
Visitor Services Project
Death Valley National Monument
Backcountry

Visitor Services Project Report 64
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



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Report 64

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Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Western Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank the staff and volunteers at Death Valley National Monument and the Death Valley '49ers, Inc. 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 Death Valley National Monument Backcountry

Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a backcountry visitor study at Death Valley National Monument during March 21-27, 1994. A total of 292 questionnaires were distributed and 262 returned, a 90% response rate.
- This report profiles Death Valley backcountry visitors. A separate appendix has visitors' comments about their visit; this report and the appendix contain a comment summary.
- Visitors were often in family groups (42%) or friends groups (29%). Groups often consisted of two people (45%). The most common visitor ages were 36-50 years old (36%), 21-35 years old (24%) and 15 years or younger (12%). Most (56%) were repeat visitors to the park. International visitors comprised 9% of all visitors. Forty-nine percent of international visitors came from Germany and 16% from Canada. United States visitors came from California (59%) and Oregon (20%) and many other states.
- Common activities for visitors were visiting at scenic areas (97%), day hiking on trails (74%), visiting mining ruins/historic sites (73%), picnicking (45%), driving dirt roads in vehicles other than 4x4's (45%) and driving dirt roads in 4x4's (44%).
- The community the greatest proportion of visitors drove through just before entering the park was Trona (29%). The most used backcountry areas were Titus Canyon and Mosaic/Grotto Canyons (each 43%). Of all backcountry areas, more visitors stopped first at Mosaic/Grotto Canyons (24%).
- Most visitors stayed two to four days in the Death Valley area (64%); 21% stayed 6 days or more. Visitors identified their reasons for visiting as seeing desert scenery (96%), experiencing wilderness and open space (82%), enjoying recreation (81%) and enjoying solitude and quiet (78%).
- The most important features to visitors' backcountry experience were hiking on trails (80%), restroom and garbage disposal facilities (63%), dirt roads passable by vehicles other than 4x4 (56%), open camping (55%), and developed campsites/campgrounds (55%). Several features were not considered important to visitors' backcountry experience: motorcycle riding (80%), using horses and pack animals (73%), and permitting pets in the backcountry (66%).
- Visitors were asked how the number of people they saw in the park's backcountry compared with what they expected. The largest proportion of visitors said it was "about as crowded as I expected" (37%).
- Visitors rated road directional signs and the park brochure/map as the most used and most important services.
- Most visitors (64%) said maps would be the most useful informational item during a future visit. The educational topics most visitors said would be important to them during a future visit were geology and history.
- Visitors made many additional comments.

<p>For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact Dr. Gary E. Machlis, Sociology Project Leader, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Moscow, Idaho 83844-1133 or call (208) 885-7129.</p>

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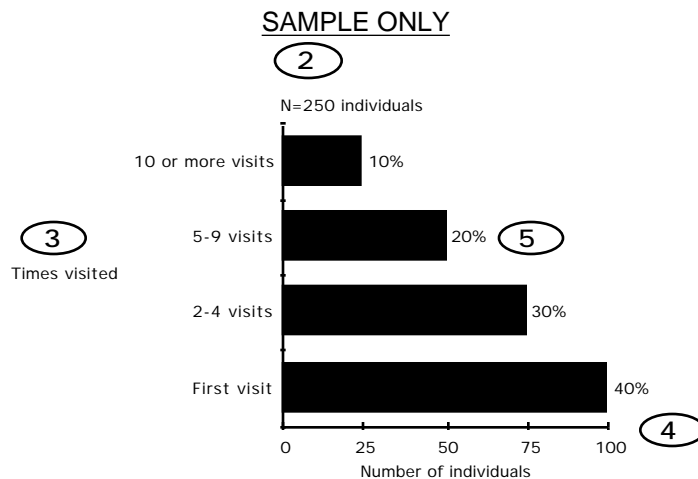
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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of backcountry visitors to Death Valley National Monument (referred to as "Death Valley"). This visitor study was conducted March 21-27, 1994. The study was conducted 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, which includes a summary of visitor comments. Next, a Menu for Further Analysis helps managers request additional analyses. The final section has a copy of the Questionnaire. The separate appendix includes a comment summary and the 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. 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

Interviews were conducted and questionnaires distributed to a sample of selected backcountry visitors using Death Valley National Monument during March 21-27, 1994. Visitors completed the questionnaire during or after their trip and then returned it by mail.

The questionnaire design used the standard format of previous Visitor Services Project studies. See the end of this report for a copy of the questionnaire.

Visitors were sampled as they entered various backcountry locations including West Side Road, Harry Wade Road, Hole-in-the-Wall Road, Golden Canyon, Mosaic Canyon, Grotto Canyon, Butte Valley, Saline Valley, Teakettle Junction, Marble and Cottonwood Canyons, Eureka-Dunes Road, Echo Canyon and Titus Canyon.

Visitor groups were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study and asked to participate. If visitors agreed, the interview took approximately two minutes. These interviews included determining group size, group type and the age of the adult who would complete the stamped questionnaire. This individual was asked his or her name, address and telephone number for the later mailing of a reminder-thank you postcard.

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.

Data analysis

Returned questionnaires were coded and entered into a computer. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were calculated using a standard statistical software package. Respondents' comments were summarized.

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 261 groups, Figure 6 presents data for 752 individuals. A note above each figure's graph specifies the information illustrated. Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions, or may have answered some incorrectly. Unanswered questions create missing data and cause the number in the sample to vary from figure to figure. For example, although 262 questionnaires were returned, Figure 1 shows data for only 261 respondents.

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

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

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 as they visit the park.
2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of March 21-27, 1994. The results do not necessarily apply to visitors using other sites in the park or 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.

During the week of March 21-27, 1994, weather conditions included winds reaching 60 mph, snow below 4000 feet and rain. This may have affected the number of visitors visiting the monument and visitors' length of stay. Some backcountry areas were closed during part of the week, so some visitors were not able to visit places they had planned to see.

**Special
Conditions**

RESULTS

Visitors contacted

A total of 305 visitor groups were contacted; 96% accepted questionnaires. Two hundred sixty-two visitor groups completed and returned their questionnaires, a 90% response rate.

Table 1 compares information collected from the total sample of visitors contacted and the actual respondents who returned questionnaires. Non-response bias was insignificant.

Table 1: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondent (years)	287	42.7	261	42.6
Group size	292	3.3	261	3.8

Demographics

Figure 1 shows group sizes, which varied from one person to forty people. Forty-five percent of visitors came in groups of two people; 25% came in groups of three or four. Forty-two percent of visitors came in family groups, as shown in Figure 2. Twenty-nine percent were in groups of friends. "Other" groups included educational groups, boyfriend/girlfriend and business associates.

Visitors were asked whether they were with a group during this visit. The sampling method used may have under-represented the number of groups (see Figures 3-5). Read these figures with caution.

Figure 6 shows the varied age groups; the most common was visitors aged 31-50 (45%). Children aged 15 or younger made up 12% of the visitors. Most visitors (56%) had visited Death Valley before, but 44% were first-time visitors (see Figure 7).

Visitors from foreign countries comprised 9% of all visitation. Map 1 and Table 2 show that most international visitors came from Germany (49%) and Canada (16%). Most United States visitors came from California (59%) and Oregon (20%), with smaller proportions from 26 other states (see Map 2 and Table 3).

