



2022 Socioeconomic Research of Rocky Mountain National Park

Report on 2022 Data Collection (Revised)



Visitors enjoy a sunset near Alpine Visitor Center, the highest-elevation visitor center in the National Park Service at 11,796 feet above sea level.

NPS

2022 Socioeconomic Research of Rocky Mountain National Park: Report on 2022 Data Collection (Revised)

Science Report NPS/SR—2026/496

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The revised version of this report corrects a previous error identified in Figure 9 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.

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Contents

	Page
Figures.....	v
Tables.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
Methods.....	3
Study Area.....	3
Sampling Period and Procedure	5
Intercept Survey.....	5
Mail-Back/Online Survey.....	6
Non-Response Bias Analysis	6
Results.....	8
Intercept Survey Results.....	8
Questions 1–2: Visitor Residency	8
Question 3: Trip Purpose.....	10
Question 4: Length of Stay.....	11
Questions 5–6: Overnight Visitors	12
Questions 9–11: Party Characteristics.....	15
Questions 13–14: Local Communities	17
Questions 15–18: Park Use Characteristics.....	19
Question 19: Transportation.....	21
Question 21: Previous Visits to Rocky Mountain	23
Question 22: Previous Visits to Other NPS Units.....	24
Follow-Up Survey Results	25
Questions 1–2: Information About Rocky Mountain.....	25
Question 3: Transportation.....	27
Question 4: Travel Party Composition.....	28
Question 10: Entrance Fees	29
Questions 12–14: Trip Characteristics	30

Contents (continued)

	Page
Questions 15–16: Reasons to Visit.....	32
Questions 17–19: Programs, Services, and Learning.....	34
Questions 20–21: Use of Devices.....	36
Question 22: Physical Difficulties.....	39
Questions 25–28: Visitor Experience.....	40
Questions 31–39: Background/Demographics	44
Literature Cited	47
Appendix A: Accessible Tables.....	48

Figures

	Page
Figure 1. Rocky Mountain National Park local area map.....	4
Figure 2. Visitor local residency status and geographic origin of domestic visitors to Rocky Mountain.....	9
Figure 3. Role of Rocky Mountain in overall trip purpose.....	10
Figure 4. Time spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain.....	11
Figure 5. Accommodation types used in the local area around Rocky Mountain.	12
Figure 6. Campground use within Rocky Mountain.....	12
Figure 7. Number of nights spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain, by accommodation type.....	13
Figure 8. Number of adults and children in respondent’s personal group while visiting Rocky Mountain.....	15
Figure 9. Age distribution of all members of respondent’s personal group while visiting Rocky Mountain.....	15
Figure 10. Communities visited outside Rocky Mountain while in the local area.	17
Figure 11. Duration of the respondent’s trip to Rocky Mountain.....	19
Figure 12. Most recent entrance used to enter Rocky Mountain.	20
Figure 13. Park locations visited during the most recent trip to Rocky Mountain.	20
Figure 14. Form of transportation used to enter Rocky Mountain on the day of the survey.....	21
Figure 15. Number of people in or on respondent’s vehicle when entering Rocky Mountain.....	22
Figure 16. Previous visits to Rocky Mountain.....	23
Figure 17. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year.	24
Figure 18. Sources used to obtain information about Rocky Mountain prior to the trip.	25
Figure 19. Forms of transportation used to travel from home to Rocky Mountain on the recent trip.....	27
Figure 20. Travel party composition during Rocky Mountain visit.....	28
Figure 21. Entrance fees to enter Rocky Mountain on the most recent trip.....	29
Figure 22. NPS sites visited on trip away from home.....	30
Figure 23. Participation in activities at Rocky Mountain.	31

Figures (continued)

	Page
Figure 24. Reasons or motivations to visit Rocky Mountain.....	32
Figure 25. Programs participated in while visiting Rocky Mountain.	34
Figure 26. Learning.....	34
Figure 27. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.....	36
Figure 28. The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.	37
Figure 29. Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.	38
Figure 30. Physical difficulties while visiting Rocky Mountain.....	39
Figure 31. Meeting Rocky Mountain expectations.	40
Figure 32. Rating Rocky Mountain experience.	41
Figure 33. Rating the quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.....	42
Figure 34. Rating overall quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.....	43
Figure 35. Respondent demographics: gender, age, and level of education.	44
Figure 36. Respondent demographics: race and ethnicity.	45
Figure 37. Household demographics: annual household income and household size.	45
Figure 38. Respondent’s language preference.	46

Tables

	Page
Table 1. Information about sampling locations in Rocky Mountain.....	4
Table 2. Response outcomes—Rocky Mountain intercept Survey.....	5
Table 3. Response rate—Rocky Mountain follow-up mail-back/online survey.	6
Table 4. Non-response bias question: “Are you a permanent or seasonal/second home resident of the local area around Rocky Mountain?”.....	7
Table 5. Non-response bias question: “Do you currently live in the United States?”.....	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 Rocky Mountain and/or within the local area?”	7
Table 7. Amount of time spent within Rocky Mountain.....	19
Table 8. Data from Figure 7.....	48
Table 9. Data from Figure 8.....	48
Table 10. Data from Figure 15.....	48
Table 11. Data from Figure 16.....	48
Table 12. Data from Figure 17.....	49
Table 13. Data from Figure 24.....	49
Table 14. Data from Figure 27.....	49
Table 15. Data from Figure 28.....	50
Table 16. Data from Figure 29.....	50
Table 17. Data from Figure 32.....	50
Table 18. Data from Figure 33.....	51
Table 19. Data from Figure 37.....	51

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. Rocky Mountain National Park (Rocky Mountain) 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 Rocky Mountain 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 perceptions 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 Figure 9 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 2015/2016 pilot program and progresses into “Phase Two” of the pilot process at 24 NPS units across the United States. Rocky Mountain National Park (Rocky Mountain) was selected as one of these units. Phase Two seeks to further explore visitor demographics and characteristics, applying recommendations from the 2015/2016 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 Rocky Mountain National Park, what they do during their visit, and their spending profile. The results of the study are intended to assist Rocky Mountain National Park managers in understanding current utilization and perceptions 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.



Two Rivers Lake in late May.
NPS / JON OLSEN

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 Rocky Mountain local area map is shown in Figure 1. The local area around Rocky Mountain consists of Larimer, Weld, Grand, Boulder, Gilpin, Jefferson, Broomfield, Adams, and Denver counties in Colorado. Within Rocky Mountain, the study area was comprised of 10 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.

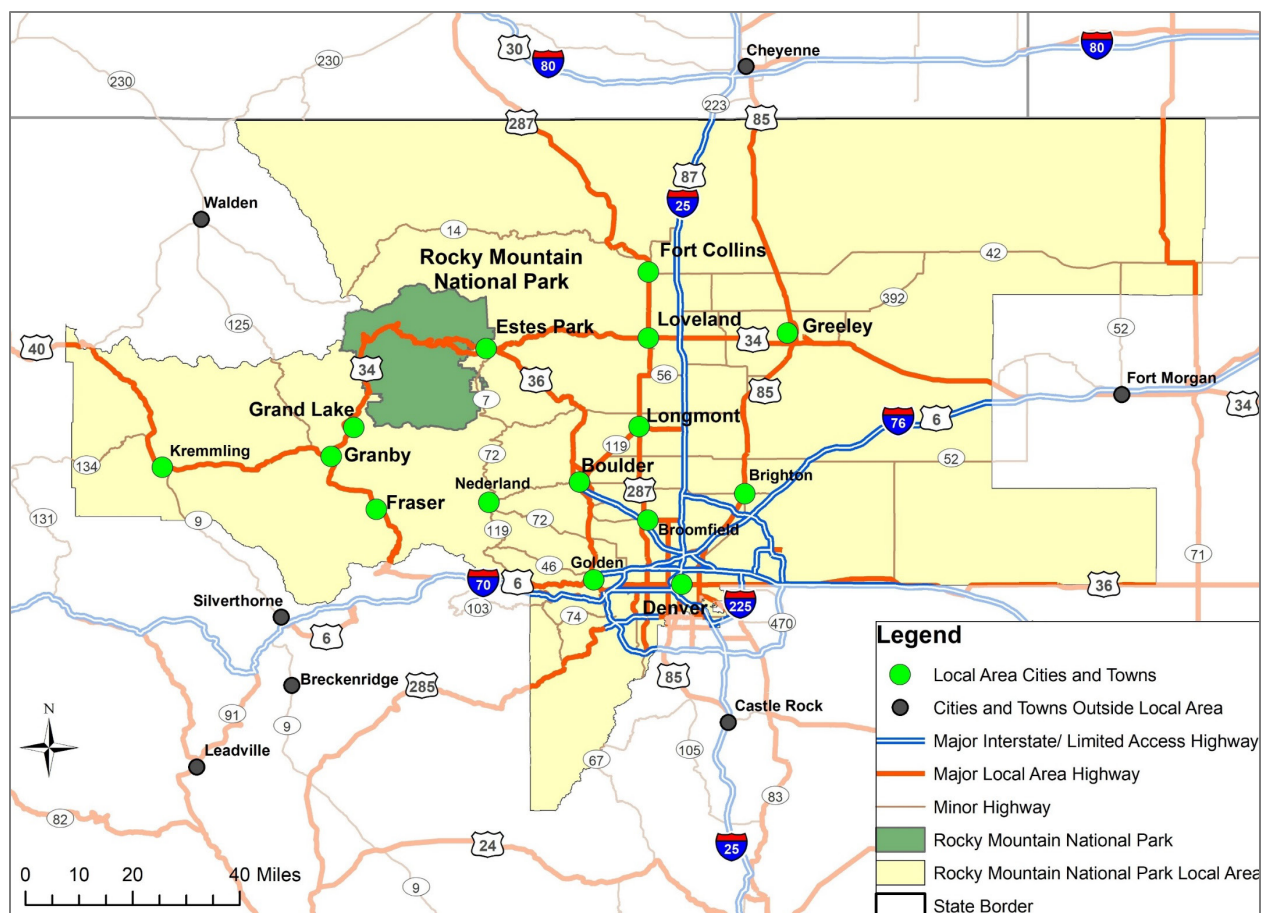


Table 1. Information about sampling locations in Rocky Mountain.

Intercept Site	Completed Intercept Surveys		Nearby Attractions
	Number of Surveys	Percent of Surveys	
Bear Lake Parking Area	518	39.2%	Bear Lake Trailhead, Shuttle Stop, Glacier Gorge Trailhead
Alpine VC	513	38.8%	Visitor Center, Fall River Pass Trailhead
Kawuneeche VC	219	16.6%	Visitor Center, Trailhead
Wild Basin	71	5.4%	Wild Basin Trailhead, Wild Basin Ranger Station, Picnic Area

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 June 9–18, 2022. A sample of visitors was 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 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 Rocky Mountain (NPS 2022). 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 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—Rocky Mountain intercept Survey.

Outcome	Total
Eligible visitors contacted	1,532
Complete refusals	171
Partial refusals (non-response questions completed)	40
Intercept surveys completed	1,321
Follow-up surveys distributed	1,093
Intercept response rate	86.2%
Follow-up acceptance rate	82.7%

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 Rocky Mountain. Each surveyor worked nine 7-hour days (six hours data collection and one-hour lunch break) and rotated between several sites. Each surveyor had one day off during the 10-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 Rocky Mountain. 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—Rocky Mountain follow-up mail-back/online survey.

Outcome	Total
Follow-up surveys distributed	1,093
Valid follow-up surveys completed	378
Response rate	34.6%

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 86.2%, 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 Rocky Mountain?” Note: p-value = 0.20.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	95	25.5%	210	22.2%
No	278	74.5%	737	77.8%

Table 5. Non-response bias question: “Do you currently live in the United States?” Note: p-value = 0.40.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	362	97.1%	909	96.1%
No	11	2.9%	37	3.9%

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 Rocky Mountain and/or within the local area?” Note: p-value = 0.68.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	303	81.2%	759	80.2%
No	70	18.8%	187	19.8%

A chi-square test for homogeneity was performed for each of the three questions to evaluate differences between the groups. Using a p-value of 0.05, the distribution of responses among full survey respondents and intercept-only respondents did not differ significantly for any of the questions. The results of the non-response bias analysis provide no compelling evidence that the survey data are biased due to systematic differences between respondents and non-respondents on these variables.

Results

Intercept Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 1,321 visitor intercept surveys conducted in Rocky Mountain National Park from June 9th to 18th, 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 Rocky Mountain. 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.

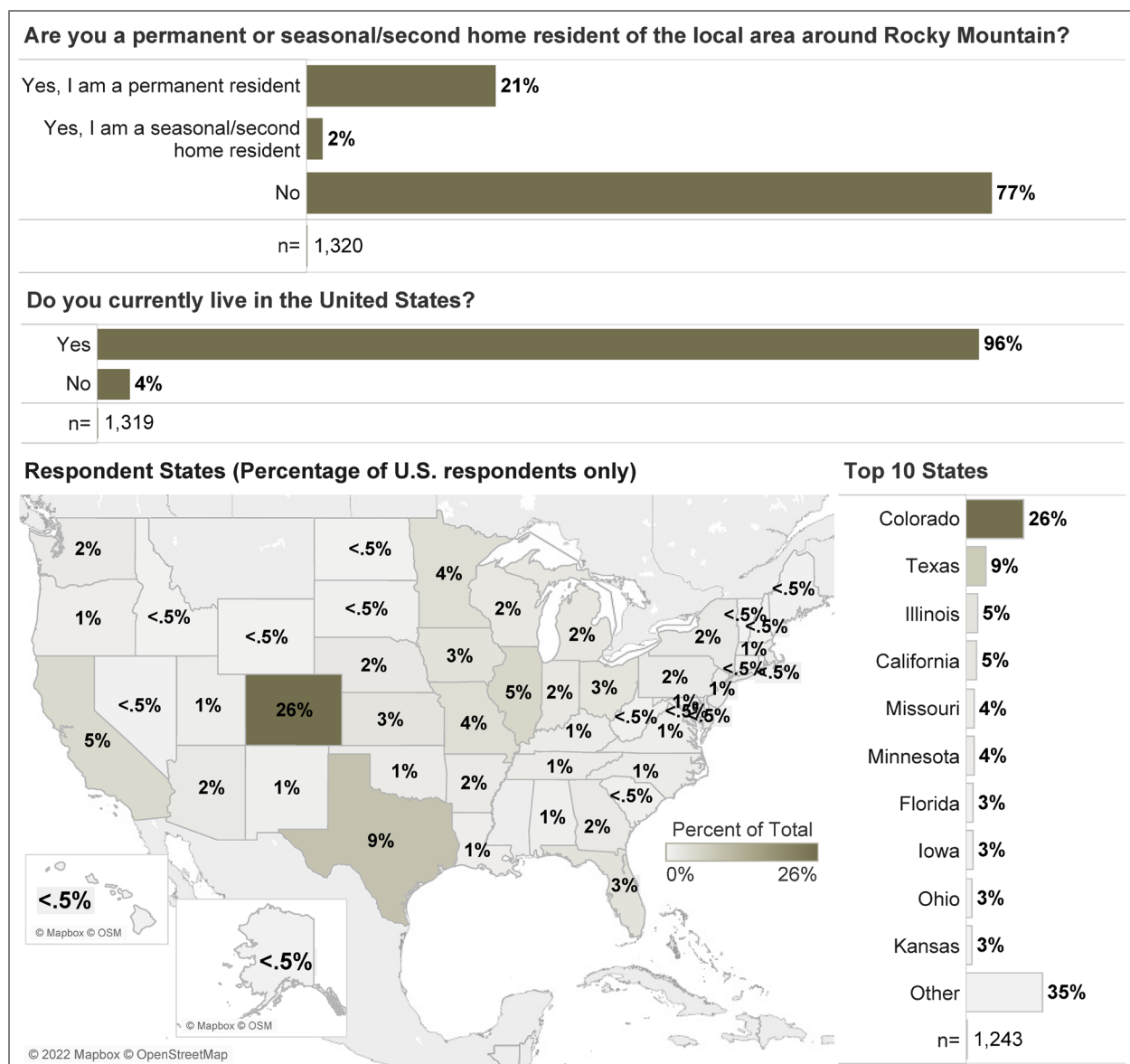


Figure 2. Visitor local residency status and geographic origin of domestic visitors to Rocky Mountain.
NPS

- About a quarter of respondents (a combined 23%) stated that they were either permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Rocky Mountain.
- There was a large geographic concentration of visitors from Colorado (where Rocky Mountain is located).
- Among the 96% of respondents currently residing in the U.S., 26% reside in Colorado, followed by 9% in Texas.

