

National Park Service
Visitor Services Project
The White House Tours

Summer 1989

Volume 1 of 2

Visitor Services Project Report 23
Cooperative Park Studies Unit
National Park Service

National Park Service
Visitor Services Project
The White House Tours

Summer 1989

Volume 1 of 2

Gary E. Machlis

Dana E. Dolsen

January 1990

Dr. Machlis is Sociology Project Leader and Mr. Dolsen is Research Associate of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, National Park Service, University of Idaho. We thank Dwight Madison, Margaret Littlejohn and Jean McKendry for their assistance with this study. We also thank Kitty Roberts, and the staffs of President's Park and the White House for their assistance.

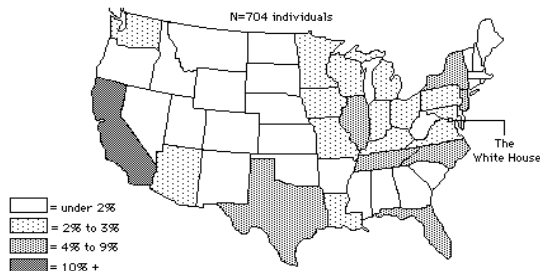
Visitor Services Project

The White House Tours

Summer 1989

Report Summary

- This report describes the results of a study of visitors who took the White House tours during June 28 - July 1, 1989. Five hundred fifty-eight questionnaires were distributed and 457 returned, an 82% response rate.
- Volume 1 profiles White House tour visitors. Volume 2 has their comments about the tours. Summaries of these comments are included in both volumes.
- Seventy-five percent of Congressional tour visitors and 64% of public tour visitors were in



Visitors by state (public tour)

- One third of Congressional tour visitors used the H Street and Madison Place intersection to arrive at the White House; similarly, 29% of the public tour visitors used the Constitution Avenue and 15th Street intersection.
- Congressional tour visitors averaged a 45-minute wait for their tours to begin. Public tour visitors averaged a two hour 15-minute wait for their tours to begin.
- Sixty-six percent of public tour visitor groups used the White House room guides.
- The services and facilities that received the highest quality rating from visitors included the White House room guides, ranger assistance and the map/brochure. Public restrooms were rated as the lowest quality facility.
- Close to three-quarters of the visitors would likely use a White House Visitor Center on their next visit, if one were available. Tour topics suggested by visitors included history, official events, information on the First Families, and architecture.
- In addition to the White House tours, respondents visited many sites in Washington, D.C. Over 90% of the White House visitors visited the Smithsonian Institution, the Lincoln Memorial, and the U.S. Capitol.
- Visitors provided many general comments about the White House tours.

For information on the Visitor Services Project, please contact Dr. Gary E. Machlis, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Moscow, Idaho 83843 (208) 885-7129.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 1	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
METHODS	2
CONGRESSIONAL TOUR RESULTS	
A. Characteristics	4
B. Transportation type	8
C. Routes traveled	9
D. Information sources	11
E. Ticket arrangements	12
F. Ticket sources	13
G. Duration of wait for tour to start	13
H. Use of services and facilities	14
I. Evaluation of services and facilities	16
J. Subjects of interest for future tours	22
K. Potential use of a White House Visitor Center	22
L. Downtown sites visited	23
M. Comment summary	24
PUBLIC TOUR RESULTS	
A. Characteristics	28
B. Transportation type	32
C. Routes traveled	33
D. Information sources	35
E. Duration of wait for tour to start	36
F. Pre-tour activities	37
G. Use of services and facilities	38
H. Evaluation of services and facilities	40
I. Subjects of interest for future tours	46
J. Potential use of a White House Visitor Center	46
K. Downtown sites visited	47
L. Comment summary	48

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

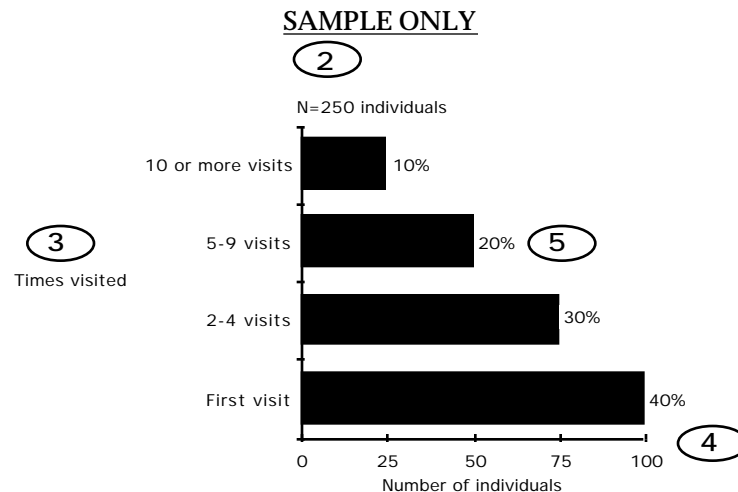
VOLUME 1 (continued)	Page
MENU FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS	53
APPENDIX: Questionnaires	54
VOLUME 2	
COMMENT SUMMARIES	
Congressional tour comment summary	1
Public tour comment summary	4
VISITOR COMMENTS	8

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of White House tour visitors. It was conducted by the Visitor Services Project (VSP) of the National Park Service. There are two kinds of tours. Congressional tours are by reservation through Congressional offices and have one guide assigned to a limited number of visitors. Public tours have guides stationed in each room, and tour tickets must be obtained daily on a first-come, first-served basis (summer operation only).

A Methods section discusses the procedures and limitations of the study. Separate Results sections are provided for the Congressional and public tours; each includes a summary of visitor comments. Next, a Menu for Further Analysis helps managers request additional analyses. Finally, the Appendix presents the questionnaires used. Volume 2 of this report includes comment summaries and the visitors' unedited comments.

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



(1) Figure 4: Number of visits

- 1: The figure title is a general description of the information contained in the graph.
- 2: A note above gives the "N," or number of cases in the samples, and a specific description of the information in the chart. Use **CAUTION** when interpreting any data with a sample size of less than 30, as the results may be unreliable.
- 3: Vertical information refers to categories.
- 4: Horizontal information shows the item number in each category; proportions may be shown.
- 5: In most graphs, percentages are included to provide additional explanation.

METHODS

General strategy

Interviews were conducted and questionnaires distributed to a sample of selected visitors touring the White House during June 28 through July 1, 1989. Visitors completed the questionnaire after their tour and returned it by mail.

Questionnaire administration and sampling

Five hundred ninety-five visitor groups were contacted as they exited the White House onto the north grounds. A systematic interval (every n^{th} adult) was used to select visitors for the survey. These visitors were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study and asked to participate. If they agreed (94% did), a brief interview was conducted and the participants given a questionnaire. Four hundred fifty-seven visitors completed and returned questionnaires, an 82% response rate. Congressional tour and public tour response rates were similar.

Table 1 compares information collected from the total sample of visitors and the actual respondents who returned questionnaires. Numbers differ from those above due to refusals and missing data (see explanation below). Non-response bias is insignificant.

Table 1: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondent	555	42.1	453	42.5
Group size	556	6.7	452	7.8

Data analysis

Two weeks after the survey, a postcard reminder was mailed to all visitors that had agreed to participate. Questionnaires returned within ten weeks were coded and entered into a computer. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were calculated using a standard statistical software package. Respondents' comments were summarized.

Sample size, missing data and reporting errors

This study collected information on both visitor groups and on individual group members. Thus, the sample size ("N"), varies from figure to figure. For example, while Figure

1 shows information for 228 groups, Figure 3 presents data for 789 individuals. A note above each figure's graph specifies the information illustrated.

Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions, or may have answered some incorrectly. Unanswered questions create missing data and cause the number in the sample to vary from figure to figure. For example, although 230 questionnaires were returned by Congressional tour visitor groups, Figure 1 shows data for only 228 respondents.

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

Limitations

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

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

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns during the study period of June 28 - July 1, 1989. The results do not necessarily apply to visitors touring the White House during other times of the year.

3. Caution is advised when interpreting any data where the sample size is less than 30, as the results may be unreliable. Whenever the sample size is less than 30, the word "**CAUTION**" is included in the graph, figure or table.

CONGRESSIONAL TOUR RESULTS

A. Characteristics

Thirty-eight percent of Congressional tour visitors came in groups of four people, 16% in groups of two and 15% in groups of three (Figure 1). Families accounted for 75% of visitors, as shown in Figure 2. Included in the "other" category were such groups as: entertainers, business associates, Congressional arts contest winners, office interns, annual student group excursions, and educational conference delegates.

Figure 3 shows a wide range of age groups, the most common being adults 36-45 (28%) and children 15 years or younger (30%). Seventy-three percent were on their first Congressional tour of the White House and 25% had toured 2-4 times, as seen in Figure 4.

Foreign visitors comprised one percent of all visitation. Map 1 and Table 2 show that most foreign visitors came from three countries--the Netherlands, Australia and Japan. Map 2 shows that most American visitors came from the eastern part of the United States. Table 3 shows that the states with the highest proportion of visitors were California (12%), Texas and Virginia (6% each).

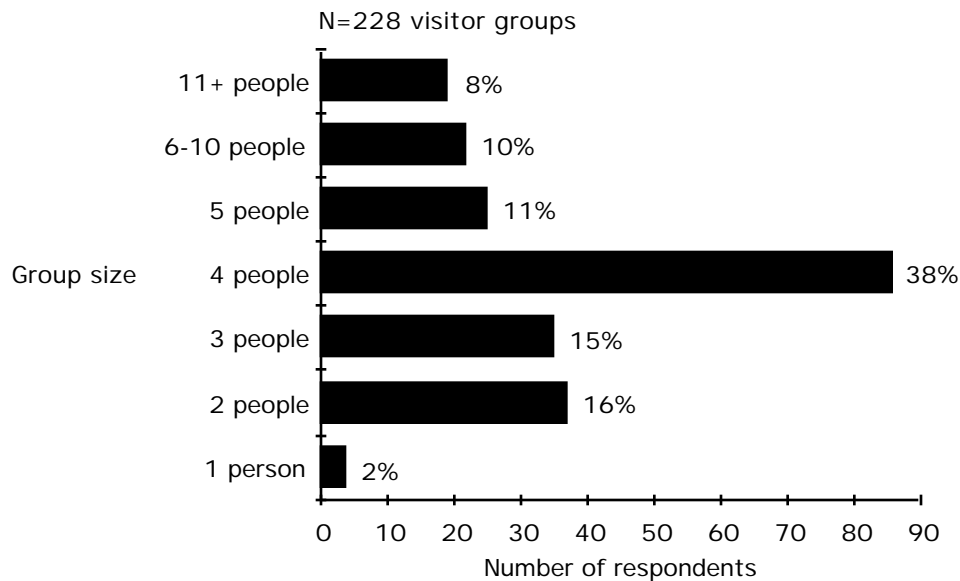


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes (Congressional tour)

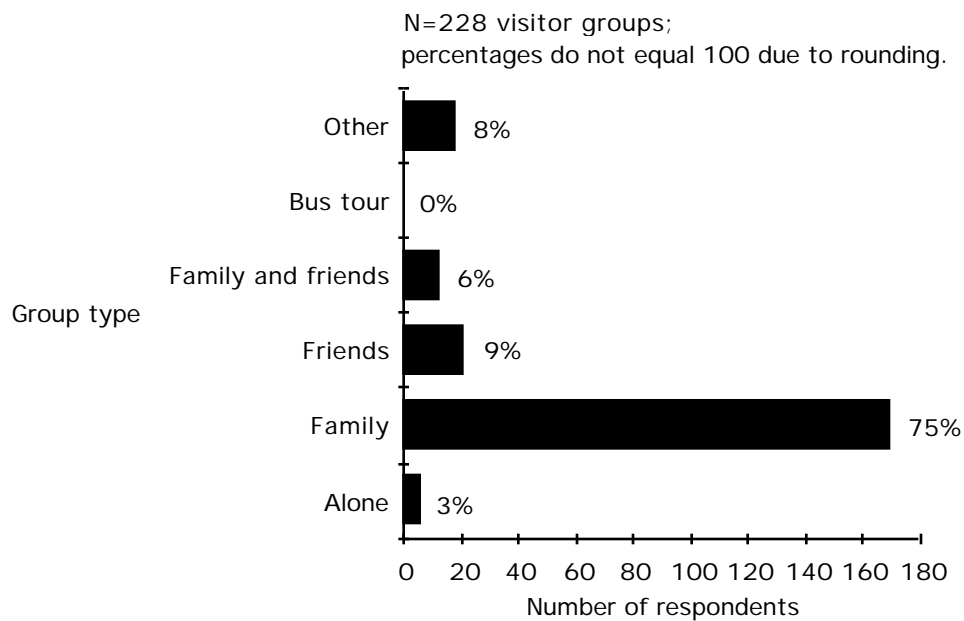


Figure 2: Visitor group types (Congressional tour)

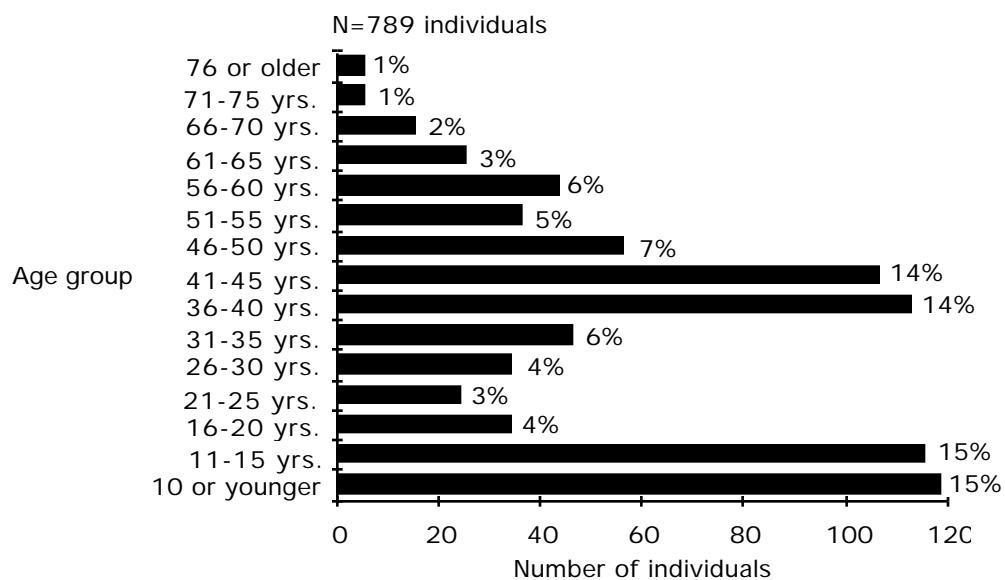


Figure 3: Visitor ages (Congressional tour)

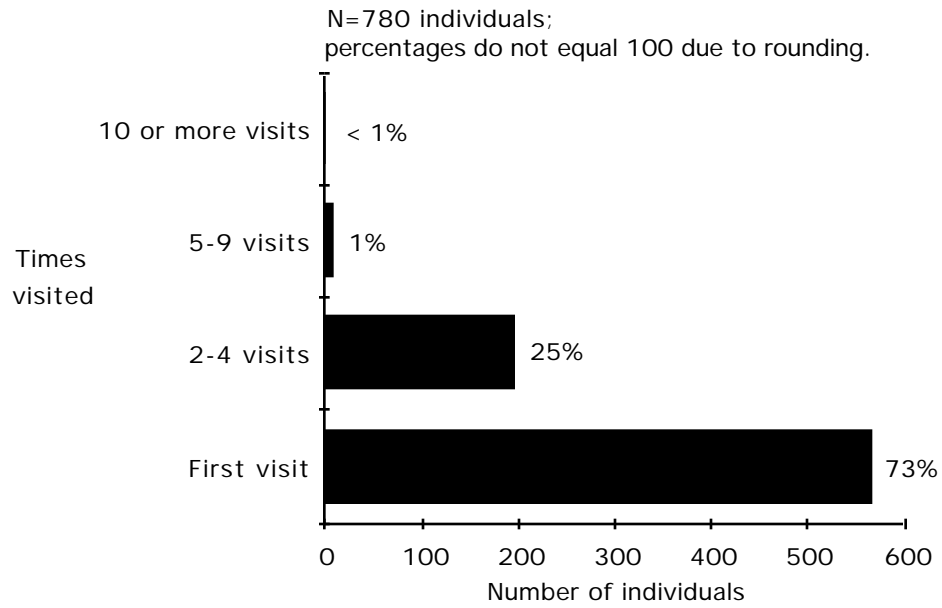


Figure 4: Number of visits made by visitor groups (Congressional tour)



Map 1: Proportion of foreign visitors by country (Congressional tour)

Table 3: Proportion of visitors from each state (Congressional tour)

N=755 individuals;
 individual state percentages do not total to 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	Percent of visitors
California	88	12
Texas	49	6
Virginia	45	6
Illinois	36	5
Ohio	33	4
Florida	30	4
New York	30	4
Pennsylvania	29	4
Michigan	26	3
Massachusetts	25	3
North Carolina	25	3
Washington	25	3
Wisconsin	25	3
Maryland	21	3
Louisiana	20	3
Tennessee	17	2
New Jersey	15	2
Hawaii	14	2
Kentucky	13	2
Connecticut	12	2
Mississippi	12	2
Other states (24)	164	22

B. Transportation type

Most Congressional tour visitors arrived for their White House tour by foot (40%), subway (39%), and private vehicle (34%). Figure 5 shows the proportion of visitor groups that used each type of available transport.

