



Rock Creek Park Visitor Study Summer 1999

Report 112
Visitor Services Project
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



Rock Creek Park

Visitor Study

Summer 1999

Margaret Littlejohn

**Visitor Services Project
Report 112**

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Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Mike Meehan, Alyson Vander Stoep, Leigh Blackburn, Sara Kohan and the staff of Rock Creek 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.

**Visitor Services Project
Rock Creek Park
Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Rock Creek Park during July 8-14, 1999. A total of 888 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 564 questionnaires for a 63.5% response rate.
- This report profiles Rock Creek Park visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Forty percent of the visitors were alone; 25% were with friends and 25% were with family. Forty-three percent of visitor groups were groups of one; 33% were in groups of two. Over one-half of visitors (56%) were aged 26-50; 13% were aged 15 years or younger.
- Most visitors (93%) said English is their primary language. Most visitors (94%) said their ethnicity was "not Hispanic or Latino." When asked about their race, visitors responded as follows: White (74%), Black or African American (24%), Asian (3%), Hispanic or Latino (2%), American Indian/Alaska Native (1%) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (<1%).
- United States visitors were from Washington, D.C. (64%), Maryland (18%), Virginia (7%), 26 other states and Puerto Rico. There were not enough international visitors to provide reliable information.
- Seventy-five percent of visitors were making a repeat visit to Rock Creek Park. Forty-two percent visit between one and six times per week. Over one-half of the visitor groups (59%) spent one or two hours. Over one-half of the visitors have visited in each season: summer (100%), spring (80%), fall (77%) and winter (60%).
- On this visit, the most common activity was jogging, walking, or hiking (44%). Most visitors (58%) used a private vehicle to arrive at the park, while 32% walked.
- Previous visits (51%) and word of mouth/friends and relatives (33%) were the most used sources of information by visitor groups. Twenty percent had not received information prior to their visit.
- Exercise (61%), escaping the city environment (47%), time with family and/or friends (37%) and solitude (30%) were the most common reasons for visiting Rock Creek Park. The most commonly visited sites in the park were the Carter Barron Amphitheater (21%), nature center/planetarium (16%) and Pierce Mill (13%).
- In 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 information services that were most used by 151 respondents were assistance from park staff (49%) and park brochure/map (38%). According to visitors, the most important services were the nature center information desk (87% of 39 respondents), assistance from park staff (85% of 72 respondents) and park brochure/map (85% of 58 respondents). The highest quality services were nature center information desk (92% of 37 respondents) and assistance from park staff (90% of 70 respondents).
- The facilities that were most used by 486 respondents were trails (60%), roads (49%), restrooms (44%) and parking (42%). According to visitors, the most important facilities were garbage collection/recycling (93% of 76 respondents), Carter Barron Amphitheater (92% of 90 respondents) and trails (92% of 275 respondents). The highest quality facilities were the Carter Barron Amphitheater (88% of 89 respondents), parking (83% of 189 respondents) and roads (79% of 224 respondents).
- Eighty-seven percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at Rock Creek Park as "very good" or "good." Less than one percent of groups rated services as "very poor."
- The features/qualities which received the highest importance ratings from visitors were scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, clean air and clean water. Visitors made many other comments.

<p style="text-align: center;">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.</p>

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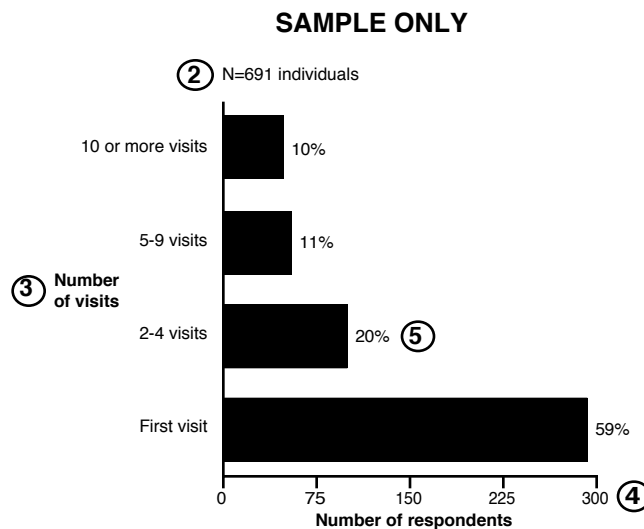
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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of visitors at Rock Creek Park. This visitor study was conducted July 8-14, 1999 by the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Services Project (VSP), part of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho.

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

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



① **Figure 4: Number of visits**

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

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 were distributed to, a sample of visitors who arrived at Rock Creek Park during the period from July 8-14, 1999. Visitors were sampled as they entered the park at the following locations in the park (see Table 1).

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution

Q. distribution location	# Q. distributed	%
Beach Drive	174	20
Tennis courts/ Carter-Barron Amphitheater	168	19
Golf course	88	10
Pierce Mill	75	8
Meridian Hill Park	72	8
Nature Center	69	8
Dumbarton Oaks	59	7
Old Stone House	60	7
Fort Reno	40	5
Battery Kemble/ Glover Archibold Parks	38	4
P Street Beach	30	3
Community gardens	15	2
Totals	888	101%

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.

**Questionnaire
design and
administration
(continued)**

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

Data analysis

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 536 visitor groups, Figure 5 presents data for 1,076 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 564 questionnaires were returned by Rock Creek Park visitors, Figure 1 shows data for only 536 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.

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.

Limitations

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

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

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of July 8-14, 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.

Special conditions

Temperature heat records (heat index of 115°) were occurring on the days immediately prior to the survey, but cooled down to the upper 90's during the survey period. The heat may have limited what visitors did and how long they stayed in the park.

RESULTS

At Rock Creek Park, 1,036 visitor groups were contacted, and 888 of these groups (86%) accepted questionnaires. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 564 visitor groups, resulting in a 63.5% response rate for this study.

Table 2 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 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	850	41.0	538	42.6
Group size	884	2.8	536	2.9

Figure 1 shows visitor group sizes, which ranged from one person to 100 people. Forty-three percent of visitor groups consisted of one person, while another 33% were in groups of two. Forty percent of visitor groups were people who were alone, 25% were family groups and 25% were groups of friends (see Figure 2). "Other" groups included co-workers, gardeners, summer camp and golfers. Two percent of the visitor groups at Rock Creek Park were guided tour or school groups (see Figure 3). The number of people in guided groups had too few respondents to provide reliable information (see Figure 4).

As is shown in Figure 5, the most common ages of visitors were ages 26-50 (56%). Another 13% of visitors were in the 15 or younger age group. Almost one-half of the visitors (49%) had visited the park 10 or more times, while 24% of visitors were visiting for the first time (see Figure 6).

Demographics

Most visitors (93%) said English is their primary language (see Figure 7). Seven percent of visitors regularly speak other languages: Spanish (38%), English (35%), German (24%), as shown in Figure 8. Over one-third (38%) listed "other" languages they speak including Italian, Portuguese, Polish and 8 other languages, although this data must be viewed with caution, due to the small number of respondents (see Table 3).

Visitors were asked to identify their ethnic and racial backgrounds. Most visitors (94%) said they were not of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (see Figure 9). Six percent were Hispanic or Latino. For race, 74% of visitors were white, 24% Black or African American and 3% Asian, as shown in Figure 10.

There were not enough international visitors to Rock Creek Park to provide reliable information (see Table 4). The largest proportions of United States visitors were from Washington, D.C. (64%), Maryland (18%), and Virginia (7%). Smaller proportions of U.S. visitors came from another twenty-six states and Puerto Rico (see Map 1 and Table 5).

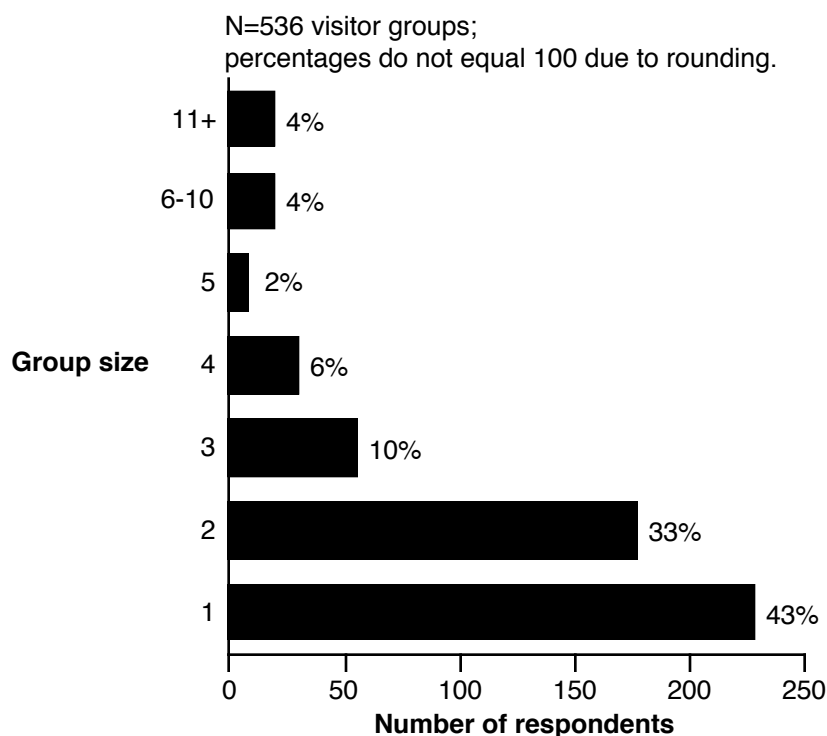
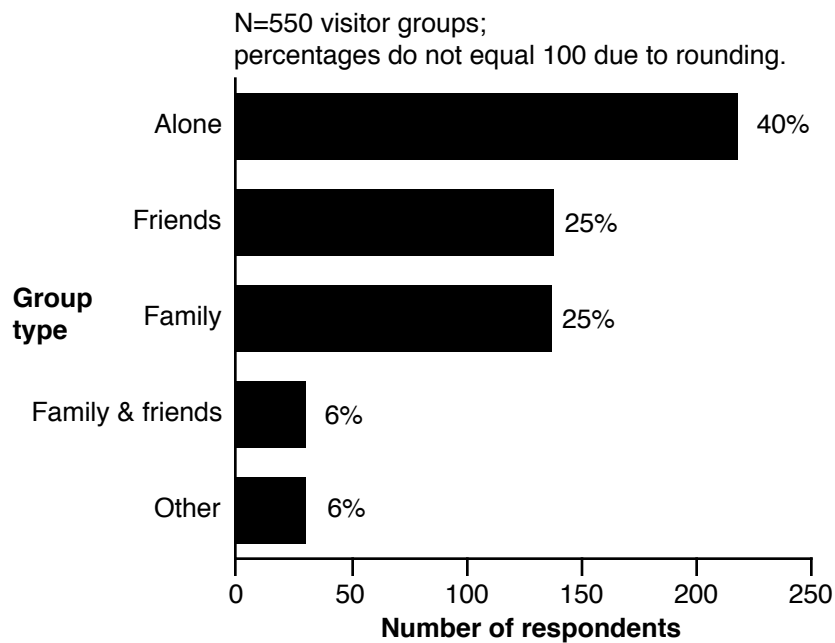
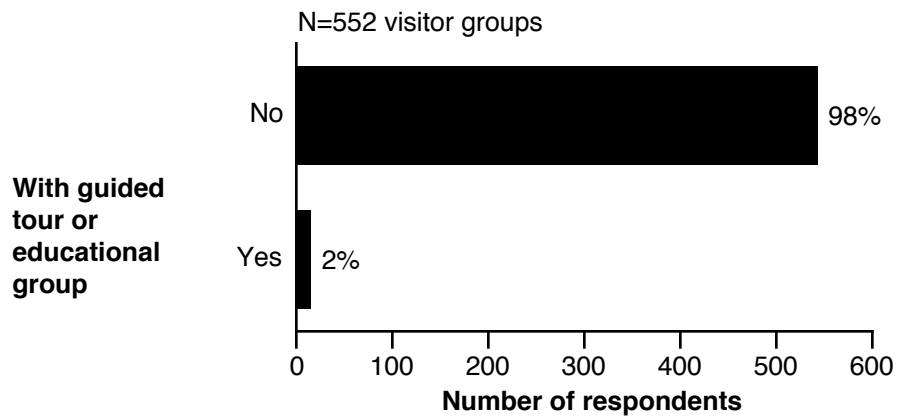


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

**Figure 2: Visitor group types****Figure 3: With guided tour or educational group?**

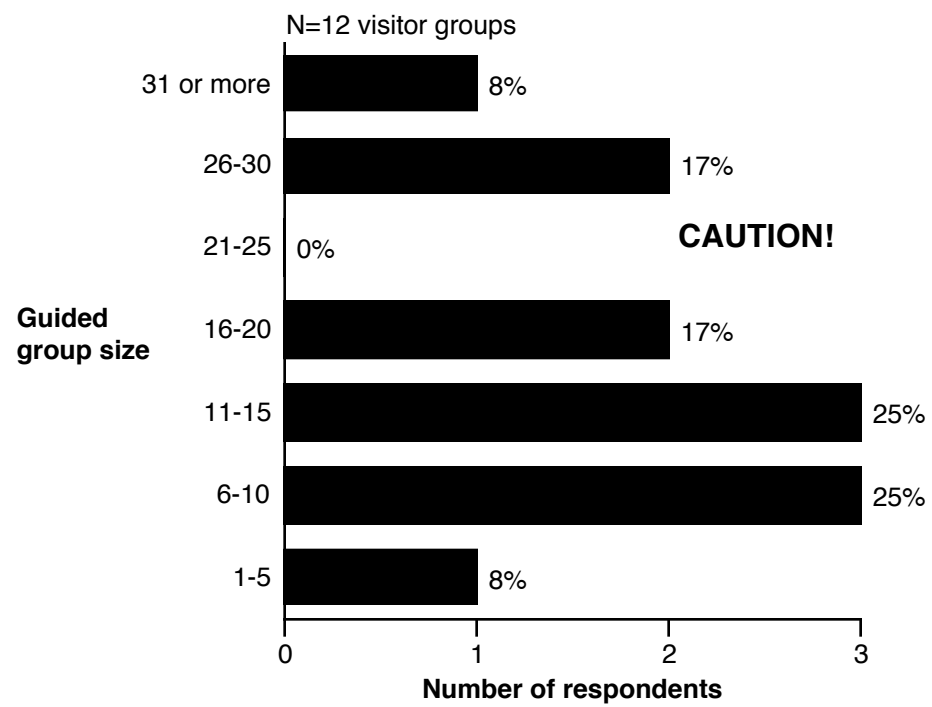
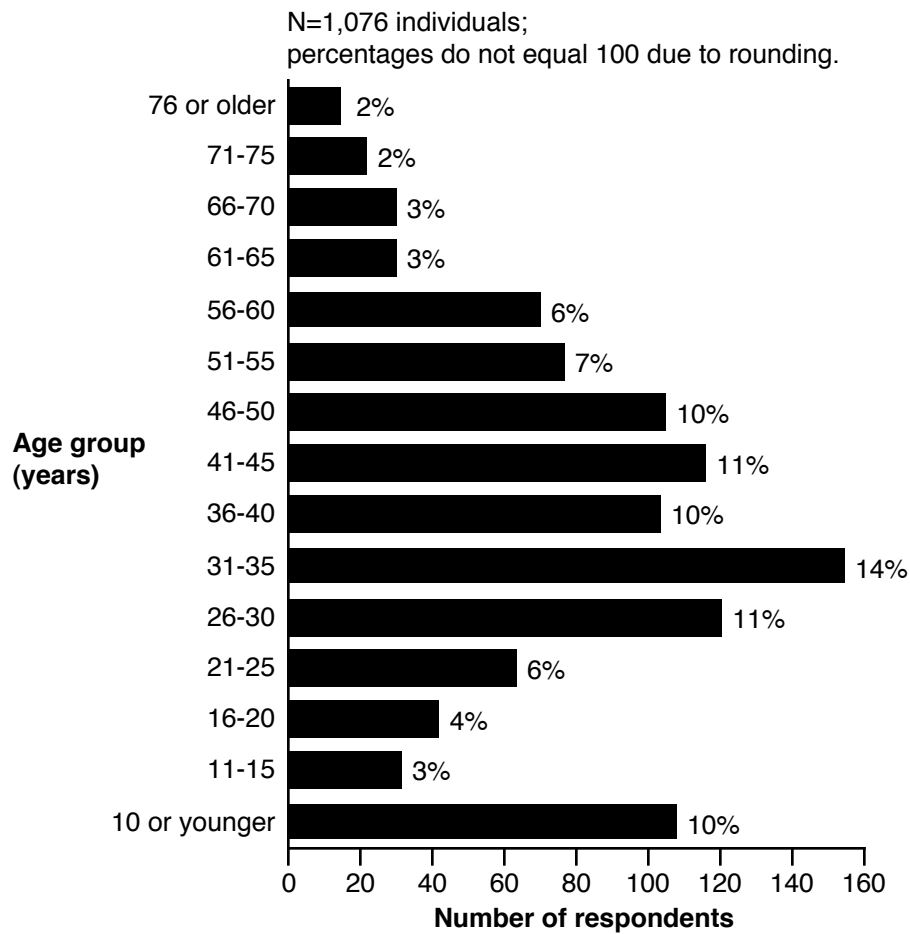
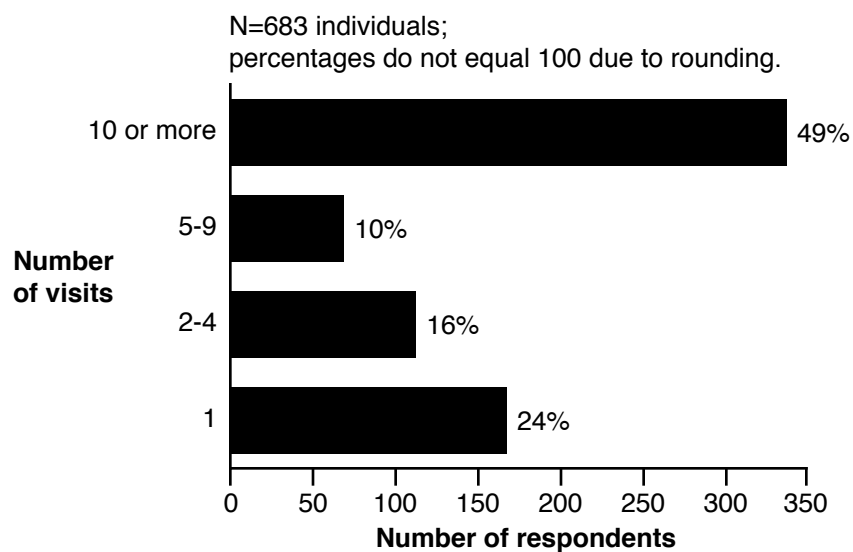


Figure 4: Size of guided tour or educational groups

**Figure 5: Visitor ages****Figure 6: Number of visits to Rock Creek Park**

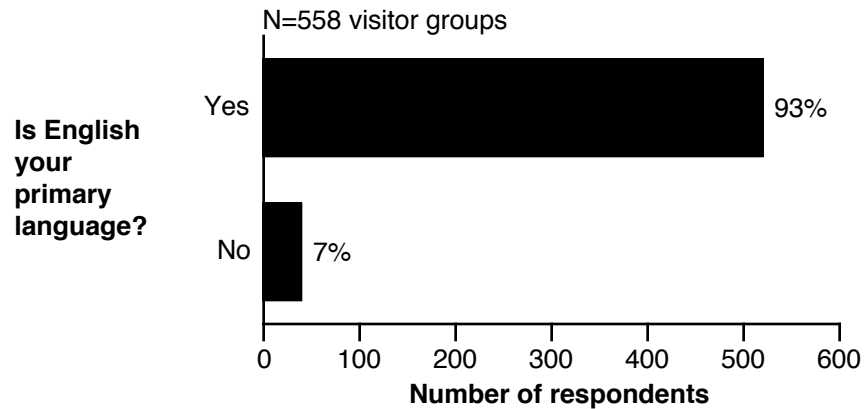


Figure 7: English as primary language

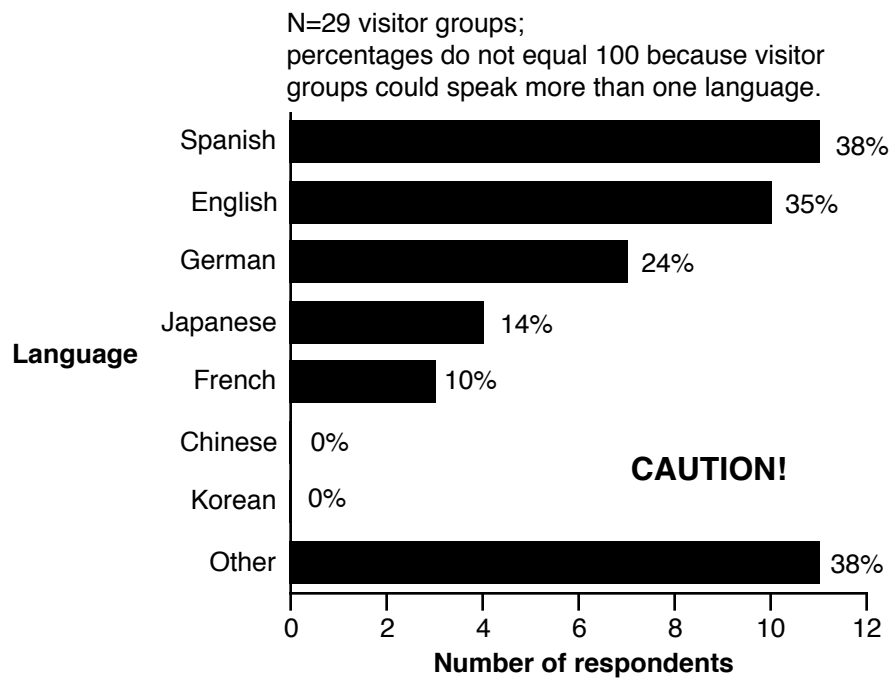


Figure 8: Languages spoken

Table 3: "Other" languages spoken

N=15 languages

Language	Number of groups
Italian	3
Polish	2
Portuguese	2
Arabic	1
African	1
Amharic	1
Bulgarian	1
Czech	1
Dutch	1

