

Walton County Tourism

Family Travel Experience Study

October 2024



Report Outline

Research purpose and methodology

Key takeaways

Detailed findings



Research Purpose and Methodology

Purpose

To explore family travel experiences in Walton County, particularly experiences of those traveling with teenagers.

Methodology

Online survey distributed to visitors who were over 18 years of age and traveled to the area from September 2023 to September 2024.

Sample size 338 respondents.



Key Takeaways

Key takeaway #1

Key takeaway #2

Key takeaway #3

Key takeaway #4

Key takeaway #5



Key Takeaway #1

Unsupervised teens impact the visitor experience and decision to return to Walton County for a small percentage of visitors.

- **Concerns about unsupervised teens** (16%) are among visitors' top five issues negatively affecting their vacation experience.
- However, **7 in 8 visitors** believe that **unsupervised teens had no impact** on their trip and willingness to return, with **1 in 8** still citing unsupervised teens as an issue.
- The impact of unsupervised teen groups was **more pronounced** among families traveling with **teens** and **older children**. The respondents indicated that it was more likely to **affect** their experiences, and intention to return.
- Moreover, visitors are more frequently concerned about **parking** being a problem (22%), the experiences being **too expensive** (19%), the area being **too crowded** (18%), and **traffic** (18%).



Key Takeaway #2

3 in 10 visitors traveling with teens recommend reinforcing a curfew and teens' supervision.

- However, nearly **3 in 10** also recommended a **wider variety of teen-oriented activities** such as sports games (volleyball, soccer, football), teen nights, concerts, and other engaging events.
- Respondents emphasized the need for more age-appropriate entertainment options to cater to older kids and teenagers, as current offerings are perceived to be primarily aimed at younger children.
- Over **1 in 10** additionally recommended to improve pedestrian and overall **safety**.



Key Takeaway #3

Relaxation is a universally favored general type activity by teenagers (92%).

- Other activities prioritized by teenagers include **shopping** (75%), and **spending time with family** (68%), and **friends** (63%).
- Around **3 in 10** visitors indicated that their teenager(s) could additionally enjoy **outdoor/adventure, entertainment, and spending time on social media.**

Key Takeaway #4

The most preferred **outdoor/adventure** and **entertainment** activities by teenagers are **water adventures** (e.g., surfing, kayaking) (28%), attending **concerts** (24%), and viewing **street performances** (19%).

- Among the sports, teenagers seem to favor **pickleball** (15%) likely due to its social nature.
- While the information in the previous slide provide insights to the broader activity interests of teens, the activities mentioned here and in slide 14 offer more specific application opportunities for Walton County Tourism to consider.
- That is, with this information, Walton County Tourism may enhance teenager(s)' involvement into the preferred activities via targeted messaging that resonates with them the most.



Key Takeaway #5

Over **3 in 5** teens are involved in the planning of vacation activities.

- This could be an opportunity to engage the teenagers in the planning process and the direction their vacation will take.



Detailed Findings

Traveling with children

Children's age group

Activities preferred by teens

Teen's involvement in trip planning

Children's supervision

Negative impacts on vacation experience

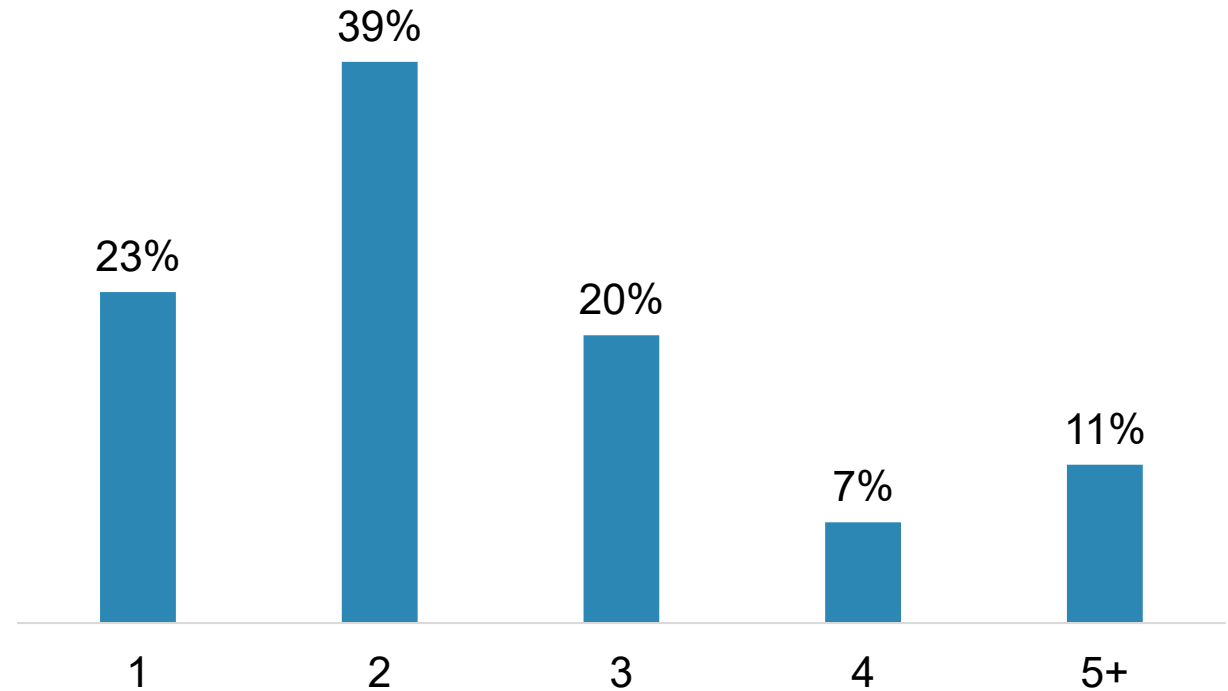
Impact of unsupervised teen groups on vacation experiences and intention to return

