

Selwyn District Council

Freedom Camping Research Report



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1. Key Messages

In December 2016, Selwyn District Council undertook a research project to gather quantitative and qualitative insights about freedom camping and freedom campers in the district. This document reports the key insights from that research. The key findings are:

1.1 **The profile of freedom campers** at Chamberlains Ford, Coes Ford, Whitecliffs Domain and Lakeside Domain is:

- More likely to congregate at Chamberlains Ford (52%) and Coes Ford (34%);
- 84% international tourists and 16% domestic tourists;
- Mainly from Germany (47%), New Zealand (16%), and France (14%);
- Domestic visitors mainly come from Canterbury (74%), especially Christchurch (57%);
- International visitors mainly congregate at Chamberlains Ford (56%) and Coes Ford (35%);
- Most visitors, but especially the internationals, are under the age of 30 years; and of those, the highest proportion are aged 18-21 years;
- The age profile of domestic visitors tends to be older, i.e. over 30 years (compared to international visitors);
- The majority of all visitors come to Selwyn for leisure purposes (60%), and this can be either part of a wider tour of New Zealand or a short break (often weekend) break away with friends and/or family (Note: about one-third of international visitors are on working visas, but did not intend to work during their stay in Selwyn);
- Most visitors, irrespective of origin, travel in pairs with their friends and/or partners/spouse;
- Levels of vehicle ownership are generally high among visitors to the area (84%), and international visitors account for 100% of vehicle rentals (16%);
- 79% of visitors said they don't take a break from driving if they are tired, however international visitors are more likely than domestic visitors to do so (24%).
- Only 15% of international visitors drive a certified self-contained vehicle. Drivers of certified self-contained vehicles span all age groups, but are more likely to be 30 years or more. 49% of domestic visitors drive a certified self-contained vehicle, and these drivers are more likely to be aged over 50 years;
- Drivers of certified self-contained vehicles use the on-board toilet approximately half of the time; other times they use public facilities, campsite facilities or local businesses, e.g. petrol station, cafe. Some drivers avoid using the on-board toilet altogether;
- Most drivers of certified self-contained vehicles empty the on-board toilet at least once every 2-3 days at a dump station.

1.2 The research identified a series of **insights about visitor attitudes and behavior**, including some important distinctions between international and domestic visitors:

- There is strong visitor demand for freedom camping in Selwyn, especially among domestic visitors. 53% of all visitors said they want access to free camping either 'very often' or 'always';
- International visitors are finding it easier than domestic visitors to access freedom camping when they want it;
- Cost/affordability drives many international visitors to want to camp, especially the under 30s, but cost is relatively less important for domestic visitors. Convenience of location

(close to Christchurch) is another key reason why both international and domestic visitors camp in the Selwyn district;

- While cost/affordability is an issue, most visitors (domestic and international) claim to be prepared to pay between \$1 and \$10 per night/person to stay at a campsite like the ones in Selwyn. Visitors consider this amount good value for money in comparison to other types of accommodation, e.g. DOC campsites, paid campsites and backpacker's/hostels;
- International visitors tend to have little, if any, knowledge about the Selwyn district, including district boundaries and tourist opportunities. This means most of them are not engaging in the local visitor attractions. They are more likely to travel to Christchurch City or beyond (e.g. Banks Peninsula, Akaroa) to engage in tourist activities;
- International and domestic visitors have different reasons for camping and choosing Selwyn.

International visitors:

- International visitors carefully consider their decision to freedom camp, and choose to come to Selwyn for several reasons
- Cost/affordability is particularly important for the under 30s, and especially for those in the 18-21 year age bracket. One of the key reasons they come to Selwyn and camp is the proximity to Christchurch; it provides an important hub for those who need/want access to the airport or employment. Another key reason is favourable social media reports (via commonly used apps like Campermate); it is becoming common knowledge that Selwyn provides high quality freedom camping sites, i.e. toilets, space, running water, rubbish disposal, attractive surroundings;
- There is also a perception that Chamberlains Ford and Coes Ford (in particular) offer excellent facilities and amenities, especially compared to the alternatives, e.g. backpacker's / hostel, paid campsites – and this appears to be partly driving increasing visitor numbers;
- International visitors do not behave the same ways all of the time – there are notable differences. The research findings indicate three broad 'types' of international visitor at the free campsites in Selwyn: Young, Budget Conscious, Freedom Seekers, and Outdoor, Camping Enthusiasts;
- The 'Young, Budget Conscious' segment are highly cost conscious (more so than the other two segments); they seek to balance a tight budget with a desire to do and see as much as they can while in the country. They want to be close to Christchurch for a variety of reasons outlined above. If possible, many would prefer to freedom camp in Christchurch because this would significantly reduce spending on fuel; but this is not possible because they don't have the required self-contained vehicles;
- 'Freedom Seekers' choose to freedom camp because they prefer a more effortless type of travel experience; and this means avoiding the 'hassle' associated with booking accommodation in advance (and finding out there is no vacancy) and abiding by strict rules, e.g. curfews at backpacker's hostels;
- 'Outdoor, Camping Enthusiasts' enjoy the experience of freedom camping because they prefer to spend time in the outdoors rather than in built-up urban areas.

Domestic visitors:

- They primarily want to camp for the outdoors experience, and consider camping a rite of passage for all New Zealanders, but especially for children;
- Cost/affordability has some relevance in terms of why domestic visitors freedom camp, but the influence on domestic visitors' decision making is relatively less compared to

international visitors. However, there are certain domestic visitors for whom cost/affordability is very important, e.g. homeless, low income families;

- There are several main reasons why domestic visitors choose to camp in Selwyn: the convenient location (i.e. close to home and makes sense in the context of a short break / weekend away), the attractive countryside, and previous enjoyable experiences;
- Families and individuals are especially drawn to camping for the outdoors experience;
- Grey Nomads especially enjoy the freedom and mobility that comes with freedom camping;
- A relatively small number of individuals freedom camp because they do not have a permanent residential address (limited financial means). While constraints with personal finances definitely influences the way this group behaves, there are some who would not be freedom camping given a choice, and others who enjoy the 'freedom' associated with the freedom camping lifestyle.

1.3 The research has highlighted a range of **tourism related insights about freedom camping**:

- Freedom camping represents only 28% of all types of accommodation types used by all visitors and 25% by international visitors specifically. Moreover, levels of free campsite usage is slightly higher among domestic visitors;
- The types of tourist activities visitors have the highest levels of interest in are natural attractions, independent tramping, and wildlife encounters. Furthermore, domestic visitors are particularly interested in rivers, lakes and fishing;
- On average, International visitors stay in New Zealand for 5½ months, and just under one week of that is spent in Selwyn. Most domestic visitors who freedom camp in Selwyn stay for 0-4 days;
- Expenditure by international visitors is considerably higher than for domestic visitors. The research findings indicate basic spending by international visitors is in the region of approximately \$250 per person, per week. Domestic visitors spend approximately one-fifth that amount. Fuel, groceries and accommodation represent the largest items of expenditure (shown in size order). Extraneous purchases have been excluded, e.g. car repairs, alcohol, laundry, showers, etc.;
- Digital communications, especially apps (e.g. Campermate), are widely used by international visitors, and this research suggests the apps play a key role in terms of influencing decisions about accommodation choices, and freedom campsites in particular;
- Visitors have high levels of satisfaction with the four free reserves/campsites in Selwyn, and this appears to be resulting in referrals, therefore fueling the demand for freedom camping in Selwyn. The Selwyn District Council might be a victim of its own success! The campsites perform well on eight out of thirteen individual attributes of satisfaction: the amount of space for campers, rubbish disposal and personal safety, general tidiness/cleanliness, ease of finding, peace and quiet, toilet facilities, and attractiveness of natural surroundings (shown in order from highest to lowest).

Most visitors rate their confidence with understanding the rules and regulations around camping in New Zealand as 'moderate', and New Zealanders report generally higher levels of confidence than this. 11% of international visitors and 17% of domestic visitors said they have not researched the camping rules and regulations. New Zealanders have a tendency to be somewhat blasé about this issue, excluding Grey Nomads who take the issue much more seriously. Anecdotal evidence from international visitors suggests inconsistency in the bylaws are leading to confusion and inadvertent

infringements. These findings suggest there is room for improvement among all visitors, and a need to streamline the regulations.

1.4 The research has highlighted a range of **insights about the environmental impact of freedom camping**. These are:

- The research suggests five key environmental impacts result from freedom camping: litter, defecating in the wild, overcrowding / excessive visitor numbers (Chamberlains Ford), fire lighting, and anti-social behavior;
- Observations at Chamberlains Ford and Whitecliffs yielded a high incidence of litter, especially plastics, and especially at Chamberlains Ford; the campsite with the heaviest concentration of visitors and the highest proportion of international visitors (average estimate is 250 people per night, with numbers rising over the peak period). Paradoxically, Chamberlains Ford was rated highly by visitors for cleanliness/tidiness. These insights either suggest that visitors are not noticing the amount of litter or feel ambivalent towards it. They also draw attention to the issue of overcrowding and the consequences this has for harmful environmental impacts and Council spending on facility management (cleaning, waste and rubbish disposal);
- The research collected evidence of freedom campers defecating in the wild from a range of sources, including the observations undertaken at Chamberlains Ford and Whitecliffs Domain and interviews with key informants. In addition, 2% of respondents who completed the visitor survey said they used nature/waterways as a toilet – this figure might have been underreported by the respondents;
- Reports of anti-social behaviour come from both the Police and the Selwyn Council service request log, and examples include assaults, dogs not on leads, quad bikes / 4WDs, and the monopolization of campsites by individuals/groups. The perpetrators are Selwyn residents, not international visitors.

1.5 The research has highlighted a range of **insights about the reputation of freedom campers** from the perspective of Selwyn residents and freedom campers:

- The term 'freedom camper' has been hijacked, and is synonymous with young international (not domestic) visitors who typically tour the country in a non-self-contained van that they use to sleep in. In this respect, the term freedom camper has negative connotations (bludgers, defecate in the wild, leave litter, flout the rules around freedom camping). International visitors are aware of this, and many of them disagree with being stereotyped in such a negative way, but they are reluctant to complain. Many have experienced verbal abuse or felt shamed by people from the local population; for no apparent reason. While most of them are aware that freedom camping does have 'issues' and international visitors are somewhat responsible for those issues, they are unhappy about the current situation and believe the issue could be better managed by the authorities. This situation can sour their impression of New Zealanders and New Zealand.
- The community applies a double standard about the appropriateness of freedom camping; it is a rite of passage for all New Zealanders, but a privilege for international visitors. For the most part, the community's 'issue' with freedom camping and campers refers to the international visitors who do it – not the New Zealanders;
- Unlike members of the local business community, rate payers find it harder to see the economic contribution international freedom campers make. Rate payers also have a tendency to negatively stereotype the young international tourists who travel the country

in non-self-contained vehicles, and view them as bludgers. Some rate payers view the Government's approach to managing freedom camping as overly lenient and blasé, e.g. European countries don't allow freedom camping, so why should we! They view the Selwyn District Council as proactively managing the situation locally by largely keeping freedom campers contained to the designated areas. Interestingly, rate payers were largely unaware of the large amounts of litter currently at Chamberlains Ford. However, they raised strong concerns about the Te Araroa walkers defecating in the wild due to a lack of toilet facilities, the loss of traditional rights for fishermen to freedom camp at Lake Coleridge, Lake Selfie and Ryton Bay and road safety issues at Chamberlains Ford.

