

AC ESF ADK RUEADK 2020

Recreational User Experience and Perspectives: Adirondack Park

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to share summary statistics for the RUEADK project among Partners: The Adirondack Council, SUNY-ESF and the Adirondack Mountain Club. This document contains deliberate and precise language that may be a source for how to talk about the data accurately. All findings are PRELIMINARY, and should be marked as such when shared.

METHODS AND PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

Between August 5 and October 11, 2020, 673 recreational users completed a survey asking about their experience with the High Peaks area of the Adirondack Park and their perspectives on management practices that address user capacity. Data was collected at 10 sites (483 surveys) by the Adirondack Council staff and 1 site (183 surveys) by Adirondack Mountain Club staff. Most data collection occurred Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays between 7am and 2pm. Participants could choose between completing a paper form on site or, via a link to a web interface (Qualtrics), complete the survey on their personal device.

At this writing, data has gone through preliminary review and some sorting by SUNY-ESF. Error checking and coding in preparation for more formal calculations is the next step. *Some totals and ratios will change during this process.*

Please see individual questions for other status notes.

Q1A, B, C

Q1a - Consent.

1. I am age 18 or older, I have read and I understand the above statement, and I agree to participate in this study.

Yes

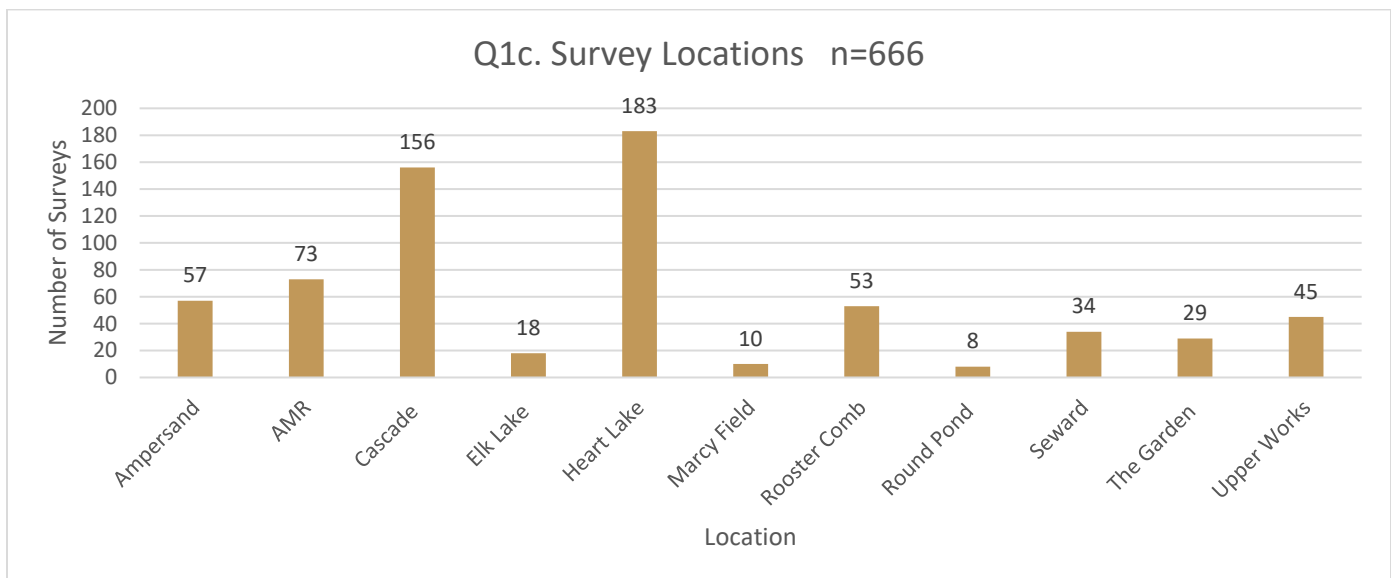
No

Only a handful of participants did not complete the consent agreement. During the remaining error checks, data associated with these respondents will be removed from the study. *Some of these data are present in this preliminary report.*

Q1b – Date of visit.

This data was not processed for this report.

Q1c – Location.



NOTES

“St Huberts”, “Ausable” and “Roaring Brook” was counted as AMR; “Tahawus” was counted as Upper Works; “ADK Loj” and related was counted as Heart Lake.

Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 666(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.96% response rate. Data collection by ADK staff was limited to Heart Lake while AC staff collected at the other locations. Some respondents who took the survey added “new” locations, but through error checking these were associated with already established sites.

Q2

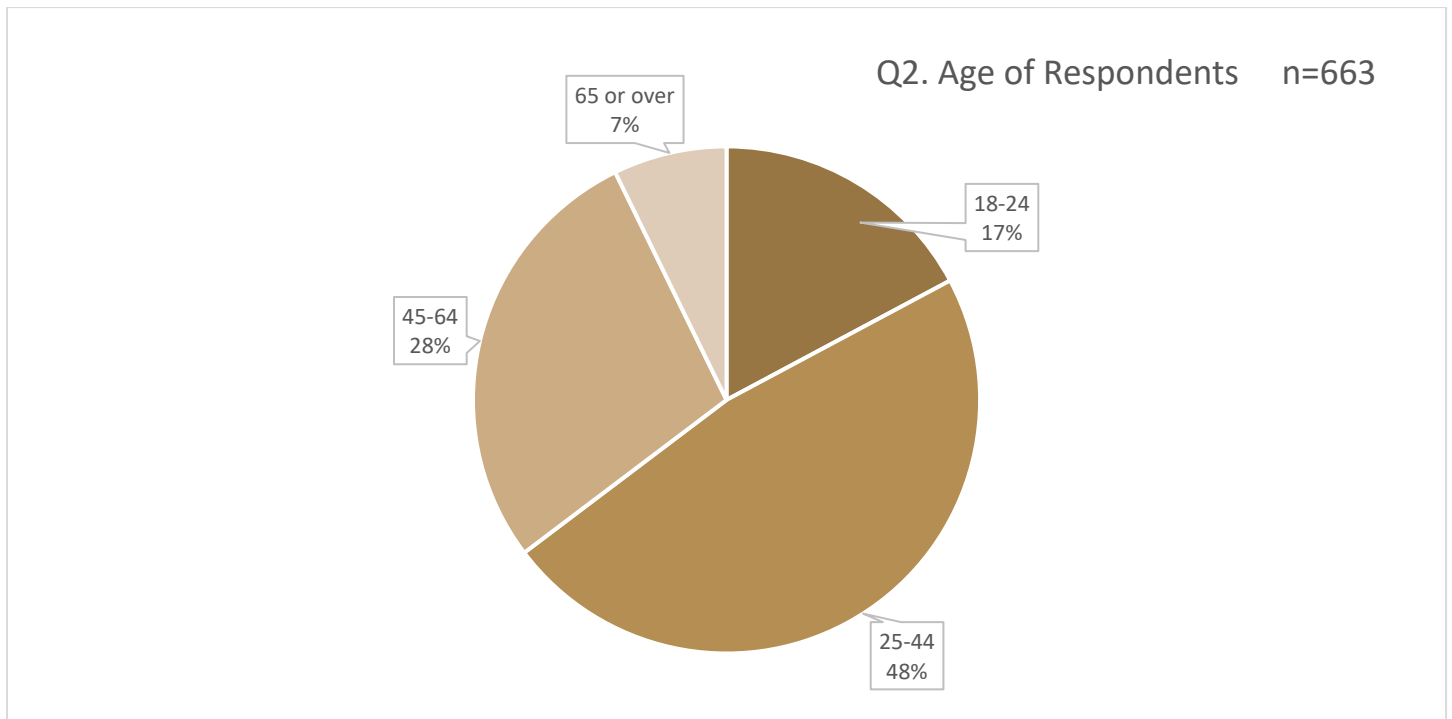
2. Age (Check one)

