

VISIT SOUTH WALTON

Visitor Tracking Study

Spring 2020



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METHODOLOGY & PREFACE

Visitor Tracking Study Methodology

This report is based on 571 internet and in-person surveys with Spring visitors who traveled to South Walton between March 2020 and May 2020.*

Preface

South Walton's visitor tracking and economic impact metrics were impacted by several factors in Spring 2020 including:

- COVID-19
- Behavior of 2nd homeowners
- Inventory increase

COVID 19

Fear of contracting COVID-19 certainly impacted all travel after March 15, 2020. In addition, all vacation rental units in Florida were banned from hosting visitors from March 27 to May 19, 2020. Despite the ban, vacation rental units had a non-owner occupancy of 3.1% in April.

Behavior of 2nd Homeowners

In Spring 2019, homeowners accounted for 6.6% points of vacation rental occupancy. In Spring 2020, second homeowners accounted for 15.4% points of occupancy, or 8.8% points higher than in 2019. While these homeowners do not increase accommodation spending and TDT collections, they do impact overall spending in Walton County as they buy groceries, eat in or carry out from restaurants, buy clothing, etc. Spring 2020 metrics factor in these unusual factors.

Inventory increase

In addition, available units for visitors in Spring 2020 increased 928 units from 2019.

*Interviews are with out-of-county guests who stay at properties/vacation rentals at beach communities across South Walton, and at various locations along the beaches.

STUDY OBJECTIVES: MAP THE VISITOR JOURNEY

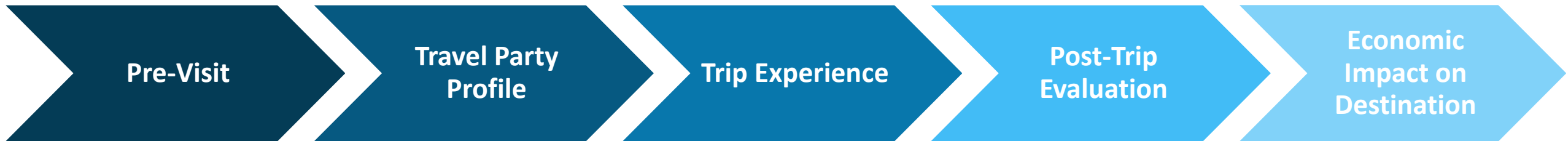


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



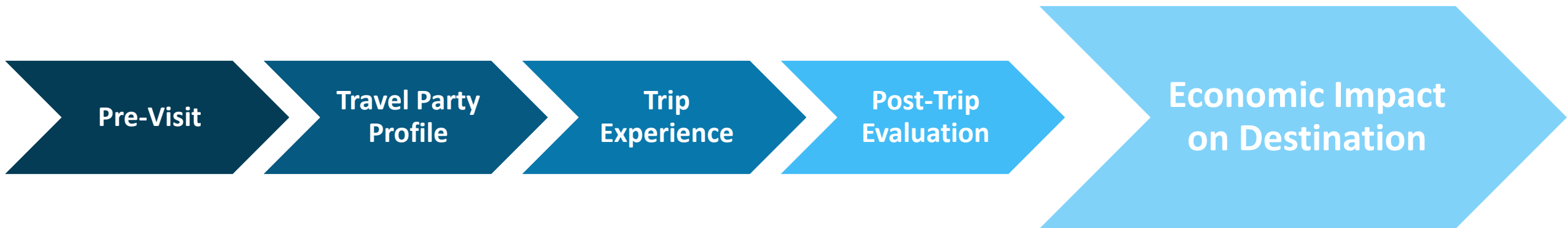
VISITOR JOURNEY: ECONOMIC IMPACT

This report is organized along the visitor's journey as shown below.



VISITOR JOURNEY: ECONOMIC IMPACT

We start at the end, that is, the economic impact of the visitor's journey.



ECONOMIC IMPACT – SPRING 2019 VS. 2020

Despite an increase of 928 active units from Spring 2019 to Spring 2019 (+6.8%), COVID-19 impacts led to huge decreases in occupancy, RevPAR, and TDT. Owners held firm on ADR, which decreased only 2.4%.

Numbers of visitors were down 48.8%, as increased numbers of 2nd homeowners kept figures from being even worse.

Total spending was moderated slightly by 2nd homeowners, yet it was down dearly 50%.

Property Statistics	Spring 2019	Spring 2020	% Change
Room nights	741,800	367,190	-50.5%
Total visitors	1,110,343	568,900	-48.8%
TDT collections	\$7,115,181	3,686,860	-48.2%
Direct spending	\$900,109,600	\$451,151,400	-49.9%
Economic impact	\$1,332,162,190	\$667,704,100	-49.9%
Occupancy*	61.1%	28.6%	-53.2%
Room rates	\$304.42	\$297.11	-2.4%
RevPAR	\$186.00	\$84.97	-54.3%

Data sources: Walton County government, properties in South Walton that rent to visitors, Key Data, and visitor surveys by Downs & St. Germain Research.

*Occupancy figures do not include 2nd homeowners.

ECONOMIC IMPACT - LODGING STATISTICS

28.6%

Occupancy

↓ 53.2%

\$297.11

ADR

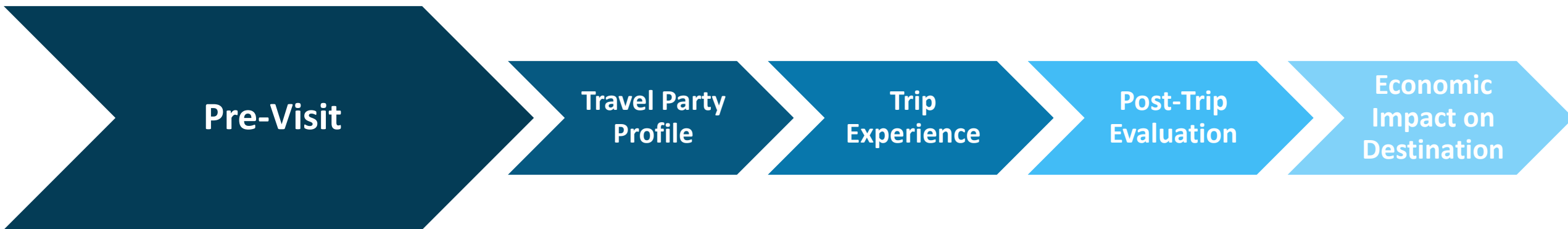
↓ 2.4%

\$84.97

RevPAR

↓ 54.3%

VISITOR JOURNEY: PRE-VISIT



PLANNING CYCLE

- » **Half** of visitors planned a Spring South Walton vacation no more than 2 months in advance
- » **1 in 10** considered vacationing at a beach outside of South Walton

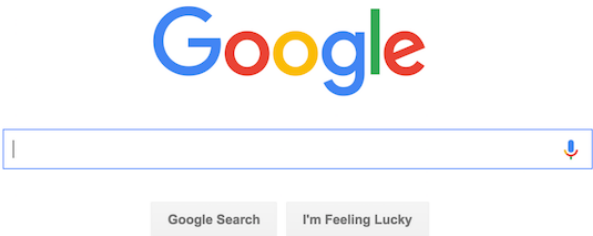


TRIP PLANNING SOURCES*



Friends, family

Search engines



Online Travel Agencies



Website for 1 of the 16 beach neighborhoods



VisitSouthWalton.com



*Multiple responses permitted.

SOUTH WALTON VISITOR GUIDE

- » **21%¹** of visitors viewed the South Walton Visitors Guide before going to South Walton



¹Most viewed it online

TOP REASONS FOR VISIT*

Family vacation (**63%**)



Relax and unwind (**60%**)



Annual routine (**21%**)



Special occasion (**13%**)



*Multiple responses permitted

SOUTH WALTON PROMOTIONS

- » **33%** of visitors have recently noticed promotions about South Walton

Online article



VSW social media



Social media



Magazine article



TOP BOOKING SOURCES

Vacation Rental Company (**50%**)

NEWMAN-DAILEY
RESORT PROPERTIES, INC.


Southern
RENTALS & REAL ESTATE


DUNE ALLEN REALTY
Vacation Rentals

Hotel/condo (**31%**)

Residence
Inn®
Marriott




hotel • dining • spa

VRBO, Homeaway (**9%**)

 **HomeAway**®

 **VRBO**®
from HomeAway®

VacationRentals.com™
Part of the HomeAway Family

VISITOR TRANSPORTATION

- » **90%** of visitors drove to South Walton
- » **10%** who flew used the following airports:

53%

Northwest Florida Beaches
International Airport



31%

Destin-Ft. Walton Beach
Airport



6%

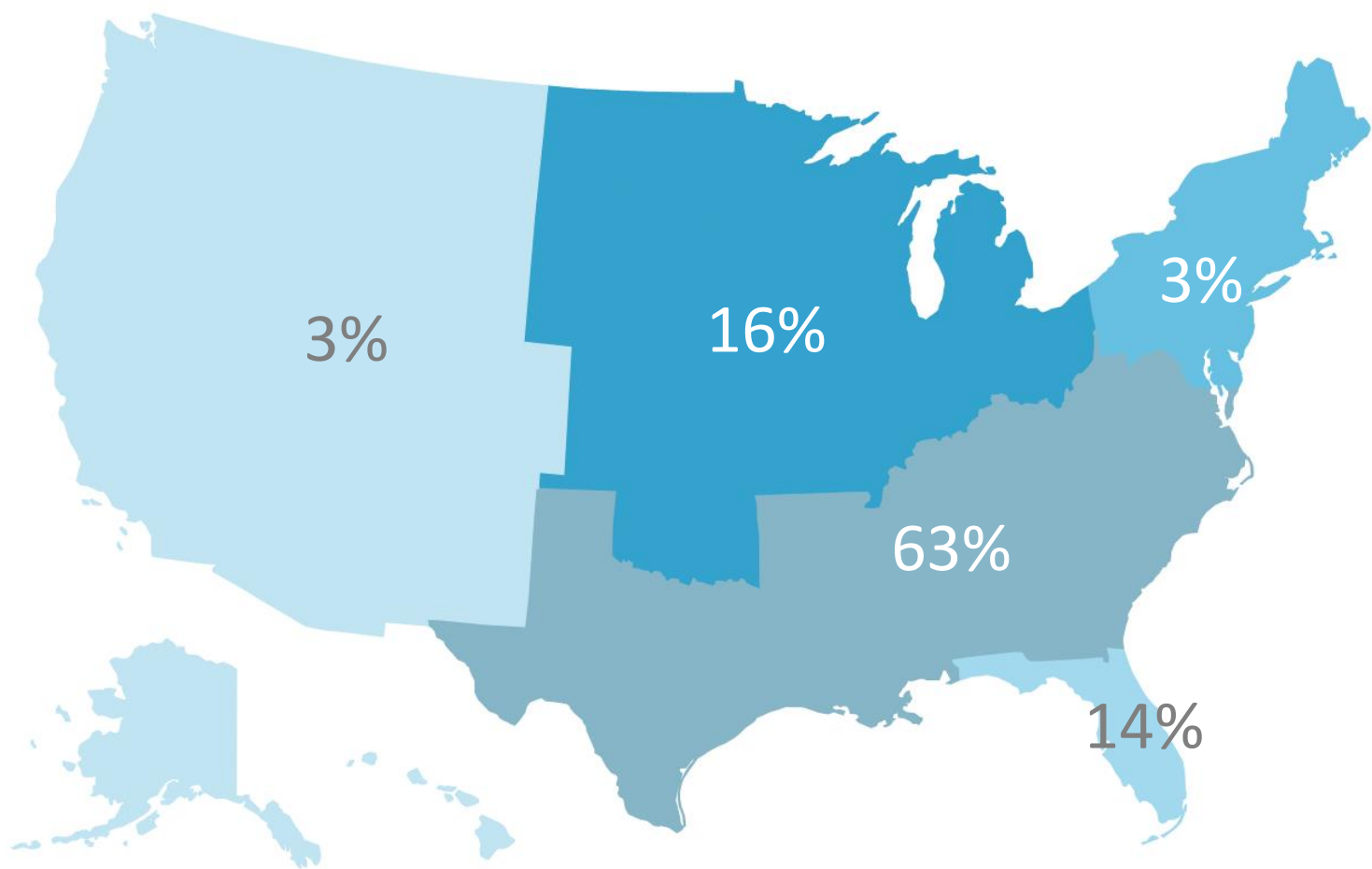
Pensacola International
Airport



VISITOR JOURNEY: TRAVEL PARTY PROFILE

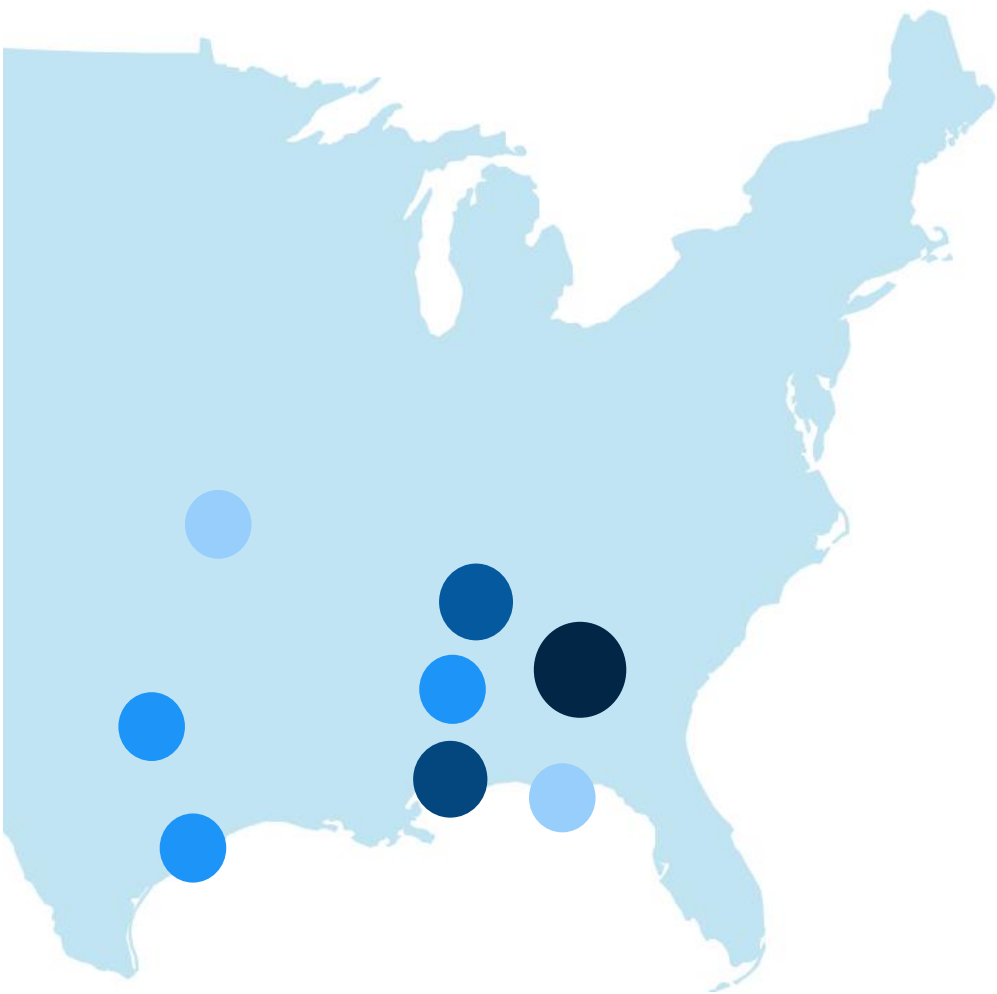


ORIGIN OF SPRING VISITORS



1% of visitors were from areas outside the U.S.

ORIGIN OF SPRING VISITORS



- 14% ● Atlanta
- 9% ● Pensacola – Mobile
- 8% ● Nashville
- 4% ● Birmingham
- 4% ● Dallas – Ft. Worth
- 4% ● Houston
- 3% ● Panama City – Destin
- 3% ● St. Louis

TRAVEL PARTY SIZE AND COMPOSITION

The typical visitor traveled in a party composed of **5.0** people



57% traveled with at least one person under the age of 18 in their travel party



SPRING VISITOR PROFILE



- » The typical South Walton Spring visitor:
 - » **48** years old
 - » Female (**62%**)
 - » Median household income of **\$165,600**
 - » From the Southeast (**77%**)

VISITOR PROFILE: TYPICAL VACATIONER¹



→The typical Vacationer¹ Visitor:

- Is **46** years old
- Has a median household income of **\$175,600**
- Is female (**62%**)
- 66%** travel with children
- 83%** drove
- Is from:
 - Southeast – not including FL (**63%**)
 - Florida (**16%**)

¹Travel parties who stayed 1-10 nights.

VISITOR PROFILE: TYPICAL LONG-TERM¹ VISITOR

→The typical Long-Term¹ Visitor:

- Is **72** years old
- Has a median household income of **\$133,500**
- Is male (**60%**)
- 87%** did not travel with children
- 95%** drove
- Is from:
 - Midwest (**31%**)
 - International (**31%**)

¹Travel parties who stayed more than 10 nights.

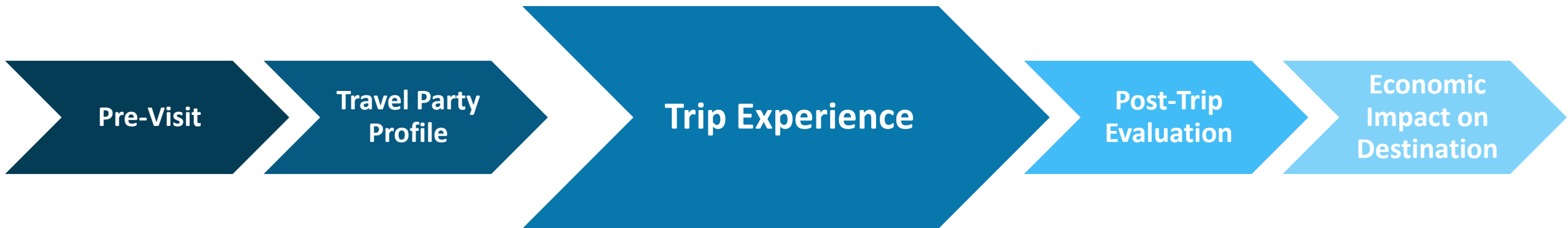
VISITOR PROFILE: TYPICAL DAY TRIPPER

» The typical Day Trip Visitor:

- » Is **43** years old
- » Has a median household income of **\$100,000**
- » Is female (**73%**)
- » **59%** traveled with children
- » **96%** drove to the area
- » Is from:
 - » Florida (**63%**)
 - » Southeast – not including FL (**26%**)



VISITOR JOURNEY: TRIP EXPERIENCE



ACCOMMODATIONS

62% Condos, rental houses, etc.



19% Hotels



14% Personal condo



TOP VISITOR ACTIVITIES*

Beach (92%)



Restaurants (87%)



Relax and unwind (82%)



Family time, reading,
cooking (69%)



Shopping, antiques (60%)



*Multiple responses permitted.

LENGTH OF STAY

- » Visitors spent **6.1*** nights in South Walton



*Visitors who stayed 30 or fewer nights. When considering all visitors, average nights stayed was 6.4.

FIRST TIME AND EXPERIENCED VISITORS

- » **14%** were first-time visitors
- » **38%** had visited more than 10 times



VISITOR EXPENDITURES*

- » Visitors spent **\$966** a day
- » Visitors spent **\$5,894** on their trip



*Visitors staying in paid accommodations.

VISITOR JOURNEY: POST TRIP EVALUATION



VISITOR SATISFACTION

- » Visitors gave South Walton a rating of **9.0¹** as a place to vacation
- » **97%** will return to South Walton²

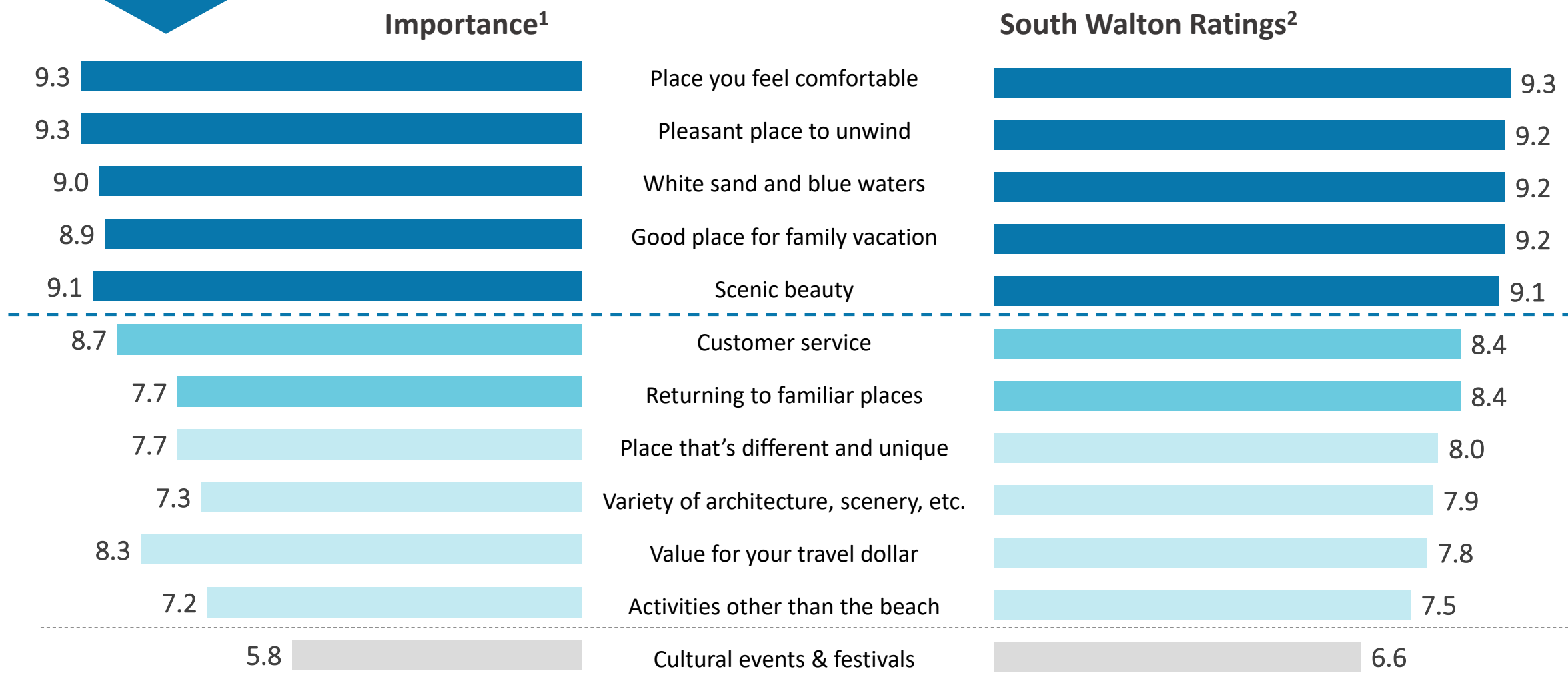


¹10 = Excellent; 1 = Poor

²About 3% of visitors will probably not return to South Walton because of the following reasons:

1. Too expensive, 2. too crowded, 3. too many families

VACATION ATTRIBUTE IMPORTANCE VS. RATINGS



¹Rated on a scale from 1 to 10 where 10 is very important and 1 is not at all important.

²Rated on a scale from 1 to 10 where 10 is excellent and 1 is poor.

VISITOR DESCRIPTIONS OF SOUTH WALTON

Beautiful beaches (61%)

“It’s beautiful scenery and the beaches are the best I have ever experienced. The people are the nicest people and have the best hospitality.”

Great place to visit (28%)

“It is a wonderful place to visit. Beautiful beaches and water. Great accommodations. Great food to eat in or out! RELAXING. Lots of great unique shops. Great boating! Great place for families!”

Relaxing (27%)

“It's a great place to unwind and relax. The water and beaches are beautiful. My friend and I went and had a ball but it's also a great place to take the family!”

EMOTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SOUTH WALTON*



*Verbatim responses.

YEARLY COMPARISONS

VISITOR PROFILE – SPRING 2019 VS. 2020

Visitor Metrics ¹	Spring 2019	Spring 2020
Travel party	5.4	5.0
Kids <20	49%	57%
Median age	53	48
Estimated median household income	\$167,500	\$165,600
Stayed in condo/rental house	74%	62%
Drove	83%	90%
Nights spent	6.0	6.1
Direct expenditures (travel party for entire trip)	\$5,796	\$5,894
1 st time visitor	15%	14%
10+ visits to South Walton	42%	38%

¹ Visitors who stayed in paid accommodations for up to 30 nights.