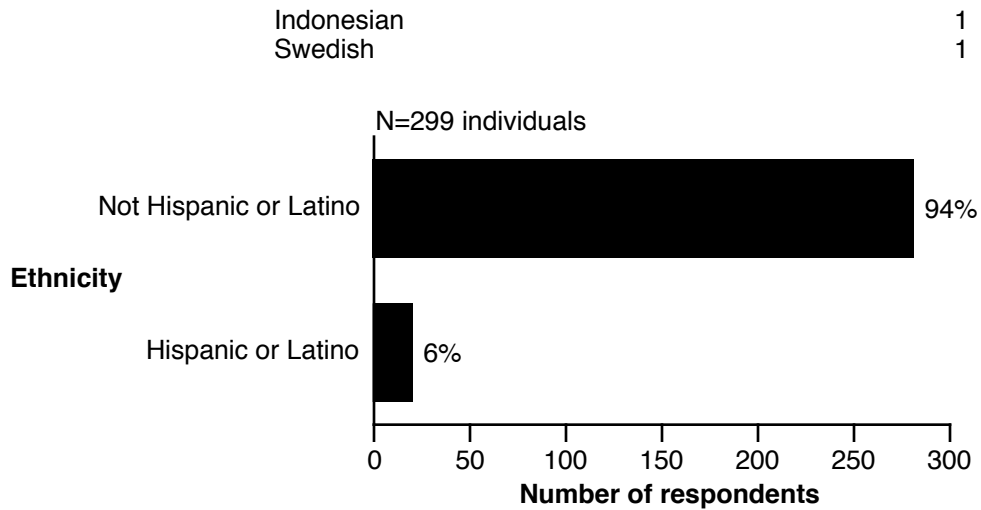
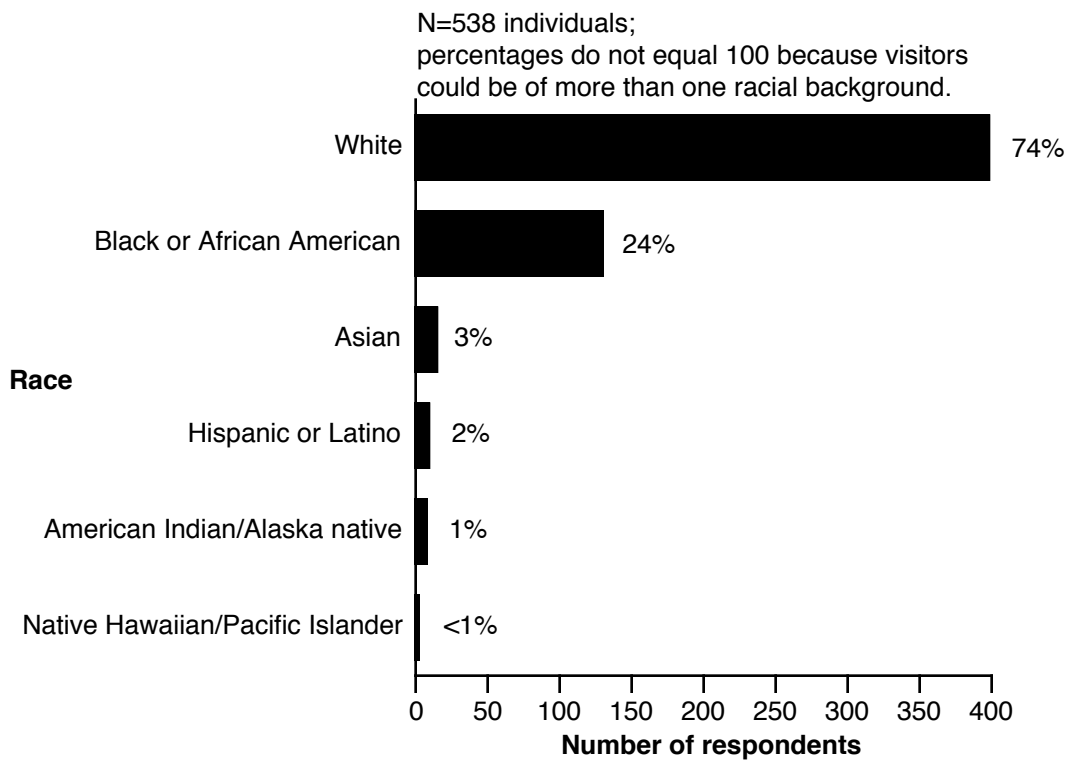
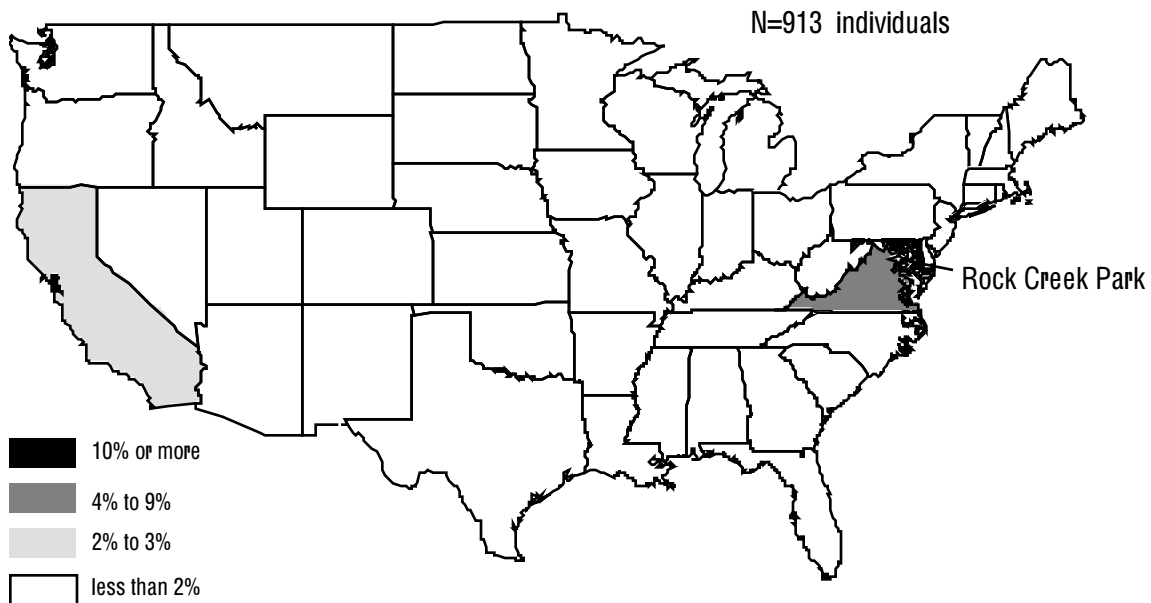
**Figure 9: Respondent's ethnicity****Figure 10: Respondent's race**

Table 4: International visitors by country of residence

N=27 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

CAUTION!

State	Number of individuals	Percent of Int'l visitors	Percent of total visitors
Germany	3	11	<1
Italy	3	11	<1
Switzerland	3	11	<1
Bulgaria	2	7	<1
El Salvador	2	7	<1
France	2	7	<1
Mozambique	2	7	<1
Africa	1	4	<1
Belgium	1	4	<1
Brazil	1	4	<1
Costa Rica	1	4	<1
Finland	1	4	<1
Haiti	1	4	<1
India	1	4	<1
Indonesia	1	4	<1
Jamaica	1	4	<1
Japan	1	4	<1



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

Table 5: United States visitors by state of residence

N=913 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	Percent of U.S. visitors	Percent of total visitors
Washington, D.C.	585	64	62
Maryland	167	18	18
Virginia	67	7	7
California	15	2	2
Florida	9	1	1
Pennsylvania	7	1	1
Illinois	5	1	1
Mississippi	5	1	1
Alabama	4	<1	<1
Arizona	4	<1	<1
Connecticut	4	<1	<1
Louisiana	4	<1	<1
Minnesota	4	<1	<1
Georgia	3	<1	<1
Iowa	3	<1	<1
Michigan	3	<1	<1
New York	3	<1	<1
Ohio	3	<1	<1
11 other states and Puerto Rico	18	2	2

**Visit frequency/
seasons visited**

Visitors were asked if this was a first time visit or return visit to Rock Creek Park. Ninety-one percent of respondents said it was a return visit (see Figure 11). Returning visitors were asked how often they had visited during the past year. Forty-two percent visited between one and six times per week (see Figure 12). Twenty percent visited two to three times a month and 19% visit less than once a month.

Visitors were also asked what seasons they (or members of their group) have visited Rock Creek Park. All visitors (100%) had visited in summer when the questionnaires were distributed, 80% in spring, 77% in fall and 60% in winter (see Figure 13).

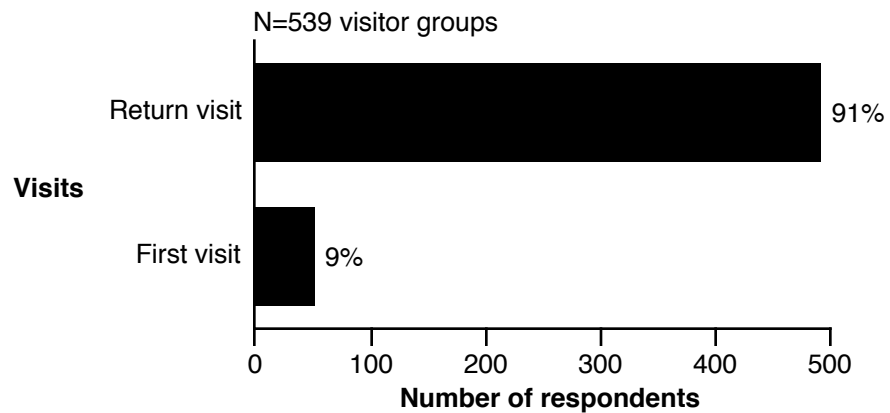
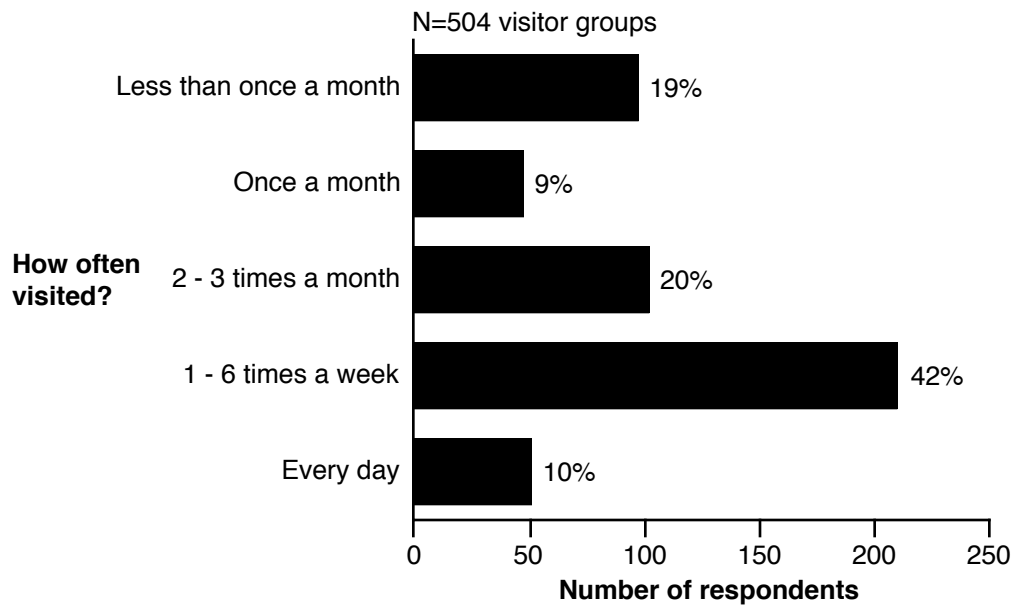
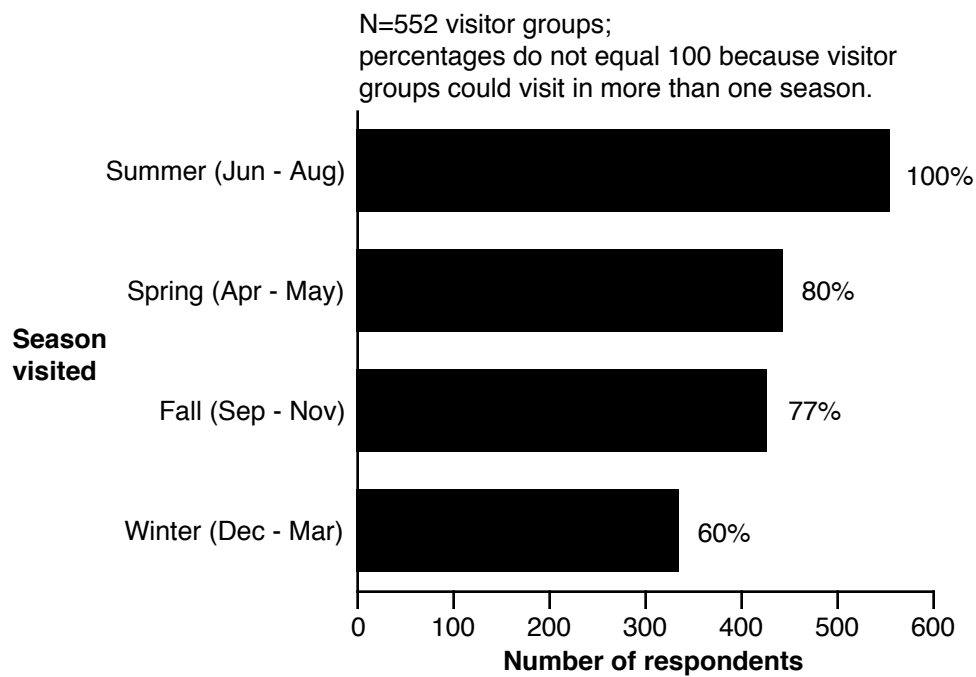


Figure 11: First or return visit?

**Figure 12: Visit frequency****Figure 13: Seasons visited**

Length of stay

Visitor groups were asked how much time they spent at Rock Creek Park on this trip. Fifty-nine percent stayed one to two hours (see Figure 14). Another 27% stayed three to four hours and 12% stayed 5 hours or more.

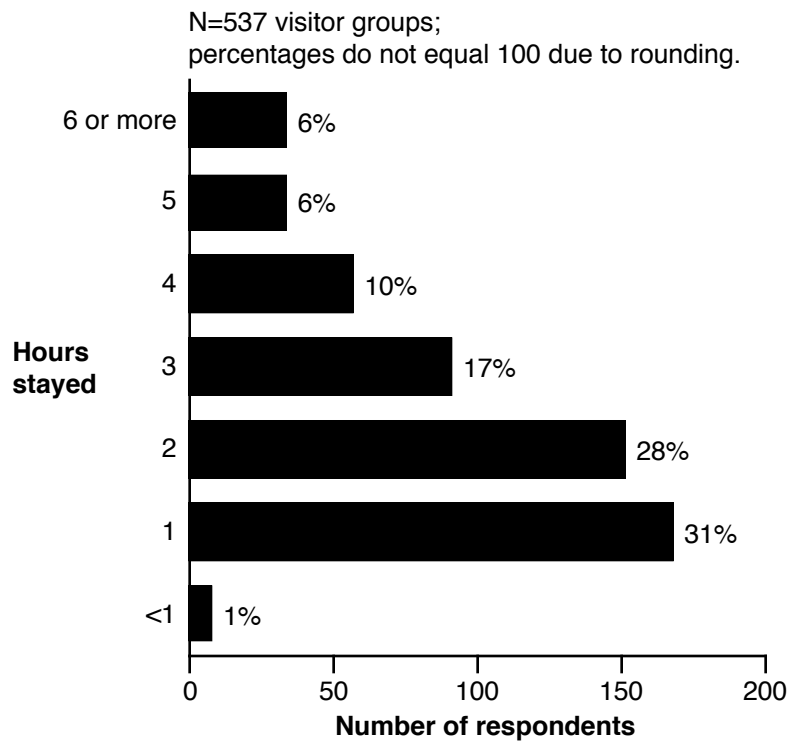


Figure 14: Hours spent at Rock Creek Park

Figure 15 shows the proportions of visitor groups which participated in a variety of activities at Rock Creek Park. The most common activities were jogging, walking or hiking (44%), bicycling (18%), relaxing/sunbathing (17%) and walking the dog (17%). The least common activity was horseback riding (1%). Visitor groups participated in a number of "other" activities including visiting the nature center, gardening, visiting the Old Stone House, visiting the planetarium, attending a children's program, playing soccer, visiting with friend, letting children play, and attending theater or concert.

Activities

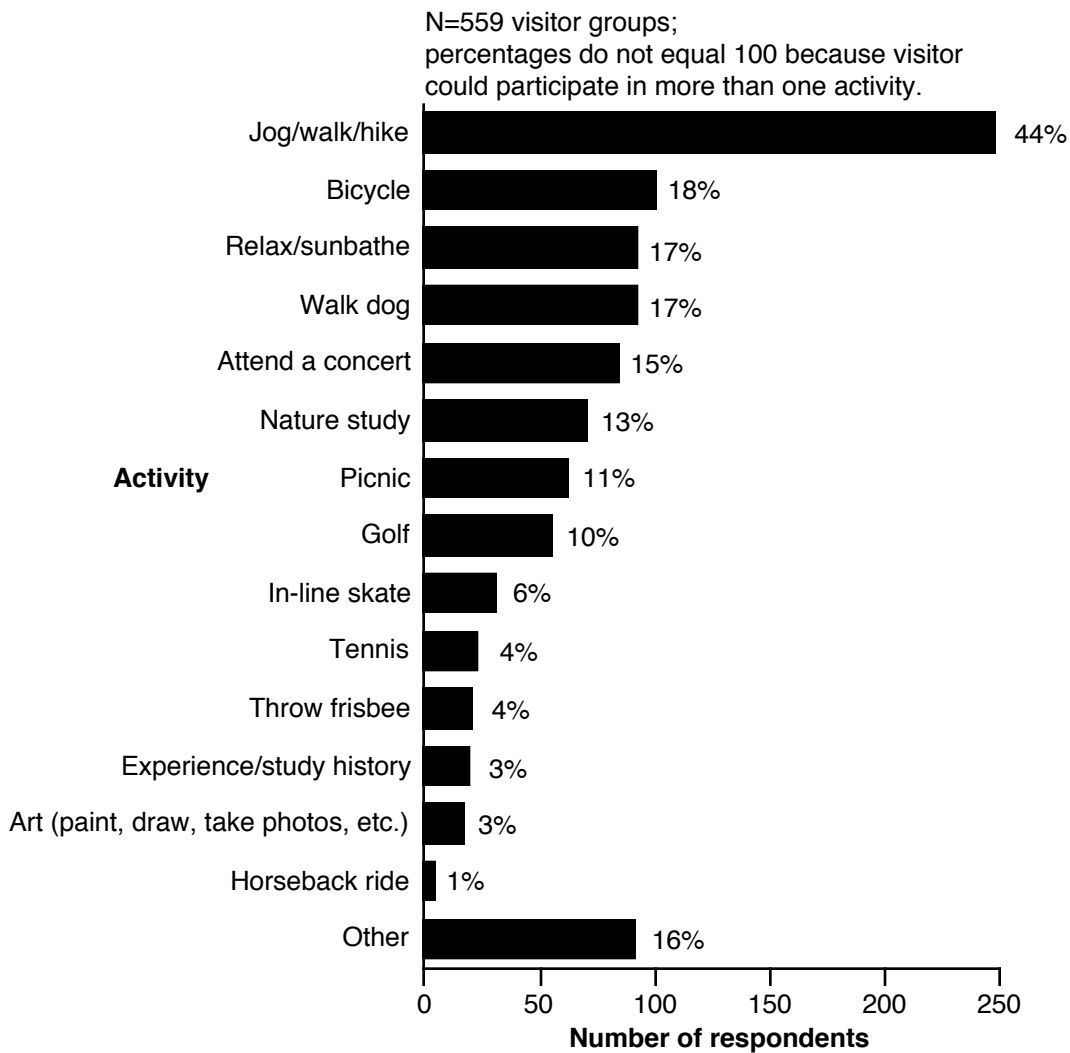


Figure 15: Visitor activities

Sources of information

Visitor groups were asked to list their sources for information about Rock Creek Park prior to their visit. Their most common sources were previous visits (51%) and word of mouth/friend/relative (33%), as shown in Figure 16. Twenty percent of visitor groups received no information prior to their visit. "Other" sources of information used by visitor groups included living nearby, friends, a map of the city, and hearing it mentioned on the radio.

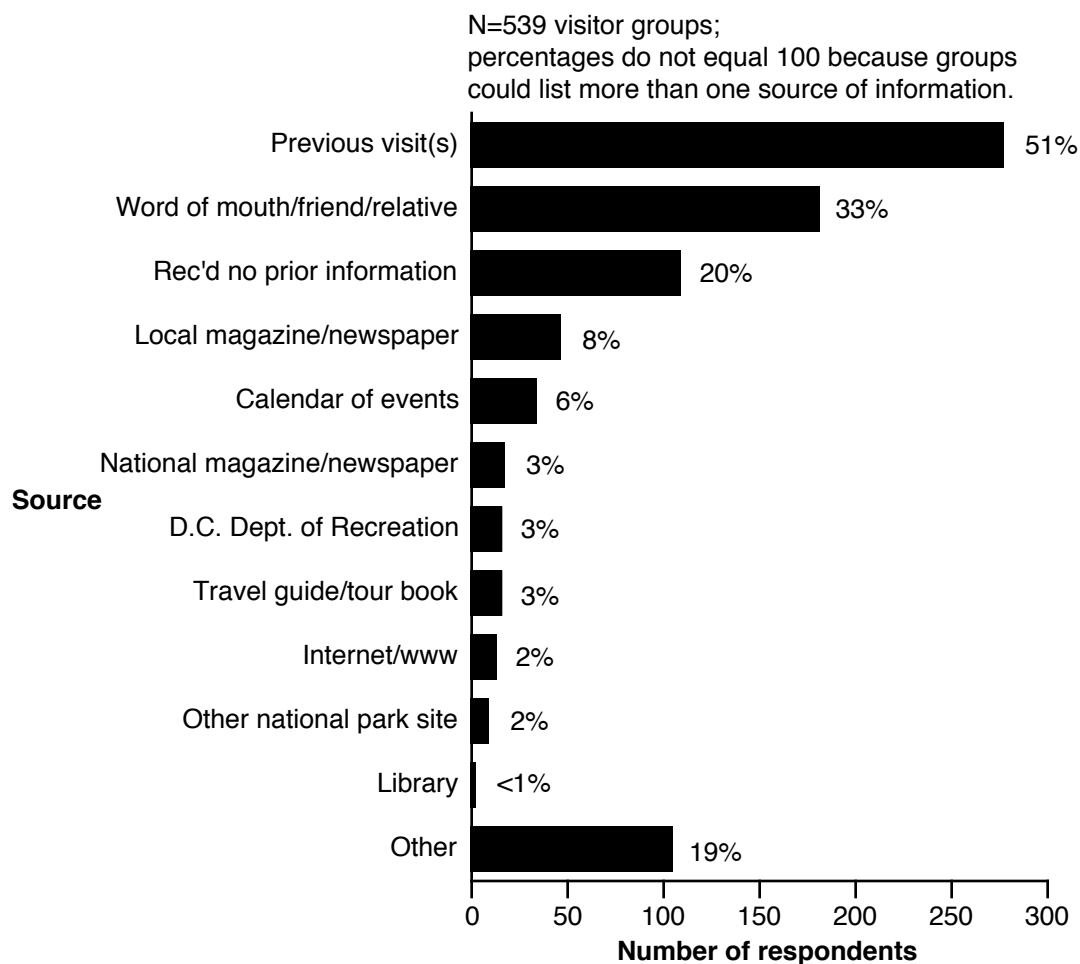


Figure 16: Sources of information used by visitors

Visitor groups were asked their reasons for visiting Rock Creek Park on this visit. As shown in Figure 17, the most commonly listed reasons were exercise (61%), escaping the city environment (47%), and time with family/friends (37%). The reason least often listed was commuting to work (6%). "Other" reasons included attending a concert, walking the dog, golfing, gardening, enjoying nature, eating lunch, commuting home, visiting the planetarium and studying.

Reasons for visiting

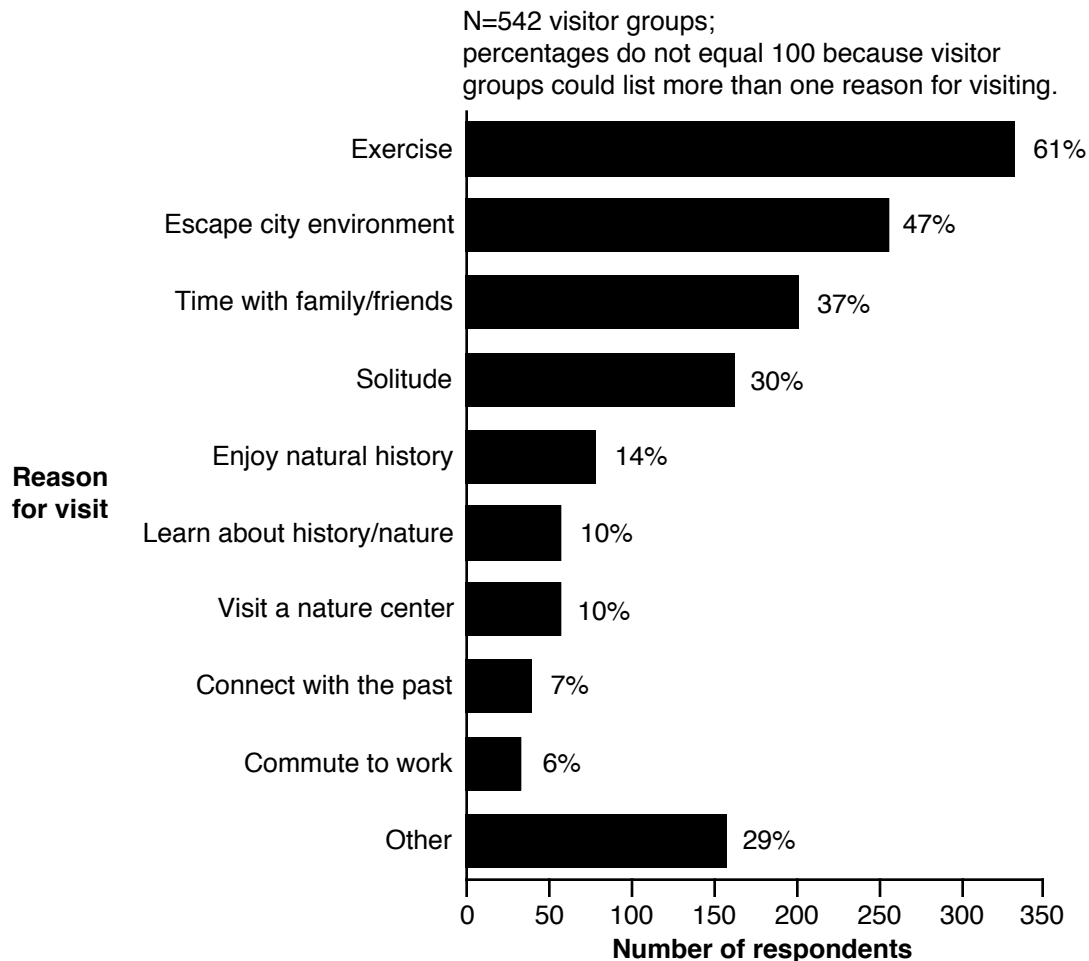


Figure 17: Reasons for visiting

Forms of transport to arrive at park

Visitor groups were asked what forms of transport they used to arrive at Rock Creek Park. As shown in Figure 18, private vehicles (58%) were the most common form of transport used, followed by walking (32%), and bicycling (14%). The least visited form of transport was group bus/school bus (1%). "Other" forms of transport to reach Rock Creek Park included running/jogging, taxi, trolley, and being dropped off by someone.

