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**1988 SURVEY OF MINNESOTANS ON THEIR  
ATTITUDES, PERCEPTIONS AND USE**

**OF**

**MINNESOTA STATE PARKS**

and

**1987 SUMMER USE SURVEY**

**OF**

**MINNESOTA STATE PARK VISITORS**

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**PREPARED BY:**

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## INTRODUCTION

What kind of state parks do Minnesotans want? Are Minnesotans satisfied with the parks when they visit them? To answer these and similar questions, two surveys were conducted. One survey focused on park visitors, while the companion survey focused on the general Minnesota population. The intent of these efforts was to evaluate the parks and the services they offer by pointedly questioning those who use the parks and contribute financially to park development. The surveys represent substantial public input: over 4000 people, representing broad cross sections of park visitors and the Minnesota population, gave their opinions about the parks.

The 1987 Visitor Survey examined the needs, motivations and satisfaction of park users. Park staff handed surveys to visitors as they exited the parks. The period of survey distribution extended from late July to mid August, during weeks of high summer use. A total of 1500 surveys were distributed and 88 percent (or 1316 surveys) were returned. All of the parks participated in the survey. In addition to full park participation, detailed measures were taken to ensure that a representative sample of park visitors was obtained during the survey period.

The 1988 General Population Survey reached virtually all segments of Minnesota's adult population. From March to June, 5258 survey were mailed to households that were randomly selected within 13 multi-county regions of the state. Over 3100 surveys were returned for a response rate of 59 percent. Because the response rate was not higher (not higher than 70%), 500 nonrespondents were contacted by telephone and administered key parts of the survey. These results were used with the mail results to more accurately characterize the opinions of all Minnesota adults.

The purpose of the General Population Survey was to find out how the Minnesota adult population perceives state parks, how much they use the parks, and how their use of the parks is related to their perceptions, or image, of them. Efforts were made to ensure that the results of this survey could be compared with the results of the Visitor Survey. The discussion that follows combines the results of the two surveys when appropriate.

What follows is a nontechnical, summary description of the findings of the two surveys. For people who would like greater detail on survey findings, tabulation documents with breakdowns are available from the Division of Parks and Recreation in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Each tabulation document contains the questionnaire and is 50-70 pages in length.

## SUPER SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

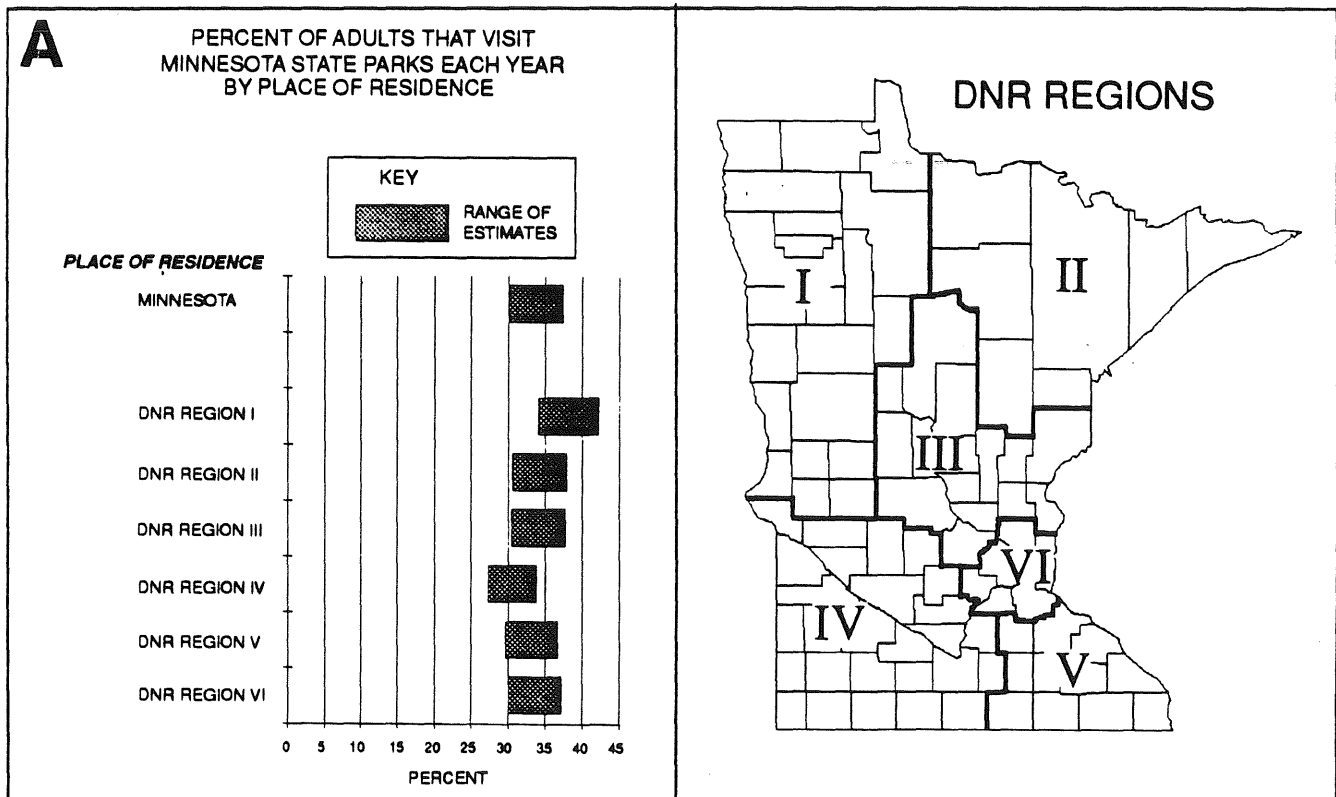
A majority of Minnesotans — including those who rarely if ever visit a state park — believe that state parks offer most of what they are looking for in an outdoor recreation area. When Minnesotans visit state parks, nearly all are satisfied with what they find.

### GENERAL POPULATION SURVEY

#### MINNESOTANS WHO VISIT PARKS

Most adult Minnesotans (86%) have visited a state park some time in their lives, and 30-37 percent visit on an annual basis. The size of the 30-plus percent who visit annually can be put into perspective by comparing it with the 45 percent of adult Minnesotans who fish annually and the 17 percent who hunt annually.

State parks attract visitors about equally from all regions of Minnesota. There is little difference from region to region in either the percent that have visited a park some time in their lives or the percent that visit each year (Chart A). Furthermore, the Visitor Survey showed that park visitation during the survey period came from all regions of the state in numbers largely representative of population numbers (see Visitor Survey section on Origin and Travel Distance of Visitors).



One reason why state parks attract visitors from throughout Minnesota is the wide distribution of parks in the state (see park map at beginning of document). Every Minnesotan is within an hour's drive of a state park. Another reason is that people visit state parks in order to recreate outdoors, and the amount of outdoor recreation people participate in is largely the same from region to region (Reference 1).

The largest group of Minnesota adults (43%) is that which goes to state parks occasionally, visiting every few years (see table below). About one-fourth of adults have not been to a state park in five years. A small proportion of the population accounts for a major share of park use. The five percent of adults who visit parks 6 or more times a year, contribute nearly half of annual park visitation from Minnesotans.

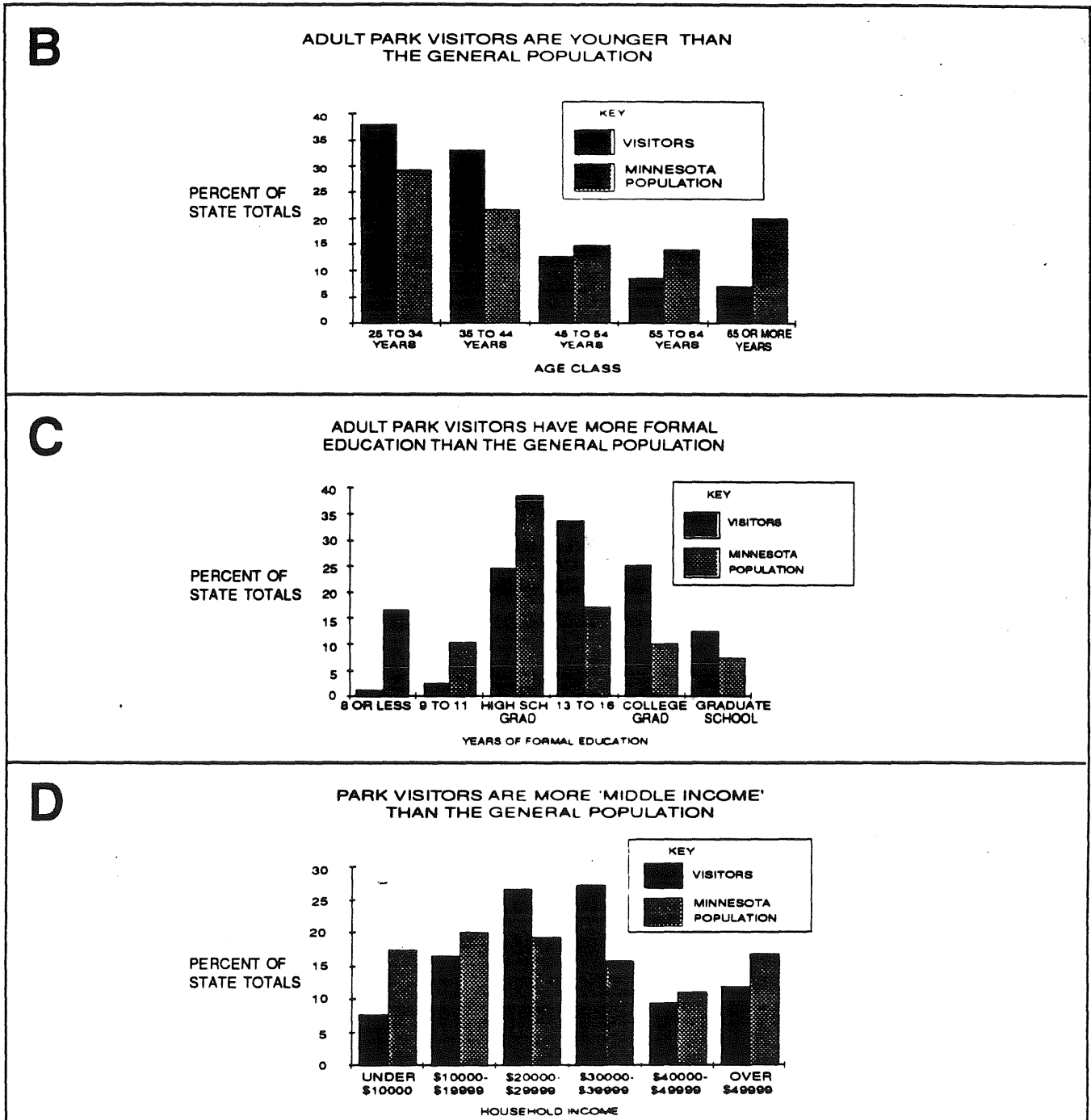
#### MINNESOTA STATE PARK USE GROUPS

STATE PARK USE GROUP	PERCENT OF ADULT MINNESOTANS <sup>a</sup>	PERCENT OF ANNUAL STATE PARK VISITATION <sup>b</sup>
Visited 6 or more times in last year	5.2	46.2
Visited 3-5 times in last year	9.6	32.5
Visited 1-2 times in last year	15.2	21.3
Haven't visited in 1-4 years	43.4	0
Haven't visited in 5 years	26.6	0
Total Percent	100	100

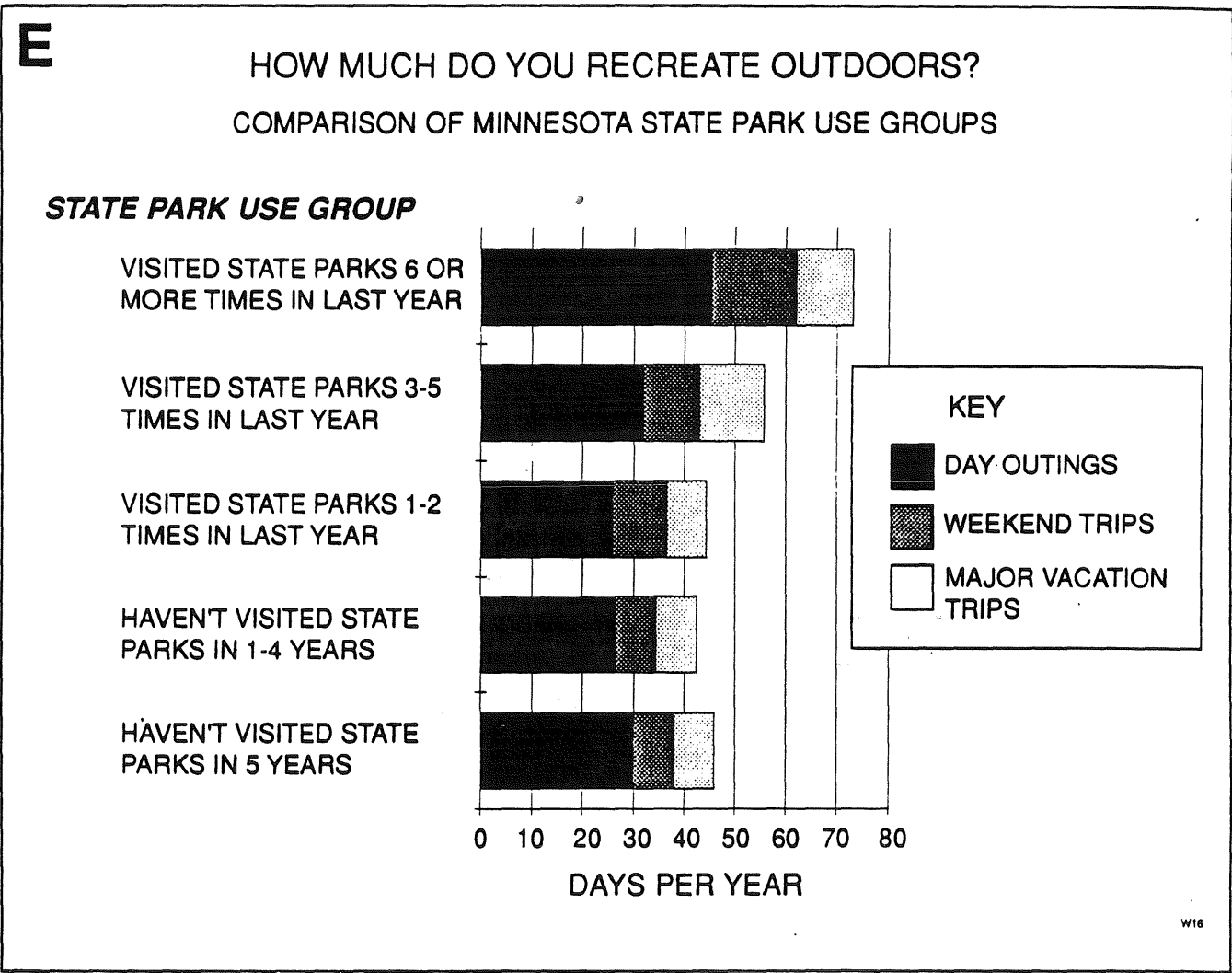
<sup>a</sup> Based on selecting 30% from the 30%-37% range for percent of adults estimated to visit state parks each year.

