



**New Bedford Whaling  
National Historical Park  
Visitor Study  
Summer 1999**

**Report 113**  
Visitor Services Project  
Cooperative Park Studies Unit

 University of Idaho





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# **New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park**

## **Visitor Study** Summer 1999

Margaret Littlejohn

**Visitor Services Project**  
**Report 113**

March 2000

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Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Chris Hoffman, Mike Meehan and the staff and volunteers of New Bedford Whaling National Historical 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**  
**New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park**  
**Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (NHP) during July 20-26, 1999. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 284 questionnaires for a 68% response rate.
- This report profiles New Bedford Whaling NHP visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Over one-half (62%) of the visitor groups were family groups. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups were groups of two; 50% were in groups of 3 or more. Thirty-five percent were aged 41-55; 22% were 15 years of age or younger. Over one-half of the visitors (54%) were female and 46% were male. Thirty percent of visitors had graduate or professional degrees and 34% had a college degree. For 95% of the visitors, English was their primary language.
- United States visitors were from Massachusetts (43%), Florida (6%), and 34 other states, plus Washington D.C. Seven percent of the visitors were from an international origin including Canada (43%), Germany (27%), Switzerland (14%), and 6 other countries.
- Seventy-five percent of visitors were making their first visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP. Most of the visitor groups (90%) spent less than a day in New Bedford. Sixty-four percent of the visitors spent between 2 and 4 hours in town.
- Prior to their visit, over one-half of the visitor groups (57%) were aware that the park existed. Forty-one percent of the visitors said New Bedford Whaling NHP was their "primary destination" and 42% said it was "one of several destinations." The most common sources of information used to plan their visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP were friends or relatives (28%) and previous visits (20%).
- On this visit, the most common reasons for visiting were to visit the New Bedford Whaling Museum (58%), learn about whaling and maritime history (29%), and visit New Bedford Whaling NHP (25%). The least common reason for visiting was to research family history (3%).
- On this visit, the most commonly visited sites in New Bedford Whaling NHP were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (79%), park visitor center (52%) and Seaman's Bethel (50%). The least visited site was the Rotch-Jones-Duff House (11%). The sites most often visited first were the park visitor center (41%) and the New Bedford Whaling Museum (36%).
- With regard to the use, importance and quality of services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The services and facilities most used by 240 visitor groups were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (76%), NPS Visitor Center (57%), assistance from park staff (31%) and the Waterfront Visitor Center (25%). The most important services and facilities were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (86% of 158 respondents) and the NPS brochure (78% of 40 respondents). The highest quality services and facilities were NPS staff assistance (94% of 67 respondents), NPS brochure (87% of 38 respondents), New Bedford Whaling Museum (86% of 156 respondents) and NPS Visitor Center (86% of 121 respondents).
- The New Bedford area services and facilities most used by 236 visitor groups were restrooms (61%), street parking (55%) and restaurants (48%). According to visitors, the most important services and facilities were restrooms (92% of 138 respondents), street parking (86% of 120 respondents), and garage/lot parking (85% of 69 respondents). The highest quality services and facilities were garage/lot parking (84% of 68 respondents), street parking (81% of 116 respondents) and benches (80% of 51 respondents).
- Ninety-one percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at New Bedford Whaling NHP as "very good" or "good." Visitors made many additional comments.

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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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODS	2
RESULTS	5
Visitors contacted	5
Demographics	5
Length of visit in New Bedford	13
Visitors' awareness of park's existence/significance	16
Sources of information	18
Travel plans	19
Difficulty locating park	22
Forms of transportation used	23
Reasons for visiting	24
Sites visited	25
Visiting the waterfront	28
NPS visitor services and facilities: use, importance, and quality	31
New Bedford area visitor services and facilities: use, importance, and quality	46
Visitor expectations	61
Safety	63
Expenditures	64
Interest in learning whaling history; preferred methods	69
Overall quality of visitor services	71
What visitors liked most	72
What visitors liked least	74
Planning for the future	76
Comment summary	78
ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS	81
QUESTIONNAIRE	83
VISITOR SERVICES PROJECT PUBLICATIONS	85

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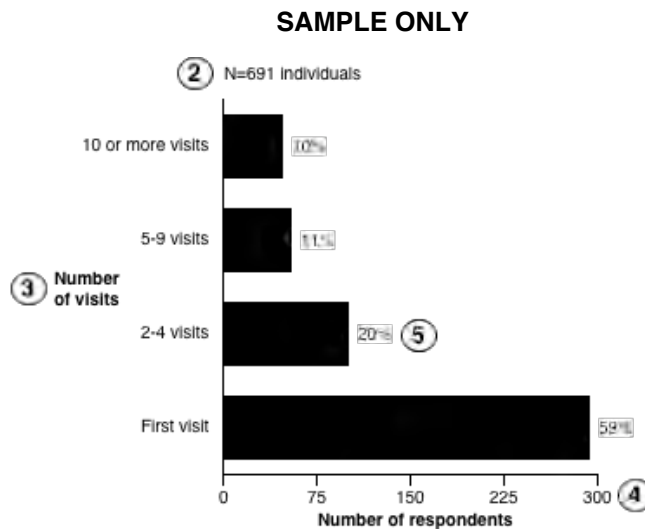


## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of visitors at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (NHP). This visitor study was conducted July 20-26, 1999 by the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Services Project (VSP), part of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho.

The **Methods** section discusses the procedures and limitations of the study. The **Results** section includes a summary of visitor comments. An **Additional Analysis** page is included which will help managers request additional analyses. The final section includes a copy of the **Questionnaire**. An 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.

## METHODS

### 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 distributed to, a sample of visitors who arrived at New Bedford Whaling NHP during July 20-26, 1999. Visitors were sampled at a total of four locations (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Questionnaire distribution locations**

Location:	Questionnaires distributed	
	Number	%
Whaling Museum	212	50
NPS Visitor Center	130	31
Waterfront Visitor Center	55	13
Rotch-Jones-Duff House	23	6
GRAND TOTAL	420	100

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 then given a questionnaire and asked his or her name, address, and telephone number in order to mail them a reminder/thank you postcard. Visitor groups were asked to complete the questionnaire during or after their visit, then return it by mail in a postage-prepaid return envelope.

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 initial interview. Eight weeks after the survey a second replacement questionnaire was mailed to visitors who still had not returned their questionnaires.

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Returned questionnaires were coded and the information 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 275 visitor groups, Figure 5 presents data for 807 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, while 284 visitors to New Bedford Whaling NHP returned questionnaires, Figure 1 shows data for only 275 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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Like all surveys, this study has limitations, which should be considered when interpreting the results.

## Limitations

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 visited the park.

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of July 20-26, 1999. 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.

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**Special  
Conditions**

During the study week, weather conditions were fairly typical of July with warm, humid days.

## RESULTS

At New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, 454 visitor groups were contacted, and 420 of these groups (93%) agreed to participate in the survey. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 284 visitor groups, resulting in a 67.6% response rate for this study.

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

### Visitors contacted

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

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondents	407	47.4	275	48.9
Group size	384	3.2	275	3.2

Figure 1 shows visitor group sizes, which ranged from one person to 29 people. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups consisted of two people, while another 19% were people visiting in groups of four.

Sixty-two percent of visitor groups were made up of family members, 12% consisted of only friends, 9% were made up of family and friends, and 14% of visitors were alone (see Figure 2). Groups listing themselves as "other" for group type included tour groups and school groups.

Figure 3 shows whether or not visitors were with a tour or education group. Ninety-three percent of the respondents were not with a tour or education group, while 7% of the visitors answered yes.

Figure 4 shows the tour/education group size, but this data must be viewed with caution due to the small number of respondents.

Figure 5 illustrates that 54% of visitors were female while 46% were male. Forty-three percent of visitors were ages 36-55 (see Figure 6). Visitors aged up to 15 years comprised 22% of the visitation to New Bedford Whaling NHP.

### Demographics

## Demographics- continued

Seventy-five percent of visitors were visiting New Bedford Whaling NHP for the first time, while 18% of visitors had visited New Bedford Whaling NHP between two and four times (see Figure 7).

Over three-fourths of the visitors (79%) had a college degree of some type, as shown in Figure 8. Over one-third of the visitors (34%) had college degrees, and 30% had graduate or professional degrees. Eighteen percent were high school graduates or had a GED.

Ninety-five percent of visitors listed English as their primary language (see Figure 9). Other primary languages included German, French, and Chinese (see Table 3), although this data should be reviewed with caution.

International visitors comprised 7% of New Bedford Whaling NHP visitors. The largest proportion of international visitors were from Canada (43%), Germany (27%), and Switzerland (14%), as shown in Table 4. The largest proportion of U.S. visitors were from Massachusetts (43%) and Florida (6%). Smaller proportions came from 34 other states and Washington D.C. (see Map 1 and Table 5).

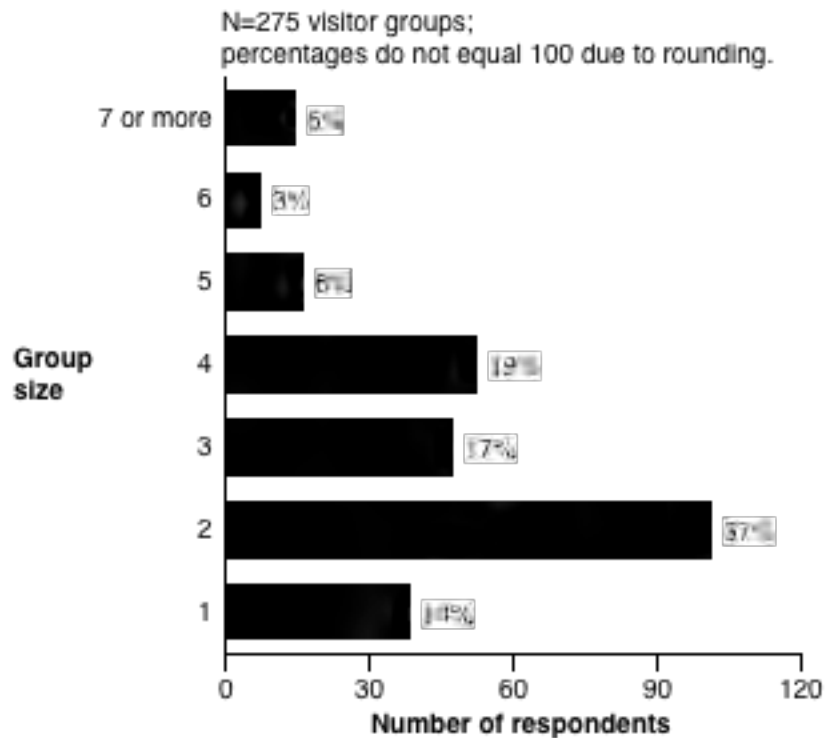


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

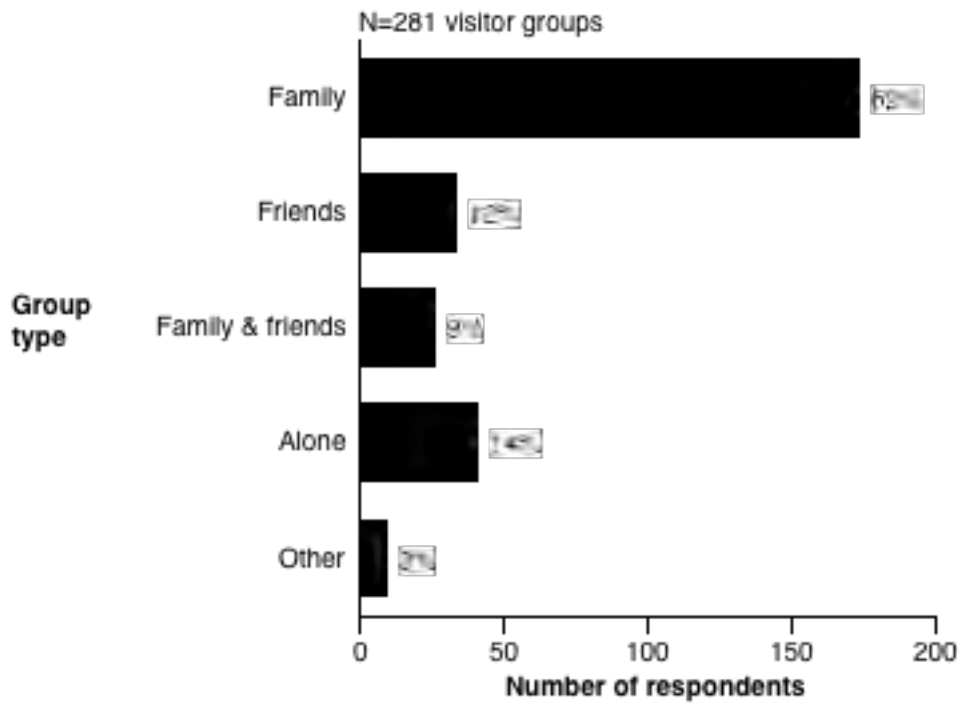


Figure 2: Visitor group types

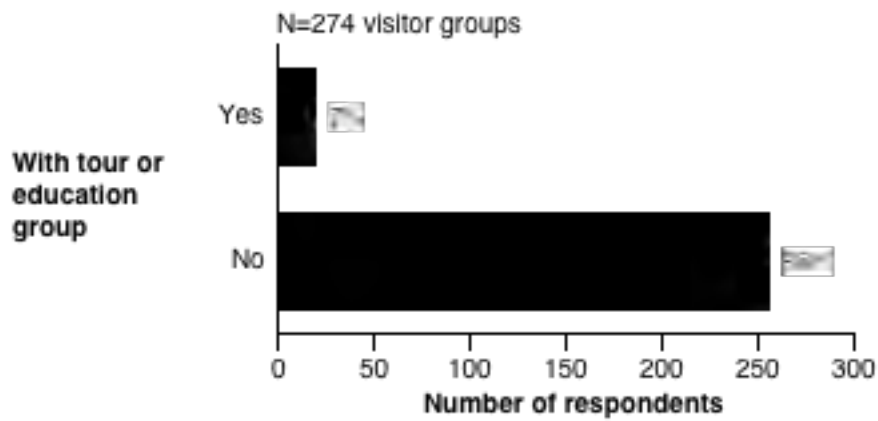


Figure 3: Part of a guided tour or educational group

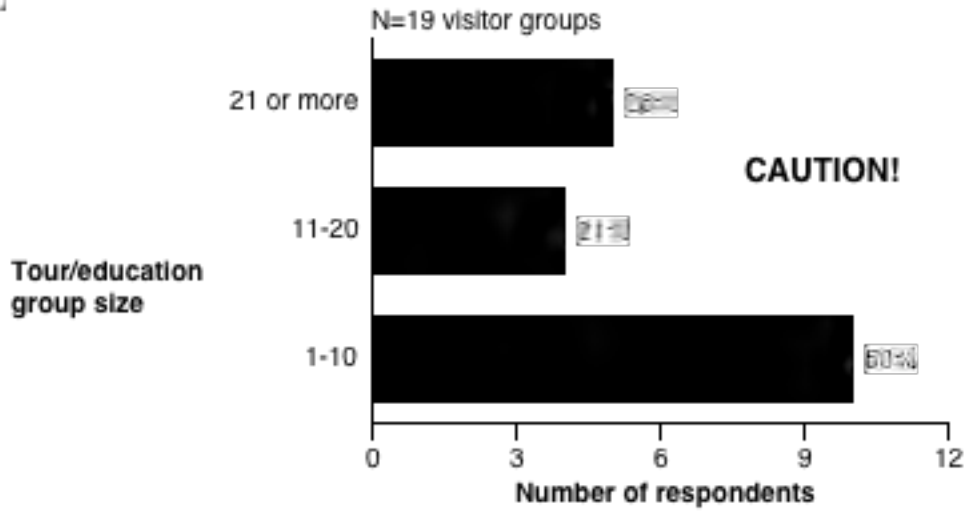


Figure 4: Guided tour or educational group size

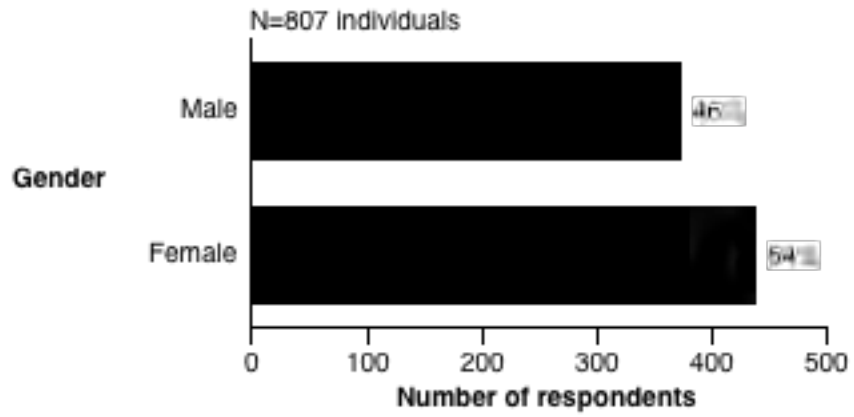


Figure 5: Gender



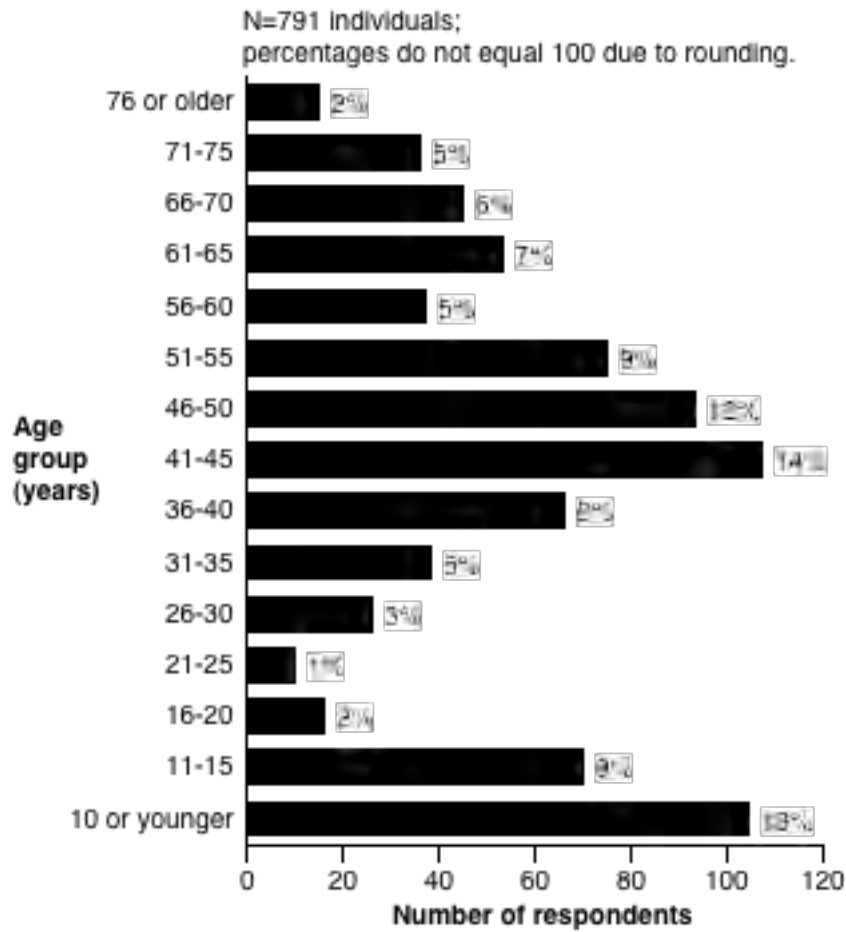


Figure 6: Visitor ages

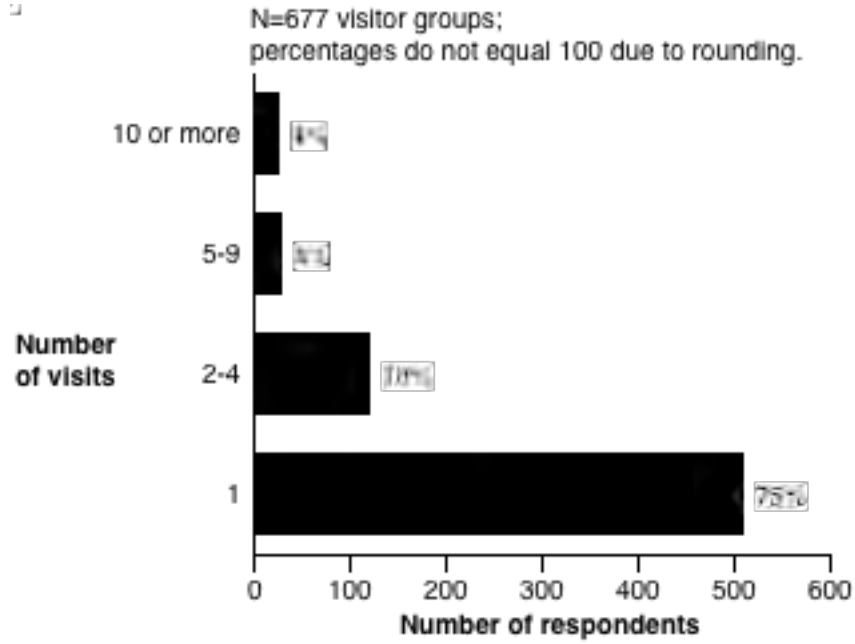


Figure 7: Number of visits

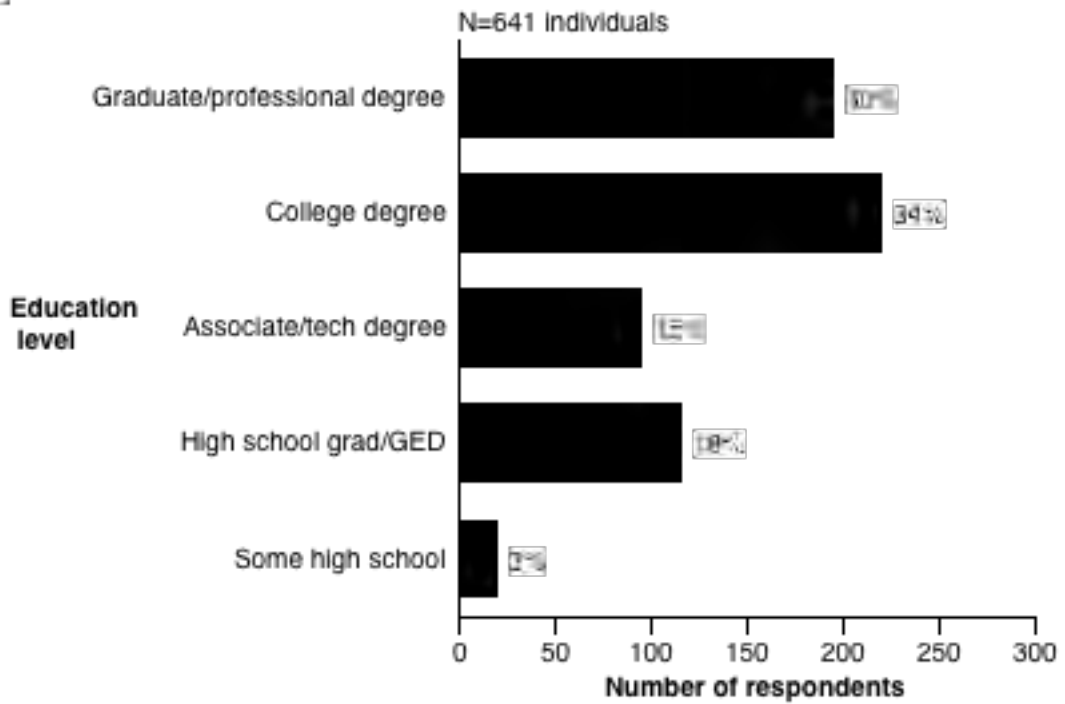
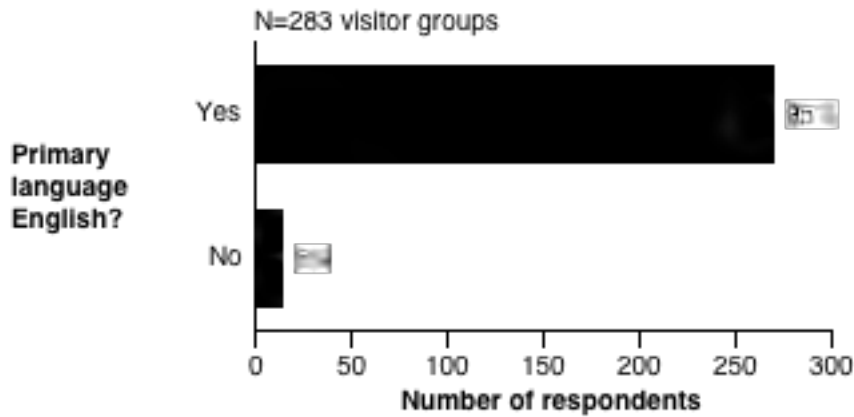


Figure 8: Education level



**Figure 9: Visitors with English as their primary language**

**Table 3: Primary languages other than English**

N=8 languages

**CAUTION!**

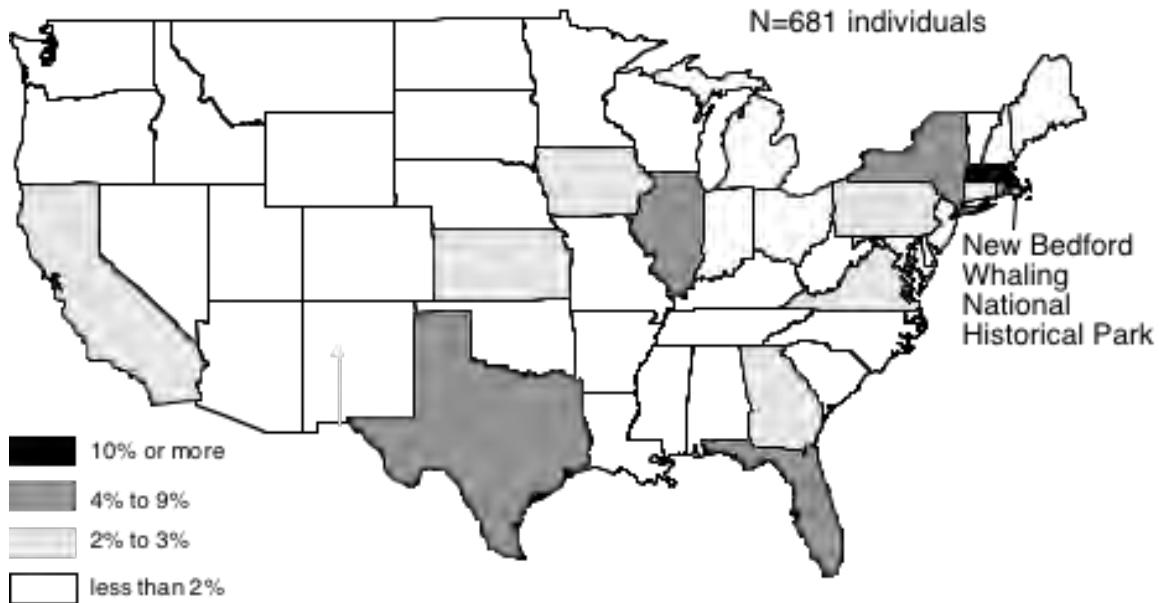
Language	Number of times mentioned
German	4
French	3
Chinese	1

**Table 4: International visitors by country of residence**

N=49 individuals;

percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Country	Number of individuals	Percent of international visitors	Percent of total visitors
Canada	21	43	3
Germany	13	27	2
Switzerland	7	14	1
Australia	2	4	<1
Holland	2	4	<1
Brazil	1	2	<1
France	1	2	<1
Ireland	1	2	<1
Thailand	1	2	<1



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

**Table 5: United States visitors by state of residence**

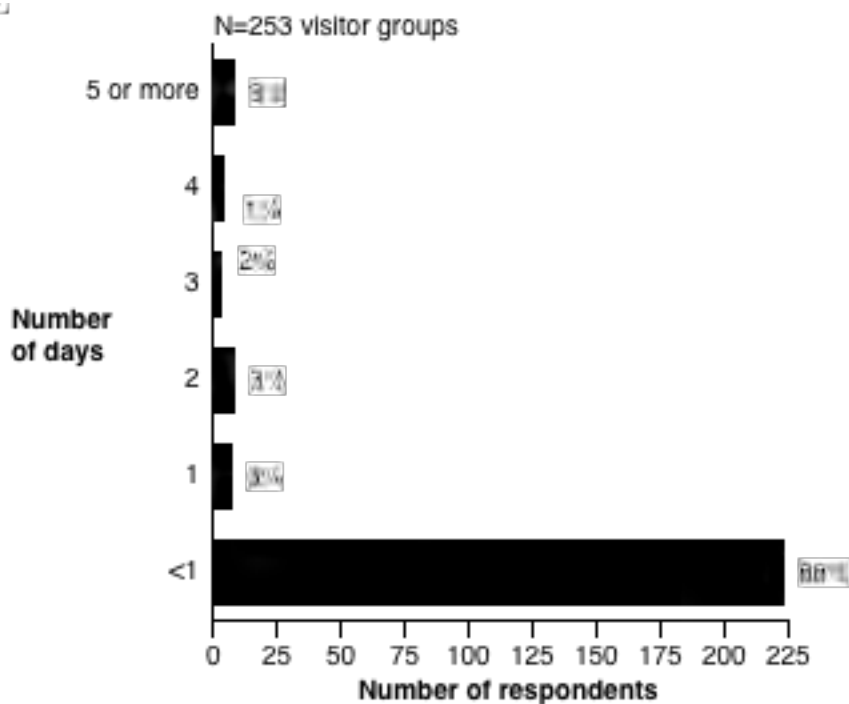
N=681 individuals;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	Percent of U.S. visitors	Percent of total visitors
Massachusetts	292	43	40
Florida	41	6	6
New York	37	5	5
Texas	37	5	5
Illinois	33	5	5
Rhode Island	28	4	4
Connecticut	21	3	3
Pennsylvania	21	3	3
California	19	3	3
Kansas	12	2	2
Iowa	11	2	2
Georgia	10	2	1
Virginia	10	2	1
Arizona	9	1	1
New Jersey	8	1	1
Louisiana	7	1	1
Maryland	7	1	1
North Carolina	7	1	1
Tennessee	7	1	1
Other states (17)	43	6	6

Visitor groups were asked how much time they planned to spend in New Bedford. Ninety-four percent of visitor groups planned to spend two days or less in the town (see Figure 10). Of the groups that planned to spend less than a day, 73% of the respondents planned to spend four hours or less (see Figure 11).

