



2022 Minnesota State Park Visitor Study

A Report on the Visitor Experience and the Economic Impact of Minnesota State Parks

Acknowledgements

Many staff at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources were involved in guiding and implementing this study. Special thanks to the following individuals for their contributions to this research: Ayanna Beckett, Anna Cichosz, Ian Cummings, Rose Grover, Laurel Huspeni, Verónica Jaralambides, Gratia Joice, Andrew Korsberg, Amelia Landsverk, Jamie McBride, Darin Newman, Laura Preus, Emma Realing, and Jade Templin.

Wilder Research staff who contributed to this report include: Anna Alba, Mark Anton, Jen Collins, Marilyn Conrad, Phil Cooper, Barite Dawud, Aly Fassett-Carman, Rachel Fields, Michelle Gerrard, Kyla Goux, Anna Granias, Thalia Hall, Maddie Hansen-Connell, Sheri Holm, Sera Kinoglu, Anne Li, Maureen McGovern, Julia Miller, Christina Munoz-Pinon, Maria Robinson, Miguel Salazar, Dan Swanson, Karen Ulstad, Jennifer Valorose, Kerry Walsh, and Cael Warren.

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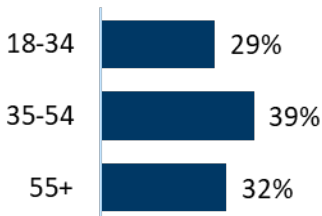
Key Findings from the 2022 State Park Visitor Study

Every five years, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources completes a state parks visitor study to understand who visits state parks, inform critical management decisions, and plan for the future.

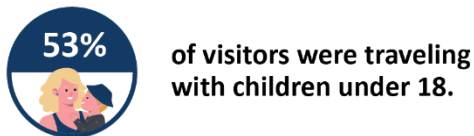
Who visits Minnesota state parks?



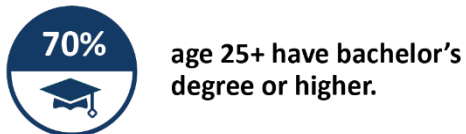
Age



Group composition



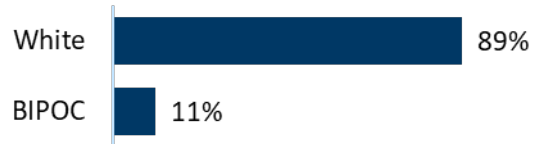
Education



Income

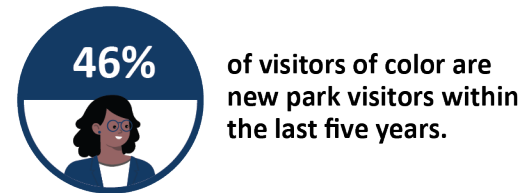
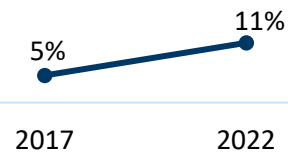


Race

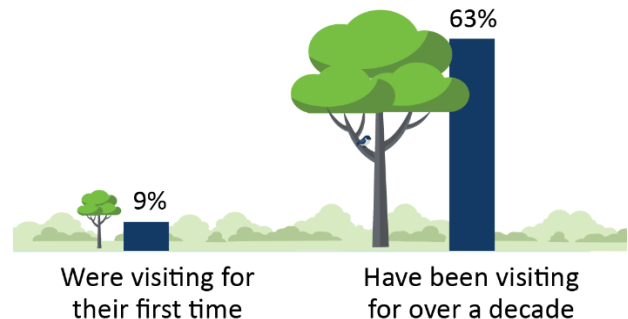


Note. BIPOC Includes race/ethnicity categories American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, biracial and multiracial.

An increasing share of park visitors are people of color.



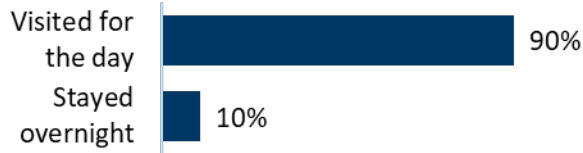
Prior use of state parks:



Compared to the Minnesota population, state park visitors are more likely to be:



What type of visits do people make?



Note. Visited for the day includes day visitors who stayed overnight at an accommodation other than the state park they were surveyed at.



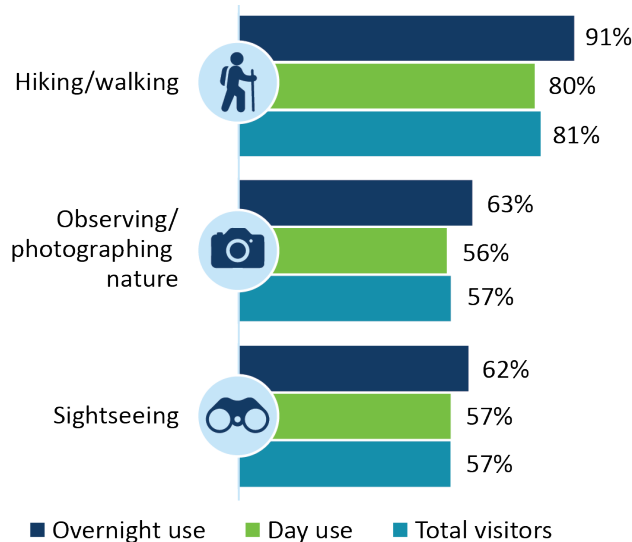
1/3 of day-use visitors were on overnight trips, staying an average of 3-4 nights away from home.



1 in 7 visitors (15%) reside outside MN.

What activities do visitors enjoy at the state parks?

Top 3 activities

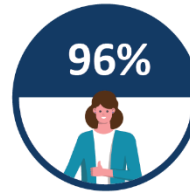


Note. Sightseeing is taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery.

How satisfied are visitors with their park visit?



98% of visitors would recommend this state park to friends or family.



96% were satisfied with their park visit.



Primary satisfaction factors

- The parks' natural features
- Beautiful scenery
- Trail systems that allow visitors to explore it all

What are visitors most satisfied with at state parks?



Note. >95% of respondents said these items were important to making their park visit enjoyable

Top 3 supported features for proposed change



Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development

85%



Provide more hiking trails

85%



Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities

77%

What changes would park visitors like to see to better serve their needs?

- Trail enhancements including maintenance, better wayfinding points, and longer/more trails
- Improve campgrounds and lodging by adding more sites/accommodations of certain types and by increasing space between campsites
- Refine the reservation system and policies (i.e., how far in advance one can reserve a campsite, sites with “first come first served” or no reservation options)

How welcome do visitors feel while at the state park?



97% of visitors felt welcome during their visit.

Focus group participants from Asian American, African American, Indigenous, and Latino communities shared that seeing staff and other visitors that look like them positively impacted their feelings of safety. While some participants reported generally feeling welcome, several expressed hesitance about visiting parks further from the Twin Cities because of the lack of diversity and potential for experiences of microaggressions. The presence of park staff and rangers supported feelings of safety among BIPOC participants, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Not too long ago I went to a state park... I wasn't going to stay there very long, and I think the woman that was at the front gate was a person of color. And that was really nice to see because it ... re-emphasizes like, "You're welcome here too."

– Focus group participant

How do visitors feel about interactions with park staff?

Frequent park visitors who participated in focus groups described a range of engagement with park staff. Some participants noted that engaging with park staff helped them get “inside” information about the park’s notable features or trail conditions as well as the surrounding area.

We stop in [when arriving at the park]. They do a great job of [highlighting] favorite trails... they've always been extremely friendly when you get there and show you where to go.

– Focus group participant

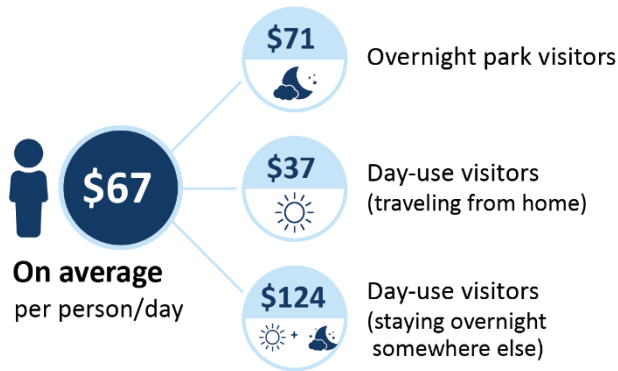
Beyond basic interactions with staff, several participants suggested increasing the program offerings at parks; these visitors commented on the enrichment they experience when learning something new from park rangers and naturalists. This was particularly important among participants with children.

How do parks boost local economies?



Spending by park visitors generates over \$688 million per year in economic activity around state parks across the state.

During their trips to state parks, visitors spent:



Visitors from outside Minnesota contribute an estimated \$147 million per year to Minnesota's economy during their trips to Minnesota state parks.

We like the parks so much for the natural beauty and the many different parks. I have been to all Minnesota state parks and I can't say I have a favorite because they all have something unique. Keep up the great work you do, and protect the fabulous assets we have.

– Lake Shetek State Park visitor

What vision do visitors have for park design?



Increase visibility and accessibility of rangers and park staff



Improve options for communication to the outside world in case of emergencies



Expand existing programming to include more options for families and visitors new to park exploration



Include more Indigenous voice in park programming; decolonize signage and acknowledge park history



Improve accessibility of parks for visitors with special needs

For more information:

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Savanna Portage State Park: Northern Lights around Lake Shumway. - Edson Vandeira

Introduction

*I think Minnesota's system of state parks are a treasure for residents.
They are worth investing in. Thank you! – Big Stone Lake State Park visitor*

Background

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has completed a state parks visitor study every five years since 1987. The study aims to determine what activities visitors engage in at the park, their previous park experience, travel preferences, trip satisfaction, interest in a variety of potential changes, trip spending and perceived value, and demographic information. Information on how to provide self-service and how to create inclusive spaces in state parks from a series of focus groups complements the information from the survey. The DNR and its stakeholders use this information to understand who their visitors are, inform critical management decisions, and plan for the future of Minnesota state parks.

For the 2022 study, the DNR contracted with Wilder Research to help update the survey tool, conduct analysis, and report findings. The DNR was responsible for all data collection and sampling plan development in consultation with Wilder Research.

Study and selection methods

The 2022 study included three parts: a visitor survey, an economic impact assessment, and focus groups. Methods and results for the economic impact assessment and the focus groups can be found later in the report. The 2022 survey method differs greatly from previous years, so comparisons to past years should be drawn with caution.

Visitor survey

In past iterations, DNR staff distributed printed surveys to park visitors and instructed park visitors to mail back completed surveys.

Data collection occurred May 28, 2022 through September 5, 2022. In total, visitors completed 2,086 surveys, more than double the 934 surveys completed in 2017.

In 2022, visitors were offered a variety of completion options in order to reduce response bias, ensure accessibility, and increase overall survey responses and representativeness across parks. Additionally, the survey was split into two parts in order to shorten the time needed to complete the entire survey and ensure that visitors accounted for all trip spending after they had completed their park visit. The first part of the survey asked questions about park activities, group composition, feeling welcome and safe, and demographics. The second part of the survey asked questions about satisfaction, potential park changes, and trip spending for use in the economic impact assessment (see [Appendix A](#) for the survey instrument). To gather the data, DNR interns and staff (“data collectors”) intercepted visitors at the parks (see [Selection process](#) for information on how data collectors randomly chose visitors). When the data collector intercepted a visitor and the visitor was willing to participate, they had the following options to complete the survey.

- Data collectors asked visitors to complete the first part of the survey on-site using a tablet, either through an interview conducted by the data collector or a self-administered format. After completing the first part of the survey, data collectors provided visitors with an information card. This card had instructions for the visitors on how to complete the second part of the survey online. If visitors did not have access to the internet, they received a paper copy of the second half with a pre-paid return envelope to mail in their responses. Of the 1,945 visitors who completed the first part of the survey at the park, 503 completed the second part of the survey after their visit online.
- Visitors who could not complete the first part of the survey at the park received an informational card with instructions on completing the entire survey online after their visit. If visitors did not have access to the internet, they received a paper copy of the entire survey with a pre-paid return envelope to mail in their responses. Sixty-five visitors completed the entire survey online and five mailed in their completed survey.
- For Spanish and Hmong-speaking visitors, data collectors provided a paper copy of the appropriately translated survey and a prepaid return envelope so visitors could complete the survey and mail in their responses. None of the visitors who completed the survey chose this method.

All intercepted visitors had seven days to complete the second half of the survey (or the entire survey if they did not complete the first half at the park), regardless of the method. Those who completed the first half at the park had the option to provide their email address to receive up to three email reminders to complete the second half of the survey. Additionally, those who completed the second half of the survey could choose to be entered into a drawing for one of 20 \$35 Minnesota state park gift cards.

At the end of July, Wilder Research and the DNR observed that Rustic parks, defined as state parks and recreation areas that offer basic facilities and amenities, had fewer responses than needed for analysis. To bolster responses from Rustic parks, the DNR sent an email to a sample of people who had made a reservation through DNR's website to camp in a Rustic park asking them to complete the survey online. While Wilder Research hosted the survey through the online platform Acuity, it was the DNR's responsibility to identify the sample and send one invitation email with the survey link to the campers at Rustic parks. This method yielded 71 visitors completing part 1, with 68 of them also completing part 2. In an effort to avoid duplicates, respondents were asked not to complete the survey if they had already been intercepted at a park or received an email to complete this survey from a visit to another park.

In total, 2,086 visitors completed part 1, and 648 visitors completed part 2.¹

Of the survey respondents, 85% are Minnesota residents, 15% reside in another state, and 1% reside internationally.

Selection process

To select survey respondents and mitigate as much bias as possible, data collectors used a continuous sampling methodology. In most cases, this included identifying an invisible line at a specific park location and asking respondents to participate in the survey when they crossed the line. At some sites, however, creating a "line" was less practical and a "zone" approach was used where anyone entering the "zone" was asked to participate. If a data collector was occupied with a visitor, no one crossing the line during this time was asked to participate. Once the data collector completed an interview or the visitor completed a self-administered survey, the data collector selected the next person to cross the line to participate.

The primary exception to this sampling methodology was in campgrounds where data collectors were instructed to walk through the campground and ask visitors in all occupied campsites to participate. This change was suggested by the DNR in July, when it was noted that there were fewer responses from campers.

To select a survey respondent from a group (e.g., two or more people crossing the line together in a visible group) data collectors identified the person with the most recent birthday to participate. Asking for the most recent birthday helped to mitigate any gender, age, ability, or other biases. If the person selected from the group refused to participate, a replacement from the same group was selected using the next most recent birthday.

¹ Seven visitors completed part 2 via the web without matching data for part 1

To be eligible for the survey, visitors:

- Had to be age 18 or older,
- Could not be an employee of the DNR,
- Could not have already completed the survey during the summer (including anyone from their group), and
- Must have been able to complete the survey in English, Spanish or Hmong.

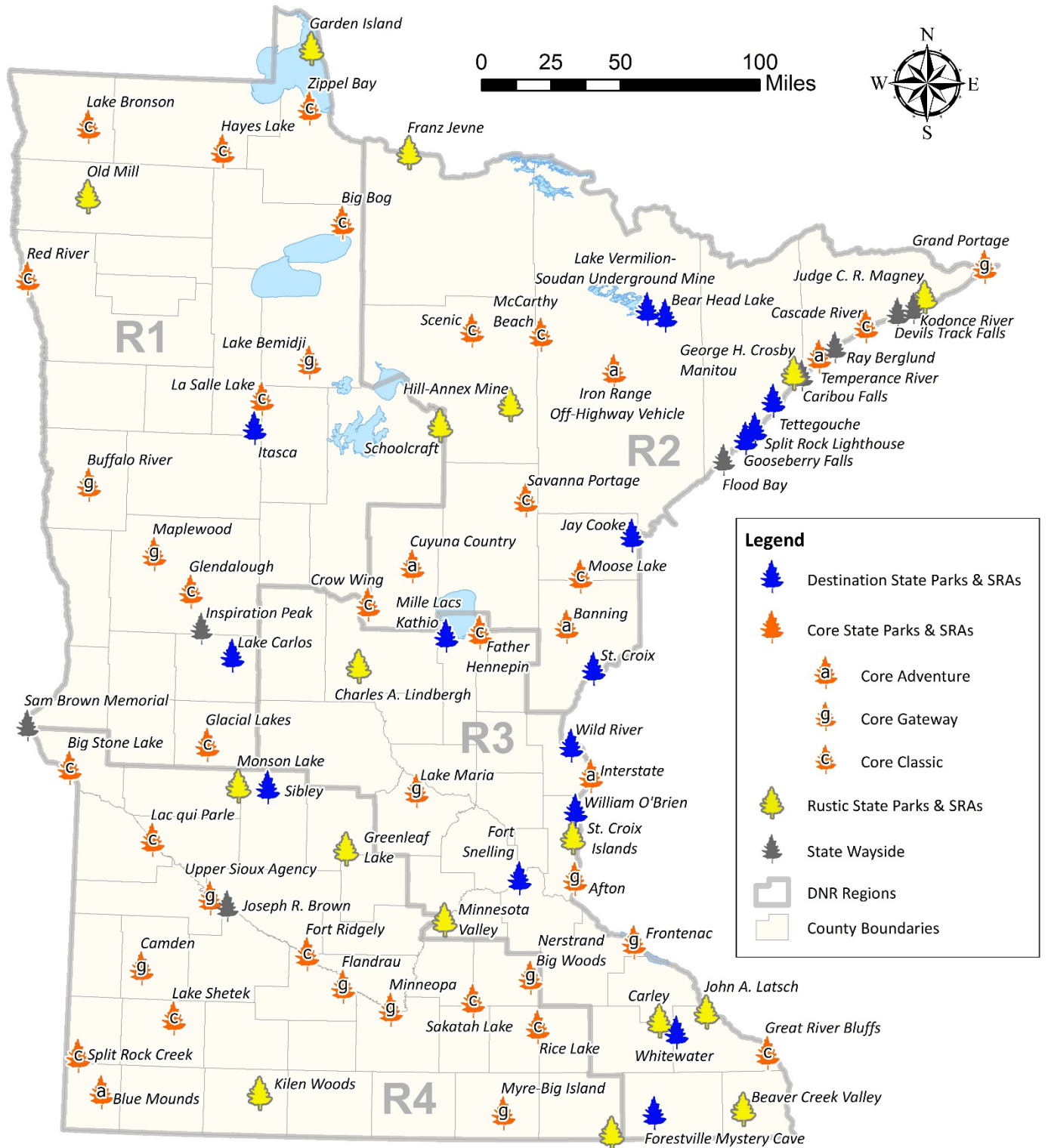
This report represents the opinions of eligible survey respondents who completed either the first and second half of the survey or just the first or second half. The categories for analysis throughout this report are as follows:

- All visitors;
- Day-use visitor vs. overnight visitor;
- Region (e.g., where in Minnesota the park is located; see [Figure 1](#) for a map of Minnesota state parks; regions and investment groups; [Figure 2](#) presents the number of survey respondents by region);
- Investment group (see [Figure 1 map](#) and refer to [State Park and Recreation Area Investment Groups](#) for a description of investment groups); and
- Demographics, including age, race/ethnicity, and household income.²

For some survey questions, other selected sub-group analyses were completed to address additional research questions as requested by the DNR team.

² Due to sample sizes, analyses of race/ethnicity have been simplified to comparisons of respondents who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) compared to White respondents.

Figure 1: Map of Minnesota state parks and state recreation areas, with DNR administrative regions and investment groups



Note. R1: Northwest region, R2: Northeast region, R3: Central region, R4: Southern region. To see the unweighted number of visitors who completed the survey at each park, please refer to [Appendix B: Data tables - Figure B1](#).

State park and recreation area investment groups

The DNR organizes its work across state parks and recreation areas into three investment groups: Rustic, Core, and Destination. Core parks are divided further into Core/Classic, Core/Gateway and Core/Adventure subgroups. The investment groups guide park operations and development and promote differentiated visitor experiences. Figure 3 shows the number of survey respondents by investment group.

Rustic state parks and recreation areas offer basic facilities and amenities catering to visitors looking for a quiet, natural experience. These parks focus on providing rustic-level camping and day-use facilities, typically with vault or portable toilets for sanitation. Visitors at these units can expect less interaction with staff.

Core state parks and recreation areas offer recreational opportunities at a level of service that encompasses the traditional experience visitors typically expect. **Core/Classic** parks focus on traditional activities and experiences such as hiking, biking, camping and water recreation. **Core/Gateway** and **Core/Adventure** can be thought of as “Classic-plus”—offering many of the same experiences as Core/Classic parks, but with additional specialized activities and services. For example, Core/Gateway parks may offer entry-level outdoor experiences and enhanced programming to cater to nearby population centers. Core/Adventure parks may offer rock climbing or mountain biking experiences.

Destination state parks and recreation areas offer a wide array of experiences and are often located in areas that attract a large number of visitors. These parks provide a higher level of service, often with staff and facilities available year-round. Destination parks provide a range of opportunities that are suitable to many different types of visitors. For example, overnight accommodations at a Destination park may include drive-in camping, lodging, group camps and backcountry campsites, while a Rustic park may only provide one type of overnight facility.

Figure 2: Number of survey respondents (N) by region (unweighted)

Region	N	N (in-state)	N (out-of-state)	N (Part 2)	N (in-state; Part 2)	N (out-of-state; Part 2)
Central	604	541	50	217	202	14
Northeast	773	625	142	230	197	31
Northwest	332	243	75	61	42	18
Southern	377	325	50	140	127	10

Note. Not all respondents provided a zip code, therefore the N of “in-state” plus “out-of-state” do not equal the total N.

Figure 3: Number of survey respondents (N) by investment group (unweighted)

Investment group	N	N (Part 2)
Destination	929	270
Core/Classic	378	94
Core/Adventure	241	74
Core/Gateway	369	119
Rustic	169	91

Note. To see the unweighted number of survey respondents by demographics and day/overnight use please refer to Appendix [B2](#) and [B3](#).

Survey weighting and analyses

All survey data were weighted to produce appropriate estimates of population parameters. The part 1 data were first weighted by park visitation at the individual park level to account for park variations. Then the weights were adjusted to account for visitor type (camper/overnight visitor vs. day-use visitor), day of the week (weekend/holiday vs. weekday), and region of the state. While this weighting process accounted for similar dimensions as previous studies, the additional completed surveys allowed for the initial park-level weighting, which was not completed in previous years. Thus, trend results should be interpreted cautiously.

Because the sample size for part 2 of the survey was not large enough to complete these additional dimensions of weighting at the individual park level, visitor type and day of the week weights were computed at the regional level.

Differences of 10 percentage points or more across demographic subgroups and other variables (e.g., overnight vs. day use, region and investment group) are highlighted within the report. Not all differences of 10 percentage points or more are reported, but rather those that seem most meaningful for management of Minnesota state parks. This will be noted at the end of each section with *“There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by ...”* The differences have not been tested for statistical significance, but may have practical significance for informing planning and decision-making.

In weighting the part 2 sample separately, we aimed to ensure that the reported results from the part 2 population offered the best possible representation of the population of Minnesota state park visitors. Nonetheless, the visitors who completed part 2 differed somewhat from those who completed part 1. Part 2 respondents were slightly older and more educated, and were slightly more likely to have higher incomes. We might expect that these differences could yield survey results that over-represent older, more educated, and higher-income visitors. Part 2 respondents also participated in the following activities at higher rates: hiking/walking, birdwatching, sightseeing, self-guided nature walks, and viewing historic sites.

The greater likelihood of participating in particular activities can be expected to affect the degree of importance that these respondents place on park facilities and services related to those activities.

Visitor survey findings

Park visitor characteristics

The DNR is interested in better understanding who is utilizing the parks system. While there may be survey completion bias, the following section outlines key demographic characteristics of survey respondents using weighted percentages to reflect the demographics of the population. For each demographic question, participants could indicate if they preferred not to answer. These responses have been excluded from analysis.

Interpret changes over time with caution:

Given the distinct methodology used in 2022 (intercept surveys) in an effort to increase responses from underrepresented populations, findings are not directly comparable to those from previous years. Apparent differences from past survey results, like demographics of park visitors, may be due more to the updated methodology than to actual changes to park visitation.

Gender

The majority of park visitors identified as female (57%) compared to 50% of the Minnesota population overall (Figure 4). Women are often more likely to respond to surveys, so this could indicate a small response bias rather than a difference in true park visitation.

Figure 4: Visitor gender

Gender	Total visitors	MN population
Male	42%	50%
Female	57%	50%
Non-binary	1%	N/A
Prefer to self-identify	<1%	N/A

Source. Minnesota Compass. U.S. Census Bureau 2016-2020.

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Age and type of park use

Park visitors were relatively equally distributed across age groups, with visitors age 35-44 representing the largest age group (Figure 5). This age group is overrepresented among park visitors compared to the Minnesota population overall. Youth under age 18 were not asked to participate in this survey and are not represented in these demographic data. The age categories in the 2022 survey differ from those collected in previous years; therefore, we cannot make comparisons over time.

Figure 5: Visitor age

Age	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors	MN adult population
18 to 24	6%	12%	11%	12%
25 to 34	16%	18%	18%	18%
35 to 44	26%	23%	24%	17%
45 to 54	19%	15%	16%	16%
55 to 64	16%	15%	16%	18%
65 and over	18%	16%	16%	21%

Source. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2016-2020. Compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure 6 presents the group composition of state park visitors in comparison to the Minnesota population overall. In general, the composition of groups who visit state parks is fairly similar to the composition of Minnesota households. Just over half (53%) of the people who visited state parks were in groups that included at least one child or teen, while 50% of Minnesota residents live in households with at least one child or teen. Among the 47% of state park visitors in groups with no children, however, there was a much larger share of people in groups of 3+ adults (24%) compared to the Minnesota population, in which only 9% of people live in households with 3+ adults. This pattern likely reflects gatherings of adults from multiple households visiting the parks together.

Almost **1 in 3** park visitors (30%) were day-use visitors on overnight trips, staying somewhere other than the park. They spent an average of **3.6** nights away from home. Ten percent of park visitors were staying overnight at the park, staying for an average of **3.1** nights.

Figure 6: Composition of visitor groups compared to Minnesota households

Composition of group (visitor group or household)	Distribution of visitor population	Distribution of population in MN households
<i>Groups/households with adults only</i>	47%	50%
1 adult, 0 teens/children	4%	3%
2 adults, 0 teens/children	20%	38%
3+ adults, 0 teens/children	24%	9%
<i>Groups/households with children or teens</i>	53%	50%
1 adult, 1+ children/teens	6%	7%
2+ adults, 1+ children/teens	45%	39%
0 adults, 1+ children/teens	1%	4%
<i>Average group size</i>	3.67	2.5

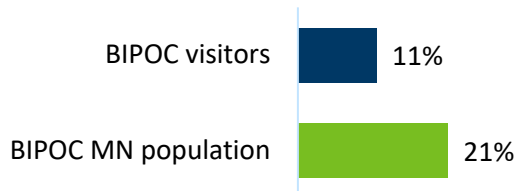
Source. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) 2016-2020. Compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Note. Part 1 survey respondents. Percentages refer to shares of individuals within the population, e.g., 53% of people who visited parks were in groups that included at least one child/teen, and 50% of people in Minnesota live in households that contain at least one child/teen. Due to rounding, components may not sum to the subtotals shown.

Race/ethnicity

White, non-Hispanic Minnesotans are overrepresented among park visitors (89%) compared to the Minnesota population overall (79%). Alternatively, Minnesotans who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) are underrepresented in Minnesota state parks (Figure 7). For more information, please refer to [Appendix B4](#).

Figure 7: BIPOC visitors compared to Minnesota population



Source. 2020 Decennial Census, U.S. Census Bureau. Compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Given the improved data collection methods used in 2022 to increase survey participation from harder-to-reach populations, we can be confident that 11% is an accurate representation of the proportion of park visitors who identify as BIPOC. The 2017 survey found the percentage of BIPOC visitors to be 5%. We cannot say with certainty whether the increase between 2017 and 2022 is due to the difference in data collection methods or a true increase in the proportion of BIPOC visitors. Other data, however, such as responses to other survey questions, qualitative data or observations may indicate a true increase in BIPOC visitation from 2017 to 2022.

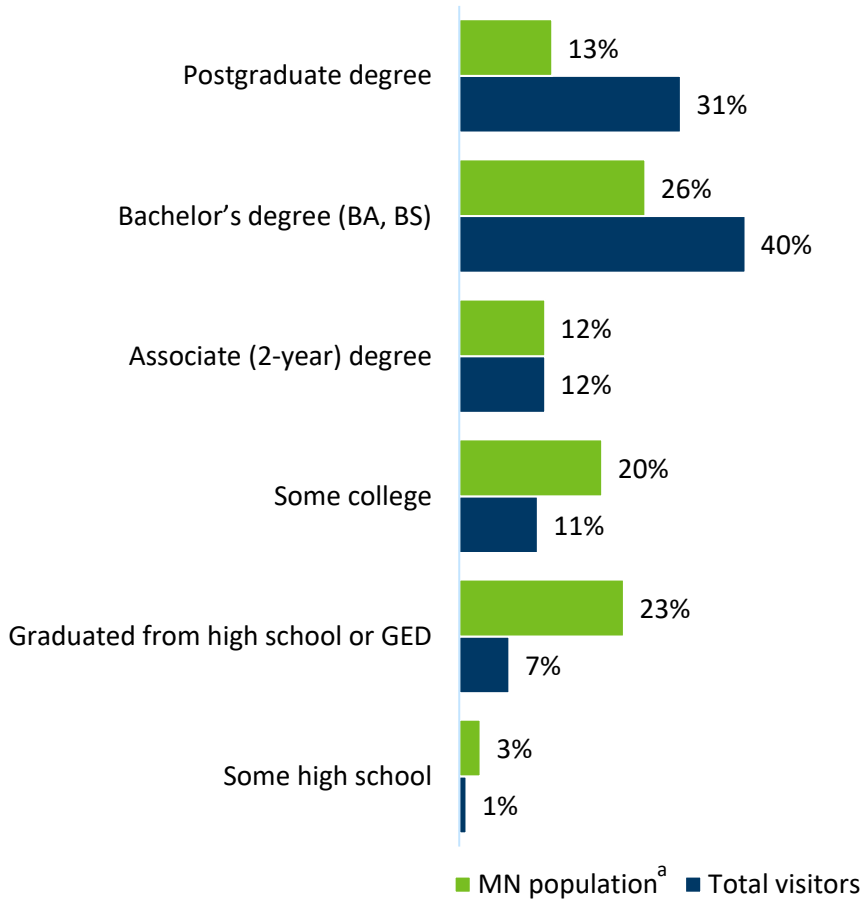


Banning State Park: Autumn at Wolf Creek Falls. - Gregg Rutter

Educational attainment

Highly educated Minnesotans are overrepresented among park visitors. Previous iterations of the survey have similarly found that state park visitors are disproportionately likely to be highly educated, compared to the overall population. Of park visitors age 25 or older, 70% have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 39% of Minnesotans overall (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Visitor educational attainment compared to Minnesota population



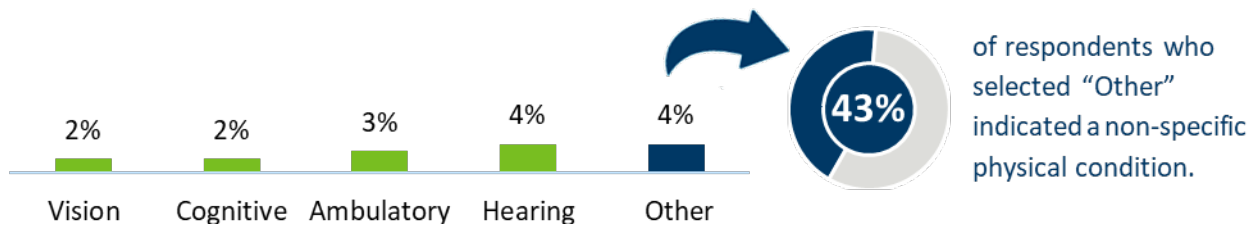
^a American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2016-2020). Compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Note. Due to rounding, combined percentages may vary from the sum of individual percentages and may not sum to 100%. Educational attainment refers to the highest level completed. Data include individuals age 25+. Part 1 survey respondents.

