

# 1999 Reservations Northwest Users Survey

## *Methodology and Results*

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#### ***Introduction***

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct the Reservations Northwest Users Survey: a representative survey of the users of Reservations Northwest (RNW) to evaluate public perception of RNW as well as user satisfaction with Oregon and Washington State Parks. The first RNW Users survey was conducted in 1996 to evaluate the first year of RNW operation, and another survey was conducted in 1997. This year's users survey is the third in the series.

Section 1 of this report summarizes the survey methodology; and Section 2 summarizes the results of the survey. In discussing this year's survey results, some findings are compared with the findings from 1997.

#### ***Section 1: Survey Methodology***

##### **Survey Instrument**

Survey questions were developed in close consultation with OPRD representative Christopher A. Havel. The majority of the questions are replicated from the second RNW survey with some new questions.

The survey instrument includes the following subject areas:

1. *RNW users' characteristics*, including age, income, and education;
2. *RNW users' knowledge of state park system operation*, including knowledge of state park funding;
3. *RNW users' camping behavior*, including how frequently they camp on and off-season, the typical size of camp group;
4. *RNW users' knowledge and experience with RNW*, including ease/difficulty of making a reservation;
5. *RNW users' preferences*, including preferences about two night minimum stay during three day week ends, toll free telephone line, reduction in reservation window, and requirement of full payment during summer camping seasons;
6. *RNW users' satisfaction with RNW and State Parks*, including satisfaction with the quality of campgrounds, facilities, and services.

##### **Sample and Data Collection**

The list of all RNW users, as of October, 1999, provided the master list of RNW users. Before selection of the sample, duplicate entries (specifically duplicate telephone numbers) were removed from the master list, providing a total of 51, 995 unique RNW users. From this master list, 700 individual RNW users were randomly drawn as the sample for this study.

This survey was conducted using OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) facility. Interviewer training was conducted on October 16, 1999. Interviewing was conducted every day from October 17<sup>th</sup> to October 29<sup>th</sup>. Altogether, 3,577 telephone calls were made to complete 404 interviews. Among the original 700 telephone numbers, 85 were unusable because the number was wrong, disconnected, non-residential, or no one in the household had called Reservations Northwest. The overall survey response rate was 67%, and the refusal rate was 6.6%<sup>1</sup>.

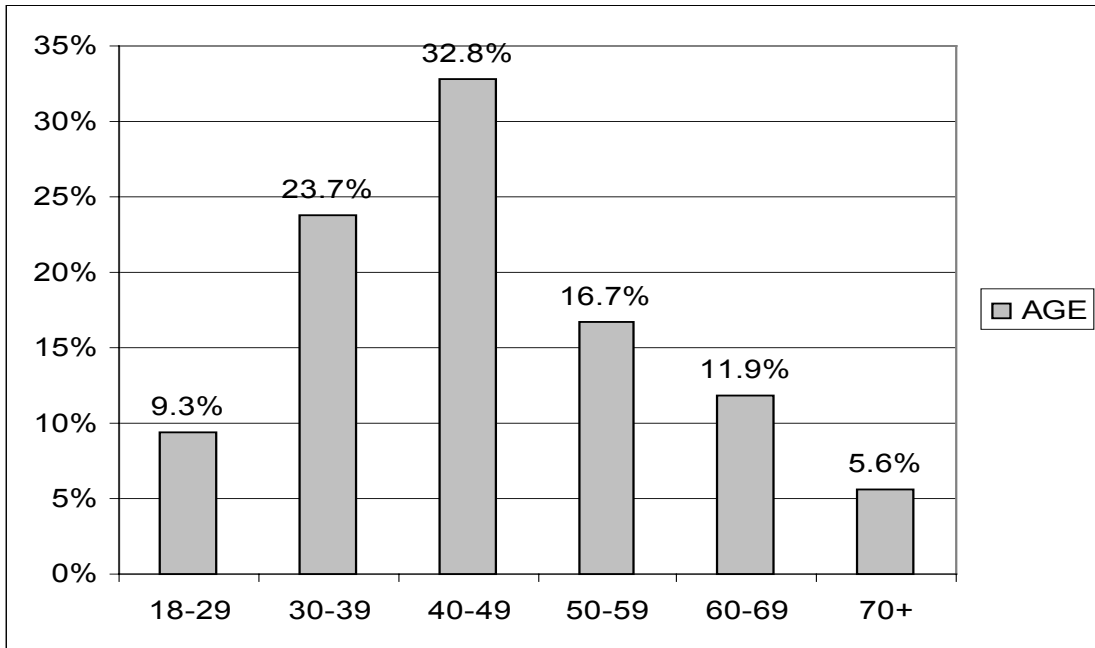
### ***Section 2: Summary of the Results***

In this section, the overall results of the survey are presented, roughly organized around the survey subject areas.

#### **A. RNW User Characteristics**

The sex distribution of the users interviewed is 40% men and 60% women. Users' age range is from 18 to 94 years old, with the average age being 46 years old. The majority of users are between the ages of 30 and 59, constituting 73% of RNW users (see Figure 1).

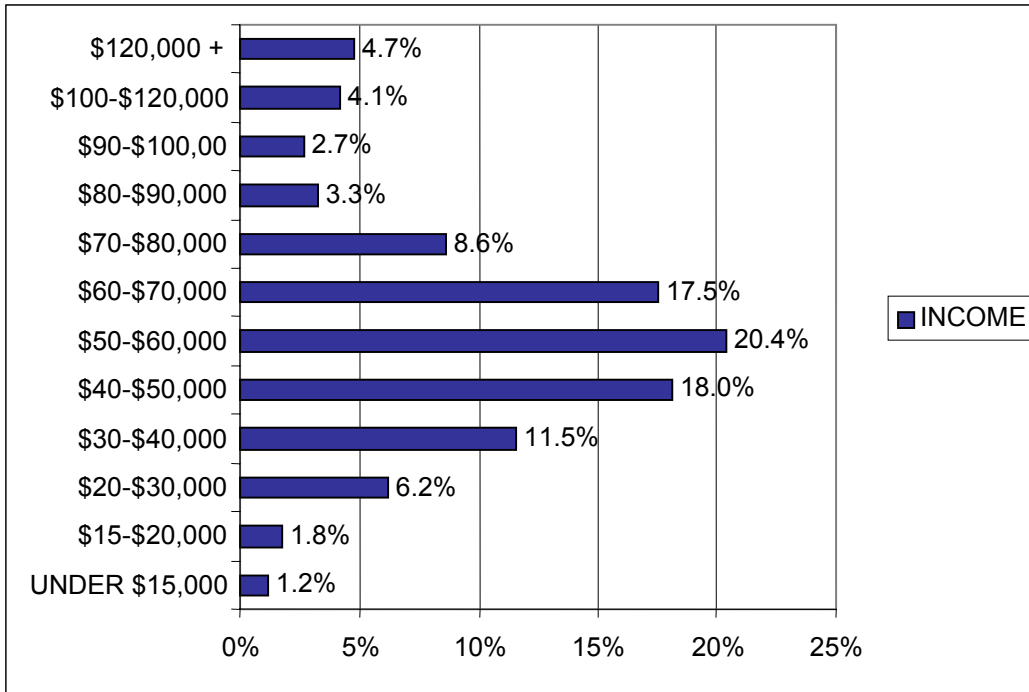
**Figure 1: Age Distribution**



<sup>1</sup> Response rate was calculated in following manner. Completed interview / (Eligible sample + ((Eligible sample / (Eligible sample + Ineligible sample)) \* Sample with unknown status))

