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American Views on National Park Issues

A Summary Report by the
National Parks and Conservation Association

and

Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit
Colorado State University

May 21, 1996

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Colorado
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Colorado
State
University

American Views on National Park Issues

**A Summary Report by the
National Parks and Conservation Association
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 223-6722**

and

**Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit
College of Natural Resources
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
(970) 491-6591**

Colorado State University

Jerry J. Vaske, Professor
Glenn E. Haas, Professor

Doug Whittaker, Research Assistant
Tim Wakefield, Research Assistant

National Parks and Conservation Association

Paul C. Pritchard
President

Kathryn E. Westra
Director of Communications

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National Parks and Conservation Association

May 21, 1996

PAUL C. PRITCHARD

President

Dear Friends of the National Parks:

Politicians like to highlight the differences between Republicans and Democrats, especially in an election year. They paint members of rival political parties in stark contrast, portraying Democrats and Republicans as pursuing radically different visions of America's future.

This may be true on some issues, but it is decidedly not true when it comes to Americans' views on protecting the national parks. That is our conclusion after reviewing the results of this important independent survey conducted by Colorado State University (CSU).

Last year, we learned in a similar survey of Americans that the American public wants to see national parks protected. They *expect* to see these special places preserved for future generations. This year, the CSU researchers have found that protecting America's national parks is a bipartisan issue, important to Republicans, Democrats, and independents alike. Politicians who vote to undermine the integrity of our national parks could find themselves in trouble with voters this November.

Quite simply, Americans intend to "vote the parks" in this election year. Americans of all political persuasions say they are more likely to vote for a presidential candidate committed to the parks. Three-quarters of Americans feel that national parks are an important issue when they vote for their congressional representatives.

The 104th Congress has done very little to protect parks or expand the National Park System. Instead, the highly partisan debate on parks in this Congress has focused on an anti-parks agenda that has included potential park closures and bills to roll back protection for some of these irreplaceable resources. Members of this Congress should listen to their constituents, the American public. More than 90 percent of Americans say they will be less likely to vote for a representative who wants to close some national parks. Nearly three-quarters say they will be more likely to vote *for* a representative who supported adding some new national parks.

With this survey, the American public has once again sent a clear message to its leaders: the national parks must not be used as pawns in a partisan political agenda. The 369 special areas that comprise the National Park System are valued by the American people, who believe that we must protect and pass on the cultural, historic, and natural resources that have been protected for us since America's first national park, Yellowstone, was created in 1872. We hope that all political candidates will heed their warning.

Sincerely,



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1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-1904
Telephone (202) 223-NPCA(6722) • Fax (202) 659-0650

Executive Summary

Americans are committed to their national parks. This national survey shows that although Americans of different party affiliations may be divided on many issues, they are united in their support of the national parks. Republicans, Democrats, and independents were more similar than different on most national park issues, and a majority of each also said that park issues matter to them when they vote. (The survey sample included 30 percent Republicans, 30 percent Democrats, 35 percent independents, and 5 percent who reported their party affiliation as "other." A breakdown of survey responses by party affiliation can be found in Appendix C.)

A majority of the survey respondents support establishing new parks, keeping existing parks open and under federal management, and increasing the National Park Service budget. Majorities also support several actions to protect specific park resources, even if these actions require sacrifices such as higher entrance fees, visitor limitations, or higher prices for consumer goods.

Several specific findings from the survey, organized by sections of the report, include:

National Park Issues and Voting Intentions

- There is strong general sentiment among Americans to protect the national parks. Almost all respondents say they are more likely to vote for a presidential candidate committed to the parks, and three-quarters feel that national parks are an important issue when they vote for their congressional representatives.
- Americans do not want their national parks closed. More than 90 percent said they would be less likely to vote for a representative who wanted to close some national parks, and nearly three-quarters said they would be more likely to vote for a representative who supported adding some new national parks.
- Americans do not support the idea of turning over national parks to state management. Two-thirds would be less likely to vote for a representative who wanted to take this action. There is almost unanimous opposition to selling national parks to private interests: only four percent would be more likely to vote for someone who wanted to take this action.

- Most Americans favor congressional candidates who support budget increases for national parks.

Park Policy Issues

- In general, Americans are committed to public policy and park management decisions that protect park resources. This is true even when such policies might mean personal inconvenience or increased costs for those responding to the survey.
- A majority of Americans think construction project decisions like a second road into Denali National Park should be made by the National Park Service, not by Congress.
- Almost 90 percent of Americans are willing to pay a small increase in the price of sugar to help restore Everglades National Park.
- Most Americans oppose putting Yellowstone's resources at risk and would support federal efforts to stop the New World Mine from being developed nearby.
- Most Americans support the creation of new parks. In fact, almost two-thirds say this should be a medium or high priority.
- Most Americans support continued management of national parks by the National Park Service, rather than turning some parks over to states.
- Most Americans support limits or a ban on sightseeing aircraft in parks, with a majority favoring limits.
- Most Americans think companies should clean up their air pollution if it is affecting air quality in national parks, even if this means higher utility rates or prices for consumer goods.
- Most Americans support use limitations in national parks to protect the quality of experiences or to prevent harm to park resources. Almost all respondents said they would be willing to make reservations or use shuttle buses to reduce crowding and protect resources.
- A slim majority of Americans appear willing to pay an increase in park entrance fees from \$5 dollars per carload to \$5 per person, although fewer support higher increases.
- Most Americans support spending more of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase inholdings in parks, and 69 percent think this should be a medium or high priority.

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Introduction

The National Park System faces a variety of challenges in 1996. Continuing congressional efforts to reduce the federal deficit have some people concerned about whether the already underfunded National Park Service will face even more severe budget restrictions. Changes in congressional leadership also have led to new controversies over several specific national park policies. To address these challenges, decision-makers need information about how Americans view these issues. This report provides that kind of information.

This study is the third in a series conducted for the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) by the Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit of Colorado State University (CSU). The first study, conducted in 1994, was a survey of national park superintendents designed to understand how the parks' chief stewards view the condition of the parks. The 1994 survey found that most of the nation's parks were only in "average" condition, with some even receiving "failing" grades. Most superintendents were pessimistic about the prospects for future protection of the parks in an era of expanding demands and static or reduced budgets.

A second study in 1995 explored how the American public views the conditions of and threats to the parks, the importance of park protection, and the parks' future prospects. The survey found that most Americans believe the parks are in good or excellent condition, that national parks should be protected as they have been in the past, that protecting the parks is important, and that they expect the parks to be protected in the future. The survey also showed that people felt there were a number of serious threats to the parks.

In the present study, NPCA and CSU build on the previous two efforts as well as address more recent issues stemming from the federal budget crisis and new bills introduced in the 104th Congress. The survey asked people about National Park System priorities, alternative ways to fund park programs, and several current park issues. The survey also explored whether park issues are likely to affect Americans' voting behavior in this presidential election year.

How to Read This Report

Results from the survey are displayed in graphic form throughout the report, with brief captions interpreting the findings. Each graph includes a margin of error (e.g., ± 3 percent), which is based upon the sample size answering the question. The sample size and the margin of error vary because some questions were asked only of people who had visited parks before, or because some people chose not to respond to particular questions.

The overall intent of the survey was to ask the American people's views on current national park issues, regardless of their level of experience with parks or the number of times they had visited parks. The methods employed in the data collection are described in Appendix A. Data for the study were collected using a survey instrument shown in Appendix B, which also includes results expressed in percentages for each question.

For most questions in the survey, data were analyzed for the entire sample as well as for people of different party affiliations (respondents were asked to describe themselves as Republicans, Democrats, independents, or "other"). Graphs are presented for the entire sample. Similarities and differences by party affiliation are noted in the text that follows each graph. Responses by party affiliation also are presented in Appendix C. Details on statistical differences are presented in Appendix A.

Jerry J. Vaske, Professor, Colorado State University

May 21, 1996

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Results: National Park Issues and Voting Intentions

The survey asked a series of questions about whether people would be more likely to vote for their representatives in Congress if they held certain positions on national park issues. They also were asked if they were more likely to vote for a presidential candidate who was committed to national parks, and whether national park issues are important when they vote. For all questions, respondents could answer "Yes," "No," or "It doesn't matter to me." The figures show the percentages for all respondents. When differences by party affiliation were significant, they are noted in the text that follows each graph. (For more detailed information on responses by party affiliation, see Appendix C.) The specific questions are given below:

- Would you be more likely to vote for a presidential candidate who is committed to protecting the national parks?
- In general, is your representative's record on national parks important to you when you vote?
- Would you be more likely to vote for your representative if he or she wanted to...
 - ♦ ...close some national parks?
 - ♦ ...sell some national parks to private interests?
 - ♦ ...turn over some national parks to state management?
 - ♦ ...add some new areas to the National Park System?
 - ♦ ...increase the National Park Service budget?

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**Would you be more likely to vote for
a presidential candidate who is committed to parks?**

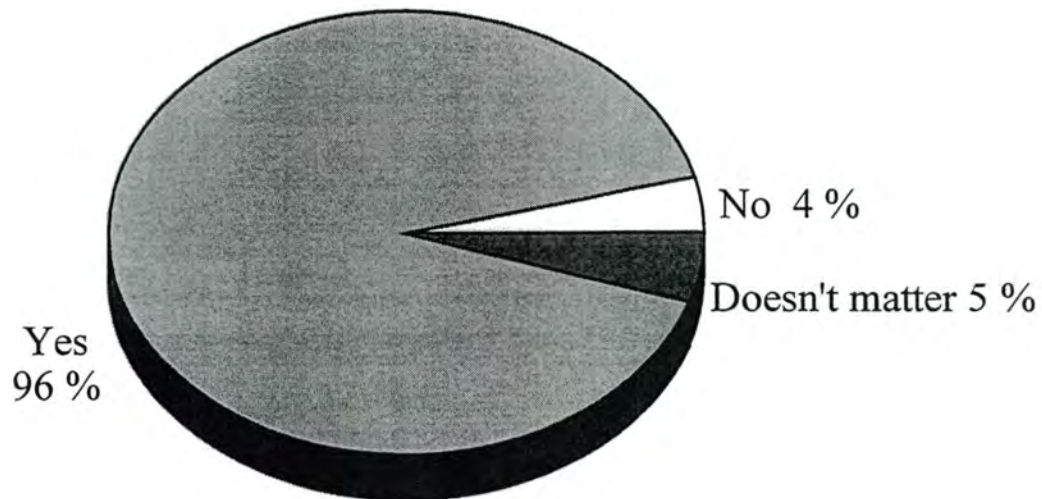


Figure 1. Percent more likely to vote for a presidential candidate who is committed to national parks. Margin of error: ± 2 percent.

- There is strong general sentiment among Americans to protect the national parks. Almost all respondents say they are more likely to vote for a presidential candidate committed to the parks.
- Republicans, Democrats, and independents agree on this issue; all support general protection of the national parks and want a presidential candidate who has a similar commitment.

