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### Montana Travel Experience Survey - Final Summary Report

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MONTANA  
TRAVEL  
EXPERIENCE  
SURVEY

FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Glenna Brown, Kara Grau, Megan Schultz

*Nonresident Survey Summary Report  
Data collected June 2021 - June 2022*

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# ABOUT OUR WORK

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*Preliminary Results - 2021-2022 Montana Travel Experience Survey*

This summary report highlights select findings from the nonresident 2021-2022 Montana Travel Experience Survey. Data included here were collected from late May, 2021 through June, 2022.

Nonresident travelers who were interviewed by one of the surveyors around the state were given this survey along with the Nonresident Travel Survey after completing an in-person “Front End” survey at a gas station, rest area, or airport. (Current and historical nonresident travel data can be viewed by clicking on [Interactive Data](#) on ITRR's website.)

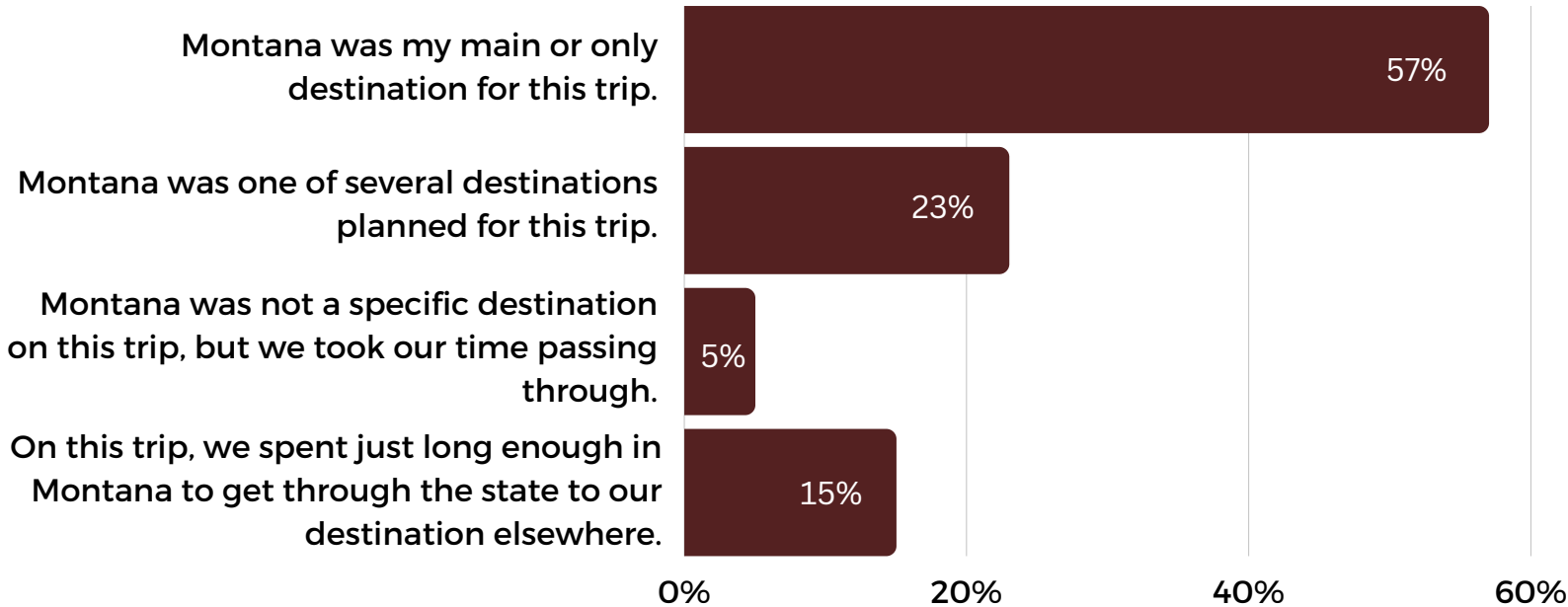
Through June, 2022, 1,327 surveys were collected. Questions included topics related to visitors’ use of public lands, trip planning, and questions for first time and repeat visitors. Some highlights are summarized below.

This data is unweighted, and represents a summary of findings. Watch [itr.umont.edu](http://itr.umont.edu) for additional updates and publications related to this data and survey effort.

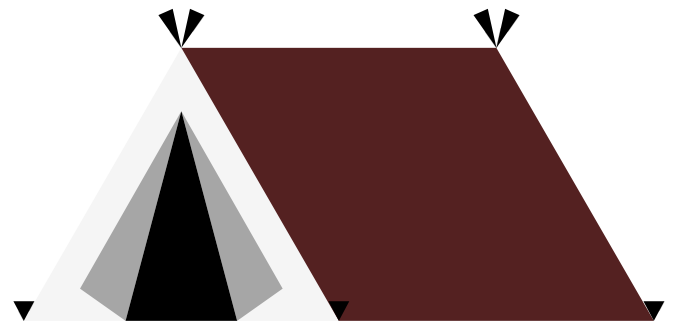
## METHODS

*Data were collected by trained surveyors who asked questions to nonresidents as they filled up their vehicle with fuel at gas stations, when they stopped at rest areas around the state, or while waiting for their departure at an airport. ITRR has permission from over 100 gas stations and 7 airports across the state to talk to travelers during the time it takes them to fill their tank, stretch their legs at a rest area, or while in the boarding area before flights. Travelers 18 years of age or older at these locations had an opportunity to be surveyed about their time in Montana during this visit. Respondents are asked to take and complete additional surveys covering more information about their trip to the state, as well as the survey highlighted here, covering their use of public lands and other aspects of their Montana experience.*

**FOR THIS TRIP IN MONTANA, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES YOUR TIME IN THE STATE?**



- For nearly **60%** of respondents, Montana was the main destination for their travels.
- **15%** considered themselves to be just passing through.



