



Research Services

Northern Rockies - Alaska Highway
Visitor Research Project
FINAL REPORT

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Project Partners

Alberta Economic Development ▪ Alberta North Tourism Destination Region
Canadian Tourism Commission ▪ Doig River First Nation ▪ Fort Nelson First Nation
Northern Rockies - Alaska Highway Tourism Association ▪ Northern Rockies Regional District
Public Works & Government Services Canada ▪ Sci-Tech North ▪ Tourism Dawson Creek

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway Visitor Research Project was undertaken in 2003 to provide data on the characteristics and volume of travelers along the highway and to support marketing plan design and product development in the Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway region. The project was sponsored by a partnership of eleven local, regional, provincial, and national organizations that provided direct funding and/or in-kind services.

Methods

Between May 15 and September 25, 2003, 3,259 interviews were conducted with travelers intercepted at two Visitor Info Centres, four attractions/museums and three campgrounds in Northeastern BC. The target population included all people traveling to or through Northeastern BC, except for those on a day trip, traveling for personal reasons, working as part of a construction crew or in shipping/transportation, or traveling as part of an organized bus or RV caravan tour group. Follow-up surveys were mailed to travelers in the target population in the fall of 2003 and 59% were returned by March 2004.

Demographics

Overall, half of all travelers were Canadians and 45% were Americans. BC and Alberta residents made up 70% of Canadian travelers intercepted in Northeastern BC. The top six states of residence for Americans were Alaska, California, Washington, Michigan, Florida and Texas. Overseas visitors accounted for 6% of travelers and were predominantly Europeans from Germany or Switzerland.

The travelers in this region are different in terms of age and travel party composition from other travelers in BC. Over half were over 55 years of age; a quarter were 65 years and older. Most people were traveling in parties of two or four and less than 15% were traveling with children.

Early in the season, travelers were more likely to be from the US and over 55 years of age. In the summer months, more Canadians and younger people were traveling in or through the region.

Trip characteristics

Most people were traveling for leisure (83%); nearly 10% were visiting friends and relatives, and 5% were traveling for business purposes.

Three-quarters of Americans said their primary destination was Alaska, compared to 20% of Canadians. Half of Canadians were traveling to Northeast BC or the Yukon (27% and 24% respectively). While 40% of overseas travelers were destined for Alaska, nearly a third said they were on a circle tour with no specific destination.

A third of travelers had visited their destination (or traveled on the same route) before. Sixty percent of these travelers had visited at least twice between 1997 and 2002; 28% had visited four or more times in the five year period.

Travelers were motivated to take their trip by the idea of seeing wildlife and wild landscapes, visiting places they had never been before, and/or taking a journey they had heard about and

always wanted to make. At least sixty percent of travelers said these three motivations were very important in their decision to take their trip to the North. Opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities or travel in places where they felt safe were also important motivations.

Half of travelers used self-contained vehicles – truck campers, camper vans, 5th wheel trailers, and motorhomes – as their primary mode of transportation. Self-contained vehicles were particularly popular among the older, Alaska-bound and leisure traveler segments. Most travelers were driving to and from their destination; however, 21% included a one-way flight or cruise in their trip.

Most travelers used two or three types of accommodation during their trip. Campgrounds – both government and private – were the most popular form of accommodation, followed by hotels or motels. Mode of transportation had the largest impact on choice of accommodation, as the majority of travelers in self-contained vehicles used campgrounds as their primary accommodation, compared to 40% of travelers driving a car, truck or van. A third of travelers spent at least one night in a road-side pullout or parking log during their trip. This proportion increased to 50% for travelers driving a camper van/truck camper or motorhome.

Trip length and expenditures

On average, travelers spent about 40 nights away from home on their trip. Regional travelers (from BC, Alberta, the Yukon and Alaska) spent about 20 nights away from home, whereas long-haul travelers were away for 50 nights or more.

During their trip, two-thirds of travelers in the North said they had some degree of flexibility in their return dates and 40% said they could change their return date by a week or more. Overall, eight percent of travelers extended their trip in the North for four to eight additional nights. Although relatively few travelers lengthened their trip, nearly 70% of travelers indicated that they wanted to extend their trip. Prior commitments and time constraints were the two most frequently cited reasons for not being able to stay longer.

On average, travel parties spent \$150 per day (\$CDN) during their trip. While total trip expenditures ranged from \$50 to \$50,000, the typical travel party spent about \$6,000 on their trip. While daily expenditures varied primarily by mode of transportation, total trip expenditures were driven predominantly by trip length. Basic expenses – for transportation, accommodation and food and beverages purchased at grocery stores – accounted for 70% of daily expenditures. Discretionary spending included food and beverages purchased in restaurants, shopping, entertainment, attractions, and outdoor recreation. Interestingly, the expenditure allocations were very consistent across the trip and demographic characteristics.

Trip activities

Travelers participated in seven different types of activities, on average. Over three quarters of travelers visited a provincial, state or national park, visited a museum, heritage or historic site or walked, hiked or cycled during their trip. Overall, participation rates for most activities were higher for the long stay, Alaska-bound, motorhome traveler segments.

Travelers were also asked about their interest in various activities on a similar trip. Comparing the participation rates and interest levels identifies areas of opportunity for the tourism industry. For example, while a third of travelers visited attended a fair or festival on their trip, 56% were

interested in this activity on a similar trip. However, interest in a given activity was strongly dependent on whether a traveler had already participated in this activity. For example, interest in attending a fair or festival was much higher among travelers who had attended a fair or festival during their trip (86%), compared to travelers who had not (44%).

Travel information

While half of travelers planned their trip within 4 months of departure, a quarter spent a year or more planning for their trip. On average, travelers used two or three sources of information in the planning stage. Canadians relied mainly on past experience and word of mouth, while US travelers favoured the *Milepost* guide and the internet, and overseas travelers used the internet and books.

During their trip, travelers typically used five different sources of information. Visitor Info Centre (VIC) counselors were the most frequently cited source of information, followed by the *Milepost*, brochures, past experience, and advice from local residents or staff working at campgrounds, restaurants or attractions. Overall, the *Milepost* was rated as the most useful source of information, followed by VIC counselors and past experience.

About 60% of travelers who stopped at a VIC in Northeastern BC wanted map or route information. Travelers were also looking for accommodation and attraction information. During their visit to the Dawson Creek and/or Fort Nelson VICs, 80% of travelers spoke with a VIC counselor.

Experiences and destination images

Over 90% of travelers said their travel experiences in the North met or exceeded their original expectations. Travelers on longer trips more frequently said that their experiences exceeded their expectations in a given region of the North, compared to those on shorter trips. While more first time travelers said their experiences exceeded their initial expectations compared to return visitors, between 20% and 40% of return visitors still indicated that their overall experience exceeded their expectations.

Travelers were asked about the images or characteristics they associated with Northern BC, Northern Alberta, the Yukon and Alaska. Scenery was the most frequently cited destination image for each region, followed by wildlife, history and hospitality. Some unique characteristics and differences were identified by travelers, but these results show that travelers do not differentiate specific regions within their image of 'the North'.

Traffic volume

Between May 15 and September 25, 2003, a traffic count was conducted at two locations north of Fort Nelson to determine the volume and origin of traffic traveling the Alaska Highway. These observations were used to estimate hourly traffic rates by month, time of day and traffic direction for calculate total traffic volume and traveler volume.

Overall, 139,700 vehicles traveled on the BC portion of the Alaska Highway, north of Fort Nelson. Non-commercial vehicles accounted for 86% of total traffic on average, giving a total of 120,600 traveler (non-commercial) vehicles. The total number of travelers - 320,400 - was estimated using the average party size (from the intercept interviews).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

For many people, the trip 'north to Alaska' is a journey of a lifetime. For others, the North is an area they enjoy exploring repeatedly. In many ways, the Alaska Highway – stretching over 2,000 kilometres from Dawson Creek, British Columbia to Fairbanks, Alaska – anchors the region, providing a transportation and historical link between British Columbia (BC), the Yukon and Alaska.

Travelers who come to 'drive the Alaska Highway' may not realize that 80% of their trip starting at Mile 0 in Dawson Creek is spent in Canada. People who travel by vehicle also drive through other parts of BC or Alberta to reach Dawson Creek. Some travelers from the southern United States may travel several thousand kilometres one-way just to reach Dawson Creek. In addition, many travelers visit Northern BC, Northern Alberta and/or the Yukon, without traveling all the way to Alaska. All of these travelers make significant contributions to regional and local economies.

Overall, tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in British Columbia and Alberta, and tourism is an increasingly important industry in Northern BC and Northern Alberta. Accurate information on visitor volume, profiles, and preferences is needed by communities, tourism associations and businesses to enhance the current opportunities and plan for future growth. The *British Columbia Visitor Study*, conducted in 1995/96 by Tourism British Columbia (Tourism BC), provided profiles of visitors traveling to or through Northeastern BC.¹ However, these visitor profiles and volume estimates are outdated and do not meet the industry's current needs.

The Northern Rockies - Alaska Highway Visitor Research project was initiated to:

- Provide data on the characteristics and volume of travelers along the highway.
- Provide research needed to support marketing plan design and product development in the Northern Rockies - Alaska Highway region

This project was sponsored by a partnership of eleven local, regional, provincial and national organizations that provided direct funding and/or in-kind services:

- Alberta Economic Development
- Alberta North Tourism Destination Region
- Canadian Tourism Commission
- Doig River First Nation
- Fort Nelson First Nation
- Northern Rockies - Alaska Highway Tourism Association
- Northern Rockies Regional District and the Town of Fort Nelson
- Public Works & Government Services Canada
- Sci-Tech North
- Tourism Dawson Creek
- Tourism British Columbia

The project was also supported by the Dawson Creek and Fort Nelson Visitor Info Centres, BC Parks, BC Hydro, and several local tourism operators in Northeastern BC.

¹ The BC Visitor Study reports are available on Tourism BC's website at www.tourismbc.com -> Research -> BC Visitor Study.

2.0 METHODS

This study used a three-phase research design:

1. Interviews with travelers intercepted in Northeastern BC
2. Follow-up surveys mailed to these travelers
3. Counts of vehicles traveling the highway

The interviews and mailback survey collected data on people traveling to or through the region. The traffic count was used to estimate the total number of vehicles traveling along the Alaska Highway. The interviews and traffic count were conducted during the summer of 2003 and the mailback survey was conducted in the fall of 2003. Each phase is described in detail below.

2.1 Defining the target population

The target population included all travelers intercepted in Northeastern BC except people traveling:

- On a day trip from their home
- For personal reasons (doctors or personal appointments)
- As shipping/transport or construction/maintenance crews (on the job)
- As part of organized bus or RV caravan tours

This definition focuses the scope of the study to the independent traveler, who is the target market for many tourism marketing organizations and businesses in the North.²

While travelers in organized group tours were not part of the target population, some basic information was collected from these travelers during the interviews to assist with marketing. The results are presented in Appendix A.

2.2 Intercept interviews

Traveler intercept interviews were conducted at nine locations in Northeastern British Columbia between May 15 and September 23, 2003 (Figure 1). The locations were selected to ensure a representative sample of travelers to and through the region and included:

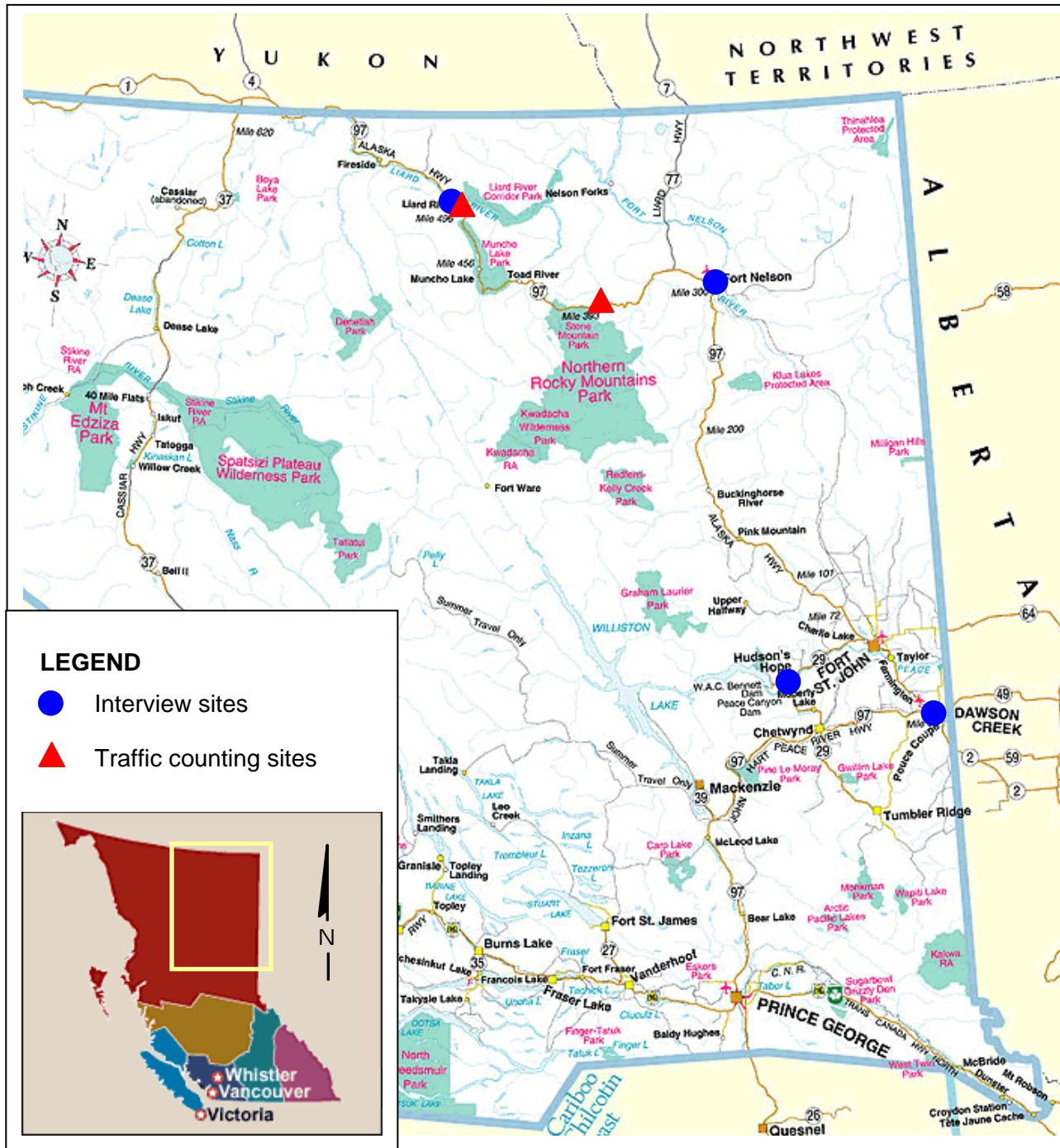
- *Visitor Info Centres:* Dawson Creek and Fort Nelson
- *Attractions and museums:* Walter Wright Pioneer Village in Dawson Creek, Dawson Creek Museum³, Fort Nelson Historical Museum, and the WAC Bennett Dam in Hudson's Hope
- *Campgrounds and parks:* Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park, Westend Campground & RV Park in Fort Nelson, Mile 0 RV Park in Dawson Creek.

² There are two definitions of the study area in this project. The *field study area* includes the eight interview locations in Northeastern BC, stretching from Liard Hot Springs in the north to Dawson Creek and the WAC Bennett Dam in the south. This area provides the geographic base for the target population. The *research area* is defined in the mailback survey as "the North", which includes Northern BC, Northern Alberta, the Yukon, and Alaska.

The report presents information on travelers' trips in the North. However, because the field study area limits the target population, the results do not represent all traveler segments in the research area.

³ The Dawson Creek Museum is located next to the Dawson Creek Visitor Info Centre.

Figure 1. Map of the study area (Northeast Rockies-Alaska Highway region).



Maps courtesy of www.hellobc.com

The interviews were conducted by two crews of two interviewers each; one crew was based in Dawson Creek and the other based in Fort Nelson. Tourism Dawson Creek and the Northern Rockies Regional District hired the interviewers and provided local supervision, office space, and logistical support.

The interviewers' schedule consisted of four-day blocks of interviewing with two days off. Interview days were rotated between the locations based on a systematic schedule, stratified by weekend/weekday, with a random start date. The systematic schedule was particularly important for the Fort Nelson crew because of the three-hour travel time one-way between Fort Nelson and Liard Hot Springs. BC Parks supported the project by providing accommodation in the park ranger cabins for the interviewers so they could survey on two consecutive days.

The interviewers randomly selected participants at each location, usually as they were leaving the facility or location. Participants were asked if they were willing to participate in a six to eight minute interview and were offered a Super, Natural British Columbia refrigerator magnet for their time.

The interviews included questions about:

- Traveler demographics: origin, age, education, party size
- Trip planning habits: information used, planning horizon
- Trip characteristics: purpose, destination, accommodation, mode of transportation
- Length of stay: departure and estimated return dates
- Average daily expenditures
- Trip flexibility: for activities and length of stay
- Use of Visitor Info Centres
- Driving experience on the Alaska Highway

Please refer to Appendix B for survey instruments.

The interviewers used mobile Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (mCAPI) Entryware™ software by Techneos™ loaded on hand-held Palm Pilots. This technology allowed interviewers to field complex questionnaires with minimal infrastructure (paper, pens, etc). The software also provided survey logic controls, automatic validation of responses, automatic recording of refusals and incomplete interviews. The interviewers downloaded the data at the end of each day and emailed the files to Tourism BC Research Services.

At the end of the interview, each respondent was asked to participate in a follow-up mailback survey. If the respondent consented, the mailing address was recorded.

