



2022 Socioeconomic Research of Isle Royale National Park

Report on 2022 Data Collection (Revised)



Local area map for the Rock Harbor area of Isle Royale National Park.

NPS / CARTER BERMINGHAM

2022 Socioeconomic Research of Isle Royale National Park: Report on 2022 Data Collection (Revised)

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Abstract

A strong mandate and need for socioeconomic monitoring are expressed in the NPS strategic goals for science, in statements by the NPS leadership, and the report of the Second Century Commission. This mandate resulted in a pilot socioeconomic monitoring study in 2015/2016 at a sample of park units across the U.S; the current study uses outcomes from the first stage of the pilot program and progresses into a second stage of the pilot process at 24 NPS units across the United States. Isle Royale National Park (Isle Royale) was selected as one of these units. This report informs core issues of visitor use management and develops a deeper, contemporary understanding of who visits Isle Royale and what they do during their visit. It uses a two-phased survey methodology to capture a representative sample of visitor information, characteristics, and behavior: (1) an on-site intercept survey conducted via tablet, and (2) a follow up (mail-back and/or online survey) for full trip details. The results are organized by these two phases and are intended to assist park managers in understanding current utilization and perception of park resources, operations and potential issues, as well as to facilitate communication and decision-making processes within the park and between the park and its local partners and stakeholders.

The revised version of this report corrects a previous error identified in Figures 5 and 11 and includes minor editorial, formatting, and accessibility updates. No substantive changes have been made to the findings or conclusions presented in the original 2022 report.

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) has both a strong mandate and need for socioeconomic research. This is expressed in the NPS strategic goals for science, in statements by the NPS leadership, in the report of the Second Century Commission, and through the Department of the Interior priorities for 2018–2022. Additionally, a recent U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report identified the needs to better understand and monitor customer experience dimensions where results more directly link to investments made. The need for socioeconomic research and monitoring also was identified in an external review of the NPS Social Science Program and supported in the 2008 Interior Appropriations Bill Joint Explanatory Statement.

This mandate resulted in a pilot socioeconomic monitoring study in 2015/2016 at a sample of park units across the U.S., previously described as “Phase One.” The current study uses outcomes from the 2015/16 pilot program and progresses into “Phase Two” of the pilot process at 24 NPS units across the United States. Isle Royale National Park (Isle Royale) was selected as one of these units. Phase Two seeks to further explore visitor demographics and characteristics, applying recommendations from the 2015/16 Phase One pilot program and validating instrument and method refinements. It is part of the program designed to collect data from in-park visitors at a broad agency level in order to best represent information needs regarding visitors across the National Park System. Data collected during the 2022 Phase Two sampling period¹ are intended to inform individual park managers of key information about their visitors and allow for analysis of data at the agency level for future implementation.

The purpose of this study is to inform core issues of visitor use management, management solutions, and to develop a current and deeper understanding of who visits Isle Royale National Park, what they do during their visit, and their spending profile. The results of the study are intended to assist Isle Royale National Park managers in understanding current utilization and perception of park resources, operations, and issues that may exist due to increasing visitation, and facilitating communication and decision processes within the park and between the park and its local partners and stakeholders.

The study was conducted by a large-scale research team from Otak, Inc., RRC Associates, Inc., and the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana.

¹ It is important to note that during the 2022 Phase Two sampling period, some aspects of the visitor profiles (e.g., perceptions and behavior) may have been impacted, to varying degrees, by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Sunset at Rock Harbor looking out on Lake Superior and the Ranger III ferry.

NPS / CARTER BERMINGHAM



A young bull moose wandering through the Rock Harbor Campground.

NPS / CARTER BERMINGHAM

Methods

The study used a two-phased survey methodology to capture a representative sample of visitor information, characteristics, and behavior:

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

This comprehensive two-phase approach provides the necessary information to make on-the-ground decisions using immediate feedback from the intercept survey while also capturing key in-depth information on visitor spending profiles and trip characteristics for long-term planning. Additionally, the tablet survey was kept brief to ensure the visitor's experience was not altered. The methods also permit a larger sample to be collected on key questions of interest.

Study Area

The Isle Royale local area map is shown in Figure 1. The local area around Isle Royale consists of Keweenaw, Houghton, and Baraga counties in Michigan and Cook County in Minnesota. Within Isle Royale, the study area was comprised of three locations. Table 1 shows more details about sampling locations. The locations and volumes of surveyor effort were determined based on historic visitor volumes and distribution across the park's main areas. It is worth noting that the number of respondents intercepted at the Houghton Visitor Center is more of a reflection of the survey schedule than the actual number of visitors coming through that location. Due to logistical constraints (e.g., travel to and from the island for surveyors), surveyors were unable to intercept the Houghton Visitor Center on a day in which the Ranger III ferry was present. In total, two surveyors spent two full days surveying the Houghton Visitor Center during the survey period.

Table 1. Information about sampling locations in Isle Royale.

Intercept Site	Completed Intercept Surveys		Nearby Attractions
	Number of Surveys	Percent of Surveys	
Windigo	241	39.8%	Washington Creek Campground, Windigo Visitor Center, Beaver Island
Rock Harbor	351	57.9%	Rock Harbor Visitor Center, Rock Harbor Lodge, Tobin Harbor, Stoll Memorial and Trail, Rock Harbor Campground, Suzy's Cave
Houghton Visitor Center	14	2.3%	Park Headquarters, Bridgeview Park, Ranger III Ferry.

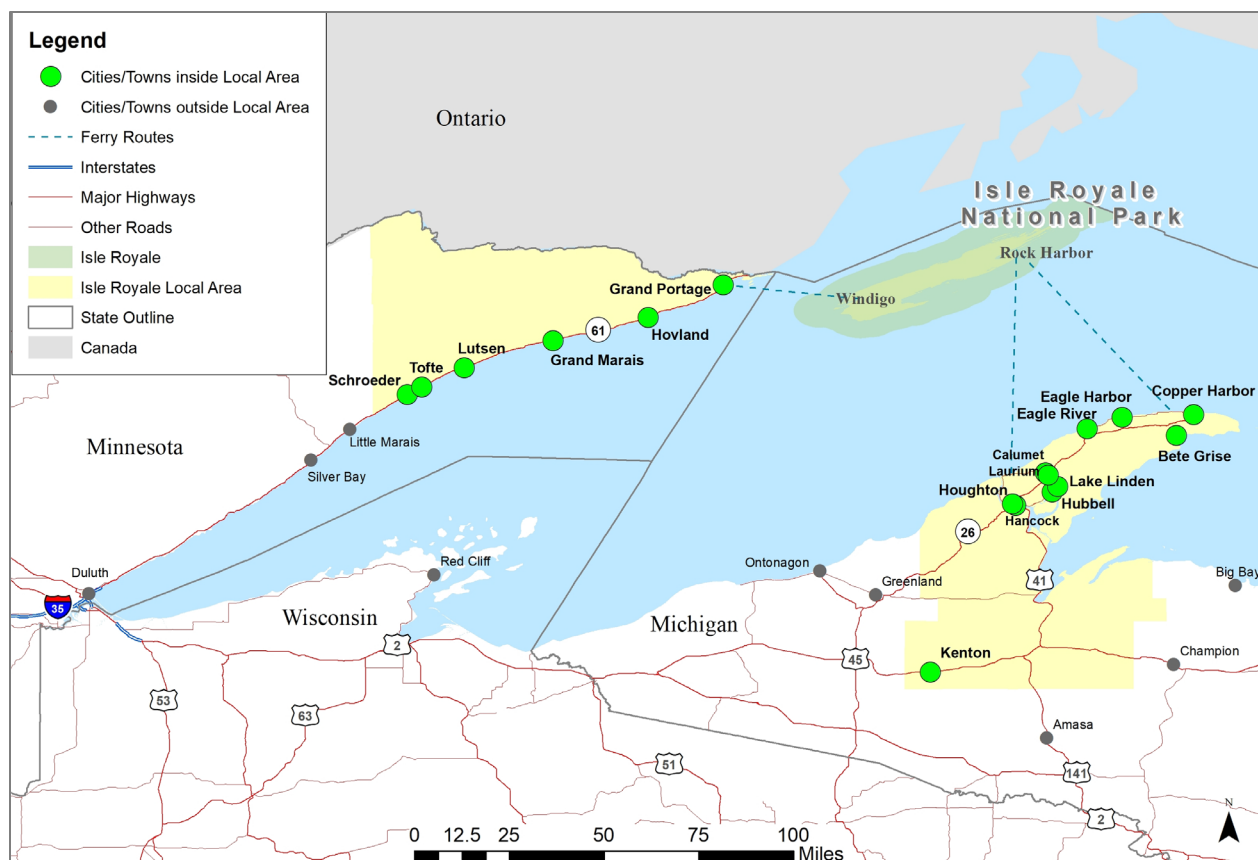


Figure 1. Isle Royale National Park local area map.

NPS

Sampling Period and Procedure

Intercept Survey

The on-site intercept survey was developed to collect rapid visitor information via tablet-based responses, which were then analyzed and provided for park managers within several weeks of conclusion of data collection. This effort allowed for immediate management action if needed.

The intercept sampling was conducted during the period of August 6th to 15th, 2022. A sample of visitors were intercepted while visiting Isle Royale across the designated locations listed in Table 1, above. The majority of respondents were visitors on foot at these locations.

Surveyors approached potential respondents 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 Isle Royale (NPS 2022). If the visitor was eligible (at least 18 years of age, not an Isle Royale 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 Non-Response Bias Analysis section). 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, visitors were invited to participate in a follow-up survey by mail-back or online response. Those who agreed to participate were given an envelope containing a printed copy of the follow-up survey and 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 follow-up survey.

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

1. Complete refusal, refusing to answer any questions, including non-response bias questions;
2. Partial refusal, answering non-response questions but nothing further;
3. Complete intercept, but refuse to take follow-up;
4. Complete intercept and take follow-up.

Table 2. Response outcomes—Isle Royale intercept Survey.

Outcome	Total
Eligible visitors contacted	637
Complete refusals	29
Partial refusals (non-response questions completed)	2
Intercept surveys completed	606
Follow-up surveys distributed	579
Intercept response rate	95.1%
Follow-up acceptance rate	95.5%

During the sampling period, 4 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 Isle Royale. Each surveyor worked nine 7-hour days (six hours data collection and one-hour lunch break) and rotated between several sites, with the field lead providing additional support for the Rock Harbor area. Surveying efforts were often staggered throughout the day and determined through coordination with park staff around the departure and arrival of ferries and seaplanes to the park. Each surveyor had one day off during the 9-day sampling window.

Mail-Back/Online Survey

The follow-up mail-back/online 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 Isle Royale. This method extended data collection and asked participants to complete the survey after their visit either through a postage-paid envelope provided to them, or online via a provided survey link. The follow-up survey covers visitor trip spending details, travel patterns, and perceptions of their recent visit (NPS 2022). Both the intercept survey and the follow-up survey were tagged with a unique identifier (four-digit code) for each respondent so their on-site tablet responses could be

paired with their follow-up responses. Joining the two datasets provides a more complete picture of connecting 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 about a week following the end of each data collection period. This postcard or email thanked them for their original participation and encouraged them to complete the follow-up 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 rate for the follow-up mail-back/online survey.

Table 3. Response rate—Isle Royale follow-up mail-back/online survey.

Outcome	Total
Follow-up surveys distributed	579
Valid follow-up surveys completed	318
Response rate	54.9%

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 on-site intercept survey. These three questions can then be compared to both those who completed the intercept survey only, and those who completed both the intercept and follow-up surveys. With an intercept survey response rate of 95.1%, concern over *intercept* non-response is muted. Tables 4 through 6 below show results of bias testing between intercept-only and full survey respondents.

Table 4. Non-response bias question: “Are you a permanent or seasonal/second home resident of the local area around Isle Royale?”. Note: p-value = 0.31.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	5.8%	23	7.8%
No	294	94.2%	271	92.2%

Table 5. Non-response bias question: “Do you currently live in the United States?” Note: p-value not computed due to low cell counts in “No” category.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	312	100.0%	289	98.3%
No	0	0.0%	5	1.7%

Table 6. 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 Isle Royale and/or within the local area?” Note: p-value = 0.60.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	300	96.2%	285	96.9%
No	12	3.8%	9	3.1%

Using a p-value of 0.05, the distribution of responses among full survey respondents and intercept-only respondents show no significant differences for any of the three non-response variables. Therefore, based on the variables measured, this study does not have a known bias due to non-response.

Results

Intercept Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 606 visitor intercept surveys conducted in Isle Royale National Park from August 6th to 15th, 2022. 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. 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.

Questions 1–2: Visitor Residency

First, respondents were asked to indicate if they were permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Isle Royale. If they did not reside permanently or seasonally in the local area, they 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.

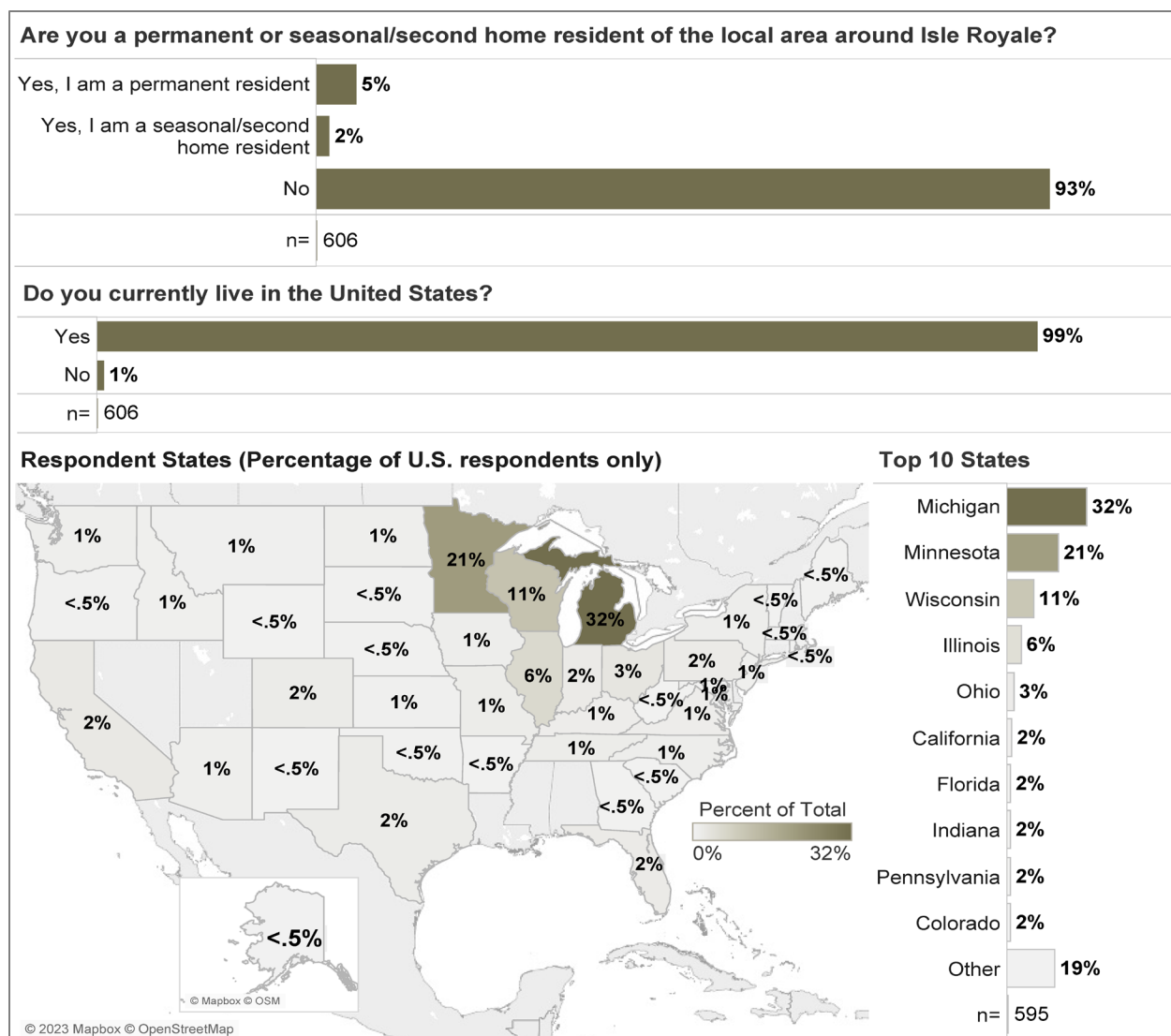


Figure 2. Visitor local residency status and geographic origin of domestic visitors to Isle Royale.
NPS

- Under 10% of respondents (a combined 7%) stated that they were either permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Isle Royale.
- There was a large geographic concentration of visitors from both Michigan (32%) and Minnesota (21%) relative to other parts of the country. Michigan and Minnesota are the two states that provide the best means for access to the park and are the closest in proximity.
- Among the 99% of respondents currently residing in the U.S., 32% reside in Michigan, followed Minnesota (21%), Wisconsin (11%), Illinois (6%), and Ohio (3%).