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**Is your representative's record on
national parks important when you vote?**

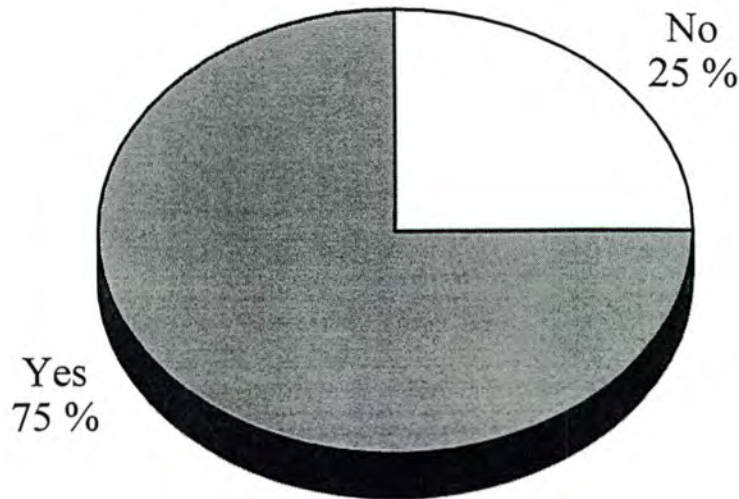


Figure 2. Percent reporting that their representative's record on national parks is important when they vote. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

- Three-quarters of Americans feel that national parks are an important issue when they vote for their congressional representatives. Candidates with a history of support for parks are more likely to attract votes than those without.
- There were some differences between Americans of different political affiliations on this issue. Although two-thirds of the Republicans said their representative's record on parks is important, 80 percent of the Democrats and independents said the same. It appears that there are slightly more Republicans who think other issues are more important than park issues.

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Would you be more likely to vote for someone who wants to...
...close some national parks?

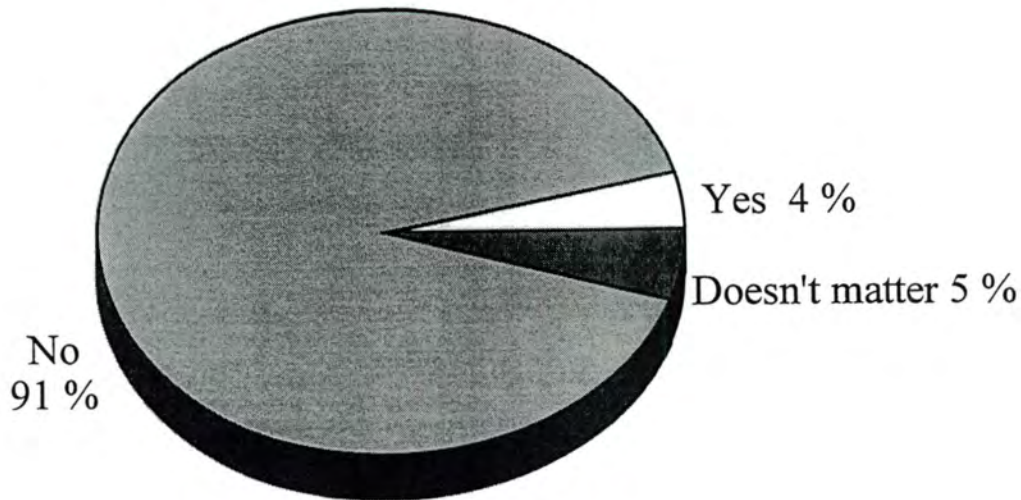


Figure 3. Percent more likely to vote for someone who wants to close some national parks. Margin of error: ± 2 percent.

- Americans do not want their national parks closed. More than 90% said they would be less likely to vote for a representative who wanted to close some national parks. With only 5% saying this issue does not matter to them, these findings show strong support among the American public for the integrity of the National Park System.
- The strength of these findings is reinforced when one considers party affiliation. Republicans, Democrats and independents all oppose closing existing parks, and are less likely to vote for someone who wants to take this action.

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**Would you be more likely to vote for someone who wants to...
... sell some national parks to private interests?**

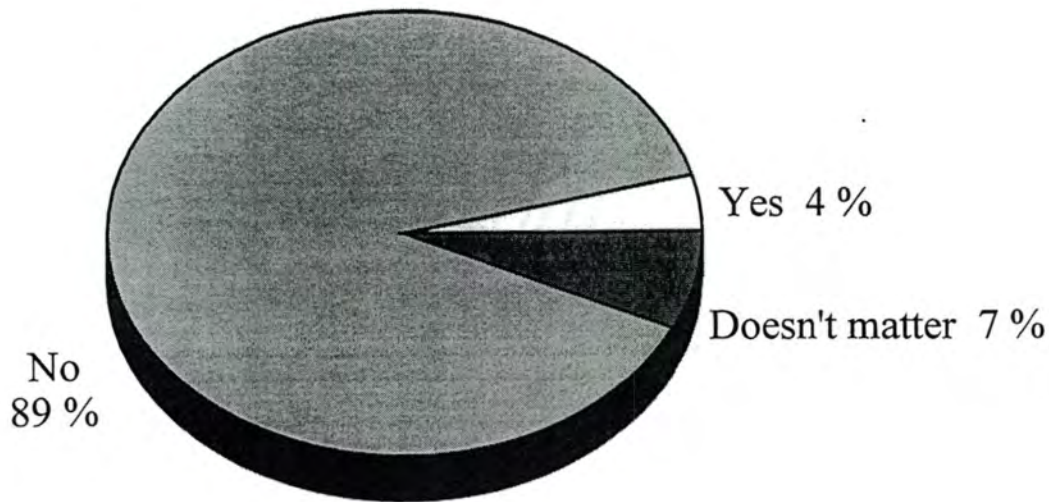


Figure 4. Percent more likely to vote for someone who wants to sell some national parks to private interests. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

- Almost all Americans are opposed to selling national parks to private interests; only 4 percent would be more likely to vote for someone who wanted to take this action. This result parallels the “close the parks” finding. Americans don’t want their parks closed, and they don’t want them controlled by private interests.
- There were slight differences among Americans of different party affiliations. Although a few more Republicans support selling parks to private interests, a majority do not. There is near unanimity among Democrats and independents on this issue.

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**Would you be more likely to vote for someone who wants to
... turn some national parks over to states to manage?**

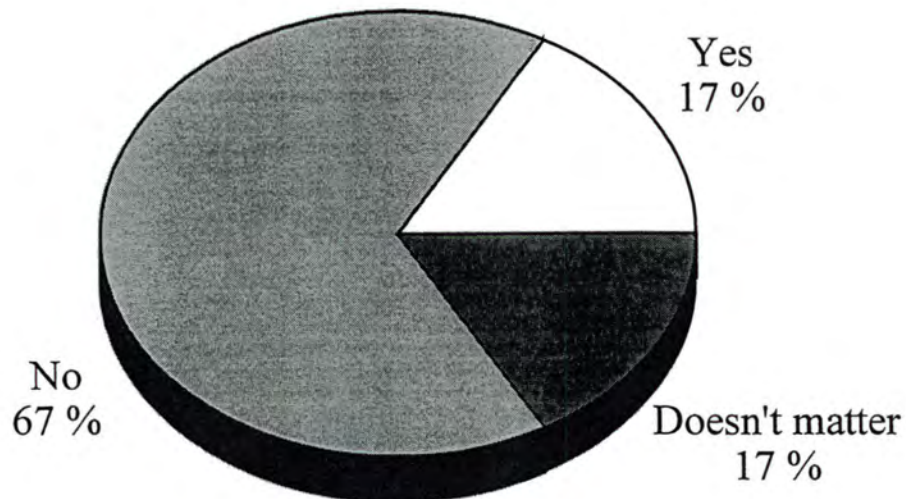


Figure 5. Percent more likely to vote for someone who wants to turn over some national parks to state management. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

- Americans do not support the idea of turning over national parks to states. Two-thirds would be less likely to vote for a representative who wanted to take this action.
- There were few differences between Americans of different political affiliations. Although Democrats are slightly more likely to oppose the idea, large majorities of all groups oppose turning national parks over to states for management.

**Would you be more likely to vote for someone who wants to
... add some new areas to the National Park System?**

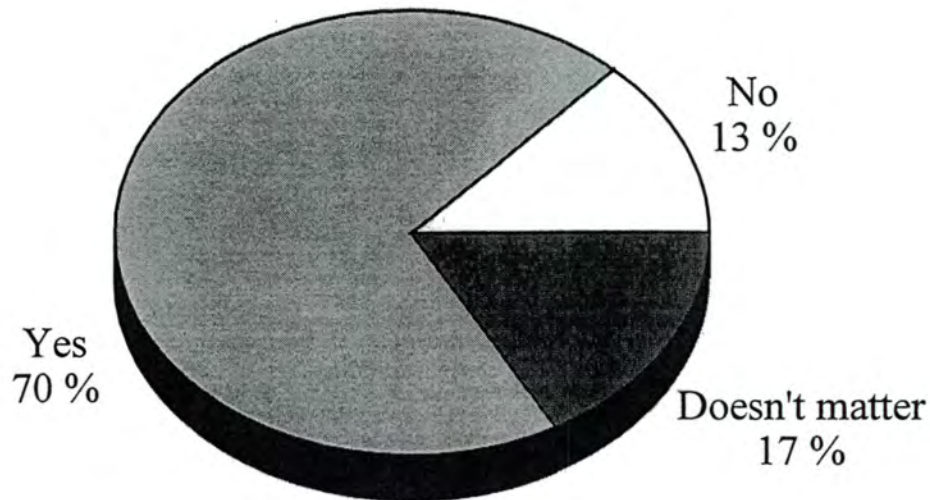


Figure 6. Percent more likely to vote for someone who wants to add some new areas to the National Park System. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

- Americans favor expanding the National Park System. Nearly three quarters said they would be more likely to vote for a representative who supported adding some new national parks.
- There were some small differences between Americans of different party affiliations. Slightly fewer Republicans support additions to the National Park System, although a large majority still report that they would be more likely to vote for someone who wants to expand the system.

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**Would you be more likely to vote for someone who wants to...
...increase the National Park Service budget?**

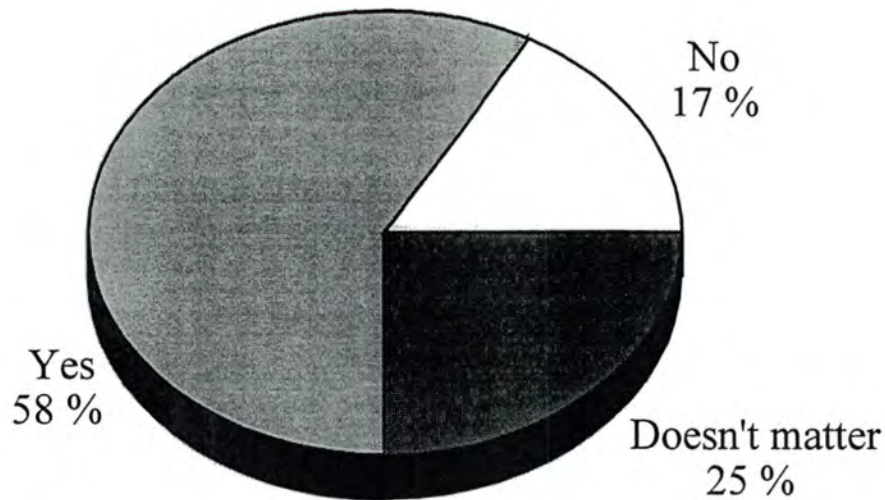


Figure 7. Percent more likely to vote for someone who wants to increase the National Park Service budget. Margin of error: ± 3 percent

- Most Americans favor Congressional candidates who support budget increases for national parks.
- There are few differences between people with different party affiliations on this issue. While Republicans are slightly less likely to vote for a candidate who favors increasing the Park Service budget, a majority say they would be.

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Results: Specific National Park Issues

The survey asked a series of questions about specific issues in particular national parks, most of which are the focus of proposed legislation currently being considered by Congress. Respondents were asked to respond "Yes" or "No" to specific actions involved in these issues, or to answer "I don't know" if they were unfamiliar with the issue or had no opinion.