**Length of visit  
in New Bedford**

When asked how much time visitors actually spent in New Bedford, 94% of the visitors actually spent two days or less (see Figure 12). Figure 13 shows that 71% of visitors spent four hours or less in New Bedford.



**Figure 10: Number of days visitors planned to spend in New Bedford**

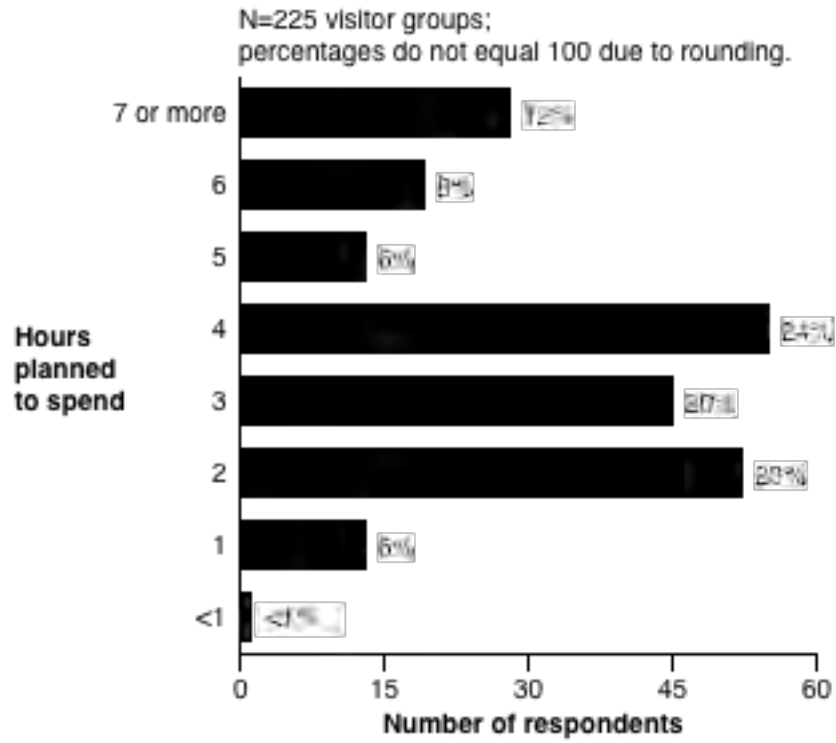


Figure 11: Number of hours visitors planned to spend in New Bedford

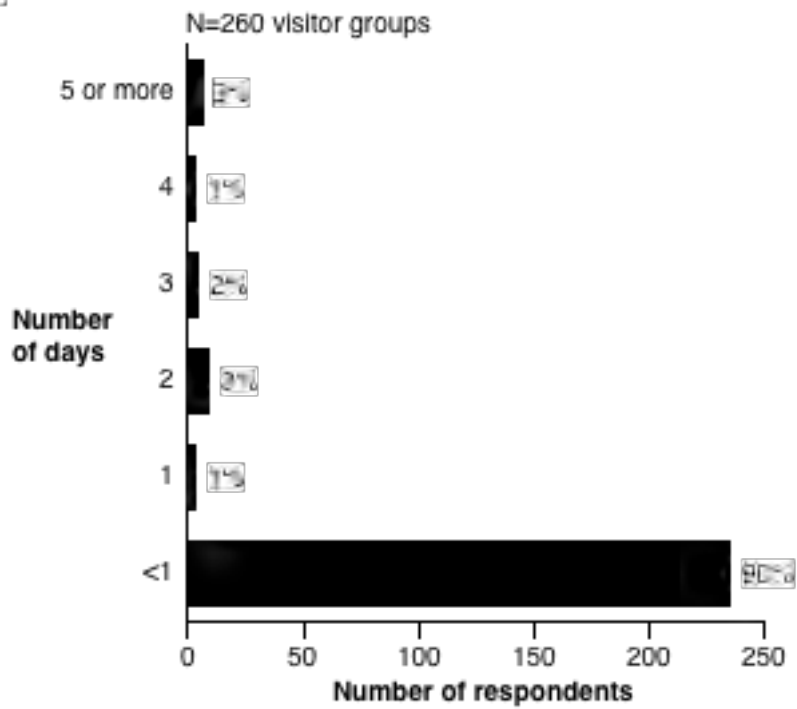


Figure 12: Number of days actually spent in New Bedford

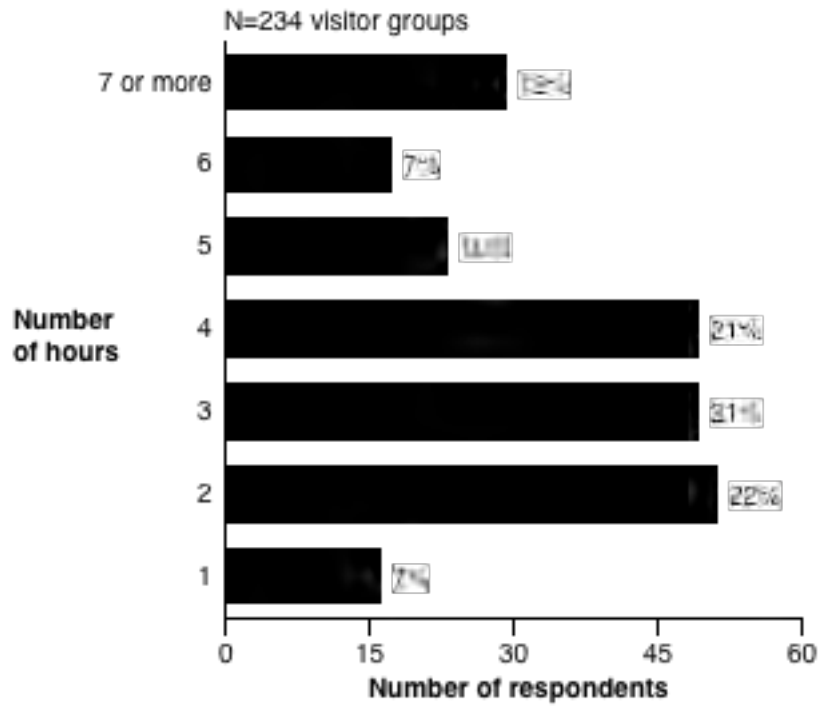
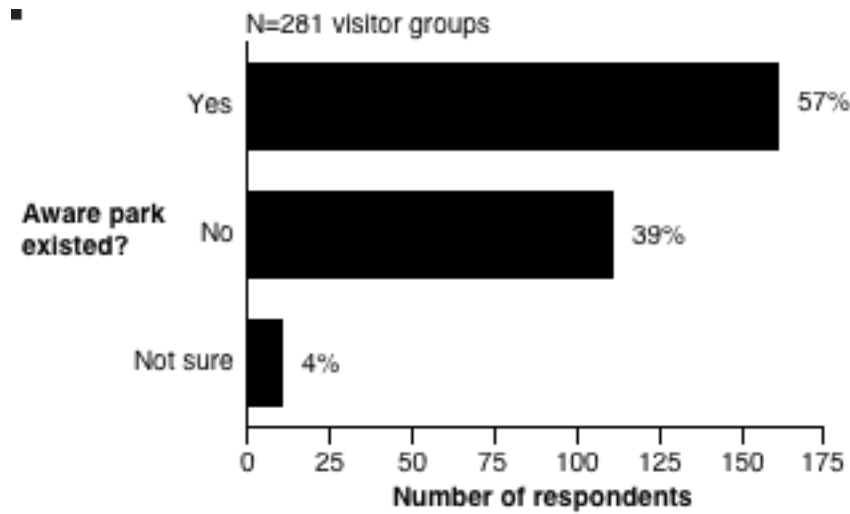


Figure 13: Number of hours actually spent in New Bedford

**Visitors' awareness of park's existence/significance**

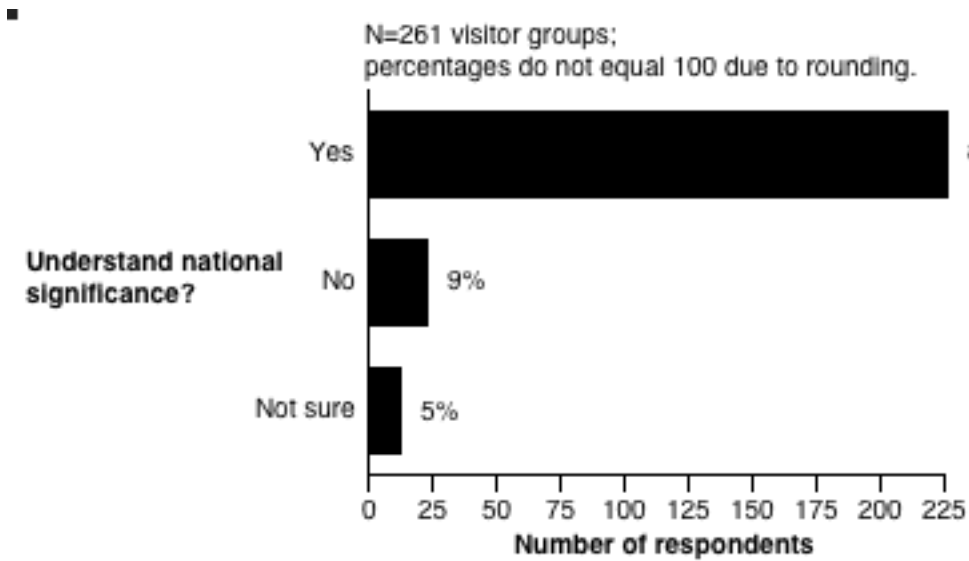
Visitor groups to New Bedford Whaling NHP were asked if they were aware that the park existed prior to their visit. Figure 14 illustrates that 57% of the respondents were aware that the park existed prior to their visit. Thirty-nine percent were not aware of the park's existence and 4% were "not sure."

Eighty-seven percent of the visitors said that they were aware of the national significance of New Bedford Whaling NHP (see Figure 15). Table 6 shows what visitors consider as the most important information they learned on this visit.



**Figure 14: Awareness of New Bedford Whaling NHP's existence**





**Figure 15: Understand significance of New Bedford Whaling NHP**

**Table 6: Most important information learned**

N=177 comments;  
some visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Whaling history	36
Contributions of whaling to society	24
New Bedford history	21
Why New Bedford is historically significant	17
That the New Bedford Whaling NHP exists	17
Preservation of historic & cultural whaling heritage	8
Construction and improvement of resources	6
The multiple uses of whale by-products	6
The life of sailors at sea	5
References to Herman Melville and Moby Dick	4
Maritime history	3
The array of area sights and activities	3
Where it was located	2
Reconstruction of whale skeleton	2
Music concert	2
Everything	2
Inclusion of Rotch-Duff-Jones House in park	2
Other comments	17

**Sources of information**

Visitors were asked to list the sources of information they used to plan their visit to New Bedford NHP prior to coming. The most common sources of information were friends or relatives (28%), previous visits (20%), and travel guide/tour book (17%), as shown in Figure 16. Twenty-three percent of visitors did not obtain any information prior to their visit to the park. Of visitor groups who used the Internet, 2% used the City of New Bedford web page, 1% used the National Park Service web page and 1% used other web pages. "Other" sources of information included visitors that live in or had previously lived in New Bedford, and word of mouth.



**Figure 16: Sources of information**

Visitors were asked how their visit to New Bedford fit into their travel plans. Forty-two percent of visitors reported New Bedford Whaling NHP as “one of several destinations” (see Figure 17). Another 41% of visitors said the park was their primary destination. Seventeen percent of visitors to New Bedford Whaling NHP said it was “not a planned destination.”

### Travel plans

Visitors were asked where they spent the night prior to their arrival in New Bedford. Figure 18 shows that 44% of visitors spent the night at their place of residence and 23% spent the night in a hotel or motel. “Other” accommodations included staying on a boat or in a summer home. In addition, visitors were also asked the location of their accommodations the night prior to their arrival to the park. Table 7 lists the towns where visitors stayed by the type of accommodation.

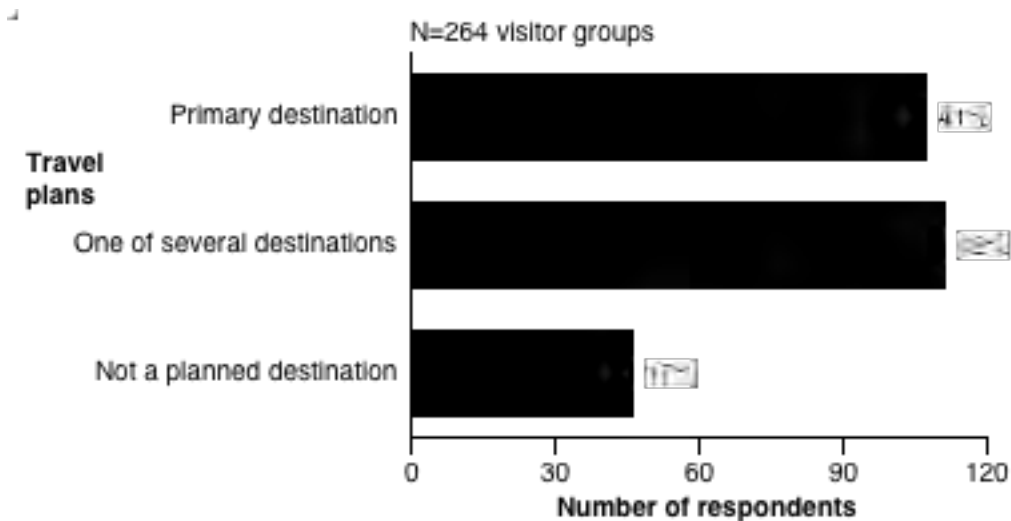


Figure 17: New Bedford Whaling NHP as part of travel plans

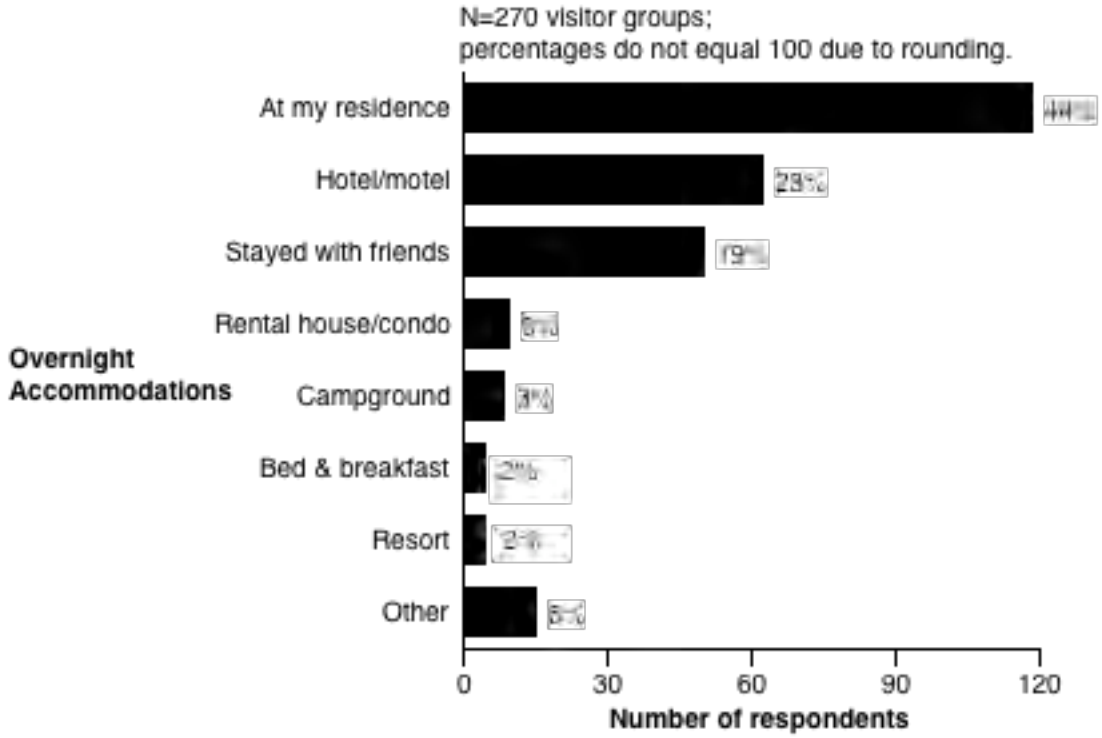


Figure 18: Accommodations prior to visit

Table 7: Locations/accommodations where visitors spent the night prior to arrival

N=89 places

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>MOTEL/HOTEL</b>	
Fairhaven	8
New Bedford	7
Newport	7
Hyannis	5
Fall River	5
Boston	3
Cape Cod	3
North Dartmouth	3
Dennisport	2
Warwick	2
Taunton	2
Foxboro	1
Falmouth	1
Plymouth	1
Providence	1
Somerset	1
South Yarmouth	1
Seakonk	1
Sandwich	1
Nashua	1
Sutton	1

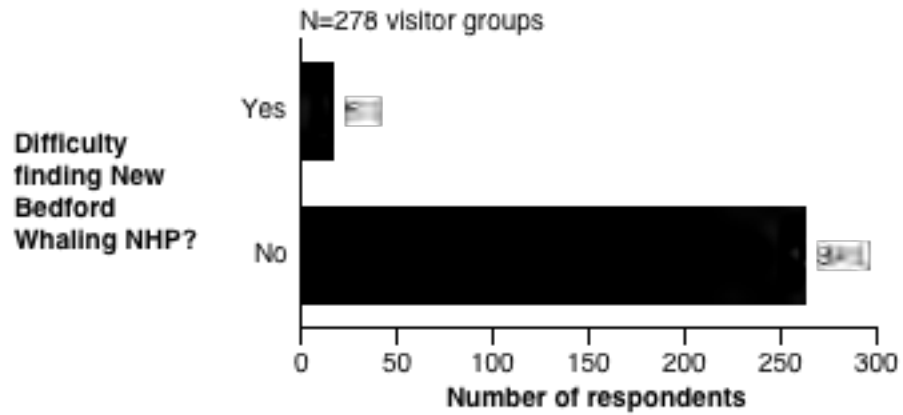
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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>RESORT</b>	
Martha's Vineyard	1
Harwich	1
Mattapoisett	1
Cape Cod	1
<b>BED &amp; BREAKFAST</b>	
Newport	1
Portsmouth	1
Plymouth	1
<b>RENTAL HOUSE/CONDOMINIUM</b>	
Narragansett	1
Cuttyhunk	1
Cotuit	1
Dennisport	1
East Sandwich	1
Westport Point	1
Marion	1
Mattapoisett	1
<b>CAMPGROUND</b>	
Rochester	1
Shawme-Crowell State Forest	1
Massasoit	1
Bourne	1
Myles Standish State Park	1
Brewster	1
<b>OTHER</b>	
Aboard a boat	3
Summer home	3
New Bedford home	2
Concord home	1
Providence College	1
University of Massachusetts	1

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**Difficulty locating park**

Visitors were asked if they had trouble finding their way to New Bedford Whaling NHP. Figure 19 shows that 6% of the visitors had difficulty finding their way to the park; 94% did not have trouble finding the park. Table 8 shows that lack of signs were the reason that visitors had difficulty locating the park.



**Figure 19: Difficulty finding way to park**

**Table 8: Reasons visitors had difficulty locating the park**

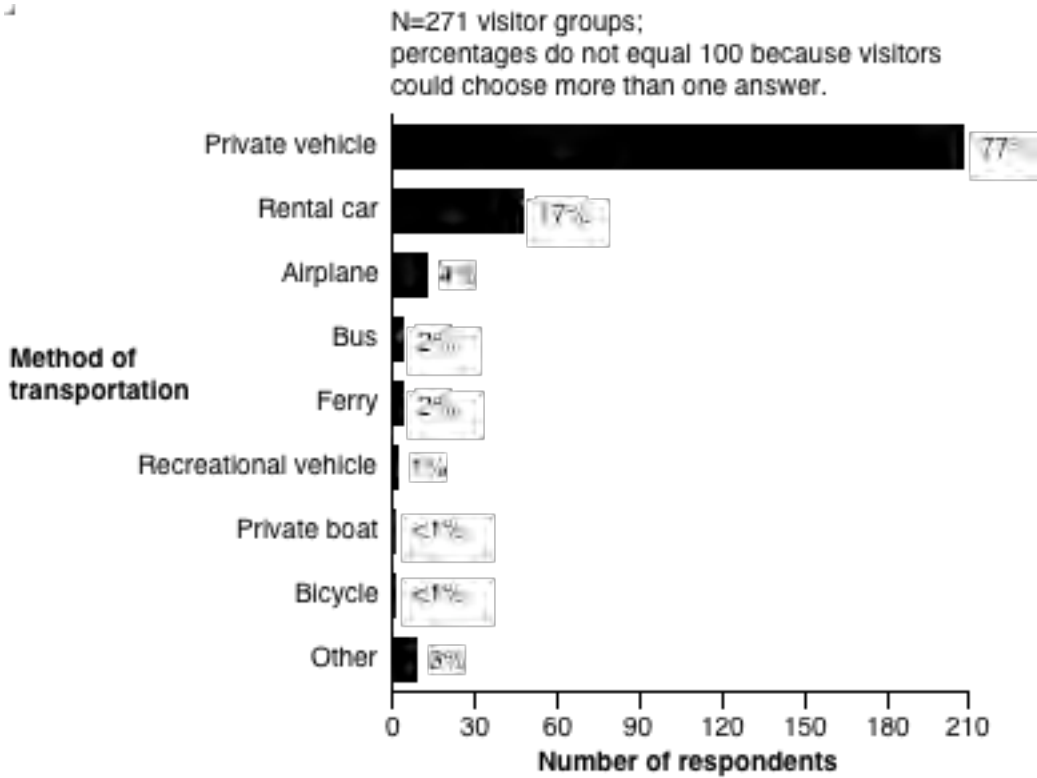
N=15 comments

**CAUTION!**

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Lack of signs	9
Lack of signs in city	3
Lack of signs on interstate	3

Visitors were asked what form of transportation they used to arrive in New Bedford on this trip. The most used form of transportation was a private vehicle (77%), as shown in Figure 20. The least used forms of transportation were bicycles and private boats (both <1%). “Other” methods of transportation used included motorcycle, van, and walking.

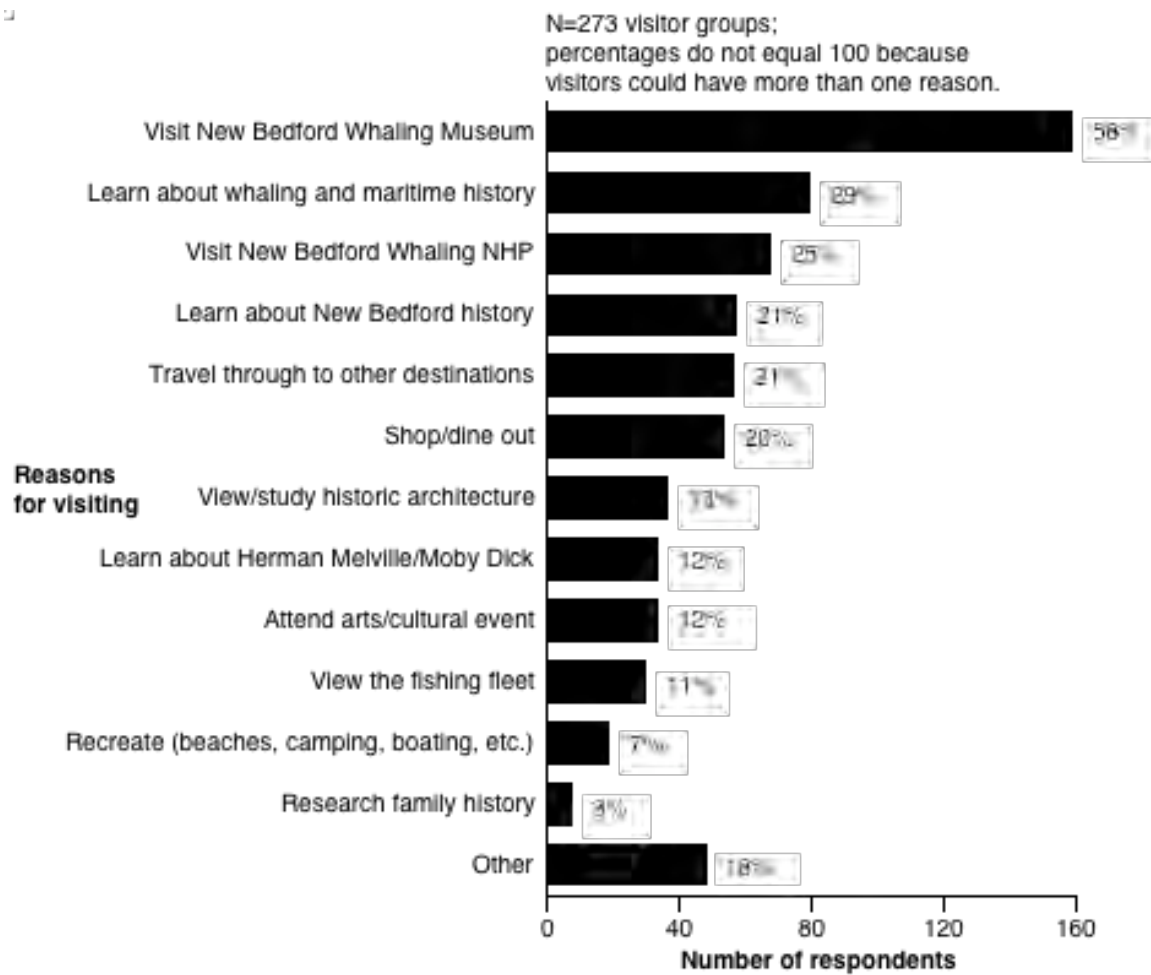
**Forms of transportation used**



**Figure 20: Methods of transportation used to arrive at New Bedford**

**Reasons for visiting**

Visitors were asked to list their reasons for visiting the New Bedford area on this trip. As shown in Figure 21, the most often listed reasons were to visit the New Bedford Whaling Museum (58%), learn about whaling and maritime history (29%), and visit New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park (25%). “Other” reasons that visitors came included visiting friends and relatives, waiting to take the ferry, and picking up travel brochures.