VISITOR PROFILE – SPRING 2019 VS. 2020

Top Origin States	Spring 2019	Spring 2020
Georgia	14%	16%
Florida	9%	14%
Alabama	12%	12%
Tennessee	10%	12%
Texas	9%	11%
Origins - Regions	Spring 2019	Spring 2020
Southeast	71%	77%
Northeast	3%	3%
Midwest	21%	16%
West	3%	3%
International	2%	1%

VISITOR PROFILE – SPRING 2019 VS. 2020

Top Visitor Activities	Spring 2019	Spring 2020
Beach	95%	92%
Restaurants	95%	87%
Relax and unwind	88%	82%
Family time, reading, cooking	78%	69%
Shopping, antiquing	72%	60%
Biking, running, etc.	45%	46%
Bars, nightclubs	25%	24%
Water sports	23%	23%
Hiking, nature walks, eco tours	19%	21%
State parks	17%	18%
Attractions	19%	16%
Golf, tennis, etc.	15%	15%
Special events	16%	14%

VISITOR PROFILE – SPRING 2019 VS. 2020

Visitor Metrics	Spring 2019	Spring 2020
Will return to South Walton	96%	97%
Rating for overall experience ¹	9.2	9.0 ¹
Viewed Visitors Guide	18% ²	21% ²
Planned trip	4 – 6+ months out (44%)	2 months or less out (49%)
Used VisitSouthWalton.com	18%	23%
Used 1 of 16 beaches' websites	32%	27%

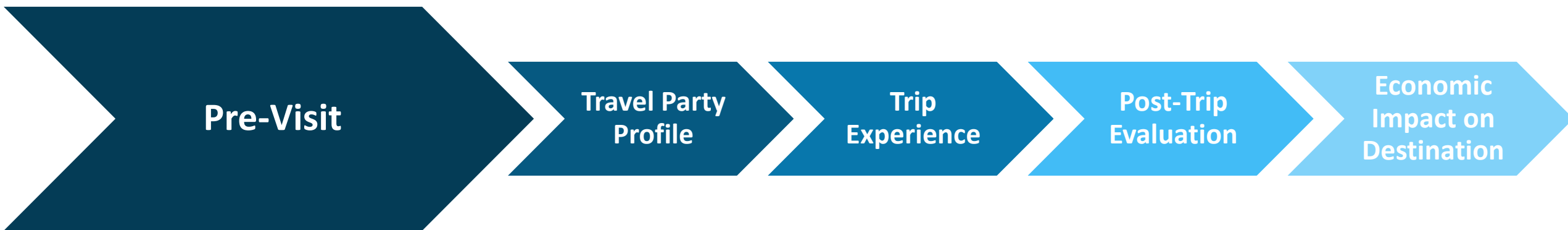
¹10-point scale with 10=Excellent & 1=Poor.

²24% used the online version & 3% used the print version.

DETAILED FINDINGS



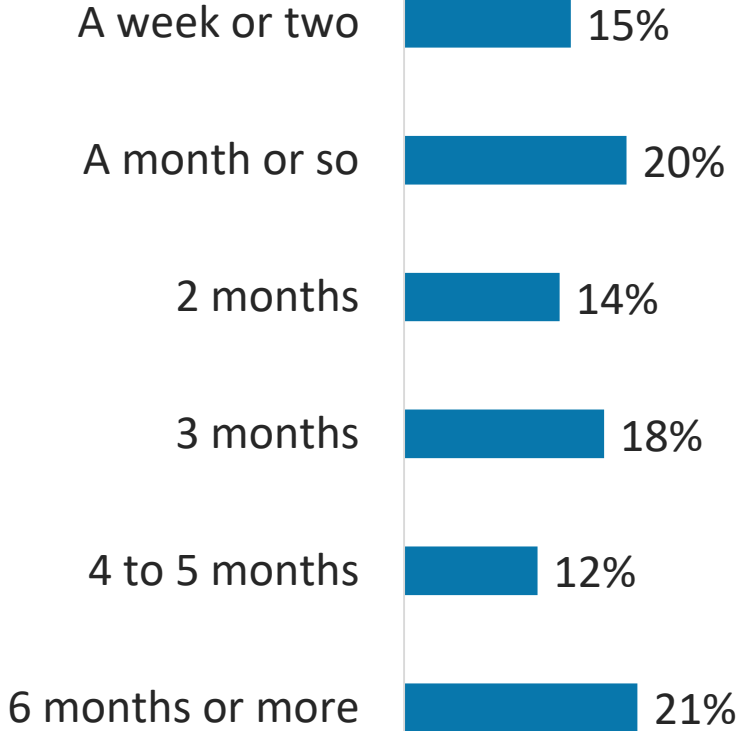
VISITOR JOURNEY: PRE-VISIT



PLANNING CYCLE

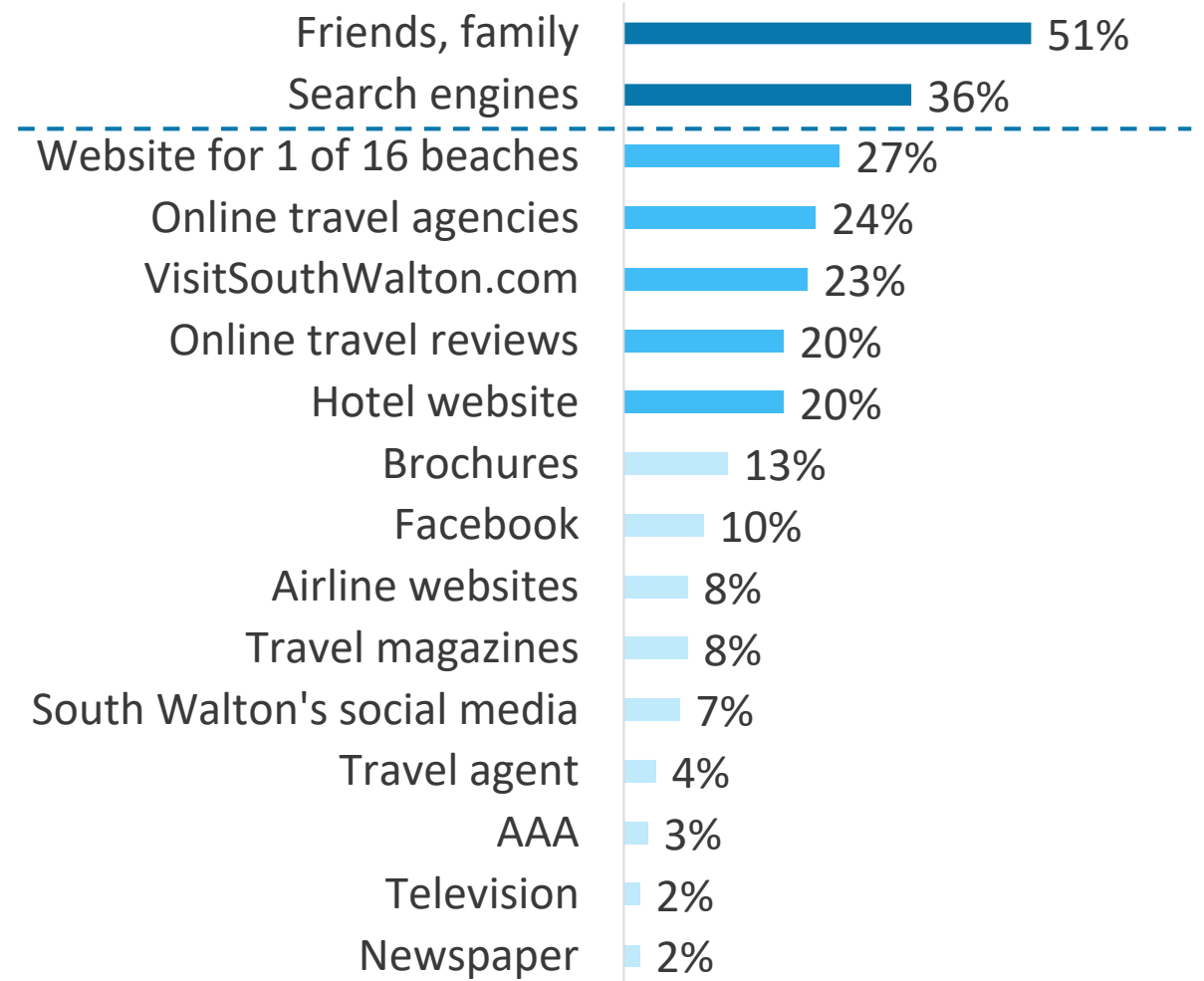
Half of visitors planned a Spring South Walton vacation no more than **2 months** in advance.

Over **1 in 3** visitors to South Walton have **a short (a month or less) planning cycle**.



PLANNING SOURCES¹

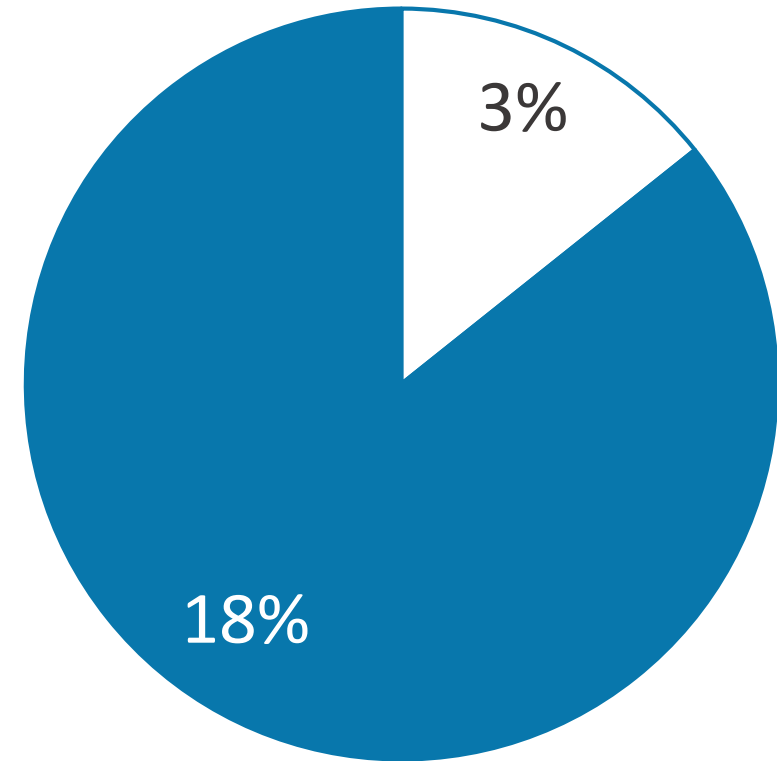
Over **half** of visitors use friends and family to help plan their trip to South Walton.



¹Multiple responses permitted.




21% of visitors viewed a South Walton Visitors Guide before going to South Walton.