Visitor recommendations on improving family travel experiences



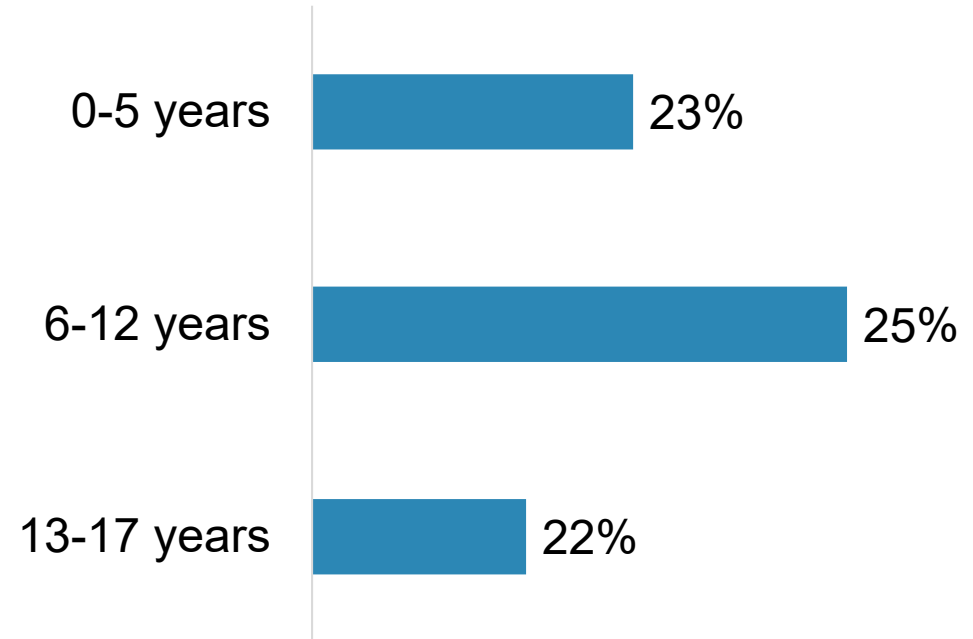
How many children under 18 were in your group?

- **51%** of visitors traveled **with** children.
- Over **4 in 5** travel with **one, two,** or **three** children in their travel party.
- Nearly **1 in 5** travel with **4 or more** children.



