

# **Fort La Présentation Association**

## **Founders Day 2007 Survey Results**

**Analysis and comments by Harry Needham**

**6 August 2007**

**Summary: Visitors come predominantly from St. Lawrence County, with significant groups from elsewhere in New York State, other states and Ontario. They represent all ages but are concentrated in those age groups with children and they therefore visit in small family groups. They learn of the event primarily from newspapers and word of mouth. They tend to be history/museum buffs, stay for at least an hour at the event and are very satisfied with their visits in general.**

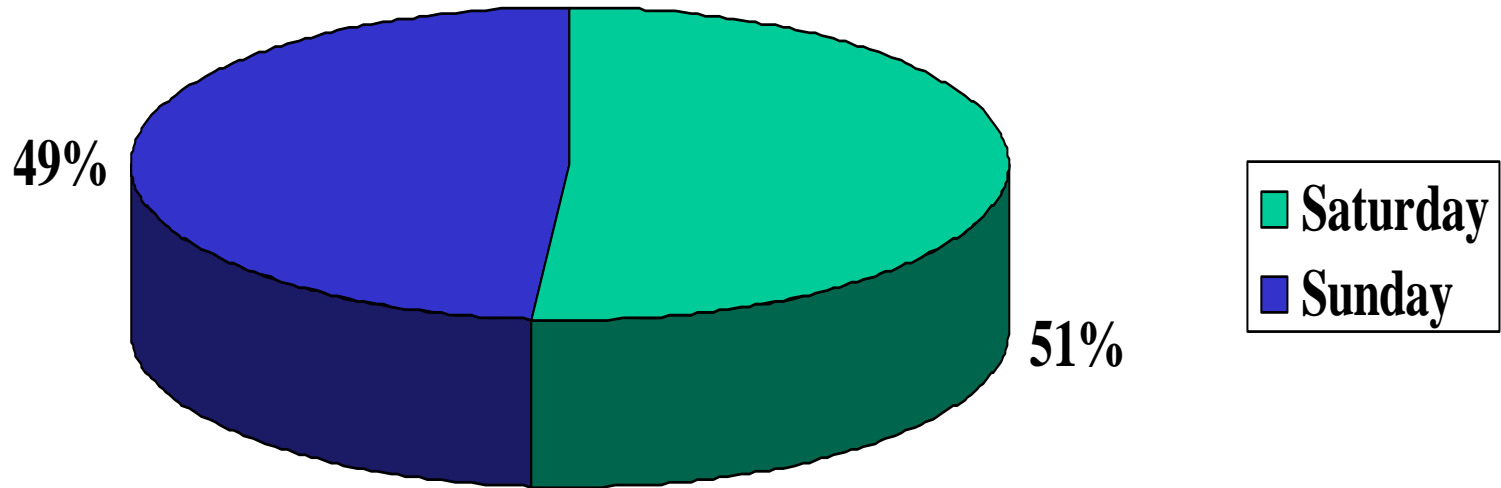
**They enjoy the naval and military aspects of the event and the encampment, but are less enthusiastic about the sutlers and the display on the proposed Fort. They are not enthusiastic as regards the USMCR canteen.**

**With respect to the new fort, they are interested in all the choices offered them, but have less enthusiasm for artwork, maps and illustrations and much less for audio-video displays. They want the emphasis placed on the buildings, furnishings and equipment, exhibits, educational programs and activities, further re-enactments and a period Iroquois village.**

# Survey administration:

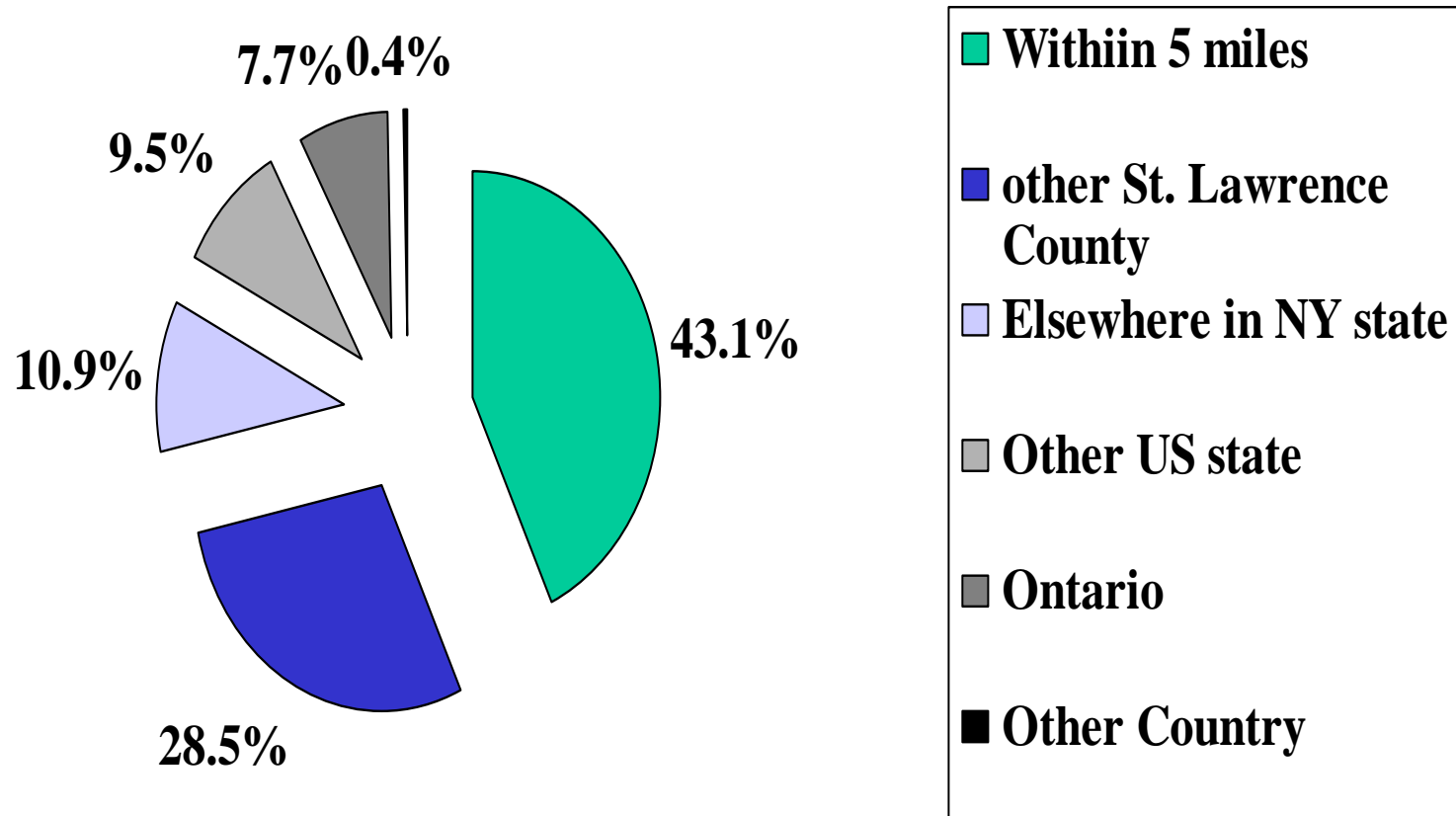
- **The survey was conducted as an exit survey at the main gate, with respondents completing their own questionnaires**
- **274 questionnaires were completed, though a few respondents did not complete the reverse side.**
- **Results, given this sample size, can be considered as accurate to within a margin of error of within  $\pm 5-6\%$ , 19 times out of 20. While this is a significant margin of error, the data trends are so strong that I believe it can generally be disregarded.**

# Distribution of responses



Given that the number of visitors was somewhat higher on Saturday, this may reasonably represent the distribution of visitors over the two days.

# Respondents' place of residence

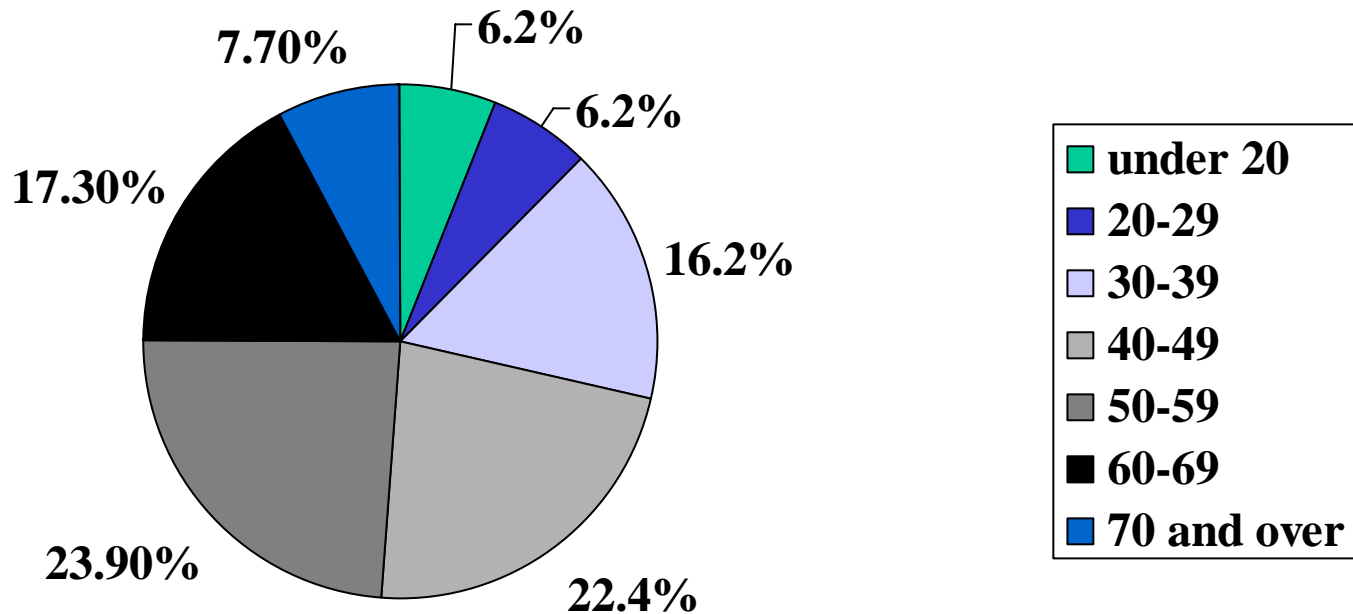


# Place of residence:

- **Almost two-thirds of the persons attending live in St. Lawrence County. This is not unexpected.**
- **10.9% live elsewhere in New York State, some in the Syracuse area**
- **A surprising 9.5% live in other US states**
- **Of the American visitors from outside the county, it is suspected that most were visiting in the area, in some cases visiting family.**

- **7.7% live in Ontario and *none* in other Canadian provinces. This is NOT very good performance. I would have expected a significantly higher number from Ontario and a reasonable number from west Quebec. We should look at advertising, as this could be made MUCH higher.**
- **A single respondent represented another country (Germany). One expects a fair number of out-of-country visitors in New York or Ottawa, but not in Ogdensburg. The number is statistically insignificant in any case.**

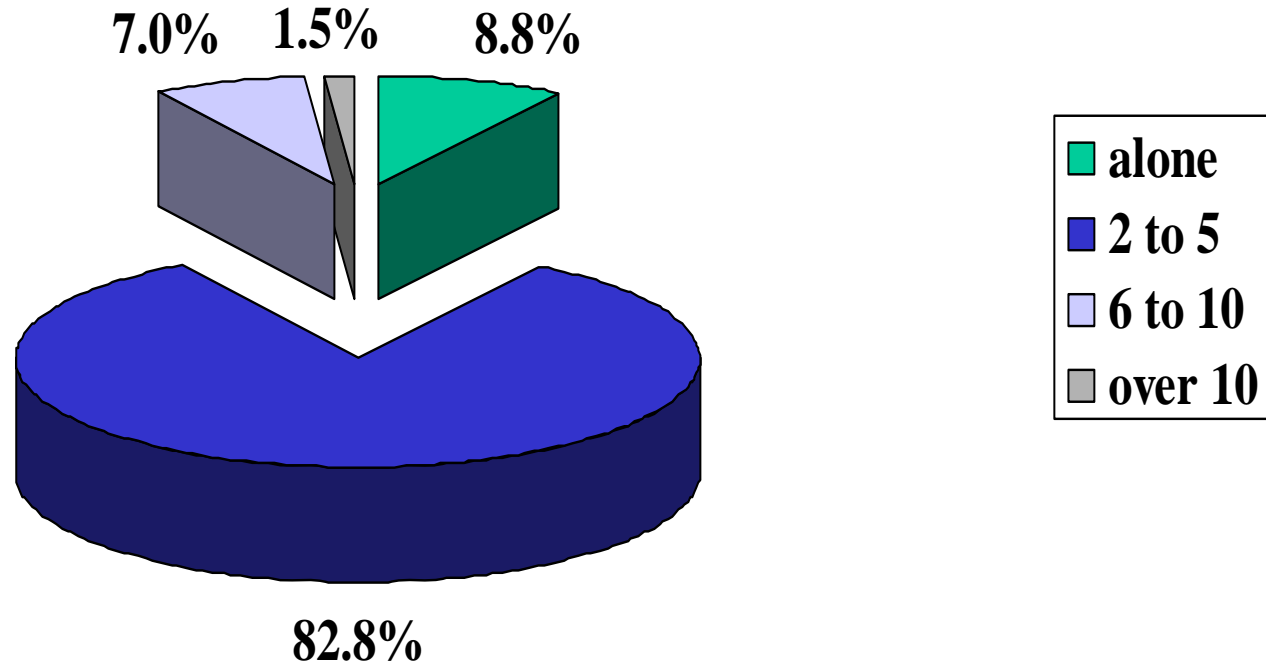
# Respondents' age



With the exception of the “under 20” cohort, which is almost *always* grossly under-represented in surveys, I suspect that this age distribution is not atypical for this area. Almost a majority are in the age group with children under 20, which is consistent with the survey’s other findings.