18 - 24

25 - 44

45 - 64

65 or over



NOTES

	Frequency
18-24	114
25-44	315
45-64	186
65 or over	48

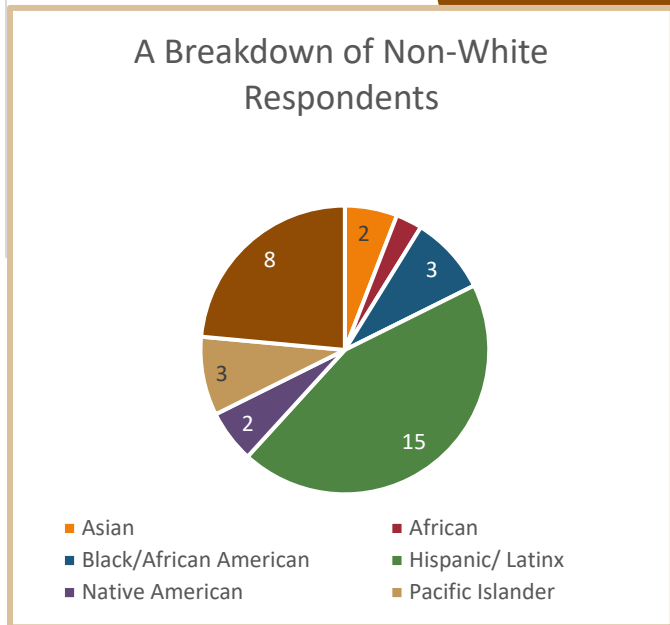
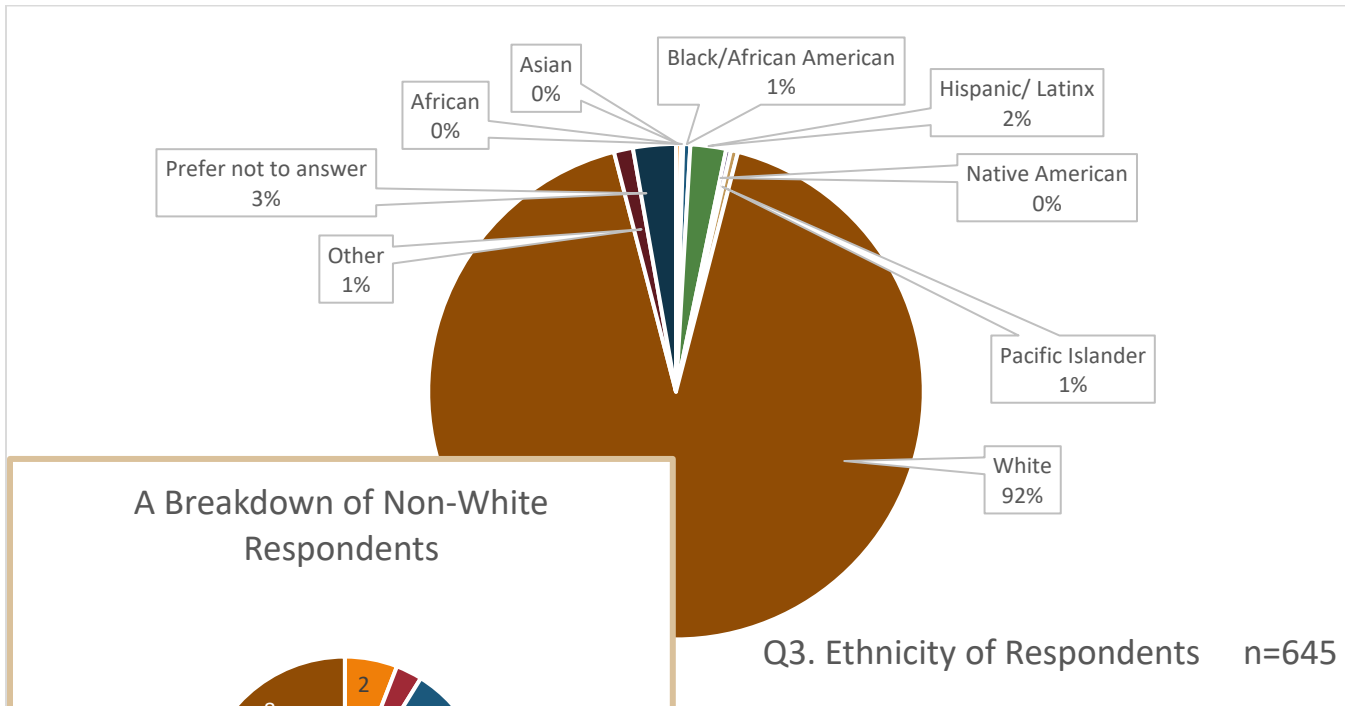
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 663(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.51% response rate. At 48% (315), the majority of respondents are aged between 25 and 44 years.

Q3

3. Ethnicity (Check one)

- Asian
- African
- Black/ African American
- Hispanic/ Latinx
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Other
- Prefer not to answer



NOTES

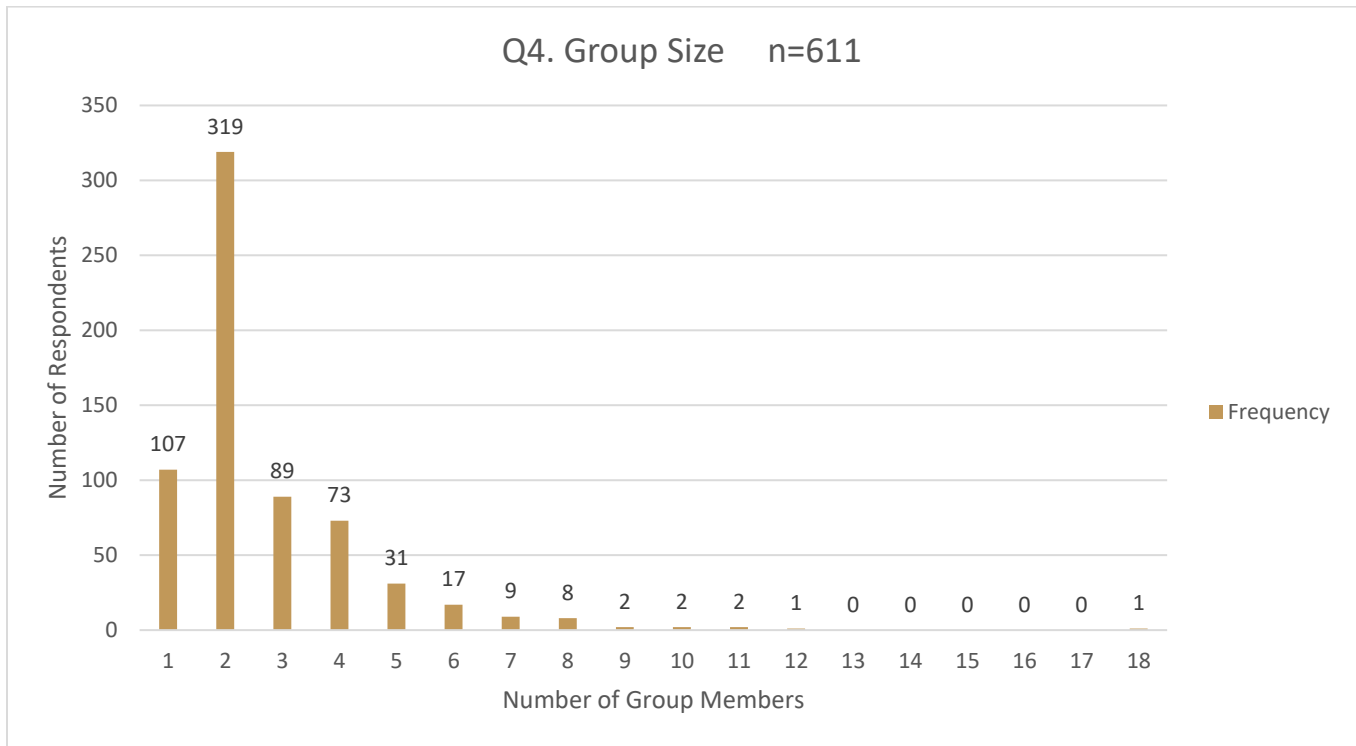
Ethnicity	Frequency
Asian	2
African	1
Black/African American	3
Hispanic/ Latinx	15
Native American	2
Pacific Islander	3
White	593
Other	8
Prefer not to answer	18

Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 645(n) valid responses to this question for a 95.84% response rate. At 92% (593) the overwhelming majority of participants self-identified as White. At 2% (15) Hispanic/ Latinx is the second most common ethnicity.

Q4

4. Including yourself, how many people are in your group? _____



NOTES

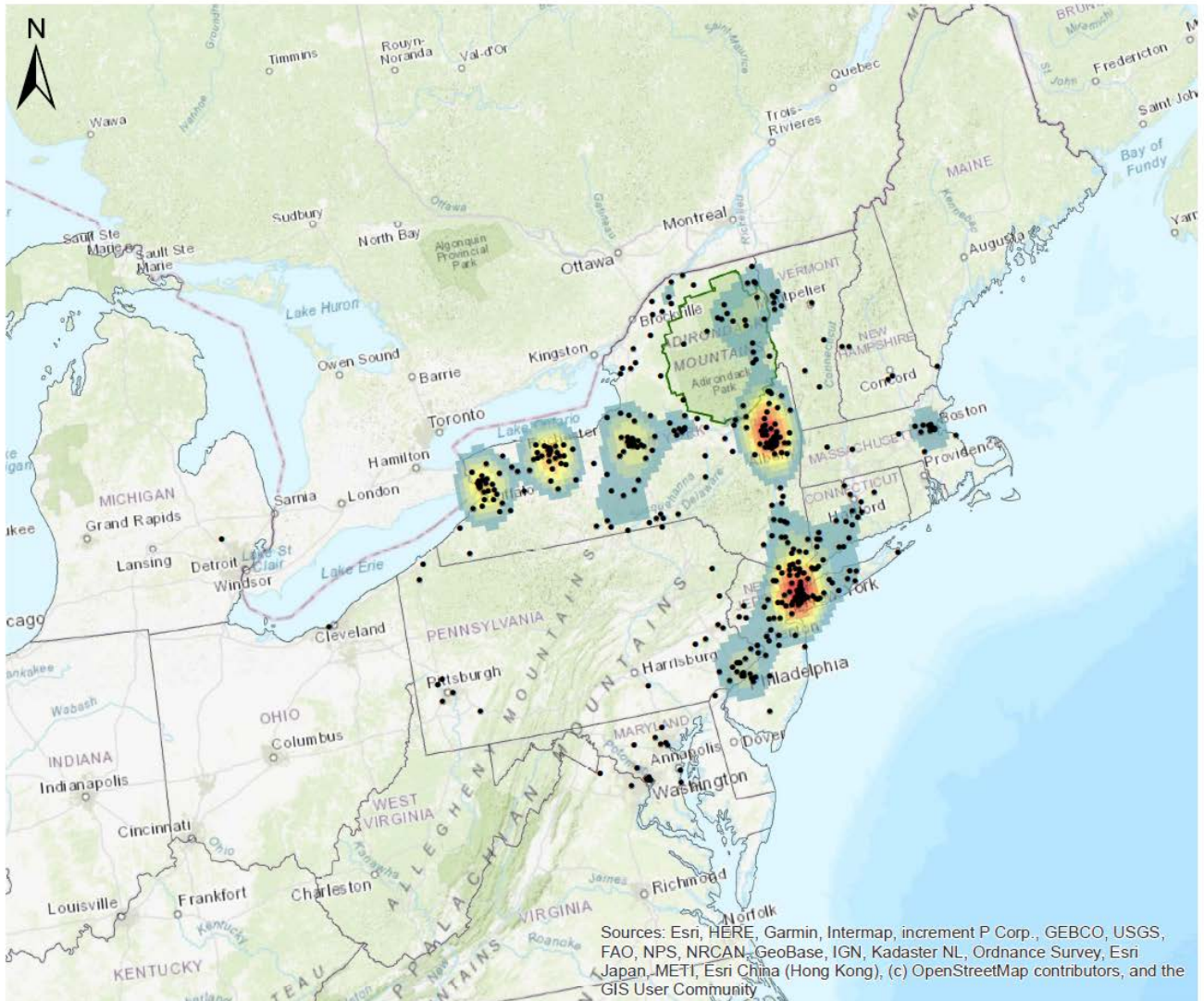
2 entries had "+dog"; dogs not counted; 1 entry said "me"; counted as "1"; 1 entry said "2-3"; this entry is void.

Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 661(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.22% response rate. 47.4% (319) of hikers were in pairs. We did not see occurrences of very large groups, which has been a trend in Northeast hiking areas over the past 5 years (Weiss n.d.) regardless of regulations. It is possible that restrictions brought about by Covid-19 caused smaller group size.

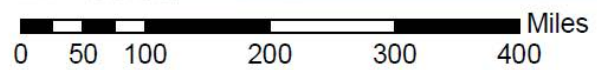
5. Please enter the zip code of your permanent residence: _____

Respondent Home Zip Code Heat Map



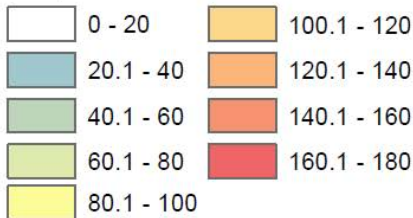
Legend

n = 425



Heat Map

Respondents



- Respondent Zip Code
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- State Boundaries

Respondents not shown:

- 3 from Puerto Rico
- 3 from Chicago, IL
- 2 from Florida
- 1 from each of the following:
CA, CO, GA, UT, TX, WI

Note: Because of the late hour of this addition, I'll let this speak for itself for now.

Q6

6. How many times have you visited the High Peaks Region for recreation in the last year? _____

Q7

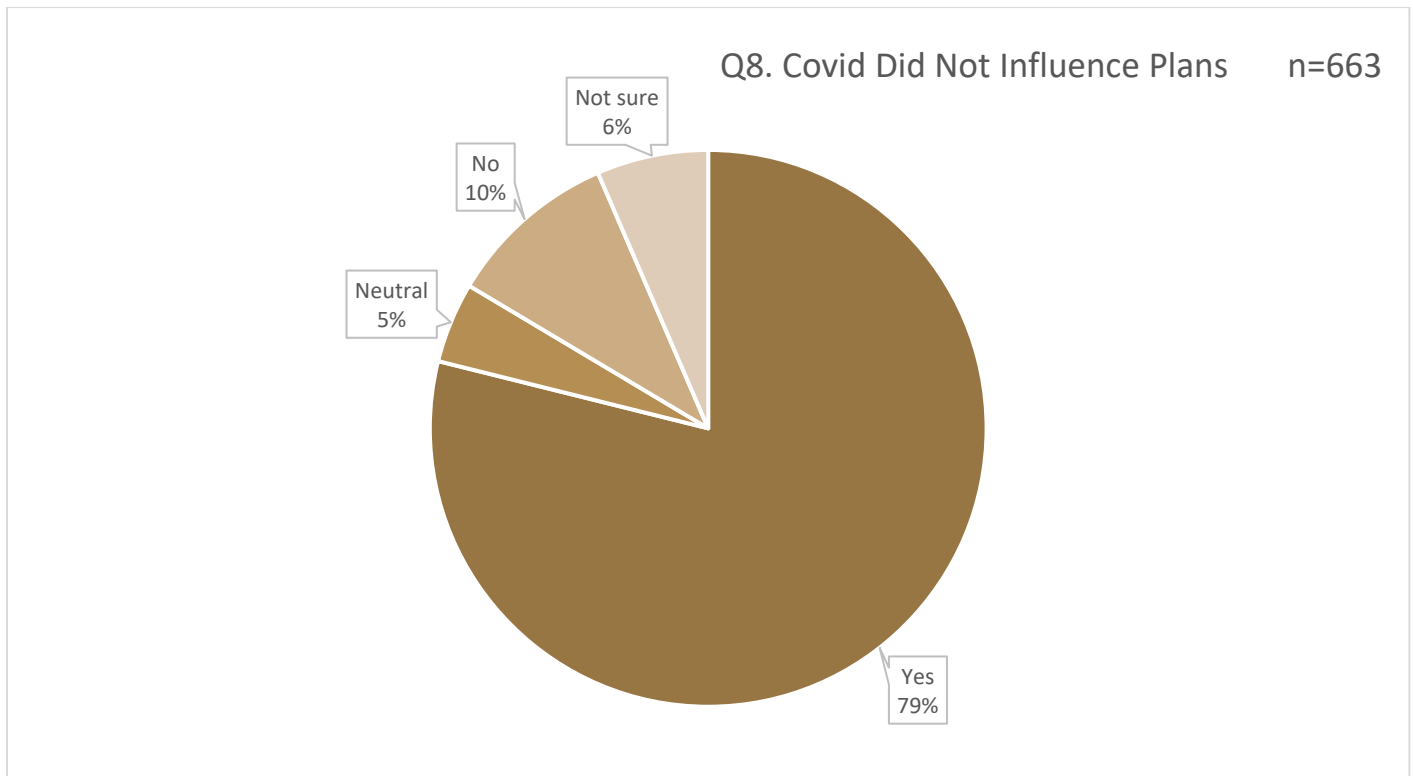
7. In the last 5 years? _____

Error checking of Q6 and Q7 was not resolved in time for this preliminary report.

Q8

8. If the COVID-19 pandemic had not occurred, would you be recreating in the High Peaks Region today? (Check one)

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	523
Neutral	31
No	66
Not sure	43

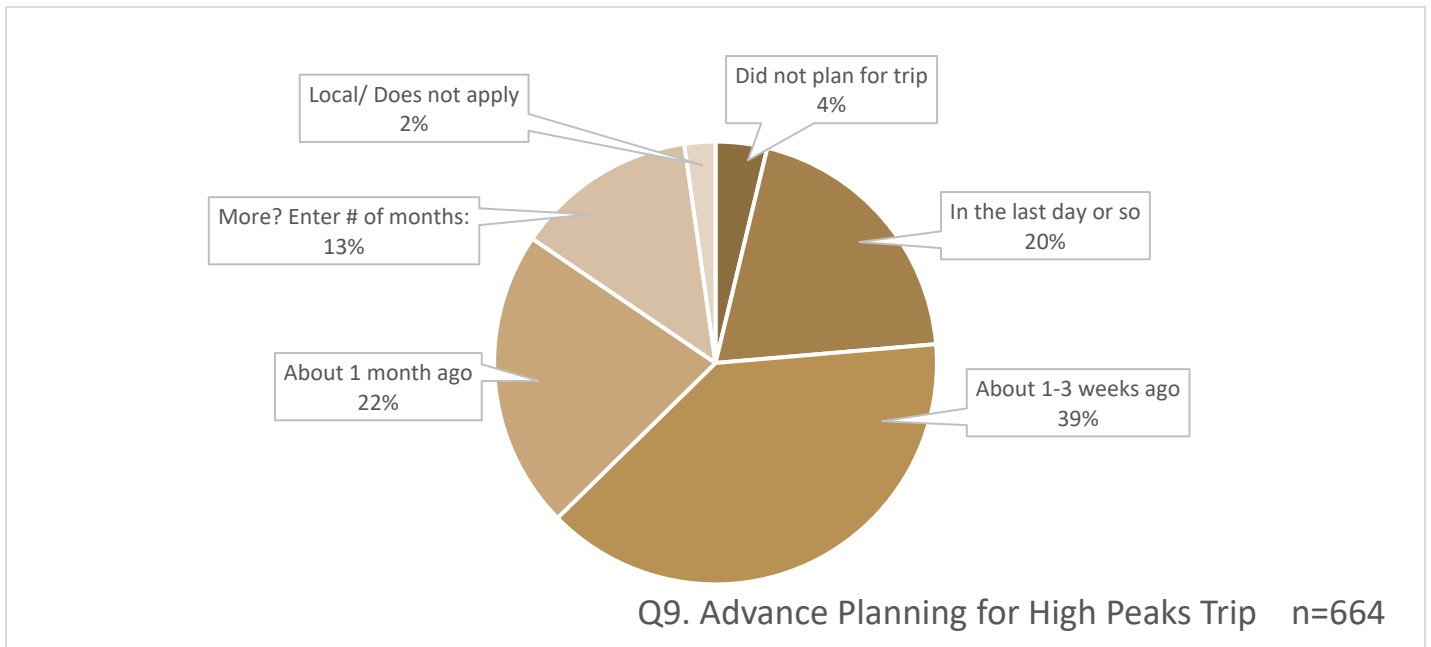
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 663(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.51% response rate. It is clear that most respondents (79%, 523) claim that they would have been on their trip to the high peaks regardless of Covid-19. One can also surmise that the No's (10%, 66) are signaling that Covid DID figure in their trip decision making. Going forward we would likely word this question differently.