What are the age ranges of the child(ren) in your group?*

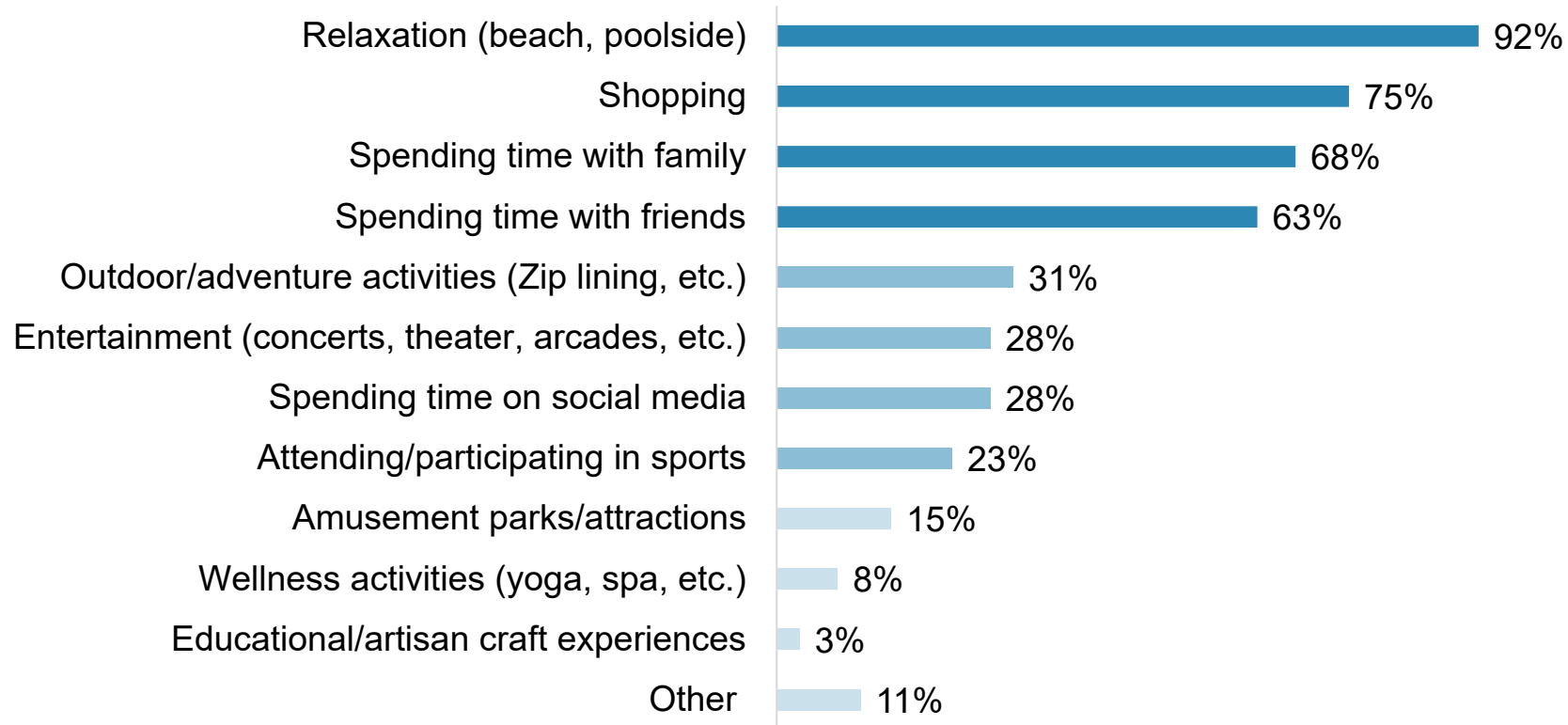
- **49%** visitors travel without children
- Nearly **1 in 4** of all visitors travel with children between **13** and **17** years old,
- **1 in 4** travel with children between the ages of **6** and **12**.



*Multiple responses were permitted.

What general types of activities do your teenager(s) (ages 13-17) enjoy the most while on vacation?*

The activity that teenagers enjoy the most is **relaxation** (92%).

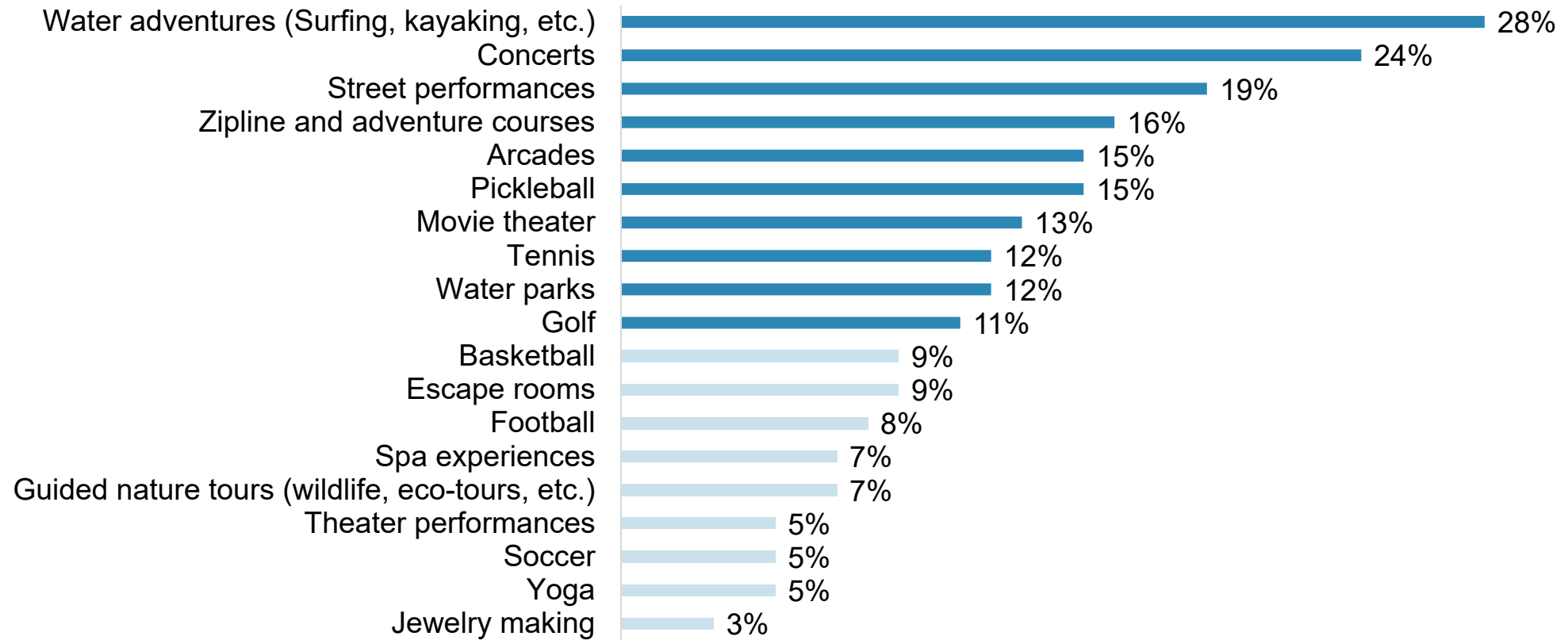


*Multiple responses were permitted. Only asked to respondents who traveled with children between the ages of 13 and 17 years (75 respondents).

