# Visitor Services Project

## Report 12

# Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

## Volume 1 of 2

**Cooperative Park Studies Unit**
**University of Idaho**

**Visitor Services Project**

**Report 12**

**Harpers Ferry National Historical Park**

**Volume 1 of 2**

Gary E. Machlis

Dana E. Dolsen

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# Executive Summary

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park during the week of July 26-August 1, 1987. Questionnaires were given to 920 visitors and 331 were returned, a 36% response rate.

- The survey provides a profile of the people who visited Harpers Ferry. Their general comments about the park are found in Volume 2 of the report and this volume has a summary of visitor comments.

- Visitors were most likely to be in family groups of two to four people.  Most visitors were making their first visit to Harpers Ferry.  The majority of visitors came from Maryland or Virginia.

- Most visitors stayed two to four hours and did not spend the night in the area. Resting, viewing the exhibits, visiting the Visitor Center and shopping were the most common activities.

- The sites that received the greatest use (in order) were the historic area, the shops area, the riverbank/shoreline and "the Point".

- The average per capita expenditure during the visit was approximately $ 14.00.  The most common level of visitor group expenditures was      $ 25.00 or less, though the average group expenditure was approximately $ 50.00. Among all visitor groups, 86% spent money on food, 80% spent money on 'other' items, 78% spent money on travel and 48% spent money on lodging.

- Visitors indicated that they were attracted to the park for more than one reason.  The primary attractions were the historical features and outdoor recreation.

- Most visitors used the park map/brochure and the information desk among several interpretive services.  The map/brochure was the most useful and the radio station was least useful.

- Visitors indicated that what they liked most about their visit in general terms were the park's beauty, historic nature and quiet and relaxing atmosphere. The river was the most frequently mentioned natural feature, the historic area and the shops were also frequently mentioned. Interpretive programs, films and tours were also mentioned often, as were swimming and tubing.

- Visitors liked least about their visit: having to leave, the weather and the garbage near the river.  Also mentioned were inadequate parking and a lack of picnic tables and grills.

- Visitors made many additional comments about their visit.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**VOLUME 1: Visitor Mapping Report**

**VOLUME 2: Visitor Comments**

# INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a visitor mapping study undertaken at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (referred to as 'Harpers Ferry') during the week of July 26-August 1, 1987 by the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho, as a part of its Visitor Services Project.  A list of Visitor Services Project publications is included on the inside back cover of this report.

After this <u>Introduction</u>, the <u>Methods</u> are presented, along with limitations to the study.  The <u>Results</u> follow, including a summary of visitor comments.  Next, a <u>Menu</u> <u>for</u> <u>Further</u> <u>Analysis</u> is provided to help managers in requesting additional analyses.  Finally, <u>Appendix</u> <u>A</u> contains the questionnaire used.  Volume 2 of this report contains comments made by visitors who returned the questionnaires.

Many of the graphs in this report are like the example on the following page. The large numbers refer to explanations below the graph.

SAMPLE ONLY
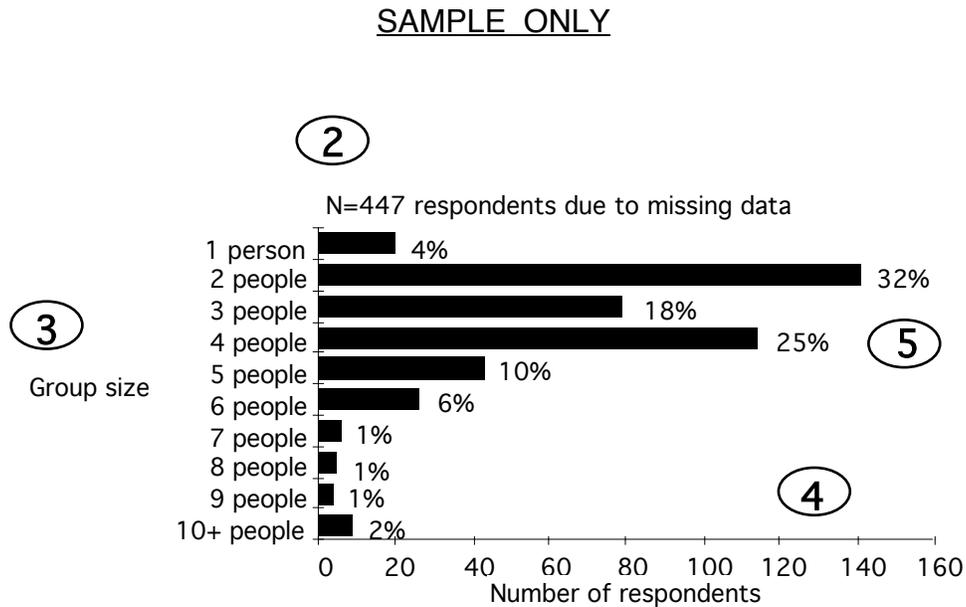


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

1: The figure title provides a general description of the information contained in the graph.

2: A note above gives the 'N', or number of cases in the sample, and a specific description of the information in the chart.

3: The vertical information describes categories.

4: The horizontal information shows the number of items that fall into each category. In some graphs, proportions are shown.

5: In most graphs, percentages are included to provide additional explanation.

**METHODS**

General strategy

Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of randomly selected visitors entering Harpers Ferry during July 26-August 1, 1987. Visitors completed the questionnaire during their trip and then returned it by mail. Returned questionnaires were analyzed and this report developed.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire asked visitors to record where they went, what they did and how much money they spent (see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire). The questionnaire followed the standard format used in previous Visitor Services Project studies. Visitors also expressed their opinions on the usefulness of park information/interpretation services and indicated what attracted them to Harpers Ferry. Space was provided for respondents' comments.

Sampling

Most visitors were contacted at the main parking lot. Sampling consisted of choosing selected daily time periods for the entire week and then approaching each visitor group entering the park during those times. On heavy visitation days (i.e. weekends), visitors parking along the road and in overflow areas were also sampled. People floating down the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers were not sampled.

The sample size was based upon 1986 visitor counts, the park's operating hours and staff availability. A total of 925 questionnaires were distributed.

Questionnaire administration

During each day's sampling periods, interviewers would approach the occupants of each selected vehicle. Visitor groups were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study, and asked to participate. If they consented, further instructions were given. One adult member of the group was asked to complete the questionnaire.

Data analysis

A cut-off date was established for incoming questionnaires approximately ten weeks after distribution. Questionnaires received within this period were coded and entered into a computer. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were calculated using a standard statistical software package. Respondents' comments were summarized and are included in the Results and with copies of the comments provided in Volume 2 of this report.

Sample size, missing data and reporting errors

In this study, information was collected on visitor groups, and on individual group members. Therefore, the sample size ('N'), varies from figure to figure. For example, Figure 1 shows information from 326 respondents representing visitor groups, while Figure 3 shows information on 1,028 individual group members. Each figure contains a note above the graph that specifies which information it illustrates.

Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions in the questionnaire, or may have answered some incorrectly. Unanswered

Sample size, missing data and reporting errors (continued)

questions

create missing data and cause the number in the sample to vary from figure to figure.  For example, although 331 questionnaires were returned, Figure 1 only shows data for 326 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.  For example, it is possible that some of the visitors' activities occurred outside of the park - they may not have understood to report only those activities done within the park.

Limitations

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

1.  All visitors were asked to record sites visited and activities, however, it is not possible to know whether their responses reflect actual behavior.  This disadvantage is applicable to all such studies and is reduced by having visitors fill out the questionnaire <u>as</u> <u>they</u> <u>visit</u> the park.

2.  The data reflect the use patterns of visitors during the designated study period of July 26-August 1.  The results do not necessarily apply to visitors using the park during different times of the year.

3.  Data are not collected on non-respondents.  Thus, it is not known if visitors who returned their questionnaires differ from those who did not.

4.  Data presented in figures, tables and maps where the sample size is below 30 are not necessarily reliable, thus any inferences drawn from such data are questionable.

# RESULTS

### A. Visitors contacted

Nine hundred and twenty-five visitor groups were contacted, and 920 agreed to participate. Thus, the acceptance rate was 99%. Three hundred and thirty-one of the visitor groups completed and returned their questionnaires, a 36% response rate. The 99% acceptance rate is comparable to the average acceptance rate of previous visitor mapping studies (97%). The response rate at Harpers Ferry (36%) was lower than the average response rate for previous visitor mapping studies (43%).

### B. Visitor characteristics

Figure 1 shows group sizes, which ranged from one to 74 people. The most common group size was two people. Nearly two-thirds of the visitors came in family groups, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3 shows that there was a wide range of age groups represented; the most common were children and middle-aged adults. For 50% of the visitors, this was their first visit to Harpers Ferry, although Figure 4 shows a small, but significant amount (11%) of returnees who have visited the park many times.

Visitors came from many different locations within the United States. Map 1 shows that most U.S. visitors originated from the states around Harpers Ferry (i.e. Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and West Virginia). Two percent of all visitors were from foreign countries (see Map 2 and Table 1).

**B. Visitor characteristics (continued)**

N=326 respondents.



Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

N=326 respondents;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
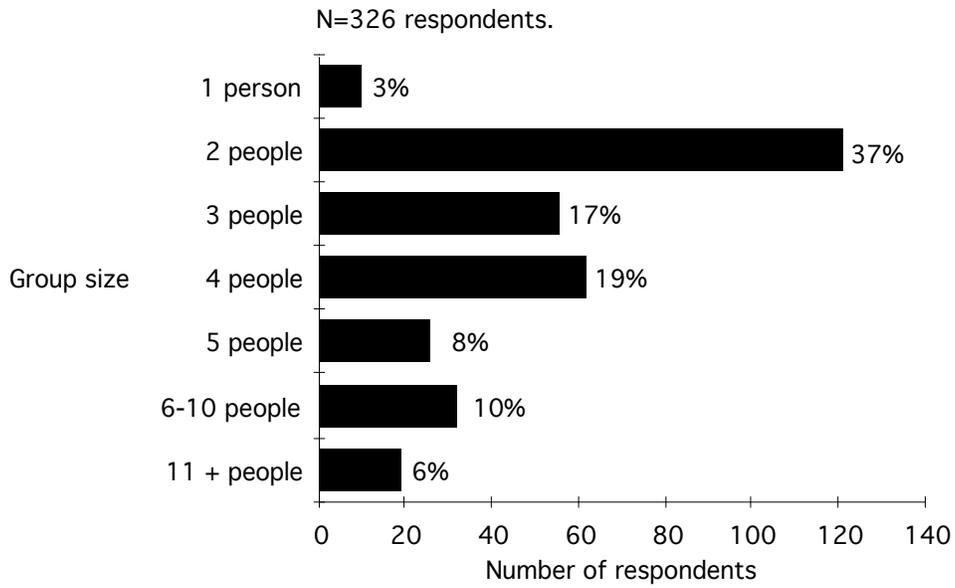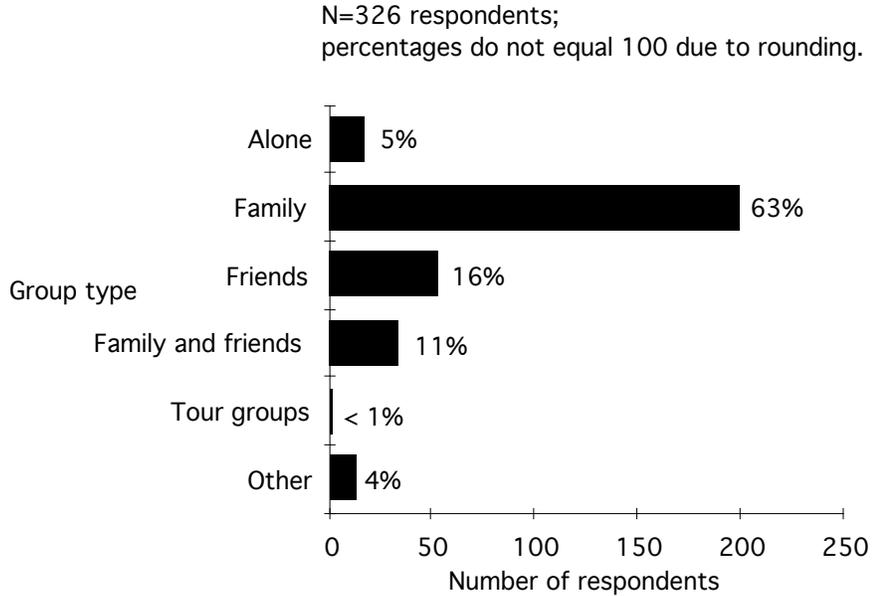


Figure 2: Visitor group types

**B. Visitor characteristics (continued)**

N=1028 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
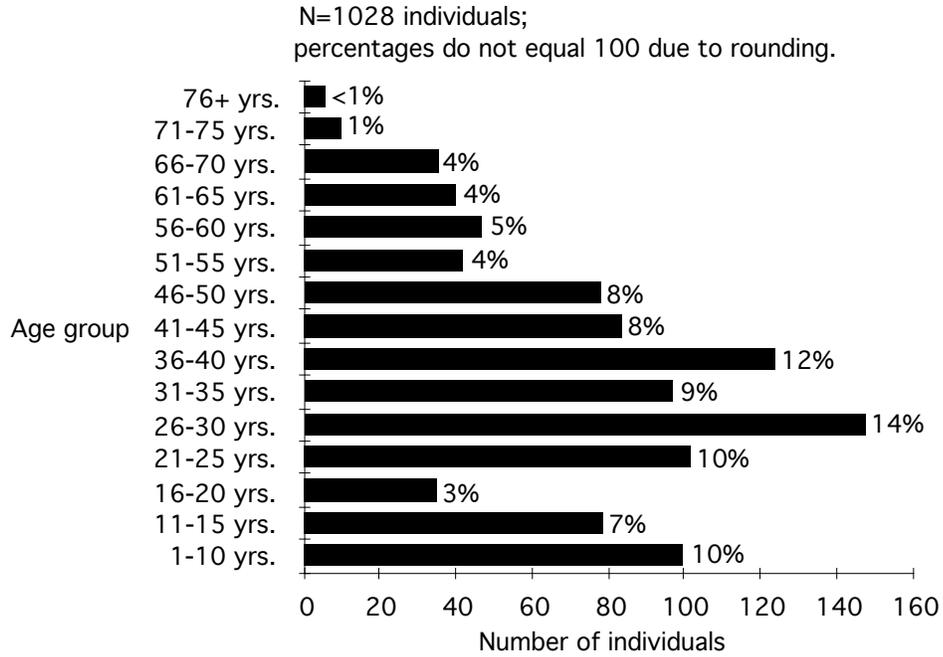


Figure 3: Visitor ages

N=950 individuals.
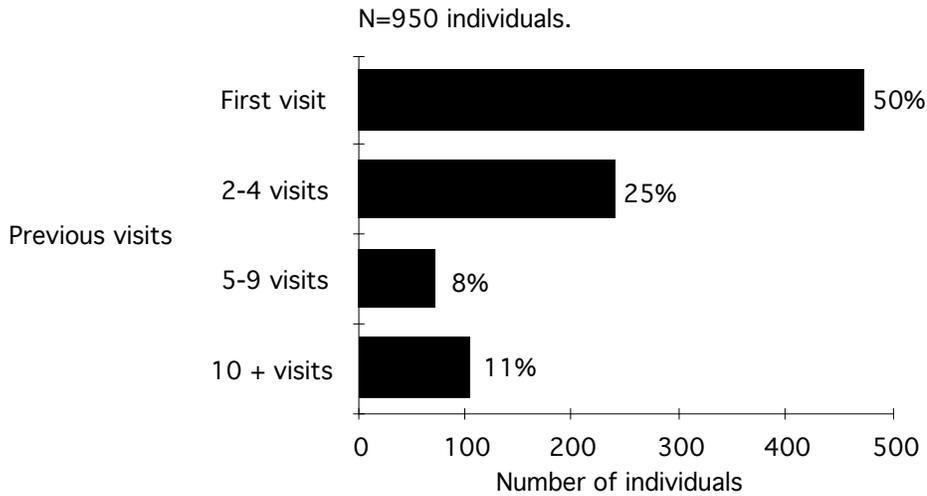


Figure 4: Number of visits

**B. Visitor characteristics (continued)**

## Table 1: Number of visitors from each country

N=16 foreign visitors;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

_____

| Country | Number of individuals | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| North America | | 18 |
|    Canada | 2 | |
|    Mexico | 1 | |
| | | |
| South America | | 6 |
|    Jamaica | 1 | |
| | | |
| Europe | | 61 |
|    Austria | 2 | |
|    England | 1 | |
|    Germany | 5 | |
|    Scotland | 1 | |
|    Switzerland | 1 | |
| | | |
| Australia | 2 | 12 |

**B. Visitor characteristics (continued)**

## C. Visitor use of time

Figure 5 illustrates that most visitors (65%) stayed at Harpers Ferry for four hours or less, with a stay of two hours being common. Twenty-one percent of the visitors stayed for six or more hours. A separate question concerning whether visitors stayed the night in the Harpers Ferry area revealed that 21% of the visitors stayed the night in the area.
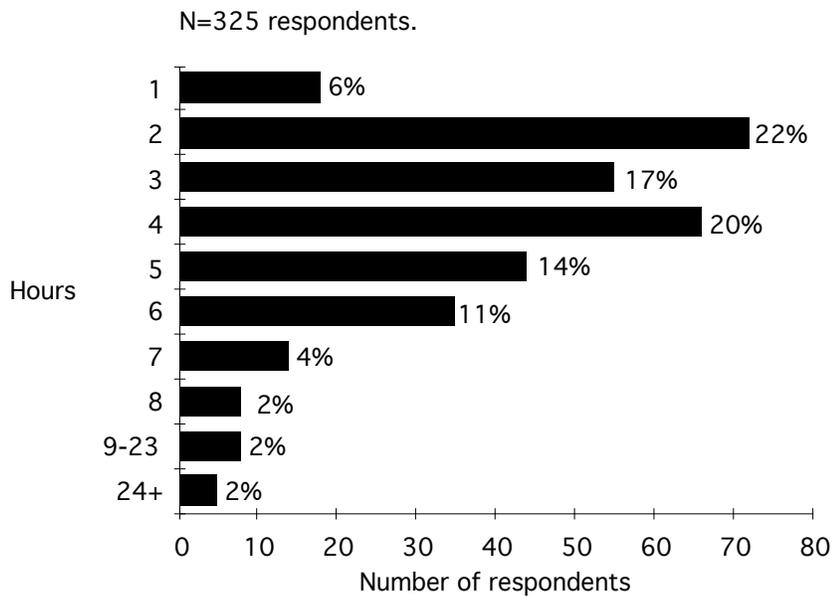
N=325 respondents.