2. Research Design

2.1 Context

Freedom camping is a nationwide issue that currently attracts considerable negative media coverage and there is evidence of growing erosion of local goodwill towards visitors, especially freedom campers in non-self-contained vehicles. The current situation poses a potential risk for the tourist economy in New Zealand. Selwyn district is experiencing unprecedented numbers of freedom campers, the majority of whom congregate at Chamberlains Ford and Coes Ford; both of which are designated free camping reserves. As part of a measured approach to the potential drafting of a freedom camping bylaw, the Selwyn District Council has sought to gather insights about freedom camping and freedom campers. The research insights are intended to provide Selwyn District Council with that will inform decision making freedom camping on regulatory and non-regulatory matters, including media and communications (messaging, media and PR, and marketing).

2.2 Design

The population of interest to Selwyn District Council was people visiting one of four Council reserves (Chamberlains Ford, Coes Ford, Lakeside Domain and Whitecliffs Domain), community members, an elected official, Council staff and contractors. To research these people, this project employed a multi-method approach. This encompassed:

- An intercept survey to profile visitors and investigate attitudes and behavior regarding freedom camping generally and specifically in relation to the Selwyn district;
- In-depth qualitative interviews with visitors, an elected official, Council employees and contractors to gather richer insights about visitor attitudes and behaviour;
- Group discussions with community committee members (Darfield, Southbridge, and Leeston) to gauge attitudes towards freedom camping in Selwyn and freedom campers.
- Observations at Chamberlains Ford and Whitecliffs Domain to document the nature and extent of damage to the environment due to camping; and
- An analysis of Council data to assess vehicle numbers at Chamberlains Ford and Coes Ford.

The intercept survey was completed amongst a total sample of 400 visitors across four council reserves¹ and achieved a response rate of 93%. 52% of the sample were male and 48% were female. Surveying took place between 25th January and 17th February, 2017.

The in-depth interviews with visitors were carried out with individuals, friendship groups, couples and family groups and targeted five different types of freedom camper². In total, three interviews per

¹ The survey employed probability sampling to ensure all visitors had an equal probability of being included in the research.

² The five segments are 'grey nomads', younger domestic visitors, seasonal / temporary workers, international visitors, and the rough sleeping community. These segments are identified in a report 'Managing freedom camping in public places: A national situational analysis', prepared by the Department for Internal Affairs in 2016.

segment were carried out³, and each interview ran for approximately fifteen minutes. Three in-depth interviews were carried out with Council staff; and each one lasted approximately thirty minutes. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with contractors responsible for cleaning the toilets and rubbish removal / waste disposal at the Council reserves. In-depth interviews were also carried out with members of three community committees (Leeston, Darfield and Southbridge), and these discussions ran for approximately thirty minutes each. An interview was also conducted with Bob Mugford, Councillor for the Selwyn district.

2.3 Some Things to Keep in Mind

While reading this report it is important to keep in mind the limitations of quantitative and qualitative research.

One component of this research involved an intercept survey among visitors to four council reserves in the Selwyn district. A total of 400 surveys were completed. A sample of this size provides Selwyn District Council with results that have a maximum margin of error of +/- 5%. This means the results provide a robust view of the visitor profile and their attitudes and behavior regarding camping generally and in Selwyn specifically. The margins of error associated with subsets in the sample will be larger than this because the maximum sampling error is a function of the total size of the sample, irrespective of the population. It is important to keep this in mind and to remember that the results become less precise as the sample size shrinks.

Qualitative research is fundamentally exploratory and illustrative. Its value is in the richness of the insights it provides the Selwyn District Council.

However, this richness is not the same as representativeness. The research does not claim to be a comprehensive overview of all visitors to the district who use free council reserves, members of the community, Council staff or contractors; but instead, aims to provide an insight into typical attitudes and behaviour (rather than an overview of all such attitudes and behaviour).

This 'insight' may also be coloured by a measure of 'self-selection bias' among visitors. This kind of bias is present when only those motivated to participate in research are heard from. 'Self-selection bias' is a subset of non-response bias, and occurs where research participants differ in important ways from the general population.

³ Unfortunately, it was only possible to conduct one in-depth interview with visitors fitting the profile of the rough sleeping community due to their reluctance to participate.

3. Visitor Profile

The research shows several key trends and sub-trends in the profile of visitors who use the four designated freedom camping reserves.

3.1 Council Reserves Used by International Tourists and New Zealanders

The results show the people who use Selwyn's designated freedom camping reserves are a combination of international tourists and New Zealanders. Moreover, the domestic visitors are made up of several sub-groups; tourists from outside of Selwyn, Selwyn residents and individuals without permanent residential addresses (i.e. homeless).

Visitor type	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
International visitor	334	84%
Domestic visitor (non- Selwyn)	50	13%
Local Visitor (i.e Selwyn)	9	2%
I am not a visitor, I live here	7	2%
Total	400	100%

3.2 Majority are International Tourists, Especially from Germany

The results show that international visitors make up the majority (84%) of visitors using the Council reserves. Therefore, New Zealanders are in the minority (16%).

Country of origin	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Germany	185	47%
New Zealand	65	16%
France	55	14%
Great Britain/UK	22	6%
Canada	7	2%
United States	7	2%
The Netherlands	4	1%
Australia	3	1%
Japan	2	1%
Belgium	2	1%
Other	42	11%
Total	394	100%

Of the international visitors using the council reserves, Germans make up a significant majority and represent the single largest nationality (56%). The next largest group of international visitors are from France; they represent 17% of all international tourists.

Country of origin	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Germany	185	56%
France	55	17%
Great Britain/UK	22	7%
Canada	7	2%
United States	7	2%
The Netherlands	4	1%
Australia	3	1%
Japan	2	1%
Belgium	2	1%
Other ⁴	42	12%
Total	329	100%

International visitors come from 26 different countries and four continents (Europe, South America, Asia and the Middle East). Most international visitors come from Europe.

3.2.1 Majority of Domestic Visitors from Canterbury

Most domestic visitors come from the Canterbury region (74%), and mainly from Christchurch (57%). Local Selwyn residents make up approximately one-quarter (28%) of the total number of domestic visitors.

Residence in Canterbury	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Christchurch	26	57%
Selwyn	13	28%
Waimakariri	3	7%
Other	4	9%
Total	46	100%

Other domestic visitors come from a combination of South and North Island regions:

South Island:	Southland, Nelson, Otago, Marlborough, Tasman
North Island:	Manawatu-Wanganui, Hawkes Bay, Waikato, Wellington, Auckland, Northland

⁴ The category 'other' includes: Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan.

3.2.2 International Visitors are Selective about Where They Freedom Camp

The most popular campsites with the international visitors are Chamberlains Ford (56%) and Coes Ford (35%). Both Lakeside Domain (7%) and Whitecliffs Domain (2%) are significantly less popular among the international visitors. The reasons for this are primarily to do with the convenience location (proximity to Christchurch) and cost/affordability – both these issues are discussed in detail in a later section.

Domestic visitors are found to be distributed more evenly across three sites (one extra compared to international visitors). Lakeside Domain is the least popular of all four sites with domestic visitors.

Site	All domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Chamberlains Ford	15	23%	187	56%	202	51%
Coes Ford	21	32%	116	35%	137	34%
Lakeside Domain	9	13%	25	7%	34	8%
Whitecliffs Domain	21	32%	6	2%	27	7%
Total	66	100%	334	100%	400	100%

3.3 Majority of Visitors Under 30 Years of Age

While a wide range of ages are represented in the data (18-70+ years), most people who camp at the Council reserves are under thirty years of age.

International visitors are on average younger than domestic visitors. 75% of international visitors are aged <30 years, and a significant proportion of the under 30s fall into the 18-21 age category (39%) and are from Germany. A far greater number of nationalities are represented among international visitors aged >30 years.

Most domestic visitors are aged > 60 years (46%), and younger domestic visitors (in the 18-34 age bracket) are in the minority (13%).

Respondents age	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
18-21	2	3%	152	46%	154	39%
21-24	2	3%	56	17%	58	15%
25-29	1	2%	82	25%	83	21%
30-34	4	6%	24	7%	28	7%
35-39	11	17%	6	2%	17	4%
40-44	4	6%	4	1%	8	2%
45-49	5	8%	1	0%	6	2%
50-54	5	8%	3	1%	8	2%
55-59	3	5%	0	0%	3	1%

60-64	7	11%	2	1%	9	2%
65-69	12	18%	0	0%	12	3%
70+	10	15%	1	0%	11	3%
Total	66	100%	331	100%	397	100%

Most domestic visitors in the 35-39 age bracket are part of a family group, and the remainder are single units (staying unaccompanied), couples or friends.

3.4 Majority of Visitors Engaged in Leisure Activity

Most visitors who camp at one of the Selwyn reserves are engaged in leisure activity (60%), i.e. holiday, short break, or traveling. The New Zealand visitors are most likely to be enjoying a short break or family holiday (80%) and most international visitors are touring the country (56%).

One third of international visitors are on a working holiday, i.e. combination of leisure and work. At the time of the survey they were engaged in leisure activity only.

Individuals who live a transitory existence (homeless / no permanent residential address) make up a small proportion of the visitors using Council reserves (3%).

A small proportion of international visitors stay at Council reserves whilst they pass time waiting to: sell a vehicle (3%), await a flight⁵ or have their vehicle repaired (2%). A small number of seasonal / temporary workers use the reserves as semi-permanent accommodation (2%).

Main purpose of activity	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Leisure	53	80%	185	56%	238	60%
Working holiday	0	0%	123	37%	123	31%
Homeless	11	17%	0	0%	11	3%
Selling vehicle	0	0%	10	3%	10	3%
Passing time	0	0%	8	2%	8	2%
Seasonal work	0	0%	7	2%	7	2%
Other* ⁶	2	3%	0	0%	2	1%
Total	66	100%	334	100%	400	100%

⁵ This can be either a flight departure or arrival (e.g. friends / family).

⁶ Stopped to enjoy a cup of tea and break, in the district looking at homes for sale.

3.5 Most International and Domestic Visitors Stay in Pairs

The research shows visitors tend to mostly stay in pairs rather than larger groups of three, four, five or more. International visitors are more likely to stay in pairs (59%) compared to domestic visitors (50%). Close to one-fifth of all visitors, regardless of country of origin, travel unaccompanied.

