



Center for Tourism Research

**CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOR OF TOURISTS  
WHO VISITED THE GEORGE S. MICKELSON TRAIL  
DURING THE 2005 PEAK SEASON**

**Prepared by:**

**Dr. Daniel M. Spencer, Associate Director  
Center for Tourism Research  
College of Business and Technology  
1200 University Street, Unit 9043  
Black Hills State University  
Spearfish, SD 57799-0001**

**Submitted to:**

**Black Hills Community Economic Development /  
Mickelson Trail Coalition  
P.O. Box 218  
Sturgis, SD 57785**

**August 1, 2006**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

To help guide management and marketing decisions regarding the George S. Mickelson Trail (GSMT), the Center for Tourism Research (CTR) at Black Hills State University, with financial assistance from Black Hills Community Economic Development / Mickelson Trail Coalition, conducted a census of warm season GSMT daily pass-holders in 2005. The census was conducted via a mail survey that achieved a response rate of 80.3%. Responses were obtained from 3,117 households. Some key findings and recommendations pertaining to *the 2,388 respondents who resided outside of the Black Hills region* are presented below.

### **Key Findings**

- When asked, “Did you first find out about the Mickelson Trail from a Web site, television show, or publication, such as a newspaper, magazine, guidebook, newsletter, brochure, or vacation guide?” 35.1% answered in the affirmative. Tourist literature (47.0%) and Web site (29.4%) were the most frequently mentioned means by which respondents learned about the Trail.
- The median number of days prior to departure that a decision was made to take a trip that involved visiting the Black Hills was 60.0. Among high-spending tourists, however, the median was 90.0 days.
- Over a third of respondents (35.1%) affirmed that “information, images, or ideas” from publications, Web sites, and/or television shows influenced them to visit the Mickelson Trail on their trip. Among these respondents, the most pervasive influence was the Internet.
- Only 11.5% of respondents stated that visiting the Trail was the sole reason for their trip and only 23.4% stated that it was the “primary reason” for their trip.
- Contact with nature was the most important motivation for, and benefit realized by, respondents. “View scenery” received the highest mean importance level among a battery of 15 possible motivations for visiting the Trail and “scenery/beauty/views” was the most frequently-cited “thing liked best” about respondents’ visits to the Trail.
- Custer and Hill City were the most frequently-mentioned Trail entry points. Hill City was the most frequently-mentioned Trail exit point. The majority (53.7%) of respondents entered and exited the Trail at the same place.
- The median number of hours spent on the Trail per visit was 4.0.
- Mountain biking was by far the most frequently-mentioned primary means of transportation used on the Trail. Eighty-four percent of respondents used this means of transportation to travel the most miles on the Trail.

- Overall satisfaction with Trail visits was extremely high—6.43 on a 7-point scale. However, respondents who had visited other rail-trail conversions did not feel that the quality of the Trail was significantly higher than the quality of these competing facilities.
- “Nothing” was by far the most frequent response to the question, “What, if anything, should be done to provide higher quality experiences to Mickelson Trail visitors?” Such responses constituted a majority (52.6%) of all responses to this question.
- The most frequent response to the question, “What kinds of events or programs would you or members of your family be interested in attending on the Mickelson Trail,” which listed six possible response options, was “None of these” (51.3%).
- Eighty-five percent of respondents felt the \$2.00 price of a daily pass was “about right.” However, the mean response to the question, “What is the maximum you would be willing to pay for a Mickelson Trail daily pass to help finance improvements to the Trail?” was \$4.39.
- The Trail visitors who, on the average, spent the most money in the Black Hills during their trips resided in the Carol Stream, Illinois; Madison, Wisconsin; and Palatine, Illinois 3-digit zip code regions.
- High-spending Trail visitors were more likely than medium- or low-spending Trail visitors to have had high incomes and party sizes; to have visited environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related Web sites in the past 12 months; to have been mountain biking aficionados; to have had longer planning horizons; to have spent more nights in the Black Hills and on their trips in general; to have participated in more recreation activities in the Black Hills; and to have visited more Black Hills attractions. On the other hand, they were less likely than their counterparts to have stated that visiting the Trail was the sole reason for their trips.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. Reflecting an established trend, the Web was the most frequently cited communications medium by which respondents were influenced to visit the GSMT. Accordingly, promotion of the Trail should strongly emphasize Internet marketing efforts. This should include a sophisticated, well-promoted, strategically linked, and search-engine optimized Web site; substantial key word buying; and e-mail advertising to target markets.
2. Given median planning horizons of about 60 days, peak-season promotion of the Trail should reach intended recipients about 80-90 days before the beginning of the season.
3. The popularity of Custer State Park among the types of tourists who visit the Trail, the popularity of Custer as a Trail entry point, the fact that more than one out of five respondents visited the Trail spontaneously, and the fact that Custer State Park is a unit in the state park system, suggests that Custer State Park would be an excellent place to cross-sell the Trail through a display at the Norbeck Visitor Center and literature distributed to motorists entering the Park.

4. Since spending per party per trip by GSMT tourist daily pass-holders was 31% lower than observed for Black Hills tourists in general, efforts should be made to expand spending opportunities for Trail visitors. Expanding shuttle services was among the top 10 suggestions for improving the Trail, so this might be a good way to increase spending and also enhance visitors' experiences. Another possibility is a gift/souvenir shop devoted entirely to Trail-related gifts and supplies (including the more and better information about the Trail sought by many respondents). Such a shop could be either permanent or set up temporarily at heavily-used trailheads.
5. The relatively low expenditures of Trail visitors also suggests that efforts should be made to attract those visitors who will spend an above-average amount of money on their trips. The top three origins of top-spending tourist parties that visited the GSMT (and the Black Hills in general) were Carol Stream, Illinois; Madison, Wisconsin; and Palatine, Illinois. Targeted e-mail blasts to the residents of these areas, plus ads promoting the Black Hills, including the GSMT, could be placed in the areas' community newspapers.
6. Since high-spending GSMT visitors were more likely to be biking aficionados,
  - posters and brochures advertising the Trail could be placed and distributed in bike shops in the above geographic areas,
  - the Mickelson Trail Trek (MTT) should be aggressively promoted to them,
  - bicycling packages that include shuttle services should be created for, and promoted to, them, and
  - efforts should be made to reach them through specialty magazines, Web sites, and mountain biking membership publications.
7. The high-spending Trail visitors clearly want much more than a visit to the GSMT while they are in the Black Hills; they also want to sightsee, shop, gamble, dine out, visit museums and art galleries, and participate in wildlife watching, nature photography, and other recreation activities. Therefore, marketing efforts should not focus on promoting the Trail alone, but on the Trail as one more great reason to visit the Black Hills. That is, the Trail should be promoted not only as a trip motivator but also as a trip enhancer—a way to extend length of stay and increase total trip spending in the region. This will require greater cooperation between the Mickelson Trail Coalition and entities charged with promoting tourism to the region as a whole, and greater efforts by such entities to portray the Trail in its promotional programs.
8. Implement a system to enable online purchases of daily and annual passes. Since such purchases will necessarily require customers to provide their names, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses, a data base of Trail users can be quickly developed that will greatly facilitate conventional direct mail and e-mail advertising campaigns to encourage repeat visits.
9. Since participants in the Mickelson Trail Trek (MTT) spent 21% more per person per trip than tourist daily pass-holders for whom visiting the Trail was the only or a primary purpose of their trip, this event should be aggressively promoted. The MTT has added significance because it occurs during a shoulder season. Three areas that were among the top 10 origins of annual pass-holder tourists but not among the top 10 origins of MTT tourists are prime

candidates for promotion: Mankato, Minnesota; Gillette, Wyoming; and Bismark, North Dakota.

10. Since scenery was the Number 1 motivation for visiting the Trail and the “thing liked best” about it, improving the scenic quality of Trail corridor will enhance visitors’ experiences and give the Trail an edge over its competitors. This can be accomplished by designing and implementing a visual resource management plan (VRMP) to protect and accentuate the scenic quality of the Trail corridor. Karen Anderson with the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance office of the National Park Service can provide this service free of charge (402/661-1542; karen\_anderson@nps.gov). She can likely be assisted by students in university landscape architecture, forestry, or outdoor recreation classes. Since much of the Trail parallels highways, the VRMP should include action items to buffer highway sights and sounds with conifer plantings. Many civic organizations, including the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, would likely be willing to donate labor for planting such screens.
11. The fact that “nothing” was the most frequently mentioned “suggestion” for improving the Trail can be construed not only as a compliment but as a warning not to change the character of the Trail too dramatically through excessive signage, events, development, or promotion. Balance and moderation must characterize further development and promotion of the Trail.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been accomplished without the generous assistance and support of many people. I am very pleased to acknowledge their contributions.

I am most grateful for the financial and moral support of Black Hills Community Economic Development (BHCED) and the Mickelson Trail Coalition. I especially appreciate the vision and leadership of BHCED Executive Director Jim Doolittle, who provided us with the time and resources we needed to get the job done right.

My colleagues in the Center for Tourism Research deserve special recognition. Center Director Tom Dunn assisted with project administration, liaison with the Mickelson Trail Coalition, data collection and cleaning, and responding to respondents' inquiries. Program Assistant Chris Coolidge developed and managed large mailing lists, prepared 104 mass mailings, and entered data from hundreds of questionnaires. Student research aide Kristen Hogrefe entered hundreds more.

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks personnel in the Mickelson Trail's Lead office were extremely helpful and supportive. Special thanks to Trail Managers Harley Noem and Shannon Percy for their exceptional cooperation and assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank the more than 3,000 respondents who took time out of their schedules to complete and return a lengthy and complex questionnaire.

*Dan Spencer*

*August 1, 2006*

## INTRODUCTION

The George S. Mickelson Trail is a 114-mile multi-purpose recreational trail in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It is a rails-to-trails conversion that follows the historic Deadwood to Edgemont Burlington Northern Rail Line, abandoned in 1983. The Trail is managed by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDDGFP). Major assistance with promotion of the Trail is provided by the Mickelson Trail Coalition, an organization largely comprised chambers of commerce in towns along the Trail. All Trail users age 12 and older are required to purchase a \$2 daily or \$10 annual trail pass. Purchasers of annual passes generally tend to be residents of the Black Hills area; purchasers of daily passes generally tend to be nonresidents.

This report summarizes key findings from a mail survey of daily pass-holders that was conducted during the warm season of 2005. It complements five oral presentations of results given to the audiences listed in Table 1, and an Excel spreadsheet submitted to SDDGFP personnel that contains respondents' verbatim responses to questions that solicited their opinions of the Trail.

<b>Table 1. Oral presentations of results.</b>		
<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Audience</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
May 4, 2006	Mickelson Trail Coalition	Rapid City, SD
June 2, 2006	Black Hills, Badlands and Lakes Association Board of Directors and key personnel of the SDGFP	Rapid City, SD
June 21, 2006	Custer Chamber of Commerce	Custer, SD
June 28, 2006	Spearfish Convention and Visitors Bureau	Spearfish, SD
July 26, 2006	Representatives of the SD Department of Tourism and State Development and the Office of the Governor	Pierre, SD

The genesis of this study was in 2003, when the Center for Tourism Research (CTR) at Black Hills State University (BHSU) proposed to the Mickelson Trail Coalition the development of a comprehensive marketing plan for the Trail based on a synthesis of secondary sources of information on cycling and long-distance trails and a survey of daily pass-holders. Because the Coalition's available funds to support this work were less than anticipated, the survey portion of the proposal was eliminated and the other work was funded. The ensuing report (Dunn, DeJong, et. al., 2004), submitted in April, 2004, included a review of national tourism trends, descriptions of the characteristics and marketing procedures of competing long-distance trails, a SWOT analysis, and a listing of cycling clubs throughout the world.

In the months following the submission of the above report, Coalition members felt a need for specific information necessary to make target marketing and advertising purchase decisions. In particular, they sought answers to such questions as: "How do most Trail users find out about

the Trail?” “What do Trail users like or dislike about the Trail?” “What compelled visitors to use the Trail?” “What are the most lucrative potential target markets for the Trail?” “What are the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of these markets?” and “How can we most effectively and efficiently reach and serve these markets?” Answers to such questions could only be obtained through survey research. While the Coalition had conducted a survey of annual pass holders in 2002, information on daily pass holders was required to enable it to better attract users who resided outside of the Black Hills area, thereby increasing the Trail’s economic impact. To create this information, a mail survey of daily pass-holders was proposed by the CTR in 2005 and jointly funded by Black Hills Community Economic Development / Mickelson Trail Coalition and the CTR.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. Describe the characteristics and behavior of peak season Mickelson Trail daily pass holders as a whole.
2. Assess daily pass holders opinions of the Trail and suggestions for improving it.
3. Identify the characteristics of high-spending Trail users.
4. Recommend management and marketing strategies based on the above results.

## **METHODS**

### **Questionnaire Design**

To obtain insights into Trail visitors’ perceptions and use patterns, a focus group session with 10 residents of Rapid City who used the Trail in 2004 was conducted on April 7, 2005 in Rapid City. Members of the Coalition and the SDDGFP attended the session. A full report on the session is available under separate cover (Spencer, Dunn, and Coolidge, 2005). Based on the focus group session and a review of relevant literature, a 9-page, 55-question survey instrument was designed that measured the following variables:

#### **Trip antecedents**

- How respondent found out about Trail
- Trip planning and decision-making behavior
- Motivations for visiting the Trail

#### **Trip characteristics**

- Purpose(s) of trip
- Main destination of trip
- Mode(s) of transportation used
- When trip began and ended
- Trip duration

- Length of stay in the Black Hills
- Length of time spent on the Trail
- Type(s) of lodging used
- Black Hills attractions visited
- Expenditures in Black Hills
- Trail entry and exit points used
- Where Trail pass was purchased
- Used own versus rented equipment
- Recreation activities pursued in Black Hills
- Mode of transportation used to travel the most miles on Trail
- Events attended on Trail and in Black Hills in general
- Party size and composition

#### Trail use

- Number of times visited Trail in last 12 months
- Number of times visited Trail since it opened
- Where entered and exited Trail on last visit

#### Opinions of the Trail

- Three things liked best and least about Trail visit
- Suggestions for improving the Trail
- Satisfaction with Trail visit
- Likelihood of visiting the Trail in the next 12 months
- Preferences for various types of Trail events and programs

#### Participation in bicycling

- Ever purchased a package that included a bike rental, one or more meals, one or more nights of lodging, and shuttle transportation
- Ever participated in a mountain biking event
- Number of times mountain biked in past 12 months
- Mountain biking skill level
- Other rail-trail conversions visited
- When first mountain biked

#### Personal and household characteristics

- Membership in environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related organizations
- Media preferences
- Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

The Coalition was given an opportunity to review and comment on a draft of the questionnaire prior to its printing and distribution. The final survey instrument is reproduced in Appendix A. A map of the study region, defined as the five Black Hills counties of Lawrence, Meade, Pennington, Custer, and Fall River, was included in the questionnaire.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The fact that all Trail users must possess either a daily or annual Trail pass to gain entry to the Trail, and that purchasing passes required visitors to provide their names and addresses, enabled us to conduct a mail survey instead of an on-site intercept survey. With the latter it is inherently difficult to obtain a truly representative sample of visitors.

The study examined individuals who purchased daily passes between May 1, 2005 and October 31, 2005. To minimize possible recall errors, the survey was conducted in successive weekly waves over the course of the survey period as opposed to all at once after the conclusion of the season. In this manner, no respondents were contacted more than a week after their purchase of a daily pass. Daily Trail passes were obtained each Friday during the six-month study period from the Trail office and their contents (if legible) entered into a data base. This yielded weekly data bases that contained the names and addresses of all persons who purchased daily passes during that particular week. However, the desired unit of analysis (i.e., the entity on which data would be collected and to which results would pertain) was the travel party (usually comprised of household members) rather than the individual pass-holder. This is because pleasure trip decisions are usually made, and pleasure trips are usually taken, by households acting as a unit, as opposed to individual household members acting independently of one another. Therefore, entries in a given weekly database containing the same address and date of purchase were considered duplicates, and all but one of these entries were deleted prior to forming the mailing list for that week. To ensure that sufficient cases would exist for the detailed analyses the Coalition needed to describe the characteristics and behavior of Trail users residing in specific out-of-state markets, survey packets were mailed to all unique households in each of the 26 weekly lists.

A combination of techniques was employed to maximize the response rate. First, a press release was distributed to all local media immediately prior to the first mail-out to explain the purpose and importance of the survey and encourage cooperation. Second, three incentives were included with each questionnaire mailed: (1) a BHSU souvenir pencil, (2) a post card portraying a scene in the Black Hills region, and (3) a voucher entitling the bearer to free access to the Trail for a day. Third, cover letters were printed on letterhead stationery, personalized, and individually signed. Finally, a variation of the "Total Design Method" (Dillman, 1978) was employed. This involved making repeated contacts to non-responding households. Households who did not respond to the initial mailing after a week were sent a reminder post card. Those who still had not responded after a month had elapsed were sent a second questionnaire. Those who still had not responded after two months had elapsed were sent a third questionnaire via priority mail. As a result of these techniques, as well as potential respondents' own interest in the Trail, an adjusted response rate of 80.3% was achieved.

The first mailing occurred on May 6, 2005; the last mailing occurred on December 19, 2005. Returned questionnaires were date-stamped and their contents entered into SPSS 14.0, check-coded, and analyzed. After deleting 13 questionnaires completed by children under age 13, the final number of records in the data base was 3,117.

Since virtually all daily pass-holders were surveyed, this study is technically a census rather than a sample survey. Sampling error therefore is not a limitation of this research. Nonsampling errors, resulting from inaccuracies in the mailing list, data entry errors, etc. are a possibility but are likely to be random in nature and are not considered a serious limitation. Nonresponse bias is unlikely to be a serious limitation because of the high response rate.

The entire purpose of statistical tests is to make inferences about a population from a sample randomly drawn from that population. Because the respondents in this study constitute a census rather than a sample, no statistical tests were performed. Readers therefore must decide whether differences between groups reported in the exhibits are substantive enough to warrant changes in policies or practices--decisions that have to be made even when statistical tests are employed.

## **RESULTS**

While the study was designed to create information that would be useful for both management and marketing decisions, the primary objective was to yield insights that would aid in more effective marketing of the Trail to tourists. The analyses that yielded the results reported below therefore singled out the 2,388 respondents who resided outside of the Black Hills region and excluded local Trail visitors. Thus, the word “respondents” used in the narrative below means daily pass-holders who were tourists. Additional analyses can be conducted on the entire data set and/or on local visitors to yield more management-oriented insights.

### **Trip Antecedents**

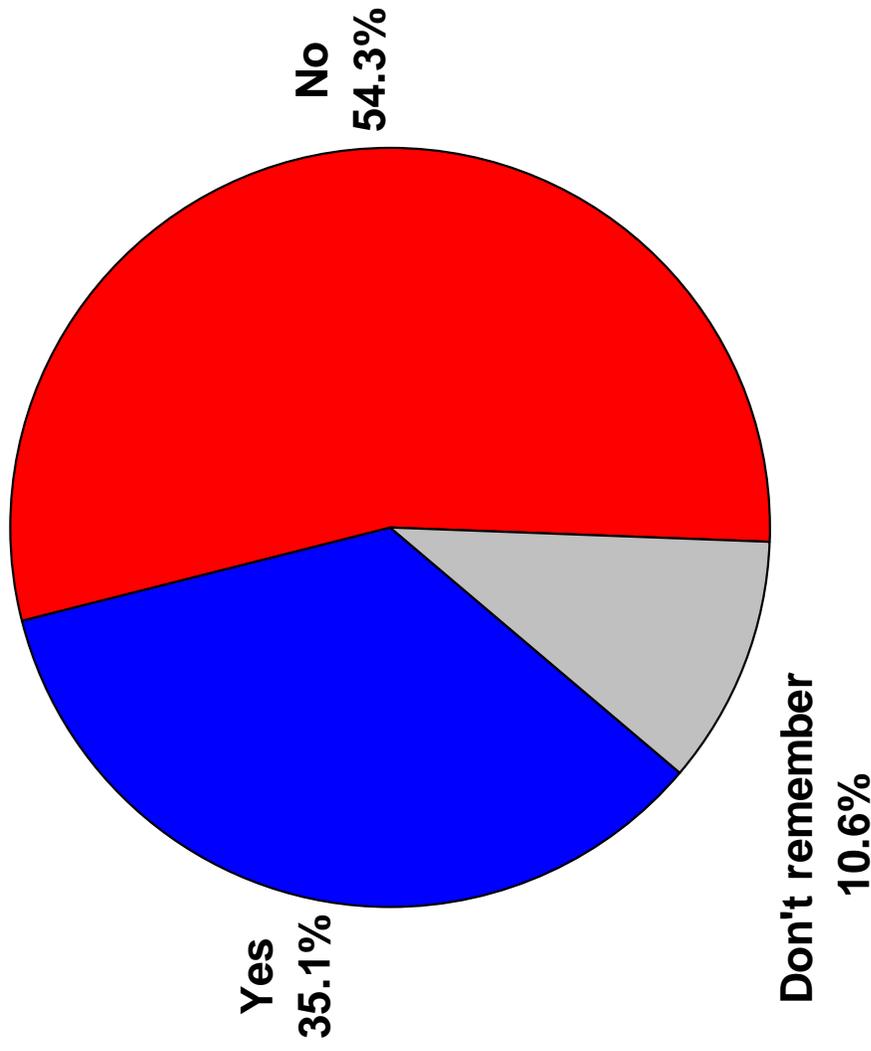
When asked, “Did you first find out about the Mickelson Trail from a Web site, television show, or publication, such as a newspaper, magazine, guidebook, newsletter, brochure, or vacation guide?” 35.1% answered in the affirmative (Figure 1). Tourist literature (47.0%) and Web site (29.4%) were the most frequently mentioned means by which respondents learned about the Trail (Figure 2).

The median number of days prior to departure that a decision was made to take a trip that involved visiting the Black Hills was 60.0 (Figure 3). Among high-spending tourists, however, the median was 90.0 days (Figure 35).

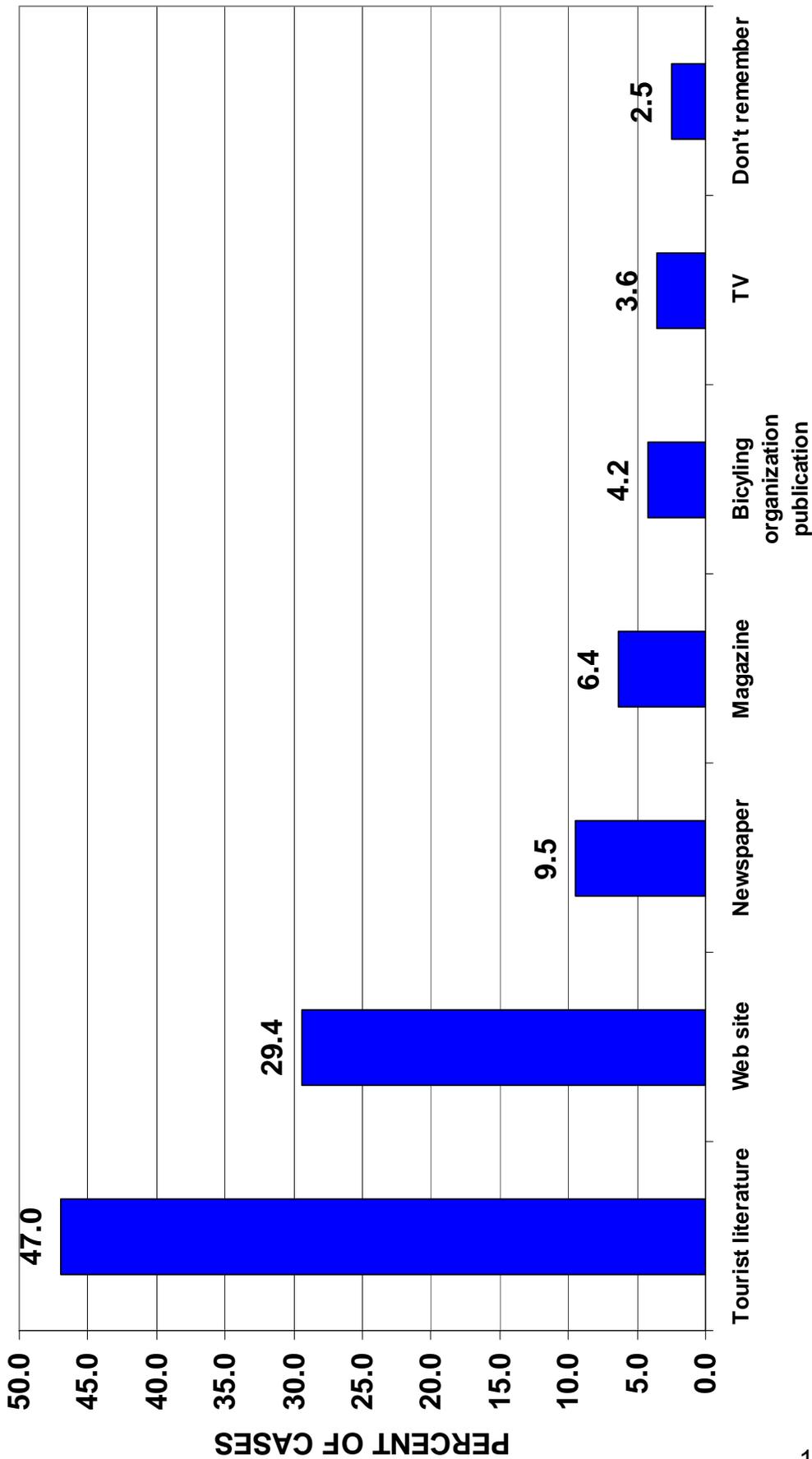
Over a third of respondents (35.1%) affirmed that “information, images, or ideas” from publications, Web sites, and/or television shows influenced them to visit the Mickelson Trail on their trip. Among these respondents, the most pervasive influence was the Internet (Figure 4).

Only 11.5% of respondents stated that visiting the Trail was the sole reason for their trip and only 23.4% stated that it was the “primary reason” for their trip. Forty-four percent stated that it was a secondary reason for their trip; 21.1% stated that they did not plan to visit the Trail prior to their departure (Figure 5).