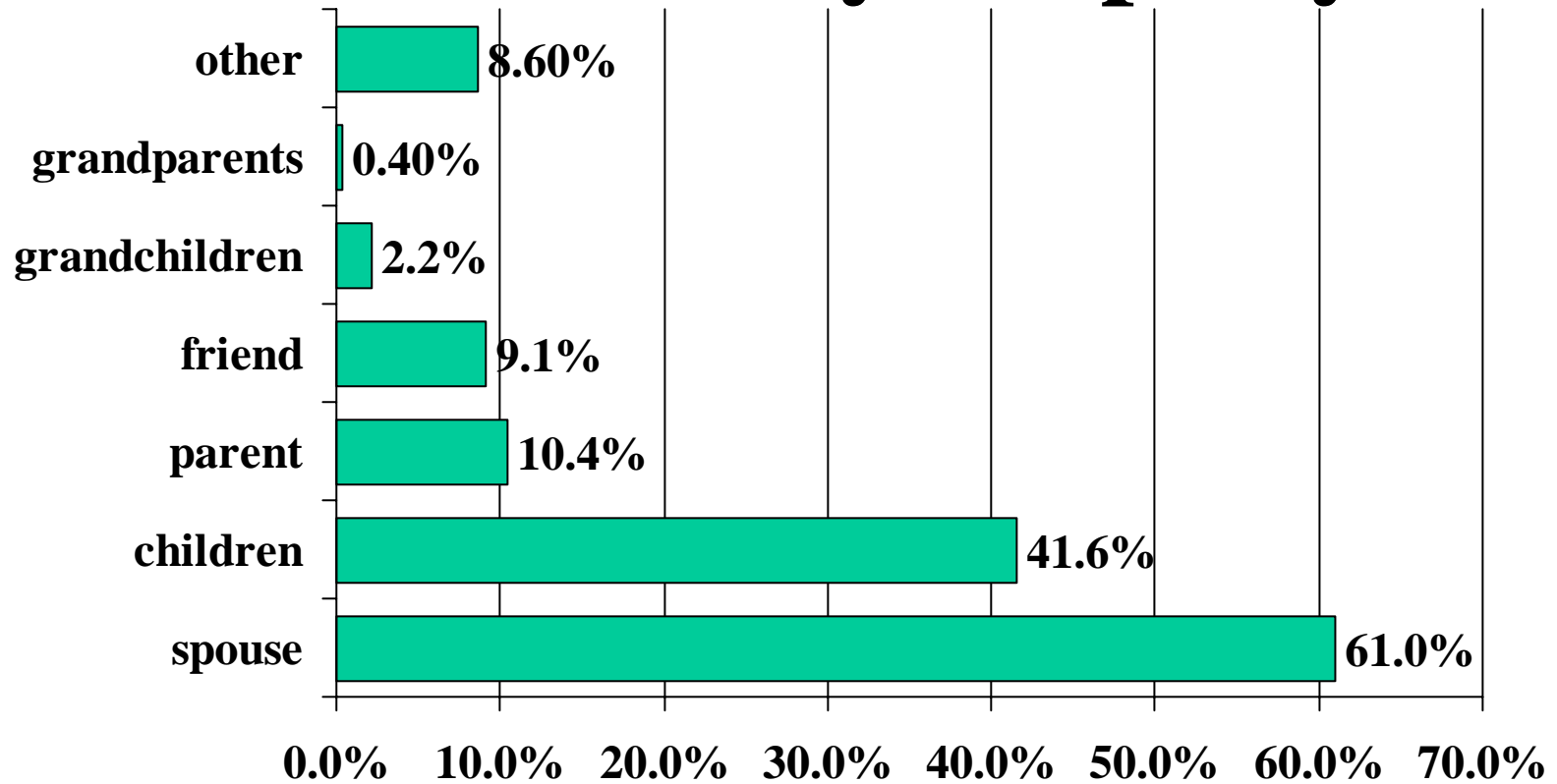


# Number in respondent's party



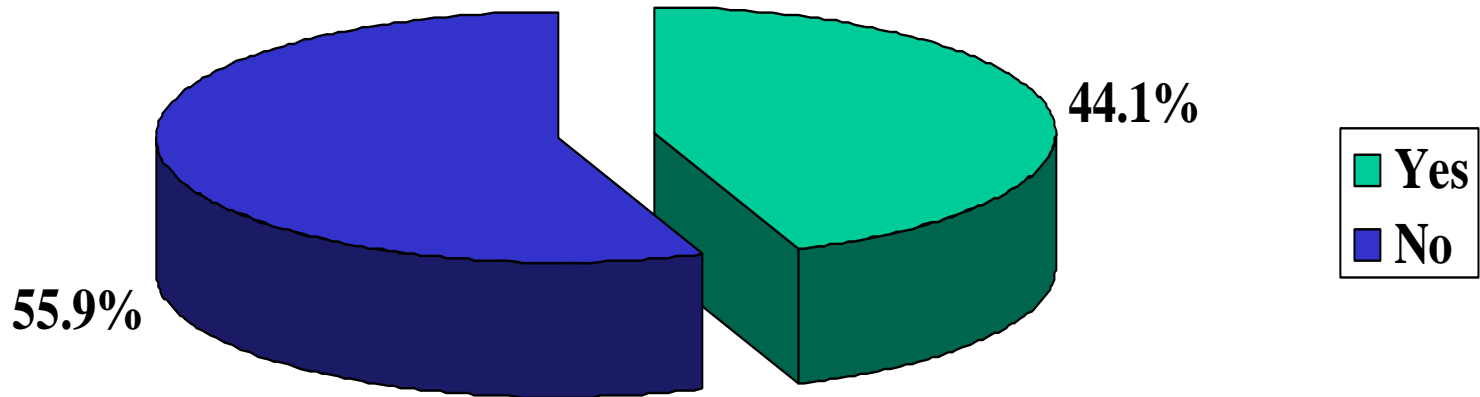
Notice the enormous proportion of visitors who come in small groups, almost always with the spouse and/or children, though some with friends. Offering group rates and planning activities for small groups might attract additional visitors.

# Who else is in your party?



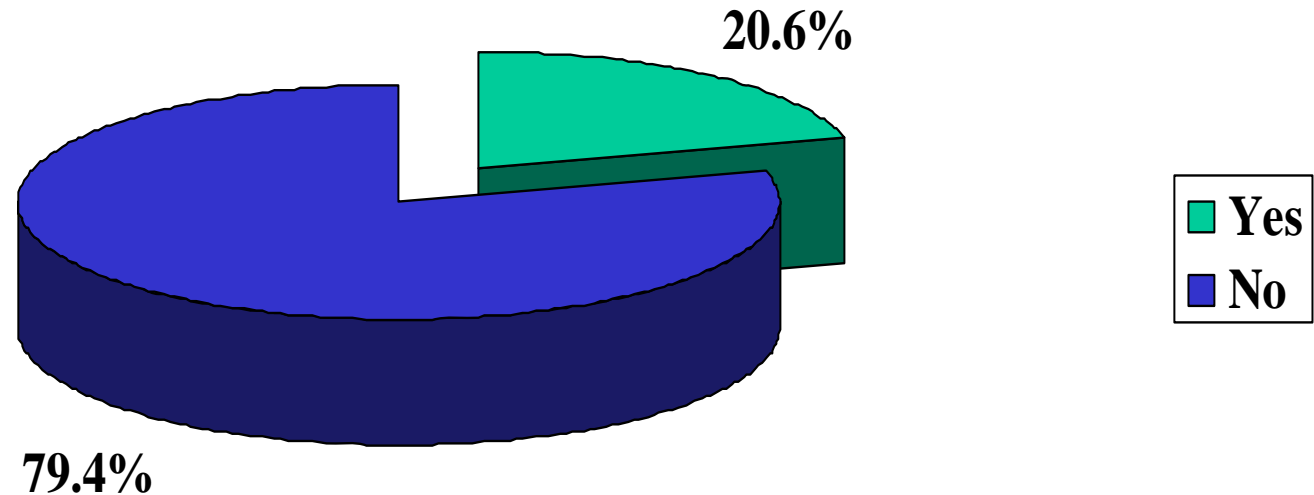
Further to the previous slide, notice the prevalence of small family groups. It will be important to offer them incentives to come and attractions to satisfy them when they do come.

# Previous Founders Day visitor?



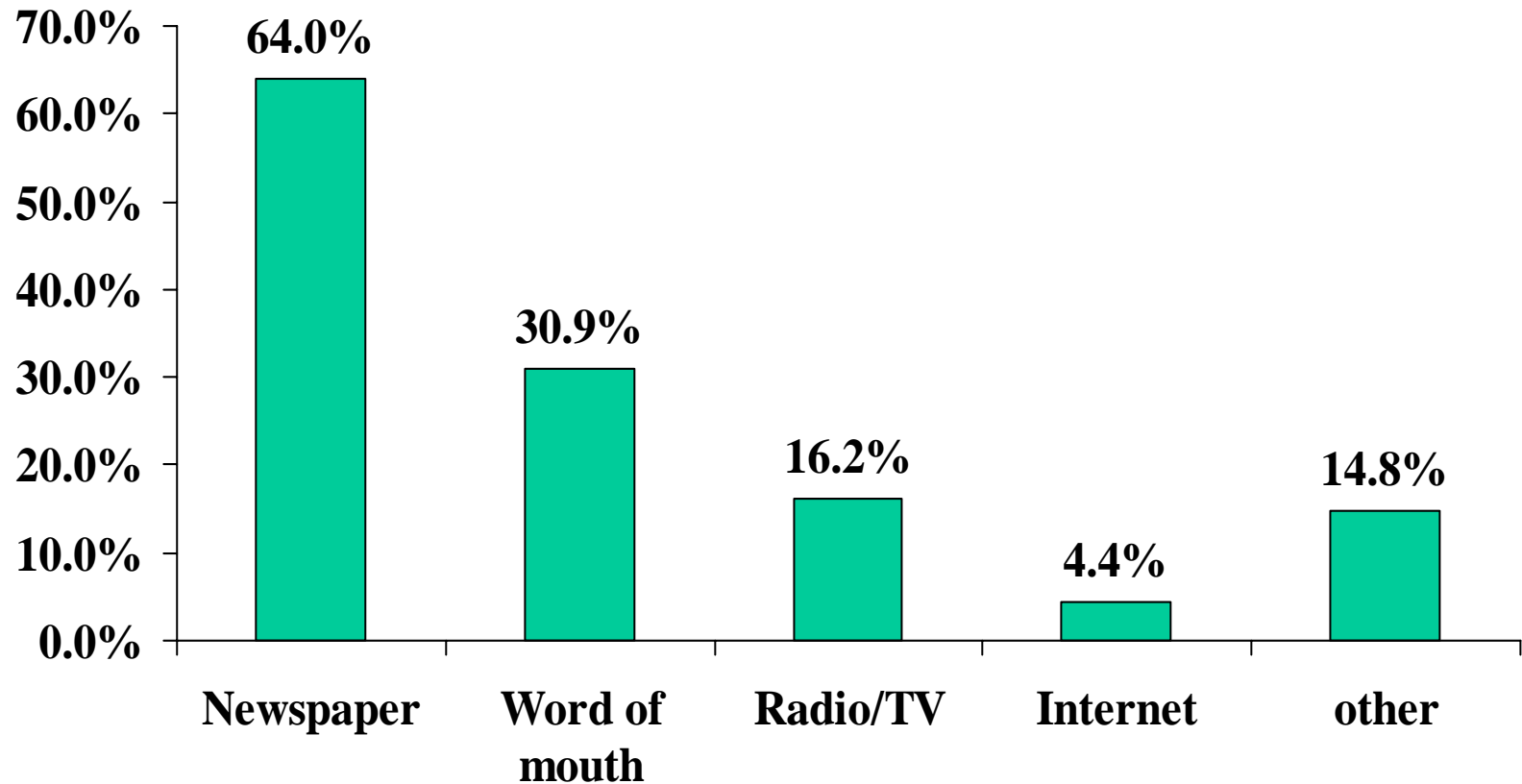
The majority of previous visitors are from the County, **BUT** there is a very significant number of County residents who have never previously attended Founders Day. Does this mean we are attracting people we never previously attracted? Or are we *losing* people that we previously attracted but no longer attend? More research is definitely required, but this data raises important questions.