Overall, 4,159 travelers were approached by the interviewers and 3,259 (78%) agreed to participate in the interview. Travelers who did not fit the target population definition⁴ were screened out of the interview; 2,803 travelers completed interviews. Seventy-one percent of these respondents gave permission for the mailback survey.

⁴ Please refer to section 2.1 *Defining the target population*.

2.3 Mailback survey

In November and December 2003, over 1,900 questionnaires were sent out to respondents with a business reply envelope, a copy of British Columbia Magazine and a chance to win a digital camera if the questionnaire upon returning the questionnaire. A reminder postcard was sent in January 2004 and a second copy of the survey form was sent in early February 2004.

The mailback questionnaire asked travelers to provide more detailed answers about their trip characteristics and think about their trip motivations and experiences. The survey included questions about:

- Trip planning considerations
- Length of stay for trip and by community
- Trip route⁵ and mode of transportation
- Trip activities and distance of side trips
- Information sources used during trip
- Type of accommodation
- Trip expenditures by category
- Ratings of highway infrastructure
- Driving experience
- Unique images of northern destination
- Trip motivators
- Overall trip experience

The survey closed on March 8, 2004 and 1,171 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a 59% response rate. The data from the mailback questionnaire were entered into computer files by Corporate Research Associates Ltd. The responses were weighted to ensure the survey population was representative of the traveler population. A weighting matrix was developed using the age and origin of respondents interviewed at the Liard Hot Springs. The Liard Hot Springs is the most popular stopping point along the BC portion of the Alaska Highway, frequented by a broad cross-section of people traveling along the Alaska Highway. Please refer to Appendix C for details on weighting.

2.4 Traffic count

A traffic count was implemented to estimate the volume of people traveling on the BC portion of the Alaska Highway north of Fort Nelson. The Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) maintains several permanent traffic counters along the Alaska Highway. These counters record hourly all north- and south-bound traffic and count multi-axle vehicles only once.

To estimate visitor traffic from the total traffic, field counts were implemented to collect additional data including vehicle type and origin. The field counts were conducted at Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park (KM 798) and Steamboat Summit (KM 538), both north of Fort Nelson.

⁵ On the mailback survey, respondents were asked to trace their travel route and indicate how many nights they spent in each overnight stopping point. The mapping analysis is complex and, at the time of writing, is yet not complete. The mapping results will be presented in a secondary report.

These locations were selected to minimize resident traffic traveling between Fort Nelson and Fort St. John or Dawson Creek.

The interview crew in Fort Nelson alternated between conducting the field traffic counts and the intercept interviews. The crew set up their count station beside the highway, in a location where traffic slowed somewhat and they could see the licence plates clearly.

The crew recorded vehicle type (commercial, motorhome, truck camper, car, truck or van, etc.) and origin (from the licence plates, referring to a lookup sheet of all current licence plates in North America) for north- and south-bound traffic in 2 to 4 hour blocks. They alternated their start and end times to obtain a representative sample of traffic. The field counts were conducted between May 15 and September 25, 2004. The data were entered into computer files by Data Express Ltd. in Vancouver.

Originally, the PWGSC counter at Fireside (KM 839) was to be used as the base volume for the traffic count. However, there were problems with this and other counters along the highway so the field counts were used to estimate traffic volume. The estimate of traveler traffic volume is presented in Section 7.0 and Appendix D.

2.5 Response rates and margin of error

Seventy-eight percent of travelers intercepted agreed to complete the interview (Table 1). Eighty-six percent of these interviewed travelers fit the definition of the target population. Seventy-one percent of travelers in the target population agreed to complete the mailback survey and 59% of these travelers returned the mailback surveys.

Table 1. Response rates for interviews and mailback surveys.

Response breakdown	Count	Response rate
Total travelers intercepted	4,159	
- <i>Refused interview</i>	900	
Travelers agreed to be interviewed	3,259	78.2%
- <i>On day trip, traveling for personal reasons or as work crew, or traveling as part of an organized bus or RV caravan tour</i>	456	
Travelers in target population	2,803	86.0%
- <i>Incomplete interviews</i>	18	
- <i>Refused mailback survey</i>	800	
Travelers agreed to complete mailback survey	1,985	70.8%
- <i>Incomplete addresses</i>	66	
- <i>No response after two reminders</i>	748	
Mailback surveys returned	1,171	59.1%

Margin of error is an indicator of the accuracy of the results. As this project had high response rates and large sample sizes in the interview and mailback phases, the margin of error is low. At the 95% confidence level, the overall margin of error for the interviews is $\pm 1\%$ and for the mailback survey is $\pm 2\%$, assuming no response bias.

For example, if the proportion of travelers from Canada is 49% based on the interview data, the margin of error indicates that the true proportion of Canadian travelers is $49\% \pm 1\%$ or between 48% and 50%. When the data are summarized by a sub-group or category, the sample size decreases and the margin of error increases.

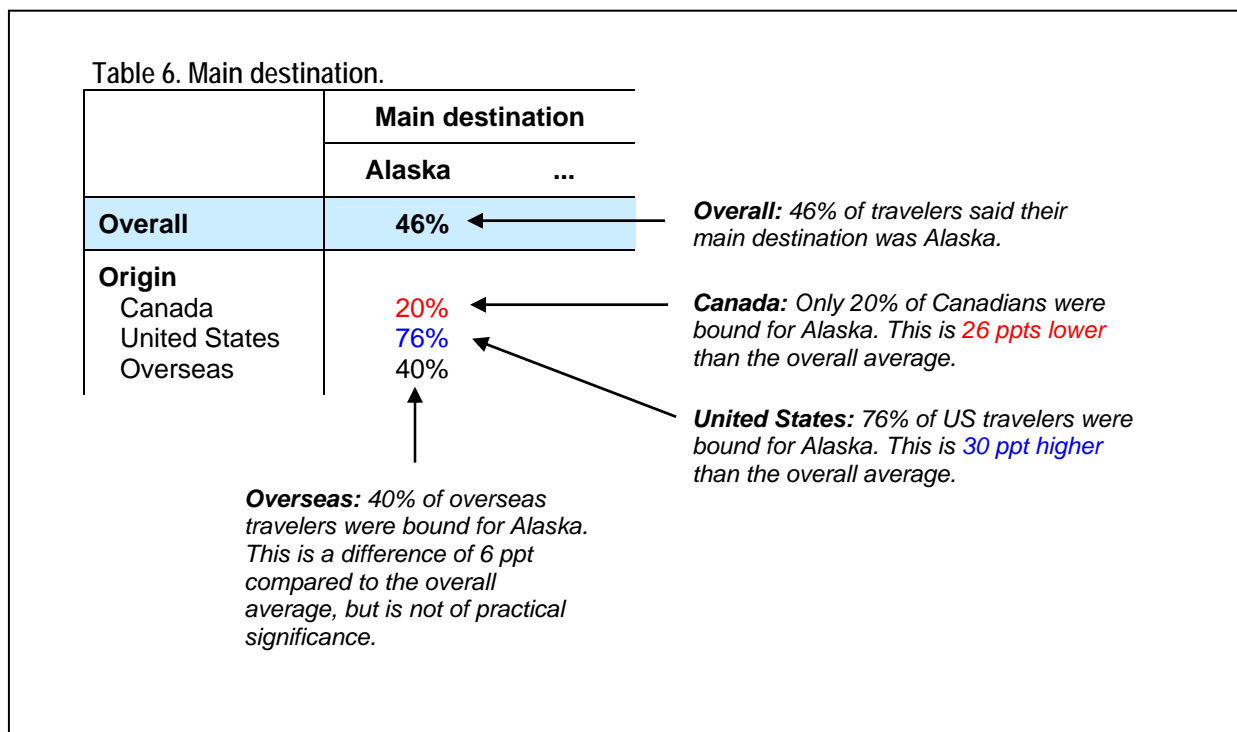
2.6 Interpreting the results

In each section, the report presents an overview and then provides results by key demographic and trip characteristics. A given table may draw data from the interviews or the mailback surveys or both sources.

As the margin of error for this study is low, small differences of two or three percentage points (ppts) between segments may be statistically significant. However, the magnitude of this difference may not be of practical significance for operational or marketing decisions.

This report will focus on practical differences, typically where there is a difference of ± 10 percentage points (ppt) or more between the sub-group and the overall average. In the tables, differences that are 10 ppts or more higher than the overall average are highlighted in blue, while differences that are 10 ppt lower are shown in red.

Figure 2. Interpreting the tables.



3.0 DEMOGRAPHICS

This section present the demographics of travelers in the target population, including origin, age, education, and party size. This section also presents information on the shifts in traveler demographics during the season.

3.1 Traveler origin

Overall, the travelers interviewed in Northeastern BC were fairly evenly split between Canadians (49%) and Americans (45%) (Table 2). Overseas visitors made up the remaining 6%.

Within Canada, 70% of travelers were BC or Alberta residents. A quarter of the BC travelers lived in Northeastern BC. The top six states of residence for American travelers were Alaska, California, Washington, Michigan, Florida and Texas. Alaskan travelers accounted for nearly a quarter of US travelers.

The majority of overseas visitors were European, predominantly from Germany and Switzerland. The Asia-Pacific region accounted for 15% of the overseas travelers and most of these travelers originated in Australia and New Zealand.

Table 2. Traveler origin.

Origin	% of travelers
Canada	49%
BC	20%
Alberta	14%
Yukon	2%
Ontario	7%
Other Canada	7%
United States⁶	45%
Alaska	10%
Pacific	8%
Mid-West	9%
South	10%
New England	3%
Overseas	6%
Europe	5%
Asia Pacific	1%
Other	<1%
Total	100%

3.2 Age and education

Overall, 53% of travelers were 55 years and older (Table 3). US travelers were older than average; 59% of US travelers were 55 years or older, compared to 50% for other travelers. Overseas travelers tended to be younger; nearly a quarter of overseas were under 35 years of age, compared to 15% or less for Canadian or US travelers.

Overall, sixty percent of travelers interviewed along the highway had a college diploma or university degree. Slightly more overseas visitors had degrees or diplomas compared to Canadian or US travelers.

⁶ US states are grouped based on US Census regions. Please refer to Appendix A.

Table 3. Age and education of travelers by origin.

	Overall	Origin		
		Canada	United States	Overseas
Age of respondent				
Under 35 yrs	15%	15%	13%	21%
24 yrs and under	4%	3%	4%	8%
25 to 34 yrs	11%	12%	9%	13%
35 to 54 yrs	32%	36%	28%	31%
35 to 44 yrs	11%	12%	9%	15%
45 to 54 yrs	21%	24%	19%	16%
55 yrs and over	53%	49%	59%	48%
55 to 64 yrs	30%	28%	32%	28%
65 yrs and older	24%	21%	27%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Education				
High school	26%	29%	24%	19%
Less than high school	4%	5%	4%	2%
High school graduate	22%	24%	20%	17%
Some post-secondary	12%	12%	14%	10%
Completed post-secondary	61%	59%	63%	71%
College/technical diploma	25%	23%	28%	28%
Undergraduate degree	22%	23%	19%	33%
Graduate degree	14%	13%	16%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.3 Party size

While the average party size was 2.7 people, over 60% of people traveled as parties of two (Table 4). These proportions were fairly consistent by origin and age. Few parties traveled with children under 18 years (14%). This proportion was relatively consistent by origin. However, 28% of travelers between 35 and 54 years were traveling with children, compared to 6% or less for older travelers.

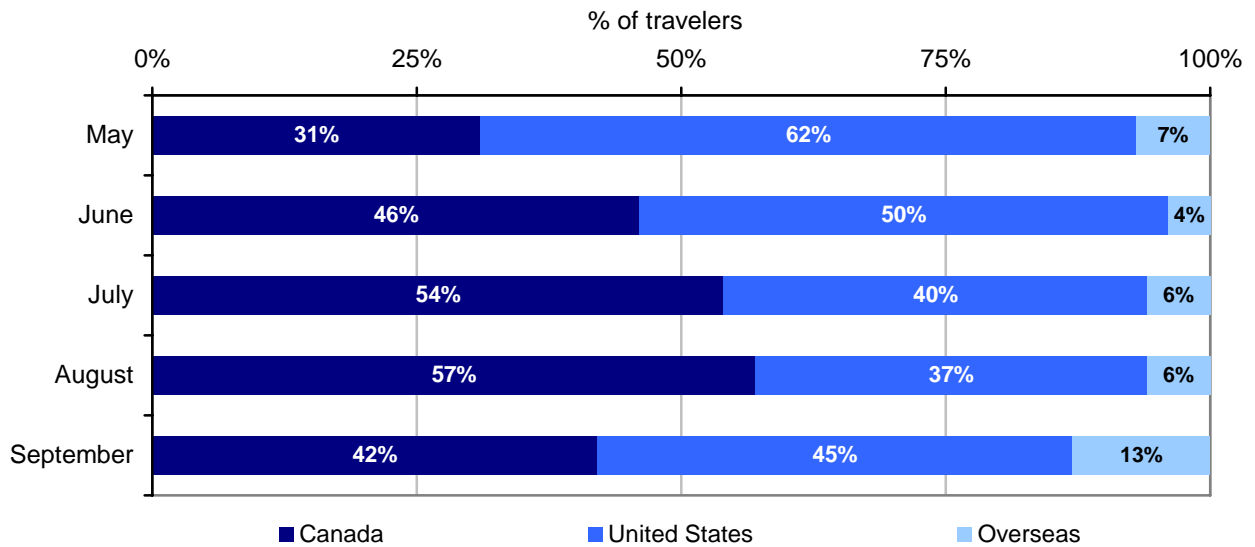
Table 4. Party size by origin and age.

	Party size					Traveling with children
	1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 or more	
Overall	8%	62%	7%	14%	9%	14%
Origin						
Canada	8%	60%	8%	14%	10%	18%
United States	8%	63%	6%	15%	7%	11%
Overseas	7%	67%	5%	12%	8%	9%
Age of respondent						
Under 35 yrs	14%	56%	15%	8%	7%	17%
35 to 54 yrs	10%	53%	9%	17%	11%	28%
55 to 64 yrs	6%	68%	5%	14%	8%	6%
65 yrs and older	5%	70%	3%	15%	8%	5%

3.4 Seasonal shift in demographics

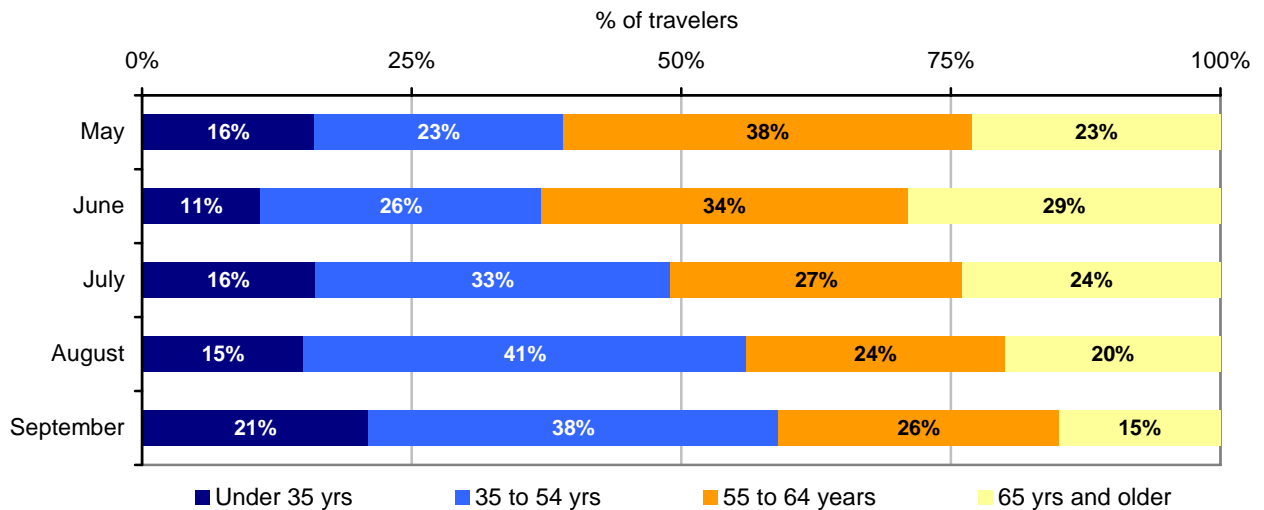
The demographic profile of travelers shifted during the summer season. In late May, 60% of travelers were American and one third were Canadian (Figure 3). In the July and August, the proportion of Canadian travelers increased to approximately 55% and the US proportion dropped to 40% or less. In September, the proportion of Canadian travelers decreased to 42% and the proportion of overseas visitors increased to 13%.

Figure 3. Seasonal shift in traveler origin.



The age profile followed a similar trend (Figure 4). Sixty percent of travelers in May and June were 55 years and older. In July and August, this proportion dropped to about 48%. In September, while the proportion of Americans increased, only 40% of visitors were over 55 years of age.

Figure 4. Seasonal shift in traveler age.



4.0 TRIP CHARACTERISTICS

This section summarizes the characteristics of trips taken in the study area during the summer of 2003, including:

- Trip purpose
- Main destination
- Mode of transportation
- Type of accommodation
- Trip activities
- Trip length
- Trip expenditures

4.1 Trip purpose

Primary trip purpose is a commonly used variable for segmenting travelers, using standard categories such as leisure/pleasure, visiting friends and relatives, or business. While each trip is a unique combination of characteristics and events, there are similarities in characteristics by trip purpose.

For example, people on leisure trips are often away from longer and have a greater degree of freedom than those on business trips. While people visiting friends and relatives (VFR) pursue many of the same activities as leisure travelers, the overall expenditures for VFR travelers are often lower because accommodation and food are often provided by the hosts.

