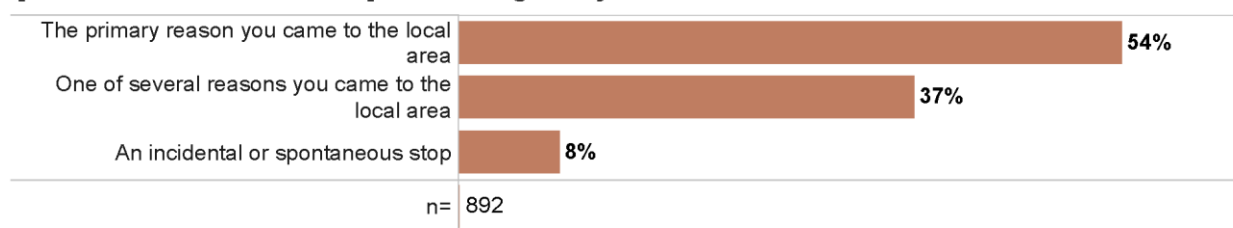
- Just under a quarter of respondents (a combined 24%) stated that they were either permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Rocky Mountain.

- There was a modest geographic concentration of respondents from Colorado (where Rocky Mountain is located).
- Among the 96% of respondents currently residing in the U.S., 29% reside in Colorado, followed by Texas (8%), California (5%), Florida (4%), and Wisconsin (4%).

Question 5: Trip Purpose

Respondents who are not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area were asked about the purpose for their overall trip away from home, while permanent or seasonal residents of the local area were asked about the purpose of their trip away from home “today,” the day they were intercepted in the park. Figure 5 depicts responses to this group of questions.

[If not local/seasonal resident] Was visiting Rocky Mountain National Park...?



[If local/seasonal resident] Was visiting Rocky Mountain National Park...?

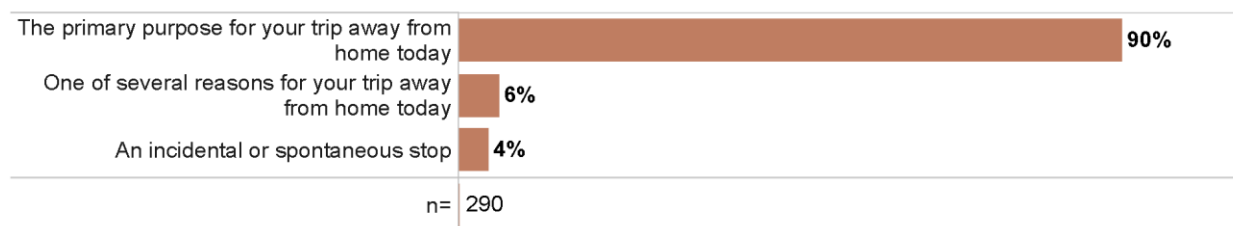


Figure 5. Role of Rocky Mountain in overall trip purpose.

- Just over one-third (37%) of respondents who resided outside the local area (as depicted in Figure 1) stated that their visit to Rocky Mountain was one of two or more equally important reasons that brought them to the area.
- For the majority (54%) of non-local respondents, visiting Rocky Mountain was the primary reason for their trip to the area.
- The remaining non-local respondents (8%) indicated their visit to Rocky Mountain was an incidental or spontaneous stop while they were already in the area.
- Among permanent or seasonal local resident respondents, the vast majority of these respondents identified visiting Rocky Mountain as the primary reason for their trip to the area.

Question 6-8: Length of Stay

Respondents who are not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Rocky Mountain were also asked how many total days they would be spending away from their home on this trip, and then how many days they planned to spend within that local area, including days spent in the park. 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 6.

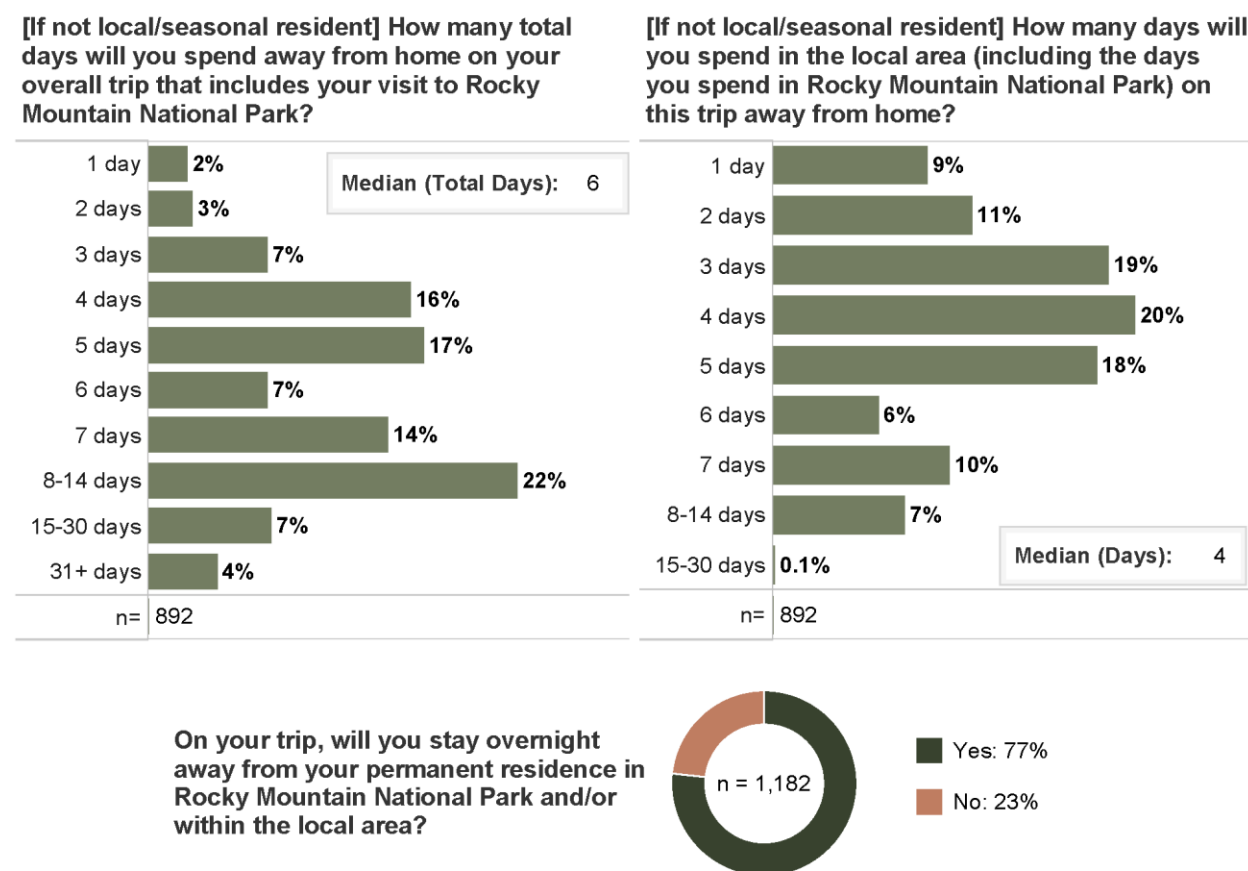


Figure 6. Time spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain.

- Only a small share of non-local respondents (2%) spent one day overall on their trip away from home, while 3% spent two days, and 7% spent three days. The median days spent away from home was six days.
- Similarly, shares were small among non-local respondents (9%) who spent one day in the local area, while 11% spent two days, and 19% spent three days. The median length of stay in the local area was four days.

- Additionally, more than three-quarters of all respondents (77%; including permanent/seasonal residents) had stayed or planned to stay overnight away from their permanent residence in the park and/or in the local area.

Question 9: 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 7).

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

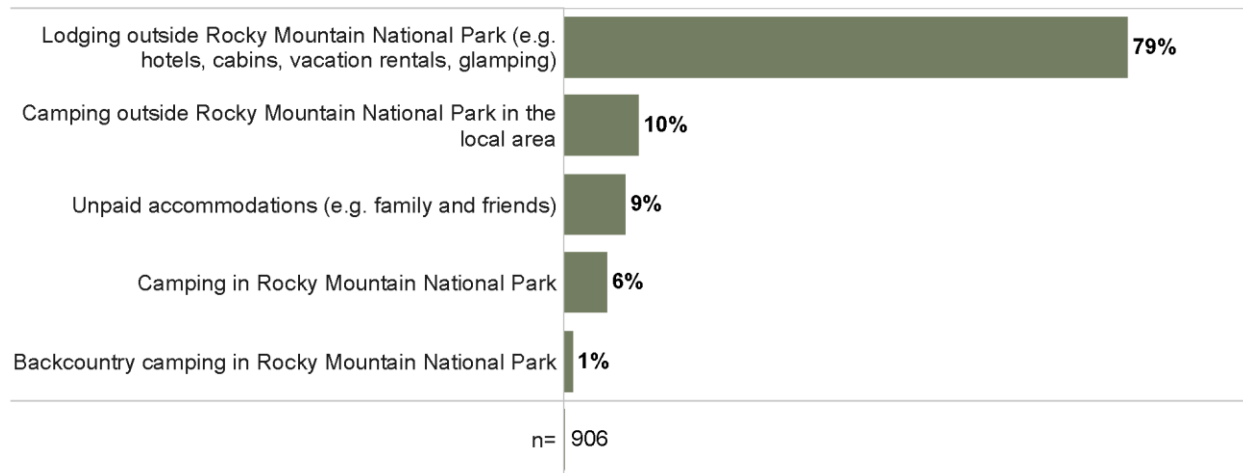


Figure 7. Accommodation types used by overnight visitors within Rocky Mountain and in the local area surrounding it.

- The majority of overnight respondents (79%) had lodging accommodations outside of Rocky Mountain.
- This was followed in prevalence camping outside Rocky Mountain (10%), and unpaid accommodations (9%).
- As a caveat, only one campground was open the entirety of the sampling period due to seasonal closures at the park. Therefore, camping generally was lower than what would be expected during the summer season mostly due the limited availability of camping during the fall and not necessarily because of a lack of desire to camp at the park.

Respondents who camped in Rocky Mountain were asked in which campground(s) they had stayed or planned to stay (Figure 8).

[If camping in Rocky Mountain National Park] In which campground(s) did you or will you stay? Please mark all that apply

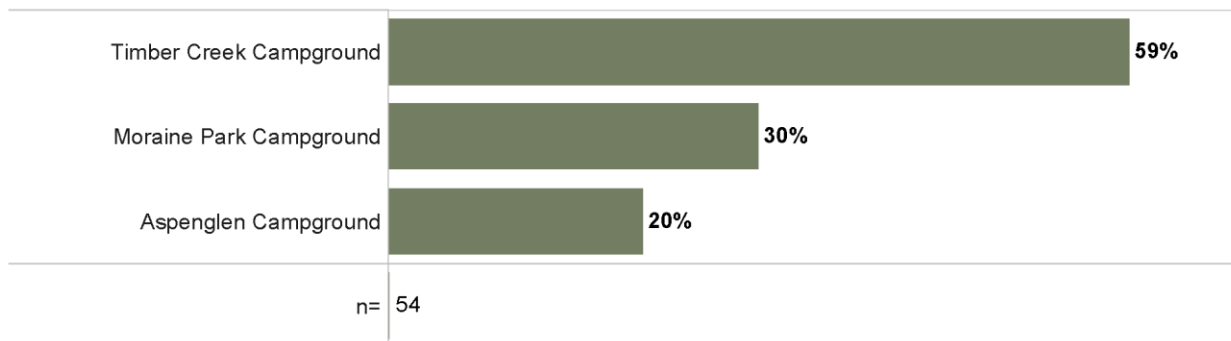


Figure 8. Campground use within Rocky Mountain.