<sup>b</sup> This is the percent of park use due to Minnesotans (about 85% of total use), and it includes the teens and children that accompany adults on park visits.

From a demographic perspective, park visitors look like the typical outdoor recreator. Park visitors from Minnesota are younger, have more formal education and are more 'middle income' than the general Minnesota population (Chart B, C and D). Similarly, the outdoor recreation involvement of Minnesotans (and Americans as a whole) decreases with age, and increases with both formal education and income (References 1 and 2).



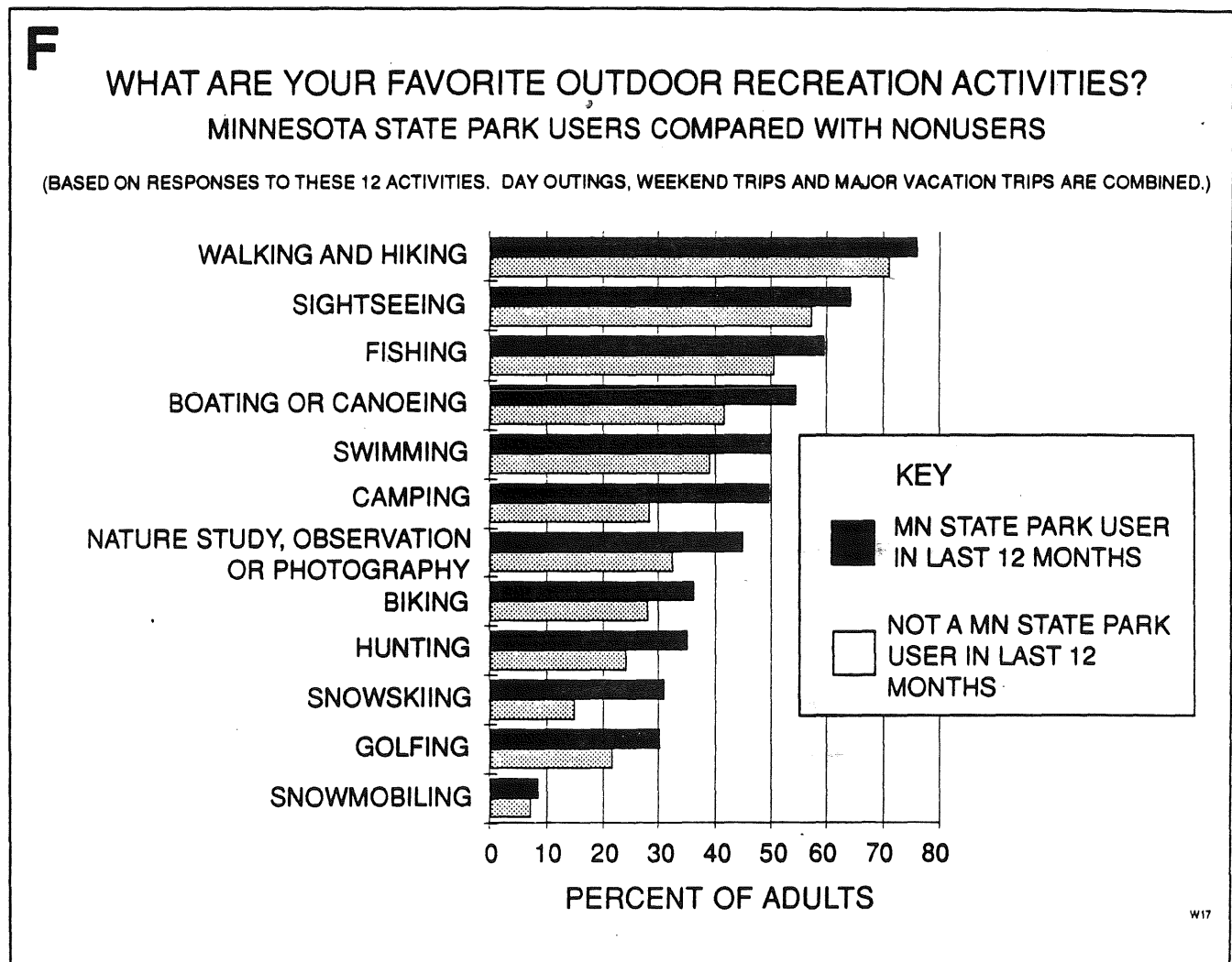
Park visitors also look like the typical outdoor recreator from the perspective of their general outdoor recreation involvement and interests. The more heavily involved an individual is in general outdoor recreation, the more likely s/he is to be a heavy user of the park system (Chart E). Moderate and heavy park users, in particular, spend more time each year on day outings, weekend trips and major vacation trips than do other segments of the population.





The outdoor interests of park users are not much different than nonusers. Although users have more favorite activities than nonusers, which is probably due to their greater involvement in outdoor recreation, there is basic agreement on what is a popular activity and what is a less popular activity (Chart F). There are two notable exceptions, however. Park users are much more likely than nonusers to have camping and snowskiing as favorite activities.

In summary, there is little in terms of geography, demography, and outdoor recreation involvement and interests that sets the typical park user off from the typical outdoor recreator. The state park market has a great deal in common with the general outdoor recreation market.

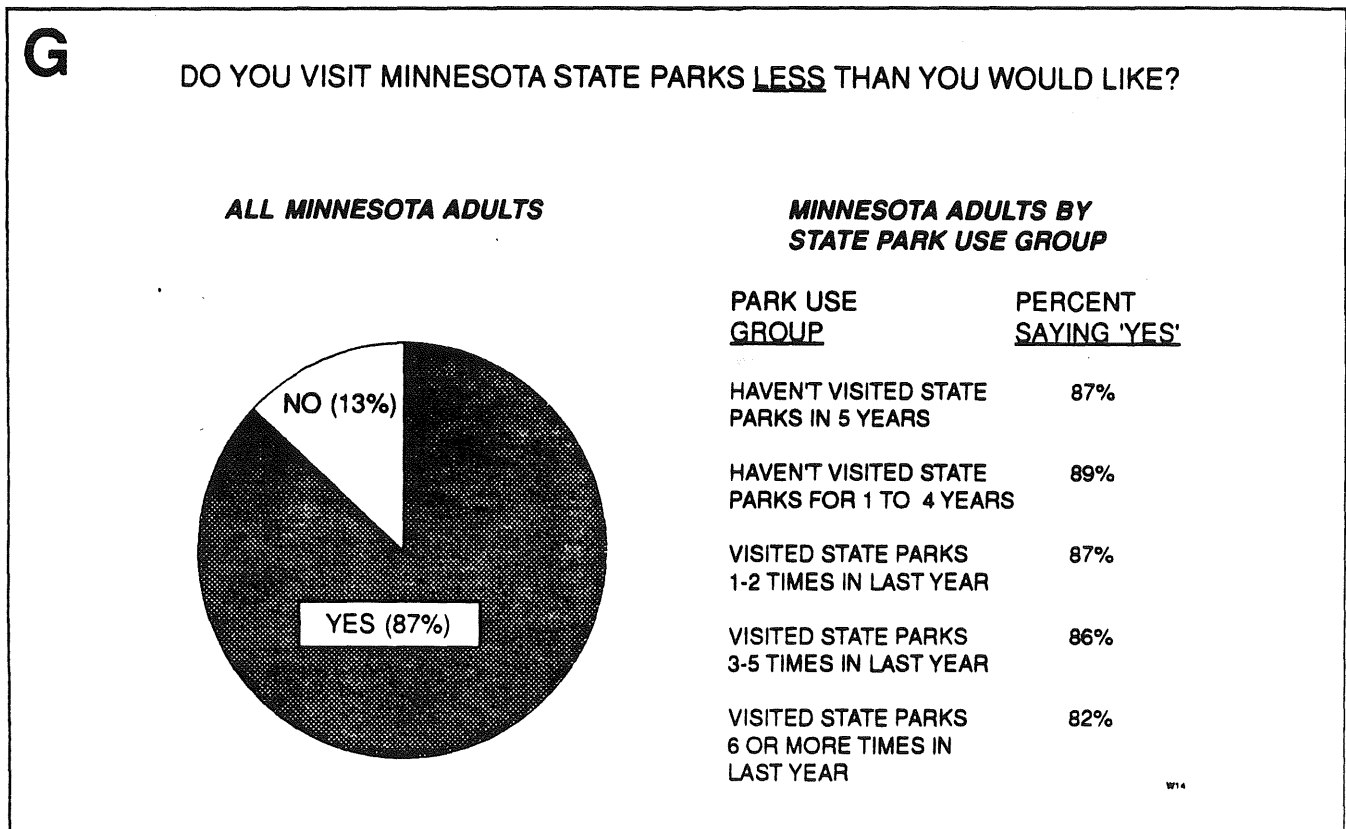


## BARRIERS TO PARK VISITATION

Most Minnesotans visit state parks less often than they would like. This is true regardless of how often they presently visit (Chart G). Visiting state parks, in other words, is seen as an enjoyable event.

When asked what would get them to visit parks more often, users and nonusers agree that more information on the parks was of prime importance (Chart H). (How people get information about parks is the next topic.) Users and nonusers also agree that the effort required to travel to the parks is a major barrier. Travel effort can be seen in the set of responses 'if they were closer', 'if they required less travel time', 'if they were less expensive' (distance traveled is directly related to cost of travel), and 'if they required less trip preparation time' (longer trips take more preparation). Part of this travel-effort barrier is probably an information problem, since state parks are widely distributed throughout the state. Part is probably a true travel-effort barrier, because outdoor recreation is predominantly a near-home activity. Nearly three-fourths of the outdoor recreation time of Minnesota adults takes place within a half hour drive of home (Reference 1).

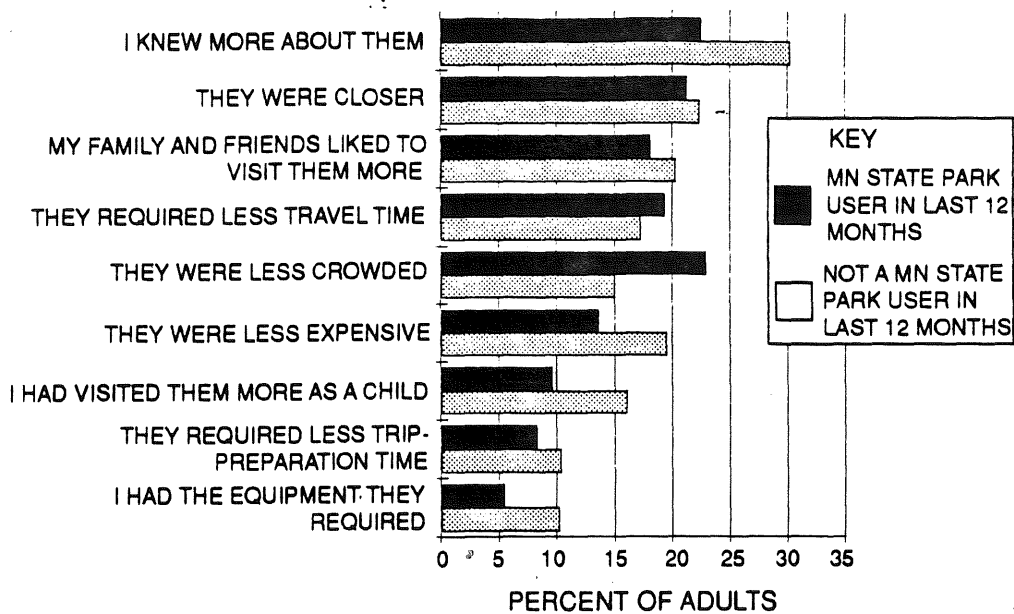
Of particular importance as a visitation barrier to users of the parks is the perceived crowding in the parks. This is actually the top-ranked barrier for users. Heavier park users are more likely than lighter users to identify this as a barrier.



# H

## I WOULD VISIT MINNESOTA STATE PARKS MORE OFTEN IF . . .

(ANSWERS GIVEN BY OVER 10% OF PARK USERS OR NONUSERS)



Other important barriers are the interest of family and friends in visiting state parks, history of visitation, and having the appropriate equipment. The latter two are more important for nonusers than users.

Visitation barriers vary from one group of Minnesotans to another. The differences between park users and nonusers are described above. Other notable differences depend on age and income.

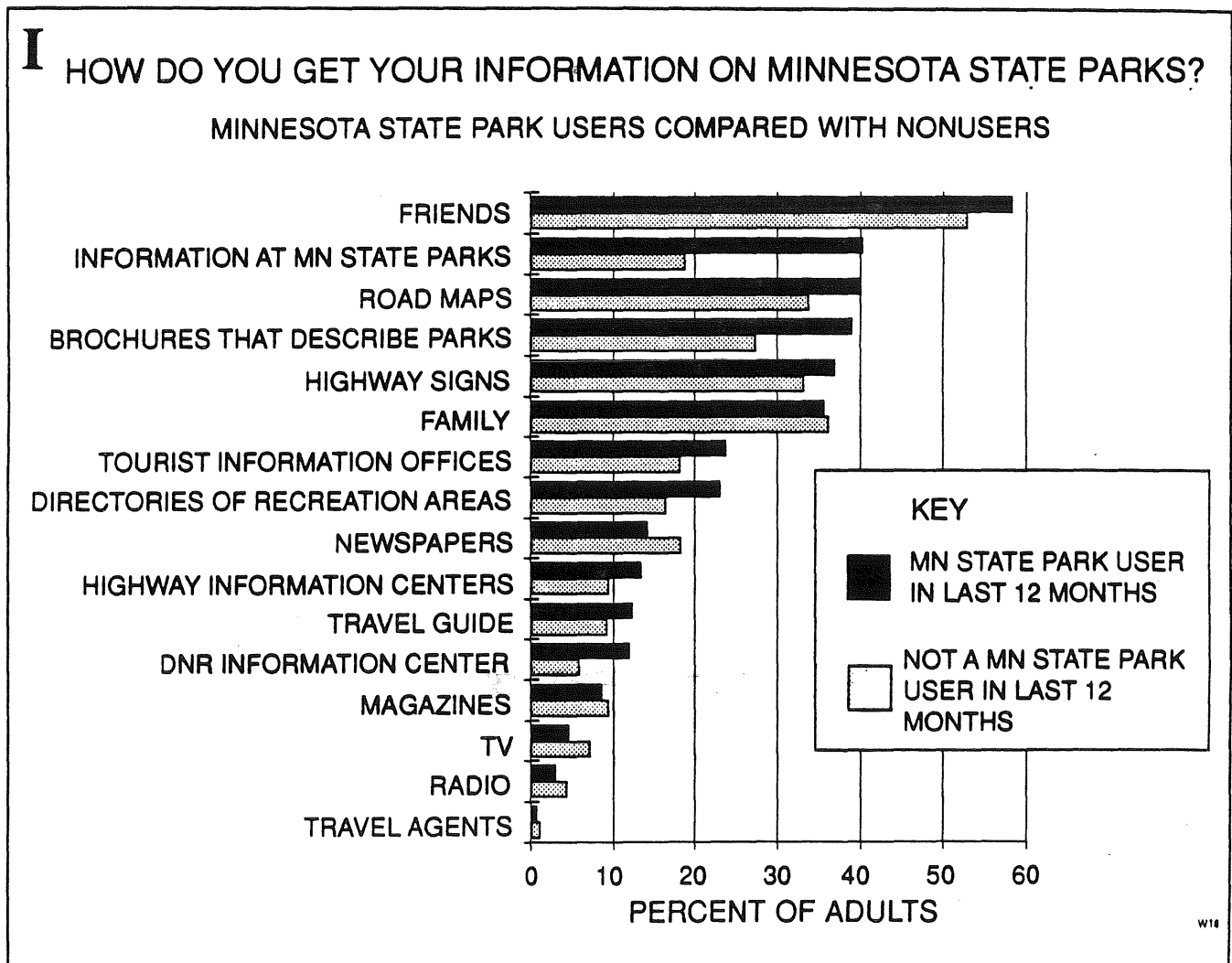
Minnesotans over 65 are much more likely than the remainder of the adult population to have barriers of 'if I had a way to get to the parks' and 'if the parks were less expensive'. These same two barriers are more likely for Minnesotans of lower income than those of higher incomes. The sharing of these two barriers among lower income and elderly people is due, to a large extent, to the predominance of the elderly in the lower income brackets. Lower income Minnesotans are also more likely to have 'if the parks were closer' as a visitation barrier.