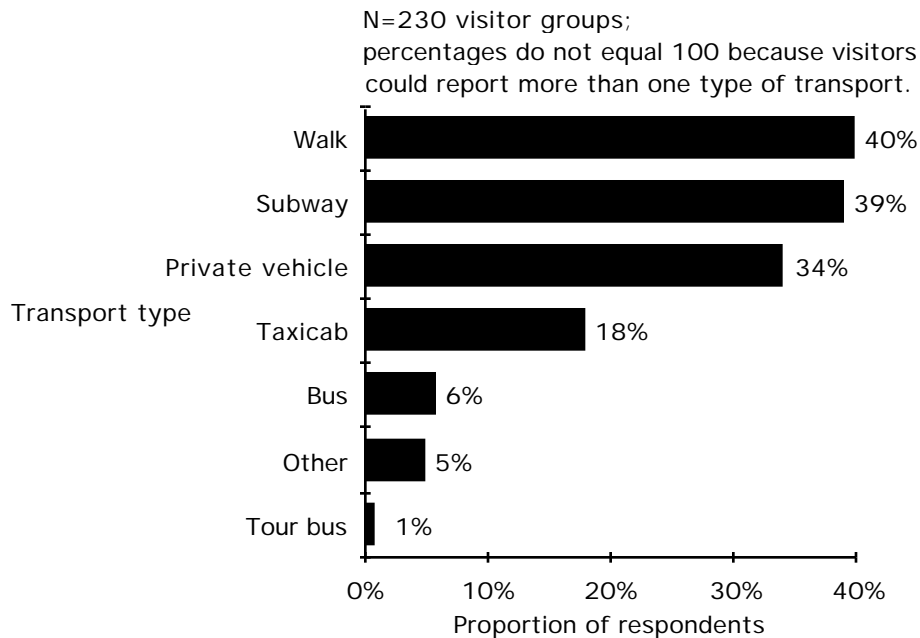


Figure 5: Proportion of visitor groups using each transport type (Congressional tour)

C. Routes traveled

Visitors indicated routes they used to arrive at the Visitors Entrance of the White House. Map 3 shows the proportion of Congressional tour visitors using each "outer" intersection to enter the White House area. H Street and Madison Place (33%) had the highest use.

Map 4 shows the proportion of Congressional tour visitors using each "inner" intersection in the immediate White House area. Pennsylvania Avenue and East Executive Park (66%) and East Executive Park and Hamilton Place (30%) were used most often.

N=230 visitor groups;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors could use more than one intersection.

Map 3: Proportion of visitor groups using outer intersections
(Congressional tour)

N=230 visitor groups;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors could use more than one intersection.

Map 4: Proportion of visitor groups using inner intersections
(Congressional tour)

D. Information sources

Prior to their Congressional tour, 72% of the visitors consulted Congressional offices for tour information. Figure 6 shows the proportion of visitors that consulted each identified source. Other commonly used information sources were personal advice (46%) and previous visits (27%). Two percent consulted the National Park Service.

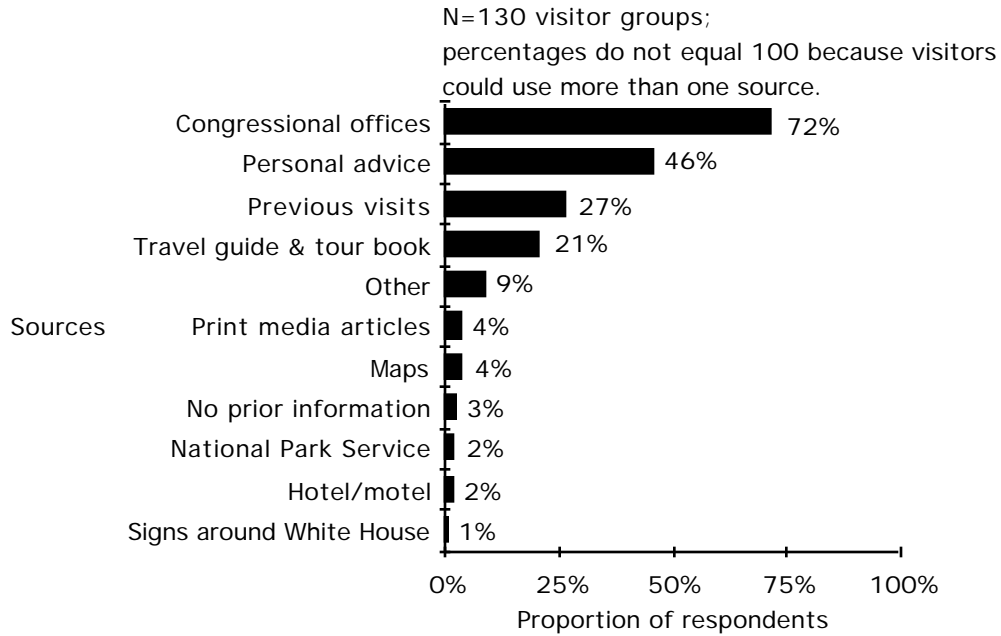


Figure 6: Proportion of visitor groups using each information source (Congressional tour)

E. Ticket arrangements

Similar proportions of Congressional tour visitors received tickets by mail and in person (Figure 7). Respondents that specified "other" ways to get tickets reported their tours were prearranged and approved by the Secret Service at the Visitors Entrance.

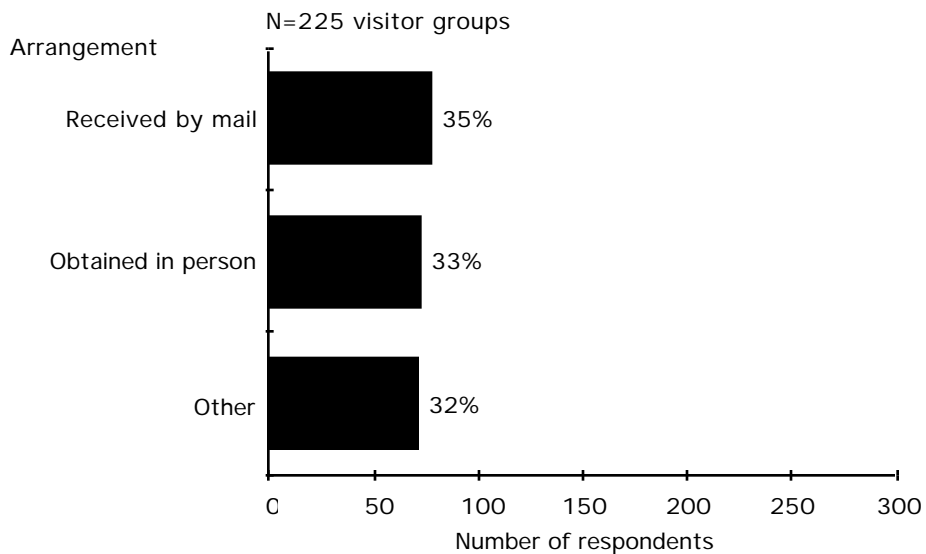


Figure 7: Arrangement for obtaining Congressional tour tickets

F. Ticket sources

Congressional tour visitors commonly obtained their tickets from the offices of Senators (28%) or Representatives (57%), as shown in Figure 8. Some of the "other" originating offices included the U.S. Secret Service Liaison Office, a personal contact in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and unspecified personal contacts.

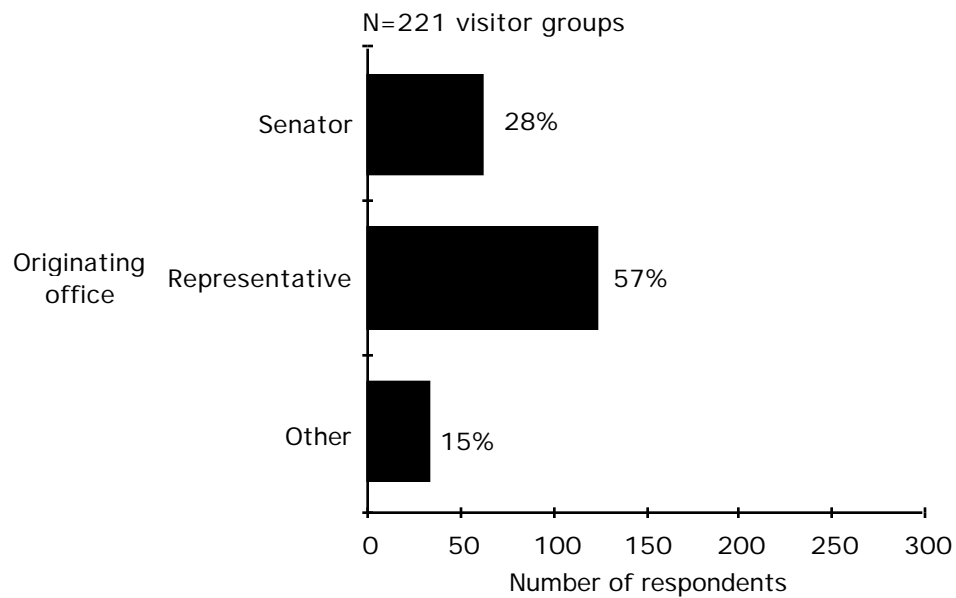


Figure 8: Originating office of Congressional tour tickets

G. Duration of wait for tour to start

Congressional tour visitors commonly waited one hour before their tours began (Figure 9). The average wait was 46 minutes.

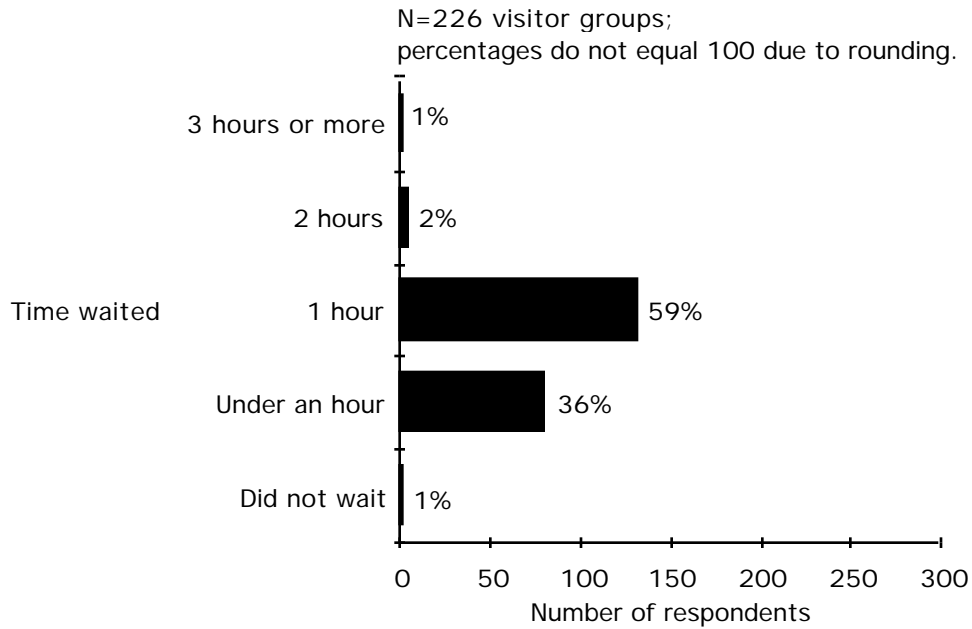


Figure 9: Duration of wait for Congressional tour to start

H. Use of services and facilities

Congressional tour visitors to the White House used a variety of the services and facilities available (Figures 10 and 11). The most commonly used information and interpretive services were the White House room guides (80%), exhibits inside the White House (42%), and book sales (34%), as seen in Figure 10.

Souvenir sales (17%) was the most used support facility; followed by restrooms (10%), and the bus or tram tour and snack bar (3% each), as seen in Figure 11.

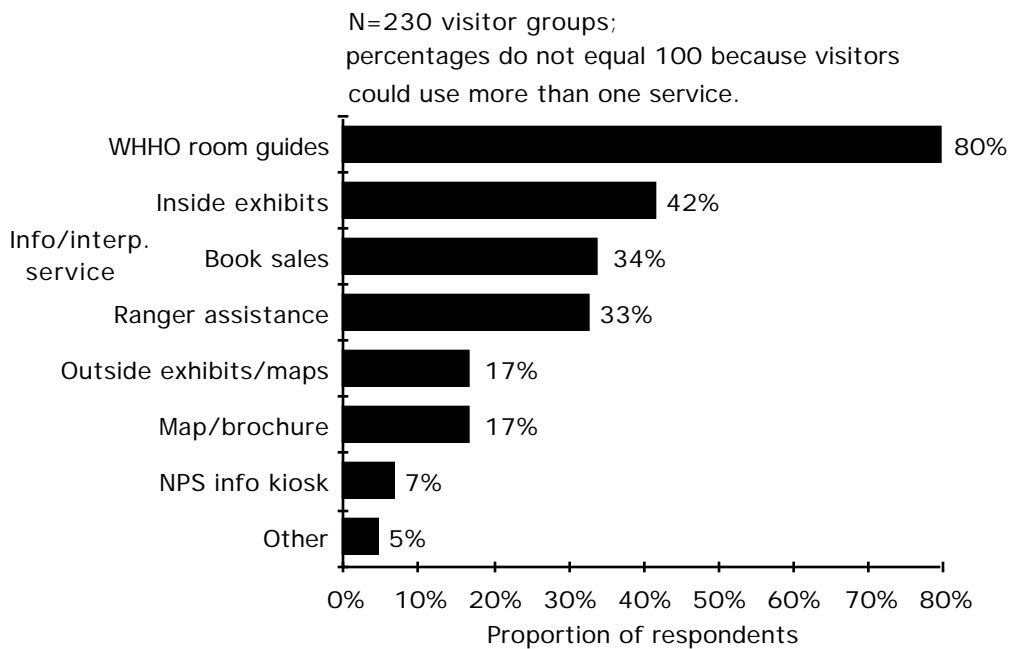


Figure 10: Proportion of visitor groups using each service
(Congressional tour)

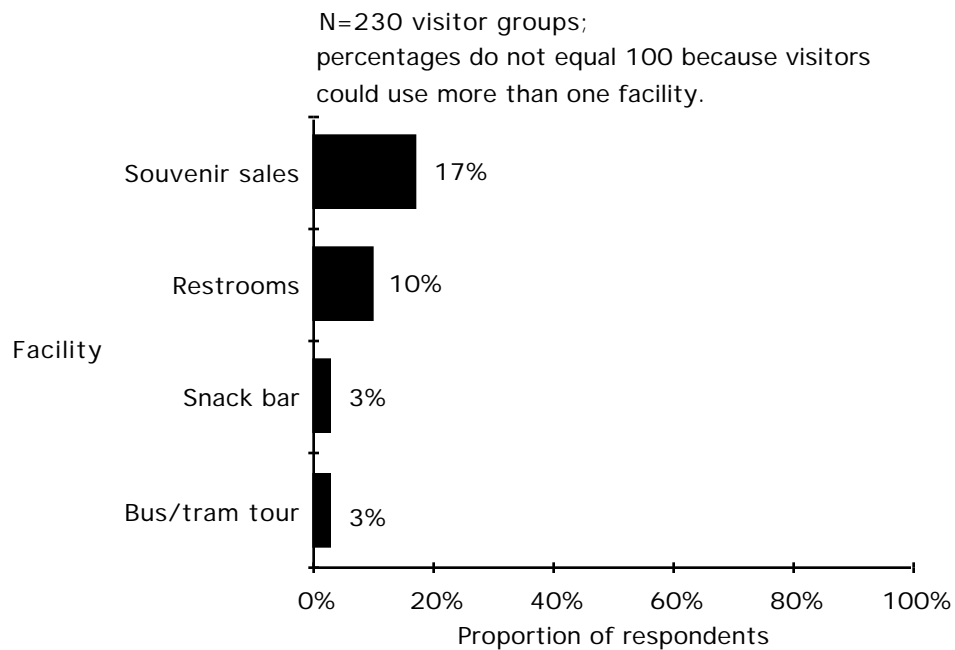


Figure 11: Proportion of visitor groups using each facility
(Congressional tour)

I. Evaluation of services and facilities

Congressional tour visitors rated the quality of each service and facility they used. Figures 12-22 show that visitors rated several services and facilities from "good" to "very good": ranger assistance (80%), White House room guides (78%), the map/brochure (77%), and the exhibits inside the White House (76%).

