



United States Department of Agriculture



**U.S. Forest Service
National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Results
National Summary Report**

Data collected FY 2018 through FY 2022

September 2023

DRAFT



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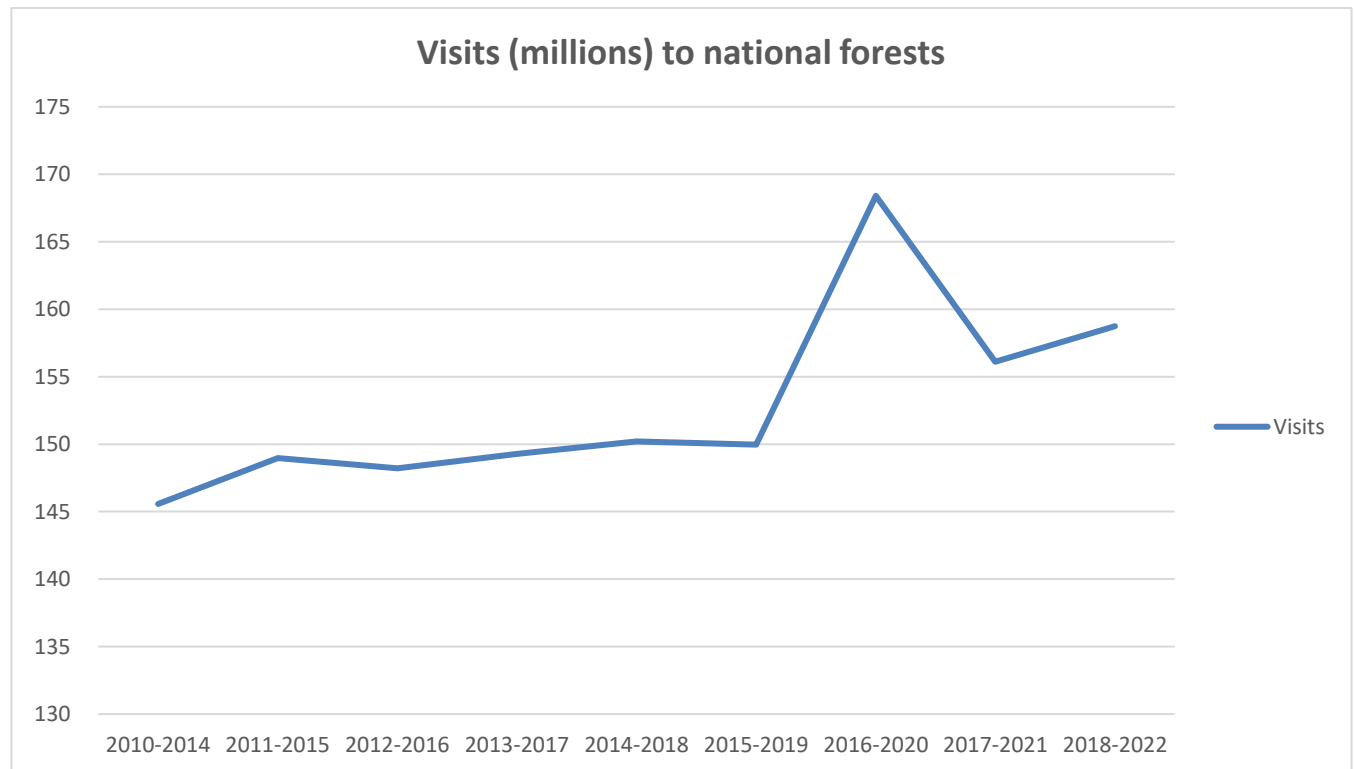


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Forest Service develops estimates of the volume of recreation use on national forests through the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. Onsite surveys are a key part of the process. These surveys help show the characteristics of recreation-related visits to national forests and the benefits recreation brings to Americans.

Completed in five-year cycles, the National Visitor Use Monitoring results help the Forest Service manage recreational resources in such a way that best meets the needs of visitors while maintaining the quality of the natural resources. Baseline data for examining long-term trends started in 2005.

Results in this report reflect the most recent field data on each national forest and includes FY2018 to FY2022. We estimate there were about 159 million recreation visits to national forests. That figure reflects a significant change from trends prior to the COVID19 pandemic. During the COVID19 pandemic, dispersed settings experienced large increases in daily visitation compared to prior years as Americans sought outdoor experiences in socially distanced settings on national forests and grasslands. The large increases seen in the last half of FY2020 and the first half of FY2021 have dissipated somewhat, but visitation rates to dispersed areas continue to be higher than pre-pandemic levels. Estimates over time are shown below:



The agency also estimates an additional 300 million occasions where people traveled on the 138 scenic byways and other similar routes near, on, or through national forests for the purpose of viewing scenery on national forests.



Chosen recreation activities vary widely, both in character and location. Some relax as they view natural features or wildlife from the roadside, whereas others pursue solitude as they hike in the remote backcountry. Some engage in off highway vehicle use. Others enjoy water-based recreation, hunt, or camp.

The two most common primary recreational activities are hiking/walking and downhill skiing. Just over 65 percent of visitors engage in a primary activity that is physically active, which contribute significantly to the American public's efforts to stay healthy.

The characteristics of recreation visitors are as diverse as their chosen activities.

- About 38 percent of visits to national forests and 41 percent of visits to Wilderness areas are made by females.
- Children under the age of 16 account for about 16 percent of visits to national forests.
- All income classes are represented in the recreating public.
- Nearly half of visits to national forests come from people who live within 50 miles of the forest they visited, while a bit over one-fifth traveled more than 200 miles.
- Many visits – about 58 percent – are by people who visit that forest 10 or fewer times per year.
- Over 17 percent of visits are from people who come back more than 50 times each year.

Our visitors said their visits to national forests and grasslands make them happy:

- 96 percent of visitors are satisfied with their overall experiences, including 83 percent who report being very satisfied.
- More than 95 percent are satisfied with their feeling of safety.
- Less than 5 percent reported being dissatisfied with the value received for any fees paid in connection with their visit.

Visitors to national forests and grasslands give back in terms of economic vitality of the nation, especially for rural communities. Annual spending by recreation visitors in areas near national forests and grasslands was about \$11 billion in FY2021. Visitors who live more than 50 miles from a forest or grassland account for about half of that total. As visitor spending ripples through the U.S. economy, about \$13.7 billion is reflected in the nation's gross domestic product and sustains about 161,000 full- and part-time jobs.

The survey data highlights the contribution of forest-based recreation in connecting the American people to their natural and cultural heritage, an important element of the Forest Service Recreation Strategy. Such connections are critical to the cultivation of a conservation ethic and sense of resource stewardship among Americans. Recreation also directly facilitates the improvement of American health, a priority in both the Recreation Strategy and among Forest Service leadership. This report also emphasizes the importance of recreation in the creation of rural wealth and vibrant rural economies.



METHODOLOGY AND USE

The National Visitor Use Monitoring program provides estimates of the volume and characteristics of recreation visitation on National Forest System lands. The National Forest System is an area of the agency that oversees 154 national forests and 20 national grasslands on 193 million acres of public lands.

Information about the quantity and quality of recreation visits is required for national forest plans; Executive Order 12862, [Setting Customer Service Standards](#); and implementation of the [National Recreation Agenda](#). The agency's [Strategic and Annual Performance Plans](#) require the measurement of user satisfaction and use level.

The National Visitor Use Monitoring Program ensures that all visitor statistics for national forests and grasslands produced by the Forest Service use a standardized measure. These standards were originally established by the agency in the 1970s. However, application of those standards is now under stricter protocols. For example, in order to count as a recreation visitor, that person must be physically recreating on Forest Service-managed lands and not merely passing through, stopping to use a facility or viewing a national forest or grassland from a non-Forest Service managed road.

Background and Methods

Results in this report are derived by adding the results from the most recent survey fieldwork for each national forest and grassland. The results included here are from field work completed from FY2018 to FY2022. Each forest is sampled once in five years. That means that in any given year, around 24 forests are engaged in field data collection. Those forests that completed their survey work in 2022 were updating visitation estimates from 2017. This report represents an iteration of the survey process, or a snapshot of the most current visitation patterns and activities on lands managed by the agency.

The basic methodology is explained in detail in [A Review of the Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring \(NVUM\) Program](#)¹. In essence, visitation is estimated through a combination of exiting traffic counts and surveys of visitors leaving a national forest or grassland. Both are obtained from random locations and days on a national forest or grassland over a period of one year.

Recreation visitors who are surveyed are asked about the length of their visit, activities they participated in while on a national forest or grassland, information about themselves such as where they are from, their age, ethnicity and other information, the distance they traveled, how often they visit and their overall satisfaction. About one-third also were asked a series of detailed satisfaction questions about specific aspects of their visit. Another one-third of visitors were asked to provide information about their income, spending while on their trip, and the next best substitute for the visit.

¹ English, et al. A Review of the Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) Program, [Agricultural and Resource Economics Review](#), Volume 49, Special Issue 1: Ecosystem Service Valuation and Federal Conservation, April 2020, p. 64 – 90.
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Satisfaction measures

Survey participants were asked to provide an overall rating of their recreation experiences on a 5-point Likert scale. A Likert scale is a numerical measurement of a respondent's level of agreement with a provided statement. About one-third of visitors were asked to rate their satisfaction with and the importance of fourteen items related to the recreation facilities and services at the site or area at which they recreated. The Likert scale for importance ranges from not important to very important. The Likert scale for performance (satisfaction) ranges from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Results are summarized by site type:

- day use developed
- overnight use developed
- undeveloped general forest, and
- Wilderness

The satisfaction responses are analyzed and reported in several ways.

1. A graph of overall satisfaction is presented in Figure 5.
2. There are two aggregate measures:
 - Percent Satisfied Index is the proportion of all ratings for 14 items in each category in which the satisfaction was denoted as either "Somewhat satisfied" or "Very Satisfied." Table 11 displays the aggregate scores.
 - Percent Meets Expectations aggregate measures the proportion of satisfaction ratings that are equal to or greater than the importance rating for a given item. This indicator tracks the similarity between the Agency's performance and customer evaluations of importance. Figure 6 displays these scores.