The specific wording of these relatively complex questions is provided with each result to help interpret findings. Short discussions of the results also are provided. When differences by party affiliation are significant, they are noted in the text that follows each graph. Details on responses by party affiliation can be found in Appendix C.

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Who should decide on construction projects like the Denali road?

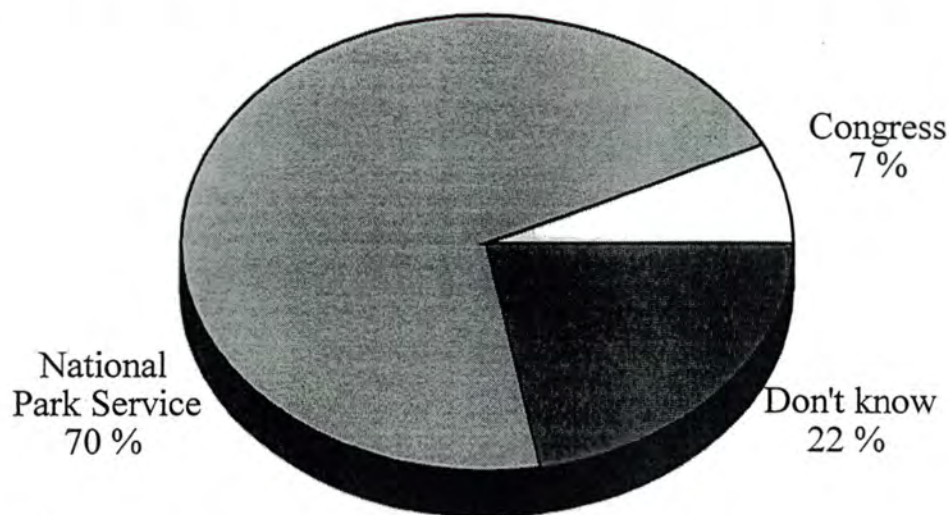


Figure 8. Who should decide on construction projects like the proposed second road into Denali National Park? Percent reporting each response. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

The National Park Service opposes a second road into the middle of Alaska's Denali National Park because it wants to protect the park's wilderness character. A few members of Congress, however, want this road constructed. Do you think Congress should override the National Park Service on these kinds of construction projects?

Yes, Congress should make these kinds of decisions

No, the Park Service should make these kinds of decisions

- A majority of Americans think construction project decisions like the Denali road should be made by the National Park Service, although almost a quarter of the respondents did not know about this issue. Results also may reflect general opposition to road projects in parks, specific opposition to the Denali road, distrust of congressional decisions, or faith in Park Service decisions.
- There were few differences between Americans of different political affiliations on this issue, although Democrats were slightly more inclined to have the Park Service make these decisions.

Are you willing to pay a sugar tax to help restore the Everglades?

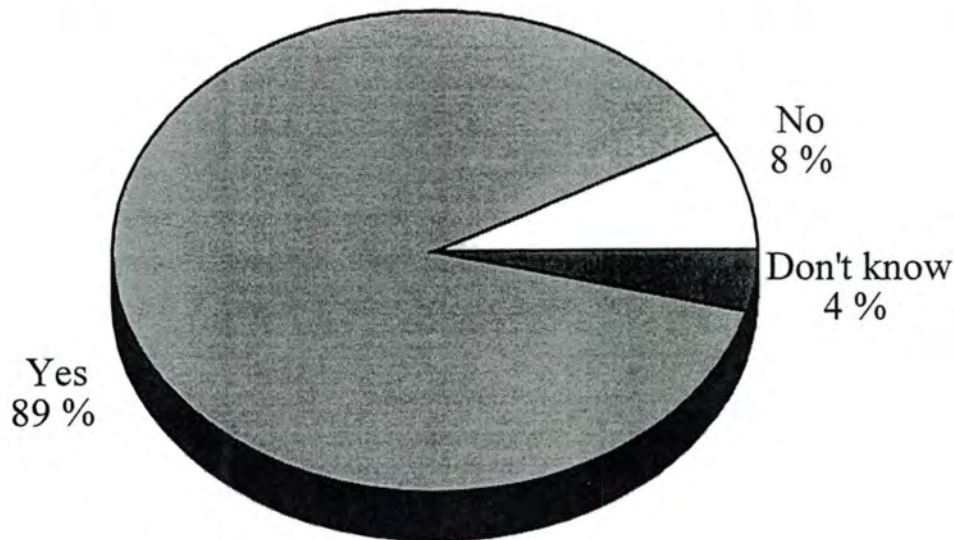


Figure 9. Percent willing to pay about 5 cents more per bag of sugar to help support restoration of Everglades National Park. Margin of error: ± 2 percent.

There is widespread agreement that restoring natural conditions in Florida's Everglades National Park is a priority, but finding the money to pay for it has been difficult. One option is a tax on Florida's sugar cane industry, which is a major source of pollution in the park. Would you be willing to pay 5 cents more for a bag of sugar if you knew the money would help restore the Everglades' natural environment?

- Almost 90 percent of Americans appear willing to pay a small increase in the price of sugar to help restore the Everglades. Results reflect specific concern about the Everglades, and may also indicate a more general concern about pollution problems in the parks.
- There were virtually no differences between Americans of different party affiliations on this issue.

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Should the government stop a new mine near Yellowstone?

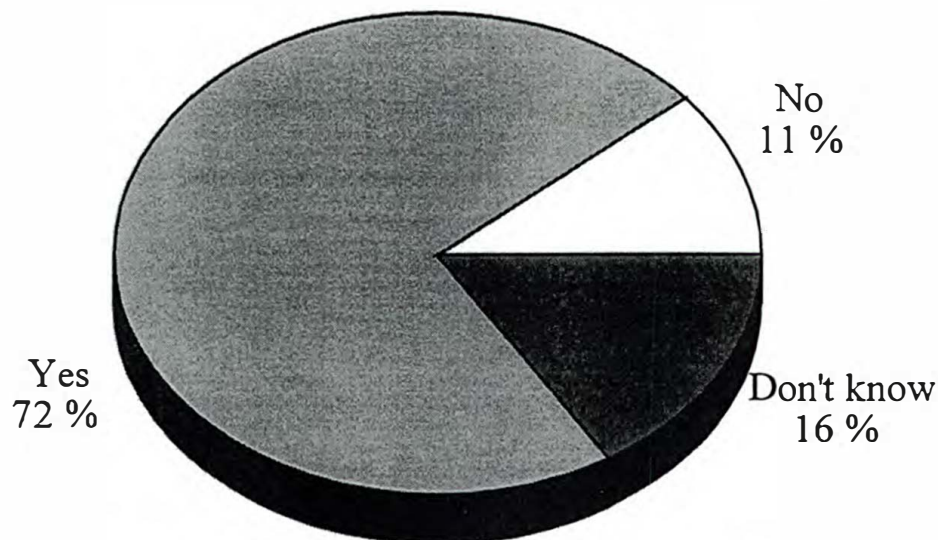


Figure 10. Percent reporting the federal government should stop the proposed New World Mine near Yellowstone National Park. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

A private company plans to build a large gold mine less than three miles from Yellowstone National Park. There are concerns that the mine could pose risks to the park's land, water, and wildlife. Should the federal government stop the mine in order to avoid these risks?

- Most Americans oppose putting Yellowstone's resources at risk and would support federal government efforts to stop the mine from being developed. Results reflect specific concern with this mine near Yellowstone, and may also indicate general opposition to development that puts park resources at risk.
- Republicans, Democrats and independents differed slightly on this issue. Slightly fewer Republicans support having the federal government stop the mine compared to the others. Almost two-thirds of Republicans, however, would still like to stop the mine from being developed.

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Should wolves have been returned to Yellowstone?

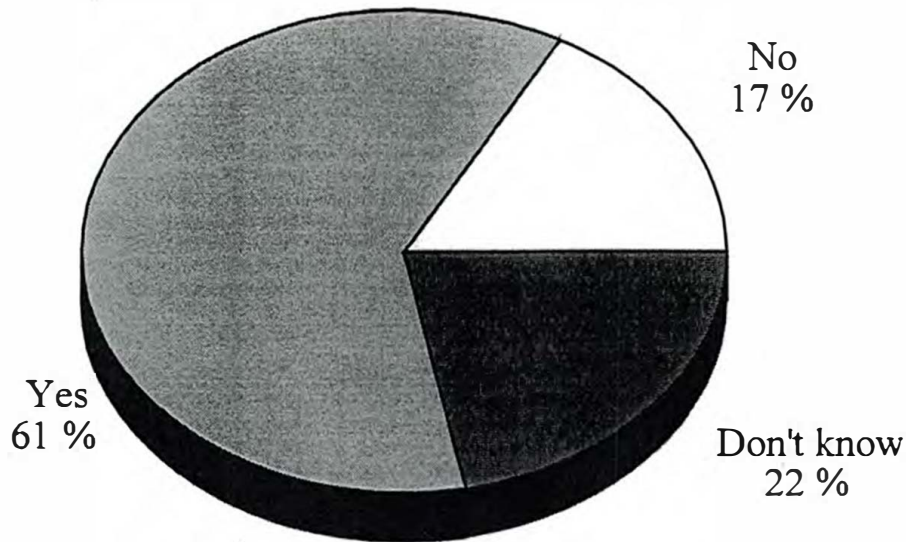


Figure 11. Percent reporting that wolves should have been returned to Yellowstone. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

Wolves were returned to Yellowstone National Park after being gone for almost 50 years. Many people think the wolves are an important part of the park's ecosystem and add to its wilderness values. Other people who live near the park, however, think the wolves will kill livestock or endanger people and should not have been returned. Do you think wolves should have been returned to Yellowstone?

- A majority of Americans support wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone, although more than one-fifth said they "did not know" about this issue. Results reflect specific interest in wolves at Yellowstone, and may also indicate general interest in and concern for park wildlife.
- There were small differences in responses by people with different political affiliations. Independents were slightly more supportive of wolf reintroduction than either Republicans or Democrats.

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Should Voyageurs' wilderness be opened to snowmobiles?

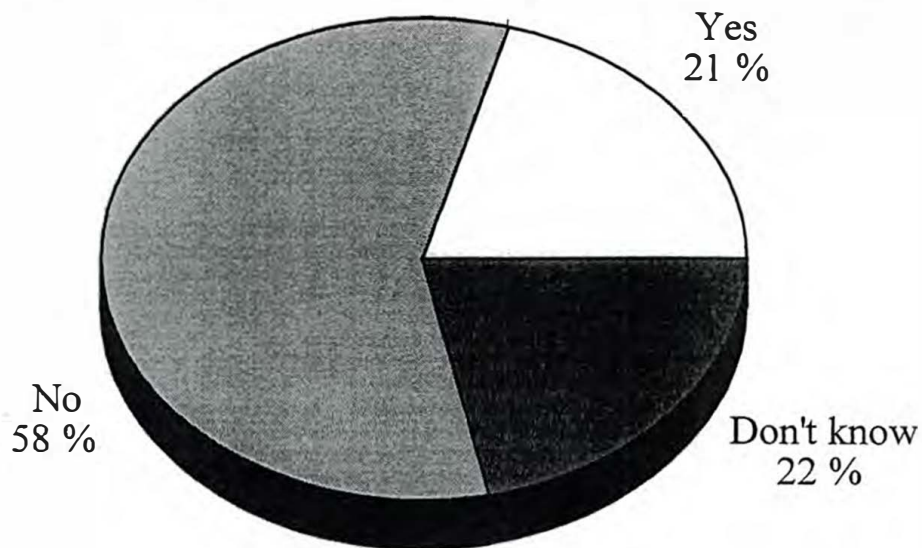


Figure 12. Percent who want to open remaining wilderness in Voyageurs National Park to snowmobiles. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

For its size, Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park has more land open for snowmobile use than any other park. Congress is considering opening the remainder of the park's wilderness areas to snowmobiles. Should these wilderness areas be opened to snowmobiles?