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).

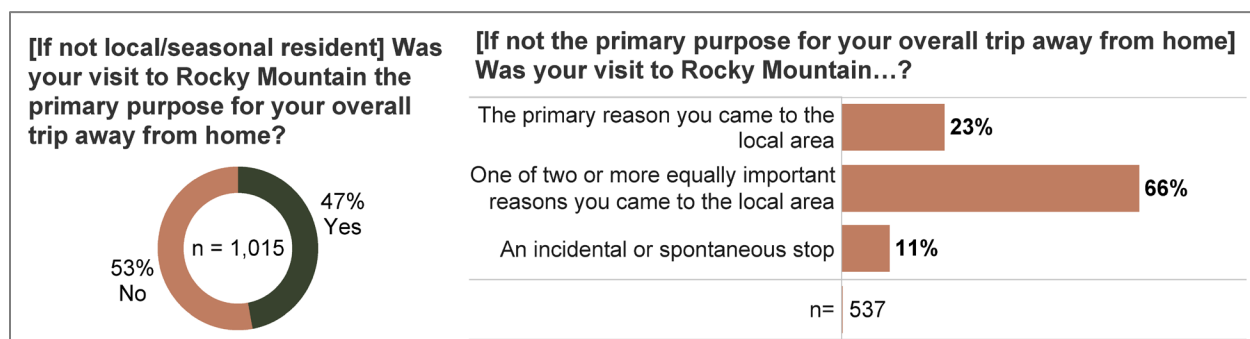


Figure 3. Role of Rocky Mountain in overall trip purpose.

NPS

- For more than half of non-local respondents (53%), visiting Rocky Mountain was not the primary purpose for their overall trip away from home.
- Among those respondents for whom Rocky Mountain was not their primary trip purpose, 66% stated that their visit to Rocky Mountain was one of two or more equally important reasons they came to the local area, while another 23% indicated that it was the primary reason you 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 Rocky Mountain, 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.

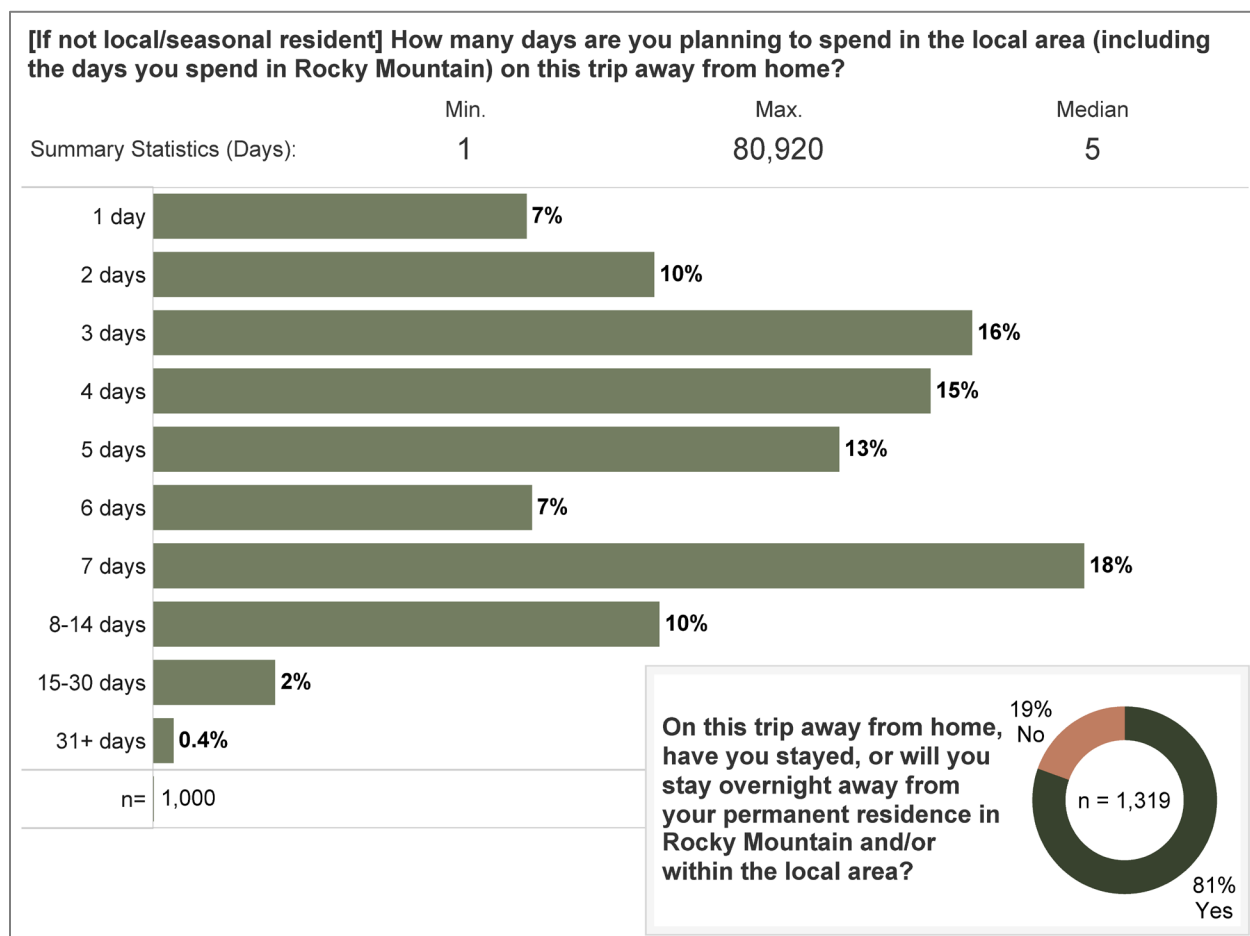


Figure 4. Time spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- About one-fifth of non-local respondents (18%) spent seven days in the local area, while 16% spent 3 days, and 15% spent 4 days. The median length of stay was 5 days.
- Additionally, the majority of all respondents (81%; 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).

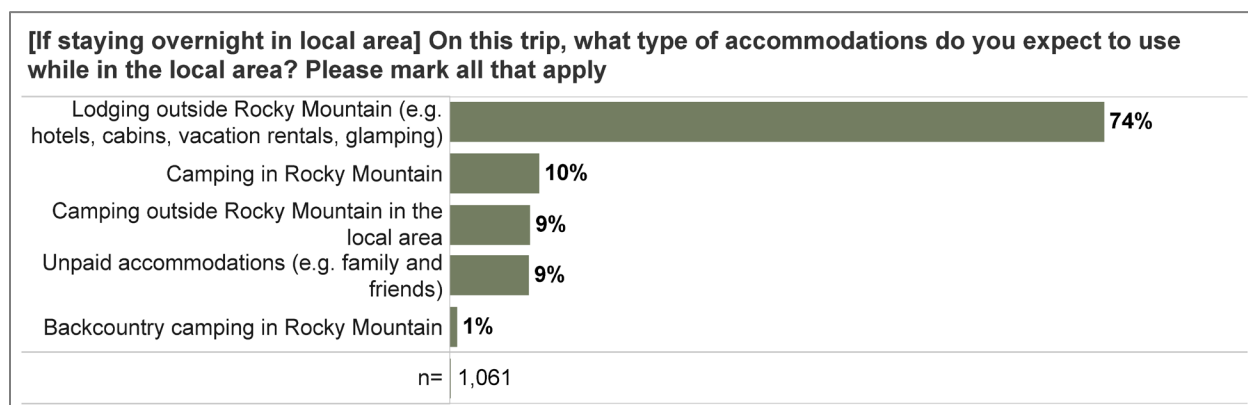


Figure 5. Accommodation types used in the local area around Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- Most overnight respondents (74%) stayed in lodging outside Rocky Mountain National Park.
- This was followed in prevalence by camping in Rocky Mountain National Park (10%), camping outside the park (9%), and unpaid accommodations (9%).

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

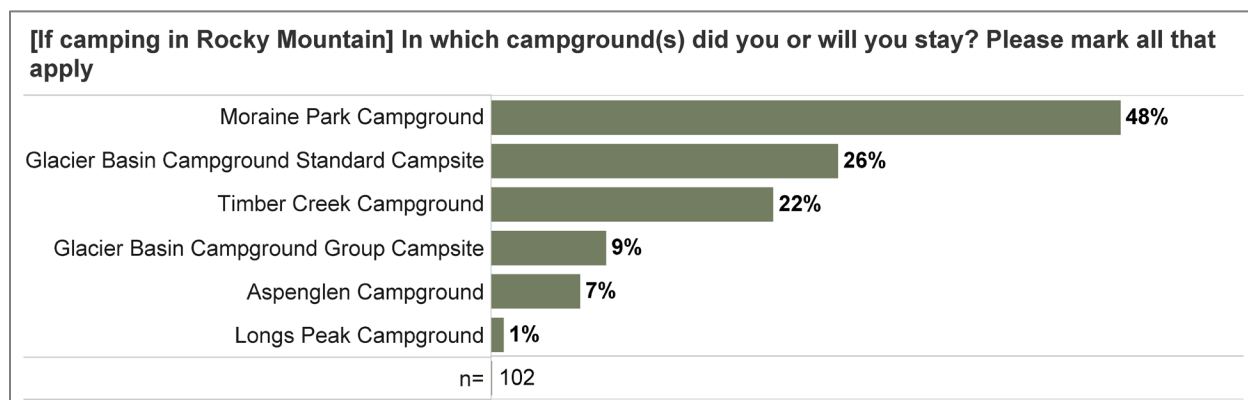


Figure 6. Campground use within Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- Nearly half of the respondents (48%) who camped in Rocky Mountain National Park indicated that they stayed or would stay in Moraine Park Campground.
- Over a quarter of respondents indicated that they camped or would camp at Glacier Basin Campground Standard Campsite (26%), followed by 22% at Timber Creek Campground.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the number of nights they spent or would spend in each accommodation type (Figure 7).

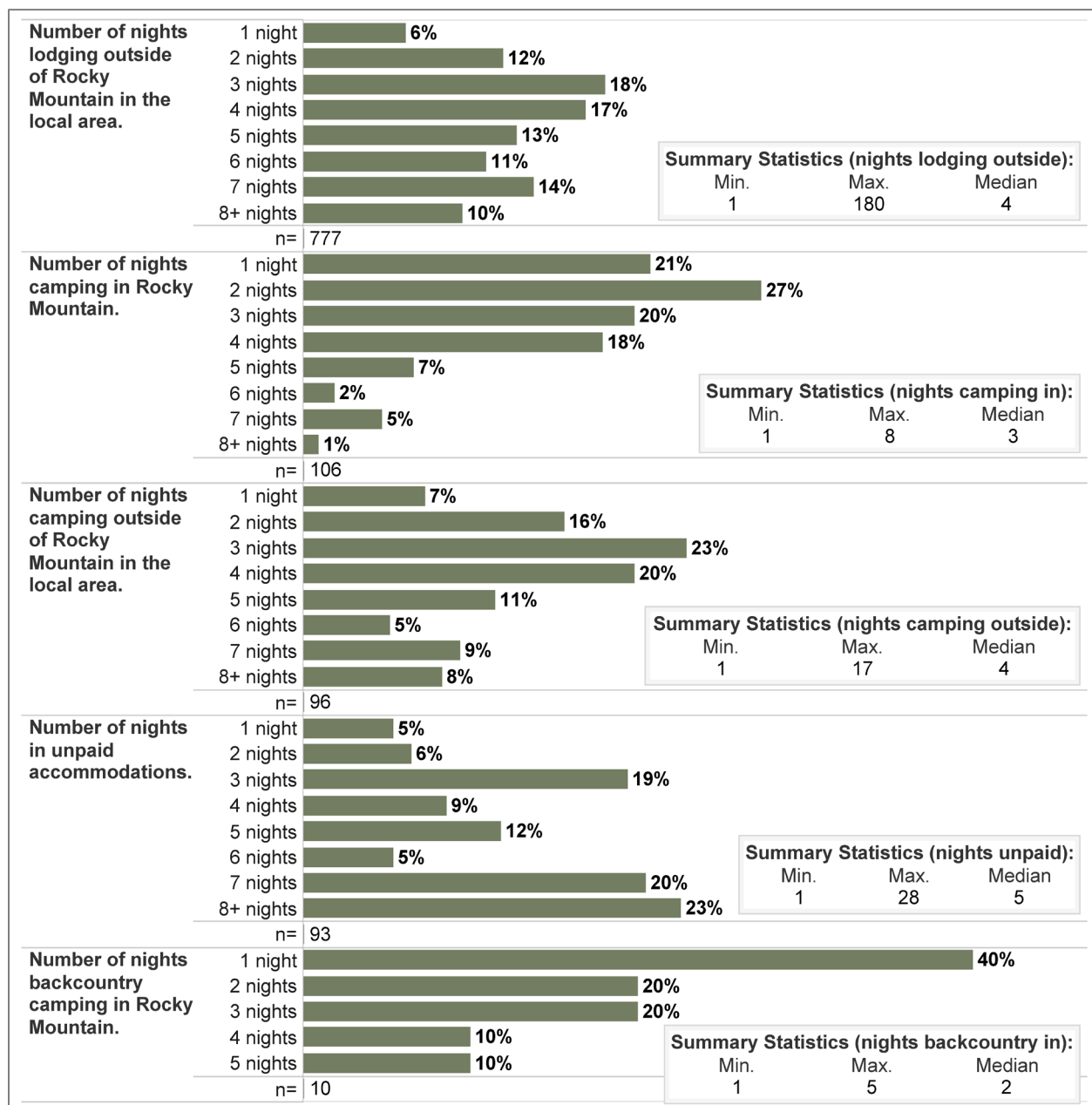


Figure 7. Number of nights spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain, by accommodation type. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 8](#).

