



## VISITOR PROFILE & EXPENDITURE RESEARCH STUDY

### Research Overview & Objectives

The objectives of this research were to collect annual and seasonal data on visitors to Wilmington and Beaches between March 2019 and March 2020 (pre-COVID), including how long they stayed in Wilmington and Beaches, what they did during their trip and how satisfied they were with their experience. The survey was distributed to the Wilmington and Beaches CVB's owned audiences. A total of 2,157 completed responses were collected between April 6 and May 31, 2020, of which 1,227, or 56.9%, were from recent visitors who took a trip to Wilmington and Beaches during the 12-month period between March 2019 and March 2020.

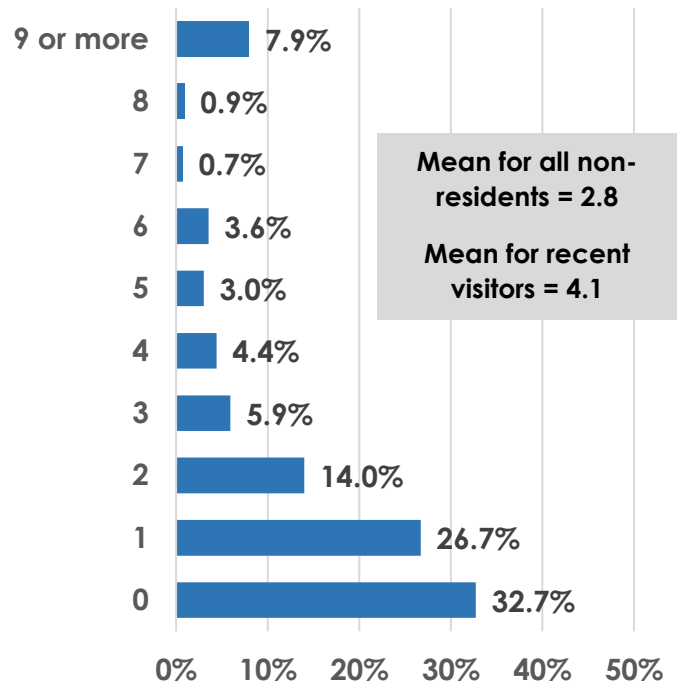
### Visitation to Wilmington and Beaches

Of the 1,227 recent visitors:

- **72.6%** of recent visitors went to **Wilmington**
- **61.9%** of recent visitors went to **Carolina Beach**
- **46.3%** of recent visitors went to **Kure Beach**
- **41.2%** of recent visitors went to **Wrightsville Beach**
- **11.5%** of recent visitors went to **all four destinations**

- A majority of leisure travelers surveyed took a trip to Wilmington and Beaches in the past year, with a total of 67.3% who visited the destination.
- On average, those who live outside New Hanover County took 2.8 trips to Wilmington and Beaches in the past year.
- Recent visitors who took a trip in the past year took even more trips, with an average of 4.1.

#### Trips to Wilmington and Beaches in the Past Year

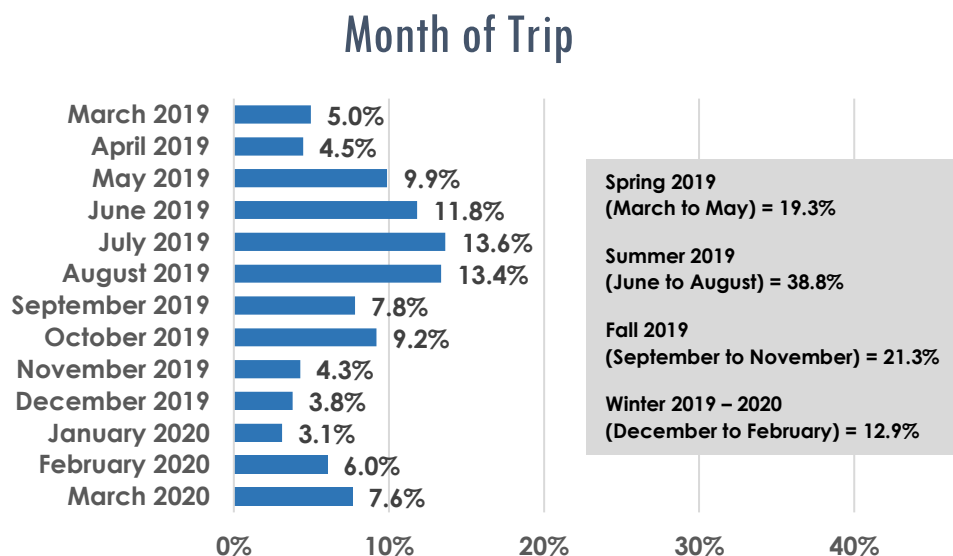


Q: How many trips to Wilmington and Beaches have you taken in the past twelve months? Base: 1,763 completed surveys.

