

## Improving the Parks Reservation Service

The Manitoba government is making changes to the parks reservation process to improve the experience for Manitobans when the inventory first opens up for booking. The intention is to amend the current system for the immediate term (spring 2022 reservations), while also working on a long term plan for a more moderate and functional system.

The focus is on addressing the major problems experienced by users on the 2021 opening days. Improvements will be tested for performance and user experience against best estimates on user traffic loads expected during the 2022 opening days.

While these short-term fixes will not address all of the current issues, they will improve performance while we continue to work on major changes to the reservation system. A public survey on EngageMB in fall 2021 was launched to seek input on potential policy changes.

### Background and Context

The current Parks Reservation System was created in 2006. Over the years, there have been investments to address challenges with the system, however the technology has now become outdated. As result, the provincial government is working toward replacing it with a more modern and functional system to meet the needs of Manitoba campers.

A reservations system is much more than a booking tool. Unlike a hotel room, one campsite is not the same as the next. The campground reservation system is also the main campground management tool. It gives attendants the ability to help customers who want to change or modify their plans during their stay. It also allows customers to make changes on their own as their summer plans evolve.

### Engagement Overview

The Improving Parks Reservation Service Survey was available for public input from Sept. 28, to Oct. 15, 2021 through the EngageMB web portal. The survey was announced via news release and it was promoted through the department's social media channels. The feedback received from this survey will be used to inform our path forward. The goal is provide Manitobans with a reliable, convenient, and fair reservation system.

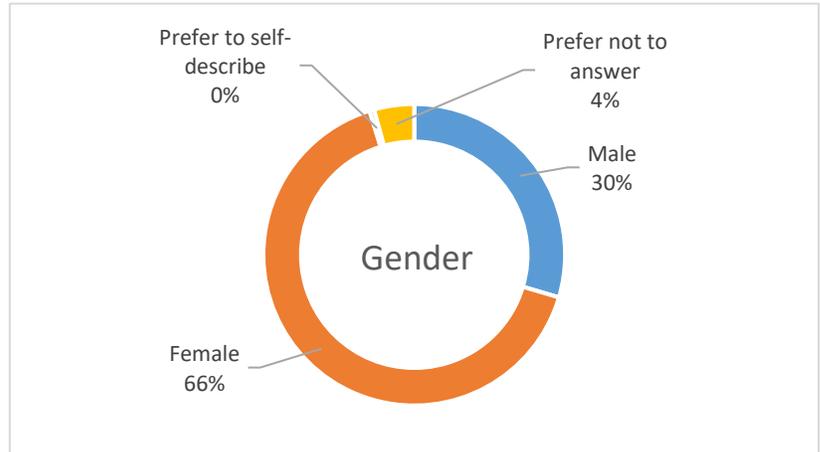
# What We Heard

There were 3,289 individuals who responded to the “Improving the Parks Reservation Service” survey through the EngageMB portal.

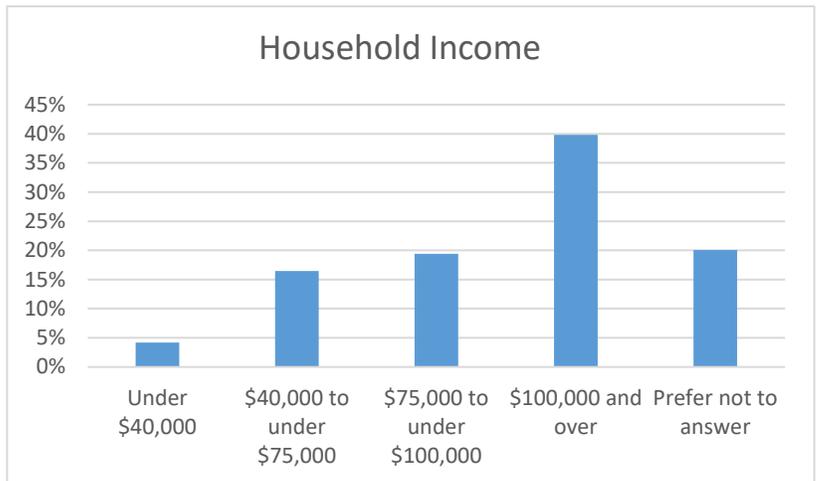
## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Respondents ranged from under 18 to over 65, but the majority were between 30 and 64 years of age (84 per cent).

Two thirds of the respondents identify as female.

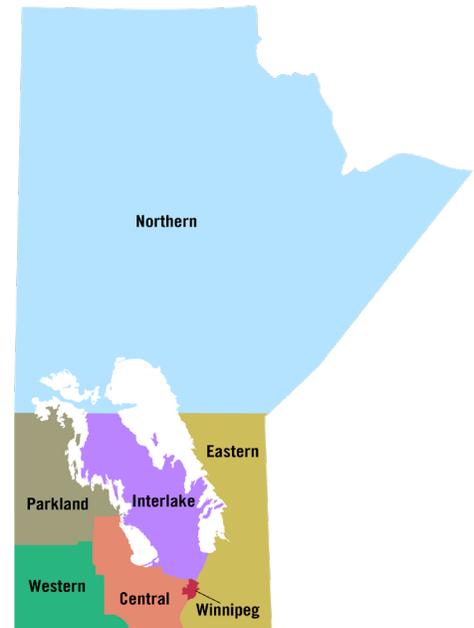
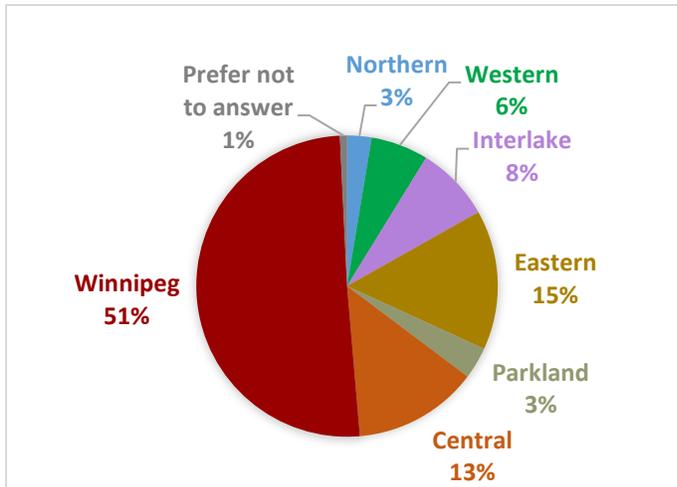


40 per cent of the respondents were from households with income under \$100,000 and 40 per cent were from households with income over \$100,000.



Just over half (51 per cent) of the respondents indicated they were living in Winnipeg and the rest lived in other areas of Manitoba.

## Region of Residence



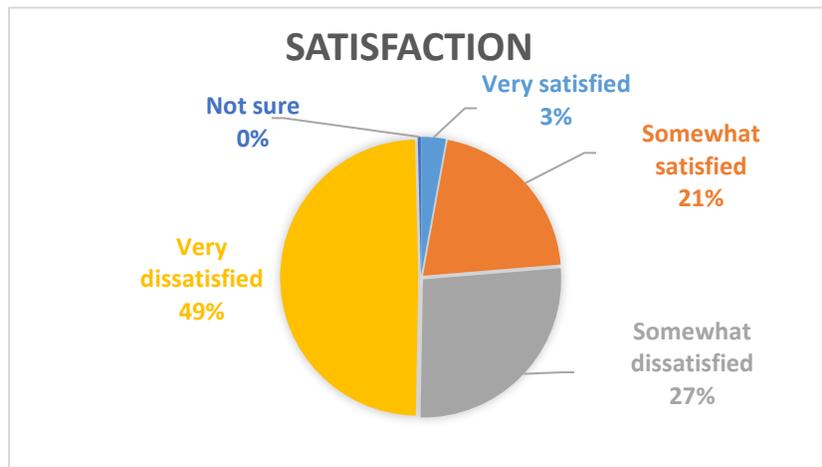
The survey asked respondents to indicate where they lived, based on regional tourism areas, as this terminology was deemed to be more familiar to the general public.

Area of residence was used as a filter for some of the responses to ascertain if there were any regional variations. Winnipeg residents provided just over half of the responses. To ensure that responses were reviewed from a province-wide perspective, it was felt that leaving Winnipeg as a separate regional filter would also be of value in the analysis. For ease of illustration, when looking at variances based on place of residence, Parkland and Western regions were combined for a West response. Similarly, Interlake and Central were combined for a Central region response. This more closely resembles how Parks Branch divides its regional operations.