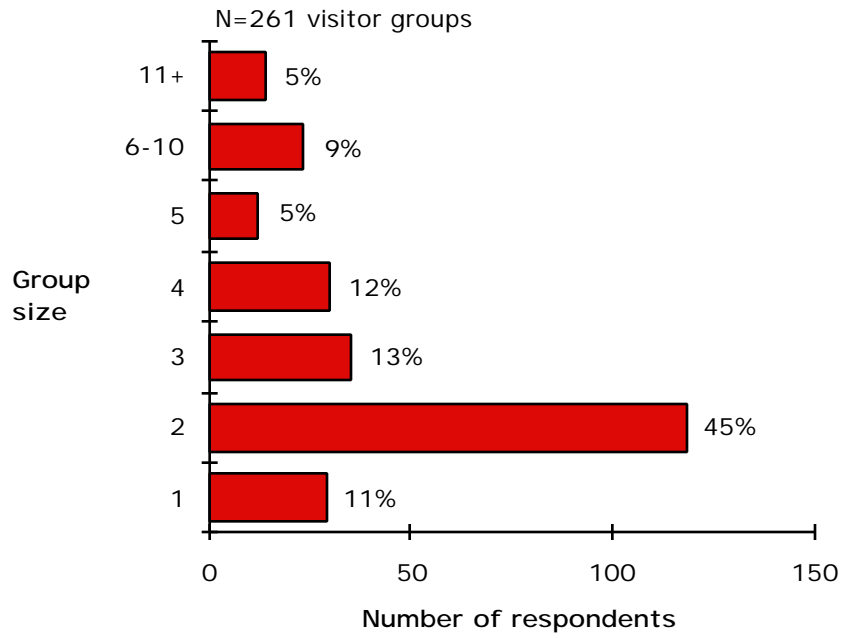


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

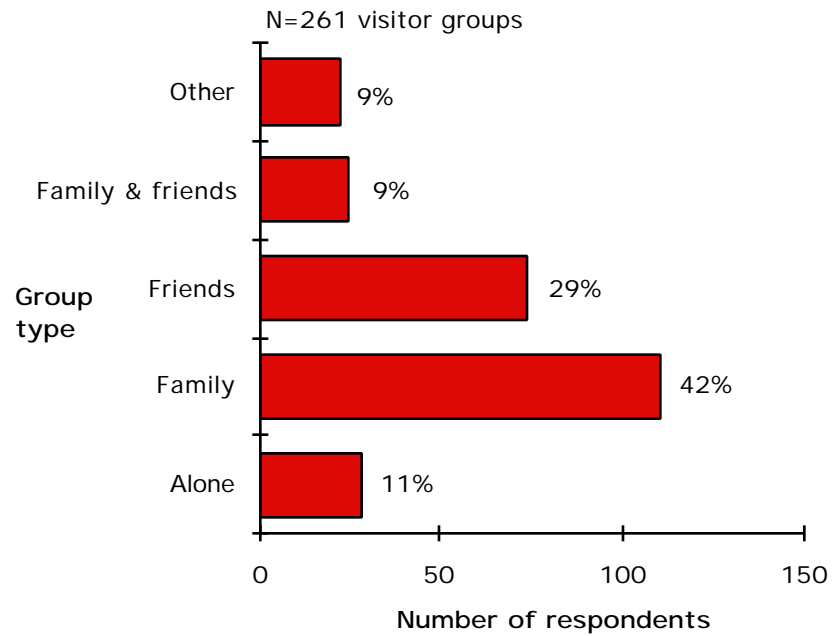


Figure 2: Visitor group types



Figure 3: Visitors with guided tour groups

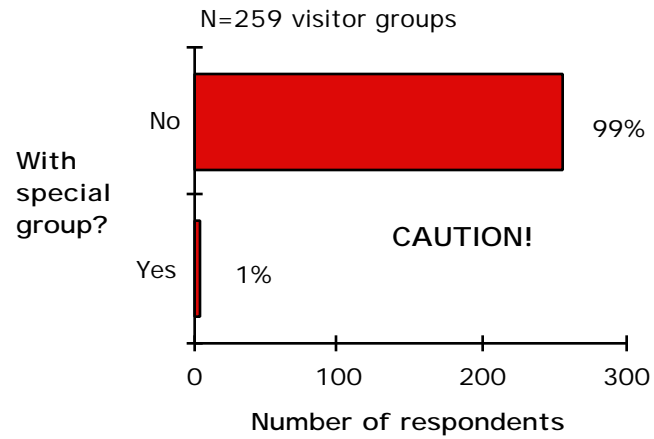


Figure 4: Visitors with scout, community or church groups



Figure 5: Visitors with educational field trips

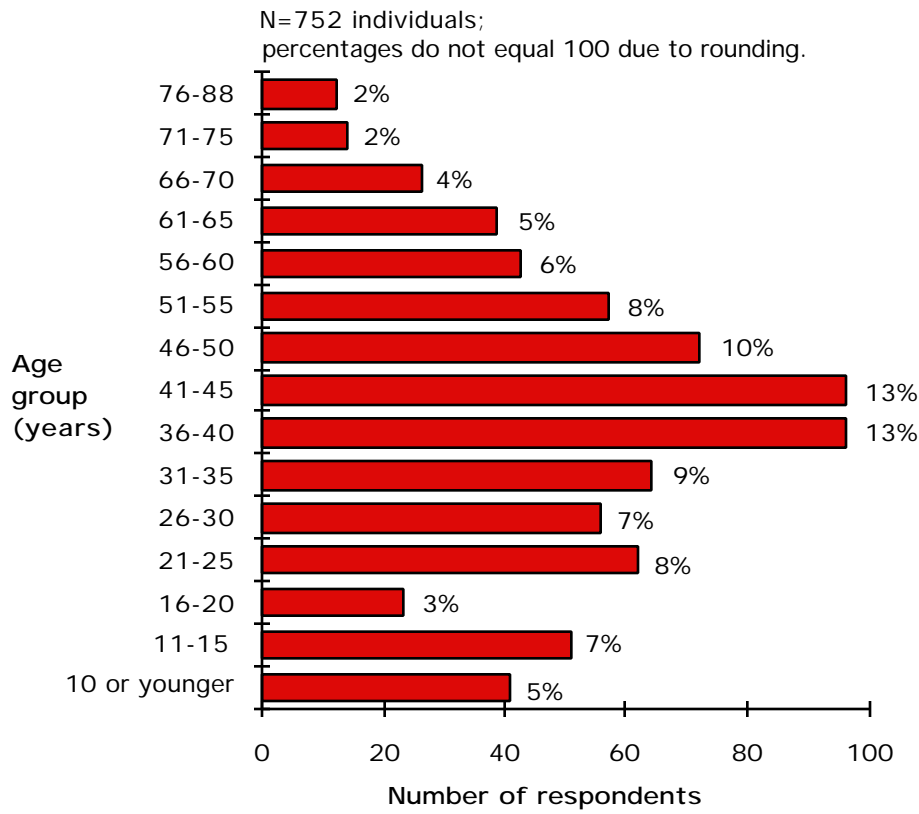


Figure 6: Visitor ages

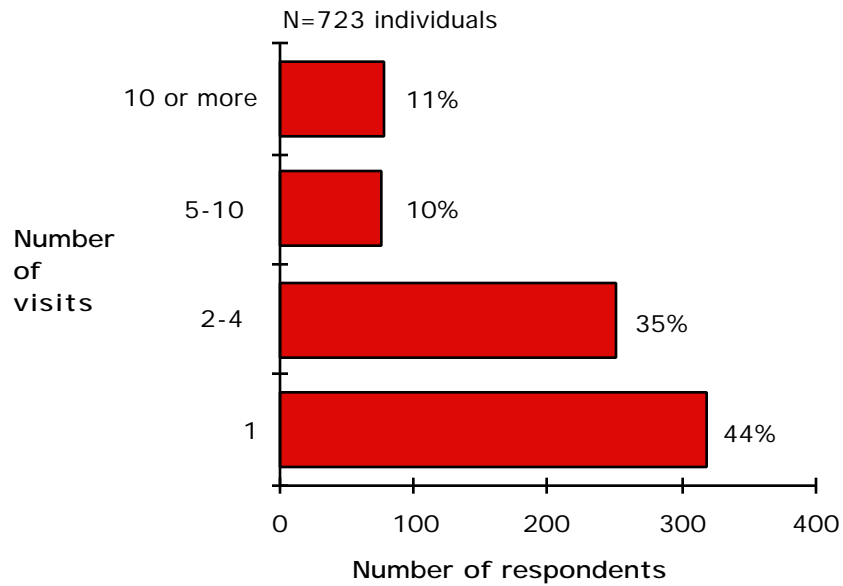


Figure 7: Number of visits

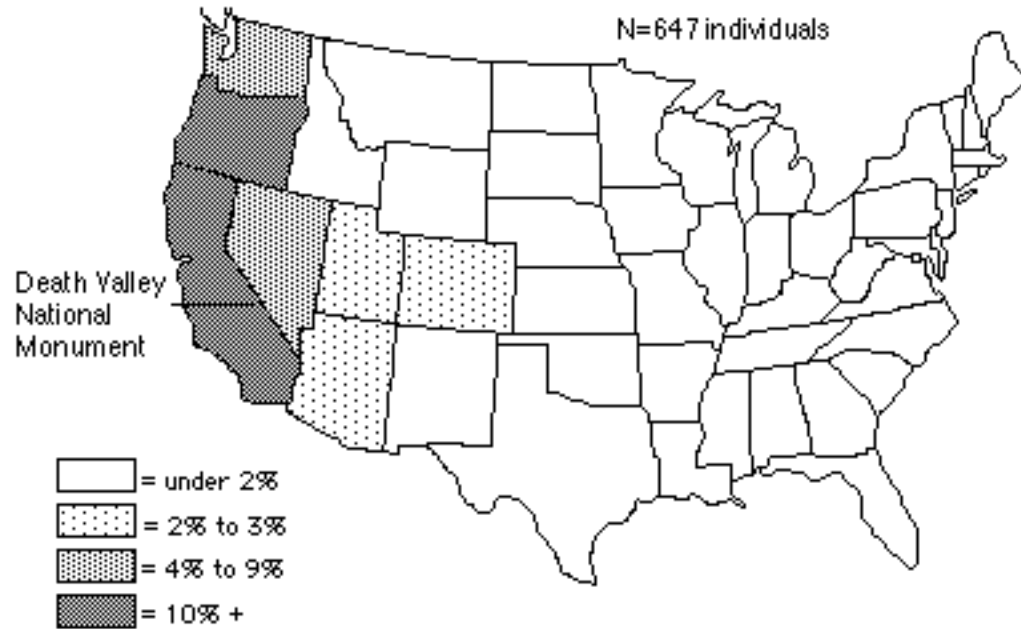


Map 1: Proportion of international visitors by country

Table 2: Visitors by country of residence

N=67 individuals
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Country	Number of individuals	% of international visitors
Germany	33	49
Canada	11	16
United Kingdom	9	13
France	3	5
Greece	2	3
Switzerland	2	3
India	2	3
Argentina	1	2
Belgium	1	2
Brazil	1	2
Chile	1	2
Italy	1	2



Map 2: Proportion of visitors from each state

Table 3: Proportion of visitors from each state

N=647 individuals
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	% of U.S. visitors
California	379	59
Oregon	126	20
Washington	24	4
Nevada	23	4
Utah	16	3
Arizona	13	2
Colorado	11	2
Massachusetts	7	1
Nebraska	6	1
New York	5	1
Pennsylvania	5	1
Connecticut	4	1
New Jersey	4	1
Tennessee	4	1
Other states (14)	20	3

Length of stay

Visitors were asked how long they stayed in the park on this visit. Almost half of the visitors (48%) stayed two to three days (see Figure 8). Twenty-one percent stayed six or more days. Because only fifteen groups reported staying less than one day, Figure 9 should be read with caution.

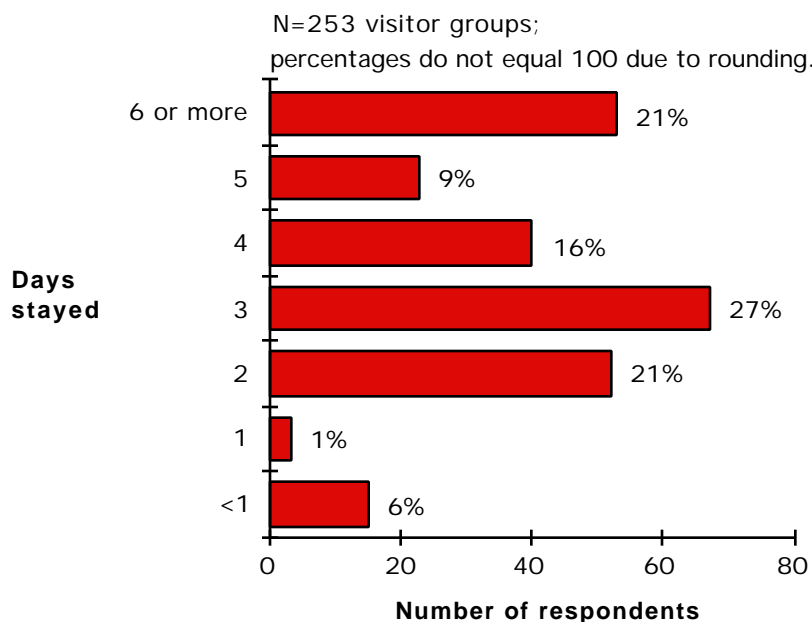


Figure 8: Length of stay (days)

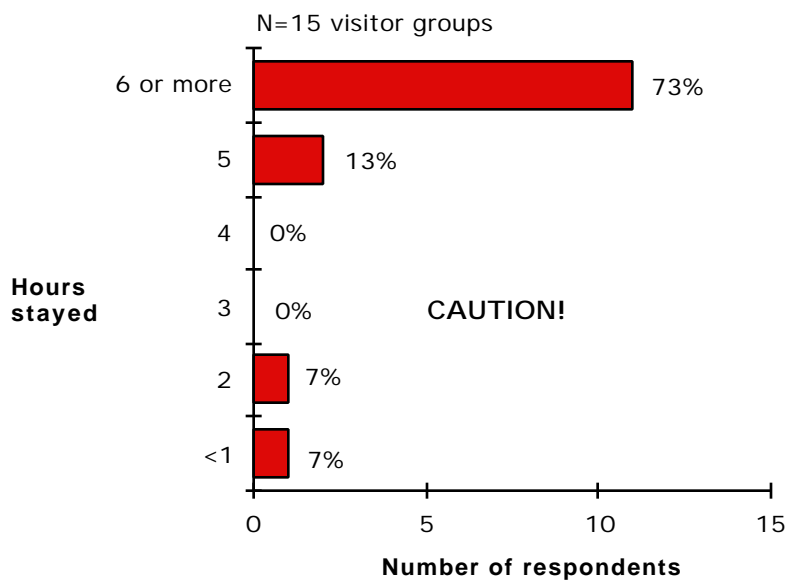


Figure 9: Length of stay (less than one day)

Figure 10 shows the proportion of visitor groups who participated in various activities during this visit. Common activities were visiting scenic areas (97%), day hiking on trails (74%), visiting mining ruins and historic sites (73%), picnicking (45%), driving dirt roads in a vehicle other than a 4 wheel drive (45%), and driving dirt roads in a 4 wheel drive (44%). Fifteen percent of the visitors described "other" activities they pursued, such as camping in front country, taking photographs, viewing wildlife, soaking in hot springs, going to the opera house, and swimming.

Activities

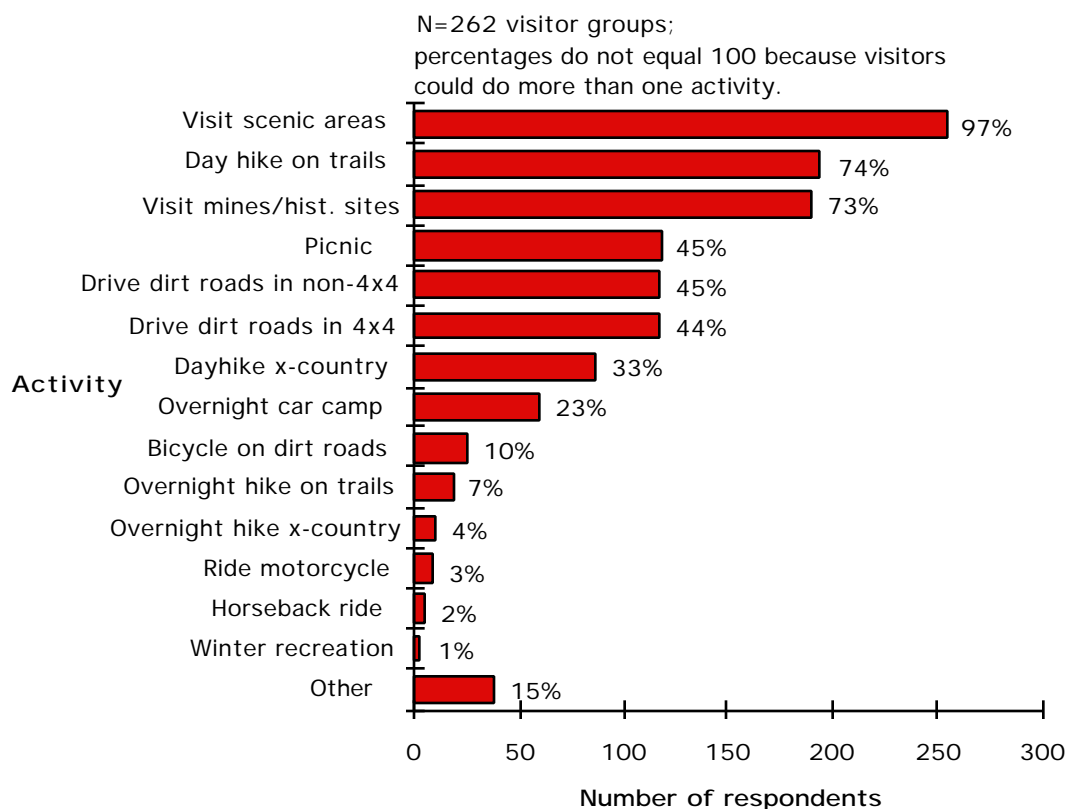


Figure 10: Visitor activities

Last community traveled through

Visitors were asked to identify the last community they traveled through just before entering Death Valley. Trona (29%) was listed by a greater proportion of visitors than any other community, as shown in Figure 11. Also identified were Shoshone (19%), Lone Pine (16%), and Beatty (12%). Visitors traveling to Death Valley went through Baker (4%) less often than other communities.

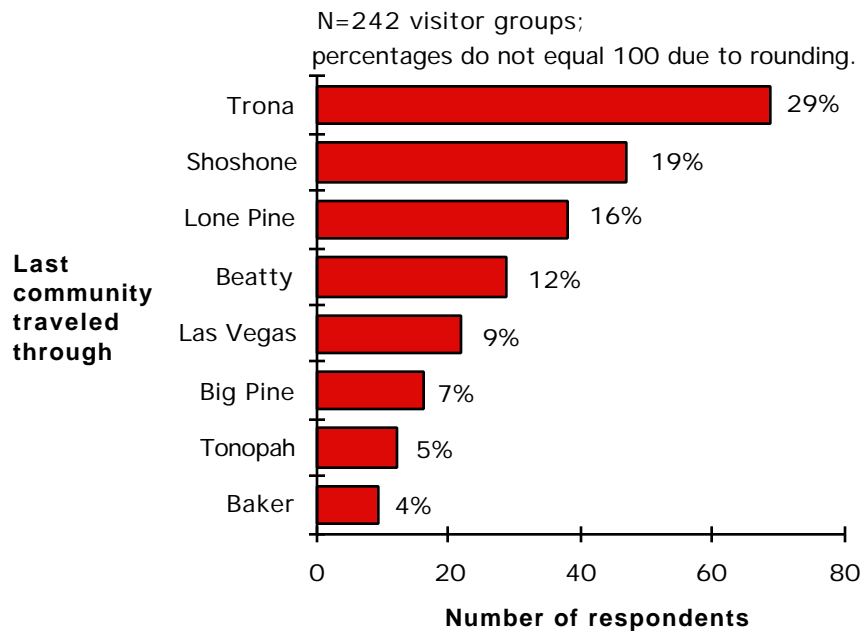


Figure 11: Last community traveled through before Death Valley

Visitors were asked to identify the order in which they visited selected backcountry areas in and around Death Valley. The most visited backcountry areas included Titus Canyon (43%), Mosaic/Grotto Canyons (43%), Saline/Eureka Valley (19%), Echo Canyon/Hole-in-the Wall (19%), and Telescope/Wildrose Peak (19%), as shown in Figure 12. Other areas visitors went to included Golden Canyon, the Sand Dune, Badwater, Natural Bridge Canyon, Keene Wonder Mine and Zabriskie Point. The first backcountry area visitors went to was often Mosaic/Grotto Canyon (24%) or Titus Canyon (21%), as shown in Figure 13.