Question 3: Trip Purpose

If respondents indicated that they were not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area, they were asked about the overall purpose for their trip away from home (Figure 3).

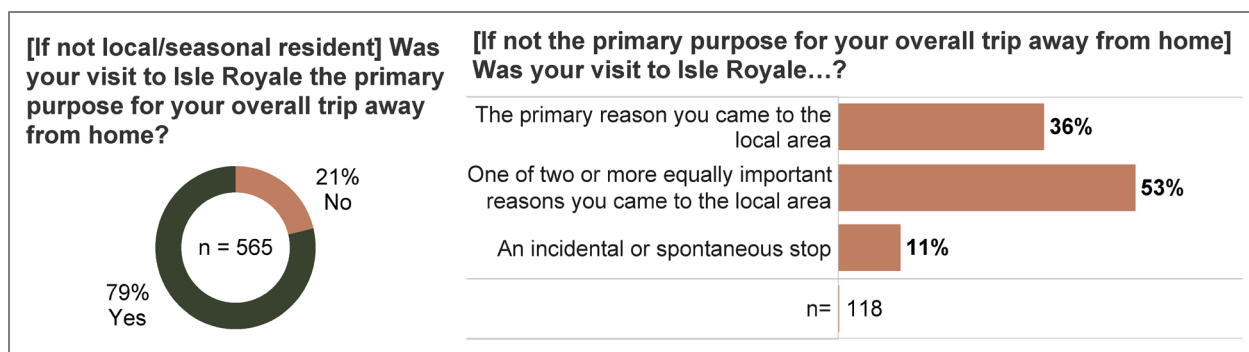


Figure 3. Role of Isle Royale in overall trip purpose.

NPS

- For a majority of non-local respondents (79%), visiting Isle Royale was the primary purpose for their overall trip away from home.
- Among those respondents for whom Isle Royale was not their primary trip purpose, 53% stated that their visit to Isle Royale was one of two or more equally important reasons you came to the local area, while another 36% indicated that it was the primary reason they came to the local area.

Question 4: Length of Stay

If respondents indicated that they were not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Isle Royale, they were asked 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 4.

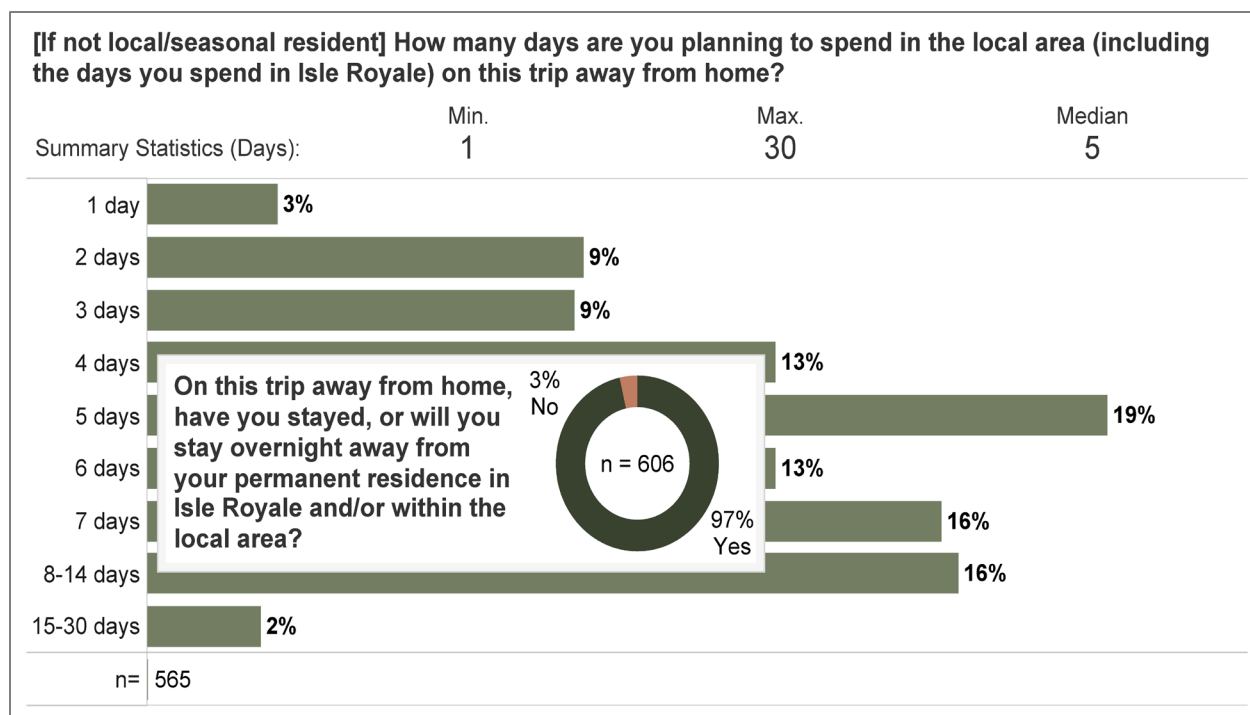


Figure 4. Time spent in the local area around Isle Royale.

NPS

- A small proportion of non-local respondents (3%) spent just one day in the local area, while the highest percentage of respondents (19%) spent five days in the local area. In addition, 16% of respondents reported staying seven days in the local area, while a collective 18% spent eight or more days. The median length of stay was five days.
- Additionally, nearly all respondents (97%; 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.

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). Note that values do not add to 100% as respondents could select multiple lodging types. It is worth noting when reviewing results that Isle Royale is a remote park with very limited options for lodging on the island. Most lodging options for the park are located on the east side of the island at the Rock Harbor Lodge, while the Windigo Camper Cabins are the only option for visitors on the west side of the island.

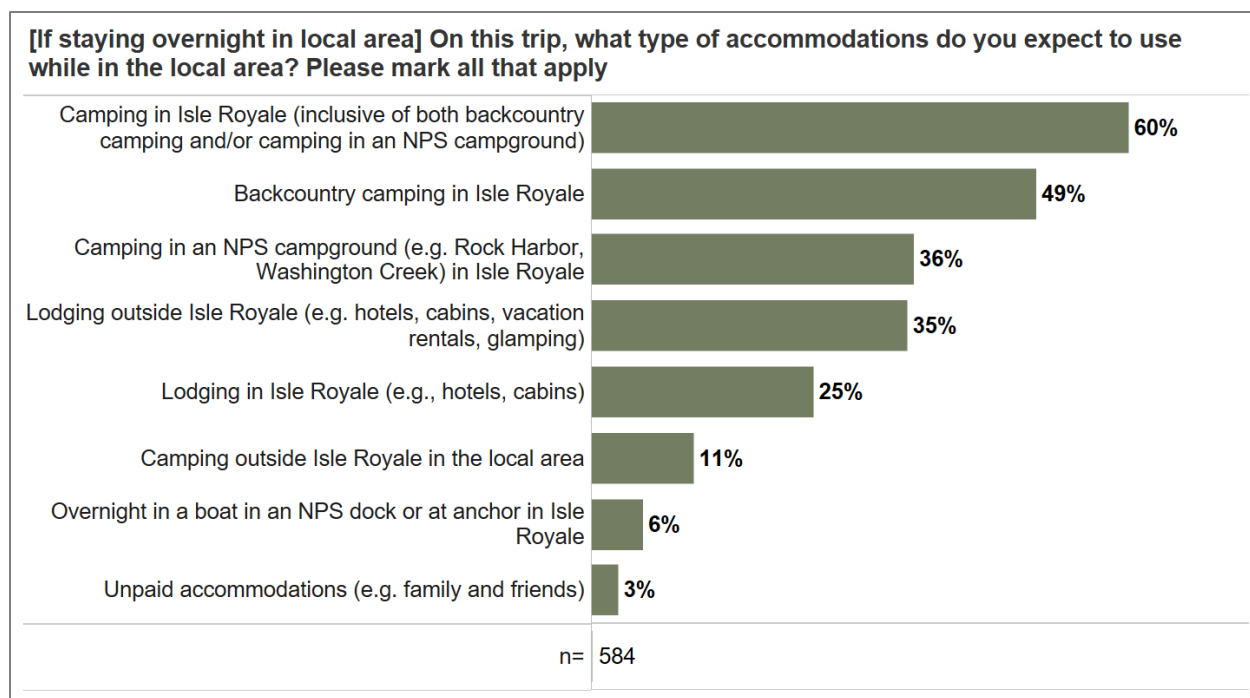


Figure 5. Accommodation types used in the local area around Isle Royale.

NPS

- In total, 60% of respondents camped either in a backcountry or frontcountry campground at Isle Royale. Almost half (49%) reported backcountry camping specifically in the park.
- This was followed in prevalence by those who stayed in lodging outside Isle Royale (35%), and those who stayed in lodging while in Isle Royale (25%).

Respondents who camped in Isle Royale were asked in which campground(s) they had stayed or planned to stay (Figure 6).

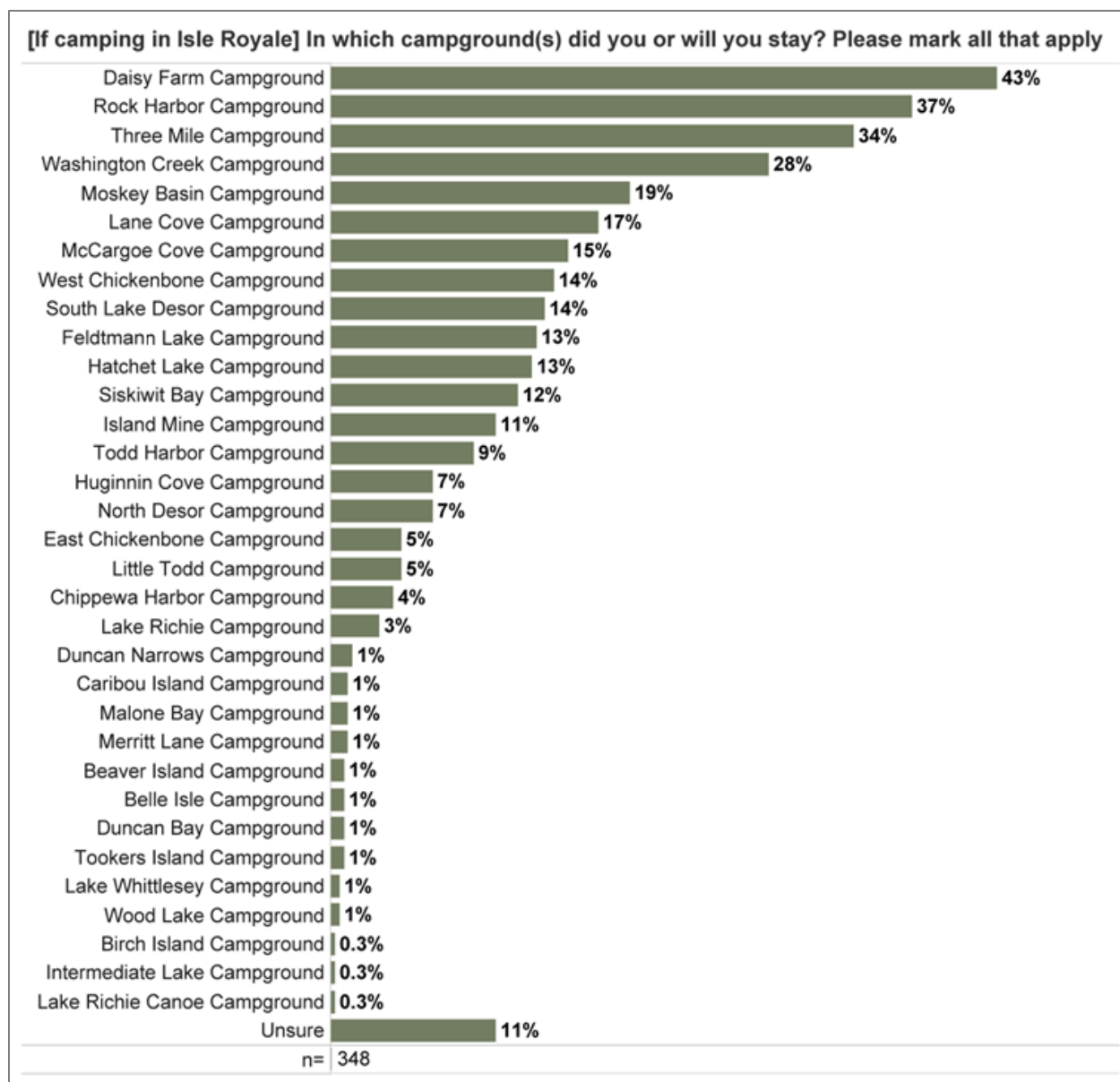


Figure 6. Campground use within Isle Royale.

NPS

- The Daisy Farm Campground reported the highest percentage of respondents (43%) who stayed at the site during the survey period. This was followed in prevalence by Rock Harbor Campground (37%), Three Mile Campground (34%), and Washington Creek Campground (28%).
- Less than 1% of respondents reported staying at the Birch Island, Intermediate Lake, and Lake Richie Canoe campgrounds. It should be noted that roughly one in ten respondents (11%) were unsure of the campground in which they would be staying at that evening.

Next, respondents who camped in Isle Royale were asked on how many nights, if any, they had to share a campsite with another group at each campground in which they had stayed. Figure 7 provides results for this question for all campgrounds that received a minimum sample of n = 30 responses.

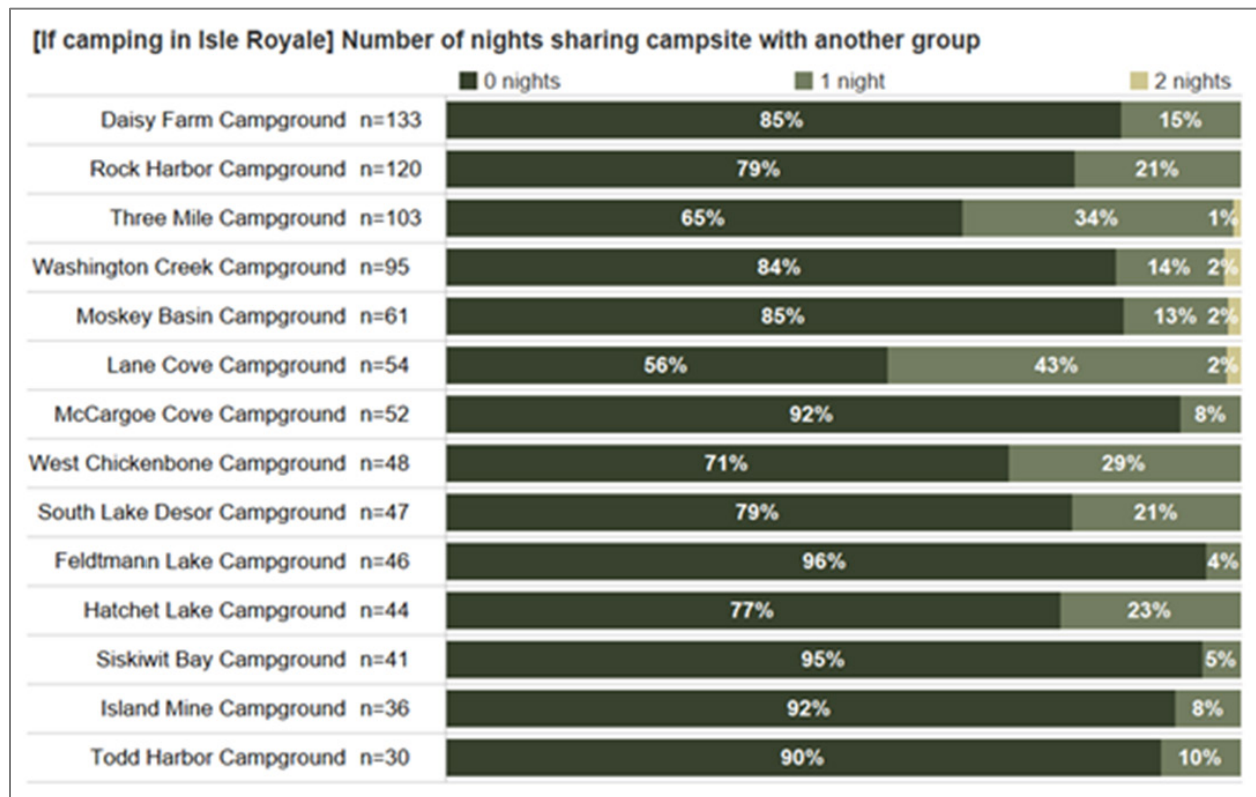


Figure 7. Campsite sharing within Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 8](#).