# Previous Battle of Ogdensburg visitor?



The surprise here is not how *few* have visited the February event, but rather how *many*. As might be expected, all but a few of these are from within the county. They include both young adults with children and a significant number of seniors.

# Learning about the event



# **Learning about the event:**

- While the newspaper is the main source of information for all age groups, especially within the County, word of mouth ranked second. In a significant number of cases, residents, especially local residents learned of the event by both the newspaper *and* word of mouth.**
- Word of mouth was an important source of information for persons living elsewhere in the state and in Ontario.**

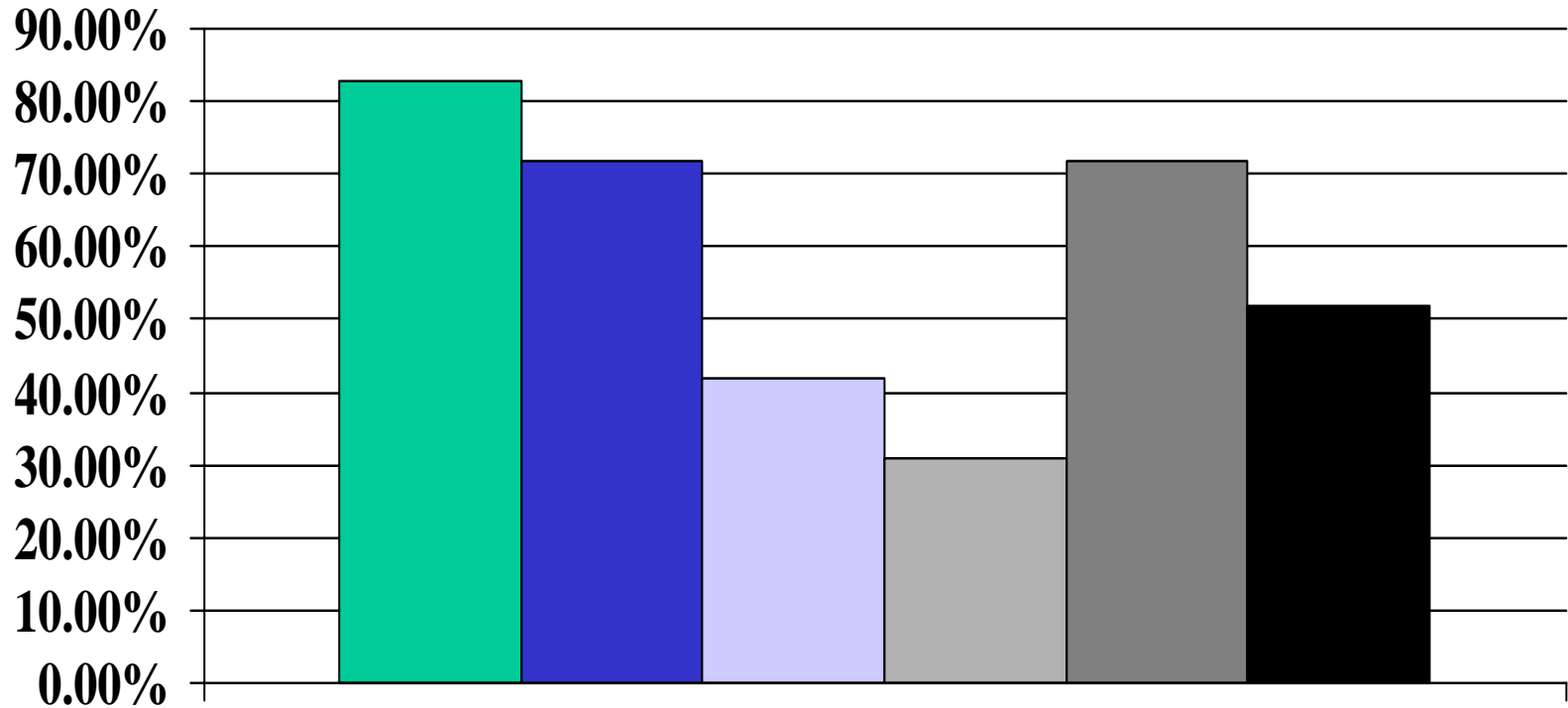
- **Radio and television coverage had an impact, particularly within the County and in Ontario, More coverage should be sought.**
- **A small number of persons got information from the Internet, including people of all ages. Increased use of the Internet should be examined.**

# **“Other” responses included:**

- Brochure
- Saw sign
- Saw tents
- Relative is a re-enactor
- Signage at events in nearby towns
- Attend every year



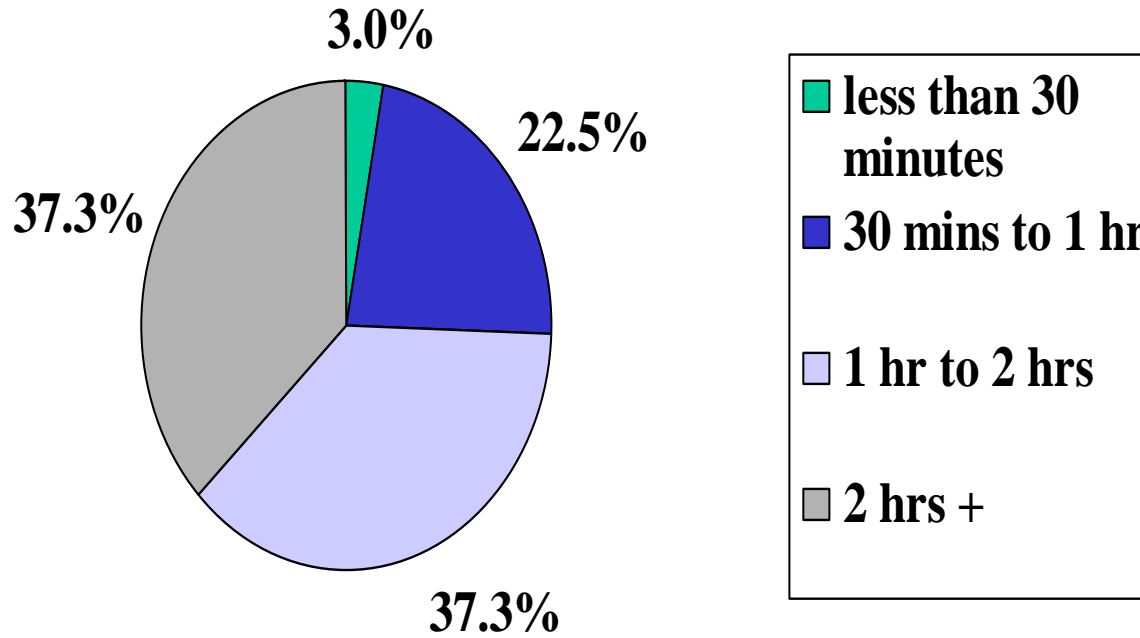
# Other attractions visited



# **Other attractions visited:**

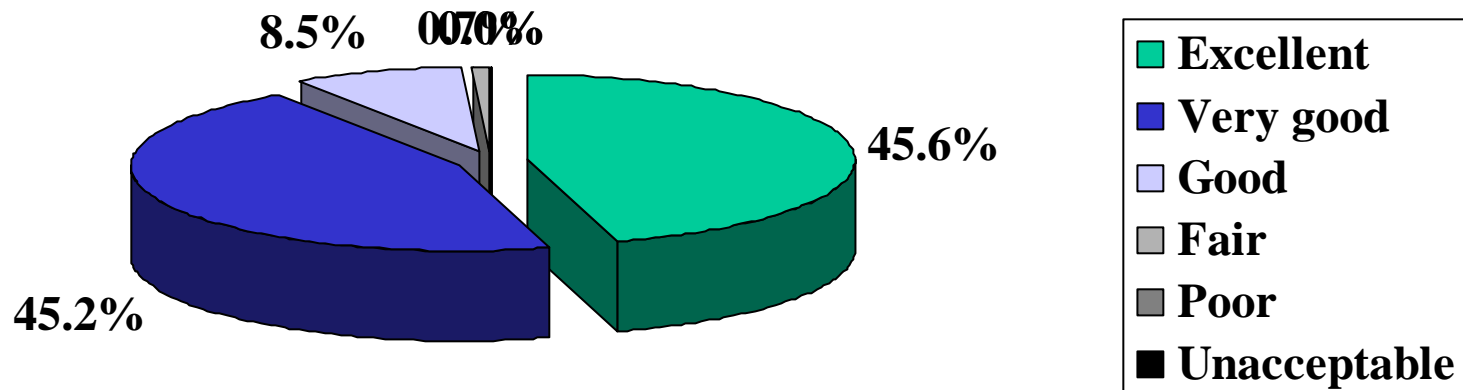
- **Our visitors are active people, with multiple interests**
- **The majority are history and/or museum buffs, visiting all of historic sites, museums and re-enactments**
- **They are not the classic sports buffs or concert-goers**
- **Further study of their characteristics is in order so that advertising and programs can be precisely targeted.**

# Time spent at Founders Day



As outdoor special events go, Founders Day has excellent holding power. A third of the visitors stayed at least an hour and another third at least two hours. One visitor reported staying 5+ hours and another being here Friday evening, most of Saturday and part of Sunday!

# Visitors' overall satisfaction



# **Visitors' overall satisfaction:**

- In more than 15 years of research in heritage institutions of all kinds, I cannot recall such a strong expression of visitor satisfaction.**
- Less than 1% of respondents rated their experience “fair” and *none* rated it poor or unacceptable.**
- There was no significant correlation between time spent and level of satisfaction, which is unusual. This speaks to the potential appeal of the event to a variety of audiences, with differing amounts of time on their hands.**

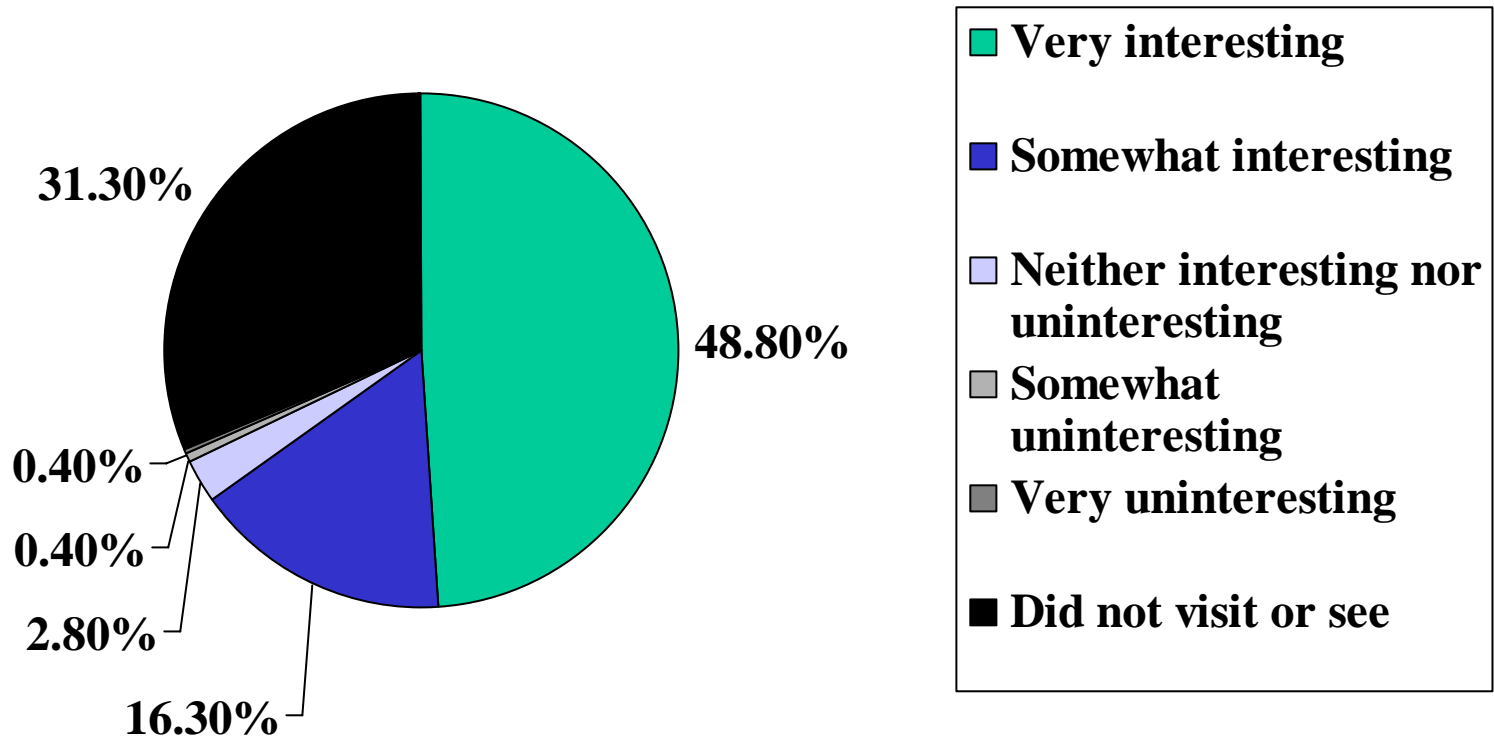
**The second half of the questionnaire looked at visitors' satisfaction with specific components of Founders Day and with aspects of the proposed fort they valued.**