NPS

- Among the 74% of overnight respondents who lodged outside of Rocky Mountain in the local area (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 4 nights. Nearly one-fifth of respondents (18%) lodged 3 nights in the local area on this trip; 17% spent 4 nights, and 14% spent 7 nights.

- Among the 10% of overnight respondents who camped in Rocky Mountain (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 3 nights. Nearly half of campers (a combined 48%) were spending 2 nights or fewer camping in the park this trip; 68% spent 3 nights or fewer.
- Among the 9% of overnight respondents who camped outside of Rocky Mountain (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 4 nights, though the plurality (23%) stayed 3 nights.
- Among the 9% of overnight respondents who stayed in unpaid accommodations in the local area (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 5 nights. However, the plurality of respondents (23%) stayed for 8 or more nights.
- Among the 1% of overnight respondents who backcountry camped in Rocky Mountain National Park (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 2 nights. However, 40% of respondents spent only 1 night backcountry camping.

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 Rocky Mountain (Figure 8). 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.

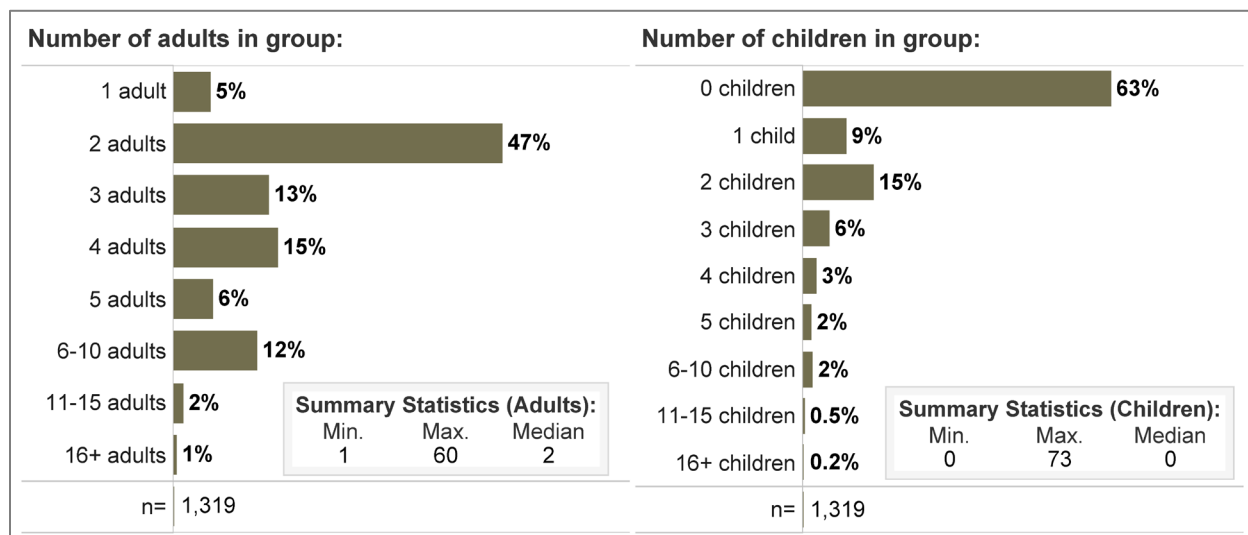


Figure 8. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 9](#).

NPS

- The median number of adults per group was 2. A plurality of groups (47%) included 2 adults.
- Most groups (63%) did not include any children.

Respondents were then asked to provide the age of each member of their group (Figure 9).

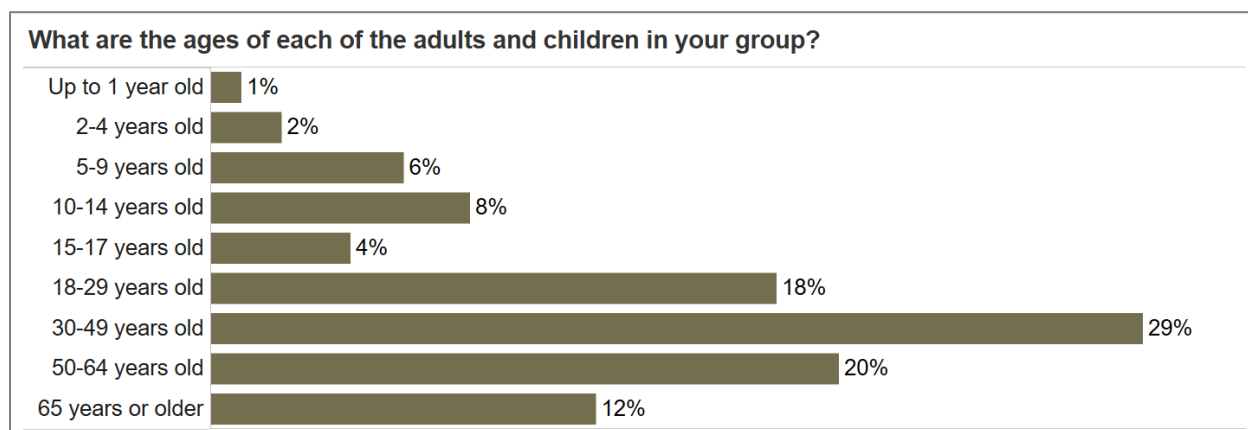


Figure 9. Age distribution of all members of respondent's personal group while visiting Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- The most common age of the adults and children in a personal group was 30 to 49 years old (29%), followed by 50 to 64 years old (20%), and 18 to 29 years old (18%).
- Children (i.e., visitors under 18 years old) accounted for a combined total of 21% of group members.

Questions 13–14: 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 of these questions are shown in Figure 10, below.

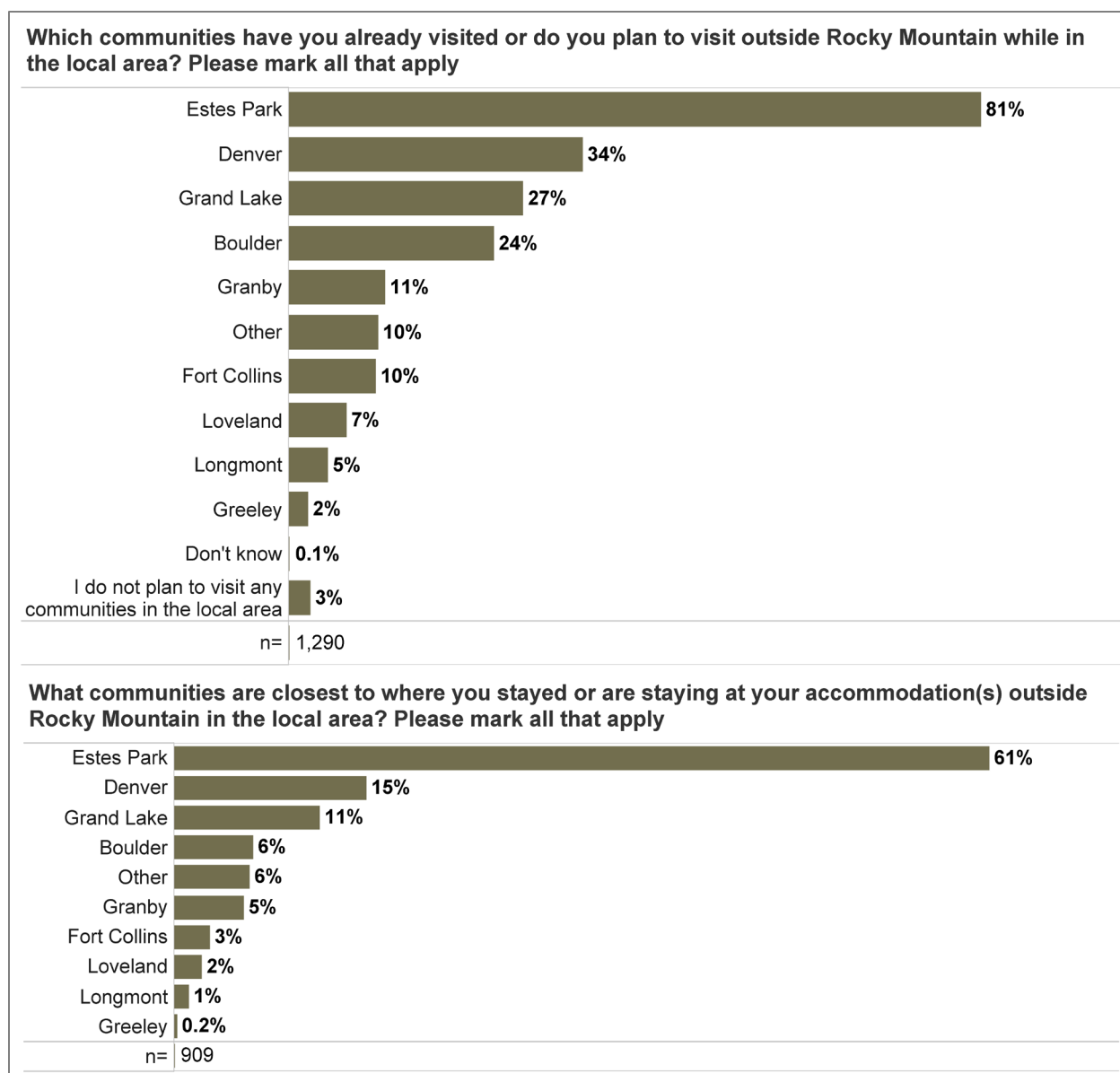


Figure 10. Communities visited outside Rocky Mountain while in the local area.

NPS

- A majority of respondents (81%) visited or planned to visit the community of Estes Park. More than one-third of respondents indicated they visited Denver (34%), 27% visited Grand Lake, and 24% visited Boulder.
- Visitors who stayed in accommodations outside Rocky Mountain National Park were most likely to stay in Estes Park (61%), Denver (15%), and Grand Lake (11%).

Questions 15–18: Park Use Characteristics

First, 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 11 and Table 7).

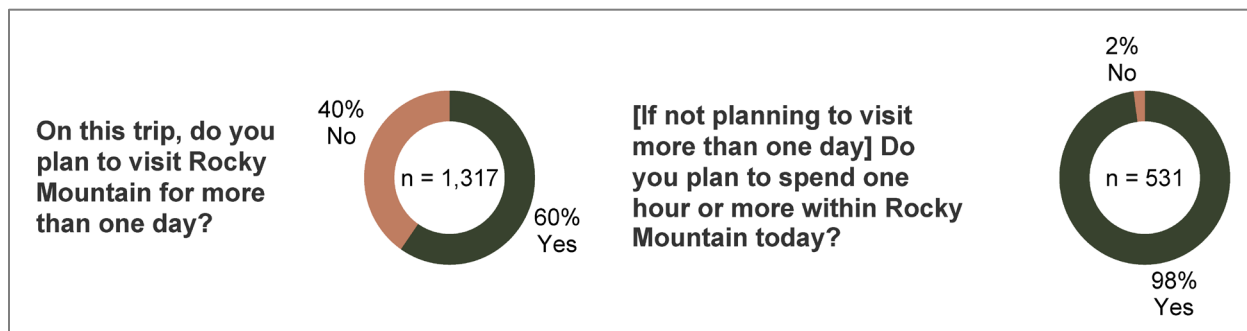


Figure 11. Duration of the respondent's trip to Rocky Mountain.

NPS

Table 7. Amount of time spent within Rocky Mountain.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If not planning to spend one hour or more] How many minutes do you plan to spend within Rocky Mountain today?	11	1	59	30
[If planning to spend less than a day, but one hour or more] How many hours do you plan to spend within Rocky Mountain today?	517	1	14	5
[If planning to visit at least one day] How many days do you plan to spend within Rocky Mountain on this trip?	788	1	25	3
[If planning to visit at least one day] On how many different days do you expect to enter the park?	786	1	25	3

- While visiting Rocky Mountain, most visitors (60%) planned to spend more than one day in the park.
- Among the 40% of visitors who did not spend more than a day in Rocky Mountain, almost all respondents (98%) planned to spend one hour or more in the park. The median length of time spent in the park among this group was 5 hours.
- Among those visitors who planned to visit the Park for more than one day, the median length of stay was 3 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 3 days.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate the most recent entrance they used to enter Rocky Mountain (Figure 12).

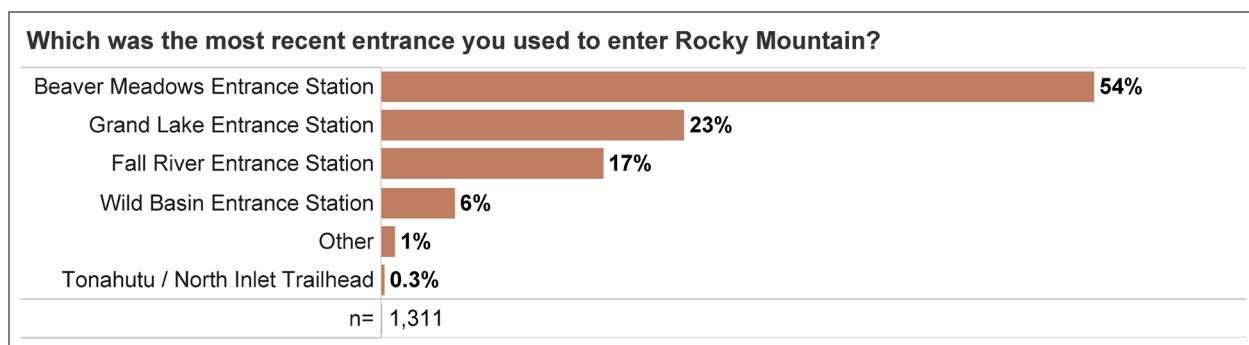


Figure 12. Most recent entrance used to enter Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- Beaver Meadows Entrance Station was the most commonly used entrance to Rocky Mountain (54%).
- About a quarter of visitors used the Grand Lake Entrance Station (23%), and 17% used the Fall River Entrance Station.

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 13).