**Sites
visited**

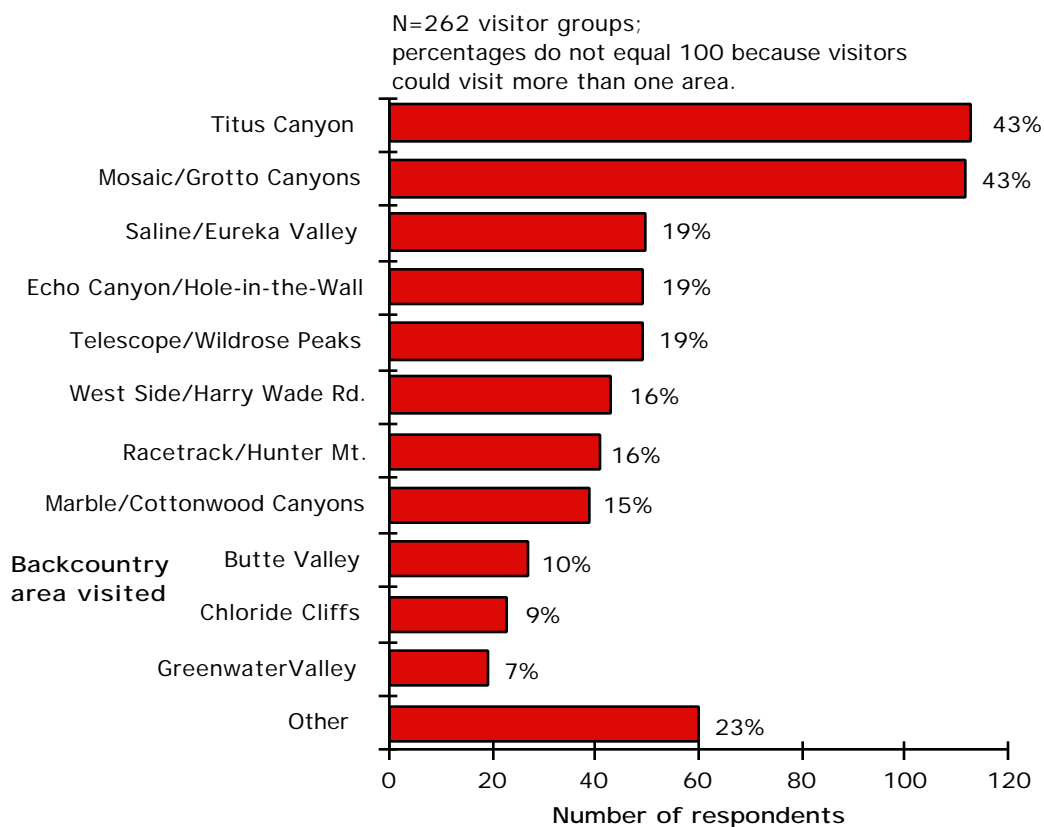


Figure 12: Backcountry areas visited

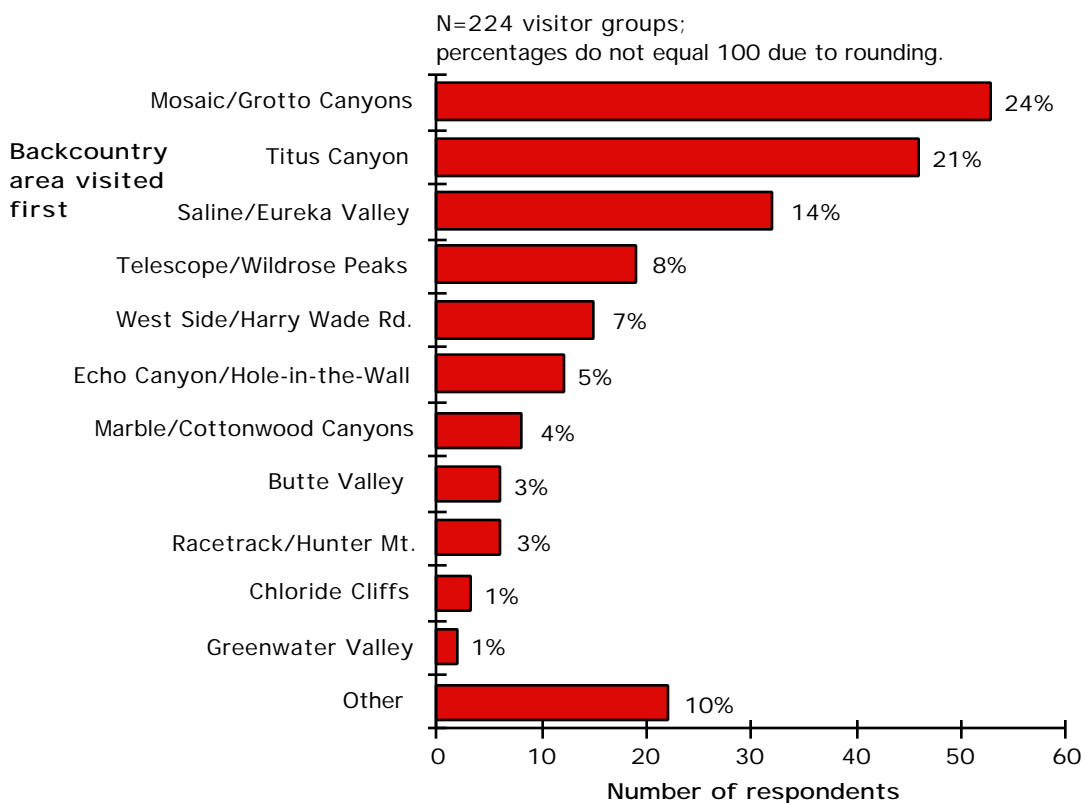


Figure 13: Backcountry areas visited first

Visitors were asked their reasons for visiting Death Valley on this visit. **Reasons for visit**

The most often identified reasons included seeing desert scenery (96%), experiencing wilderness and open space (82%), enjoying recreation such as hiking, driving backcountry roads, and camping in the park (81%), enjoying solitude and quiet (78%), learning about Death Valley history (57%), and viewing/studying desert plants and/or animals (56%), as shown in Figure 14. Sixteen percent of the visitors listed "other" reasons including to take photographs, study geology, enjoy warm and clean air, mountain bike, visit family/friends, and study geography.

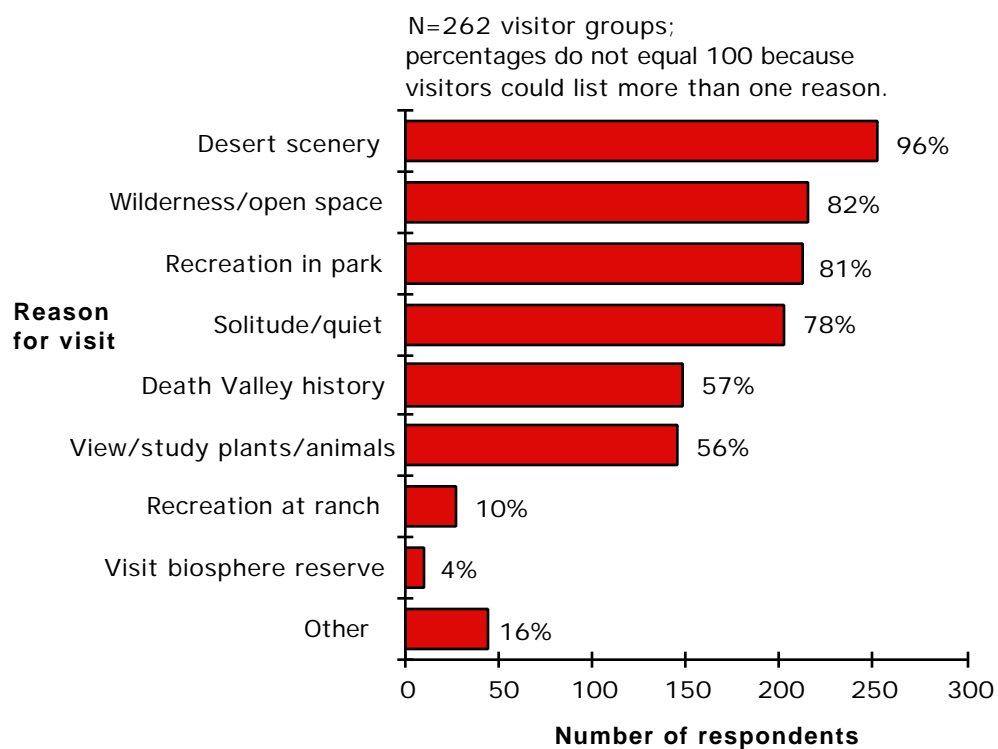


Figure 14: Reasons for visit

Importance of features

Visitors were asked to rate the importance of selected features to their backcountry experience at Death Valley. They used a five point scale (see box below).

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

Figures 15-28 show that several features received the highest "very important" to "extremely important" ratings: hiking on trails (80%), restroom and garbage disposal facilities (63%), dirt roads passable by vehicles other than 4 x 4's, such as passenger cars (56%), open camping, i.e. no designated sites (55%), and developed campsites or campgrounds (55%). "Other" features visitors considered important included: showers; swimming; remote, undeveloped areas; use of Furnace Creek facilities; bike trails; and not allowing RV's in backcountry.

Some features received the highest "not important" ratings: motorcycle riding (80%), using horses and pack animals (73%), permitting pets in backcountry (66%), handicapped accessibility (54%), backcountry cabins (50%), and roads or trails for mountain biking (50%).