Disability status

Thirteen percent of visitors indicated they or someone in their group had a physical or cognitive disability (Figure 9), a similar proportion to the Minnesota population (12%). Of those who indicated they or someone in their group had a disability, 8% experienced barriers using park amenities and/or services related to their disability.

Figure 9: Visitor disability status



Note. Respondents could select all that apply. Part 1 survey respondents.

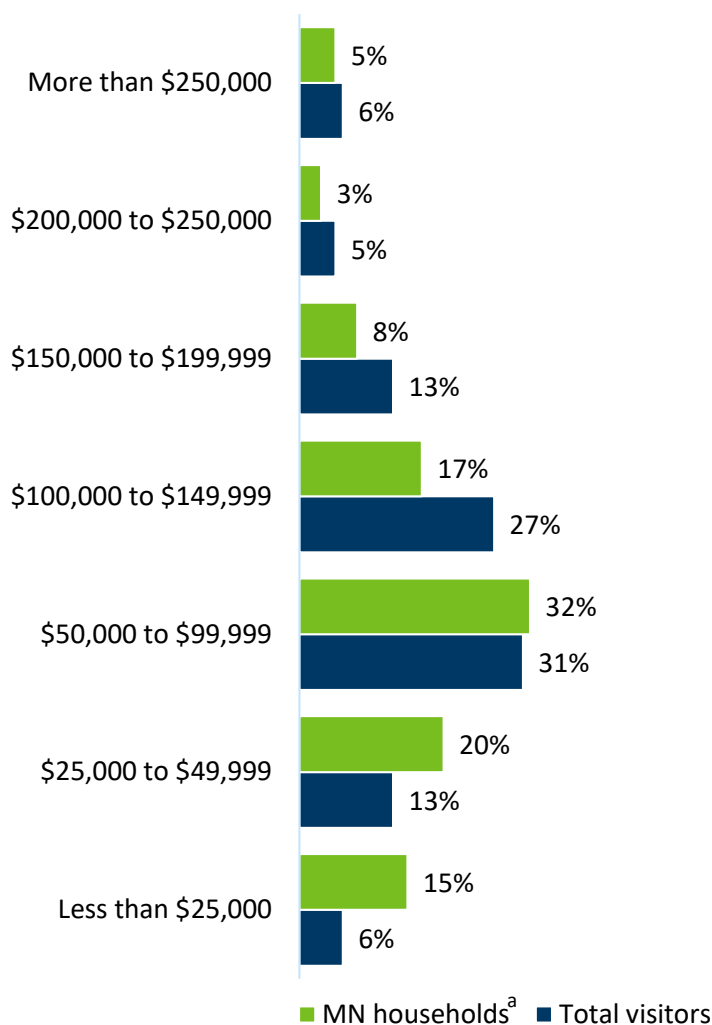


Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine: Crusher house. - Jim Devries

Household income

Wealthier households are slightly overrepresented among park visitors. According to American Community Survey 5-Year estimates from 2020, 33% of Minnesota households have an income of \$100,000 or more, compared with 50% of surveyed park visitors (Figure 10). The largest proportion of park visitors (31%) have a household income of \$50,000 to \$99,999, followed by visitors with a household income of \$100,000 to \$149,999 (27%). In 2017, 14% of park visitors reported a household income of \$150,000 or more. In 2022, this increased by 9 percentage points to 23% of park visitors. However, we are not able to determine whether this is attributable to changes in survey methodology or true changes in park visitation.

Figure 10: Visitor household income compared to Minnesota population



^a ACS 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample 2020. Compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Note. Due to rounding, combined percentages may vary from the sum of individual percentages and may not sum to 100%. Minnesota household data taken from ACS 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample 2020 and compiled by Minnesota compass. Part 1 survey respondents.

Prior use of state parks

Nearly two-thirds of park visitors (63%) have been visiting Minnesota state parks for over a decade (Figure 11). For 9% of visitors, it was their first year visiting the park where they were surveyed. The average number of years visitors have been to Minnesota state parks is 23 years, with a median number of 20 years.

Figure 11: Number of years visiting Minnesota state parks

Number of years	Total visitors
1 year	9%
2 to 5 years	16%
6 to 10 years	11%
11 to 20 years	17%
21 to 30 years	15%
More than 30 years	30%

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. If their first year, respondents were instructed to select '1.' Part 1 survey respondents.

Demographic differences: Nearly half of BIPOC visitors (46%) reported having visited the parks for five years or less, compared to about one-quarter of White visitors (24%; Figure 12).

Figure 12: Number of years visiting Minnesota state parks by race/ethnicity

Number of years	White	BIPOC
1 year	8%	19%
2 to 5 years	16%	26%
6 to 10 years	11%	17%
11 to 20 years	18%	15%
21 to 30 years	15%	13%
More than 30 years	32%	9%

Note. Due to rounding, combined percentages may vary from the sum of individual percentages and may not sum to 100%. If their first year, respondents were instructed to select '1.' Part 1 survey respondents.

Demographic differences: Some differences exist by age and household income in the number of years having visited state parks. Not surprisingly, older visitors were more likely to have been visiting the parks for over 30 years. Visitors with a household income of less than \$50,000 were less likely to have been visiting the parks for over 30 years, compared to higher-income visitors.

There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more by overnight/day users, region or investment group.

Trip planning

Visitors, especially day-use visitors, tend to make somewhat last-minute plans to visit state parks. Over half of visitors planned their trip within the past 30 days. A greater proportion of day-use visitors reported having planned their trip in the past 30 days, including the day of, compared to overnight visitors (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Planning in advance for park visit

Days or months	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
1 to 30 days	36%	54%	52%
1 to 2 months	21%	9%	11%
3 to 5 months	32%	10%	12%
6 to 12 months	9%	2%	3%
Over 12 months	2%	<1%	<1%
None; decided trip on day of park visit	<1%	24%	22%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Demographic differences: BIPOC visitors were more likely to report having planned their trip within 30 days of their visit compared to White visitors (63% vs. 51%, respectively). Visitors under age 25 were more likely than visitors over 25 to plan their trip the day of (40% vs. 21%, respectively). Across the income scale, household income and the length of advanced planning were positively correlated, with higher-income visitors tending to plan their trip farther in advance. Compared to visitors with annual household incomes below \$100,000, those with incomes above \$100,000 were more likely to have planned their trip a month or more before their visit. Lower (<\$50,000) and middle income (\$50,000 - \$99,999) visitors were similar in trip planning, with the majority planning less than a month in advance (61% vs. 56%, respectively). Additionally, almost a third of lower income visitors planned their trips on the day of their park visit.

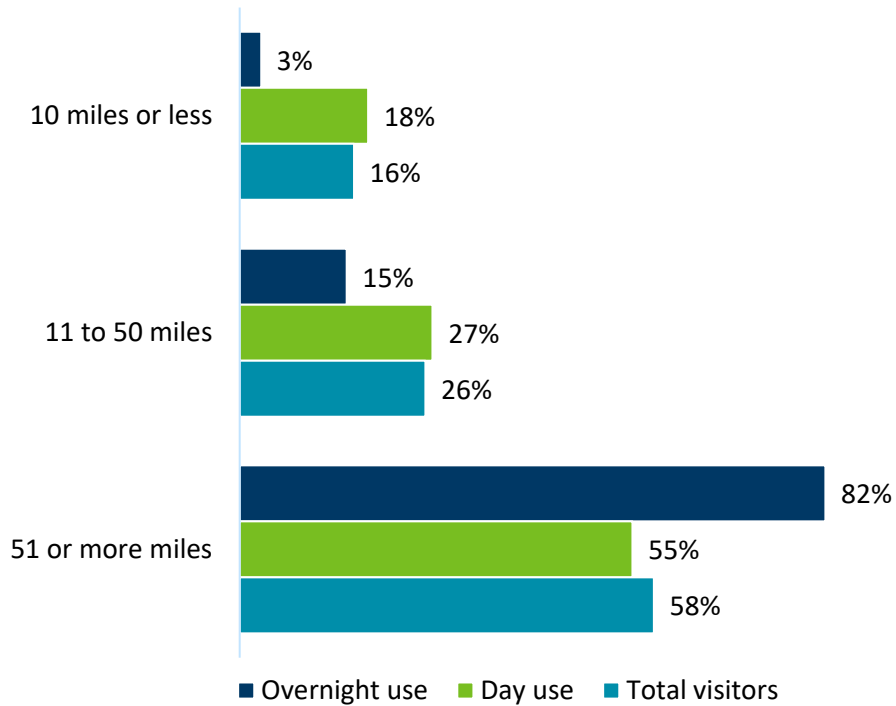
Differences by region: Visitors to the northeast region were more likely to have planned their trip more than 30 days in advance (41%) compared to other regions (16%), while 92% of central region visitors planned their trips 30 days in advance or less.

Differences by investment group: Visitors to Rustic parks were more likely to plan their trip 30 days or more in advance (49%) than visitors to other investment groups (25%). Gateway parks had the largest share of visitors planning their trip between 1-30 days in advance (88%), while Classic parks saw the most visitors who planned their visit the day of (31%).

Distance traveled

The largest proportion of visitors traveled more than 50 miles to visit the park (Figure 14). This is true for a much larger proportion of overnight visitors compared to day-use visitors.

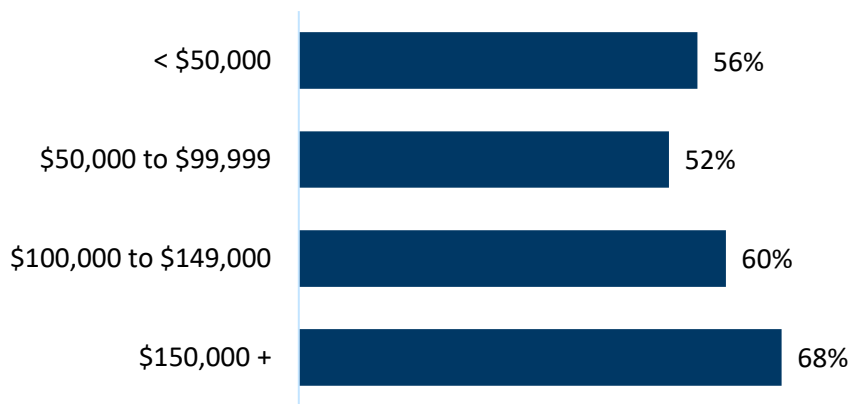
Figure 14: Distance of park from permanent residence



Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Demographic differences: Visitors with a higher household income (\$150,000 or more) were more likely to have traveled more than 50 miles to the park for their visit compared to visitors with lower household incomes, suggesting that lower-income households tend to visit parks closer to home (Figure 15). This finding could indicate that traveling long distances may be a barrier for lower-income households. See [Appendix B9](#) for more details.

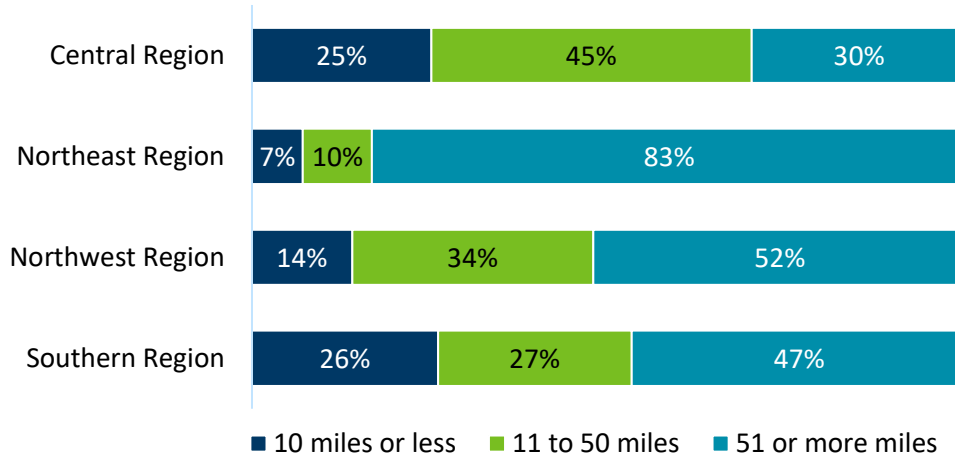
Figure 15: Visitors traveling more than 50 miles, by household income



Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Differences by region: Visitors to the northeast region (the Arrowhead) were the most likely group to have traveled more than 50 miles to the park, followed by visitors to parks in the northwest, southern, and central regions (Figure 16).

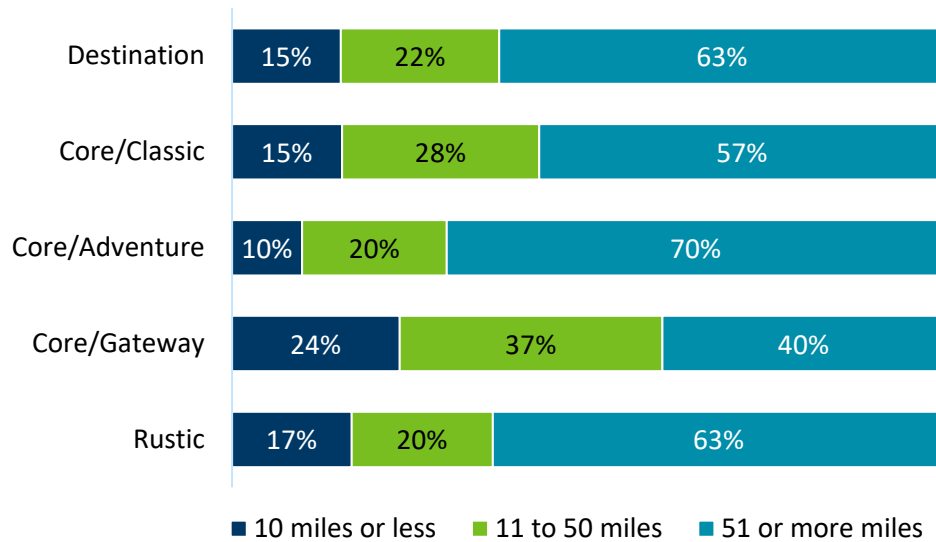
Figure 16: Distance of park from permanent residence by region



Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Differences by investment group: Those visiting parks in the Core/Adventure category were more likely to travel over 50 miles to get to the park than those visiting other investment groups (Figure 17). This is to be expected, as Core/Adventure parks offer opportunities for particular outdoor activities which are not widely available across the system, including rock climbing and mountain biking. While fewer visitors to Core/Gateway parks traveled long distances (over 50 miles), a larger share of these visitors traveled 11-50 miles compared to any other investment category. This is also to be expected, as Core/Gateway parks are located within 30 miles of select metropolitan areas.

Figure 17: Distance of park from permanent residence by investment group



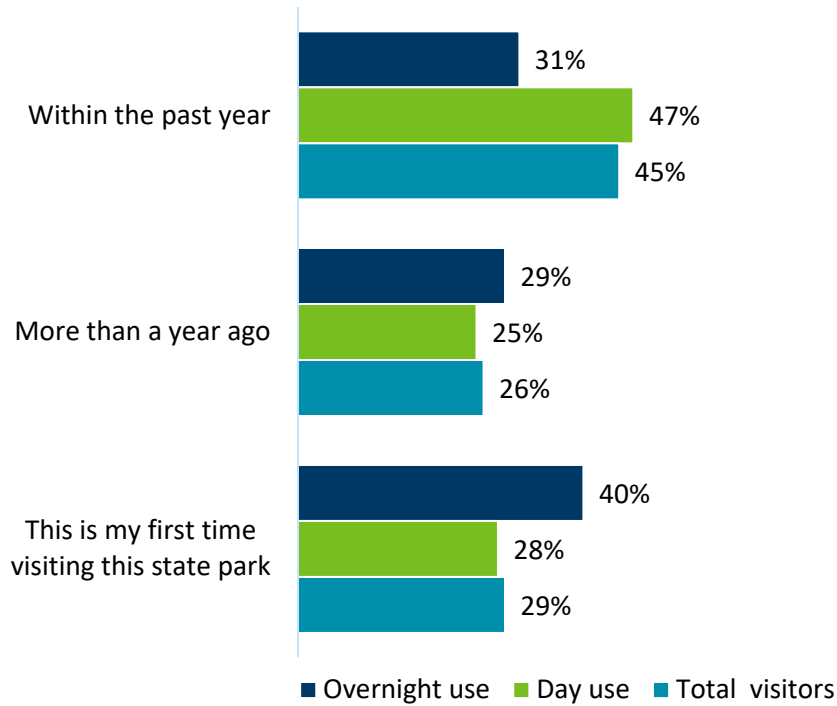
Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by age and no differences by race/ethnicity related to distance traveled to the park from permanent residence.

Last park visit to the park where respondent was surveyed

Nearly three-quarters of visitors (71%) were return visitors to the park where they were surveyed, while nearly half of visitors (45%) had previously visited this park within the past year (Figure 18). A larger proportion of overnight visitors (40%) were visiting the park for the first time, compared to 28% of day-use visitors.

Figure 18: Last visit to the park where respondent was surveyed

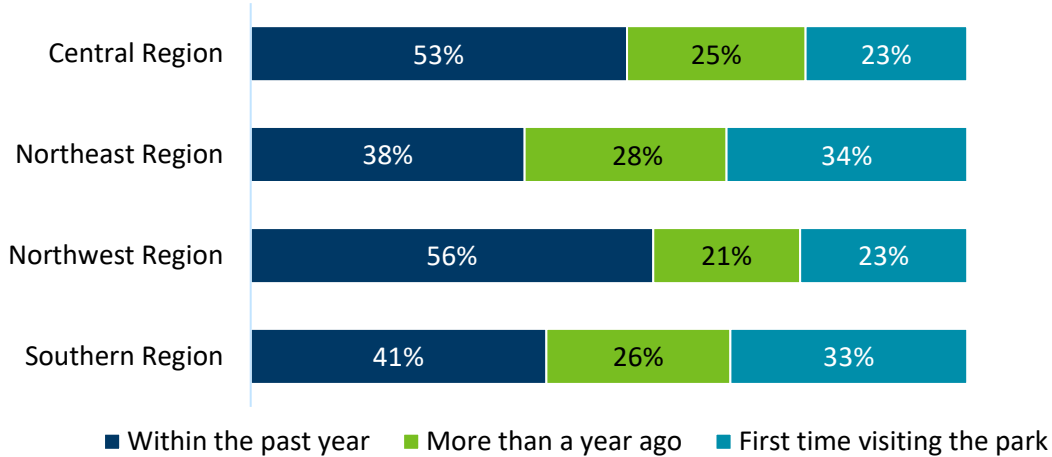


Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Demographic differences: Visitors age 18 to 24 and visitors with lower household incomes (\$50,000 or less) were more likely to have visited the park within the past year, compared to older and wealthier visitors who were more likely to be visiting a park for the first time. See [Appendix B13](#) for more details.

Differences by region: For visitors to parks in the northeast and southern regions, it was more likely to be their first time visiting the park than those visiting parks in the central and northwest regions (Figure 19).

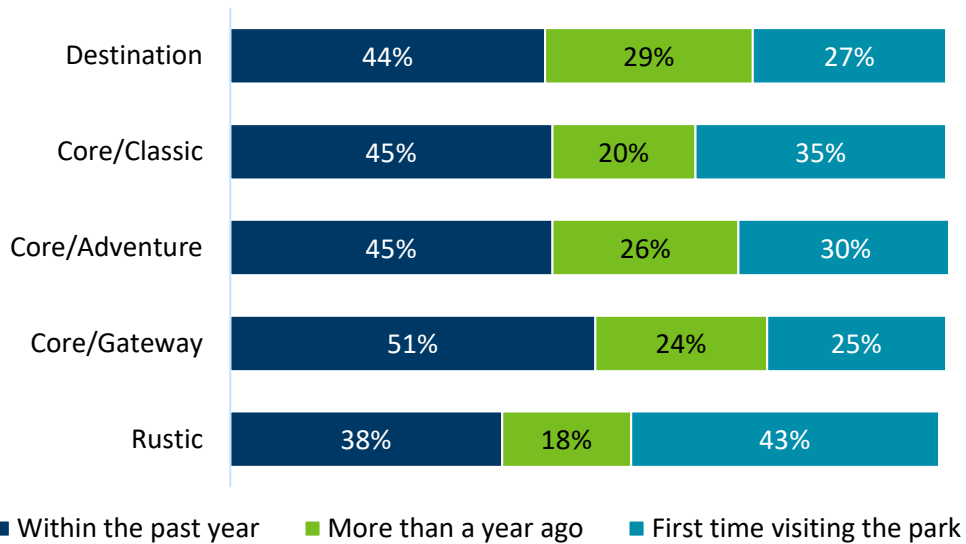
Figure 19: Most recent prior visit to the park by region



Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

Differences by investment group: Those visiting Rustic parks were more likely to be visiting for the first time, compared to the other types of parks where a higher proportion of visitors had been to the park within the last year (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Most recent prior visit to the park by investment group



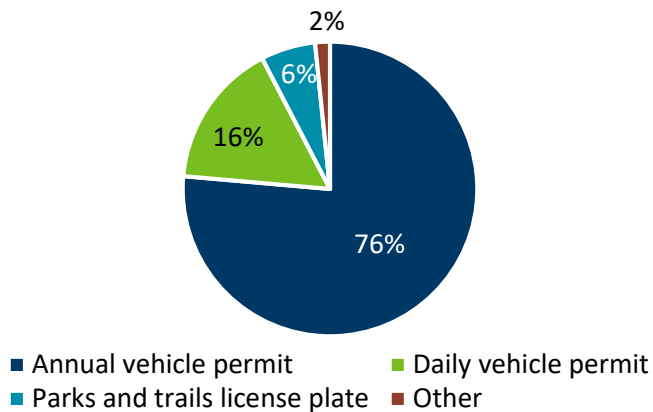
Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more by race/ethnicity related to timing of last visit to the park.

Type of vehicle permit used

The majority of visitors (76%) used an annual vehicle permit to enter the state park (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Type of vehicle permit



Demographic differences: Vehicle permit type varied by age. Visitors age 18 to 24 were more likely to have a daily vehicle permit compared to older visitors, who were more likely to have an annual permit. Visitors with lower household incomes (less than \$50,000) were more likely to use an annual vehicle permit than visitors with the highest household income (\$150,000 or more).

Differences by investment group: Vehicle permit type varied by investment group. Gateway park visitors were more likely to use a daily vehicle permit, while visitors to Core/Classic parks were more likely to use an annual permit.

There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more by overnight/day users, race/ethnicity or region.

Outdoor recreation involvement

Over one in three park visitors have a Minnesota fishing license, and one in three have a boat registered in Minnesota. Overnight visitors are generally more likely to have other outdoor recreation licenses than day-use visitors and have similar license and registrations to the overall Minnesota population (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Visitors with a recreational license or registration

Type of license or registration	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors	All MN households
Minnesota fishing license	45%	37%	37%	38%
Boat currently registered in Minnesota	42%	30%	31%	34%
Minnesota hunting license	19%	13%	14%	23%
Great Minnesota Ski Pass from the previous winter	4%	11%	10%	1%
ATV/OHV currently registered in Minnesota	15%	8%	9%	15%
Snowmobile currently registered in Minnesota	12%	6%	7%	9%
Minnesota Horse Pass	0%	2%	2%	<1%

Source. DNR (202X) and ACS 2016-2020

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only. Percentages of Minnesota households with each license or registration type were calculated based on DNR-supplied license and registration records for 2022, divided by the Minnesota population. This approach involves an implied assumption that people with these licenses/registrations are uniformly distributed across households.

Demographic differences: Compared to White visitors, BIPOC visitors were less likely to have any type of Minnesota DNR passes or licenses. Boat registration had the most notable difference, with 10% of BIPOC visitors having a registered boat compared to 32% of White visitors (Figure 23). Visitors over age 55 were more likely than younger visitors to have a registered boat and a hunting license. See [Appendix B17](#) for more details on differences by age.

Figure 23: Visitors with a recreational license or registration by race/ethnicity

Type of license or registration	White	BIPOC
Boat currently registered in Minnesota	32%	10%
Minnesota fishing license	38%	23%
Great Minnesota Ski Pass from the previous winter	11%	<1%
Minnesota hunting license	14%	4%
Snowmobile currently registered in Minnesota	8%	<1%
ATV/OHV currently registered in Minnesota	9%	7%
Minnesota Horse Pass	2%	0%

Differences by region: Percentages of visitors with DNR licenses and registrations were similar across the regions, although visitors from the southern region were more likely to have a fishing license or registered boat compared to other regions. See [Appendix B18](#) for more details on notable differences by region.

Differences by investment group: Compared to the Destination and Core parks, Rustic parks saw higher shares of visitors with a Minnesota hunting and fishing license. Core/Adventure parks, which tend to offer more active outdoor opportunities like groomed ski trails, had notably higher shares of visitors with a Great Minnesota Ski Pass. See [Appendix B19](#) for more details on notable differences by investment group.

There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more by income.

Park experience and satisfaction

Experience

As in previous years, hiking/walking was the most common activity among park visitors (Figure 24). Visitors staying overnight were more likely to engage in more of the activities parks offer. When asked if a park program or event had brought them to the park, few visitors (5%) reported yes.

Figure 24: Activities while visiting the park

Activities	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
Hiking/walking	91%	80%	81%
Observing/photographing nature	63%	56%	57%
Sightseeing ^a	62%	57%	57%
Taking a self-guided nature walk	53%	43%	44%
Picnicking	50%	28%	30%
Looking at kiosks or visitor center exhibits	42%	26%	28%
Did nothing/relaxed	50%	24%	27%
Visiting historic sites	32%	24%	25%
Bird watching	32%	23%	24%
Shopping in the park's gift shop	37%	20%	22%
Swimming	38%	18%	20%
Camping	91%	9%	17%
Biking (all types)	27%	10%	12%
Canoeing/kayaking/paddleboarding/motorboating	26%	8%	10%
Fishing	27%	8%	10%
Other ^b	3%	4%	4%

^a E.g., taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery

^b The top three "other" activities visitors noted during their trip were: 1) a park-sponsored event including ranger shows, concerts, naturalist/ranger-guided walk, or guided tour (17%), 2) miscellaneous activities, including wood carving, photography (non-specific), four-wheeling, and campfire-building (15%), and 3) all other sports including Frisbee, volleyball, rock climbing/bouldering, archery, geocaching, horse riding, in-line skating (15%).

Demographic differences: Activities across age groups were similar with a few exceptions; younger visitors were more likely to report swimming and doing nothing/relaxing compared to older visitors (55+), while older visitors were more likely to report bird watching compared to their younger counterparts. The proportion of visitors over age 55 who used the parks for biking was double that of biking for visitors under age 34 (31% vs. 15%, respectively). See [Appendix B20](#) for more details.

Differences by region: The top three most common activities among visitors were the same in all four regions (hiking/walking, observing/photographing nature, and sightseeing). The southern region saw more visitors relaxing compared to the central and northeast regions. See [Appendix B21](#) for more details and variations in other less-common activities.

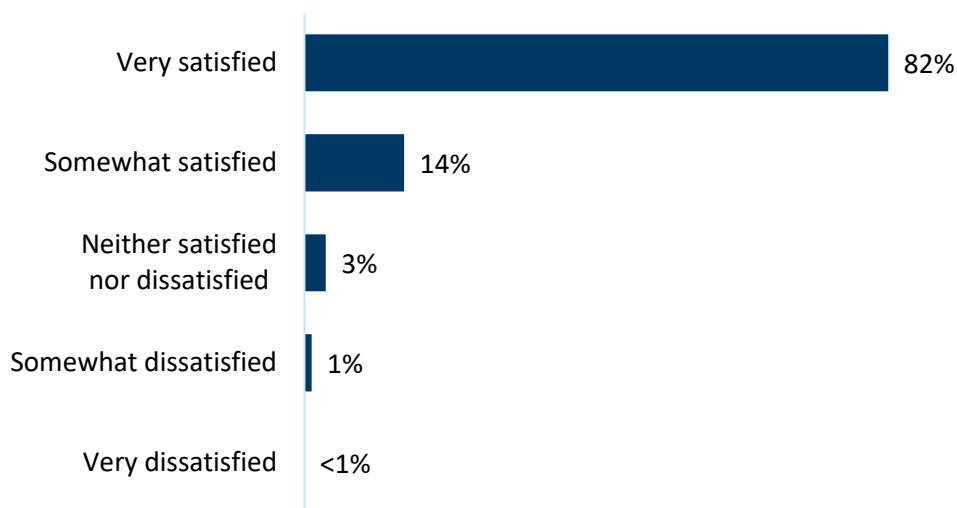
Differences by investment group: The top three most common activities among visitors were the same in the five investment groups (hiking/walking, observing/photographing nature, and sightseeing). Biking was one of the least popular activities at Core/Gateway and Rustic parks. State parks are managed to provide facilities and services around the niche of each park. Visitors to Core/Adventure state parks were three times as likely to bicycle as visitors to other parks. This could be because Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, a park in the Core/Adventure investment group, is a flagship mountain biking destination. See [Appendix B22](#) for more details and differences in other less-common activities.