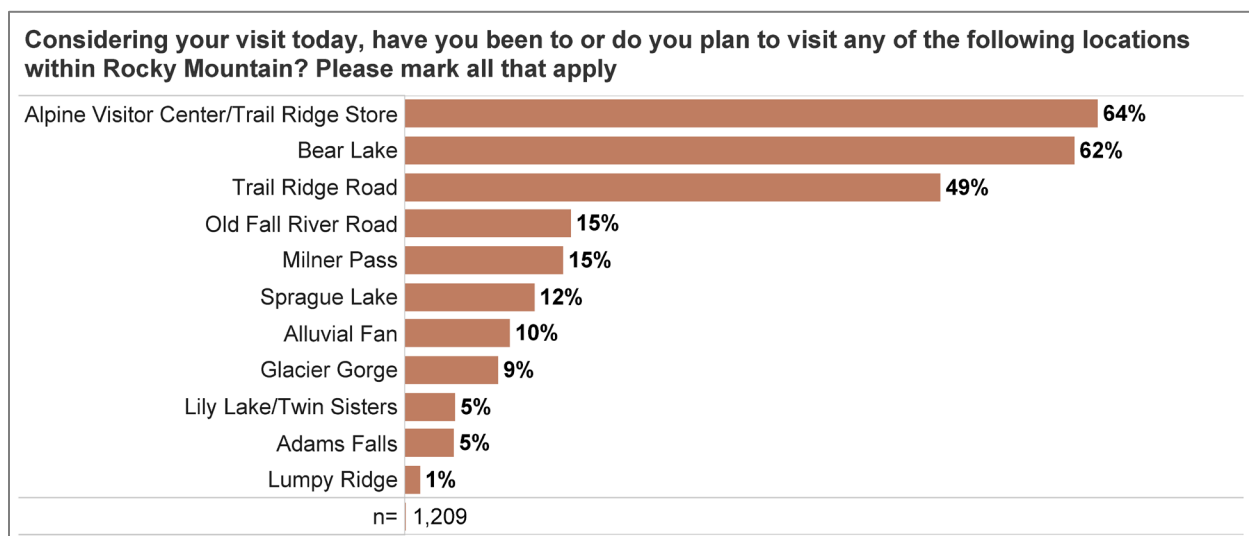


Figure 13. Park locations visited during the most recent trip to Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- The most commonly visited location in Rocky Mountain was the Alpine Visitor Center/Trail Ridge Store (64% of respondents had either been there or planned to visit it on their trip), followed by Bear Lake (62%) and Trail Ridge Road (49%).
- Lumpy Ridge was the least-visited location from the list provided, with only 1% of respondents reporting having visited or planning to visit.

Question 19: Transportation

Visitors were asked about the form of transportation they used to enter Rocky Mountain on the day they were surveyed (Figure 14).

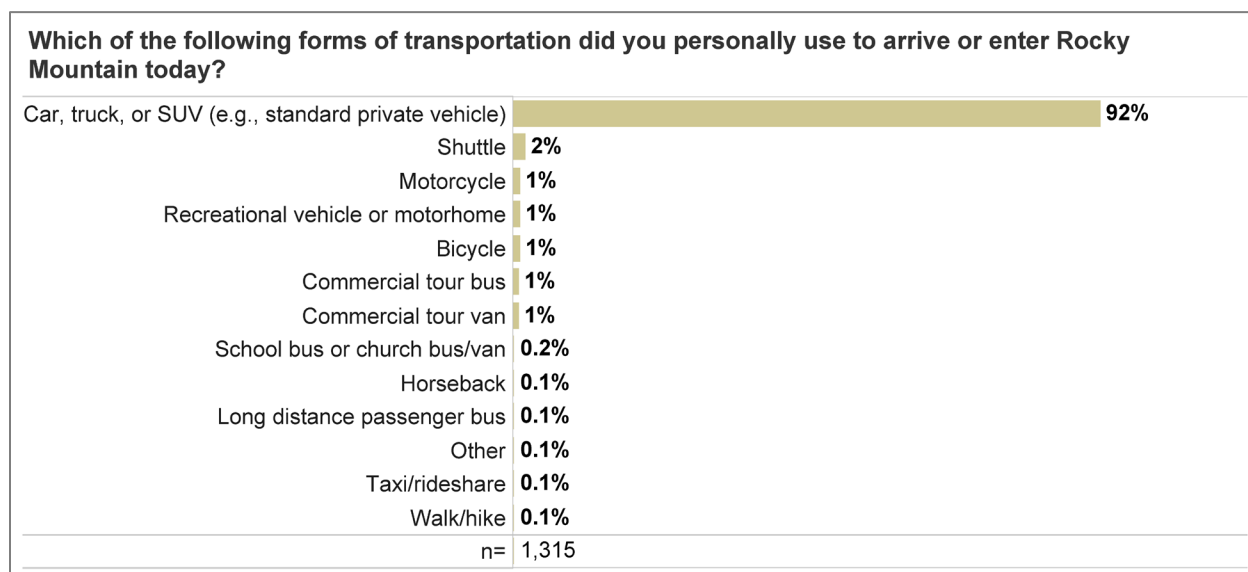


Figure 14. Form of transportation used to enter Rocky Mountain on the day of the survey.

NPS

- The vast majority of respondents (92%) 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 (2%), and motorcycle (1%).

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 15).

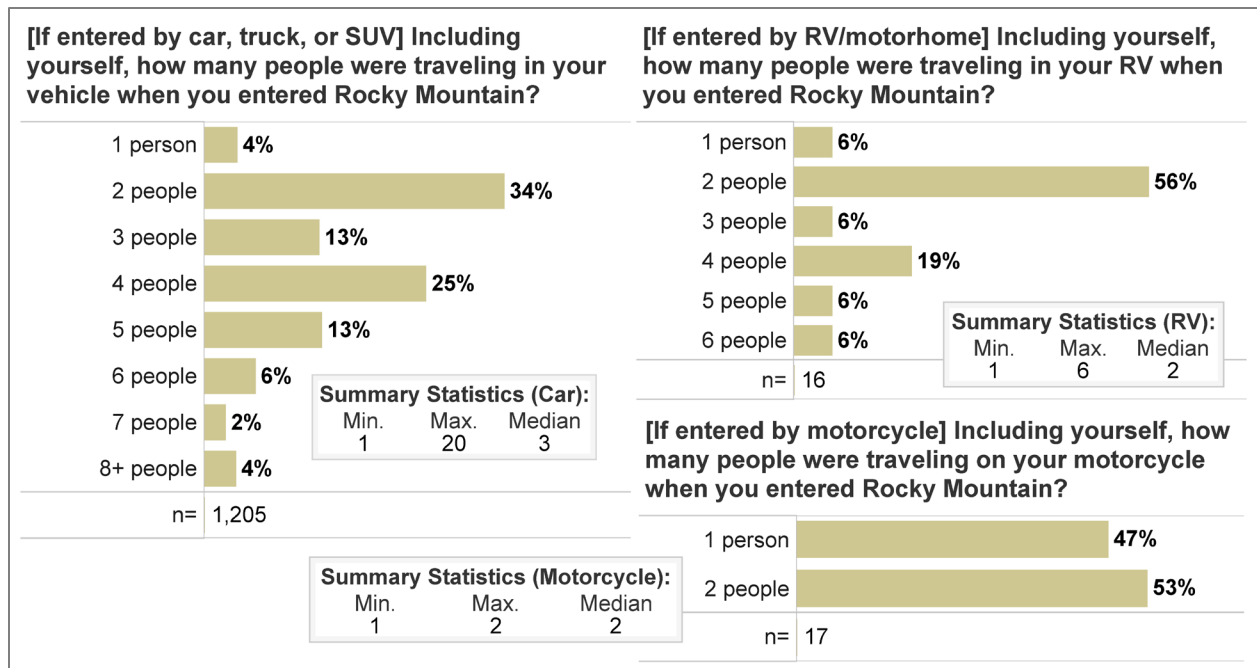


Figure 15. Number of people in or on respondent's vehicle when entering Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 10](#).

NPS

- More than one-third of respondents (34%) traveling by car reported 2 people. The next most common group size was 4 people (25%), followed by 3 people (13%) and 5 people (13%).
- More than half of respondents entering Rocky Mountain by RV/motorhome reported traveling in a group of 2 people (56%), followed by 4 people (19%).
- Most motorcyclists (53%) were traveling in a group of 2 people with the rest by themselves.

Question 21: Previous Visits to Rocky Mountain

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 16).

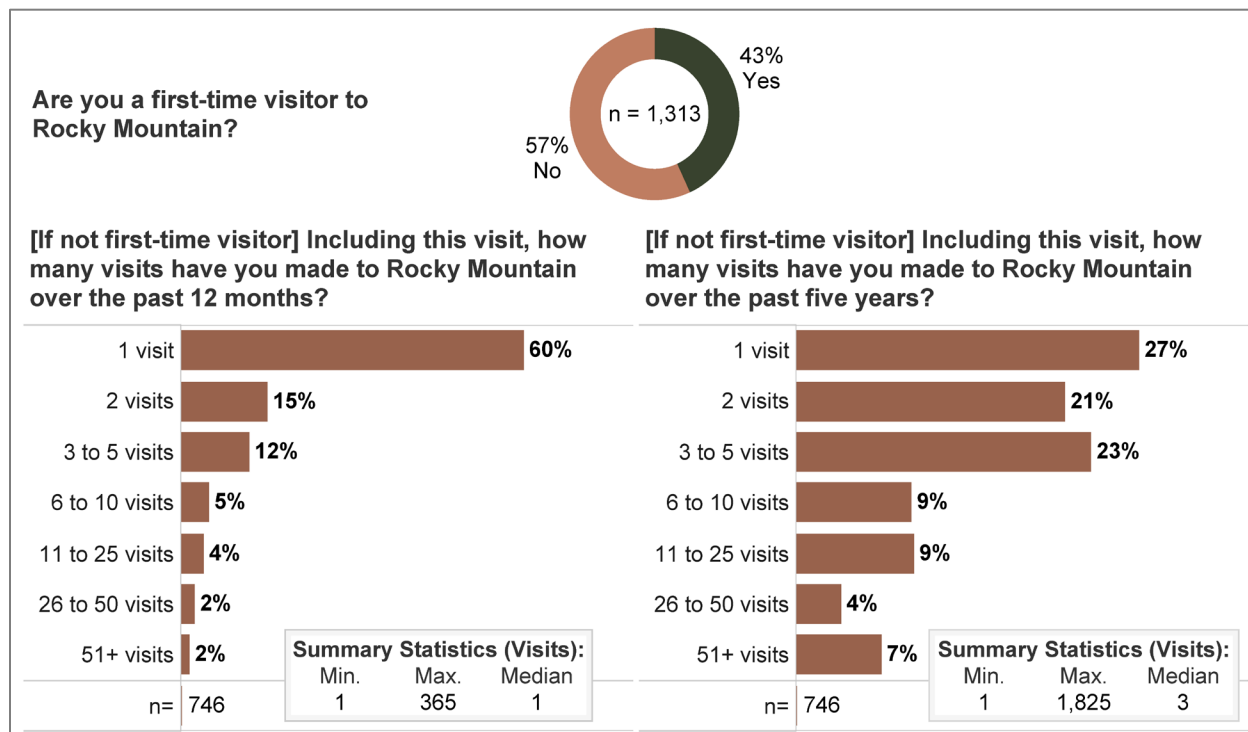


Figure 16. Previous visits to Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 11](#).

NPS

- Nearly half of respondents (43%) were on their first ever trip to Rocky Mountain.
- Among the 57% of respondents who were repeat visitors, the majority (60%) were on their first visit in the past 12 months (i.e., had last visited more than a year ago).
- However, a quarter of repeat visitors (27%) had visited at least one prior time in the past five years.
- The median number of visits made in the past five years was 3, including the current trip; 20% of repeat visitors had made more than 10 visits in the past five years.

Question 22: Previous Visits to Other NPS Units

Finally, respondents were asked how many visits they made to other NPS sites over the past 12 months (Figure 17).

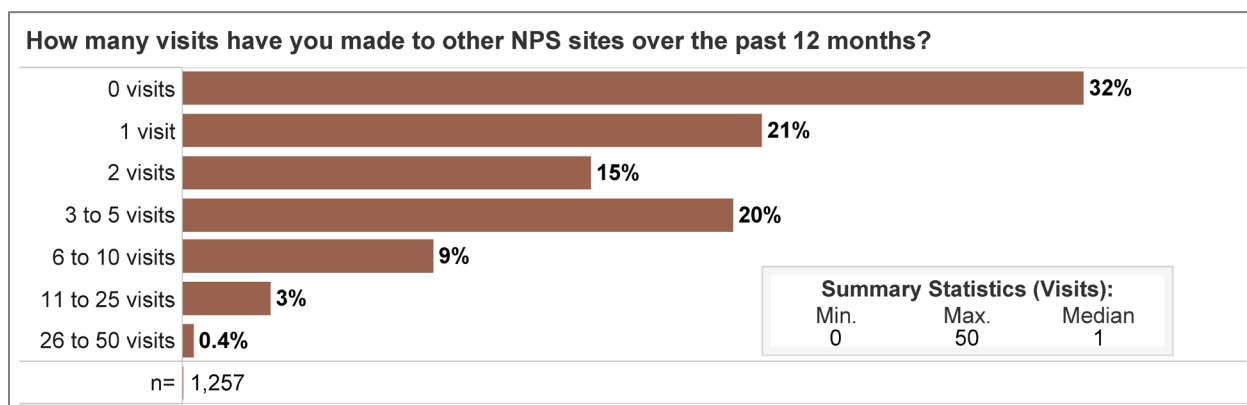


Figure 17. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 12](#).

NPS

- A majority of respondents (68%) 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 1, though a combined 32% had made 3 or more visits in the past year.

Follow-Up Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 378 follow-up visitor surveys received by mail-back or online following fieldwork conducted in Rocky Mountain 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 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 18).

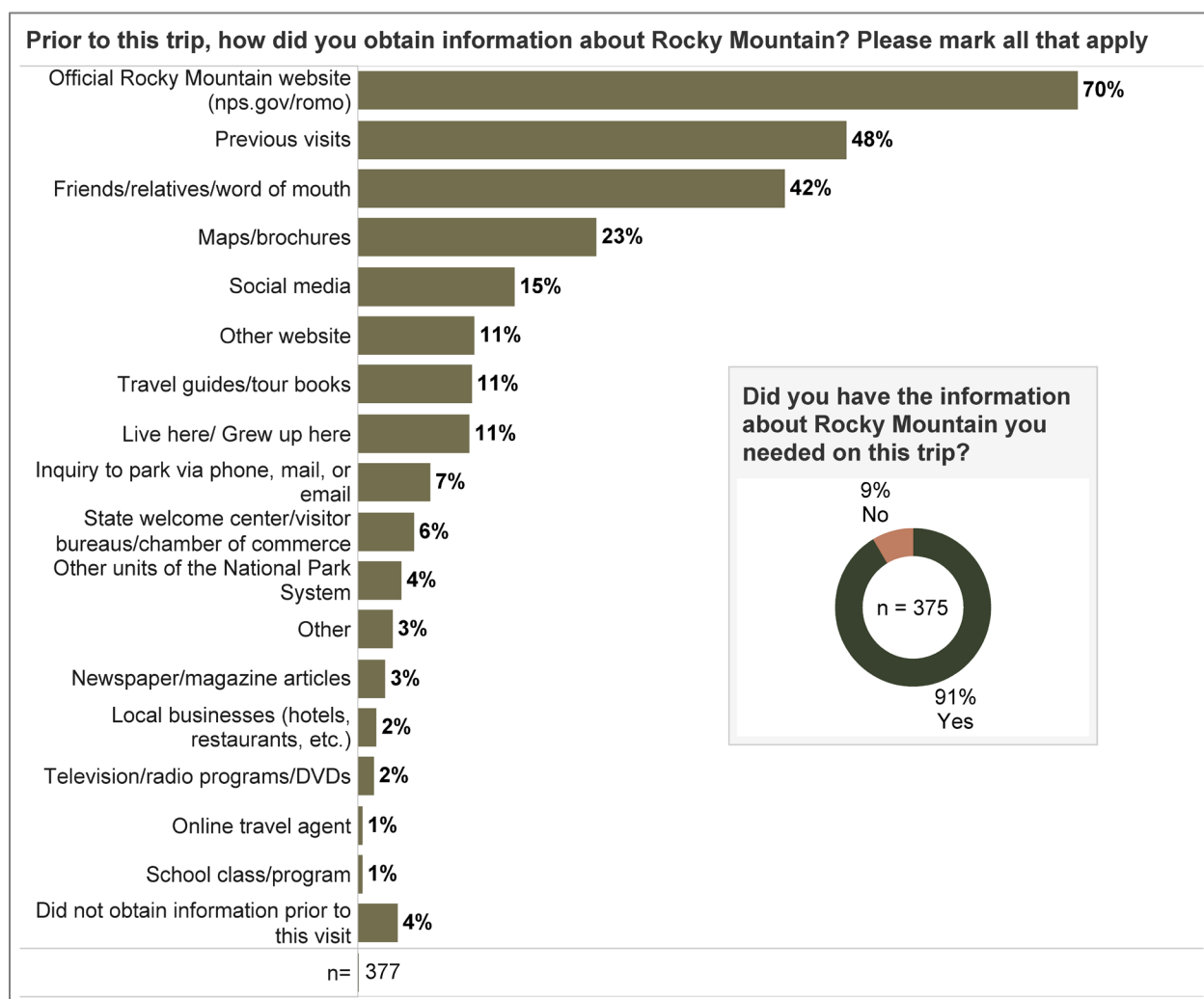


Figure 18. Sources used to obtain information about Rocky Mountain prior to the trip.