- Among those overnight respondents that camped in Rocky Mountain, the majority stayed at the Timber Creek Campground (59%), followed by the Moraine Park Campground (30%), and the Aspenglen Campground (20%).



Lake of Glass.
NPS

Respondents were then asked to indicate the number of nights they spent or would spend in each accommodation type (Figure 9).

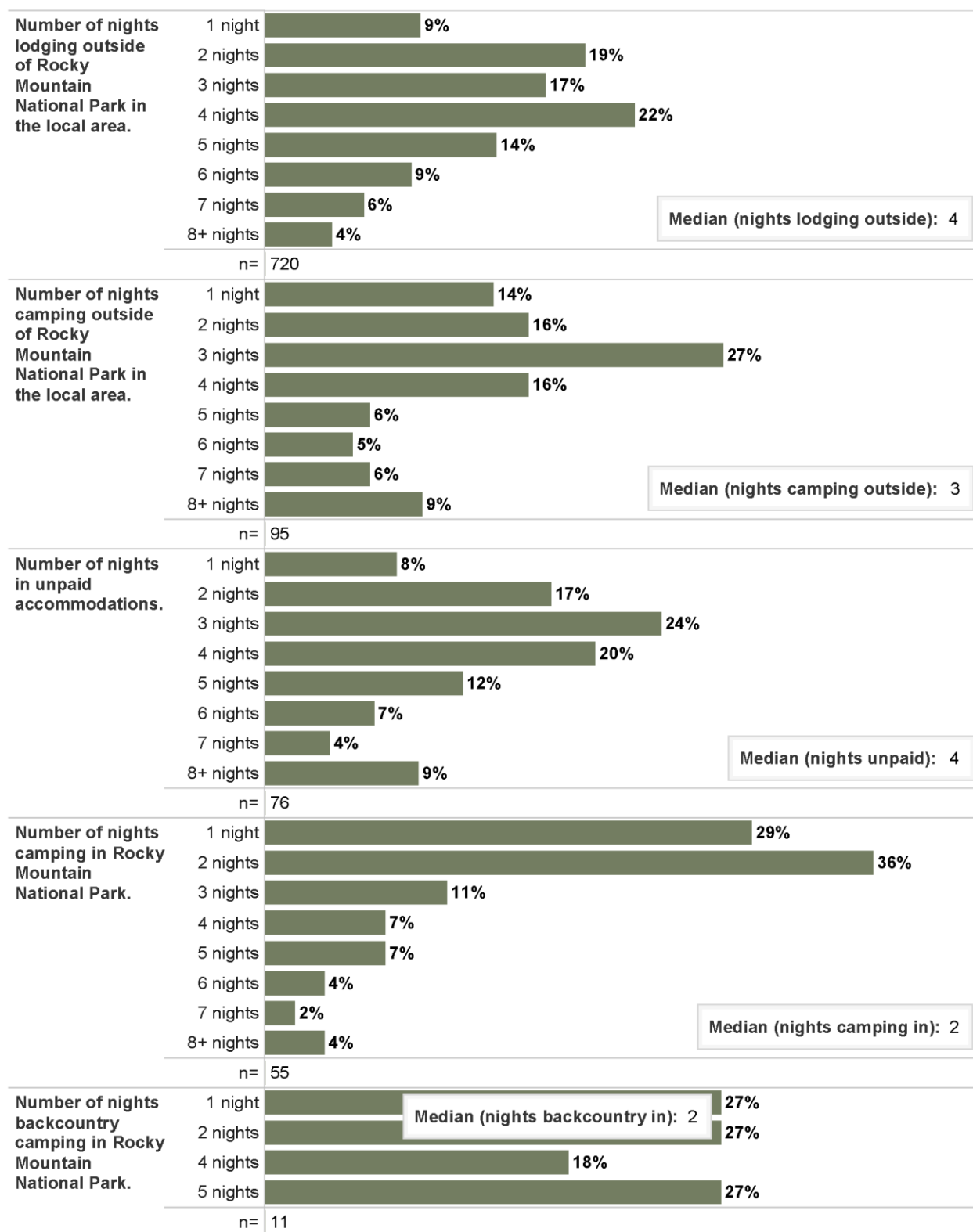


Figure 9. Number of nights spent within Rocky Mountain and in the local area surrounding it, by accommodation type. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 10.

- Among the 79% of overnight respondents who lodged outside of Rocky Mountain in the local area (per Figure 7), median length of stay was four nights. Just over one-quarter (28%) lodged two nights or fewer in the local area this trip; 45% spent three nights or fewer.
- Among the 10% of overnight respondents who camped outside of Rocky Mountain (per Figure 7), median length of stay was three nights, though three in ten (30%) stayed two nights or fewer.
- Among the 9% of overnight respondents who stayed in unpaid accommodations in the local area (per Figure 7), median length of stay was four nights, though the majority (51%) stayed four nights or longer.
- Among the 6% of overnight respondents who camped in Rocky Mountain (per Figure 7), median length of stay was two nights. Just under two-thirds (65%) of campers were spending two nights or fewer camping in the park this trip; 76% spent three nights or fewer.
- Among the 1% of overnight respondents who backcountry camped in Rocky Mountain (per Figure 7), median length of stay was two nights. Just over one-quarter (27%) of backcountry campers stayed just one night, 54% spent two nights or fewer.



Marmot sits on a rocky outcrop.

NPS

Questions 12-14: 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 Rocky Mountain (Figure 10). A personal group was defined as the visitor and companions with whom they visited the park, 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.

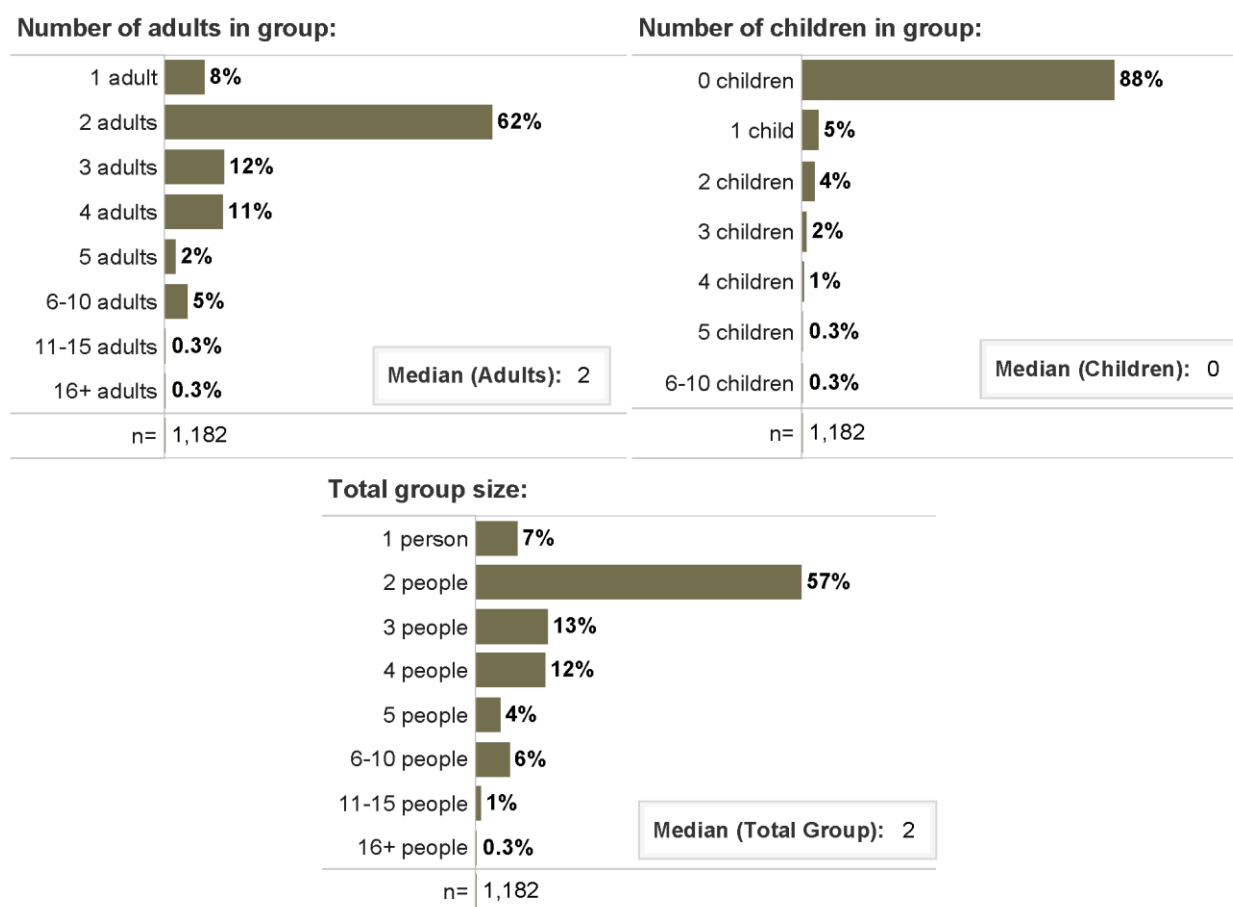


Figure 10. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group, and total group size, while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 11.

- The median number of adults per group was two. Most groups (62%) included two adults.
- Most groups (88%) did not include any children.
- The median total number of people (adults and children) per group was two.

Respondents were then asked to provide the age of each member of their group (Figure 11). These data show the true age distribution of respondent groups sampled at Rocky Mountain.