# Wilmington and Beaches Visitors

- The typical recent visitor to Wilmington and Beaches began planning their trip 3.6 weeks in advance. The vast majority of recent visitors are also repeat visitors (91.5%), having taken 14.1 trips to Wilmington and Beaches. However, it should be noted that survey respondents are owned audiences, who follow the CVB and tend to be the destination's loyalists.

- The summer months of June, July and August incurred the highest visitation to Wilmington and Beaches amongst recent visitors. About 40 percent took a trip to Wilmington and Beaches in Summer 2019, while a quarter came in Spring 2019 and one-in-five visited during Fall 2019.

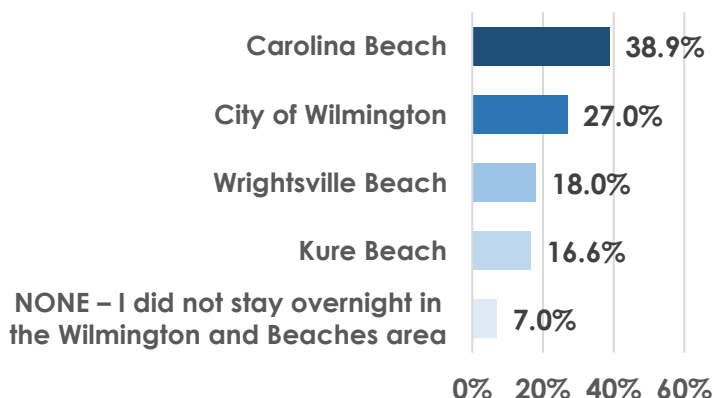


Q: In which month did you take this trip to Wilmington and Beaches? Base: 1,227 completed surveys

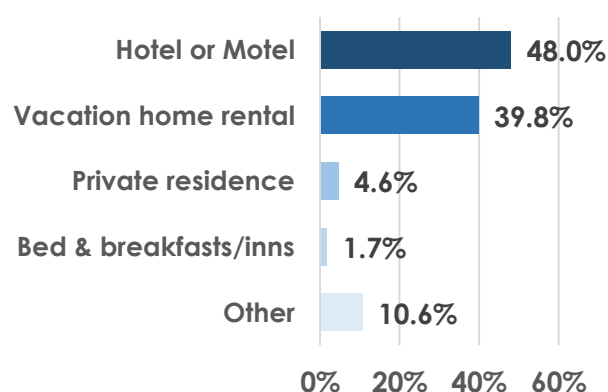


Recent visitors primarily traveled to Wilmington and Beaches for leisure purposes. About half characterized their trip as a vacation, followed by 24.3% who took a weekend getaway. On average, recent visitors spent 5.1 days and 4.4 nights in Wilmington and Beaches.

- Approximately 40 percent of recent visitors stayed overnight in Carolina Beach. Over one quarter stayed in the City of Wilmington, while similar percentages of recent visitors stayed overnight in Wrightsville Beach (18.0%) and Kure Beach (16.6%). Recent overnight visitors commonly stayed in a hotel or motel or a vacation or home rental during their trip.



Q: In which area did you stay overnight? (Select all that apply)  
Base: All recent visitors who spent one or more nights. 1,060 completed surveys.



Q: Where did you stay during this trip? (Select all that apply)  
Base: All recent visitors who stayed overnight in the Wilmington and Beaches area. 1,006 completed surveys.

The typical travel party to Wilmington and Beaches is comprised of 3.6 persons. This consists of 1.7 females, 1.3 males and 0.6 children on average.



The vast majority of recent visitors arrived in Wilmington and Beaches via personal car (90.9%). 4.3% arrived by airplane into Wilmington International Airport (ILM).



The average travel party to Wilmington and Beaches spent \$519.41 per day.



The City of Wilmington was the most commonly visited destination as part of a Wilmington and Beaches trip.