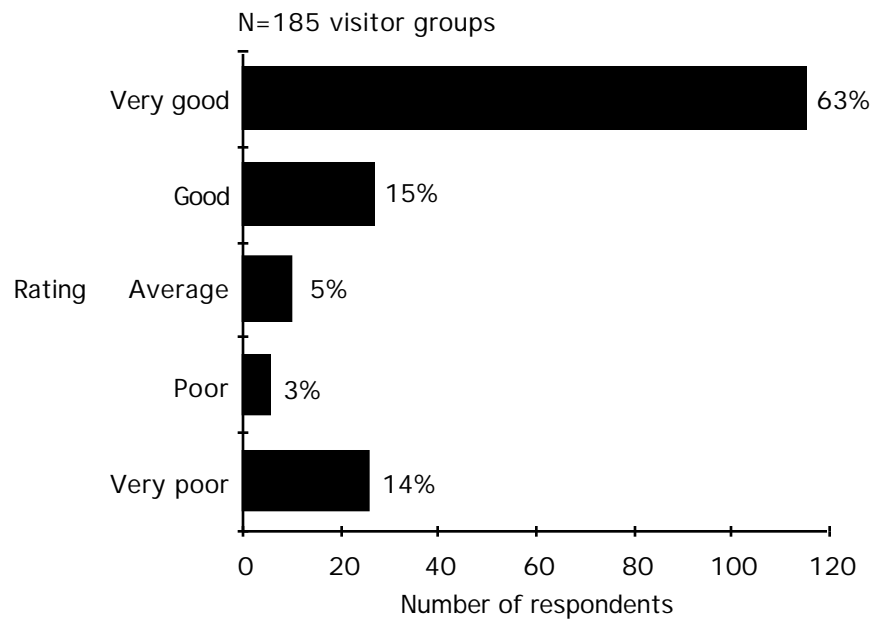


Figure 12: Quality of White House room guides (Congressional tour)

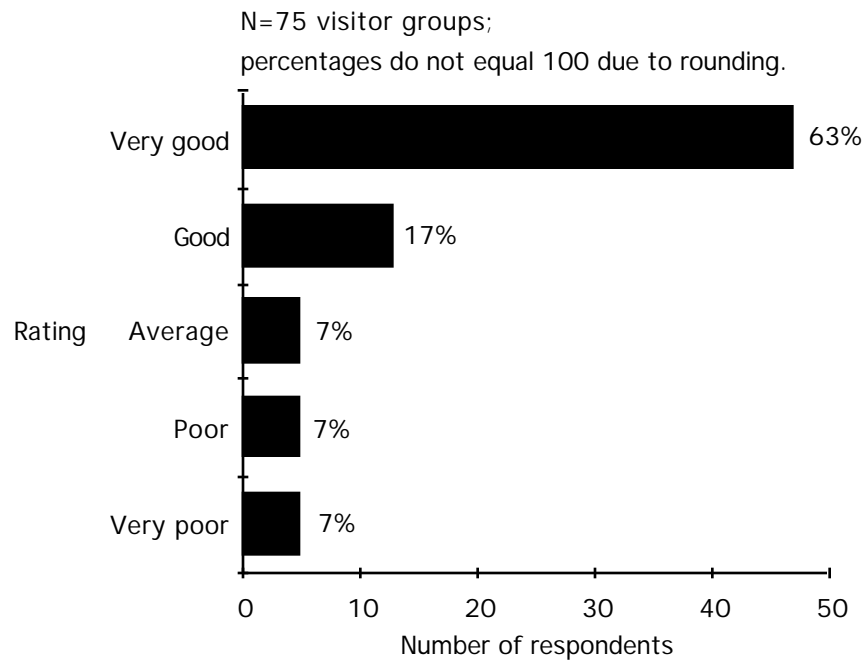


Figure 13: Quality of ranger assistance (Congressional tour)

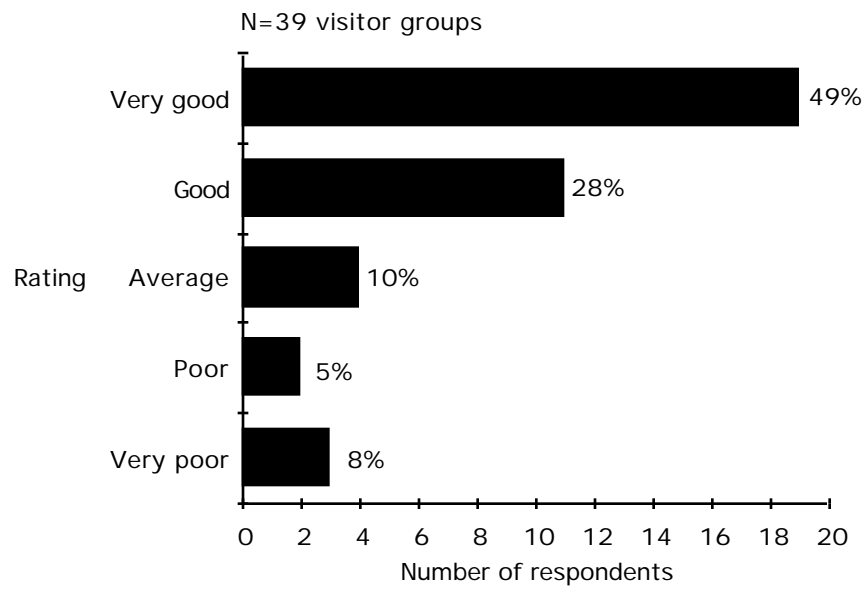


Figure 14: Quality of map/brochure (Congressional tour)

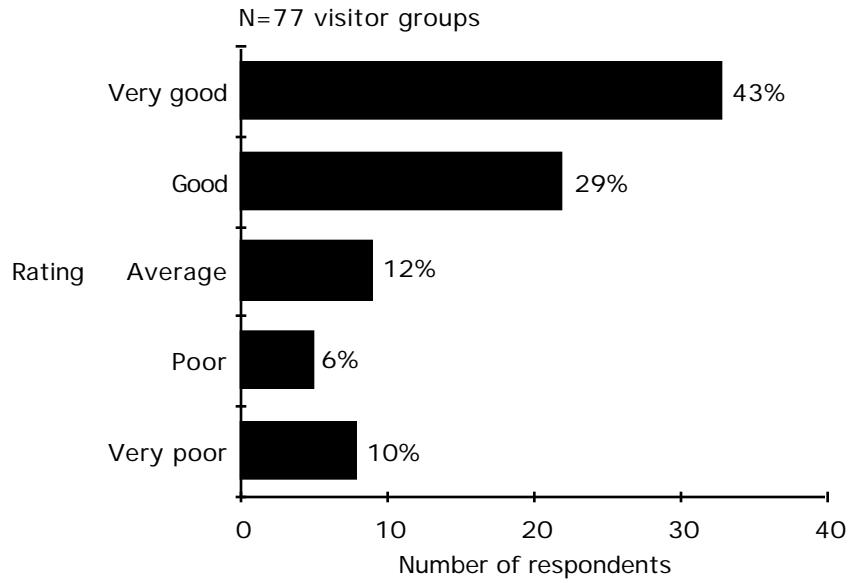


Figure 15: Quality of book sales (Congressional tour)

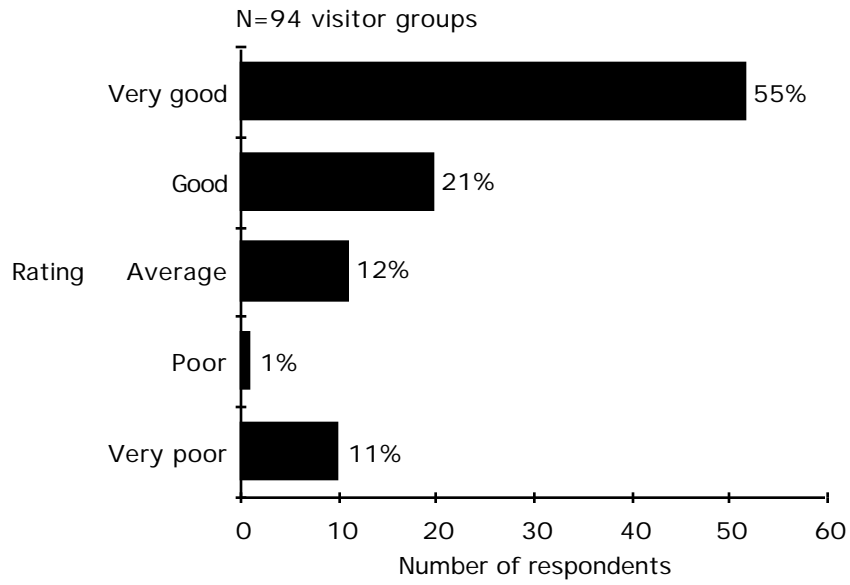


Figure 16: Quality of exhibits inside the White House (Congressional tour)

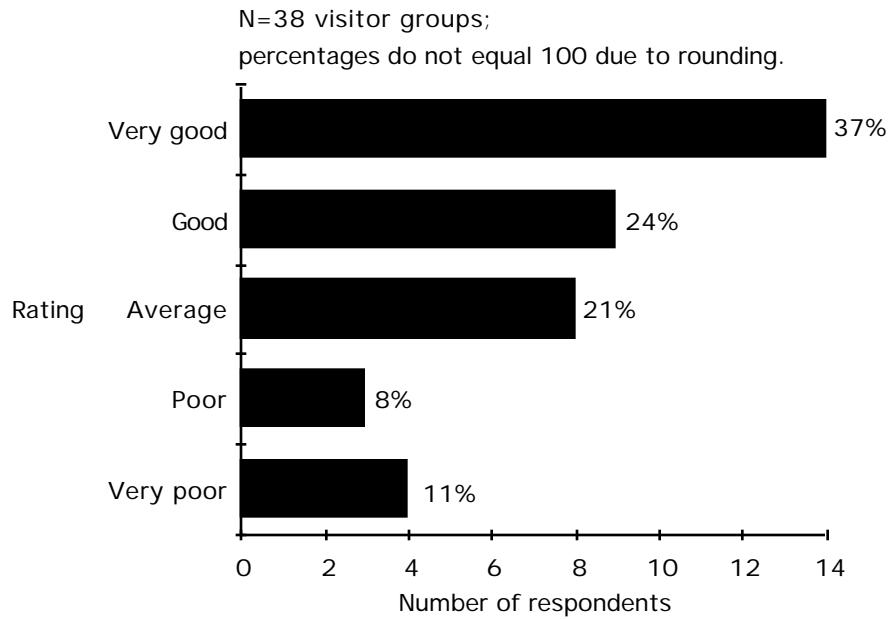


Figure 17: Quality of exhibits and maps outside the White House (Congressional tour)

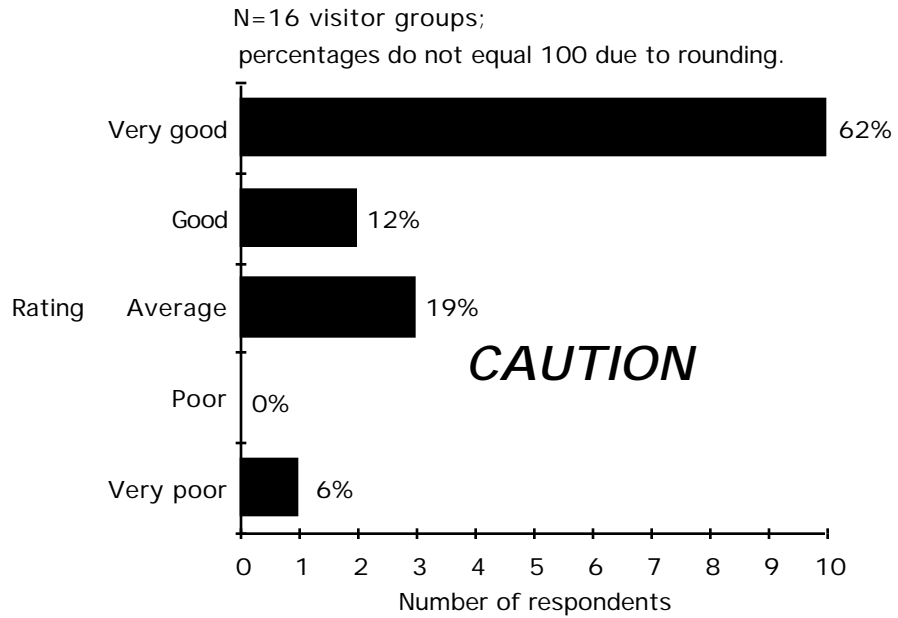


Figure 18: Quality of the NPS information kiosk (Congressional tour)

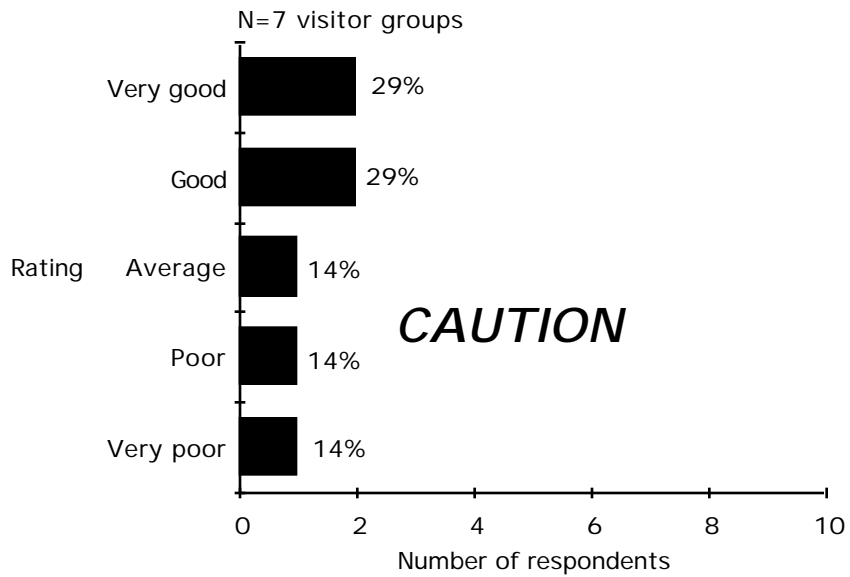


Figure 19: Quality of snack bar (Congressional tour)

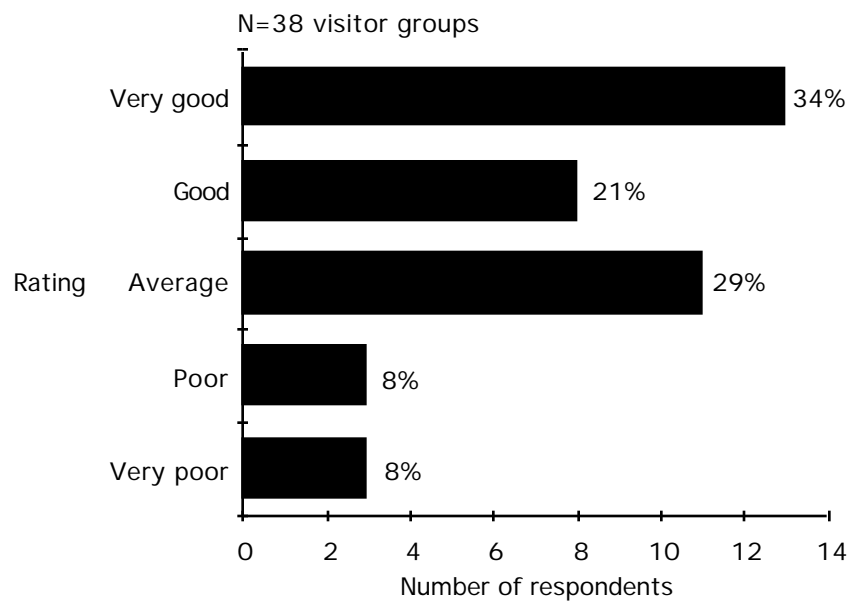


Figure 20: Quality of souvenir sales (Congressional tour)