Number of individuals in group	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
1 (sole occupants)	14	21%	57	17%	71%	18%
2	33	50%	198	59%	231	58%
3	3	4%	40	12%	43	11%
4	9	14%	23	7%	32	8%
5+	7	11%	15	5%	22	6%
Total	66	100%	333	100%	399	100%

Domestic visitors are more likely to be part of a larger group compared to international visitors. 29% of domestic visitors were part of a 4+ person group, compared to 23% of international visitors.

Of the visitors who travel in groups of two or more, most are accompanied by their partner/spouse (47%) or friend/s (43%). Family groups represent 10% of the all visitors, and domestic visitors are much more likely to be part of a family groups (29%) compared to international visitors (4%).

3.6 High Levels of Vehicle Ownership, Not Rentals

International visitors are more likely to own their vehicle (84%), and 16% rent their vehicle. There weren't any rental vehicles among the domestic visitors surveyed. A small proportion of visitors either use a borrowed vehicle (1%) or do not use a vehicle (1%).

Vehicle ownership status	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Owned	63	95%	273	82%	336	84%
Rented	0	0%	53	16%	53	13%
Borrowed	2	3%	2	1%	4	1%
No vehicle	1	2%	4	1%	5	1%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

3.7 Majority Don't Take a Break from Driving When Tired

Most respondents claimed they have not pulled their vehicle over to the side of the road to sleep because of fatigue. Most visitors, who we know travel with one or more companions, said they are more likely to swap driver than pull over. However, 24% of international visitors said they have taken a break

from driving because of fatigue. The fact international visitors are more likely to take a break is perhaps not surprising given they tend to drive for longer periods of time.

Pulled vehicle over to Sleep	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
No	62	95%	247	76%	309	79%
Yes	3	5%	79	24%	82	21%
Total	65	100%	326	100%	391	100%

4. Attitudes and Behaviour

This section reports on the attitudes and behaviour of visitors who stay at one of the four Selwyn reserves/campsites selected for this study. It contains information about why they camp, why they choose to camp at one of the free reserves in Selwyn, how decisions about accommodation options in the area are made, and the importance of cost/affordability. The following findings are taken from the survey of 400 visitors and in-depth interviews with visitors. This section highlights several overall trends in the data and points out where there are significant differences in attitude and/or behaviour with regards to freedom camping.

4.1 Strong Demand for Freedom Camping

In general, the demand for free camping was strong for all visitors. Of all visitors, 53% said they would like to access free camping at least 'very often'; and of those, 18% would 'always' like to access free camping.

Domestic visitors have the highest expectations when it comes to free camping; 70% said they would 'always' want to access free camping. International visitors have comparatively lower expectations. 39% said they would like access to free camping 'very often' and 40% say 'sometimes'.

Extent to which want free camping	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Never	1	1%	0	0%	1	0%
Rarely	2	3%	21	6%	23	6%
Sometimes	9	14%	153	46%	162	41%
Very often	8	12%	130	39%	138	35%
Always	46	70%	28	9%	74	18%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

The research shows domestic visitors cannot access free camping as much as they would want. While 70% of domestic visitors said they 'always' want access to free camping, only 55% said this had been achieved. This suggests domestic visitors are not accessing free camping 15% of the time.

The situation for international visitors is considerably more positive. 48% of international visitors claimed to want free camping either 'very often' or 'always', and the research shows they were achieving this 82% of the time (Note: the figure of 82% comes from combining the 45% who said 'very often' and 37% who said 'always').

Extent to which able to access free camping	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Never	1	1%	0	0%	1	0%
Rarely	3	4%	8	2%	11	3%
Sometimes	11	16%	49	15%	60	15%
Very often	16	24%	151	45%	167	42%
Always	36	55%	124	37%	160	40%
Total	67	100%	332	100%	399	100%

4.2 Why Camp?

The research shows international and domestic visitors have different reasons for freedom camping. At a general level, international visitors are primarily motivated to freedom camp for financial reasons; 60% said they choose to camp because it is the most affordable option. By contrast, domestic visitors (28%) are primarily motivated to camp because they want the outdoors experience.

Primary reason for camping	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Outdoors experience	17	28%	42	13%	59	15%
Family holiday	7	11%	0	0%	7	2%
Lifestyle choice / retirement	7	11%	2	1%	9	2%
Cost/affordability	6	10%	196	60%	202	52%
Freedom and mobility	6	10%	54	16%	60	15%
No other option	6	10%	0	0%	6	2%
Hunting or fishing	1	2%	0	0%	1	0%
Seasonal work / accommodation	1	2%	29	9%	30	8%
Hiking and recreation	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Other	10	16%	5	2%	15	4%
Total	61	100%	329	100%	390	100%

Many of the visitors for whom the outdoors experience or cost/affordability wasn't their primary reason for camping, chose these very two factors as secondary reasons. 37% of visitors said the other (secondary) reason they camped was for the outdoors experience and 22% said it was because of cost/affordability. There is little difference between international and domestic visitors on this matter. Also, freedom and mobility is an important secondary consideration for international visitors is (30%). This suggests all three factors have a great deal of relevance overall.

Secondary reasons for camping	All domestic		International		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
For the outdoors experience	19	32%	124	38%	143	37%
Cost/affordability	14	24%	71	22%	85	22%
Family holiday	9	15%	0	0%	9	2%
Freedom and mobility	5	8%	98	30%	103	26%
Lifestyle choice/retirement	4	7%	4	1%	8	2%
Access to hiking and recreation	2	3%	4	1%	6	2%
I have no other option	2	3%	1	0%	3	1%
Social	1	2%	10	3%	11	3%
Access to hunting or fishing	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Other	3	5%	17	5%	20	5%
Total	59	100%	330	100%	389	100%

4.3 Why Camp in Selwyn?

The main reason visitors camp in Selwyn is because the location is convenient (43%). Importantly, however, convenience has a different meaning for international and domestic visitors – this is discussed in detail in a later section. Cost is the next key driver; 22% of all respondents said they camp at one of the Council reserves because of affordability.

Main reason for choosing this campsite	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Convenient location	18	27%	152	46%	170	43%
Surrounding view and environment	10	15%	16	5%	26	7%
Previous experience	10	15%	2	1%	12	3%
Cost/affordability	5	8%	82	25%	87	22%
Recommendation/reviews	5	8%	30	9%	35	9%
Social aspects	5	8%	7	2%	12	3%
Amenities and facilities	2	3%	12	4%	14	4%
Spacious	1	2%	6	2%	7	2%
Proximity to local attractions or events	1	2%	1	0%	2	1%
Selling vehicle	0	0%	8	2%	8	2%
Other	9	14%	16	5%	25	6%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

4.4 Cost / Affordability is a Key Driver

Cost / affordability appears to be the primary reason why most international visitors choose to freedom camp (60%). However, a significant proportion of international visitors (40%) camp for other reasons, e.g. they enjoy the outdoors experience (and don't like being cooped up in a crowded backpacker's bunkroom) or they want the freedom to come and go as they please (avoiding the 'hassle' of having to plan ahead, make advance bookings and being turned down because of under supply) and they dislike. For those who camp because they like the outdoors or want freedom, cost/affordability is an important secondary consideration - 21% of these two groups cited cost/affordability as their secondary reason for camping.

As far as domestic visitors are concerned, cost / affordability does have some influence on the decision to camp. Furthermore, cost / affordability can have different levels of importance for domestic visitors. While 10% of domestic visitors cited cost / affordability as a primary reason for camping, 24% rated other factors as more important. This means for around one-third of domestic visitors, the decision to camp at a Selwyn reserve is influenced by cost / affordability factors.

4.5 Many Prepared to Pay Nominal Amount

The respondents were asked how much, if anything, they would be willing to pay per night for a campsite on a per person basis. The results show most visitors, domestic and international, are prepared to pay between \$1 and \$10. This amount was felt to be good value for money in comparison to DOC campsites, paid campsites and backpacker's/hostels.

Amount prepared to pay per person/night for campsite	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
\$0	4	6%	30	9%	34	9%
\$1-\$5	28	44%	131	40%	159	40%
\$5-\$10	26	41%	135	41%	161	41%
\$10-\$15	2	3%	24	7%	26	7%
\$15-\$20	1	2%	5	2%	6	2%
\$20-\$25	2	3%	4	1%	6	2%
\$30-\$35	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Total	63	100%	330	100%	393	100%

4.6 Secondary Influencers

Parents want their children to experience camping in the outdoors, and they regard it as an integral part of growing up in New Zealand. Some of them came to the same campsite when they were children, therefore can be a sense of nostalgia associated with coming back.

Visitors are also attracted to the camping reserves in Selwyn because they are deemed to have superior amenities and facilities, e.g. toilets, rubbish bins. 20% of respondents said the amenities and facilities provided at Selwyn camping reserves were a secondary reason for camping at one of the Selwyn

reserves. Furthermore, 8% of all visitors said their decision to camp in Selwyn was influenced because someone had recommended it or they had heard positive reviews, e.g. CamperMate.

The research also reveals subtle differences within each of these groups.

4.7 International Visitors

The survey findings show most international visitors' freedom camp in Selwyn because of cost/affordability and convenience. Fewer international visitors choose to stay in Selwyn for the surrounding view /environment or to engage in tourist activities.

93% of international visitors below the age of thirty years cited cost/affordability as their primary motivation for camping. Furthermore, the importance of cost/affordability increases with the younger international visitors. Cost was of greatest importance to the 18-21 year olds (52%). By way of contrast, only 17% of 21-24 year olds and 24% of 25-29 year olds cited cost/affordability as their main motivation for camping at a Selwyn reserve.

Convenience essentially means being close to Christchurch and the surrounding area, for which there are several reasons:

- Access to Christchurch International Airport, e.g. for flight departure, to collect friends/family arriving into Christchurch from overseas, to return rental vehicle;
- Access to key amenities in Christchurch city, including vehicle rental companies, mechanics, supermarkets;
- Access to key tourist attractions;
- Employment / employment opportunities (temporary);
- Access to a substantial market for buying / selling non-self-contained campervans.

Visitors travel to Christchurch City or beyond (e.g. Banks Peninsula, Akaroa) to engage in tourist activities. They tend to have little, if any, knowledge about the Selwyn district, including district boundaries and tourist opportunities. One American couple mentioned how much they had enjoyed rock climbing at Castle Rock but were blissfully unaware that it was in Selwyn.

Some make the decision about accommodation near the time of entering the district, but others take more time over planning. The extent of pre-planning depends somewhat on the primary reason for coming to the area and the use of apps. Those visitors with an important specific need (e.g. Christchurch Airport, to find or take up employment, sell a vehicle etc.) tend to spend more time researching accommodation options in the area; this is done to ensure they can focus on the important need they are aiming to accomplish. The visitors who are in travel mode, and don't have more pressing needs can act more spontaneously when deciding on accommodation options.