NPS

- The most used resource was the official Rocky Mountain website (nps.gov/romo), with 70% of respondents reportedly using it. The second most common source was previous visits (48%), followed by friends/relatives/word of mouth (42%), maps/brochures (23%), and social media (15%).
- In a follow-up question, 91% of respondents said that they had the information about Rocky Mountain that they needed on their trip, while 9% 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 Rocky Mountain on their trip (Figure 19).

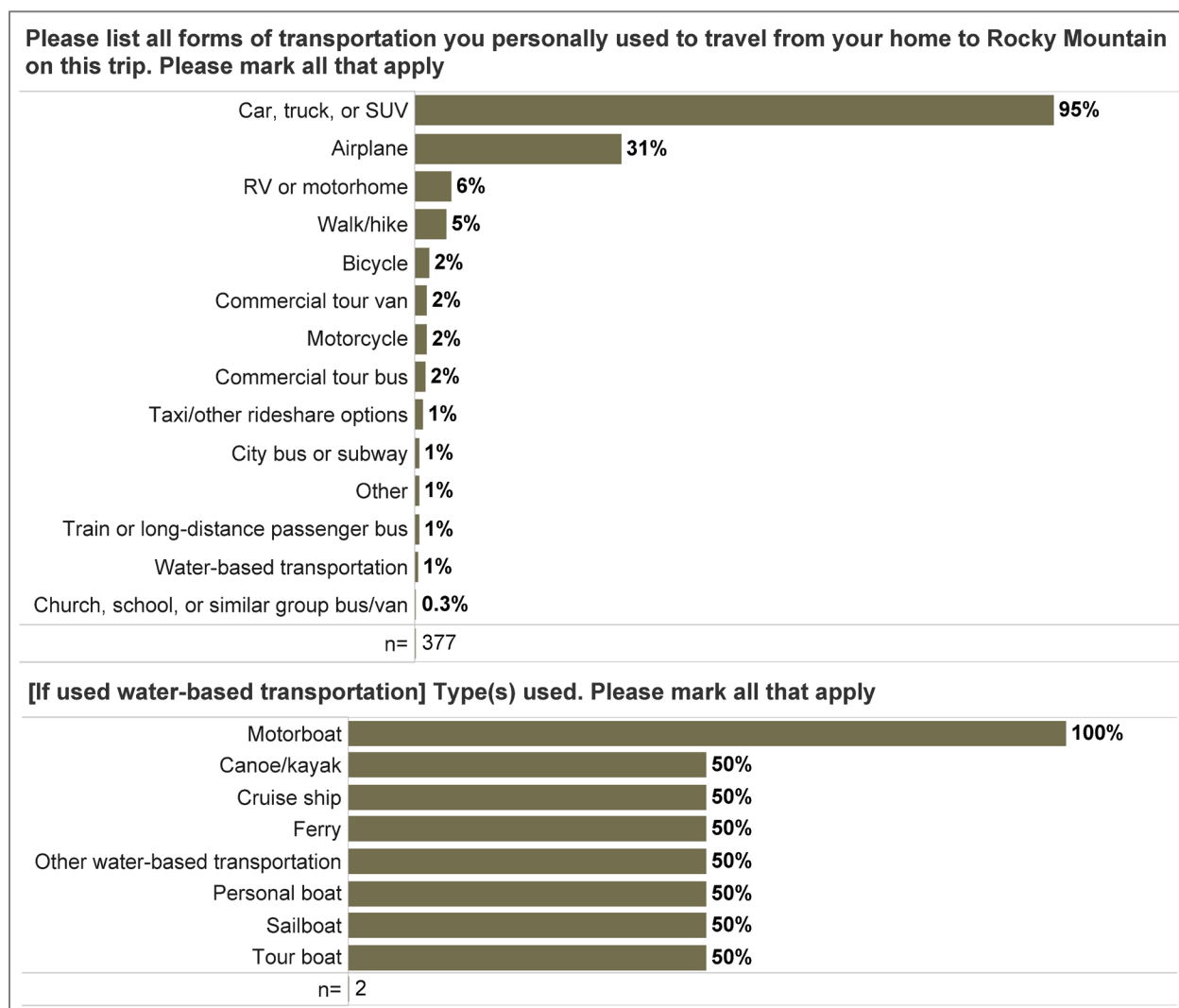


Figure 19. Forms of transportation used to travel from home to Rocky Mountain on the recent trip.

NPS

- Nearly all respondents (95%) 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 (31%), followed by RV or motorhome (6%).

Question 4: Travel Party Composition

Respondents were asked what type of group they were with during their visit to Rocky Mountain on the day of the survey (Figure 20).

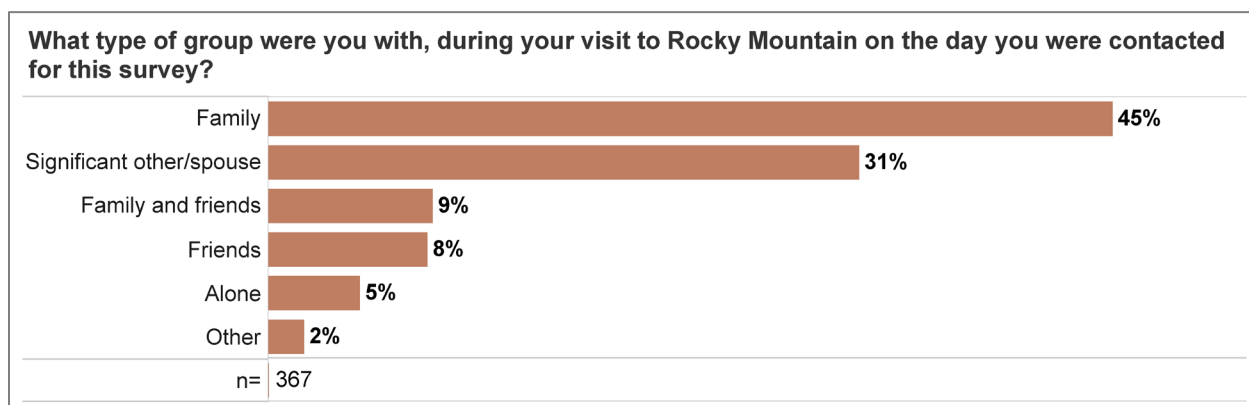


Figure 20. Travel party composition during Rocky Mountain visit.

NPS

- Nearly half of respondents (45%) visited Rocky Mountain with their family on the day of the survey.
- Nearly one-third of respondents (31%) explored Rocky Mountain with their significant other or spouse, and another 9% visited the park with their family and 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 Rocky Mountain (Figure 21).

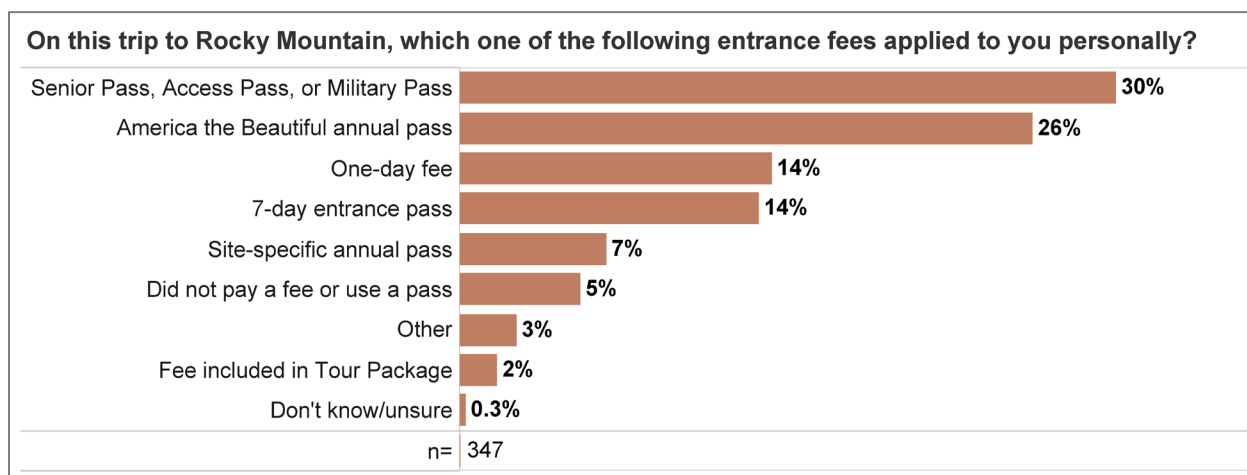


Figure 21. Entrance fees to enter Rocky Mountain on the most recent trip.

NPS

- Nearly one-third of respondents (30%) reported using a Senior Pass, Access Pass, or Military Pass, and another 26% entered using an America the Beautiful annual pass.
- In contrast, 35% of respondents entered using a Rocky Mountain-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 22).

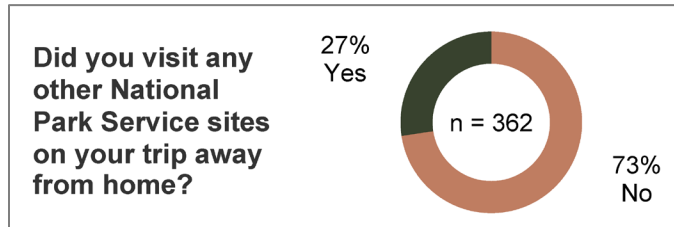


Figure 22. NPS sites visited on trip away from home.

NPS

- A quarter (27%) of all respondents had visited other NPS sites on their trip, while 73% 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). These comments are provided in an accompanying document.

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 23).

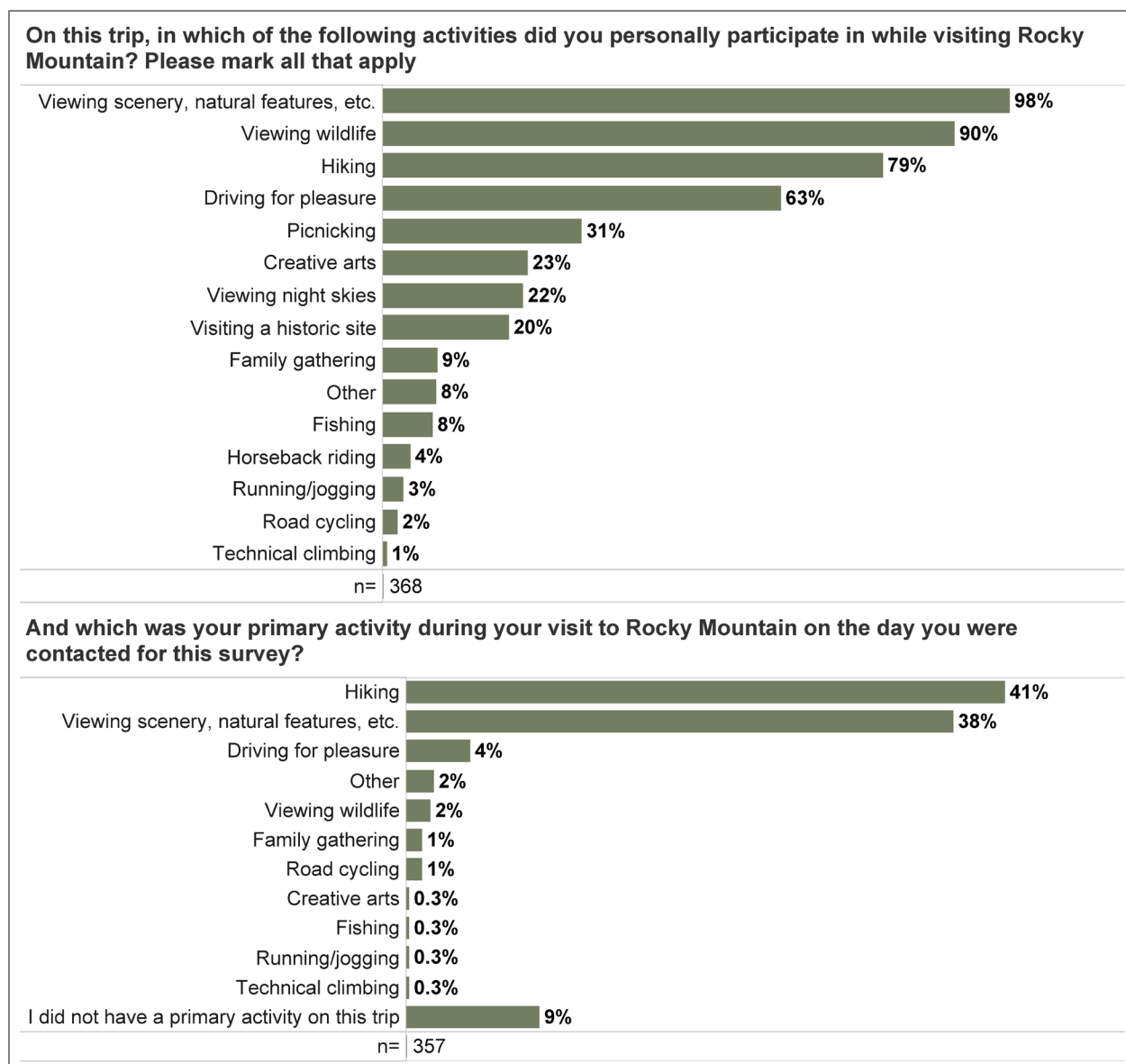


Figure 23. Participation in activities at Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- Almost all visitors reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (98%). Most visitors also indicated that they viewed wildlife (90%), and hiked (79%).
- Horseback riding, running/jogging, road cycling, and technical climbing were all uncommon activities (reported by 5% or fewer of respondents).
- The plurality of respondents (41%) reported hiking as their primary activity, followed by viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (38%).