There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by household income, and no difference by race/ethnicity in regard to activities visitors participated in.

Satisfaction with park visit

Park visitors expressed overwhelming satisfaction with their visit. Less than 2% of visitors expressed dissatisfaction. However, 18% of visitors indicated there is room for improvement (i.e., gave a response other than “very satisfied;” Figure 25). The satisfaction scale used in 2022 is different than what was used in the 2017 survey; therefore, comparisons should not be made.

Figure 25: Satisfaction with park visit



Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Differences by region. Rates of overall satisfaction (the sum of those who were “very satisfied” and “somewhat satisfied” with their park visit) were similar across park regions, but visitors of parks in the northeast region were more likely to select “very satisfied” than those in the other regions (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Level of satisfaction in park visit by region

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	78%	89%	76%	77%
Somewhat satisfied	18%	8%	16%	18%

Differences by investment group. Similar to the comparison by region, the differences in satisfaction across investment groups occurred in the proportions of visitors who were “very satisfied” with their visit. Those who visited Core/Classic and Rustic parks were less likely to report being “very satisfied” compared to those who visited parks in the other groups (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Level of satisfaction in park visit by investment group

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	84%	71%	89%	82%	67%
Somewhat satisfied	12%	22%	8%	15%	24%

There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more by overnight/day users, race/ethnicity, age, household income, or disability status in regard to level of satisfaction with the park visit.

Survey respondents were asked an open-ended question about the primary factors that contributed to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction during their visit. The largest proportion of responses concerning satisfaction were related to the natural environment (42% of responses), specifically the 1) natural beauty of the park (views and scenery) and 2) specific natural features (e.g., waterfalls, lakes, rivers and stars).

The lake is very beautiful and almost had the same look as the Boundary Waters. The way the land juts out into the water and the quiet serenity of the area. In the same way it is the perfect place to kayak and canoe. – La Salle Lake State Recreation Area visitor

The waterfalls are so beautiful at Minneopa! Great place to picnic, take a hike, enjoy the birds and the bison. I have been coming to this park since I was in 1st grade or about 60 years. We now take our grandchildren to have the same experience. What a wonderful place and we [are] fortunate to have it so close to us. The park has such easy access for all ages, which is another big plus. Love it! – Minneopa State Park visitor

There are so many amazing animals and birds out and about this year...and we love being able to observe and see them all. – Itasca State Park visitor



Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area: Mountain biking at Cuyuna County State Recreation Area

The second largest proportion of responses were related to trails (24% of responses), specifically 1) hiking, walking and running trails and paths, and 2) general appreciation for the trails and trail system. Twelve percent of responses were about the overall park environment, with the largest proportion of comments being about the quiet and peacefulness at the park.

Well-maintained trails with good views of water. – Fort Snelling State Park visitor

This is a peaceful park with great trails. – Nerstrand Big Woods State Park visitor

Lots of trails including some remote ones. Great birdwatching, nice landscapes. – Afton State Park visitor

Well made path with great viewpoints and good signage. – Temperance River State Park visitor

The number of responses regarding what contributed to visitors' dissatisfaction is too small to report any meaningful findings as no themes were mentioned by more than three respondents.

Satisfaction with features in the park

Overall, park visitors were highly satisfied with the most important aspects that make a park visit enjoyable. Figure 28 shows the level of satisfaction for park features and the percentage of visitors who indicated that each feature was “very important” to making their park visit enjoyable. Overnight visitors were more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction for participating in a staff-led program and designated places to swim. For more details on levels of importance for park features, see [Appendix B24](#).

Figure 28: Level of satisfaction with features in the park that visitors consider to be important

Features	Percent of visitors indicating this feature is “very important” to their enjoyment	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Does not apply
A natural setting for the park ^a	95%	80%	19%	1%	0%	1%	<1%
Trails in the park	92%	61%	32%	6%	1%	1%	1%
Well-protected and managed natural resources	76%	44%	43%	12%	1%	0%	7%
Signs for finding my way around the park	75%	39%	48%	10%	3%	0%	2%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	75%	51%	39%	7%	2%	0%	2%
Well-protected cultural resources	64%	42%	43%	15%	0%	1%	17%
General informational brochure/maps provided	52%	40%	47%	10%	3%	1%	10%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	47%	36%	39%	21%	3%	1%	10%

Features	Percent of visitors indicating this feature is "very important" to their enjoyment	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Does not apply
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	42%	42%	42%	14%	2%	1%	27%
Presence of park staff	26%	28%	48%	21%	2%	1%	20%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	26%	36%	41%	20%	3%	1%	29%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	25%	32%	47%	18%	2%	1%	16%
Designated places to swim	21%	30%	36%	29%	4%	1%	48%
Boating opportunities	15%	28%	39%	31%	2%	0%	59%
Fishing opportunities	11%	23%	35%	39%	3%	0%	65%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	9%	29%	39%	28%	4%	0%	43%
Participating in a staff-led programs	5%	30%	23%	47%	0%	0%	70%

a E.g., lakes, rivers, forest

c E.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species

d E.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Note: The following analysis on levels of satisfaction excludes respondents who chose “does not apply.”

Demographic differences: A greater proportion of BIPOC visitors reported they are “very satisfied” with well-protected cultural resources and the presence of park staff compared to White visitors. White visitors expressed higher satisfaction with boating opportunities compared to BIPOC visitors. For more detail on these differences, see [Appendix B25](#).

There were no meaningful patterns in terms of levels of satisfaction with park features based on age. Appendix [B27](#) and [B28](#) present comparisons of the levels of satisfaction with park features by age.

Note about satisfaction with features for visitors with a disability: Regarding satisfaction with park features, visitors with a disability compared to those without, had lower levels of satisfaction with learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means, and general informational brochure/maps provided. For visitors with a disability, the highest levels of dissatisfaction (“dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied”) were related to designated places to swim (18%), availability of park staff to answer questions (10%), and fishing opportunities (10%).

Differences by region: There were numerous notable differences in levels of satisfaction by region. For example:

- Visitors to the northwest region were more likely to indicate satisfaction with designated places to swim and boating opportunities.
- The southern region saw higher levels of satisfaction with lack of disturbances by other park visitors.

For more details on visitor satisfaction with each feature by region, see [Appendix B29a-B29g](#).

Differences by investment group: There were numerous notable differences across investment groups in visitors’ levels of satisfaction with specific park features. This is to be expected, as the availability of park features varies considerably across investment groups, by design. For example, Rustic parks are not staffed as frequently, and visitors to Rustic parks had lower levels of satisfaction with the presence of park staff compared to parks in other investment groups. A few other notable differences were:

- Core/Adventure parks had the highest levels of satisfaction with nine out of the 17 listed park features.
- Over a quarter of Rustic park visitors were dissatisfied with designated places to swim.
- There were no notable differences between investment groups about levels of satisfaction with well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities, and a natural setting for the park.

For more details on visitor satisfaction with each feature by investment group, see [Appendix B30a-B30g](#).

Welcoming, safety and security

Welcoming

The vast majority of visitors reported that they felt welcome during their visit (97%) and would recommend the state park to friends and family (98%; Figure 29).

Figure 29: Feeling welcome and recommendation to friends and family

Feeling welcome and recommendation	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree or disagree
I have felt welcome during my visit to this park.	97%	3%	<1%
I would recommend this state park to friends and family.	98%	1%	<1%

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by demographics, region or investment group. There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more by overnight/day users.

There are some differences in visitors feeling welcome when comparing the proportion of “strongly agree” responses versus combining “agree” and “strongly agree.” Looking at “strongly agree” independently for the question “I have felt welcome during my visit to this park,” visitors with income less than \$50,000, visitors under age 24, and visitors who identified as BIPOC were less likely to report “strongly agree” than visitors in the remaining demographic categories. When looking at region and investment group for the same question, fewer visitors to the northwest region and Core/Classic and Rustic groups selected “strongly agree” compared to visitors to other regions and investment groups.

When looking at “strongly agree” independently for the question “I would recommend this state park to friends and family,” responses differed by age group, with those under age 24 reporting “strongly agree” less frequently than those in other age categories. Similar to the previous question, visitors to the northwest region and Core/Classic and Rustic groups were less likely to select “strongly agree” than visitors to the other regions and groups.

Safety and security

Of the 63% of visitors who interacted with park staff, 79% said those staff positively contributed to their sense of safety and security, and 20% said it had no effect (Figure 30).

Figure 30: Staff effect on sense of safety and security at the park

Sense of safety and security	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
The staff positively contributed to my sense of safety and security at the park.	82%	79%	79%
The staff did not have any effect on my sense of safety and security at the park.	18%	20%	20%
The staff negatively contributed to my sense of safety and security at the park.	<1%	1%	1%
Other	<1%	<1%	<1%

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

Demographic differences: While there is not a difference of 10% or more, a higher proportion of BIPOC visitors reported that the staff positively contributed to their sense of safety and security at the park compared with White visitors (85% vs. 78%, respectively; Figure 31).

Figure 31: Staff effect on sense of safety and security at the park by race/ethnicity

Sense of safety and security	White	BIPOC
The staff positively contributed to my sense of safety and security at the park.	78%	85%
The staff did not have any effect on my sense of safety and security at the park.	21%	10%
The staff negatively contributed to my sense of safety and security at the park.	<1%	3%
Other	0%	2%

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 1 survey respondents.

Differences by investment group: A higher percentage of those visiting Core/Adventure (86%) and Core/Gateway (85%) parks indicated that staff positively contributed to their sense of safety and security compared to Core/Classic and Rustic (71% and 66%, respectively). Similarly, Core/Classic and Rustic parks had the highest percentage of visitors indicating that the staff did not have any effect on their sense of safety and security (26% and 34%, respectively). This is to be expected since Core/Classic and Rustic parks are the least-staffed parks in the system.

There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by region, and no differences by age, or household income.

Park information sources

The DNR website and friends and family were identified as the most important sources of information about Minnesota state parks (Figure 32). The DNR website was particularly important to overnight visitors, likely because reservations are required for camping and lodging, and most visitors make reservations online.

Figure 32: Most important information sources about Minnesota state parks

Sources	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
DNR website	87%	69%	71%
Friends and family	52%	55%	54%
Staff and informational materials at the park (including state park campgrounds)	37%	39%	39%
DNR parks and trails brochures	36%	36%	36%
Explore Minnesota	29%	29%	29%
Social media	18%	28%	27%
Recreation maps and guides	26%	24%	24%
DNR social media	10%	13%	13%
Places I stay ^a	13%	13%	13%
Online (please specify) ^b	8%	8%	8%
Newspapers or magazines	5%	7%	7%
DNR newsletters	6%	4%	5%
Chambers of commerce/convention and visitor bureaus	4%	4%	4%
Travel guides/agents	3%	4%	4%
TV	2%	4%	4%
Radio	2%	3%	3%
Another source not listed (please specify) ^b	2%	2%	2%
None of the above	0%	1%	1%

a E.g., resorts, campgrounds

b Due to overlap in responses, Online (please specify) and Another source not listed (please specify) were combined for analysis. Among these responses, the most commonly cited source was a generic web search, mentioned by 4% of respondents. For more information, see [Appendix B31](#).

Note. Respondents could select all that apply. Part 1 survey respondents.

Demographic differences: The DNR website and friends and family were in the top three most important sources for all age groups. For young visitors (age 18-44), social media was rated as the third most important source of information. Visitors age 25-54 and age 65 and older included staff and informational materials at the park in their top three most important sources. For visitors age 55-64, the DNR parks and trails brochures were the third most important information source. See [Appendix B32](#) for more details. Visitors with a household income of less than \$50,000 were less likely to indicate the DNR website as an important information source compared to visitors with higher household income, possibly due to limited access to internet at home or access to internet-enabled devices. See [Appendix B33](#) for more details.

Differences by region: The DNR website was the favored mode of information, followed closely by friends and family for visitors in the central, northeast and southern regions. This was flipped for visitors in the northwest region who favored friends and family first, followed by the DNR website. See [Appendix B34](#) for information sources by region.

Differences by investment group: The DNR website and friends and family were the top two sources of information from visitors regardless of investment group. The third favored source from Core/Classic, Destination and Core/Gateway visitors was staff and informational materials at the park, while Core/Adventure and Rustic visitors identified DNR parks and trails brochures as their tertiary source. See [Appendix B35](#) for more details.

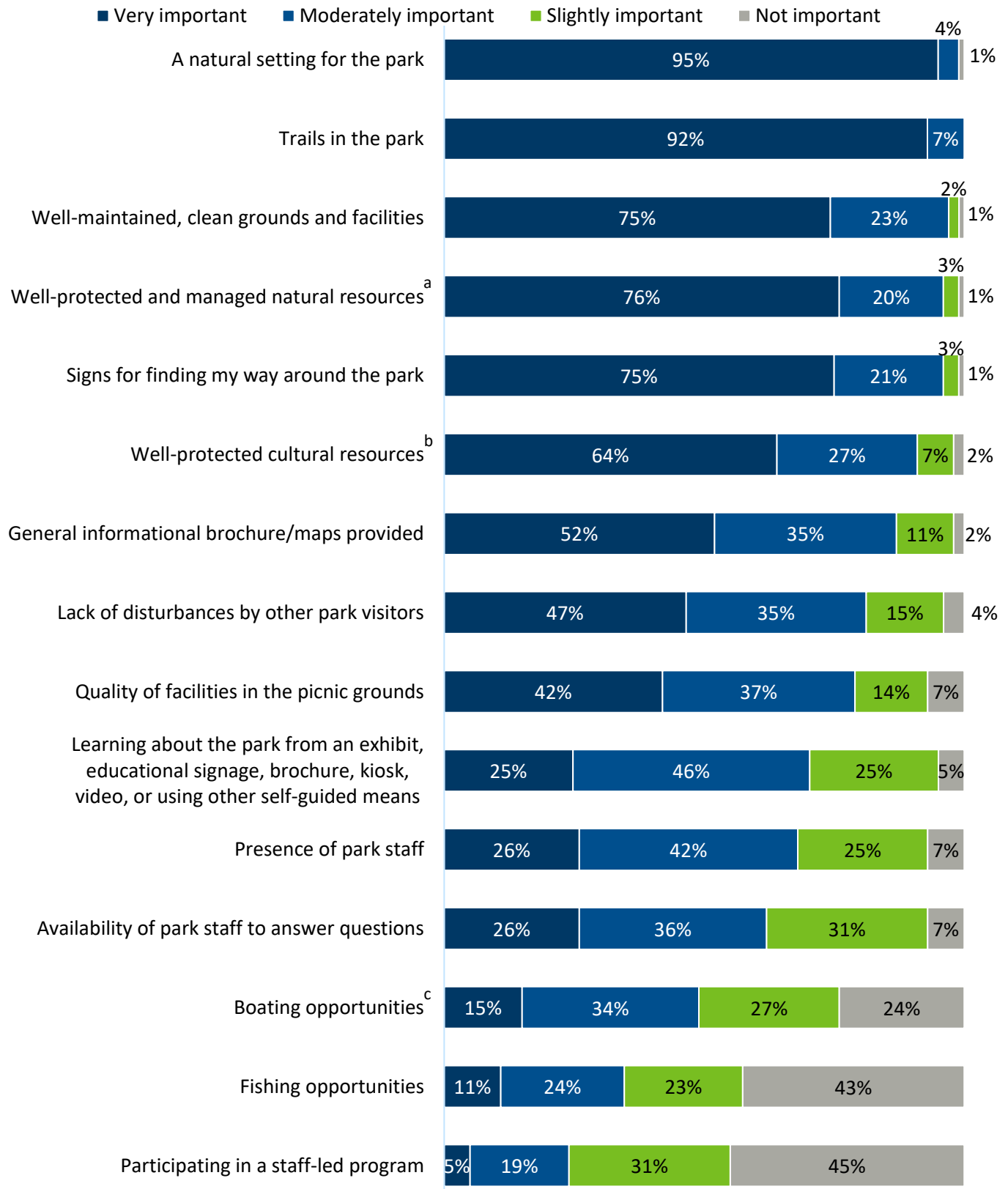
There were no differences of 10 percentage points or more in important information sources by race/ethnicity.

Additional park preferences

Importance of park features

Visitors were asked how important various features are to making their park visit enjoyable. **The park's natural setting and the trails in the park** were deemed "very important" for an enjoyable park visit by over nine in 10 visitors (Figure 33). Also "very important" to three in four visitors were having **well-protected and managed natural resources, well-maintained grounds and facilities, and signage for navigating around the park**. Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities are of particular importance to overnight visitors (86% rated it "very important" compared to 74% of day-use visitors). See [Appendix B36](#) and [B37](#) for more details.

Figure 33: Importance of features to enjoyable park visit



^a E.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species

^b E.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings

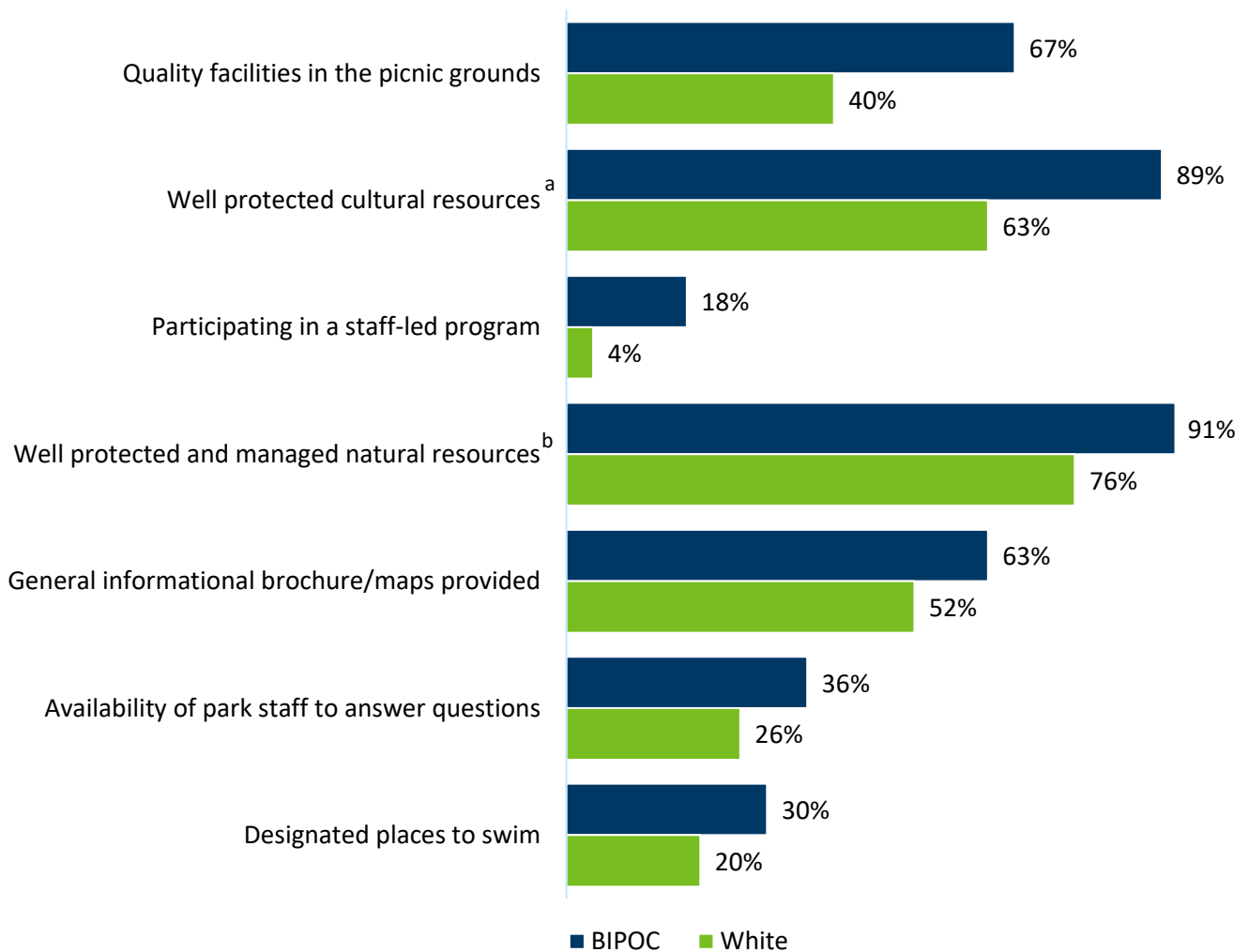
^c E.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Demographic differences: Young visitors (age 18-24) were less likely to report several features as “very important” compared to older visitors. For example, a smaller proportion deemed the quality of facilities in the picnic grounds and learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means as “very important.” For more detail on differences of 10 percentage points or more, see [Appendix B38](#).

Of the features listed, a higher proportion of BIPOC visitors reported several as “very important” for an enjoyable visit compared to White visitors (Figure 34). The quality of facilities in the picnic grounds and well-protected cultural resources were “very important” to BIPOC visitors by more than 20 percentage points compared to White visitors.

Figure 34: Key differences by race/ethnicity (proportion that reported features as “very important” for an enjoyable park visit)



Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

^a Well-protected cultural resources like historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings.

^b Well-protected and managed natural resources like controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species.

A greater proportion of visitors with income below \$50,000 reported a lack of disturbances by other park visitors as “very important” for an enjoyable park visit, compared with visitors with higher incomes. For more detail on differences of 10 percentage points or more, see [Appendix B40](#).

Differences by region: Some variability between regions are present regarding the importance of various features to an enjoyable park visit. For example, visitors to the northwest region were more likely to report learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using self-guided means than visitors to other regions. More northwest region visitors rated the quality of facilities as “very important” compared to visitors to other regions. For more detail on differences of 10 percentage points or more by region, see [Appendix B41](#).

Differences by investment group: The importance of various features varied by investment group. For example, a lack of disturbances by other park visitors was of greater importance to Rustic visitors. This aligns with the purpose of Rustic parks as they are designed to blend in with nature, while only offering basic amenities (e.g., no/very few electric sites, no hot water and remote campsites). Another example is that of the Core/Adventure visitors who noted clean facilities and grounds of lower importance. For more detail on differences of 10 percentage points or more, see [Appendix B42](#).

Value of park fees

The majority of visitors (89%) feel they are getting good value for the entrance permit (i.e., annual pass, day pass or license plate) they paid to enter Minnesota state parks (Figure 35). A higher proportion of day-use visitors perceived their entrance fee as of “good value.”

Figure 35: Perceived value for entrance fee paid

Value	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
Good value	79%	90%	89%
Fair value	19%	9%	10%
Poor value	2%	1%	1%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Demographic differences: Young visitors (age 18-24) were less likely to perceive their entrance fee as “of good value” than older visitors (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Perceived value for state park entrance fee paid by age

Value	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
Good value	67%	86%	91%	86%	91%	96%
Fair value	29%	13%	7%	14%	9%	3%
Poor value	3%	1%	2%	<1%	0%	1%

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 2 survey respondents only.

There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by household income, and no differences by race/ethnicity, region or investment group in regard to permit fees.

The majority of overnight visitors felt that they were getting a good value for what they paid for. Almost a quarter of these visitors indicated room for improvement in terms of value for accommodations (Figure 37). Overnight visitors are paying higher fees, as they have to pay both for the overnight facility (such as a campsite or cabin) and the park permit, a factor that could be contributing to lower levels of perceived value for both the entrance and camping/lodging fees.

Figure 37: Perceived value for camping/lodging fee paid

Value	Total overnight visitors
Good value	78%
Fair value	20%
Poor value	3%

Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Demographic differences: Compared to BIPOC visitors, White visitors were more likely to select “good value” for the camping/lodging fee (Figure 38). While the majority of visitors in all income categories favored “good value” for their camping/lodging fee, those with incomes under \$50,000 were more likely to select “fair value,” compared to those in the other income categories. Regardless of age, the majority of visitors indicated that the camping/lodging fee was a good value. Those in the 25-34 age range were more likely to rate the camping/lodging fee as a poor value, compared to visitors in other age ranges (see [Appendix B43](#) for more detail).

Figure 38: Perceived value for camping/lodging fee paid by race/ethnicity

Value	White	BIPOC
Good value	78%	64%
Fair value	19%	36%
Poor value	3%	0%

Differences by investment group: Core/Classic and Core/Gateway parks had around a quarter of visitors indicating “fair value” for their overnight camping or lodging fees. Core/Adventure parks did have noticeably fewer visitors indicating “fair value,” compared to the two previously mentioned investment groups (Figure 39).

Figure 39: Perceived value for camping/lodging fee paid by investment group

Value	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Good value	81%	72%	86%	75%	77%
Fair value	17%	24%	14%	25%	18%
Poor value	2%	4%	0%	0%	5%

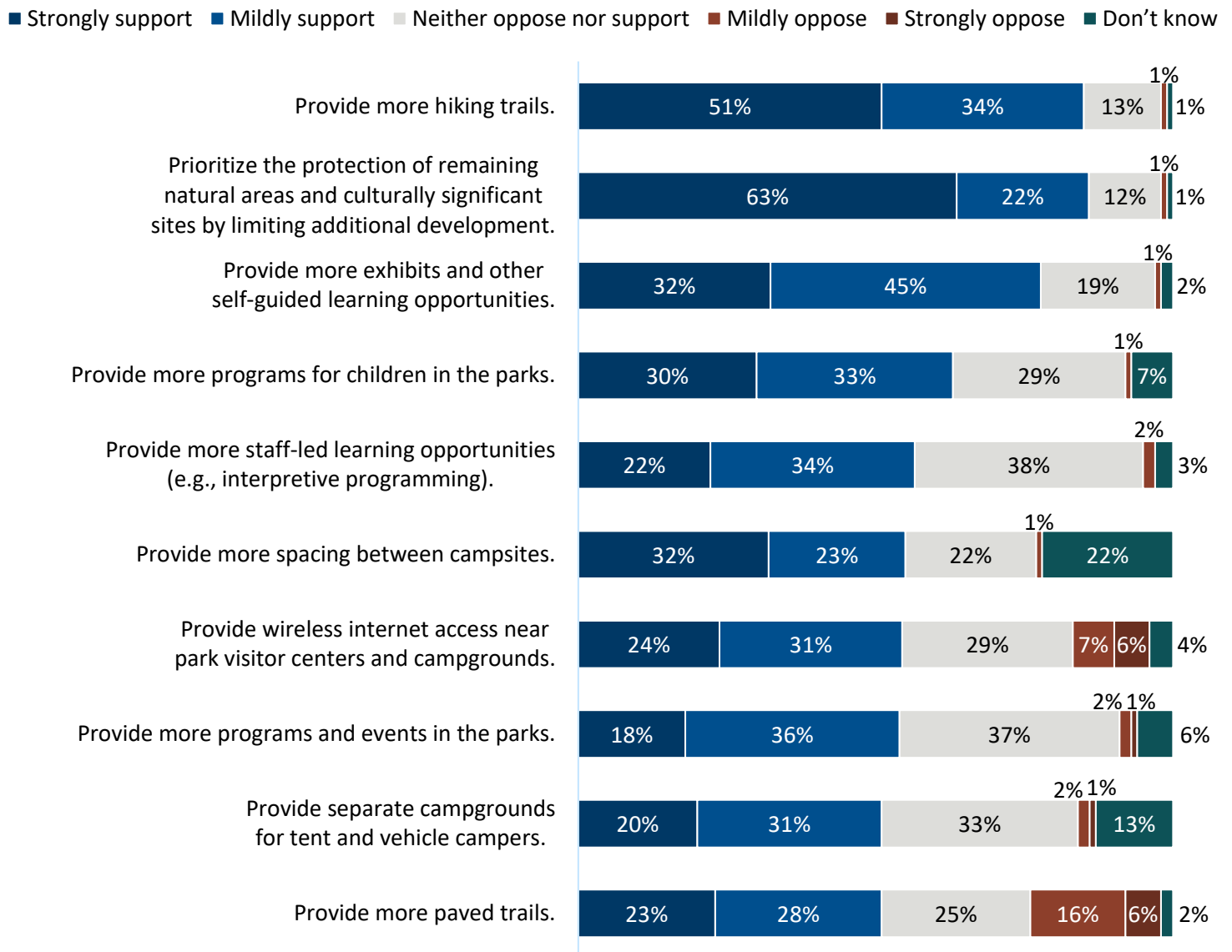
There were no meaningful differences of 10 percentage points or more by region in regard to perceived value of camping/lodging fees.

Potential park changes

Visitors were given a list of 19 potential changes to Minnesota state parks and related services. They were asked to report whether they support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose each potential change. Overall, visitors supported the majority (13) of the changes, with the largest percentage of visitors (85%) supporting *provide more hiking trails* and *prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development* (Figure 40).

Visitors neither supported nor opposed five of the potential changes which included *provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping*, *provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes*, and *provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites*. Only *provide more hunting opportunities* was opposed by more visitors than supported.