Figure 5: Number of hours visitors spent at Harpers Ferry

## D. Visitor activities

Figure 6 shows the proportion of visitors who engaged in each activity during their visit.  The activities pursued by the majority of visitors included resting (64%), viewing exhibits (58%), visiting the Visitor Center (56%) and shopping (52%).  Less common activities were fishing, climbing rocks and 'others' (i.e. eating at restaurants, walking, bicycling, visiting the Harpers Ferry cemetery and visiting the Appalachian Trail building).  In general, higher participation rates existed for historical-oriented activities than for outdoor recreation activities.  Activities defined in this section as outdoor recreation activities include: fishing, hiking, swimming/sunbathing, boating/rafting/tubing, climbing rocks, nature study/photography, picnicking and taking a scenic drive.

N=331 respondents;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors
could report more than one activity.

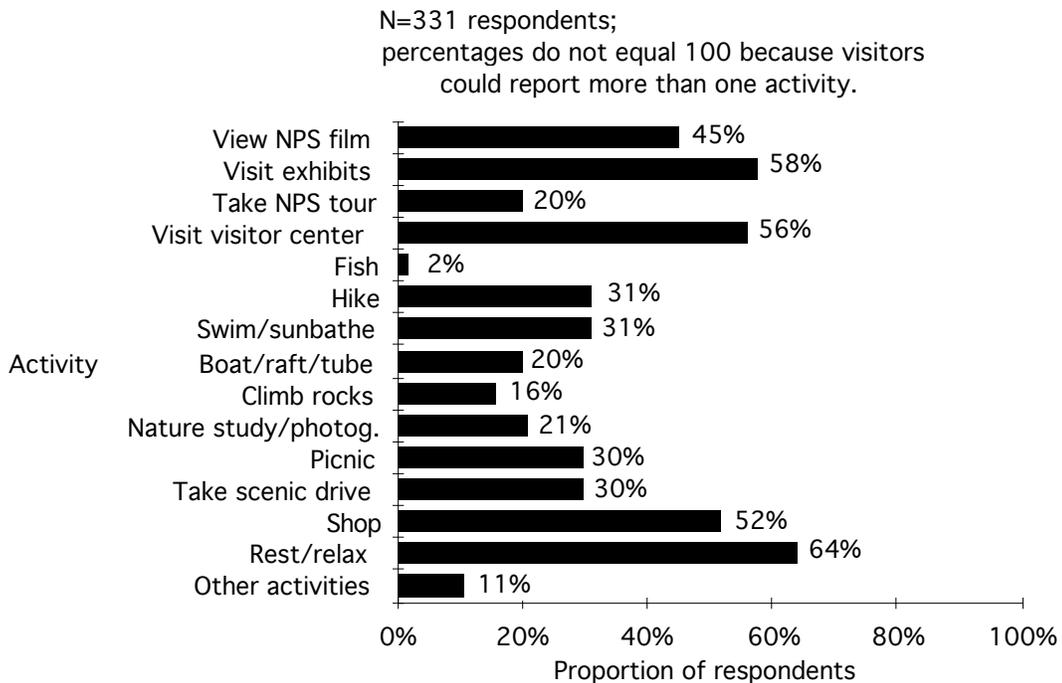| Activity | Proportion of respondents |
|---|---|
| View NPS film | 45% |
| Visit exhibits | 58% |
| Take NPS tour | 20% |
| Visit visitor center | 56% |
| Fish | 2% |
| Hike | 31% |
| Swim/sunbathe | 31% |
| Boat/raft/tube | 20% |
| Climb rocks | 16% |
| Nature study/photog. | 21% |
| Picnic | 30% |
| Take scenic drive | 30% |
| Shop | 52% |
| Rest/relax | 64% |
| Other activities | 11% |

Figure 6: Proportion of visitors reporting each activity

**E. Visitor expenditures**

Figure 7 shows the  amount of money visitor groups spent during their visit to the Harpers Ferry area.  Forty-two percent of the visitor groups spent $ 1-25.00. The <u>average</u> visitor group expenditure was approximately $ 50.00; the average <u>per capita</u> amount spent was approximately $14.00.

Figure 8 shows the proportion of money that visitor groups spent on each item.  Food accounted for 34% of the total expenditures.  Figures 9 through 12 show the range of spending on lodging, travel, food and 'other' items.

Figure 9 shows that a wide variation in spending existed; the most common amount spent was $ 41.00-60.00 (40%).  Figure 10 shows that 36% spent $ 6-10.00 on travel.  Figure 11 shows that 42% spent $ 1-10.00 on food.  As shown in Figure 12, 33% of visitor groups purchased 'other' items worth $ 1-10.00.

**E. Visitor expenditures (continued)**
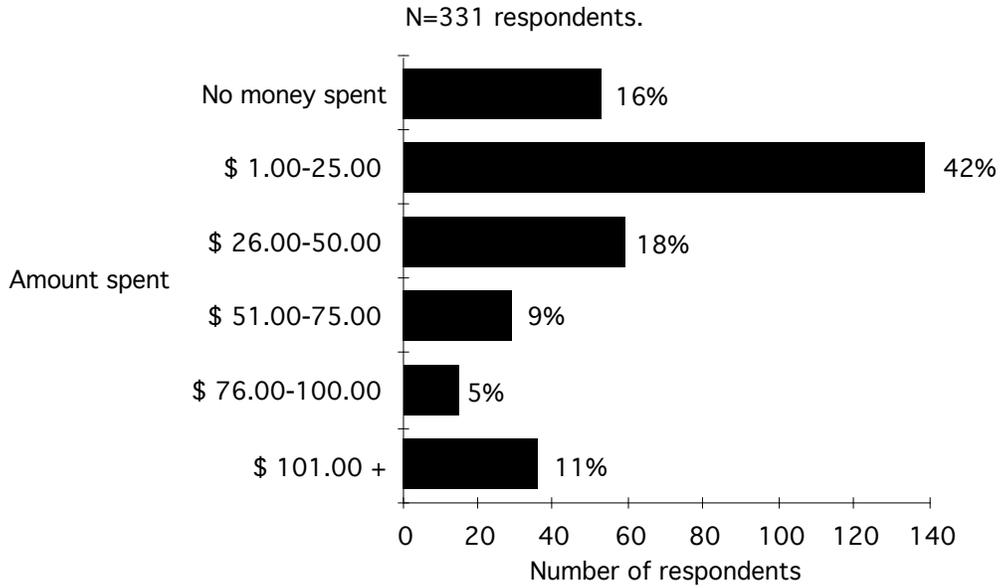
N=331 respondents.



Figure 7 : Amount of visitor group expenditures

N=306 respondents who spent money on one or more items; percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
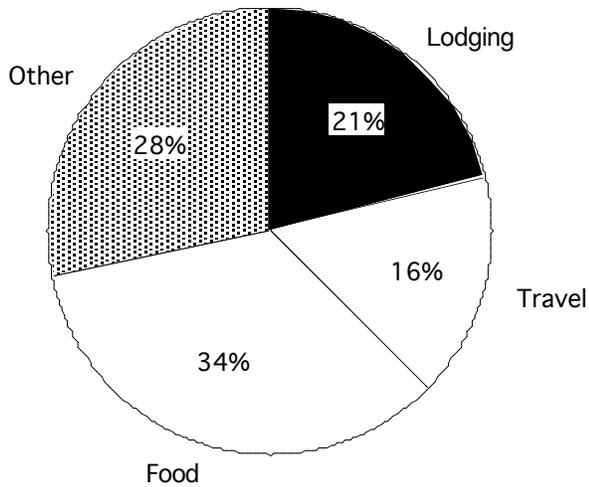


Figure 8: Type of visitor expenditures

**E. Visitor expenditures (continued)**

N=65 respondents who spent money on lodging;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
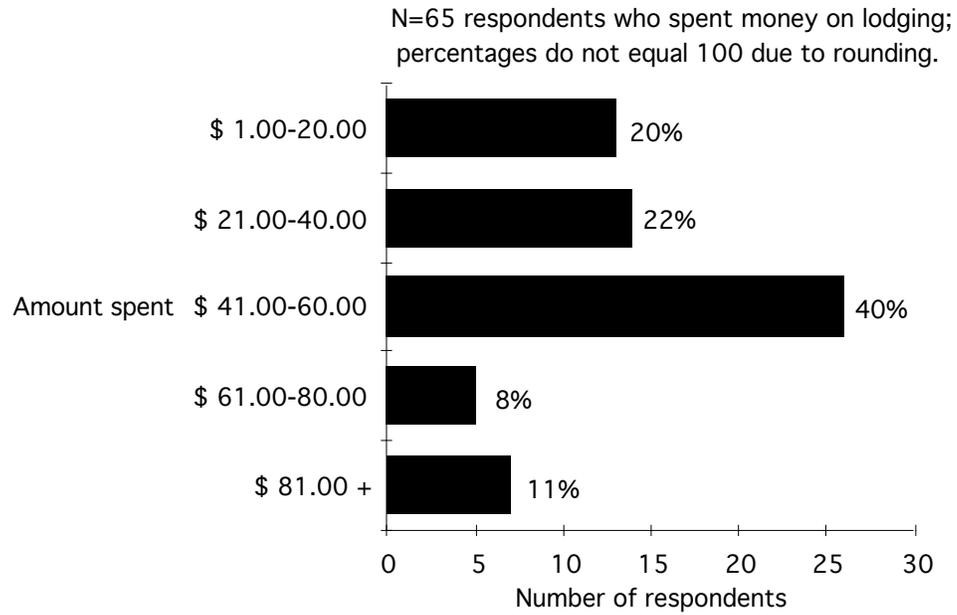


