



# Prince William Forest Park

## Visitor Study Fall 1996

Report 91  
Visitor Services Project  
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



University of Idaho



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## Visitor Study

Fall 1996

Chris Wall

**Visitor Services Project**  
**Report 91**

June 1997

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Chris Wall is a VSP Research Associate based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Mark Patterson and the staff of Prince William Forest 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 Prince William Forest Park Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Prince William Forest Park during October 7-13, 1996. A total of 395 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 337 questionnaires for an 85% response rate.
- This report profiles Prince William Forest visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Forty-six percent of the visitor groups were family groups. Forty-two percent of visitor groups were groups of two. Thirty-five percent of visitors were aged 36-55.
- Forty-two percent of visitors were making their first visits to Prince William Forest. Sixty-nine percent of the visitor groups spent less than a day at the park and 17% spent one or two days. Of those groups that spent less than a day at the park, 55% spent two or three hours.
- United States visitors were from Virginia (57%), the District of Columbia (9%), Maryland (6%), Florida (5%) and 28 other states. There were not enough international visitors to provide reliable information.
- On this visit, the most common activities were walking or hiking (69%), driving the scenic loop road (49%) and camping in developed campgrounds (32%).
- Previous visits (49%), highway signs (27%), friends and relatives (22%) and camping guides or tour books (21%) were the most used sources of information by visitor groups.
- Forty percent of visitor groups indicated that recreation was a primary reason for visiting the Northern Virginia area. Another 35% reported that visiting Prince William Forest Park was a primary reason for visiting the area.
- The park features that received the highest proportion of "extremely important" or "very important" ratings were recreational opportunities (81%) and solitude (69%).
- The most commonly visited sites in the park were trails other than the Farms to Forest Trail (46%), the visitor center (33%), Travel Trailer Village (21%) and the Pine Grove Picnic Area (20%).
- 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 services that were most used by 228 respondents were the park brochure/map (72%) and park directional signs (56%). According to visitors, the most important services were self-guided trail signs (92% of 123 respondents) and garbage collection/recycling (89% of 44 respondents). The highest quality services were information from park personnel (95% of 65 respondents) and the park brochure/map (92% of 157 respondents).
- In regard to the use, importance and quality of facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The facilities that were most used by 275 respondents were trails (68%) and restrooms (63%). According to visitors, the most important facilities were campgrounds (96% of 95 respondents) and trails (95% of 186 respondents). The highest quality facilities were campgrounds (95% of 92 respondents) and trails (88% of 180 respondents).
- Thirty-nine percent of visitor groups spent no money on lodging, travel, food or "other" items such as souvenirs, film and gifts in Prince William County, while 28% spent from \$1 to \$50. Of the total expenditures by groups, 40% was for lodging and 31% was for food.
- Ninety-four percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at Prince William Forest 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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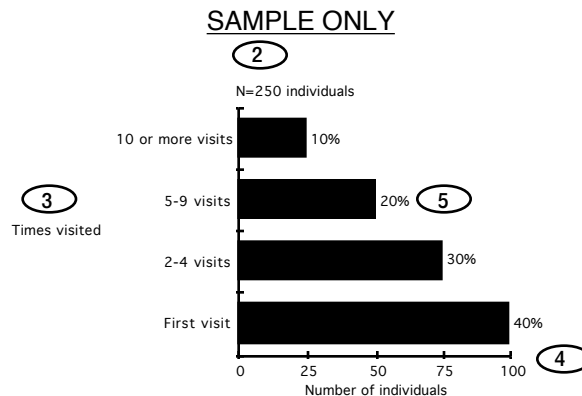
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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of visitors at Prince William Forest Park (referred to as "Prince William Forest"). This visitor study was conducted October 7-13, 1996 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.

Many 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

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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 Prince William Forest Park during the period from October 7-13, 1996. Visitors were sampled at the park entrance station and at the registration area for Travel Trailer Village, the park's concessionaire operated RV campground.

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.

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.

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### **Data analysis**

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.

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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 336 visitor groups, Figure 4 presents data for 771 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 337 questionnaires were returned by Prince William Forest visitors, Figure 1 shows data for only 336 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 visit the park.

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of October 7-13, 1996. 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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Tuesday, October 8 was a very rainy day with low visitation. A total of fifteen questionnaires was distributed at the sampling sites on that day.

**Special  
conditions**

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## RESULTS

### Visitors contacted

At Prince William Forest, 411 visitor groups were contacted, and 395 of these groups (96%) accepted questionnaires.

Questionnaires were completed and returned by 337 visitor groups, resulting in an 85% response rate for this study.

Table 1 compares age and group size information collected from the total sample of visitors contacted with that from those who actually returned questionnaires. Based on the variable of group size, non-response bias was judged to be slightly significant since the average group size for actual respondents was larger than the average group size for those who agreed to participate.

**Table 1: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents**

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondents	390	45.5	327	46.5
Group size	394	3.2	336	5.5

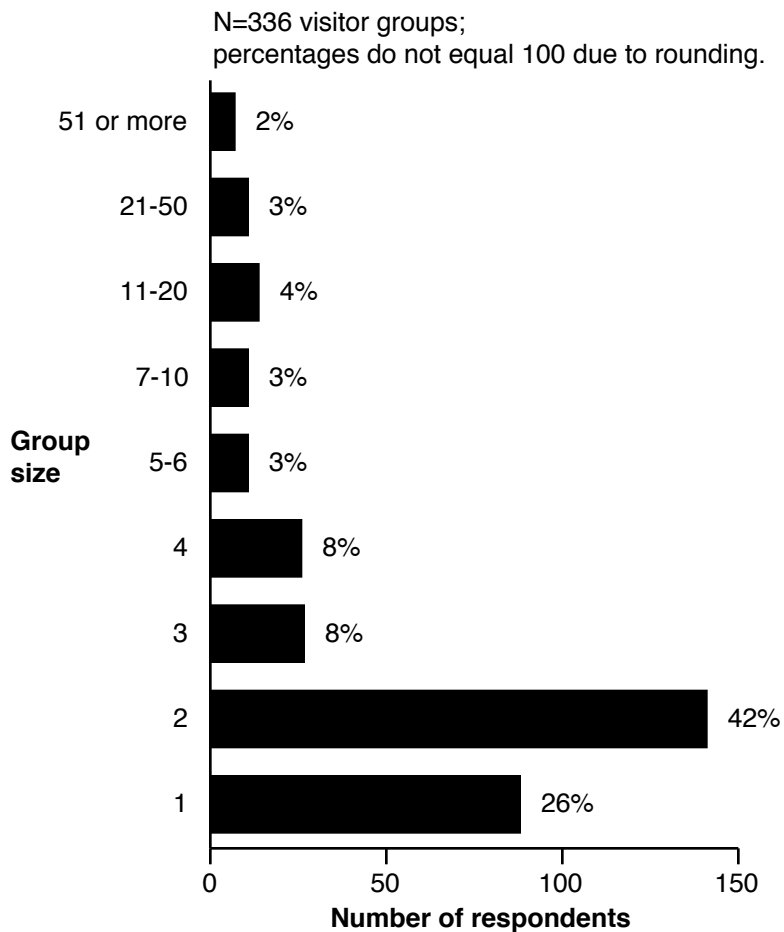
### Demographics

Figure 1 shows visitor group sizes, which ranged from one person to 80 people. Forty-two percent of visitor groups consisted of two people, while another 26% were people visiting alone. Forty-six percent of visitor groups were made up of family members, 9% were made up of friends, and 7% were made up of family and friends (see Figure 2). Groups listing themselves as "other" for group type included church groups and Girl Scout groups. Three percent of the visitor groups at Prince William Forest were guided tour or school groups (see Figure 3).

As is shown by Figure 4, visitors were concentrated in three different age groups. Twenty-eight percent of the visitors were in the 31-45 age group and 23% were in the 51-65 age group. Another 15% of visitors were in the 10 or younger age group respondents. Forty-two percent of visitors were making their first visit to the park while the majority of visitors (58%) had visited the park previously (see Figure 5).



There were not enough international visitors to Prince William Forest to provide reliable information (see Table 2). The largest proportions of United States visitors were from Virginia (57%), the District of Columbia (9%), Maryland (6%) and Florida (5%). Smaller proportions of U.S. visitors came from another twenty-eight states (see Map 1 and Table 3).



**Figure 1: Visitor group sizes**

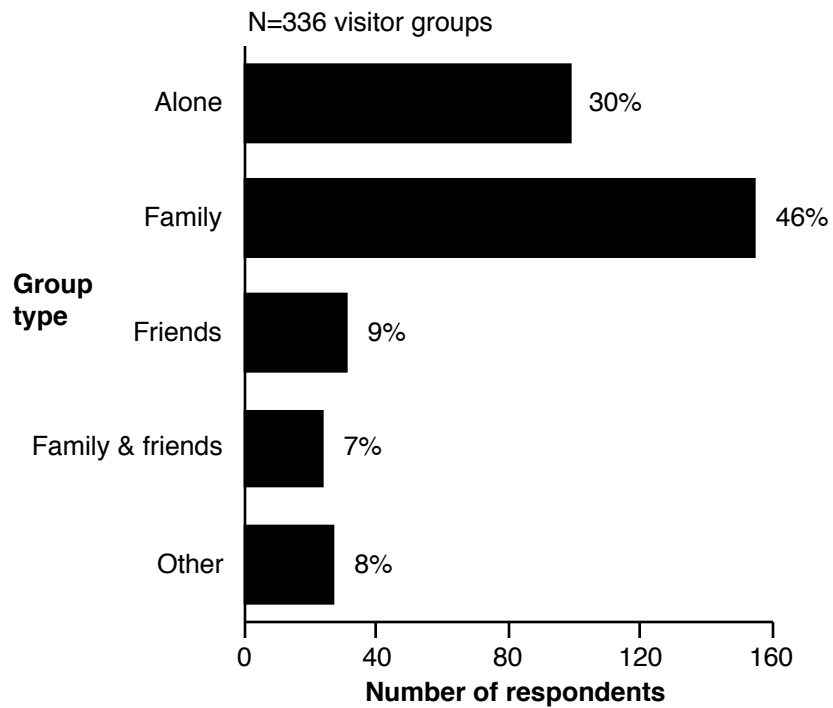


Figure 2: Visitor group types

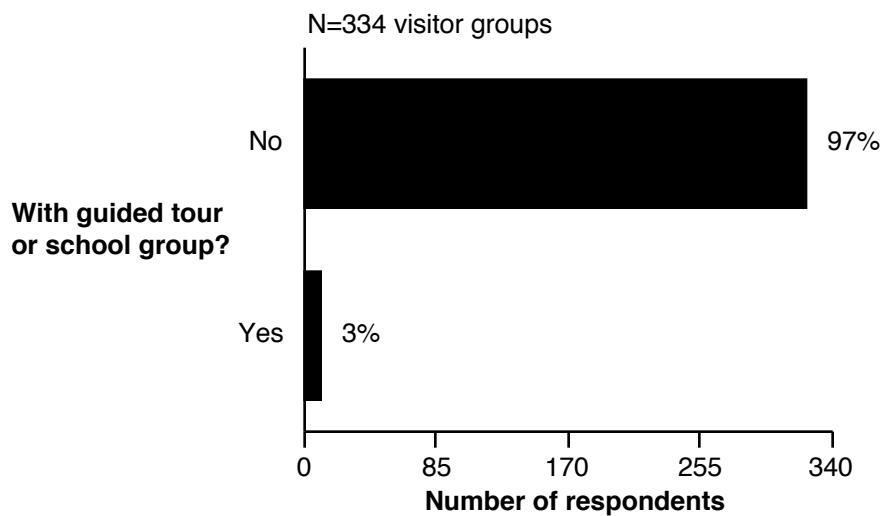


Figure 3: With guided tour or school group?

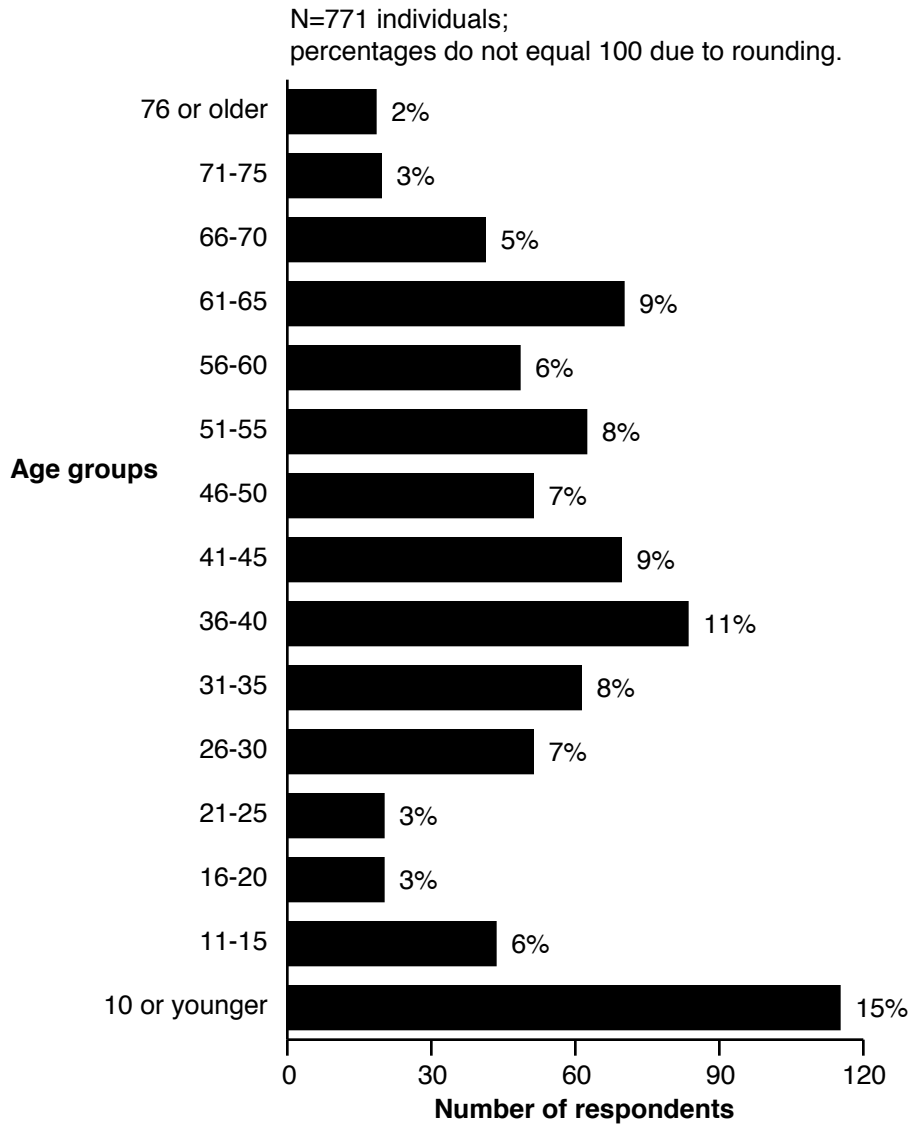
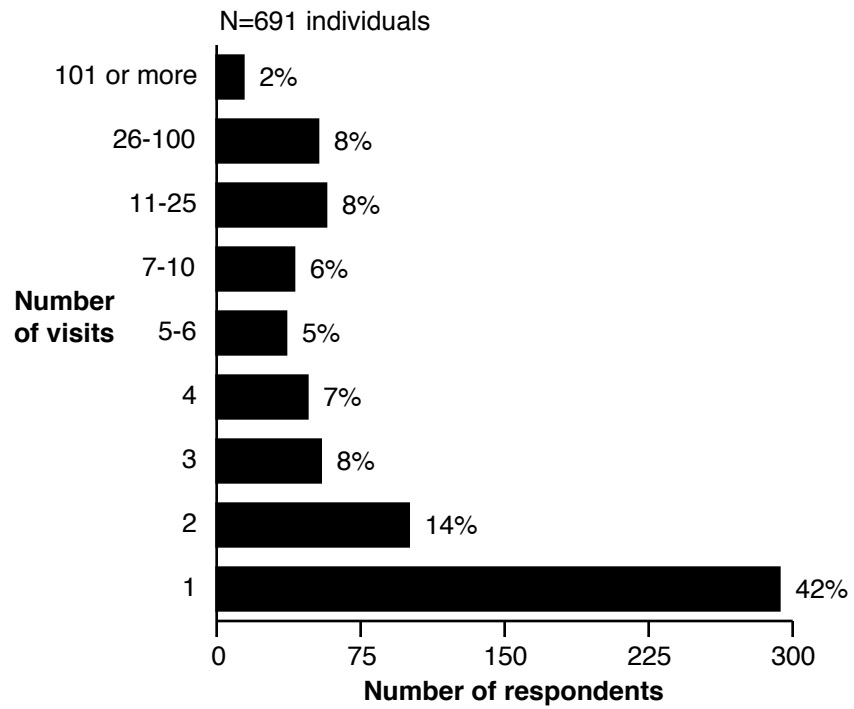


Figure 4: Visitor ages



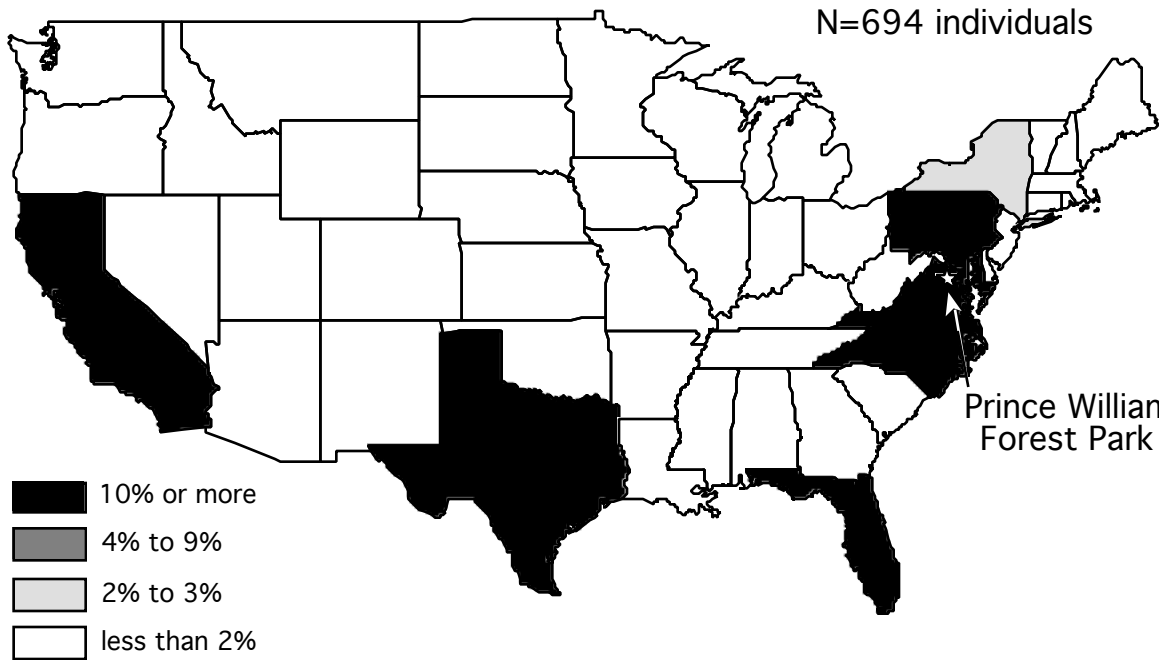
**Figure 5: Number of visits to Prince William Forest**

**Table 2: International visitors by country of residence**

N=8 individuals;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

**CAUTION!**

Country	Number of individuals	Percent of international visitors
England	5	63
Denmark	2	25
Japan	1	13



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

**Table 3: United States visitors by state of residence**

N=694 individuals;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

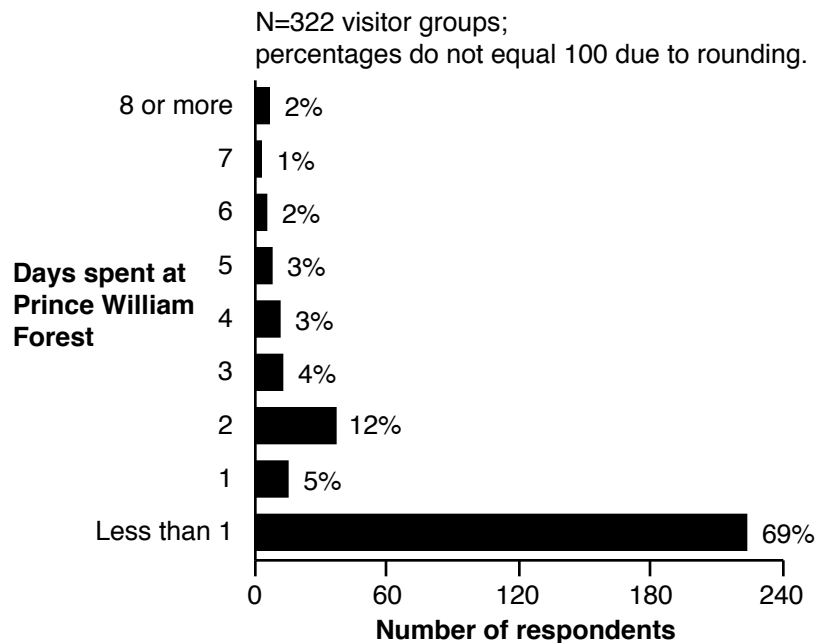
State	Number of individuals	Percent of U.S. visitors
Virginia	398	57
District of Columbia	62	9
Maryland	40	6
Florida	36	5
California	25	4
Texas	19	3
Pennsylvania	14	2
North Carolina	11	2
New York	11	2
Illinois	6	1
Ohio	6	1
Washington	6	1
Alabama	5	1
Wisconsin	5	1
Arizona	4	1
Connecticut	4	1
Missouri	4	1
New Hampshire	4	1
Rhode Island	4	1
Tennessee	4	1
12 other states	26	4

## Length of stay

Visitor groups were asked how much time they spent at Prince William Forest Park. Sixty-nine percent of visitor groups spent less than one day at the park, 17% spent one or two days and another 10% spent four or more days (see Figure 6). Of the groups that spent less than a day at the park, 83% reported that they spent from one to four hours at the park while 10% spent eleven hours or more (see Figure 7).