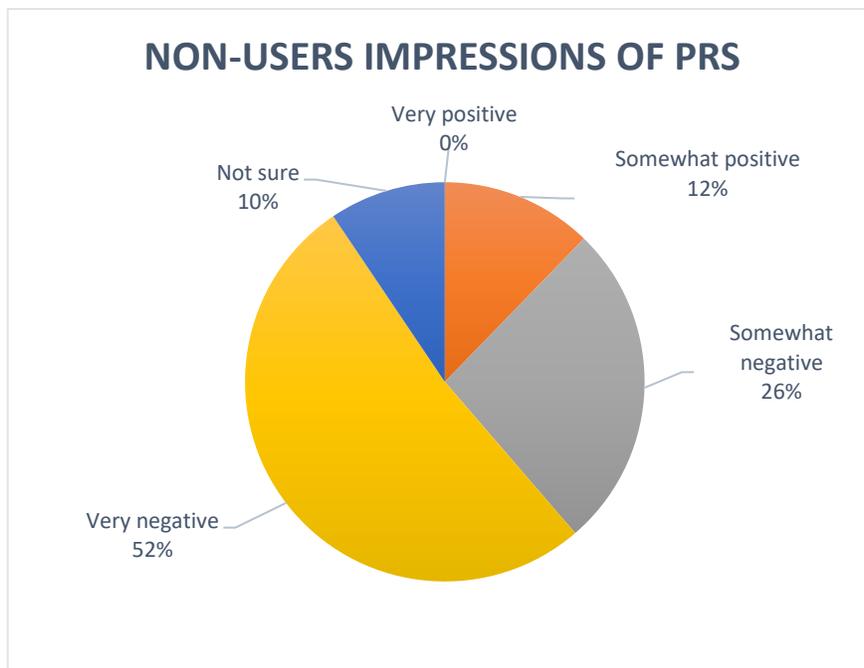
## USING THE PARKS RESERVATION SERVICE

When asked: **Have you ever booked a reservation through the Parks Reservation Service? (Includes reservations made in-person, over the phone or online)?**,” 97 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had.

As anticipated, given the most recent camping reservation season, satisfaction with the reservation experience was low. As this survey was primarily intended to explore the reservation process, it did not elaborate further into user dissatisfaction. With the unprecedented number of people trying to secure a campsite this season, wait times were much longer than in previous years. As soon as desired dates and inventory are gone, a certain level of disappointment can be expected. All of these factors contribute to the reservation experience.

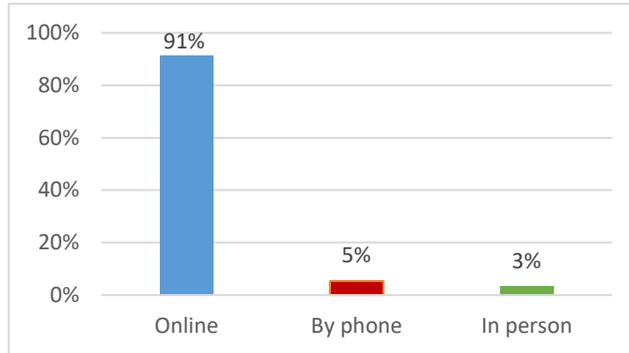


Similarly, of those that indicated that they had not used the reservation service (three per cent), their overall impression of it was on the negative side.



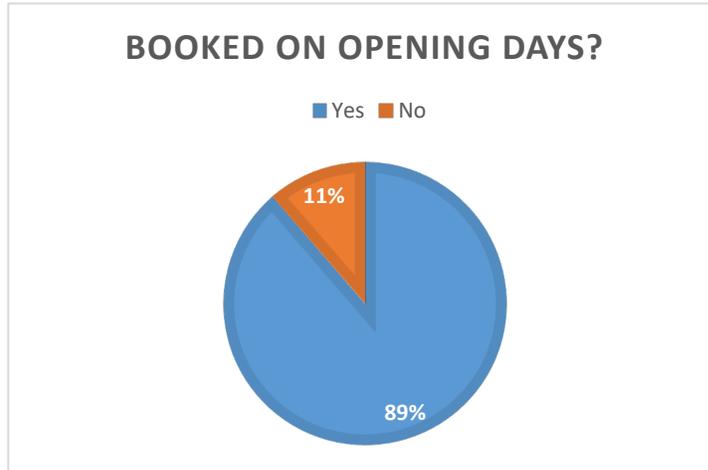
When asked “**How do you typically reserve provincial park sites?**,” on-line was the most frequent reservation channel used (91 per cent), regardless of where people lived. Respondents from western Manitoba used phone or in-person reservations at a higher rate than those who lived in other parts of the province.

**Reservations by Sales Channel by Region**



Region	On-line	Phone	In-person
North	89%	7%	5%
Western (West & Parkland)	84%	10%	7%
East	91%	5%	4%
Central (Central & Interlake)	90%	7%	4%
Winnipeg	94%	4%	3%

When asked: “**Have you ever tried to book with the Parks Reservation Service on opening days?**” 89 per cent indicated that they had.



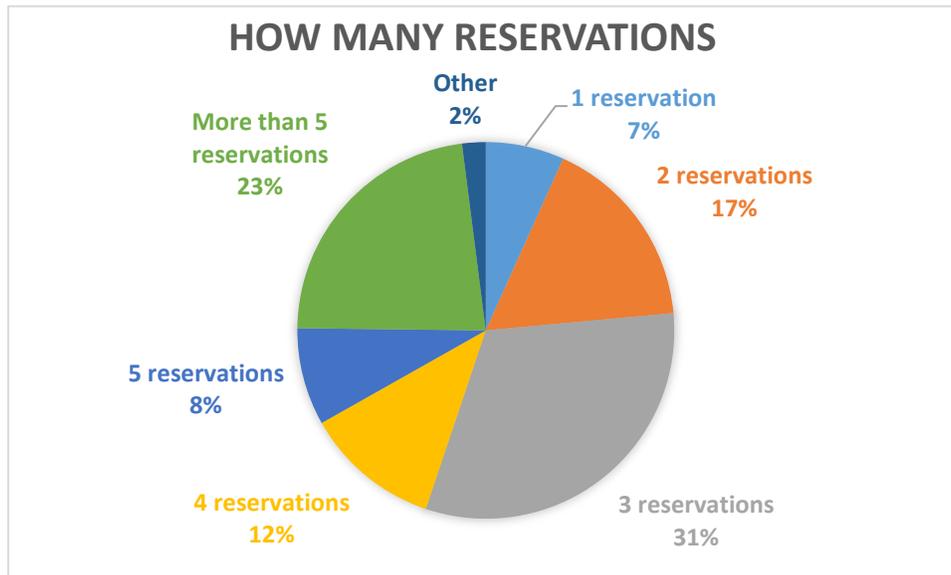
By region	yes	no
North	90.4%	9.5%
West: Western & Parkland	84.4%	15.5%
East	87.8%	12.2%
Central: Central & Interlake	87.2%	12.8%
Winnipeg	90.3%	9.7%
Overall	89%	11%

Geographic variation was slight. Western Manitoba showed the biggest variation where only 84 per cent indicated they made reservations on opening day.

Of the 11 per cent that indicated they did not book on opening day, the top reasons were:

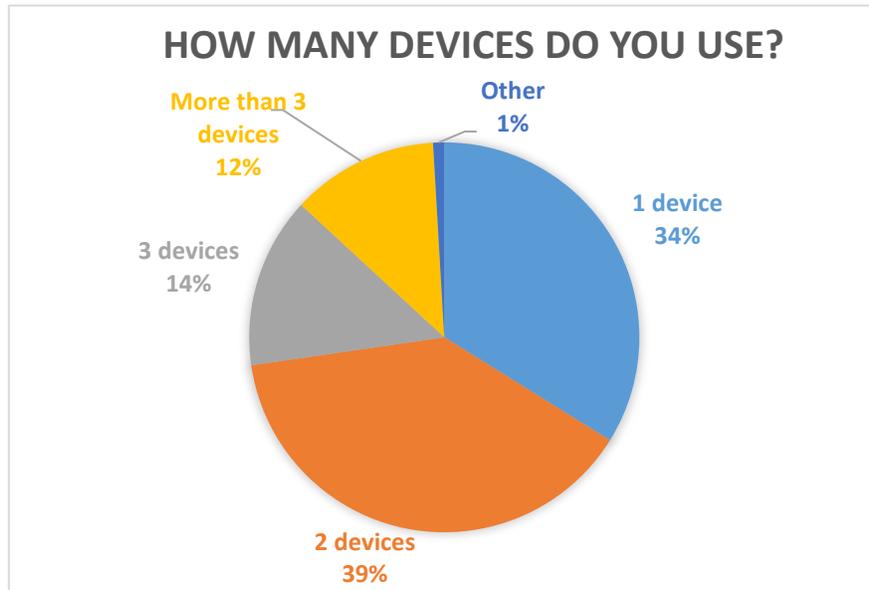
- they had a bad experience (39 per cent)
- takes too long (23 per cent), too far in advance (16 per cent)
- time of day (six per cent)
- technology (five per cent)
- other reasons (five per cent)
- no need (four per cent)
- don't camp in Manitoba (one per cent)

When asked “**How many provincial park site reservations do you typically try to book on opening days (all opening days combined per year)? Include all reservations you try to book if you are the first among your friends and family to get through the PRS queue.**,” approximately one third made three reservations on opening day, with one quarter making two or fewer reservations. This pattern was consistent across the province, regardless of where people lived. Almost one third reported making four or more reservations.



For those respondents who selected “**other**” (two per cent), approximately one third said they no longer book on opening day because it takes too long or is too stressful. The second most frequent response was that they had to make several reservations since they book for themselves as well as friends/family. Others said it varied (21 per cent) depending on the year, or whether or not they got into the system early enough to book their desired sites.

When asked: “How many devices do you use at the same time on opening days when trying to book provincial park sites?” the majority of respondents said they use two or more devices.



	North	West	East	Central	Winnipeg
1 device	45.3%	38.6%	34.8%	34.3%	31.8%
2 devices	36.0%	40.5%	35.1%	36.9%	40.7%
3 devices	14.7%	10.8%	17.2%	14.6%	13.7%
More than 3 devices	4.0%	9.3%	11.0%	13.2%	13.2%
Other	0.0%	0.8%	1.9%	1.0%	0.7%

Northern Manitobans were more likely to use one device to connect on opening day, but the use of two devices was the most common in all other regions. Winnipeg, Eastern and Central regions were much more likely to use more than three devices, than residents of Western or Northern Manitoba.