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

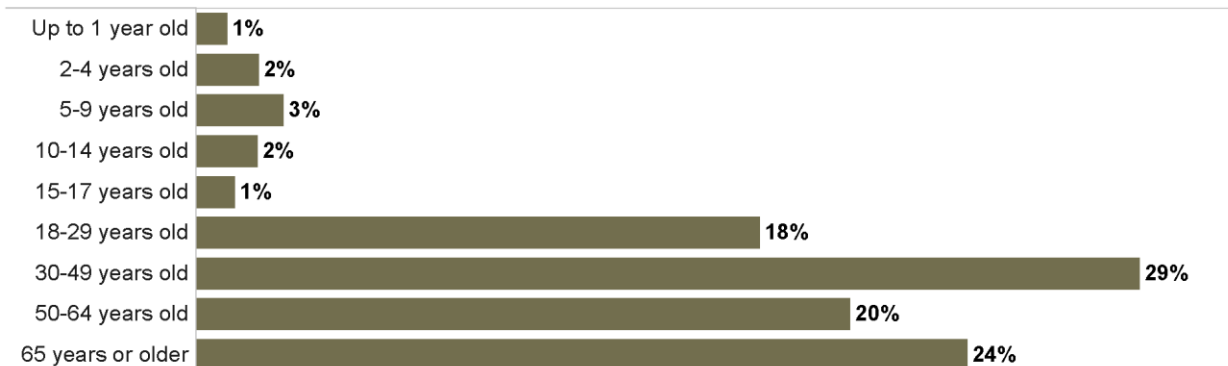


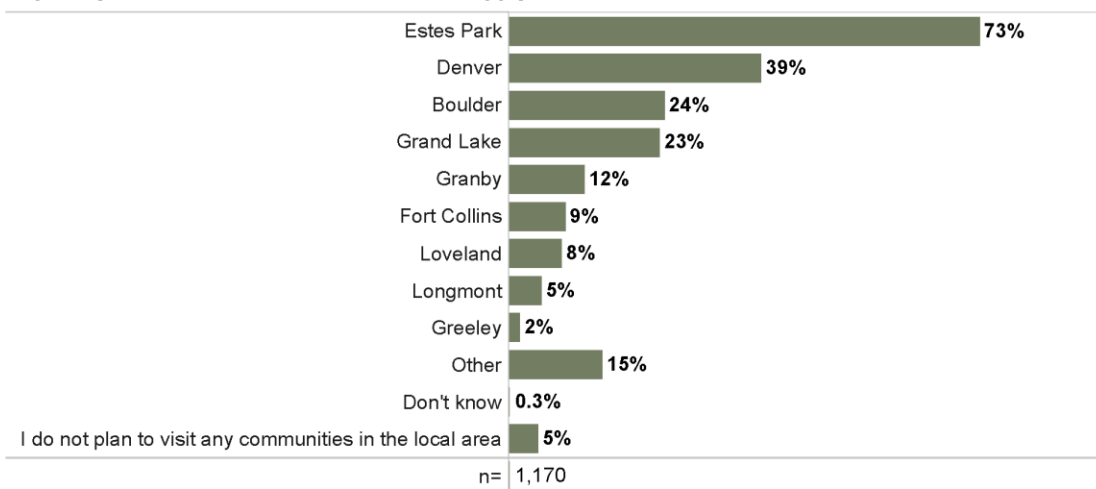
Figure 11. Age distribution of all members of respondent's personal group while visiting Rocky Mountain.

- The most common age of the adults and children in a personal group was 30-49 years old (29%), followed by 65 years or older (24%), and 50-64 years old (20%).
- Children (i.e., visitors under 18 years old) accounted for a combined total of just 9% of group members.

Questions 17-18: Local Communities

To build a more detailed understanding of the impact of Rocky Mountain on the surrounding local area, respondents were given a list of nearby communities and asked which one(s), if any, they had already visited or planned to visit during their trip. Visiting a community was defined as stopping to do or buy anything, such as purchasing gas or groceries or dining. Those respondents who had previously indicated that they were staying overnight in the local area outside Rocky Mountain (i.e., paid lodging outside the park, camping outside the park, or staying in unpaid accommodation outside the park) were then asked which local community (or communities) from that list was (or were) closest to their accommodations. Responses to both questions are shown in Figure 12, below.

Which communities will you visit outside Rocky Mountain National Park while in the local area on this trip away from home? Please mark all that apply.



[If will visit] What communities are closest to your accommodation(s) outside Rocky Mountain National Park in the local area? Please mark all that apply.

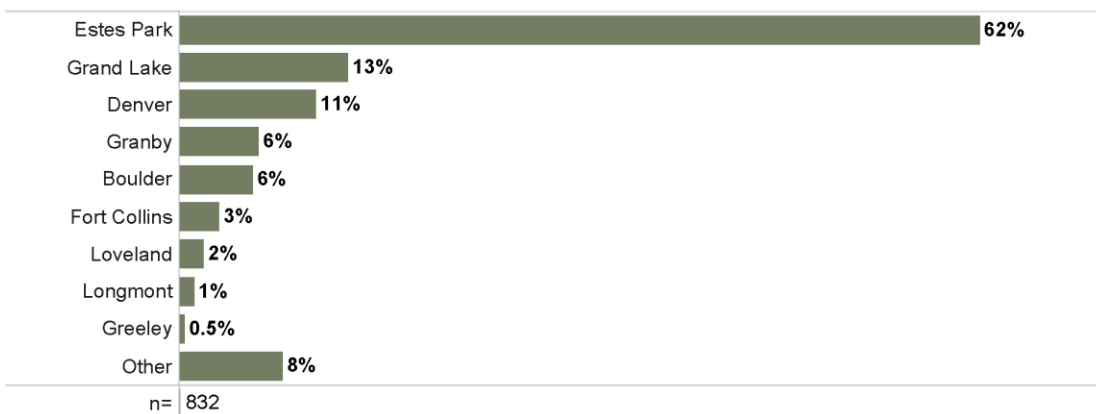


Figure 12. Communities visited outside Rocky Mountain while in the local area.

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported they had visited or planned to visit Estes Park, while visiting the Rocky Mountain local area on their trip away from home.
- The next most visited community was Denver, visited by 39% of respondents, followed in prevalence by Boulder (24%), Grand Lake (23%), and Granby (12%).
- The rank order of the top five communities were largely the same when considering which community was closest to where respondents stayed during their visit: the majority of respondents reported staying closest to Estes Park (62%), followed by Grand Lake (13%), Denver (11%), Granby (6%), and Boulder (6%).

Questions 19-23: Park Use Characteristics

Then, respondents were asked to indicate if they planned to visit Rocky Mountain for more than one day, and then a series of follow-up questions about the length of time they might spend in the park (Figure 13 and Table 7).

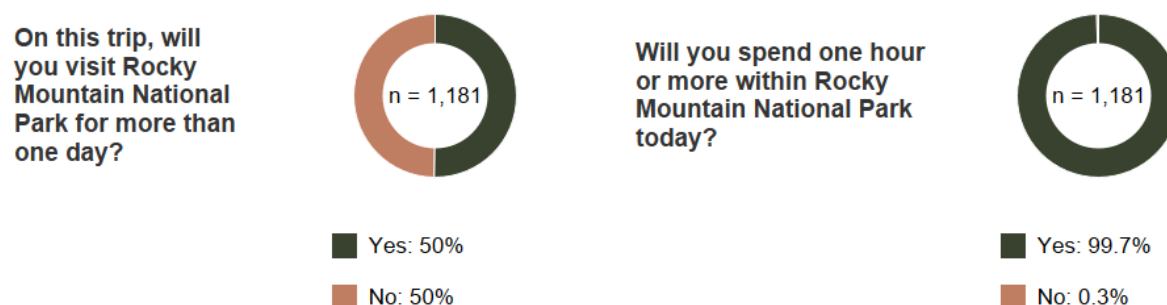


Figure 13. Length of time spent within Rocky Mountain on this trip.

Table 7. Length of time spent within Rocky Mountain 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 Rocky Mountain today?	4	5
[If planning to spend one hour or more] How many hours do you plan to spend within Rocky Mountain today?	1,177	5
[If planning to visit more than one day] How many days do you plan to spend within Rocky Mountain on this trip?	592	3
[If planning to visit more than one day] On how many different days do you expect to enter the park?	592	3

- Nearly all of respondents (99.7%) planned to spend one hour or more within Rocky Mountain on the day they were surveyed. Among these respondents, median length of time spent in the park “today” was five hours.
- Among the 0.3% of respondents who planned to spend less than an hour within the park on the day they were surveyed, the median length of anticipated visit was five minutes.
- Additionally, half of respondents (50%) were planning to spend just a single day in Rocky Mountain on their trip. Among the 50% of respondents who planned to visit for more than one day, the median length of visit was three days.
- Those respondents who spent more than one day in the park were also asked on how many different days they expected to enter the park; the median answer was three days.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate the most recent entrance they used to enter Rocky Mountain (Figure 14).

Which was the most recent entrance you used to enter Rocky Mountain National Park?

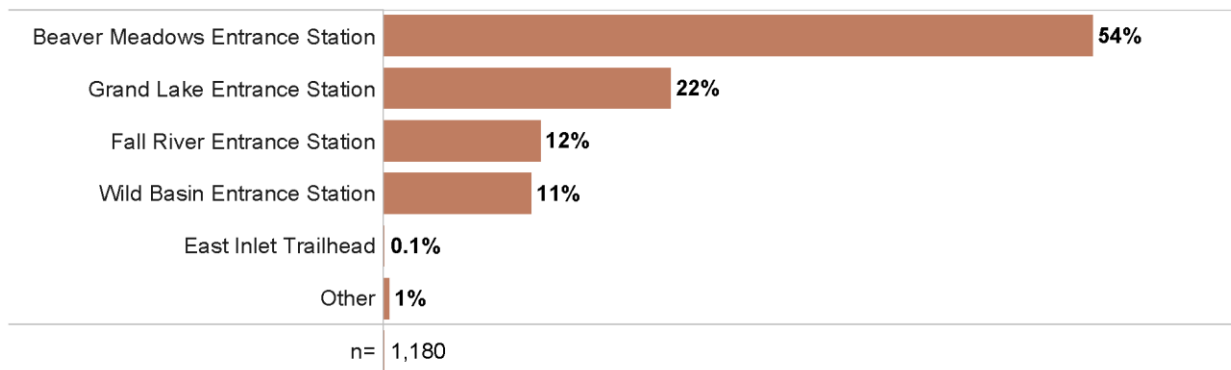


Figure 14. Most recent entrance used to enter Rocky Mountain.

- Among respondents, Beaver Meadows Entrance Station was the most commonly used entrance to Rocky Mountain (54%).
- This was followed by just under one-quarter of respondents which entered through the Grand Lake Entrance Station (22%).
- Due to park geography and proximity of intercept sites to entrances, the results for most recent entrance used were impacted by the volume of visitors intercepted at various sites.



Horseshoe Park.
NPS

Respondents were also presented with a list of locations within Rocky Mountain and asked to indicate if they had been to, or planned to visit them, that day (Figure 15).

Considering your visit today, will you visit any of the following locations within Rocky Mountain National Park? Please mark all that apply

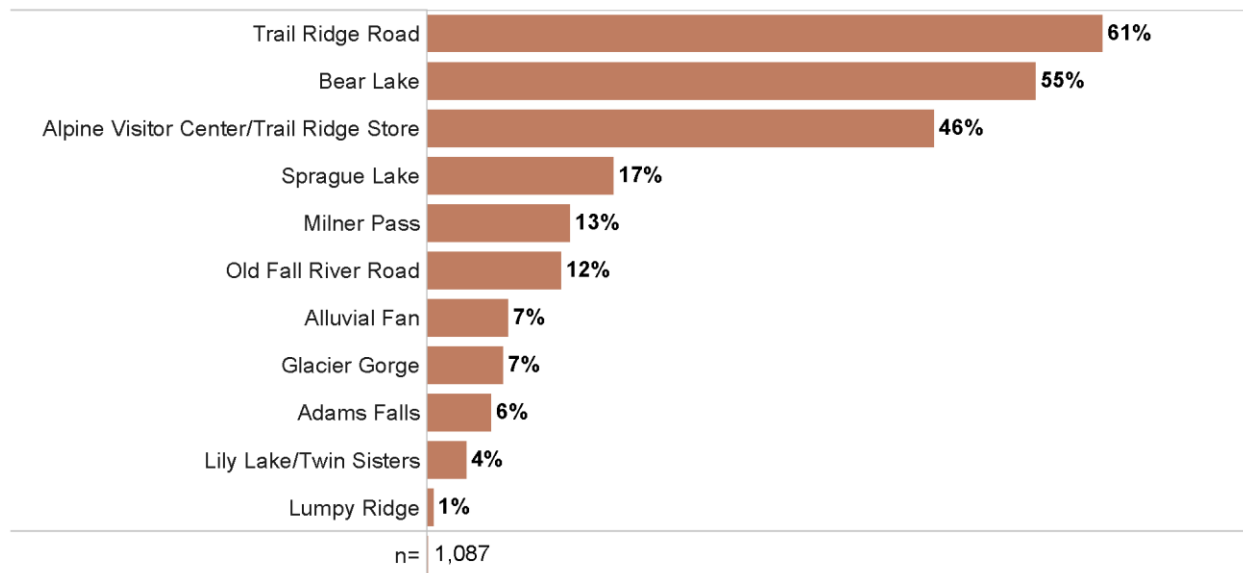


Figure 15. Park locations visited during the most recent trip to Rocky Mountain.