Questions 15–16: Reasons to Visit

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of various reasons to visit Rocky Mountain on their trip, then asked which of those was the most important reason for them to visit Rocky Mountain (Figure 24).

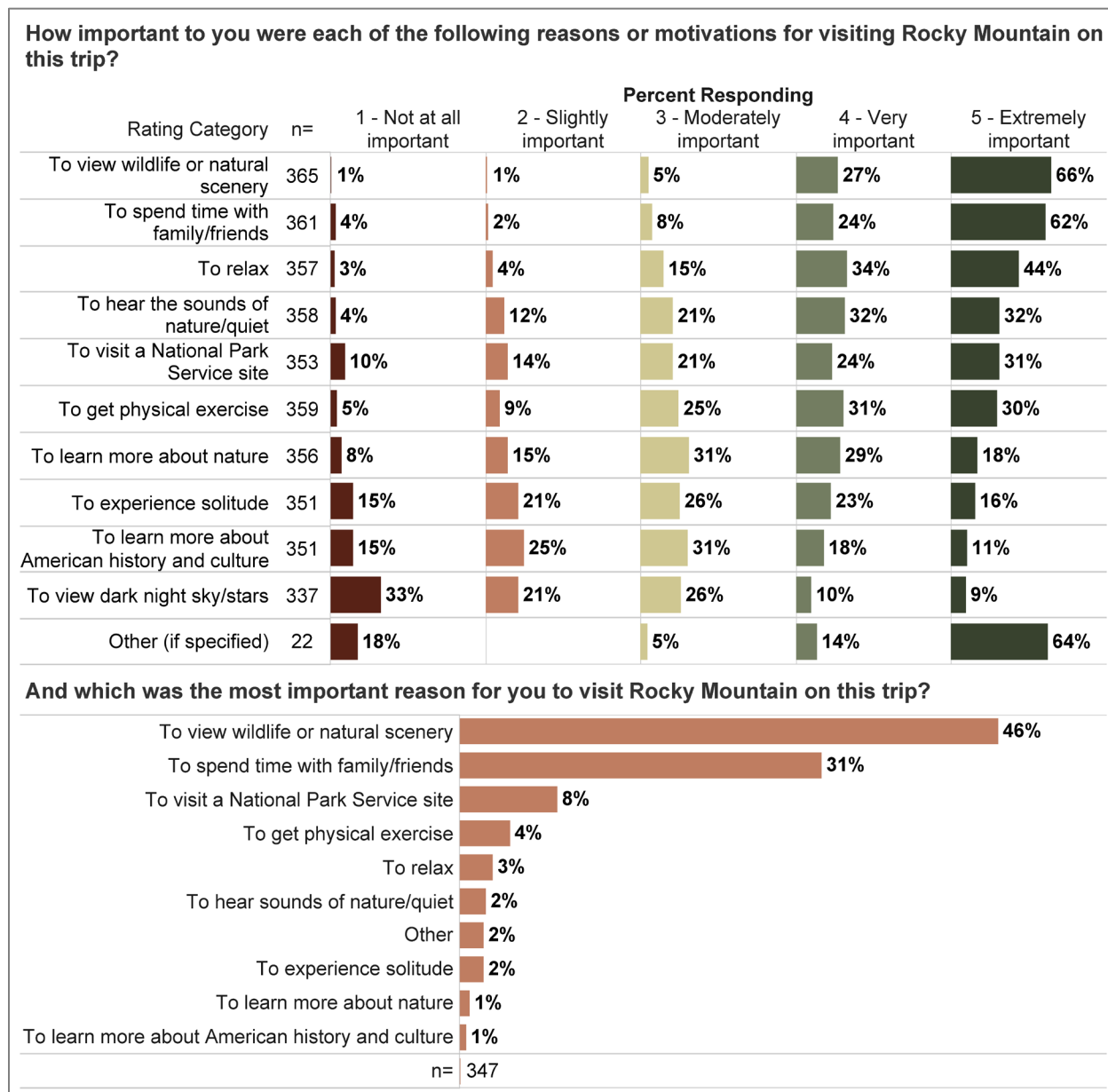


Figure 24. Reasons or motivations to visit Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 13](#).

NPS

- Most visitors chose “to view wildlife or natural scenery” (66%) and “to spend time with family/friends” (62%) as extremely important reasons for their trip to Rocky Mountain.

- Other important reasons were “to relax” and “to hear sounds of nature/quiet” (44% and 32% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- The least important reasons were “to view dark night sky/stars” and “to learn more about American history and culture” (only 9% and 11% of respondents, respectively, reported them as extremely important, and 33% and 15% 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” (46%), followed by “to spend time with family/friends” (31%), and “to visit a National Park Service Site” (8%).

Questions 17–19: Programs, Services, and Learning

Respondents were asked to identify all programs and services that they personally participated in while visiting Rocky Mountain during their trip (Figure 25).

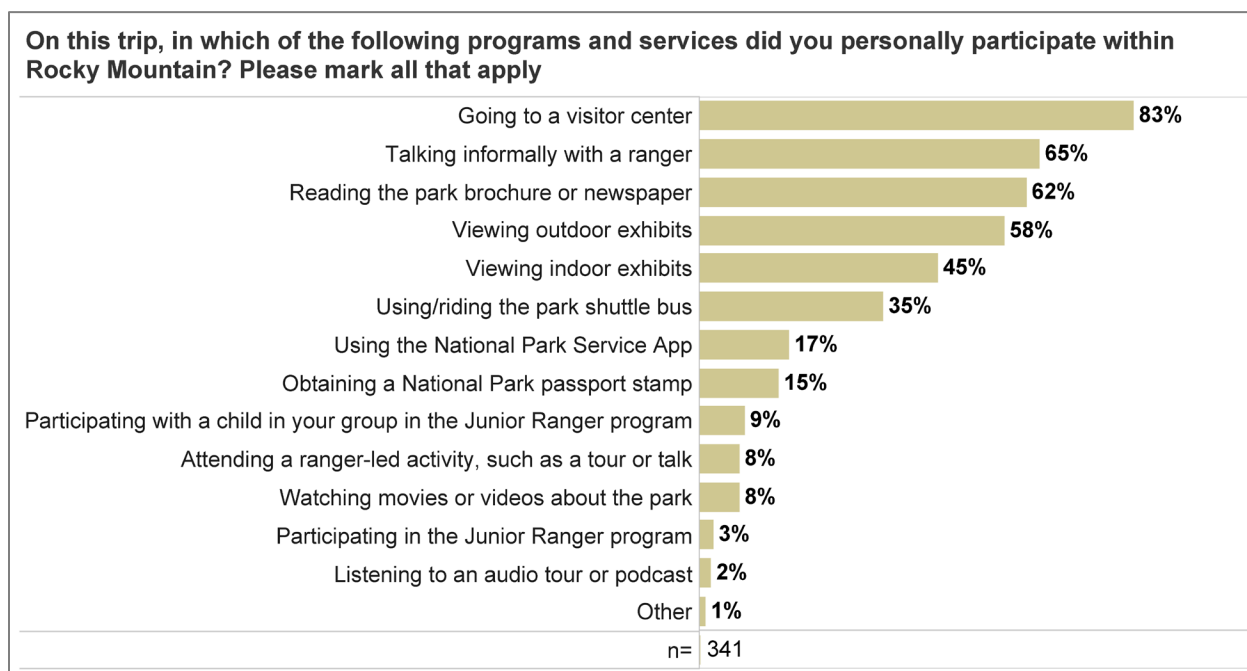


Figure 25. Programs participated in while visiting Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- The two most-used programs were going to a visitor center and talking informally with a ranger, with 83% and 65% of respondents, respectively, reporting participating in each of them.
- Several other programs were engaged in by over half of respondents: reading the park brochure or newspaper (62%) and viewing outdoor exhibits (58%).

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 26).

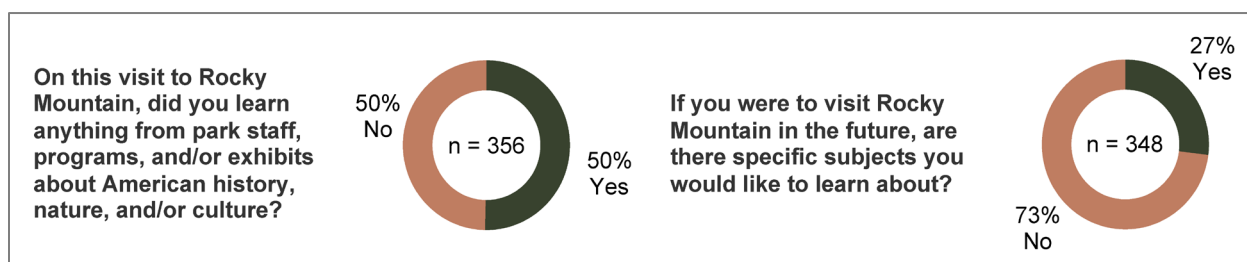


Figure 26. Learning.

NPS

- Half of respondents (50%) reported that they learned something from park staff, programs, and/or exhibits about American history, nature, and/or culture.
- A quarter of respondents (27%) 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 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 Rocky Mountain (Figure 27).

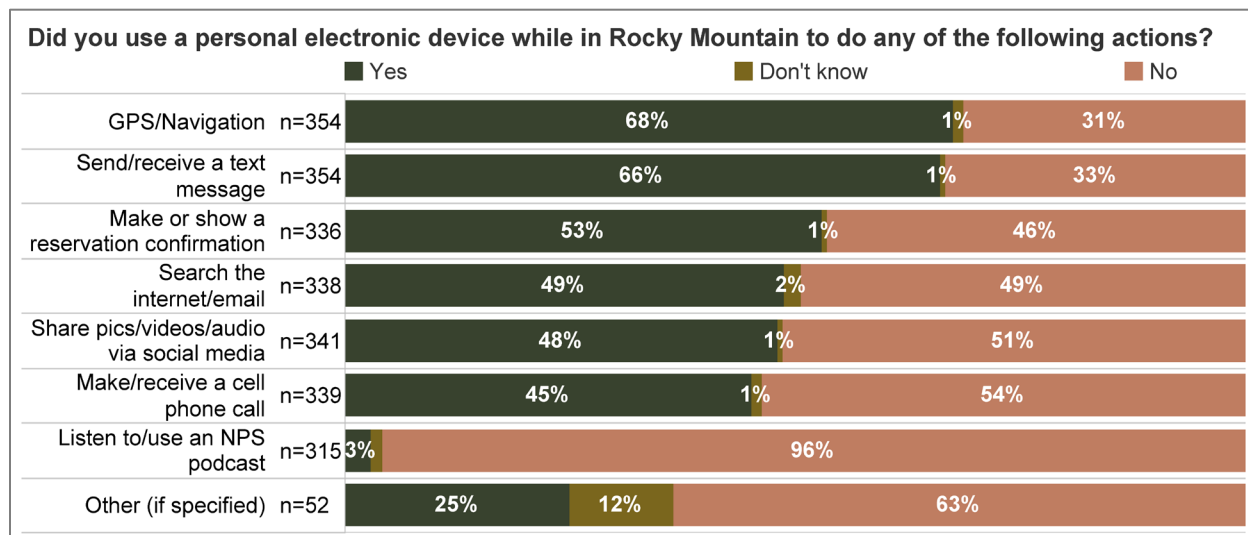


Figure 27. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 14](#).

NPS

- The majority of respondents (68%) reported using GPS/Navigation, and more than half of respondents reported sending/receiving a text message (66%) and making or showing a reservation confirmation (53%).
- Conversely, only 3% of respondents listened to or used an NPS podcast.

Then, respondents were asked to rate both the importance of each of these electronic device uses (Figure 28), and the quality of their service (Figure 29).

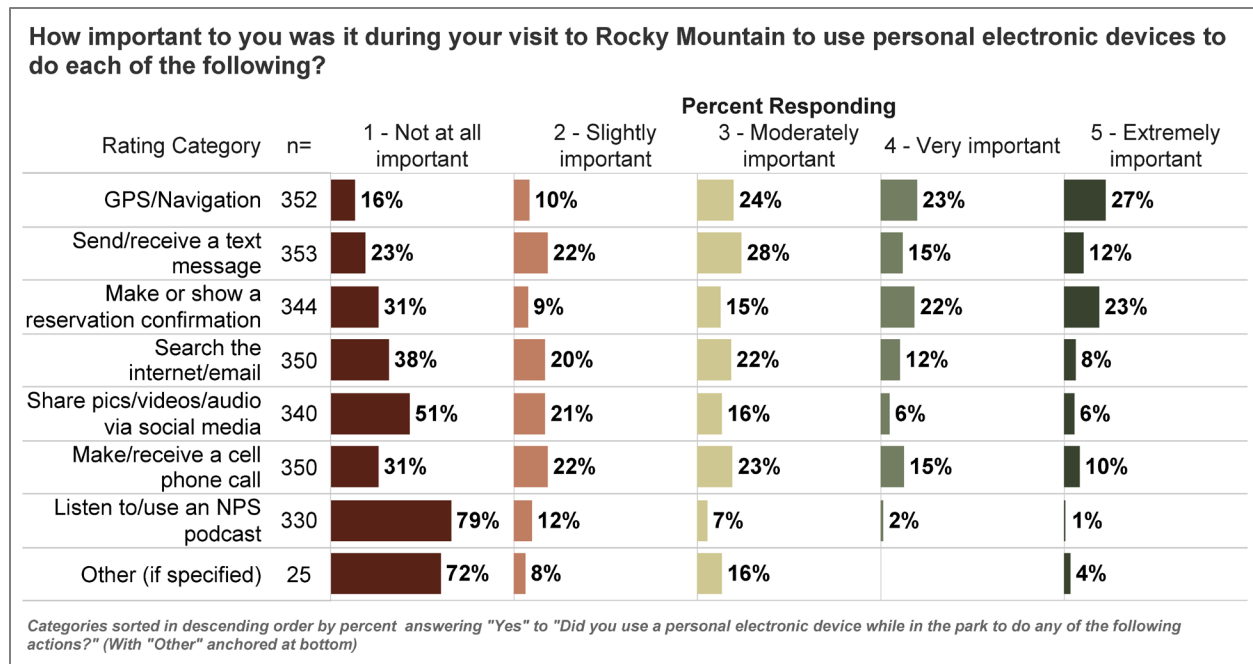


Figure 28. The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 15](#).

NPS

- The most important device uses were GPS/Navigation and making or showing a reservation confirmation (27% and 23% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- Listening to and using an NPS podcast was rated as extremely important only by 1% of respondents, and not at all important by 79% of respondents.