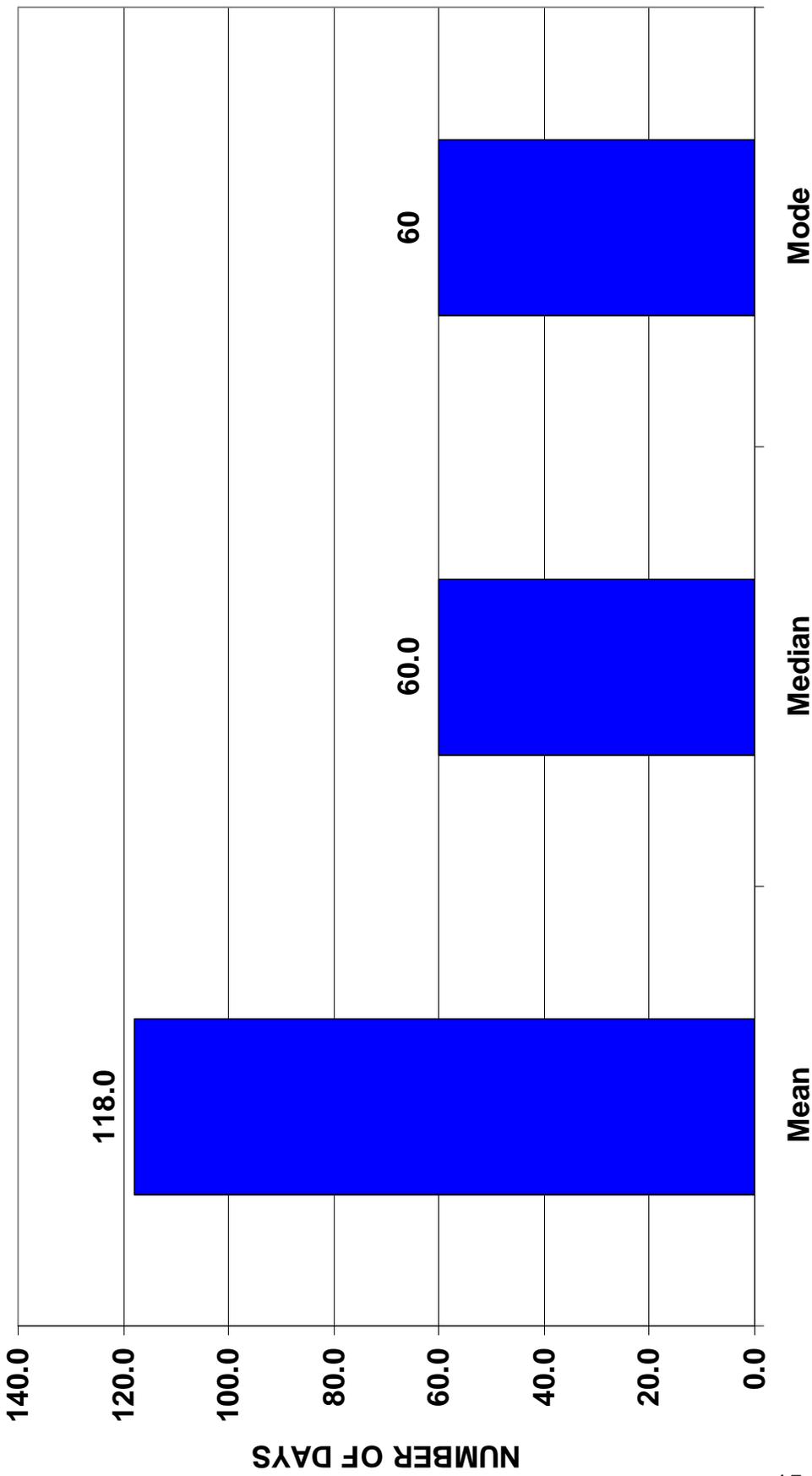
**Figure 1. Responses to Question 1: “Did you first find out about the Mickelson Trail from a Web site, television show, or publication, such as a newspaper, magazine, guidebook, newsletter, brochure, or vacation guide?”**



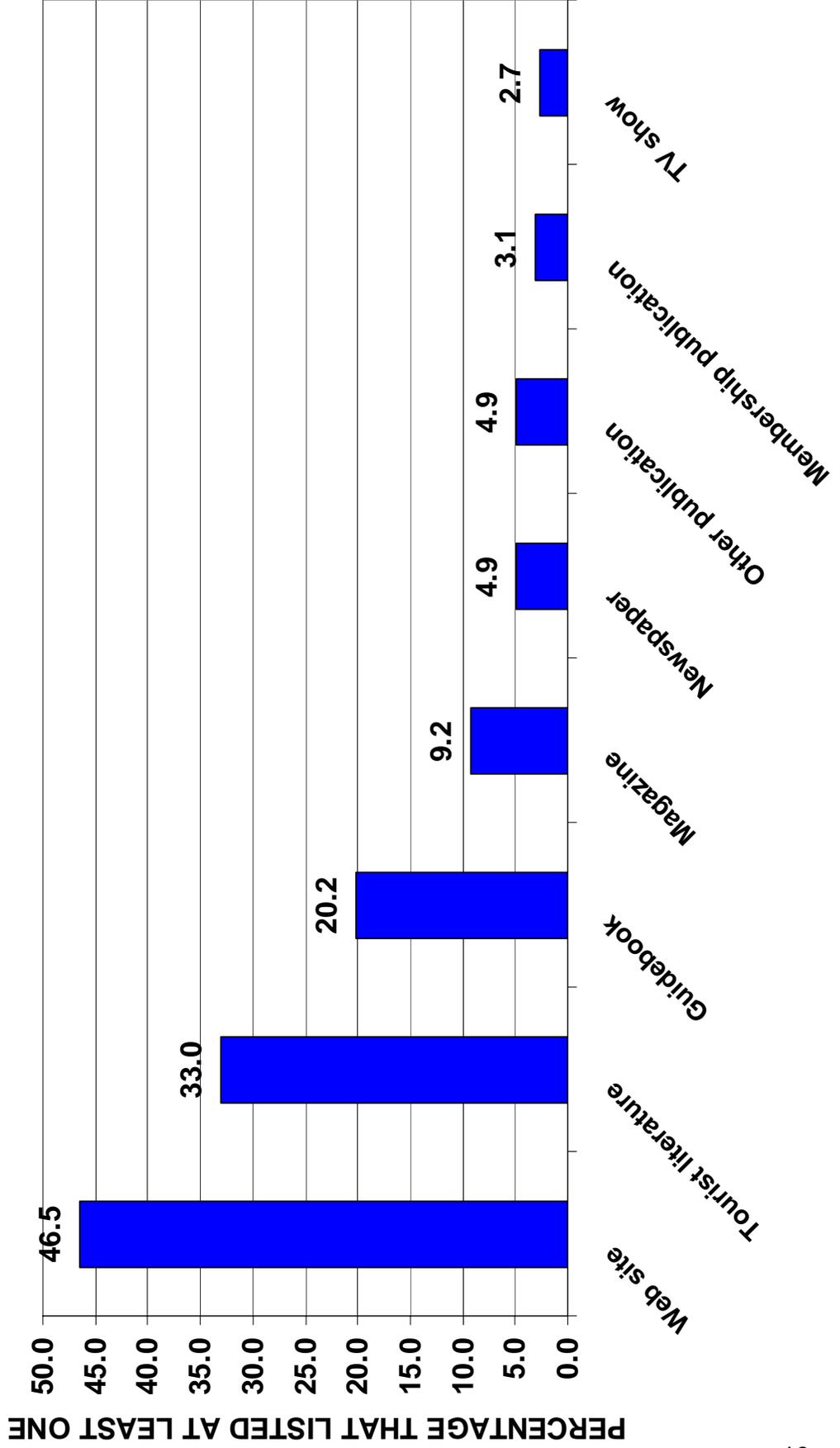
**Figure 2. Responses to Question 1a: “Please provide the name of this Web site, television show, or publication.”**



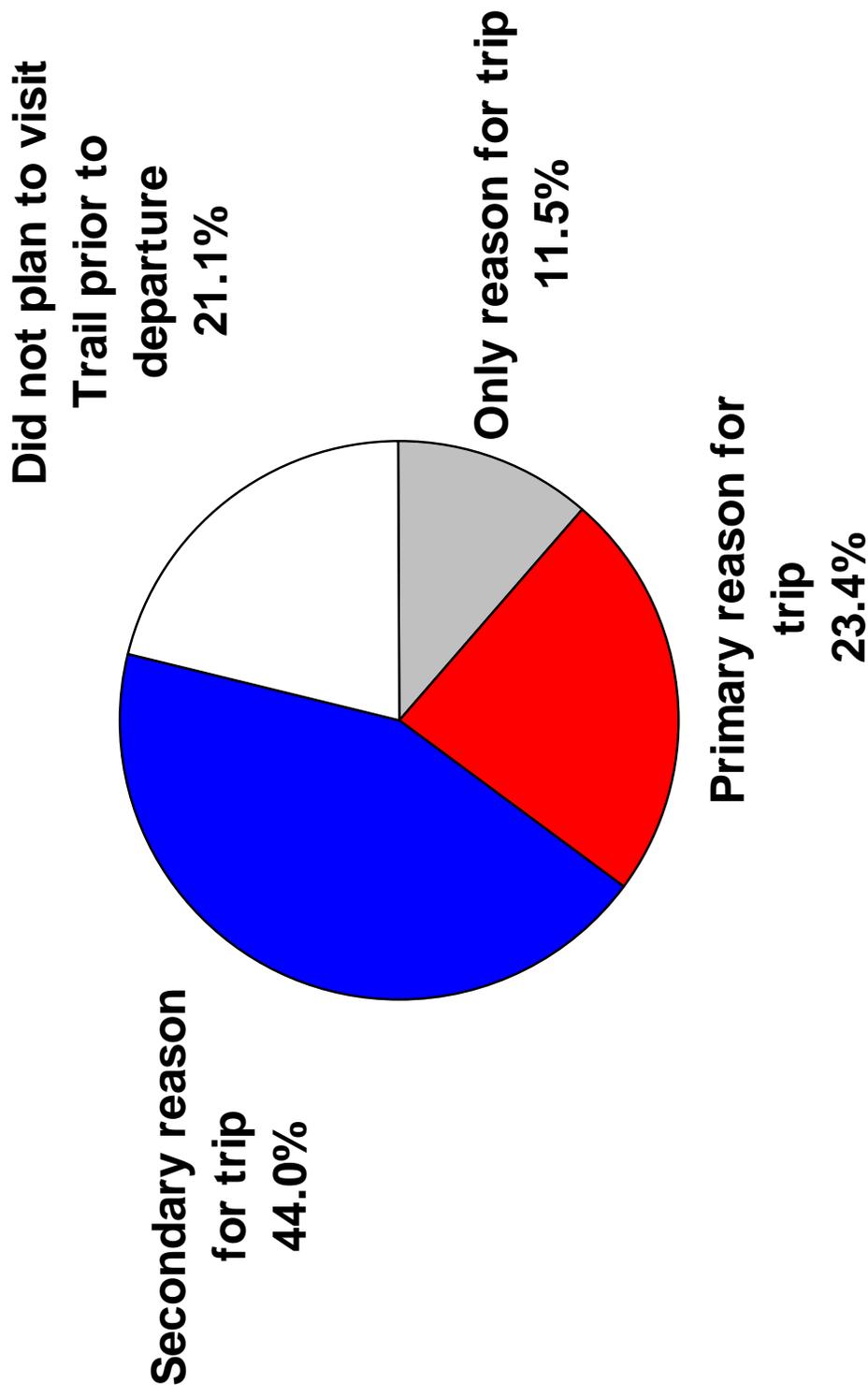
**Figure 3. Responses to Question 2: “About how many days before you left home on this trip did you decide to take a trip that involved visiting the Black Hills?”**



**Figure 4. Responses to Question 3a: “Please provide the names of these publications, Web sites, and/or television shows.”**



**Figure 5. Responses to Questions 4: “Did you plan to visit the Mickelson Trail before you left home on this trip?” and 4a: “Was visiting the Mickelson Trail the only reason for this trip, a primary reason for this trip, or a secondary reason for this trip?”**



Contact with nature was the most important motivation for visiting the Trail. “View scenery” received the highest mean importance level among a battery of 15 possible motivations for visiting the Trail (Figure 6).

### **Trip Characteristics**

Those trip origins constituting a majority of daily passes purchased by unique tourist households during the study period are shown in Figure 7. The Sioux Falls, Twin Cities, and Denver 3-digit zip code regions were the top three such origins. Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that “the Black Hills or a place in the Black Hills was the main destination of this trip.”

Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that “recreation” was “the purpose of this trip” and 27.2% stated that “to visit relatives and/or friends” was the purpose of their trip (Figure 8). Results shown in Figure 8 add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Ninety-three percent of respondents stated that a personally owned car, truck, minivan, jeep, or self-contained recreation vehicle was the “mode of transportation” by which they traveled “the most miles to reach the Black Hills on this trip” (Figure 9). Only 6.0% traveled by airplane and only 0.9% traveled by rental vehicle to reach the Black Hills.

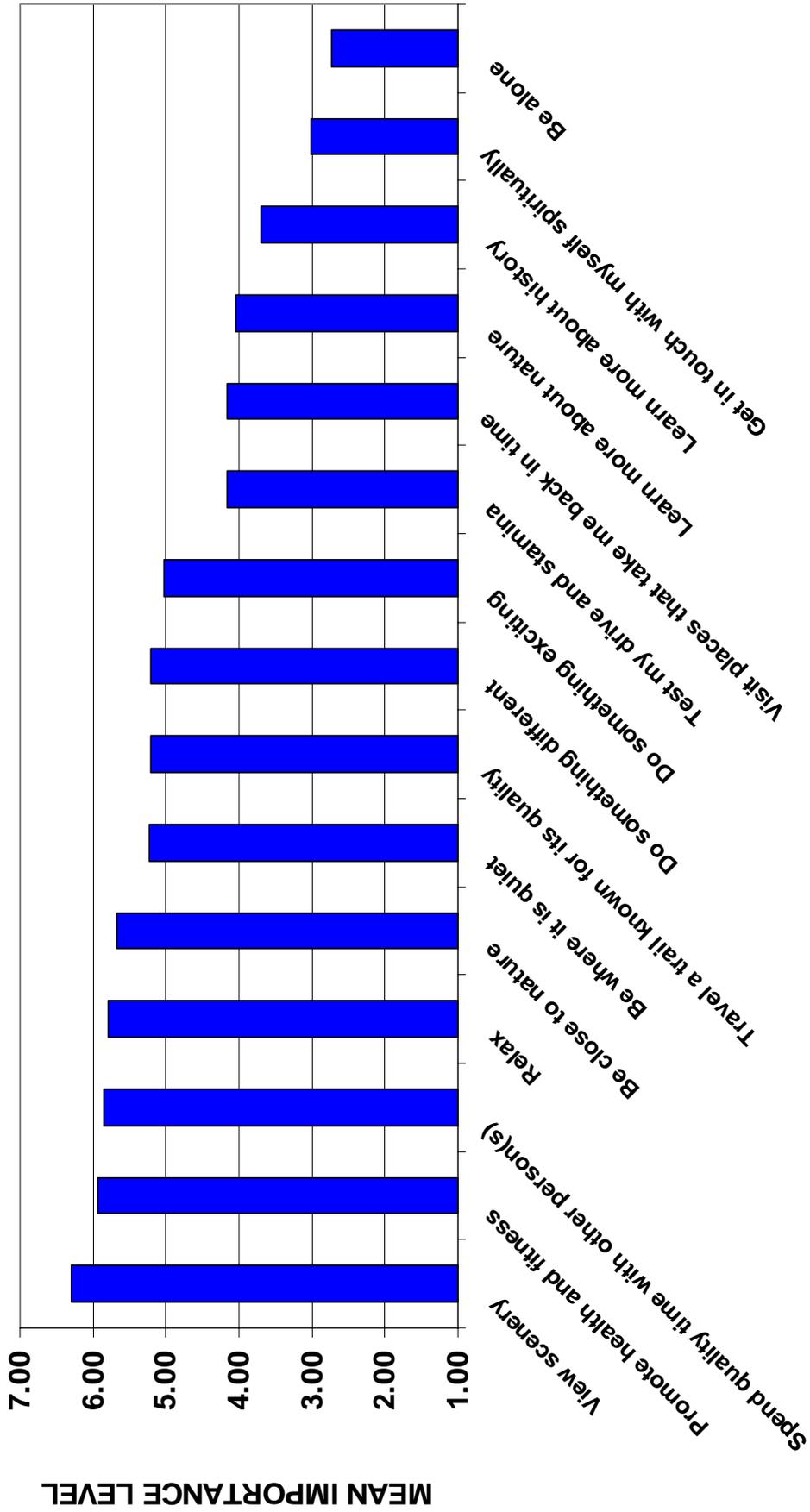
Custer State Park was the most frequently cited Black Hills attraction that respondents said they visited on their trips, among a list of 10 such attractions (Figure 10). Sixty-two percent of respondents stated that they visited this particular attraction. The next most popular attraction was Deadwood (58.0%), followed by Mount Rushmore National Memorial (55.1%), Crazy Horse Memorial (40.4%), and Badlands National Park (36.9%).

The popularity of Custer State Park and Deadwood, to some extent, may be related to the relative popularity of Custer as a Trail entry point (Figure 18) and Deadwood as a Trail exit point (Figure 19). The popularity of Custer State Park among the types of tourists who visit the Trail, the popularity of Custer as a Trail entry point, the fact that more than one out of five respondents visited the Trail spontaneously (Figure 5), and the fact that Custer State Park is a unit of the state park system, suggests that Custer State Park would be an excellent place to cross-sell the Trail through a display at the Norbeck Visitor Center and literature distributed to motorists entering the Park.

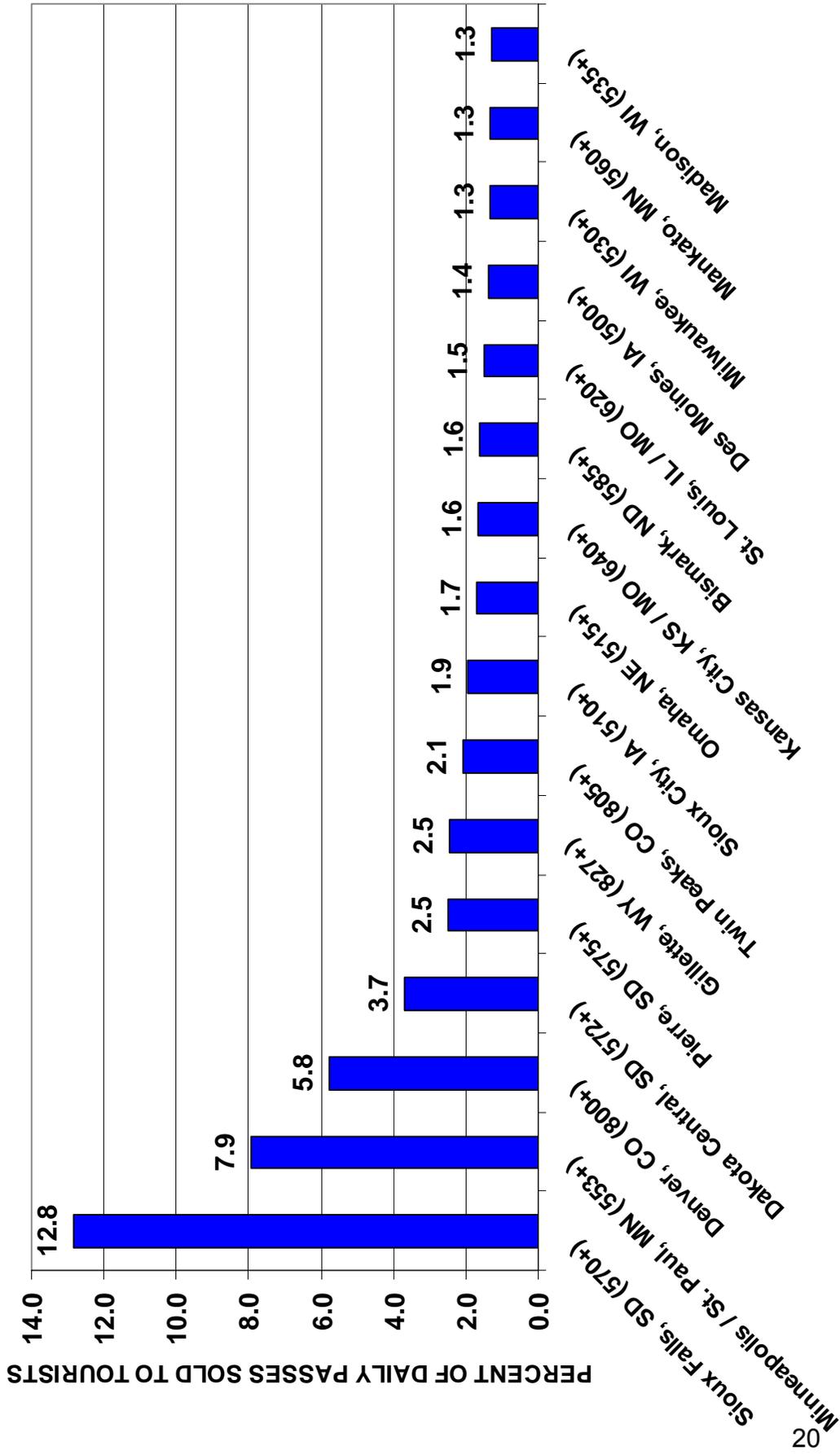
Nearly half (41.2%) of respondents lodged in a hotel, motel, or lodge in the Black Hills during their trips (Figure 11). Over a third (36.8%) camped in a commercial or government-operated campground.

Unsurprisingly, mountain biking was the most frequently-cited recreation activity engaged in during respondents’ visits to the Black Hills, followed closely by sightseeing and driving for pleasure (Figure 12). Twenty-six percent affirmed that they attended “a festival, concert, play, stage show, outdoor drama, motorcycle rally, car rally, or other event” while they were in the Black Hills on their trips.

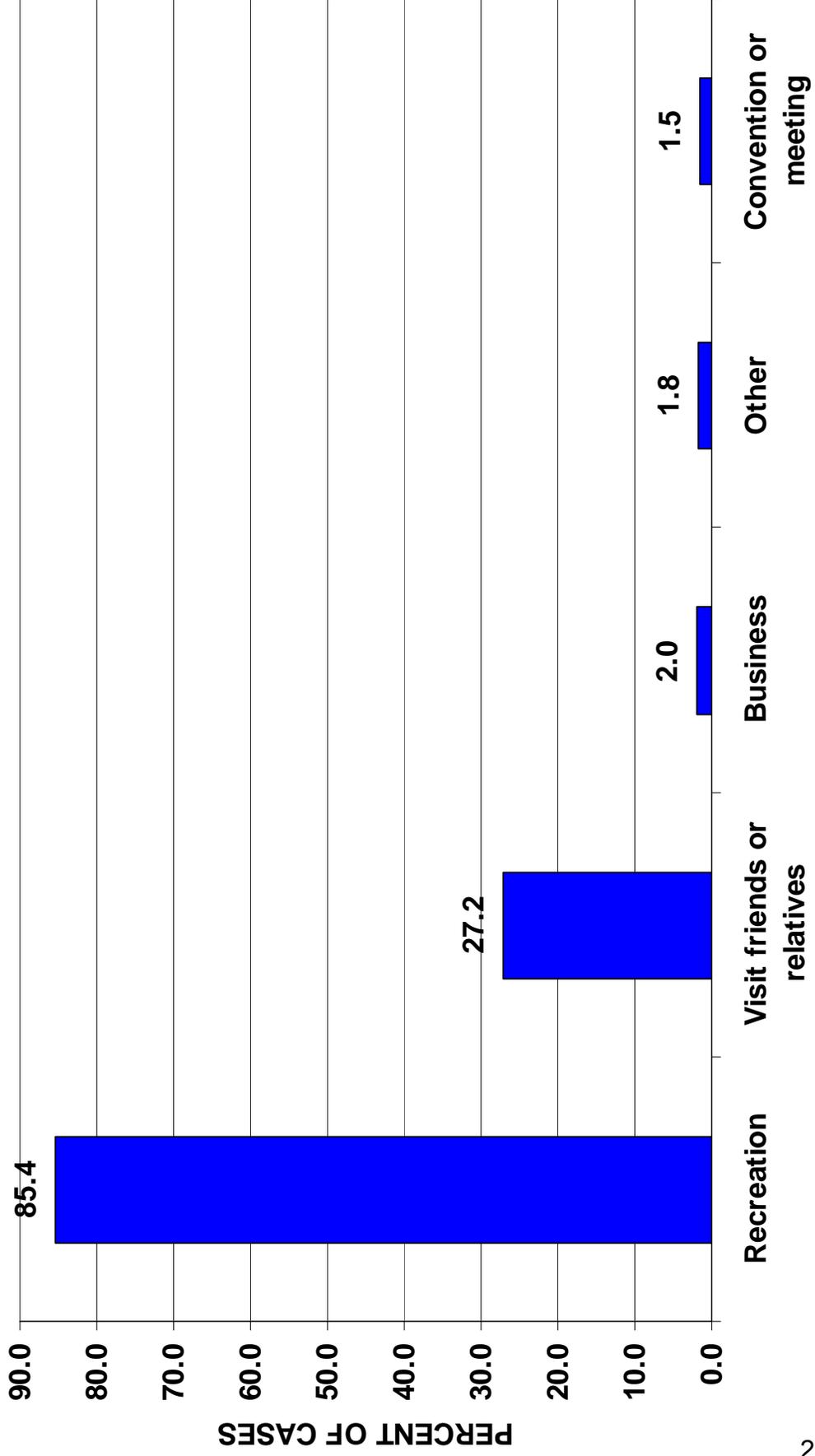
**Figure 6. Reported reasons for visiting the Mickelson Trail.**



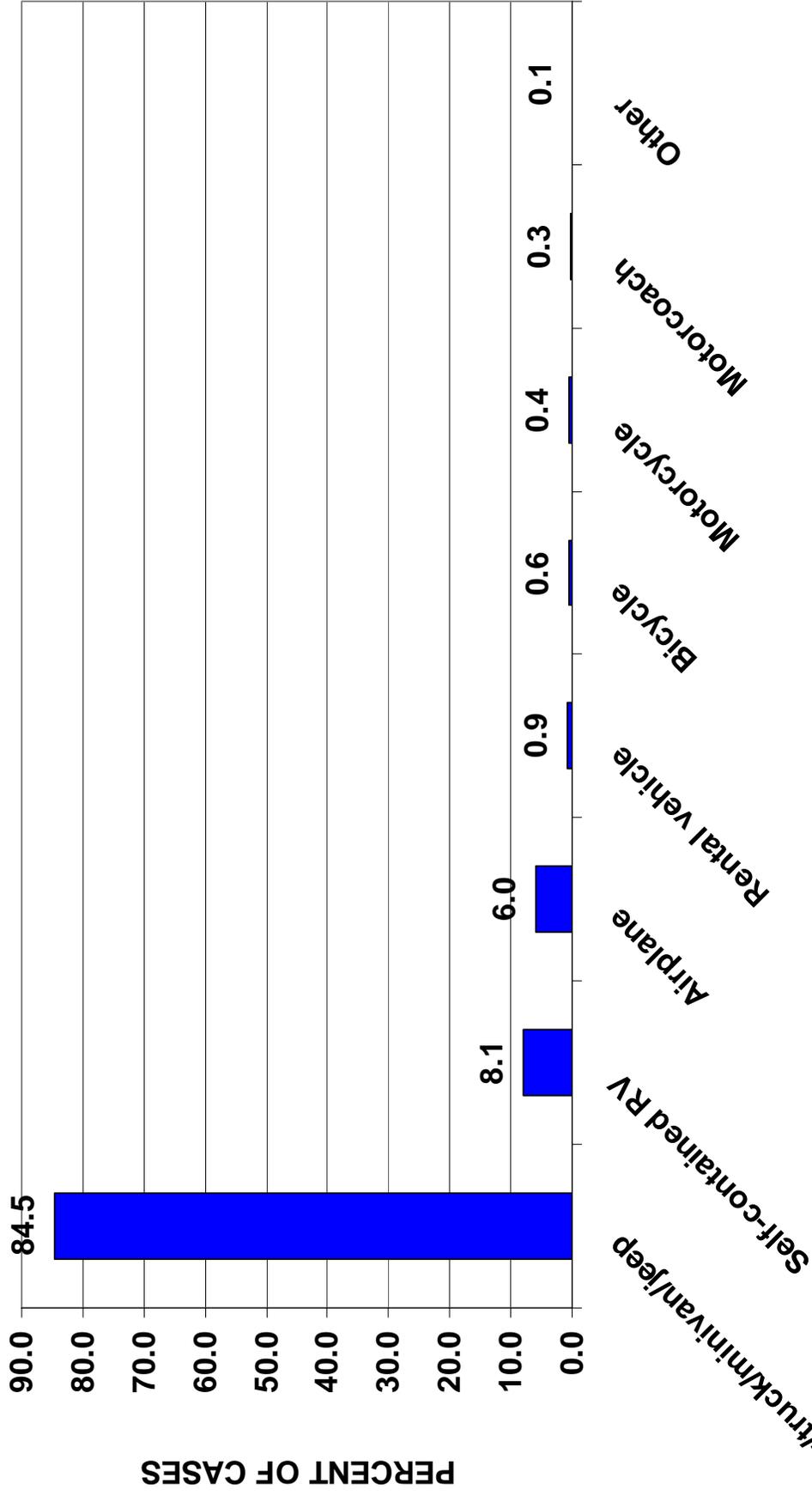
**Figure 7. Origins constituting a majority of daily passes purchased by unique tourist households during the study period.**



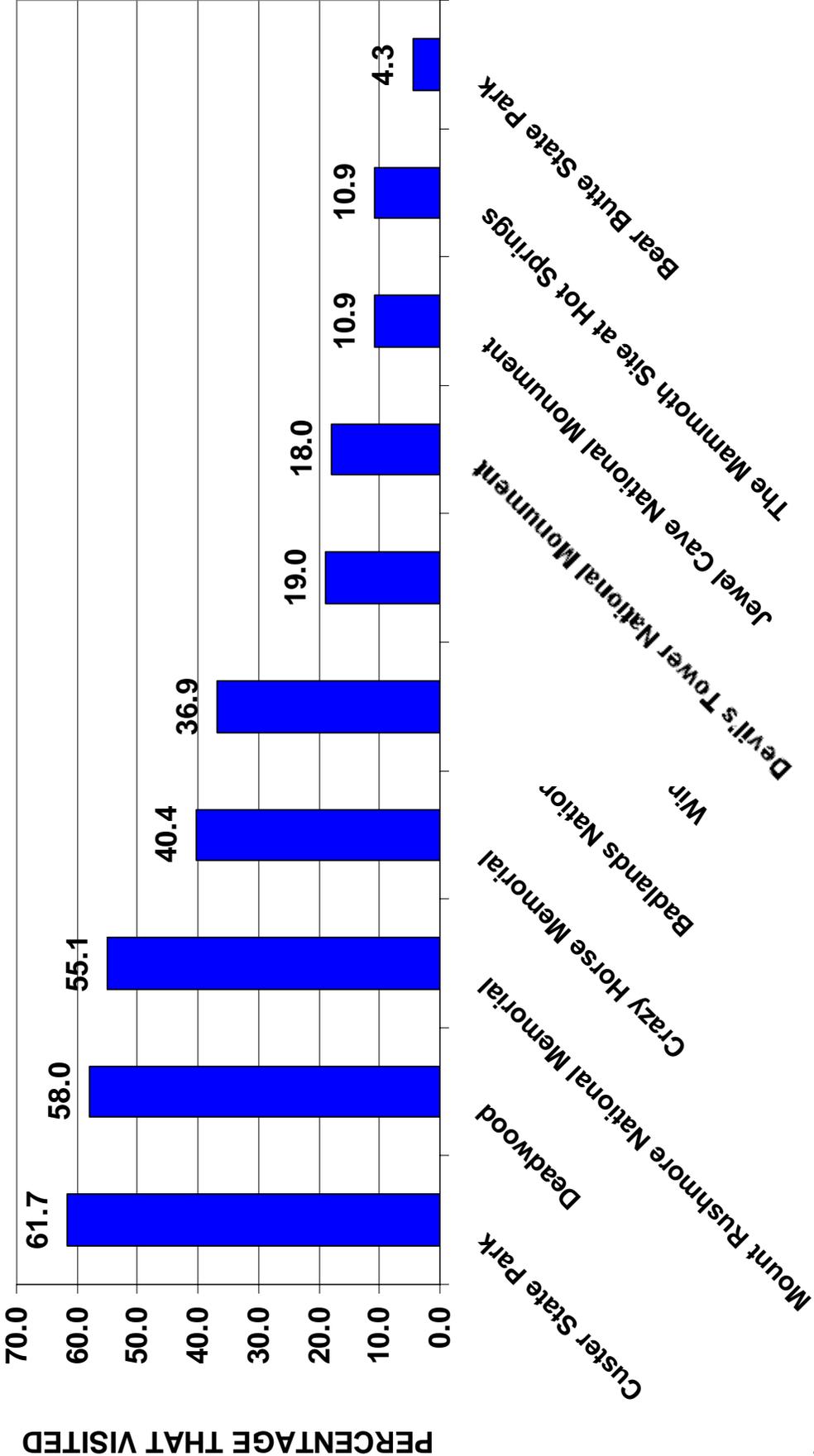
**Figure 8. Responses to Question 8: “What was the purpose of this trip (Please check one or more categories.)”**