What specific activities would your teenager(s) (ages 13-17) be most interested in during a visit to our destination?*

While the activities in the previous slide provide insights to the broader activity interests of teens, the activities mentioned here offer more specific application opportunities.

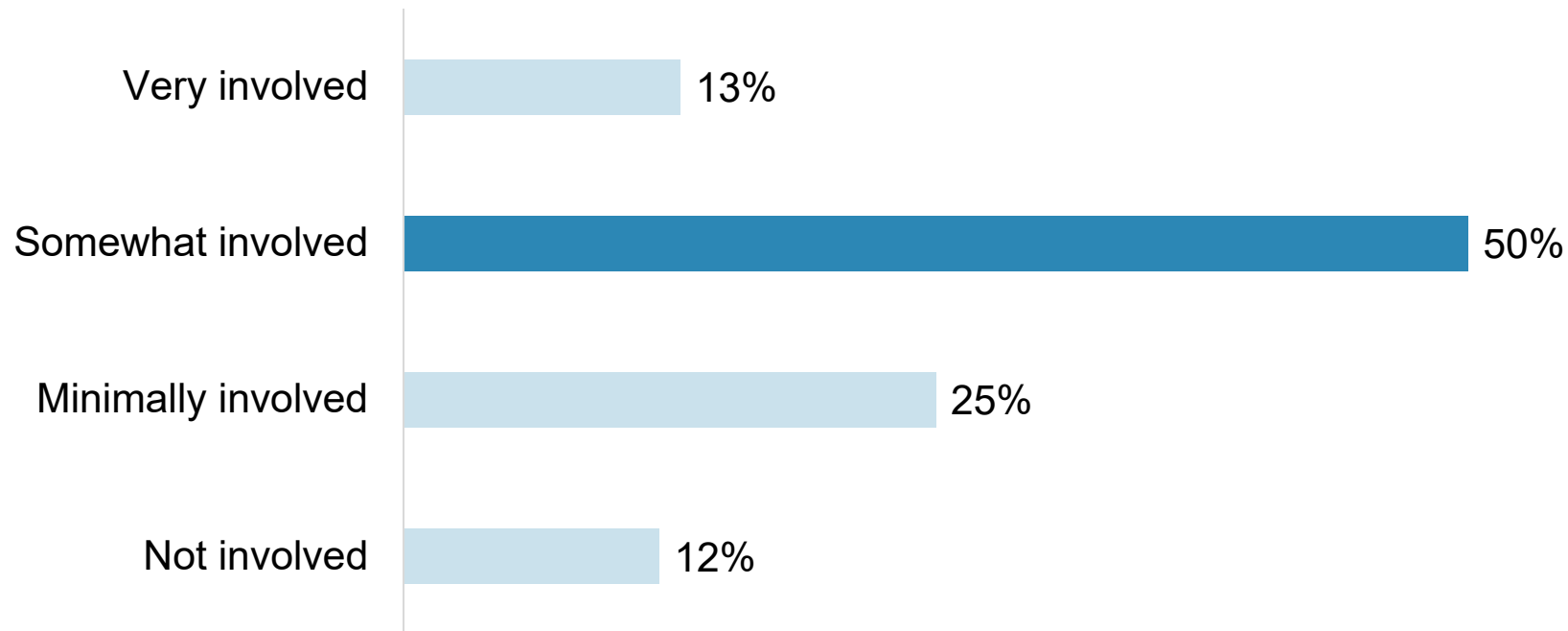
Examples of more specific activities favored by teens include **water adventures** (28%) and **concerts** (24%).



*Multiple responses were permitted. Only asked to respondents who traveled with children between the ages of 13 and 17 years (75 respondents).