Apps like Campermate⁷, WikiCamp, and Rankers make decisions about accommodation so much easier for tourists, and increase their ability to act spontaneously. Apps provide valuable navigation and reviews of campsites throughout New Zealand. Anecdotal evidence from freedom campers and analysis of the Geo Zone website suggests Selwyn District Council reserves/free campsites currently attract very positive reviews (clean toilets, plenty of space, pleasant outdoor environments, daily rubbish collection etc.); and this could be contributing to the increasing numbers of international freedom campers.

⁷ Campermate appeared to be the most widely used app.

With regards to international visitor attitudes and behaviour, closer inspection of the survey data reveals subtle differences among them. Our analysis shows the international visitors who freedom camp in Selwyn fall into one of three broad motivational / attitudinal types:

1. Young, budget conscious;
2. Freedom seekers; and
3. Outdoor, camping enthusiasts.

Each one is described below.

Young, Budget Conscious

The research suggests most international visitors who use the Selwyn free camping reserves (mainly Chamberlains Ford and Coes Ford) are young (predominantly 18-21 years) and budget conscious. They use the Selwyn reserves for two main reasons:

- They have a limited budget or want to save money to fund further future travel and tourist activities; and,
- They need/want to be close to Christchurch but there isn't any freedom camping for non-self-contained vehicles, so they freedom camp as close to Christchurch as possible, and that happens to be in Selwyn.

Their strict budgeting goes beyond merely accommodation; these visitors favour the cheapest supermarkets (e.g. Pac n Save) and wherever possible, they source the basics for free, e.g. use school grounds or parks to fill water bottles instead of paying for bottled water.

Seasonal / temporary workers are included within the archetype of a young, budget conscious international freedom camper. Seasonal / temporary visitors often commute from Chamberlains Ford or Coes Ford to work in Christchurch. They consider spending money on either a hostel or a paid camp ground because they want better facilities when they return from work tired (e.g. shower, kitchen), but ultimately choose one of Selwyn's free camping options because they don't perceive the alternatives to be good value for money. One international visitor had tried unsuccessfully to get short-term rental accommodation in Christchurch.

These visitors don't tend to engage in tourist activities during their stay at the Selwyn campsites because they are pre-occupied with practical matters, of which there are many possibilities: working to earn money to fund the next stage of their journey, finding work, preparing to leave the country and therefore preparing their vehicle for sale, waiting for the sale of their vehicle, waiting for car repairs, or waiting to welcome friends / family from overseas.

Freedom Seekers

16% of all international visitors primarily choose to freedom camp because it allows them to operate with greater freedom and mobility. These international visitors don't want their New Zealand experience to be tainted by the constant 'hassle' associated with booking accommodation in advance (usually hostels), especially during the peak tourist season and in locations where the demand for accommodation exceeds the supply. The existence of freedom campsites makes it significantly easier for these visitors to come and go as they please, and this might explain why a high percentage of respondents rated spaciousness (of campsite) very highly. Freedom Seekers also like freedom camping because there are fewer rules compared to other forms of accommodation, e.g. curfews at backpacker/hostels.

The research shows the visitors who seek freedom and mobility tend to be older. 24% of international visitors aged 30 years and over said freedom and mobility was their primary motivation for camping. This compares to only 7% of over 30s who cited cost/affordability as their primary motivation for camping.

Outdoor, Camping Enthusiasts

The third and final group of international visitors, whom we have labelled 'outdoor, camping enthusiasts', enjoy the experience of camping and being in the outdoors. 13% of international visitors said enjoyment of camping and the outdoors was their primary reason for camping at the Selwyn reserve. These visitors make a positive choice to stay in the Selwyn district, i.e. prefer it to staying in urban Christchurch. They try to avoid the 'unattractive' free car park campsites made available in some New Zealand towns and cities.

4.8 Domestic Visitors

The attractiveness of the surrounding view and environment and previous experience of a campsite are both important to domestic visitors (both factors mattered to 15% of domestic visitors respectively). The research suggests 15% of domestic visitors have visited the same campsite on one or more occasions. It is safe to presume that high levels of reported satisfaction with that/those previous experience/s is a key driver for the repeat visits.

The research shows cost/affordability and convenient location are relatively less important for domestic visitors, and cost has limited relevance when it comes to camping in Selwyn - only 8% of domestic visitors said cost determined their choice of campsite. Only 27% of domestic visitors said convenient location was an important factor in their decision about where to camp, compared to 46% of international visitors. Furthermore, there is not a difference between Selwyn residents and residents from other parts of Canterbury or New Zealand.

While domestic visitors behave similarly on some levels, the research shows they can also behave disparately as a group. In terms of why they choose camping, the research suggests their behaviour falls into one of three main 'types':

1. Families and individuals who seek the outdoor experience (includes one respondent whose main motivation was fishing⁸);
2. Grey Nomads traveling around New Zealand for extended periods (mostly) in self-contained campervans/buses and who enjoy the freedom and mobility that comes with freedom camping;
3. Individuals without a permanent address (i.e. homeless) and who resort to camping due to a combination of reasons, including financial constraints, a lack of alternative housing options and lifestyle/choice.

These domestic visitor sub-groups tally with the profiles identified in a report by the Department of Internal Affairs⁹.

⁸ This figure derives from combining 28% of 'outdoors experience' and 11% of 'family holiday' – in the table above.

⁹ Managing Freedom camping in Public Places. A national situational analysis. Department of Internal Affairs.

The rest of this section details additional insights about the different types of domestic visitor, their motivations for camping, coming to Selwyn and the way they plan.

Grey Nomads

Grey Nomads primarily seek enjoyment and relaxation through their experience of traveling the country. Their surroundings are an integral part of the enjoyment factor, and they search for locations with attractive scenery and natural surroundings (e.g. lakes, rivers, woods), as well as peace and quiet. While their journeys usually have a purpose (e.g. family wedding in Invercargill), they still want to travel with a certain degree of freedom. This desire for freedom and mobility means they can sometimes act spontaneously and change plans; for example, they might park up at a place for the night instead of the one planned if they see somewhere attractive on route. The weather can also cause them to act spontaneously – as they attempt to experience as many sunny days as possible.

The NZMCA handbook, which contains a dearth of relevant information in an easily accessible format, is widely used for planning purposes and makes the planning process easier. Some Grey Nomads also use apps like Campermate for information about accommodation and navigation.

Cost / affordability is a consideration for Grey Nomads. They tend to be on limited fixed incomes (retirees) and/or want to maximize the value realised from their expensive motorhomes and NZMCA membership. However, quality of experience is equally important.

Grey Nomads pay for accommodation, but only as and when they need something extra, e.g. laundry, electricity for re-charging vehicle battery. Typically, they book into a paid campsite every few days.

Grey Nomads don't need basic facilities such as toilets and showers because they are self-contained. However, they can be swayed to stay at the free campsites which provide such facilities and amenities.

Young Domestic Visitors

We interviewed three separate groups of campers who fitted the profile of a young domestic visitor. These people were all families staying at Whitecliffs Domain. Two families were from Selwyn and the third one was from Christchurch.

They had all decided in advance to take their families on a camping weekend. The weather was an important factor in terms of making the decision to camp. Two families had planned to come to Whitecliffs, but the third family made a last-minute decision because their preferred campsite wasn't available (Waitangi weekend). Two had previous experiences of camping at Whitecliffs, but the third family was visiting for the first time.

The parents wanted a relaxing family camping weekend. They wanted to give their children an opportunity to experience the joy of camping and believed camping was a rite of passage for New Zealanders. Camping also removed the children from electronic devices, which parents considered a good thing. Two mothers said they liked camping because it meant a break from housework for a few days.

The decision to go to Whitecliffs was driven by various factors:

- Convenient location, i.e. close to home (quick to go home to feed the animals or return home if it rained or there was no available space);
- Attractive natural surroundings, e.g. trees, river;
- Child friendly (and safe), e.g. river for swimming, trees for climbing, space for children to use their bicycles;
- Previous positive experiences; and

- (For one family) a friend's recommendation.

Cost / affordability was a consideration for families, especially for those with larger families, but they differed with respect to the level of importance given to cost. One family said they could only afford to have a family camping weekend at Whitecliffs because it was free. One family was prepared to pay (they set out to book into Rakaia Gorge or Glentunnel but there was no vacancy). The third family, who had camped at Whitecliffs on many other previous occasions and had returned once again because they enjoyed the experience so much, were also prepared to pay.

The minimal facilities / amenities at Whitecliffs, for example lack of showers, were not a barrier for these families; because of the short stay.

Rough Sleepers

Although we spoke to several rough sleepers, but only conducted one in-depth interview; this was due to a general reluctance to talk.

There were both male and female rough sleepers, and their ages ranged from mid-thirties to retirement. Several individuals split their time between living at the reserve and with a friend / family member (based either in Selwyn or Christchurch).

The rough sleepers used various types of accommodation, including tent, car, bus, make-shift caravan. Most forms of accommodation, except for the bus, were non-self-contained.

The most common reason for camping appeared to be a lack of money. Several people were currently in paid employment and one was waiting for the start of a contract for work.

For some rough sleepers, there can also be an element of lifestyle choice about their decision to freedom camp in Selwyn, i.e. they enjoyed the laid back, outdoors lifestyle (over summer) and/or the freedom to relocate relatively easily.

But other rough sleepers appeared to camp because they had little or no choice. One such older gentleman, whose home was damaged in the Christchurch earthquakes, was living in his car and had been doing so for several years. One woman in her late forties, who had separated from her husband, was waiting for a work contract to start; she intended to find rental accommodation once she was earning again.

4.9 Visitor Satisfaction

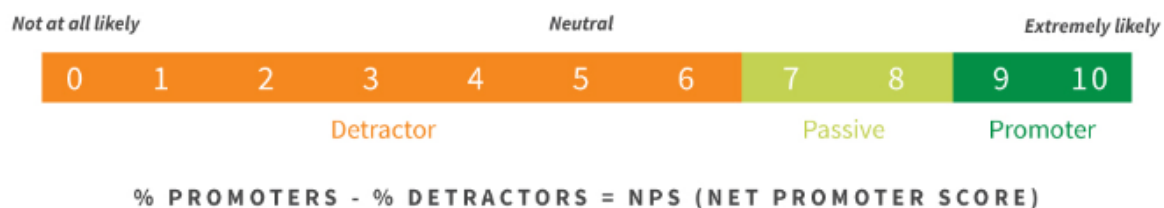
The respondents at each campsite were asked *how likely would you be to recommend this campsite to other people on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 was not at all likely and 10 was extremely likely?*

The results show high levels of satisfaction with the campsites, with an overall mean score of 8.3 across all four sites. Of these, Whitecliffs Domain comes out on top, with a mean score of 9.1 points out of 10.

Campsite	Mean Score
Whitecliffs Domain	9.1
Coes Ford	8.2
Chamberlains Ford	7.9
Lakeside Domain	7.9

4.9.1 Net Promoter Score

Satisfaction with the campsites was measured using Net Promoter Score (NPS). NPS is a proxy for gauging customer's overall satisfaction with a company's product or service and the customer loyalty to the brand.