It should be noted that the visitation barrier of 'I don't have enough time to visit parks more often' was not offered as an option on the survey, because lack of time is a universal reason for not doing more of something. Even though it was not offered as a survey option, many respondents took the time to write it in. Had it been offered as an option, there is little doubt it would be the top-ranked barrier.

## INFORMATION SOURCES ON PARKS

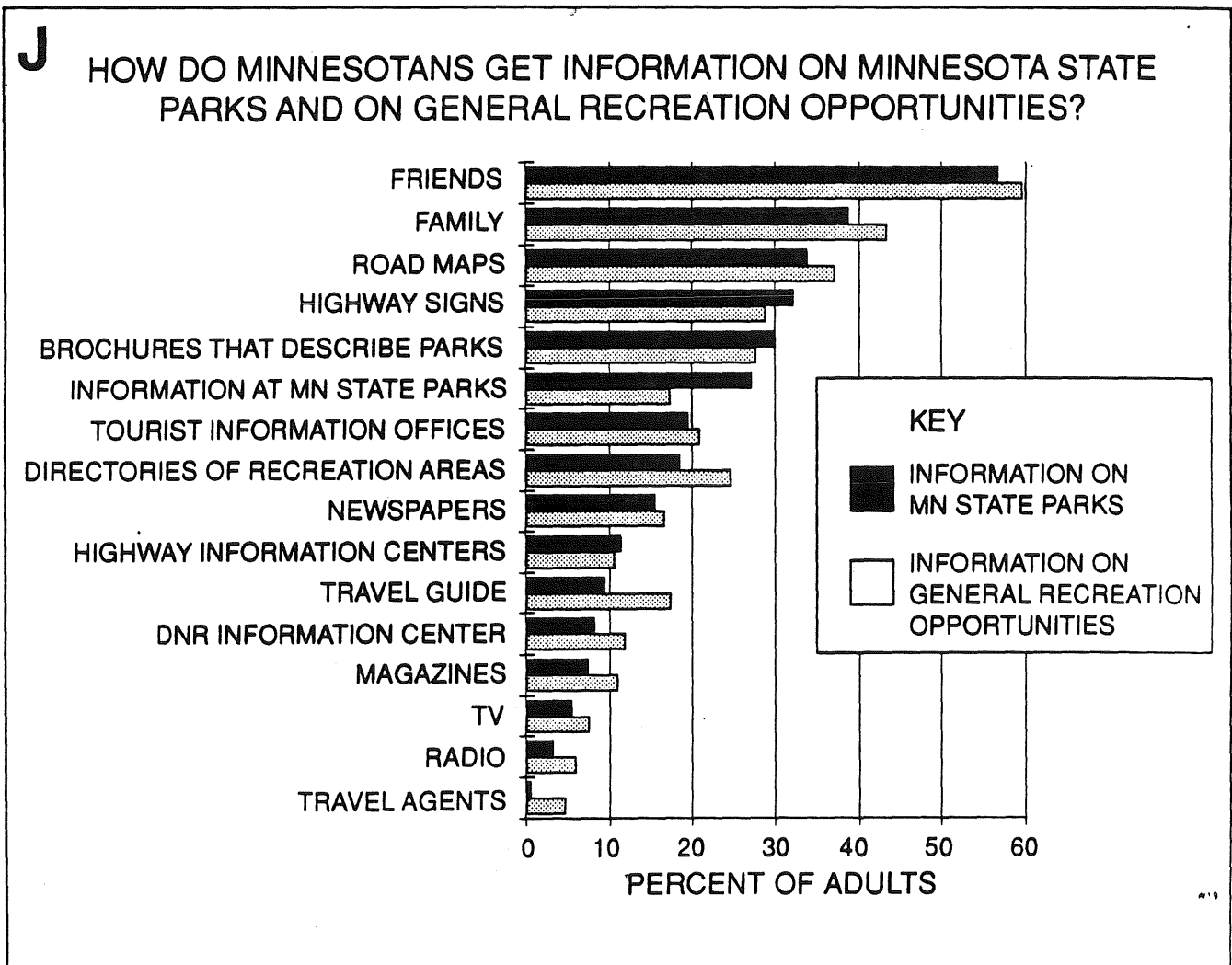
Word of mouth, especially coming from friends but also from family, is the primary information source on Minnesota state parks for park users as well as nonusers (Chart I). Travel aids, in the form of road maps and highway signs, are next in importance for both users and nonusers. Park users, not surprisingly, are more-likely than nonusers to get information at the parks themselves and in park brochures. For users, the parks themselves are second only to friends as a source of information.

Information offices and centers are of medium to low importance. Directories of recreation areas, newspapers and travel guides lie in the same medium to low range. The broadcast media (TV and radio) and travel agents are of lowest importance.



The preceding results for park users are nearly the same as those found in the Visitor Survey. The only major difference is that in the Visitor Survey, 'family' is a more important information source and the 'parks themselves' is less important. These two information sources basically switched their respective rankings from one survey to the other.

The way people get information on parks is largely the same as the way they get information on general outdoor recreation opportunities (Chart J). There are a few exceptions. As expected, state parks are a more important information source on state parks than on general outdoor recreation. In addition, the lower-ranking sources are relatively more important to general outdoor recreation than to the parks. This is mostly due to the importance of the lower-ranking sources for major vacations, which are longer than an extended weekend and include distant destinations, frequently out of state. Lower-ranking sources such as travel agents and TV, for example, are more important information sources for major vacations than they are for state park outings.



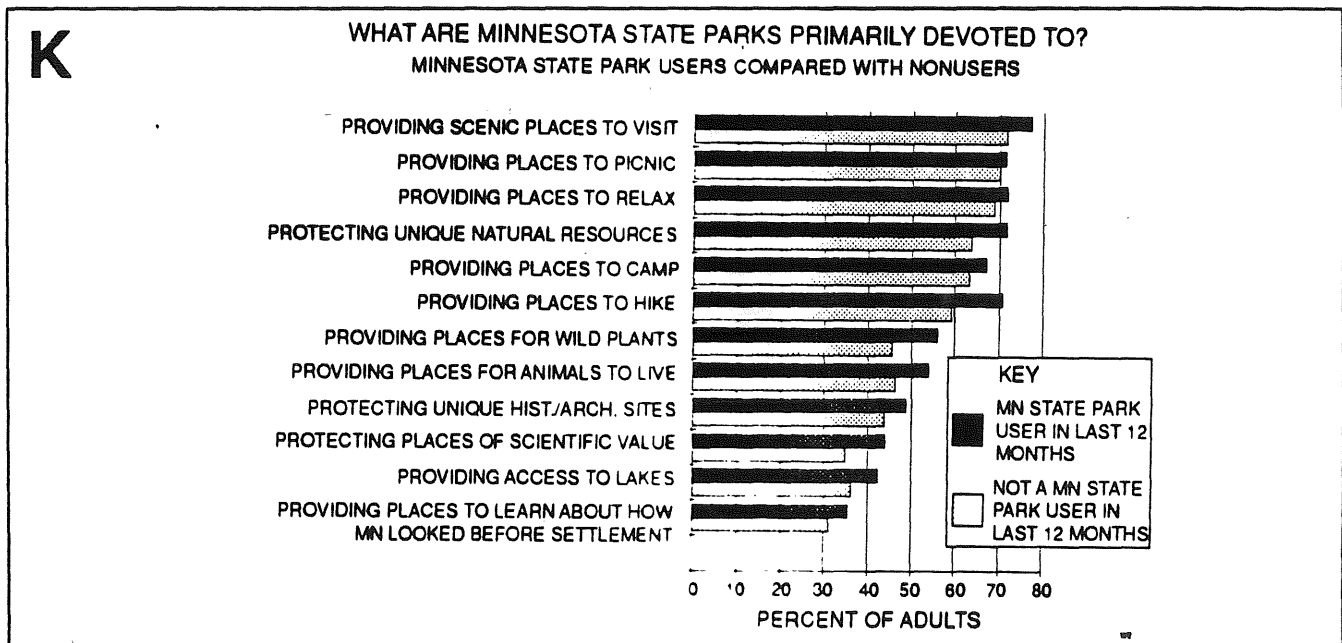
## PARK IMAGE

The collective perceptions people have of the parks represent their image of the parks. Park perceptions are examined in the first part of the discussion that follows. The perceptions of park users are compared with nonusers in order to determine the extent to which image contributes to park visitation.

The second part of the discussion answers the question, Is this package of perceptions, or image, of the parks positive or negative? There is a long and a short answer to this question. The long answer involves taking the image people have of the parks and comparing it with their favorite recreation area. The more someone's favorite area looks like their image of the parks, the more positive is their image of the parks. Likewise, the converse is true. The short answer involves a person's reluctance, or lack thereof, to recommend visiting a park to a friend. Personal recommendation forces someone to weigh the positive and negative aspects of park image and decide whether the balance leans to the positive or the negative.

### Reasons for Parks

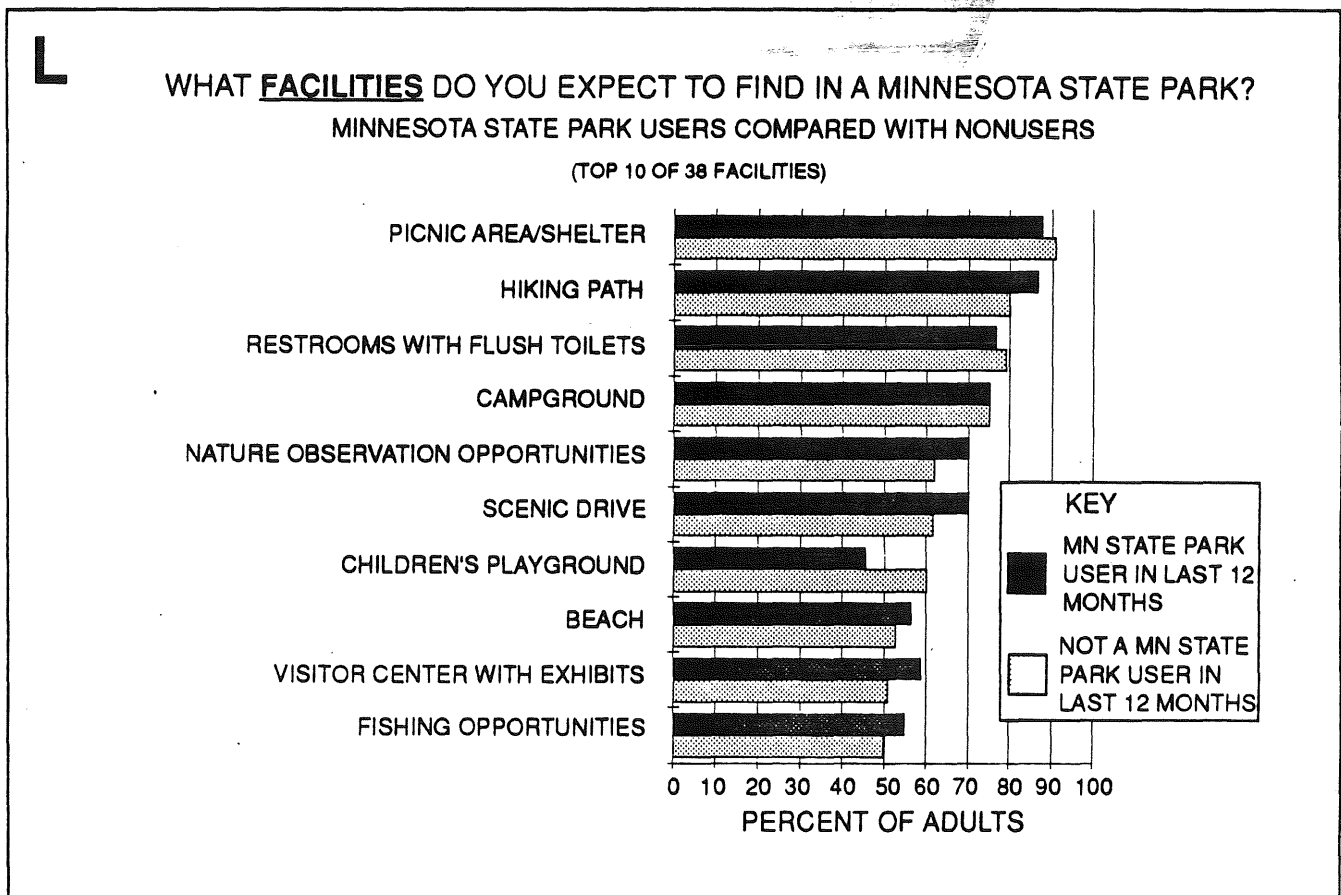
Certain reasons for the existence of state parks are more frequently perceived by Minnesotans than other reasons. Minnesota state parks are devoted to all of the purposes on Chart K. People, overall, understand the recreation reasons for the parks better than the natural resource, scientific and educational reasons. Park users are somewhat more aware than nonusers of each of the reasons, but the differences between users and nonusers are minor. Whether one visits parks, in other words, has little to do with one's awareness of the reasons parks exist.



## Facilities in Parks

Park users and nonusers do not differ much in the facilities they identify with state parks. Nor does this facility component of their image vary greatly when it is examined by age, income, formal education, gender, region of residence in Minnesota, household size, number of children in the household, and by length of residency in Minnesota. The same was found when the three remaining components of image— services, settings and recreation opportunities — were similarly examined. The reason for this common image of Minnesota state parks among all segments of the population is not known. Perhaps there exists a common perception of ‘natural parks’, or of something equally broad, that contains Minnesota state parks.

The facility that people most frequently expected in the parks is picnic area/shelter (Chart L). It is followed closely by hiking paths. Modern restrooms are regularly expected, as are campgrounds, facilities for observing and learning about nature, water recreation facilities, scenic drives and childrens’ playgrounds. All of these top facilities support the basic ways people enjoy, in some comfort, the out of doors in a natural setting. Facilities rarely expected in parks include amusement park rides, golf courses, lounges and motorized ORV areas, all of which are associated more with ‘urban’ settings than with the ‘natural’ settings characteristic of the parks.



## Interpretation of Responses on Facilities, Services, Settings and Recreation Opportunities

What did people mean when they responded that they expect a facility to be in the parks? It appears that they meant more than a *mere* expectation. They seemed to be identifying their preferences for facilities they want in the parks for their enjoyment. What people expect is what they want, in other words.