To what extent are your teens usually involved in planning vacation activities?*

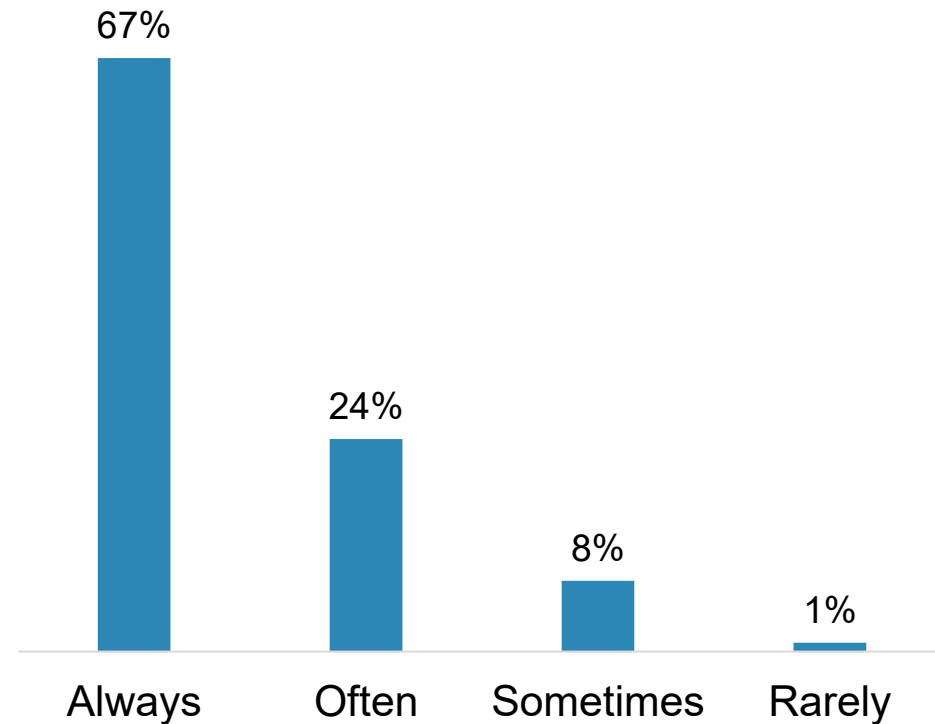
63% of teens are **somewhat** or **very involved** in planning vacation activities.



* Only asked to respondents who traveled with children between the ages of 13 and 17 years (75 respondents).

How often are the children in your group with someone in your travel party?*

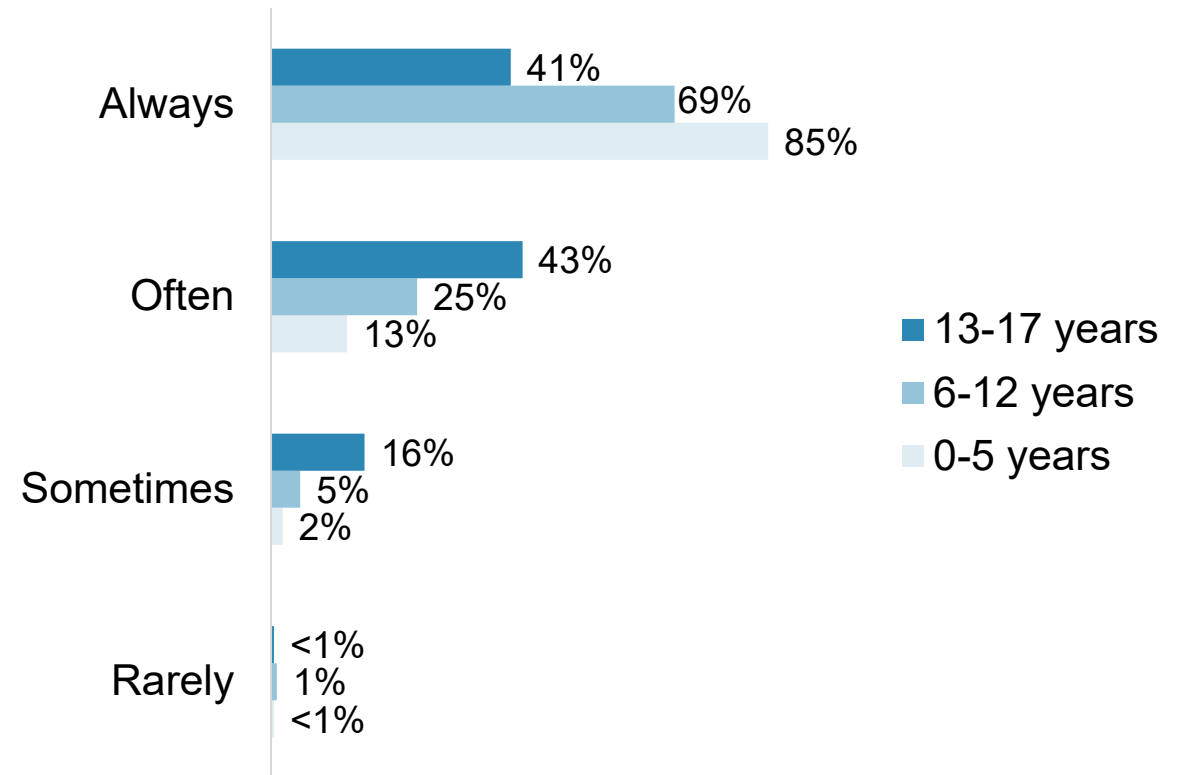
- Nearly **7 in 10** said that the children in their group are **always** with someone in the travel party
- Over **2 in 10** indicated that their children with someone **often**



*BASE: 171 respondents.