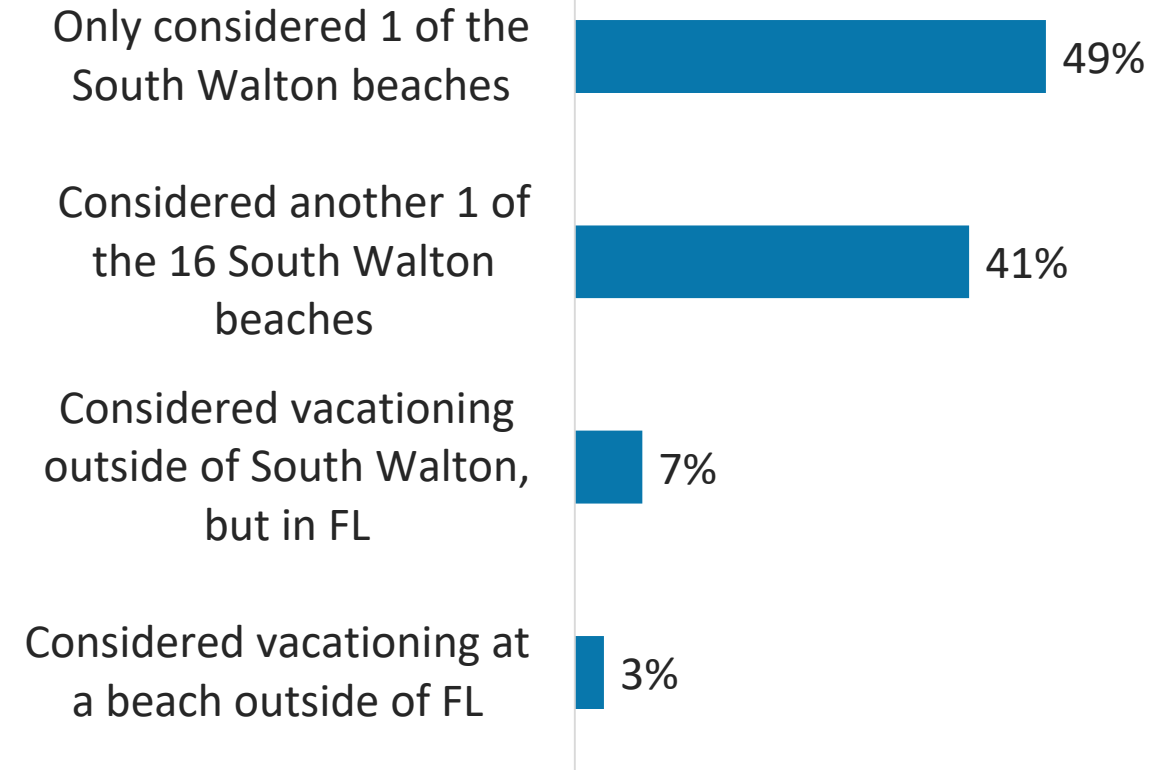


□ Print version ■ Online version

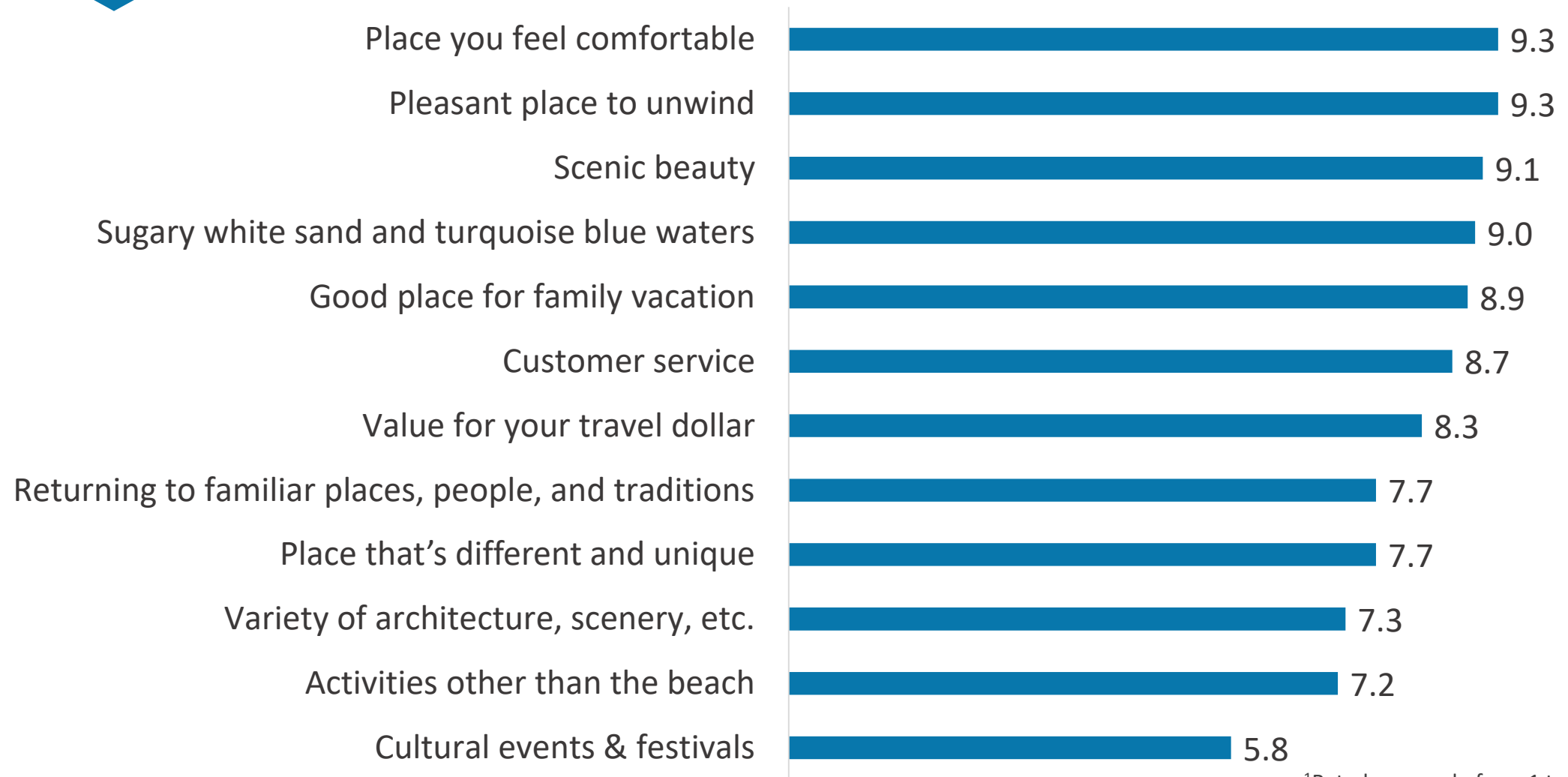
OTHER DESTINATIONS CONSIDERED



Only **1 in 10** visitors considered vacationing at a beach outside of South Walton.

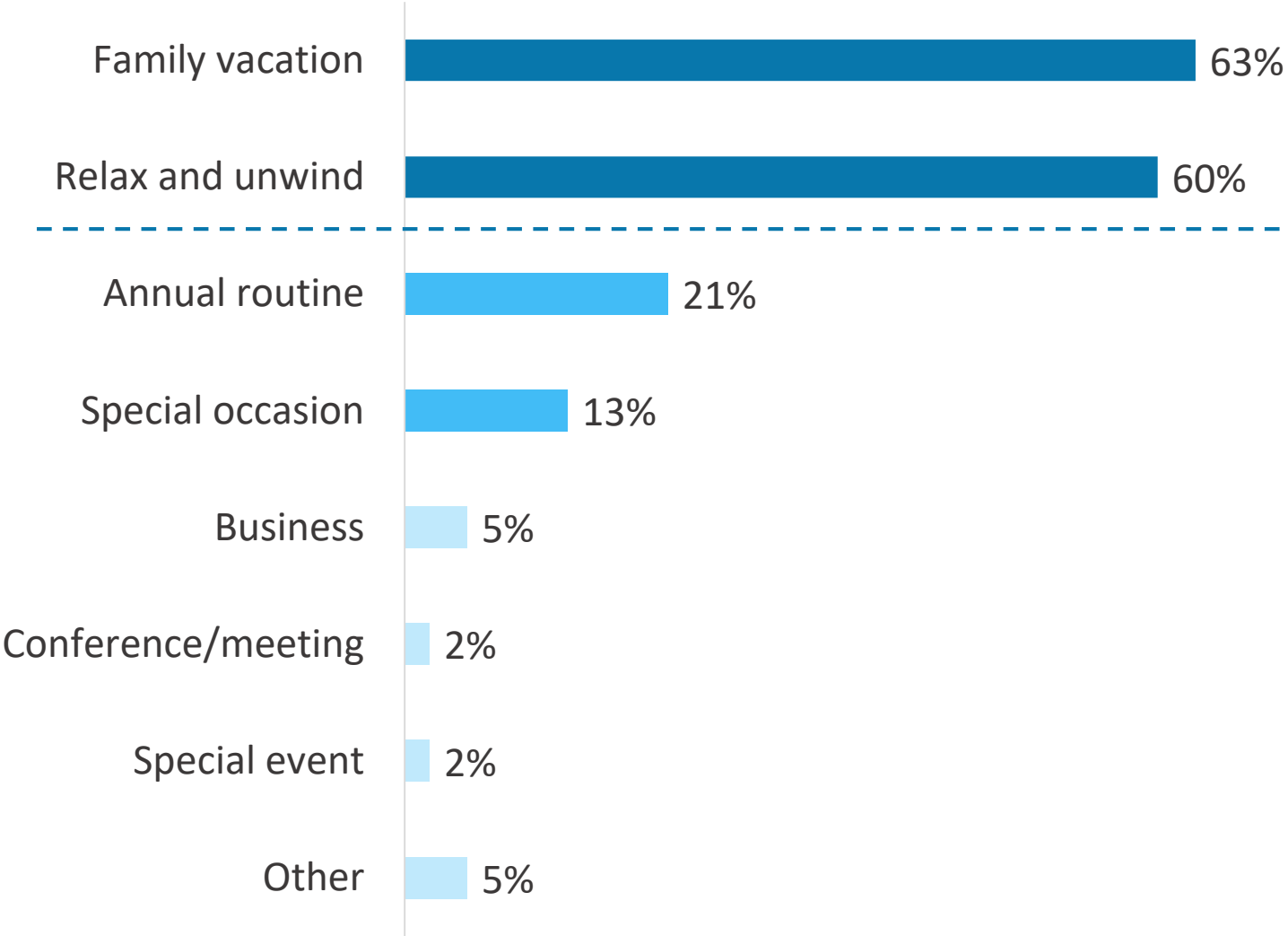


IMPORTANT VACATION DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES¹



¹Rated on a scale from 1 to 10 where 10 is very important and 1 is not at all important.

REASONS FOR VISITING¹

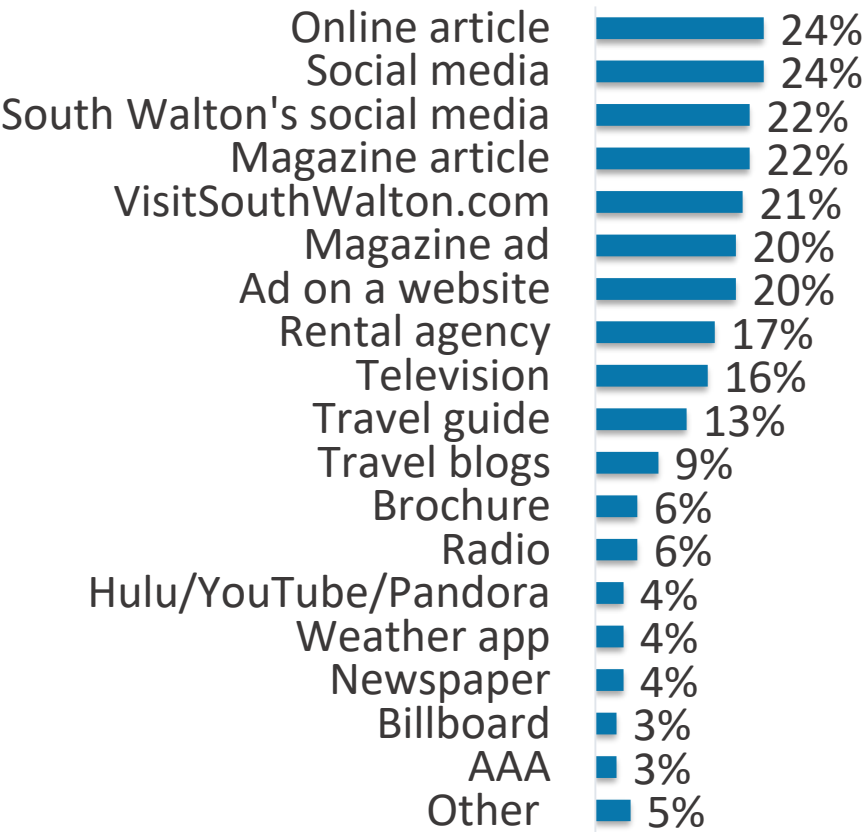


¹Multiple responses permitted.

SOUTH WALTON PROMOTIONS¹

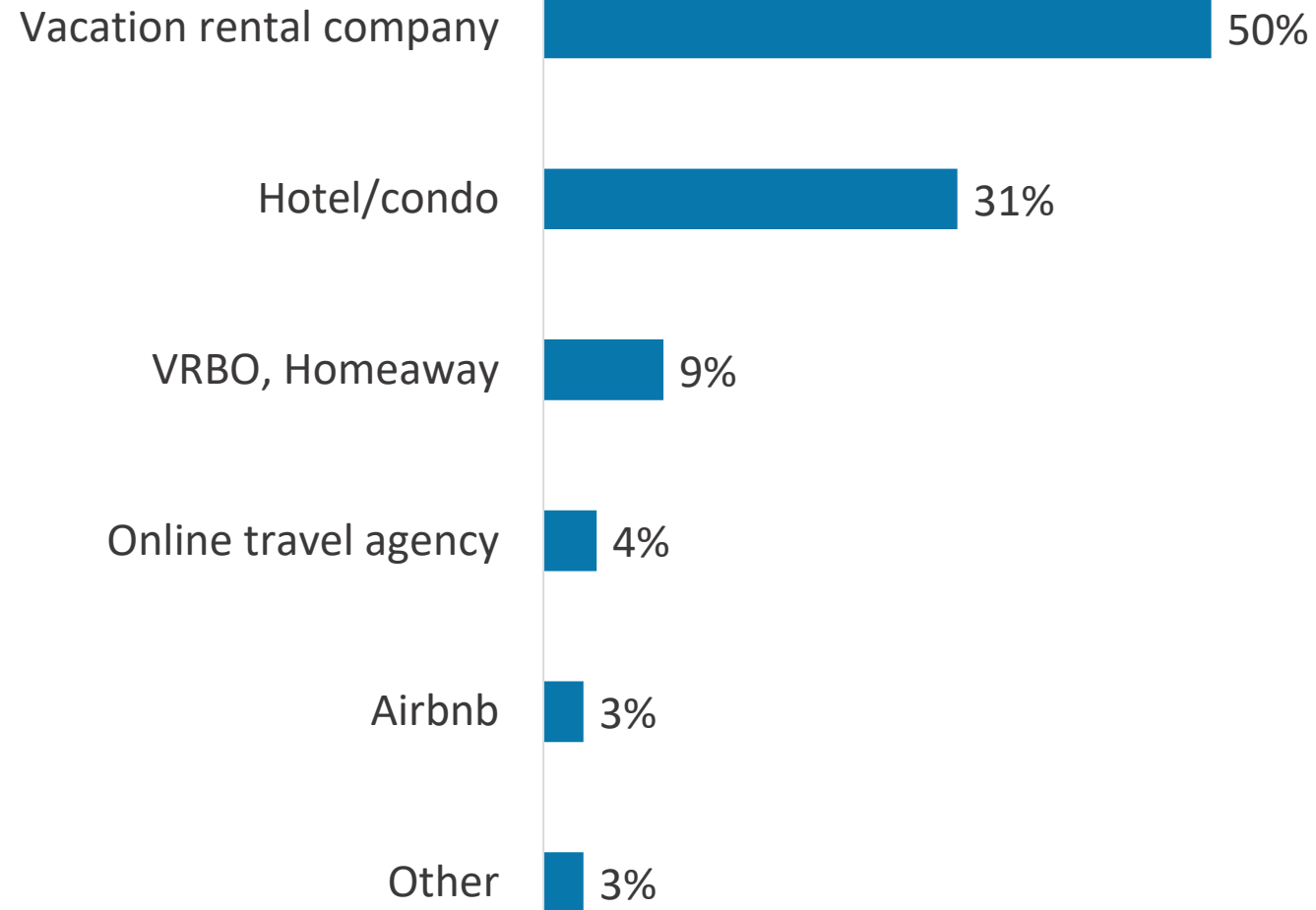


33% of Spring visitors noticed advertising, promotions or travel stories about South Walton.




