

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Visitor Study Spring 1997

Report 95
Visitor Services Project
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



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Visitor Services Project
Report 95

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Chris Wall is a VSP Research Associate based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Margaret Littlejohn and the staff of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site 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 Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site during April 13-19, 1997. A total of 473 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 286 questionnaires for a 61% response rate.
- This report profiles Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Forty-three percent of the visitor groups were family groups. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups were groups of two. Forty-one percent of visitors were aged 26-45.
- Eighty-two percent of visitors were making their first visits to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. Forty-four percent of the visitor groups spent two hours at the park, while 25% spent one hour and 20% spent three hours.
- United States visitors were from Georgia (24%), New York (8%), California (7%), Florida (6%), 40 other states and the District of Columbia. International visitors (13% of total visitation) were from France (28%), Germany (28%), England (13%) and twelve other countries.
- On this visit, the most common activities were viewing visitor center exhibits (97%), visiting Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb (89%) and watching the visitor center video (73%).
- Travel guides and tour books (31%) and friends or relatives (28%) were the most used sources of information by visitor groups; 20% of the groups received no information prior to their visits.
- Eighty-six percent of visitor groups indicated that learning more about Martin Luther King, Jr. was a primary reason for visiting the park. Another 70% reported that seeing the area where Dr. King grew up was a primary reason for visiting the park. Thirty-six percent of visitor groups indicated that the park was the primary destination on this visit. Other Atlanta area attractions visited by groups included Underground Atlanta (65%), Stone Mountain (41%) and CNN Center (35%).
- Sixty-one percent of visitor groups had members with a special interest in African-American history. Other civil rights sites visited in the past by groups included the Civil Rights Monument in Montgomery, AL (35%) and the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, TN (35%).
- Twenty percent of visitor groups reported that there were things they had hoped to do or see at the park but which they were unable to do. Included in this category were visiting Ebenezer Baptist Church and touring Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth home.
- In regard to the use, importance and quality of services, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The services that were most used by 247 respondents were visitor center exhibits (78%), the park brochure/map (66%) and the visitor center video program (65%). According to visitors, the most important services were visitor center exhibits (91% of 184 respondents), the visitor center video (85% of 157 respondents) and restrooms (85% of 130 respondents). The highest quality services were visitor center exhibits (93% of 177 respondents) and the visitor center video (93% of 154 respondents).
- Sixty-seven percent of visitor groups want to learn more about the life and teachings of Dr. King on a future visit and 61% want to learn more about the Civil Rights Movement.
- Ninety-one percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site as "very good" or "good." None of the groups rated services as "very poor." Visitors made many additional comments.

<p>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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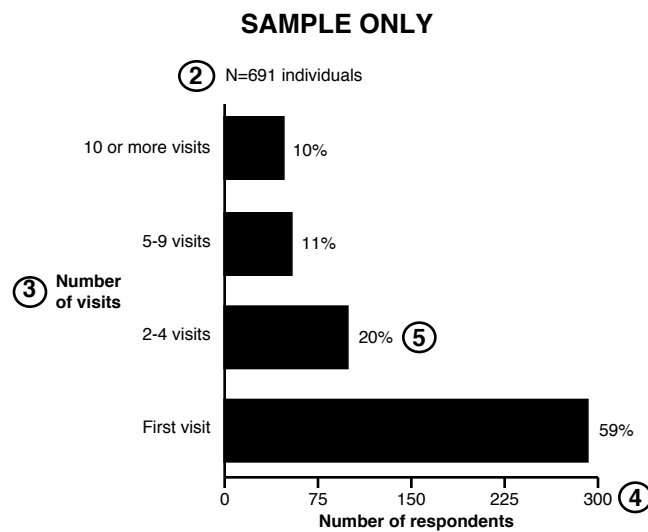
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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of visitors at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. This visitor study was conducted April 13-19, 1997 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 Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site during the period from April 13-19, 1997. Visitors were sampled as they entered the park's visitor center.

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.

Data analysis

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

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 283 visitor groups, Figure 5 presents data for 715 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 286 questionnaires were returned by Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site visitors, Figure 1 shows data for only 283 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.

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

Limitations

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

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of April 13-19, 1997. 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.

Bus tour participants arriving at the site are allowed only very brief visits, and most tour members were unwilling to stop and talk to the interviewer. As a result, bus tour participants may be slightly underrepresented in the study sample.

**Special
conditions**

RESULTS

Visitors contacted

At Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, 517 visitor groups were contacted, and 473 of these groups (92%) accepted questionnaires. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 286 visitor groups, resulting in a 61% response rate for this study.

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

Table 1: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondents	444	39.7	280	42.3
Group size	469	9.4	283	9.8

Demographics

Figure 1 shows visitor group sizes, which ranged from one person to 300 people. Thirty-seven percent of visitor groups consisted of two people, while another 25% were groups of three or four. Forty-three percent of visitor groups were made up of family members, 19% were made up of friends, and 14% were people visiting by themselves (see Figure 2). Groups listing themselves as "other" for group type included school groups, organized tour or church groups and choir groups. Ten percent of the visitor groups at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site were guided tour groups (see Figure 3) and 9% were educational groups (see Figure 4).

As is shown by Figure 5, a significant proportion of visitors (41%) was in the 26-45 year age group. Fourteen percent were fifteen years old or younger. A large majority of visitors (82%) were making their first visit to the park (see Figure 6).

There was a total of eighty-seven international visitors to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site (13% of total visitation), with 28% coming from France and 28% coming from Germany (see Table 2). The largest numbers of United States visitors were from Georgia (24%), New York (8%), California (7%) and Florida (6%). Smaller numbers of U.S. visitors came from another 40 states and the District of Columbia (see Map 1 and Table 3).

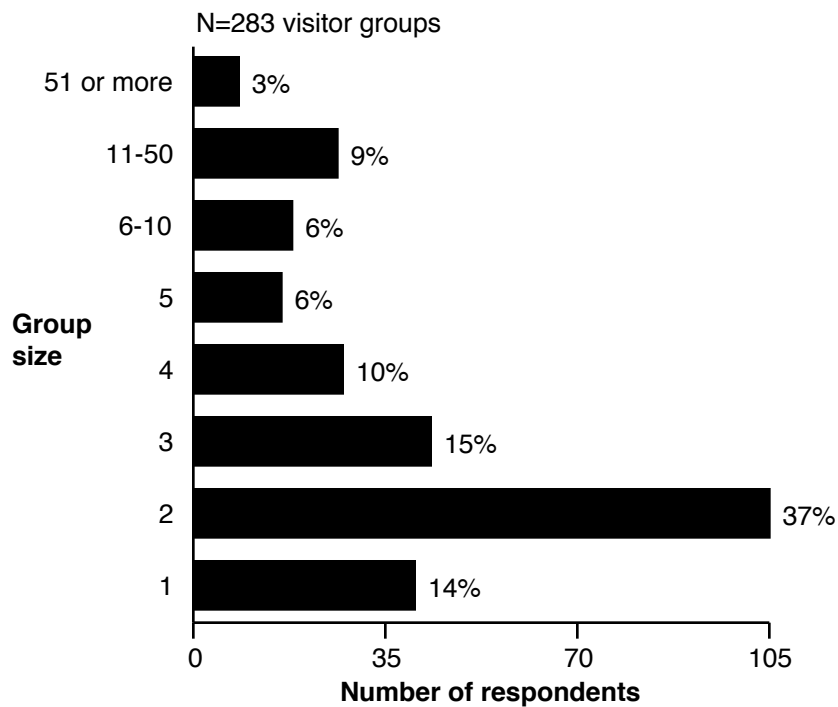


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

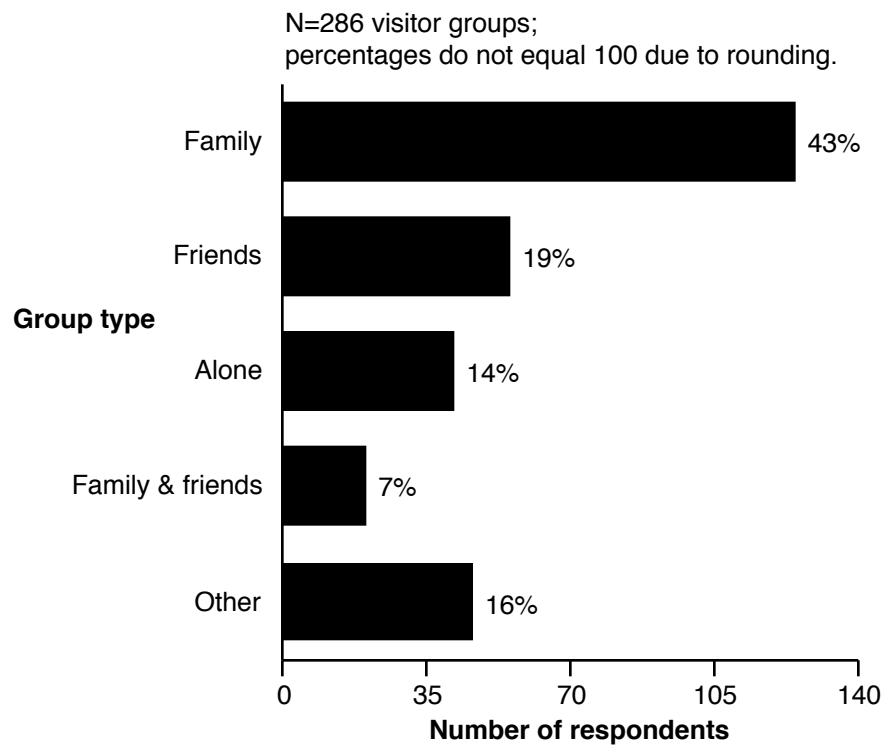


Figure 2: Visitor group types

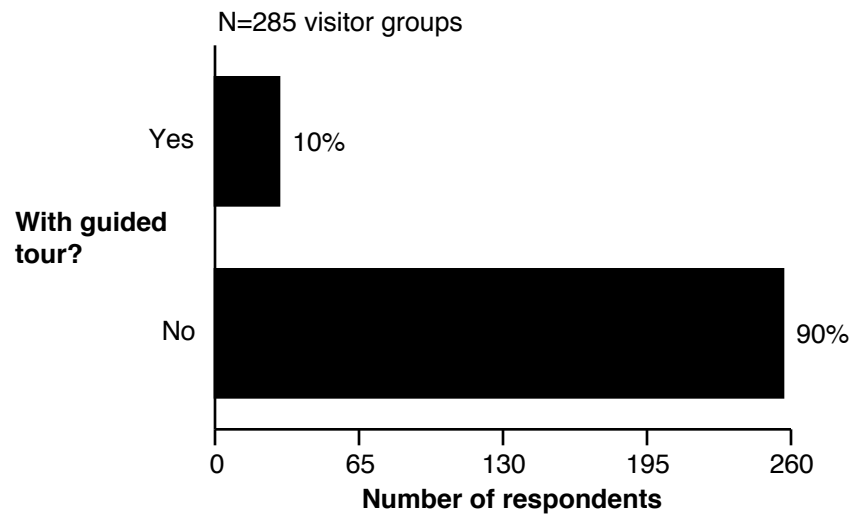


Figure 3: With organized guided tour group?

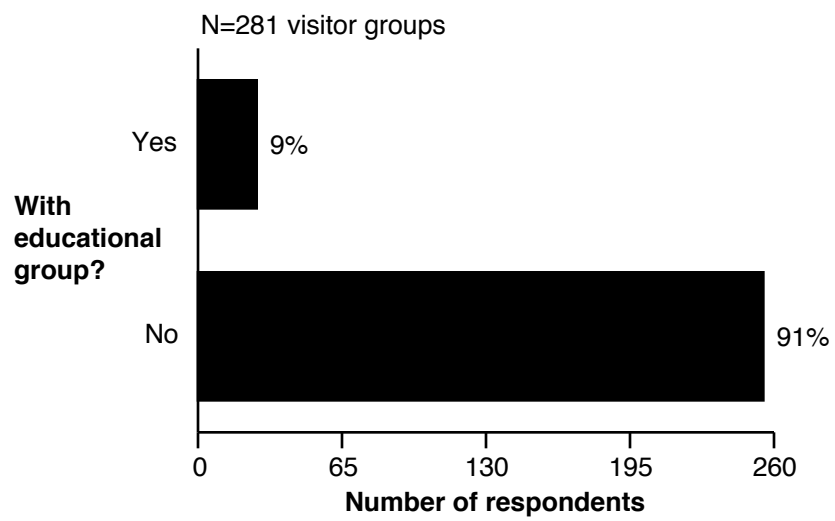
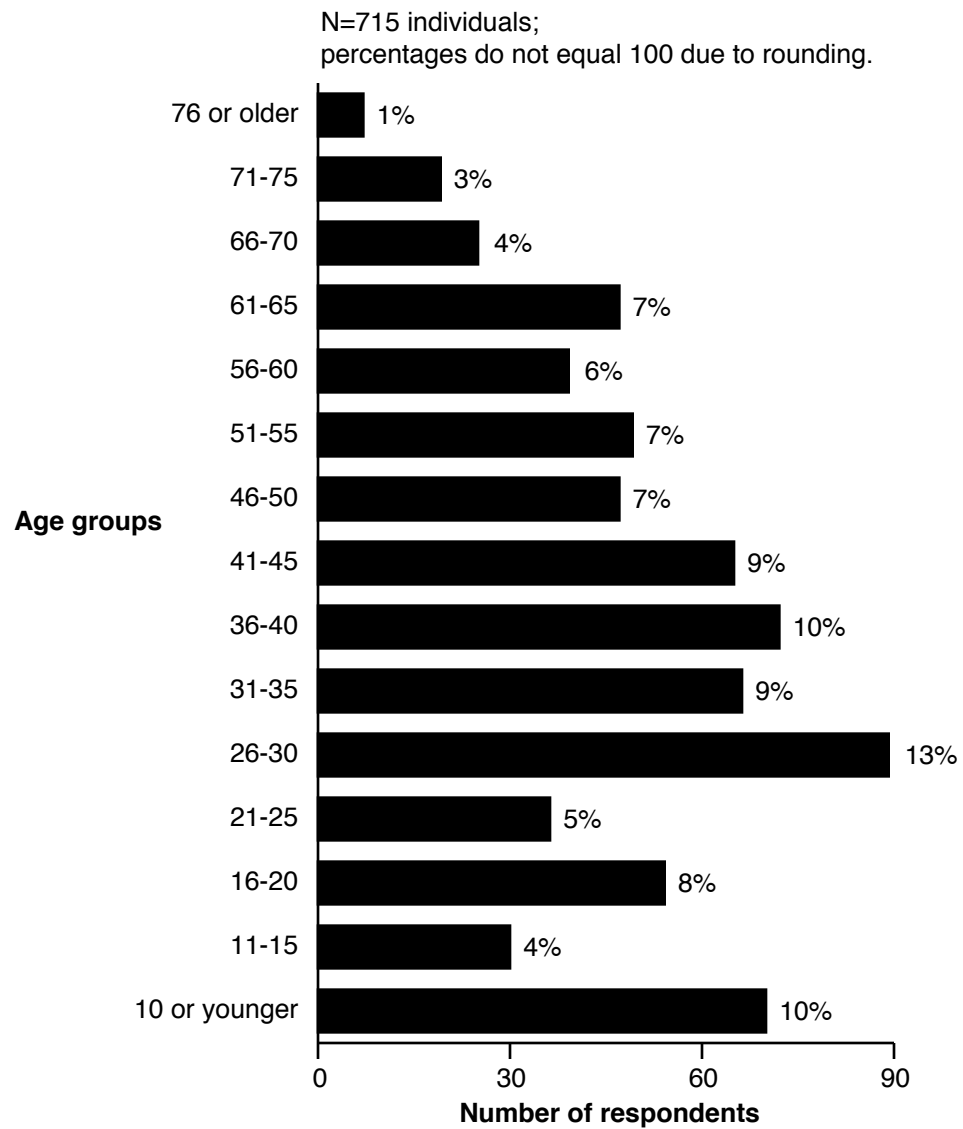


Figure 4: With school or educational group?