For the one per cent that indicated “other,” just over a third (37 per cent) indicated a range between one and three devices. Just over a quarter said they don’t use any devices (e.g., they book by phone, do not book on opening day or, just look at what is available and then go in person). Sixteen per cent said it varied and a further 16 per cent said they used five or more devices.

## CAMPGROUND INVENTORY

For context, it is important to understand that there is variability in the type of camping inventory available across the province. The chart below illustrates the distribution of camping inventory by geographic region (as defined by Parks Branch).

Approximately 46 per cent of the just over 4,000 campsites available for reservation offer basic service, 40 per cent have electrical service, six per cent are electric/water sites, and seven per cent are full-service sites. The north does not offer any electric/water or full-service sites. The west has more electric/water sites, and central and east have more full-service sites. What is available might influence how people responded to some questions, based on where they live. It is also important to remember that people camp outside of their regions and provincial parks are not the only camping provider.

### Distribution of Camping Inventory by Geographic Region

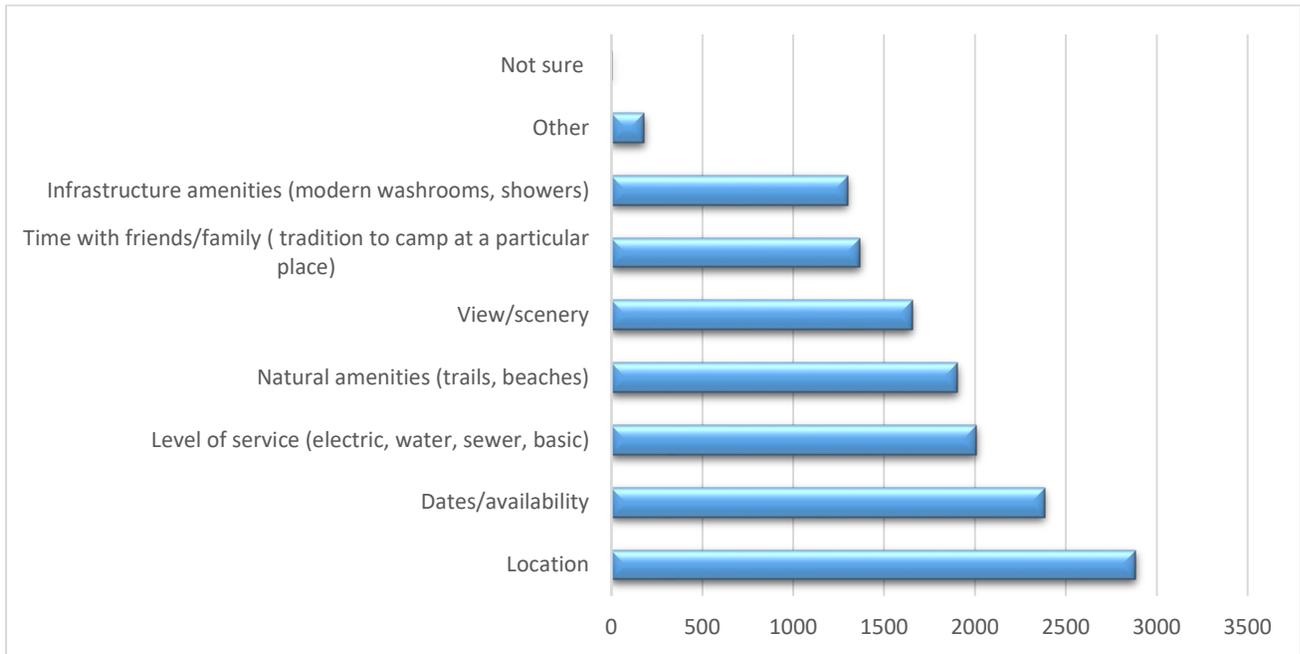
<b>Nightly Camping Inventory by Region*</b>	<b>Total Nightly</b>	<b>Basic Service</b>	<b>Electrical Service</b>	<b>Electrical / Water Service</b>	<b>Full Service</b>	<b>Cabins</b>	<b>Yurts</b>	<b>Group-Use</b>
Central Region Total	1339	603	523	50	163	34	12	30
Eastern Region Total	1580	879	497	94	110	0	16	12
Northern Region Total	267	90	177	0	0	0	21	2
Western Region Total	879	310	446	103	20	0	26	51
<b>Provincial Total</b>	<b>4065</b>	<b>1882</b>	<b>1643</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>95</b>

\* Reservation inventory only

## DESTINATION SELECTION

When asked “**What are the main criteria you consider when choosing a campsite?**,” respondents could choose multiple categories. Location, availability and level of service were the top three categories, followed closely by natural amenities and view.

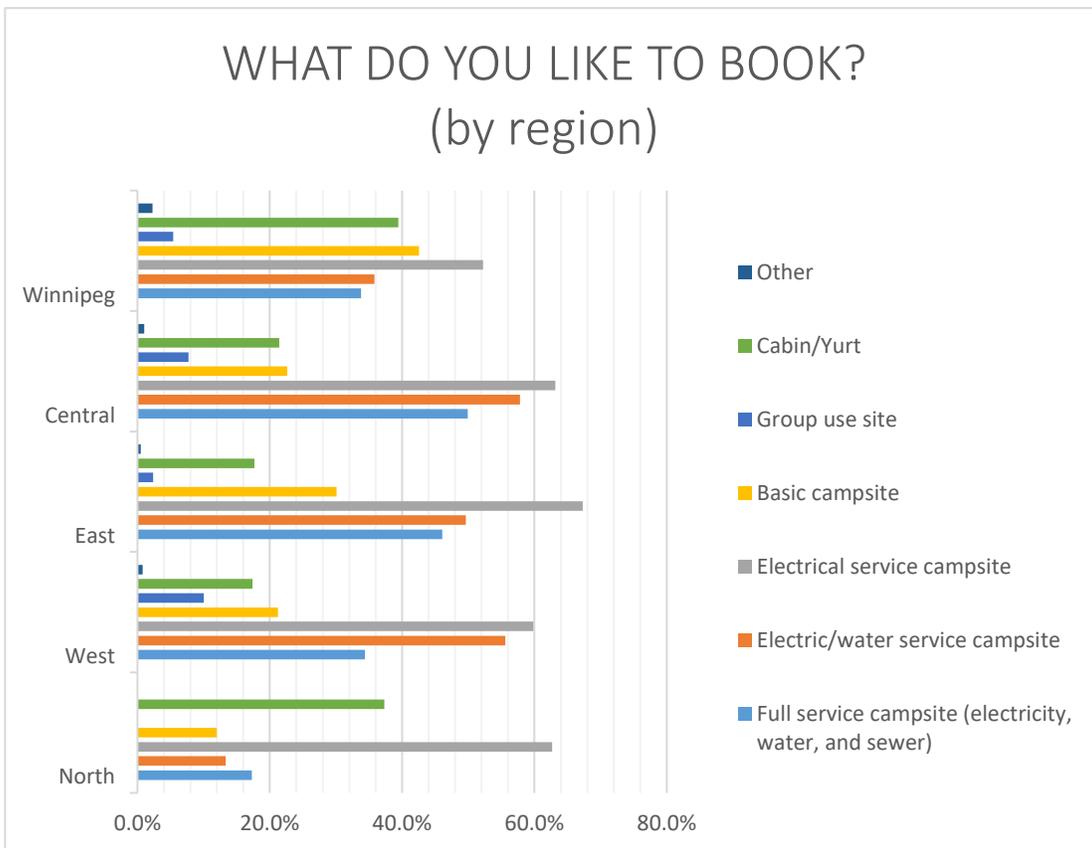
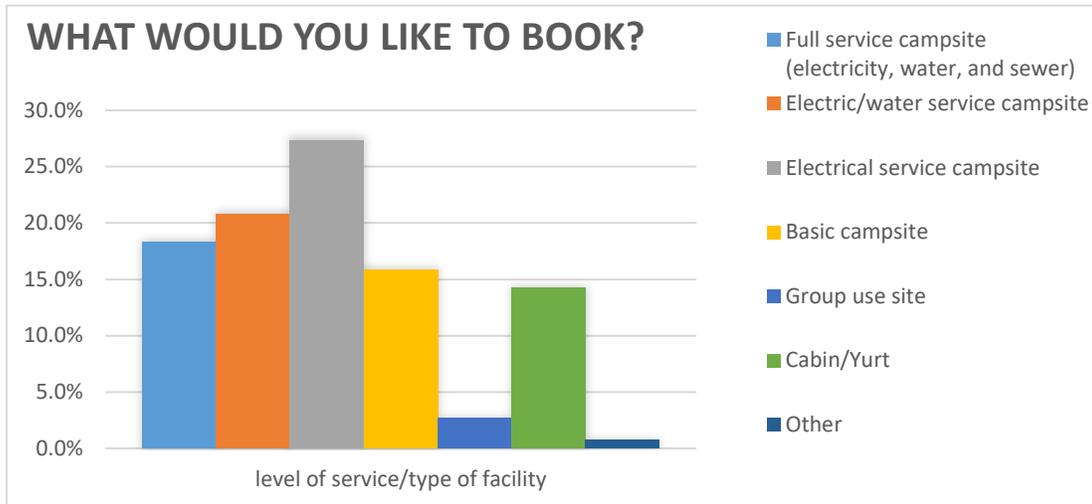
### Criteria for Choosing a Campsite