Visitor groups were also asked how much time they spent outside the park but within thirty-five miles of the park. Groups that had members who resided in Prince William County were directed to skip this part of the question since they would normally spend the majority of their time within thirty-five miles of the park. As is shown by Figure 8, 61% of the visitor groups had no group members who were county residents.

Seventy percent of visitor groups spent less than a day in the area within thirty-five miles of the park, 15% spent two to four days and 14% spent five or more days (see Figure 9). Of those groups that spent less than a day in the area, 46% reported spending no time in the area and 32% spent one to three hours (see Figure 10).



**Figure 6: Days spent at Prince William Forest**

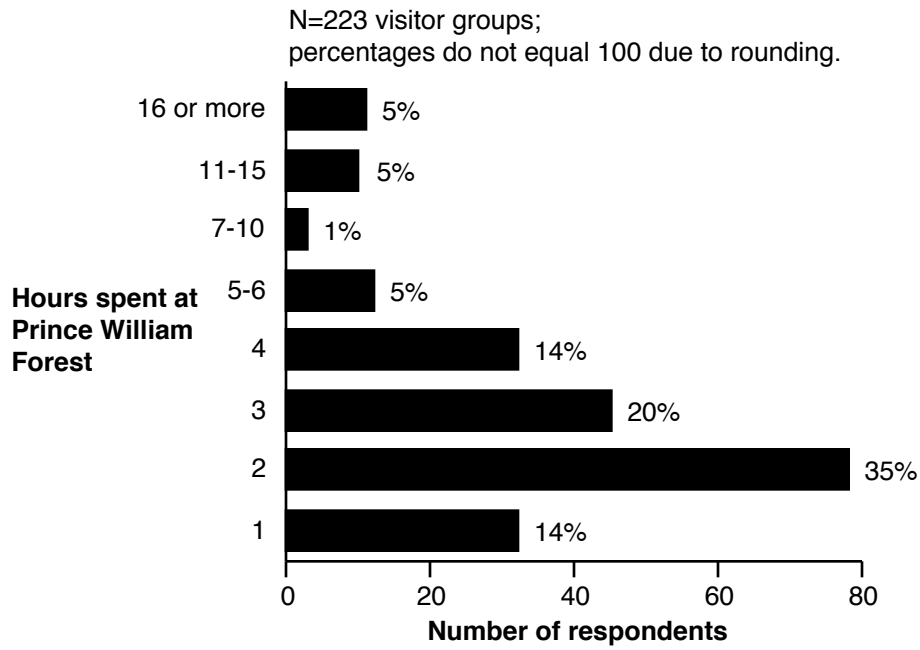


Figure 7: Hours spent at Prince William Forest

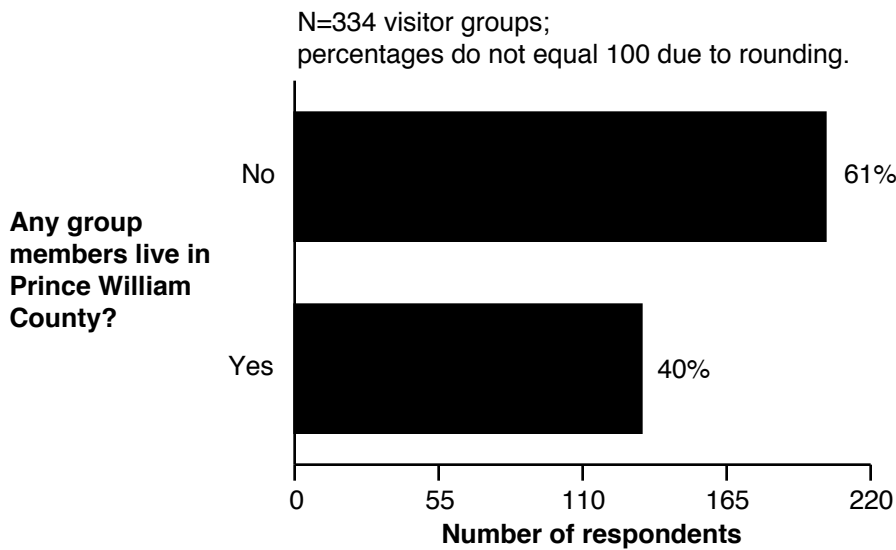
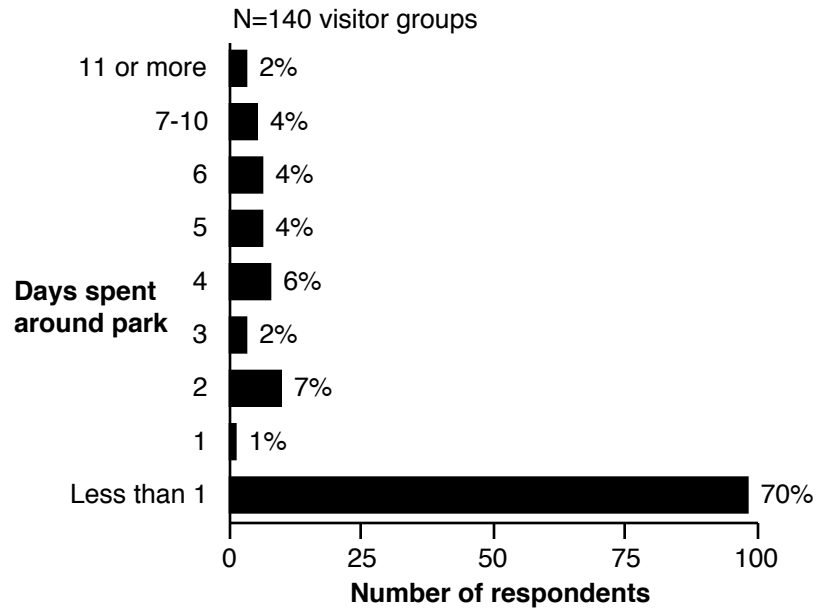
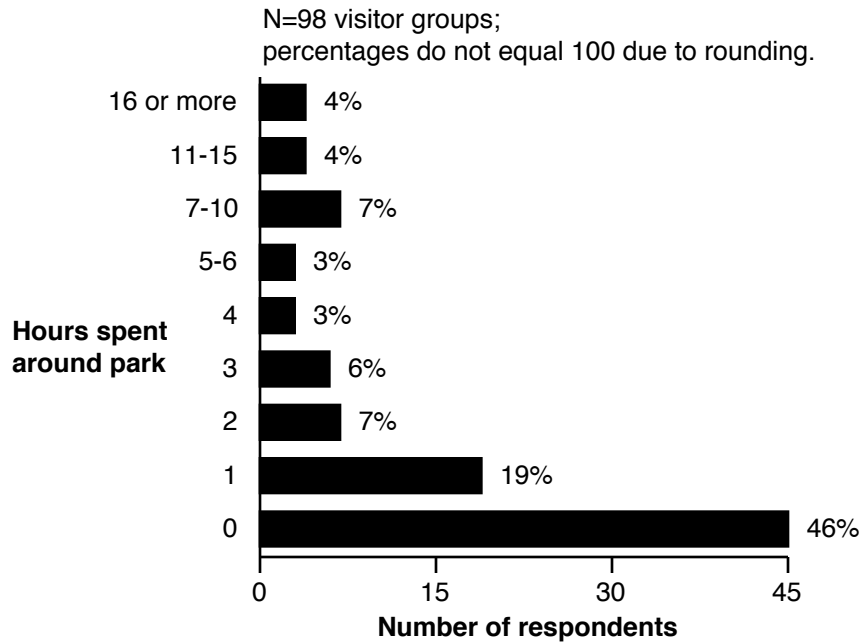


Figure 8: Any members of group live in Prince William County?



**Figure 9: Days spent outside park but within 35 miles of park**

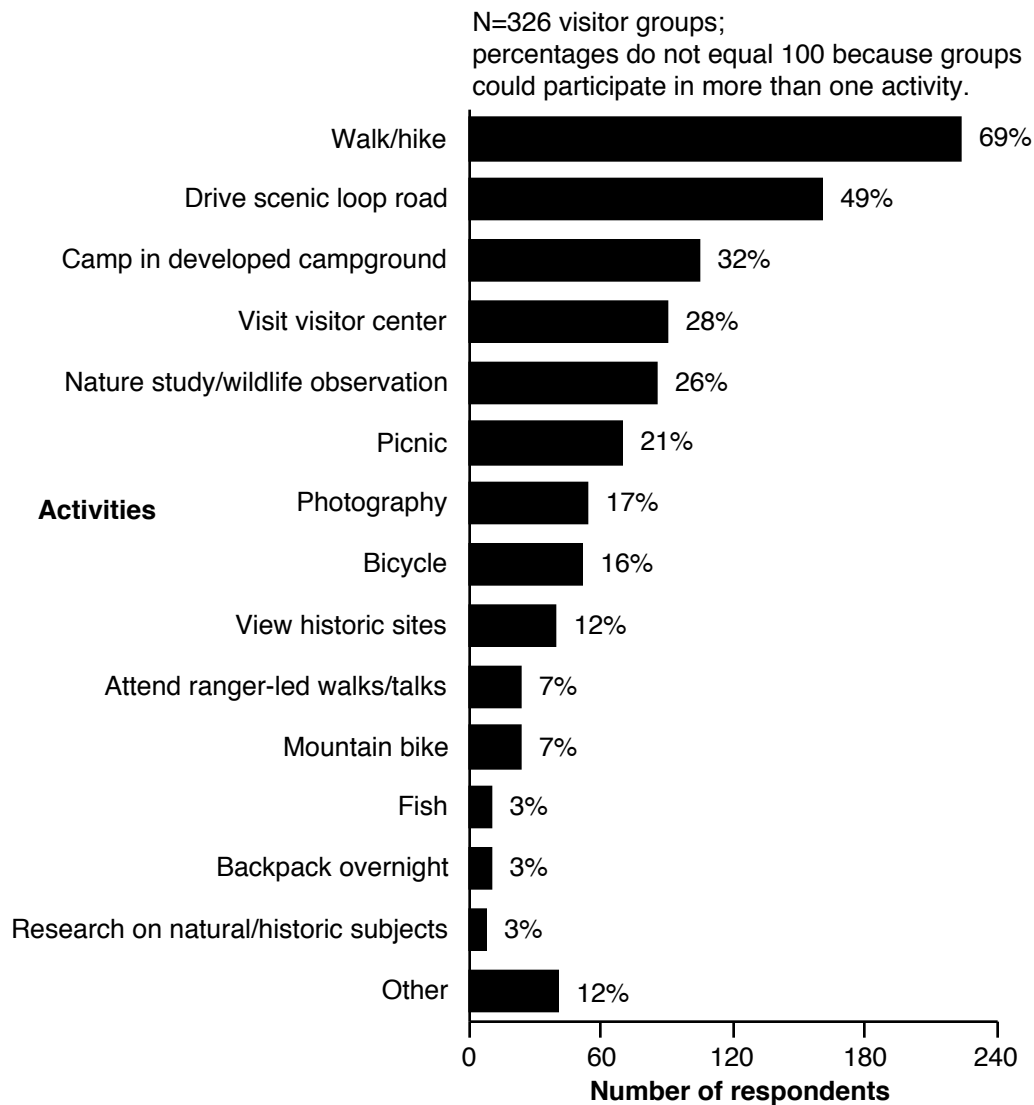


**Figure 10: Hours spent outside park but within 35 miles of park**



Figure 11 shows the percentages of visitor groups which participated in a variety of activities at Prince William Forest. The most common activities were walking or hiking (69%), driving the scenic loop road (49%), and camping in developed campgrounds (32%). Visitor groups participated in a number of "other" activities including running or jogging, visiting Washington, D.C., visiting friends or relatives and attending a church retreat.

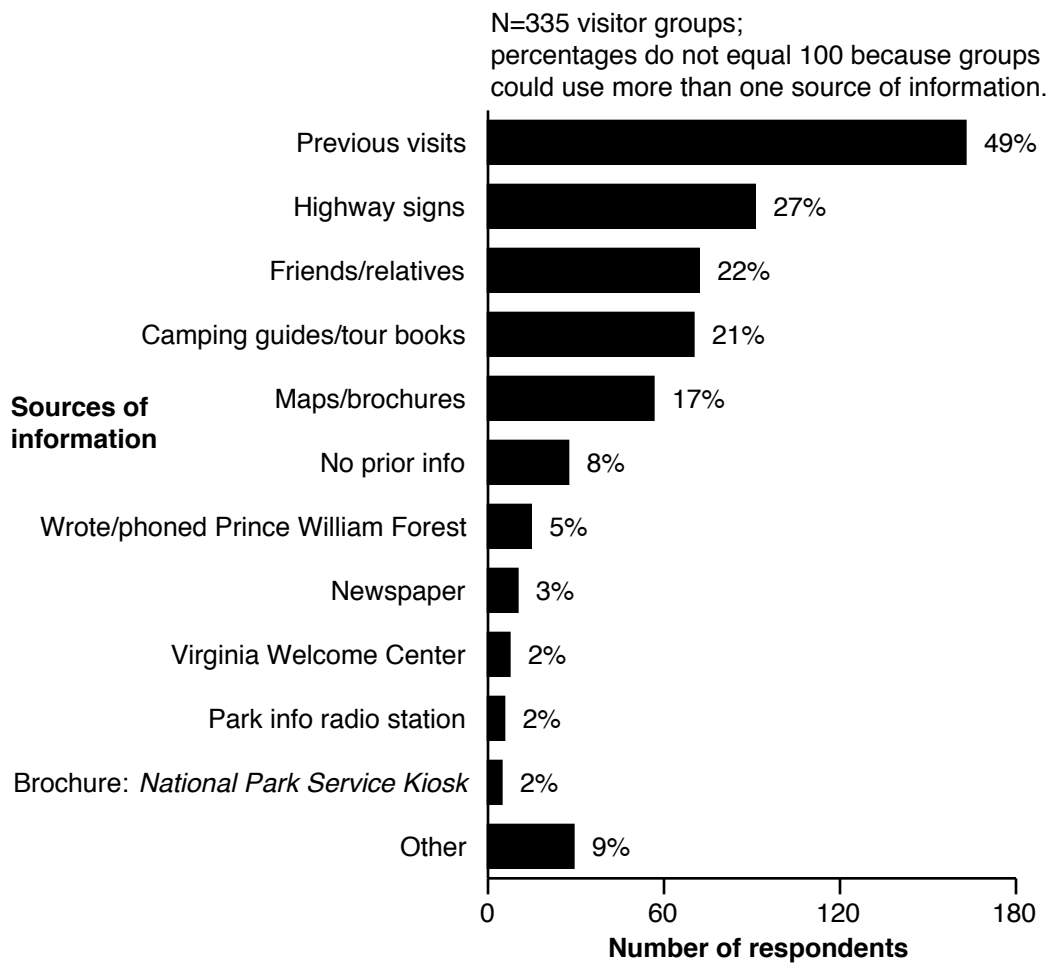
**Activities**



**Figure 11: Visitor activities**

**Sources of information**

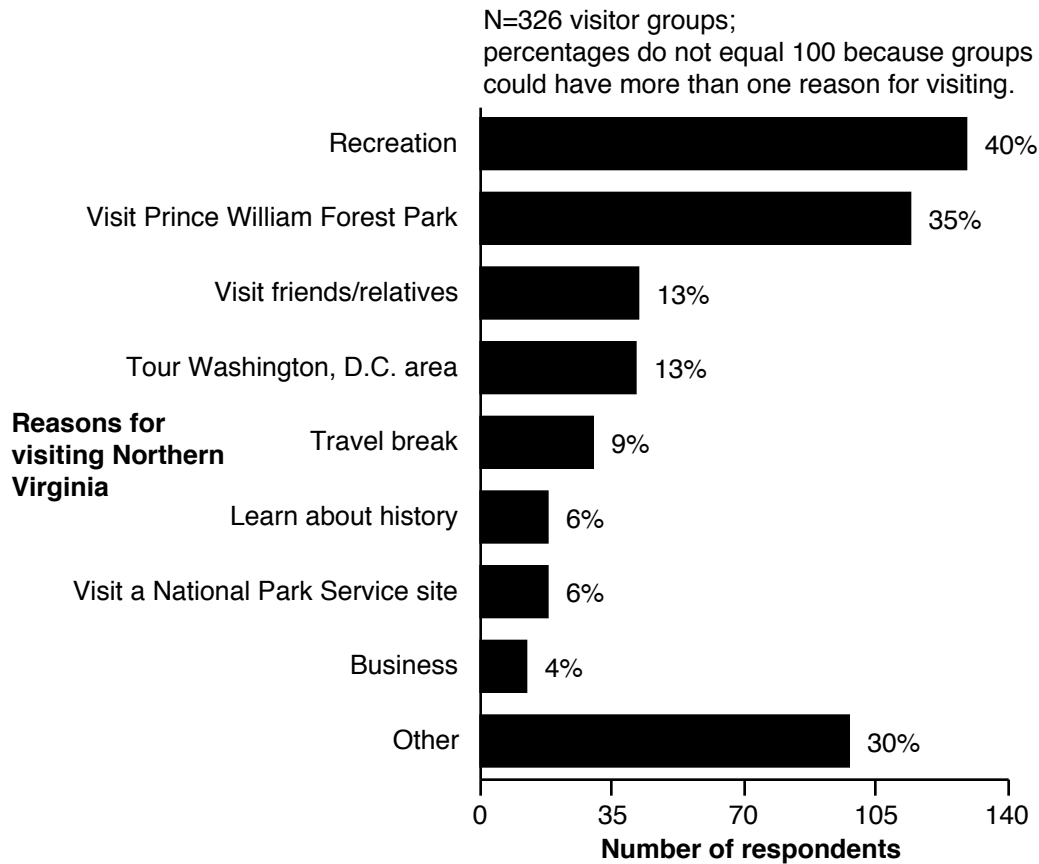
Visitor groups were asked to indicate the sources from which they had received information about Prince William Forest Park prior to their visit. Forty-nine percent of visitor groups received information during previous visits, 27% received information from highway signs, and 22% received information from friends or relatives (see Figure 12). Eight percent of visitor groups received no information prior to their visits. "Other" sources of information used by visitor groups included living or growing up nearby, church and bike shops.



**Figure 12: Sources of information used by visitors**

Visitor groups were asked to indicate their reasons for visiting Northern Virginia and/or the Washington, D.C. area. Forty percent of the visitor groups were in the area to participate in recreation (such as walking, biking, picnicking, and camping), 35% were in the area specifically to visit Prince William Forest Park, 13% were visiting friends or relatives, and 13% were there to tour the Washington, D.C. area (see Figure 13). Visitor groups mentioned a number of “other” reasons for visiting, including living nearby, attending a church retreat and driving through the area.

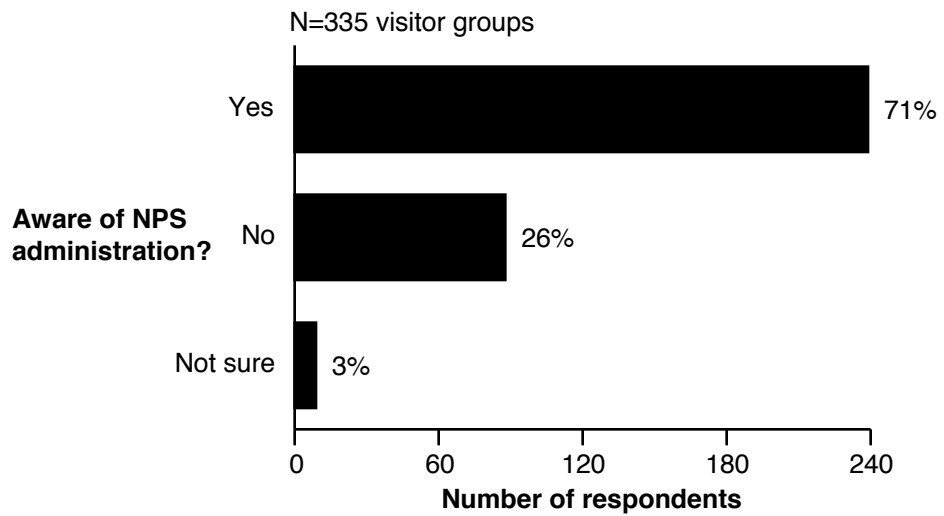
**Reasons for visiting**



**Figure 13: Reasons for visiting Northern Virginia area**

**Aware of NPS administration?**

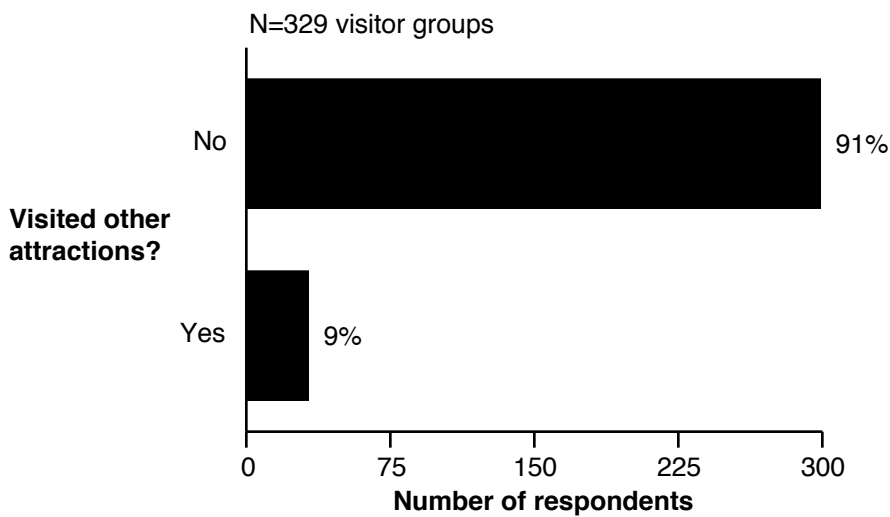
Visitor groups were asked to indicate whether they were aware prior to their visit that Prince William Forest is administered by the National Park Service. Seventy-one percent of visitor groups were aware that the park is a National Park Service site, 26% were not aware of NPS administration and 3% were not sure (see Figure 14).



