

## Provincial Parks Endowment Funds

Manitoba's 92 provincial parks preserve and protect more than four million hectares of land and water.

In addition to annual funding to operate, support and enhance provincial parks, in 2021, the Manitoba government invested \$20 million into new Provincial Parks Endowment Funds. These funds are expected to generate as much as \$1 million per year to support projects that will enhance the ecological integrity and visitor experiences in provincial parks.

The Endowment Funds were established through agreements with The Winnipeg Foundation. These agreements support numerous funding categories, including:

- development and maintenance of trails, boardwalks and associated infrastructure
- public-use facilities such as amphitheatres, shelters, day-use sites, playground equipment, docks and launches
- park road maintenance
- habitat restoration and enhancement
- historical assets and cultural sites
- infrastructure to support programming
- modern machinery and operational equipment
- municipal servicing infrastructure
- campground enhancements
- interpretive infrastructure to support programming

Each year, priorities for the use of the revenues generated through the Endowment Funds will be determined through public engagement.

For the first time, Manitoba sought this input via a public survey in late 2021 and early 2022.

### Engagement Overview

The Endowment Funds survey was intended to gather input on the park-related priorities that matter most to Manitoba provincial park users. In addition, Manitoba Parks used the survey as an opportunity to obtain feedback on satisfaction with existing park services, and to help inform broader investment decisions in parks in the immediate future.

The survey was open on EngageMB from December 30, 2021 to January 31, 2022. The opportunity to provide feedback through EngageMB was announced by a government news release and publicized via government social media channels. In addition, registered EngageMB.ca users who previously participated in another Manitoba Parks-related survey were sent an email notification about the Endowment Funds survey.

A number of provincial park stakeholder organizations were also contacted by Manitoba Parks staff to inform them of the public engagement and encourage participation. These included cottage owner associations, recreational trail groups, environmental conservation organizations, and various others.

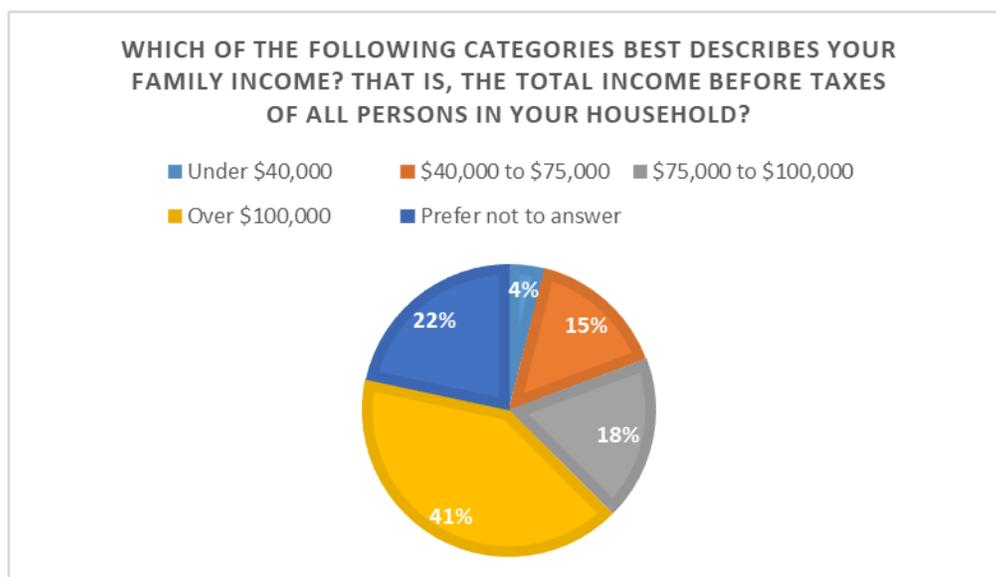
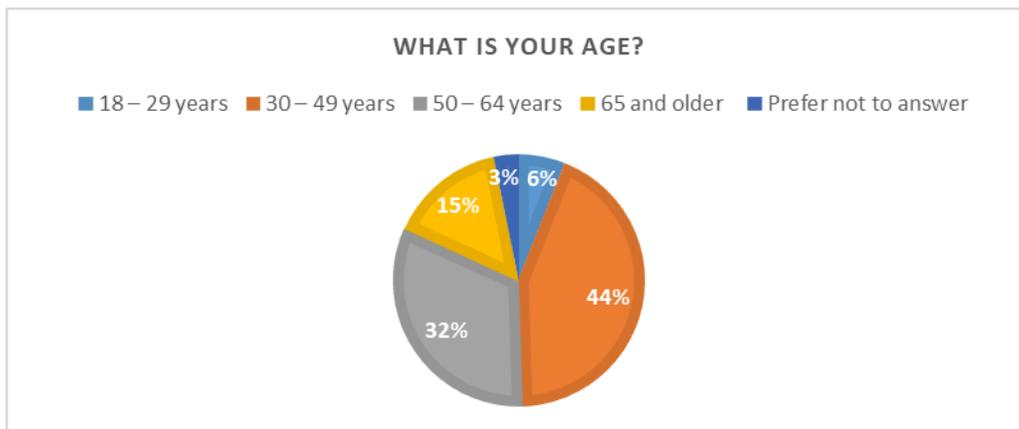
In total, there were 2232 responses to the survey (2231 in English and one in French).