- A majority of Americans want to see remaining wilderness in Voyageurs closed to snowmobile access. This finding reflects specific concern for Voyageurs, and may also indicate a more general concern with wilderness values in the parks.
- There were few differences between respondents of different political affiliations, although Democrats were slightly more likely to favor opening up more wilderness to snowmobile use.

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Results: General National Park Issues

The survey asked a series of questions about more general national park issues which are also the focus of current legislation. For most of these questions, respondents were asked to respond "Yes" or "No" to specific actions involved in these issues, or to answer "I don't know" if they had no opinion.

The specific wording of these relatively complex questions is provided with each result to aid in interpretation. Short discussions of the findings are also provided. Similarities and differences by party affiliation are noted in the text that follows each graph. Details of responses by party affiliation appear in Appendix C.

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Should new National Parks be created?

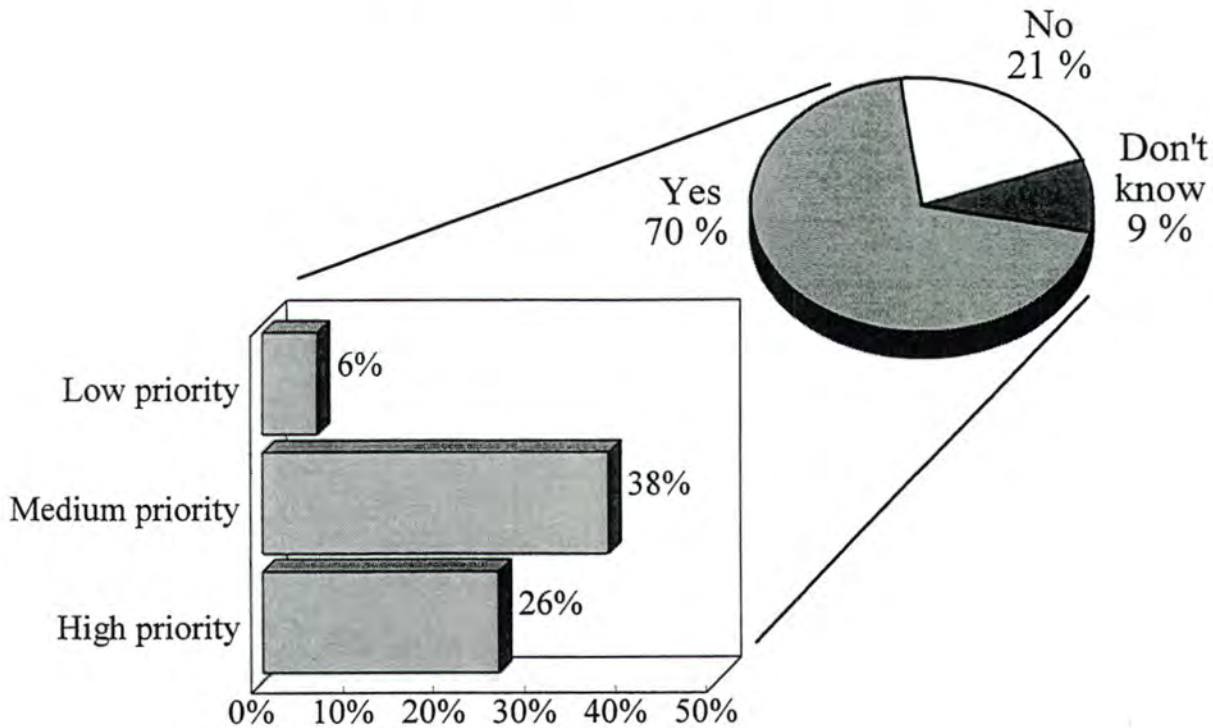


Figure 13. Percent of respondents who support the creation of new national parks and percent of those who responded “Yes” who think it should be a high, medium, or low priority. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

Do you think Congress should establish new national parks to protect additional natural and cultural resources?

- Most Americans support the creation of new parks, with almost two-thirds saying this should be a medium or high priority. In contrast, about one-fifth don't think Congress should establish new parks, and another 9 percent had no opinion on this issue.
- There were some differences between Americans of different party affiliations on this issue. Republicans are much more likely to oppose the creation of new parks (37 percent) compared to Democrats or independents (17 and 19 percent, respectively). Among the Republicans that did support creating new parks, there are also relatively fewer who think this is a high priority. These differences aside, a majority of Republicans still support the creation of new parks.

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Should some National Parks be turned over to states?

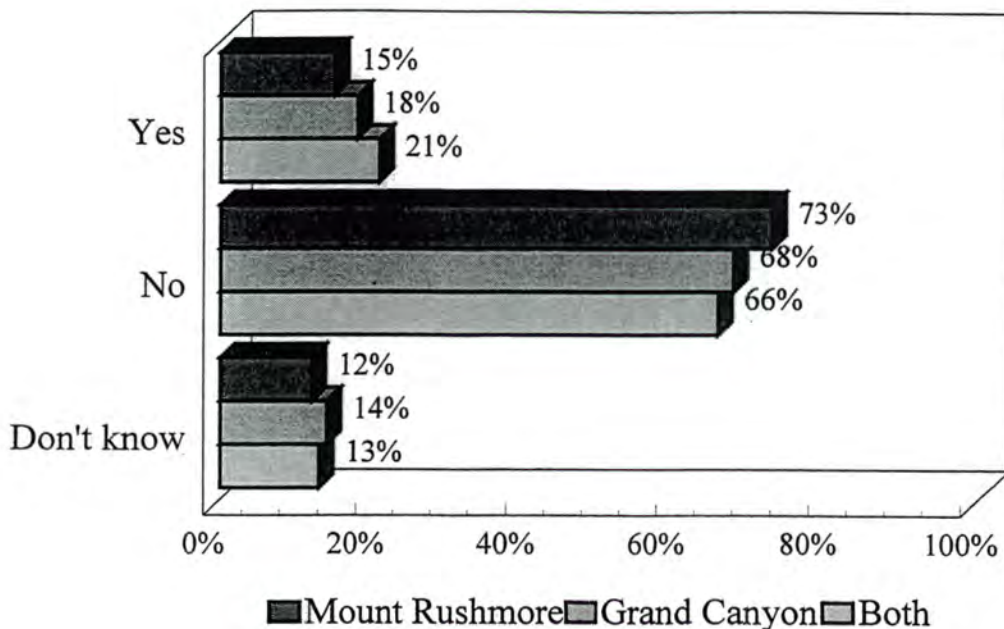


Figure 14. Percent who think that some national parks should be turned over to states to manage. Respondents were randomly given one of three versions of this question with different example parks. Margin of error: ± 5 percent.

Some people think [Mount Rushmore; Grand Canyon; Mount Rushmore and Grand Canyon] or other national parks should be turned over to state governments to run. Other people oppose this, saying some states will not manage these parks to a national standard or to benefit the nation at large. In general, do you think parks should be turned over to states?

- Most Americans support continued management of national parks by the federal government. This result is similar to those for the voting intention question on the same subject (see page 7).
- Results for different versions of the question were not very different. Surprisingly, however, people who were asked about both parks showed more support for state management than those who were asked about either park singly.
- There were few differences between respondents of different party affiliations, although Democrats were slightly less likely to support state management.

Should companies reduce pollution to protect park air quality?

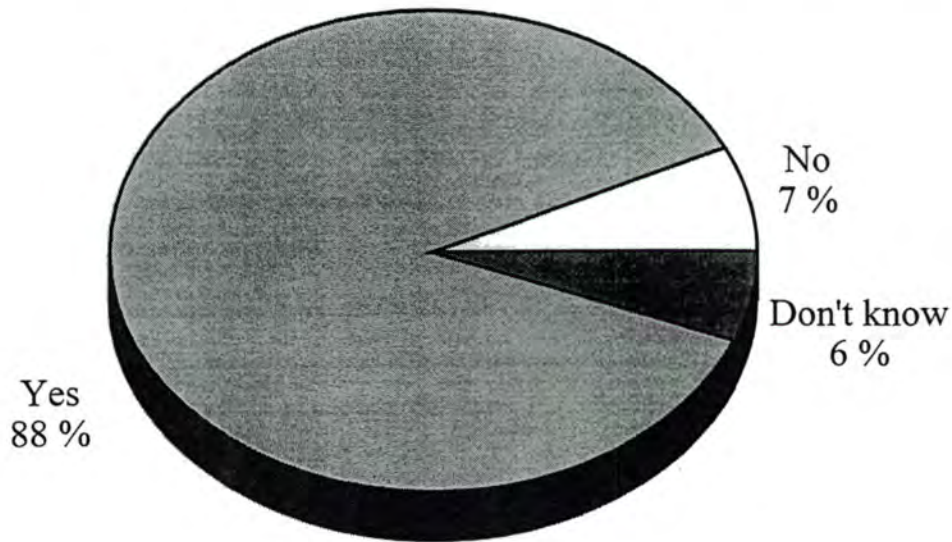


Figure 15. Percent reporting that companies should clean up their pollution to improve park air quality, even if it raises utility rates or consumer prices. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

The National Park Service says pollution from power plants and industry significantly worsens visibility at Grand Canyon, Great Smoky Mountains and other national parks. Should companies be required to clean up their pollution, even if it meant you might pay more for utilities and consumer products?

- Most Americans think companies should clean up their air pollution if it is affecting park air quality, even if this means higher utility rates or prices for consumer goods. This is more evidence that Americans are willing to make sacrifices for parks. Results may reflect specific concern at Grand Canyon or Great Smoky Mountains, or overall concern about air quality in the parks.

There were some small differences among people of different political affiliations. Republicans are a little less likely to support pollution clean-up regulations, although a large majority still support this action.

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Should there be limits or a ban on aircraft sightseeing in parks?

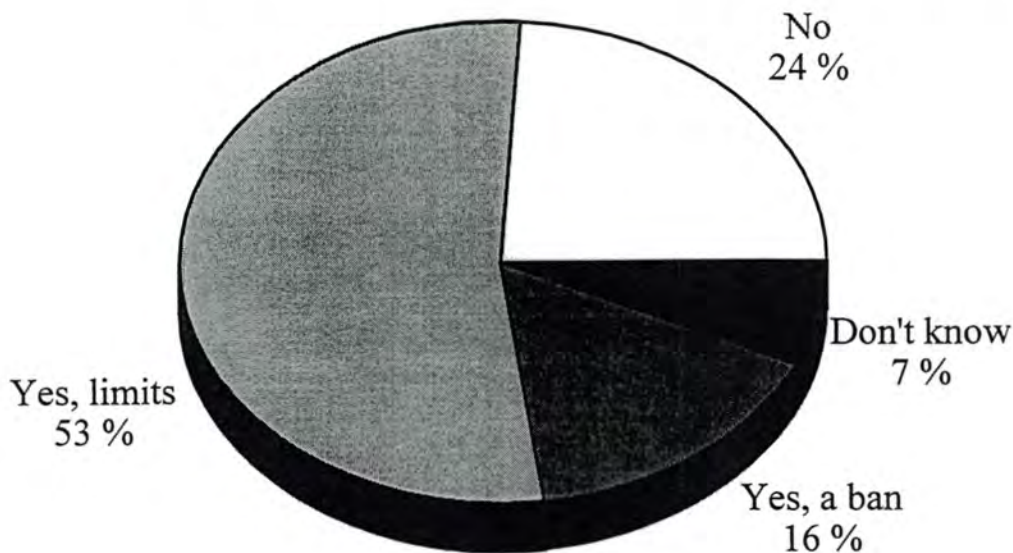


Figure 16. Percent supporting a ban, limits, or no limits on aircraft overflights in national parks. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

At national parks like Grand Canyon and Great Smoky Mountains, companies offer low flying airplane or helicopter sightseeing trips. Some people think these flights should be limited or banned because the sight and sound of them detracts from other people's enjoyment. Do you think these flights should be limited or banned?