**Figure 14: Aware of NPS administration?**

Visitor groups were asked to indicate whether they had visited any additional attractions in Prince William County during their visit. As is shown by Figure 15, 91% of visitor groups did not visit any other attractions in Prince William County. Visitor groups who had visited other attractions were also asked how they had learned about these attractions. The most common sources of information were friends or relatives, living nearby, books or newspapers, advertisements, and brochures (see Table 4).

**Visited other attractions?**



**Figure 15: Visited other attractions?**

**Table 4: Sources of information about Prince William County attractions**

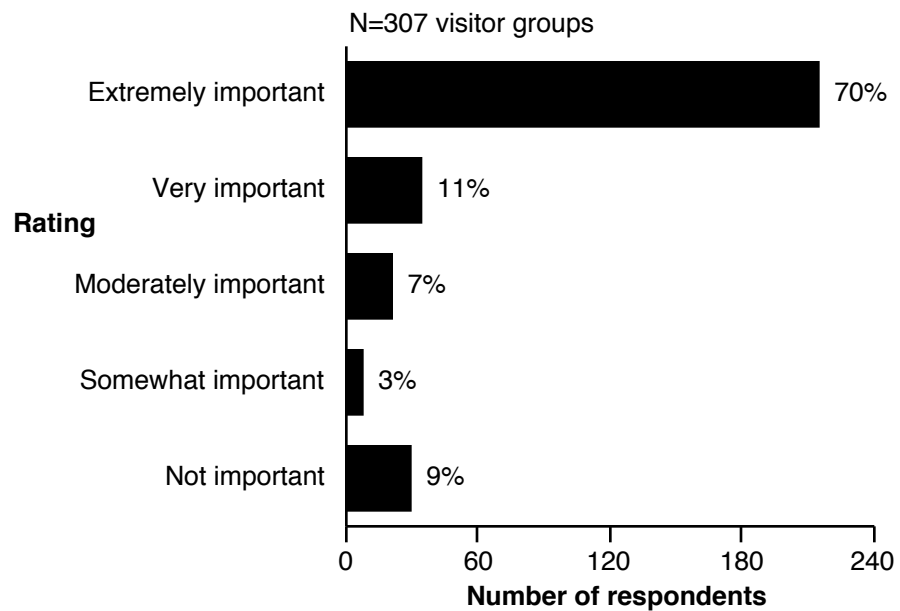
N=35 comments;  
several visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Friends or relatives	5
Live nearby	4
Books or newspapers	4
Advertisements	4
Brochures	4
Word of mouth	2
Signs	2
Virginia Welcome Center	2
Other comments	8

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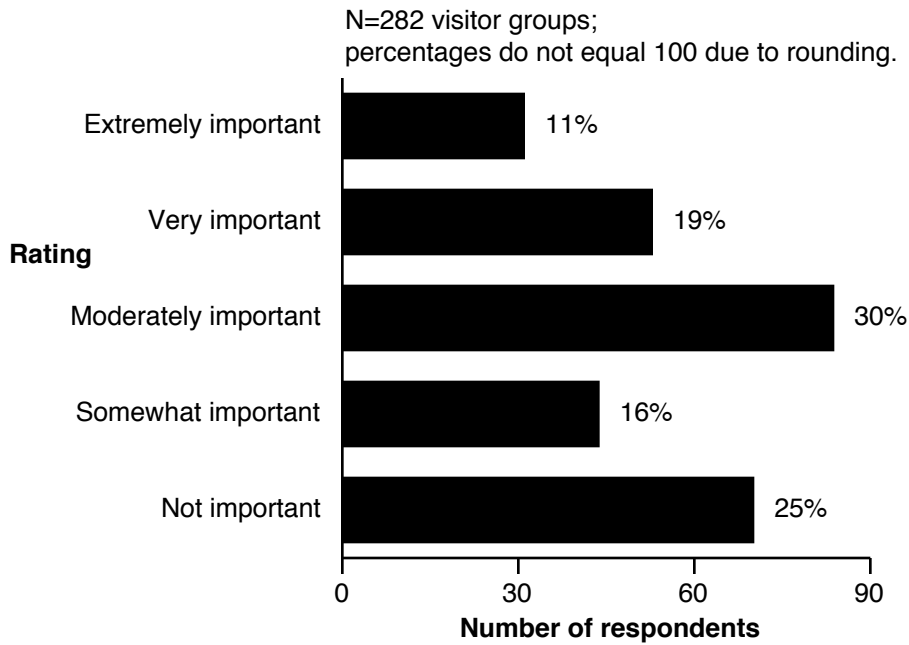
**Importance of park features**

Visitor groups were asked to rate the importance of several park features and qualities to their visit. As is shown by Figures 16-19, the features or qualities that received the highest proportion of “extremely important” or “very important” ratings were recreational opportunities (81%) and solitude (69%). The feature or quality that received the highest proportion of “not important” ratings was educational opportunities (25%).

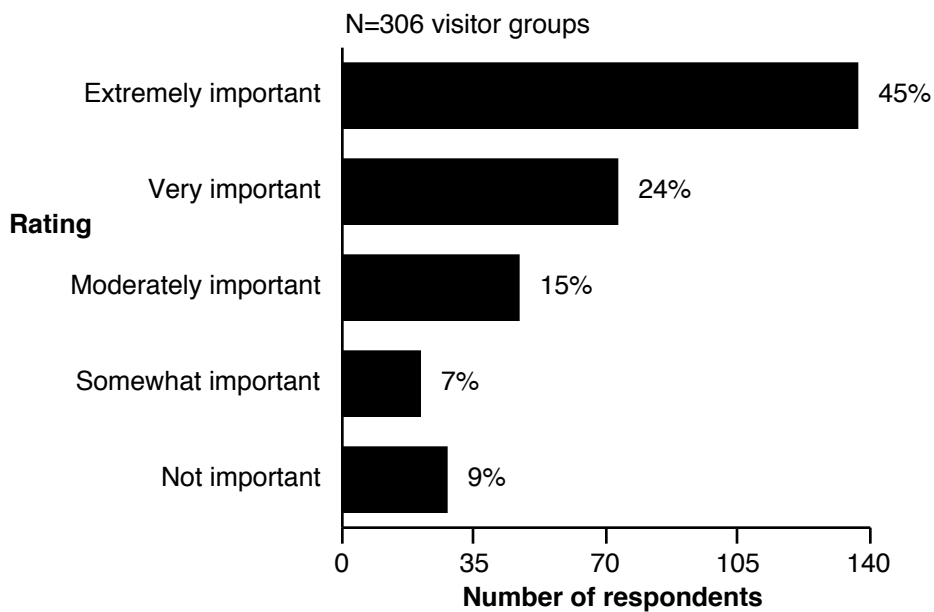


**Figure 16: Importance of recreational opportunities**

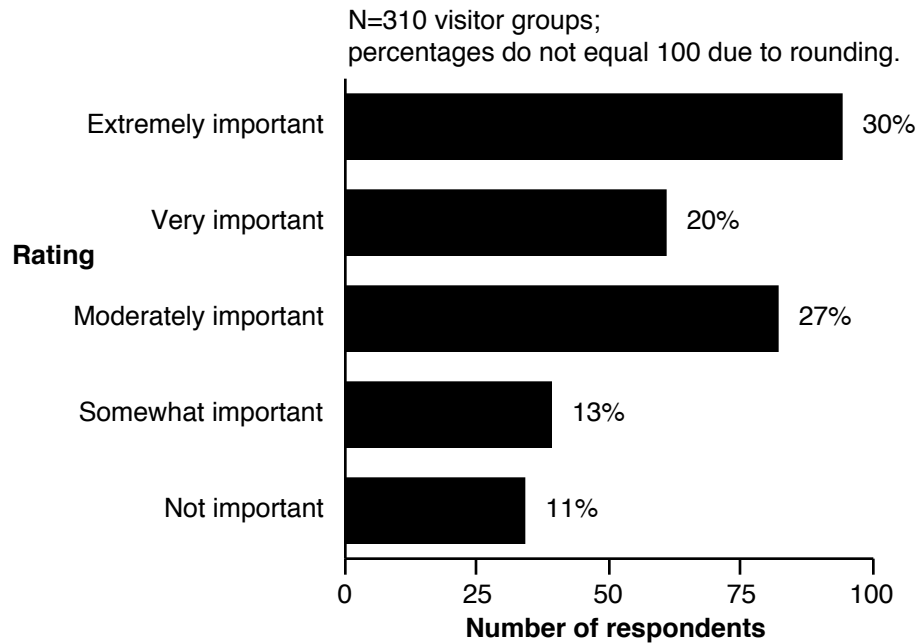
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**Figure 17: Importance of educational opportunities**



**Figure 18: Importance of solitude**



**Figure 19: Importance of facilities**

Visitor groups were asked to indicate whether they had any difficulty locating Prince William Forest Park. Ninety-eight percent of visitor groups did not have any trouble (see Figure 20). Those who did have trouble were also asked to suggest ways to make locating the park easier. As is shown by Table 5, the most common suggestions were to improve signs, to put more signs on Interstate 95, and to place signs *before* it is necessary for drivers to make a turn.

### Difficulty locating park?



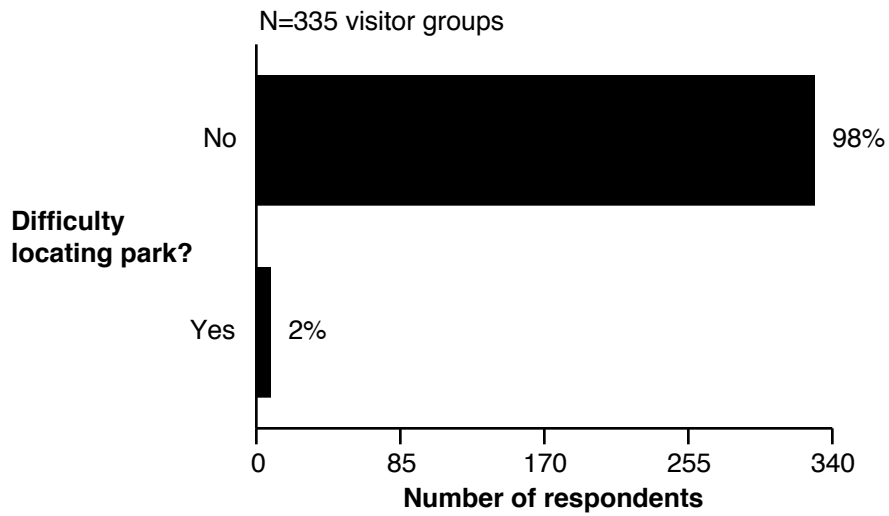


Figure 20: Difficulty locating park?

Table 5: Suggestions for making park easier to locate

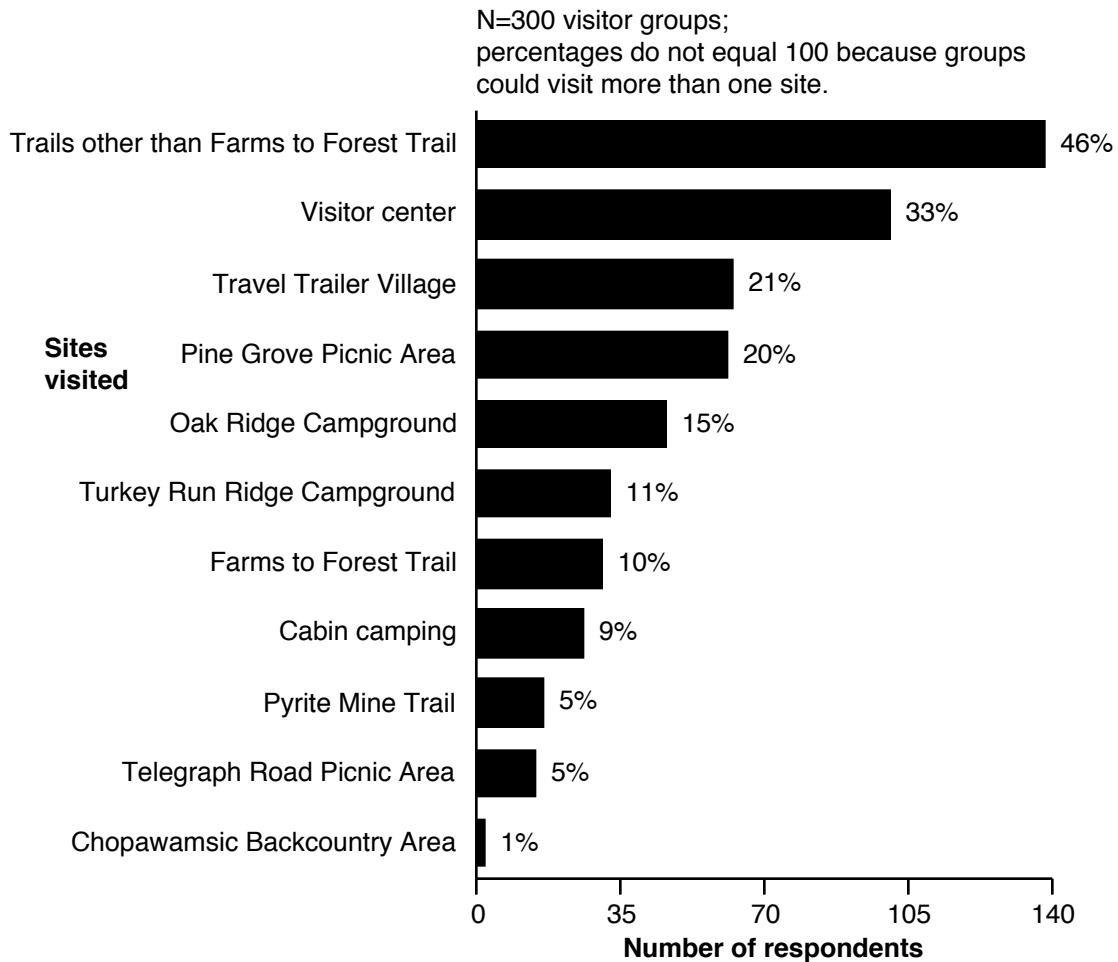
N=9 comments

**CAUTION!**

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Improve signs	4
More signs on I-95	2
Put signs <i>before</i> turns are necessary	2
Other comment	1

**Sites visited**

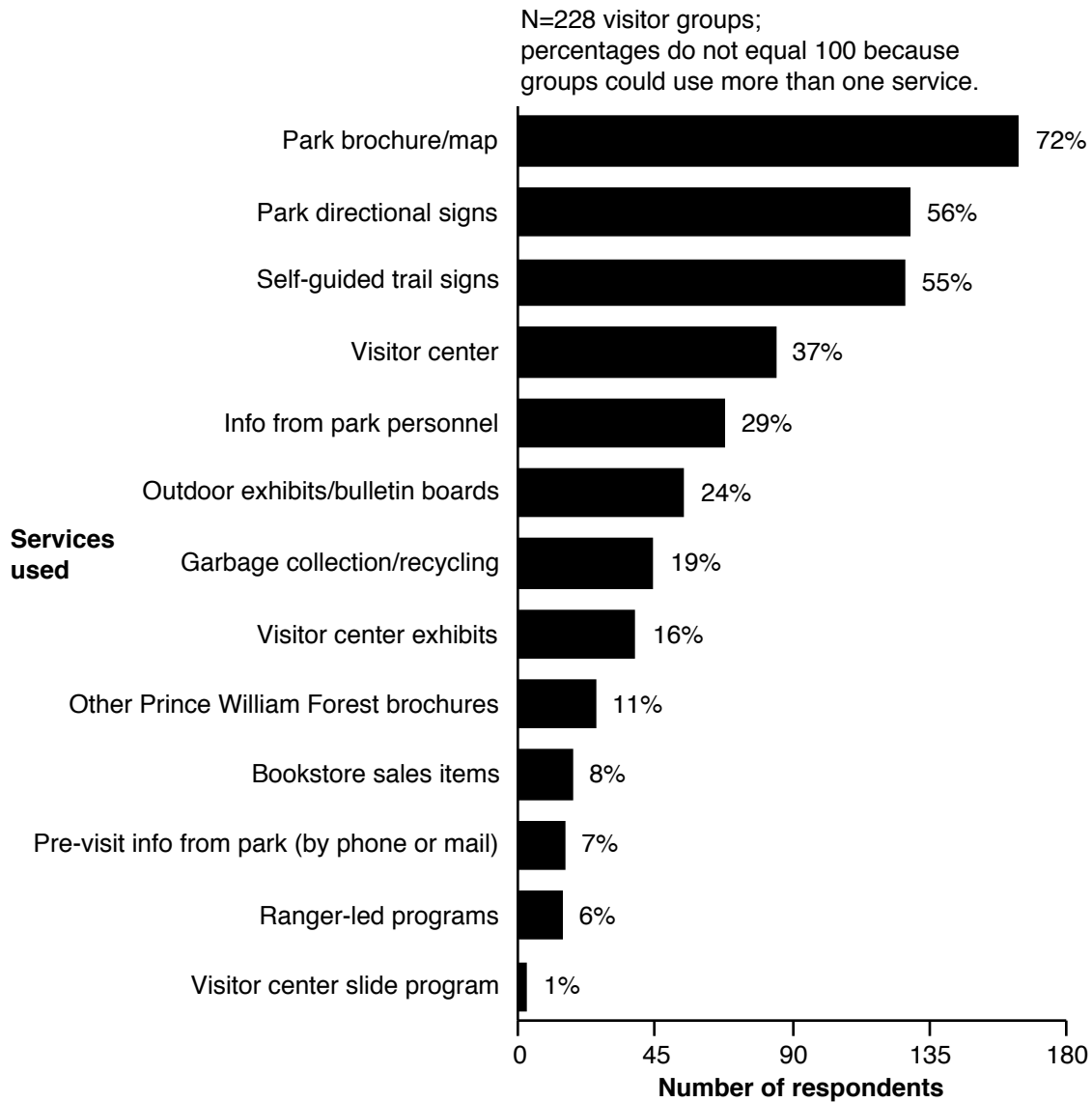
Visitor groups were asked to indicate the sites that they had visited during their visit to Prince William Forest. As is shown by Figure 21, the most commonly visited sites were trails other than the Farms to Forest Trail (46%), the visitor center (33%), Travel Trailer Village (21%) and the Pine Grove Picnic Area (20%). The least visited site was the Chopawamsic Backcountry Area (1%).



**Figure 21: Sites visited**

Visitor groups were asked to note the park services they used during their visit to Prince William Forest. As is shown by Figure 22, the services that were most commonly used by visitor groups were the park brochure/map (72%), park directional signs (56%), self-guided trail signs (55%) and the visitor center (37%). The least used service was the visitor center slide program (1%).

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



**Figure 22: Services used**

Visitor groups rated the importance and quality of each of the services 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 23 shows the average importance and quality ratings for visitor 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 23. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. It should be noted that other Prince William Forest brochures, visitor center slide program, bookstore sales items, ranger-led programs and pre-visit information from the park were not rated by enough people to provide reliable data.

Figures 24-36 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 self-guided trail signs (92%), garbage collection and recycling (89%) and the park brochure/map (86%). The highest proportion of "not important" ratings was for garbage collection and recycling (5%).

Figures 37-49 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 park personnel (95%), the park brochure/map (92%) and the visitor center (84%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for self-guided trail signs (4%).