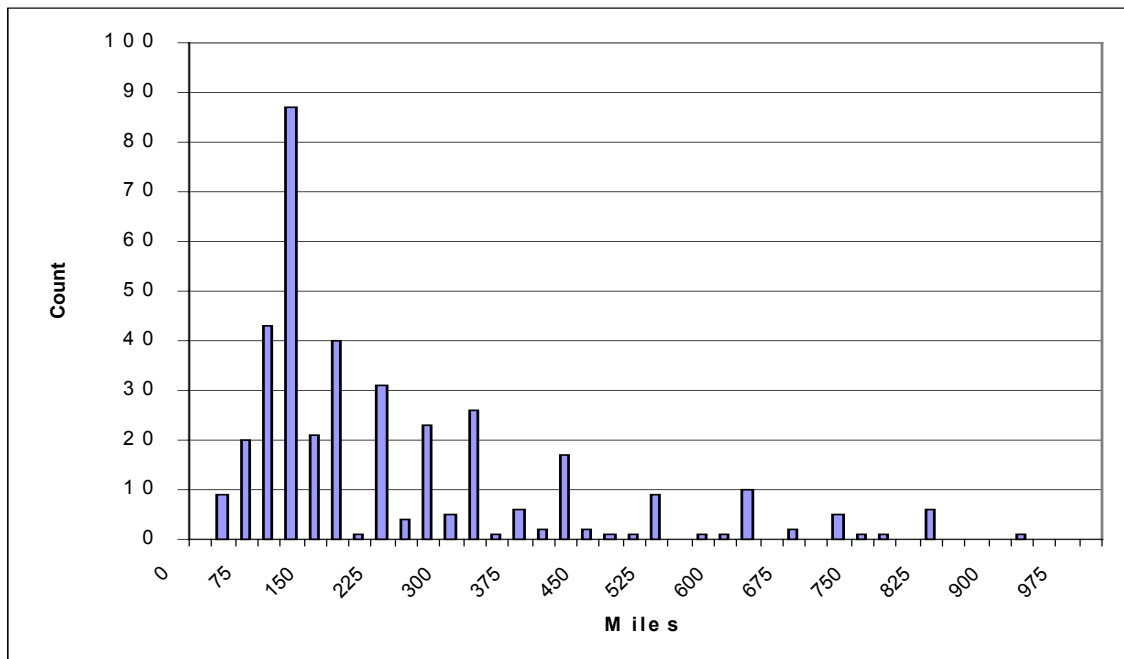
Categorically, the median annual household income of RNW users is \$50 to \$60,000, with the majority (76%) of RNW users' income in the range from \$30 to \$80,000 (see Figure 2). Roughly half of RNW users have an associate or higher degree of education. The average number of miles RNW users traveled to get to a campsite was 240 miles. The distribution of miles traveled, however is quite skewed. About 50% of RNW users traveled between 50 and 150 miles to get to their destination campsite (see Figure 3).

**Figure 2: Household Income Distribution**



The majority of RNW users live in either Oregon (60%) or Washington (21%) state. RNW users from California and Idaho constitute 8.6% and 3.5% respectively. Users from countries other than United States make up 3.2% of the users.

**Figure 3: Miles Traveled to Get to the Campsite**



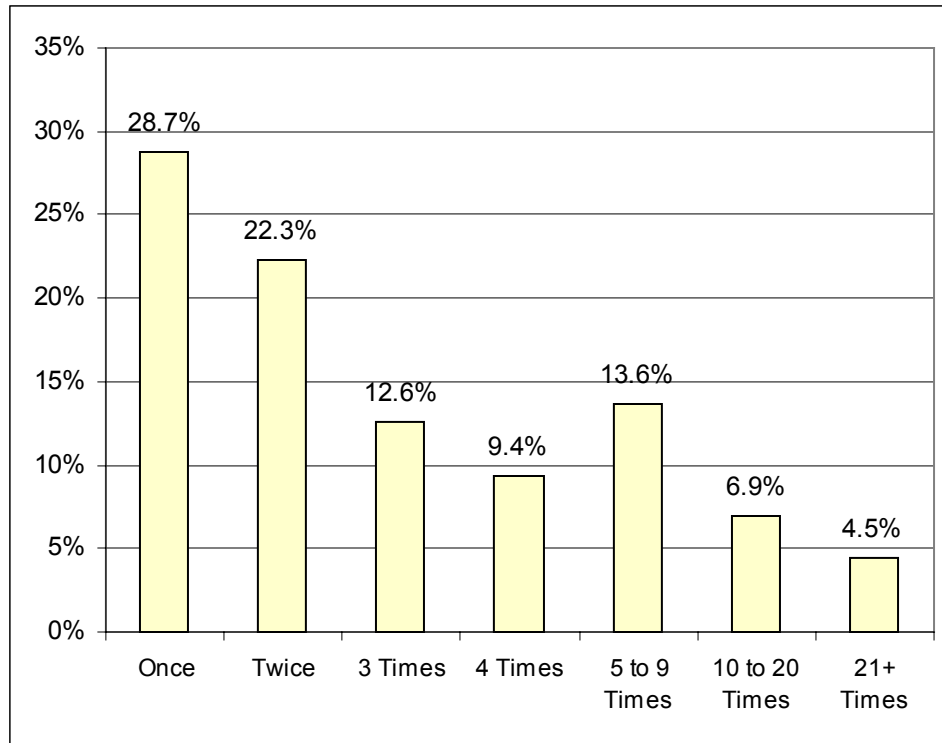
## B. RNW Use

Most RNW users (50%) made one or two phone calls to RNW in the last 12 months. Roughly a quarter of the users called RNW three or four times, and another quarter called RNW five or more times (see Figure 4).