Almost one quarter of the respondents (23.5 per cent) that selected “**other**” said they looked for a site with privacy. Additional themes included:

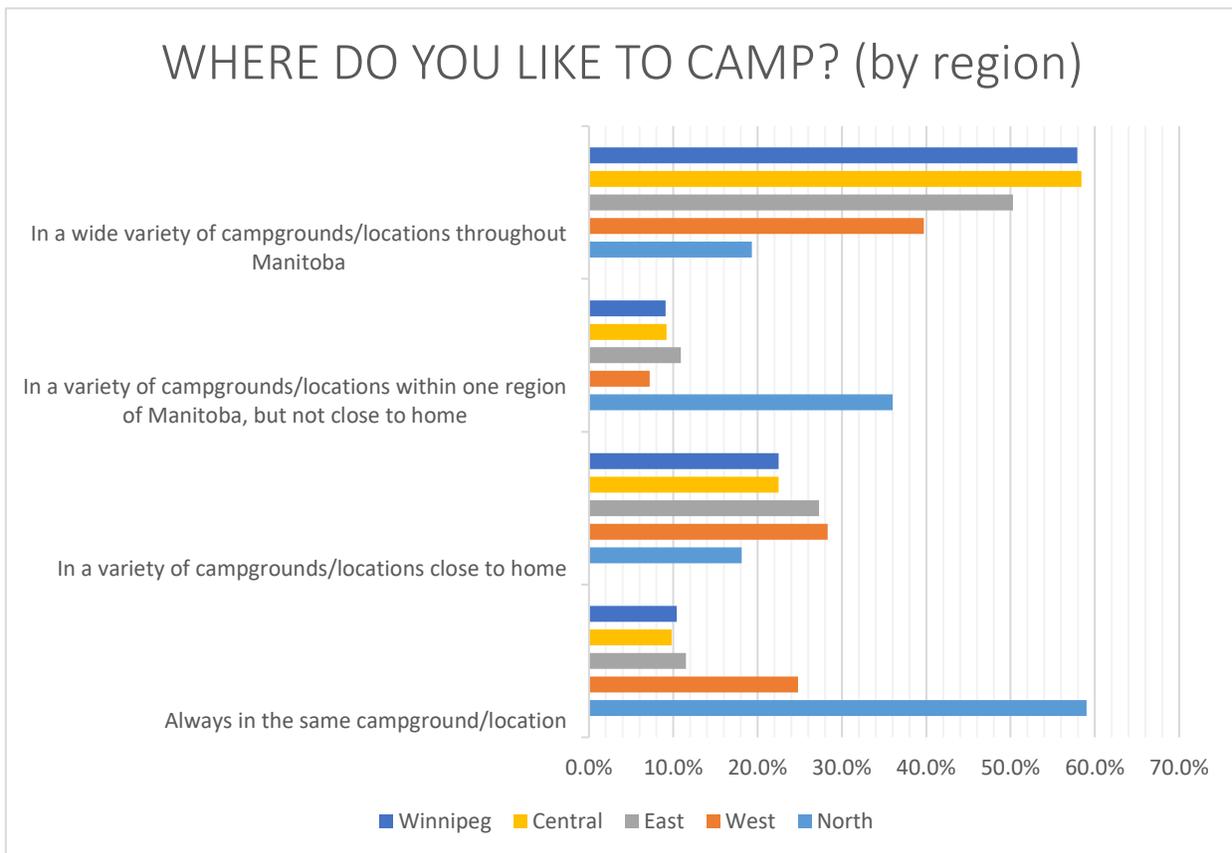
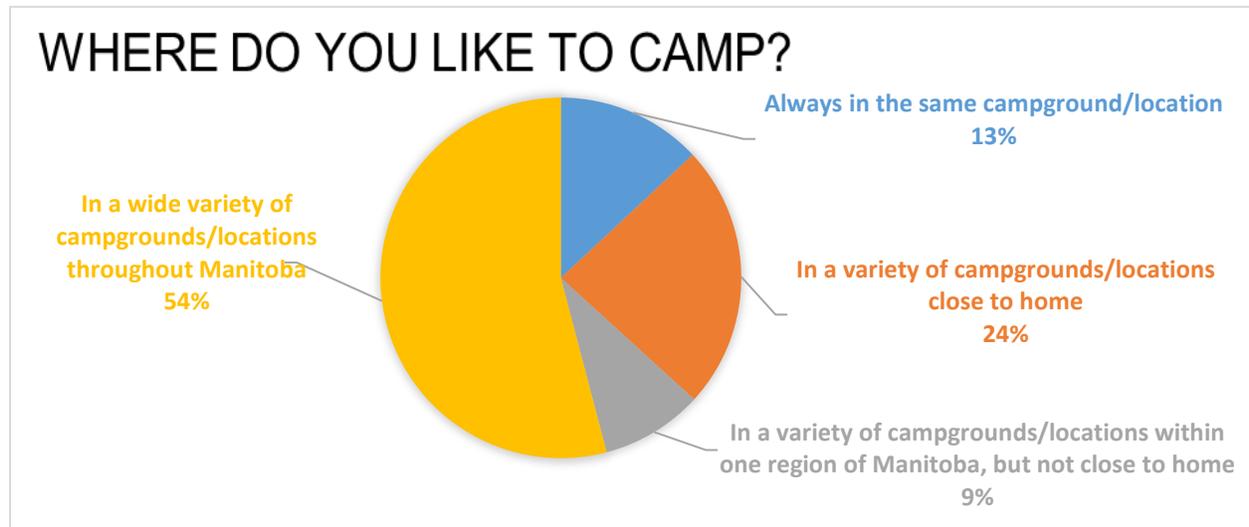
- site details, such as size (16.2 per cent);
- recreation features (11.1 per cent);
- amenities (10.3 per cent);
- natural (e.g. trees/shade, remoteness, bugs) (nine per cent);
- location-based reasons (6.4 per cent);
- something quiet (4.7 per cent);
- pet-friendly amenities (three per cent);
- accessible amenities (three per cent);
- kid-friendly amenities (2.6 per cent);
- “free” firewood (1.3 per cent);
- sites where they could be close to others in their group (1.3 per cent);
- booked whatever they could get (1.3 per cent).

When asked “**What service level/type of facility do you try to book on opening days?**,” the majority of respondents were looking for campsites with electrical service or more. The majority of people (80 per cent) who selected the “other” category indicated that they liked to book back country sites. Others said they book buddy sites, or that they are seasonal campers.



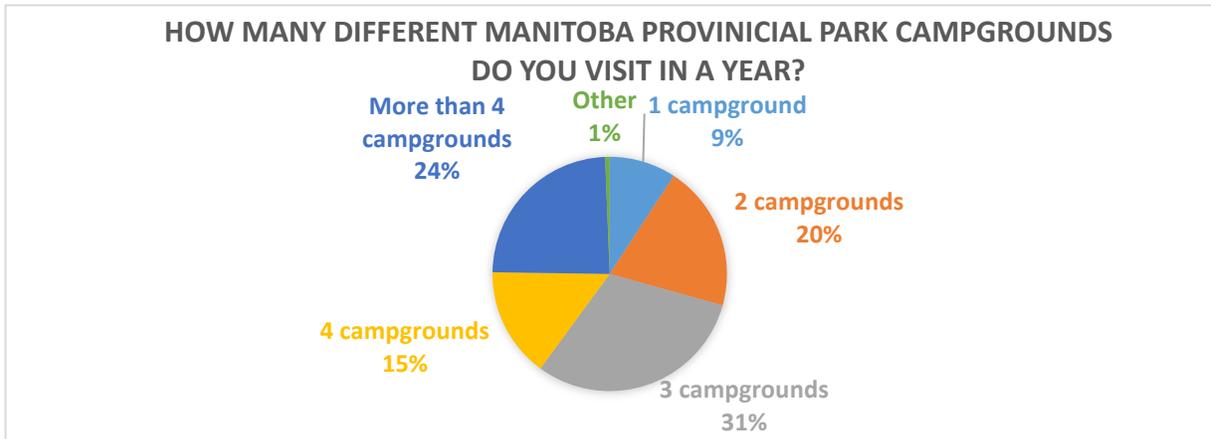
Winnipeg respondents seemed to be more interested in simply securing a campsite, as a basic service site was the second most popular type for this demographic. Electrical sites and yurts were of most interest to Northern Manitobans, whereas group use areas did not rank at all.

When asked: **“Where do you try to book provincial park sites?”** just over half (54 per cent ) of the respondents indicated that they like to camp in a variety of campgrounds in a variety of locations across the province. Thirteen per cent responded that they always go to the same place, while almost one quarter like to camp close to home.