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

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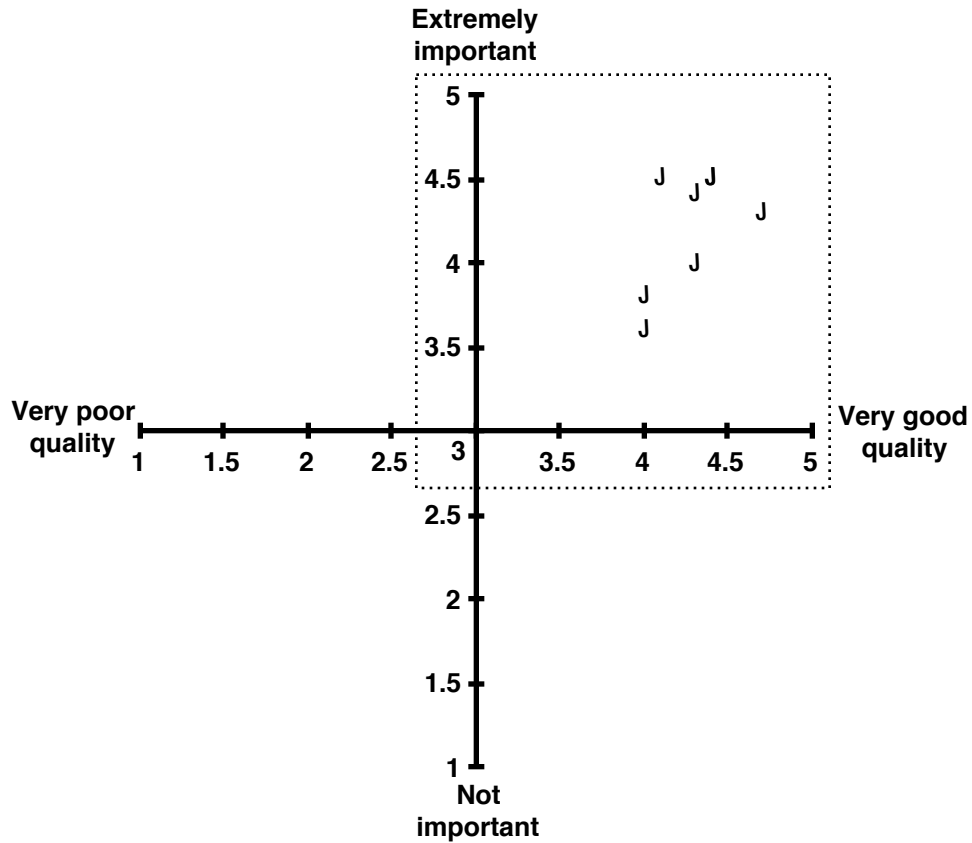


Figure 23: Average ratings of service importance and quality

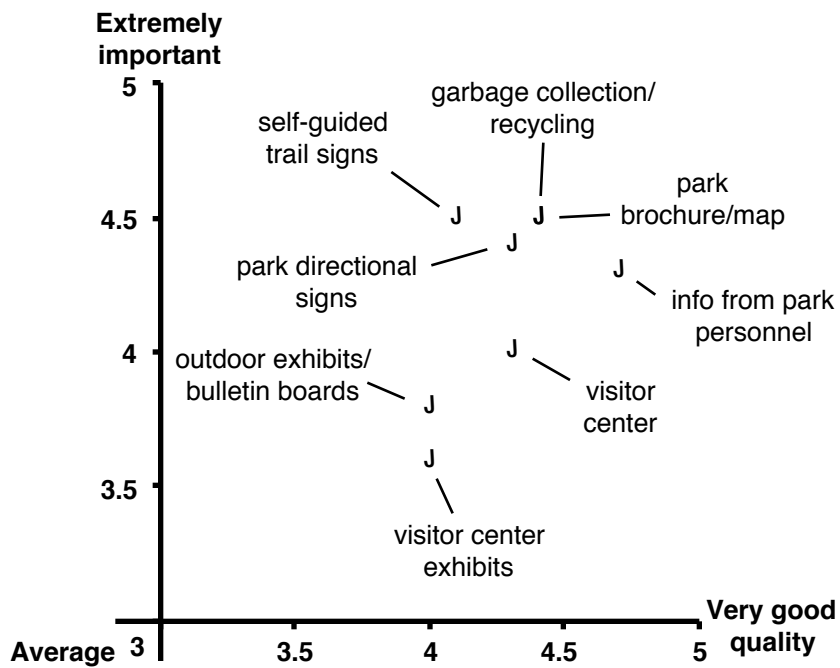
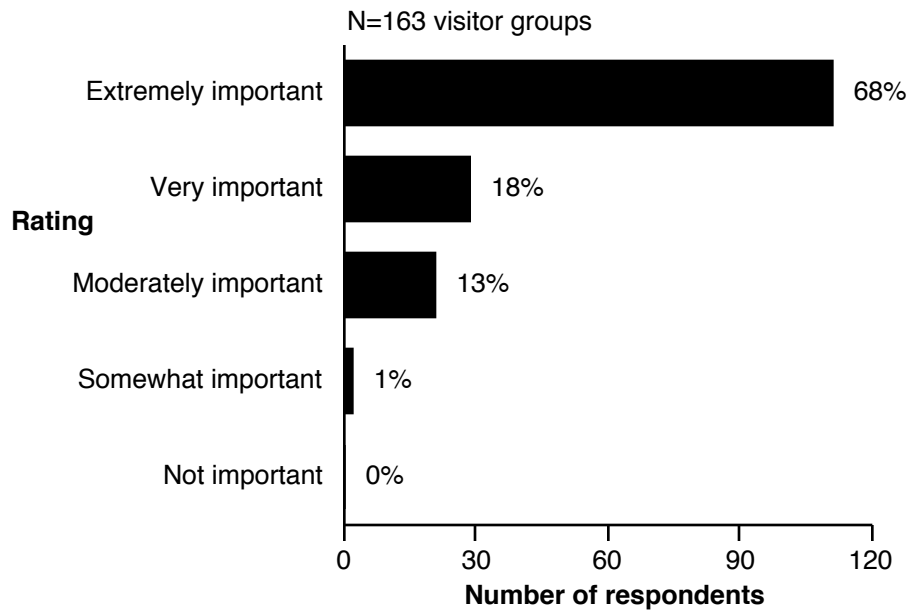
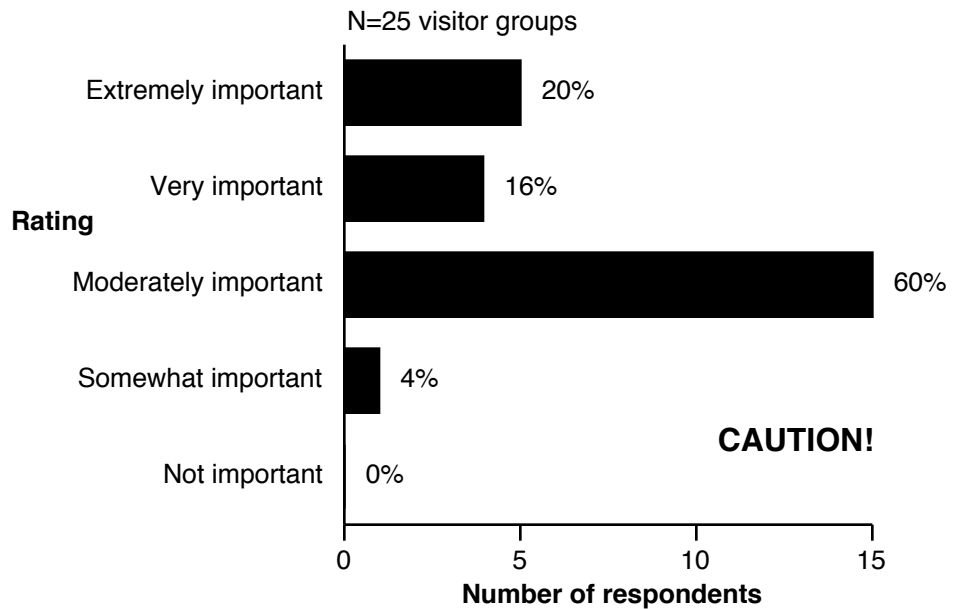


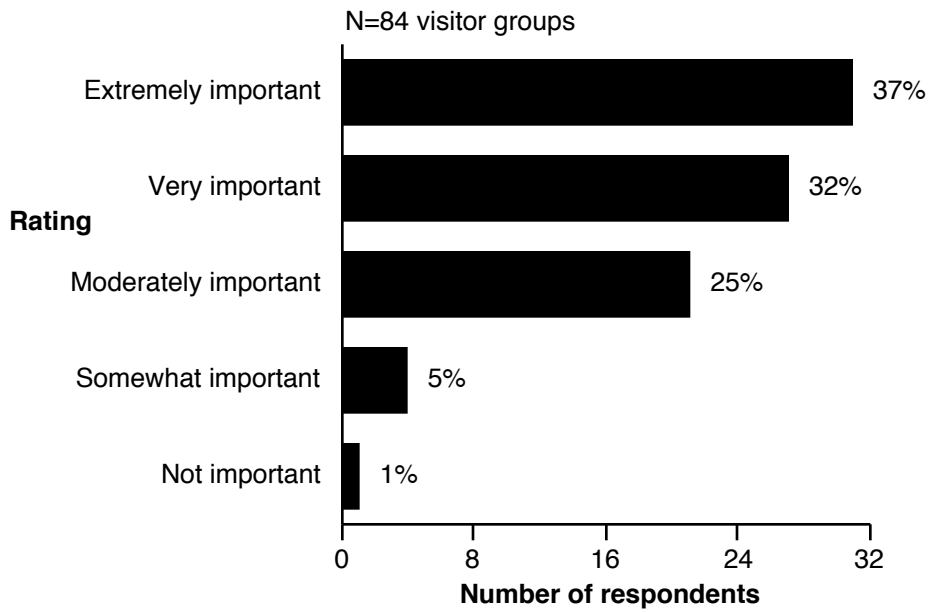
Figure 23: Detail



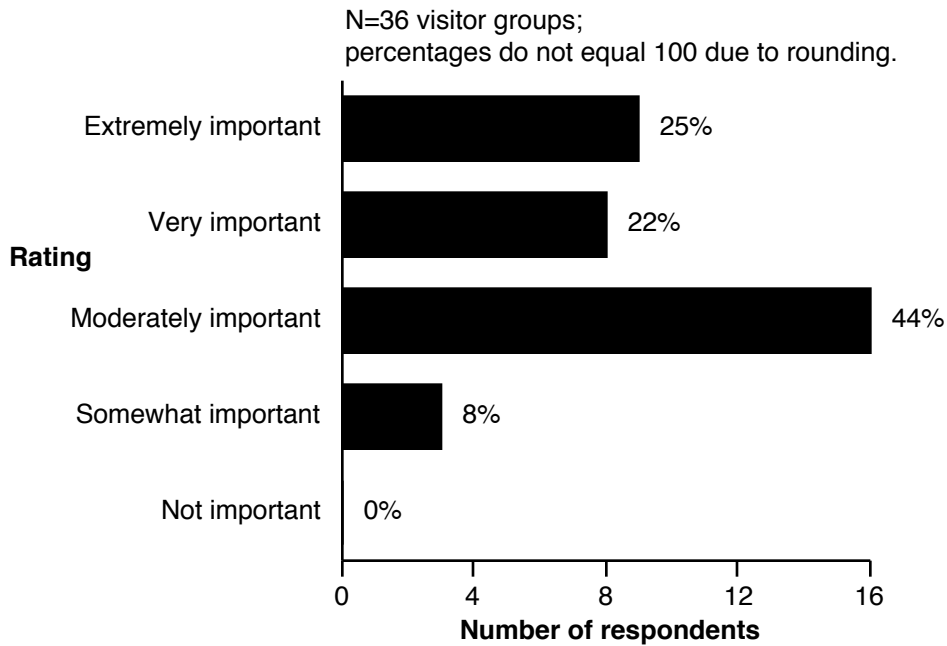
**Figure 24: Importance of park brochure/map**



**Figure 25: Importance of other Prince William Forest brochures**



**Figure 26: Importance of visitor center**



**Figure 27: Importance of visitor center exhibits**

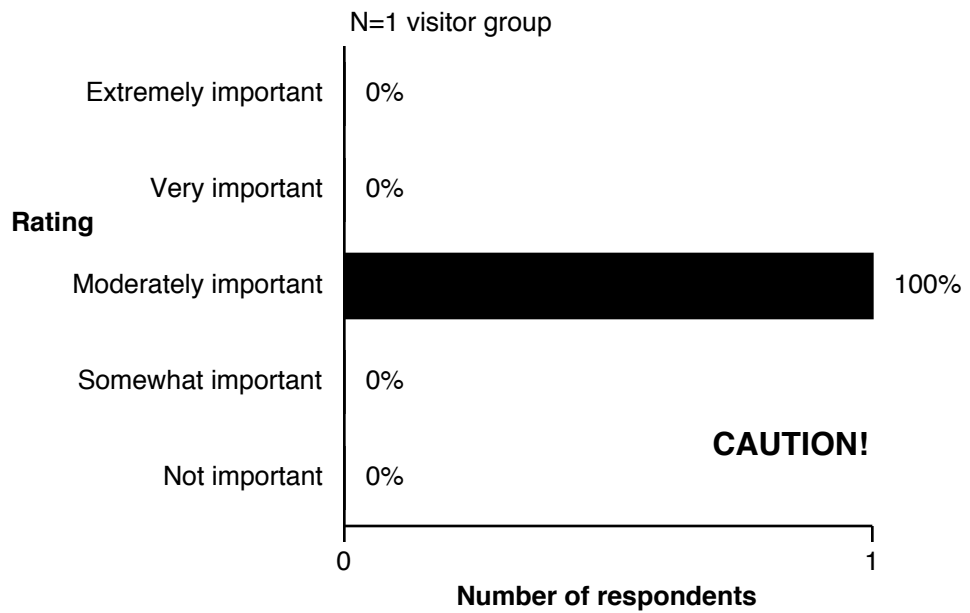


Figure 28: Importance of visitor center slide program

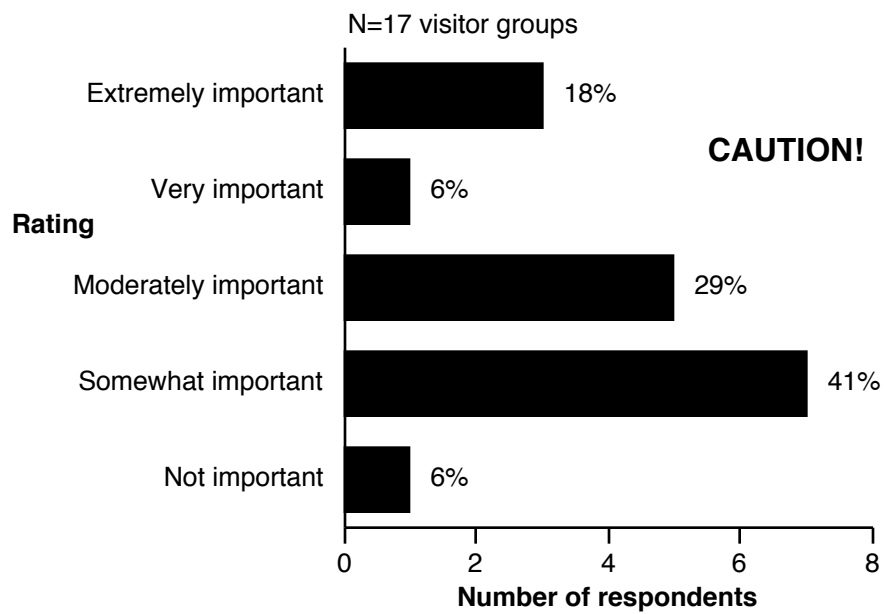


Figure 29: Importance of bookstore sales items



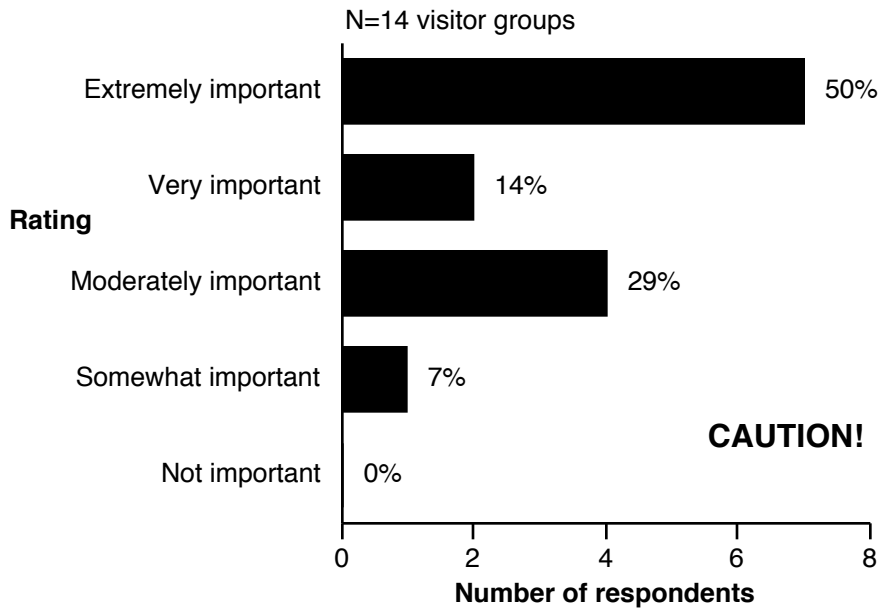


Figure 30: Importance of ranger-led programs

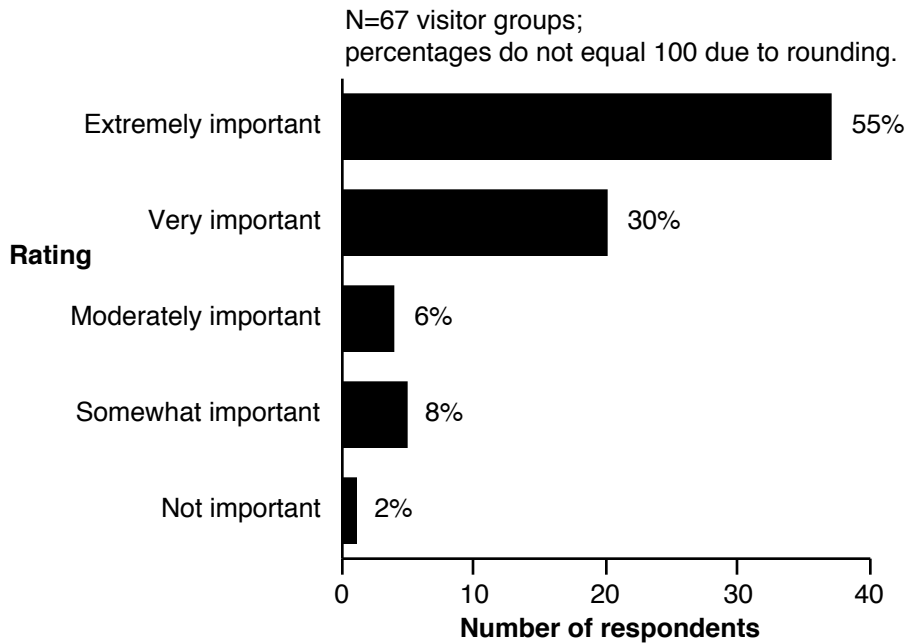
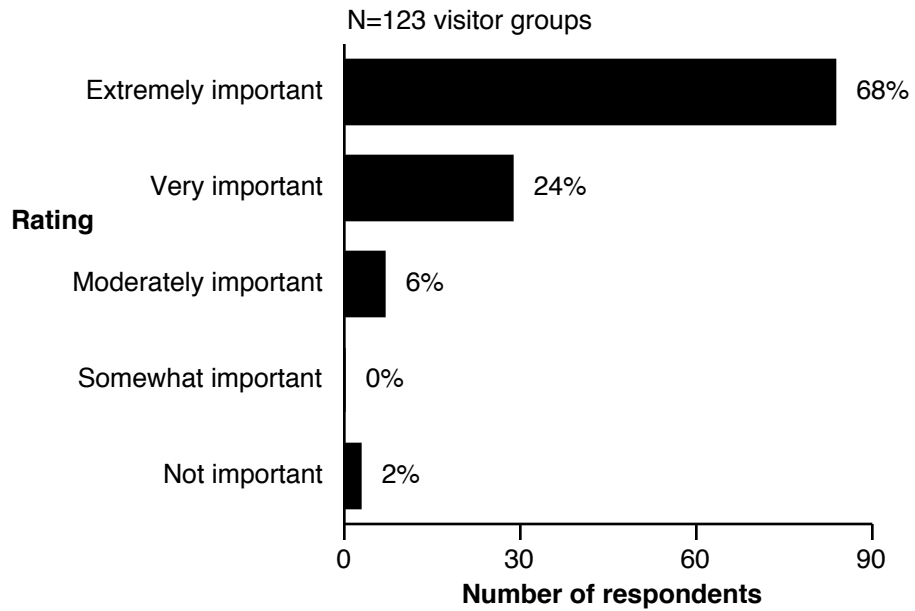
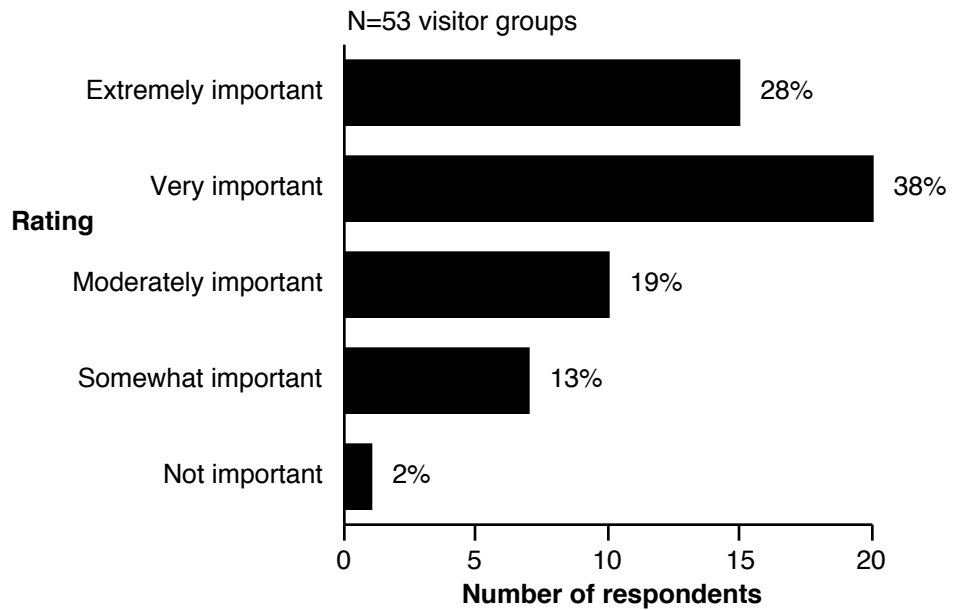