Within the target population of independent travelers, most people traveling to or within Northeastern BC were on a leisure trip (Table 5). About 10% were visiting friends and relatives and 5% were on a business trip. The proportion of VFR travelers was higher among Canadians, compared to US or overseas travelers. The proportion of travelers in the Other category was higher among US travelers, most of whom were moving to or from Alaska.

Table 5. Trip purpose by origin and age.

	Trip purpose			
	Leisure	Visit friends & relatives	Business	Other
Overall	83%	9%	5%	3%
Origin				
Canada	82%	11%	5%	1%
United States	82%	6%	6%	5%
Overseas	96%	3%	1%	<1%
Age				
Under 35 yrs	75%	9%	6%	9%
35 to 54 yrs	81%	9%	7%	3%
55 to 64 yrs	86%	8%	6%	1%
65 yrs and older	86%	9%	3%	2%

4.2 Main destination

Nearly half of the visitors traveling in Northeastern BC said their primary destination was Alaska. Most of the remaining travelers were destined either for the Yukon, for Northeastern BC, or were on a circle tour with no specific destination (nearly 15% each).

Destination choice varied by travelers' demographics and trip purpose (Table 6):

- Americans were much more likely to be traveling to Alaska than Canadians travelers (76%, compared to 20%).
- About a quarter of Canadians cited Northeastern BC as their main destination and another quarter were traveling to the Yukon.
- While 40% of overseas travelers were destined for Alaska, three-in-ten were on a circle tour.
- About half of travelers over 55 years of age were destined for Alaska, compared to less than 40% of younger travelers.
- Travelers who were visiting friends and relatives or on business were more likely to be destined for Northeastern BC, compared to leisure travelers.

Table 6. Main destination by origin.

	Main destination						
	Alaska	Northeast BC	The Yukon	Circle tour	Other BC	Alberta	Other
Overall	46%	15%	13%	13%	3%	2%	8%
Origin							
Canada	20%	27%	24%	17%	5%	3%	4%
United States	76%	2%	1%	6%	0%	1%	14%
Overseas	40%	8%	11%	31%	6%	1%	3%
Age							
Under 35 yrs	40%	18%	13%	14%	3%	2%	9%
35 to 54 yrs	39%	18%	14%	13%	4%	3%	10%
55 to 64 yrs	51%	12%	14%	12%	2%	2%	7%
65 yrs and older	53%	11%	11%	14%	3%	1%	7%
Trip purpose							
Leisure	49%	11%	13%	14%	3%	2%	7%
Visit friends & rel	21%	34%	15%	8%	6%	4%	11%
Business	35%	30%	9%	8%	1%	2%	15%

Main destination also varied within the broad origin categories (Table 7). For example, nearly 40% of long-haul Canadian travelers (from Ontario, Quebec, etc.) were bound for Alaska, compared to less than 15% for short-haul Canadians (from BC, Alberta and Yukon). Nearly 90% of US travelers from the Lower 48 States were destined for Alaska, while many of the Americans visiting other destinations were Alaskan residents traveling to the Lower 48 states.

Table 7. Main destination by detailed origin.⁷

Origin	Main destination						
	Alaska	Northeast BC	The Yukon	Circle tour	Other BC	Alberta	Other
Overall	46%	15%	13%	13%	3%	2%	8%
Canada	20%	27%	24%	17%	5%	3%	4%
BC, AB, YT	13%	32%	25%	18%	6%	3%	4%
Long haul	39%	13%	23%	15%	5%	3%	3%
United States	76%	2%	1%	6%	1%	1%	14%
Alaska	32% ⁸	2%	0%	11%	1%	2%	54%
Lower 48 states	88%	2%	2%	5%	0%	0%	3%
Overseas	40%	8%	11%	31%	6%	1%	3%
Europe	48%	4%	4%	39%	5%	1%	4%
Asia Pacific	39%	8%	12%	31%	5%	0%	0%

4.2.1 Past trips to the main destination

On the mailback questionnaire, travelers were asked if this was their first trip to their main destination or their first trip on their route.⁹

Two-thirds of all travelers indicated they had not been to their destination or traveled their route before (Table 8). While most overseas travelers were first time visitors, two-in-ten had visited their main destination before. However, nearly 60% of travelers to Northeastern BC had visited their destination before. Similarly, 60% of VFR and business travelers had visited their destination before.

Table 8 also presents the frequency of return trips for those who had visited their destination before. For travelers bound for Alaska who had visited before, 60% had visited once or twice in the past five years and 22% had made four or more trips. For travelers bound for Northeastern BC, nearly half had visited four or more times in the past 5 years. Seventy percent of Alberta-bound travelers had visited their destination four or more times since 1997.

⁷ Within Table 7, the proportion of visitors traveling to a specific destination is compared to average for the country of origin, not the overall average. For example, on average, 20% of Canadians were bound for Alaska. However, 39% of long-haul Canadians were traveling to Alaska (shown in blue as this proportion is 19 ppt higher than the Canadian average).

⁸ As Table 7 shows, a third of Alaska residents – intercepted in Northeastern BC - said that their primary destination was Alaska. One explanation may be that these people were interviewed on their return journey and may have misunderstood the question “what is your primary destination?” as “what is your final destination?”.

⁹ This question wording was designed to accommodate people traveling on a circle route.

Table 8. Previous visits to destination.

	Visited route or destination before?		Number of previous trips between 1997 and 2002 ¹⁰			
	No	Yes	Once	Twice	Three	4 or more
Overall	66%	34%	30%	23%	10%	28%
Origin						
Canada	65%	35%	31%	19%	10%	29%
United States	65%	35%	30%	26%	11%	26%
Overseas	83%	17%	0%	48%	12%	28%
Age						
Under 35 yrs	62%	38%	47%	9%	15%	25%
35 to 54 yrs	71%	29%	26%	21%	7%	39%
55 to 64 years	63%	37%	24%	27%	13%	26%
65 yrs and older	67%	33%	27%	30%	8%	21%
Trip purpose						
Leisure	70%	30%	31%	23%	10%	26%
Visit friends & rel	39%	61%	27%	24%	10%	30%
Business	36%	64%	19%	17%	19%	45%
Destination						
Alaska	70%	30%	32%	30%	9%	21%
Northeast BC	43%	57%	31%	7%	8%	47%
Yukon	68%	32%	32%	29%	4%	19%
Circle tour	78%	22%	32%	22%	21%	15%
Alberta	58%	42%	13%	8%	8%	70%

4.2.2 Alternative destinations

Three-quarters of travelers indicated they did not consider any other destinations or routes when planning their trip. However, for the travelers who were considering alternative destinations for their trip, 60% were considering destinations in the research area. The most frequently mentioned alternative destinations were:

- Alaska (19%)
- British Columbia (18%)
- Cassiar Highway (13%)
- The Yukon (11%)

¹⁰ The proportions showing the number of previous trips do not sum to 100% due to non-response.

4.3 Travel motivations

To gain insight into their travel motivations, travelers were asked to rate the importance of specific statements in their decision to take their trip to or in the North. Overall, the key motivators were the desire to see wild places and to have new experiences.

Figure 5 presents the proportion of travelers who rated each statement as *very important* and *important*. The top three motivators were:

- To see wildlife and wild landscapes (92% rated this statement as *very important* or *important*).
- To visit places I/we'd never been before (87%).
- To take a journey we'd heard about and always wanted to make (76%).

Overall, at least sixty of travelers indicated these three statements were *very important* in their decision to take a trip to the North.

Seventy percent of travelers indicated that the opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities or to travel in safe places were also important or very important to their decision to take their trip. While historical or cultural motivators – such as learning about the history of the Alaska Highway, the local way of life, and/or First Nations culture – had lower importance ratings, at least a third of travelers rated these motivators as very important or important.

Figure 5. Importance of motivations for taking a trip to or in the North.

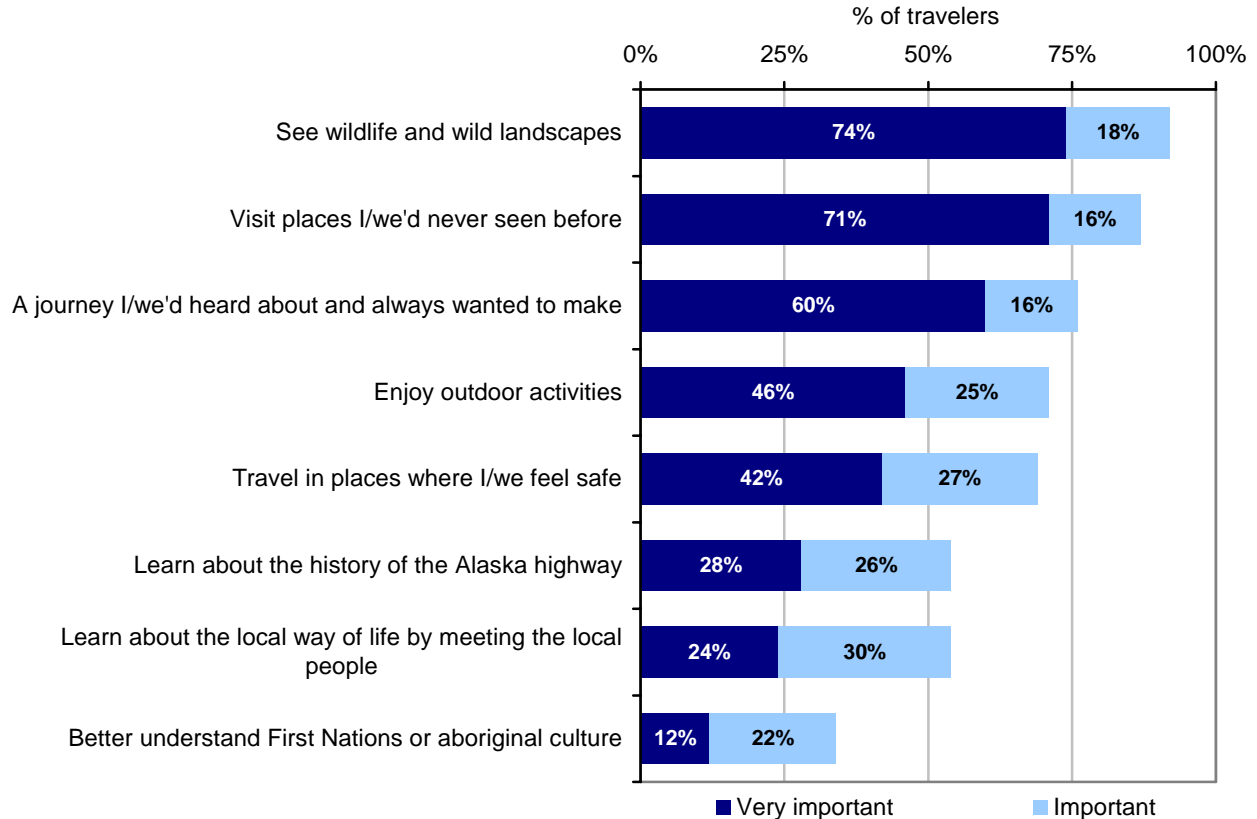


Table 9 presents the proportion of travelers who rated each statement as *very important* or *important*, by origin, age, trip purpose, destination, and previous visit.

- Seeing wild places and new places was important to all overseas travelers. Overseas travelers were more likely to be motivated by a desire to learn about local and First Nations culture, but were less motivated by safety than other travelers.
- Alaska-bound travelers were more motivated to learn about the history of the Alaska Highway, while Yukon-bound travelers were more interested in outdoor activities than other travelers. More Alberta-bound travelers were motivated by learning about First Nations culture than other groups.
- Travelers over 55 years of age were more influenced by history and culture and more likely to be motivated by making the ‘journey of a lifetime’ than younger travelers.
- As expected, travelers visiting their destination for the first time were more likely to be motivated by seeing new places and by making a journey that they had always wanted to make than those who had visited before.
- For each statement, travelers visiting friends and relatives or on business had lower importance ratings than those travelers on leisure trips because their key motivation is implicit in their trip purpose.

Table 9. Importance of motivations by selected variables.

	% of travelers who rated statement as <i>very important</i> or <i>important</i>							
	Wild places	New places	Journey	Enjoy outdoors	Safe travel	Highway history	Local people	First Nations
Overall	92%	87%	76%	71%	69%	54%	54%	34%
Origin								
Canada	89%	86%	75%	71%	67%	52%	52%	30%
United States	94%	86%	78%	71%	72%	58%	54%	36%
Overseas	100%	100%	76%	77%	59%	48%	68%	47%
Age								
Under 35 yrs	92%	76%	69%	72%	66%	47%	52%	32%
35 to 54 yrs	91%	89%	74%	76%	68%	49%	51%	34%
55 to 64 yrs	93%	87%	81%	72%	72%	56%	53%	34%
65 yrs and older	91%	90%	80%	65%	68%	64%	61%	34%
Trip purpose								
Leisure	94%	89%	80%	72%	70%	57%	56%	35%
Visit friends & rel	76%	69%	49%	65%	71%	32%	41%	21%
Business	66%	66%	54%	64%	50%	32%	50%	26%
Destination								
Alaska	96%	90%	85%	74%	76%	67%	60%	39%
Northeast BC	81%	68%	56%	74%	54%	37%	35%	13%
Yukon	93%	90%	78%	80%	66%	49%	60%	37%
Circle tour	90%	92%	75%	67%	62%	42%	52%	36%
Alberta	72%	82%	59%	54%	79%	47%	39%	45%
Previous visit								
First time	94%	96%	88%	75%	70%	59%	61%	38%
Returning	89%	68%	54%	64%	67%	45%	41%	25%

4.4 Transportation

There are many transportation options for people traveling to or within the North. For example, travelers may:

- Sail to Alaska on a cruise ship, tour the region in a bus, and fly home.
- Fly to the Yukon, tour the region in a rented recreational vehicle (RV), and fly home.
- Drive to Alaska in a rented vehicle and sail home on the Alaska and BC Ferry systems.
- Drive to and from Alaska and/or the Yukon.¹¹

Communities, businesses and tourism organizations in the Northern Rockies - Alaska Highway region cater primarily to the driving segment of travelers. Overall, 96% of travelers intercepted during the study were using some form of vehicle as their primary mode of transportation.

Driving distance is a key consideration for travel in the North. The Alaska Highway is 2,200 kilometres long. Travelers from the Lower 48 States or from eastern Canada may be traveling an additional 4,000 to 6,000 kilometres one-way before beginning the Alaska Highway at Mile '0' in Dawson Creek.

Because of the distances involved, vehicles with on-board living space – such as camperized vans or trucks, trucks with a 5th wheel trailer, or motorhomes – are popular. These self-contained vehicles allow travelers to follow their own flexible schedule, with no fixed reservations for hotels, transportation, or meals.

Overall, 50% of travelers used a self-contained vehicle as their primary mode of transportation (Table 10). The results show a split in the type of transportation by age, trip purpose and destination:

- Older travelers favoured self-contained vehicles, particularly motorhomes, although 37% of older travelers did use a car, truck or van (vehicle only).
- Leisure visitors predominantly used self-contained vehicles.
- While 61% of Alaska-bound travelers used self-contained vehicles, only 41% of those bound for the Yukon and 47% of those on a circle tour used self-contained vehicles.

4.4.1 Vehicle rentals

While rented motorhomes and camper vans are frequently seen along the Alaska Highway during the summer, most travelers along the highway were driving their own vehicle.

Overall, 7% of travelers rented their vehicle (Table 11); this proportion was consistent across most demographic and trip variables, except for overseas travelers where two-thirds had rented their vehicle. The other third may have been traveling in a vehicle owned or leased by someone in their travel party or purchased for the trip. The proportion of rentals was slightly higher for travelers on a circle tour (15%) and for people traveling in September (16%).

¹¹ These options do not include the many day or short excursions available within the destination.

Table 10. Primary modes of transportation by selected variables.

	Vehicle only	Self-contained vehicle				Other [†]
		Total self-contained	Motorhome	5 th wheel trailer	Camper truck or van	
Overall	46%	50%	22%	16%	12%	4%
Origin						
Canada	51%	45%	14%	18%	13%	4%
United States	39%	56%	30%	15%	11%	4%
Overseas	52%	38%	23%	3%	12%	10%
Age						
Under 35 yrs	63%	35%	14%	8%	12%	2%
35 to 54 yrs	49%	45%	17%	15%	12%	6%
55 to 64 yrs	41%	55%	26%	17%	12%	4%
65 yrs and older	37%	59%	28%	19%	12%	4%
Trip purpose						
Leisure	41%	54%	24%	17%	13%	4%
Visit friends & rel	66%	19%	12%	10%	7%	5%
Business	76%	19%	5%	9%	5%	5%
Destination						
Alaska	35%	61%	32%	17%	12%	4%
Northeast BC	60%	34%	8%	16%	9%	6%
Yukon	53%	41%	10%	18%	13%	6%
Circle tour	50%	47%	19%	15%	14%	3%
Alberta	71%	29%	11%	10%	8%	0%

† Other includes motorcycles, bicycles, airplanes, trains, and hitch-hiking.

Rental locations differed considerably by traveler origin. Nearly 30% of Canadians rented their vehicle in Edmonton. Northeastern BC¹², Calgary and Vancouver/Lower Mainland were each cited by 16% of Canadian renters.

For Americans who rented transportation, 32% rented in Seattle, while 27% rented their vehicle from 'other places', usually in their area of origin. Forty percent of overseas travelers rented in Vancouver, and 15% rented in Calgary.

Table 11. Key cities for renting vehicles by traveler origin.