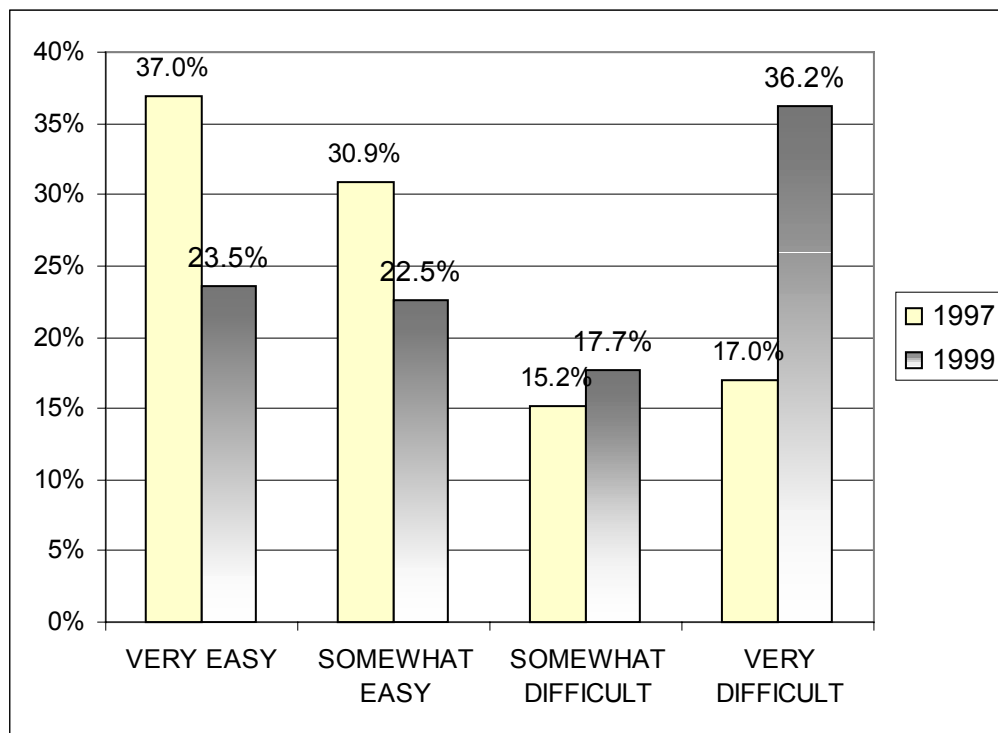
Fully 96% of RNW users made a reservation. Figure 5 summarizes users feelings on getting through to an operator. Results of the 1997 RNW survey are included as a reference. This year, 68% of users indicated that it was "very easy" or "somewhat easy" to get through to an operator to make reservations. This is a considerable improvement over 1997, when only 45% of RNW users chose "very easy" or "somewhat easy."

76.5% of the RNW users interviewed, remember receiving a confirmation letter from RNW. Of those users who remembered receiving a confirmation letter, 72.5% said that they read the letter, and 70.8% brought the confirmation letter with them to the campground.

**Figure 4: Number of Times Called Reservations Northwest**



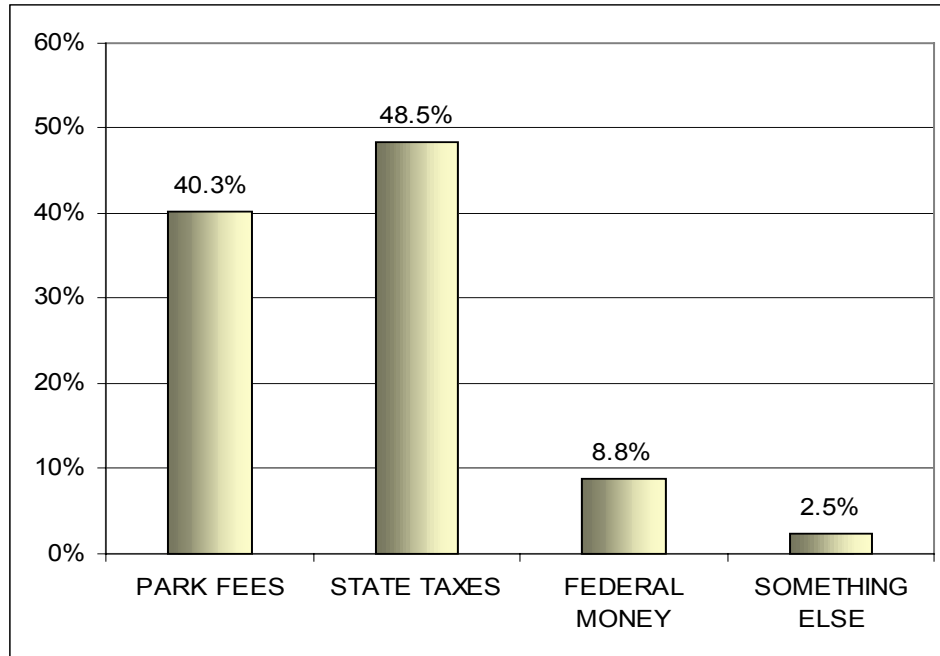
**Figure 5: Difficulty Getting Through to an Operator to Make Reservation**



### C. RNW Users' Knowledge about State Park System Operation and RNW

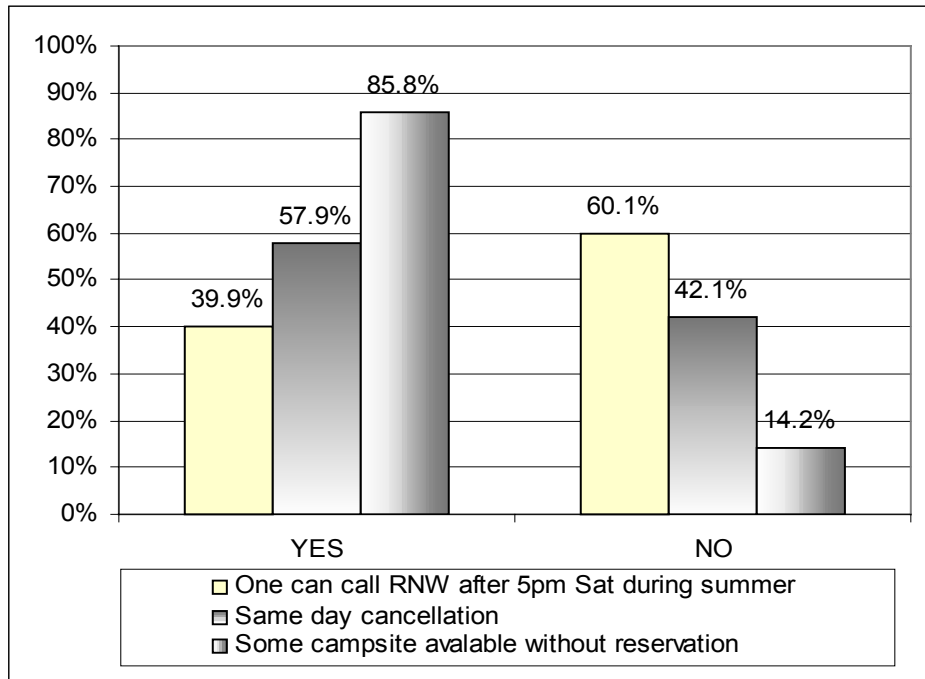
To the question, "Where do you think your state park system gets most of its funding--fees, state taxes, federal money, or something else?," 40.3% responded fees, 48.5% responded state tax, 8.8% responded federal money, and 2.5% responded something else (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: State Park System Funded by**