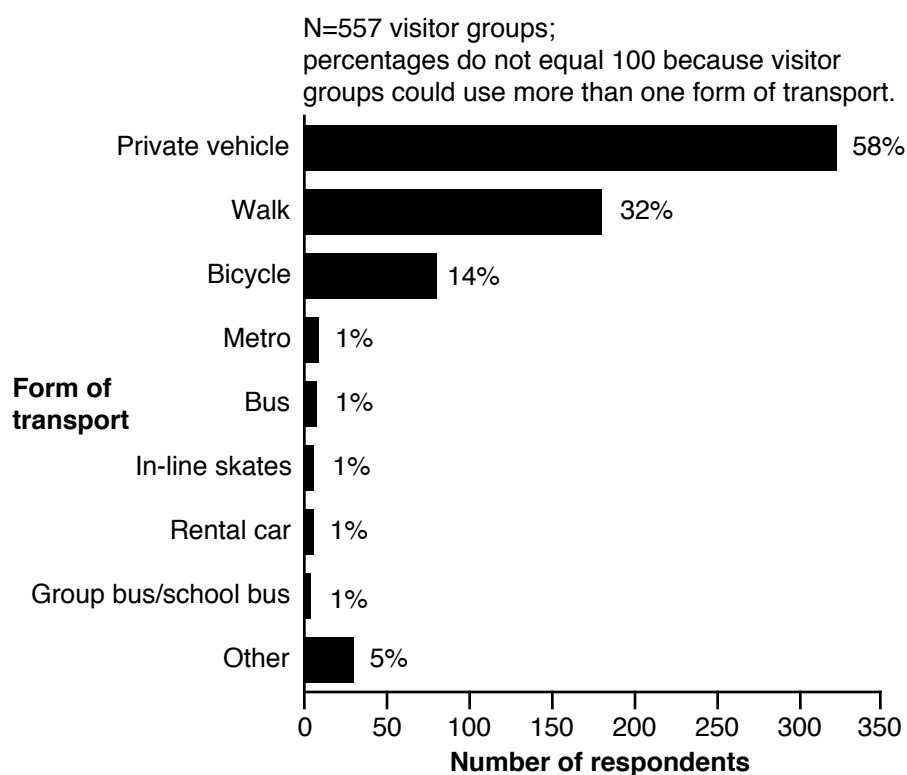


Figure 18: Forms of transport used

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the sites that they had visited during their visit to Rock Creek Park. As shown in Figure 19, the most commonly visited sites were the Carter Barron Amphitheater (21%), the Nature Center/Planetarium (16%), and Pierce Mill (13%). The least visited site was Fort Reno Park (3%). "Other" sites in Rock Creek Park which visitors visited included trails, bike trail, Beach Drive, jogging trail, zoo, roadway and horse trails.

Sites visited

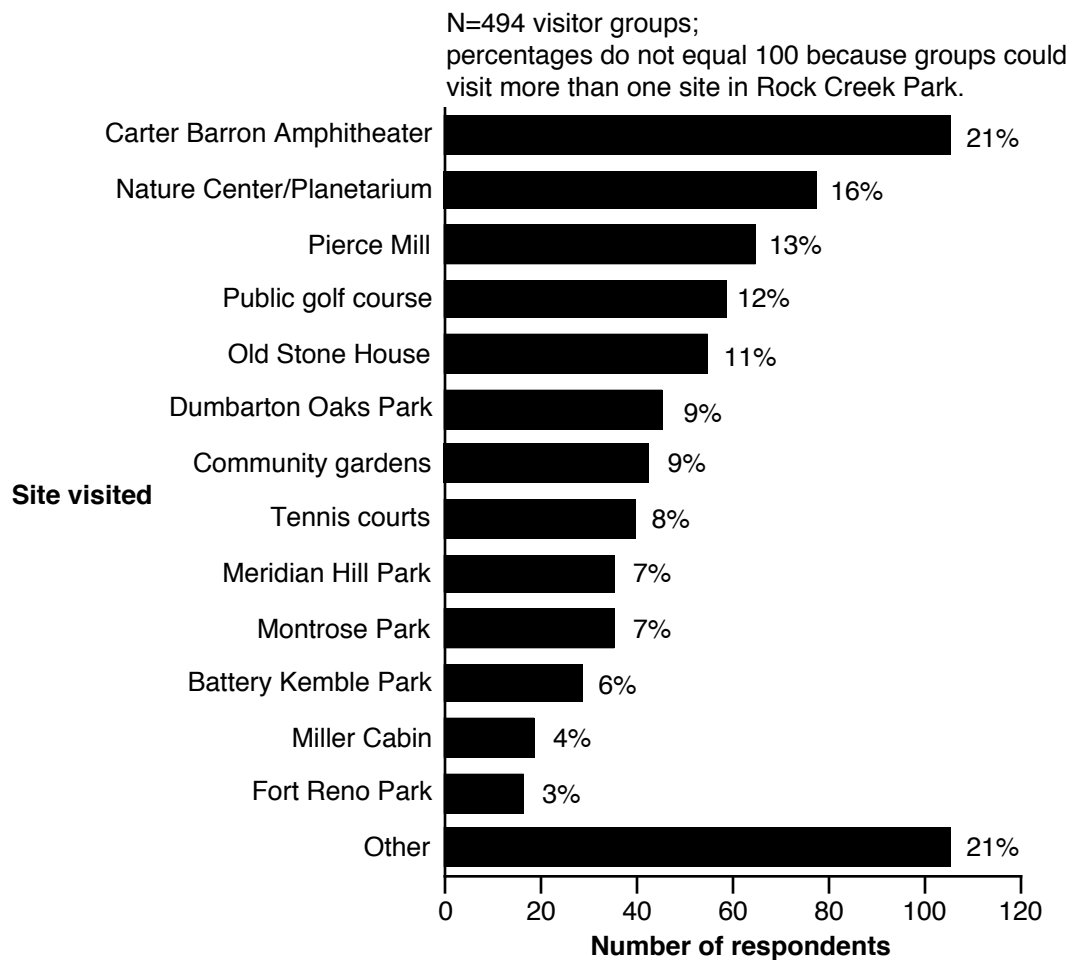


Figure 19: Sites visited

Information and interpretive services: use, importance and quality

Visitor groups were asked to note the park services they used during their visit to Rock Creek Park. As shown in Figure 20, the services that were most commonly used by visitor groups were assistance from park staff (49%), park brochure/map (38%), and bulletin boards (34%). The least used service was the Pierce Mill information desk (5%).

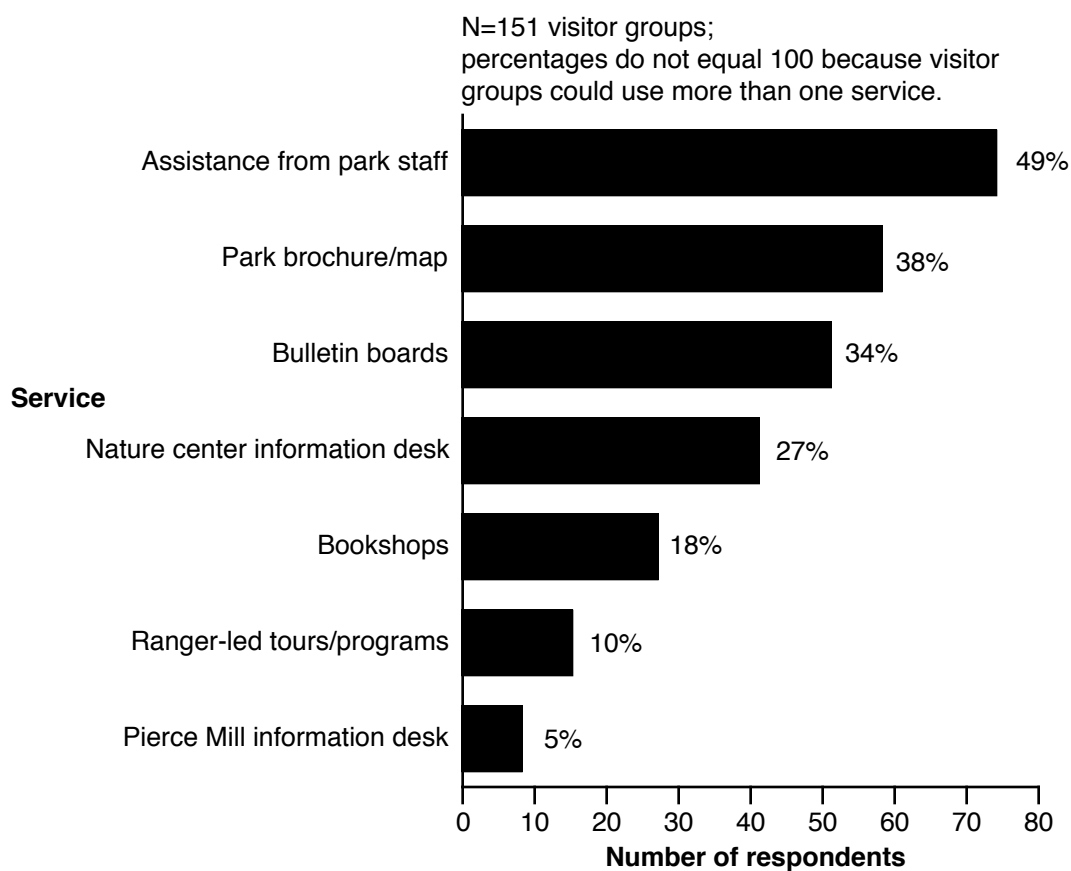


Figure 20: Services used

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 21 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 21. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. Please note that bookshops, ranger-led tours and Pierce Mill information desk were not rated by enough people to provide reliable data.

Figures 22-28 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 the nature center information desk (87%), assistance from park staff (85%), and park brochure/map (85%). The highest proportion of "not important" ratings was for assistance from park staff (3%).

Figures 29-35 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 nature center information desk (92%), assistance from park staff (90%) and park brochure/map (82%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for assistance from park staff and park brochure/map (each 4%).

Figure 36 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services.