**Figure 21: Reasons for visiting New Bedford area**



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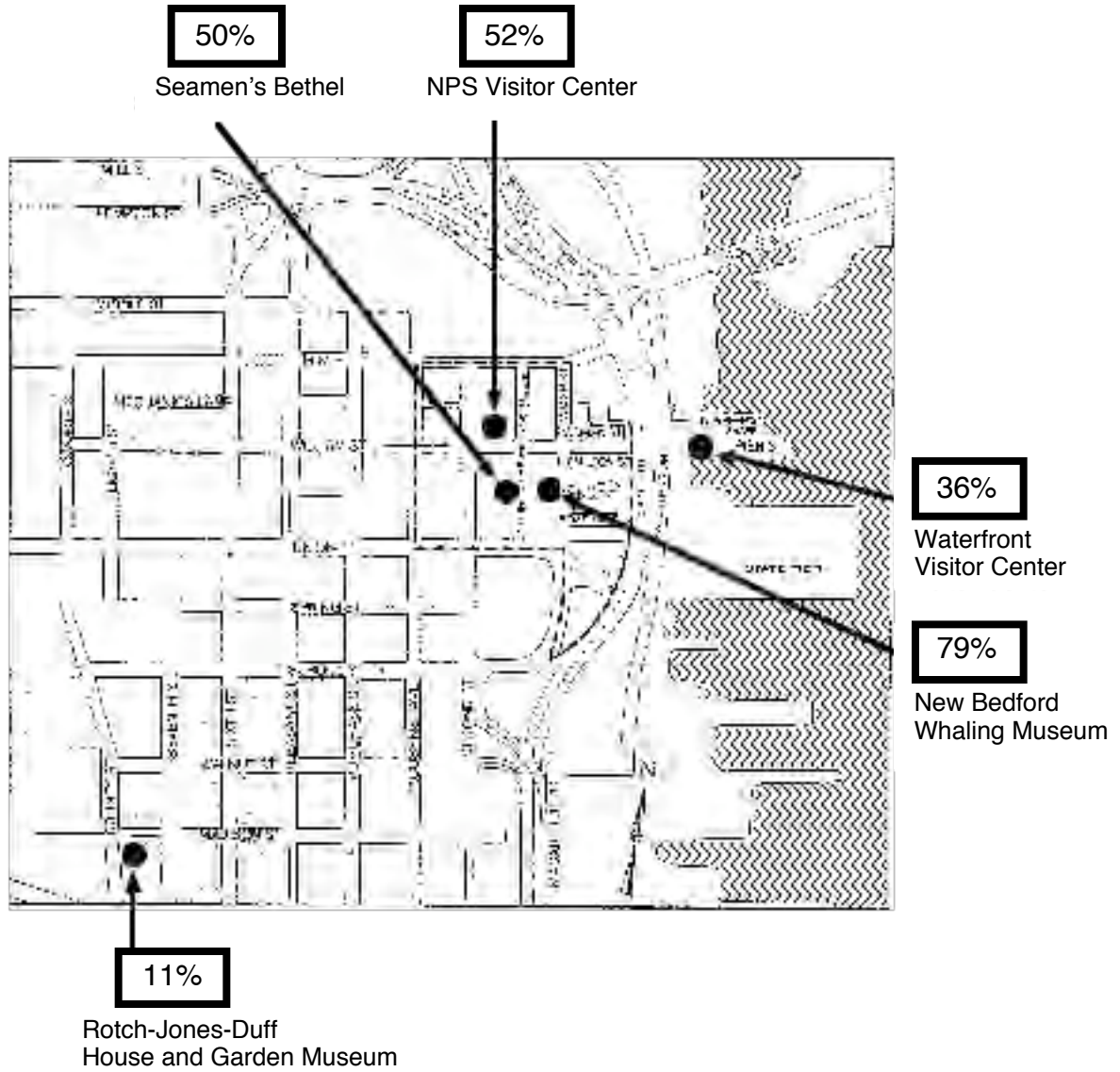
Visitors were asked to list the sites they visited and the order in which they visited them. Map 2 shows the proportion of visitor groups that visited each site within New Bedford Whaling NHP during this visit. The most frequently visited sites include the New Bedford Whaling Museum (79%), NPS Visitor Center (52%), Seamen's Bethel (50%), Waterfront Visitor Center (36%), and the Rotch-Jones-Duff House (11%).

### **Sites visited**

Map 3 shows the proportion of visitor groups who visited each site first during their visit. The sites most likely to be visited first include the NPS Visitor Center (41%) and the New Bedford Whaling Museum (36%).

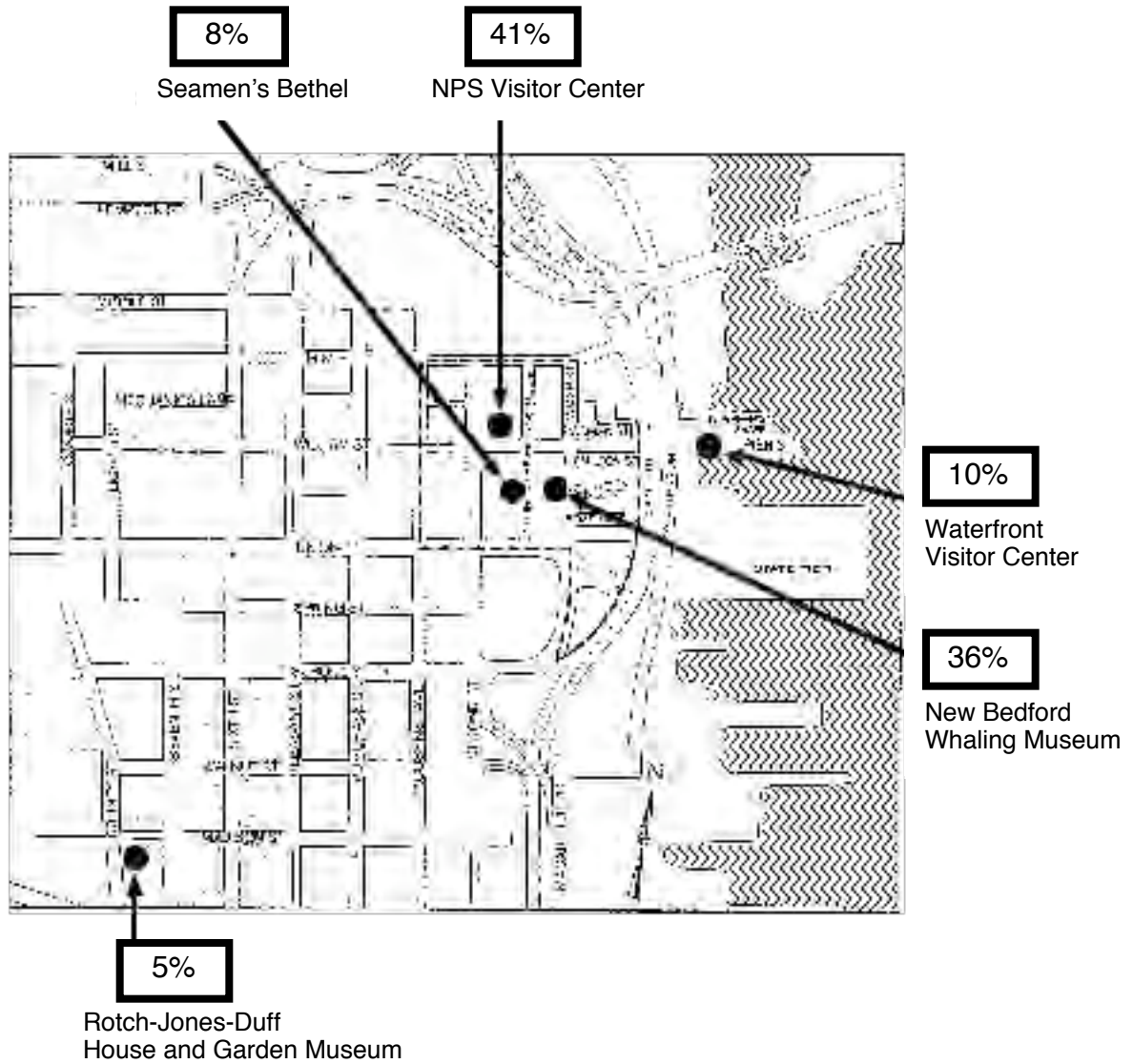
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N=266 visitor groups;  
percentages do not equal 100 because visitor groups could visit more than one site.



Map 2: Sites visited

N=241 visitor groups

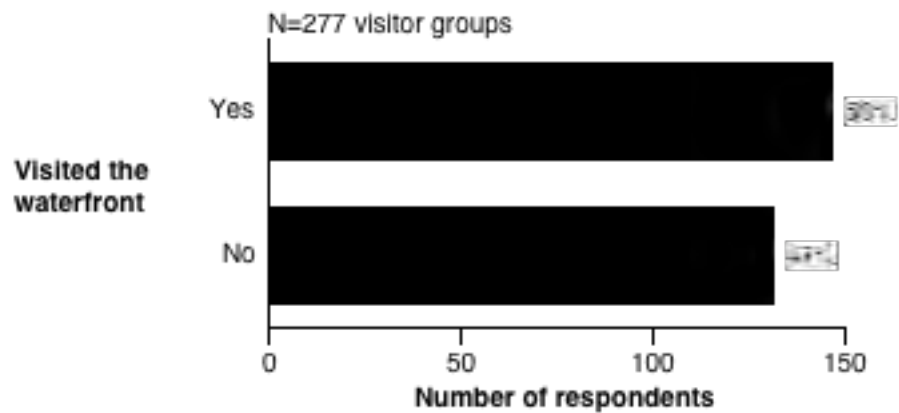


**Map 3: Sites visited first**

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**Visiting the waterfront**

Visitors were asked a series of questions relating to the waterfront at New Bedford Whaling NHP. As shown in Figure 22, 53% of the visitors visited the waterfront during this visit. Those who visited were asked how difficult it was to find the waterfront and 89% said it was either "somewhat easy" or "very easy" to find (see Figure 23). Visitors were also asked if any member of their group used the pedestrian overpass to access the waterfront. Figure 24 shows that 56% of visitors did not use the overpass. When asked about the difficulty of getting around the waterfront, 87% said it was either "somewhat easy" or "very easy" (see Figure 25).



**Figure 22: Visits to New Bedford waterfront**

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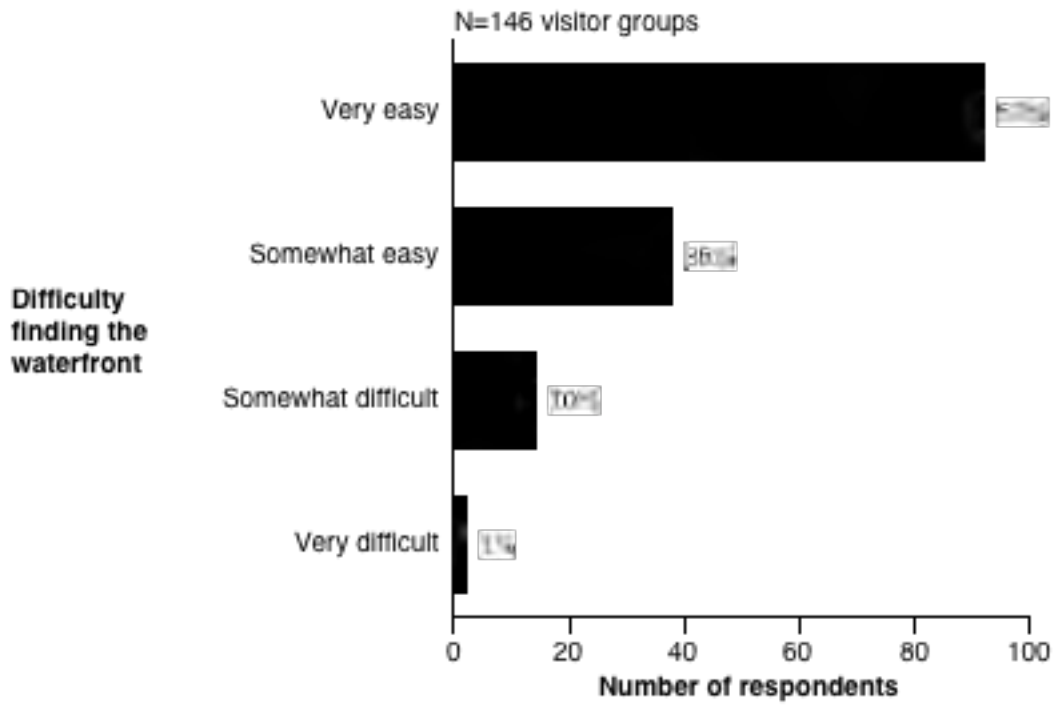


Figure 23: Ease or difficulty in finding the waterfront

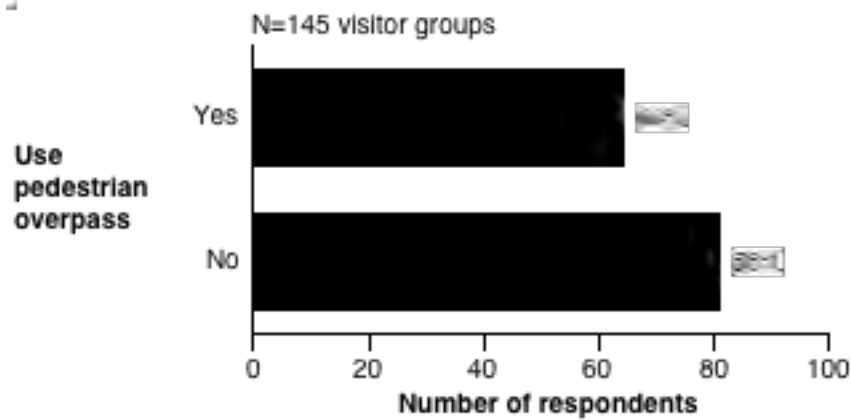


Figure 24: Use of pedestrian overpass to access waterfront

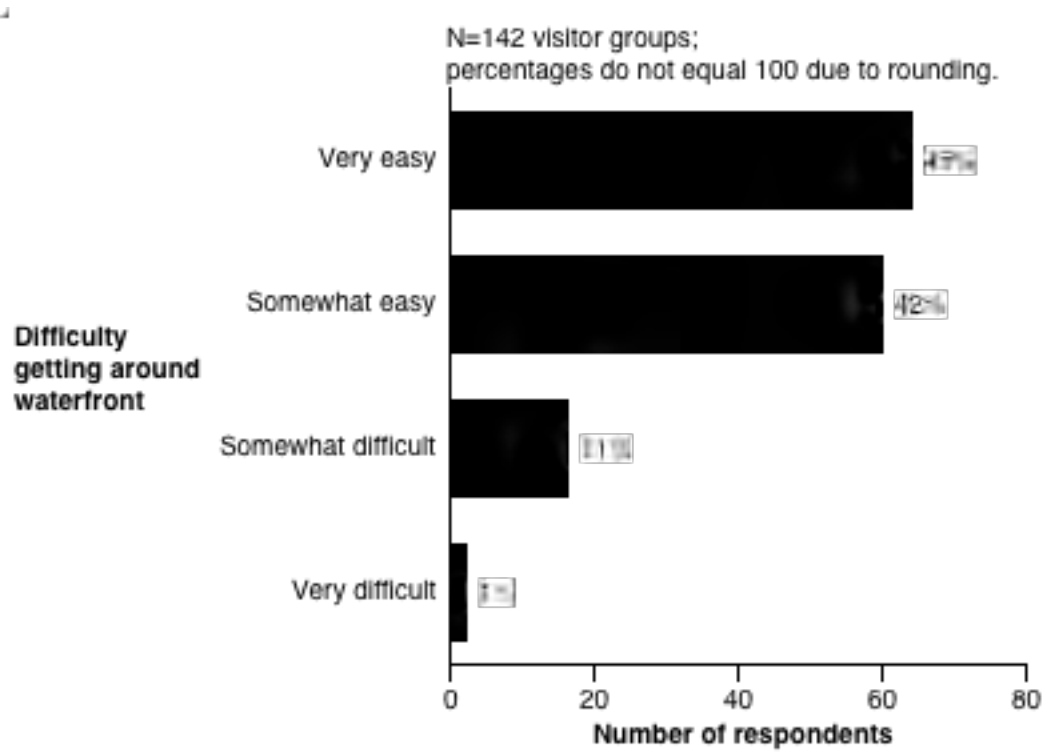
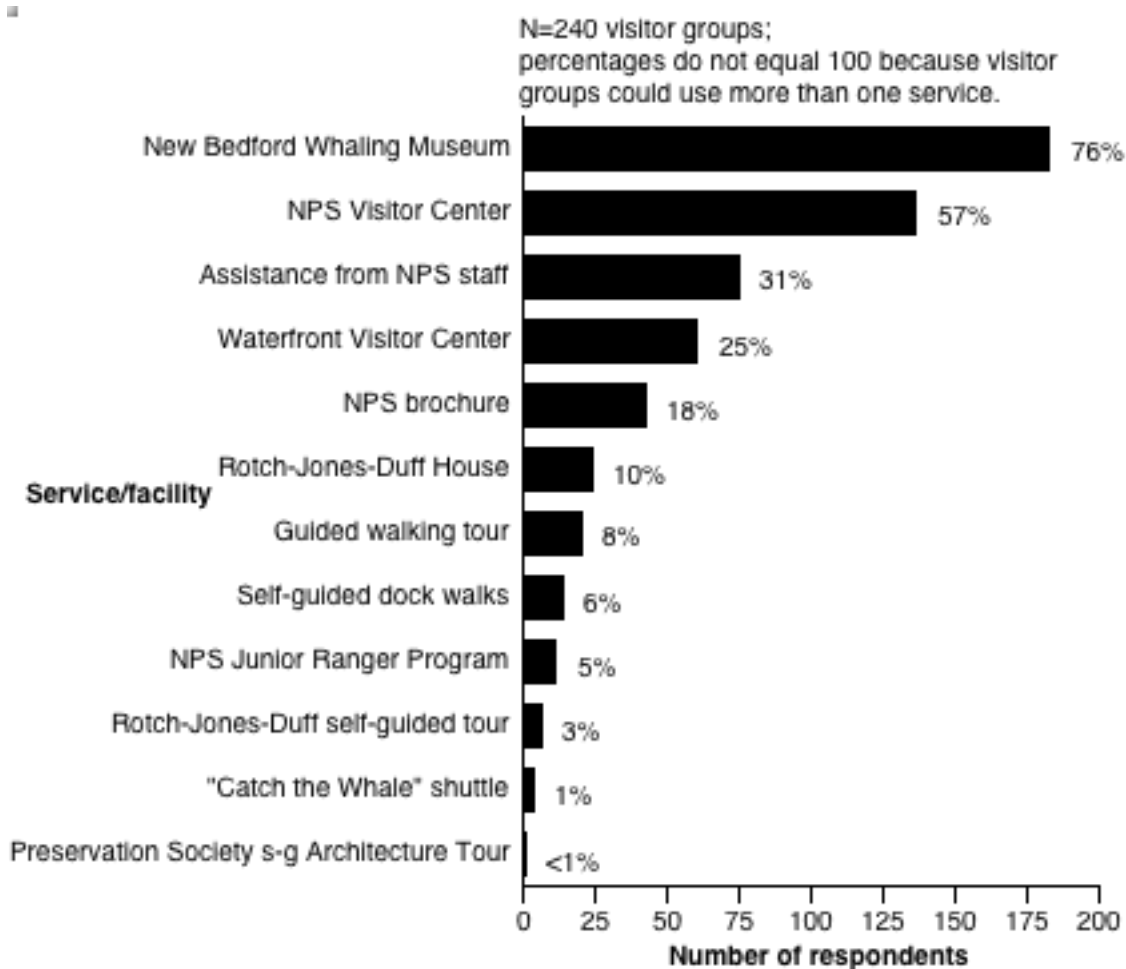


Figure 25: Ease or difficulty in getting around the waterfront

Visitor groups were asked to note the park’s visitor services and facilities which they used during their visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP. As shown in Figure 26, the services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the New Bedford Whaling Museum (76%), NPS Visitor Center (57%), assistance from NPS staff (31%), and Waterfront Visitor Center (25%). The least used services were the “Catch the Whale” shuttle (1%) and the Preservation Society Self-Guided Architecture Tour (<1%).

**NPS visitor services and facilities: use, importance, and quality**



**Figure 26: NPS visitor 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

The average importance and quality ratings for each service and facility were determined based on ratings provided by visitors who used each service. Figure 27 shows the average importance and quality ratings for each of the visitor service and facilities. All services and facilities were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. Note that the Rotch-Jones-Duff House, guided walking tour, self-guided dock walks, NPS Junior Ranger Program, Rotch-Jones-Duff self-guided tour, "Catch the Whale" shuttle, and Preservation Society Self-Guided Architecture Tour were not rated by enough visitor groups to provide reliable data.

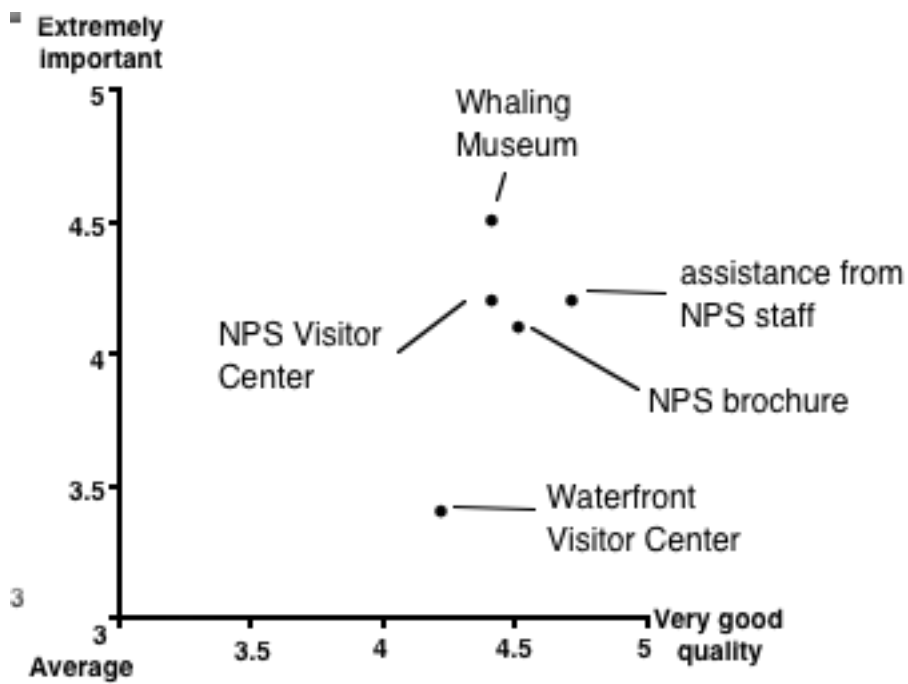
Figures 28-38 show the importance ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual services and facilities. Those services receiving the highest combined proportion of "extremely important" and "very important" ratings included New Bedford Whaling Museum (86%), NPS brochure (78%), and assistance from NPS staff and volunteers (76%). The facility with the largest proportion of "not important" responses was the Waterfront Visitor Center (6%). No respondents rated the importance of the Preservation Society Self-Guided Architecture Tour.

Figures 39-49 show the quality ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual services and facilities. Those services receiving the highest combined proportion of "very good" and "good" ratings included assistance from NPS staff and volunteers (94%), NPS brochure (87%), New Bedford Whaling Museum and NPS Visitor Center (both 86%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for the Waterfront Visitor Center (2%). No respondents rated the quality of the Preservation Society Self-Guided Architecture Tour.

Figure 50 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services and facilities.