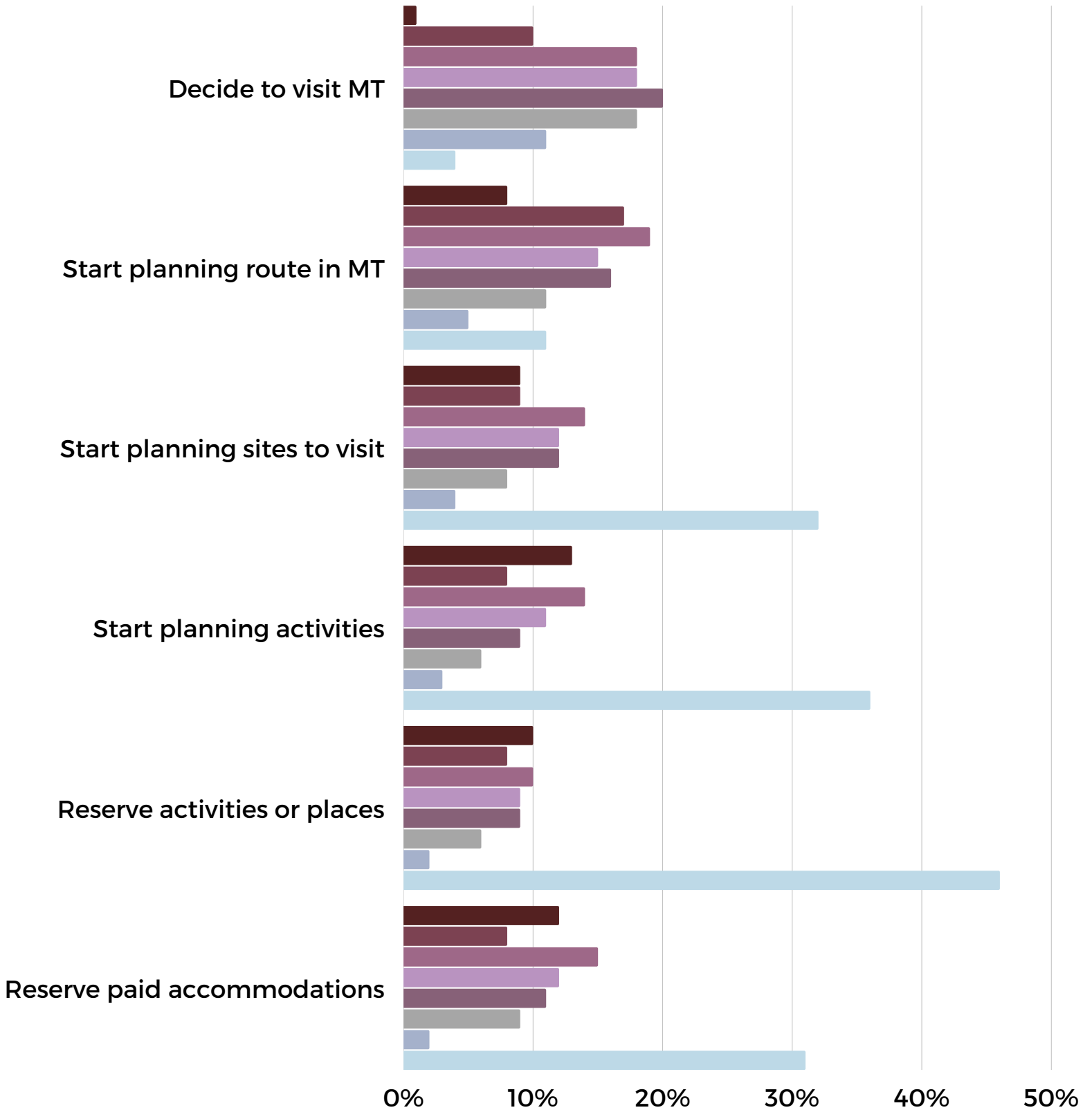
**26%**  
of respondents who had done some planning "More than a year ago" had planned, but then postponed their trip because of the COVID-19 pandemic.  
See the following table for more on planning timeframe.

Respondents were asked if they had been able to stay in their preferred location and preferred accommodation type during their stay in the state, with an opportunity to answer 'yes' or 'no' for up to 8 nights. The vast majority, **95%-98%**, replied 'yes' to both.

\*Selected responses displayed

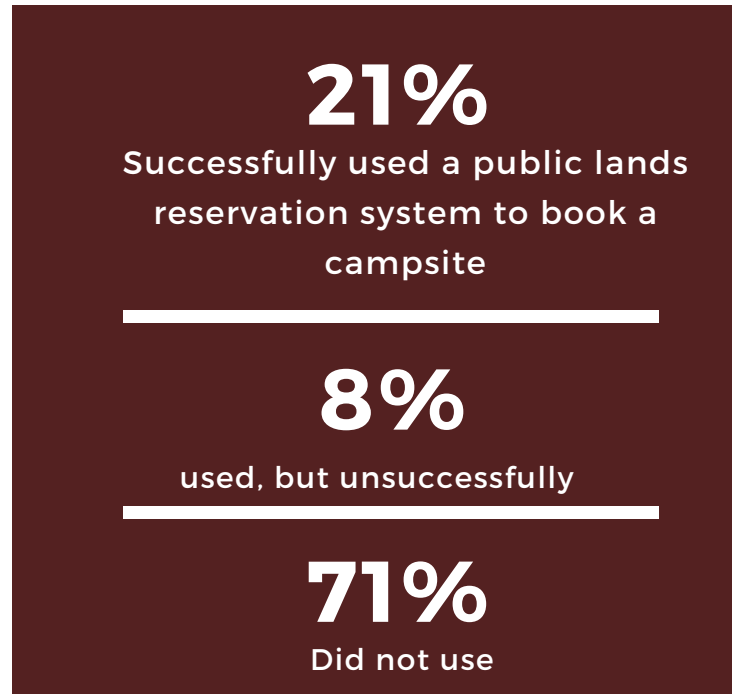
HOW LONG BEFORE THIS TRIP TO MONTANA DID YOU...