NPS

- Of the campgrounds with sufficient sample size, the Lane Cove Campground reported the highest percentage of respondents who had to share a campsite with another group for at least one night (45%). This was followed in prevalence by the Three Mile Campground (35%) and the West Chickenbone Campground (29%).
- For the Todd Harbor (90%), Island Mine (92%), McCargoe Cove (92%), Siskiwit Bay (95%), and Feldtmann Lake (96%) campgrounds, at least 90% of respondents reported they did not share a campsite with another group. Excluding the Three Mile and Lane Cove campgrounds, at least 70% of respondents for all remaining campsites reported they did not have to share a campsite with another group.

Respondents who lodged in Isle Royale were asked in which lodge(s) they had stayed or planned to stay, while respondents who stayed overnight in a boat in Isle Royale were asked in which location(s) they had or planned to dock or anchor their boat (Figure 8).

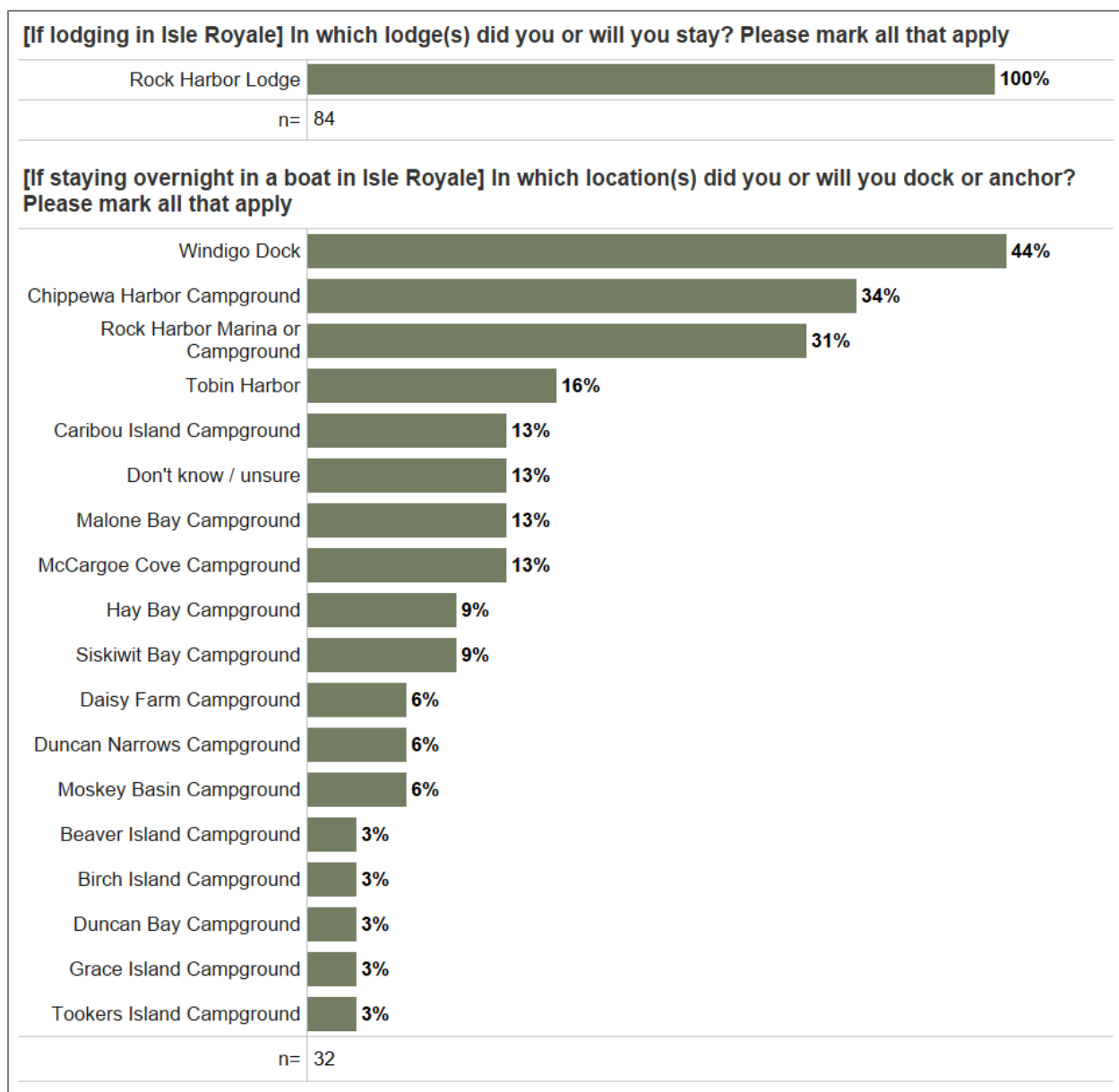


Figure 8. Lodge, dock, and anchor location use within Isle Royale.

NPS

- For those respondents who stayed in lodging on the island during their visit, all (100%) reported staying at the Rock Harbor Lodge. The Windigo side of the park does offer lodging in the form of the Windigo Camper Cabins. However, there were no respondents who selected that option during the survey period.
- For those respondents who reported staying overnight in a boat in Isle Royale, the plurality reported staying at the Windigo Dock (44%), followed by the Chippewa Harbor Campground (34%), and the Rock Harbor Marina or Campground (31%).

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

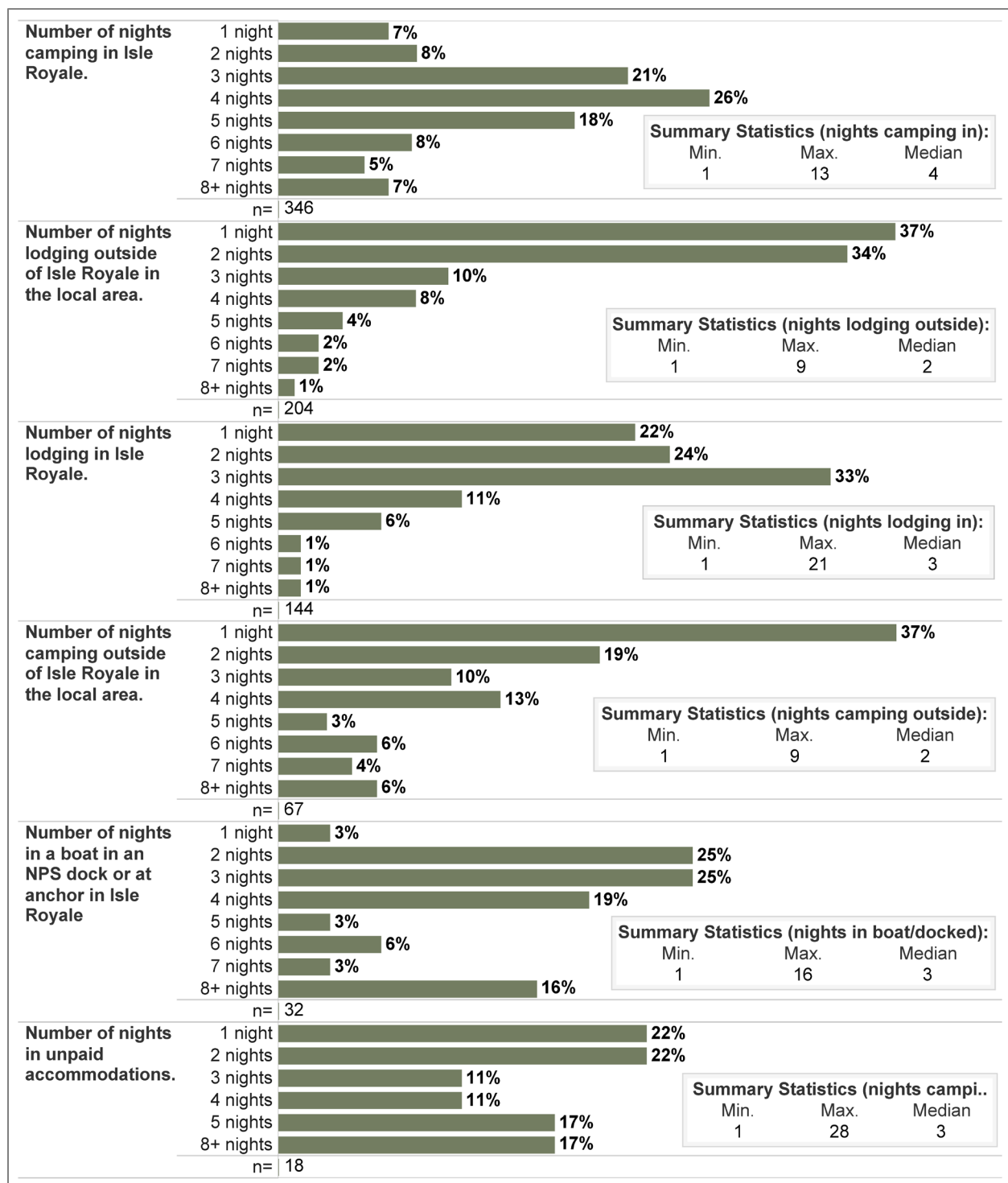


Figure 9. Number of nights spent in the local area around Isle Royale, by accommodation type. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 9](#).

NPS

- Among the 67% of overnight respondents who camped on Isle Royale (per Figure 5), median length of stay was four nights. The highest percentage of respondents (26%) were spending four nights camping in the park; a majority of respondents (62%), reported spending four nights or fewer for their trip.
- Among the 39% of overnight respondents who lodged outside of Isle Royale in the local area (per Figure 5), median length of stay was two nights. The majority of respondents (71%) lodged two nights or fewer in the local area this trip; 81% spent three nights or fewer.
- Among the 28% of overnight respondents who stayed in lodging on Isle Royale (per Figure 5), median length of stay was three nights. Just under half (46%) of campers were spending two nights or fewer camping in the park this trip; 79% spent three nights or fewer.
- Among the 13% of overnight respondents who camped outside of Isle Royale (per Figure 5), median length of stay was two nights, though the plurality (37%) stayed just one night.
- Among the 7% of overnight respondents who stayed overnight in a boat in an NPS dock or at anchor on Isle Royale (per Figure 5), median length of stay was three nights. One quarter of respondents (25%), respectively, stayed either two nights or three nights in a boat on Isle Royale.
- Among the 3% of overnight respondents who stayed in unpaid accommodations in the local area (per Figure 5), median length of stay three nights. There was much broader spread in length of overnight stay among those staying in unpaid accommodations than those in paid options. Caution should be applied when interpreting results for this group due to the small size of the sample ($n < 30$).

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 Isle Royale (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 visitors were informed not to account for the larger group with whom they may have traveled, such as a school, church, scout, or tour group.

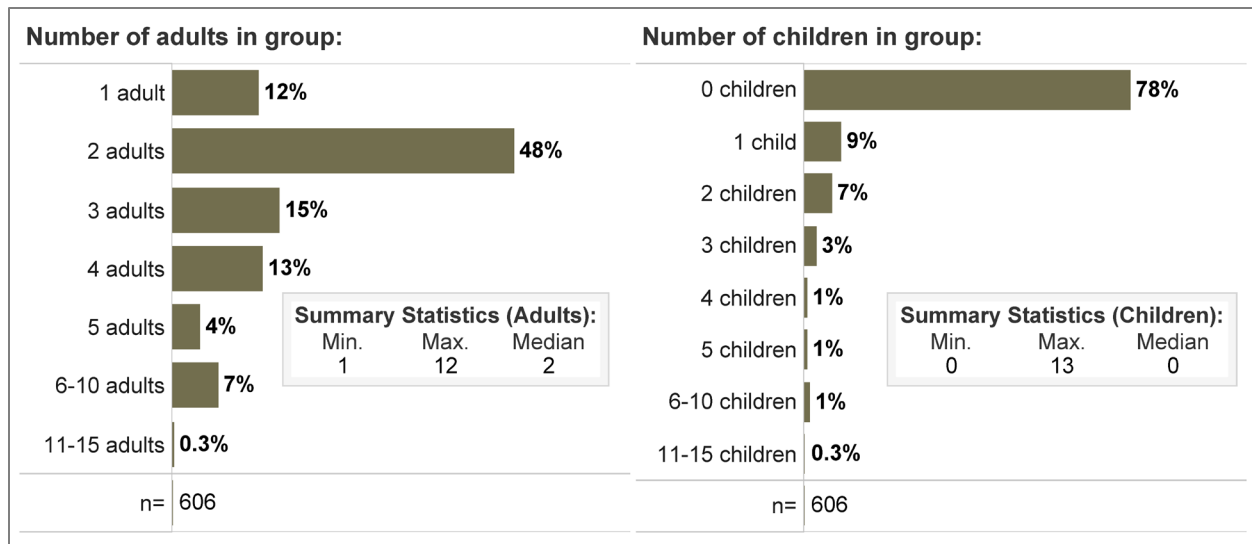


Figure 10. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group while visiting Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 10](#).

NPS

- The median number of adults per group was two. Close to half of all groups (48%) included a total of two adults.
- Most groups (78%) did not include any children.

Respondents were then asked to provide the age of each member of their group (Figure 11).

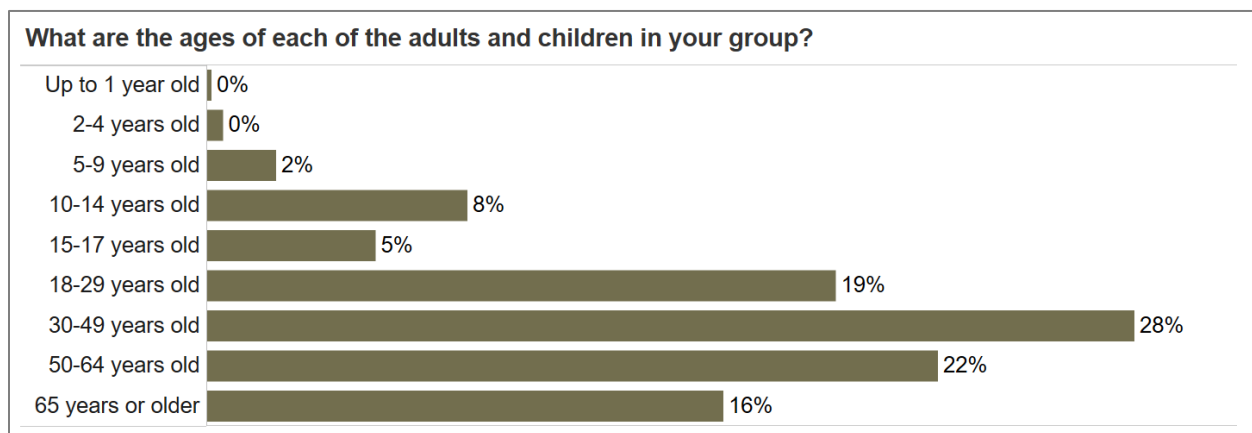


Figure 11. Age distribution of all members of respondent's personal group while visiting Isle Royale.

NPS

- The most common age of the adults and children in a personal group was 30–49 years old (28%), followed by 50–64 years old (22%), and 18–29 years old (19%).
- Children (i.e., visitors under 18 years old) accounted for a combined total of roughly 15% of group members.

Questions 13–17: Park Use Characteristics

First, respondents were asked to indicate if they planned to visit Isle Royale 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 12 and Table 7).

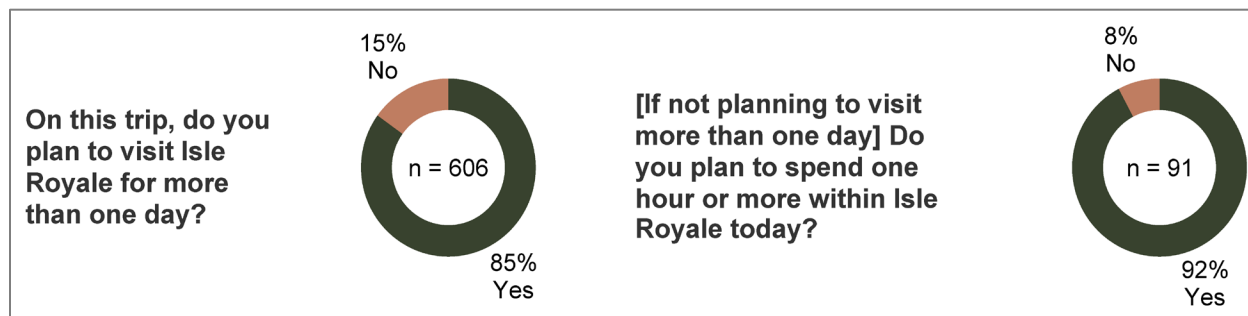


Figure 12. Duration of the respondent's trip to Isle Royale.