This conclusion was reached through a comparison of the facilities park users expect in the parks (from the General Population Survey) and the facilities park visitors say should be in the park for their enjoyment (from the Visitor Survey). The 'expect' and 'should be' lists of facilities, when ordered from top to bottom, are nearly identical (as demonstrated by a rank-order correlation coefficient of .95). It is not known whether this conclusion extends to the other components of image (services, settings and recreation opportunities) because of a lack of comparable data in the Visitor Survey. However, given the strength of the relationship for facilities, it appears likely that an 'expect' response is largely tantamount to a 'should be' response. In addition, given that park users and nonusers are similar in their perceptions of facilities and the other components of image, the expect/should be relationship probably also extends to nonusers. The extension to nonusers, like the extension to the other components of image, cannot be demonstrated, because nonusers of the parks were not included, of course, in the Visitor Survey.

To recapitulate, it appears likely that the responses on the items (facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities) people expect to find in state parks reveal their preferences for the items that should be in the parks for their enjoyment. But it only appears likely that preferences are revealed, because the evidence on preferences is indirect.

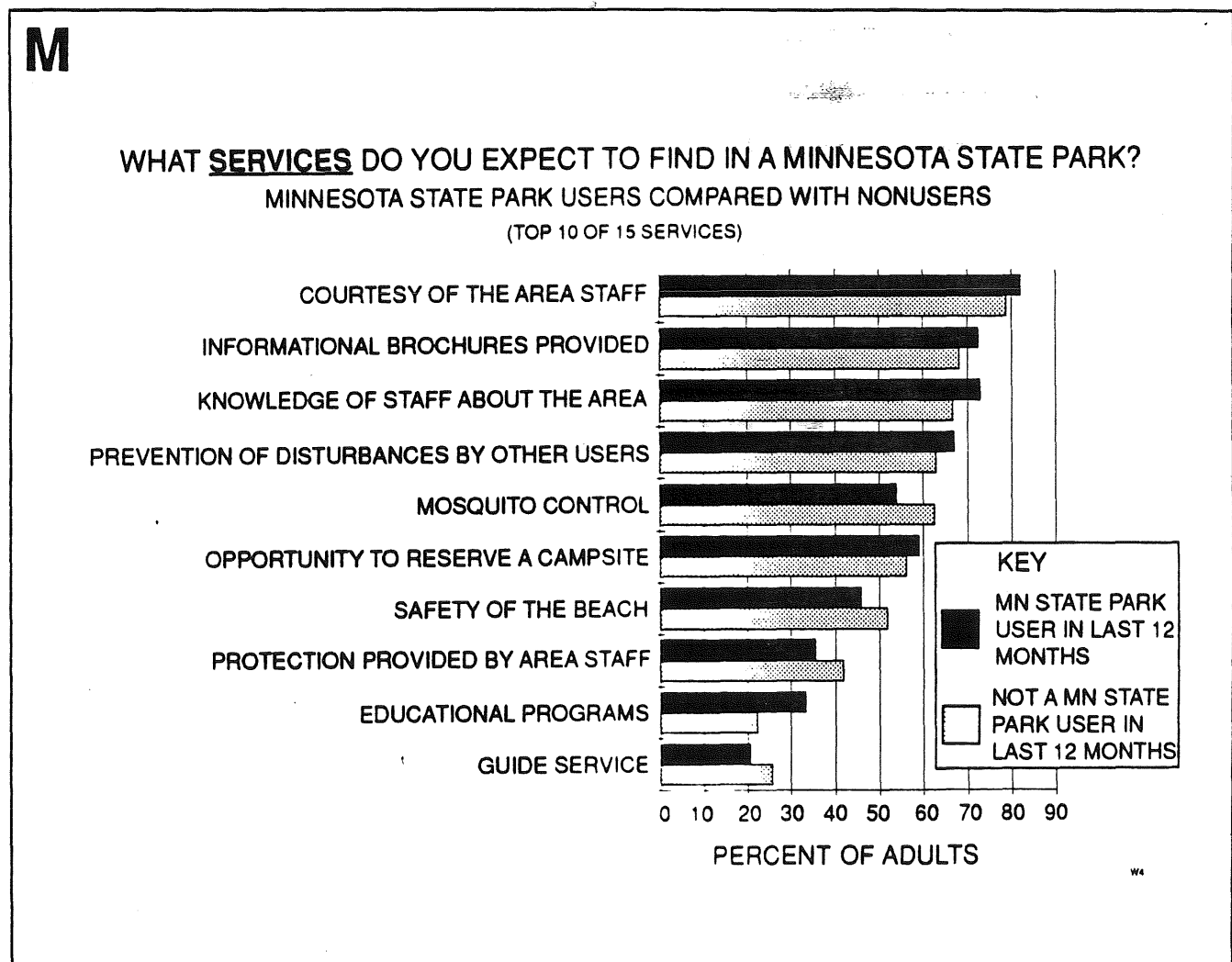


## Services in Parks

The top services identified with state parks concern park staff, who are expected to be courteous, knowledgeable about the area and to prevent disturbances by other users (Chart M). A courteous park staff was found in the Visitor Survey to be an important aspect of an enjoyable park visit (see Visitor Survey section on Important Items for an Enjoyable Visit).

Information brochures are also ranked near the top; they are expected by 60 percent of park users and nonusers. Other services expected by half or more of park users and nonusers are mosquito control, opportunity to reserve a campsite and safety of the beach. Overall, park users and nonusers differ little in their expectations.

Services that are rarely expected include day care, entertainment and recreation programs.



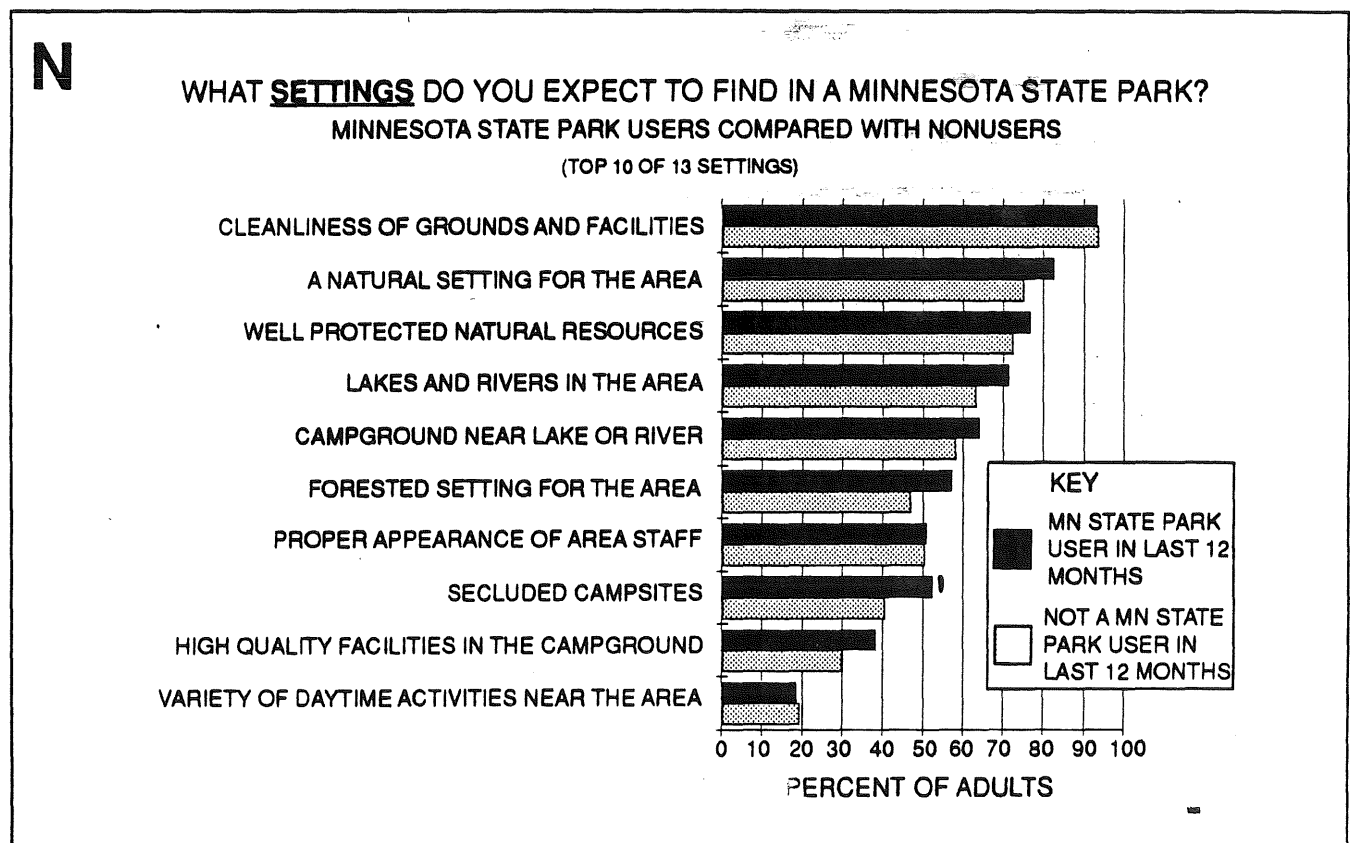
## Settings in Parks

Over 90 percent of park users and nonusers expect the setting of the park to be clean, which reemphasizes the importance of park cleanliness found in the Visitor Survey (Chart N). The setting is also expected to be natural, and the natural resources well protected. Both the naturalness of the setting, expressed in terms of park beauty, and the emphasis on protection of the park's natural resources were found in the Visitor Survey to be important aspects of an enjoyable park visit (see Visitor Survey section on Important Items for an Enjoyable Visit).

Lakes and rivers in a forested area are regularly identified with state parks. Campgrounds are expected to be near water and secluded. The proper appearance of park staff is the remaining setting item expected by over half of park users and nonusers.

Rarely expected for park setting are nighttime activities near the area, a prairie setting and group facilities.

Expectations, overall, are similar for park users and nonusers, except for camping-related items. The uniqueness of camping items is probably due to the fact that park users are more likely than nonusers to be interested in camping (see preceding section on Minnesotans Who Visit Parks).

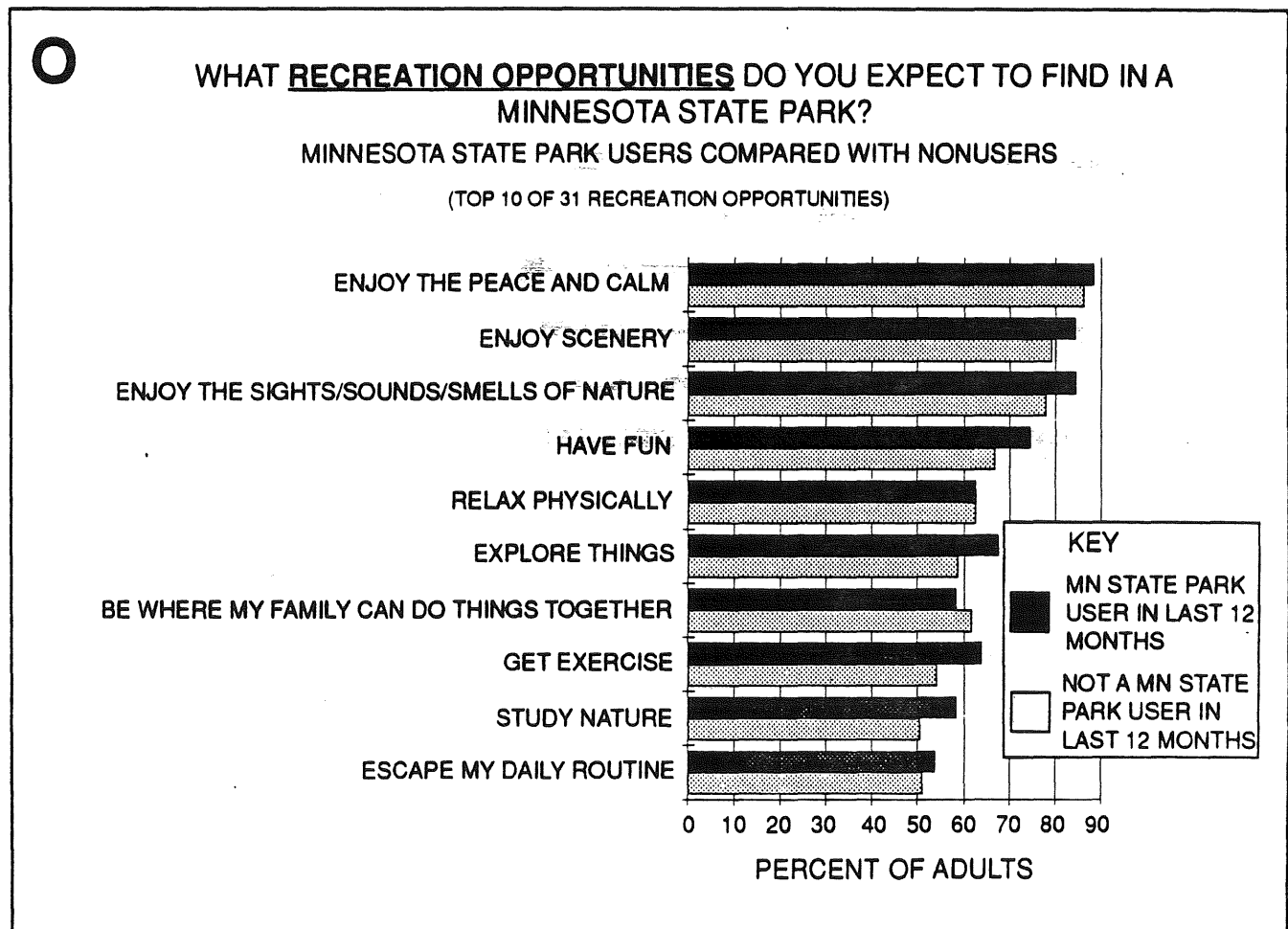


## Recreation Opportunities (or Motivations) in Parks

Recreation opportunities define the experiences and benefits people expect to receive from outdoor recreation. They are the motivations behind outdoor recreation. The most prevalent recreation opportunities expected in parks are to obtain a general 'natural' experience: to enjoy scenery, nature, and peace and calm of the park (Chart O). Fun, relaxation, exercise and an escape from daily routine are also regularly expected in the parks. Other high-ranking expectations are to obtain educational (explore, study) and family experiences. Park users differ little from nonusers in their expectations.

The lowest-ranking expectations are to obtain a challenging outdoor experience, to be where the social action is, and to share skills and knowledge with others. Parks, in other words, are rarely seen by visitors as places to build self-confidence through a challenging experience. Nor are they commonly seen as places to obtain either of the latter two experiences given above.

The preceding results are virtually the same as those found in the Visitor Survey (see Visitor Survey section on Motivations for Park Visit).



## PARK IMAGE: POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

### Comparison with People's Favorite Recreation Areas

People were asked to describe their favorite recreation areas in the same terms they described park image. Specifically, they were asked to identify the items (facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities) that make their favorite recreation area an enjoyable place to recreate. The items that add to enjoyment of favorite areas are desirable features of that recreation place. If these favorite-area items are expected in parks, the image of parks is positive. The more they are expected in parks, the more positive the image. Conversely, the less they are expected in parks, the less positive and more negative the image.