Yes, there should be limits on flights
Yes, there should be a ban on flights
No

- Most Americans support limits or a ban on aircraft sightseeing in parks (69 percent), with a majority favoring limits. Results may reflect concern at Grand Canyon or Great Smoky Mountains, or overall concern about sightseeing overflights.
- There were small differences between people with different party affiliations. Republicans were a little less likely to support either limits or a ban than Democrats and independents.

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Should more Land and Water Conservation Fund money be used to buy inholdings in parks?

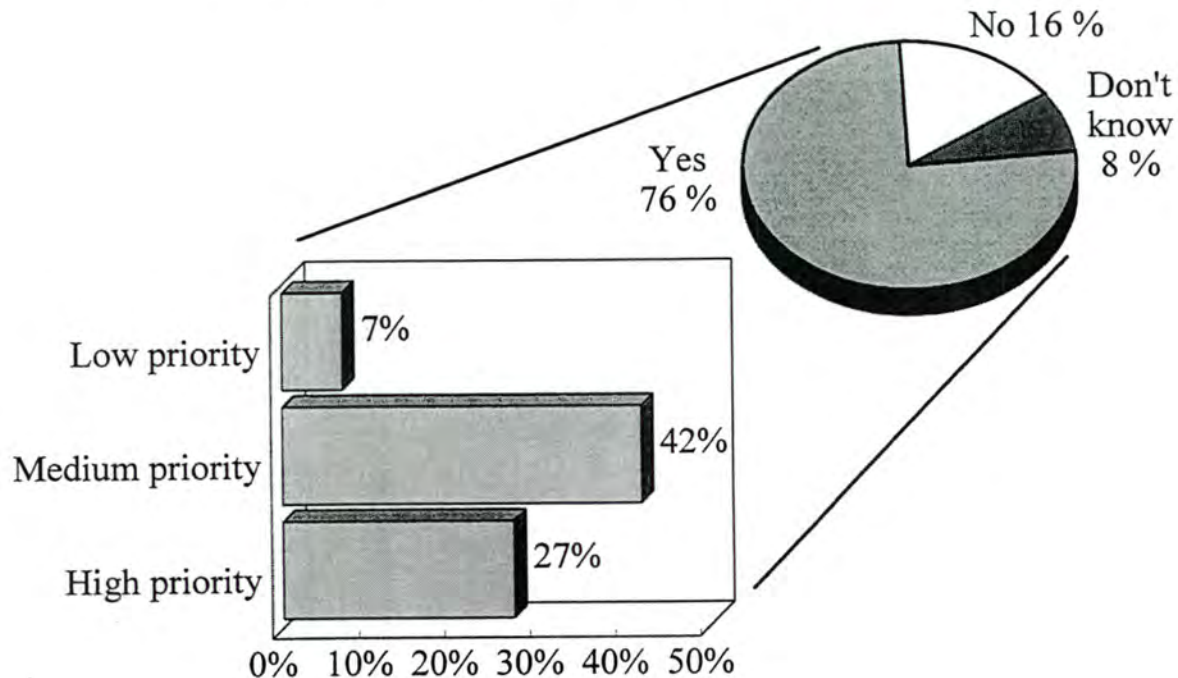


Figure 17. Percent reporting that more federal Land and Water Conservation Fund money should be used to buy inholdings in parks. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

There is a government fund set aside to buy land for conservation and recreation. Congress, however, uses less than five percent of this money each year. Should Congress spend more of this money to buy private land inside national park boundaries from willing sellers?

- Most Americans support spending more of this fund, and 69 percent think this should be a medium or high priority.
- There were few differences among people of different party affiliations. Slightly fewer Republicans think greater use of the fund is a good idea; among those who support using the fund, it is a slightly lower priority. Overall, however, majorities of all groups support using more of the fund.

**Should visitation be limited
to protect park resources or the quality of visits?**

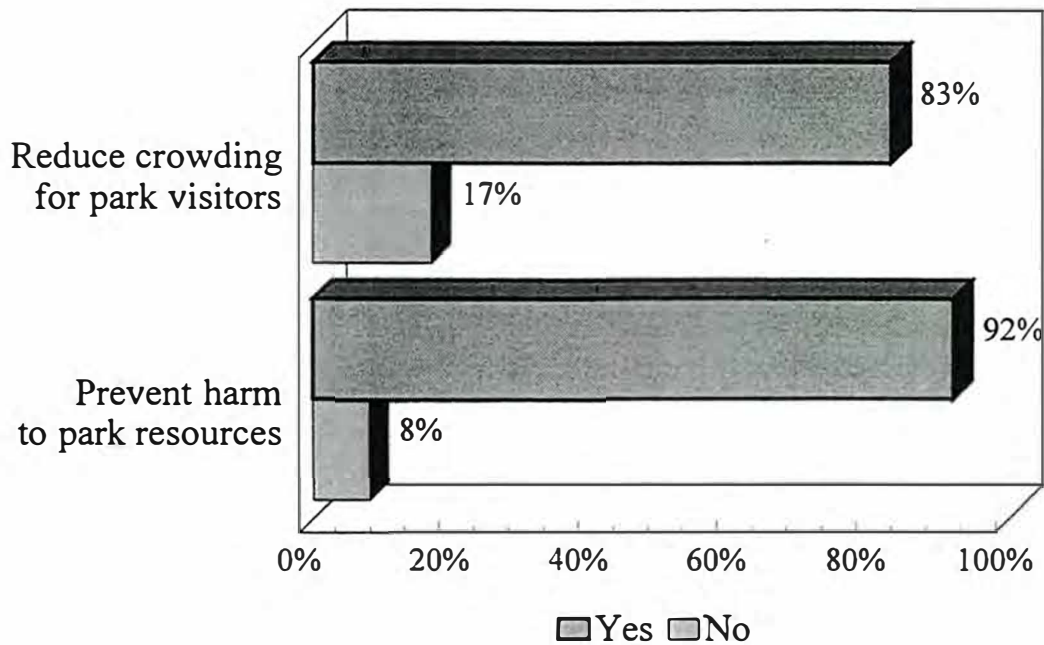


Figure 18. Percent reporting that the Park Service should limit use to reduce crowding or to prevent harm to park resources. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

Do you think the National Park Service should take steps to ensure crowding does not detract from park visits?

Do you think the National Park Service should limit visitors if the number of visitors is harming park resources?

- Most Americans support use limitations in national parks to protect the quality of experiences or to prevent harm to park resources. There is somewhat greater support for limitations when park resources are at risk than for maintaining the quality of park visits.
- There were virtually no differences between Republicans, Democrats and independents on this issue.

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Would you be willing to make a reservation or use shuttle buses to enter popular parks during the peak season?

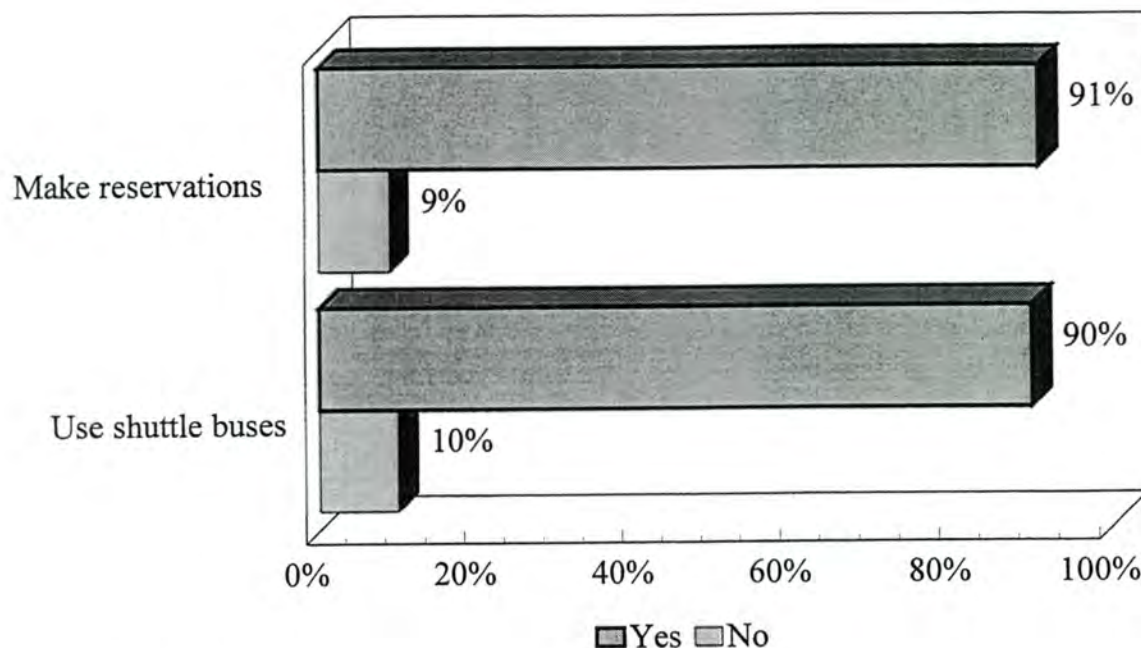


Figure 19. Percent willing to make reservations to enter, or use shuttle buses, in popular national parks in peak season. Margin of error: ± 2 percent.

Would you be willing to make a reservation to enter popular parks during the peak season if reservations would reduce crowding and help protect park resources?

Would you be willing to use shuttle buses in popular parks during peak season to reduce traffic congestion and help protect park resources?

- People are willing to make sacrifices of personal convenience in order to protect parks. Almost all respondents said they would be willing to make reservations or use shuttle buses to reduce crowding or protect resources.
- There were few differences between Republicans, Democrats, and independents for these questions. All groups show a willingness to use reservation or shuttle bus systems.

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Do you support increases in park entrance fees?