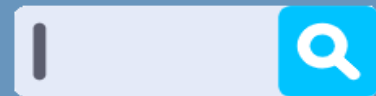
Visiting the beaches (82.2%), dining (82.0%) and shopping (67.7%) were the top activities that were part of a Wilmington and Beaches trip.



About half of all recent visitors went to the Carolina Beach Boardwalk (51.2%) and Wilmington Riverwalk & Historic District (48.0%) during their trip to Wilmington and Beaches.



General internet search (40.4%) and word-of-mouth (27.9%) were the most common resources used to plan a Wilmington and Beaches trip. In total, 43.2% used at least one official Wilmington and Beaches resource, including the destination website (23.8%), the printed visitors guide (20.7%) and the online visitors guide (14.6%).



Relaxation (60.7%), affordability (57.4%) and previous trips to Wilmington and Beaches (56.0%) were the most important factors in deciding to visit the destination.



Parking was the top recommendation for enhancing the visitor experience in Wilmington and Beaches, including better parking (16.1%), free parking (8.9%) and more parking (8.0%).

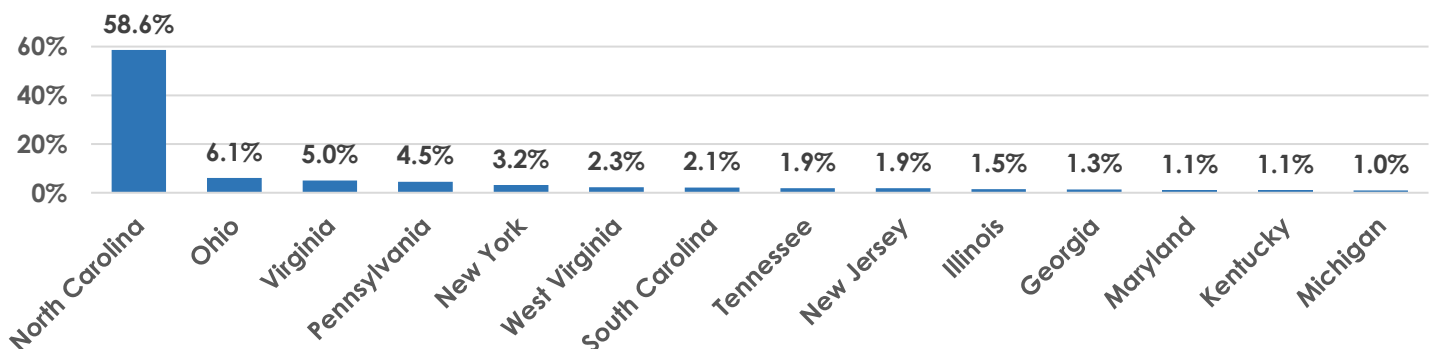


# Wilmington and Beaches — Visitor Satisfaction

- Given that the vast majority of recent visitors are repeat visitors, they also have a high likelihood to return to the destination. Nearly all recent visitors reported being “likely” (9.9%) or “very likely” (84.9%) to return to Wilmington and Beaches.
- In line with their high likelihood to return, nearly all recent visitors were “satisfied” (24.5%) or “very satisfied” (71.0%) with their visitor experience in Wilmington and Beaches.
- Recent visitors who reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their experience reported that the reasons for their level of satisfaction were the relaxing experience, quality of restaurants, friendly locals, beaches and the beauty of the area.

## Wilmington and Beaches — Respondent Point of Origin

- Over half of respondents who reside in the United States live within the state of North Carolina (58.6%). Approximately 5 percent or more of survey respondents reside in Ohio (6.1%), Virginia (5.0%) and Pennsylvania (4.5%).



## Key Takeaways

- Marketing around the quality of beaches, affordability and parking can drive consumer perceptions about the destination and boost Wilmington and Beaches' ratings for these attributes.
- Addressing the parking situation may positively affect satisfaction with the Wilmington and Beaches experience, help visitors in their trip planning and/or shift perceptions of parking in the destination.
- With a majority of recent visitors being repeat visitors, nearly all reported being “likely” (9.9%) or “very likely” (84.9%) to return to Wilmington and Beaches (94.8%). Moving forward, there is an opportunity with additional research to seek out and learn from other types of travelers and new visitors who might not have visited Wilmington and Beaches before.