



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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## Memorandum

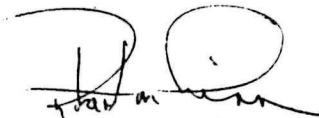
To: Directorate; All Regional Directors; Director, Office of National Capital and Urban Park Affairs; and All Center Directors

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

A quick glance at the monthly reports of visitation to NPS areas provides the knowledge that not all are equally favored simultaneously with public use. Some of the reasons for this variation are obvious. Others are more subtle. In this report we want to examine how the variation in going to the national parks among adults in this society fits into a larger pattern of variation in going to all kinds of parks. In particular we want to examine how this variation may be associated with the geographical region where a person may reside.

The study from which the information in this report is drawn was carried out during November 1968. The population under study was the adult (18 years and older) population of the U.S. who were not institutionalized or in the armed forces abroad. There were, at that time, approximately 121,000,000 adults in the society. [The study was limited to national parks only for technical reasons. This limitation, where appropriately considered, should be recalled as you interpret these data.] What are some of the patterns of going to parks, in general, which are associated with particular geographical regions of the United States?

The geographical regions utilized in this study are those employed by the Bureau of the Census - Northeast, North Central, South and West. (The constituent states of each region are noted, for convenience, at the bottom of each page of tables.) The adult population was distributed among these 4 geographical regions in 1968 in the following manner:

South	- 30.2%
North Central	- 27.2%
Northeast	- 25.2%
West	- 17.4%

Note this report is dealing with the adult population only, so if the fact that the South census region has the largest proportion of this population does not fit with your own picture of the population distribution in the nation as a whole, then this is one reason for the difference. Turning now to Table 1, we can see the pattern of going to any kind of park for each of these regions.

(See Table 1)

Immediately one notes that there is a great deal of variation among the regions with respect to adults going to parks. These differences are statistically significant. That is, the observed differences are real and not artifacts of how the information was obtained. (See earlier reports in this series for the explanation of statistical significance). The Table reads from left to right across the rows. Thus in Row 1, of all the adults residing in the Northeast region 66% went to some kind of park (city, county, state, national, etc.) within a year preceding the date of the study. Twenty-five percent went to a park more than a year before the study while 5% report they never go to parks. Comparatively, the proportion of adults who go to parks in ascending order, by region, is: South, Northeast, North Central and West. Note the reversal between the proportion of the adult population resident in a region and the proportion of those who go to parks. Thus, while some 17% of the adults reside in the West, about 80% of them go to parks. Perhaps this disparity reflects availability of parks, climatic variations, population density, work patterns in the population, transportation patterns, etc. It is unlikely that any one of these factors will explain the discrepancy. For example, an inspection of Table 1 and Table 2 reveals that there is no direct relationship between the comparative number of state, county and city parks located in a region and the recency with which adults resident in the region went to a park. This suggests that availability per se (as measured here by number of parks) is insufficient to explain the observed differences in going to parks among the adults resident in the four regions.

In Table 3 we observe that the frequencies with which adults report going to parks begins to equilibrate among several of the regions.

(See Table 3)

This suggests that within each region a portion of the adult population goes to various kinds of parks comparatively much more frequently than other adults who reside in that region. Thus in the Northeast, North Central and West regions approximately 33% of the adults go to some kind of park as frequently as once or more per month. In the South the proportion is about 20%. This latter difference is statistically significant. The reasons for this difference will be discussed later in the report.

In Table 4 we can observe the proportion of the adult population residing in a region that has ever (during their lifetime) gone to any national park.

(See Table 4)

It is appropriate to mention that the distribution of the 32 national parks in operation at the time of this study is as follows:

Northeast	- 1 park
North Central	- 2 parks
South	- 8 parks
West	- 21 parks

One can see, however, that there is no direct relationship between the number of national parks in a region and the proportion of the adults resident there who have ever gone to a national park.

With regard to going to a national park within the year preceding the date of the study, Table 5 shows this distribution.

(See Table 5)

For the society as a whole, 19% of the adult population had gone to at least one of the national parks during the calendar year preceding the study. Reference to Table 5 indicates that only the West region differs significantly from the national pattern.

#### Region and National Park Location

At this point in the report, attention will be shifted from the adult population of the United States to only those adults who were in a national park within the year before the date of the study. While percentages will be calculated as before, remember that the sample under discussion is but approximately 19% of the adult population in the society.

Considering only those adults who went to a national park during the year before the study, they are residentially distributed among the regions as follows:

West	- 33.0%
South	- 28.0%
North Central	- 20.0%
Northeast	- 19.0%

Thus, 28% of the adults in national parks during the year were residents of the South census region. Comparing this residential distribution with the distribution for the society as a whole, one notes that whereas about 17% of adults reside in the West, approximately 33% of adults in national parks are residents of that region. When

it is recalled that the largest number of national parks are located in the West, it suggests that unlike other parks (see Table 2), proximity of national parks is directly related to recency of going to one. This may suggest that going to a national park is independent of going to other kinds of parks. One additional observation can be made.

