



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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Memorandum

To: Directorate; All Regional Directors; Director, Office of National Capital and Urban Park Affairs; and All Center Directors

From: Chief, Office of Natural Science Studies

Subject: Office of Natural Science Studies Reports

During the latter part of 1968, the Office of Natural Science Studies conducted a nationwide study to learn about some of the sociological characteristics of the people who went to a national park during the preceding year. The purpose of this study was to obtain baseline data necessary for additional studies which will be undertaken later. While these data were obtained as an integral part of the scientific work being carried out by the Office of Natural Science Studies, they may also be useful to other divisions for any number of purposes.

Periodically, ONS will issue short reports similar to the enclosure, in which some information about people in the parks will be presented. These will be technical reports presenting the information and explaining it. How it may be useful to each division will, of necessity, be decided within the division. ONS will be available, of course, to answer any questions about the information contained in these reports. Should you require additional copies of this report, please contact this office directly. The reports are provided for administrative use only.

Robert M. Linn

Enclosure

PEOPLE IN THE PARKS

In our society going to a park is a widespread phenomenon. We now know that there exist several kinds of park-going publics. Within each of the publics, subgroups exist which engage in various activities while in the parks. In this report we are concerned with one of these subgroups - Campers. The information in this report was drawn from a study conducted by the Office of Natural Science Studies in November, 1968. The population studied included the adult (18 years and older) population of the U.S. who were not in the armed forces overseas nor institutionalized.

Camping is an activity which receives an important amount of organizational attention within the National Park Service. Considerable time, personnel and resources are expended upon the planning, maintenance and operation of camping facilities within the parks. This report is concerned with those adults who camped in some national park during the year before the study period in 1968. Approximately 9.1% of the adults (18 years of age and over) who went to a national park within that year had also camped. This same grouping comprised 1.8% of all the adults who have gone to any kind of park. Clearly we are not, therefore, in this report talking about camping as it occurs outside of the national parks, for a considerably larger number of adults go camping in other places. Instead we want to examine some of the sociological and demographic characteristics of campers in national parks and compare them with other persons in the parks. Before doing so, a cautionary note should be sounded. This special analysis of the camping subgroup will seek to identify commonalities and differences between campers and non-campers. Since the campers are a small proportion of the persons in the parks, caution must be exercised in interpreting these results. In general, this analysis should be considered as suggestive of trends in the data rather than identifying definite similarities and differences. Now, what, if any, variables distinguish campers from the other adults going to national parks?

Social Class

It is sometimes observed that camping is carried out by those who seek a less expensive way of seeing the parks. One might assume then that campers would be persons with an income distribution different from other adults and perhaps with somewhat lower incomes. In Table 1 we can compare the income distribution of campers and non-campers.

(See Table 1)

It appears that no substantial differences occur between the distributions suggesting that campers and non-campers are quite similar with respect to reported incomes. If any differences exist they appear to occur towards the higher end of the income distribution rather than the lower. Thus we conclude that campers and non-campers do not differ significantly with respect to incomes.

Age

The significance of age in any society often determines the scope and type of activity allowed and determined by the society. Our society has various limits on activities with age opening the way to various privileges and obligations.

With respect to campers and non-campers, age groups fall closely together for each aggregate. The mode for both groups being the 25-49 year old group.

(See Table 2)

With so little variance between these aggregates relative to the age groups, it appears that the incidence of camping among adults going to national parks occurs independently of the person's age group.

Education

As stated in earlier reports of this series, education plays a role in determining the recency and frequency of going to any park. An increase in the amount of education also seems to determine to some extent the frequency of going to national parks. Does this increased education also influence the incidence of camping among individuals in the park-going public?

(See Table 3)

In Table 3 it can be observed that campers and non-campers are distributed differentially with respect to education. It appears that proportionately more campers have education beyond high school than is true for adults in the national parks as a whole.

Regional Residence and Size of Place

Earlier in the series, regional residence patterns and residence in various sizes of towns, as associated with park attendance, were examined. Adults residing in the West Census Region were found to be predominant visitors to national parks in the last year, followed by those living in the South, in the North Central and lastly the Northeast Region.

(See Table 4)

The incidence of camping in national parks during the last year seems to closely follow the general park visiting pattern. Those living in the Western Census Region appear to be the most numerous campers, followed by the campers in the South and North Central Regions and lastly those living in the Northeastern Region.

This incidence of camping in the West could be related to the close proximity of more national parks to Westerners than to Easterners. However, as we have seen in previous reports in this series (#5, p.4), this needs to be studied more extensively before any definite conclusions can be drawn.

The size of place in which one resides, as seen in earlier reports, appears to have some relation to the frequency with which adults go to national parks.

(See Table 5)

The percentage of those going to national parks most recently are greater among small town residents. In contrast, as can be seen in Table 5, a greater percentage of campers tend to be from places of over 500,000 population.

Frequency of Going to Any Park

Table 6 shows the distribution between campers and non-campers with reference to going to parks per se.

(See Table 6)

It would appear that among those persons who go to national parks, more campers go to all kinds of parks most frequently. Thus within the park-going public (see Report #6) that goes to all kinds of parks most frequently, the subgroup of campers tends to go even more frequently than others.

Summary

This report presents information relative to the phenomenon of camping among the park-going public. It has been observed that income, education, regional location, size of place of residence and the frequency with which one goes to any park influences, to some degree, camping among adults going to the national parks.

The extent to which these variables influence camping outside of national parks remains to be determined. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this analysis is the finding that with respect to education, the campers are among the best educated persons in the

parks. When this fact is combined with the observation that as a subgroup they are also most frequently visiting all kinds of parks, the outlines of a particular life-style begin to emerge. What its precise dimensions are will be the object of further studies.

Neil H. Cheek, Jr.
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March 18, 1970

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Table 1. NPS Campers and Non-Campers and Income - %

	Under \$5,000	\$5,000 - \$9,999	\$10,000 - \$14,999	\$15,000 - \$24,999	Over \$25,000	No Response	Total
Campers	11.4	41.0	26.2	20.0	1.4	---	100.0
Non-Campers	15.7	44.9	23.8	10.7	2.5	2.4	100.0

Table 2. NPS Campers and Non-Campers and Age Distribution - %

	18-24	25-49	50+	Total
Campers	21.3	55.7	23.0	100.0
Non-Campers	18.1	55.5	26.4	100.0

Table 3. NPS Campers and Non-Campers and Education - %

	Less than High School	High School	More than High School	Total
Campers	19.6	29.5	50.9	100.0
Non-Campers	25.4	38.7	35.9	100.0

Table 4. NPS Campers and Non-Campers and Regional Residence Distribution - %

	NE	NC	S	W	Total
Campers	6.5	21.4	21.3	50.8	100.0
Non-Campers	19.0	19.6	28.2	33.2	100.0

Table 5. NPS Campers and Non-Campers and Town Size Residence
Distribution - %

	Under 25,000	25,000 - 100,000	100,000 500,000	500,000 +	Total
Campers	37.7	4.9	11.5	45.9	100.0
Non-Campers	48.8	5.0	10.7	35.5	100.0

Table 6. NPS Campers and Non-Campers and Frequency of Going to Parks - %

	Once or more per month	Less than once a month	Don't recall	Total
Campers	52.4	44.2	3.4	100.0
Non-Campers	44.0	52.5	3.5	100.0