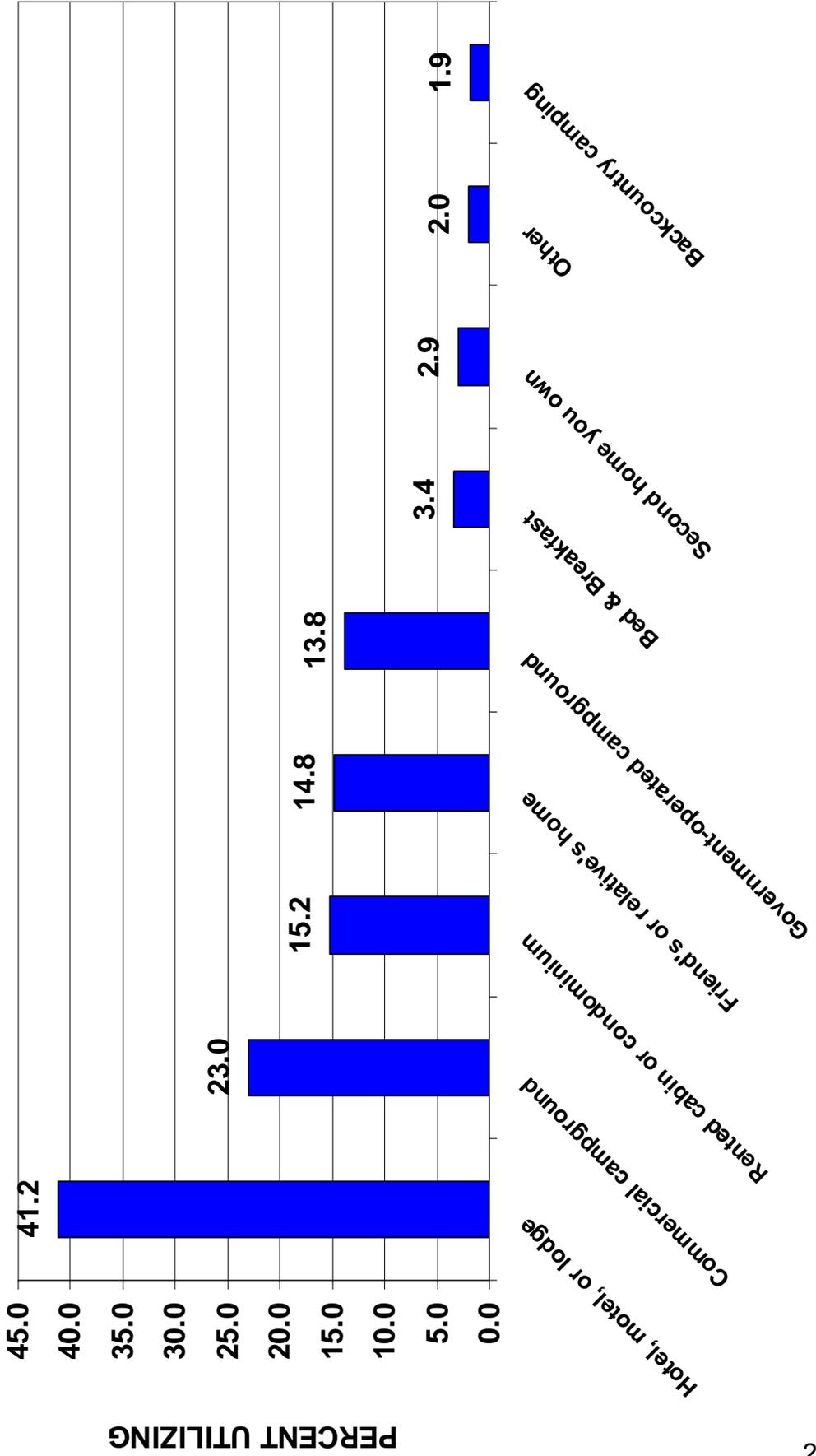
**Figure 9. Responses to Question 9: “By what mode of transportation did you travel the most miles to reach the Black Hills on this trip?”**



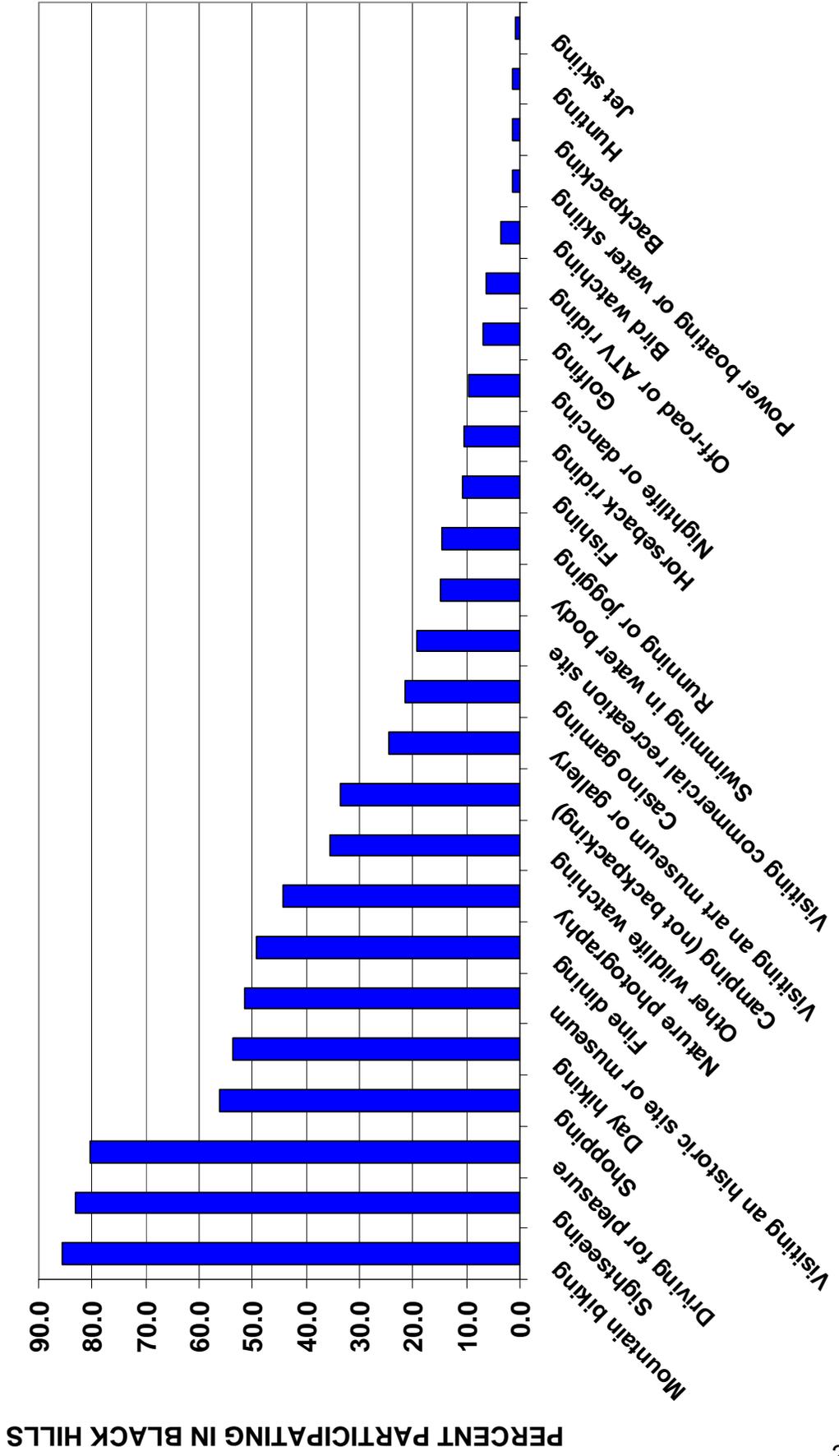
**Figure 10. Visitation to selected attractions in the Black Hills.**



**Figure 11. Lodging types used while in the Black Hills.**



**Figure 12. Participation in recreation activities while in the Black Hills.**



The mean party size among all respondents was 4.28 (Figure 13). However, this figure is inflated by the fact that some respondents traveled with large groups. Among respondents who traveled in parties with under 10 persons, the mean party size was 3.03. Nearly a third of respondents (30.6%) traveled with one or more children under 18 on their trips, 17.8% traveled with one or more children under age 10, and 21.1% traveled with one or more children age 10-17 (Figure 14).

Respondents on the average spent \$689.67 per party per trip in the Black Hills on their trips (Figure 15). This is 31% lower than the \$1,006.34 per party per trip spent by Black Hills visitors in general. The latter result emerged from the CTR's August 2005 intercept survey of tourists contacted at gasoline service stations scattered across the Black Hills. Commercial lodging received the largest share of respondents' expenditures (27.6%), followed by restaurant and bar meals and drinks (18.4%) and gasoline and oil (14.3%) (Figure 16). Participants in the Mickelson Trail Trek (MTT) spent 21% more per person per trip than tourist daily pass-holders for whom visiting the Trail was the only or a primary purpose of their trip.

## **Trail Use**

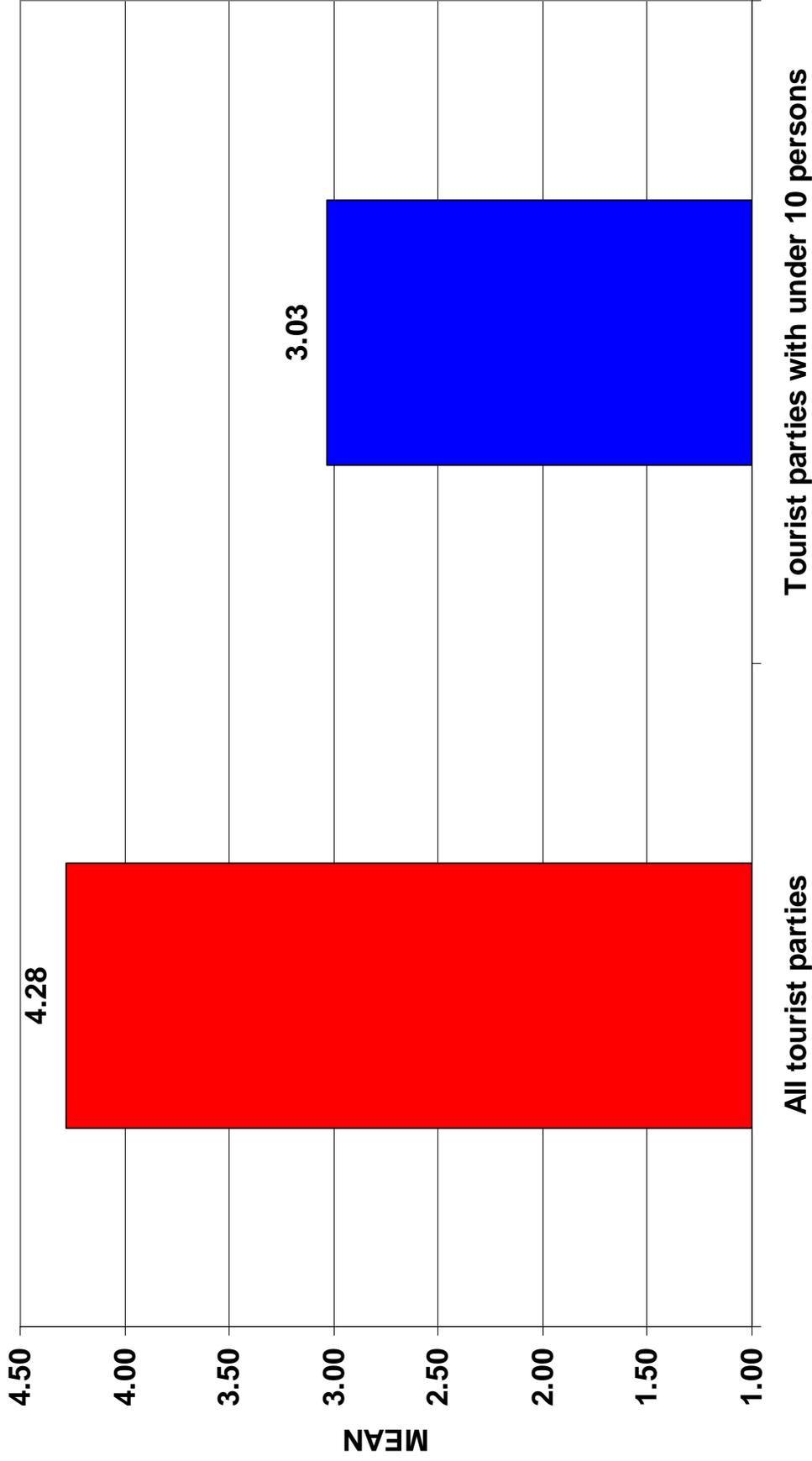
During May through October 2005, 6,863 daily passes were sold. Of these, 5,181 or 75.5% were sold to tourists, i.e., persons who resided outside the 5-county Black Hills study region.

Hill City was by far the most frequently-mentioned place at which daily passes were purchased (Figure 17). The Rafter J Bar Ranch was among the top 10 such places. Custer and Hill City were the most frequently-mentioned Trail entry points (Figure 18). Hill City was the most frequently-mentioned Trail exit point (Figure 19).

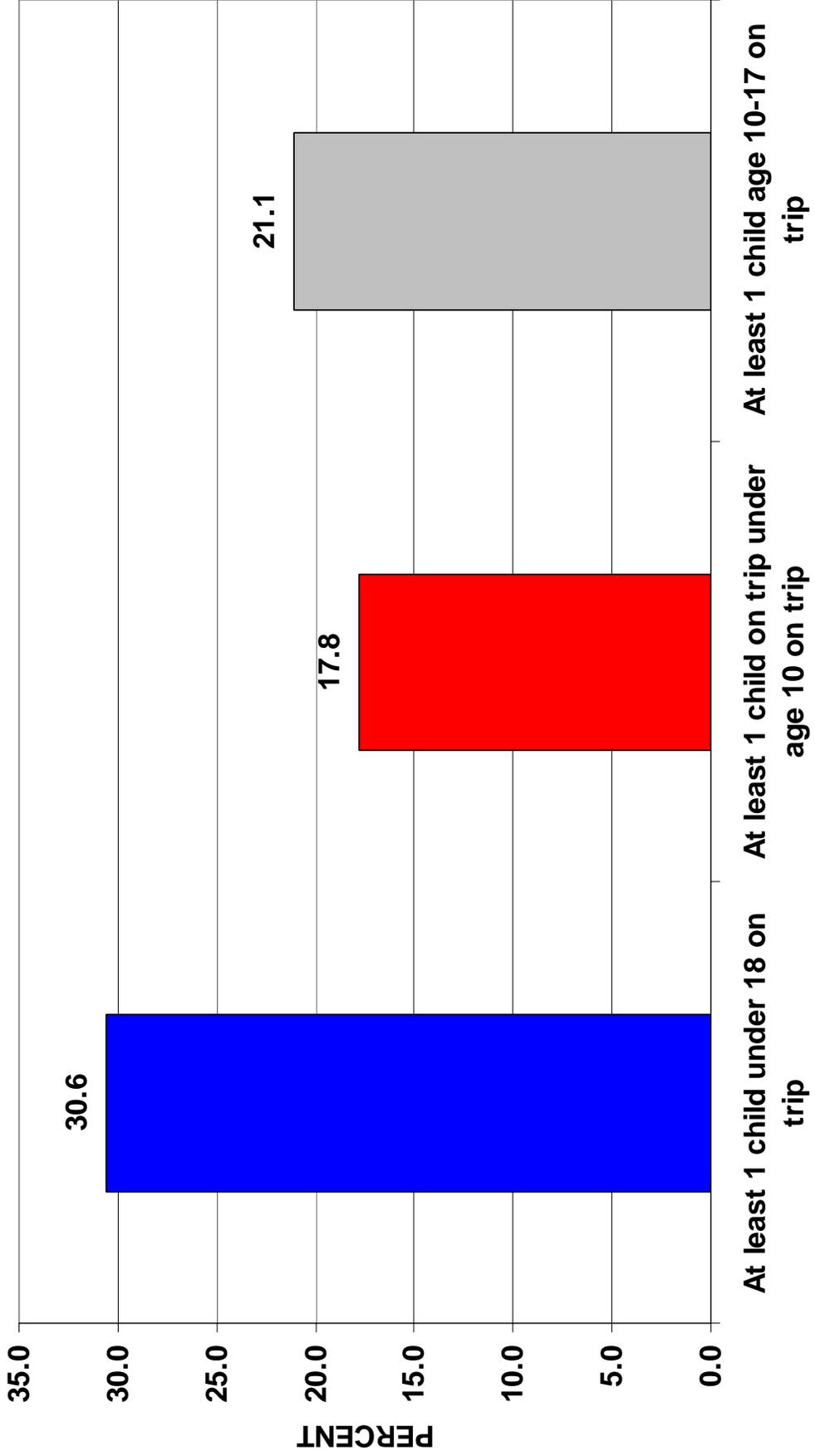
Mountain biking was by far the most frequently-mentioned primary means of transportation used on the Trail (Figure 20). Eighty-four percent of respondents used this means of transportation to travel the most miles on the Trail. Walking/hiking was the next most frequently mentioned mode of transportation (13.0%), followed by running/jogging (1.7%) and horseback riding (1.6%). Only one respondent used the Trolley on the Trail. Among respondents who cited mountain biking as their primary means of transportation, 90.7% stated that they rode an owned mountain bike, 8.5% stated that they rode a rented mountain bike, and 0.9% stated that they rode both an owned and a rented mountain bike.

The majority (53.7%) of respondents entered and exited the Trail at the same place. This fact, combined with the fact that the median number of hours spent on the Trail per visit was 4.0 (Table 2), suggests that many Trail visits consist of entering the Trail in Custer or Hill City, riding a bike a couple of hours up the Trail, turning around, and returning to the same trailhead. In other words, many Trail visitors are not utilizing the entire Trail. The reason(s) for this are unknown, but the lack of reasonably-priced shuttle service, the strenuous nature of some Trail sections, and/or the fact that the average age of tourist daily pass-holders was 48 (Table 3) may be possible explanations.

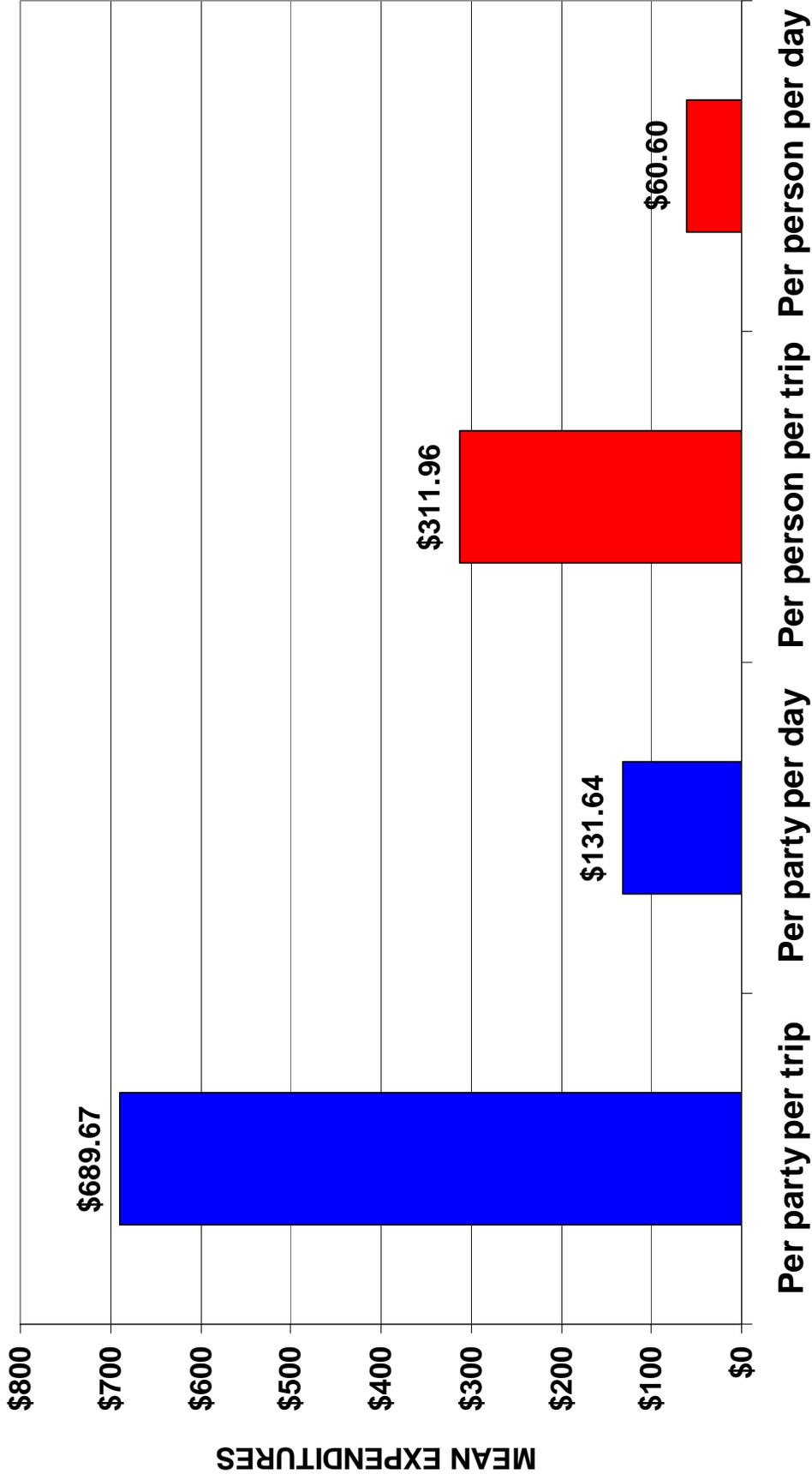
**Figure 13. Responses to Question 16: “How many people, including yourself, went on this trip?”**



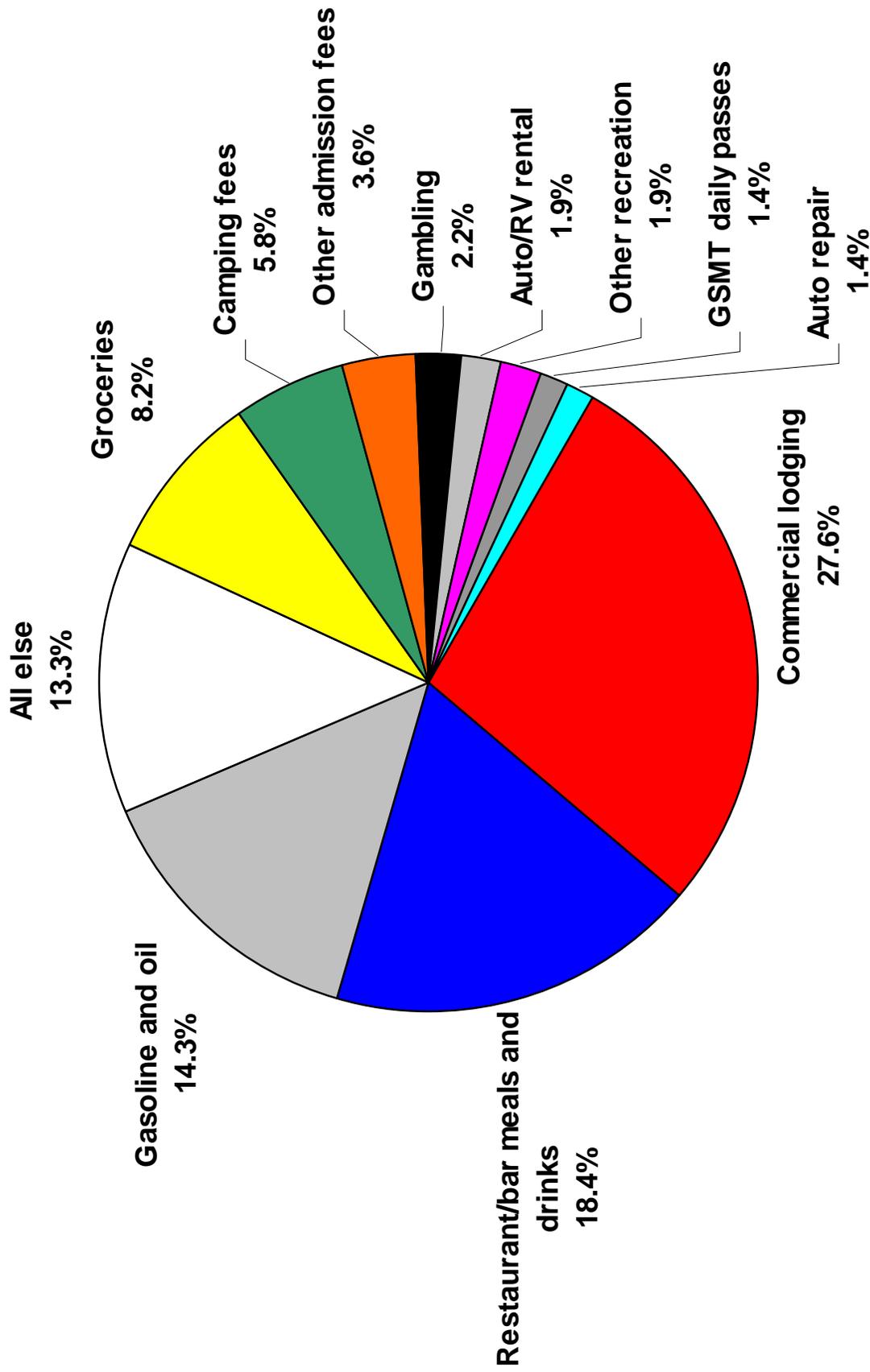
**Figure 14. Presence of children in the travel party.**



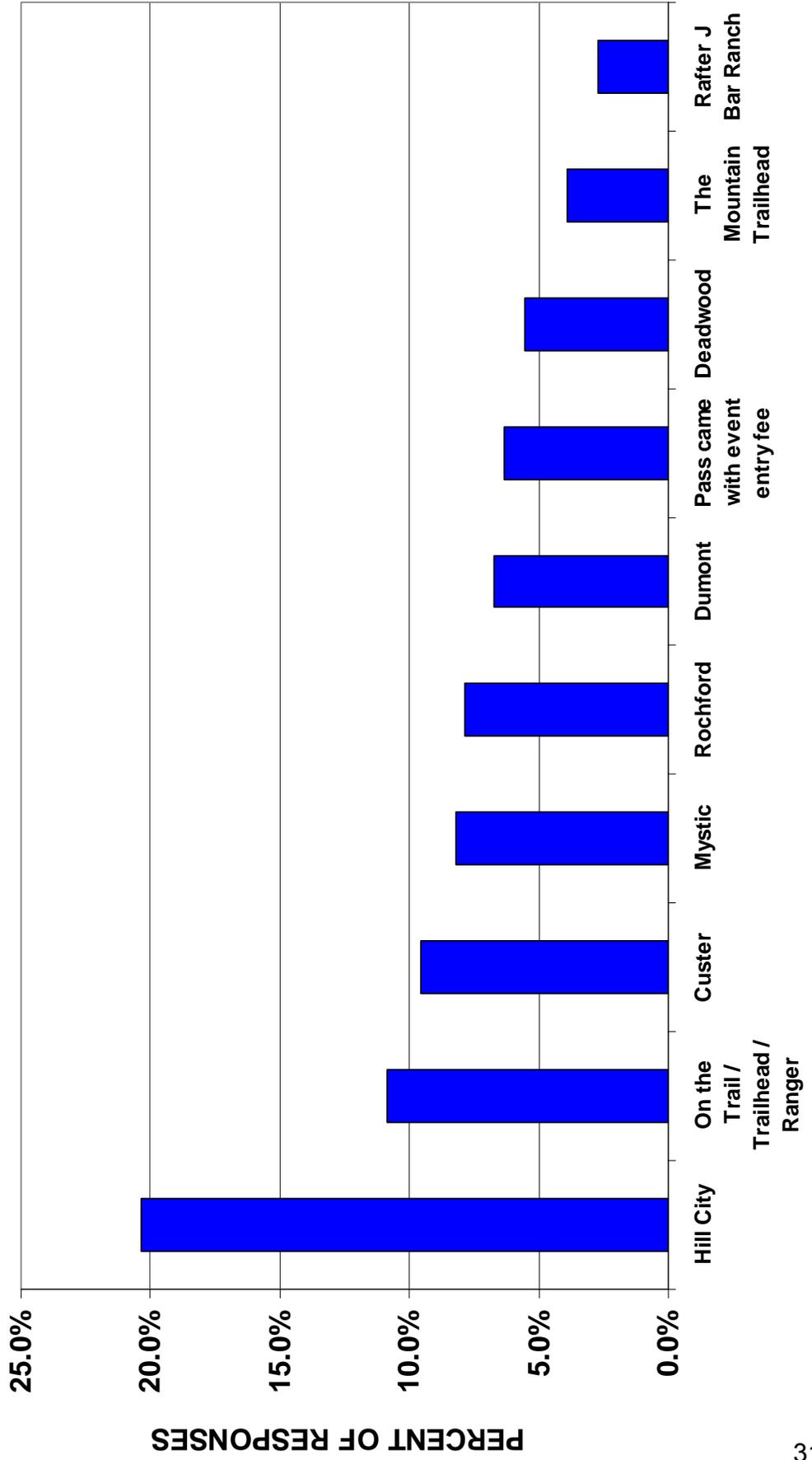
**Figure 15. Mean expenditures in the Black Hills.**