- While in MT on this trip
- Less than 1 week
- 1 to 4 weeks
- 1 to 2 months
- 3 to 6 months
- 6 months to a year
- More than a year
- N/A

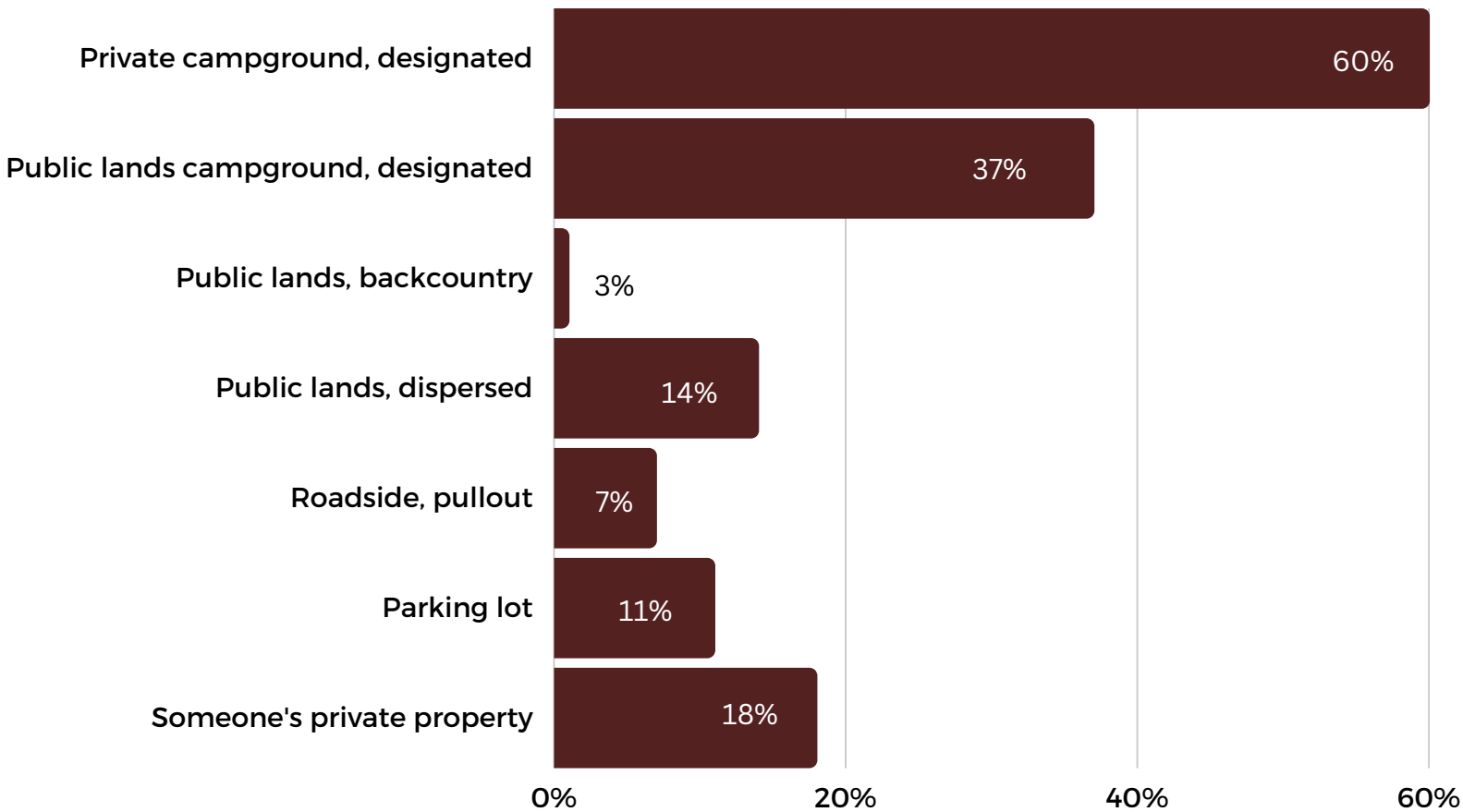


# CAMPING IN MT

- 17% of travelers surveyed had stayed in an RV/travel trailer on this trip.
- Most who camped did not attempt to use a public lands reservation system to book a campsite (i.e., ReserveAmerica.com, Recreation.gov), but about almost 30% did.
- Of the travelers who camped, 13% had difficulty finding available camping on Montana public lands.



## ON THIS TRIP TO MONTANA, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS BEST DESCRIBE THE AREAS YOU STAYED ON THE NIGHTS YOU CAMPED IN THE STATE?



# 1ST TIME VISITORS

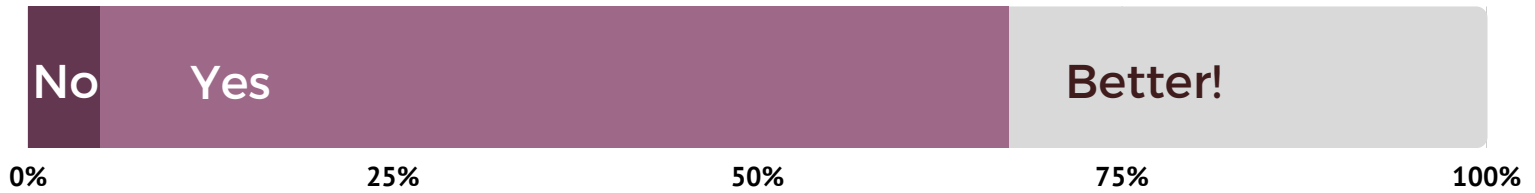
Montana is a popular destination for repeat visitors. However, we wanted to know a bit more from first-time visitors...

Upcoming analysis will describe what motivated first-time visitors to make the trip, and what some of their expectations for Montana were before they came.

