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# Acadia National Park

## Visitor Study Summer 1998

Margaret Littlejohn

**Visitor Services Project  
Report 108**

May 1999

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Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Tom Wade, the staff and volunteers of Acadia National Park for their assistance with this study. The VSP acknowledges the Public Opinion Lab of the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University, for its technical assistance.

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## Visitor Services Project Acadia National Park Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Acadia National Park during August 2-8, 1998. A total of 1,255 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 1,065 questionnaires for an 85% response rate.
- This report profiles Acadia National Park visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Seventy-one percent of the visitor groups were family groups. Thirty-nine percent of visitor groups were groups of two; 37% in groups of three or four. Forty-two percent of visitors were aged 36-55 and 23% were aged 10 or younger. Most visitors (95%) speak English as their primary language.
- United States visitors were from Massachusetts (14%), New York (12%), Pennsylvania (11%), Maine (10%), 39 other states and Washington, D.C. International visitors comprised 5% of Acadia's visitation with 29% from Canada, 16% from England and 18 other countries.
- Over one-half of the visitors (52%) were making repeat visits to Acadia National Park. Over one-half of the visitors (58%) stayed from one to three days in the park.
- On this visit, the most common activities were sightseeing/ driving for pleasure (86%), hiking on trails (72%), picnicking (43%) and walking on carriage roads (40%). Over one-half of the visitors (58%) visited Acadia NP Visitor Center. The most common commercial activities were boat cruises (52%) and sea kayaking tours (26%).
- Previous visits (51%), travel guide/ tour book (41%), and friends and relatives (40%) were the most used sources of information by visitor groups.
- The most commonly visited sites in the park were Cadillac Mt. summit (76%), Sand Beach/ Thunder Hole (75%), Jordan Pond House (61%), Visitor Center (59%) and Seawall area (55%).
- In regard to the use, importance and quality of services, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The most used service by 927 respondents was the park brochure/map (92%). According to visitors, the most important services were the park brochure/ map (92% of 831 respondents) and self-guided trail signs (92% of 408 respondents). The highest quality services were visitor center staff (92% of 332 respondents) and ranger-led programs (91% of 155 respondents).
- The facilities that were most used by 981 respondents were Park Loop Road (86%), parking lots (82%) and park road directional signs (82%). According to visitors, the most important facilities were campgrounds (95% of 146 respondents), hiking trails (95% of 653 respondents) and restrooms (94% of 719 respondents). The highest quality facilities were the Park Loop Road (92% of 798 respondents), hiking trails (91% of 640 respondents) and carriage roads (90% of 466 respondents).
- Visitors were asked to rate the importance of park features and qualities. The features and qualities which received the highest "extremely important" and "very important" ratings were scenic views (99%), clean air (97%) and clean water (96%).
- Visitors were asked about their willingness to ride a free island transport bus. Forty-eight percent of visitors said they would be willing to ride a bus. When asked if they would be willing to pay to ride the bus, 51% of visitors said it was unlikely they would pay to ride and 25% said they would be willing to pay to ride. Most visitors (87%) support the charging of an entrance fee at Acadia. Almost three-fourths of the visitors (74%) feel that a per vehicle fee is the fairest way to charge entrance fees.
- Ninety-six percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at Acadia National Park as "very good" or "good." Less than one percent of groups rated services as "very poor."

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the  
University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit; phone (208) 885-7129 or 885-7863.

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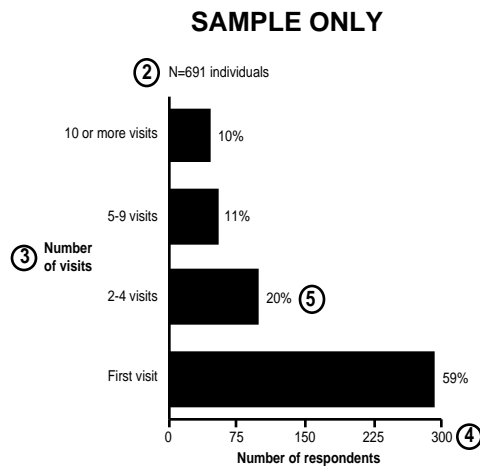
## INTRODUCTION

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This report describes the results of a study of visitors at Acadia National Park. This visitor study was conducted August 2-8, 1998 by the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Services Project (VSP), part of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho.

A **Methods** section discusses the procedures and limitations of the study. A **Results** section follows, including a summary of visitor comments. Next, an **Additional Analysis** page helps managers request additional analyses. The final section has a copy of the **Questionnaire**. The separate appendix includes comment summaries and visitors' unedited comments.

Most of this report's graphs resemble the example below. The large numbers refer to explanations following the graph.



① Figure 4: Number of visits

- 1: The figure title describes the graph's information.
  - 2: Listed above the graph, the 'N' shows the number of visitors responding and a description of the chart's information. Interpret data with an 'N' of less than 30 with **CAUTION!** as the results may be unreliable.
  - 3: Vertical information describes categories.
  - 4: Horizontal information shows the number or proportions in each category.
  - 5: In most graphs, percentages provide additional information.
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## METHODS

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### Questionnaire design and administration

The questionnaire for this visitor study was designed using a standard format that has been developed in previous Visitor Services Project studies. A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this report.

Interviews were conducted with, and questionnaires were distributed to, a sample of visitors who arrived at Acadia National Park during the period from August 2-8, 1998. Visitors were sampled at the locations shown in Table 1, based on the recommendations of park staff.

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**Table 1: Questionnaire distribution locations**  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

<u>Location:</u>	<u>Questionnaire</u> Number	<u>distributed</u> %
East side frontcountry	411	33
Carriage road trailheads	208	17
Seawall area	205	16
East side trailheads/ campground	182	15
West side trailheads, Echo Lake Beach	180	14
Baker/ Islesford naturalist cruises	45	4
Wildwood stables	24	2
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>101</b>

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Visitor groups were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study, and asked to participate. If visitors agreed, an interview, lasting approximately two minutes, was used to determine group size, group type, and the age of the adult who would complete the questionnaire. This individual was given a questionnaire and was asked his or her name, address and telephone number for the later mailing of a reminder-thank you postcard. Visitor groups were asked to complete the questionnaire during or after their visit and then return it by mail.

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Two weeks following the survey, a reminder-thank you postcard was mailed to all participants. Replacement questionnaires were mailed to participants who had not returned their questionnaires four weeks after the survey. Eight weeks after the survey, second replacement questionnaires were mailed to visitors who still had not returned their questionnaires.

**Questionnaire design and administration (continued)**

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Returned questionnaires were coded and the information was entered into a computer using a standard statistical software package. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were calculated for the coded data, and responses to open-ended questions were categorized and summarized.

**Data analysis**

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This study collected information on both visitor groups and individual group members. Thus, the sample size ("N"), varies from figure to figure. For example, while Figure 1 shows information for 1,054 visitor groups, Figure 4 presents data for 3,556 individuals. A note above each graph specifies the information illustrated.

**Sample size, missing data and reporting errors**

Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions, or may have answered some incorrectly. Unanswered questions result in missing data and cause the number in the sample to vary from figure to figure. For example, although 1,065 questionnaires were returned by Acadia National Park visitors, Figure 1 shows data for only 1,054 respondents.

Questions answered incorrectly due to carelessness, misunderstanding directions, and so forth turn up in the data as reporting errors. These create small data inconsistencies.

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**Limitations**

Like all surveys, this study has limitations which should be considered when interpreting the results.

1. It is not possible to know whether visitor responses reflect actual behavior. This disadvantage applies to all such studies and is reduced by having visitors fill out the questionnaire soon after they visit the park.

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of August 2-8, 1998. The results do not necessarily apply to visitors during other times of the year.

3. Caution is advised when interpreting any data with a sample size of less than 30, as the results may be unreliable. Whenever the sample size is less than 30, the word "**CAUTION!**" is included in the graph, figure or table. Tour bus groups are likely under-represented in this study due to the sampling methodology used.

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**Special  
Conditions**

Weather at Acadia National Park during the week of August 2-8, 1998 was unusually hot, with temperatures reaching into the 90's.

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## RESULTS

### Visitors contacted

At Acadia National Park, 1,312 visitor groups were contacted, and 1,255 of these groups (96%) accepted questionnaires.

Questionnaires were completed and returned by 1,065 visitor groups, resulting in an 85% response rate for this study.

Table 2 shows age and group size information collected from the total sample of visitors and compares the same information from visitors who returned their questionnaires. Based on the variables of respondent age and visitor group size, non-response bias was judged to be insignificant.

**Table 2: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents**

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondents	1,236	43.9	1,051	44.9
Group size	1,233	3.2	1,054	3.8

### Demographics

Figure 1 shows visitor group sizes, which ranged from one person to 45 people. Thirty-nine percent of visitor groups consisted of two people, while another 37% were people in groups of three or four. Seventy-one percent of visitor groups were made up of family members (see Figure 2). Groups listing themselves as "other" group type included business associates, boyfriend/ girlfriend, scouts or college groups. Two percent of the visitor groups at Acadia National Park were guided tour groups (see Figure 3).

As is shown by Figure 4, the most common visitor age groups were the 36-55 age group (42%) and another 23% of visitors were 15 or younger. Forty-seven percent of visitors were making their first visit to the park while 52% of the visitors had visited the park previously (see Figure 5).

Visitor groups were asked if, on this trip, any members of their group had a disability. Six percent of the visitor groups had a person with a disability (see Figure 6). Table 3 shows the types of disabilities those people had. Visitors were also asked if they encountered any

access/ service problems in the park. Figure 7 shows that 20% of the visitor groups with a disabled member experienced access/ service problems. Table 4 shows the types of problems they encountered.

Visitors were asked if English is the primary language they speak. The majority of visitors (95%) speak English as their primary language (see Figure 8). Visitors who do not speak English as their primary language were asked to list the language they speak. Table 5 shows their responses, with German and French leading the list.

International visitors to Acadia National Park comprised 5% of the total visitation (see Table 6). The countries most often represented were Canada (29%), England (16%)and Israel (9%). The largest proportions of United States visitors were from Massachusetts (14%), New York (12%), Pennsylvania (11%) and Maine (10%). Smaller proportions of U.S. visitors came from another thirty-nine states and Washington, D.C. (see Map 1 and Table 7).

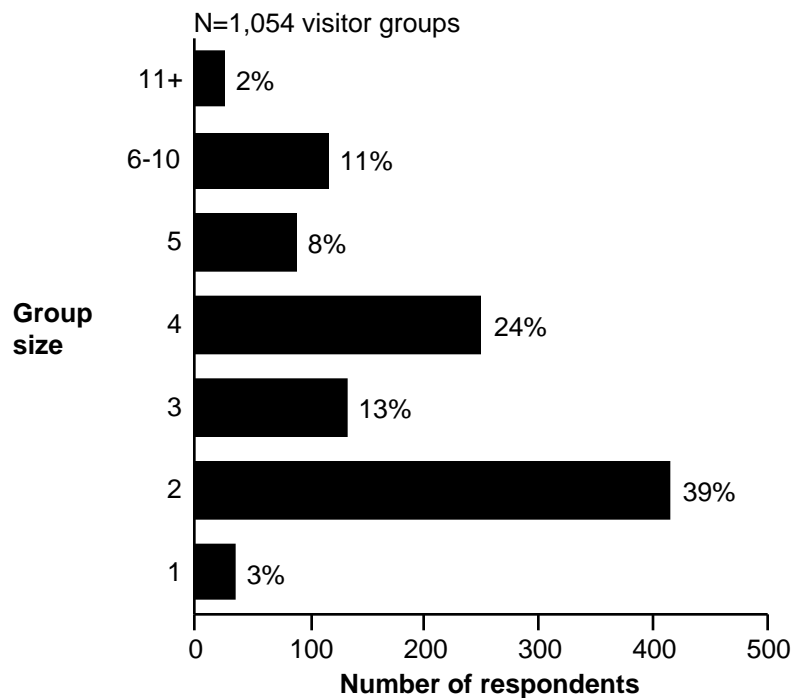


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

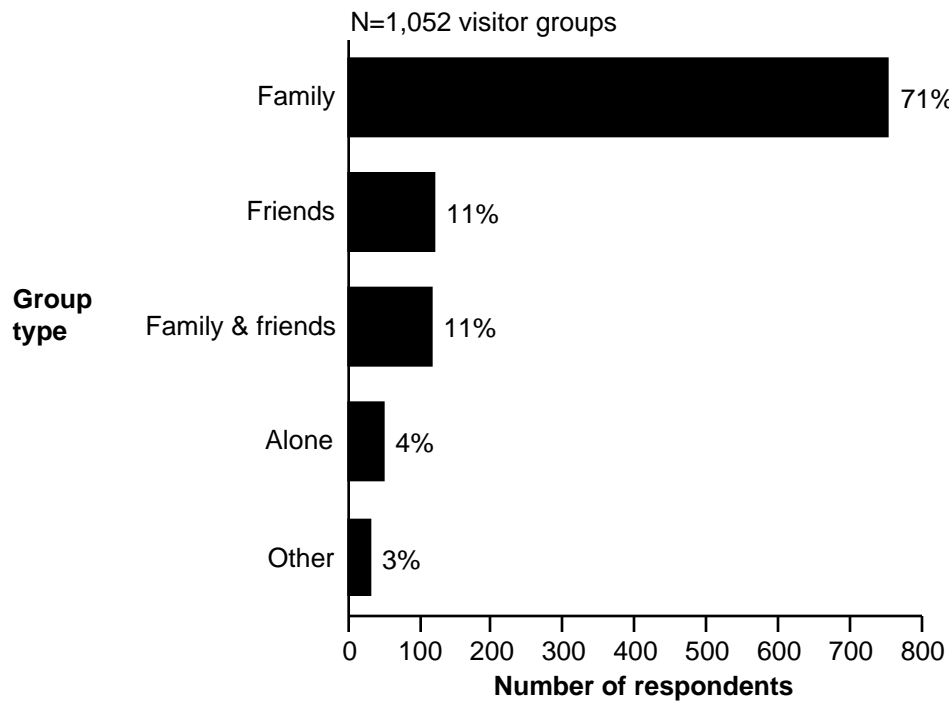


Figure 2: Visitor group types

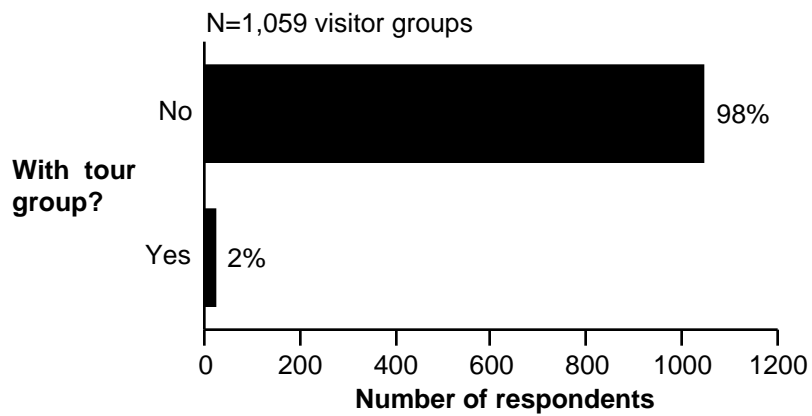


Figure 3: With guided tour group?

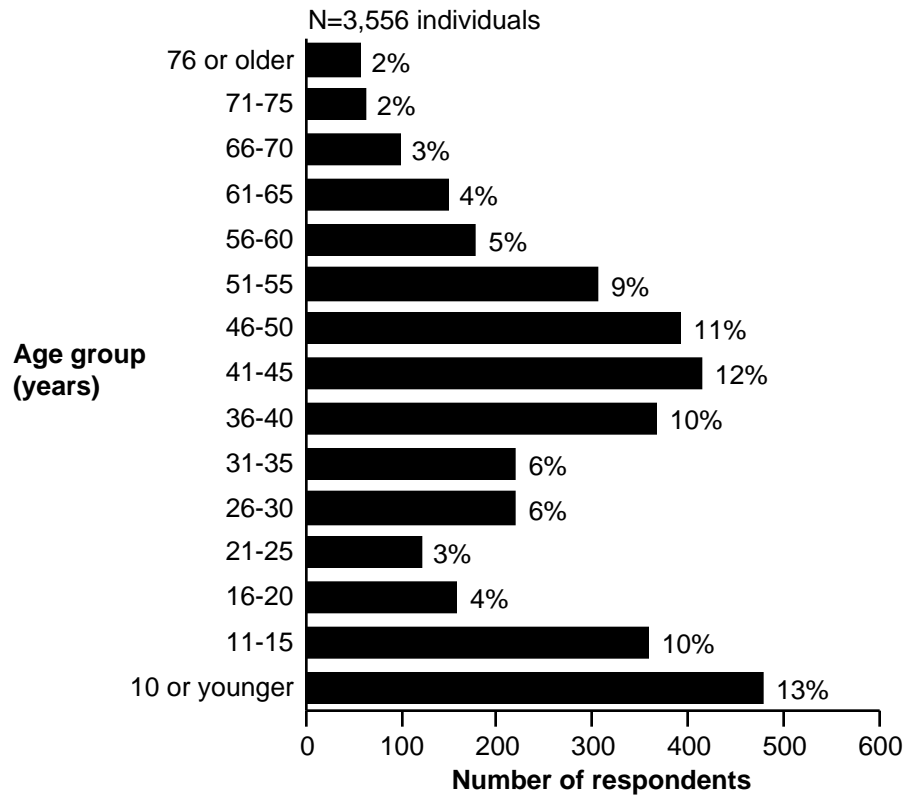


Figure 4: Visitor ages

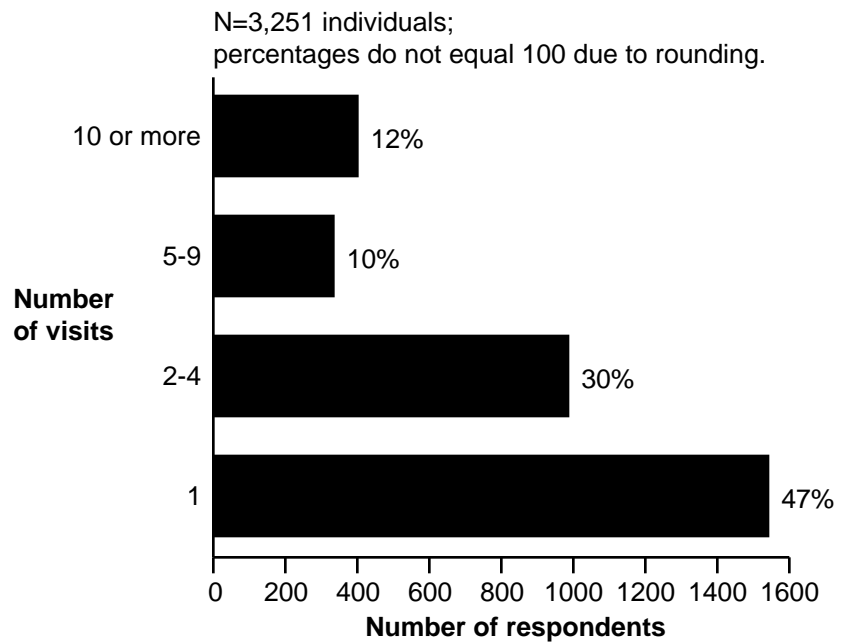
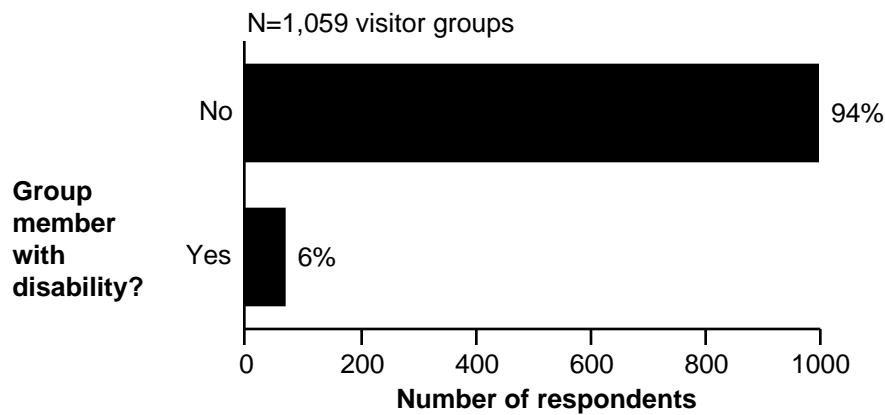


Figure 5: Number of visits

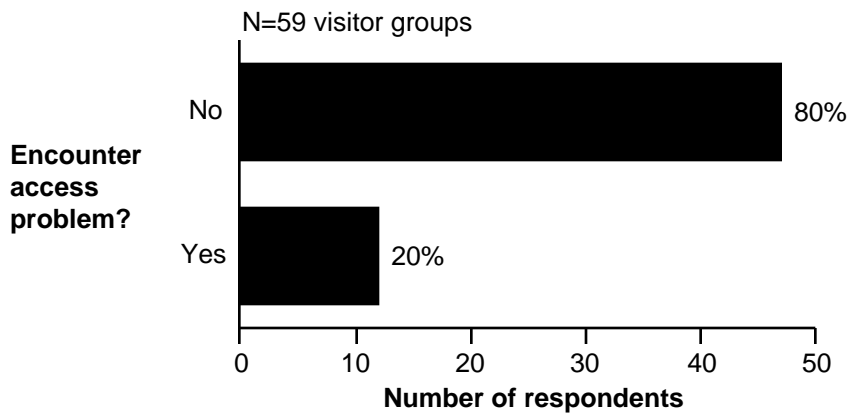


**Figure 6: Visitor groups with disabled person(s)**

**Table 3: Visitors disabilities**

N=56 comments

Disability	Number of times mentioned
Difficulty walking	12
Deafness	7
Wheelchair	4
Heart problems	4
Breathing problems	3
Knee injury/ amputation/ replacement	3
Arthritis	2
Mentally handicapped	2
Bad eyesight	2
Diabetes	2
Broken foot	2
Back injury	2
Other disabilities	11



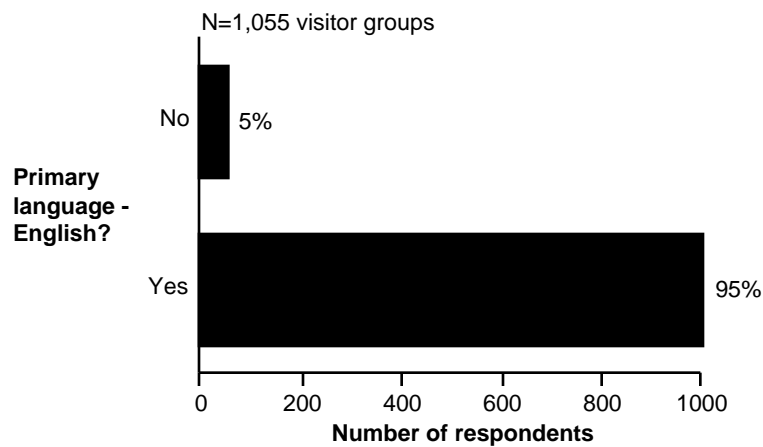
**Figure 7: Visitors who encountered access/ service problems**

**Table 4: Access/ service problems encountered in park**

N=16 comments

**CAUTION!**

Problem	Number of times mentioned
No ramps available, only steps	5
Limited parking for handicapped	3
Lack of information	2
No access to sights of interest	2
Other comments	4



**Figure 8: Visitors who speak English**

**Table 5: Primary language spoken**

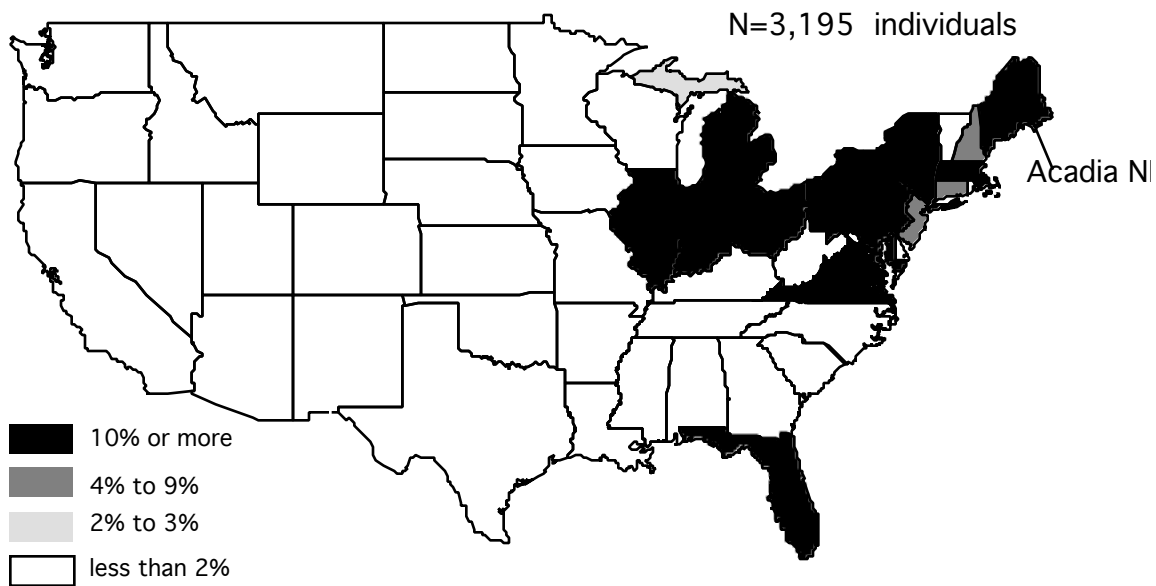
N=32 languages

Language	Number of times mentioned
German	8
French	7
Hebrew	3
Dutch	2
Korean	2
American sign language	1
Chinese	1
Hungarian	1
Icelandic	1
Italian	1
Japanese	1
Konkan	1
Polish	1
Russian	1
Spanish	1

**Table 6: International visitors by country of residence**

N=165 individuals;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Country	Number of individuals	Percent of international visitors	Percent of total visitors
Canada	47	29	1
England	27	16	1
Israel	15	9	1
Germany	13	8	<1
Holland	11	7	<1
Switzerland	11	7	<1
Italy	9	6	<1
France	6	4	<1
Austria	4	2	<1
Scotland	4	2	<1
Korea	3	2	<1
Spain	3	2	<1
Belgium	2	1	<1
Iceland	2	1	<1
Ireland	2	1	<1
Singapore	2	1	<1
Japan	1	1	<1
Poland	1	1	<1
Taiwan	1	1	<1
Turks & Caicos	1	1	<1



**Map 1: Proportion of United States visitors by state of residence**

**Table 7: Proportion of United States visitors from each state**

N=3,195 individuals;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

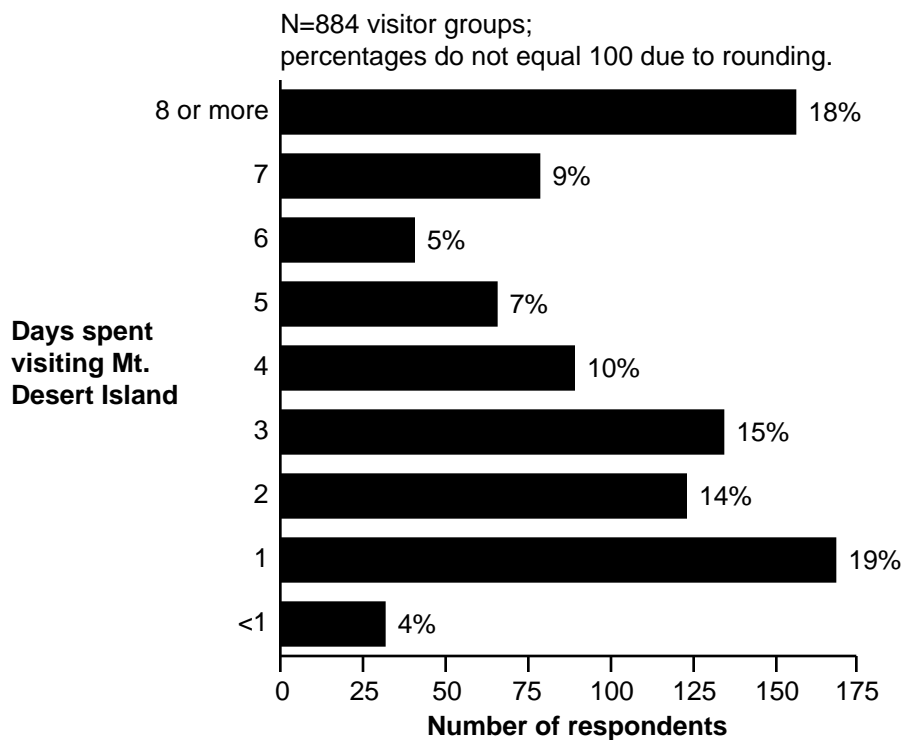
State	Number of individuals	% of U.S. visitors	% of total visitors
Massachusetts	457	14	14
New York	376	12	11
Pennsylvania	341	11	10
Maine	317	10	9
New Jersey	259	8	8
Connecticut	175	6	5
Maryland	175	6	5
Ohio	120	4	4
New Hampshire	118	4	4
Michigan	84	3	3
Virginia	73	2	2
Florida	70	2	2
Illinois	63	2	2
Indiana	53	2	2
California	44	1	1
Wisconsin	36	1	1
Vermont	35	1	1
Delaware	30	1	1
Texas	30	1	1
North Carolina	27	1	1
Rhode Island	27	1	1
Kentucky	25	1	1
Colorado	23	1	1
Other states (20) + Washington, D.C.	211	7	6



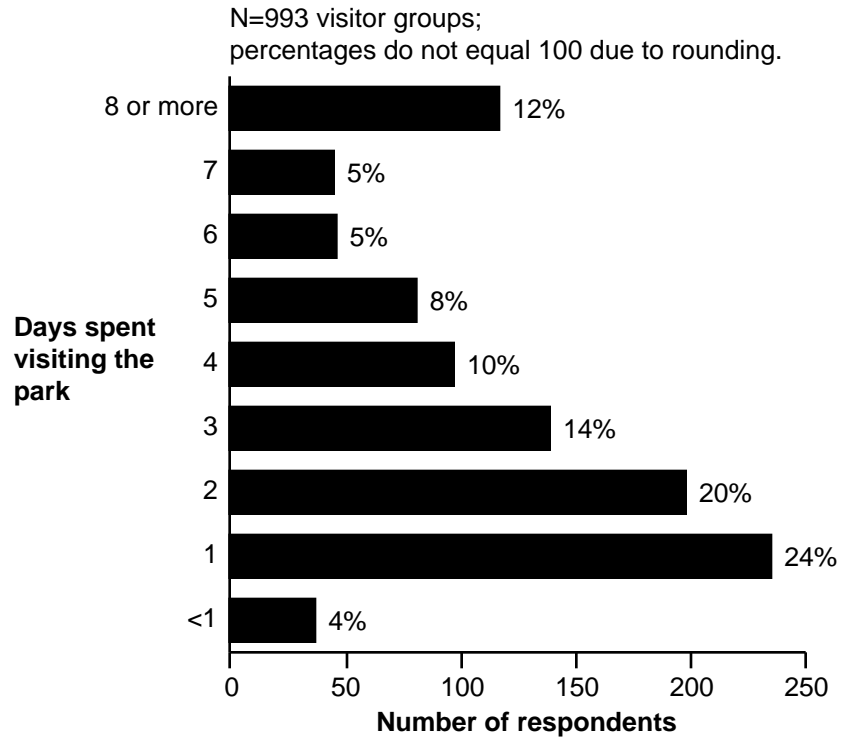
**Length of stay**

Visitor groups were asked how much time they spent on Mount Desert Island. Almost half of the visitor groups spent between one and three days on the island (see Figure 9). Another 18% spent eight or more days on the island. Four percent of the groups spent less than a day on the island.

Visitor groups were also asked how much time they spent at Acadia National Park. Over one-half of the visitors (58%) stayed from one to three days visiting Acadia (see Figure 10). Another 12% spent 8 or more days visiting the park.



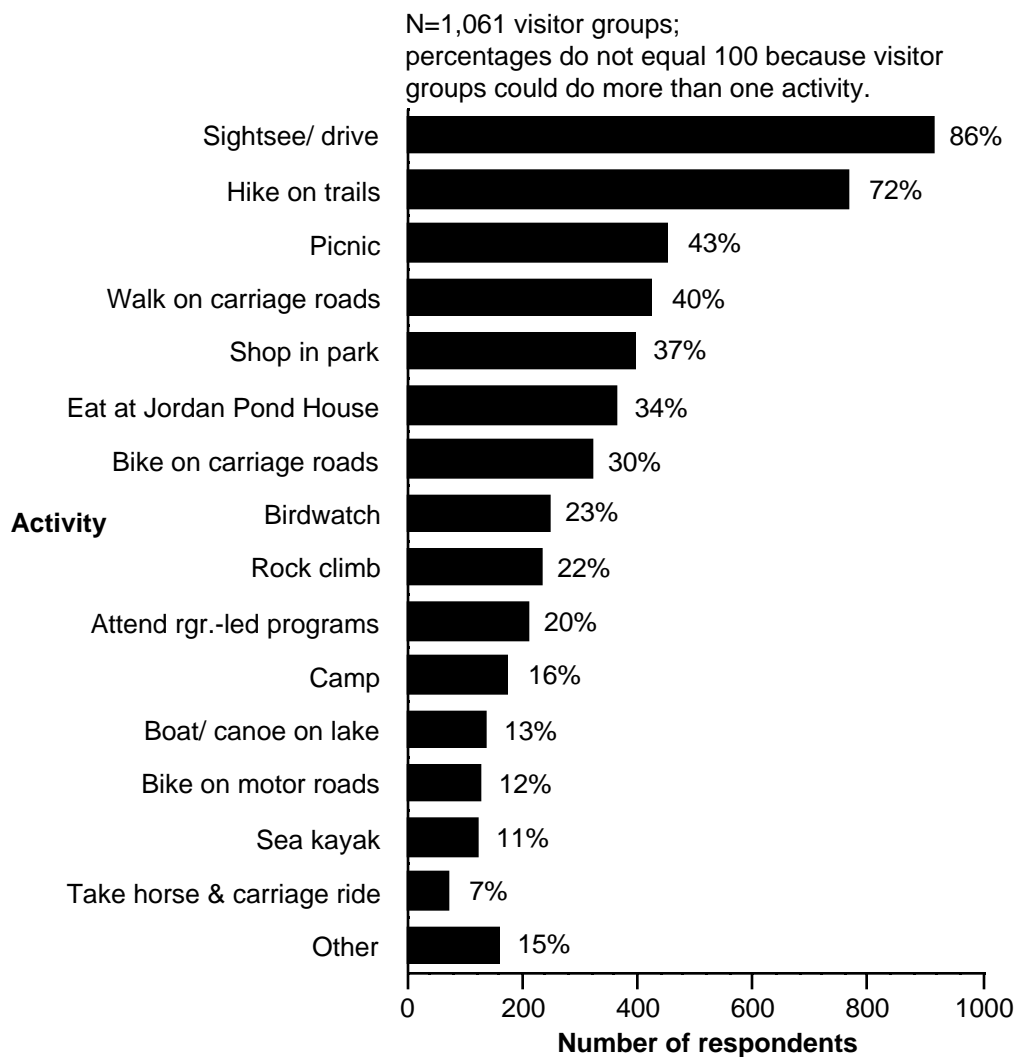
**Figure 9: Days spent visiting Mount Desert Island**



**Figure 10: Days spent visiting Acadia National Park**

Figure 11 shows the proportions of visitor groups which participated in a variety of activities at Acadia National Park. The most common activities were sightseeing/ driving for pleasure (86%), hiking on trails (72%), picnicking (43%) and walking on carriage roads (40%). The least common activity was taking a horse and carriage ride (7%). Visitor groups participated in a number of "other" activities including swimming, whale watching, going to the beach, watching the sunrise or sunset, camping in private campground, sailing, and taking a cruise.