Only about 40% of RNW users knew that RNW can handle reservations calls after 5:00 pm on Saturday during the summer months. User awareness of the same day cancellation policy is somewhat higher, at about 60%. Most (86%) RNW users are aware that some campsites are available without first making a reservation (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Awareness of RNW Operation**



#### **D. Reservations Northwest Users' Camping Behavior**

##### *Planning camping trip and reserving camp site*

Most of the RNW users (83%) indicated that they usually make a reservation in advance. The majority of users make reservations at about the same time as they plan for their camping trip. Of the RNW users sampled, 63% plan for a camping trip and make reservations at the same time. Another 18% reserve within 5 weeks between the time they plan their trip and when they finally make a reservation. Among those RNW users who plan and make reservations at different times, more users delay making reservations. On average, users start planning a camping trip 16 weeks in advance and reserve a campsite 14 weeks in advance.

##### *Camp group size and camping method:*

The average RNW users' camping group consists of seven people. However, the average is skewed by users who camp in a large group. The most common camping group size is four people (26.3%). Roughly 90% of RNW users camp with a group that is less than or equal to 10 in size (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Typical Number of People in Camping Group**

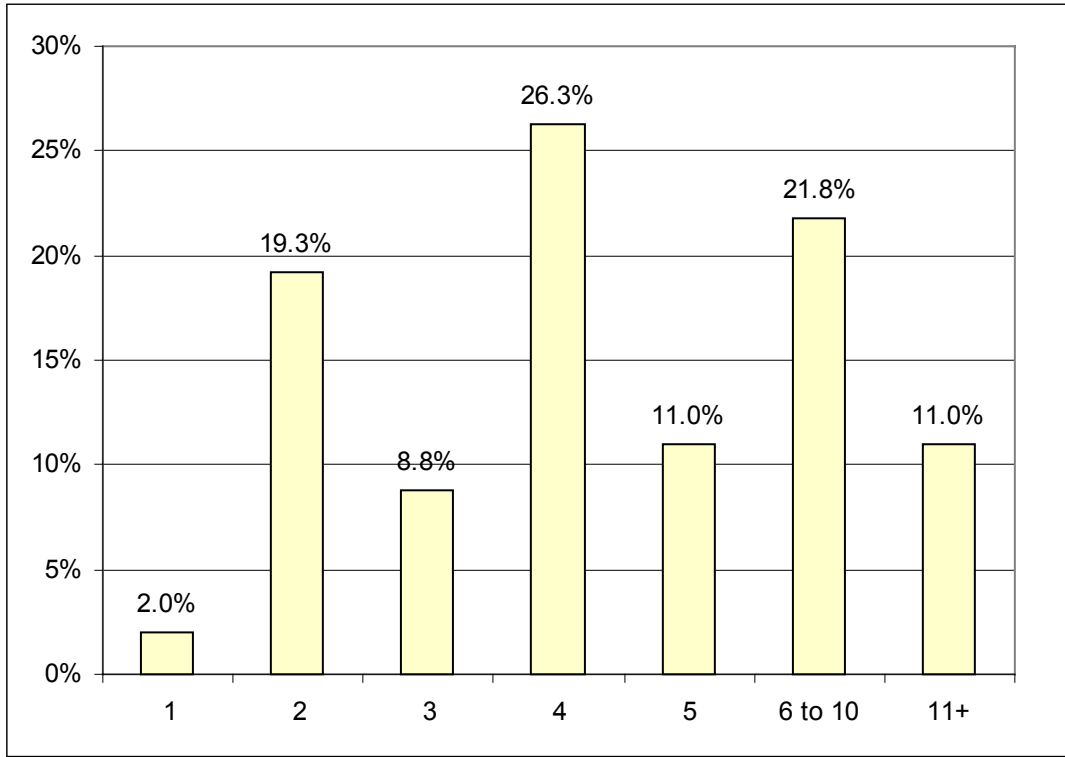
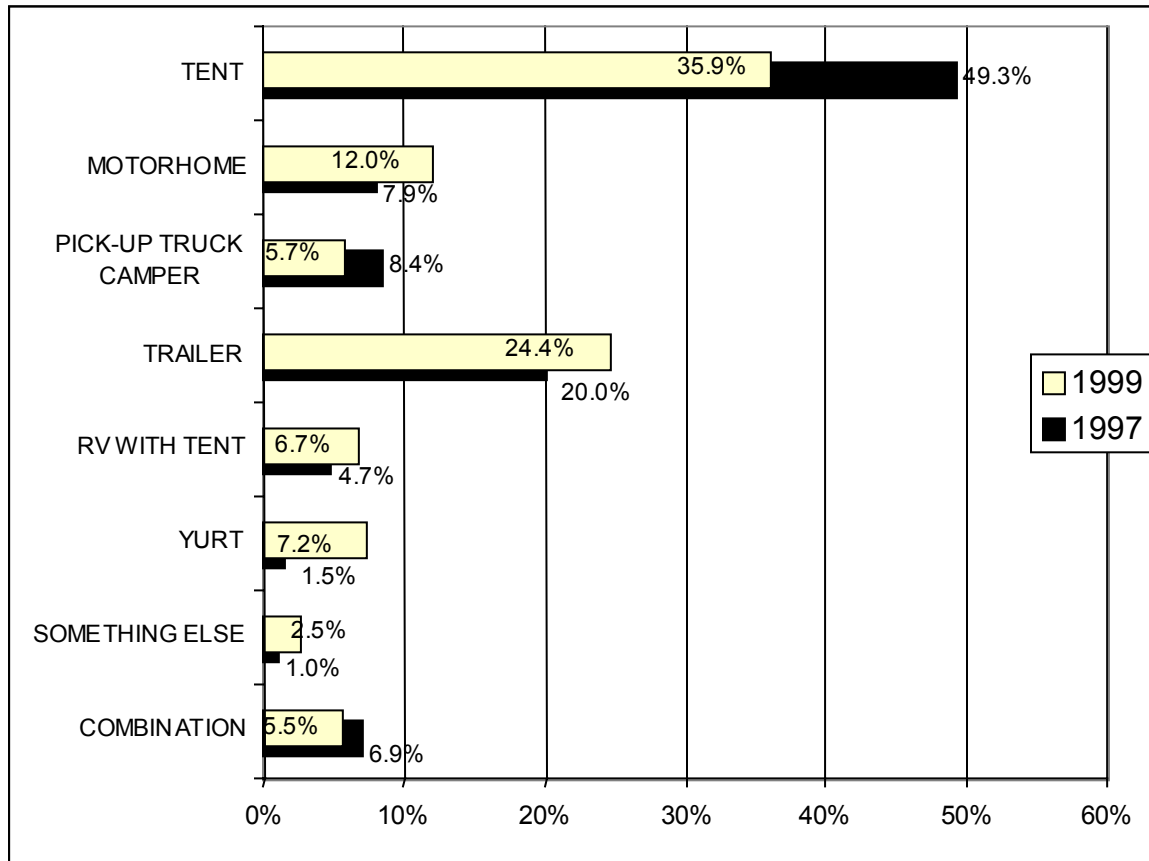