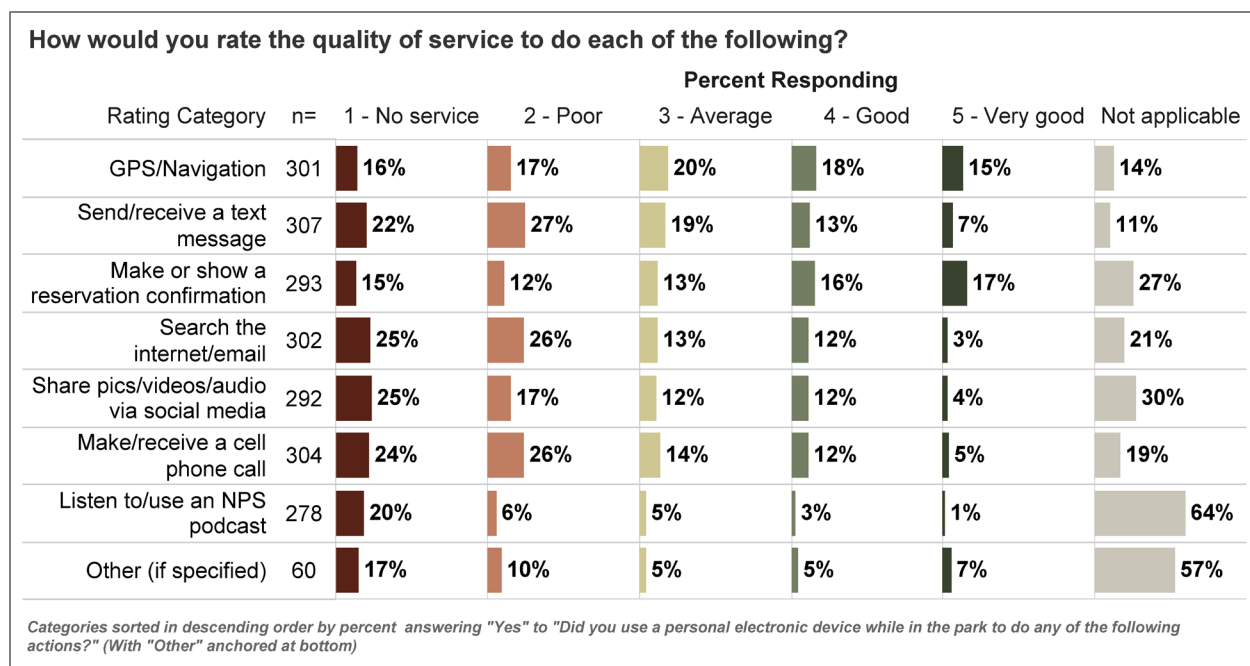


Figure 29. Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 16](#).

NPS

- GPS/Navigation was rated as very good or good by 15% and 18% of respondents, respectively. However, 16% of respondents reported that they had no service for this.
- A proportion of respondents (ranging from 15% to 25%, depending on the service) reported that they also had no service to send/receive a text message, make or show a reservation confirmation, search the internet/email, share pics/videos/audio via social media, make/receive a cell phone call, or listen to/use an NPS podcast.
- However, a smaller percentage of visitors (ranging from 1% to 17%, depending on the service) rated these services as very good.

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 Rocky Mountain. If such a condition was identified, respondents were asked to specify the type of difficulty (Figure 30).

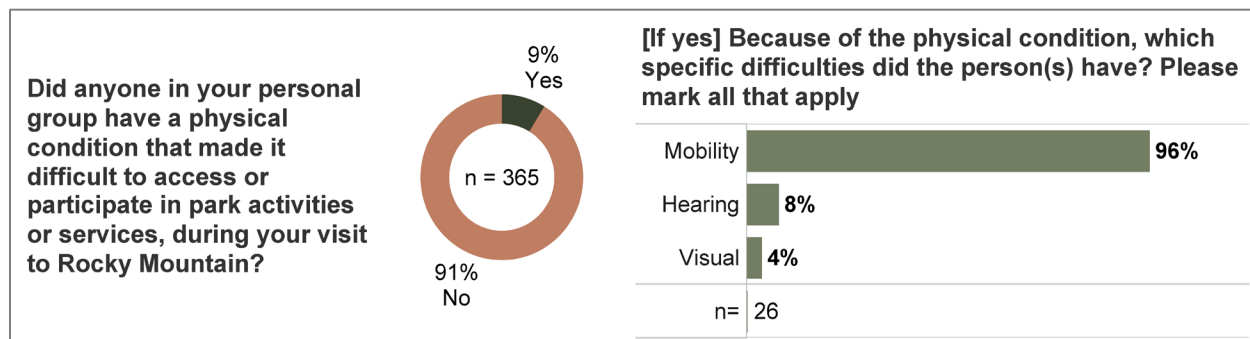


Figure 30. Physical difficulties while visiting Rocky Mountain.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (91%) 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 9% of visitors who identified at least one difficulty, 96% reported mobility issues in their group, with small portions also reporting hearing and/or visual difficulties.

Questions 25–28: Visitor Experience

Respondents were asked if their visit to Rocky Mountain met their expectations (Figure 31).

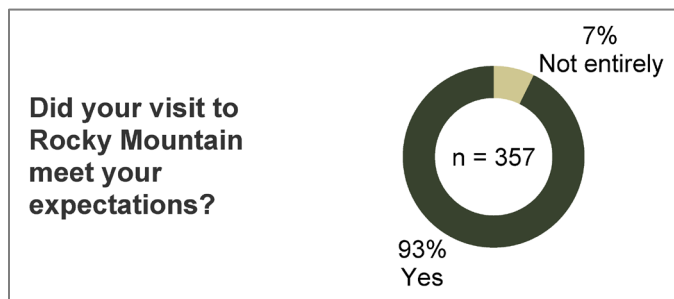


Figure 31. Meeting Rocky Mountain expectations.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (93%) reported that their visit to Rocky Mountain met their expectations, while 7% 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 Rocky Mountain 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 Rocky Mountain and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each given statement (Figure 32).

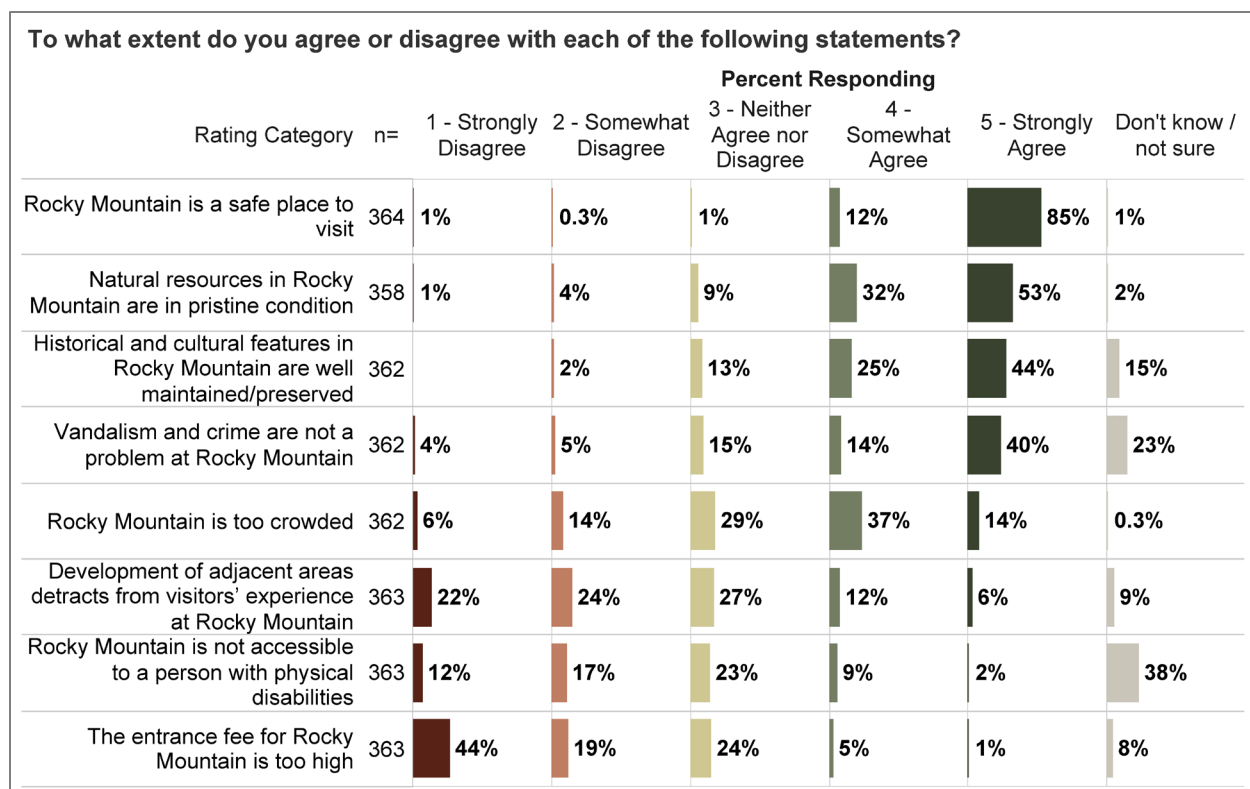


Figure 32. Rating Rocky Mountain experience. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 17](#).

NPS

- From all the statements listed, “Rocky Mountain is a safe place to visit” received the most consensus with a combined 97% of respondents saying they either strongly or somewhat agree with it. That was followed by “natural resources in Rocky Mountain are in pristine condition” and “historical and cultural features in Rocky Mountain are well maintained/preserved” (85% and 69% of respondents, respectively, strongly or somewhat agreed with these statements).
- Conversely, “the entrance fee for Rocky Mountain is too high” and “Rocky Mountain is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities” received the least support, with 6% and 11% of respondents, respectively, either somewhat or strongly agreeing with these statements, and 44% and 12% 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 33).

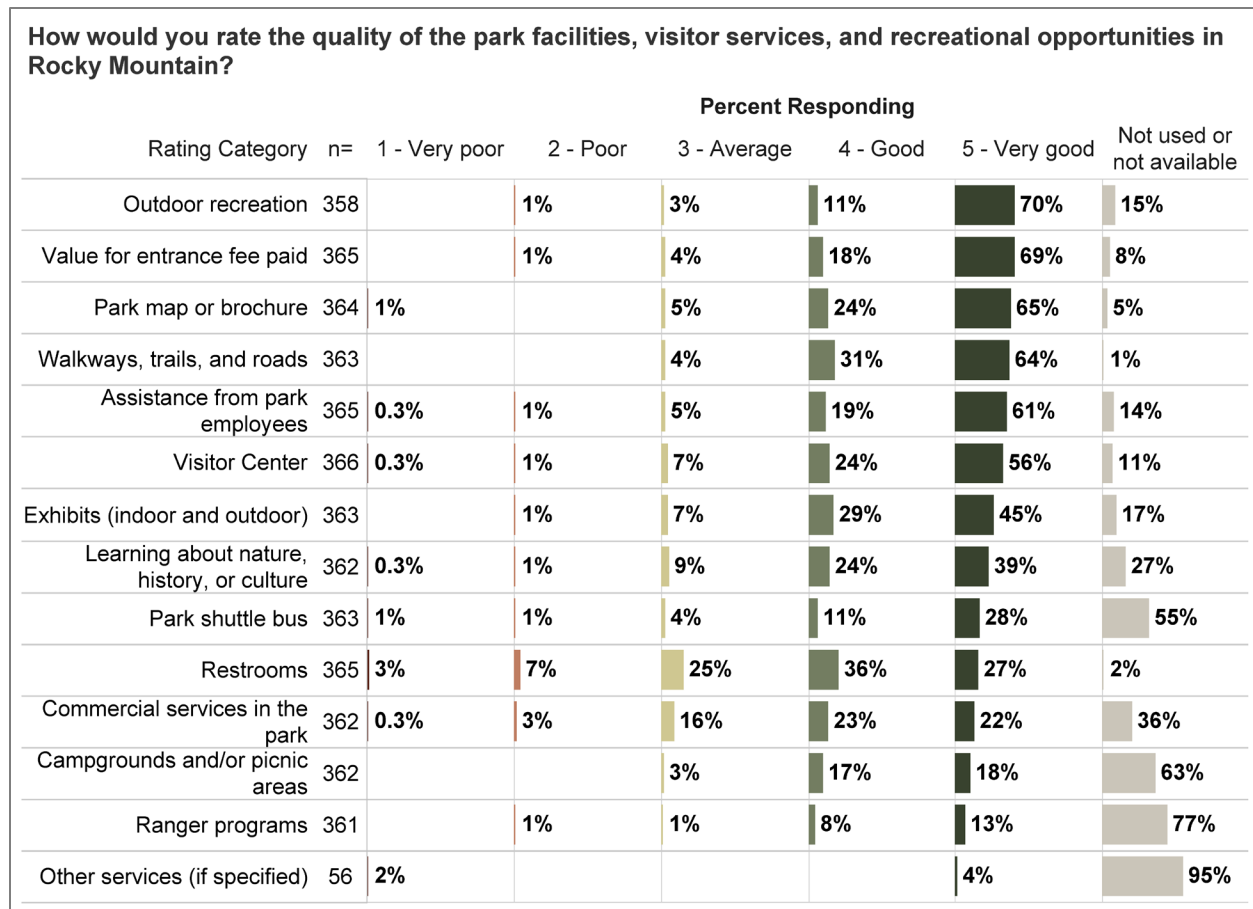


Figure 33. Rating the quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 18](#).

NPS

- Over half of visitors (ranging from 56% to 70%) rated the visitor center, assistance from park employees, walkways, trails, and roads, park map or brochure, value for entrance fee paid, and outdoor recreation as very good.
- Conversely, fewer than half of visitors rated exhibits (indoor and outdoor), learning about nature, history, or culture, the park shuttle bus, restrooms, commercial services in the park, campgrounds and/or picnic areas, and ranger programs as very good. For several of these ratings categories, visitors were likely to say that the facility, service, or opportunity was either not available, or they did not use them.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreation opportunities (Figure 34).

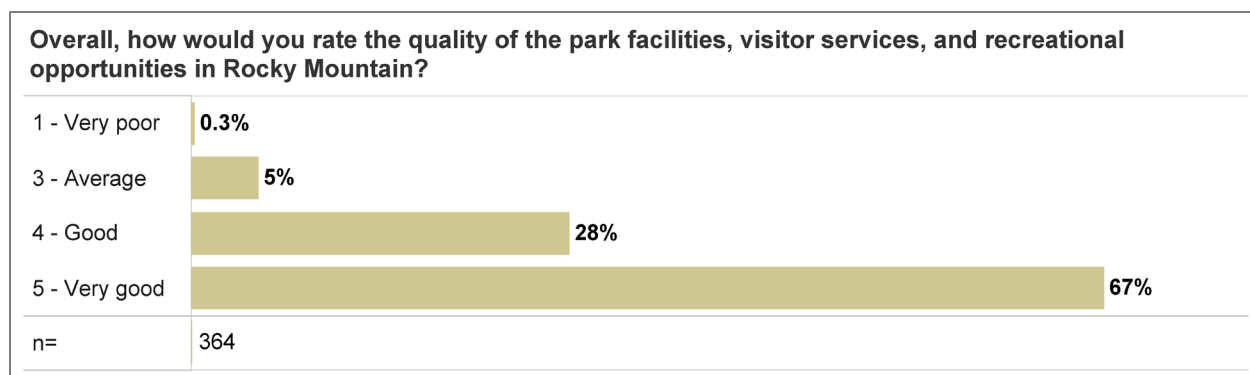


Figure 34. Rating overall quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

NPS

- In general, about two-thirds of respondents (67%) rated the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Rocky Mountain as very good, and another 28% rated them as good.
- Only 5.3% of visitors rated the overall quality as average or below.