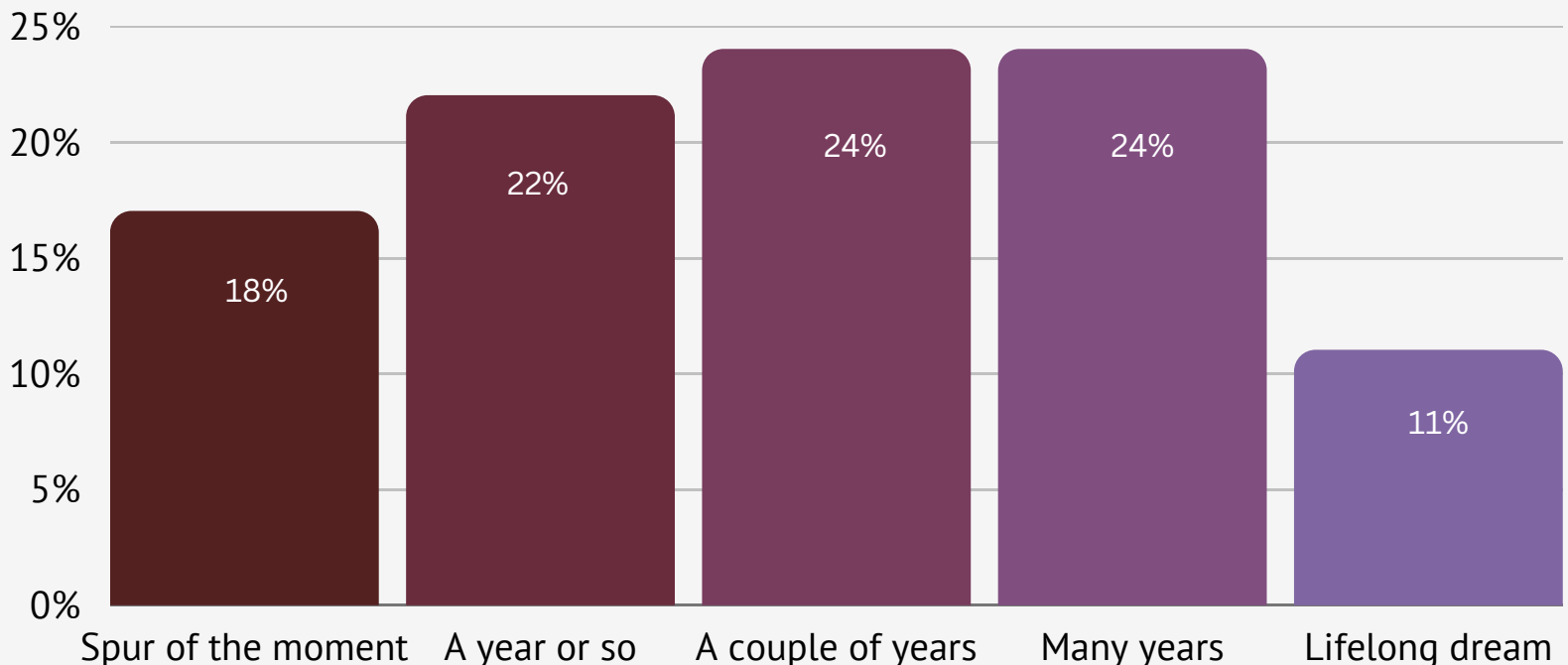
Likewise, we will analyze responses to questions about what may not have met their expectations, what exceeded them, and what they wish they had known before they arrived.



## DID MONTANA, IN GENERAL, MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?



## HOW LONG HAD YOU BEEN WANTING TO VISIT THE STATE BEFORE FINALLY TAKING THIS TRIP?



# 1ST TIME VISITORS OPEN-ENDED

FIRST-TIME VISITORS WERE ASKED SEVERAL OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR TRAVEL TO MONTANA. THEY WERE ASKED TO USE 3 PHRASES/WORDS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

MOST  
FREQUENT  
RESPONSE  
THEMES...

**WHAT  
MOTIVATED  
YOU TO TAKE  
THE TRIP?**

**GENERAL DESIRE TO TRAVEL  
DESIRE TO VISIT NATIONAL PARK  
SCENIC BEAUTY OF STATE**

**EXPECTATIONS  
BEFORE YOUR  
TRIP**

**BEAUTIFUL SCENERY  
WIDE OPEN SPACES  
RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES**

**THINGS NOT  
AS  
EXPECTED**

**WEATHER CONDITIONS  
ROAD  
CONDITIONS/TRANSPORTATION  
LACK OF CONVENIENCES/CELLS  
PHONE SERVICE**

**EXCEEDED  
EXPECTATIONS**

**BEAUTY OF STATE  
FRIENDLINESS OF MT RESIDENTS  
ABUNDANCE OF WILDLIFE**

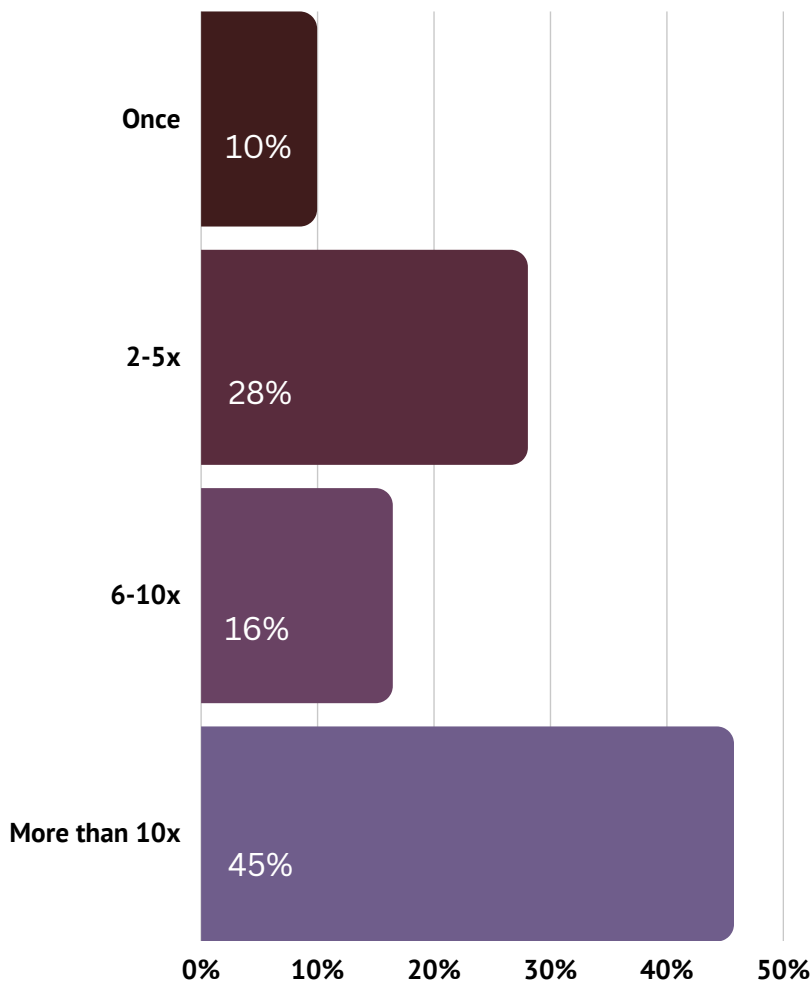
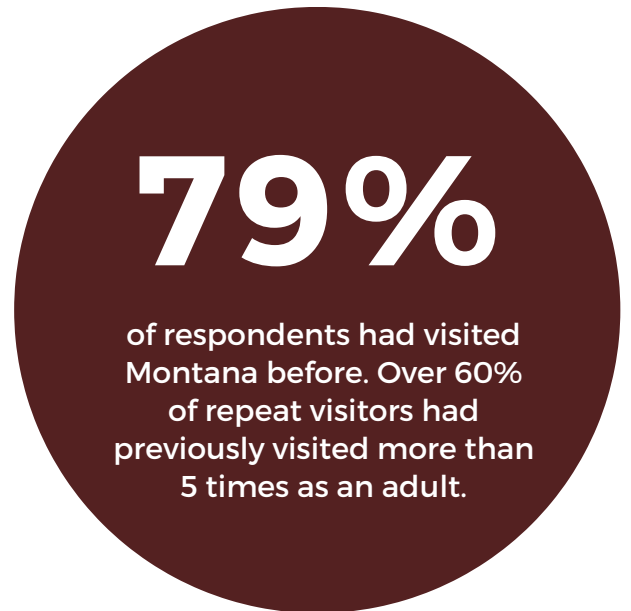