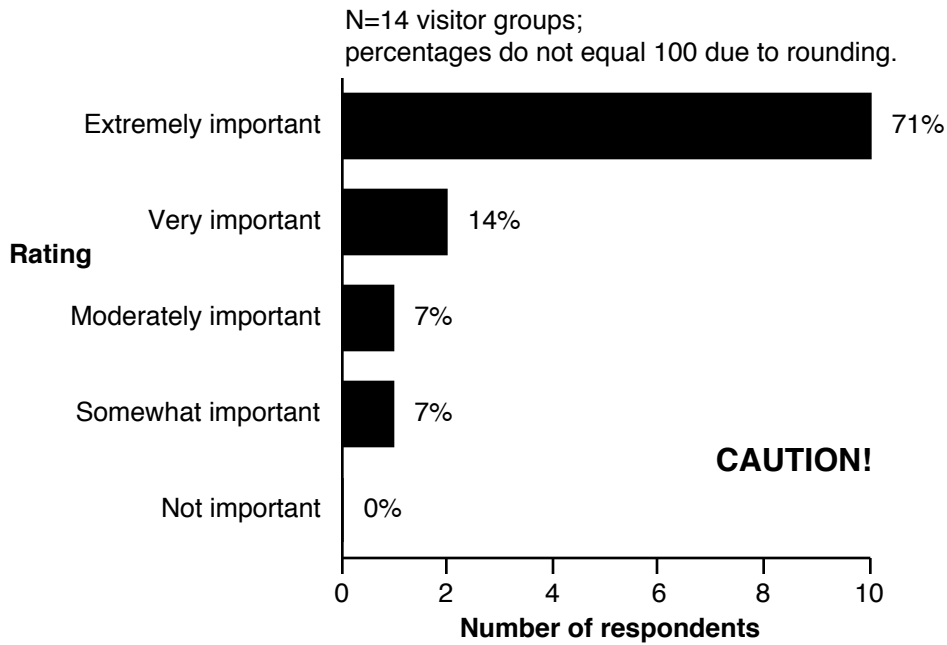
Figure 31: Importance of information from park personnel



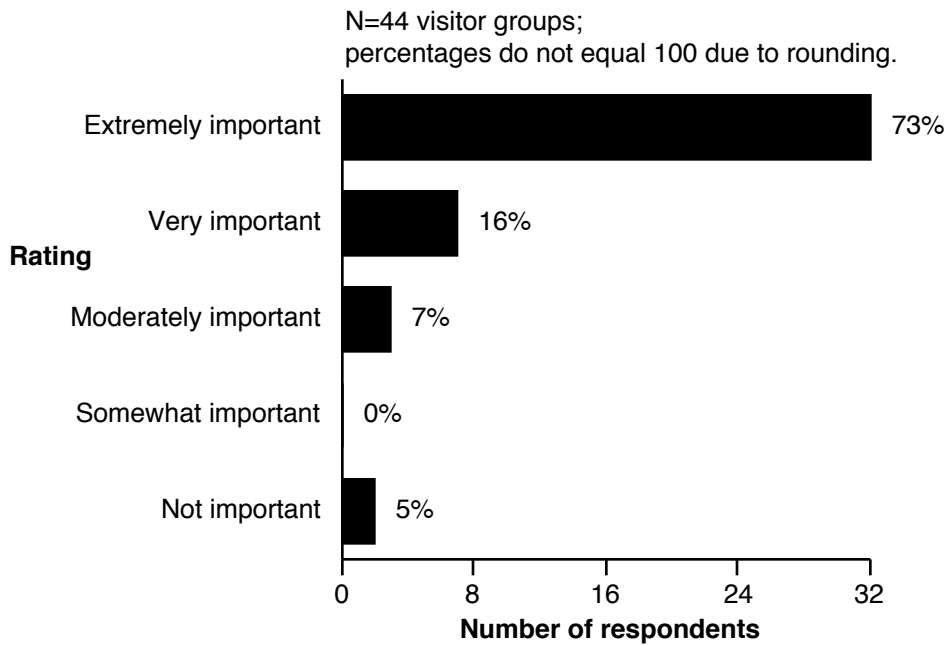
**Figure 32: Importance of self-guided trail signs**



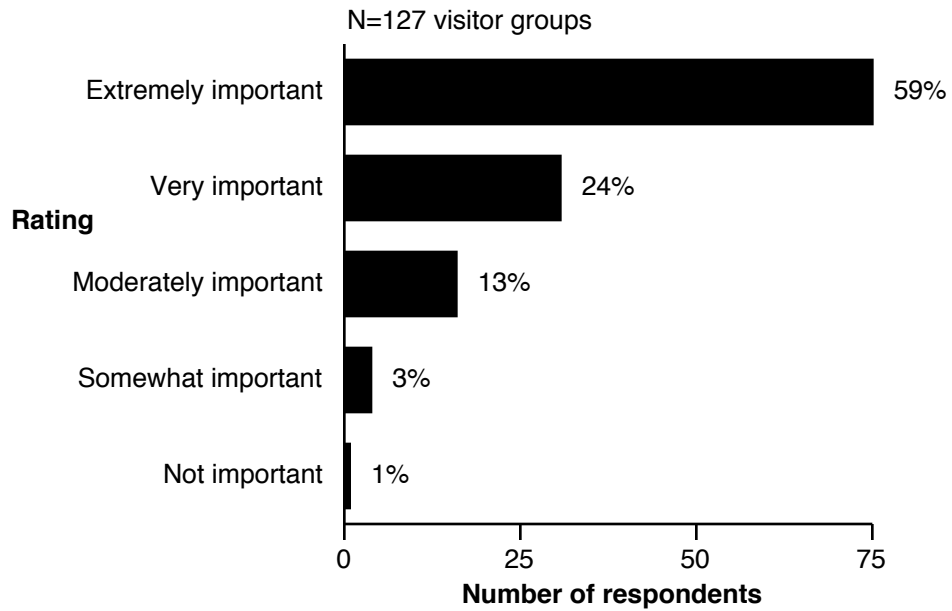
**Figure 33: Importance of outdoor exhibits/bulletin boards**



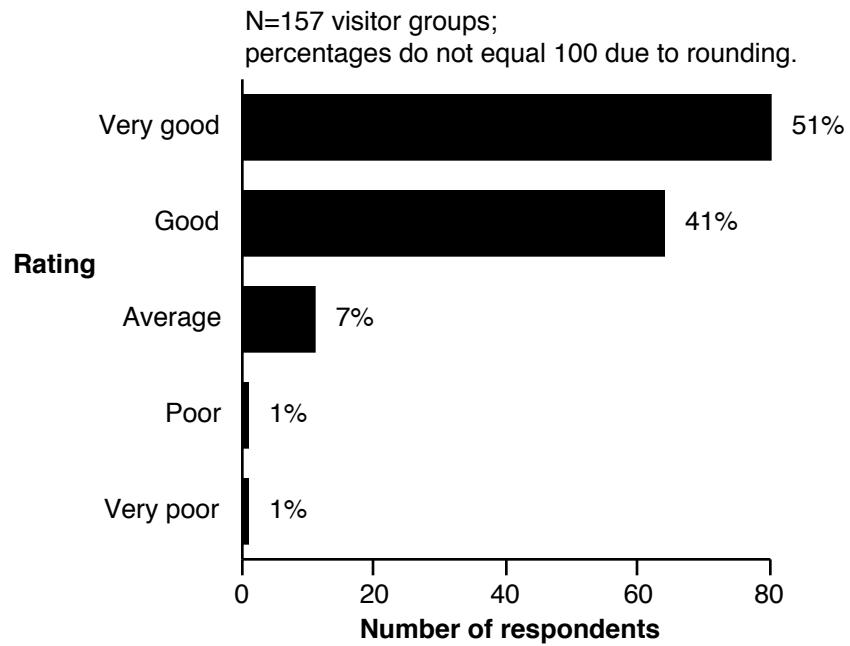
**Figure 34: Importance of pre-visit information (by phone or mail from the park)**



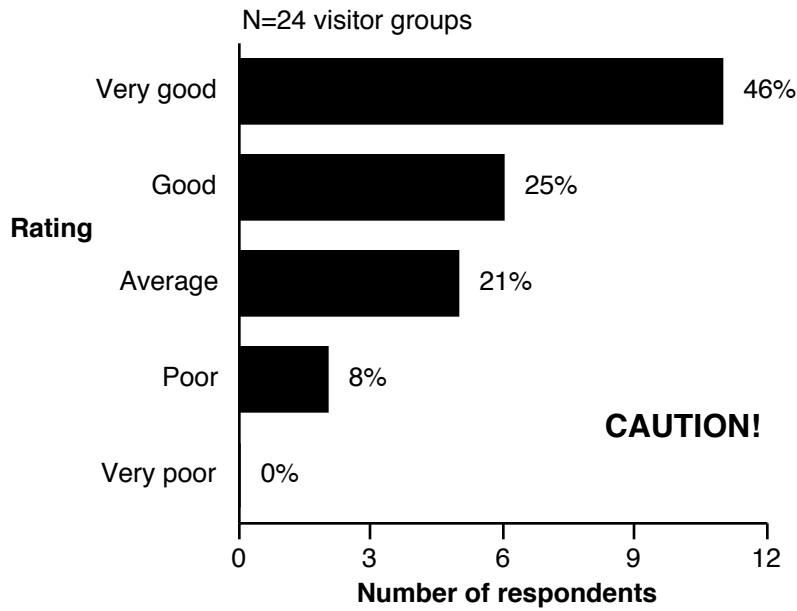
**Figure 35: Importance of garbage collection/recycling**



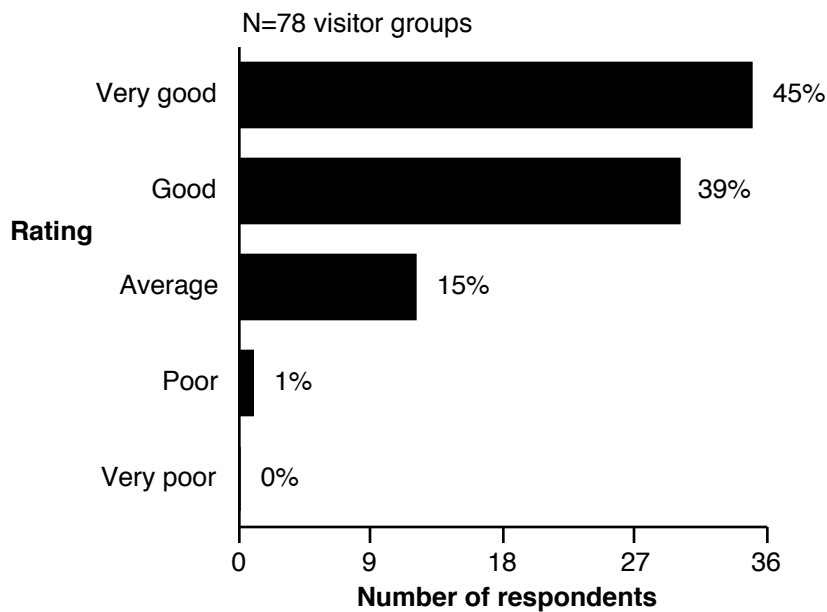
**Figure 36: Importance of park directional signs**



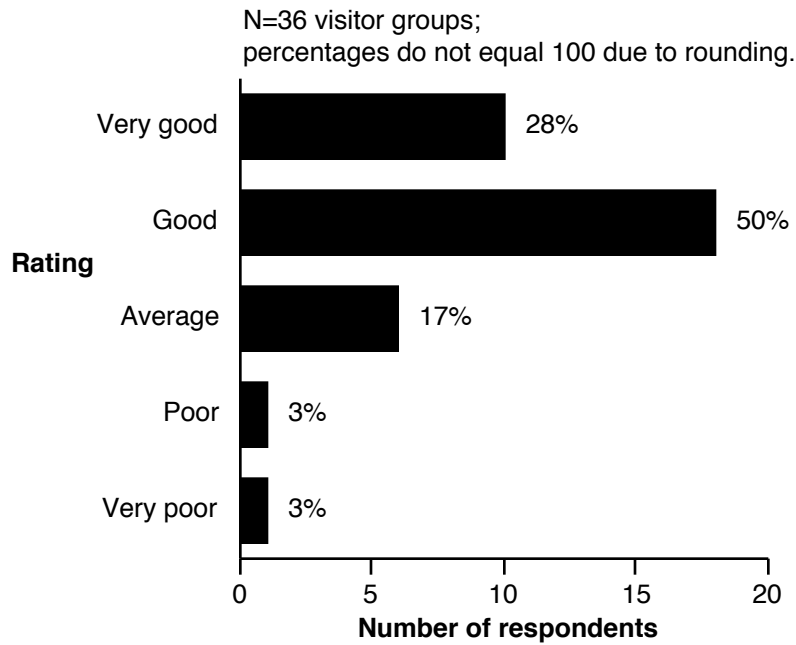
**Figure 37: Quality of park brochure/map**



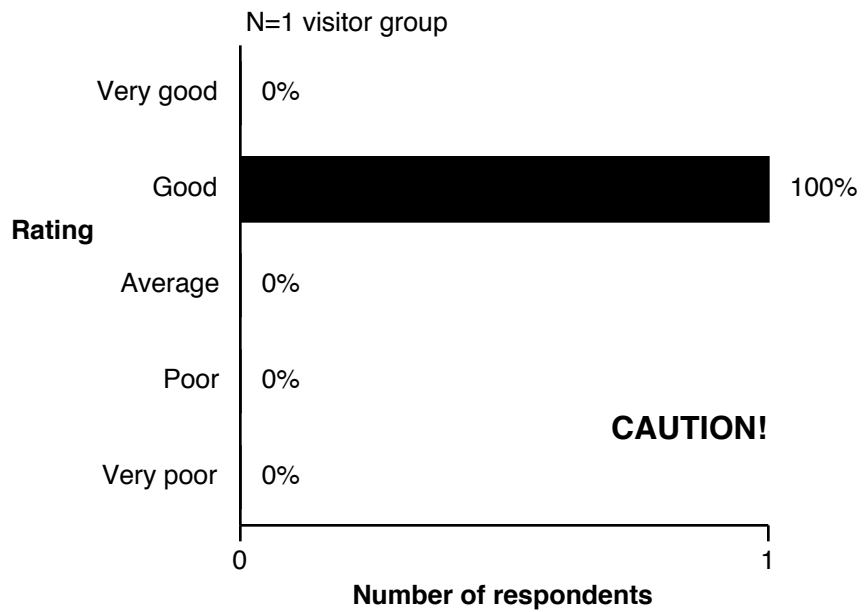
**Figure 38: Quality of other Prince William Forest brochures**



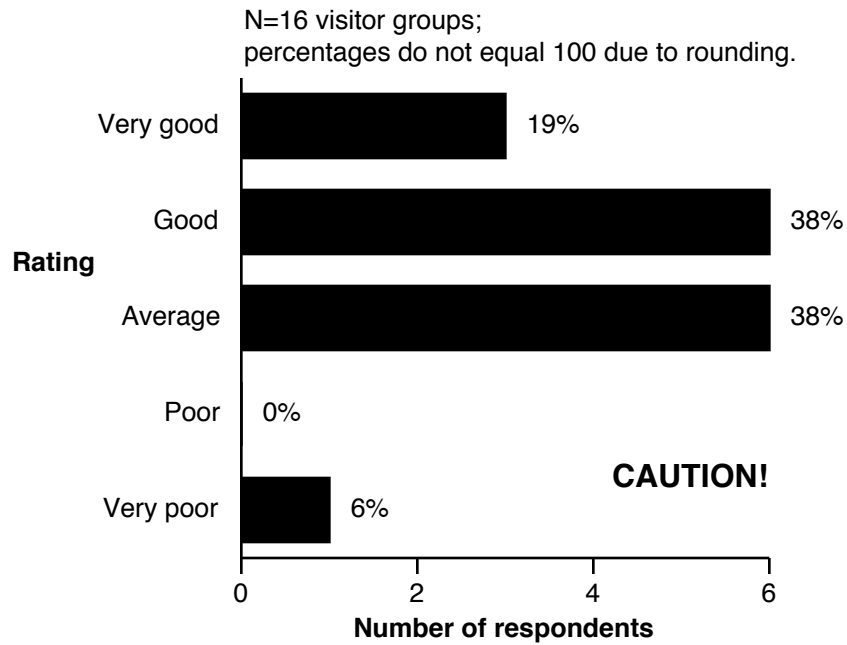
**Figure 39: Quality of visitor center**



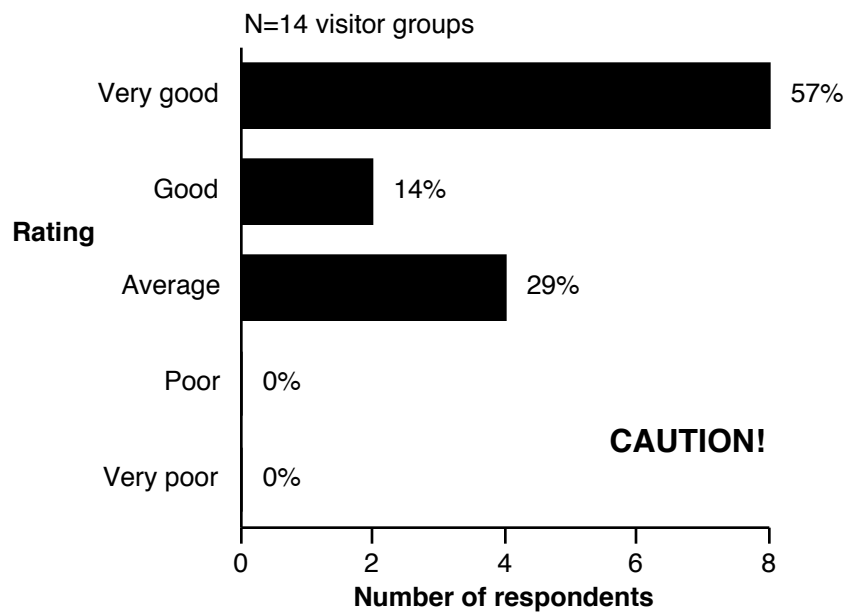
**Figure 40: Quality of visitor center exhibits**



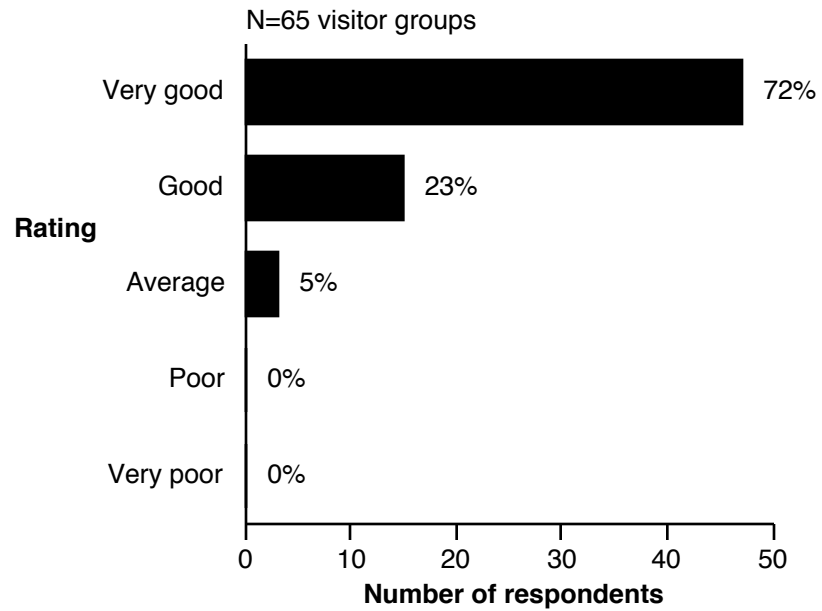
**Figure 41: Quality of visitor center slide program**



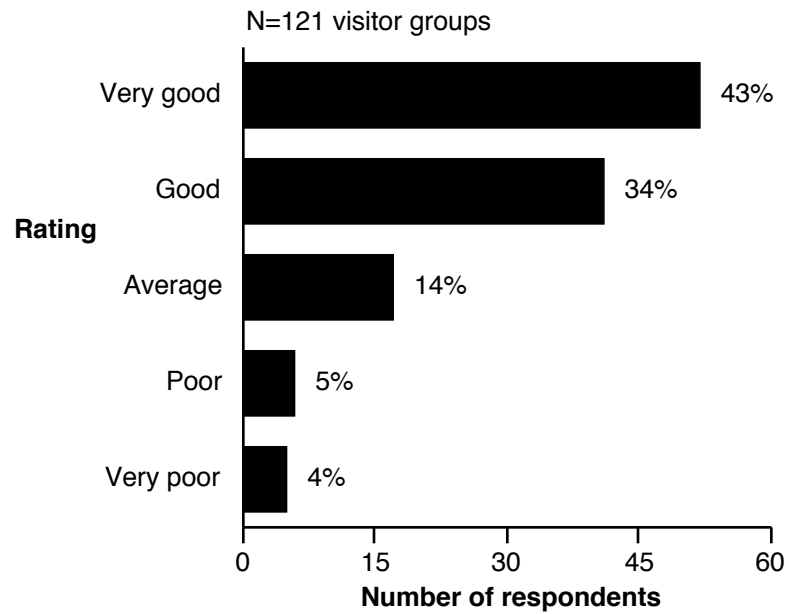
**Figure 42: Quality of bookstore sales items**