The satisfaction elements most readily controlled by managers were aggregated into four categories:

- developed facilities
- access
- services
- visitor safety

The site types sampled were aggregated into three groups:

- developed sites, which includes day use and overnight developed sites
 - undeveloped areas
 - Wilderness
3. Importance-Performance Analysis was calculated for the mean values of the importance and satisfaction scores. A target level of importance and performance divides the possible set of score pairs into four quadrants. In the context of the recreation visitor survey, the target level for each of the 14 satisfaction items was a numerical average score of 4.0. The quadrant titles help to



interpret each score and can provide general guidance for management. The quadrants definitions are:

- Importance at or above 4.0, Satisfaction at or above 4.0: **Keep up the good work.** These are functions that are important to visitors and which the agency is performing quite well.
- Importance at or above 4.0, Satisfaction under 4.0: **Concentrate here.** These are functions that are highly important to the public, but performance is not at a satisfactory level. Increasing effort here is likely to have the greatest payoff in overall customer satisfaction.
- Importance below 4.0, Satisfaction above 4.0: **Possible overkill.** These are functions that are not of the highest importance to visitors but performance is quite good. It may be possible to reduce effort here without greatly harming overall customer satisfaction.
- Importance below 4.0; Satisfaction below 4.0: **Low priority.** These are functions where performance is not at high levels, but neither are the importance ratings. Focusing effort here is unlikely to have as great an impact on overall satisfaction.

The numerical scores for visitor satisfaction and importance for each of the satisfaction items by site type are presented in Appendix A (Tables A1 – A4). Special attention should be paid to the numeric scores in the Appendix in reviewing and evaluating the Importance-Performance Analysis results for each item. Particular emphasis should be placed on those ratings that are close to but slightly below the 4.0 value, which separates the four quadrants. For these, the distribution of responses as well as the average rating should be reviewed, as the average value could be affected by a relatively small set of very low ratings.

Visitors rated their perception of how crowded the recreation site or area felt to them. Perceptions take into account the type of site and visitors' expectations. Ratings ranged from 1 (hardly anyone there) to 10 (overcrowded).

Spending and Economic Contributions

Spending by visitors has important effects to the health of forest-dependent economies and supports thousands of jobs in communities near NFS lands. To estimate total spending associated with recreation visits this information is collected:

- overall visitation estimate
- proportion of visits in each of a series of visitor types
- average spending total for each of the respective visitor types.

Multiplying these three variables gives the total amount of spending by each type of visitor. Summing over all visitor types gives total spending associated with recreation on national forests and grasslands.

One-third of the visitor surveys included questions about trip-related spending made within 50 miles of the site visited. Dr. Eric White of the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station developed a typology of visitor types and average spending amounts for each. The spending that occurs on a recreation trip is greatly influenced by the type of trip taken. Visitors on overnight trips away from home pay for some form of lodging, such as hotel rooms or campground fees, while day-trip visitors do not. Visitors on overnight trips also generally purchase more food during their trip in restaurants or grocery stores than visitors on day trips. Visitors who are close to home usually spend less than visitors traveling longer distances, especially on items such as fuel and food.



Analysis of spending patterns has shown that segments of the visitor market with consistent spending patterns are:

- local visitors on day trips
- local visitors on overnight trips staying on the national forest
- local visitors on overnight trips staying off the national forest
- non-local visitors on day trips
- non-local visitors on overnight trips staying on the national forest
- non-local visitors on overnight trips staying off the national forest
- non-primary visitors

In addition, these surveys included questions about household income and what the individual considered to be the most likely substitute for their visit to the forest. National results for the most up to date economic contribution measures available are presented here. In general, the most current economic data lags the visitation estimate by a year or two, as it takes time to assemble and validate the economic model and the interindustry and institutional relationships that it represents. Greater detail on the contribution of visitor spending to economic regions around individual national forest units is available at the [National Forest Recreation Economic Contributions](#) website.



Terms Used in this Report

National forest visit: one person participating in one or more recreation activities on a national forest or grassland for an unspecified period of time. A national forest visit can be composed of multiple site visits.

Site visit: one person participating in one or more recreation activities at a particular national forest or grassland site or area for an unspecified period of time.

Confidence interval: a range of values that is likely to include an unknown population value, where the range is calculated from a given set of sample data. Confidence intervals are always accompanied by a confidence level

Confidence level: tells the degree of certainty that the value lies in the interval. Used together, confidence interval and confidence level define the reliability of the estimate by defining the range of values that are needed to reach the given confidence level. For example, the current national visitation estimate is 158.7 million visits, with a 90 percent confidence interval of 2.4 percent. In other words, given the data, our best estimate is 158.7 million visits, and we are 90 percent certain that the true number is between 154.9 million and 162.6 million.

Local visitors: travel less than 50 road miles from home to the recreation site

Non-local visitors: travel greater than 50 road miles

Non-primary visitors: have a primary trip purpose that is something other than recreating on the national forest – it could be to some other recreation destination, or for some reason other than recreation.

Average: values for visit characteristics are calculated by expanding the sample of recreation contacts to the population of national forest visits. On some tables **median** values (the value of the 50th percentile) are also provided, because the averages can be greatly influenced by a few large values.



Using this Report

Results presented here reflect forest-level data collected during the period FY2018 through FY2022. The national results summarize the data for all reporting units.

The results provide a good snapshot representation of the characteristics of visitors, their visitation patterns, activities, satisfactions, expectations, and the benefits they bring to communities surrounding national forests.

This report has been written and formatted for a diverse audience. More results from the National Visitor Use Monitoring program including results for individual reporting units are available at [USDA Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring Results](#).

Forest Service Use of Visitor Data

Results from the National Visitor Use Monitoring Program are used for a number of purposes:

- To report the best current estimate of visitation to national forests and wilderness areas, including the proportion of visits that come from targeted demographic groups, including children and different racial and ethnic groups.
- To provide a sense of the recreation niche for individual national forests and their unique contributions to the set of outdoor recreation opportunities available to the public.
- To measure the contribution the Forest Service makes to the health of the American public through participation in active outdoor pursuits.
- To provide guidance for how to maintain and improve the set of recreation opportunities the Agency provides.
- To document the contribution that Forest Service recreation visitation makes to the economic well-being of both forest-dependent communities and the Nation.

Visitation Estimates

Table 1a displays the number of annual national forest visits and national forest site visits for the entire National Forest System estimated for FY2022. The site visit estimate includes visits to Wilderness areas. Table 1b shows the estimates for visitation since FY2018. Table 2 shows the number of national forest and Wilderness visits in each Forest Service region. The current annual visitation estimate is nearly 159 million national forest visits. The 90 percent confidence interval for that estimate ranges from 154.9 million to 162.6 million. In 2022, we estimate Wilderness accounted for slightly less than 13 million recreational visits annually, compared to its pre-pandemic range of around 9 million. The increase in recreation visits to uncrowded, natural settings has occurred since the COVID pandemic began in 2020.

Most people (85 percent) who recreate on a particular national forest describe recreating on that forest as their primary destination for the trip away from home (Figure 1). That is, the recreation opportunities provided on land managed by the Agency were the main reason these visitors decided to make a trip away from home. The rest were people making a side trip to recreate on the national forest during a trip where the primary trip purpose was recreating elsewhere or some other, non-recreation, purpose.



Table 1a. Overall annual visitation estimate for the National Forest System, for FY2022.

Visit type	Visits (Thousands)	90 Percent Confidence Interval Width (Percent)	90 Percent Confidence Interval Range (Thousands of Visits)
Total Estimated Site Visits	209,780	2.2	205,164 - 214,395
Designated Wilderness Visits^a	12,844	5.7	12,112 - 13,576
Total Estimated National Forest Visits	158,747	2.4	154,937 - 162,557

^a Designated Wilderness visits are included in the Site Visits estimate.

Table 1b. National visitation estimate (in thousands) for the National Forest System, in recent years.

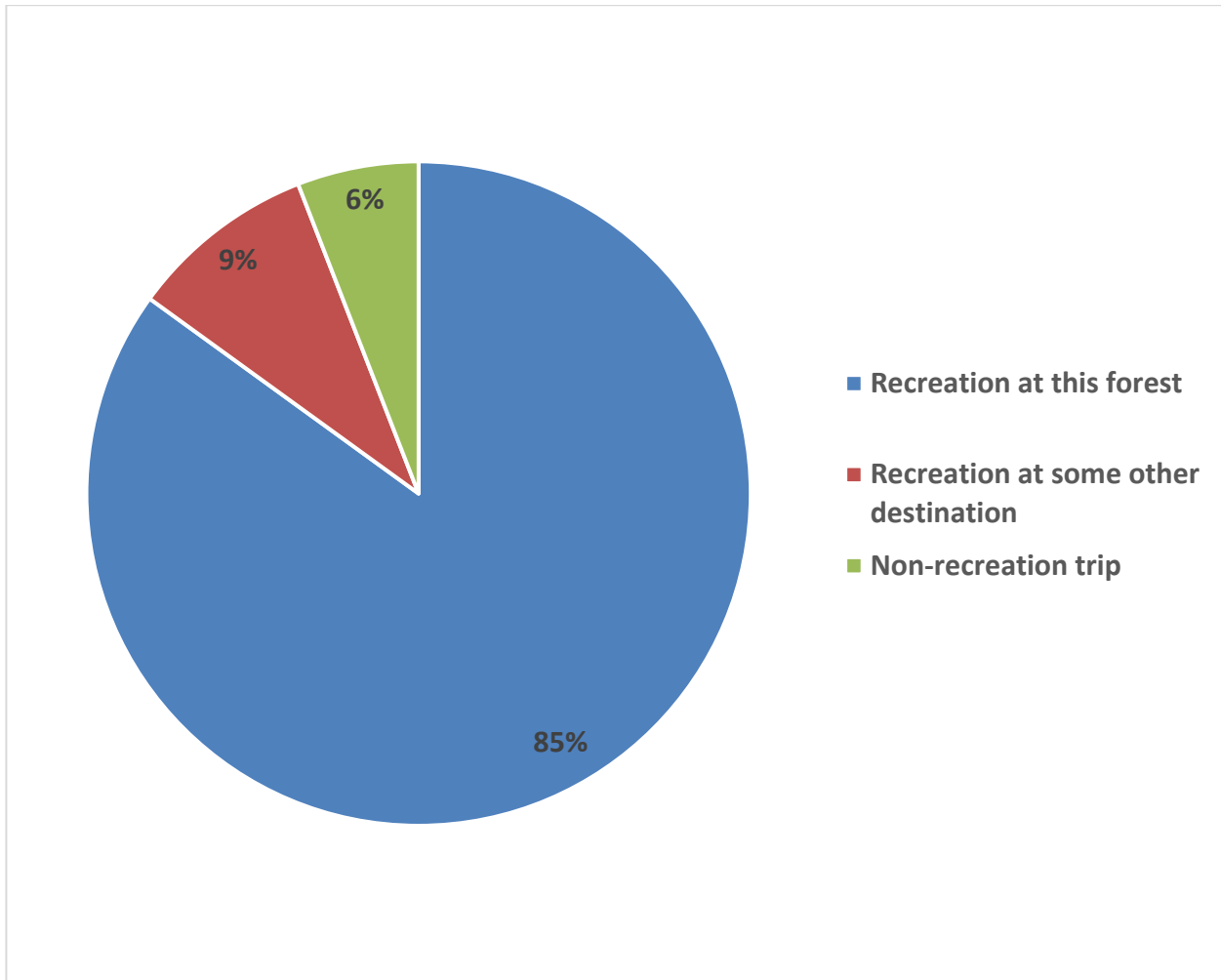
Visit type	FY2014- FY2018	FY2015- FY2019	FY2016- FY2020	FY2017- FY2021	FY2018- FY2022
Day Use Developed Sites	76,830	77,420	74,871	72,107	71,900
Overnight Use Developed Sites	14,057	14,228	13,091	13,424	14,334
General Forest Areas	93,227	93,227	115,902	105,773	110,702
Wilderness	8,884	8,981	16,045	11,427	12,844
Total Site Visits	191,578	193,857	219,909	202,731	209,780
National Forest Visits	150,195	149,960	168,406	156,109	158,747