**Figure 27: Average ratings of interpretive service and facility importance and quality**



**Figure 27: Detail**

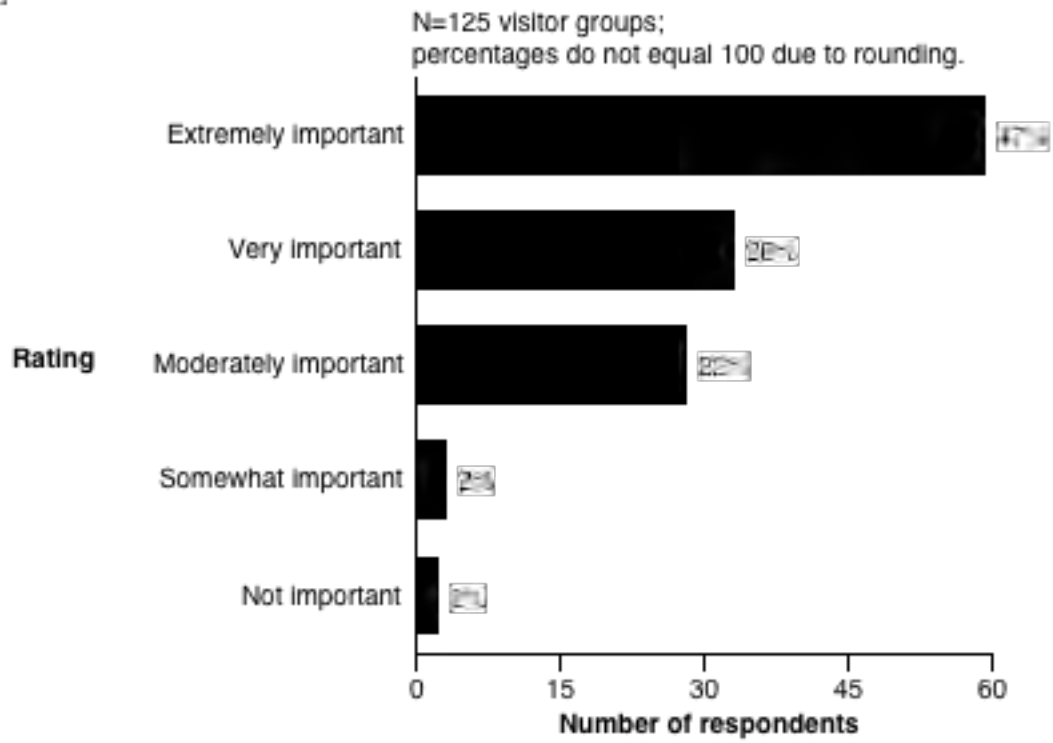


Figure 28: Importance of NPS Visitor Center

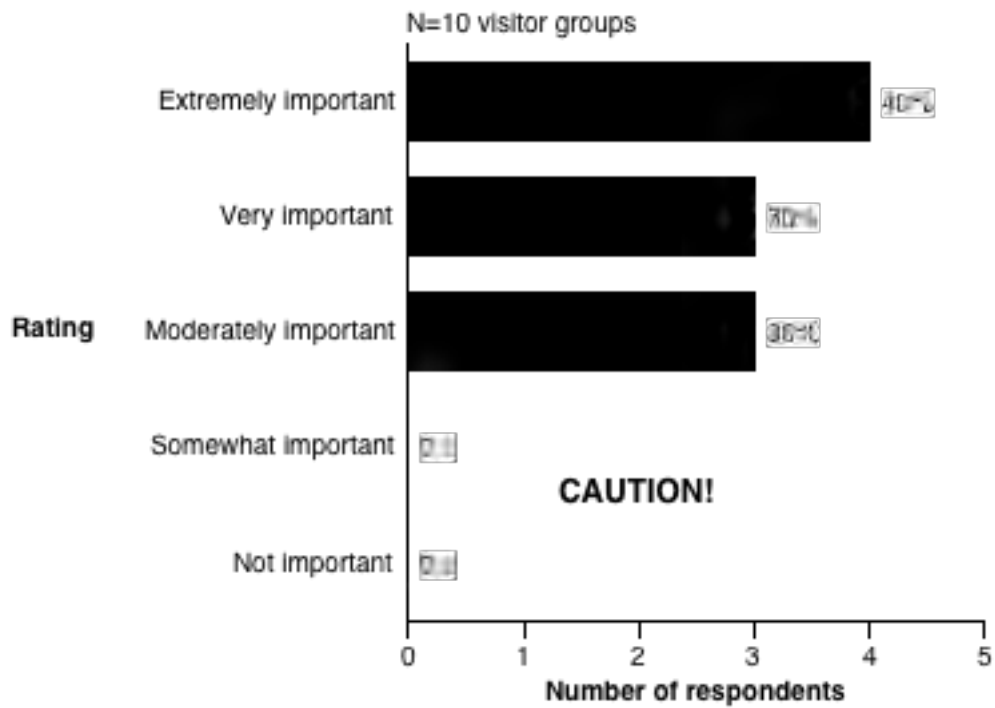


Figure 29: Importance of NPS Junior Ranger program

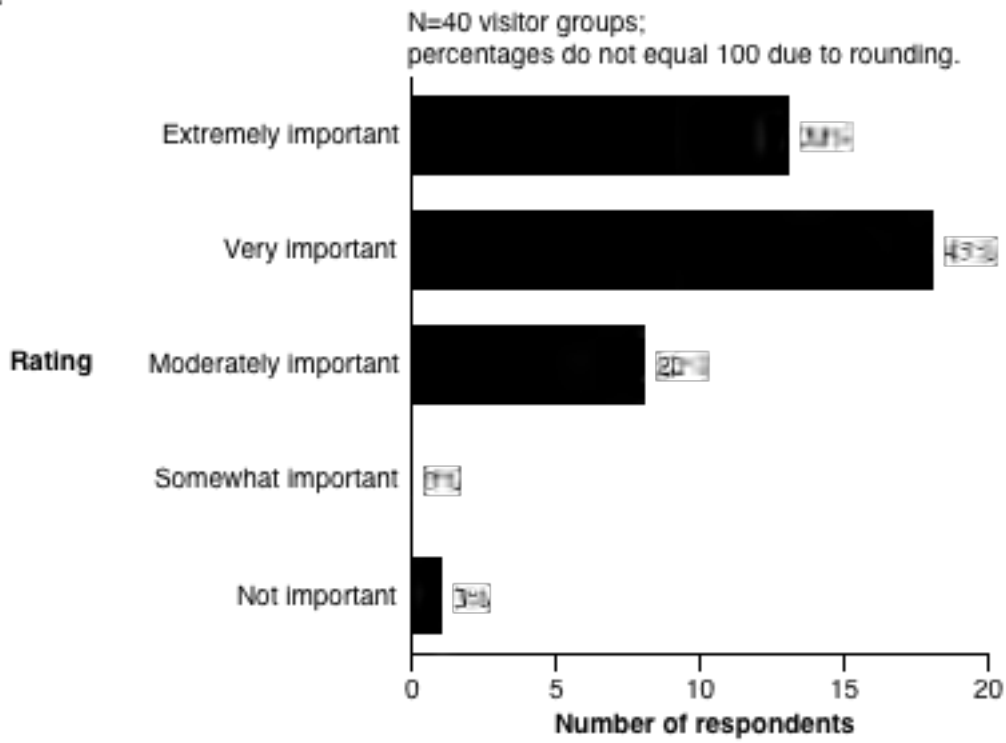


Figure 30: Importance of NPS brochure

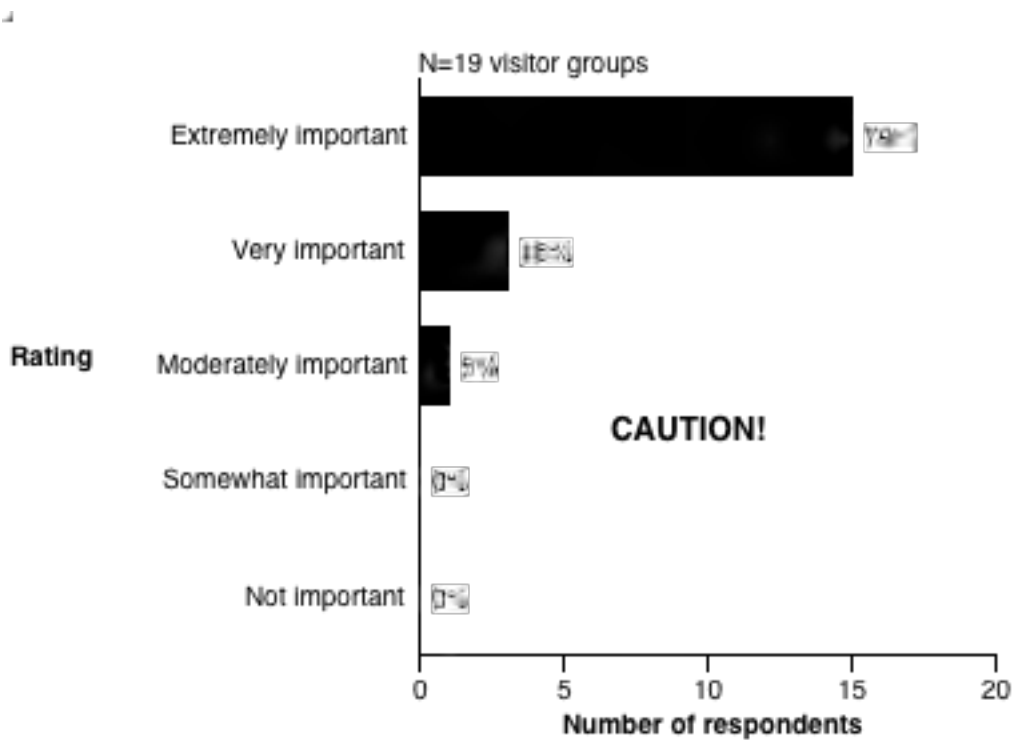


Figure 31: Importance of guided walking tour

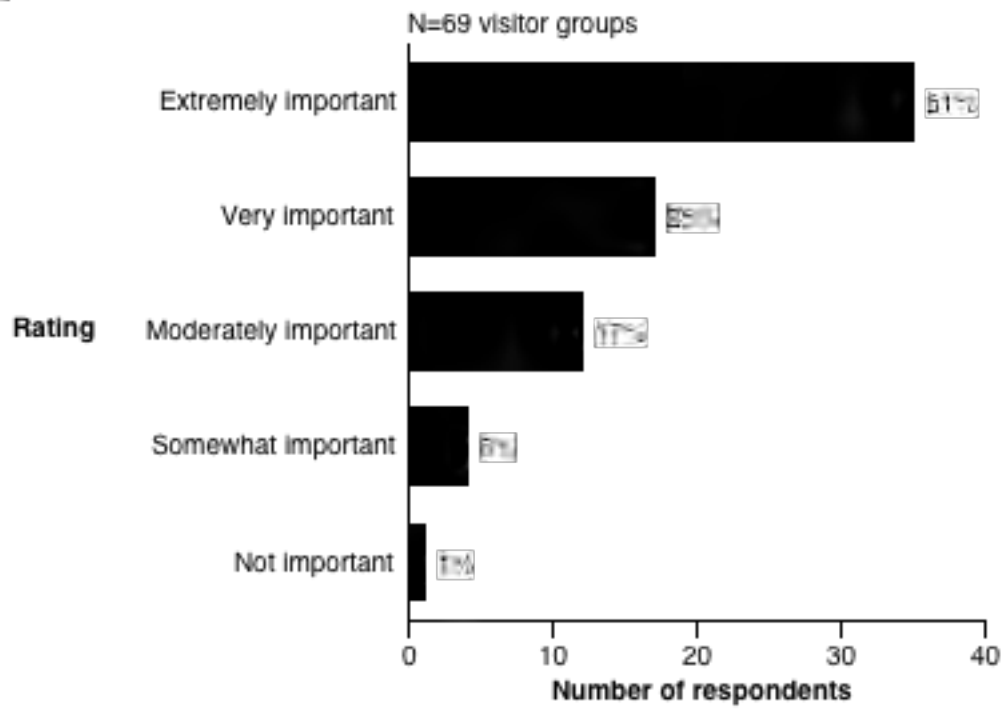


Figure 32: Importance of assistance from NPS staff/volunteers

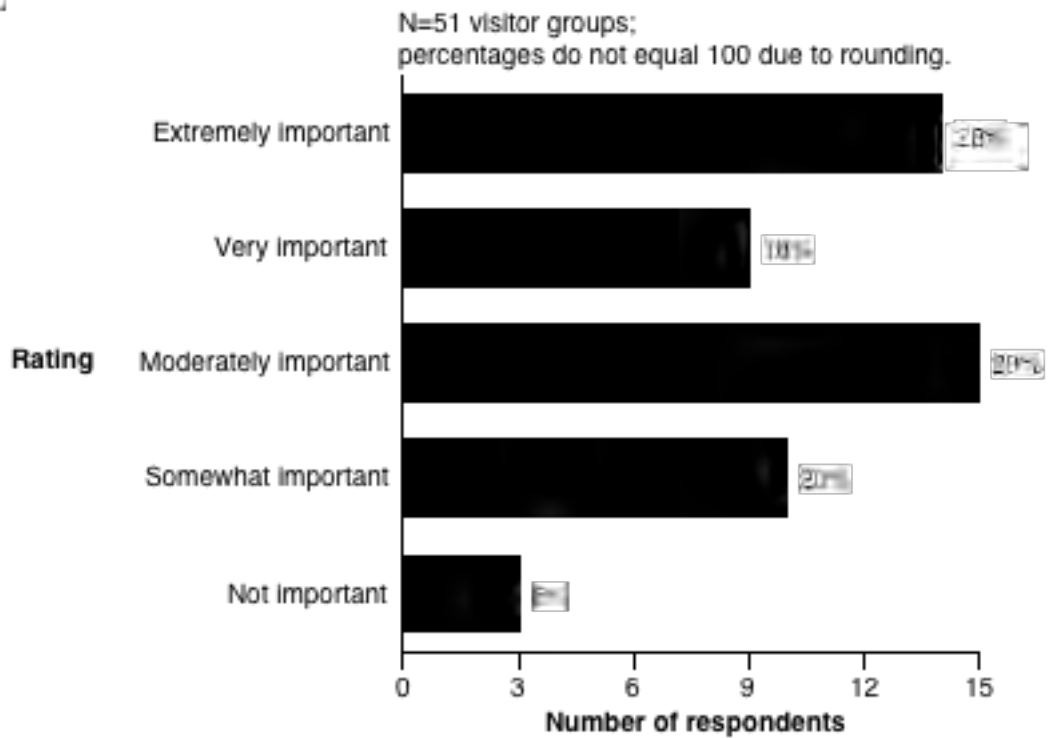


Figure 33: Importance of Waterfront Visitor Center

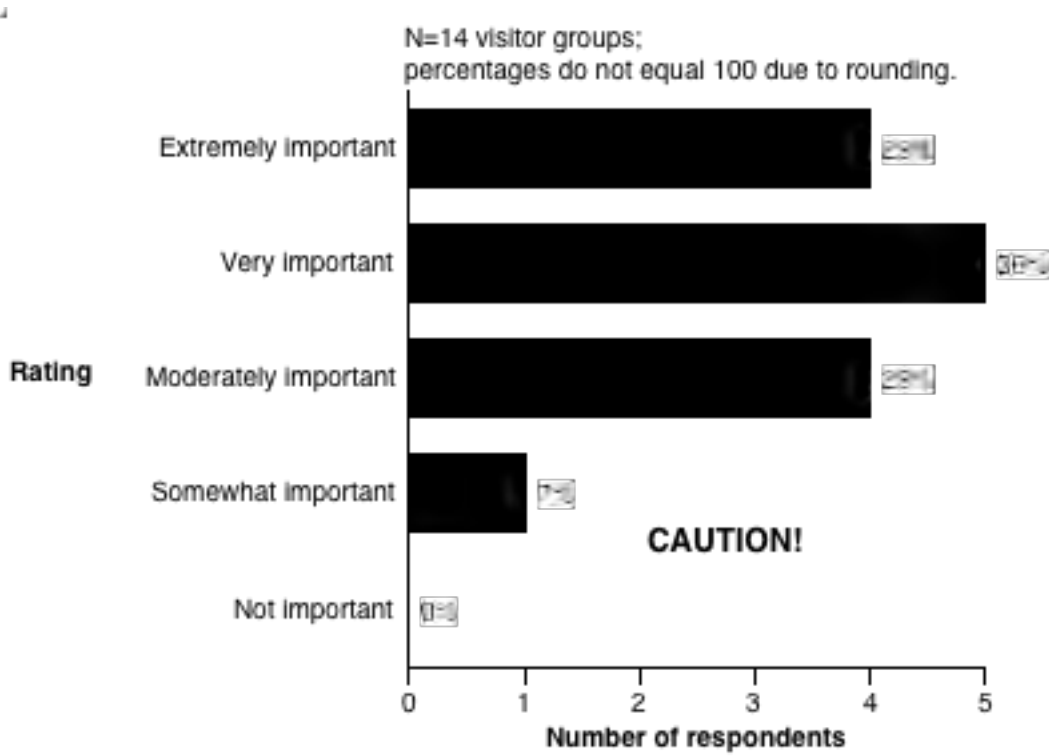


Figure 34: Importance of self-guided dock walks

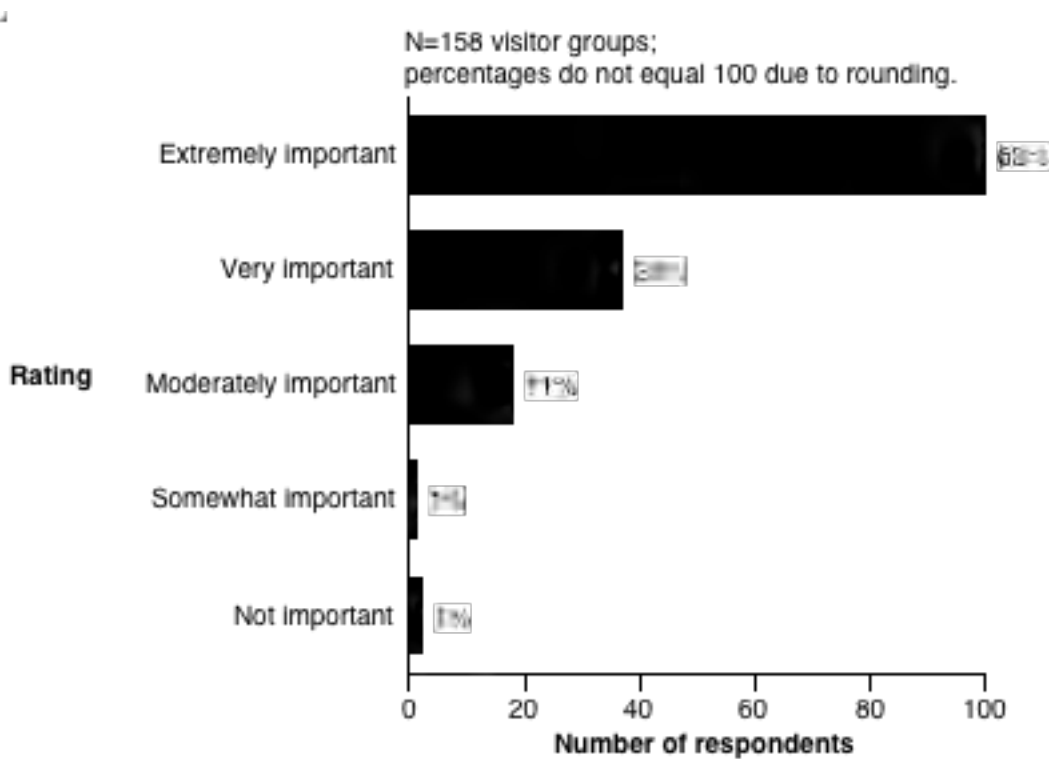


Figure 35: Importance of New Bedford Whaling Museum

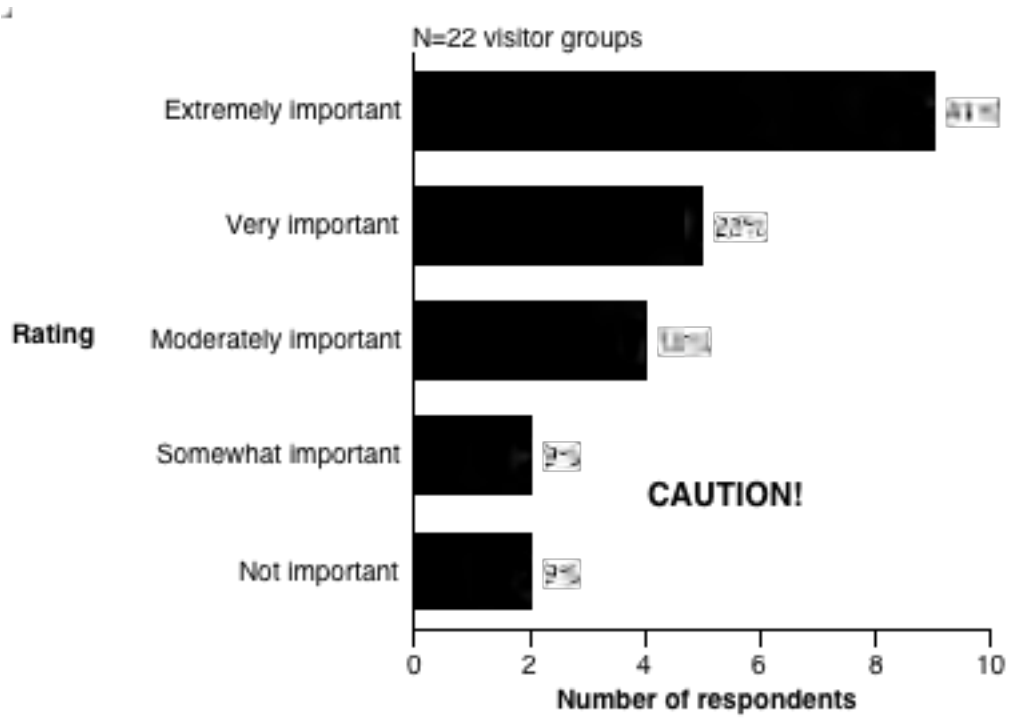


Figure 36: Importance of Rotch-Jones-Duff House

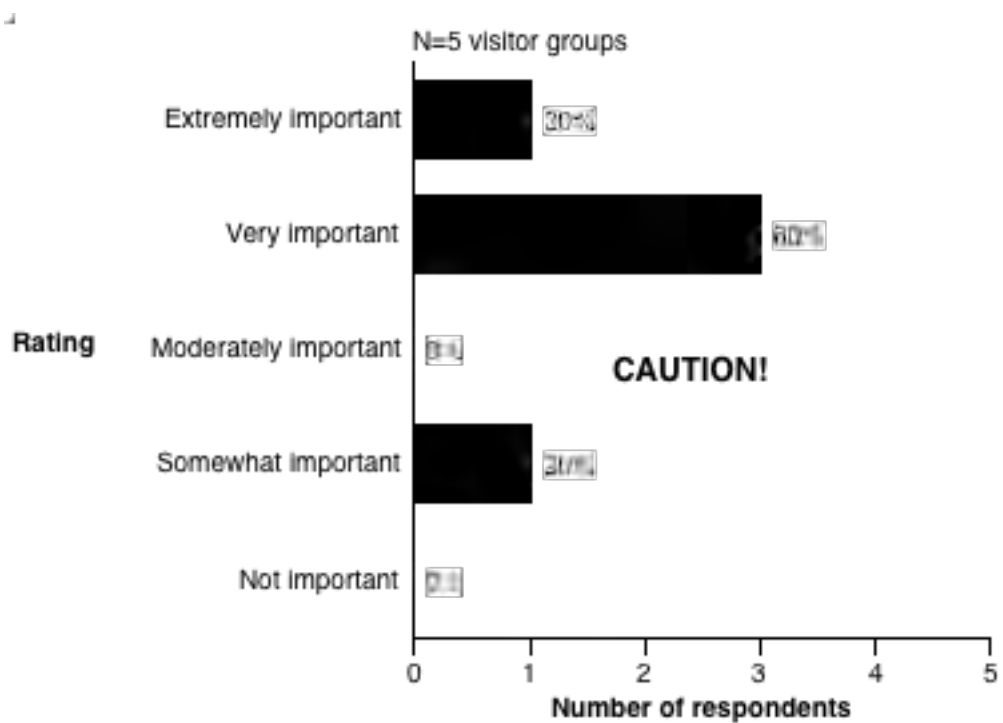


Figure 37: Importance of Rotch-Jones-Duff self-guided tour

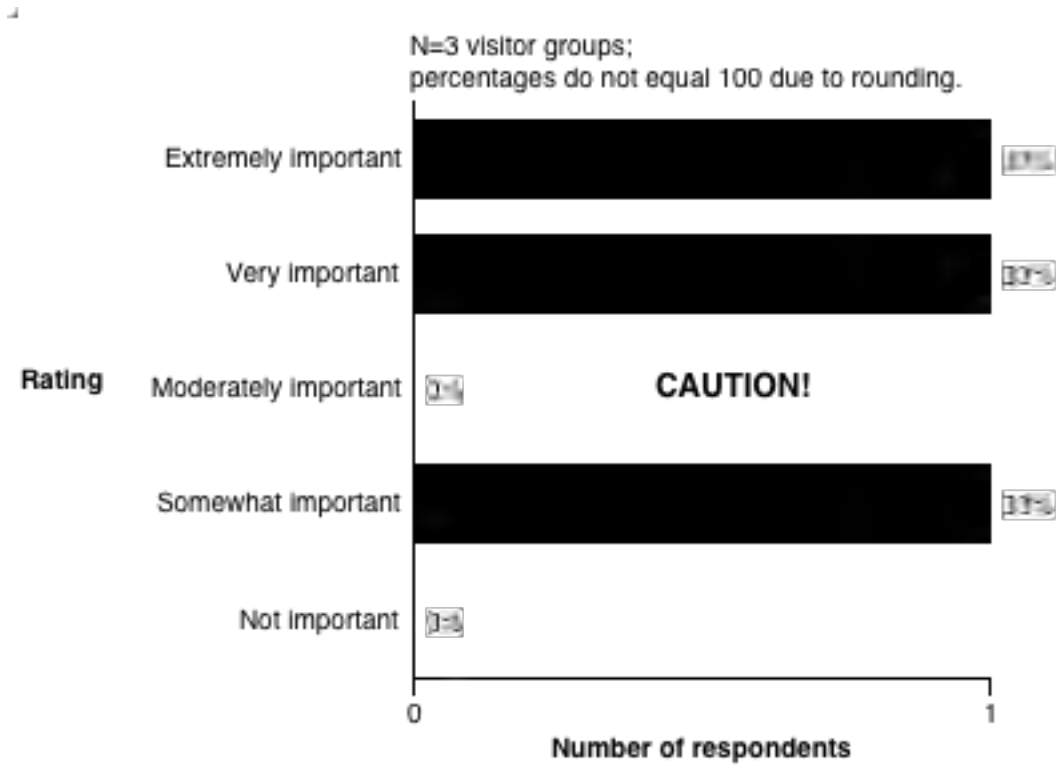


Figure 38: Importance of “Catch the Whale” free shuttle

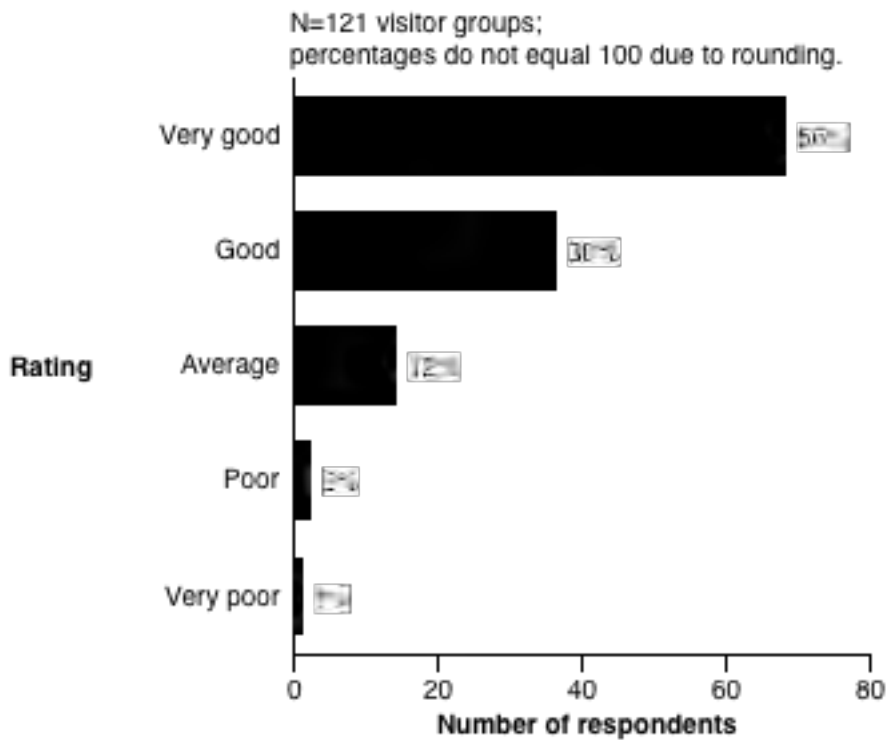


Figure 39: Quality of NPS Visitor Center



Figure 40: Quality of NPS Junior Ranger program

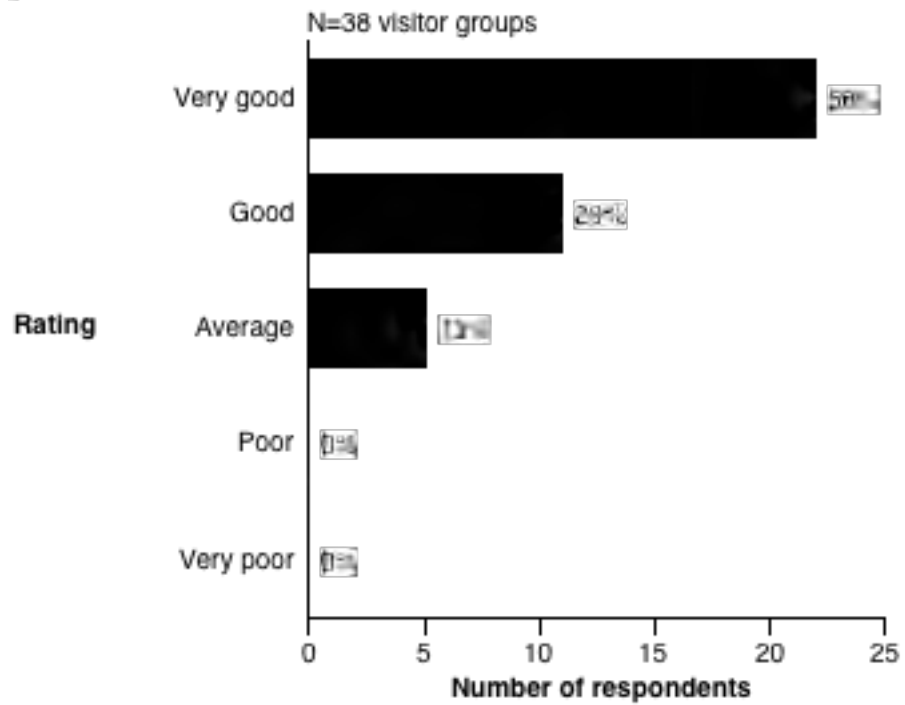


Figure 41: Quality of NPS brochure



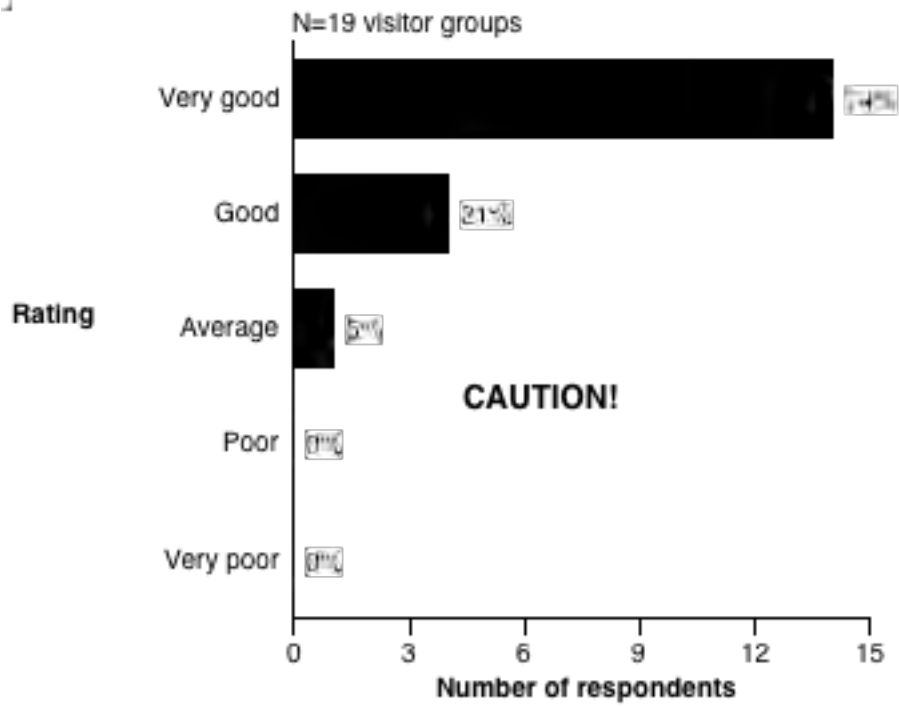


Figure 42: Quality of guided walking tour

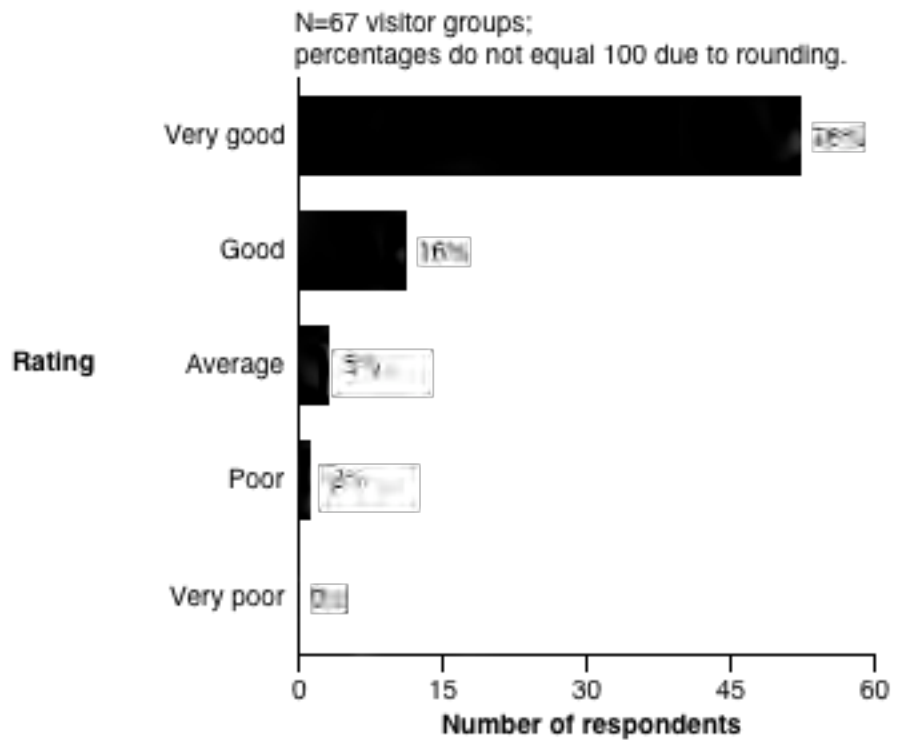


Figure 43: Quality of assistance from NPS staff/volunteers

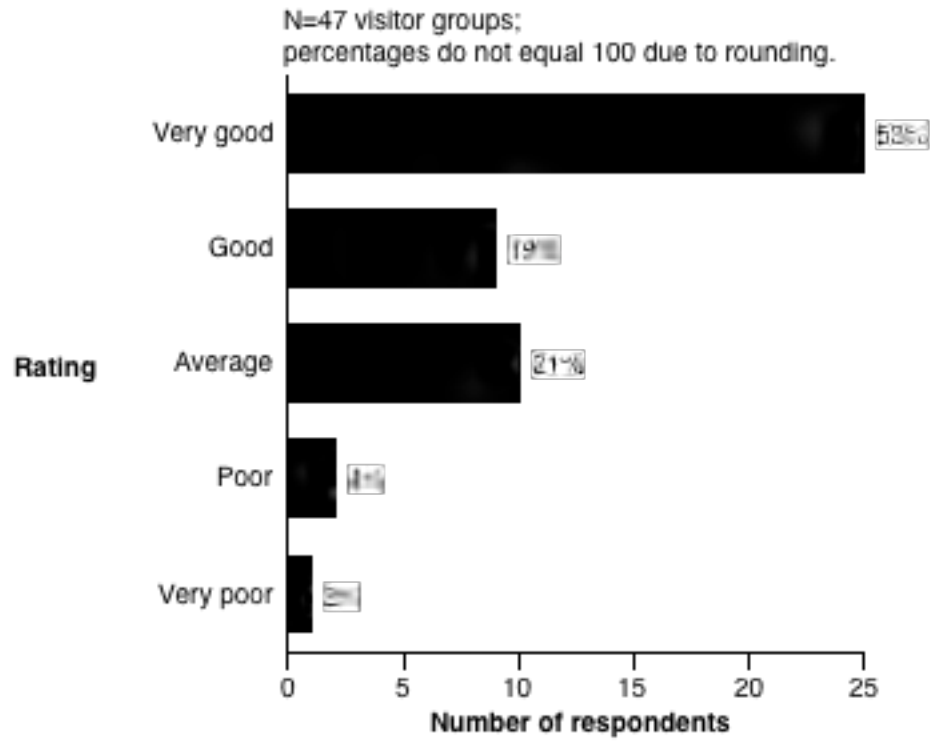


Figure 44: Quality of Waterfront Visitor Center

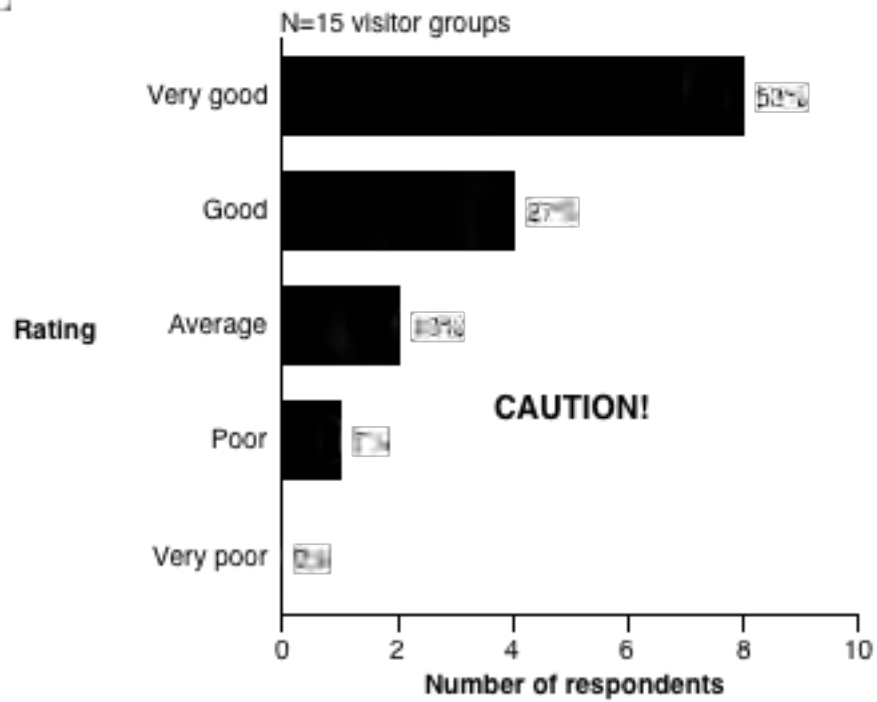


Figure 45: Quality of self-guided dock walks

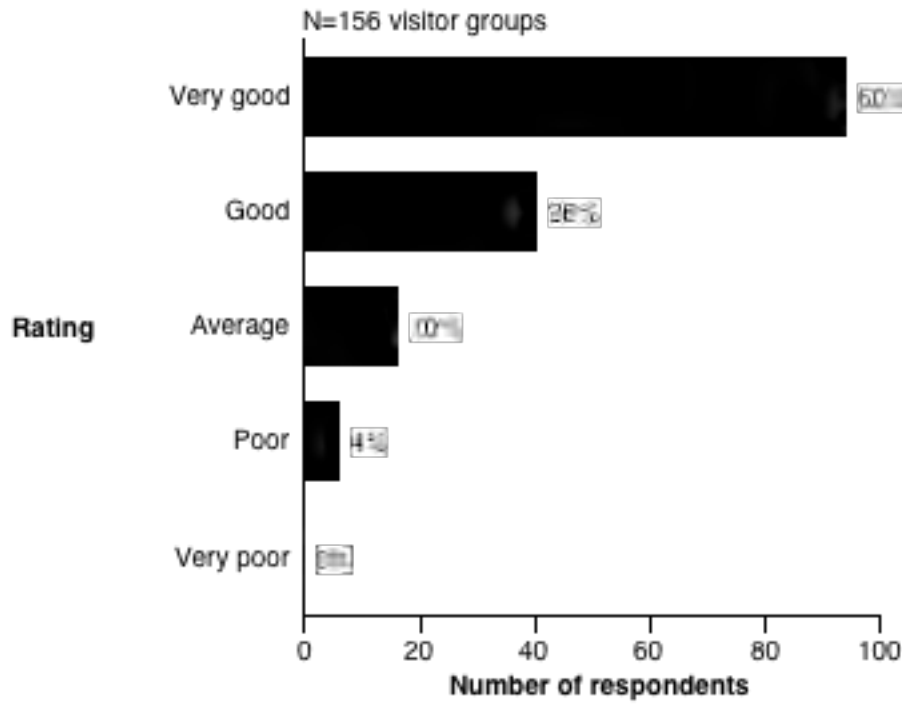


Figure 46: Quality of New Bedford Whaling Museum

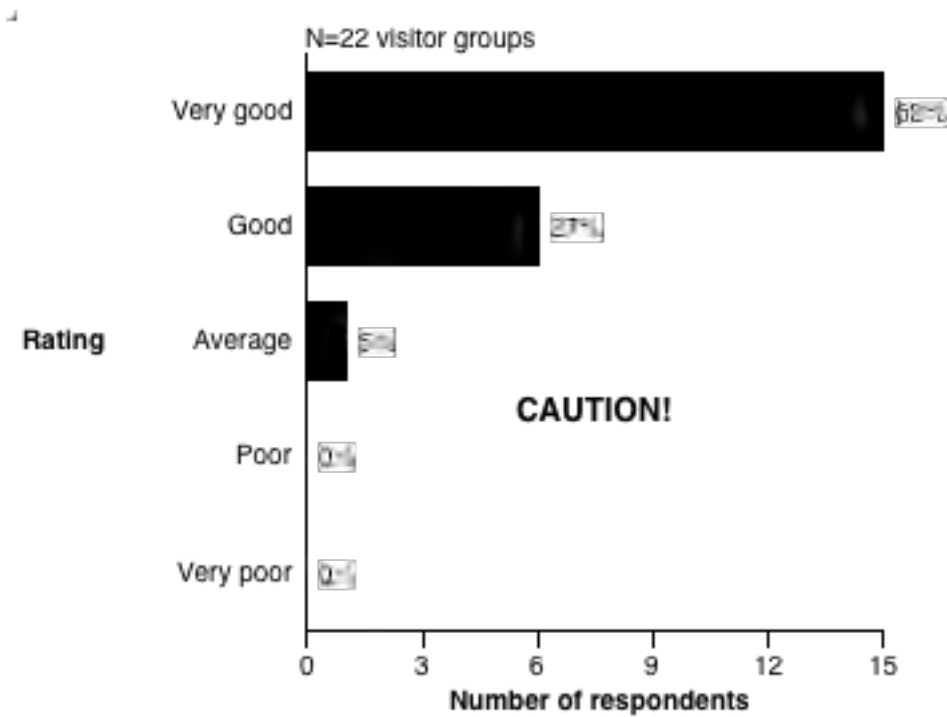


Figure 47: Quality of Rotch-Jones-Duff House



Figure 48: Quality of Rotch-Jones-Duff self-guided tour

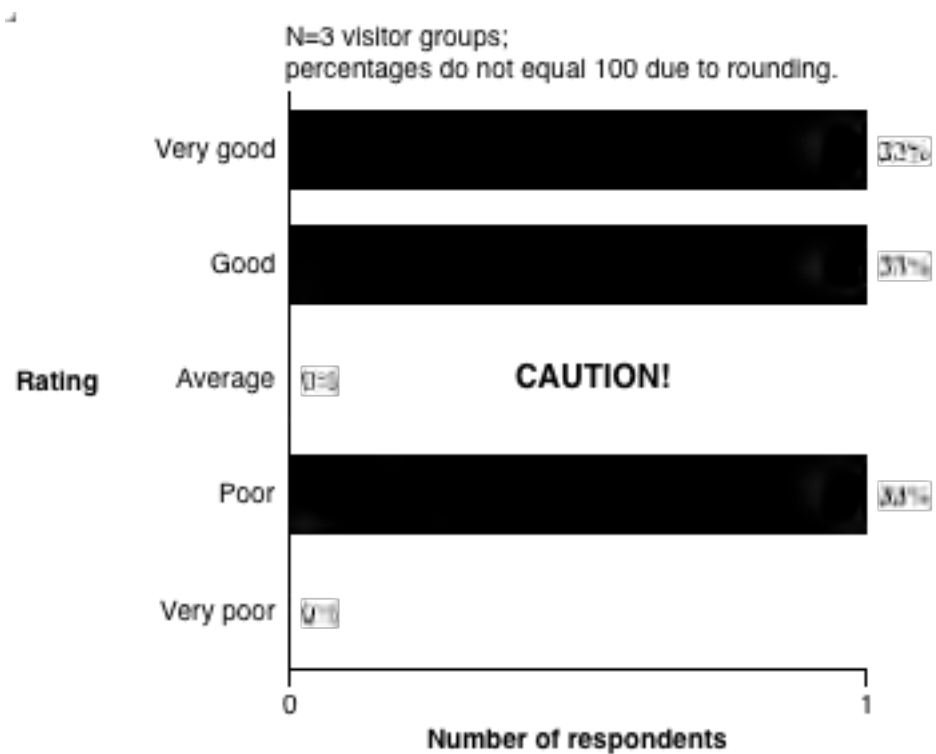
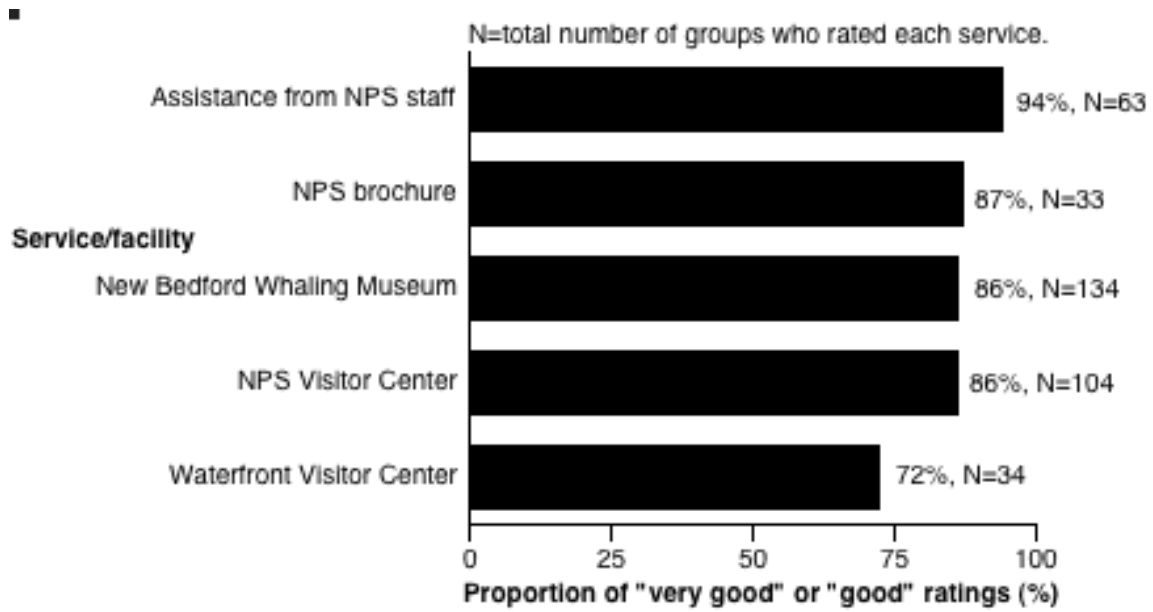