**Figure 43: Quality of ranger-led programs**



**Figure 44: Quality of information from park personnel**



**Figure 45: Quality of self-guided trail signs**

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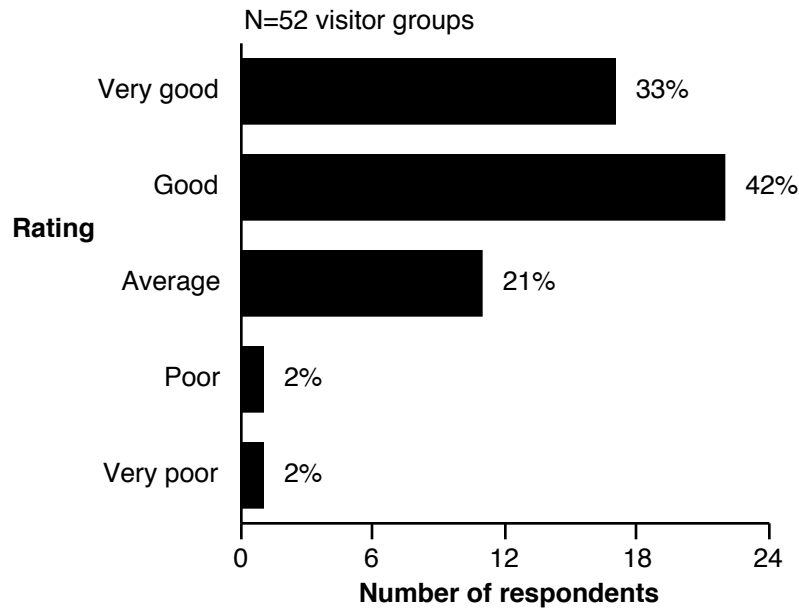


Figure 46: Quality of outdoor exhibits/bulletin boards

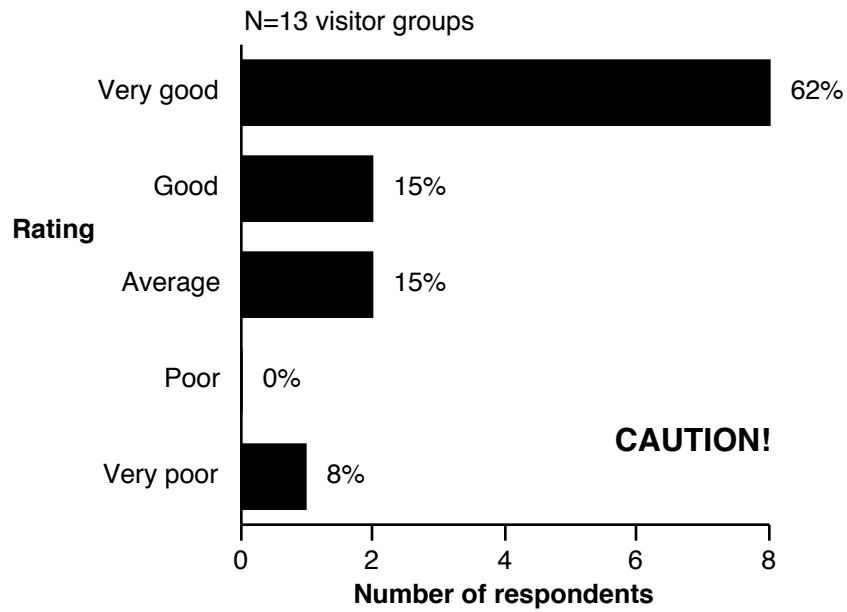
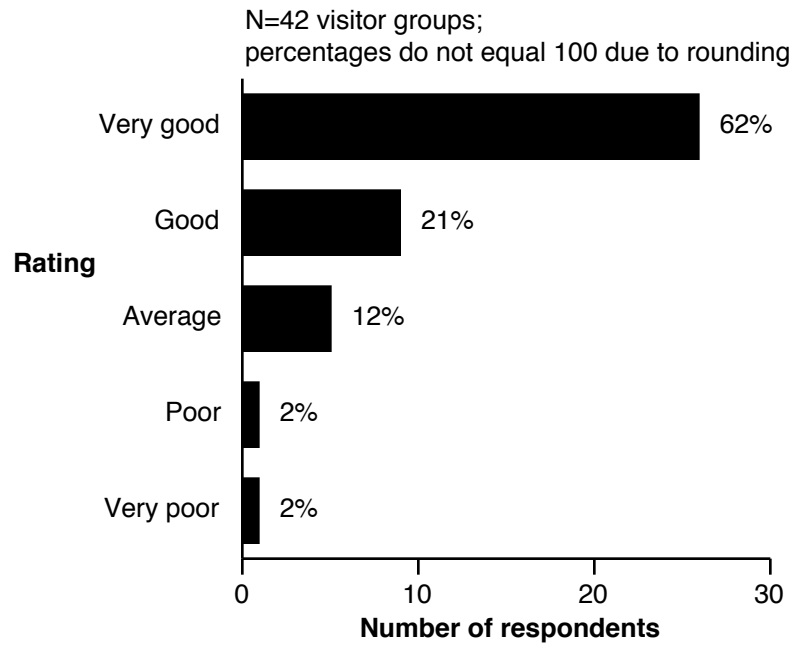
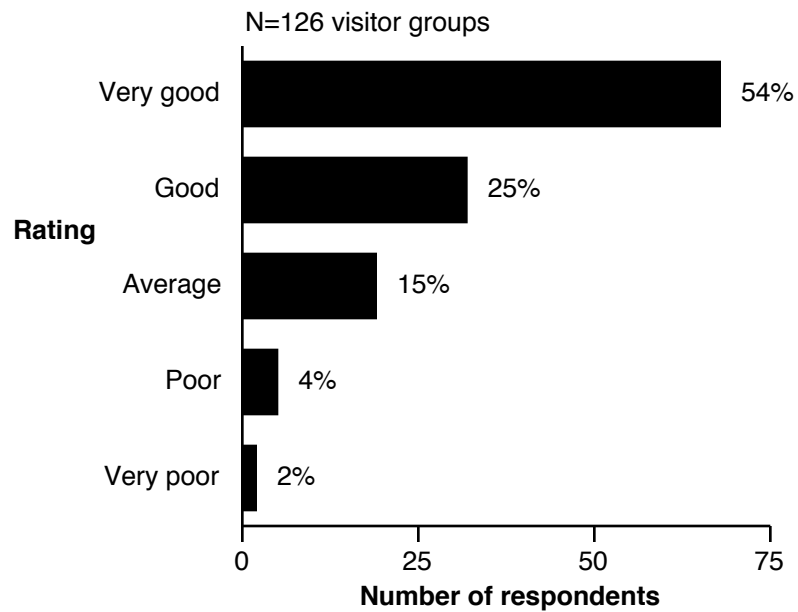


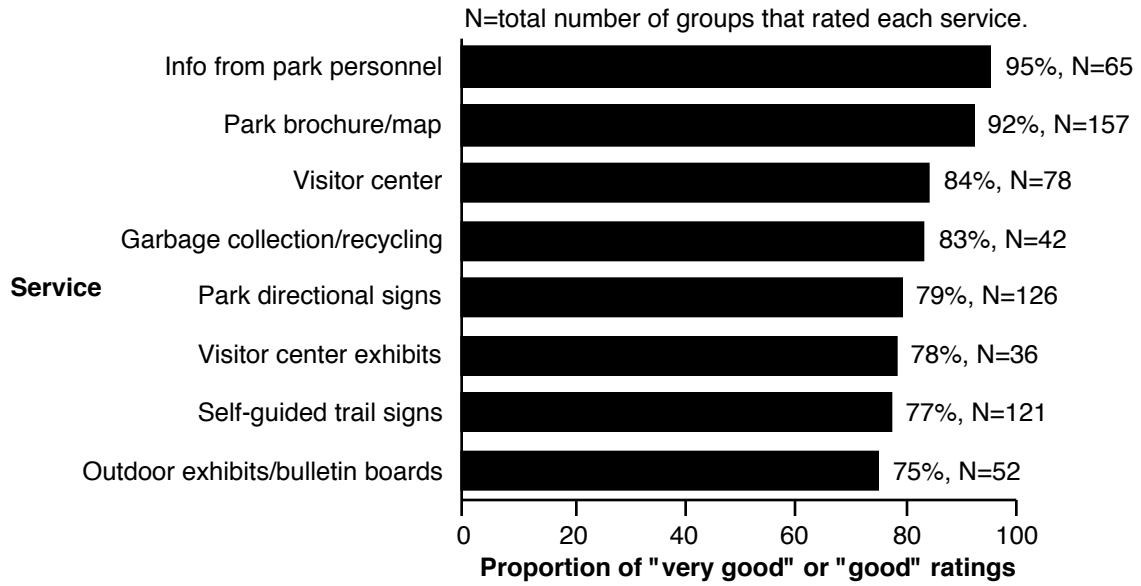
Figure 47: Quality of pre-visit information (by phone or mail from park)



**Figure 48: Quality of garbage collection/recycling**



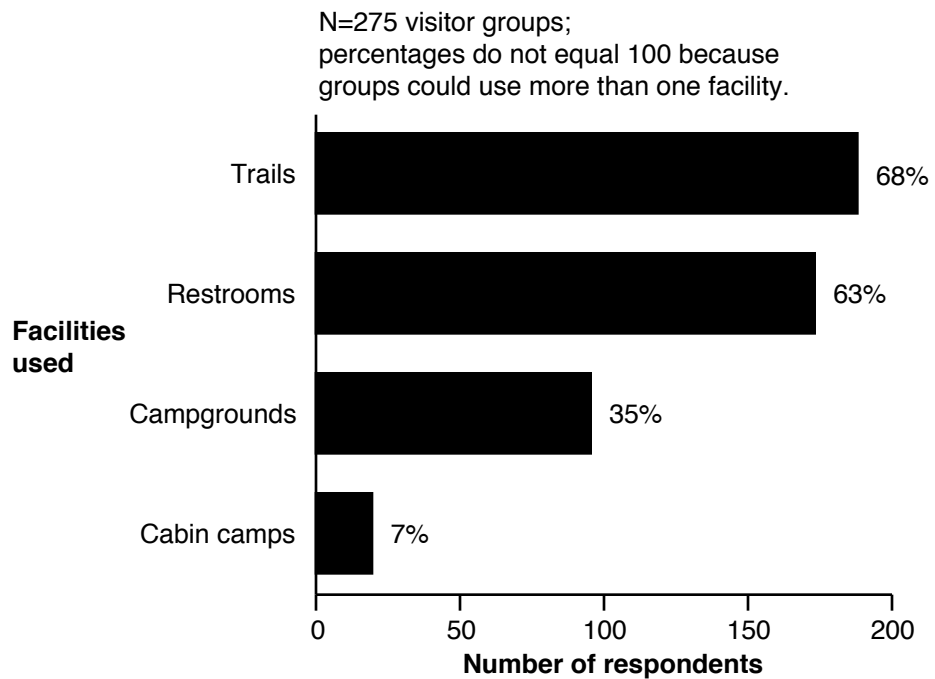
**Figure 49: Quality of park directional signs**



**Figure 50: Combined proportions of “very good” or “good” quality ratings for services**

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

Visitor groups were asked to note the visitor facilities they used during their visit to Prince William Forest. As is shown by Figure 51, the facilities that were most commonly used by visitor groups were trails (68%) and restrooms (63%). The least used facility was the cabin camps (7%).



**Figure 51: Facilities used**

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

IMPORTANCE	QUALITY
5=extremely important	5=very good
4=very important	4=good
3=moderately important	3=average
2=somewhat important	2=poor
1=not important	1=very poor

Figure 52 shows the average importance and quality ratings for visitor facilities. An average score was determined for each facility based on ratings provided by visitors who used that facility. This was done for both importance and quality, and the results are plotted on the grid shown in Figure 52. All facilities were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. It should be noted that cabin camps were not rated by enough people to provide reliable data.

Figures 53-56 show the importance ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual facilities. Those facilities receiving the highest proportion of "extremely important" or "very important" ratings included campgrounds (96%) and trails (95%).

Figures 57-60 show the quality ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual facilities. Those facilities receiving the highest proportion of "very good" or "good" ratings included campgrounds (95%) and trails (88%).

Figure 61 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the facilities.

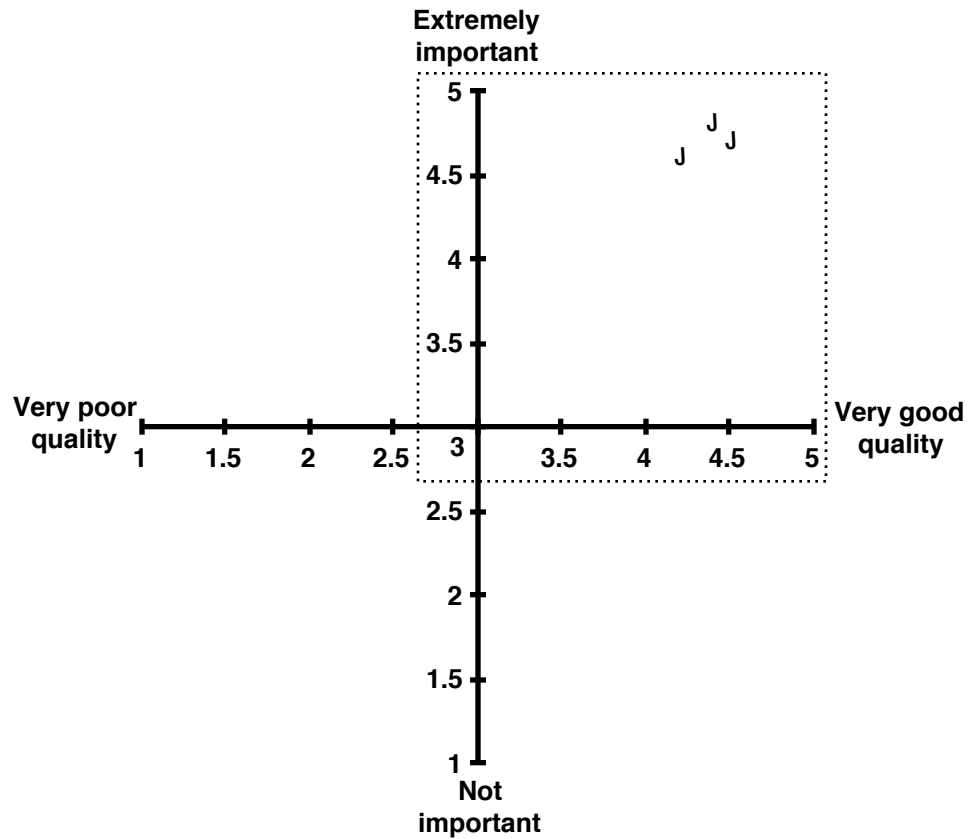
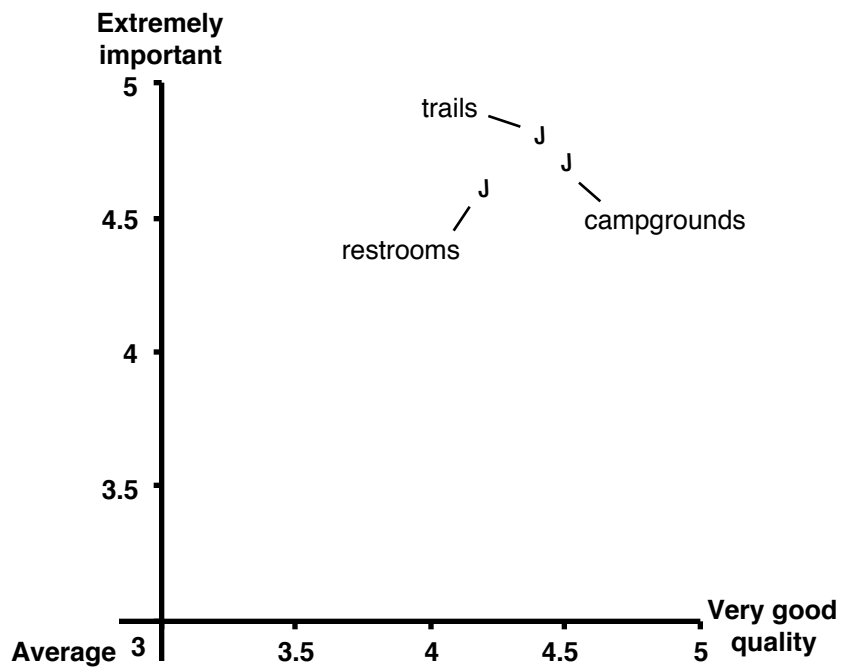
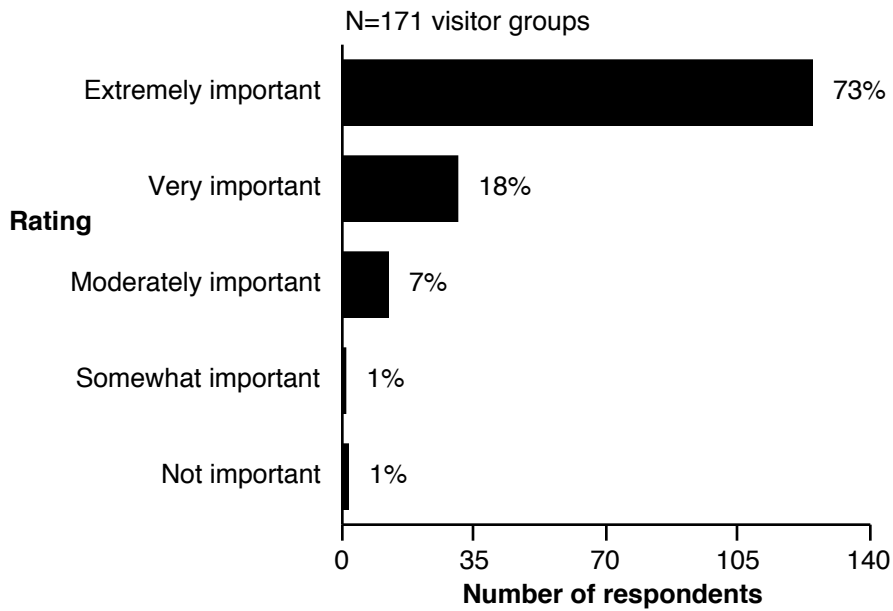


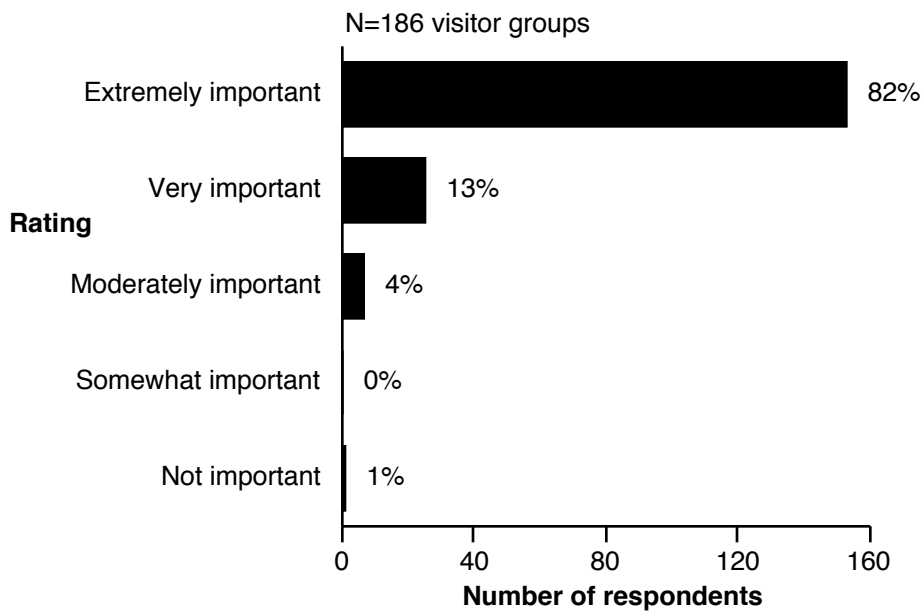
Figure 52: Average importance and quality for facilities