- The most commonly visited location in Rocky Mountain was Trail Ridge Road (61% of respondents had either been there or planned to visit it on their trip), followed by Bear Lake (55%) and the Alpine Visitor Center/Trail Ridge Store (46%).
- Lumpy Ridge was the least-visited location from the list provided, with only 1% of respondents reporting having visited or planning to visit.

Question 24-25: Transportation

Respondents were first asked to indicate all the forms of transportation they personally used to travel from their home to Rocky Mountain on their trip (Figure 16).

From the list below, select all forms of transportation you personally used to travel from your home to Rocky Mountain National Park on this trip. Please mark all that apply.

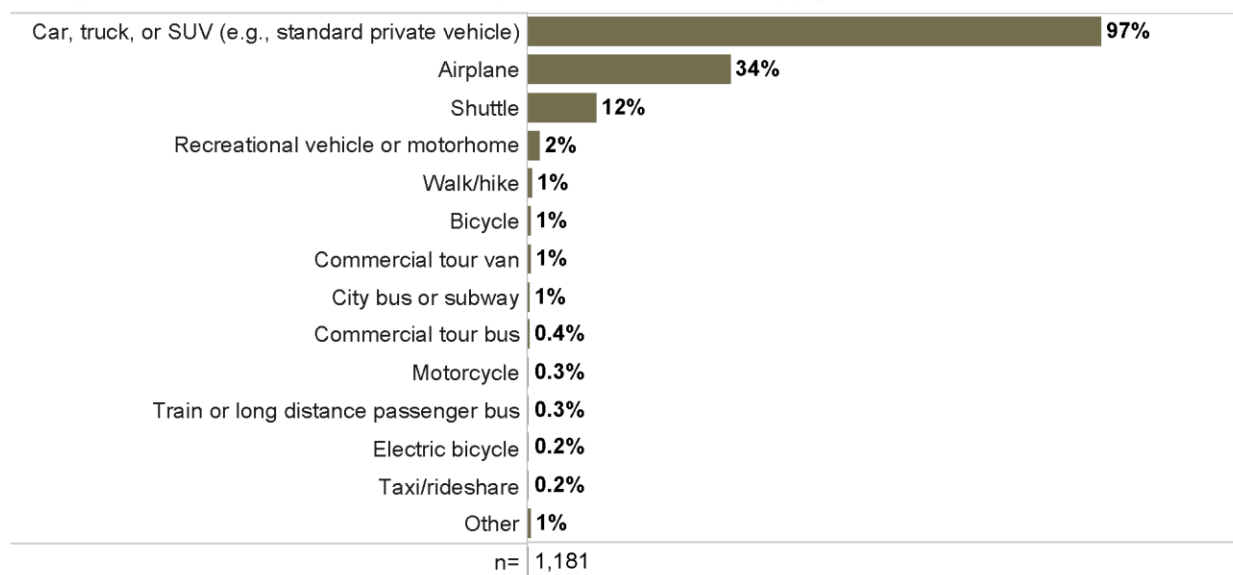


Figure 16. Forms of transportation used to travel from home to Rocky Mountain on the recent trip.

- Nearly all of respondents (97%) used a personal vehicle, such as a car, truck, or SUV, at some point during their trip from home to Rocky Mountain.
- The second most common mode of travel was an airplane (34%), followed by shuttle (12%).



Tundra Communities Trail
NPS / KIM GROSSMAN

Respondents were then asked a follow-up question about the single form of transportation they used to enter Rocky Mountain on the day they were surveyed (Figure 17).

[If used at all during trip] Which form of transportation did you personally use to enter Rocky Mountain National Park today?

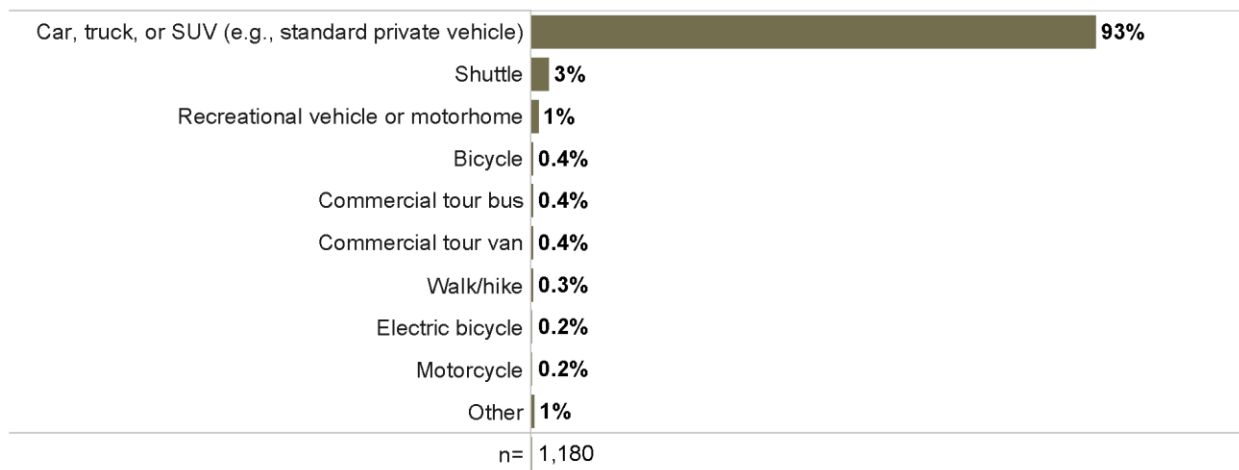
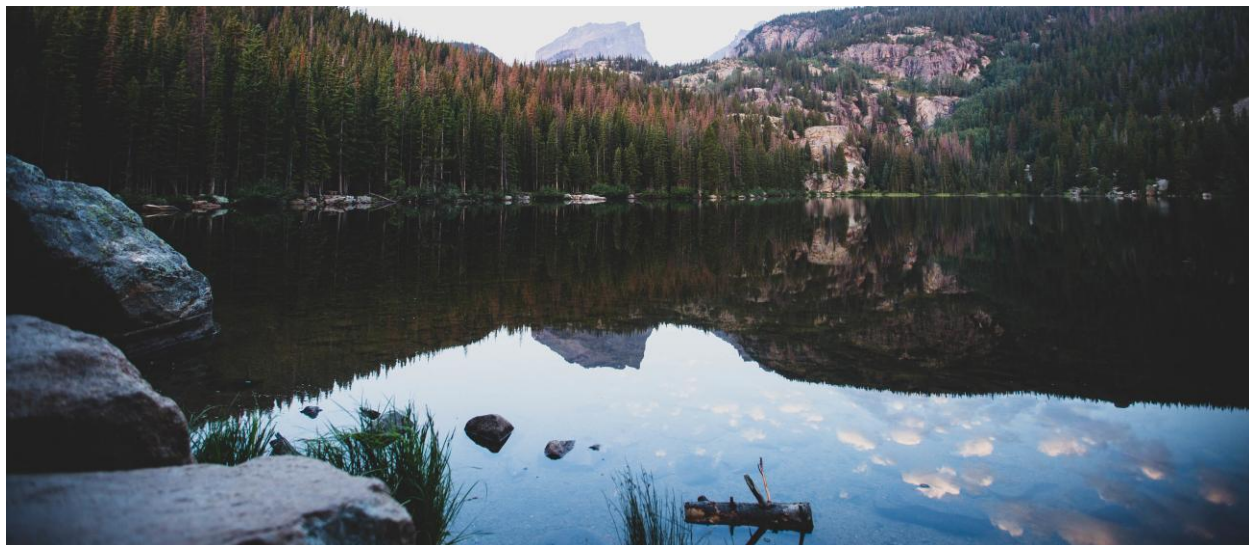


Figure 17. Form of transportation used to enter Rocky Mountain on the day of the survey.

- The vast majority of respondents (93%) reported that they used their car, truck, or SUV to enter Rocky Mountain on the day of the survey.
- This was followed distantly by use of a shuttle (3%), and recreational vehicle or motorhome (1%).



Mountain peaks reflect on clear calm lake
NPS M. REED

If respondents entered the park 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 18).

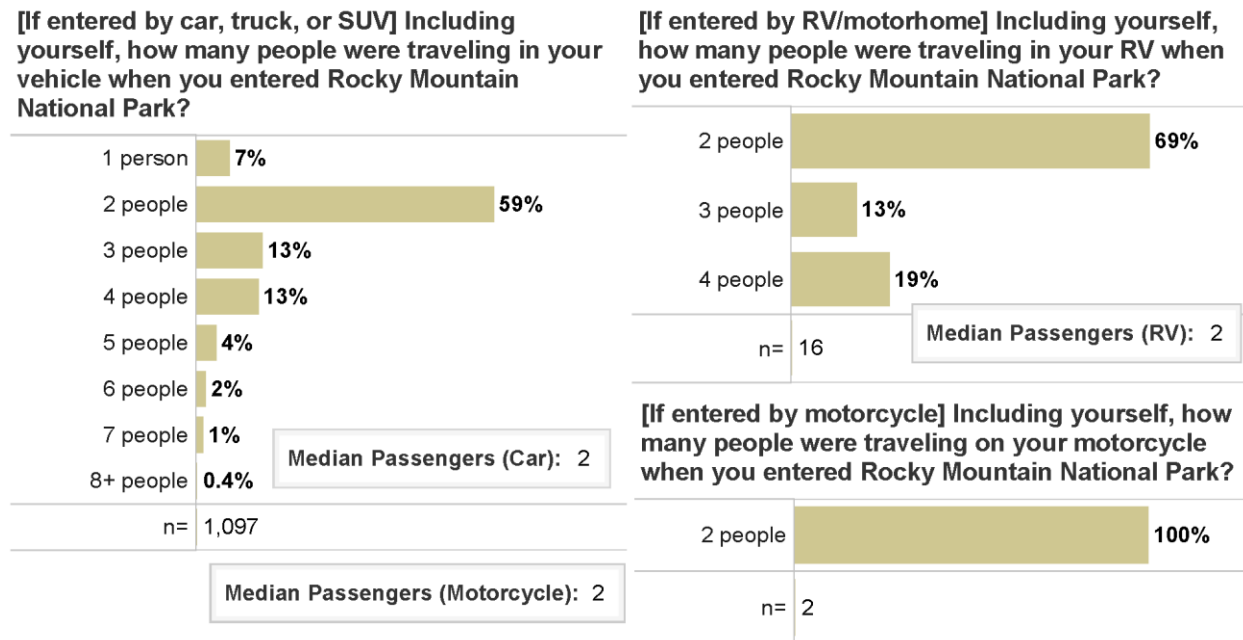


Figure 18. Number of people in or on respondent's vehicle when entering Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 12.

- More than half of respondents traveling by car reported two people. The next common group size was three people (13%), followed by four people (13%).
- Just over two-thirds of respondents entering Rocky Mountain by RV/motorhome reported traveling in a group of two people (69%), followed by four people (19%) or three people (13%).
- All motorcyclists (100%) were traveling in a group of two people.