Figure 9: Visitor lodging expenses

N=149 respondents who spent money on travel.
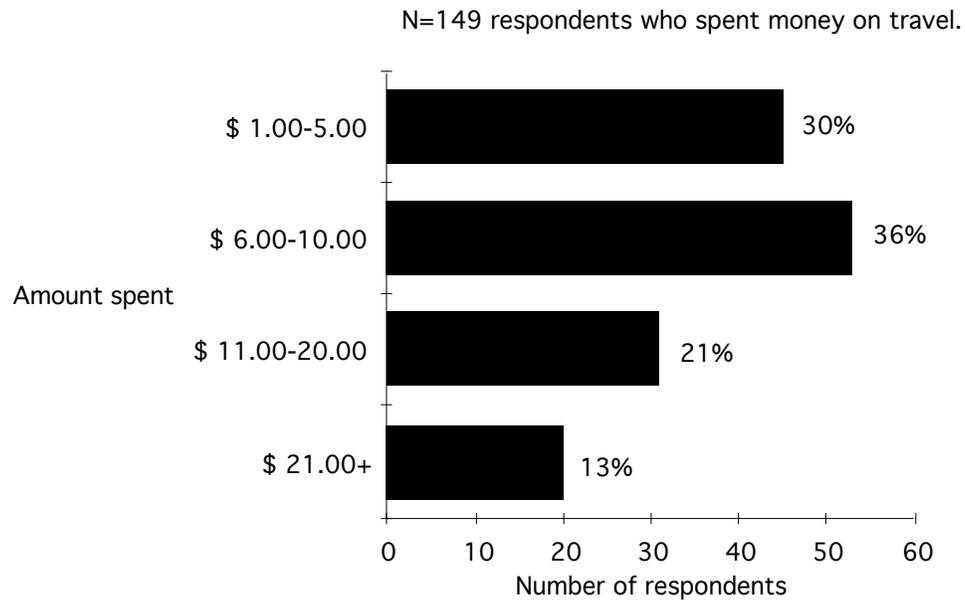


Figure 10: Visitor travel expenses

**E. Visitor expenditures (continued)**

N=224 respondents who spent money on food.

| Amount spent | |
|---|---|
| $ 1.00-10.00 | 42% |
| $ 11.00-20.00 | 28% |
| $ 21.00-40.00 | 20% |
| $ 41.00 + | 10% |

Number of respondents

Figure 11: Visitor food expenses

N=171 respondents who spent money on Other item(s).

| Amount spent | |
|---|---|
| $ 1.00-5.00 | 33% |
| $ 6.00-10.00 | 22% |
| $ 11.00-20.00 | 16% |
| $ 21.00-40.00 | 18% |
| $ 41.00+ | 11% |

Number of respondents

Figure 12: 'Other' visitor expenses

### F. Visitor locations

Map 3 shows the proportion of visitors that stopped at each site.  The largest proportion of visitors stopped at the historical area (76%), the shops area (68%), the riverbank/shoreline (65%) and "the Point" (58%).  Map 4 shows the proportion of visitors who visited each site first.  Forty-five percent of park visitors chose to make the riverbank/shoreline their first stop, while 37% chose the historic area.
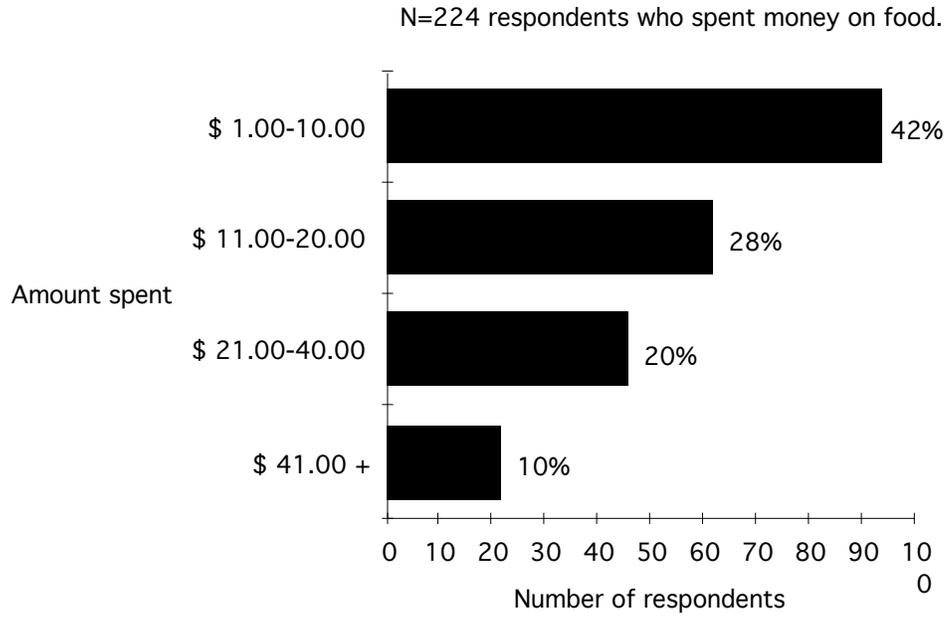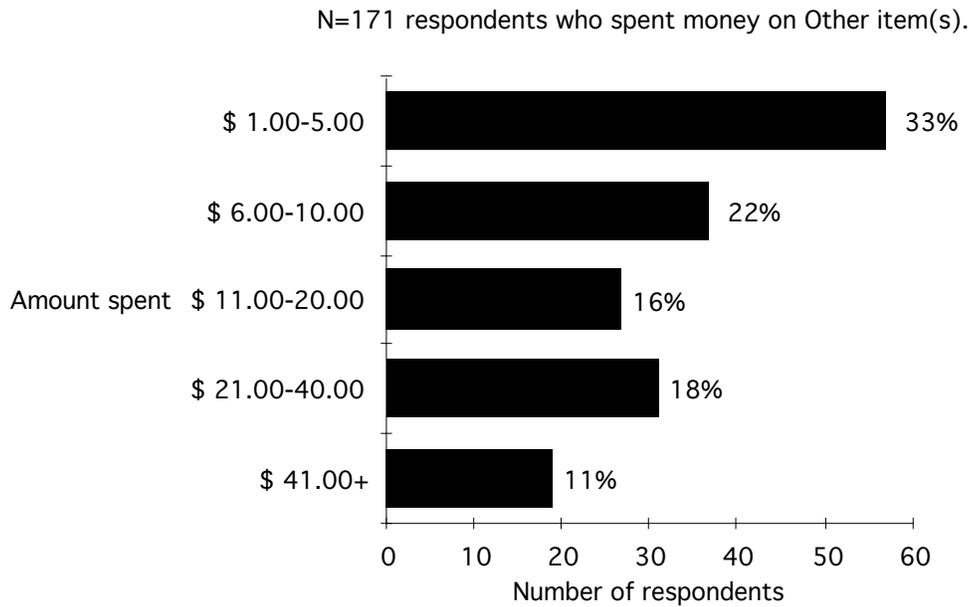
Eighty percent of visitor groups stopped at either the historic area or the shops area, (combined and defined as "historic sites" for the purposes of this discussion), while 66% of visitor groups stopped at either the riverbank/shoreline or Virginius Island (defined as "outdoor recreation sites" for the purposes of this discussion).  Fifty-eight percent of visitors stopped at <u>both</u> an historic site and at an outdoor recreation site.  Four percent of visitors stopped only at an historic site and 5% of visitors stopped only at an outdoor recreation site.

The order in which visitors stopped at sites during their visit is shown in Figures 13 through 20.  Virginius Island visitors tended to stop earlier than later in their visit.  Many Storer College campus visitors stopped at the site later.  Many of the riverbank/shoreline visitors stopped at the site first, whereas a good proportion of Jefferson Rock visitors chose to stop there mid- visit.  Visitors to "the Point" usually made it one of their earlier stops.  Historic area visitors (Figure 18) tended to stop at the beginning of their visit.  Visitors to the shops area (Figure 19) stopped there in the early to middle parts of their visit, whereas footbridge/Maryland Heights visitors stopped at that site slightly later.