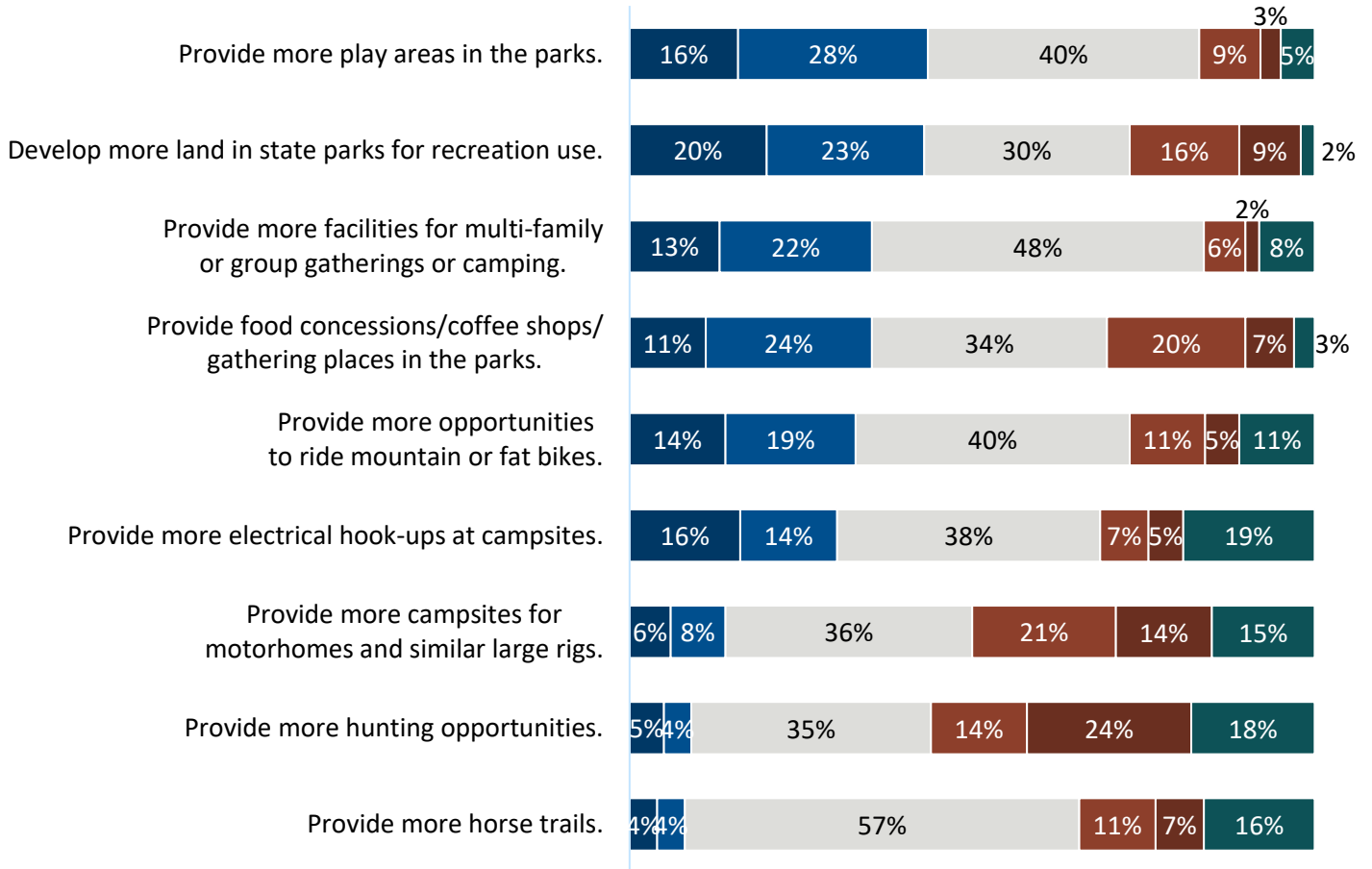
Figure 40: Level of support for potential park changes



Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure 40: Level of support for potential park changes (continued)

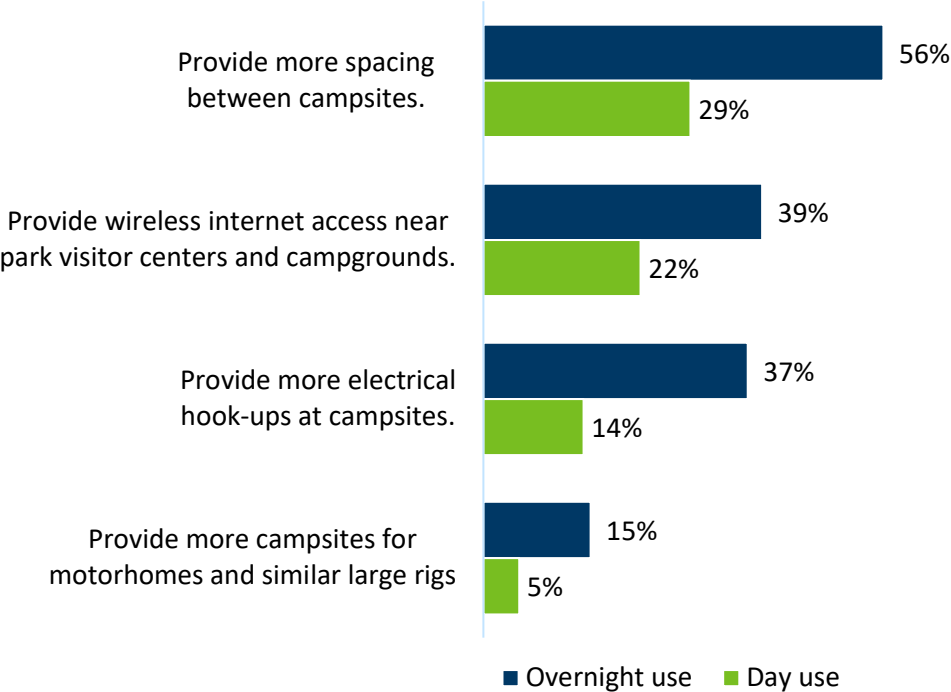
■ Strongly support
 ■ Mildly support
 ■ Neither oppose nor support
 ■ Mildly oppose
 ■ Strongly oppose
 ■ Don't know



Note. Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%. Part 2 survey respondents only.

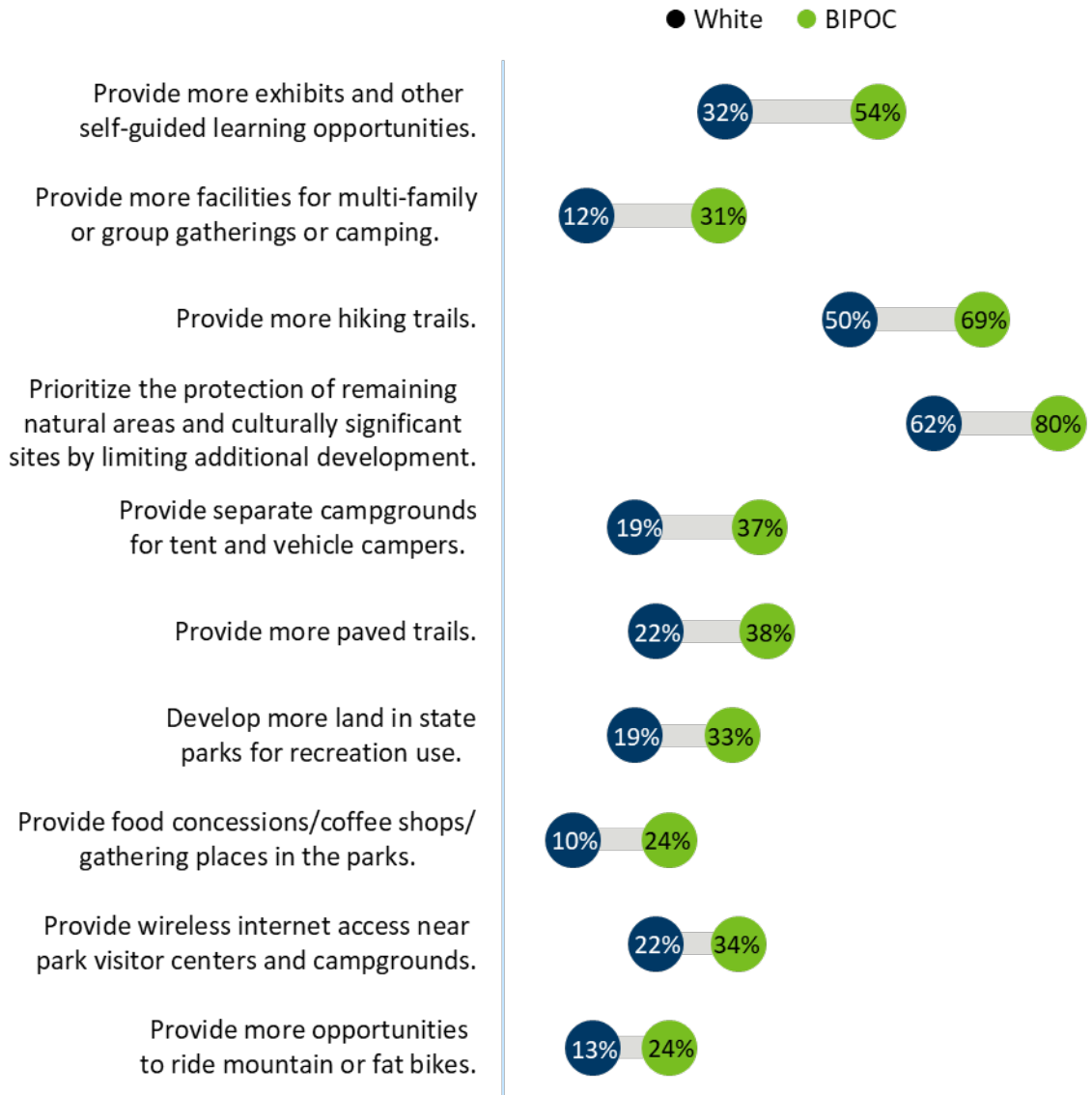
Compared to day-use visitors, overnight visitors were more likely to “strongly support” potential park changes. Not surprisingly, the changes associated with camping, like providing more campsites for motorhomes and larger rigs, had much greater support from overnight users (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Key differences in strongly supported changes by day and overnight visitor



Demographic differences: In general, BIPOC visitors tend to more strongly support changes to state parks compared to White visitors (Figure 42).

Figure 42: Key differences in strongly supported changes by race/ethnicity



Note. This table only includes differences of 10 percentage points or more. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Support for the potential changes varied greatly across age groups. While there was overall general support for the *prioritization of the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development* regardless of age, support for this change was most common among the younger visitors (under 24) of whom nine in 10 supported this change. This age group was also least supportive of *developing more land in state parks for recreation use*, which was supported by a larger majority of the older visitors (55+). See [Appendix B47](#) for more detail on level of support by age.

For eight potential changes, visitors in the lowest (<\$50,000) and highest (\$150,000+) income categories differed in their levels of support. See [Appendix B48](#) for more detail on level of support by income.

BIPOC, low income, and older visitors (55+) expressed higher levels of support for *providing wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds* than visitors in the other demographic categories.

Differences by region: For nine of the 19 potential changes, northwest region visitors indicated a higher level of support than visitors of parks in other regions. The largest difference between regions was the higher support from the northwest region compared to the central region about providing more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes. See [Appendix B49](#) for more detail on level of support by region.

Differences by investment groups: Due to the nature of park designs differing based on investment group, it is to be expected that there would be different levels of support for potential changes across those different types of parks. Visitors to Core/Gateway parks were most strongly supportive of nine potential changes. Visitors to Core/Adventure parks were least supportive of 14 out of the 19 potential changes, compared to visitors of other types of parks. See [Appendix B50](#) for more detail on level of support by investment group.

When asked an open-ended question about **one thing that could be changed** about the parks to better meet their needs, respondents' suggestions were fairly evenly distributed across several themes.³ The most common theme, mentioned by 12% of respondents, referred to **improvements related to trails**, primarily: 1) more or better signage/maps for trails (4%), 2) better trail maintenance/condition (2%), and 3) more and/or longer trails, including those specifically for bikes (1%).

Better hiking trail signs. More signs to show where I am. – Carley State Park visitor

Muddy spots on some trails. Could have better drainage or maintenance. – Tettegouche State Park visitor

More trails, paved and unpaved (variety!). – Lake Bronson State Park visitor

³ The percentages reported in this section are based on the respondents who answered this question (N=1,472); 29% of respondents did not provide an answer.

Many other respondents shared suggestions to improve **campgrounds and the camping experience** (11%). The most common suggestions in this category were to: 1) add more of a certain type of campsite or lodging (5%), which included suggestions to add more electric/modern campsites including RV camping (2%), camper cabins or yurts (1%), or rustic/primitive campsites (1%); 2) Change the campground layout (3%), including spacing between campsites and campsite size; and 3) comments about campground policies/rules and their enforcement (2%).

Bigger sites and more sites with electricity. – Split Rock Lighthouse State Park visitor

More cabins, electric outlets near tents. – Myre-Big Island State Park visitor

Having the campgrounds more spaced out so you aren't all up in somebody's business. It sometimes gets to be too much and there is no privacy. – Old Mill State Park visitor

Have check-out time for camping at three and check-in at four. – Frontenac State Park visitor

Enforcing the rules of the campground so it doesn't get ruined. – Sibley State Park visitor

Another common theme related to the **overall availability of campsites and the parks' reservation system/policies** that respondents found challenging (10%). These respondents suggested a range of improvements to the reservation system and associated policies (6%), including the user interface, the reservation window (i.e., how far in advance one can reserve a campsite), and general comments that the reservation system should be improved. While some respondents requested a longer reservation window, others noted that it's difficult to plan far enough in advance to book a campsite when the four-month reservation window opens. Proposing a potential solution to the latter concern, a number of respondents asked for first-come, first-served or no-reservation campsite options (3%). Others asked for increased campsite availability overall (2%).

The DNR reduced the reservation window for camping and lodging from 365 to 120 days in the summer of 2020. At the most popular parks, however, the campgrounds fill up quickly, requiring customers to make reservations in advance. The DNR will continue to evaluate visitor feedback and consider reservation policies that promote fairness and equitable access.

Camping reservation site is hard to navigate. – Jay Cooke State Park visitor

Would love to have first-come, first-served camping. The reservation system does not work. It's too hard. – Fort Snelling State Park visitor

The reservation system, return to one-year reservation booking, or a minimum six months. If you keep the 120 day, make it painful for the people who book 15 days and reschedule to get the weekend they want. For people who make a 15 day reservation, charge them \$100 to change reservation. – St. Croix State Park visitor

More campsites—we often don't know our work schedules far enough in advance to snag a site before they fill up. The reservation system seems geared toward white-collar workers. – Whitewater State Park visitor

Reservation system, it's hard to book sites. Booking online is helpful, but need some first-come, first-served. Sites are booked but people don't show up, they need to be open for others if they arrive. [I] liked past reservation system better, especially for sites on the north shore. – Charles A. Lindbergh State Park visitor

Many visitors also made comments about **improving park information** (9%), specifically to: 1) provide better, more or updated signage (4%), 2) provide better or more maps (e.g., more detailed and larger maps/routes on mobile apps; 3%), and 3) improve the website (2%).

Make it more education[al]. There are signs, but more signs. Signs talking about different things, like history, land acknowledgements to natives, natural/invasive species, how growing human civilization has negatively affected this park, climate change, more naturalists around educating. – Banning State Park visitor

Online maps made available on apps such as Avenza. – William O'Brien State Park visitor

Website could provide better information about park amenities. Maps can be hard to find too. – Blue Mounds State Park visitor

More funding. Website needs updates. Photos of the campsites don't enlarge or aren't updated. – Lake Shetek State Park visitor

I wish the website had more in-depth pictures of the park. They're all kind of vague or not very descriptive. For people like us who aren't from here it's hard to decide if it is worth it because of the picture quality. – Big Bog State Recreation Area visitor

Visitors also mentioned changes to **restroom facilities** to better serve visitors' needs (9%). Most notably visitors saw the need for: 1) more restrooms (including portable toilets and pit toilets, 3%); 2) better restrooms in general (2%); and 3) cleaner and better-maintained restroom facilities (2%).

Would like more bathrooms, especially more accessible restrooms. – Interstate State Park visitor

Nicer bathrooms at some sites. Like the ones at St. Croix [and] Sakatah Lake, the new ones with private spaces. – Forestville Mystery Cave State Park visitor

Would like to see bathroom and shower buildings modernized. – Big Bog State Park visitor

I appreciate when the bathrooms are open and maintained, somewhere to wash hands. – Frontenac State Park visitor

Finally, 16% of respondents indicated that there was nothing they would change or offered a note of appreciation about the parks.

Economic impact assessment

An economic impact assessment (EIA) component was included in this year's study. The EIA aims to quantify the spending that occurs as a result of each visitor's trip to a state park, and then uses existing economic data and modeling software to estimate the additional economic impact of that spending as it circulates throughout the local economy. The economic impact of Minnesota state parks has been quantified in three prior studies conducted in 1985, 2001 and 2012. To make it possible to assess trends and changes over time, the methodology of this study and presentation of the results closely mirrors those of the 2012 EIA. Any departures from the methods or definitions of the 2012 study are noted in the text.

Additional methodological details are included in [Appendix C](#).

Results

Minnesotans and visiting tourists make millions of visits to Minnesota state parks every year. In the process, park visitors' spending on food, transportation, lodging, souvenirs and entertainment provides an ongoing source of revenue for local economies near state parks throughout the state. In an effort to quantify the magnitude of this economic impact, the 2022 state parks survey asked visitors a series of questions about their expenditures during their trips to state parks. Their responses were compiled and paired with annual state parks attendance data to produce aggregate estimates of these expenditures for the state (overall) and its four regions.

Although the aggregate estimates of park visitors' expenditures are impressively large on their own, the economic impact of Minnesota state parks extends beyond these direct expenditures, as the funds provide support for local businesses who then provide revenue to their suppliers and employees. When the suppliers and employees spend those funds, they build on the countless economic ripple effects that help sustain thriving local economies near many state parks. In this EIA, we use input-output economic modeling software (IMPLAN) to quantify the ripple effects of the hundreds of millions of dollars that park visitors spend during their trips to Minnesota state parks every year.

Visitors to Minnesota state parks spend an average of about \$67 per person per day during their trips to state parks.

- Overnight visitors spend \$71 per person per day,
- Day-use visitors (traveling from home) spend \$37 per person per day, and
- Day-use visitors on overnight trips spend \$124 per person per day.

Visitor spending adds up to over \$688 million per year in economic activity around state parks across Minnesota.

In this section, we summarize the various types of expenditures and the different groups of park visitors who are responsible for them. The aggregate expenditures then serve as the "inputs" in the IMPLAN input-output model, which we use to provide a more complete picture of the magnitude of the economic impact of the Minnesota state park system on statewide and regional economies.

Spending profiles of park visitors

After removing incomplete and outlier survey responses (see [Appendix C](#), EIA methods section), spending profiles were developed based on responses from 516 park visitors. Figures 43-45 present detailed spending profiles of three groups of park visitors:

- Overnight visitors (staying overnight in a park campground or other park lodging),
- Day-use visitors who are on overnight trips away from home but not staying at the park, and
- Day-use visitors who are on day trips from home (not staying overnight).

The figures show the mean expenditure amounts for each of 10 spending categories, including food, fuel, lodging and entertainment, among others. Park visitors' spending is further disaggregated into trip-related expenses incurred while preparing for the trip prior to leaving home ("At-home spending") and expenses incurred while traveling to/around the park ("Away from home spending"). This distinction becomes relevant when we examine regional economic impacts and the flows of dollars across regions.

Visitors' expenditures extend across several industries, including hospitality (lodging and restaurants), gas stations, retail and entertainment. Visitors on day trips from home spent an average of about \$37 per person, about two-thirds of which was spent on gasoline and food (Figure 43).

The largest total expenditures were among day-use visitors on overnight trips, who spent an average of \$124 per person per day (Figure 44). Many in this group reported expenditures for lodging in the private sector (rental homes, hotels or private campgrounds), a type of expense that is not applicable for the other two visitor groups. This group also tended to spend more than the other two groups on most of the expenditure categories, though overnight park visitors spent more on park fees, other payments to public agencies, and on renting or purchasing recreational equipment.

Overnight park visitors spent about \$71 per person per day overall (Figure 45). Their largest expenditure categories were park fees/other payments to public agencies, gasoline and groceries.

Figure 43: Spending profile of day-use visitors traveling from home (mean \$ per person per day)

Expense	Away-from-home spending	At-home spending ^a	Total spending
Overnight accommodations in the private sector	\$0	\$0	\$0
Restaurants	\$6.54	\$0.88	\$7.42
Groceries	\$3.74	\$1.19	\$4.93
Gasoline and other fuels	\$9.88	\$2.35	\$12.23
Other transportation-related expenses	\$0.27	\$0	\$0.27
Shopping (clothes, souvenirs, gifts, etc.)	\$2.39	\$0.28	\$2.66
Recreational equipment, purchased or rented	\$0.73	\$0.64	\$1.38
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$0.41	\$0.05	\$0.46
All other trip-related spending	\$0.15	\$0.07	\$0.22
Subtotal (excluding payments to public agencies)	\$24.11	\$5.47	\$29.57
Payments to state parks and other public agencies (park fees, licenses, etc.)	\$6.74	\$0.83	\$7.57
Total (mean per person per day)	\$30.85	\$6.30	\$37.15

^a Expenditures of out-of-state tourists are not included in at-home spending estimates because those funds were spent outside Minnesota and do not directly contribute to the state or regional economies. Their spending values were entered as zeros for the purpose of calculating the at-home expenditure mean, to ensure the use of the same denominators within each combination of visitor group and spending category.

Figure 44: Spending profile of day-use visitors on overnight trips away from home (mean \$ per person per day)

Expense	Away-from-home spending	At-home spending^a	Total spending
Overnight accommodations in the private sector	\$21.56	\$2.12	\$23.68
Restaurants	\$24.30	\$1.60	\$25.91
Groceries	\$11.03	\$5.79	\$16.82
Gasoline and other fuels	\$26.67	\$2.79	\$29.46
Other transportation-related expenses	\$0.75	\$0.15	\$0.90
Shopping (clothes, souvenirs, gifts, etc.)	\$11.56	\$0.15	\$11.71
Recreational equipment, purchased or rented	\$3.15	\$0.99	\$4.14
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$1.92	\$0	\$1.92
All other trip-related spending	\$0.47	\$0.07	\$0.53
Subtotal (excluding payments to public agencies)	\$101.40	\$13.66	\$115.06
Payments to state parks and other public agencies (park fees, licenses, etc.)	\$8.43	\$0.98	\$9.41
Total (mean per person per day)	\$109.83	\$14.64	\$124.47

^a Expenditures of out-of-state tourists are not included in at-home spending estimates because those funds were spent outside Minnesota and do not directly contribute to the state or regional economies. Their spending values were entered as zeros for the purpose of calculating the at-home expenditure mean, to ensure the use of the same denominators within each combination of visitor group and spending category.

Figure 45: Spending profile of overnight visitors (mean \$ per person per day)

Expense	Away-from-home spending	At-home spending^a	Total spending
Overnight accommodations in the private sector	-	-	-
Restaurants	\$7.52	\$0.69	\$8.21
Groceries	\$8.37	\$5.53	\$13.90
Gasoline and other fuels	\$14.57	\$3.83	\$18.40
Other transportation-related expenses	\$1.09	\$0.56	\$1.65
Shopping (clothes, souvenirs, gifts, etc.)	\$3.93	\$0.12	\$4.05
Recreational equipment, purchased or rented	\$2.64	\$3.04	\$5.68
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$1.14	\$0.07	\$1.21
All other trip-related spending	\$0.15	\$0.12	\$0.27
Subtotal (excluding payments to public agencies)	\$39.41	\$13.97	\$53.38
Payments to state parks and other public agencies (park fees, licenses, etc.)	\$14.40	\$2.78	\$17.18
Total (mean per person per day)	\$53.81	\$16.75	\$70.56

^a Expenditures of out-of-state tourists are not included in at-home spending estimates because those funds were spent outside Minnesota and do not directly contribute to the state or regional economies. Their spending values were entered as zeros for the purpose of calculating the at-home expenditure mean, to ensure the use of the same denominators within each combination of visitor group and spending category.

Figure 46 presents a comparison of inflation-adjusted expenditure values by visitor group over time. Since 2012, park visitor spending has grown substantially across all visitor groups. Among visitors on day trips from home, expenditures have doubled in the last decade. Large increases in spending have occurred among the overnight visitor groups as well. In contrast, among overnight visitors and visitors on day trips from home, inflation-adjusted expenditures had generally held steady between 1985 and 2012.

Across all visitor groups, the average expenditure per person per day (weighted by each group’s share of visitation totals) has grown from \$41 in 2012 to \$67 in 2022. A portion of this increase may reflect unique aspects of the 2022 economy and the impact of improved technology on our ability to capture consumer spending in survey research; these explanations do not preclude the possibility that these results represent a substantial and sustained increase in spending by state park visitors.⁴

Figure 46: Comparison of 1985, 2002, 2012, and 2022 trip spending by visitor group (mean \$ per person per day)

Visitor group	1985	2001	2012	2022
Day-use visitor (from home)	\$20.38	\$23.74	\$17.65	\$37.15
Day-use visitor on overnight trip away from home	\$69.84	\$65.67	\$80.05	\$124.47
All day-use visitors ^a	\$41.18	\$41.36	\$39.78	\$66.63
Overnight visitor	\$51.36	\$47.64	\$51.79	\$70.56
All visitors ^a	\$42.29	\$42.05	\$41.11	\$67.03

All past expenditure estimates have been inflated to 2022 dollars (mean CPI for January-October 2022) using the CPI from Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/consumer-price-index-and-annual-percent-changes-from-1913-to-2008/>)

^a These combined figures are weighted by the estimated visitation size of a segment for a given study year.

⁴ This observed increase in spending may be attributable to a number of factors, of which two are discussed here. First, it is likely that modern technology and the methodological changes in 2022 resulted in a greater share of trip expenses being captured in the 2022 results, compared to past years. In the economy overall, the share of spending that is charged to credit cards has increased markedly, and consumers’ ability to view their expenditures via credit card companies’ websites and apps has made it easier for a consumer to view their recent spending. This surely improved the comprehensiveness of reported expenditures on average, compared to past surveys where a larger share of respondents would have completed the survey based on the spending they could recall. Therefore, the increase in spending may not have been as large as it appears; rather, modern technology has reduced the degree to which expenditures are underreported, compared to past surveys.

A second factor which could explain why spending may have increased between 2012 and 2022: the timing of 2022 data collection, relative to the global health crisis of COVID-19. According to a [2023 Forbes article](#), the outdoor recreation industry had been growing rapidly even before the pandemic began, but that growth accelerated during the pandemic. Furthermore, by the summer of 2022, many consumers had been limiting their travel for more than two years. This might have led to larger-than-usual vacation budgets in 2022, in which case the increase in spending may not fully persist over time. Future studies will likely offer additional insights into the durability of these patterns in the coming years.

Visitor days count each day that a person spends at any state park during the year. For example:

1 person visits a state park for 2 hours = 1 visitor day

3 people camp at a state park for 2 days = 6 visitor days

Cumulatively, park visitors spend about **11.9 million days** in Minnesota state parks annually, and they directly spend an estimated **\$688 million per year** during their visits to state parks (not including amounts directly paid to parks or other public agencies; Figure 47). Approximately 90% of days spent at Minnesota state parks are day-use visits to the park, and coincidentally, these day-use visitors contribute to about 90% of park visitors' total spending. One-third of these day-use visits are during overnight trips away from home, by visitors staying somewhere outside the park (3.6 million days), while the other two-thirds (7.1 million days) are on day trips from home. Although the day-use visitors on overnight trips comprise only one-third of day-use visitor days, they do about two-thirds of the day-use visitor spending, totaling almost \$414 million annually.

The remaining 10% of visitor days and expenditures are by overnight visitors staying in state parks. They spend 1.2 million days in the parks per year and contribute \$65 million in annual spending.

Figure 47: Distribution of spending and park use by visitor group

Visitor group	Park use (1000s of visitor days)	% of park use	Aggregate spending (per year, \$millions)	% of spending
Day-use visitor (from home)	7,100	59%	\$209	30%
Day-use visitor on overnight trip away from home	3,600	30%	\$414	60%
All day-use visitors ^a	10,700	90%	\$623	90%
Overnight visitor	1,200	10%	\$65	9%
Total ^a	11,900	100%	\$688	100%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. These expenditures exclude payments to state parks and other public agencies, but they include all other at-home and away-from-home spending by Minnesota residents, in addition to away-from-home spending by nonresidents.

^a These combined figures are weighted by the estimated visitation size of a segment for a given study year.

Residents of the central region of the state were responsible for the majority of state park visitor days (61%) and visitor expenditures (63%; Figure 48), which is not surprising given that the Twin Cities metro area is home to the majority of Minnesota residents.

Tourists from outside Minnesota are responsible for 15% of visitor days at Minnesota state parks, and they contribute 21% of park-related spending.

Figure 48: Distribution of spending and park use by visitors’ home region

Region of origin (visitor’s home region)	Park use (1000s of visitor days)	% of park use	Aggregate spending (per year, \$millions)	% of spending	Share of MN population that resides in region
Visitors from central region	7,300	61%	\$433	63%	72%
Visitors from northeast region	1,000	9%	\$35	5%	7%
Visitors from northwest region	700	6%	\$33	5%	8%
Visitors from southern region	1,200	10%	\$40	6%	12%
Visitors from outside Minnesota	1,700	15%	\$147	21%	N/A
Total	11,900	100%	\$688	100%	100%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Regional spending patterns and flows of tourism dollars

Figure 49 presents the aggregate spending by all visitor groups statewide, and also breaks down the spending by the region where the spending took place.

Among the four regions, park visitor spending in the northeast region (totaling \$377 million) far exceeded spending by visitors of the other three regions’ parks *combined* (\$311 million). The northeast region also hosts the largest share of park visitors (4.6 million visitor days per year, which is 39% of statewide park use), though park visitors’ spending in the region is still disproportionately high compared to their share of park visitation.

Figure 49 also disaggregates statewide and regional spending into tourists and local visitors, an important distinction as we move toward an examination of how state park visitors facilitate the flow of funds across the different regions of the state, and from other states into Minnesota. Of the \$688 million spent by state park visitors in a year, Minnesota residents spend about \$541 million, while non-resident tourists spend \$147 million.

While all Minnesota residents are considered “local visitors” in the statewide analysis, for the regional analysis, a local visitor is defined as a park visitor who resides in the same region as the park they’re visiting. In three of the four regions, tourist spending greatly exceeds spending by local residents. The difference is particularly stark in the

northeast region, where \$352 million of the \$377 million in annual park-related spending (more than 93%) comes from tourists. The southern and northwest regions also get 65% or more of their park-related spending from tourists visiting from other regions or from outside Minnesota. The central region (which contains the Twin Cities metro area) is the exception to this pattern; almost 90% of their \$166 million in annual park-related spending comes from local visitors.