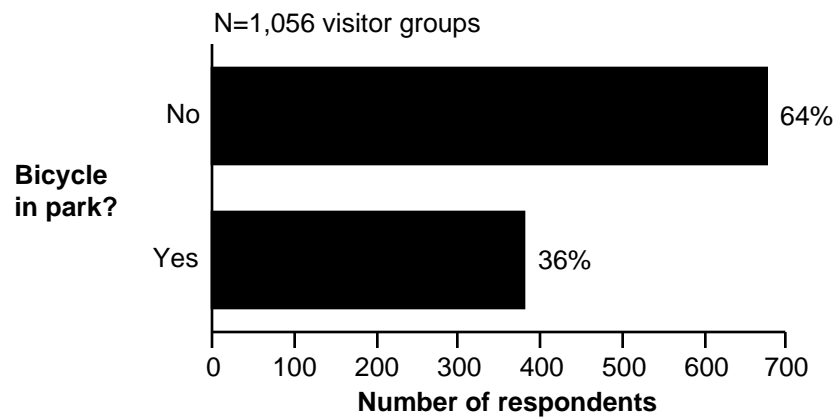
## Activities



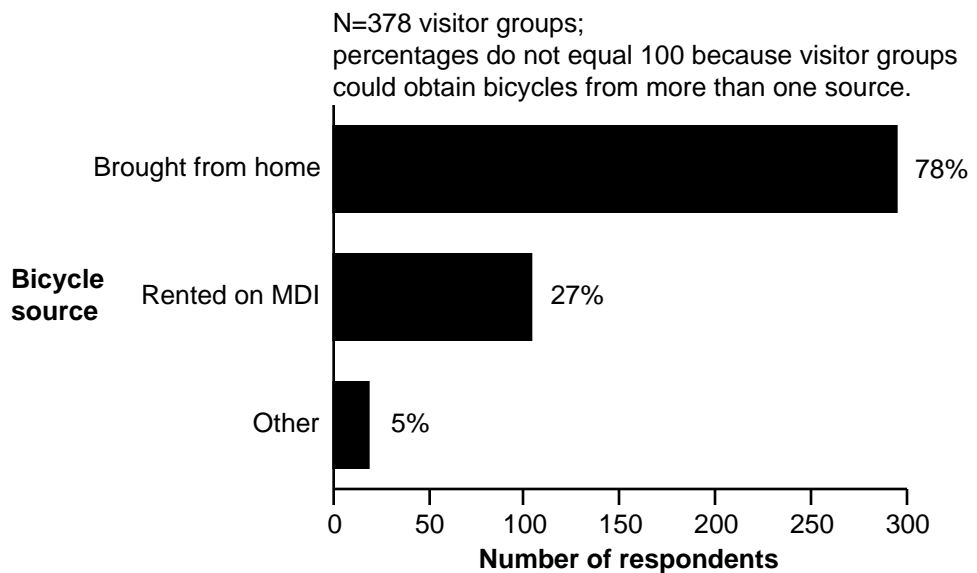
**Figure 11: Visitor activities**

**Bicycle use**

Visitors were asked if anyone in their group bicycled during this trip to Acadia NP. Just over one-third of the groups had bicyclers in their group (see Figure 12). The people who bicycled were then asked the sources of the bicycles they used. Most visitor groups (78%) brought their bicycles from home, while 27% of the groups rented them on Mount Desert Island, as shown in Figure 13. Five percent obtained the bicycles from "other" sources such as borrowed, stored on the island, bought on the way to the park or rented elsewhere.



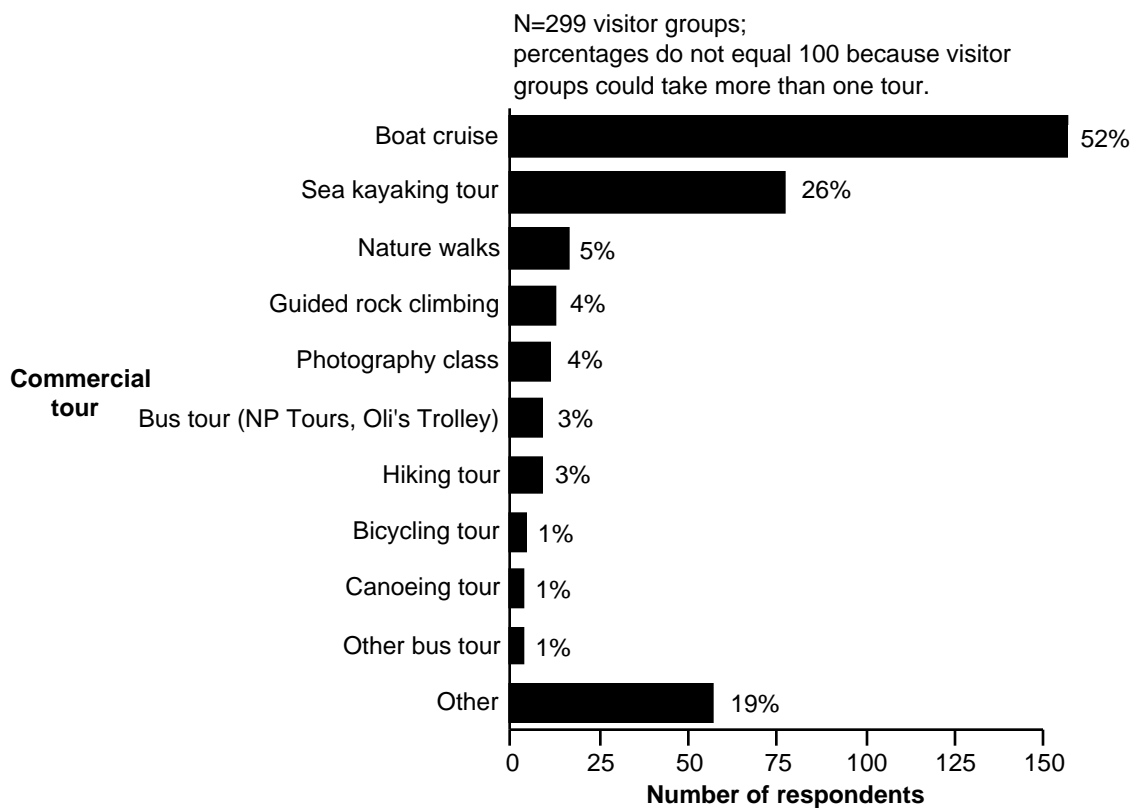
**Figure 12: Bicycle use**



**Figure 13: Bicycle source**

Figure 14 shows the proportions of visitor groups which participated in a variety of commercial activities including guided tours and instruction trips at Acadia National Park. The most common commercial activities were boat cruises (52%) and sea kayaking tours (26%). Visitor groups participated in a number of "other" commercial activities including whale watching, taking carriage rides, taped car tours, nature cruises, scenic flights, visiting the Oceanarium, and renting a sailboat.

**Commercial activities**

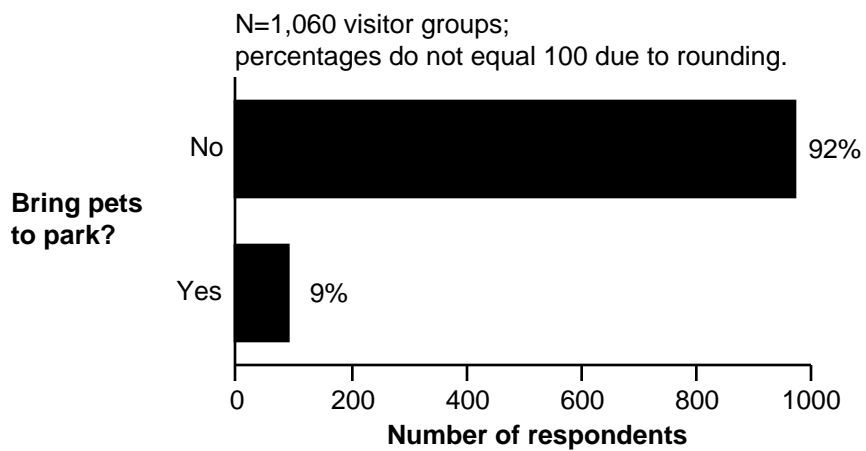


**Figure 14: Commercial activities**

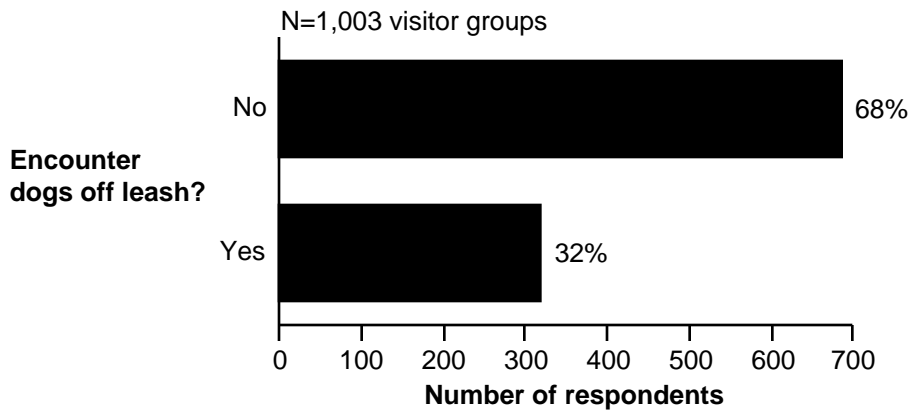
**Pet encounters**

Visitor groups were asked a series of questions related to pets in the park. The first question asked if they brought pets to the park and nine percent of the visitors said they had brought pets (see Figure 15).

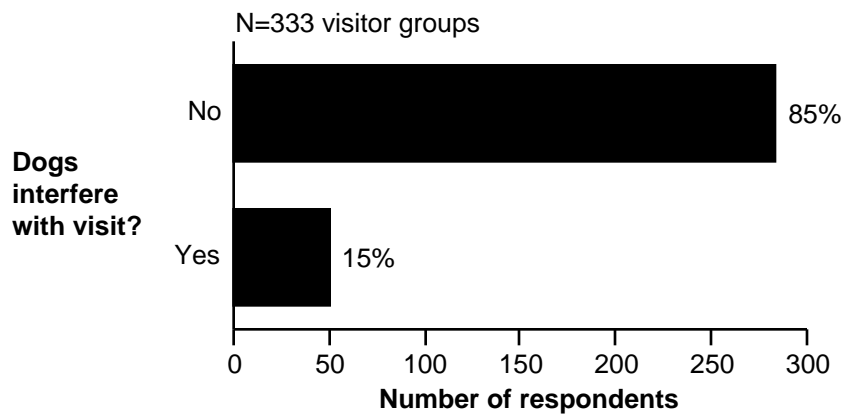
Visitors were asked if they had encountered any dogs off leash. Almost one-third of the visitor groups (32%) had encountered dogs off leash (see Figure 16). Visitors were then asked if the off leash dogs had interfered with their visit and 15% answered "yes," as shown in Figure 17. Table 8 shows the ways that the dogs interfered.



**Figure 15: Pets on trip**



**Figure 16: Encounter dogs off leash**



**Figure 17: Dog interference with visit**

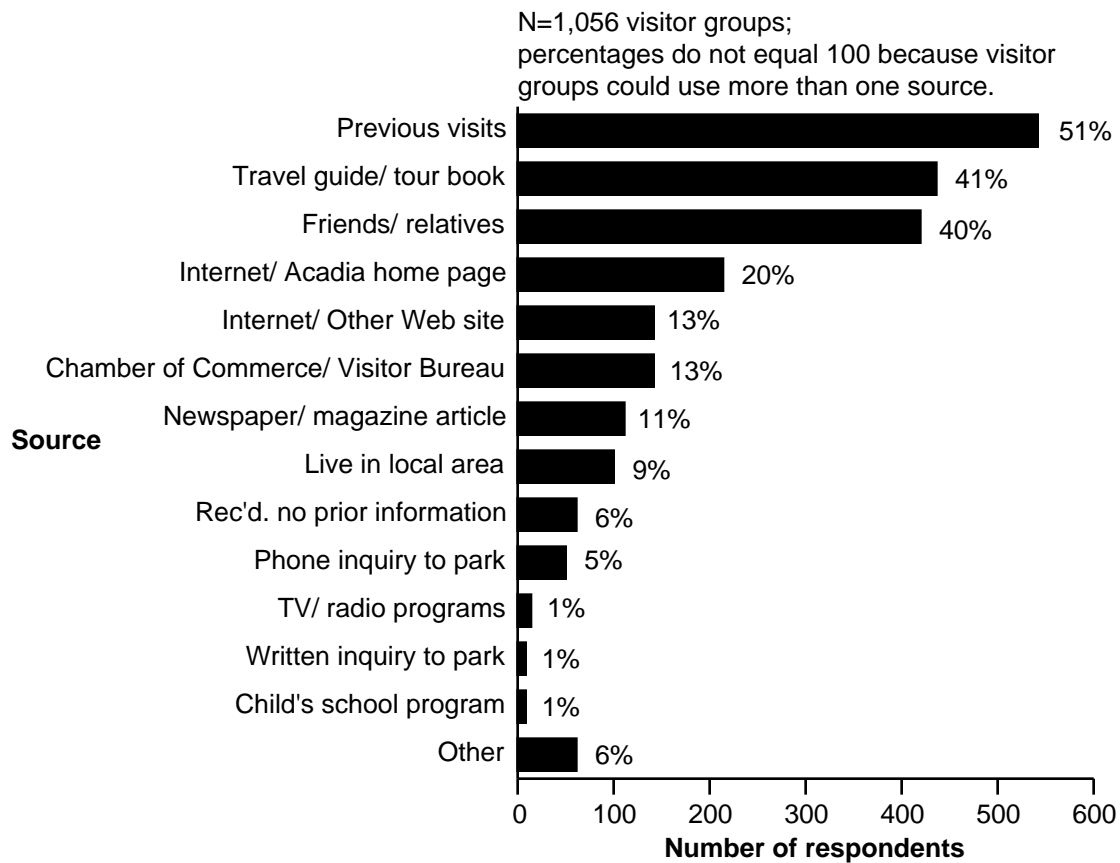
**Table 8: Ways dogs interfered with visit**

N=73 comments

How dogs interfered	Number of times mentioned
Unruly dogs ran up to us	19
Afraid of dogs/ afraid dogs would bite	12
Growling/ barking	11
Dog waste	10
Dogs chased bicycles/ ran in front of bicycles	3
Dogs swimming in lake	3
Dogs swimming in drinking water lakes/ ponds	2
Dogs pooped in our campsite	2
Dogs chased birds	2
Other comments	9

### Sources of information

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the sources from which they had received information about Acadia National Park prior to their visit. The most common sources of information were previous visits (51%), travel guides/ tour books (41%), and friends and/ or relatives (40%), as shown in Figure 18. Six percent of visitor groups received no information prior to their visit. "Other" sources of information used by visitor groups included national park books, from living in area, AAA, maps, tourist information centers, and hotel literature.

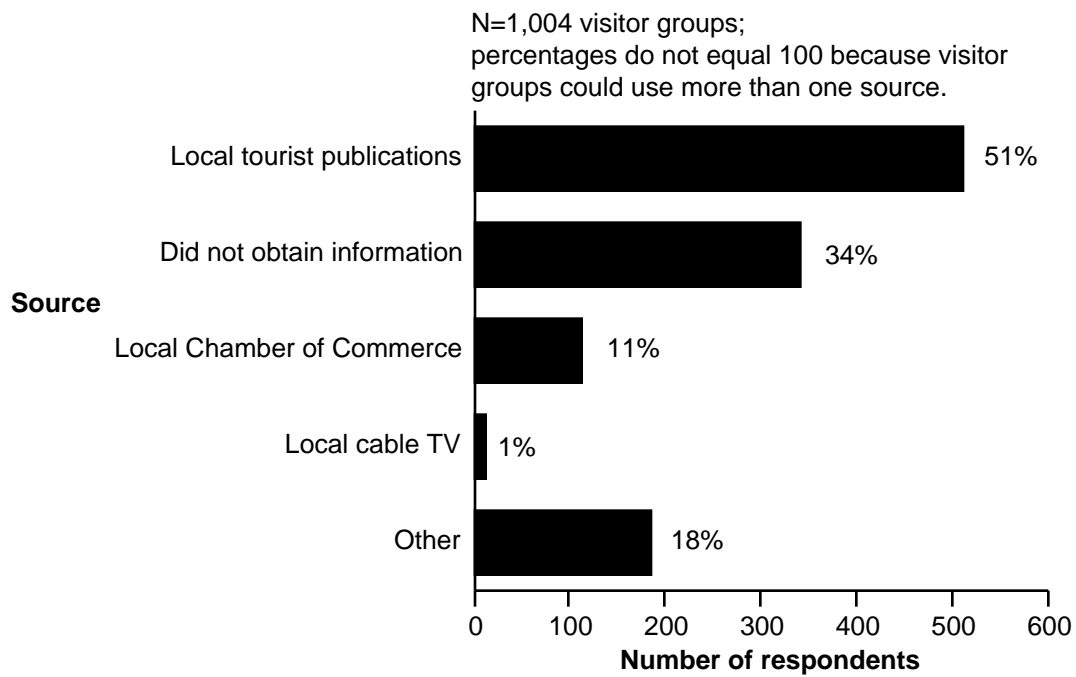


**Figure 18: Sources of information used by visitors**



Visitors were asked what sources outside of Acadia National Park they used to obtain park information during this trip. The most common source was local tourist publications (51%), as shown in Figure 19. Over one-third of the visitors (34%) did not obtain information outside the park during their trip. "Other" sources visitors used included local residents, AAA, friends, family, tourist information center, the internet, books, and travel guides.

**Sources of information during trip**

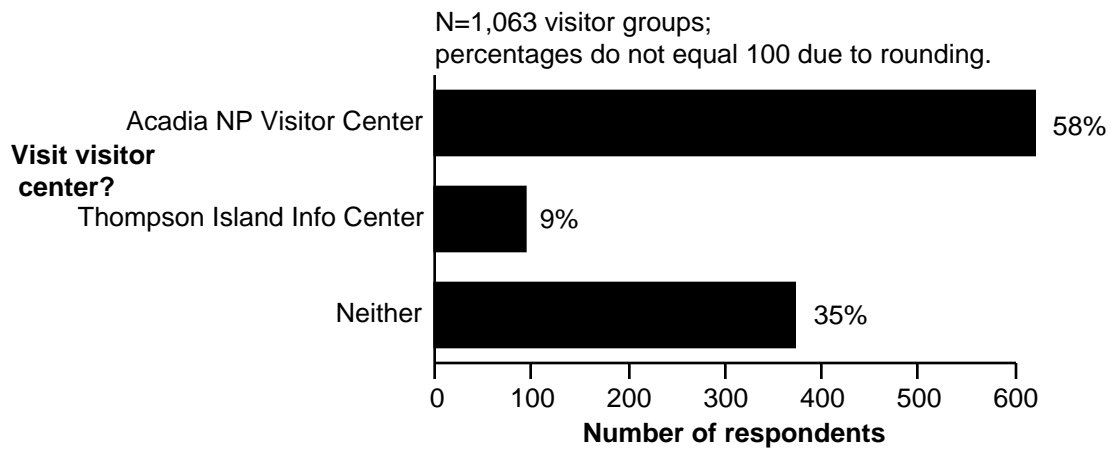


**Figure 19: Sources of information from outside the park**

**Visitor center visits**

Visitor groups were asked if they had visited either of the park visitor centers. As shown in Figure 20, Acadia NP Visitor Center was used by 58% of the visitors and 9% visited the Thompson Island Information Center. Thirty-five percent of the visitors did not go to either visitor center.

Visitors who visited the visitor center(s) were asked to list the day(s) of their trip that they visited. Most visitors stopped at the visitor centers on the first day of their visit (see Table 9). Visitors were asked to list the number of times they visited the visitor center(s), and most visited once (see Table 10).



**Figure 20: Visitor center visits**

**Table 9: Day of trip that visitors went to visitor centers**

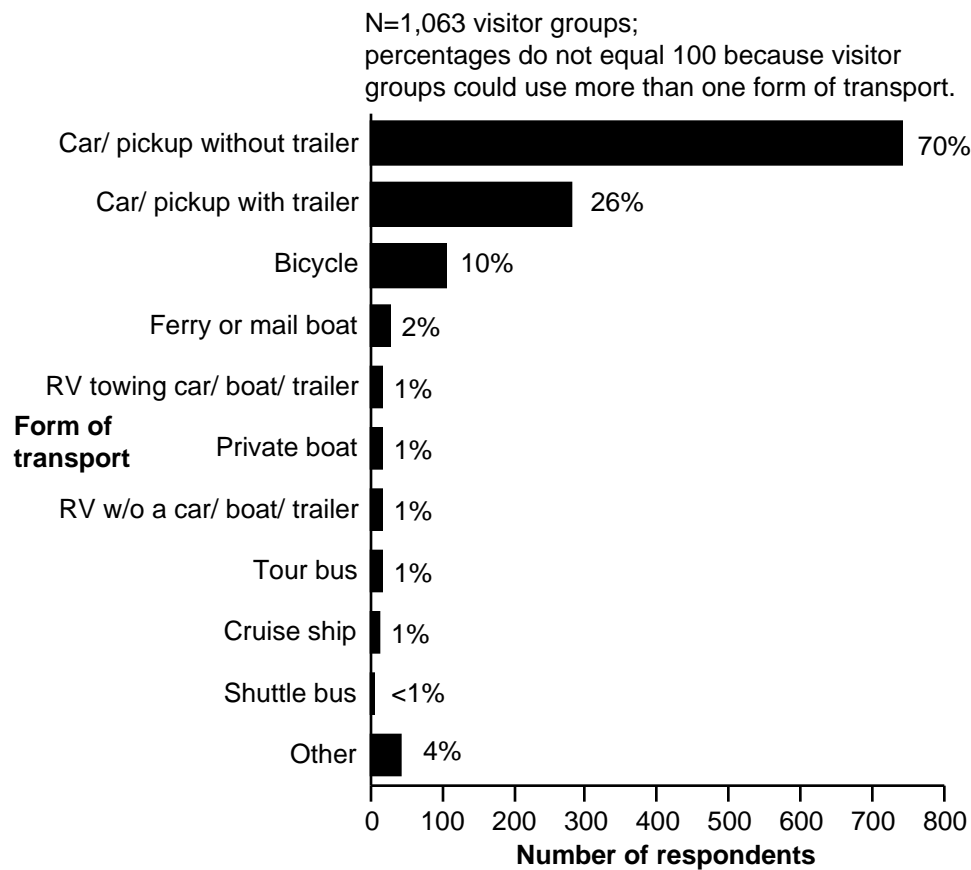
Visitor Center	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Totals
Acadia NP Visitor Center	364 67%	120 22%	28 5%	14 3%	7 1%	10 2%	543 100%
Thompson Island Information Center	61 74%	8 10%	7 9%	0 0%	5 6%	1 1%	82 100%

**Table 10: Number of visits to visitor centers during this trip**

Visitor Center	1 visit	2 visits	3 visits	4 visits	Totals
Acadia NP Visitor Center	524 92%	36 6%	5 1%	3 1%	568 100%
Thompson Island Information Center	81 94%	5 6%	0 0%	0 0%	86 100%

Figure 21 shows the proportions of visitor groups which used various forms of transportation to reach Acadia National Park. The most common forms of transportation were car/ pickup/ van without trailer or camper (70%), car pickup/ van with trailer or camper (26%), and bicycle (10%). The least used form of transportation was the shuttle bus - *Downeast Transportation* (<1%). "Other" forms of transportation that visitor groups used included motorcycles, walking, sea kayaks and airplanes.

**Forms of transportation**



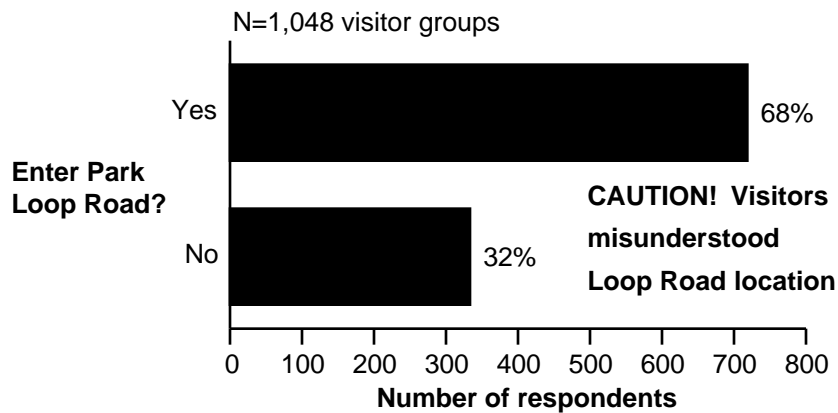
**Figure 21: Forms of transportation**

**Park Loop Road use**

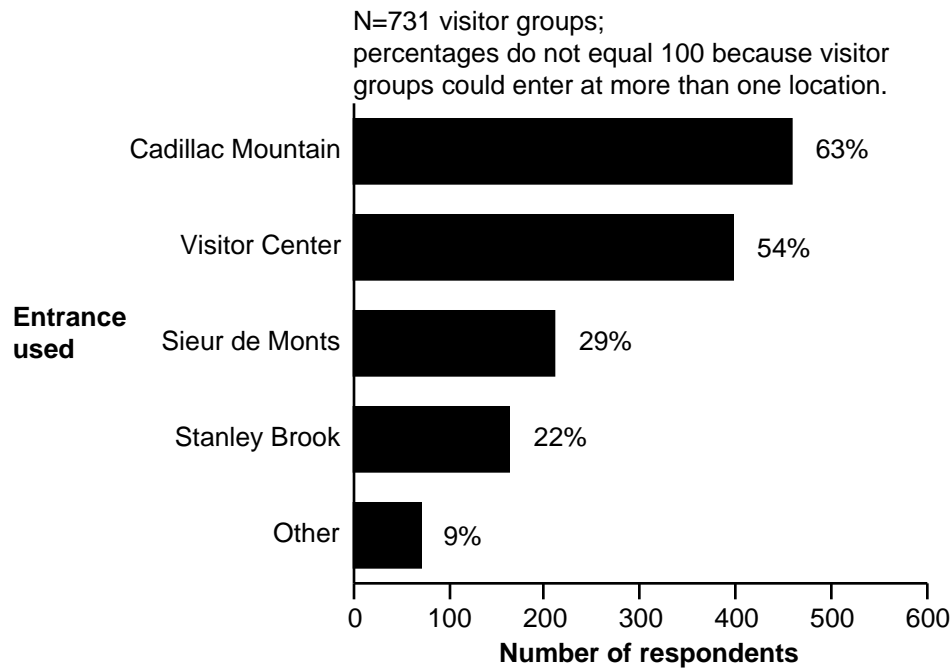
Visitors were asked, "On the day you received this questionnaire, did you enter the Park Loop Road in Acadia National Park with a motor vehicle?" Over two-thirds (68%) said they did (see Figure 22).

The visitors who entered the Park Loop Road were asked which entrance they used and how many times they entered on the day they received their survey questionnaire. Most visitors said they entered at the Cadillac Mountain entrance (63%) and the Visitor Center entrance (54%), as shown in Figure 23. "Other" entrances used included Sand Beach, Seawall, Eagle Lake, Jordan Pond, Otter Cliffs/ Otter Cove, Echo Lake and Schoodic Point. NOTE: Based on their answers, some visitors were confused as to the location of the "Park Loop Road," hence data in Figure 22 should be viewed with caution.

Table 11, which shows the number of times visitors entered at each location on the day they received the questionnaire, should be viewed with caution. Some of the responses were based on time spans much longer than one day.



**Figure 22: Use of Park Loop Road**



**Figure 23: Park Loop Road entrance used**

**Table 11: Number of entries at each Park Loop Road entrance**

N=731 visitor groups

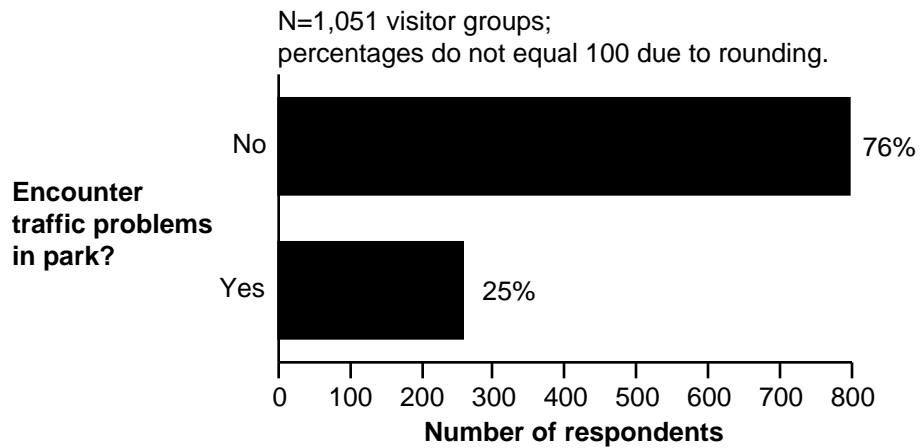
CAUTION! Some groups were confused about the location of the Park Loop Road. Some answers were not based on "the day you received this questionnaire," but on longer time periods.

Entrance	Number of entries					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5 or more	
<b>Cadillac Mountain</b>	260	70	31	5	6	372
<b>Visitor Center</b>	245	57	14	4	7	327
<b>Sieur de Monts</b>	146	21	7	5	3	182
<b>Stanley Brook</b>	100	13	4	4	3	124
<b>Other</b>	31	6	3	3	1	44
<b>Totals</b>	782	167	59	21	20	1049

**Traffic congestion/ parking problem issues**

Visitor groups were asked if they encountered traffic congestion and/ or parking problems in Acadia NP or on Mount Desert Island. In Acadia NP, 76% of the visitors said they did not encounter traffic congestion and/ or parking problems (see Figure 24). The 25% of visitors who encountered problems were asked to identify where those problems were (see Table 12).

On Mount Desert Island, 30% of the visitors encountered traffic or parking problems (see Figure 25). Table 13 shows the locations where they encountered the problems.

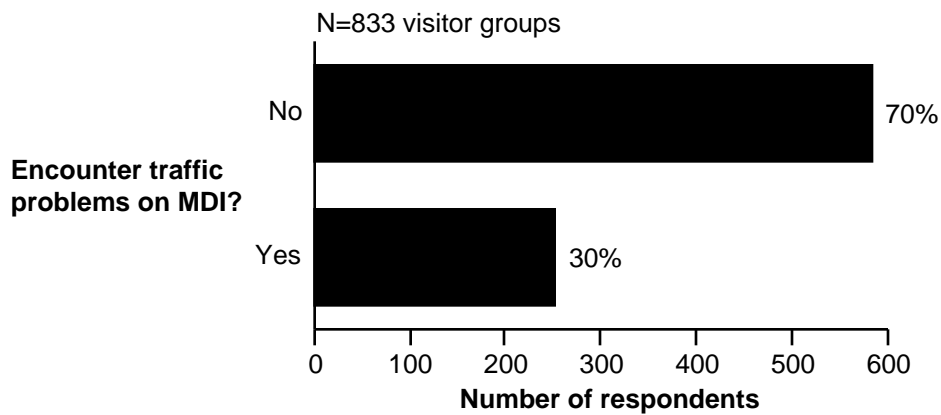


**Figure 24: Proportion of visitors encountering traffic problems in Acadia NP**

**Table 12: Locations of traffic/ parking problems in Acadia NP**

N=321 comments

Location	Number of times mentioned
Sand Beach to Thunder Hole parking	107
Jordan Pond House	80
Park Loop Road	56
Cadillac Mt. road/ parking	16
Eagle Lake	10
Bubbles parking	9
Echo Lake	6
Trailhead parking	5
Seawall area	5
Visitor center parking	4
Whole park	3
Otter Point	3
Sieur de Monts	2
Bass Harbor Lighthouse parking	2
Other locations	13



**Figure 25: Proportion of visitors encountering traffic problems on Mount Desert Island (MDI)**

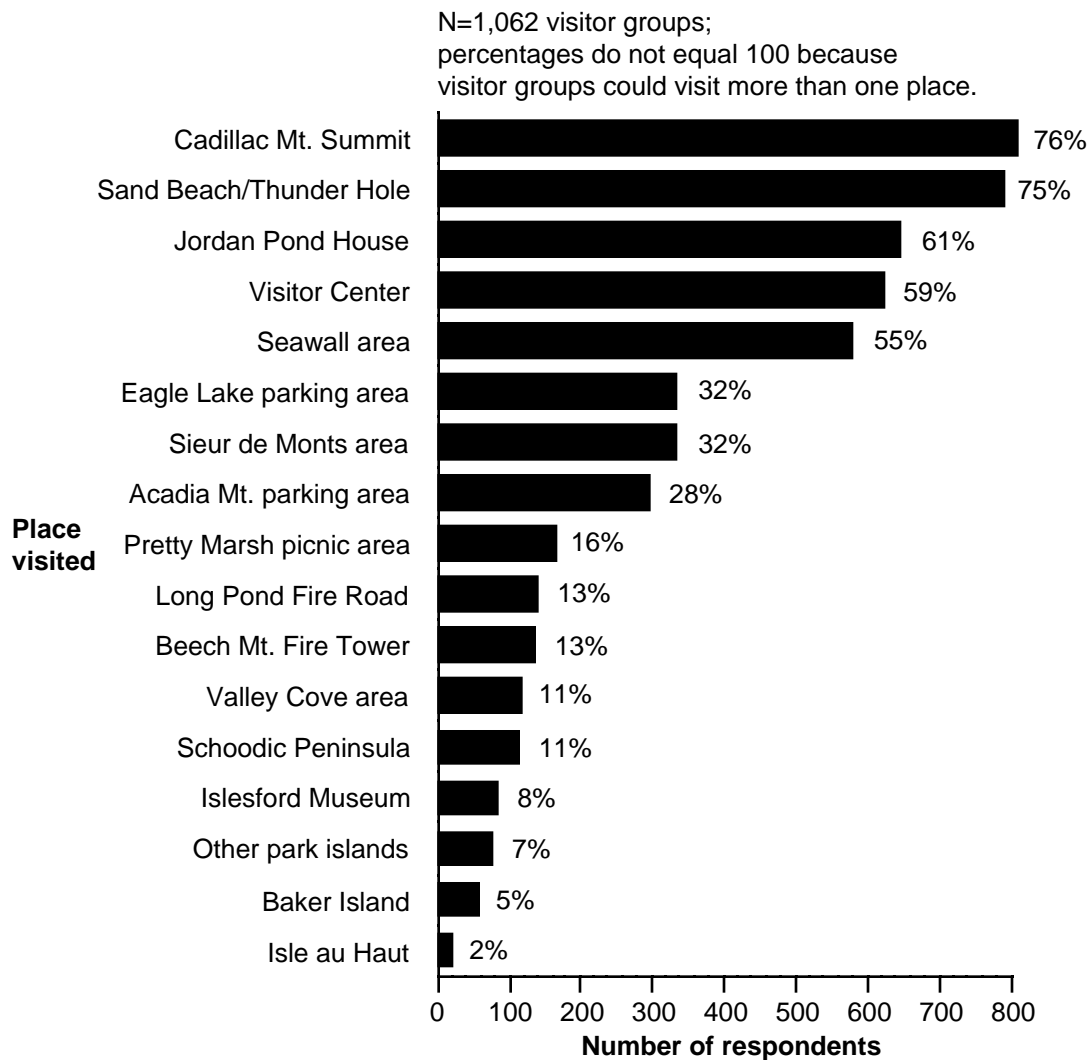
**Table 13: Locations of traffic/ parking problems on Mount Desert Island**

N=237 comments

Location	Number of times mentioned
Downtown Bar Harbor	135
Bar Harbor parking	35
Southwest Harbor	14
Northeast Harbor	12
Route 3	10
Whole island	8
Lack of handicapped parking in Bar Harbor	3
Somesville	3
Intersection of Bar Harbor/ Somesville Road	3
Route 198 at North Somes Sound	2
Tour buses idling in Bar Harbor	2
Intersection of Routes 3/ 198/ 102	2
Ferry terminal	2
Other locations	6

## Places visited

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the places that they had visited during their visit to Acadia National Park. The most commonly visited places were Cadillac Mt. summit (76%), Sand Beach/ Thunder Hole (75%), Jordan Pond House and area (61%), visitor center (59%) and the Seawall area (55%), as shown in Figure 26. The least visited place was Isle au Haut (2%).

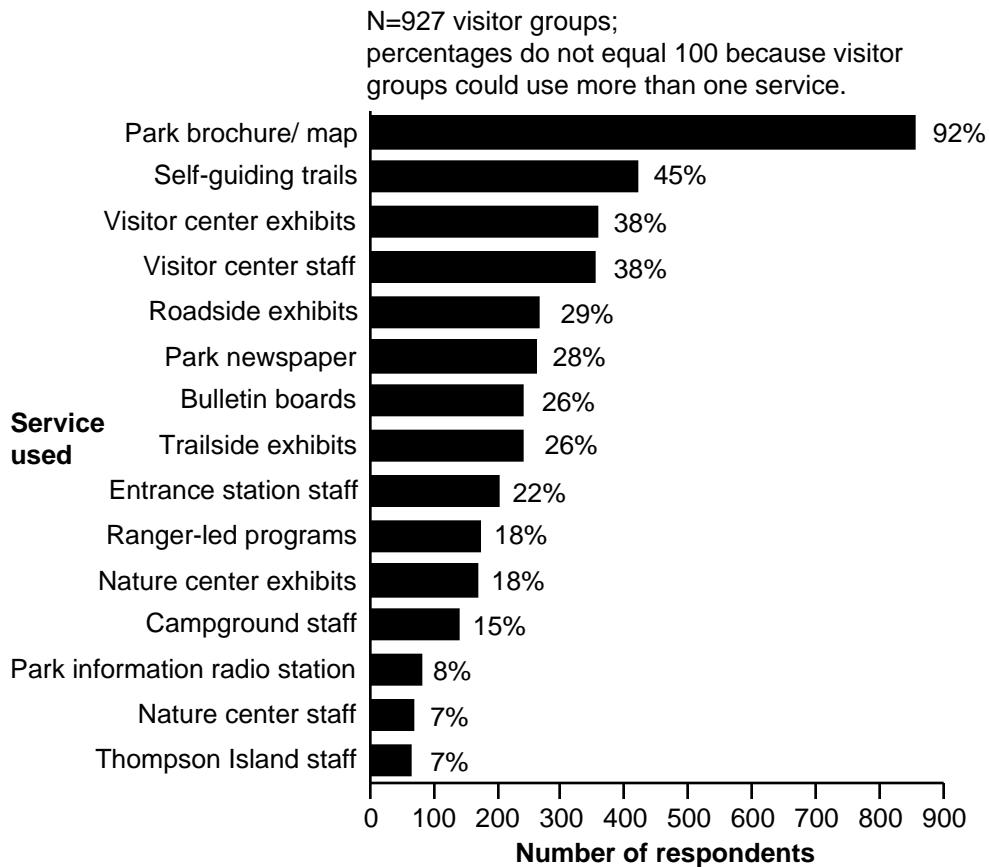


**Figure 26: Places visited**



Visitor groups were asked to note the park information services they used during their visit to Acadia National Park. The most commonly used services were the park brochure/map (92%), self-guiding trails (45%), visitor center exhibits (38%) and the visitor center staff (38%), as shown in Figure 27. The least used services were the nature center staff and Thompson Island Information Center staff (each 7%).