**As noted previously, a small number of visitors did not complete the reverse side of the questionnaire, though specifically requested to do so.**

**As well, no responses were recorded for certain parts of the event. I suspect that this means they did not see or visit those parts, but I have *not* included their numbers in the tables.**

**The following ten questions  
investigate visitors'  
satisfaction with specific  
components of the event.**

# The sea battle

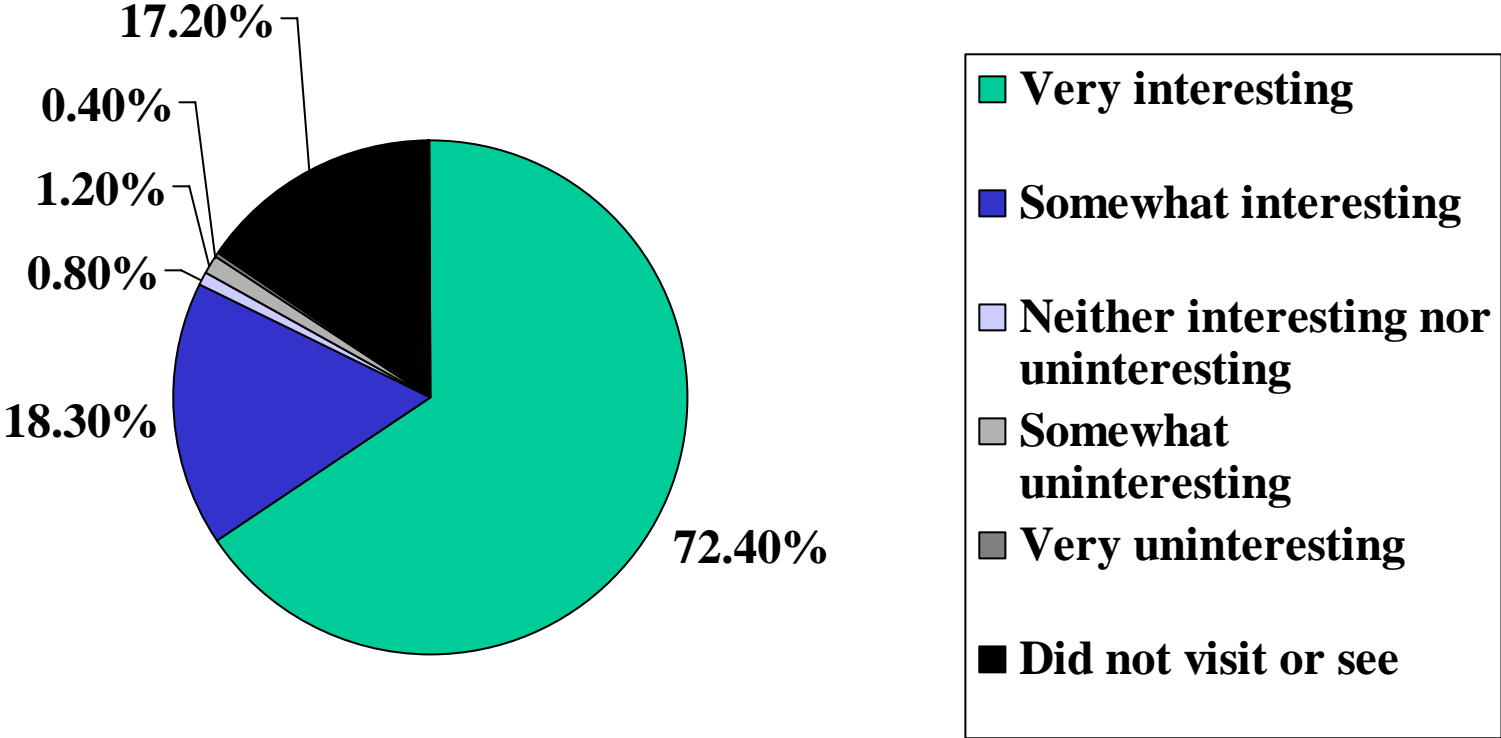




# The sea battle:

- **Those who saw the sea battle tended to find it very interesting.**
- **However, almost a third of the visitors never saw it and if the number of visitors who did not answer this question is added, this figure jumps significantly.**
- **Obviously, some visited when the battle was not taking place but it also seems apparent that the sea battle is (a) poorly advertised; (b) invisible to the public; or both.**

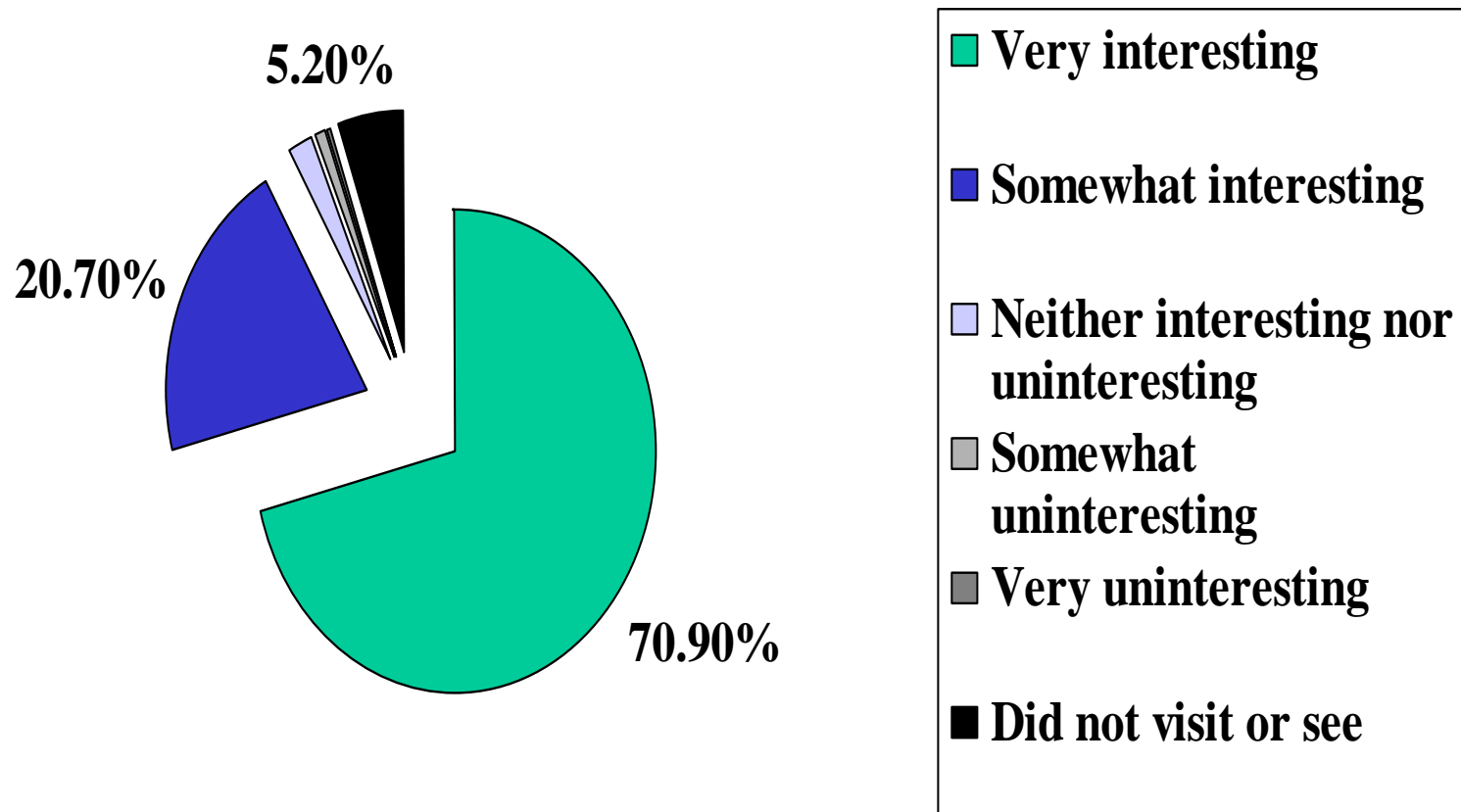
# The replicas of historic ships and boats



# **The replicas of historic ships and boats:**

- Visitors response was even more positive than to the previous question, probably because more people saw them close-up and, in some cases, in action**
- Nonetheless, a significant number failed to see them, which reinforces the suggestion that better promotion and signage is required.**

# The sailors' uniforms and equipment



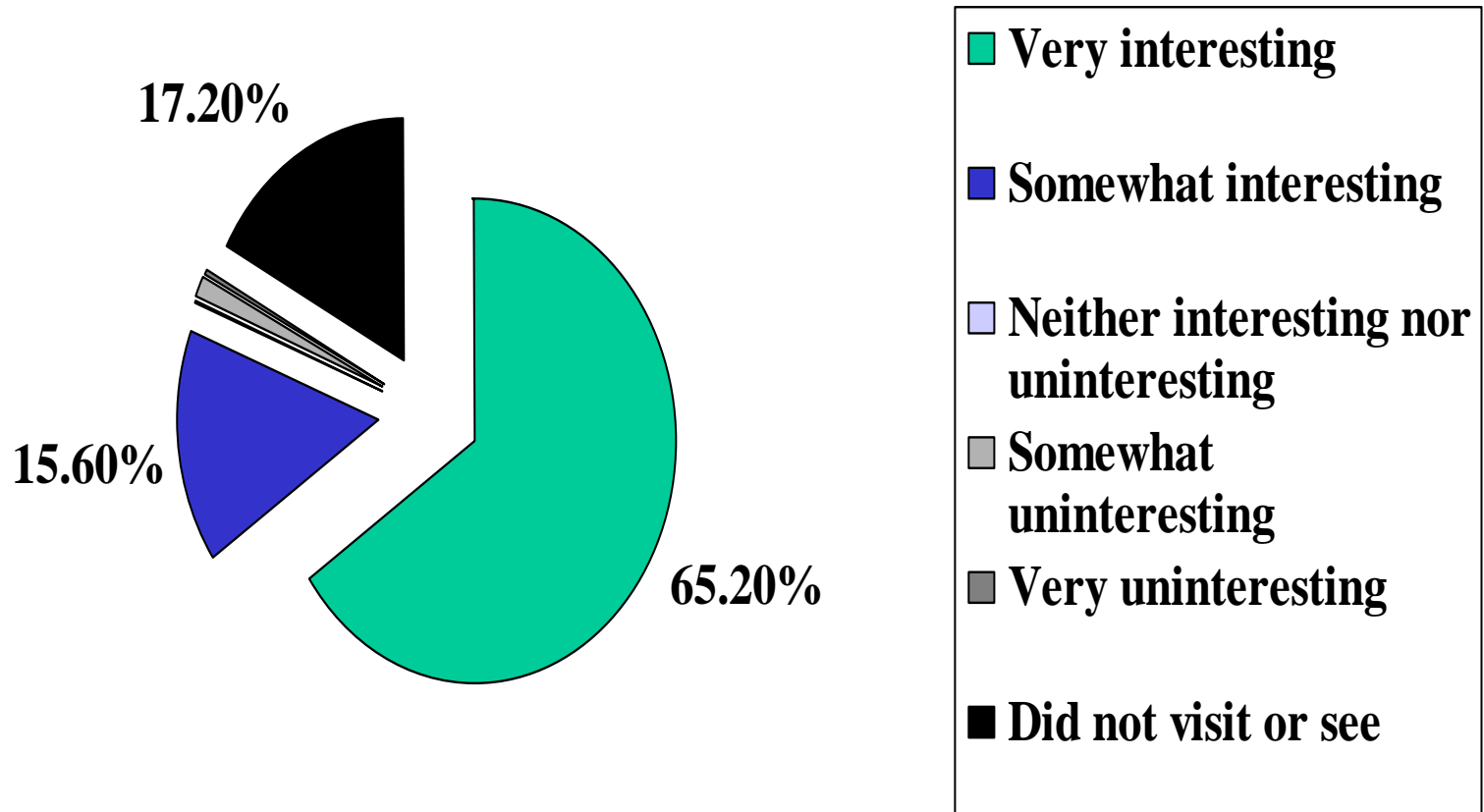
# **The sailors' uniforms and equipment:**