Q9

9. When did you start planning for today's trip? (Check one)

- Did not plan for trip
- In the last day or so
- About 1-3 weeks ago
- About 1 month ago
- More? Enter # of months: _____
- Local resident/ Does not apply



NOTES

	Frequency
Did not plan for trip	25
In the last day or so	132
About 1-3 weeks ago	259
About 1 month ago	145
More? Enter # of months:	88
Local/ Does not Apply	15

88 respondents selected "More? Enter # of months:". The word "month" was removed from 3 entries; . "yr", year" or "annual" was converted to 12 months; entries such as "2-3" were rounded up to 3; the symbol "~" was removed from one entry; one answer was voided; One was left blank.

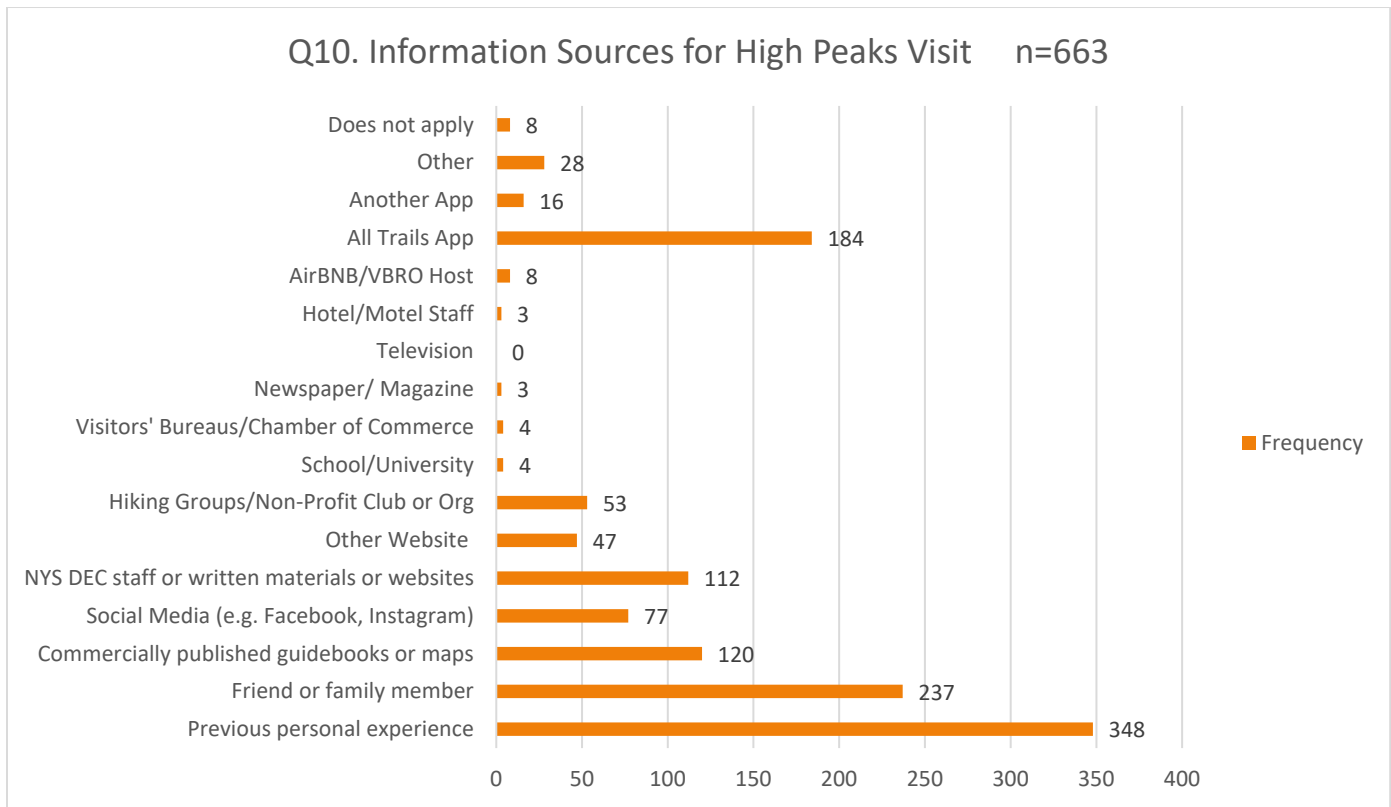
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 664(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.66% response rate. 59% planned less than one month in advance and 4% (25) did not plan for their visit to the High Peaks on this occasion.

Q10

10. Where did you obtain information about your visit to this location today? (Check all that apply)

- Previous personal experience
- Friend or family member
- Commercially published guidebooks or maps
- Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)
- NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) staff or written materials or websites.
- Other Website Name: _____
- Hiking Groups/ Non-Profit Club or Org
- School/ University
- Visitors' Bureaus/ Chamber of Commerce
- Newspaper/ Magazine
- Television
- Hotel/ Motel Staff
- Air BnB/ VRBO Host
- All Trails App
- Another App, Name: _____
- Other: _____
- Does not apply



<i>Other Websites: 47 Respondents selected; 12 websites were identified</i>	
Google	11
All Trails Website	8
Adirondack Mountain Club Site	3
"Various"	3
adirondack.net	2
CNY Hiking	2

lakeplacid.com	2
offonadventure.com	2
Reddit	2
adirondacks.org	1
Mytrails.com	1
saranaclake.com	1
YouTube	1

<i>Other Apps: 16 Respondents selected; 5 apps were identified</i>	
Gaia	4
Dack App	1
Avenza	1
Mountain Project	1
Peak View	1

<i>Other: 28 Respondents selected; 5 general sources were identified</i>	
"I live here" and similar	5
"regular visitor" or similar	2
Adirondack Loj (ADK)	2
Work	1
The Mountaineer (retail store)	1
"another person" or similar	1
46 of 46 podcast	1
Mountain Weather Forecasts	1
Phil Brown's book	1
Elk Lake Lodge	1

NOTES: (1) Some respondents disregarded labels and entered Google, Gaia, and All Trails indiscriminately across all three open prompts. These entries are void as data. (2) Entries we are unable to verify via web search are also void.

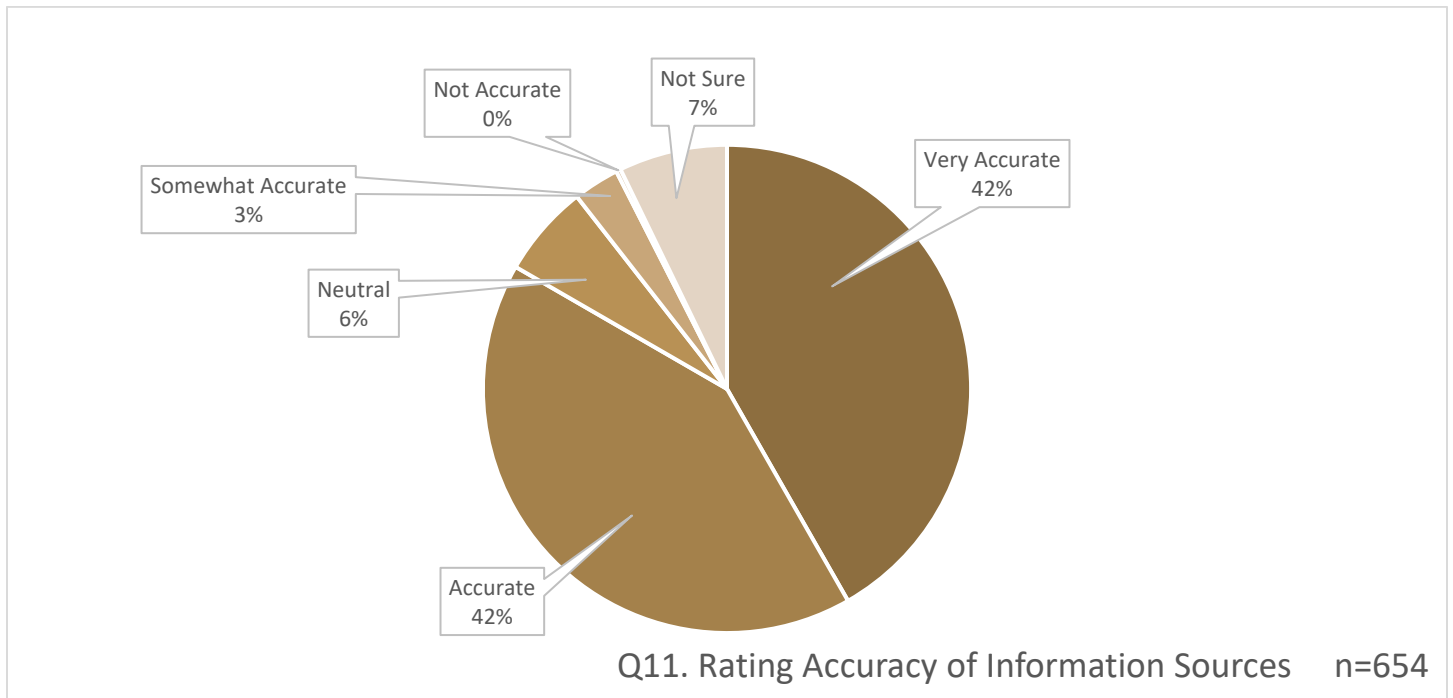
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 663(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.51% response rate. Respondents could check as many sources as they liked, so the numbers for each selection should be considered independently. As predicted, All Trails, the app and the website, are popular sources for information among these recreational users. Yet, guidebooks and use of NYS DEC materials had a strong showing. Last, based on this data collection, Television is not considered as an information source on this topic by these respondents, refuting anecdotal complaints about NYS tourism advertising causing overcrowding.