**Information services: use, importance and quality**



**Figure 27: Information services used**

Visitor groups rated the importance and quality of each of the information services they used. The following five point scales were used in the questionnaire:

<p><b>IMPORTANCE</b>            5=extremely important            4=very important            3=moderately important            2=somewhat important            1=not important</p>	<p><b>QUALITY</b>            5=very good            4=good            3=average            2=poor            1=very poor</p>
--	--

Figure 28 shows the average importance and quality ratings for information services. An average score was determined for each service based on ratings provided by visitors who used that service. This was done for both importance and quality, and the results are plotted on the grid shown in Figure 28. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality, except for the park radio information station, which received a below average importance rating.

Figures 29-43 show the importance ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest proportion of "extremely important" or "very important" ratings included park brochure/ map (92%), self-guided trails (87%), ranger-led programs (81%) and visitor center staff (81%). The highest proportion of "not important" ratings was for the park travelers information radio station (18%).

Figures 44-58 show the quality ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest proportion of "very good" or "good" ratings included information from visitor center staff (92%), ranger-led programs (91%) and Thompson Island Information Center staff (90%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for the park travelers information radio station (11%).

Figure 59 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services.

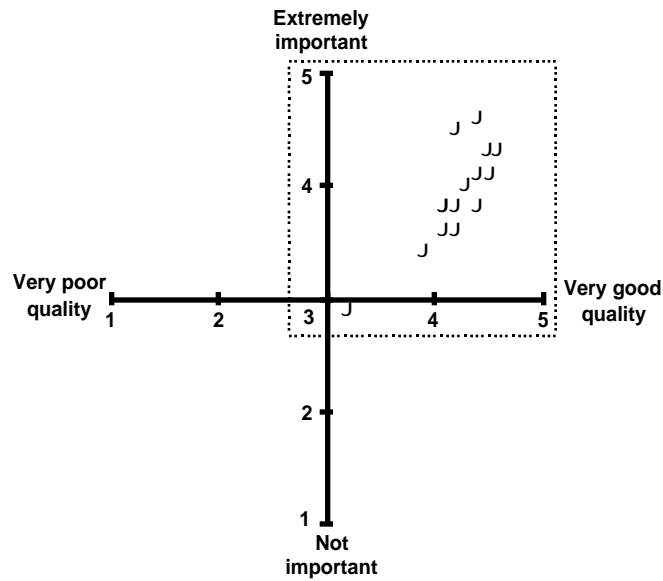


Figure 28: Average ratings of service importance and quality

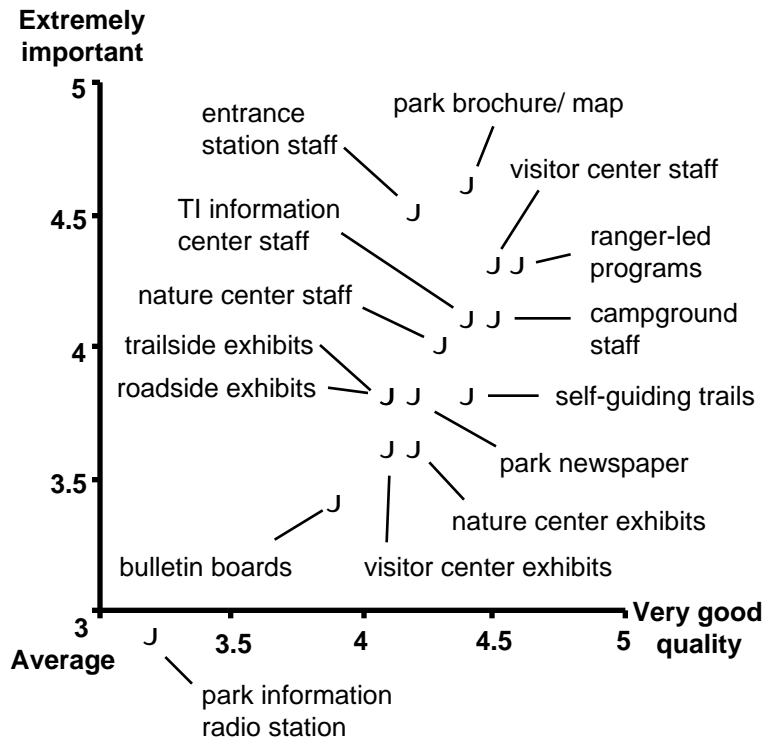
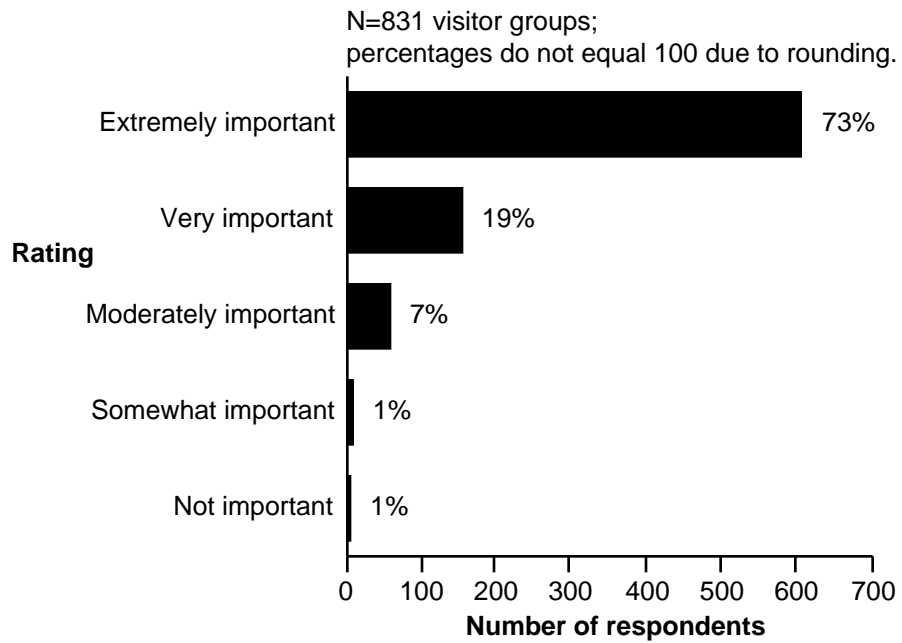
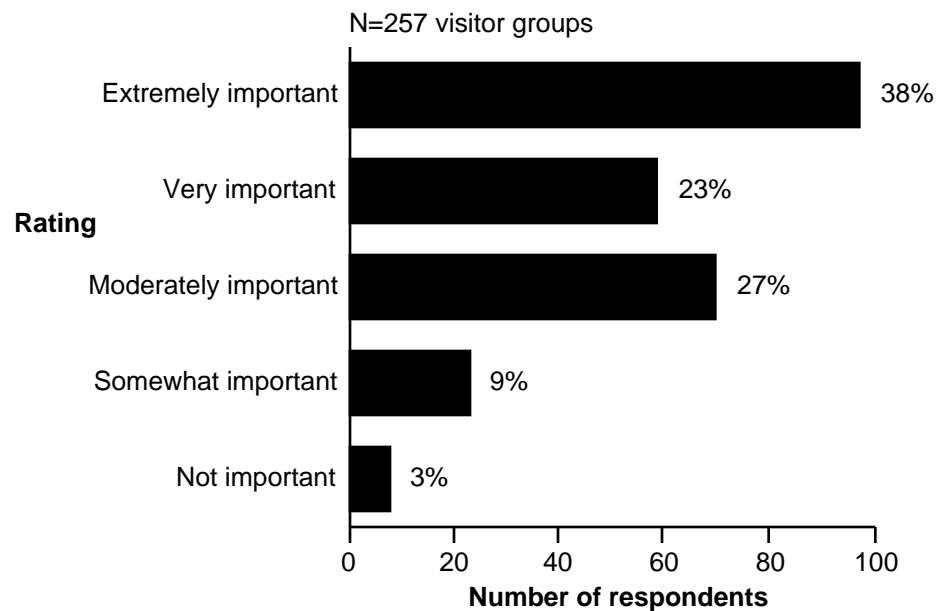


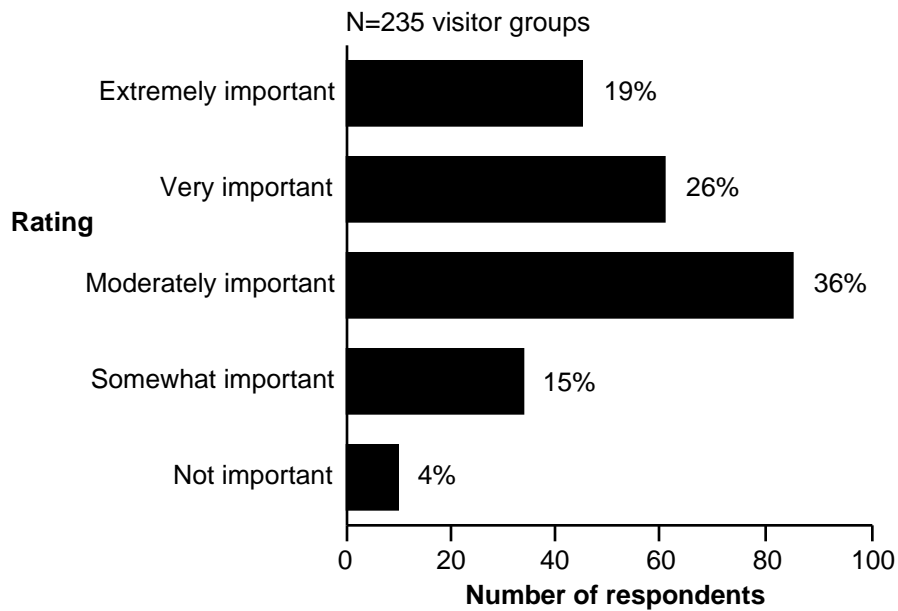
Figure 28: Detail



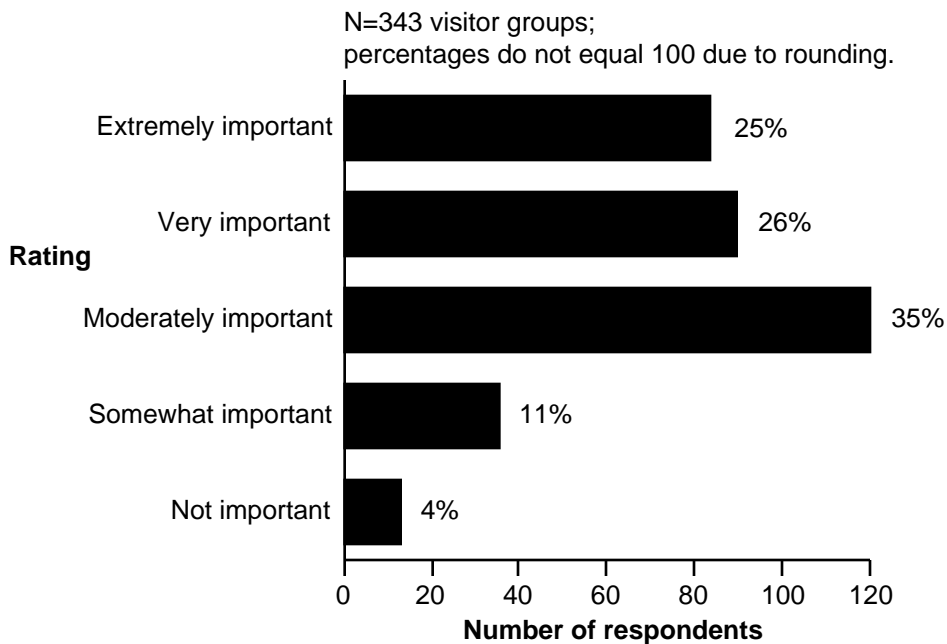
**Figure 29: Importance of park brochure/map**



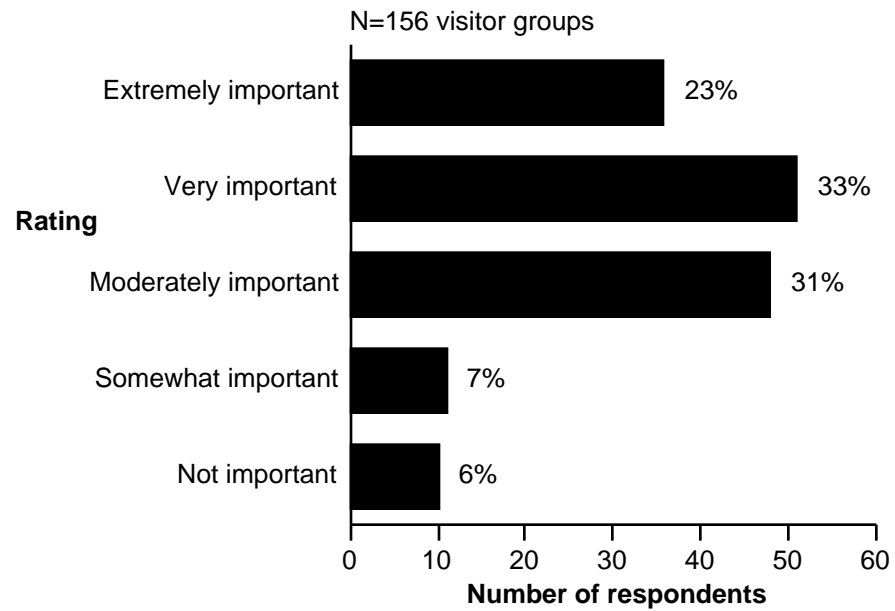
**Figure 30: Importance of park newspaper: *Beaver Log***



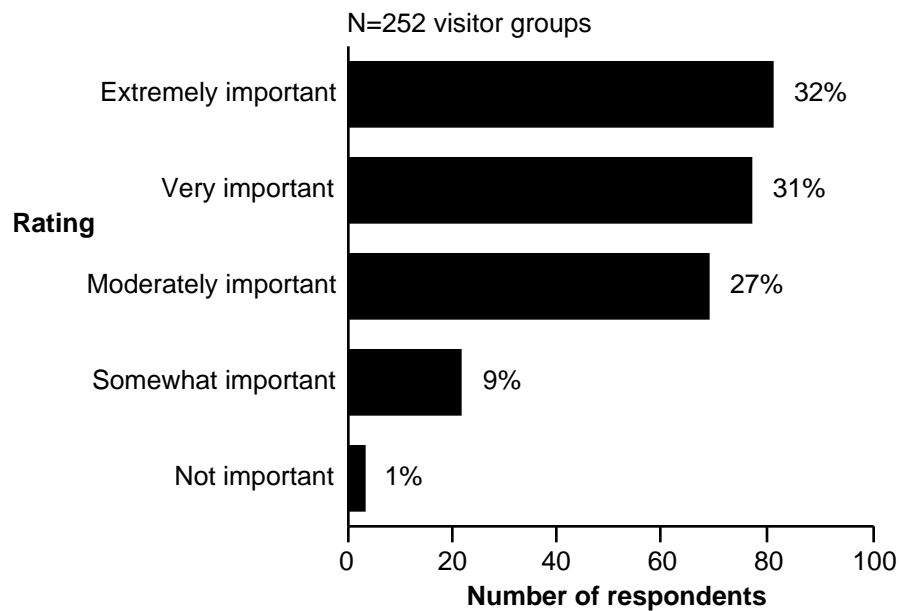
**Figure 31: Importance of bulletin boards**



**Figure 32: Importance of visitor center exhibits**

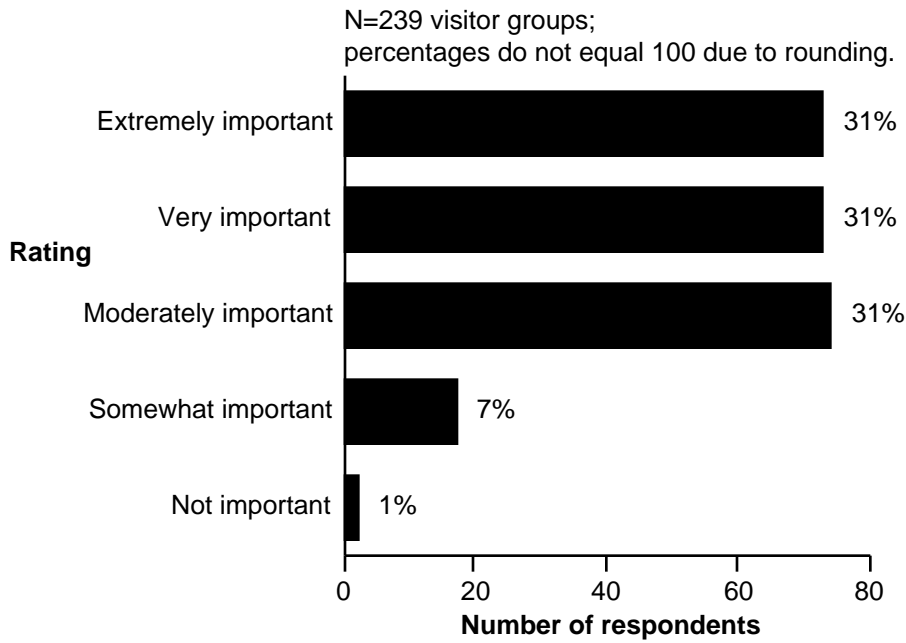


**Figure 33: Importance of nature center exhibits**

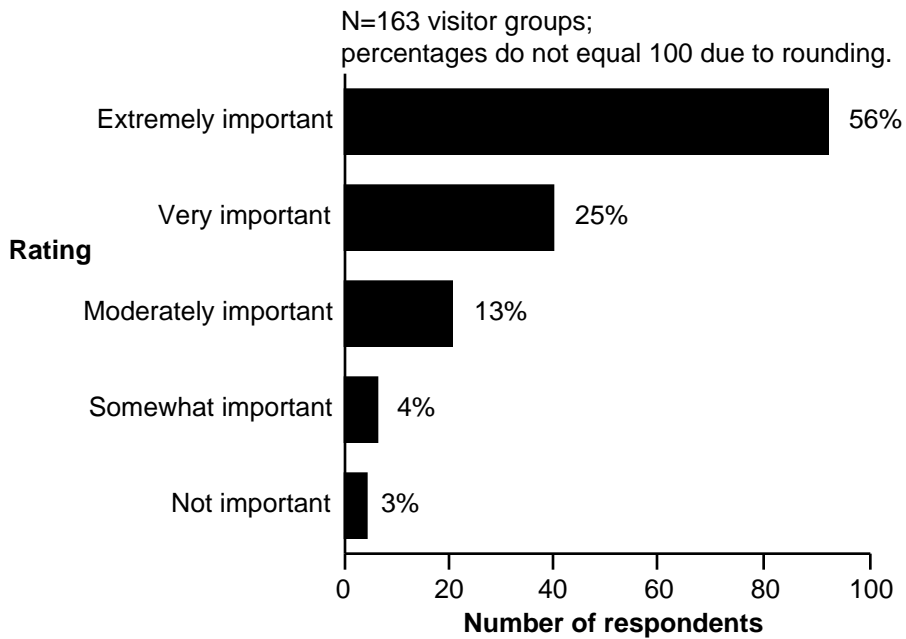


**Figure 34: Importance of roadside exhibits**

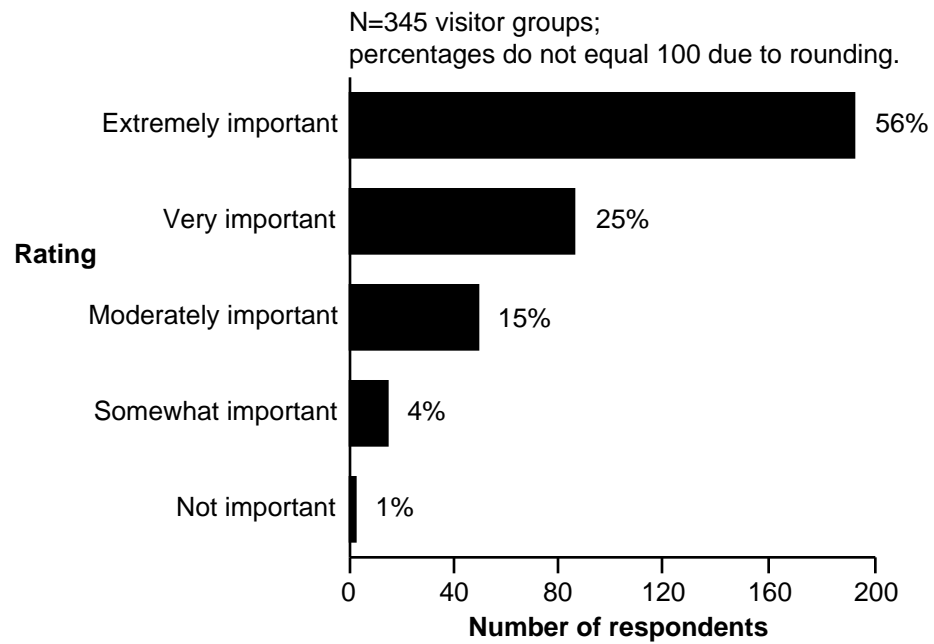
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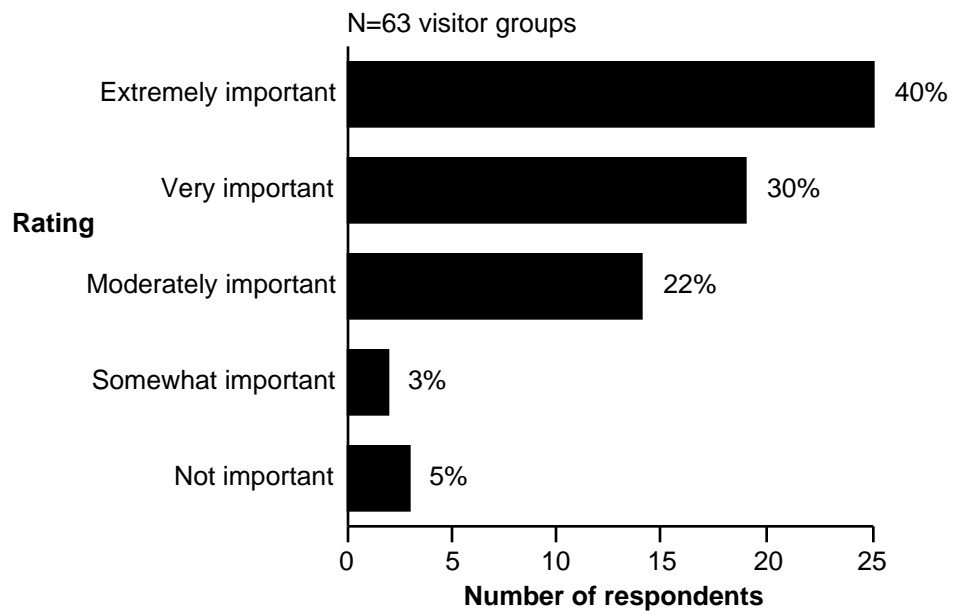
**Figure 35: Importance of trailside exhibits**



**Figure 36: Importance of ranger-led programs/ walks**

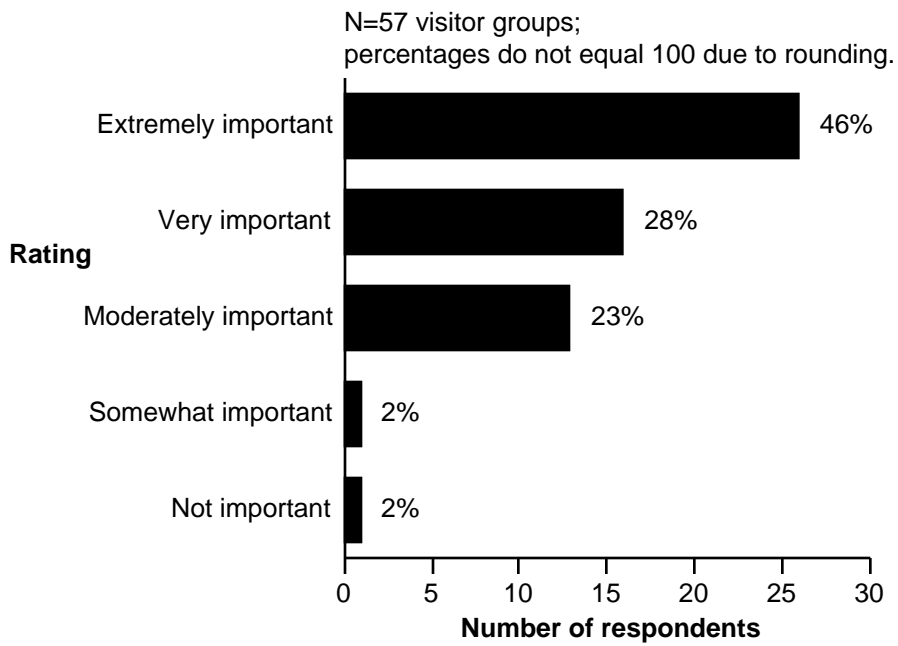


**Figure 37: Importance of visitor center staff**

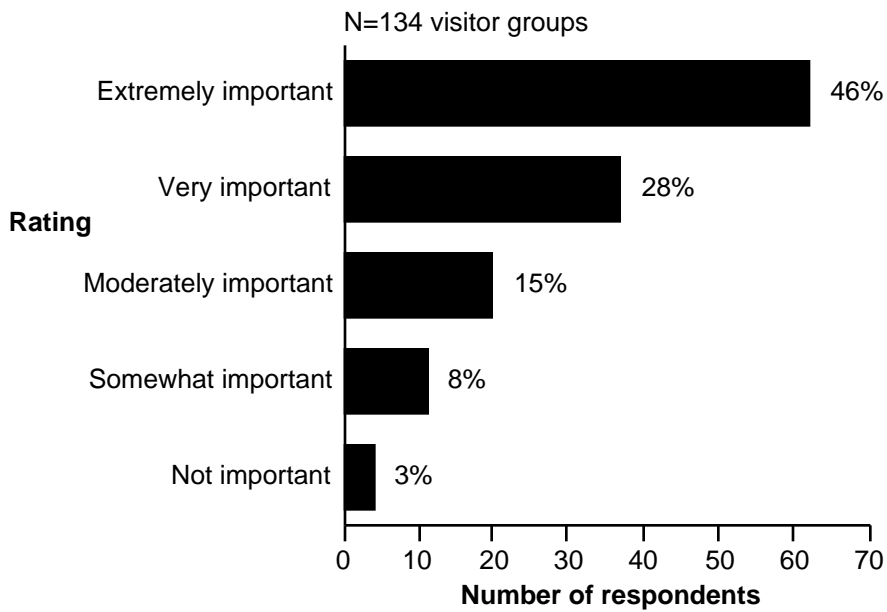


**Figure 38: Importance of nature center staff**

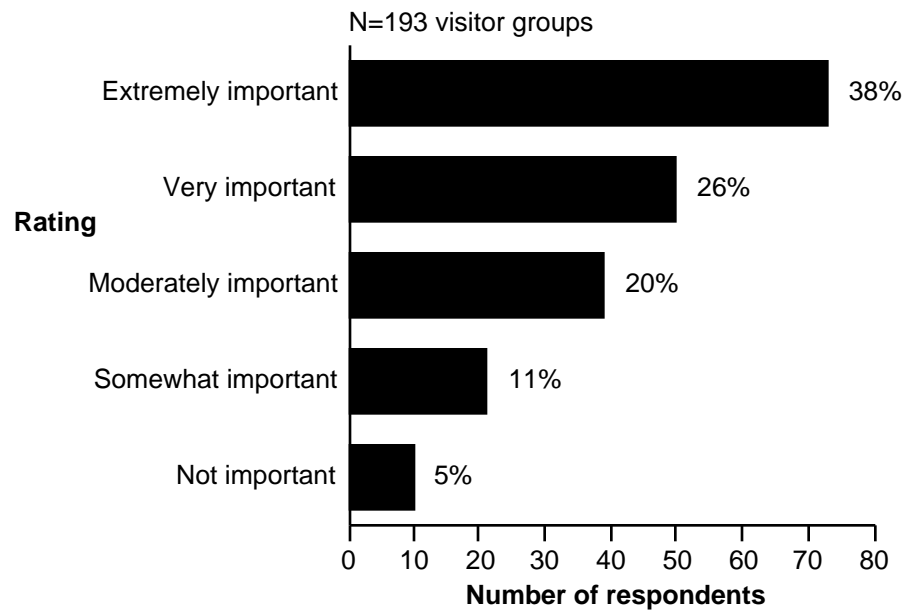




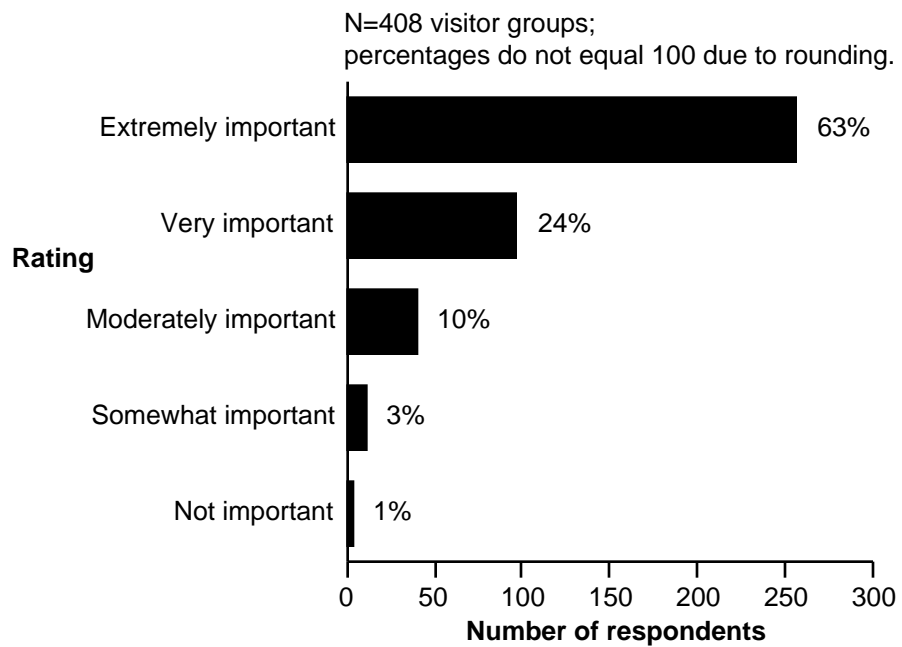
**Figure 39: Importance of Thompson Island Information Center staff**



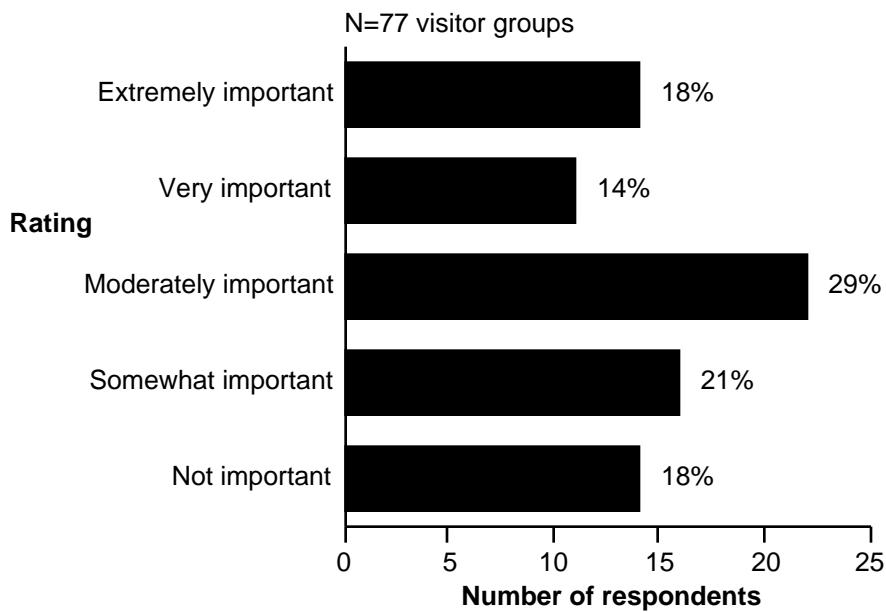
**Figure 40: Importance of campground staff**



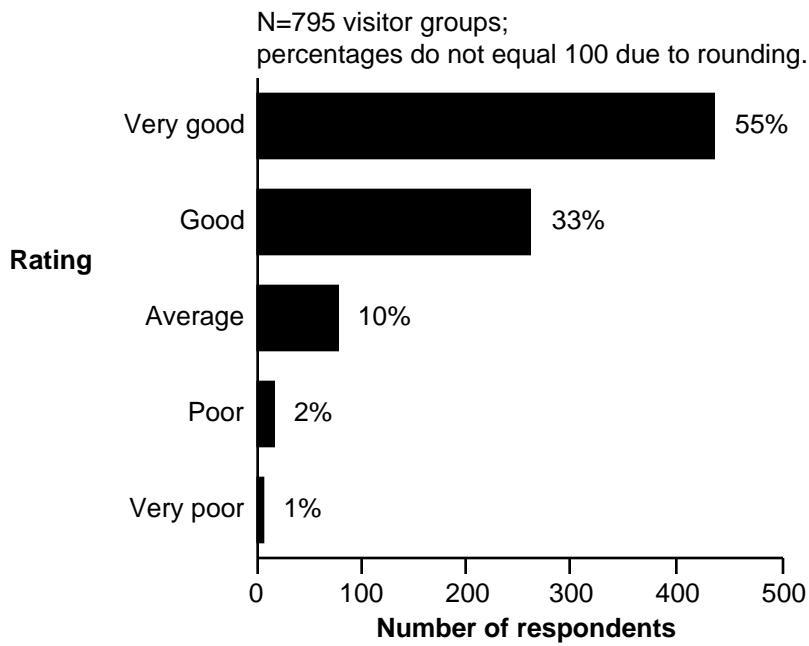
**Figure 41: Importance of entrance station staff**