**F. Visitor locations (continued)**

N=331 respondents

**Map 3: Proportion of all visitors who stopped at each site**

N=264 respondents

**Map 4: Proportion of visitors who stopped at each site first**

**F. Visitor locations (continued)**

N=37 respondents who visited this site.
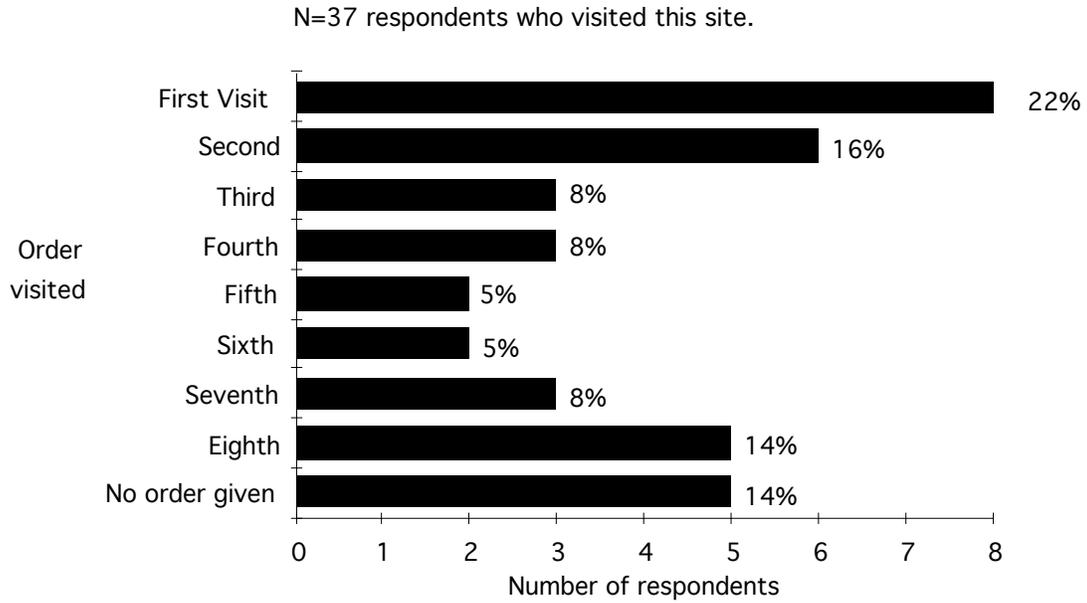


Figure 13: Order in which visitors stopped at Virginius Island

N=37 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
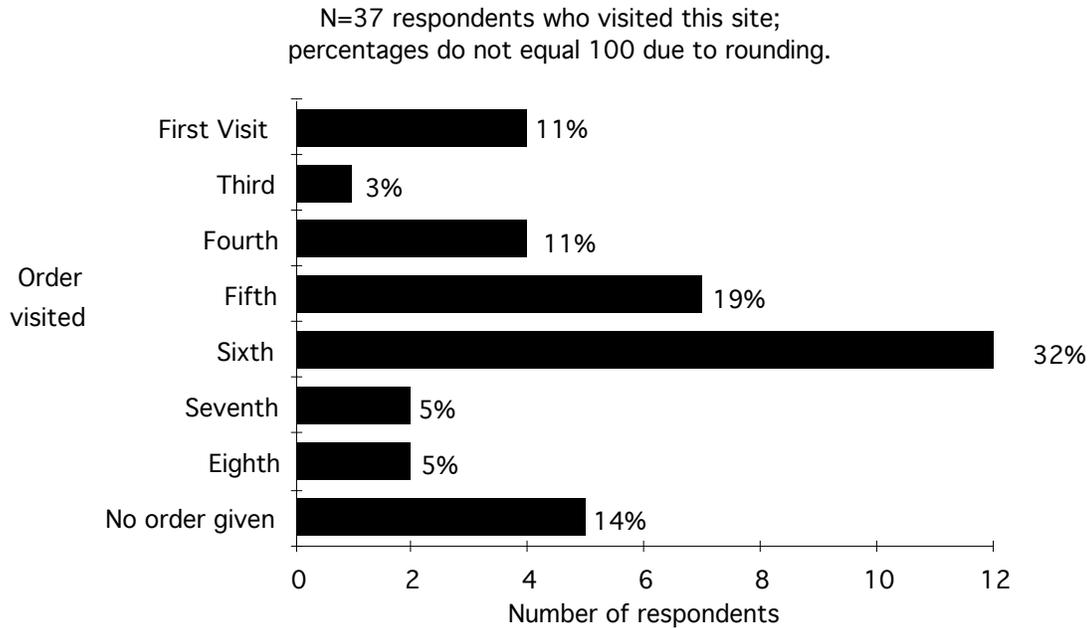


Figure 14: Order in which visitors stopped at Storer College campus

**F. Visitor locations (continued)**

N=216 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
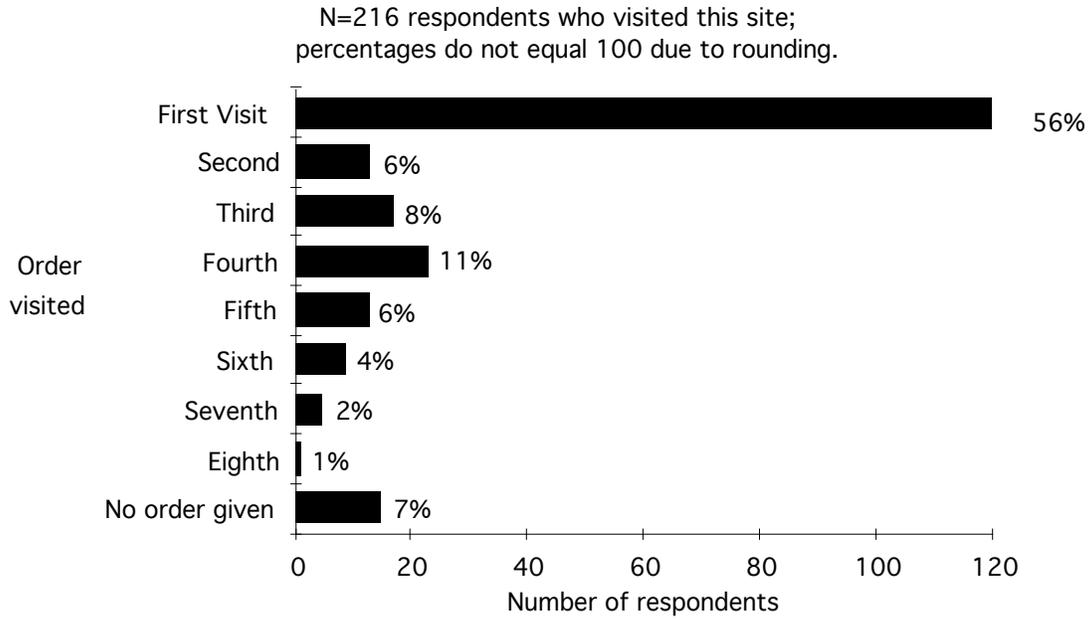


**Figure 15: Order in which visitors stopped at the riverbank/shoreline**

N=91 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
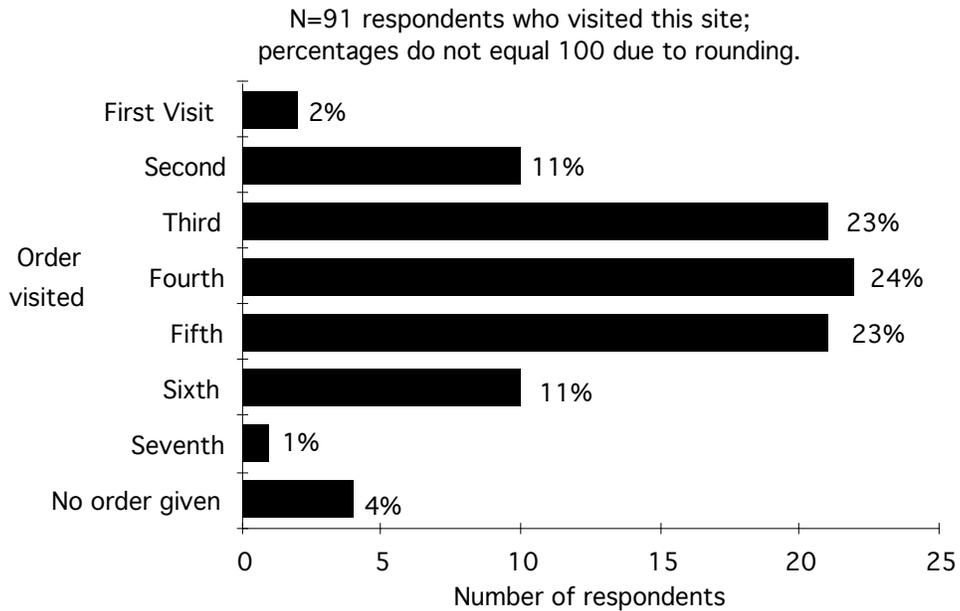


