National Park Service Recreation Visits, 1979-2025: Totals from the IRMA Public-Use File

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Source git 38fa640 · technical report

Abstract

We sum the NPS Visitor Use Statistics Main_Data.csv (IRMA DataStore 2317666) on recreation-visit rows (Statistic=TRV). The file has 2,905,440 rows and 406 unit codes spanning 1979-2025. Systemwide TRV is 205,369,795 in 1979 and 331,863,358 in 2024. The 2025 annual total in the same file is 323,014,305 and may be incomplete. The busiest 2024 unit codes in this extract are GOGA, BLRI, and GRSM. We did not join a names table; codes are reported as stored.

1. Introduction

Research question. Using only the public monthly IRMA file, how did NPS recreation visits change from 1979 to 2024, and which unit codes dominate 2024?

Contributions:

- C1. Annual TRV series (results/gov/nps_annual_trv.csv).
- C2. Top 20 unit codes by 2024 TRV (results/gov/nps_top20_units_2024.csv).
- C3. File-shape facts: 2,905,440 rows, 406 units (results/gov/nps_meta.json).

2. Background

NPS Social Science coordinates visitor-use reporting. IRMA hosts monthly estimates from 1979. The CSV columns are UnitCode, Year, Month, Statistic, Value. Multiple statistics exist (TRV, TNRV, TV, overnight counts). We treat TRV as recreation visits because it is the labeled recreation series in this extract. We do not reinterpret other statistic codes.

3. Method

Streaming CSV read on the operator workstation (i5-12600KF, 64 GiB, Linux 6.17), 2026-09-20. For each row with Statistic equal to TRV, add Value (parsed as integer from float strings) to that year and, if Year is 2024, to that UnitCode. No interpolation. Missing months stay missing. Source path: Documents/Research Data/datagov/historyrise/nps_visitor_use_main_1979-2025.csv (72,212,002 bytes). Companion state file was not used for Tables 1-2.

4. Results

Table 1. Selected annual TRV totals (full series in nps_annual_trv.csv).

year	recreation_visits_trv
1979	205369795
1980	220463211
1990	255581467
2000	285891275
2010	281303769
2019	327516619
2020	237064332
2021	297115406
2022	311985998
2023	325498646
2024	331863358
2025	323014305

Table 2. Highest 2024 TRV unit codes (top 7 of 20 in nps_top20_units_2024.csv).

rank	unit_code	trv_2024
1	GOGA	17187508
2	BLRI	16733639
3	GRSM	12191834
4	GATE	8929035
5	LINC	8479349
6	GUIS	7801176
7	NATR	7364833

2024 TRV is 1.62 times 1979 TRV in this file (331863358 / 205369795). 2020 is the visible pandemic-year dip (237,064,332).

5. Discussion and threats

IRMA methodology, not this script, defines a recreation visit. Parkway and recreation-area units (GOGA, BLRI, NATR) are not interchangeable with interior national parks; ranking by code mixes unit types. 2025 may be a partial calendar year. Integer conversion truncates fractional Values if any exist. We did not verify against the NPS Statistical Abstract PDF. Codes are not expanded to official names in the result tables.

6. Related work

NPS Visitor Use Statistics Program and IRMA Stats (irma.nps.gov/Stats). Data.gov dataset NPS Visitor Use Statistics Data Package, 2025. This paper is a file sum, not a new demand model.

7. Ethics

Public IRMA CSV. No individual visitor records. Download used HTTP GET with a research user-agent.

8. Conclusion

The IRMA monthly file supports a reproducible annual TRV series. 2024 systemwide recreation visits in this extract are 331.9 million, up from 205.4 million in 1979, with 2020 as the low year in the 2019-2024 window.

9. Artifact appendix

python3 harness/govdata/analyze.py writes results/gov/nps_*.csv and nps_meta.json. Source SHA of this papers repo is on the PDF title page after commit.

10. References

- NPS IRMA DataStore reference 2317666, Main_Data.csv, downloaded 2026-09-20. https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2317666
- NPS Visitor Use Data overview. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/visitor-use-statistics-dashboard.htm