**Figure 42: Importance of self-guiding trails**



**Figure 43: Importance of park travelers information radio station (1610 AM)**



**Figure 44: Quality of park brochure/map**

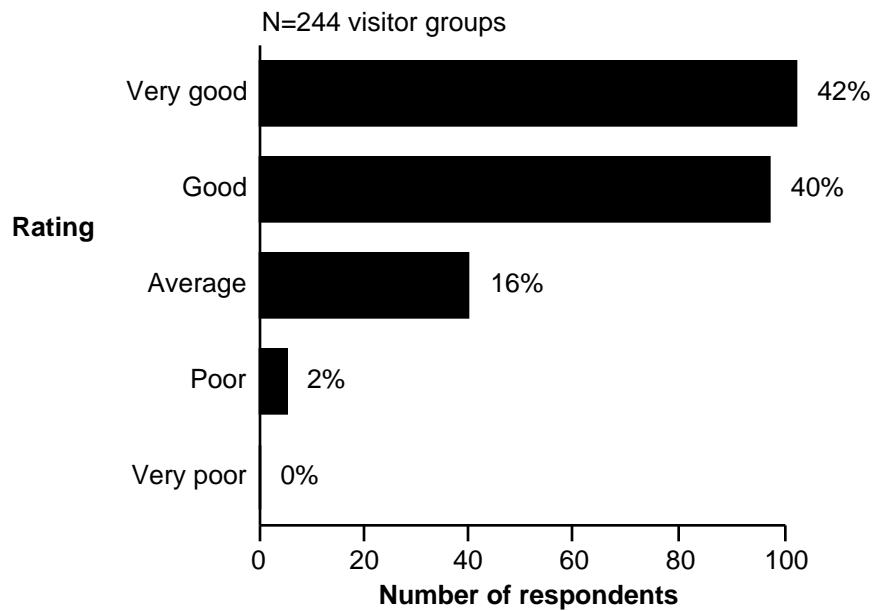


Figure 45: Quality of park newspaper: *Beaver Log*

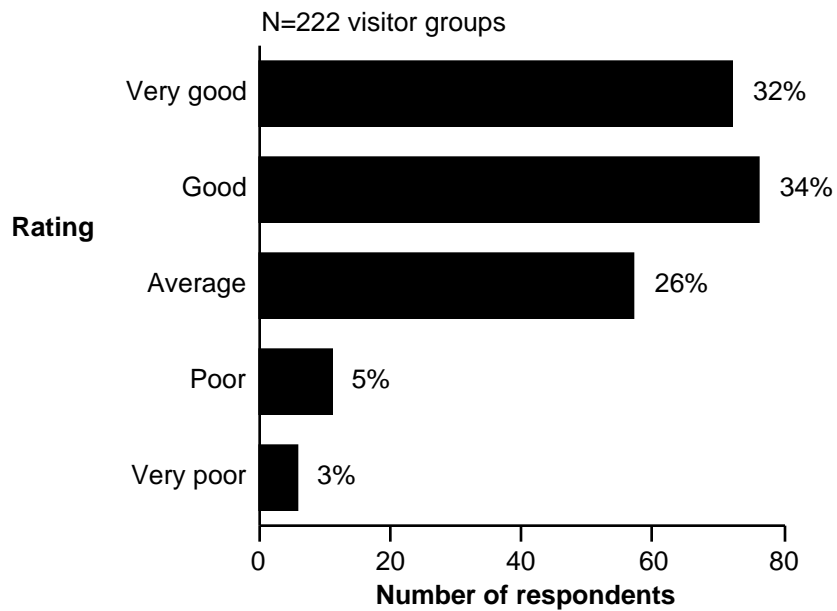
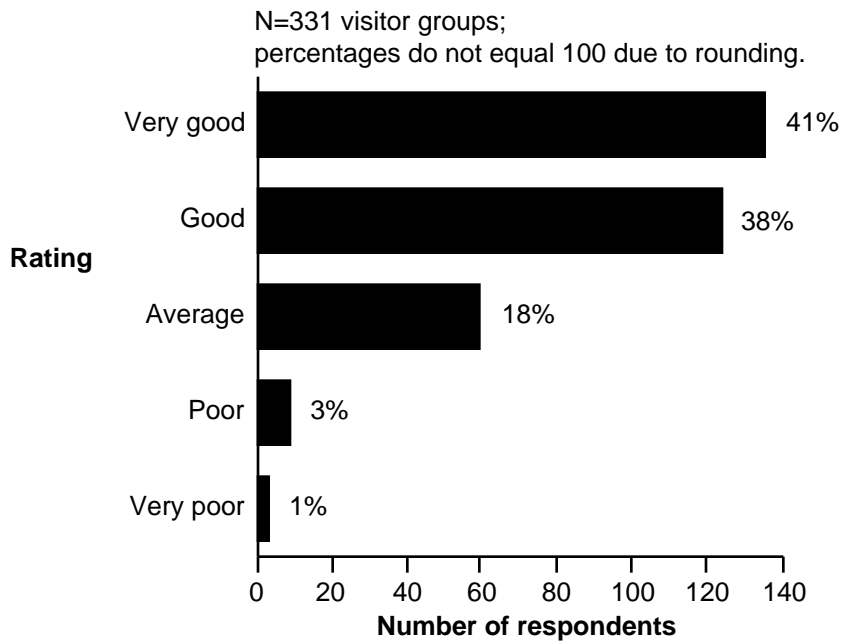
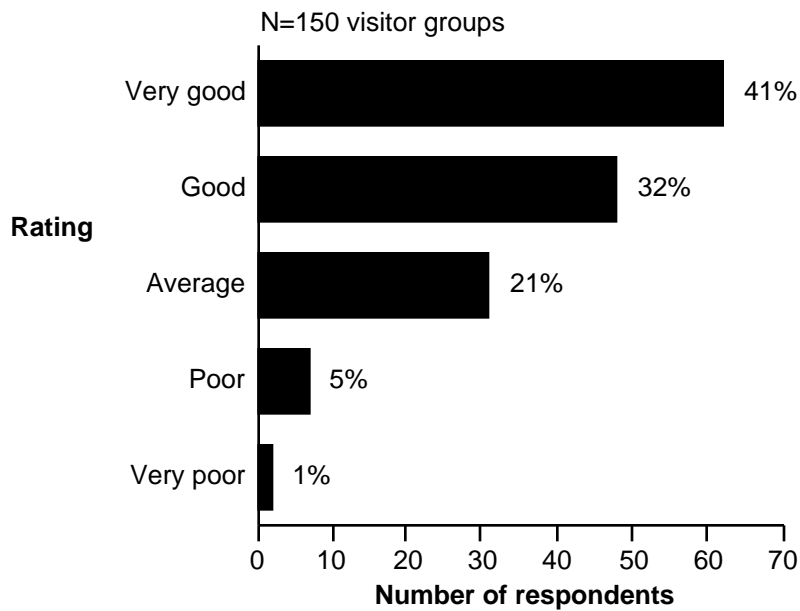


Figure 46: Quality of bulletin boards

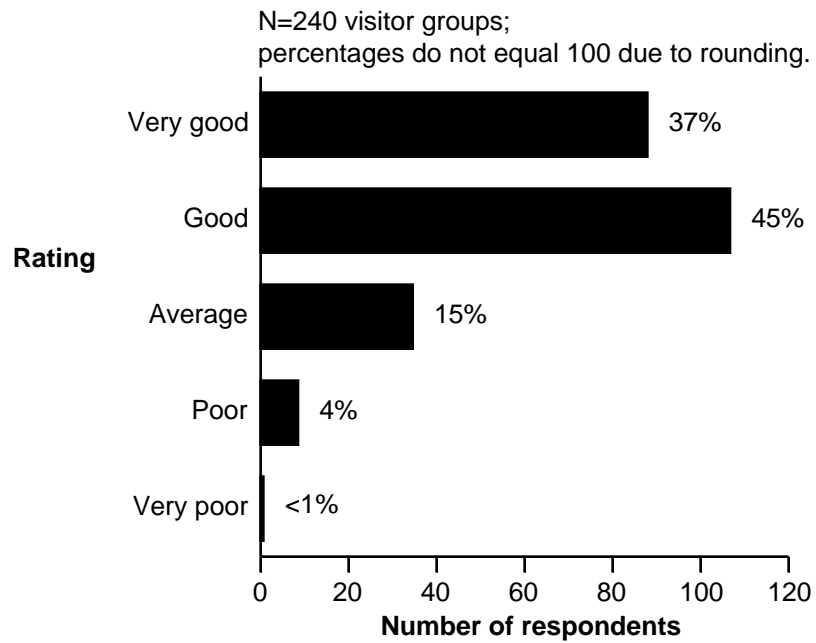
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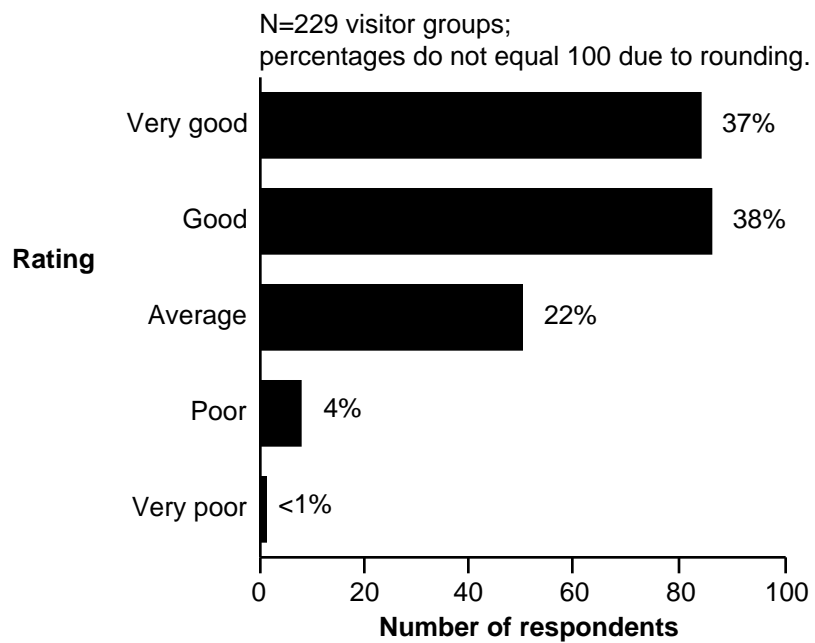
**Figure 47: Quality of visitor center exhibits**



**Figure 48: Quality of nature center exhibits**

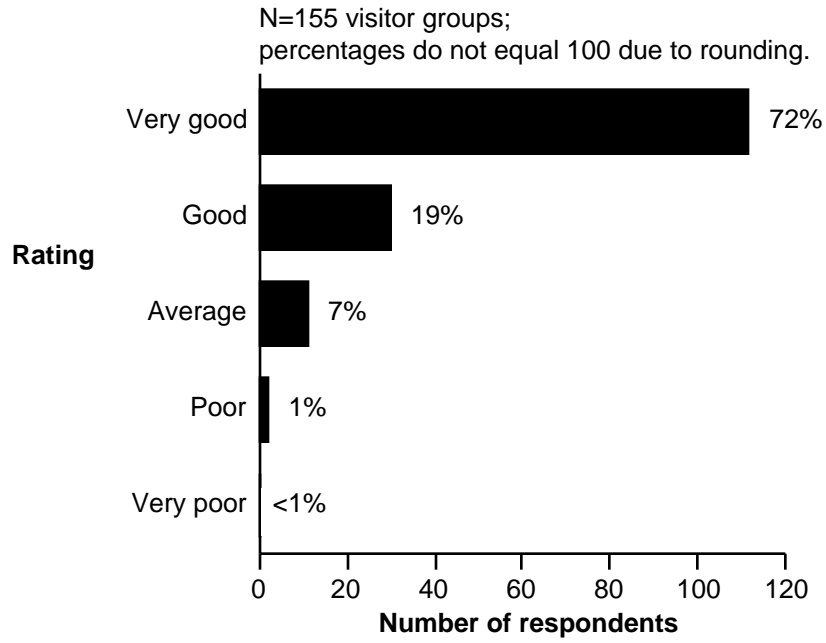


**Figure 49: Quality of roadside exhibits**

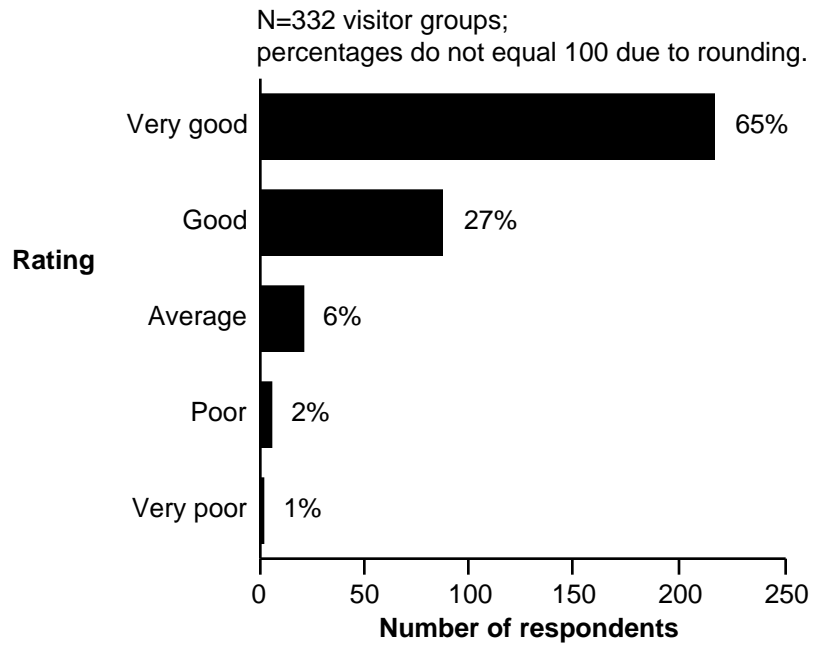


**Figure 50: Quality of trailside exhibits**

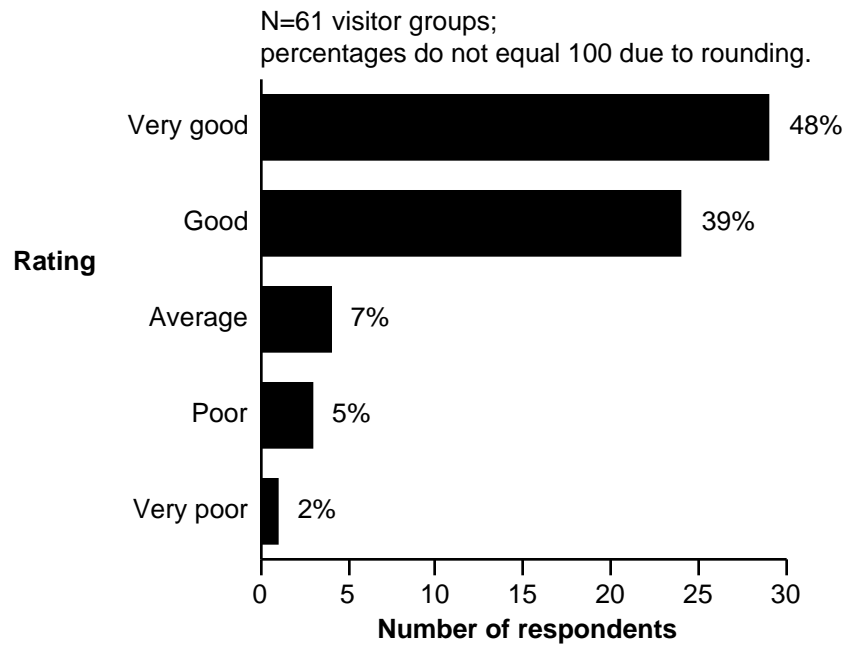
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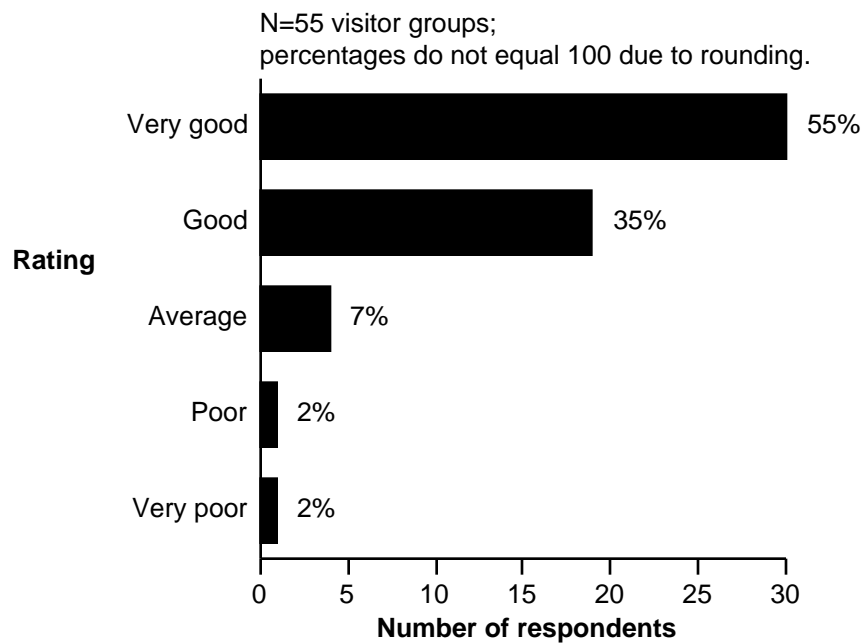
**Figure 51: Quality of ranger-led programs/ walks**



**Figure 52: Quality of visitor center staff**



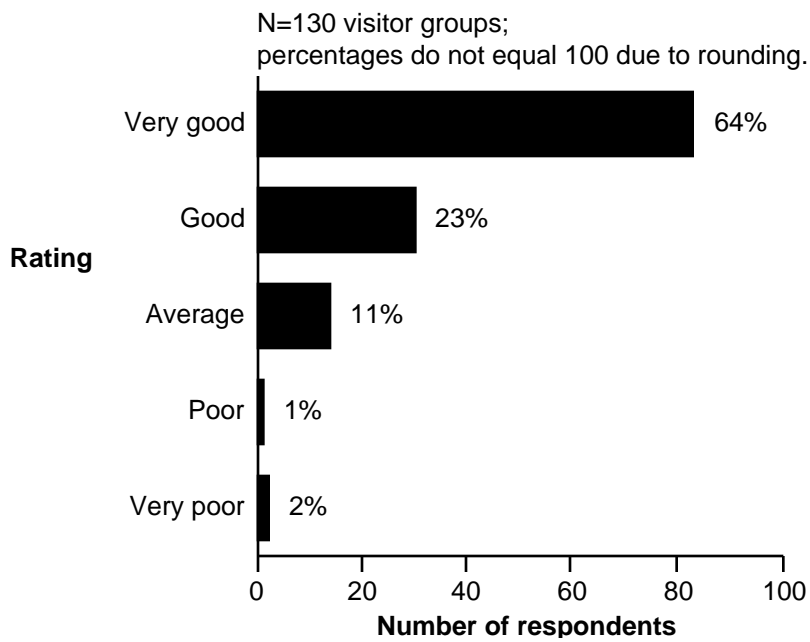
**Figure 53: Quality of nature center staff**



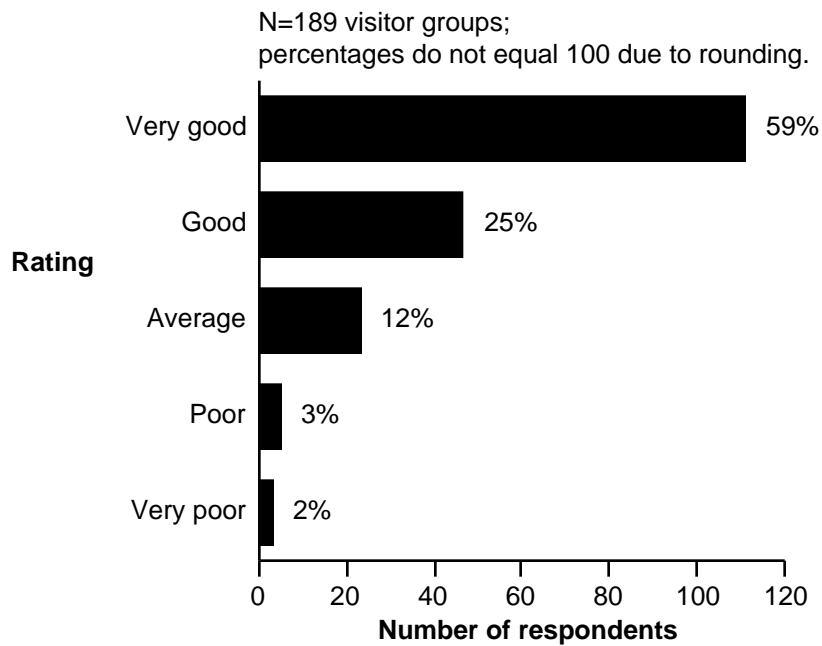
**Figure 54: Quality of Thompson Island Information Center staff**

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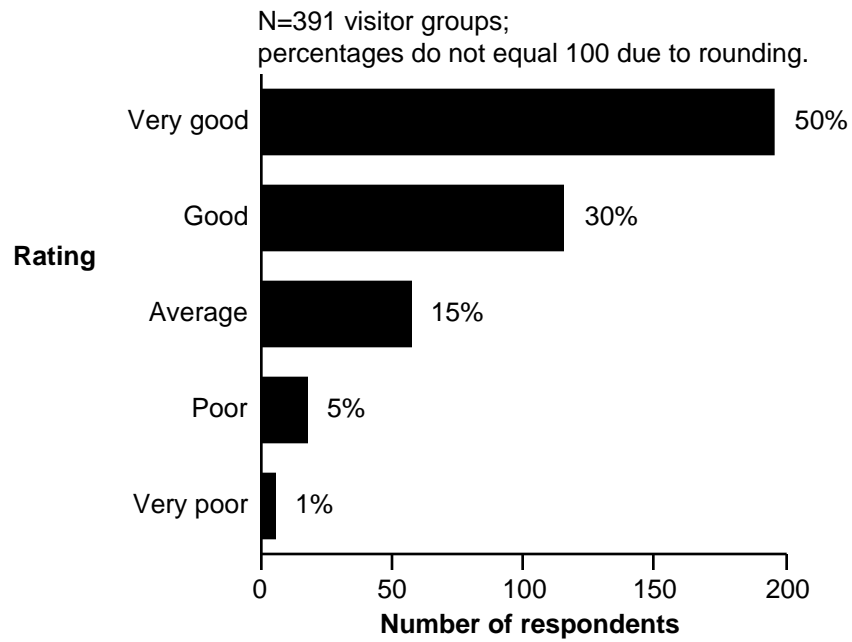




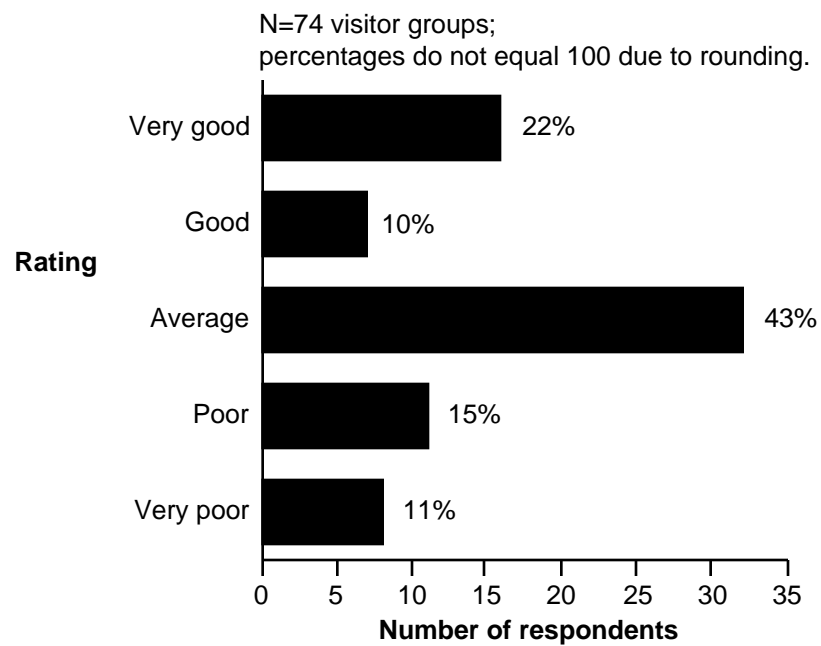
**Figure 55: Quality of campground staff**



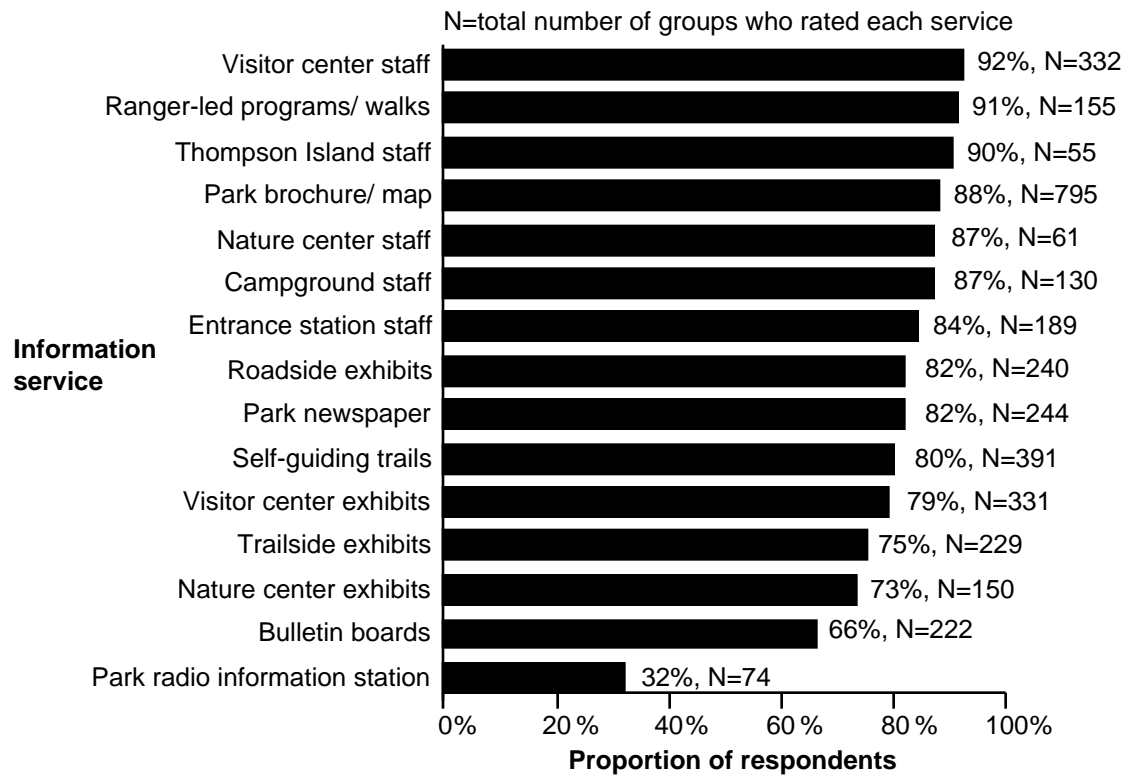
**Figure 56: Quality of entrance station staff**



**Figure 57: Quality of self-guiding trails**



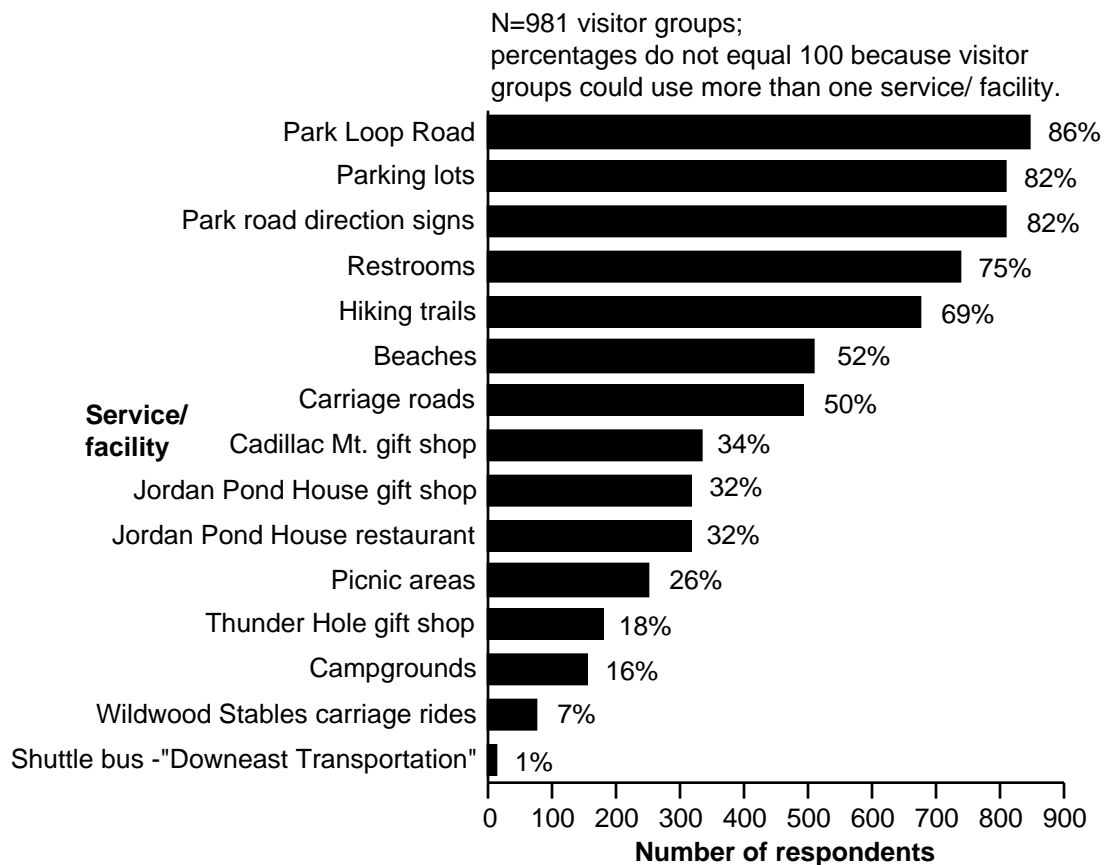
**Figure 58: Quality of park travelers information radio station  
(1610 AM)**



**Figure 59: Combined proportions of “very good” or “good” quality ratings for information services**

**Visitor services  
and facilities:  
use, importance  
and quality**

Visitor groups were asked to note the park services and facilities they used during their visit to Acadia National Park. As shown in Figure 60, the services that were most commonly used by visitor groups were the Park Loop Road (86%), parking lots (82%), park road directional signs (82%), restrooms (75%) and hiking trails (69%). The least used service was the shuttle bus - *Downeast Transportation* (1%).



**Figure 60: Services and facilities used**

Visitor groups rated the importance and quality of each of the services and facilities they used. The following five point scales were used in the questionnaire:

IMPORTANCE
5=extremely important
4=very important
3=moderately important
2=somewhat important
1=not important

QUALITY
5=very good
4=good
3=average
2=poor
1=very poor

Figure 61 shows the average importance and quality ratings for visitor services and facilities. An average score was determined for each service and facility based on ratings provided by visitors who used that service or facility. This was done for both importance and quality, and the results are plotted on the grid shown in Figure 61. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. It should be noted that the shuttle bus (*Downeast Transportation*) was not rated by enough visitor groups to provide reliable data.

Figures 62-76 show the importance ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual services and facilities. Those services and facilities receiving the highest proportion of "extremely important" or "very important" ratings included campgrounds (95%), hiking trails (95%), restrooms (94%) and Park Loop Road (93%). The highest proportion of "not important" ratings was for Cadillac Mt. Gift Shop (12%).

Figures 77-91 show the quality ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest proportion of "very good" or "good" ratings included the Park Loop Road (92%), hiking trails (91%) and carriage roads (90%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for restrooms (4%).

Figure 92 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services.

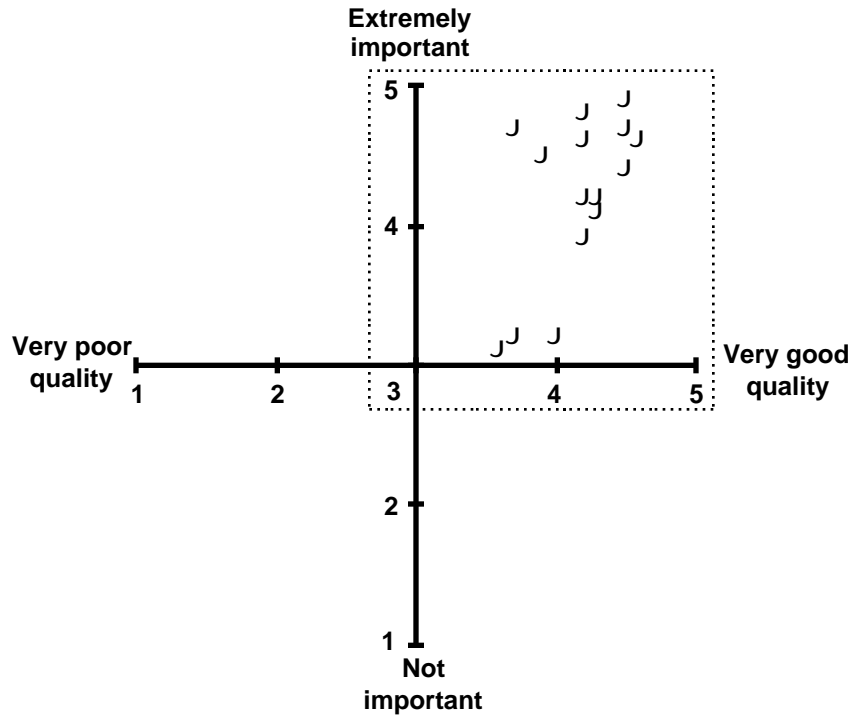


Figure 61: Average ratings of service and facility importance and quality

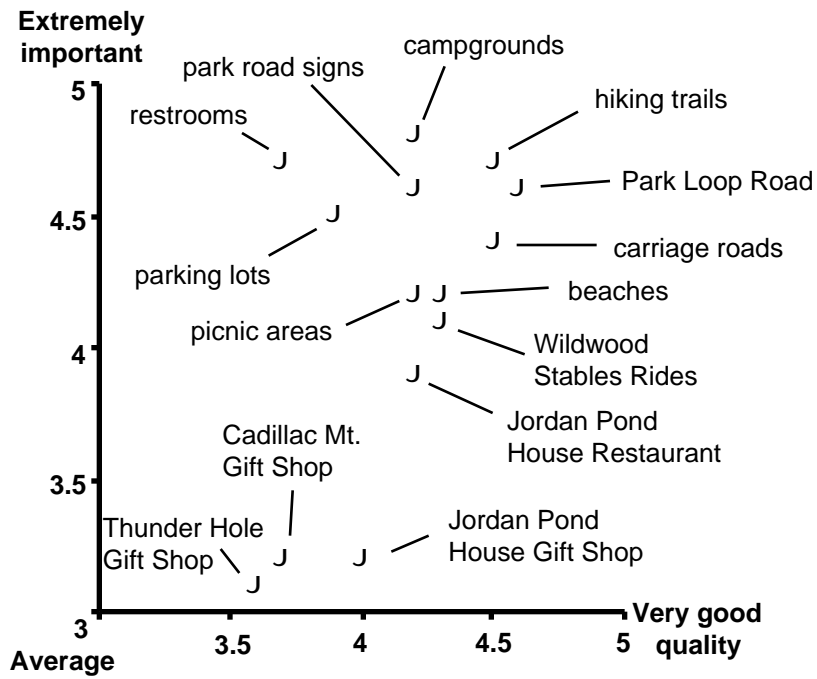
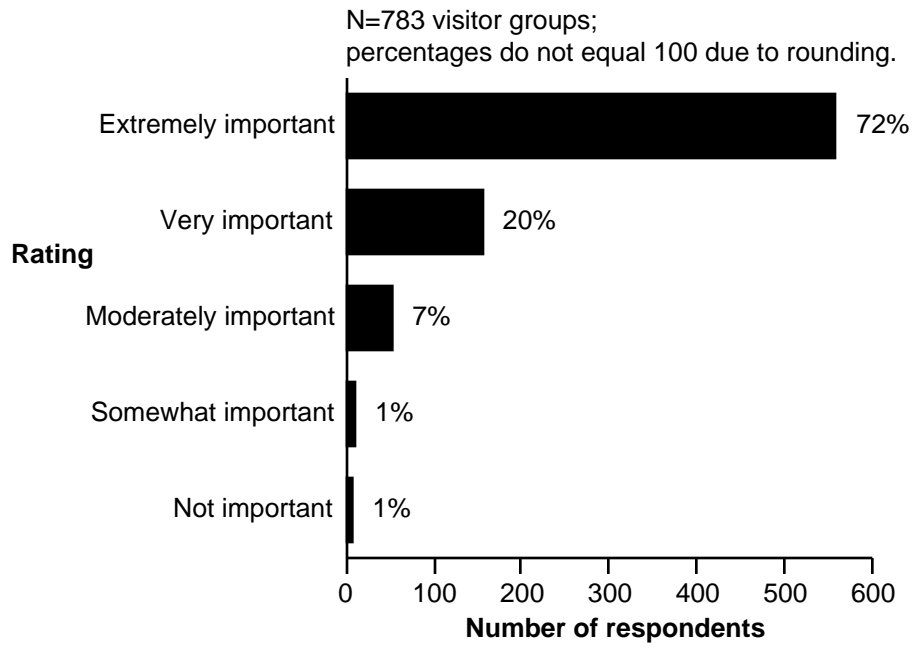
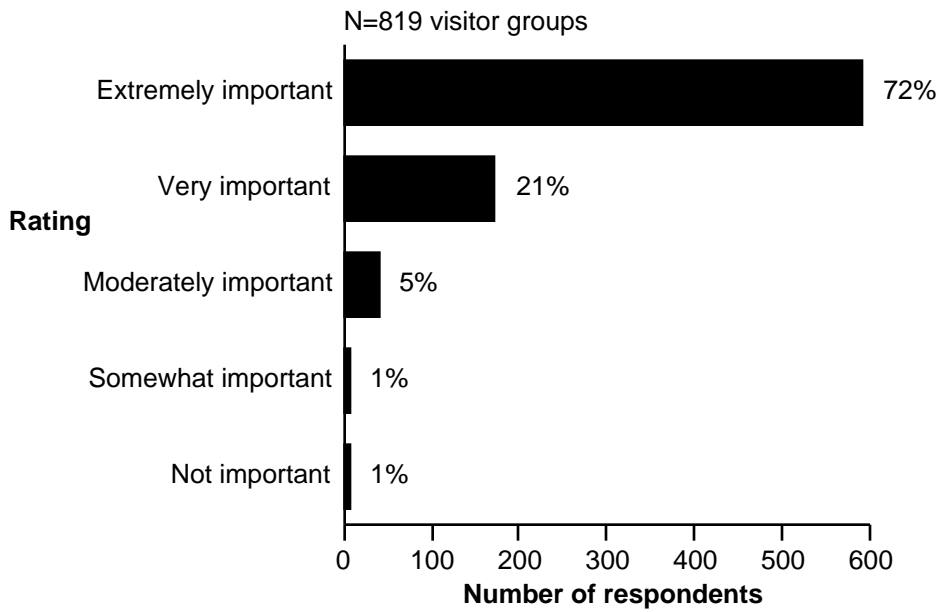