NPS

Table 7. Amount of time spent within Isle Royale.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If not planning to spend one hour or more] How many minutes do you plan to spend within Isle Royale today?	7	15	30	15
[If planning to spend less than a day, but one hour or more] How many hours do you plan to spend within Isle Royale today?	82	2	20	4
[If planning to visit at least one day] How many days do you plan to spend within Isle Royale on this trip?	517	1	28	4
[If planning to visit at least one day] On how many different days do you expect to enter the park?	515	1	14	1

- While visiting Isle Royale, most visitors (85%) did plan to spend more than one day in the park.
- Among the 15% of visitors who did not spend more than a day in Isle Royale, the majority (92%) planned to spend one hour or more in the park. The median length of time spent in the park among this group was four hours.
- The remaining 85% of visitors planned to visit for more than one day; among those visitors, the median length of stay was four days.
- Those respondents who spent at least one day in the park were also asked on how many different days they expected to enter the park; the median answer was one day.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate the most recent entrance they used to enter Isle Royale. Respondents who entered by boat or seaplane (i.e., most recently entered Isle Royale anywhere other than the Houghton Visitor Center) were then asked the departure location of the boat or seaplane on

which they most recently entered the park. Responses to this series of questions are presented in Figure 13.

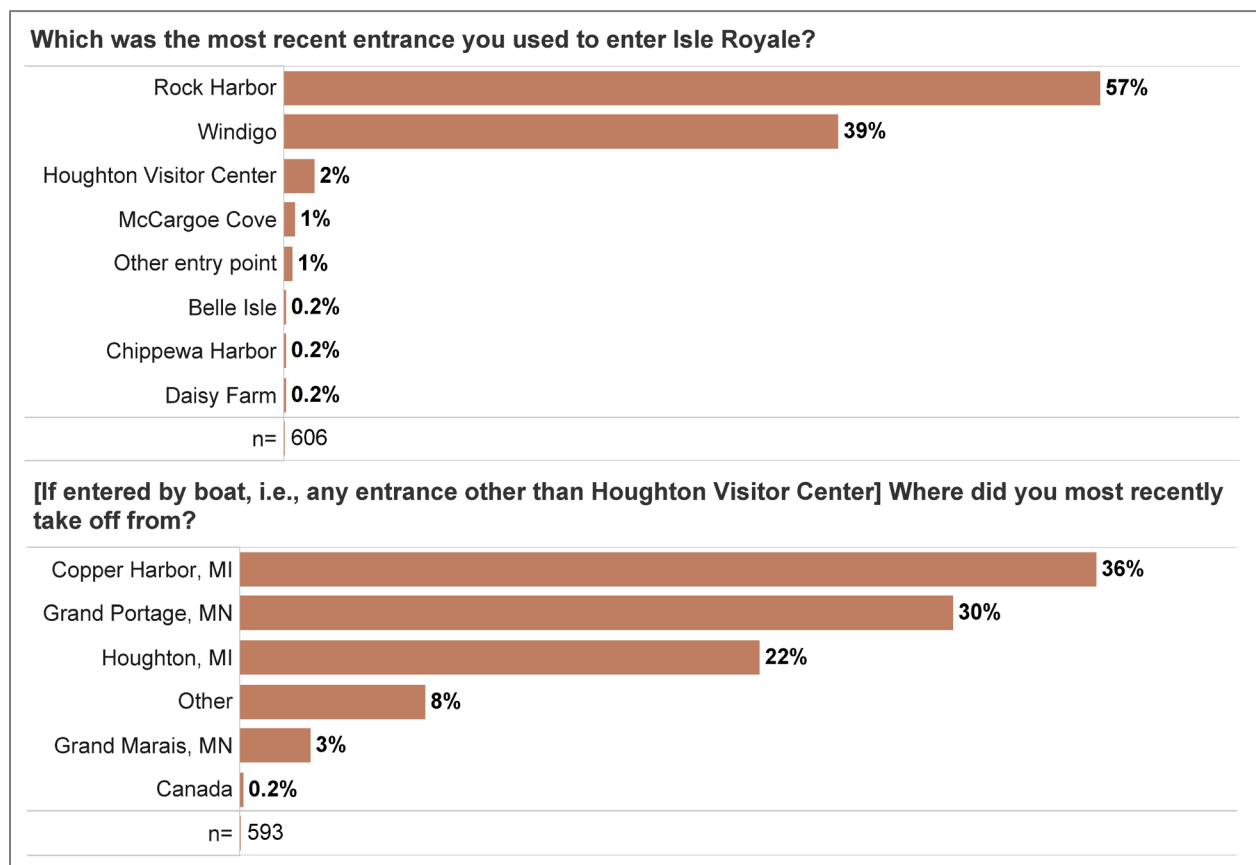


Figure 13. Most recent entrance used to enter Isle Royale and departure location.

NPS

- The Rock Harbor entrance was the most commonly used entrance to Isle Royale (57%).
- Another 39% of respondents reported entering Isle Royale through Windigo, followed by just 2% who reported entering via the Houghton Visitor Center in Houghton, MI (Isle Royale park headquarters are located in Houghton, MI).
- The most commonly used launch point for beginning a journey out to Isle Royale was Copper Harbor, MI, with 36% of respondents taking off from that location. Another 30% reported taking off from Grand Portage, MN, while 22% left from Houghton, MI.
- It should be noted that the proportion of respondents who provided a location from which they took off includes both the number of respondents who took off via water-based transportation (e.g., ferry, personal boat, etc.) and those who used seaplanes.

Respondents were also presented with a list of locations within Isle Royale and asked to indicate if they had been to or planned to visit them (Figure 14).

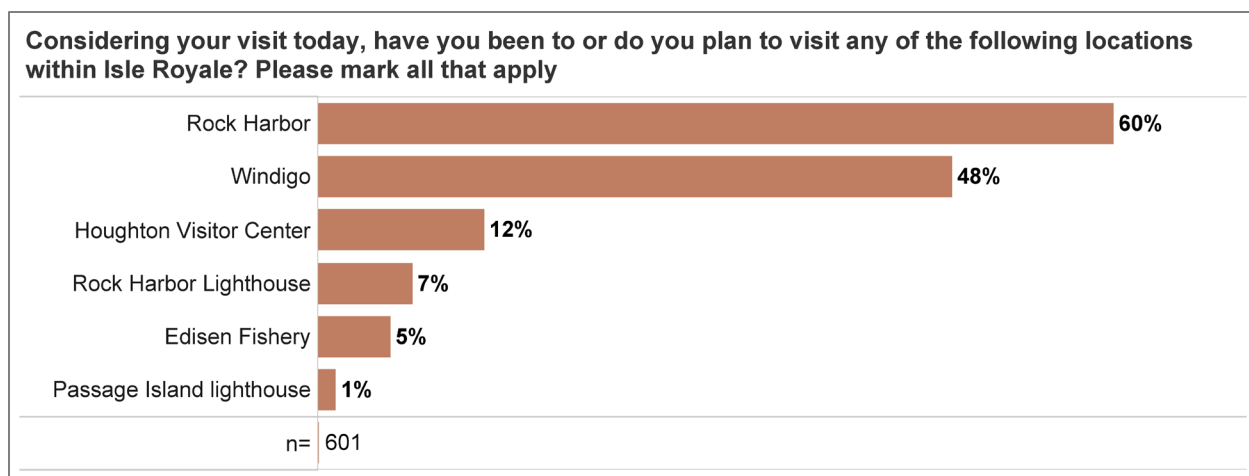


Figure 14. Park locations visited during the most recent trip to Isle Royale.

NPS

- The most commonly visited location in Isle Royale was Rock Harbor (60% of respondents had either been there or planned to visit it on their trip), followed by Windigo (48%) and the Houghton Visitor Center (12%).
- The Passage Island Lighthouse was the least-visited location from the list provided, with only 1% of respondents reporting having visited or planning to visit.

Question 18: Transportation

Visitors were asked about the form of transportation they used to enter Isle Royale on the day they were surveyed (Figure 15).

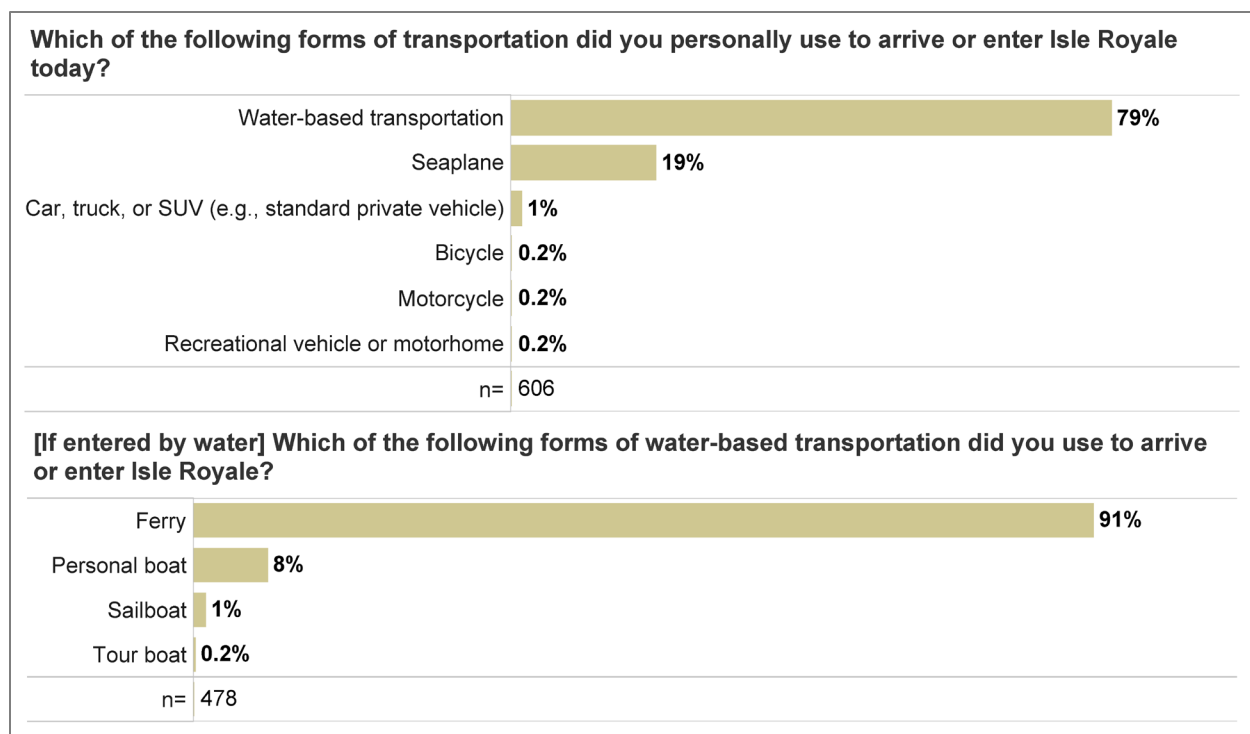


Figure 15. Form of transportation used to enter Isle Royale on the day of the survey.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (79%) reported that they used some form of water-based transportation to access Isle Royale on the day of the survey.
- This was followed by the use of a seaplane (19%), and, distantly, by a standard private vehicle (e.g., car, truck, SUV) (1%). It should be noted that respondents who entered the park via a car, truck, or SUV, were most likely surveyed on mainland at the Houghton Visitor Center and represent a proportion of visitors so small that results should be interpreted with caution.

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 16).

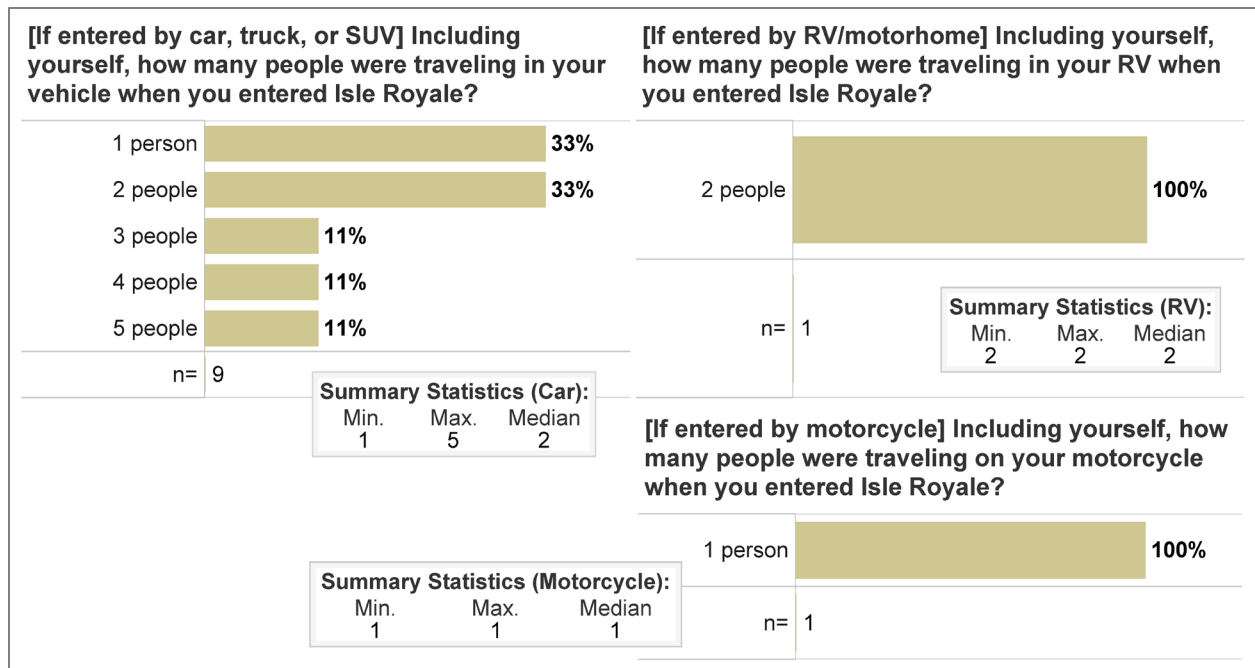


Figure 16. Number of people in or on respondent's vehicle when entering Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 11](#).

NPS

- One-third of respondents traveling by car reported two people, while another 33% reported a group size of one person (33%). This was followed by groups of three people, four people, and five people (11% each, respectively).
- The only respondents entering Isle Royale by RV/motorhome reported traveling in a group of two (100%).
- The only motorcyclist was traveling on their own.
- Due to the nature of visitation to the park (i.e., mainly water-based transportation), sample size for questions targeting motorized vehicle entrances is expectedly small. While these results are less relevant to a park like Isle Royale, they remain in this document as they are included in all reports for park units that are featured in the SEM program. As with all findings with a sample size less than 30, results should be interpreted with caution.

Question 20: Previous Visits to Isle Royale

Respondents were asked if they were first time visitors to Isle Royale. Repeat visitors were then asked how many visits they have made to Isle Royale in the last 12 months and the last five years (Figure 17).

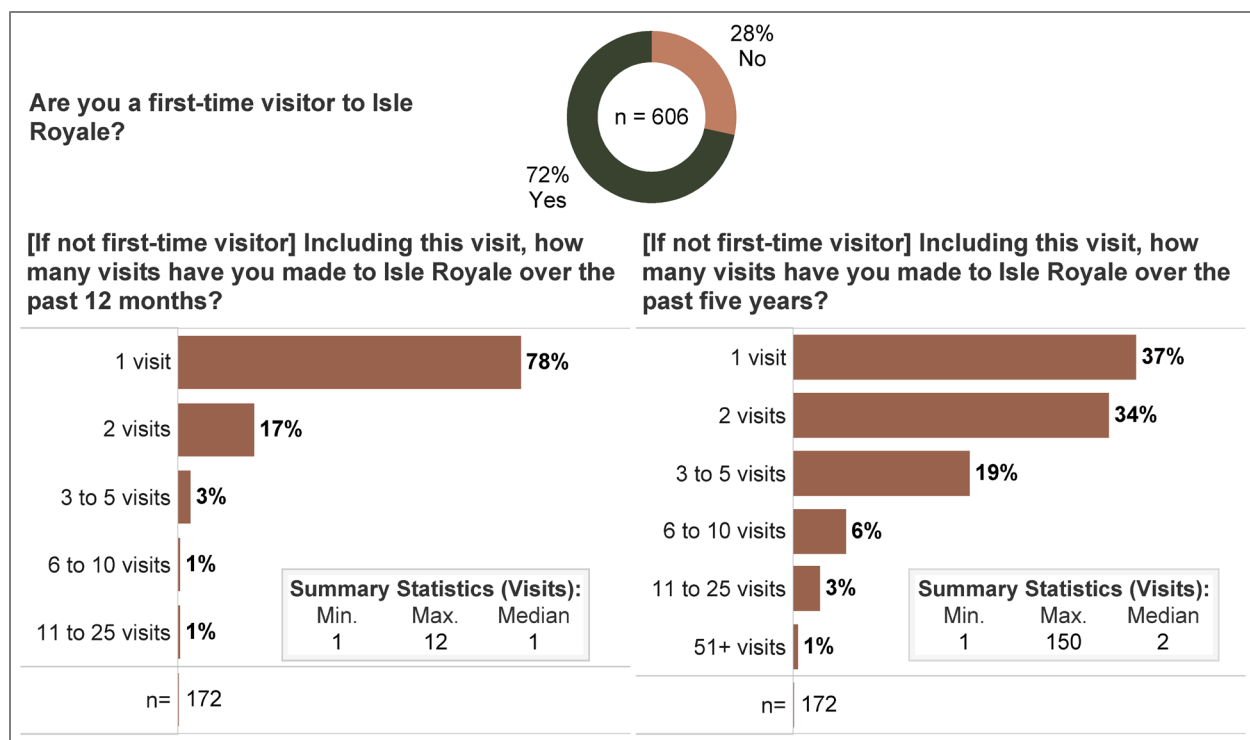


Figure 17. Previous visits to Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 12](#).