Canada		United States		Overseas	
<i>% of renters</i>	4%	<i>% of renters</i>	3%	<i>% of renters</i>	63%
Edmonton	28%	Seattle	32%	Vancouver	41%
Northeast BC	17%	Other places	27%	Calgary	15%
Vancouver	16%	Anchorage	14%	Seattle	12%
Calgary	16%	Northeast BC	10%	Whitehorse	12%
Prince George	9%	Calgary	8%	Edmonton	10%

¹² Grand Prairie accounted for very few rentals and has been included in the Northeast BC category because of its proximity to Dawson Creek.

4.4.2 Multi-modal trips

Three-quarters of travelers used a vehicle both to and from their destination. Thirteen percent used a one-way flight and 8% incorporated a one-way cruise in their trip (Table 12).

The proportion of travelers who used a flight or cruised varied somewhat across demographic and trip variables:

- Seventy-two percent of overseas travelers incorporated a flight in their trip (other than their flight to North America).
- More travelers on a circle tour included a flight or cruise in their trip, compared to Alaska and Yukon-bound travelers.
- Travelers driving with a 5th wheel trailer were more likely to drive both ways compared to other travelers.

Table 12. Proportion of travelers taking multi-modal trips by selected variables.

	Drive both ways	Fly - drive	Cruise - drive
Overall	78%	13%	8%
Origin			
Canada	85%	9%	6%
United States	79%	10%	11%
Overseas	18%	72%	10%
Age			
Under 35 yrs	75%	15%	10%
35 to 54 yrs	78%	16%	7%
55 to 64 yrs	80%	12%	8%
65 yrs and older	78%	11%	10%
Trip purpose			
Leisure	77%	13%	10%
Visit friends & rel	85%	13%	3%
Business	84%	15%	1%
Destination			
Alaska	78%	12%	11%
Northeast BC	90%	10%	0%
Yukon	83%	11%	6%
Circle tour	66%	17%	18%
Alberta	78%	16%	7%
Transportation			
Vehicle only	74%	18%	8%
Camper	83%	9%	8%
5th wheel trailer	88%	5%	7%
Motorhome	78%	12%	11%

4.5 Accommodation

Northern destinations offer a wide range of accommodations, including bed & breakfasts, hotels, lodges and resorts, campgrounds, and RV parks. Typically, travelers used two or three different types of accommodation during their trip. However, campgrounds and RV parks – government or private – were the most popular forms of accommodation.

Three-quarters of all travelers stayed in a campground or RV park for at least one night (Table 13). A third of travelers stayed in a hotel or motel, or with friends and relatives for at least one night.

- Accommodation use (all types and primary) was fairly consistent by age. However, more overseas travelers used lodges, resorts or bed & breakfasts, compared to other groups.
- While nearly 80% of leisure travelers used campgrounds/RV parks, 42% of travelers visiting friends and relatives used campground/RV parks. Sixty percent of these VFR travelers stayed in hotels or motels and 66% stayed with their hosts for at least one night.
- More travelers bound for Northeast BC, Alberta or the Yukon used hotels or motels, compared to the average.
- Mode of transportation had the largest impact on the choice of accommodation. The majority of travelers with self-contained vehicles used campgrounds/RV parks, compared to less than 50% of travelers driving a car, truck or van.

A third of travelers spent at least one night in a roadside pull-out or parking lot during their trip. Parking lots and roadside pull-outs were used more often by travelers:

- Driving camper vans/trucks (46%) or motorhomes (47%)
- Bound for Alaska (43%)
- From the United States (42%)
- Away for more than 30 nights (40%)

Seven percent of travelers also indicated that they used roadside pull-outs or parking lots as their primary form of accommodation.

Table 13. Primary form of accommodation on trip.

	All types of accommodation used during trip							Accommodation most often used				
	Camp RV park	Hotel motel	Lot or pull-out	Friends relatives	Lodge resort	Bed & breakfast	Other ¹³	Camp RV park	Hotel motel	Lot or pull-out	Friends relatives	Other ¹⁴
Overall	74%	35%	34%	34%	12%	8%	5%	63%	18%	7%	7%	5%
Origin												
Canada	71%	38%	29%	41%	11%	7%	5%	61%	20%	4%	10%	5%
United States	80%	30%	43%	24%	12%	8%	4%	67%	16%	10%	3%	4%
Overseas	64%	38%	31%	36%	22%	24%	15%	56%	21%	2%	5%	17%
Age												
Under 35 yrs	83%	31%	38%	38%	14%	9%	8%	65%	10%	15%	5%	5%
35 to 54 yrs	71%	41%	28%	33%	19%	8%	5%	62%	22%	3%	6%	7%
55 to 64 yrs	75%	34%	36%	36%	9%	8%	5%	63%	18%	8%	7%	5%
65 yrs and older	72%	33%	37%	32%	8%	8%	4%	62%	19%	6%	9%	4%
Trip purpose												
Leisure	78%	31%	36%	32%	13%	8%	5%	66%	16%	7%	5%	6%
Visit friends & rel	42%	61%	24%	66%	10%	5%	3%	34%	29%	3%	31%	2%
Business	45%	71%	16%	17%	4%	6%	11%	44%	49%	0%	0%	7%
Destination												
Alaska	81%	26%	42%	28%	11%	9%	3%	70%	13%	10%	3%	4%
Northeast BC	57%	47%	13%	35%	7%	4%	6%	50%	25%	1%	17%	7%
Yukon	72%	47%	32%	45%	14%	6%	5%	60%	19%	6%	9%	7%
Circle tour	76%	34%	26%	37%	14%	9%	9%	67%	16%	4%	5%	8%
Alberta	45%	49%	37%	46%	15%	22%	6%	38%	42%	0%	14%	6%
Transportation												
Vehicle only	46%	63%	22%	40%	22%	15%	7%	41%	34%	6%	11%	9%
Camper	94%	20%	48%	34%	7%	1%	2%	77%	6%	10%	5%	2%
5th wheel trailer	98%	9%	35%	27%	3%	2%	1%	92%	2%	5%	1%	0%
Motorhome	98%	11%	50%	29%	4%	4%	4%	85%	1%	10%	2%	2%

¹³ For all types of accommodation, Other includes hostels, backcountry or wilderness camping, construction camps, etc.

¹⁴ For most often used (primary) accommodation, Other includes bed & breakfast, lodge or resort and other (as defined from 'all types of accommodation').

4.6 Trip length

On average, travelers spent 39 nights away from home.¹⁵ Table 14 presents the average and median trip length by origin, age, trip purpose, destination and transportation.¹⁶

Proximity to the region had a large influence on total trip length. Travelers from the Lower 48 states and from overseas had the longest trips (about two months) while travelers from BC, Alberta, Yukon and Alaska had the shortest trips (less than three weeks).

While trip length varied by age, its impact was less than other factors. As expected, travelers over 55 years and older had longer trip lengths than younger travelers. Travelers aged 35 to 54 years had the shortest trips, but the average trip length for this group was still over 30 days.

Travelers visiting friends and relatives had shorter trips, compared to leisure travelers. While the average trip length for business travelers was over 30 nights, many of these travelers were away from home for less than ten nights (as shown by the median of 9 nights).

On average, Alaska-bound travelers spent more than 50 nights on their trip, while travelers on a circle tour spent 36 nights. Travelers bound for Northeast BC or Alberta had shorter trips (3 weeks or less).

Travelers driving self-contained recreational vehicles spent at least 20 more nights on their trips compared to those driving cars, trucks or vans. Travelers in motorhomes had the longest trips, averaging 60 nights.

4.6.1 Trip flexibility

Travelers had different degrees of flexibility in their return date. Travelers with fixed return dates may not have the time to participate in opportunities that arise during the trip, whereas travelers with several days or weeks of

Table 14. Trip length by selected variables.

	Total trip length [†]	
	Average nights	Median nights
Overall	39	29
Origin		
Canada	26	19
BC, AB, YT	20	15
Long haul	41	35
United States	51	42
Alaska	21	15
Lower 48 states	58	49
Overseas	62	40
Europe	64	35
Asia Pacific	58	54
Age		
Under 35 yrs	38	25
35 to 54 yrs	33	21
55 to 64 yrs	45	32
65 yrs and older	42	35
Trip purpose		
Leisure	41	30
Visit friends & rel	24	15
Business	35	9
Destination		
Alaska	53	42
Northeast BC	15	8
Yukon	27	20
Circle tour	36	28
Alberta	22	14
Transportation		
Vehicle only	26	19
Camper van	46	36
5 th wheel trailer	42	36
Motorhome	60	45

[†]Differences of ±10 or more nights are highlighted in blue and red. For origin, differences in trip length are compared to the average for country of origin.

¹⁵ Both the interviews and mailback surveys asked travelers about their trip length. However, travelers' estimates of trip length (from the interviews) were 3 nights longer, on average, compared their actual trip length (from the mailback surveys).

¹⁶ The median is the "middle" value in a dataset, obtained by ranking all values from highest to lowest and choosing the midpoint. The median divides a dataset into two equal halves. As the average (mean) may be influenced by very large or very small values, the median is often used to show the "typical" value.

discretionary time may try new routes, stay additional nights and/or try new activities.

Overall, most travelers in the North had some flexibility in their return date (Table 15). Two-thirds could change their return date by at least a day. Forty percent could change their return date by more than a week. The majority of overseas travelers were constrained by their return dates, likely tied to flight reservations.

Travelers with the highest degree of flexibility included those:

- From the United States
- Aged 55 years and older
- Bound for Alaska
- Driving a motorhome
- Away from home for 30 days or more

Table 15. Trip flexibility by selected variables.

	Inflexible (must be home on a certain date)	Moderately flexible (change return date by 1 to 7 days)	Very flexible (change return date by a week or more)
Overall	32%	27%	40%
Origin			
Canada	38%	31%	32%
United States	19%	27%	54%
Overseas	80%	6%	14%
Age			
Under 35 yrs	39%	31%	30%
35 to 54 yrs	38%	31%	31%
55 to 64 yrs	29%	24%	47%
65 yrs and older	24%	26%	50%
Purpose			
Leisure	31%	27%	42%
Visit friends & rel	38%	33%	29%
Business	43%	27%	30%
Destination			
Alaska	23%	24%	53%
Northeast BC	53%	26%	20%
Yukon	35%	37%	28%
Circle tour	38%	24%	38%
Alberta	42%	37%	22%
Transportation			
Vehicle only	40%	30%	30%
Camper van	27%	27%	45%
5 th wheel trailer	25%	26%	49%
Motorhome	22%	23%	55%
Trip length			
Less than 30 nights	43%	32%	25%
30 nights or more	21%	22%	57%

4.6.2 *Extending trip length*

The question about trip flexibility was asked during the interview and reflects a traveler's potential for extending their trip. A follow-up question was asked on the mailback survey to investigate how many travelers had extended their trip.

Overall, only 8% of travelers extended their trip. This proportion was relatively consistent across the demographic and trip characteristics, even for travelers who indicated they could change their return date by more than a week. Travelers bound for Alberta and those under 35 years of age were slightly more likely to extend their trip (14% and 12% respectively), compared to the average.

The travelers who did extend their trip spent eight additional nights, on average. However, the typical traveler who extended their trip stayed an additional four nights (the median value).

Although relatively few travelers actually lengthened their trip, 69% of travelers said they wanted to stay longer (Table 16). Those who were more likely to want to extend their trip include travelers:

- From overseas
- Under 35 years
- On business
- Bound for the Yukon
- On short trips
- With inflexible return dates

Overall, travelers interested in extending their trip said they wanted to spend an average of 15 additional nights. However, the typical or median traveler wanted to spend an additional seven nights. The number of additional nights travelers wanted to stay varied considerably by origin, age, trip purpose, destination, transportation, trip length and flexibility.

A third of travelers who wanted to extend their trip indicated that work prevented them from staying additional nights. Other reasons included:

- Prior commitments (20%)
- Time constraints (16%)
- Money constraints (11%)
- Travel plans or reservations elsewhere (6%)
- Poor weather (6%)

Table 16. Additional nights travelers wanted to spend during their trip.

	Travelers who wanted to extend trip		
	% of travelers who wanted to stay	Additional nights wanted to stay (average)	Additional nights wanted to stay (median)
Overall	69%	15	7
Origin			
Canada	71%	11	7
United States	65%	20	10
Overseas	77%	16	10
Age			
Under 35 yrs	75%	13	7
35 to 54 yrs	69%	12	7
55 to 64 yrs	70%	20	10
65 yrs and older	64%	12	10
Purpose			
Leisure	69%	15	7
Visit friends & rel	62%	13	7
Business	74%	17	4
Destination			
Alaska	65%	17	10
Northeast BC	71%	8	6
Yukon	76%	10	7
Circle tour	71%	13	8
Alberta	51%	7	7
Transportation			
Vehicle only	71%	13	7
Camper	74%	13	7
5th wheel trailer	67%	13	10
Motorhome	63%	18	14
Trip length			
Less than 30 nights	73%	11	7
30 nights or more	65%	19	14
Flexibility			
Very flexible	77%	12	7
Moderately flexible	70%	11	7
Inflexible	61%	20	10

4.7 Traveler expenditures

Table 17 presents travelers' average daily expenditures and estimated total trip expenditures. This table draws data from the interview and the mailback surveys to ensure the results are representative.

- In the interview, respondents were asked about their previous day's expenditures. This short recall period minimizes recall bias.
- The longer recall period on the mailback survey is less important for trip length as respondents can more easily recall their departure and return dates, than their expenditures.

Average daily expenditures were also calculated from mailback data: total expenditures in the North divided by number of nights spent in the North. The mailback daily expenditures were higher than the daily expenditures collected during the interview (\$192 vs. \$150, respectively), likely because people spent more money on activities once they reached their destination, compared to en-route to their destination (when they were intercepted). This analysis uses the more conservative daily expenditures from during the interviews.

4.7.1 Daily and trip expenditures

On average, travel parties spent \$150 per day (\$CDN) during their trip.¹⁷ While total trip expenditures ranged from \$50 to \$50,000, the typical party spent about \$6,000 on their trip. The expenditures varied considerably by demographic and trip variables (Table 17), driven primarily by trip length.

- Canadian and US daily expenditures were similar but total US trip expenditures were considerably higher than Canadian expenditures because of longer trips.
- While overseas travelers had lower daily expenditures, their total expenditures were nearly double the Canadian and US expenditures because of their longer trips.
- Business travelers spent more per day, compared to other travelers, but had lower than average trip expenditures because of their shorter trips.
- While destination had little effect on daily expenditures, total expenditures varied considerably by destination from \$2,100 for BC-bound travelers to \$8,100 for Alaska-bound travelers, due to their longer trips.
- Mode of transportation had an impact on daily expenditures. Travelers driving camper vans or towing trailers had lower expenditures than those driving only a vehicle or driving a motorhome. The higher daily expenditures may be related to higher accommodation costs for travelers without a self-contained vehicle and higher fuel costs for travelers driving motorhomes.
- Total expenditures for travelers staying 30 days or more were three times the total expenditures of travelers on shorter trips.

¹⁷ Average daily expenditures were recorded in Canadian dollars. A US exchange rate of 1.50 (as of May 15, 2003) was used to convert US dollars into Canadian currency during the interviews.

Table 17. Daily and trip expenditures per party.

	Average daily expenditures [†]	Average trip length (nights)	Average total trip expenditures
Overall	\$150	39	\$5,850
Origin			
Canada	\$146	26	\$3,803
United States	\$157	51	\$7,989
Overseas	\$127	63	\$8,005
Age			
Under 35 yrs	\$151	38	\$5,751
35 to 54 yrs	\$153	33	\$5,045
55 to 64 yrs	\$147	45	\$6,599
65 yrs and older	\$147	42	\$6,191
Trip purpose			
Leisure	\$147	41	\$6,009
Visit friends & relatives	\$120	24	\$2,888
Business	\$226	35	\$7,903
Destination			
Alaska	\$153	53	\$8,126
Northeast BC	\$144	15	\$2,155
Yukon	\$154	27	\$4,155
Circle tour	\$144	36	\$5,183
Alberta	\$143	22	\$3,136
Transportation			
Vehicle only	\$158	26	\$4,100
Camper van	\$122	46	\$5,592
5 th wheel trailer	\$127	42	\$5,345
Motorhome	\$165	60	\$9,918
Trip length			
Less than 30 days	\$154	16	\$2,505
30 days or more	\$145	58	\$8,438

[†] Differences of ± \$10 for average daily expenditures are highlighted in blue or red.

Differences of ± 10 nights for total trip length in blue or red (refer also to Table 14).

Differences of ± \$1,500 for total trip expenditures (approx 25% of overall average trip expenditures) are highlighted in blue or red.

4.7.2 Expenditures by category

Travel expenditures can be divided into two categories:

- Basic expenses: transportation, food & beverage, and accommodation.
- Discretionary expenses: shopping, recreation, attractions, and entertainment.