**Figure 5: Visitor ages**

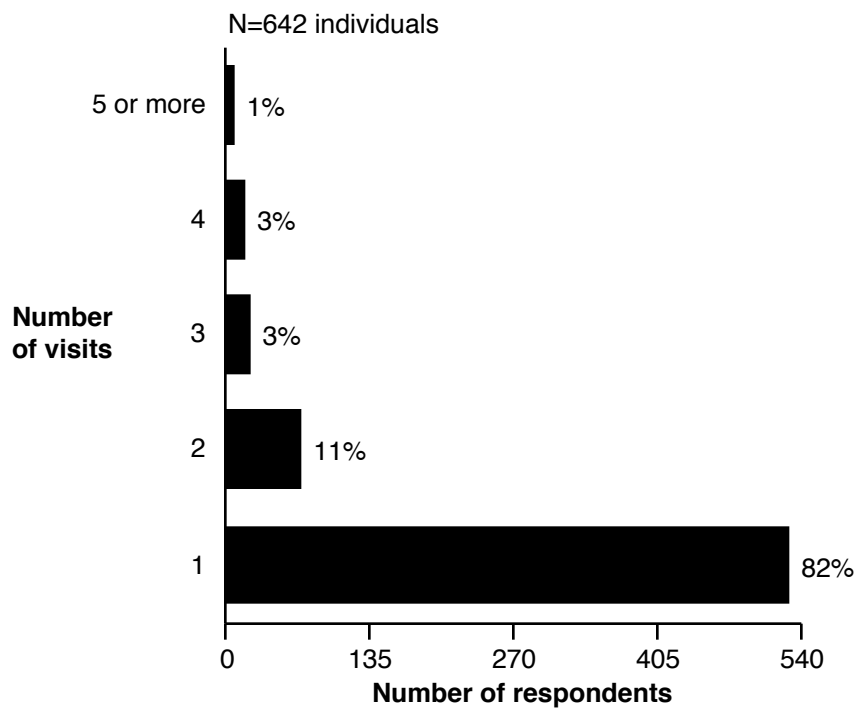
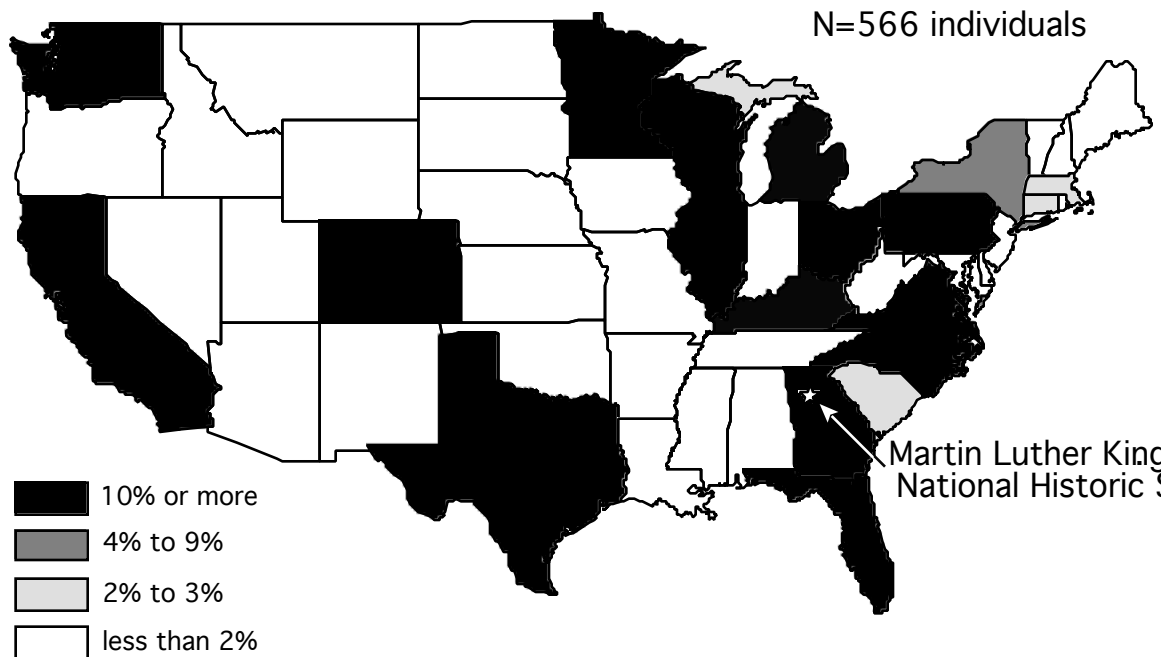


Figure 6: Number of visits to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Table 2: International visitors by country of residence

N=87 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Country	Number of individuals	Percent of int'l visitors	Percent of total visitors
France	24	28	4
Germany	24	28	4
England	11	13	2
Canada	6	7	1
Australia	4	5	1
Belgium	3	3	all others less than 1%
Philippines	3	3	
Sweden	3	3	[
Denmark	2	2	
Italy	2	2	
Czech Republic	1	1	
Holland	1	1	
Hungary	1	1	
Korea	1	1	
Switzerland	1	1	



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

Table 3: United States visitors by state of residence

N=566 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	Percent of U.S. visitors	Percent of total visitors
Georgia	137	24	21
New York	43	8	7
California	42	7	6
Florida	33	6	5
Illinois	28	5	4
Virginia	20	4	3
North Carolina	19	3	3
Texas	18	3	3
Washington	17	3	3
South Carolina	16	3	3
Minnesota	14	3	2
Wisconsin	14	3	2
Colorado	13	2	2
Ohio	12	2	2
Kentucky	10	2	2
Massachusetts	10	2	2
Michigan	10	2	2
Connecticut	9	2	1
Pennsylvania	9	2	1
25 other states and Washington, D.C.	92	16	14

Visitor groups were asked how much time they spent at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. Forty-four percent of visitor groups spent two hours at the park and 25% spent one hour (see Figure 7). Four percent of the visitor groups spent less than an hour at the park (see Figure 8).

Length of stay

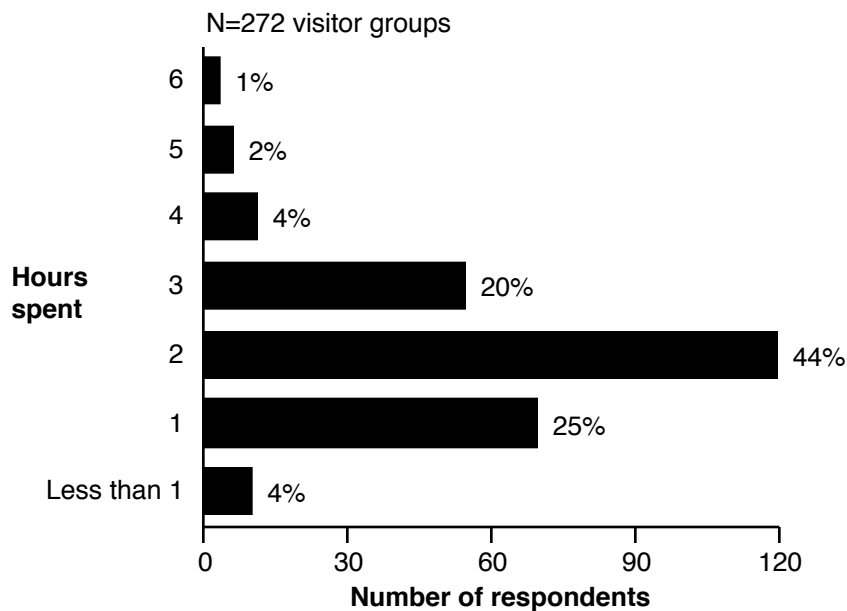


Figure 7: Hours spent at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

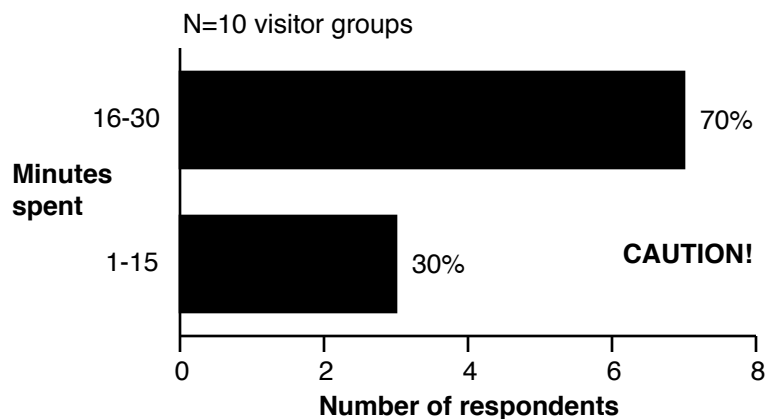


Figure 8: Minutes spent at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Activities

Figure 9 shows the proportions of visitor groups which participated in a variety of activities at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. The most common activities were viewing visitor center exhibits (97%), visiting Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb (89%) and watching the visitor center video (73%). The least common activity was visiting the King Center library and archives (19%). Visitor groups participated in a number of "other" activities including eating at local restaurants and viewing the birth home from the outside.

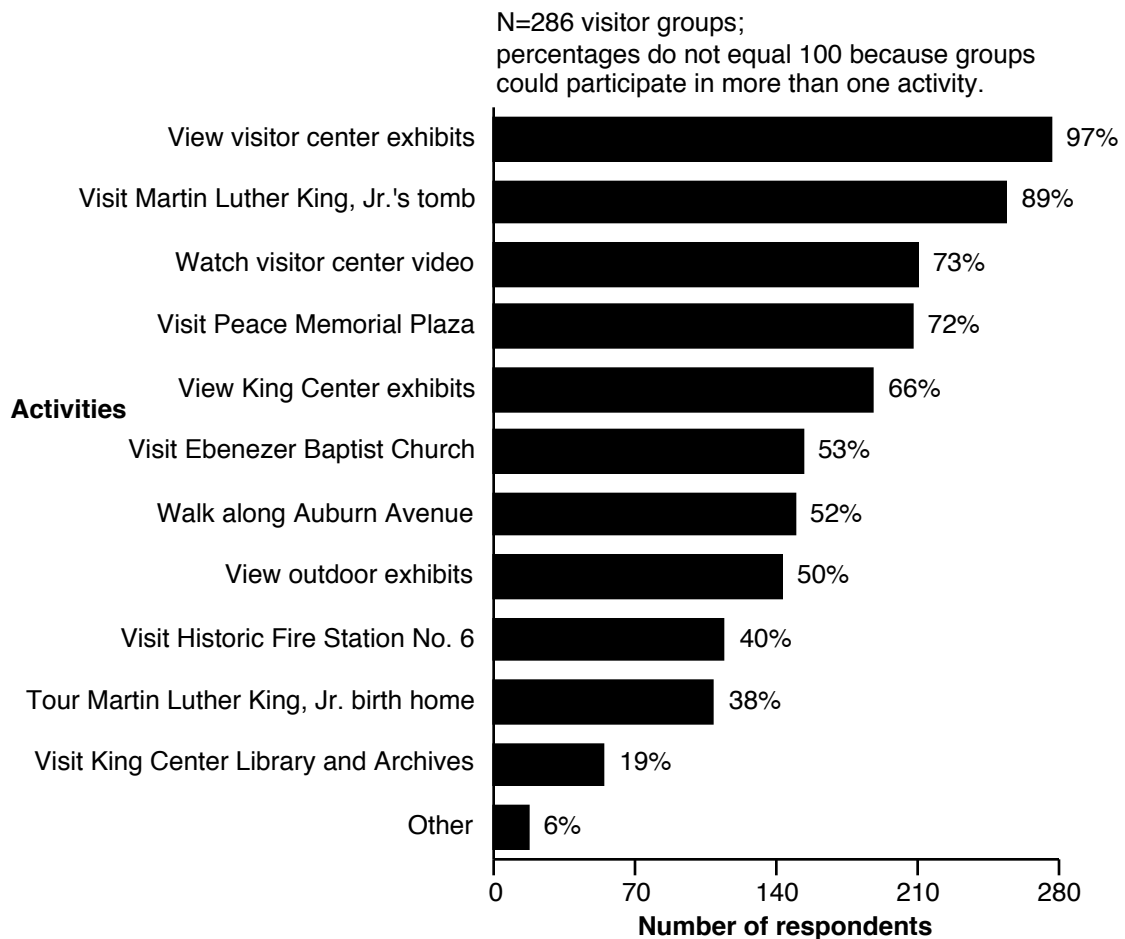


Figure 9: Visitor activities

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the sources from which they had received information about Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site prior to their visit. Thirty-one percent of visitor groups received information from travel guides or tour books, 28% received information from friends or relatives and 18% received information during previous visits (see Figure 10). Twenty percent of visitor groups received no information prior to their visits. Groups received information from a number of “other” sources, including personal histories, tour guides, National Park Service Passports and books.

Sources of information

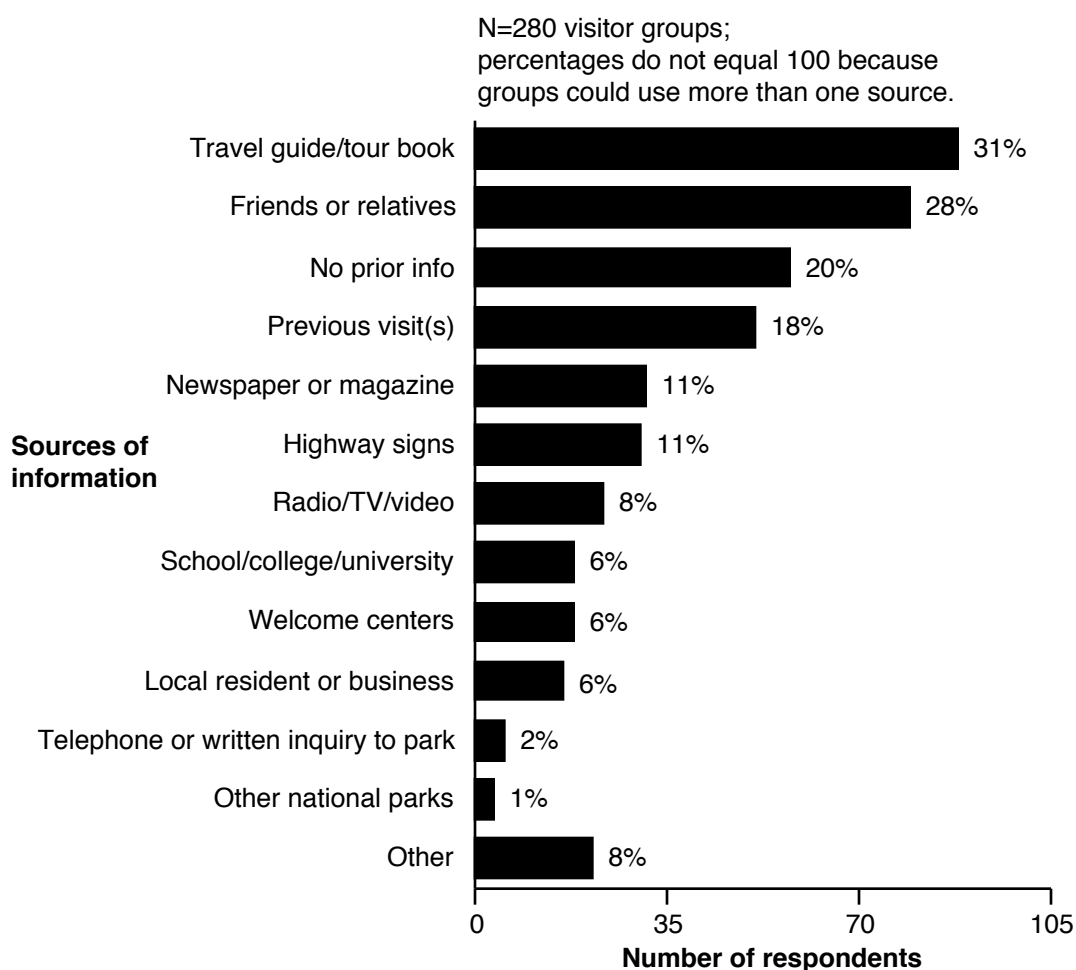


Figure 10: Sources of information used by visitors

Reasons for visiting

Visitor groups were asked to indicate their reasons for visiting Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. Eighty-six percent of the visitor groups were at the site to learn more about Martin Luther King, Jr. Seventy percent visited to see the area where Dr. King grew up while 59% wanted to learn more about civil rights (see Figure 11). Groups mentioned a number of “other” reasons for visiting, including paying respect to Martin Luther King, Jr., impressing on children what Dr. King did and visiting Dr. King’s tomb.