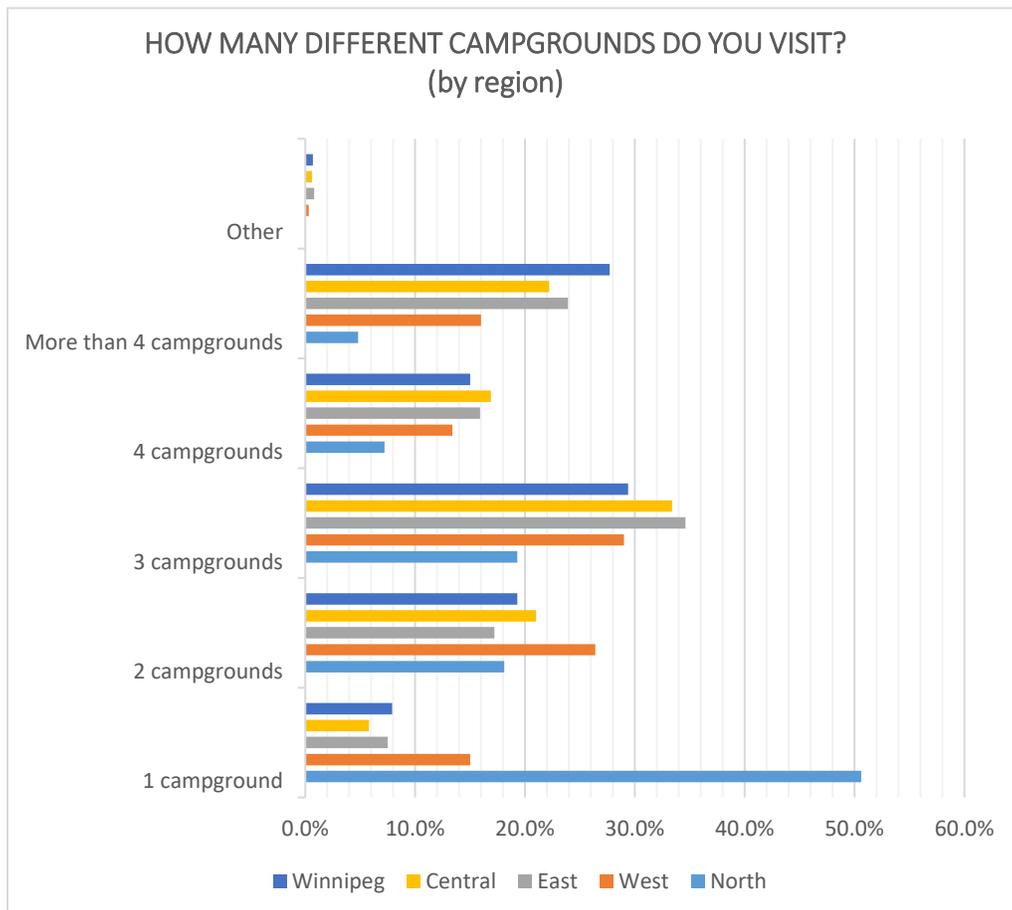


There was greater geographical variation in the response to this question. In Northern Manitoba, the majority of respondents like to camp in the same location every year. In Western Manitoba, they tended to either go to the same location, or camp closer to home.

When asked “**How many different Manitoba provincial park campgrounds do you typically like to visit in a year?**,” 70 per cent of the respondents indicated that they like to visit three or more different campgrounds in a season. Respondents who indicated an “**other**” response said it varies (32 per cent), or they couldn’t get a site (26 per cent), or they do not camp in Manitoba provincial parks (16 per cent).



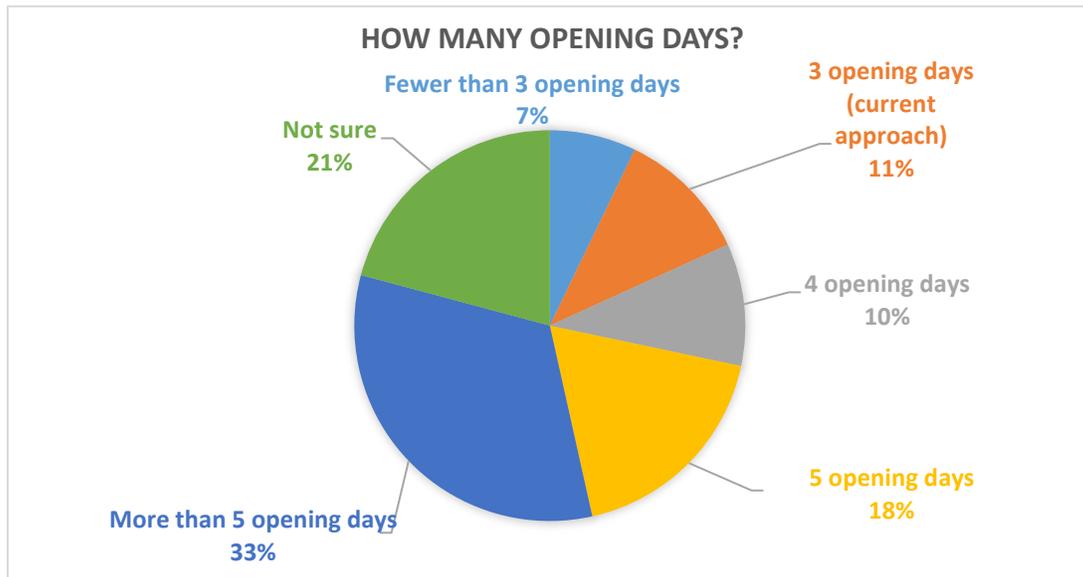
Northern Manitobans differed substantially on this question, with half the respondents saying that they like to go to the same campground all the time. The West also tended to prefer three or fewer campgrounds.



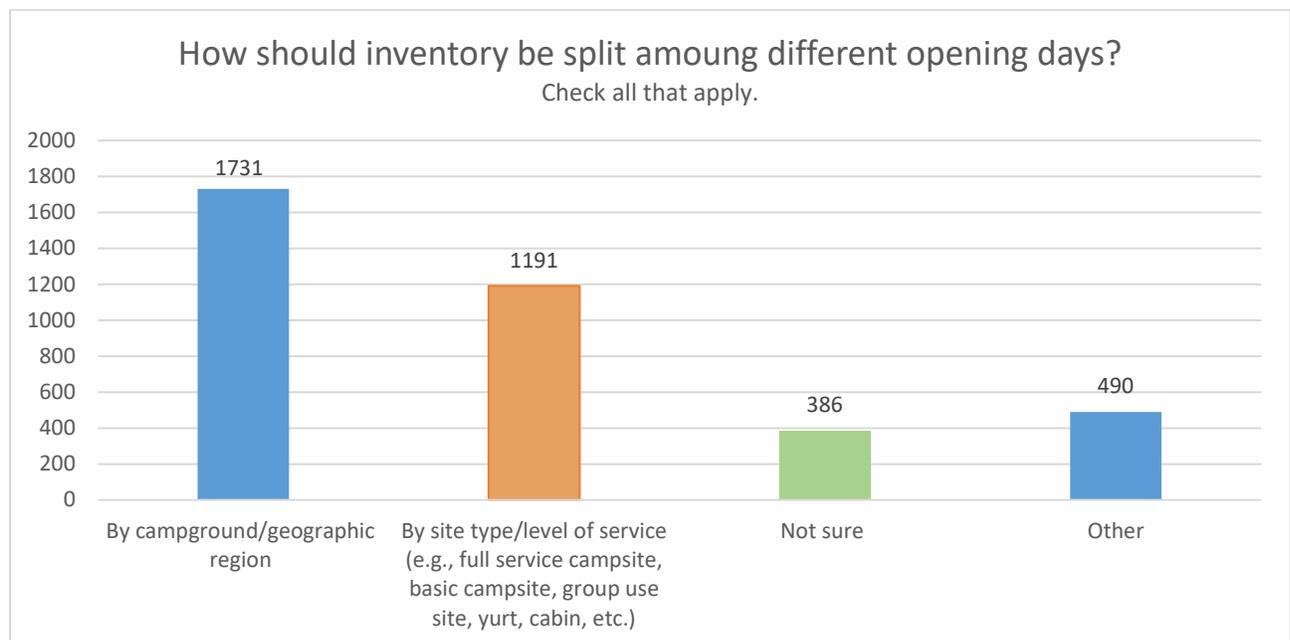
## EXPLORING EXPANDED RESERVATION OPENING

Participants were asked: **“How many opening days should be held each year, to spread out the opening of campsites, yurts, and cabins?”**

For the most part respondents were in support of adding additional opening days. There was very little variation in responses, based on where people lived.



When asked: **“How would you like to see provincial park inventory split among different opening days?”**, splitting inventory by campground/geographic region received the most support.