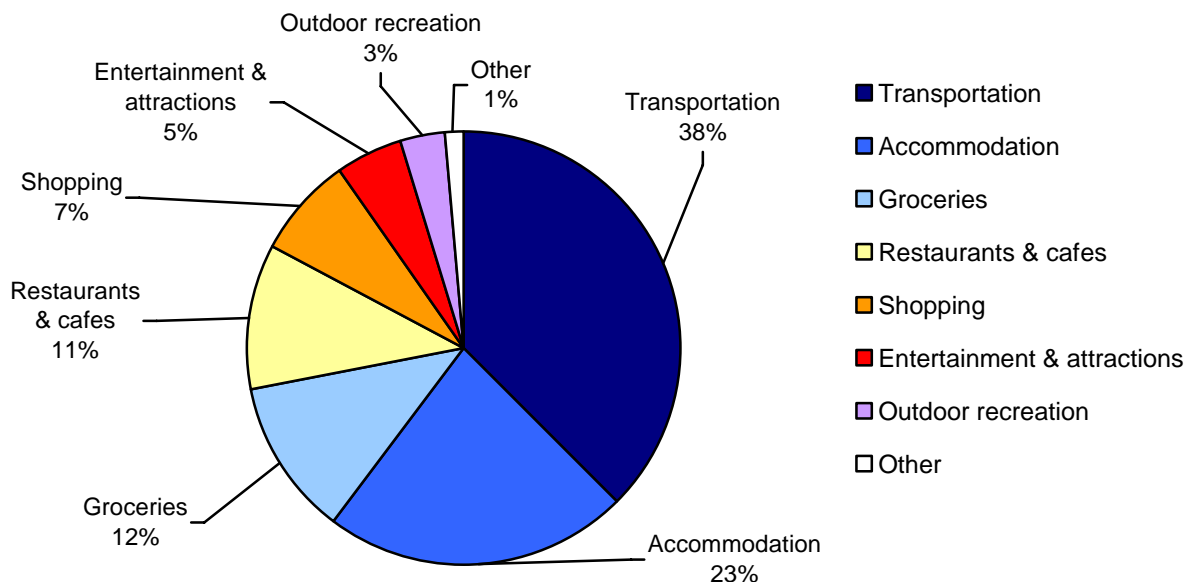
For most travelers, basic expenses accounted for over 70% of expenditures (Figure 6):

- Transportation expenses for gas, repairs, ferry fares, taxi, bus, or vehicle rental.
- Accommodation expenses for camping/RV fees, hotels, motels, or lodges.
- Food and beverage expenses for food purchased in grocery stores.

Discretionary spending was apportioned among:

- Food and beverage expenses for food purchased in restaurants, cafes, and bars.
- Shopping for clothing, gifts, film, books, souvenirs, etc.
- Entertainment and attraction expenses including admission, shows, tours, spa, etc.
- Outdoor recreation expenses including park passes, nature guides, etc.

Figure 6. Allocation of total expenditures.



The expenditure allocations were surprisingly consistent by the demographic and trip characteristics. The expenditure proportions varied less than ± 5 ppts from the overall proportion, even by mode of transportation. The only major difference was in the proportion for accommodation for business travelers (32%, compared to the overall average of 23%).

In most cases, the proportion of food and beverage purchases in stores was approximately equal to the proportion purchased in restaurants, cafes or bars. Leisure travelers were slightly more likely to spend money on food and beverage in stores, compared to other travelers. Travelers driving a vehicle only spent slightly more money on food and beverages in restaurants, cafes or bars than those in self-contained vehicles.

4.8 Trip activities

Travelers participated in a variety of activities during their trip, including visiting parks, hiking or walking, visiting museums or heritage sites, going shopping, or attending aboriginal attractions or events.

On average, travelers participated in 7 different activities on their trip. The most frequently mentioned activities were:

- Visiting a provincial, state or national park (89% of travelers)
- Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site (85%)
- Walking, hiking or cycling (77%)
- Going shopping (72%)
- Participating in unguided outdoor activities: hunting, fishing, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing (61%)

4.8.1 Participation rates

Table 18 presents participation rates by origin, main destination, mode of transportation, and trip length. Participation rates were fairly stable for visiting a park and walking, hiking or cycling (where participation by sub-group was within ± 10 ppt of the overall participation rate).

For other activities, there was considerable variation among the sub-groups. In general, participation rates in most activities were higher than average for the long stay, Alaska-bound, motorhome traveler segments. For example, overall 47% of travelers took a day cruise or boat trip during their trip. However, participation rates for this activity were considerably higher for travelers destined for Alaska (63%), driving a motorhome (71%), or on longer trips (65%). These travelers were also more likely to:

- Attend an aboriginal or native cultural attraction or event
- Attend a fair, festival or exhibition
- Participate in guided outdoor activities

Travelers bound for Northeastern BC had much lower participation rates for most activities, except walking, hiking and cycling.

4.8.2 Interest levels

Travelers were also asked which activities they would be interested in on a similar trip, to provide insight into the demand for activities and highlight potential opportunities for tourism businesses and/or marketing organizations.

The top five activities in terms of interest were (Table 19):

- Visiting a provincial, state or national park (85%)
- Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site (81%)
- Walking, hiking or cycling (75%)
- Participating in unguided outdoor activities: hunting, fishing, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing (71%)
- Going shopping (66%)

Interest in visiting a park and walking, hiking, or cycling were consistent across origin, destination, transportation or trip length, and were similar to the actual participation rates for these activities. Overall, interest levels for each activity were more consistent between the sub-groups than the participation rates except:

- Overseas travelers had higher interest levels for unguided outdoor activities, taking a day cruise or boat trip, and attending an aboriginal or native cultural attraction or event.
- For travelers bound for Northeastern BC, interest levels were lower for visiting an art gallery, taking a day cruise or boat trip, and attending an aboriginal or native cultural attraction or event.

4.8.3 Opportunities

Figure 7 compares overall participation rates and interest levels by activity to identify areas of opportunity. Participation rates and interest levels were fairly closely matched for:

- Visiting a provincial, state or national park
- Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site
- Walking, hiking, or cycling
- Going shopping
- Visiting an art gallery or studio

For all of the other activities, except golfing, interest levels were at least 10 ppt higher than participation rates. Interest levels were more than 20 ppt higher than participation rates for:

- Guided outdoor activities (participation rate: 24%, interest level: 46%)
- Attending a fair, festival or exhibition (31% and 56%)
- Flight-seeing in an airplane or helicopter (14% and 42%)

The difference between participation rates and interest levels may indicate that demand for these activities is higher than the current supply of the activity. To interpreting supply and demand for activities, there are two factors to consider, among others:

1. *Awareness* of the activity: Travelers may not be aware that various activities are available in the region.
2. *Opportunity* to participate: Travelers may have been aware of the activity before their trip or have become aware of activities. However, they may not have the opportunity to participate in the activity during their trip due to time constraints or because they had become aware of the activity too late in their trip.¹⁸

Travelers were asked about how many of their activities were planned during their trip. The majority of travelers had planned few or none of their activities (83%) while 13% said they had planned half of their activities. These proportions were consistent by origin, age, purpose, destination, transportation and length of stay, except for travelers bound for Alberta and business travelers (where 73% and 53%, respectively, had planned few or no activities).

A traveler's Interest in doing an activity on a similar trip was also significantly influenced by whether the traveler had participated in the activity on their current trip (Figure 8). For all activities, about 85% of those who had participated in the activity were interested in that activity on a similar trip. However, interest for those who had not participated in the activity varied considerably by activity. For example,

- Eighty-five percent of travelers were interested in visiting a provincial, state or national park. However, the interest level among travelers who had not visited a park on their trip was much lower than the interest level for those who did visit a park (43%, compared to 90%).
- Overall, half of travelers expressed an interest in visiting an art gallery or studio. While 80% of those who had visited an art gallery were interested in the same activity on a similar trip, less than a quarter of travelers who had not visited an art gallery on their trip expressed an interest in visiting an art gallery on a similar trip.

Increasing travelers' awareness of activities in the beginning of their trip and ensuring that activities are easy to find and access may encourage travelers to participate in more activities throughout their trip. Also, these results may suggest that catering to repeat visitors may be important for encouraging travelers' participation in activities.

¹⁸ This study did not ask specific questions about travelers' awareness of or opportunity to participate in various activities.

Table 18. Participation rates for trip activities by selected variables.

PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES	Overall	Origin			Destination			Transportation		Length of trip	
		Canada	US	Overseas	Alaska	NE BC	Circle tour	Vehicle	Motor home	< 30 days	30+ days
Visiting a park (state, provincial or national)	89%	86%	93%	89%	93%	82%	90%	86%	93%	84%	94%
Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site	85%	87%	81%	87%	85%	70%	91%	76%	94%	76%	92%
Walking, hiking or cycling	77%	81%	72%	80%	75%	83%	81%	75%	79%	74%	79%
Go shopping	72%	72%	74%	68%	79%	53%	64%	62%	86%	63%	81%
Unguided outdoor activities ¹⁹	61%	58%	63%	72%	65%	51%	59%	55%	67%	51%	69%
Visiting an art gallery or a studio	47%	52%	42%	53%	48%	37%	50%	45%	49%	41%	51%
Take a day cruise or a boat trip	47%	37%	57%	58%	63%	16%	48%	32%	71%	25%	65%
Attend an aboriginal or native cultural attraction or event	40%	37%	42%	53%	50%	10%	45%	30%	58%	27%	51%
Visit an industrial attraction (BC Hydro Dam, forestry mill, etc.)	31%	35%	24%	49%	33%	26%	37%	23%	40%	23%	37%
Attend a fair, festival or exhibition	31%	26%	37%	33%	41%	18%	21%	23%	41%	18%	41%
Guided outdoor activities ²⁰	24%	18%	30%	29%	35%	7%	24%	15%	36%	12%	34%
Visit a family attraction (mini golf, zoo, etc.)	21%	18%	22%	32%	24%	15%	18%	16%	26%	17%	23%
Flight seeing (in a airplane or helicopter)	14%	14%	14%	20%	16%	7%	16%	12%	18%	10%	18%
Participate in or attend a sporting event other than golf	10%	9%	10%	9%	11%	11%	7%	8%	9%	6%	12%
Participate in or attend a golfing event	7%	7%	5%	8%	6%	6%	6%	5%	11%	8%	7%

¹⁹ Unguided outdoor activities include hunting, fishing, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, etc.

²⁰ Guided outdoor activities include hiking, hunting, fishing, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, etc.

Table 19. Interest levels for trip activities by selected variables.

INTERESTED IN ACTIVITY	Overall	Origin			Destination			Transportation		Length of trip	
		Canada	US	Overseas	Alaska	NE BC	Circle tour	Vehicle	Motor home	< 30 days	30+ days
Visiting a park (state, provincial or national)	85%	82%	87%	92%	85%	79%	88%	82%	87%	82%	87%
Visiting a museum, heritage or historic site	81%	82%	81%	80%	81%	77%	87%	80%	83%	79%	83%
Walking, hiking or cycling	75%	77%	73%	75%	73%	79%	80%	76%	73%	76%	75%
Go shopping	66%	68%	63%	66%	69%	57%	68%	57%	74%	59%	72%
Unguided outdoor activities ²¹	71%	68%	71%	89%	71%	62%	78%	71%	68%	69%	72%
Visiting an art gallery or a studio	49%	50%	47%	51%	49%	39%	55%	53%	44%	49%	49%
Take a day cruise or a boat trip	65%	65%	63%	77%	69%	54%	67%	60%	77%	57%	72%
Attend an aboriginal or native cultural attraction or event	56%	51%	58%	77%	58%	39%	63%	54%	61%	49%	61%
Visit an industrial attraction (BC Hydro Dam, forestry mill, etc.)	47%	50%	43%	52%	48%	41%	56%	39%	57%	42%	52%
Attend a fair, festival or exhibition	56%	53%	60%	56%	60%	54%	54%	59%	52%	52%	61%
Guided outdoor activities ²²	46%	46%	45%	49%	51%	44%	45%	42%	54%	41%	50%
Visit a family attraction (mini golf, zoo)	31%	31%	29%	37%	30%	30%	32%	30%	30%	31%	30%
Flight seeing (in a airplane or helicopter)	42%	41%	40%	53%	42%	36%	48%	43%	42%	39%	45%
Participate in or attend a sporting event other than golf	25%	26%	21%	23%	21%	35%	25%	26%	21%	26%	23%
Participate in or attend a golfing event	12%	16%	8%	13%	10%	18%	16%	10%	13%	13%	12%

²¹ Unguided outdoor activities include hunting, fishing, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, etc.

²² Guided outdoor activities include hiking, hunting, fishing, rafting, canoeing, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, etc.

Figure 7. Participation and interest in trip activities.

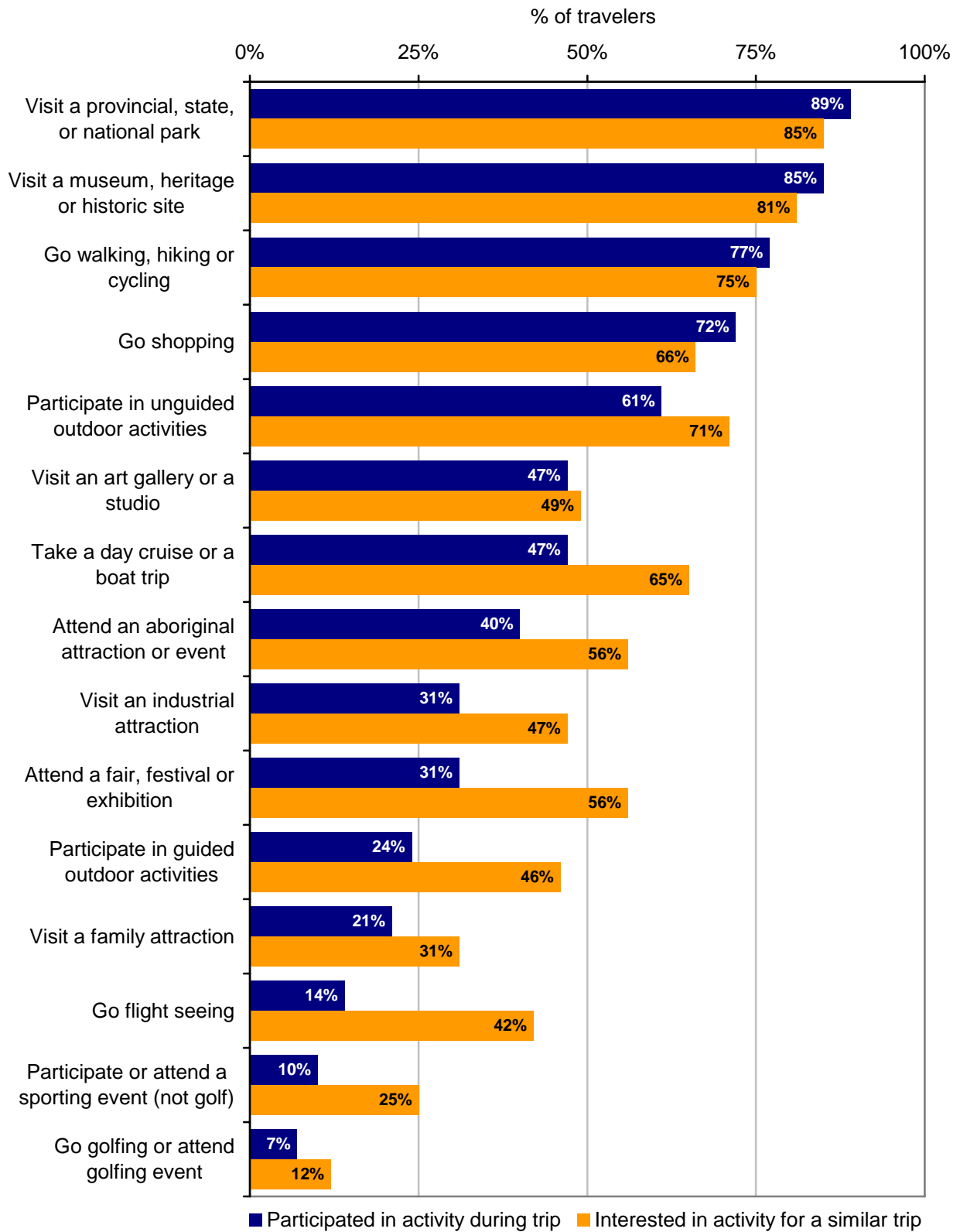
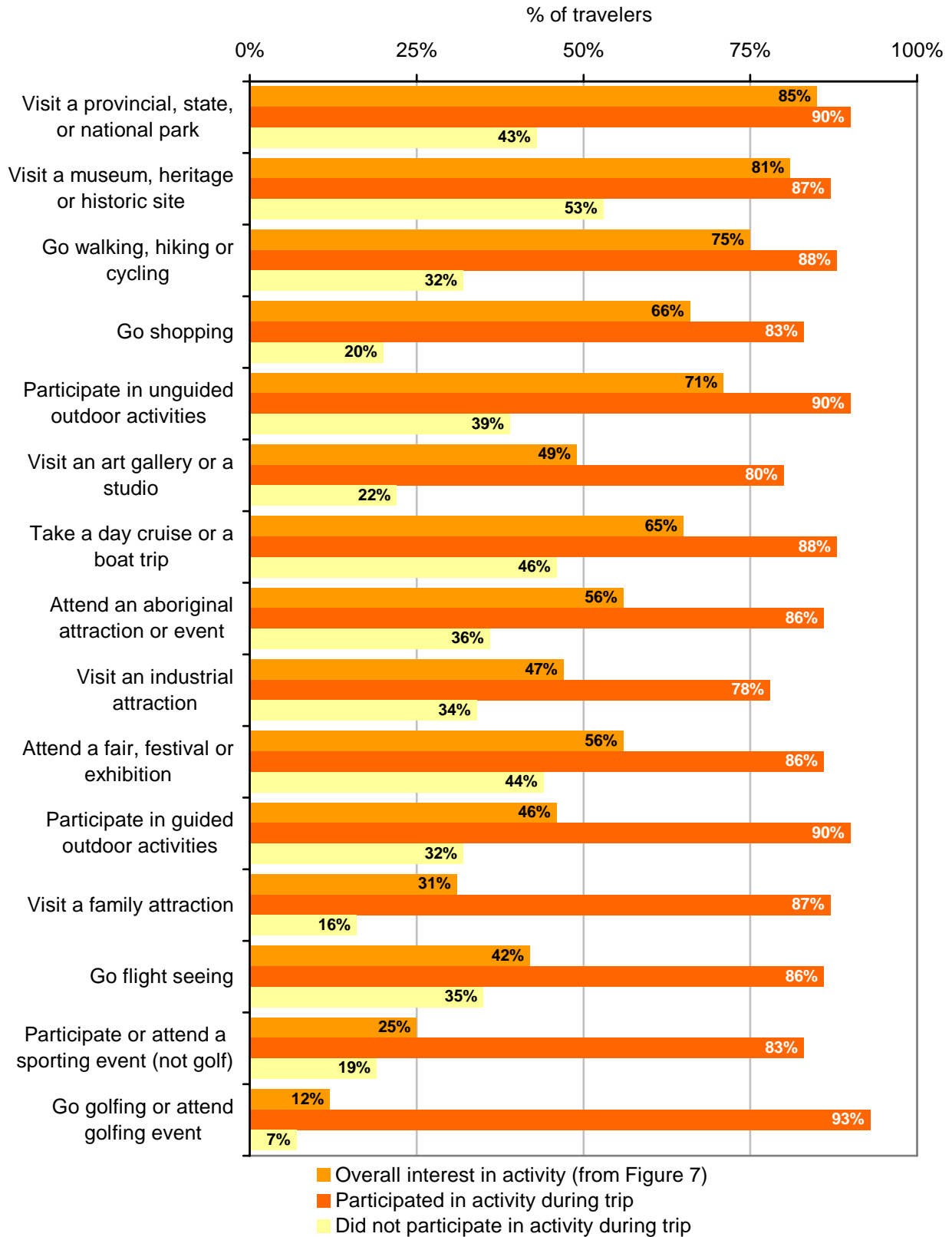


Figure 8. Interest in activities by previous participation in activities.