¹Multiple responses permitted.


ACCOMMODATION SOURCES



VISITOR TRANSPORTATION

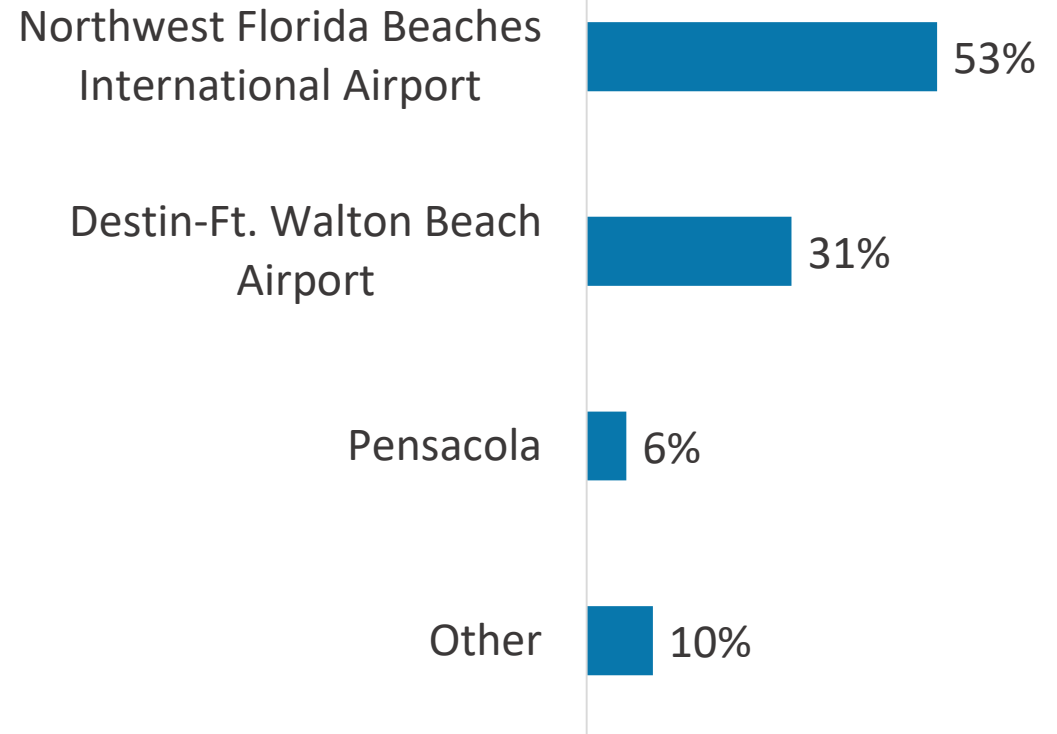


90% of Spring visitors drove to South Walton.



39% of those who drove were aware that there were direct flights from their city to the South Walton area.

10% who **flew** used the following airports:

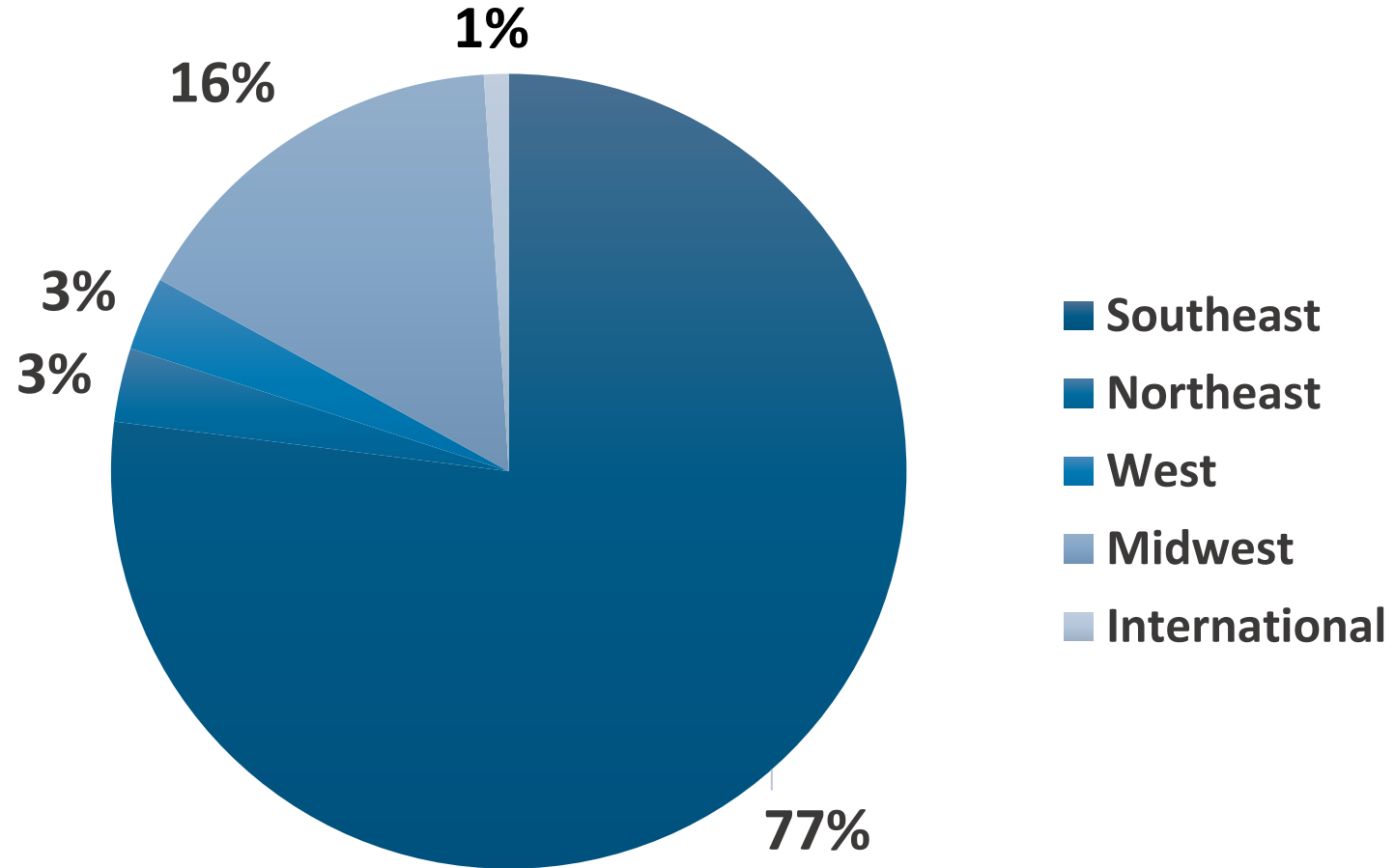


VISITOR JOURNEY: TRAVEL PARTY PROFILE



ORIGIN OF SPRING VISITORS

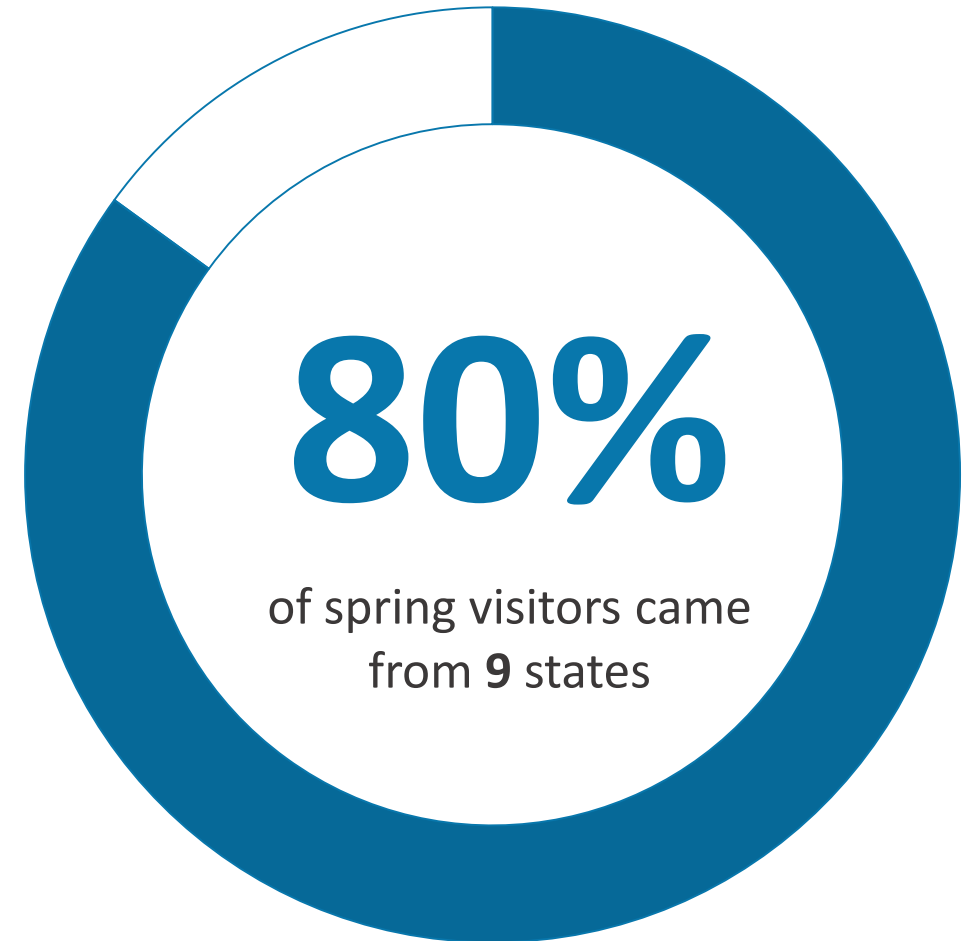
Top Origin Markets	% of Visitors
Atlanta	14%
Pensacola-Mobile	9%
Nashville	8%
Dallas-Ft. Worth	4%
Birmingham	4%
Houston	4%
Panama City - Destin	3%
St. Louis	3%
Orlando	2%
Cincinnati	2%
New Orleans	2%
Chattanooga	2%
Memphis	2%
Austin	2%
Tallahassee	2%



¹The metro area of St. Louis includes some parts of Missouri and Illinois.