Q11

11. Can you rate the accuracy of the information you found? (Check one)

- Very Accurate
- Accurate
- Neutral
- Somewhat Accurate
- Not Accurate
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Very Accurate	273
Accurate	272
Neutral	40
Somewhat Accurate	20
Not Accurate	2
Not Sure	47

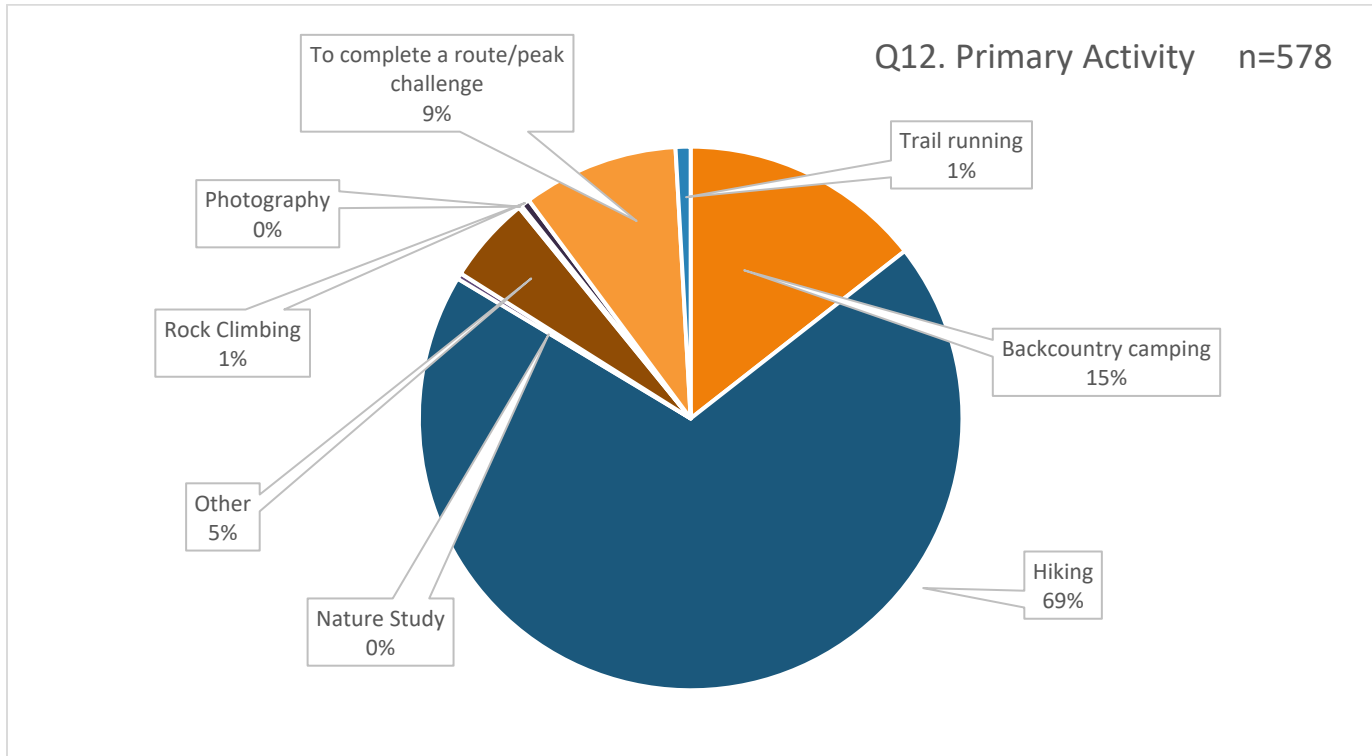
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 654(n) valid responses to this question for a 97.18% response rate. 88% of respondents rated the information they found for their High Peaks trip favorably.

Q12

12. What is the primary activity of your trip? (Check one)

- Backcountry Camping (In the Park for 2 or more consecutive days)
- To complete a route or peak challenge.
- Hiking
- Trail Running
- Rock Climbing
- Photography
- Nature Study (e.g. birding, plant identification)
- Other: _____



NOTES

This report does not include up to 91 voided entries.

29 respondents entered "Other"; 27 of these entries were valid and added these 17 answers:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Campground host work | Looking at lake to see if good for canoeing |
| Canoeing | Morning walk |
| Car Camping | Paddling |
| Dog walking | Pole walk |
| Family visit | Training |
| Work for NYSDEC | Walking |
| Kayaking | Work |
| Getaway | We are in our RV and wanted to see some foliage and go on hikes |
| leisure/hiking | |

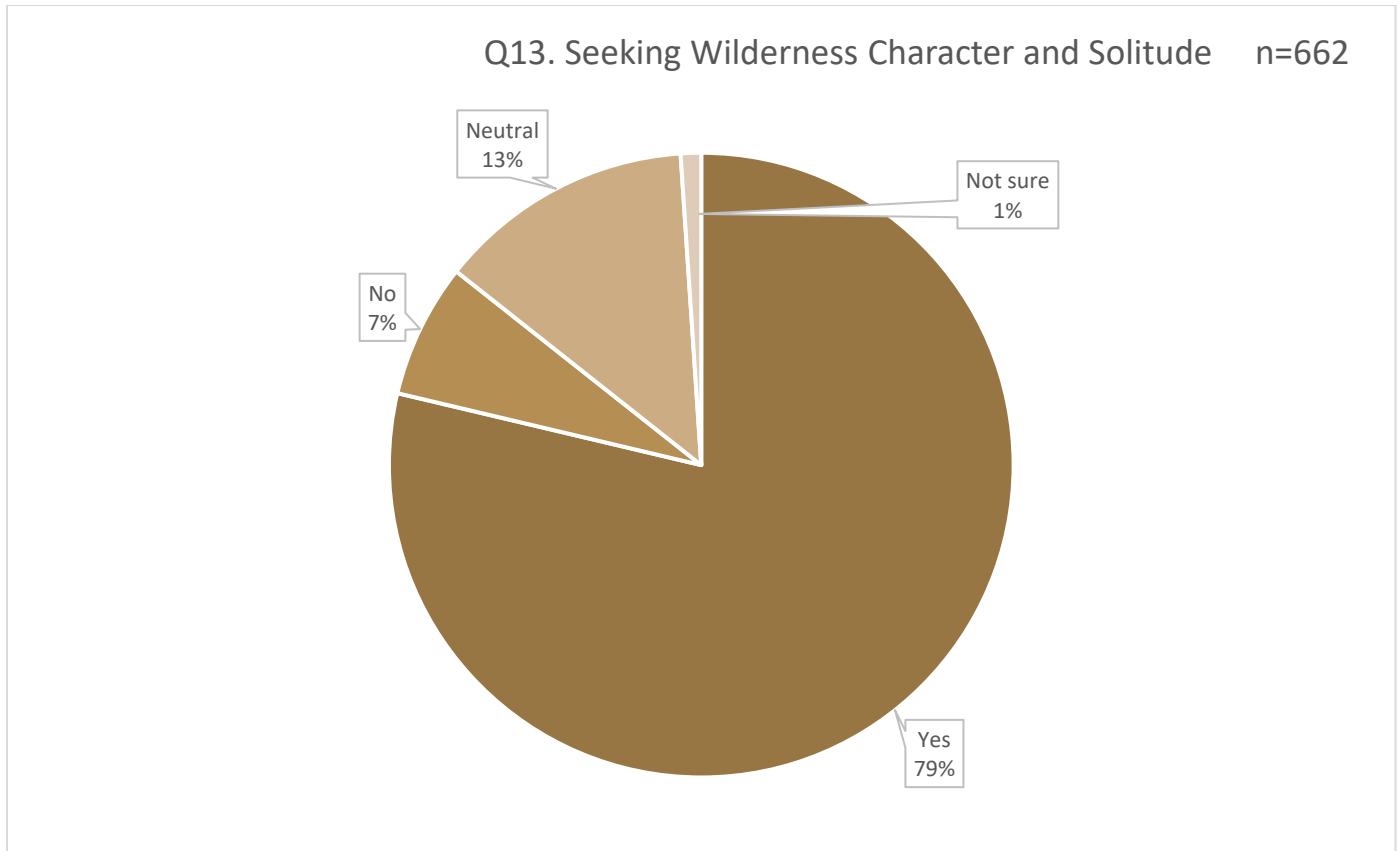
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 578(n) valid responses to this question for a **85.88% response rate**. We are early in fully processing these data. While one can mention that these activities are occurring and hiking is the most popular, it would not be appropriate to share these numbers in a press release at this time.