Figure 9 summarizes the camping methods used by RNW users. 1997 results are shown for your reference. The most typical camping method is tent camping, at 35.9%. Roughly 50% of the RNW users utilize a form of Recreational Vehicle (RV); 12% camped with motorhome, 5.7% camped with pickup truck camper, 24% used trailer, and 6.7% used a combination of RV and tent. The proportion of RNW users camping in yurts is 7.2%. The proportion of tent camping decreased considerably since 1997, while the proportion of RV camping and yurt increased.



**Figure 9: Camping Method**

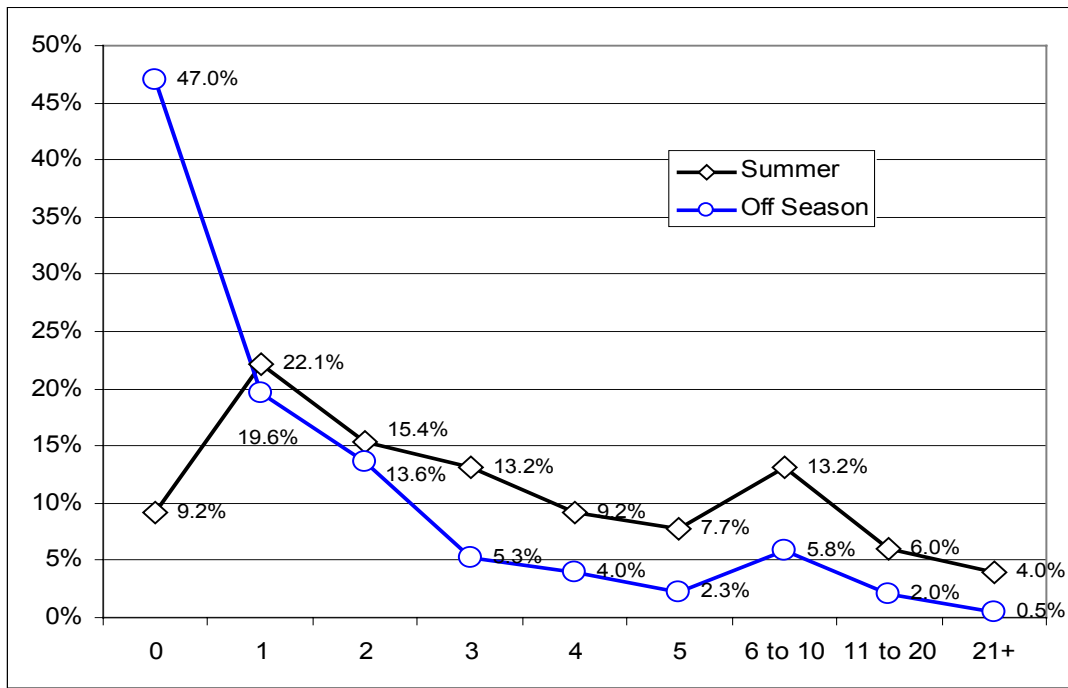


*Frequency of camping trips*

Over 50% of RNW users have camped during the ‘off-season’, and over 90% have camped during the summer season. On the average, those camping during the summer season camped 5.4 times, and those who camped during the off season camped 3.7 times. These averages are a slight increase from 1997. The average camping frequency during the 1997 summer season was 4.5 times, and during the off-season was 1.8 times.

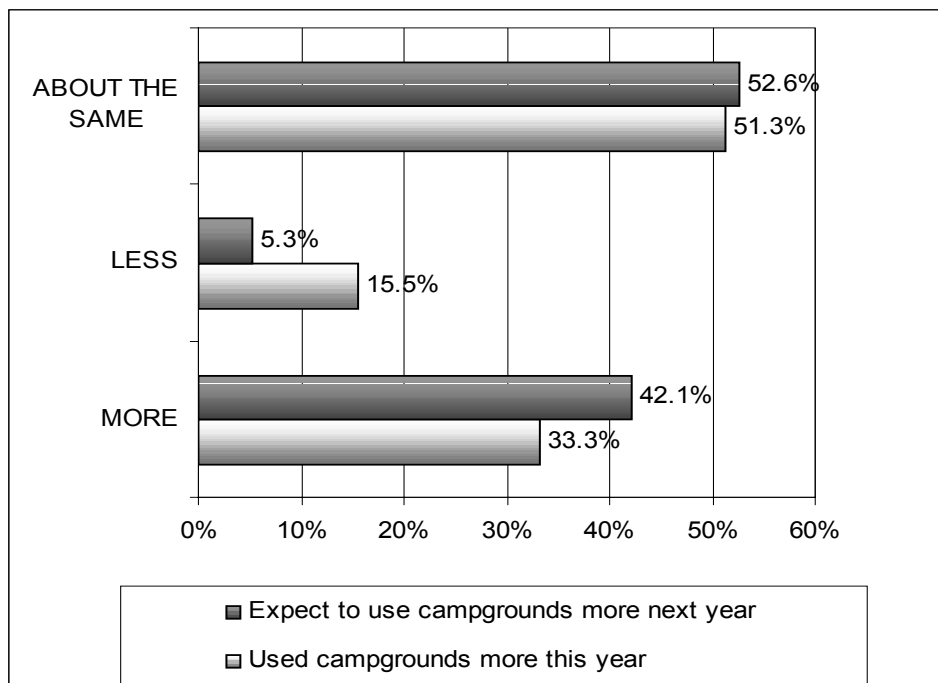
The proportion of RNW users camping only during the off-season is much lower than users who camped only during the summer season. Among all users sampled, 45% indicated they only camped during the summer camping season. Among the users who indicated they camped during the off-season, 11% camped only during the off-season and 89% camped during both the summer and off-season.

**Figure 10: Number of Times Camped Off and On Season**



In response to the question, "Comparing 1998 to 1999, did you use campgrounds more, less, or about the same this year?" 33.3% reported they camped more this year, while 15.5% responded they camped less this year. About half (51.3%) of the users responded they camped about the same amount. In projecting their camping for next year, 42.1% of users projected they will camp more, while 5.3% projected they will camp less next year. The proportion of the users who indicated that they will camp about the same next year is 52.6% (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Comparing This Year to Next Year**



**E. RNW User Preferences**

*Setting aside some site available without reservation:*

Most of RNW users responding to the question (80%) indicated they prefer that some sites be set aside for drop-ins. However, the proportion of users who prefer to have an option for drop-in sites has decreased from 1997 by 10%.