NPS

- Most respondents (72%) were on their first ever trip to Isle Royale.
- Among the 28% of respondents who were repeat visitors, the majority (78%) were on their first visit in the past 12 months (i.e., had last visited more than a year ago).
- However, the majority of repeat visitors (63%) had visited two or more times in the past 5 years.
- The median number of visits made in the past five years was two, including the current trip; 4% of repeat visitors had made more than ten visits in the past five years.

Question 21: 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 18).

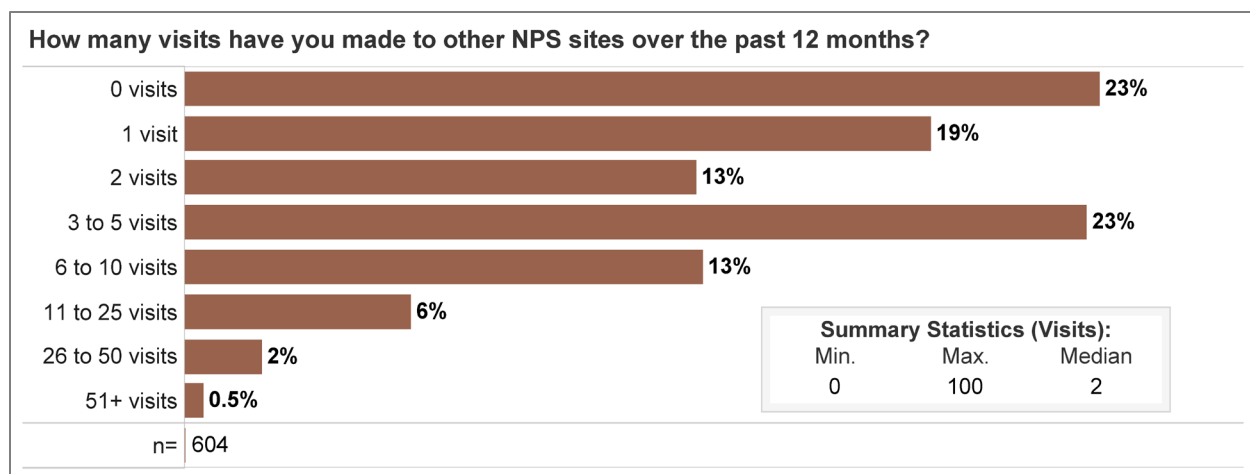


Figure 18. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 13](#).

NPS

- The majority of respondents (77%) 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 45% had made three or more visits in the past year.

Follow-Up Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 318 follow-up visitor surveys received by mail-back or online following fieldwork conducted in Isle Royale National Park in summer of 2022. 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 Isle Royale

First, respondents were asked what sources they used to obtain information about Isle Royale prior to their trip, and whether they had the information they needed on their trip (Figure 19).

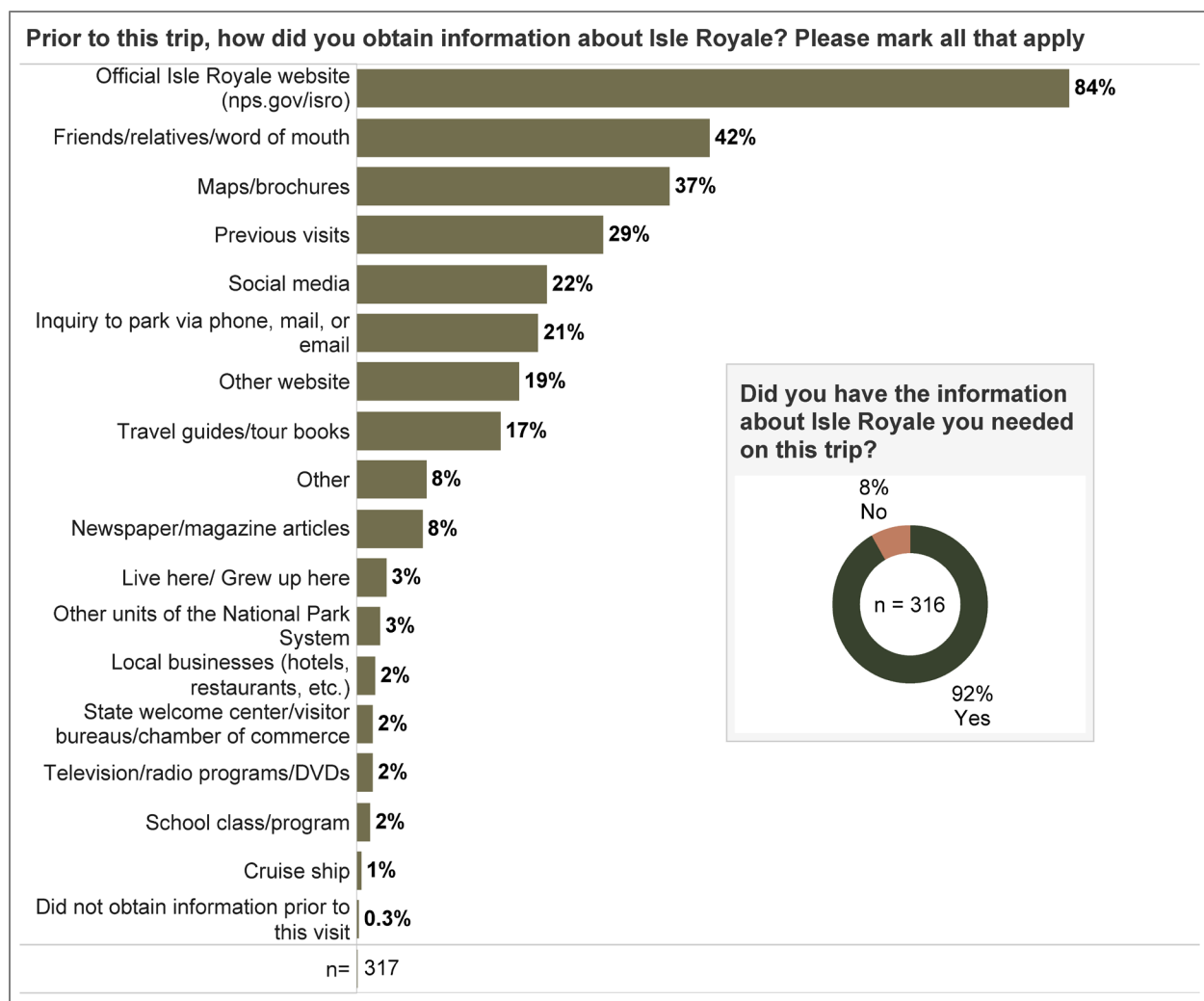


Figure 19. Sources used to obtain information about Isle Royale prior to the trip.

NPS

- The most used resource was the official Isle Royale website (nps.gov/isro), with 84% of respondents reportedly using it. The second most common source was friends/relatives/word of mouth (42%), followed by maps/brochures (37%), previous visits (29%), and social media (22%).
- In a follow-up question, 92% of respondents said that they had the information about Isle Royale that they needed on their trip, while 8% 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. These comments are provided as an accompanying document for review.

Question 3: Transportation

While in the intercept survey, respondents indicated a mode of transportation they used to enter the park on the day of the intercept, the follow-up survey asked respondents to select all forms of transportation they personally used to travel from their home to Isle Royale on their trip (Figure 20).

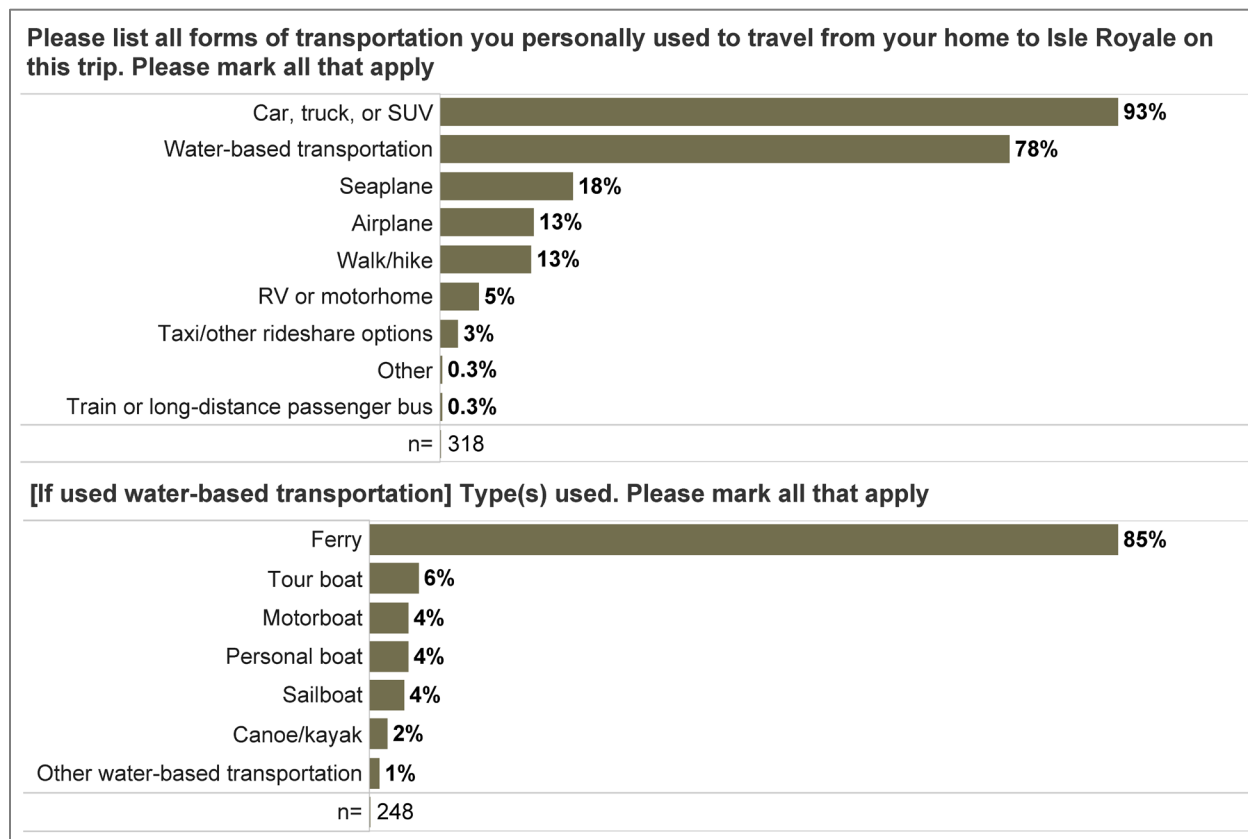


Figure 20. Forms of transportation used to travel from home to Isle Royale on the recent trip.

NPS

- Nearly all respondents (93%) used a personal vehicle, such as a car, truck, or SUV, at some point during their trip from home to Isle Royale.
- The second most common mode of travel was water-based transportation (78%), followed by seaplane (18%).

Question 4: Travel Party Composition

Respondents were asked what type of group they were with during their visit to Isle Royale on the day of the survey (Figure 21).

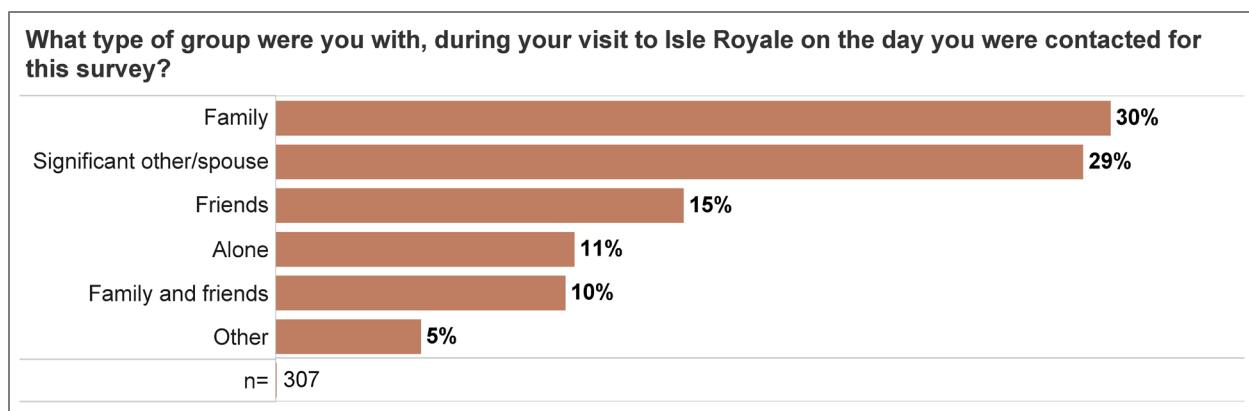


Figure 21. Travel party composition during Isle Royale visit.

NPS

- Just under one-third of respondents (30%) visited Isle Royale with their family on the day of the survey.
- Roughly another third of respondents (29%) explored Isle Royale with their significant other/spouse, and another 15% visited the park with their friends.

Question 10: Entrance Fees

Respondents were asked to indicate which type of entrance fees applied to them personally on their most recent trip to Isle Royale (Figure 22).

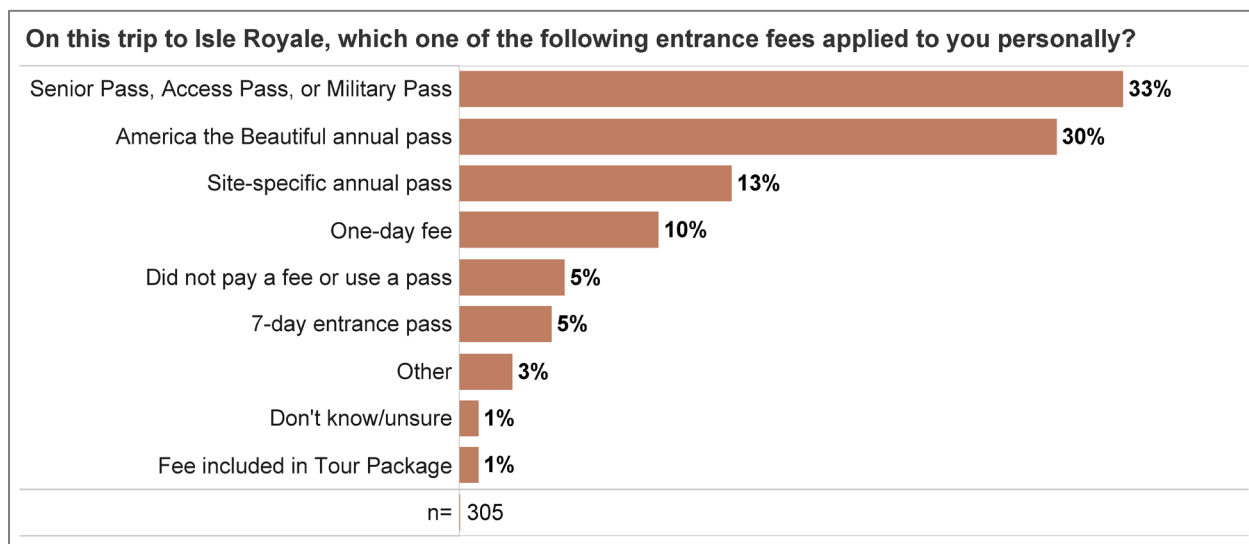


Figure 22. Entrance fees to enter Isle Royale on the most recent trip.

NPS

- One-third of respondents (33%) reported using a Senior Pass, Access Pass, or Military Pass, and another 30% entered using an America the Beautiful annual pass.

- In contrast, 28% of respondents entered using an Isle Royale-specific pass or fee (i.e., annual pass, 7-day, or single-day entrance fee).

Questions 12–14: Trip Characteristics

Respondents were asked if they visited other National Park Service sites on their trip away from home (Figure 23).