The respondents were asked how likely it is they would recommend the campsite to other people on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 was not at all likely and 10 was extremely likely. They were also asked how likely they would be to recommend the district.

- Promoters (score 9-10) are loyal enthusiasts who will return and refer others, fuelling growth;
- Passives (score 7-8) are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who are vulnerable to competitive offerings; and
- Detractors (score 0-6) are unhappy customers who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

Subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters yields the Net Promoter Score, which can range from a low of -100 (if every customer is a Detractor) to a high of 100 (if every customer is a Promoter).

The results are as follows:

“How likely it is they would recommend the campsite to other people” Result = 27.

“How likely it is they would recommend the area (of Selwyn) to other people” Result = -28.

NPS can vary by industry, region, or customer characteristics like age, income level, or amount of experience. To understand this NPS, it should be compared within the tourist industry, and against both direct and indirect competitors. The premise for success is that organisations or companies with scores higher than their competitive set grow faster and are more successful.

Visitors Say “Thank You”

The respondents also had an opportunity to comment at the end of the survey. A large proportion of them used this as an opportunity to thank you to the Selwyn District Council. They were grateful to the Council for providing the campsites, including the facilities and amenities. The following comments illustrate the general view of visitors.

“We are absolutely delighted to find facilities that cater for families and appreciate the wide variety of campsites in Selwyn. This is a good one; it’s spacious, stuff for kids to do, for example the river. It’s great to see kids enjoying themselves.” (Whitecliffs, Domestic visitor)

“I think this is amazing given it is for free. It’s so beautiful and quiet. It’s lovely to see families using it. What a wonderful thing for the council to provide.” (Whitecliffs, domestic visitor)

“This campsite is really good. The toilets and bins make it great. It feels safe. There’s not rubbish lying around everywhere. Everyone seems friendly.” (Coes Ford, international visitor)

“Very nice campsite, toilets and rubbish bins cleaned everyday which is really good.” (Coes Ford, international visitor)

“One of the best campsites here in NZ. Always clean, great facilities, free BBQ area.” (Chamberlains Ford, domestic visitor)

4.9.2 High Satisfaction with Facilities, Amenities, and Environment

During the survey the respondents rated how satisfied or unsatisfied they were with a range of facilities, amenities and the environment. A five-point rating scale was used, with 1 being very unsatisfied and 5 is very satisfied. The results are summarised in the table below and are shown as mean scores.

The research shows a high level of satisfaction among visitors overall, and with most aspects of the free camping reserves. Areas of particularly high satisfaction are:

- the amount of available space for campers;
- the rubbish disposal, and;
- personal safety.

The research shows little, if any, difference between international and domestic visitors in terms of their general satisfaction with the available space, rubbish disposal and personal safety. That is, when scores for ‘very satisfied’ are added to ‘somewhat satisfied’ the difference is only 2-6%. What the research doesn’t tell us is how important each individual issue is for international versus domestic visitors.

Visitors are generally ambivalent about the quality of showering / washing facilities and access to water for drinking. Most visitors don’t expect drinking water and showers to be provided for free at the Council campsites. They find alternative ways to meet these needs, e.g. book into a paid campsite or pay a small fee to use showers at swimming pools, gyms, and campsites. Anecdotal evidence suggests some international visitors leave without paying for shower facilities.

Satisfaction with amenities/facilities/environment	Mean scores
Amount of available space for campers	4.90
Rubbish disposal	4.83
Personal safety	4.81
General tidiness/cleanliness	4.59
Ease of finding	4.49
Peace and quiet	4.35
Toilet facilities	4.27
Attractiveness of natural surroundings	4.02
Access to water for washing dishes	3.98
Lighting in the toilets or bathrooms	3.92
Proximity to other facilities, shops etc.	3.33
Showering/washing facilities	3.05
Access to water for drinking	2.99

The greatest difference in satisfaction between domestic and international visitors is proximity to other facilities, shops etc. International visitors were much less satisfied with the proximity to other facilities, shops etc.; 16% stated they were either 'somewhat satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. By contrast, domestic visitors were more likely to be satisfied with the proximity to other facilities, shops etc. and often couch it in positive terms; 37% of domestic visitors were either 'somewhat satisfied' or 'very satisfied'.

As mentioned above, while visitors only expect to be provided with basic amenities, their satisfaction is highly likely to turn to delight if additional amenities such as showers and drinking water were also provided. Some requests were also made for hand soap in the toilets. Here are some of the comments made by visitors:

"Pay as you go shower block would be great, it would take the place to another level." (Whitecliffs, Domestic visitor)

"A shower would be good but not necessary when it is free." (Chamberlains Ford, International visitor)

"Shower with a shelter would be good rather than being out in the open." (Lakeside Domain, international visitor)

"It would be nice to have a shower in the 'ideal world' but don't expect at a free campsite." (Coes Ford, international visitor)

"Drinking water would be a great addition." (Coes Ford, international visitor)

"Water (of any kind) would be much appreciated." (Chamberlains Ford, international visitor)

"Tap and hand soap for hygiene at larger campsite would be good." (Coes Ford, domestic visitor)

"It would be nice to have hand wash/disinfectant provided in the toilets." (Chamberlains Ford, international visitor)

Concerns Raised About the Water Quality / State of Selwyn Rivers

Many visitors (15%) remarked on the water quality and state of the rivers in Selwyn without being asked. Comments were made by visitors across three of the Council reserves/campsites: Chamberlains Ford, Coes Ford, and Whitecliffs. Here are some of their comments:

"I am concerned about the water quality in the river. Bad for fish, babies and pets." (Chamberlains Ford, domestic visitor)

"It's a shame about the river; I saw a photo in the newspaper, it's not even flowing? My children used to play in this river when they were children." (Coes Ford, domestic visitor)

"I noticed the sign about algae. This is unfortunate as it restricts swimming in the rivers and the dog could get sick." (Whitecliffs, domestic visitor)

Clearer information and signage was another suggestion. Approximately 5% of respondents said the information pertaining to the campsites lacked clarity in places. Some of their comments are detailed below.

"On the Council website, some of the information specific to this campsite about dogs and fees contradicted other general information. Also, I would like to suggest a sign is placed on the toilet doors to remind people to close the lid." (Whitecliffs, domestic visitor)

"It's really good that it is for free. App said there is drinking water, but signs are confusing and some reviews say can drink it others say you can't." (Chamberlains Ford, international visitor)

4.10 Vehicle Waste Disposal

4.10.1 International Visitors are Less Likely to be Certified Self-Contained

International tourists are more likely to sleep in a non-self-contained vehicle (73%) and/or tent (20%). New Zealand visitors are most likely to sleep either in a tent (31%) and/or self-contained campervan (31%). International tourists are significantly less likely to use a self-contained campervan (7%).

Type of accommodation	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Tent	22	32%	72	20%	94	22%
Caravan (non-self-contained)	3	4%	0	0%	3	1%
Self-contained campervan	22	32%	27	7%	49	11%
Vehicle (non-self-contained)	4	6%	265	72%	269	62%
Bus	10	14%	0	0%	10	1%
Other ¹⁰	8	12%	2	1%	10	2%
Total	69	100%	366	100%	435	100%

¹⁰ Types of accommodation in the 'other' category were pop-up camper, camping trailer, converted truck or under the stars, and all were non-self-contained.

Of all visitors, only 15% use a self-contained vehicle as accommodation.

4.10.2 Older Domestic Visitors Significantly More Likely To Be Certified Self-Contained

Most visitors do not have a certified self-contained vehicle (85%). However, among domestic visitors there is a much higher likelihood of them being certified self-contained (49%). Moreover, domestic visitors aged 50+ years are highly likely to have a certified self-contained vehicle (90%). Older international visitors are not more likely than their younger counterparts to use a certified-self-contained vehicle.

Vehicle self-containment	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
No	32	49%	303	92%	335	85%
Yes	33	51%	25	8%	58	15%
Total	65	100%	328	100%	393	100%

If we look at international visitors with a certified self-contained vehicle, we actually see all ages using them. However, use of certified self-contained vehicles by international visitors is highest among the <30 years of age category, and in particular among the 25-29 year olds. International visitors with a certified self-contained vehicle aged 50+ years are underrepresented. This is likely to be a factor of the younger age profile of international visitors in the sample.

4.10.3 Daily Use of On-Board Toilet

Most visitors who drive a certified self-contained vehicle say they use the toilet daily (55%). Importantly, 43% of visitors who drive a certified self-contained vehicle regularly use other provider's toilet facilities (this figures combines 'only if no other options', 'never', and 'weekly').

Frequency of using on-board toilet	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Daily	32	55%
Only if no other options	13	22%
Never	9	16%
Weekly	3	5%
Don't know	1	2%
Total	58	100%

4.10.4 Frequency of Emptying On-Board Toilet

Most visitors who drive a certified self-contained vehicle empty the on-board toilet at least weekly (73%). Within this, two types of behaviour appear most common: people who empty more often, i.e. every two

or three days (26%) and people who empty less often, i.e. weekly (31%). The research suggests that daily emptying of on-board toilets is uncommon (9%). Interestingly, one-fifth of visitors who drive a certified self-contained vehicle are not using the on-board toilet and this obviously means they don't have a need to empty it.

Frequency of emptying on-board toilet	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Daily	5	9%
Every two to three days	14	26%
Every four days	4	7%
Weekly	17	31%
Never (don't use on-board toilet)	11	20%
Don't know	3	6%
Total	54	100%

4.10.5 Frequency of Emptying On-board Toilet by Facility

The main method used to empty the on-board toilet is the public dump station. 52% said they use campground dump stations either sometimes or always. Most visitors claimed not to empty their on-board toilets inappropriately, i.e. in public toilets, roadside drains or ditches, in water ways and in nature.

Frequency of using method for disposing on-board toilets	Public dump stations		Campground dump stations		In public toilets		Roadside drains or in ditches		In water ways		In nature	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Never	12	21%	23	40%	53	91%	57	98%	58	100%	58	100%
Rarely	1	2%	5	9%	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%
Sometimes	10	17%	23	40%	4	7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Always	35	60%	7	12%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	58	100%	58	100%	58	100%	58	100%	58	100%	58	100%

4.10.6 Frequency of On-board Rubbish Disposal By Method

The research shows that half of all visitors claim to ‘always’ use the campground bins to dispose of rubbish, and a further 46% say they use this method some of the time.

Public litter bins are also used extensively by one quarter of all visitors, and a further 58% of them use public litter bins sometimes.

Most visitors claimed not to dispose of their on-board rubbish inappropriately, i.e. left on the roadside or ground at campsites. Furthermore 4% of visitors either never or rarely use a campground bin to dispose of litter.

These results imply that campers behave responsibly and do not regard litter as an issue at the Council’s free campsites. However, the results from the observations tell a different story. The findings from the observations identified considerable evidence of sustained littering at Council free camping sites, especially at Chamberlains Ford. This raises the question – why do campers say they use the litter bins provided when the evidence shows a significant amount of litter?