Question 27: Entrance Fee

Respondents were asked to indicate which type of entrance fee applied to them personally on their most recent trip to Rocky Mountain (Figure 19).

On this trip to Rocky Mountain National Park, which one of the following entrance fees applied to you personally?

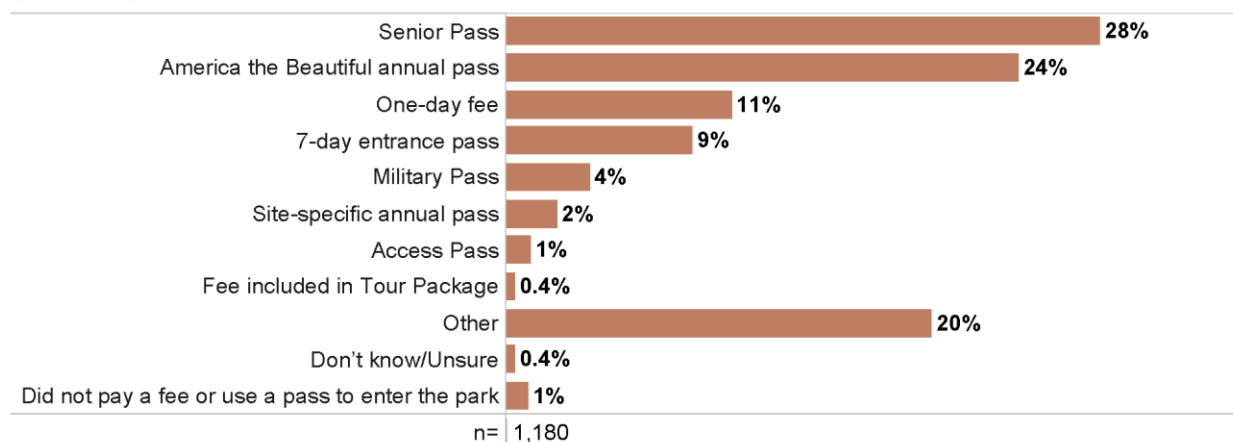
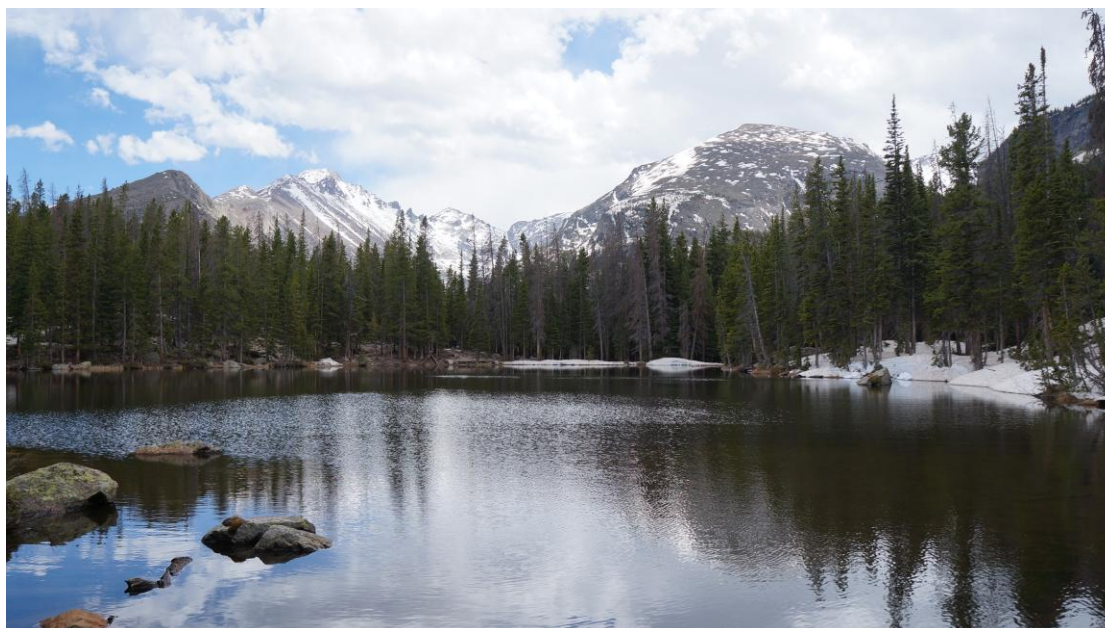


Figure 19. Entrance fee paid to enter Rocky Mountain on the most recent trip.

- One-third of respondents (33%) reported using a Senior Pass, Access Pass, or Military Pass.
- Another 24% entered using an America the Beautiful annual pass.
- Just under one-quarter of respondent (22%) entered using a Rocky Mountain-specific pass or fee (i.e., annual pass, 7-day, or single-day entrance fee).



Nymph Lake.
NPS

Post-trip Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 498 post-trip visitor surveys received by mail-back or online following fieldwork conducted in Rocky Mountain in fall 2025. 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. Some questions were omitted because they were not applicable to this report.

Questions 1–2: Information about Rocky Mountain

First, respondents were asked what sources they used to obtain information about Rocky Mountain prior to their trip, and whether they had the information they needed on their trip (Figure 20).

Prior to this trip, how did you obtain information about Rocky Mountain National Park? Please mark all that apply

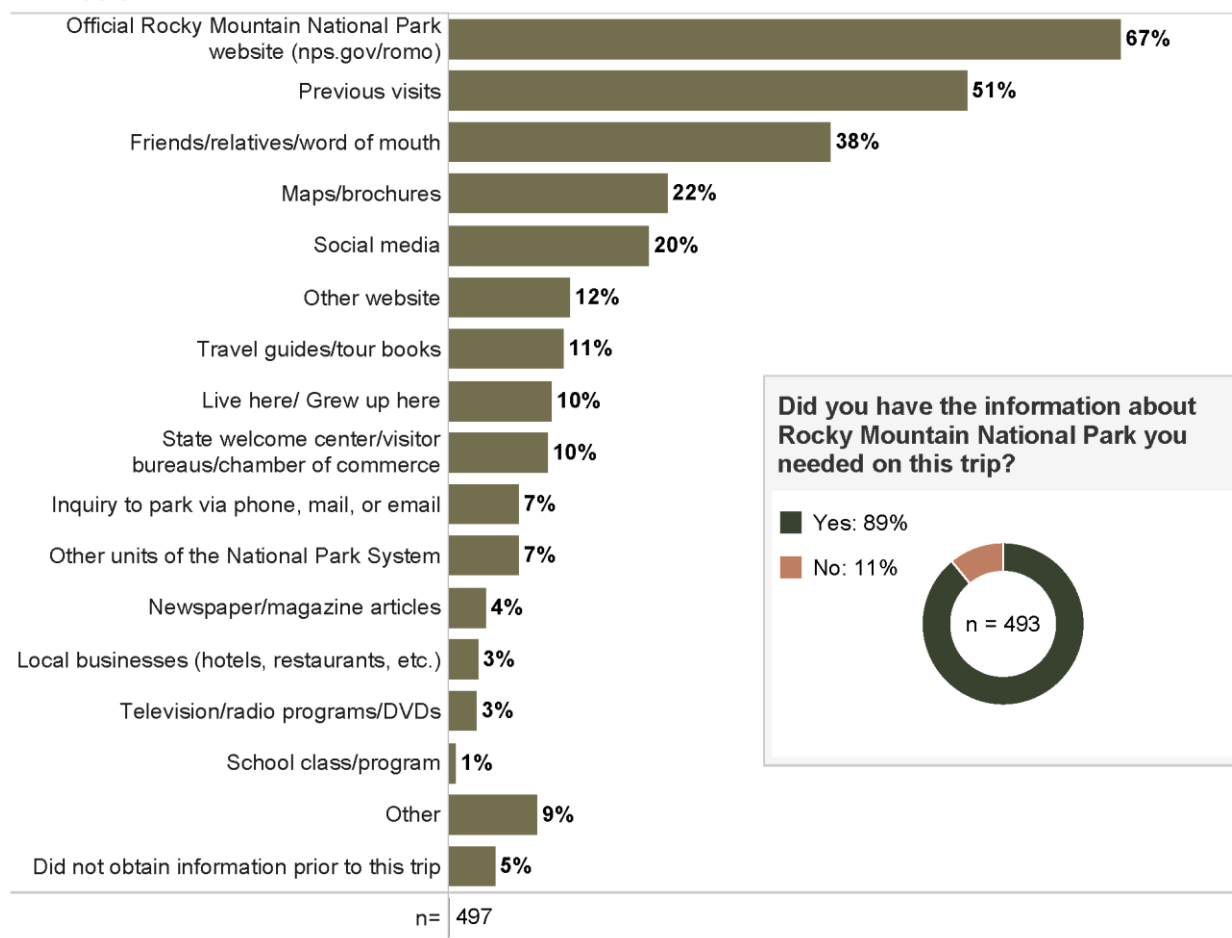


Figure 20. Sources used to obtain information about Rocky Mountain prior to the trip.

- The most used resource was the Official Rocky Mountain website, with 67% of respondents reportedly using it. The second most common source was a prior visit (51%), followed by friends/relatives/word of mouth (38%), maps/brochures (22%), and social media (20%).

- In a follow-up question, 89% of respondents said that they had the information about Rocky Mountain that they needed on their trip, while 11% 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.

Questions 7-9: Trip Characteristics

Respondents were asked if they visited other National Park Service sites on their trip away from home (Figure 21).

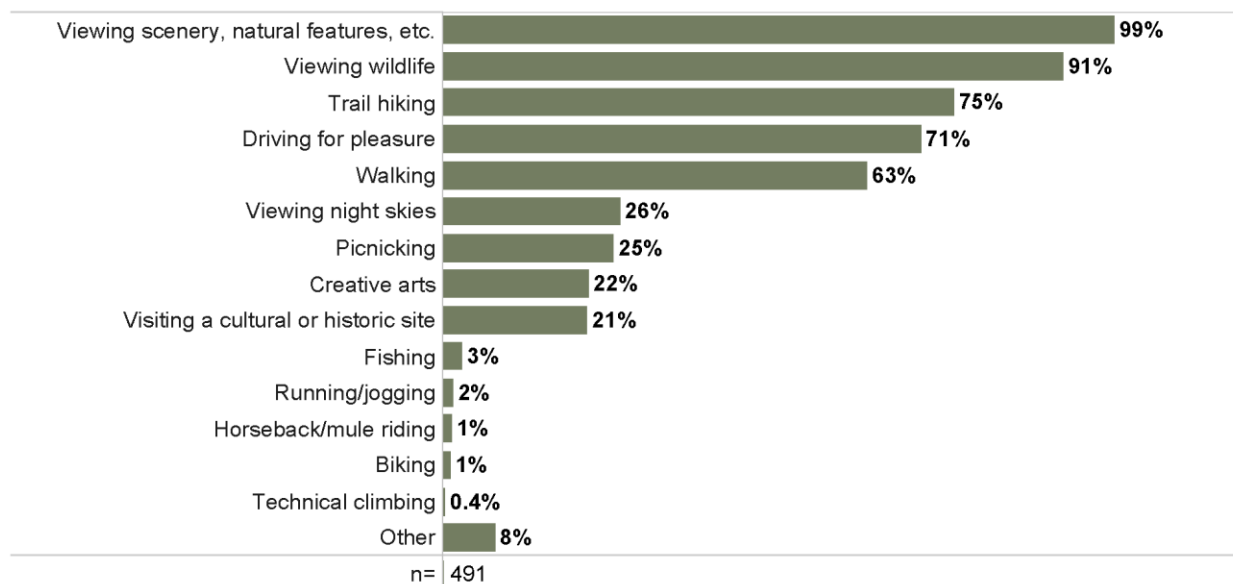


Figure 21. NPS sites visited on trip away from home.