ORIGIN OF SPRING VISITORS

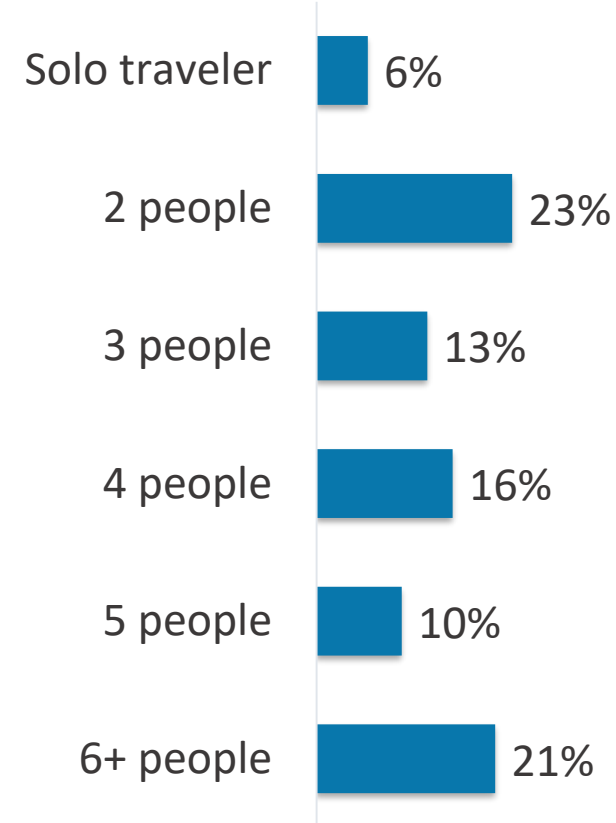
State	Percentage of Visitors
Georgia	16%
Florida	14%
Alabama	12%
Tennessee	12%
Texas	11%
Louisiana	3%
Mississippi	3%
Missouri	3%
Ohio	3%
Indiana	3%



TRAVEL PARTY SIZE AND COMPOSITION

Visitors traveled in a party composed of **5.0** people.

57% of visitors traveled with children under the age of 18.

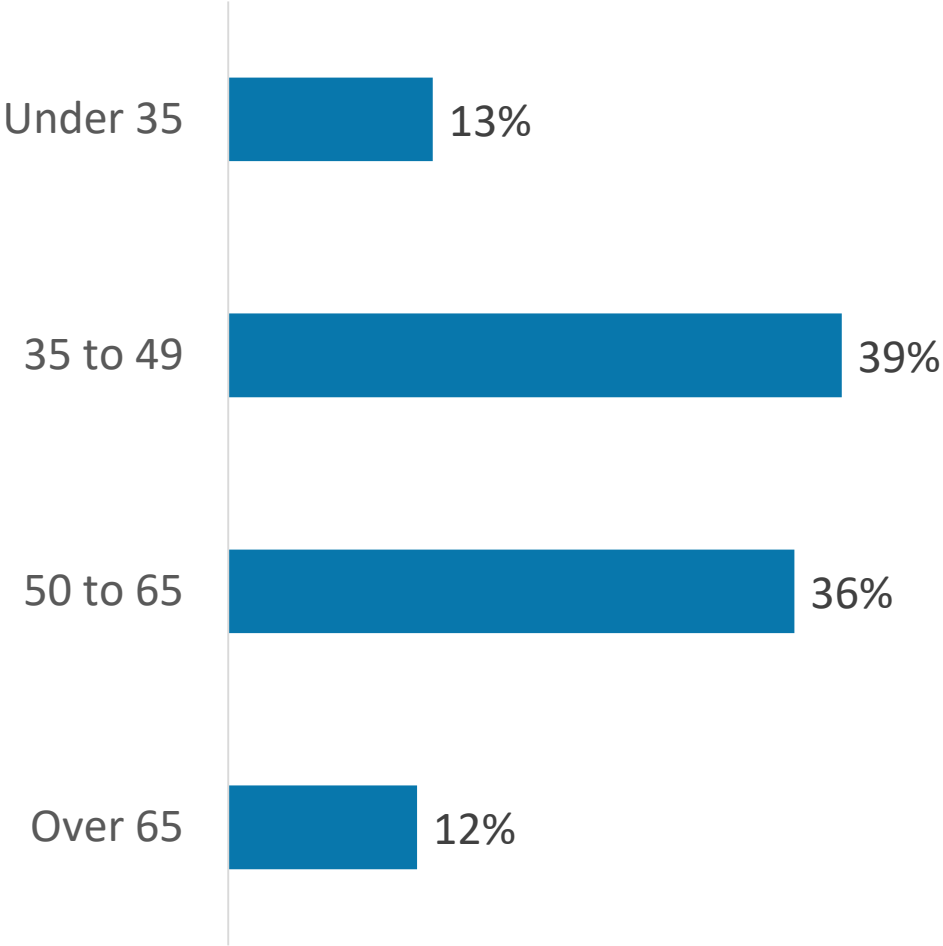


¹Multiple responses permitted.

AGE OF SPRING VISITORS

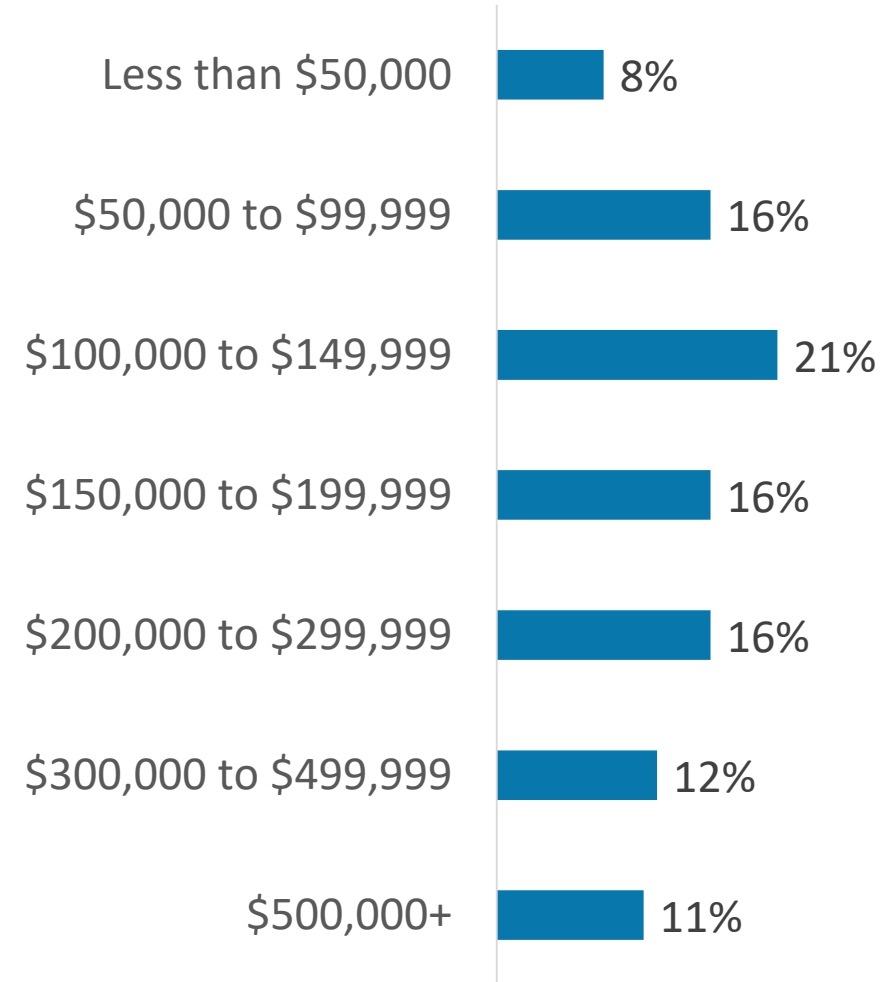


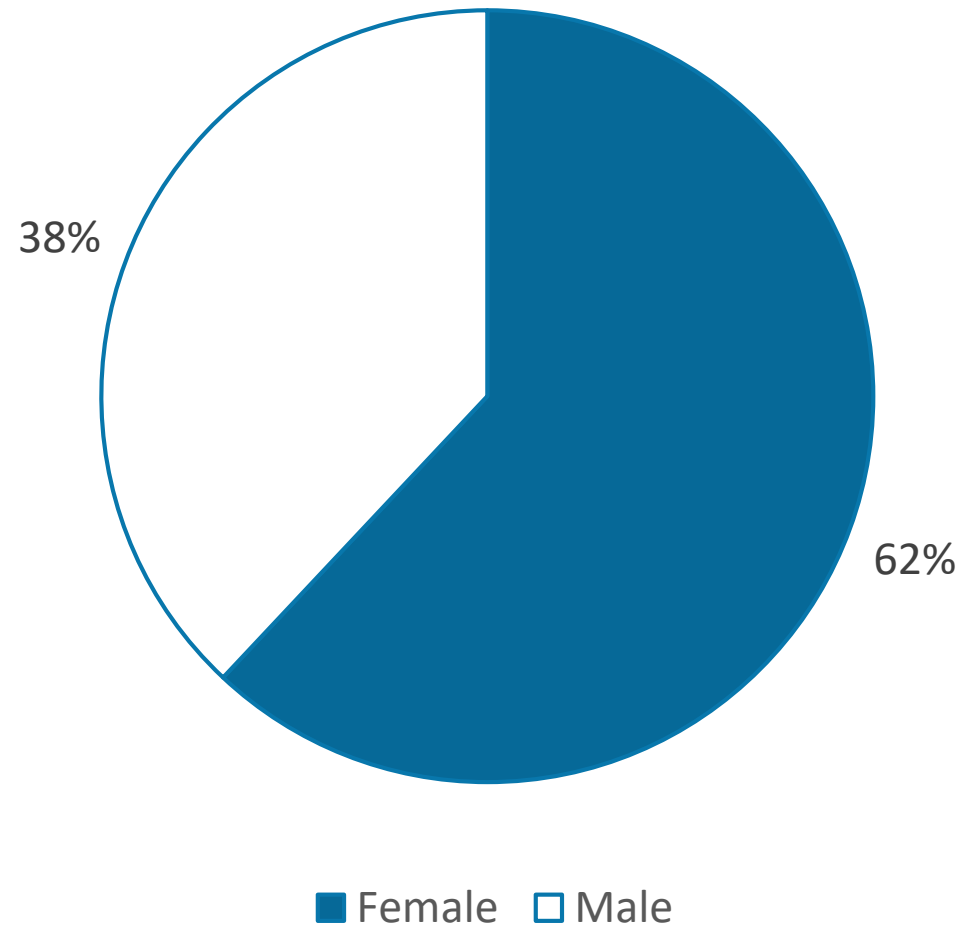
Median age of Spring visitors was **48 years old.**



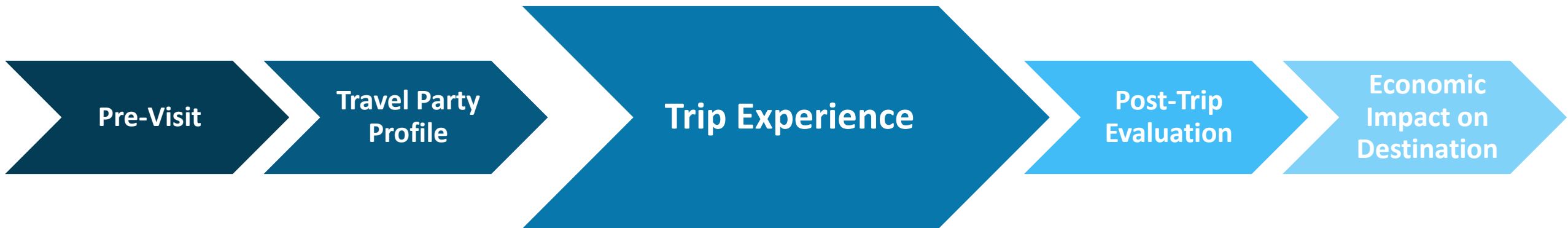
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 2019

Spring visitors had a median household income of **\$165,600**.