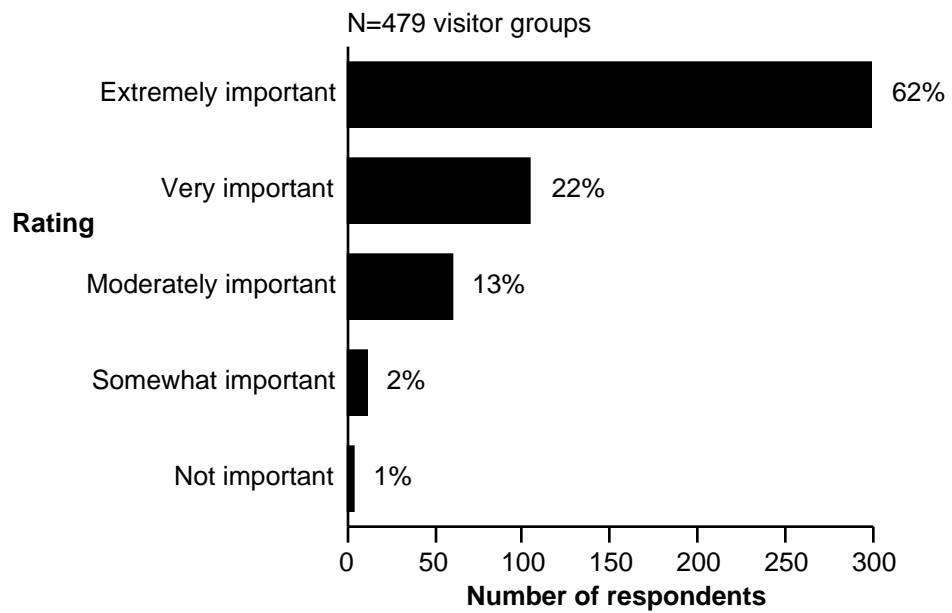
Figure 61: Detail



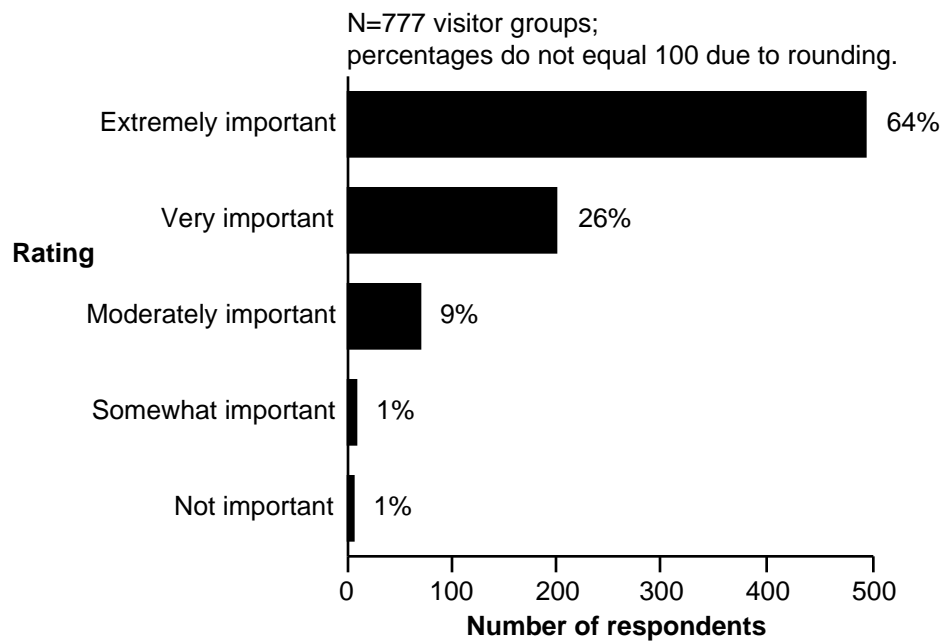
**Figure 62: Importance of park road directional signs**



**Figure 63: Importance of Park Loop Road**

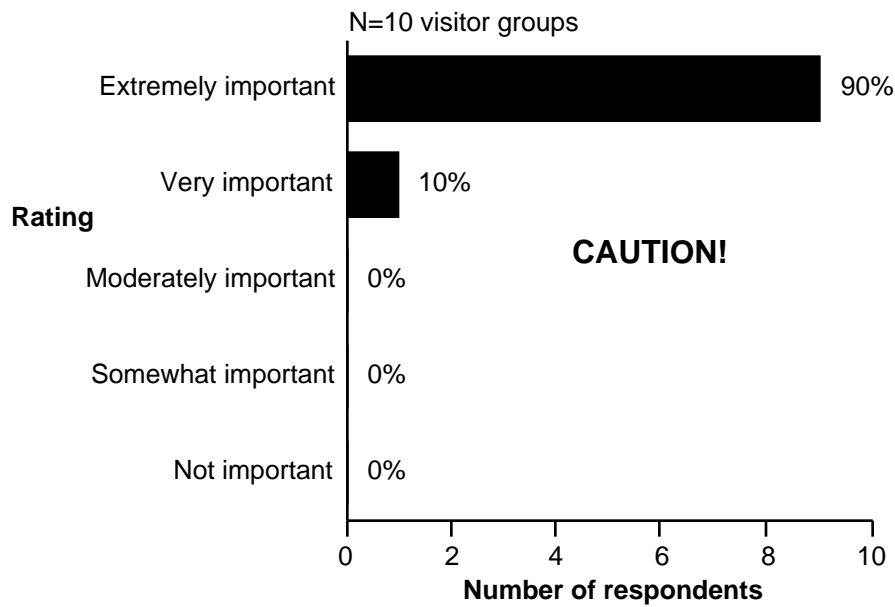


**Figure 64: Importance of carriage roads**

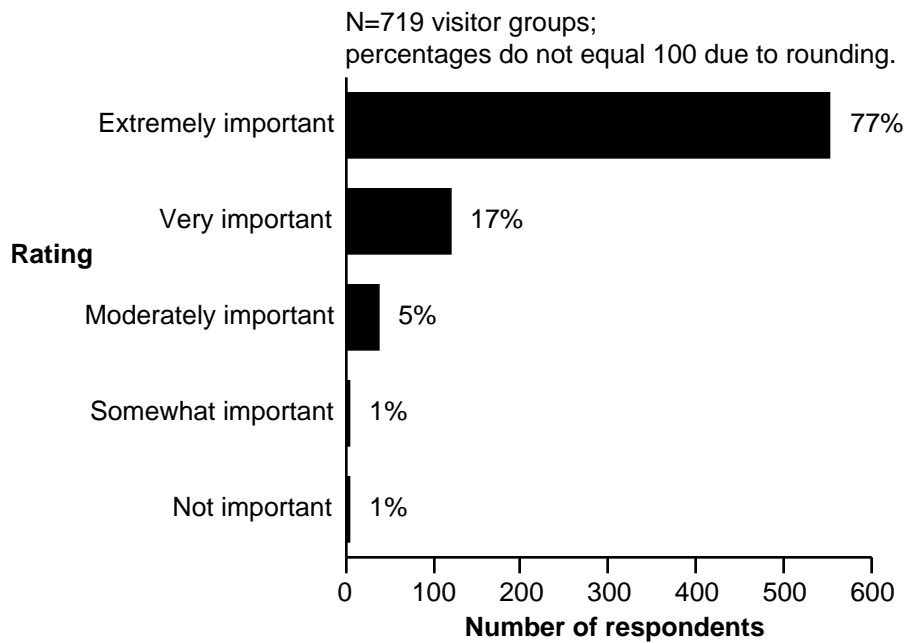


**Figure 65: Importance of parking lots**

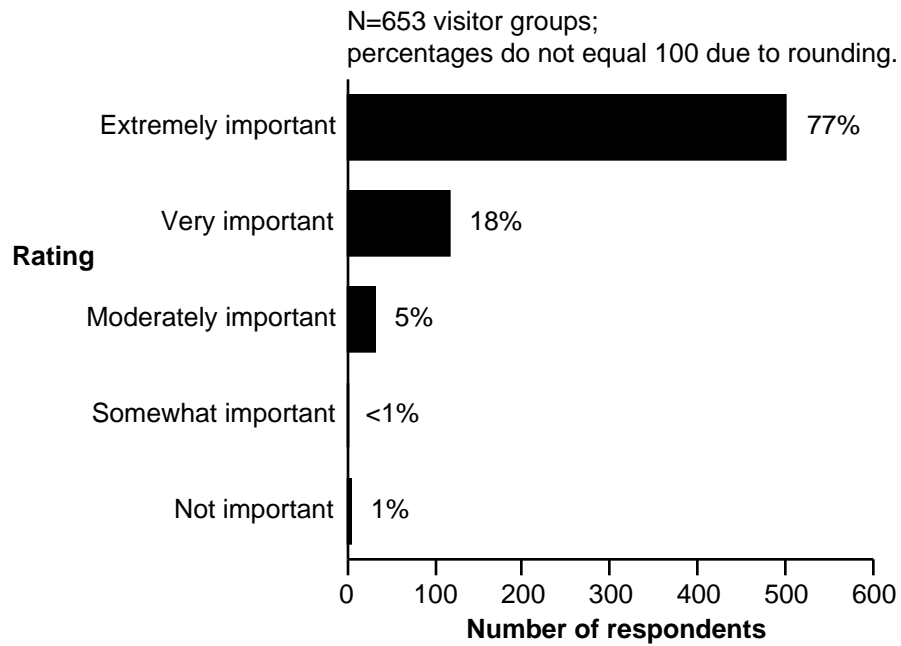




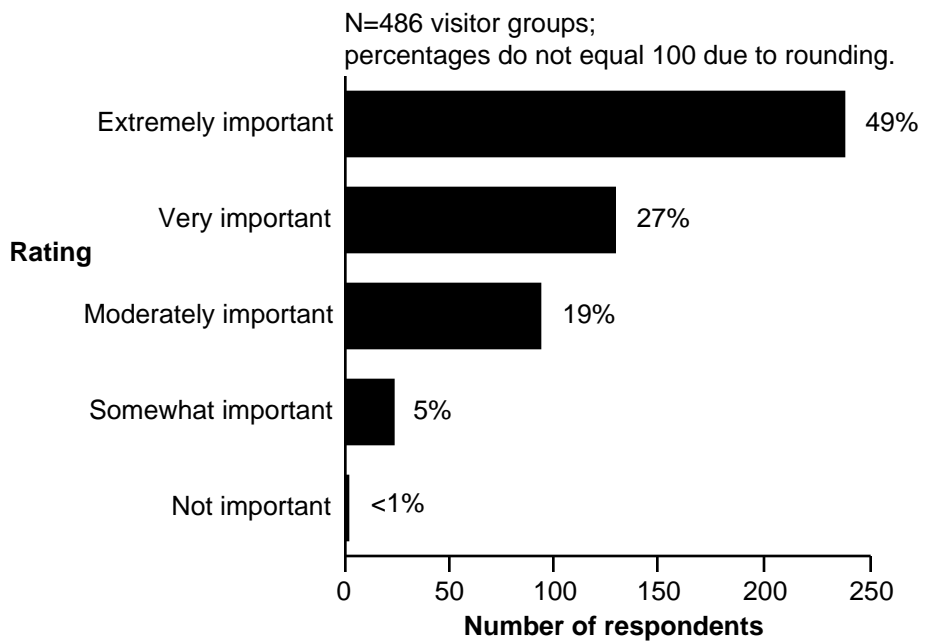
**Figure 66: Importance of shuttle bus (*Downeast Transportation*)**



**Figure 67: Importance of restrooms**

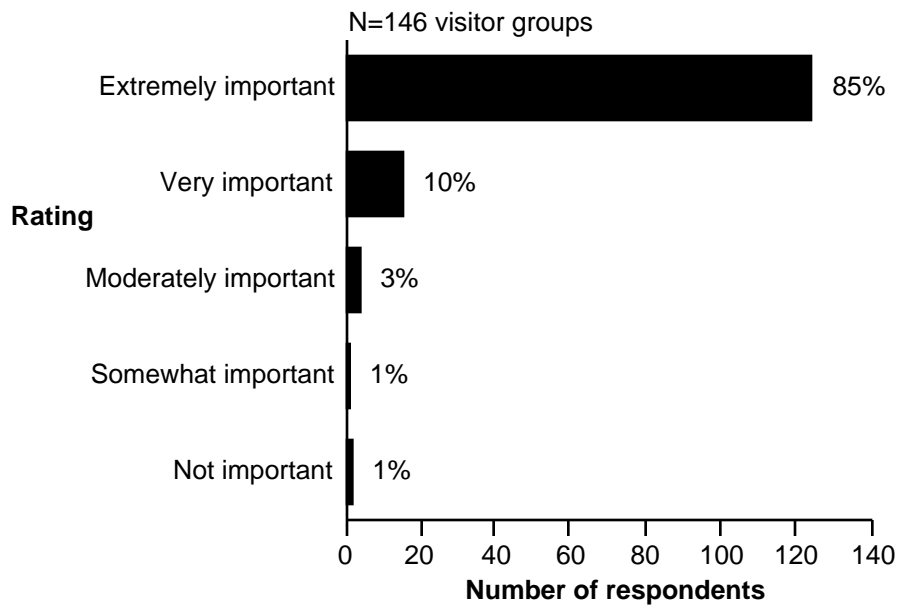


**Figure 68: Importance of hiking trails**

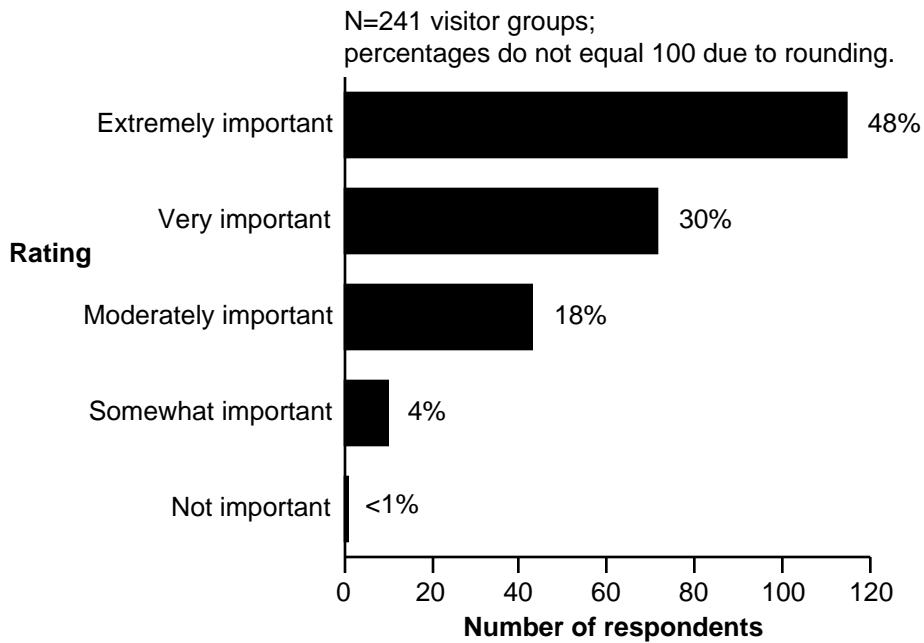


**Figure 69: Importance of beaches**

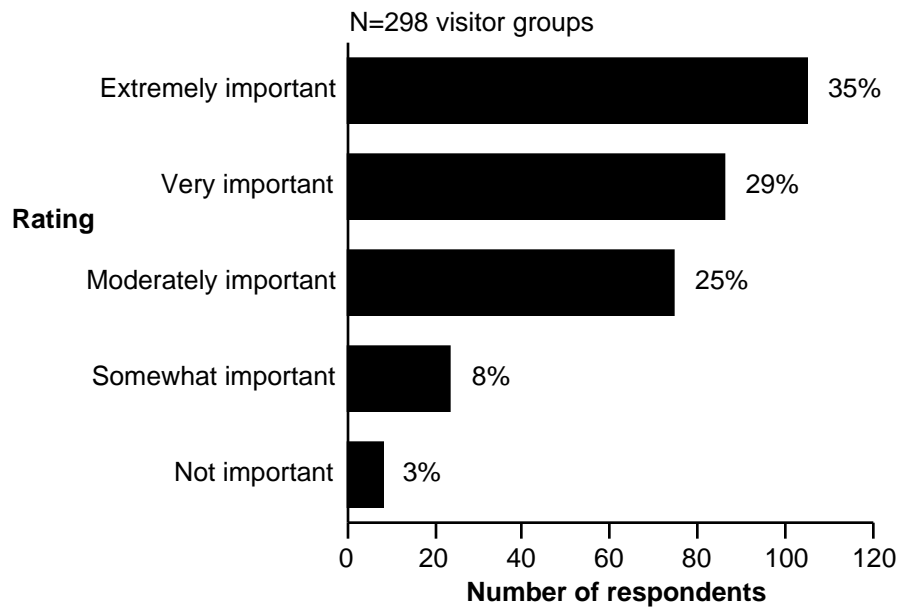
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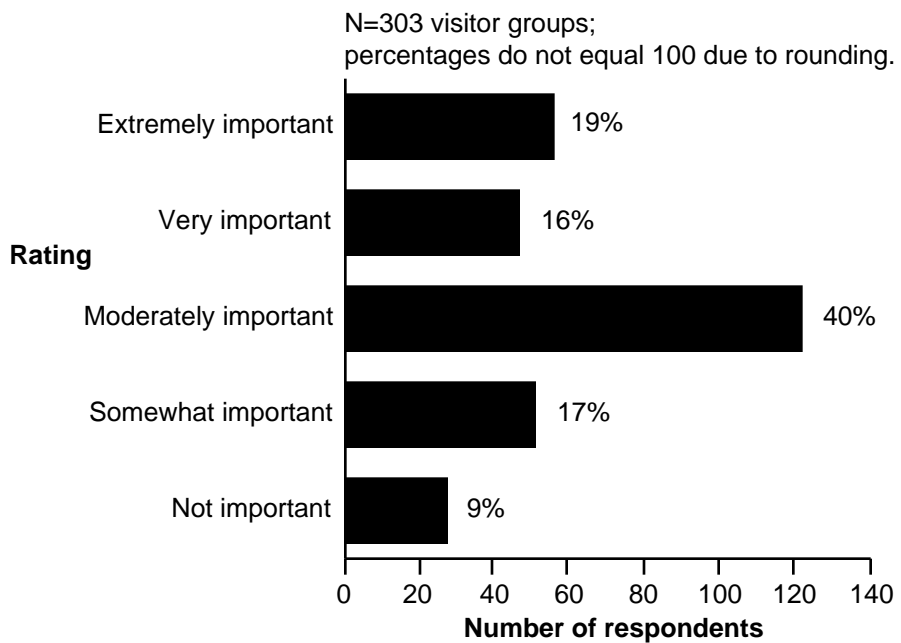
**Figure 70: Importance of campgrounds (Blackwoods/ Seawall)**



**Figure 71: Importance of picnic areas**

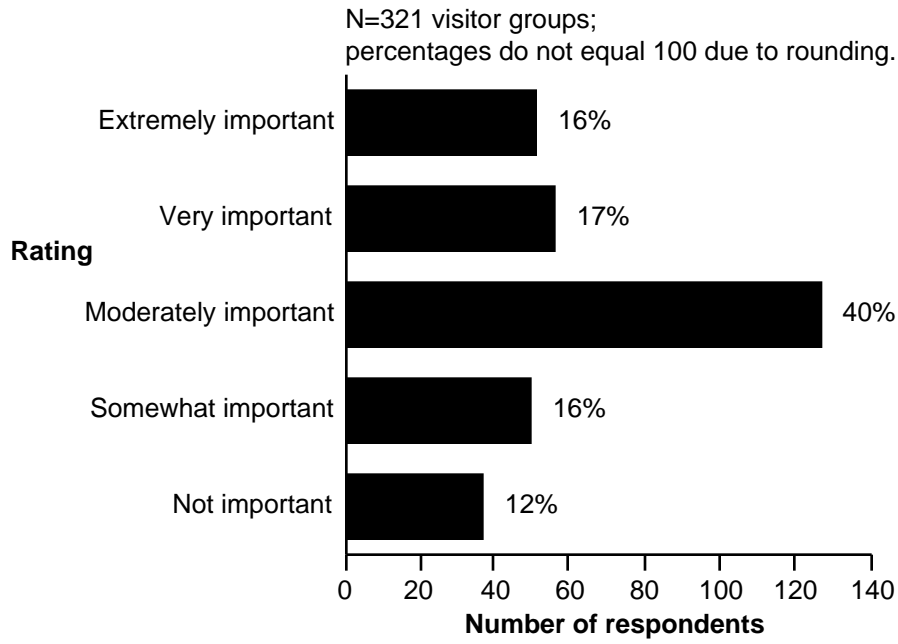


**Figure 72: Importance of Jordan Pond House Restaurant**

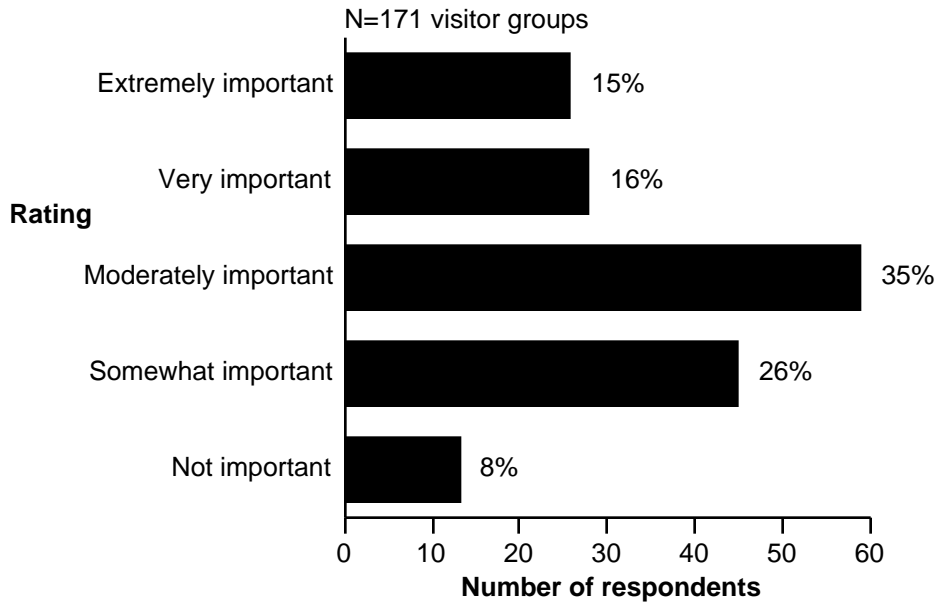


**Figure 73: Importance of Jordan Pond House gift shop**

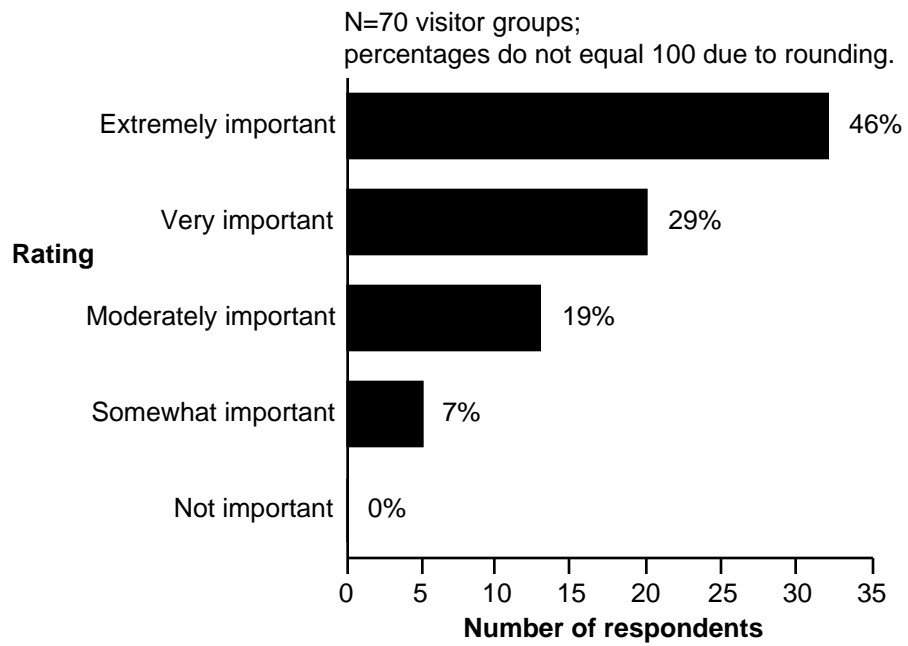
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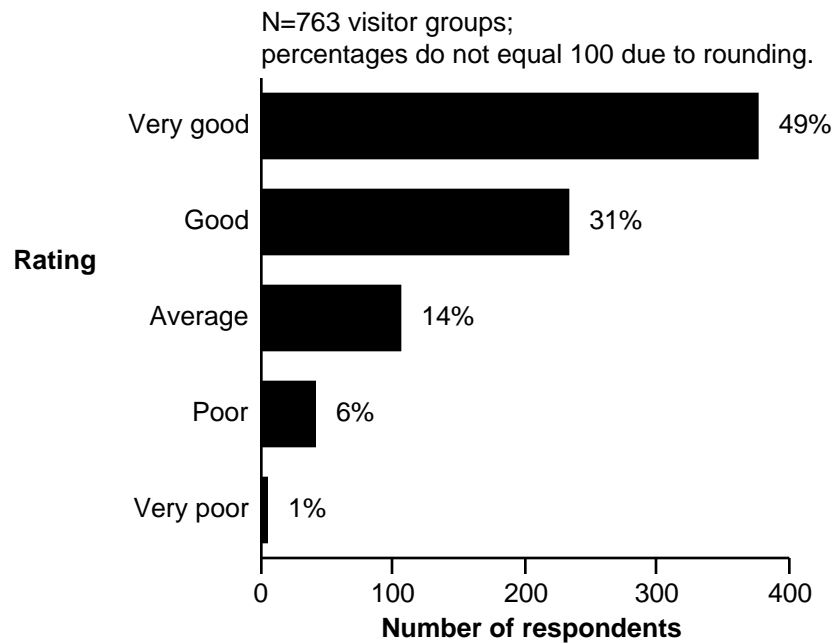
**Figure 74: Importance of Cadillac Mountain gift shop**



**Figure 75: Importance of Thunder Hole gift shop**



**Figure 76: Importance of Wildwood Stables carriage rides**



**Figure 77: Quality of park road directional signs**

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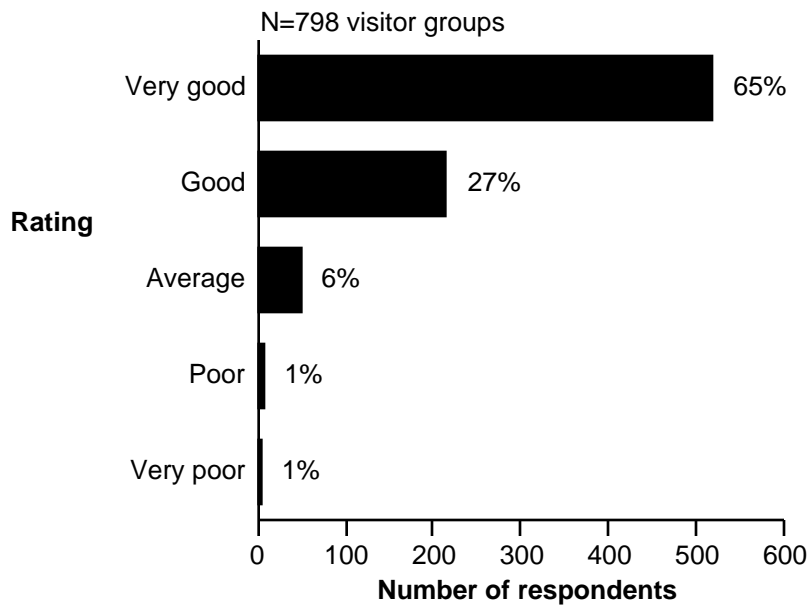


Figure 78: Quality of Park Loop Road

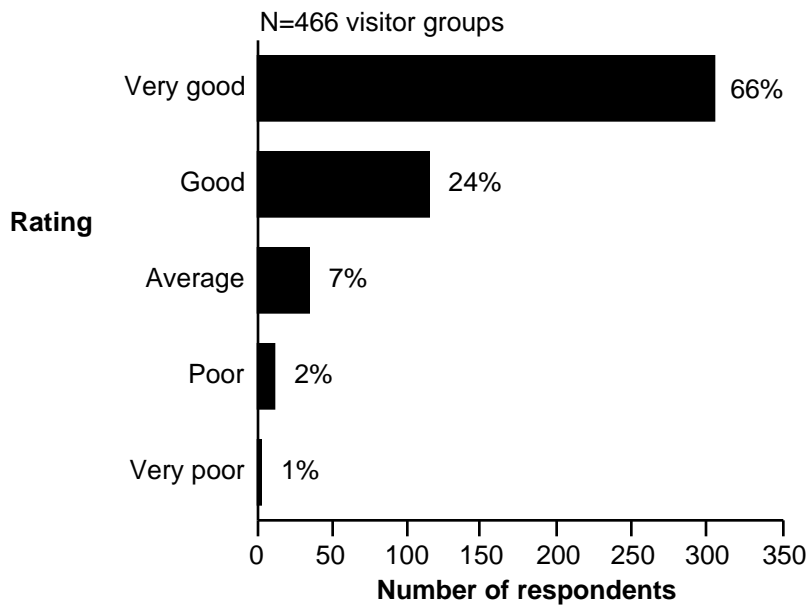
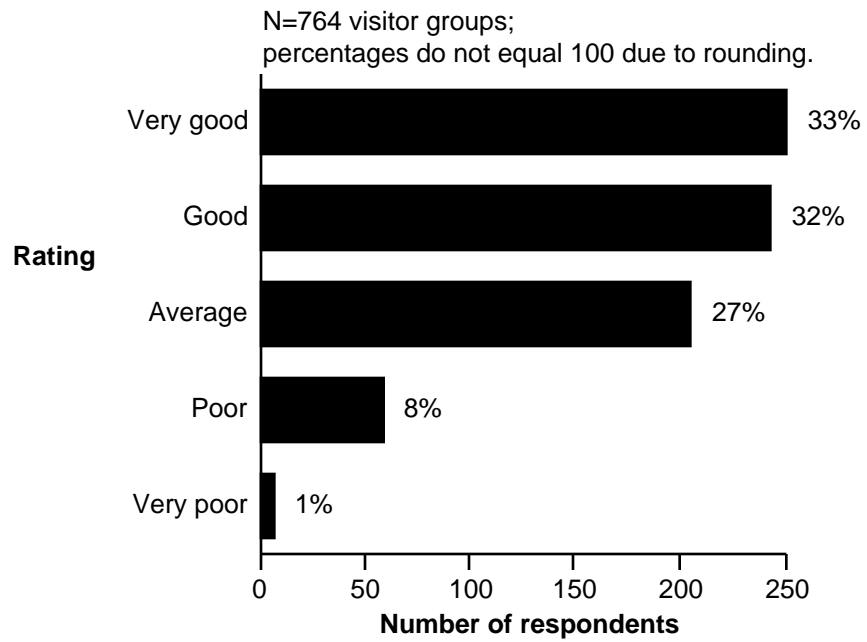
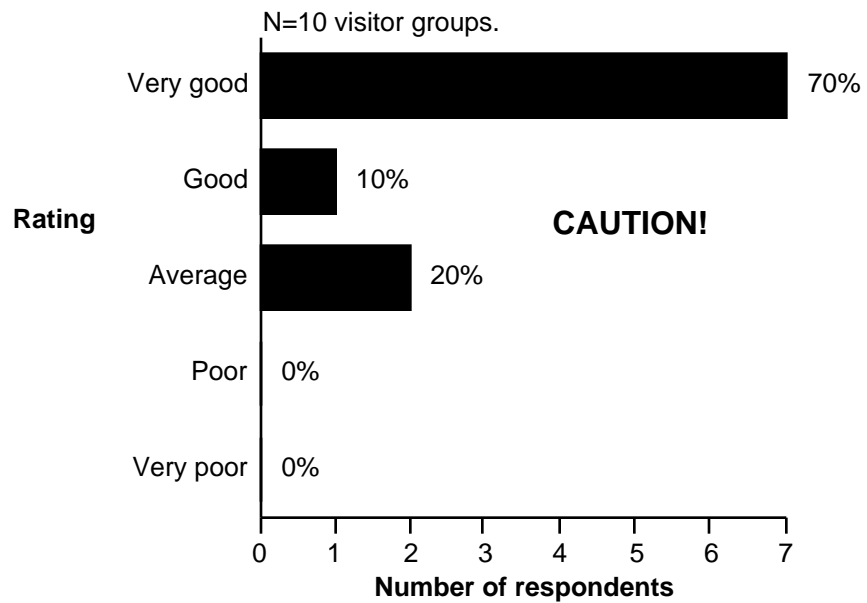