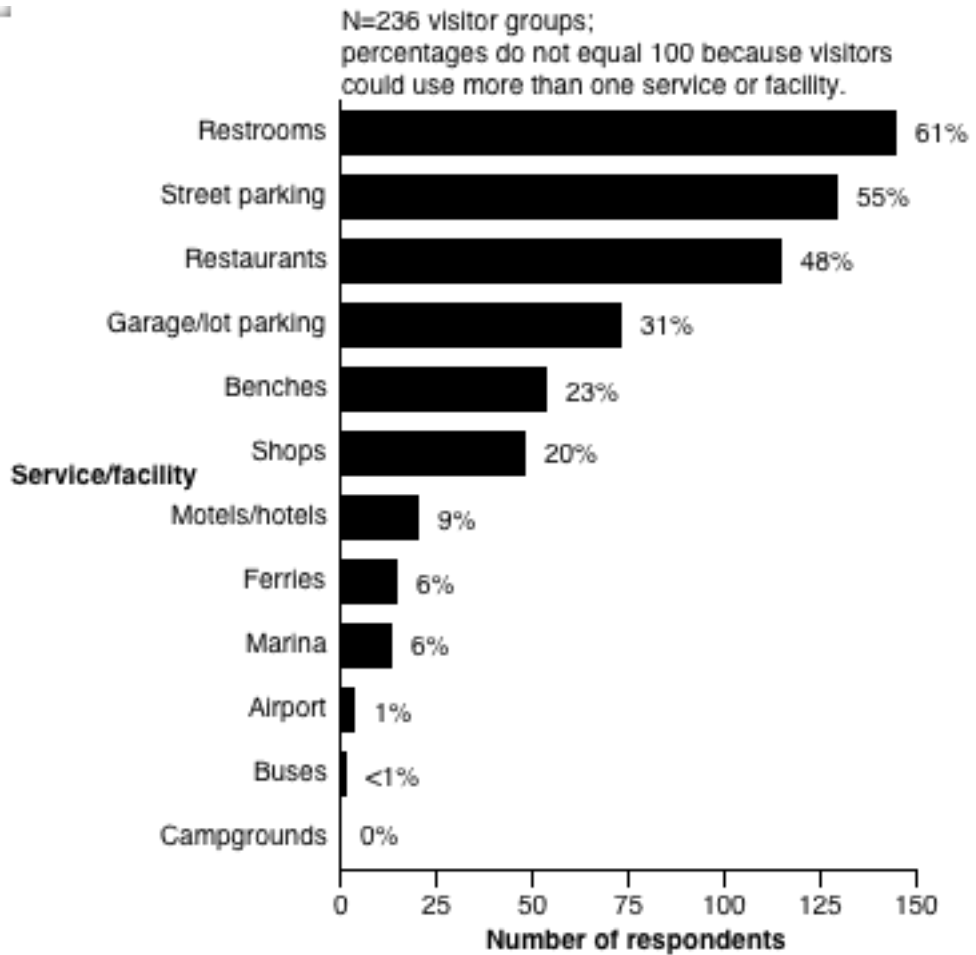
Figure 49: Quality of "Catch the Whale" free shuttle



**Figure 50: Combined proportions of "very good" and "good" quality ratings for NPS visitor services and facilities**

**New Bedford area visitor services and facilities: use, importance, and quality**

Visitor groups were asked to note the New Bedford area services and facilities they used during their visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP. As shown in Figure 51, the services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were restrooms (61%), street parking (55%), restaurants (48%), and garage and lot parking (31%). The least used services were buses (<1%) and campgrounds (0%).



**Figure 51: New Bedford area 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

The average importance and quality ratings for each service were determined based on ratings provided by visitors who used each service. Figure 52 shows the average importance and quality ratings for each of the visitor services. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. Please note that motels/hotels, ferries, marina, airport, buses, and campgrounds were not rated by enough visitor groups to provide reliable data.

Figures 53-63 show the importance ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest combined proportion of "extremely important" and "very important" ratings included restrooms (92%), street parking (86%), and garage and lot parking (85%). The service with the largest proportion of "not important" responses was street parking and restrooms (1%). No respondents rated the campgrounds' importance.

Figures 64-74 show the quality ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest combined proportion of "very good" and "good" ratings included garage and lot parking (84%), street parking (81%), and benches (80%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for restaurants (3%). No respondents rated the campgrounds' quality.

Figure 75 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services.