Figure 49: Aggregate annual trip spending of Minnesota state park visitors by region in which spending occurred

Location of spending	Spending by local visitors (\$millions) ^a	At-home spending by departing locals (\$millions) ^b	Spending by tourists (\$millions) ^c	Total spending in region (\$millions)	Park use (1000s of visitor days)
Statewide	\$541	N/A	\$147	\$688	11,900
Central region	\$82	\$66	\$18	\$100	3,200
Northeast region	\$25	\$0.3	\$352	\$377	4,700
Northwest region	\$16	\$0.2	\$60	\$76	1,900
Southern region	\$18	\$7	\$45	\$62	2,200

Note. Local visitors live in the region of the park they visited; tourists live outside the region of the park they visited. All Minnesotans are "local visitors" at the statewide scale; only non-Minnesotans are tourists at the statewide scale.

^a Spending by local visitors includes both at-home and away-from-home spending, as both types of spending occurred in the same region.

^b At-home spending by departing locals refers to the spending by a region's residents in preparation for a trip to a park in another region. They are referred to as "locals" because their spending is assumed to have occurred in the resident's home region. This category of spending was excluded from the 2012 analysis.

^c Away-from-home spending by tourists is assumed to have occurred in the region where the park is located.

^d The analysis excludes all at-home spending by visitors who do not reside in Minnesota.

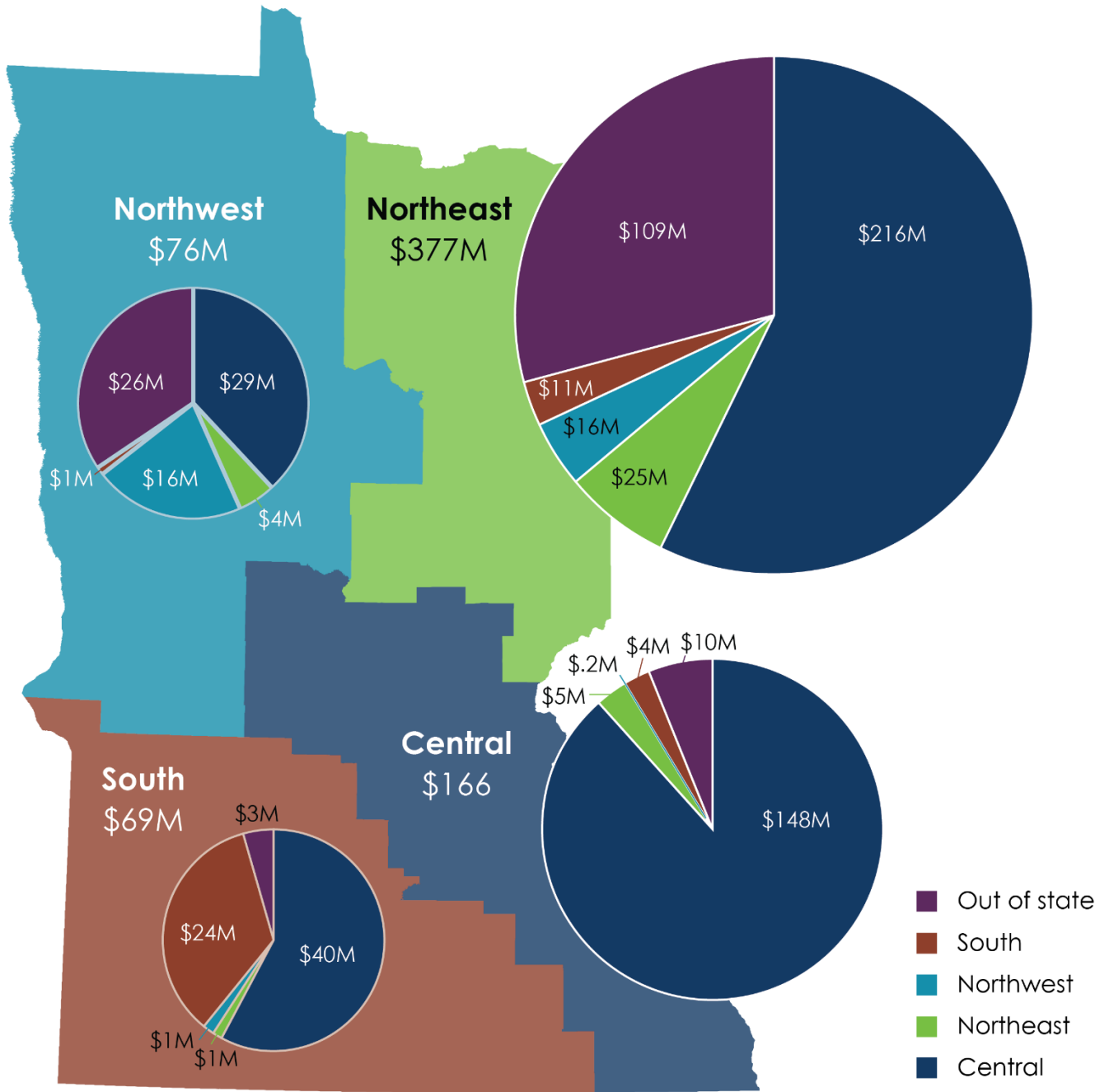
The movement of tourism dollars among Minnesota regions is further illustrated in Figure 50. For each region of the state, visitors' spending is shown in a pie chart, the size of which is roughly proportional to how much is spent by visitors to that region's parks. Within each pie chart, the regional origin of the spending is broken down. For example, visitors to the northeast region's parks spend approximately \$377 million per year, including \$216 million spent by visitors from the central region and \$109 million spent by visitors from outside Minnesota.

The central region is the top contributor of spending to each of the regions; central region residents spend \$40 million per year while visiting parks in the southern region, \$29 million per year in the northwest region, and \$148 million per year in their home (central) region.

Visitors from outside Minnesota are also responsible for large shares of spending across the state. In addition to the \$109 million that out-of-state visitors spend while visiting parks in the northeast region each year, they also spend \$26 million per year visiting parks in the northwest region and \$10 million per year around parks in the central region of the state.

Across Minnesota's four regions, out-of-state tourists spend a total of **\$147 million per year** while visiting Minnesota state parks.

Figure 50: Park visitor spending in each region, by region of visitor origin



Note. In each region, the spending by the region’s residents is a combination of two values: the spending (both at-home and away-from-home spending) by locals who are on trips to parks within their home region, and the at-home spending by locals who then traveled to parks in other regions. Due to rounding, components may not sum to the totals shown.

Input-output analysis

When park visitors spend money on food, transportation, lodging, souvenirs, and more during, and leading up to, their trip to state parks, each of those expenditures sets off a chain reaction. This creates demand for all of the little things that support those products and services: dishes for restaurants, gasoline pumps for gas stations, towels and sheets for hotels, and so on. Those tourism expenditures also support jobs for things like restaurant servers, gas station cashiers, and hotel cleaning staff, and those staff use their paychecks to pay for local housing, groceries, transportation, and countless other goods and services. All of these effects are part of what is called a “multiplier effect,” where a purchase has a ripple effect throughout the local economy, generating more economic value than indicated by the original purchase price.

Considering all direct, indirect and induced impacts, every year state park visitors:

- Generate over \$700 million of economic output, and
- Support over 5,100 jobs.

Note: These figures do not include the money they spend at the parks, or the state park jobs that they support.

Economists often quantify this effect using an economic modeling tool called input-output analysis. The input-output results for this analysis were computed using IMPLAN, an input-output modeling program that uses 90+ data sources to effectively follow each dollar through the local economy, adding up the additional economic activity that those dollars generate.

The results of the input-output analysis include three key indicators to measure economic impacts: output, value added and the number of jobs. *Output* refers to the value of the production of goods and services purchased by park visitors (gross revenue, or the total of purchase prices). Total output is the sum of three types of output: direct, indirect and induced.⁵ For simplicity’s sake, Figure 51 combines these three levels of effects. Unless noted otherwise, the measures of economic activity discussed here all include direct, indirect and induced effects. State park visitors’ spending activity results in a total of over \$700 million of economic output annually.

Value added is another economic measure reported in input-output results and is a subset of economic output. While output can be considered a measure of the amount of money that changes hands in the course of different types of economic activity, output does not necessarily represent the amount of *production* that occurs in a given

⁵ To understand the meaning of these three types of output, consider the following example: when a park visitor stops for ice cream at an ice cream shop near the park, the visitor’s payment for the ice cream cone is direct output. When the ice cream shop owner purchases their supply of ice cream and pays their staff, that spending is considered indirect output. Finally, when the ice cream shop employee uses their paycheck to buy a pair of pants, that’s induced output. The three types of output all result from the park visitor’s decision to stop for an ice cream cone. These direct and indirect effects of consumer spending represent the “multiplier” effect and are the foundation of input-output models.

period (because many businesses hold inventory, which creates a gap between output and production). Value added is the measure generally used by economists to represent production, i.e., economic activity that generates something of value, whether that refers to the creation of goods or the provisions of services.⁶ State park visitors' spending results in \$387 million in value added per year.

Finally, the number of *jobs* is a more tangible measure of economic impacts included in the input-output model, referring to the number of full- and part-time jobs supported by the economic activity. Park visitors' economic activities support a total of 5,100 full- and part-time jobs, not including the jobs at the state parks themselves.

The economic impacts of state park visitors extend to every corner of the local economy, to 480 different industries, with total output impacts ranging from over \$166 million for the restaurant industry, to \$2.9 million for accounting and bookkeeping, to \$26,400 for boat building, all the way down to \$0.63 for optical instrument and lens manufacturing.

Figure 51: Estimated economic impacts of spending by state park visitors (input-output analysis)

Visitor type	Trip spending (\$millions)	Output (business sales, \$millions)	Value added (\$millions)	Employment (full- and part-time jobs)
Local visitors	\$541	\$552	\$300	4,000
Tourists ^a	\$147	\$155	\$87	1,200
All visitors	\$688	\$707	\$387	5,200

^a At-home expenditures of out-of-state tourists are not included in these estimates because those funds were spent outside Minnesota and do not directly contribute to the state or regional economies.

Regional profiles

The remainder of this section reviews the region-specific profiles of visitors and spending, including the results of the input-output analysis for each region.

Central region

Figure 52 summarizes the profile of park visitors and trip-related spending in the central region. Visitors to parks in the central region spend approximately \$100 million per year, in addition to \$66 million that is spent by central region residents at home in preparation for their trips to other regions' parks, for a total of \$166 million in park-related spending in the central region each year.

⁶ Value added is a subset of output and is the same concept that is measured by major economic production indicators like GDP. Taxes and labor income, which includes payments to employees as well as proprietor income, are included in value added.

Visitors spend about 3.2 million visitor-days at parks in the central region every year. Almost nine in 10 (88%) of these visitor-days are spent by residents of the central region, and 84% of visitor-days are day trips from home. These day trips account for nearly two-thirds (63%) of the spending that occurs on trips to parks in the central region, while day-use visitors on overnight trips account for one-quarter (25%) of spending on trips to central region parks. Overnight visitors make up a relatively small share of central region parks' visitor-days (8%), and a slightly larger share of the spending (12%) that occurs on trips to these parks.

Figure 52: Profile of park visitors and trip-related spending in central region

Visitor profile	Trip spending (\$millions)	% of region's trip spending	Visitor-days (1000s)	% of region's visitor-days
Visitor group:				
Day-use visitor (from home)	\$63	63%	2,700	84%
Day-use visitor on overnight trip away from home	\$25	25%	300	8%
All day-use visitors	\$88	88%	3,000	92%
Overnight visitor	\$12	12%	300	8%
Home region of visitors to central region parks:				
Central	\$82	82%	2,800	88%
Northeast	\$5	5%	100	4%
Northwest	\$0.2	<1%	10	<1%
Southern	\$4	4%	100	3%
Outside Minnesota	\$10	10%	200	5%
Central region residents' at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions	\$66	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	\$166	100%	3,200	100%

Note. Spending percentages refer to the percentages of spending by visitors to the region's parks, i.e., their denominator is the total spending minus the at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions. Due to rounding, components may not sum to the totals shown.

The \$166 million in park-related spending in the central region results in a total of \$243 million in annual economic output as it reverberates throughout the local economy, and it generates \$132 million in value added annually. This economic activity supports 1,300 jobs in the central region, not including the jobs at the state parks (Figure 53).

Figure 53: Estimated economic impacts of spending by state park visitors (input-output analysis), central region

Trip spending (\$millions)	Output (business sales, \$millions)	Value added (\$millions)	Employment (full- and part-time jobs)
\$166	\$243	\$132	1,300

Northeast region

State parks in the northeast region see 4.6 million visitor-days each year, which result in \$377 million in spending by visitors to the region’s parks (Figure 54). Most of the northeast region’s visitors (63% of visitor-days) and spending (57%) originate in the central region, while 17% of visitor-days and 29% of spending come from visitors from outside the state.

Three-quarters (77%) of park-related spending in the northeast region is spent by day-use visitors on overnight trips away from home, totaling \$291 million per year. This group also occupies 55% of the region’s visitor-days (a higher share than any other region), while day-use visitors from home only occupy about one-third (36%) of visitor-days and 18% of trip spending in the northeast region. Overnight visitors to state parks in the northeast are responsible for only 5% of the region’s park-related spending and 9% of visitor-days.

Figure 54: Profile of park visitors and trip-related spending in northeast region

Visitor profile	Trip spending (\$millions)	% of region’s trip spending	Visitor-days (1000s)	% of region’s visitor-days
Visitor group				
Day-use visitor (from home)	\$66	18%	1,700	36%
Day-use visitor on overnight trip away from home	\$291	77%	2,600	55%
All day-use visitors	\$358	95%	4,300	91%
Overnight visitor	\$19	5%	400	9%
Home region of visitors to northeast region parks				
Central	\$216	57%	3,000	63%
Northeast	\$25	7%	800	17%
Northwest	\$16	4%	100	2%

Visitor profile	Trip spending (\$millions)	% of region's trip spending	Visitor-days (1000s)	% of region's visitor-days
Southern	\$11	3%	100	2%
Outside Minnesota	\$109	29%	800	17%
<i>Northeast region residents' at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions</i>	\$0.3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	\$377	100%	4,600	100%

Note. Spending percentages refer to the percentages of spending by visitors to the region's parks, i.e., their denominator is the total spending minus the at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions. Due to rounding, components may not sum to the totals shown.

Trip spending by visitors to parks in the northeast region is responsible for \$352 million in annual economic output, including \$198 million in value added.⁷ Nearly 2,900 full- and part-time jobs are supported by the economic activity that state parks bring to the region, not including the jobs at the parks themselves (Figure 55).

Figure 55: Estimated economic impacts of spending by state park visitors (input-output analysis), northeast region

Trip spending (\$millions)	Output (business sales, \$millions)	Value added (\$millions)	Employment (full- and part-time jobs)
\$377	\$352	\$198	2,900

Northwest region

Visitors of state parks in the northwest region spend about 1.9 million visitor-days in the region's parks and spend about \$76 million in the region every year. A great majority of the visitor-days at parks in the northwest region are spent by visitors on day trips (83%), as is the case for the other regions, but northwest park visitors spend a greater share of their visitor-days (17%) and trip spending (21%) on overnight trips at the parks, compared to visitors of parks in other regions.

⁷ The value of the total economic output is less than the total trip spending for three of the four regions as a result of a number of economic factors, most notably the concept of "leakage." Leakage occurs when the economic impacts of a purchase are not fully realized within the region where the purchase took place, which frequently happens when goods and services are sourced from outside the region. For example, when a tourist purchases gasoline from a gas station, a portion of the expenditure continues into the local economy via payroll and purchases, but a larger portion is paid to the supplier of the gasoline, which ultimately comes from outside the region and outside the state. That value is lost to the local economy. Leakage like this is a key reason for trip spending values that exceed the resulting economic output.

More than one-third of visitor-days (34%) and spending (37%) in northwest parks are spent by visitors from outside Minnesota. Visitors from the central region also occupy nearly one-third of visitor-days (Figure 56).

Figure 56: Profile of park visitors and trip-related spending in northwest region

Visitor profile	Trip spending (\$millions)	% of region's trip spending	Visitor-days (1000s)	% of region's visitor-days
Visitor group				
Day-use visitor (from home)	\$30	39%	1,200	67%
Day-use visitor on overnight trip away from home	\$30	39%	300	17%
All day-use visitors	\$60	79%	1,500	83%
Overnight visitor	\$16	21%	300	17%
Home region of visitors to northwest region parks				
Central	\$29	38%	600	32%
Northeast	\$4	5%	100	5%
Northwest	\$16	21%	500	26%
Southern	\$1	1%	20	1%
Outside Minnesota	\$26	34%	700	37%
Northwest region residents' at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions	\$0.2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	\$76	100%	1,900	100%

Note. Spending percentages refer to the percentages of spending by visitors to the region's parks, i.e., their denominator is the total spending minus the at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions. Due to rounding, components may not sum to the totals shown.

Park-related spending in the northwest region generates \$60 million in economic output in the region each year, including \$31 million in value added. This economic activity supports 500 full- and part-time jobs in the region, not including the jobs at the state parks (Figure 57).

Figure 57: Estimated economic impacts of spending by state park visitors (input-output analysis), northwest region

Trip spending (\$millions)	Output (business sales, \$millions)	Value added (\$millions)	Employment (full- and part-time jobs)
\$76	\$60	\$31	500

Southern region

Park visitors spend about \$62 million per year in the southern region, including about \$55 million spent by visitors to state parks in the southern region and \$7 million spent by residents of the southern region in preparation for their trips to state parks in other regions of the state. Seven in 10 visitor-days at parks in the southern region are day trips (of visitors traveling from home), which are responsible for half of park-related spending in the southern region. Two in 10 visitor-days (19%) are day trips by visitors staying overnight somewhere other than the park, fueling 40% of the southern region’s park-related spending.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the park-related spending in the southern region originates in the central region, as do half of visitor-days (49%). Most of the remaining spending (29%) and visitor-days (42%) originate in the southern region (Figure 58).

Figure 58: Profile of park visitors and trip-related spending in southern region

Visitor profile	Trip spending (\$millions)	% of region’s trip spending	Visitor-days (1000s)	% of region’s visitor-days
Visitor group				
Day-use visitor (from home)	\$31	50%	1,500	70%
Day-use visitor on overnight trip away from home	\$25	40%	400	19%
All day-use visitors	\$56	90%	1,900	89%
Overnight visitor	\$7	11%	200	11%
Home region of visitors to southern region parks				
Central	\$40	65%	1,100	49%
Northeast	\$1	2%	30	1%
Northwest	\$1	2%	40	2%
Southern	\$18	29%	910	42%
Outside Minnesota	\$3	5%	100	5%
Southern region residents’ at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions	\$7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	\$62	100%	2,200	100%

Note. Spending percentages refer to the percentages of spending by visitors to the region’s parks, i.e., their denominator is the total spending minus the at-home spending for trips to parks in other regions. Due to rounding, components may not sum to the totals shown.

Park-related spending generates \$49 million in annual economic output in the southern region, including \$25 million in value added. This economic activity supports 400 full- and part-time jobs in the region, not including the jobs at the state parks (Figure 59).

Figure 59: Estimated economic impacts of spending by state park visitors (input-output analysis), southern region

Trip spending (\$millions)	Output (business sales, \$millions)	Value added (\$millions)	Employment (full- and part-time jobs)
\$69	\$49	\$25	400

Focus groups with park visitors

In addition to the standard quantitative survey and EIA, Wilder also conducted seven focus groups with various audiences of interest. Participants were given a \$40 Amazon, Target, or Walmart gift card as a thank you for their time and sharing of their experiences.

Self-service groups

Wilder conducted two virtual focus groups with individuals who were recruited through the DNR’s customer database. From this database, Wilder compiled a random sample of those who had engaged with the DNR in the past year and invited these individuals to register for the groups online. One group was comprised of participants who had purchased day-use permits (n=11) and the other of participants who had made overnight reservations (n=13).

The key research questions for these groups were:

- What is the wayfinding experience of park visitors?
 - Point of arrival, orientation, knowing where to go.
 - What do they like/dislike about current park navigation?
- How much do park visitors want to engage/interact with park staff?
- Which aspects of the visit are improved with engagement?
 - Which aspects of the visit are “not worth” or do not require engagement?
 - What should the role of technology be in park visits?
- How do visitors want to acquire/pay for a permit?

Creating inclusive spaces

Wilder conducted five additional virtual focus groups with individuals who were recruited through a variety of means. The DNR created an interest form that was included in DNR newsletters and sent to community partners that work closely with those who may be eligible. Wilder Research then used the interest form to invite eligible participants to the focus groups. Recruitment was focused on current park users who identify with one of the following four racial or ethnic identities: Asian American, Black or African American, Latino/a/e, and Indigenous.



Blue Mounds State Park: Prairie and Bison Tour

In order to create free and open conversation, a facilitator who shared the same racial or ethnic identity as participants moderated each group. In all, 33 people participated in the focus groups: six in the Asian American group, 16 in the Black or African American groups, nine in the Latino/a/e group, and two in the Native American group. Participants shared that they engage in a variety of outdoor recreation activities, including hiking, biking, fishing, camping, kayaking, rock climbing, and simply being in nature. These focus groups were designed to cover the following research areas:

- Why do people choose the outdoor places or activities they engage with?
- What are peoples' previous experiences with Minnesota state parks? What are the challenges and successes?
- Do people feel that they are safe, belong, and are accepted at Minnesota state parks? What features contribute to feelings of comfort or safety? Who are state parks "for?"

Wilder Research analyzed the notes and transcripts from the groups for themes. Given the methods and sample size, these results are not representative of Minnesotans or of the racial or ethnic groups we chose to focus on. Nonetheless, these results provide insight into how historically marginalized identities may experience Minnesota state parks, and suggestions to make the parks more welcoming and inclusive to all.

Self-service focus group results

For these discussions, the DNR and Wilder were interested in learning more about the wayfinding experience of park visitors as they navigate park visits, how much park visitors want to engage with park staff on their visit, and what the role of technology, or “self-service,” should be in park visits.

Participants engage in open-ended planning

Participants in both of the self-service focus groups commented on using the DNR’s website for many of their planning needs. They noted a few ways they utilize website information to plan a trip, and their searches were described as somewhat open-ended. Some said that they **browse parks in a certain region** of the state and then look for openings with flexible dates, while others preferred to base their search on dates and then see **which parks had openings** during that time. A few also mentioned **searching based on their preferred activities**; for example, a family that enjoyed kayaking searched for camping sites close to the water. Others talked about seeking out Hiking Club trails.

We kayak, and so we actually do Google search and I look at it on the satellite map. In addition to the DNR site, I will actually scope out which sites are close to the water so that we can either be close enough to the launch or have water access to take our kayaks down to it. And we use Google a lot as far as trying to figure out where we want to be and what the park has to offer? How close the sites are together?

We joined the Hiking Club and so that's kind of our focus for deciding where to go. We knocked off the north shore hikes right away because we live up there. And then two years ago we concentrated on the southeastern part of the state. And then this past summer we did the southwestern part of the state. Our initial planning is just figuring out which part of the state we want to visit and which hiking club trails that we can knock off and then jump on the website and see what's available for camping.

As a family of five with young children, our first thing we look for is close to the home so we're not driving as far.

Most participants did not mention connecting with or requesting assistance from DNR staff during the planning stage. Aside from the DNR’s website, participants talked about a few other sites that they routinely visit in order to plan trips to state parks. Many cited **Google** and **Explore Minnesota** as resources, as well as **sites that offer photos of individual campsites**. Notably, they sought out these sites to gain more detail about particular campsites, including reviews of individual sites within a campground. This allowed them to make a more informed decision on which campsite to select, including the foundation type (e.g., gravel, grass, dirt) and the density of surrounding trees. This additional information helped them to determine the best fit for the type of camping they planned to do (i.e., tent vs. camper).

I do have trouble figuring out which is the best campsite and I am picky about my campsites and I frequently am frustrated when I get there and it's not quite what I wanted... I'm a tent camper and all of the pads are usually gravel or are hard packed and not very tent friendly. They seemed to be geared more toward the RVs and it would be nice if they had some places available for tents or at least had information on which sites are more tent friendly.

Participants conducted broader searches to **find out more about the area around a given park**. They described searching for information about what to see or do, where to eat or find food, special events in the area, and geographic and topographic features.

If there's an event up north, we try to camp for that event. For example, there was a powwow in Grand Marais in August and so we camped up north.

Participants suggested that the **DNR include links to these most-frequently used sites** on their own page as a reference, or some of these details on the DNR website along with individual park information. They also recommended adding easy-to-follow directions to certain parks in remote areas, where Google may not be the best navigation method. While many participants focused their planning efforts online, some commented on the continued utility of telephone availability.

I really do like the website and usually reserve that way, but I also like having the option to call in because sometimes there's something tricky. I might be changing one site or one day and want to get that credit. And so I've called in also, so I hope they always offer two choices.

Reserving campsites

Several participants in the overnight use group expressed a desire for **more remote campsites** or campsites to be further apart. Additionally, although the DNR states the reservation window on their website (i.e., how far in advance visitors can make reservations), several focus group participants were not aware of this information; they expressed frustration with popular parks being booked up very far in advance.

Groups expressed ambivalence about interacting with park staff

Participants in both groups expressed **appreciation for park staff**. Many commented that they enjoyed being able to talk with someone who knows the park and its surroundings well (some referred to this as “insider information”). These participants liked the information they received from staff, such as tips for “must see” stops in the park, what to do nearby, and updates on trail conditions.

[It's nice to] call and talk to them for one of my big interests is cross country skiing. I know I can see the ski conditions on the website, but it's, they're not always exactly the same as what you'll get if you call the person and find out what trails are groomed and how much snow is on them and things like that. It's nice to be able to contact somebody on the park staff and find out what conditions really are like there.

I went on a guided tour of the flowers that were growing, lady slipper walk or something...all the employees there were really knowledgeable of the types of plants that grow in the park and they really care about taking care of the park. I think that just having people that you can tell right away that they were invested in the nature and the state of the park, I think that's great.

Park staff also helped participants with **directions, maps and key park information**, including campsite location(s), trails, and details about programming at the park during their visit (e.g., ranger talks or special activities). Many preferred the “personal touch” that comes with having face-to-face interactions with park staff. Notably, overnight visitors were more likely to talk about enjoying their interactions with staff than day-use visitors, and more frequently commented on their appreciation for seeing staff in person (day-use visitors were more indifferent about seeing staff).

We stop in [when arriving at the park]. They do a great job of, with the yellow highlighter, telling us where to turn and where our site is and circling it. And then often they give us favorite hikes that they highlight as well. Or if I have any questions, if the beach is open, things like that. [Letting us know if it is] a good place to swim or has unhealthy water...they've always been extremely friendly when you get there and show you where to go.

I have a daughter and they told us that the park rangers were going to do some talks about some of the aspects of the parks and nature. And that was very good to know that there were some extracurricular activities for my daughter to [enjoy].

We like to step into the headquarters just to grab any brochures or find out about anything special going on or schedule for the nature talk.

It's really nice to have that face to face with the staff. I think during COVID we might have visited a couple times with no contact and you really do miss that. Sometimes that's the only staff person we talk to the whole visit, so they're really important.

Another important aspect of park staff's presence was that it **contributed to an overall sense of safety**. Some participants noted that they felt more comfortable having a **point of contact in case of emergency**, and a few went so far as to say that they would not camp if there were not a staff person readily available or on site.

I don't think I would feel comfortable just knowing there's not an actual person around, should something happen. That would really be a deal breaker.

It feels a little less safe [when park staff are not there], especially for someone who only comes once or twice a year. For new people, it's nice to know there's someone working.

Participants suggested that having posted hours of when staff are available would be helpful and contribute to a feeling of safety. However, some experienced campers noted that they do not need to spend as much time talking with or interacting with staff, and some went so far as to say that they did not want to “waste” staff time when they had other visitors to attend to. A few participants mentioned that they just visit the office to pick up some pamphlets, and **do not necessarily need to interact with anyone if printed information is available**. These participants also have enough experience to navigate the parks and know the way to their campsite and therefore need less direction from park staff.

If we're not camping and we've got our sticker on, we generally stop at the stop sign and wave and just keep going on in because they don't really need to talk to us. And like somebody said, it was kind of a waste of their time, but if we've made a reservation online to camp, we pretty much already know where our campsite is and have a map of the campground because it can be downloaded.

Regarding campground hosts, participants from the overnight use group expressed confusion about roles and responsibilities of these volunteers. Participants **questioned how campground hosts can or should help campers** and suggested that information be posted on site about what hosts can help with. Even experienced campers

conveyed hesitance to approach or engage with campground hosts, even when they wanted or needed help with something (e.g., purchasing firewood).

They should have kind of a sign that says, come here if you have some emergency or these are my responsibilities, some kind of sign outside that says that they are there to help us.

Key takeaway: Staffing parks remains an important aspect of the visitor experience.

Park maps are important, and visitors would like more information included on them

Participants in both groups said they **initially seek out a posted park map**, and many pick up a paper copy of the park map, preferring it to the use of an app for navigation. Some said that they wished **more points of interest** were included on maps or made easier to locate; these participants felt that the DNR maps are not always intuitive or easy to read. Interestingly, participants from the day-use group were more likely to seek information online or look for signs rather than ask park staff, whereas participants from the overnight-use group seemed to more readily seek out staff for interaction.

We definitely stop to get one of the maps out of the slot. And then, there's usually a kiosk area where there's a bigger map that we study where we need to go to park, that kind of thing, but those paper maps really are good to have.

Maybe making the points of interest even easier to find, [like the] fishing holes...we had a little bit of confusion on where to find things in the park and it was so immense that we weren't exactly sure where to go. The maps are great, but sometimes they turn us around a little bit.

Participants desire flexibility with permit purchase

Approaches to permit purchases varied and included **buying online on the DNR website**; this was the case for the majority of participants in the day-use group, and they preferred this convenience. Conversely, participants in the overnight-use group were much more likely to indicate that they typically bought their permit at whichever park they happen to visit around the time of expiration of their previous pass. Participants in both groups suggested that the DNR pilot the use of **automated kiosks** at parks that can accept credit cards (i.e., similar to a city parking meter).

Key takeaway: Continue to offer existing permit purchase options, including online and in person.