4.8.4 Side trips

Many towns, attractions, scenic areas, events and activities are located off the main highways, requiring travelers to take side trips. Overall, 71% of travelers took a side trip off their main travel route (Table 20). More travelers driving motorhomes or from overseas took side trips and fewer travelers visiting friends and relatives, on business or destined for Northeastern BC took side trips. Over 80% of travelers drove more than 10 kilometres off their main travel route and over half drove more than 50 kilometres. Overseas or business travelers were more likely to take longer side trips (67% and 68% took side trips over 50 km, respectively).

Table 20. Travelers who took side trips and distance traveled by selected variables.

	Took a side trip	Distance from main route			
		Less than 2 km	2 to 10 km	11 to 50 km	More than 50 km
Overall	71%	4%	12%	32%	51%
Origin					
Canada	70%	2%	14%	29%	54%
United States	70%	7%	10%	37%	45%
Overseas	80%	0%	6%	25%	67%
Age					
Under 35 yrs	69%	16%	12%	29%	43%
35 to 54 yrs	69%	3%	11%	34%	50%
55 to 64 yrs	74%	1%	12%	33%	55%
65 yrs and older	71%	2%	12%	31%	54%
Purpose					
Leisure	73%	3%	11%	33%	52%
Visit friends & rel	60%	8%	17%	30%	42%
Business	44%	8%	8%	17%	68%
Destination					
Alaska	75%	5%	10%	32%	51%
Northeast BC	57%	4%	22%	32%	41%
Yukon	78%	4%	13%	30%	53%
Circle tour	69%	0%	9%	31%	58%
Alberta	65%	0%	28%	24%	43%
Transportation					
Vehicle only	63%	7%	12%	31%	48%
Camper van	74%	0%	12%	29%	59%
5 th wheel trailer	78%	1%	10%	30%	58%
Motorhome	81%	2%	13%	37%	47%
Trip length					
Less than 30 nights	63%	9%	16%	26%	48%
30 nights or more	77%	0%	9%	37%	53%

5.0 TRIP PLANNING

5.1 Trip planning horizons

For many travelers, the distance and time required for travel in the North is reflected in their planning horizons. Half of travelers planned for four months or more, while a quarter planned for a year or more. Another quarter planned for less than a month (Table 21).

The length of the planning horizons varied by demographic and trip characteristics:

- Planning horizons were longer for travelers from overseas, over 55 years of age, destined for Alaska, driving a motorhome, or away from home 30 or more nights. Seventy percent of those who planned for more than a year were destined for Alaska.
- Travelers with shorter planning horizons included Canadians, those visiting friends and relatives or on business, destined for Northeastern BC, driving a car, truck or van, or staying less than 30 nights.

Table 21. Length of planning horizons by selected variables.

	Planning horizons				
	Less than 1 month	1 to 3 months	4 to 6 months	7 to 12 months	1 or more years
Overall	27%	23%	19%	6%	25%
Origin					
Canada	37%	24%	17%	4%	18%
United States	18%	23%	19%	6%	33%
Overseas	14%	20%	32%	11%	24%
Age					
Under 35 yrs	34%	27%	18%	4%	17%
35 to 54 yrs	31%	23%	18%	6%	22%
55 to 65 yrs	24%	21%	19%	5%	31%
65 yrs and over	23%	24%	19%	8%	27%
Trip purpose					
Leisure	25%	22%	19%	6%	28%
Visiting friends & rel	37%	28%	15%	5%	15%
Business	52%	21%	17%	3%	7%
Destination					
Alaska	16%	21%	19%	7%	38%
Northeast BC	55%	26%	9%	3%	7%
Yukon	32%	22%	21%	6%	19%
Circle tour	30%	23%	23%	6%	17%
Alberta	36%	21%	20%	7%	16%
Transportation					
Vehicle only	37%	29%	18%	3%	13%
Camper van	22%	20%	18%	5%	35%
5 th wheel trailer	19%	20%	18%	10%	32%
Motorhome	14%	17%	22%	8%	39%
Trip length					
Less than 30 days	40%	27%	16%	4%	13%
30 days or more	14%	19%	22%	8%	38%

5.2 Information for trip planning

During the interview, travelers were asked what sources of information they used for planning their trip. Typically, travelers used two or three sources of information during the planning stage. The internet was the most frequently mentioned source of information, followed by word of mouth and *The Milepost* guide.

However, the popularity of the information sources varied considerably by origin and destination (Table 22).

- While past experience was most frequently cited by Canadian travelers, followed by the internet and word of mouth, *The Milepost* was the most frequently used information for US travelers, followed by the internet. The internet and books were the most frequently used sources for overseas travelers.
- Alaska-bound travelers preferred the internet and *The Milepost*, whereas those traveling to Northeast BC favoured past experience and word of mouth. Travelers on a circle tour used a wide variety of sources, but the internet was most frequently mentioned.

Overall, a third of travelers used only one source of information to plan their trip. This proportion was relatively consistent among age and origin. However, while less than 20% of Alaska-bound travelers used a single source, 50% of travelers destined for Northeastern BC used only one source of information to plan their trip, typically past experience.

5.3 Information used during the trip

In the mailback survey, travelers were asked about what information sources they used during their trip. On average, travelers used five different sources of information during their trip.

Overall, Visitor Info Centre (VIC) counselors were the most frequently mentioned source of information used during the trip, cited by 70% of respondents (Table 23). *The Milepost* and brochures were used by over 60% of travelers. Past experience and advice from locals or other travelers were also popular sources of information on the trip (mentioned by over 50%). Automobile Association guides and the *North! to Alaska* magazine were mentioned by about a third of travelers.

The information used during the trip varied along several dimensions, including origin, destination and length of stay. Some highlights include:

- Overseas travelers used brochures, books and the internet more frequently than other travelers.
- Alaska-bound travelers overwhelmingly used *The Milepost* (83%). However, *The Milepost* was more popular among American travelers bound for Alaska, compared to Canadian travelers bound for Alaska (92% and 68%, respectively).
- Travelers bound for Northeastern BC were more likely to use past experience and less likely to use Visitor Info Centres.
- Travelers using motorhomes more frequently used advice from locals or fellow travelers than other travelers.
- Travelers away for 30 nights or more used six different sources on average, compared to four sources for those staying less than 30 nights.

There were few major differences in the sources of information used by age or education. However, the use of Visitor Info Centres increased somewhat with age (67% for travelers under 35 years to 76% for those 65 years and over) and with education (36% for travelers with high school education to 44% for those with university education).

5.4 Most useful source of information

Travelers were asked to identify the most useful source of information during their trip. Overall, *The Milepost* was overwhelmingly the most frequent response, chosen by 46% of travelers (Table 24). VIC counselors and past experience were the next two choices (18% and 15%, respectively).

However, the most useful source of information varied across several dimensions. For example:

- 64% of Alaska bound travelers and 70% of US travelers rated *The Milepost* as most useful.
- A quarter of Canadian and overseas travelers indicated that VIC counselors were the most useful source of information, compared to 9% of US travelers.
- A third of travelers bound for Northeastern BC said past experience was most useful.

While the ratings for most useful information source were fairly stable by education, older travelers preferred *The Milepost*, compared to younger travelers (50% for travelers 65 years and over, compared to 39% for those under 35 years).

The proportion of travelers rating *The Milepost* as most useful changed very little between those visiting for the first time and those who had visited their destination before (47% and 43%). By comparison, VICs were rated most useful by 23% of first time travelers and 8% of returning travelers. Of returning travelers, a third rated past experience as most useful.

Table 22. Information sources used for trip planning.

INFO USED FOR PLANNING	Overall	Origin			Destination			Transportation		Length of trip	
		Canada	US	Overseas	Alaska	NE BC	Circle tour	Vehicle	Motor home	< 30 days	30+ days
Internet	42%	35%	46%	60%	49%	21%	39%	41%	45%	36%	49%
Word of mouth	34%	34%	34%	33%	37%	40%	20%	31%	36%	31%	37%
<i>The Milepost</i>	31%	12%	55%	9%	49%	3%	19%	24%	46%	21%	42%
Past experience	31%	36%	28%	16%	21%	54%	28%	33%	27%	37%	24%
Visitor Info Centres	25%	28%	22%	28%	27%	20%	28%	24%	25%	23%	28%
Travel agent	19%	20%	18%	22%	21%	8%	27%	19%	22%	16%	23%
Books	19%	14%	21%	41%	24%	6%	24%	16%	23%	12%	26%
Brochures	17%	17%	18%	13%	19%	10%	22%	14%	23%	13%	21%
Tourism BC 1-800 (HelloBC)	5%	5%	6%	2%	7%	3%	5%	4%	7%	4%	7%
Other 1-800 numbers	4%	2%	5%	2%	5%	1%	4%	3%	5%	2%	5%
Travel Alberta 1-800	3%	2%	4%	1%	4%	1%	4%	2%	4%	2%	4%
Tour operators	2%	1%	3%	3%	3%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%
<i>North! to Alaska</i> magazine	1%	<1%	3%	1%	3%	<1%	1%	<1%	3%	1%	2%
<i>Hello North Travel Guide</i>	1%	1%	1%	<1%	1%	<1%	1%	<1%	1%	<1%	1%
Media coverage	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	<1%	2%	<1%	1%	<1%	1%
<i>Bell's Travel Guide</i>	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%

Table 23. All sources of information used during the trip.

ALL INFO USED DURING TRIP	Overall	Origin			Destination			Transportation		Length of trip	
		Canada	US	Overseas	Alaska	NE BC	Circle tour	Vehicle	Motor home	< 30 days	30+ days
Visitor Info Centre counselors	71%	72%	68%	86%	75%	48%	79%	67%	75%	62%	80%
<i>The Milepost</i>	64%	47%	89%	31%	83%	27%	52%	56%	75%	53%	76%
Brochures	63%	61%	64%	78%	68%	36%	72%	55%	74%	50%	76%
Own or party's past experience	59%	63%	57%	50%	51%	77%	57%	66%	54%	68%	50%
Advice from locals ²³	56%	52%	61%	57%	64%	35%	55%	46%	71%	44%	68%
Advice from fellow travelers	53%	50%	59%	42%	62%	34%	54%	44%	65%	38%	69%
Internet	42%	40%	41%	54%	41%	34%	43%	41%	46%	36%	47%
Books	38%	30%	41%	72%	44%	11%	46%	31%	47%	23%	53%
Automobile association guides	34%	38%	32%	14%	37%	27%	32%	33%	38%	28%	40%
<i>North! to Alaska</i> magazine	27%	26%	26%	32%	32%	9%	29%	21%	31%	18%	36%
<i>Hello North Travel Guide</i>	7%	11%	3%	10%	4%	4%	13%	8%	5%	6%	9%
<i>Bell's Travel Guide</i>	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other sources	9%	8%	8%	16%	7%	7%	12%	8%	9%	9%	9%

²³ Advice from locals includes advice from campground, restaurant, and museum staff, and other local residents.

Table 24. Most useful source of information during the trip.

MOST USEFUL SOURCE	Overall	Origin			Destination			Transportation		Length of trip	
		Canada	US	Overseas	Alaska	NE BC	Circle tour	Vehicle	Motor home	< 30 days	30+ days
<i>The Milepost</i>	46%	27%	70%	21%	64%	12%	36%	34%	62%	33%	58%
Visitor Info Centre counselors	18%	26%	9%	24%	12%	17%	22%	19%	17%	19%	18%
Own or party's past experiences	15%	19%	12%	12%	13%	32%	12%	21%	8%	22%	9%
Advice from fellow travelers	6%	6%	7%	4%	8%	12%	3%	6%	4%	5%	8%
Automobile association guides	6%	9%	4%	3%	6%	5%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%
Brochures	6%	5%	6%	16%	7%	4%	5%	5%	6%	6%	7%
Advice from locals ²⁴	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%	3%	4%	5%	5%	6%
Books	5%	3%	5%	20%	5%	2%	8%	4%	3%	4%	6%
Internet	5%	6%	2%	9%	3%	5%	8%	5%	4%	5%	4%
<i>North! to Alaska</i> magazine	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%	2%	4%	2%	4%
<i>Hello North Travel Guide</i>	1%	1%	<1%	5%	1%	<1%	3%	2%	<1%	1%	1%
<i>Bell's Travel Guide</i>	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%
Other	4%	4%	3%	12%	2%	6%	8%	6%	2%	5%	3%

²⁴ Advice from locals includes advice from campground, restaurant, and museum staff, and other local residents.

5.5 Timing of information gathering

Travelers obtained the information they used during their trip from different places and at different times. Some information used during the trip was compiled during the planning stage before the trip: from the internet, from guides picked up previously or ordered from tourism organizations, or from people who had made the trip before. Other information was picked up on route at Visitor Info Centres, from brochure racks, or from local residents or fellow travelers.

Figure 9 shows when travelers obtained information for their trip: before the trip, during the trip, or both before and during.²⁵ For example:

- Among travelers using the internet, 98% obtained the information before their trip and ten percent obtained information from the internet during the trip.
- For travelers using Automobile Association guides or books, 90% indicated they obtained the information before their trip while over 40% obtained the guide or book during their trip.
- Three-quarters of travelers indicated they obtained past experience before their trip. Interestingly, 46% also said they obtained 'past experience' during their trip.²⁶
- While three quarters of travelers obtained *The Milepost* before their trip, two thirds obtained the guide during their trip.
- Information from VIC counselors and from locals was predominantly obtained during the trip (by over 95% of travelers using these sources).

5.6 Visitor Info Centres

Visitor Info Centres (VICs) play an important role in servicing travelers, by distributing travel guides, brochures, and maps, by retailing souvenirs, and by providing the opportunity to speak with on-site travel counselors. Travelers interviewed at the Dawson Creek and Fort Nelson VICs were asked questions about their use of the VIC.

5.6.1 Stopping at VICs

Nearly 60% of the travelers who stopped at these two VICs wanted map or route information (Table 25). Accommodation and attraction information were the second and third most frequently cited reasons for stopping at the VICs. A third of travelers indicated they stopped for other reasons. These reasons include visiting nearby museums (both in Dawson Creek and in Fort Nelson), purchasing film or souvenirs, and stopping for photo opportunities, particularly at the Mile 0 Post and the official Alaska Highway sign in Dawson Creek.

Overall, the reasons for stopping at a VIC are fairly consistent between sub-groups. Travelers visiting friends and relatives or traveling to Alberta were less likely to stop for accommodation information and more likely to stop for other reasons. Previous visits to the destination did not significantly change the travelers' reasons for stopping at the VICs. However, first time travelers were slightly more likely to stop for route or accommodation information than returning travelers.

²⁵ In this section, the proportions for the response "obtained before and during trip" are counted twice: once to estimate the total proportion of travelers who obtained the information before the trip and a second time to estimate the total proportion of travelers who obtained the information during the trip. Some travelers may have obtained one copy or version of a guide before the trip and then purchased or picked up another copy or version during their trip

²⁶ Thirteen percent of travelers who used past experience specifically said they obtained their experience 'during their trip'. A third indicated they obtained past experience 'before' and 'during' trip. The travelers who obtained past experience during the trip may have been referring to the first leg of their journey.

Figure 9. Timing of information gathering.