Figure 52: Average ratings of service and facility importance and quality



Figure 52: Detail



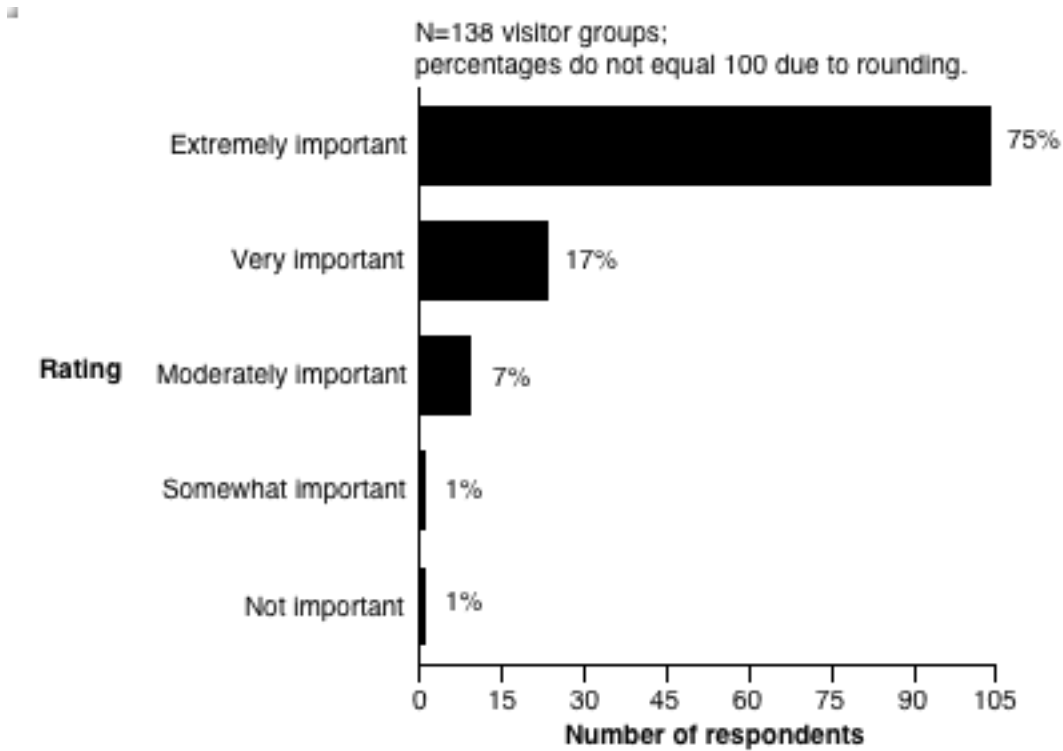


Figure 53: Importance of restrooms

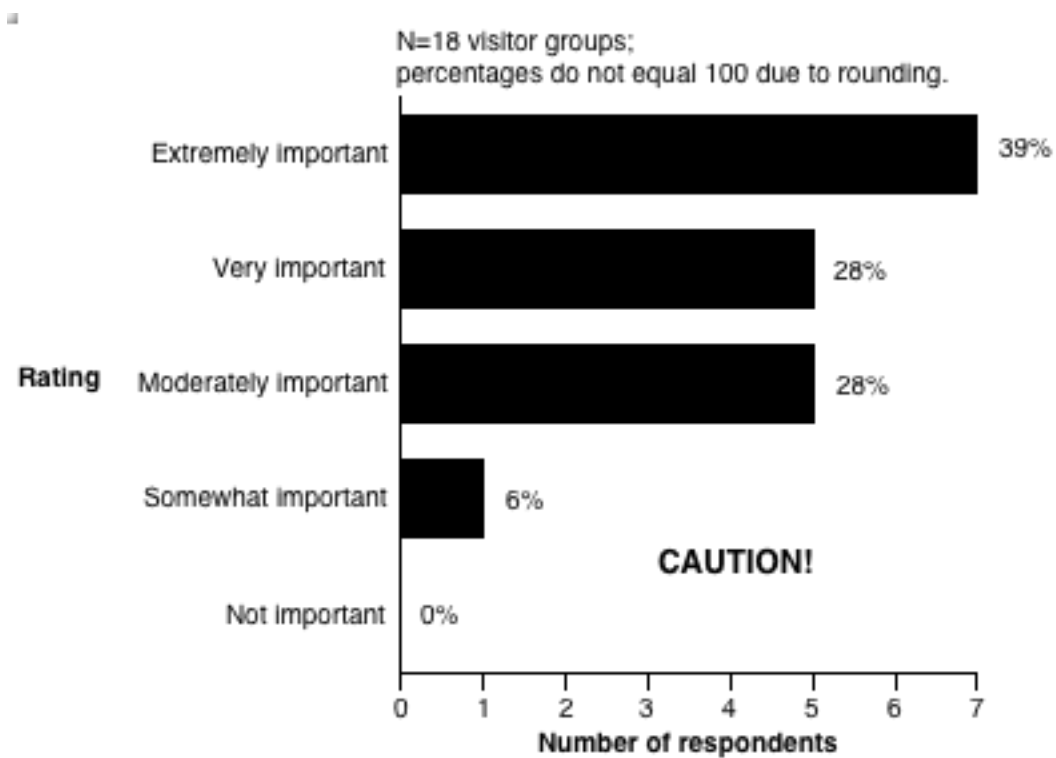


Figure 54: Importance of motels/hotels

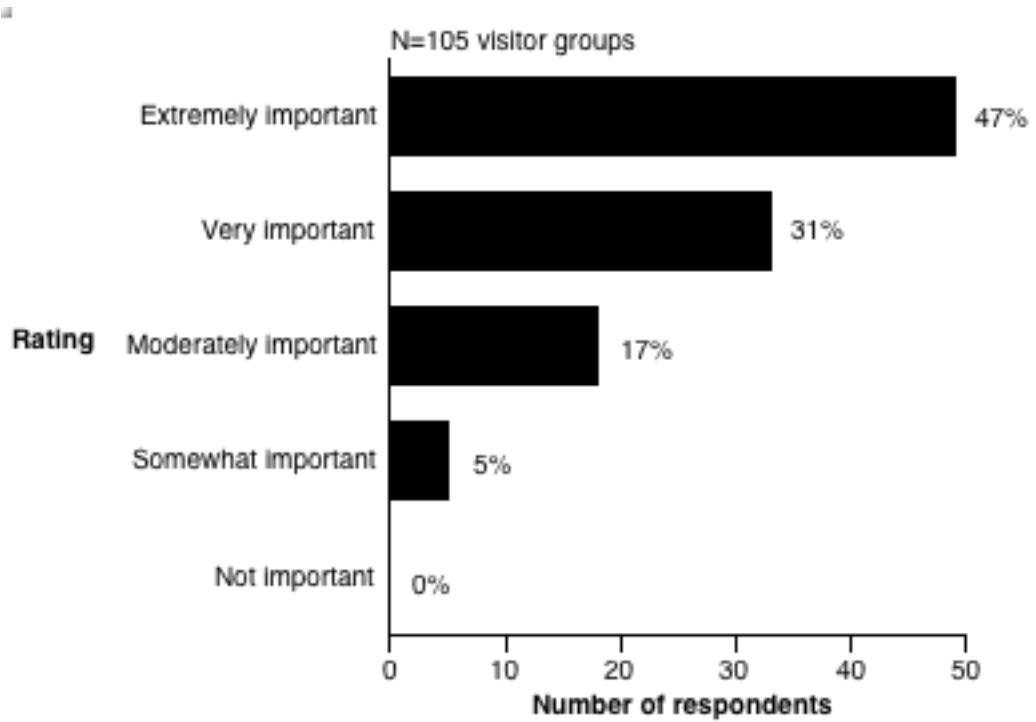


Figure 55: Importance of restaurants

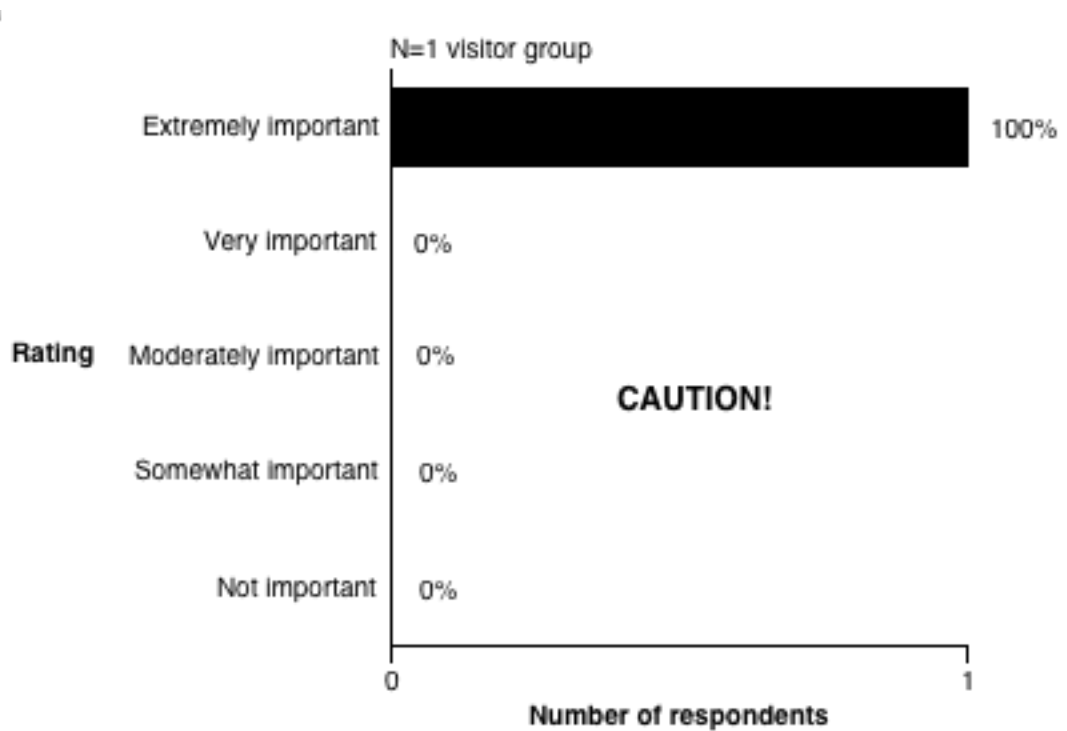


Figure 56: Importance of buses

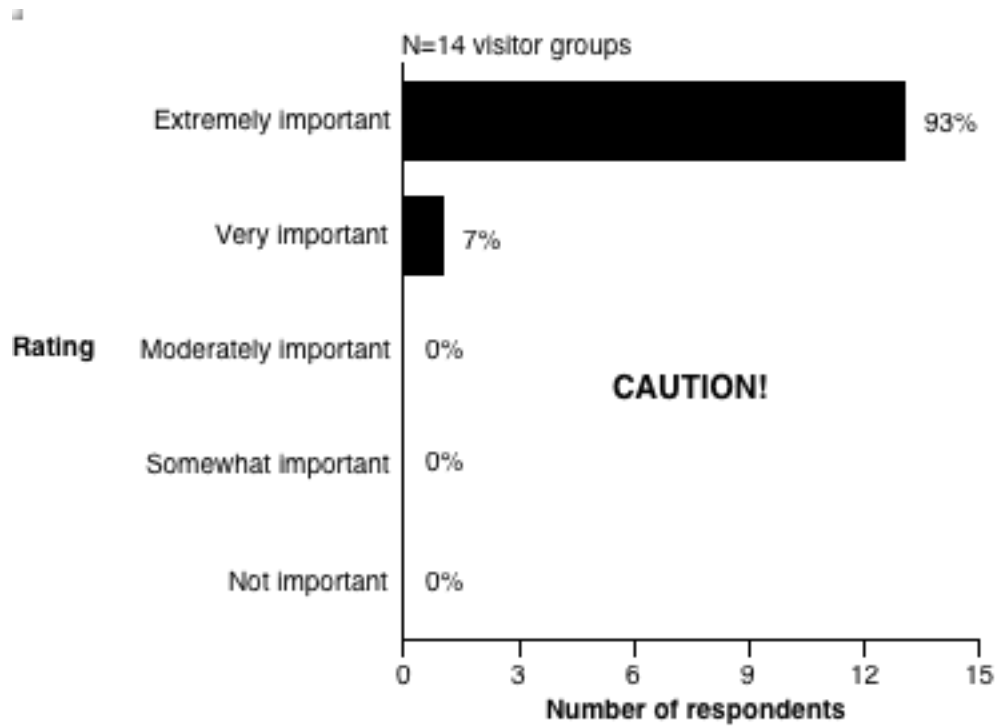


Figure 57: Importance of ferries

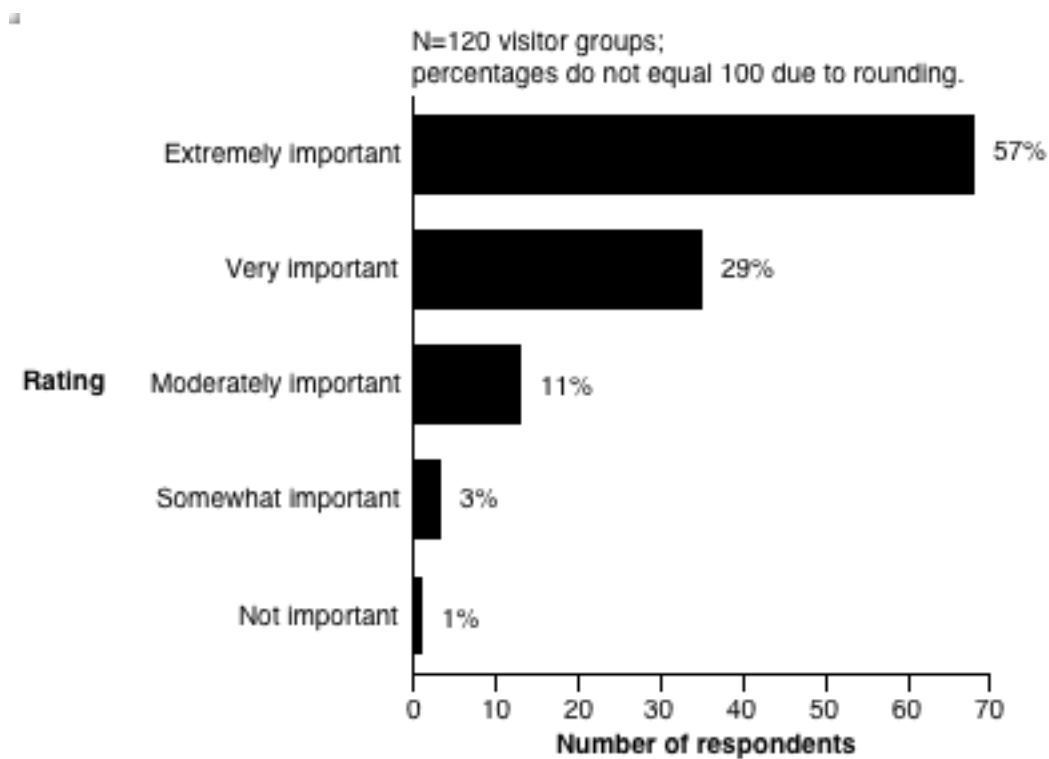


Figure 58: Importance of street parking

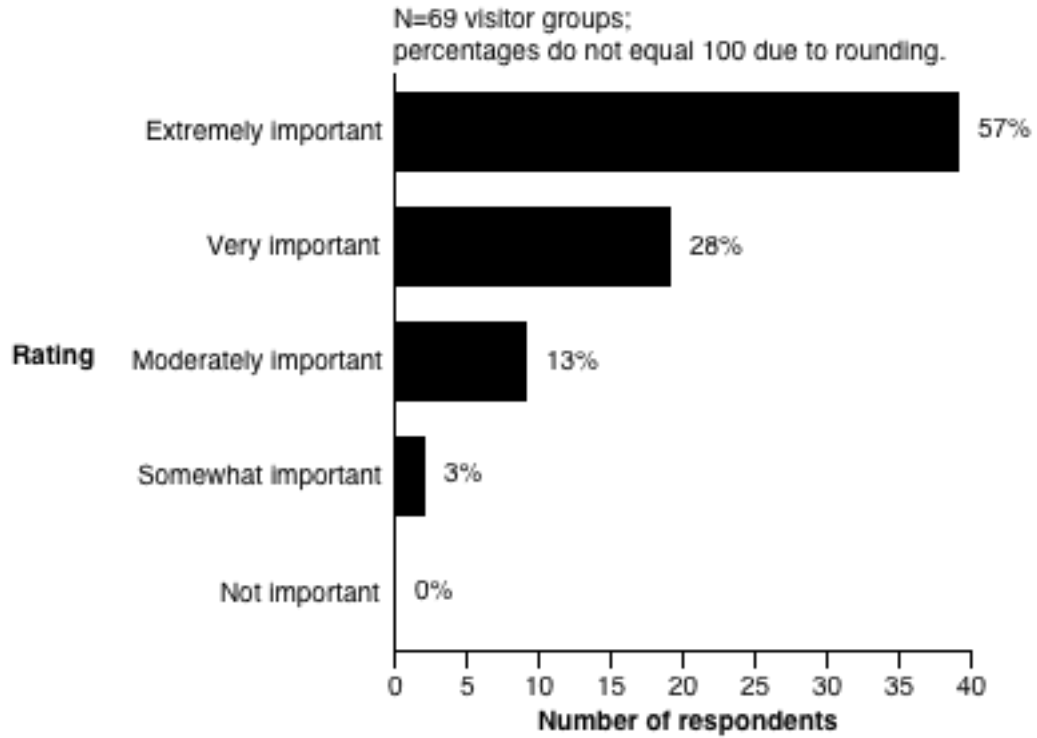


Figure 59: Importance of garage/lot parking

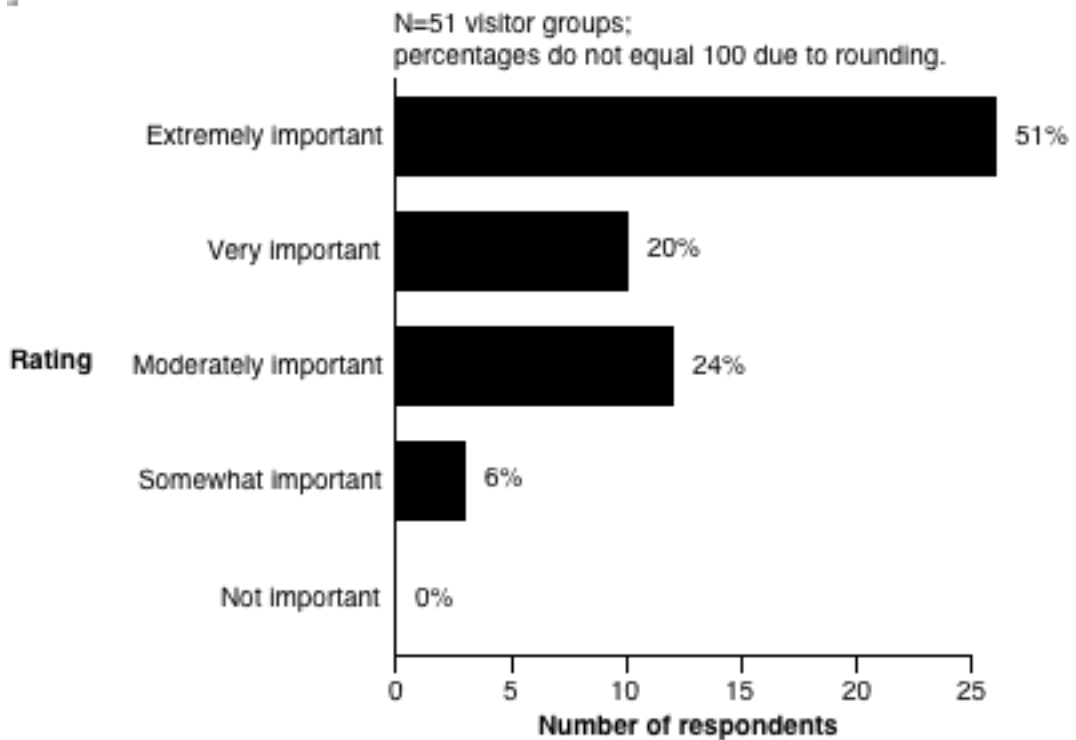


Figure 60: Importance of benches

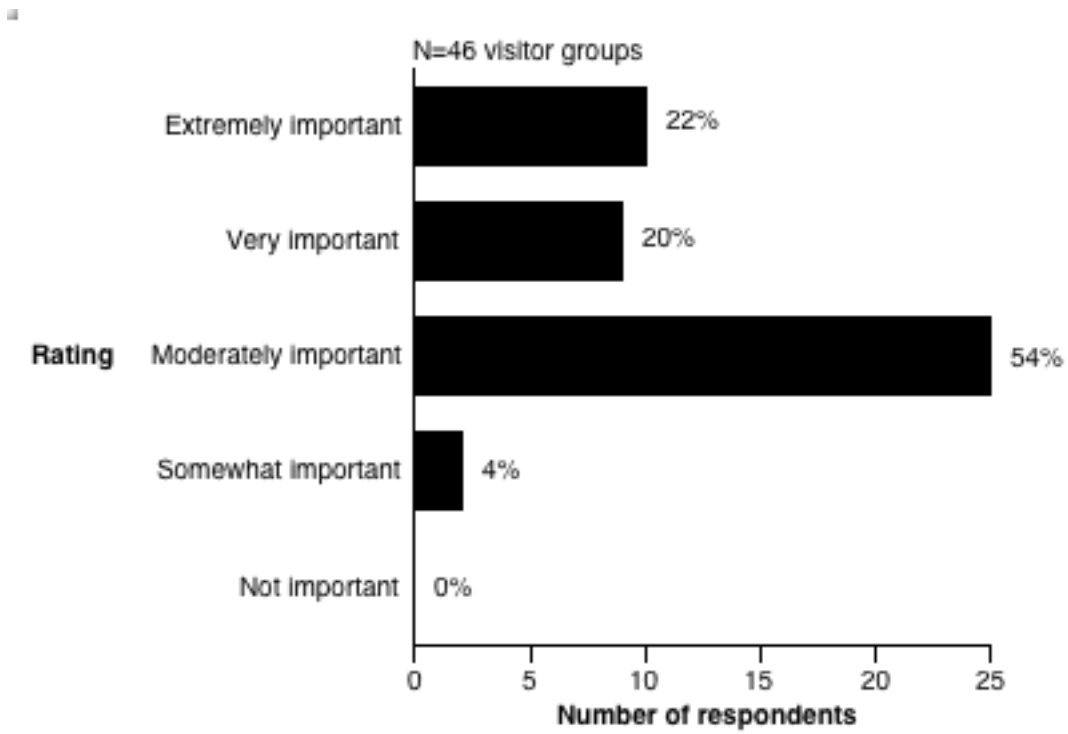


Figure 61: Importance of shops

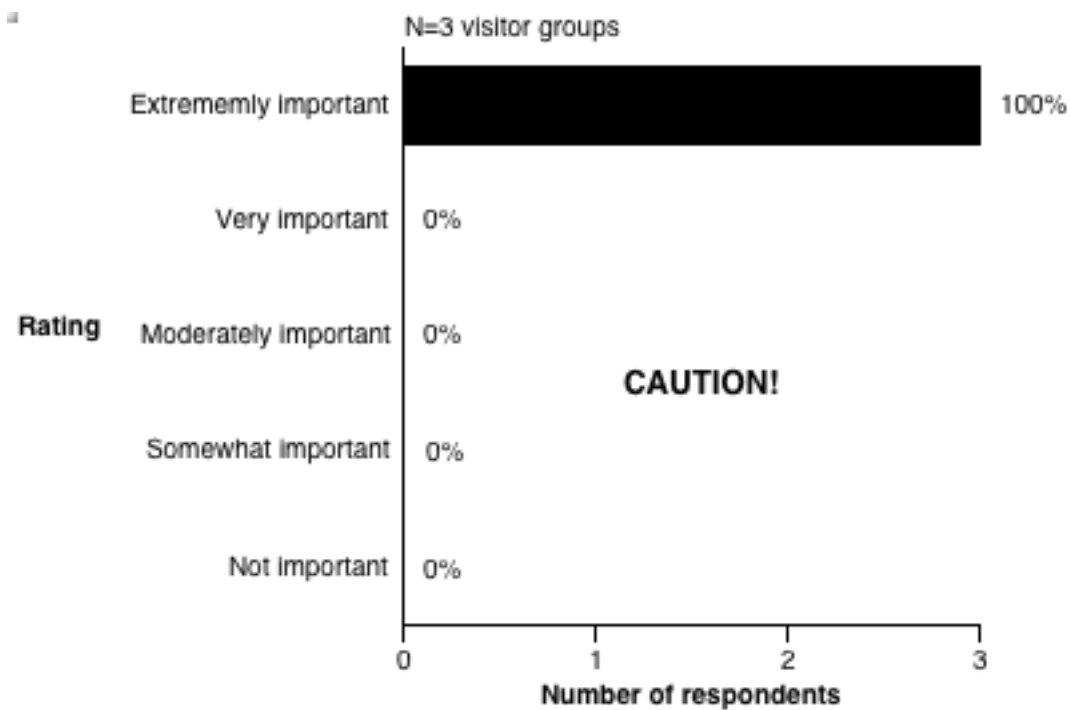


Figure 62: Importance of airport

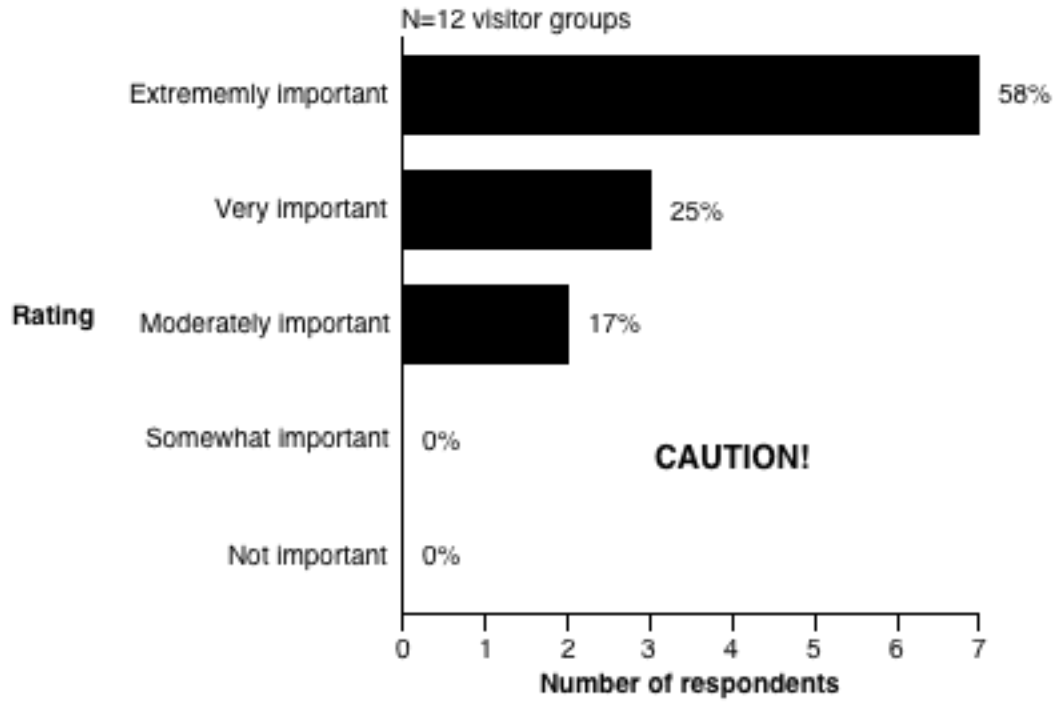


Figure 63: Importance of marina

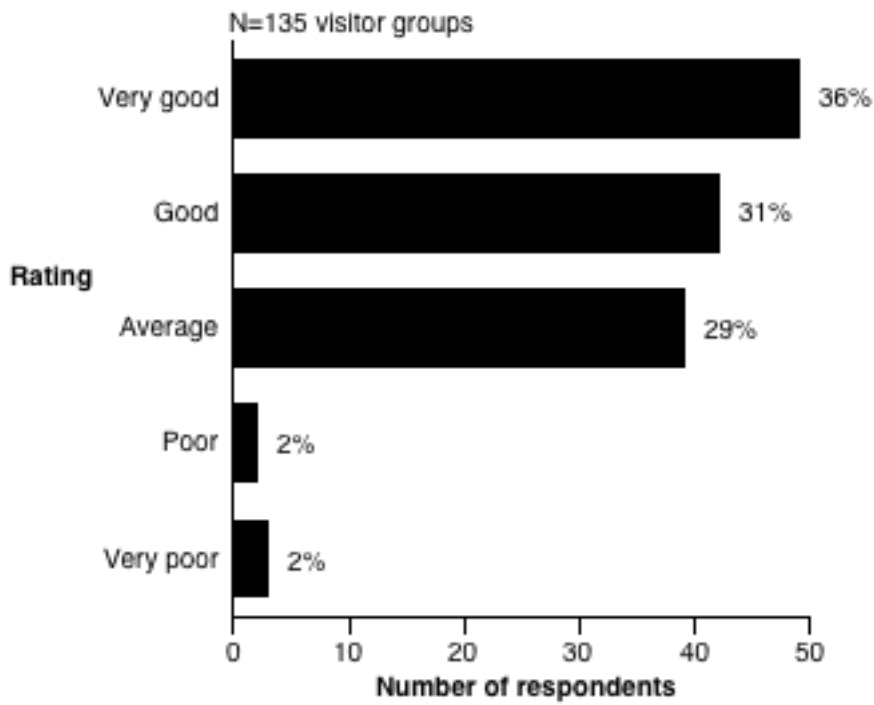


Figure 64: Quality of restrooms

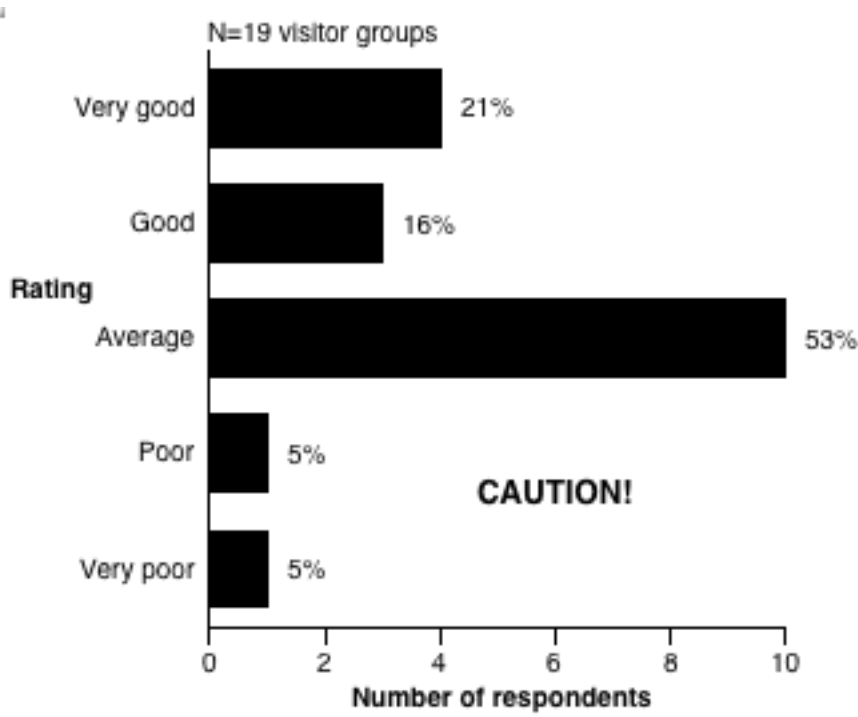


Figure 65: Quality of motels/hotels

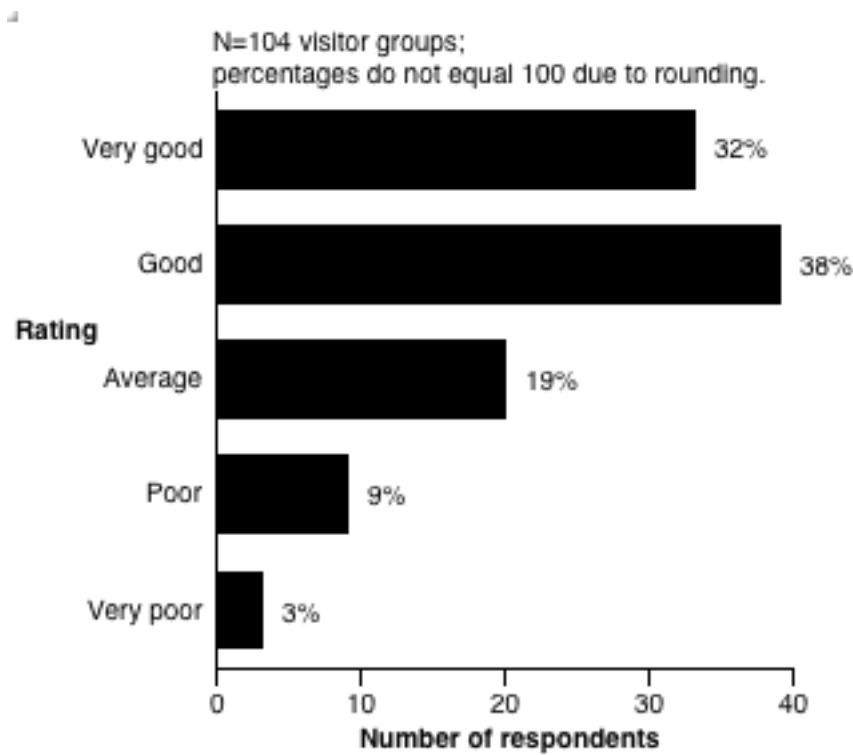


Figure 66: Quality of restaurants

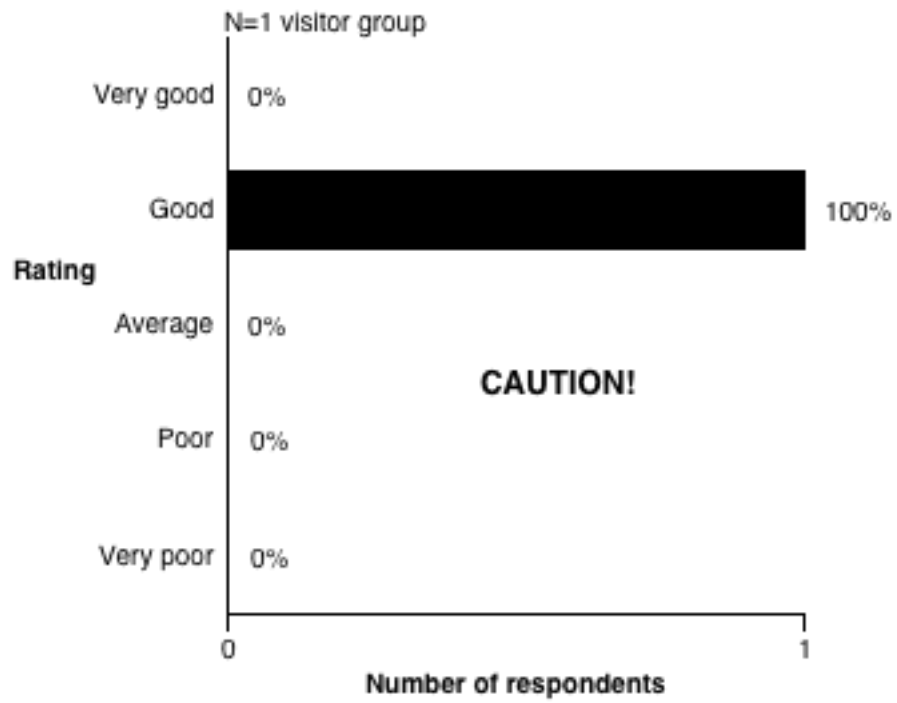


Figure 67: Quality of buses

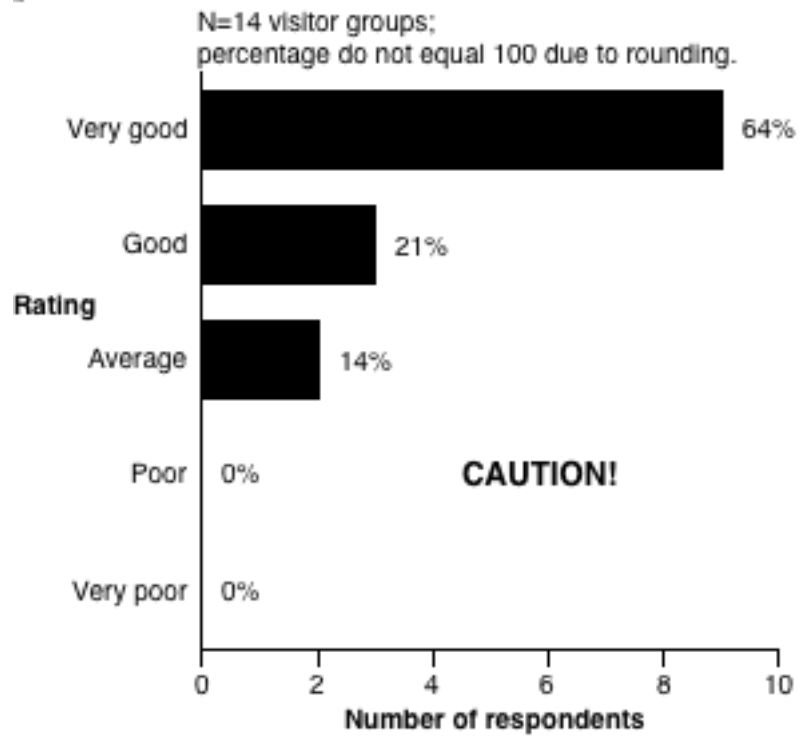


Figure 68: Quality of ferries



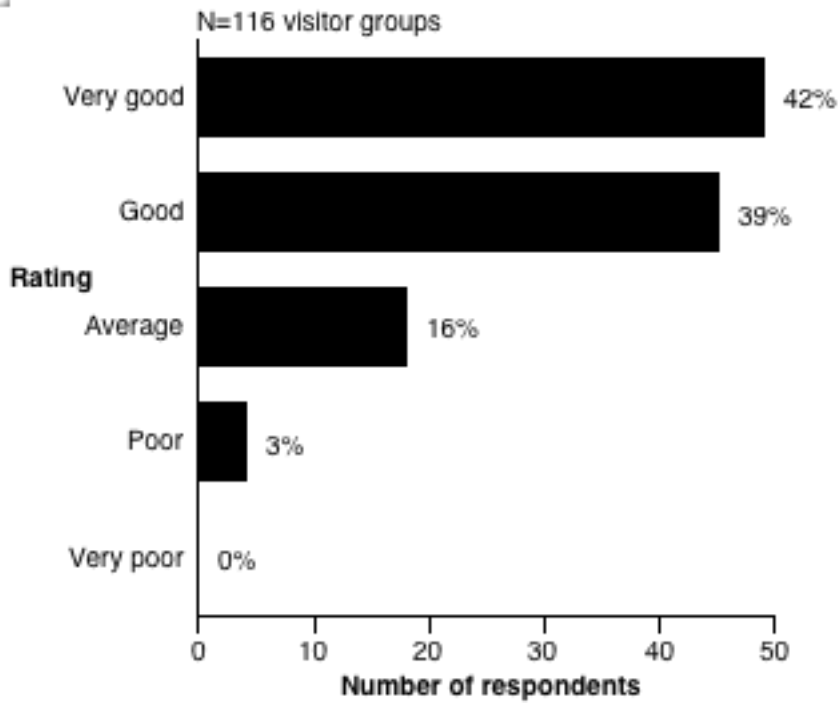


Figure 69: Quality of street parking

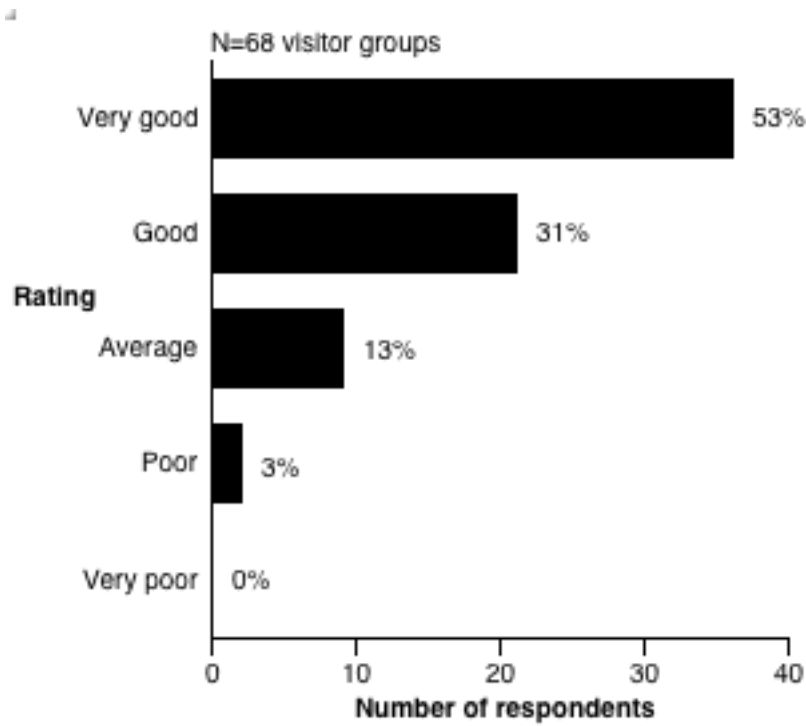


Figure 70: Quality of garage/lot parking

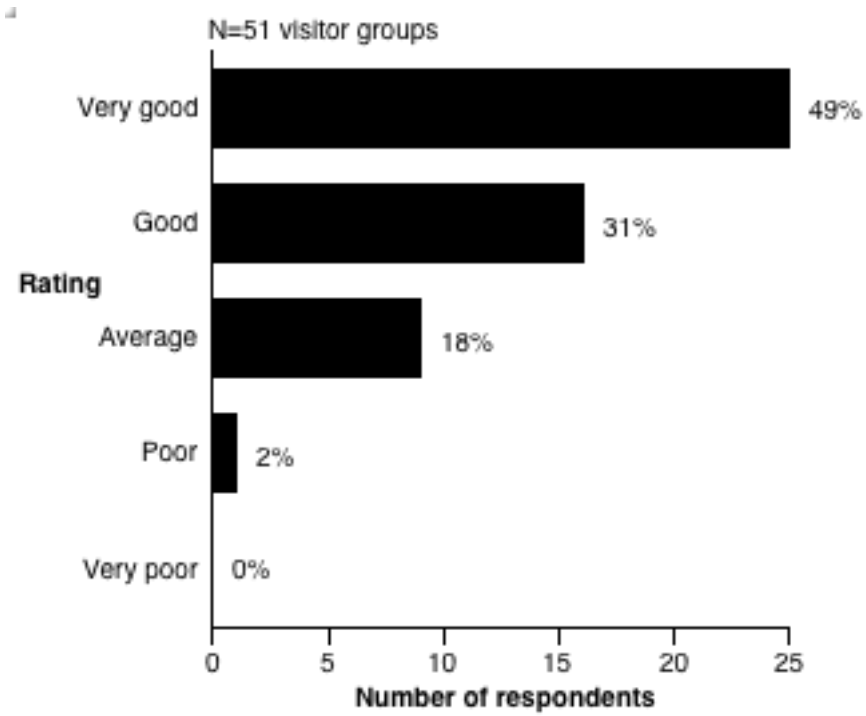


Figure 71: Quality of benches

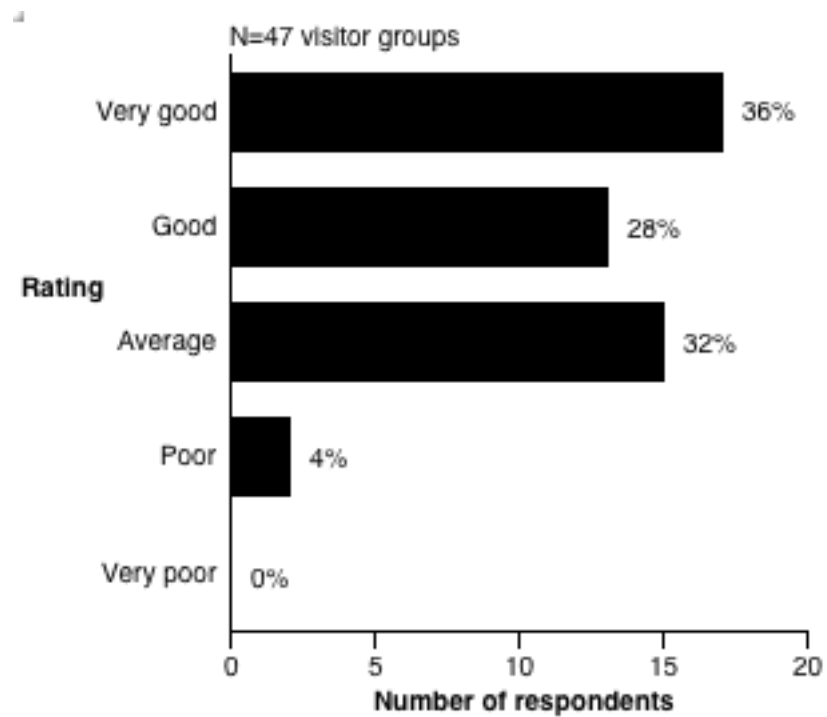


Figure 72: Quality of shops

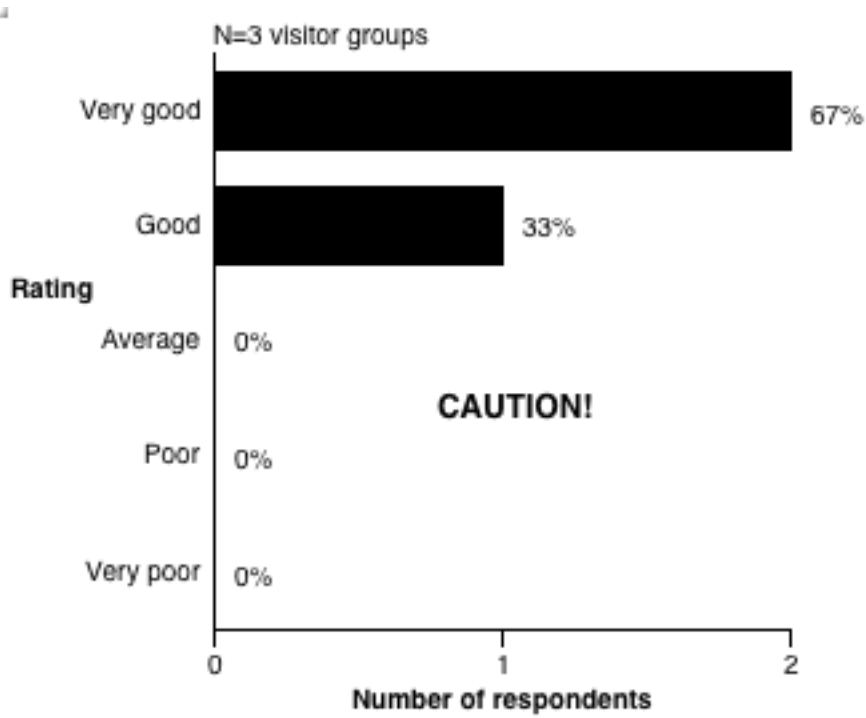


Figure 73: Quality of airport

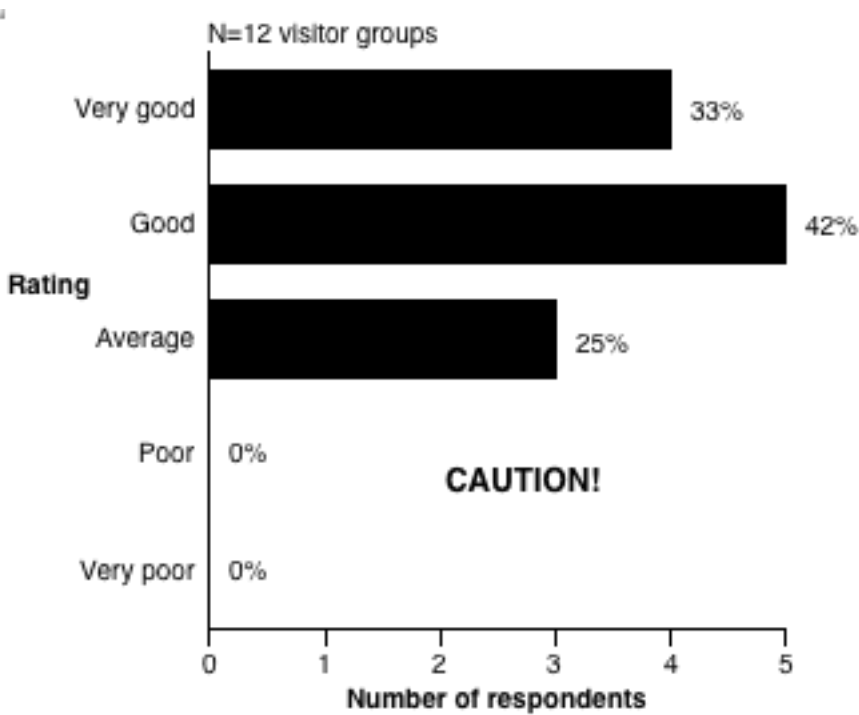


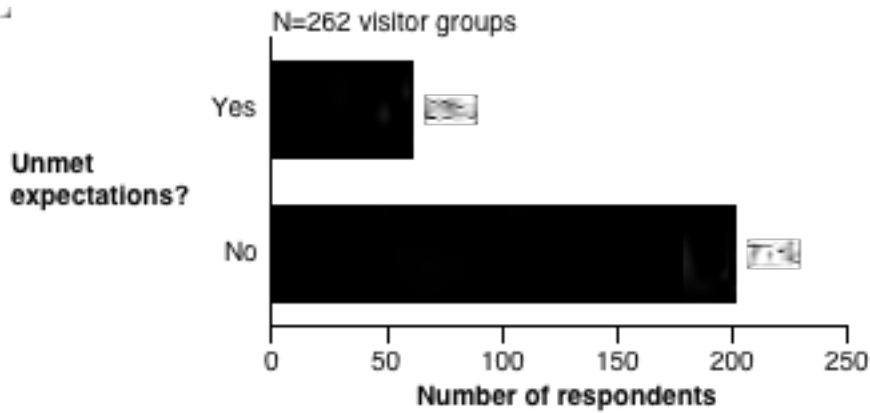
Figure 74: Quality of marina



**Figure 75: Combined proportions of "very good" and "good" quality ratings for New Bedford area services and facilities**

**Visitor expectations**

Visitors were asked to indicate if there was anything they expected to see or do but were not able to while visiting New Bedford Whaling NHP. Twenty-three percent of visitors responded that there was something they were unable to see or do (see Figure 76). The most common topics mentioned were visiting Seamen’s Bethel, shopping, visiting the waterfront, and visiting the schooner *Ernestina* (see Table 9). The most commonly mentioned reasons visitors did not get to see or do what they expected included lack of time, *Ernestina* was not at dock, and renovation of exhibits (see Table 10).