Availability and presence of technology impacts visitor experiences

Focus group participants had opposing viewpoints regarding the availability of Wi-Fi in state parks; **some emphasized the desire to “disconnect,” while seeing a benefit to having Wi-Fi available for safety and family needs**. Several participants said that they wanted Wi-Fi **available in case of emergency**, especially at parks where cell service is limited. They noted that being able to connect and keep track of family and friends in the park was extremely beneficial. For participants who visited parks with younger children in particular, they commented that Wi-Fi is helpful for times when their kids want to use a device (e.g., a tablet). Participants also offered that Wi-Fi is helpful in the case of **severe or inclement weather** in order to stay informed about quickly changing conditions.

In concert with Wi-Fi availability, some participants suggested that the DNR implement the **use of QR codes** throughout parks as a way to provide information or quickly access a map online (including having the link take visitors directly to a map that shows their location at that QR code).

Other participant suggestions

Aside from the core topics discussed above, some additional wants and needs arose in both groups.

Safety and accessibility are important aspects of the visitor experience

The concepts of safety and accessibility were notable themes in each discussion. Participants expressed a desire for more accessible trails, as well as railings near drop-offs.

I [would like] handicap accessibility with really nice paved trails. And if the hike is by a cliff, have a fence. I tell you, they make me nervous some of them because of erosion and bringing young kids. But I think as I age and I want to do this the rest of my life, whether it's with a walker, a cane, a wheelchair, a companion, but handicap accessibility, I think would be nice.

Participants felt that some campgrounds did not have sufficient lighting to feel safe at night. Many also suggested the DNR provide more **clarity about features and options** at parks, especially related to safety and accessibility, so that visitors know what to expect and feel safe during their visit.

If people are looking for specific things, maybe the DNR site says, this place doesn't have lights or the bathrooms are lit or this is a little more secure. There's a lot of staff on, maybe that kind of thing.... maybe that's a little bit of something that would not cost a lot of money that would give a lot more information for everyone.

One participant told a story highlighting the need for such information:

I had researched online about the cave tour and there were several to choose from which was great. And it said like, oh, you can take strollers and this and that, which was a big deal, but there wasn't a lot of information about that...more information would've been helpful. They had the little, tiny umbrella strollers there for people to use, which was awesome because I have a double stroller. And so, I was like, oh, strollers. Great. Perfect. Didn't even think about the width or the dimensions. And they were like, "Yeah. No, that's not going to fit." And I don't even know if I had a single stroller of a decent size if that would've fit either. And so, it was just a little bit different. And actually, we weren't even able to do the tour. We started it, we got about five minutes in, and then we had to pull out because of the kids and there was cold water dripping on us and we couldn't see because it was so dark. So, it really wasn't going to be a good kid-friendly situation, so maybe a little bit more information about what the experience looks like, but I know that that's specific to that state park and that tour.

Enhanced programming would benefit diverse audiences

Many participants talked about the programming they enjoyed at various parks and wanted to ensure that programming continued. They further specified that they wished to see programming related to Indigenous history and culture relevant to the location and geography of each park. Others suggested engaging local artists or musicians in activities or events at parks.

Day-use group participants expressed interest in the development of audio tours such as one might experience at a museum. Such tours could talk a bit about what visitors might be seeing, including some history of the area; this might also be successful in a podcast format that could be downloaded in advance.

[I like the idea of] an app that would follow you around the park and be like, hey, notice that there's Indian burial mounds over here, or like a walking tour or a driving tour, whatever you're doing in the park similar to the art museum guide. I think that'd be really cool.

While a few participants mentioned active participation in the DNR's Hiking Club, some also suggested that the DNR offer activity-based clubs that could host meet-ups in the park, potentially led by park staff.

Participants with children mentioned that they would like to see more offerings for young children, including availability of playgrounds, and some day-use visitors said they appreciated when a park had "interactive educational" options (e.g., in a park building or near the visitor center).

[I like when] they have interactive stuff for kids like, oh, here's this display, and you move this, or little videos that explain things because my kids can't read yet. But yeah, any of that stuff gets them pretty excited. [At one site] they have a beaver home built and they can crawl inside of it and see from the inside or whatever it may be. I think all of that stuff is really great.

Creating inclusive spaces focus group results

For these discussions, the DNR and Wilder were interested in learning more about how to make Minnesota state parks places where all can feel safe, that they belong, and they are welcome, with a focus on those from historically marginalized identities. The discussion focused on how people decide where to go for outdoor recreation, why people choose Minnesota state parks specifically, barriers to engaging with state parks, and thoughts and experiences on feeling safe and welcome at Minnesota state parks.

Decision-making for general outdoor activities

Since all participants engage in outdoor recreation, participants were initially asked how they decide where to go for outdoor activities. As in, generally, what are the most important pieces to consider when figuring out where to enjoy the outdoors.

Convenience and time matter

Participants most commonly mentioned convenience and time as important factors in deciding where to go. Parks located near where they live and easily accessible may be their most preferred places. Some shared they will plan longer or farther trips when they have more time, such as on a weekend.

Convenience. If it's just during the weekday, [there's a park right by us]. If it's a weekend, or if you're planning a long weekend, then we like to go a little bit further, a road trip. Then, we try and hit the state parks, whether it's Jay Cooke State Park or Wild River, just to do an overnight camping.

A lot of times it just depends on my schedule, how far I can drive, how much time I have to enjoy. So if I don't have a lot of time that day, I might just go to one of the lakes in the area, in the cities or just walk around the area I live in. But yeah, if I have more time then it's nice to drive further and just spend time in nature.

Available activities and programming, particularly for those with children

Focus group participants also shared that activities or programming offered at a park may be a deciding factor. For example, a certain event or a kid-friendly playground may draw people to visit a park. An important feature for participants was having family- and kid-friendly activities.

There have been events hosted by some of the parks and trail systems. I know Three Rivers a couple years ago, they always have a free Saturday event where you can rent snow shoes and try cross country skiing or whatnot. So, those events definitely draw me to drive further to get those experiences and just learn something new as well.

I'd add, as a mom, it really depended on what was close and what activities my kids could do there. Was there a beach? Was there a playground? Was there, if we went to a state park, was there going to be a ranger-led activity in the evening that we could do or something at 1:00 or something at 5:00? So, there were some activities. That's how I would kind of decide.

Recommendations and organized social groups

An additional decision-making factor included recommendations, such as from friends or family. Participants also cited travel books and websites like AllTrails as sources for recommendations, and three participants shared that they are part of organized groups that plan social outings to parks.

Reasons to visit Minnesota state parks

In addition to how they decide where to go for outdoor activities in general, participants were asked what draws them to Minnesota state parks in particular and what comes to mind when they think of Minnesota state parks. There is some overlap with overall decision-making factors, with some additional nuance.

Participants share positive associations with Minnesota state parks

During the discussions, participants were asked what comes to mind when they think of Minnesota state parks. They most commonly shared that they appreciate the natural beauty of the parks and trails, that parks are clean and well-maintained, and that parks are places they can relax or be peaceful.

I just think how fortunate we are. You could just drive out 20 minutes away from the cities, just enjoy the beauty of the nature outdoors and so many things to do at the state parks. Also, watching the change in seasons too, and how different they look in each season, and of course the landscape as well. It's beautiful.

The parks that I've been to have been so well-maintained. It's clean. It's actually really clean for our state parks and stuff like that, when compared to other places. That's what I appreciate.

A few people mentioned the variety of options among Minnesota state parks, that parks provide opportunities to socialize with friends and family, or that the parks provide access to the North Shore specifically.

Available activities and programming in Minnesota state parks

Similar to activities and programming being a factor on where to go for outdoor recreation, participants commonly shared that activities and programs at Minnesota state parks are a reason they visit. This includes activities like fishing, kayaking, camping, and programs or classes the parks offer. Again, a few participants mentioned kid- or family-friendly activities as particularly worthwhile.

I always appreciate when there's ranger or naturalist-led activities. Even in the winter, we went to Tettegouche, and there was a naturalist that led a snowshoe hike. So, it was really cool for us to go on a frozen river. I don't know that I would necessarily do that by myself, because I'm not sure. Is it going to be safe or not? But, any kind of expert-led activities kind of adds to the experience.

I feel like there's parks for everybody or everybody's interests. If you want to go on hikes, you can find a park that's got really great hikes. [When] my kids were little, we would go out onto Forestville, because they had the caves, and we could go to that old town that was there and just do that. They could see horses, because they loved horses. So, I feel like there's something for everyone. My kids are teens, but when we started camping, when they were one year old, there was something we could find or a camp we could find that worked that was accommodating to whatever stage we were at.

Opportunity to be in nature

Some participants visited state parks to be in nature. Again, some respondents echoed appreciation of the natural beauty of Minnesota parks. Parks provide a chance to relax in nature or disconnect from the world. One respondent referred to this as “nature therapy.”

A lot of times I'm just doing nothing. I mean, besides walking. Just usually when I go out, spirit just tells me, "You just need to be out in the woods. You just need to be outside." I'm just out there. I'm just being. I'm just present with it, everything that's out there.

I choose it just because it's a way to decompress. When I go to the parks with my kids, I can let them run a little wild. There's not a lot of people around, so they can be a little bit untamed.

Opportunity to be with friends and family

A few respondents shared that visiting parks is a way to socialize with their friends or family. Participants with children were particularly likely to mention this benefit, reinforcing the theme of kid-friendly activities.

It's very family friendly. There's a lot of picnic areas, picnic shelters, lots of restrooms, signages. So that's been helping me a lot, especially when you have kids and stuff, it's always looking for the signs, looking for somewhere to eat at...So I think they did a good job of making it family friendly in that aspect I guess.

Personally, I also have friends that go to state parks lot, so whenever they go, I try to tag along.

Barriers to visiting and enjoying Minnesota state parks

During the discussions, participants were asked to share what makes it difficult for them to visit and participate at Minnesota state parks.

Cost and affordability are a barrier to entry

Participants most commonly mentioned cost as a barrier to accessing parks. This includes passes to enter and the price to reserve campsites or lodgings. A few participants mentioned how the fee system can be particularly cost prohibitive for those who are not already avid park goers. For example, while some noted the annual pass is relatively affordable or valuable if someone plans on visiting frequently, the daily passes can be relatively expensive for just a single day visit. One participant also mentioned that the daily pass can be cost-prohibitive for families who have more than one vehicle.

For folks that are not often state park visitors, the annual payment for the visitation is cheaper than on the daily basis. So people who are not able to go on a daily basis but would want to just go and experience it on one day, sometimes it could be out of their budget... It's cheaper annually, which makes sense, but I think that could be one of the limitations that can come around from folks that would want to experience that.

Similarly, one participant mentioned the yurt or cabin lodgings are often more expensive than the tent campsites, though these types of lodgings may be a better option for those who are not as familiar or comfortable with tent camping.

The yurts and cabins, I like them. I like tenting too, but sometimes I want to do the fun stuff, the yurts. I kind of find that they can be a little bit expensive. So, for first time newbies who don't want to necessarily pitch a tent, the cost can serve as a barrier.

The camping reservation system can be prohibitive

Participants also shared that the camping reservation system can be a barrier for a variety of reasons. Some commented on a lack of available spaces, especially without booking well in advance, particularly along the North Shore. Besides not having spaces available, the website itself can be overwhelming or intimidating for some. This can be a barrier particularly for those who do not have access to or are not as comfortable with technology, aren't native English speakers, or are not as familiar with state parks and the reservation system.

Because I like camping, the online system of reserving camp sites actually can make it harder because if you're up north, for example, there's not really an opportunity to just show up and get a spot because people have booked maybe almost a year out in advance. The best sites are always taken up. I haven't been able to get my favorite site on Lake Superior in years because people get in ahead of me. And I have internet and I have a credit card, but if you don't have those things, you're kind of shut out.

Now, this whole system that the state parks have is you have to make a reservation online, which I think if you don't have a really good understanding of the language, and it's all written in English, and you have to put in what park you want and how many days and what vehicle and what kind of camper—really it can be kind of intimidating. I think you lose a lot of people. I think in very small print up at the top, it says, "Here's the number to call to make a reservation."

Distance and the ability to travel as a barrier

As previously mentioned, the discussions highlighted convenience as a major factor in where to go for outdoor recreation, including distance to parks and time available. Similarly, respondents shared that distance to Minnesota state parks can be a barrier to accessing them. This included travel time, a lack of transportation options, and the cost of gas.

I think my biggest barrier would be travel. I'm in the Twin Cities area and most of the state parks are up north or more than two hours away, so I can only go within the distance of an hour to two hour with kids and stuff. So I guess I frequently go to the ones near me but it's harder for me to go travel up north. Maybe once a year I can do that, but I can't go there often. So I think travel is the biggest hardship for me. If there was a back road or some kind of easier route to get to, I definitely would go there. But I guess it's just that right now, especially with gas prices and everything going up, the cost and mileage and everything's just difficult to go see and venture new state parks.

The travel, just the time it might take. I think I love going up to the North Shore, but if it's like, "Okay, I only have this much time," how much of that time is spent on the road and not really enjoying the nature or the state park?

Feeling welcome and safe while visiting Minnesota state parks

In addition to sharing reasons to visit Minnesota state parks and barriers they have experienced, participants were asked to share the degree to which they feel safe and welcome, and how the DNR could support feeling safe and welcome.

For the purposes of these discussions, **safety** was defined as physical, emotional, and mental safety and well-being, while **feeling welcomed** was defined as feeling invited to participate and having inclusive spaces that are designed for you.

Safety in numbers and representation are important

When it comes to safety, participants shared that representation and numbers matter. Not seeing others who look like them can create feelings of uneasiness or an extra mental burden during their visit. A few participants also mentioned that state parks tend to be designed for and dominated by White visitors.

Even feeling comfortable with my skills and my ability to survive [outdoors], it is uncomfortable sometimes to be the only person of color in the campground or something, or one of those kind of things where you feel like, "Is everybody else going to be cool?" So that'll be the only time where maybe I have a bit of unsafe feeling.

I think not feeling safe is just something that Native people and BIPOC people in general have to deal with because those spaces (parks) are dominated by white people. Natural resources and the history of conservation, environmental and natural resource type concepts, they are all about privilege and white supremacy. Those spaces were made for those white people of privilege to enjoy and that's who continues to dominate them.

Participants expressed feeling safer at parks with more people around or parks that are closer to urban areas or population centers. In general, population centers have more people, more diversity, and a greater likelihood of people seeing others like themselves. Parks in rural areas or small towns can feel less safe, due to fewer people

and less diversity. Some shared they feel safe visiting parks with organized social groups or family, but they do not feel safe visiting parks alone.

I usually go [to parks] three or four hours outside of the city. I don't see people like me there, which can make me feel less safe.

I will feel safe in Duluth. I feel like it's a bigger population. So, I feel like when the population is a little large, and they're used to a lot of foot traffic, I feel a lot safer than state parks that aren't used to a lot of foot traffic, because they just don't have that exposure of people looking any different than they do. Yeah, that all kind of encompasses it all, my physical, mental, and even emotional well-being. What areas [are] more well-populated? Unfortunately, then I will go towards those state parks more. But, I'm trying my hardest to go to the smaller ones.

I always bring somebody with me. I would love to [have] that solitude aspect of me just being there by myself. But I always have that fear in the back of my head where I feel not really comfortable because I just can't take the risk.

Additionally, some shared they have received hostile looks or microaggressions during visits to state parks or surrounding areas. A few noted that in rural areas near parks there were more political signs or bumper stickers that may make them feel on edge, or concerned about gun violence. One respondent, a Black man, shared that he sometimes goes out of his way to say hi or be friendly to other campers so they are aware of his presence and “alleviate those fears.”

You start to see things outside the metro that can be a little scary, especially if you're a person of color. [I see certain political statements] not too far from my site, and I just get a little nervous.

If it's just me or my husband or our family walking down a trail, I am a little bit wary or just kind of extra observant, because some of these parks are in such tiny little towns. They don't really get to see a lot of people that are different looking from them. So, going into the towns is fun and is nice, but when my kids were younger, sometimes we would run into a little bit of, "Oh, where are you from? And, you speak English so well." My parents were immigrants, so I actually was born and raised here. So, it's lessened a lot. It doesn't happen that often, but it still does happen.

However, some participants said that they feel safe and welcome at state parks because the people are friendly and everyone has a shared goal of enjoying the outdoors.

I guess most people that I have come across are very friendly and in tune with the nature. We can talk a lot about the biodiversity so it brings together a lot of like-minded people.

Beyond the identities of other visitors, some participants shared that the signs and language used at parks adds to a lack of representation. Particularly, signs tend to be in English and focus on White or settler history. A few shared they would like to see signs translated into other languages, include Indigenous or other cultural narratives, or include tribal land acknowledgements.

Park staff and rangers are important for creating a safe and welcoming space

When asked about feeling safe and welcome, many respondents spoke about the importance of having park staff visible and accessible. Park staff and rangers are often the face of a park or set the tone of the environment. Staff can also provide additional help or support to visitors who may not be as familiar with state parks or a specific park. Some noted it might depend on the specific staff, since some staff are more friendly and welcoming than others. Results from the field survey support this theme: a higher proportion of BIPOC visitors reported that the staff

positively contributed to their sense of safety and security at the park compared with White visitors (85% vs. 78%, respectively). The inverse can also be true—not seeing park staff and rangers can make people feel less safe and welcome. A few participants experienced this difference during the pandemic when staff were not available. A common suggestion was to have park staff and rangers more visible and accessible for visitors.

My experience is it really varies depending upon if there are staff or rangers working in the park. Because, sometimes they'll just go into the office, and they'll pick up a map, and whoever's working will recommend certain trails or even bear sightings or whatever type of thing. But, because of during COVID and everything, a lot of it is kind of self-service now. So, you sort of feel like you're on your own.

We went camping twice this year, and I noticed one campsite had rangers. The ranger station was open. We could go on and ask questions, and we were new to that campsite. We went to another one, another state park, and there weren't any rangers around. There was nobody to ask questions. I thought, wow, if I had been brand new, I would've been totally lost. I know it's the pandemic, but I also feel like we also need to have more ranger stations open, because really, you're catering to people who already know the system, and you're not bringing in new people. So, I think that's really important, that they are there, and they can ask you questions. Or, if you're lost, you can call the ranger stations or someone who can help you, because I remember doing that before the pandemic. I just think that's really important that the DNR gets people back in those ranger stations. It's so important.

Tying into the importance of representation, one participant also shared an example of feeling welcome at a park by seeing a staff person of color at the front gate.

Not too long ago I went to a state park and I just wanted to kind of check it out, I wasn't going to stay there very long, and I think the woman that was at the front gate was a person of color. And that was really nice to see because it just, I don't know, kind of re-emphasizes like, "You're welcome here too." And yeah, it was really nice.

While park staff and rangers were found to be important for safety and welcoming, two participants shared the uniforms park rangers wear can be off-putting and reminiscent of military or law enforcement uniforms. One participant suggested allowing rangers to wear uniforms that are more casual.

That uniform that [rangers] wear, they should rethink that. Let them wear blue jeans and a T-shirt so we all know who they are, like they work at K-Mart or something. But they don't have to wear a military-type uniform to do their work in the park. That's sending a signal of enforcement and it's not welcoming.

Visitors may have physical safety concerns about wildlife and nature

Some other common safety concerns were related to being in nature and wildlife. This included feeling unsafe around wildlife, concerns about water quality or water contamination, and lack of survival or swimming skills. One suggestion was to include more signs and education on these pieces of outdoor recreation to help visitors feel more physically safe.

Indigenous perspective and fundamental differences

Participants in the Indigenous focus group had difficulty answering some of the discussion questions because they highlighted the difference in worldviews between Indigenous culture and colonizer culture. In many ways, state parks represent the largely White worldview of private property and designating land for certain purposes. For example, participants commented that it is not welcoming to Indigenous people to put gates or fences around the property borders or have rules and regulations for which areas of the park people can visit. These two Indigenous focus group participants suggested different visitation guidelines for Indigenous visitors, co-creating park programming with local tribal members, and decolonizing the history in park signs and language.

So I may want to visit the land that happens to now be called Itasca State Park or the Big Bog, or you'll put some label on it and decided that it was special from a white supremacy ideology...I like certain spaces for certain reasons. Sometimes they happen to be in areas that are called a name with a state park behind it. So that's a challenge in and of itself, to try to even answer the question.

Several other Indigenous community members who were not able to participate in the focus group offered feedback via Facebook. Their feedback included a recommendation that entrance and parking fees be removed, which the DNR did for American Indians enrolled in the 11 federally recognized tribes that share geography with Minnesota starting in 2022. Another individual commented on not wanting to support the DNR since they participated in the policing of Line 3 protesters, and another person commented that they do not want the DNR to spray pesticides in case people are gathering food or medicines there.

Participant suggestions for park design

Throughout the discussions, participants shared ideas on how to make parks more accessible, safe, and welcoming. Additionally, at the end of the group, participants were asked if they could design a state park for themselves and their loved ones, how they would design it.

- **Park staff and rangers should be visible and accessible.** Park staff are important for creating feelings of welcoming and safety. In addition to having staff more visible and accessible, other related suggestions included diversifying park staff to be more representative of communities served.
- **Improve options for communication to the outside world in case of emergencies.** For example, improved cell reception, Wi-Fi hotspots, or emergency phone stations.
- **Visitors would like additional programming options.** Suggestions for parks programming and activities:
 - More kid-friendly or family-friendly activities;
 - More “how-to” or beginners classes to help people feel more familiar; and
 - Co-create park programming with local Indigenous leaders.
- **Park signage should be more inclusive, decolonized, and acknowledge the history of each park.**
 - Have park welcome signs in multiple languages.
 - Have signage reflect less White-centric history and narrative. Include Indigenous history and land acknowledgements, as well as other cultural group history as relevant for each park. **Park signage should be more educational, interactive, and provide safety guidelines.**

- **Parks should be more accessible to those with special needs.** This includes providing activities or designated days for those with special needs, as well as making parks and trails more amenable for wheelchairs and strollers.
- **Include more Indigenous voice in park programming, guidelines, and signage.**
 - Partner with local Indigenous leaders to co-create park programming and activities.
 - Change park signs to acknowledge Indigenous history and narrative.
 - Have different rules and guidelines for Indigenous tribal members to honor their relationship and history with the land.
- Increase marketing and visibility of materials for Minnesota state parks, particularly in places where people who may be interested are already visiting (county or city parks, REI or other outdoor stores, etc.).
- Make state park space more available for community events and family gatherings.
- Make the website more searchable for certain activities, fitness levels, etc.
- Improve transportation to parks, such as including shuttle services or bus lines from cities to state parks.

Recommendations based on findings from Wilder Research to the DNR

Wilder Research developed the following recommendations based on the themes from both components of the qualitative study (self-service and creating inclusive spaces) and are a reflection of participant suggestions.

Enhance opportunities to engage with staff

Notably, seeing staff provided a level of comfort and safety for visitors. Focus group participants appreciated park staff's knowledge of the park and the surrounding area. Ensuring that staff are available to answer questions and guide visitors to certain hikes or points of interest may increase visitor satisfaction and enjoyment of parks; participants valued this access to "insider information," especially those who were frequent park visitors. This additional access to park information is also helpful for those who are not as familiar with state parks and who would benefit from additional support, guidance or a friendly face. Participants mentioned the intangible benefit of having human connection when visiting parks, especially for those staying overnight. In terms of creating inclusive spaces, having staff be visible and accessible was associated with feelings of safety while visiting state parks.

Explore ways to enhance programming

Many participants cited park programming and organized activities as important. Participants expressed a desire to see even more opportunities to engage with programs at state parks, including those targeted to certain audiences. Notably, participants wished to see more offerings for families and children, especially at parks located in or near population centers (e.g., Fort Snelling State Park in the Twin Cities), and more activities or events for beginners who may not be as familiar with outdoor activities (i.e., "how-to" classes). Participants also suggested programming that engaged local artists or musicians as part of park offerings or special events at state parks. Programming could also be enhanced without the addition of staffed events or activities; one participant suggested the development of audio tours or podcasts that visitors could listen to at the park to learn about park features or history of the area.

Deepen partnerships with local tribes

Participants in the Indigenous discussion group recommended strengthening partnerships with local tribes, emphasizing the importance of investing time and resources into these partnerships on an ongoing basis. The DNR could invest additional time and resources in partnering with Indigenous leaders, such as building land acknowledgements for parks across the state, including the native names of certain geological park features, and partnering to provide park programming and events with local tribal members. Participants in other groups also expressed an interest in seeing more information about Indigenous history and culture in state parks.

Consider updating materials to reflect diverse communities

Many DNR materials, such as signs, the website, and maps, are currently in English. Participants expressed a desire to update materials to be more inclusive, such as having welcome signs in multiple languages or using more iconography. For example, the camping reservation site in particular may be problematic for those who do not speak English or who are not as comfortable with technology. This may remove barriers to entry and help people feel more welcome when visiting state parks.

Commit to inclusion and representation

Representation is critical for inclusivity and ensuring that BIPOC communities feel comfortable and welcome in state parks. Recruiting more staff from BIPOC communities may help visitors feel more welcome and, in turn, could encourage more visitors from BIPOC communities. This is further supported by participants in the “inclusive spaces” groups describing the feeling of “safety in numbers” when visiting parks.

Expand information offered on the DNR website

Participants used the DNR website to seek a wide range of information, and comments in both groups reflect a desire for access to more information and improved usability. Providing information regarding safety and accessibility in all parks would help participants to feel more comfortable and to be more aware of what to expect regarding specific aspects of their visit. For example, note the amount of lighting at a campground, whether or not there are rail guards near drop-offs, and staff availability. Including information about strength of cellular signals might also be helpful, as participants said that having a signal or Wi-Fi connectivity contributed to their feelings of safety.

Participants desire more information about campsites. Several participants in the “self-service” groups talked about using other websites to determine which campsite to select, and providing this information on the DNR’s website (or direct links to websites that do offer these details) could ease the burden on visitors trying to make informed decisions about their overnight reservations.

Finally, including more detail about the roles of park staff (including campground hosts), as well as the hours that staff are on site and available may help visitors to feel more secure.

Appendix

A: Survey instrument

2022 Minnesota State Park Visitor Survey

(PART 1)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback will help the DNR grow and improve the park system for future visitors like yourself. You will notice the questions ask about your experiences today at the park; we understand that you may not be completing the survey on the same day you were given this survey. If this is the case, please answer the questions in regard to your visit on the day you were stopped by a DNR staff person. This survey should be completed by someone who is 18 years of age or older.

The survey will take 15 minutes to complete. **As a thank you, you can choose to be entered into a drawing for 1 of 20 \$35 state park gift cards!**

Please complete the survey and mail it back using the pre-paid envelope attached within one week of your receiving this. If you have any questions about the survey please contact Gratia Joice at gratia.joice@state.mn.us.

This first section asks questions about your visit to the park.

1. Which of the following activities did you participate in while visiting this park on this trip? **(PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping | <input type="checkbox"/> Sightseeing (e.g., taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picnicking | <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping in the park's gift shop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observing/photographing nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Biking (all types) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hiking/walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a self-guided nature walk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Did nothing/relaxed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bird watching | <input type="checkbox"/> Looking at kiosks or visitor center exhibits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/kayaking/paddleboarding/motorboating | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting historic sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |

2. Please enter the number of people in your group for each applicable age group. Your group includes anyone you traveled to/from the park with. Enter '0' if your group does not have anyone in any age range.

- _____ Children aged 12 or under
_____ Teens aged 13-18
_____ Adults aged 19-40
_____ Adults aged 41-64
_____ Adults aged 65+

3. About how many miles is this state park from your permanent residence?

- 10 miles or less
 11 to 50 miles
 51 or more miles

4. When was the last time you visited this state park?

- Within the past year
 More than a year ago
 This is my first time visiting this state park

5. Did attending a park program or event attract you to the park on this visit?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

6. Which statement most closely reflects your feelings about this visit?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

7. What was the primary factor that contributed to your satisfaction/dissatisfaction?

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

8. I have felt welcome during my visit to this state park.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. I would recommend this state park to friends and family.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. How did interacting with park staff affect your sense of safety and security at the park?

- The staff positively contributed to my sense of safety and security at the park.
- The staff negatively contributed to my sense of safety and security at the park.
- The staff did not have any effect on my sense of safety and security at the park.
- N/A; I didn't interact with any park staff during my visit.
- Other, please specify: _____

11. Is this park visit part of an overnight trip away from home?

- Yes ➡
- No

11a. How many nights did you spend away from home on this trip?
____ Nights in this state park
____ Nights in other state parks
____ Nights in other lodging, NOT in a state park

12. How many hours were you in this park on the day(s) of your visit?

____ Hours

This next section asks questions about Minnesota state parks in general.

13. For how many years have you been visiting Minnesota state parks? If this is your first year, please enter "1"

_____ Years

14. When you obtain information about Minnesota state parks, what are your most important information sources?

(PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)

DNR sources:

- Staff and informational materials at the park (including state park campgrounds)
- DNR website
- DNR newsletters
- DNR social media
- DNR parks and trails brochures

General sources:

- Friends and family
- Social media
- Newspapers or magazines
- Radio
- TV
- Places I stay (e.g., resorts, campgrounds)
- Recreation maps and guides
- Chambers of commerce/convention and visitor bureaus
- Explore Minnesota
- Travel guides/agents
- Online (please specify): _____
- Another source not listed (please specify): _____
- None of the above

15. If you could change one thing in the state parks to better serve your needs, what would it be?

This next set of questions are about you. It's important for us to know that we are hearing from all different types of people so we can better understand park visitors. All information you provide will remain confidential.

16. What is your zip code? If international, please enter "00000".

17. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-identify: _____
- Prefer not to answer

18. What is your age group?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 and over
- Prefer not to answer

19. What is your race/ethnicity? **(PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)**

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Prefer to self-identify: _____
- Prefer not to answer

20. Do you, or does someone in your group, have a physical or cognitive disability or condition?

(PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)

- Hearing
 - Vision
 - Cognitive
 - Ambulatory
 - Other (please specify): _____
 - No one in my group has a disability
 - Prefer not to answer
- ➔ 20a. Did you experience any barriers in using park amenities and/or services related to this/these disabilities?
- Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to answer

21. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some high school
- Graduated from high school or GED
- Some college
- Associate (2-year) degree
- Bachelor's degree (BA, BS)
- Postgraduate degree
- Prefer not to answer

22. Please indicate your total household income before taxes last year from all sources.

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 to \$199,999
- \$200,000 to \$250,000
- More than \$250,000
- Prefer not to answer

(PART 2)

If this visit is part of an overnight stay at this park, please fill out questions 23 – 25. If you only visited the park for the day, please continue on to question 26.