## What We Heard

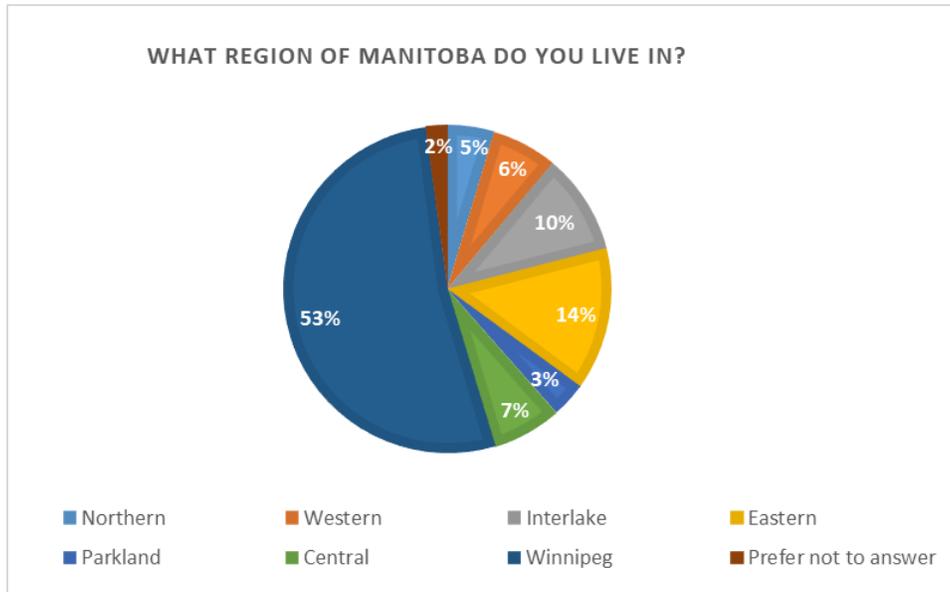
### Demographic Profile

Survey participants ranged from 18 years old to over 65, with the largest group being in the 30-49 years age range. Fifty-six per cent of the participants identified as female, 39 per cent as male, and the remainder preferred to either self-describe or not answer the question.

Participants' household income ranged, with the largest group being 41 per cent of households with income over \$100,000.



Just over half (53 per cent) of the participants indicated they live in Winnipeg and the rest live in other areas in Manitoba.



## Section 1: Park Users' Priorities

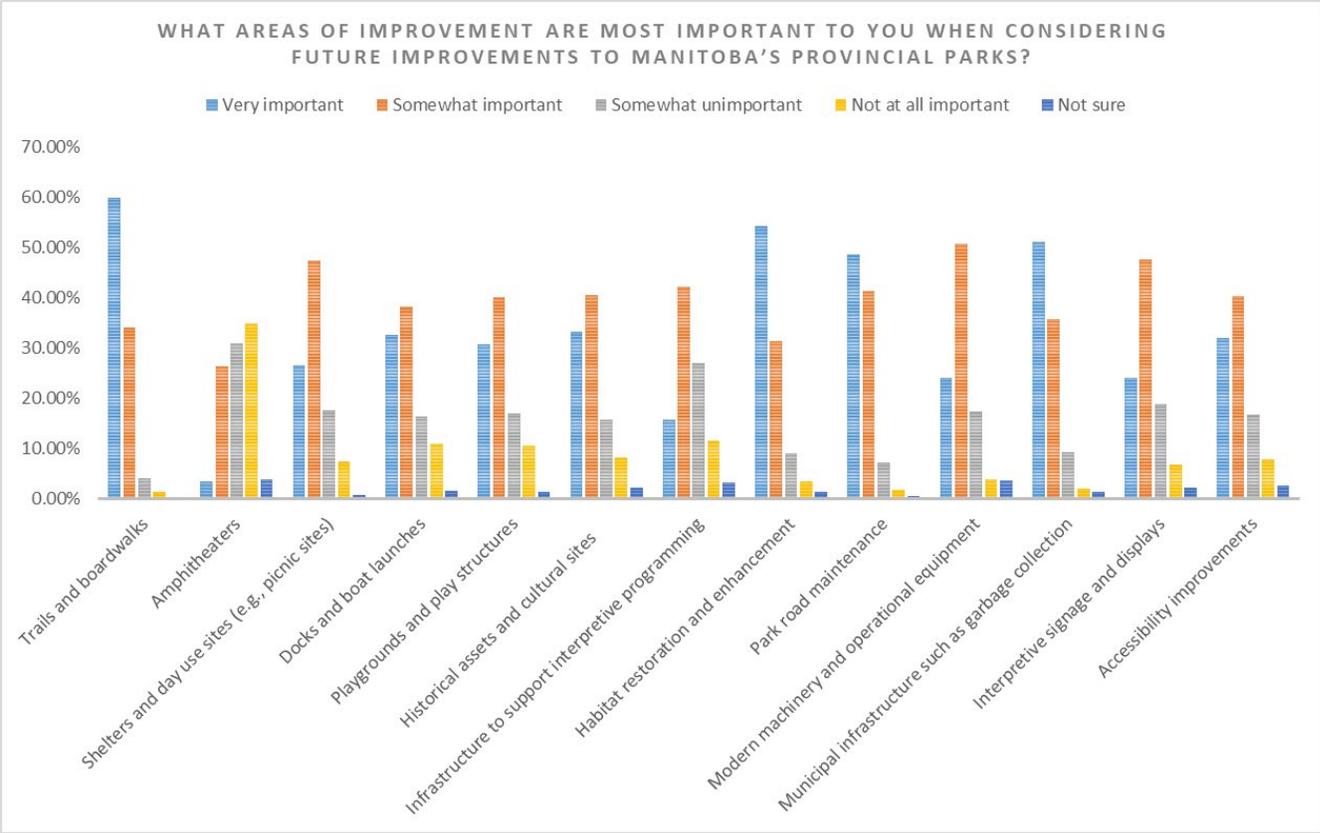
The first section of the survey focused on park users' priorities, in relation to facilities, services and experiences that could be supported by the Parks Endowment Funds. Sixty-one per cent of the 2232 participants indicated that they had not heard, read or seen anything about the Provincial Parks Endowment Funds prior to this public engagement process. For the 39 per cent who stated that they had heard of the funds before, the most common sources were social media, news articles and a government news release. Several participants also indicated they heard about the funds and/or the public engagement through cottage or other stakeholder organizations.