Figure 79: Quality of carriage roads

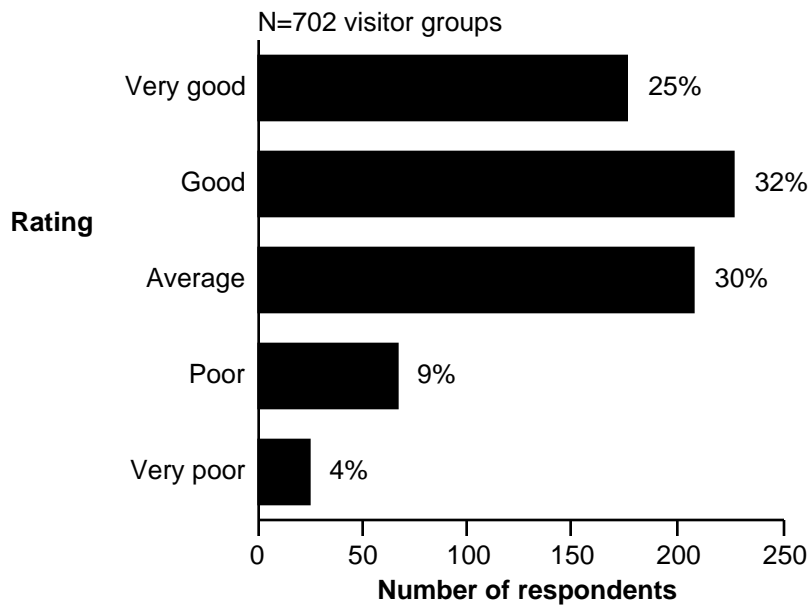


**Figure 80: Quality of parking lots**

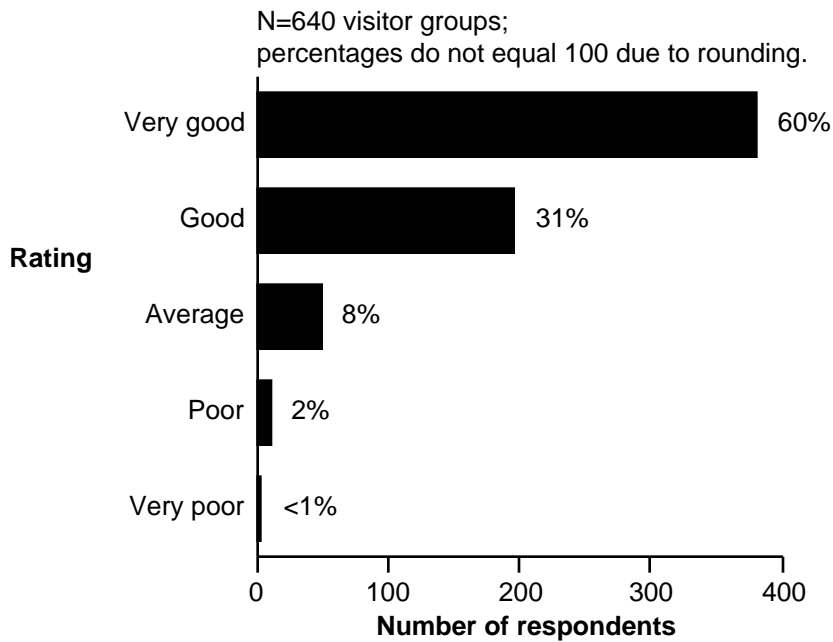


**Figure 81: Quality of shuttle bus (*Downeast Transportation*)**

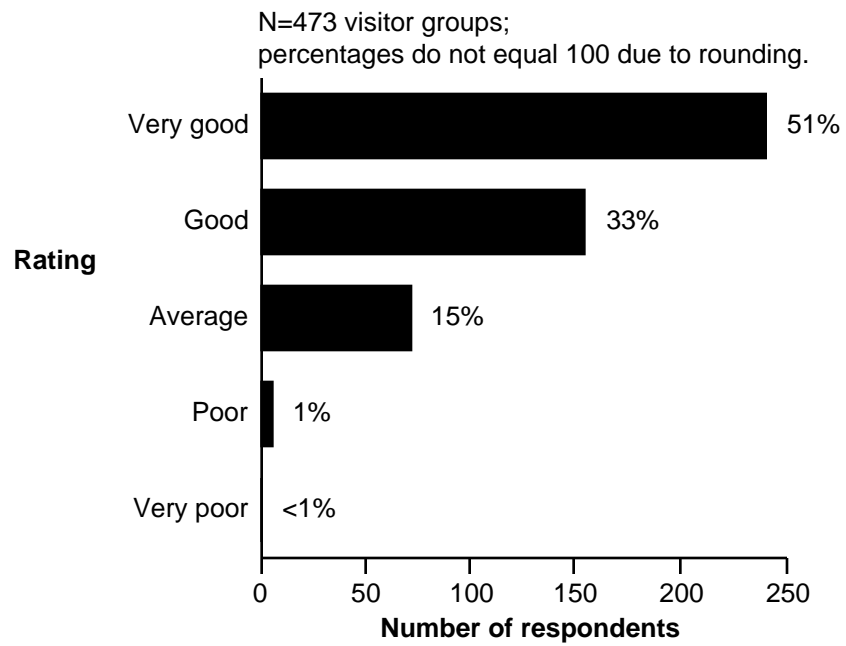




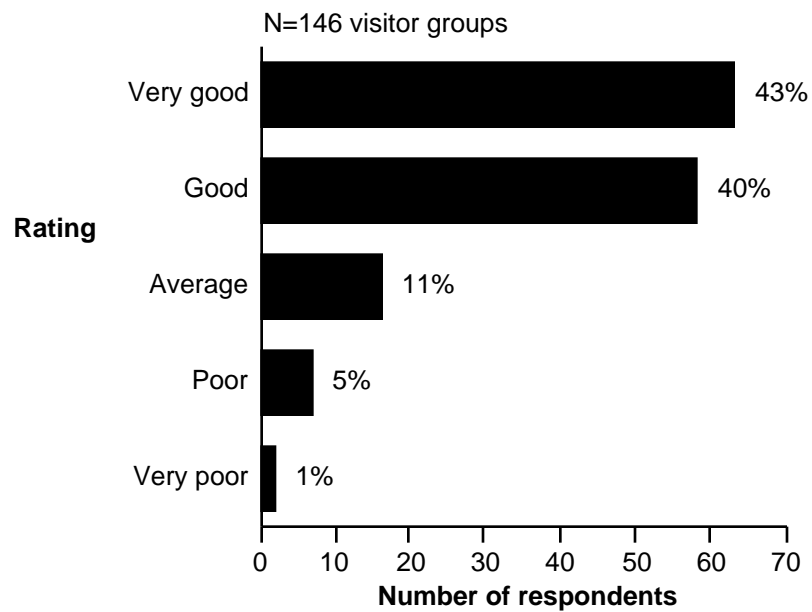
**Figure 82: Quality of restrooms**



**Figure 83: Quality of hiking trails**

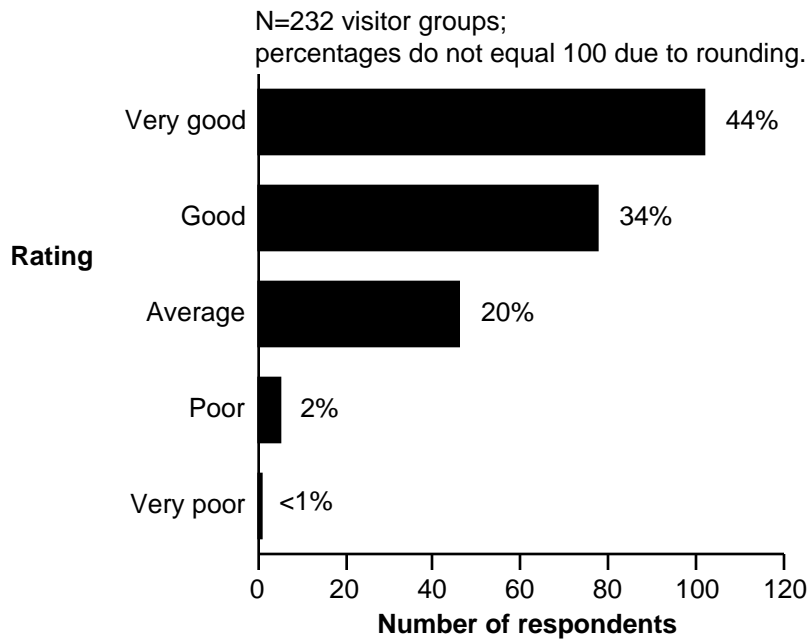


**Figure 84: Quality of beaches**

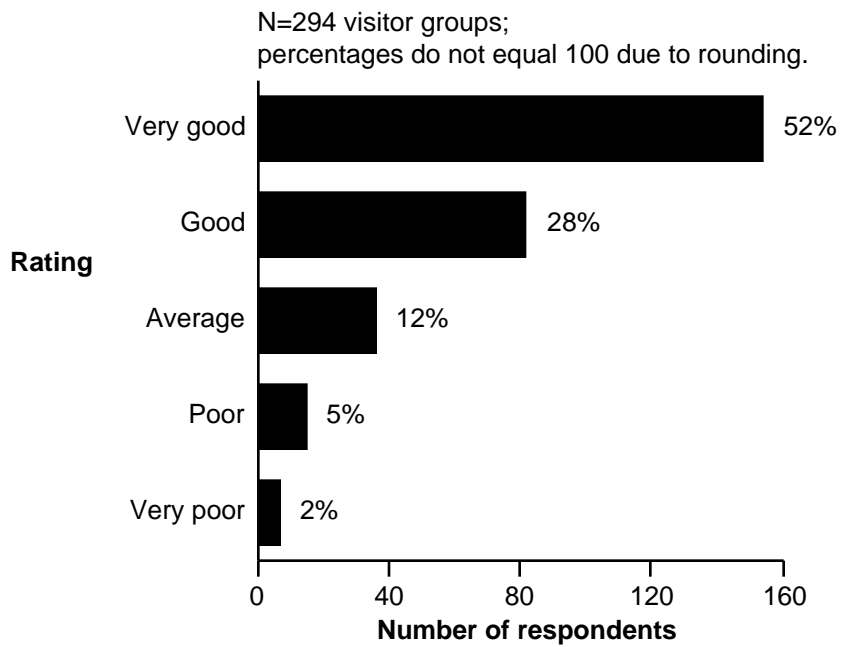


**Figure 85: Quality of campgrounds (Blackwoods/ Seawall)**

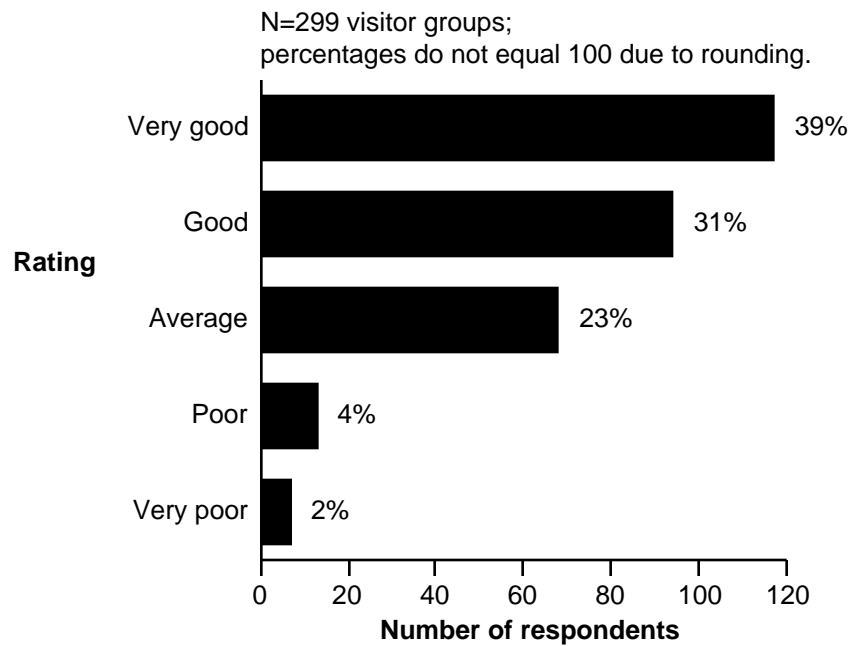
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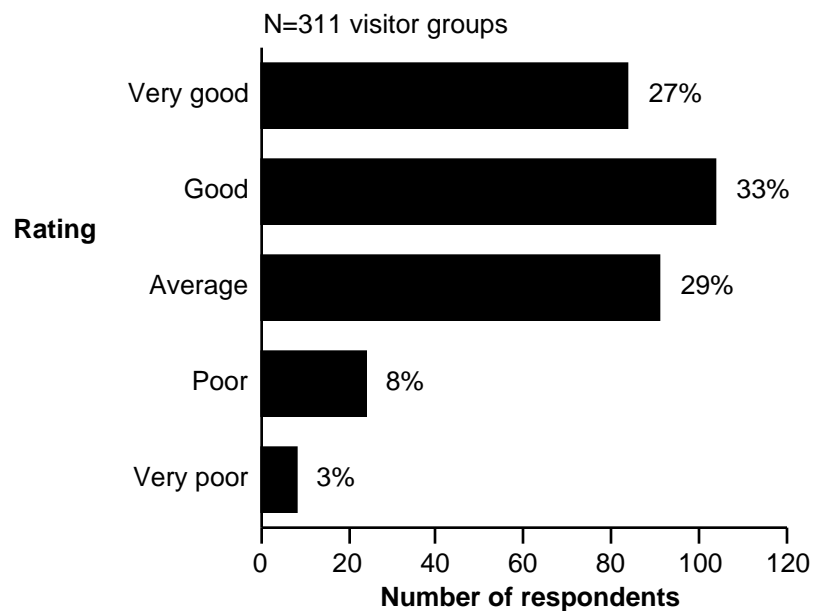
**Figure 86: Quality of picnic areas**



**Figure 87: Quality of Jordan Pond House Restaurant**

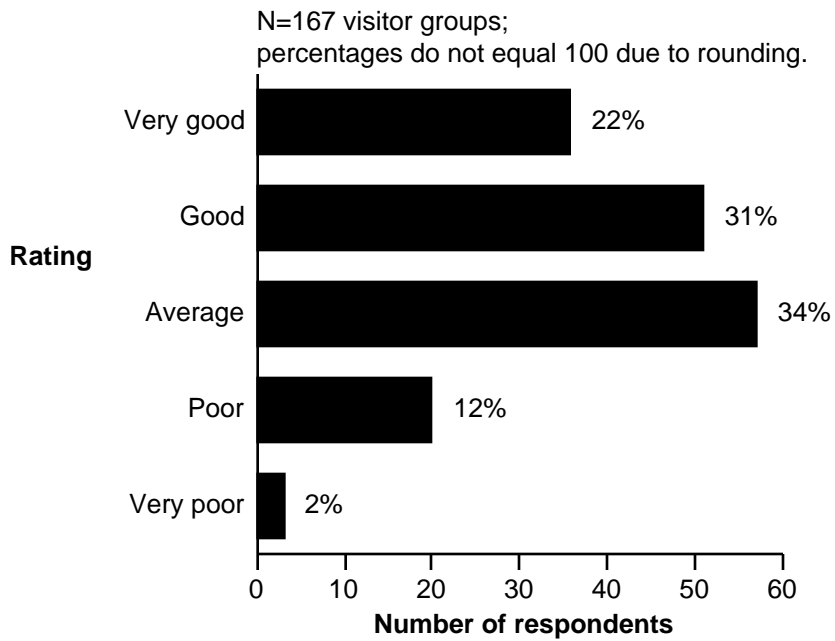


**Figure 88: Quality of Jordan Pond House gift shop**

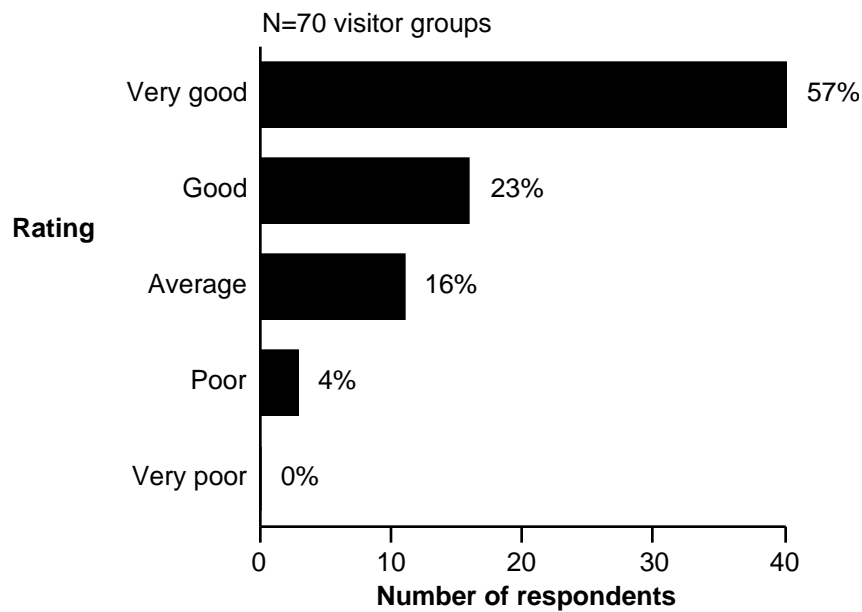


**Figure 89: Quality of Cadillac Mountain gift shop**

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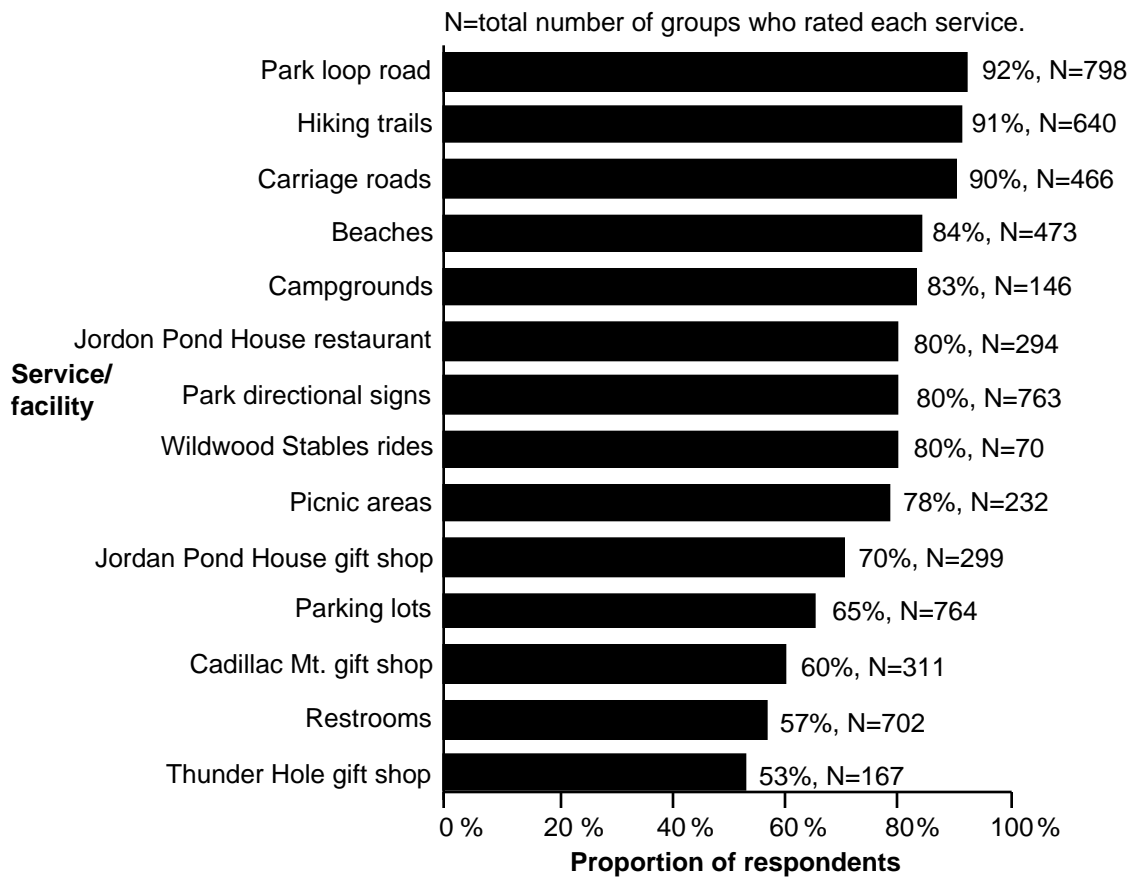


**Figure 90: Quality of Thunder Hole gift shop**



**Figure 91: Quality of Wildwood Stables carriage rides**

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**Figure 92: Combined proportions of “very good” or “good” quality ratings for services and facilities**

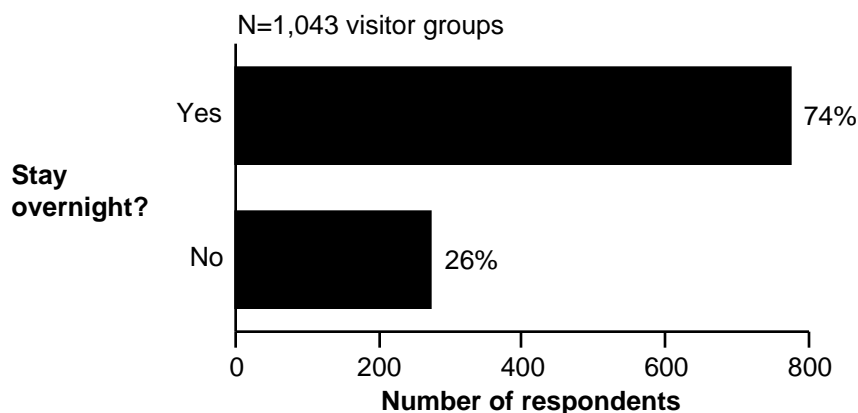
Visitor groups were asked if they stayed overnight on Mount Desert Island during this trip to Acadia National Park. Many of the visitors said they stayed overnight (74%), as shown in Figure 93.

### Overnight stays; locations

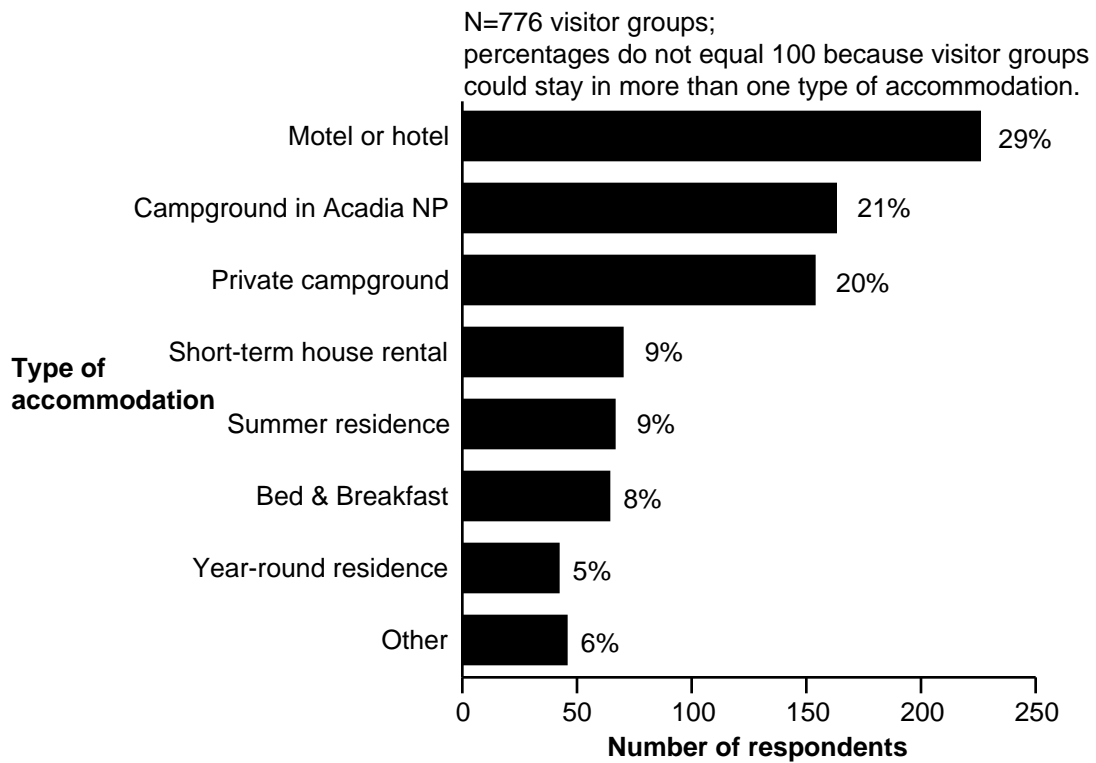
Visitors who answered "yes" above, were asked the type of accommodations they stayed in. The most commonly used types of accommodations were motel or hotel (29%), campground in Acadia National Park (21%) and private campgrounds (20%), as shown in Figure 94. The least used type of accommodation used was year-round residence (5%). "Other" types of accommodations where visitors stayed included a family or friend's house, cottage, college or college camp, time-share resort and cabin.

Visitors were then asked to identify the zones on Mount Desert Island where they stayed overnight on this trip. The most common locations where visitors stayed were Downtown Bar Harbor (21%) and Route 3 motels (15%), Otter Creek/Blackwoods (12%) and Southwest Harbor (12%), as shown in Figure 95. The places least used by overnight visitors were Seal Harbor and Pretty Marsh (each 1%).

Visitors who did not stay on Mount Desert Island were asked to identify the towns where they stayed. Twenty-four percent of the visitors stayed in Ellsworth, 13% in Trenton and 9% in Bangor (see Figure 96). "Other" places where visitors stayed are listed in Table 14.

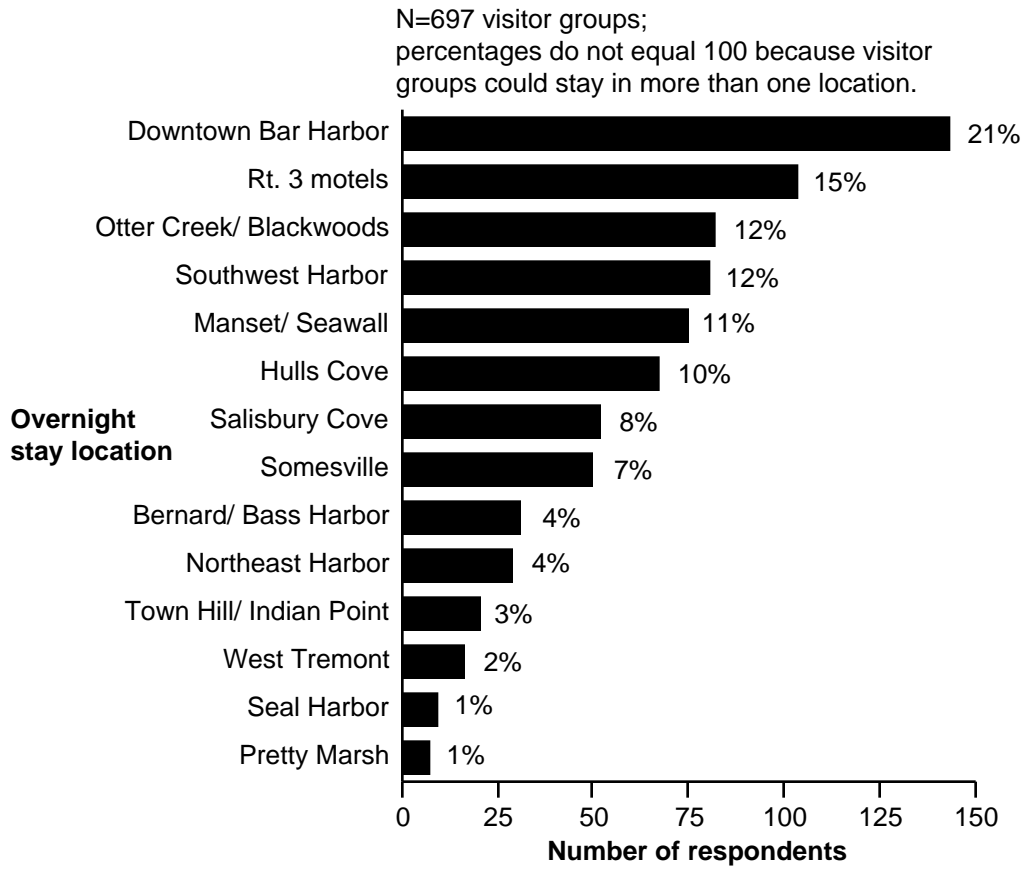


**Figure 93: Proportion of visitors staying overnight on Mount Desert Island**

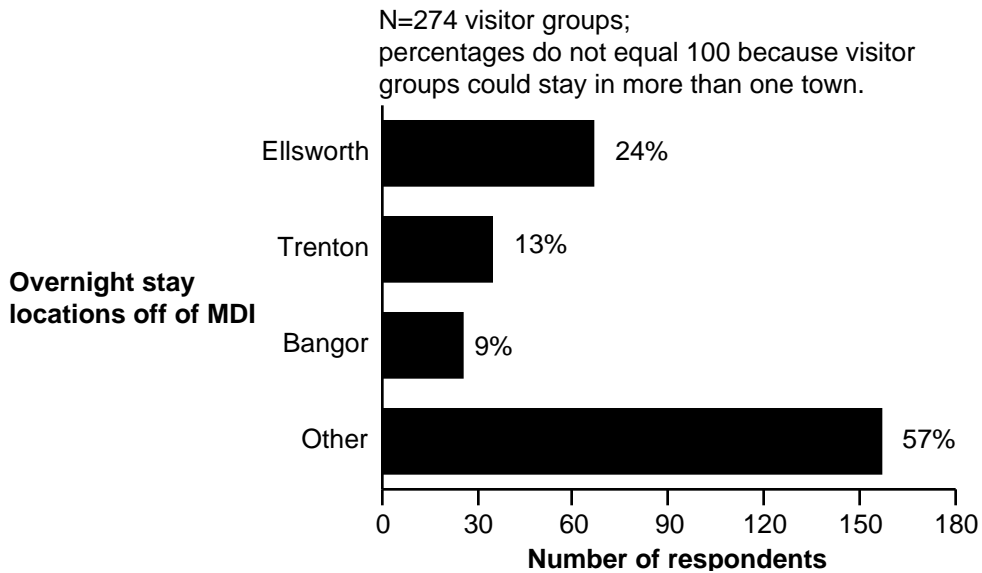


**Figure 94: Types of overnight accommodations used on Mount Desert Island**





**Figure 95: Locations of overnight stays on Mount Desert Island**



**Figure 96: Locations of overnight stays off of Mount Desert Island**

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**Table 14: Other locations where visitors stayed**

N=140 comments

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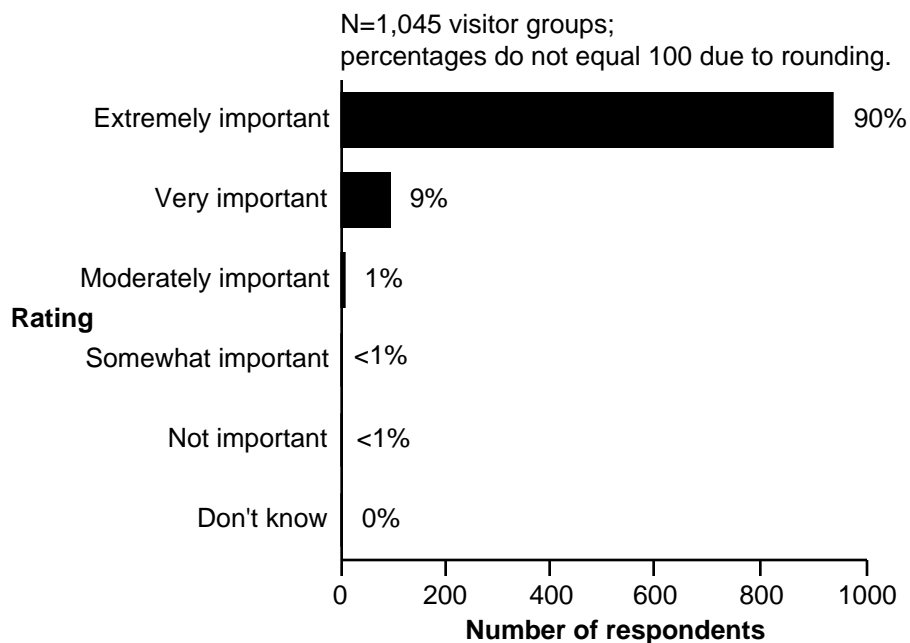
Location	Number of times mentioned
Bar Harbor	23
Southwest Harbor	7
Lamoine	6
Belfast	6
Blue Hill	5
Live locally	5
Surry	4
Birch Harbor	3
Brooklin	3
Bucksport	3
Islesford/ Little Cranberry	3
Stonington	3
Home	3
Augusta	2
Boothbay	2
Brooksville	2
Dedham	2
Deer Isle	2
Gouldsboro	2
Great Cranberry Island	2
Hadley Point	2
Hancock	2
Hulls Cove	2
Orland	2
Rockland	2
Other locations	42

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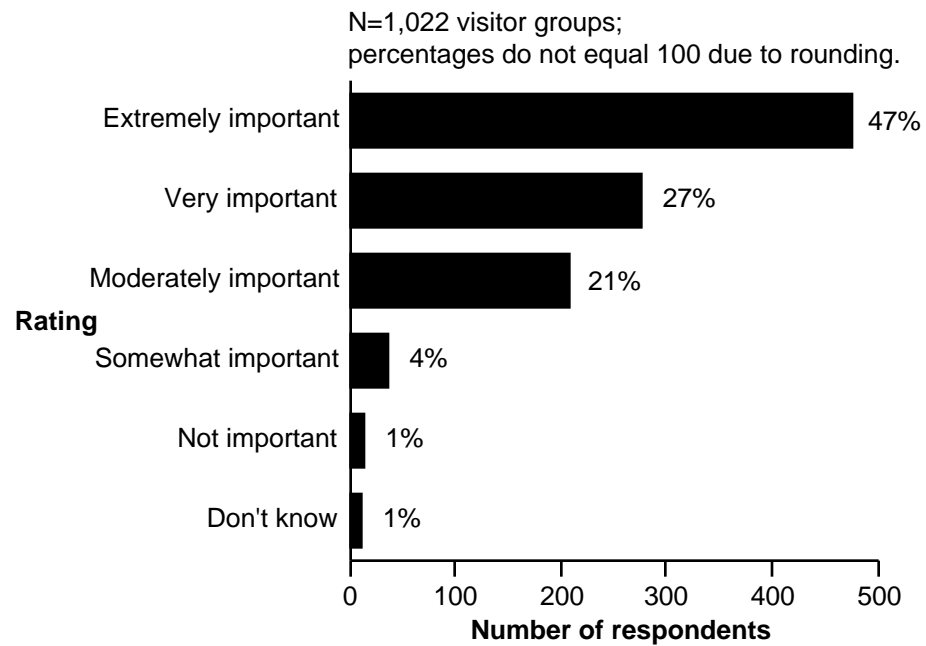
Visitor groups were asked to rate the importance (from 1 to 5) of selected features and qualities of Acadia National Park. The features or qualities that they were asked to rate included scenic views, native plants and animals, recreational opportunities such as hiking, camping and fishing, solitude/ quiet, wildness, cultural/ historic sites and resources, clean air and clean water.

### Importance of park features and qualities

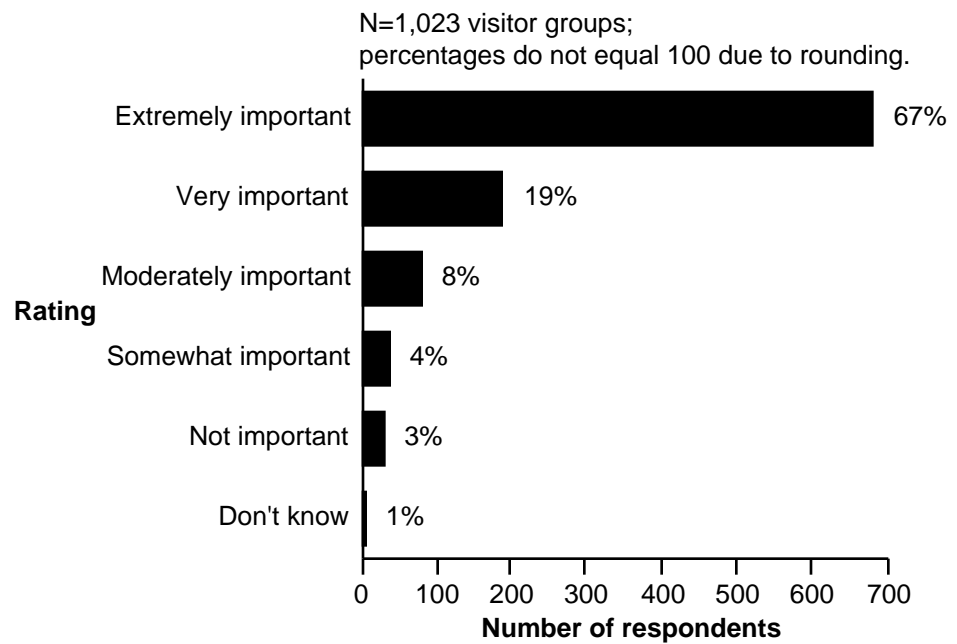
Figures 97-105 show visitors' ratings of the above features and qualities. The features or qualities that received the highest "extremely important" and "very important" ratings were scenic views (99%), clean air (97%) and clean water (96%). The feature which received the lowest "extremely important" and "very important" rating was cultural/ historic sites and resources (51%). The feature which received the highest "not important" rating was educational opportunities (7%).