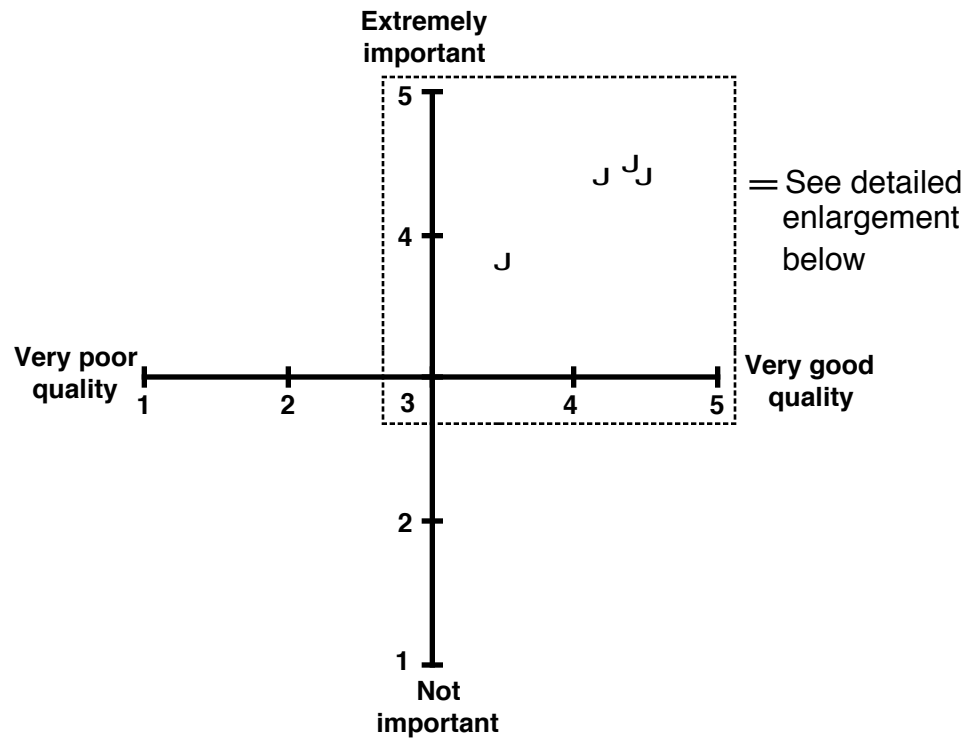


Figure 21: Average ratings of service importance and quality

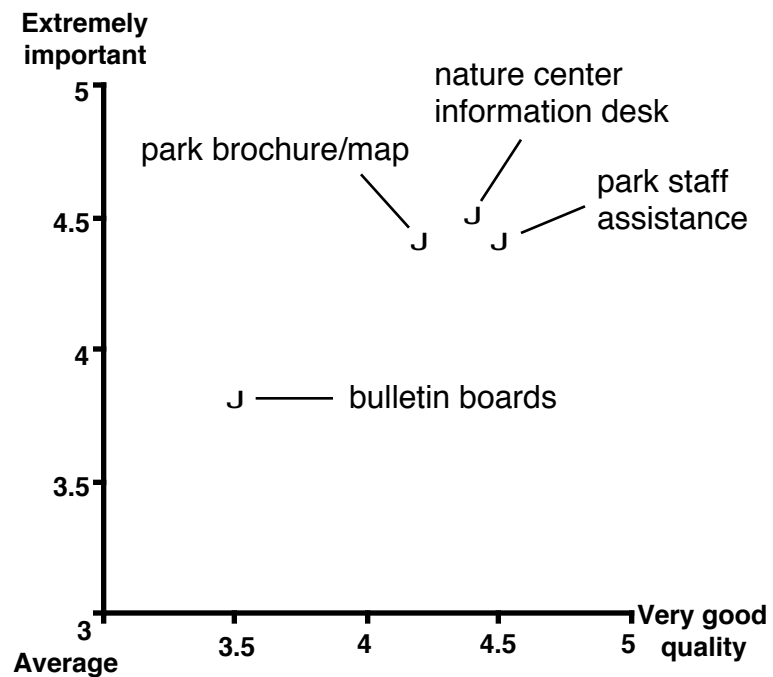


Figure 21: Detail

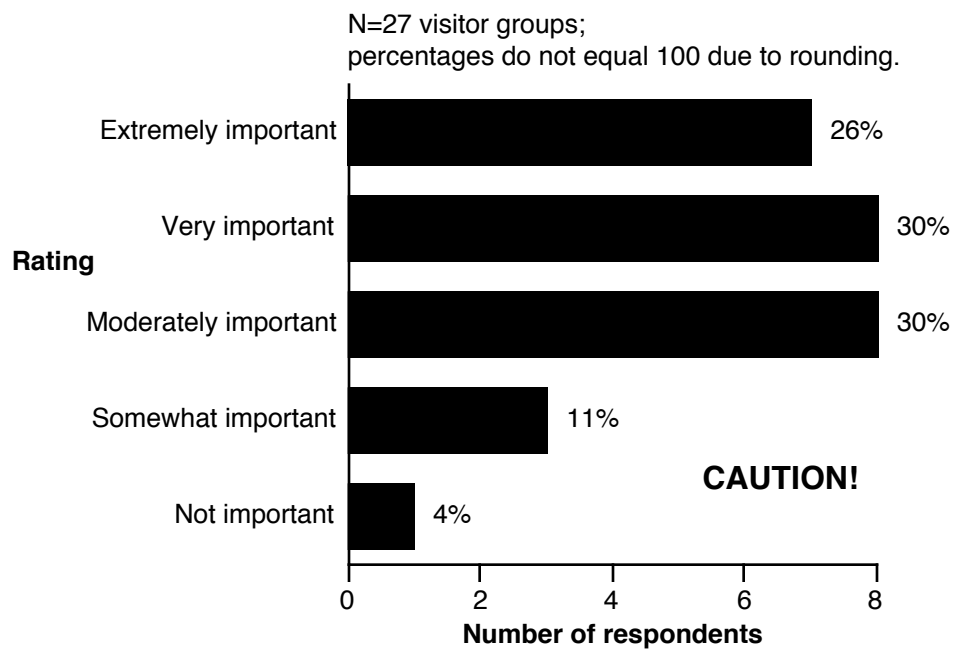


Figure 22: Importance of bookshops

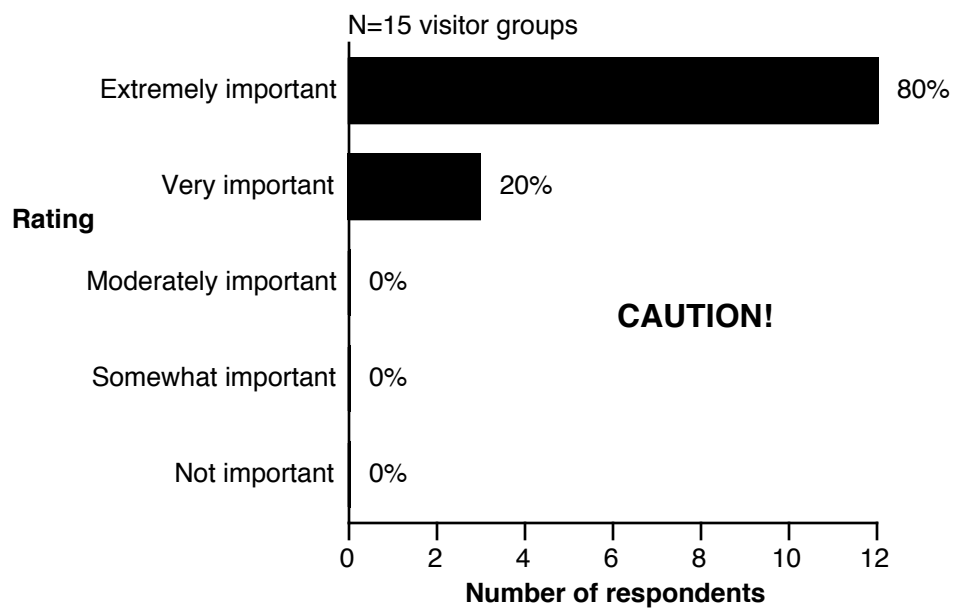


Figure 23: Importance of ranger-led tours or programs

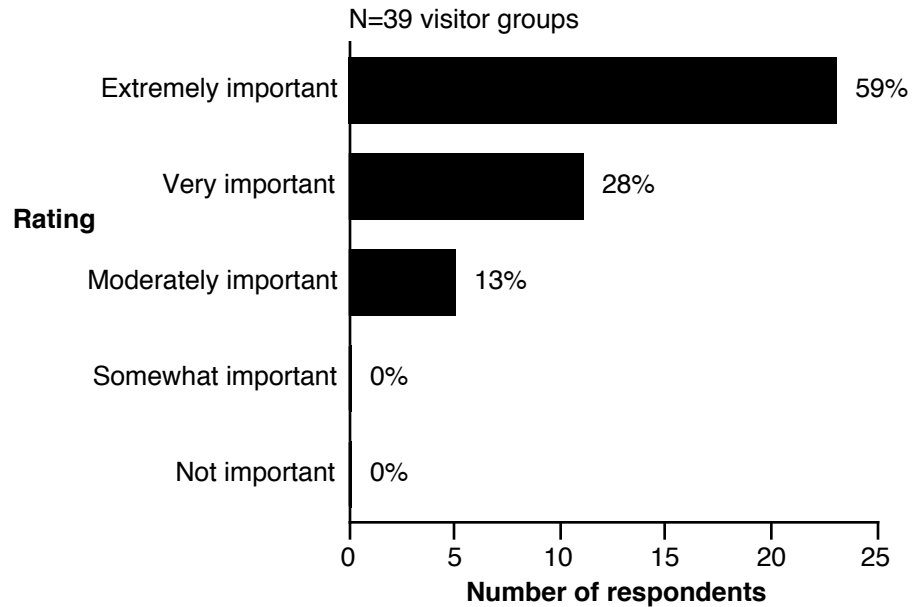


Figure 24: Importance of nature center information desk

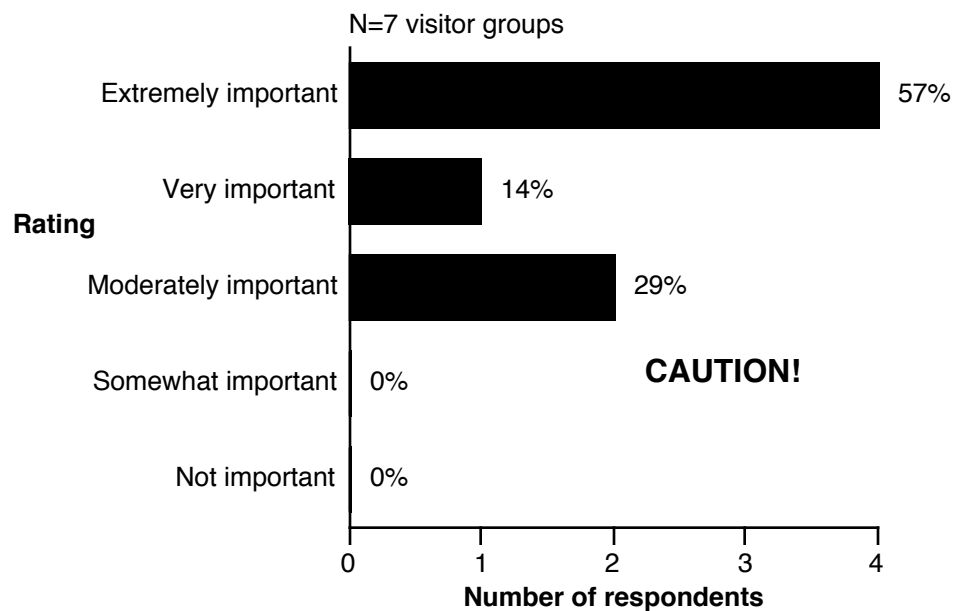


Figure 25: Importance of Pierce Mill information desk

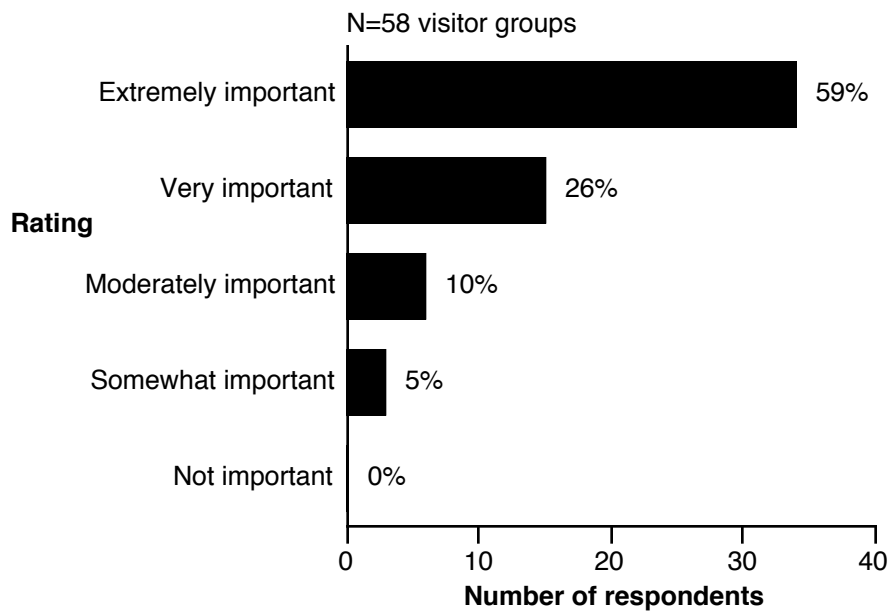


Figure 26: Importance of park brochure/map

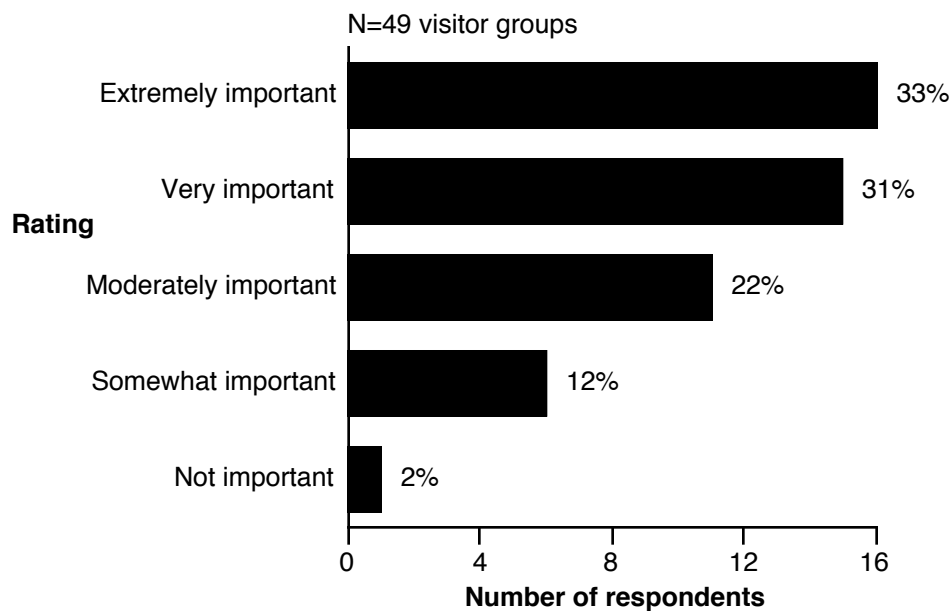


Figure 27: Importance of bulletin boards

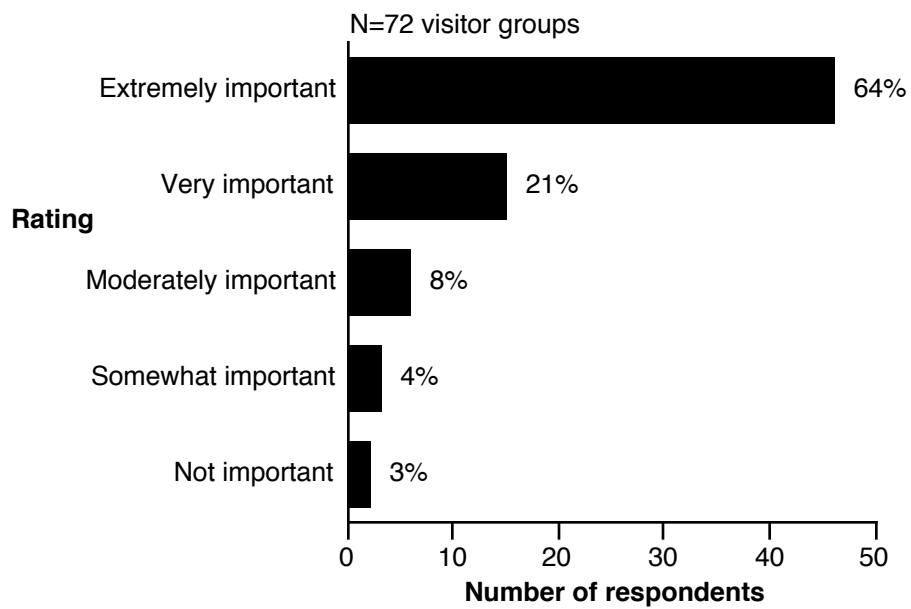


Figure 28: Importance of assistance from park staff

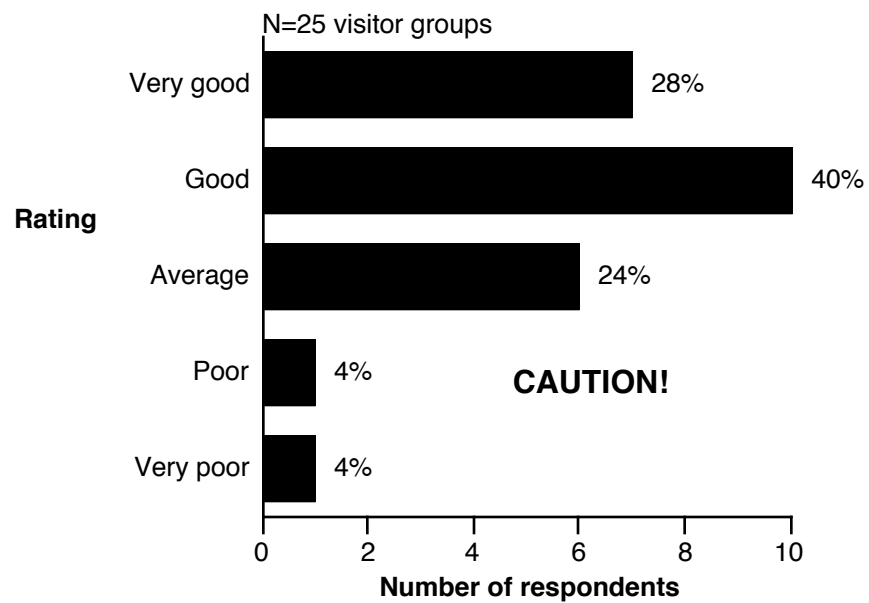


Figure 29: Quality of bookshops

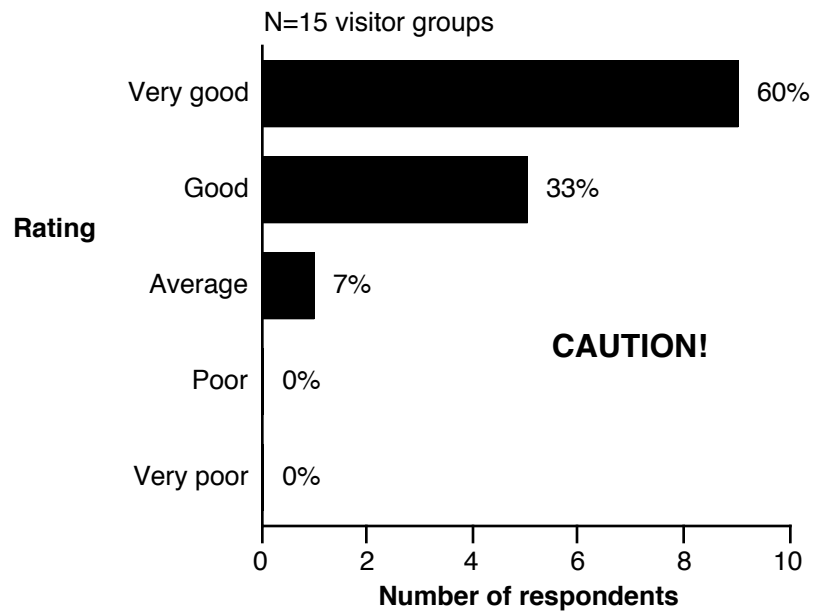


Figure 30: Quality of ranger-led tours or programs

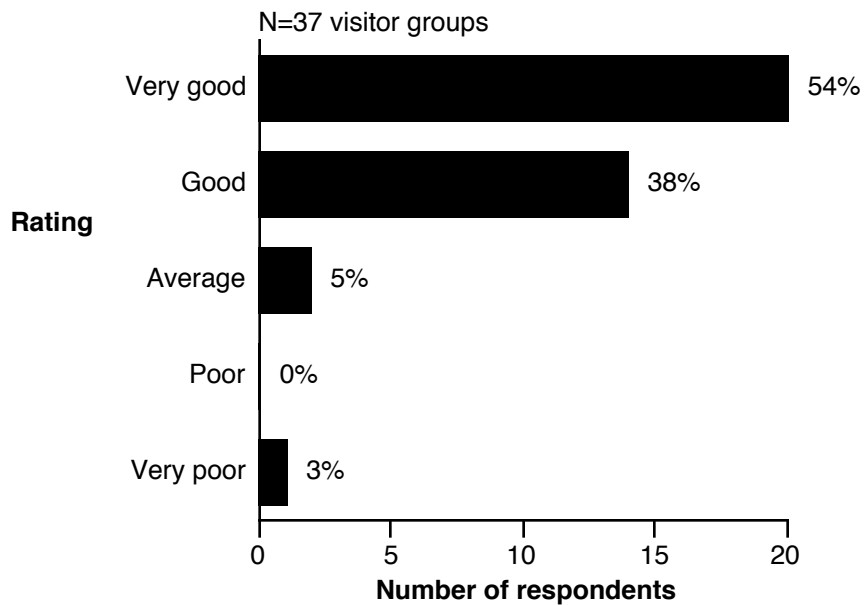


Figure 31: Quality of nature center information desk



Figure 32: Quality of Pierce Mill information desk

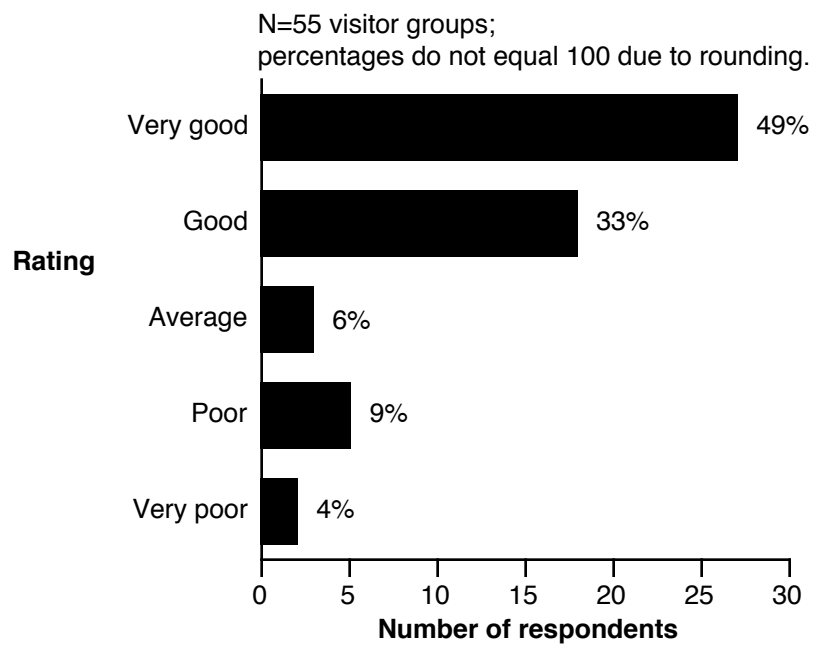


Figure 33: Quality of park brochure/map

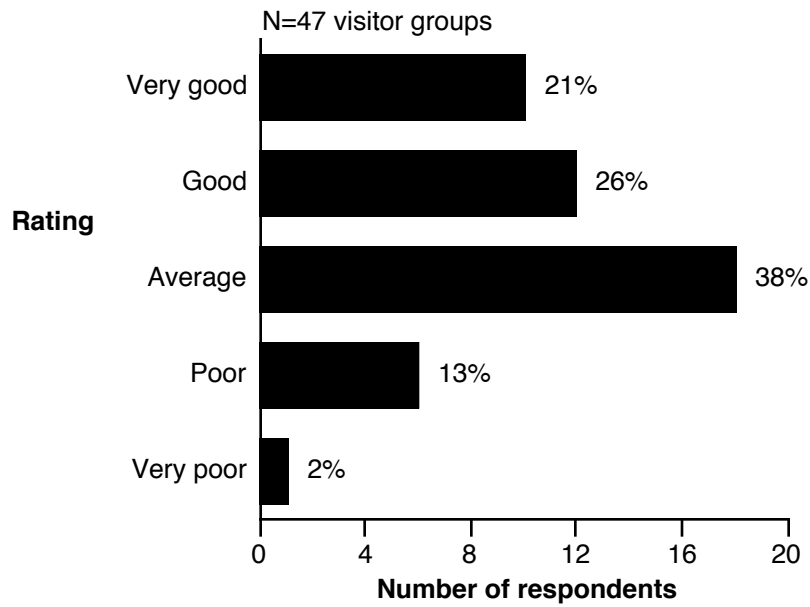


Figure 34: Quality of bulletin boards

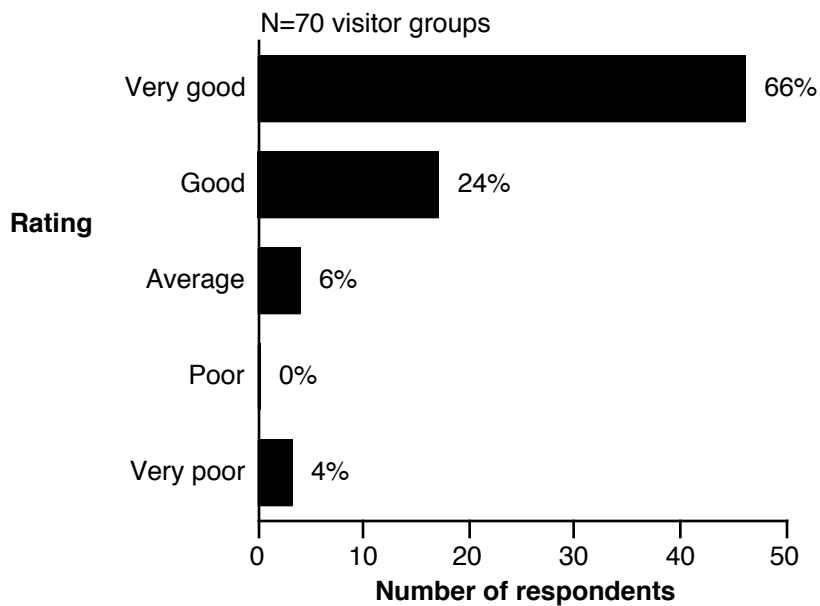


Figure 35: Quality of assistance from park staff

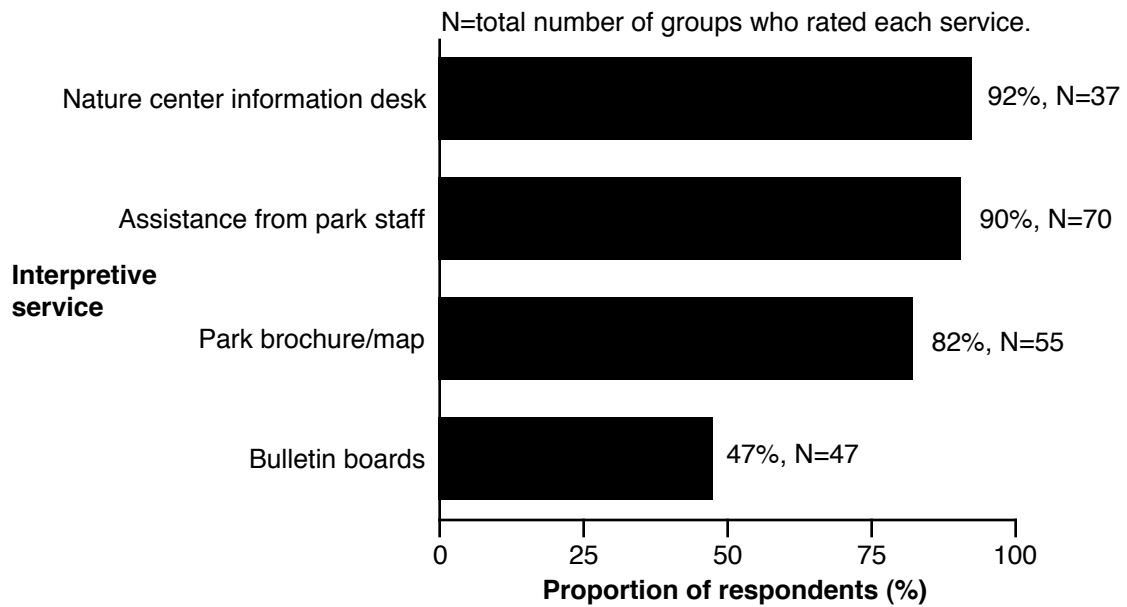


Figure 36: Combined proportions of “very good” or “good” quality ratings for services

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the facilities that they had used during their visit to Rock Creek Park. As is shown in Figure 37, the most commonly used facilities were the trails (60%), the roads (49%), restrooms (44%) and parking (42%). The least used facility was handicapped access (1%).

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

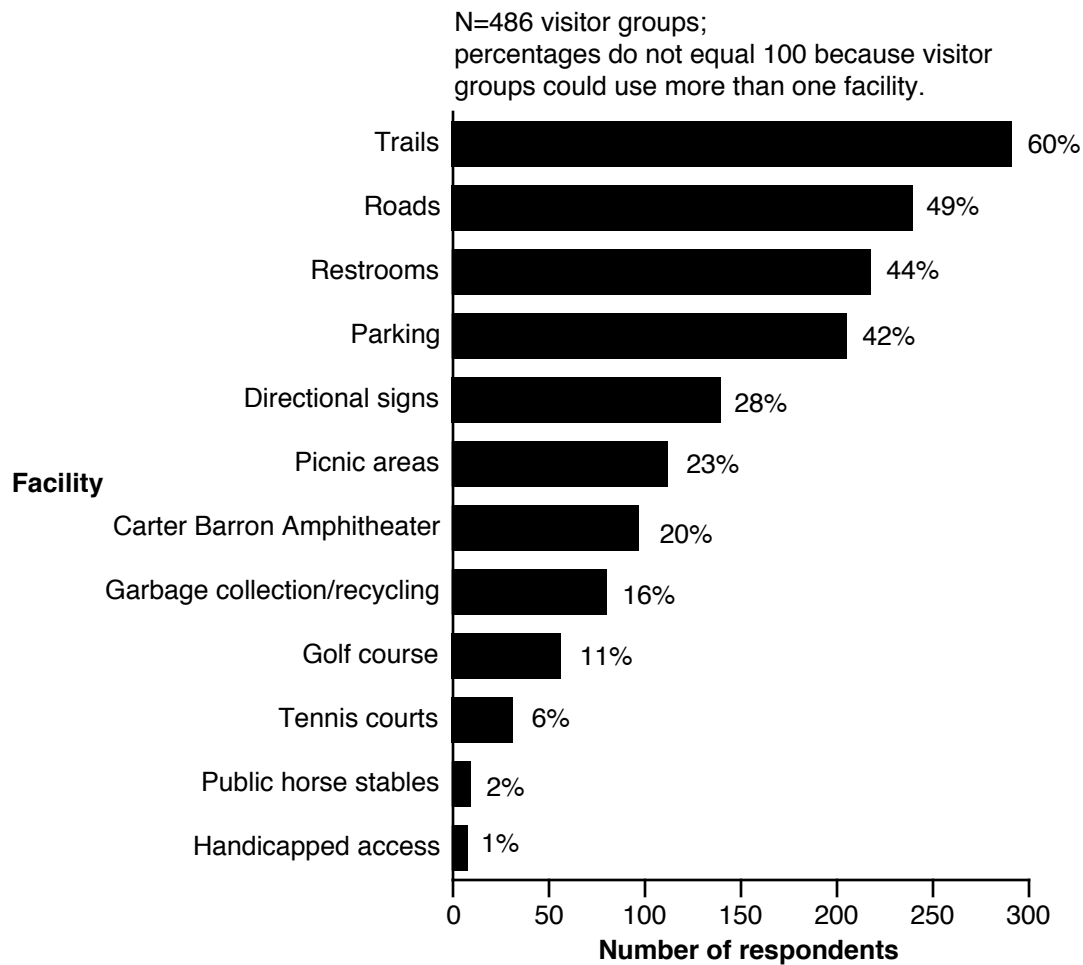


Figure 37: Facilities used

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 38 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 38. All facilities were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. Please note that public horse stables, tennis courts and handicapped access were not rated by enough people to provide reliable data.

Figures 39-50 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 garbage collection/ recycling (93%), Carter Barron Amphitheater (92%), trails (92%), restrooms (90%) and golf course (90%). The highest proportion of "not important" ratings was for the golf course (4%).

Figures 51-62 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 the Carter Barron Amphitheater (88%), parking (83%), roads (79%), and trails (75%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for directional signs (6%).

Figure 63 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the facilities.