*Toll free number:*

Only a small proportion of RNW users indicated that the availability of a toll free number is unimportant (1.5% somewhat unimportant, and 6% unimportant). For the majority of users, the availability of a toll free number is very important (73.6%) and another 18.9% indicated that the toll free number is somewhat important.

*Advanced reservation time frame*

RNW users were asked if they prefer that the advance reservation time frame be shortened from the current 11 months to 7 or 9 months in order to reduce summertime busy signals. Although the user's preference is evenly split between the options, the proportion of users who prefer the current 11 month window is somewhat higher at 52.3%.

*Requiring full advanced payment during summer camping season*

A majority (68.1%) of RNW users responded unfavorably to a policy requiring full advanced payment during the summer camping season.

*Two night minimum stay during three-day holiday weekends*

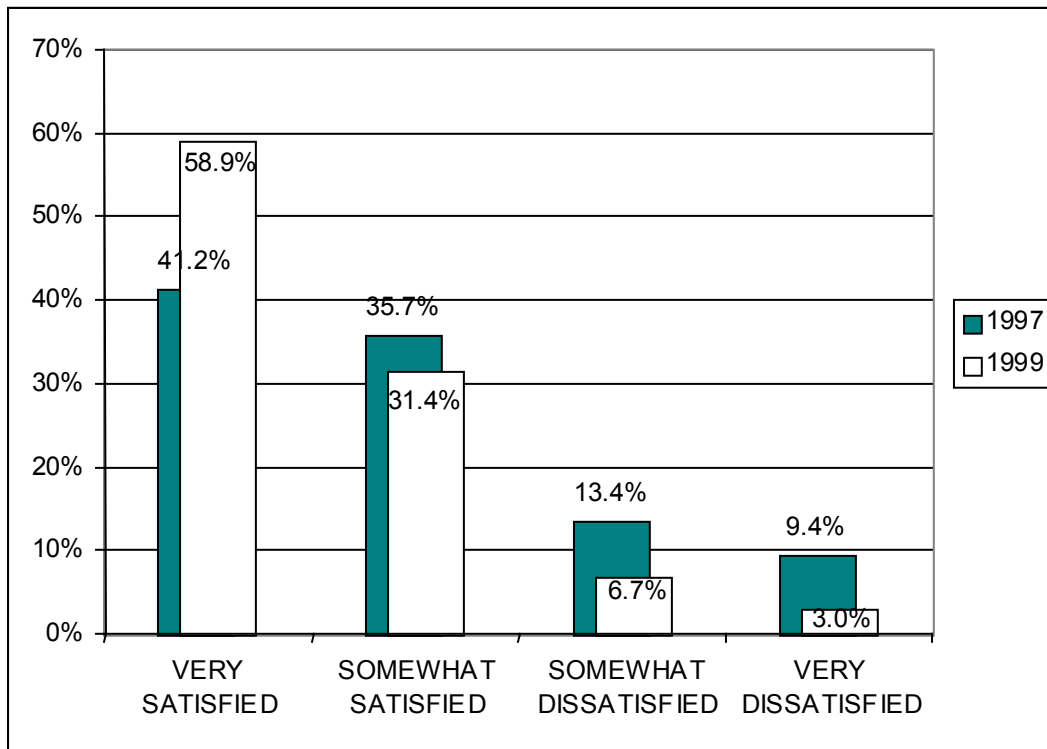
RNW users also responded unfavorably to requiring a two night minimum stay during three-day holiday weekends. The same question was asked in 1997 and the responses are fairly constant.

This year, 71.6% of the users (compared with 69.1% in 1997) responded that a two night minimum stay should not be required.

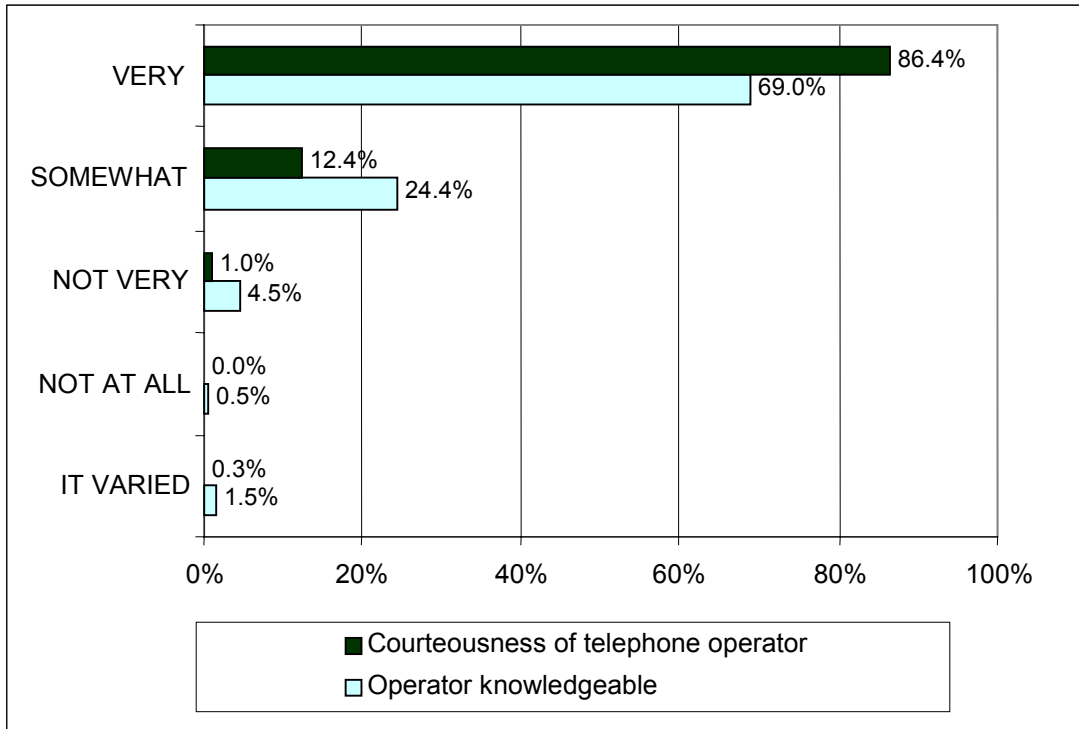
### F. Overall User Satisfaction with RNW

The majority (90%) of RNW users are either "very satisfied" (58.9%) or "somewhat satisfied" (31.4%), with the RNW system overall. This result is a considerable improvement over the satisfaction rate of 77% in 1997 (Figure 12). As a reference, the overall satisfaction with RNW in 1996 was 63%. RNW telephone operators are very highly rated by the users, and this year's results are consistent with 1997's result. Over 90% of the users rated RNW telephone operators as courteous, and knowledgeable (see Figure 13).