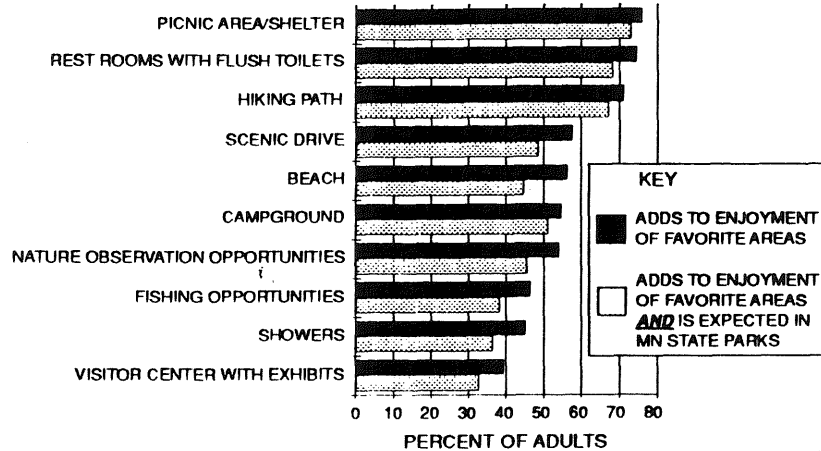
The comparison with favorite recreation areas led to a number of conclusions. The major facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities that add to enjoyment of favorite recreation areas are regularly expected in state parks. Stated differently, the image of parks is positioned near the center of the popular markets for facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities. Because the image of parks compares so well with these popular items, the overall image of parks is definitely positive. Park users have a better match between their park image and their favorite area than nonusers, but the difference between users and nonusers does not appear to be sufficiently large to account for the disparity in park visitation.

The correspondence between park image and favorite areas is displayed on Charts P, Q, R and S. Each chart contains the top-ranked items that add to enjoyment of favorite recreation areas, without regard to whether or not these items are expected in state parks. To read the charts, take as an example the top-ranked facility, which is picnic area/shelter. Over 70 percent of adults indicate that the picnic facility adds to their enjoyment of their favorite recreation area, as is shown by the upper, dark bar on the graph. And most of these same adults expect the picnic facility in state parks. This is shown on the graph by the closeness in length of the lower, lighter bar to the upper, dark bar. The closer the two bars are in length, the greater the correspondence between state park image and favorite recreation areas. The lower bar cannot be longer than the upper bar, because the lower bar is a subset of the individuals in the upper bar.

**P**

**WHAT FACILITIES ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS?  
ARE THESE EXPECTED TO BE FOUND IN MINNESOTA STATE PARKS?**

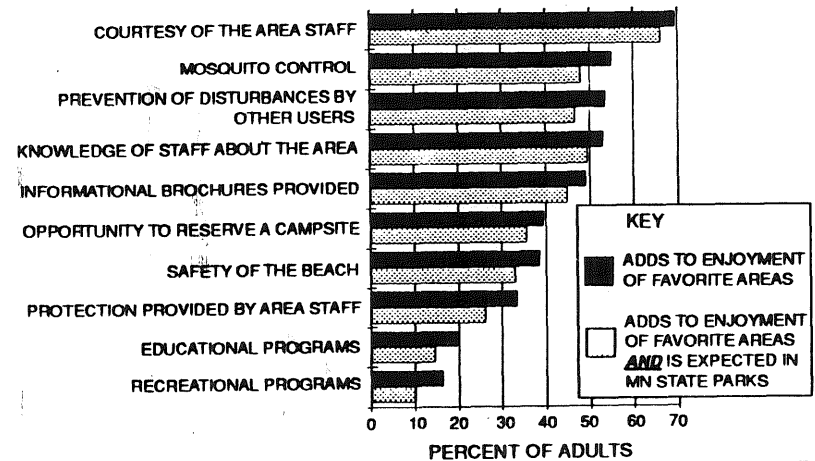
(TOP 10 OF 38 FACILITIES THAT ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS)



**Q**

**WHAT SERVICES ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS?  
ARE THESE EXPECTED TO BE FOUND IN MINNESOTA STATE PARKS?**

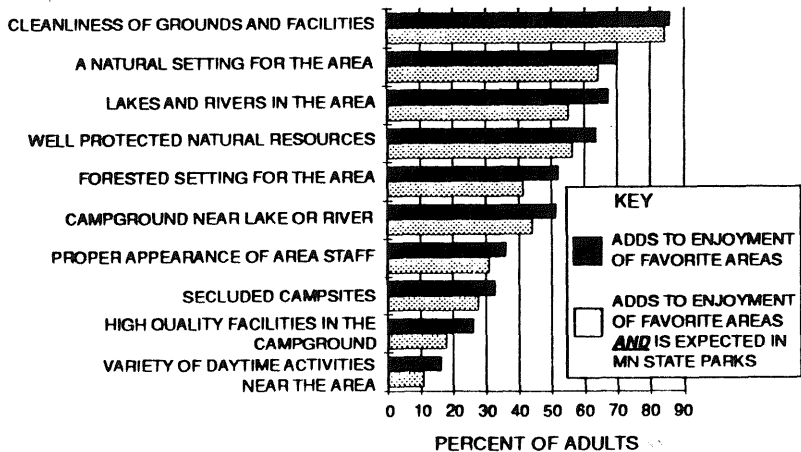
(TOP 10 OF 15 SERVICES THAT ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS)



**R**

**WHAT SETTINGS ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS?  
ARE THESE EXPECTED TO BE FOUND IN MINNESOTA STATE PARKS?**

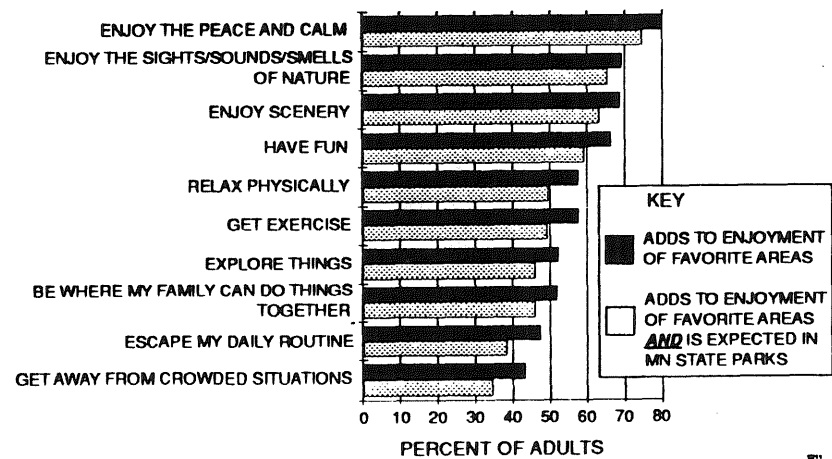
(TOP 10 OF 13 SETTINGS THAT ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS)



**S**

**WHAT RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS?  
ARE THESE EXPECTED TO BE FOUND IN MINNESOTA STATE PARKS?**

(TOP 10 OF 31 RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES THAT ADD TO ENJOYMENT OF FAVORITE RECREATION AREAS)



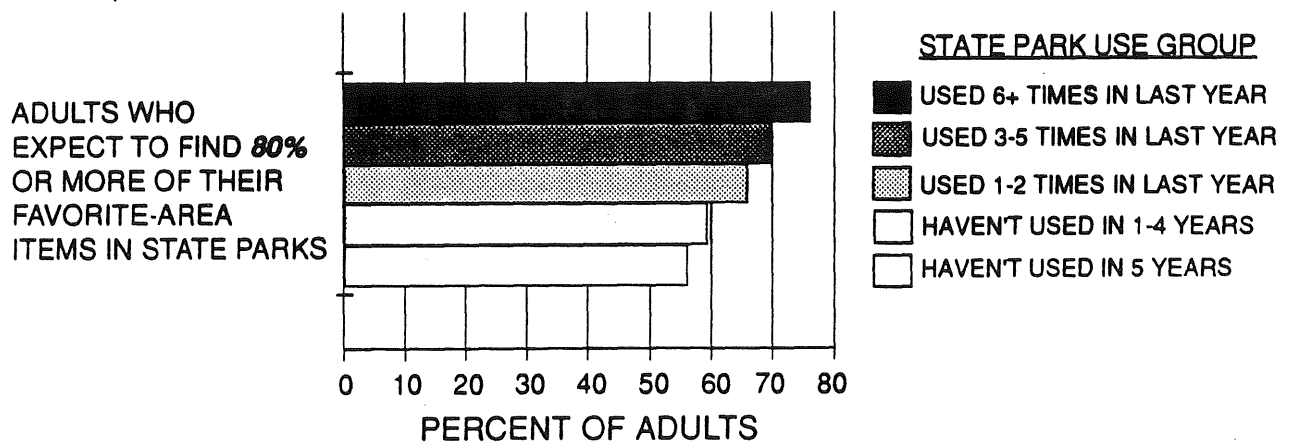
The preceding graphs display the correspondence between park image and favorite areas on an item-by-item basis. The following section looks at the correspondence between park image and favorite areas on the basis of a package of items. Minnesota adults typically identified a package of 20-40 items (selected from the 97 facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities) that adds to their favorite-area enjoyment. Each adult identified his/her personal package. The question is, How many people expect to find in parks most of what is contained in their package of favorite-area items?

A majority of people expect to find in parks most of the items that add to their favorite-area enjoyment (Chart T). The more heavily people use the parks, the more likely they are to expect to find most of their favorite-area items in parks. Three-fourths of the highest park-use group expect to find most (at least 80 percent) of their favorite-area items in the parks. This drops to a low of 55 percent for people who have not used the parks in 5 years. The 80 percent cut-off on Chart T is intended to be the numerical equivalent of 'most'. For the typical adult, who identified 31 favorite-area items, at least 25 (or 80%) of the 31 favorite-area items must be expected in parks.

**T**

**HOW MANY PEOPLE EXPECT TO FIND, IN MINNESOTA STATE PARKS, MOST OF THE PACKAGE OF ITEMS THAT ADDS TO THEIR ENJOYMENT OF THEIR FAVORITE RECREATION AREA?**

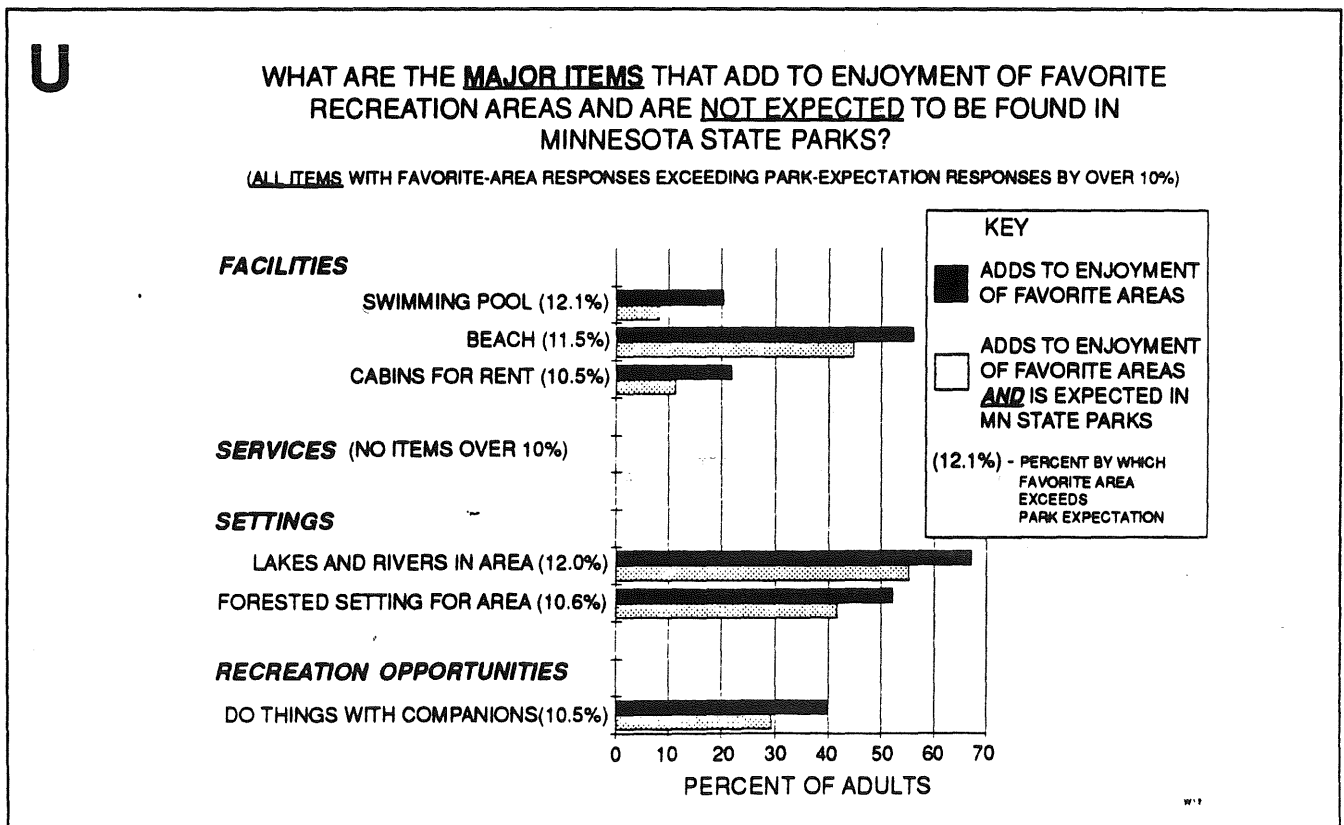
(ITEMS INCLUDE FACILITIES, SERVICES, SETTINGS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES; THE TYPICAL ADULT INDICATED 31 SUCH ITEMS IN THEIR FAVORITE AREA)



The preceding indicates a good overall match between favorite areas and park image. There are some individual items, however, for which the match is not as good. Poorness of match is measured in terms of the number of adults who identified a favorite-area item that they did not expect in parks. Chart U has all such items that involve 10 percent or more of the adult population. It contains the most frequent items in people's favorite-area packages that they do not expect to find in parks. If these items are offered in the parks, the public should be made better aware of them. If they are not offered, and their provision is consistent with park management, they are prime candidates for development.

There are not many items that involve over 10 percent of the adult population: 3 of the 38 facilities, none of the 15 services, 2 of the 13 settings, and 1 of the 31 recreation opportunities. None is much over 10 percent, either. Swimming facilities (beaches and pools) are the top facilities (Chart U). Swimming pools, for example, add to the enjoyment of favorite recreation areas for 20 percent of adults, but only 8 percent of adults both identified pools as a favorite-area item and expect them in parks. The difference for pools is 12 percent (20 minus 8), which is above the 10 percent criterion needed for inclusion on the chart. The remaining facility is cabins to rent.