### Question: What areas of improvement are most important to you when considering future improvements to Manitoba's provincial parks?

As illustrated in the graphic below, the options most frequently identified as "very important" were:

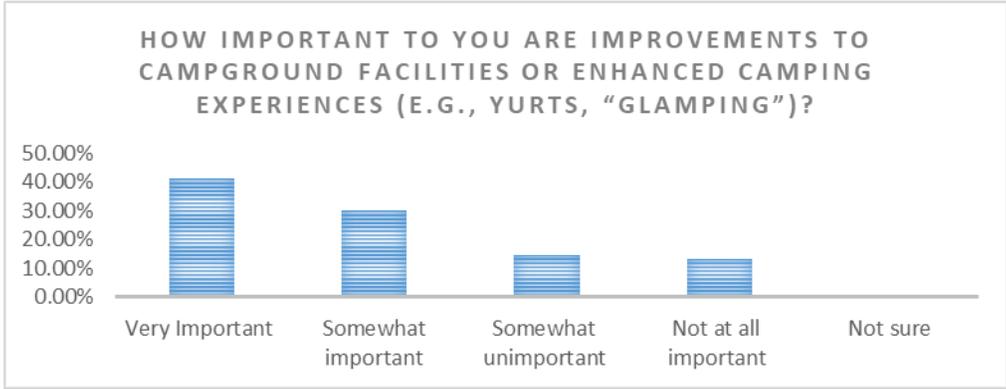
- trails and boardwalks (59 per cent of participants)
- habitat restoration and enhancement (54 per cent)
- municipal infrastructure (ex. garbage collection, etc.) (51 per cent)
- park road maintenance (49 per cent)

None of the options presented were considered by a significant number of participants as being "not at all important" except for amphitheatres, with 35 per cent rating this option as not at all important.



**Question: How important to you are improvements to campground facilities or enhanced camping experiences (e.g., yurts, “glamping”)?**

Seventy-one per cent of survey participants rated improvements to campground facilities or enhanced camping experiences as very or somewhat important.

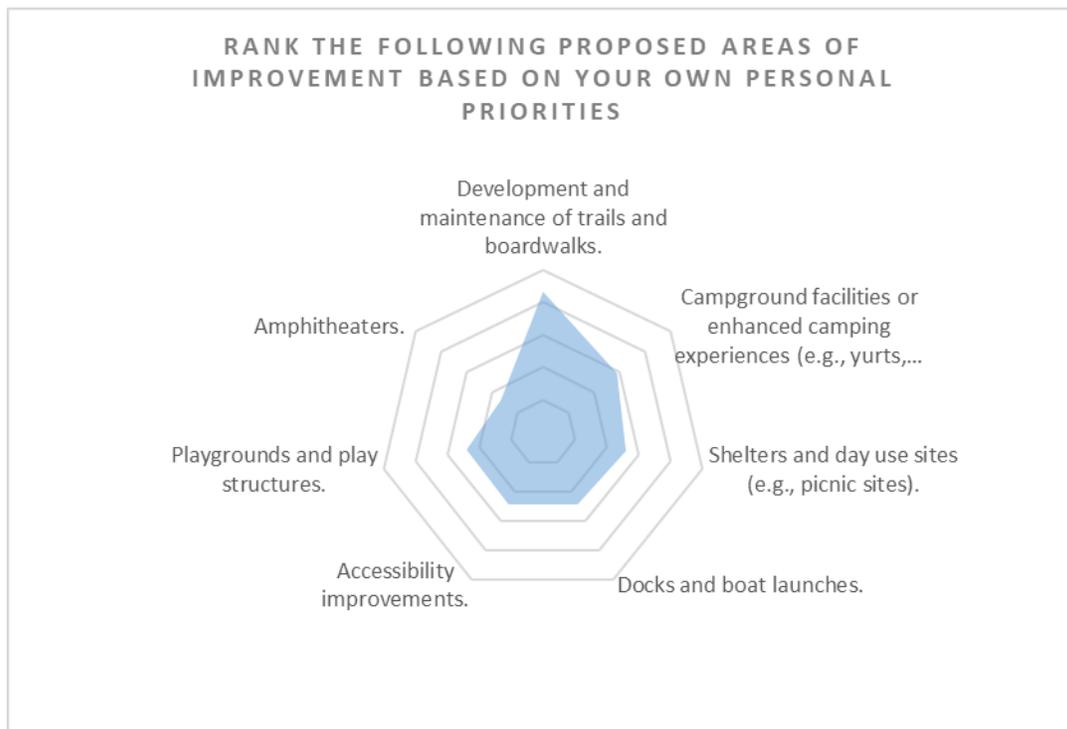


Those 71 per cent were then asked to identify which was more important to them; investments to campground facilities or enhanced camping experiences. Of those participants, 57 per cent felt that enhancements to existing campground facilities are more important, while 34 per cent felt that they are of equal importance, and only nine per cent felt that enhanced camping experiences (e.g. yurts and “glamping”) are more important.