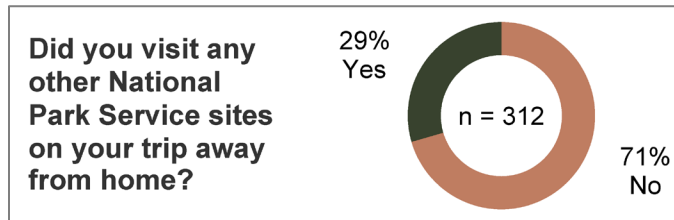


Figure 23. NPS sites visited on trip away from home.
NPS

- The majority (71%) of all respondents had not visited another NPS site on their trip, while 29% identified Isle Royale as one of several NPS sites 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). These comments are provided in an accompanying document.

Survey respondents were then asked to identify all activities that they participated in while visiting Isle Royale, and which of those was their primary activity (Figure 24).

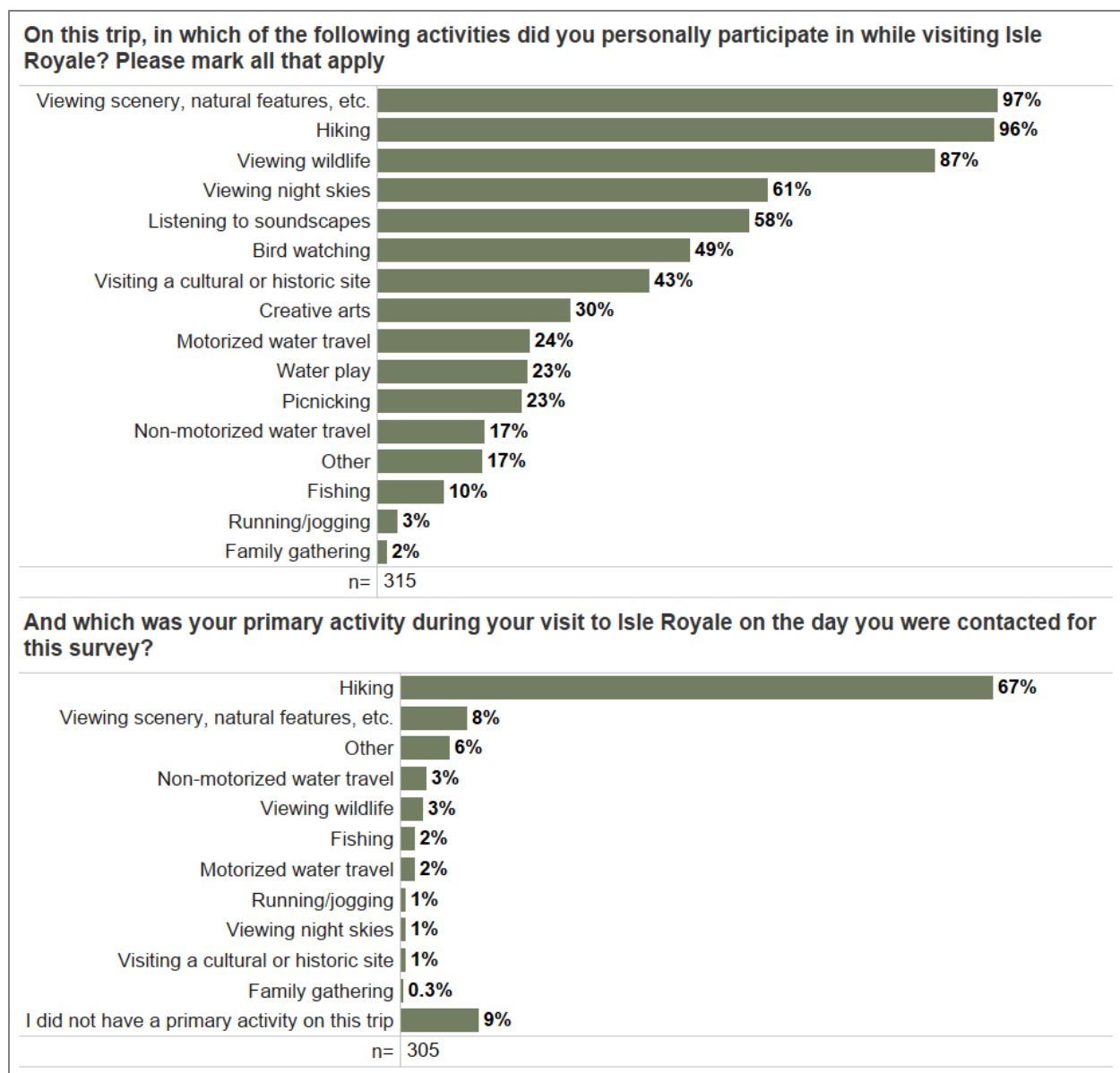


Figure 24. Participation in activities at Isle Royale.

NPS

- Almost all visitors reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (97%), hiking (96%), and viewing wildlife (87%).
- Running/jogging and family gatherings were all uncommon activities (reported by 3% or fewer of respondents).
- The majority of respondents (67%) reported hiking as their primary activity, followed by viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (8%).

Questions 15–16: Reasons to Visit

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of various reasons to visit Isle Royale on their trip, then asked which of those was the most important reason for them to visit Isle Royale (Figure 25).

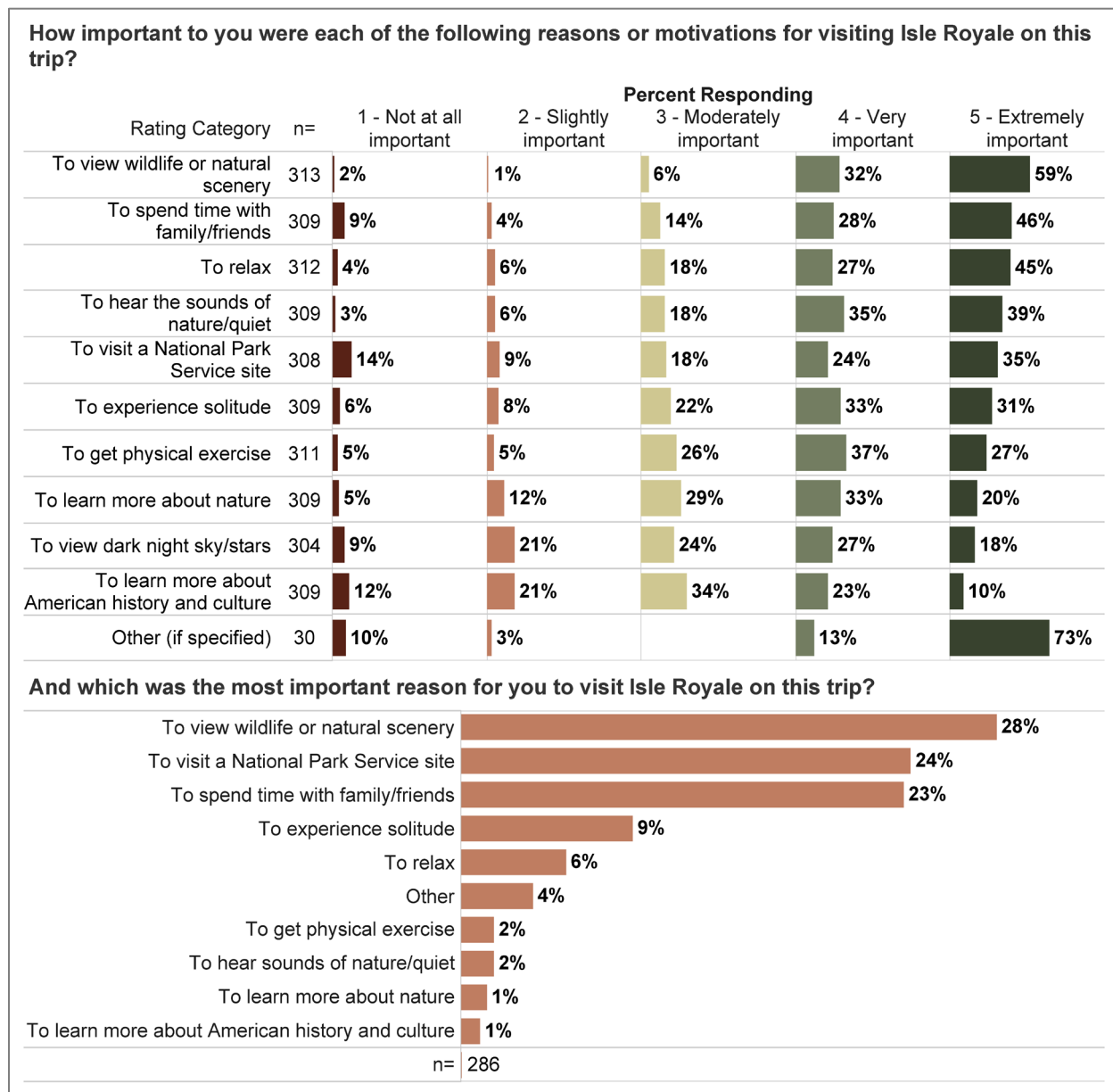


Figure 25. Reasons or motivations to visit Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 14](#).

NPS

- Most visitors chose viewing wildlife or natural scenery (59%) as an extremely important reason for their trip to Isle Royale.

- Other important reasons were to spend time with family/friends and to relax (46% and 45% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- Of those listed, the least important reasons were to view dark night sky/stars and to learn more about American history and culture (only 18% and 10% of respondents, respectively, reported them as extremely important, and 9% and 12% 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 (28%), followed by visiting a National Park Service site (24%), and spending time with family/friends (23%).

Questions 17–19: Programs, Services, and Learning

Respondents were asked to identify all programs and services that they personally participated in in Isle Royale during their trip (Figure 26).

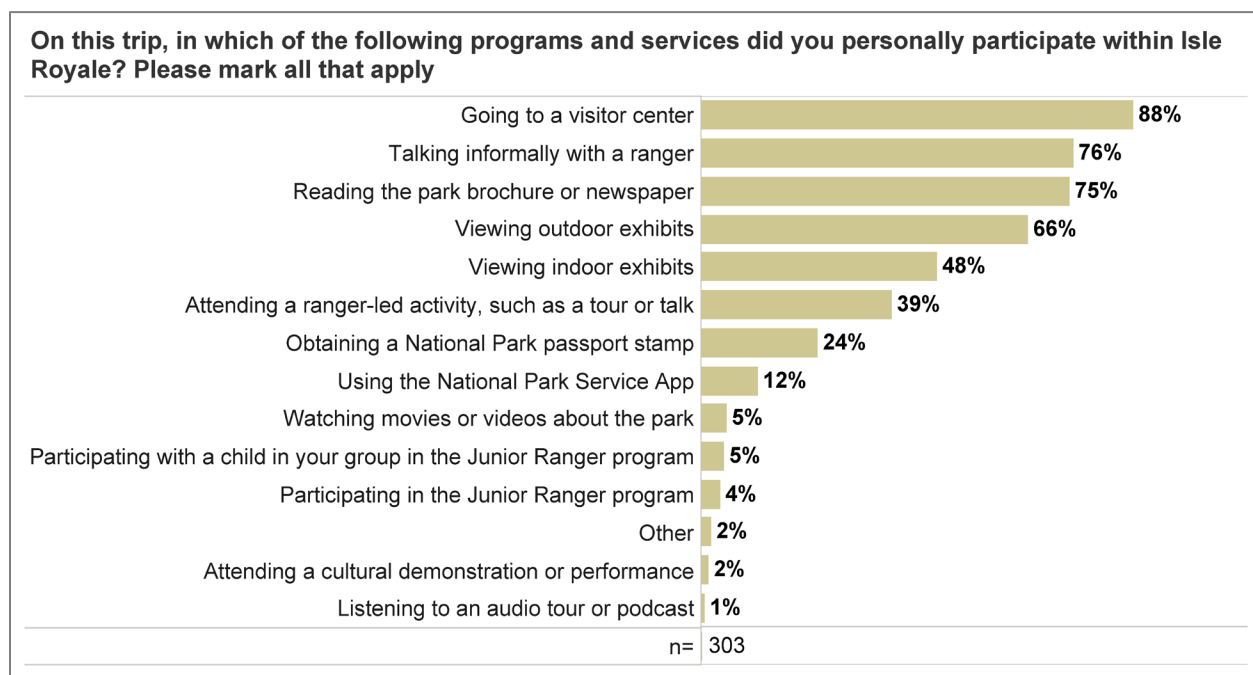


Figure 26. Programs participated while visiting Isle Royale.

NPS

- The two most-used programs/services were going to a visitor center and talking informally with a ranger, with least three-quarters of respondents (76%) reporting participating in each of them.
- Several other programs were engaged in by over half of respondents: reading the park brochure or newspaper (75%) and viewing outdoor exhibits (66%).

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 27).

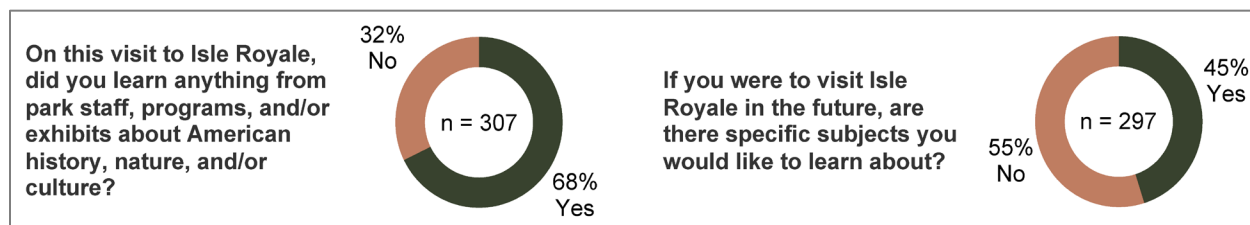


Figure 27. Learning.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (68%) reported that they learned something from park staff, programs, and/or exhibits about American history, nature, and/or culture.
- Close to half of respondents (45%) reported that if they were to visit Isle Royale 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. These comments are provided as an accompanying document for review.

Questions 20–21: 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 Isle Royale (Figure 28).

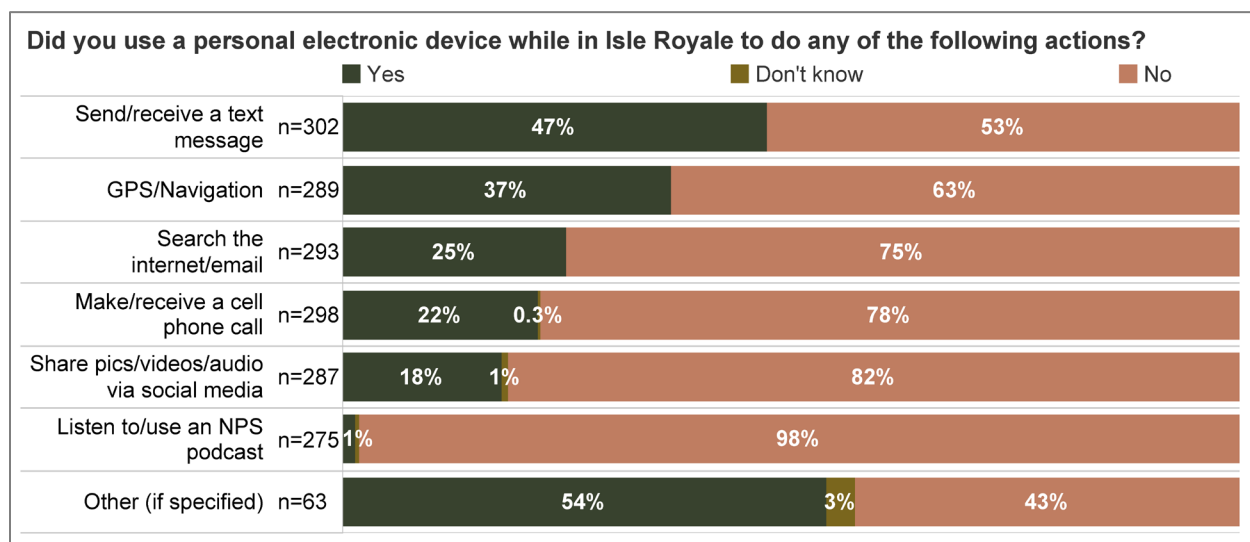


Figure 28. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 15](#).

NPS

- Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported using their phone to send/receive a text message, while just over one-third of respondents (37%) reported using GPS/Navigation.
- Conversely, only 1% 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 29), and the quality of their service (Figure 30).