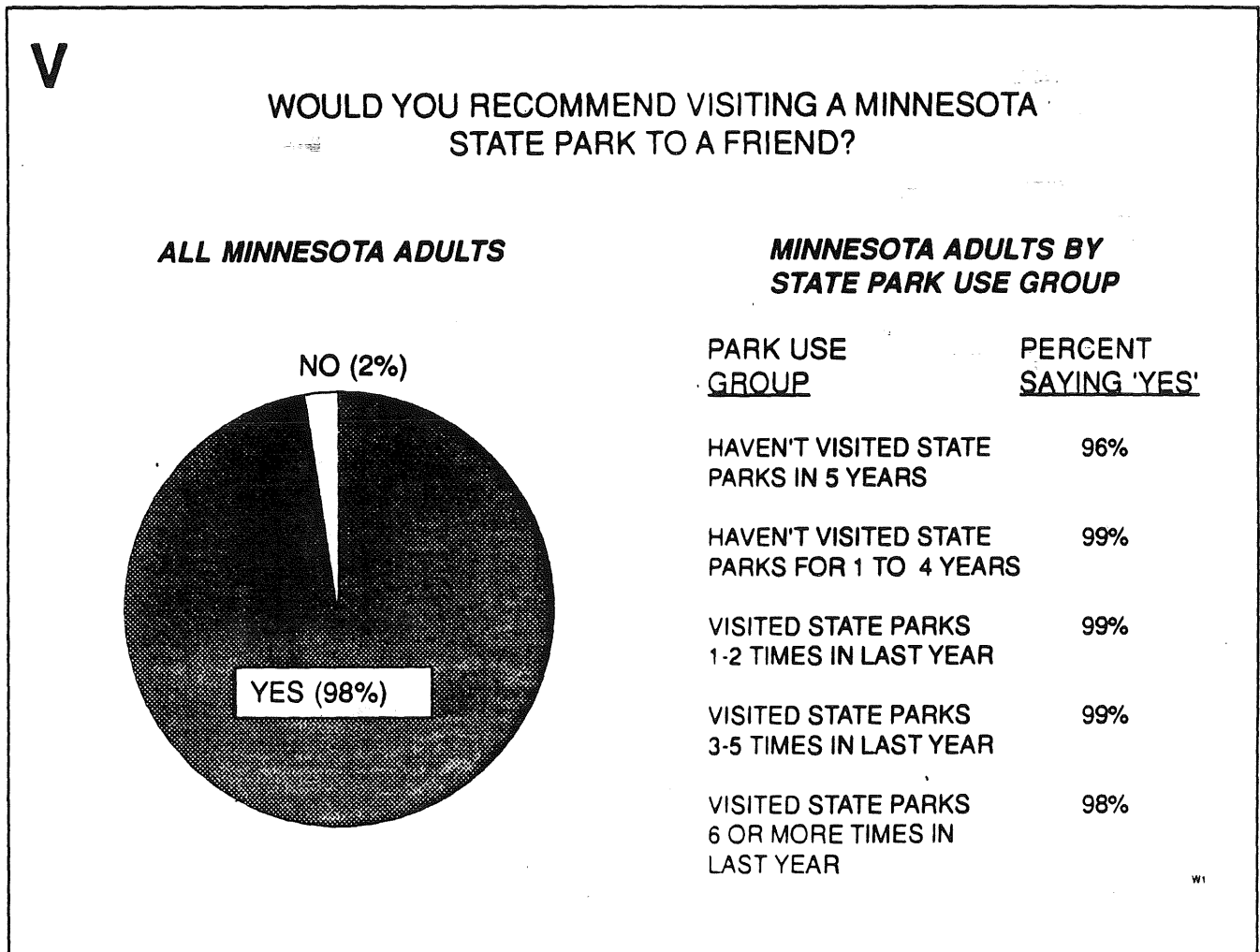
For settings, the major items are lakes, rivers and forests. Recreation opportunities contains one item: to have the opportunity to 'do things with companions'.



Why are there so few items (facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities) that have a poor match between favorite areas and park image and, thereby, get included on Chart U? The reason is: an item that is expected in parks by few people is an item that adds to the favorite-area enjoyment of few people. Take, as an example, a motorized ORV area, which is rarely expected in parks. Only 5 percent of adults indicated that ORV areas add to enjoyment of favorite recreation areas. That is less than the 10-percent-of-adults criterion used to construct Chart U. To reiterate an earlier conclusion, the image of parks is positioned near the center of the popular markets for facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities. Had the image of parks been positioned far from the center of the popular markets, the number of items on Chart U would be quite large.

Personal Recommendation

Nearly all Minnesotans, including those who rarely if ever visit a park, would recommend visiting state parks to a friend (Chart V). This indicates a generally good image of state parks throughout the population.



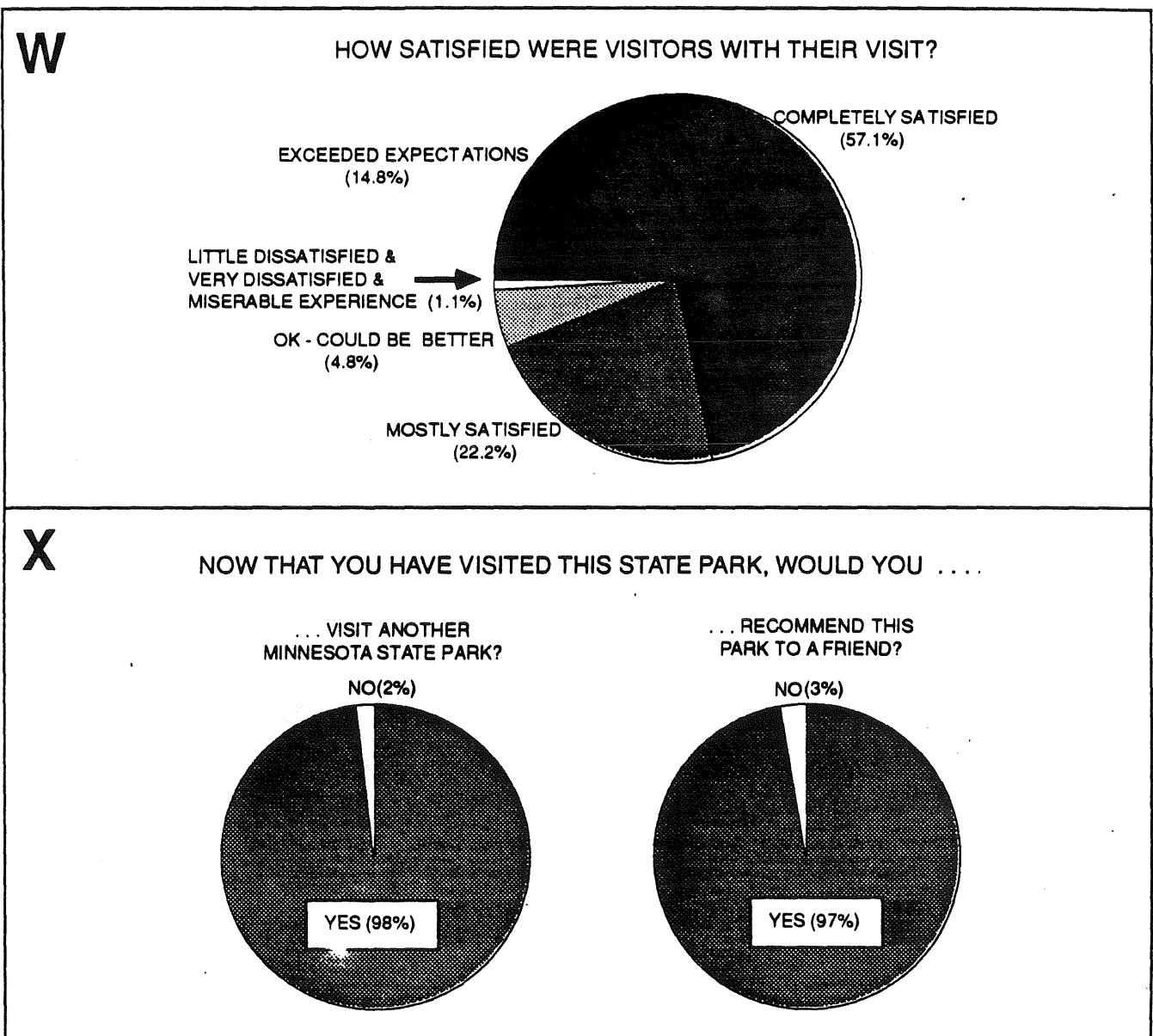


# VISITOR SURVEY

## VISITOR SATISFACTION

Most visitors were satisfied with their park outing (Chart W). Over 70 percent were either completely satisfied or had their expectations exceeded. Another 22 percent were mostly satisfied. Only 1 percent of visitors were dissatisfied to any extent.

High satisfaction was further demonstrated by the overwhelming proportion of visitors who — based on their experience — would visit another Minnesota state park and would recommend the park they visited to a friend (Chart X).

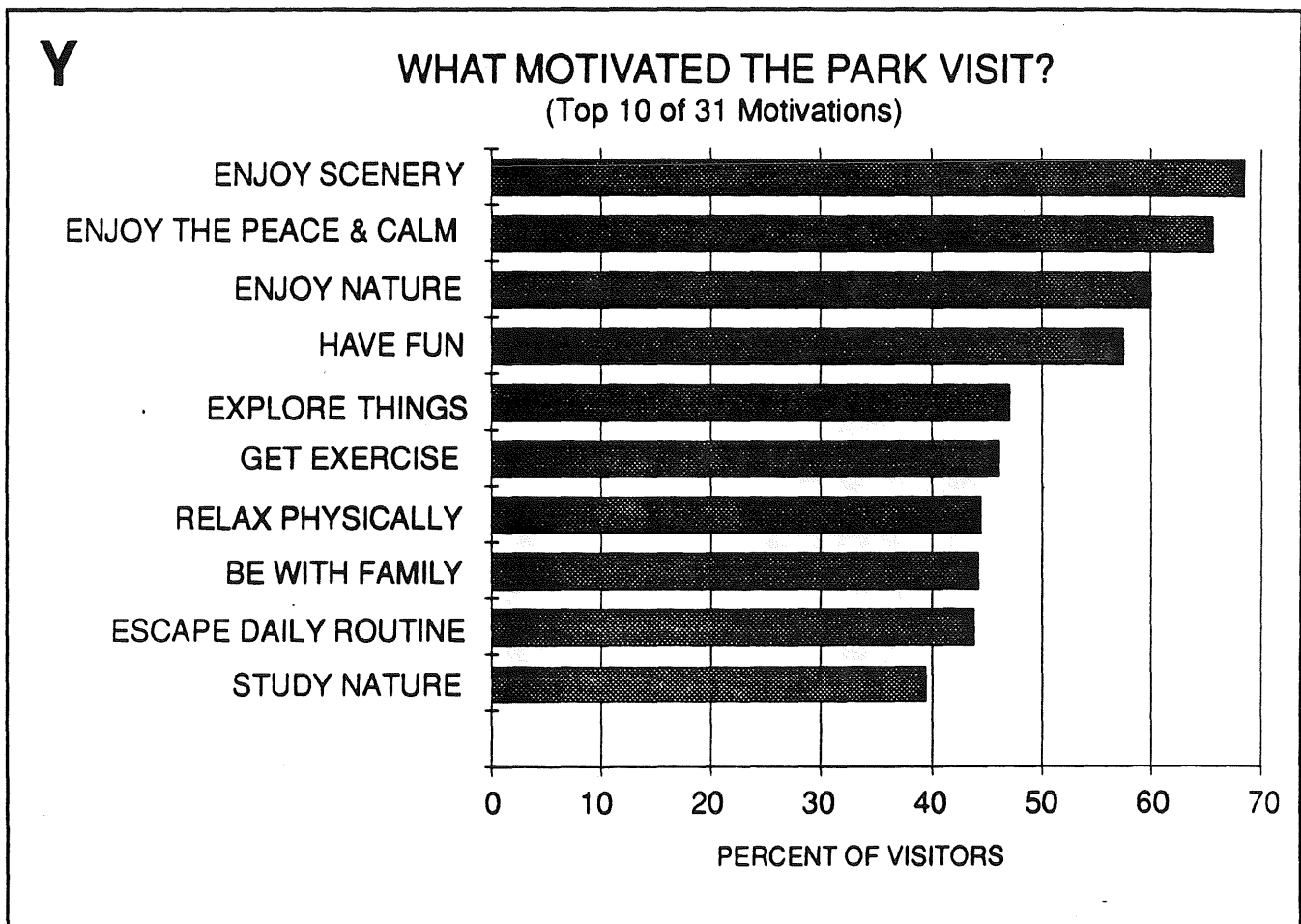


## MOTIVATIONS FOR PARK VISIT

Motivations are direct statements of the benefits visitors expect to receive from the park outing. Motivations define the park experience from the visitor's perspective. As such, they represent an effective language with which to speak to current and potential park users.

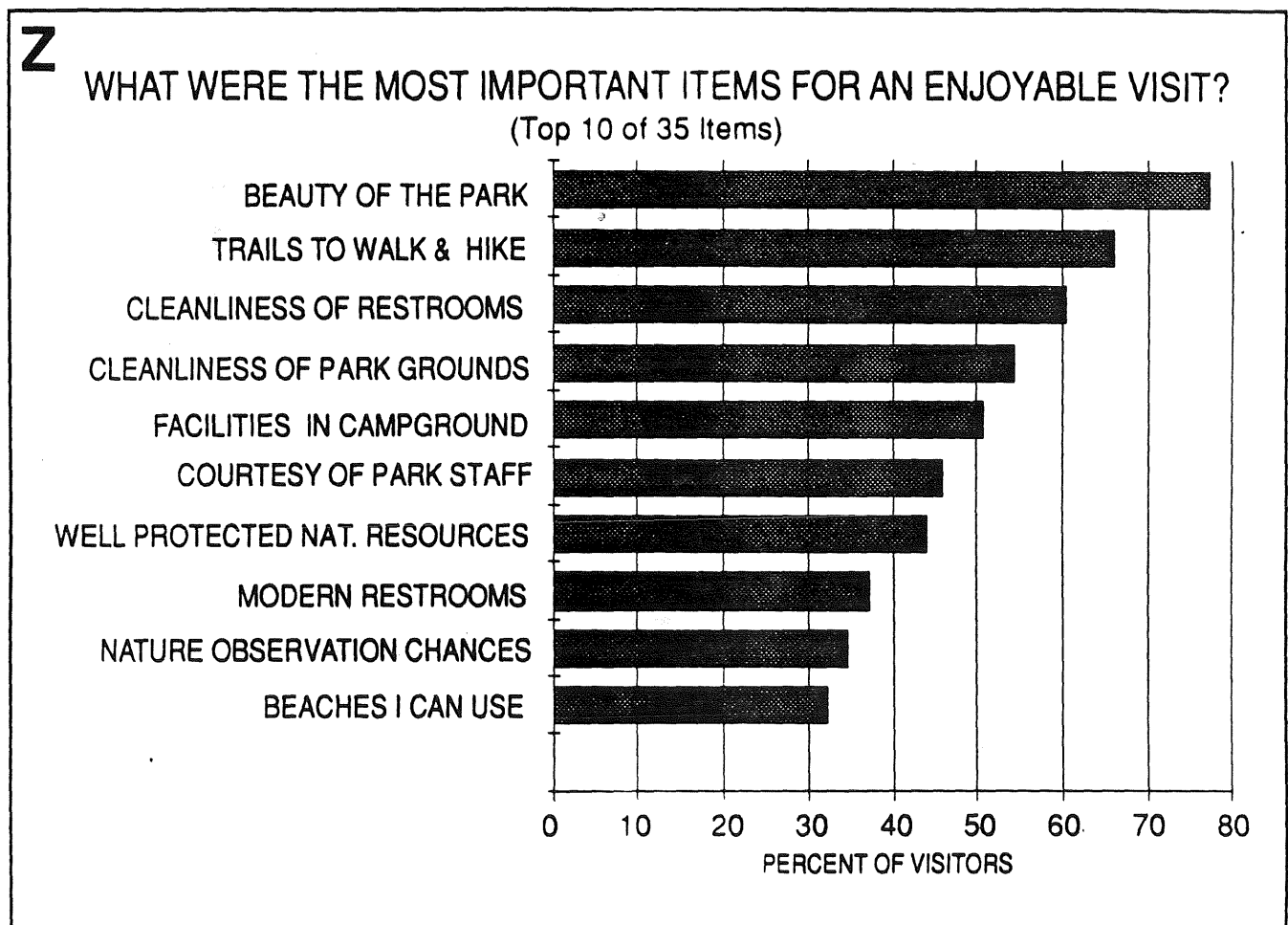
The most prevalent visitor motivations were to obtain a general 'natural' experience: to enjoy scenery, nature, and peace and calm of the park (Chart Y). Fun, relaxation, exercise and an escape from daily routine were also primary motivations, as they are for most types of outdoor recreation. Other high-ranking motivations were to obtain educational (explore, study) and family experiences — two types of experiences that are emphasized in the parks.