Table 2. Regional annual visitation estimates for the National Forest System, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Region	National Forest Visits (1000s)	90 Percent Confidence Interval, As Percent of Visits	Wilderness Visits (1000s)	90 Percent Confidence Interval, As Percent of Visits
01: Northern	9,518	4.9	569.6	10.7
02: Rocky Mountain	34,040	7.6	2,988	15.4
03: Southwestern	15,693	5.5	2,868	12.4
04: Intermountain	21,423	5.4	997.3	10.1
05: Pacific Southwest	23,024	5.2	2,252	14.4
06: Pacific Northwest	19,386	5.2	1,347	13.3
08: Southern	21,010	7.5	1,044	19.4
09: Eastern	11,919	8.1	734.6	13.6
10: Alaska	2,736	5.5	43.3	24.1
TOTAL	158,747	2.4	12,844	5.7

Figure 1. Purpose of Trip for FY2018 - FY2022.





DESCRIPTION OF THE RECREATION VISIT

Demographics

Demographic characteristics provide an overall picture of the customer base for national forest recreation. Table 3 shows the percentage of visits by men and women. Table 4 presents the racial and ethnic distribution of visits, and Table 5 shows the age distribution. A large proportion of national forest visits and visits to designated wilderness come from people who live nearby (Figure 3). Foreign visitors are not overly common (Table 6); Europeans and Canadians each account for a little more than one-third of all foreign visits.

Table 3. Percent of national forest and wilderness visits by gender, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Gender	National Forest Visits (Percent)	Wilderness Visits (Percent)
Female	38	41
Male	62	59
Total	100	100

Table 4. Percent of national forest and wilderness visits by race and ethnicity, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Race/Ethnicity ^a	National Forest Visits (Percent)	Wilderness Visits (Percent)
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.6	1.7
Asian	3.3	5.1
Black/African American	1.6	1.3
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.6	0.5
White	94.5	93.4
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	8.1	6.9

^a Questions on race and ethnicity are asked separately on the NVUM survey, following the current OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. Respondents first stated whether they were Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino, then a separate question asked which of the racial categories applied to them. Respondents could choose more than one racial group.

Table 5. Percent of national forest and wilderness visits by age class, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Age	National Forest Visits (Percent)	Wilderness Visits (Percent)
Under 16	15.9	9.3
16-19	2.7	2.9
20-29	13.8	18.1
30-39	16.8	18.9
40-49	15.2	14
50-59	14.5	16.8
60-69	14.5	14.4
70 and over	6.5	5.6

Figure 2. Distribution of national forest and Wilderness visits by age group, for FY2018 - FY2022.

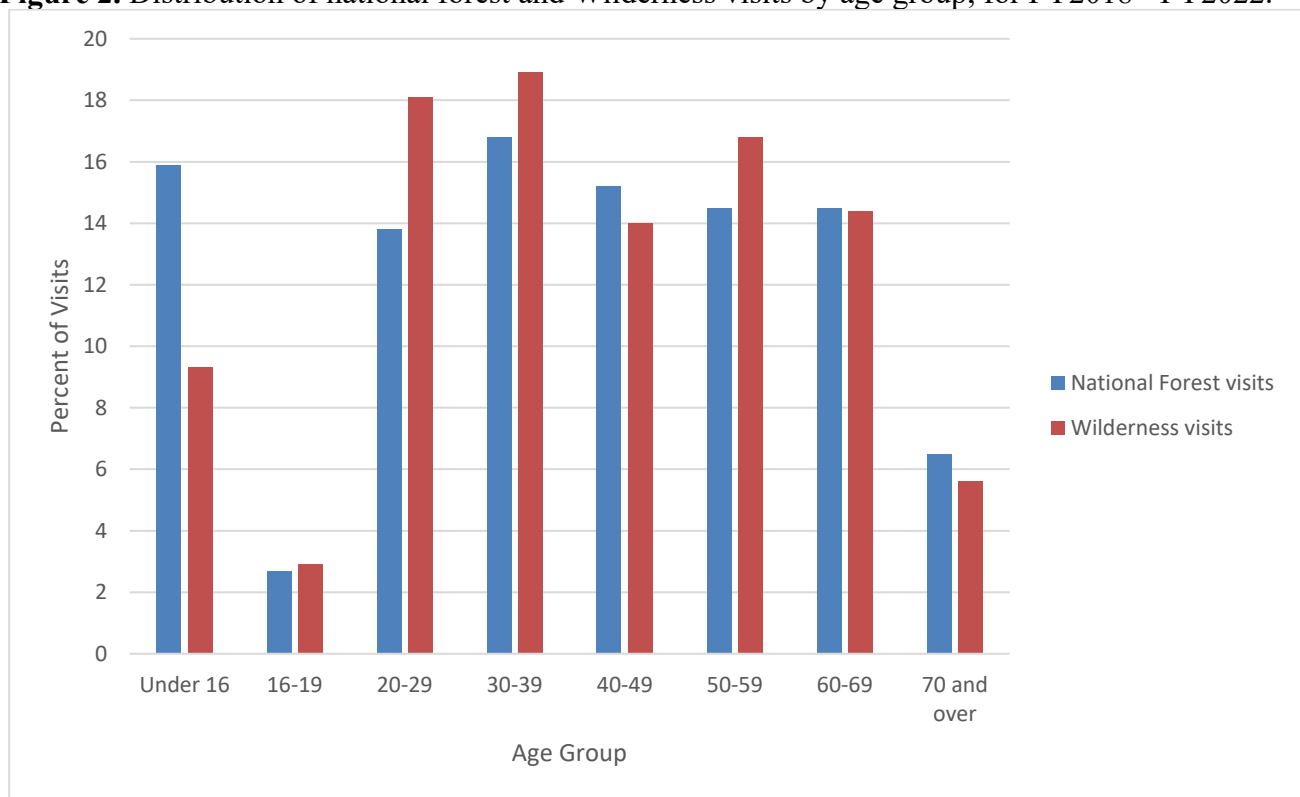


Figure 3. Distribution of national forest visits by travel distance categories, for FY2018 - FY2022.

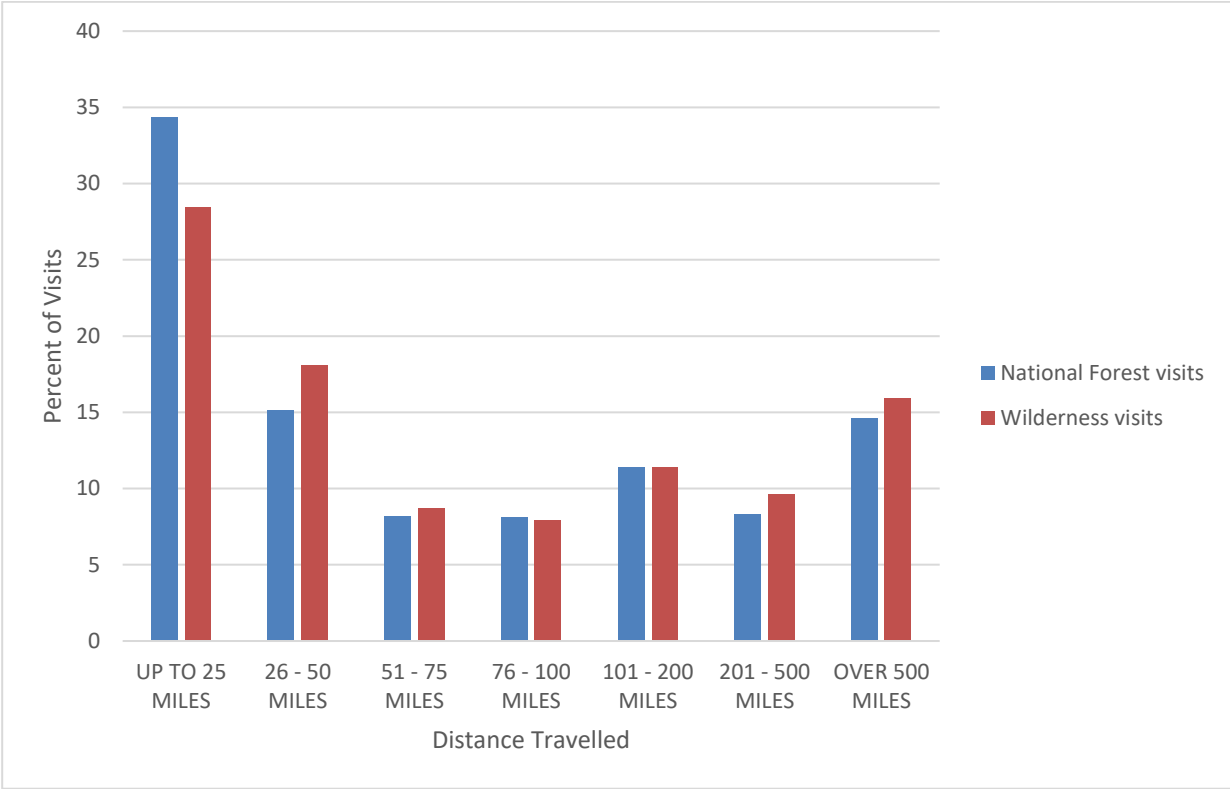


Table 6. Percent of national forest visits by origin for foreign visitors, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Origin	% National Forest Visits
Asia	0.1
Canada	0.6
Europe	0.6
Mexico	0
South America	0
Some other origin	0.3

