



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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## Memorandum

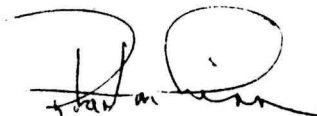
To: Directorate; All Regional Directors; Director, Office of National Capital and Urban Park Affairs; and All Center Directors

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

One of the great all-American pastimes is sightseeing. It is one form of recreation which is easily available to all and can be practiced in almost any setting. The precise nature of sightseeing remains unfathomable. There are any number of ways in which it could be conceptualized. One way might be on the basis of the objects being viewed - people, animals, buildings, etc. In fact there are already words in the common parlance denoting certain highly specialized forms of sightseeing, such as ogling. Another way in which it might be conceptualized is in terms of the motivations of the participants. That is, is the activity intentional, accidental, spontaneous, etc. A further way might be on the basis of with whom the sightseeing occurs - friends, acquaintances, family, etc. Whatever way one may conceive sightseeing, a great deal of it goes on.

In Report #3 in this series, we noted that about 49% of the adults in a national park during the year before the study reported sightseeing as the single activity in which they participated most while in a park. For the purposes of the study, sightseeing was defined as an intentional activity requiring some previous planning before reaching a park. The precise objects to be seen were not specified. The information in this report was drawn from a study conducted by the Office of Natural Science Studies during November, 1968. The population studied included the adult (18 years and older) population of the United States who were not in the armed forces overseas nor institutionalized. This particular report is concerned with sightseeing among those adults in the national parks. Comparisons will be made between those park-going adults who reported it as the major recreational activity and those also in the parks but who reported some other activity. (Report #8 considers NPS Campers as a subgroup).

#### Social Class and Education

Table 1 shows the distribution of income (See Table 1) among sightseers and non-sightseers. It is apparent that no significant differences exist between the subsamples suggesting that engaging in sightseeing is not determined by the social class of the respondent alone.

In a similar fashion Table 2 shows the distribution of education among sightseers and non-sightseers. It appears (See Table 2) that sightseeing is not determined by education alone. Whether persons with different kinds of educational backgrounds share an interest in the same kinds of sights is unknown. It is also interesting to notice that sightseeing and camping differ with respect to the importance of education as a determinant, campers as a subgroup having more adults with more education than among sightseers.

Apparently sightseeing has appeals different from camping, for approximately 25% of both sightseers and non-sightseers remained overnight in a park. How many were overnight as campers cannot be ascertained from the data of this study. Thus unlike camping, sightseeing as an activity cuts across both social class and education.

### Region of Residence

The importance of the region of the country in which the adults resides was examined in a previous report. In Report #5 it was noted that adults residing in the Western Census Region tended to go to all kinds of parks more than those residing in other regions. It was also noted that Westerners tended to go to national parks more recently than others. Notice in Table 3 that among sightseers and non-sightseers (See Table 3) Westerners form a substantially larger proportion of national park sightseers than is true of non-sightseers. On the other hand, adults residing in the North Central Census Region tend to be disproportionate among non-sightseers. It is always difficult to interpret the meanings of regional residence with respect to human behavior. However, there are clear subcultural variations among regions of the country with respect to many things such as food preferences, folk music styles, etc. These observed differences with respect to sightseeing may be indicative of such cultural variability in what is considered appropriate park-going behavior.

### Size of Place of Residence

When we compared park-going publics with respect to size of place of residence, we found that national park goers tended to come disproportionately from smaller places.

(See Table 4)

Among sightseers a substantial proportion reside in smaller places whereas more non-sightseers, comparatively, reside in larger places. As with region of residence, this empirical difference between the subsamples may be another indication of cultural variability with respect to park behavior.

### Age

Table 5 shows no substantial differences among the age categories (See Table 5) with respect to sightseeing. This recalls a previous observation that the so-called inherent passivity-activity of recreation should not be thought of as suggesting which particular age groups in the society are most likely to participate in them.

### Summary

Sightseeing as the recreation activity most often mentioned by adults in national parks seems to be participated in independent of social class, age or education of the respondent. It does however appear to vary among census regions of the nation, as well as places of residence of differing sizes. It is suggested that these findings reflect differences in cultural patterns associated with behavior while in parks.

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National Park Service  
March 23, 1970

Table 1. NPS Sightseers and Non-Sightseers and Income Distribution - %

	Income						Total
	Under \$5,000	\$5,000 - \$9,999	\$10,000 - \$14,999	\$15,000 - \$24,999	Over \$25,000	No Response	
Sightseers	15.2	48.0	21.4	10.7	2.1	2.6	100.0
Non-Sightseers	16.1	41.9	26.0	10.8	2.9	2.3	100.0

Table 2. NPS Sightseers and Non-Sightseers and Educational Distribution - %

	Education			
	Less than High School	High School	More than High School	Total
Sightseers	26.2	37.9	35.9	100.0
Non-Sightseers	24.8	39.8	35.4	100.0

Table 3. NPS Sightseers and Non-Sightseers and Region of Residence - %

	Region of Residence				
	NE	NC	S	W	Total
Sightseers	17.4	16.8	27.2	38.6	100.0
Non-Sightseers	20.2	22.3	29.3	28.2	100.0

Table 4. NPS Sightseers and Non-Sightseers and Size of Place of Residence - %

	Size of Place of Residence			
	Under 25,000	25,000 - 499,999	500,000 +	Total
Sightseers	54.7	16.1	29.2	100.0
Non-Sightseers	43.1	15.2	41.7	100.0

Table 5. NPS Sightseers and Non-Sightseers and Age Distribution - %

	Age			
	18-29	30-49	50+	Total
Sightseers	27.2	45.2	27.6	100.0
Non-Sightseers	30.2	44.3	25.5	100.0