**Figure 12: Overall Satisfaction with RNW Telephone Reservation System**



**Figure 13 Operator's Courteousness and Knowledge**

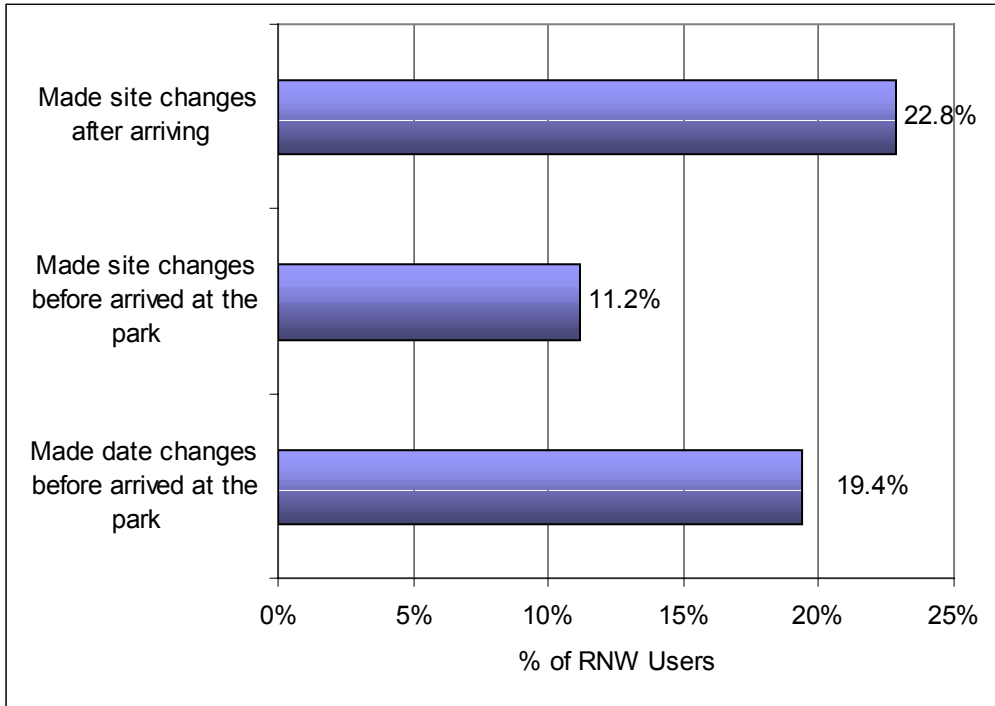


**A. Making Changes and User Satisfaction.**

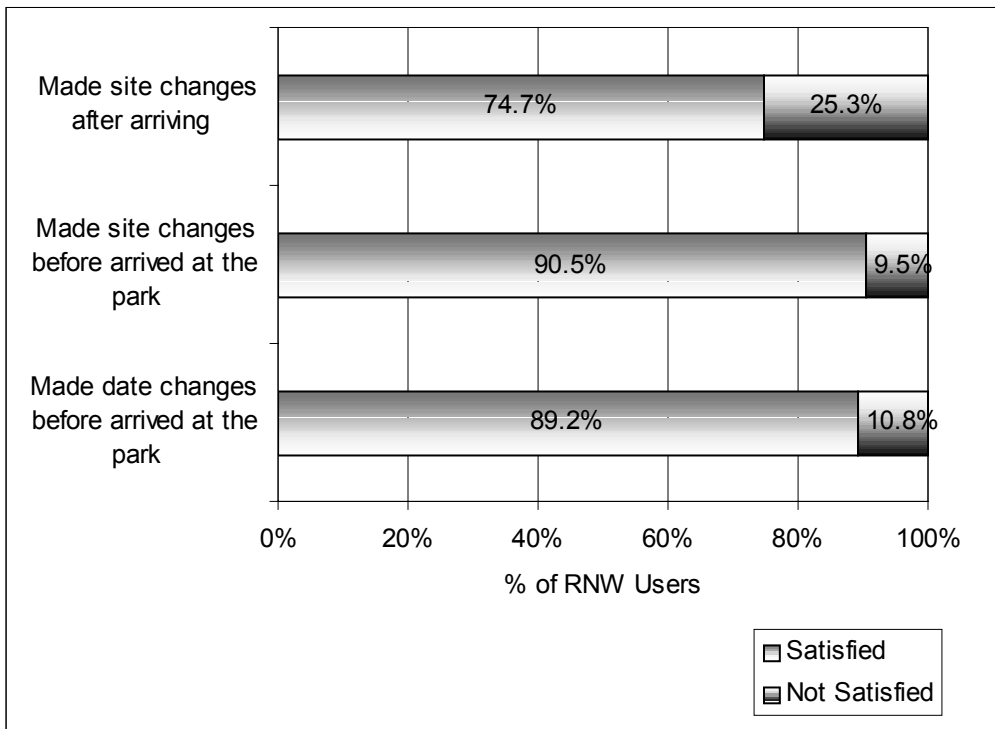
RNW allows users to make various changes to their reservations. Regarding site changes, 22.8% of users indicated they made site changes after arriving at their campground site, and 11.2% of users made site changes before arriving at a park. Regarding date changes, 19.4% of users made date changes before arriving at a park (see Figure 14).

RNW user satisfaction with the handling of changes is very high. Overall, 61% of users were "very satisfied" and 22.8% of the users were "somewhat satisfied." Figure 15 shows the breakdown of user satisfaction with the way the changes were handled. Among the users who made date changes and site changes before arriving at the park, satisfaction rates are very high, at about 90%. Among the users who made site changes after arriving at the park satisfaction is also high (75%), but not as high as the users who made site or date change before arriving at the park.