Visit Descriptions

Characteristics of the recreation visit such as length of visit, types of sites visited, activity participation and visitor satisfaction with forest facilities are of interest to a variety of stakeholders. Short visits to national forests and wilderness areas are typical (Table 7) and the great majority of visitors to national forests only go to one location on the forest during their visit (Table 8). However, some visitors do go to more than one recreation site or area. Often, these are the people who stay for a relatively long time and visit several different locations. Visitors were asked how often they visit a given national forest for all recreational activities, and how often for their primary activity (Table 9). Most visits are made by people who visit the forest on which they were surveyed only a few times per year. Most of the people who visit frequently live close to the national forest they visit.

Table 7. Visit duration for national forest visits, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Visit Type	Average Duration (hours)	Median Duration (hours)
Site Visit	8.9	2.7
Day Use Developed	2.7	2.1
Overnight Use Developed	47.5	41.7
Undeveloped Areas	7.4	2.5
Designated Wilderness	9.9	3.2
National Forest Visit	21.1	4.0

Figure 4. Distribution of national forest and wilderness visits by duration categories, for FY2018 - FY2022.

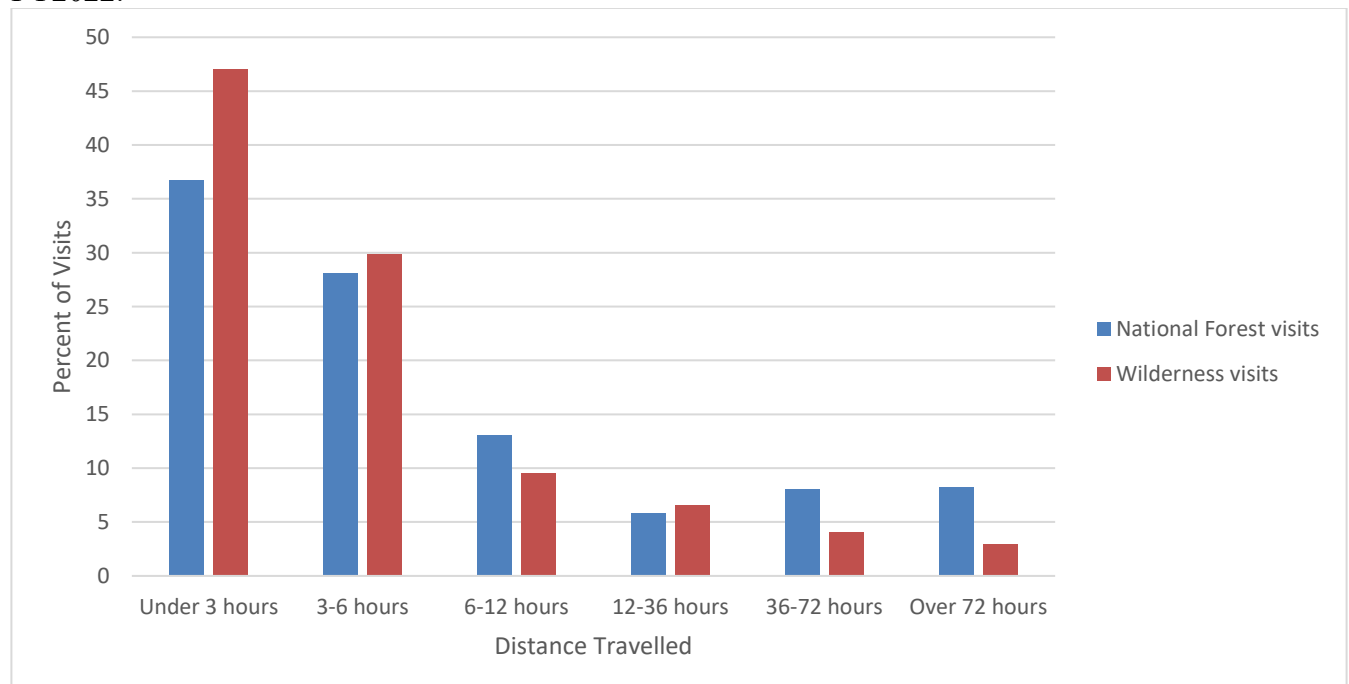


Table 8. Other visit characteristics for national forest recreation visits, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Characteristic	
Percent of recreational visitors who visit just one national forest site during their entire national forest visit	82.1
Average number of national forest sites visited during each national forest visit	1.4
Average group size	2.3

Table 9. Percent of national forest visits by annual visit frequency, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Number of reported annual visits	For All activities	For Just Primary Activity
1 – 5 times per year	48.4	55.5
6 – 10 times per year	9.9	11.9
11 – 15 times per year	6.1	5.8
16 – 20 times per year	4.5	4.7
21 – 25 times per year	3.2	2.8
26 – 30 times per year	3.2	2.8
31 – 35 times per year	0.4	0.7
36 – 40 times per year	2.4	2.1
41 – 50 times per year	4.9	3.3
51 – 100 times per year	8.4	5.1
101 – 200 times per year	4.8	2.8
201 – 300 times per year	2.8	1.9
Over 300 times per year	1.2	0.6

Activities

Most national forest visitors participate in several recreation activities during each visit. However, nearly all can identify a single primary activity on the visit. A small portion list more than one primary activity; a few do not specify any primary activity. Visitors were asked how many hours they spent doing their primary activity (Table 10).

Recreation on national forests also contributes to the overall health of those who visit. Around 65 percent of visits come primarily to engage in a physically active pursuit. On average, these people spend a little more than 8 hours per visit participating in their primary activity.

Table 10. Activity participation for national forest recreation visits, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Activity	% Percent Of Visitors Who Participated in This Activity ^a	% Indicating As Their Primary Activity ^b	Average Hours Spent in Primary Activity ^c
Developed Camping	8.1	3.6	43.2
Primitive Camping	3.3	1	35.5
Resort Use	1.5	0.1	38
Nature Center Activities	5.7	0.3	1.8
Nature Study	6.7	0.4	5.4
Viewing Wildlife	26.9	1.4	3.7
Viewing Natural	38.3	8.5	3.4
Visiting Historic or Prehistoric Sites	4.9	0.3	2.8
Relaxing, Hanging out, Escaping Heat or noise	30.2	4.1	14.1
Picnicking	8.4	1.1	7.2
OHV Use	3.7	1.9	5.4
Target Shooting	1	0.6	1.9
Snowmobiling	1.5	1.1	4.2
Driving for Pleasure	17.3	3.9	3.8
Motorized Water Activities	2	0.8	9.3
Other Motorized	0.4	0.1	4.1
Fishing*	8.9	5.2	6
Hunting*	4.3	3.8	11.9
Gathering Forest Products*	3.1	0.8	3.2
Hiking / Walking*	49.6	28.9	3.6
Backpacking*	2.1	0.8	33.4
Horseback Riding*	0.7	0.5	5.9
Bicycling*	6.7	3.7	2.9
Downhill Skiing / Snowboarding*	16.6	15.8	6.2

Activity	% Percent Of Visitors Who Participated in This Activity ^a	% Indicating As Their Primary Activity ^b	Average Hours Spent in Primary Activity ^c
Cross-country Skiing / Snowshoeing*	4.3	3.3	2.9
Non-motorized Water*	3.5	1.8	4.9
Other Non-motorized	6.3	1.7	3.3
Some Other Activity	5.5	3.9	3.2
No Activity Reported	0.7	1.5	.

^a Survey respondents could select multiple activities so this column may total more than 100 percent.

^b Respondents were asked to select one activity as their main one. Some selected more than one, so this column may total more than 100 percent.

^c Computed only for those who indicated the activity was the main activity on their visit.

* Indicates that this activity is considered to be physically active.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

A critical element of outdoor recreation program delivery is the evaluation of customer satisfaction with the recreation setting, facilities, and services provided. Overall satisfaction levels for national forest visits are quite high (Figure 5).

The Percent Satisfied Index shows very high satisfaction levels for visitors’ perceptions of safety (Table 11). Satisfaction levels pertaining to access were equal to or above 85 percent satisfied for all three types of sites. Satisfaction levels with services (signage, information, and employee helpfulness) were between 77 and 83 percent; the lower satisfaction levels occur in dispersed recreation settings, where those services are less common. Comparing these results to the overall satisfaction results indicates that safety and access are likely to be among the most important elements of customer satisfaction.

Most places on national forests do not have any fees associated with recreation use. However, for those that do have fees, the majority of visitors are satisfied with the value they receive for the fees they paid. In developed sites, including ski areas and overnight sites, 85 percent are satisfied.

The Percent Meets Expectations (PME) measure shows that the congruence between performance and expectations is quite high for the feeling of safety – greater than 90 percent in each of the three types of sites (Figure 6). Access elements are above 80 percent for each of the site types. The PME levels for developed facility items are above 75 percent for all areas.