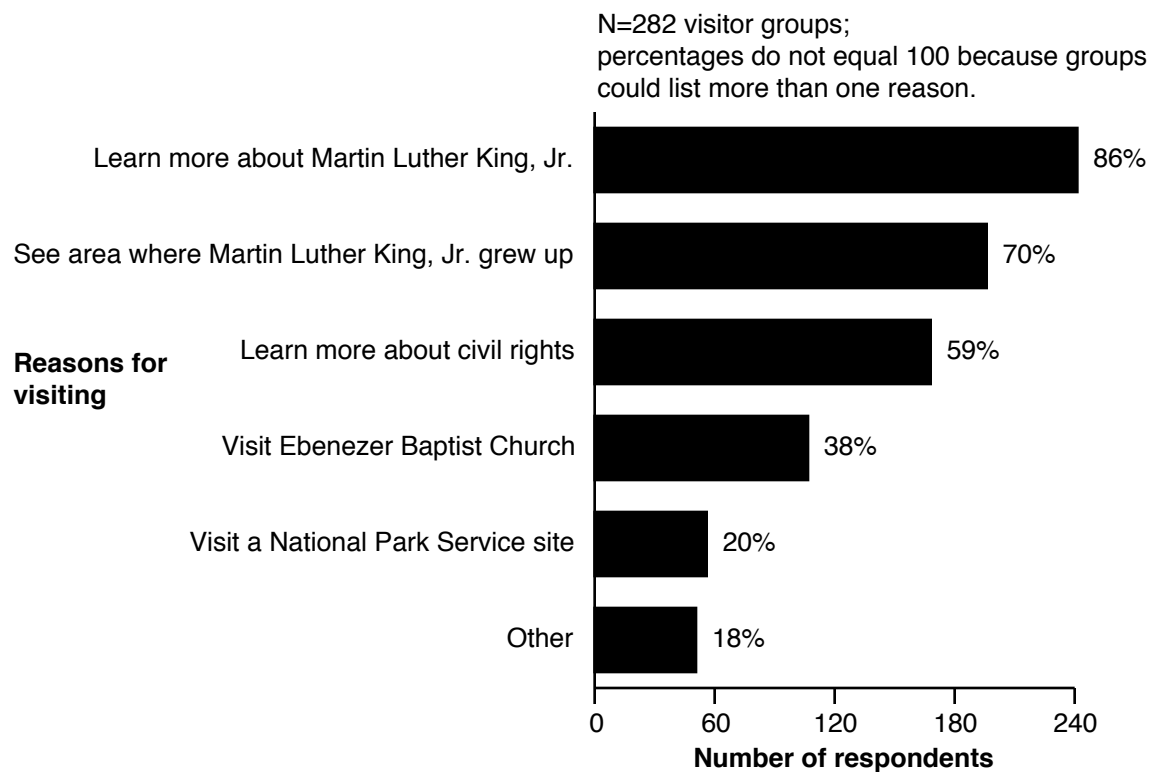


Figure 11: Reasons for visiting Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the direction they had used to reach Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. Fifty-one percent of the groups came from the north on Interstate 75/85 while 22% came from the south on Interstate 75/85 (see Figure 12).

Direction used to reach park

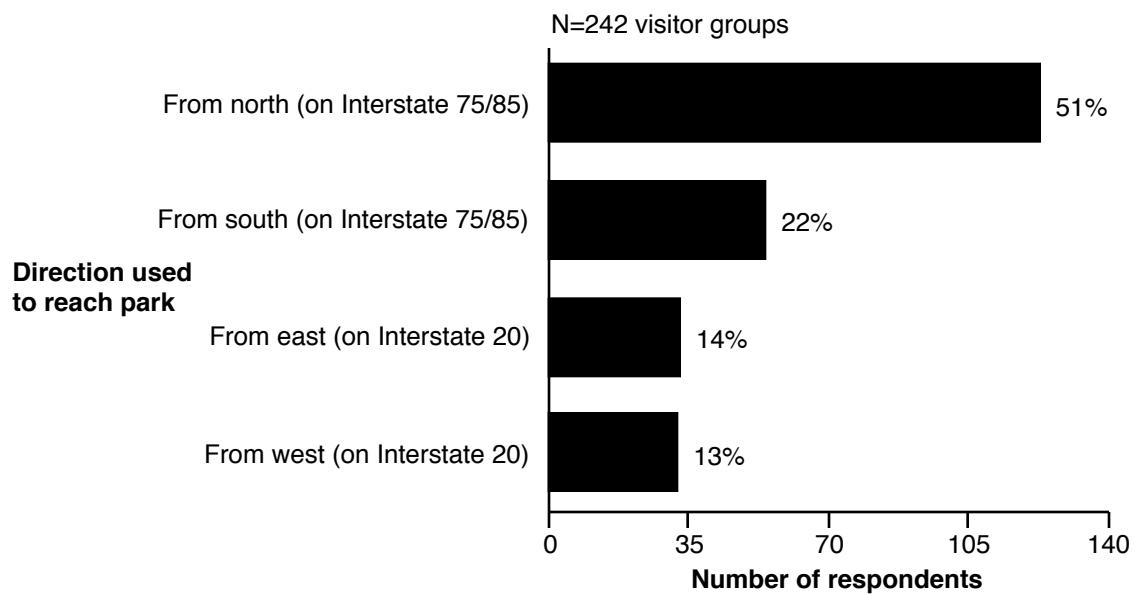


Figure 12: Direction used to reach park

Difficulty locating park?

Visitor groups were asked to indicate whether they had experienced any difficulty in locating the park. Sixteen percent of the groups had problems finding the park while the majority (84%) did not have any trouble (see Figure 13). Groups were also asked to list the specific problems they had encountered. The most common problems were a lack of street signs, no signs from the parking lot and a lack of signs from Interstate 75/85 (see Table 4).

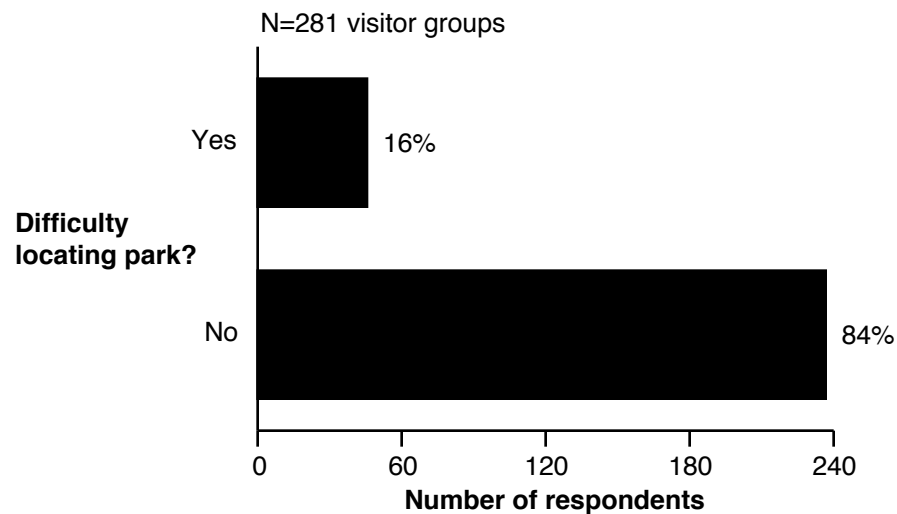


Figure 13: Difficulty locating park?

Table 4: Reasons for difficulty locating park

N=46 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Need more street signs	8
No signs from parking lot	6
Lack of signs from Interstate 75/85	4
No signs from MARTA station	3
No sign off Interstate 75/85 to turn on Auburn	3
Unfamiliar with Atlanta	3
No signs to say which way to turn on Auburn	2
No signs on MARTA route	2
No signs on Interstate 20 from west	2
Martin Luther King, Jr. NHS visitor center not labeled	2
Need better street signs	2
Many roads closed for special event	2
Other comments	7

Visitor groups were asked to list the forms of transportation they had used to arrive at the park. As is shown by Figure 14, the most commonly used form of transportation was private vehicle (47%), followed by walking (18%) and rental cars (17%). Visitor groups listed several “other” forms of transportation, including school bus and MARTA or subway.

Forms of transportation

Visitor groups that arrived by train were asked to indicate the station they had used. The most commonly used stations were King Memorial Station and Five Points (see Table 5).

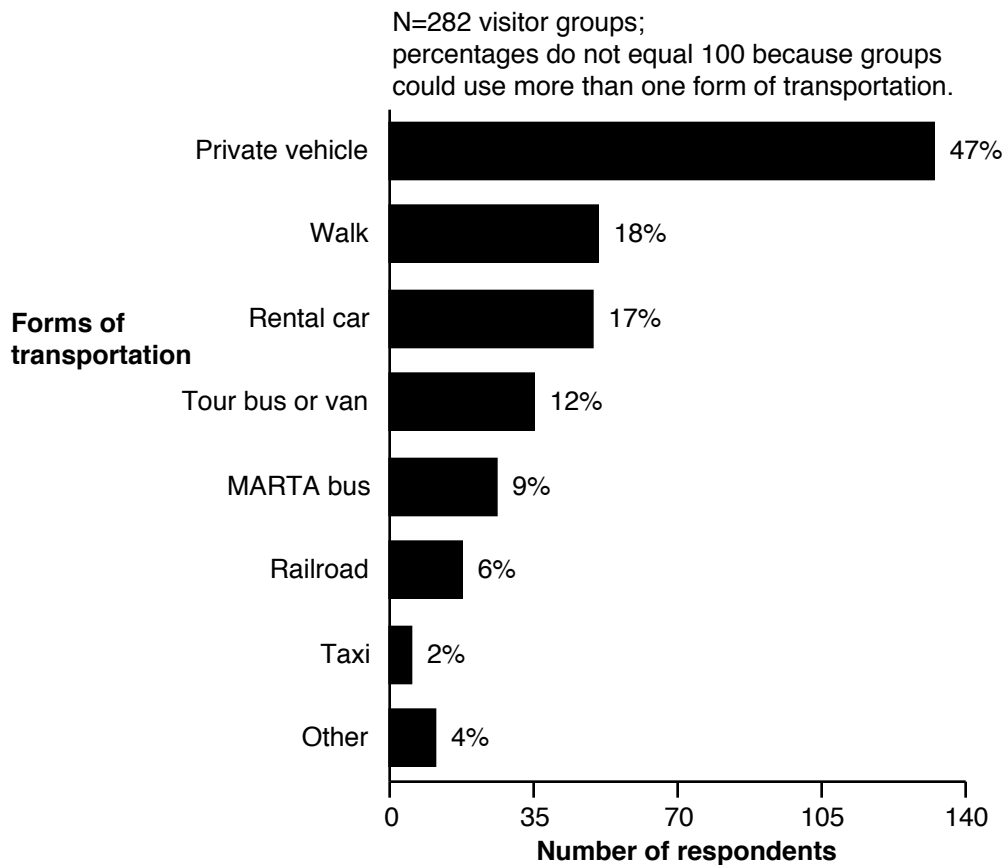


Figure 14: Forms of transportation

Table 5: Train station used

N=15 comments

CAUTION!

Comment	Number of times mentioned
King Memorial Station	6
Five Points	3
MARTA at Peachtree	2
MARTA	2
Other comments	2

Visitor groups were asked whether Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site was their primary destination on this trip. Thirty-six percent of visitor groups stated that the park was their primary destination (see Figure 15). The groups for which the park was not a primary destination were asked to indicate what their primary destination was. As is shown by Table 6, the most common destinations were visiting family or friends, seeing Atlanta, business trip and a convention or conference.

Primary destination

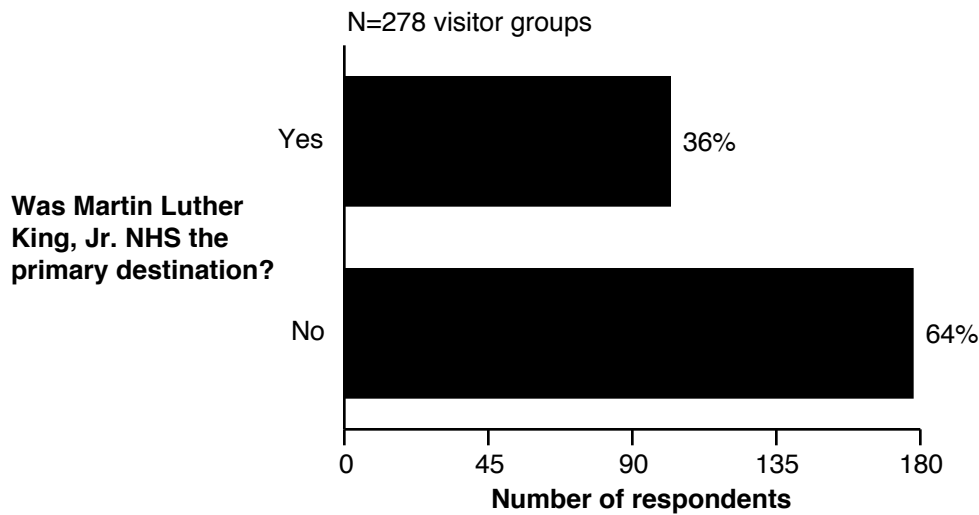


Figure 15: Was Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site the primary destination?

Table 6: Primary destination

N=191 comments

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Visit family or friends	30
See Atlanta	22
Business trip	17
Convention or conference	16
Visit college or university	6
R.I.M.S.	6
Stone Mountain	6
Competition or tournament	6
Other Georgia locations	6
Freaknik	6
Auburn Festival	6
Carter Center	5
Coca-Cola Building	4
Tour southeast United States	3
Theme or amusement park	3
Cyclorama	3
South Carolina	3
Other Atlanta attractions	3
Museum(s)	2
Grant Park or Zoo Atlanta	2
Underground Atlanta	2
Herndon House	2
Seminar or training	2
North Carolina and South Carolina	2
Olympic Park	2
CNN Center	2
King Center or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb	2
Visit historic sites	2
Auburn Avenue	2
See the country or vacation	2
Ben Hill UMC	2
Airport	2
Other comments	12

Visitor groups were asked to list the other attractions that they visited in the Atlanta area during this trip. As is shown by Figure 16, the most commonly visited attraction was Underground Atlanta (65%), followed by Stone Mountain (41%), CNN Center (35%) and Centennial Olympic Park (33%). Although not specifically asked to do so, a number of groups wrote in "other" attractions they had visited such as the Coca-Cola Building and the Botanical Gardens.

Other attractions visited

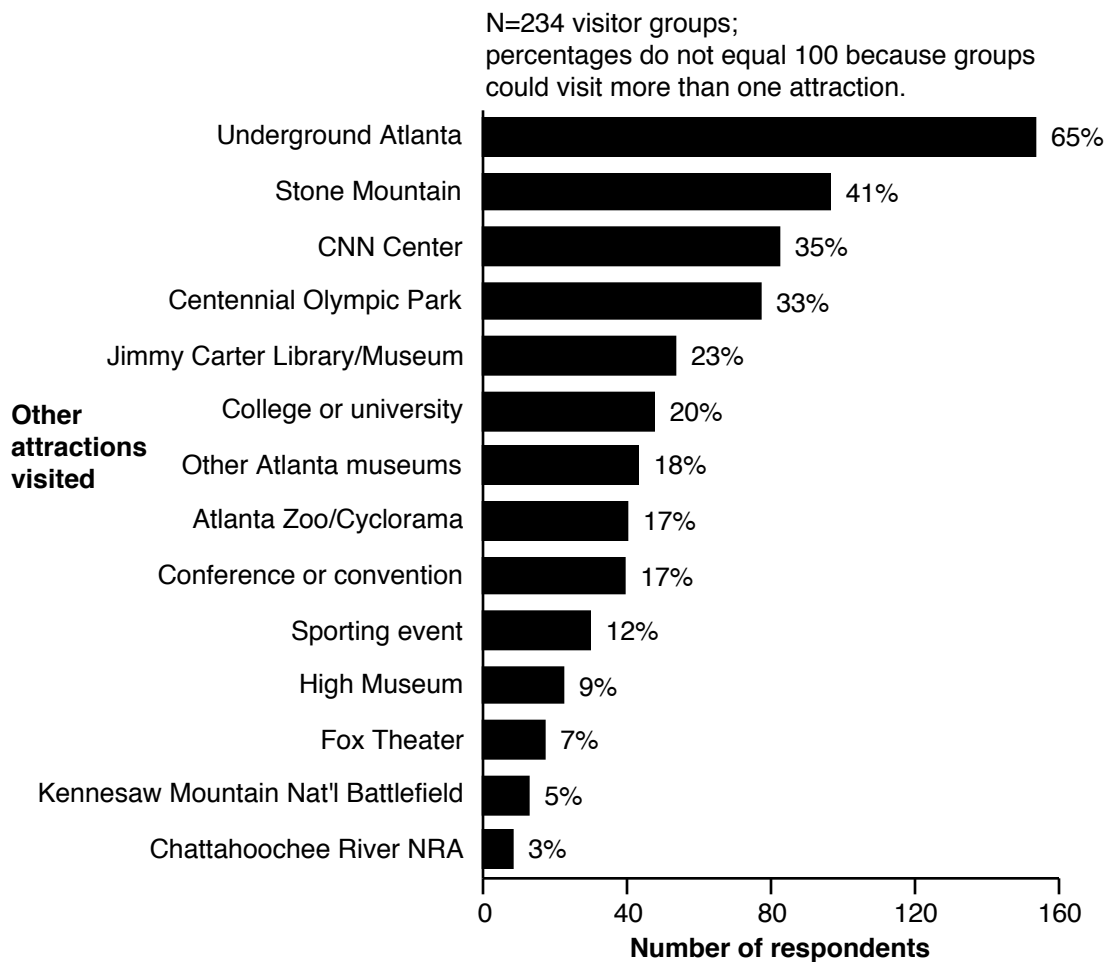


Figure 16: Other attractions visited

**Special interest in
African-American
history**

Visitor groups were asked whether any members of their group had a special interest in African-American history. As is shown by Figure 17, 61% of the groups indicated that members had a special interest in African-American history, while 39% expressed no special interest.

