<https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http://watchdoglabs.org/blog/2013/03/06/two-thirds-of-white-house-visitor-records-about-tourists/>

## [Two-thirds of White House visitor records about tourists](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2013/03/06/two-thirds-of-white-house-visitor-records-about-tourists/)

[*efg*](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/author/efg/)[*March 6, 2013 at 5:23 pm*](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2013/03/)

By Earl F Glynn | Franklin Center

[](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/White-House.jpg)

Two out of three visit records released by the White House describe tourists that see the “visitors office”, and identify no specific person visited.

The remaining records describe official visitors, who see the President, the Vice-President, the First Lady, or various members of the White House staff.

The primary purpose for studying [White House visitor logs](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/disclosures/visitor-records) is to understand what people, how often, in what groups visit the White House to attempt to influence public policies.

The information about tourists is rarely “interesting” since there is no public policy issue  involved in touring the White House.

Removal of the tourist data, or segregating it into a separate file, allows one to focus on the more interesting visitors, who see the President or White House officials.

The most recent file released on Feb. 22 contained slightly more than 3 million records.  I identified slightly more than 2 million tourists in this file and almost a million official visitors.

The Data section below shows the tourist data, including files of tourist data by year.

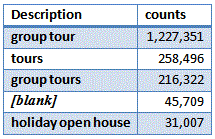
The next article will describe how to work with official visitors in the White House data.

**What is known about White House tourists?**

For simplicity, I label records in the White House visitor file as “tourists” if the person to be visited is the “visitors office.”  I’ve combined the last and first names into a single “visitee” field:

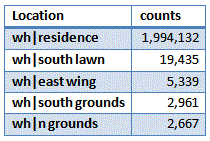
[](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/White-House-Tourist-visitee.gif)

A “Description” field sometimes gives information about a White House visit, but the top 5 descriptions, which cover almost 90% of the visits, are all related to tours:

[](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/White-House-Tourists-Description.gif)

Tourist groups range in size from 1 to over 4,000 people with a median size of about 275.

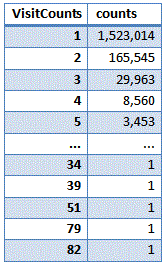
A derived location field, a combination of building and room, shows most of the tourists visit the White House residence.  Here are the top 5 locations visited:

[](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/White-House-tourist-Location.gif)

A “type of access” field is usually “VA” (“visitors access) for tourists, but the information for an “AL” value is not known for some 16,000 visits:

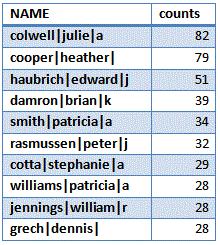
How many times does a person visit the White House?

Based on name alone (multiple people could have the same name), over 1.5 million have visited only once:

[](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/White-House-Tourists-Visit-Counts.gif)

Why have some tourists visited the White House as many as 82 times?  Here are names for the top 10:

**Top 10 White House “tourists”**

[](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/White-House-Top-10-Tourists.gif)

It’s possible that these counts represent more than one person with the same name.

Some of these high-frequency visitors are [White House volunteers, such as floral designer Heather Cooper](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.today.com/pets/white-house-decks-halls-bos-947079).

The information above shows why data about White House tourists has little relevancy to public policy issues or government transparency.

**Data**

* [“Cleaned-Enhanced” version of White House visitor logs](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.watchdoglabs.org/data/WhiteHouse/CLEANED-ENHANCED/) updated with Feb. 22, 2013 data.  Monthly files of visit releases since 2009.
* [New visit data released on Feb. 22, 2013](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.watchdoglabs.org/data/WhiteHouse/CLEANED-ENHANCED/WhiteHouse-Visitor-Records-2013-02-23.txt): 59,024 visits from Nov 2012, 2 visits from June 2009, 5 visists from March 2009.
* [Frequency counts of 59,031 new visits released in Feb. 2013](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.watchdoglabs.org/data/WhiteHouse/2013-02-22/Counts-RELEASE/).
* [White House “Tourist” Data](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.watchdoglabs.org/data/WhiteHouse/Tourists/).  ZIP file by year, frequency counts of selected data fields.
* [R script for initial processing of Feb 2013 data](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.watchdoglabs.org/data/WhiteHouse/2013-02-22/WhiteHouse-Visitors-Processing.Rhttp:/)to create “cleaned-enhanced” data.
* [R script for splitting cleaned data](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/www.watchdoglabs.org/data/WhiteHouse/2013-02-22/WhiteHouse-Visitors-Groups.R) into “tourists” and “official visitors”.

**Series about analyzing White House visitor data**

* [How many White House visitors see the President?](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2012/12/01/how-many-white-house-visitors-see-the-president/), WatchdogLabs.org, Dec. 1, 2012.
* [Background information on White House visitor data](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2012/12/10/background-information-on-white-house-visitor-data/), WatchdogLabs.org, Dec. 10, 2012.
* [Discrepancies between “raw format” and final release versions of White House visitor records](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2012/12/11/discrepancies-between-raw-format-and-final-release-versions-of-white-house-visitor-records/), WatchdogLabs.org, Dec. 11, 2012.
* [White House Worker and Visitor Entry System Data Fields](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2012/12/12/white-house-worker-and-visitor-entry-system-data-fields/), WatchdogLabs.org, Dec. 12, 2012.
* [Cleaning and standardizing White House visitor data](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2012/12/14/cleaning-and-standardizing-white-house-visitor-data/http:/), WatchdogLabs.org, Dec. 14, 2012.
* **Two-thirds of White House visitor records about tourists**, WatchdogLabs.org, March 6, 2013.
* [Charts show end of White House tourist visits](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2013/08/01/charts-show-end-of-white-house-tourist-visits/), WatchdogLabs.org, Aug. 1, 2013.
* [Out-of-cycle release of White House visitor records](https://web.archive.org/web/20140412223123/http:/watchdoglabs.org/blog/2013/08/02/latest-white-house-visitor-records-show-13-more-shulman-visits-in-2009/), WatchdogLabs.org, Aug. 2, 2013.