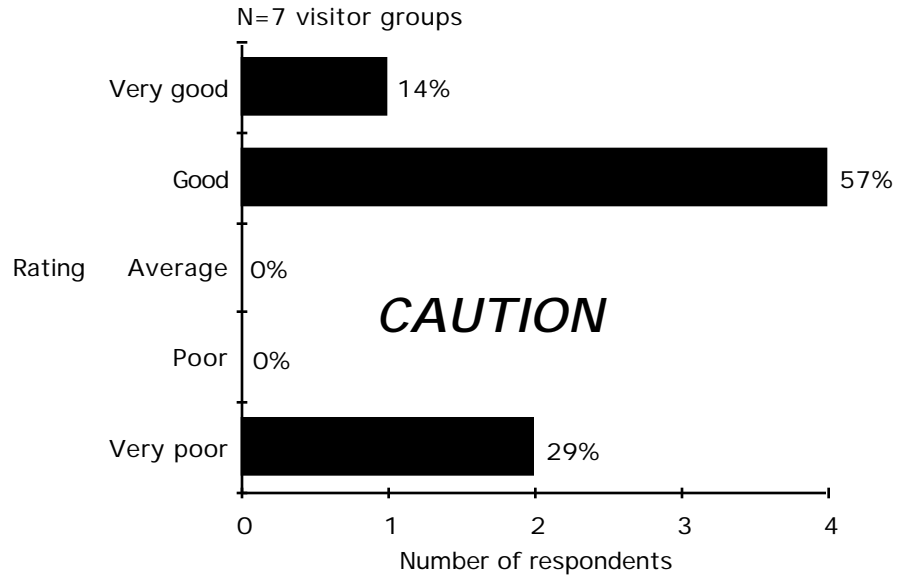


Figure 21: Quality of bus tour or tram (Congressional tour)

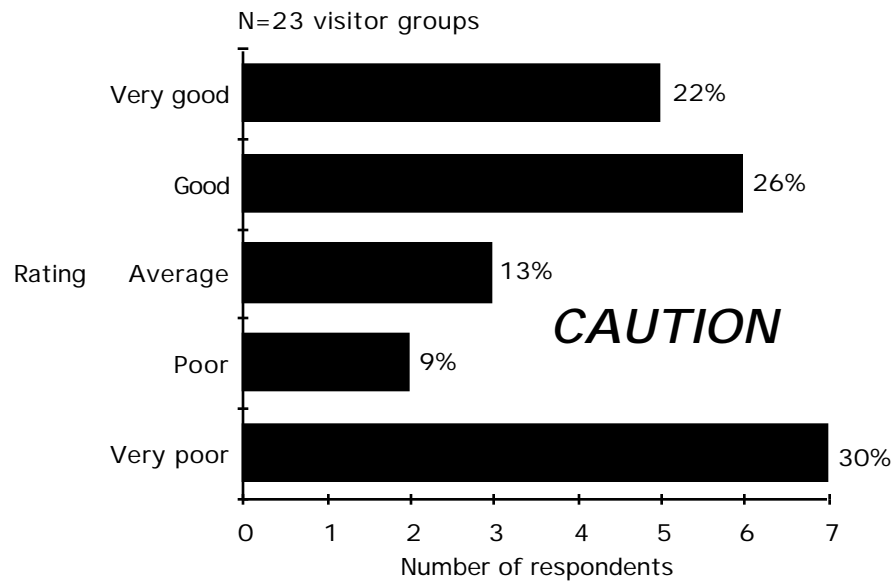


Figure 22: Quality of restrooms (Congressional tour)

J. Subjects of interest for future tours

Congressional tour visitors suggested many different topics for future White House tours (Table 4). The most popular subjects included history, personal information on the First Families (past and present), official events, and architecture.

Table 4: Future tour subjects of interest (Congressional tours)

N=326 subjects; many visitors mentioned more than one subject.

Subjects	No. of times mentioned
History	68
Information on First Families (past and present)	39
Official events	34
Architecture	33
Information on other White House rooms and grounds not seen	22
Satisfied with current subject coverage	20
General information on rooms, furnishings, fashions, art objects, etc.	17
Details about White House social and current events	16
Details about White House staff and Secret Service operations, responsibilities and assignments	13
Different personal interests and habits of Presidents	11
Information on President and family's daily routine and schedule	11
Detailed history of each room's past major events	10
Initial overall orientation to the White House with visual aids	5
Presidential personalities as expressed in the White House	5
Details about White House guests	4
A list of all the Presidents and terms in succession	3
When built, length of construction, renovation details	3
Details about significant or famous White House moments	2
Other comments (< 2 each)	13

K. Potential use of a White House Visitor Center

Seventy-three percent of the Congressional tour respondents felt they would likely use a nearby White House Visitor Center, if it were available; 18% felt they would be unlikely to do so (Figure 23).

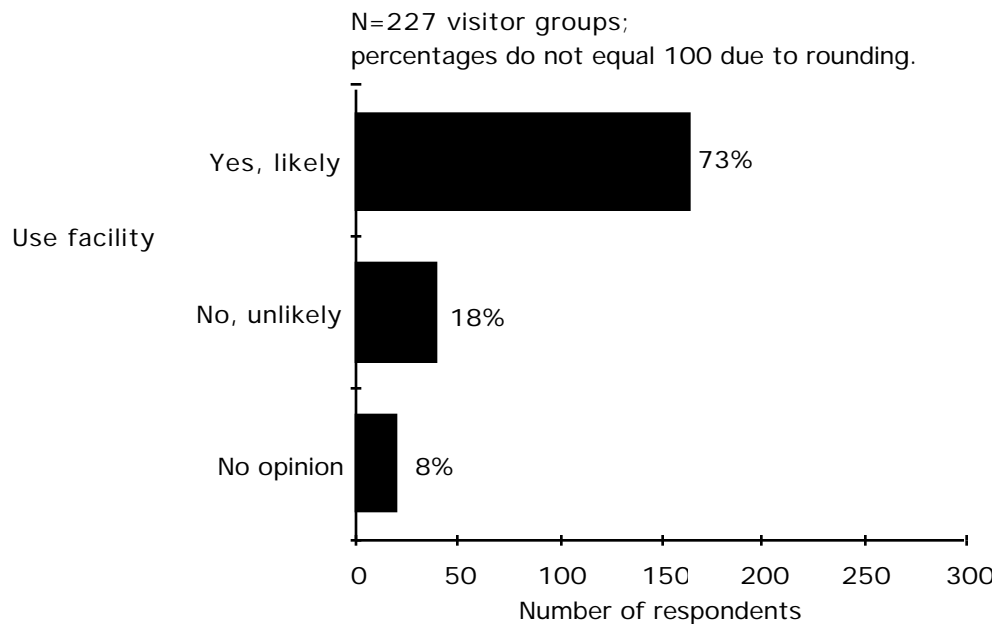


Figure 23: Potential use of a White House Visitor Center (Congressional tour)

L. Downtown sites visited

Respondents either planned to visit or had visited many other downtown Washington, D.C. sites (Figure 24). Most either visited or planned to visit the Smithsonian Institution (91%). The Lincoln Memorial (86%) and the U.S. Capitol (84%) were the next most popular sites. Fifty percent of visitors specified "other" sites, including the Kennedy Center, the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, the FBI Building, the Library of Congress, Ford's Theater, the Old Post Office, and the Supreme Court.

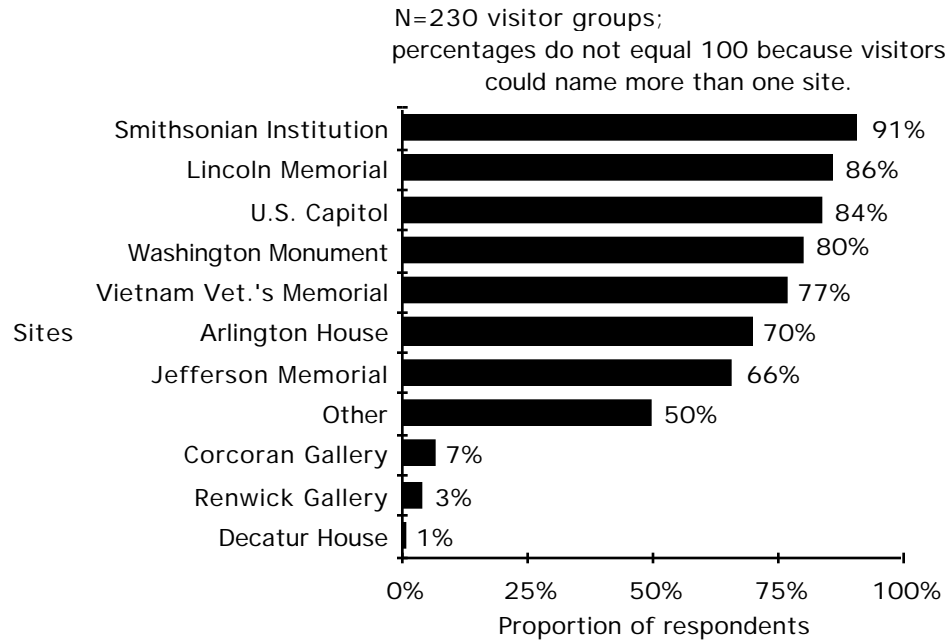


Figure 24: Downtown sites visited (Congressional tour)

M. Comment summary (Congressional tour)

Volume 2 of this report includes unedited comments of Congressional tour visitors. A summary of these comments appears below and is also included in Volume 2. A wide variety of topics are mentioned, including architectural features, personnel, maintenance and regulations.

Visitor comment summary (Congressional tour)

N=424 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
National Park Service	
Rangers helpful and informative	3
Secret Service	
Guides helpful and informative	48
Security staff knowledgeable and polite	5
Guide's diction and voice projection poor	4

Guide's diction and voice projection good	2
Guide too formal following tour	1
Guide did not rush viewing of room exhibits	1
Guide uninterested, uninformative	1
Guide needed to keep group together and not talk until all present	1

Other Personnel

Everyone helpful and informative	6
Non-White House tour guide helpful and kind	1

INTERPRETIVE SERVICES

Nonpersonal

Need brochure outlining room layouts and other information	2
Text on portrait plaques too small for reading	1
Need in-depth handout materials	1
Not informative enough--need more exhibits	1
Desired exhibits with photos of private living areas	1
Displays were interesting	1

Personal

Tour not long enough	33
Tour groups too large	21
Tour crowded, viewing difficult or uncomfortable	13
Tours well organized	6
Tour was late in starting	6
Tour well conducted	3
Improve tour quality--too superficial	3
Tour needs to accommodate children better	2
Wanted a guide stationed in each room	2
Tour not rushed	1
Tour group size (12) allowed good view and listening	1
Ticket distribution system disorganized	1
Need more information on how to arrange for tour of grounds	1
Need more information about tour scheduling at ticket pickup	1
Need more information for children's interest during tours	1
Improve ticket distribution system for public tours	1
Emulate the U.S. Capitol tour system	1
Liked time of tour	1

FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE

General

Insufficient White House tour directional signs	3
White House clean, well kept	2
Need more public restrooms	2
Clean, well maintained grounds	1
Appreciate restoration efforts	1

Take better care of maintenance details	1
Need more drinking fountains	1
Benches desired for those who have a long wait	1

Roads and Parking Facilities

Poor parking availability	1
Area around White House needs better traffic and street signs	1

POLICIES

Want age restrictions to exclude young children	3
---	---

CONCESSIONS

Need to have souvenir and book sales available after tour	2
Need to sell souvenirs	2
Book prices reasonable	2
Need snack bar to sell food	1
Literature for sale is high quality	1
Books serve as excellent mementos	1

VISITOR SERVICES PROJECT

Thanks for privilege of expressing myself	3
Interviewer very nice	1

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Enjoyable and interesting tour	63
Wanted to see more White House rooms and grounds	39
Thanks to White House tour management	15
Tour informative	11
Waited too long	10
Grateful for opportunity to tour White House	7
Wanted to personally meet the President and other dignitaries	5
Instilled pride in U.S. and a desire to know more of U.S. history	5
Enjoyed the floral arrangements	4
Not enough personal information about Presidents and families	4
Plan to return	4
White House tour a favorite	3
Want advance ticket procurement	2
Appreciated human interest information	2
Highlight of Washington visit	2
Want information on various presidential and family personalities as expressed in the White House	2
Want details on White House staff responsibilities and assignments	2
Want more information on the areas of interest at the White House that media covers (e.g. grounds, gardens)	2

Want more information on the Presidential living areas	2
Thankful for courtesy to handicapped and aged	2
Very disappointed with tour	2
Wait in line not too long	2
Expand public tour hours	1
All D.C. tours very good	1
Congressional tour much better than public tour	1
Information on President and family's daily routine and schedule desired	1
Waiting area pleasant	1
Have taken many friends on tour	1
Overrated as special tour	1
Should skip tours during holidays--disorganization apparent	1
Need better system of crowd control in waiting line	1
Washington is beautiful because of the NPS	1
Floral arrangements terrible--appeared too artificial	1
Hope flowers used again, expensive outlay for taxpayers	1
Too much trivia on rooms and events--needs more depth	1
Wanted private tour	1
Tour group had tickets ready on bus--no standing in line	1
Tour better than '85 Candlelight tour	1
Approved of ticket distribution system	1
Need initial overall orientation to the White House with visual aids	1
Foreigners have difficulty with English comprehension	1
Enjoyed paintings and related information	1
More information on paintings and artwork desired	1
Metro-rail and bus information have insufficient tourist information	1
Horticulture lectures desired	1
Mall facilities well maintained and of a high quality	1
People of Washington, D.C. very helpful	1
Young children on tour interfered with visitor's experience	1

PUBLIC TOUR RESULTS

A. Characteristics

Twenty-four percent of public tour visitors came in groups of four, 17% in groups of two, and 16% in groups of three (Figure 25). Families accounted for 64% of visitors, as shown in Figure 26. Some of the "other" kinds of groups included educational convention delegates, church groups, school groups, and 4-H youth.

Figure 27 shows a wide range of age groups, the most common being adults 36-45 years of age (27%) and children 15 years or younger (30%). Seventy-nine percent were on their first White House tour, and 20% had toured 2-4 times, as seen in Figure 28.

Foreign visitors comprised eight percent of public tour visitors. Most came from European countries (Map 5), and most of these from the U.K. (16%) and West Germany (16%). Map 6 and Table 6 show that the states with the largest proportions of visitors were California (14%), Texas (9%), Illinois and Florida (6% each).