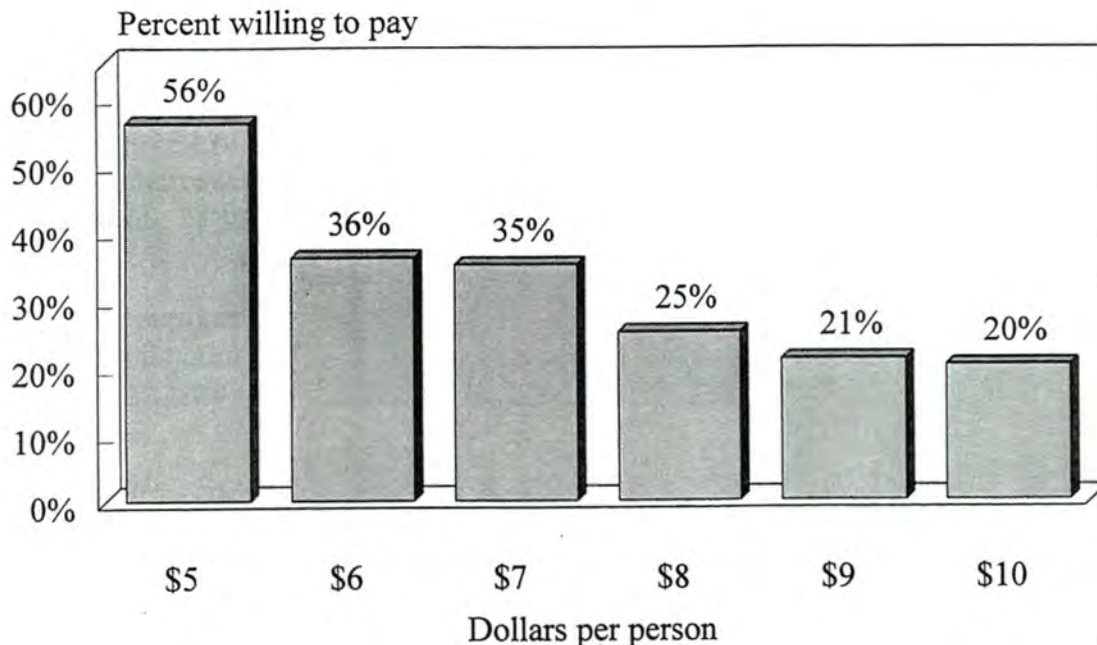


Figure 20. Percent willing to pay various increases in entrance fees (from \$5 per carload). Margins of error: ± 3 percent for \$5; ± 7 percent for other amounts.

Entrance fees for most large national parks are \$5 PER CARLOAD for a visit of up to seven days. Would you support an increase to \$5 PER PERSON to help operate and maintain parks?

People who said yes to the \$5 dollar increase were also asked if they would support an increase to either \$6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 PER PERSON to help operate and maintain parks. The amount they were asked was randomly assigned.

- A slim majority of Americans appear willing to pay an increase from \$5 dollars per carload to \$5 per person, but about a third or less would be willing to pay higher fees (\$6 through \$10). Each successive amount shows a drop in willingness to pay.
- Increases in fees to \$5 per person equals a 300 percent increase for a family of four, so these results are not surprising. While a majority appear to support some increases in fees, \$5 per person appears to be the upper limit at this time.

Why respondents said “no” to higher entrance fees

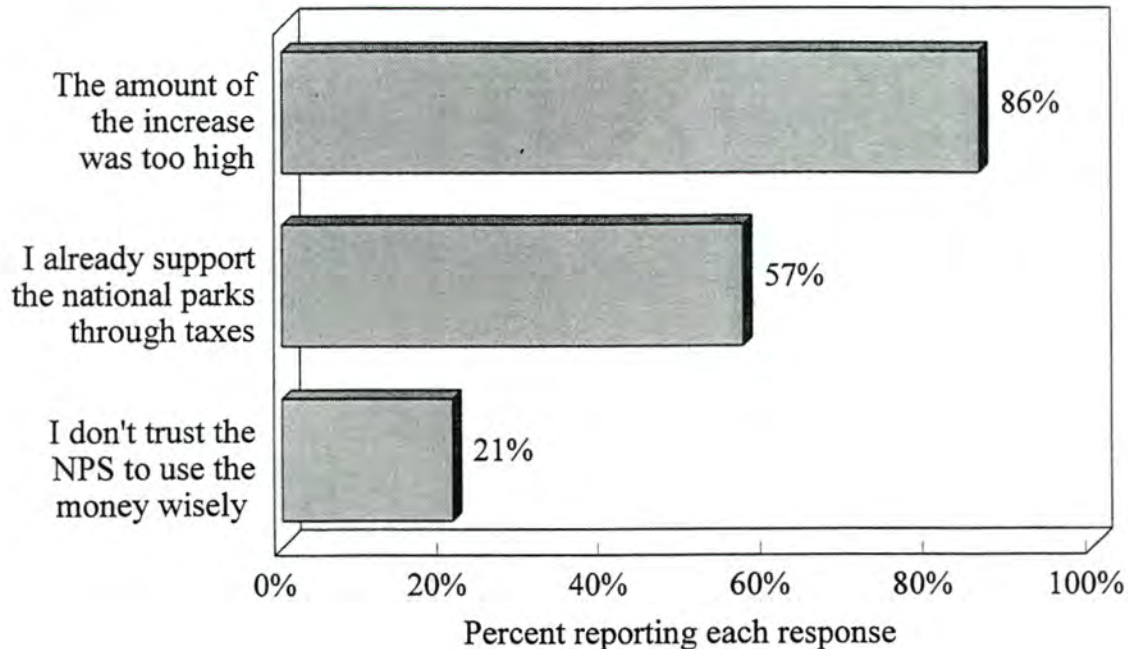


Figure 21. Percent reporting various reasons for not accepting higher entrance fees. Respondents could choose any or all of the reasons. Margin of error: ± 5 percent.

The amount of the increase was just too high.

I already support the national parks through taxes.

I don't trust the Park Service to use the money wisely or efficiently.

- The size of the fee increases was the most important reason why people were unwilling to pay. A majority also oppose fee increases because they already pay for national parks through taxes.
- Relatively few people (21 percent) felt that the National Park Service would use the fee money unwisely, suggesting widespread confidence in Park Service management.
- There were few differences among people of different party affiliations on these issues, although independents were slightly less likely to trust the Park Service to use fee revenues wisely or efficiently.

Should the Golden Age Passport program be continued?

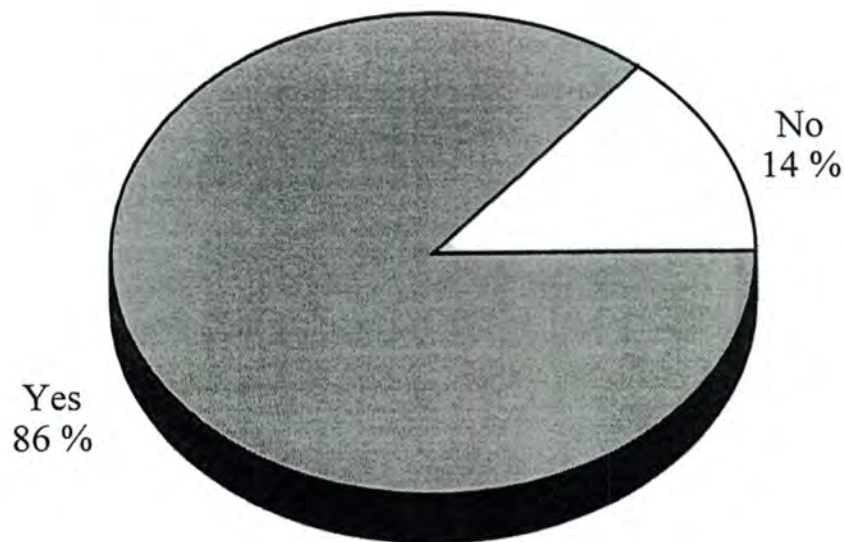


Figure 22. Percent reporting that the Golden Age Passport program should be continued. Margin of error: ± 3 percent.

People over 62 can buy a Golden Age Passport that allows them free entrance into National Parks for the rest of their life. The Passport has a one-time cost of \$10. Do you think this program should be continued?

- A large majority of Americans of all ages support the Golden Age Passport program, with 86 percent reporting that it should be continued.
- Interviewers, however, noted that many respondents seemed interested in supporting the program but perhaps raising the amount of the one-time fee. These types of responses were not quantified, so it is impossible to estimate the percent of the sample who felt this way, but interviewers found this response noteworthy.
- Differences among people of different party affiliations were small.

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Profile of Survey Respondents

This final section of the report provides a profile of the survey sample. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their background and their visitation patterns to National Parks. Brief results are given below.

Visitation to National Parks

- More than 79 percent of the sample had visited National Park System units.
- Of that number, more than 80 percent had visited a National Park System unit in the past three years, and 45 percent had visited three or more park units in the past three years.

Age and Gender

- Median age: 42.
- 31 percent of the sample were less than 35 years old.
- 53 percent were between the ages of 35 and 65.
- 16 percent were over 65 years old.
- 41 percent of the sample were males; 59 percent were females.

Education

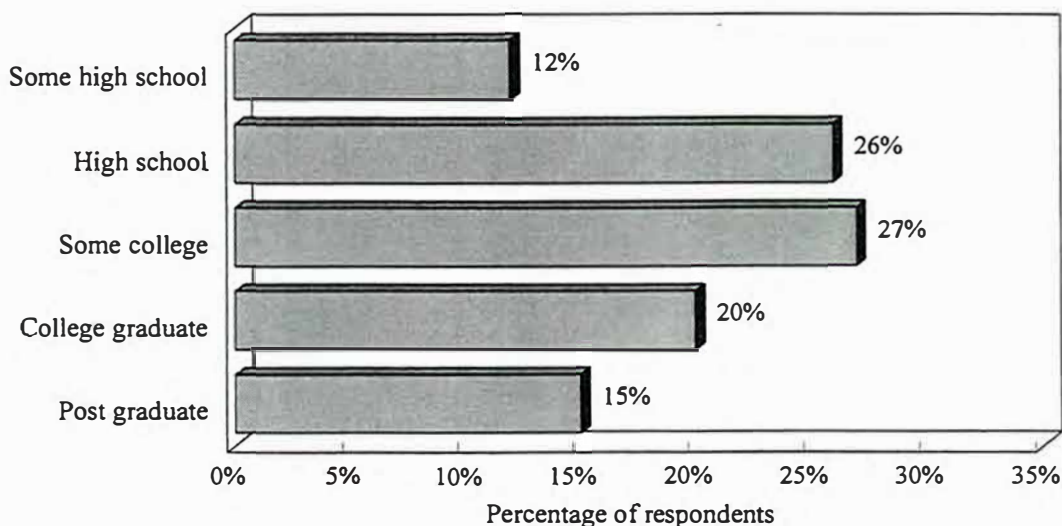


Figure 23. Percent of sample completing each level of education.