The least important visitor motivations were to obtain a challenging outdoor experience, to be where the social action is, and to reflect on personal values. Parks, in other words, were rarely seen by visitors as places to build self-confidence through a challenging experience. Nor were they commonly seen as places to obtain either of the latter two experiences given above.



## IMPORTANT ITEMS FOR AN ENJOYABLE VISIT

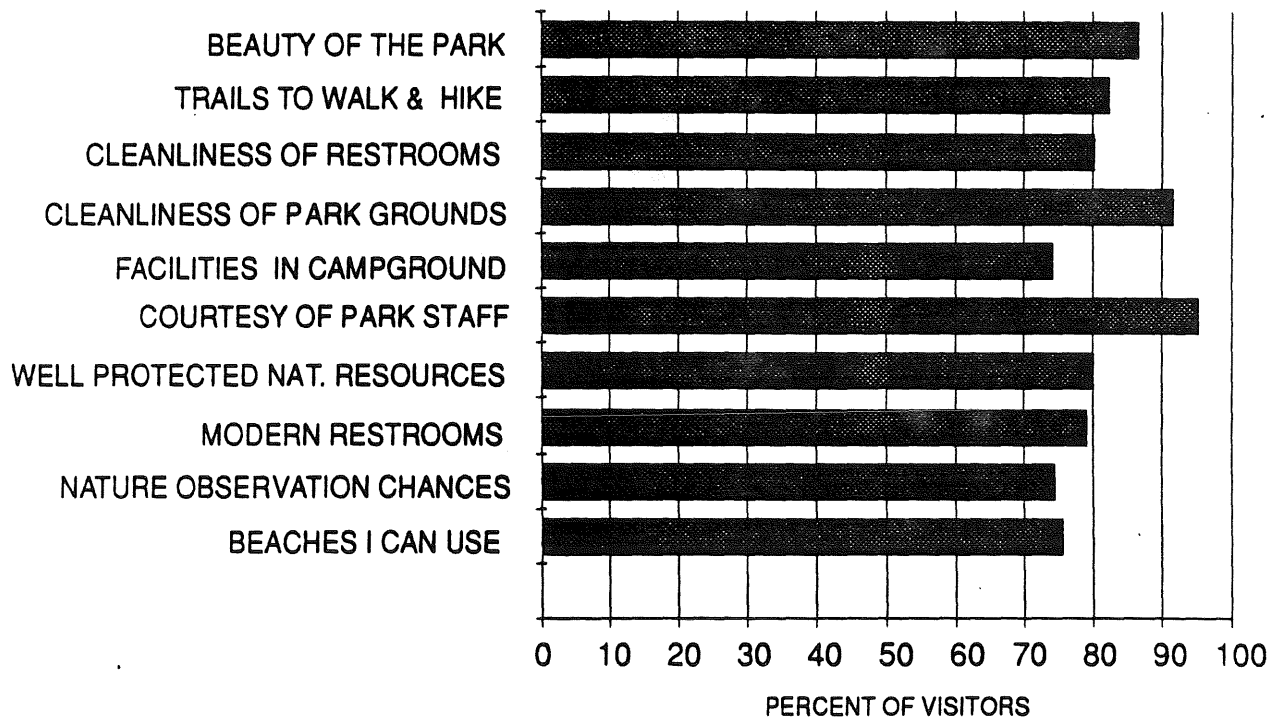
Nature provides the most important item for an enjoyable visit: beauty of the park (Chart Z). People provide the rest: facilities, management and services. The highest-ranking facility was trails to walk and hike, followed by campgrounds, restrooms and beaches. To protect the natural resources of the park was seen by just under half of the visitors as important to their enjoyment of the park. Services, in the forms of cleanliness and staff courtesy, were also ranked near the top. In fact, visitors ranked these services as highly as they did key facilities.



How well did the park provide the preceding important items? To answer this question visitors were asked to rank park performance in providing their important items on a five-point scale: very poor, poor, average, good and excellent. The results of the quality rankings indicate that the parks performed well above average. Over 70 percent of the visitors judged the quality of their most important items as 'good' or 'excellent' (Chart AA).

# AA

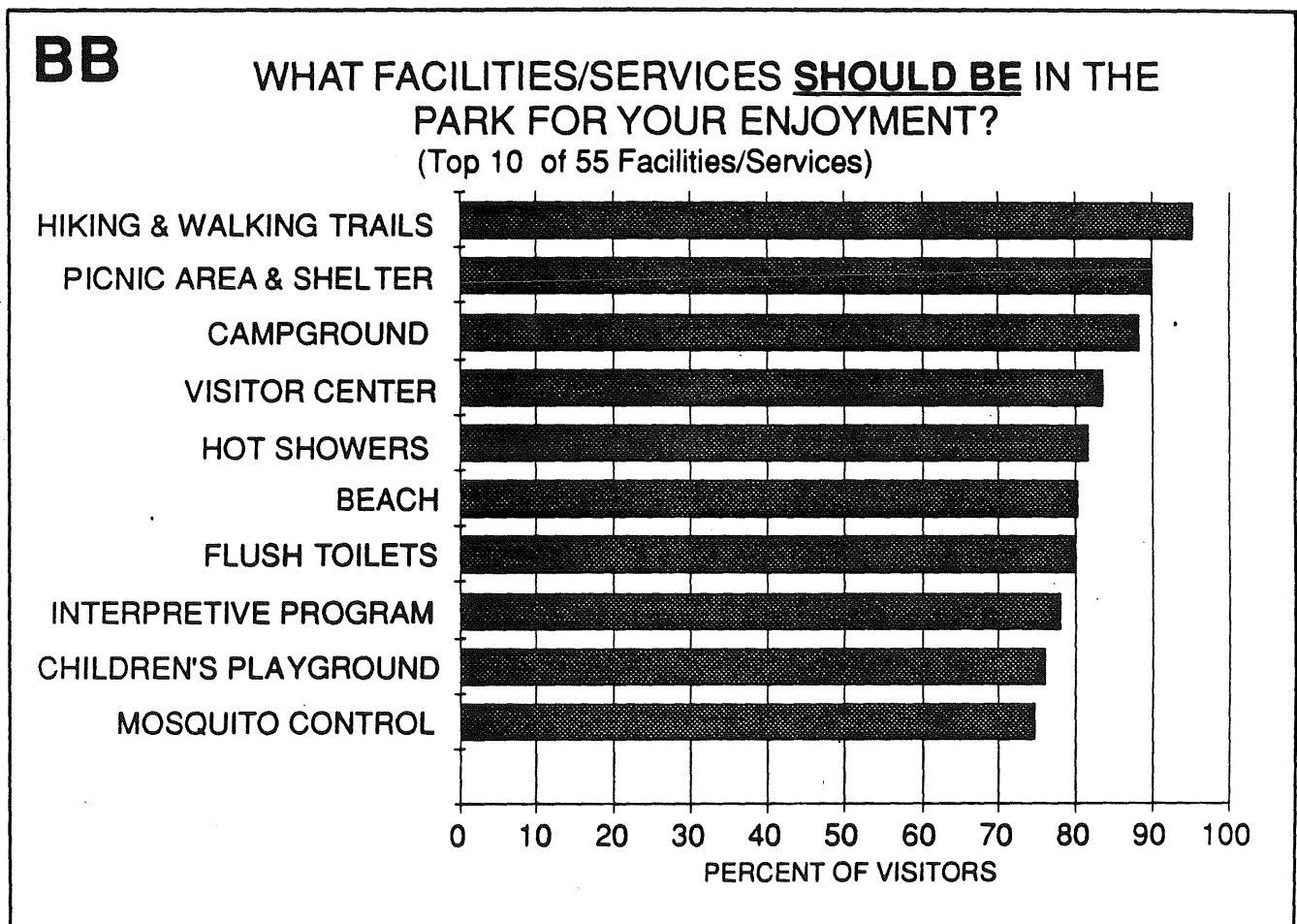
**PARK PERFORMANCE: RATINGS OF GOOD TO EXCELLENT ON THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS FOR AN ENJOYABLE VISIT**  
(Ratings of the Top 10 of 35 Items)



## WHAT VISITORS SAY SHOULD BE (AND SHOULD NOT BE) IN THE PARKS

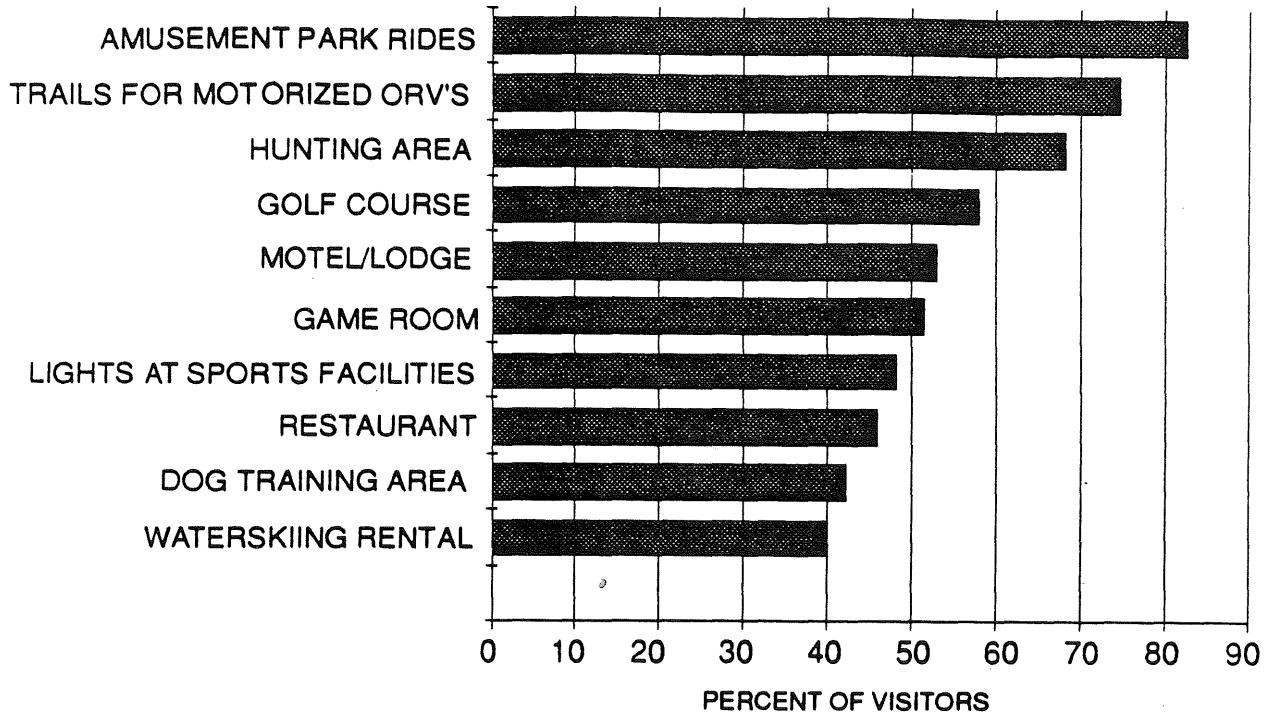
When asked what should and should not be in the park for their enjoyment, visitors strongly supported the parks as they are today and, thereby, the philosophy that has guided the development and management of today's park system.

The top items that visitors say should be in the park for their enjoyment are largely the basic park-provided facilities, services, recreation opportunities and recreator comforts (Chart BB). Alternatively, the top items that visitors say should not be in the park for their enjoyment would, if provided, bring into the parks a more 'urban' type of recreation experience (Chart CC). The present 'natural' type of recreation experience would be correspondingly diminished. To provide the should not be items is to risk losing current visitors and, as likely, to attract a new clientele who are looking for such facilities, services and associated recreation experiences.



WHAT FACILITIES/SERVICES SHOULD NOT BE IN THE PARK FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT?