**Figure 76: Unmet visitor expectations?**

**Table 9: Expected to see or do**

N=73 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Visit Seamen's Bethel	8
More shopping	8
Visit waterfront	7
Visit schooner Ernestina	6
Visit museum	4
Attend concert	4
Visit Rotch-Jones-Duff House	3
See more of the area	3
See a full-size whaling ship	3
Walking tour	2
Eat at waterfront restaurant	2
Guided boat tour	2
Research family history	2
View exhibits in Visitor Center	2
Other comments	17

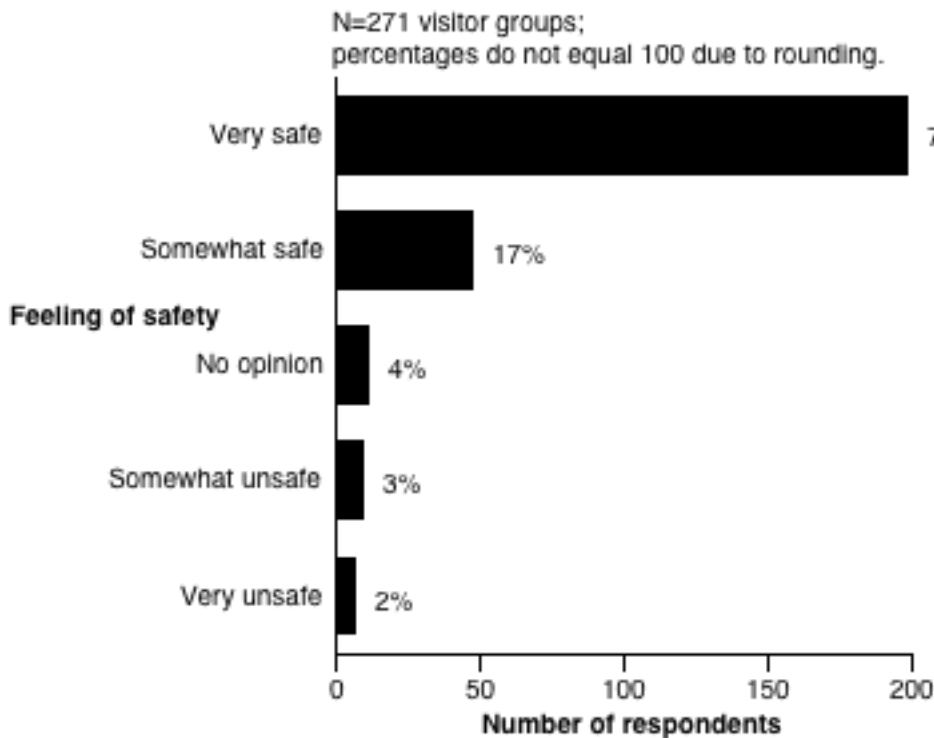
**Table 10: Reasons you were unable to see or do what you expected**

N=47 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Lack of time	15
<i>Ernestina</i> not at dock	6
Exhibit renovation/construction	5
Seamen's Bethel closed	3
Historic boat exhibit unavailable	2
Didn't know facilities existed	2
Guided boat ride not offered	2
Nothing	2
Other comments	10

**Safety**

Visitors were asked to rate how safe they and their group felt on this visit to New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. Seventy-three percent of visitor groups reported feeling very safe while only 2% felt very unsafe (see Figure 77). The most commonly given reasons for feeling unsafe included being in area after dark, the presence of vagrants, and being uncomfortable on the waterfront (see Table 11).



**Figure 77: How safe did you and your group feel?**

**Table 11: Reasons for feeling unsafe**

N=3 comments

**CAUTION!**

Comment	Number of times mentioned
After dark	1
Vagrants in the area	1
Uncomfortable on waterfront	1

---

## Expenditures

Visitors were asked to list their expenditures in the New Bedford area (within 1/2 hour drive of the park) during their trip. They were asked how much money they spent for lodging (motel, camping, etc.), travel (gas, rental car, bus fare, etc.), food (restaurant, groceries, etc.), fees (museums, tours, etc.) and "other" items (recreation, film, books, gifts, etc.).

**Total expenditures:** Almost one-half of the visitors (48%) spent up to \$50 in total expenditures during this trip (see Figure 78). The average visitor group expenditure during this visit was \$141. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of groups spent more; 50% spent less) was \$45.

Food accounted for the greatest proportion of total expenditures (35%), followed by lodging and "other" items (each 20%), as shown in Figure 79.