Children supervision by age group*

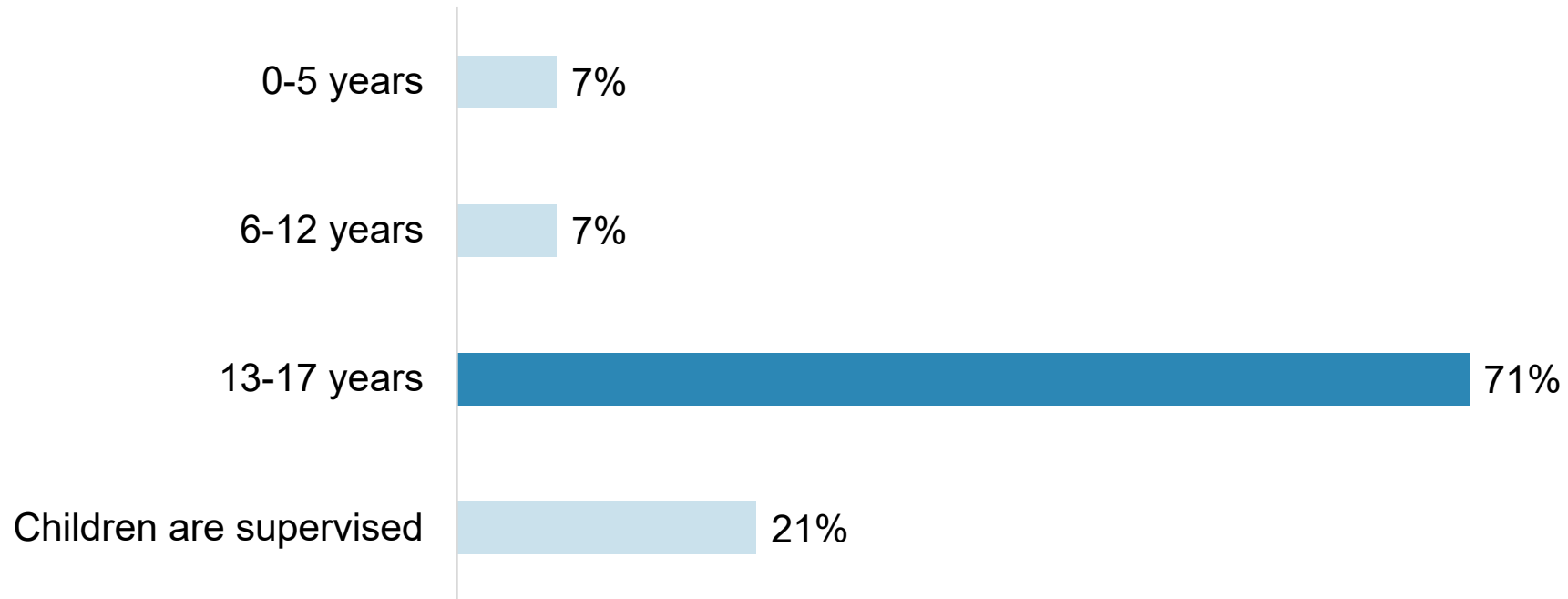
- Visitors who traveled with younger children were markedly more likely to **always** have them supervised than those who traveled with teenagers.



*BASE: 171 respondents.

Please select each of the age ranges you would typically allow to be unsupervised during your trip to the area.*

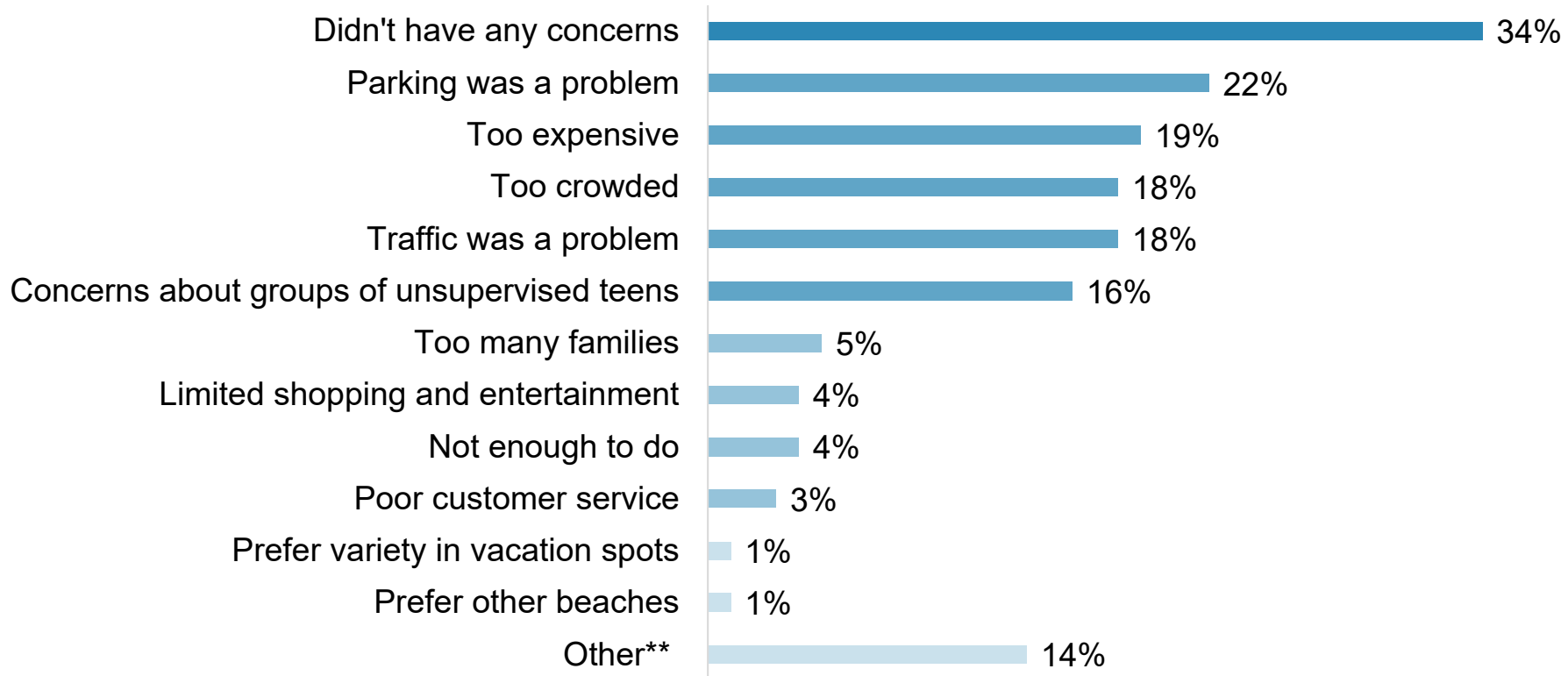
Consistent with the previous slide, some respondents confirmed that primarily **teenagers** were allowed to be unsupervised during the trip.