Q13

13. Did you come to this location to experience what you would consider wilderness character and solitude? (Check one)

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	521
No	46
Neutral	88
Not sure	7

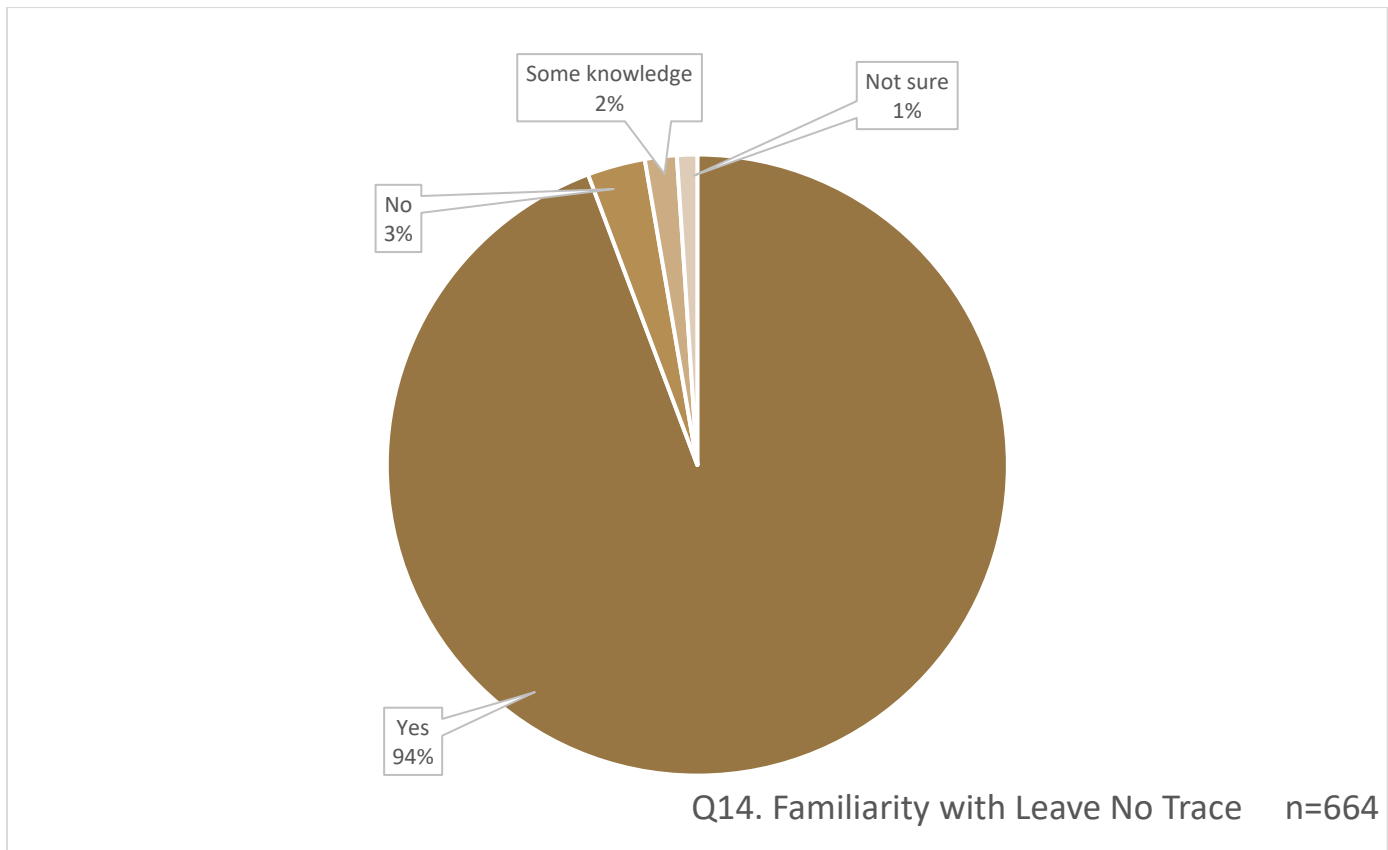
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 662(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.37% response rate. At 79% (521), the majority of respondents came to the High Peaks for its wilderness characteristics and solitude. That said, respondents were not asked for nor provided with definitions for these terms.

Q14

14. Are you familiar with Leave No Trace principles? (Check one)

- Yes
- Some knowledge
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	626
No	20
Some Knowledge	11
Not Sure	7

Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 664(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.66% response rate. 94% (626) of respondents confirmed they are familiar with Leave No Trace Principles. This is a testament to the growing popularity of this ethical framework and programming. That said, respondents were not tested on their LNT knowledge.

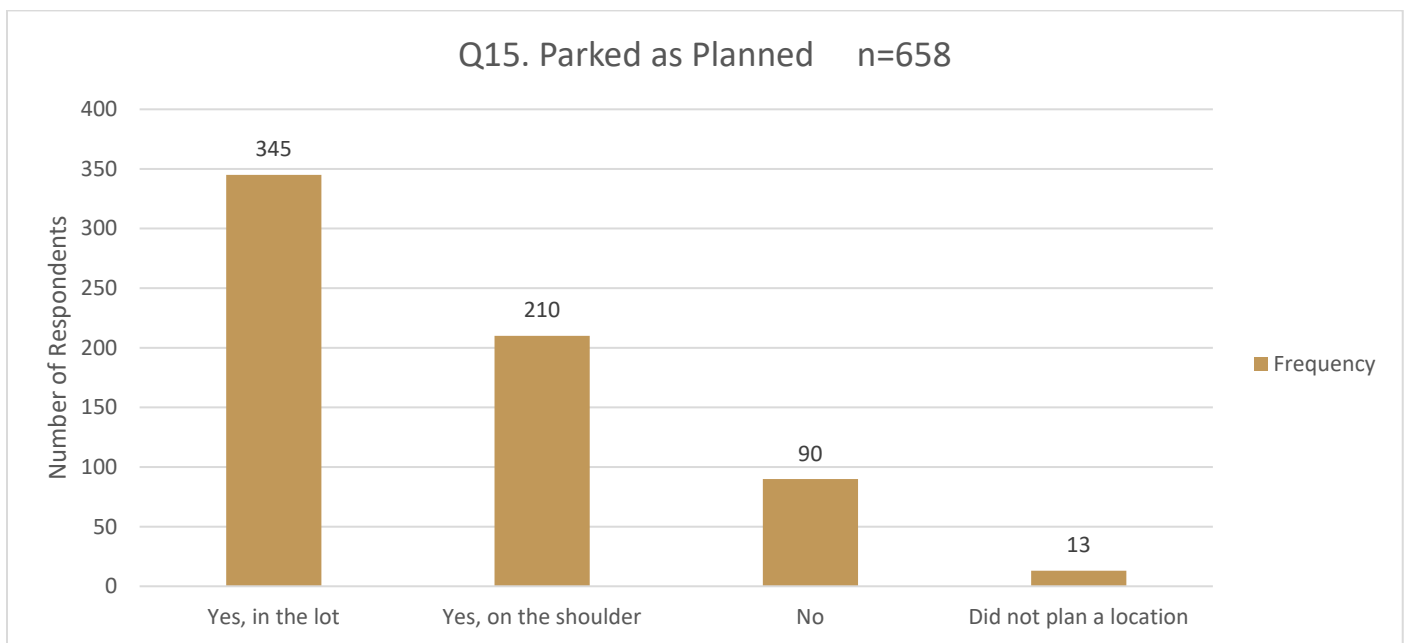
From the survey:

In the next few questions, we are asking for your input about conditions and management actions that may manage capacity in areas of the Park such as popular trailheads and adjacent parking areas. Please check only one response per question.