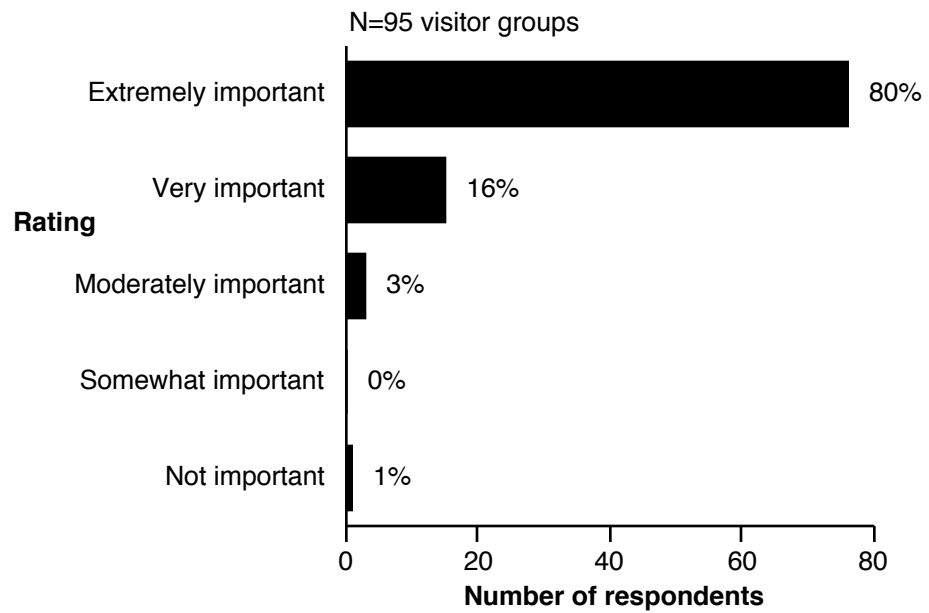
**Figure 52: Detail**



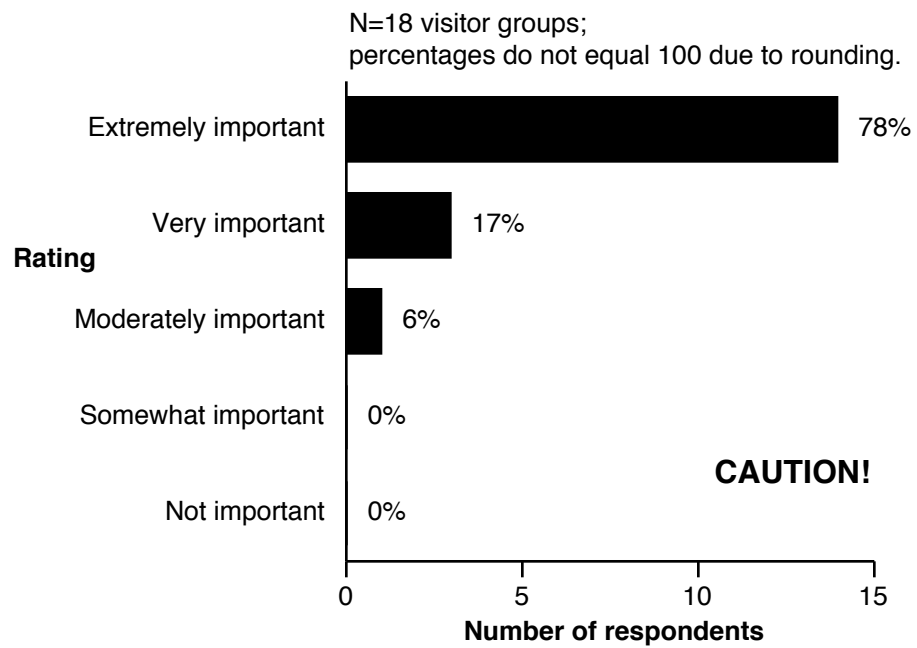
**Figure 53: Importance of restrooms**



**Figure 54: Importance of trails**

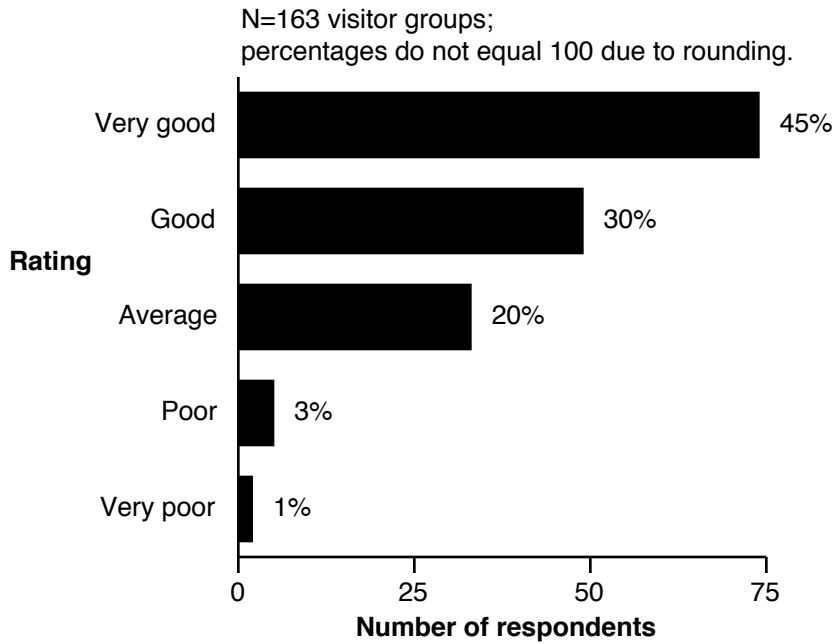


**Figure 55: Importance of campgrounds**

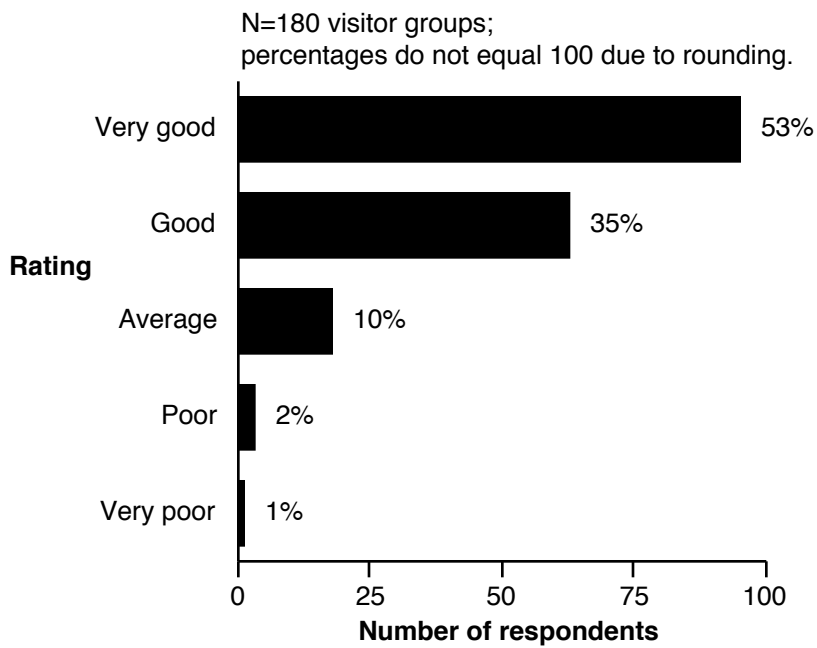


**Figure 56: Importance of cabin camps**





**Figure 57: Quality of restrooms**



**Figure 58: Quality of trails**

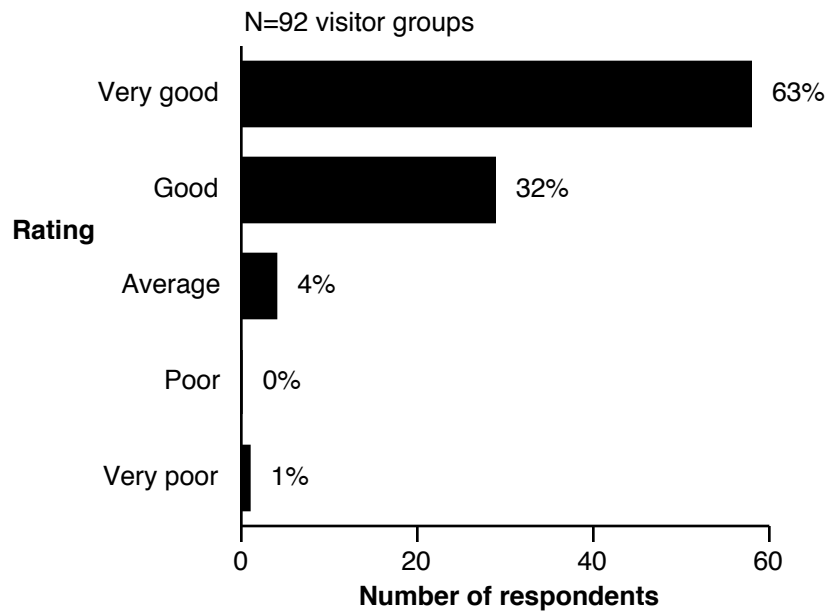


Figure 59: Quality of campgrounds

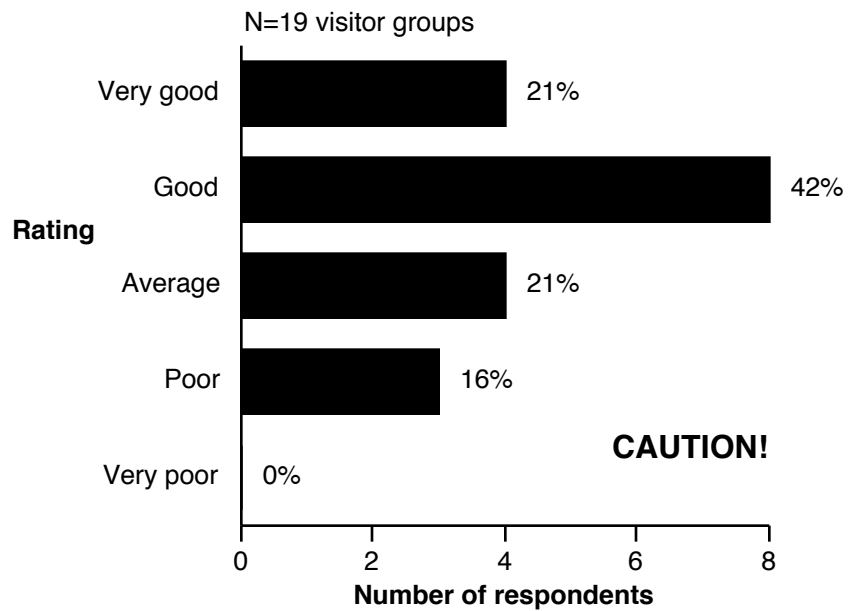
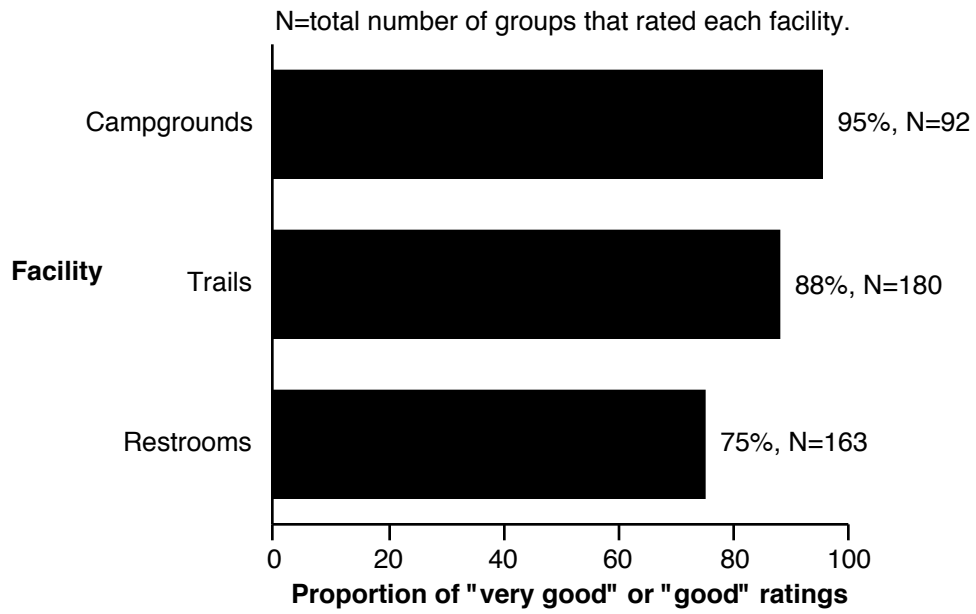


Figure 60: Quality of cabin camps



**Figure 61: Combined proportions of "very good" or "good" quality ratings for facilities**

## Expenditures

Visitor groups were asked if all the members of their groups lived in Prince William County. As is shown by Figure 62, 68% of the visitor groups indicated that not all of their group members lived in the county. Those groups for which some or all of the group members lived *outside* of Prince William County were also asked to indicate the amount of money they had spent in Prince William County on lodging, travel, food and "other" items (such as souvenirs, gifts and film) on this visit. The expenditure totals that follow refer to these groups only.

**Total expenditures:** Thirty-nine percent of visitor groups spent no money in Prince William County. Twenty-eight percent of the groups spent from \$1 to \$50, and another 10% spent from \$51 to \$100 (see Figure 63). Of the total expenditures by groups, 40% was for lodging, 31% was for food, 19% was for travel and 11% was for "other" items (see Figure 64).

The average visitor group expenditure during this visit was \$90. The median visitor group expenditure (50% of groups spent more and 50% of groups spent less) was \$16. The average per capita expenditure was \$37.

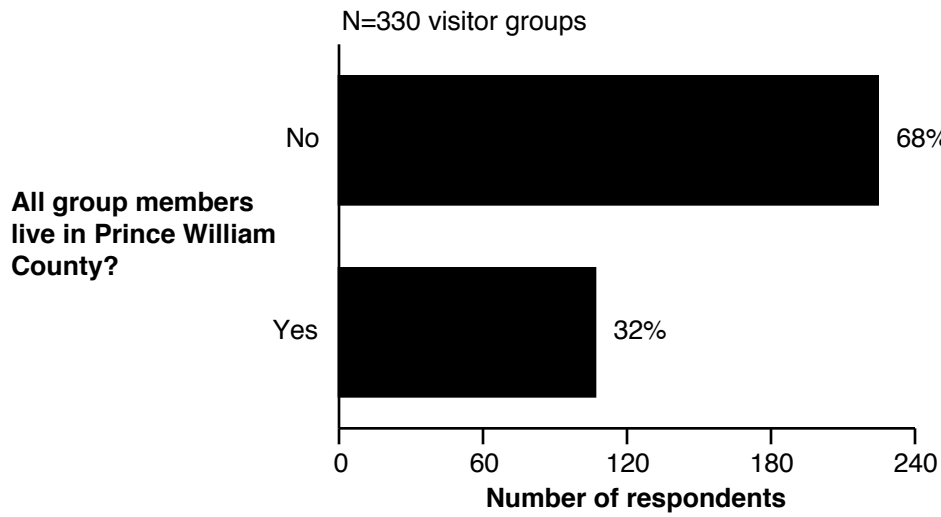
**Lodging:** Fifty-seven percent of visitor groups spent no money on lodging in Prince William County. Sixteen percent of the groups spent from \$1 to \$25 and another 7% spent from \$26 to \$50 (see Figure 65).

**Travel:** Fifty-two percent of visitor groups spent no money on travel in Prince William County. Twenty-six percent of the groups spent from \$1 to \$25 and another 15% spent from \$26 to \$50 (see Figure 66).

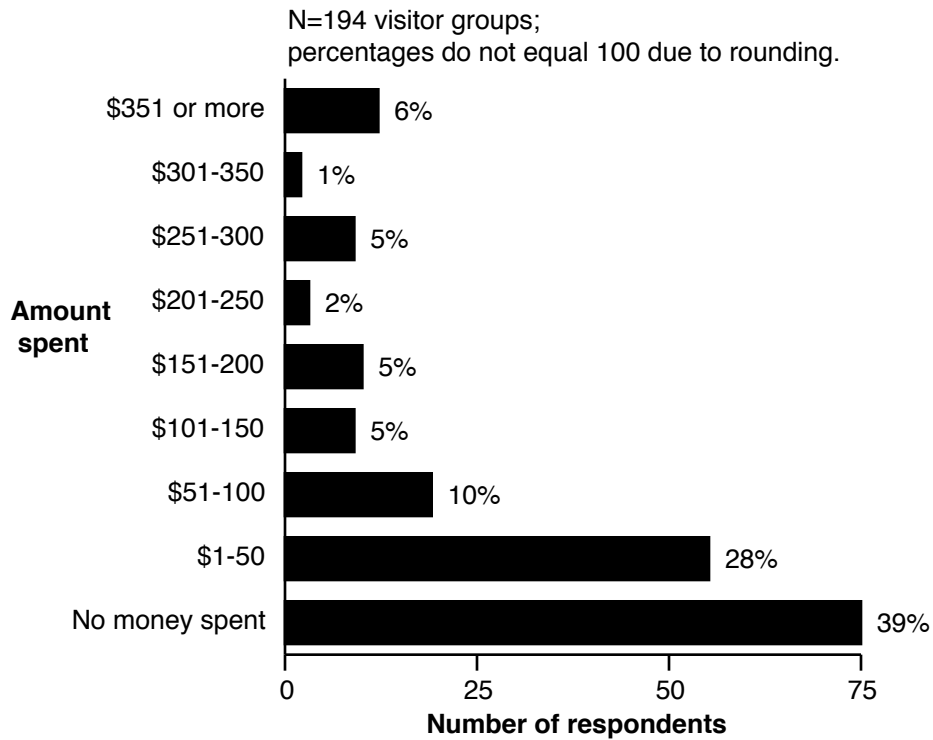
**Food:** Fifty-three percent of visitor groups spent no money on food in Prince William County. Twenty-three percent of the groups spent from \$1 to \$25 and another 11% spent from \$26 to \$50 (see Figure 67).

**"Other" items:** Eighty percent of the visitor groups spent no money on "other" items such as souvenirs, film and gifts. Eleven percent of the groups spent from \$1 to \$25 and another 4% spent from \$26 to \$50 (see Figure 68).

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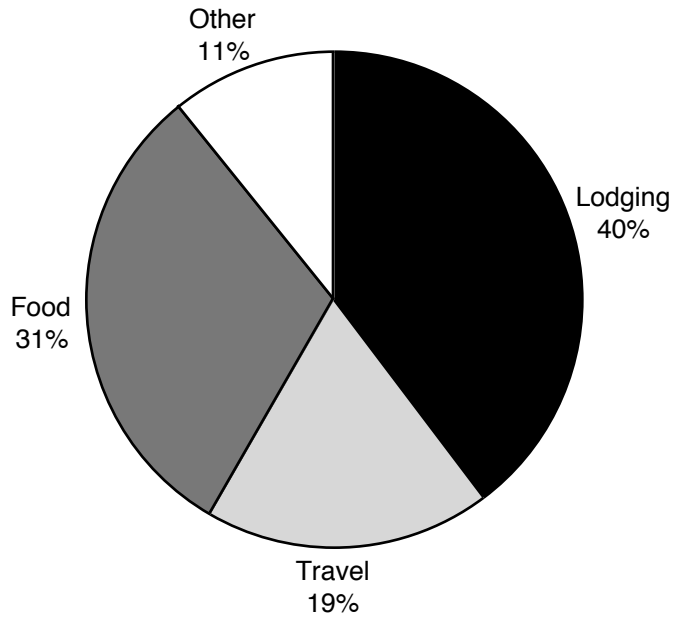


**Figure 62: Do all members of group live in Prince William County?**



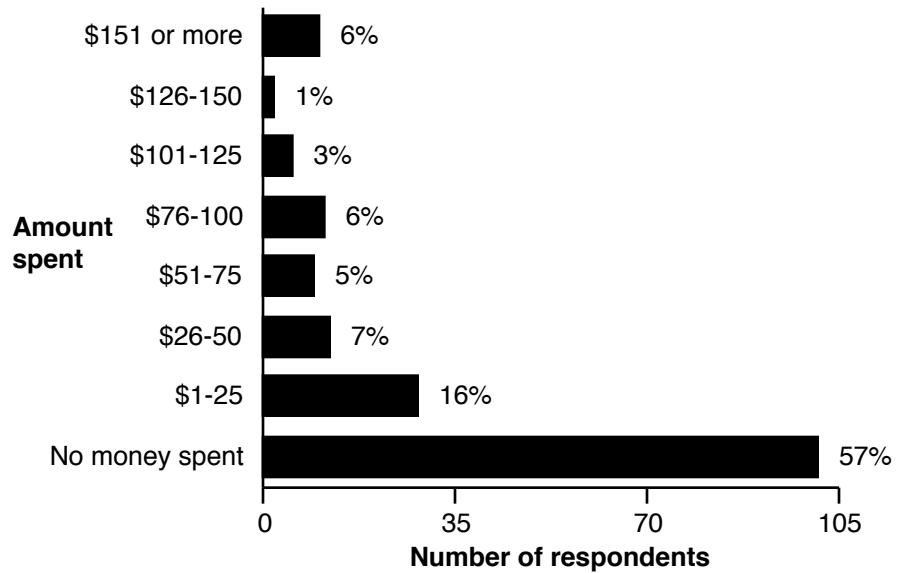
**Figure 63: Total expenditures in Prince William County**

N=194 visitor groups;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

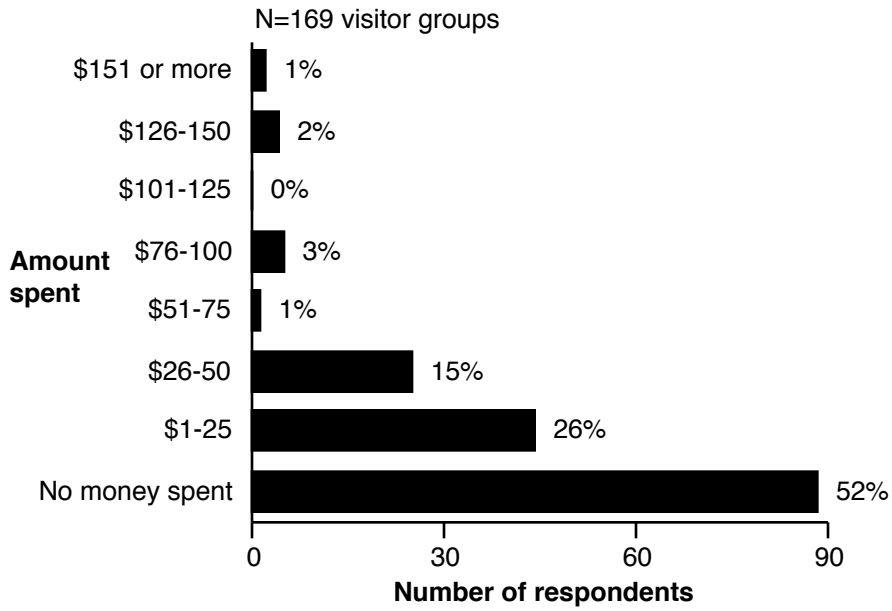


**Figure 64: Proportion of expenditures in Prince William County**

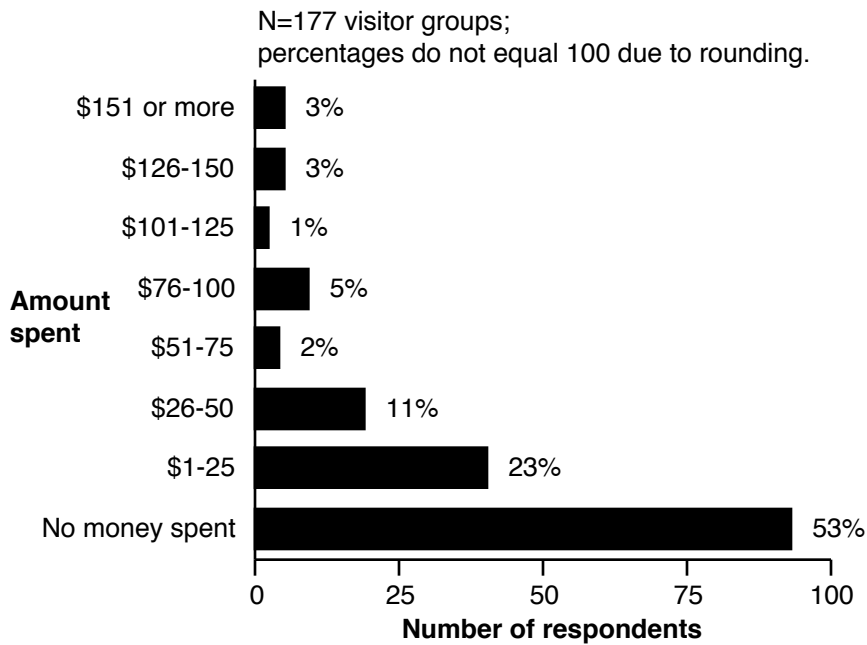
N=178 visitor groups;  
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.