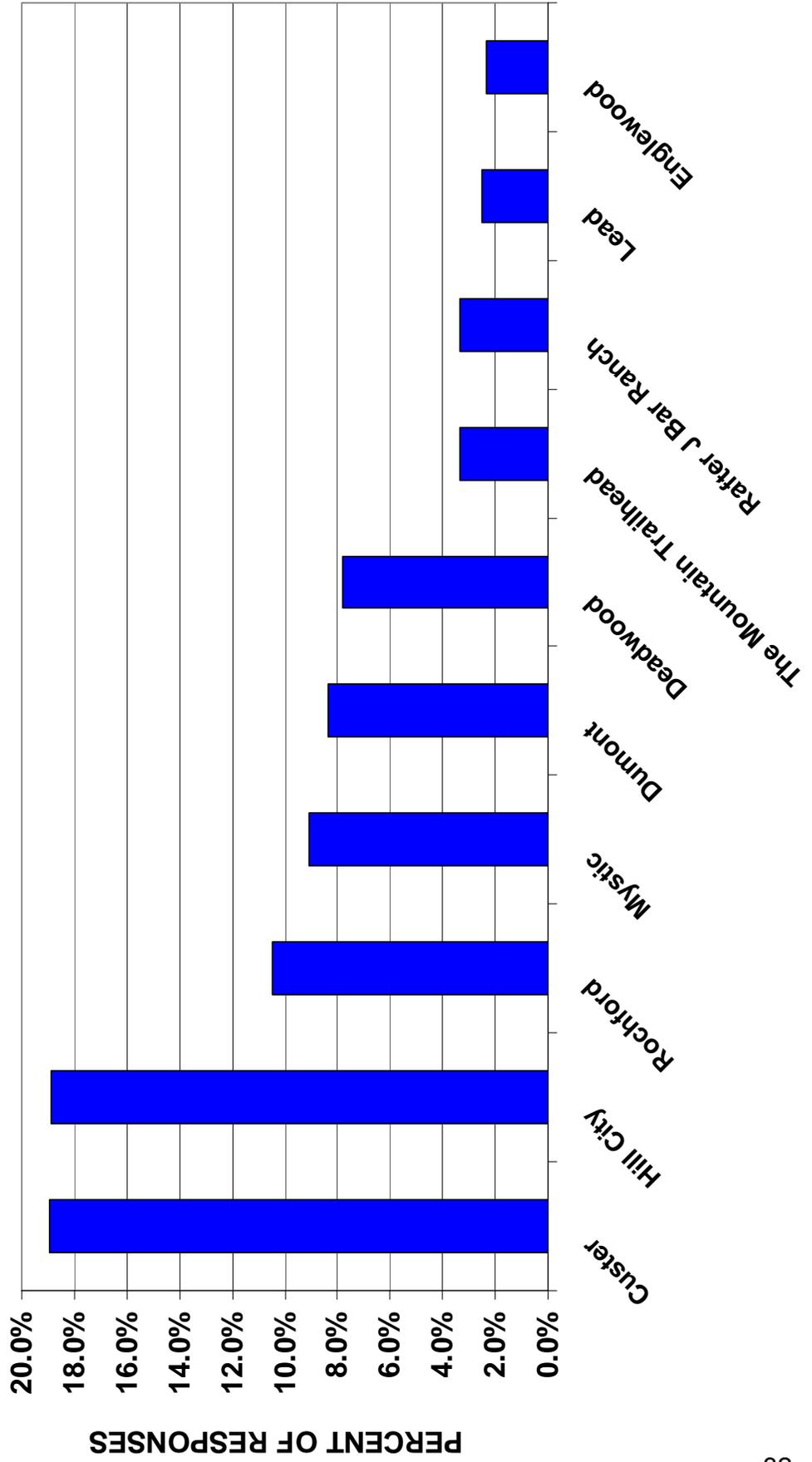
**Figure 16. Distribution of the tourist daily pass-holder's dollar in the Black Hills.**



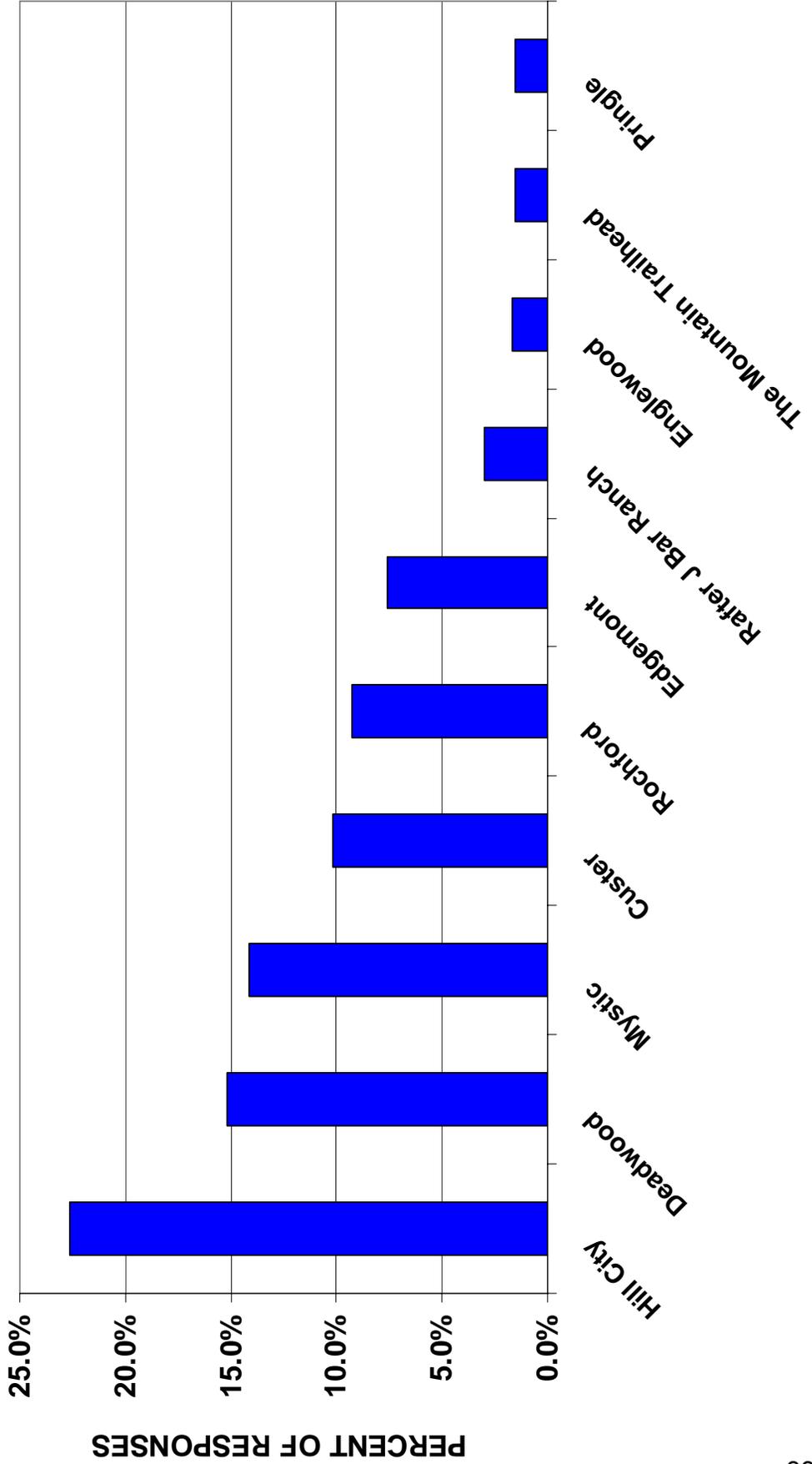
**Figure 17. Top 10 places daily passes were purchased.**



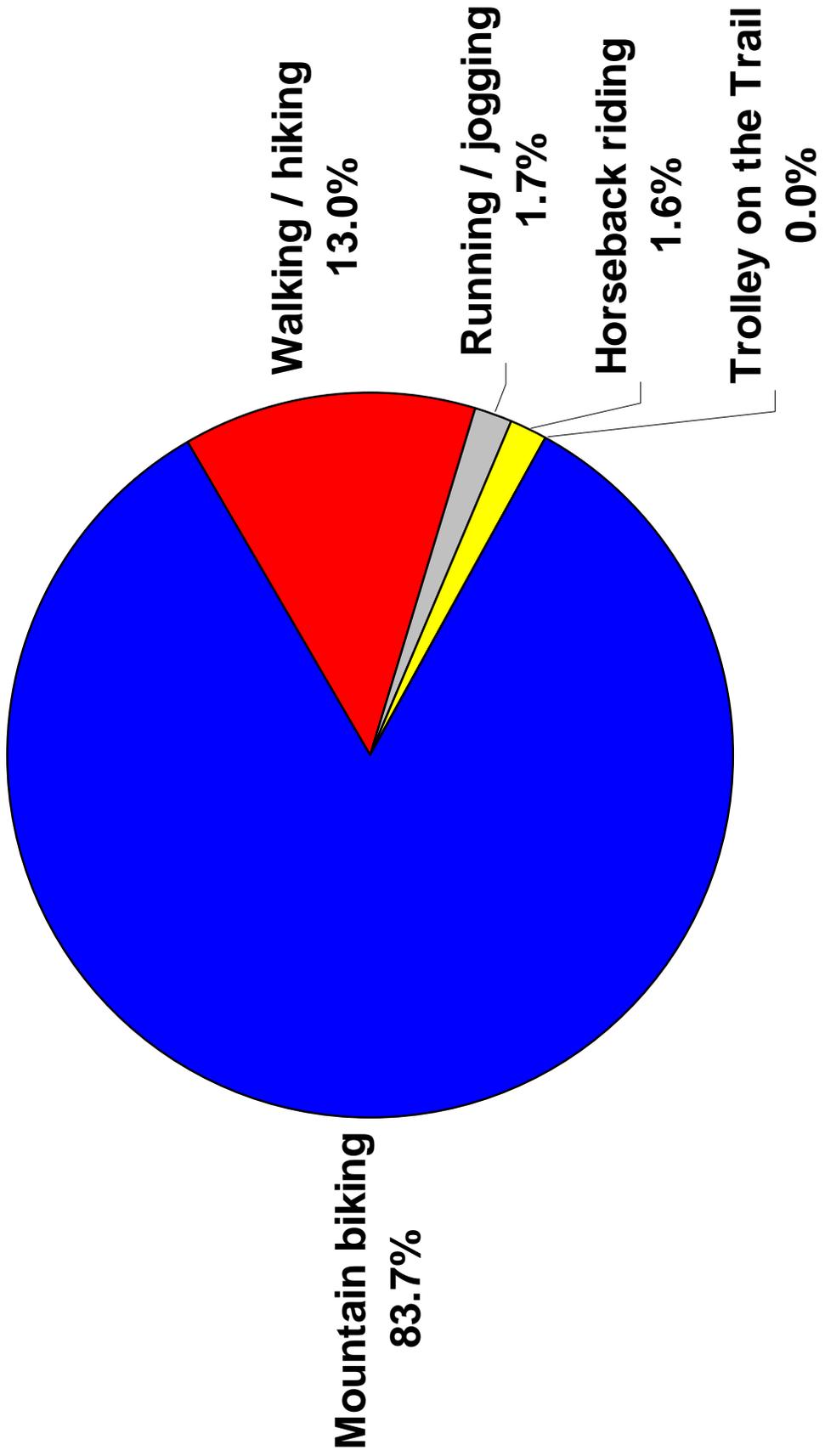
**Figure 18. Top 10 places Trail was entered.**



**Figure 19. Top 10 places Trail was exited.**



**Figure 20. Mode of transportation by which respondent traveled the most miles on Trail.**



**Table 2. Respondents' time expenditures.**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>
Total number of nights away from home on trip	9.99	6.00
Number of nights spent in Black Hills	4.85	4.00
Number of hours spent on the Mickelson Trail	6.34	4.00

The vast majority (86.4%) of respondents traveled on the Trail with other people. Of those that did so, the median travel party size was 3.0. Thirteen percent of respondents attended one or more events while they were on the Trail. Respondents, on the average, visited the Trail 1.38 times during the past 12 months and 2.8 times “since it opened in September 1998.”

### **Opinions of the Trail**

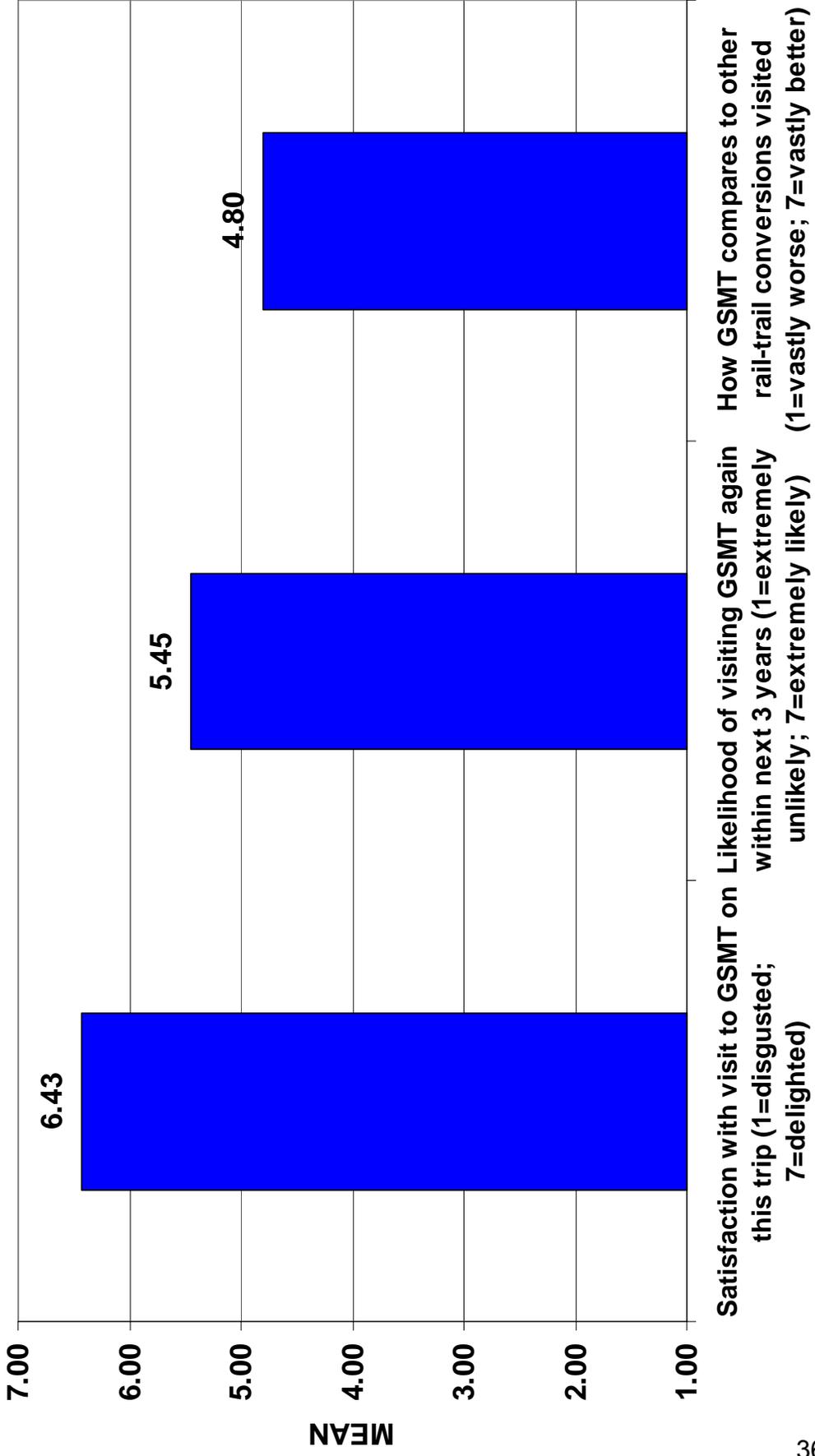
Overall satisfaction with Trail visits was extremely high—6.43 on a 7-point scale (Figure 21). This is an impressive complement to those responsible for managing and maintaining the Trail. However, respondents who had visited other rail-trail conversions did not feel that the quality of the Trail was significantly higher than the quality of these competing facilities. This suggests that if the Coalition wants to compete effectively against these other rail-trail conversions, the high levels of satisfaction with the Trail should not be taken as license to not make further efforts to enhance the Trail and the quality of visitors' experiences.

“Nothing” was also the most frequent response to the question, “What, if anything, should be done to provide higher quality experiences to Mickelson Trail visitors?” (Figure 22). Such responses constituted a majority (52.6%) of all responses to this question.

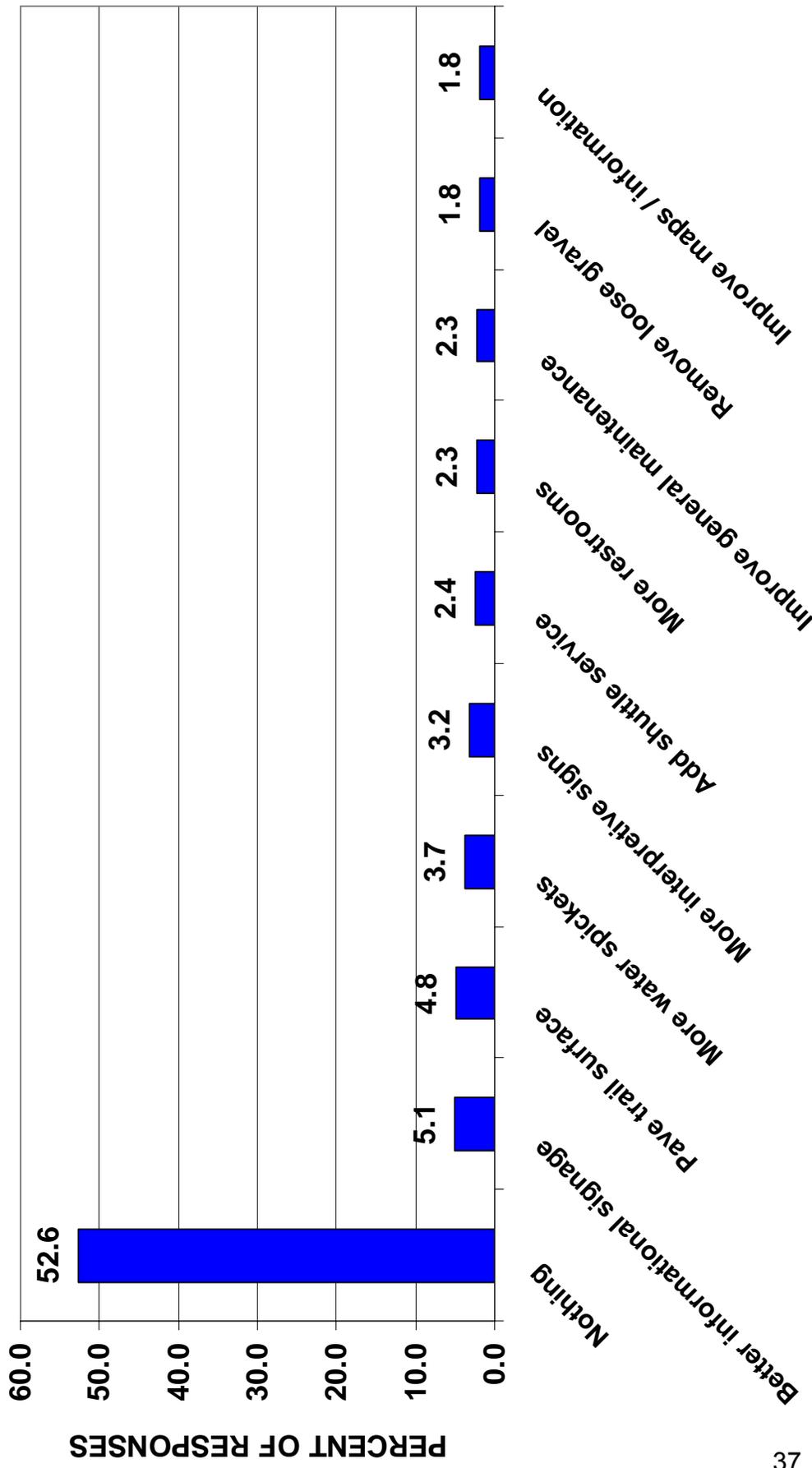
Respondents were asked to “list the three things you liked best about your visit to the Mickelson Trail.” “Scenery/beauty/views” was the most frequent response, followed distantly by “solitude/peacefulness/quietude” (Figure 23). Taken together, these results suggest that contact with nature and the opportunity for contemplation it confers are the Trail attributes most highly prized by Trail visitors. Much the same message was obtained from the results of the motivations battery (Figure 6).

Respondents were also asked to “list the three things you liked least about your visit to the Mickelson Trail.” “Nothing” was the most frequent response (15.2%), followed by poor quality of trail surface (13.3%) (Figure 24). “Horses and/or horse droppings” constituted only 2.7% of the responses to this question. This finding, together with the fact that equestrians spent more money in the Black Hills than those who used other means of transportation on the Trail (Figure 25), suggests that while some Trail visitors may not like to share the Trail with equestrians, it would be difficult to justify excluding equestrians from the Trail. On the other hand, the fact that

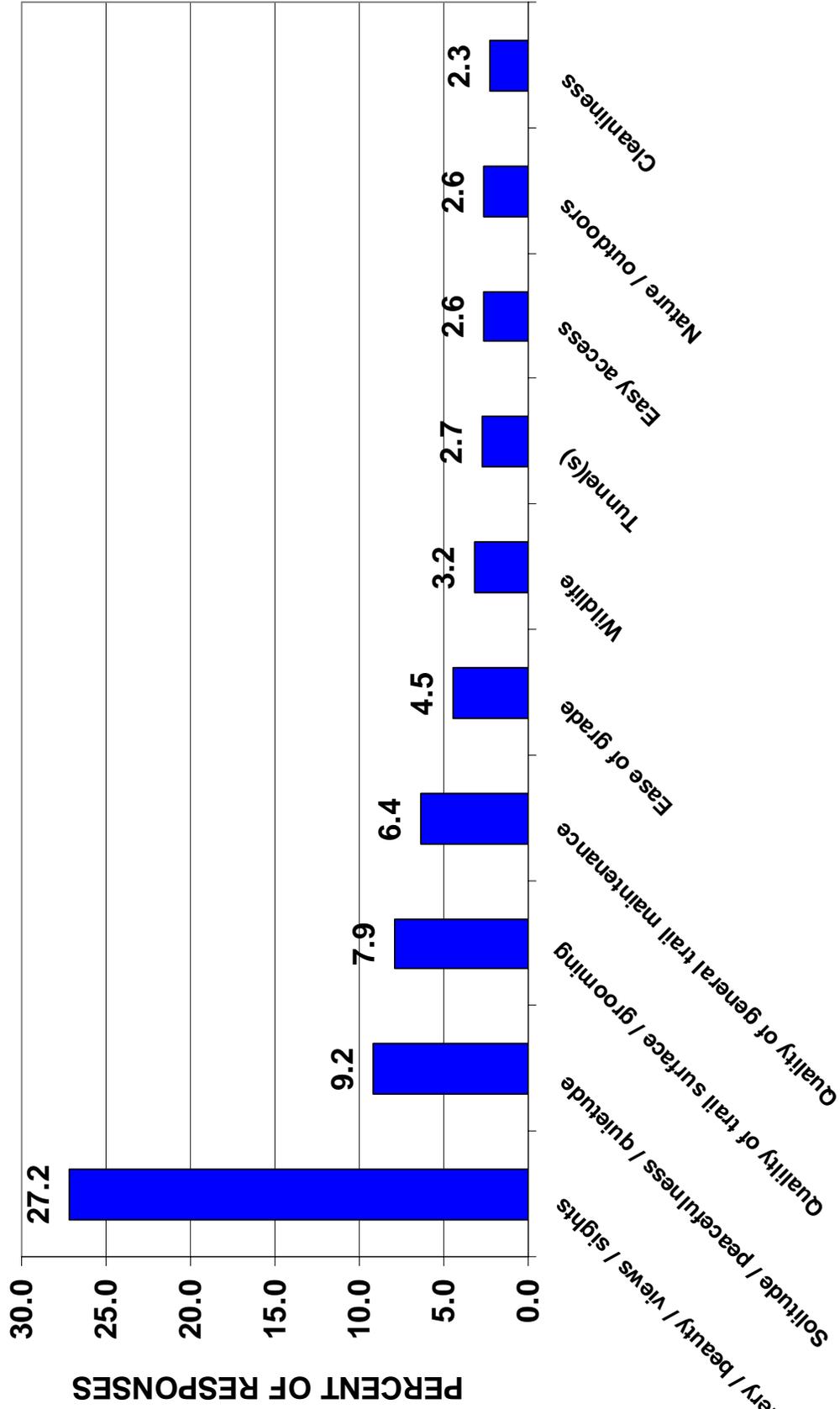
**Figure 21. Results of rating scale questions.**



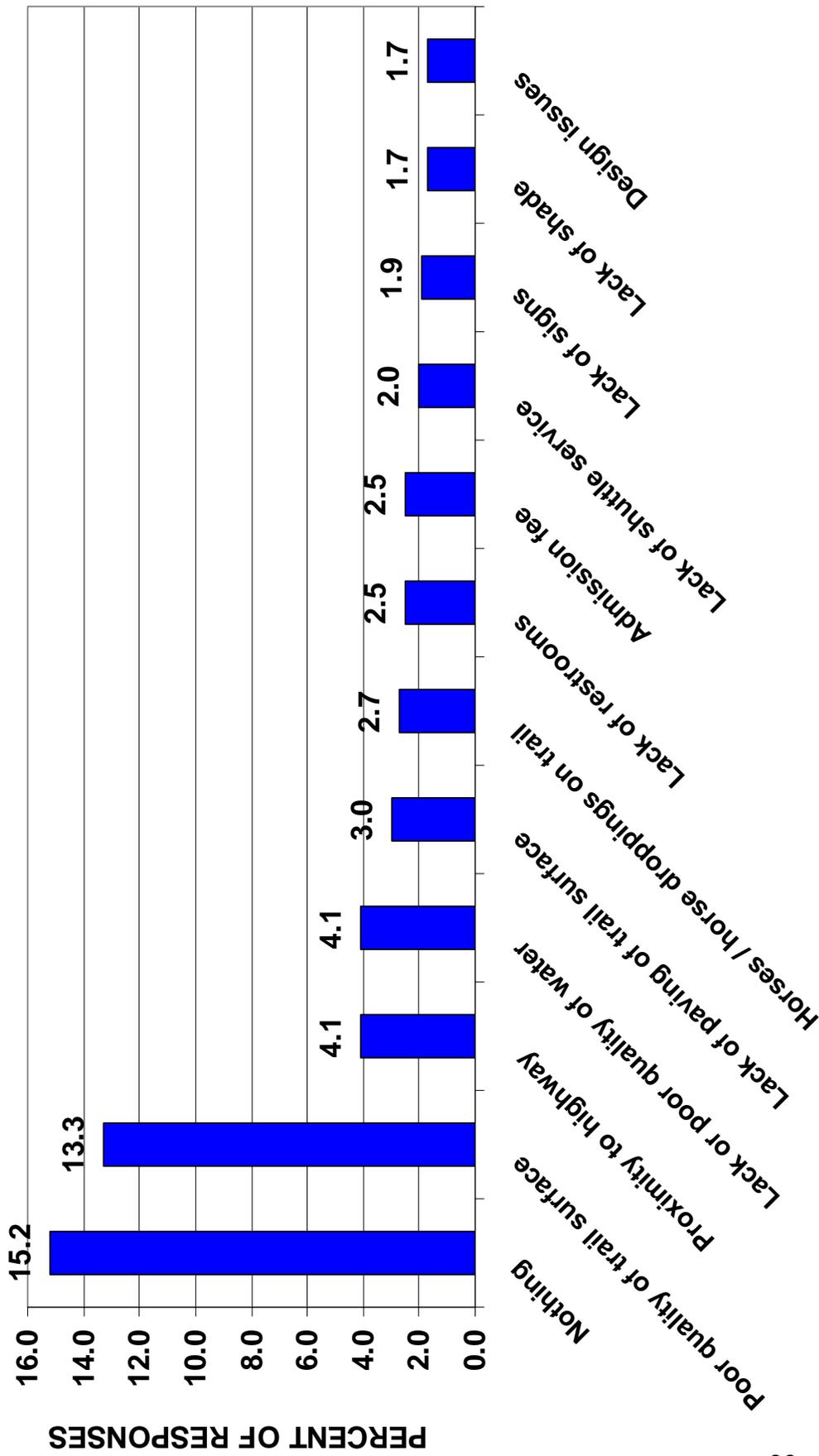
**Figure 22. Top 10 responses to Question 33: “What, if anything, should be done to provide higher quality experiences to Mickelson Trail visitors?”**



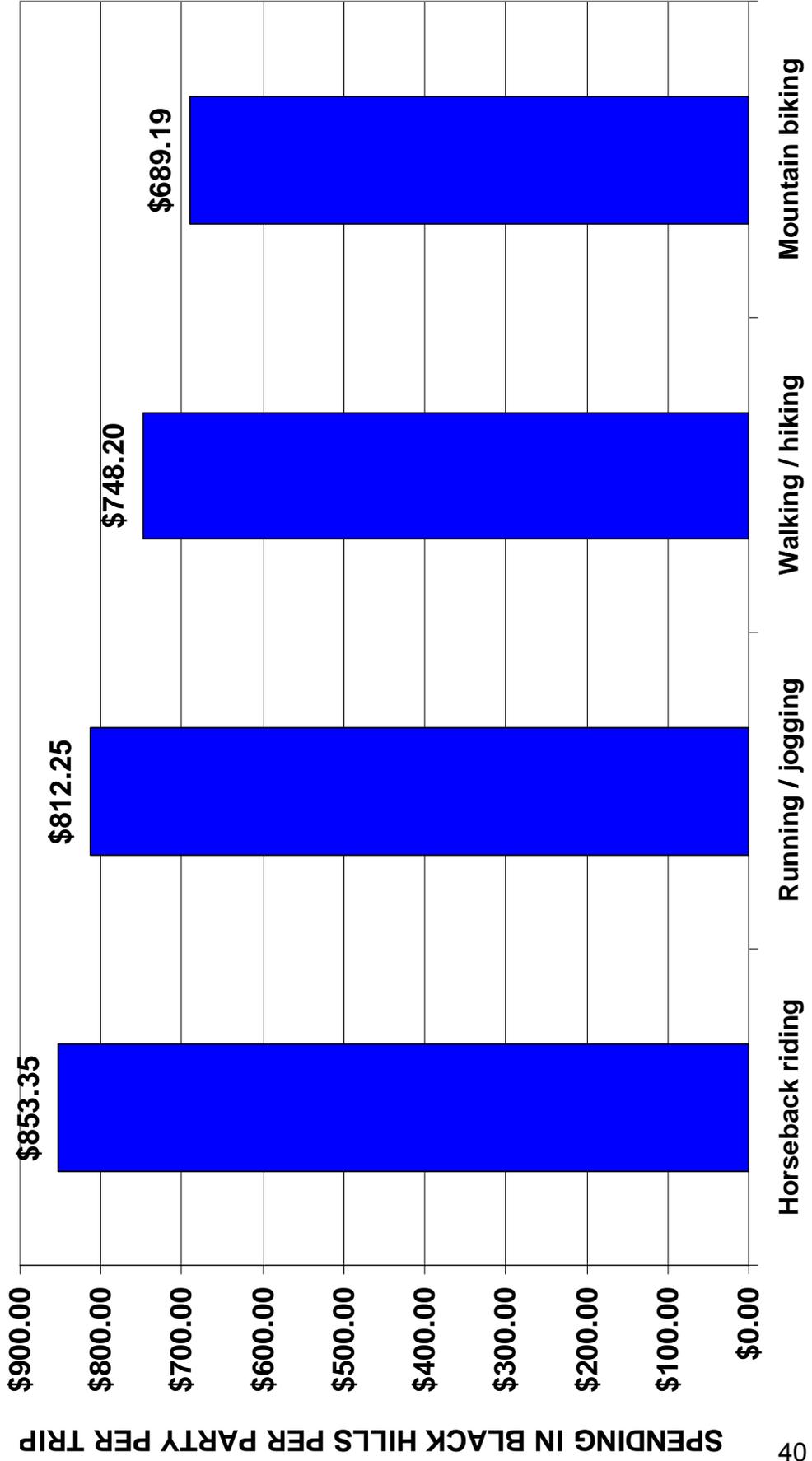
**Figure 23. Top 10 responses to Question 28: “Please list the three things you liked best about your visit to the Mickelson Trail.”**



**Figure 24. Top 10 responses to Question 29: “Please list the three things you liked least about your visit to the Mickelson Trail.”**



**Figure 25. Expenditures in the Black Hills by mode of transportation by which respondent traveled the most miles on the Trail.**



equestrians' expenditures in the region exceeded those who used other means of transportation does not necessarily mean that it would be prudent to actively seek to increase equestrian use of the Trail. Obviously, the benefits of increasing equestrian use of the Trail would need to be weighed against the costs of increased maintenance expense, heightened risk of accidents involving other types of Trail users, and the possibility of alienating the vast majority of Trail users who felt that the Trail should remain essentially unchanged (Figure 22).