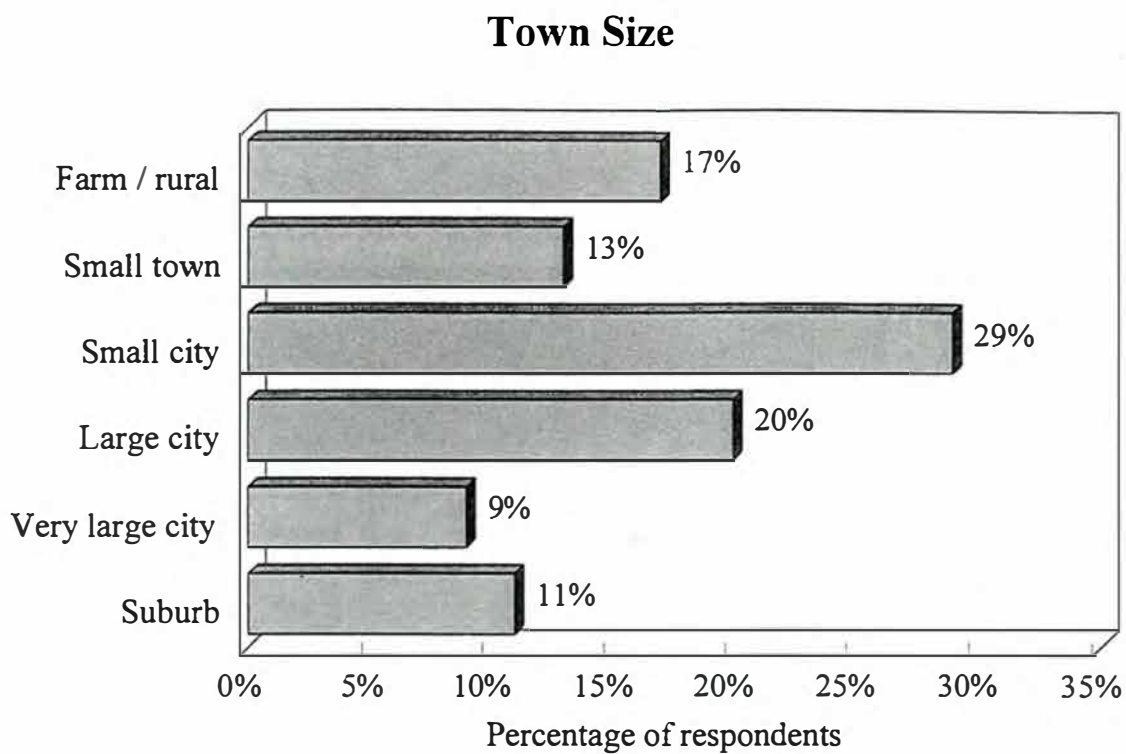


Figure 24. Percent reporting the size of town in which they live.

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Party Affiliation and Political Identification

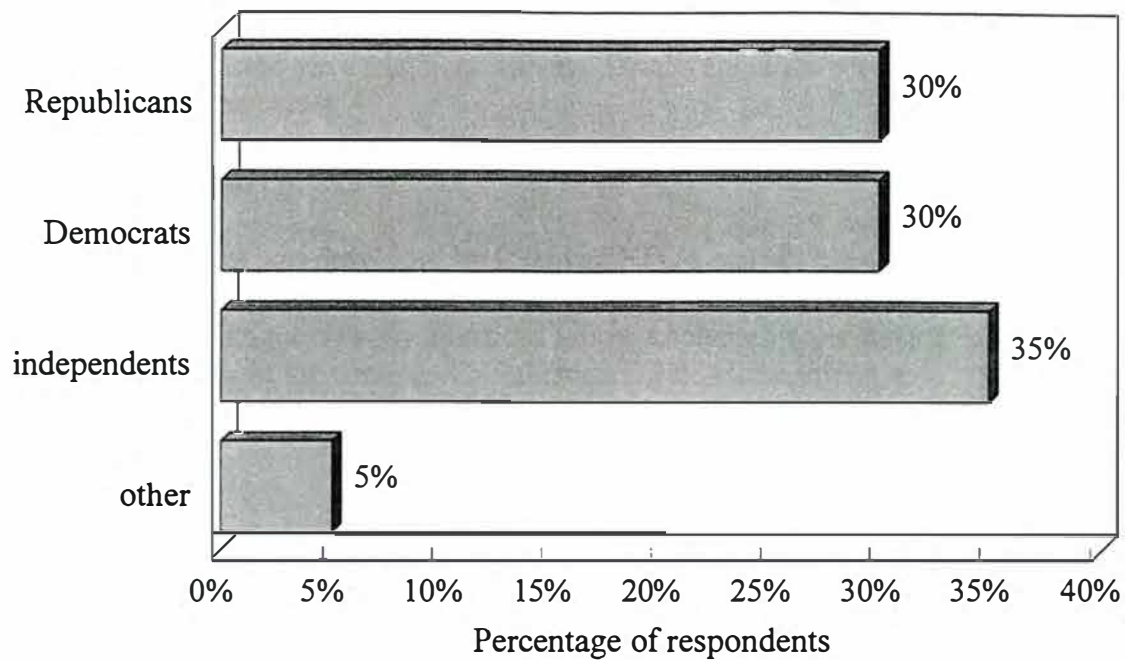


Figure 25. Percent of sample reporting different political affiliations.

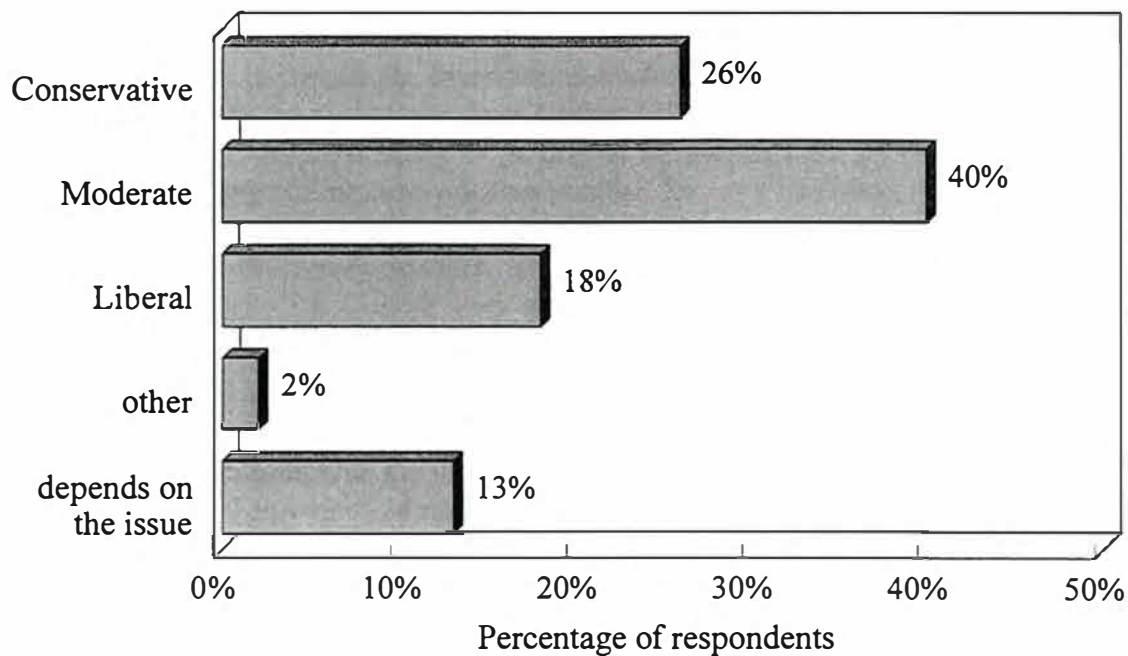


Figure 26. Percent of sample reporting different political ideologies.

Appendix A: Survey Methods

The study was conducted via a telephone survey. Details about the survey development, sample, and methods are given below.

Survey Development

The survey instrument was developed by CSU and NPCA staff in March and April of 1996. The survey format drew on previous efforts conducted by NPCA, with particular focus on current park issues. The willingness to pay questions follow a standard economics format suggested by John Loomis, a leader in the contingency valuation field. All questions were reviewed for face validity and bias.

Sample

A sample of random digit numbers was purchased from Survey Sampling, Inc. of Fairfield, Connecticut. The sample was purged of business numbers, disconnected numbers, facsimile numbers etc. to the extent possible, and included both listed and unlisted household numbers from all United States. The sample was designed to be proportional to the population in each state, and thus representative of the population of the United States in age, income, ethnicity, and state population. The sample included approximately 4,400 numbers.

Phone Interview Methods

Trained interviewers from Colorado State University conducted the phone survey. From the 4,400 initial numbers in the sample, interviewers made over 10,000 dialings in their attempts to reach people (interviewers made up to three "callbacks" to numbers that were busy or had answering machines). Approximately 47 percent of the numbers did not result in contact (busy, no answer, answering machine, non-working number, fax, or a business). Contact was made with 53 percent or 2,310 households, of which 809 or 35 percent agreed to complete the survey. Final sample size for the survey was 809. This response rate is typical for national general population surveys.

Analysis Methods

Data was coded concurrent with the interview using QPL software. Analysis was conducted using SPSS statistical software. Most statistics are simple frequencies or percentages of responses. Chi square tests of association were used to determine if differences between people of different party affiliations were significant. Due to the intended audience of the report, these chi square statistics are not reported; significant differences are discussed only when the chi square is significant at the 0.05 level.

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Margins of error are reported with many results. They were calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Margin of error} = 1.96 \sqrt{pq / n - 1}$$

with n = sample size answering the question
 p = proportion "yes"
 q = proportion "no"

Questions with 90-10 splits thus have smaller margins of error compared to questions where the sample was split at 50-50.

Demographic Reliability

Confidential demographic data were collected from all respondents. Answers to these survey items were consistent with general characteristics of the United States population, and provided a basis for generalizing from the sample to the population. Comparisons of the survey sample with the 1990 census data suggests our sample was slightly more educated, slightly older, and more likely to be female. These are common findings among telephone surveys.

An attempt was made to get non-respondents (people we contacted but who refused to complete the survey) to answer one question and compare it with people who did complete the survey. The question was about whether they had ever visited a National Park. Only 53 percent of the non-respondents answered this question; among those, 52 percent said they had visited a National Park. About 78 percent among the sample said the same. The sample thus includes a higher proportion of people who have visited National Parks.

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Appendix B: Survey Instrument and Results

The actual survey instrument is given below, along with results. Results are given in percentages unless otherwise noted. Percentages for each question may not sum exactly to 100 because of rounding.

1. Hello, I'm calling from Colorado State University and my name is _____. We are conducting a survey about the National Parks. This is not a fund raising call. The questions take less than ten minutes to answer. Would you be willing to participate?

If asked, interviewers were instructed to provide the following information:

We chose random phone numbers nationwide.

We are interested in your opinions even if you never visit parks.

Results will help guide National Parks into the next century.

Survey is being conducted for National Parks and Conservation Association.

Yes

No

2. Just for the record, I need to confirm that you are 18 or older.

Yes....Go to Question 3

No....Is there someone 18 or older who might be at home?

3. For your information, any time I refer to National Parks during this survey, I mean all 369 areas the National Park Service manages, including National Parks and Monuments, National Recreation Areas, National Historic Sites, and so on.

First of all, have you ever visited these National Park areas?

Yes 79 %

No....Skip to question 5 18

Not sure....Skip to question 5 3

4. About how many different National Parks have you been to in the past three years?
(Type a number or 999 for "I don't know")

_____ parks Median: 2.0
None: 20 %

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5. In general, how well do you think natural resources in the National Parks are being protected? By natural resources, we mean all the plants, animals, air, water and natural features in the parks.

Excellent	17
Good	55
Fair	23
Poor	5

6. In general, how well do you think cultural resources in the National Parks -- such as historic buildings, Indian ruins, and battlefields -- are being protected?

Excellent	19
Good	55
Fair	22
Poor	4

7. Do you think Congress should establish new National Parks to protect additional natural and cultural resources?

No	21
Yes low priority	6
Yes, medium	38
Yes, high	26
Don't know	9

8. There is a government fund set aside to buy land for conservation and recreation. Congress, however, uses less than five percent of this money each year. Should Congress spend more of this money to buy private land inside National Park boundaries from willing sellers?

No	16
Yes low priority	7
Yes, medium	42
Yes, high	27
Don't know	8

9. These next questions focus on ways to pay for National Park programs. Right now, entrance fees for most large National Parks are \$5 PER CARLOAD for a visit of up to seven days. Would you support an increase to \$5 PER PERSON to help operate and maintain parks?