*The following three questions asked participants to rank the importance of improvements to different aspects of provincial parks. The different aspects were put into three groupings (one for each question) based on their purpose and/or the service they provide, in order to facilitate comparison.*

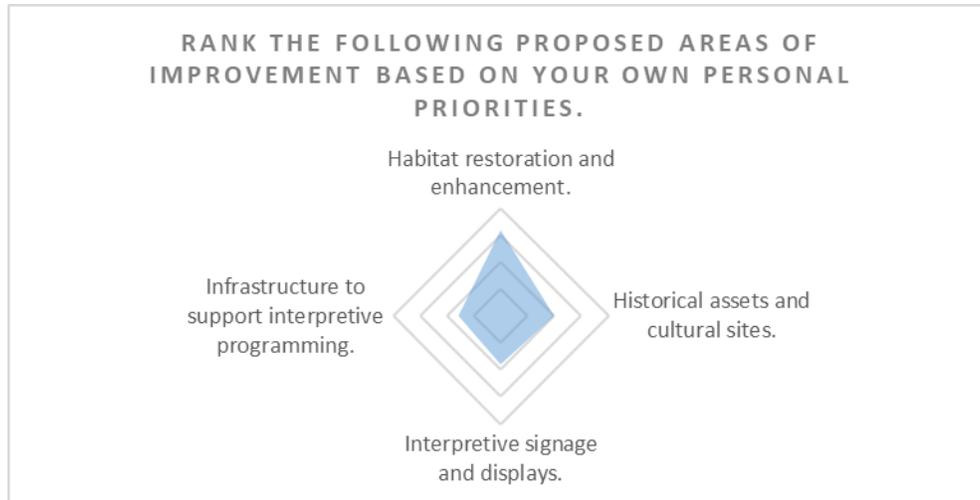
**Question: Rank the following proposed areas of improvement based on your own personal priorities. (1 = Most important, 7 = Least important)**

With this question, survey participants showed a strong preference for improvements to the development and maintenance of trails and boardwalks. The second highest ranked option was improvements to campground facilities or enhanced camping experiences (e.g., yurts, “glamping”). Shelters and day use sites, docks and boat launches, accessibility improvements, and playgrounds and play structures followed, and were all clustered together with a similar average ranking. Improvements to amphitheatres was consistently the lowest ranked option. However, it should be noted that infrastructure to support interpretive programming, which is similar to amphitheatres, was rated more favourably in a previous question.



**Question: Rank the following proposed areas of improvement based on your own personal priorities. (1 = Most important, 4 = Least important)**

The average rankings for this question resulted in habitat restoration and enhancement being considered the most important. This was followed, in order, by historical assets and cultural sites, interpretive signage and displays, and infrastructure to support interpretive programming.



**Question: Rank the following proposed areas of improvement based on your own personal priorities. (1 = Most important, 3 = Least important)**

On average, survey participants most often ranked park road maintenance as the most important option in this question. This was followed closely behind by municipal infrastructure such as garbage collection, recycling, and sewage and waste disposal. Modern machinery and operational equipment (e.g., maintenance equipment used by park employees) was consistently considered to be the least important option.



**Question: Based on your experiences and personal priorities, what types of future projects and improvements to Manitoba’s provincial parks would you like to see?**

Many survey participants submitted an answer to this open-ended question, with 1783 responses in total. These comments covered a range of subjects, with some people commenting about specific ideas or issues concerning one particular park, and others commenting on one or more subjects that could be applicable province-wide.

The responses to this question were sorted into several categories. The most frequently commented on category was **frontcountry campgrounds and camping**, with 34 per cent of the question respondents commenting on this topic. This included comments related to all types of campgrounds and campsites, including yurts, cabins and new types of accommodation, but excluded backcountry camping (that was considered a separate category). These comments also included requests for improvements to camping-adjacent facilities, such as the provision of firewood, and extending the dates of the camping season. In general, the majority of people commenting on this subject spoke about the need for more campsites, especially electrical and full-service sites, and yurts.

The second most frequently commented on category was **maintaining and upgrading existing facilities** (33 per cent of respondents). This included comments about improving the frequency of maintenance and cleanliness of facilities (particularly washrooms and showers), improving collection of garbage and recycling collection/ systems, and comments about the need for more road maintenance and repair.

Comments about **trails and backcountry routes** were also common, with 24 per cent of question respondents commenting on this subject. This included comments about the need to improve or create new trails and backcountry routes (including canoe routes), improve/ create ancillary facilities such as parking and staging areas, make changes to trails to address conflicts between different user types, and improve trail maps.

Other frequently commented on subjects were:

- **Nature conservation** – This included comments related to the importance of protecting the environment, restoring habitat/ ecosystems, conducting research and monitoring, and addressing environmental concerns, such as invasive species. Some of these comments included requests for more parks to be created, and concerns about logging and mining.
- **Activities and programming** – This included requests to direct funding toward various types of existing and new activities or programming, including interpretive and educational programming, as well as new ideas and activities offered or led by external partners or commercial operators. This also included comments about the need for improvements to online information and maps, and comments about increasing opportunities for Indigenous-led management or programs in parks.
- **New infrastructure and facilities** – This included comments stating that funding should be directed toward the development of new infrastructure and facilities of various types (including increased access to WiFi). As noted above, significantly more people commented on the need to improve existing facilities than on the need to construct new facilities.