- **Again, the response was very positive.**
- **71% found this very interesting and 21 somewhat interesting. A tiny number (3 respondents) did not find this interesting.**
- **5.2%, a significant number, did not apparently see the sailors' uniforms.**
- **This may be because they did not see the sailors or did not identify them as such.**

**The results of the three previous questions strongly suggest that the visitors find the naval component of the event attractive.**

**It should be continued, improved, and promoted more strongly.**

# The land battle



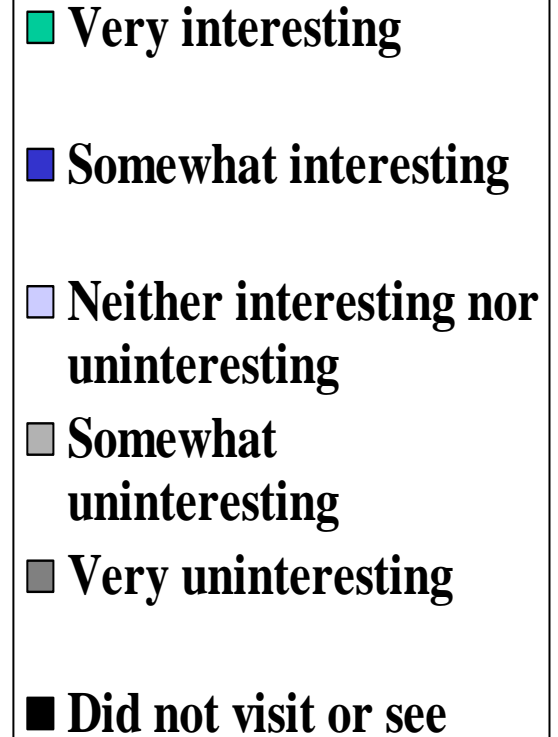
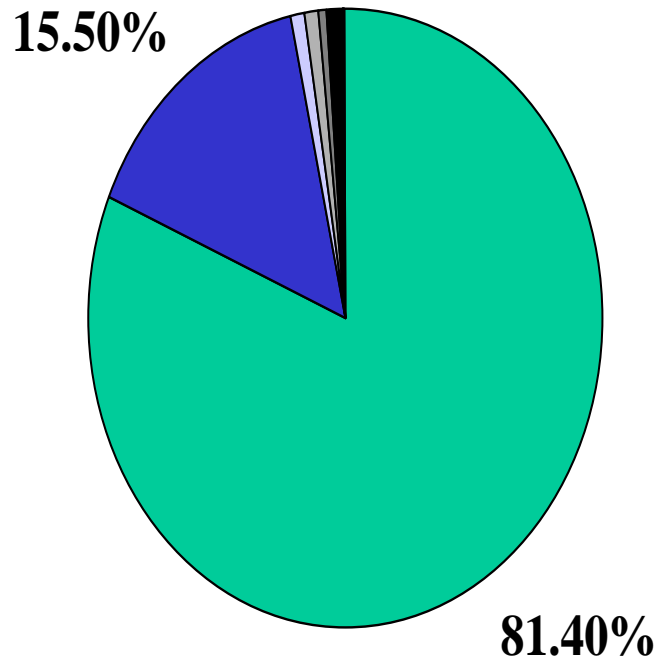
# The land battle:

- **Almost two thirds of visitors found the land battle “very interesting” and another 15.6% “somewhat interesting”.**
- **The neutral and negative responses *totaled* only 2%, which is statistically insignificant.**
- **The very significant 17.2% of respondents who missed the battle almost certainly came in the morning.**



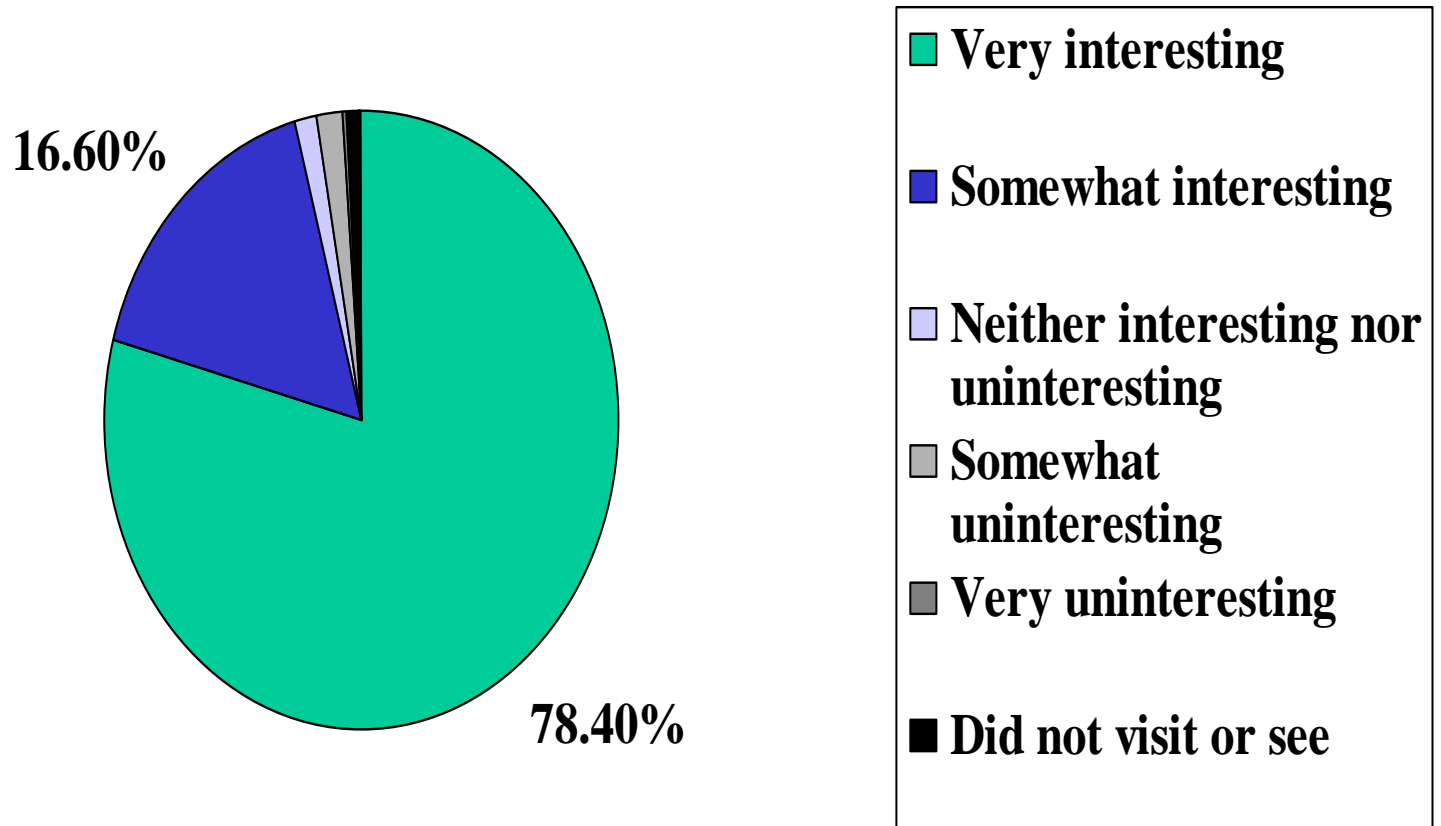
**Too many visitors are missing either the land battle or the naval battle, or both. Both scheduling and advertising should be examined.**

# The soldiers' uniforms and equipment



Do you *really* need a comment?!!!

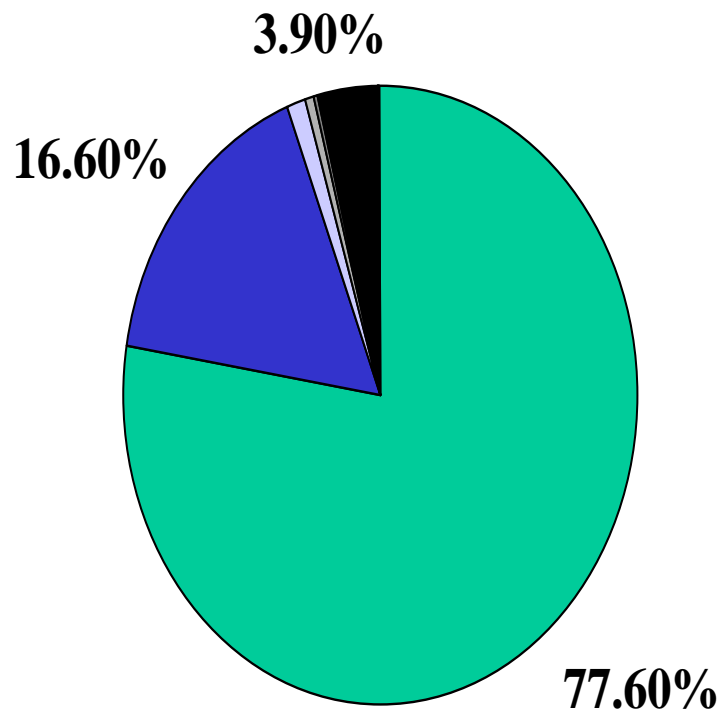
# The encampment



Even more positive results.

**As might have been expected, the military component is at the heart of visitors' satisfaction ratings. Neutral and negative ratings, even when combined, are insignificant.**

# The heritage trades people

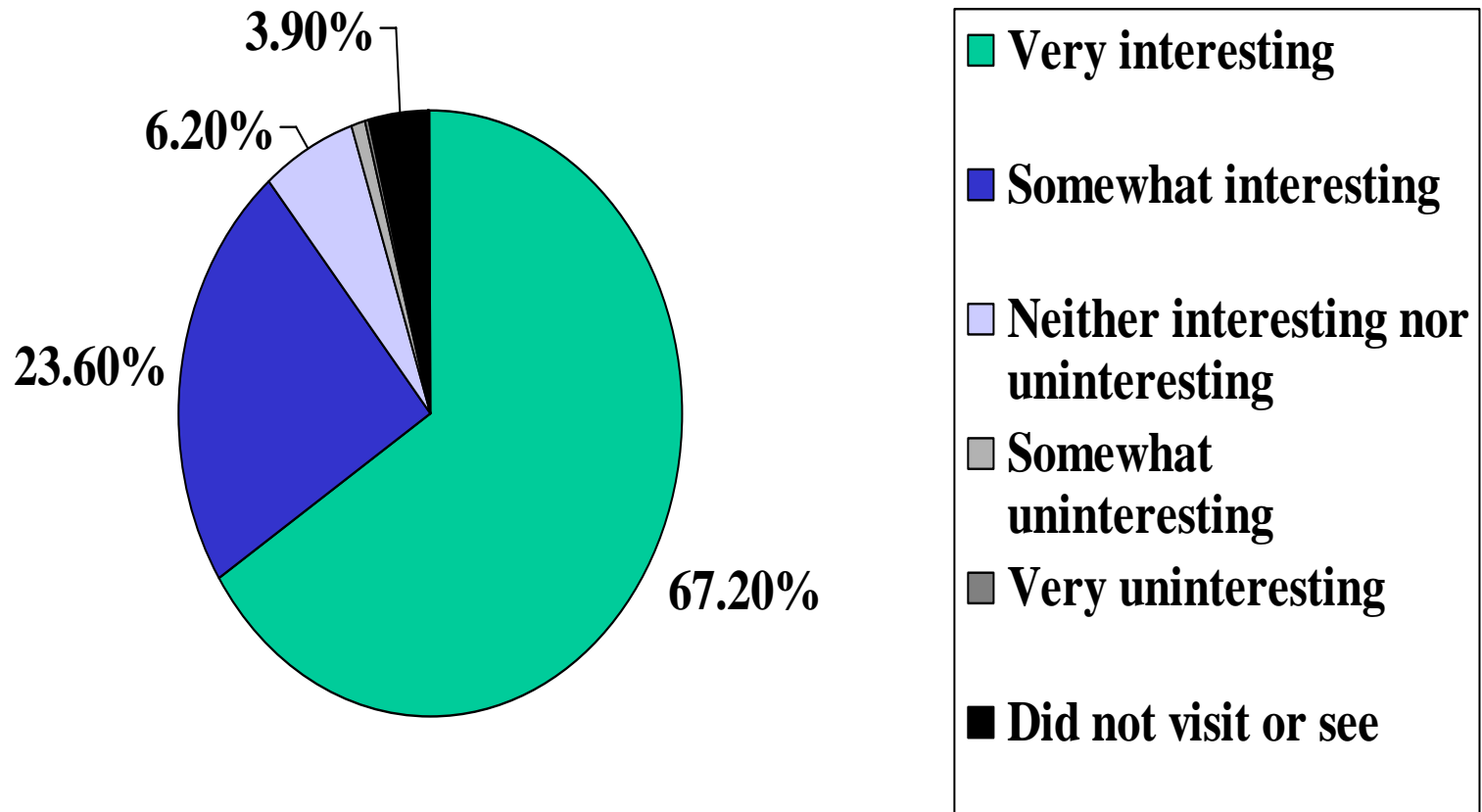


- Very interesting
- Somewhat interesting
- Neither interesting nor uninteresting
- Somewhat uninteresting
- Very uninteresting
- Did not visit or see