Yes	56
No	44

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10. People who said yes to the \$5 dollar increase were also asked if they would support an increase to either \$6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 PER PERSON to help operate and maintain parks. The amount they were asked was randomly assigned.

Assuming that no to \$5 means no to any higher amount, percentages among the entire sample saying yes to each higher amount were:

	\$6	\$7	\$8	\$9	\$10
Yes	36	35	25	21	20
No	64	65	75	79	80

11. Respondents who said they were unwilling to pay higher entrance fees were also asked.... We'd like to know why you answered no. I'll list three reasons why you might not have been willing to support higher entrance fees. For each, tell me if the statement played a part in your "no" answer.

The amount of the increase was just too high.

Yes	86
No	14

I already support the National Parks through taxes.

Yes	58
No	42

I don't trust the Park Service to use the money wisely or efficiently.

Yes	21
No	79

12. People over 62 can buy a Golden Age Passport that allows them free entrance into National Parks for the rest of their life. The Passport has a one-time cost of \$10. Do you think this program should be continued?

Yes	86
No	14

13. The next five questions ask about limiting visitation to the National Parks. Do you think the National Park Service should take steps to ensure crowding does not detract from park visits?

Yes	78
No	16
Don't know	6

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14. Do you think the National Park Service should limit visitors if the number of visitors is harming park resources?

Yes	90
No	7
Don't know	2

15. Would you be willing to make a reservation to enter popular parks during the peak season if reservations would reduce crowding and help protect park resources?

Yes	88
No	9
Don't know	3

16. Would you be willing to use shuttle buses in popular parks during peak season to reduce traffic congestion and help protect park resources?

Yes	88
No	9
Don't know	3

17. Were you aware of recent park closures caused by the federal government shutdowns?

Yes	68
No....skip to question 20	32

18. Were you personally affected or inconvenienced by the recent park closures?

Yes	8 % of entire sample
No... skip to question 20	92

19. How were you affected? I'll read a statement and you tell me yes or no.

I had to change my travel plans.

Yes	4 % of entire sample
No	96

I was turned away from a Park when I arrived.

Yes	4 % of entire sample
No	96

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20. The next seven questions ask about more specific issues and parks. These are yes/no questions, but if you don't know about the park or the issue, feel free to answer "I don't know" instead.

The National Park Service opposes a second road into the middle of Alaska's Denali National Park because it wants to protect the park's wilderness character. A few members of Congress, however, want this road constructed. Do you think Congress should override the National Park Service on these kinds of construction projects?

Yes, congress should make these kinds of decisions	7
No, the park service should make these kinds of decisions	70
I don't know	22

21. The National Park Service says pollution from power plants and industry significantly worsens visibility at Grand Canyon, Great Smoky Mountains and other National Parks. Should companies be required to clean up their pollution, even if it meant you might pay more for utilities and consumer products?

Yes	88
No	7
Don't know	6

22. A private company plans to build a large gold mine less than three miles from Yellowstone National Park. There are concerns that the mine could pose risks to the park's land, water, and wildlife. Should the federal government stop the mine in order to avoid these risks?

Yes	72
No	11
Don't know	16

23. For its size, Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park has more land open for snowmobile use than any other park. Congress is considering opening the remainder of the park's wilderness areas to snowmobiles. Should these wilderness areas be opened to snowmobiles?

Yes	21
No	58
Don't know	22

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24. At National Parks like Grand Canyon and Great Smoky Mountains, companies offer low flying airplane or helicopter sightseeing trips. Some people think these flights should be limited or banned because the sight and sound of them detracts from other people's enjoyment. Do you think these flights should be limited or banned?

Yes, there should be limits on flights	53
Yes, there should be a ban on flights	16
No	24
Don't know	7

25. There is widespread agreement that restoring natural conditions in Florida's Everglades National Park is a priority, but finding the money to pay for it has been difficult. One option is a tax on Florida's sugar cane industry, which is a major source of pollution in the park. Would you be willing to pay 5 cents more for a bag of sugar if you knew the money would help restore the Everglades' natural environment?

Yes	89
No	8
Don't know	4

26. Wolves were returned to Yellowstone National Park after being gone for almost 50 years. Many people think the wolves are an important part of the park's ecosystem and add to its wilderness values. Other people who live near the park, however, think the wolves will kill livestock or endanger people and should not have been returned. Do you think wolves should have been returned to Yellowstone?

Yes	61
No	17
Don't know	22

27. The next question got asked in three different ways (respondents were randomly assigned only one of the versions).

Some people think [Mount Rushmore; Grand Canyon; Mount Rushmore and Grand Canyon] or other National Parks should be turned over to state governments to run. Other people oppose this, saying some states will not manage these parks to a national standard or to benefit the nation at large. In general, do you think parks should be turned over to states?

	Mount Rushmore	Grand Canyon	Both
Yes	15	18	21
No	73	68	66
Don't know	12	14	13

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28. We're almost done. For these next seven questions, I'll read you a position that a Congressional representative or senator might have, and you say whether it would make you more likely to vote for them. If you don't care about the issue, you can say "it does not matter."

Would you be more likely to vote for your representative if he or she wanted to increase the National Park Service budget?

Yes	58
No	17
Does not matter	25

29. Would you be more likely to vote for your representative if he or she wanted to close some National Parks?

Yes	4
No	91
Does not matter	5

30. Would you be more likely to vote for your representative if he or she wanted to add some new areas to the National Park system?

Yes	70
No	12
Does not matter	17

31. Would you be more likely to vote for your representative if they wanted some National Parks to be turned over to states?

Yes	17
No	67
Does not matter	17

32. Would you be more likely to vote for your representative if he or she wanted some National Parks to be sold to private interests?

Yes	4
No	89
Does not matter	7

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33. Would you be more likely to vote for a presidential candidate who is committed to protecting the National Parks?

Yes	93
No	4
Does not matter	5

34. And finally: In general, is your representative's record on National Parks important to you when you vote?

Yes	75
No	25

35. How old are you?

Median:	42.0
Mean	45.0
Percent over 65:	14
Percent under 30:	22

36. What is the last grade of school you completed? Stop me when I get to it.

Some high school or less	12
High school or vocational tech graduate	25
Some college or two-year graduate	26
Four year college graduate	20
Post graduate work or degree	15
No answer	3

37. Do you consider yourself a republican, democrat, or independent?

Republican	28
Democrat	28
Independent	32
Other	4
No response	8

38. In general, do you consider yourself liberal, moderate, or conservative?

Liberal	17
Moderate	38
Conservative	25
Depends on the issue	14
No answer	6

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39. How would you describe where you live? Stop me when I get to it.

Farm or rural area	17
Small town (less than 5,000 people)	13
Small city (5,000 to 50,000 people)	28
Large city (50,000 to 500,000 people)	19
Very large city (over 500,000 people)	9
Suburb -- within 15 miles of a large or very large city	11
No answer	3

40. And finally, what is your zip code (used to code region of country)?

41. Interviewer noted gender

Male	41
Female	59

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Appendix C: **Survey Results by Party Affiliation**

QUESTIONS ON VOTING INTENTIONS

Voting intentions: Commitment to parks by presidential candidates:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	93%	98%	97%
No	7%	2%	3%

Voting intentions: the importance of a representative's national park record:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	64%	80%	80%
No	36%	20%	20%

Voting intentions: Closing some national parks:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	5%	3%	5%
No	95%	97%	95%

Voting intentions: Selling some parks to private interests:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	8%	3%	3%
No	92%	97%	97%

Voting intentions: Turning some parks over to state management:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	24%	15%	21%
No	76%	85%	79%

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Voting intentions: Adding new national parks:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	76%	87%	90%
No	24%	13%	10%

Voting intentions: Increasing the National Park Service Budget:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	73%	81%	81%
No	28%	19%	19%

QUESTIONS ON SPECIFIC NATIONAL PARK ISSUES

(figures are for those who had an opinion and/or provided an answer on these questions)

Who should decide construction projects like the Denali Road?

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Congress	11%	6%	10%
National Park Service	89%	94%	90%

Willingness to pay sugar tax to restore Everglades National Park:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	91%	93%	92%
No	9%	7%	8%

Stopping the proposed New World Mine near Yellowstone National Park:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	80%	91%	90%
No	20%	9%	10%

Wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone National Park:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	76%	75%	82%
No	24%	25%	18%

Opening wilderness to snowmobiles in Voyageurs National Park:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	26%	30%	24%
No	74%	70%	76%

QUESTIONS ON GENERAL NATIONAL PARK ISSUES

(figures are for those who had an opinion and/or provided an answer on these questions)

Should new national parks be created?

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes			
High Priority	19%	33%	32%
Medium Priority	36%	44%	41%
Low Priority	8%	8%	8%
No	37%	17%	19%

Should some parks be turned over to state management?

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	26%	16%	20%
No	74%	84%	80%

Should companies reduce pollution to protect park air quality?

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	88%	97%	94%
No	12%	3%	6%

Limits or a ban on aircraft sightseeing in parks:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes, limits	54%	59%	57%
Yes, a ban	13%	18%	20%
No	33%	23%	23%

Support for using more Land and Water Conservation Fund money to buy inholdings:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes			
High Priority	25%	31%	31%
Medium Priority	44%	45%	47%
Low Priority	9%	6%	6%
No	22%	18%	17%

Should visitation be limited (percent responding "yes")?

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
To reduce crowding for visitors	81%	83%	84%
To prevent harm to park resources	94%	91%	91%

Willingness to make reservations and use shuttle bus systems (percent responding "yes"):

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Make reservations to enter parks	93%	89%	94%
Use shuttle buses in popular parks	90%	92%	90%

Why respondents said "no" to higher entrance fees:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
The amount of the increase was too high	87%	86%	87%
Already support parks through taxes	59%	54%	61%
Don't trust the Park Service to use money wisely	20%	18%	26%

Support for Golden Age Passport program:

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
Yes	82%	89%	87%
No	18%	11%	13%

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[63] From: bkuehl@gyc.desktop.org (Brian Kuehl) at NP--INTERNET 5/24/96 4:30PM (1722 bytes: 28 ln)

To: Mike Finley at NP-YELL, wilson.wes@epamail.epa.gov at NP--INTERNET, kerry_moss@nps.gov at NP--INTERNET, srieff@ios.doi.gov at NP--INTERNET, bastian.robert@epamail.epa.gov at NP--INTERNET, clark_r@a1.eop.gov at NP--INTERNET, robert.s.nebel@mro01.usace.army.mil at NP--INTERNET, bleiwas@usgs.gov at NP--INTERNET, Edward_Kassman@nps.gov at NP--INTERNET
Subject: New World Update

----- Message Contents -----

Text item 1: Text Item

A nationwide poll conducted this week reveals overwhelming opposition to the proposed New World Mine that would be located next to Yellowstone National Park.

The poll, conducted by Colorado State University's Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit and the National Parks and Conservation Association found the following:

72% of people nationwide feel that "the federal government should stop the mine" because of concerns it "could pose risks to the park's land, water, and wildlife." 11% felt that the government should not stop the mine, and 16% had no opinion.

Of those who had an opinion about the mine, 80% of Republicans, 91% of Democrats, and 90% of independents want the government to stop the mine.

The survey polled 809 people over the age of 18, and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

Source: Bozeman Daily Chronicle, May 23, 1996.

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WestNet: Online Community for People with a Passion for this Place
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National Parks and Conservation Association
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1904

Telephone (202) 223-NPCA(6722) • Fax (202) 659-0650
NATPARKS@aol.com • <http://www.npca.org>

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