Q15

15. Were you able to park at your planned location for your trip today?

- Yes, in the lot
- Yes, but on the shoulder of the road
- No
- Did not plan for a particular location



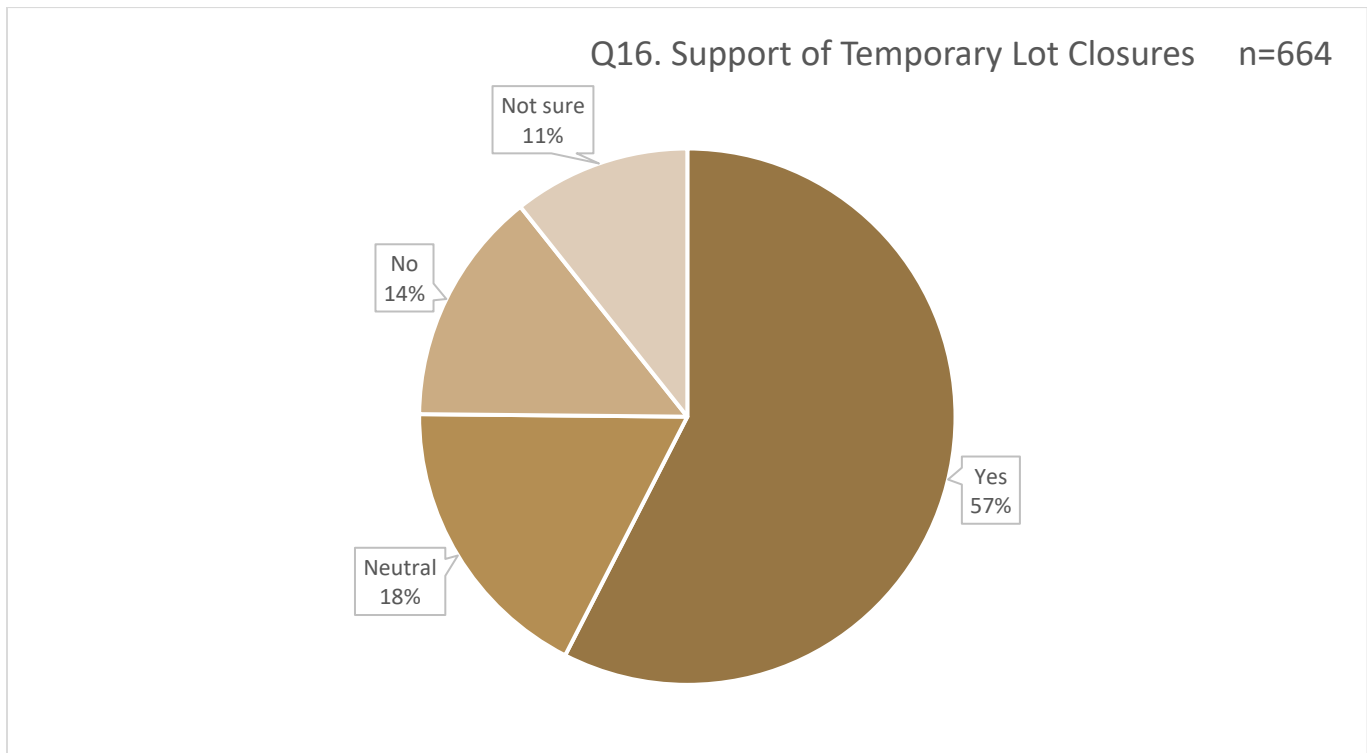
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 658(n) valid responses to this question for a 97.77% response rate. 31.91% (210) claimed they planned to and parked on the shoulder. Parking on the shoulder at many of these sites has been limited since sign installation starting in 2019.

Q16

16. Would you support temporary parking area closures when a trailhead parking lot has reached capacity?

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	382
Neutral	117
No	94
Not sure	71

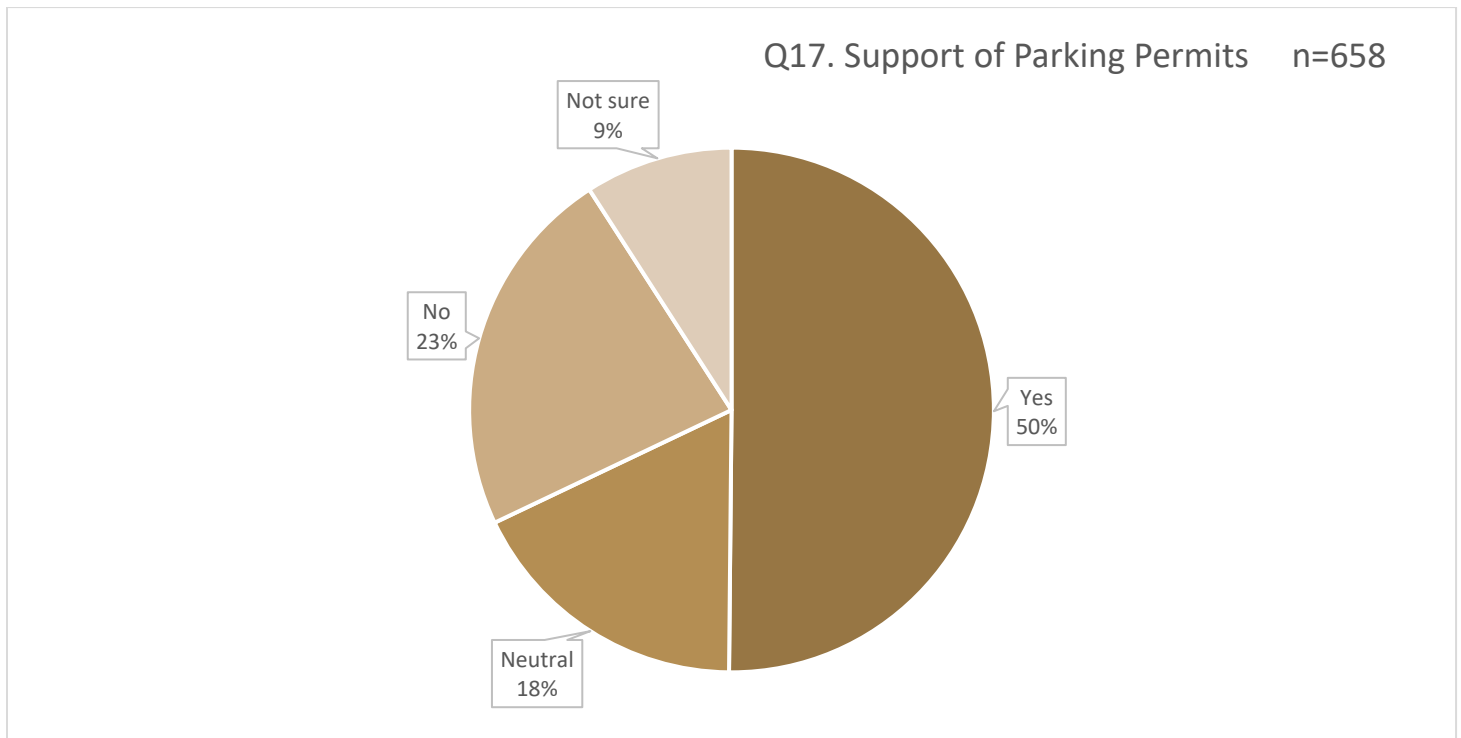
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 664(n) valid responses to this question for a 98.66% response rate. At 57% (382) closing trailhead lots when they are full has support.

Q17

17. Would you support a parking permit system that would guarantee a parking space at a trailhead on arrival?

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	330
Neutral	117
No	151
Not sure	60

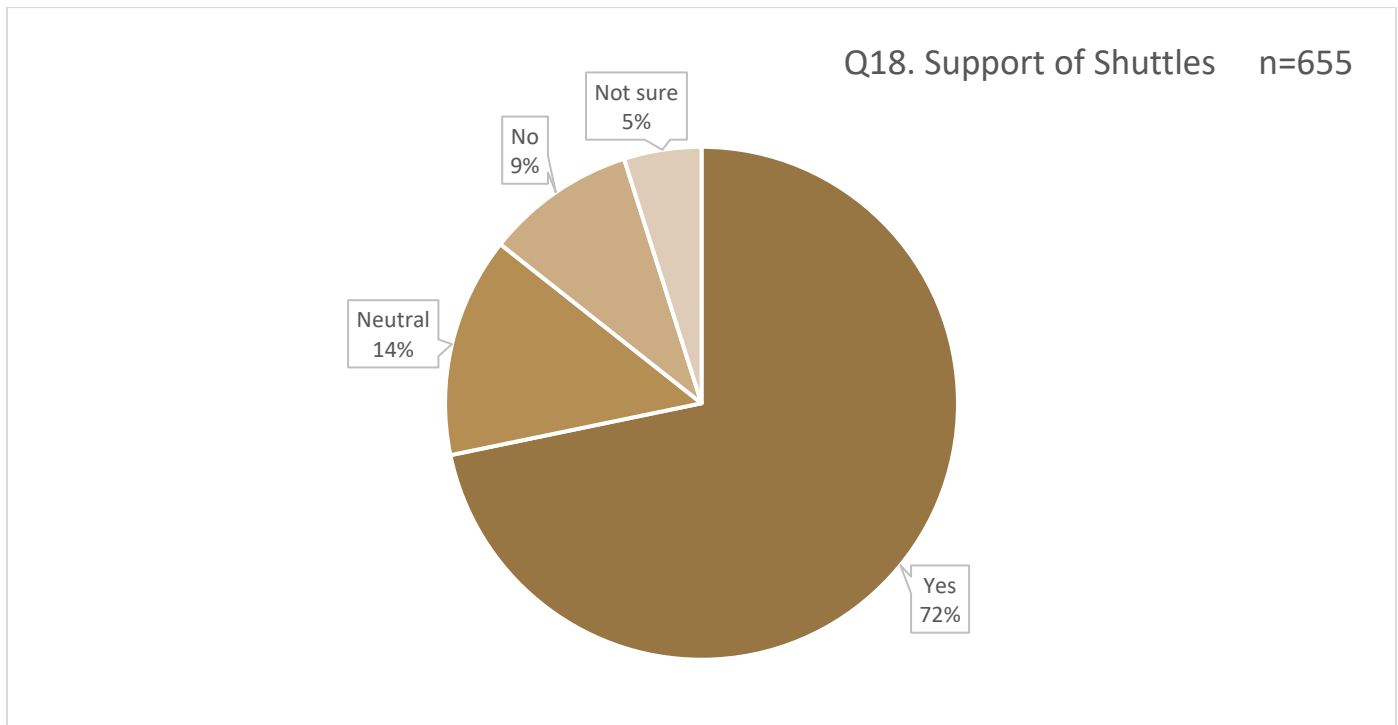
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 658(n) valid responses to this question for a 97.77% response rate. 50% (330) support a parking permit system of some kind. Based on public comments provided to DEC HPAG, one may suspect that the No's (23%, 151) may have concerns about who such policy will favor. The 9% (60) not sure and 18% (117) neutral may signal hesitation regarding change of any kind – the result of such a measure is an unknown they cannot suss out. This analysis is likely borne out in the open comments (Q22).