National importance-performance results show that there are no elements that fall into the ‘Concentrate here’ quadrant (Table 12). All were in the ‘Keep up the good work’ quadrant. The overall ratings of road conditions and adequacy of signage were quite good: for over half of all visits both the importance and satisfaction for these items were rated as high as possible (Figures 7a and 7b).

Feeling that an area is very crowded can diminish recreation satisfaction. Visitors to both types of developed sites report higher levels of crowding than do users of dispersed sites (Table 13, and Figure 8).

For the developed sites, between 10 and 15 percent of people felt there were high levels (8 or higher) of crowding. In dispersed settings (GFA and Wilderness) a little over 50 percent of the visitors felt that the areas were not crowded, giving a rating of 1 – 3.

Figure 5. Percent of national forest visits by overall satisfaction rating, for FY2018 - FY2022

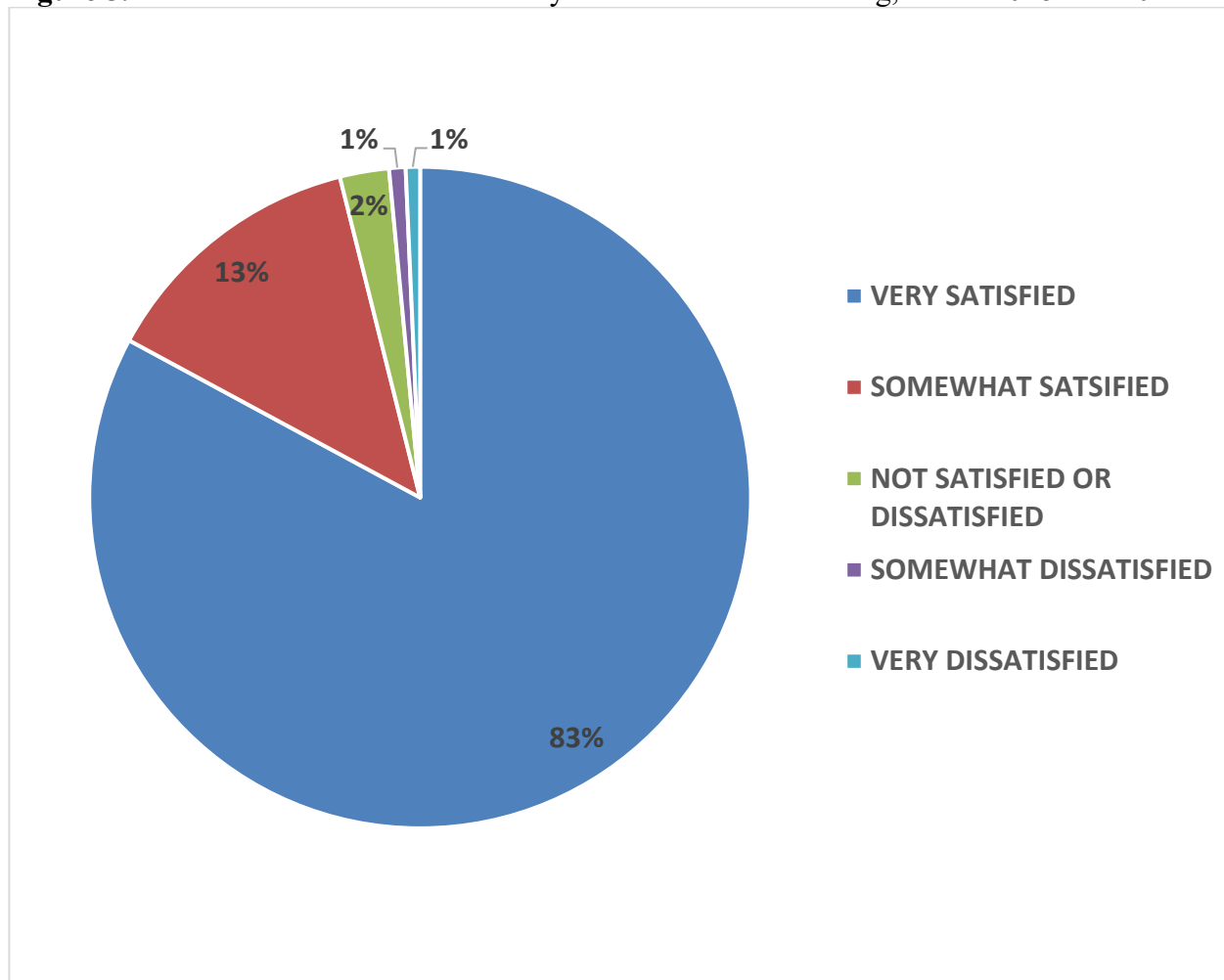


Table 11. National forest visitation percent satisfaction index ^a scores for aggregate categories, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Satisfied Visits (percent)

Items Rated	Developed Sites ^b	General Forest Areas	Designated Wilderness
Developed facilities (includes restroom cleanliness and facility condition)	87.2	79.9	81.1
Access (includes parking availability, parking lot condition, road condition and trail condition)	84.8	84.8	86.2

Items Rated	Developed Sites ^b	General Forest Areas	Designated Wilderness
Services (includes availability of information, signage and employee helpfulness)	83.3	77.1	80.5
Perception of safety	95.3	95.5	97.5
Value received for any fee paid at the site	84.5	91.2	89.1

^a Composite ratings of the proportion of satisfaction ratings scored by visitors as satisfied or very satisfied. The values are computed as the percentages of all ratings for the elements within the groupings that are at or above the target level, and indicate the percent of all visits where the person was satisfied with agency performance.

^b This category includes both Day Use and Overnight Use Developed Sites.

Figure 6. Percent meets expectations results for national forest visits by type of site, FY2018 - FY2022.

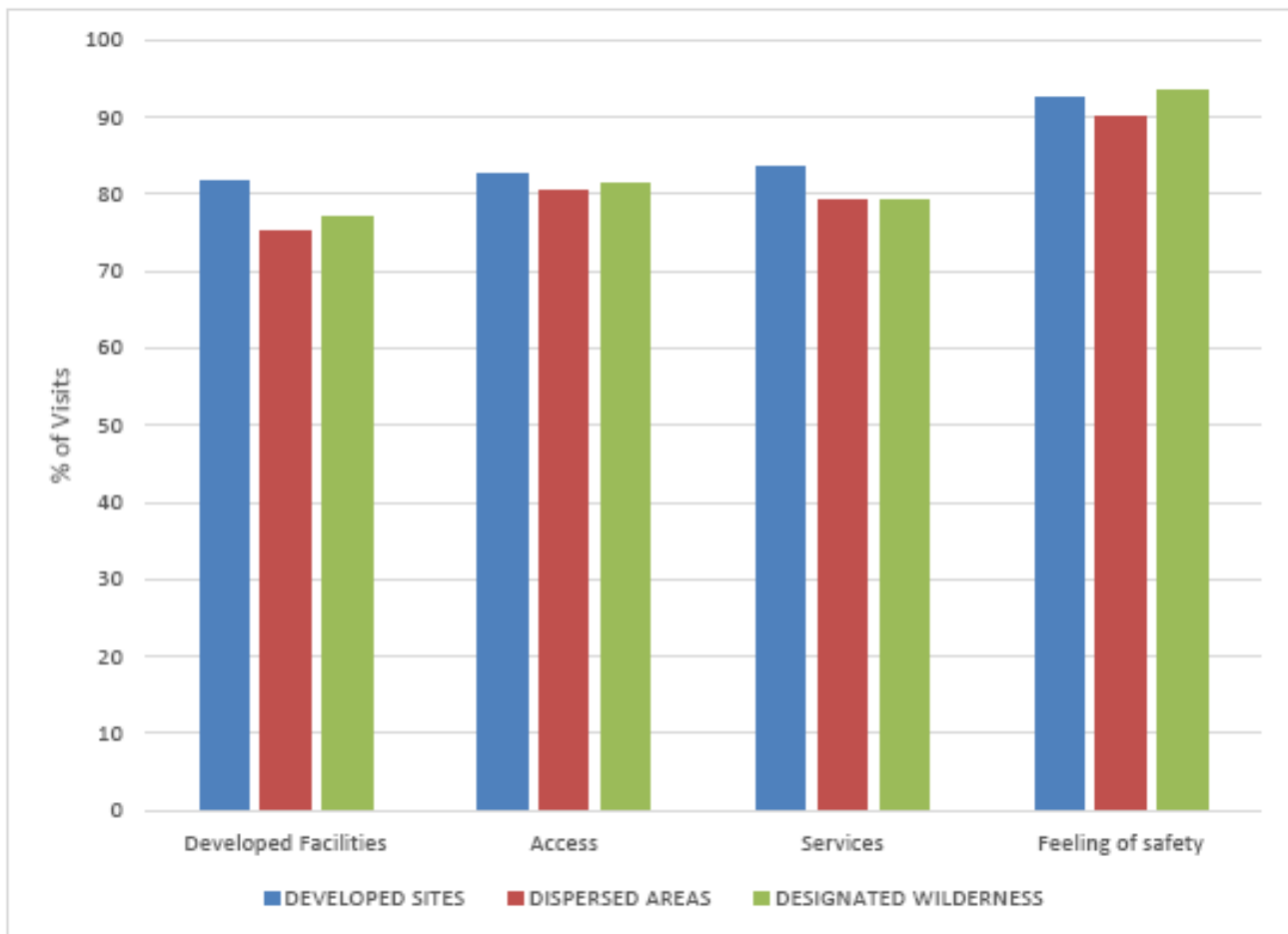


Table 12. Importance-performance ratings for satisfaction items, by type of site.

ITEM	Day Use Developed Sites	Overnight Use Developed Sites	Undeveloped Areas	Designated Wilderness
Restroom cleanliness	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Developed facility condition	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Condition of environment	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Employee helpfulness	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Interpretive display	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Parking availability	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Parking lot condition	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Rec. info. available	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Road condition	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Feeling of safety	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Scenery	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Signage adequacy	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Trail condition	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work
Value for fee paid	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work	Keep up the Good Work

Figure 7a. Overall satisfaction with forest-wide road conditions and signage adequacy, for FY2018 - FY2022.