**Figure 16: Order in which visitors stopped at Jefferson Rock**

**F. Visitor locations (continued)**

N=192 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
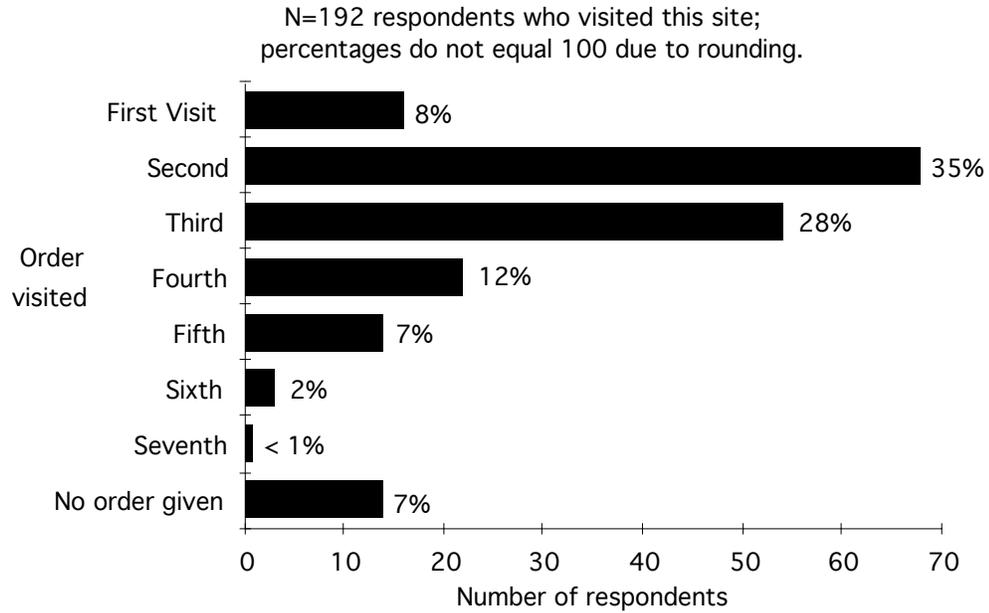


Figure 17: Order in which visitors stopped at the Point

N=252 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
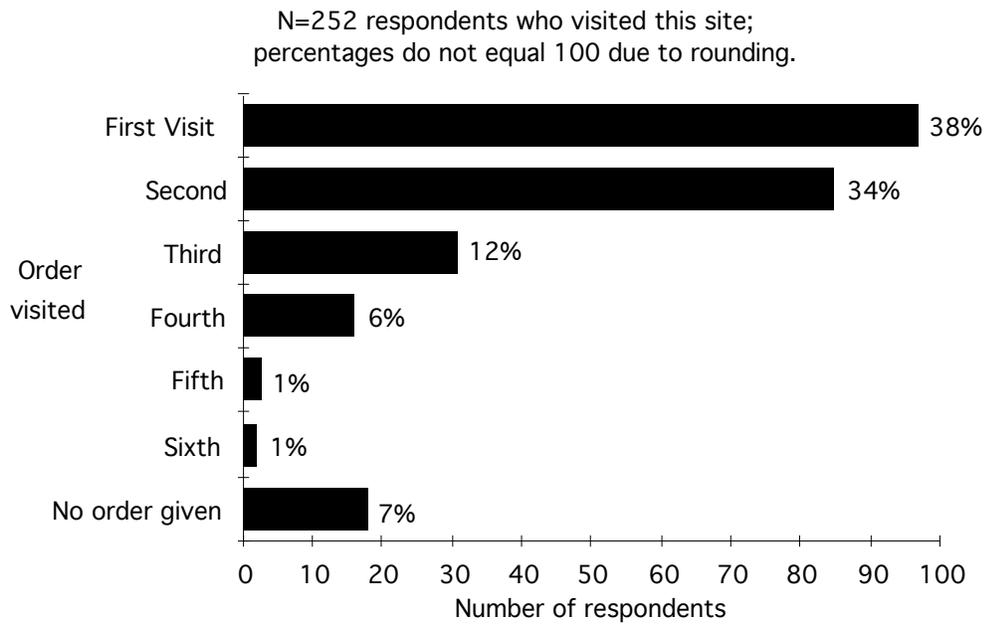


Figure 18: Order in which visitors stopped at the historic area

**F. Visitor locations (continued)**

N=225 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

| Order visited | |
|---|---|
| First Visit | 6% |
| Second | 24% |
| Third | 27% |
| Fourth | 17% |
| Fifth | 13% |
| Sixth | 3% |
| Seventh | 2% |
| No order given | 8% |

Number of respondents
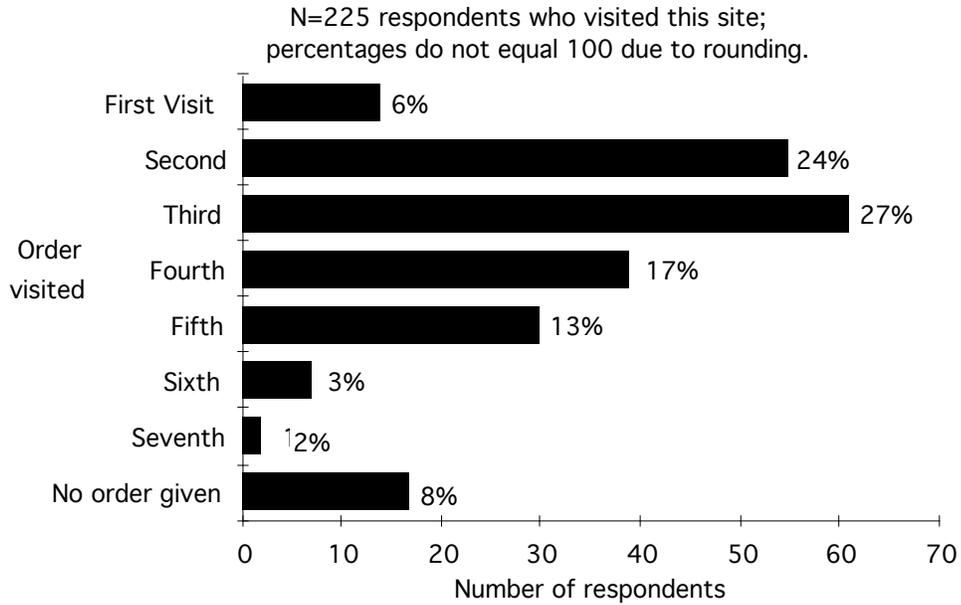
Figure 19: Order in which visitors stopped at the shops area

N=124 respondents who visited this site;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

| Order visited | |
|---|---|
| First Visit | 2% |
| Second | 10% |
| Third | 32% |
| Fourth | 27% |
| Fifth | 11% |
| Sixth | 5% |
| Seventh | 2% |
| Eighth | 1% |
| No order given | 8% |

Number of respondents

Figure 20: Order in which visitors stopped at the footbridge/Maryland Heights

**G. Special question 1: Park attractions**

The survey asked visitors what attracted them to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Visitors could report more than one reason. Figure 21 shows that 75% of the respondents were attracted by the park's historical features; 47% of the respondents indicated that outdoor recreation attracted them to the park. 'Other' attractions included a restaurant, a prior visit, geological features, word of mouth recommendation, the scenic view and river, and the Appalachian Trail.
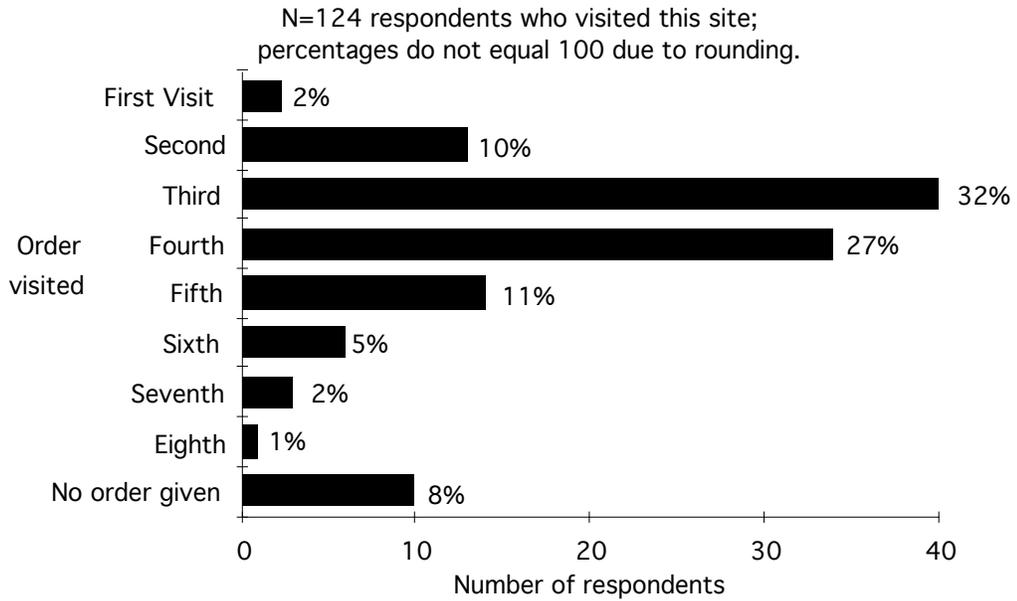
Some visitors came for specific reasons: 31% were solely attracted by the park's historic features and 15% of visitors were solely attracted by outdoor recreation.

N=331 respondents;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors
could report more than one attraction.