*BASE: 14 respondents.

Did any of the following negatively affect your vacation experience?*

16% of respondents were **concerned about the groups of unsupervised teens.**

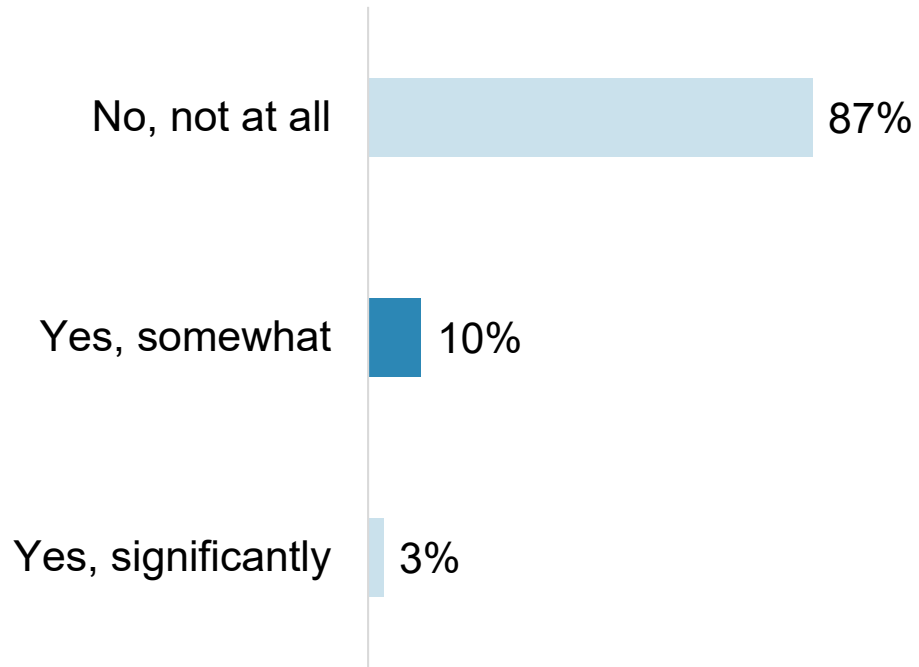


*Multiple responses were permitted. BASE: 338 respondents.

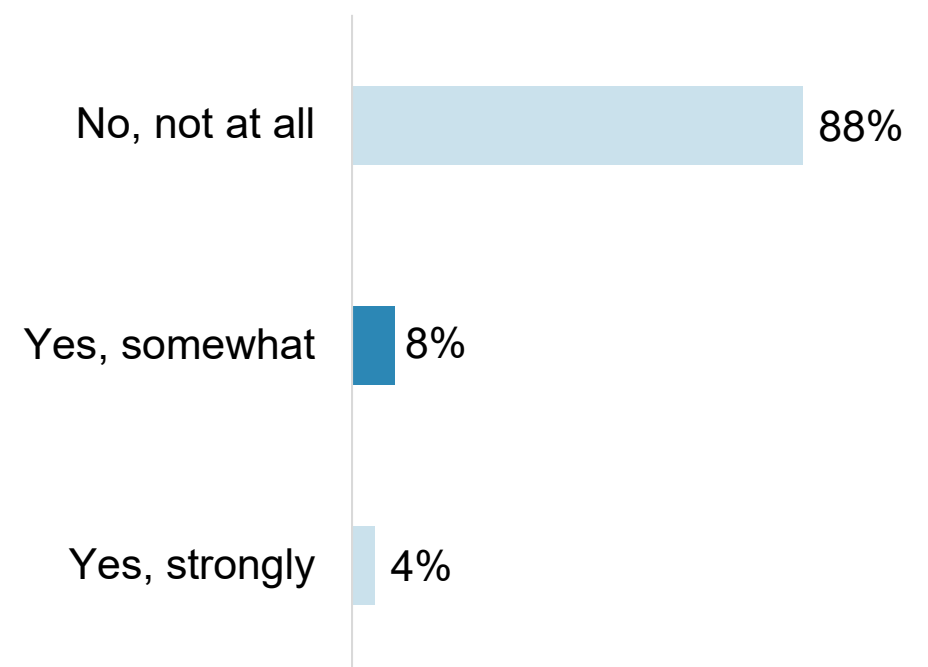
**Open-ended responses included issues with rental properties, beach access, limited dining options, etc. BASE: 48 respondents.

