



2022 Socioeconomic Research of Niobrara National Scenic River

Report on 2022 Data Collection (Revised)



Canoeists float along a calm stretch of the Niobrara River.

NPS

2022 Socioeconomic Research of Niobrara National Scenic River: 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. Niobrara National Scenic River (Niobrara NSR) 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 Niobrara NSR 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. Niobrara National Scenic River (Niobrara NSR) 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 Niobrara National Scenic River, what they do during their visit, and their spending profile. The results of the study are intended to assist Niobrara National Scenic River 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.



A solo canoeist paddles along the Niobrara River beneath towering bluffs.
NPS

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 Niobrara NSR local area map is shown in Figure 1. The local area around Niobrara NSR consists of Cherry, Keya Paha, Brown, and Rock counties in Nebraska. Within Niobrara NSR, the study area was comprised of 5 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 Niobrara NSR.

Intercept Site	Number of Completed Intercept Surveys	Percent of Completed Intercept Surveys
Visitor Center	49	12.7%
Cornell Bridge Launch	41	10.6%
Smith Falls State Park	165	42.7%
Brewer Bridge Launch	126	32.6%
Norden Bridge	5	1.3%

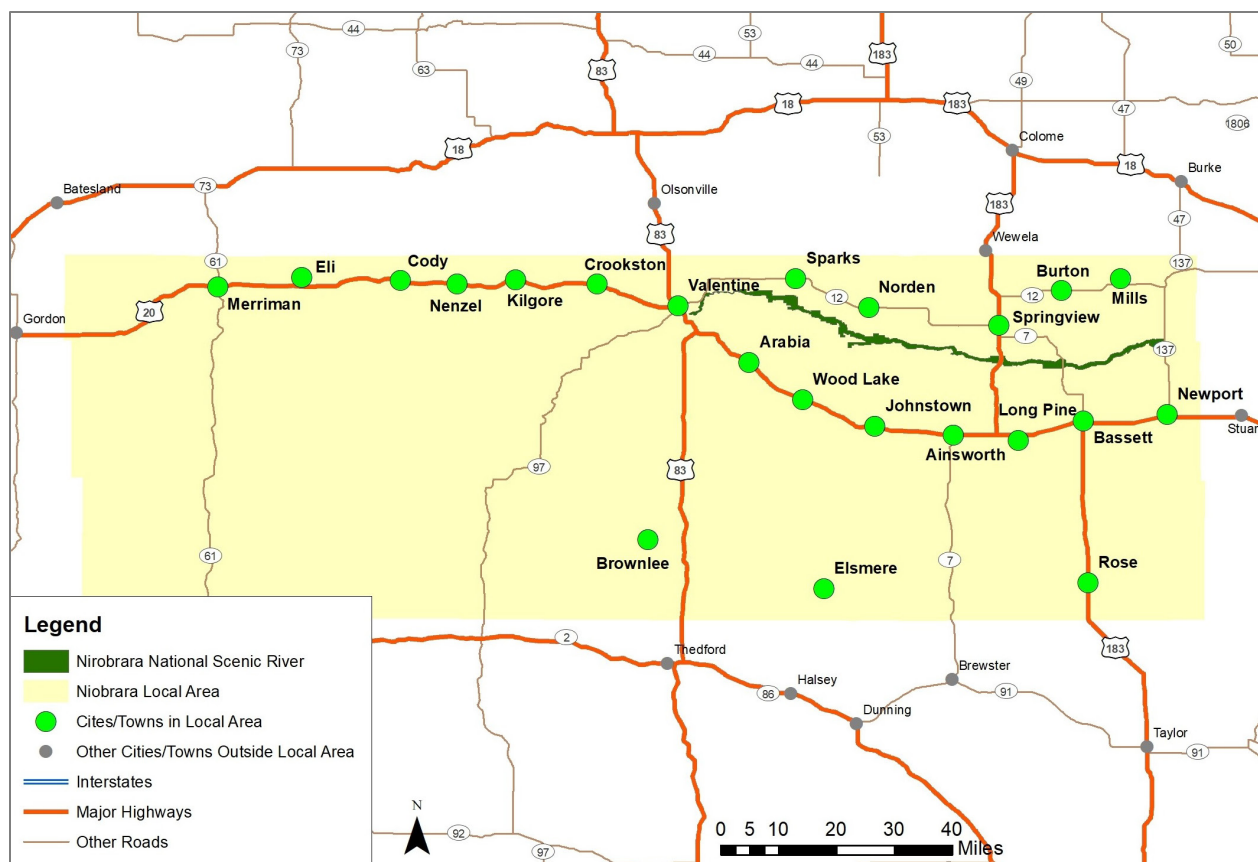


Figure 1. Niobrara National Scenic River local area map.

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 July 23rd to August 1st, 2022. A sample of visitors was intercepted while visiting Niobrara NSR across the designated locations listed in Table 1, above.

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 Niobrara NSR (NPS 2022). If the visitor was eligible (at least 18 years of age, not a Niobrara NSR 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—Niobrara NSR intercept Survey.

Outcome	Total
Eligible visitors contacted	455
Complete refusals	21
Partial refusals (non-response questions completed)	48
Intercept surveys completed	386
Follow-up surveys distributed	362
Intercept response rate	84.8%
Follow-up acceptance rate	93.8%

During the sampling period, 4 surveyors were stationed simultaneously at different sampling sites. The team sampled visitors from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm daily and varied sampling locations to capture a diverse sample of visitors across Niobrara NSR. Each surveyor worked nine 8-hour days (seven hours data collection and one-hour lunch break) and rotated between several sites. Each surveyor had a day off on Wednesday, July 27th 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 Niobrara NSR. 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—Niobrara NSR follow-up mail-back/online survey.

Outcome	Total
Follow-up surveys distributed	362
Valid follow-up surveys completed	98
Response rate	27.1%

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 84.8%, 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 Niobrara NSR?” Note: p-value = 0.03.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	5	5.1%	37	12.8%
No	93	94.9%	251	87.2%

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	97	99.0%	288	100.0%
No	1	1.0%	0	0.0%

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 Niobrara NSR and/or within the local area?” Note: p-value = 0.32.

Response	Full Survey Respondents		Intercept-Only Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	71	72.4%	193	67.0%
No	27	27.6%	95	33.0%

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 differed significantly for one question: Permanent/seasonal residency. Therefore, permanent/seasonal residents are not as well represented in the full responses as desired.

Results

Intercept Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 386 visitor intercept surveys conducted in Niobrara National Scenic River from July 23rd to August 1st, 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 Niobrara NSR. 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.

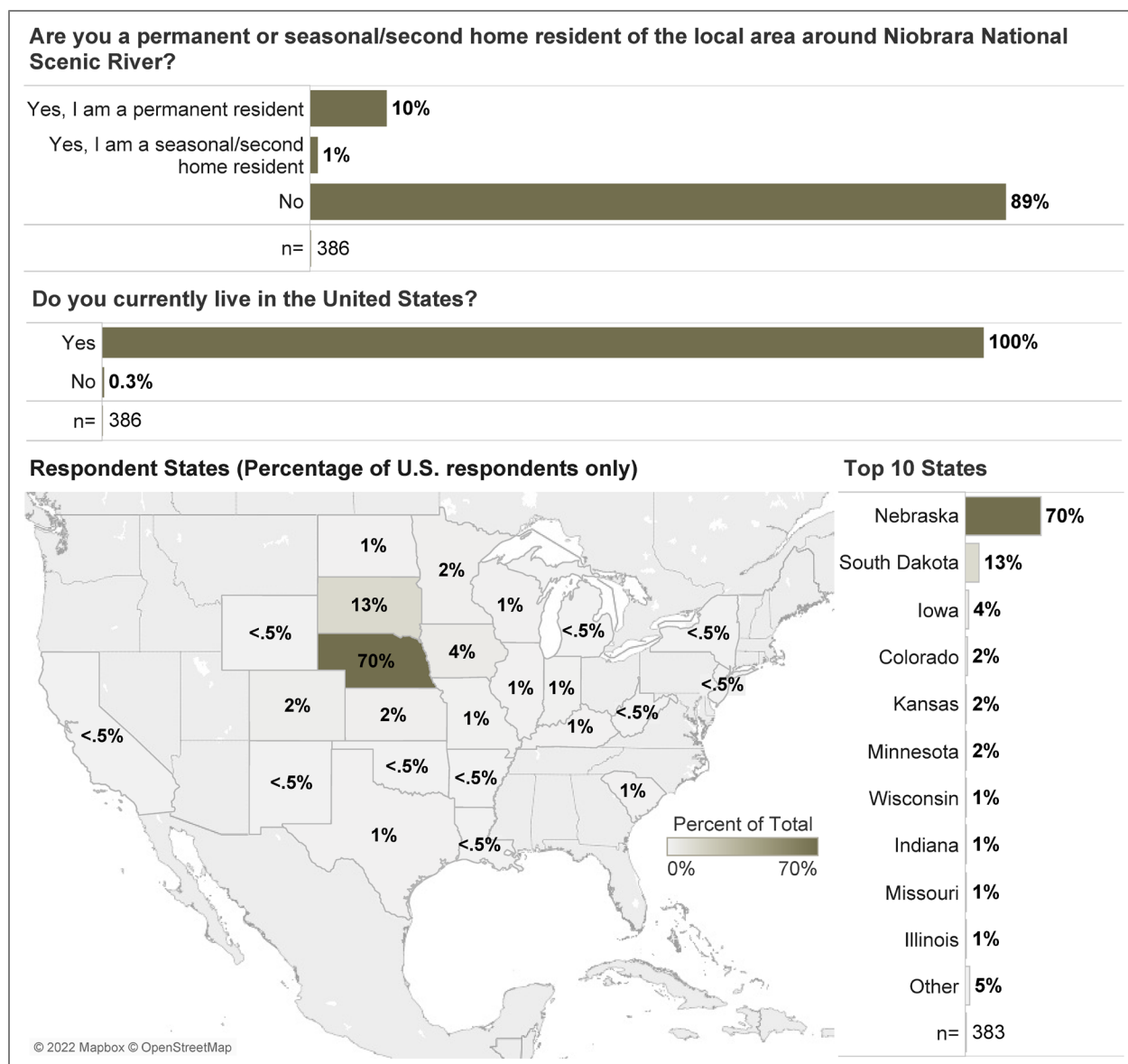


Figure 2. Visitor local residency status and geographic origin of domestic visitors to Niobrara NSR.
NPS

- The majority of respondents (89%) stated that they were not permanent or seasonal residents of the local area around Niobrara NSR.
- There was a large geographic concentration of visitors from Nebraska (where Niobrara NSR is located).
- Among the 100% of respondents currently residing in the U.S., 70% reside in Nebraska, followed by South Dakota (13%) and Iowa (4%).

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).

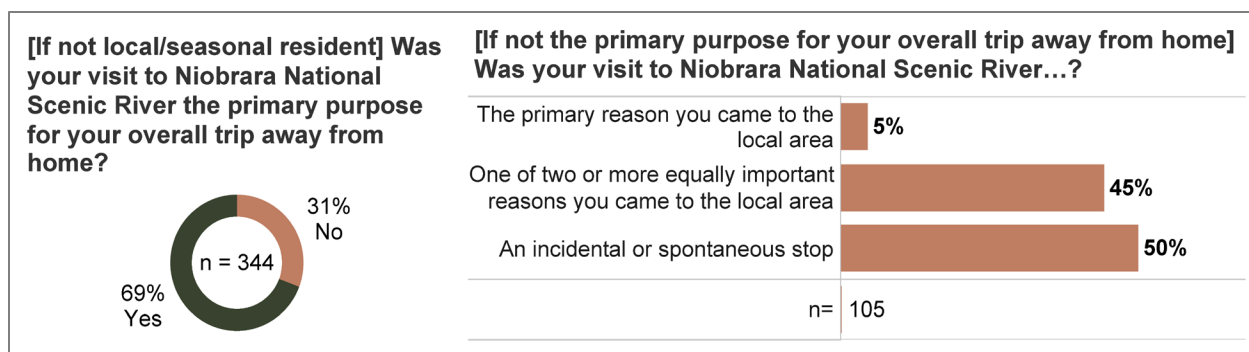


Figure 3. Role of Niobrara NSR in overall trip purpose.

NPS

- For the majority of non-local respondents (69%), visiting Niobrara NSR was the primary purpose for their overall trip away from home.
- Among those respondents for whom Niobrara NSR was not their primary trip purpose, 50% stated that their visit to Niobrara NSR was an incidental or spontaneous stop, while another 45% indicated that it was one of two or more equally important reasons 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 Niobrara NSR, 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.