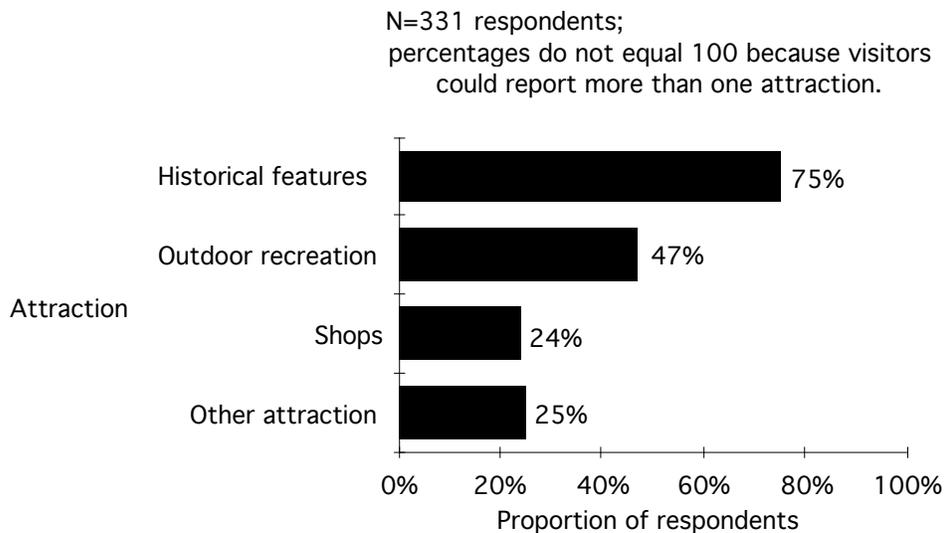| Attraction | Proportion of respondents |
|---|---|
| Historical features | 75% |
| Outdoor recreation | 47% |
| Shops | 24% |
| Other attraction | 25% |

Figure 21: Proportion of visitors reporting park attractions as reason for visiting

## H. Special question 2: Usefulness ratings of park services

The survey asked visitors to rate the particular park information or
interpretive services that they used.  A five point scale was provided: 1 =
extremely useful, 2 = very useful, 3 = moderately useful, 4 = somewhat useful and
5 = not useful.  Figure 22 shows that 59% of the respondents used the park
map/brochure and 54% used the Visitor Center information desk.

Figures 23-27 show visitors' ratings of these services.  Services rated very
to extremely useful were the park/map brochure (88%), the roadside exhibits
(80%), the information desk at the visitor center (79%) and bulletin boards (61%).
The radio station's usefulness ratings varied from extremely useful to not useful.

N=331 respondents;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors
could report using more than one service.
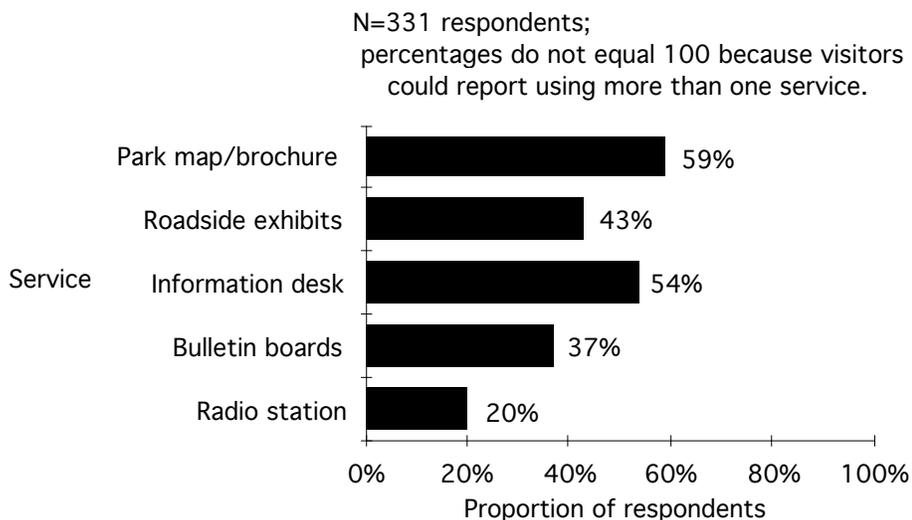
Figure 22:  Proportion of visitors who used each service

**H. Special question 2: Visitor ratings (continued)**

N=189 respondents who rated the map/brochure;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.
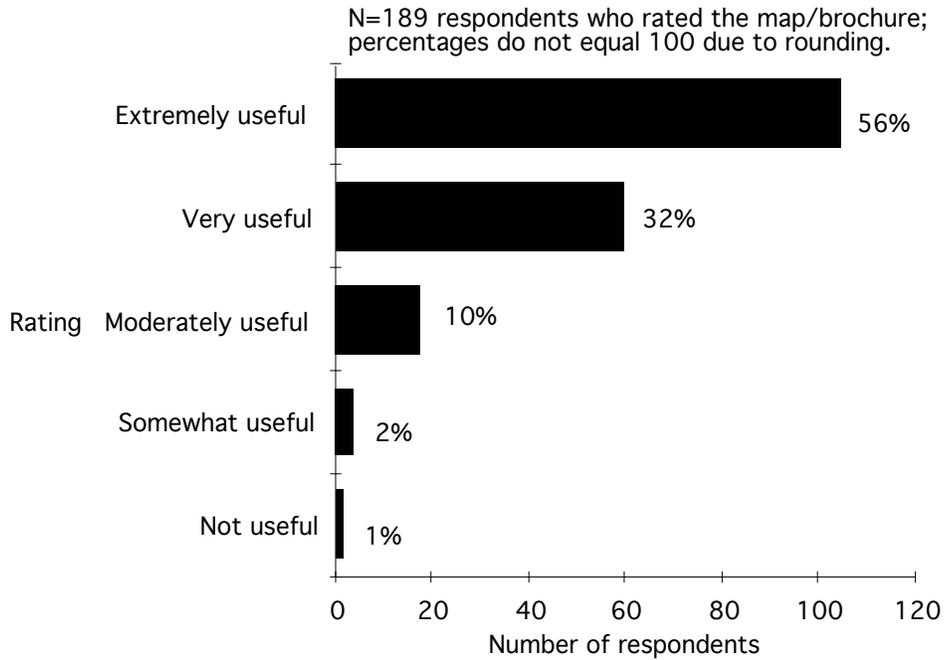


Figure 23: Visitor usefulness ratings of park map/brochure

N=134 respondents who rated roadside exhibits.
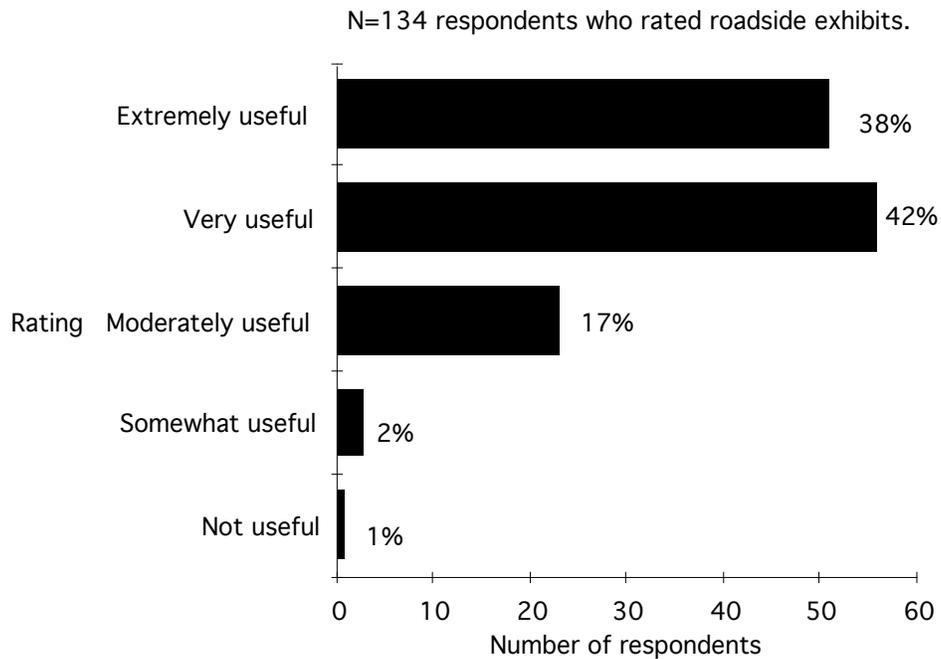


Figure 24: Visitor usefulness ratings of roadside exhibits

**H. Special question 2: Visitor ratings (continued)**

N=170 respondents who rated the information desk.

| Rating | |
|---|---|
| Extremely useful | 42% |
| Very useful | 37% |
| Moderately useful | 15% |
| Somewhat useful | 3% |
| Not useful | 3% |