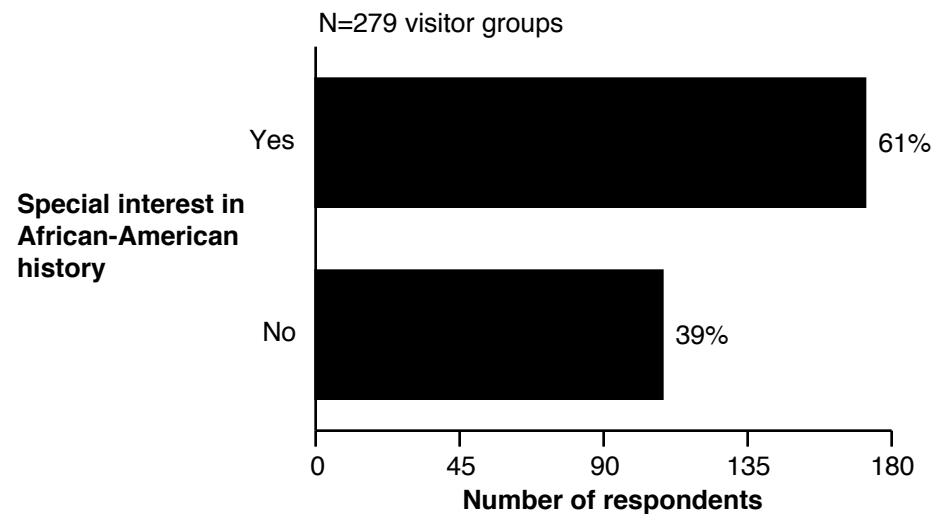


Figure 17: Special interest in African-American history

Visitor groups were asked to list the other civil rights sites that they have visited in the past. As is shown by Figure 18, the most commonly visited sites were the Civil Rights Monument in Montgomery, Alabama (35%) and the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee (35%). Groups mentioned several “other” civil rights sites visited including the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee and the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.

Other civil rights sites visited

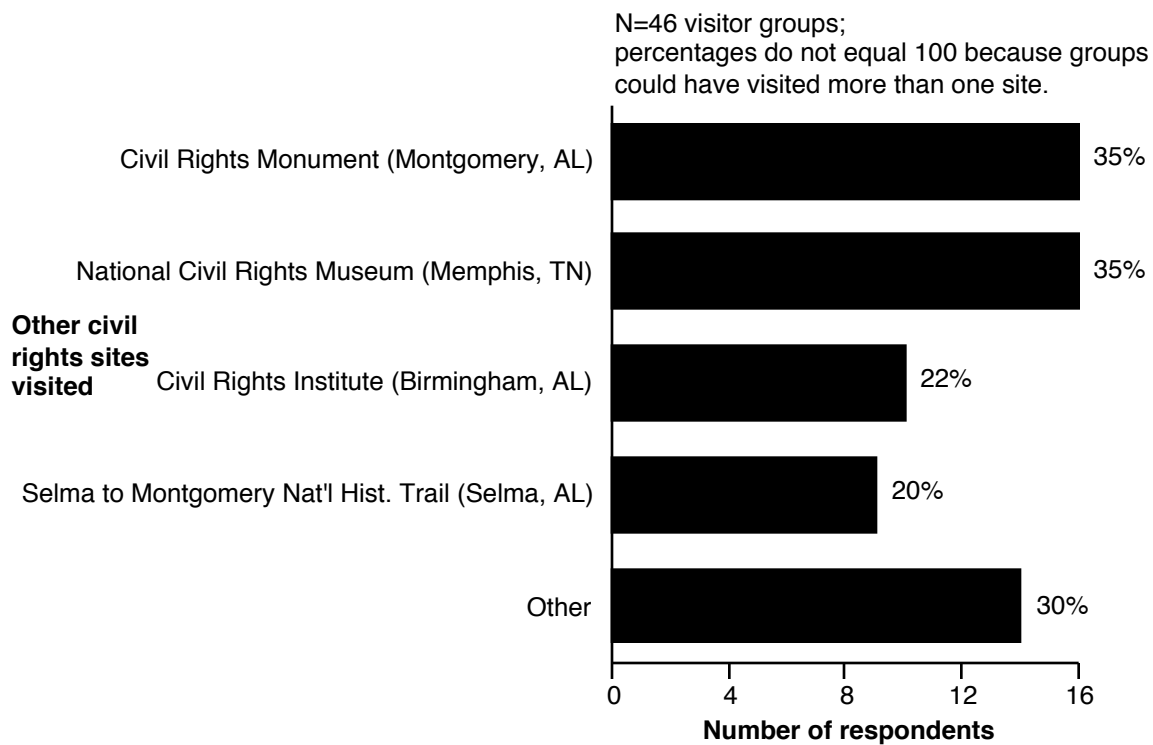


Figure 18: Other civil rights sites visited

Unmet expectations?

Visitor groups were asked whether there was anything that they had expected to do or see at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site that they were not able to do or see. As is shown by Figure 19, 20% of the groups had expectations that were unmet. Visitor groups were also asked to list the specific things that they had hoped to do or see, as well as the reasons that they were unable to do or see them. As is shown by Table 7, visiting Ebenezer Baptist Church and touring the birth home were the most frequently listed things that groups were unable to do.

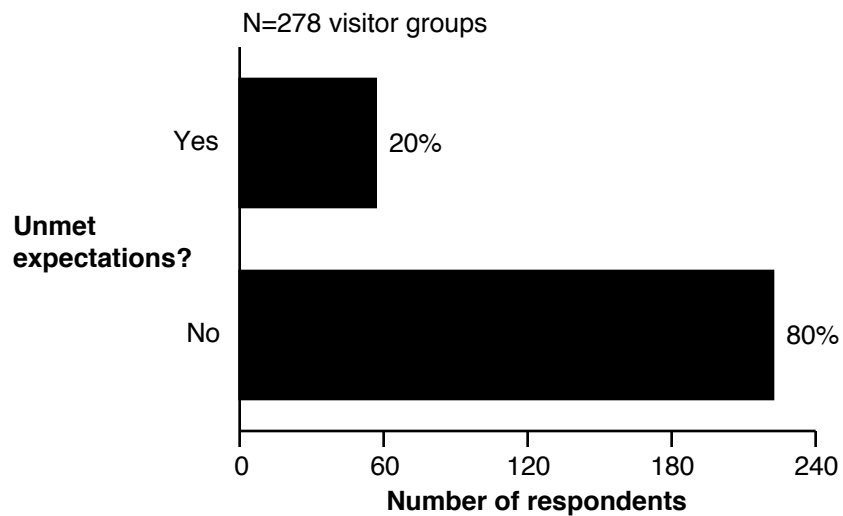


Figure 19: Unmet expectations?

Table 7: Unmet expectations

Things visitors could not do N=67		Reasons visitors could not do them N=67	
Comment	Times mentioned	Comment	Times mentioned
Visit Ebenezer Baptist Church	25	Church was closed	9
		Service or activity taking place	7
		Closed to public on Sunday	4
		Lack of time	2
		Other comments	3
Tour birth home	21	Lack of time	7
		No tours for large groups	6
		Timing not right	3
		Long wait for next tour	3
		Tours not frequent enough	2
		Wasn't told to go to fire house	2
		Other comment	1
View all exhibits	10	Lack of time	5
		Group schedule	2
		Other comment	1
Visit King Center or Library	4	Lack of time	2
		Other comments	2
Other comments	7	Comments	6

Visitor and information services: use, importance and quality

Visitor groups were asked to note the visitor and information services they used during their visit to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. As is shown by Figure 20, the service that was most commonly used by visitor groups was visitor center exhibits (78%), followed by the park brochure/map (66%), the visitor center video (65%) and the National Park Service visitor center (64%). The least used service was the NPS parking lot (31%).

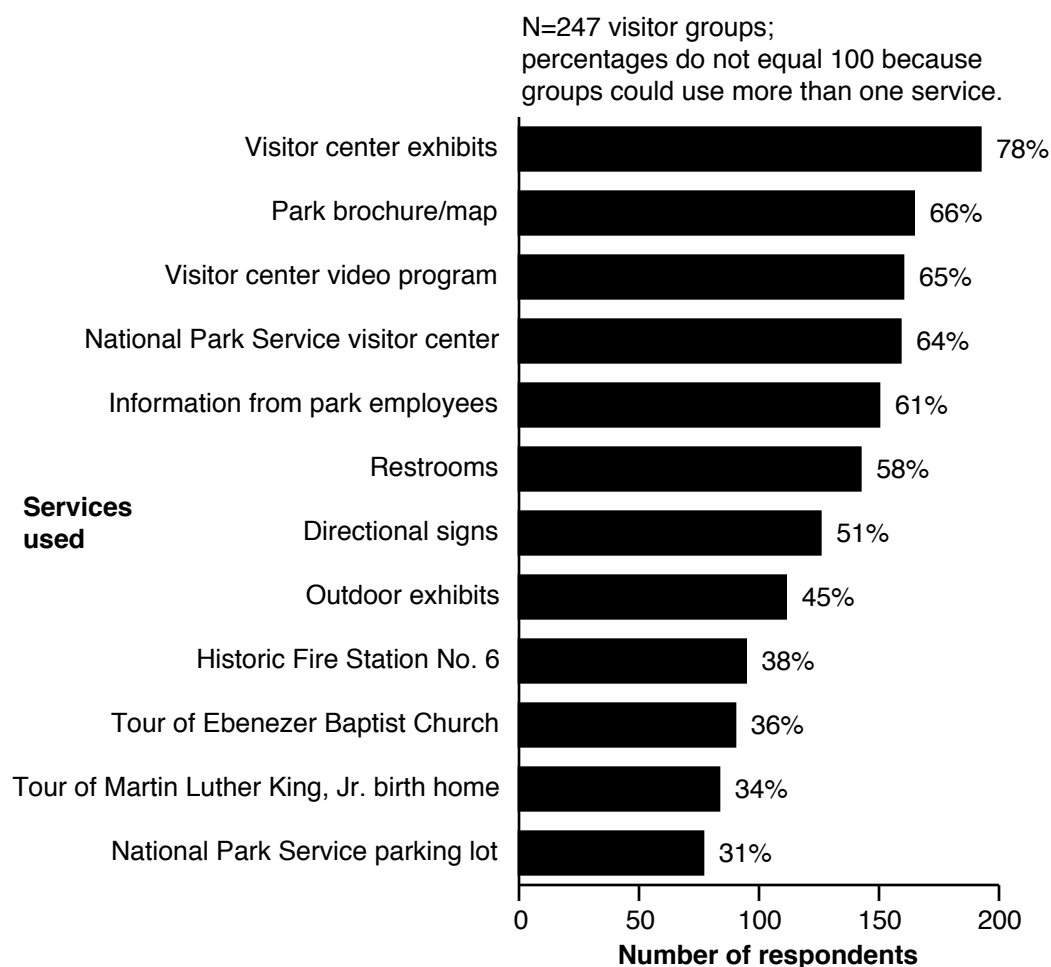


Figure 20: Services used

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 and information services. An average score was calculated for each service based on ratings provided by visitors who used that service, and the results are plotted on the grid shown in Figure 21. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality.

Figures 22-33 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 visitor center exhibits (91%), visitor center video (85%) and restrooms (85%). The highest proportion of "not important" ratings was for Historic Fire Station No. 6 (11%), followed by outdoor exhibits (4%).

Figures 34-45 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 visitor center exhibits (93%), visitor center video (93%) and restrooms (89%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for directional signs (5%), followed by Historic Fire Station No. 6 (4%) and the NPS parking lot (4%).

Figure 46 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the visitor and information services.