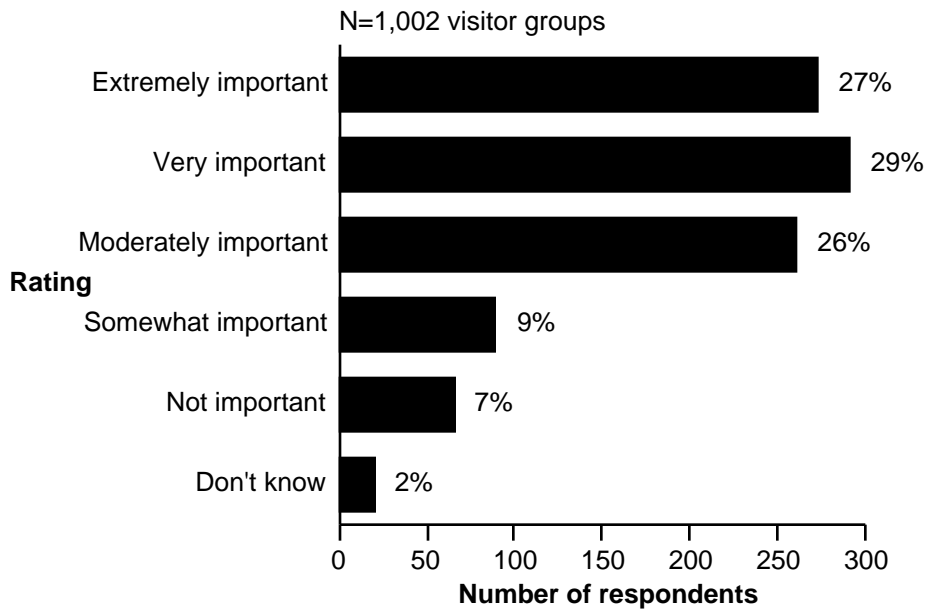
**Figure 97: Importance of scenic views**



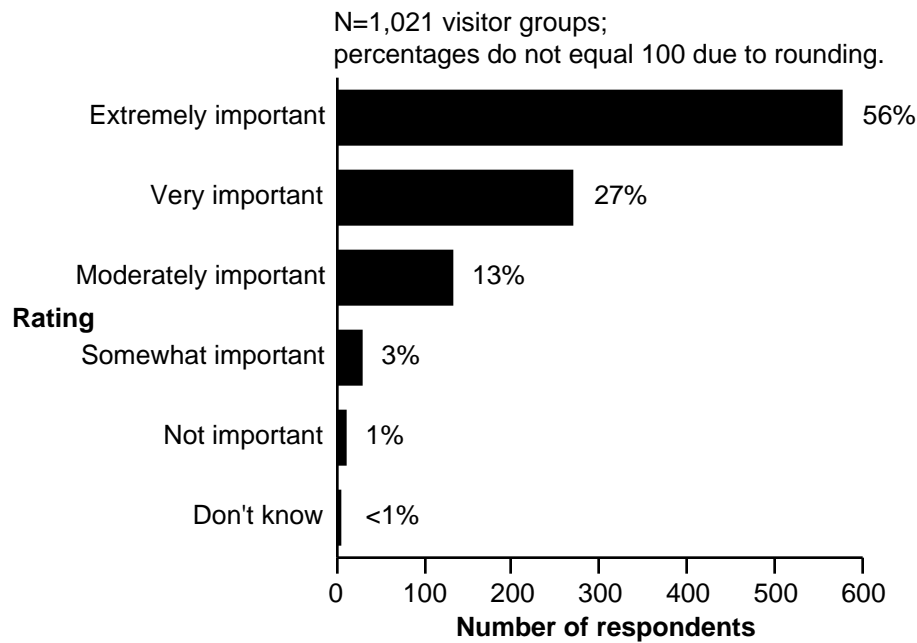
**Figure 98: Importance of native plants and animals**



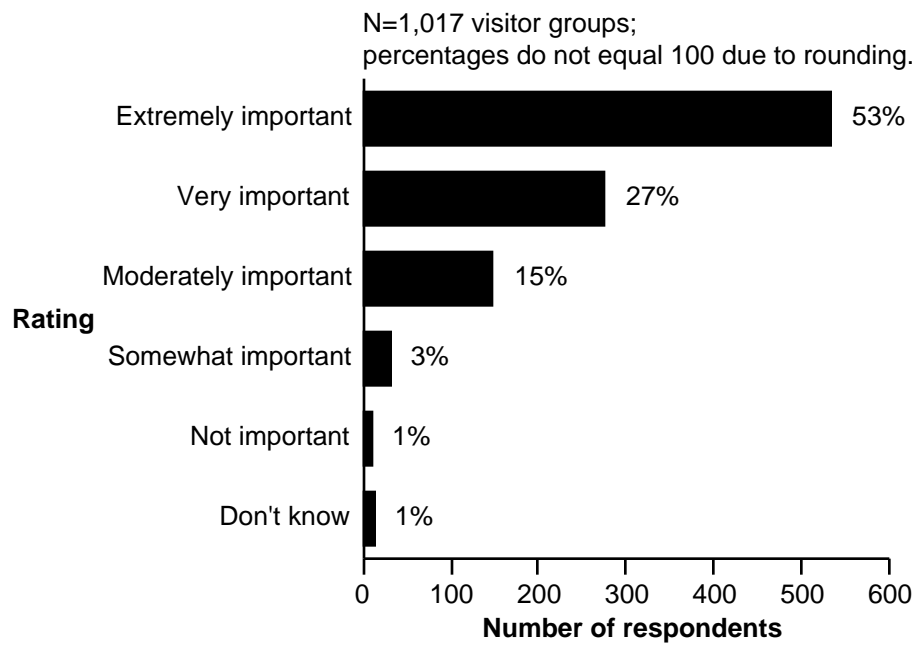
**Figure 99: Importance of recreational opportunities**



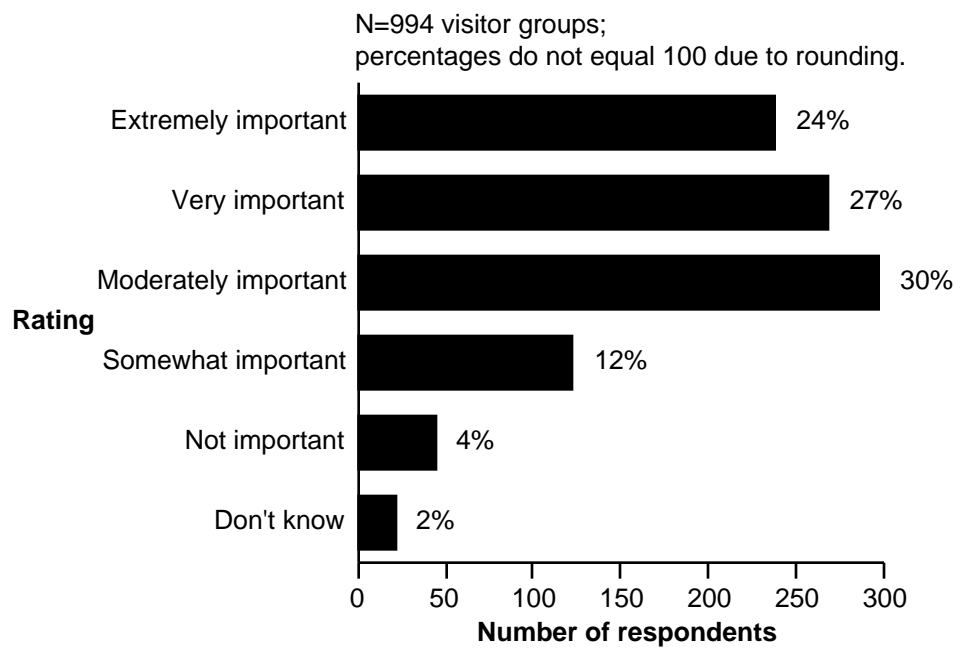
**Figure 100: Importance of educational opportunities**



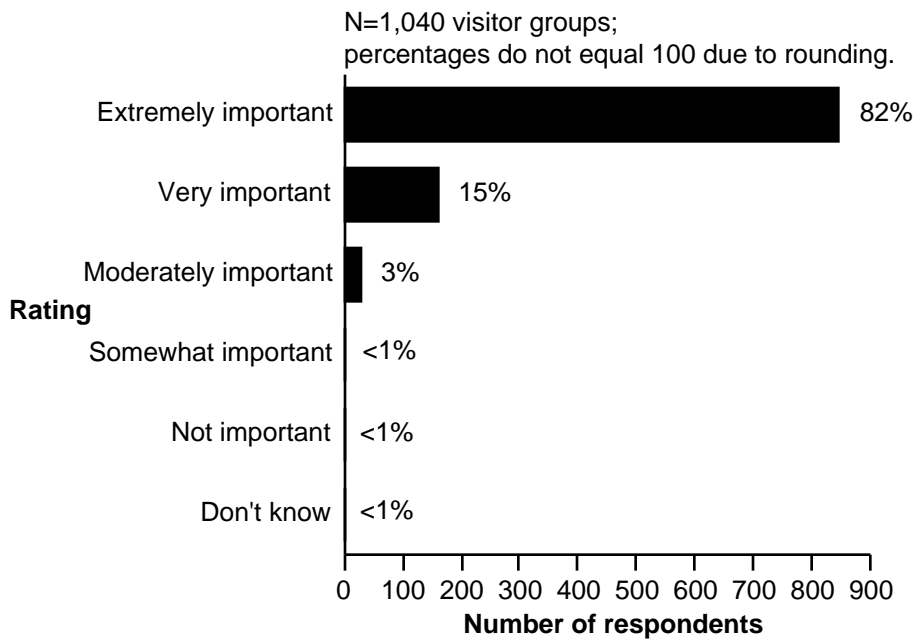
**Figure 101: Importance of solitude/ quiet**



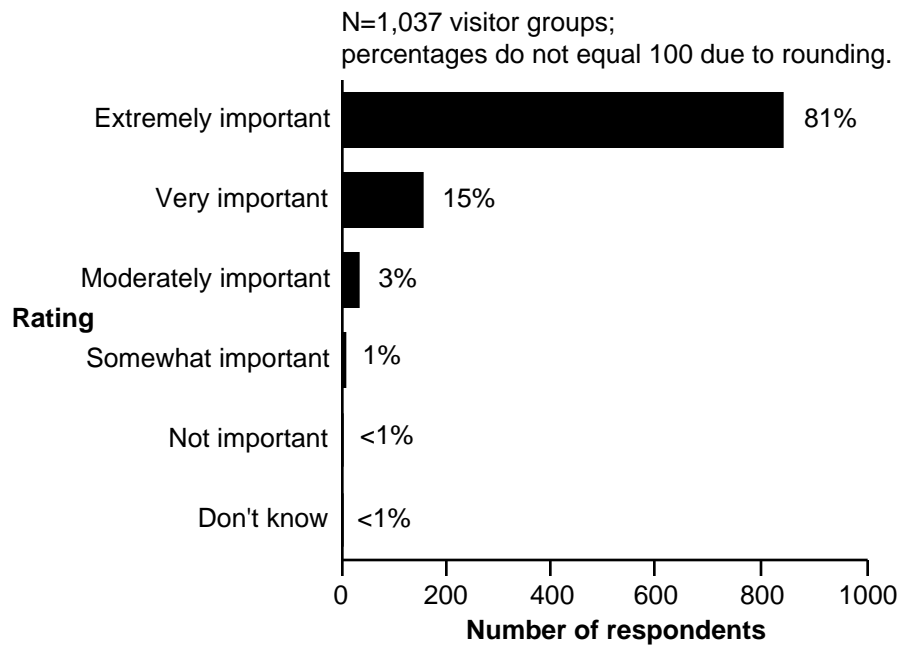
**Figure 102: Importance of wildness**



**Figure 103: Importance of cultural/ historic sites and resources**



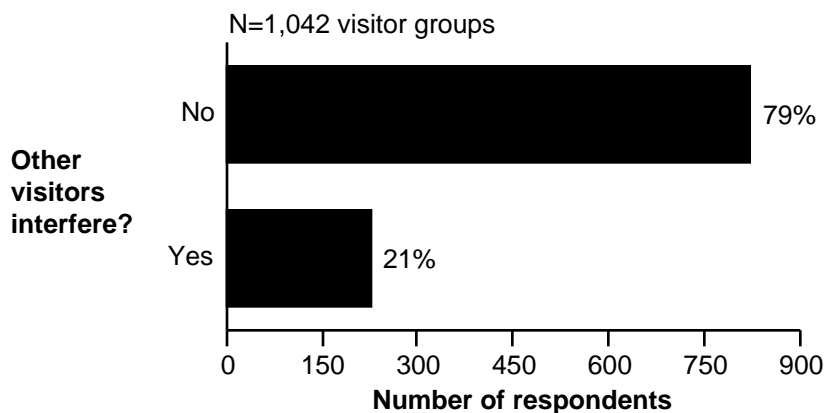
**Figure 104: Importance of clean air**



**Figure 105: Importance of clean water**

**Visitors/  
activities which  
interfered with  
visit**

Visitor groups were asked "During this visit, did other visitors and their activities interfere with your visit and enjoyment of Acadia National Park?" Twenty-one percent of the visitors said other visitors and their activities did interfere with their visit (see Figure 106). Visitors were asked to identify the problems. Their responses are listed in Table 15.



**Figure 106: Did visitors or their activities interfere with visit**

**Table 15: Ways visitors/ activities interfered with others' visits**

N=277 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Too crowded	86
Too much traffic/ too many cars	25
No parking available due to crowding	23
Bicyclists delayed traffic/ did not obey rules of road	12
Noisy campground neighbors	8
Noisy people	8
Cars and RVs blocking traffic/ views	7
Dogs off leash	7
Inattentive drivers/ parking	6
Visitors littering	6
Noisy/ screaming children	5
People smoking	5
Bicyclists go too fast on carriage roads and in campgrounds	5
Lack of courtesy on trails	5
Campsites too close together	4
Rude/ inconsiderate visitors	4
Large, noisy, inconsiderate hiking groups	4
Barking dogs	4
Dog waste is repulsive	4



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**Table 15: Ways visitors/ activities interfered with others' visits  
(continued)**

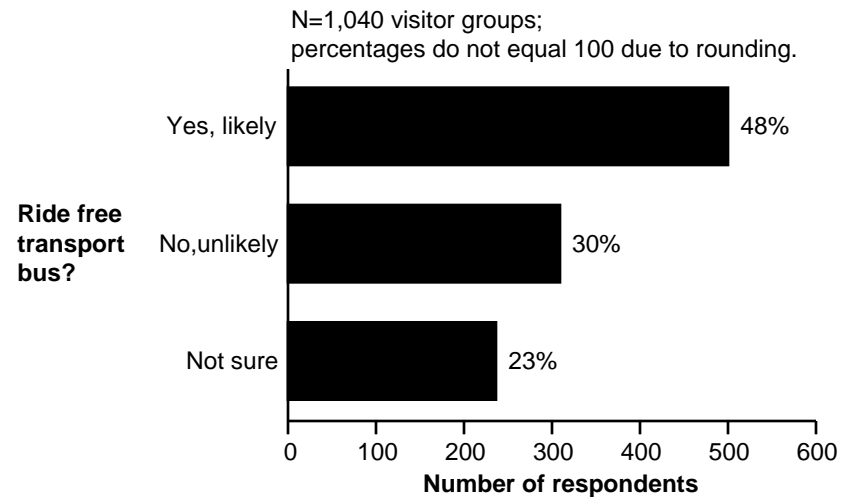
Comment	Number of times mentioned
Carriage roads crowded	3
People ruining views by climbing where they do not belong	3
Hit and run damage to car in parking lot	2
Too many bicycles on carriage roads	2
Jet ski noise at Long Pond	2
Bicyclists are not trained about passing horses on carriage roads	2
Rude children pushing into photos	2
People did not follow parking rules	2
Bicyclists riding 3 or 4 abreast	2
Unsupervised children in campground	2
Too many tour groups	2
Speeding drivers	2
Too many bicycles	2
Noisy, smelly buses and RVs	2
RV generator noise	2
Unattended children walking/ biking on road	2
Noisy motorboats	2
Other comments	13

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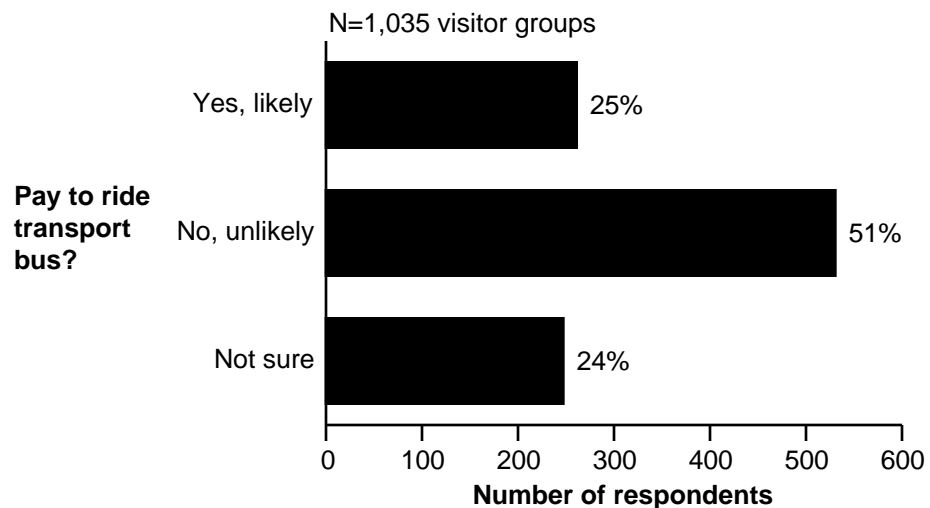
### Future shuttle use

Visitor groups were asked, "Would you and your group be willing to park your vehicle and ride a free island transport bus to visit major park attractions on a future trip?" Almost one-half of the visitor groups (48%) said they would likely be willing to ride a free transport bus (see Figure 107). Thirty percent said they were unlikely to ride a free transport bus and 23% said they were not sure.

Visitors were also asked if they would be willing to pay to ride an island transport bus. Over one-half of the visitors said they would not be willing to pay to ride the bus (see Figure 108). One-fourth of the visitors (25%) said they would be willing to pay and 24% said they were not sure.



**Figure 107: Willingness to ride free island transport bus**



**Figure 108: Willingness to pay to ride island transport bus**

Visitor groups were asked the type of entrance fee they paid to enter Acadia on this visit. Over one-half of the visitors (55%) paid a 7 day entrance fee (\$10/vehicle or \$3/individual), as shown in Figure 109. Twenty-two percent of the visitors said they did not pay a fee or use a pass to enter the park. Twenty percent used a pass including Golden Eagle, Annual Acadia Park Pass, Golden Age Pass or Golden Access Pass. "Other" types of entrance fees that visitors listed included a camping fee, pass, college pass and daily entrance fee.

### Type of entrance fee paid

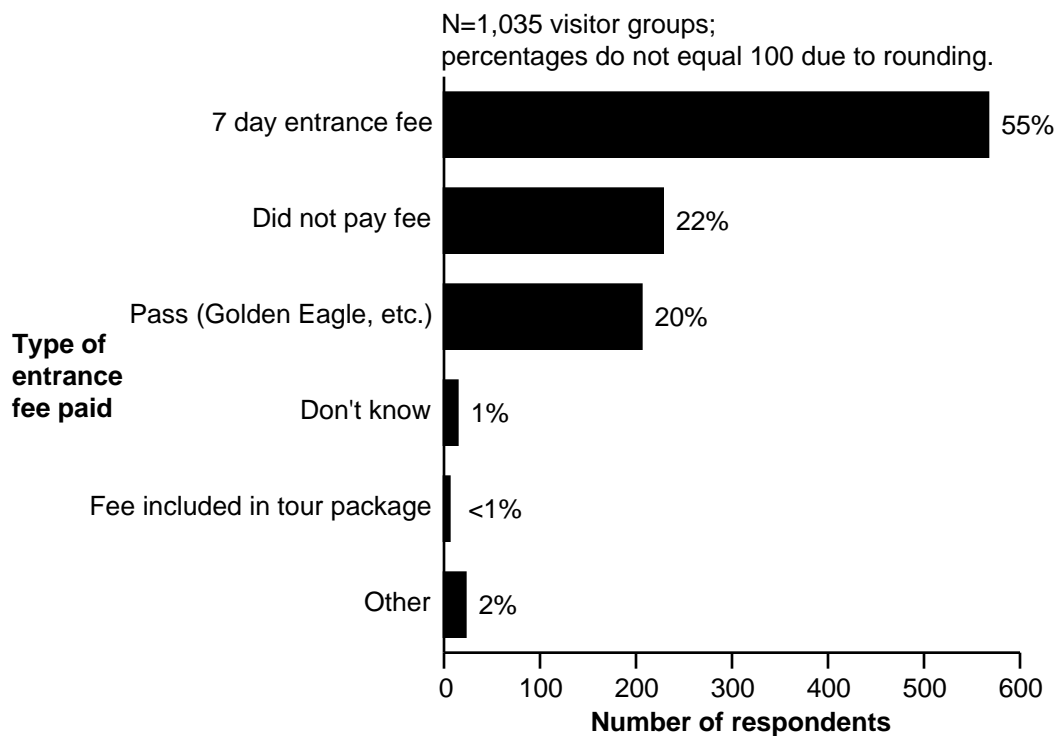


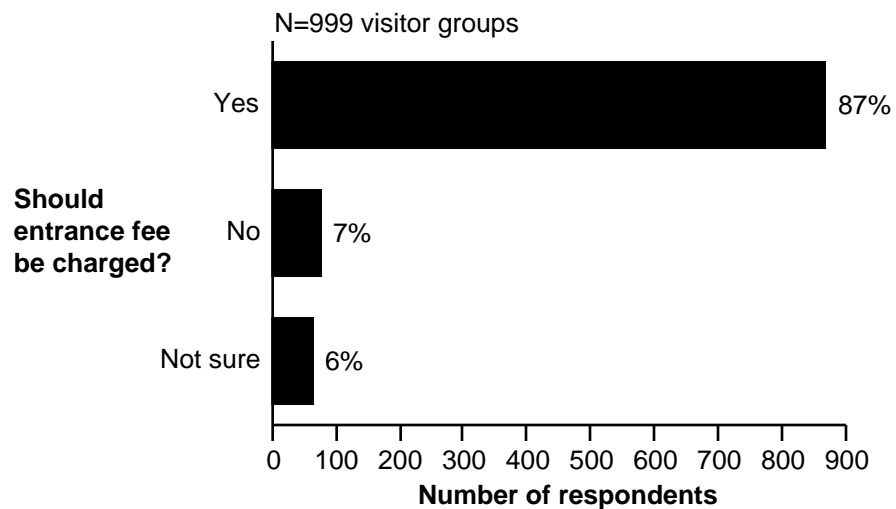
Figure 109: Type of entrance fee paid

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**Opinions about entrance fees**

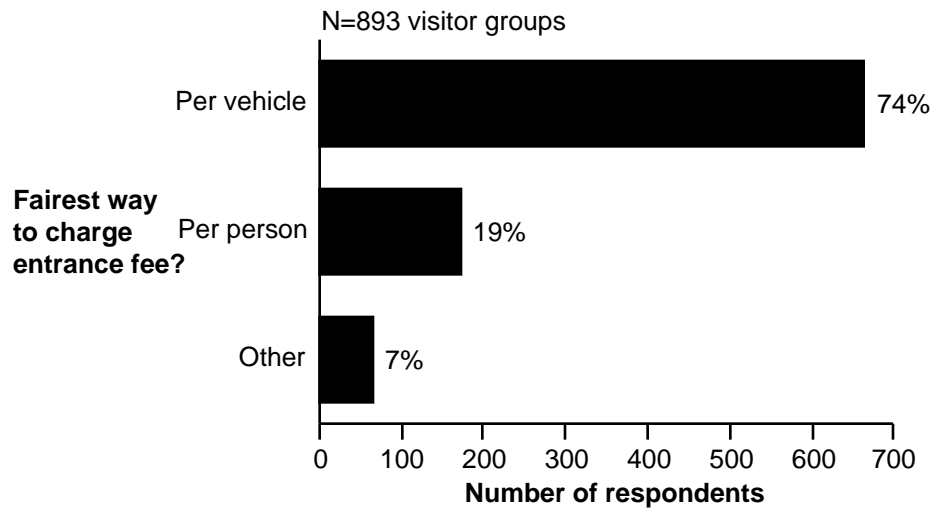
Visitors were asked their opinions about the following. "Entrance fees at Acadia NP are used to help fund park operations. Do you think an entrance fee should be charged?" Most visitor groups (87%) said that an entrance fee should be charged (see Figure 110). Seven percent of the groups said that no entrance fee should be charged and 6% were not sure.

Visitors who supported charging an entrance fee were then asked what the fairest way is to charge an entrance fee. Almost three-fourths of the visitors (74%) said the fairest way to charge a fee is "per vehicle," as shown in Figure 111. Nineteen percent suggested "per person" entrance fees. "Other" suggestions are included in Table 16.



**Figure 110: Opinions about charging entrance fees**

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**Figure 111: Opinions about fairest way to charge entrance fees**

**Table 16: "Other" fair ways to charge entrance fees**

N=88 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Per vehicle and per person combination	12
Per vehicle/ day	12
Per family fee, plus additional cost for additional adults	8
Per day	7
Keep current system	5
Based on vehicle size and number of passengers	4
Based on vehicle size	3
Bicycles/ pedestrians free	3
Free for Maine residents	2
Per family	2
Per adult	2
Waivers for people with below poverty line incomes	2
Per person with maximum per vehicle	2
Use per vehicle fee scale to encourage car pooling	2
Other suggestions	22

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**National Park  
Service mission  
at Acadia NP**

Visitor groups were asked, "What do you think is the National Park Service's mission at Acadia National Park?" Table 17 shows the listing of visitors' answers. The three top listings were preserving, protecting and maintaining the natural beauty, providing for visitors' enjoyment and recreation, and educating the public about the park and environment.

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**Table 17: National Park Service mission**

N=1,856 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Preserve, protect, maintain the natural beauty	712
Provide for enjoyment, recreation for visitors	357
Educate the public about the park/ environment	197
Keep park accessible to all people	72
Keep it safe for visitors	69
Preserve for future generations	59
Keep it clean/ unpolluted	59
Preserve/ protect wildlife	43
Limit access/ protect from overuse	39
Keep facilities well maintained	32
Serve the public in the best possible way	28
Maintain roads/ trails	23
Manage/ restore park resources	22
Provide law enforcement/ visitor safety	18
Protect cultural/ historical values	15
Keep it undeveloped/ uncommercial	14
Preserve/ provide Maine coastal experience	14
Balance use and protection	14
Protect biodiversity	13
Protect quiet/ solitude/ peacefulness	12
Provide assistance to visitors	8
Inform the public about culture/ history	7
Provide guides for visitors	6
Keep traffic uncrowded	6
Keep fees costs down	4
Provide place for personal renewal	3
Keep trails well marked	2
Inform the public about geology	2
Raise funds for the park	2
Other comments	4

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Visitor groups were asked to rate the overall quality of the visitor services provided at Acadia National Park during this visit. The majority of visitor groups (96%) rated services as "very good" or "good" (see Figure 112). Less than 1% of the visitor groups rated services as "very poor."

### Overall quality of visitor services

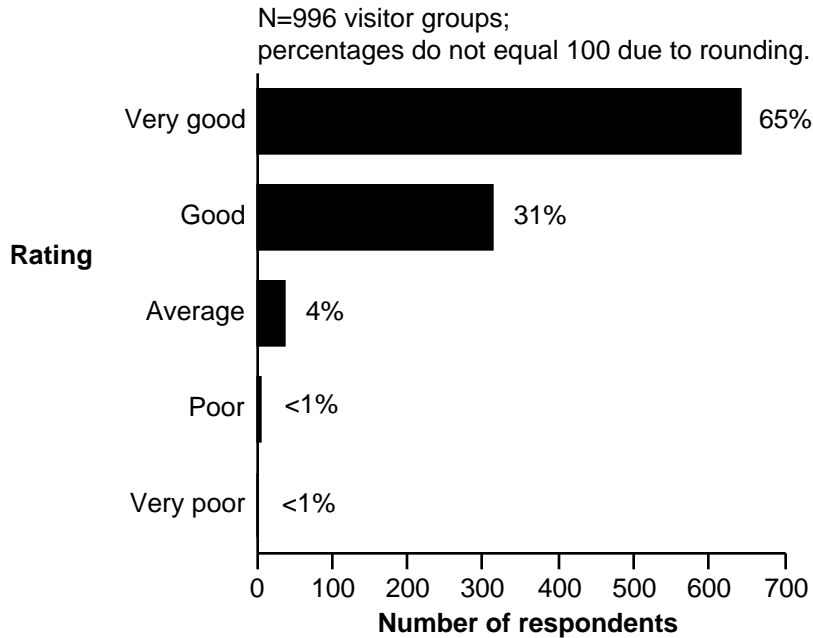


Figure 112: Overall quality of visitor services

### What visitors liked most

Visitor groups were asked "On this visit, what did you and your group like most about your visit to Acadia National Park?"

Ninety-four percent of visitor groups (997 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 18 and in the appendix.

**Table 18: What visitors liked most**

N=1,819 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Friendly/ helpful staff	7
Courteous/ helpful rangers	6
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Ranger-led walks/ programs	24
Audio tour on park loop road	3
Ranger-led tidal pool walk	3
Ship Harbor Nature Trail	3
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Hiking trails	88
Carriage roads	66
Cleanliness/ lack of litter	38
Trails	24
Park Loop Road	13
Beehive hike	8
Hiking trails in excellent condition	7
Hike/ trail to Cadillac Mt.	6
Carriage roads in excellent condition	5
Well-marked trails	4
Well maintained	4
Roads	4
Seawall Campground	4
Well organized/ well run	4
Good signs	3
Abundant trails	3
Facilities	3
Blackwoods Campground quiet/ peaceful	2
Beech Cliff Trail	2
Clean restrooms/ pit toilets	2
Ocean view drive	2
Other comments	6



Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Traveling at own speed, stopping anywhere	17
Accessibility	8
One way Park Loop Road	6
Only public access to coast in New England	4
Easy access to hiking trails	3
Being able to take dog	3
Accessible wilderness	2
Access to views	2
Other comments	6
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Nature cruise	13
Jordan Pond House tea/ popovers	6
Jordan Pond House food/ atmosphere	5
Carriage ride	4
Good food	2
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Scenic views	169
Cadillac Mt./ view	57
Coastline/ shoreline	34
Preservation of natural areas	29
Ocean	23
Areas without crowds	21
Nature	18
Sand beach	14
Abundant wildlife	13
Tidal pools	13
Lack of development/ commercialism	13
Wilderness	11
Blueberries	9
Forest/ trees	8
Beaches	8
Echo Lake/ beach	8
Birds	8
Seawall	7
Schoodic Point uncrowded	6
Jordan Lake	5
Uncrowded trails	4
Bar Harbor	4
Peregrine falcons	4
Uncrowded	4
Whale watching	4
Baby seals	3
Bass Harbor Lighthouse	3
Beehive/ view	3
Lakes	3
Otter Point/ Cliffs	3
Safety	3
Mountains	3
Mount Desert Island	3
Wild gardens	3
Lots of viewpoints	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Natural resources	3
Ponds	3
Wonderland	3
Sieur de Monts	2
Gorham Mt. view	2
Openness/ space	2
Clean water	2
Rocks	2
Cliffs	2
Islands	2
Lack of crowds before 10 a.m.	2
Geography	2
Quieter west side	2
Other comments	11
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Beauty/ scenery	319
Quiet	50
Solitude	37
The variety of outdoor activities	37
Bicycling	35
Peace/ serenity	33
Bicycling carriage roads	33
Swimming	24
Everything	22
Weather	21
Hiking/ walking	21
Camping	19
Climbing	15
Sunsets	14
The air	11
Enjoying nature	10
Relaxation	7
Friendly people	7
Sunrises	6
Picnicking	6
Walking/ climbing on rocks along the coast	6
Proximity to town	5
Hiking up mountains	5
Sharing park with family/ friends	5
Lobster	4
Walking on carriage road	4
Boating	4
Park is enchanting/ magical place	4
Driving for pleasure	3
Exploring beaches/ beachcombing	3
Sitting on rocks	3
Running on carriage road	3
Hiking less crowded trails	3
Water activities	3
Watching/ listening to ocean	3
Whale watch cruise	2
Spiritually rejuvenating	2
Spending time on cliffs	2

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS (continued)</b>	
Moon rise	2
Picnicking on coast	2
Reaching summit of Dorr Mountain	2
Exploring/enjoying Otter Cliff	2
Not having to watch out for cars	2
Boat rides	2
Hiking Gorge Trail	2
Swimming at Echo Lake	2
That park does not change	2
Shopping	2
Eating in Bar Harbor	2
Early mornings	2
Coexistence of man and nature	2
Other comments	13

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**What visitors liked least**

Visitor groups were asked "On this visit, what did you and your group like least about Acadia National Park?" Eighty-one percent of visitor groups (863 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 19 and in the appendix.

---

**Table 19: What visitors liked least**

N=1,055 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Unfriendly personnel	2
Other comments	2
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Inaccurate/ confusing carriage road maps/ information	8
Needed more information	7
Improve road maps	5
Lack of ranger-led programs	4
Park Loop Road map confusing	4
Map did not mark difficult parts of trail	2
Map difficult to read	2
Improve trail maps	2
Ranger-led program poor quality	2
Other comments	3
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Restrooms unclean, in need of maintenance	30
Lack of restrooms	20
Lack of showers	17
Road signs/ got lost	13
Trail signs	10
Campsites too small/ too close together	8
Directional signs	7
Lack of showers at Seawall Campground	7
Visitor center difficult to get to/ overwhelming	5
Signs on Park Loop Road confusing	5
Restrooms in campgrounds	5
Litter/ trash	5
Need more types of trails	5
Restrooms at Sand Beach unclean	4
Carriage road closed	4
Trails show evidence of overuse	4
Lack of distance markers on trail	3
Cigarette butts	3
Lack of showers at Sand Beach	3
Trail needs improvement	3
Improve picnic areas	3

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (continued)</b>	
Need more picnic areas	3
Women's restrooms at Blackwoods Campground need repairs	2
Women's restrooms at Seawall need repairs	2
Signs on carriage roads confusing	2
Dog waste on trails	2
Improve roads	2
Need more trash cans	2
Trails closed for maintenance	2
Add amenities to restrooms	2
Other comments	17
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Speeders on Park Loop Road	5
Mountain bikers	5
Dogs	4
Parking on side of Park Loop Road should be illegal	4
Lack of parking/ too many vehicles	3
Entrance fees	3
Ban driving up Cadillac Mountain	3
Noisy campers during quiet hours	3
Smokers	3
Dogs off leash	2
RV's should be banned	2
Bicycles on paved park roads	2
Bicycles shouldn't have to go one way on one way road	2
Bikers who do not follow one way rules	2
Add restrooms and showers to campgrounds	2
One way part of Park Loop Road	2
Concrete path at Thunder Hole ugly	2
Fees for access	2
Other comments	11
<b>CROWDING</b>	
Crowds	164
Traffic	103
Congested parking	67
Too many vehicles	19
Too many people on Cadillac Mt.	13
Too many vehicles at Sand Beach	12
Crowds at Jordan Pond	11
Too many bicycles dangerous	9
Difficult/ impossible to get a campsite	7
Crowds at Sand Beach	6
Traffic at Cadillac Mt.	4
Traffic at Thunder Hole	3
Limited parking at trailheads	3
Too many people/ bicycles on carriage roads	3
Too many people on trails	3
Parking at Echo Lake	2
Traffic at Jordan Pond	2
Parking at Thunder Hole	2

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Jordan Pond House Restaurant	5
Lack of reasonably priced places to eat	4
Carriage rides too crowded	3
Bees at outdoor restaurant at Jordan Pond House	2
Jordan Pond House gift shop	2
Jordan Pond House	2
Jordan Pond House too formal	2
Lack of places in park to get provisions	2
Other comments	3
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Lack of wildlife to be seen	6
Commercialization	6
Hearing traffic	4
Mosquitoes/ flies/ bugs, etc.	4
Lack of contiguous park/ no true backcountry	4
Too much noise	2
Unable to fish/swim in park lakes	2
Other comments	5
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Nothing	78
Time too short	31
Bar Harbor traffic	22
Having to leave	15
Large vehicles/ RV's	10
Bar Harbor parking	10
Bar Harbor crowded	6
Heat/ weather	6
Bar Harbor	5
Bicyclists who do not follow rules of the road	5
Noisy people	4
Littering visitors	4
Expensive prices	3
Bar Harbor too commercial	3
Bicycling on Rt. 3 dangerous	3
Too much driving between park viewpoints	3
Not camping in park	3
Inconsiderate drivers on Park Loop Road	3
Too hot to ride bicycles	2
Long drive to get to park	2
Pollution from other places	2
People who are insensitive to environment	2
Lodging/ motel	2
Unsupervised children	2
Too much to see	2
Seeing private homes from park	2
Seagulls stealing food from people	2
Other comments	27

Visitor groups were asked "If you were a park manager planning for the future of Acadia National Park, what would you propose? Please be specific." Seventy-four percent of visitor groups (789 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 20 and in the appendix.