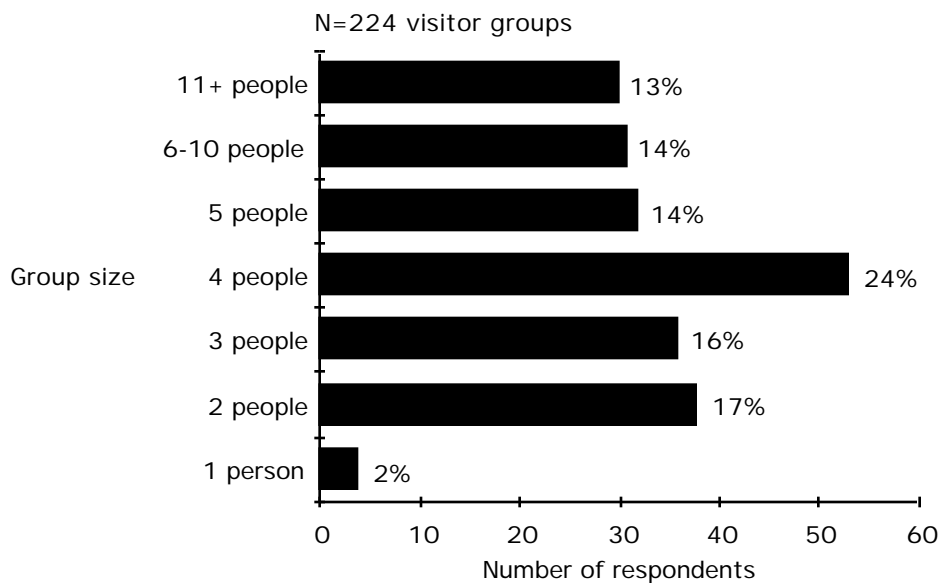


Figure 25: Visitor group sizes (public tour)

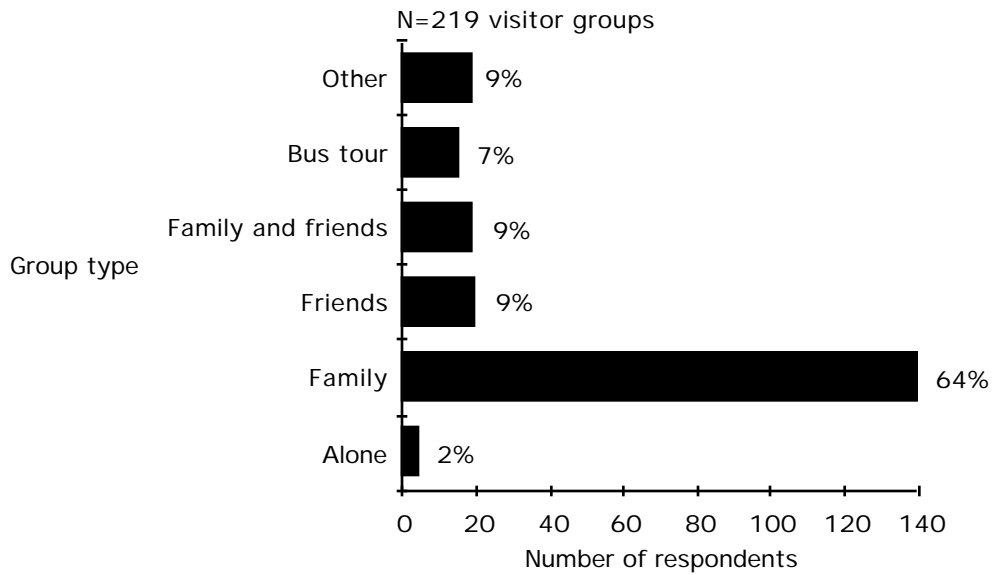


Figure 26: Visitor group types (public tour)

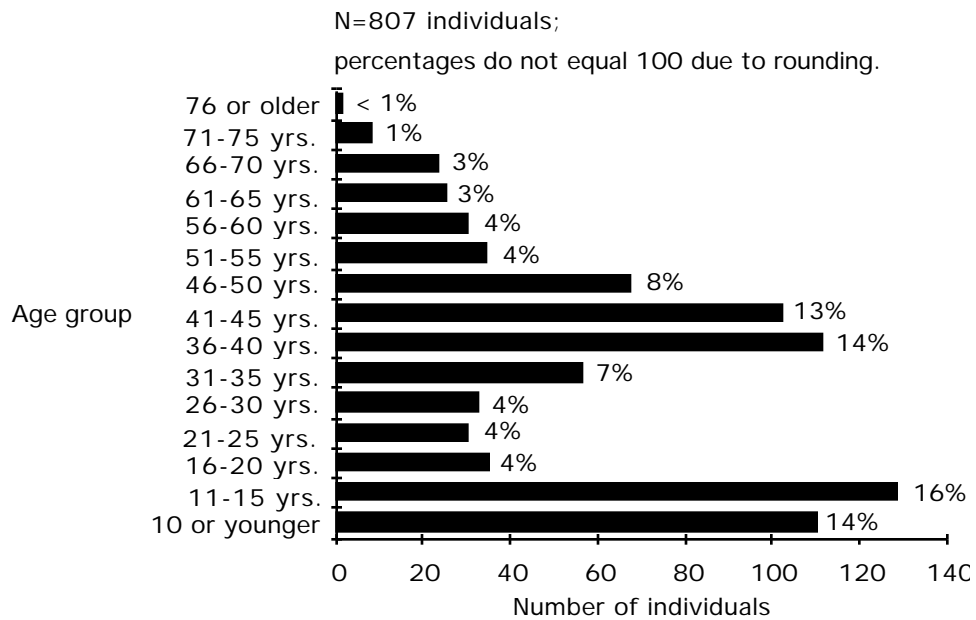


Figure 27: Visitor ages (public tour)

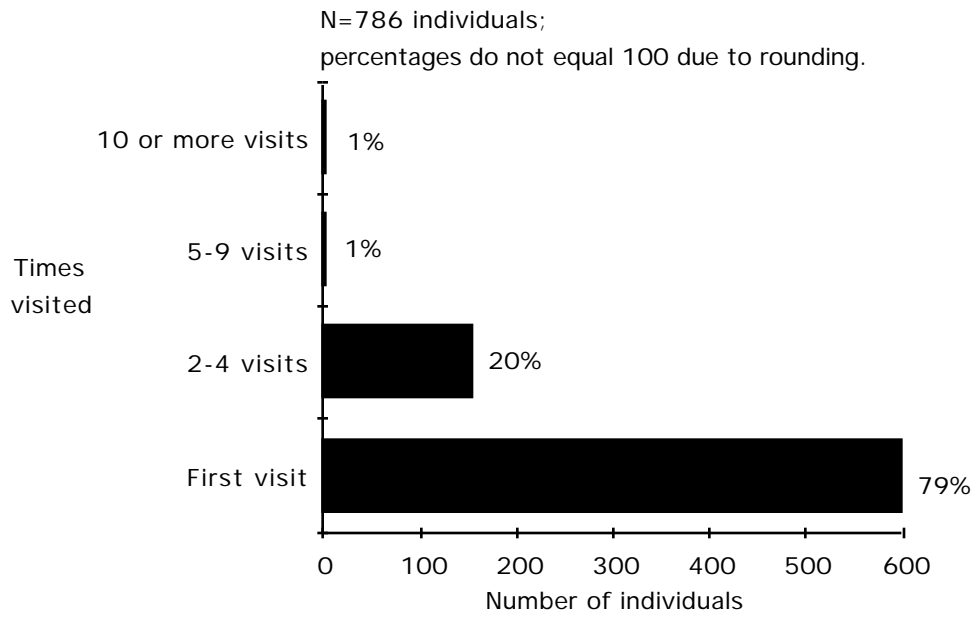
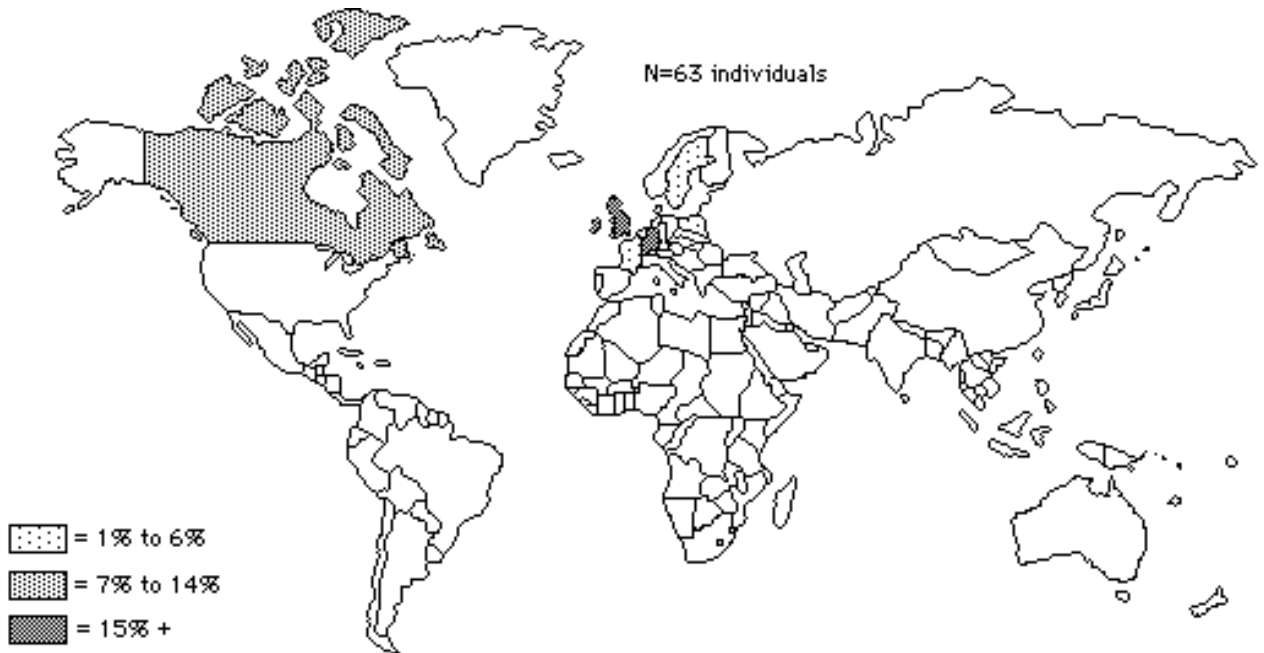


Figure 28: Number of visits made by visitor groups (public tour)



Map 5: Proportion of foreign visitors by country (public tour)

Table 6: Proportion of visitors from each state (public tour)

N=704 individuals;
 individual state percentages do not total to 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	Percent of visitors
California	101	14
Texas	65	9
Florida	42	6
Illinois	39	6
New Jersey	30	4
North Carolina	29	4
New York	27	4
Tennessee	25	4
Pennsylvania	24	3
Wisconsin	24	3
Arizona	23	3
Virginia	23	3
Indiana	20	3
Iowa	20	3
Ohio	18	3
Louisiana	16	2
Michigan	16	2
Washington	16	2
Kentucky	15	2
Missouri	15	2
Minnesota	12	2
Maryland	11	2
Other states (18)	93	13

B. Transportation type

Most public tour visitors arrived for their White House tours by foot (45%), private vehicle (38%), subway (28%), and/or tour bus (23%). Figure 29 shows the proportion of visitors that used each type of available transport.

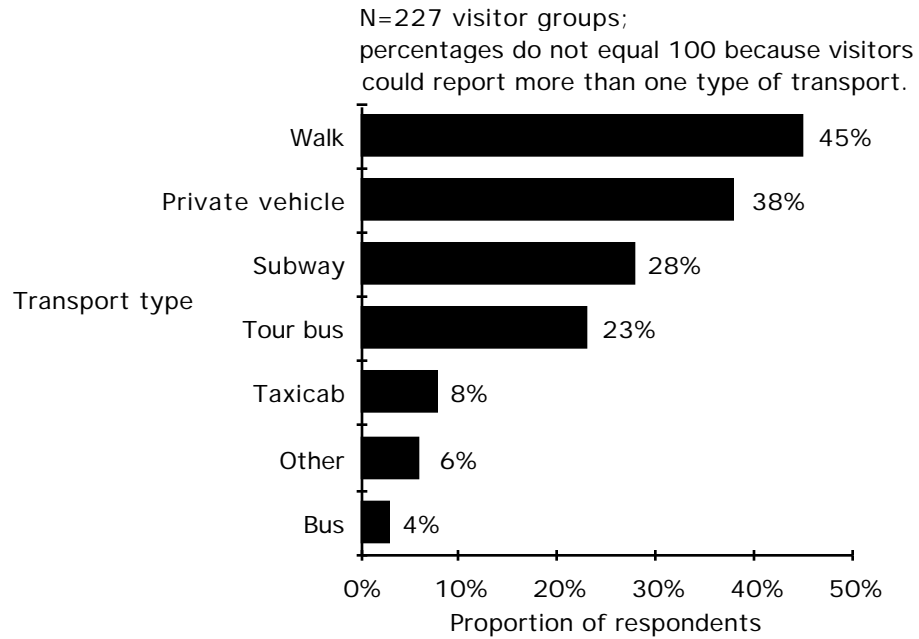


Figure 29: Proportion of visitor groups using each transport type (public tour)

C. Routes traveled

Visitors indicated routes they used to arrive at the ticket booth to obtain tickets for the public tour. Map 7 shows the proportion of public tour visitors using each "outer" intersection to enter the White House area. Constitution Avenue and 15th Street (29%) and E Street N.W. and 15th Street (21%) had the highest use.

Map 8 shows the proportion of public tour visitors using each "inner" intersection in the immediate White House area. East Executive Park and Hamilton Place (33%) was used most often.

N=227 visitor groups;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors could use more than one intersection.

Map 7: Proportion of visitor groups using outer intersections
(public tour)

N=227 visitor groups;
percentages do not equal 100 because visitors could use more than one intersection.

Map 8: Proportion of visitor groups using inner intersections
(public tour)

D. Information sources

Prior to their public tour, most visitor groups consulted their friends and relatives for advice, as well as travel guides and tour books (48% each). Figure 30 shows the proportion of visitors that consulted each identified source. Twenty-two percent consulted the National Park Service, Congressional offices, and their knowledge from prior visits, respectively.

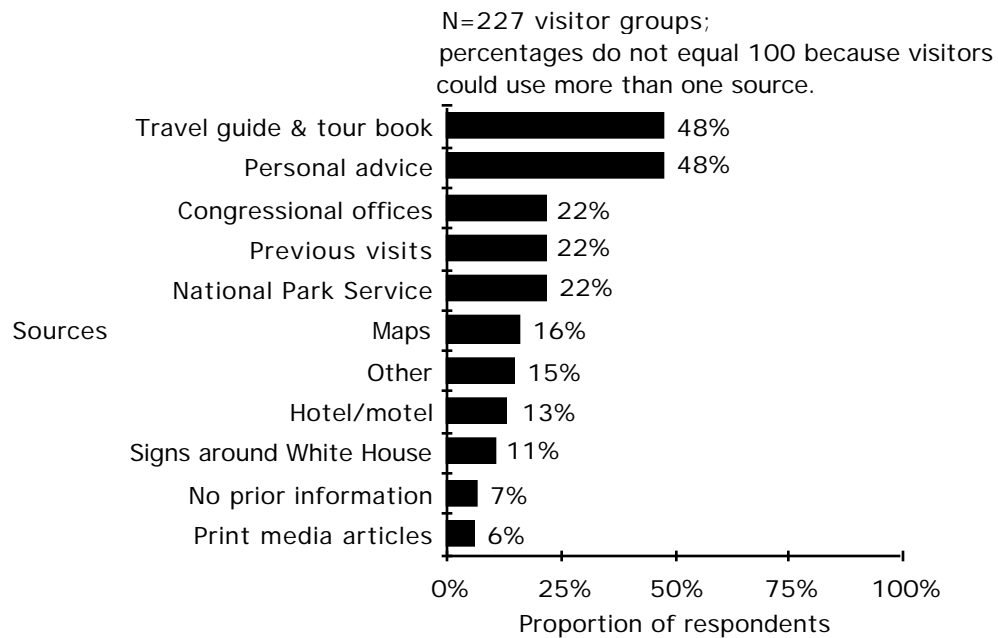


Figure 30: Proportion of visitor groups using each information source (public tour)

E. Duration of wait for tour to start

Public tour visitors commonly waited between two and three hours before their tours began (Figure 31). The average wait was two hours and thirteen minutes. Some groups did not wait at all, while one group waited four and one half hours.

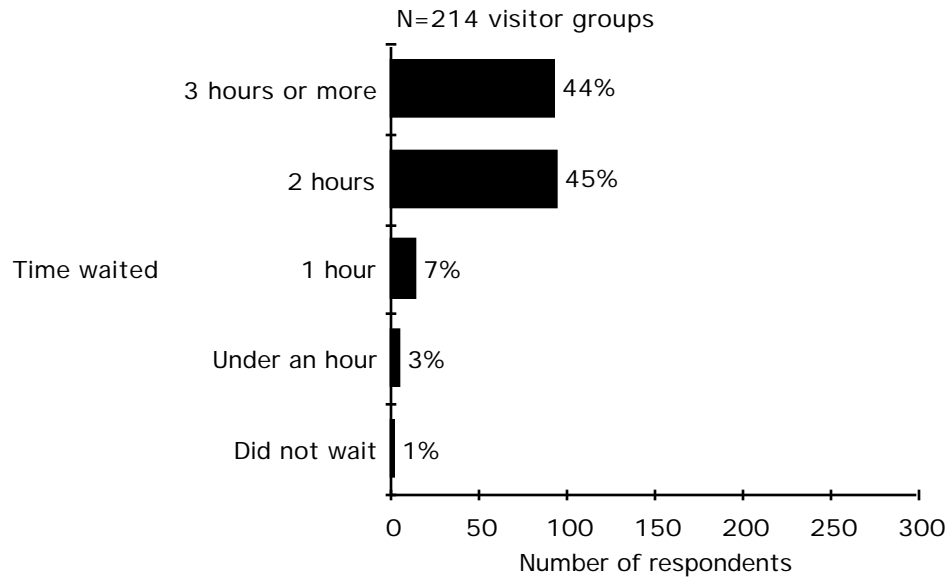


Figure 31: Duration of wait for public tour to start

F. Pre-tour activities

Public tour visitors did many things while awaiting the start of their tours (Table 7). Commonly, they ate, visited the Washington Monument and enjoyed the entertainment provided at the Ellipse.