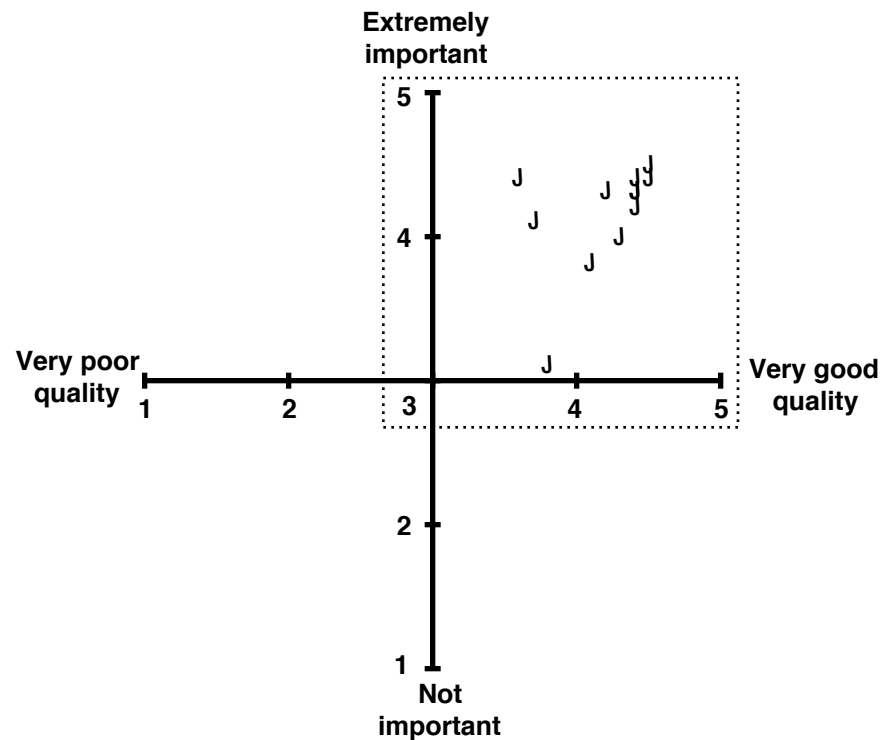


Figure 21: Average ratings of service importance and quality

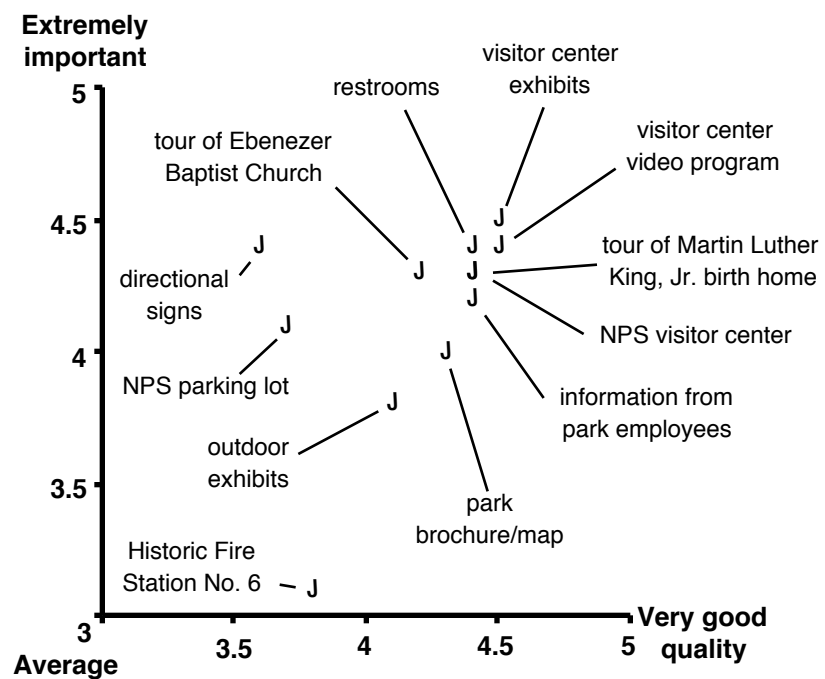


Figure 21: Detail

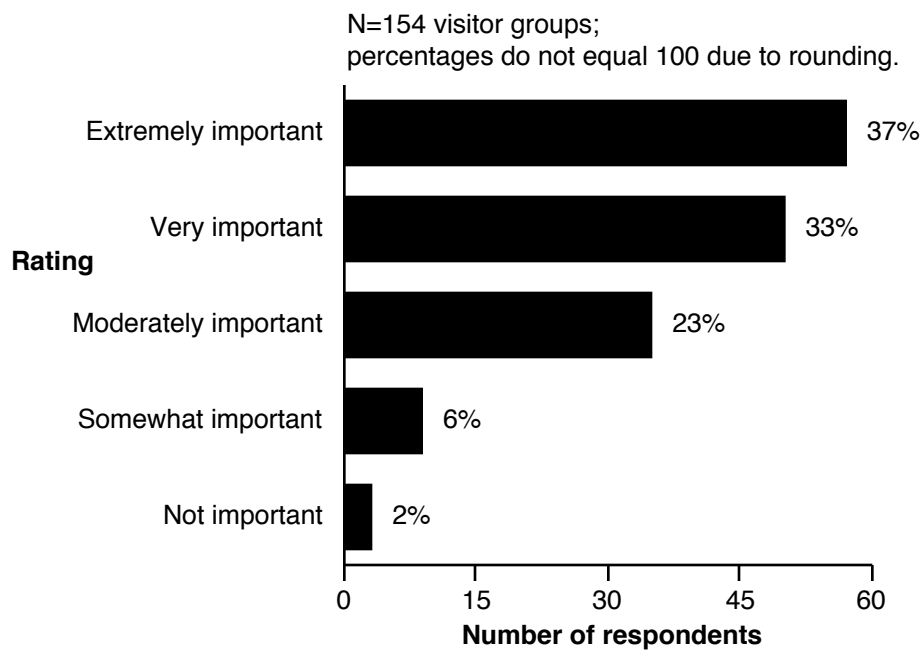


Figure 22: Importance of park brochure/map

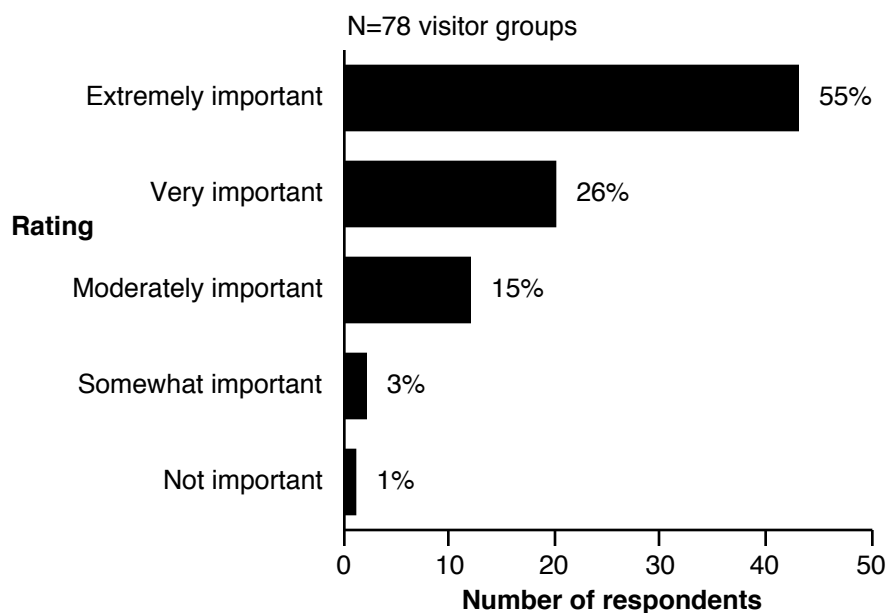


Figure 23: Importance of tour of Martin Luther King, Jr. birth home

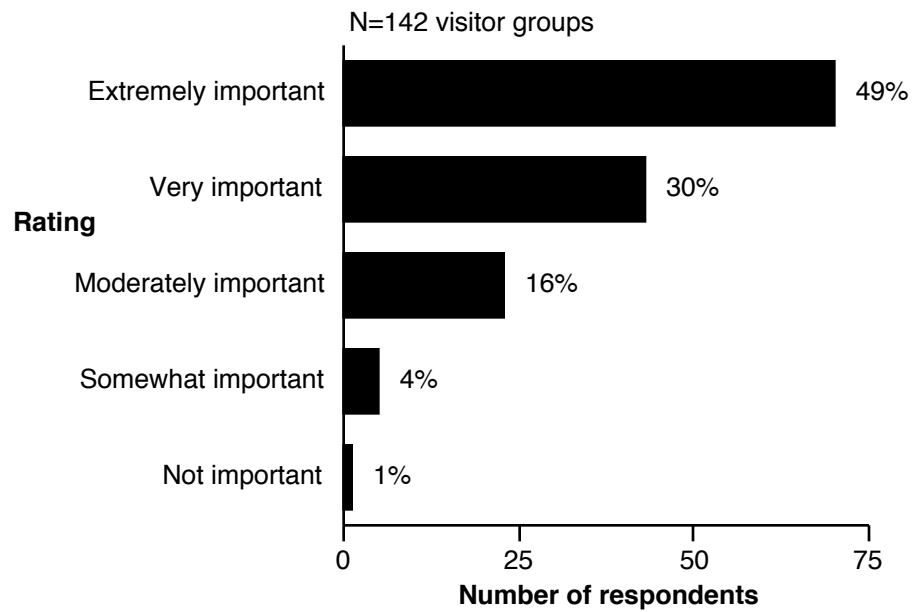


Figure 24: Importance of information from park employees

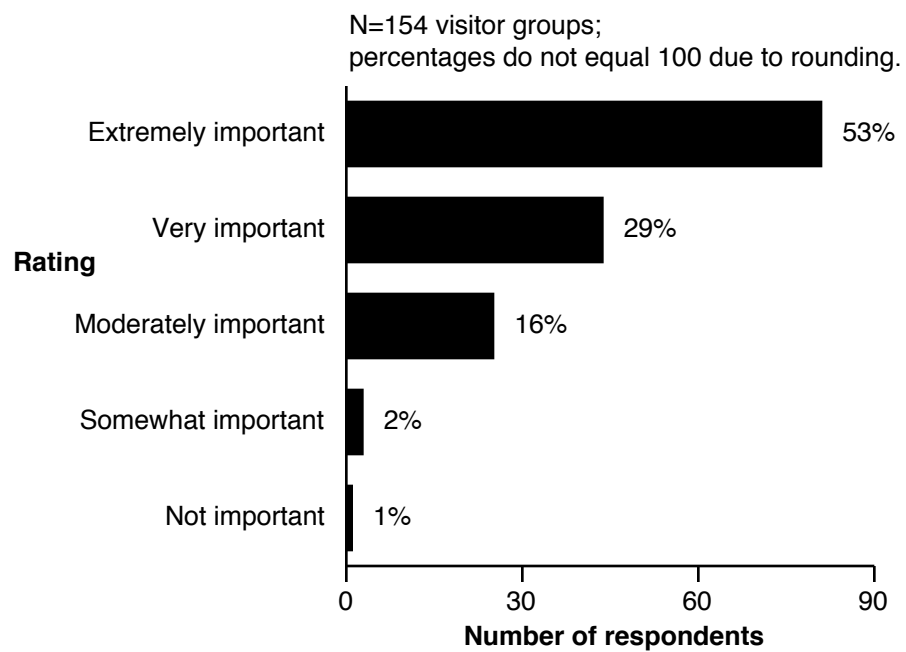


Figure 25: Importance of National Park Service visitor center

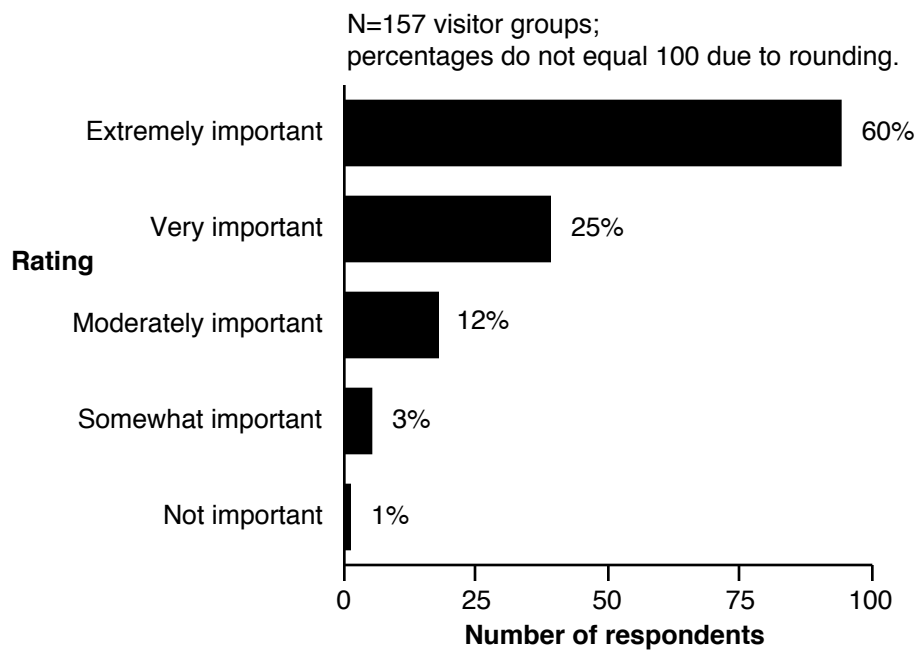


Figure 26: Importance of visitor center video program

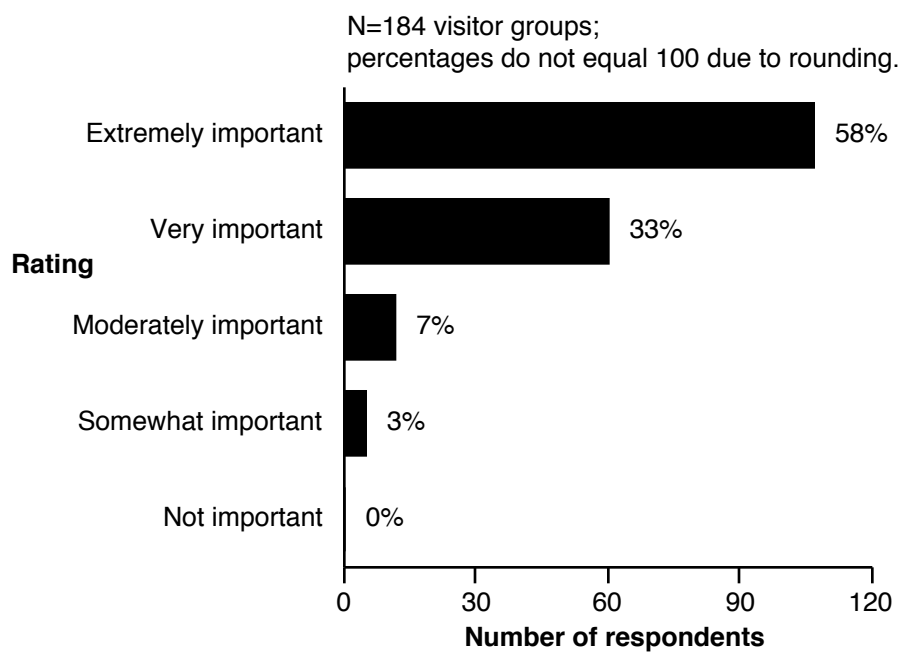


Figure 27: Importance of visitor center exhibits

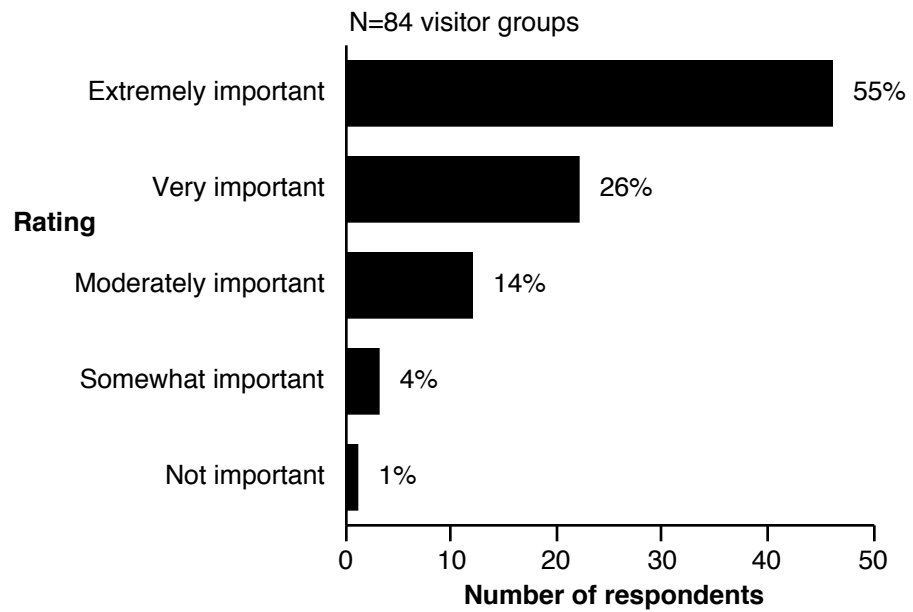