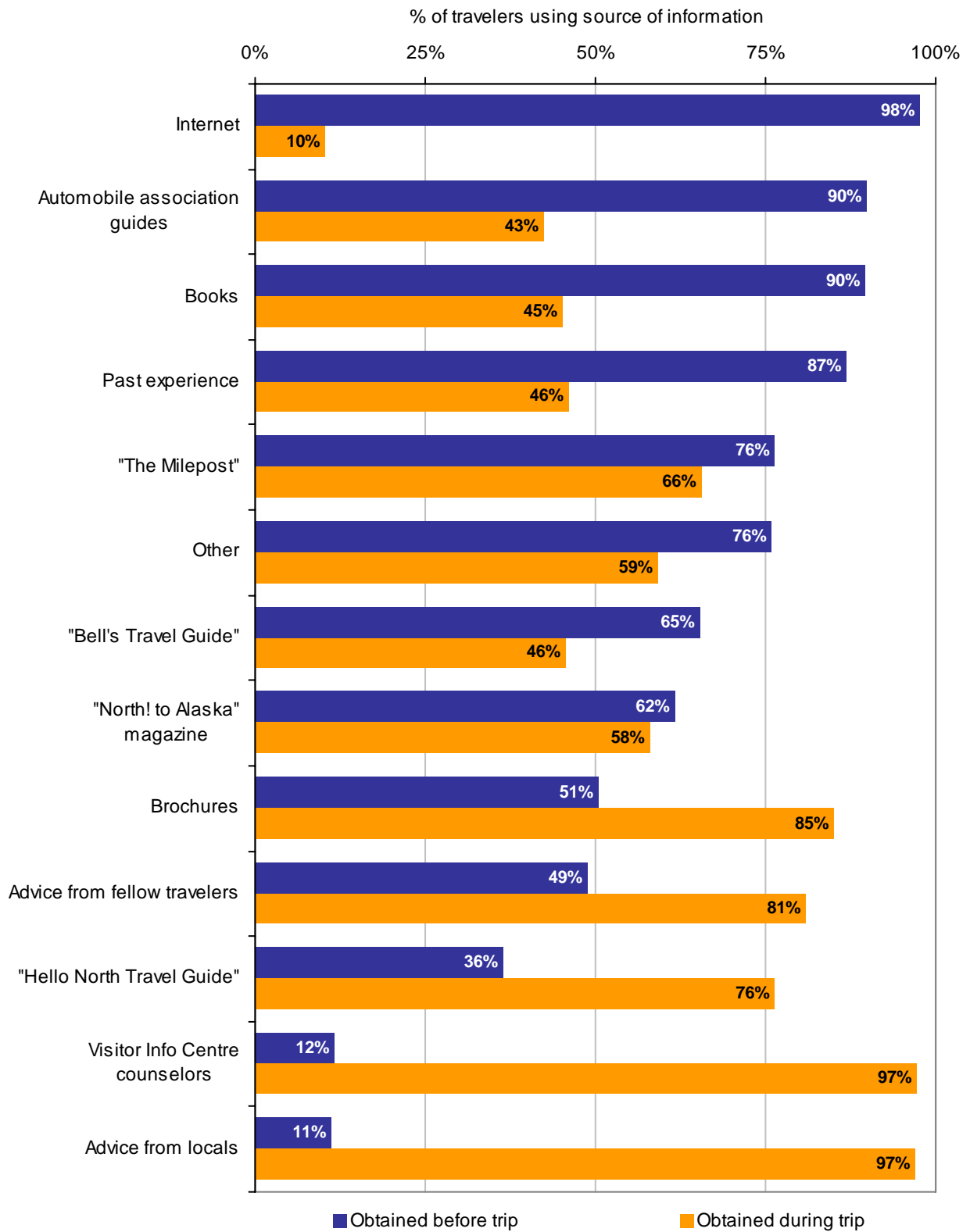


Table 25. Travelers' reasons for stopping at Visitor Info Centres.

	Travelers' reasons for stopping at Visitor Info Centres							
	Map or route	Accommodation	Attraction info	Event info	Take a break	Use facilities	Refreshments	Other ²⁷
Overall	56%	41%	34%	14%	12%	5%	1%	32%
Origin								
Canada	55%	42%	34%	16%	12%	6%	1%	30%
United States	57%	40%	33%	13%	14%	4%	1%	34%
Overseas	61%	45%	38%	9%	12%	7%	0%	33%
Age								
Under 35 yrs	59%	44%	30%	13%	20%	9%	2%	18%
35 to 54 yrs	59%	41%	33%	13%	13%	4%	1%	29%
55 to 64 yrs	52%	42%	37%	16%	12%	6%	1%	34%
65 yrs and older	57%	40%	33%	14%	10%	4%	1%	39%
Trip purpose								
Leisure	58%	43%	35%	14%	12%	6%	1%	31%
Visit friends & rel	54%	28%	29%	6%	13%	3%	1%	42%
Business	39%	30%	40%	27%	17%	9%	0%	40%
Destination								
Alaska	59%	45%	33%	13%	12%	4%	1%	32%
Northeast BC	50%	30%	29%	13%	9%	4%	1%	34%
Yukon	58%	50%	34%	20%	14%	6%	2%	28%
Circle tour	54%	41%	43%	18%	10%	7%	1%	25%
Alberta	34%	27%	34%	14%	15%	5%	0%	45%
Transportation								
Vehicle only	56%	39%	32%	14%	13%	7%	1%	30%
Camper van	59%	50%	29%	11%	7%	4%	2%	26%
5 th wheel trailer	56%	45%	35%	20%	13%	2%	1%	35%
Motorhome	57%	42%	41%	15%	12%	4%	1%	36%
VIC location								
Dawson Creek	59%	42%	31%	12%	14%	5%	0%	33%
Fort Nelson	48%	40%	42%	20%	9%	7%	3%	29%
Previous visit								
First time	56%	46%	35%	17%	10%	6%	1%	34%
Return visit	48%	40%	38%	13%	9%	5%	3%	36%

²⁷ Other reasons for stopping at the VIC include visiting the nearby museums, buying film or souvenirs, or taking advantage of photo opportunities.

5.6.2 Speaking with VIC counselors

During their visit to the VIC, 80% of travelers indicated they spoke with a travel counselor. This proportion was slightly higher at the Fort Nelson VIC, compared to the Dawson Creek VIC (91% and 79%, respectively).

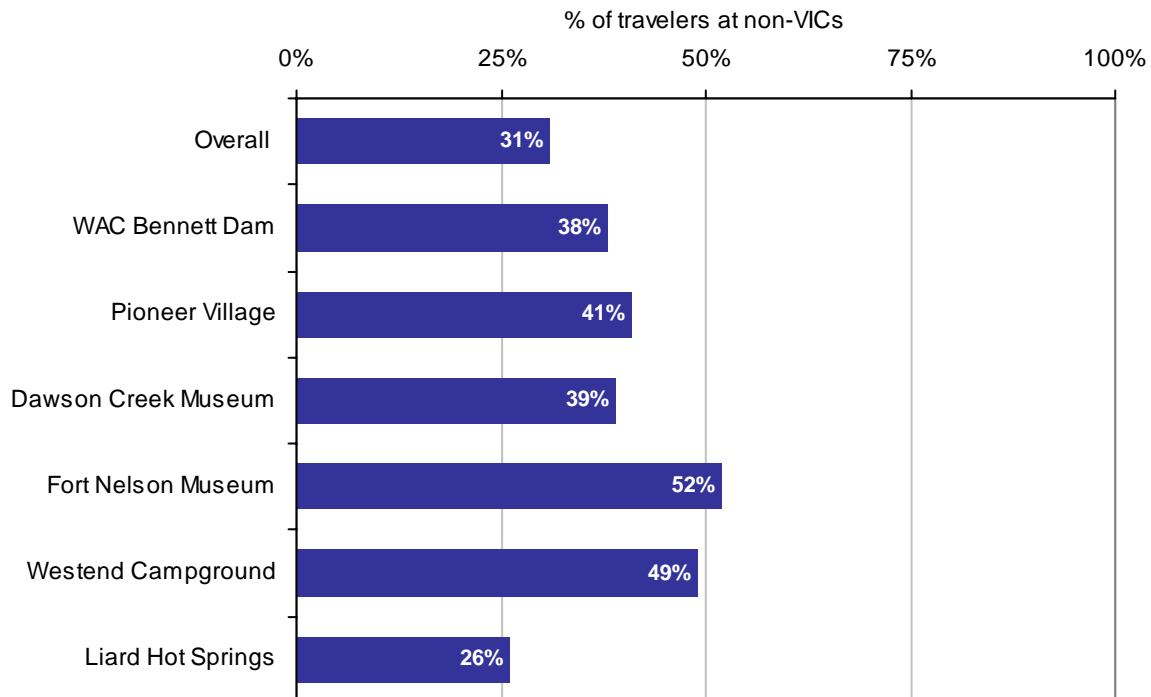
Overseas travelers were somewhat more likely to speak with a counselor (89%) than North American travelers (about 80%). More travelers on a circle tour or destined for the Yukon (86%) spoke with counselors, compared to those traveling to Northeastern BC or Alberta (70%). There was little difference in the use of counselors by age, education, mode of transportation, length of stay or previous visits to the destination.

5.6.3 Overall VIC use

Travelers interviewed at non-VIC locations were asked if they had visited the Dawson Creek and/or Fort Nelson VICs during their trip. Overall, 31% of travelers had visited either or both VICs. However, this proportion varied considerably based on the proximity of the interview site to the VIC. Nearly half of visitors who were interviewed at the Dawson Creek and Fort Nelson museums (non-VIC interview locations) has also visited the VIC as these museums are less than a five minute walk from the VIC.

As the Liard Hot Springs Provincial Park is far away from both VICs and is a popular stopping place for all travelers, this location provides a good estimate of the proportion of the general traveling population who visit VICs (26%).

Figure 10. Proportion of travelers who stopped at VICs by interview location.



6.0 EXPERIENCES AND DESTINATION IMAGES

This section presents travelers' trip experiences and their images of the northern destinations.

6.1 Traveler experiences

Overall, travelers reported positive experiences in all northern destinations. Over 90% of travelers said their experiences met or exceeded their original expectations (Figure 11). Very few travelers had negative experiences.

Figure 11. Travelers' overall experience in each area.

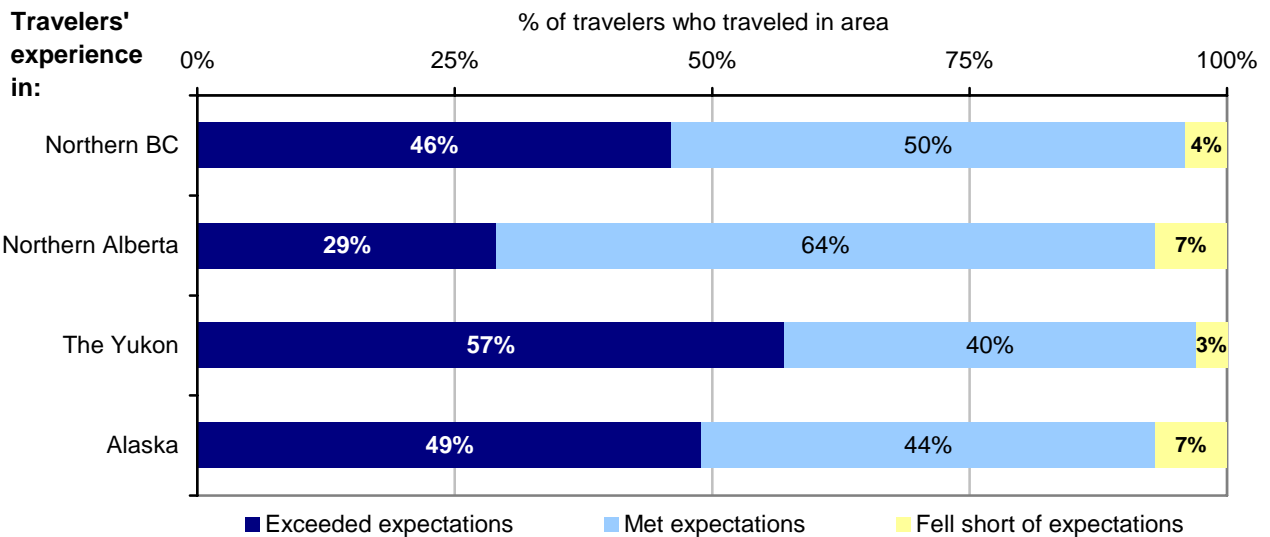


Table 26 presents the ratings for travelers' overall experience in each region by sub-group. While there is some natural variation in ratings, many of the ratings fall within ± 10 ppt of the overall rating. There are some significant differences such as:

- Sixty-two percent of business travelers indicated that Northern BC exceeded their expectation, compared to 46% for Northern BC overall.
- Thirty-nine percent of Americans said that Northern Alberta exceeded their expectations, compared to 29% for Northern Alberta overall.
- Overall, more older travelers said their experiences exceeded their expectations in a given region, compared to younger travelers.
- Within each region, the ratings by mode of transportation are fairly consistent.

Two major trends emerge when the data are analyzed by length of stay and previous visit:

- Travelers on longer trips more frequently said that their experiences exceeded their expectations in any given region, compared to those on shorter trips.
- While more first-time travelers said a region exceeded their initial expectations compared to return visitors, between 20% and 40% of return visitors indicated that their experience exceeded their expectations.

Table 26. Travelers' experiences in northern destinations by select variables.²⁸

	Travelers' overall experiences in:											
	Northern BC			Northern Alberta			The Yukon			Alaska		
	Sh	Met	Ex	Sh	Met	Ex	Sh	Met	Ex	Sh	Met	Ex
Overall	3%	51%	47%	6%	66%	29%	3%	40%	57%	6%	44%	50%
Origin												
Canada	3%	57%	40%	5%	75%	20%	2%	36%	62%	10%	43%	47%
United States	3%	43%	54%	6%	55%	39%	3%	45%	52%	4%	45%	51%
Overseas	0%	52%	48%	7%	70%	24%	6%	35%	59%	12%	41%	48%
Age												
Under 35 yrs	3%	57%	40%	7%	84%	9%	4%	49%	47%	9%	45%	46%
35 to 54 yrs	3%	48%	49%	6%	62%	32%	3%	40%	57%	6%	47%	47%
55 to 64 yrs	3%	52%	45%	6%	63%	30%	3%	39%	58%	6%	41%	52%
65 yrs and older	1%	48%	51%	3%	64%	33%	2%	36%	62%	6%	42%	52%
Purpose												
Leisure	2%	51%	46%	5%	65%	30%	3%	39%	58%	6%	44%	49%
Visit friends & rel	6%	49%	45%	12%	70%	18%	0%	54%	46%	4%	36%	60%
Business	0%	38%	62%	7%	76%	17%	0%	47%	53%	0%	52%	48%
Transportation												
Vehicle only	3%	52%	45%	7%	69%	24%	3%	47%	51%	6%	48%	46%
Camper van	3%	43%	54%	6%	57%	37%	1%	34%	65%	3%	52%	45%
5th wheel trailer	2%	50%	48%	3%	61%	37%	0%	39%	61%	9%	42%	49%
Motorhome	2%	52%	46%	4%	64%	32%	5%	35%	61%	7%	36%	57%
Trip length												
Less than 30 nights	2%	60%	38%	4%	77%	19%	2%	49%	49%	6%	59%	36%
30 nights or more	3%	41%	55%	7%	56%	38%	4%	33%	63%	7%	35%	58%
Previous trip												
First time	3%	43%	54%	6%	61%	33%	4%	33%	63%	7%	37%	57%
Return	3%	65%	33%	5%	76%	19%	1%	55%	44%	5%	60%	34%

Sh: Fell short of original expectations
 Met: Met original expectations
 Ex: Exceeded original expectations

²⁸ The ratings in this table include only those travelers who visited the areas. For example, 49% of Canadians did not travel in Alaska and these travelers were removed before calculating the ratings for Alaska by Canadians.

6.2 Destination images

A “destination image” is the composite of all images, feelings or knowledge that a person may have about a place, generated from:

- Past experience (if applicable)
- Stories from friends or family who have visited before
- Media, including books, movies, television, magazines, articles, and photos.

While the notion of ‘wild places’ may be a common image for all northern destinations, it is useful for businesses or tourism marketing organizations to know about any unique characteristics that may help differentiate one destination from another or identify common images or themes among the regions. In the mailback questionnaire, travelers were asked to list three unique and interesting characteristics for Northern BC, Northern Alberta, the Yukon and Alaska. If the traveler had not visited a particular region, they were asked to draw from their background knowledge. There were few significant differences in the destination images between first-time and returning travelers.

Although travelers were asked to list the unique characteristics of each northern destination, four common images for the destinations emerged: scenery, wildlife, history and hospitality (Table 27). Scenery was mentioned by at least 85% of travelers for each region.

There were some differences in the common characteristics mentioned for each region:

- While scenery was mentioned for each destination by the majority travelers, the proportion was slightly lower for the Yukon compared to other regions.
- Wildlife was more frequently mentioned for Northern BC, while history was more frequently mentioned for the Yukon.

There were also differences in the common characteristics by traveler origin. For example:

- Wildlife was more frequently mentioned by overseas travelers for each region, compared to other travelers.
- Canadians were twice as likely to mention the Yukon’s history, compared to US or overseas travelers. Canadians and overseas travelers more frequently mentioned history for Alaska, compared to US travelers.
- Canadians were twice as likely to mention Northern BC’s hospitality, compared to other travelers.

While the common characteristics dominated travelers’ destination images, some unique characteristics did emerge:

- The Yukon: goldfields, Dawson City, an Arctic climate, and culture
- Northern BC: hot springs
- Alaska: glaciers

Table 27. Common and unique characteristics of northern destinations by traveler origin.

	Northern BC				Northern Alberta				The Yukon				Alaska			
	All	CDN	US	OS	All	CDN	US	OS	All	CDN	US	OS	All	CDN	US	OS
Common																
Scenery	93%	95%	90%	98%	92%	91%	93%	90%	85%	83%	86%	87%	92%	91%	93%	87%
Wildlife	54%	55%	52%	62%	27%	27%	26%	36%	37%	32%	42%	47%	45%	31%	54%	67%
History	10%	11%	9%	6%	7%	7%	6%	7%	25%	33%	17%	16%	14%	18%	10%	18%
Hospitality	14%	22%	19%	10%	11%	8%	13%	13%	13%	12%	14%	19%	11%	9%	12%	17%
Unique																
Hot springs	20%	22%	19%	10%	<5%				<5%							
Glaciers	<5%				<5%				<5%				18%	17%	18%	27%
Gold fields	<5%				<5%				14%	17%	9%	24%				
Dawson City									13%	15%	10%	10%	<5%			
Arctic climate	<5%				<5%				5%	7%	3%	10%	7%	11%	5%	4%
Culture	<5%				<5%				5%	5%	4%	5%	<5%			
Other images (less than 5%)	Alaska Highway Cassiar Highway								Dempster Highway Top of the World Highway				Alaska Highway Trans-Alaska pipeline Top of the World Highway			

7.0 TRAFFIC VOLUME

This section presents the estimates for the volume of travelers on the BC portion of the Alaska Highway, north of Fort Nelson.