## Planning for the future

**Table 20: Planning for the future**

N=1,946 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Need more rangers	10
Need more ranger presence to enforce rules	6
Train rangers better so they are familiar with park	6
Provide roving rangers	2
Need park photographers	2
Put rangers on bikes	2
Need more ranger presence at night in campgrounds	2
Other comments	5
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
More types of ranger-led programs	34
Provide more detailed hiking maps	15
Educate about environmental issues	10
Need more interpretive signs on trails	9
Provide more detailed, up-to-date maps	9
More programs for kids (up to age 16)	8
Provide education on low impact use of the park	5
Provide guided bus tours/ shuttles	4
Publicize lesser-known areas	4
VC is too small	4
Encourage off-season use	4
Make people aware of how they can help park	3
Schedule stargazing program more than once per week	3
Expand educational programs	3
Make maps more easily available	3
Make brochures available	2
Re-institute stargazing programs on Cadillac Mt	2
Need more music concerts	2
Need more info	2
Provide more info about different areas in the park	2
Number trail markers to coincide with books and audiotapes	2
Provide educational brochures	2
Educate hikers about boots, trail etiquette	2
Post large map at visitor center	2
Provide more maps	2
Provide park information at entrance station	2
Need more information stations in park	2
Advertise park more	2

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES (continued)</b>	
Improve nature center	2
Need to show video about park--make available to public	2
Advertise easily accessible areas	2
Other comments	14
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
<u>Trails/Roads</u>	
Provide more parking	329
Widen island roads to add bike/pedestrian lanes	21
Need more walks and trails	12
Maintain trails	11
Make more places accessible to wheelchairs	10
Improve parking	7
More parking needed at Sand Beach	6
Continue to maintain trails and carriage roads	5
Make a separate bike path	5
Improve trail maintenance, including preventing erosion	5
More hiking trails/ carriage roads on west side of island	5
Improve maintenance of carriage roads	5
Need better bike trails	3
Need biking and hiking access to Carriage Roads from Blackwoods	3
Make Sand Beach accessible to wheel chairs	3
Need extended, easy bike trails	3
No more roads	3
More carriage roads	3
Improve road maintenance	3
More mt. bike trails	2
Provide evacuation route in case of fire (e.g. Blackwoods)	2
Make bike system continuous through the park	2
Warning signs in dangerous spots	2
Stress importance of staying on marked trails	2
Make Park Loop Road 2-way	2
More entrances and exits for Park Loop Road	2
Maintain carriage roads during "off-season"	2
Parking on roads is hazardous	2
Manage parking	2
Other comments	9
<u>Signs</u>	
Improve trail signs	11
Improve Park Loop Road signs	7
Trails poorly marked	5
Better signs	4
Put distance/ time on trail signs	4
Use trail maps with "you are here" marked at trailheads, intersections	3
Mileage signs on roads	2
Mileage signs on carriage roads	2
Improve road directional signs	2
Add signs	2



Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (continued)</b>	
<u>Restrooms/Showers</u>	
Need more restrooms	29
Improve maintenance/ cleanliness of restrooms	11
Improve restrooms - add flush toilets	9
More restrooms at trailheads	5
Freshwater showers at Sand Beach	3
Need showers at Blackwoods	2
Need hot water in restrooms	2
Restore changing rooms at Echo Lake	2
Need water & electricity at RV sties	2
Showers by the beach	2
Other comments	2
<u>Campgrounds</u>	
Need hot showers at campgrounds	27
Need more campgrounds	16
Keep it clean	8
Keep vistas cleared	6
Improve existing facilities	6
Provide more picnic tables	5
More trash cans	5
More emphasis on recycling	4
Need more space between campsites	4
Need bike racks	3
Need bigger beach area/need more beach areas	3
Need drinking fountains	3
Drinking water on trails	3
Empty trashcans more often	3
Encourage visitors to pickup trash (e.g. provide bags)	3
Require dog waste cleanup	2
Need second beach at Echo Lake	2
Need benches along trails, at VC	2
Need electricity at campsites	2
Improve beaches - Sand Beach, Echo Lake	2
Clear scrap piles/ chip downed trees and branches	2
Maintain facilities	2
Gardens at Sieur De Monts not well-maintained	2
Other comments	8
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Collect entrance fee from everyone	21
Increase fees	14
Encourage "people-powered" activities, not "motor-powered"	13
Ban RVs	12
Increase number and variety of fees charged	9
Limit where bicycles are allowed - not on major roads	9
Ban dogs and pets	7
Keep entrance fee affordable	7
Limit RV's to certain areas in park	7
Need a day pass	6
Enforce laws about not removing specimens: plants, sealife	6
Keep it open for public	6
Enforce speed limit	5

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICIES (continued)</b>	
Ban smoking	5
Charge additional user fees to help maintain park	5
Develop partnerships with local towns to solve problems	5
Enforce dog leash rules	4
Limit RV's on Park Loop Road	4
Enforce bike rules	4
Prohibit parking on roads - too dangerous	4
Continue to allow private vehicles	3
Charge fines for littering	3
Pay entrance fee at VC	3
Ban/ limit use of jet-skis	3
Keep bikes and cars on separate roads	3
7 day pass: car/ shuttle on alternate days	3
Have day and weekly passes for shuttles	3
Open up remote areas to backpacking	3
Obtain increased funding for park from Congress	3
Keep fees in park - use for maintenance	3
Enforce park rules strictly	3
Reduce speed limits	3
Enforce not feeding wild animals	2
Charge fees for vehicles: waive for bikers and hikers	2
Charge more for out-of-state cars	2
Sometimes bikes on Park Loop Road are hazardous	2
Restrict tour buses	2
Improve campsite reservation/ non-reservation assignment	2
Entrance fees too expensive	2
Couldn't find entrance station - locate at Park Loop Road entrance	2
Control bike speed: hazardous to others	2
Ban bus tours on island	2
Work with Friends of Acadia, establish trust fund to preserve	2
Ban consumer products which end up as litter	2
Other comments	26
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Expand food service (need less expensive options)	19
Fewer gift shops in the park	9
Need bike rental at park entrance	7
No more businesses in park	4
No more restaurants in park	4
Provide vending machines	4
Horse rentals	3
Lodge for overnight stays	3
Boat/ kayak/ canoe rentals	3
Improve restaurant service	3
Ferries to islands	3
Need another restaurant in park	2
Need information about reasonably priced grocery stores	2
Boat rides to Schoodic Peninsula	2
No more hotels, restaurants, and bars	2
Other comments	10

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Preserve wildness/keep it natural	81
Acquire as much land on MDI as possible	26
Do not commercialize/ reduce commercialization	22
Limit development	17
Limit access to environmentally sensitive areas	7
Minimize human-caused damage to environment	6
Limit access	5
Place rotating parts of park and trails on sabbaticals	4
Expand park	4
Introduce more wildlife	3
Concerned about air pollution	2
Keep it quiet	2
Replant damaged areas	2
Purchase or lease private carriage roads	2
Stock fish in fresh water lakes	2
Other comments	4
<b>CROWDING</b>	
Provide frequent shuttle	112
Limit number of vehicles	93
Limit number of people	47
Keep shuttle free	23
Ban cars	14
Plan for increase in number of visitors	13
Provide underground parking with shuttle	12
Use reservation system to limit access	11
Better traffic control - use traffic police if needed	8
Use shuttle service	8
Electric shuttle bus	7
Shuttle only on Cadillac Mt	6
Trams/shuttles should be optional	6
Do not limit vehicle access to park	6
Shuttles need to be wheelchair/ elderly accessible	6
Limit visitation through increase in fees	5
Park outside park, shuttle in	5
Shuttle needs to transport bikes	4
Limit drive-through visitors, encourage hikers	4
Multiple types of public transit	4
Monorail/ light rail system	4
Do not allow overcrowding	4
Parking at trail heads	4
Shuttle to Sand beach	3
Ban cars on park loop road	3
Shuttle on Park Loop Road (continuous)	3
Limit parking	2
Reservations during peak periods	2
Provide shuttle to Bar Harbor	2
Build parking lots where needed	2
Centrally coordinated park and ride stops to major attractions	2
Other comments	24

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<u>Comment</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Keep up good work	28
Nothing should be done/changed	13
Great park	4
Need more parks in Northeast U.S. to reduce crowding	4
Need better parking at Bar Harbor	3
Need better road planning/ traffic control at Bar Harbor	3
It's beautiful	2
Prevent building of motels and hotels in area, to limit crowds	2
Need more park land along mainland coast	2
Add traffic lights	2
Encourage building limit on island	2
Other comments	20

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Sixty-three percent of visitor groups (669 groups) wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments about Acadia National Park are summarized below in Table 21 and in the appendix.

### Comment summary

**Table 21: Additional comments**  
N=1,498 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Employees friendly, helpful, knowledgeable	49
Rangers courteous, helpful, knowledgeable	22
Need more rangers	5
Ranger/ staff not knowledgeable	5
Exceptional park employees	2
Need rangers on bicycles to enforce bicycle regulations	2
Hire excellent staff	2
Rangers should enforce noise rules in campgrounds	2
Other comments	4
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Enjoyed ranger programs	16
Provide more information on park activities with schedules	15
Provide more detailed maps/ information for hiking	4
Offer more guided hikes/ tours	4
Film in visitor center excellent - show on big screen	4
Provide more in-depth ranger programs	3
No seals at Seal Beach--should not direct people there	3
Excellent ranger guide on boat cruise	3
Junior Ranger program excellent	3
Need maps available at trailheads	3
Interpretation well done	3
Inform visitors of available activities outside park	2
Need more information on campgrounds/ prices	2
Enjoyed Kodak program	2
Maps and trail guides well done	2
Trail guides should be more readily available	2
Visitor center helpful	2
Provide more information about plants and animals	2
Provide more written information about park	2
Other comments	15

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Park clean/ well maintained	43
Provide better signs/ information on trails (mileage, difficulty)	24
Need more directional signs	10
Provide hot water and showers	9
Hiking trails clean/ well maintained	9
Keep park maintained/clean	8
Need better/clearer signs	7
Improve trail maintenance	7
Need more restrooms	6
Improve accessibility and services for disabled	6
Restrooms not clean	6
Need more parking	6
Need bike lanes on all roads	4
Reduce trash	4
Good variety of trails	3
Attractions well signed	3
Good roads - good views	3
Add amenities (playground, dishwashing area) to campgrounds	3
Campground restrooms and campsites clean	2
Carriage ride unique and memorable	2
Well thought out and planned	2
Good accessibility	2
Surprised by trail closures and carriage road construction	2
Do not add parking	2
Campground is a fire trap (only one access road)	2
Add recycling and garbage cans	2
Other comments	27
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Required use of shuttle bus would prevent or reduce our return	8
Limiting vehicles is a necessary	7
Glad to pay entrance fee	5
Shuttle bus would not allow us to bring our supplies	4
Entrance fee too expensive	3
Willing to pay higher fee	3
Keep entrance fee affordable	3
Congress should entirely fund parks so no entrance fee needed	3
Campground full - unjust with empty campsites	3
Prosecute those who break park rules	3
Limit access to park	2
Trail maps should be included with entrance fee	2
Bicycles on roads and carriage roads dangerous	2
Great to be able to bring dogs	2
Enforce speed limits	2
Concerned about foreign control of U.S. parks	2
Prefer first come, first served camping	2
Keep fees for use to improve park	2
Keep/ advertise annual pass for frequent users	2
Park boundaries confusing	2
Other comments	26

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Bicycle rentals at carriage roads	3
No more restaurants/ food vendors	3
Park very commercial	2
Improve quality of food	2
Jordan Pond house too crowded	2
Do not like gift shops at natural attractions	2
Other comments	10
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Preserve/ protect the park/ keep it undeveloped	45
Park too crowded	19
Park is not crowded - keep it that way	15
Too much traffic - need alternatives	11
Continue balancing preservation and use	5
Crowded, but there are still places to escape crowds	5
Backcountry is not crowded	4
Traffic not a distraction	4
Disappointed not to see wildlife	4
Traffic and development much increased in 30 years	3
Too few areas for swimming	2
Scheduled tour buses needed for higher traffic areas	2
Preserve the ability to have individual experience	2
Concerned about air pollution	2
Manage the wildlife	2
Other comments	17
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Enjoyed visit	244
Beautiful park	128
Plan to return	96
Keep up the good work	69
Have visited before/ visit often	55
Favorite park	45
Thank you	39
Enjoy variety of landscapes to explore	21
Peaceful/ relaxing	20
Visit too short	19
Place a treasure/unique	12
Enjoyed hiking	7
Park a high point to vacation	6
NPS should be enlarged, funding increased	5
A great place to live	5
Enjoy park in other less crowded seasons	5
Physically challenging/ great exercise	4
Bring our guests here	4
Great weather	4
Enjoyed carriage roads	4
Glad to see people enjoy national parks	4
Restrooms clean	4
Recommended to friends	3
Favorite vacation	3
Enjoyed carriage roads	3

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS (continued)</b>	
Educational visit	3
Bar Harbor too developed	3
Activities outside the park just as important as those in park	2
Liked family atmosphere	2
Park has not changed in over 20 years	2
Thanks for asking our opinions	2
Fond memories of childhood visits	2
Unaware August is most crowded season	2
Feel safe here	2
Would like to work/ volunteer for NPS	2
Other visitors do not respect nature	2
Other visitors courteous	2
Proud of park	2
Other comments	18

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## Acadia National Park Additional Analysis VSP Report 108

The Visitor Services Project (VSP) staff offers the opportunity to learn more from VSP visitor study data.

### Additional Analysis

Additional analysis can be done using the park's VSP visitor study data that was collected and entered into the computer. Two-way and three-way cross tabulations can be made of any of the characteristics listed below. Be as specific as possible--you may select a single program/ service/ facility instead of all that were listed in the questionnaire. Include your name, address and phone number in the request.

- Sources of information
- Sources of info outside Acadia
- Days on Mount Desert Island
- Days in park
- Visitor center visits
- Forms of transportation
- Bicycle use
- Bicycle source
- Activities
- Commercial activities
- English as primary language?
- Group size
- With guided tour group?
- Group type
- Group members disabled?
- Access/ service problems
- Age
- State of residence
- Country of residence
- Number of park visits
- Bring pets?
- Encounter dogs off leash?
- Dogs interfere with visit?
- Park Loop Road entries
- Park Loop Road entrance used
- Number of entries to Park Loop Road
- Traffic/ parking problems in park
- Traffic/ parking problems on MDI?
- Places visited
- Information services use
- Information service importance
- Information service quality
- Service/ facility use
- Service/ facility importance
- Service/ facility quality
- Overall quality rating
- Overnight stays on MDI
- Type of accommodations used
- Locations of overnight stay
- Overnight stay locations off island
- Park feature/ quality importance
- Visitor interference with visit
- Willingness to ride free transport bus
- Willingness to pay to ride transport bus
- Kind of entrance fee paid
- Fairest type of entrance fee

### Database

The VSP database is currently being revised to allow easier access to the data. To obtain database information or to make queries of the VSP database, please call or FAX the numbers below.

Phone/send requests to:

**Visitor Services Project, CPSU  
College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho 83844-1133**

**Phone: 208-885-7863  
FAX: 208-885-4261**



## QUESTIONNAIRE



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## Visitor Services Project Publications

Reports 1-6 (pilot studies) are available from the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit. All other VSP reports listed are available from the parks where the studies were conducted or from the UI CPSU. All studies were conducted in summer unless otherwise noted.

**1982**

1. Mapping interpretive services: A pilot study at Grand Teton National Park.

**1983**

2. Mapping interpretive services: Identifying barriers to adoption and diffusion of the method.
3. Mapping interpretive services: A follow-up study at Yellowstone National Park and Mt Rushmore National Memorial.
4. Mapping visitor populations: A pilot study at Yellowstone National Park.

**1985**

5. North Cascades National Park Service Complex
6. Crater Lake National Park

**1986**

7. Gettysburg National Military Park
8. Independence National Historical Park
9. Valley Forge National Historical Park

**1987**

10. Colonial National Historical Park (summer & fall)
11. Grand Teton National Park
12. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
13. Mesa Verde National Park
14. Shenandoah National Park (summer & fall)
15. Yellowstone National Park
16. Independence National Historical Park: Four Seasons Study

**1988**

17. Glen Canyon National Recreational Area
18. Denali National Park and Preserve
19. Bryce Canyon National Park
20. Craters of the Moon National Monument

**1989**

21. Everglades National Park (winter)
22. Statue of Liberty National Monument
23. The White House Tours, President's Park (summer)
24. Lincoln Home National Historical Site
25. Yellowstone National Park
26. Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
27. Muir Woods National Monument

**1990**

28. Canyonlands National Park (spring)
29. White Sands National Monument
30. National Monuments, Washington, D.C.
31. Kenai Fjords National Park
32. Gateway National Recreation Area
33. Petersburg National Battlefield
34. Death Valley National Monument
35. Glacier National Park
36. Scott's Bluff National Monument
37. John Day Fossil Beds National Monument

**1991**

38. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park (spring)
39. Joshua Tree National Monument (spring)
40. The White House Tours, President's Park (spring)
41. Natchez Trace Parkway (spring)
42. Stehekin-North Cascades NP/ Lake Chelan NRA
43. City of Rocks National Reserve
44. The White House Tours, President's Park (fall)

**1992**

45. Big Bend National Park (spring)
46. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (spring)
47. Glen Echo Park (spring)
48. Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
49. Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
50. Zion National Park
51. New River Gorge National River
52. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (AK)
53. Arlington House-The Robert E. Lee Memorial

**1993**

54. Belle Haven Park/Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (spring)
  55. Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (spring)
  56. Whitman Mission National Historic Site
  57. Sitka National Historical Park
  58. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (summer)
  59. Redwood National Park
  60. Channel Islands National Park
  61. Pecos National Historical Park
  62. Canyon de Chelly National Monument
  63. Bryce Canyon National Park (fall)
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**Visitor Services Project Publications (continued)**

- 1994**
- 64. Death Valley National Monument Backcountry (winter)
  - 65. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (spring)
  - 66. Anchorage Alaska Public Lands Information Center
  - 67. Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts
  - 68. Nez Perce National Historical Park
  - 69. Edison National Historic Site
  - 70. San Juan Island National Historical Park
  - 71. Canaveral National Seashore
  - 72. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (fall)
  - 73. Gettysburg National Military Park (fall)
- 1995**
- 74. Grand Teton National Park (winter)
  - 75. Yellowstone National Park (winter)
  - 76. Bandelier National Monument
  - 77. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve
  - 78. Adams National Historic Site
  - 79. Devils Tower National Monument
  - 80. Manassas National Battlefield Park
  - 81. Booker T. Washington National Monument
  - 82. San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
  - 83. Dry Tortugas National Park
- 1996**
- 84. Everglades National Park (spring)
  - 85. Chiricahua National Monument (spring)
  - 86. Fort Bowie National Historic Site (spring)
  - 87. Great Falls Park, Virginia (spring)
  - 88. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer)
  - 89. Chamizal National Memorial
  - 90. Death Valley National Park (fall)
  - 91. Prince William Forest Park (fall)
- 1997**
- 92. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer & fall)
  - 93. Virgin Islands National Park (winter)
  - 94. Mojave National Preserve (spring)
  - 95. Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historical Park (spring)
  - 96. Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial
  - 97. Grand Teton National Park
  - 98. Bryce Canyon National Park
  - 99. Voyageurs National Park
  - 100. Lowell National Historical Park
- 1998**
- 101. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve (spring)
  - 102. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (spring)
  - 103. Cumberland Island National Seashore (spring)
  - 104. Iwo Jima/Netherlands Carillon Memorials
  - 105. National Monuments & Memorials, Washington, D.C.
  - 106. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (AK)
  - 107. Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
  - 108. Acadia National Park

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit; phone (208) 885-7863.

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**May 1999**



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# Acadia National Park

## Visitor Study

Summer 1998

### Appendix 2

Margaret Littlejohn

**Visitor Services Project  
Report 108**

May 1999

This volume contains a summary of visitors' comments for Questions 28, 29, 30 and 31. The summary is followed by visitors' unedited comments.

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Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Tom Wade, the staff and volunteers of Acadia National Park for their assistance with this study. The VSP acknowledges the Public Opinion Lab of the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University, for its technical assistance.

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### What visitors liked most

N=1,819 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Friendly/ helpful staff	7
Courteous/ helpful rangers	6
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Ranger-led walks/ programs	24
Audio tour on park loop road	3
Ranger-led tidal pool walk	3
Ship Harbor Nature Trail	3
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Hiking trails	88
Carriage roads	66
Cleanliness/ lack of litter	38
Trails	24
Park Loop Road	13
Beehive hike	8
Hiking trails in excellent condition	7
Hike/ trail to Cadillac Mt.	6
Carriage roads in excellent condition	5
Well-marked trails	4
Well maintained	4
Roads	4
Seawall Campground	4
Well organized/ well run	4
Good signs	3
Abundant trails	3
Facilities	3
Blackwoods Campground quiet/ peaceful	2
Beech Cliff Trail	2
Clean restrooms/ pit toilets	2
Ocean view drive	2
Other comments	6
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Traveling at own speed, stopping anywhere	17
Accessibility	8
One way Park Loop Road	6
Only public access to coast in New England	4
Easy access to hiking trails	3
Being able to take dog	3
Accessible wilderness	2
Access to views	2
Other comments	6

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Nature cruise	13
Jordan Pond House tea/ popovers	6
Jordan Pond House food/ atmosphere	5
Carriage ride	4
Good food	2
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Scenic views	169
Cadillac Mt./ view	57
Coastline/ shoreline	34
Preservation of natural areas	29
Ocean	23
Areas without crowds	21
Nature	18
Sand beach	14
Abundant wildlife	13
Tidal pools	13
Lack of development/ commercialism	13
Wilderness	11
Blueberries	9
Forest/ trees	8
Beaches	8
Echo Lake/ beach	8
Birds	8
Seawall	7
Schoodic Point uncrowded	6
Jordan Lake	5
Uncrowded trails	4
Bar Harbor	4
Peregrine falcons	4
Uncrowded	4
Whale watching	4
Baby seals	3
Bass Harbor Lighthouse	3
Beehive/ view	3
Lakes	3
Otter Point/ Cliffs	3
Safety	3
Mountains	3
Mount Desert Island	3
Wild gardens	3
Lots of viewpoints	3
Natural resources	3
Ponds	3
Wonderland	3
Sieur de Monts	2
Gorham Mt. view	2
Openness/ space	2
Clean water	2
Rocks	2
Cliffs	2
Islands	2
Lack of crowds before 10 a.m.	2
Geography	2
Quieter west side	2
Other comments	11

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Beauty/ scenery	319
Quiet	50
Solitude	37
The variety of outdoor activities	37
Bicycling	35
Peace/ serenity	33
Bicycling carriage roads	33
Swimming	24
Everything	22
Weather	21
Hiking/ walking	21
Camping	19
Climbing	15
Sunsets	14
The air	11
Enjoying nature	10
Relaxation	7
Friendly people	7
Sunrises	6
Picnicking	6
Walking/ climbing on rocks along the coast	6
Proximity to town	5
Hiking up mountains	5
Sharing park with family/ friends	5
Lobster	4
Walking on carriage road	4
Boating	4
Park is enchanting/ magical place	4
Driving for pleasure	3
Exploring beaches/ beachcombing	3
Sitting on rocks	3
Running on carriage road	3
Hiking less crowded trails	3
Water activities	3
Watching/ listening to ocean	3
Whale watch cruise	2
Spiritually rejuvenating	2
Spending time on cliffs	2
Moon rise	2
Picnicking on coast	2
Reaching summit of Dorr Mountain	2
Exploring/enjoying Otter Cliff	2
Not having to watch out for cars	2
Boat rides	2
Hiking Gorge Trail	2
Swimming at Echo Lake	2
That park does not change	2
Shopping	2
Eating in Bar Harbor	2
Early mornings	2
Coexistence of man and nature	2
Other comments	13

---

### What visitors liked least

N=1,055 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Unfriendly personnel	2
Other comments	2
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Inaccurate/ confusing carriage road maps/ information	8
Needed more information	7
Improve road maps	5
Lack of ranger-led programs	4
Park Loop Road map confusing	4
Map did not mark difficult parts of trail	2
Map difficult to read	2
Improve trail maps	2
Ranger-led program poor quality	2
Other comments	3
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Restrooms unclean, in need of maintenance	30
Lack of restrooms	20
Lack of showers	17
Road signs/ got lost	13
Trail signs	10
Campsites too small/ too close together	8
Directional signs	7
Lack of showers at Seawall Campground	7
Visitor center difficult to get to/ overwhelming	5
Signs on Park Loop Road confusing	5
Restrooms in campgrounds	5
Litter/ trash	5
Need more types of trails	5
Restrooms at Sand Beach unclean	4
Carriage road closed	4
Trails show evidence of overuse	4
Lack of distance markers on trail	3
Cigarette butts	3
Lack of showers at Sand Beach	3
Trail needs improvement	3
Improve picnic areas	3
Need more picnic areas	3
Women's restrooms at Blackwoods Campground need repaired	2
Women's restrooms at Seawall need repaired	2
Signs on carriage roads confusing	2
Dog waste on trails	2
Improve roads	2
Need more trash cans	2
Trails closed for maintenance	2
Add amenities to restrooms	2
Other comments	17

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<u>Comment</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Speeders on Park Loop Road	5
Mountain bikers	5
Dogs	4
Parking on side of Park Loop Road should be illegal	4
Lack of parking/ too many vehicles	3
Entrance fees	3
Ban driving up Cadillac Mountain	3
Noisy campers during quiet hours	3
Smokers	3
Dogs off leash	2
RV's should be banned	2
Bicycles on paved park roads	2
Bicycles shouldn't have to go one way on one way road	2
Bikers who do not follow one way rules	2
Add restrooms and showers to campgrounds	2
One way part of Park Loop Road	2
Concrete path at Thunder Hole ugly	2
Fees for access	2
Other comments	11
<b>CROWDING</b>	
Crowds	164
Traffic	103
Congested parking	67
Too many vehicles	19
Too many people on Cadillac Mt.	13
Too many vehicles at Sand Beach	12
Crowds at Jordan Pond	11
Too many bicycles dangerous	9
Difficult/ impossible to get a campsite	7
Crowds at Sand Beach	6
Traffic at Cadillac Mt.	4
Traffic at Thunder Hole	3
Limited parking at trailheads	3
Too many people/ bicycles on carriage roads	3
Too many people on trails	3
Parking at Echo Lake	2
Traffic at Jordan Pond	2
Parking at Thunder Hole	2
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Jordan Pond House Restaurant	5
Lack of reasonably priced places to eat	4
Carriage rides too crowded	3
Bees at outdoor restaurant at Jordan Pond House	2
Jordan Pond House gift shop	2
Jordan Pond House	2
Jordan Pond House too formal	2
Lack of places in park to get provisions	2
Other comments	3

<u>Comment</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Lack of wildlife to be seen	6
Commercialization	6
Hearing traffic	4
Mosquitoes/ flies/ bugs, etc.	4
Lack of contiguous park/ no true backcountry	4
Too much noise	2
Unable to fish/swim in park lakes	2
Other comments	5
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Nothing	78
Time too short	31
Bar Harbor traffic	22
Having to leave	15
Large vehicles/ RV's	10
Bar Harbor parking	10
Bar Harbor crowded	6
Heat/ weather	6
Bar Harbor	5
Bicyclists who do not follow rules of the road	5
Noisy people	4
Littering visitors	4
Expensive prices	3
Bar Harbor too commercial	3
Bicycling on Rt. 3 dangerous	3
Too much driving between park viewpoints	3
Not camping in park	3
Inconsiderate drivers on Park Loop Road	3
Too hot to ride bicycles	2
Long drive to get to park	2
Pollution from other places	2
People who are insensitive to environment	2
Lodging/ motel	2
Unsupervised children	2
Too much to see	2
Seeing private homes from park	2
Seagulls stealing food from people	2
Other comments	27



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## Planning for the future

N=1,946 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Need more rangers	10
Need more ranger presence to enforce rules	6
Train rangers better so they are familiar with park	6
Provide roving rangers	2
Need park photographers	2
Put rangers on bikes	2
Need more ranger presence at night in campgrounds	2
Other comments	5
 <b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
More types of ranger-led programs	34
Provide more detailed hiking maps	15
Educate about environmental issues	10
Need more interpretive signs on trails	9
Provide more detailed, up-to-date maps	9
More programs for kids (up to age 16)	8
Provide education on low impact use of the park	5
Provide guided bus tours/ shuttles	4
Publicize lesser-known areas	4
VC is too small	4
Encourage off-season use	4
Make people aware of how they can help park	3
Schedule stargazing program more than once per week	3
Expand educational programs	3
Make maps more easily available	3
Make brochures available	2
Re-institute stargazing programs on Cadillac Mt	2
Need more music concerts	2
Need more info	2
Provide more info about different areas in the park	2
Number trail markers to coincide with books and audiotapes	2
Provide educational brochures	2
Educate hikers about boots, trail etiquette	2
Post large map at visitor center	2
Provide more maps	2
Provide park information at entrance station	2
Need more information stations in park	2
Advertise park more	2
Improve nature center	2
Need to show video about park--make available to public	2
Advertise easily accessible areas	2
Other comments	14

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<u>Comment</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
<u>Trails/Roads</u>	
Provide more parking	329
Widen island roads to add bike/pedestrian lanes	21
Need more walks and trails	12
Maintain trails	11
Make more places accessible to wheelchairs	10
Improve parking	7
More parking needed at Sand Beach	6
Continue to maintain trails and carriage roads	5
Make a separate bike path	5
Improve trail maintenance, including preventing erosion	5
More hiking trails/ carriage roads on west side of island	5
Improve maintenance of carriage roads	5
Need better bike trails	3
Need biking and hiking access to Carriage Roads from Blackwoods	3
Make Sand Beach accessible to wheel chairs	3
Need extended, easy bike trails	3
No more roads	3
More carriage roads	3
Improve road maintenance	3
More mt. bike trails	2
Provide evacuation route in case of fire (e.g. Blackwoods)	2
Make bike system continuous through the park	2
Warning signs in dangerous spots	2
Stress importance of staying on marked trails	2
Make Park Loop Road 2-way	2
More entrances and exits for Park Loop Road	2
Maintain carriage roads during "off-season"	2
Parking on roads is hazardous	2
Manage parking	2
Other comments	9
<u>Signs</u>	
Improve trail signs	11
Improve Park Loop Road signs	7
Trails poorly marked	5
Better signs	4
Put distance/ time on trail signs	4
Use trail maps with "you are here" at trailheads, intersections	3
Mileage signs on roads	2
Mileage signs on carriage roads	2
Improve road directional signs	2
Add signs	2
<u>Restrooms&gt;Showers</u>	
Need more restrooms	29
Improve maintenance/ cleanliness of restrooms	11
Improve restrooms - add flush toilets	9
More restrooms at trailheads	5
Freshwater showers at Sand Beach	3
Need showers at Blackwoods	2
Need hot water in restrooms	2
Restore changing rooms at Echo Lake	2
Need water & electricity at RV sties	2
Showers by the beach	2
Other comments	2

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (continued)</b>	
<u>Campgrounds</u>	
Need hot showers at campgrounds	27
Need more campgrounds	16
Keep it clean	8
Keep vistas cleared	6
Improve existing facilities	6
Provide more picnic tables	5
More trash cans	5
More emphasis on recycling	4
Need more space between campsites	4
Need bike racks	3
Need bigger beach area/need more beach areas	3
Need drinking fountains	3
Drinking water on trails	3
Empty trashcans more often	3
Encourage visitors to pickup trash (e.g. provide bags)	3
Require dog waste cleanup	2
Need second beach at Echo Lake	2
Need benches along trails, at VC	2
Need electricity at campsites	2
Improve beaches - Sand Beach, Echo Lake	2
Clear scrap piles/ chip downed trees and branches	2
Maintain facilities	2
Gardens at Sieur De Monts not well-maintained	2
Other comments	8
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Collect entrance fee from everyone	21
Increase fees	14
Encourage "people-powered" activities, not "motor-powered"	13
Ban RVs	12
Increase number and variety of fees charged	9
Limit where bicycles are allowed - not on major roads	9
Ban dogs and pets	7
Keep entrance fee affordable	7
Limit RV's to certain areas in park	7
Need a day pass	6
Enforce laws about not removing specimens: plants, sealife	6
Keep it open for public	6
Enforce speed limit	5
Ban smoking	5
Charge additional user fees to help maintain park	5
Develop partnerships with local towns to solve problems	5
Enforce dog leash rules	4
Limit RV's on Park Loop Road	4
Enforce bike rules	4
Prohibit parking on roads - too dangerous	4
Continue to allow private vehicles	3
Charge fines for littering	3
Pay entrance fee at VC	3
Ban/ limit use of jet-skis	3
Keep bikes and cars on separate roads	3
7 day pass: car/ shuttle on alternate days	3
Have day and weekly passes for shuttles	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICIES (continued)</b>	
Open up remote areas to backpacking	3
Obtain increased funding for park from Congress	3
Keep fees in park - use for maintenance	3
Enforce park rules strictly	3
Reduce speed limits	3
Enforce not feeding wild animals	2
Charge fees for vehicles: waive for bikers and hikers	2
Charge more for out-of-state cars	2
Sometimes bikes on Park Loop Road are hazardous	2
Restrict tour buses	2
Improve campsite reservation/ non-reservation assignment	2
Entrance fees too expensive	2
Couldn't find entrance station - locate at Park Loop Road entrance	2
Control bike speed: hazardous to others	2
Ban bus tours on island	2
Work with Friends of Acadia, establish trust fund to preserve	2
Ban consumer products which end up as litter	2
Other comments	26
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Expand food service (need less expensive options)	19
Fewer gift shops in the park	9
Need bike rental at park entrance	7
No more businesses in park	4
No more restaurants in park	4
Provide vending machines	4
Horse rentals	3
Lodge for overnight stays	3
Boat/ kayak/ canoe rentals	3
Improve restaurant service	3
Ferries to islands	3
Need another restaurant in park	2
Need information about reasonably priced grocery stores	2
Boat rides to Schoodic Peninsula	2
No more hotels, restaurants, and bars	2
Other comments	10
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Preserve wildness/keep it natural	81
Acquire as much land on MDI as possible	26
Do not commercialize/ reduce commercialization	22
Limit development	17
Limit access to environmentally sensitive areas	7
Minimize human-caused damage to environment	6
Limit access	5
Place rotating parts of park and trails on sabbaticals	4
Expand park	4
Introduce more wildlife	3
Concerned about air pollution	2
Keep it quiet	2
Replant damaged areas	2
Purchase or lease private carriage roads	2
Stock fish in fresh water lakes	2
Other comments	4

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>CROWDING</b>	
Provide frequent shuttle	112
Limit number of vehicles	93
Limit number of people	47
Keep shuttle free	23
Ban cars	14
Plan for increase in number of visitors	13
Provide underground parking with shuttle	12
Use reservation system to limit access	11
Better traffic control - use traffic police if needed	8
Use shuttle service	8
Electric shuttle bus	7
Shuttle only on Cadillac Mt	6
Trams/shuttles should be optional	6
Do not limit vehicle access to park	6
Shuttles need to be wheelchair/ elderly accessible	6
Limit visitation through increase in fees	5
Park outside park, shuttle in	5
Shuttle needs to transport bikes	4
Limit drive through visitors, encourage hikers	4
Multiple types of public transit	4
Monorail/ light rail system	4
Do not allow overcrowding	4
Parking at trail heads	4
Shuttle to Sand beach	3
Ban cars on park loop road	3
Shuttle on Park Loop Road (continuous)	3
Limit parking	2
Reservations during peak periods	2
Provide shuttle to Bar Harbor	2
Build parking lots where needed	2
Centrally coordinated park and ride stops to major attractions	2
Other comments	24
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Keep up good work	28
Nothing should be done/changed	13
Great park	4
Need more parks in Northeast U.S. to reduce crowding	4
Need better parking at Bar Harbor	3
Need better road planning/ traffic control at Bar Harbor	3
It's beautiful	2
Prevent building of motels and hotels in area, to limit crowds	2
Need more park land along mainland coast	2
Add traffic lights	2
Encourage building limit on island	2
Other comments	20

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### Additional comments

N=1,498 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Employees friendly, helpful, knowledgeable	49
Rangers courteous, helpful, knowledgeable	22
Need more rangers	5
Ranger/ staff not knowledgeable	5
Exceptional park employees	2
Need rangers on bicycles to enforce bicycle regulations	2
Hire excellent staff	2
Rangers should enforce noise rules in campgrounds	2
Other comments	4
 <b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Enjoyed ranger programs	16
Provide more information on park activities with schedules	15
Provide more detailed maps/ information for hiking	4
Offer more guided hikes/ tours	4
Film in visitor center excellent - show on big screen	4
Provide more in-depth ranger programs	3
No seals at Seal Beach--should not direct people there	3
Excellent ranger guide on boat cruise	3
Junior Ranger program excellent	3
Need maps available at trailheads	3
Interpretation well done	3
Inform visitors of available activities outside park	2
Need more information on campgrounds/ prices	2
Enjoyed Kodak program	2
Maps and trail guides well done	2
Trail guides should be more readily available	2
Visitor center helpful	2
Provide more information about plants and animals	2
Provide more written information about park	2
Other comments	15
 <b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Park clean/ well maintained	43
Provide better signs/ information on trails (mileage, difficulty)	24
Need more directional signs	10
Provide hot water and showers	9
Hiking trails clean/ well maintained	9
Keep park maintained/clean	8
Need better/clearer signs	7
Improve trail maintenance	7
Need more restrooms	6
Improve accessibility and services for disabled	6
Restrooms not clean	6
Need more parking	6
Need bike lanes on all roads	4

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
Reduce trash	4
Good variety of trails	3
Attractions well signed	3
Good roads - good views	3
Add amenities (playground, dishwashing area) to campgrounds	3
Campground restrooms and campsites clean	2
Carriage ride unique and memorable	2
Well thought out and planned	2
Good accessibility	2
Surprised by trail closures and carriage road construction	2
Do not add parking	2
Campground is a fire trap (only one access road)	2
Add recycling and garbage cans	2
Other comments	27
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Required use of shuttle bus would prevent or reduce our return	8
Limiting vehicles is a necessary	7
Glad to pay entrance fee	5
Shuttle bus would not allow us to bring our supplies	4
Entrance fee too expensive	3
Willing to pay higher fee	3
Keep entrance fee affordable	3
Congress should entirely fund parks so no entrance fee needed	3
Campground full - unjust with empty campsites	3
Prosecute those who break park rules	3
Limit access to park	2
Trail maps should be included with entrance fee	2
Bicycles on roads and carriage roads dangerous	2
Great to be able to bring dogs	2
Enforce speed limits	2
Concerned about foreign control of U.S. parks	2
Prefer first come, first served camping	2
Keep fees for use to improve park	2
Keep/ advertise annual pass for frequent users	2
Park boundaries confusing	2
Other comments	26
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Bicycle rentals at carriage roads	3
No more restaurants/ food vendors	3
Park very commercial	2
Improve quality of food	2
Jordan Pond house too crowded	2
Do not like gift shops at natural attractions	2
Other comments	10
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Preserve/ protect the park/ keep it undeveloped	45
Park too crowded	19
Park is not crowded - keep it that way	15
Too much traffic - need alternatives	11
Continue balancing preservation and use	5

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (continued)</b>	
Crowded, but there are still places to escape crowds	5
Backcountry is not crowded	4
Traffic not a distraction	4
Disappointed not to see wildlife	4
Traffic and development much increased in 30 years	3
Too few areas for swimming	2
Scheduled tour buses needed for higher traffic areas	2
Preserve the ability to have individual experience	2
Concerned about air pollution	2
Manage the wildlife	2
Other comments	17
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Enjoyed visit	244
Beautiful park	128
Plan to return	96
Keep up the good work	69
Have visited before/ visit often	55
Favorite park	45
Thank you	39
Enjoy variety of landscapes to explore	21
Peaceful/ relaxing	20
Visit too short	19
Place a treasure/unique	12
Enjoyed hiking	7
Park a high point to vacation	6
NPS should be enlarged, funding increased	5
A great place to live	5
Enjoy park in other less crowded seasons	5
Physically challenging/ great exercise	4
Bring our guests here	4
Great weather	4
Enjoyed carriage roads	4
Glad to see people enjoy national parks	4
Restrooms clean	4
Recommended to friends	3
Favorite vacation	3
Enjoyed carriage roads	3
Educational visit	3
Bar Harbor too developed	3
Activities outside the park just as important as those in park	2
Liked family atmosphere	2
Park has not changed in over 20 years	2
Thanks for asking our opinions	2
Fond memories of childhood visits	2
Unaware August is most crowded season	2
Feel safe here	2
Would like to work/ volunteer for NPS	2
Other visitors do not respect nature	2
Other visitors courteous	2
Proud of park	2
Other comments	18