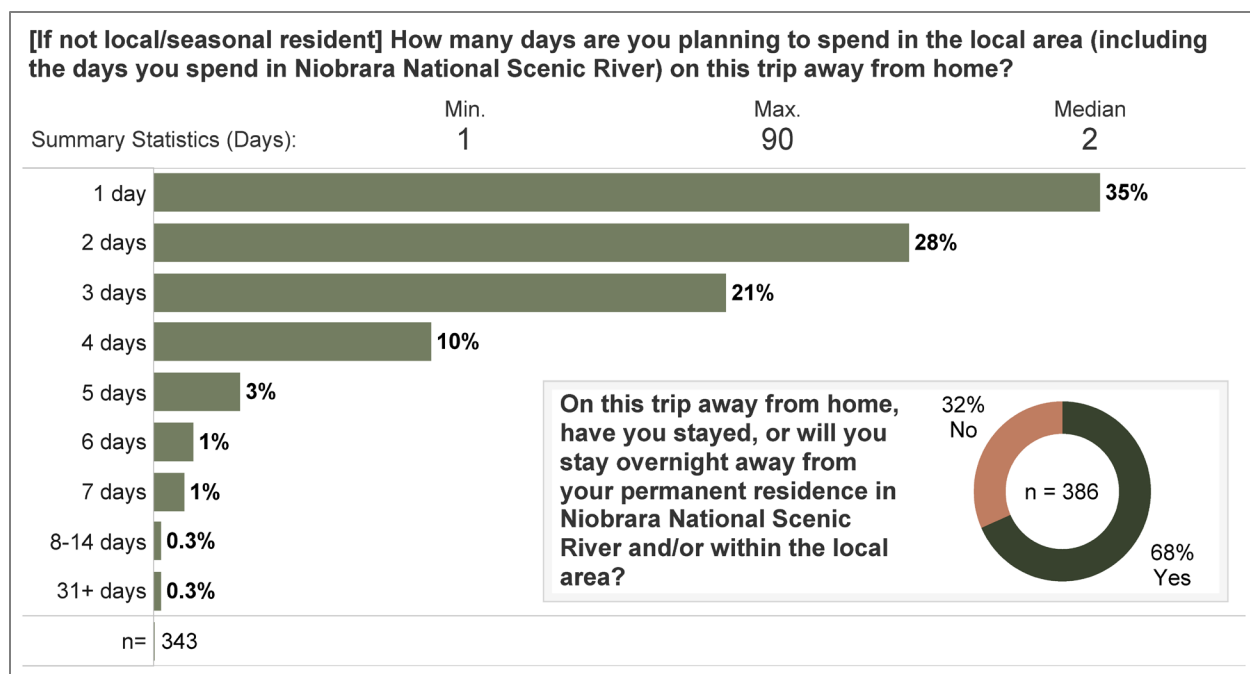


Figure 4. Time spent in the local area around Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- About a third of non-local respondents (35%) spent one day in the local area, while 28% spent 2 days, and 21% spent 3 days. The median length of stay was 2 days.
- Additionally, the majority of all respondents (68%; 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).

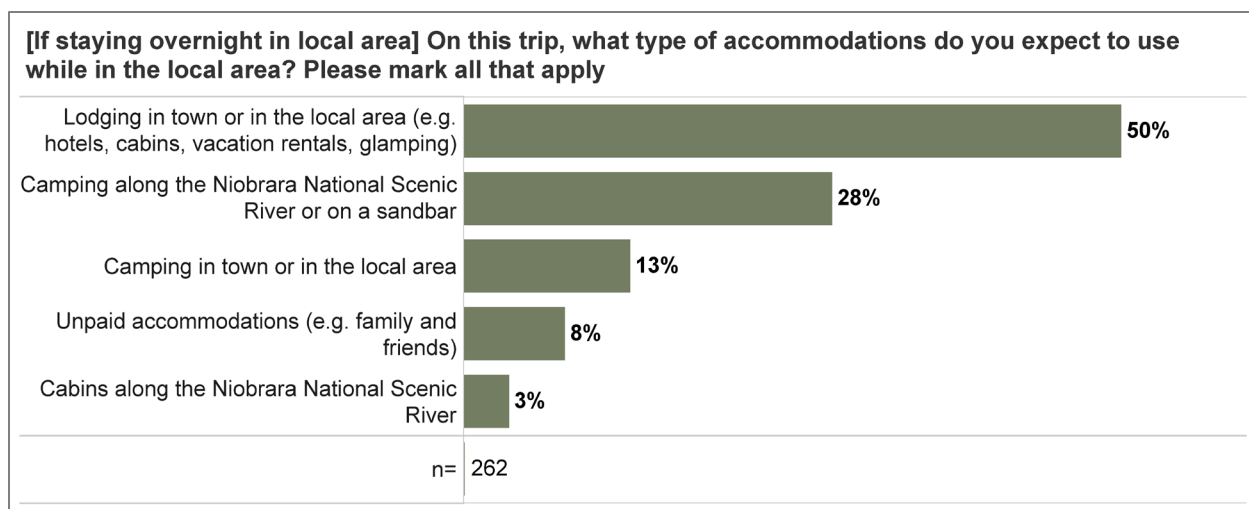


Figure 5. Accommodation types used in the local area around Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- Half of overnight respondents (50%) lodged in town or in the local area (e.g., hotels, cabins, vacation rentals, glamping).
- This was followed in prevalence by camping along the Niobrara National Scenic River or on a sandbar (28%), and camping in town or in the local area (13%).

Respondents who camped in Niobrara NSR were asked if they had camped on a sandbar (Figure 6).

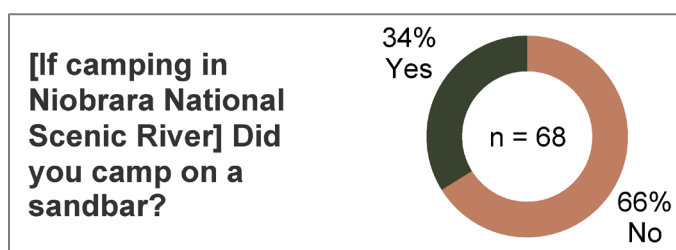


Figure 6. Use of sandbars for camping in Niobrara National Scenic River.

NPS

- About one-third of visitors (34%) who camped in Niobrara NSR reported that they camped on a sandbar.

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

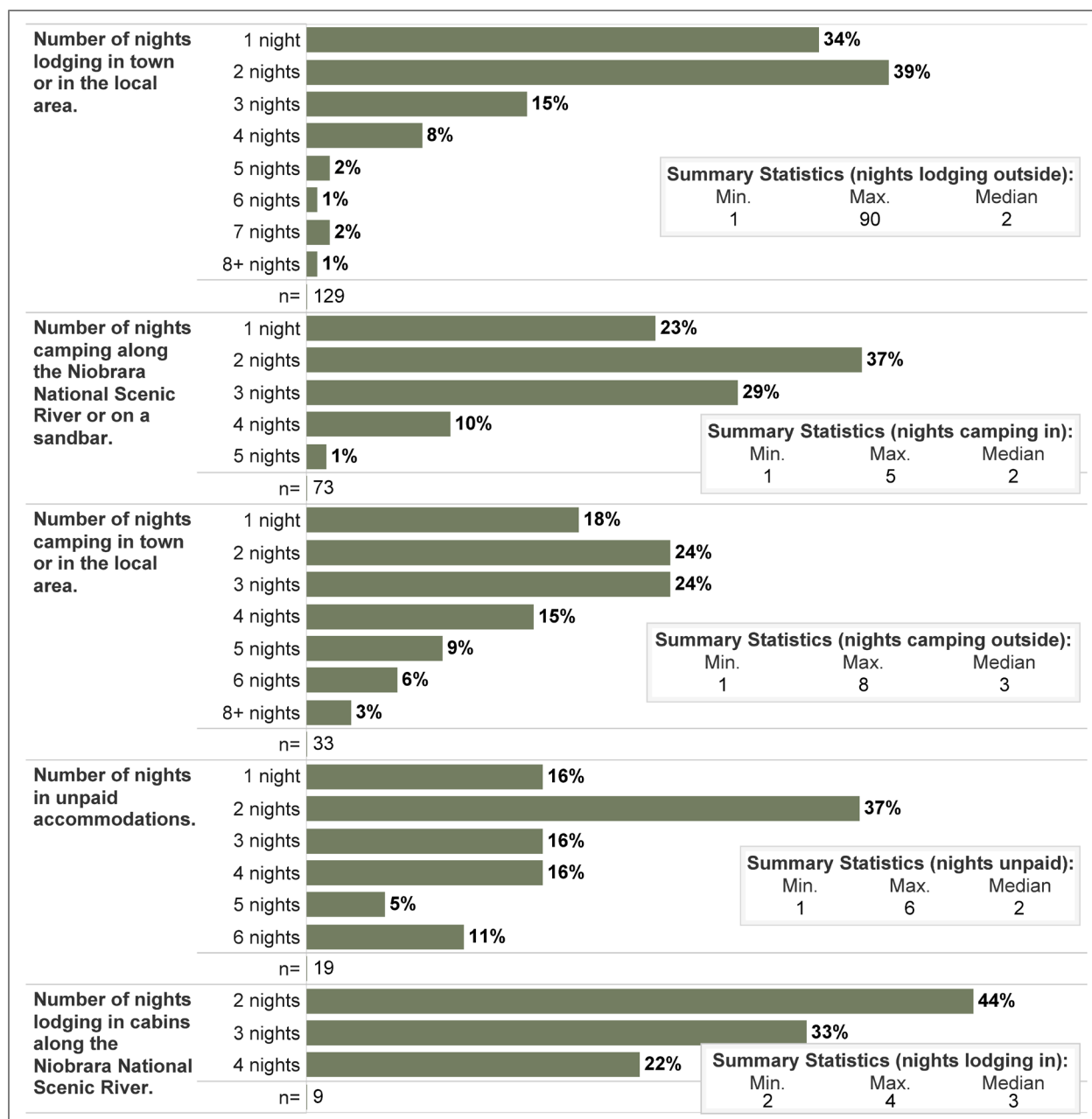


Figure 7. Number of nights spent in the local area around Niobrara NSR, by accommodation type. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 8](#).

NPS

- Among the 50% of overnight respondents who lodged in town or in the local area (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 2 nights. Nearly three-quarters of visitors (73%) lodged 2 nights or fewer in the local area this trip; 88% spent 3 nights or fewer.
- Among the 28% of overnight respondents who camped along the Niobrara NSR (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 2 nights. More than half (60%) of campers were spending 2 nights or fewer camping in the park this trip; 89% spent 3 nights or fewer.

- Among the 13% of overnight respondents who camped in town or in the local area (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 3 nights. 42% of campers were spending 2 nights or fewer camping in the park this trip; 66% spent 3 nights or fewer.
- Among the 8% of overnight respondents who stayed in unpaid accommodations in the local area (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 2 nights. The plurality of visitors (37%) also stayed 2 nights.
- Among the 3% of overnight respondents who stayed in cabins along the Niobrara National Scenic River (per Figure 5), the median length of stay was 3 nights. However, the plurality of visitors (44%) stayed only 2 nights.

Questions 9–11: Party Characteristics

Respondents were asked to indicate how many adults (18 or older) and children (under 18) were in their personal group during their visit to Niobrara NSR (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.

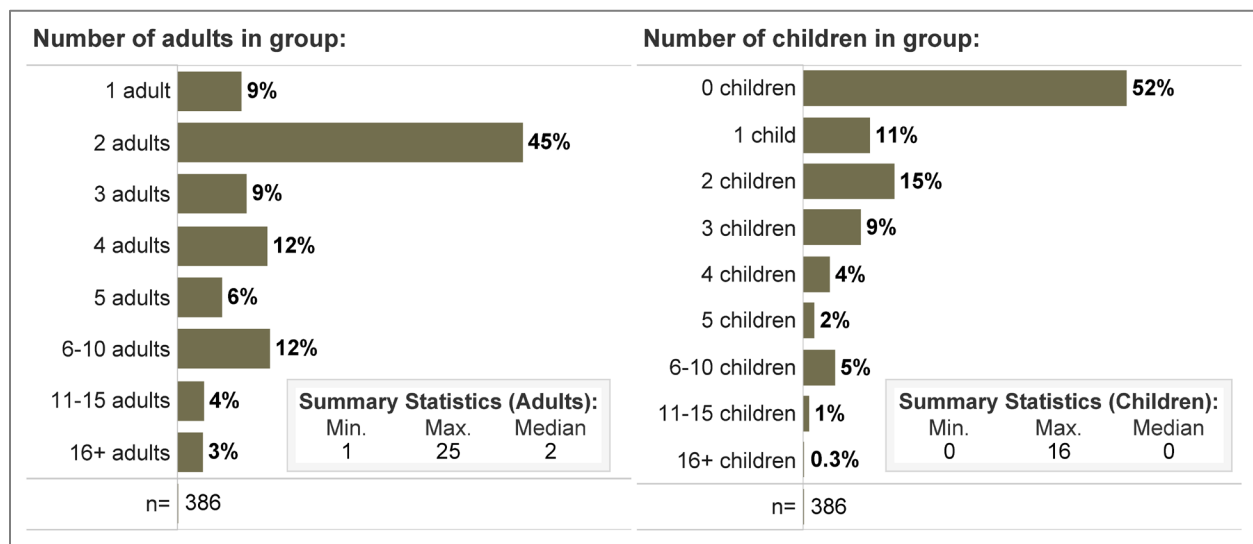


Figure 8. Number of adults and children in respondent's personal group while visiting Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 9](#).

NPS

- The median number of adults per group was 2. Nearly half of groups (45%) included 2 adults.
- More than half of groups (52%) did not include any children.

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

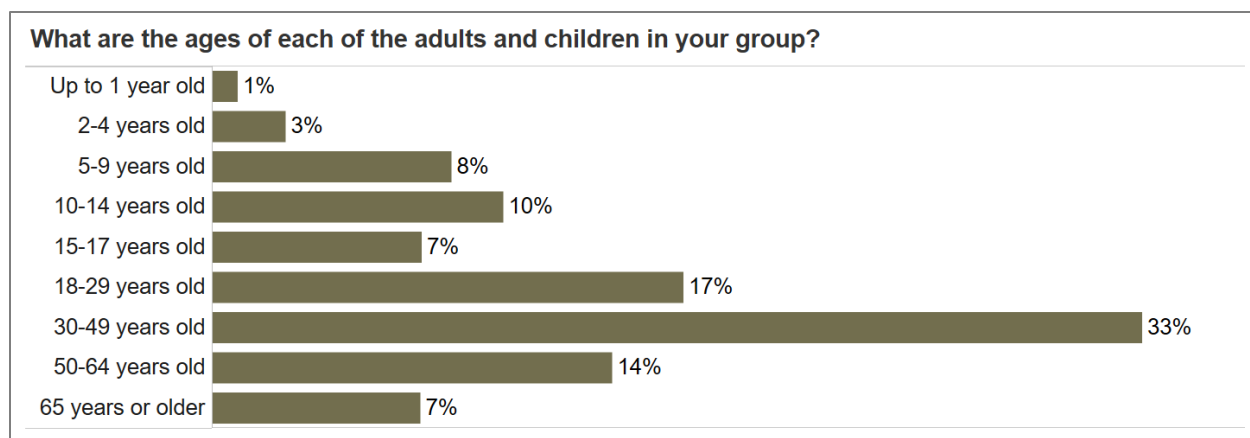


Figure 9. Age distribution of all members of respondent's personal group while visiting Niobrara NSR.
NPS

- The most common age of the adults and children in a personal group was 30 to 49 years old (33%), followed by 18 to 29 years old (17%), and 50 to 64 years old (14%).
- Children (i.e., visitors under 18 years old) accounted for a combined total of 29% of group members.