# **The heritage trades people:**

- There was very strong interest in the heritage trades people**
- However, 3.9% of the visitors did not see them. If we include the visitors who did not answer this item, the figure becomes significant.**
- It would appear that heritage trades could be a promising addition to the event, but there must be more of them and they must be more visible.**

# The sutlers

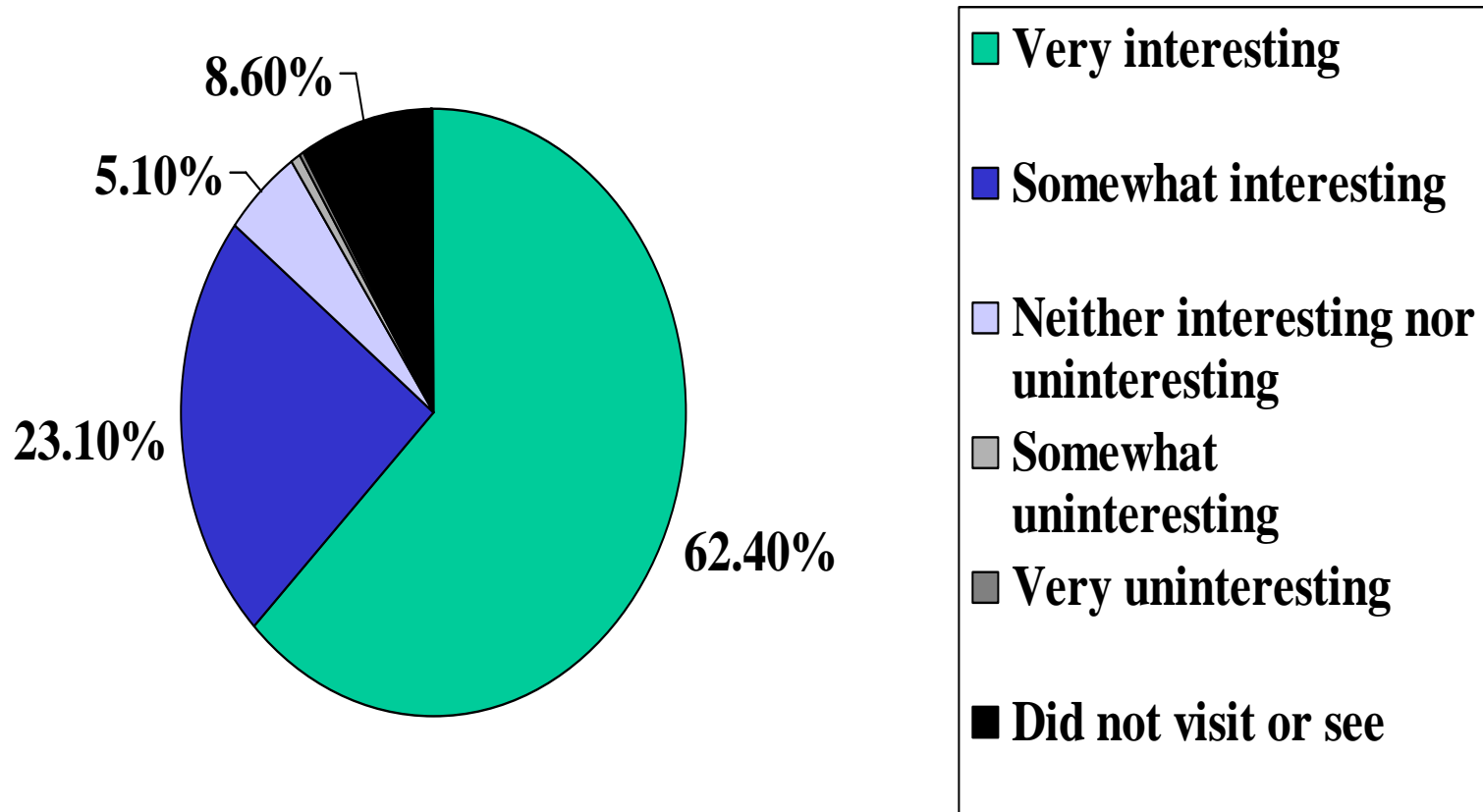


# **The sutlers:**

- **The sutlers are significantly less interesting to visitors than the military and naval aspects of the event but they are still a major attraction, even though their numbers were down from 2006.**
- **This is an area which should be examined with a view to making the event more appealing to visitors.**



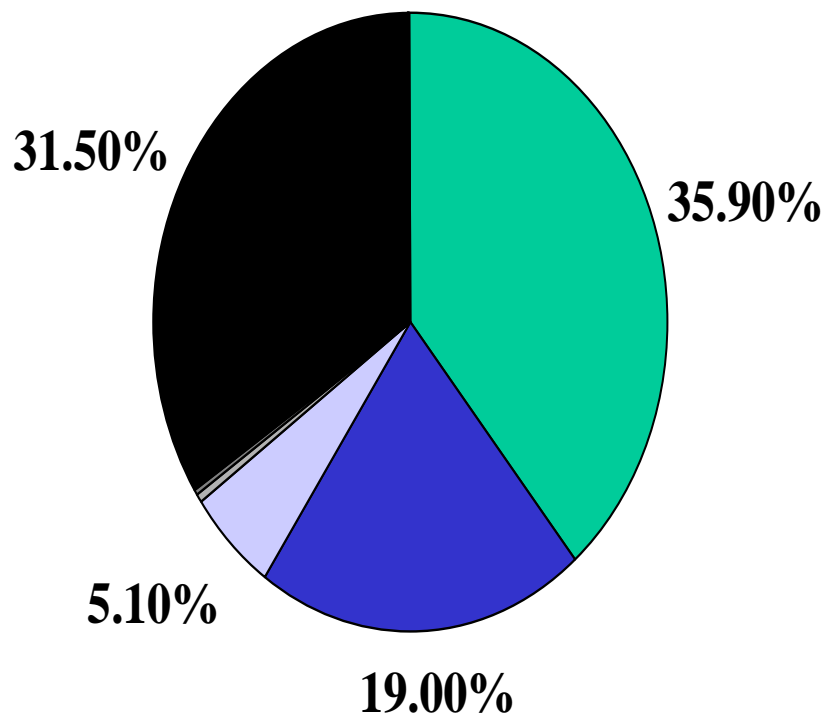
# The display on Fort La Présentation



# **The display on Fort La Présentation:**

- At a time when this might have been expected to be of great interest to visitors, it was not, ranking below the sutlers as an attraction.**
- Note the significant number of visitors whose feelings were neutral and, more important, the proportion who did not see or visit it.**
- At a time when we should be drumming up public support for the construction of the fort, these results are disappointing. This display *must* be improved and made much more visible to the public for future events, winter and summer.**

# The USMCR snack bar



- Very interesting
- Somewhat interesting
- Neither interesting nor uninteresting
- Somewhat uninteresting
- Very uninteresting
- Did not visit or see

# **The USMCR snack bar:**

- This was the least attractive (to visitors) component of the event that was surveyed.**
- Notice the very high proportion of visitors who did not visit it; combine this with the number who did not answer this question and the real picture emerges.**
- The snack bar is jarringly out of context with the rest of the site. Creating a period tavern at a central location in the site (like “Jack Nastyface’s Tavern” at Discovery Harbour) is an alternative that should be examined.**
- It is certainly a worthwhile thing to partner with the USMCR, but perhaps it could be done in a way that better suits the event?**

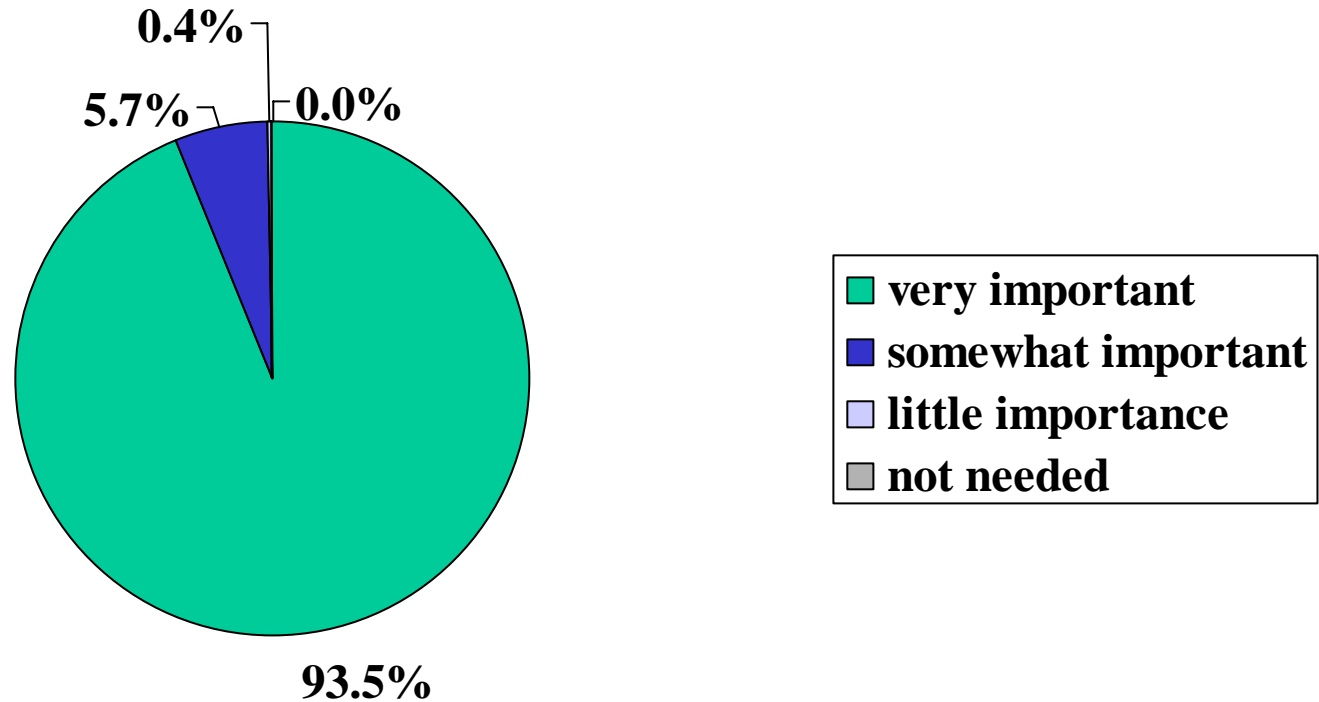
**Given the fact that a significant number of visitors checked off each question in the previous series as “excellent” (the first alternative), there is no doubt that the responses are skewed toward the positive end of the spectrum.**

**Nonetheless, the weight of the evidence does point to a very good event, though there are clearly some areas for both improvement and more investigation at future events.**