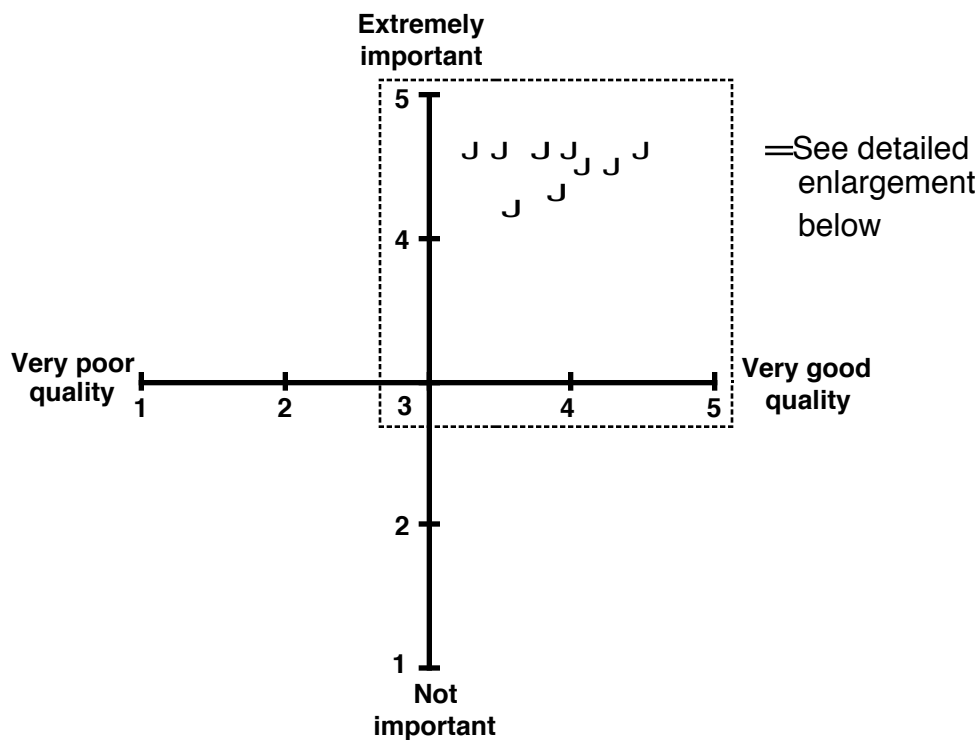


Figure 38: Average ratings of service importance and quality

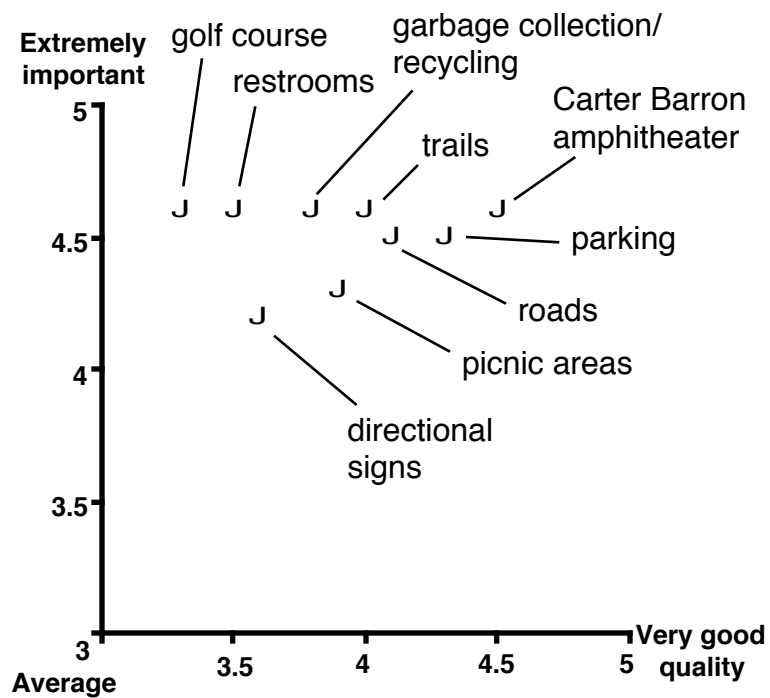


Figure 38: Detail

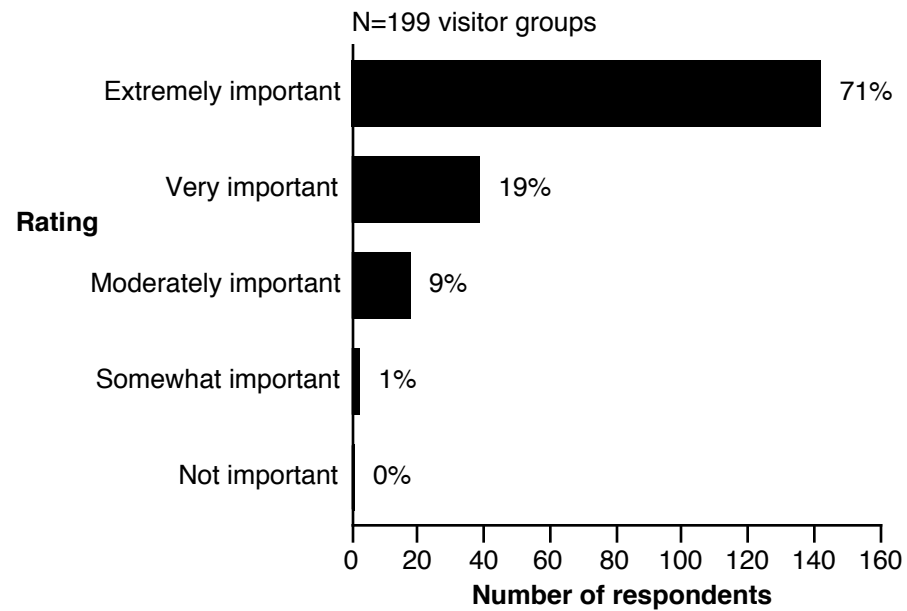


Figure 39: Importance of restrooms

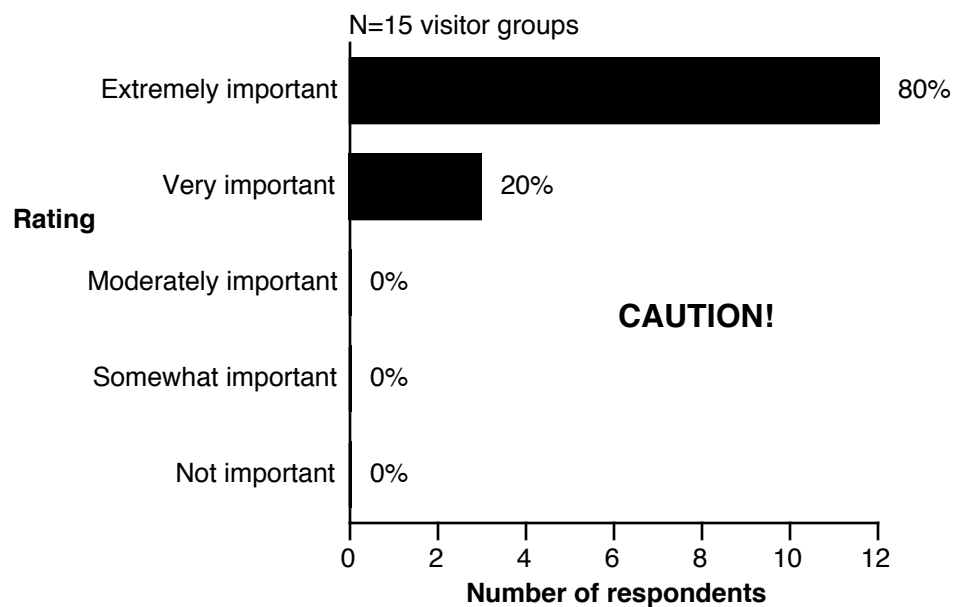
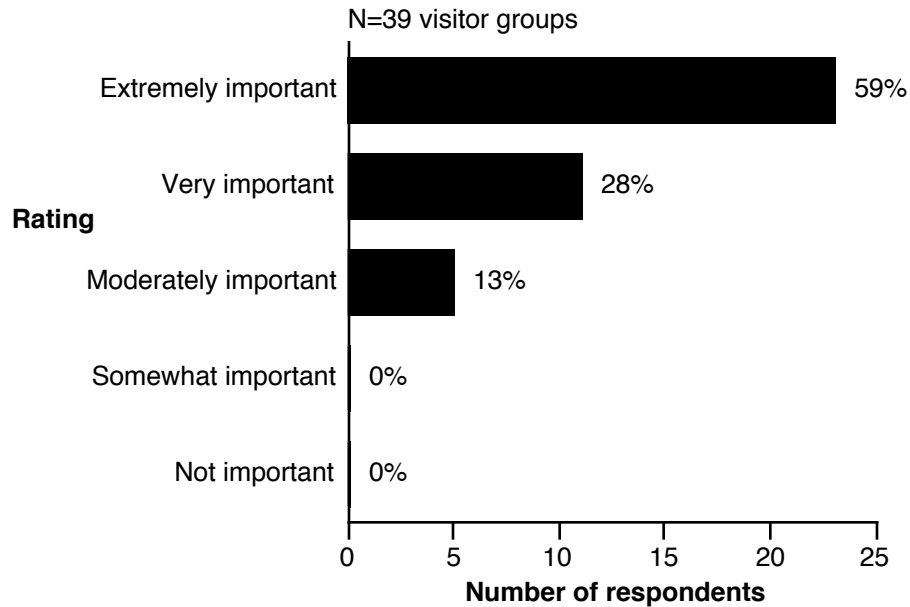
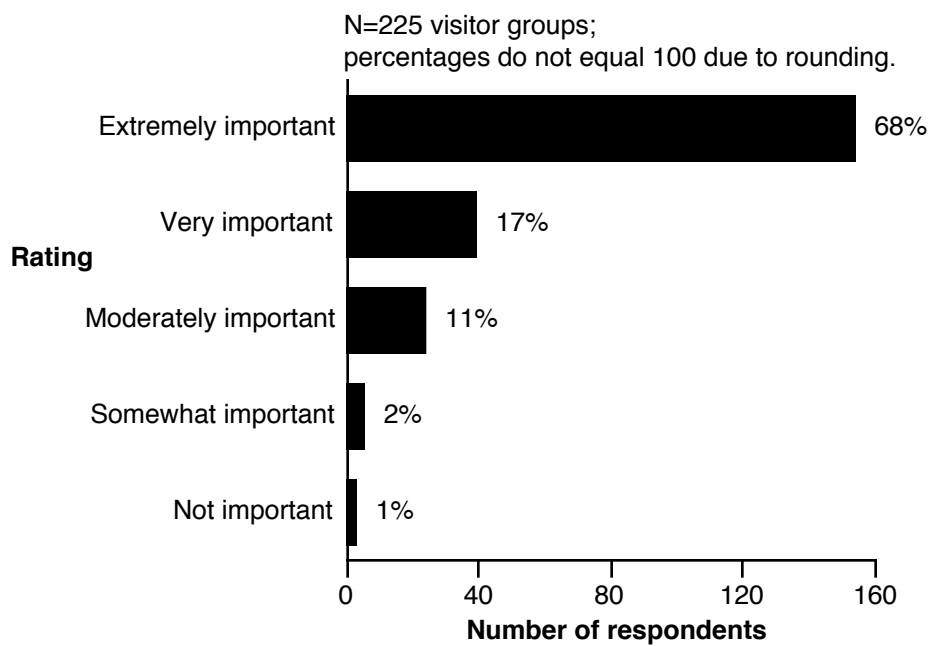