The following questions ask you for information related to the money you and your group spent in the park and the surrounding area on the days that you stayed at the park, including costs for your travel to and from the area. Your responses to these detailed questions are very valuable, as they help the DNR to understand the impact of the park system on local economies across the state.

23. Approximately how much money did you and your group spend during this overnight/camping trip to this state park? As a reminder, your group includes anyone you traveled to/from the park with. For each spending item below, please fill in the approximate dollar amount for:

Group definition:
Your group includes anyone you traveled to/from the park with.

- a. Travel and park spending: money spent traveling to/from the park, while in the park, and while in communities nearby the park; and
- b. At home spending: money spent at home getting ready for the trip.

If this trip included nights in other lodging (outside this park), please include spending only for the period between when you checked in at the park and when you left the park (including money spent at home for supplies, etc. for your time at the park). Please only include money spent for this trip. For example, if you purchased an annual vehicle permit when you visited a park last month, do not include that cost. If you purchased a new tent last month because you needed it for this trip, please do include that cost.

Spending Item	A Travel and park spending	B At home spending
State park vehicle permit fees	\$	\$
Other state park fees (e.g., camping, program, firewood, rentals)	\$	\$
Licenses for fishing, hunting, boating	\$	\$
Camping fees at a publicly-owned campground (other state, federal campground)	\$	\$
Camping fees at a privately-owned campground, RV site	\$	\$
Indoor lodging/rental homes (privately owned)	\$	\$
Restaurant food, beverages, and snacks	\$	\$
Groceries (including pop, beer, and other beverages)	\$	\$
Gasoline and other fuels	\$	\$
Other transportation-related expenses (e.g., oil change, vehicle repair)	\$	\$
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$	\$
Shopping, souvenirs, gifts	\$	\$
Recreational equipment purchase (e.g., tent, hiking boots, sleeping bag, camp stove)	\$	\$
Recreational equipment rental from private business (e.g., bike, tent, boat rentals)	\$	\$
All other trip-related spending (e.g., medical, locksmith)	\$	\$

24. How many people were covered by this spending? _____ People in my group

25. For the money paid for camping/lodging at the state park, do you feel you are getting a good, fair, or poor value from Minnesota state parks?

- Good value Fair value Poor value Don't know

IF YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE PREVIOUS SECTION PLEASE CONTINUE ON TO QUESTION 28. IF YOUR VISIT WAS A DAY TRIP PLEASE COMPLETE THE SECTION BELOW.

If you only visited this park for the day, please fill out questions 26 – 27.

The following questions ask you for information related to the money you and your group spent in the park and the surrounding area during your day trip to this park. Your responses to these detailed questions are very valuable, as they help the DNR to understand the impact of the park system on local economies across the state.

26. Approximately how much money did you and your group spend on the day of your visit to this state park? As a reminder, your group includes anyone you traveled to/from the park with. For each spending item below, please fill in the approximate dollar amount for:

Group definition:
Your group includes anyone you traveled to/from the park with.

- a. Travel and park spending **on day of visit:** money spent traveling to/from the park, while in the park, and while in the general area of the park; and
- b. At home spending **on day of visit:** money spent at home getting ready for the trip. If you did not come from home on the day of your visit, ignore this column.

Please note: Costs for traveling to/from the park should be included if they occurred on the day(s) of your visit to this park. If you visited the park on multiple days during this trip, please include costs for any days when you visited the park. If you traveled to or from the area on a day when you did not visit the park, please do not include those travel costs. For example, if you purchased an annual vehicle permit when you visited a park last month, do not include that cost. If you purchased a new tent last month because you needed it for this trip, please do include that cost.

Spending Item	A Travel and Park spending on day of visit	B At Home spending on day of visit
State park vehicle permit fees	\$	\$
Other state park fees (e.g., program, firewood, rentals)	\$	\$
Licenses for fishing, hunting, boating	\$	\$
Camping fees at a publicly-owned campground (other state, federal campground)	\$	\$
Camping fees at a privately-owned campground, RV site	\$	\$
Indoor lodging/rental homes (privately owned)	\$	\$
Restaurant food, beverages, and snacks	\$	\$
Groceries (including pop, beer, and other beverages)	\$	\$
Gasoline and other fuels	\$	\$
Other transportation-related expenses (e.g., oil change, vehicle repair)	\$	\$
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$	\$
Shopping, souvenirs, gifts	\$	\$
Recreational equipment purchase (e.g., tent, hiking boots, sleeping bag, camp stove)	\$	\$
Recreational equipment rental from private business (e.g., bike, tent, boat rentals)	\$	\$
All other trip-related spending (e.g., medical, locksmith)	\$	\$

27. How many people were covered by this spending? _____ People in my group

28. What type of vehicle permit did you use to get into this state park?

- Daily vehicle permit
- Annual vehicle permit
- Parks and trails license plate
- Other (please describe): _____
- Not applicable

29. For the money paid for this entrance permit, do you feel you are getting a good, fair, or poor value from Minnesota state parks?

- Good value
- Fair value
- Poor value
- Don't know
- Not applicable

30. How many days or months in advance did you plan this trip to this park?

- 1 to 30 days
- 1 to 2 months
- 3 to 5 months
- 6 to 12 months
- Over 12 months
- None; decided trip on day of park visit

31. Do you or a member of your household have . . . **(PLEASE SELECT ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM)**

	Yes	No	<i>I don't know</i>
a. A current Minnesota fishing license?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. A current Minnesota hunting license?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. A boat currently registered in Minnesota?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. A snowmobile currently registered in Minnesota?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. An ATV/OHV currently registered in Minnesota?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. A Minnesota Horse Pass?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. A Great Minnesota Ski Pass from the previous winter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next set of questions asks about ways in which your park visit could be more enjoyable.

32. For each item below, please tell us how important each item is to making your park visit enjoyable

Importance of item to your enjoyment?	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important
a. A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Participating in a staff-led program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. General informational brochure/maps provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Availability of park staff to answer questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Trails in the park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Well protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Well protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Presence of park staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Designated places to swim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Fishing opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Signs for finding my way around the park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The next set of questions asks about your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with items in this park

33. For each item below, please tell us how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the item in this park.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Does not apply
a. A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Participating in a staff-led program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. General informational brochure/maps provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Availability of park staff to answer questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Trails in the park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Well protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Well protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Presence of park staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Designated places to swim	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Fishing opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Signs for finding my way around the park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

34. Below are several statements that describe possible changes for Minnesota state parks and related services. Please indicate how much you support or oppose each possible change.

	Strongly support	Mildly support	Neither oppose or support	Mildly oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
a. Provide more staff-led learning opportunities (e.g., interpretive programming).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Provide more spacing between campsites.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Provide more paved trails.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Provide more hunting opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Provide more horse trails.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Provide more hiking trails.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. Provide more programs and events in the parks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. Provide more programs for children in the parks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. Provide more play areas in the parks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. Provide food concessions/coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

35. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your state park experience?

Thank you for completing the survey. If you would like to be entered into a drawing for 1 of 20 \$35 state park gift cards, please provide your name, phone number, and email address. Your name and email address will not be associated with your answers and your information will not be used for any other purposes.

NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

B: Data tables

Figure B1: Number of visitors who completed a survey by park

Park or SRA	Region	Investment Group	Number of visitors who completed a survey	Number of visitors (completed Part 2)
Afton State Park	R3: Central	Gateway	59	16
Banning State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Adventure	29	8
Bear Head Lake State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	28	7
Beaver Creek Valley State Park	R3: Central	Rustic	21	17
Big Bog State Park Recreation Area	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	26	1
Big Stone Lake State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	13	4
Blue Mounds State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Adventure	44	12
Buffalo River State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Gateway	22	6
Camden State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Gateway	19	7
Carley State Park	R3: Central	Rustic	10	3
Cascade River State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Classic	44	9
Charles A. Lindbergh State Park	R3: Central	Rustic	33	18
Crow Wing State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	18	6
Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area	R2: Northeast	Core/Adventure	43	18
Father Hennepin State Park	R3: Central	Core/Classic	9	2
Flandrau State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Gateway	46	16
Forestville Mystery Cave State Park	R3: Central	Destination	20	8
Fort Ridgely State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	17	9
Fort Snelling State Park	R3: Central	Destination	107	45
Franz Jevne State Park	R1: Northwest	Rustic	2	2
Frontenac State Park	R3: Central	Core/Gateway	34	13
George H. Crosby Manitou State Park	R2: Northeast	Rustic	18	10
Glacial Lakes State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	13	7
Glendalough State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	17	3
Gooseberry Falls State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	132	35
Grand Portage State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Gateway	11	1

Park or SRA	Region	Investment Group	Number of visitors who completed a survey	Number of visitors (completed Part 2)
Great River Bluffs State Park	R3: Central	Core/Classic	13	4
Hayes Lake State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	5	0
Interstate State Park	R3: Central	Core/Adventure	69	20
Iron Range State Recreation Area	R2: Northeast	Core/Adventure	3	0
Itasca State Park	R1: Northwest	Destination	82	6
Jay Cooke State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	72	24
Judge C.R. Magney State Park	R2: Northeast	Rustic	27	11
Kilen Woods State Park	R4: Southern	Rustic	9	10
La Salle Lake State Recreation Area	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	5	0
Lac Qui Parle State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	9	0
Lake Bemidji State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Gateway	22	1
Lake Bronson State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	20	1
Lake Carlos State Park	R1: Northwest	Destination	41	16
Lake Louise State Park	R3: Central	Rustic	12	5
Lake Maria State Park	R3: Central	Core/Gateway	16	5
Lake Shetek State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	23	10
Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	30	8
Maplewood State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Gateway	25	9
McCarthy Beach State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Classic	36	9
Mille Lacs Kathio State Park	R3: Central	Destination	23	8
Minneopa State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Gateway	44	19
Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area	R3: Central	Rustic	7	3
Monson Lake State Park	R4: Southern	Rustic	8	5
Moose Lake State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Classic	16	7
Myre Bog Island State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Gateway	31	11
Nerstrand Big Woods State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Gateway	30	10
Old Mill State Park	R1: Northwest	Rustic	11	1

Park or SRA	Region	Investment Group	Number of visitors who completed a survey	Number of visitors (completed Part 2)
Red River State Recreation Area	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	15	2
Rice Lake State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	8	0
Sakatah Lake State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	20	10
Savanna Portage State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Classic	17	5
Scenic State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Classic	15	3
Schoolcraft State Park	R2: Northeast	Rustic	11	6
Sibley State Park	R4: Southern	Destination	35	10
Split Rock Creek State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Classic	11	2
Split Rock Lighthouse State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	74	20
St. Croix State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	23	9
Temperance River State Park	R2: Northeast	Core/Adventure	53	16
Tettegouche State Park	R2: Northeast	Destination	91	24
Upper Sioux Agency State Park	R4: Southern	Core/Gateway	10	5
Whitewater State Park	R3: Central	Destination	85	11
Wild River State Park	R3: Central	Destination	35	18
William O'Brien State Park	R3: Central	Destination	51	21
Zippel Bay State Park	R1: Northwest	Core/Classic	8	0
Total			2,086	648

Figure B2: Visitor demographics (unweighted)

Demographic	N	N (Part 2)
Gender		
Male	870	267
Female	1,143	350
Non-binary/Prefer to self-identify	26	n<20
Age		
18-24	202	33
25-34	365	104
35-44	499	153
45-54	341	107
55-64	310	110
65 and over	340	125
Race/Ethnicity		
BIPOC (Includes race/ethnicity categories American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, biracial and multiracial.)	194	40
American Indian or Alaska Native ^a	29	n<20
Asian or Asian American ^a	81	21
Black or African American ^a	26	n<20
Middle Eastern or North African ^a	n<20	0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ^a	n<20	0%
Hispanic or Latino ^a	55	n<20
White (this number reflects respondents who selected White alone and does not include respondents who selected White and one or more other races).	1,802	577
Prefer to self-identify	25	n<20
Prefer not to answer	56	n<20
Educational attainment (includes respondents age 25+ only).		
Some high school	n<20	n<20
Graduated from high school or GED	186	44
Some college	247	58
Associate (2-year) degree	245	79
Bachelor's degree (BA, BS)	793	237
Postgraduate degree	550	210

Demographic	N	N (Part 2)
Household income		
Less than \$25,000	95	n<20
\$25,000 to \$49,999	216	54
\$50,000 to \$99,999	535	174
\$100,000 to \$149,999	465	142
\$150,000 to \$199,999	227	81
\$200,000 to \$250,000	83	31
More than \$250,000	89	35

Note. As the number of respondents is n<20, data is suppressed. Of the respondents, 63 identified multiple races

^a Respondents could select multiple race/ethnicities

Figure B3: Day versus overnight usage

Visitor type	Number of visitors	Number of visitors (Part 2)
Overnight	734	272
Day use	1,352	376

Figure B4: Visitor race/ethnicity by user type and comparisons to total Minnesota population

Race/ethnicity	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors	MN population
BIPOC	8%	11%	11%	21%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%	2%	1%	2%
Asian or Asian American	4%	4%	4%	6%
Black or African American	1%	2%	2%	8%
Middle Eastern or North African	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Hispanic or Latino	2%	3%	3%	6%
White	94%	91%	91%	79%
Prefer to self-identify	1%	1%	1%	N/A
Prefer not to answer	2%	2%	2%	N/A

Source. Ruggles, S., Flood, S., Goeken, R., Schouweiler, M., & Sobek, M. (2022). IPUMS USA: Version 12.0. American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2016-2020). IPUMS. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0>

Compiled by Minnesota Compass.

Note. Respondents could select all that apply. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B5: Visitor educational attainment

Educational attainment	Total visitors	MN population
Some high school	1%	3%
Graduated from high school or GED	7%	23%
Some college	11%	20%
Associate (2-year) degree	12%	12%
Bachelor's degree (BA,BS)	40%	26%
Postgraduate degree	31%	13%

Data include individuals age 25+. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B6: Visitors by disability type

Disability type	Total visitors
Hearing	4%
Ambulatory	3%
Cognitive	2%
Vision	2%
Other	4%
Physical (non-specific)	43%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B7: Visitor household income

Income	Total visitors	MN households
Less than \$25,000	6%	15%
\$25,000-\$49,999	13%	20%
\$50,000-\$99,999	31%	32%
\$100,000-\$149,999	27%	17%
\$150,000-\$199,999	13%	8%
\$200,000-\$250,000	5%	3%
More than \$250,000	6%	5%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B8: Distance of park from permanent residence by usage type

Distance	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
10 miles or less	3%	18%	16%
11 to 50 miles	15%	27%	26%
51 or more miles	82%	55%	58%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B9: Distance of park from permanent residence by income

Miles from permanent residence	<\$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,000	\$150,000
10 miles or less	15%	18%	18%	13%
11 to 50 miles	29%	30%	22%	19%
51 or more miles	56%	52%	60%	68%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B10: Distance of park from permanent residence by region

Miles from permanent residence	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
10 miles or less	25%	7%	14%	26%
11 to 50 miles	45%	10%	34%	27%
51 or more miles	30%	83%	52%	47%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B11: Distance of park from permanent residence by investment group

Miles from permanent residence	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
10 miles or less	15%	15%	10%	24%	17%
11 to 50 miles	22%	28%	20%	37%	20%
51 or more miles	63%	57%	70%	40%	63%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B12: Last visit to the park where respondent was surveyed

Last visit	Overnight use	Day use	Total visitors
Within the past year	31%	47%	45%
More than a year ago	29%	25%	26%
This is my first time visiting this state park	40%	28%	29%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B13: Last time visiting the state park by age and household income

Demographic	Visited within the past year	Visited more than a year ago	This is my first time visiting this state park
Age			
18-24	57%	17%	26%
25-34	40%	24%	35%
35-44	47%	26%	28%
45-54	41%	28%	31%
55-64	44%	29%	26%
65+	48%	26%	26%
Household income			
<\$50,000	50%	20%	30%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	46%	22%	32%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	46%	28%	26%
\$150,000+	40%	29%	31%

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B14: Last visit to the park by region

Last visit	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Within the past year	53%	38%	56%	41%
More than a year ago	25%	28%	21%	26%
This is my first time visiting this state park	23%	34%	23%	33%

Figure B15: Last visit to the park by investment group

Last visit	Destination	Core/ Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/ Gateway	Rustic
Within the past year	44%	45%	45%	51%	38%
More than a year ago	29%	20%	26%	24%	18%
This is my first time visiting this state park	27%	35%	30%	25%	43%

Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B16: Type of vehicle permit

Type of permit	Total visitors
Annual vehicle permit	76%
Daily vehicle permit	16%
Parks and trails license plate	6%
Other	2%

Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B17: Notable differences in visitors with a recreational license or registration by age

Type of license or registration	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Minnesota fishing license	50%	35%	33%	32%	39%	42%
Boat currently registered in Minnesota	26%	20%	27%	26%	39%	38%
Minnesota hunting license	4%	12%	12%	13%	15%	18%

Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B18: Notable differences in visitors with a recreational license or registration by region

Type of license or registration	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Minnesota fishing license	30%	39%	37%	44%
A boat currently registered in Minnesota	24%	34%	28%	35%

Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B19: Notable differences in visitors with a recreational license or registration by investment group

Type of license or registration	Destination	Core/ Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/ Gateway	Rustic
Minnesota fishing license	36%	34%	41%	37%	46%
Minnesota hunting license	14%	10%	17%	11%	27%
Great Minnesota Ski Pass from the previous winter	8%	11%	20%	8%	8%

Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B20: Activities visitors engaged in while visiting the park by age

Activities	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Hiking/walking	79%	86%	80%	81%	80	78%
Observing/photographing nature	63%	57%	56%	61%	52%	54%
Sightseeing (e.g., taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery)	57%	57%	57%	59%	56%	58%
Taking a self-guided nature walk	42%	45%	46%	48%	40%	38%
Picnicking	32%	30%	31%	31%	32%	26%
Looking at kiosks or visitor center exhibits	23%	24%	30%	29%	28%	30%
Did nothing/relaxed	31%	27%	31%	26%	20%	26%
Visiting historic sites	20%	29%	24%	26%	25%	21%
Bird watching	13%	22%	22%	26%	25%	32%
Shopping in the park's gift shop	19%	21%	18%	28%	23%	24%
Swimming	28%	22%	27%	22%	11%	12%
Camping	15%	18%	19%	20%	15%	17%
Biking (all types)	6%	9%	11%	12%	16%	15%
Canoeing/kayaking/paddleboarding /motorboating	13%	9%	10%	12%	8%	8%
Fishing	10%	9%	12%	11%	7%	8%
Other	6%	4%	6%	2%	2%	3%

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B21: Activities visitors engaged in while visiting the park by region

Activities	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Hiking/walking	84%	83%	73%	77%
Observing/photographing nature	55%	61%	48%	58%
Sightseeing (e.g., taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery)	53%	64%	43%	59%
Taking a self-guided nature walk	46%	44%	40%	43%
Picnicking	28%	28%	33%	35%
Looking at kiosks or visitor center exhibits	30%	33%	20%	19%
Did nothing/relaxed	23%	25%	28%	36%
Visiting historic sites	23%	29%	17%	22%
Bird watching	28%	21%	18%	28%
Shopping in the park’s gift shop	14%	30%	23%	14%
Swimming	16%	16%	30%	28%
Camping	12%	18%	20%	21%
Biking (all types)	7%	14%	20%	8%
Canoeing/kayaking/paddleboarding/motorboating	8%	8%	16%	10%
Fishing	9%	7%	18%	10%
Other	4%	2%	8%	4%

Note. Respondents could select all that apply. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B22: Activities visitors engaged in while visiting the park by investment group

Activities	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Hiking/walking	86%	73%	74%	81%	75%
Observing/photographing nature	60%	45%	61%	57%	46%
Sightseeing (e.g., taking a scenic drive, stopping to view the scenery)	61%	45%	62%	56%	40%
Taking a self-guided nature walk	45%	35%	48%	46%	29%
Picnicking	29%	33%	25%	33%	39%
Looking at kiosks or visitor center exhibits	36%	19%	27%	18%	23%
Did nothing/relaxed	26%	28%	19%	33%	25%

Activities	Destination	Core/ Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/ Gateway	Rustic
Visiting historic sites	31%	16%	28%	15%	22%
Bird watching	24%	21%	19%	28%	16%
Shopping in the park's gift shop	32%	13%	21%	10%	10%
Swimming	18%	27%	14%	23%	19%
Camping	18%	24%	12%	12%	36%
Biking (all types)	11%	11%	24%	7%	9%
Canoeing/kayaking/ paddleboarding/motorboating	8%	18%	11%	7%	9%
Fishing	8%	21%	7%	7%	10%
Other	4%	4%	4%	3%	6%

Note. Respondents could select all that apply. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B23: Satisfaction with park visit

Level of satisfaction	Total visitors
Very satisfied	82%
Somewhat satisfied	14%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1%
Very dissatisfied	<1%

Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B24: Level of importance of features in the park

Features	Very Important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important
A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	95%	4%	<1%	1%
Trails in the park	92%	7%	<1%	<1%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/ forests, protecting rare species)	76%	20%	3%	1%
Signs for finding my way around the park	75%	21%	3%	1%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	75%	23%	2%	1%

Features	Very Important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/ VCC built park buildings)	64%	27%	7%	2%
General informational brochure/maps provided	52%	35%	11%	2%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	47%	35%	15%	4%
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	42%	37%	14%	7%
Presence of park staff	26%	42%	25%	7%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	26%	36%	31%	7%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	25%	46%	25%	5%
Designated places to swim	21%	33%	24%	22%
Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	15%	34%	27%	24%
Fishing opportunities	11%	24%	23%	43%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	9%	30%	29%	32%
Participating in a staff-led programs	5%	19%	31%	45%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B25: Key differences by race/ethnicity (proportion that were “very satisfied” with park features)

Features	White visitors	BIPOC visitors
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	40%	63%
Presence of park staff	27%	51%
Designated places to swim	30%	17%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	37%	26%
Boating opportunities	29%	12%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	30%	19%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B26: Key differences by income (proportion that were “very satisfied” and “satisfied” with park features)

Features	< \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,000	\$150,000 +
Participating in a staff-led program	59%	45%	50%	60%
General informational brochure/maps provided	96%	87%	82%	86%
Designated places to swim	75%	63%	51%	76%
Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	63%	63%	66%	77%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	55%	71%	67%	83%
Signs for finding my way around the park	94%	84%	81%	93%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only

Figure B27: Key differences by age (proportion that were “very satisfied” with park features)

Features	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	75%	77%	79%	79%	76%	89%
Participating in a staff-led program	41%	7%	36%	26%	27%	42%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	28%	38%	31%	28%	32%	35%
General informational brochure/maps provided	45%	48%	35%	35%	44%	41%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	28%	41%	35%	34%	32%	38%
Trails in the park	67%	59%	63%	53%	56%	68%
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	38%	45%	47%	33%	41%	43%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	24%	52%	41%	39%	43%	42%
Designated places to swim	30%	28%	41%	21%	28%	22%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	41%	33%	32%	36%	35%	44%
Fishing opportunities	26%	26%	29%	17%	24%	17%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	35%	55%	50%	49%	52%	56%
Boating opportunities	39%	36%	26%	22%	32%	22%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	36%	30%	25%	28%	32%	29%
Signs for finding my way around the park	48%	42%	40%	34%	44%	33%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

B28: Key differences by age (proportion that were “satisfied” with park features)

Features	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	25%	23%	17%	21%	23%	11%
Participating in a staff-led program	24%	46%	30%	14%	17%	9%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	43%	46%	45%	55%	48%	46%
General informational brochure/maps provided	38%	38%	49%	54%	45%	51%
Trails in the park	28%	30%	32%	43%	35%	28%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/ forests, protecting rare species)	57%	41%	44%	41%	41%	41%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built par	56%	30%	49%	39%	38%	46%
Presence of park staff	41%	48%	47%	59%	43%	47%
Designated places to swim	46%	43%	26%	51%	35%	31%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	20%	41%	46%	45%	35%	35%
Fishing opportunities	34%	36%	33%	40%	30%	36%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	41%	34%	39%	38%	44%	38%
Boating opportunities	26%	30%	47%	42%	29%	44%
Signs for finding my way around the park	25%	42%	46%	43%	29%	39%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figures B29: Level of satisfaction with features in the park by region (part 2 survey respondents only)

Figure B29a: A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	80%	89%	69%	69%
Satisfied	19%	11%	28%	29%
Neutral	1%	<1%	0%	2%
Dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%
Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	3%	0%

Figure B29b: Participating in a staff-led program

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	32%	33%	13%	34%
Satisfied	25%	21%	27%	19%
Neutral	42%	45%	60%	46%
Dissatisfied	0%	<1%	0%	0%
Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	1%

Figure B29c: Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	30%	36%	28%	32%
Satisfied	52%	45%	46%	45%
Neutral	16%	18%	17%	20%
Dissatisfied	2%	<1%	5%	2%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	4%	0%

Figure B29d: General informational brochure/maps provided

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	35%	48%	29%	43%
Satisfied	54%	43%	57%	38%
Neutral	8%	8%	11%	15%
Dissatisfied	3%	2%	4%	2%
Very dissatisfied	1%	1%	0%	2%

Figure B29e: Availability of park staff to answer questions

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	35%	37%	37%	31%
Satisfied	44%	41%	32%	43%
Neutral	17%	20%	26%	16%
Dissatisfied	2%	2%	4%	7%
Very dissatisfied	2%	0%	0%	2%

Figure B29f: Trails in the park

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	59%	70%	50%	52%
Satisfied	36%	24%	41%	38%
Neutral	3%	5%	9%	7%
Dissatisfied	1%	1%	<1%	1%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	0%	1%

Figure B29g: Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	33%	47%	44%	40%
Satisfied	51%	40%	40%	37%
Neutral	12%	12%	16%	18%
Dissatisfied	2%	1%	0%	6%
Very dissatisfied	2%	0%	0%	0%

Figure B29h: Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	41%	47%	47%	41%
Satisfied	45%	43%	37%	45%
Neutral	12%	10%	15%	13%
Dissatisfied	2%	0%	0%	1%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	1%	0%

Figure B29i: Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	36%	45%	49%	36%
Satisfied	42%	41%	40%	51%
Neutral	21%	13%	11%	11%
Dissatisfied	1%	0%	0%	<1%
Very dissatisfied	0%	1%	0%	2%

Figure B29j: Presence of park staff

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	24%	32%	37%	16%
Satisfied	49%	50%	36%	54%
Neutral	20%	17%	27%	25%
Dissatisfied	5%	1%	0%	3%
Very dissatisfied	2%	<1%	0%	2%

Figure B29k: Designated places to swim

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	20%	28%	48%	29%
Satisfied	38%	42%	24%	27%
Neutral	36%	27%	18%	34%
Dissatisfied	4%	2%	5%	8%
Very dissatisfied	1%	<1%	4%	1%

Figure B29l: Lack of disturbances by other park visitors

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	40%	35%	30%	35%
Satisfied	39%	34%	43%	49%
Neutral	19%	24%	24%	13%
Dissatisfied	2%	5%	3%	2%
Very dissatisfied	1%	1%	0%	2%

Figure B29m: Fishing opportunities

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	16%	23%	34%	21%
Satisfied	46%	27%	32%	34%
Neutral	37%	46%	32%	37%
Dissatisfied	<1%	3%	2%	6%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	<1%	0%	1%

Figure B29n: Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	47%	57%	48%	47%
Satisfied	41%	34%	39%	47%
Neutral	9%	6%	10%	2%
Dissatisfied	2%	2%	3%	4%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	<1%	0%

Figure B29o: Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	20%	28%	35%	31%
Satisfied	42%	33%	36%	49%
Neutral	36%	36%	29%	17%
Dissatisfied	2%	3%	0%	2%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	0%	1%

Figure B29p: Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	22%	33%	27%	33%
Satisfied	35%	41%	37%	40%
Neutral	38%	25%	26%	22%
Dissatisfied	5%	<1%	9%	4%
Very dissatisfied	0%	<1%	0%	1%

Figure B29q: Signs for finding my way around the park

Level of satisfaction	Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southern
Very satisfied	37%	44%	31%	38%
Satisfied	50%	46%	52%	47%
Neutral	8%	8%	15%	13%
Dissatisfied	5%	2	1%	2%
Very dissatisfied	0%	1%	0%	<1%

Figures B30: Level of satisfaction with features in the park by investment group (part 2 survey respondents only)

Figure B30a: A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	86%	70%	80%	74%	71%
Satisfied	13%	25%	20%	25%	26%
Neutral	<1%	1%	0%	1%	3%
Dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	<1%
Very dissatisfied	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%

Figure B30b: Participating in a staff-led program

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	32%	27%	29%	29%	27%
Satisfied	25%	25%	17%	23%	15%
Neutral	43%	47%	54%	47%	58%
Dissatisfied	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Figure B30c: Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	33%	31%	41%	28%	32%
Satisfied	49%	40%	48%	50%	41%
Neutral	16%	24%	12%	20%	21%
Dissatisfied	1%	5%	0%	2%	4%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%

Figure B30d: General informational brochure/maps provided

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	45%	30%	42%	36%	36%
Satisfied	42%	48%	58%	51%	45%
Neutral	10%	15%	<1%	12%	6%
Dissatisfied	3%	6%	0%	1%	1%
Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%

Figure B30e: Availability of park staff to answer questions

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	41%	37%	28%	29%	28%
Satisfied	38%	37%	46%	47%	36%
Neutral	20%	19%	23%	19%	18%
Dissatisfied	1%	7%	3%	4%	5%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	0%	0%	14%

Figure B30f: Trails in the park

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	65%	49%	71%	57%	44%
Satisfied	29%	40%	25%	38%	40%
Neutral	6%	9%	3%	4%	9%
Dissatisfied	<1%	1%	0%	1%	4%
Very dissatisfied	0%	2%	1%	0%	3%

Figure B30g: Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	46%	41%	48%	33%	33%
Satisfied	41%	41%	42%	45%	48%
Neutral	13%	14%	8%	19%	11%
Dissatisfied	0%	4%	2%	4%	2%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	<1%	0%	5%