Figure 28: Importance of tour of Ebenezer Baptist Church

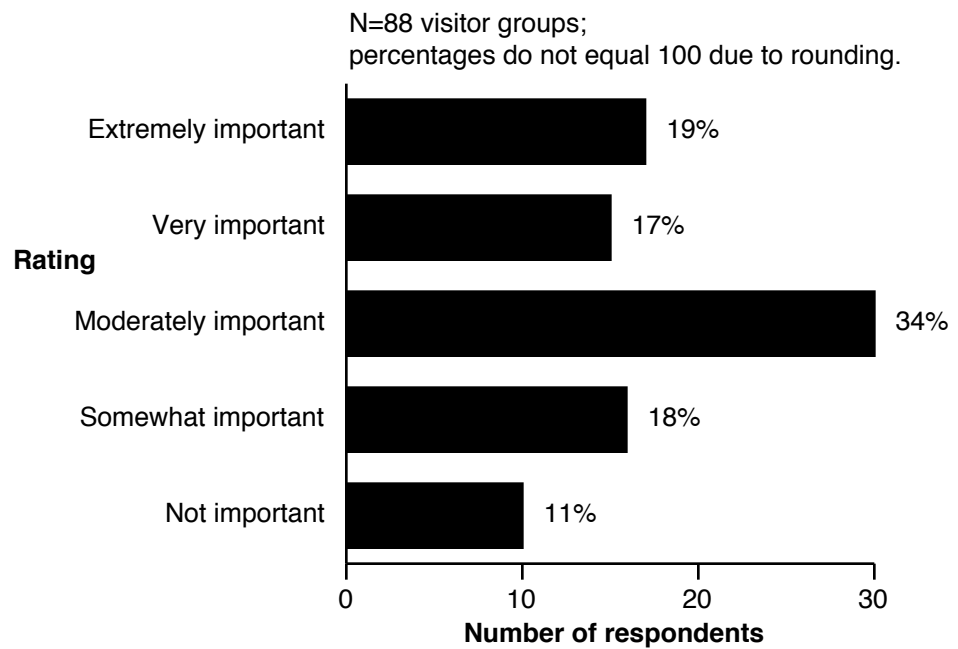


Figure 29: Importance of Historic Fire Station No. 6

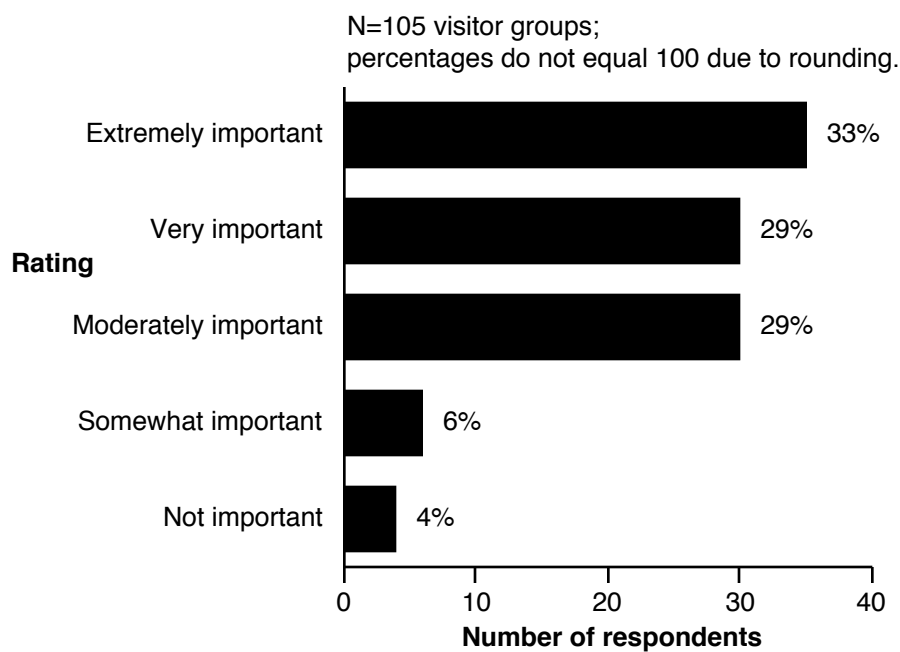


Figure 30: Importance of outdoor exhibits

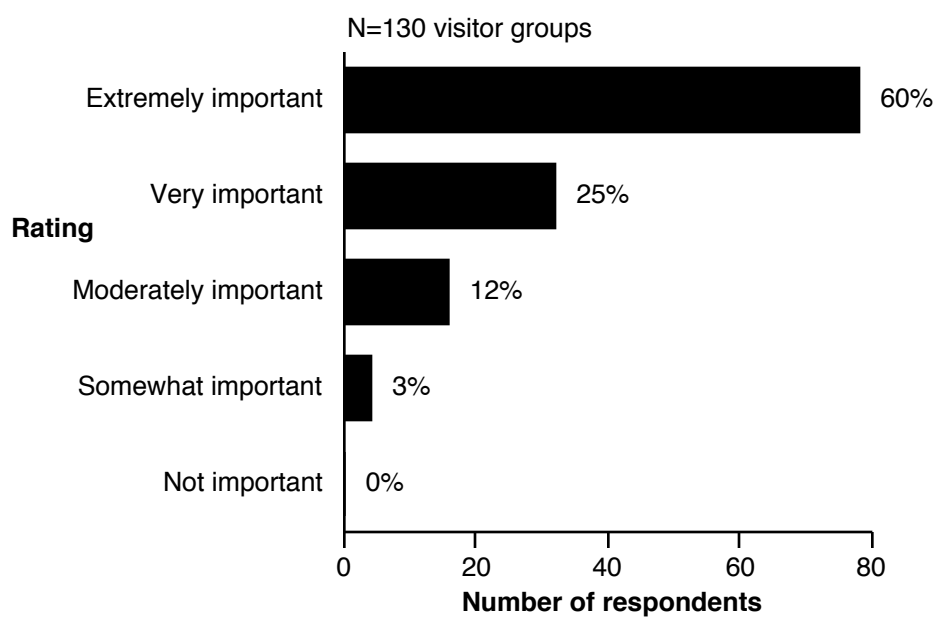


Figure 31: Importance of restrooms

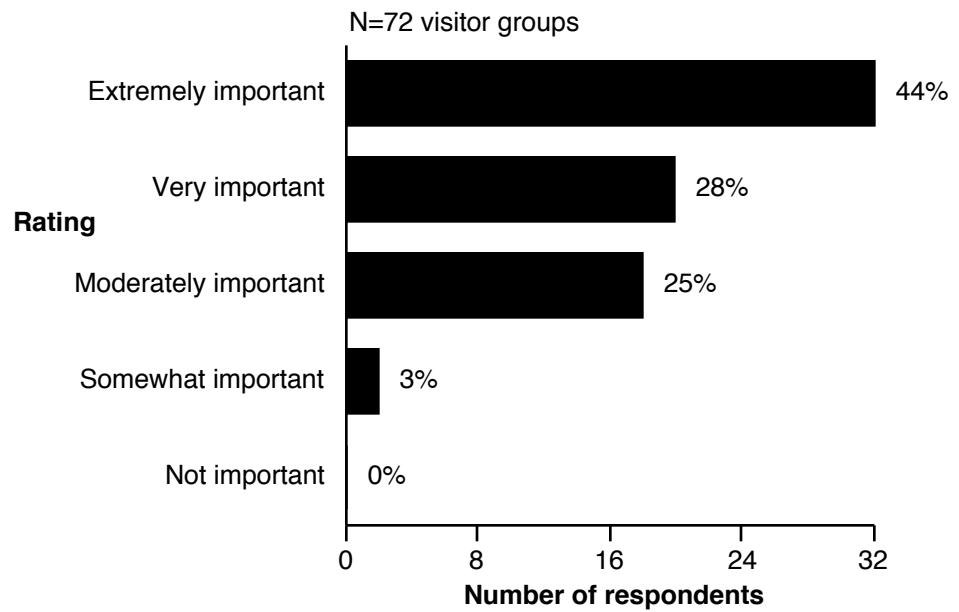


Figure 32: Importance of National Park Service parking lot

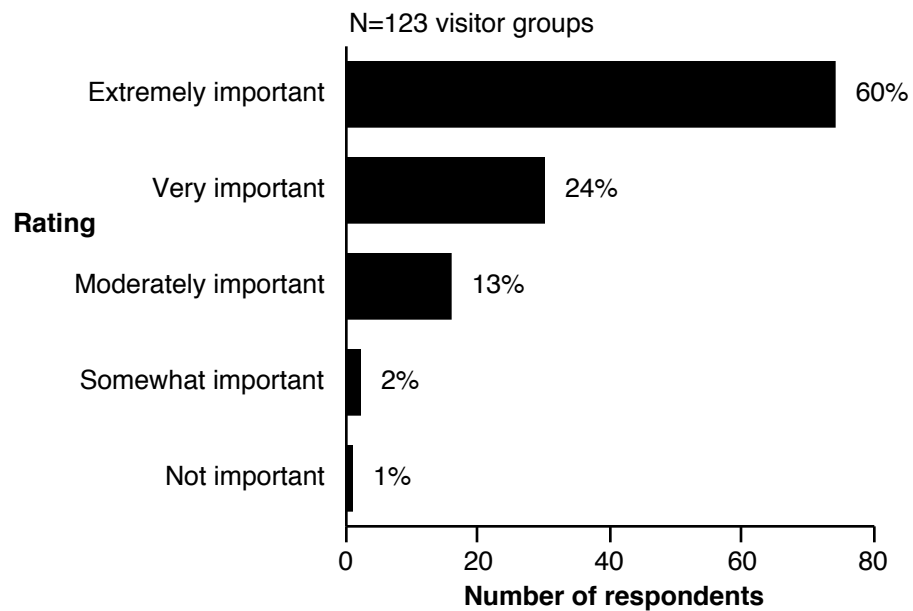


Figure 33: Importance of directional signs

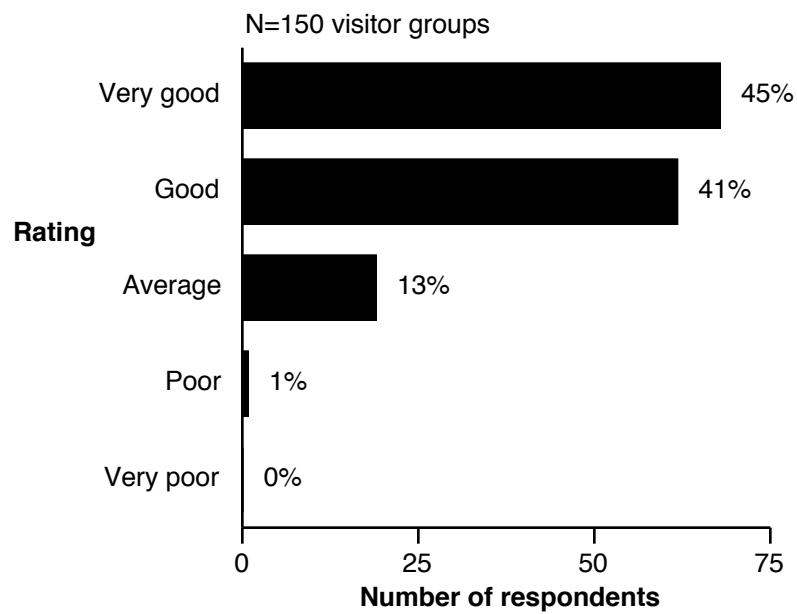


Figure 34: Quality of park brochure/map

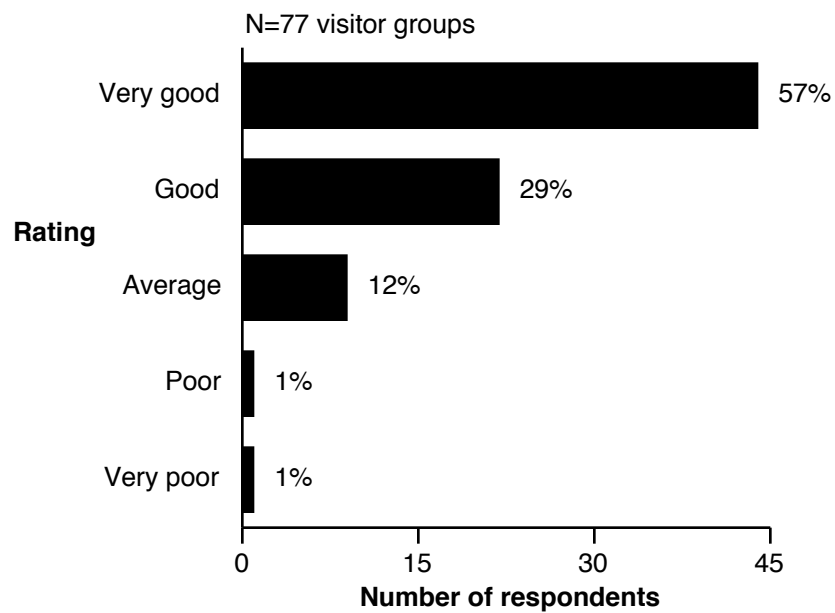


Figure 35: Quality of tour of Martin Luther King, Jr. birth home

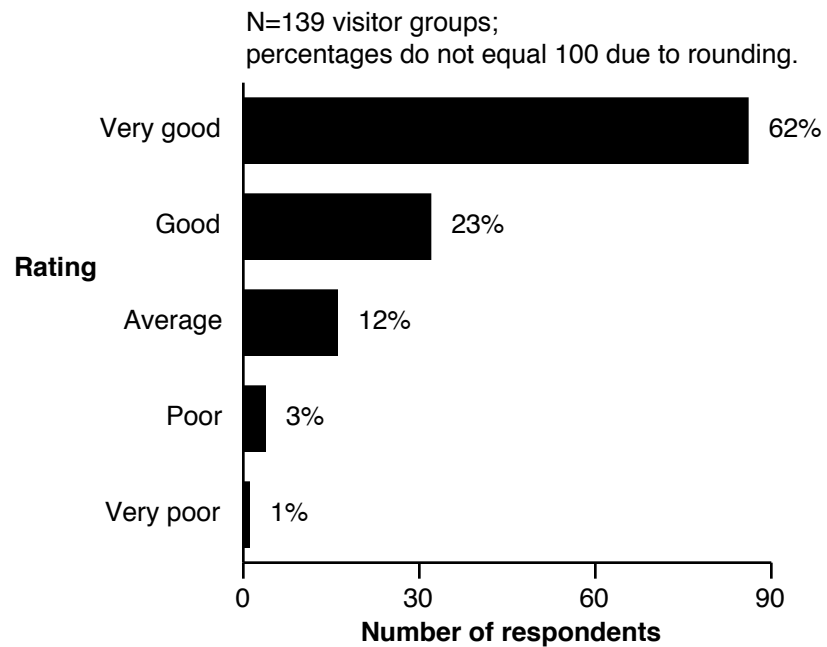
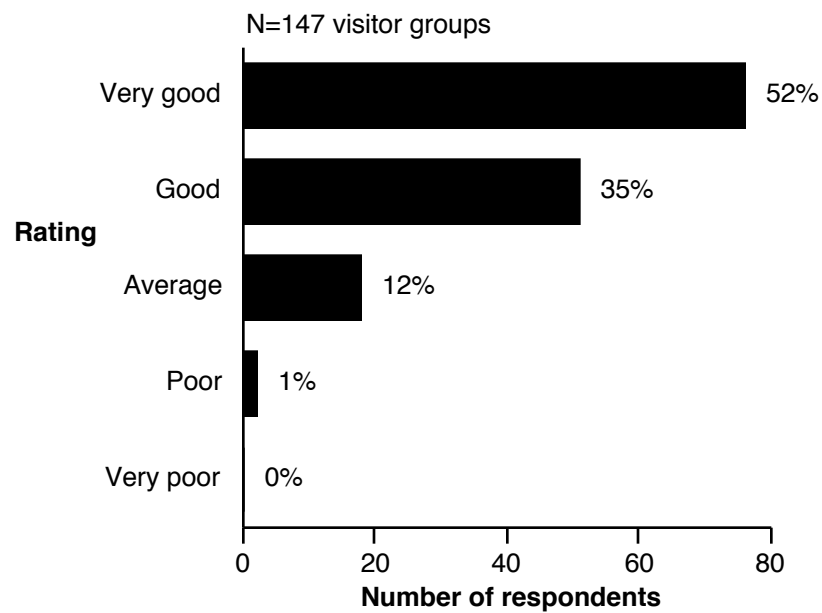