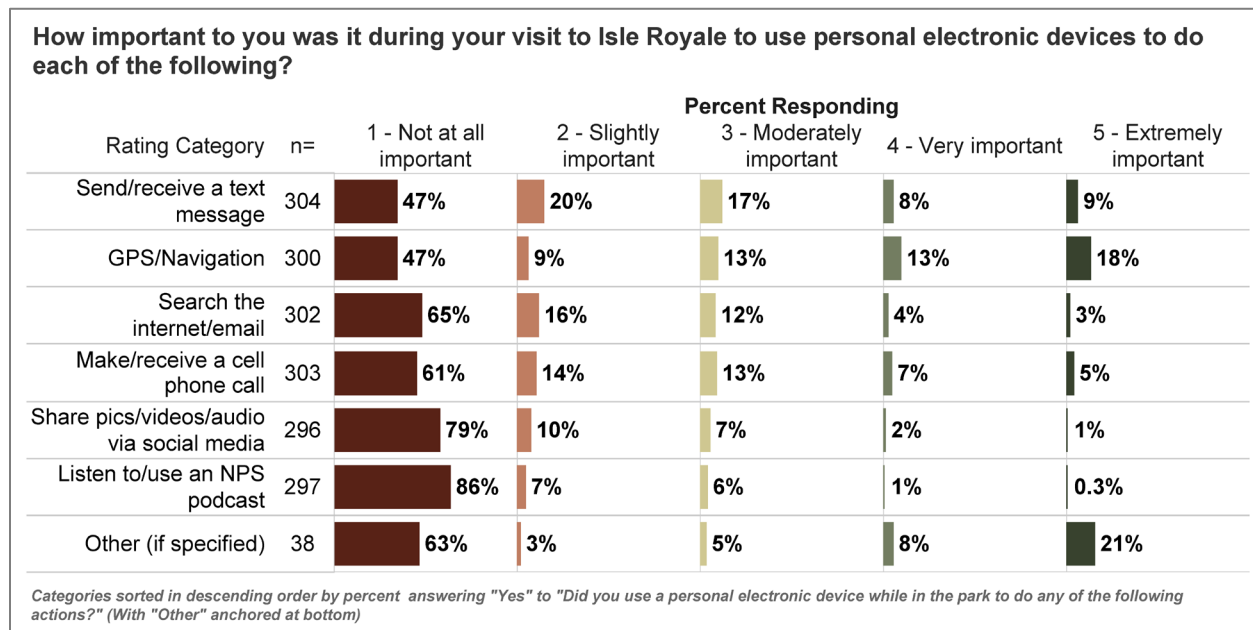


Figure 29. The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 16](#).

NPS

- The most important device uses were GPS/Navigation and sending/receiving text messages (18% and 9% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- Listening to and using an NPS podcast was rated as extremely important only by less than 1% of respondents, and not at all important by 86% of respondents.
- It is worth noting that once arriving on the island, amenities such as cell phone service and wireless internet are not available for respondents. When analyzing findings from Figure 29, results indicate that the use of electronic devices play a small role of importance for visitors.

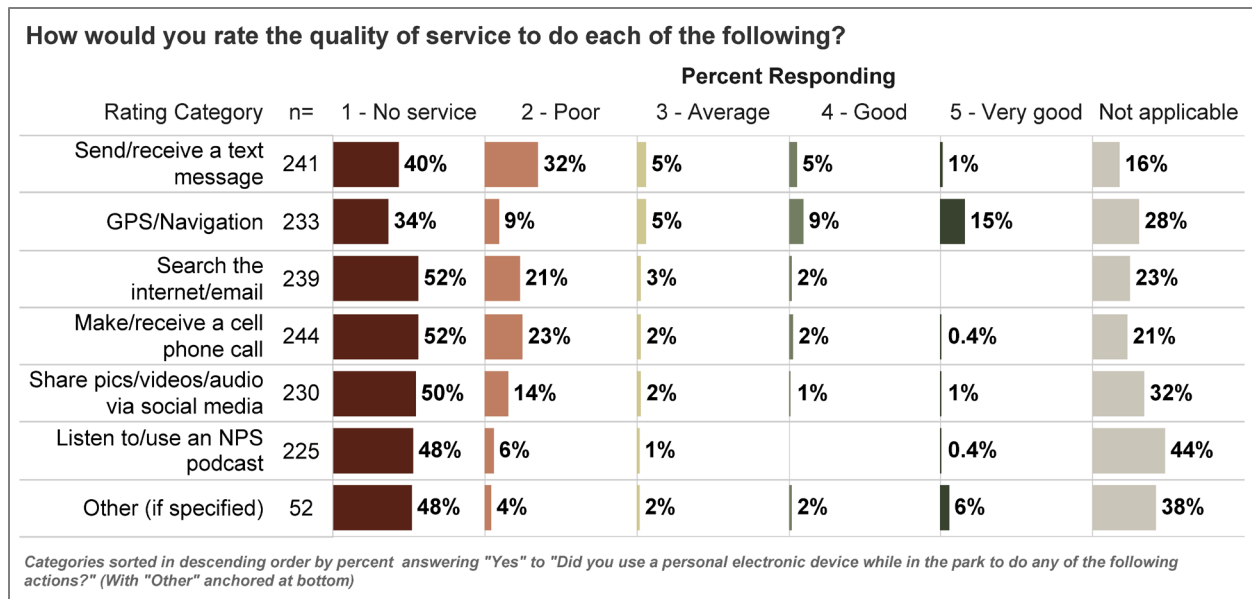


Figure 30. Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Isle Royale. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 17](#).

NPS

- GPS/Navigation was rated as very good or good by 15% and 9% of respondents, respectively. However, 34% of respondents reported that they had no service for this.
- Roughly half of respondents (ranged from 48% to 52%, depending on the service) reported that they also had no service to search the internet/email, make/receive phone calls, share pics/videos/audio via social media, or listen to/use an NPS podcast. Forty percent of respondents also indicated that they had no service to send/receive text messages.
- As previously mentioned, the number of respondents reporting “No service” for list of given services in unsurprising given the remote nature and location of Isle Royale.

Question 22: 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 Isle Royale. If such condition was identified, respondents were asked to specify the type of difficulty (Figure 31).

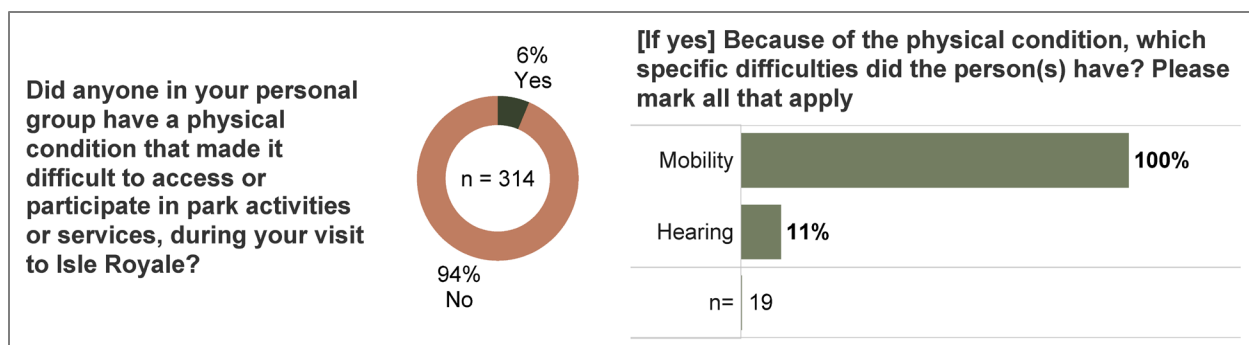


Figure 31. Physical difficulties while visiting Isle Royale.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (94%) 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 Isle Royale.
- Among the 6% of visitors who identified at least one difficulty, 100% reported mobility issues in their group, with small portion also reporting hearing difficulties (11%).

Questions 25–28: Visitor Experience

Respondents were asked if their visit to Isle Royale met their expectations (Figure 32).

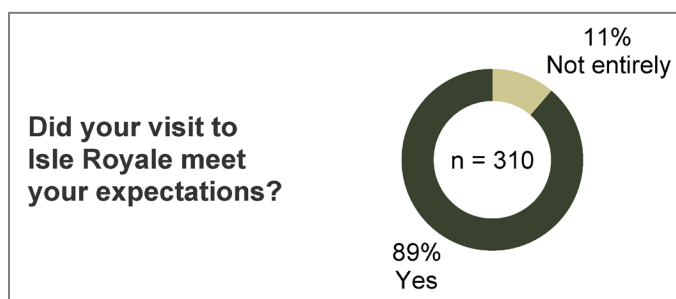


Figure 32. Meeting Isle Royale expectations.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (89%) reported that their visit to Isle Royale met their expectations, while 11% of respondents said it did not meet their expectations entirely, and no respondents indicated that it did not meet their expectations at all.
- In an open-ended follow-up question, respondents who indicated that Isle Royale did not meet their expectations were asked to elaborate. These comments are provided as an accompanying document for review.

Respondents were then given several statements about Isle Royale and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each given statement (Figure 33).

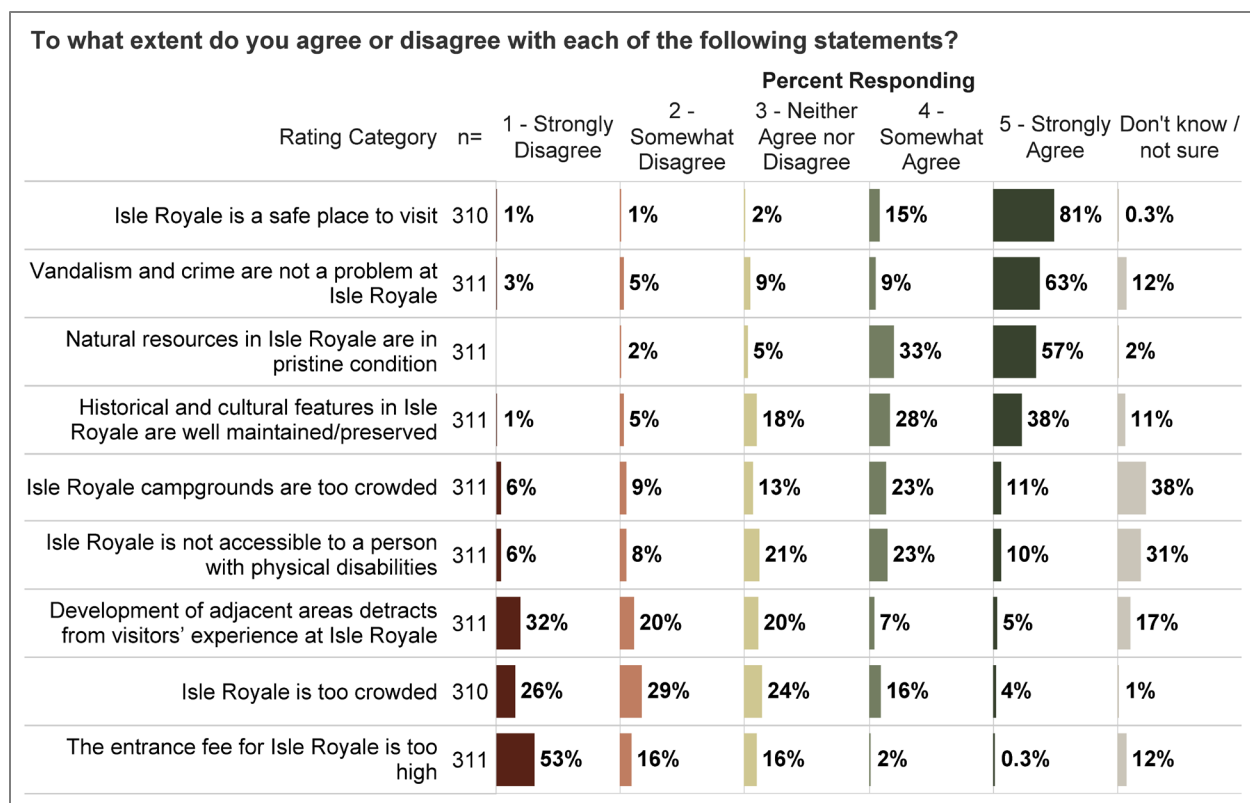


Figure 33. Rating Isle Royale experience. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 18](#).

NPS

- From all the statements listed, “Isle Royale 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 “Vandalism and crime are not a problem at Isle Royale” and “Natural resources in Isle Royale are in pristine condition” (72% and 90% of respondents, respectively, strongly or somewhat agreed with these statements).
- Conversely, “Isle Royale is too crowded” and “The entrance fee for Isle Royale is too high” received the least support, with 55% and 69%, respectively, of respondents either somewhat or strongly disagreeing with these statements.

Next, respondents were asked to rate the quality of park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Isle Royale (Figure 34).

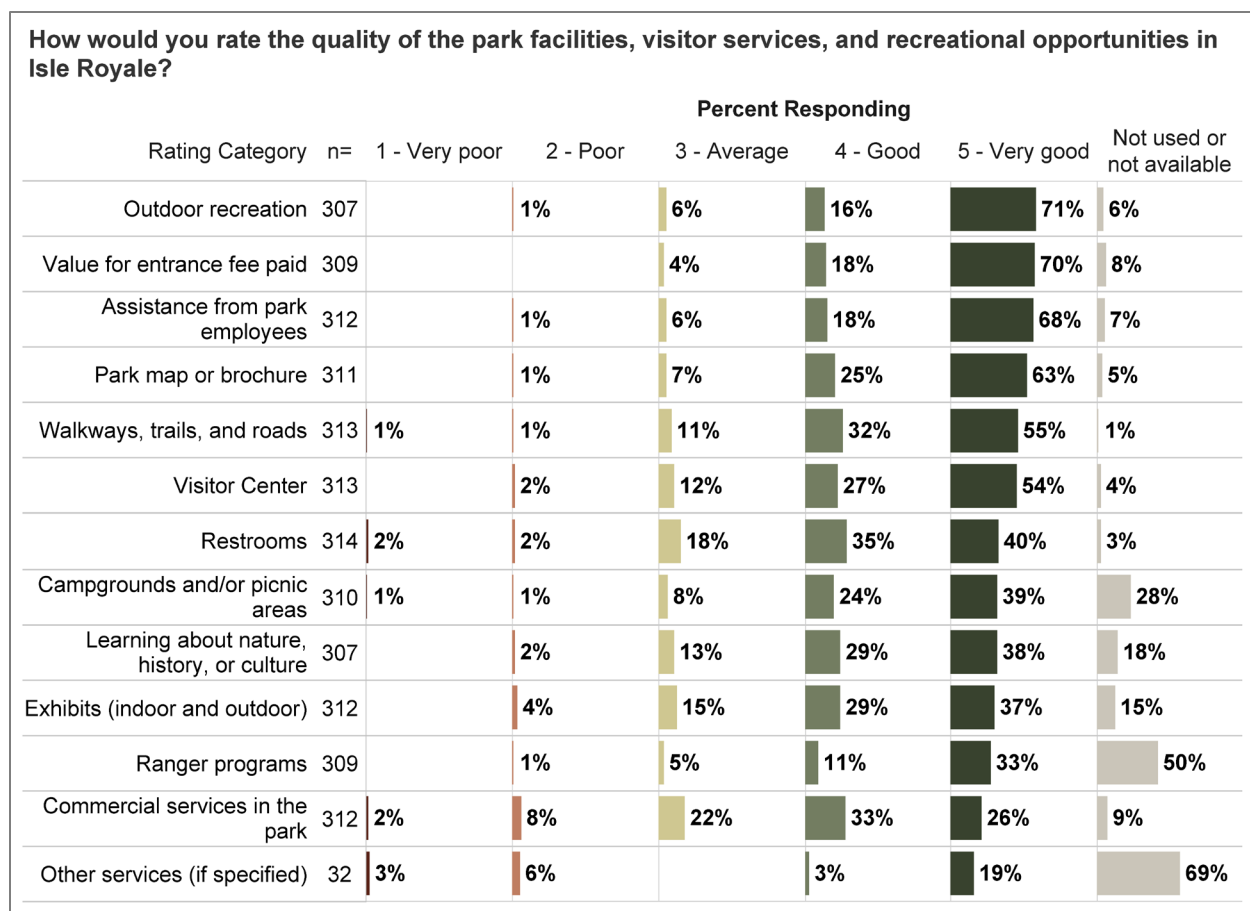


Figure 34. Rating the quality of Isle Royale facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 19](#).

NPS

- Over half of visitors (ranging from 71% to 54%, respectively) rated outdoor recreation, the value for the entrance fee paid, assistance from park employees, park maps or brochures, walkways, trails, and roads, and visitor centers as very good.
- Furthermore, at least half of visitors rated the quality of all the park facilities, services, and recreational opportunities as good or very good except for ranger programs (combined 44%). For ranger programs, visitors were most likely to say that they did not use them (50%), followed by 33% who reported them as very good.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate overall quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreation opportunities (Figure 35).