Questions 13–16: Park Use Characteristics

First, respondents were asked to indicate if they planned to visit Niobrara NSR 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 10 and Table 7).

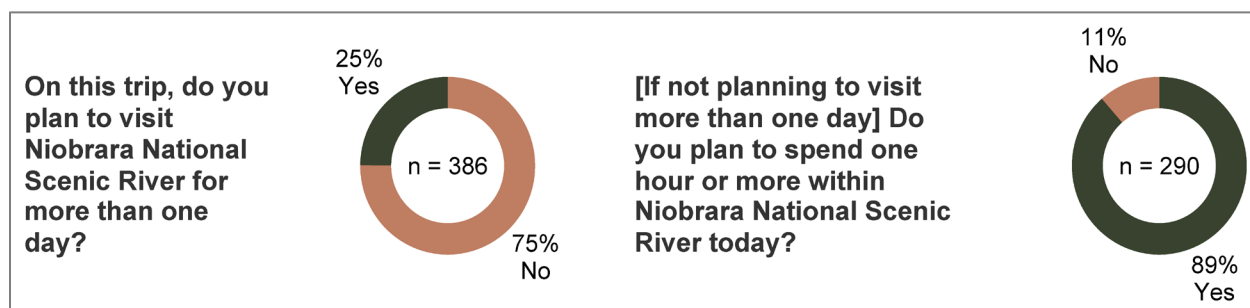


Figure 10. Duration of the respondent's trip to Niobrara NSR.
NPS

Table 7. Amount of time spent within Niobrara NSR.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If not planning to spend one hour or more] How many minutes do you plan to spend within Niobrara NSR today?	33	5	59	20
[If planning to spend less than a day, but one hour or more] How many hours do you plan to spend within Niobrara NSR today?	257	1	12	4
[If planning to visit at least one day] How many days do you plan to spend within Niobrara NSR on this trip?	96	1	5	2
[If planning to visit at least one day] On how many different days do you expect to enter the park?	96	1	4	2

- While visiting Niobrara NSR, most visitors (75%) did not plan to spend more than one day in the park.
- Among the 75% of visitors who did not spend more than a day in Niobrara NSR, the majority (89%) planned to spend one hour or more in the park. The median length of time spent in the park among this group was 4 hours.
- The remaining 25% of visitors planned to visit for more than one day; among those visitors, the median length of stay was 2 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 2 days.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate the most recent entrance they used to enter Niobrara NSR (Figure 11).

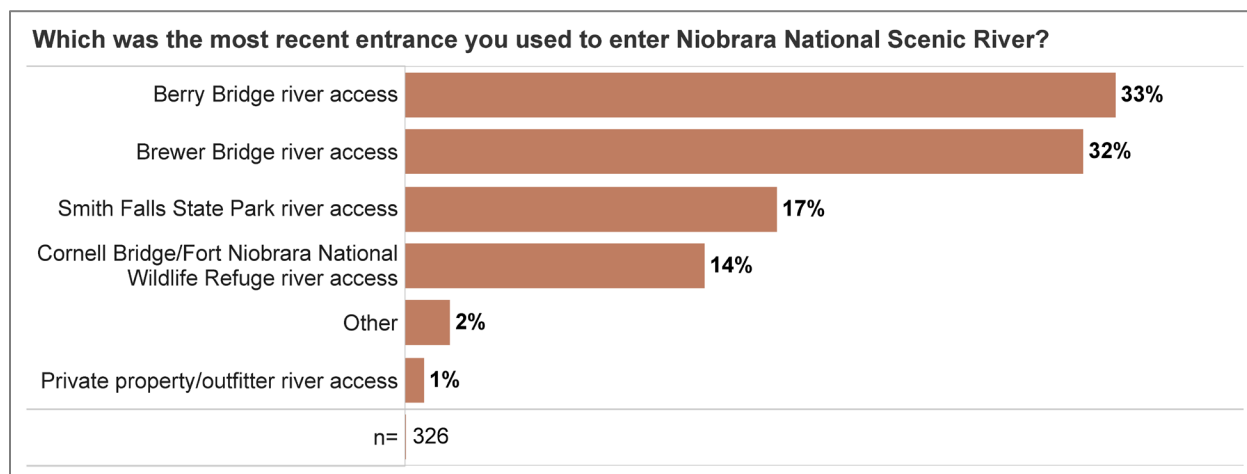


Figure 11. Most recent entrance used to enter Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- Berry Bridge river access was the most commonly used entrance to Niobrara NSR (33%).
- This was followed in prevalence by Brewer Bridge river access (32%), Smith Falls State Park river access (17%), and Cornell Bridge/Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge river access (14%).

Respondents were also presented with a list of locations within Niobrara NSR and asked to indicate if they had been to, or planned to visit them, that day (Figure 12).

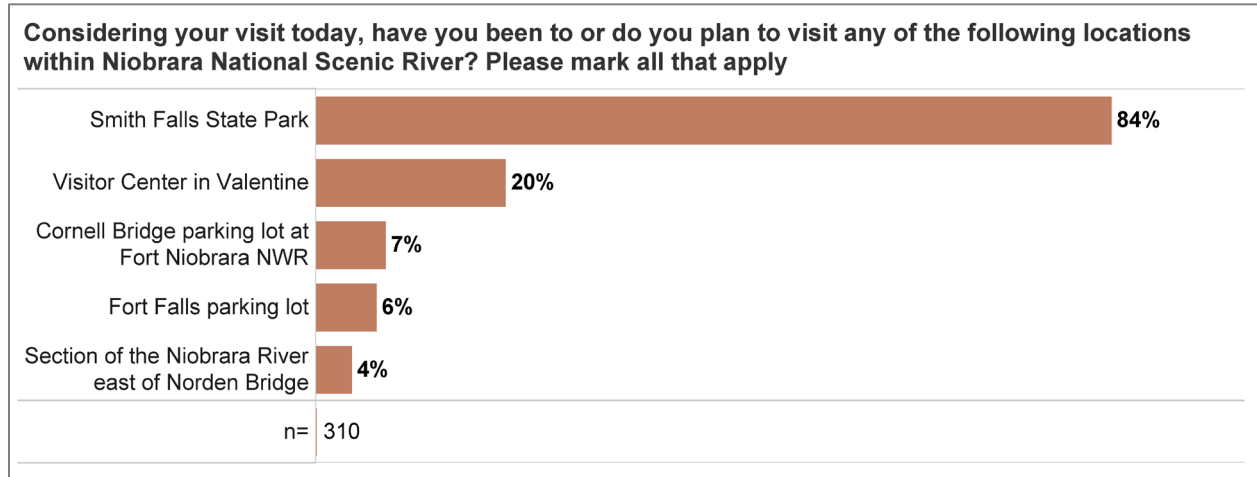


Figure 12. Park locations visited during the most recent trip to Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- The most commonly visited location in Niobrara NSR was Smith Falls State Park (84% of respondents had either been there or planned to visit it on their trip), followed by the Visitor Center in Valentine (20%) and Cornell Bridge parking lot at Fort Niobrara NWR (7%).
- The section of the Niobrara River east of Norden Bridge was the least-visited location from the list provided, with only 4% of respondents reporting having visited or planning to visit.

Question 17: Transportation

Visitors were asked about the form of transportation they used to enter Niobrara NSR on the day they were surveyed (Figure 13).

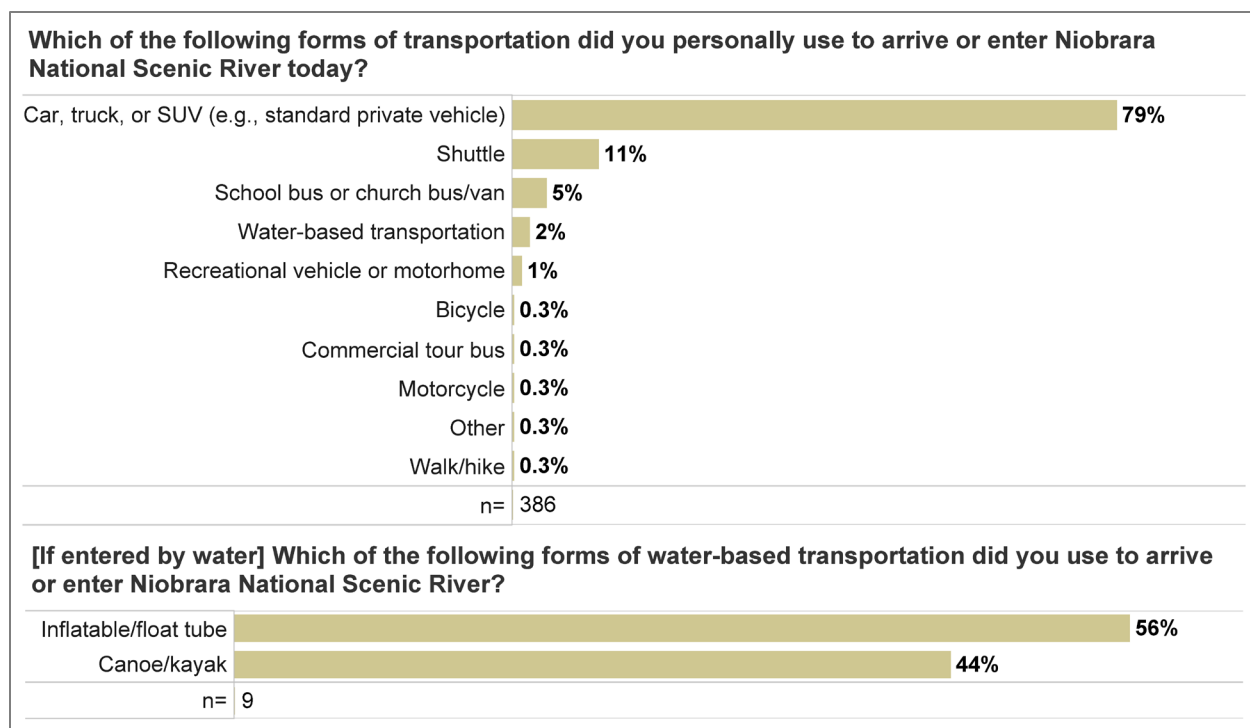


Figure 13. Form of transportation used to enter Niobrara NSR on the day of the survey.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (79%) reported that they used their car, truck, or SUV to enter Niobrara NSR on the day of the survey.
- This was followed distantly by use of a shuttle (11%), and use of a school bus or church bus/van (5%).

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 14).

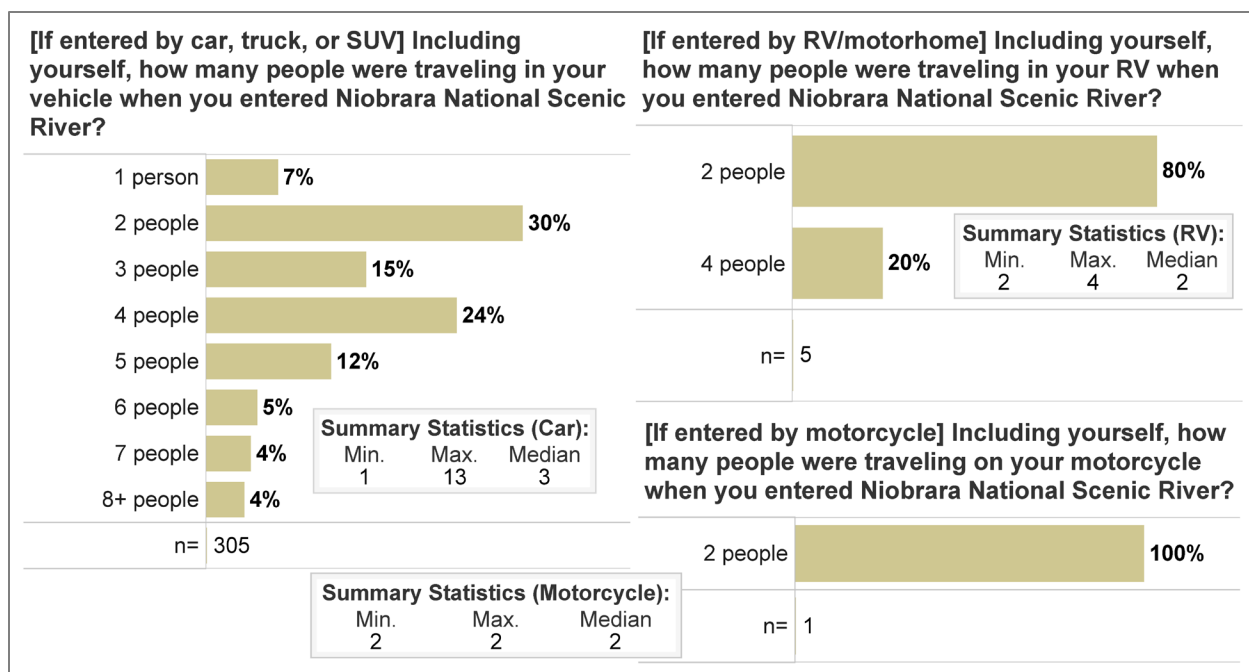


Figure 14. Number of people in or on respondent's vehicle when entering Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 10](#).