In Table 6 we can observe how adults who were in a national park during the year before the study distributed themselves in terms of their region of residence and in terms of the National Park Service Region in which the park was located. While NPS regions and Census regions are not coterminous, some useful information can be obtained from this table.

(See Table 6)

For example, we note that adults resident in the West region do apparently go to parks located in the "Western" regions of the NPS. Very few went to parks in the Northeast or Southeast region. In contrast, adults resident in the Northeast census region went to parks in the Southeast NPS region most heavily, but also were well represented in the Midwest, Southwest and Western regions. Clearly, the most parochial section is the South census region. Very few persons resident therein went to national parks beyond the Southeast and Southwest NPS regions. North Central residents go mostly to parks in the Southeast, Midwest and Southwest NPS regions. Perhaps crossing the Rocky Mountains is a limitation, although residents of the West region move heavily into the parks in the Midwest NPS region.

### Summary

This report presents information relating the census region of residence for adults in the society to a number of other variables. In particular, it is observed that there are real differences among adults in terms of how recently they have gone to parks. Yet this is not a direct relationship to the availability of state, county or city parks. Moreover, there appears to be a portion of the adult population resident in all regions who go to parks more frequently than others. **More adults, resident in the West, have gone to a national park during their lifetime than is true for any other census region.** The proximity of the national parks may account for the observation that adult residents of the West were significantly more likely to have been in a national park during the year before the study than were residents of other regions. However, this will require further investigation for it appears that adults, in general, resident in the West go to all kinds of parks more than those resident in other regions. The possibility that national park going as a sociological phenomenon may be divergent from the general pattern of going to parks is worthy of additional consideration.

Finally, this report shows that adults in the national parks during the year before the study reflect at least two different migratory streams. West and South region residents tend to remain mostly in the same region, while Northeast and North Central residents move more generally throughout the NPS regions.

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January 19, 1970

Table 1. Last time at any kind of park - Percentages

Census Region	Within 365 Days	Over 365 Days	Never	Don't Remember	Total
*Northeast	66.0	25.0	5.0	4.0	100.0
**North Central	74.0	20.0	5.0	1.0	100.0
***South	56.0	31.0	9.0	4.0	100.0
****West	81.0	17.0	1.0	1.0	100.0

Table 2. State, County &amp; City Parks, by Region - Percentages

Census Region	State Parks	County & City Parks	Combined State, County & City Parks
*Northeast	15.5	24.0	20.0
**North Central	40.0	30.0	34.0
***South	25.0	26.0	26.0
****West	19.5	20.0	20.0
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1969. pp. 197-198

Table 3. Frequency of going to any kind of park - Percentages

Census Region	Once or more per month	Less than once a month	Never go or less than once a year	Don't Remember	Total
*Northeast	31.0	35.0	30.0	4.0	100.0
**North Central	32.0	41.0	24.0	3.0	100.0
***South	20.0	37.0	28.0	5.0	100.0
****West	36.0	45.0	17.0	2.0	100.0

\*Northeast - Conn., Maine, Mass., N.H., N.J., N.Y., Pa., R.I., and Vt.

\*\*North Central - Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kan., Mich., Minn., Mo., Nebr., N.Dak., Ohio, S.Dak. and Wis.

\*\*\*South - Ala., Ark., Del., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Md., Miss., N.C., Okla., S.C., Tenn., Tex., Va. and W. Va.

\*\*\*\*West - Alaska, Ariz., Calif., Colo., Hawaii, Idaho, Mont., Nev., N.Mex., Oreg., Utah, Wash. and Wyo.

Table 4. Ever going to a national park - Percentages

Census Region	Yes	No	Never	Don't Remember	Total
*Northeast	37.0	57.0	5.0	1.0	100.0
**North Central	46.0	48.0	5.0	1.0	100.0
***South	47.0	44.0	9.0	-	100.0
****West	78.0	21.0	1.0	-	100.0

Table 5. Gone to a National Park in last year - Percentages

Census Region	Yes	No	Other than a year ago	Total
*Northeast	14.0	23.0	63.0	100.0
**North Central	13.0	32.0	55.0	100.0
***South	17.0	29.0	54.0	100.0
****West	35.0	42.0	23.0	100.0

Table 6. Region of residence by NPS region of parks - Percentages

Census Region	NE	SE	MW	SW	W	NW	Total
*Northeast	13.0	38.0	12.0	19.0	12.0	5.0	100.0
**North Central	#	26.0	28.0	27.0	11.0	8.0	100.0
***South	#	60.0	7.0	25.0	6.0	2.0	100.0
****West	#	4.0	28.0	25.0	22.0	20.0	100.0

# less than .5%

\*Northeast - Conn., Maine, Mass., N.H., N.J., N.Y., Pa., R.I. and Vt.

\*\*North Central - Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kan., Mich., Minn., Mo., Nebr., N.Dak., Ohio, S.Dak. and Wis.

\*\*\*South - Ala., Ark., Del., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Md., Miss., N.C., Okla., S.C., Tenn., Tex., Va. and W.Va.

\*\*\*\*West - Alaska, Ariz., Calif., Colo., Hawaii, Idaho, Mont., Nev., N.Mex., Oreg., Utah, Wash. and Wyo.