Frequency of disposing on-board rubbish by method	In public litter bins		In campground bins		Transfer stations of landfills		Left on the roadside		On the ground at camping spots	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Never	17	4%	3	1%	348	87%	392	98%	394	99%
Rarely	56	14%	11	3%	20	5%	4	1%	3	1%
Sometimes	230	58%	185	46%	27	7%	1	0%	0	0%
Always	94	24%	198	50%	2	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Refused	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Total	398	100%	398	100%	398	100%	398	100%	398	100%

5. Tourism Insights

5.1 Accommodation

A wide variety of accommodation types are being used by visitors, especially by international visitors. Free campsites make up 28% of all types of accommodation.

International visitors use a wide variety of other types of accommodation. Use of free campsites accounts for 25% of all accommodation. Other types include:

- Paid campgrounds (22%);
- DOC campsites (17%);
- Backpackers/hostel (17%);
- Friends / family (7%);
- Rented accommodation (5%);
- Hotels (2%);
- Motels (2%);
- Wofing (2%); and
- Couch surfing (1%).

The research shows international visitors pay for accommodation (65%) more often than they use free accommodation, and some international visitors exchange their labour for accommodation and subsistence, i.e. wofing.

Domestic visitors use free campsites more frequently than international visitors, and more frequently than any other form of accommodation. Domestic visitors are less likely to use paid campgrounds (19%), DOC facilities (10%), hotels (0%) and motels (0%). Furthermore, domestic visitors are more likely to stay with friends/family (11%).

All types of accommodation stayed at	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondent	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Free campsites/roadside	58	54%	328	25%	386	28%
Camp grounds (paid)	20	19%	285	22%	305	22%
Department of conservation/national park facilities	11	10%	213	17%	224	16%
Backpackers / hostel	0	0%	215	17%	215	15%
Friend/family's house	12	11%	84	7%	96	7%
House/ flat that you pay rent for (includes air bnb)	0	0%	62	5%	62	4%
Wofing	0	0%	28	2%	28	2%
Hotels	1	0%	23	2%	24	2%
Motels/motor inns or serviced apartments	3	0%	27	2%	30	2%
Student residence	0	0%	2	0%	2	0%
Couch-surfing	0	0%	14	1%	14	1%
Other	2	2%	6	0%	8	1%

Total	107	100%	1287	100%	1394	100%
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5.2 Activities of Interest

The respondents were asked to rate how interested or uninterested they are in participating in a range of tourist activities. A five-point rating scale was used, with 1 being very uninterested and 5 is very interested. The results are summarised in the table below and shown as mean scores.

The research shows the top three activities, in order of priority, are:

- Natural attractions (geothermal, glaciers, fiordlands, waterfalls etc.);
- Independent tramps biking, boating, or other excursions; and
- Wildlife encounters (bird watching, nature walks, whale watching etc.).

Level of interest in activity (All Visitors)	Mean score
Natural attractions (geothermal, glaciers, fiordlands, waterfalls etc.)	4.69
Independent tramps, biking, boating, or other excursions	4.23
Wildlife encounters (bird watching, nature walks, whale watching etc.)	4.18
Art, historical and cultural heritage sites	3.50
Events (sporting, musical, live performances etc.) and conferences	3.37
Adventure sports (bungee jumping, skydiving, ziplines etc.)	3.31
Hunting, fishing, lakes and rivers	3.21
Wineries and cafes	2.92
Riding excursions (all-terrain vehicles, horses etc.)	2.55
Retail shopping	2.34
Skiing and snowboarding	2.32
Guided tramps, biking, boating or other excursions	1.95
The TranzAlpine (train)	1.71

Some notable differences between domestic and international visitors are evident. Among the international visitors, natural attractions recorded the highest level of interest at 87%. By contrast, domestic visitors were most interested in fishing, lakes and rivers¹¹ (55%), and 47% were very interested in natural attractions. The level of interest in wildlife encounters between internal and domestic visitors was much more balanced, with 53% of international visitors and 45% of domestic visitors saying they were very interested. Note: detailed breakdowns for each activity and visitor type have been appended.

Look at differences by age

¹¹ Hunting did not hold appeal to any of the visitors.

5.3 Average Stay

International visitors stay in New Zealand an average 5 ½ months in total, and spend just short of one week of that in the Selwyn area. By the time international visitors arrive in Selwyn, on average they are approximately three-quarters of the way through their trip.

The research shows the average for a period domestic visitors' travel is approximately one month, and most stay in Selwyn for 0-4 days (71%). This suggests most domestic visitors are using the Council reserves for short breaks. Only 17% of the domestic visitors stay at the Council reserves for more than two weeks, however a minority stay considerably longer (tables appended).

Average number of nights	Domestic visitors	International visitors
... already travelled	18	93
... planned to travel overall	4	164
... planned to stay in Selwyn	1	5

5.4 Expenditure

The table below shows the average expenditure per person per week on a range of goods and services by visitor type¹². International visitors spend considerably more than domestic visitors on all items, although domestic visitors tend to bring items from home, e.g. groceries.

Expenditure	Domestic visitors average weekly spend (per person)	International visitors average weekly spend (per person)
Groceries	\$39.21	\$56.04
Accommodation	\$1.44	\$27.86
Fuel	\$8.23	\$99.78
Eating out	\$1.44	\$10.80
Shopping	\$1.55	\$6.33
Entry fees	\$0.13	\$20.13
Activities ¹³	\$0.13	\$20.13
Guided vehicle tours	\$0.03	\$2.39
Total weekly spend	\$52.15	\$243.47

The single largest expenditure for international visitors is fuel, but for domestic visitors it is groceries. The next largest expenditure for international visitors is groceries and accommodation respectively.

The average international visitor spends around \$100 on fuel per person / per week (compared to \$8 for domestic visitors), and this figure equates to approximately 41% of the average total spend per week, per person. The next largest expenditure is groceries; and the average international visitor spends \$56 per week on this (compared to \$40 by domestic visitors), which equates to close to ¼ of their total budget.

¹² These figures exclude expenditure on wide range of 'other' items, e.g. cigarettes/tobacco, alcohol, laundry, showers, Sim card/data, car repairs / maintenance, books, camping equipment, vehicle rental, medical (doctor, dentist), night clubs, the Picton Ferry, and tattoos.

¹³ Expenditure on activities & guided vehicle/tours was calculated by dividing the total amount spent by the total number of weeks in New Zealand / on holiday.

The amount of money spent international visitors spend on accommodation is relatively small, and represents approximately 11% of all expenditure.

5.5 Communications

Most visitors rely primarily on apps to find out about accommodation options in Selwyn. International visitors are extremely likely to use apps (74%), but the extent of usage among domestic visitors is also high (54%).

Word of mouth is a relatively less influential means by which visitors find out about accommodation options in the area. However, the research shows domestic visitors are more reliant on word-of-mouth (17%) than international visitors (11%).

The research suggests a significant proportion of domestic visitors (14%) and a small number of international visitors (4%) are returning to the same campsite.

The NZMCA is a source of information about accommodation options in Selwyn for 6% of domestic visitors, i.e. Grey Nomads.

Sources of information about accommodation options in this area	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondent	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondent	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Apps, e.g. Campermate, Rankers	41	53%	287	74%	328	71%
Word-of-mouth, e.g. family, friend, acquaintance, other campers	13	17%	43	11%	56	12%
Previous experience	11	14%	17	4%	28	6%
Internet search, e.g. Google, Safari	3	4%	14	4%	17	4%
NZMCA	5	6%	10	3%	15	3%
Asking locals	0	0%	5	1%	5	1%
Selwyn District Council, e.g. website, brochure	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Christchurch and Canterbury Tourism, e.g. website	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other ¹⁴	3	4%	12	3%	15	3%
Don't know	1	1%	0	0%	1	0%
Total	77	100%	388	100%	465	100%

5.6 Camping in New Zealand: Rules and Regulations

5.6.1 Knowledge Confidence

¹⁴ 'Other' sources of information are brochures (e.g. DOC, Christchurch City Council, information centre), council visit, Lonely Planet, and from driving past and noticing the campsite.

When it comes to understanding the camping rules and regulations in New Zealand, most visitors rate themselves at least ‘moderately confident’ (82%). New Zealanders are more likely to rate themselves as confident; most New Zealanders rate themselves as ‘highly confident’ (79%). International visitors do not rate their confidence to the same high levels; most international visitors who rate themselves as moderately confident (59%).

Level of confidence	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Not confident	3	4%	9	3%	12	3%
Slightly confident	0	0%	61	18%	61	15%
Moderately confident	11	17%	197	59%	208	52%
Highly confident	52	79%	65	20%	117	30%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

5.6.2 Knowledge Sources

The research shows visitors use a wide range of information sources to increase their knowledge about the New Zealand’s camping rules and regulations. Signage (onsite at council reserves) is a popular source of information for domestic and international visitors (22%). The internet is also popular among international visitors (25%), as is phone apps (14%), e.g. CamperMate, WikiCamper, Rankers.

11% of all visitors do not investigate camping regulations. New Zealand visitors are least likely to carry out research into the regulations around camping (17%) and more likely to say the regulations are a matter of common sense / prior knowledge (18%). The Grey Nomad segment are an exception to this, and are highly represented among the 11% of domestic visitors who acquire their knowledge of the ‘rules’ from the NZMCA. Fewer international visitors have not researched the regulations (11%) and they are less likely to perceive the matter as common sense (4%). Several overseas visitors, who had been caught and penalised for infringing the rules, said they found the different ‘rules’ throughout New Zealand confusing and difficult to navigate.

It is also apparent that camping rules and regulations are a topic of conversation; 8% of all visitors acquired their knowledge by word-of-mouth.

Source of knowledge about NZ camping rules and regulations	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Signs	33	30%	166	23%	199	22%
I have not researched the regulations	19	17%	80	11%	99	11%
Phone app	3	3%	101	14%	104	12%
Internet	8	8%	178	25%	186	21%
Word-of-mouth	7	6%	62	9%	69	8%
I-Sites	3	3%	60	8%	63	7%
Common sense/prior knowledge	20	18%	29	4%	49	13%

Asking locals	4	4%	23	3%	27	3%
NZMCA	12	11%	1	0%	13	1%
Vehicle rental company	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Other ¹⁵	0	0%	18	3%	18	2%
Total	109	100%	719	100%	828	100%

5.6.3 Toilets and Traveling

The research shows visitors are most likely to use public toilets (62%) or campsite toilets (26%). A small percentage of respondents admitted they go to the toilet in nature or the waterways (2%).

Location where access toilet (if on-board not used)	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Public facilities	279	62%
Campsite facilities	119	26%
Local businesses	27	6%
In nature/waterways	9	2%
Mainly use on-board vehicle	9	2%
Mix of public, local bus, campsite, in paid accommodation	5	1%
In paid accommodation	1	0%
Don't know	1	0%
Total	450	100%

¹⁵ 'Other' sources of information refers to Department of Conservation (website, staff and i-site) and travel guidebooks, e.g. Lonely Planet, AA.