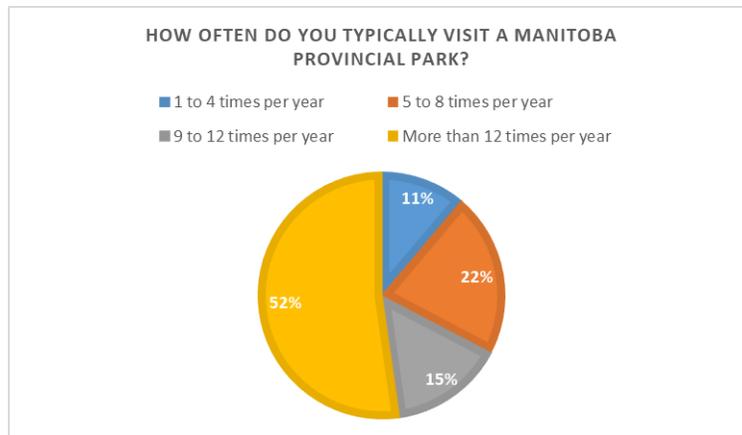
Many people made references to specific parks or areas within parks, including both positive comments about their favourite places, as well as concerns or ideas for improvement. Quite a few respondents also commented on subjects that were out of scope within the context of the question, such as the need for improvements to the Parks Reservation Service (which is an initiative currently being pursued but not via the Parks Endowment Funds), issues with park vehicle permits, and support for keeping Manitoba's provincial parks public.

## Section 2: Satisfaction with Existing Park Services

The second section of the survey focused on park users' satisfaction with existing park services. Sixty-nine percent of the survey participants (1532 people) agreed to participate in this section of the survey.

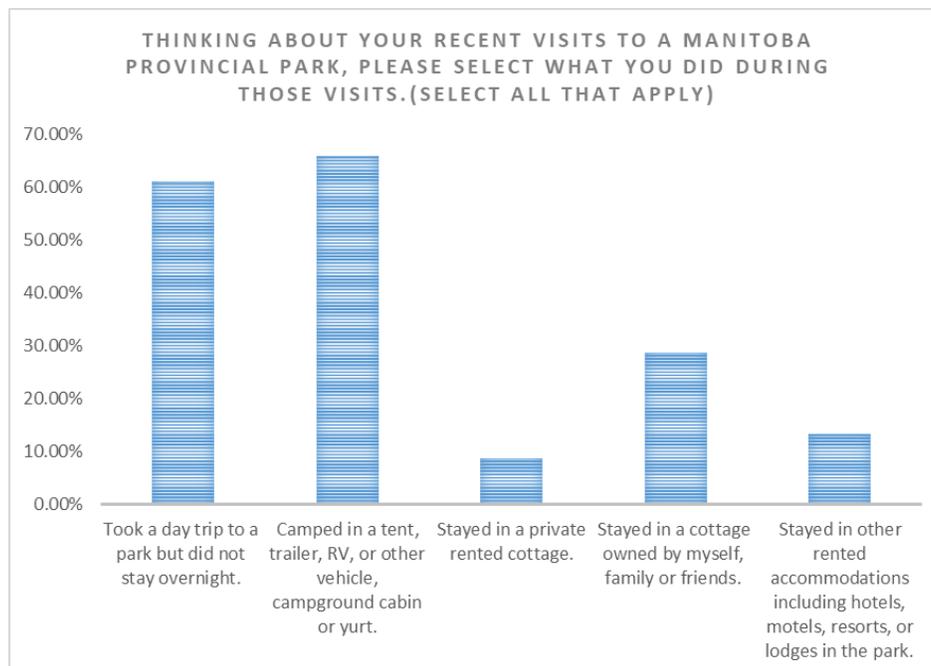
### Question: How often do you typically visit a Manitoba provincial park?

More than half (52 per cent) of the participants in this section of the survey indicated they visit provincial parks more than 12 times a year.



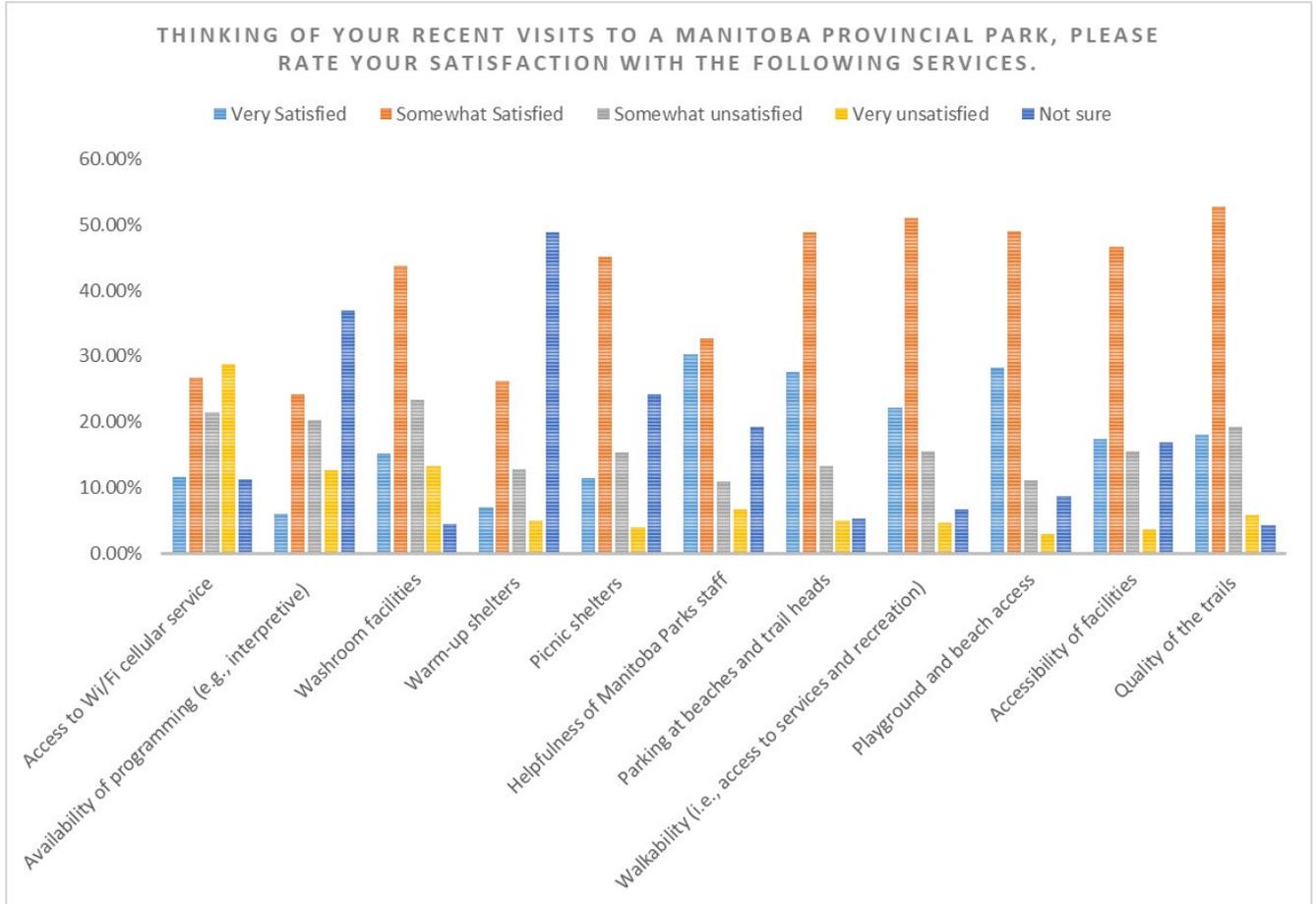
### Question: Thinking about your recent visits to a Manitoba provincial park, please select what you did during those visits. (Select all that apply)

