



How visitors seek information ahead of visit

First-time/infrequent visitors far more likely to seek information prior to visits

New visitors are a primary audience for information about parks and trails (Figure 33). First time/infrequent visitors are 86% of those seeking information. They are more likely to seek information on park hours, parking, and rules (Table 15). They are less likely to seek information on trail conditions. BIPOC visitors more frequently used social media and friends/family as information sources compared with White visitors (Table 16).

New park visitors were the most likely to seek information prior to visiting.

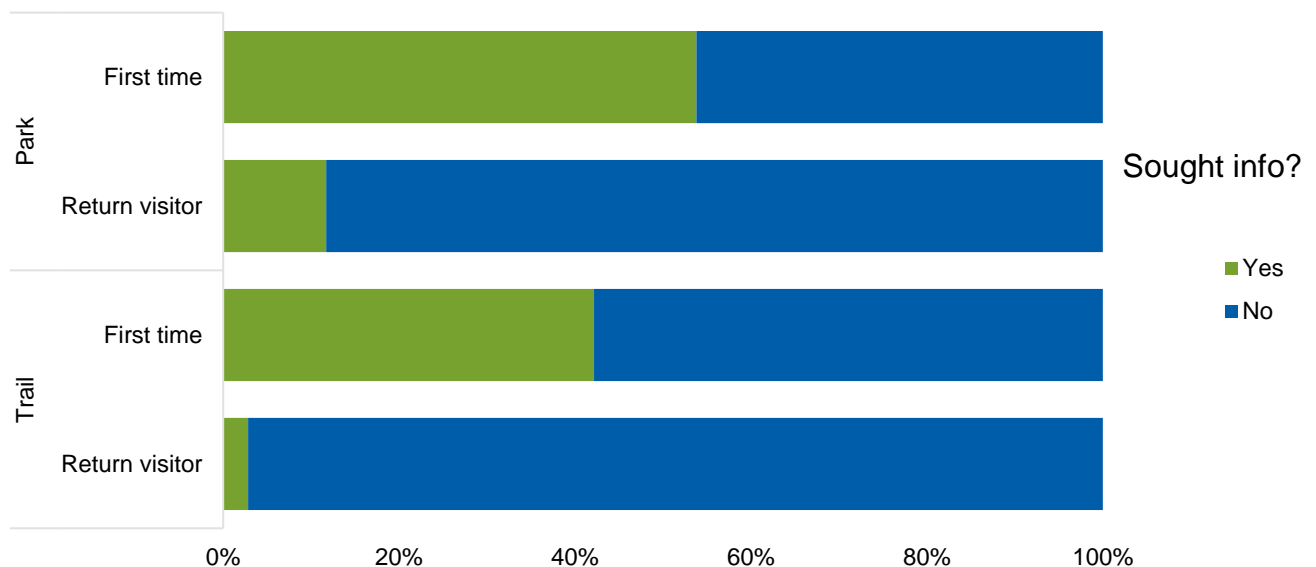


Figure 1: Information seeking by new and returning visitors compared by park and trail (unweighted data, percent)

Maps, activity guides, and information about nature features most sought

Visitors most desired maps, activities guides, and nature features (lakes, woods and such) (Table 15). The survey asked, “In general, what kind of information would be helpful for you to plan a visit to parks and trails in this region?” Most frequently used information sources include smartphone map, word of mouth (Table 16). BIPOC visitors more often drew from family/friends and social media compared to White visitors.

Patterns of information seeking were similar across park agencies (Tables 15, 16). New visitors desired park hours, parking information, and park rules more often, while returning visitors were more likely to seek trail conditions.

Most mentioned helpful information systemwide includes maps, activity guide, and available nature features.