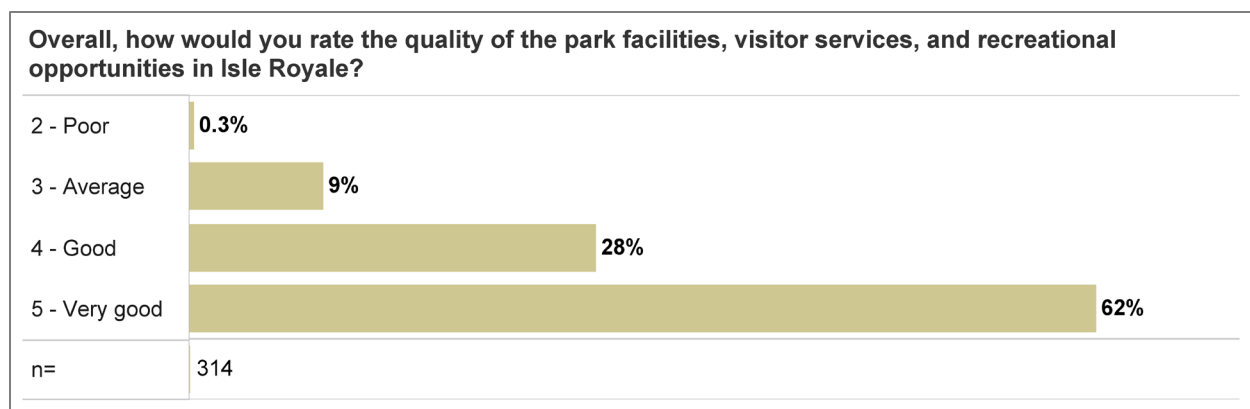


Figure 35. Rating overall quality of Isle Royale facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.
NPS

- In general, close to two-thirds of respondents (62%) rated the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Isle Royale as very good, and another 28% rated them as good. Collectively, less than 1% of respondents rated facilities, services, and recreational opportunities as poor or very poor in Isle Royale.

Questions 31–39: Background/Demographics

In the final section of the follow-up survey, respondents were asked various questions about their personal and household demographics. Figure 36 depicts descriptive statistics for respondent gender, age, and education.

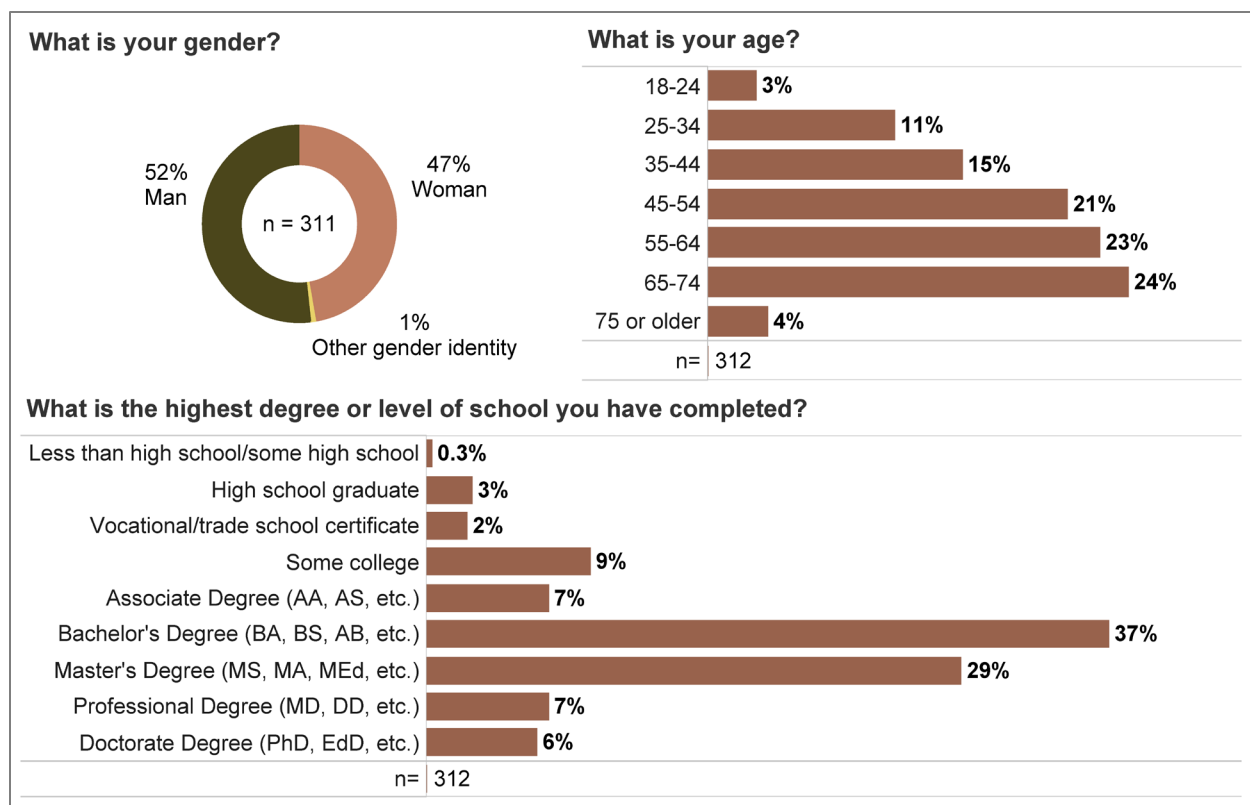


Figure 36. Respondent demographics: gender, age, and level of education.

NPS

- Follow-up survey respondents were slightly more likely to be men than women, though the sample was relatively balanced (52% vs. 47%). Another 1% had another gender identity.
- The most common age categories were 65–74 years old (24%), 55–64 years old (23%), and 45–54 years old (21%). The least represented age group were those 18–24 years old (only 3% of the participants surveyed).
- Most survey respondents were fairly well educated, with a combined 86% having some college degree, and roughly one-third (29%) holding a master's degree.

Respondents were also asked to identify their race(s) and if they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (Figure 37).

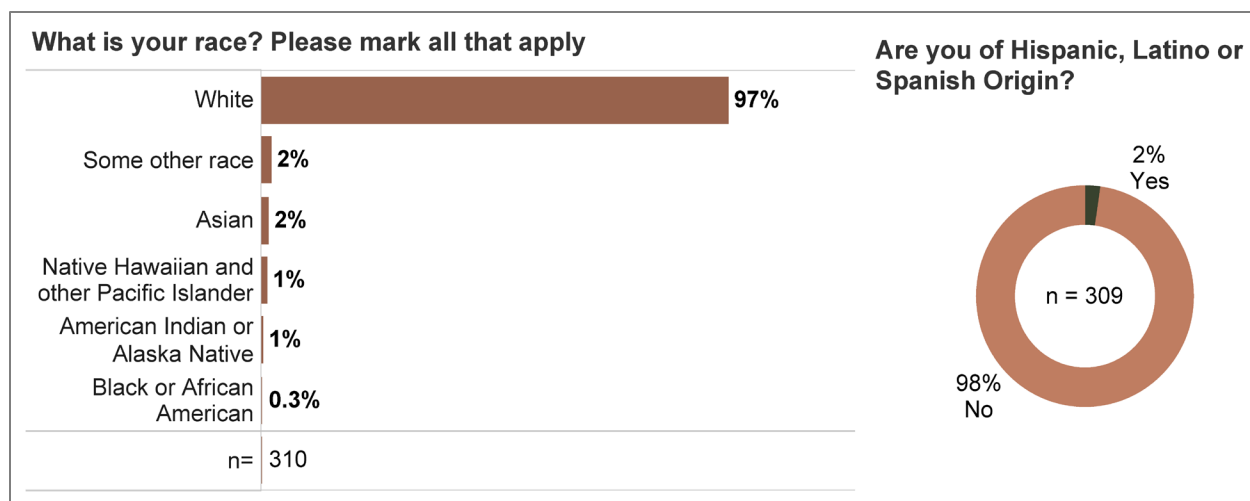


Figure 37. Respondent demographics: race and ethnicity.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (97%) were White, while 2% were Asian or of some other race, respectively.
- Most respondents (98%) were not of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

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 38).

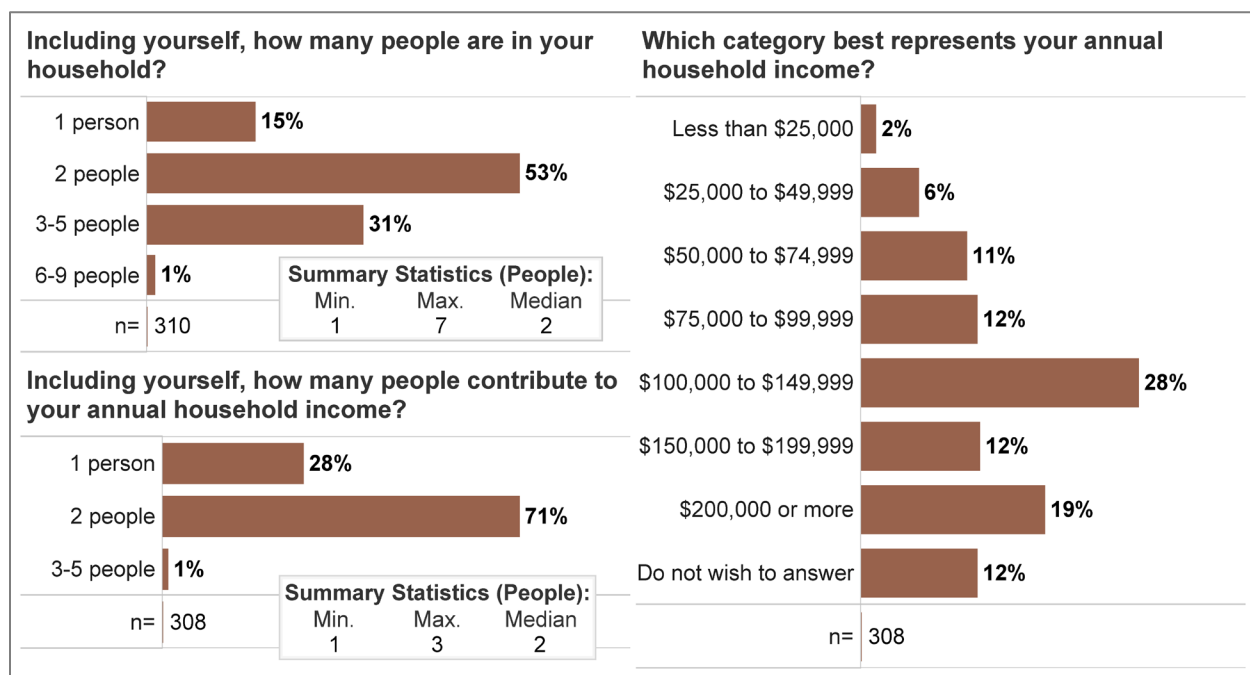


Figure 38. Household demographics: annual household income and household size. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 20](#).

NPS

- Over half of respondents (53%) had two people in their household, followed by three to five people (another 31%).
- In addition to being highly educated, Isle Royale visitors are also relatively affluent. Roughly a quarter of respondents (28%) reported that their annual household income was between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and another 19% earned \$200,000 or more.
- Most respondents (71%) came from a dual-income household.

Finally, respondents were asked about their language preference (Figure 39).

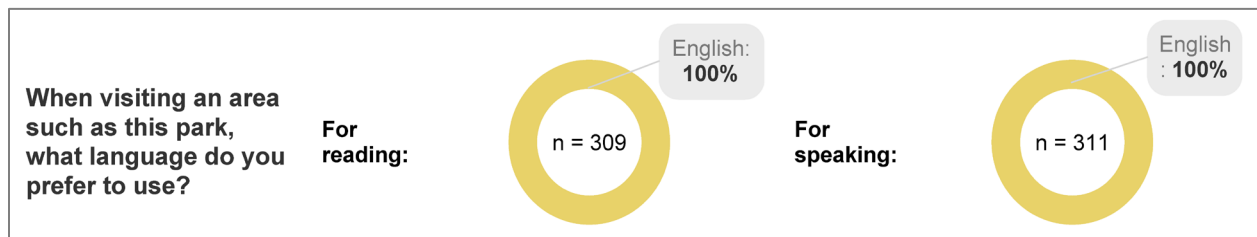


Figure 39. Respondent's language preference.

NPS

- While 2% of respondents were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin, all respondents (100%) preferred to use English both for reading and speaking when visiting an area such as Isle Royale.

Literature Cited

National Park Service (NPS). 2022. 2022 Socioeconomic Monitoring of Isle Royale National Park: Visitor Intercept and Post-Trip Surveys.
<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2318667>

Appendix A: Accessible Tables

This appendix contains accessible tables with data from figures found in the body of the report (Tables 8–20). Table captions include hyperlinks to the corresponding figures.

Table 8. Data from [Figure 7](#). Campsite sharing within Isle Royale.

Campground	n
Daisy Farm Campground	133
Rock Harbor Campground	120
Three Mile Campground	103
Washington Creek Campground	95
Moskey Basin Campground	61
Lane Cove Campground	54
McCargoe Cove Campground	52
West Chickenbone Campground	48
South Lake Desor Campground	47
Feldtmann Lake Campground	46
Hatchet Lake Campground	44
Siskiwit Bay Campground	41
Island Mine Campground	36
Todd Harbor Campground	30

Table 9. Data from [Figure 9](#). Number of nights spent in the local area around Isle Royale by accommodation type.

Accommodation Type	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Camping in Isle Royale	346	1	13	4
Staying in a boat in an NPS dock or at anchor in Isle Royale	32	1	16	3
Camping outside Isle Royale	67	1	9	2
Lodging in Isle Royale	144	1	21	3
Lodging outside Isle Royale	204	1	9	2
Unpaid accommodations	18	1	28	3

Table 10. Data from [Figure 10](#). Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group while visiting Isle Royale.

Group Composition	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Adults	606	1	12	2
Children	606	0	13	0

Table 11. Data from [Figure 16](#). Number of people in respondent's vehicle when entering Isle Royale.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If entered by car, truck, or SUV] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your vehicle when you entered Isle Royale?	9	1	5	2
[If entered by RV/motorhome] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your RV when you entered Isle Royale?	1	2	2	2
[If entered by motorcycle] Including yourself, how many people were traveling on your motorcycle when you entered Isle Royale?	1	1	1	1

Table 12. Data from [Figure 17](#). Previous visits to Isle Royale.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Isle Royale over the past 12 months?	172	1	12	1
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Isle Royale over the past five years?	172	1	150	2

Table 13. Data from [Figure 18](#). Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
How many visits have you made to other NPS sites over the past 12 months?	604	0	100	2

Table 14. Data from [Figure 25](#). Reasons or motivations to visit Isle Royale.

Rating Category	n
To visit a National Park Service site	308
To experience solitude	309
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	309
To learn more about nature	309
To learn more about American history and culture	309
To spend time with family/friends	309
To get physical exercise	311
To view wildlife or natural scenery	313
To relax	312
To view dark night sky/stars	304
Other (if specified)	30

Table 15. Data from [Figure 28](#). Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Isle Royale.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	298
Send/receive a text message	302
Search the internet/email	293
GPS/Navigation	289
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	287
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	275
Other (if specified)	63

Table 16. Data from [Figure 29](#). The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Isle Royale.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	303
Send/receive a text message	304
Search the internet/email	302
GPS/Navigation	300
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	296
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	297
Other (if specified)	38

Table 17. Data from [Figure 30](#). Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Isle Royale.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	244
Send/receive a text message	241
Search the internet/email	239
GPS/Navigation	233
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	230
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	225
Other (if specified)	52

Table 18. Data from [Figure 33](#). Rating Isle Royale experience.

Rating Category	n
Isle Royale is a safe place to visit	310
Isle Royale is too crowded	310
Isle Royale campgrounds are too crowded	311
Natural resources in Isle Royale are in pristine condition	311
The entrance fee for Isle Royale is too high	311
Vandalism and crime are not a problem at Isle Royale	311
Isle Royale is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities	311
Historical and cultural features in Isle Royale are well maintained/preserved	311
Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors' experience at Isle Royale	311

Table 19. Data from [Figure 34](#). Rating the quality of Isle Royale facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

Rating Category	n
Visitor Center	313
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	312
Restrooms	314
Walkways, trails, and roads	313
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	310
Assistance from park employees	312
Park map or brochure	311
Ranger programs	309
Value for entrance fee paid	309
Commercial services in the park (food, lodging, gifts, rental, etc.)	312
Other services (if specified)	32
Learning about nature, history, or culture	307
Outdoor recreation (sightseeing, camping, bicycling, boating, hiking, etc.)	307

Table 20. Data from [Figure 38](#). Household demographics: annual household income and household size.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Including yourself, how many people are in your household?	310	1	7	2
Including yourself, how many people contribute to your annual household income?	308	1	3	2

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