- Just over one-quarter (28%) of all respondents had visited other NPS sites on their trip, while 72% identified Rocky Mountain 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 Rocky Mountain, and which of those was their primary activity (Figure 22).

On this trip, in which of the following activities did you personally participate within Rocky Mountain National Park? Please mark all that apply



And which was your primary activity within Rocky Mountain National Park during your visit (on the day you were contacted for this survey)?

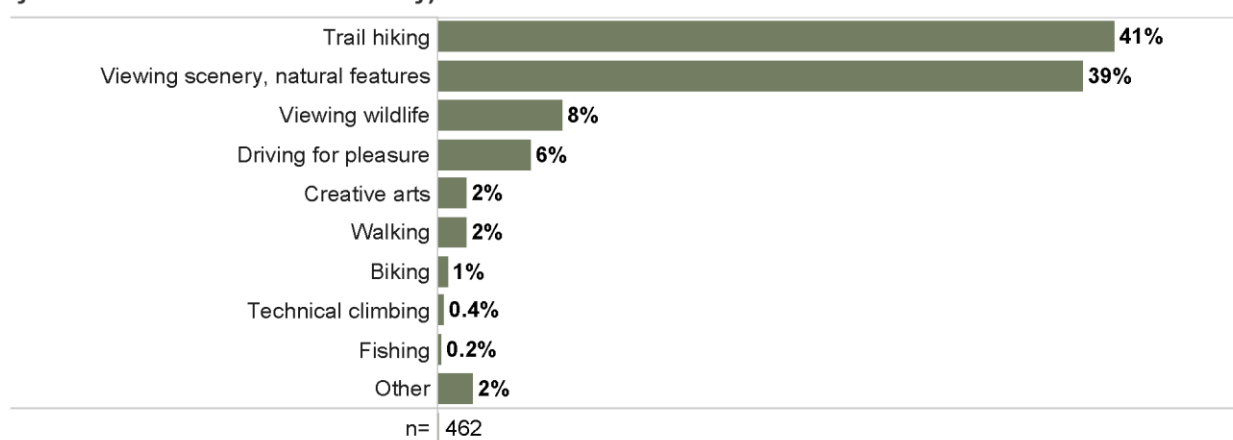


Figure 22. Participation in activities at Rocky Mountain.

- Almost all respondents reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (99%) and viewing wildlife (91%) as activities they personally participated in within Rocky Mountain.
- Technical climbing, biking, horseback/mule riding, and running/jogging were all uncommon activities (reported by 2% or fewer of respondents).
- The majority of respondents reported either trail hiking (41%) or viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (39%) as their primary activity.

Questions 10-11: Reasons to Visit

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of various reasons to visit Rocky Mountain on their trip and were then asked which of those was the most important reason for them to visit Rocky Mountain (Figure 23).

How important to you were each of the following reasons or motivations for visiting Rocky Mountain National Park 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 view wildlife or natural scenery	488	0.2%	0.4%	3%	22%	75%
To spend time with family/friends	480	7%	3%	8%	29%	53%
To relax	476	2%	5%	17%	32%	44%
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	481	3%	8%	19%	32%	37%
To visit a National Park Service site	468	7%	11%	22%	26%	33%
To get physical exercise	481	5%	9%	27%	31%	30%
To experience solitude	476	14%	16%	24%	25%	20%
To learn more about nature	475	7%	17%	31%	27%	17%
To learn more about American history and culture	477	14%	24%	31%	21%	11%
Other (if specified)	52	21%	2%	4%	12%	62%

And which was the most important reason for you to visit Rocky Mountain National Park on this trip?

To view wildlife or natural scenery	57%
To spend time with family/friends	15%
To visit a National Park Service site	12%
To get physical exercise	4%
To hear sounds of nature/quiet	3%
To relax	3%
To experience solitude	2%
To learn more about American history and culture	1%
To learn more about nature	1%
Other	2%
n=	471

Figure 23. Reasons or motivations to visit Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 13.

- Most respondents chose to view wildlife or natural scenery (75%) and to spend time with family/friends (53%) as extremely important reasons for their trip to Rocky Mountain.
- Other important reasons rated were to relax and to hear the sounds of nature/quiet (44% and 37% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).

- The least important reasons rated were to learn more about nature and to learn more about American history and culture (only 17% and 11% of respondents, respectively, reported them as extremely important, and 7% and 14% of respondents, respectively, rated them as not at all important).
- The most common response about the most important reason was to view wildlife or natural scenery (57%), followed more distantly by to spend time with family/friends (15%), and to visit a National Park Service site (12%).

Questions 12-13: Programs, Services, and Learning

Respondents were asked to identify all programs and services in which they personally participated in Rocky Mountain during their trip (Figure 24).

On this trip, in which of the following programs and services did you personally participate within Rocky Mountain National Park? Please mark all that apply

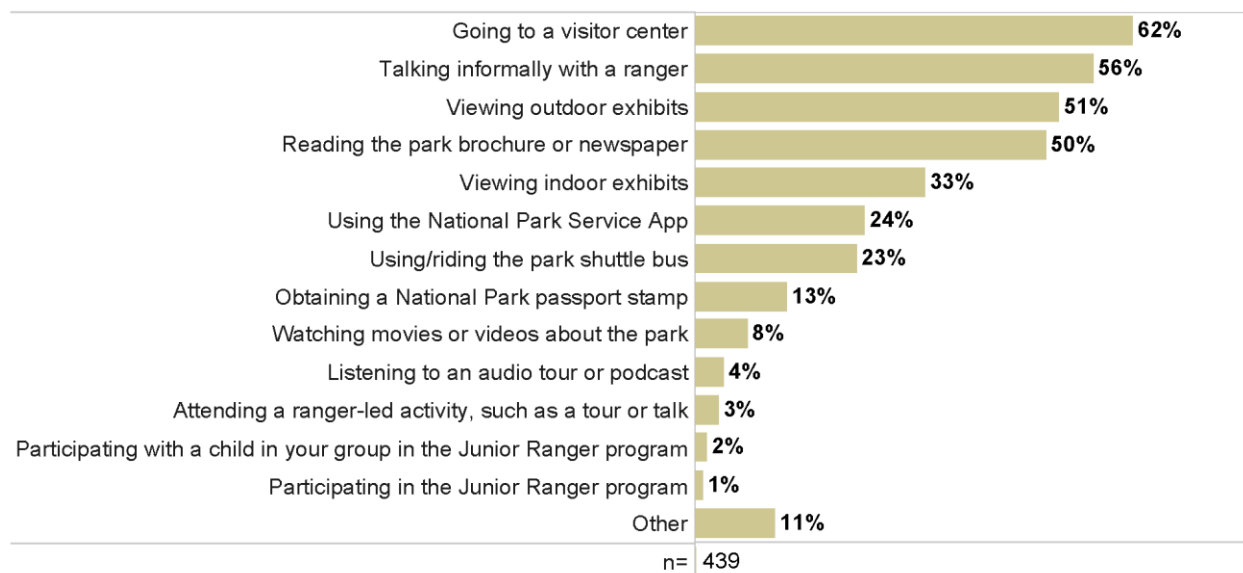


Figure 24. Participation in programs at Rocky Mountain.

- The two most-used programs were going to a visitor center and talking informally with a ranger, with the majority of respondents (62% and 56%, respectively) reporting participating in each of them.
- Viewing outdoor exhibits (51%) and reading the park brochure or newspaper (50%) were also participated in by at least half of respondents.

Two follow-up questions asked if respondents learned anything from park 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 25).

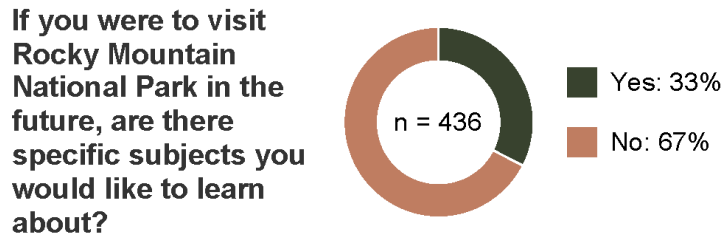


Figure 25. Learning outcomes while visiting Rocky Mountain.

- One-third of respondents (33%) reported that if they were to visit Rocky Mountain in the future, there are specific subjects they would like to learn about.
- Respondents who said yes to this question were asked to elaborate.

Questions 14-15: 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 Rocky Mountain (Figure 26).

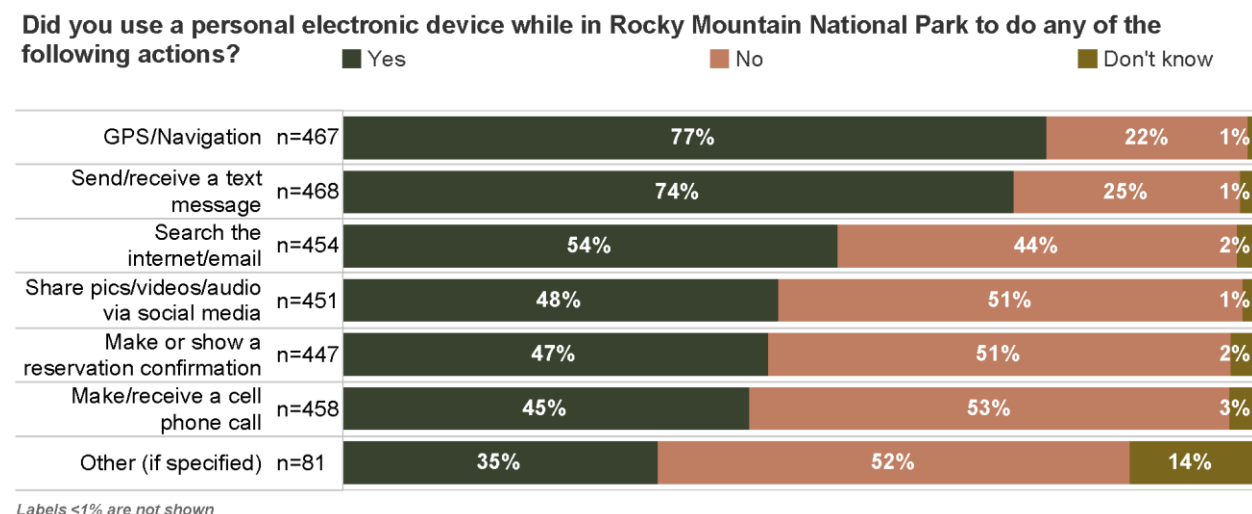


Figure 26. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 14.

- Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) reported using GPS/navigation, with another roughly three-quarters of respondents (74%) sending/receiving a text message.
- Conversely, only 45% of respondents made/received a cell phone call.

Then, respondents were asked to rate both the importance of each of these electronic device uses (Figure 27), and the quality of their service (Figure 28).