Park Agency	Maps	Activity guide	Nature features	Trail conditions	Entry locations & trail access	Park hours	Entrance fees	Onsite signs & information	Parking information	Rental equipment fees	Park rules	Space rental fees	Public transit information	Disability accommodations & access	Other
Anoka County	53%	49%	43%	38%	43%	33%	36%	31%	21%	18%	18%	12%	8%	9%	9%
Bloomington	54%	44%	43%	37%	42%	36%	33%	34%	28%	22%	21%	10%	10%	7%	7%
Carver County	50%	50%	41%	38%	37%	42%	36%	25%	24%	18%	24%	10%	3%	5%	7%
Dakota County	61%	47%	45%	50%	46%	33%	32%	34%	28%	24%	18%	12%	7%	7%	9%
Minneapolis	51%	51%	52%	43%	39%	38%	33%	36%	33%	19%	19%	13%	13%	10%	8%
Ramsey County	57%	43%	45%	46%	43%	36%	33%	38%	34%	17%	22%	12%	9%	11%	5%
Saint Paul	49%	48%	46%	38%	38%	42%	34%	32%	28%	18%	20%	11%	12%	10%	4%
Scott County	55%	43%	39%	46%	37%	38%	33%	30%	23%	28%	20%	12%	4%	8%	7%
Three Rivers	57%	49%	44%	42%	37%	37%	35%	30%	27%	24%	20%	14%	7%	9%	8%
Washington County	55%	45%	42%	39%	38%	34%	34%	29%	25%	21%	19%	12%	5%	5%	7%
Mean	54%	47%	44%	42%	40%	37%	34%	32%	27%	21%	20%	12%	8%	8%	7%

Table 1: All categories of information that visitors say would be helpful to plan a visit to parks and trails in the region

New visitors desired more information on this compared with returning visitors
New visitors desired less information on this compared with returning visitors
No rate of difference between new and returning visitors

Most frequently used information sources include smartphone map and word of mouth. BIPOC visitors more often drew from family/friends and social media compared to White visitors.

Park agency	Smartphone map	Family & friends	A specific park or trail website	Onsite map or rec guide	Other internet sources/apps	Facebook	Printed map or atlas	Help desk at park	Another park, trail, or nature center	Local newsletter	Email from the park or county	Instagram	Other social media	Twitter
Anoka County	58%	41%	38%	25%	14%	12%	11%	10%	7%	7%	6%	3%	4%	1%
Bloomington	55%	40%	41%	28%	13%	10%	11%	6%	7%	11%	5%	5%	1%	2%
Carver County	55%	44%	36%	21%	15%	11%	7%	6%	6%	4%	7%	2%	5%	1%
Dakota County	58%	38%	47%	30%	20%	14%	10%	6%	6%	6%	7%	2%	4%	2%
Minneapolis	64%	50%	38%	31%	14%	11%	8%	8%	6%	8%	8%	5%	4%	2%
Ramsey County	62%	41%	43%	31%	18%	11%	12%	9%	8%	8%	11%	3%	5%	1%
Saint Paul	61%	49%	38%	26%	12%	13%	10%	8%	6%	7%	6%	5%	5%	3%
Scott County	54%	40%	41%	22%	14%	12%	7%	6%	5%	5%	6%	2%	1%	2%
Three Rivers	58%	39%	43%	29%	12%	10%	11%	8%	7%	7%	6%	5%	3%	2%
Washington County	56%	43%	46%	28%	12%	10%	8%	12%	9%	6%	6%	2%	2%	1%
Mean	58%	42%	41%	27%	14%	11%	10%	8%	7%	7%	7%	3%	3%	2%

Table 2: Information sources used, compared by park agency

BIPOC visitors use source more often than white visitors
White visitors use source more often than BIPOC visitors
No significant difference between visitor use

Park agencies reflect on new visitors and information seeking

“These results show that the priority of communication is rising in importance. Communications is foundational to the success of our system. We need to prioritize information seeking across all park agencies. There is a misconception that we only need to build the system and invest in growing the system. But good communication is what attracts people. We need to push this priority, and the Met Council can support this through grant opportunities. Directors can support it through reviewing this data.”

- Communication workshop participant, fall

2022

Park agency staff participated in a workshop on information seeking, and an additional conversation with communications staff provided insights. The higher percentage of people of color among new visitors provides an opportunity to support underserved communities. This means focusing on providing the right information and activities and understanding how new visitors experience their first visit. New audiences are a high priority in communication strategies (Figure 34).

“It’s a success that a higher proportion of new visitors are young and people of color. This is a new audience we have prioritized.”

“We recognize that social media and word of mouth are important. We want to expand even more in these areas.”

“We need more data on why people don’t visit, or what brought them out to their first visit. What is the ‘why’ behind these statistics?”

“These numbers reflect what we’ve been seeing in BIPOC visitation and how people learn about our system.”

“We follow the lead of BIPOC staff about how they want to communicate and build relationships. It’s not going to look the same as outreach to white audiences.”

“We hired an equity coordinator, and this is an important step in improving communication with new audiences.”

Figure 2: Analysis of new visitor and information seeking by park agencies in summer workshops