Figure 40: Importance of picnic areas

**Figure 41: Importance of trails****Figure 42: Importance of roads**

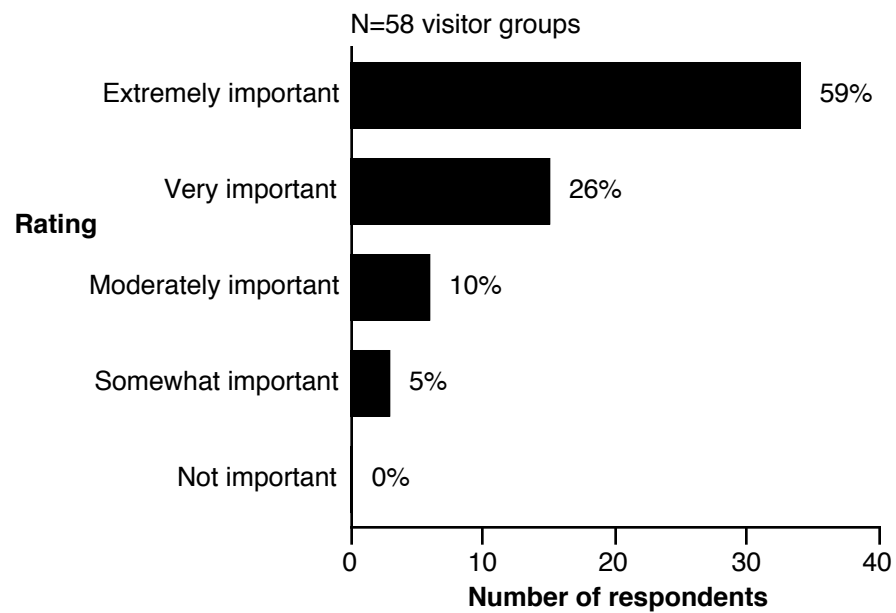


Figure 43: Importance of directional signs

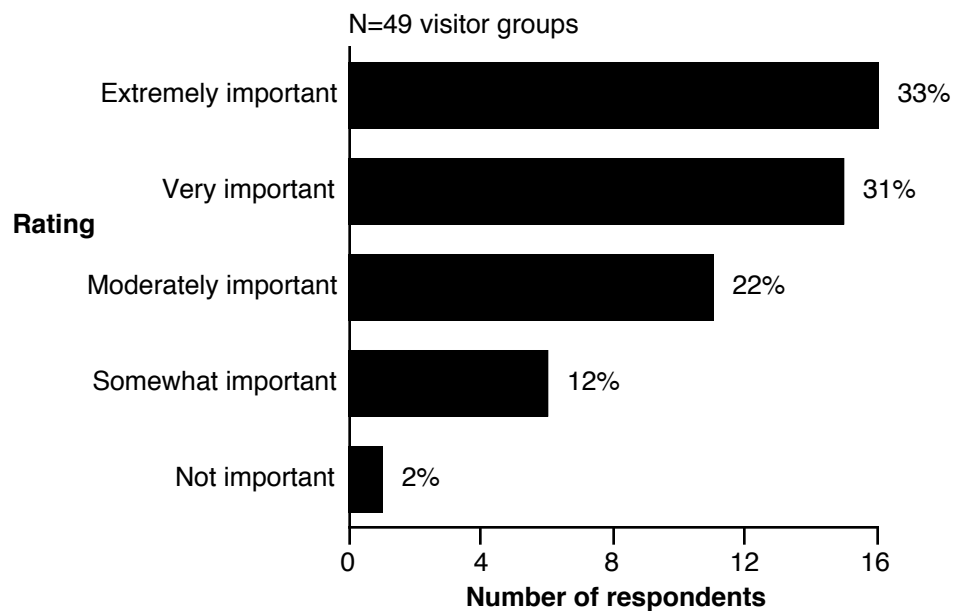


Figure 44: Importance of parking

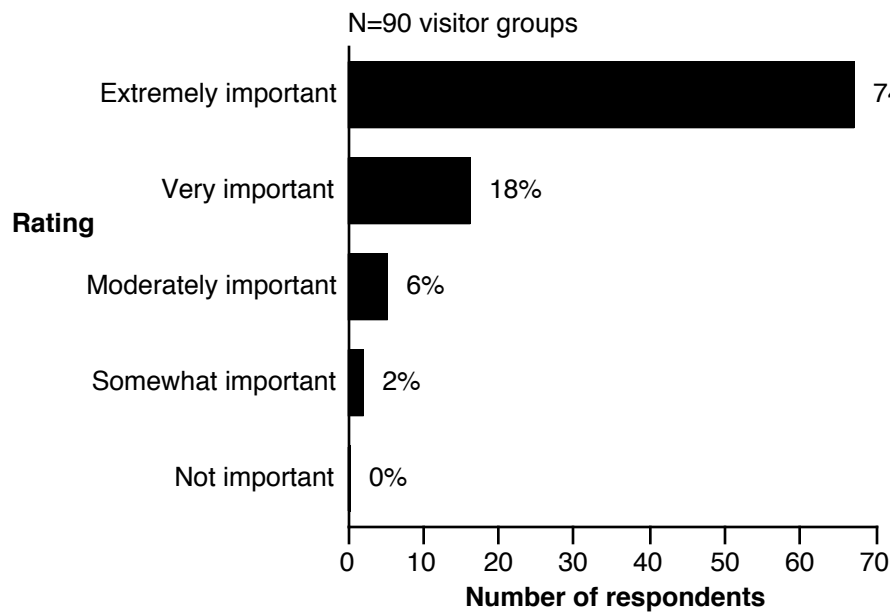


Figure 45: Importance of Carter Barron Amphitheater

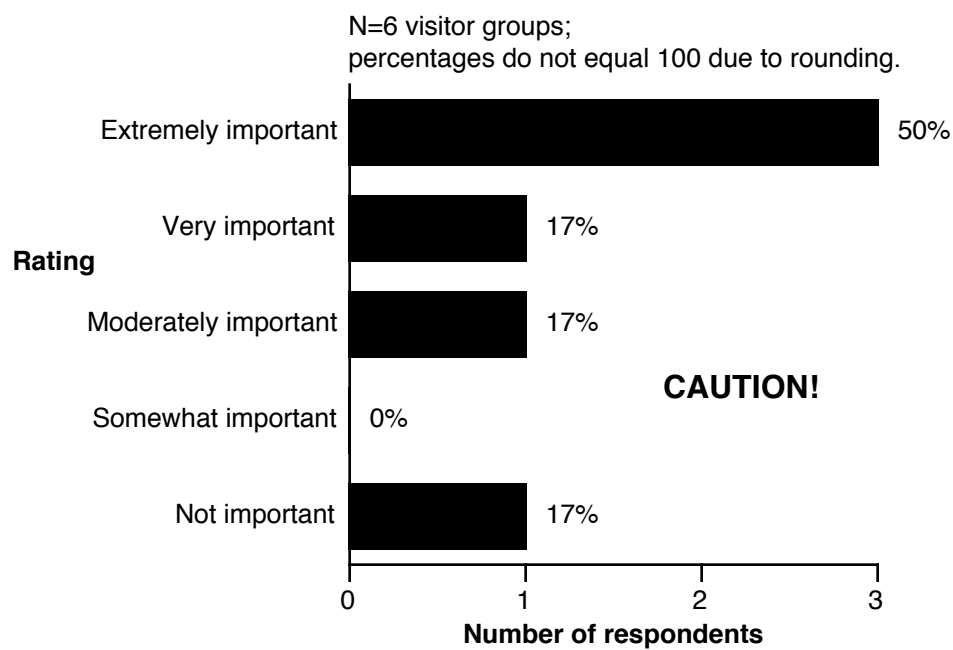


Figure 46: Importance of public horse stables

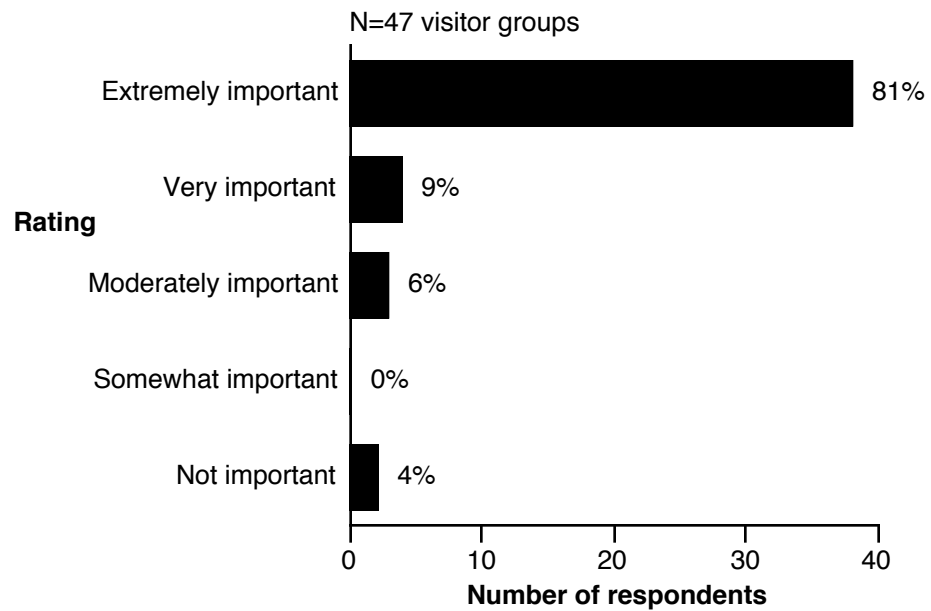


Figure 47: Importance of golf course

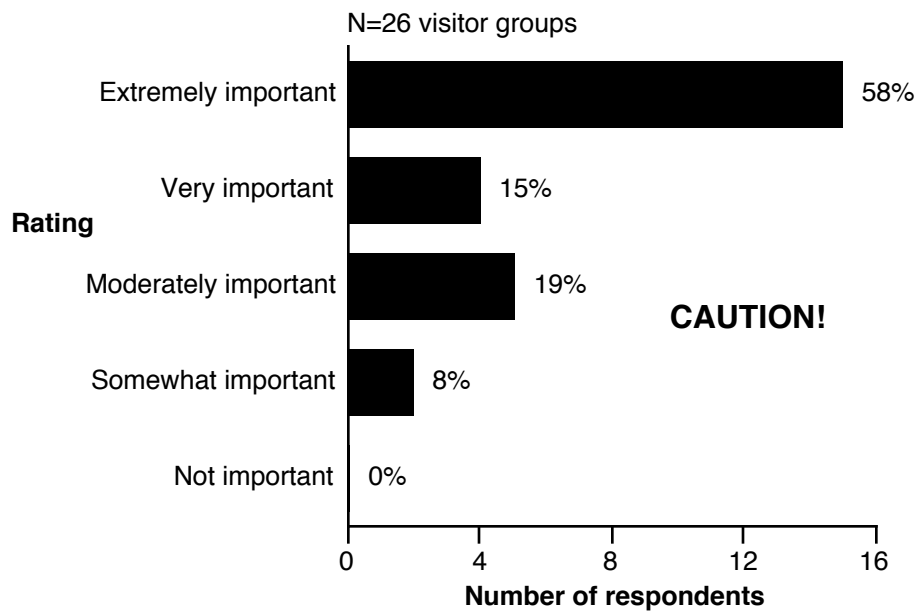


Figure 48: Importance of tennis courts

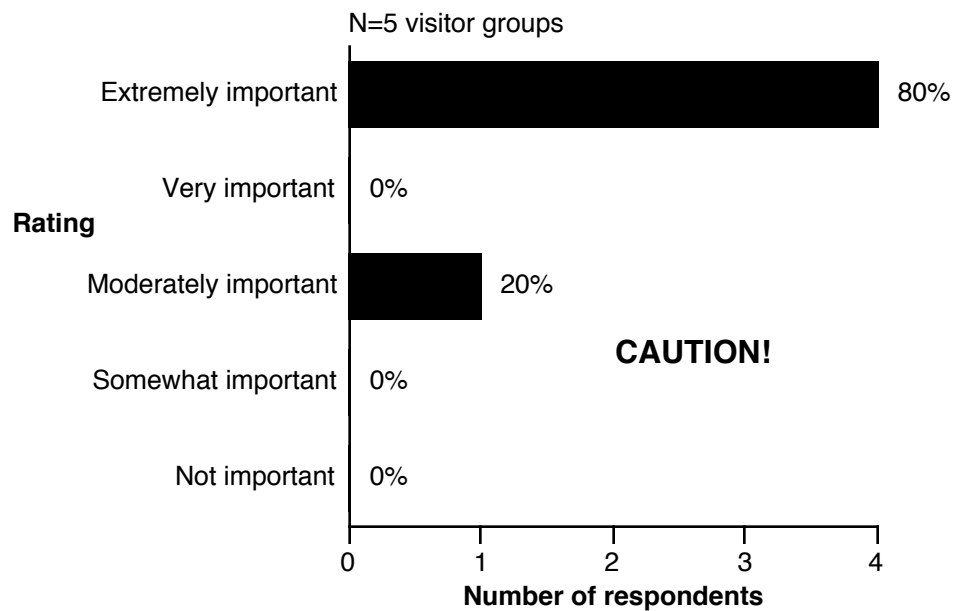


Figure 49: Importance of handicapped accessibility

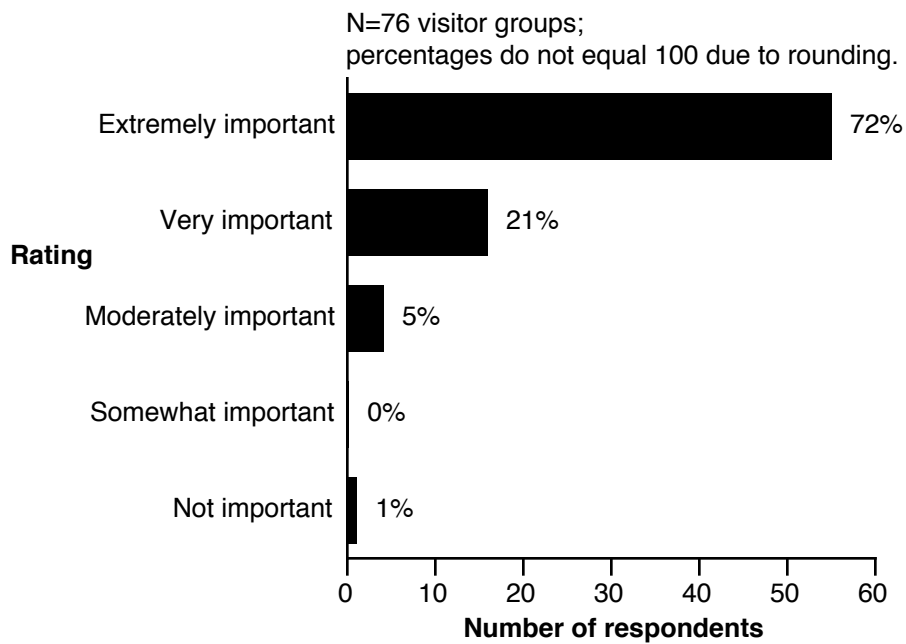


Figure 50: Importance of garbage collection/recycling

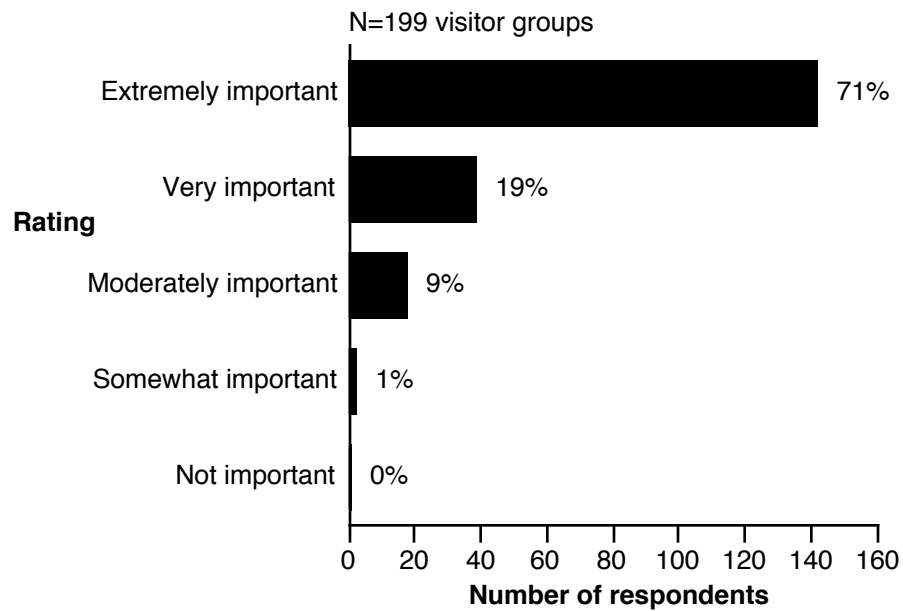


Figure 51: Quality of restrooms

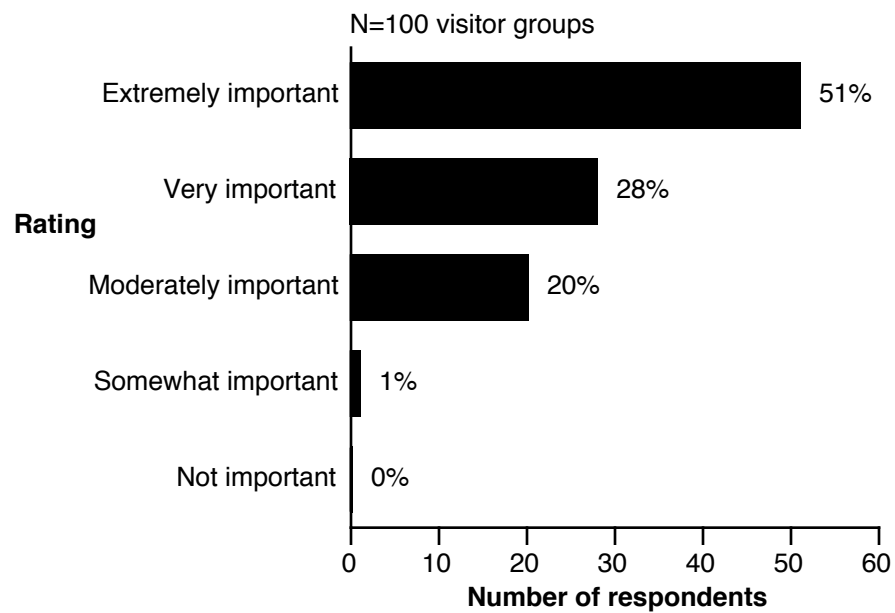


Figure 52: Quality of picnic areas

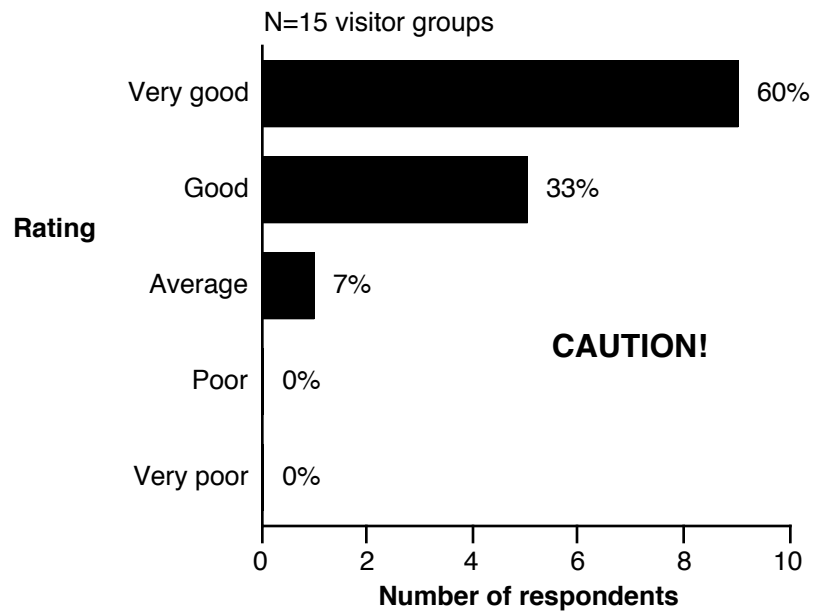


Figure 53: Quality of trails

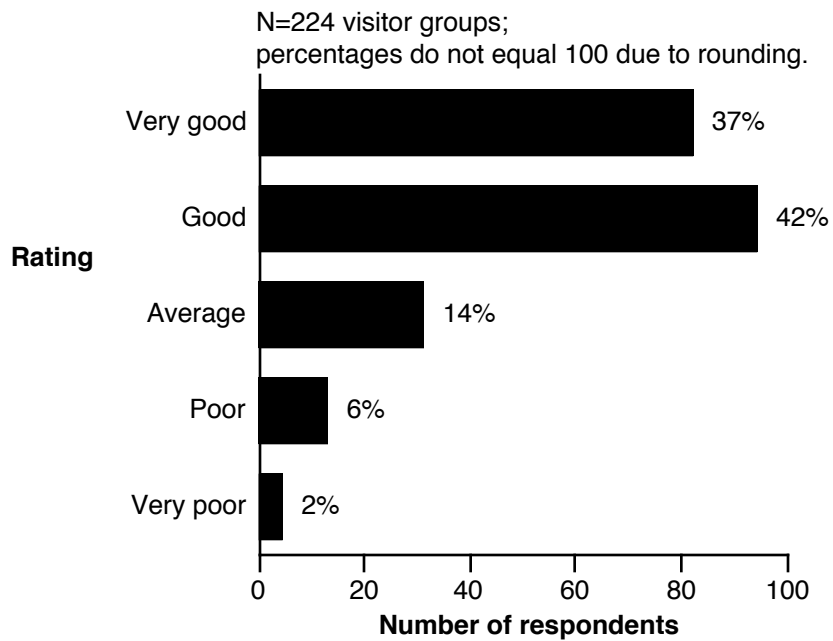
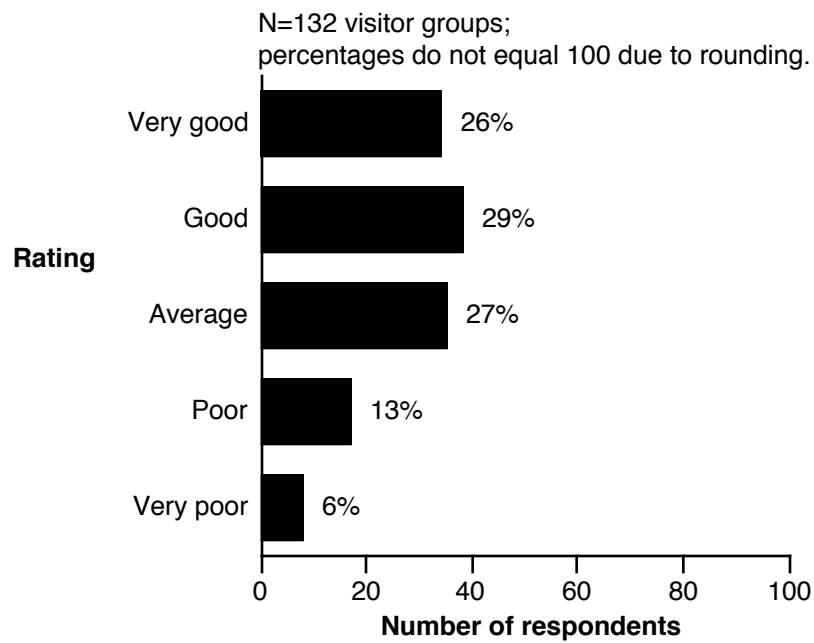
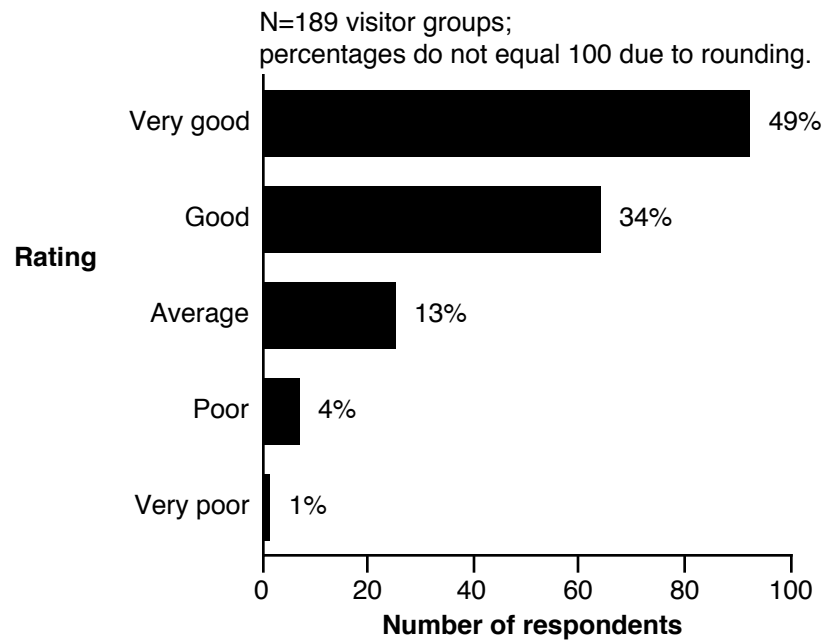


Figure 54: Quality of roads

**Figure 55: Quality of directional signs****Figure 56: Quality of parking**

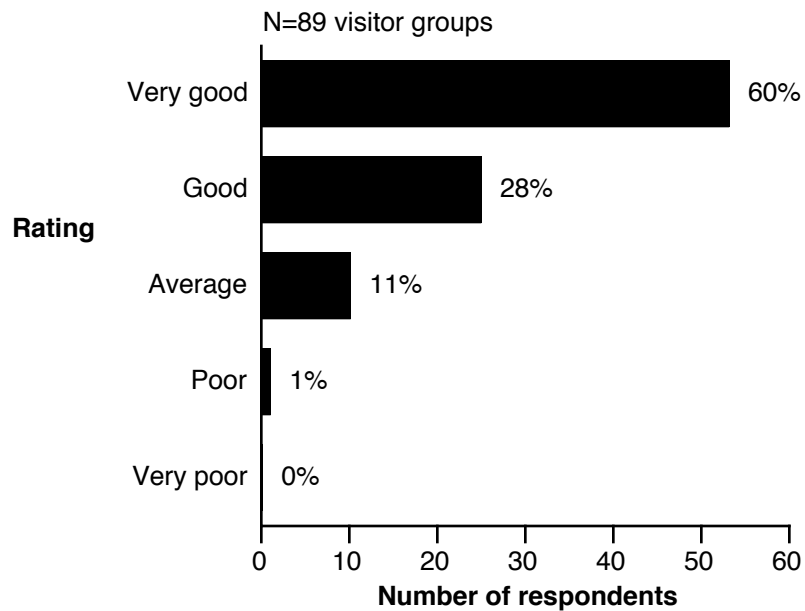


Figure 57: Quality of Carter Barron Amphitheater

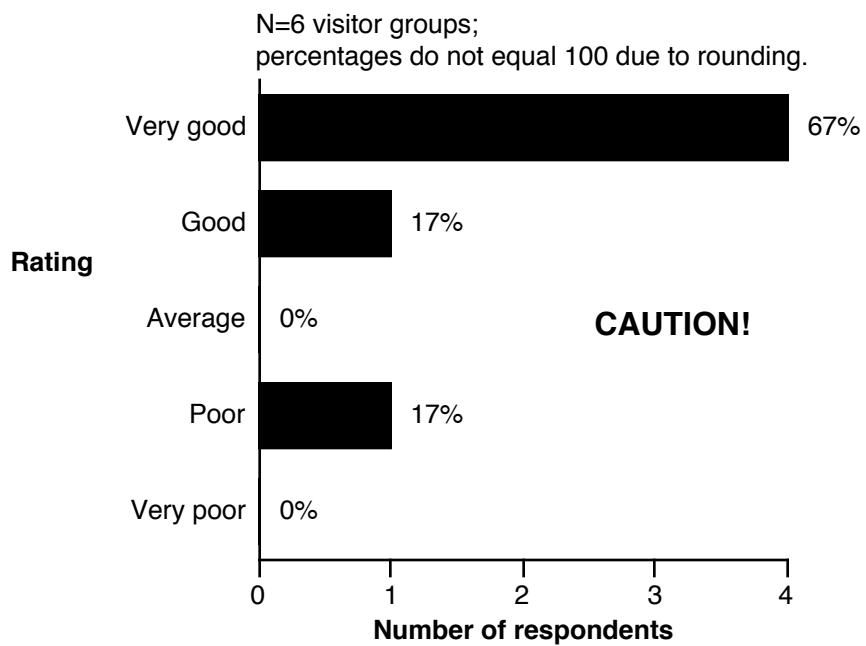
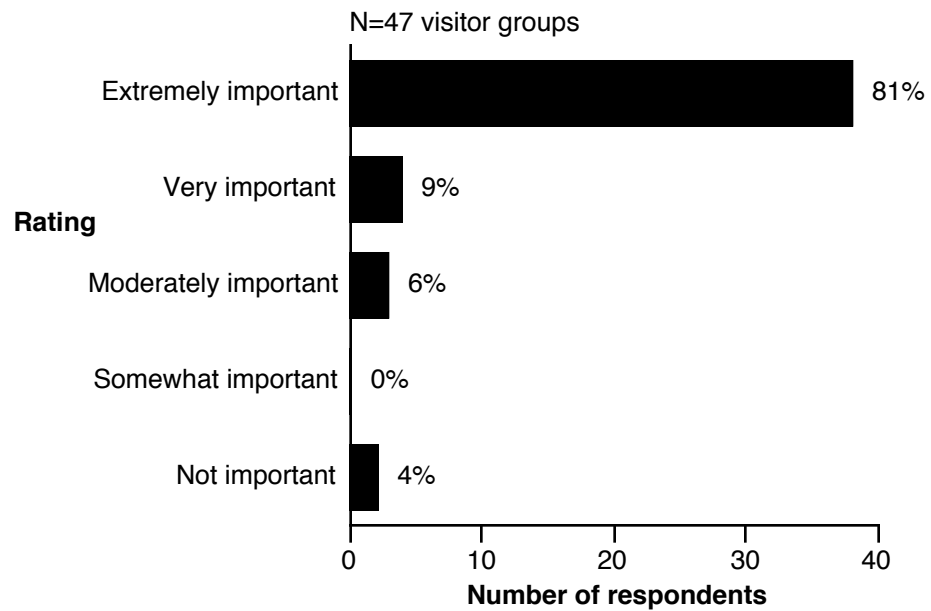
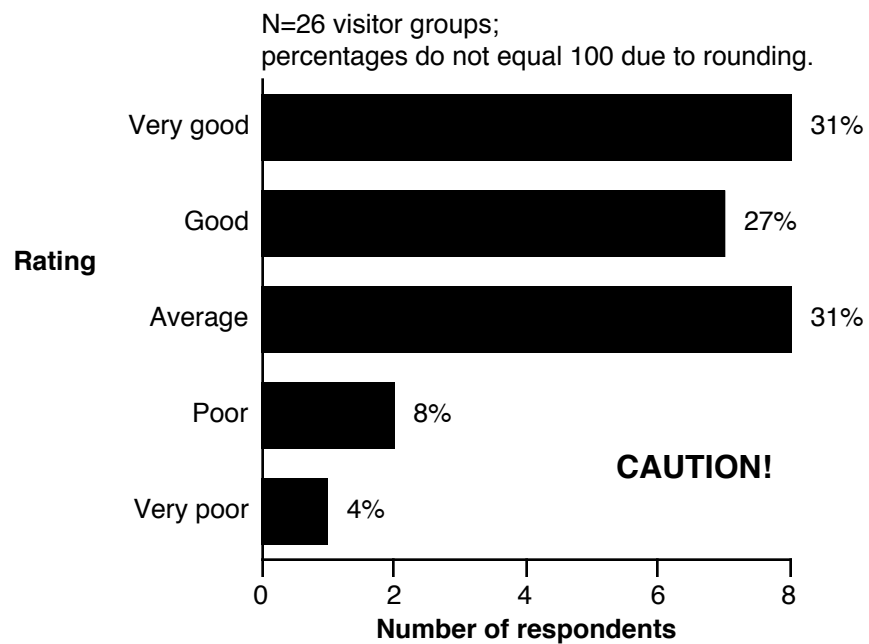


Figure 58: Quality of public horse stables

**Figure 59: Quality of golf course****Figure 60: Quality of tennis courts**

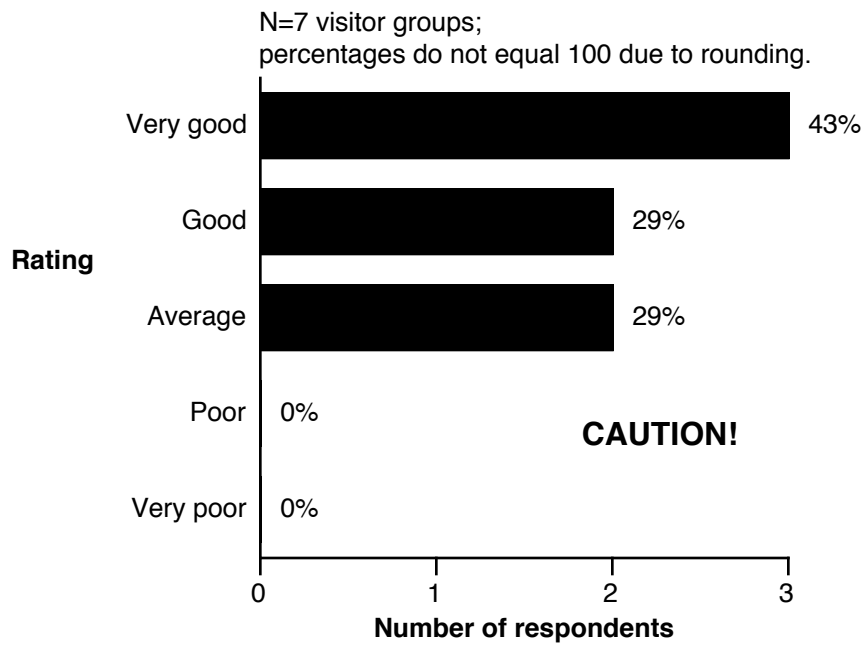


Figure 61: Quality of handicapped accessibility

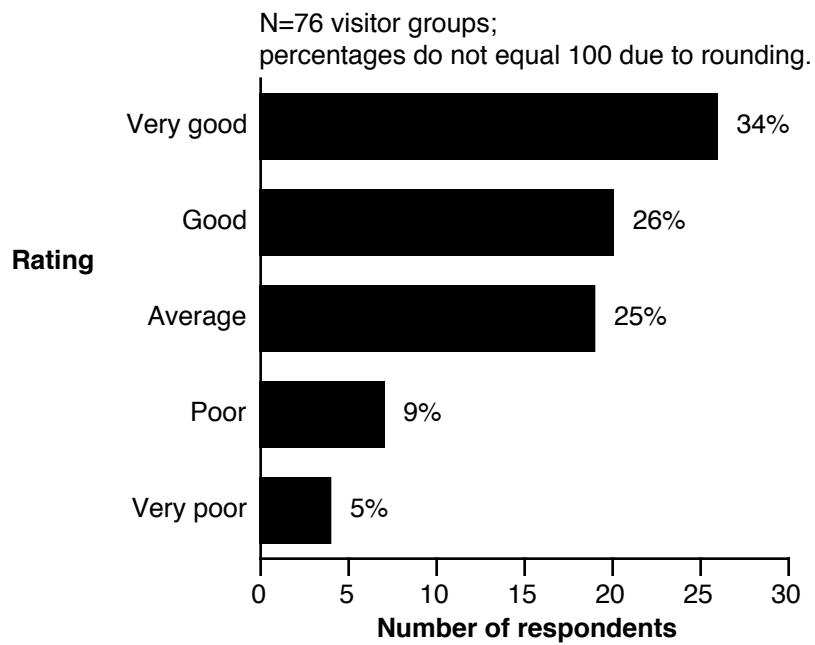


Figure 62: Quality of garbage collection/recycling

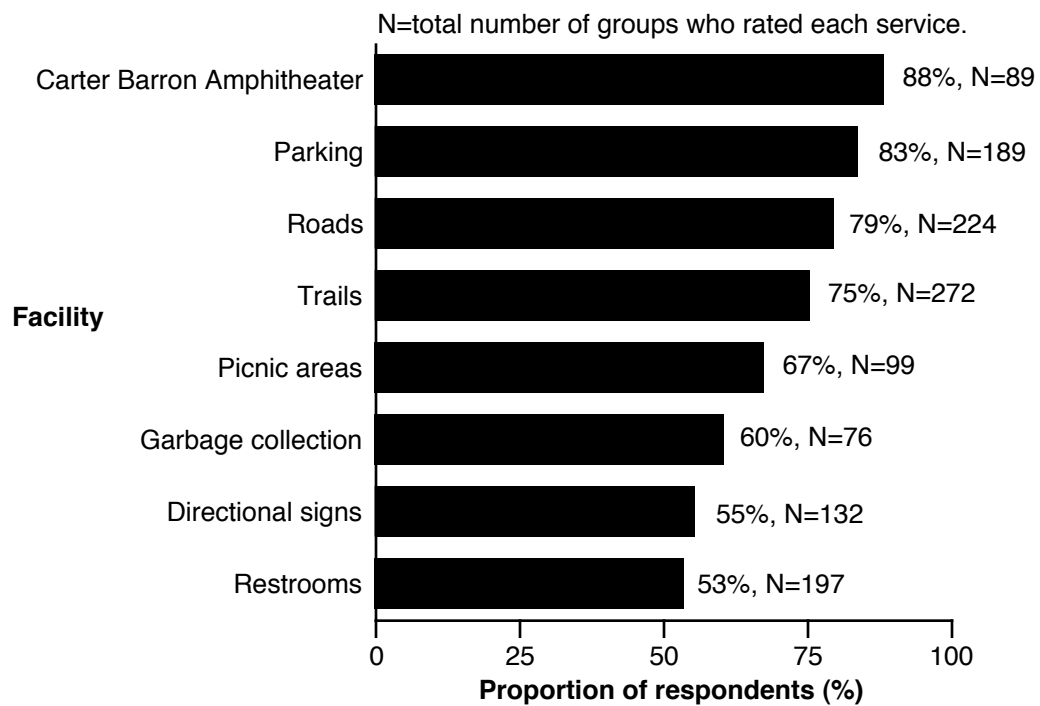


Figure 63: Combined proportions of “very good” or “good” quality ratings for services

Visitor groups were asked to rate the importance of selected features or qualities of Rock Creek Park. The features and qualities were as follows: scenic beauty, native plants and animals, recreational opportunities (walking, biking, etc.), educational opportunities, solitude/quiet, wildness, cultural/historic sites and resources, clean air, and clean water. The results can be compared by looking at the combined "extremely important" and "very important" ratings for each feature or quality. The highest importance ratings were for scenic beauty (94%), recreational opportunities (93%), clean air (90%) and clean water (86%), as shown in Figures 64-72.

Importance of selected features or qualities

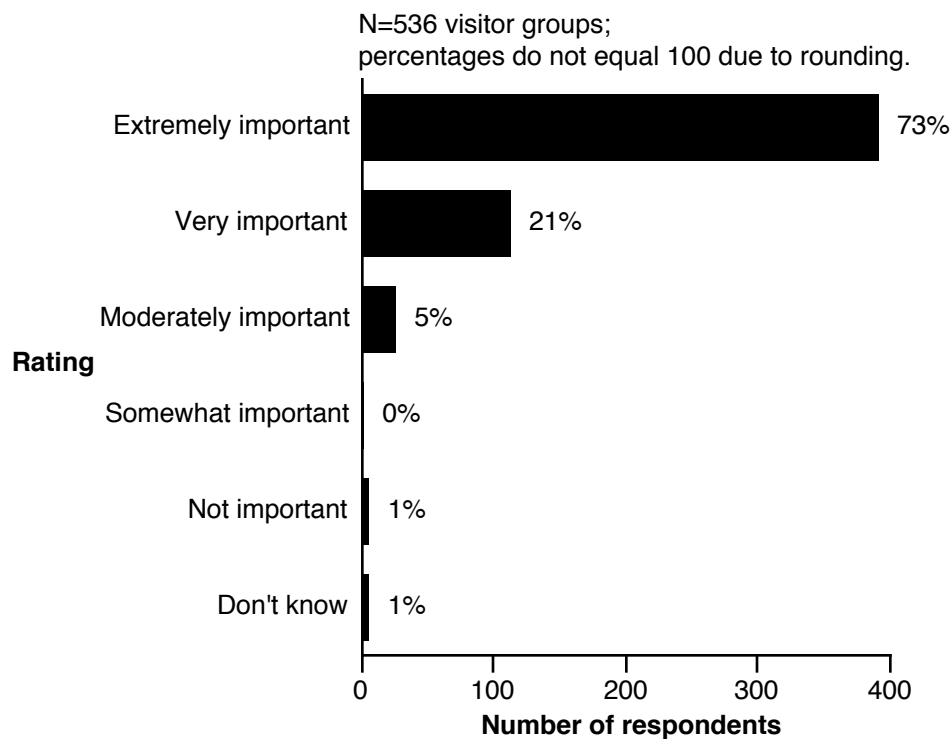


Figure 64: Importance of scenic beauty

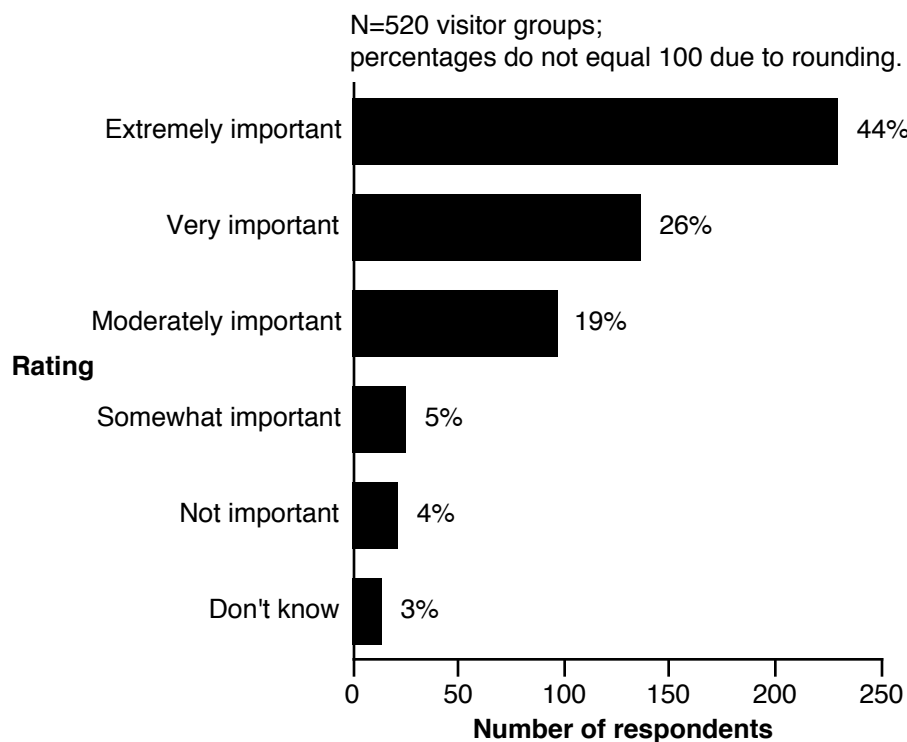


Figure 65: Importance of native plants and animals

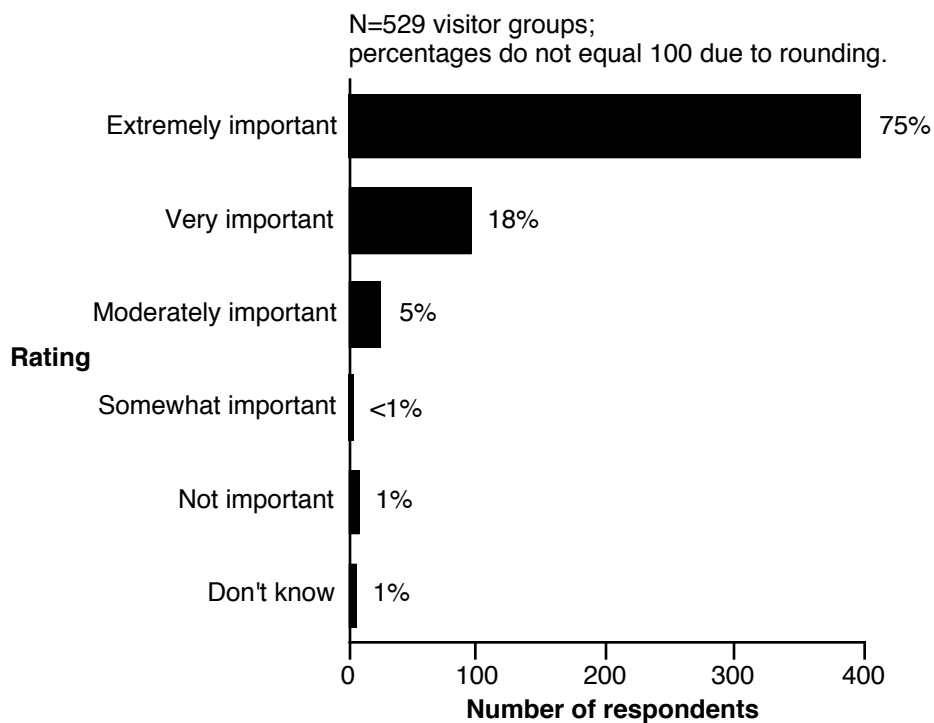


Figure 66: Importance of recreational opportunities (walking, biking, etc.)