Impact of unsupervised teen groups on vacation experience and intention to return

Did concerns about groups of unsupervised teens impact your vacation experience?*



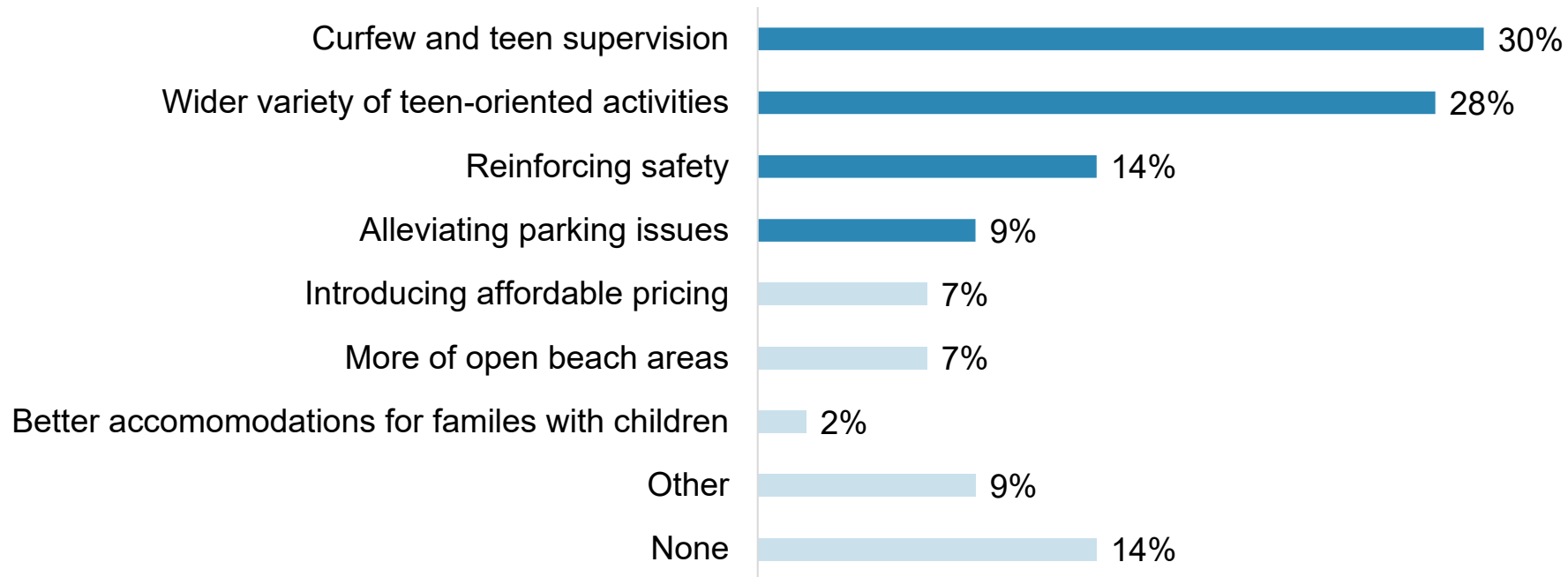
Would concerns about groups of unsupervised teens influence your decision to return to this destination?*



*Percentage of all visitors.

What suggestions do you have for improving the vacation experience for families with teenagers at our destination?*

Introducing **curfew** and reinforcing **teen supervision** are the primary recommendations for improving the vacation experience for those traveling with teens.



*Multiple responses were permitted. BASE: 42 respondents.

What visitors say about possible improvements

"The entertainment at Rosemary Beach is the same every year. I would love to see it include new concepts, vendors, etc."

"Have areas where they are allowed to congregate and meet new people"

"I understand that there have been 'roaming groups' but it seems that there could be a balance struck. Also, the bikes are out of control."

"Start by focusing on safety. Emphasize that your concern is to ensure they are safe, not to control their fun. Teens are more likely to respond positively."

"Very large groups (15-30 people) of teens out at night without adult chaperones has become a huge turnoff. The curfews have helped, but we didn't see them enforced very well."

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Downs & St. Germain Research

contact@dsg-research.com

850-906-3111 | www.dsg-research.com