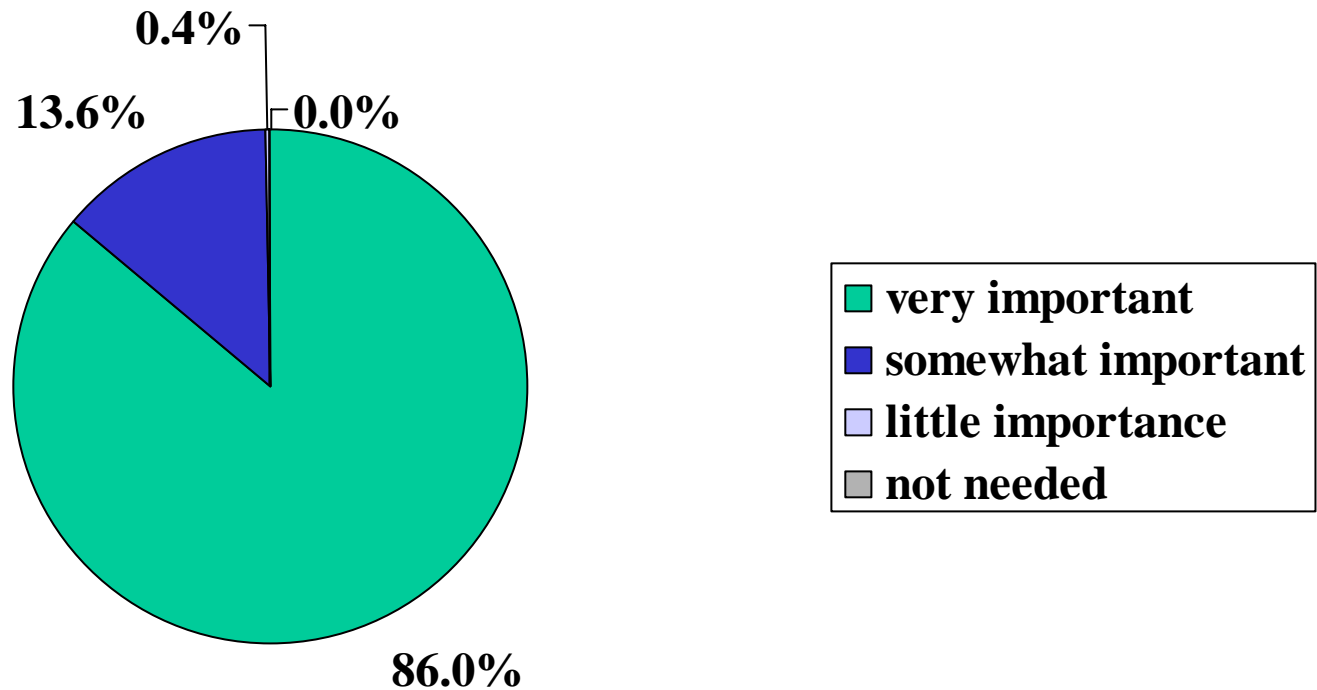
**The remaining questions asked the visitors how important to them were certain specific facets of the fort to be rebuilt.**

**It is significant that many of the respondents who skimmed over the previous group of questions apparently gave the next questions more consideration.**