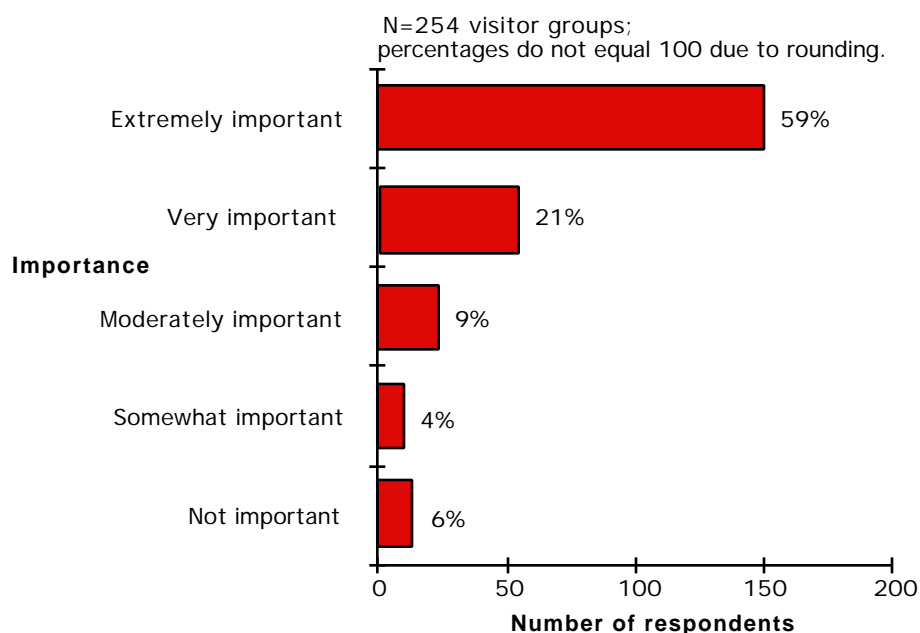


Figure 15: Importance of hiking on trails

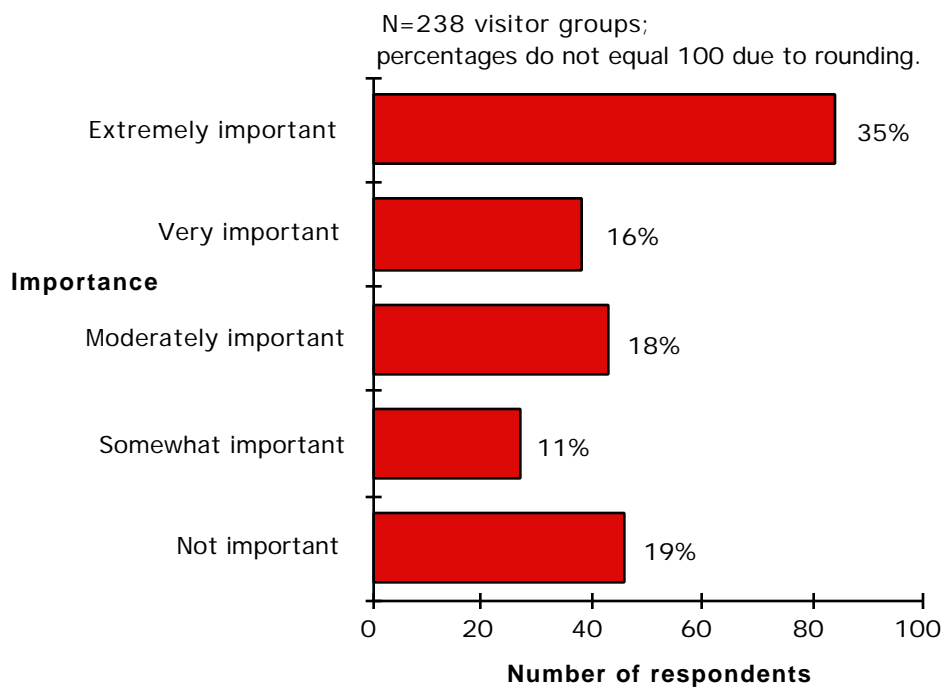


Figure 16: Importance of hiking cross country

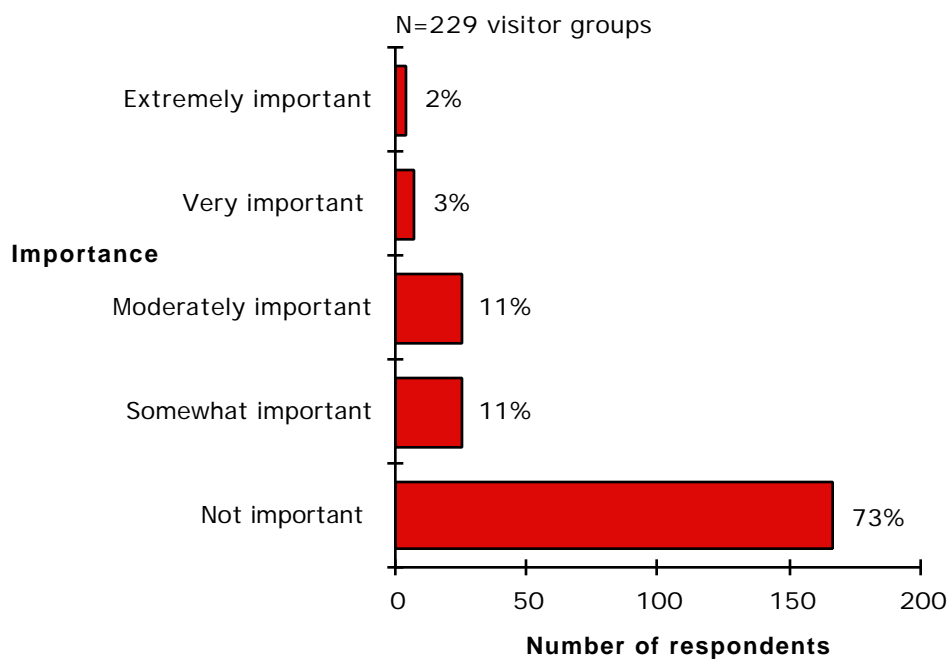


Figure 17: Importance of using horses and pack animals

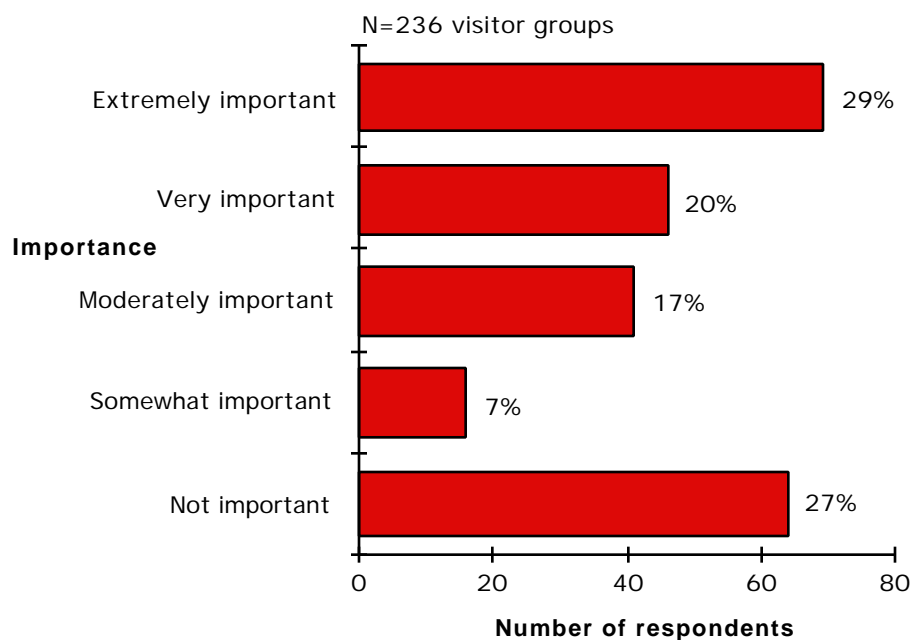


Figure 18: Importance of dirt roads passable only by 4 x 4 vehicles

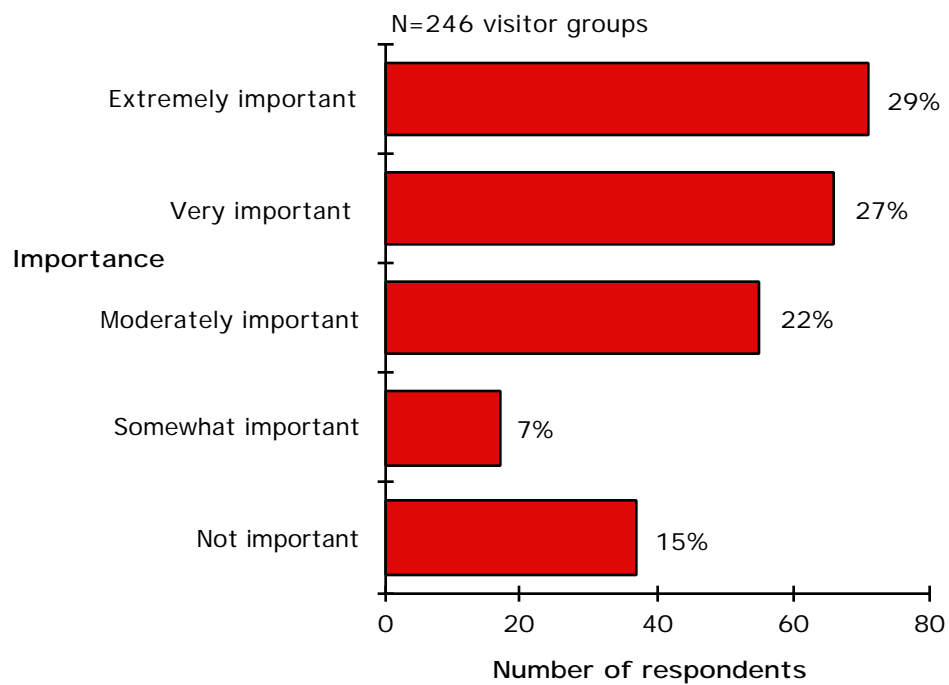


Figure 19: Importance of dirt roads passable by vehicles other than 4 x 4 (passenger cars)

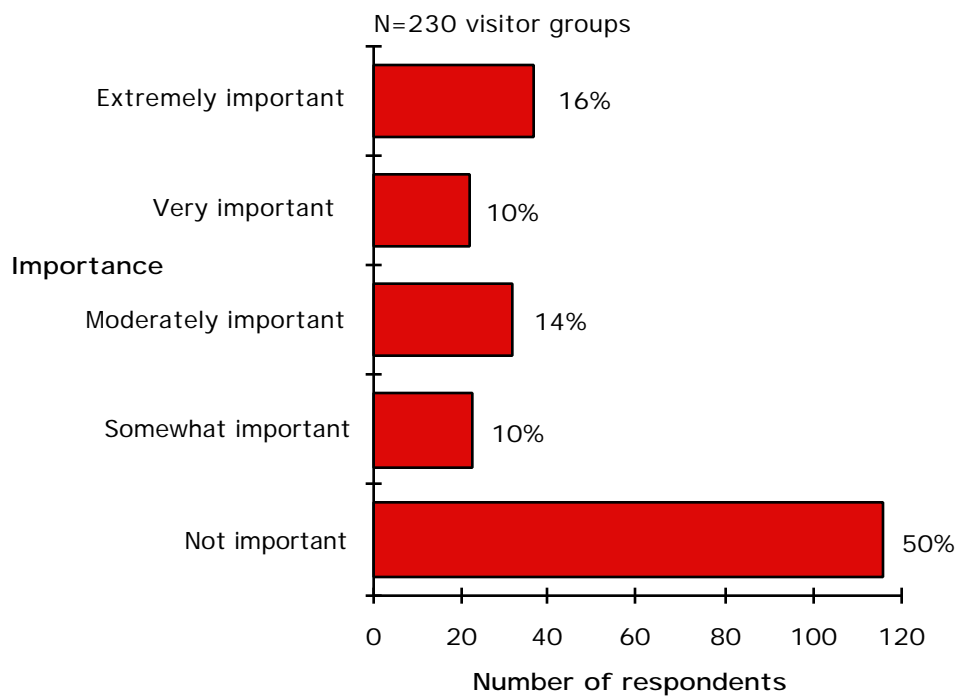


Figure 20: Importance of roads or trails designated for mountain biking

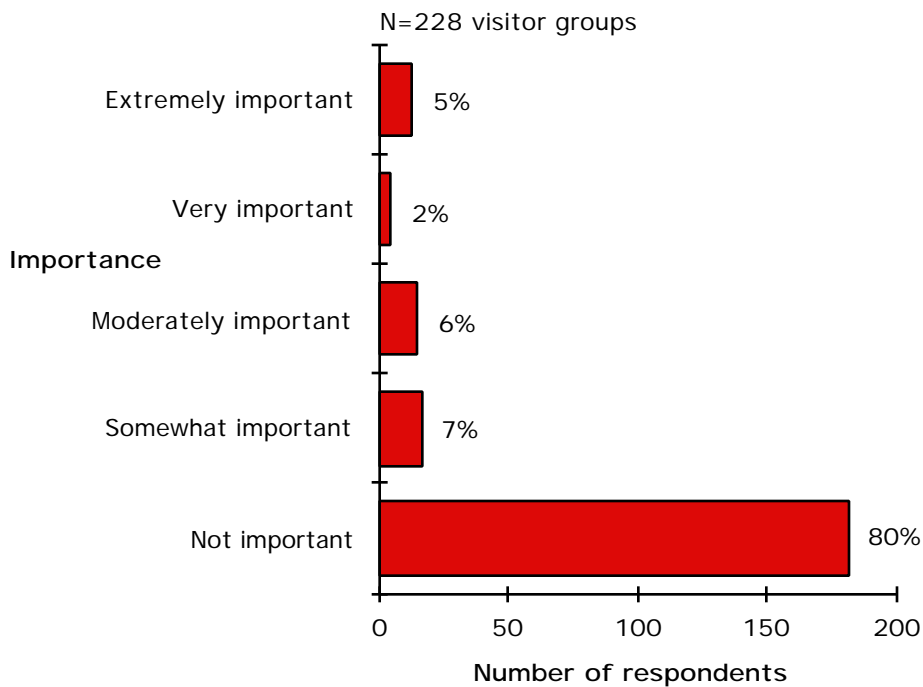


Figure 21: Importance of motorcycle riding

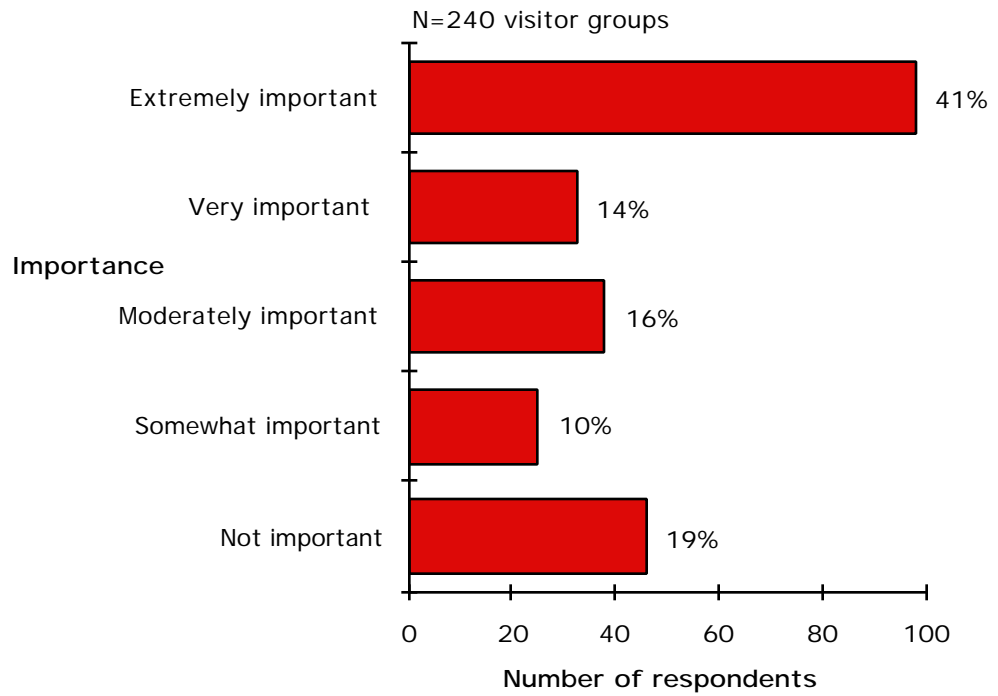


Figure 22: Importance of open camping (no designated sites)