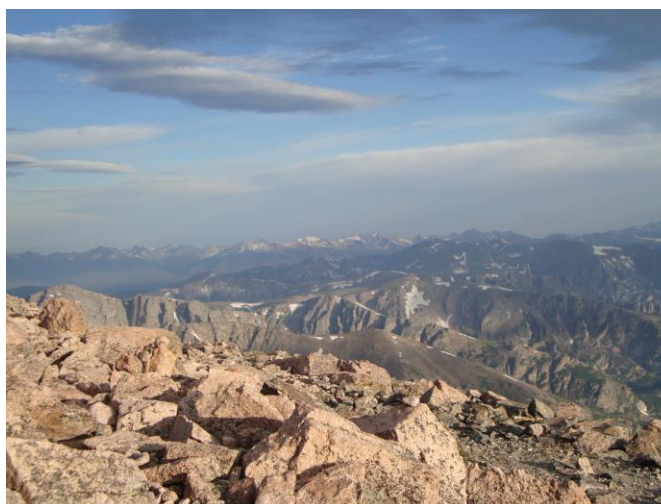
How important to you was it during your visit to Rocky Mountain National Park to use personal electronic devices to do each of the following?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - Not at all important	2 - Slightly important	3 - Moderately important	4 - Very important	5 - Extremely important
GPS/Navigation	471	13%	9%	18%	26%	34%
Send/receive a text message	473	24%	22%	23%	16%	14%
Search the internet/email	472	37%	22%	23%	9%	9%
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	469	54%	18%	16%	6%	6%
Make or show a reservation confirmation	466	31%	11%	18%	15%	25%
Make/receive a cell phone call	472	35%	21%	20%	11%	13%
Other (if specified)	44	61%	2%	7%	9%	20%

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 27. The importance of the use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 15.

- The most important device uses were GPS/navigation and making or showing a reservation confirmation (34% and 25% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- Sharing pics/video/audio via social media was rated as extremely important only by 6% of respondents, and not at all important by 54% of respondents.



Looking back west, from the highest peak in the park.
NPS

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
GPS/Navigation	366	11%	17%	30%	23%	18%
Send/receive a text message	364	14%	26%	28%	23%	9%
Search the internet/email	315	22%	29%	25%	18%	7%
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	271	25%	25%	25%	16%	9%
Make or show a reservation confirmation	276	15%	17%	24%	20%	24%
Make/receive a cell phone call	325	20%	30%	23%	18%	8%
Other (if specified)	26	31%	31%	8%	15%	15%

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)

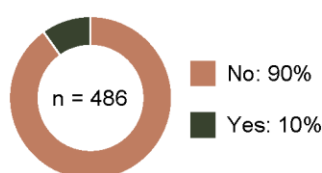
Figure 28. Quality of service for personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 16.

- Making or showing a reservation confirmation was rated as very good or good by 24% and 20% of respondents, respectively. However, 15% of respondents reported that they had no service for this.
- More than one in five of respondents (ranged from 20% to 25%, depending on the service) reported that they also had no service to share pics/videos/audio via social media, search the internet/email, and make/receive a cell phone call.
- However, a small percentage of respondents (ranging from 7% to 9%, depending on the service) rated these services as very good.

Question 16: Physical Difficulties

Respondents were asked if anyone in their personal group had a physical condition that made it difficult to access or participate in park activities or services during their visit to Rocky Mountain. If such a condition was identified, respondents were asked to specify the type of difficulty (Figure 29).

Did anyone in your personal group have difficulties accessing or participating in park activities or services within Rocky Mountain National Park during your trip? Please mark one.



[If yes] Which specific difficulties did the person(s) have? Please mark all that apply.

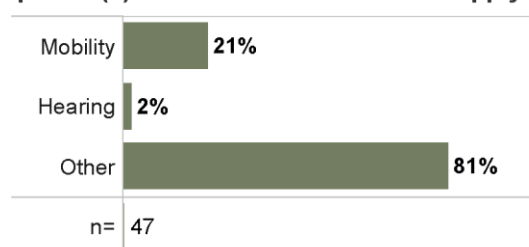


Figure 29. Physical difficulties while visiting Rocky Mountain.

- The majority of respondents (90%) reported that nobody in their personal group had a physical condition that made it difficult to access or participate in park activities or services during their visit to Rocky Mountain.
- Among the 10% of respondents who identified at least one difficulty, 21% reported mobility issues in their group, with a smaller portion also reporting hearing difficulties.

Questions 19-21: Visitor Experience

Respondents were then given several statements about Rocky Mountain and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each given statement (Figure 30).

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

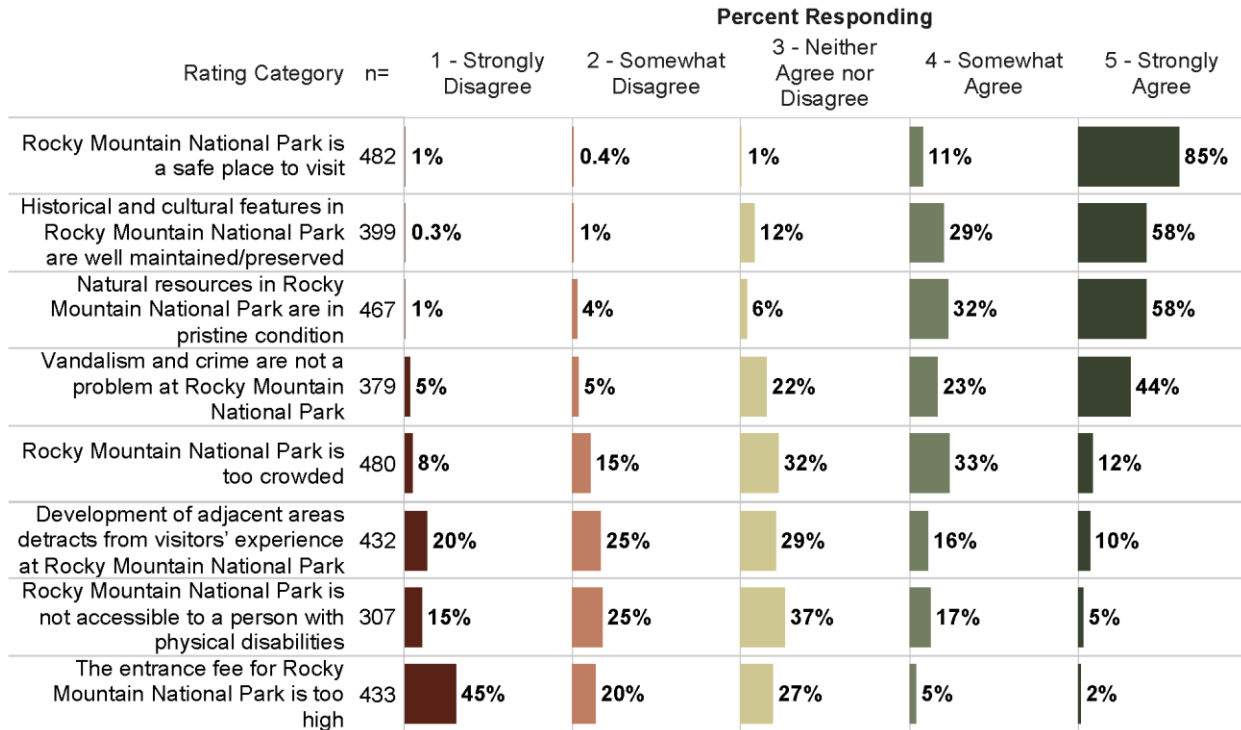


Figure 30. Rating Rocky Mountain experience. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 17.

- From all the statements listed, “Rocky Mountain National Park is a safe place to visit” received the most consensus with a combined 96% of respondents saying they either strongly or somewhat agree with it. That was followed by “Natural resources in Rocky Mountain National Park are in pristine condition” and “Historical and cultural features in Rocky Mountain National Park are well maintained/preserved” (90% and 87% of respondents, respectively, strongly or somewhat agreed with these statements).
- Conversely, “Rocky Mountain National Park is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities” and “Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors’ experience at Rocky Mountain National Park” received the least support, with only a little over 22% of

respondents either somewhat or strongly agreeing with these statements, and a little over one in seven of respondents strongly disagreeing with each of them.

Next, respondents were asked to rate the quality of park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Rocky Mountain (Figure 31).

How would you rate the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Rocky Mountain National Park?

Rating Category	n=	Percent Responding				
		1 - Very poor	2 - Poor	3 - Average	4 - Good	5 - Very good
Outdoor recreation	396			1%	13%	86%
Park shuttle bus	159			4%	14%	82%
Assistance from park employees	352	1%	0.3%	6%	21%	73%
Walkways, trails, and roads	467			4%	28%	69%
Park map or brochure	405	0.5%	1%	5%	28%	66%
Visitor Center	314		2%	7%	27%	65%
Ranger programs	67			1%	36%	63%
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	201			6%	33%	61%
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	321		0.3%	11%	36%	52%
Learning about nature, history, or culture	298		0.3%	10%	38%	51%
Commercial services in the park	229	1%	6%	23%	35%	35%
Restrooms	455	4%	11%	29%	34%	22%
Other services (if specified)	7	29%			14%	57%

Figure 31. Rating the quality of specific Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 18.

- Over half of respondents (ranging from 51% to 86%) rated outdoor recreation, park shuttle bus, assistance from park employees, walkways, trails, and roads, park map or brochure, Visitor Center, ranger programs, campgrounds and/or picnic areas, exhibits (indoor and outdoor), and learning about nature, history, or culture as very good.
- Conversely, fewer than half of respondents rated commercial services in the park and restrooms as very good.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate overall quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreation opportunities (Figure 32).

Overall, how would you rate the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Rocky Mountain National Park?

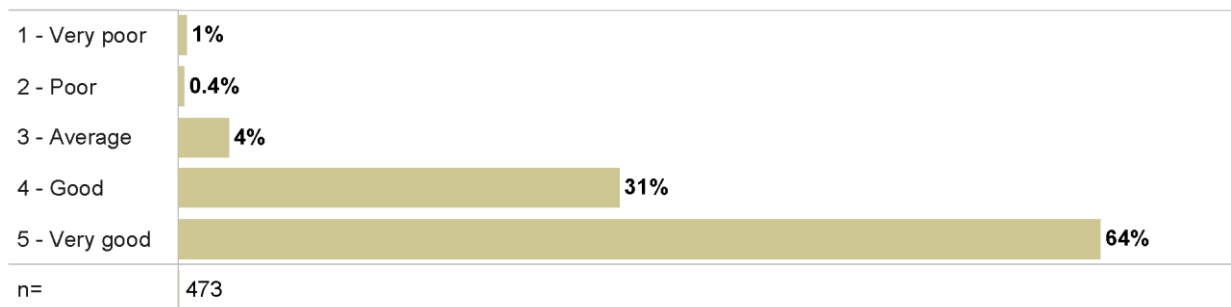


Figure 32. Rating overall quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

- In general, just under two-thirds of respondents (64%) rated the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Rocky Mountain as very good, and another 31% rated them as good.
- Just about one in 20 respondents rated the overall quality as average or below.