# The fort and its buildings

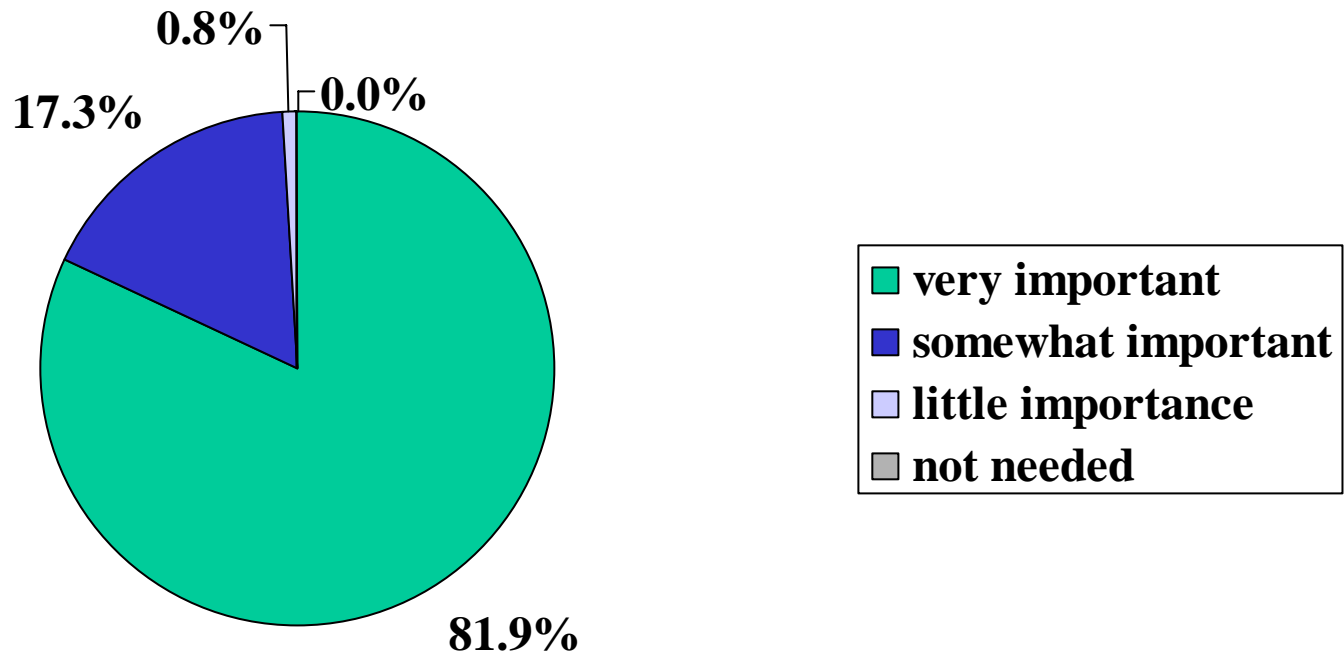


# Reproductions of furniture, equipment, etc.

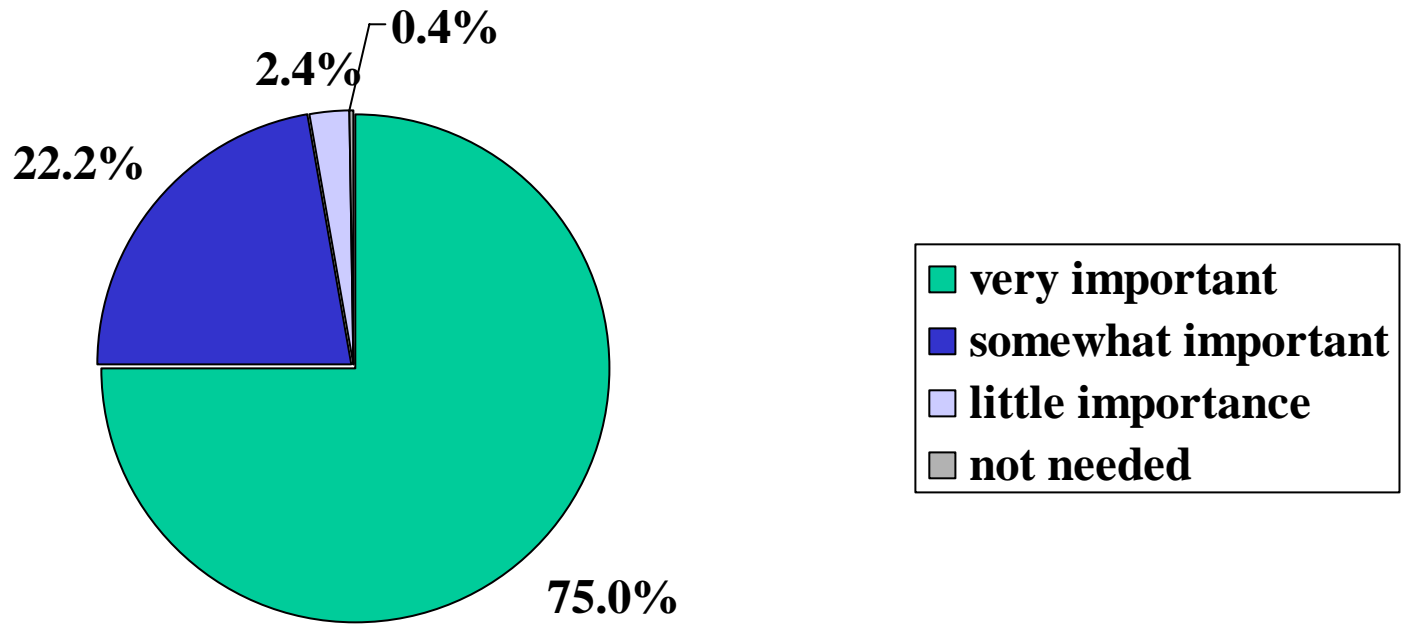




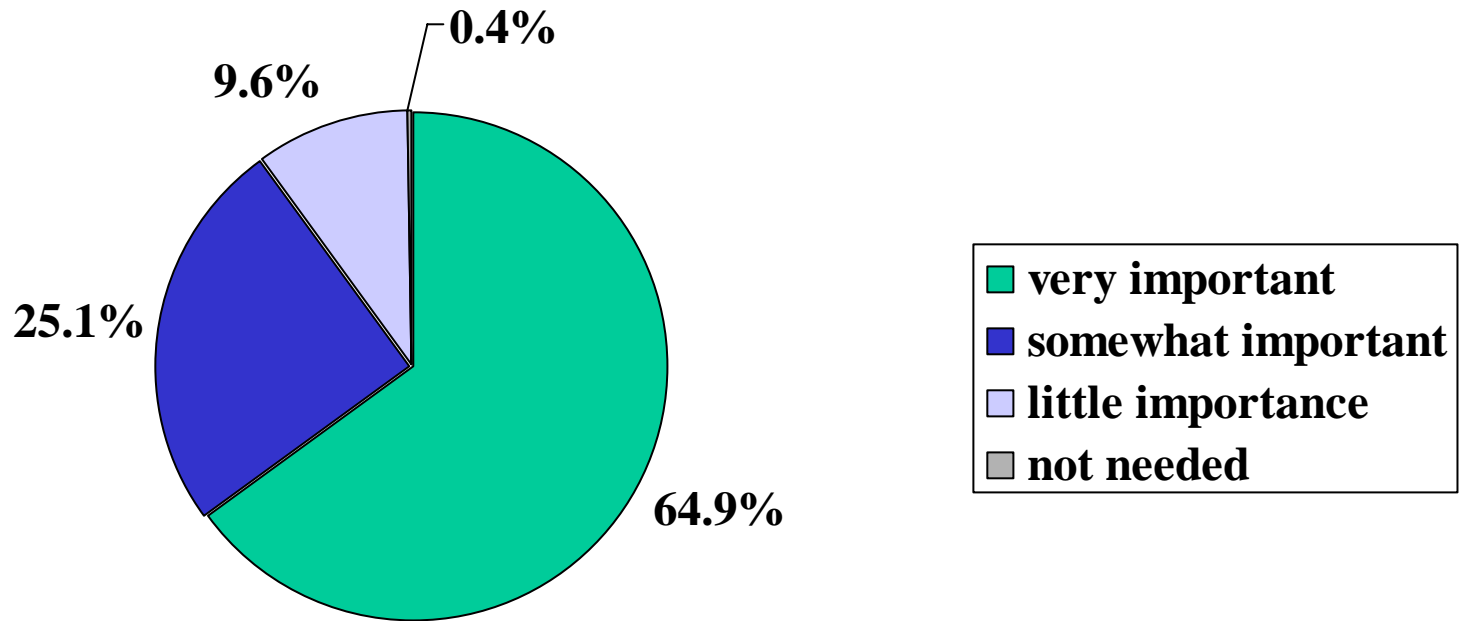
# Educational (museum style) exhibits



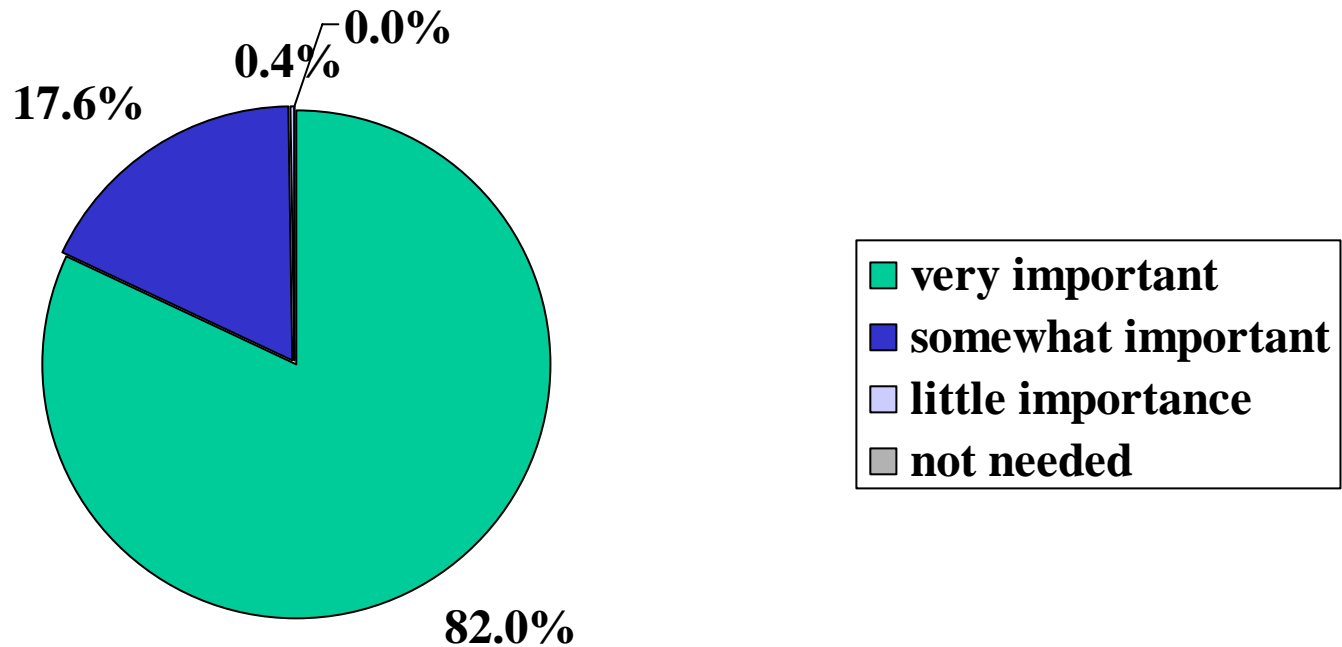
# Artwork, maps & illustrations



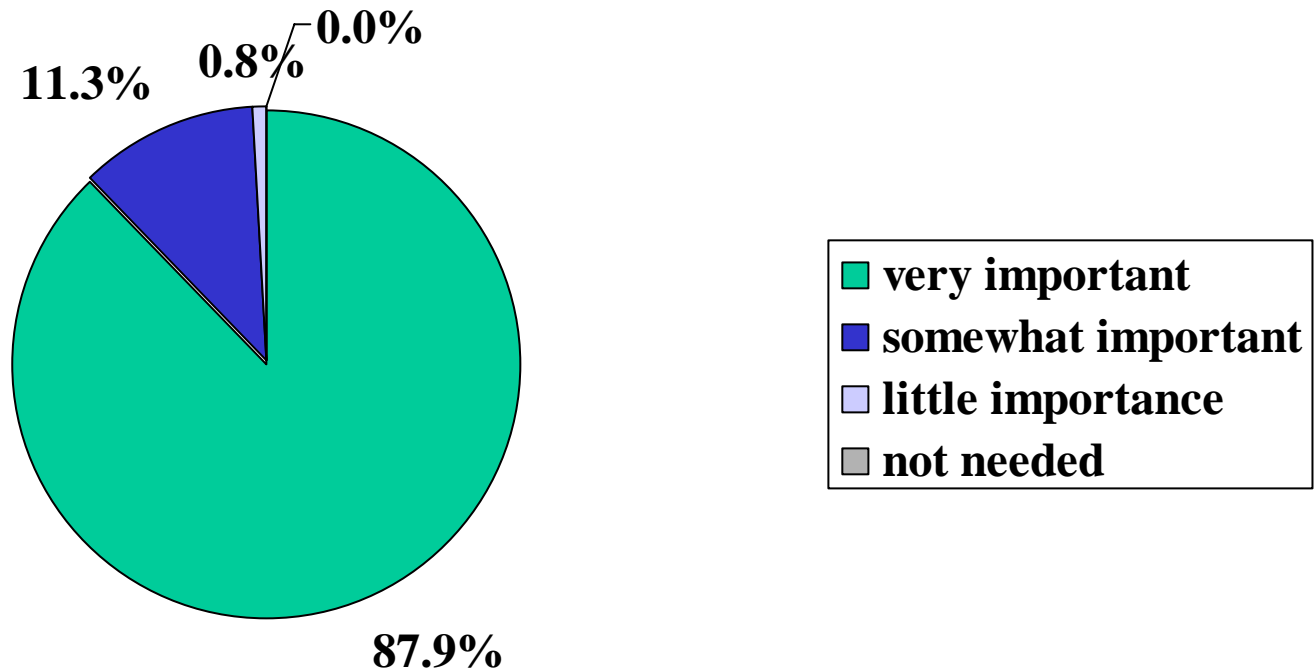
# Audio-visual displays



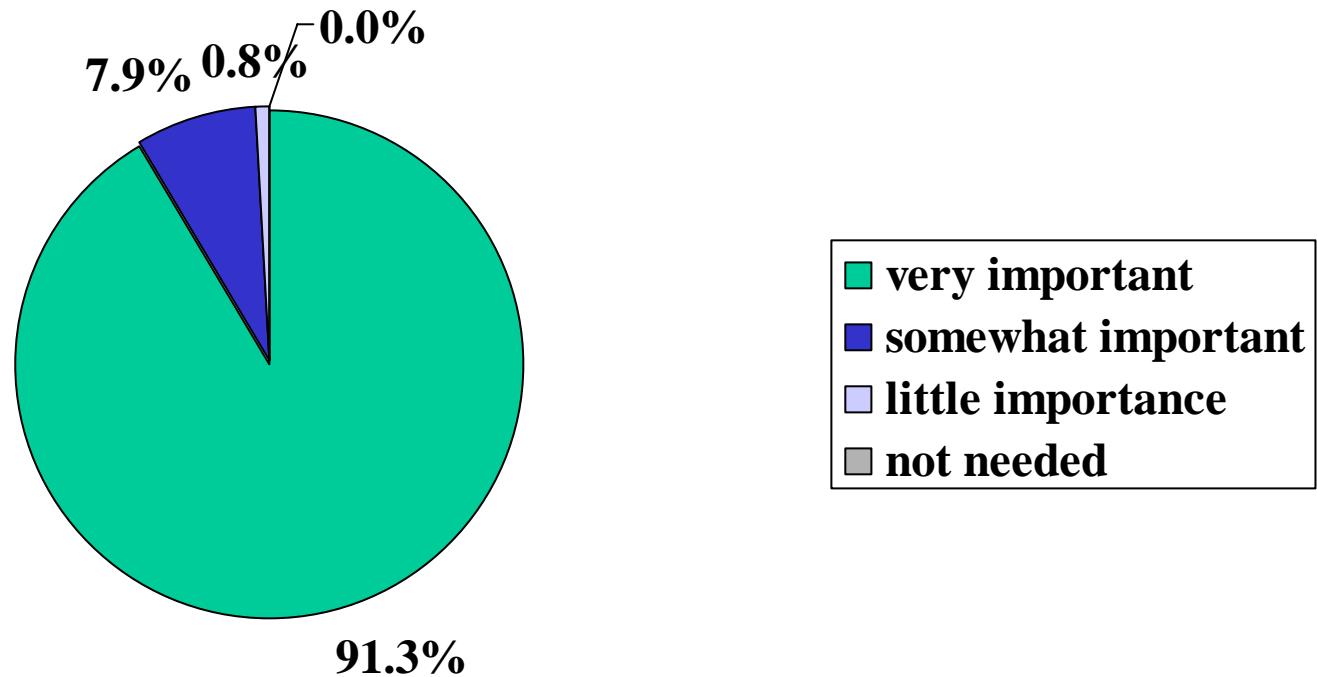
# Educational programs and activities



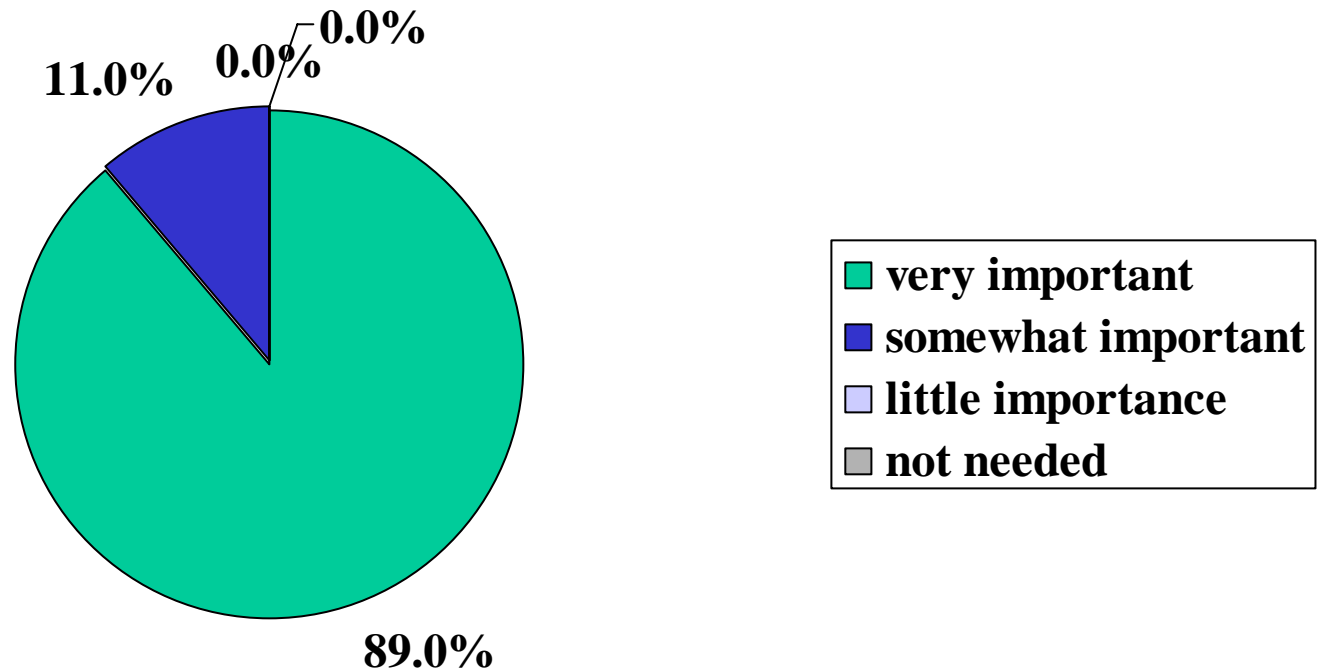
# Live (human) interpreters and hosts



# Re-enactments like the one you saw today



# An Iroquois village of the 1750s



**What does this data from the visitors tell us about the fort they want to see built?**



**The visitors place a high value  
on the fort itself and its  
furnishings and equipment.**

**They value museum-style exhibits, but are less concerned about artwork, maps and illustrations, and much less concerned about audio-visual displays.**

**The visitors place a high value on educational programs and activities, live interpretation and hosting, re-enactments and the prospect of a period Iroquois village.**

**A small number of visitors wrote comments on the forms, as follows:**

- “Admission tent was basically invisible”
- “Can’t wait to see the fort!”
- “No significant input from Iroquois people”
- “You cook”
- “This is a bunch of great people. Thanks!”
- “Do not want to support French government” (HN note: This person declined to answer questions on the fort.
- “Keep up the good work!”

- “The announcer for the battle could of (sic) been closer, Hard to hear over the guns”
- “Intend to return to see sea and land battles (HN note: probably an early morning visitor)
- “not much here for young children. Too much above them.”
- “stayed Friday night, all day Saturday and part of Sunday”
- “Check out AV at Tupper Lake Museum”
- “Canteen ran out of stuff”
- “Ran out too early to try snack bar”

-- “Sutlers did not sell quill pens!”

-- “”Excellent! Can’t wait till next year! Former art teacher and history buff (undecipherable...Capt St. Vincent.”

-- “Re-enactors and sutlers unresponsive, even when approached and questioned. It seems to be just an opportunity for a group to get out and play, not do anything to educate”

-- “We missed the snack bar”

# **Recommendations:**

- 1. Maintain the general pattern of the event.**
- 2. Concentrate advertising on newspapers, radio and TV, particularly to attract visitors from elsewhere in New York State and central Canada.**
- 3. Increase awareness of the event and the Association within the county.**
- 4. Consider group rates and special activities for families.**

- 5. Provide activities for families, especially children.**
- 6. Relocate admissions tent to make it more visible and deter people entering without paying.**
- 7. Consider installation of signs to direct visitors to different areas and activities.**
- 8. Continue and improve naval component but make it more visible.**



**9. More effectively advertise timings for the naval and land battles, to help visitors plan their visits. Consider adjusting timings and sequence of activities.**

**10. Promote more participation by historic trades people and increase their visibility.**

**11. Improve and make very visible the display on Fort La Présentation.**

**12. Consider developing, in partnership with USMCR, a period “tavern” offering improved variety and quality of food.**

**13. In planning the new fort, place emphasis on the buildings, furnishing and equipment, and limited exhibits. Also emphasize educational programs, live interpretation and re-enactments.**

**14. In consultation with the Iroquois, develop elements of a 1750s native village as an adjunct to the fort to be built.**

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**7 August 2007**