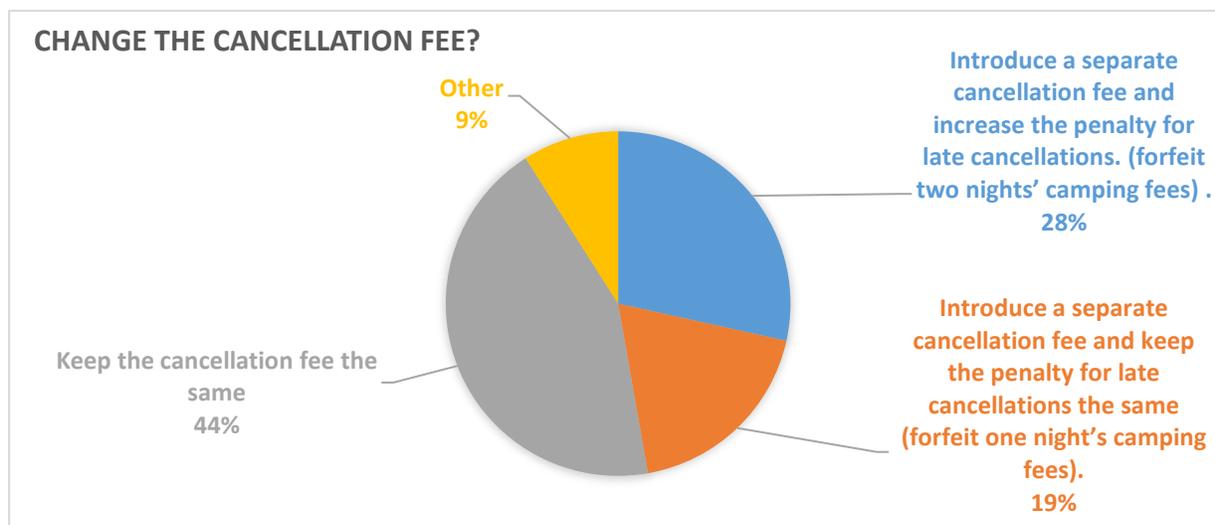


For the respondents that indicated “other,” many referred to a rolling window system (66.5 per cent), in which, instead of having fixed opening days for the whole season, reservations become available a certain number of days/months before a desired date. For example, reservations could be made 60 days in advance of the desired camping date. (Typically, jurisdictions that use a rolling window system are those that offer year-round reservations, such as Ontario Parks). A further 18 per cent provided a variety of other ideas about how to split the inventory. These included:

- giving first preference to Manitoba residents;
- introducing a lottery system for popular destinations;
- separating popular locations onto different days and combining them with less popular locations;
- having the most popular locations on their own day;
- taking part of the inventory off the reservation service and making it first-come-first-serve;
- giving avid campers a pre-sale opportunity by letting them book first for an additional fee;
- greatly limit the maximum length of stay in popular locations, but allow longer stays in less popular locations;
- prevent people who cancel at the last minute, or do not show up, from booking the next year;
- split inventory alphabetically rather than geographically;
- allow reservations further in advance;
- do not allow reservations until one week before the sites are available.

## EXPLORING CANCELLATION POLICIES

A common complaint from people unable to secure a desired site for a desired date is that too many people are reserving inventory that they actually do not want, and that the cancellation fees are too lenient. This means that people keep their reservation and do not cancel until a few days before, or do not cancel at all. Currently, there is no fee to cancel a campsite, group use site, yurt, or cabin, if you cancel four or more days in advance of the arrival date (i.e., only the non-refundable \$10 reservation fee is kept upon cancellation). Cancellations less than four days prior to the stay are charged the cost of the first night. When asked: “**Should this cancellation fee change?**,” almost half the respondents felt that cancellation fees should remain the same (44 per cent).



For the nine per cent that responded “**other**,” almost half felt there should be a cancellation fee and suggested various parameters or penalties. Other responses included introducing a “no show fee” of one additional night. Some felt that allowing someone to cancel four or more days in advance was not enough, and others felt that campers should be allowed to cancel without penalty 24 hours in advance. Some felt people needed an incentive to cancel so the inventory would be become available for someone else to book.

Geographically, Northern Manitobans felt the strongest about keeping the cancellation fees the same. There was some support to introducing an actual cancellation fee and increasing the late cancellation penalty to two nights’ camping fees.

	All	North	West	East	Central	Winnipeg
Introduce a separate cancellation fee and increase the penalty for late cancellations. (forfeit two nights’ camping fees).	28.5%	16.9%	27.7	29.6%	29.8%	28.5%
Introduce a separate cancellation fee and keep the penalty for late cancellations the same (forfeit one night’s camping fees).	18.8%	15.7%	19.5%	18.4%	16.2%	20.0%
Keep the cancellation fee the same	43.7%	62.7%	43.0%	40.5%	45.3%	43.1%
Other	9.0%	4.8%	9.8%	11.5%	8.8%	8.5%

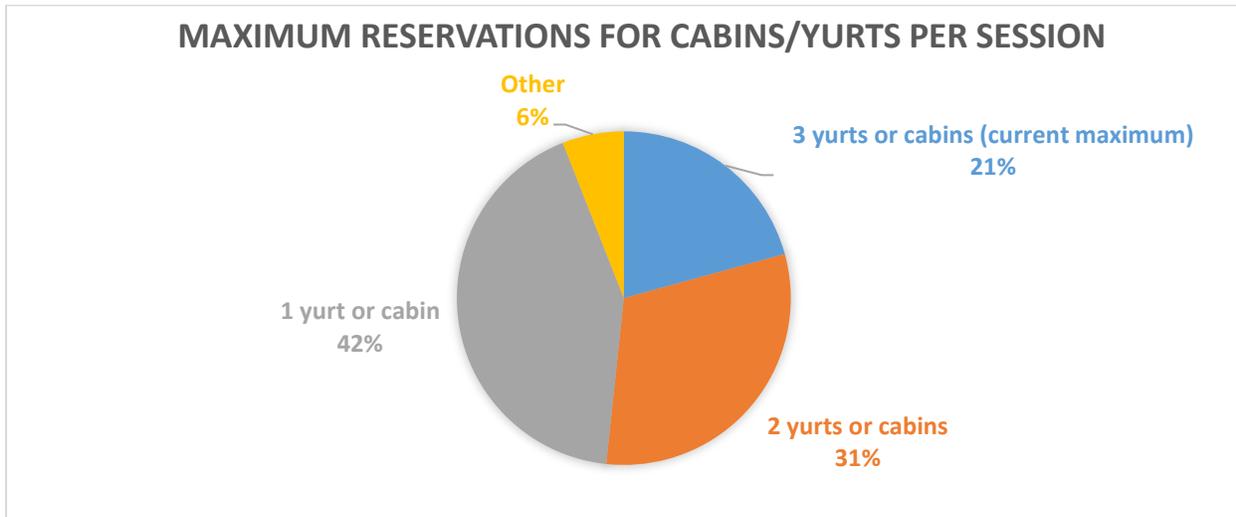
When asked “**Do you have any additional comments on changes you would like to see to the cancellation fee or policy?**,” there were 1,362 responses, many of which contained multiple thoughts and ideas. Responses were analyzed for key themes. Approximately one third were off-topic or out-of-scope for this particular question. The remaining could be broken down into the following key themes:

Theme	% of answers that included this theme	Additional Details
No-shows	14.3%	Campers are very frustrated when they are unable to get a campsite and later see that others have not shown up and there are sites that are unused. Some suggestions include implementing a penalty for “no-shows,” while others suggest that the reason people do not cancel is because they are already not getting some of their money back. Some would like a system that prevents “no-shows” from being able to make other reservations for the rest of the season. Seeing sites unused, when they were so difficult to obtain, was disheartening.
Yes, cancel fee	9.9%	Respondents felt that since camping fees are so low, or canceling came at a low cost, that people were waiting too long to cancel or they were willing to forgo the money. The result being that they were denying someone else the opportunity to camp. These respondents felt that if it cost more to cancel late, people would cancel in a timelier manner and not hang onto inventory that they did not intend to use. Respondents in this category felt that people were booking multiple sites for the same time frame, using multiple accounts and then, cancelling the one they didn’t want. (The current PRS system prevents the same account holder from holding two reservations for the same dates, so if this were the case, the other reservation would have to be under a different account).
Cancellation window	9.8%	Respondents felt that letting people cancel four days in advance without penalty is too lenient, and that people would cancel sooner if they risked losing a percentage of their camping fees. Some also felt that a rolling window system would prevent people from booking their whole summer at once, thereby planning when they might actually go. They also felt that people were booking multiple sites for the same time frame, using multiple accounts and then, cancelling the one(s) they didn’t want.
Repeat cancellers	5.7%	These respondents felt strongly that cancellation penalties needed to be stiffer/more punitive to prevent people from scooping up inventory in a speculative manner. Some wanted increased penalties for those who abuse the system and/or cancel multiple times in the same year.
Flexibility	3.9%	These respondents felt torn between a policy that would be too punitive for those that had legitimate reasons to cancel at the last minute and not punitive enough who had reserved based on speculation and just canceled shortly before their stay. These respondents wanted the cancellation policy to allow cancellation without penalty for particular circumstances, such as forest fires or emergencies.
Waiting lists	3.6%	These respondents felt it would be great to be put on a waiting list where they could be notified if inventory they wanted became available due to a cancellation.
No cancel fee	3.0%	These respondents felt that there should be no cancellation fee. Some of the reasons included that people should not be punished for things that are out of their control, such as bad weather, or someone getting sick. Some felt that all cancellation penalties should be suspended during the

		COVID-19 pandemic. Others said that people are less likely to cancel if they are already losing part of their camping fees, leaving the site unavailable for someone else.
Transfers	2.2%	These respondents felt that the reservation fee should be waived if they were transferring their original reservation to a “better” site because one became available. Some felt that a reservation should be transferable to another family member or friend, rather than having to “cancel” and rebook in that person’s name. They felt that people would be less likely to “no-show,” and/or more likely to cancel, if there was no cost to transfer reservations to other locations or other people. Others felt it was important not to let people sublet their site to someone else (e.g. no Air BnB).
Don't change it	2.0%	These respondents felt that there were benefits to not having a cancellation fee because at least people might cancel. Some felt that the four-day window could be increased to seven days, to allow other people time to make plans and book those cancelled dates. Some felt that not charging for cancellations makes sense under the current system, since reservations are made so far in advance. In contrast, under a rolling window system people have to plan only three months in advance, so people are more likely to book the weekends they actually want.
Incentive	1.5%	These respondents felt that it is important to keep cancellation easy and inexpensive, to encourage people to actually cancel and free up inventory for someone else to take.
Unique idea	1.4%	These respondents provided additional ideas about how fees could be charged, such as only charging a cancellation fee if the site did not end up getting re-booked by someone else, or making the cost of cancellation proportional to the length of the reservation.
Opening day cancellation	1.0%	These respondents felt that too many people book sites that they do not want on an opening day system and that a rolling window system would help spread out people’s plans. Some respondents felt there should be cancellation fees specifically for reservations that were made on opening day.
Education	0.4%	Some suggested that people need to be educated about the impact that overbooking has on others. Some felt that the cancellation process needed more clarification/explanation.