Figure 36: Quality of information from park employees



**Figure 37: Quality of National Park Service
visitor center**

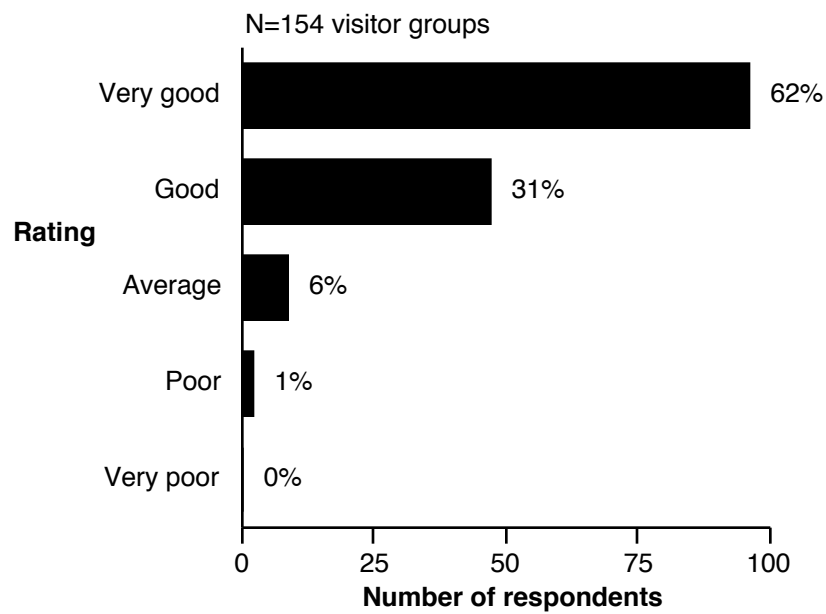


Figure 38: Quality of visitor center video program

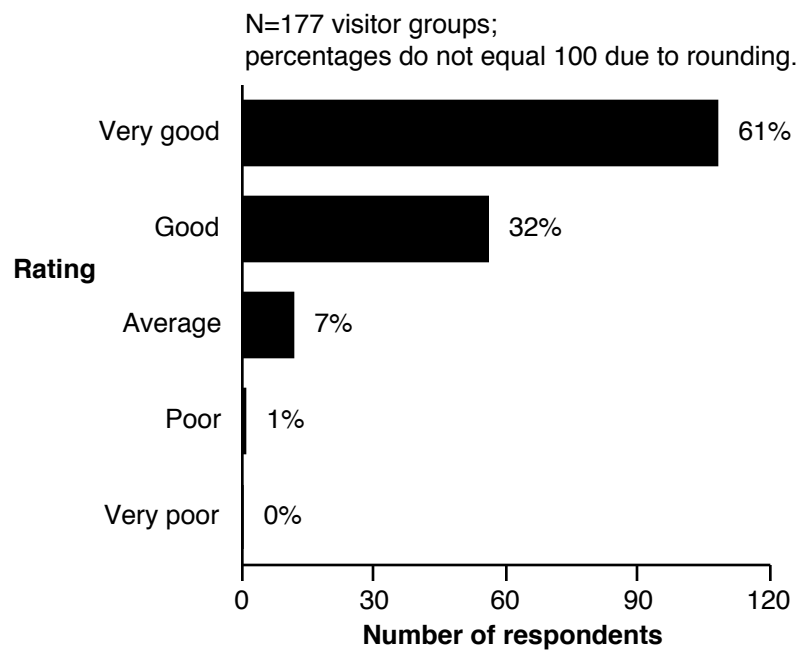


Figure 39: Quality of visitor center exhibits

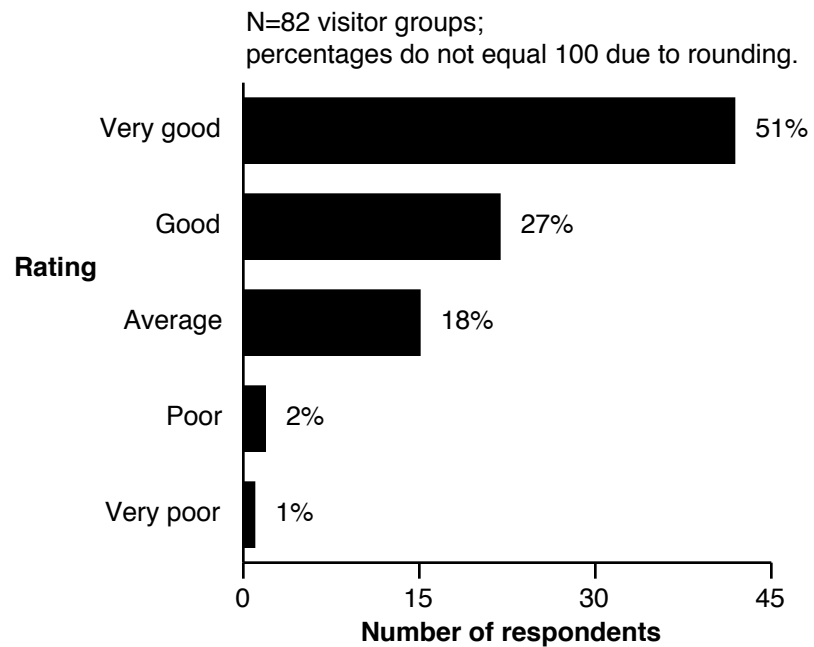


Figure 40: Quality of tour of Ebenezer Baptist Church

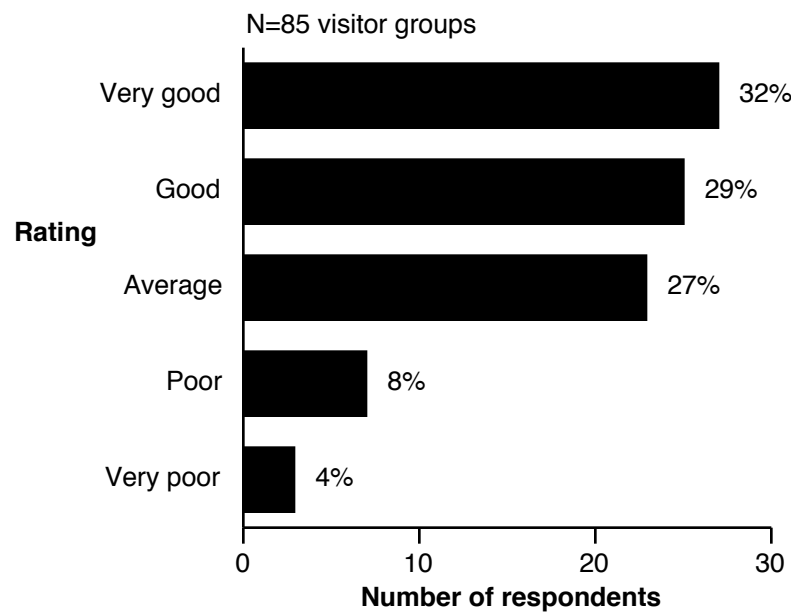


Figure 41: Quality of Historic Fire Station No. 6

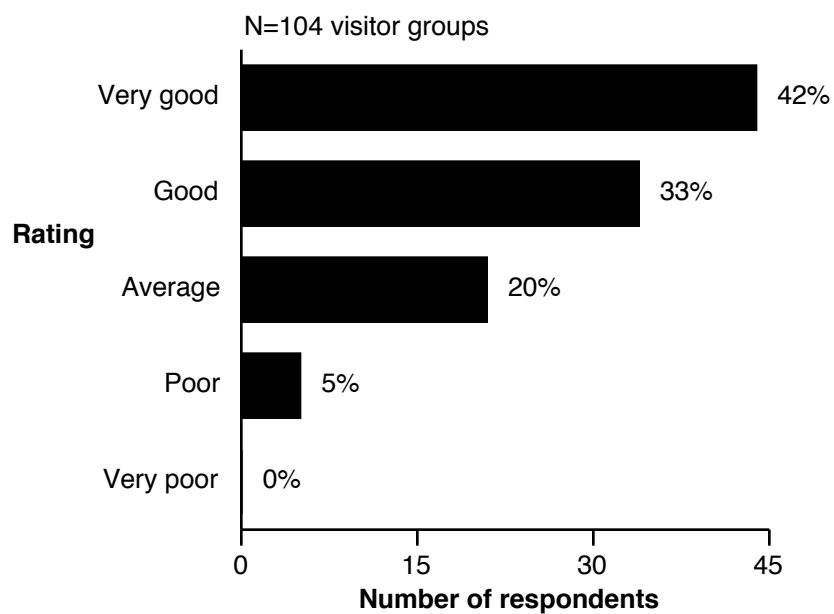


Figure 42: Quality of outdoor exhibits

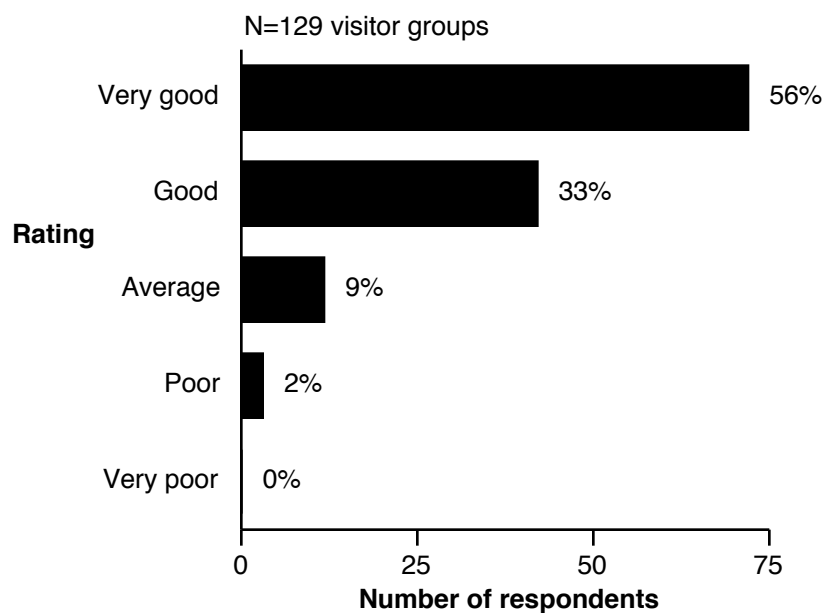


Figure 43: Quality of restrooms

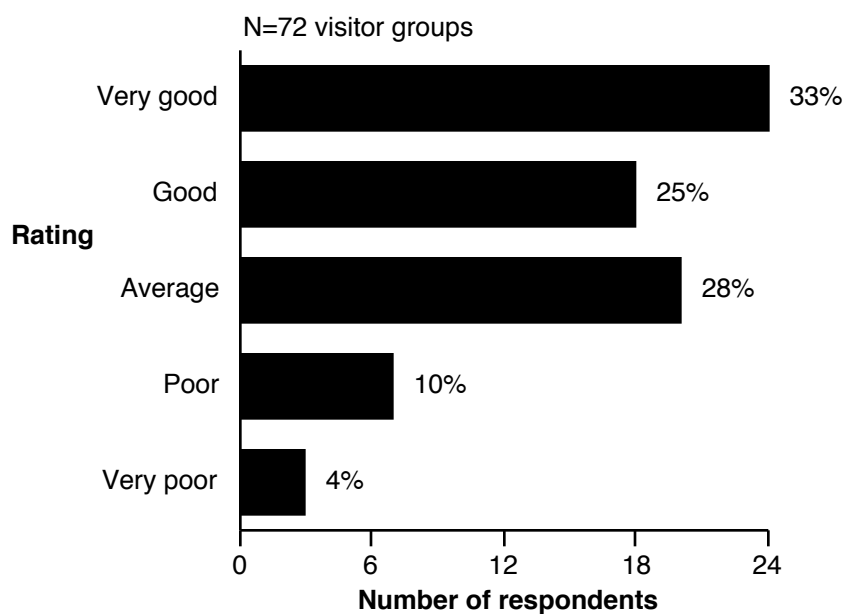


Figure 44: Quality of National Park Service parking lot

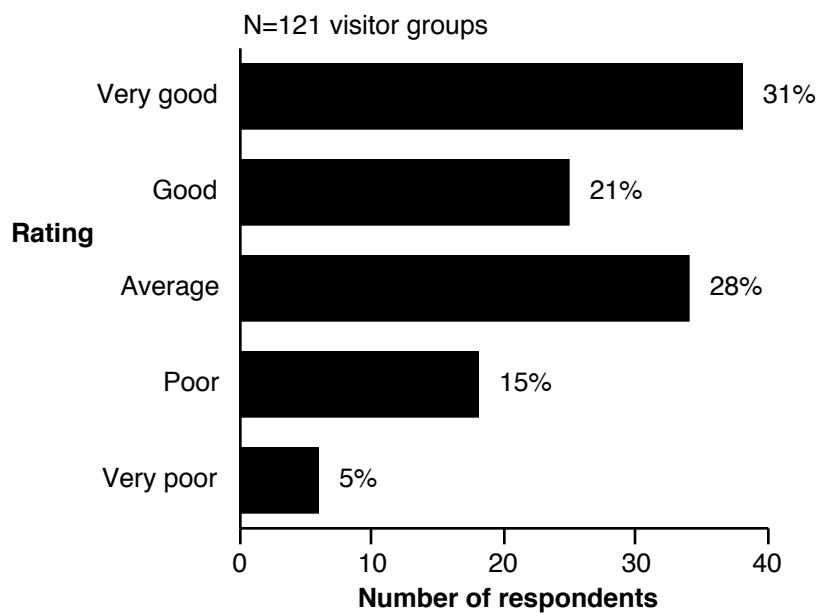


Figure 45: Quality of directional signs

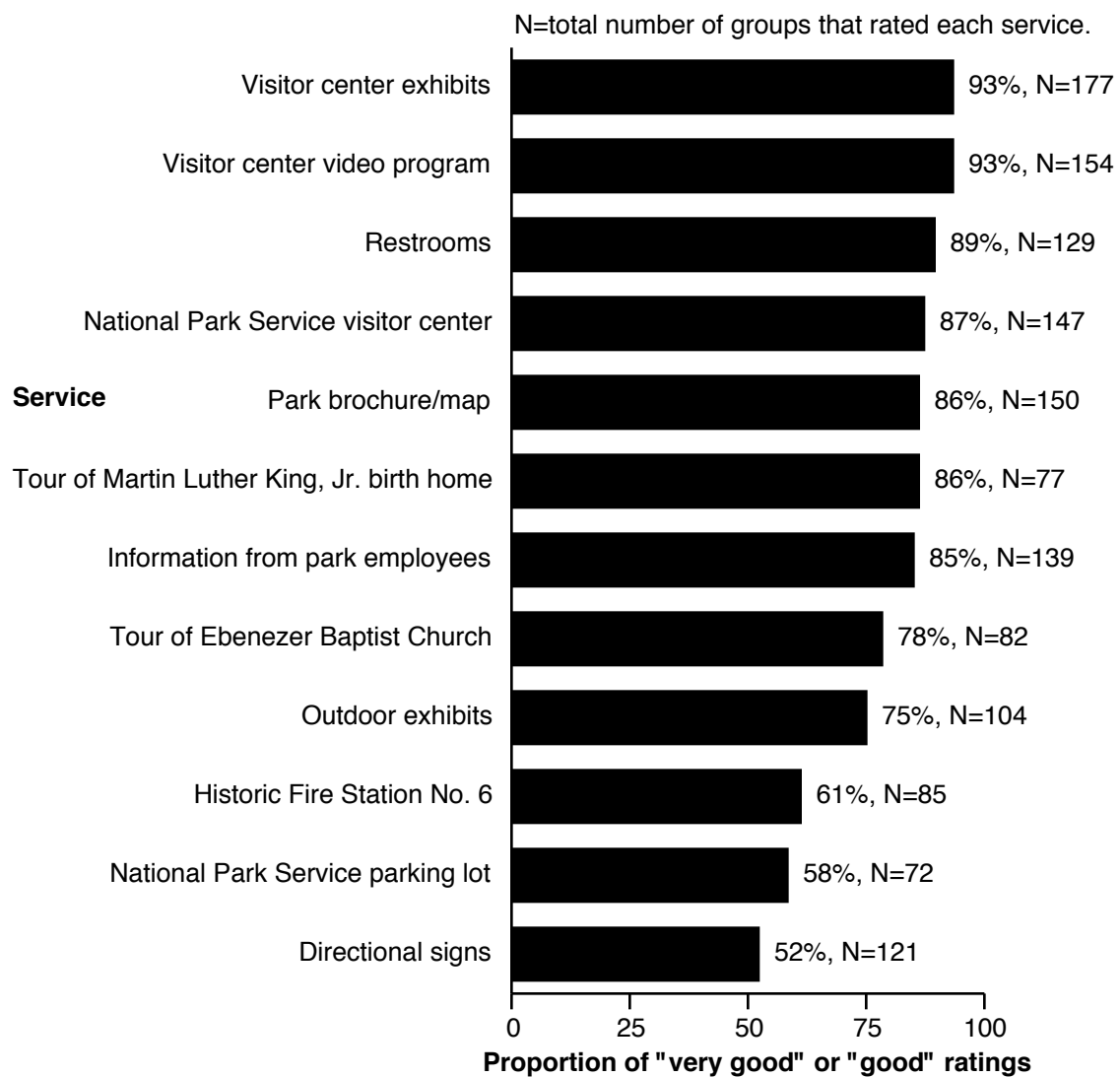


Figure 46: Combined proportions of "very good" or "good" quality ratings for services

Future subjects of interest

Visitor groups were asked what subjects they would be interested in learning about on a future visit to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. As is shown by Figure 47, the subjects visitors were most interested in learning about were the life and teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. (67%), the Civil Rights Movement (61%) and life in Sweet Auburn in the early 1900's (52%). Visitor groups mentioned several "other" subjects of interest, including information about how King's family lived after his death, the doctrine of non-violence, and details about those who influenced and/or worked with Dr. King.

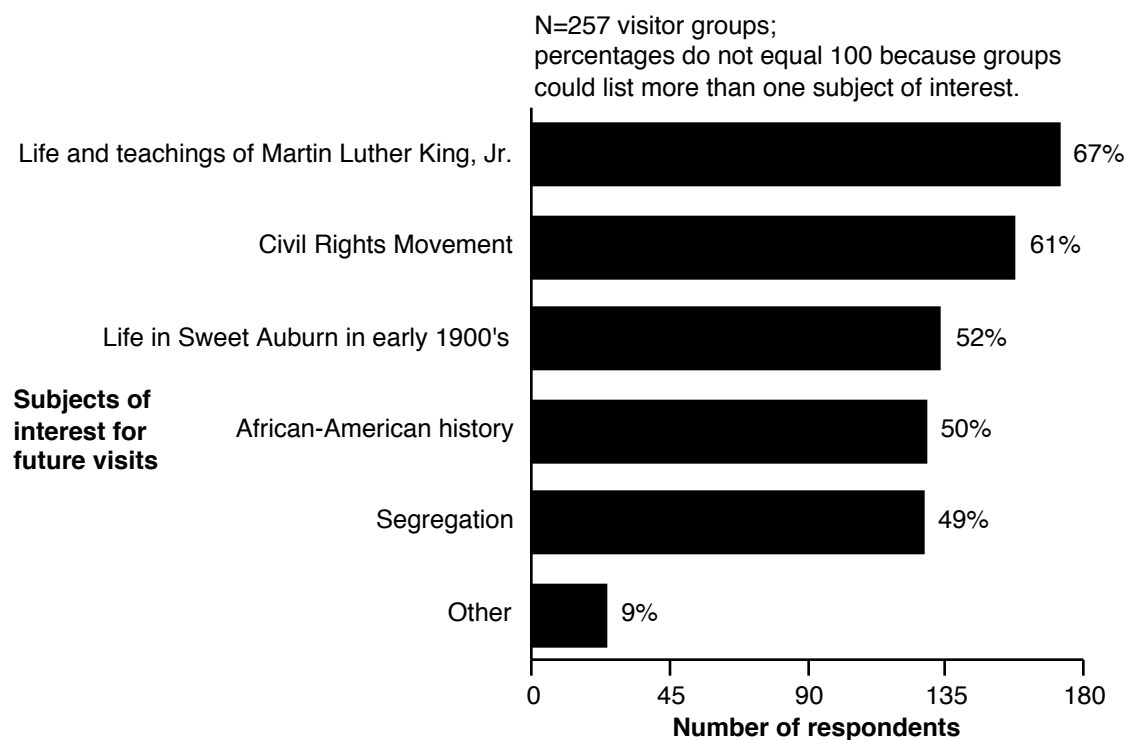


Figure 47: Subjects of interest for future visits

Visitor groups were asked to rate the overall quality of the visitor services provided to them at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site during this visit. The majority of visitor groups (91%) rated services as "very good" or "good" (see Figure 48). Two groups rated services as "poor," while none of the visitor groups rated services as "very poor."