For this question, the most common selections were camping (66 per cent) and day trips (61 per cent).



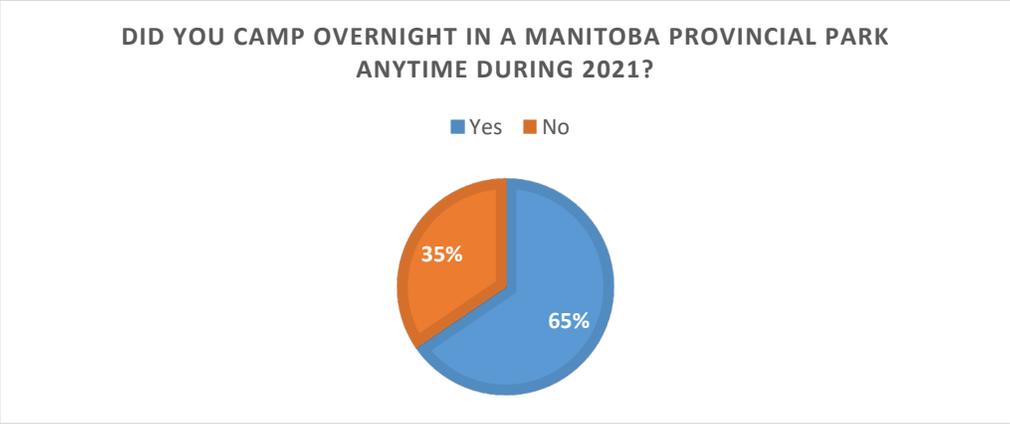
**Question: Thinking of your recent visits to a Manitoba provincial park, please rate your satisfaction with the following services.**

For this question, survey participants were most often “somewhat satisfied” with the majority of park services listed. The highest ranking services that participants were “somewhat satisfied” with were quality of the trails (53 per cent), walkability (51 per cent), and playground and beach access (49 per cent). The majority of survey participants did not indicate high dissatisfaction levels with any of the services listed; however, 29 per cent indicated they were “very unsatisfied” with access to WiFi/ cellular service.