The most frequent response to the question, "What kinds of events or programs would you or members of your family be interested in attending on the Mickelson Trail," which listed six possible response options, was "None of these" (51.3%) (Figure 26). When asked "What themes for these events or programs would you prefer?" nearly half (46.7%) of respondents said "nature," followed by "health / fitness" (39.7%) and "history" (39.2%) (Figure 27).

Eighty-five percent of respondents felt the \$2.00 price of a daily pass was "about right" (Figure 28). However, the mean response to the question, "What is the maximum you would be willing to pay for a Mickelson Trail daily pass to help finance improvements to the Trail?" was \$4.39 (Figure 29).

### **Participation in Bicycling**

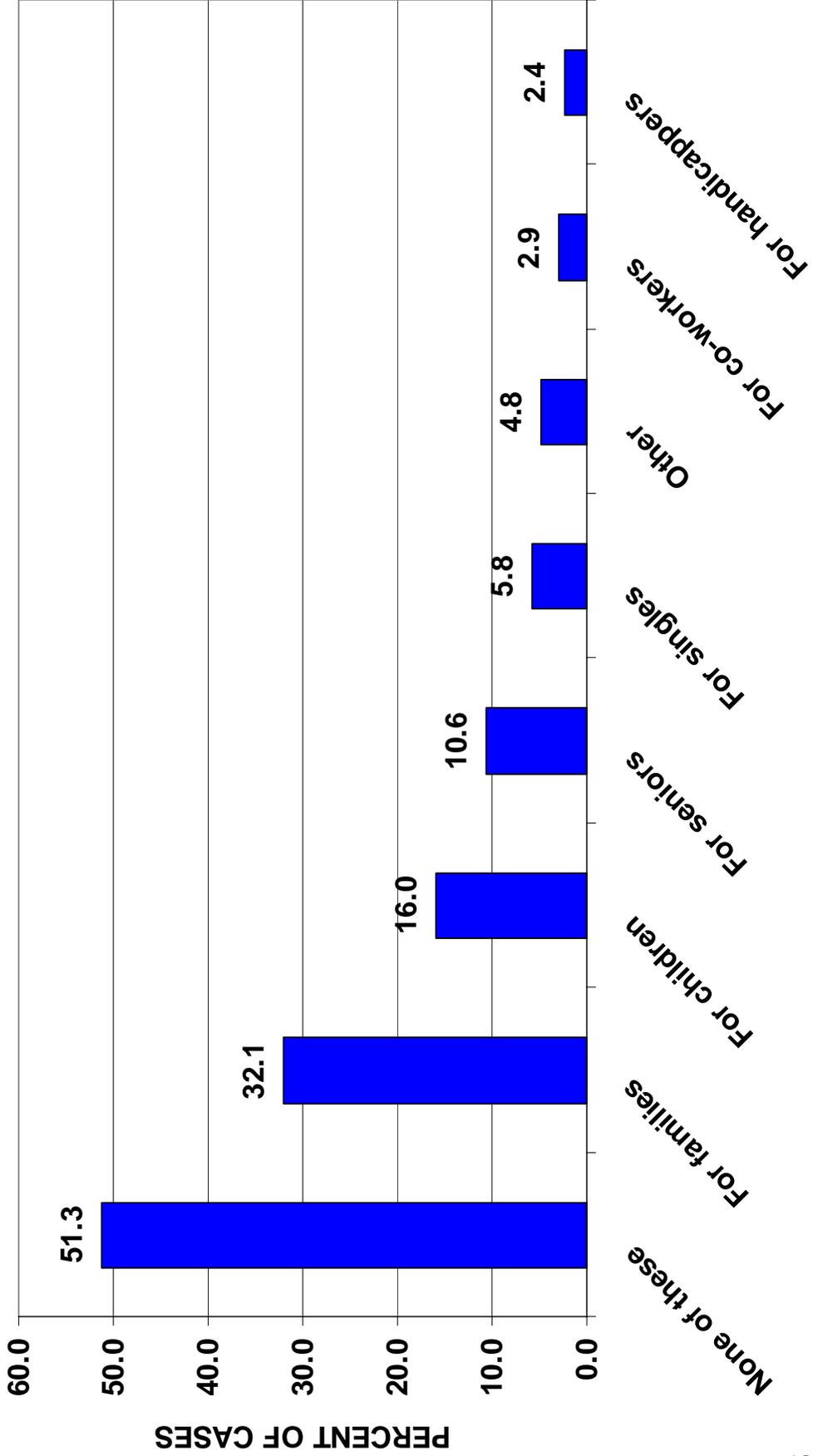
The majority (51.7%) of respondents had visited "other trails that were once railroad right-of-ways." Eighteen percent reported that they had "ridden on a guided bicycle tour" at some point in their lives, 42.0% reported that they had "ridden in an organized bicycle race, ride, or other event," and 10.6% reported that they had "purchased a bicycling package that included a bicycle rental, one or more meals, one or more stays at a lodging establishment, and shuttle transportation."

Eighty-seven percent reported that they had participated in mountain biking in the past 12 months. Among such individuals, the average respondent participated in mountain biking 24.2 times in the past 12 months, adopted the sport in 1994, and considered his/her mountain biking skill level to be "intermediate."

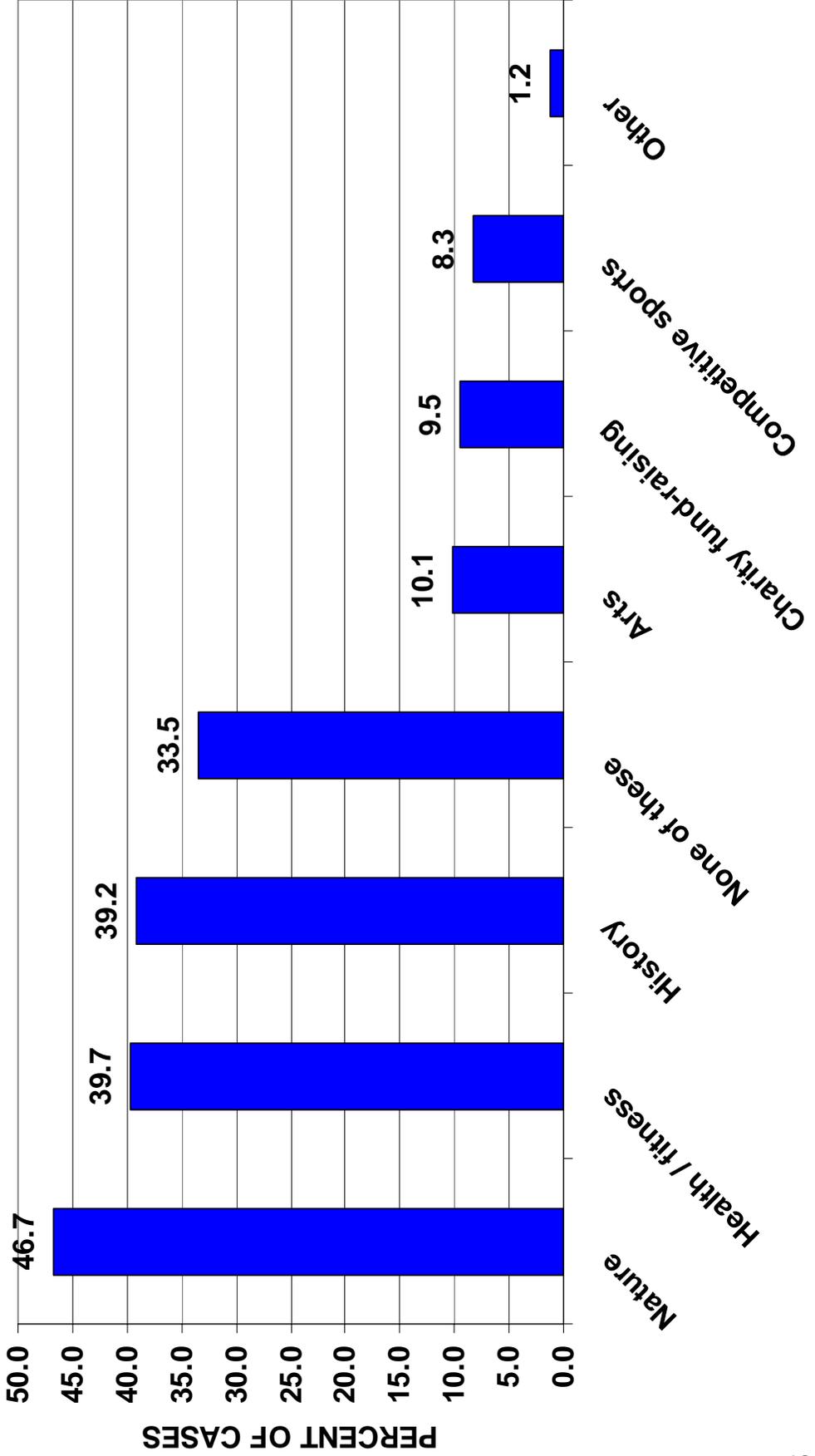
### **Media Preferences**

Notwithstanding their participation in outdoor recreation by virtue of their having visited the Trail, respondents' interaction with environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related media was far from universal. Fifty-five percent reported having visited one or more "environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related Web sites" in the past 12 months, 52.2% reported having "read any environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related magazines" in the past 12 months, and 54.7% reported having "watched any environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related television channels or shows" in the past 12 months.

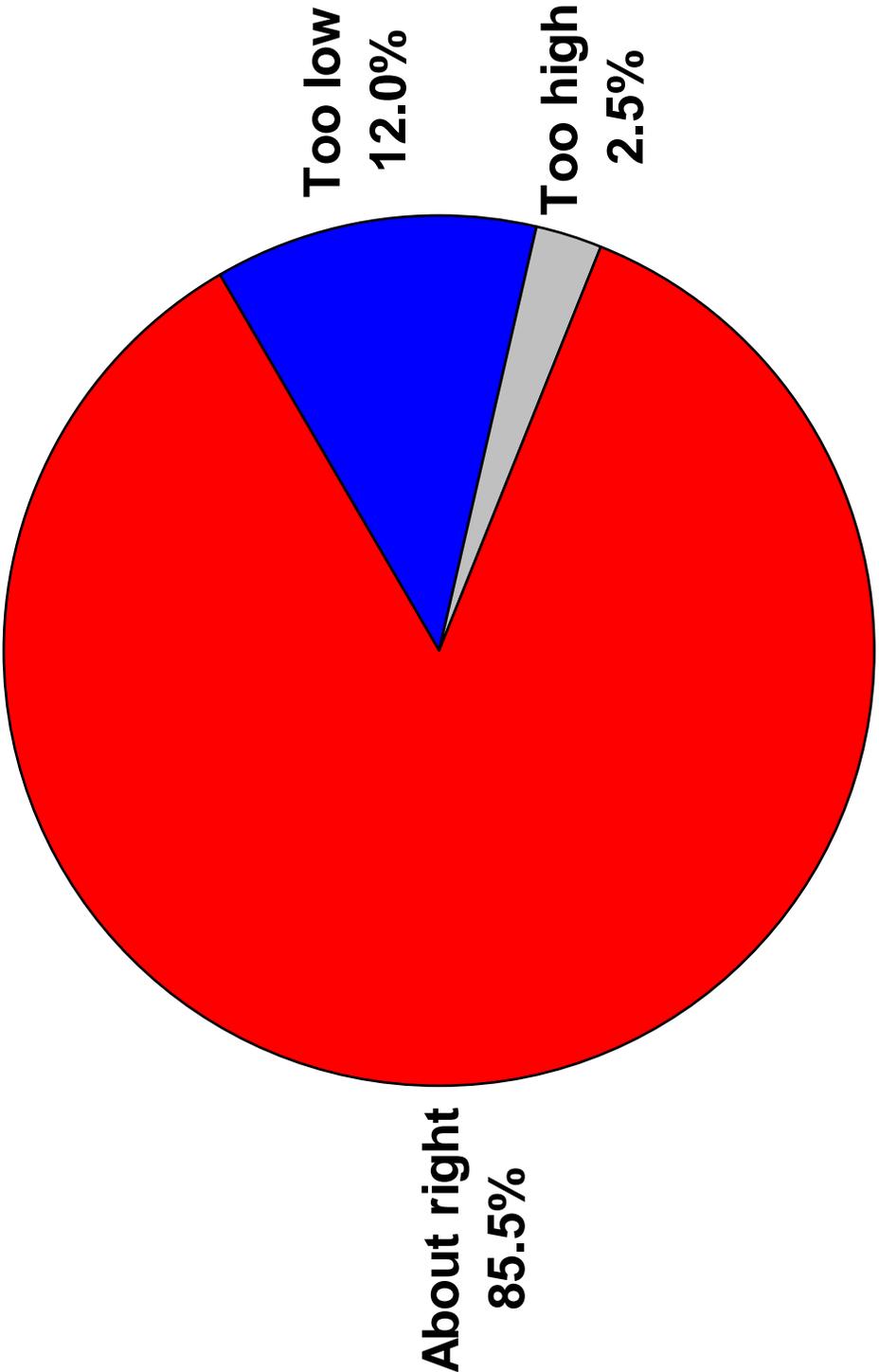
**Figure 26. Responses to Question 34: “What kinds of events or programs would you or members of your family be interested in attending on the Mickelson Trail?”**



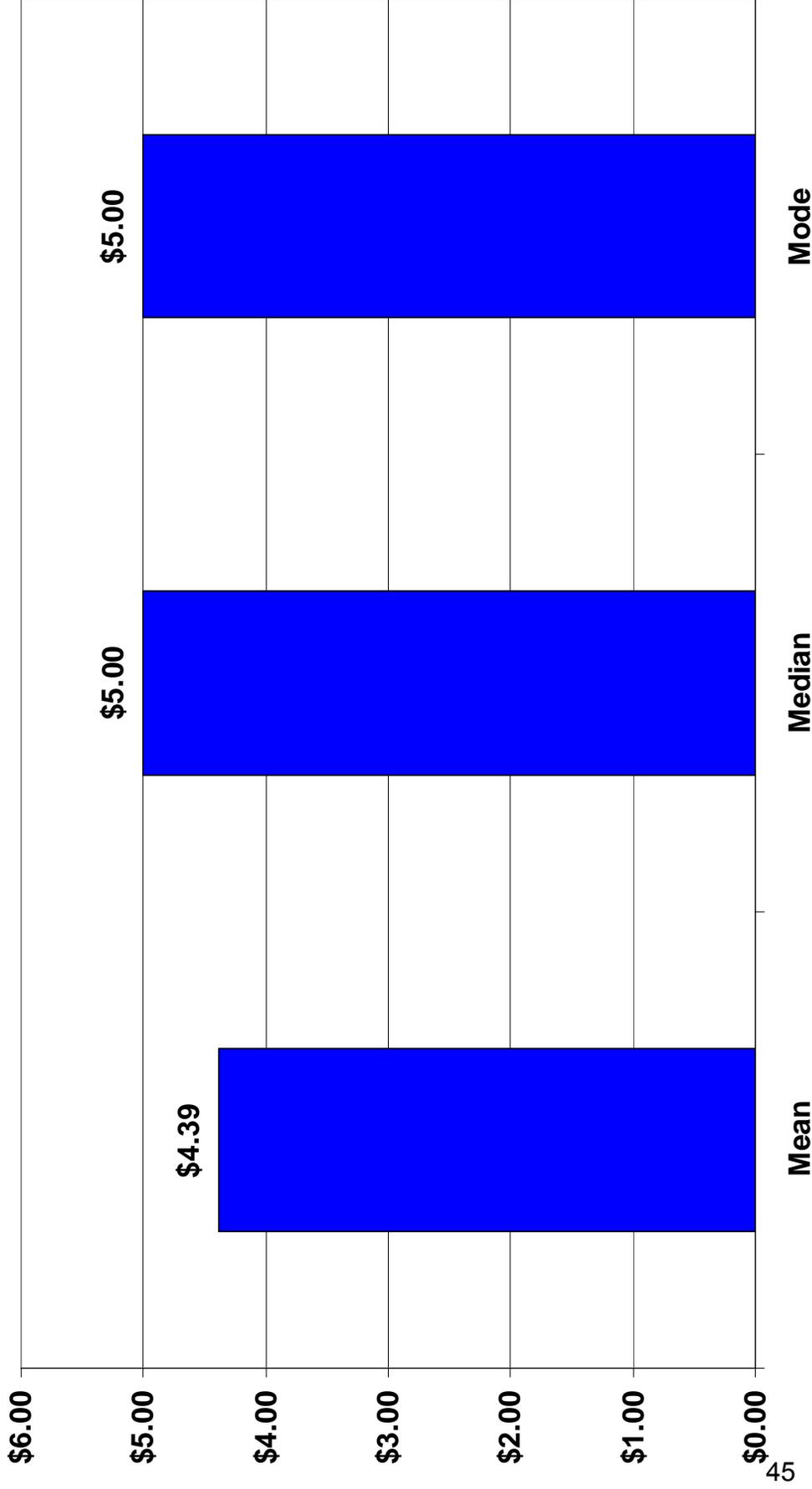
**Figure 27. Responses to Question 35: “What themes for these events or programs would you prefer?”**



**Figure 28. Responses to Question 31: “Do you feel the \$2.00 price for a Mickelson Trail daily pass is too low, too high, or about right?”**



**Figure 29. Responses to Question 31: “What is the maximum you would be willing to pay for a Mickelson Trail daily pass to help finance improvements to the Trail?”**



## **Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics**

The majority (54.8%) of respondents were male; the mean age was 48; just over a quarter (27.6%) belonged to one or more environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related organizations; the average household size was 2.7 persons; nearly a third (32.8%) resided with children under age 18; nearly two-thirds (64.9%) were employed on a full-time basis; the mean number of years of formal education was 16.2; and the majority (54.5%) had 2004 household incomes of over \$75,000 (Table 3).

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Result</b>
Gender (% male)	54.8
Mean age	48.2
Member of any environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related organizations (%)	27.6
Average number of persons residing in household on a regular basis	2.7
Average number of adults residing in household on a regular basis	1.9
Average number of wage-earners residing in household on a regular basis	1.7
Children under 18 living in household on a regular basis (%)	32.8
Present employment situation (% of cases) <sup>a</sup>	
Working full-time	64.9
Working part-time	14.6
Unemployed	0.7
Homemaker	2.9
Retired	15.2
Student	5.3
Other	0.1
Mean number of years of formal education	16.2
Household's total 2004 income before taxes (%)	
Under \$30,000	4.6
\$30,000 to \$49,999	14.0
\$50,000 to \$74,999	26.9
\$75,000 to \$99,999	21.2
\$100,000 to \$149,999	21.5
\$150,000 or more	11.8

<sup>a</sup> Percentages sum to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

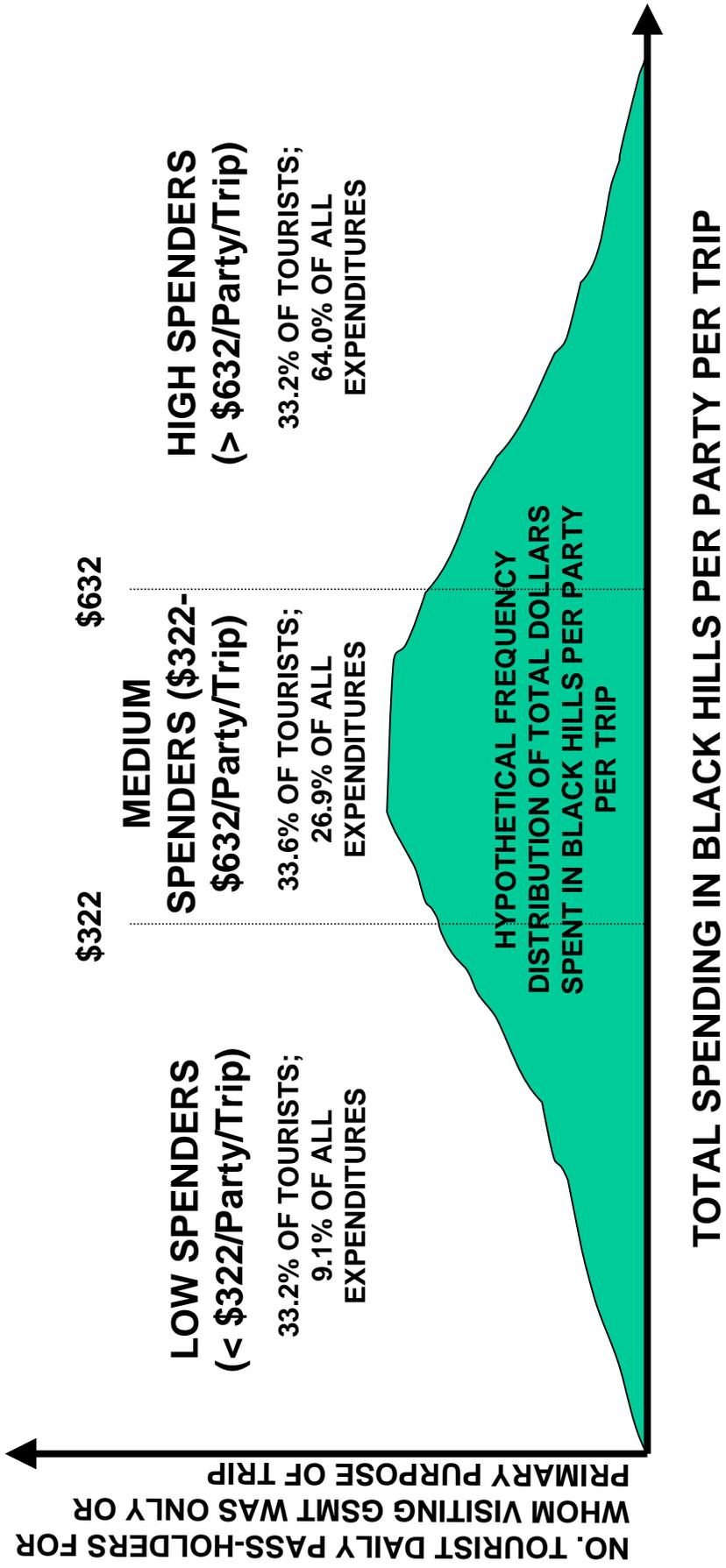
## **Characteristics and Behavior of High-Spending Trail Visitors**

Since Trail visitors' expenditures in the Black Hills were 31% lower than that observed for Black Hills visitors in general, increasing the economic impact of the Trail will require not just attracting more visitors but attracting more visitors who will spend above average sums of money in the region. To help target promotional campaigns designed to attract high-spending Trail visitors, an analysis was conducted to identify the characteristics and behavior of such individuals. The analysis involved singling out respondents for whom visiting the Trail was the sole or primary purpose of their trips, and then dividing the frequency distribution of these respondents' expenditures in the Black Hills per party per trip at the tertiles to form three groups of roughly equal size: low spenders (whose expenditures were less than \$322), medium spenders (whose expenditures were between \$322 and \$632), and high spenders (whose expenditures exceeded \$632) (Figure 30). These characteristics and behavior of these three groups were then compared. Because the high spenders' mean expenditures in the region were more than double those of the other groups (Figure 31), their expenditures constituted nearly two-thirds (64.0%) of the expenditures of all respondents in the analysis, even though they constituted only one-third of such respondents.

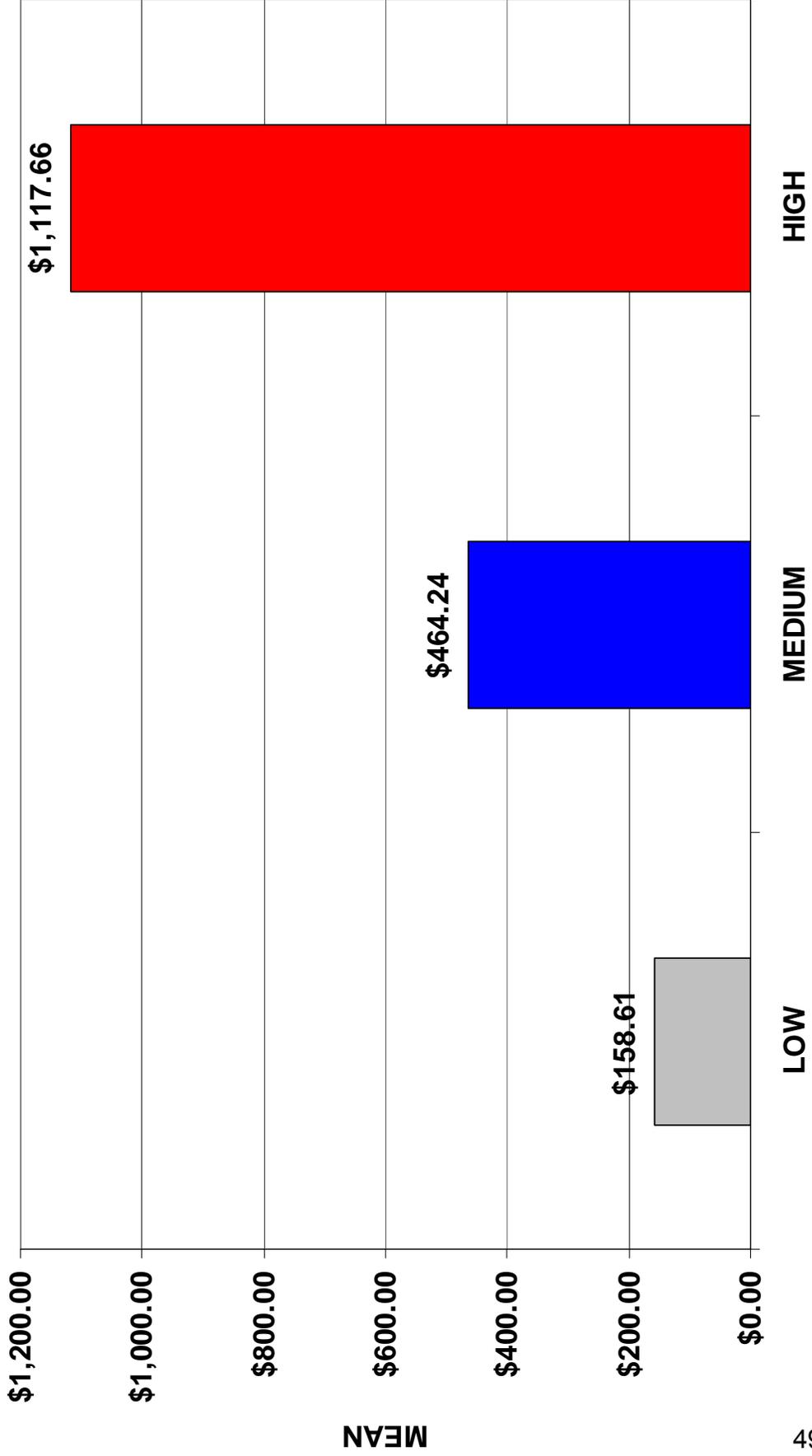
High-spending Trail visitors were more likely than medium- or low-spending Trail visitors to have had high incomes and party sizes; to have visited environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related Web sites in the past 12 months; to have had longer planning horizons; to have spent more nights in the Black Hills and on their trips in general; to have patronized those forms of lodging that involve relatively high per-night costs; to have participated in more recreation activities in the Black Hills; and to have visited more Black Hills attractions (Figures 32 through 40). On the other hand, they were less likely than their counterparts to have stated that visiting the Trail was the sole reason for their trips (Figure 41). In addition, the high-spenders, compared to their counterparts, on the average spent more hours on the Trail (Figure 42) and were more likely to have been mountain biking aficionados (Figures 43 through 48). This means that high spenders can be targeted through advertisements placed in or on mountain biking magazines and Web sites, mountain biking organization newsletters and Web sites, and other channels catering to mountain biking enthusiasts.