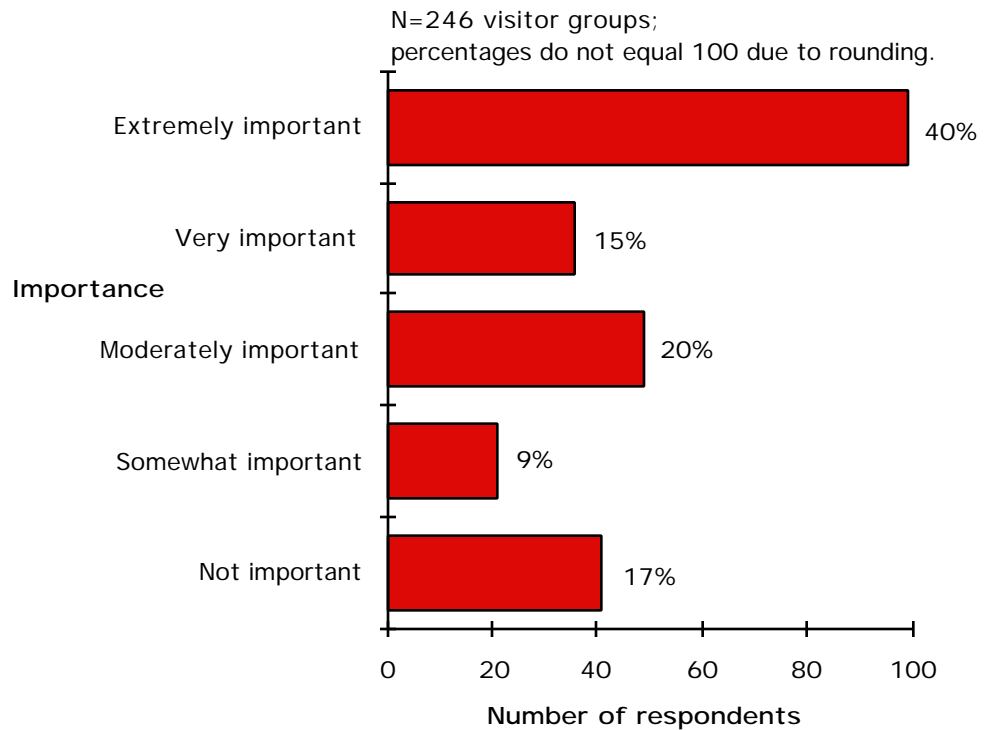


Figure 23: Importance of developed campsites or campgrounds

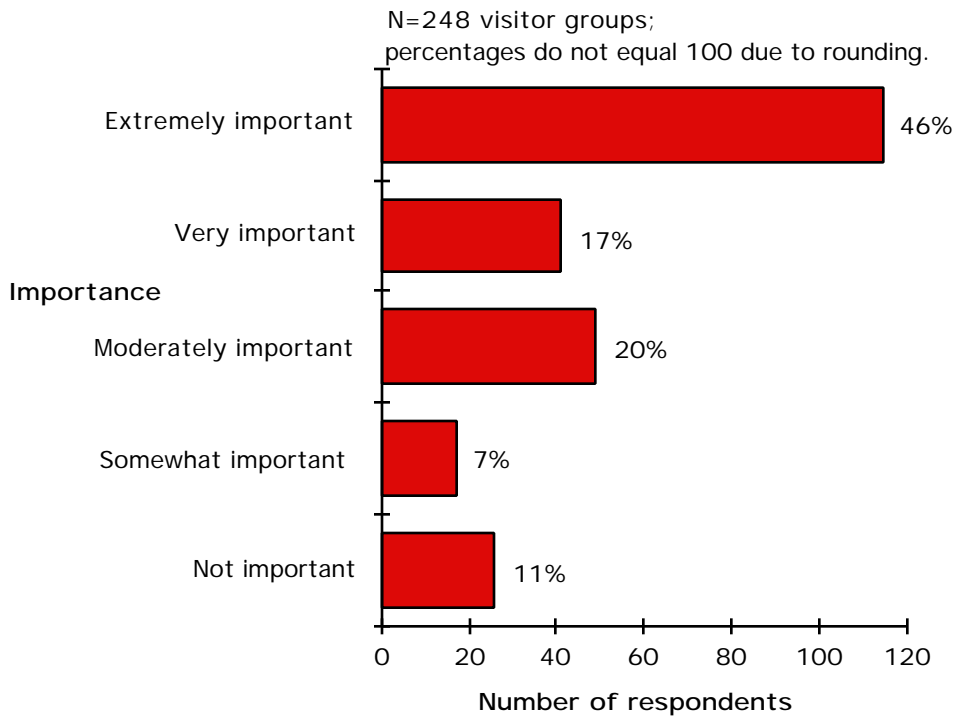


Figure 24: Importance of restroom and garbage disposal facilities

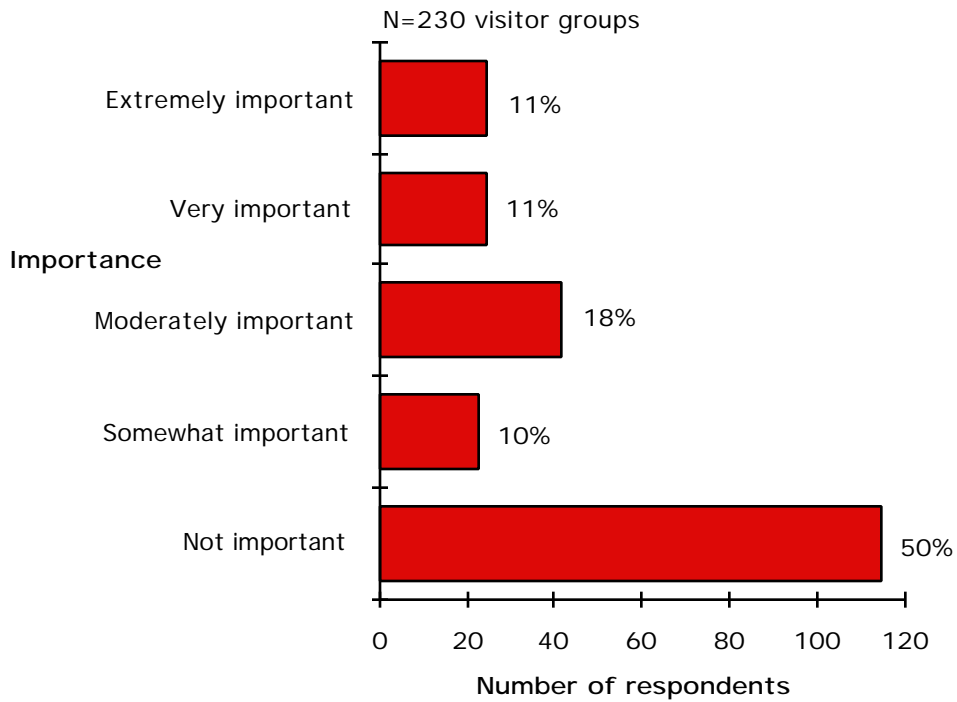


Figure 25: Importance of backcountry cabins

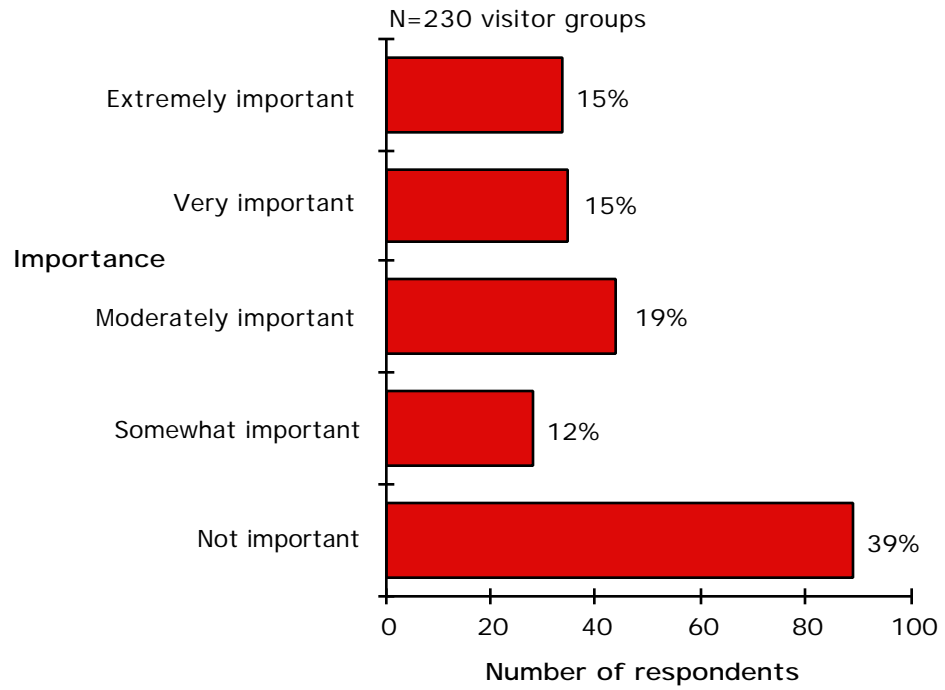


Figure 26: Importance of backcountry picnic areas

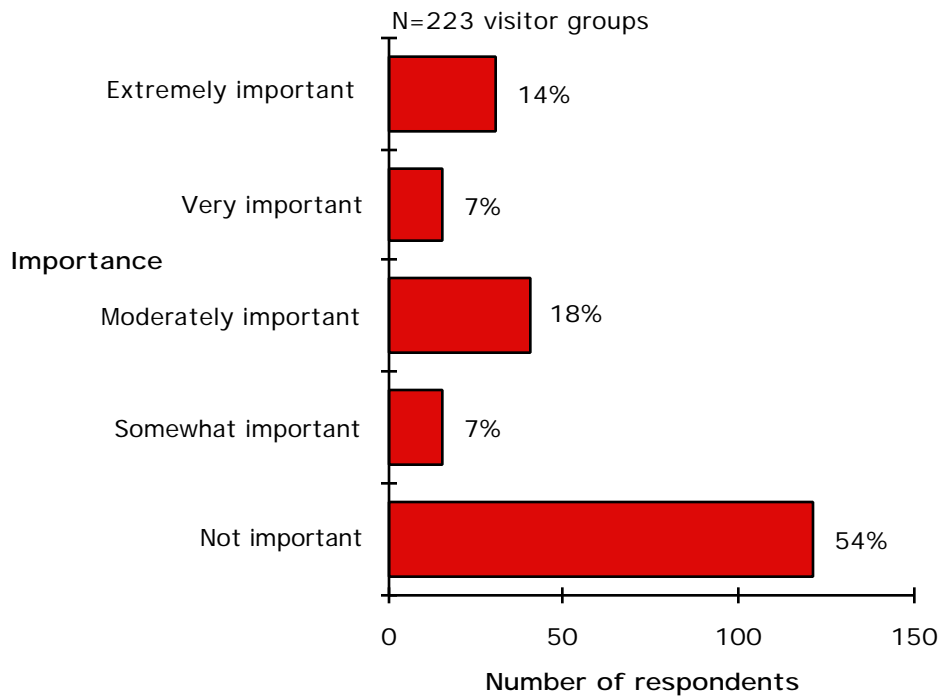


Figure 27: Importance of handicapped accessibility

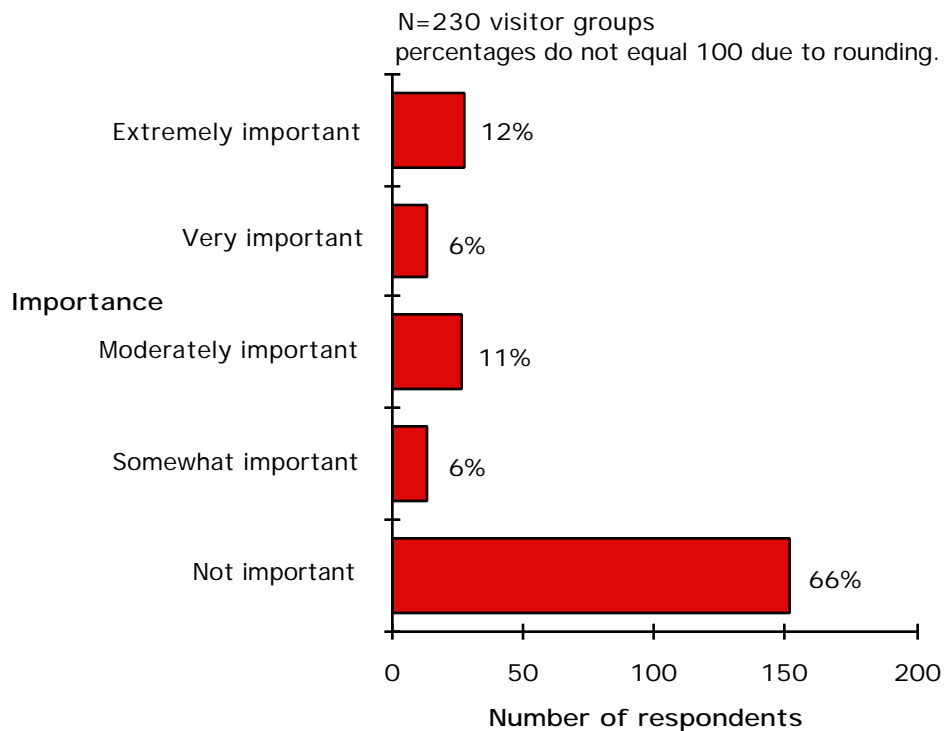


Figure 28: Importance of permitting pets in backcountry

The information services most used by visitors were road directional signs (84%), park brochure/map (81%), ranger personnel (66%), visitor center bookstore (62%), informational handouts and brochures (55%), roadside exhibits (53%) and self-guided trail guides (50%), as shown in Figure 29. The least used service was concession personnel (31%).

Information services: use and importance

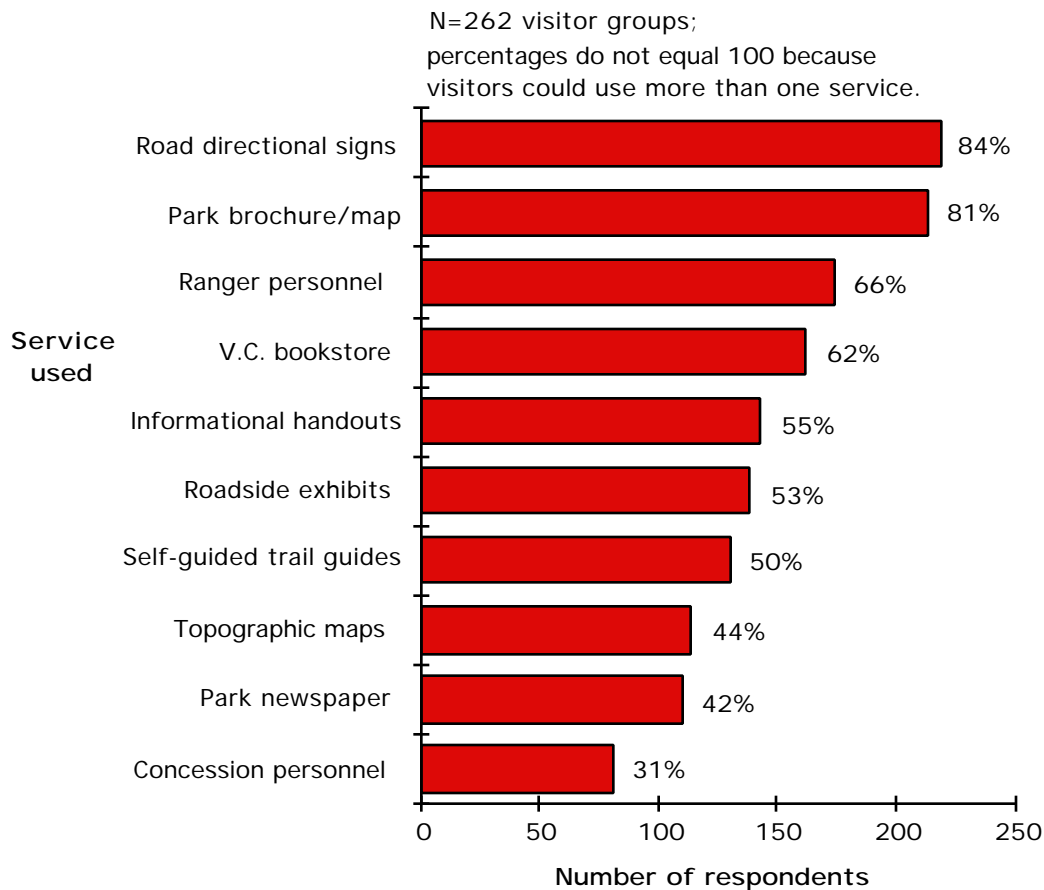


Figure 29: Use of visitor services

Visitors rated the importance of each of the information services they used. They used a five point scale (see box below).

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

Figures 30-38 show that several services received the highest "very important" to "extremely important" ratings: road directional signs (88%), park brochure/map (85%), self-guided trail guides (80%), and topographic maps (80%).

The services which received the highest "not important" ratings were concession personnel (10%) and park newspaper (8%).