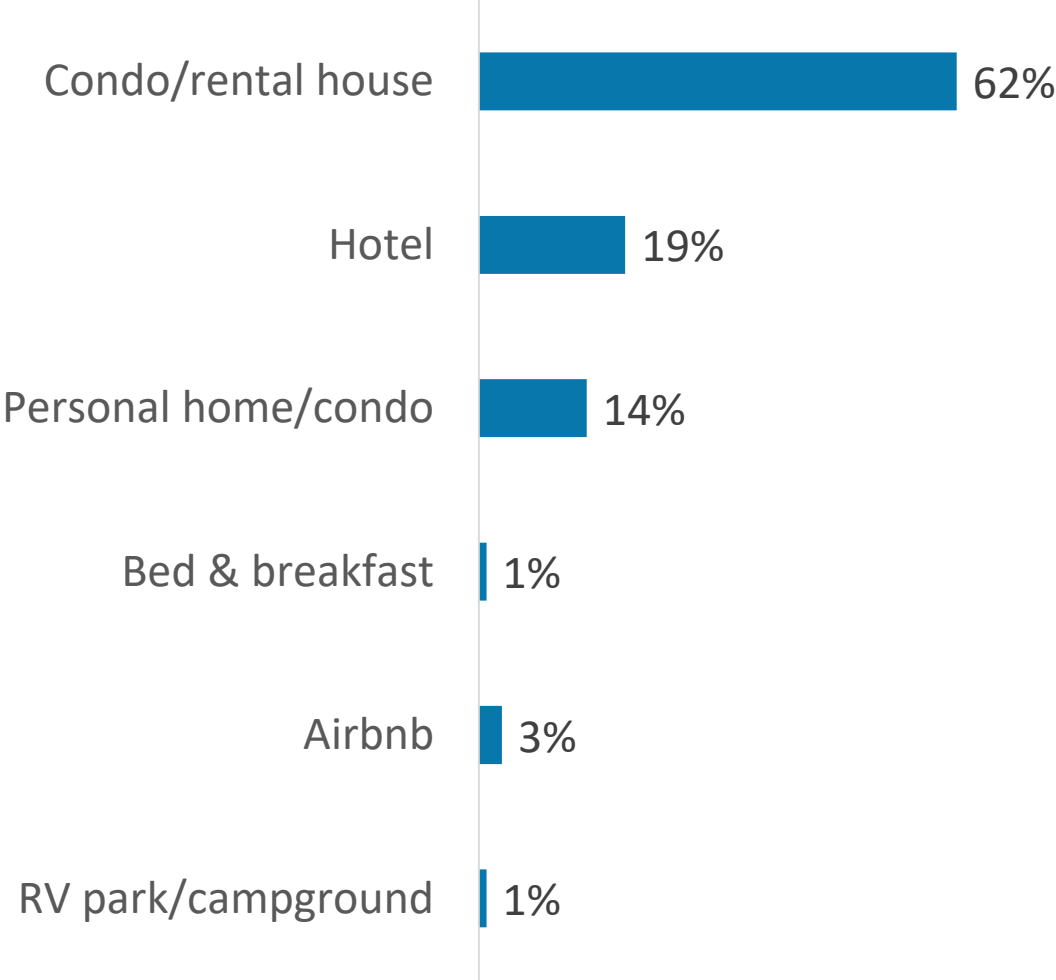




VISITOR JOURNEY: TRIP EXPERIENCE



VISITOR'S PAID ACCOMMODATIONS¹

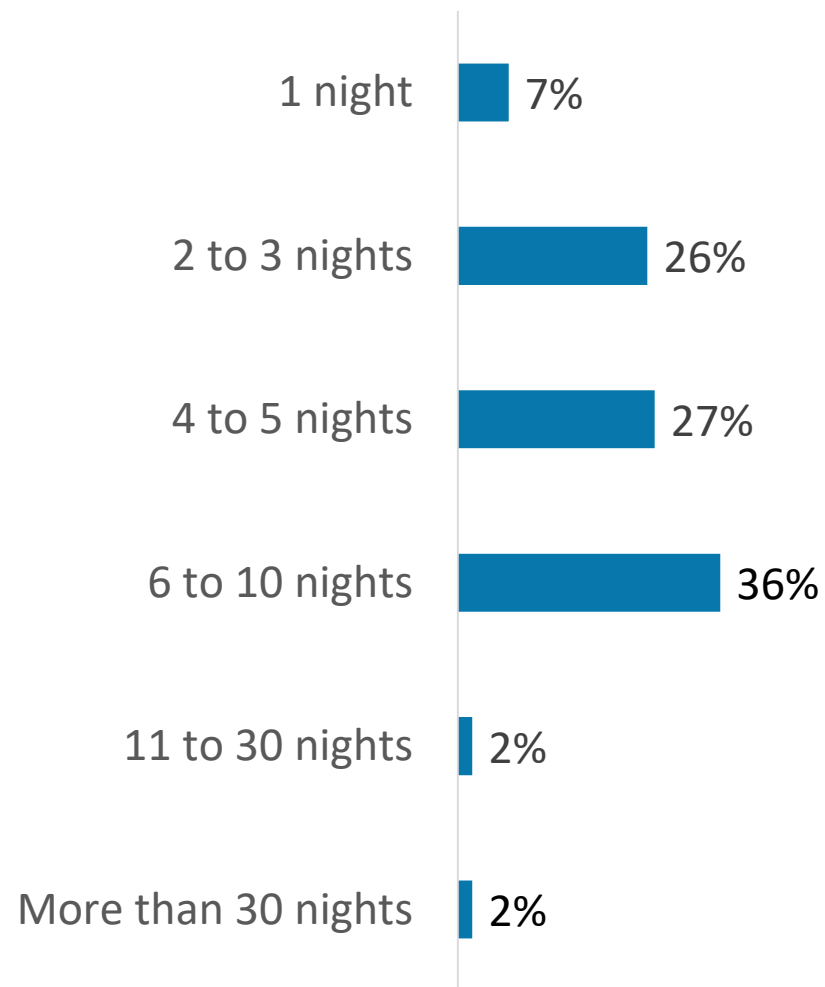


¹Excludes visitors staying with friends and relatives.

LENGTH OF STAY

Spring visitors¹ spent an average of **6.1** nights in South Walton.

When including long-term Spring visitors², average length of stay was **6.4** nights.



¹Visitors who stayed in South Walton up to 30 nights.

²Includes visitors who stayed in South Walton for 30 nights or more.

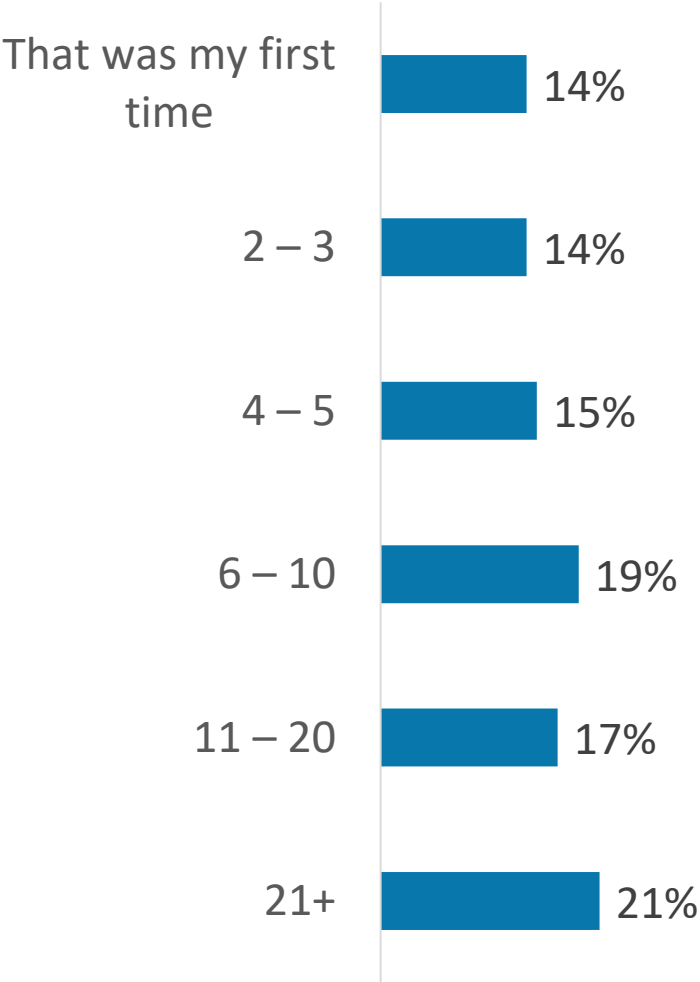
NUMBER OF VISITS TO SOUTH WALTON



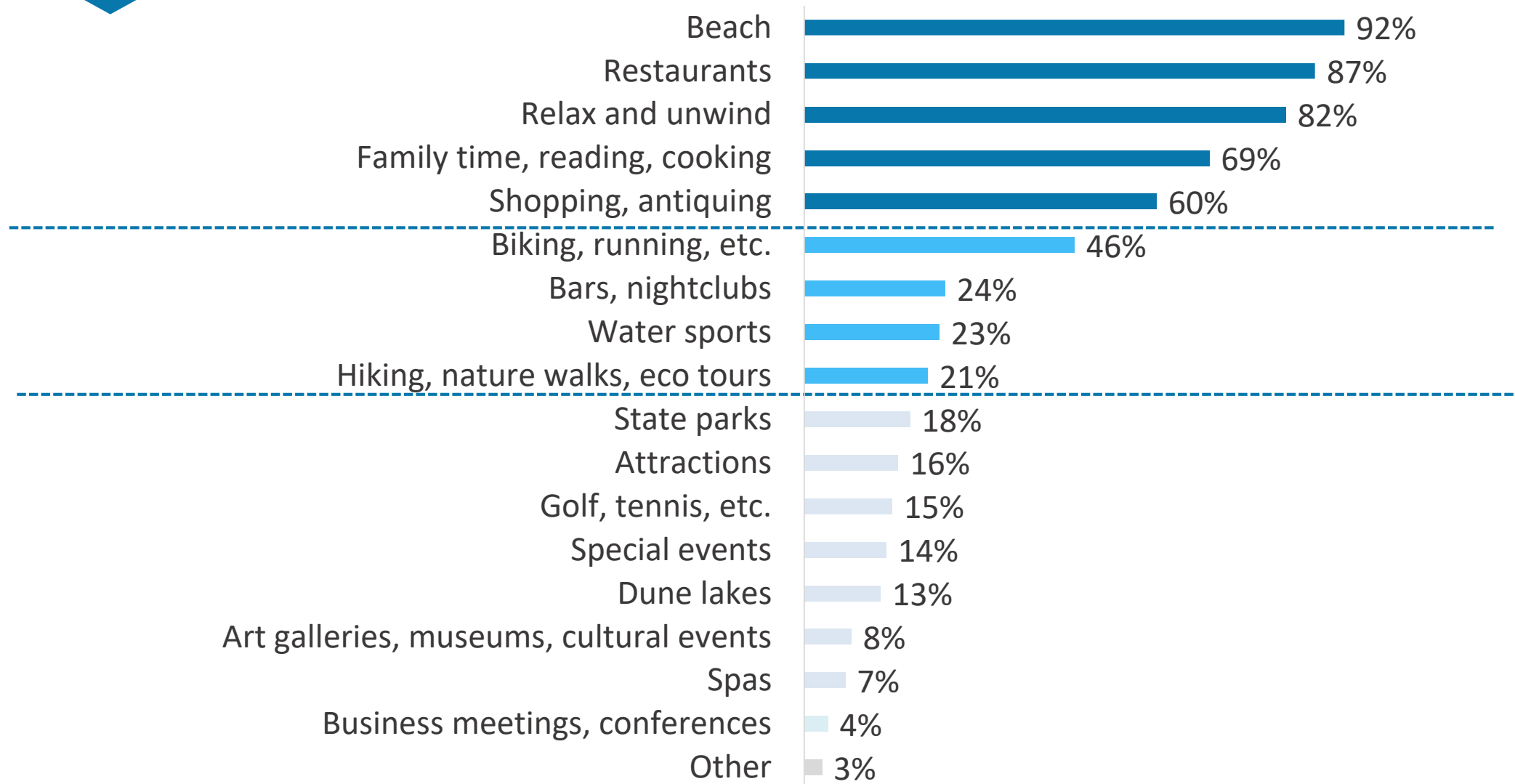
14% of Spring visitors were visiting for the first time.



38% of Spring visitors have visited South Walton more than 10 times.



VISITOR ACTIVITIES¹



¹Multiple responses permitted.

TYPICAL SOUTH WALTON TRAVEL PARTY EXPENSES¹

Visitor Metrics ¹	Average Daily Expenditure	Total Trip Expenditure
Accommodations	\$418	\$2,550
Restaurants	\$181	\$1,107
Groceries	\$60	\$366
Shopping	\$129	\$789
Entertainment	\$66	\$400
Transportation	\$55	\$336
Other	\$57	\$346
Total	\$966	\$5,894

¹For visitors staying 30 days or fewer

²This figure differs from the ADR reported by properties because of various fees added to the price visitors pay such as swim & tennis fees, amenity fees, housekeeping fees, reservation fees, arts & entertainment fees, linen charges, damage fees, etc.