NPS

- Nearly a third of respondents (30%) traveling by car reported two people. The next most common group size was 4 people (24%), followed by 3 people (15%).
- Most respondents entering Niobrara NSR by RV/motorhome reported traveling in a group of 2 people (80%), followed by 4 people (20%).
- The one visitor who traveled by motorcycle reported a group size of 2 people.

Question 19: Previous Visits to Niobrara NSR

Respondents were asked if they were first time visitors to Niobrara NSR. Repeat visitors were then asked how many visits they have made to Niobrara NSR in the last 12 months and the last five years (Figure 15).

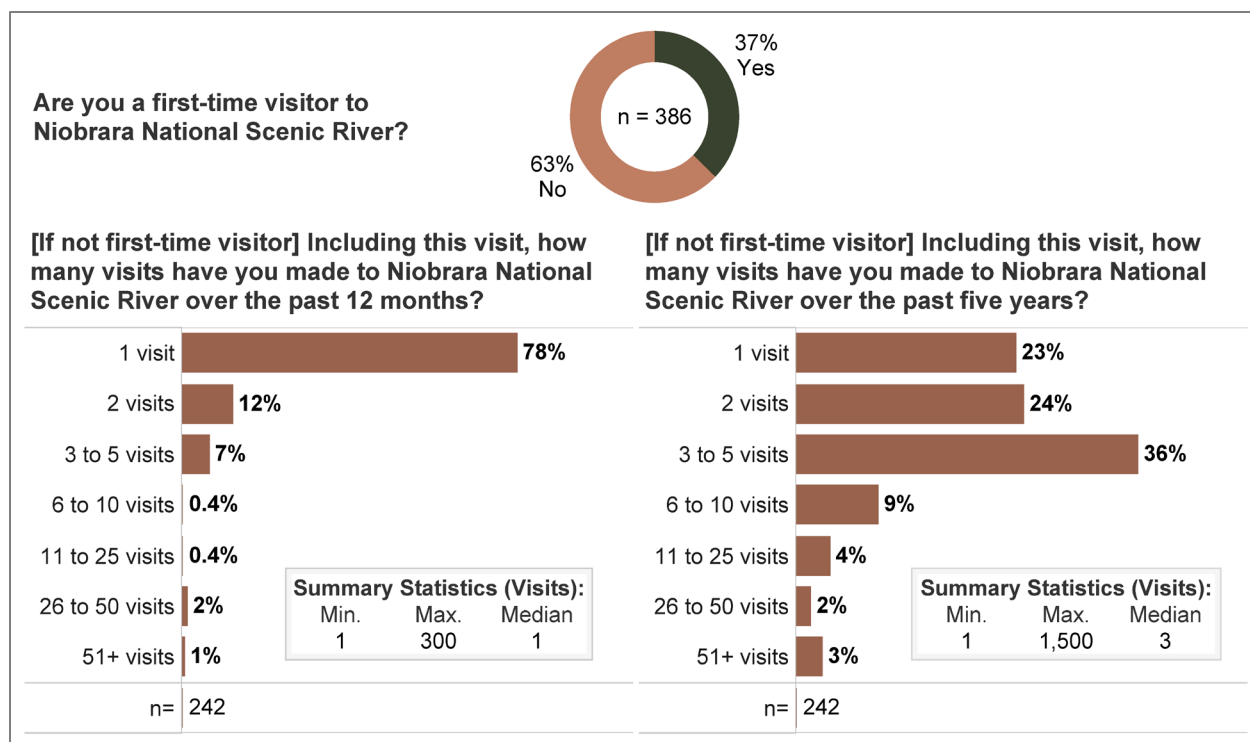


Figure 15. Previous visits to Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 11](#).

NPS

- About a third of visitors (37%) were on their first ever trip to Niobrara NSR.
- Among the 63% 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 (78%) 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; 9% of repeat visitors had made more than 10 visits in the past five years.

Question 20: 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 16).

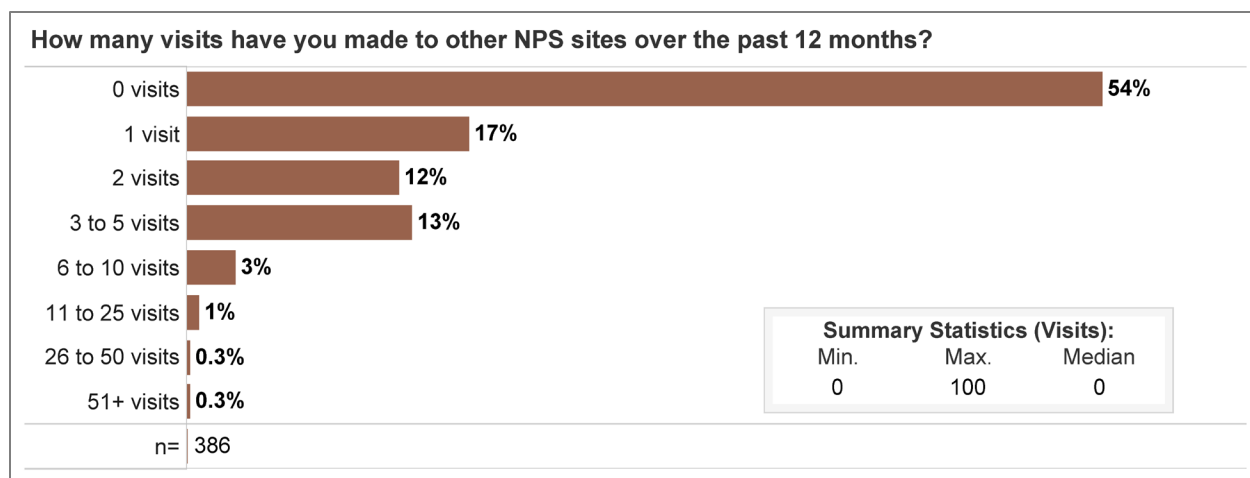


Figure 16. Visits made to other NPS sites within the past year. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 12](#).

NPS

- More than half of respondents (54%) reported that they had not made any visits 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 0, though a combined 46.6% of respondents had made at least one visit in the past year.

Follow-Up Survey Results

The following section provides results of the 98 follow-up visitor surveys received by mail-back or online following fieldwork conducted in Niobrara National Scenic River 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 Niobrara NSR

First, respondents were asked what sources they used to obtain information about Niobrara NSR prior to their trip, and whether they had the information they needed on their trip (Figure 17).

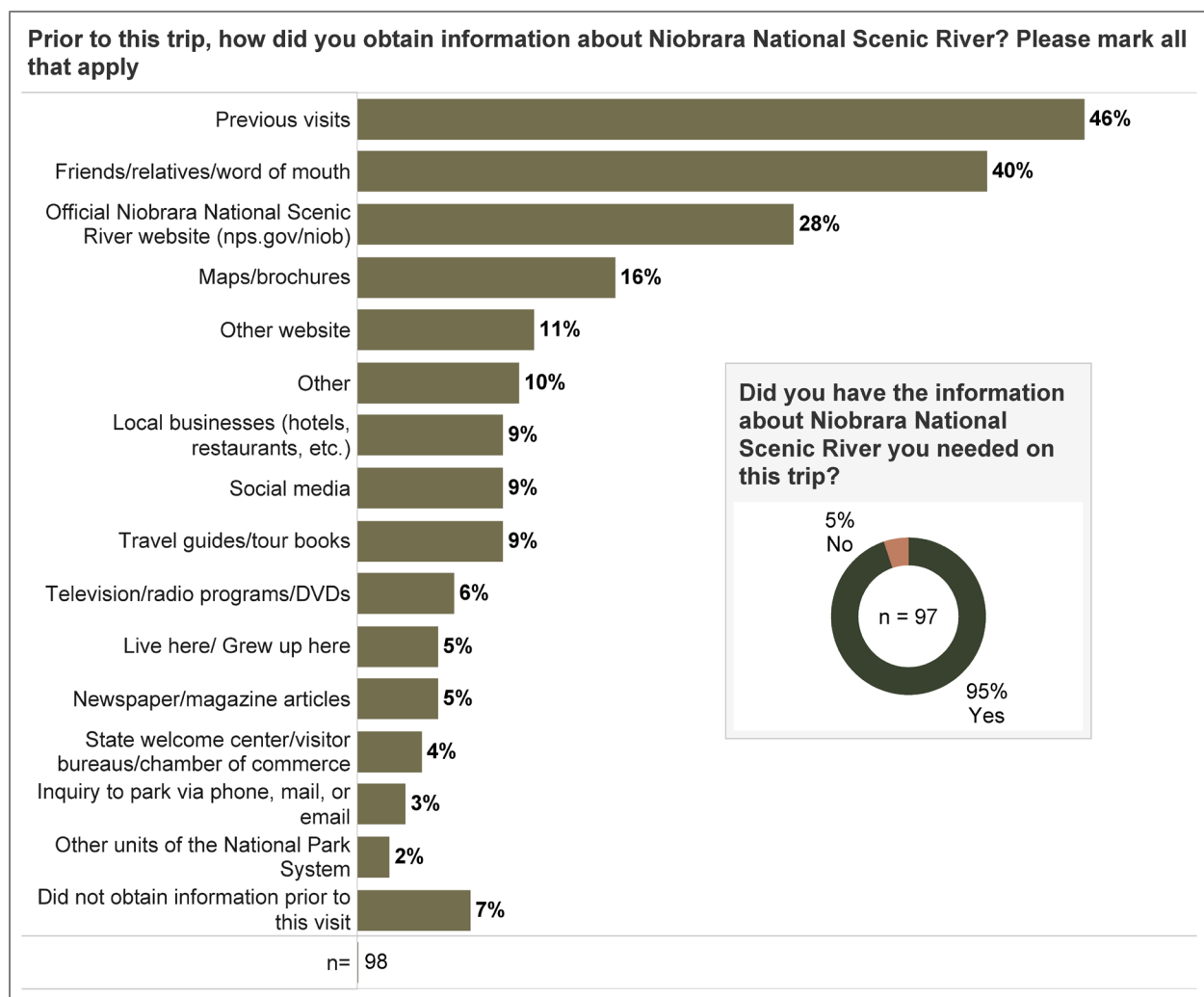


Figure 17. Sources used to obtain information about Niobrara NSR prior to the trip.

NPS

- The most used resource was previous visits, with 46% of respondents reportedly using it. The second most common source was friends/relatives/word of mouth (40%), followed by the official website (nps.gov/niob) (28%), maps/brochures (16%), and other websites (11%).
- In a follow-up question, 95% of respondents said that they had the information about Niobrara NSR that they needed on their trip, while 5% 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 Niobrara NSR on their trip (Figure 18).

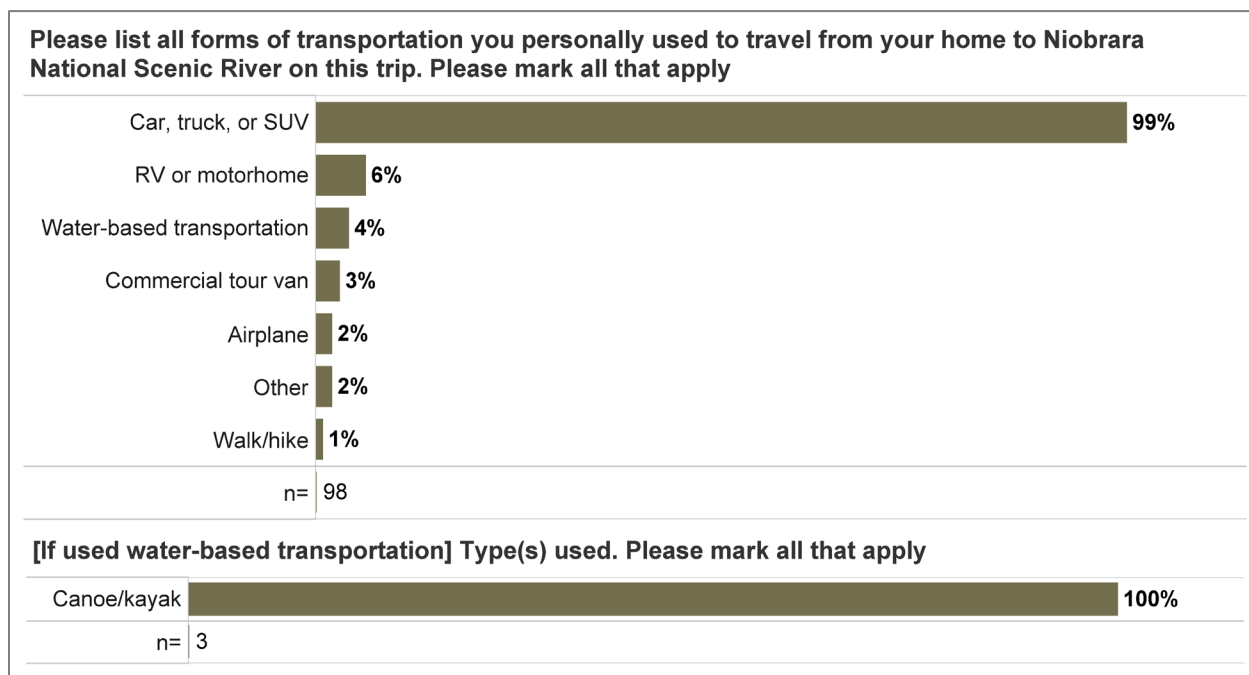


Figure 18. Forms of transportation used to travel from home to Niobrara NSR on the recent trip.
NPS

- Nearly all respondents (99%) used a personal vehicle, such as a car, truck, or SUV, at some point during their trip from home to Niobrara NSR.
- The second most common mode of travel was an RV or motorhome (6%), followed by water-based transportation (4%).
- Of the 4% of respondents who reported that they used water-based transportation, all visitors stated that they used a canoe or kayak.