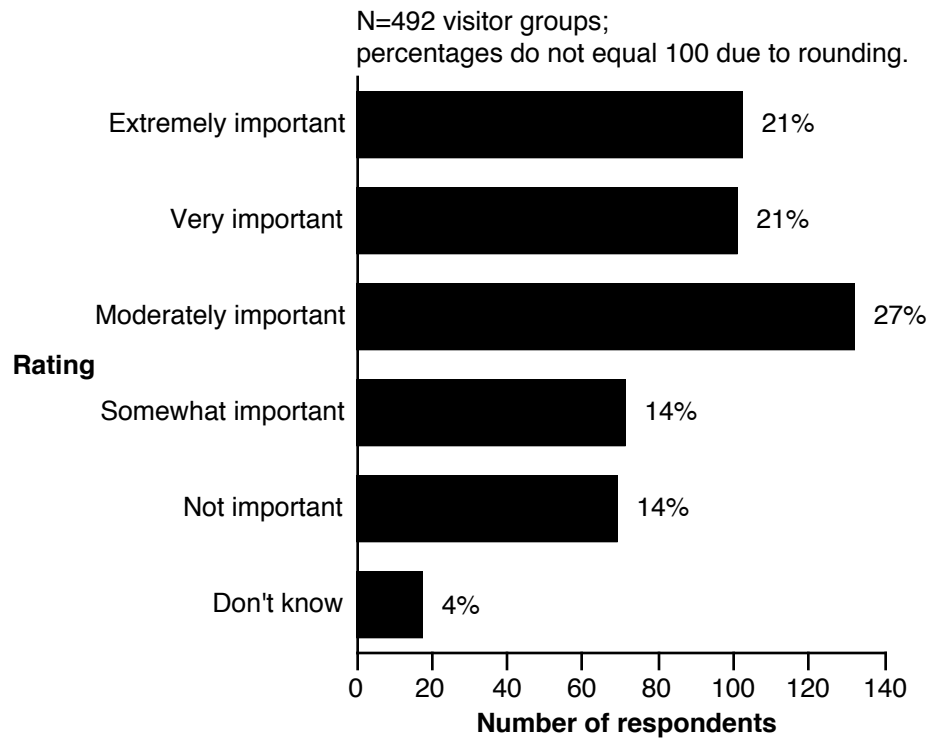


Figure 67: Importance of educational opportunities

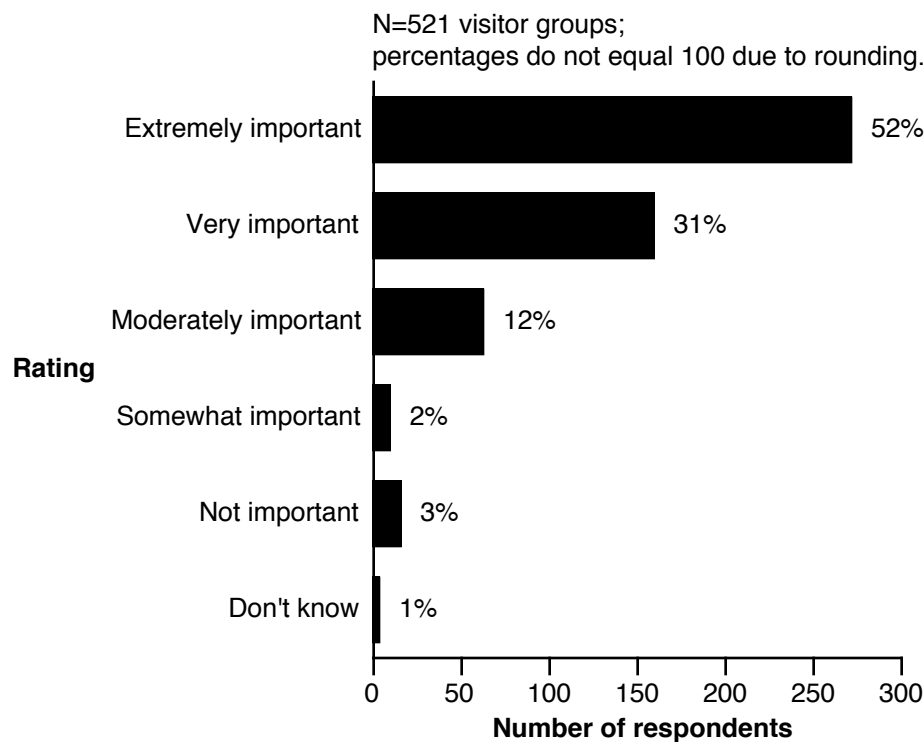


Figure 68: Importance of solitude/quiet

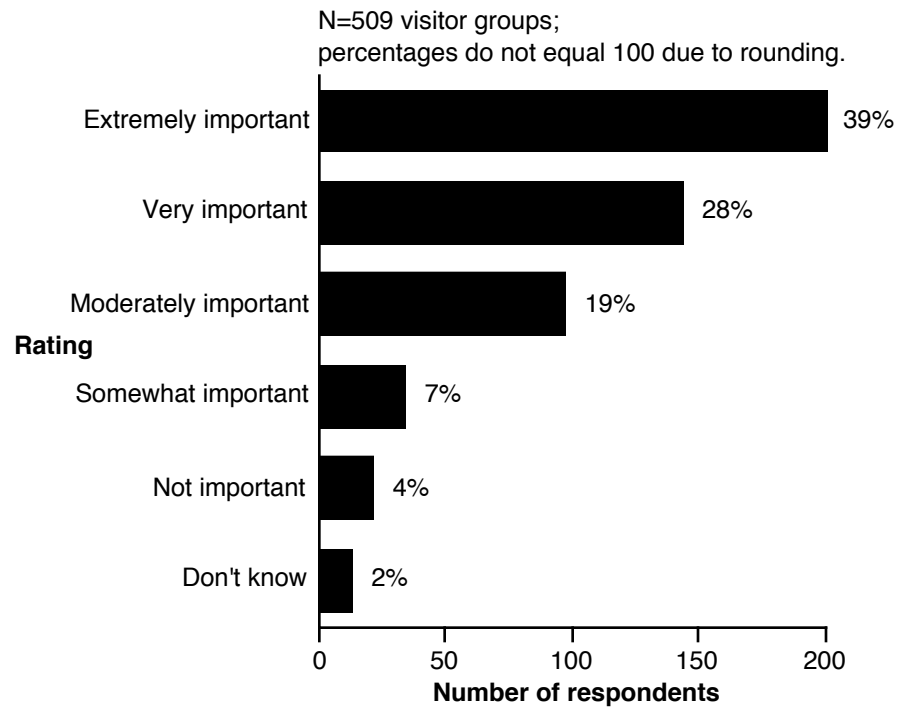


Figure 69: Importance of wildness

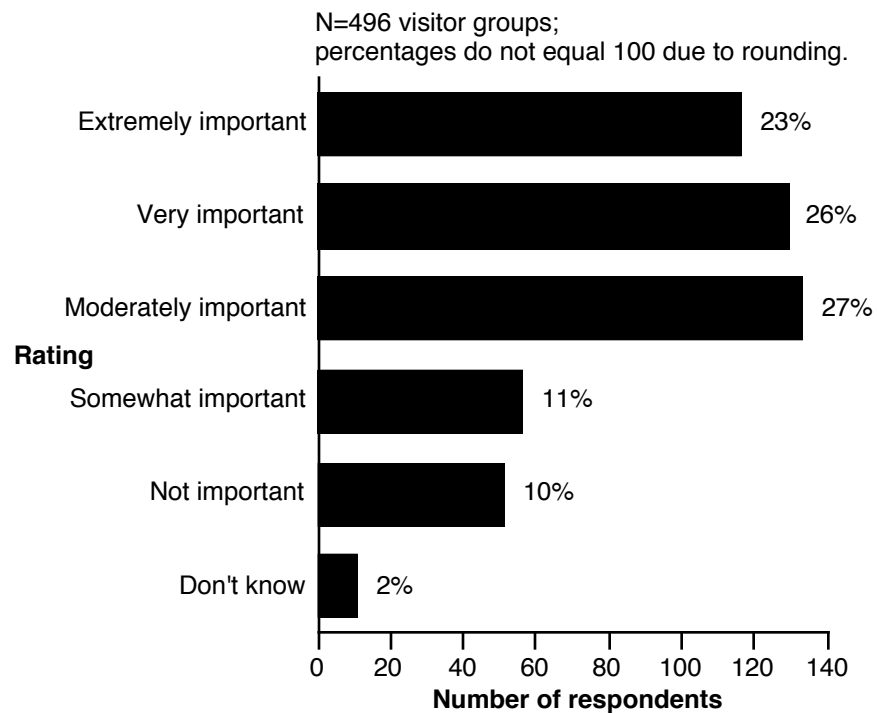


Figure 70: Importance of cultural/historic sites and resources

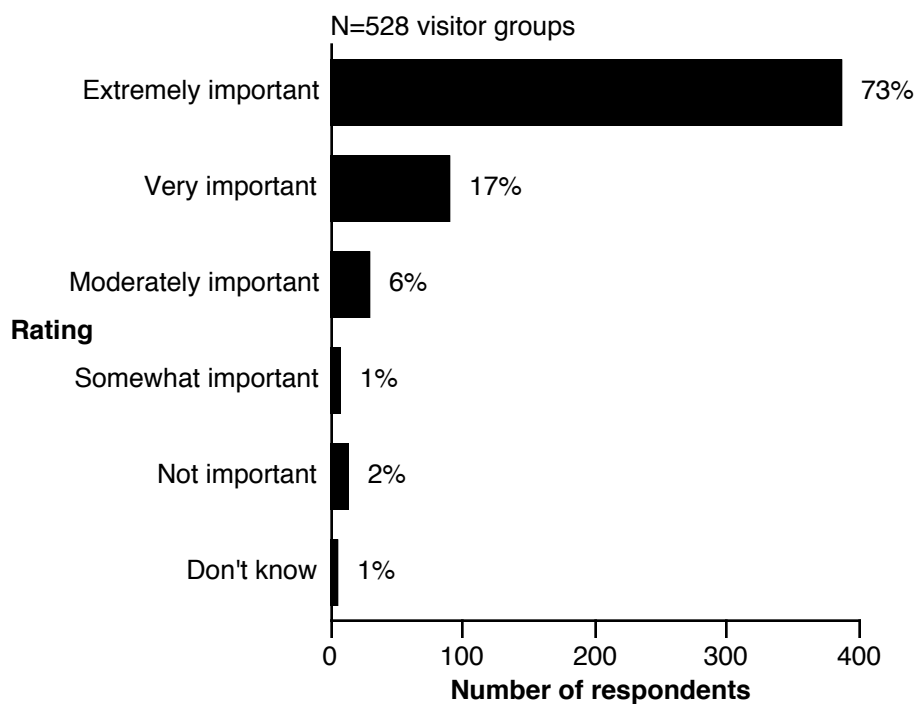


Figure 71: Importance of clean air

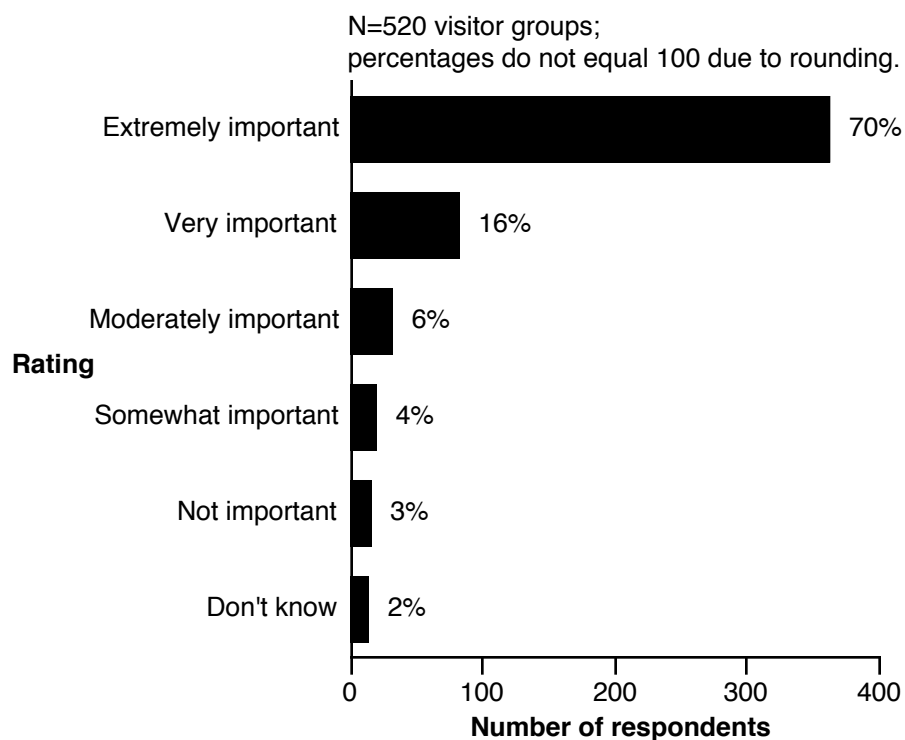


Figure 72: Importance of clean water

**Preferred types
of performances
at Carter Barron
Amphitheater**

Visitor groups were asked if they were interested in attending live performances at the Carter Barron Amphitheater on a future visit to Rock Creek Park. Most visitors (70%) said they would likely attend a future performance (see Figure 73). Sixteen percent said they would not attend a future performance and 14% were not sure.

The visitor groups who would attend a performance were asked to list the type of performance they would like to attend. Table 6 shows their responses, with music, theater, jazz and Shakespeare leading the list.

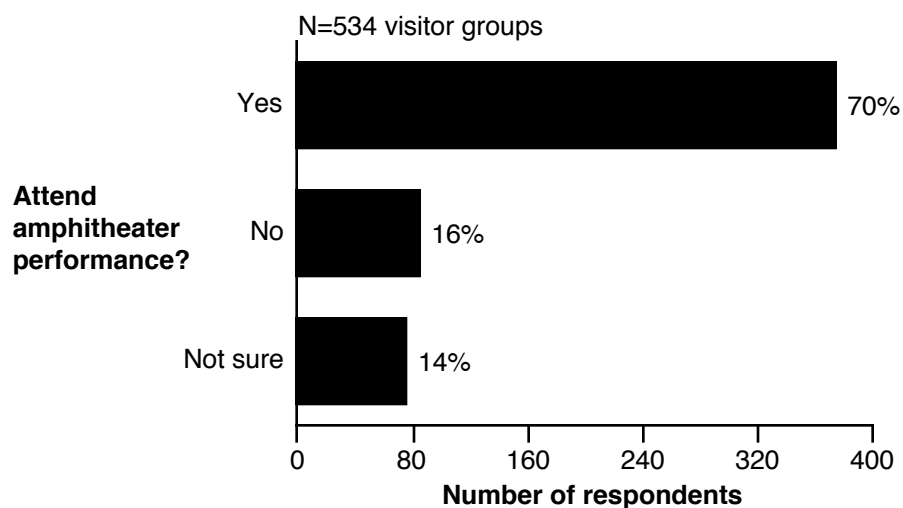


Figure 73: Future interest in attending performances at Carter Barron Amphitheater

**Table 6: Preferred types of performances at
Carter Barron Amphitheater**

N=639 visitor groups

Preferred performance	Number of comments
Music	154
Theater	113
Jazz	64
Shakespeare	55
Classical music	31
Blues	26
Dance performance	21
Musicals	20
Rock	19
Rhythm and blues	18
Children's shows	18
Gospel	17
Folk music	15
Opera	8
Bluegrass	6
Raggae	5
Comedy	5
Anything	5
Ballet	4
Lectures	4
Big band	3
Poetry	3
Art shows	2
Historic re-creations	2
Wolf Trap type of performance	2
Drums	2
Movies	2
Sporting events	2
Free performance	2
Other	11

Preferred types of ranger-led programs

Visitor groups were asked to identify the types of ranger-led programs they would like to have available on a future visit. Forty-five percent of the groups said they are not interested in ranger-led programs.

Of the visitors who were interested in attending ranger-led programs, the most preferred types of programs were nature walks (72%), historical tours (51%), and children's activities (42%), as shown in Figure 74. Nine percent of visitor groups asked for programs in multiple languages. "Other" programs which visitors listed included golf, astronomy, legal mountain biking, park orientation information, plants, and exercise.

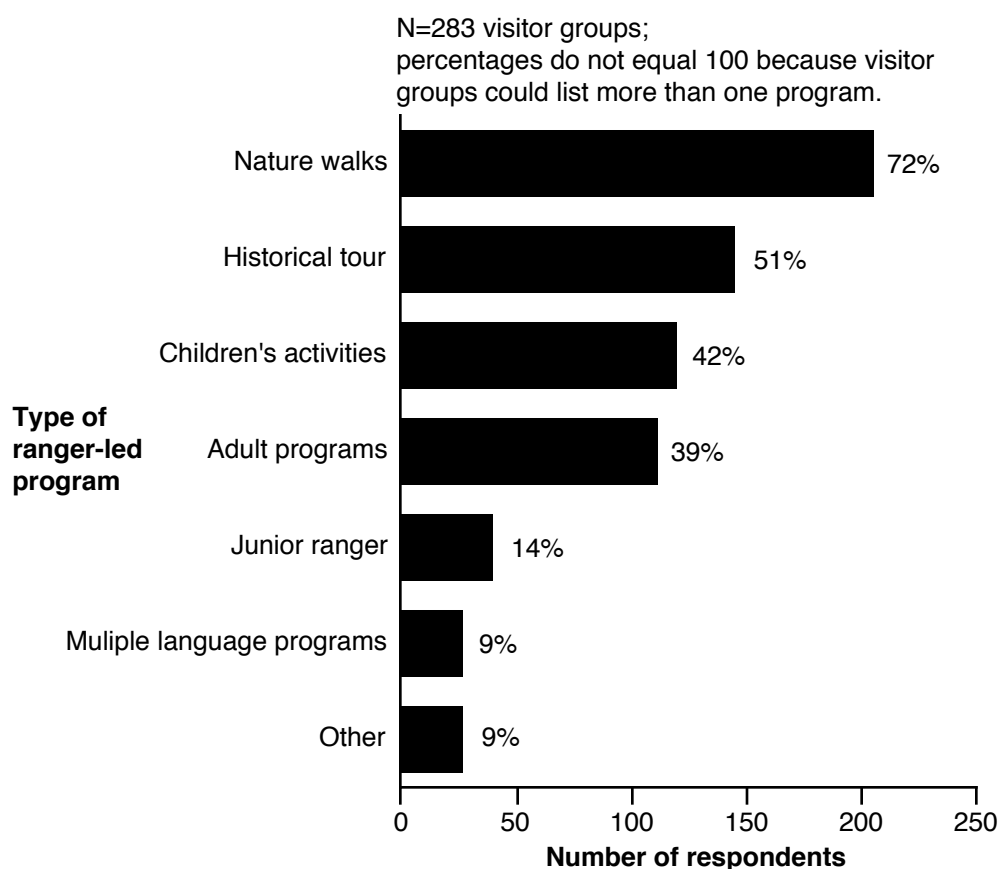


Figure 74: Preferred types of ranger-led programs

Visitor groups were asked if they were interested in learning about Rock Creek Park's natural and cultural resources. Over one-half of the visitor groups (56%) said they were interested in learning about the natural and cultural resource (see Figure 75). Thirty percent of visitors said they were not interested in learning and 15% were not sure.

Preferred methods of learning about park

The visitor groups who were interested in learning about the natural and cultural resources were asked to identify the methods they would prefer to use to learn about the park. The most preferred methods included brochures (69%), calendar of events (65%), trailside exhibits (55%) and the Internet/www (50%), as shown in Figure 76. The method preferred by the smallest proportion of visitors was public service announcements (28%). Visitors listed "other" methods including mailings and newspapers.

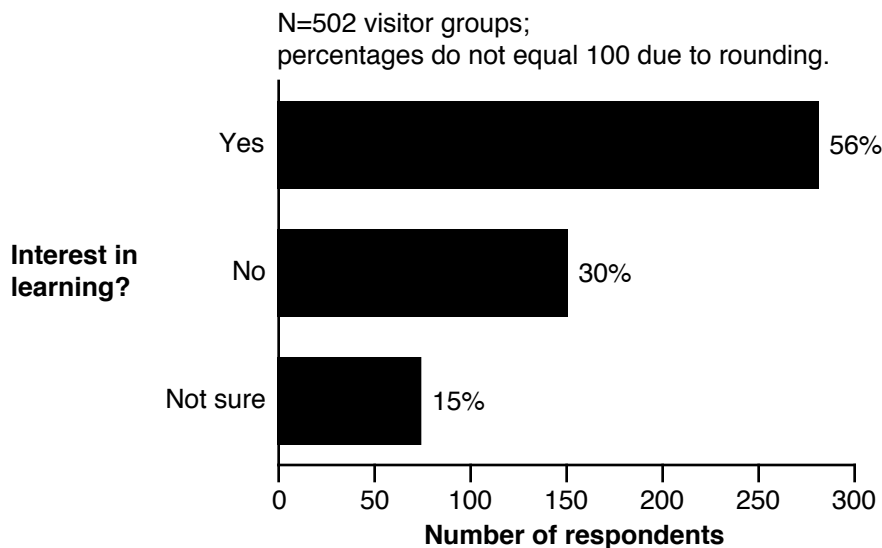


Figure 75: Interested in learning about natural and cultural resources

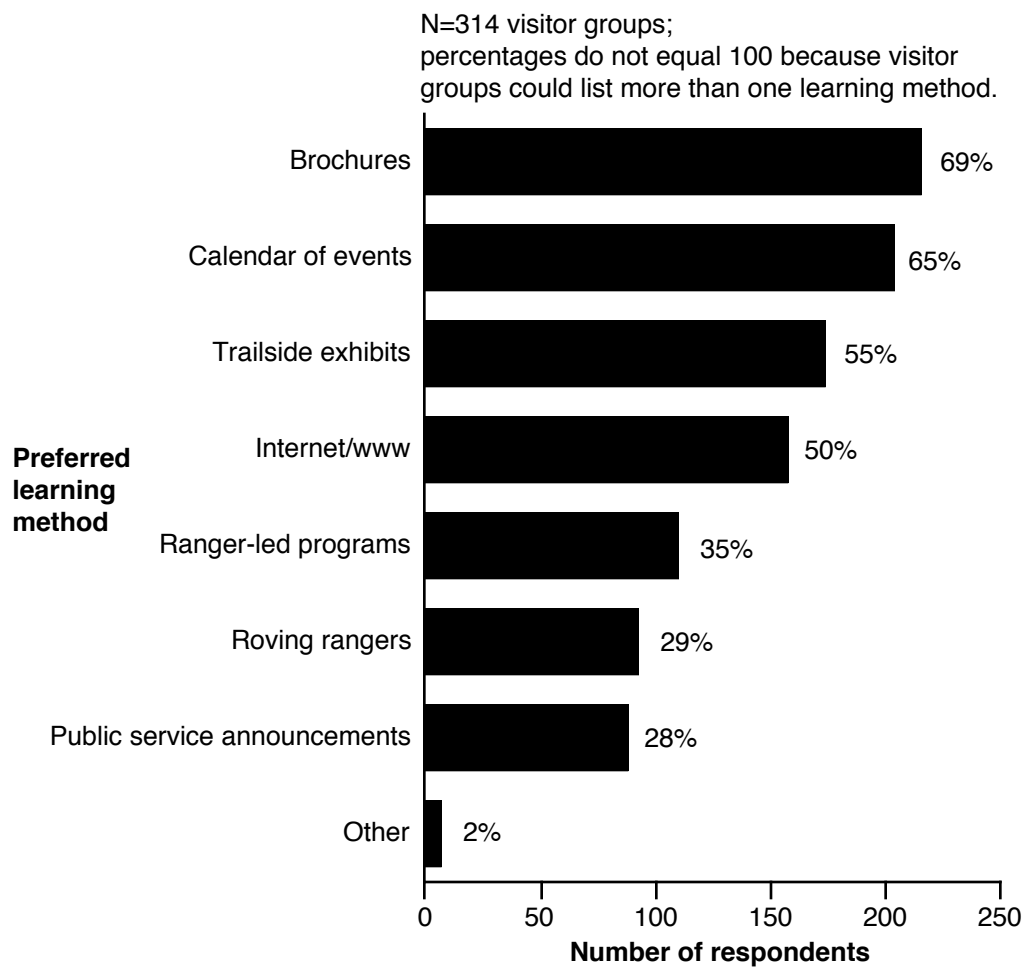


Figure 76: Preferred methods of learning about Rock Creek Park

Visitor groups were asked what subjects they would be most interested in learning during a future visit to Rock Creek Park. Their subject preferences were natural history (58%), recreational opportunities (53%), history (42%) and gardening (33%), as shown in Figure 77. The least preferred subject was art (22%). "Other" subject preferences included golf lessons, live music, preservation efforts and topics for children.