# REPEAT VISITORS

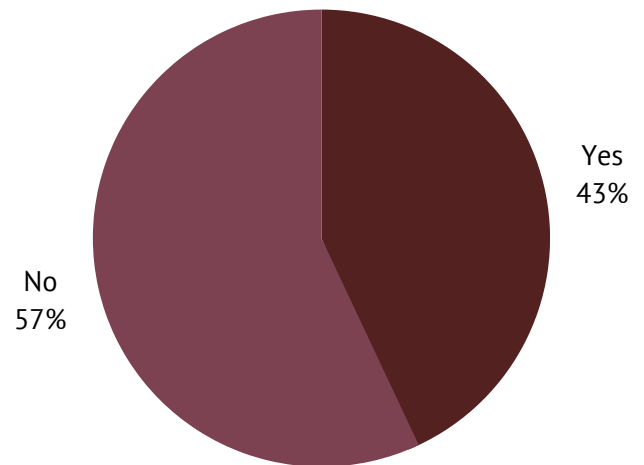
The majority of the survey sample had visited Montana at least once before their current trip. 58% of them had previously visited 6 times or more during their adult life.

More than half of repeat visitors chose to visit new areas in Montana. Forthcoming analysis will look at their responses to understand why.

Additional analysis of repeat visitor data will explore what changes for the better, or for the worse, they perceived in the state over time.



**NOT INCLUDING THIS VISIT, I HAVE VISITED MONTANA...**



**AS A REPEAT VISITOR, DID YOU VISIT ANY NEW AREAS OF THE STATE ON THIS TRIP?**

# REPEAT VISITORS OPEN-ENDED

REPEAT VISITORS WERE ASKED SEVERAL OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR TRAVEL TO MONTANA. THEY WERE ASKED TO USE 3 PHRASES/WORDS TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

## CHANGES YOU HAVE PERCEIVED IN THE STATE OVER TIME (+)

**FLOURISHING DOWNTOWNS**

**INCREASED AMMENITIES**

**BETTER ROADS & SIGNAGE**

**CLEANER**

**BETTER REST STOPS**

## CHANGES YOU HAVE PERCEIVED IN THE STATE OVER TIME (-)

**EXPENSIVE**

**CROWDED & BUSY**

**ROAD CONDITIONS WORSE**

**SMOKE & WEATHER**



### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO VISIT A NEW AREA OF THE STATE?