Question 4: Travel Party Composition

Respondents were asked what type of group they were with during their visit to Niobrara NSR on the day of the survey (Figure 19).

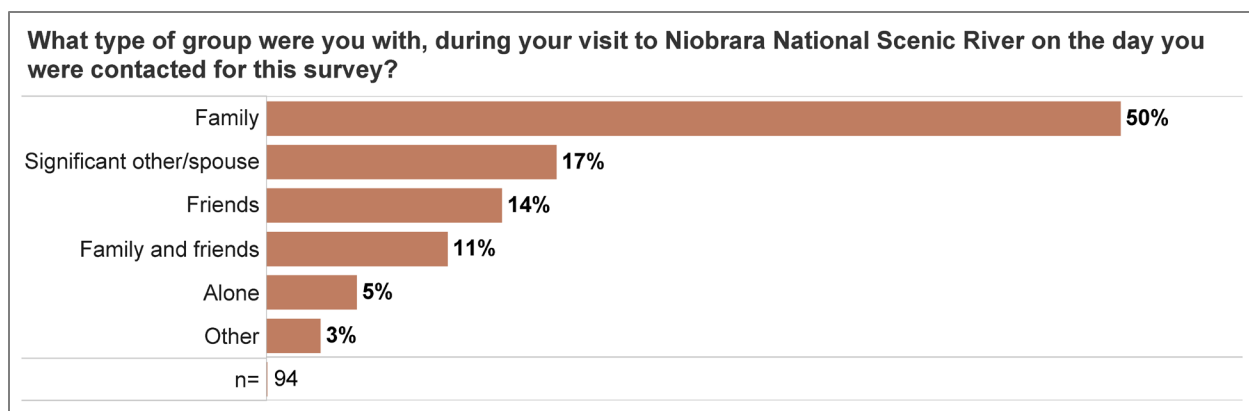


Figure 19. Travel party composition during Niobrara NSR visit.

NPS

- Half of respondents (50%) visited Niobrara NSR with their family on the day of the survey.
- Nearly a fifth of respondents (17%) explored Niobrara NSR with their significant other or spouse, and another 14% 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 Niobrara NSR² (Figure 20).

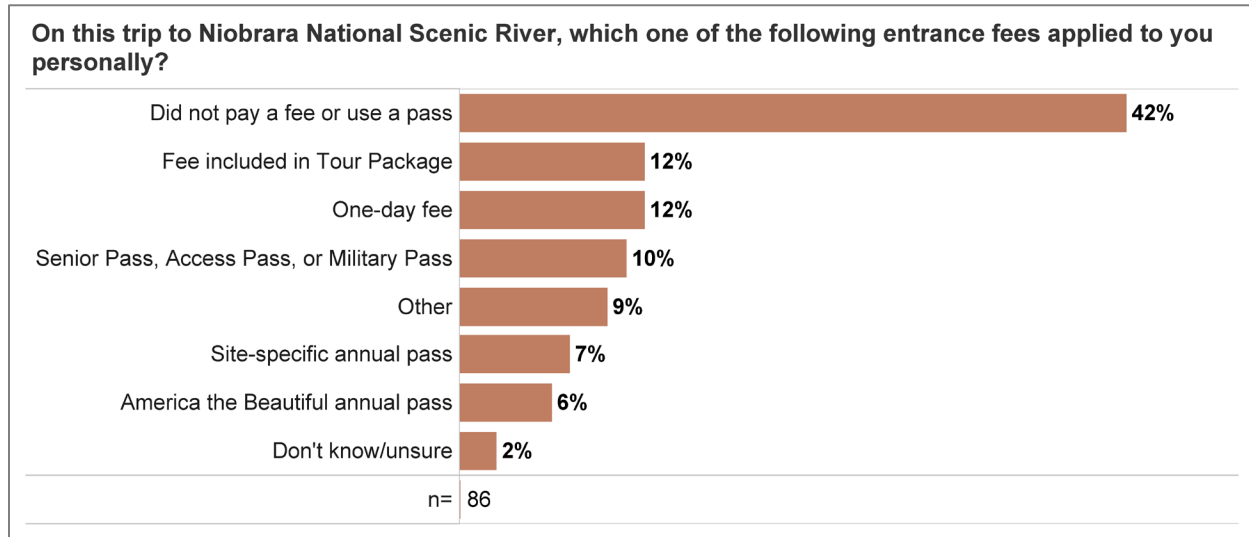


Figure 20. Entrance fees to enter Niobrara NSR on the most recent trip.

NPS

² Niobrara NSR does not charge an entrance fee. However, this question was asked as part of the standard survey fielded at units across the NPS system.

- The plurality of respondents (42%) reported that they did not pay a fee or use a pass on their trip.
- Twelve percent of respondents stated that they paid a fee included in a Tour Package.
- A combined 35% stated that they paid a one-day fee, used a Senior Pass, Access Pass, or Military Pass, used a site-specific annual pass, or used an America the Beautiful annual pass.

Questions 12–14: Trip Characteristics

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

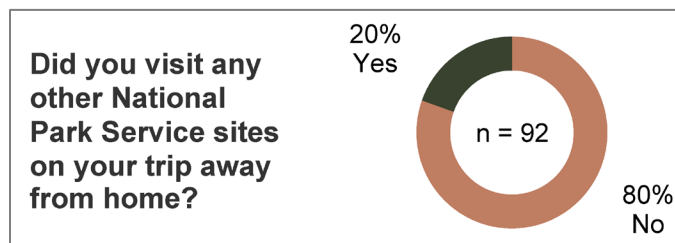


Figure 21. NPS sites visited on trip away from home.

NPS

- The majority (80%) of all respondents identified Niobrara NSR as the only NPS site they visited while away from home, while 20% of respondents stated that they had visited other NPS sites on their trip.
- 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 Niobrara NSR, and which of those were their primary activity (Figure 22).

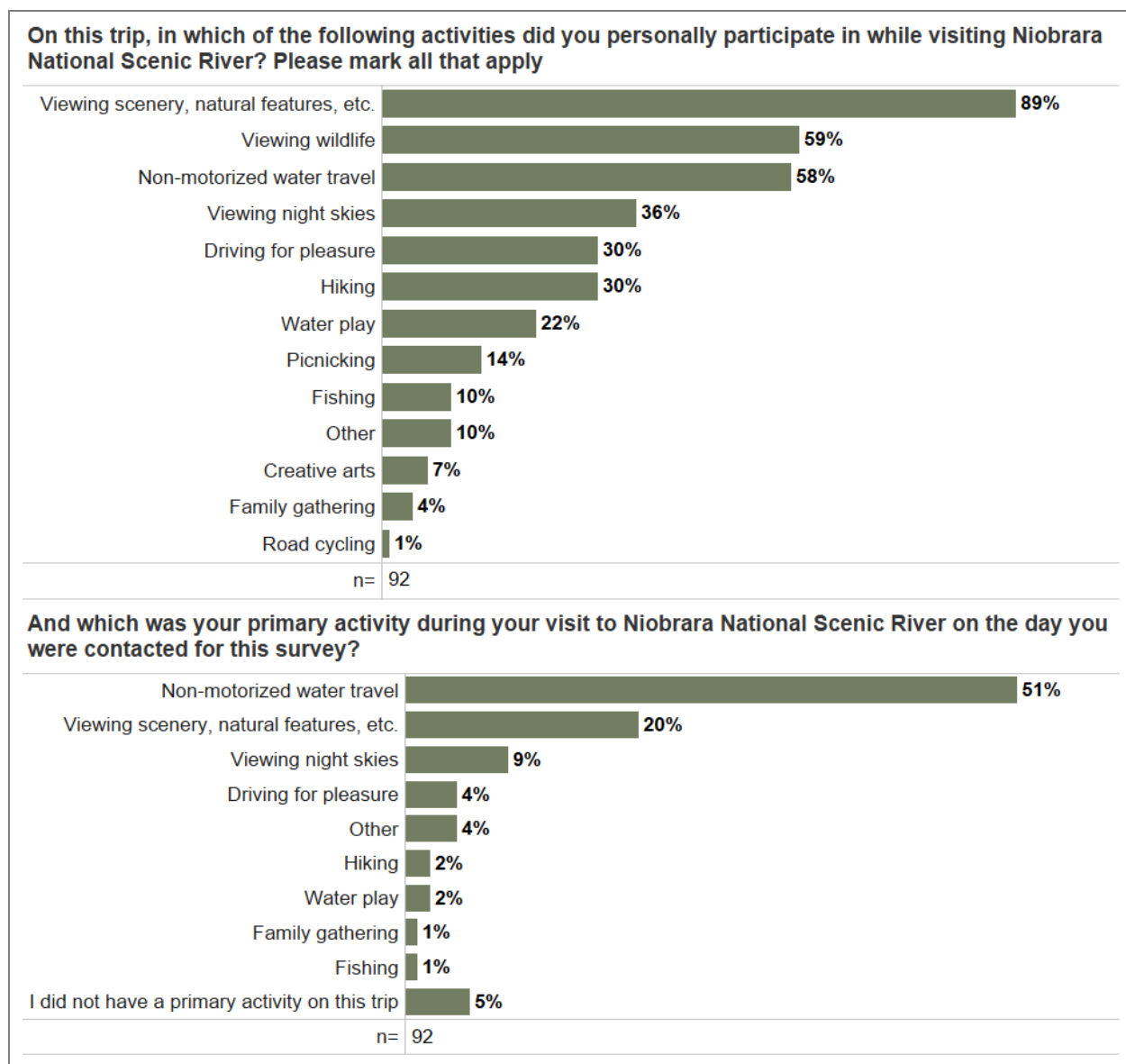


Figure 22. Participation in activities at Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- Almost all visitors reported viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (89%). Other common activities included viewing wildlife (59%), and non-motorized water travel (58%).
- Fishing, creative arts, family gathering, road cycling were all uncommon activities (reported by 10% or fewer of respondents).
- More than half of respondents (51%) reported non-motorized water travel as their primary activity, followed by viewing scenery, natural features, etc. (20%).

Questions 15–16: Reasons to Visit

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

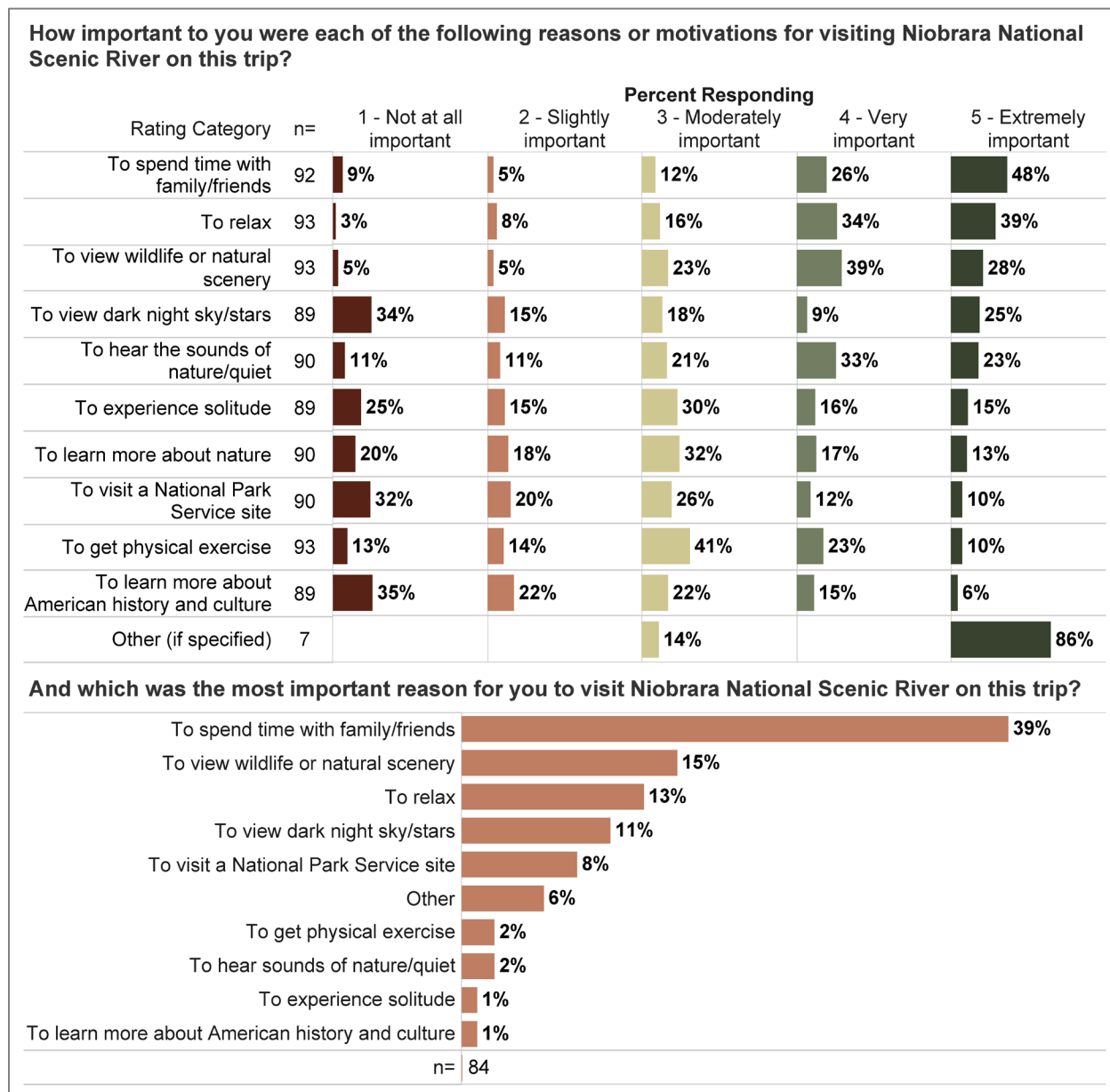


Figure 23. Reasons or motivations to visit Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 13](#).