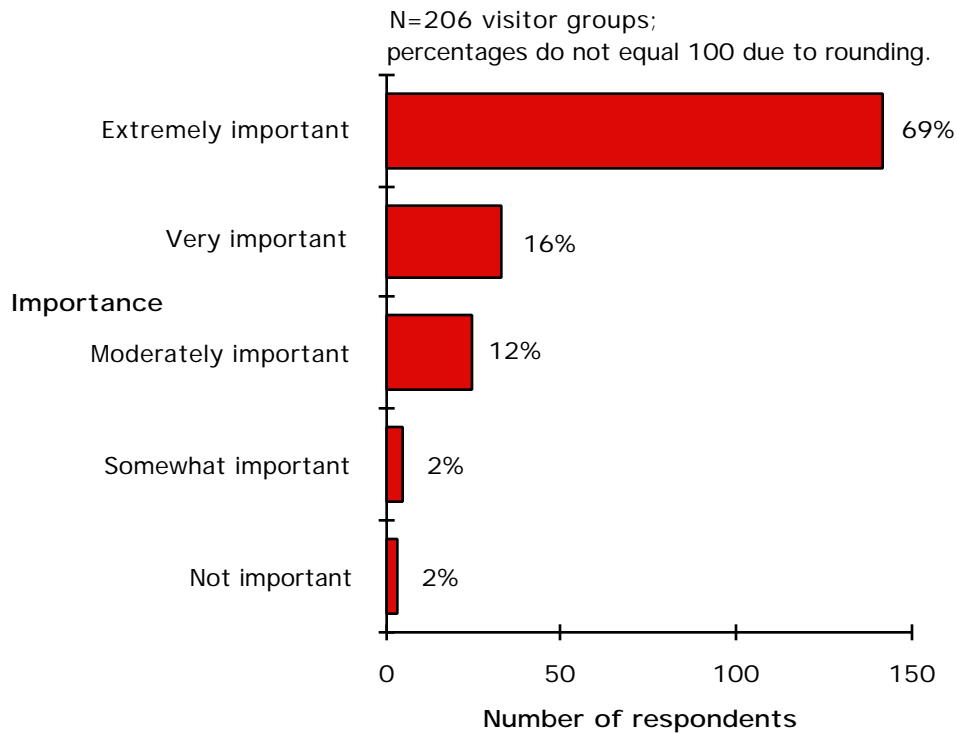


Figure 30: Importance of park brochure/map

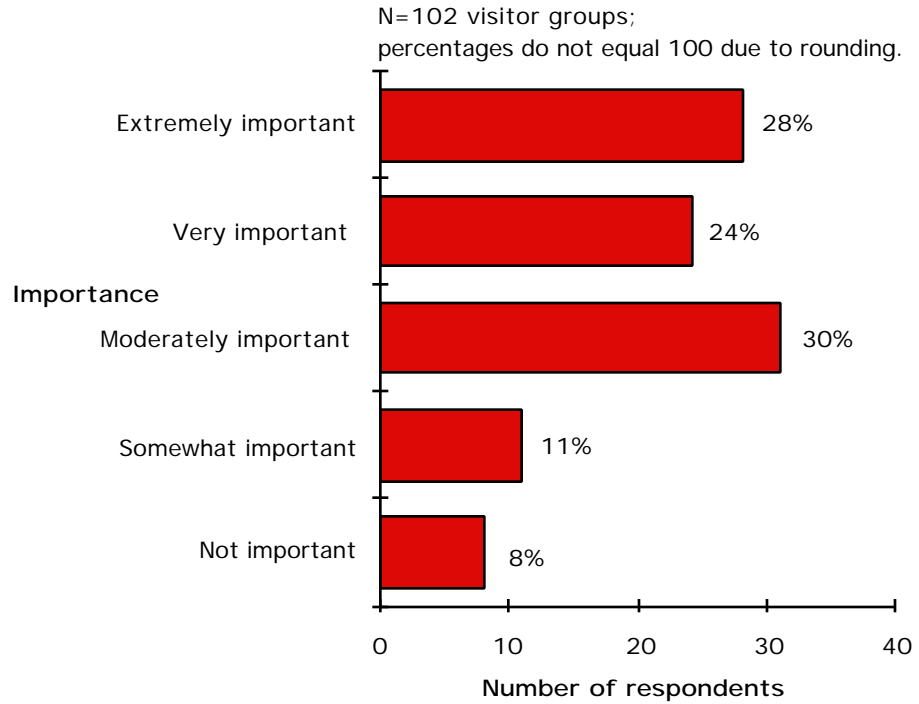


Figure 31: Importance of park newspaper

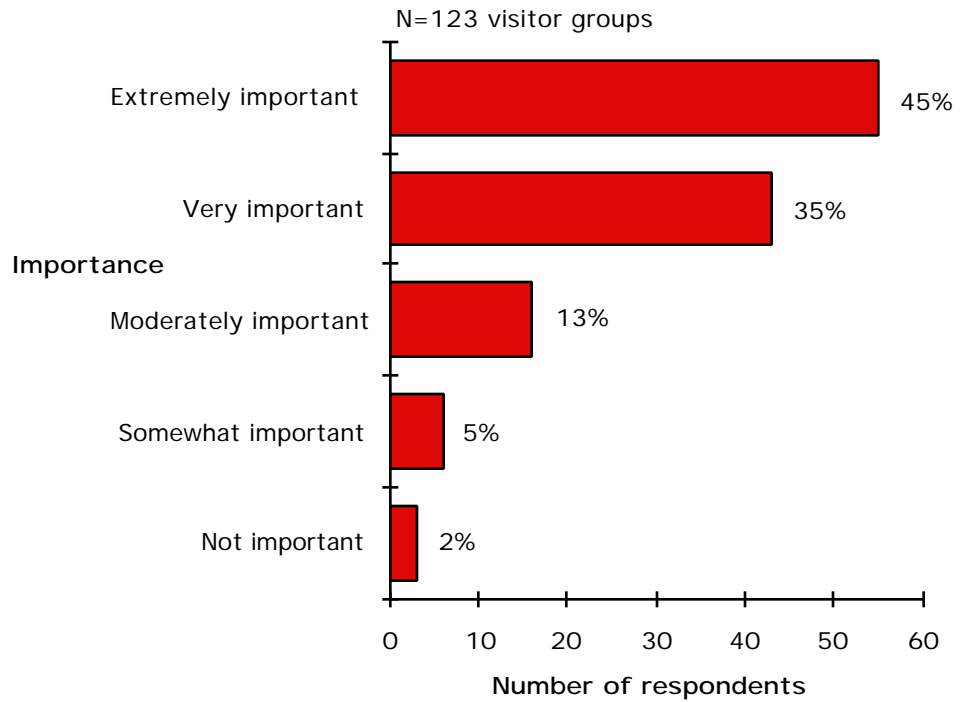


Figure 32: Importance of self-guided trail guides

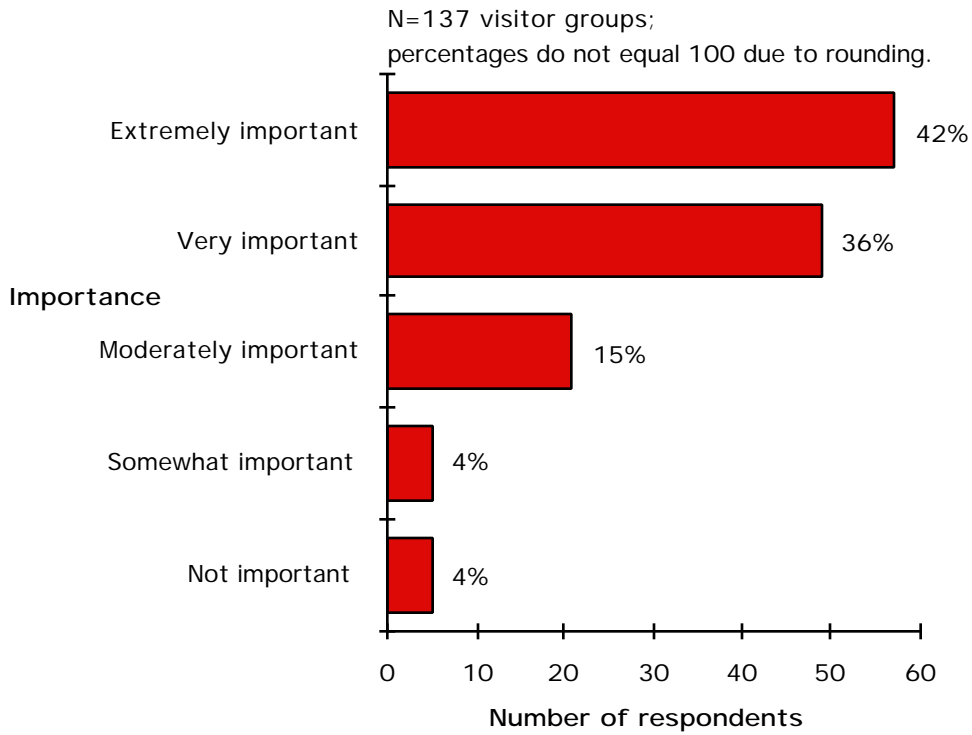


Figure 33: Importance of informational handouts and brochures

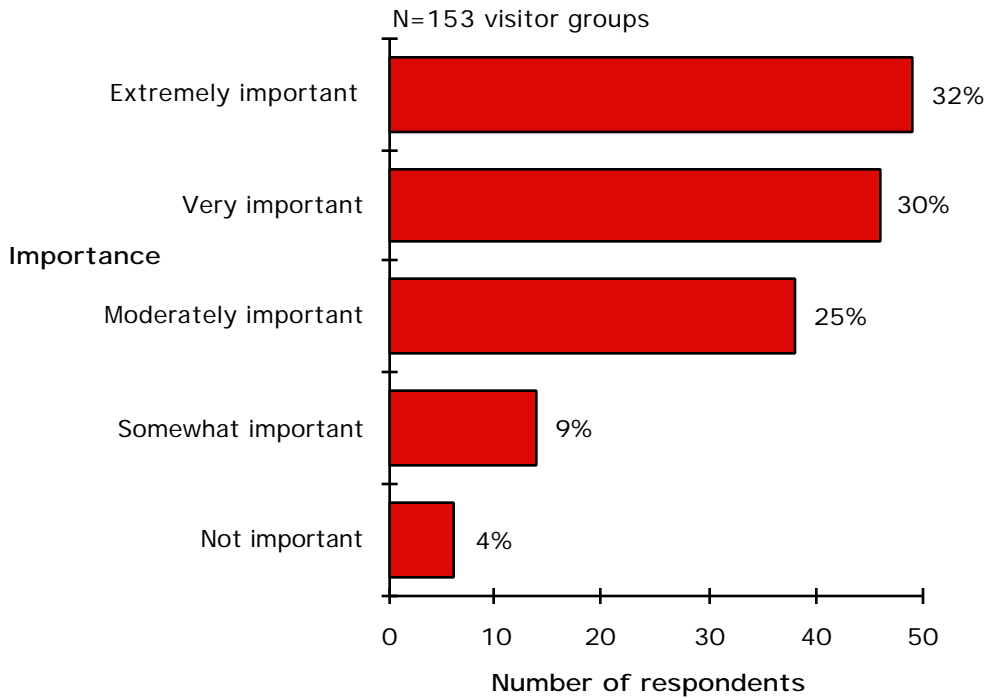


Figure 34: Importance of visitor center bookstore

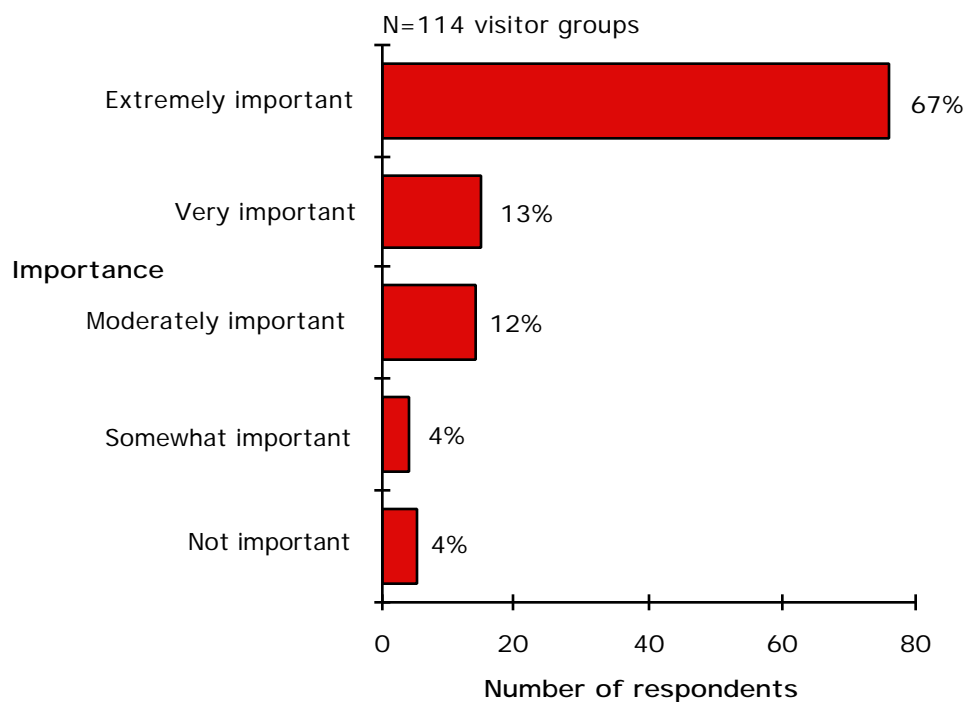


Figure 35: Importance of topographic maps

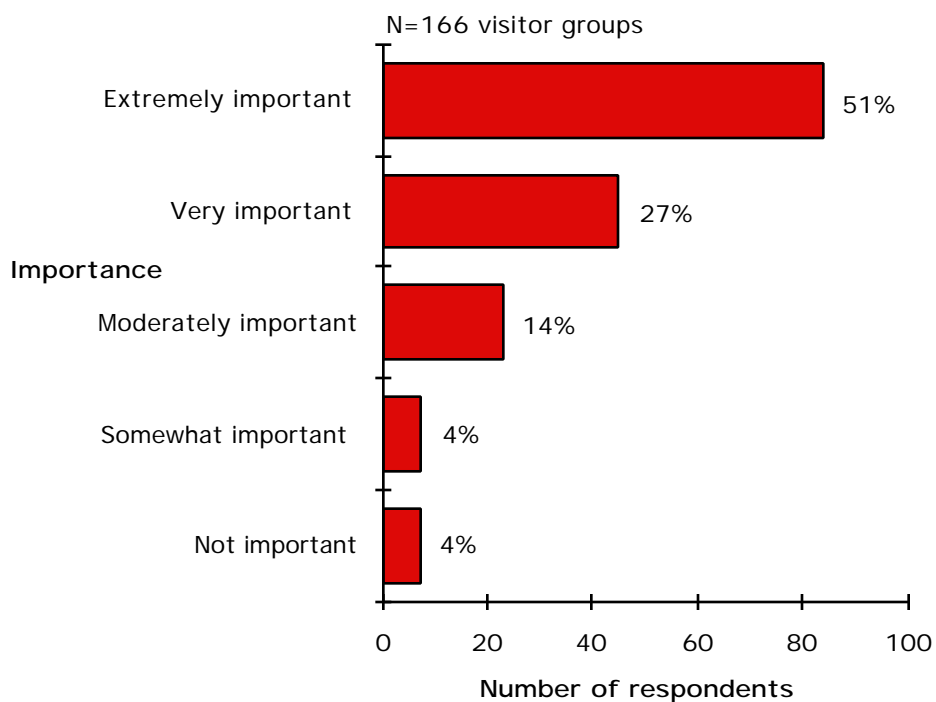


Figure 36: Importance of ranger personnel

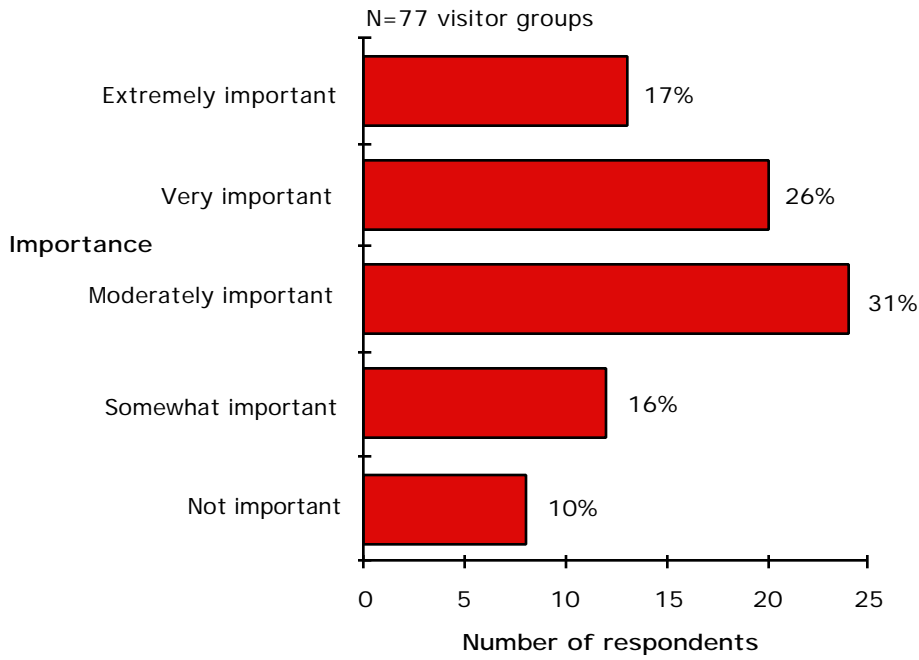


Figure 37: Importance of concession personnel

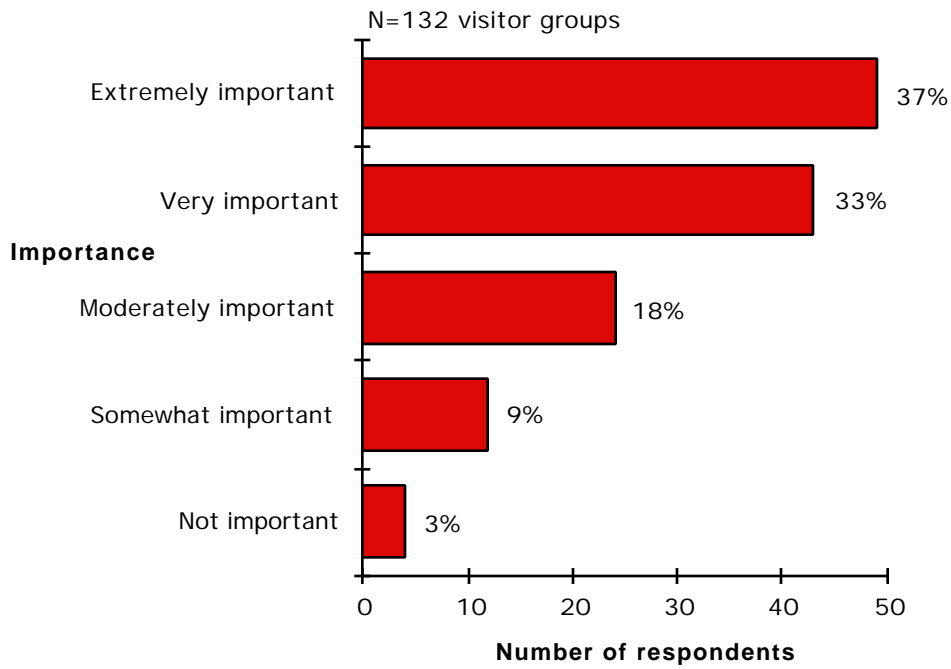


Figure 38: Importance of roadside exhibits

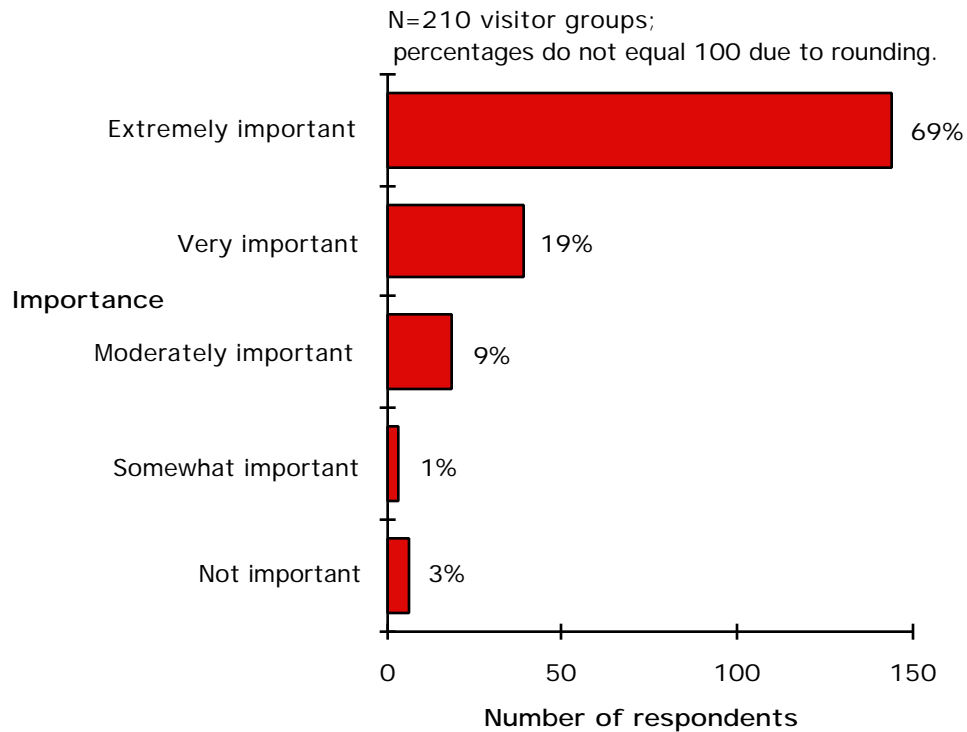


Figure 39: Importance of road directional signs

Visitors were asked "How did the number of people you saw in the park's backcountry compare with what you expected to see?" They selected their answer from a list. The largest proportion of respondents said it was "about as crowded as I expected" (37%), as shown in Figure 40. Nineteen percent said it was "a little more crowded than I expected." Seven percent of the visitors said they "didn't really have any expectations."

Crowding

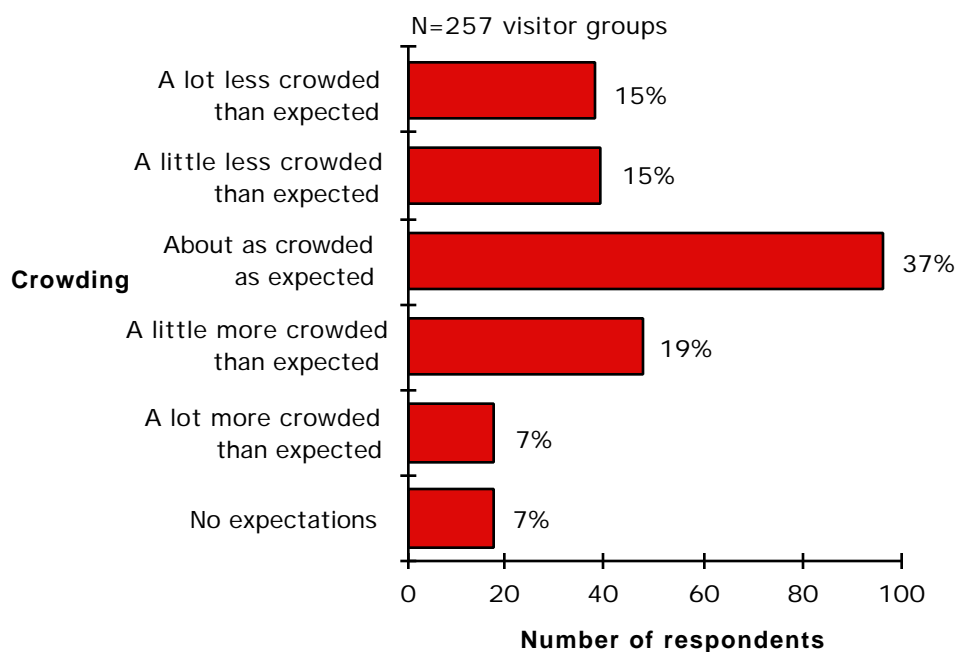


Figure 40: Visitor opinions about crowding in backcountry

Desired features not seen or activities not done and reasons Visitors were asked if there was anything specific which their group wanted to see or do but were not able to see or do. A majority of visitors (52%) said there was not anything they were unable to see or do, as shown in Figure 41. Table 4 lists the features visitors were not able to see or the activities they were not able to do. Table 5 lists the reasons which prevented visitors from seeing or doing what they had planned.