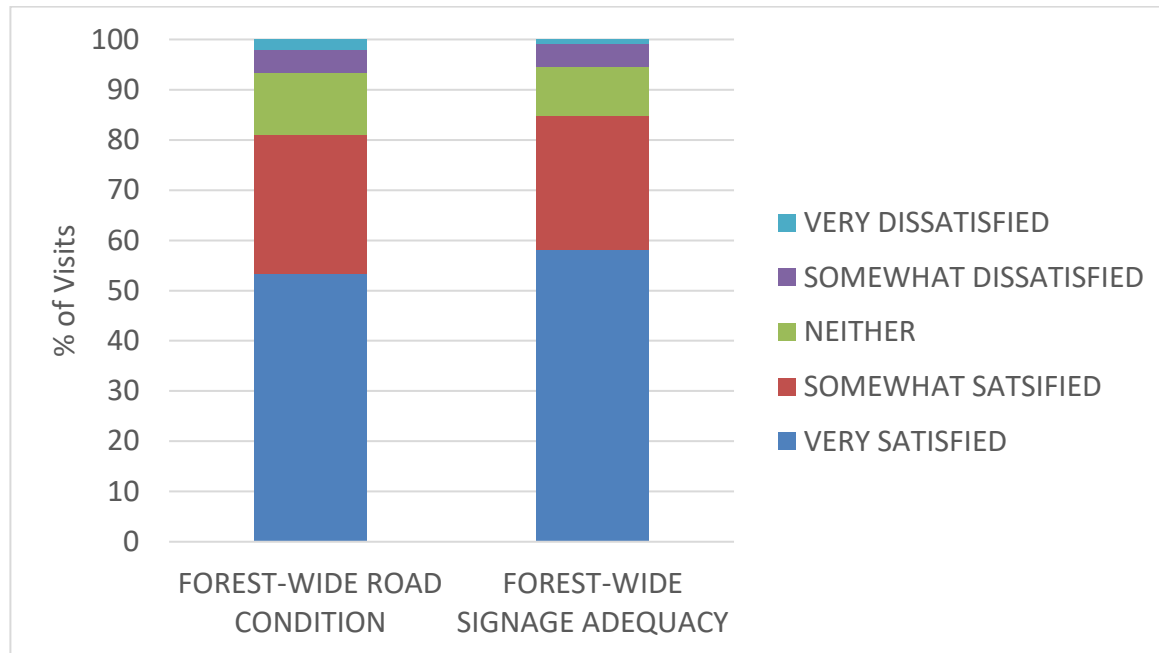


Figure 7b. Overall importance ratings for road condition and signage adequacy, for FY2018 - FY2022.

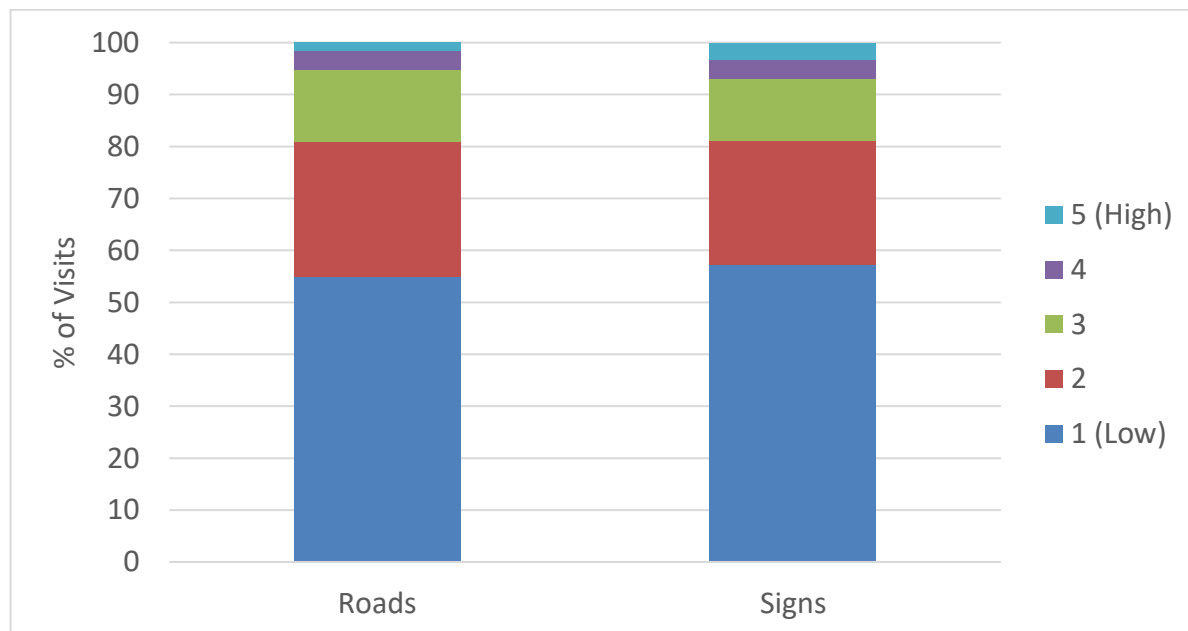
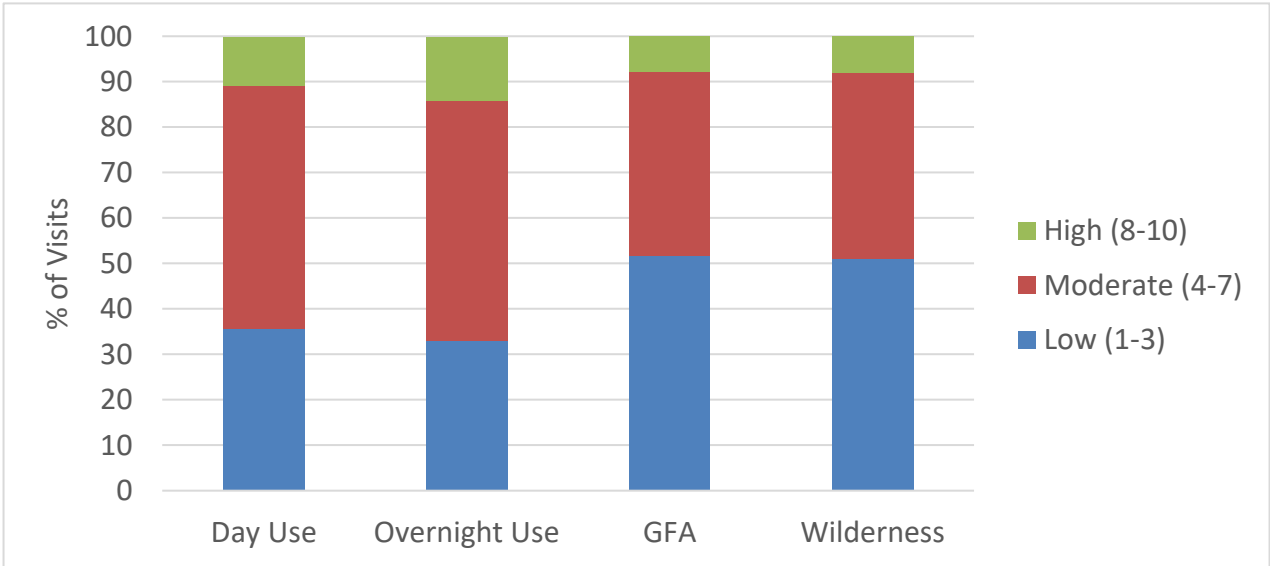


Table 13. National forest visitor perceptions of crowding by site type, for FY2018 - FY2022.

**Perception of Crowding by Site Types
(Percent site visits percent)**

Crowding Rating	Day Use Developed Sites	Overnight Use Developed Sites	General Forest Areas	Designated Wilderness
10 Overcrowded	1.9	1.4	1.4	1.2
9	3.9	4.2	2.1	2.7
8	4.9	8.4	4.3	4.2
7	7.2	8.2	6	6
6	15.2	16.5	11.3	10.2
5	17.4	15.6	11.2	13.7
4	13.8	12.7	12.1	11
3	15.1	14.3	16.1	19
2	14.7	12.3	22.5	19.8
1 Hardly anyone there	5.8	6.3	13.1	12.3

Figure 8. Distribution of site visits into general crowding categories.



Accessibility

The Forest Service is committed to integrating accessibility considerations into its sustainable recreation planning so all people, including those with disabilities, can recreate. The accessibility of recreation facilities is an important part of this policy. About six percent of national forest visits are made by people in groups where one or more group members have a disability (Table 14). For over 85 percent of these parties, the facilities they used were rated as accessible.

Table 14. Accessibility for national forest visits by persons with disabilities, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Item	Percent
Percent of visitors interviewed with group member having a disability	6.4
Of this group, percent who said facilities at site visited were accessible	85.2

VISITOR SPENDING AND ECONOMICS

Visitor Spending

Visitors to national forests often spend money in nearby communities during the time they are on their recreation trips. These communities benefit directly from that spending. About 49 percent of visits to national forests are from residents of the local area who are on day trips. Few local residents stay overnight away from their home on or near the forests. About 15 percent of non-local residents make visits while on day trips away from home. More non-locals on overnight trips spend the night in facilities off the forest than on the forest. The national forest was not the primary reason for the trip away from home for about 14 percent of national forest visits.

Visitors spend money in towns that are near national forests for things like gasoline, food, lodging, and souvenirs. The spending segments differ markedly in the amount of money per party. In general, visitors who come from outside the local area spend more than do those who are from the local area. Those parties staying overnight off national forest lands spend more than those who spend the night on the national forest. Those coming for the primary purpose of downhill skiing typically spend more per visit than for other types of recreation.

The most current economic data on visitor spending and resultant economic effects comes from FY2021. Economic data for 2022 is not yet available to accurately portray the contributions from visitors and their spending in 2022. The annual economic data, paired with Forest Service visitation and spending, depends on detailed, and ongoing, compilation and estimation of interindustry and institutional relationships in our national and local economies. Final analysis of the effects of the 159 million visits in FY2022 will be completed when the economic data becomes available.