NPS

- Many visitors chose “to spend time with family/friends” (48%) and “to relax” (39%) as extremely important reasons for their trip to Niobrara NSR.
- Other important reasons were “to view wildlife or natural scenery” and “to view dark night sky/stars” (28% and 25% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- The least important reasons were “to learn more about American history and culture,” “to visit a National Park Service site” and “to get physical exercise” (only 6%, 10% and 10% of respondents, respectively, reported them as extremely important, and 35%, 32% and 13% of respondents, respectively, rated them as not at all important).
- The most common response about the most important reason was “to spend time with family/friends” (39%), followed by “to view wildlife or natural scenery” (15%), and “to relax” (13%).

Questions 17–19: Programs, Services, and Learning

Respondents were asked to identify all programs and services that they personally participated in in Niobrara NSR during their trip (Figure 24).

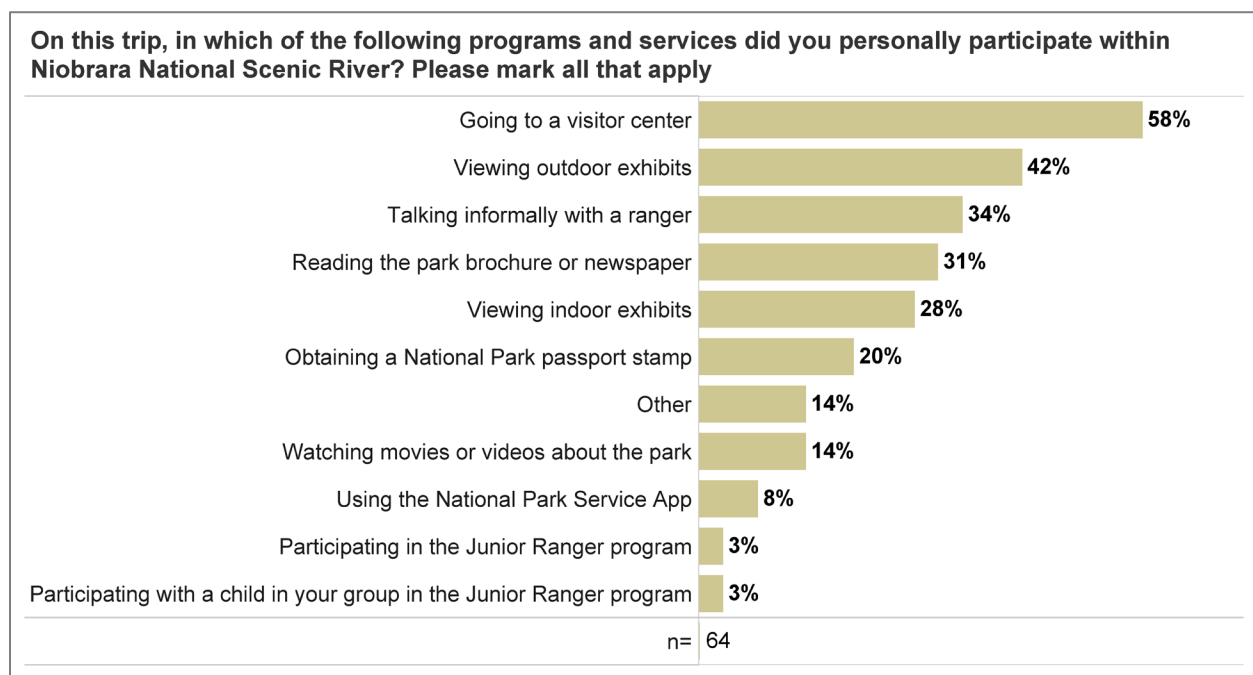


Figure 24. Programs participated while visiting Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- The two most-used programs were going to a visitor center and viewing outdoor exhibits, with 58% and 42% of respondents, respectively, reporting participating in each of them.
- Two other programs were engaged in by about a third of respondents: talking informally with a ranger (34%) and reading the park brochure or newspaper (31%).

Two follow-up questions asked if respondents learned anything from park staff, programs, and/or exhibits about American history, nature, and/or culture, and what specific subjects they would like to learn about in the future (Figure 25).

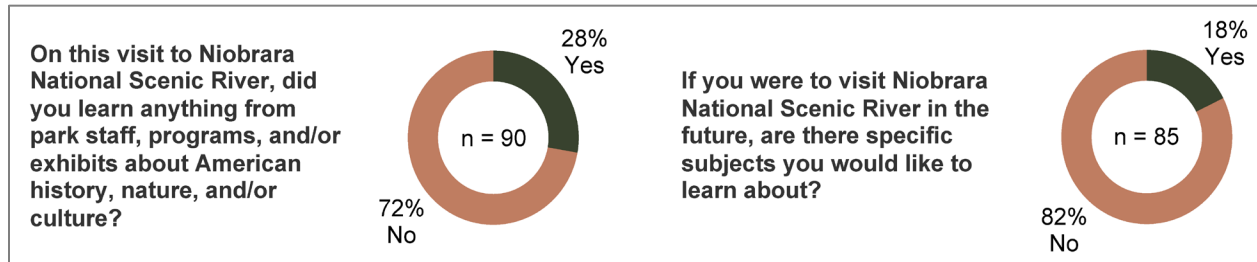


Figure 25. Learning.

NPS

- About a quarter of respondents (28%) reported that they learned something from park staff, programs, and/or exhibits about American history, nature, and/or culture.
- A minority of respondents (18%) reported that if they were to visit Niobrara NSR 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 Niobrara NSR (Figure 26).

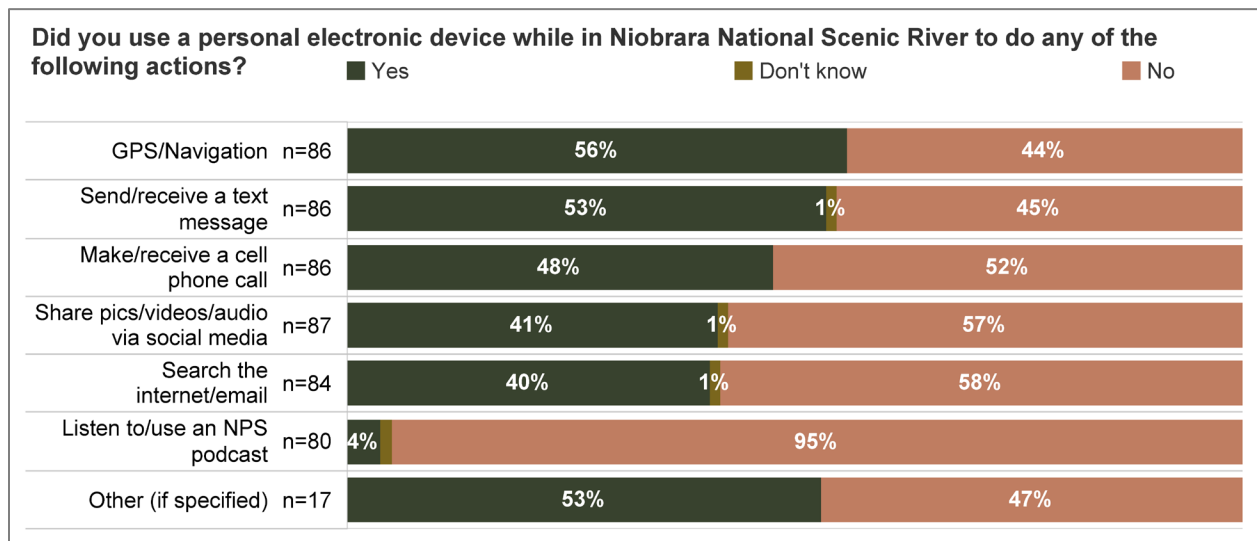


Figure 26. Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 14](#).

NPS

- More than half of respondents (56%) reported using GPS/Navigation, and 53% of respondents reported sending or receiving a text message.
- Conversely, only 4% 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 27), and the quality of their service (Figure 28).

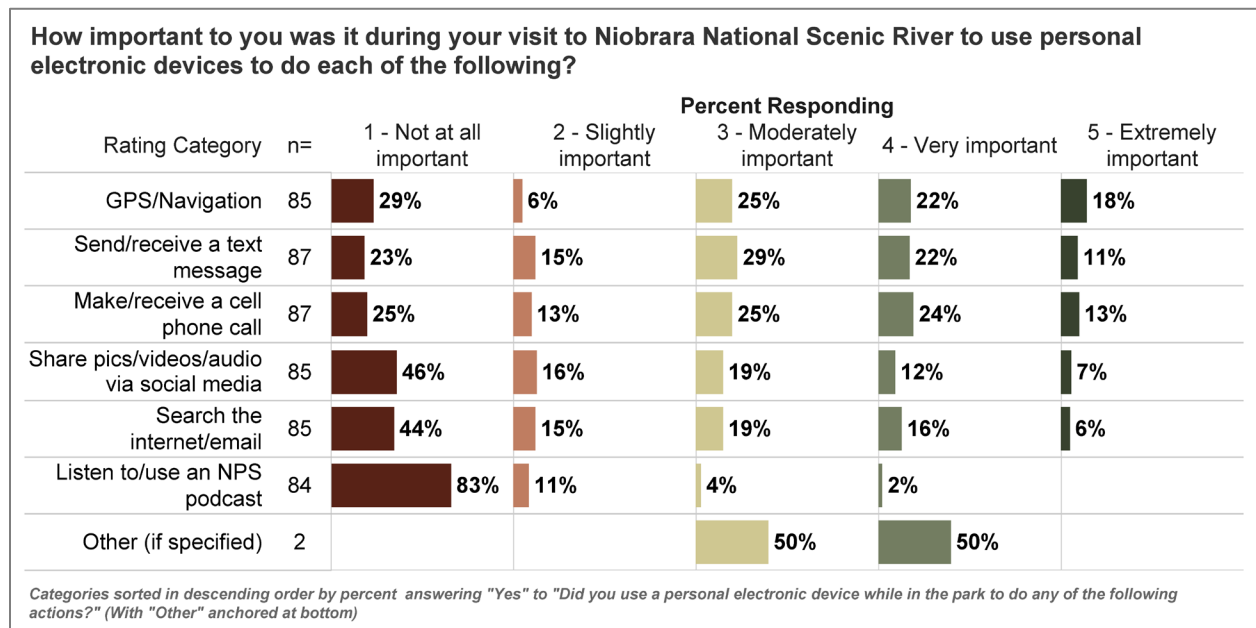


Figure 27. The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 15](#).

NPS

- The most important device uses were GPS/Navigation and sending or receiving a text message (18% and 11% of respondents, respectively, rated them as extremely important).
- Listening to and using an NPS podcast was not rated as extremely important by any respondents, and it was rated as not at all important by 83% of respondents.

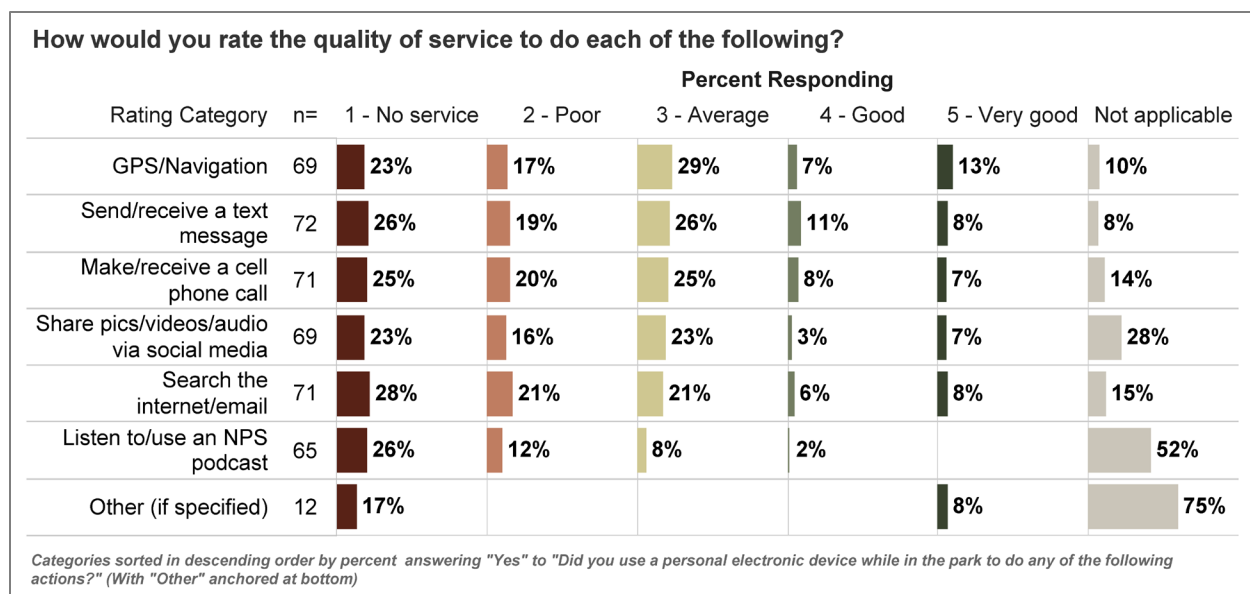


Figure 28. Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Niobrara NSR. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 16](#).

NPS

- GPS/Navigation was rated as very good or good by 13% and 7% of respondents, respectively. However, 23% of respondents reported that they had no service for this.
- About a quarter of respondents (ranging from 23% to 28%, depending on the service) reported that they also had no service to send or receive a text message, make or receive a cell phone call, share pics/videos/audio via social media, search the internet or use email, or listen to/use an NPS podcast.
- However, a small percentage of visitors (ranging from 7% to 8%, 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 Niobrara NSR. If such a condition was identified, respondents were asked to specify the type of difficulty (Figure 29).