Preferred subjects

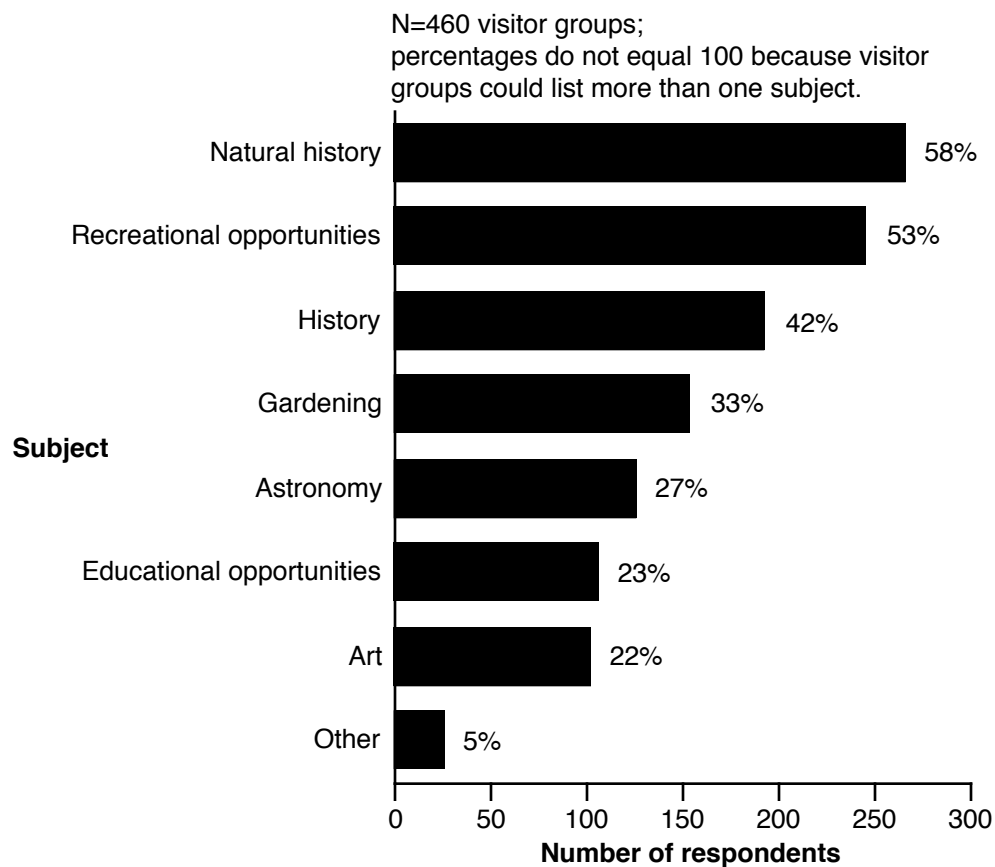


Figure 77: Subjects preferred to learn at Rock Creek Park

Nature center visits/reasons for visiting

Visitor groups were asked whether they had visited the park nature center during their visit to Rock Creek Park. Most visitors (88%) did not visit the nature center on this visit (see Figure 78). Twelve percent said they had visited.

Visitors who visited the nature center were asked their reasons for visiting the center. Using the restrooms (56%) and viewing the exhibits (56%) were the most often listed reasons for visiting the nature center (see Figure 79). Obtaining information from the park staff (35%) and obtaining a map (24%) were also listed. "Other" reasons for visiting included to attend a ranger-led program, visit the planetarium, and visit the garden.

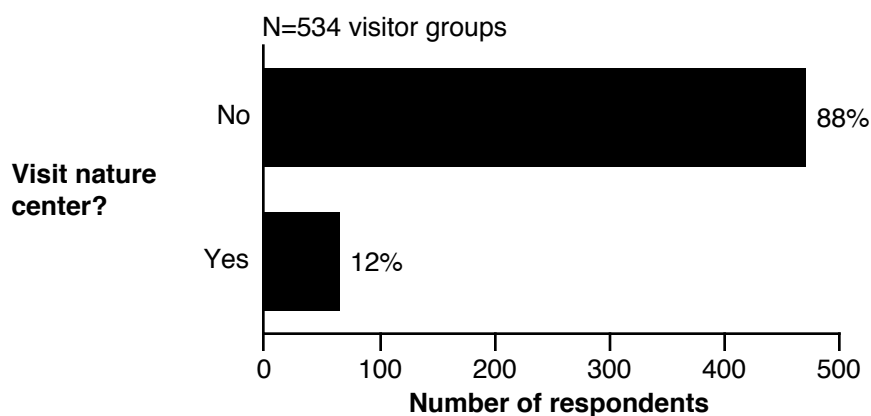


Figure 78: Nature center visits

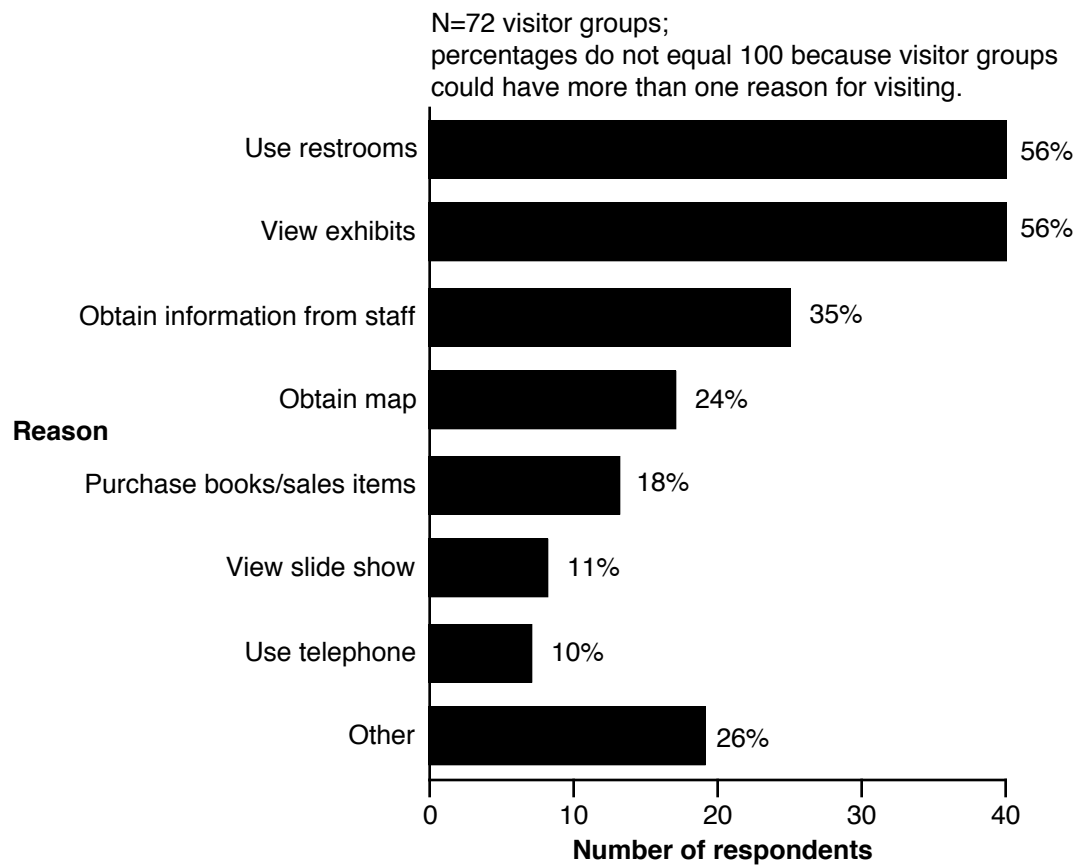


Figure 79: Reasons for visiting the park nature center

**What visitors
liked most about
the nature center**

Visitor groups were asked "On this visit, what did you and your group like most about the Rock Creek Park Nature Center?" A summary of the responses from the 128 groups who responded is listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7: What visitors liked most about Nature Center

N=89 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Exhibits	14
Staff	13
Planetarium	10
Playroom for children	8
Cleanliness	4
Beautiful/natural	4
Hands-on activities	3
Informative	3
Atmosphere	2
Air conditioning	2
Programs	2
Children's programs	2
Sales items	2
Well organized	2
Everything	2
Trails	2
Solitude/quiet	2
Other comments	12

Visitor groups were asked "On this visit, what did you and your group like least about the Rock Creek Park Nature Center?" A summary of the responses from the 68 groups who responded is listed in Table 8 below.

**What visitors
liked least
about the
nature center**

Table 8: What visitors liked least about Nature Center

N=42 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Nothing	11
Limited exhibits	3
Restrooms not clean	3
Stuffed animal exhibit	2
Planetarium closed	2
Lack of exhibits	2
Needed more plant information	2
Improve water taste/fountain	2
Other comments	15

Visitor understanding of park's national significance

Visitor groups were asked, "As a result of your visit, do you have a better understanding of why Rock Creek Park is nationally significant?" Forty-five percent of visitors said they do have a better understanding of Rock Creek Park's national significance (see Figure 80). Forty-three percent of visitors said they did not understand the significance and 12% were "not sure."

Visitors who said they had a better understanding of Rock Creek Park's significance were then asked what, in their opinion, was most significant or special about Rock Creek Park. Many visitor groups (232) made responses, which are shown in Table 9.

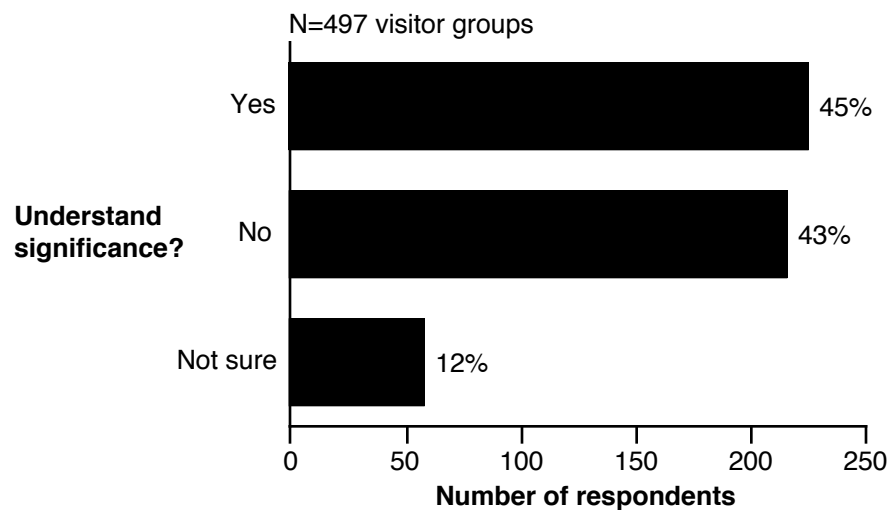


Figure 80: Visitors' understanding of park significance after visiting

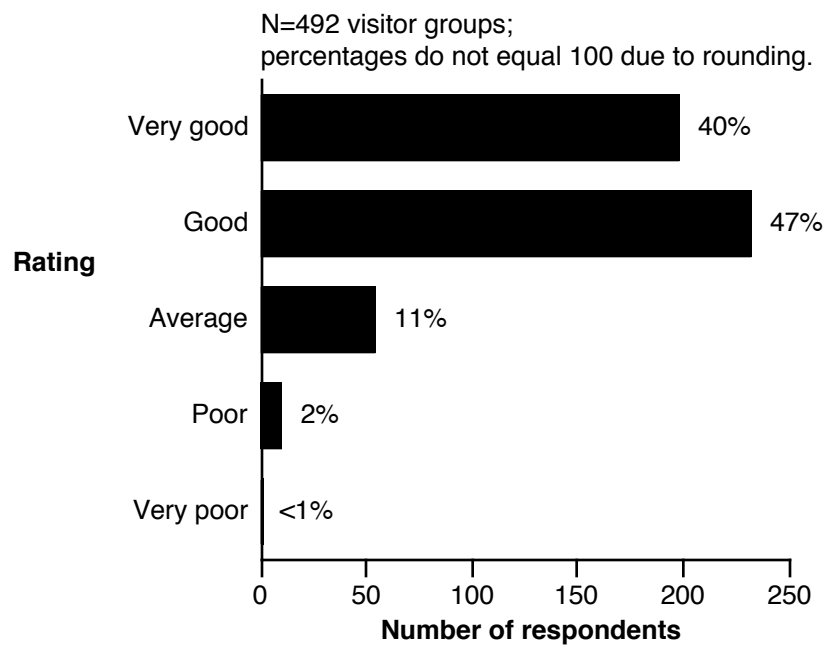
Table 9: Significance of Rock Creek Park

N=399 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Offers green space in Washington, D.C.	94
Natural beauty	43
Natural environment	42
Easy access	19
Urban location	18
Recreation	16
Trails	13
Provides escape	12
History	10
Quiet	10
Away from traffic	9
Wildlife	9
Golf course	8
Large size	8
Well maintained	7
Solitude	7
Diversity	6
Environmental education	5
Safety	5
Close to home	5
Preservation	5
Improves quality of life	5
Peacefulness	4
The creek	4
Unique	4
Clean air	3
Foresight to preserve it	3
Provides exercise opportunities	3
Relaxation	3
Free	2
Informative rangers	2
Old Stone House	2
Tennis courts	2
The arts	2
Other comments	9

**Overall quality of
visitor services**

Visitor groups were asked to the overall quality of the visitor services provided during their visit to Rock Creek Park. Many visitors (87%) rated the services as "very good" or "good," as shown in Figure 81. Less than one percent rated the services as "very poor."



**Figure 81: Overall quality of visitor services
at Rock Creek Park**

Visitor groups were asked "On this visit, what did you and your group like most about your visit to Rock Creek Park?" A summary of the responses from the 449 groups who responded is listed in Table 10 below and in the Appendix.

What visitors liked most about their park visit

Table 10: What visitors liked most

N=730 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Friendly/helpful staff	11
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Open-air theater	17
Nature center	4
Ranger programs	4
Environmental Education opportunities	2
Planetarium	2
Other comments	4
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
Trails	62
Golf course	27
Well maintained park	10
Recreation facilities	9
Old Stone House	7
Easy parking	6
Picnic areas	6
Tennis courts	4
Road conditions	3
Water fountains	2
Other comments	6
POLICIES	
Closing streets for pedestrian use	22
No user fees	4
Other comments	2
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Natural environment qualities	69
Trees	16
Wildlife	11
Creek	10
Fresh air	8
Shade	5
Flower gardens	4
Landscaping	4
Community gardens	4
Sound of creek	2
Other comment	1

Comment	Number of times mentioned
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Natural beauty	84
Quiet	39
Opportunities for solitude	25
Easily accessible	25
Peace	22
Clean	21
Escape from city	20
Large open space	18
Urban location	17
Open space for pets	14
Lack of traffic	13
Safe environment	11
Exercise opportunities	10
Wildness qualities	10
Concerts	8
Walking opportunities	7
Relaxation	6
History of area	5
Visiting with fellow dog owners	4
Not overcrowded	3
Weather	3
Everything	3
Rollerblading opportunities	3
Biking opportunities	3
Atmosphere	2
Other comments	6

Visitor groups were asked "On this visit, what did you and your group like least about your visit to Rock Creek Park?" A summary of the responses from the 324 groups who responded is listed in Table 11 below and in the Appendix.

What visitors liked least about their park visit

Table 11: What visitors liked least

N=416 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Police harassment	6
Golf course employee	3
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Lack of general park information	11
Lack of information signs	6
Lack of trail signs	5
Absence of trail mile markers	2
Other comments	2
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
Litter	31
Trail maintenance conditions	24
Lack of available drinking water	16
Golf course needs improvements	13
Restroom maintenance	13
Lack of restrooms	5
Road maintenance	5
Lack of lighting	4
Sporting field maintenance	3
Hard seats	3
Lack of parking	3
Lack of public telephones	2
Other comments	11
POLICIES	
Leash law	7
Bicycles not allowed on trails	3
Stricter enforcement of rules	2
Close park too early	2
Other comments	6
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Biting insects	9
Deterioration of flora and fauna	3
Other comments	5

Comment	Number of times mentioned
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Nothing	75
Traffic	61
Crowds	10
Inconsiderate visitors	8
Not enough time	6
Traffic noise	6
Loud radios	5
Noise pollution	4
Weather	4
Foul odor	3
Vagrants	3
Owners not cleaning up after pets	3
Not feeling safe	3
Difficult to navigate around park	3
Survey	2
Other comments	14

Visitor groups were asked "If you were a park manager planning for the future of Rock Creek 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 in Table 12 below and in the Appendix.

Planning for the future

Table 12: Planning for the future

N=604 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Provide additional staff	9
Provide better quality staff	2
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Provide more general park information	16
Provide more information signs	16
Add more children's programs	14
Add volunteer program	14
Provide better maps	10
Encourage more use of Carter Baron Amphitheater	6
Add more park programs	5
Provide more event advertising	4
Provide more entertainment	4
Improve public relations	4
Provide historical tours	3
Increase special events	3
Other comments	8
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
Improve trails	38
Improve bike path	25
Improve golf course	22
Add more water fountains	21
Add more restrooms	10
Better road maintenance	10
Additional trash cans	9
Add more picnic areas	7
Improve restroom maintenance	7
Add bike lanes on roads	6
Add trail mile markers	6
Provide more playground equipment	5
Proved better overall park maintenance	5
Clean up litter	5
Provide better parking	5
Make drinking water available year-round	3
Add more public phones	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE (continued)	
Restore Pierce Mill	3
Build swimming pool	3
Upgrade all facilities	3
Improve picnic area maintenance	2
Increase night lighting	2
Increase historic preservation	2
Improve maintenance at Carter Baron Amphitheater	2
Improve maintenance of fountains/sculptures	2
Develop a camping area	2
Improve sporting facilities	2
Improve tennis courts	2
Other comments	7
POLICIES	
Reduce/restrict traffic	62
Continue current traffic plan	19
Permanently close streets to traffic	18
Increase enforcement of rules and regulations	17
Block construction of cell phone tower	15
Designate unleashed area for dogs	7
Relax leash laws	6
Manage for recreation opportunities	6
Legalize mountain biking	4
Seek a larger budget	3
Limit group sizes	2
Ban dogs	2
Extend park hours	2
Expand park boundaries	2
Provide rental equipment	2
Other comments	6
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Maintain natural resources	17
Preserve native wildlife	4
Clean waterway	4
Preserve native flora	2
Stabilize stream bank erosion	2
Provide more fish	2
Eliminate sewer overflow	2
Remove fallen trees	2
Other comments	5
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
No changes	28
Improve safety	11
Add more vendors/vending machines	7
Improve public transit to park	2
Other comments	5

Thirty-three percent of visitor groups (186 groups) wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments about Rock Creek Park are summarized in Table 13 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 13: Additional comments

N=260 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Staff friendly/helpful	8
Police unfriendly/rude	4
Police friendly/helpful	3
Need more personnel	2
Need more police	2
Golf course staff friendly/helpful	2
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Offer more ranger guided activities	2
Other comments	5
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
Need more trash cans/more frequent trash pick-up	5
Make trail improvements	4
Need more directional signs	3
Add paths, especially along roadsides	3
Clean up after horses	2
Clean up creek	2
Clean, well maintained	2
Grass needs mowed	2
Add lights/reflectors to roads	2
Manage trees (trim/replace)	2
Like facilities	2
Fix drinking fountains/add more drinking fountains or sell water	2
Other comments	10

Comment	Number of times mentioned
POLICIES	
Against cell phone towers	6
Too much traffic	6
Traffic goes too fast	6
Keep cars off road on weekends	5
Daily free concerts at Carter Barron Amphitheater	5
Close off roads to traffic	4
Allow dogs in Battery Kemble Park	2
Other comments	14
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Retain natural character	5
Golf course needs repairs/improvements	4
No more development	3
Other comments	2
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Enjoyed park	40
Nice resource in middle of city	21
Return visit	12
Keep up the good work	8
Beautiful	6
Glad it exists	6
Enjoy nature	4
Favorite park in D.C.	4
Feels safe	3
Enjoy wildlife	3
Could be more valuable	3
Great place to jog/run/exercise	3
Don't change anything	2
Brings renewal	2
Like the water	2
Enjoyed watching people	2
Other comments	7

Rock Creek Park Additional Analysis VSP Report 112

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

Additional Analysis

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

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| • Sources of information | • Age | • Importance of interpretive services |
| • Forms of transport | • State of residence | • Quality of interpretive services |
| • Length of stay in park | • Country of residence | • Reasons for visiting |
| • Activities | • Number of visits | • Importance of park features/ qualities |
| • Seasons visited | • English primary language? | • Types of ranger-led programs preferred |
| • Sites visited | • Languages spoken | • Interest in learning about park |
| • First/return visit | • Ethnicity | • Preferred methods to learn |
| • Frequency of visit - return visitors | • Race | • Preferred subjects to learn |
| • With guided tour/educational group | • Use of visitor facilities | • Visit nature center? |
| • Group size - guided tour/ educational group | • Importance of visitor facilities | • Reasons for visiting nature center |
| • Group size - immediate group | • Quality of visitor facilities | • Future interest in attending performance at Carter Barron |
| • Group type | • Use of interpretive services | • Understand park significance better after visit? |
| | | • Overall quality |

Database

The VSP database is currently under development, but requests can be handled through Washington State University, by contacting the VSP.

Phone/send requests to:

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

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

QUESTIONNAIRE

Visitor Services Project Publications

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

1982

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

1983

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

1985

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

1986

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

1987

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

1988

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

1989

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

1990

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

1991

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

1992

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

1993

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

Visitor Services Project Publications (continued)**1994**

- 64. Death Valley National Monument Backcountry (winter)
- 65. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (spring)
- 66. Anchorage Alaska Public Lands Information Center
- 67. Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts
- 68. Nez Perce National Historical Park
- 69. Edison National Historic Site
- 70. San Juan Island National Historical Park
- 71. Canaveral National Seashore
- 72. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (fall)
- 73. Gettysburg National Military Park (fall)

1995

- 74. Grand Teton National Park (winter)
- 75. Yellowstone National Park (winter)
- 76. Bandelier National Monument
- 77. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve
- 78. Adams National Historic Site
- 79. Devils Tower National Monument
- 80. Manassas National Battlefield Park
- 81. Booker T. Washington National Monument
- 82. San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
- 83. Dry Tortugas National Park

1996

- 84. Everglades National Park (spring)
- 85. Chiricahua National Monument (spring)
- 86. Fort Bowie National Historic Site (spring)
- 87. Great Falls Park, Virginia (spring)
- 88. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer)
- 89. Chamizal National Memorial
- 90. Death Valley National Park (fall)
- 91. Prince William Forest Park (fall)

1997

- 92. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer & fall)
- 93. Virgin Islands National Park (winter)
- 94. Mojave National Preserve (spring)
- 95. Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historical Park (spring)
- 96. Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial
- 97. Grand Teton National Park
- 98. Bryce Canyon National Park
- 99. Voyageurs National Park
- 100. Lowell National Historical Park

1998

- 101. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve (spring)
- 102. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (spring)
- 103. Cumberland Island National Seashore (spring)
- 104. Iwo Jima/Netherlands Carillon Memorials
- 105. National Monuments & Memorials, Washington, D.C.
- 106. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, AK
- 107. Whiskeytown National Recreation Area
- 108. Acadia National Park

1999

- 109. Big Cypress National Preserve (winter)
- 110. San Juan National Historic Site, Puerto Rico (winter)
- 111. St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
- 112. Rock Creek Park

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