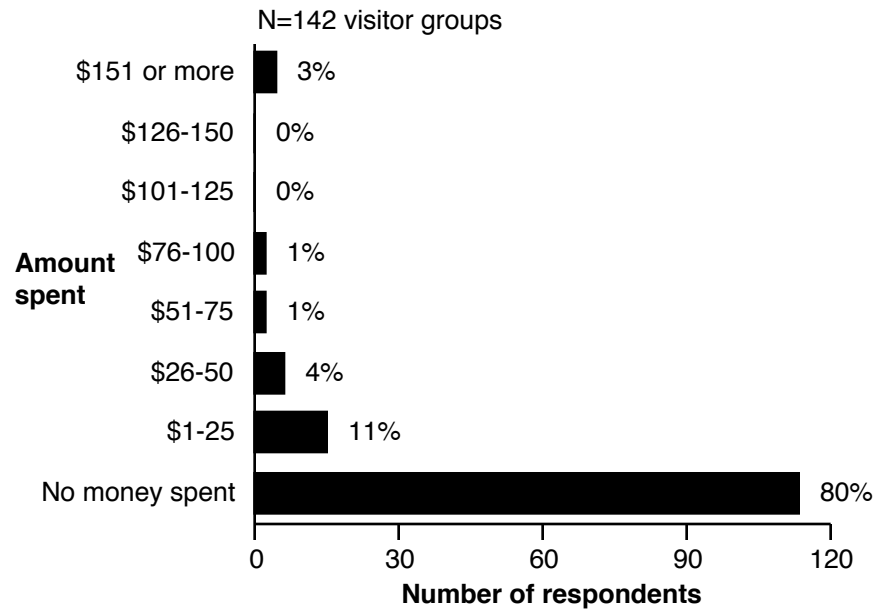
**Figure 65: Expenditures for lodging in Prince William County**



**Figure 66: Expenditures for travel in Prince William County**



**Figure 67: Expenditures for food in Prince William County**



**Figure 68: Expenditures for “other” items in Prince William County**



Visitor groups were asked to rate the overall quality of the visitor services provided at Prince William Forest Park during this visit. The majority of visitor groups (94%) rated services as "very good" or "good" (see Figure 69). Only one visitor group (less than 1% of respondents) rated services as "very poor."

### Overall quality of visitor services

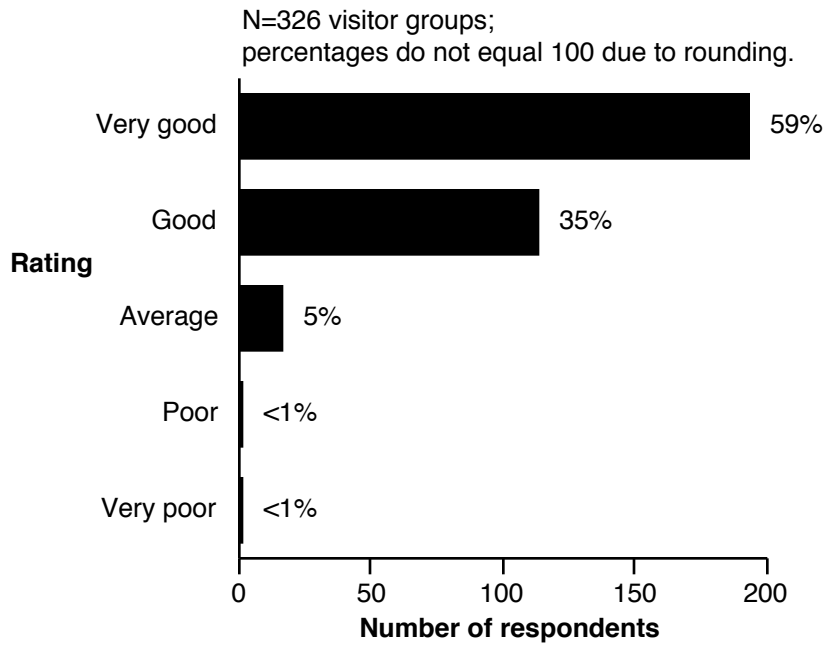


Figure 69: Overall quality of visitor services

### What visitors liked most

Visitor groups were asked "What did you like most about your visit to Prince William Forest Park?" Eighty-nine percent of visitor groups (300 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

**Table 6: Visitor likes**

N=526 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Helpful rangers	4
Knowledgeable rangers	3
Friendly rangers	3
Friendly personnel at Travel Trailer Village	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Enjoyed talking exhibits	2
Other comments	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Trails	28
Clean park	25
Hiking trails	24
Campground	11
Good facilities	7
Biking roads	7
Park well-maintained	7
Scenic drive	6
Well-marked trails	5
Picnic areas	5
Good RV campground	5
Bike trails	5
Trails well-maintained	4
Layout of Travel Trailer Village	3
Clean restrooms	3
Quality of roads	3
Variety of hikes	3
Well-maintained roads	3
Walk-in campsites	2
Easy access to water	2
Nice campsites at Travel Trailer Village	2
Backcountry camping	2
RV hook-ups	2
Other comments	13

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Designated cycling lane	6
Other comments	3
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Natural setting	24
Wildlife	19
Forest	17
Uncrowded	9
Creeks	5
Foliage	3
Few cars	3
Falls	2
Other comments	4
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Peace and quiet	56
Solitude	43
Beauty	35
Convenient	13
Scenery	13
Close to home	11
Close to Washington, D.C.	8
Enjoy nature	7
Spending time with family and friends	6
Safe	5
Rest and relaxation	4
Privacy	4
Being outdoors	4
Location	3
Clean, fresh air	3
Getting away from urban living and noise	3
Nature close to urban area	3
Room to exercise	2
Close to Interstate 95	2
Other comments	12

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### What visitors liked least

Visitor groups were asked "What did you like least about your visit to Prince William Forest Park?" Sixty percent of visitor groups (202 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

**Table 7: Visitor dislikes**

N=226 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Park rangers' attitudes	3
Other comments	2
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Not enough information available	3
Map should be updated and improved	2
Other comments	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Trails poorly marked	10
Pyrite Mine Trail was closed	7
Restrooms	6
Trails need maintenance	6
Cabin conditions	5
Small trailer spaces	5
Signs could be better	5
No hot water	5
Not enough trails for biking	4
Lack of showers at Oak Ridge	4
No access from Highway 234 side or not enough entrances	3
Water tasted strange	3
Restrooms need updating	3
Insufficient parking	3
Construction or closed areas	2
Not enough trash cans	2
No heat in cabins	2
Campground site density too high	2
Dryers were not working well	2
No trails at Travel Trailer Village	2
Other comments	15

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Entrance fee too high	4
Paying an entrance fee	4
Loud campers	3
Bikes on hiking trails	3
Uncontrolled pets	2
Speed of cars on road	2
Restrictions on pets	2
Dedicated bike path	2
Bicycles or skateboards in camping area	2
Other comments	14
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Bugs	4
Storm damage	2
Noise from cars or aircraft	2
Other comments	5
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
No snack bar or vending area	3
Other comment	1
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Nothing	38
Visit was too short	8
Weather	6
Highway traffic	3
Other comments	8

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## Planning for the future

Visitor groups were asked "If you were a park manager planning for the future of Prince William Forest Park, what would you propose? Please be specific." Sixty-six percent of visitor groups (222 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

**Table 8: Planning for the future**

N=369 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Hire more rangers	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Publicize programs more	14
Provide more information	8
Signs which identify plants and trees	5
More ranger-led programs	5
More information on history	5
More educational programs	5
Better maps	3
Wildlife information	3
Plant and tree information	3
Stress history of mine and transportation	2
More programs to benefit wider range of people	2
More outdoor exhibits	2
Start Halloween program again	2
Other comments	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
More mountain bike trails/roads	16
Mark trails more clearly	13
Ensure maintenance of current facilities	11
Upgrade cabins	10
More hiking trails	9
More bathrooms at trailheads and parking areas	7
Campsites for larger RVs	7
Showers at campground	7
Maintain trails and fire roads	6
Expand trail system	6
Provide entry to park from Highways 234 and/or 619	5

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (con't)</b>	
Update/modernize RV spaces	4
Improve playground	4
More full hookups	4
Create more rustic campsites	4
Upgrade bathrooms	4
More picnic areas	3
Re-open Pyrite Mine Trail	3
Enlarge Travel Trailer Village	3
More trash cans	3
Provide hot water	2
Cable TV hookups in campground	2
More parking	2
Improve handicapped trail	2
Rate trails for hiking or biking difficulty	2
Improve signs (should correspond with map)	2
Current facilities are sufficient	2
More benches	2
Improve recycling within park	2
Other comments	21
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Have events that attract people (runs, bike races, etc.)	5
Allow rollerblading	4
Continue rollerblade prohibition	3
Work with local organizations on park maintenance projects	3
Continue to prohibit bikes from trails	2
Enforce leash law at all times	2
Lower fees	2
Increase cost of annual pass	2
Lower or enforce speed limit	2
Introduce horse riding	2
Other comments	11
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Don't develop more	13
Maintain natural setting	10
Acquire more land	6
Resist encroachment by suburbia	4
Protect park	4
Provide more fishing opportunities	2
Preserve wildlife and plant life	2
Park has land that is under-utilized	2
Other comments	11

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Add a grocery/convenience store	2
Other comments	2
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Fine as it is	25
Good job	6
Enjoy park	4
Nature is the attraction	2
Other comments	4

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Forty-six percent of visitor groups (155 groups) wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments about Prince William Forest Park are summarized below and in the appendix. Some comments offer specific suggestions on how to improve the park; others describe what visitors enjoyed or did not enjoy about their visit.

### Comment summary

**Table 9: Additional comments**

N=283 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Friendly staff	12
Helpful staff	9
Courteous staff	2
Knowledgeable staff	2
Ranger was terrific	2
People running Travel Trailer Village were good	2
Other comments	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Provide more information	5
Advertise more	2
Had problems with orienteering maps	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Improve road signs	4
Trail maintenance could be better	4
Clean bathrooms	3
Park is clean	3
Well maintained	3
Best RV park this close to Washington, D.C.	2
Re-open Pyrite Mine Trail	2
Clean campground	2
Nice campground	2
More mountain biking trails	2
Good trails	2
Improve showers or hot water situation	2
Other comments	6

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Free wood is nice	5
Allow mountain bikes on unpaved roads	2
Other comments	8
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Keep it natural	7
Not overcrowded	2
National parks are high quality and well-run	2
Protect against commercialism	2
Beautiful hardwood forest	2
Other comments	2
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Comment	1
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Enjoy park	42
Great and/or beautiful park	25
Plan to return	21
Keep up good work	14
We visit often	10
Thank you	7
Good escape from urban living	7
Come to hike	5
Come to bike	5
Thanks	4
Great place for local residents	3
Kids had a great time	3
Quiet	3
One of reasons we still live in area	2
Had fun camping	2
Great asset	2
Conveniently located to Washington, D.C.	2
Other comments	15

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## Prince William Forest Park Additional Analysis

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.

- Aware of NPS administration
- Sources of park information
- Attractions visited
- Hours spent in park
- Days spent in park
- Hours spent in county
- Days spent in county
- Primary reasons for visiting area
- Importance of park qualities
- Visitor activities
- Difficulty locating park
- Sites visited
- Group size
- With guided tour/school group
- Group type
- Age
- State of residence
- *All* group members live in county
- *Some* group members live in county
- Country of residence
- Number of visits
- Visitor service use
- Visitor service importance
- Visitor service quality
- Visitor facility use
- Visitor facility importance
- Visitor facility quality
- Expenditures in county
- Overall quality rating

### **Database**

A database has been developed which contains all the VSP visitor study results from 1988 through the present. The database became operational in April, 1996. In order to use the database it will be necessary to have a database catalog, which lists the information contained in the database. Queries to the database will be accepted by phone, mail, cc:Mail, e:mail or fax, and the same forms of media will be used to return the answer to you. Through the database, you can learn how the results of this VSP visitor study compare with those from studies held at NPS sites across the nation, with those within a specific region or type of NPS site, or with those that meet criteria that are of importance to you as a park manager, researcher or other interested party.

Phone/send requests to:

**Visitor Services Project, CPSU  
College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences  
University of Idaho  
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## QUESTIONNAIRE

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# Prince William Forest Park

## Visitor Study

Fall 1996

### Appendix

Chris Wall

**Visitor Services Project  
Report 91**

June 1997

This volume contains a summary of visitors' comments for Questions 18a, 18b, 19 and 20. The summary is followed by visitors' unedited comments.

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Chris Wall is a VSP Research Associate based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Mark Patterson and the staff of Prince William Forest 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 likes

N=526 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Helpful rangers	4
Knowledgeable rangers	3
Friendly rangers	3
Friendly personnel at Travel Trailer Village	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Enjoyed talking exhibits	2
Other comments	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Trails	28
Clean park	25
Hiking trails	24
Campground	11
Good facilities	7
Biking roads	7
Park well-maintained	7
Scenic drive	6
Well-marked trails	5
Picnic areas	5
Good RV campground	5
Bike trails	5
Trails well-maintained	4
Layout of Travel Trailer Village	3
Clean restrooms	3
Quality of roads	3
Variety of hikes	3
Well-maintained roads	3
Walk-in campsites	2
Easy access to water	2
Nice campsites at Travel Trailer Village	2
Backcountry camping	2
RV hook-ups	2
Other comments	13
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Designated cycling lane	6
Other comments	3

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Natural setting	24
Wildlife	19
Forest	17
Uncrowded	9
Creeks	5
Foliage	3
Few cars	3
Falls	2
Other comments	4
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Peace and quiet	56
Solitude	43
Beauty	35
Convenient	13
Scenery	13
Close to home	11
Close to Washington, D.C.	8
Enjoy nature	7
Spending time with family and friends	6
Safe	5
Rest and relaxation	4
Privacy	4
Being outdoors	4
Location	3
Clean, fresh air	3
Getting away from urban living and noise	3
Nature close to urban area	3
Room to exercise	2
Close to Interstate 95	2
Other comments	12

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### Visitor dislikes

N=226 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Park rangers' attitudes	3
Other comments	2
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Not enough information available	3
Map should be updated and improved	2
Other comments	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Trails poorly marked	10
Pyrite Mine Trail was closed	7
Restrooms	6
Trails need maintenance	6
Cabin conditions	5
Small trailer spaces	5
Signs could be better	5
No hot water	5
Not enough trails for biking	4
Lack of showers at Oak Ridge	4
No access from Highway 234 side or not enough entrances	3
Water tasted strange	3
Restrooms need updating	3
Insufficient parking	3
Construction or closed areas	2
Not enough trash cans	2
No heat in cabins	2
Campground site density too high	2
Dryers were not working well	2
No trails at Travel Trailer Village	2
Other comments	15

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<u>Comment</u>	<u>Number of times mentioned</u>
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Entrance fee too high	4
Paying an entrance fee	4
Loud campers	3
Bikes on hiking trails	3
Uncontrolled pets	2
Speed of cars on road	2
Restrictions on pets	2
Dedicated bike path	2
Bicycles or skateboards in camping area	2
Other comments	14
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Bugs	4
Storm damage	2
Noise from cars or aircraft	2
Other comments	5
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
No snack bar or vending area	3
Other comment	1
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Nothing	38
Visit was too short	8
Weather	6
Highway traffic	3
Other comments	8

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## Planning for the future

N=369 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Hire more rangers	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Publicize programs more	14
Provide more information	8
Signs which identify plants and trees	5
More ranger-led programs	5
More information on history	5
More educational programs	5
Better maps	3
Wildlife information	3
Plant and tree information	3
Stress history of mine and transportation	2
More programs to benefit wider range of people	2
More outdoor exhibits	2
Start Halloween program again	2
Other comments	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
More mountain bike trails/roads	16
Mark trails more clearly	13
Ensure maintenance of current facilities	11
Upgrade cabins	10
More hiking trails	9
More bathrooms at trailheads and parking areas	7
Campsites for larger RVs	7
Showers at campground	7
Maintain trails and fire roads	6
Expand trail system	6
Provide entry to park from Highways 234 and/or 619	5
Update/modernize RV spaces	4
Improve playground	4
More full hookups	4
Create more rustic campsites	4
Upgrade bathrooms	4
More picnic areas	3
Re-open Pyrite Mine Trail	3
Enlarge Travel Trailer Village	3
More trash cans	3

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (con't)</b>	
Provide hot water	2
Cable TV hookups in campground	2
More parking	2
Improve handicapped trail	2
Rate trails for hiking or biking difficulty	2
Improve signs (should correspond with map)	2
Current facilities are sufficient	2
More benches	2
Improve recycling within park	2
Other comments	21
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Have events that attract people (runs, bike races, etc.)	5
Allow rollerblading	4
Continue rollerblade prohibition	3
Work with local organizations on park maintenance projects	3
Continue to prohibit bikes from trails	2
Enforce leash law at all times	2
Lower fees	2
Increase cost of annual pass	2
Lower or enforce speed limit	2
Introduce horse riding	2
Other comments	11
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Don't develop more	13
Maintain natural setting	10
Acquire more land	6
Resist encroachment by suburbia	4
Protect park	4
Provide more fishing opportunities	2
Preserve wildlife and plant life	2
Park has land that is under-utilized	2
Other comments	11
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Add a grocery/convenience store	2
Other comments	2

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Fine as it is	25
Good job	6
Enjoy park	4
Nature is the attraction	2
Other comments	4

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## Summary of additional visitor comments

N=283 comments;  
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>PERSONNEL</b>	
Friendly staff	12
Helpful staff	9
Courteous staff	2
Knowledgeable staff	2
Ranger was terrific	2
People running Travel Trailer Village were good	2
Other comments	3
<b>INTERPRETIVE SERVICES</b>	
Provide more information	5
Advertise more	2
Had problems with orienteering maps	2
<b>FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE</b>	
Improve road signs	4
Trail maintenance could be better	4
Clean bathrooms	3
Park is clean	3
Well maintained	3
Best RV park this close to Washington, D.C.	2
Re-open Pyrite Mine Trail	2
Clean campground	2
Nice campground	2
More mountain biking trails	2
Good trails	2
Improve showers or hot water situation	2
Other comments	6
<b>POLICIES</b>	
Free wood is nice	5
Allow mountain bikes on unpaved roads	2
Other comments	8

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Comment	Number of times mentioned
<b>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b>	
Keep it natural	7
Not overcrowded	2
National parks are high quality and well-run	2
Protect against commercialism	2
Beautiful hardwood forest	2
Other comments	2
<b>CONCESSIONS</b>	
Comment	1
<b>GENERAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
Enjoy park	42
Great and/or beautiful park	25
Plan to return	21
Keep up good work	14
We visit often	10
Thank you	7
Good escape from urban living	7
Come to hike	5
Come to bike	5
Thanks	4
Great place for local residents	3
Kids had a great time	3
Quiet	3
One of reasons we still live in area	2
Had fun camping	2
Great asset	2
Conveniently located to Washington, D.C.	2
Other comments	15

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