The Trail visitors who, on the average, spent the most money in the Black Hills during their trips resided in the Carol Stream, Illinois; Madison, Wisconsin; and Palatine, Illinois 3-digit zip code regions (Figure 49). The Carol Stream 3-digit zip code region is basically the western suburbs of Chicago; the Palatine, Illinois 3-digit zip code region is basically the northern suburbs of Chicago. The intercept survey mentioned above found these same three 3-digit zip code regions to be the origins of those Black Hills visitors in general who, on the average, had the highest per party expenditures in the Black Hills.

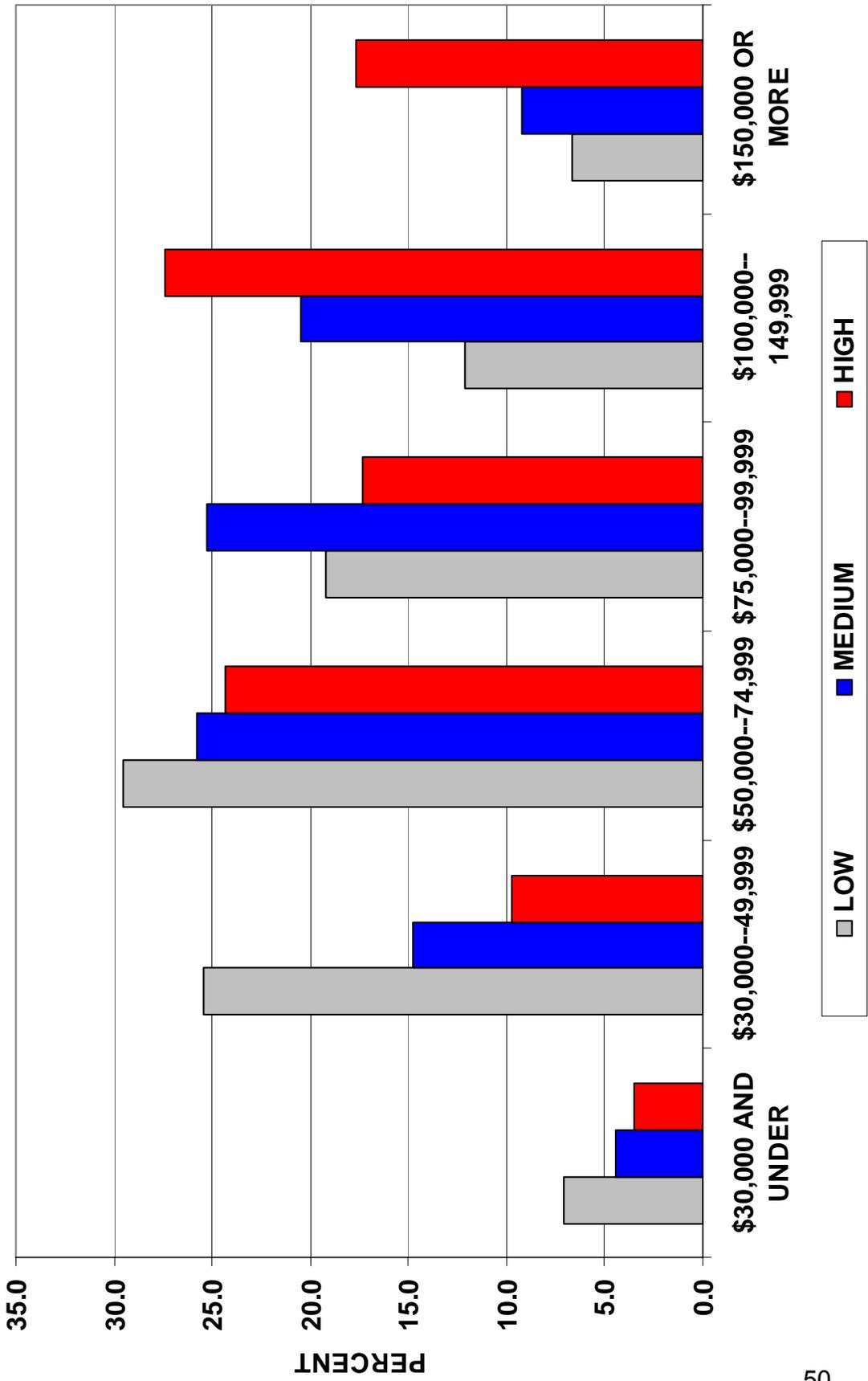
**Figure 30. Definition of spending groups.**



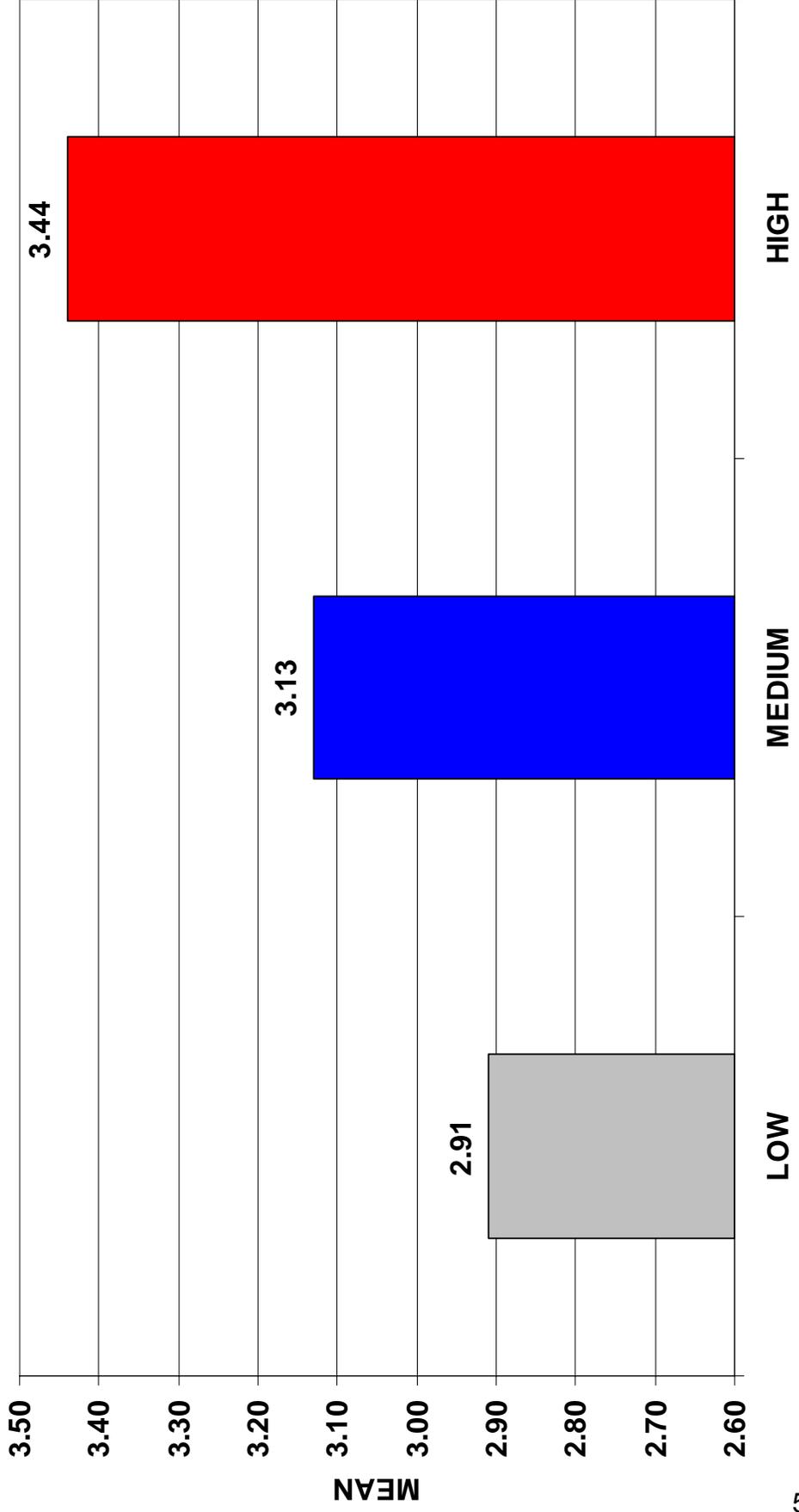
**Figure 31. Average expenditures in the Black Hills per party per trip, by spending group.**



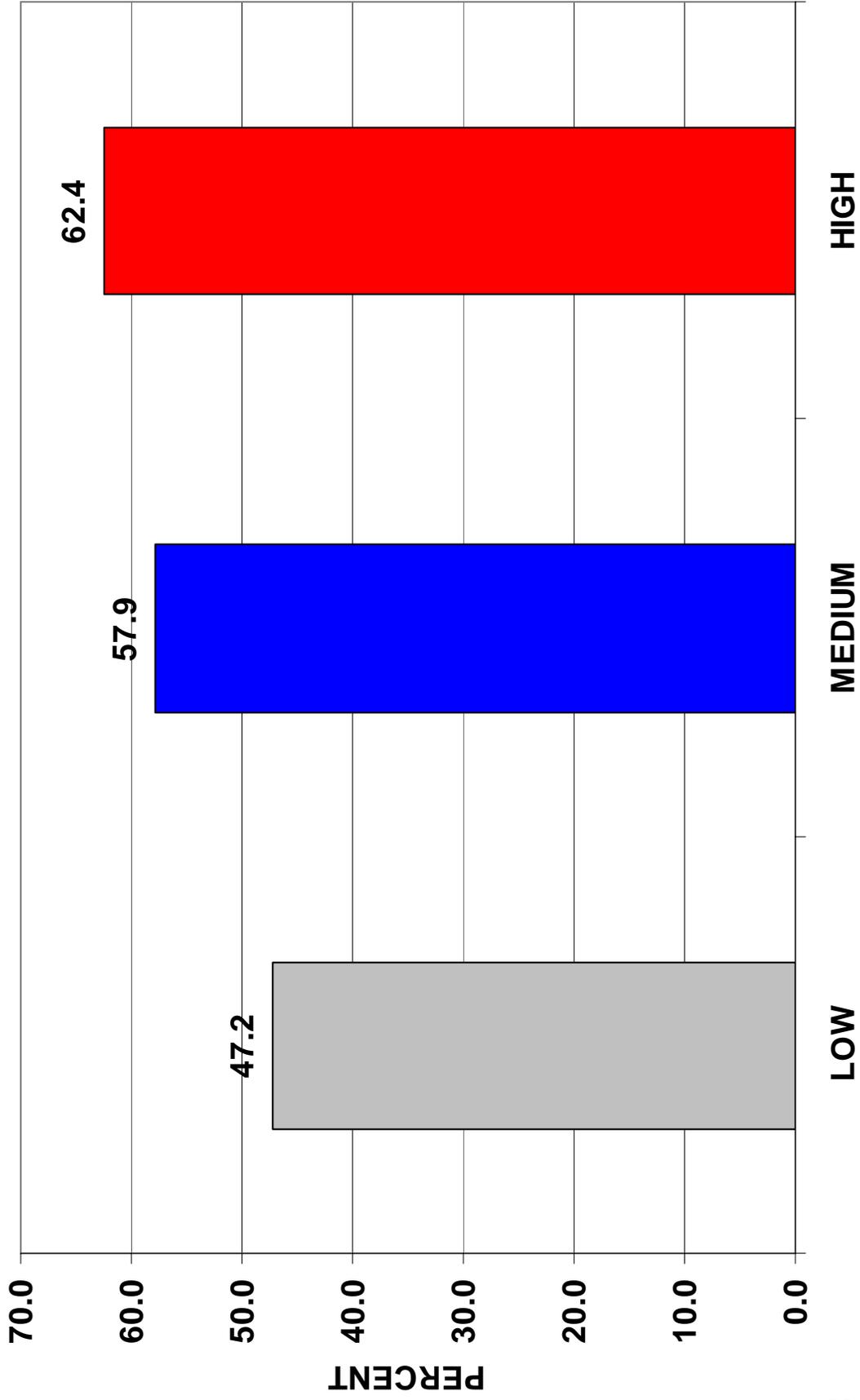
**Figure 32. Total 2004 household income before taxes by spending group.**



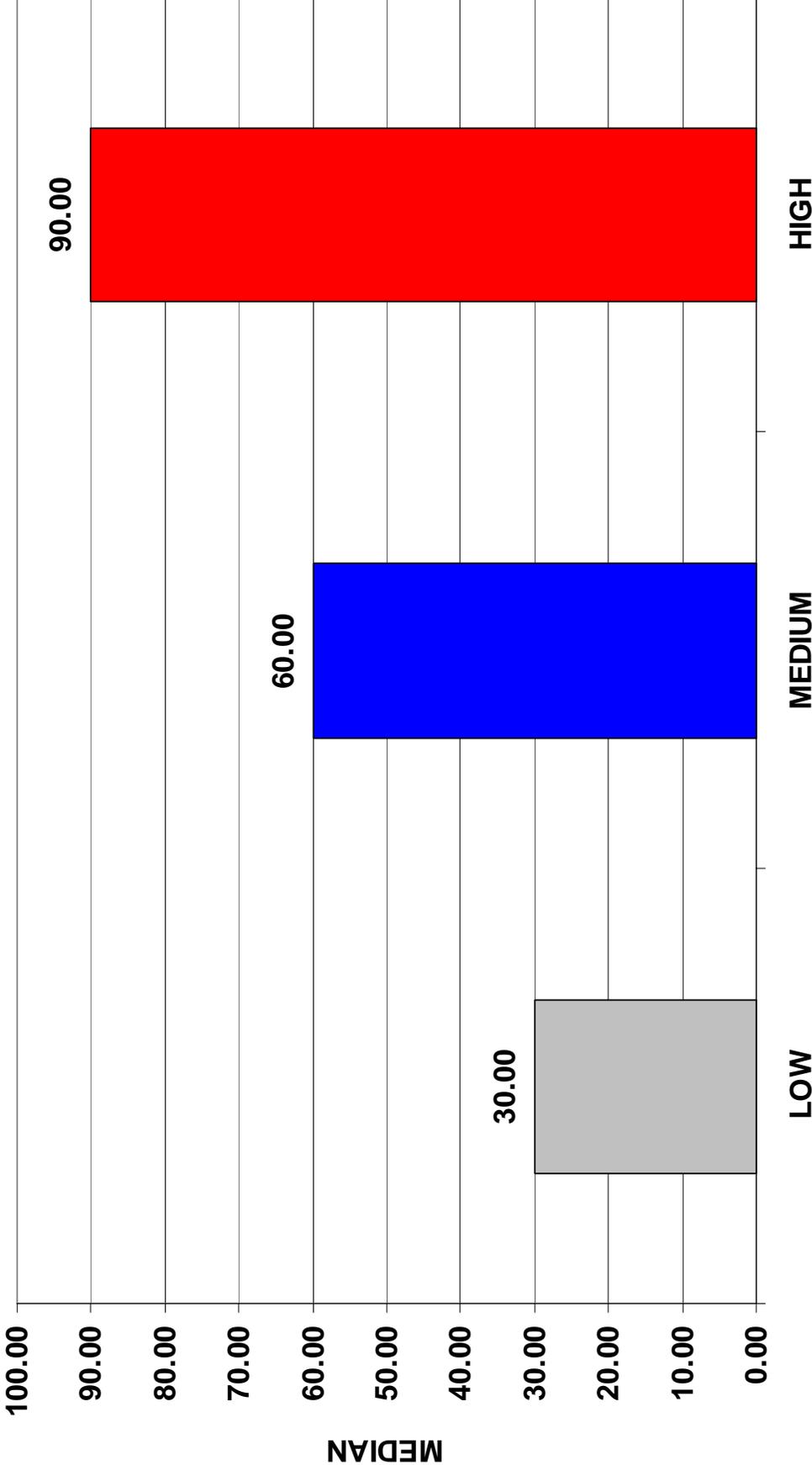
**Figure 33. Party size by spending group.**



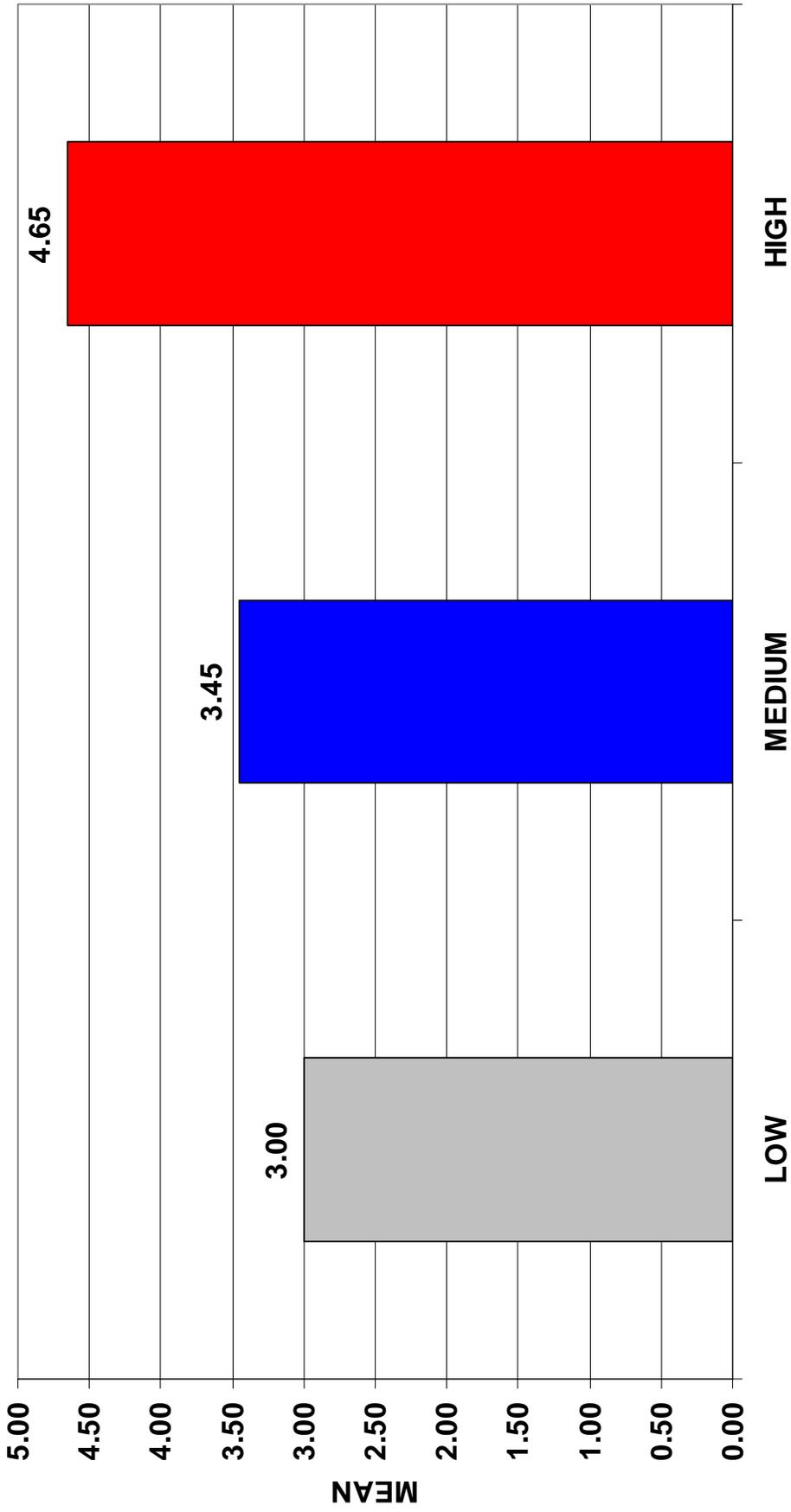
**Figure 34. Visited an environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related website in past 12 months, by spending group.**



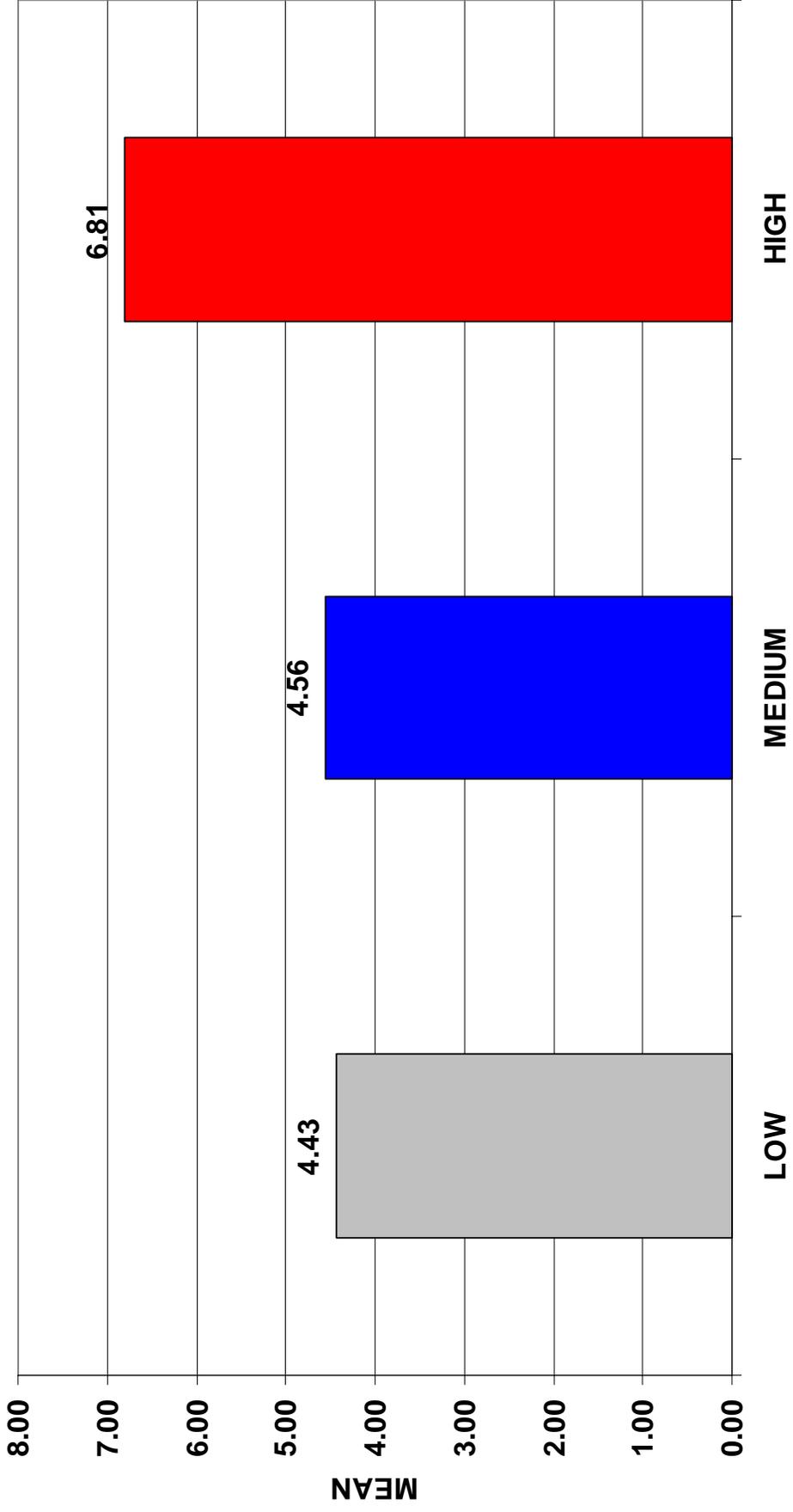
**Figure 35. Number of days before departure that a decision to take a trip that involved visiting the Black Hills was made, by spending group.**



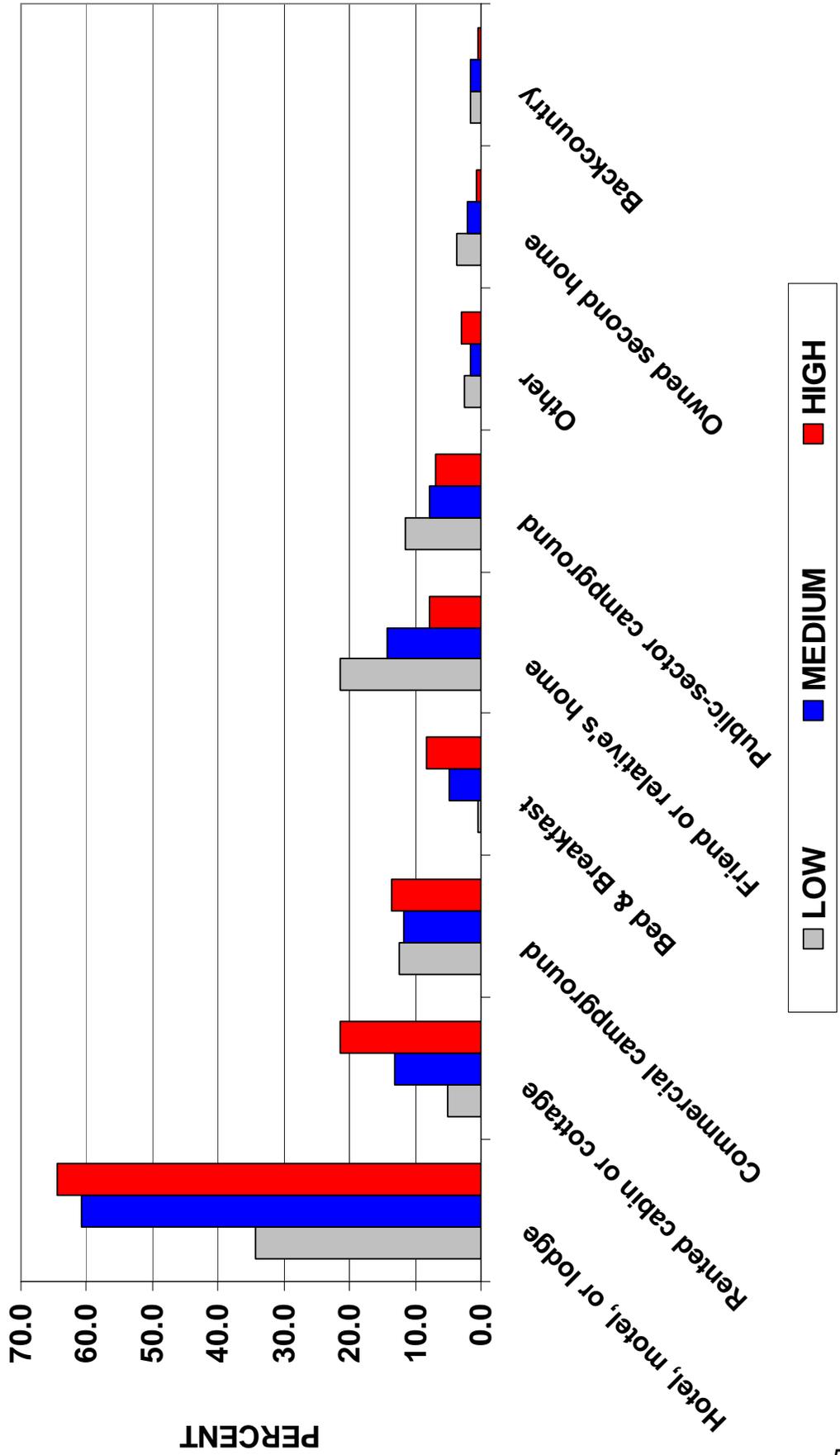
**Figure 36. Number of nights spent in Black Hills on trip, by spending group.**