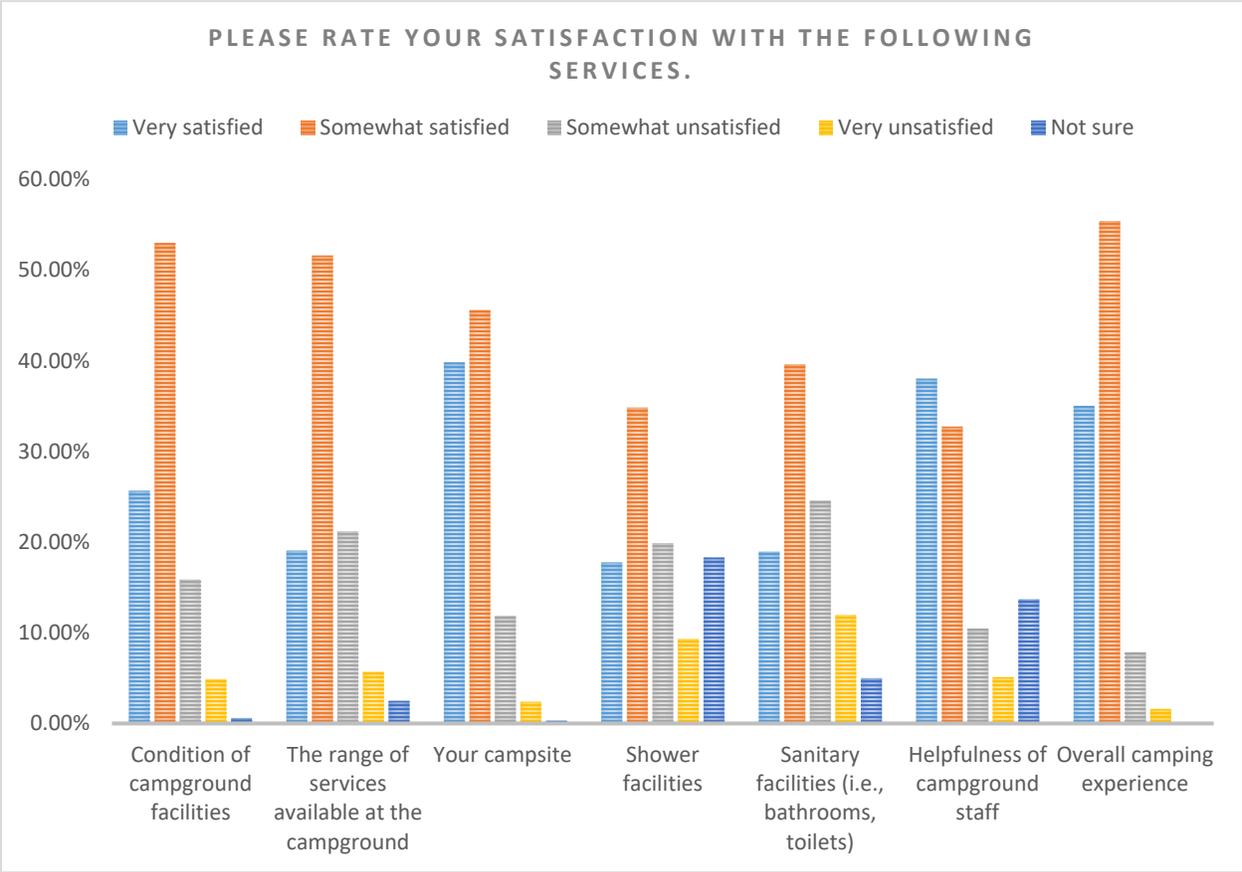
**Question: Did you camp overnight in a Manitoba Provincial Park anytime during 2021?**

Sixty-five per cent of participants answered “yes” to this question.



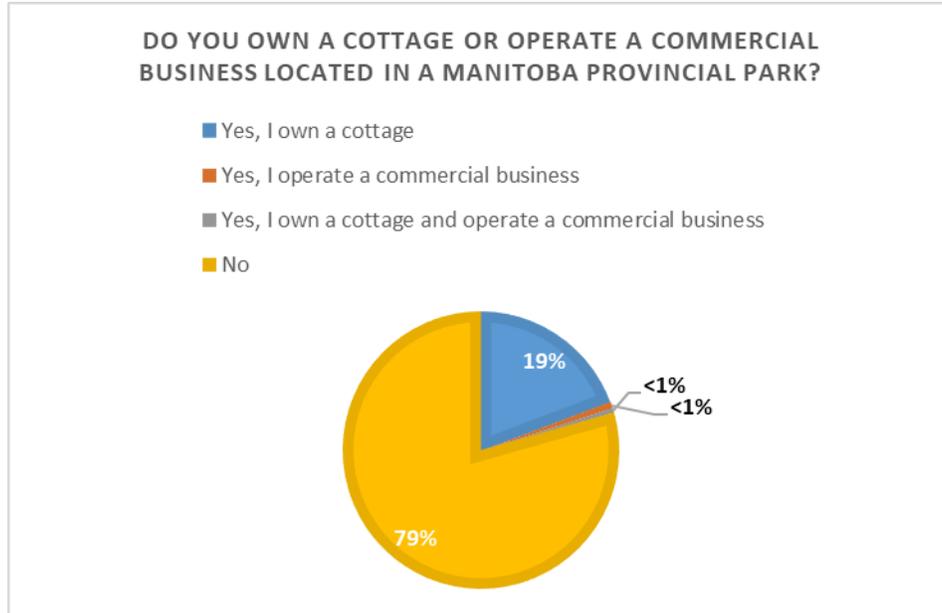
**Question: Please rate your satisfaction with the following services.**

For the survey participants who indicated they camped overnight in a park during 2021, the most common rating given to all campground services was “somewhat satisfied,” with the exception of “helpfulness of campground staff,” which was most commonly rated as “very satisfied.” No services had a particularly high rate of dissatisfaction; however, 36 per cent of participants were somewhat or very dissatisfied with sanitary facilities (bathrooms), and 29 per cent were somewhat or very dissatisfied with shower facilities.