## EXPLORING RESERVATION LIMITS

On opening day, reservations are limited to three reservations per session, after which users must get back in line. Cabins and yurts are very popular facilities, but there is a limited supply. **What is an appropriate number of reservations per session someone should be able to make for a cabin or yurt on opening day?**



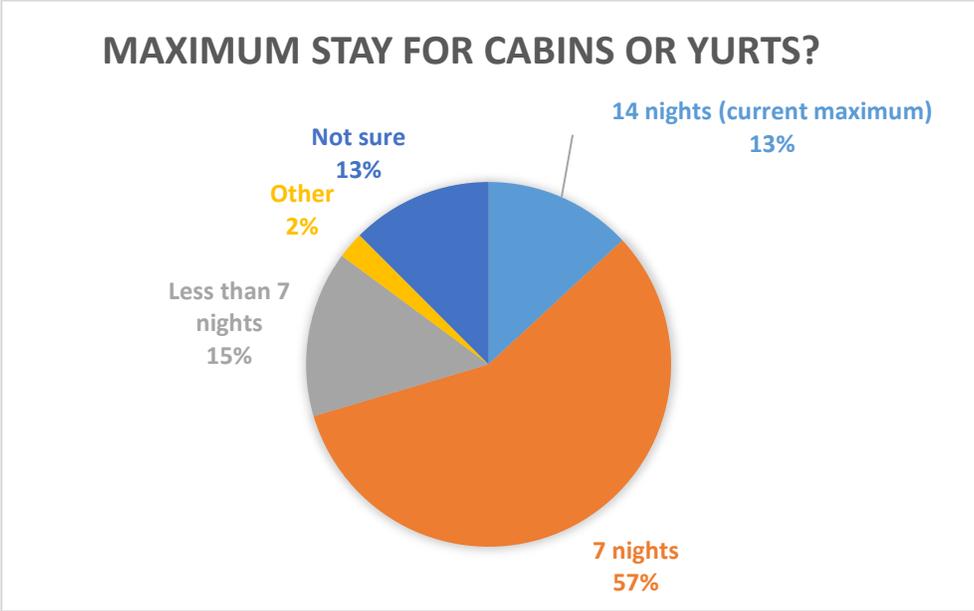
	North	West	East	Central	Winnipeg
3 yurts or cabins (current maximum)	32.0%	27.4%	19.6%	21.6%	19.0%
2 yurts or cabins	37.3%	30.5%	31.5%	29.6%	31.3%
1 yurt or cabin	28.0%	35.9%	42.2%	42.0%	44.1%
Other	2.7%	6.2%	6.7%	6.7%	5.6%

The majority of respondents indicated that it would be appropriate to reduce the number of yurts or cabins that could be reserved within a single session on opening day.

Of the six per cent that selected “**other**,” almost half indicated that they do not book cabins or yurts. Almost one quarter suggested structuring the way yurts are booked differently, such as adding more staff on opening day, or introducing a rolling window. A few indicated that they would like to book more than four yurts in a session or have no limit, and others presented a range of additional conditions.

EXPLORING LENGTH OF STAY

**What should be the maximum number of nights per stay for cabins and yurts?** It is important to balance the option for visitors to have longer stays in cabins and yurts with the ability for as many people as possible to have the chance to enjoy them.



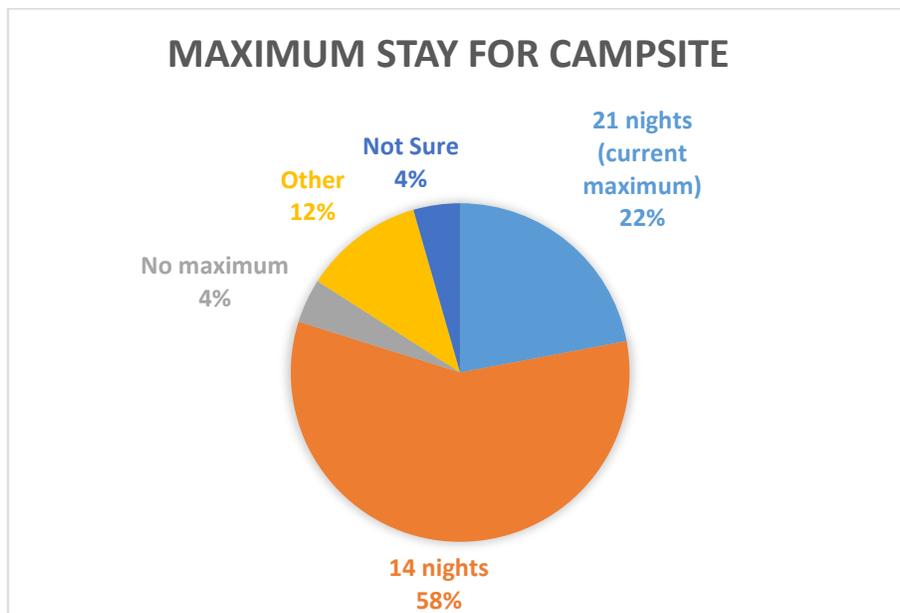
Regardless of where respondents lived, more than half felt that a cabin or yurt stay should be limited to no more than seven nights.

	North	West	East	Central	Winnipeg
14 nights (current maximum)	24.4%	19.3%	12.8%	13.7%	11.1%
7 nights	45.3%	52.7%	57.8%	56.5%	59.2%
Less than 7 nights	15.1%	6.1%	12.0%	13.8%	17.4%
Other	2.3%	2.3%	1.6%	1.9%	3%
Not sure	12.8%	19.6%	15.7%	14.1%	9.5%

Of the two per cent that responded “**other**,” respondents submitted a range of answers, from less than seven nights to no maximum number. Some suggested there should be variability depending on the season or the demand for a particular location (five per cent).

**What should be the maximum number of nights per stay for campsites?** It is important to balance the option for visitors to have long stays in campsites with the ability for as many people as possible to be able to enjoy them.

More than half the respondents felt that a 14-night maximum stay was adequate. When exploring this question based on where respondents lived, there was a significant difference in how this question was answered by residents of Northern Manitoba. In that region, 47 per cent were in favour of keeping the 21-night maximum stay and a further 17.6 per cent preferred not to have a limit on how long they could stay.



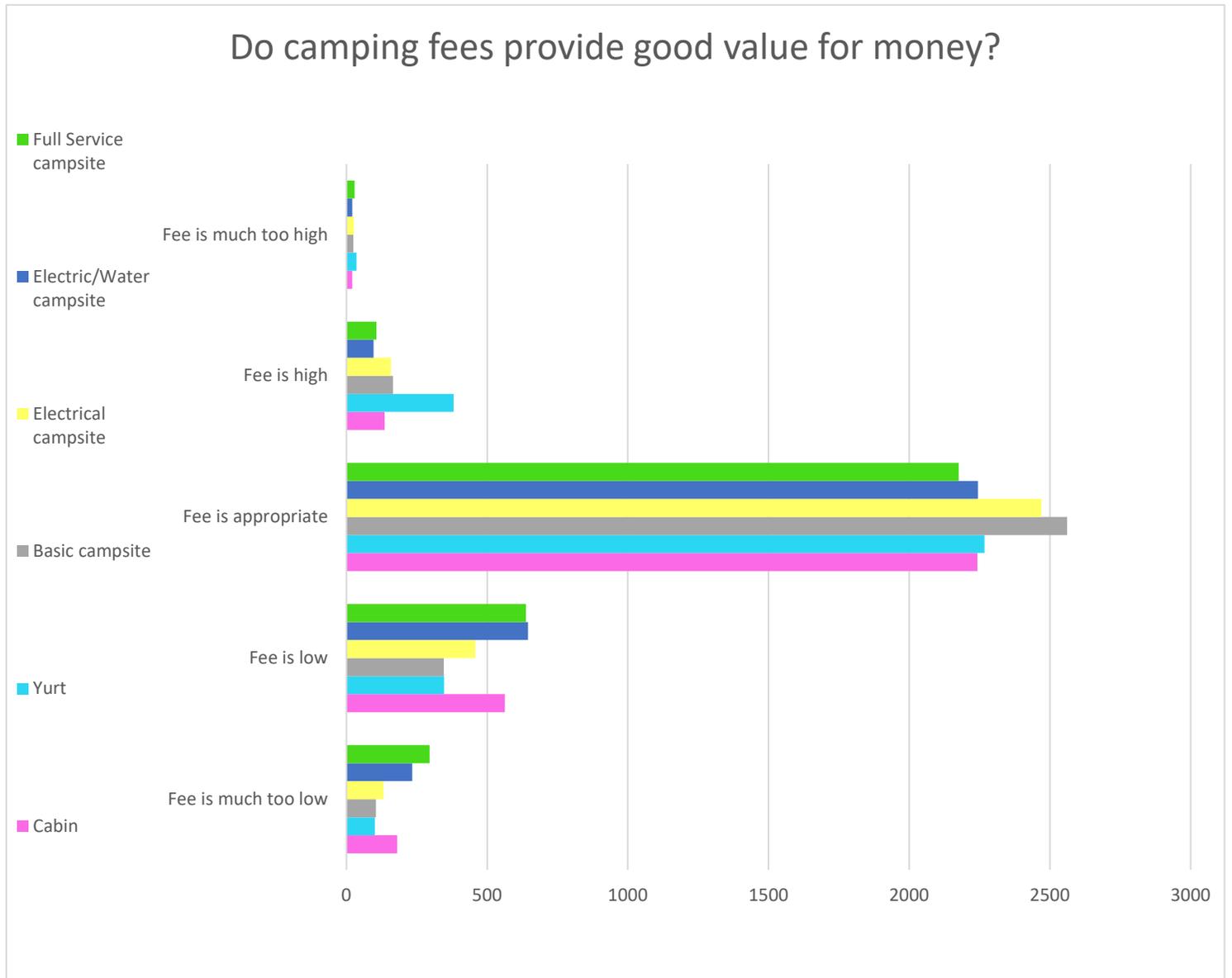
	North	West	East	Central	Winnipeg
21 nights (current maximum)	47.1%	34.4%	20.1%	19.8%	20.1%
14 nights	28.2%	46.5%	60.6%	60.8%	59.4%
No maximum	17.6%	5.7%	3.0%	5.0%	3.2%
Other	4.7%	8.9%	12.6%	10.8%	12.3%
Not Sure	2.4%	4.5%	3.7%	3.6%	5.0%