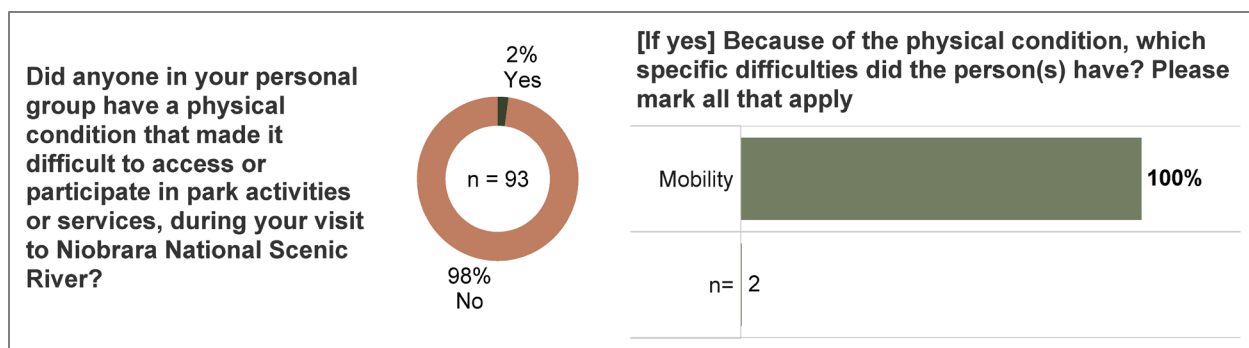


Figure 29. Physical difficulties while visiting Niobrara NSR.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (98%) 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 Niobrara NSR.
- Among the 2% of visitors who identified at least one difficulty, all of these respondents reported mobility issues in their group.

Questions 25–28: Visitor Experience

Respondents were asked if their visit to Niobrara NSR met their expectations (Figure 30).

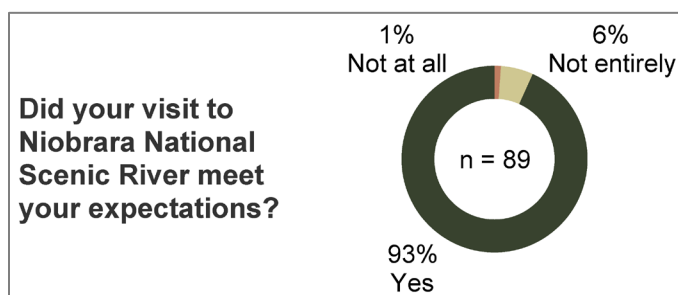


Figure 30. Meeting Niobrara NSR expectations.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (93%) reported that their visit to Niobrara NSR met their expectations, while 6% of respondents said it did not meet their expectations entirely, and 1% of respondents indicated that it did not meet their expectations at all.
- In an open-ended follow-up question, respondents who indicated that Niobrara NSR 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 Niobrara NSR and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each given statement (Figure 31).

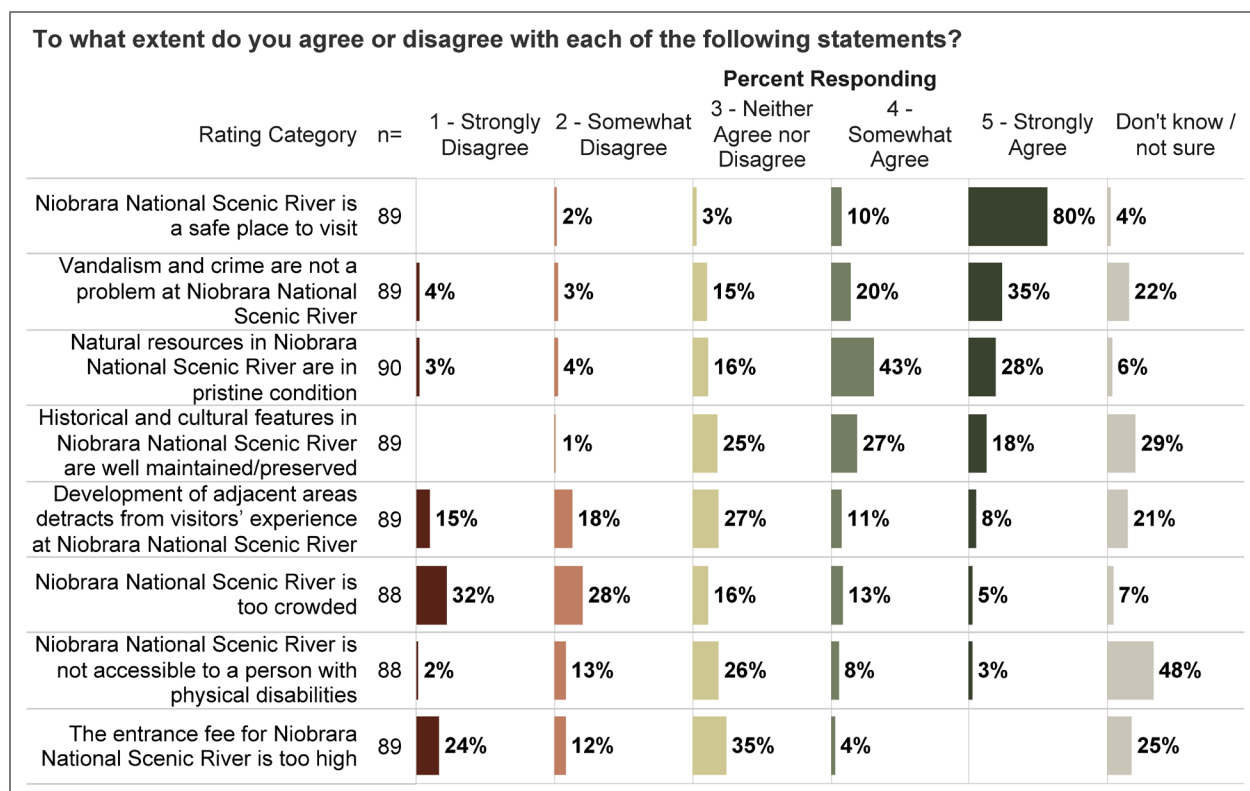


Figure 31. Rating Niobrara NSR experience. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 17](#).

NPS

- From all the statements listed, “Niobrara National Scenic River is a safe place to visit” received the most consensus with a combined 90% of respondents saying they either strongly or somewhat agree with it. That was followed by “natural resources in Niobrara National Scenic River are in pristine condition” and “vandalism and crime are not a problem at Niobrara National Scenic River” (71% and 55% of respondents, respectively, strongly or somewhat agreed with these statements).
- Conversely, “the entrance fee for Niobrara National Scenic River is too high” and “Niobrara National Scenic River is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities” received the least support, with only 4% and 11% of respondents, respectively, either somewhat or strongly agreeing with these statements. For each of these statements, more than a quarter of respondents also indicated that they didn’t know or were not sure.

Next, respondents were asked to rate the quality of park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Niobrara NSR (Figure 32).

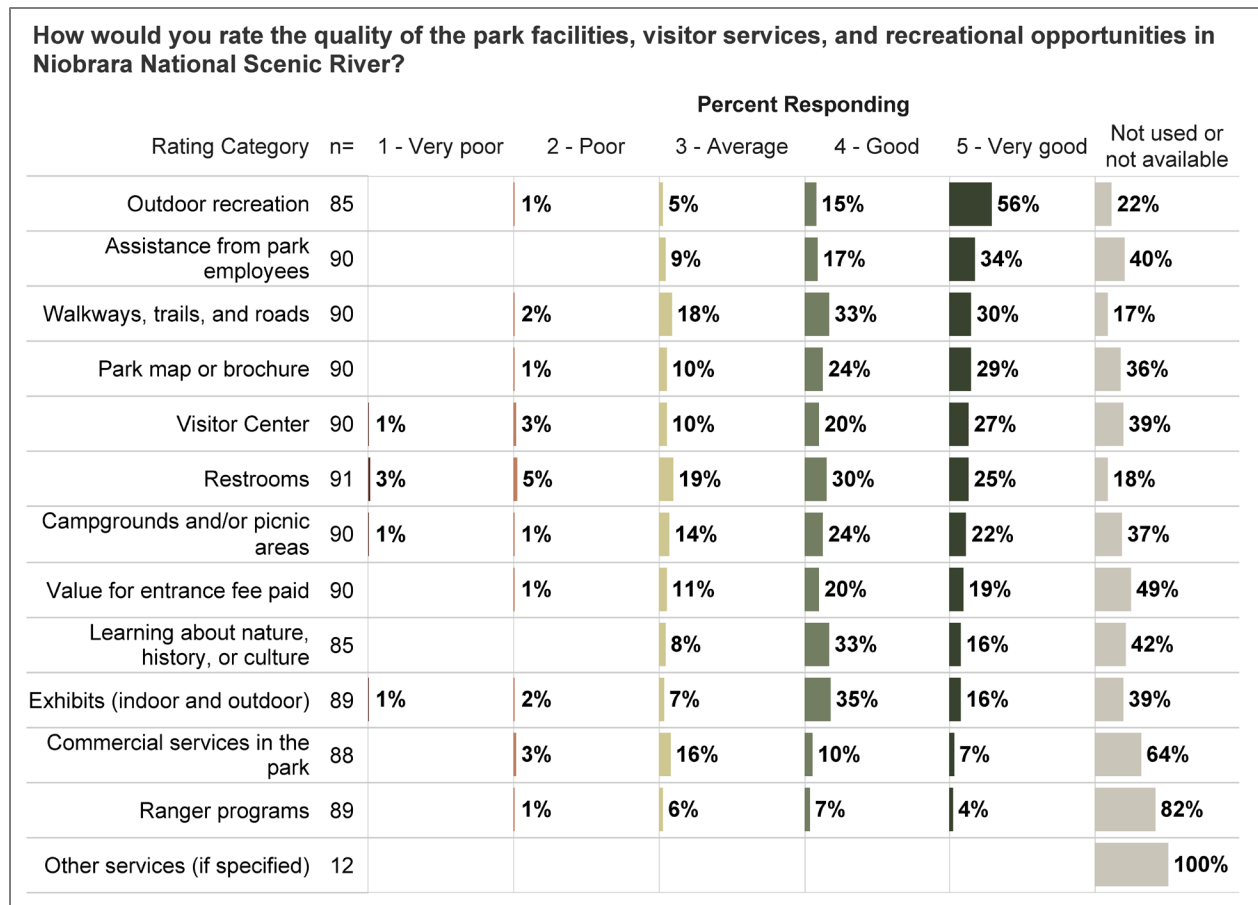


Figure 32. Rating the quality of Niobrara NSR facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 18](#).

NPS

- Over half of visitors (56%) rated outdoor recreation as very good.
- Over a quarter of visitors (ranging from 27% to 34%, depending on the service) rated assistance from park employees, walkways, trails, and roads, the park map or brochure, and the visitor center as very good.
- Conversely, fewer than 10% of visitors rated commercial services in the park and ranger programs as very good. For these rating categories, visitors were most likely to say that they were 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 33).

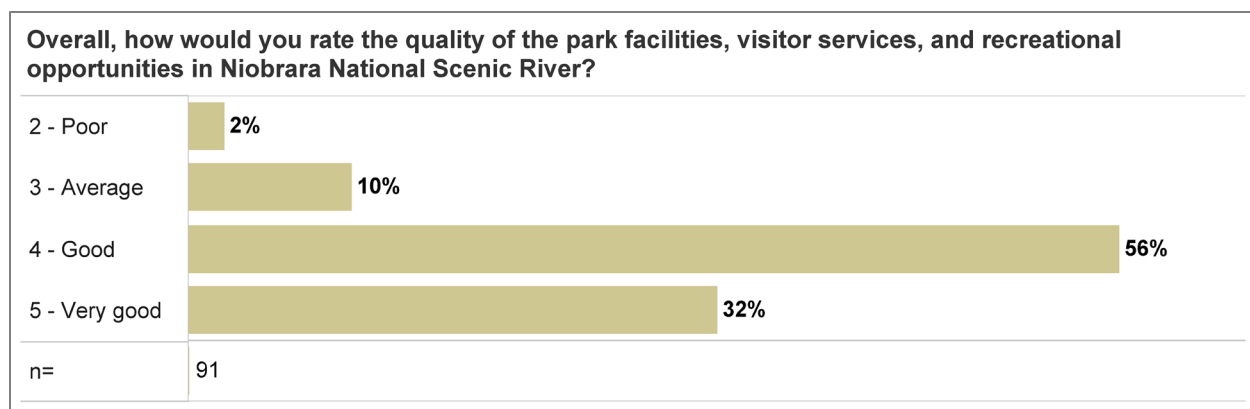


Figure 33. Rating overall quality of Niobrara NSR facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

NPS

- In general, about a third of respondents (32%) rated the quality of the park facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities in Niobrara NSR as very good, and another 56% rated them as good.
- Just about 1 in 8 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 34 depicts descriptive statistics for respondent gender, age, and education.