**Figure 14: Making Various Changes**



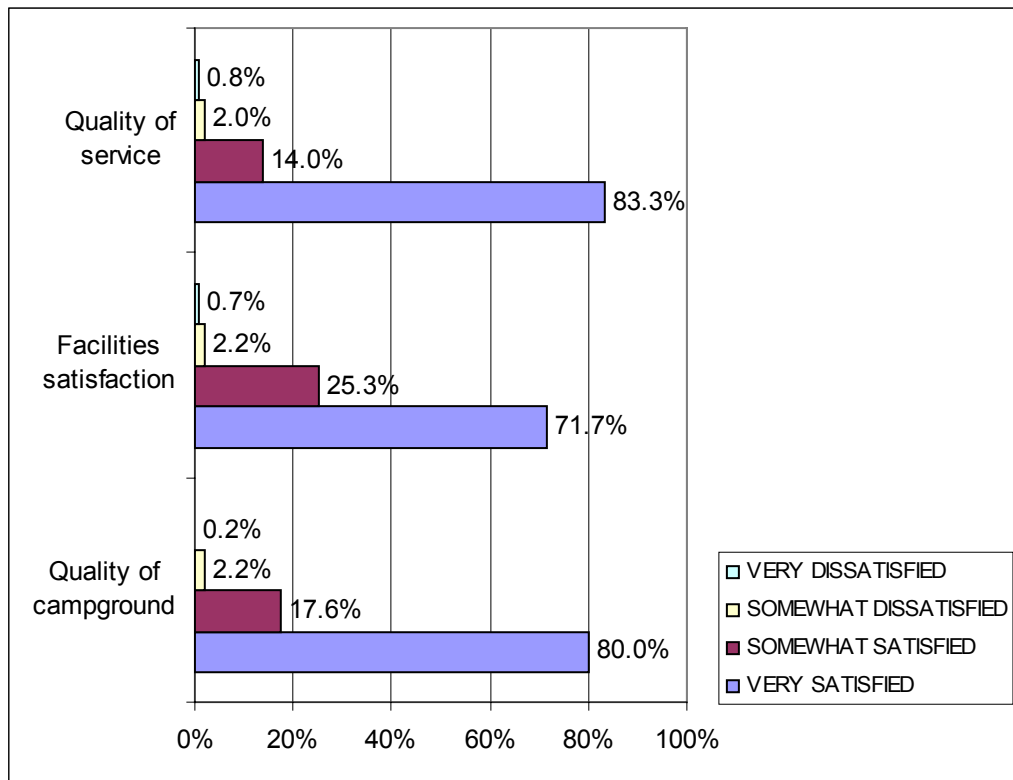
**Figure 15: Making Changes and Satisfaction with How Changes were Handled**



## User Satisfaction with Oregon Parks

The overwhelming majority of users are satisfied with the quality of campgrounds, campground facilities, and the services provided by the state park campgrounds (see Figure 16). Less than 3% expressed dissatisfaction for each of three aspects of satisfaction. Although there is not much change in the satisfaction/dissatisfaction ratio between 1997 and 1999, there are some increase in the proportion of the users who are "very satisfied" compared to the users who are "somewhat satisfied." A majority of Oregon state park campground users reported that they are "very satisfied" with all three aspects of satisfaction; 83.3% are very satisfied with quality of service (73.3% in 1997); 71.7% are very satisfied with facilities (67.1% in 1997); and 80% are very satisfied with the quality of the campground (75.9% in 1997).

**Figure 16: User Satisfaction with Oregon Parks.**

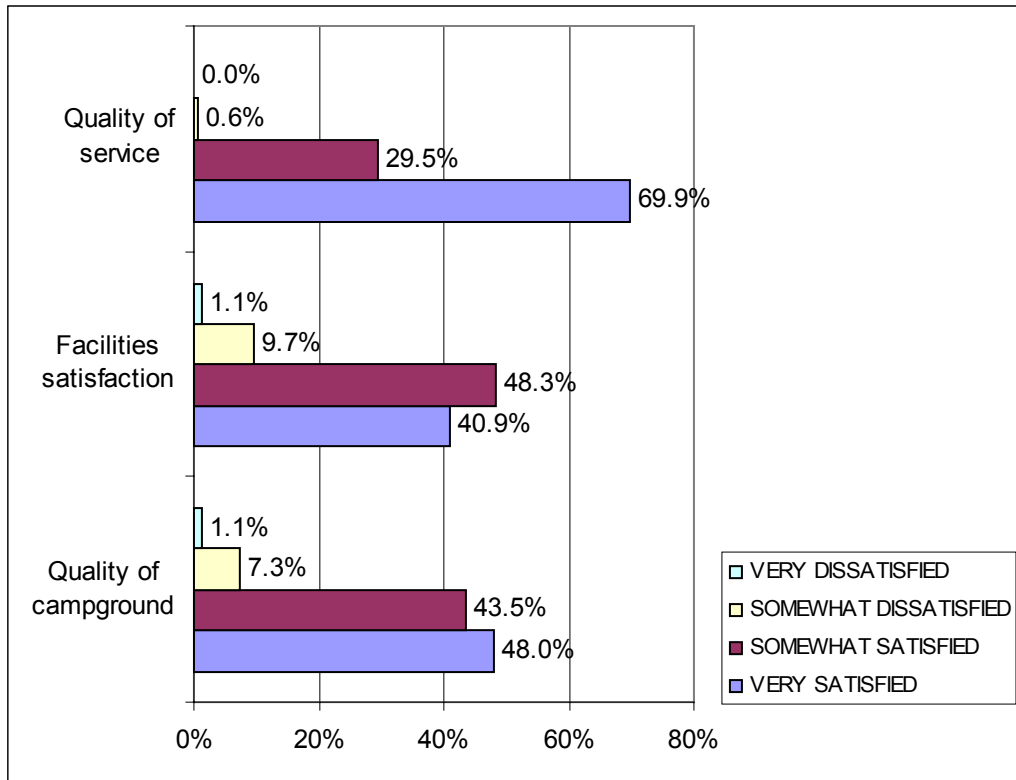


## User Satisfaction with Washington Parks

User satisfaction with Washington parks was also high (see Figure 16). User satisfaction with Washington parks is highest for quality of service. Fully 99.4% of the users indicated that they are either "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with the quality of service. The user satisfaction with facilities and quality of campgrounds remains quite high: around 90% satisfaction for both facilities and quality of campgrounds.

When compared with the results of 1997, there is a slight increase in "somewhat dissatisfied" users and a slight decrease in "somewhat satisfied" users. Regarding facility satisfaction, 52.7% of the users were "somewhat satisfied" in 1997, compared with 48.3% this year; 5.5% of the users were "somewhat dissatisfied" in 1997, compared with 9.7% this year. Regarding the quality of campgrounds, 47.3% of the users were "somewhat satisfied" in 1997, compared with 43.5% this year; and 4.7% of the users were "somewhat dissatisfied" in 1997, compared with 7.3% this year. These results, however, may not be reliable because of the relatively small portion of the sample (170) who have had experiences with Washington parks.

**Figure 16: User Satisfaction with Washington Parks.**



**Concluding Remarks**

RNW is in its fourth year of operation. Although RNW had a rough start, this year's survey results shows that RNW is well liked by the majority of RNW users. Most notably, the overall user satisfaction with RNW has increased from 63% in 1996, to 77% in 1997, and to 90% this year. The RNW operators continues to receive very high ratings from RNW users. RNW users also rate the quality of Oregon and Washington state campgrounds very highly.

In addition to increasing user satisfaction with RNW, comparing this year's results with 1997 results, shows interesting trends. The average frequency of camping during the summer season and during the off-season increased. Also, the proportion of tent campers decreased, while the proportion of RV users and yurt users increased. One possible interpretation is that a good reservation system attracts RV users, who generally have more specific campsite requirement than tent campers. Although, the results of these RNW users surveys do not provide enough evidence making the above speculation conclusive, further study of the issue may be warranted.