(Top 10 of 55 Facilities/Services)



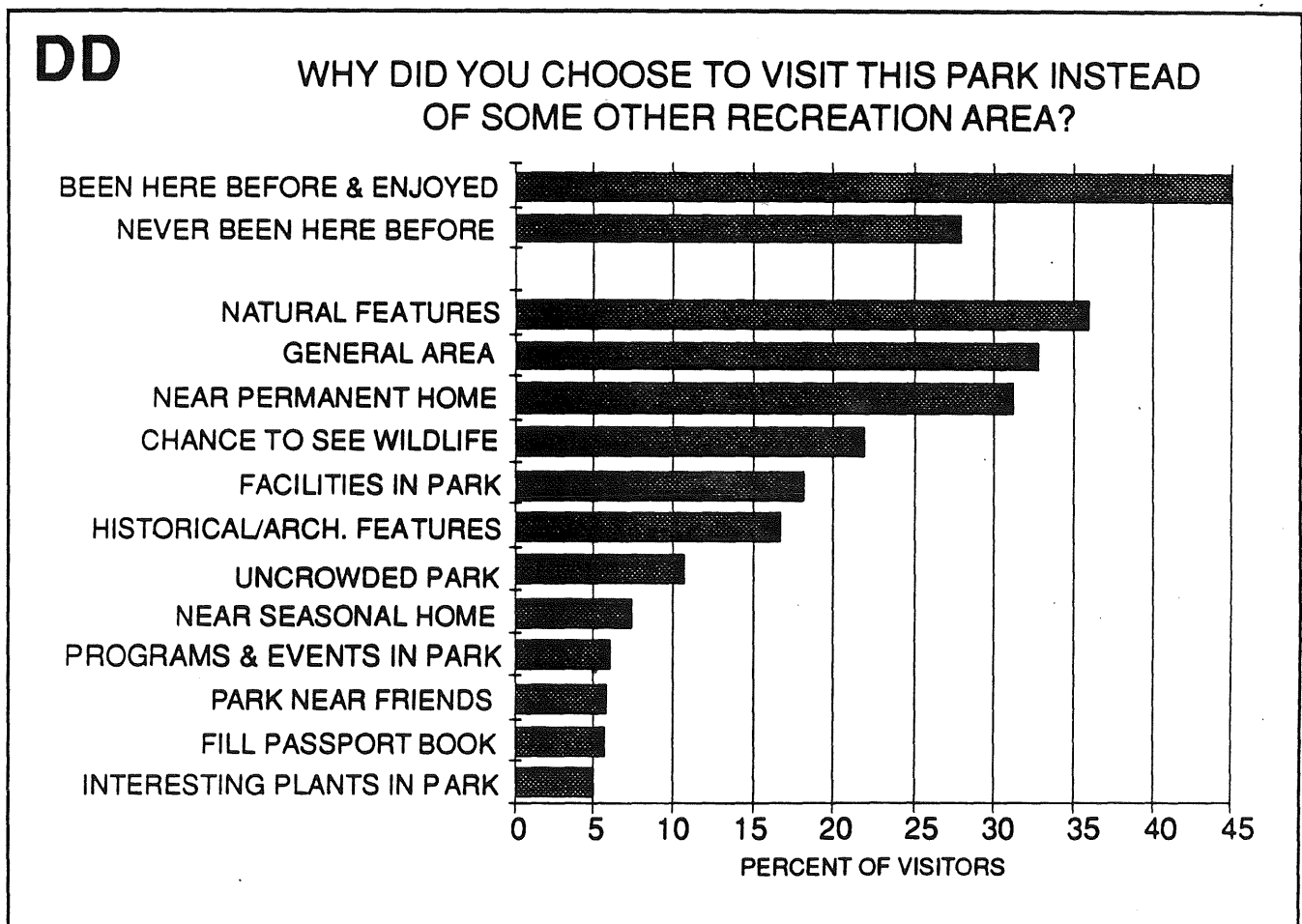
How many Minnesotans want the should not be items in the outdoor recreation areas they visit, and are, perhaps, being deterred from visiting state parks because such items are not provided? With the completion of the General Population Survey, this question can be answered, because the Survey measured the size of the entire Minnesota market for facilities and services. Market size was measured in terms of the number of Minnesota adults who indicated that a facility/service adds to their enjoyment of their favorite recreation area.

Small Minnesota-wide markets are associated with the top should not be facilities/services of park visitors. And the higher the should not be responses become, the smaller are the Minnesota-wide markets. The relationship to market size is reversed for the should be facilities/services of park visitors. The higher the should be responses become, the larger the Minnesota-wide markets. These relationships to market size are a restatement of a conclusion drawn in the General Population Survey section: Minnesota adults place parks near the center of the popular markets for facilities, services, settings and recreation opportunities. (For the statistically minded, the rank-order correlation coefficient between the frequency of should be responses of park visitors and Minnesota-wide market sizes is .93; it is -.86 for the relationship between should not be responses of park visitors and Minnesota-wide market sizes.)

## REASONS FOR SELECTING THE PARK

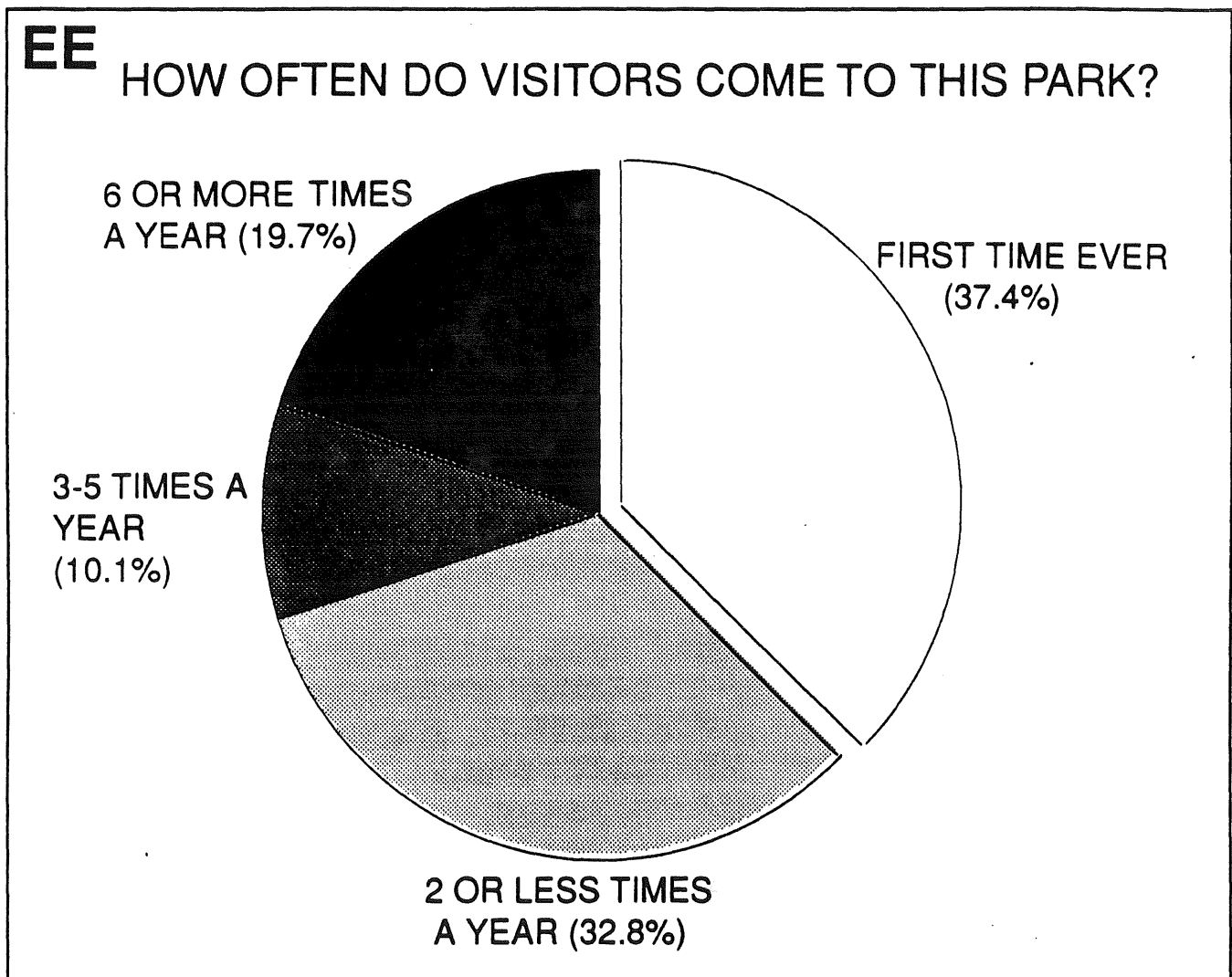
Past satisfaction was the most frequent reason visitors gave for selecting the park instead of another recreation area (Chart DD). However, many visitors selected the park because they had never been there before (see next page for a discussion of visitation history).

The natural features of the park were a major draw. This is not surprising given the importance visitors ascribed to park beauty and to the opportunity to obtain a 'natural' type of experience from the park outing. Other frequently given reasons involved park location, both in terms of the general area of the park and in terms of proximity to visitor's homes. A middle-frequency set of reasons for selecting the park included wildlife observation opportunities, park facilities and the historical/archaeological features in the park. All remaining reasons were given by fewer than one-in-nine visitors.



## FREQUENCY OF VISIT TO THE PARK

Many visitors (37%) had never been to the park before (Chart EE). A third of the visitors used the park infrequently, 2 or less times a year. The more regular clientele, who used the park at least 3 times a year, comprised the remaining 30 percent of visitors.

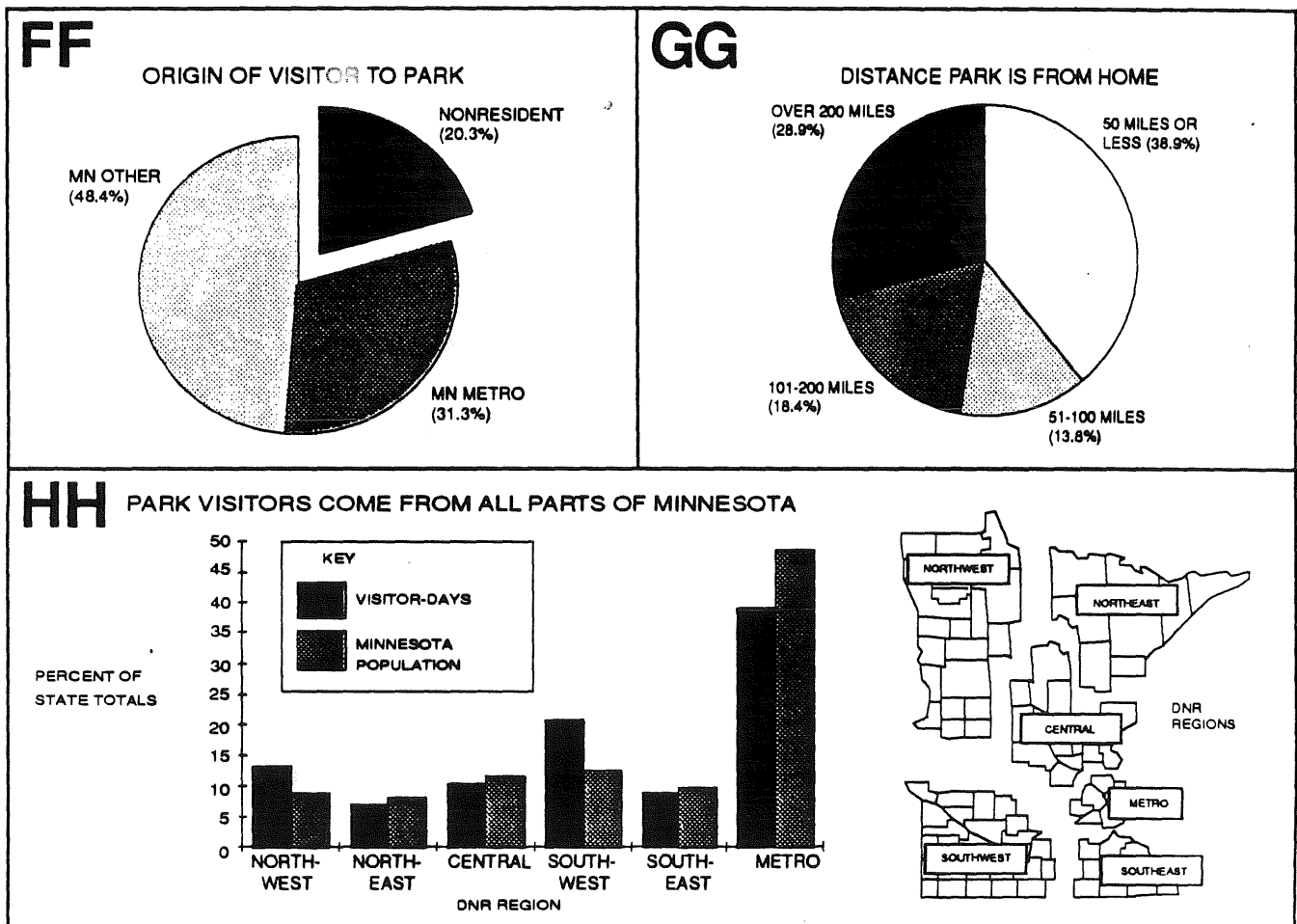




## ORIGIN AND TRAVEL DISTANCE OF VISITORS

Eighty percent of park visitors were Minnesotans (Chart FF), who came from all regions of the state in numbers largely representative of population numbers (Chart HH). Most nonresidents (59%) came from the surrounding four states and Canada.

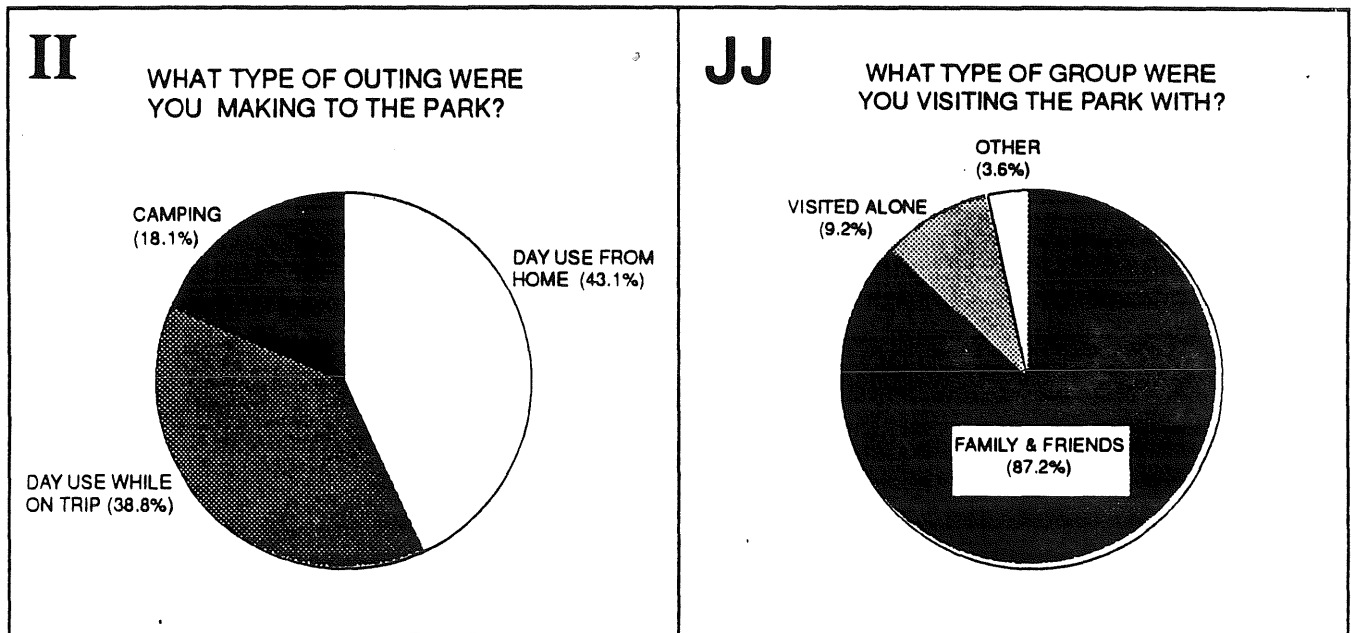
Nearly 40 percent of visitors were within a one-hour drive of home (less than 50 miles), while nearly half were over two hours from home (100 miles or more) (see Chart GG). The high frequency of long travel distances means that many Minnesotans were not visiting their nearest park, because all Minnesotans live within an hour's drive of a state park.



## THE PARK OUTING: TYPE OF USER AND VISITOR GROUP

Day users accounted for 82 percent of visitors, campers 18 percent (Chart II). Of the day users, about half came to the park directly from home and about half spent the night before the park visit away from home. Resorts and hotels/motels were the most common type of overnight accommodations for the day users away from home. Most campers (77%) came to the park directly from home.

The large majority of visitors were traveling with family and friends (Chart JJ). Few visitors came alone. Close to half (45%) of visitor groups contained children below the age of 13, and 21 percent contained teenagers.



## REFERENCES

1. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 1985-86 Outdoor Recreation Participation and Expenditure Survey of Minnesotans.
2. U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service. 1986. 1982-1983 Nationwide Recreation Survey.