Figure B30h: Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	50%	30%	43%	43%	34%
Satisfied	37%	50%	52%	45%	47%
Neutral	12%	20%	5%	11%	18%
Dissatisfied	1%	<1%	0%	1%	<1%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	0%	1%	<1%

Figure B30i: Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	45%	40%	45%	35%	33%
Satisfied	41%	42%	39%	50%	35%
Neutral	12%	18%	16%	14%	30%
Dissatisfied	<1%	0%	<1%	0%	1%
Very dissatisfied	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Figure B30j: Presence of park staff

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	35%	25%	21%	22%	15%
Satisfied	46%	49%	57%	50%	39%
Neutral	18%	26%	22%	25%	19%
Dissatisfied	2%	<1%	<1%	2%	14%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	0%	<1%	13%

Figure B30k: Designated places to swim

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	32%	33%	29%	28%	2%
Satisfied	33%	41%	54%	32%	16%
Neutral	32%	21%	15%	29%	56%
Dissatisfied	2%	4%	1%	8%	23%
Very dissatisfied	0%	<1%	2%	3%	2%

Figure B30l: Lack of disturbances by other park visitors

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	36%	31%	31%	39%	45%
Satisfied	38%	40%	36%	44%	36%
Neutral	21%	26%	29%	14%	14%
Dissatisfied	5%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	<1%	2%	1%	4%

Figure B30m: Fishing opportunities

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	20%	22%	26%	31%	18%
Satisfied	37%	47%	26%	26%	28%
Neutral	40%	27%	47%	36%	50%
Dissatisfied	2%	3%	0%	6%	3%
Very dissatisfied	0%	<1%	1%	<1%	2%

Figure B30n: Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	59%	38%	48%	50%	38%
Satisfied	33%	52%	43%	39%	47%
Neutral	7%	7%	7%	5%	12%
Dissatisfied	1%	2%	2%	5%	4%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	1%	<1%	0%	0%

Figure B30o: Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	31%	32%	24%	19%	23%
Satisfied	32%	33%	58%	51%	26%
Neutral	33%	34%	17%	30%	42%
Dissatisfied	3%	1%	0%	<1%	7%
Very dissatisfied	0%	<1%	1%	<1%	1%

Figure B30p: Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	35%	24%	14%	26%	14%
Satisfied	40%	34%	44%	39%	30%
Neutral	23%	28%	42%	33%	46%
Dissatisfied	2%	14%	<1%	2%	6%
Very dissatisfied	<1%	0%	0%	0%	4%

Figure B30q: Signs for finding my way around the park

Level of satisfaction	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Very satisfied	43%	29%	41%	39%	17%
Satisfied	46%	51%	54%	47%	51%
Neutral	8%	15%	2%	12%	25%
Dissatisfied	4%	4%	2%	1%	2%
Very dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%

Figure B31: Information source not listed in the survey used by visitors

Information source	Visitors (N=176)
Web searches (general)	51%
Books, publications, and print information	16%
AllTrails	11%

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B32: Most important information sources used by visitors about Minnesota state parks by age

Information source	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
DNR website	54%	77%	76%	73%	74%	65%
Friends and family	68%	60%	56%	49%	52%	44%
Staff and informational materials at the park (including state park campgrounds)	35%	46%	36%	39%	35%	40%
DNR parks and trails brochures	31%	33%	34%	36%	42%	38%
Explore Minnesota	17%	31%	28%	28%	34%	35%
Social media	41%	40%	33%	21%	18%	12%
Recreation maps and guides	24%	25%	21%	23%	28%	26%
DNR social media	11%	16%	16%	14%	8%	8%
Places I stay (e.g., resorts, campgrounds)	17%	14%	12%	13%	15%	10%
Online (please specify)	10%	12%	8%	7%	8%	6%
Newspapers or magazines	3%	5%	4%	5%	14%	13%
DNR newsletters	4%	2%	3%	4%	7%	8%
Chambers of commerce/convention and visitor bureaus	<1%	2%	3%	4%	9%	5%
Travel guides/agents	4%	5%	2%	3%	6%	4%
TV	7%	2%	1%	3%	4%	6%
Radio	2%	3%	3%	1%	7%	3%
Another source not listed	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	6%
None of the above	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	2%

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B33: Most important information sources used by visitors about Minnesota state parks by household income

Information source	< \$50,000	\$50,000- \$99,999	\$100,000- \$149,000	\$150,000+
DNR website	62%	75%	74%	74%
Friends and family	60%	53%	55%	57%
Staff and informational materials at the park (including state park campgrounds)	38%	39%	39%	42%
DNR parks and trails brochures	36%	37%	32%	36%
Explore Minnesota	26%	32%	32%	31%
Social media	35%	31%	24%	28%
Recreation maps and guides	27%	25%	23%	30%
DNR social media	12%	16%	13%	14%
Places I stay (e.g., resorts, campgrounds)	14%	12%	17%	13%
Online (please specify)	12%	6%	7%	8%
Newspapers or magazines	7%	7%	8%	7%
DNR newsletters	6%	5%	5%	3%
Chambers of commerce/convention and visitor bureaus	5%	4%	3%	4%
Travel guides/agents	3%	5%	6%	3%
TV	2%	4%	4%	2%
Radio	2%	3%	3%	5%
Another source not listed	2%	2%	3%	2%
None of the above	1%	1%	1%	1%

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B34: Most important information sources used by visitors about Minnesota state parks by region

Information source	Central Region	Northeast Region	Northwest Region	Southern Region
DNR website	74%	74%	63%	70%
Friends and family	50%	58%	65%	45%
Staff and informational materials at the park (including state park campgrounds)	40%	38%	38%	41%
DNR parks and trails brochures	36%	33%	40%	39%
Explore Minnesota	29%	29%	32%	28%
Social media	23%	29%	31%	25%
Recreation maps and guides	20%	27%	28%	22%
DNR social media	11%	13%	13%	14%
Places I stay (e.g., resorts, campgrounds)	10%	12%	22%	13%
Online (please specify)	7%	9%	11%	6%
Newspapers or magazines	8%	9%	7%	4%
DNR newsletters	5%	4%	3%	6%
Chambers of commerce/convention and visitor bureaus	2%	3%	11%	3%
Travel guides/agents	4%	4%	4%	3%
TV	5%	3%	1%	3%
Radio	5%	2%	5%	3%
Another source not listed	1%	3%	3%	3%
None of the above	<1%	1%	2%	2%

Note. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B35: Most important information sources used by visitors about Minnesota state parks by investment group

Information source	Destination	Core/ Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/ Gateway	Rustic
DNR website	72%	69%	69%	72%	71%
Friends and family	53%	66%	58%	45%	58%
Staff and informational materials at the park (including state park campgrounds)	40%	42%	32%	39%	37%
DNR parks and trails brochures	33%	41%	33%	37%	39%
Explore Minnesota	27%	35%	33%	28%	25%
Social media	25%	29%	32%	27%	34%
Recreation maps and guides	22%	27%	32%	22%	31%
DNR social media	12%	10%	15%	15%	9%
Places I stay (e.g., resorts, campgrounds)	12%	22%	15%	9%	15%
Online (please specify)	9%	9%	7%	7%	9%
Newspapers or magazines	8%	7%	9%	4%	5%
DNR newsletters	5%	5%	2%	5%	7%
Chambers of commerce/convention and visitor bureaus	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%
Travel guides/agents	4%	3%	7%	3%	2%
TV	5%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Radio	4%	6%	3%	1%	4%
Another source not listed	2%	4%	2%	2%	1%
None of the above	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%

Note. Respondents could select all that apply. Part 1 survey respondents.

Figure B36: Importance of features for an enjoyable park visit by overnight visitors

Features	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important
A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	93%	6%	1%	<1%
Trails in the park	84%	13%	3%	<1%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	71%	22%	7%	<1%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	86%	13%	1%	0%
Signs for finding my way around the park	73%	24%	3%	<1%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	62%	26%	11%	1%
General informational brochure/maps provided	57%	33%	8%	2%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	57%	34%	8%	1%
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	48%	28%	17%	7%
Presence of park staff	34%	40%	19%	6%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	35%	42%	16%	7%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	23%	48%	24%	6%
Designated places to swim	33%	35%	21%	12%
Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	21%	36%	26%	17%
Fishing opportunities	15%	30%	22%	33%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	13%	32%	32%	23%
Participating in a staff-led program	8%	25%	27%	40%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B37: Importance of features for an enjoyable park visit by day-use visitors

Features	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important
A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	95%	4%	<1%	1%
Trails in the park	93%	6%	0%	<1%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	77%	20%	2%	1%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	74%	24%	2%	1%
Signs for finding my way around the park	76%	21%	3%	1%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	64%	27%	6%	3%
General informational brochure/maps provided	52%	36%	11%	2%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	45%	35%	15%	4%
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	41%	38%	14%	7%
Presence of park staff	26%	42%	26%	7%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	25%	35%	33%	7%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	25%	45%	25%	5%
Designated places to swim	19%	33%	24%	23%
Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	14%	34%	27%	25%
Fishing opportunities	10%	23%	23%	44%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	9%	29%	29%	33%
Participating in a staff-led program	5%	18%	31%	46%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B38: Key differences by age (proportion that reported features as “very important” for an enjoyable visit)

Key findings	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	6%	28%	20%	25%	30%	29%
General informational brochure/maps provided	30%	62%	43%	45%	64%	56%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	26%	26%	18%	22%	29%	37%
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	20%	44%	34%	44%	43%	52%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	66%	74%	83%	72%	75%	78%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	55%	60%	64%	61%	65%	73%
Presence of park staff	17%	21%	19%	19%	30%	47%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	34%	48%	44%	45%	41%	57%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	68%	72%	77%	70%	79%	78%
Signs for finding my way around the park	78%	74%	70%	77%	78%	80%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B39: Key differences by race/ethnicity (proportion that reported features as “very important” for an enjoyable park visit)

Key findings	BIPOC	White
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	67%	40%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	89%	63%
Participating in a staff-led program	18%	4%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	91%	76%
General informational brochure/maps provided	63%	52%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	36%	26%
Designated places to swim	30%	20%

Figure B40: Key differences by household income (proportion that reported features as “very important” for an enjoyable visit)

Key findings	< \$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,000	\$150,000 +
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	30%	33%	21%	14%
General informational brochure/maps provided	48%	56%	53%	41%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	24%	27%	28%	16%
Quality of facilities in the picnic ground	39%	44%	42%	31%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	80%	83%	76%	71%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	66%	73%	62%	57%
Presence of park staff	27%	30%	24%	18%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	61%	45%	44%	45%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	69%	79%	67%	77%
Signs for finding my way around the park	78%	79%	68%	76%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B41: Key differences by region (proportion that reported items as “very important” for an enjoyable visit)

Key findings	Central Region	Northeast Region	Northwest Region	Southern Region
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	21%	20%	41%	29%
General informational brochure/maps provided	54%	47%	54%	60%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	22%	26%	34%	25%
Quality facilities in the picnic grounds	31%	38%	63%	46%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	58%	62%	70%	72%
Presence of park staff	24%	25%	35%	25%
Designated places to swim	17%	17%	33%	25%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	50%	41%	55%	46%
Fishing opportunities	9%	8%	20%	11%
Signs for finding my way around the park	75%	75%	85%	69%
A natural setting for the park (e.g., lakes, rivers, forest)	80	89	69	69

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B42: Key differences by investment group (proportion that reported features as “very important” for an enjoyable visit)

Key findings	Destination	Core/ Classic	Core/ Adventure	Core/ Gateway	Rustic
Participating in a staff-led program	6%	2%	4%	5%	13%
Learning about the park from an exhibit, educational signage, brochure, kiosk, video, or using other self-guided means	24%	36%	19%	24%	21%
General informational brochure/maps provided	54%	45%	48%	56%	48%
Availability of park staff to answer questions	32%	19%	13%	26%	15%
Quality of facilities in the picnic grounds	44%	48%	27%	42%	45%
Well-protected and managed natural resources (e.g., controlling for invasive species, restoring prairies/forests, protecting rare species)	78%	68%	75%	79%	70%
Well-protected cultural resources (e.g., historic and archeological sites, historic structures such as CCC/WPA/VCC built park buildings)	65%	61%	59%	70%	53%
Presence of park staff	32%	22%	17%	25%	19%
Lack of disturbances by other park visitors	49%	46%	32%	46%	62%
Well-maintained, clean grounds and facilities	75%	77%	66%	77%	80%
Boating opportunities (e.g., canoeing/kayaking, motorboating)	19%	15%	14%	9%	7%
Ability to purchase souvenirs or convenience items at the gift shop	12%	13%	2%	6%	6%
Signs for finding my way around the park	80%	71%	65%	75%	72%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B43: Perceived value for camping/lodging fee paid by age group

Key findings	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Good value	87%	80%	74%	74%	79%	77%
Fair value	13%	10%	24%	26%	21%	19%
Poor value	0%	11%	2%	0%	0%	4%

B44: Level of support from all visitors to potential park changes

Proposed park changes	Strongly support	Mildly support	Neither oppose nor support	Mildly oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	63%	22%	12%	1%	<1%	1%
Provide more hiking trails.	51%	34%	13%	1%	<1%	1%
Provide more spacing between campsites.	32%	23%	22%	1%	0%	22%
Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	32%	45%	19%	1%	<1%	2%
Provide more programs for children in the parks.	30%	33%	29%	1%	<1%	7%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	24%	31%	29%	7%	6%	4%
Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	20%	31%	33%	2%	1%	13%
Provide more staff-led learning opportunities (e.g., interpretive programming).	22%	34%	38%	2%	<1%	3%
Provide more paved trails.	23%	28%	25%	16%	6%	2%
Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	20%	23%	30%	16%	9%	2%
Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	16%	14%	38%	7%	5%	19%
Provide more programs and events in the parks.	18%	36%	37%	2%	1%	6%
Provide more play areas in the parks.	16%	28%	40%	9%	3%	5%

Proposed park changes	Strongly support	Mildly support	Neither oppose nor support	Mildly oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	13%	22%	48%	6%	2%	8%
Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	14%	19%	40%	11%	5%	11%
Provide food concessions/coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	11%	24%	34%	20%	7%	3%
Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	6%	8%	36%	21%	14%	15%
Provide more hunting opportunities.	5%	4%	35%	14%	24%	18%
Provide more horse trails.	4%	4%	57%	11%	7%	16%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B45: Key differences by day and overnight visitor (proportion that reported features as “strongly support” for potential park changes)

Potential changes	Overnight use	Day use
Provide more spacing between campsites.	56%	29%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	39%	22%
Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	37%	14%
Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	15%	5%

Figure B46: Key differences by race/ethnicity (proportion that reported features as “strongly support” for potential park changes)

Potential changes	White	BIPOC
Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	32%	54%
Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	12%	31%
Provide more hiking trails.	50%	69%
Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	62%	80%
Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	19%	37%
Provide more paved trails.	22%	38%
Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	19%	33%
Provide food concessions/coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	10%	24%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	22%	34%
Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	13%	24%

Figure B47: Potential park changes by age (proportion that reported features as “strongly support” and “mildly support”)

Changes	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	93%	83%	87%	90%	78%	89%
Provide more hiking trails.	83%	84%	86%	87%	87%	82%
Provide more spacing between campsites.	61%	55%	61%	63%	41%	52%
Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	73%	78%	73%	74%	79%	87%
Provide more programs for children in the parks.	74%	58%	73%	49%	62%	65%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	57%	44%	50%	49%	63%	61%
Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	58%	43%	62%	46%	49%	50%
Provide more staff-led learning opportunities (e.g., interpretive programming).	54%	52%	55%	50%	57%	66%
Provide more paved trails.	30%	50%	52%	41%	61%	52%
Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	29%	42%	36%	41%	53%	45%
Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	17%	29%	30%	33%	26%	36%
Provide more programs and events in the parks.	63%	53%	57%	49%	53%	56%
Provide more play areas in the parks.	39%	39%	58%	37%	40%	40%
Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	26%	31%	40%	34%	36%	40%
Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	41%	31%	37%	39%	33%	25%
Provide food concessions/coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	43%	32%	34%	32%	33%	38%
Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	11%	15%	10%	14%	13%	23%
Provide more hunting opportunities.	5%	14%	10%	9%	9%	6%
Provide more horse trails.	22%	9%	10%	8%	3%	9%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B48: Potential park changes by income (proportion that reported features as “strongly support” and “mildly support”)

Changes	\$50,000	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$100,000 to \$149,000	\$150,000+
Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	88%	89%	88%	82%
Provide more hiking trails.	79%	86%	85%	90%
Provide more spacing between campsites.	47%	55%	53%	56%
Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	88%	81%	75%	70%
Provide more programs for children in the parks.	70%	59%	63%	62%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	64%	49%	50%	53%
Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	46%	50%	54%	57%
Provide more staff-led learning opportunities (e.g., interpretive programming).	74%	57%	57%	42%
Provide more paved trails.	60%	51%	49%	52%
Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	44%	41%	38%	42%
Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	24%	25%	29%	35%
Provide more programs and events in the parks.	66%	51%	54%	49%
Provide more play areas in the parks.	53%	35%	46%	50%
Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	41%	33%	39%	33%
Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	32%	31%	42%	32%
Provide food concessions/coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	52%	32%	27%	35%
Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	10%	13%	8%	20%
Provide more hunting opportunities.	8%	11%	7%	3%
Provide more horse trails.	10%	11%	6%	6%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

B49: Potential park changes by region (proportion that reported features as “strongly support” and “mildly support”)

Changes	Central Region	Northeast Region	Northwest Region	Southern Region
Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	85%	81%	89%	90%
Provide more hiking trails.	82%	85%	89%	86%
Provide more spacing between campsites.	56%	49%	56%	66%
Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	72%	74%	90%	82%
Provide more programs for children in the parks.	62%	61%	68%	62%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	49%	55%	62%	54%
Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	55%	48%	52%	53%
Provide more staff-led learning opportunities (e.g., interpretive programming).	55%	54%	69%	51%
Provide more paved trails.	46%	50%	59%	51%
Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	40%	45%	34%	51%
Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	24%	29%	36%	38%
Provide more programs and events in the parks.	52%	52%	60%	58%
Provide more play areas in the parks.	42%	38%	44%	57%
Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	33%	36%	32%	42%
Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	24%	37%	44%	29%
Provide food concessions/coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	30%	32%	46%	39%
Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	9%	15%	17%	19%
Provide more hunting opportunities.	7%	10%	5%	15%
Provide more horse trails.	5%	7%	14%	10%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

Figure B50: Potential park changes by investment group (proportion that reported features as “strongly support” and “mildly support”)

Changes	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Prioritize the protection of remaining natural areas and culturally significant sites by limiting additional development.	87%	83%	78%	88%	81%
Provide more hiking trails.	84%	86%	83%	87%	85%
Provide more spacing between campsites.	52%	64%	50%	55%	72%
Provide more exhibits and other self-guided learning opportunities.	79%	83%	57%	85%	67%
Provide more programs for children in the parks.	64%	67%	50%	67%	51%
Provide wireless internet access near park visitor centers and campgrounds.	54%	45%	45%	60%	74%
Provide separate campgrounds for tent and vehicle campers.	52%	53%	47%	54%	47%
Provide more staff-led learning opportunities (e.g., interpretive programming).	60%	58%	36%	61%	44%
Provide more paved trails.	52%	50%	45%	49%	58%
Develop more land in state parks for recreation use.	42%	39%	49%	44%	48%
Provide more electrical hook-ups at campsites.	32%	26%	20%	31%	40%
Provide more programs and events in the parks.	58%	51%	33%	63%	43%
Provide more play areas in the parks.	41%	50%	32%	55%	33%
Provide more facilities for multi-family or group gatherings or camping.	35%	37%	26%	41%	35%
Provide more opportunities to ride mountain or fat bikes.	30%	37%	37%	37%	28%

Changes	Destination	Core/Classic	Core/Adventure	Core/Gateway	Rustic
Provide food concessions/ coffee shops/gathering places in the parks.	36%	31%	24%	42%	35%
Provide more campsites for motorhomes and similar large rigs.	14%	16%	14%	16%	18%
Provide more hunting opportunities.	10%	15%	4%	8%	9%
Provide more horse trails.	10%	8%	5%	8%	7%

Note. Part 2 survey respondents only.

C. Economic impact assessment supplemental information

Supplemental tables

Figure C1: Spending profile of day-use visitors (from home and overnight, combined) (mean \$ per person per day)

Expense	Away-from-home spending	At-home spending ^a	Total spending
Overnight accommodations in the private sector	\$7.28	\$0.72	\$7.99
Restaurants	\$12.54	\$1.12	\$13.66
Groceries	\$6.20	\$2.74	\$8.94
Gasoline and other fuels	\$15.55	\$2.50	\$18.05
Other transportation-related expenses	\$0.43	\$0.05	\$0.48
Shopping (clothes, souvenirs, gifts, etc.)	\$5.48	\$0.23	\$5.72
Recreational equipment, purchased or rented	\$1.55	\$0.76	\$2.31
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$0.92	\$0.03	\$0.95
All other trip-related spending	\$0.25	\$0.07	\$0.32
Subtotal (excluding payments to public agencies)	\$50.20	\$8.23	\$58.43
Payments to state parks and other public agencies (park fees, licenses, etc.)	\$7.31	\$0.88	\$8.19
Total (mean per person per day)	\$57.51	\$9.11	\$66.63

^a Expenditures of out-of-state tourists are not included in at-home spending estimates because those funds were spent outside Minnesota and do not directly contribute to the state or regional economies. Their spending values were entered as zeros for the purpose of calculating the at-home expenditure mean, to ensure the use of the same denominators within each combination of visitor group and spending category.

Figure C2: Spending profile of visitors (all groups, combined) (mean \$ per person per day)

Expense	Away-from-home spending	At-home spending ^a	Total spending
Overnight accommodations in the private sector	\$6.53	\$0.64	\$7.17
Restaurants	\$12.02	\$1.08	\$13.10
Groceries	\$6.42	\$3.03	\$9.45
Gasoline and other fuels	\$15.45	\$2.64	\$18.08
Other transportation-related expenses	\$0.50	\$0.10	\$0.60
Shopping (clothes, souvenirs, gifts, etc.)	\$5.32	\$0.22	\$5.55
Recreational equipment, purchased or rented	\$1.66	\$1.00	\$2.66
Entertainment (including casinos)	\$0.94	\$0.04	\$0.98
All other trip-related spending	\$0.24	\$0.08	\$0.32
Subtotal (excluding payments to public agencies)	\$49.09	\$8.82	\$57.91
Payments to state parks and other public agencies (park fees, licenses, etc.)	\$8.04	\$1.08	\$9.12
Total (mean per person per day)	\$57.13	\$9.90	\$67.03

^a Expenditures of out-of-state tourists are not included in at-home spending estimates because those funds were spent outside Minnesota and do not directly contribute to the state or regional economies. Their spending values were entered as zeros for the purpose of calculating the at-home expenditure mean, to ensure the use of the same denominators within each combination of visitor group and spending category.

Figure C3: Park visitor spending in each region, by region of visitor origin

Visitor's home region	Spending in Central (\$millions)	Spending in Northeast (\$millions)	Spending in Northwest (\$millions)	Spending in Southern (\$millions)	Total (\$millions)
Central	\$148	\$216	\$29	\$40	\$433
Northeast	\$5	\$25	\$4	\$1	\$35
Northwest	\$0.2	\$16	\$16	\$1	\$33
Southern	\$4	\$11	\$1	\$25	\$41
Outside Minnesota	\$10	\$109	\$26	\$3	\$148
Total	\$167	\$377	\$76	\$70	\$688

General EIA methods

The economic impact analysis relied on data from part 2 of the survey, which included a set of detailed questions about respondents' trip-related expenditures, both prior to and during their trip. To ensure that the survey data would capture complete information about respondents' expenditures for the full length of their trip, survey participants at the parks were handed cards with instructions to complete part 2 of the survey online after the conclusion of their trip. Survey weights were applied to match statewide park visitor proportions of weekday versus weekend visitors, day-use versus overnight visitors, and visitors of parks in the four different regions.

The analysis includes three main visitor groups, which include day-use visitors (from home), day-use visitors staying overnight elsewhere (not at the park), and overnight visitors at the park (camping or staying in park lodging).

Following the 2012 study, outliers at the top and bottom end of the spending distribution, within each visitor group, were dropped from the sample. While the 2012 study dropped responses with total spending estimates that fell in the top and bottom 10% of their sample, examination of the distribution of 2022 survey responses revealed relatively few extreme values. In this case, the top and bottom 5% of responses (based on total spending) were excluded from the sample for each visitor group. After trimming outliers and removing responses with missing data on questions that were essential to this analysis, the final dataset of 516 responses included 41% day-use visitors (from home), 19% day-use visitors on overnight trips, and 40% overnight visitors. After weighting the data to match the proportions of the overall population of state park visitors, the dataset's proportions of these visitor segments were 59%, 30%, and 10%, respectively.

Payments made to the parks themselves (for vehicle passes, camping fees, etc.) are not included in totals. When the value paid to public agencies is included, these payments are quantified separately.

Qualifying expenditures included purchases in the park and surrounding area on the day(s) of the visit, costs for traveling to/from the park, and any purchases made at home specifically for use during the trip to the park.

Due to a glitch in web survey programming, day-use visitors on overnight trips (staying elsewhere) received the instructions for overnight visitors rather than day-use visitors. During data cleaning, the responses of this group were reviewed carefully to determine whether the respondent had likely considered the correct reference period in their responses. Cases were dropped if the survey responses indicated that the respondent was not interpreting the questions as intended. To avoid biasing economic impact estimates upward, the approach to addressing this issue generally erred on the conservative side.

At-home and away-from-home spending

Visitors were asked to separately quantify their trip-related spending (a) at home, prior to leaving for their trip, and (b) during their trip to the park. At-home purchases are treated differently depending on the circumstance. At-home purchases by non-residents (out-of-state visitors) are not included in any values shown because those funds are assumed to never enter Minnesota's economy. At-home purchases by Minnesota residents are generally included in the analysis (unless indicated otherwise), but are disaggregated into two groups to facilitate comparisons with the 2012 results, which excluded a portion of this spending. For visitors who reside in the same region as

the park where they received the survey invitation, at-home purchases are included in both statewide and regional values throughout the report.⁸

For visitors who are Minnesota residents but do not reside in the same region as the park where they received the survey invitation, their spending is represented differently in this report than it was in the 2012 study. In the 2012 study, this group of at-home purchases appear to have been excluded from all estimates of aggregate economic impact. With this approach, the study focused on the impact of a region's state parks on their own regional economy, while excluding the effects of other regions' state parks on a given region's economy.

With advancements in input-output modeling since the most recent economic impact analysis in 2012, it is now possible to jointly model the interdependent economic impacts on a set of regions using Multi-Region Input-Output (MRIO) analysis. This method allows some economic "leakages" (losses of local value when purchases are made outside the region) to flow into other regions in the study, rather than being lost entirely from the value estimates. As a result, most expenditure values in this report include at-home spending for all Minnesota residents, with at-home spending counted as an economic impact in the park visitor's home region. With this approach, the economic impacts in a given region can be considered the impacts of all state park visitors on the economy of that region.

Specifications of IMPLAN analysis

This subsection reviews the detailed specifications of the IMPLAN model. The input-output analysis was completed using IMPLAN's Multi-Regional Input-Output (MRIO) model, based on 2021 IMPLAN data and measured in 2022 US Dollars.⁹ The MRIO model accounts for economic interactions across regions, and enables us to estimate economic impacts across regions much more precisely than the methods that were available in the past. For example, when tourists in the northeast region cause an increase in demand for corn on the cob, the MRIO model will model the resulting influx of corn on the cob from the southern counties in the state, and capture the economic impact of that demand on the southern region in addition to the direct impacts that occur at the grocery stores in the northeast.¹⁰

Custom regions were generated as groups of counties, based on the four regions used by the DNR.

⁸ This strategy implies an assumption that these at-home purchases were made within the visitor's home region (though IMPLAN was configured to adjust for the local percentage of purchases, so the inevitable "leakage" of dollars outside the region is accounted for in the input-output analysis).

⁹ [MRIO: Introduction to Multi-Regional Input-Output Analysis](#)

¹⁰ MRIO analysis is more effective at capturing multi-regional economic interactions and impacts than previously available strategies involving separate analyses of individual regions. On the flip side, MRIO also allows for a statewide analysis that does not suffer from aggregation bias. Because aggregation bias tends to present as an upward bias in economic output estimates, and because previously available methods were prone to this problem, correcting this bias with the latest available methods would be expected to result in smaller (but more accurate) estimates of economic output.

We include separate IMPLAN "events" (referring to each spending amount entered separately into the model) for up to 12 different spending categories:

- Restaurants;
- Gasoline;
- Other transportation costs;
- Groceries, which are subdivided into 5 groups: Fruits, Grains, Vegetables, Beverages (non-alcoholic), and All Other Groceries¹¹;
- Lodging;
- Shopping;
- Recreational equipment; and
- Entertainment.

Each spending category is reported separately for each of the four regions, and broken down by tourist (non-Minnesota resident) versus local within each of those region-category combinations. All told, the model setup includes a total of 12 categories times two tourist/local groups times four regions equals 96 potential spending 'events' with each one representing each combination of the spending category, the region, and whether the spending is by tourists or locals. Because spending did not occur in some of these combinations (e.g., non-Minnesota-resident visitor spending on recreational equipment in the northwest region), a total of 87 combinations were entered as events in the IMPLAN MRIO model.

The categories representing specific items (gasoline, fruits, grains, vegetables and beverages) were entered as Commodity Output events, with margins set to "purchaser price" (all margins set to "SAM"). The remaining categories were entered as Industry Output events. The following categories required use of IMPLAN's industry aggregation tool to properly capture the categories' contents: restaurants; other transportation costs; lodging; shopping; recreational equipment; and entertainment. Details about the industry codes that were selected for each category are available upon request.

¹¹ Based on state-level food purchasing data from the USDA, we were able to assign an estimated portion of retail food spending to specific commodities, enabling us to quantify the impacts of some of spending that would otherwise be lost as "leakage." For example, the USDA data indicates that 16.5% of grocery spending is on non-alcoholic beverages, 6.2% of food spending is on fruits, 3.8% is spent on vegetables, and 4.7% is spent on grains. As these all directly correspond to an IMPLAN commodity code (or a combination of two codes, in the case of beverages), their portion of the spending can be captured separately as commodity output events in the model, slightly reducing the amount of "leakage." The remainder of grocery spending is modeled as an industry output event for retail grocery.