Table 7: Pre-tour activities

N=396 activities; many visitor groups did more than one activity.

Activities	No. of times mentioned
Ate	74
Visited Washington Monument	41
Enjoyed entertainment provided while waiting	35
Visited other sites	25
Visited Lincoln Memorial	21
Talked with other White House visitors	15
Visited Smithsonian Institution	15
Visited U.S. Capitol	15
Visited Vietnam Veterans' Memorial	14
Visited Ford's Theater	12
Visited Jefferson Memorial	12
Shopped for souvenirs	10
Visited U.S. Bureau of Printing and Engraving	9
Returned to hotel room or home	8
Visited the Old Post Office	8
Visited FBI Building	7
Visited Arlington Cemetery	7
Walked surrounding grounds	6
Took photographs	5
Walked the Mall	5
Visited National Archives	5
Viewed official arrival	4
Visited Dept. of Commerce's National Aquarium	4
Read	4
Located a parking place	4
Stood in line waiting outside the fence	3
Attempted to go on other site tour	3
Visited Supreme Court	3
Visited Marine Corps War Memorial	3
Visited Library of Congress	2
Rested	2
Made plans to visit other sites	2
Other comments (< 2 each)	12

G. Use of services and facilities

Public tour visitors used a variety of the services and facilities available (Figures 32 and 33). The most commonly used information and interpretive services were the White House room guides (66%), the exhibits inside the White House (53%), ranger assistance (47%), and the map/brochure (37%), as seen in Figure 32.

Facilities used most often were the restrooms (30%), followed by souvenir sales (23%), the snack bar (21%), and the bus or tram tour (15%), as seen in Figure 33.

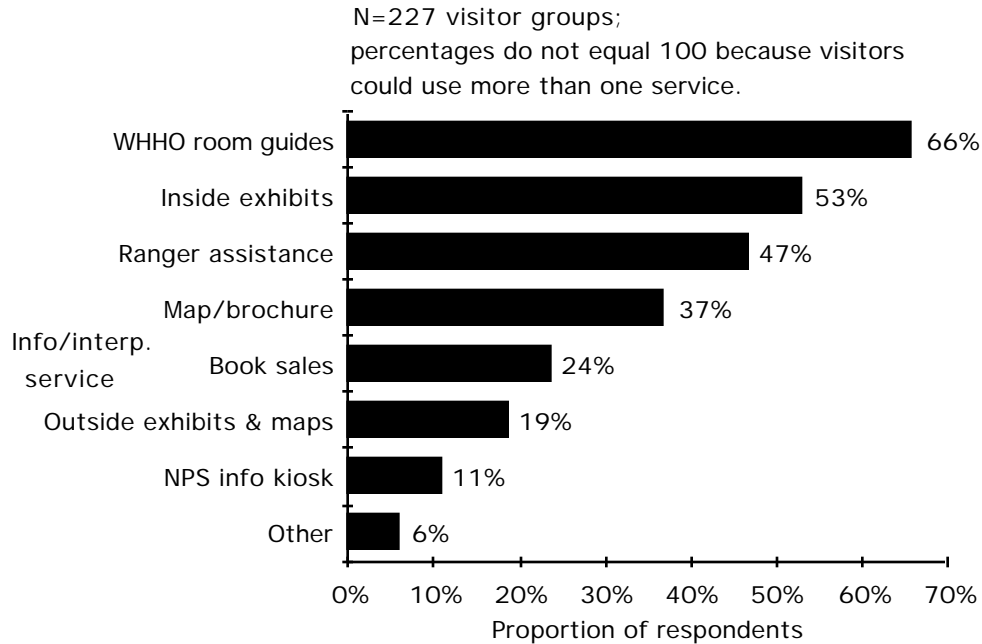


Figure 32: Proportion of visitor groups using each service (public tour)

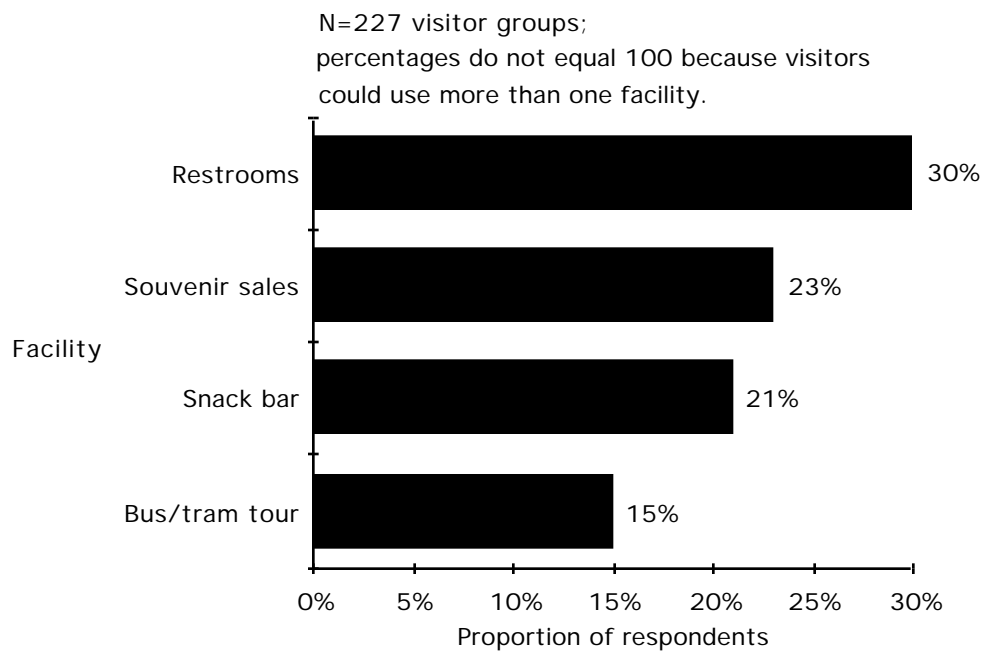


Figure 33: Proportion of visitor groups using each facility (public tour)

H. Evaluation of services and facilities

Public tour visitors rated the quality of each service and facility they used. Figures 34-44 show that visitors rated several services and facilities from "good" to "very good": map/brochure (77%), exhibits and maps outside the White House (73%), book sales (72%), ranger assistance and the bus or tram tour (71% each). The services and facilities with the lowest quality, from "poor" to "very poor", were the restrooms (38%) and the snack bar (35%).

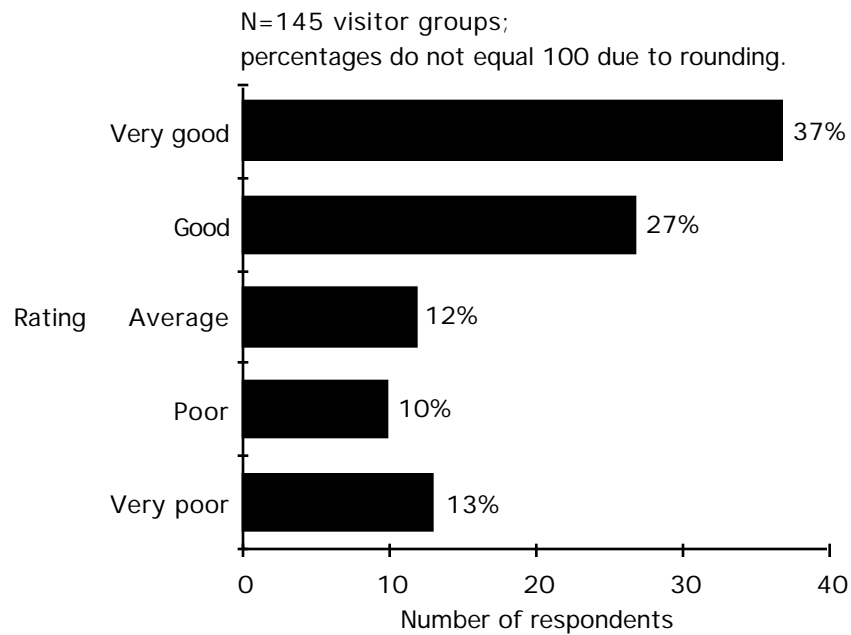


Figure 34: Quality of White House room guides (public tour)

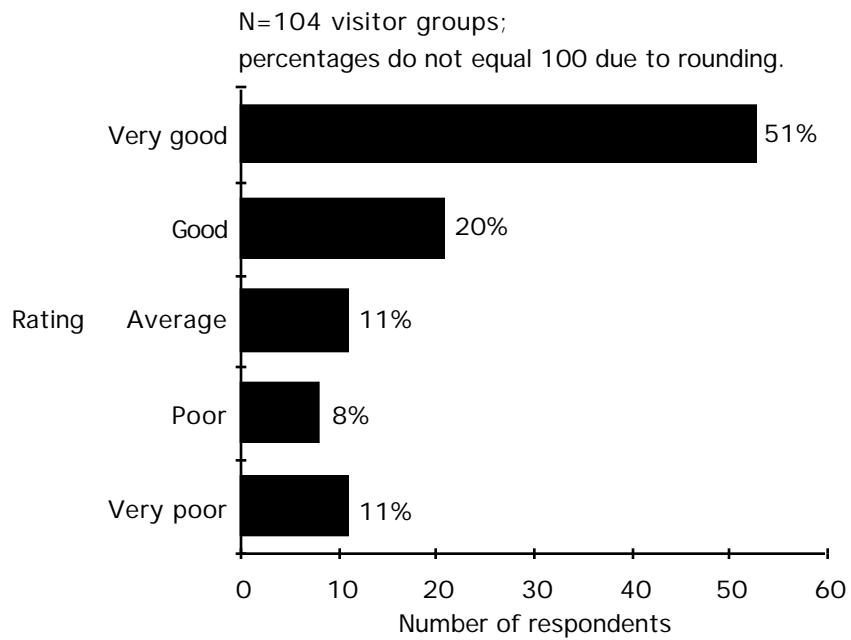


Figure 35: Quality of ranger assistance (public tour)

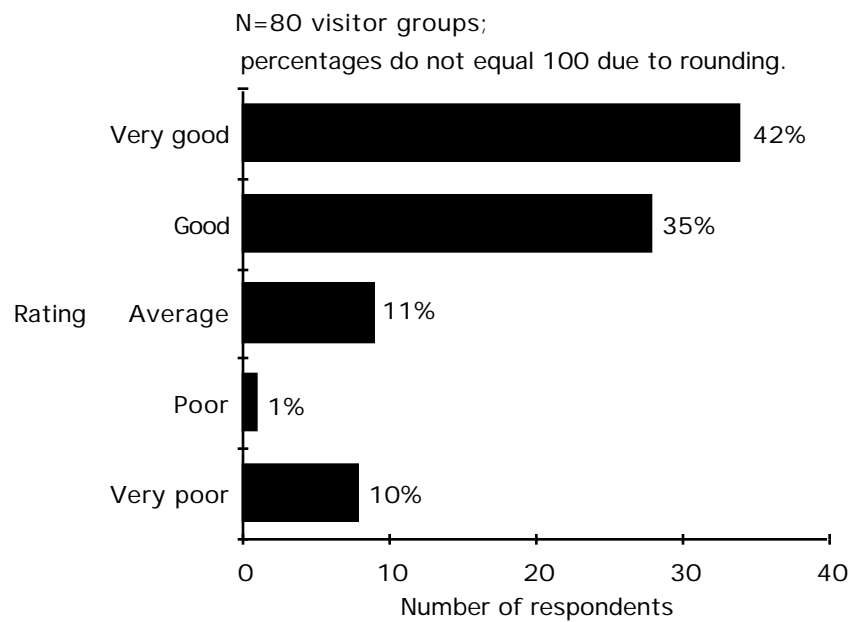


Figure 36: Quality of map/brochure (public tour)

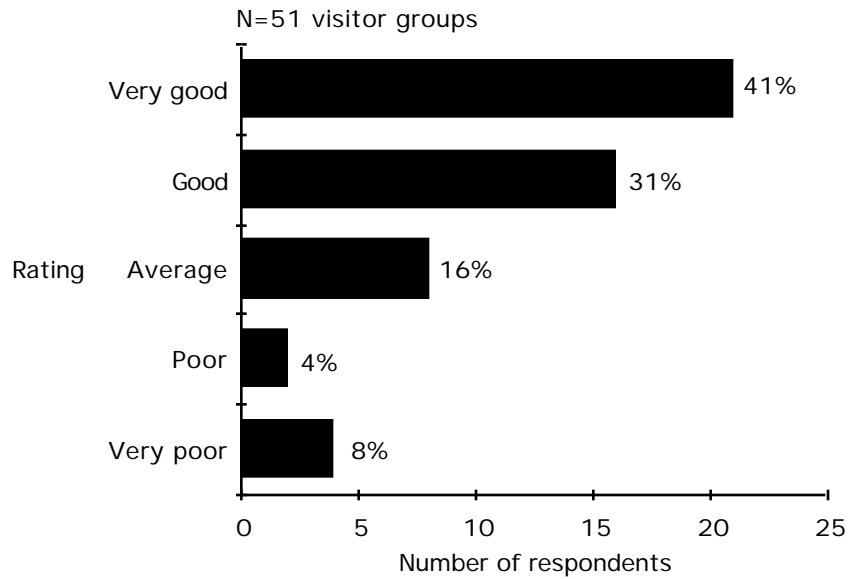


Figure 37: Quality of book sales (public tour)

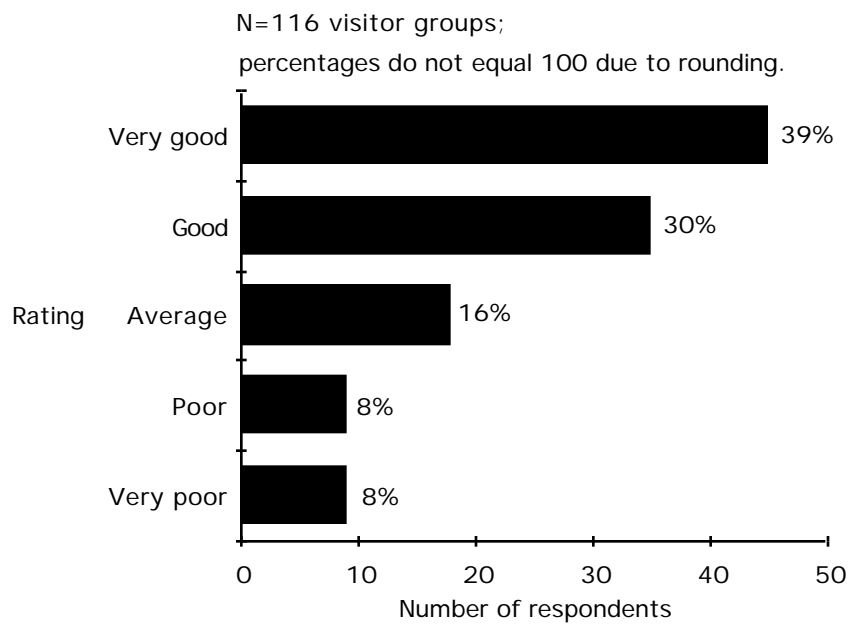


Figure 38: Quality of exhibits inside the White House (public tour)