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 35 depicts descriptive statistics for respondent gender, age, and education.

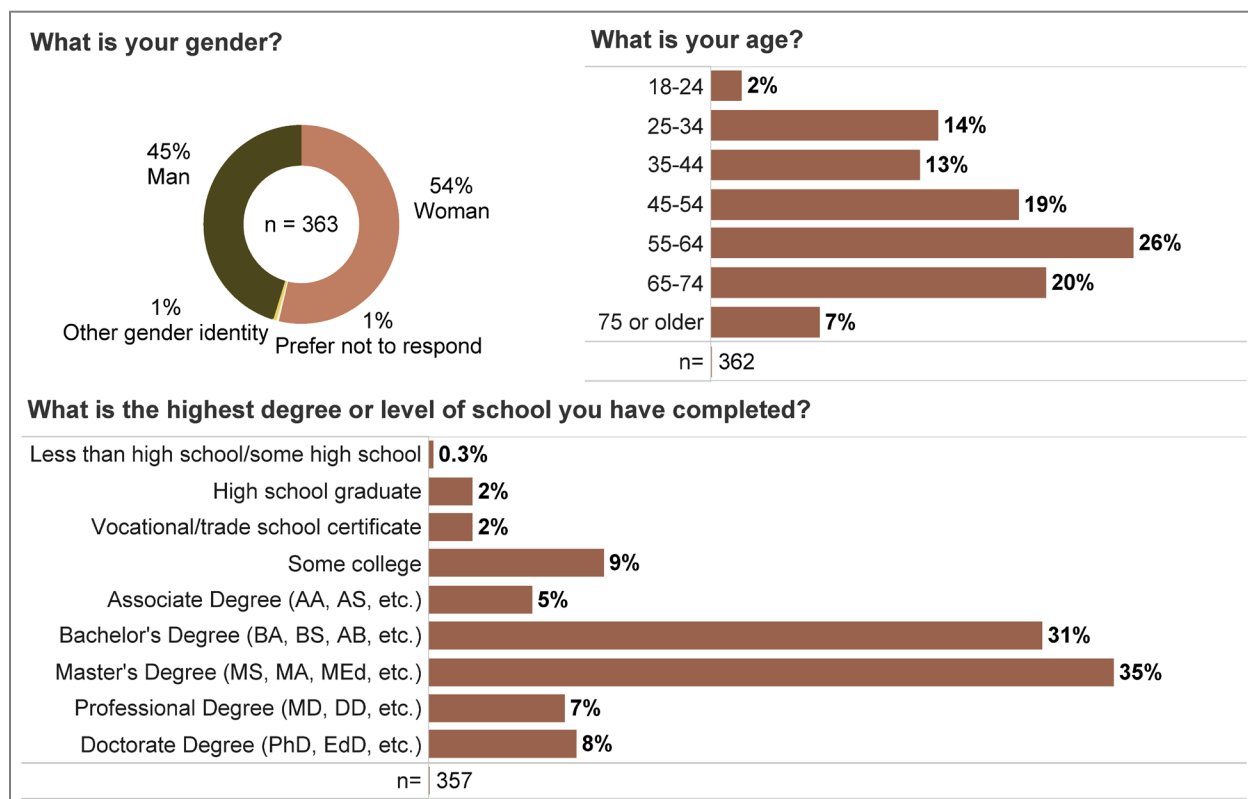


Figure 35. Respondent demographics: gender, age, and level of education.

NPS

- Follow-up survey respondents were slightly more likely to be women than men, though the sample was relatively balanced (54% vs. 45%). Another 1% had another gender identity, while 1% preferred not to disclose their gender identity.
- The most common age categories were 55 to 64 years old (26%), 65 to 74 (20%), and 45 to 54 (19%). The least represented age group was 18 to 24 (only 2% of the participants surveyed).
- Most survey respondents were highly educated, with a combined 95% having some college degree, and a plurality (35%) 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 36).

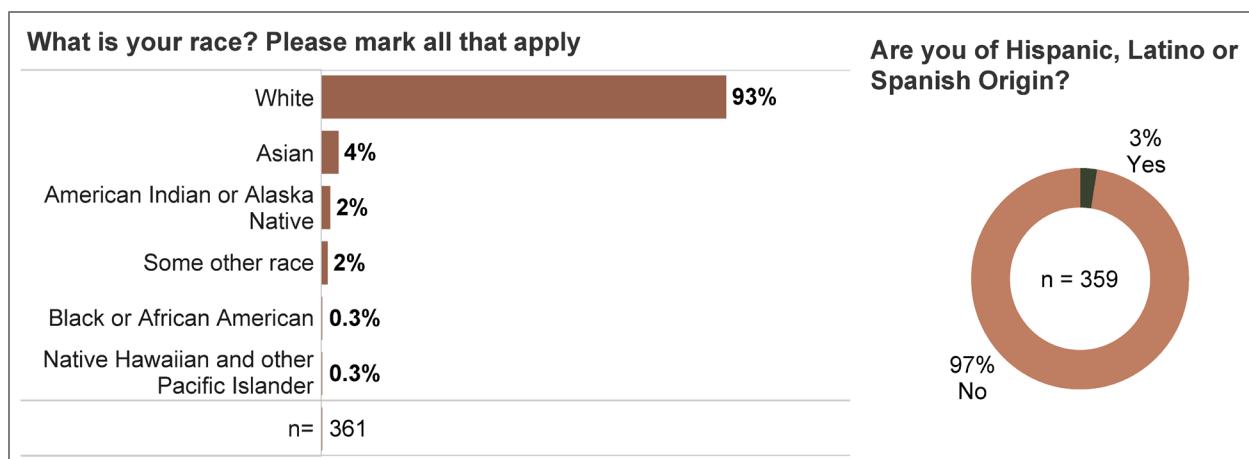


Figure 36. Respondent demographics: race and ethnicity.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (93%) were White, while 4% were Asian.
- Most respondents (97%) 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 37).

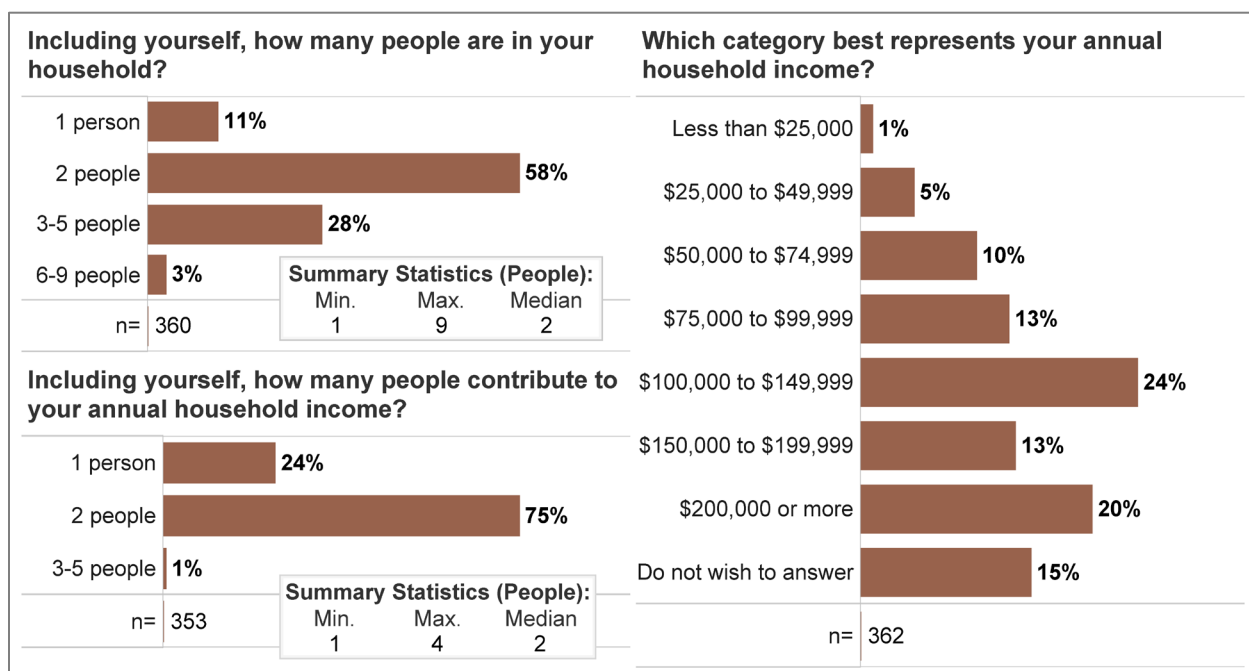


Figure 37. Household demographics: annual household income and household size. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 19](#).

NPS

- Over half of respondents (58%) had 2 people in their household, followed by 3 to 5 people (another 28%).
- In addition to being highly educated, Rocky Mountain visitors are also relatively affluent. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) reported that their annual household income was between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and another 20% earned \$200,000 or more.
- Most respondents (75%) came from a dual-income household.

Finally, respondents were asked about their language preference (Figure 38).

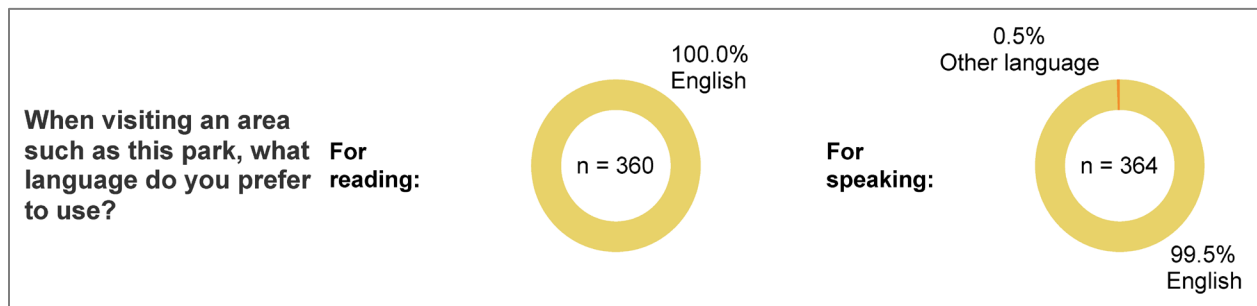


Figure 38. Respondent's language preference.

NPS

- While 3% of respondents were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin, the overwhelming majority of respondents preferred to use English both for reading (100%) and speaking (99.5%) when visiting an area such as Rocky Mountain.
- Only 0.5% of respondents preferred Spanish for either reading and/or speaking.

Literature Cited

National Park Service (NPS). 2022. 2022 Socioeconomic Monitoring of Rocky Mountain National Park: Visitor Intercept and Post-Trip Surveys.
<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2318679>

Appendix A: Accessible Tables

This appendix contains accessible tables with data from figures found in the body of the report (Tables 8–19). Table captions include hyperlinks to the corresponding figures.

Table 8. Data from [Figure 7](#). Number of nights spent in the local area around Rocky Mountain, by accommodation type.

Accommodation Type	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Backcountry Camping in Rocky Mountain	10	1	5	2
Camping in Rocky Mountain	106	1	8	3
Camping outside Rocky Mountain	96	1	17	4
Lodging outside Rocky Mountain	777	1	180	4
Unpaid accommodations	93	1	28	5

Table 9. Data from [Figure 8](#). Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Group Composition	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Adults	1319	1	60	2
Children	1319	0	73	0

Table 10. Data from [Figure 15](#). Number of people in respondent's vehicle when entering Rocky Mountain.

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 Rocky Mountain?	1205	1	20	3
[If entered by RV/motorhome] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your RV when you entered Rocky Mountain?	16	1	6	2
[If entered by motorcycle] Including yourself, how many people were traveling on your motorcycle when you entered Rocky Mountain?	17	1	2	2

Table 11. Data from [Figure 16](#). Previous visits to Rocky Mountain.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Rocky Mountain over the past 12 months?	746	1	365	1
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Rocky Mountain over the past five years?	746	1	1825	3

Table 12. Data from [Figure 17](#). 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?	1257	0	50	1

Table 13. Data from [Figure 24](#). Reasons or motivations to visit Rocky Mountain.

Rating Category	n
To visit a National Park Service site	353
To experience solitude	351
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	358
To learn more about nature	356
To learn more about American history and culture	351
To spend time with family/friends	361
To get physical exercise	359
To view wildlife or natural scenery	365
To relax	357
To view dark night sky/stars	337
Other (if specified)	22

Table 14. Data from [Figure 27](#). Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	339
Send/receive a text message	354
Search the internet/email	338
GPS/Navigation	354
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	341
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	315
Make or show a reservation confirmation	336
Other (if specified)	52

Table 15. Data from [Figure 28](#). The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	350
Send/receive a text message	353
Search the internet/email	350
GPS/Navigation	352
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	340
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	330
Make or show a reservation confirmation	344
Other (if specified)	25

Table 16. Data from [Figure 29](#). Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Rocky Mountain.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	304
Send/receive a text message	307
Search the internet/email	302
GPS/Navigation	301
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	292
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	278
Make or show a reservation confirmation	293
Other (if specified)	60

Table 17. Data from [Figure 32](#). Rating Rocky Mountain experience.

Rating Category	n
Rocky Mountain is a safe place to visit	364
Rocky Mountain is too crowded	362
Natural resources in Rocky Mountain are in pristine condition	358
The entrance fee for Rocky Mountain is too high	363
Vandalism and crime are not a problem at Rocky Mountain	362
Rocky Mountain is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities	363
Historical and cultural features in Rocky Mountain are well maintained/preserved	362
Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors' experience at Rocky Mountain	363

Table 18. Data from [Figure 33](#). Rating the quality of Rocky Mountain facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

Rating Category	n
Visitor Center	366
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	363
Restrooms	365
Walkways, trails, and roads	363
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	362
Assistance from park employees	365
Park map or brochure	364
Ranger programs	361
Value for entrance fee paid	365
Commercial services in the park (food, lodging, gifts, rental, etc.)	362
Other services (if specified)	56
Learning about nature, history, or culture	362
Outdoor recreation (sightseeing, camping, bicycling, boating, hiking, etc.)	358

Table 19. Data from [Figure 37](#). Household demographics: annual household income and household size.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Including yourself, how many people are in your household?	360	1	9	2
Including yourself, how many people contribute to your annual household income?	353	1	4	2

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Natural Resource Stewardship and Science

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