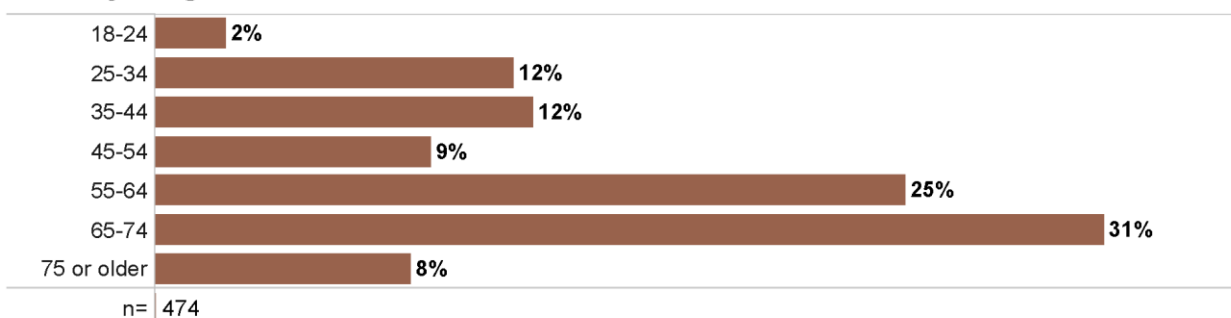


Bull Elk.
NPS

Questions 22-28: Background/Demographics

In the final section of the post-trip survey, respondents were asked various questions about their personal and household demographics. Figure 33 depicts descriptive statistics for respondent age and education.

What is your age?



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

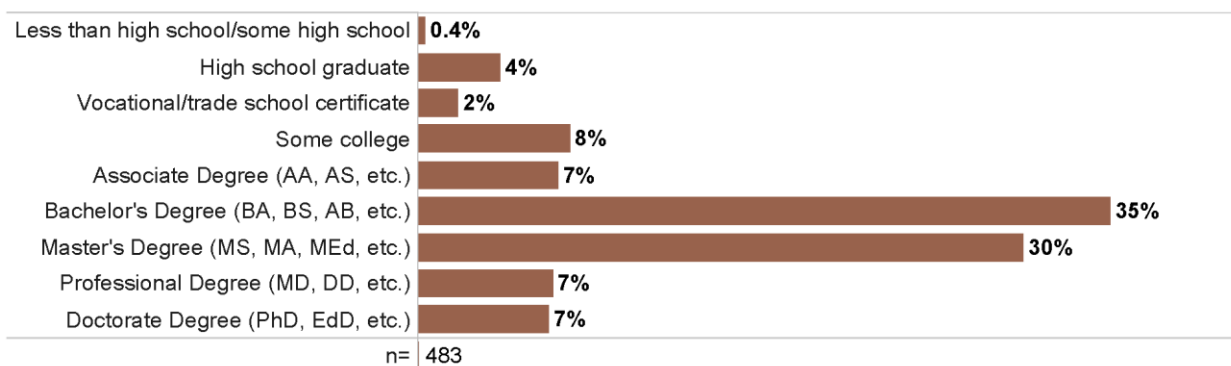


Figure 33. Respondent demographics: age and level of education.

- The most common age categories were 65-74 (31%), 55-64 (25%), and 35-44 (12%). The least represented age group was 18-24 (only 2% of the participants surveyed).
- Most survey respondents reported obtaining higher education, with a combined 94% having some college degree, and a plurality (35%) holding a bachelor's degree.

Respondents were also asked to identify their race(s) and if they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (Figure 34).

What is your race and/or ethnicity? Mark all that apply.

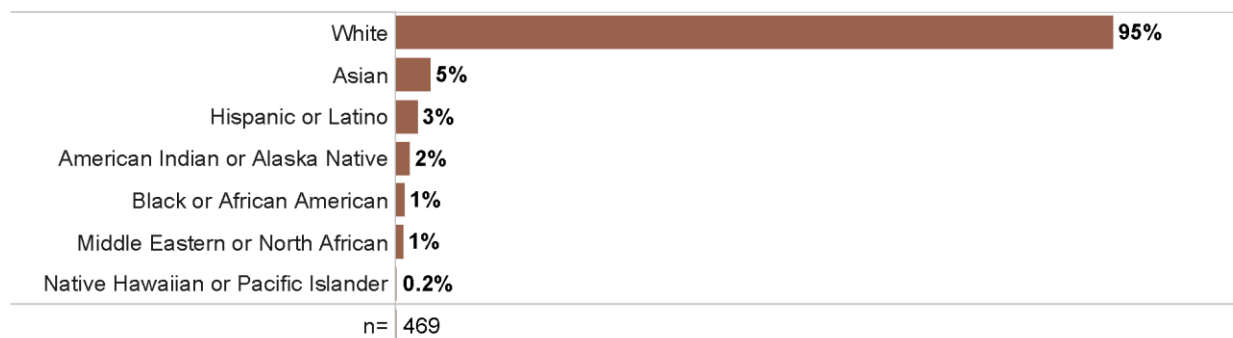


Figure 34. Respondent demographics: race and/or ethnicity.

- The majority of respondents (95%) were White, while 5% were Asian.

Finally, 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 35).

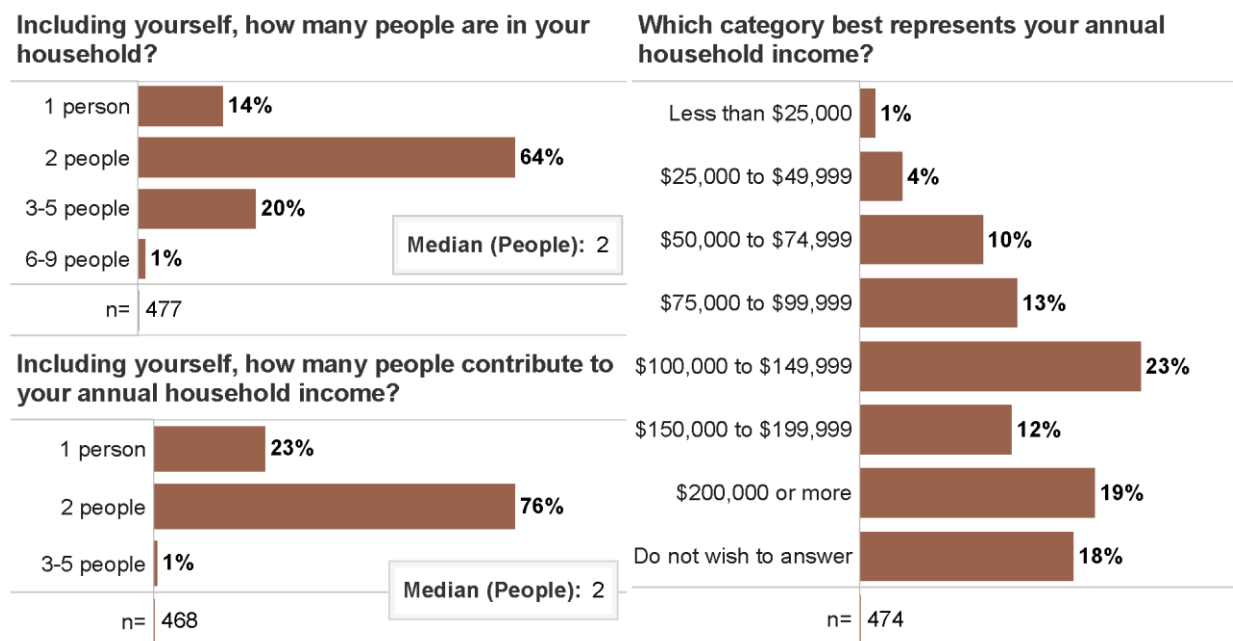


Figure 35. Household demographics: annual household income and household size. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in Appendix A, Table 19.

- Just under two-thirds of respondents (64%) had two people in their household, followed by three to five people (another 20%).

- In addition to obtaining higher education, visitors surveyed at Rocky Mountain also reported relatively high income levels. Around one-quarter of respondents (23%) reported that their annual household income was between \$100,000 to \$149,999, and another 19% earned \$200,000 or more.
- Most respondents (76%) came from a dual-income household.



A sunset over Rocky Mountain National Park.
NPS

Literature Cited

National Park Service (NPS). 2025. 2025 Socioeconomic Monitoring of Rocky Mountain National Park: Visitor intercept and post-trip surveys.
<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2317884>

Appendix A: Accessible Tables

Table 8 through Table 19 contain tabular data from figures found in the body of the report.

Table 8. Data from Figure 2. Previous visits to Rocky Mountain.

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Rocky Mountain over the past 12 months?	611	1
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Rocky Mountain over the past five years?	611	3

Table 9. Data from Figure 3. 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?	1180	1

Table 10. Data from Figure 9. Number of nights spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain, by accommodation type.

Accommodation Type	Sample Size (n)	Median
[If backcountry camping in Rocky Mountain] Number of nights	11	2
[If camping in Rocky Mountain] Number of nights	55	2
[If camping outside of Rocky Mountain in the local area] Number of nights	95	3
[If lodging outside Rocky Mountain in local area] Number of nights	720	4
[If staying in unpaid accommodations] Number of nights	76	4

Table 11. Data from Figure 10. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group, and total group size, while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Group Composition	Sample Size (n)	Median
Adults	1182	2
Children	1182	0
Total group size	1182	2

Table 12. Data from Figure 18. Number of people in respondent's vehicle when entering Rocky Mountain.

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 Rocky Mountain?	1097	2
[If entered by RV/motorhome] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your RV when you entered Rocky Mountain?	16	2
[If entered by motorcycle] Including yourself, how many people were traveling on your motorcycle when you entered Rocky Mountain?	2	2

Table 13. Data from Figure 23. Reasons or motivations to visit Rocky Mountain.

Rating Category	Sample Size (n)
To visit a National Park Service site	468
To experience solitude	476
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	481
To learn more about nature	475
To learn more about American history and culture	477
To spend time with family/friends	480
To get physical exercise	481
To view wildlife or natural scenery	488
To relax	476
Other (if specified)	52

Table 14. Data from Figure 26. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Device Use	Sample Size (n)
Make/receive a cell phone call	458
Send/receive a text message	468
Search the internet/email	454
GPS/Navigation	467
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	451
Make or show a reservation confirmation	447
Other	81

Table 15. Data from Figure 27. The importance of the use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Device Use	Sample Size (n)
Make/receive a cell phone call	472
Send/receive a text message	473
Search the internet/email	472
GPS/Navigation	471
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	469
Make or show a reservation confirmation	466
Other	44

Table 16. Data from Figure 28. Quality of service for personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Device Use	Sample Size (n)
Make/receive a cell phone call	325
Send/receive a text message	364
Search the internet/email	315
GPS/Navigation	366
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	271
Make or show a reservation confirmation	393
Other	26

Table 17. Data from Figure 30. Rating Rocky Mountain experience.

Rating Category	Sample Size (n)
Rocky Mountain is a safe place to visit	482
Rocky Mountain is too crowded	480
Natural resources in Rocky Mountain are in pristine condition	467
The entrance fee for Rocky Mountain is too high	433
Vandalism and crime are not a problem at Rocky Mountain	379
Rocky Mountain is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities	307
Historical and cultural features in Rocky Mountain are well maintained/preserved	399
Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors' experience at Rocky Mountain	432

Table 18. Data from Figure 31. Rating the quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

Rating Category	Sample Size (n)
Visitor Center	314
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	321
Restrooms	455
Walkways, trails, and roads	467
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	201
Assistance from park employees	352
Park map or brochure	405
Ranger programs	67
Commercial services in the park (food, lodging, gifts, rental, etc.)	229
Other services (if specified)	7
Learning about nature, history, or culture	298
Outdoor recreation (sightseeing, camping, bicycling, boating, hiking, etc.)	396
Park shuttle bus	159

Table 19. Data from Figure 35. Household demographics: annual household income and household size.

Question	Sample Size (n)	Median
Including yourself, how many people are in your household?	477	2