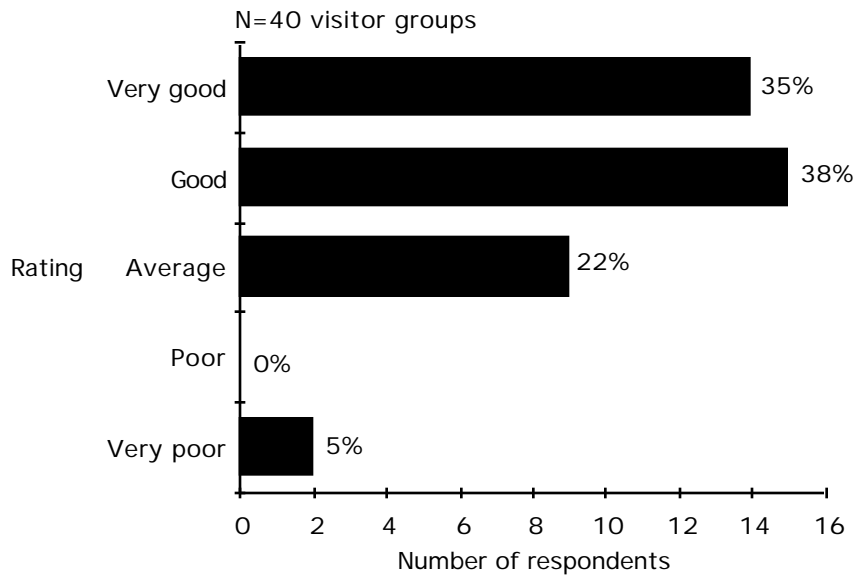


Figure 39: Quality of exhibits and maps outside the White House (public tour)



Figure 40: Quality of the NPS information kiosk (public tour)

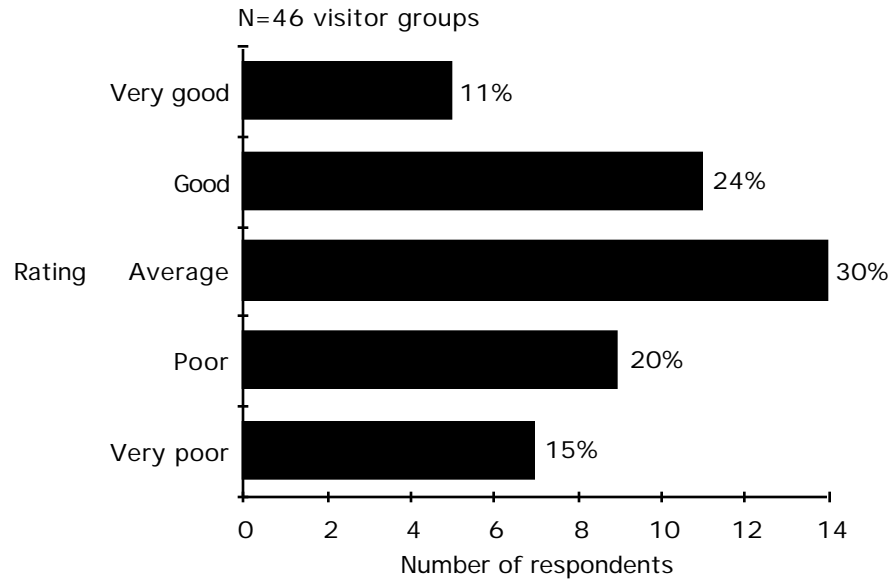


Figure 41: Quality of snack bar (public tour)

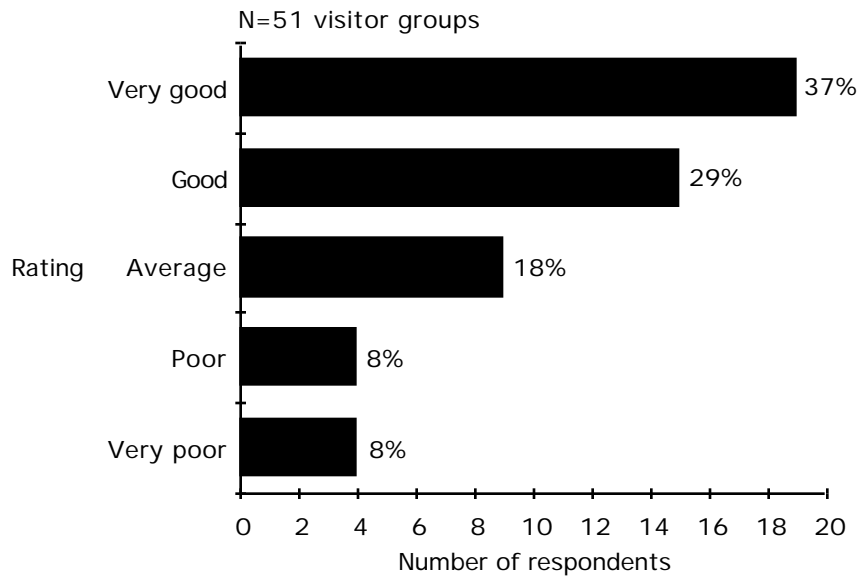


Figure 42: Quality of souvenir sales (public tour)

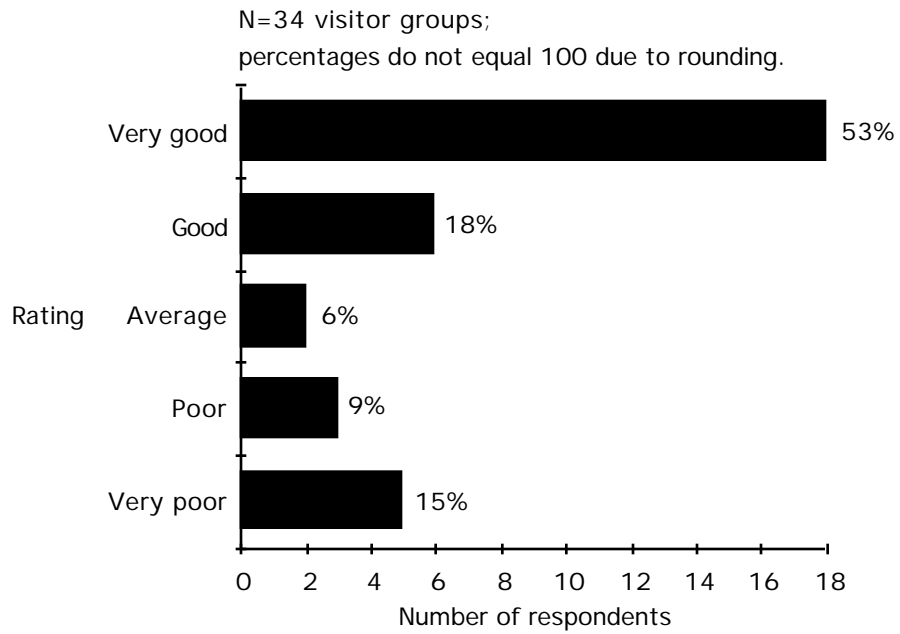


Figure 43: Quality of bus tour or tram (public tour)

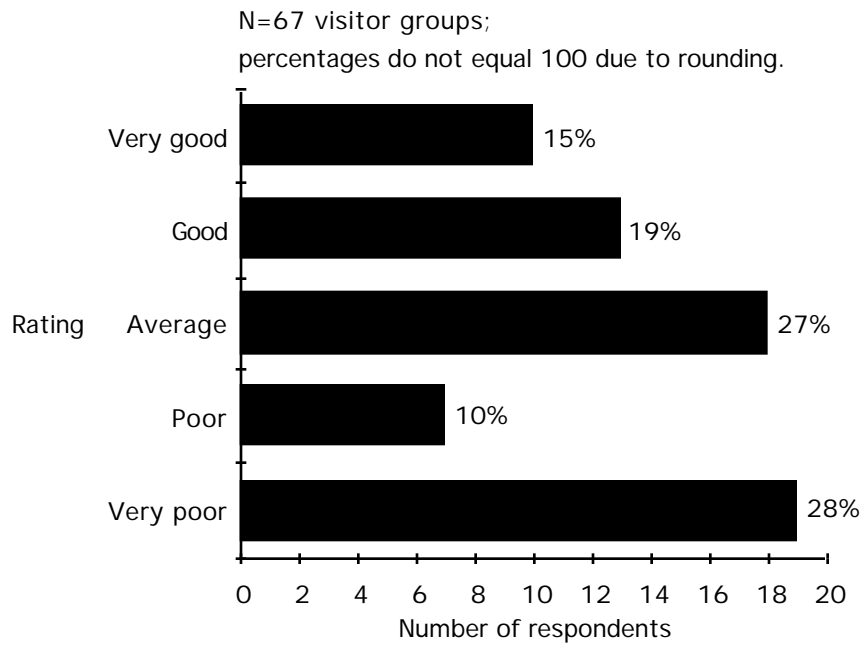


Figure 44: Quality of restrooms (public tour)

I. Subjects of interest for future tours

Public tour visitors mentioned many different topics for future White House tours (Table 8). The most popular subjects included history, official events, information on the First Families (past and present), and architecture.

Table 8: Future tour subjects of interest

N=321 subjects; many visitors mentioned more than one subject.

Subjects	No. of times mentioned
History	84
Official events	53
Information on First Families (past and present)	31
Architecture	31
More information on unseen White House rooms and grounds	24
General information on rooms, furnishings, fashions, art objects, etc.	24
Detailed history of each room's past major events	13
Information on daily routine contrasted to normal home	12
Secret Service and White House staff duties	5
When built, length of construction, renovation, etc.	5
Any information would be better than how it is now	5
Current Presidential and White House agendas	4
Different personal interests and habits of Presidents	4
Explanation of procedures during official events	3
Meet the President	3
Presidential personalities as expressed in the White House	2
Details about unusual events	2
Details about interior decorating decisions	2
Details about White House guests	2
Other comments (< 2 each)	12

J. Potential use of a White House Visitor Center

Seventy-four percent of the public tour respondents felt they would likely use a nearby White House Visitor Center, if it were available; 14% felt they would be unlikely to do so (Figure 45).

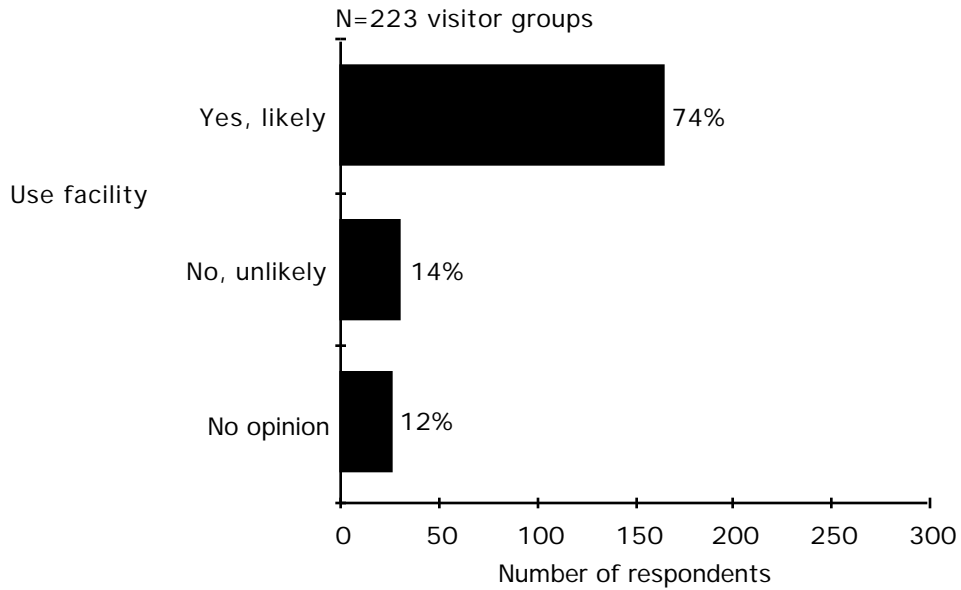


Figure 45: Potential use of a White House Visitor Center (public tour)

K. Downtown sites visited

Public tour respondents either planned to visit or had visited many downtown Washington, D.C. sites (Figure 46). Most either visited or planned to visit the Lincoln Memorial (94%). The Smithsonian Institution (93%) and the U.S. Capitol (91%) were the next most popular sites. Fifty-six percent of visitors specified "other" sites, including the Kennedy Center, the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, the FBI Building, the Library of Congress, Ford's Theater, the Old Post Office, and the Supreme Court.

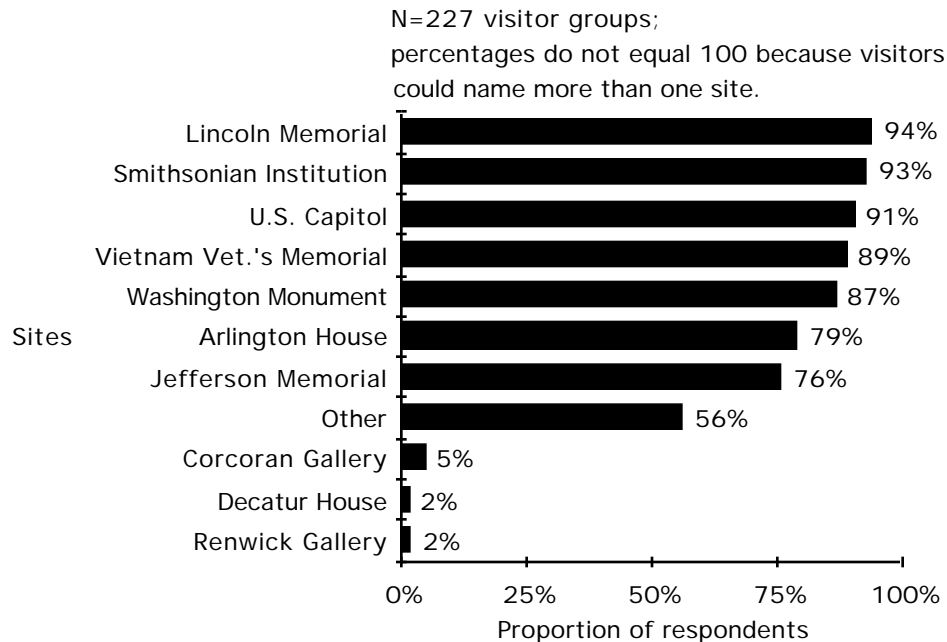


Figure 46: Downtown sites visited (public tour)

L. Comment summary (public tour)

Volume 2 of this report includes unedited comments of public tour visitors. A summary of these comments appears below and is also included in Volume 2. A wide variety of topics are mentioned, including architectural features, personnel, maintenance and regulations.

Visitor comment summary (public tour)

N=515 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
National Park Service	
Rangers helpful and informative	4
Rangers not expansive enough with responses	3
Rangers rude	1
Many park service people said nothing	1
More staff needed to man ticket booth	1
Park service personnel not busy	1

Secret Service

Guards were knowledgeable and polite	7
Room guides helpful and informative	6
Security measures good	2
Room guides not helpful and informative	2
Room guides did not have prepared talks--should have	2
Room guides lacked enthusiasm and interest in answering questions	1

Other Personnel

Everyone helpful and informative	8
Bus tour guide very good	1
Staff appeared overly warm in uniforms	1

INTERPRETIVE SERVICES**Nonpersonal**

Need brochure or tape explaining rooms and events	3
Need to locate more information signs higher in each room	2
White House Guide Books should be available at no cost	1
Pleased with printed materials available	1
Downstairs exhibits sketchy	1
Text on portrait plaques too small for reading	1
Information and materials needed in foreign languages	1
Not informative enough--orientation slide show needed	1
Desire room exhibits with photos of historic events	1
Exhibits mediocre	1
Pleased with self-guided tour	1
Advocated books on White House trivia and "unusual scenes"	1

Personal

Tour too short	36
Tour crowded, viewing difficult and uncomfortable	24
Wanted accompanying guide to explain interesting items	20
Would like fewer people per tour	12
Tours well organized	7
Need better system of crowd control to minimize time loss	4
Disappointed in the quality of the information guides provided	4
Tour not designed with children in mind	2
Tour disorganized re: traffic flow	2
Abbreviated tours should be advertised as such	1
Tour is repetitive, needs to be changed	1
Conflicting information received about President's location	1
Suggested optional tour of White House grounds	1
Suggested a mock "News Conference" to experience reality of White House events	1

FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE

General

Clean, well maintained grounds	3
White House clean, well kept	2
Need more restrooms near ticket booth	2
VIP gate appropriately low key and well conceived	1
Roped paths needed to keep line in single file	1
Take better care of restrooms	1
Insufficient White House tour directional signs	1
Wheelchair ramps hard to navigate	1
Approve of ticket booth and associated waiting line relocation	1
Wanted ticket booth to be part of shaded bleacher area	1

Roads and Parking Facilities

Poor parking availability	6
White House tour parking area needed	2
Handicapped parking is limited and distant	2
Cost for parking too expensive	1

CONCESSIONS

Need to sell coffee and orange juice	1
--------------------------------------	---

VISITOR SERVICES PROJECT

Thanks for privilege of expressing myself	3
Would like another questionnaire after longer visit	1
Ranger doing interview most congenial	1