Overall, in FY2021 recreating visitors spent over \$11 billion in areas around National Forest System lands (Table 15). Many downhill skiers are from outside the local area and are staying in off-forest lodging. As a result, downhill skiers account for around \$3.8 billion in local spending. Visitors for wildlife-related recreation spend least as a group, largely because many of these visits are made by people on day trips away from home. As visitor spending ripples through the economy, further economic activity is created. In total, spending by visitors to national forests and grasslands contributes about \$13.7 billion to the US economy and sustains about 161,000 full-and part-time jobs. Greater spatial detail on the contribution of visitor spending to economic regions around individual National Forest units is available in the [Economic Contribution of Recreation: Website User Guide](#).

Table 15. Visitor spending and associated economic effects of recreation visits to national forest land, for FY2017 - FY2021.

	Downhill Skiing Visits	Wildlife-Related Visits	Other Recreation Visits	TOTAL VISITS
Millions of national forest Visits	24.9	17.0	114.2	156.1
Direct spending in local economies, (millions of \$2019)	\$3,787	\$1,190	\$6,105	\$11,082
Total GDP contributions (millions of \$2019)	\$5,120	\$1,293	\$7,239	\$13,652
Full- and part-time jobs sustained, (thousands)	66	14	81	161

About 38 percent of visits to national forests are made by people who are spending at least one night away from home (Table 16). For most of them, it includes at least one night spent within 50 miles of the forest they visited. Those spending the night within 50 miles of the forest stay an average of about 5 nights. For those spending one or more nights on or near the forest, about 31 percent stay in hotels or lodges off the forest. About 20 percent camp at developed campgrounds on the national forest; about 12 percent camp in undeveloped areas of the forest.

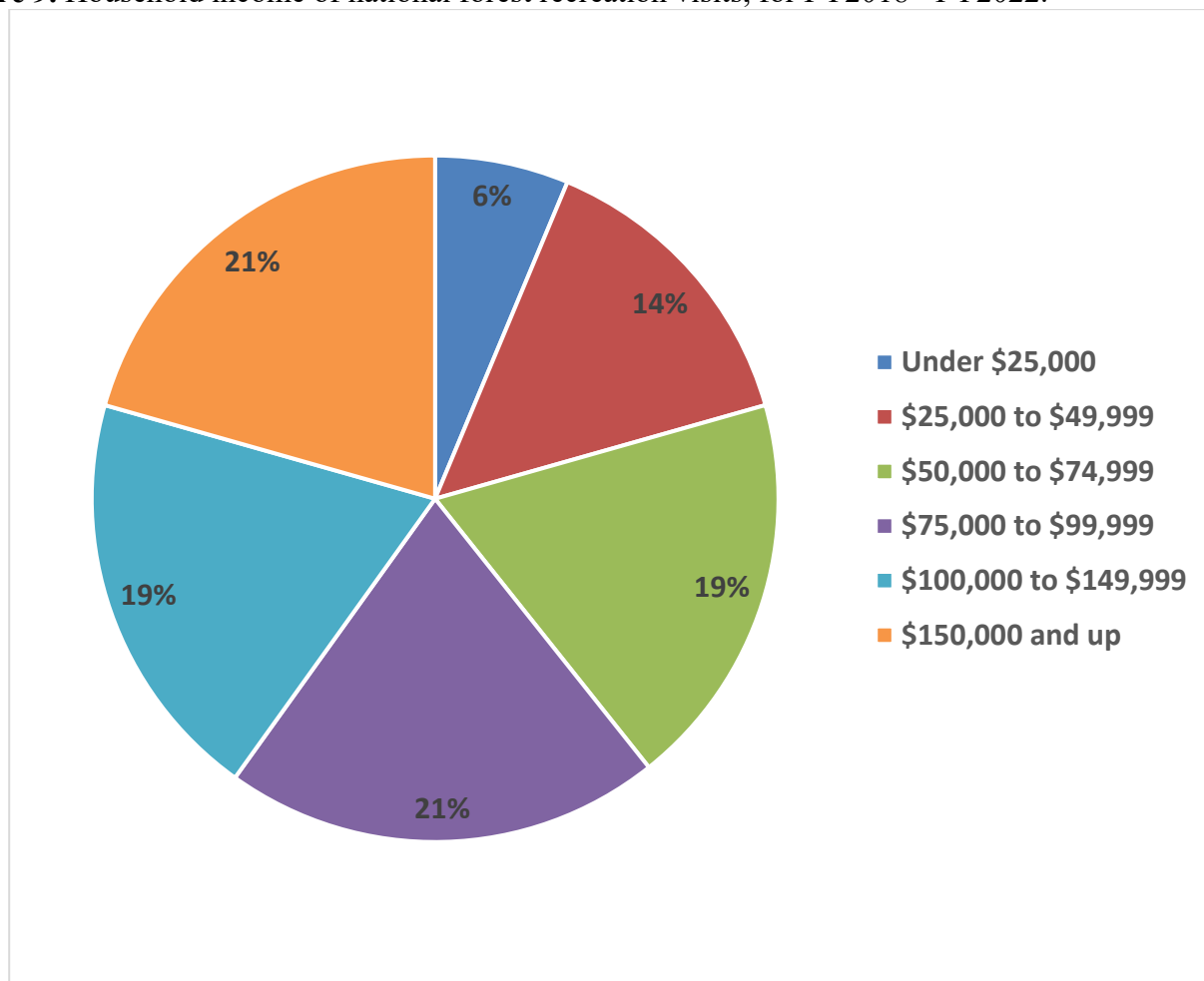
Table 16. Visitor trip information, for FY2018 - FY2022.

Item	%
Percent of visits that occur on trips with an overnight stay away from home	37.6
Percent of visits that occur on trips with an overnight stay within 50 miles of the visited forest	35
For overnight visits, average number of nights within 50 miles of the forest	5.1
For those staying overnight within 50 miles of the national forest, percent indicating each type of lodging	%
NF campgrounds ON the national forest	19.8
Camping in undeveloped areas of the national forest	12.4
Cabins, lodges, hotels or huts ON the national forest	7.9
Other public campgrounds (Park Service, BLM, State Park, other)	3.5
Private campgrounds NOT on the national forest	2.4
Rented home, condo, cabin, lodge or hotel NOT on the NF	30.5
Private home of friend or relative	12.3
Home, cabin, or condo owned by visitor	6.3
Other	2.9

Household Income

Visitors to national forests have a variety of household income levels (Figure 9). About 21 percent of visits are made by individuals whose household income is \$150,000 or over per year. A smaller percentage (6 percent) comes from people in households earning less than \$25,000 per year. About a third of all visits come from people in households earning between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year.

Figure 9. Household income of national forest recreation visits, for FY2018 - FY2022.



Substitute behavior

What other recreation options the visitor considers using provides information about the other outdoor recreation opportunities that are substitutes for the opportunities provided by the Agency. The NVUM survey question asked what people would do if the forest was not available for recreation for this visit. Respondents could choose more than one option. Over half (54 percent) indicate that their substitute behavior choice is activity driven – that is, their substitute is going elsewhere for same activity (Figure 10). Another 54 percent said they would choose some other substitute. About 18 percent indicate they would come back later for the same activity. Less than 20 percent of visitors said they would have gone to work (2 percent) or stayed home (14 percent) instead of recreating. For those visitors, there appears to be no readily accessible substitute for the recreation opportunity provided by the agency. Visitors who said they would have gone somewhere else for recreation also indicated the distance from their home to the alternate destination (Figure 11). The distribution of travel distances to alternative locations is very

similar to the distribution of travel distances for national forest visits, which may indicate that a reasonable set of alternative destinations indeed exists for most visits.

Figure 10. Substitute behavior choices of national forest visitors, for FY2018 - FY2022.