Q18

18. Would you support shuttle busses (seating ~16) that bring people to trailheads from an offsite parking area?

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	470
Neutral	91
No	62
Not sure	32

Summary:

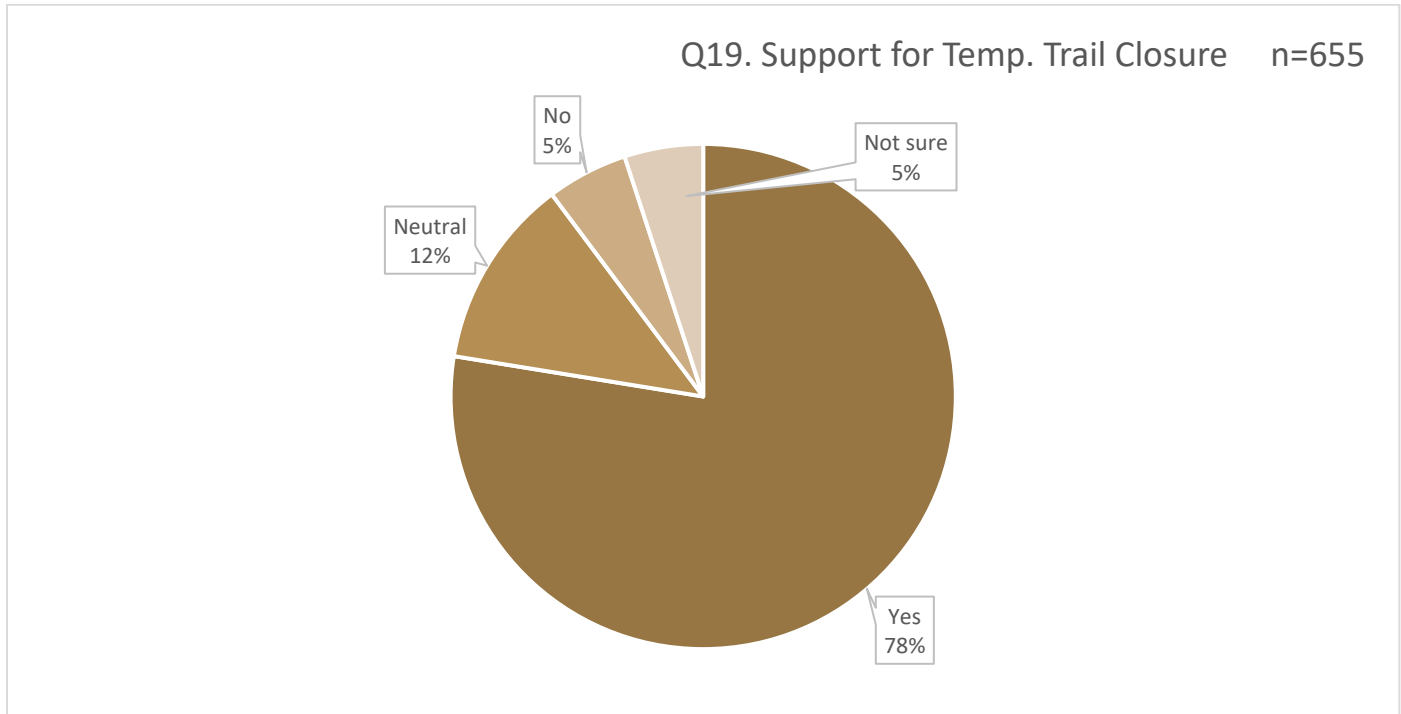
Out of 673 participants, there were 655(n) valid responses to this question for a 97.33% response rate. At 72% (470), shuttle busses have strong support with these respondents. That said, the second most popular answer Neutral (14%, 91) probably represents a group that would not take the shuttle, so “It does not apply to me”, etc.

Note: Busses may be spelled busses or buses. For the press release, align with how Keene or the DEC spells it.

Q19

19. Would you support temporary trail closures when conditions are dangerous, or foot traffic would permanently damage the trail and the natural environment? (e.g. spring mud season)

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	508
Neutral	80
No	34
Not sure	33

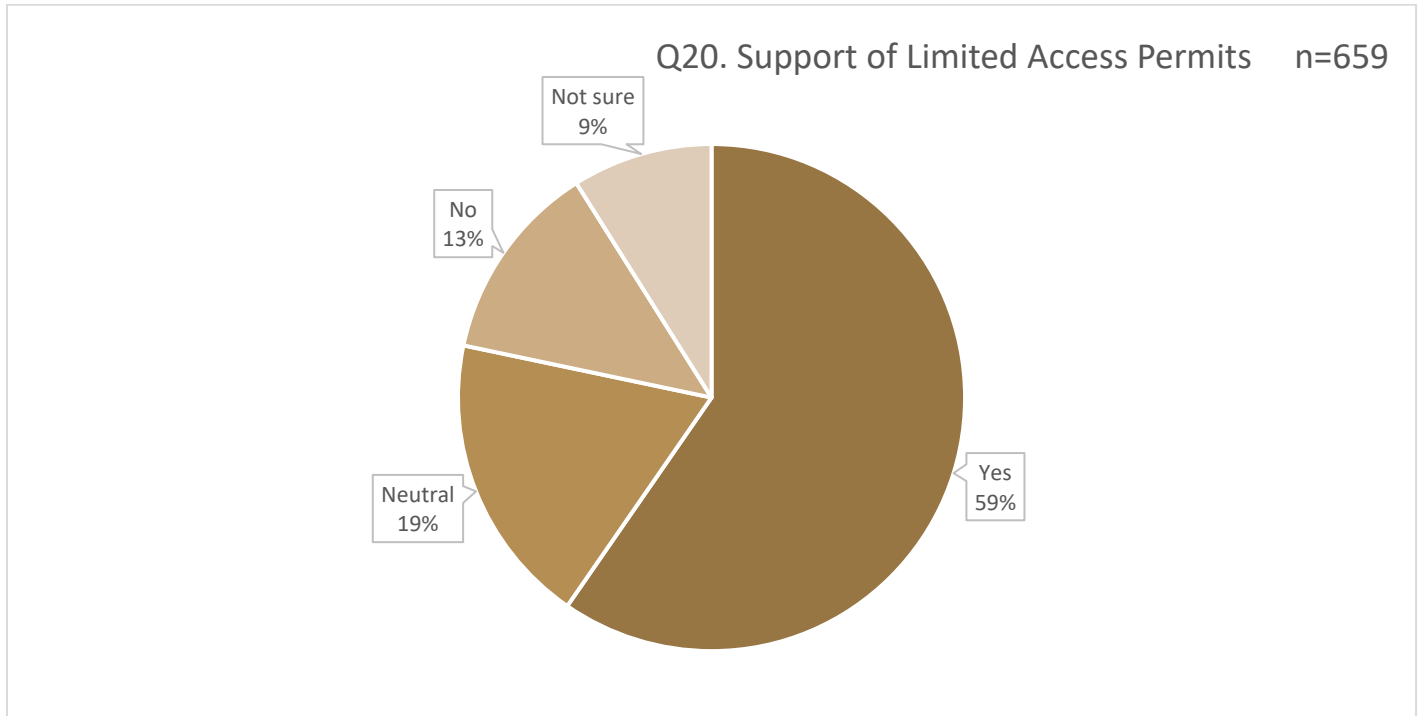
Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 655(n) valid responses to this question for a 97.33% response rate. At 78% (508). Protecting the trail surface has overwhelming support. The No's (5%, 34) may represent a recreational user as a location of their sport goals rather than a commons (Weiss n.d.).

Q20

20. Would you support access permits (i.e. limited issue, as in use at the National Parks) to manage capacity in wilderness areas of the Park where use is degrading the trails and natural environment?

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
- Not sure



NOTES

	Frequency
Yes	393
Neutral	123
No	84
Not sure	59

Summary:

Out of 673 participants, there were 659(n) valid responses to this question for a 97.92% response rate. While 59% (393) shows support, the Not sure (9%, 59) and Neutral (19%, 123) may signal that more education on the issue is needed.

Q21

21. Would you support a combination of the actions described above? (Check all that apply)

- Permitted parking
- Temporary closures for parking areas at capacity
- Shuttle buses
- Temporary trail closures to preserve conditions
- Limited Use permits
- None of these

Analysis of Q21 was not resolved in time for this preliminary report.

Q22

22. Please use the following space to tell us anything more about your answers.

Analysis of Q22 was not resolved in time for this preliminary report.