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Enjoyable and interesting tour	48
Wanted to see more rooms and grounds in White House	34
Need more material presented in each room	17
Need more general information, before and during tour	16
Wait was too long	12
Grateful for opportunity to tour White House	12
Not enough personal information about Presidents and families	9
Thanks to White House tour management	9
Enjoyed the floral arrangements	7
Disappointed with tour	7
Wanted to see President and other dignitaries	6
Efficient ticket distribution process	6
Allow photos inside	5
Total lack of information	5
Prefer better ticket system	5
Wanted better advance ticket reservations	5
Plan to return	5
President's residence in poor shape	4

Disliked early hours necessary to obtain tickets	4
Improve tour quality or stop tours altogether	4
Wanted to know more about White House historical events	4
Tour educational	4
Want more information on significant moments and events	3
President's home beautiful	3
Enjoyed Congressional tour more than public tour	3
Displeased with wait in line after leaving grandstands	3
Washington a great place to visit	3
White House tour highlight of Washington visit	3
People in Washington helpful	2
Enjoyed the News/Press room	2
Vietnam Veterans' Memorial very impressive	2
Waiting too long a big problem with children	2
More publicity on how to arrange for tour tickets needed	2
Tour served many in a short time frame	2
Proud of President's home	2
Do not allow other groups to get in without having to wait	1
Food costs too high	1
White House a historic building, too outdated for President's residence	1
Enjoy collecting NPS stamps and validations	1
Disappointed that doors opposite Kennedy Garden not opened	1
Personally prepared for tour by reading guidebook	1
Ticket booth should open earlier	1
Display current Presidential agenda for that day and week	1
Station several guides in large rooms to answer questions	1
Tour too impersonal	1
Tour group had tickets ready on bus--no standing in line	1
Control foreign tour groups better	1
Impressed and thankful for courtesy to handicapped--no wait	1
Thankful for courtesy to handicapped, but wait too long	1
Tour bus guide very informative	1
Set dining area for a State Function	1
Disliked hucksters selling "White House tours" on the streets	1
Washington has insufficient street parking	1
Exciting to know President also present in White House	1
Washington Monument rangers rude	1
Wanted to know rationale for naming rooms	1
Washington cabbies may be dishonest--meters needed	1
Information on the cost of facility maintenance desired	1
Allow photos inside	1
Bus tour very informative and enjoyable	1
Couldn't locate First Ladies' gowns at the Smithsonian Institution	1
Need to explain renovations being done	1
East Room poorly kept	1
Enjoyed Union Station and Washington Cathedral	1
Enjoyed guided tour through Lafayette Park	1
Enjoyed promenade along White House	1
Fifth trip to Washington--finally obtained White House tickets	1
White House is "... just another elaborate museum."	1
Information on Congressional tours not available	1
Courtesy extended to handicapped impressive	1

George Washington Parkway is great	1
White House has a mix of domestic and imposing aspects	1
Advocated a visitor center with film for total picture	1
Suggested special tours for foreign visitors	1
Foreign visitors enjoyed tour as much as visitor did	1
Enjoyed entertainment at Ellipse while waiting	1
Washington postcards should be printed in U.S.	1
Waiting time and facilities well planned and executed	1
Shade provided in bleachers appreciated	1
Glad they were not included in Washington's high crime rate	1
Protect Washington's beauty by keeping it clean	1
Information kiosk not advertised well enough around Ellipse	1
Desire details on foreign gifts in White House	1
Need visitor center	1
Saw a mouse in the White House	1
Wanted an interpretive program for foreign visitors re:	
White House significance to the American democratic heritage	1
Enjoyed portraits of former First Family members	1

MENU FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

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

- 1) Two-way comparisons. These compare two characteristics at a time. For example, to learn about which information sources a particular age group consulted, request a comparison of information sources by age group; to learn about how the use of information sources varied among group types, request a comparison of information sources by group type.
- 2) Three-way comparisons. These compare a two-way comparison to a third characteristic. For example, to learn about whether a proposed visitor center would be used by different visitor group types and sizes, request a comparison of potential visitor center use by group type by group size; to learn about whether a visitor center would be used by different age groups by group size, request a comparison of potential visitor center use by age group by group size.

Consult the complete list of the characteristics for White House visitors, then write those desired in the appropriate blanks on the order form. Blank order forms follow the example below.

SAMPLE

APPENDIX

Questionnaires

**Analysis Order Form
Visitor Services Project
Report 23 (The White House Tours)**

Date of request: _____/_____/_____

Person requesting analysis: _____

Phone number (commercial): _____

The following list specifies all of the variables available for comparison from the visitor survey conducted in your park. Consult this list to identify the characteristics of interest when requesting additional two-way and three-way comparisons.

- Group size
- Group type
- Age
- State residence
- Number of visits
- Routes traveled
- Information sources
- Potential visitor center use
- Services & facilities used
- Service/facility quality
- Downtown sites visited
- Transportation type
- Duration of wait for tour to start
- Ticket arrangements (Congr. Tr. only)
- Ticket sources (Congr. Tr. only)

Please submit all requested cross-tabulations for a particular tour on a separate order form.

Indicate here whether this order form is for: _____ Congressional tour, OR
 _____ public tour

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

_____ by _____
 _____ by _____
 _____ by _____

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

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

Special instructions:

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

Publications of the Visitor Services Project

A number of publications have been prepared as part of the Visitor Services Project. Reports 1-4 are available at cost from the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit upon request. All other reports, except those noted below, are available from the respective parks in which the studies were conducted.

* For a copy of the White House Tours Report or information on the Visitor Services Project, please contact Dr. Gary E. Machlis, University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, Moscow, Idaho 83843 (208) 885-7129.

National Park Service
Visitor Services Project
The White House Tours

Summer 1989

Volume 2 of 2

Visitor Services Project Report 23
Cooperative Park Studies Unit
National Park Service

National Park Service
Visitor Services Project
The White House Tours

Summer 1989

Volume 2 of 2

Gary E. Machlis

Dana E. Dolsen

January 1990

This volume contains summaries of comments made by participating Congressional tour and public tour visitors. The summaries are followed by the visitors' unedited comments.

Dr. Machlis is Sociology Project Leader and Mr. Dana E. Dolsen is Research Associate of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, National Park Service, University of Idaho. We thank Dwight Madison, Margaret Littlejohn and Jean McKendry for their assistance with this study. We also thank Kitty Roberts, and the staffs of President's Park and the White House for their assistance.

Visitor comment summary (Congressional tour)

N=424 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
National Park Service	
Rangers helpful and informative	3
Secret Service	
Guides helpful and informative	48
Security staff knowledgeable and polite	5
Guide's diction and voice projection poor	4
Guide's diction and voice projection good	2
Guide too formal following tour	1
Guide did not rush viewing of room exhibits	1
Guide uninterested, uninformative	1
Guide needed to keep group together and not talk until all present	1
Other Personnel	
Everyone helpful and informative	6
Non-White House tour guide helpful and kind	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Nonpersonal	
Need brochure outlining room layouts and other information	2
Text on portrait plaques too small for reading	1
Need in-depth handout materials	1
Not informative enough--need more exhibits	1
Desired exhibits with photos of private living areas	1
Displays were interesting	1
Personal	
Tour not long enough	33
Tour groups too large	21
Tour crowded, viewing difficult or uncomfortable	13
Tours well organized	6
Tour was late in starting	6
Tour well conducted	3
Improve tour quality--too superficial	3
Tour needs to accommodate children better	2
Wanted a guide stationed in each room	2
Tour not rushed	1
Tour group size (12) allowed good view and listening	1
Ticket distribution system disorganized	1

Need more information on how to arrange for tour of grounds	1
Need more information about tour scheduling at ticket pickup	1
Need more information for children's interest during tours	1
Improve ticket distribution system for public tours	1
Emulate the U.S. Capitol tour system	1
Liked time of tour	1

FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE

General

Insufficient White House tour directional signs	3
White House clean, well kept	2
Need more public restrooms	2
Clean, well maintained grounds	1
Appreciate restoration efforts	1
Take better care of maintenance details	1
Need more drinking fountains	1
Benches desired for those who have a long wait	1

Roads and Parking Facilities

Poor parking availability	1
Area around White House needs better traffic and street signs	1

POLICIES

Want age restrictions to exclude young children	3
---	---

CONCESSIONS

Need to have souvenir and book sales available after tour	2
Need to sell souvenirs	2
Book prices reasonable	2
Need snack bar to sell food	1
Literature for sale is high quality	1
Books serve as excellent mementos	1

VISITOR SERVICES PROJECT

Thanks for privilege of expressing myself	3
Interviewer very nice	1

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Enjoyable and interesting tour	63
Wanted to see more White House rooms and grounds	39
Thanks to White House tour management	15
Tour informative	11

Waited too long	10
Grateful for opportunity to tour White House	7
Wanted to personally meet the President and other dignitaries	5
Instilled pride in U.S. and a desire to know more of U.S. history	5
Enjoyed the floral arrangements	4
Not enough personal information about Presidents and families	4
Plan to return	4
White House tour a favorite	3
Want advance ticket procurement	2
Appreciated human interest information	2
Highlight of Washington visit	2
Want information on various presidential and family personalities as expressed in the White House	2
Want details on White House staff responsibilities and assignments	2
Want more information on the areas of interest at the White House that media covers (e.g. grounds, gardens)	2
Want more information on the Presidential living areas	2
Thankful for courtesy to handicapped and aged	2
Very disappointed with tour	2
Wait in line not too long	2
Expand public tour hours	1
All D.C. tours very good	1
Congressional tour much better than public tour	1
Information on President and family's daily routine and schedule desired	1
Waiting area pleasant	1
Have taken many friends on tour	1
Overrated as special tour	1
Should skip tours during holidays--disorganization apparent	1
Need better system of crowd control in waiting line	1
Washington is beautiful because of the NPS	1
Floral arrangements terrible--appeared too artificial	1
Hope flowers used again, expensive outlay for taxpayers	1
Too much trivia on rooms and events--needs more depth	1
Wanted private tour	1
Tour group had tickets ready on bus-no standing in line	1
Tour better than '85 Candlelight tour	1
Approved of ticket distribution system	1
Need initial overall orientation to the White House with visual aids	1
Foreigners have difficulty with English comprehension	1
Enjoyed paintings and related information	1
More information on paintings and artwork desired	1
Metro-rail and bus information have insufficient tourist information	1
Horticulture lectures desired	1
Mall facilities well maintained and of a high quality	1
People of Washington, D.C. very helpful	1
Young children on tour interfered with visitor's experience	1

Visitor comment summary (public tour)

N=515 comments; many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
National Park Service	
Rangers helpful and informative	4
Rangers not expansive enough with responses	3
Rangers rude	1
Many park service people said nothing	1
More staff needed to man ticket booth	1
Park service personnel not busy	1
Secret Service	
Guards were knowledgeable and polite	7
Room guides helpful and informative	6
Security measures good	2
Room guides not helpful and informative	2
Room guides did not have prepared talks--should have	2
Room guides lacked enthusiasm and interest in answering questions	1
Other Personnel	
Everyone helpful and informative	8
Bus tour guide very good	1
Staff appeared overly warm in uniforms	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Nonpersonal	
Need brochure or tape explaining rooms and events	3
Need to locate more information signs higher in each room	2
White House Guide Books should be available at no cost	1
Pleased with printed materials available	1
Downstairs exhibits sketchy	1
Text on portrait plaques too small for reading	1
Information and materials needed in foreign languages	1
Not informative enough--orientation slide show needed	1
Desire room exhibits with photos of historic events	1
Exhibits mediocre	1
Pleased with self-guided tour	1
Advocated books on White House trivia and "unusual scenes"	1

Personal

Tour too short	36
Tour crowded, viewing difficult and uncomfortable	24
Wanted accompanying guide to explain interesting items	20
Would like fewer people per tour	12
Tours well organized	7
Need better system of crowd control to minimize time loss	4
Disappointed in the quality of the information guides provided	4
Tour not designed with children in mind	2
Tour disorganized re: traffic flow	2
Abbreviated tours should be advertised as such	1
Tour is repetitive, needs to be changed	1
Conflicting information received about President's location	1
Suggested optional tour of White House grounds	1
Suggested a mock "News Conference" to experience reality of White House events	1

FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE**General**

Clean, well maintained grounds	3
White House clean, well kept	2
Need more restrooms near ticket booth	2
VIP gate appropriately low key and well conceived	1
Roped paths needed to keep line in single file	1
Take better care of restrooms	1
Insufficient White House tour directional signs	1
Wheelchair ramps hard to navigate	1
Approve of ticket booth and associated waiting line relocation	1
Wanted ticket booth to be part of shaded bleacher area	1

Roads and Parking Facilities

Poor parking availability	6
White House tour parking area needed	2
Handicapped parking is limited and distant	2
Cost for parking too expensive	1

CONCESSIONS

Need to sell coffee and orange juice	1
--------------------------------------	---

VISITOR SERVICES PROJECT

Thanks for privilege of expressing myself	3
Would like another questionnaire after longer visit	1
Ranger doing interview most congenial	1

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Enjoyable and interesting tour	48
Wanted to see more rooms and grounds in White House	34
Need more material presented in each room	17
Need more general information, before and during tour	16
Wait was too long	12
Grateful for opportunity to tour White House	12
Not enough personal information about Presidents and families	9
Thanks to White House tour management	9
Enjoyed the floral arrangements	7
Disappointed with tour	7
Wanted to see President and other dignitaries	6
Efficient ticket distribution process	6
Allow photos inside	5
Total lack of information	5
Prefer better ticket system	5
Wanted better advance ticket reservations	5
Plan to return	5
President's residence in poor shape	4
Disliked early hours necessary to obtain tickets	4
Improve tour quality or stop tours altogether	4
Wanted to know more about White House historical events	4
Tour educational	4
Want more information on significant moments and events	3
President's home beautiful	3
Enjoyed Congressional tour more than public tour	3
Displeased with wait in line after leaving grandstands	3
Washington a great place to visit	3
White House tour highlight of Washington visit	3
People in Washington helpful	2
Enjoyed the News/Press room	2
Vietnam Veterans' Memorial very impressive	2
Waiting too long a big problem with children	2
More publicity on how to arrange for tour tickets needed	2
Tour served many in a short time frame	2
Proud of President's home	2
Do not allow other groups to get in without having to wait	1
Food costs too high	1
White House a historic building, too outdated for President's residence	1
Enjoy collecting NPS stamps and validations	1
Disappointed that doors opposite Kennedy Garden not opened	1
Personally prepared for tour by reading guidebook	1
Ticket booth should open earlier	1
Display current Presidential agenda for that day and week	1
Station several guides in large rooms to answer questions	1
Tour too impersonal	1
Tour group had tickets ready on bus--no standing in line	1
Control foreign tour groups better	1
Impressed and thankful for courtesy to handicapped--no wait	1
Thankful for courtesy to handicapped, but wait too long	1
Tour bus guide very informative	1
Set dining area for a State Function	1

Disliked hucksters selling "White House tours" on the streets	1
Washington has insufficient street parking	1
Exciting to know President also present in White House	1
Washington Monument rangers rude	1
Wanted to know rationale for naming rooms	1
Washington cabbies may be dishonest--meters needed	1
Information on the cost of facility maintenance desired	1
Allow photos inside	1
Bus tour very informative and enjoyable	1
Couldn't locate First Ladies' gowns at the Smithsonian Institution	1
Need to explain renovations being done	1
East Room poorly kept	1
Enjoyed Union Station and Washington Cathedral	1
Enjoyed guided tour through Lafayette Park	1
Enjoyed promenade along White House	1
Fifth trip to Washington--finally obtained White House tickets	1
White House is "... just another elaborate museum."	1
Information on Congressional tours not available	1
Courtesy extended to handicapped impressive	1
George Washington Parkway is great	1
White House has a mix of domestic and imposing aspects	1
Advocated a visitor center with film for total picture	1
Suggested special tours for foreign visitors	1
Foreign visitors enjoyed tour as much as visitor did	1
Enjoyed entertainment at Ellipse while waiting	1
Washington postcards should be printed in U.S.	1
Waiting time and facilities well planned and executed	1
Shade provided in bleachers appreciated	1
Glad they were not included in Washington's high crime rate	1
Protect Washington's beauty by keeping it clean	1
Information kiosk not advertised well enough around Ellipse	1
Desire details on foreign gifts in White House	1
Need visitor center	1
Saw a mouse in the White House	1
Advocated an interpretive program for foreign visitors re: White House significance to the American democratic heritage	1
Enjoyed portraits of former First Family members	1