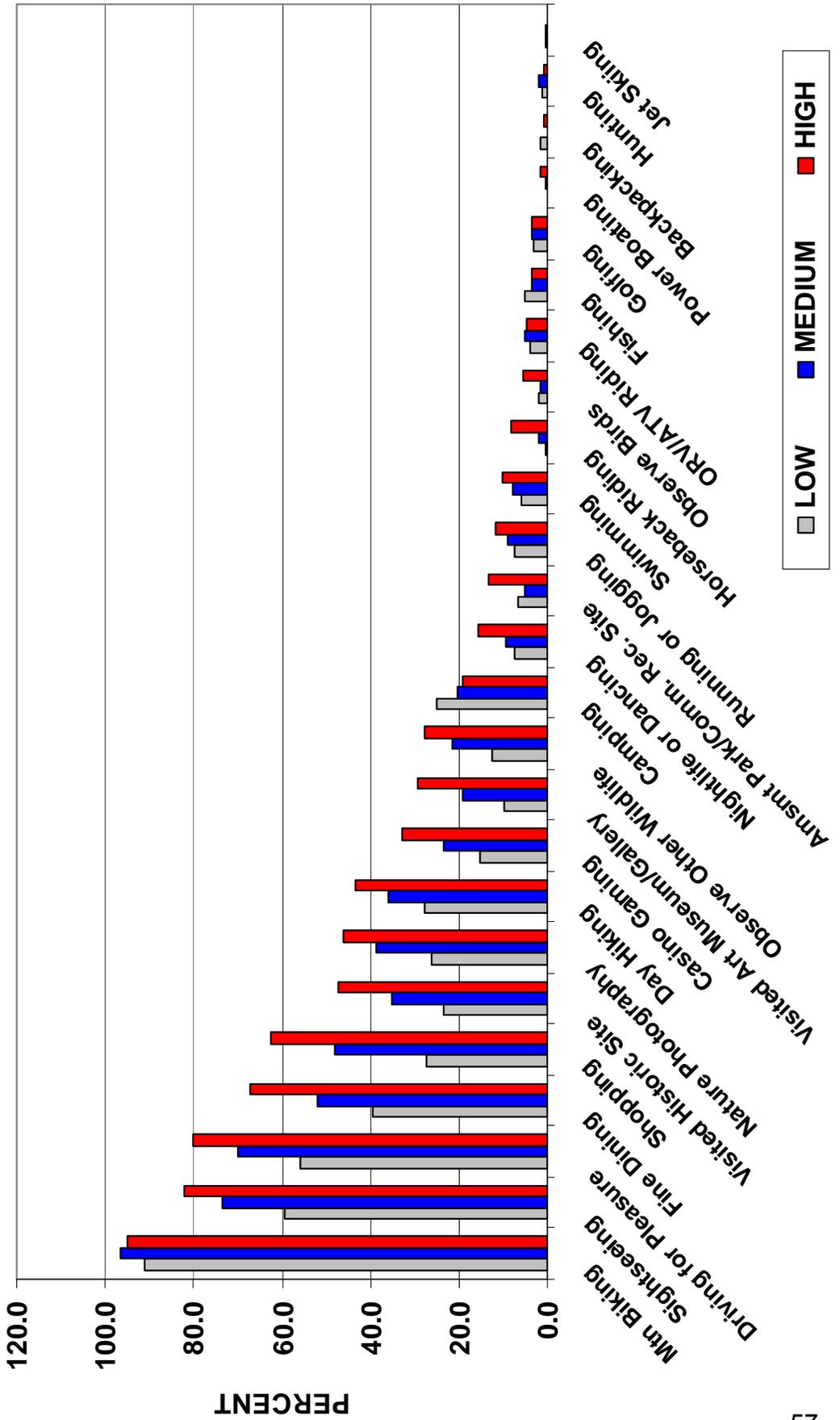
**Figure 37. Total number of nights away from home spent on trip.**



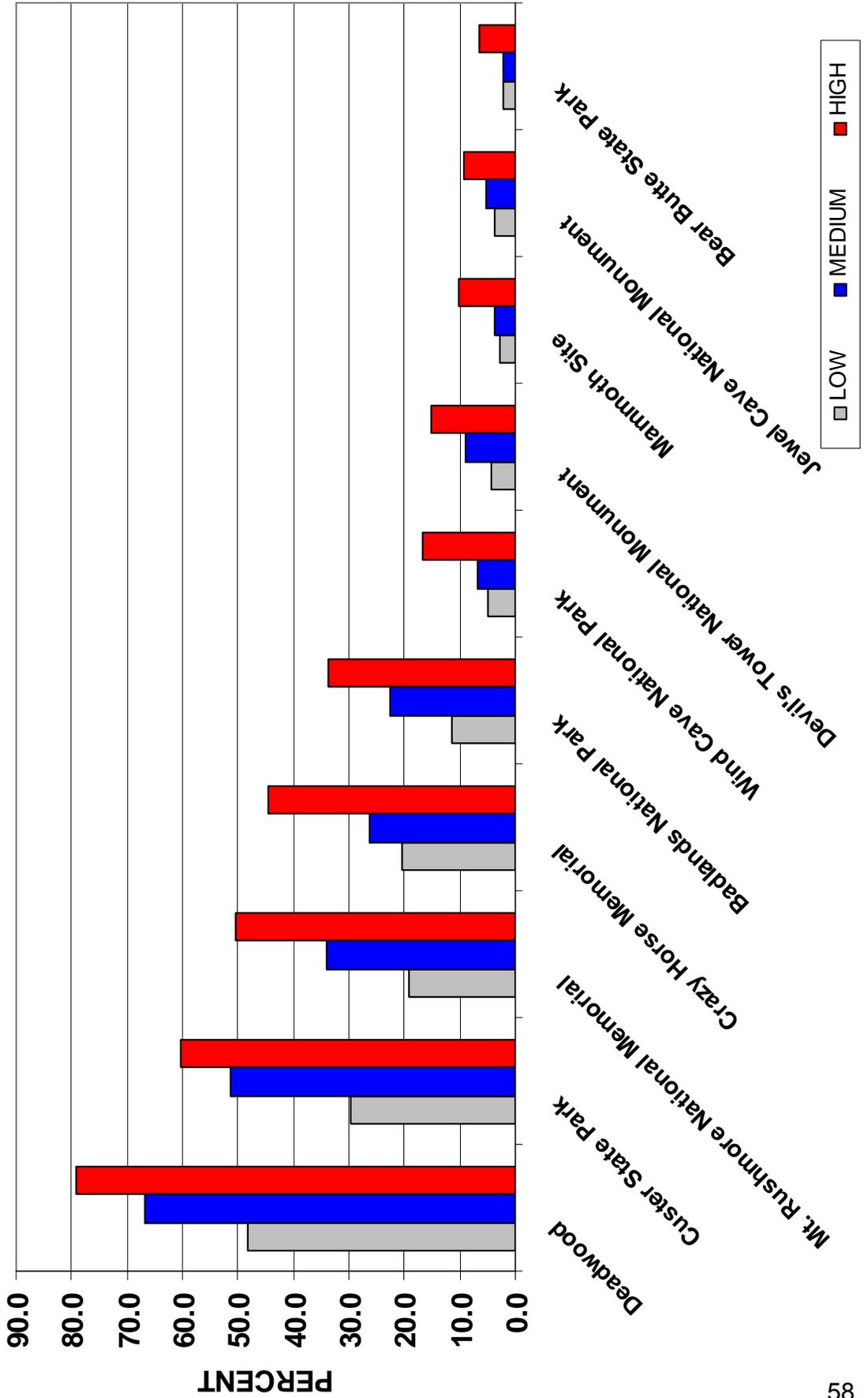
**Figure 38. Type of lodging used while in the Black Hills, by spending group.**



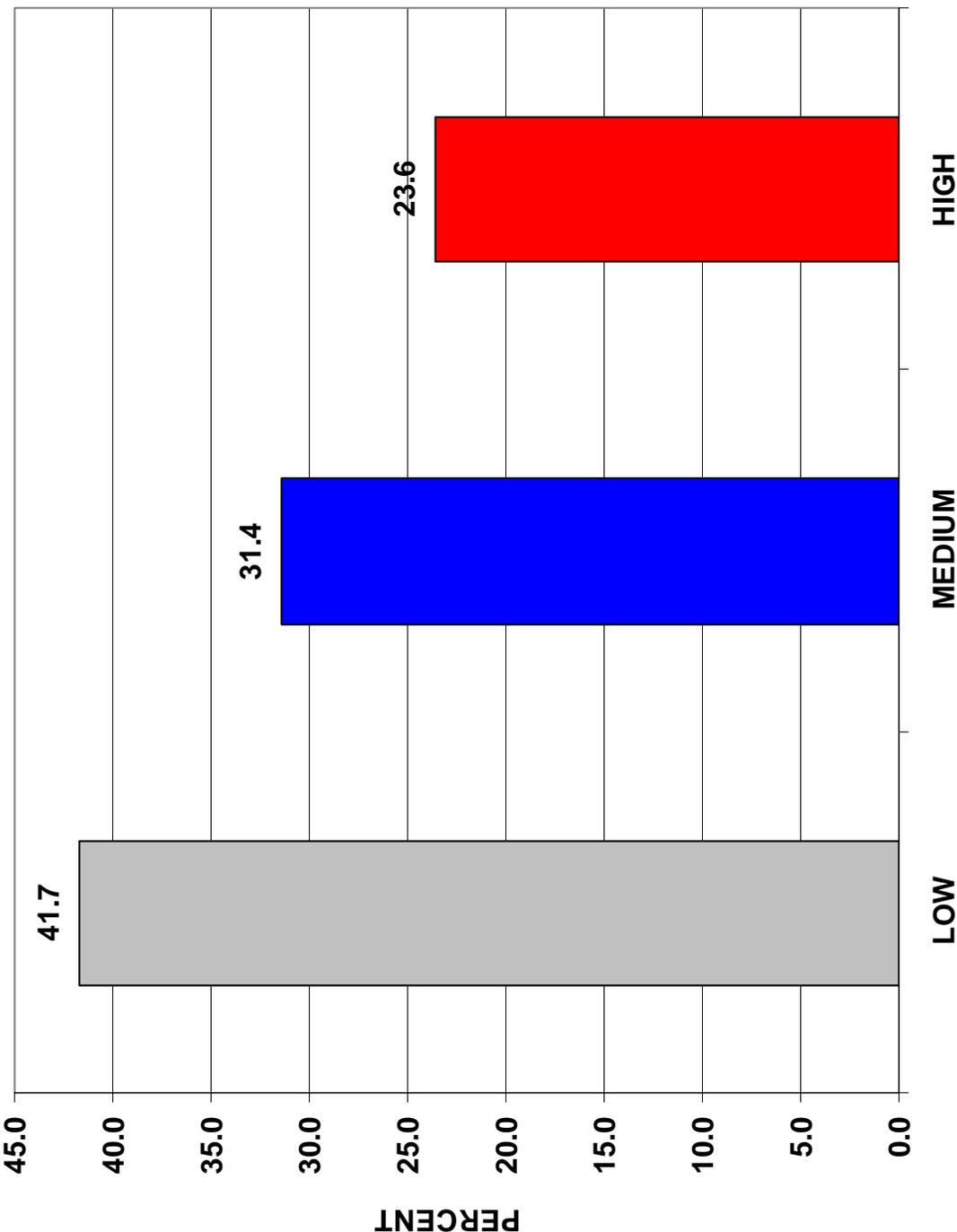
**Figure 39. Participation in recreation activities while in Black Hills, by spending group.**



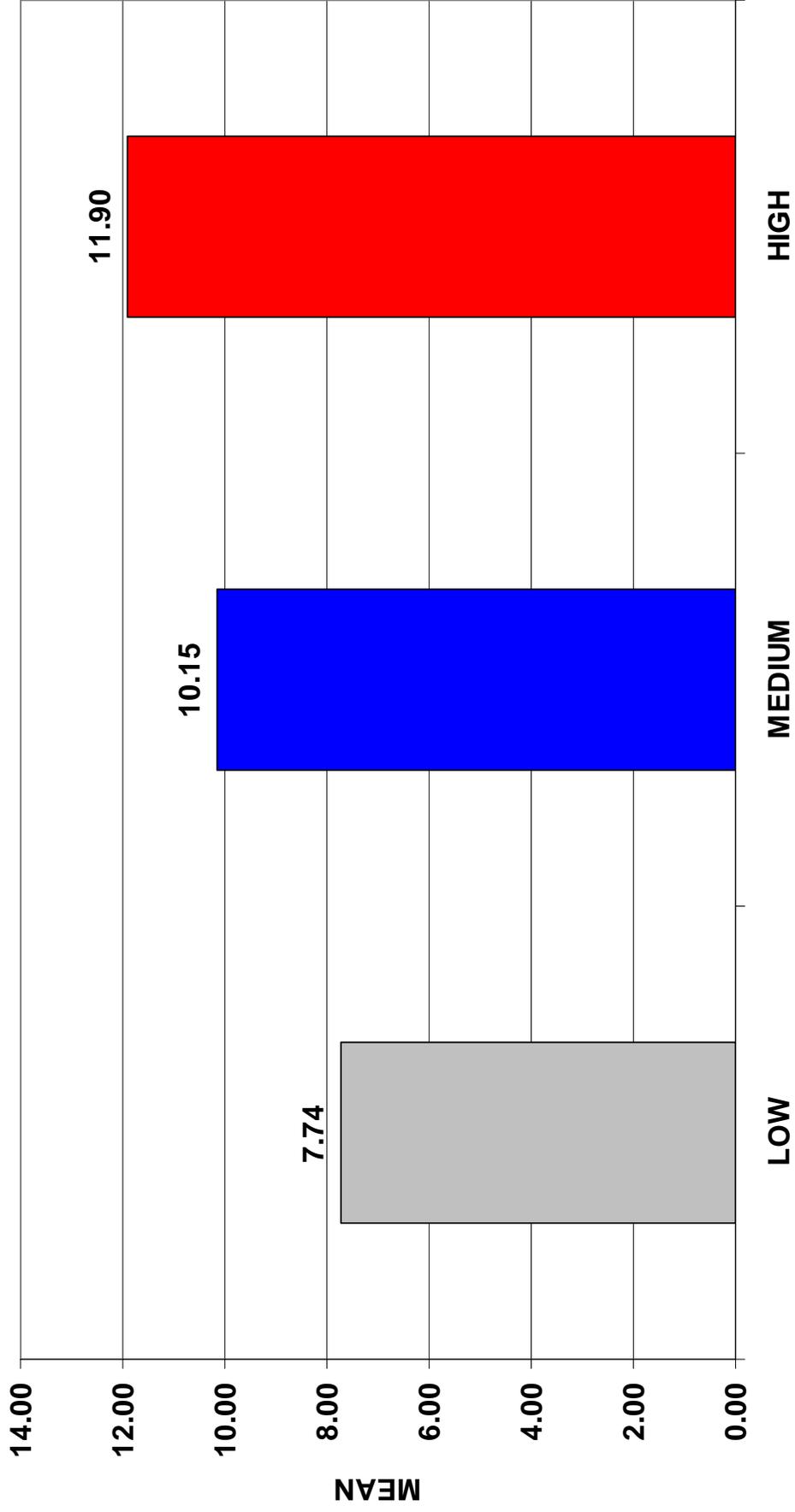
**Figure 40. Black Hills attractions visited on trip, by spending group.**



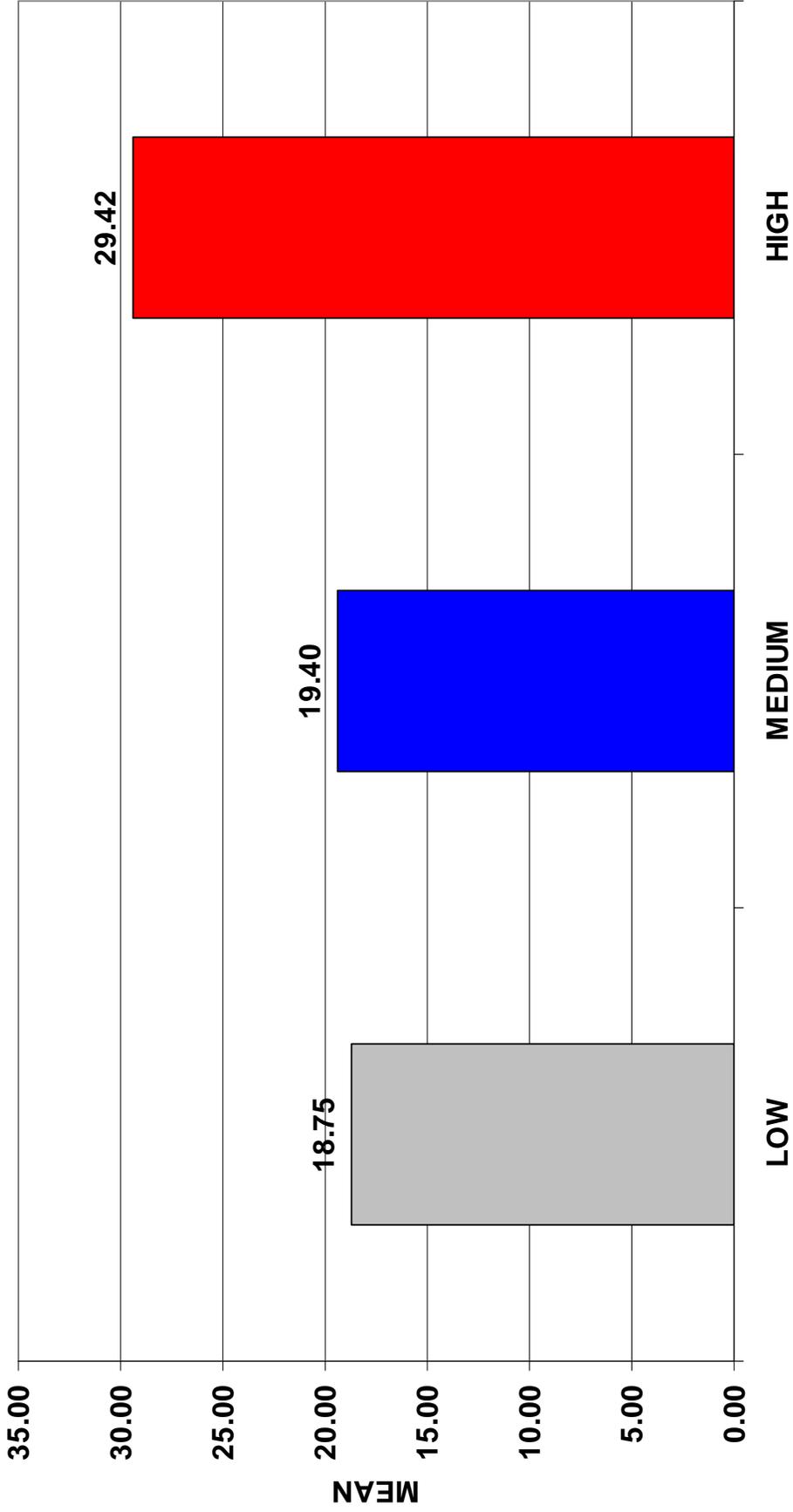
**Figure 41. Visiting the Mickelson Trail was only reason for trip, by spending group.**



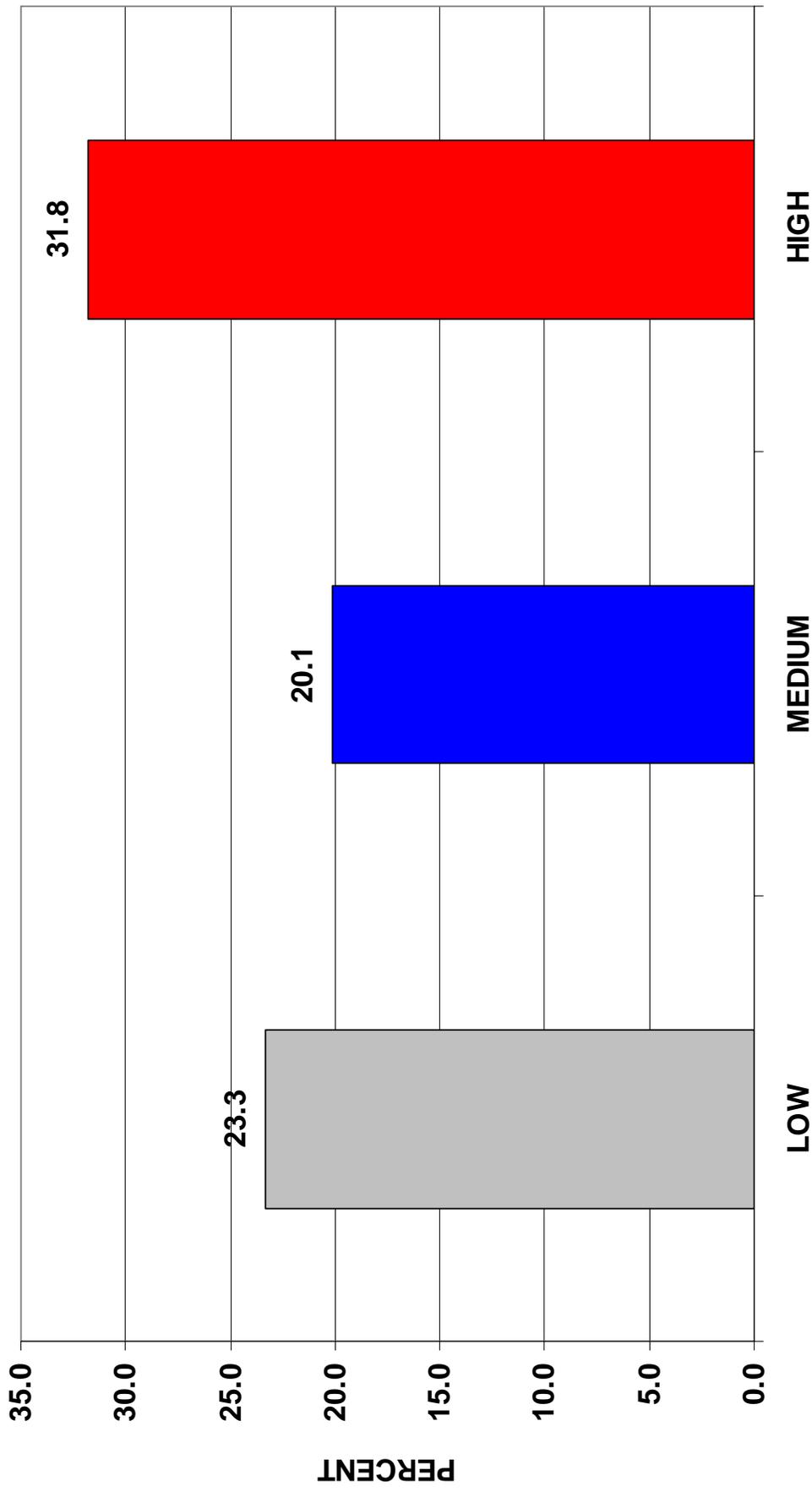
**Figure 42. Number of hours spent on Mickelson Trail, by spending group.**



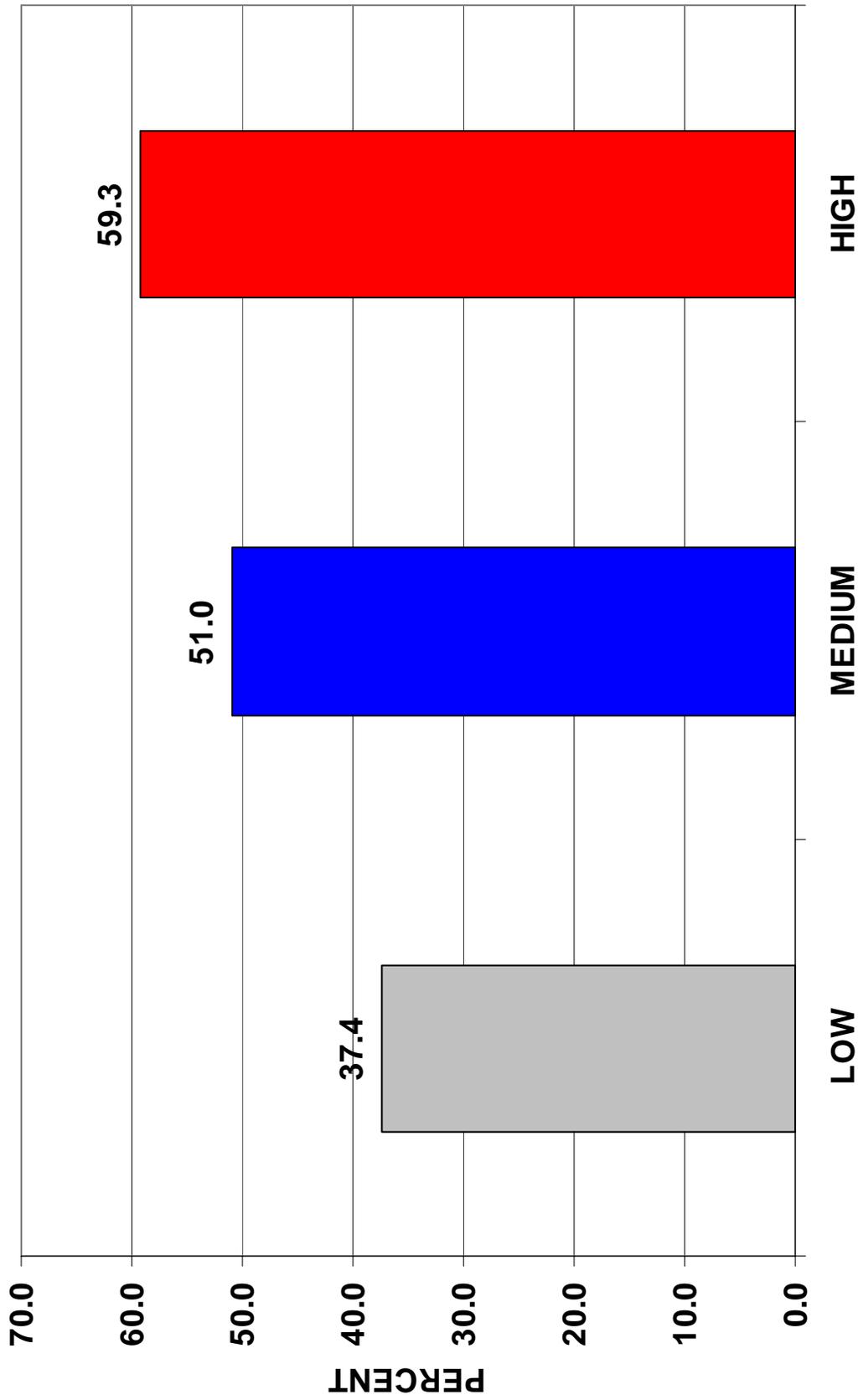
**Figure 43. Number of times participated in mountain biking in past 12 months, by spending group.**



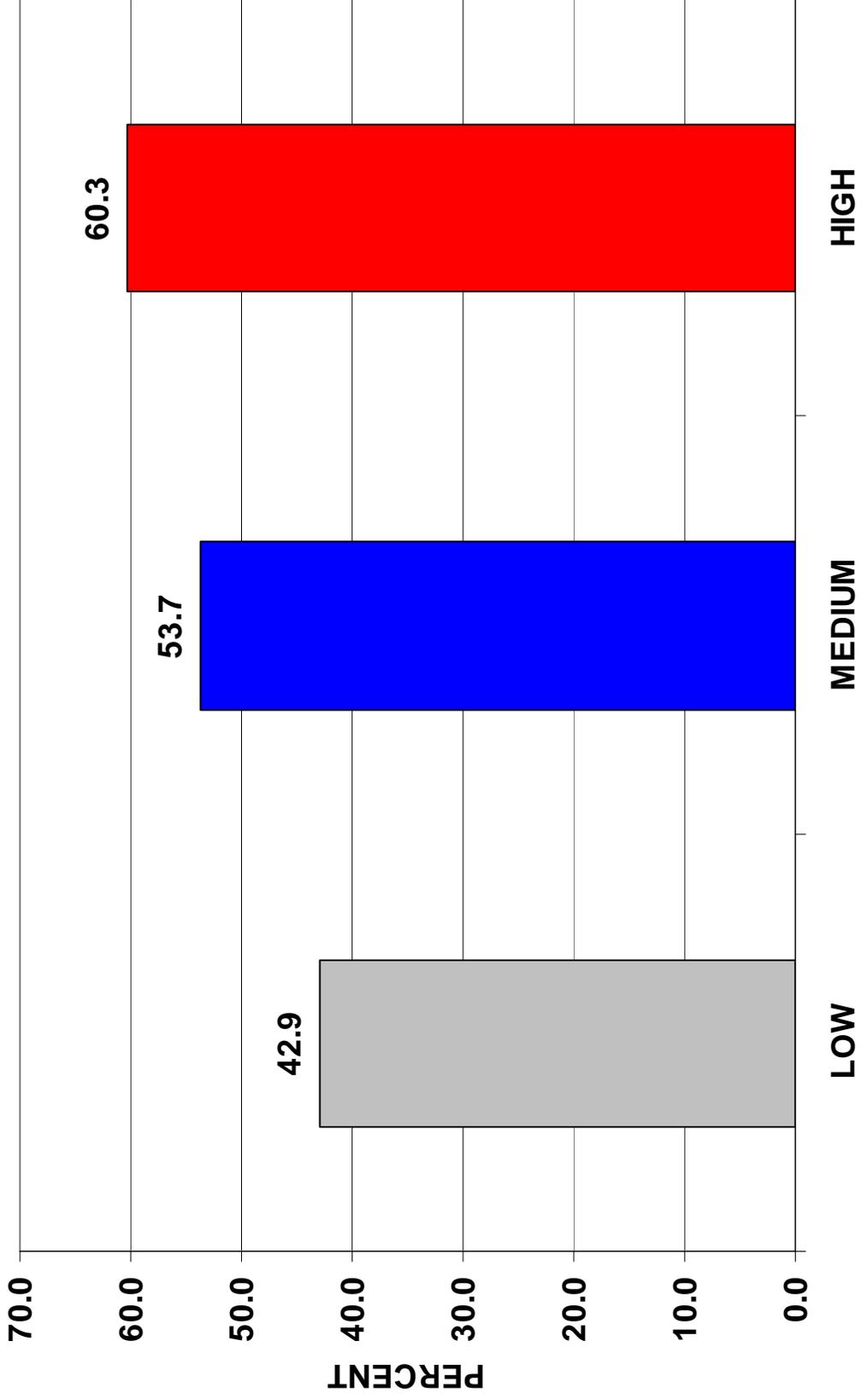
**Figure 44. Considered mountain biking skill level to be advanced or expert, by spending group.**