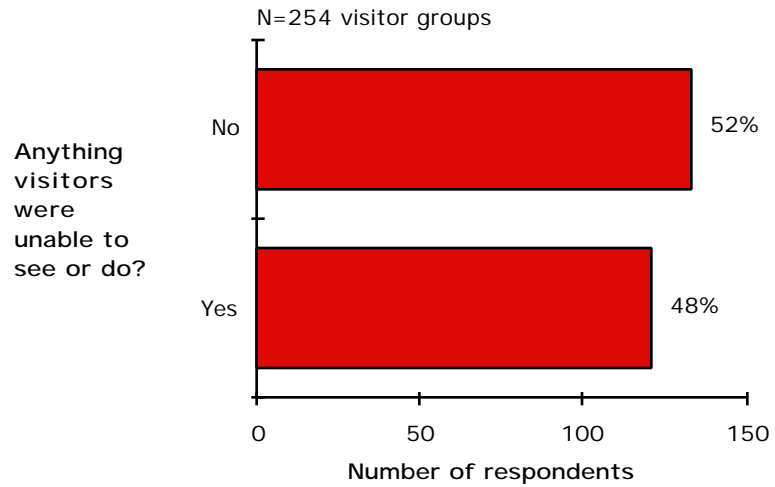


Figure 41: Anything visitors were unable to see or do?

Table 4: Features not seen/activities not done

Feature not seen/ Activity not done	Number of respondents
Titus Canyon	26
Racetrack	14
Backcountry (hiking, camping, roads)	9
Telescope Peak	7
Camp and swim	6
Twenty Mule Team Canyon	5
Moving rocks	5
Flowers	5
Scotty's Castle	4
Ubehebe Crater	4
Wildlife	3
More hiking	3
Take a shower	3
Mosaic Canyon	3
Echo Canyon/Hole in the-Wall	3
Wildrose Canyon	3
Charcoal Kilns	2

Cottonwood/Marble Canyons	2
Dante's View	2
Mahogany Flats	2
Zabriskie Point	2
Other features/activities	20

Table 5: Reasons for being unable to see features or do activities

Reason feature not seen/ activity not done	Number of respondents
Not enough time	35
Bad weather/snow	28
Needed high clearance vehicle	14
Roads too rough	14
Roads closed	9
Cannot use swimming pool if camping	6
Titus Canyon road too rough	5
Too early to see flowers	5
Showers closed at Furnace Creek	4
Trail too long	3
Poor information from visitor center	3
Group had different interests	2
Wildlife could not be seen	2
Got lost	2
Too hot	2
No motel vacancies	2
Too many people	2
Other comments	16

Informational items preferred in the future

Visitors were asked which informational items would be most useful to them during a future visit. Visitors said maps (64%) and publications (26%) would be most useful (see Figure 41). "Other" items that visitors said would use included hiking publications, better maps, updated exhibits, road condition reports and bulletin boards.

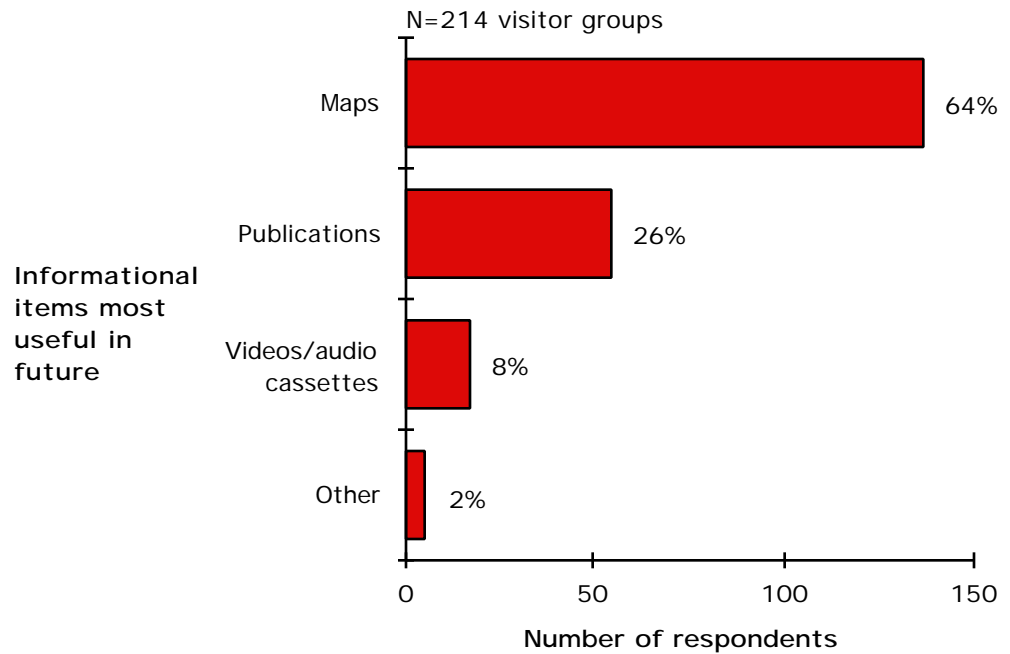


Figure 41: Most useful future informational items

Visitors were asked what educational program topics would be most important to them in the future. A summary of their comments is listed below and in the appendix.