**Lodging:** Of visitors reporting total expenditures for lodging, 71% said they spent no money (see Figure 80).

**Travel:** For travel, 64% of visitor groups spent up to \$50 (see Figure 81).

**Food:** For food, 64% of the groups spent up to \$50 (see Figure 82).

**Fees:** Three-fourths of the visitor groups (75%) reported up to spending \$25 on fees (see Figure 83).

**"Other" items:** For "other" items 61% of the groups spent up to \$50 (see Figure 84).

**Per capita expenditures:** The average per capita expenditure was \$55.

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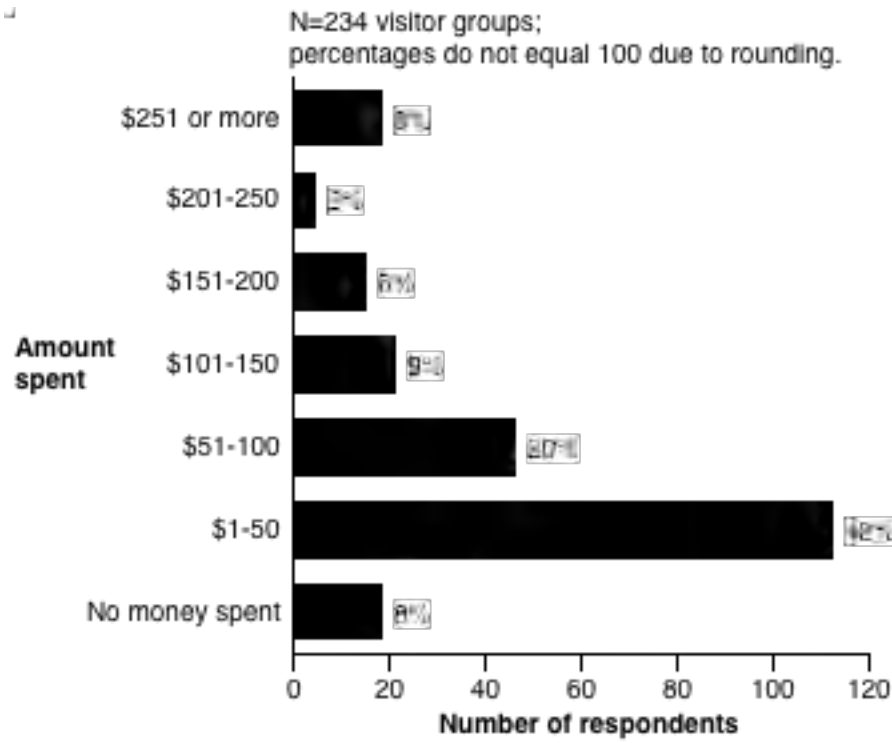


Figure 78: Total expenditures

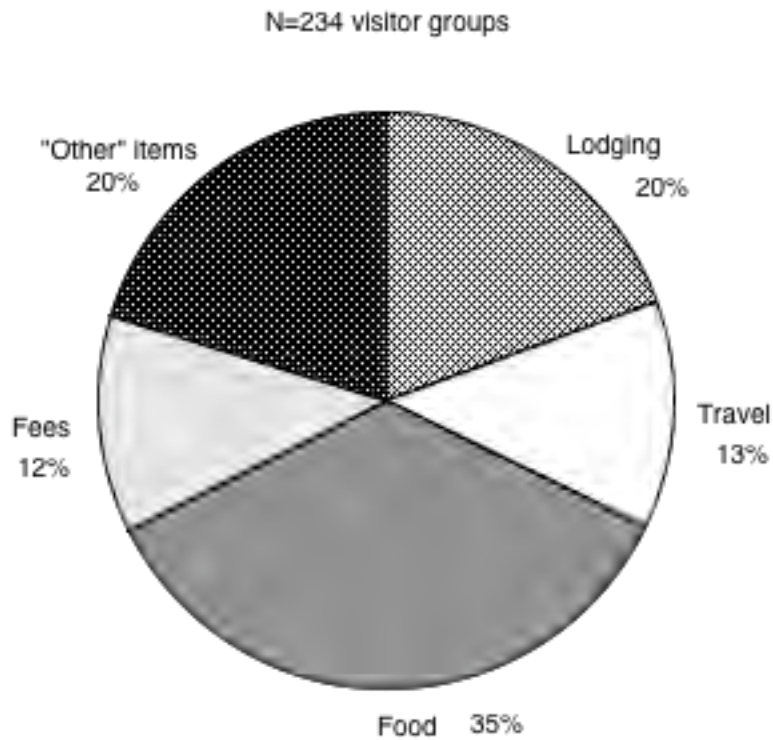


Figure 79: Proportion of expenditures

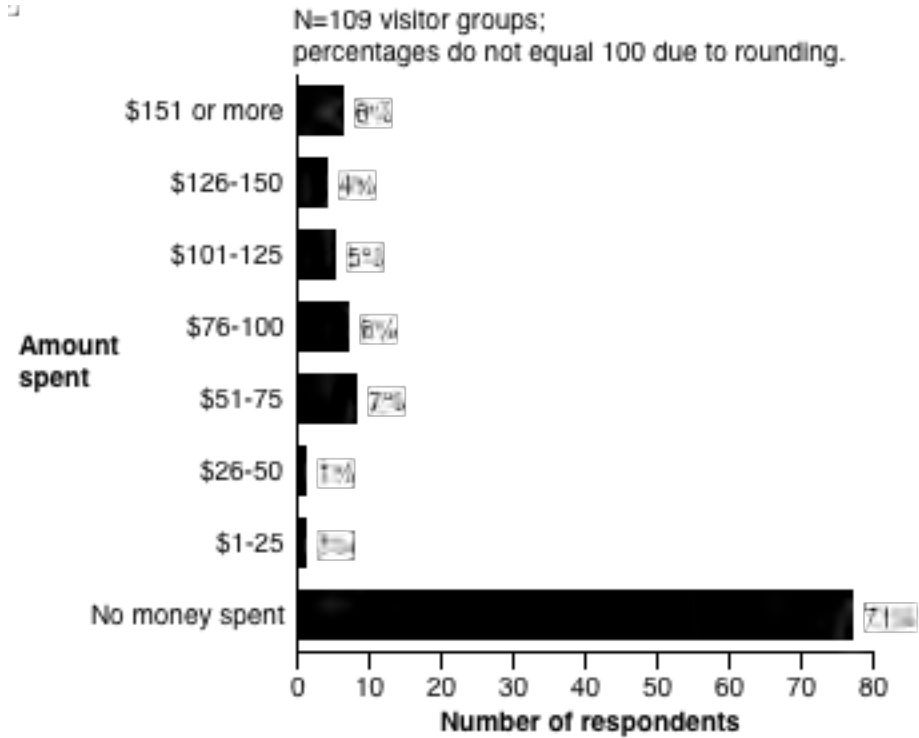


Figure 80: Expenditures for lodging in the New Bedford area

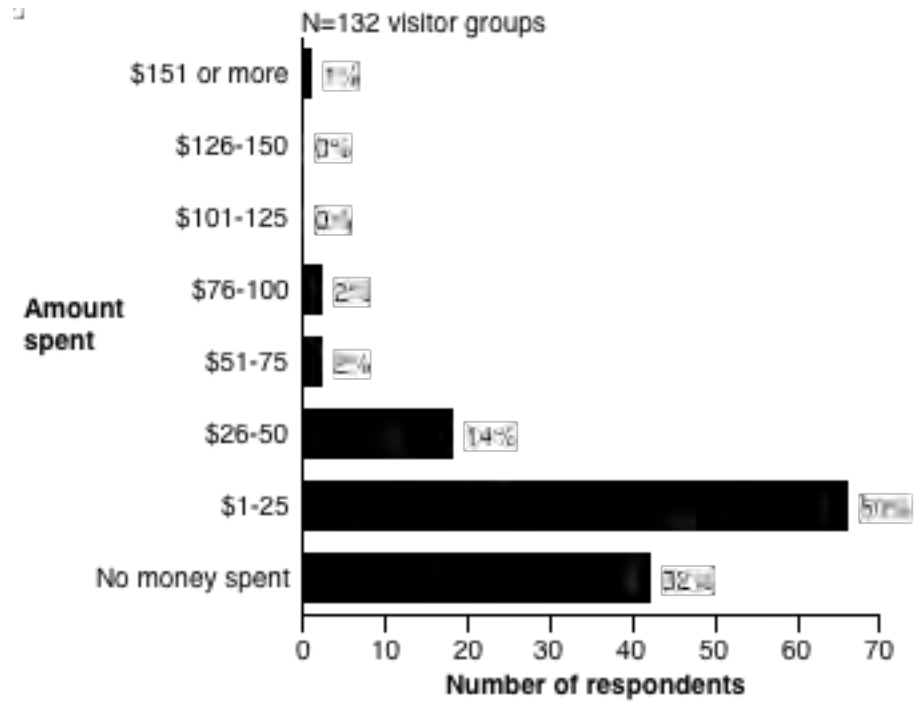


Figure 81: Expenditures for travel in the New Bedford area

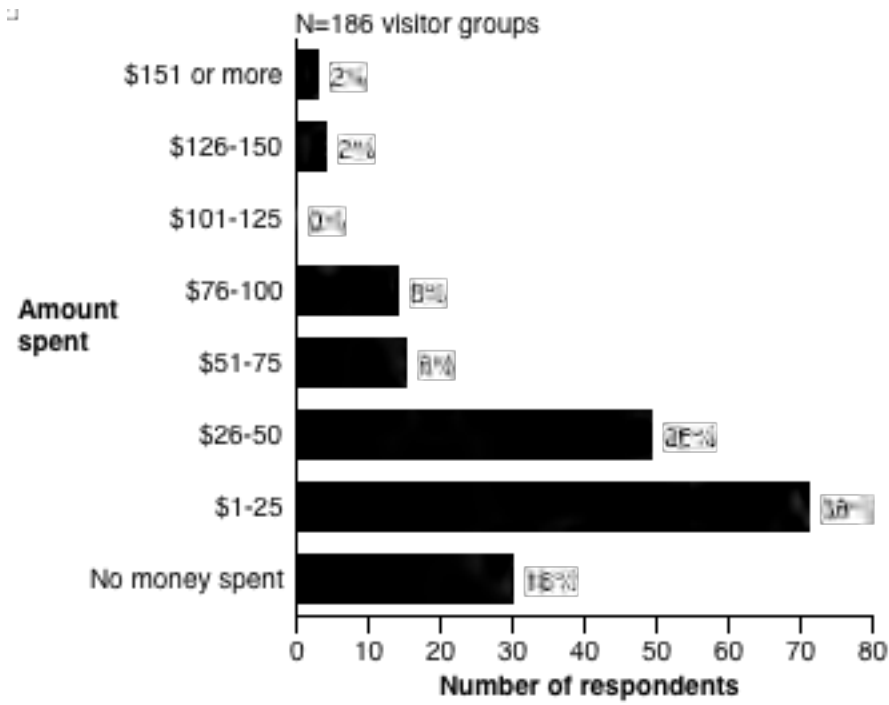


Figure 82: Expenditures for food in the New Bedford area

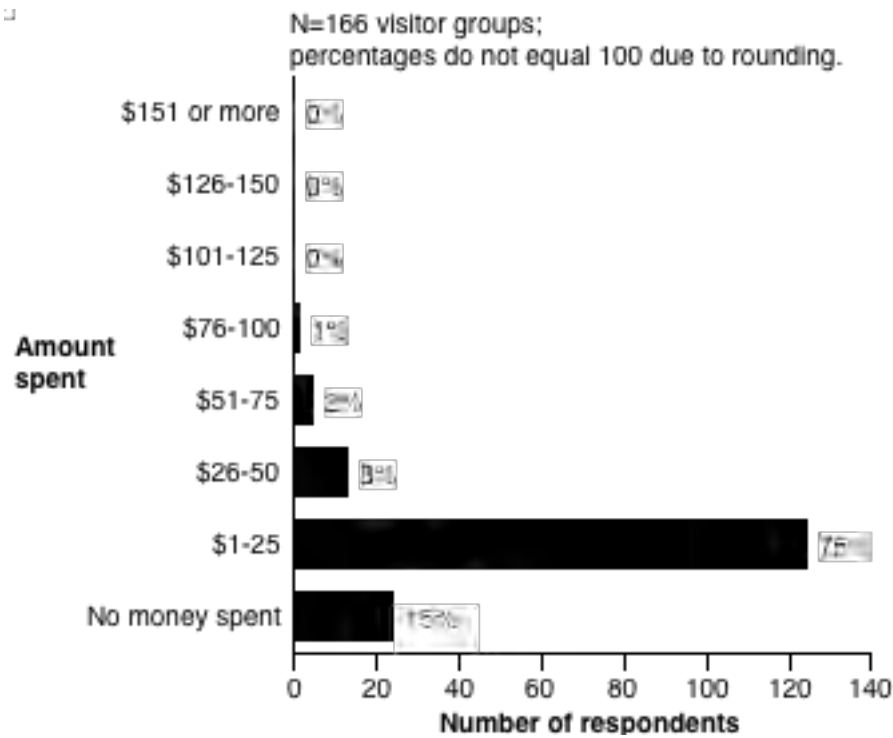
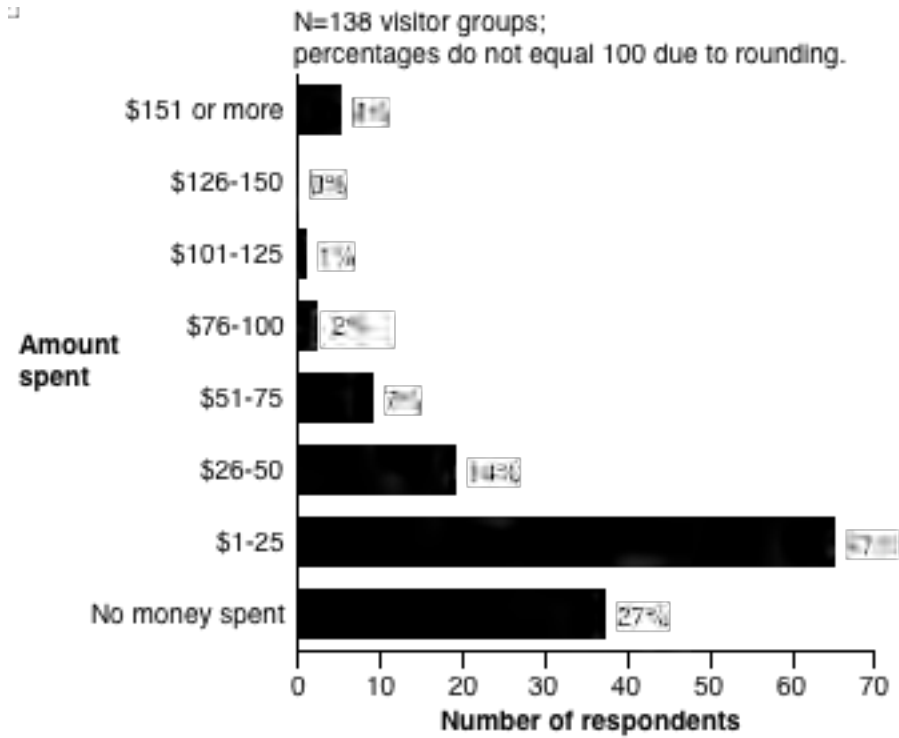


Figure 83: Expenditures for fees in the New Bedford area

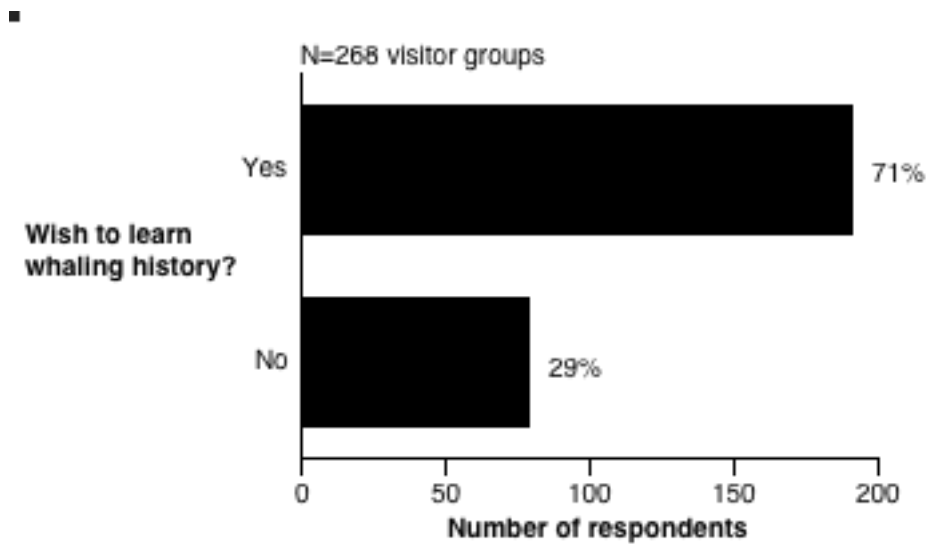


**Figure 84: Expenditures for "other" items in the New Bedford area**

Visitor groups were asked if they were interested in learning about the history of whaling in New Bedford. Seventy-one percent of respondents said they were interested in learning about whaling in New Bedford (see Figure 85).

Visitor groups were also asked how they would prefer to learn about the history of whaling on a future visit to New Bedford Whaling NHP. As shown in Figure 86, the most commonly listed preferences for learning about whaling history include visitor center and museum exhibits (68%), audio-visual programs such as videos, movies, slide shows, etc. (66%), printed materials such as books, brochures, maps, etc. (62%), ranger or volunteer-led walks and tours (59%), and outdoor exhibits (54%). The learning method visitors were least interested in was children's programs (30%). Other preferences for learning about park resources include newsletters, web sites, and additional visitor centers.

**Interest in learning whaling history; preferred methods**



**Figure 85: Interested in learning about history of whaling in New Bedford**

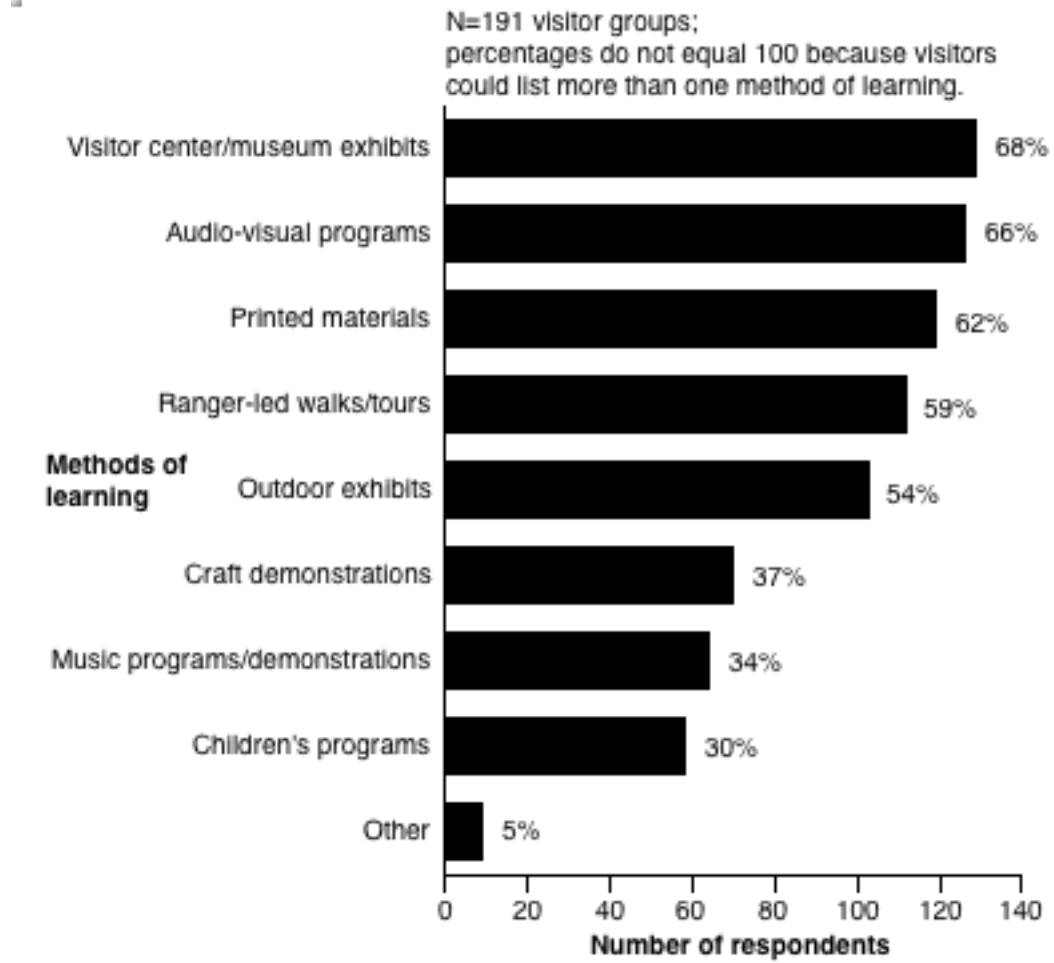
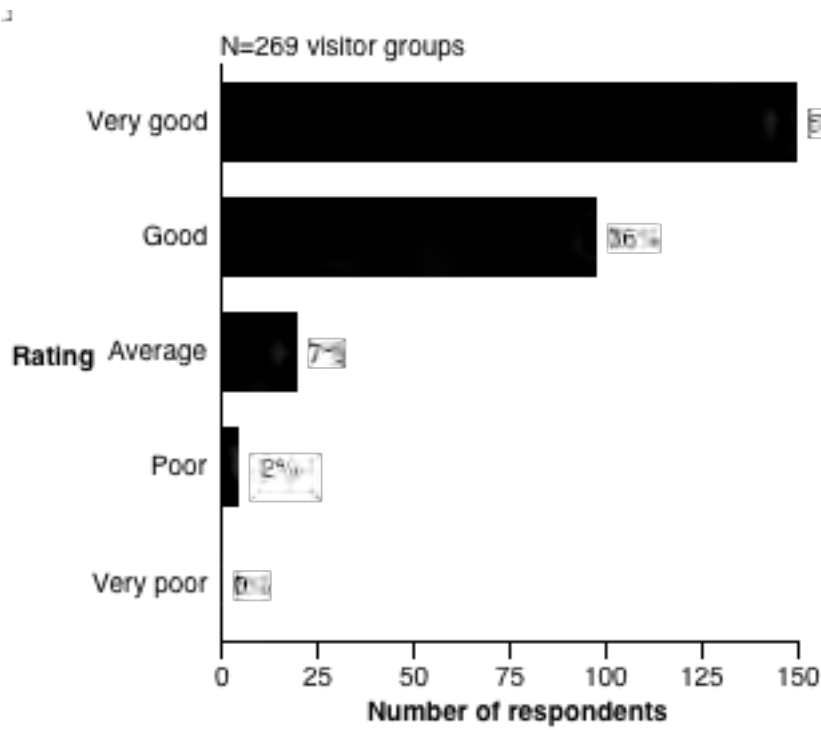


Figure 86: Methods of learning about natural and cultural resources

Visitor groups were asked to rate the overall quality of the visitor services provided at New Bedford Whaling NHP during this visit. Most visitor groups (91%) rated services as “very good” or “good” (see Figure 87). No visitor groups rated the overall quality of services provided at New Bedford Whaling NHP as “very poor.”

**Overall quality of visitor services**



**Figure 87: Overall quality of services**

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**What visitors  
liked most**

Visitor groups were asked, "What did you like most about your visit to New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park?" Seventy-eight percent of visitor groups (222 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 12 and complete copies of visitor responses are contained in the appendix.

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**Table 12: What visitors like most**

N=312 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Helpfulness and friendliness of rangers and staff	23
Observing workers on blue whale exhibit	5
Helpfulness and friendliness of volunteers	2
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Whaling museum	28
Museum	27
Museum audio-visual program	19
Half-scale ship model	15
Whale skeleton exhibit	12
Music concert program	11
Museum exhibits	10
Ranger-led walking tour	7
Painting exhibits	4
Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum	3
Moby Dick references	3
Whaling era historical interpretation	3
Other comments	15
<b>FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE</b>	
Seamen's Bethel	8
Waterfront	5
Well maintained area	5
Cobblestone streets	4
Good parking	3
Preservation of historic buildings	2
Other comments	3
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Not commercialized	1
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Area architecture	12
Quality restoration work	4
Not crowded	2

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Generally informative	13
Quaint/picturesque area	9
General historic significance	8
Relaxing atmosphere	8
Clean neighborhood	6
Improvements to New Bedford	5
Everything	4
Well organized park area	4
Easy access	4
The restaurant	4
Watching harbor activity	3
Community involvement	2
Harbor cruise	2
Other comments	4

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**What visitors  
liked least**

Visitor groups were asked, "What did you like least about your visit to New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park?" Fifty-four percent of visitor groups (153 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 13 and complete copies of visitor responses are contained in the appendix.

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**Table 13: What visitors like least**

N=172 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Lack of museum staff	2
Other comments	2
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Little to see/do outside museum	7
Lack of children's exhibits/programs	3
Lack of promotion/publicity	2
Improve presentation of whaling history	2
Disorganization of exhibits	2
Lack of references to Moby Dick	2
Other comments	15
<b>FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE</b>	
Lack of air conditioning	12
Construction/renovation work	6
Lack of parking	4
Lack of restrooms	2
Other comments	4
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Other comments	2
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Separation of waterfront by highway	17
Other comments	6
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Nothing	30
Weather	8
Not enough time	6
Lack of area restaurants	5
Lack of area shops	4
Difficult to navigate around area	4

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS (continued)</b>	
Businesses were closed	3
Store fronts appearing empty	3
Dirty waterfront	3
Deteriorated buildings in the area	2
Lack of utilization of historic buildings	2
Need more general area information	2
Area is too small	2
Traffic	2
Other comments	6

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**Planning for  
the future**

Visitor groups were asked, "If you were a park manager planning for the future of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, what would you propose?" Fifty-three percent of visitor groups (149 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed in Table 14 and complete copies of visitor responses are contained in the appendix.

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**Table 14: Planning for the future**

N=232 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Provide more museum staff	4
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Increase park promotion	13
Better organization of exhibits	11
Provide more exhibits	11
Increase children programming	9
Provide full-size whaling ship replica	7
Offer living interpretation	7
Improve hours of operation	6
Develop public festivals	5
Offer more information on New Bedford history	5
Increase publicity of local attractions	4
Provide boat tours	4
Expand walking tour	3
Provide demonstrations	3
More information on current whale protection	3
Provide more interactive exhibits	3
Use more multi-media in exhibits	3
Provide more Moby Dick exhibits	2
Continue the music concert program	2
Offer more tours with different themes	2
Provide exhibit on ethnic groups in whaling	2
Provide more information on whaling	2
Increase programming	2
Provide whale ecology/physiology exhibits	2
Other comments	1
<b>FACILITIES &amp; MAINTENANCE</b>	
Improve air conditioning	8
Install street directional signs	4
Develop walking bridge to waterfront	3
Develop better parking	3
Other comments	4

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICY</b>	
Work cooperatively to link sites	6
Offer incentives for business renovation/preservation	2
Other comments	5
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Relocate the highway separating waterfront	8
Preserve the area as historically accurate	3
Make area less industrial	2
Other comments	3
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Nothing	23
Offer more variety of shops/restaurants	22
Develop the waterfront with more attractions	8
Develop vacant properties	3
Develop a hotel	2
Develop a mini-theatre	2
Develop an IMAX theatre	2
Other comments	3

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**Comment  
summary**

Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups (105 groups) wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments about New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park are summarized below (see Table 15). Some comments offer specific suggestions on how to improve the park; others describe what visitors enjoyed or did not enjoy about their visit.

**Table 15: Additional comments**

N=165 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Rangers friendly and helpful	19
Volunteers friendly and helpful	3
Other comments	1
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Provided good information	6
Enjoy music concert program	5
Provide detailed map of area	3
Enjoy blue whale exhibit	3
Improve exhibits	3
Enjoy programs	2
Good audio/visual program	2
Provide more children's programming	2
Enjoy harbor tour	2
Other comments	8
<b>FACILITIES &amp; MAINTENANCE</b>	
Continue to keep area clean of litter	4
Well maintained	4
Appreciation for historical preservation	4
Improve access	3
Improve highway signs	2
Other comments	3
<b>POLICY</b>	
Comments	2
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Comments	3

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Enjoyable/good experience	29
Nothing	21
Plan future visit	12
Disappointing visit	4
Recommend to others	3
Quaint/nice town	3
Waterfront was disappointing	2
Wanted more time to visit	2
Other comments	5

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## New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park Additional Analysis VSP Report 113

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.

- Awareness of park's existence
- Sites visited
- Sites visited first
- Sources of information
- Planned # of days in New Bedford
- Planned # of hours in New Bedford
- Actual # of days in New Bedford
- Actual # of hours in New Bedford
- Type of accommodation used on night before visit
- Forms of transportation to reach New Bedford
- New Bedford as destination
- Reasons for visiting New Bedford area
- Group size
- With guided tour/educational group?
- Educational/tour group size
- Group type
- Gender
- Age
- State of residence
- Country of residence
- Number of visits
- Education level
- English as primary language?
- Trouble finding park?
- Visit New Bedford waterfront?
- Difficulty finding waterfront?
- Use pedestrian overpass?
- Difficulty getting around waterfront?
- Use of visitor facilities/service
- Importance of visitor facilities/ services
- Quality of visitor facilities/services
- Use of visitor facilities/services
- Importance of visitor facilities/ services
- Quality of visitor facilities/services
- Unmet visitor expectations?
- Safety
- Understand historical significance
- Total expenditures
- Lodging expenditures
- Travel expenditures
- Food expenditures
- Fees expenditures
- "Other" expenditures
- Interest in learning about whaling history
- Preferred methods of learning
- Overall quality

### Database

The VSP database is currently under development, but requests can be handled by contacting the VSP below.

Phone/send requests to:

**Visitor Services Project, CPSU  
College of Natural Resources  
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
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 National Recreation Area
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)

**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
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

**1999**

109. Big Cypress National Preserve (winter)
110. San Juan National Historic Site (Puerto Rico)
111. Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway
112. Rock Creek Park
113. New Bedford Whaling National Historical 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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