6. Environmental Impacts

The research sought to investigate the environmental impact of freedom camping. A series of observations were carried out at campsites, along with several in-depth interviews with Council staff and contractors.

Observations were carried out at Chamberlains Ford and Whitecliffs Domain on two separate occasions. The observations involved a walk around the campsite perimeter and each piece of rubbish was recorded on a location map, along with a description of its type.

The key informant interviews were carried out with Council staff, several contractors (responsible for waste disposal and cleaning of the toilets) and a member of the local Police.

Five key issues associated with freedom camping in Selwyn were identified:

- Litter;
- Defecating in the wild;
- Overcrowding / excessive visitor numbers (at Chamberlains Ford);
- Fire lighting; and
- Anti-social behaviour.

In addition, a few secondary issues were highlighted.

6.1 Litter

Littering and waste disposal (effluent and litter/rubbish) are key issues according to the key informants; and findings from the observations provide further evidence of an excessive amount of litter at Council reserves/campsites. It is worth noting that Council (including contractors) expenditure on waste disposal has increased significantly in recent years.

The observations yielded a high incidence of litter, especially at Chamberlains Ford.

A wide variety of rubbish types were identified at each site, including plastic (supermarket bags, food wrappers, plates and cutlery, bottles, clothes pegs), food scrapes, glass bottles/tops, cans, paper (toilet paper, tissue, shop receipts, food and sweet wrappings, takeaway packaging, newspaper), cardboard boxes, tin foil, cooking pots, clothing, car tyre, shopping cart, cigarette butts, foam mattress, and furniture.

Plastic is the most common type of litter.

It is worth pointing out that Chamberlains Ford is mostly used by international visitors and Whitecliffs Domain is mainly used by Domestic visitors. This suggests international visitors are largely responsible for the litter. And, whilst there is a greater amount of litter at Chamberlains Ford, this could be explained (at least in part) by the much higher visitor numbers at this campsite.



The research findings suggest that Freedom campers are either not aware or ambivalent about the litter issue. The survey findings show visitors believe they regularly use the rubbish bins provided. This is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed with freedom campers.

The observation identified a lot of fruit and vegetable skins/peelings such as mandarins, bananas and cabbage left on the ground in both the bushes and on camping sites.

The rubbish has a greater tendency to collect at the periphery of campsites.



In addition to the larger items of rubbish, the observations revealed large numbers of small litter items, especially at Chamberlains Ford. Examples of smaller items are cotton wool buds, tissue paper, hair ties. These small items appeared to be the remnants of campers' daily ablutions.

While the observations indicated large amounts of rubbish at each campsite, it is interesting to note, that on 04/02/17, particularly large amounts of rubbish were recorded at the far end of the campsite at Chamberlains Ford, with a large amount behind the toilet block.

Along with small pieces of litter, some larger items were observed in bushes such as camping chairs, car seats, foam mattresses and airbed boxes. These were often in less noticeable places such as on the outskirts of the campsite in the bushes, purposely being put there. Further evidence of large items of refuse being left at Coes Ford are recorded in the Council's service request log.



6.2 Defecating in the Wild

The findings of the observation reveal a noticeable amount of tissue and toilet paper at Chamberlains Ford and Whitecliffs Domain, and particularly in areas furthest away from the toilet facilities. This suggests people camping further away from the toilets use the bushes as toilets instead of the toilets provided. Some visitors at Chamberlains Ford said there are frequent queues to use the toilets.

Key informants also raised the issue of freedom campers defecating in the grass and bushes at Council reserves /campsites and elsewhere, e.g. Lake Coleridge. For example, there was a reported incident at Lake Selfie of a domestic visitor digging a toilet in the earth 10 meters from the lake.



6.3 Overcrowding / Facility Fatigue

According to Council staff and contractors, some of the responsibility for litter can be attributed to the high volume of freedom campers - leading to overuse of toilets and rubbish bins. This also has consequences for the expenditure required to dispose of waste and rubbish. Contractors sometimes are required to bring in additional resource to deal with the high levels of waste and rubbish. They also reported an increase in the number of hours required to clean the toilet facilities at these campsites. They said, in 2016 the cost of emptying rubbish bins increased because trucks were needed for heavy lifting.

Furthermore, Council staff report freedom camping in Selwyn is increasing in popularity. Freedom camping used to be a seasonal activity, and typically lasted from Labour weekend to Easter, but nowadays it occurs throughout the year. Records of visitor numbers¹⁶ between the period 15 November 2016 to 13 March 2017 show 4504 parked vehicles at Chamberlains Ford. This equates to an average of 125 vehicles per night. If we assume most vehicles carry two passengers, this suggests an average of 250 people per night stay at Chamberlains, and use the facilities. The vehicle count is roughly half of this at Coes Ford (2327 over the same period).

6.4 Fire Lighting

The key informants reported a key issue with visitors lighting fires. Those responsible include both domestic and international visitors. An analysis of the Selwyn District Council service request log, where residents can report issues observed in the community, shows reports of lighting fires at Lakeside Domain and Coes Ford.

¹⁶ Records of visitor numbers first started to be captured in 2016; this was in response to anecdotal evidence of an increase in visitor numbers.

6.5 Anti-Social Behaviour

Reports of anti-social behaviour come from the Police and residents who use the Council service request log. Examples include assaults, dogs not on leads, drunken behaviour, excessive noise and inappropriate use of motorbikes, 4WDs and quad-bikes and monopolising campsites. In some cases the problems involving vehicles are causing property damage, e.g. broken fencing. Selwyn residents/families are believed to be the main perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. It is believed they are camping for extended periods over summertime. Anti-social behaviour is more common at Chamberlains Ford and Coes Ford.

7. Freedom Camper Reputation

7.1 The Visitor Perspective

The term freedom camper is familiar to domestic and international visitors. The term is mainly associated with international visitors and Grey Nomads (not young domestic visitors nor the homeless), but in different ways.

The term 'freedom camper' has negative connotations for the international visitor: young, loud, dirty / litter, no money, flouts the rules. Many of the international visitors surveyed said they were conscious of being negatively stereotyped by some New Zealanders. Some also said they have encountered unpleasant situations, e.g. derogatory comments. Consequently, some overseas tourists are feeling unwelcome as visitors to this country.

The term 'freedom camper' also applies to Grey Nomads. While Grey Nomads don't have a bad image among the local population, that doesn't stop them worrying about the possibility of 'being tarred with the same brush'. Therefore, they are keen to differentiate themselves from international freedom campers, and they perceive NZMCA membership as offering protection against this happening.

Many international visitors are sympathetic to the problems associated with freedom camping (e.g. litter), and claim to act responsibly. They don't think it is fair that all international visitors are negatively stereotyped but feel somewhat powerless to solve the problem.

Many domestic visitors have sympathy for the international visitors who are blamed for all the freedom camping issues, and feel it unfair to attach the negative stereotype to all international visitors who freedom camp. Moreover, they feel the New Zealand authorities have a responsibility to do more to rectify the situation, e.g. provide more facilities, clarify rules.

7.2 The Community Perspective

The research sought to gather an understanding of the community's perspective about freedom camping. To do this, several meetings were held with members of three Community Committees (at Leeston, Southbridge and Darfield) and one elected member of the Selwyn District Council. The following information is the researcher's analysis of those conversations.

A double standard exists over community attitudes towards the acceptability of freedom camping. Attitudes depend on who is freedom camping (i.e. whether they come from New Zealand or overseas), and how freedom camping impacts on the environment and/or economy.

There is a commonly held view that camping is a 'rite of passage' for all New Zealanders. By contrast, Selwyn residents believe that for overseas tourists, freedom camping is a privilege, and not a right.

Not surprisingly, local business owners generally have a more positive attitude towards overseas freedom campers; because they benefit economically. Other community members accept / tolerate overseas freedom campers, but only if they behave appropriately (i.e. treat freedom camping as a privilege), and the local community does not experience harm or disadvantage. Members of local communities whom we interviewed said freedom campers (traveling in self-contained vehicles) commonly park-up and stay overnight in towns like Darfield (next to the Four Square), Southbridge (rugby club) and Leeston (library).

Whilst the people we spoke to did not have a problem with this, anecdotal evidence indicates some other residents in the community are not happy about it.

People can resent freedom campers if there is no visible financial benefit and they see themselves as 'footing the bill' for freedom campers through their rates. Unfortunately, this results in a sense of unfairness about freedom camping and of the community being taken advantage of by overseas freedom campers. Some would like to see a requirement for freedom campers to pay a nominal amount to freedom camp, although they were not sure who this would work in practice.

There is a sense among some members of the community that freedom camping by overseas visitors currently occurs at their expense. This belief is underpinned by several commonly held beliefs (myths):

- Freedom campers are getting something for nothing; they don't contribute to the community / economy, and they are bludgers, e.g. park their vans outside community libraries to use free Wifi;
- Countries in Europe (where freedom campers come from) do not allow freedom camping, so why should we!
- Freedom campers only come to Selwyn because they have no money (no choice) and cannot freedom camp in Christchurch.

Negative media coverage of freedom camping tends to reinforce negative views and stereotypes

The community in Leeston raised concerns about road safety on the bridge and road next to Chamberlains Ford. It was well known that freedom campers were slowing down on the road and bridge because of confusion about where to access the road to the free campsite.

The community expects local authorities to 'manage' freedom camping by providing the necessary facilities and ensuring the community is not disadvantaged in any way.

Members of the community who we spoke to generally thought the Selwyn District Council is largely doing a good job of managing freedom camping; by containing overseas freedom campers to designated areas (Chamberlains Ford, Coes Ford, and Lakeside Domain). Providing toilet facilities is also a key part of the 'good management'. Despite this, several issues were raised by members of the community:

- The Te Araroa walkers (walking New Zealand's Trail) at Lake Coleridge are defecating in the environment because no toilet is available;
- Local fishermen have lost their traditional right to freedom camp at Lake Coleridge, Lake Selfie and RytonBay; and
- Some believe the increasing numbers of freedom campers is contributing to problems with the water quality / state of the rivers.

Members of the community do not perceive an issue with freedom campers littering, and were unaware of the extent of litter at the Council reserves currently. They are aware of the bins provided and assumed the freedom campers at the Council reserves were using them. Several Selwyn residents who had camped at Chamberlains Ford recently did not share this view. These people, who we interviewed as part of the visitor survey, had concerns about the large amounts of litter and blamed overseas freedom campers for this. Moreover, the issue appeared to be causing resentment towards the international visitors; and there is a risk this could escalate.