Originally, the intention was to use the data recorded by the permanent traffic counter at kilometre 839 (Fireside) as the total traffic volume and then use the field observations to adjust the total traffic volume (i.e. by removing commercial traffic) and calculate the traveler traffic volume.

However, the counter at KM 839 was removed for repair on August 12. Subsequent analysis of archive data from the counters at KM 839 and KM 427 indicated that the traffic data were unreliable. Therefore, an alternate method for estimating traffic volume using the database of field traffic counts was developed.

Between May 15 and September 22, the interview crew that conducted the field traffic count (refer to section 2.4) recorded 9,284 observations over 38 sampling days. Over the course of the field season, data were recorded at various times of the day between 7:00 AM and 2:00 AM.

Using this database of traffic counts, the average number of vehicles per hour was calculated by month, time of day, and traffic direction (north and south). The average traffic flow was then weighted by the total hours per month and time of day to calculate total traffic flow. The detailed calculations are described in Appendix D.

7.1 Total and traveler traffic volume

Overall, an estimated 139,700 vehicles traveled on the BC portion of the Alaska Highway, north of Fort Nelson between May and September 2003. Non-commercial vehicles accounted for 86% of total traffic on average. Commercial vehicles were removed from the estimate, giving 120,600 traveler vehicles and 320,400 total travelers – calculated using average travel party size.²⁹

Table 28. Summary of total and traveler traffic volumes.³⁰

Month	Estimated total traffic	Total traveler traffic	Average travel party size	Total number of travelers
May	19,400	16,100	2.46	39,700
June	31,000	27,000	2.70	73,000
July	33,800	29,700	2.72	80,800
August	33,700	29,700	2.70	80,200
September	21,800	18,100	2.58	46,700
Total	139,700	120,600	2.66	320,400

²⁹ BC residents' vehicles were included in the estimate of total traveler traffic, as explained in section 7.2.

³⁰ The results in this table have been rounded up to the nearest 100. Please see Appendix D for the detailed calculations.

7.2 Traveler origin

Vehicle origin was also recorded for each observation from licence plates. Initially, the proportion of BC travelers in the traffic count was expected to be higher than the proportion in the interviews due to traffic from local residents around the traffic count sites. Therefore, the BC traffic was to be removed from the traveler traffic estimate because there was no way to determine whether a BC vehicle contained a local resident or a BC resident on a trip.

However, the proportion of BC vehicles in the traffic count was similar to the proportion of BC travelers in the interviews, indicating that the local resident traffic near the count sites was negligible (Table 29). Therefore, BC vehicles were kept in the overall traffic count and the estimates.

Table 29. Comparing origin between the traffic count and the unweighted intercept interview counts.

Origin	Traffic count	Intercept interviews
Canada	47%	46%
BC	22%	17%
Alberta	10%	13%
Yukon	8%	7%
Ontario	2%	7%
Other Canada	5%	2%
United States	53%	54%
Alaska	17%	5%
Mid-west	8%	13%
Northeast	3%	4%
Pacific	10%	11%
South	7%	14%
West	7%	7%
Total	100%	100%

APPENDIX A

Group Travelers

Group Travelers

Three percent of travelers intercepted in Northeastern BC were part of an organized bus or caravan tour. Over two-thirds of these travelers were from the United States; 27% were Canadian and 5% were from overseas.

While 60% of Canadian tour travelers were part of a bus tour, the majority of Americans (88%) were traveling as part of an RV caravan. Alaska was the primary destination for all American tour travelers and for 57% of Canadians. Canadians were also traveling on a circle tour (21%) or to the Yukon (11%).

Adventure Caravan, Creative World Travel, and Tracks to Adventure were the most frequent caravan companies, while Cardinal Tours was the most frequent bus tour company. The full list of tour companies or organizations is presented in Table 30 and Table 31.

Table 30. List of bus tour companies from intercept interviews.

Bus tours	Canada	United States	Overseas	Overall
Cardinal Tours	2		2	4
McConaghy Tours	2			2
Southwest Tours		2		2
Sunwest Tours	2			2
Boomerang Tours			1	1
Carson Tours		1		1
Christian Tours		1		1
DeNure Tours	1			1
Getaways Vacations	1			1
Goodwill Tours		1		1
Lighthouse Ministries	1			1
Parsons Holiday Tours	1			1
Rostad Tours	1			1
Rotel Tours			1	1
Schedernescher Vacations			1	1
Sovereign Tours	1			1
Sunflower Tours		1		1
Well Gray Tours	1			1
Westworld Tours	1			1
Anderson Coach Tours		1		1
Hanover Holiday Tours	1			1
Total	15	7	5	27

Table 31. List of caravan tour companies, clubs or organizations from intercept interviews.

Caravan tours	Canada	United States	Overseas	Total
Adventure Caravan	1	11		12
Creative World Travel		12		12
Tracks to Adventure		12		12
Fantasy Tours		8		8
ExploreCanada	4			4
Good Sam Club	1	2		3
Newmar Kountry Klub		3		3
Winnebago-Itasca Travelers Club		3		3
Adventure Tours	1	1		2
Foretravel Motorcade Club		2		2
Holiday Ramblers		2		2
Alaska Travel Adventures		1		1
Alaskan Discovery RV Tours		1		1
CJ RV Adventures		1		1
Creative World Travel		1		1
Quebec Federation of Camping/Caravanning	1			1
RecVee Holiday Adventures	1			1
SunQuest Vacations		1		1
Total	9	61	0	70

APPENDIX B

Survey Instruments

APPENDIX C

Weighting Methods

Weighting method

Research conducted by Tourism BC has shown travelers visiting Visitor Info Centres (VIC) may differ from the general traveling population.³¹ While the demographics of travelers intercepted at VICs and at non-VIC locations vary considerably between regions, the VIC visitors are often older with higher education and income levels. Also, there tend to be fewer locals or BC residents at VICs intercepted at VICs, compared to the general traveling population.

In the Northern Rockies – Alaska Highway Visitor Research study, there were similar differences in the profile of respondents between VICs and non-VIC locations and between locations along the highway (Table 32).

- Overall, travelers intercepted in Dawson Creek or Fort Nelson were older than those intercepted at the WAC Bennett Dam or Liard Hot Springs Provincial Park (these two locations are one to three hours away from the nearest towns).
- The proportion of BC residents varied considerably by interview location. Few Alaskans were intercepted by interviewers, except at the Liard Hot Springs.

Table 32. Profile of interview respondents by location.

Interview locations	Age			Origin				
	34 years & under	35 to 54 years	55 years & over	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Over-seas
Dawson Creek overall	8%	25%	67%	13%	27%	2%	52%	6%
Dawson Creek VIC	7%	24%	69%	10%	27%	2%	55%	6%
Dawson Creek Museum	14%	25%	61%	45%	33%	0%	11%	11%
Pioneer Village	0%	27%	73%	6%	17%	0%	72%	6%
WAC Bennett Dam	9%	45%	46%	31%	16%	2%	47%	5%
Fort Nelson overall	7%	24%	68%	16%	20%	3%	54%	6%
Fort Nelson VIC	13%	27%	60%	15%	26%	3%	48%	8%
Westend Campground	1%	18%	81%	12%	15%	3%	67%	3%
Fort Nelson Museum	6%	32%	62%	27%	18%	3%	44%	8%
Liard Hot Springs	19%	35%	46%	20%	29%	10%	35%	7%
Overall	12%	29%	60%	16%	27%	5%	47%	6%

Weighting was required to ensure that the interview and mailback results accurately represented the target population for the study. However, to develop the appropriate weights, data for origin and age for the target population were required.

While traveler origin was available from the traffic counts, age data were not. However, the Liard Hot Springs - one of the most popular stopping points along the BC portion of the Alaska Highway - is frequented by a broad cross-section of people traveling along the Alaska Highway. The origin profile for respondents intercepted at Liard Hot Springs was not significantly different

³¹ Refer to the Value of a VIC studies conducted by Tourism BC since 2001. The reports are available on Tourism BC's website at www.tourismbc.com -> Research -> Special Reports -> Regional Research.

from the profiles based on the traffic counts. Also, the Liard data compensated partially for the under-representation of Alaska travelers in the interview population³² and provided age data. Therefore, the profile of travelers intercepted at the Liard Hot Springs was used to develop the weights for all interview and mailback responses.

Table 33. Comparison of origin between traffic counts, all interviews, and interviews conducted at Liard.

Origin	Traffic count	All intercept interviews	Interviews at Liard Hot Springs
Canada	47%	46%	52%
BC	22%	17%	21%
Alberta	10%	13%	14%
Yukon	8%	7%	6%
Ontario	2%	7%	7%
Other Canada	5%	2%	4%
United States	53%	54%	48%
Alaska	17%	5%	10%
Mid-west	8%	13%	10%
Northeast	3%	4%	3%
Pacific	10%	11%	11%
South	7%	14%	8%
West	7%	7%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

³² Some Alaska residents may have been traveling for personal reasons and may have been screened out of the intercept interviews. However, less than 3% of respondents overall were traveling for personal reasons, so this does not account for the difference in Alaskan travelers between the traffic count and the interviews.

Weighting calculations

The weights were calculated as follows:

- Using the interview data from the Liard Hot Springs, a matrix was constructed showing proportion of respondents by age and origin.

LIARD INTERVIEWS	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Overseas	TOTAL
34 years & under	4.4%	4.7%	3.1%	4.7%	2.2%	19.1%
35 to 54 years	8.1%	13.3%	4.1%	7.4%	2.1%	34.9%
55 years & over	7.0%	11.6%	2.4%	22.8%	2.1%	45.9%
Total	19.5%	29.6%	9.6%	34.9%	6.4%	100.0%

- These relative proportions were used to represent the proportions in the target population, which used an arbitrarily set base of 10,000.

LIARD COUNTS	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Overseas	TOTAL
34 years & under	439	471	314	471	220	1,914
35 to 54 years	805	1,328	408	743	209	3,494
55 years & over	701	1,161	241	2,280	209	4,592
Total	1,946	2,960	962	3,494	638	10,000

- To develop the interview weights, the weighted counts from Liard were divided by the actual respondent counts from the interviews for each age and origin cell. For example, for BC residents aged 34 and under, the weighted count from Liard (439) was divided by the count of respondents from the interviews (66) to obtain a weight of 6.66 for each respondent in the cell.

INTERVIEWS COUNTS	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Overseas	TOTAL
34 years & under	66	84	37	81	54	322
35 to 54 years	160	293	58	223	57	791
55 years & over	214	376	38	975	65	1,668
Total	440	753	133	1,279	176	2,781

INTERVIEW WEIGHTS	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Overseas
34 years & under	6.66	5.60	8.48	5.81	4.07
35 to 54 years	5.03	4.53	7.03	3.33	3.67
55 years & over	3.27	3.09	6.33	2.34	3.22

4. The same process was used to calculate the mailback weights. The mailback responses were weighted back to the same target population (represented by Liard Hot Springs). For example, for BC residents aged 34 and under, the weighted count from Liard (439) was divided by the count of respondents from the mailback (17) to obtain a weight of 25.84 per respondent in the cell.

MAILBACK COUNTS	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Overseas	TOTAL
34 years & under	17	21	2	14	16	70
35 to 54 years	71	143	10	73	16	313
55 years & over	122	204	13	431	24	794
Total	210	368	25	518	56	1,177

MAILBACK WEIGHTS	BC	Rest of Canada	Alaska	Rest of US	Overseas
34 years & under	25.84	22.41	156.90	33.62	13.73
35 to 54 years	11.34	9.29	40.79	10.17	13.08
55 years & over	5.74	5.69	18.51	5.29	8.72

APPENDIX D

Traffic Volume Calculations

Total and traveler traffic volume

Total and traveler traffic volumes were calculated as follows:

1. The north- and south-bound traffic flow (vehicles per hour) was calculated for each sample block.
2. The sample blocks were grouped according to time of day as follows:

Time of day	Start time	End time	Hours
Morning	6:00 AM	12:29 PM	6.5
Afternoon	12:30 PM	5:59 PM	5.5
Evening	6:00 PM	10:59 PM	5.0
Night	11:00 PM	5:59 AM	7.0

For blocks that split across cut-off times, we compared how much of the block fell in each group and reassigned entire sample block to the time of day group with the largest portion of the block.

3. The average traffic flow was calculated by month, time of day and traffic direction:

Month	Time of day	Average vehicles per hour	
		North-bound	South-bound
May	Morning	26.5	9.6
	Afternoon	27.4	10.3
	Evening	19.0	7.0
	Night	3.8	3.8
June	Morning	48.9	17.0
	Afternoon	39.7	22.5
	Evening	20.5	21.5
	Night	3.8	3.8
July	Morning	41.7	34.0
	Afternoon	33.6	33.1
	Evening	22.2	13.8
	Night ¹	3.8	3.8
August	Morning	33.8	29.1
	Afternoon	30.8	35.2
	Evening	24.3	28.1
	Night	3.8	3.8
September	Morning	14.4	25.7
	Afternoon	17.7	23.4
	Evening ²	21.5	16.0
	Night	3.8	3.8

Notes:

1. Traffic counting at night was conducted on a randomly chosen night (July 21, 2003) between 11 pm and 2 am. The traffic flow was 2.3 veh/hr north-bound and 5.3 veh/hr south-bound. These two rates were averaged and used to impute night time values for the other months.
2. The average of each month's evening north-bound traffic flow was used to impute the value for north-bound evening traffic in September.

3. The total hours per month and time of day were used to calculate the total traffic volume along the Alaska Highway, north of Fort Nelson (Table 34).
4. Vehicle type – recorded during the field counts – was used to determine the proportion of non-commercial traffic by month, time of day and traffic direction. Non-commercial traffic ranged from 69% to 89% of all vehicle traffic, averaging 84% over the period of the survey.

Non-commercial vehicles

- VO Vehicle only (car, truck, van)
- TC Truck camper or camper van
- VT Vehicle with trailer (5th wheel, etc.)
- RV Motorhome
- MC Motorcycle

Commercial vehicles

- SM Semi-trailer truck
- CO Commercial vehicle (van, truck)
- TB Tour bus

5. The proportion of commercial traffic was subtracted from the total volume to estimate the volume of traveler traffic (Table 34).

Table 34. Calculations for gross and net traveler traffic volume.

Month	Time of day	Hours	Days	Total hrs	Vehicle / hour		Gross traffic volume			% non-comm		Net traffic volume		
					North	South	North	South	Total	North	South	North	South	Total
May	Morning	6.5	31	201.5	26.5	9.6	5,345	1,940	7,285	83%	81%	4,431	1,570	6,001
May	Afternoon	5.5	31	170.5	27.4	10.3	4,669	1,755	6,423	76%	71%	3,563	1,253	4,816
May	Evening	5.0	31	154.5	19.0	7.0	2,935	1,081	4,017	84%	84%	2,463	903	3,366
May	Nights	7.0	31	217.0	3.8	3.8	825	825	1,649	74%	74%	609	609	1,219
Jun	Morning	6.5	30	195.0	48.9	17.0	9,533	3,311	12,844	89%	83%	8,514	2,746	11,261
Jun	Afternoon	5.5	30	165.0	39.7	22.5	6,546	3,713	10,259	78%	79%	5,109	2,936	8,045
Jun	Evening	5.0	30	149.5	20.5	21.5	3,065	3,214	6,279	90%	80%	2,758	2,556	5,314
Jun	Nights	7.0	30	210.0	3.8	3.8	798	798	1,596	74%	74%	590	590	1,180
Jul	Morning	6.5	31	201.5	41.7	34.0	8,403	6,841	15,244	87%	89%	7,315	6,069	13,384
Jul	Afternoon	5.5	31	170.5	33.6	33.1	5,723	5,640	11,363	88%	77%	5,007	4,320	9,328
Jul	Evening	5.0	31	154.5	22.2	13.8	3,437	2,136	5,573	90%	91%	3,097	1,952	5,049
Jul	Nights	7.0	31	217.0	3.8	3.8	825	825	1,649	74%	74%	609	609	1,219
Aug	Morning	6.5	31	201.5	33.8	29.1	6,818	5,859	12,678	88%	90%	6,002	5,292	11,294
Aug	Afternoon	5.5	31	170.5	30.8	35.2	5,260	6,005	11,265	78%	84%	4,122	5,018	9,141
Aug	Evening	5.0	31	154.5	24.3	28.1	3,748	4,340	8,088	87%	91%	3,268	3,949	7,216
Aug	Nights	7.0	31	217.0	3.8	3.8	825	825	1,649	74%	74%	609	609	1,219
Sep	Morning	6.5	30	195.0	14.4	25.7	2,810	5,006	7,816	75%	89%	2,093	4,451	6,544
Sep	Afternoon	5.5	30	165.0	17.7	23.4	2,921	3,862	6,783	80%	78%	2,339	2,999	5,338
Sep	Evening	5.0	30	149.5	21.5	16.0	3,215	2,392	5,607	79%	86%	2,531	2,059	4,589
Sep	Nights	7.0	30	210.0	3.8	3.8	798	798	1,596	74%	74%	590	590	1,180
Total									139,663					116,703