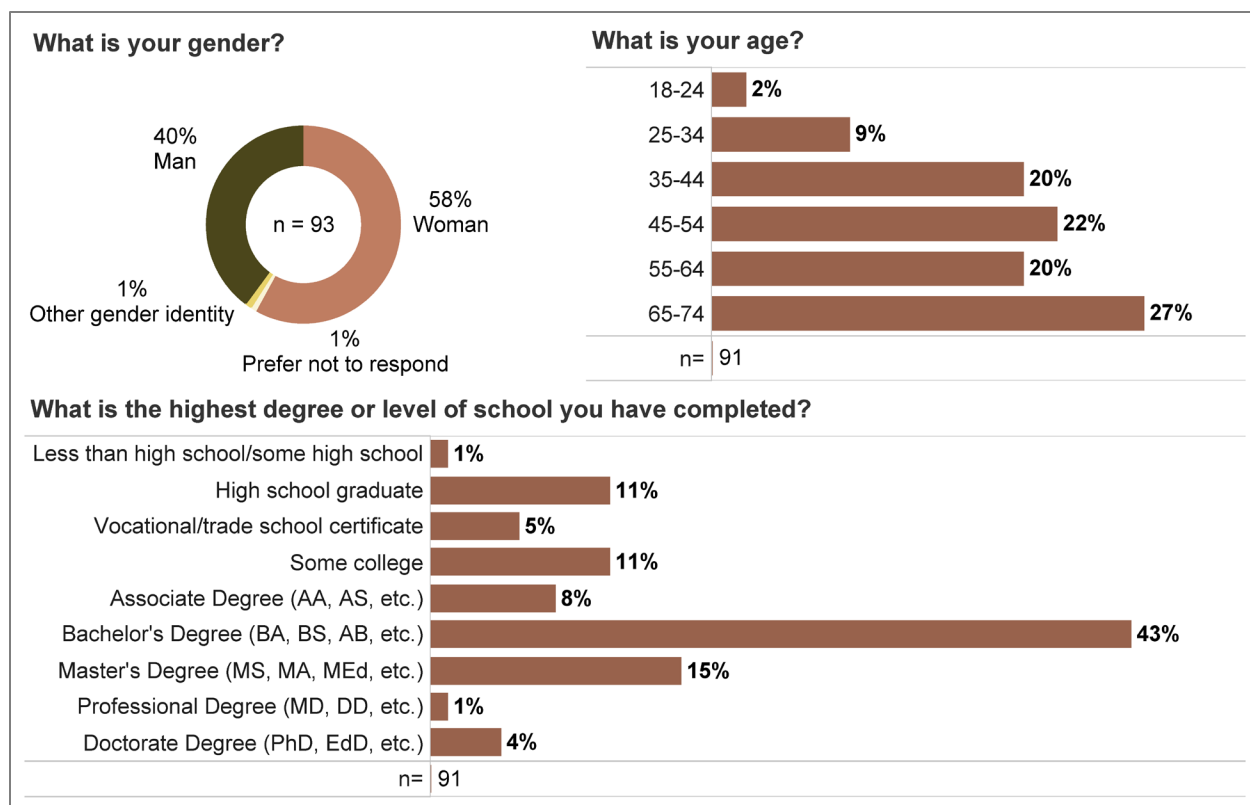


Figure 34. Respondent demographics: gender, age, and level of education.

NPS

- Follow-up survey respondents were more likely to be women than men, though the sample was relatively balanced (58% vs. 40%). Another 1% had another gender identity, while 1% preferred not to disclose their gender identity.
- The most common age categories were 65 to 74 (27%), 45 to 54 (22%), and 55 to 64 (20%). The least represented age group was 18 to 24 (only 2% of the participants surveyed).
- Most survey respondents were educated, with a combined 71% having some college degree, and a plurality (43%) holding a bachelor's degree.

Respondents were also asked to identify their race(s) and if they were of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin (Figure 35).

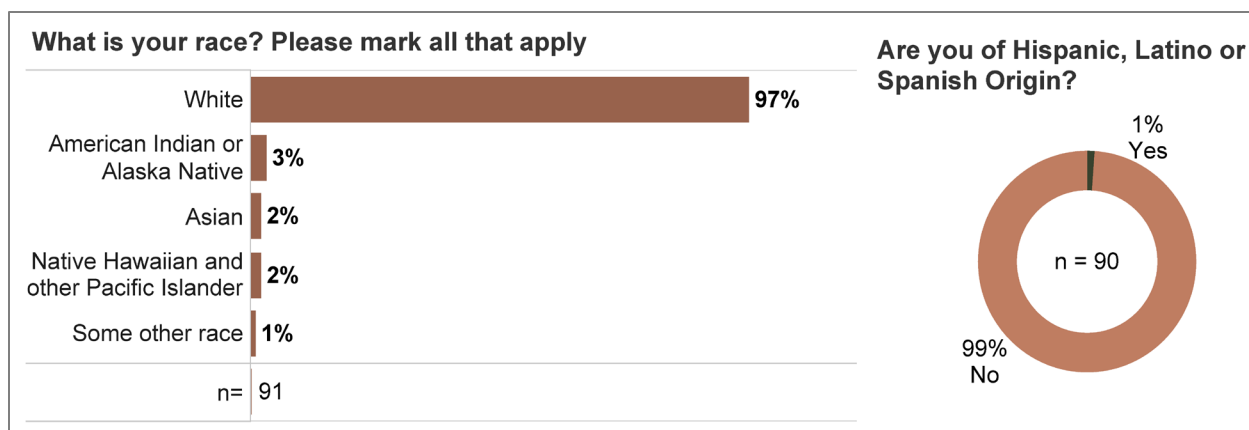


Figure 35. Respondent demographics: race and ethnicity.

NPS

- The majority of respondents (97%) were White, while 3% were American Indian or Alaska Native.
- Most respondents (99%) 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 36).

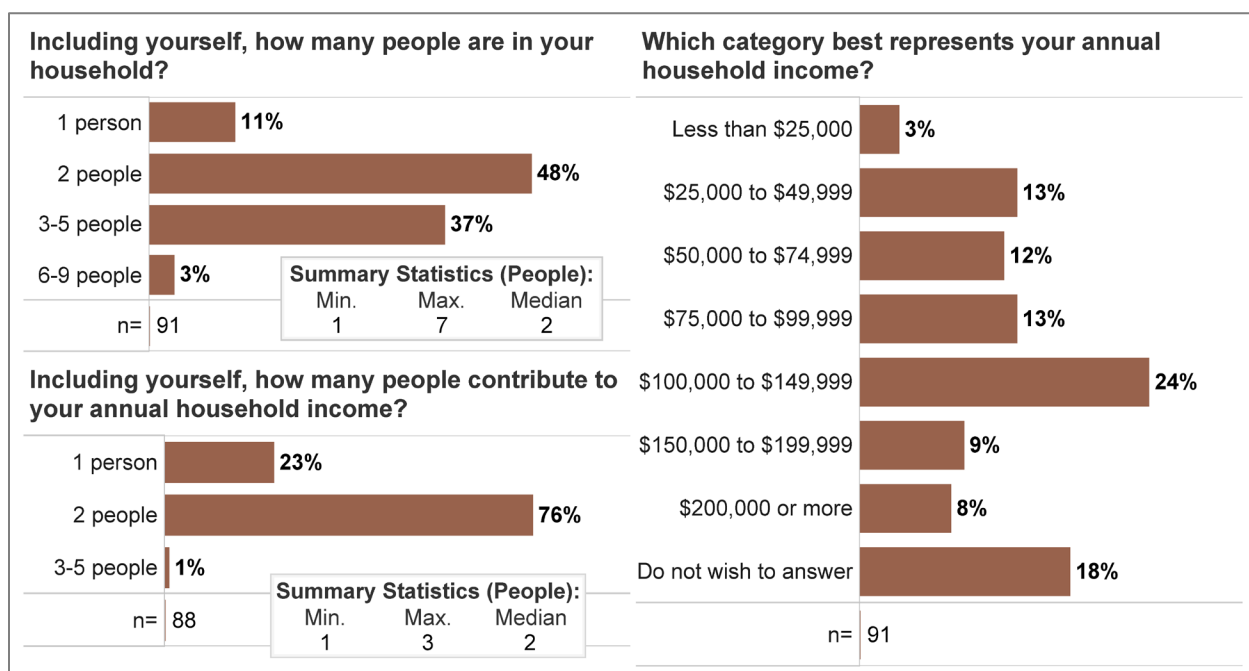


Figure 36. Household demographics: annual household income and household size. Tabular data shown in this figure are presented in [Appendix A, Table 19](#).

NPS

- Nearly half of respondents (48%) had two people in their household, followed by 3 to 5 people (another 37%).
- In addition to being educated, Niobrara NSR visitors are also relatively affluent. About a quarter of respondents (24%) reported that their annual household income was between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and another 8% earned \$200,000 or more.
- Most respondents (76%) came from a dual-income household.

Finally, respondents were asked about their language preference (Figure 37).

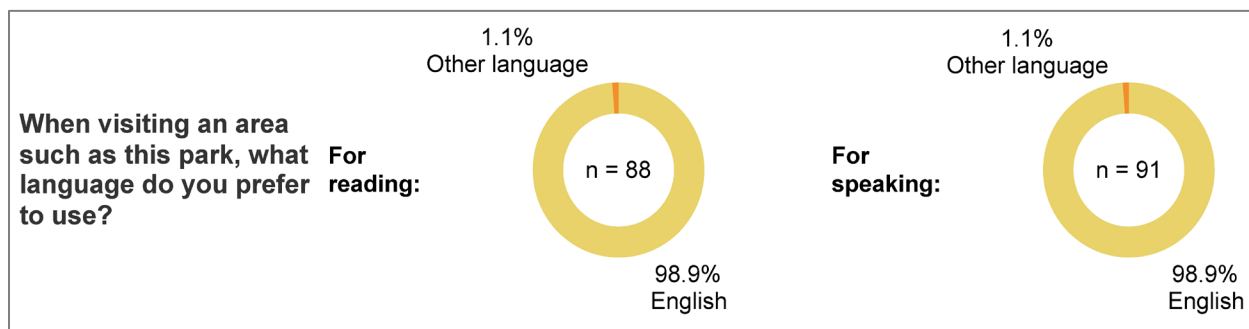


Figure 37. Respondent's language preference.

NPS

- The overwhelming majority of respondents (98.9%) preferred to use English both for reading and speaking when visiting an area such as Niobrara NSR, while only 1.1% of respondents preferred Spanish for either reading and/or speaking.

Literature Cited

National Park Service (NPS). 2022. 2022 Socioeconomic Monitoring of Niobrara National Scenic River: Visitor Intercept and Post-Trip Surveys.
<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2318677>

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 Niobrara NSR, by accommodation type.

Accommodation Type	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Camping along the Niobrara National Scenic River or on a sandbar	73	1	5	2
Camping in town or in the local area	33	1	8	3
Lodging in cabins along the Niobrara National Scenic River	9	2	4	3
Lodging in town or in the local area	129	1	90	2
Unpaid accommodations	19	1	6	2

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

Group Composition	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Adults	386	1	25	2
Children	386	0	16	0

Table 10. Data from [Figure 14](#). Number of people in respondent's vehicle when entering Niobrara NSR.

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 Niobrara NSR?	305	1	13	3
[If entered by RV/motorhome] Including yourself, how many people were traveling in your RV when you entered Niobrara NSR?	5	2	4	2
[If entered by motorcycle] Including yourself, how many people were traveling on your motorcycle when you entered Niobrara NSR?	1	2	2	2

Table 11. Data from [Figure 15](#). Previous visits to Niobrara NSR.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Niobrara NSR over the past 12 months?	242	1	300	1
[If not first-time visitor] Including this visit, how many visits have you made to Niobrara NSR over the past five years?	242	1	1500	3

Table 12. Data from [Figure 16](#). 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?	386	0	100	0

Table 13. Data from [Figure 23](#). Reasons or motivations to visit Niobrara NSR.

Rating Category	n
To visit a National Park Service site	90
To experience solitude	89
To hear the sounds of nature/quiet	90
To learn more about nature	90
To learn more about American history and culture	89
To spend time with family/friends	92
To get physical exercise	93
To view wildlife or natural scenery	93
To relax	93
To view dark night sky/stars	89
Other (if specified)	7

Table 14. Data from [Figure 26](#). Use of personal electronic devices while visiting Niobrara NSR.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	86
Send/receive a text message	86
Search the internet/email	84
GPS/Navigation	86
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	87
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	80
Other (if specified)	17

Table 15. Data from [Figure 27](#). The importance of use of personal electronic devices while visiting Niobrara NSR.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	87
Send/receive a text message	87
Search the internet/email	85
GPS/Navigation	85
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	85
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	84
Other (if specified)	2

Table 16. Data from [Figure 28](#). Quality of service of personal electronic devices while visiting Niobrara NSR.

Device Use	n
Make/receive a cell phone call	71
Send/receive a text message	72
Search the internet/email	71
GPS/Navigation	69
Share pics/videos/audio via social media	69
Listen to/use an NPS podcast	65
Other (if specified)	12

Table 17. Data from [Figure 31](#). Rating Niobrara NSR experience.

Rating Category	n
Niobrara NSR is a safe place to visit	89
Niobrara NSR is too crowded	88
Natural resources in Niobrara NSR are in pristine condition	90
The entrance fee for Niobrara NSR is too high	89
Vandalism and crime are not a problem at Niobrara NSR	89
Niobrara NSR is not accessible to a person with physical disabilities	88
Historical and cultural features in Niobrara NSR are well maintained/preserved	89
Development of adjacent areas detracts from visitors' experience at Niobrara NSR	89

Table 18. Data from [Figure 32](#). Rating the quality of Niobrara NSR facilities, visitor services, and recreational opportunities.

Rating Category	n
Visitor Center	90
Exhibits (indoor and outdoor)	89
Restrooms	91
Walkways, trails, and roads	90
Campgrounds and/or picnic areas	90
Assistance from park employees	90
Park map or brochure	90
Ranger programs	89
Value for entrance fee paid	90
Commercial services in the park (food, lodging, gifts, rental, etc.)	88
Other services (if specified)	12
Learning about nature, history, or culture	85
Outdoor recreation (sightseeing, camping, bicycling, boating, hiking, etc.)	85

Table 19. Data from [Figure 36](#). Household demographics: annual household income and household size.

Question	n	Min.	Max.	Median
Including yourself, how many people are in your household?	91	1	7	2
Including yourself, how many people contribute to your annual household income?	88	1	3	2

National Park Service
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Natural Resource Stewardship and Science

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