**Educational
topics
preferred in
the future**

Educational topics

N=413 topics; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Geology	120
History	99
Biology	64
Environmental concerns	63
Wildlife	9
Plant life/flowers	9
Indian culture	7
Same as current topics	6
Natural history	6
Weather information/precautions	5
Archeology	4
Trail information/guides	3
Ecology	3
Future plans of park	3
Astronomy	2
Wilderness preservation	2
Road conditions in backcountry	2
Other comments	6

What visitors liked most Visitors were asked what they like most about their visit to Death Valley National Monument. A summary of their comments is listed below and in the appendix.

Visitors' likes

N=422 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Staff friendly, helpful	9
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Nonpersonal	
Visit educational	3
Ranger-guided activities	3
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Trails	12
Campgrounds	6
Tourist accommodations	6
Backcountry roads	3
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Historical ruins/cabins	12
POLICIES	
Entrance fee	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Scenery	91
Solitude /spiritual atmosphere	52
Hiking	25
Warm weather	24
Open space	22
Park geology	16
Wildlife	16
Titus Canyon	15
Backcountry	10
Sand dunes	9

History	8
Everything	7
Zabriskie Point	7
Other natural areas	6
Other activities	6
Golden Canyon	6
Mosaic Canyon	5
Salt Creek	5
Scotty's Castle	5
Scenic views	5
Mountains	4
Ubehebe Crater	4
Racetrack	3
Canyons	3
Hot springs	3
Butte Valley	2
Dante's View	2
Natural Bridge Area	2
Wild Rose Peak	2
Other comments	2

What visitors liked least Visitors were asked what they liked least about their visit to Death Valley National Park. A summary of their comments is listed below and in the appendix.

Visitors' dislikes

N=233 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Not enough ranger enforcement	7
Rude park rangers	4
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Lack of information	3
Unavailability of trail guides	2
Other comments	1
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Campgrounds need improvement	18
Poor roads	12
Too much trash in backcountry	3
Titus Canyon closed	2
Closed roads	2
Hiking areas not accessible without 4x4	2
Other comments	2
CONCESSION	
No showers	26
Poor quality restaurants	9
Resort areas too developed	8
No showers at Furnace Creek	7
No swimming at Furnace Creek	6
Motel accommodations	4
Meals too expensive	3
Lodging too expensive	3
Golf course	3
Recreation at Furnace Creek	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
Comments	4

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Crowds	36
Weather	17
Nothing	12
Rude visitors	7
Not enough time to spend	5
Features too far apart	5
Missed desert flowers	2
Traffic	2
RV's	2
Other comments	10

**Planning for
the future**

Visitors were asked "If you were planning for the future of Death Valley National Monument, what would you propose? Please be specific."
A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

Planning for the future

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

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Improve rangers' education	3
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
More educational programs	13
Keep trail guides stocked	7
Provide more information	5
Provide more maps	4
Other comments	5
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Provide showers that campers can use	24
Improve campgrounds	23
Make backcountry roads passable by 2 wheel drive	19
Improve trails	12
Leave roads primitive	11
Improve signing	9
Provide more restrooms	8
Provide more campgrounds	5
Provide recycling	4
Enforce water conservation measures	3
Provide more group camping areas	3
Improve group facilities	3
Other comments	3
CONCESSION	
Less commercial concessions	7
Lower gas prices	7
Lower prices for other items	4
Improve motels	2
Provide more services	2
Other comments	7

POLICIES

More restrictions on RV's	11
Increase entrance fee	4
Restrict number of 4x4's	4
Separate RV's and tents in campgrounds	4
Allow more camping in backcountry	3
Limit camping in backcountry	3
Reduce traffic	3
Allow open fires	2
Allow dogs on trails	2
Other comments	5

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Less development	31
Emphasize preservation	15
Limit the number of people	9
Protect historic sites	3

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Don't change anything	12
Offer a tour bus/shuttle bus	6
Other comment	1

Comment Summary Many visitors wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments 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.

Visitor Comment Summary

N=236 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
---------	---------------------------

PERSONNEL

Staff/rangers helpful, friendly	21
Rangers unknowledgeable/rude	4
Other comment	1

INTERPRETIVE SERVICES

Educate public	4
Improve visitor center	3
Enjoyed visitor center	2
Trail guide box empty	2
Other comments	3

FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE

General

Improve trail signs	8
Well maintained	5
Improve roads	3
Backcountry roads need shady pullouts	3
Improve campgrounds	3
Separate RV and tent camping	2
Why conserve water when it is used to water golf course?	2
Other comments	5

CONCESSION

Eliminate pools, golf	3
Not enough restaurants	2
Other comments	2

POLICIES

Don't change backcountry access	4
Other comments	3

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Preserve park	21
Thank you for preserving	6
Don't develop the park	5
Miss the burros	2

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Enjoyed visit	52
Will return	16
Thank you	13
Keep up the good work	11
Beautiful	10
Special place	5
Enjoyed getting away from people	2
Make it a national park	2
Other comments	6

MENU FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

Park personnel who wish to see other tables, graphs, and maps to learn more about their visitors may request such information from the VSP. Two kinds of analyses are available:

1) Two-way comparisons compare two characteristics. For example, to learn about the length of stay by backcountry car campers, request a comparison of length of stay by backcountry car campers; to learn about the number of visits by visitors who rated crowding as about what they expected, request a comparison of number of visits by crowding (about as crowded as expected).

2) Three-way comparisons compare a two-way comparison to a third characteristic. For example, to learn about first time visitors' reasons for visiting and the sites they visited, request a comparison of (reasons for visiting by first time visitors) by sites visited; to learn about ages of visitors who used the visitor center bookstore and who would use publications in the future, request a comparison of (age group by visitor center bookstore use (service)) by future use of publications.

Consult the list of characteristics for Death Valley backcountry visitors; then complete the appropriate blanks on the order form. Make a copy of the order form which follows the example below.

SAMPLE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Visitor Services Project Analysis Order Form
Death Valley National Monument Backcountry
Report 64

Date of request: _____/_____/_____

Person requesting analysis/Title: _____

Phone number (commercial): _____

The following list has the variables available for comparison from your park's visitor survey. Use this list to find the characteristics for which you want to request additional two-way and three-way comparisons. Be as specific as possible--you may select a single program/service/facility instead of all those listed in the questionnaire.

- Activities
- Guided tour
- Importance of backcountry feature
- Last community traveled through
- Community group
- Information service use
- Order of sites visited
- Educational field trip
- Information service importance
- Reasons for visit
- Age
- Crowding
- Length of stay
- State of residence
- Anything unable to see or do
- Group size
- Country of residence
- Future informational items
- Group type
- Number of times visited

Two-way comparisons (write in the appropriate variables from the above list)

_____ by _____
_____ by _____
_____ by _____

Three-way comparisons (write in the appropriate variables from the above list)

_____ by _____ by _____
_____ by _____ by _____
_____ by _____ by _____

Special instructions _____

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

NPS D-145

October 1994



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Visitor Services Project Publications

Reports 1-4 (pilot studies) are available from the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit. All VSP reports listed below are available from the parks where the studies were conducted.

1985

5. North Cascades National Park Service Complex

1986

6. Crater Lake National Park

1987

7. Gettysburg National Military Park
8. Independence National Historical Park
9. Valley Forge National Historical Park
10. Colonial National Historical Park
11. Grand Teton National Park
12. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
13. Mesa Verde National Park
14. Shenandoah National Park
15. Yellowstone National Park
16. Independence National Historical Park: Four Seasons Study

1988

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

1989

21. Everglades National Park
22. Statue of Liberty National Monument
23. The White House Tours, President's Park
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
29. White Sands National Monument
30. National Monuments
31. Kenai Fjords National Park

1990 (continued)

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
39. Joshua Tree National Monument
40. The White House Tours, President's Park
41. Natchez Trace Parkway
42. Stehekin-North Cascades National Park/Lake Chelan National Rec. Area
43. City of Rocks National Reserve
44. The White House Tours, President's Park

1992

45. Big Bend National Park
46. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site
47. Glen Echo Park
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
53. Arlington House-The Robert E. Lee Memorial

1993

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

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact
Dr. Gary E. Machlis, Sociology Project Leader, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit,
College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences,

Moscow, Idaho 83844-1133 or call (208) 885-7129.

Visitor Services Project
Death Valley National Monument
Backcountry
Appendix

Visitor Services Project Report 64
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



Visitor Services Project Death Valley National Monument Backcountry

Appendix

Margaret Littlejohn

Report 64

October 1994

This volume contains a summary of visitors' comments for Questions 13, 14, 16, 17, and 18. The summary is followed by their unedited comments.

Margaret Littlejohn is VSP Western Coordinator, National Park Service, based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank the staff and volunteers at Death Valley National Monument and the Death Valley '49ers, Inc. 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.

Table 4: Features not seen/activities not done

Feature not seen/ Activity not done	Number of respondents
Titus Canyon	26
Racetrack	14
Backcountry (hiking, camping, roads)	9
Telescope Peak	7
Camp and swim	6
Twenty Mule Team Canyon	5
Moving rocks	5
Flowers	5
Scotty's Castle	4
Ubehebe Crater	4
Wildlife	3
More hiking	3
Take a shower	3
Mosaic Canyon	3
Echo Canyon/Hole in the-Wall	3
Wildrose Canyon	3
Charcoal Kilns	2
Cottonwood/Marble Canyons	2
Dante's View	2
Mahogany Flats	2
Zabriskie Point	2
Other features/activities	20

Table 5: Reasons for being unable to see features or do activities

Reason feature not seen/ activity not done	Number of respondents
Not enough time	35
Bad weather/snow	28
Needed high clearance vehicle	14
Roads too rough	14
Roads closed	9
Cannot use swimming pool if camping	6
Titus Canyon road too rough	5
Too early to see flowers	5
Showers closed at Furnace Creek	4
Trail too long	3
Poor information from visitor center	3
Group had different interests	2
Wildlife could not be seen	2
Got lost	2
Too hot	2
No motel vacancies	2
Too many people	2
Other comments	16

Educational topics

N=413 topics; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Geology	120
History	99
Biology	64
Environmental concerns	63
Wildlife	9
Plant life/flowers	9
Indian culture	7
Same as current topics	6
Natural history	6
Weather information/precautions	5
Archeology	4
Trail information/guides	3
Ecology	3
Future plans of park	3
Astronomy	2
Wilderness preservation	2
Road conditions in backcountry	2
Other comments	6

Visitors' likes

N=422 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Staff friendly, helpful	9
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Nonpersonal	
Visit educational	3
Ranger-guided activities	3
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Trails	12
Campgrounds	6
Tourist accommodations	6
Backcountry roads	3
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Historical ruins/cabins	12
POLICIES	
Entrance fee	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Scenery	91
Solitude /spiritual atmosphere	52
Hiking	25
Warm weather	24
Open space	22
Park geology	16
Wildlife	16
Titus Canyon	15
Backcountry	10
Sand dunes	9
History	8
Everything	7
Zabriskie Point	7
Other natural areas	6
Other activities	6
Golden Canyon	6
Mosaic Canyon	5
Salt Creek	5

Scotty's Castle	5
Scenic views	5
Mountains	4
Ubehebe Crater	4
Racetrack	3
Canyons	3
Hot springs	3
Butte Valley	2
Dante's View	2
Natural Bridge Area	2
Wild Rose Peak	2
Other comments	2

Visitors' dislikes

N=233 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Not enough ranger enforcement	7
Rude park rangers	4
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Lack of information	3
Unavailability of trail guides	2
Other comments	1
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Campgrounds need improvement	18
Poor roads	12
Too much trash in backcountry	3
Titus Canyon closed	2
Closed roads	2
Hiking areas not accessible without 4x4	2
Other comments	2
CONCESSION	
No showers	26
Poor quality restaurants	9
Resort areas too developed	8
No showers at Furnace Creek	7
No swimming at Furnace Creek	6
Motel accommodations	4
Meals too expensive	3
Lodging too expensive	3
Golf course	3
Recreation at Furnace Creek	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
Comments	4
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Crowds	36
Weather	17
Nothing	12
Rude visitors	7

Not enough time to spend	5
Features too far apart	5
Missed desert flowers	2
Traffic	2
RV's	2
Other comments	10

Planning for the future

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

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Improve rangers' education	3
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
More educational programs	13
Keep trail guides stocked	7
Provide more information	5
Provide more maps	4
Other comments	5
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Provide showers that campers can use	24
Improve campgrounds	23
Make backcountry roads passable by 2 wheel drive	19
Improve trails	12
Leave roads primitive	11
Improve signing	9
Provide more restrooms	8
Provide more campgrounds	5
Provide recycling	4
Enforce water conservation measures	3
Provide more group camping areas	3
Improve group facilities	3
Other comments	3
CONCESSION	
Less commercial concessions	7
Lower gas prices	7
Lower prices for other items	4
Improve motels	2
Provide more services	2
Other comments	7
POLICIES	
More restrictions on RV's	11
Increase entrance fee	4
Restrict number of 4x4's	4
Separate RV's and tenters in campgrounds	4
Allow more camping in backcountry	3

Limit camping in backcountry	3
Reduce traffic	3
Allow open fires	2
Allow dogs on trails	2
Other comments	5

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Less development	31
Emphasize preservation	15
Limit the number of people	9
Protect historic sites	3

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Don't change anything	12
Offer a tour bus/shuttle bus	6
Other comment	1

Visitor Comment Summary

N=236 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Staff/rangers helpful, friendly	21
Rangers unknowledgeable/rude	4
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Educate public	4
Improve visitor center	3
Enjoyed visitor center	2
Trail guide box empty	2
Other comments	3
FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE	
General	
Improve trail signs	8
Well maintained	5
Improve roads	3
Backcountry roads need shady pullouts	3
Improve campgrounds	3
Separate RV and tent camping	2
Why conserve water when it is used to water golf course?	2
Other comments	5
CONCESSION	
Eliminate pools, golf	3
Not enough restaurants	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
Don't change backcountry access	4
Other comments	3
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Preserve park	21
Thank you for preserving	6
Don't develop the park	5
Miss the burros	2

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Enjoyed visit	52
Will return	16
Thank you	13
Keep up the good work	11
Beautiful	10
Special place	5
Enjoyed getting away from people	2
Make it a national park	2
Other comments	6