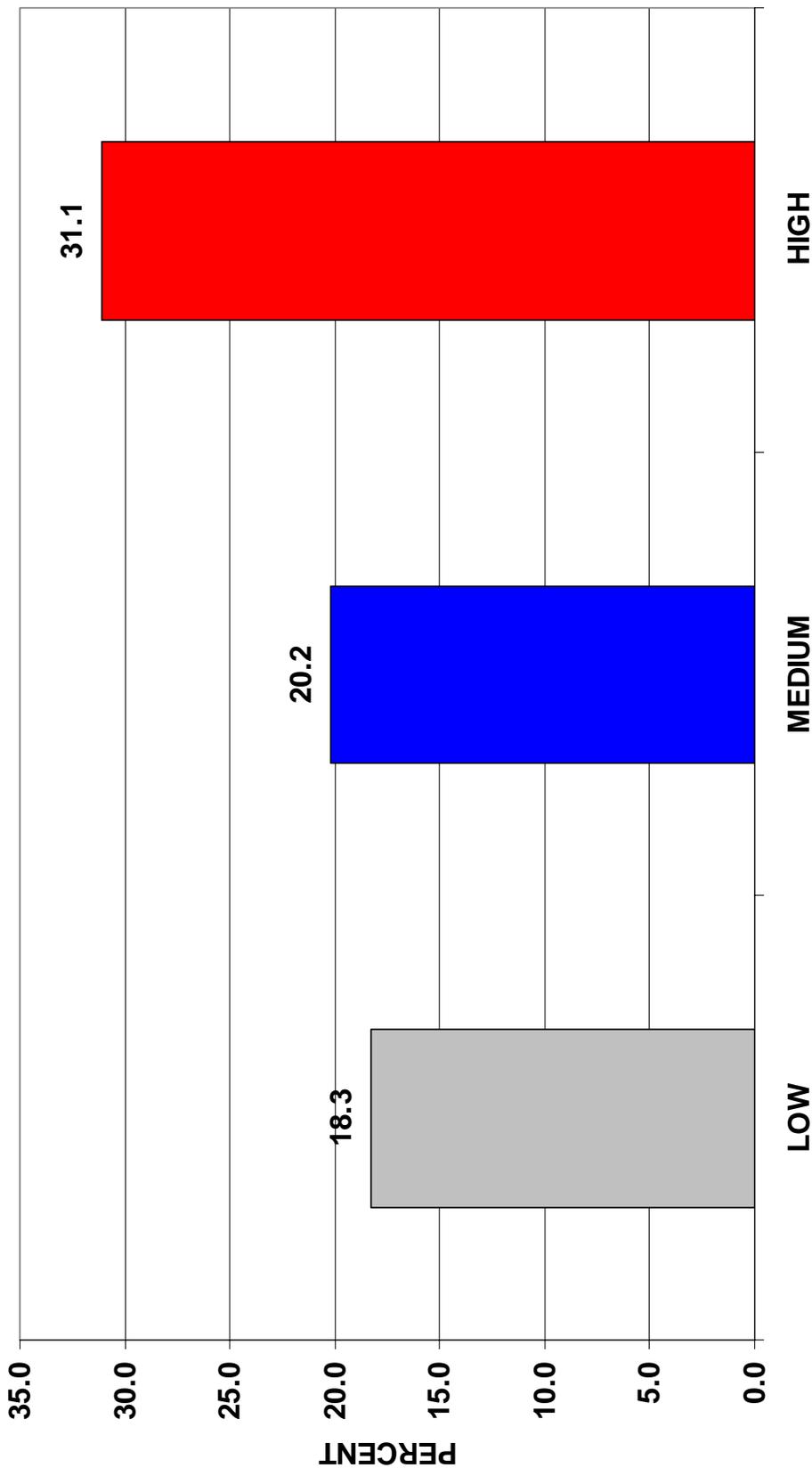
**Figure 45. Ever visited other rail-trail conversions, by spending group.**



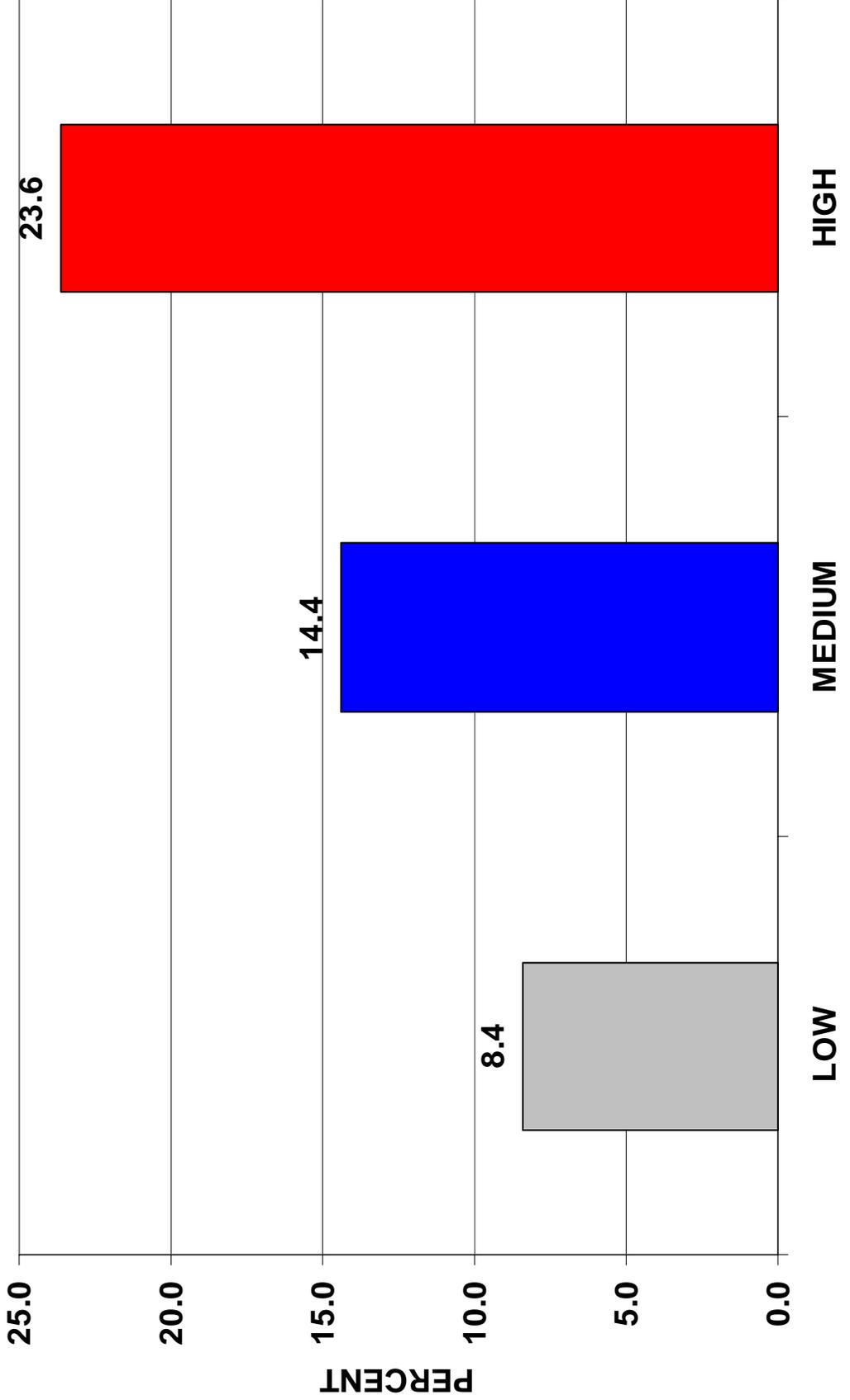
**Figure 46. Rode in an organized bicycle event sometime in past, by spending group.**



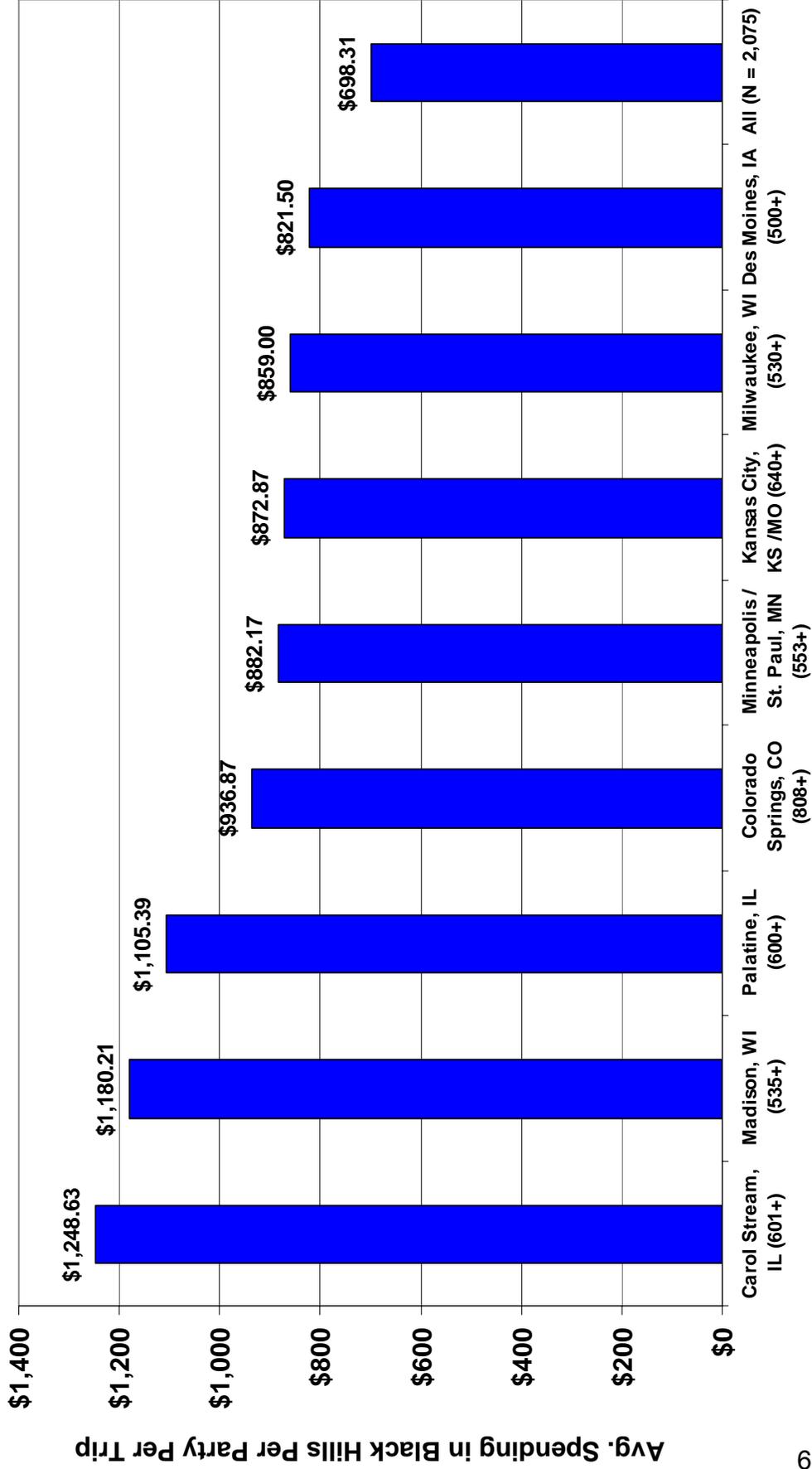
**Figure 47. Rode on a guided bicycle tour sometime in past, by spending group.**



**Figure 48. Purchased a bicycling package sometime in past, by spending group.**



**Figure 49. Origins of top-spending tourist parties that visited the Mickelson Trail.**



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reflecting an established trend, the Web was the most frequently cited communications medium by which respondents were influenced to visit the GSMT. Accordingly, promotion of the Trail should strongly emphasize Internet marketing efforts. This should include a sophisticated, well-promoted, strategically linked, and search-engine optimized Web site; substantial key word buying; and e-mail advertising to target markets.
2. Given median planning horizons of about 60 days, peak-season promotion of the Trail should reach intended recipients about 80-90 days before the beginning of the season.
3. The popularity of Custer State Park among the types of tourists who visit the Trail, the popularity of Custer as a Trail entry point, the fact that more than one out of five respondents visited the Trail spontaneously, and the fact that Custer State Park is a unit in the state park system, suggests that Custer State Park would be an excellent place to cross-sell the Trail through a display at the Norbeck Visitor Center and literature distributed to motorists entering the Park.
4. Since spending per party per trip by GSMT tourist daily pass-holders was 31% lower than observed for Black Hills tourists in general, efforts should be made to expand spending opportunities for Trail visitors. Expanding shuttle services was among the top 10 suggestions for improving the Trail, so this might be a good way to increase spending and also enhance visitors' experiences. Another possibility is a gift/souvenir shop devoted entirely to Trail-related gifts and supplies (including the more and better information about the Trail sought by many respondents). Such a shop could be either permanent or set up temporarily at heavily-used trailheads.
5. The relatively low expenditures of Trail visitors also suggests that efforts should be made to attract those visitors who will spend an above-average amount of money on their trips. The top three origins of top-spending tourist parties that visited the GSMT (and the Black Hills in general) were Carol Stream, Illinois; Madison, Wisconsin; and Palatine, Illinois. Targeted e-mail blasts to the residents of these areas, plus ads promoting the Black Hills, including the GSMT, could be placed in the areas' community newspapers.
6. Since high-spending GSMT visitors were more likely to be biking aficionados,
  - posters and brochures advertising the Trail could be placed and distributed in bike shops in the above geographic areas,
  - the MTT should be aggressively promoted to them,
  - bicycling packages that include shuttle services should be created for, and promoted to, them, and
  - efforts should be made to reach them through specialty magazines, Web sites, and mountain biking membership publications.
7. The high-spending Trail visitors clearly want much more than a visit to the GSMT while they are in the Black Hills; they also want to sightsee, shop, gamble, dine out, visit museums and art galleries, and participate in wildlife watching, nature photography, and other recreation

activities. Therefore, marketing efforts should not focus on promoting the Trail alone, but on the Trail as one more great reason to visit the Black Hills. That is, the Trail should be promoted not only as a trip motivator but also as a trip enhancer—a way to extend length of stay and increase total trip spending in the region. This will require greater cooperation between the Mickelson Trail Coalition and entities charged with promoting tourism to the region as a whole, and greater efforts by such entities to portray the Trail in its promotional programs.

8. Implement a system to enable online purchases of daily and annual passes. Since such purchases will necessarily require customers to provide their names, mailing addresses, and e-mail addresses, a data base of Trail users can be quickly developed that will greatly facilitate conventional direct mail and e-mail advertising campaigns to encourage repeat visits.
9. Since participants in the MTT spent 21% more per person per trip than tourist daily pass-holders for whom visiting the Trail was the only or a primary purpose of their trip, this event should be aggressively promoted. The MTT has added significance because it occurs during a shoulder season. Three areas that were among the top 10 origins of annual pass-holder tourists but not among the top 10 origins of MTT tourists are prime candidates for promotion: Mankato, Minnesota; Gillette, Wyoming; and Bismark, North Dakota.
10. Since scenery was the Number 1 motivation for visiting the Trail and the “thing liked best” about it, improving the scenic quality of Trail corridor will enhance visitors’ experiences and give the Trail an edge over its competitors. This can be accomplished by designing and implementing a visual resource management plan (VRMP) to protect and accentuate the scenic quality of the Trail corridor. Karen Anderson with the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance office of the National Park Service can provide this service free of charge (402/661-1542; karen\_anderson@nps.gov). She can likely be assisted by students in university landscape architecture, forestry, or outdoor recreation classes. Since much of the Trail parallels highways, the VRMP should include action items to buffer highway sights and sounds with conifer plantings. Many civic organizations, including the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, would likely be willing to donate labor for planting such screens.
11. The fact that “nothing” was the most frequently mentioned “suggestion” for improving the Trail can be construed not only as a compliment but as a warning not to change the character of the Trail too dramatically through excessive signage, events, development, or promotion. Balance and moderation must characterize further development and promotion of the Trail.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Survey Instrument**

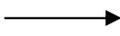
**SECTION 1. BEGINNINGS.**

1. Did you **first find out** about the Mickelson Trail from a Web site, television show, or publication, such as a newspaper, magazine, guidebook, newsletter, brochure, or vacation guide?

Yes

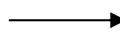


No



**SKIP TO QUESTION 2**

Don't remember



**SKIP TO QUESTION 2**

1a. Please provide the **name** of this Web site, television show, or publication: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 2. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT THE TRIP DURING WHICH YOU MOST RECENTLY VISITED THE MICKELSON TRAIL.**

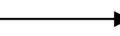
2. About how many days before you left home on this trip did you decide to take a trip that involved visiting the Black Hills? \_\_\_\_\_ (See map on left for our definition of "the Black Hills.")

3. Did information, images, or ideas from any publications, Web sites, and/or television shows influence you, in any degree, to visit the Mickelson Trail on this trip?

Yes



No



**SKIP TO QUESTION 4**

3a. Please provide the **names** of these publications, Web sites, and/or television shows:

**Names of publications:**  
Guidebooks: \_\_\_\_\_  
Magazines: \_\_\_\_\_  
Membership publications: \_\_\_\_\_  
Newspapers: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tourist literature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Names of Web sites:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Names of television shows:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you plan to visit the Mickelson Trail before you left home on this trip?

Yes



No



**SKIP TO QUESTION 5**

4a. Was visiting the Mickelson Trail the **only** reason for this trip, a **primary** reason for this trip, or a **secondary** reason for this trip?

Only reason                       Primary reason                       Secondary reason

5. Listed below are some reasons people visit the Mickelson Trail, followed by scales from 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all important to me” and 7 means “extremely important to me.” For each reason listed, please circle the number on the scale that represents how important or unimportant that reason was in your decision to visit the Mickelson Trail.

Reason For Visiting the Mickelson Trail	Not At All Important To Me			Some-what Important To Me			Extremely Important To Me
Be alone	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Be close to nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Be where it is quiet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do something different	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do something exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Get in touch with myself spiritually	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learn more about history	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learn more about nature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Promote health and fitness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Relax	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Spend quality time with other person(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Test my drive and stamina	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Travel a trail known for its quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
View scenery	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visit places that take me back in time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. On what date did you **leave** home for this trip? Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

7. On what date did you **return** home from this trip? Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

8. What was the purpose of this trip? (Please check one or more categories.)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business              | <input type="checkbox"/> To visit relative(s) and/or friend(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convention or meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Other; please specify: _____          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation            | _____  |

9. By what mode of transportation did you travel the most miles to reach the Black Hills on this trip?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airplane                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcoach                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car/truck/minivan/jeep                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Bus                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-contained recreation vehicle or motorhome | <input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rental vehicle                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Train                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other; please specify: _____ |
|   | _____   |

10. What place did you visit on this trip that was farthest from your home?

Place \_\_\_\_\_ State or Province \_\_\_\_\_

11. Was the Black Hills or a place in the Black Hills the main destination of this trip?

- Yes       No

12. While you were in the Black Hills on this trip, did you attend a festival, concert, play, stage show, outdoor drama, motorcycle rally, car rally, or other event?

Yes                       No      —————>      **SKIP TO QUESTION 13**

12a. Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Did you visit any of the following attractions on this trip?

Attraction	No	Not Sure	Yes
Badlands National Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bear Butte State Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crazy Horse Memorial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Custer State Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deadwood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devil's Tower National Monument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewel Cave National Monument	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mount Rushmore National Memorial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Mammoth Site at Hot Springs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wind Cave National Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Did you spend any nights away from home on this trip?

Yes                       No      —————>      **SKIP TO QUESTION 15**

14a. How many **total nights** away from home did you spend on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_

14b. How many nights away from home did you spend **in the Black Hills** on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_

14c. How many nights did you spend in each of the following types of lodging **while you were in the Black Hills on this trip?** Please write "0" if you didn't spend any nights in a given type of lodging.

Type of Lodging	Number of Nights in the Black Hills
Hotel, motel, or lodge	
Bed & Breakfast	
Rented cabin, cottage, condominium, or home	
Second home or timeshare you own	
Friend or relative's home	
Commercial campground (e.g., KOA campground)	
Government-operated campground (municipal, state park, national park, or national forest campground)	
Backcountry camping	
Other type of lodging	
Total number of nights spent in the Black Hills	

15. Did you participate in any of the following recreation activities **while you were in the Black Hills on this trip**? “Participation” means direct involvement in the activity and does not include observing or accompanying someone else.

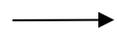
Recreation Activity	Participated in the Black Hills on This Trip	
	No	Yes
Power boating or water skiing	[ ]	[ ]
Jet skiing	[ ]	[ ]
Day hiking for at least two hours	[ ]	[ ]
Overnight hiking (backpacking)	[ ]	[ ]
Camping (not backpacking)	[ ]	[ ]
Fine dining	[ ]	[ ]
Casino gaming	[ ]	[ ]
Nightlife or dancing	[ ]	[ ]
Driving for pleasure through the countryside	[ ]	[ ]
Sightseeing	[ ]	[ ]
Fishing	[ ]	[ ]
Golfing (not miniature golfing)	[ ]	[ ]
Horseback riding	[ ]	[ ]
Hunting	[ ]	[ ]
Nature photography	[ ]	[ ]
Off-road or all-terrain vehicle riding	[ ]	[ ]
Riding a mountain bike on an unpaved surface	[ ]	[ ]
Running or jogging	[ ]	[ ]
Shopping	[ ]	[ ]
Swimming in a river, stream, or lake	[ ]	[ ]
Visiting an amusement park, water park, video arcade, miniature golf course, petting zoo, or other commercial recreation establishment	[ ]	[ ]
Visiting a place solely to observe birds	[ ]	[ ]
Visiting a place solely to observe other types of wildlife	[ ]	[ ]
Visiting an art museum or gallery	[ ]	[ ]
Visiting an historic site, museum, or hall of fame	[ ]	[ ]
Other; please specify:		

16. How many people, including yourself, went on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Did any children under age 18 go on this trip?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No



**SKIP TO QUESTION 18**



17a. How many children under age 10 went on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_

17b. How many children age 10 through 17 went on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_

18. About how much did your “spending unit” spend on each of the following items **in the Black Hills on this trip**? A “spending unit” is an individual who purchases things for himself or herself, or a group that purchases things as a group. An individual who pays his or her own expenses is one spending unit whether he or she is traveling alone or with others. Two married couples traveling together are two spending units if each couple purchases things separately.

Please include all expenditures in the Black Hills, including pre-paid reservation deposits and all other payments, whether by cash, credit card, or check. Please do not leave any spaces blank. Please write “0” if you had no expenditures in a given category. Include only expenditures in the Black Hills. See inside front cover for our definition of “the Black Hills.”

Item	Expenditures in the Black Hills on This Trip
Lodging (hotels, motels, rental homes, cabins, Bed & Breakfasts, resorts, condominiums)	\$
Camping fees and charges	\$
Restaurant and bar meals and drinks	\$
Groceries and take out food	\$
Gasoline and oil for vehicle and/or boat	\$
Auto or recreation vehicle rental	\$
Auto or recreation vehicle repairs, parts, and washing	\$
Parking fees	\$
Recreation equipment rental (bicycles, golf carts, boats, all-terrain vehicles, etc.)	\$
Temporary fishing or hunting licenses just for the trip (not annual license)	\$
Mickelson Trail daily passes	\$
Other admission fees	\$
Gambling	\$
Other recreation (golfing, horseback riding, video games, etc.)	\$
All other purchases (sporting goods, souvenirs, film, books, clothing, gifts, etc.)	\$
Total estimated expenditures in the Black Hills on this trip	\$

19. **How many persons** were in your “spending unit” on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 3. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR VISIT TO THE MICKELSON TRAIL WHILE YOU WERE ON THE TRIP YOU’VE DESCRIBED ABOVE. A MAP OF THE TRAIL IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK PAGE.**

20. Where did you purchase a daily pass to use the Mickelson Trail? \_\_\_\_\_

21. Where did you **enter** the Mickelson Trail? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Where did you **exit** the Mickelson Trail? \_\_\_\_\_

23. About how many hours did you spend on the Mickelson Trail? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Did you attend one or more events while you were on the Mickelson Trail?

Yes

No

—————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 25**

24a. Which event(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

25. Did you travel on the Mickelson Trail with other people or were you alone?

With other people

Alone —————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 26**

25a. Who did you travel with on the Mickelson Trail? **(Please check all that apply.)**

<input type="checkbox"/> Friend(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Business associate(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult family member(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Organized group. Please indicate name of organization: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Child(ren) under age 18	_____

25b. How many persons, including yourself, traveled together on the Mickelson Trail? \_\_\_\_\_

26. While you were on the Mickelson Trail, by what means of transportation did you travel the most miles?

- Walking/hiking —————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 27**
- Running/jogging —————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 27**
- Horseback riding —————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 27**
- Trolley on the Trail —————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 27**
- Mountain biking

26a. Did you ride an owned or rented mountain bike?  Owned  Rented

27. Overall, how satisfied are you with your visit to the Mickelson Trail on this trip? (Please circle one number below.)

			Mixed (About Equally				
<u>Disgusted</u>	<u>Unhappy</u>	<u>Mostly Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Satisfied and Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Mostly Satisfied</u>	<u>Pleased</u>	<u>Delighted</u>	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

28. Please list the three things you liked **best** about your visit to the Mickelson Trail.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

29. Please list the three things you liked **least** about your visit to the Mickelson Trail.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

30. On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means “extremely unlikely” and 7 means “extremely likely,” how likely are you to visit the Mickelson Trail again **within the next three years**? (Please circle one number below.)

Extremely <u>Unlikely</u>							Extremely <u>Likely</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**SECTION 4. YOUR OPINIONS OF THE MICKELSON TRAIL.**

31. Do you feel the \$2.00 price for a Mickelson Trail daily pass is too low, too high, or about right?

- Too low                       Too high                       About right

32. What is the **maximum** you would be willing to pay for a Mickelson Trail daily pass to help finance improvements to the Trail? \$\_\_\_\_\_

33. What, if anything, should be done to provide higher quality experiences to Mickelson Trail visitors? (Attach additional sheets if necessary.)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Nothing

34. What kinds of events or programs would you or members of your family be interested in attending on the Mickelson Trail?

- For children                       For handicappers                       None of these  
 For families                       For seniors                       Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 For co-workers                       For singles

35. What themes for these events or programs would you prefer?

- Arts                       Health/fitness                       None of these  
 Charity fund-raising                       History                       Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Competitive sports                       Nature

36. Have you ever visited any other trails that were once railroad right-of-ways?

- Yes                       No —————> **SKIP TO QUESTION 37**

36a. Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

36b. Compared to these other trails, would you say the overall quality of the Mickelson Trail is . . .  
(Please circle one number below.)

<u>Vastly</u> <u>Worse</u>	<u>Much</u> <u>Worse</u>	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Worse</u>	<u>About the</u> <u>Same</u>	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Better</u>	<u>Much</u> <u>Better</u>	<u>Vastly</u> <u>Better</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

37. How many times have you visited the Mickelson Trail in the past 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_

38. About how many times have you visited the Mickelson Trail since it opened in September 1998? \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 5. YOUR PARTICIPATION IN BICYCLING.**

39. Have you ever **ridden** on a guided bicycle tour?       Yes       No
40. Have you ever **ridden** in an organized bicycle race, ride, or other event?       Yes       No
41. Have you ever purchased a bicycling package that included a bicycle rental, one or more meals, one or more stays at a lodging establishment, and shuttle transportation?       Yes       No
42. We're defining "mountain biking" as *bicycling on backcountry roads, trails, or cross-country, riding a mountain bike or hybrid bike*. During the past 12 months, have you participated in mountain biking as defined above, around your home or elsewhere?

Yes       No      **→ SKIP TO QUESTION 43**

Yes ↓

42a. How many times have you participated in mountain biking in the past 12 months? _____
42b. In what year did you first participate in mountain biking? _____
42c. How would you describe your skill level in mountain biking?
<input type="checkbox"/> Beginner <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced <input type="checkbox"/> Expert

**SECTION 6. YOUR MEDIA PREFERENCES.**

43. In the past 12 months, have you visited any environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related **Web sites**?

Yes       No      **→ SKIP TO QUESTION 44**

Yes ↓

43a. Which one(s)? _____ _____
-----------------------------------

44. In the past 12 months, have you read any environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related **magazines**?

Yes       No      **→ SKIP TO QUESTION 45**

Yes ↓

44a. Which one(s)? _____ _____
-----------------------------------

45. In the past 12 months, have you watched any environmental, outdoor recreation, or travel-related **television channels or shows**?

Yes       No      **→ SKIP TO QUESTION 46**

Yes ↓

45a. Which one(s)? _____ _____
-----------------------------------