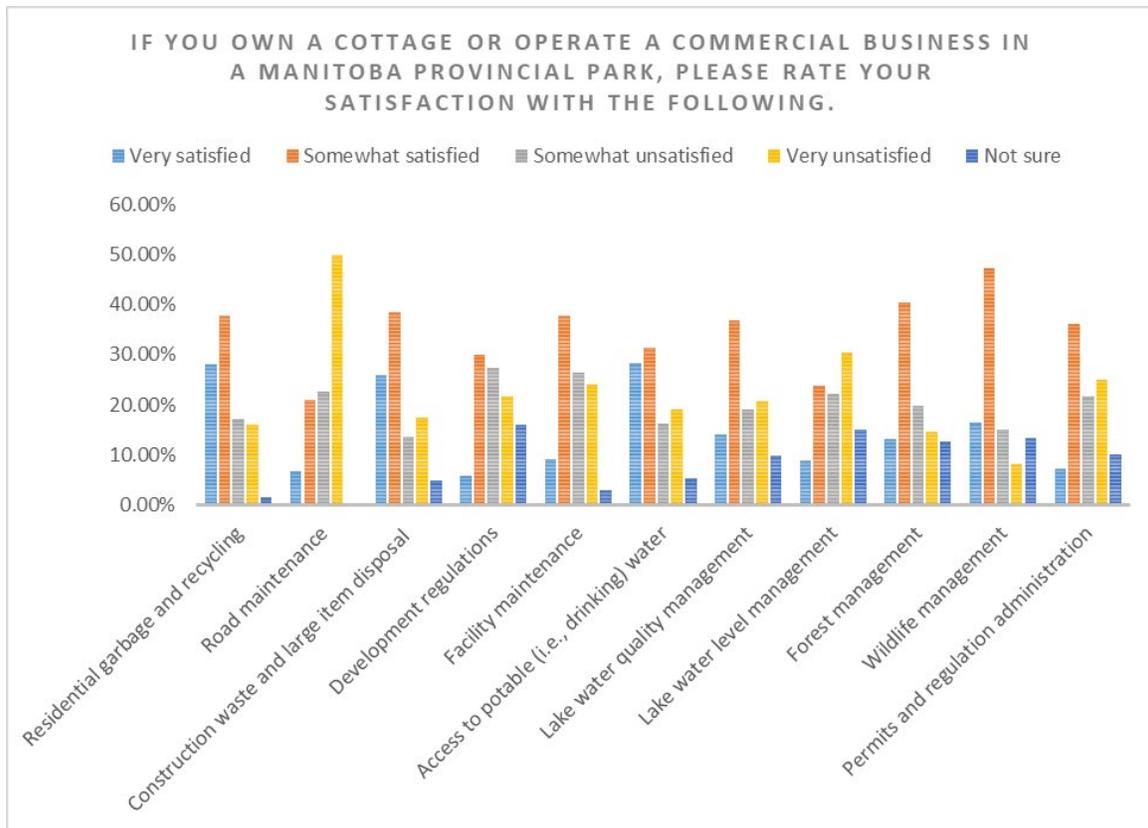


**Question: Do you own a cottage or operate a commercial business located in a Manitoba provincial park?**

Twenty-one percent of participants in this section of the survey (315 people) indicated that they own a cottage and/or operate a commercial business in a provincial park.



Individuals who answered “yes” to the question above were then asked to rate their satisfaction with a number of services (list shown in the chart below). Generally, the most common satisfaction levels with most services was “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied.” Greater dissatisfaction levels were indicated for road maintenance, lake water level management, and facility maintenance. Road maintenance in particular stood out, with 50 per cent of respondents to this question stating they were “very unsatisfied.”



**Question: Based on your experiences visiting or using Manitoba’s provincial parks, is there any other feedback you would like to provide on what provincial park priorities matter most to you?**

There were 1523 answers submitted for this question. As with the other open-ended question in the survey, the responses covered a very wide range of subjects.

The most frequently commented on subject for this question was **recreation infrastructure**, with 41 per cent of question respondents saying something about this. Broadly, this included comments about participants’ desire for more recreation facilities or infrastructure of various kinds to be provided or developed. This also included comments about the need for the Parks Reservation Service to be improved. Many different types of facilities or services were mentioned here, including beaches, campgrounds, cabins, backcountry sites, WiFi, trails, equipment rentals, pet-friendly areas, docks and boat launches, playgrounds, and warming huts. In addition, this category also included comments about size/ equipment requirements for certain types of campsites, and park or campground season dates.

Following recreation infrastructure, the second highest subject in terms of number of comments was **general maintenance**, with 30 per cent of the question respondents commenting on this. This category included comments about the need for improved or more frequent maintenance of various park facilities and infrastructure, including washrooms, showers, campsites, and canoe routes, as well as improved garbage management. A significant number of people also commented on the need for better road maintenance in or on the way to parks, with many noting specific problem areas.

The other top subjects for this question were **staffing and enforcement** (12 per cent) and **nature conservation** (10 per cent). Comments about staffing and enforcement related to a desire for increased staff numbers, enhanced staff training, or more enforcement of various park rules and regulations, including park vehicle permit requirements. Comments about nature conservation included those expressing support for creating more parks, restricting mining and other forms of development in parks, rewilding, and increasing initiatives to restore and protect habitat. This also included comments about the importance of being in nature and keeping remote areas remote.

Other subjects mentioned in the responses to this question included:

- **Financial accessibility** - Comments related to the need for financial accessibility to be considered, and for parks to be affordable.
- **Economic development** - Comments in favour of increased support for economic development in parks, including greater promotion and tourism efforts, and activities such as commercial development and mining.
- **Health and safety** - Comments relating to various concerns regarding public health, safety, and emergencies. This included topics such as cell service, access to drinking water, emergency services, and beach safety.
- **Communication** - Comments about a need for more education, communication, and information for park visitors.
- **Programming** - Comments in favour of more or new types of programming, and activities for kids/ families.
- **Addressing user conflicts** - Comments about conflicts between different park user types, and the need for various types of user conflicts to be addressed. This included comments about the desire for quiet camping areas, opposition to generators, opposition to off-road vehicles and/or the desire for more non-motorized areas in parks, and concerns about overcrowding and a lack of privacy in some areas.
- **Keeping provincial parks public** - Comments that supported the need to keep parks public.
- **Funding** - Comments in support of more funding/ larger budgets for parks, as well as for cottage fees to be charged appropriately.

Many participants submitted comments about specific parks or places within parks in relation to the subjects listed above, and some also expressed general positivity about provincial parks.

## Next Steps

Manitoba Parks is currently taking the feedback received through this public engagement process into consideration. This input will be an important part of the decision-making process on upcoming investments in provincial parks. Further information will be provided about the use of the Provincial Parks Endowment Funds as it becomes available.

## Active Offer Statement

This information is available in an alternate format on request. Please contact [mqi@gov.mb](mailto:mqi@gov.mb).

## Questions?

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