**ADVENTURE**

**NATIONAL PARKS**

**EDUCATION/ HISTORY**

**RECREATION**



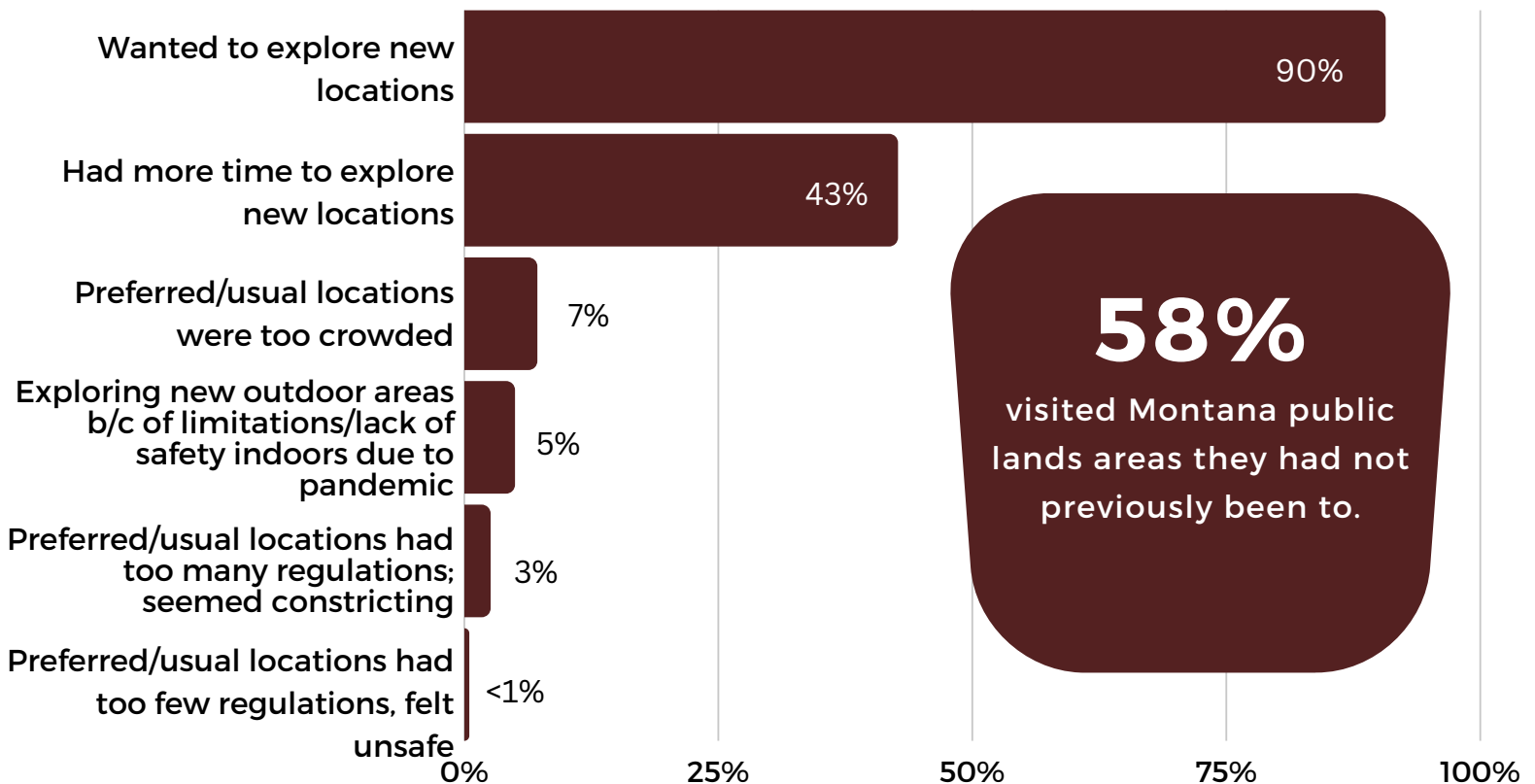
# PUBLIC LAND ACTIVITIES & USES

During the 12 months prior to completing the survey, **10%** of respondents had visited Montana public lands once, while **25%** had visited 2-5 times, and just **8%** had visited 6 or more times.

Of those who had visited public lands in the past 12 months, over half had visited somewhere in the state that was new to them, for a variety of reasons.

Primary activity on MT public lands	Top responses
Sightseeing	24%
Walking/hiking	20%
Relaxing	8%
Fishing	6%
Driving for pleasure (on-road/gravel travel)	6%
Camping (developed sites)	5%
Wildlife viewing	5%

## WHY DID YOU VISIT THESE NEW MONTANA PUBLIC LAND AREAS?



# PUBLIC LAND ACTIVITIES & USES

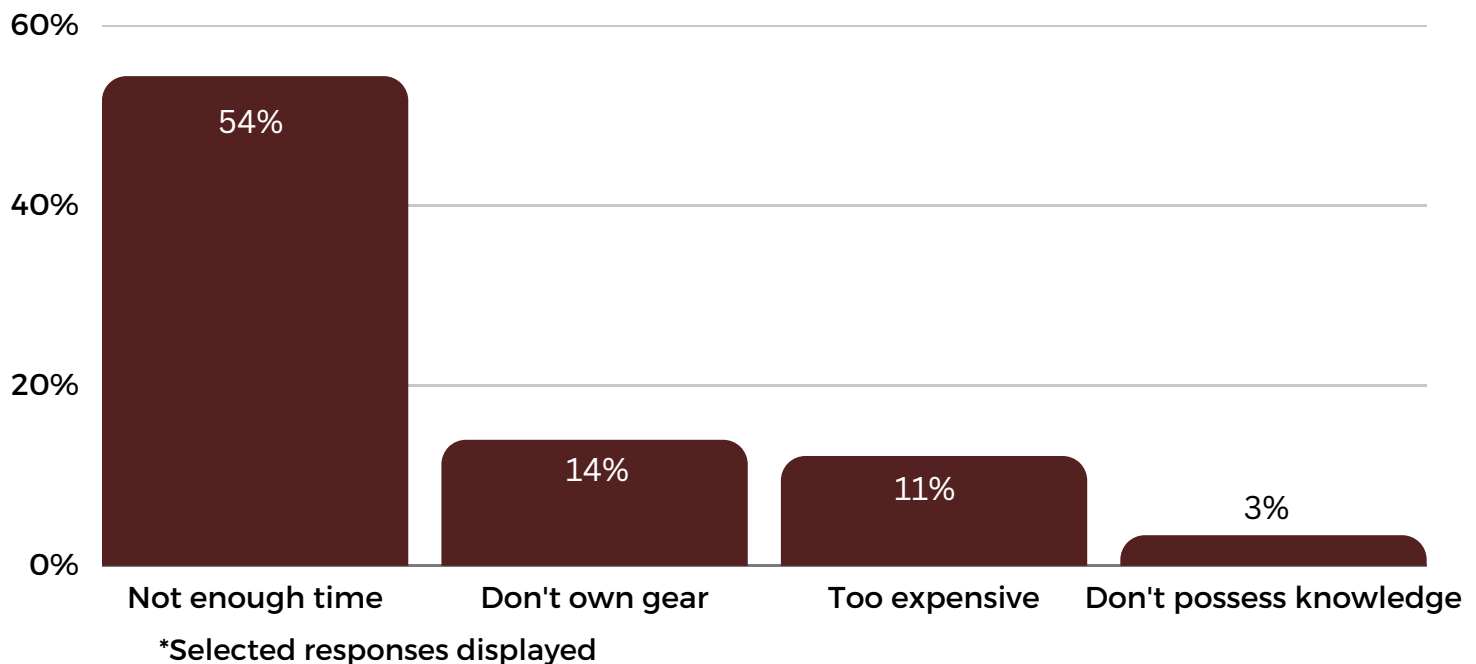
All respondents were asked about their activities and use of public lands in Montana during the last 12 months. About 1/5 of respondents said that there were activities on public lands in which they wanted to participate, but were not able to. While many respondents selected from the reasons provided, 43% listed Other as a reason, and responses included wildfire, smoke, and related restrictions; inclement weather; crowding or lack of parking; difficulty obtaining GNP tickets.