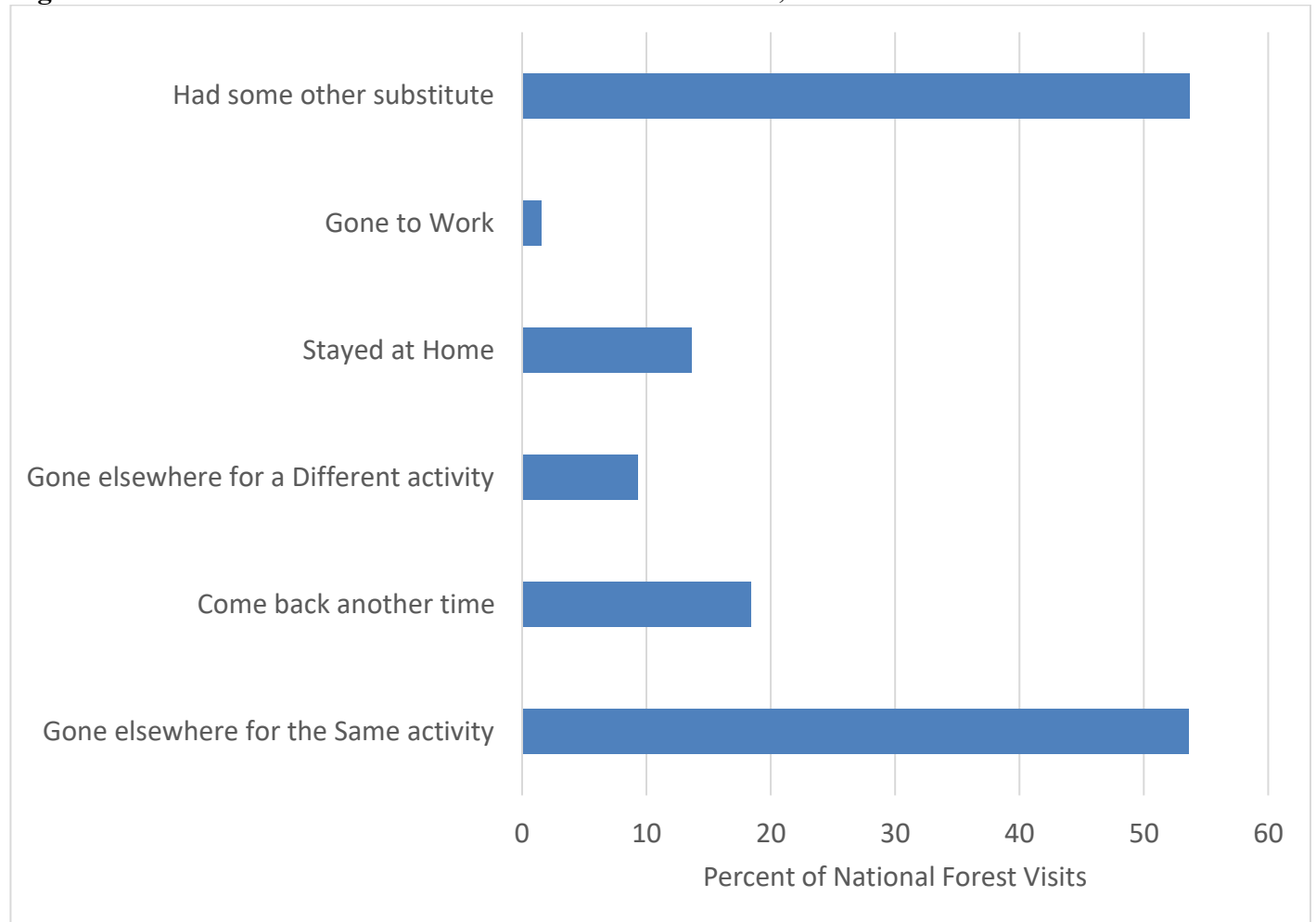
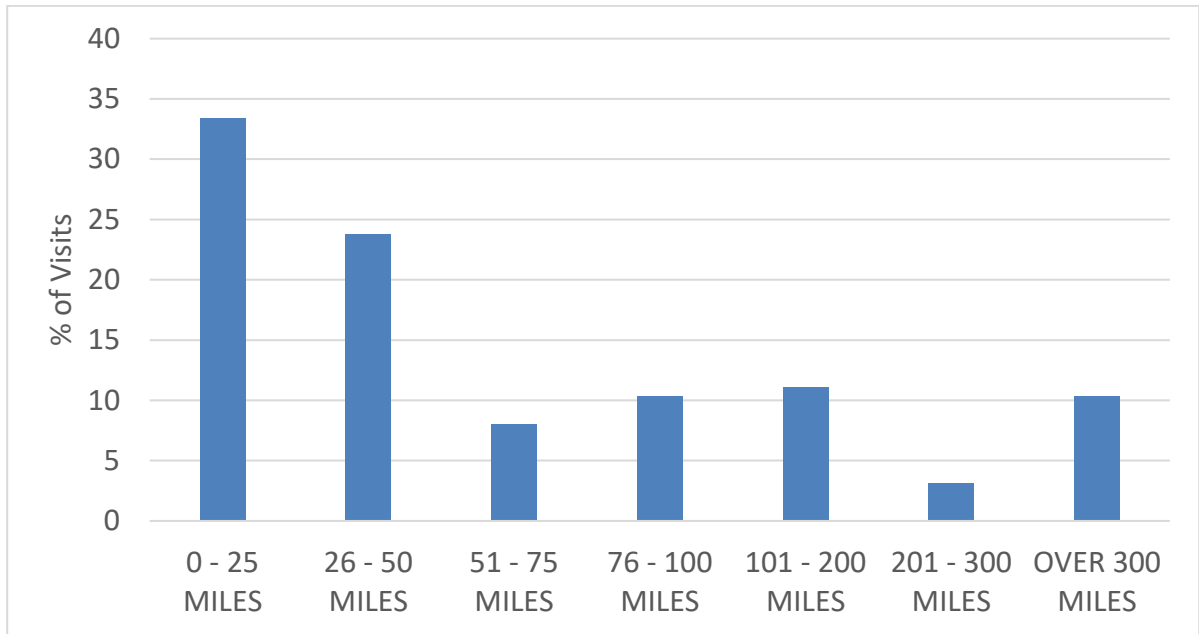


Figure 11. Reported distance visitors would travel to alternative recreation locations, for FY2018 – FY2022.



Appendix A. Detailed Satisfaction Results

Table A-1. Satisfaction of national forest recreation visitors at developed day use sites, for FY2018 - FY2022.

ITEM	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Avg. Rating*	Mean Importance**
Restroom cleanliness	2.6	8.9	8.2	20.9	59.4	4.3	4.6
Developed facility condition	0.4	1.3	4.8	20.6	73	4.6	4.4
Condition of environment	0.1	1.5	3.7	18.4	76.2	4.7	4.8
Employee helpfulness	0.4	0.9	5.6	8.1	85	4.8	4.7
Interpretive displays	0.9	9.3	15.7	18.2	55.9	4.2	4.2
Parking availability	3.5	7.4	10.3	15.8	63	4.3	4.5
Parking lot condition	0.4	2.3	12.7	19.8	64.8	4.5	4.1
Rec. info. availability	0.8	4	12.6	21.1	61.5	4.4	4.4
Road condition	0.7	2.6	14.2	22.9	59.6	4.4	4.3
Feeling of safety	0.2	0.2	4.6	11.5	83.4	4.8	4.6
Scenery	0.1	0.3	1.4	7	91.3	4.9	4.8
Signage adequacy	1.1	4.8	11.3	18.3	64.5	4.4	4.4
Trail condition	0.3	1	8.4	23.6	66.7	4.6	4.6
Value for fee paid	0.7	4.9	11.5	20.4	62.5	4.4	4.6

*Scale is: Very Dissatisfied = 1 Dissatisfied = 2 Neither = 3 Satisfied = 4 Very Satisfied = 5

** Scale is: 1= Not Important 2= Somewhat Important 3= Moderately Important 4= Important 5 = Very Important

Table A-2. Satisfaction of national forest recreation visitors at developed overnight sites, for FY2018 - FY2022.

ITEM	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Avg. Rating*	Mean Importance**
Restroom cleanliness	2.2	5.3	9.9	24.2	58.3	4.3	4.6
Developed facility condition	0.7	1.1	8	21.9	68.2	4.6	4.4
Condition of environment	0.2	0.8	3.1	15.9	79.9	4.7	4.8
Employee helpfulness	0.7	1.8	5.7	8.1	83.7	4.7	4.7
Interpretive displays	1.8	4.2	18.4	23.6	52	4.2	4.1
Parking availability	0.9	2	4.9	15.9	76.4	4.6	4.4
Parking lot condition	0.2	0.9	7	19.2	72.7	4.6	4.2
Rec. info. availability	0.9	3	15.1	24	57	4.3	4.4
Road condition	1.3	3	9	25	61.6	4.4	4.3
Feeling of safety	0.1	0.1	2.6	11.1	86.1	4.8	4.7
Scenery	0.1	0	3.4	10.8	85.6	4.8	4.7
Signage adequacy	1	4.1	8.2	22.3	64.4	4.5	4.5
Trail condition	0.3	1.4	9.2	20.8	68.4	4.6	4.5
Value for fee paid	0.7	2.7	6.9	21.7	68	4.5	4.6

*Scale is: Very Dissatisfied = 1 Dissatisfied = 2 Neither = 3 Satisfied = 4 Very Satisfied = 5

** Scale is: 1= Not Important 2= Somewhat Important 3= Moderately Important 4= Important 5 = Very Important

Table A-3. Satisfaction of national forest recreation visitors in dispersed areas, for FY2018 - FY2022.

ITEM	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Avg. Rating*	Mean Importance**
Restroom cleanliness	6.5	8.4	14.5	21.9	48.6	4	4.4
Developed facility condition	1.2	1.7	8.3	23.5	65.2	4.5	4.3
Condition of environment	0.6	2.1	5	21.2	71.1	4.6	4.8
Employee helpfulness	1.3	1.6	8.9	13	75.1	4.6	4.5
Interpretive displays	1.8	5.7	19	25.1	48.5	4.1	4
Parking availability	1.4	4.2	10.6	17.4	66.4	4.4	4.3
Parking lot condition	0.9	2.9	9	20.6	66.6	4.5	4.1
Rec. info. availability	1.8	4.8	17.7	25.2	50.4	4.2	4.2
Road condition	3	6.9	10.5	26.4	53.1	4.2	4.3
Feeling of safety	0.1	1.1	3.3	11.7	83.7	4.8	4.6
Scenery	0.2	0.9	3	11.5	84.5	4.8	4.7
Signage adequacy	2.9	6.2	13.1	23.5	54.2	4.2	4.3
Trail condition	0.6	2.7	7.6	24.3	64.8	4.5	4.5
Value for fee paid	1	3	4.9	15.2	76	4.6	4.5

*Scale is: Very Dissatisfied = 1 Dissatisfied = 2 Neither = 3 Satisfied = 4 Very Satisfied = 5

** Scale is: 1= Not Important 2= Somewhat Important 3= Moderately Important 4= Important 5 = Very Important

Table A-4. Satisfaction of national forest wilderness visitors, for FY2018 - FY2022.

ITEM	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Avg. Rating*	Mean Importance**
Restroom cleanliness	5.6	8	10.8	25.1	50.6	4.1	4.3
Developed facility condition	0.1	1.1	10.6	20.9	67.3	4.5	4.2
Condition of environment	0.3	1.2	3.2	14.4	80.9	4.7	4.8
Employee helpfulness	0.4	0.3	5.7	13.5	80.2	4.7	4.5
Interpretive displays	1.6	5.3	18.1	28	47	4.1	4
Parking availability	3.6	5	9.2	16.1	66.1	4.4	4.4
Parking lot condition	1.4	3	6.4	17.4	71.8	4.6	4
Rec. info. availability	1.2	3.6	14	26.9	54.2	4.3	4.3
Road condition	2.1	7.1	10.7	28.4	51.7	4.2	4.3
Feeling of safety	0.2	0.5	1.9	11.1	86.3	4.8	4.5
Scenery	0.1	0.3	1.3	8.9	89.4	4.9	4.8
Signage adequacy	1.5	5.6	13	27.7	52.3	4.2	4.3
Trail condition	0.3	2.6	4.6	24.4	68.1	4.6	4.5
Value for fee paid	1.9	0.6	8.3	10.5	78.6	4.6	4.5

*Scale is: Very Dissatisfied = 1 Dissatisfied = 2 Neither = 3 Satisfied = 4 Very Satisfied = 5

** Scale is: 1= Not Important 2= Somewhat Important 3= Moderately Important 4= Important 5 = Very Important