Appendix

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Male	208	52%
Female	189	48%
Total	397	100%

Nights of stay in this area	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
0-4	41	71%	229	70%	270	70%
5-9	7	12%	49	15%	56	15%
10-14	2	3%	26	8%	28	7%
15-19	0	0%	6	2%	6	2%
20-24	2	3%	7	2%	9	2%
25-29	3	5%	2	1%	5	1%
30+	3	5%	8	2%	11	3%
Total	58	100%	327	100%	385	100%

Nights already been travelling	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of nights	Percentage of respondents	Number of nights	Percentage of respondents	Number of nights	Percentage of respondents
0-7 days	81	5%	81	0%	63	17%
1-2 weeks	44	3%	175	0%	17	4%
2 - 3 weeks	61	4%	329	1%	19	5%
3-4 weeks	0	0%	140	0%	5	1%
1-2 months	133	8%	668	2%	25	7%
2-3 months	87	6%	2282	6%	44	12%
3-4 months	0	0%	5433	15%	62	16%
4-5 months	0	0%	7266	20%	62	16%
5-6 months	0	0%	3661	10%	25	7%
6-7 months	0	0%	3907	11%	22	6%
7-8 months	0	0%	1050	3%	5	1%
8-9 months	0	0%	1440	4%	6	2%
9-10 months	0	0%	1620	4%	6	2%
10-11 months	0	0%	1815	5%	6	2%
11-12 months	0	0%	1650	5%	5	1%
12-13 months	720	46%	2170	6%	1	0%
13-14 months	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
14-15 months	0	0%	840	2%	2	1%
15-16 months	450	29%	900	2%	3	1%
16-17 months	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
17-18 months	0	0%	525	1%	1	0%
18-19 months	0	0%	540	1%	1	0%
19-20 months	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
20-21 months	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Total	1576	100%	36492	100%	380	100%
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Nights of planned travel (entire trip)	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
0-29 (<1 month)	43	83%	15	5%	58	15%
30-59 (1-2 months)	5	10%	27	8%	32	8%
60-89 (2-3 months)	1	2%	24	7%	25	6%
90-119 (3-4 months)	1	2%	27	8%	28	7%
120-149 (4-5 months)	0	0%	22	7%	22	6%
150-179 (5-6 months)	0	0%	23	7%	23	6%
180-209 (6-7 months)	0	0%	62	19%	62	16%
210-239 (7-8 months)	0	0%	25	8%	25	6%
240-269 (8-9 months)	0	0%	25	8%	25	6%
270-299 (9-10 months)	0	0%	15	5%	15	4%
300-399 (10-11 months)	1	2%	55	17%	56	15%
400-499 (11-12 months)	0	0%	8	2%	8	2%
500-599 (12-13 months)	0	0%	4	1%	4	1%
600-699 (13-14 months)	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
700-799 (14-15 months)	1	2%	0	0%	1	0%
Total	52	100%	333	100%	385	100%

Level of interest in independent tramps, biking, boating or other excursions	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	16	24%	12	4%	28	7%
Somewhat uninterested	7	11%	7	2%	14	4%
Neither/nor	5	8%	23	7%	28	7%
Somewhat interested	11	17%	76	23%	87	22%
Very interested	27	41%	214	64%	241	61%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in natural attracts (geothermal, glaciers, fiordlands, waterfalls etc.)	(Domestic visitors)		(International visitors)		(All visitors)	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	8	12%	0	0%	8	2%
Somewhat uninterested	2	3%	1	0%	3	1%
Neither/nor	6	9%	2	1%	8	2%
Somewhat interested	19	29%	40	12%	59	15%
Very interested	31	47%	289	87%	320	80%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in wildlife encounters (bird watching, nature walks, whale watching etc.)	(Domestic visitors)		(International visitors)		(All visitors)	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	9	14%	9	3%	18	5%
Somewhat uninterested	5	8%	8	2%	13	3%
Neither/nor	10	15%	37	11%	47	12%
Somewhat interested	12	18%	101	30%	113	28%
Very interested	30	45%	177	53%	207	52%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in art, historical and cultural heritage sites	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	14	21%	20	6%	34	9%
Somewhat uninterested	8	12%	21	6%	29	7%
Neither/nor	9	14%	98	30%	107	27%
Somewhat interested	25	38%	130	39%	155	39%
Very interested	10	15%	63	19%	73	18%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in events (sporting, musical, live performances etc.) and conferences	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	19	29%	38	11%	57	14%
Somewhat uninterested	2	3%	45	14%	47	12%
Neither/nor	13	20%	62	19%	75	19%
Somewhat interested	19	29%	103	31%	122	31%
Very interested	13	20%	84	25%	97	24%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in adventure sports (bungee jumping, skydiving, zip lines etc.)	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	48	73%	53	16%	101	25%
Somewhat uninterested	0	0%	21	6%	21	5%
Neither/nor	6	9%	49	15%	55	14%
Somewhat interested	5	8%	85	26%	90	23%
Very interested	7	11%	124	37%	131	33%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in hunting, fishing, lakes and rivers	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	12	18%	71	21%	83	21%
Somewhat uninterested	1	2%	44	13%	45	11%
Neither/nor	3	5%	64	19%	67	17%
Somewhat interested	14	21%	90	27%	104	26%
Very interested	36	55%	63	19%	99	25%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in wineries and cafes	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	23	35%	65	20%	88	22%
Somewhat uninterested	7	11%	56	17%	63	16%
Neither/nor	13	20%	80	24%	93	23%
Somewhat interested	16	24%	78	23%	94	24%
Very interested	7	11%	53	16%	60	15%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in riding excursions (all-terrain vehicles, horses etc.)	Domestic visitors)		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	32	48%	110	33%	142	36%
Somewhat uninterested	6	9%	61	18%	67	17%
Neither/nor	7	11%	58	17%	65	16%
Somewhat interested	11	17%	62	19%	73	18%
Very interested	10	15%	41	12%	51	13%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in retail shopping	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	29	44%	117	35%	146	37%
Somewhat uninterested	11	17%	72	22%	83	21%
Neither/nor	5	8%	80	24%	85	21%
Somewhat interested	12	18%	40	12%	52	13%
Very interested	9	14%	23	7%	32	8%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in skiing and snowboarding	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	51	77%	148	45%	199	50%
Somewhat uninterested	4	6%	24	7%	28	7%
Neither/nor	4	6%	61	18%	65	16%
Somewhat interested	4	6%	49	15%	53	13%
Very interested	3	5%	50	15%	53	13%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in guided tramps, biking, boating or other excursions	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	48	73%	169	51%	217	55%
Somewhat uninterested	5	8%	57	17%	62	16%
Neither/nor	3	5%	50	15%	53	13%
Somewhat interested	6	9%	45	14%	51	13%
Very interested	4	6%	11	3%	15	4%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of interest in the TranzAlpine (train)	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very uninterested	31	47%	222	67%	253	64%
Somewhat uninterested	10	15%	47	14%	57	14%
Neither/nor	11	17%	36	11%	47	12%
Somewhat interested	8	12%	22	7%	30	8%
Very interested	6	9%	5	2%	11	3%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with amount of available space for campers	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	1	2%	0	0%	1	0%
Neither/nor	1	2%	3	1%	4	1%
Somewhat satisfied	10	15%	20	6%	30	8%
Very satisfied	54	82%	309	93%	363	91%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with rubbish disposal	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	2	3%	0	0%	2	1%
Neither/nor	7	11%	7	2%	14	4%
Somewhat satisfied	4	6%	28	8%	32	8%
Very satisfied	53	80%	297	89%	350	88%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with personal safety	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Neither/nor	3	5%	5	2%	8	2%
Somewhat satisfied	13	20%	40	12%	53	13%
Very satisfied	49	74%	285	86%	334	84%
Not applicable	1	2%	1	0%	2	1%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with general tidiness/cleanliness	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	2	3%	2	1%	4	1%
Neither/nor	6	9%	17	5%	23	6%
Somewhat satisfied	13	20%	92	28%	105	26%
Very satisfied	45	68%	221	67%	266	67%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with ease of finding	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	1	2%	3	1%	4	1%
Somewhat unsatisfied	0	0%	16	5%	16	4%
Neither/nor	3	5%	27	8%	30	8%
Somewhat satisfied	15	23%	62	19%	77	19%
Very satisfied	46	70%	224	67%	270	68%
Not applicable	1	2%	0	0%	1	0%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with peace and quiet	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	1	2%	15	5%	16	4%
Neither/nor	3	5%	49	15%	52	13%
Somewhat satisfied	19	29%	80	24%	99	25%
Very satisfied	43	65%	186	56%	229	58%
Not applicable	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with toilet facilities	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	0	0%	9	3%	9	2%
Neither/nor	11	17%	48	14%	59	15%
Somewhat satisfied	10	15%	114	34%	124	31%
Very satisfied	38	58%	158	48%	196	49%
Not applicable	7	11%	2	1%	9	2%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with attractiveness of natural surroundings	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	1	2%	0	0%	1	0%
Somewhat unsatisfied	2	3%	20	6%	22	6%
Neither/nor	4	6%	88	27%	92	23%
Somewhat satisfied	13	20%	122	37%	135	34%
Very satisfied	46	70%	102	31%	148	37%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with lighting in the toilet block	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	0	0%	5	2%	5	1%
Somewhat unsatisfied	1	2%	10	3%	11	3%
Neither/nor	23	35%	98	30%	121	30%
Somewhat satisfied	4	6%	62	19%	66	17%
Very satisfied	31	47%	129	39%	160	40%
Not applicable	7	11%	28	8%	35	9%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with access to water for washing dishes	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	2	3%	8	2%	10	3%
Somewhat unsatisfied	7	11%	11	3%	18	5%
Neither/nor	16	24%	58	17%	74	19%
Somewhat satisfied	11	17%	65	20%	76	19%
Very satisfied	23	35%	153	46%	176	44%
Not applicable	7	11%	37	11%	44	11%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with proximity to other facilities, shops etc.	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	
Very unsatisfied	1	2%	5	2%	6	2%
Somewhat unsatisfied	2	3%	65	20%	67	17%
Neither/nor	13	20%	157	47%	170	43%
Somewhat satisfied	28	42%	65	20%	93	23%
Very satisfied	21	32%	37	11%	58	15%
Not applicable	1	2%	3	1%	4	1%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with access to water for drinking	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	6	9%	27	8%	33	8%
Somewhat unsatisfied	3	5%	21	6%	24	6%
Neither/nor	20	30%	46	14%	66	17%
Somewhat satisfied	3	5%	16	5%	19	5%
Very satisfied	11	17%	22	7%	33	8%
Not applicable	23	35%	200	60%	223	56%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%

Level of satisfaction with showering/washing facilities	Domestic visitors		International visitors		All visitors	
	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very unsatisfied	3	5%	6	2%	9	2%
Somewhat unsatisfied	4	6%	14	4%	18	5%
Neither/nor	18	27%	74	22%	92	23%
Somewhat satisfied	6	9%	16	5%	22	6%
Very satisfied	4	6%	12	4%	16	4%
Not applicable	31	47%	210	63%	241	61%
Total	66	100%	332	100%	398	100%