Overall quality of visitor services

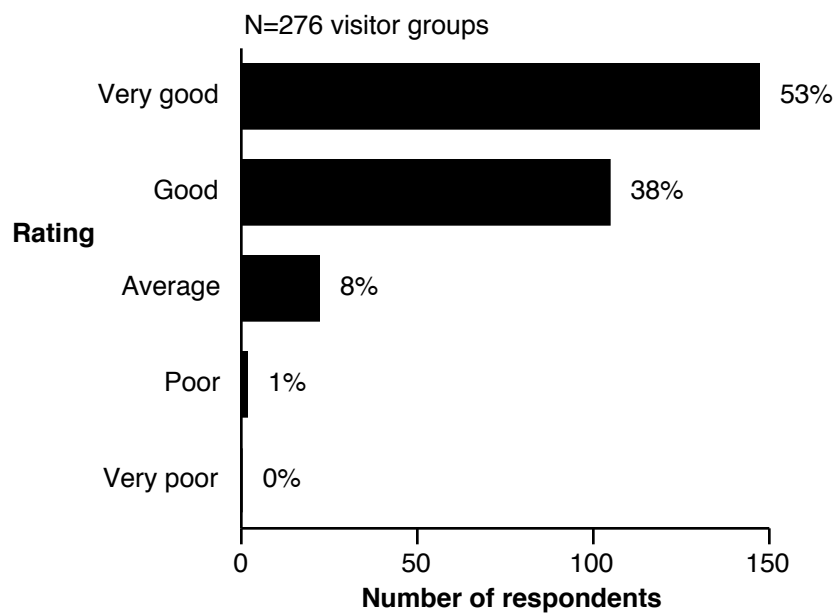


Figure 48: Overall quality of visitor services

What visitors liked most

Visitor groups were asked "What did you like most about your visit to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site?" Ninety percent of visitor groups (256 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

Table 8: Visitor likes

N=441 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Helpful staff	7
Friendly staff	6
Knowledgeable staff	4
Staff	4
Ebenezer Baptist Church tour guide	2
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Videos at visitor center	65
Birth home tour	36
Visitor center exhibits	34
Educational or informative	18
Visitor center	18
Exhibits	17
Photographic exhibit	16
Organization of exhibits	16
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb	16
Ebenezer Baptist Church	15
Learning about Civil Rights Movement	9
Good combination of audio and video	9
Learning about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life	8
Insight into difficult time in U.S. history	8
Museum is well laid out	6
King Center exhibits	6
Historical perspective	6
Learning about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s actions	6
School children art	5
Being able to leave comments and hear comments from others	5
Figures marching	4
Auburn Avenue	4
Segregation information	4
Introductory video	3
Tour	3
March to Freedom exhibit	3
Timelines	2

Comment	Number of times mentioned
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES (con't)	
Service at Ebenezer Baptist Church	2
Made events seem close and real	2
Fire station	2
Overall presentation	2
Sense of history	2
Selma March art	2
Outdoor exhibits	2
Honored an important man	2
"Behold" sculpture	2
Other comments	8
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Clean	2
Well-maintained	2
New facility	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
No entry fee	2
Other comment	1
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
That area is being preserved as a community	4
Restored neighborhood	3
Other comments	3
CONCESSIONS	
Gift shop	2
Other comment	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Enjoyed visit	5
Emotional experience	5
Appreciated everything	4
Whole environment	3
Peaceful and quiet	2
Other comments	6

What visitors liked least

Visitor groups were asked "What did you like least about your visit to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site?" Fifty-eight percent of visitor groups (167 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

Table 9: Visitor dislikes

N=223 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Rude gift shop personnel	2
Lack of assistance from park staff	2
Other comments	2
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Quality of exhibits should be improved	6
Not enough exhibits/attractions	6
Unable to tour birth home	6
More information about what there is to do at the site	6
Unable to tour Ebenezer Baptist Church	4
Poor interpretation on birth home tour	3
Ebenezer Baptist Church tour	3
Not enough information about sign-ups and tickets for birth home tour	3
Scheduling of tours for groups	3
Fire station	3
Not much about other leaders and workers in Civil Rights Movement	3
Should be more guided tours	2
Struggles of Martin Luther King, Jr. and all African-Americans	2
Waiting for tour	2
Coretta Scott King had half of exhibit	2
Some exhibits were repetitious	2
Videos/music in visitor center were too loud	2
Marching figures in visitor center	2
Should be more exhibits at King Center	2
Should have information about where to start	2
Lack of pedestrian friendly maps	2
More personal effects/artifacts	2
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb	2
Other comments	6

Comment	Number of times mentioned
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Public transportation to/from area	9
Poorly maintained	8
Poor signs to park	7
Poor signs to parking lot	7
Parking	5
Not well marked to guide people through site	4
Not enough places to sit for resting and viewing exhibits	4
Grounds	3
Construction in progress	3
Reflecting pool was damaged and/or dirty	2
Parking too far away	2
Fountain was off	2
Walking from one site to another	2
Rose garden in disrepair	2
Other comments	4
POLICIES	
Closed too early	4
Other comments	3
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Intimidating neighborhood	3
Decaying homes around site	2
Other comments	2
CONCESSIONS	
Poor selection in gift shop	2
Gift shop should have greater variety of books	2
Comments about price or quality of merchandise	2
Other comments	3
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Nothing	29
Didn't have enough time	12
Panhandlers or homeless people	6
Weather	2
Other comments	5

Planning for the future

Visitor groups were asked "If you were a park manager planning for the future of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, what would you propose? Please be specific." Fifty-nine percent of visitor groups (169 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below and in the appendix.

Table 10: Planning for the future

N=300 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
More staff or volunteers	8
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
More exhibits	21
Exhibits on current civil rights issues	13
More tour or general information at visitor center	11
More history of King and family	6
More outdoor exhibits or monuments	5
Tours of Sweet Auburn area	5
More exhibits on Civil Rights Movement	4
Ensure that guides can answer questions and know history	4
More information about birth home tour	4
Information in other languages	4
More historical context	4
Exhibits comparing Martin Luther King, Jr. with other civil rights leaders	4
More interactive exhibits	4
Talks by people who experienced Civil Rights Movement	3
More artifacts or personal effects	3
Hands-on exhibits	3
More guided tours	3
Classes or research on current race issues	2
Indication of proper order for viewing exhibits	2
Lectures at center	2
Should have a guide for each group	2
Make birth home tour more convenient	2
Display of how a segregated neighborhood might be	2
Site was informative	2
More frequent birth home tours	2
Music playing at tomb and freedom walk	2
Provide guides as transitions between sites	2
Expand King Center exhibits	2
Other comments	23

Comment	Number of times mentioned
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Better signs	8
Better signs to and from site	8
Landscaping improvements	6
Better signs directing people through site	5
Make site more pedestrian friendly	5
More benches for sitting/reflecting	4
Clean up site	4
Rose garden not well maintained	3
Improve parking	3
Shuttle from MARTA/train	3
Continued maintenance of park	3
Improve signs on buildings	2
Repair and clean reflecting pool	2
Build picnic area	2
Shuttle or tour bus	2
Shade structures or trees	2
Better signs to parking	2
Other comments	8
POLICIES	
More publicity and exposure	9
Longer hours	2
Donation boxes	2
Prohibit panhandlers and beggars	2
Other comments	2
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Continued rehabilitation of neighborhood	10
Preserve area	3
Appears to still be under development	2
Keep site dedicated to spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.	2
Economic development for area	2
Other comments	4
CONCESSIONS	
Have food or refreshments available	5
More material available for sale	5
Better selection in bookstore	2
Gift shop items too expensive	2
Other comment	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
No changes to suggest	6
Keep things as they are	4
Keep up good work	2
Other comments	7

**Comment
summary**

Forty-three percent of visitor groups (122 groups) wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments about Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site are summarized below and in the appendix. Some comments offer specific suggestions on how to improve the park; others describe what visitors enjoyed or did not enjoy about their visit.

Table 11: Additional comments

N=234 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Friendly staff	7
Helpful staff	5
Birth home guide was good	3
Well spoken staff	2
Knowledgeable staff	2
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Educational or informative visit	15
Interesting	7
Enjoyed videos	5
Provide more information or exhibits	4
Well presented and organized	4
Important to keep recent history in mind	3
Enjoyed birth home tour	3
Liked exhibits	3
Visitor center should provide more information on King Center	2
Helped me better understand Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life	2
Other comments	9
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Park was clean and well-maintained	3
Comments about parking lot	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
Should be publicized and promoted more	3
Other comments	2

Comment	Number of times mentioned
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Restored community around Sweet Auburn is nice	3
Parts of area seemed unsafe	2
Continue work on site	2
Other comments	3
CONCESSIONS	
Comment	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Enjoyed visit	42
Thanks	19
Emotional experience	18
We'll come back	8
Good job	6
Wish I had more time	5
Valuable site	4
Inspiring	4
Enlightening visit	4
Disappointed	3
Obvious that care was taken to make site educational and informative	2
Impressed	2
Worthwhile	2
Other comments	15

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Additional Analysis

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

Additional Analysis

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

- Sources of park information
- Direction used to get to park
- Hours spent in park
- Minutes spent in park
- Difficulty locating park
- Forms of transportation
- Primary destination
- Visitor activities
- Number of visits
- Other attractions visited
- Group size
- With guided tour group
- With educational/school group
- Group type
- Age
- State of residence
- Country of residence
- African-American history interest
- Reasons for visiting
- Other civil rights sites visited
- Unmet expectations
- Visitor service use
- Visitor service importance
- Visitor service quality
- Future subjects of interest
- Overall quality rating

Database

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

Phone/send requests to:

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

**Phone: 208-885-2819
FAX: 208-885-4261
cc:Mail: VSP Database NP- -PNR
e-mail: vspdatabase@uidaho.edu**

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.

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
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 (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
29. White Sands National Monument
30. National Monuments
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
39. Joshua Tree National Monument
40. The White House Tours, President's Park (spring)
41. Natchez Trace Parkway
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
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 (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

Visitor Services Project Publications (continued)

1994

- 64. Death Valley National Monument Backcountry
- 65. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park
- 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

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

1997

- 92. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer & fall)
- 93. Virgin Islands National Park
- 94. Mojave National Preserve
- 95. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park

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

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

Visitor Study

Spring 1997

Appendix

Chris Wall

Visitor Services Project Report 95

December 1997

This volume contains a summary of visitors' comments for Questions 19a, 19b, 21 and 22. The summary is followed by visitors' unedited comments.

Chris Wall is a VSP Research Associate based at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. I thank Mark Patterson and the staff of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site 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 likes

N=441 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Helpful staff	7
Friendly staff	6
Knowledgeable staff	4
Staff	4
Ebenezer Baptist Church tour guide	2
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Videos at visitor center	65
Birth home tour	36
Visitor center exhibits	34
Educational or informative	18
Visitor center	18
Exhibits	17
Photographic exhibit	16
Organization of exhibits	16
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb	16
Ebenezer Baptist Church	15
Learning about Civil Rights Movement	9
Good combination of audio and video	9
Learning about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life	8
Insight into difficult time in U.S. history	8
Museum is well laid out	6
King Center exhibits	6
Historical perspective	6
Learning about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s actions	6
School children art	5
Being able to leave comments and hear comments from others	5
Figures marching	4
Auburn Avenue	4
Segregation information	4
Introductory video	3
Tour	3
March to Freedom exhibit	3
Timelines	2
Service at Ebenezer Baptist Church	2
Made events seem close and real	2
Fire station	2
Overall presentation	2
Sense of history	2

Comment	Number of times mentioned
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES (con't)	
Selma March art	2
Outdoor exhibits	2
Honored an important man	2
"Behold" sculpture	2
Other comments	8
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Clean	2
Well-maintained	2
New facility	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
No entry fee	2
Other comment	1
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
That area is being preserved as a community	4
Restored neighborhood	3
Other comments	3
CONCESSIONS	
Gift shop	2
Other comment	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Enjoyed visit	5
Emotional experience	5
Appreciated everything	4
Whole environment	3
Peaceful and quiet	2
Other comments	6

Visitor dislikes

N=223 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Rude gift shop personnel	2
Lack of assistance from park staff	2
Other comments	2
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Quality of exhibits should be improved	6
Not enough exhibits/attractions	6
Unable to tour birth home	6
More information about what there is to do at the site	6
Unable to tour Ebenezer Baptist Church	4
Poor interpretation on birth home tour	3
Ebenezer Baptist Church tour	3
Not enough information about sign-ups and tickets for birth home tour	3
Scheduling of tours for groups	3
Fire station	3
Not much about other leaders and workers in Civil Rights Movement	3
Should be more guided tours	2
Struggles of Martin Luther King, Jr. and all African-Americans	2
Waiting for tour	2
Coretta Scott King had half of exhibit	2
Some exhibits were repetitious	2
Videos/music in visitor center were too loud	2
Marching figures in visitor center	2
Should be more exhibits at King Center	2
Should have information about where to start	2
Lack of pedestrian friendly maps	2
More personal effects/artifacts	2
Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb	2
Other comments	6
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Public transportation to/from area	9
Poorly maintained	8
Poor signs to park	7
Poor signs to parking lot	7
Parking	5
Not well marked to guide people through site	4
Not enough places to sit for resting and viewing exhibits	4
Grounds	3
Construction in progress	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE (con't)	
Reflecting pool was damaged and/or dirty	2
Parking too far away	2
Fountain was off	2
Walking from one site to another	2
Rose garden in disrepair	2
Other comments	4
POLICIES	
Closed too early	4
Other comments	3
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Intimidating neighborhood	3
Decaying homes around site	2
Other comments	2
CONCESSIONS	
Poor selection in gift shop	2
Gift shop should have greater variety of books	2
Comments about price or quality of merchandise	2
Other comments	3
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Nothing	29
Didn't have enough time	12
Panhandlers or homeless people	6
Weather	2
Other comments	5

Planning for the future

N=300 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
More staff or volunteers	8
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
More exhibits	21
Exhibits on current civil rights issues	13
More tour or general information at visitor center	11
More history of King and family	6
More outdoor exhibits or monuments	5
Tours of Sweet Auburn area	5
More exhibits on Civil Rights Movement	4
Ensure that guides can answer questions and know history	4
More information about birth home tour	4
Information in other languages	4
More historical context	4
Exhibits comparing Martin Luther King, Jr. with other civil rights leaders	4
More interactive exhibits	4
Talks by people who experienced Civil Rights Movement	3
More artifacts or personal effects	3
Hands-on exhibits	3
More guided tours	3
Classes or research on current race issues	2
Indication of proper order for viewing exhibits	2
Lectures at center	2
Should have a guide for each group	2
Make birth home tour more convenient	2
Display of how a segregated neighborhood might be	2
Site was informative	2
More frequent birth home tours	2
Music playing at tomb and freedom walk	2
Provide guides as transitions between sites	2
Expand King Center exhibits	2
Other comments	23
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Better signs	8
Better signs to and from site	8
Landscaping improvements	6
Better signs directing people through site	5
Make site more pedestrian friendly	5
More benches for sitting/reflecting	4
Clean up site	4
Rose garden not well maintained	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE (con't)	
Improve parking	3
Shuttle from MARTA/train	3
Continued maintenance of park	3
Improve signs on buildings	2
Repair and clean reflecting pool	2
Build picnic area	2
Shuttle or tour bus	2
Shade structures or trees	2
Better signs to parking	2
Other comments	8
POLICIES	
More publicity and exposure	9
Longer hours	2
Donation boxes	2
Prohibit panhandlers and beggars	2
Other comments	2
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Continued rehabilitation of neighborhood	10
Preserve area	3
Appears to still be under development	2
Keep site dedicated to spirit of Martin Luther King, Jr.	2
Economic development for area	2
Other comments	4
CONCESSIONS	
Have food or refreshments available	5
More material available for sale	5
Better selection in bookstore	2
Gift shop items too expensive	2
Other comment	1
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
No changes to suggest	6
Keep things as they are	4
Keep up good work	2
Other comments	7

Summary of additional visitor comments

N=234 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Friendly staff	7
Helpful staff	5
Birth home guide was good	3
Well spoken staff	2
Knowledgeable staff	2
Other comment	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Educational or informative visit	15
Interesting	7
Enjoyed videos	5
Provide more information or exhibits	4
Well presented and organized	4
Important to keep recent history in mind	3
Enjoyed birth home tour	3
Liked exhibits	3
Visitor center should provide more information on King Center	2
Helped me better understand Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life	2
Other comments	9
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Park was clean and well-maintained	3
Comments about parking lot	2
Other comments	2
POLICIES	
Should be publicized and promoted more	3
Other comments	2
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Restored community around Sweet Auburn is nice	3
Parts of area seemed unsafe	2
Continue work on site	2
Other comments	3
CONCESSIONS	
Comment	1

Comment	Number of times mentioned
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Enjoyed visit	42
Thanks	19
Emotional experience	18
We'll come back	8
Good job	6
Wish I had more time	5
Valuable site	4
Inspiring	4
Enlightening visit	4
Disappointed	3
Obvious that care was taken to make site educational and informative	2
Impressed	2
Worthwhile	2
Other comments	15