For the 12 per cent who selected “other,” 72 per cent felt a seven-night maximum stay was adequate. Some felt that longer-term stays are what seasonal campsites are for. Four per cent felt it should be less than seven nights. Some respondents (three per cent) commented that some people who book 21 nights only come to the site on weekends, and the site sits unused during the rest of the week. It was suggested that some amount of occupancy should be required for longer-term stays. A further four per cent suggested there should be variability, with shorter stays required for sites with higher levels of service, more popular locations or more popular times of year.

## EXPLORING CAMPING FEES

### “Do current camping fees in Manitoba provincial parks provide good value for money?”

Respondents were asked to rate the various types of camping facilities against value for money. More than half of the respondents felt the camping fees were appropriate. However, for full-service sites, only one third of respondents felt the fee was appropriate. Very seldom did the ratings fall on the “fee is much too high” end of the scale, with the exception of fees for yurts. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the category “fee is much too low” resonated somewhat on the sites with higher levels of service, such as full-service, electric/water sites or cabins.



When asked: “**Do you have any other comments regarding the Parks Reservation Service?**” 1,879 comments were received, many of which provided multiple thoughts or suggestions. Approximately 22 per cent were considered out-of-scope as they did not refer to the reservation service specifically. The remaining could be broken down into the following broad themes:

Theme	% of answers that included this theme	Additional Details
Suggested changes	31.1%	<p>Responses included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allow one reservation per session;</li> <li>• allow one reservation per day;</li> <li>• three reservations per session is too few (should be five or six);</li> <li>• some feel that the length of stay should be a maximum of 14 days (camping), and others felt that there should be no restriction on length of stay;</li> <li>• having a “search all” feature for the dates selected;</li> <li>• have site details more visible;</li> <li>• leave some inventory for walk-up sites instead of 100 per cent reservable;</li> <li>• allow more payment options (e.g., Interact, PayPal, Apple Pay);</li> <li>• add more opening dates to stagger the inventory more;</li> <li>• Other suggested changes are reflected in the responses below.</li> </ul>
Opening day	19.9%	<p>Many responses in this category expressed frustration with the wait times and issues that were encountered on past opening days; disparity between rural and city Internet services limited people’s ability to use more than one device; people overbooking on opening day.</p> <p>Suggestions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to further divide-up inventory;</li> <li>• require a log-in before getting into queue so that an account could only be in queue once;</li> <li>• a different queue structure with a countdown function;</li> <li>• have reservations available year-round, six months in advance (see rolling window);</li> <li>• make the system faster and capable of handling more capacity to reduce the wait times;</li> <li>• have an earlier reservation opening time (5:00 a.m.);</li> <li>• have a later reservation opening time (5:00 p.m.);</li> <li>• open reservations on weekends;</li> <li>• allow Manitobans to book first;</li> </ul>
Rolling window	11.8%	<p>A rolling window system is one where, instead of having fixed opening days for the whole season, reservations become available a certain number of days/months in advance of a desired date. Respondents felt that this would help spread out people’s plans and prevent them from being able to book their whole summer on opening day (thereby giving others a chance to acquire inventory). Suggestions include opening inventory 180 days (six months), 90 days in advance, down to two weeks (14 days) in advance (some people have to book their holiday time months in advance).</p>
Cancellation & no-shows	6.7%	<p>Respondents were frustrated with empty sites and overbooking. Suggestions include stricter cancellation policies, so people only book what they intend to use; and others feel the complete opposite where cancellation should be made easier, so that people actually do cancel and free up inventory for others to book. Some feel giving people four days to cancel and still get all their fees back is too much time, since it does not</p>

		allow other people enough time to plan, and others feel that cancelling 24 hours in advance is ample time.
Equity	3.1%	<p>Reponses included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concerns about needing equitable access to quality Internet;</li> <li>• structuring the queue in a different way (waiting room);</li> <li>• giving preferential treatment to past customers;</li> <li>• increase camping fees because demand is high;</li> <li>• keep fees low to allow access to everyone;</li> <li>• prevent people from using multiple devices;</li> <li>• booking six months in advance would be more fair;</li> <li>• booking closer to arrival would be more fair;</li> <li>• prevent people from hoarding inventory that they do not intend to keep;</li> <li>• prevent people from always booking the same prime spot and let others have an opportunity to book it;</li> <li>• people booking long stays isn't fair; (vs. others wanting to book long stays)</li> <li>• provide equitable booking opportunities for those without Internet</li> <li>• Can't book longer term stays because weekends are all booked up.</li> </ul>
Positive	2.4%	<p>Comments included: After opening day the system worked quite well; policies are fair to campers, even though they might not be to everyone's liking; system is straight-forward, easy to navigate; the system is decent – it just needs more power; needs tweaking, but overall, it is good. This past year was an extraordinary year, and the system generally works well; some respondents were thankful for having the opportunity to share their thoughts.</p>
MB residents	1.0%	<p>Respondents wanted Manitoba residents to have reservation priority.</p>
Unique ideas	0.3%	<p>Responses included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a lottery for booking times</li> <li>• leave some inventory that can't be reserved until four to five days in advance</li> <li>• notification/wait list for desired sites</li> <li>• a rolling window system, but then have some inventory open earlier (six months prior to arrival date) and other sites not be available for reservation until (14 days prior to arrival date). This way, people who don't plan far in advance can still get a site.</li> <li>• have people register a few days before and be issued a ticket number</li> <li>• allow options for people who wish to camp close to other friends and family to book a group of sites</li> <li>• add 360-degree photos of the campsites</li> </ul>
Out-of-scope	22.1%	<p>Respondents provided thoughts that related to other elements of their visit that are not part of the actual reservation service. These included things to do with camping facilities (e.g., adding electrical inventory, more yurts, more seasonal sites, adding a waste dump fee), extend the camping season in spring and fall; the need for more funding for parks in general, enforcement presence, enforcing other types of proper camper behaviour, keeping parks accessible.</p>

Many comments have been received over the years about a rolling window reservation system. This is not an option that can be pursued under the current reservation system, as it relates to how the system is designed to function. This type of change would require a major software re-

write to re-structure how inventory is handled. This would be an option to be explored in a future reservation system. Rolling window reservation systems are not without their issues, especially when competing for inventory in more than one campground, or short camping seasons where there are a limited number of summer weekends available.

## Next Steps

A reservation system not only allows the public to reserve one of 4000+ nightly campsites/ facilities in one of 42 Manitoba provincial park campgrounds, it is also acts as the onsite campground management tool by managing campground inventory in real time, allowing attendants to assist customers by issuing permits, making changes to their stay, as well as tracking and reporting on all transactions. Securing and implementing a replacement for the current system is a lengthy process. While the provincial government works to research, acquire and implement a new system, work is underway on short-term fixes and potential rule changes to improve the 2022 reservation experience. The potential rule changes were the focus of the survey questions.

Although the survey results often presented ideas that were on opposing ends of the continuum, results indicated that there would generally be support for the following policy changes:

- Add additional opening days.
- Split inventory based on geographical location is a preferred method, along with dividing up some of the most popular destinations, so all sites do not become available on the same day.
- Keeping the number of reservations that can be made per session for campsites at three. Camping is a communal activity and people make reservations for other friends and family who may not have the same Internet access or payment ability.
- Reduce the number of reservations that can be booked in one session for cabins and yurts from three to two. Have cabin and yurts on their own day, without Birds Hill.
- Reduce the maximum length of stay in a cabin or yurt from 14 to seven nights, but do not reduce the maximum length of stay for a campsite (keep at 21 nights).
- Cancellation policies and fees will remain the same for the upcoming reservation season, however they will be a consideration for a future system, depending on how it is structured.

The survey results will also be considered in determining how a future reservation system might best be structured. This would include looking at when and how camping inventory opens for reservation. The ultimate goal is to provide Manitobans with a reliable, convenient, and fair reservation system.

## Questions?

Parks Reservation Service: [prs@gov.mb.ca](mailto:prs@gov.mb.ca)