Number of respondents
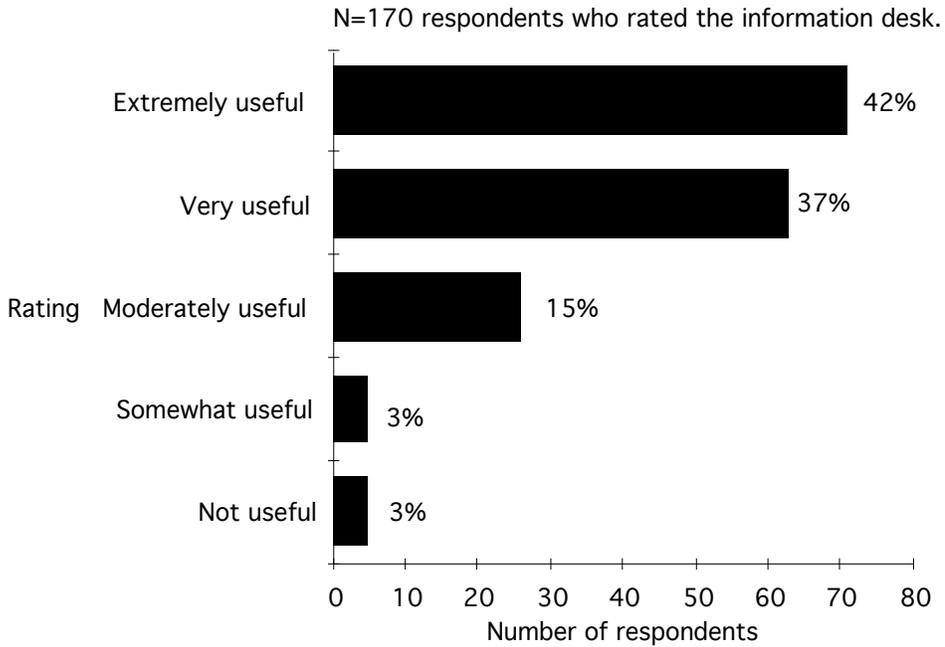
Figure 25: Visitor usefulness ratings of information desk

N=117 respondents who rated bulletin boards; percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

| Rating | |
|---|---|
| Extremely useful | 22% |
| Very useful | 39% |
| Moderately useful | 26% |
| Somewhat useful | 9% |
| Not useful | 3% |

Number of respondents
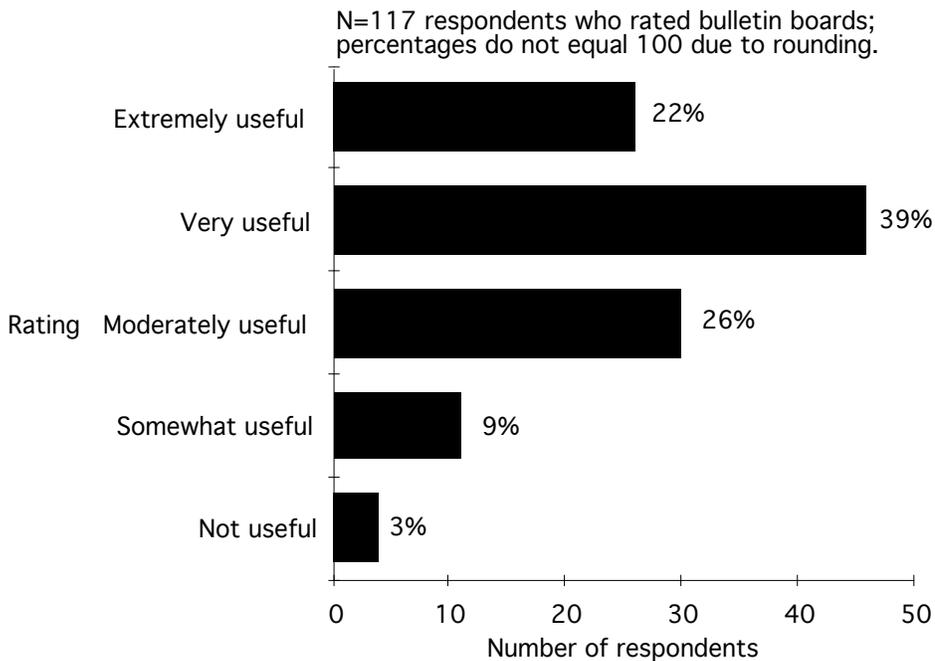
Figure 26: Visitor usefulness ratings of bulletin boards

N=66 respondents who rated the radio station.
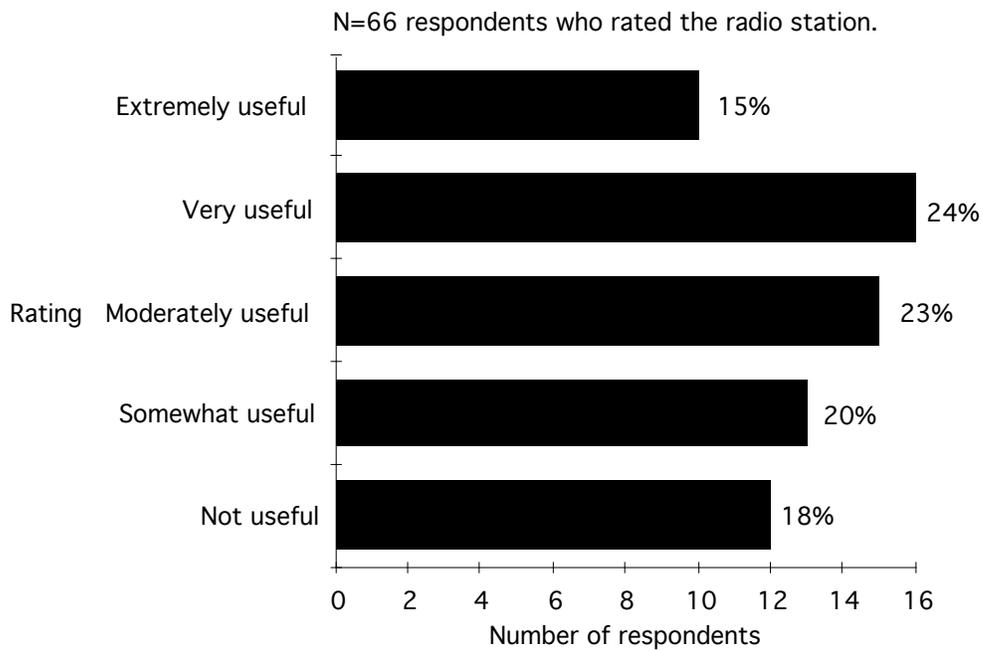


Figure 27: Visitor usefulness ratings of AM radio information station

**I. Summary of visitor comments - Introduction**

Volume 2 of this report contains unedited comments made by visitors.  A summary of these comments appears below, and is also included within Volume 2.  Some comments offer specific suggestions regarding what visitors like or dislike, while others contain general impressions.  A wide variety of topics are discussed, including natural features, facilities, interpretation services, personnel, and maintenance.

**I. Summary of visitor comments (continued)**

**I. Summary of visitor comments (continued)**

**I. Summary of visitor comments (continued)**

**I. Summary of visitor comments (continued)**

# MENU FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

This report contains only some of the information that can be provided by the results of this study.  By combining characteristics such as visitor ages, site visited, group size, and so forth, many further analyses can be made.  Park personnel may wish to see other tables, graphs, and maps in order to learn more about visitors.  This menu is provided so that the requests for further analyses can be done easily.  Two kinds of analyses are available:

1)  Two-way comparisons compare two characteristics at a time.  For example, if knowledge is desired about which activities a particular age group engaged in, a comparison of <u>activity</u> by <u>age</u> <u>group</u> could be requested; if knowledge about how expenditures on lodging varied between group types was required, a comparison of <u>lodging</u> <u>expenditures</u> by <u>group</u> <u>type</u> could be requested.

2)  Three-way comparisons compare a two-way comparison to a third characteristic.  For example, if knowledge was desired about the different activities of visitors to each site each day, a comparison of (<u>activity</u> by <u>site</u> <u>visited</u>) by <u>entry</u> <u>day</u> could be requested; if knowledge about which age groups were participating in an activity at a particular site was required, a comparison of (<u>age</u> <u>group</u> by <u>activity</u>) by <u>site</u> <u>visited</u> could be requested.

In the first section of the sample order form found on the page after next is a complete list of the variables for which information was collected from the visitors to your park.  Below the list are a series of two blanks that are provided for specifying the additional variables that are to be requested in two-way comparisons.  Simply select the characteristics of interest from the variable list and write in the names of the other variables desired in the adjacent spaces.  Blank order forms are provided for tearing out and completing, as shown in the example.

Should a three-way comparison be required, the next section of the order form provides blanks for specifying each of the three variables of interest.  Simply write down the names of those specific characteristics required from the above list for each comparison requested.  For example, if a comparison of <u>activity</u> by <u>group type</u> by <u>age group</u> is required, each of these characteristics should be listed in the space provided on the order form.

**SAMPLE**

# APPENDICES


## Appendix A: Questionnaire

## Visitor Services Project
## Analysis Order Form--Report 12 (Harpers Ferry)

Date of request:  ____/____/____
Person requesting analysis: _____
Phone number (commercial):_____

The following list includes the variables available for comparison from the visitor survey conducted in your park.  Use this list when requesting additional two-way and three-way comparisons.

1. Group size
2. Group type
3. Age
4. State residence
5. Number of visits
6. Entry time
7. Entry day
8. Length of visit
9. Overnight stay
10. Activity

11. Site visited
12. Lodging expenses
13. Travel expenses
14. Food expenses
15. 'Other' expenses
16. Total expenses
17. Park attractions
18. Services used
19. Services rated

1. Additional two-way comparisons (please write in the appropriate variables from the above list).

      Variable         Variable

_____by_____
_____by_____
_____by_____
_____by_____
_____by_____
_____by_____

## Analysis Order Form (continued)

**2. Additional three-way comparisons (please describe, listing the three items of interest from the previous list).**

_____by_____by_____
_____by_____by_____
_____by_____by_____

**3. Special Instructions**

_____
_____
_____

**Mail to:**
**Cooperative Park Studies Unit**
**College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences**
**University of Idaho**
**Moscow, Idaho  83843**