Analysis of those "other" reasons is forthcoming. The most frequent responses from the list provided to respondents is below.

## 21%

Indicated there were public land activities they wanted to participate in, but could not for various reasons

## WHY COULDN'T YOU/DIDN'T YOU PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTIVITY OR ACTIVITIES ON MT PUBLIC LANDS?

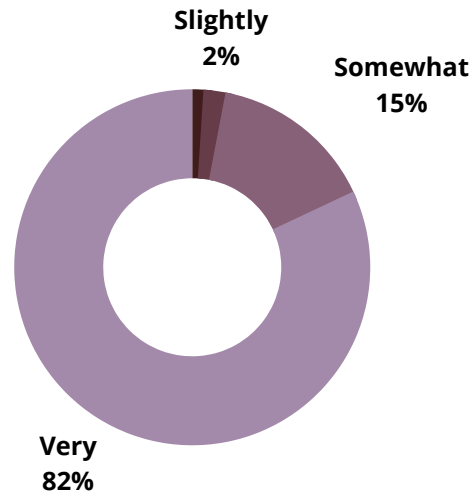


# PUBLIC LANDS EXPERIENCE

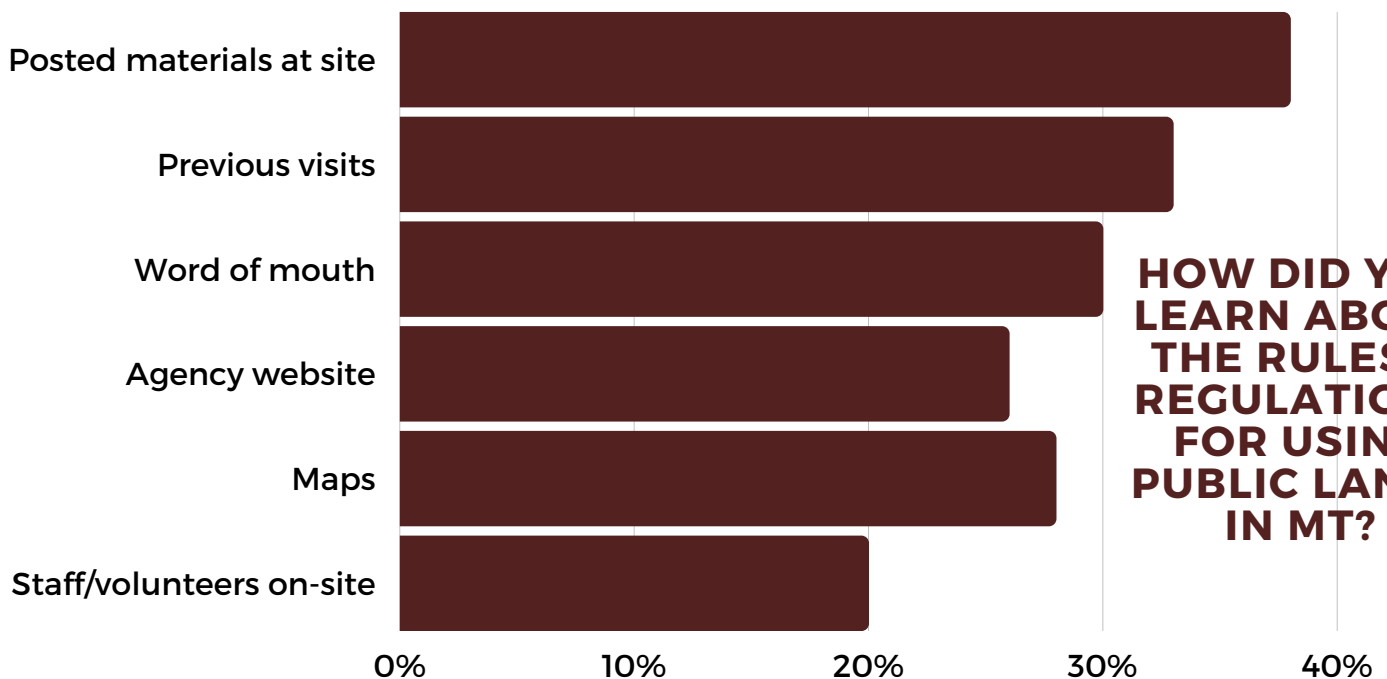
Just **3%** of respondents who had visited MT public lands felt that the experience did not meet their expectations. The majority felt that their expectations had been met, and **82%** were very willing to recommend their most recent public lands experience to a friend.

Respondents were asked how they learned about the rules and regulations for using public lands in Montana. A selection of popular responses are highlighted below. Full responses will be displayed in a forthcoming report.

**97%**  
of those who had visited MT public lands felt the experience met their expectations



**HOW WILLING ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND YOUR MOST RECENT MT PUBLIC LANDS EXPERIENCE TO A FRIEND?**



**HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE RULES & REGULATIONS FOR USING PUBLIC LANDS IN MT?**

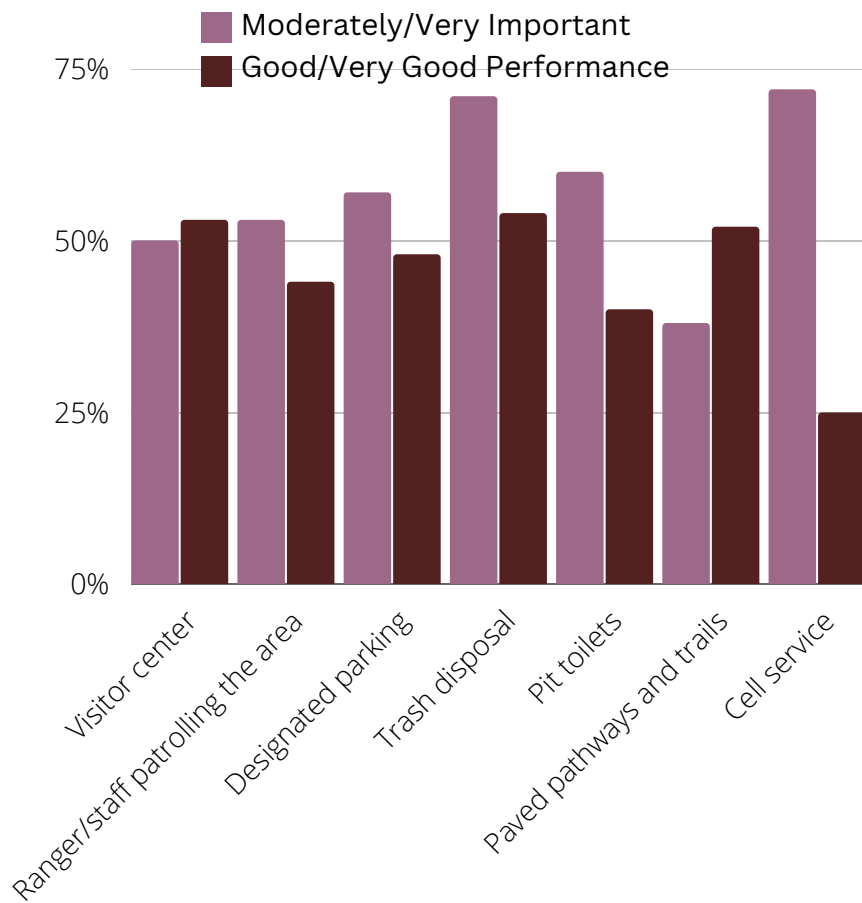
# PUBLIC LANDS EXPERIENCE

**DURING YOUR VISIT TO MT PUBLIC LANDS, HOW IMPORTANT WAS IT TO YOU TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE FOLLOWING AMENITIES OR SERVICES, AND HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF EACH AMENITY/SERVICE YOU USED?**

Respondents were asked about amenities or services they used on MT public lands, as well as any safety concerns they may have. A selection of items are displayed in the tables.

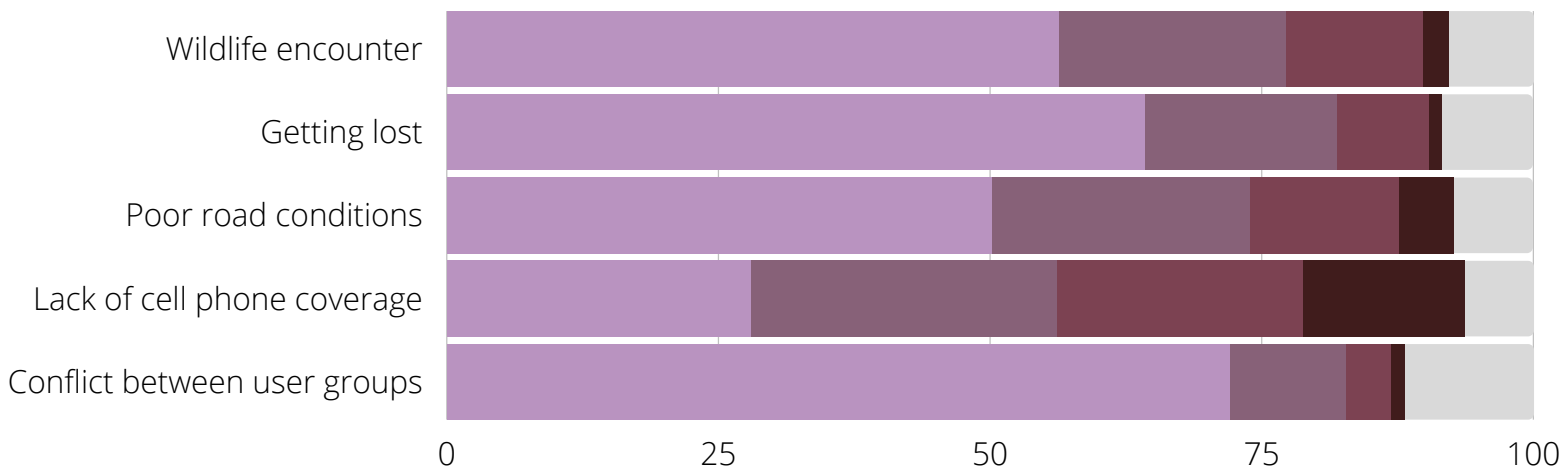
Displayed is the percentage of respondents who felt the item was either **Moderately** or **Very important** alongside the percentage of respondents who found the item's quality of service to be **Good** or **Very good**.

Likewise, a few safety concerns visitors may have, along with their level of concern on MT public lands, are below. More extensive analysis of importance and quality of service of services and amenities on MT public lands is forthcoming.



## DO YOU HAVE ANY SAFETY CONCERNS WHILE VISITING MONTANA PUBLIC LANDS?

- Not a problem/concern
- Minor problem/concern
- Moderate problem/concern
- Major problem/concern
- Don't know/no opinion



# PUBLIC LANDS EXPERIENCE- OPEN-ENDED

VISITORS WERE ASKED SEVERAL OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC LAND EXPERIENCE IN MONTANA

## DID YOUR MONTANA LANDS EXPERIENCE MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS? EXPLAIN

537 responses, overwhelmingly  
positive

“VERY HAPPY WITH THE  
VIEWS”

“BEAUTIFUL PEACEFUL  
COUNTRY.”

## IF YOU WERE NOT SATISFIED, WHY NOT?

49 responses

“TOO CROWDED AND  
UNAVAILABLE ”

“TOO MANY HUNTERS ON  
PROPERTY”

## WHAT AVENUE WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR MANAGERS TO COMMUNICATE RULES/REGULATIONS ABOUT PUBLIC LANDS?

- 1) IN PRINT/ON SITE (SIGNS, BROCHURES, STAFF)
- 2) ONLINE (AGENCY WEBSITES, SOCIAL MEDIA)
- 3) NEED BOTH ONLINE AND ON SITE