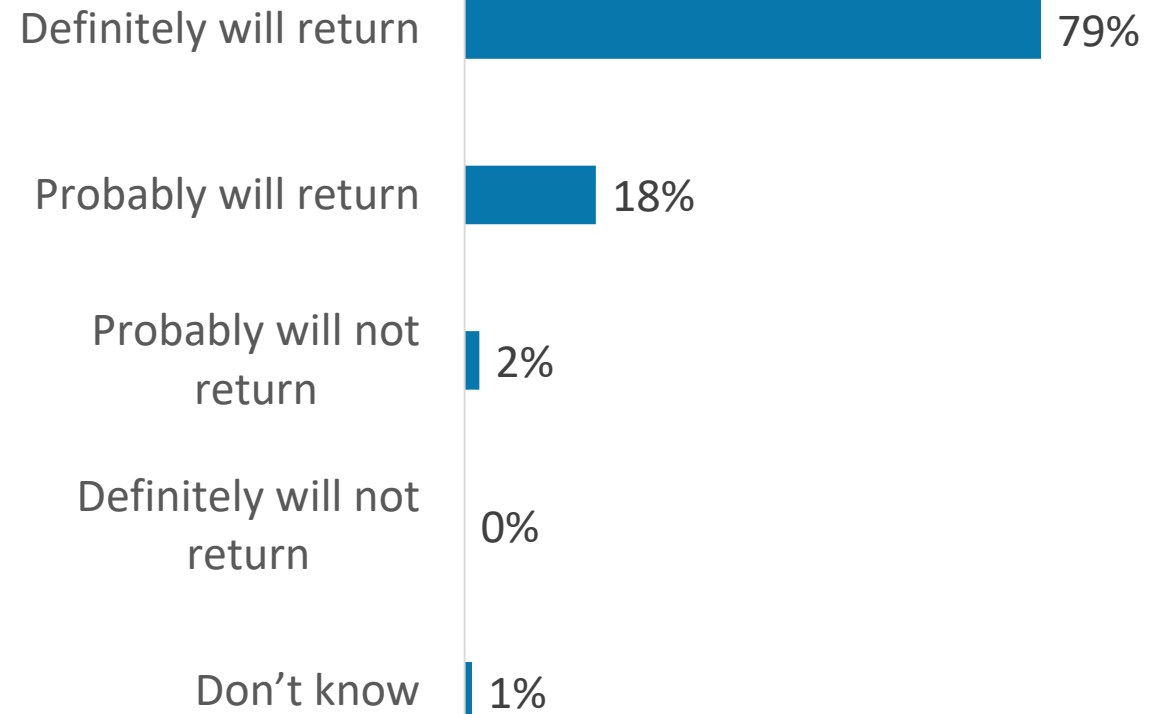
VISITOR JOURNEY: TRIP EXPERIENCE



SATISFACTION WITH SOUTH WALTON

Visitors gave South Walton a rating of **9.0**¹ as a place to vacation.

97% will return to South Walton.²

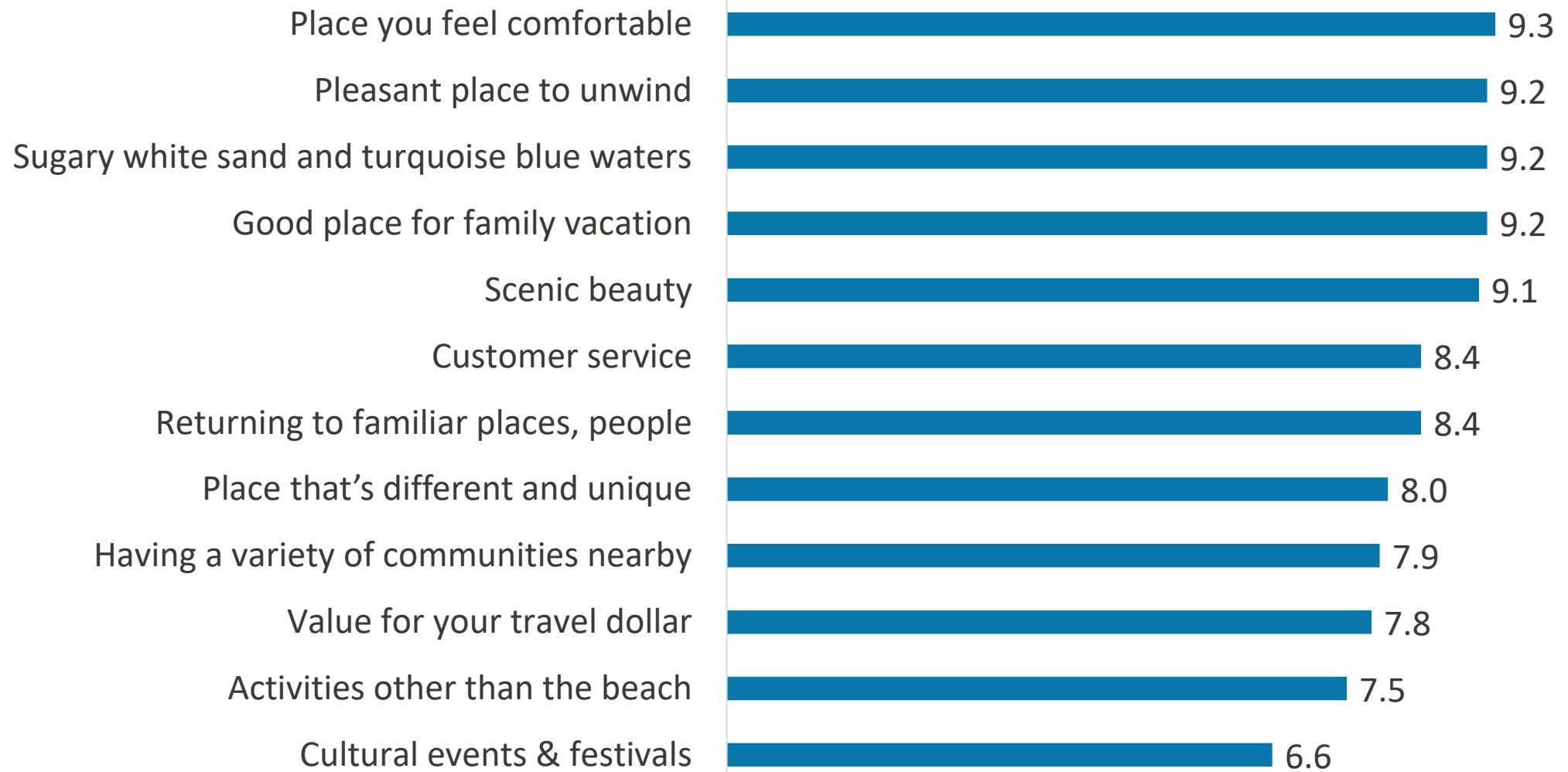


¹10 = Excellent; 1 = Poor

²3% of all visitors will not return to South Walton for the following reasons:

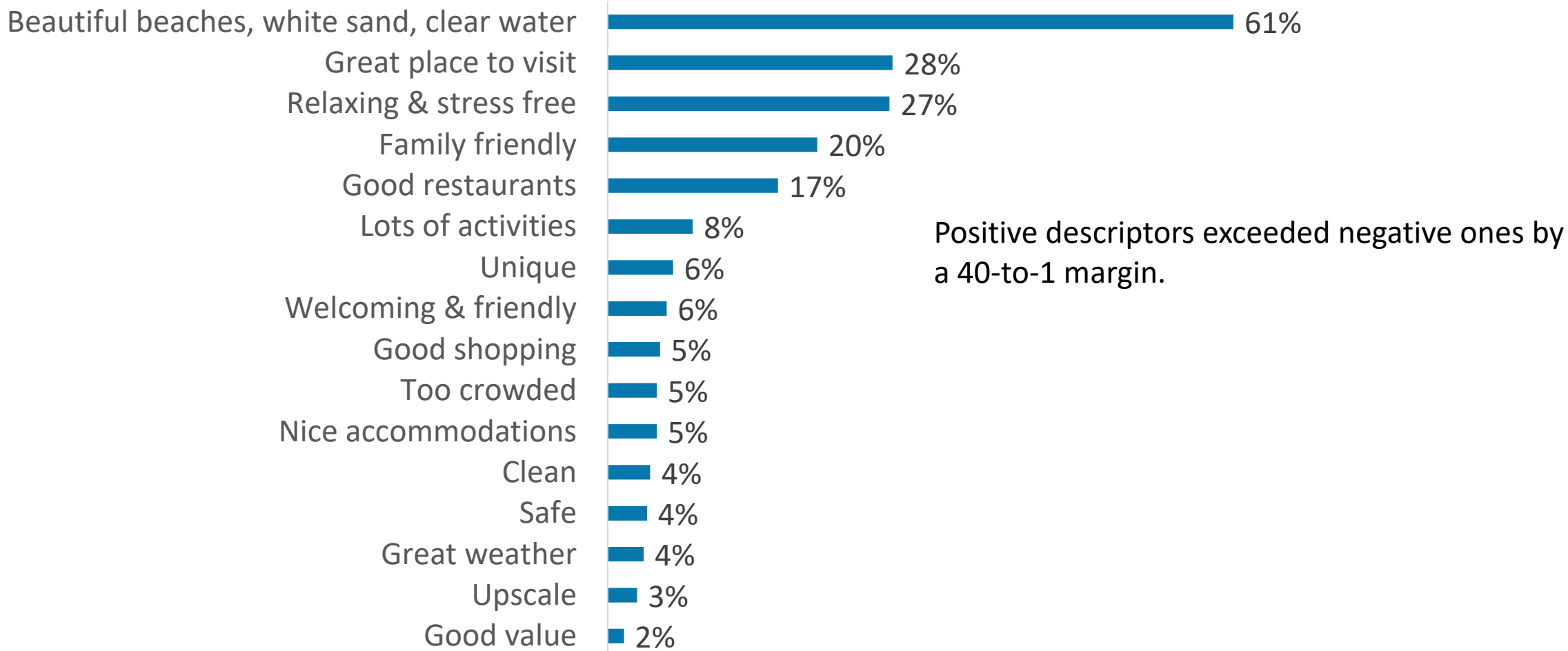
1. Too expensive
2. Too crowded
3. Prefer variety in vacation spots
4. Traffic was a problem
5. Poor customer service

RATING SOUTH WALTON¹



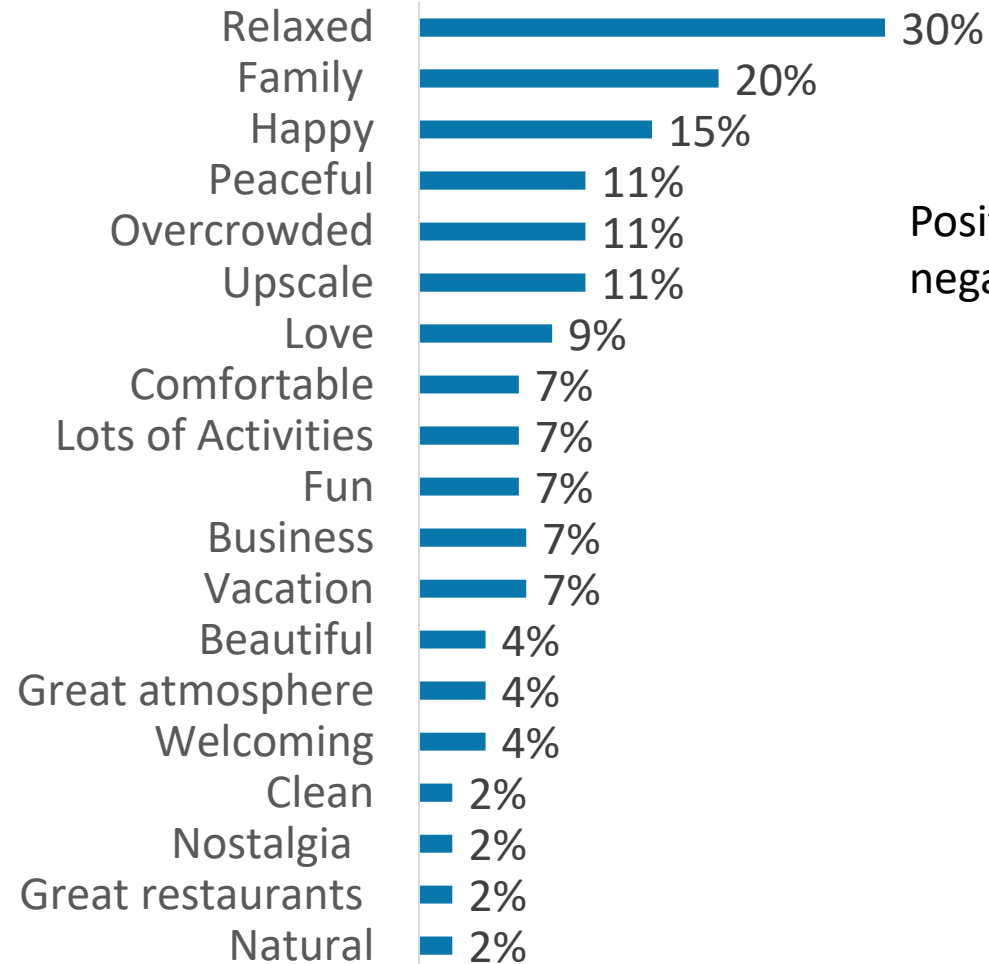
¹Rated on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent.

VISITOR DESCRIPTIONS OF SOUTH WALTON¹



¹Coded verbatim response; multiple responses permitted.

EMOTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SOUTH WALTON¹



Positive emotional associations exceeded negative ones by a 12 to 1 margin.

¹Coded verbatim response; multiple responses permitted.

VISIT SOUTH WALTON

Visitor Tracking Study

Spring 2019



Phillip Downs, Ph.D
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