



## **VISITOR INDUSTRY TASK FORCE 2.0 (VITF) AGENDA**

**May 14, 2026 at 5:30 PM**

**Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar**

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<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/83826098583> or call 1 (669) 444-9171 Webinar ID: 838 2609 8583

- A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**
- B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. Gunalchéesh
- C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - 1. 2026, April 23 VITF Minutes - Draft**
- E. AGENDA TOPICS**
  - 1. Discussion on long-term tourism planning and regional context**
    - A) Introductions & Overview**
    - B) Discussion**
- F. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**
- G. NEXT MEETING DATE - MAY 21 2026, AT 5:30PM**
- H. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**
  - 1. VITF Tourism Vision Memo 5-7-2026**
- I. ADJOURNMENT**

ADA accommodations available upon request: contact the Clerk's Office (907)586-5278 or [city.clerk@juneau.gov](mailto:city.clerk@juneau.gov) at least 36 hours prior to a meeting, to request ADA arrangements.



## VITF 2.0 – MEETING **DRAFT MINUTES**

April 23, 2026 at 5:30 PM  
Assembly Chambers & Zoom

<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/83826098583> or call 1 (669) 444-9171 Webinar ID: 838 2609 8583

### A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ella Adkison called the April 23, 2026 VITF meeting to order in the Assembly Chambers and via Zoom at 5:30 p.m.

### B. ROLL CALL

**Task Force Members Present:** Ella Adkison; Neil Steininger; Meilani Schijvens; Kirby Day; Kirsas Hughes-Skandijs; Matt Catterson; Ren Scott, Sarah Lowell, Shem Sooter

**Task Force Members Absent:** Jeremy Timothy

**Staff/Others Present:** Visitor Industry Director Alexandra Pierce, Asst. City Attorney Nicole Lynch (via Zoom), Engagement Specialist Phil Huebschen, D&H

Harbormaster Matthew Creswell, Suzie Teerlink (NOAA), Serene Hutchison (Juneau Tours, SEAWWA), Jayleen Bydlon (Jayleen's Alaska)

### C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Agenda approved as presented

### D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Minutes approved as presented

#### a. 2026-04-16 VITF Minutes - Draft

### E. AGENDA TOPICS

#### a. Whale Watching Discussion and Policy Options

##### i) Introductions & Overview

Topics from last meeting were further explored and discussed by VITF members and guest speakers, and guests provided overview of supplemental materials.

##### ii) Discussion

The following topics were agreed upon for future recommendation considerations pending consultation with CBJ Law. No formal action was taken:

1. Feasibility of whale watching limited entry program and rented permits
2. Enforcing wakes and speed in Statter Harbor area
3. Moving 5 knot buoy out an additional 500 ft in Statter Harbor

## VITF 2.0 – MEETING **DRAFT MINUTES**

April 23, 2026 at 5:30 PM  
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**F. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS** - None

**G. NEXT MEETING DATE** Thursday, May 14, 2026 @ 5:30pm.

**H. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

1. VITF Whale Watch Memo 4-16-2026 w/ Updated Information
2. Asst. City Attorney Lynch Notes on Whale Watching
3. Juneau Whale Watch Boats 2026 Tracker — Suzie Teerlink (NOAA)

**I. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the Task Force, the meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.



## **Memorandum**

**To:** Visitor Industry Task Force

**From:** Alexandra Pierce, Visitor Industry Director

**Date:** May 7, 2026

**Re:** Tourism Vision

As the VITF prepares to hear testimony from the public, cruise lines, and possibly Goldbelt in the coming months, CBJ staff are initiating a broader discussion about Juneau's long-term tourism vision. We are asking the VITF to provide overarching guidance on what kind of destination Juneau should be in 10 years, and what actions are necessary to achieve that vision.

A central issue in this discussion is cruise passenger volume and overall visitor management. The VITF has already identified concerns related to downtown crowding, flightseeing, and whale watching. While the Mendenhall Glacier is outside CBJ's jurisdiction and the formal scope of the VITF, capacity constraints at that site remain a significant community concern. Importantly, limitations at any major attraction tend to redistribute visitors elsewhere, often intensifying pressure on other areas.

Following the original VITF process and in response to roughly 30% growth in annual cruise passengers after the pandemic, CBJ negotiated a daily limit of five ships and passenger caps of 16,000 (12,000 on Saturdays). These measures have helped stabilize visitation levels in the near term. However, over time, there will likely be pressure to revisit these limits, particularly in light of proposals such as Goldbelt's potential development of two additional docks. Our job is to give future decision makers the tools to establish informed policies grounded in data.

Infrastructure remains the most effective tool for managing visitor impacts, and tourism growth affects the entire community. While current volumes have remained relatively stable under the caps, future decision-makers will inevitably face questions about whether, when, and how to adjust them. The goal of this effort is to ensure those decisions are guided by clear principles, reliable data, and a shared community vision.

To support this, we are seeking VITF guidance in the following areas:

### **Data Collection**

- What data are currently missing that would improve decision-making?
- What metrics should be tracked over time to evaluate how well Juneau is managing visitor volume and impacts?



### **Criteria for Growth**

- What conditions or indicators should be considered before adjusting passenger caps?
- How should future decision-makers use these criteria to evaluate potential changes?

### **Destination Optimization**

- What investments or strategies are needed to improve Juneau as a destination for both residents and visitors?
- What measurable indicators can be used to track progress toward these goals?

### **Information and Resources**

The following plans and studies provide important context and can help inform the VITF's work. Municipalities fund and rely on plans to help inform future decision making and set visions or goals for specific areas or activities. The documents listed below represent a foundation:

#### **Blueprint Downtown**

This plan focuses on revitalizing and managing downtown Juneau as the community's cultural and economic center. It addresses land use, transportation, pedestrian flow, and public space design, with an emphasis on balancing resident needs and visitor activity. The plan highlights strategies for improving walkability, reducing congestion, and enhancing the overall downtown experience.

- Available for download on CDD website: [CDD – NPC – Blueprint Downtown – City and Borough of Juneau](#)
- Tourism information can be found in section five (p.167).

#### **Long Range Waterfront Plan**

The Long Range Waterfront Plan provides a framework for development and use of Juneau's waterfront, including cruise infrastructure, public access, and shoreline improvements. It considers how to accommodate marine tourism while preserving community character and access. The plan also addresses dock development, circulation along the waterfront, and opportunities for public amenities. Notably, this plan contains a framework for updating the plan in the future to accommodate a cruise ship dock at the Subport. This was tremendously helpful when the Aak'w Landing project was proposed because it, and VITF 1.0, gave staff a set of criteria to amend the plan.



- Available for download on CDD website: <https://juneau.org/community-development/plans-studies>, along with 2022 amendment.
- The 2004 plan has application to tourism industry throughout, and the 2022 amendment includes VITF 1.0 recommendations and application throughout.

### **2013 Comprehensive Plan**

Juneau's Comprehensive Plan establishes the community's long-term vision for land use, growth, housing, economic development, and environmental stewardship. It provides policy guidance that shapes decision-making across sectors, including tourism. While not tourism-specific, it frames broader community priorities that should guide how visitor industry growth is managed.

- Available for download on CDD website: <https://juneau.org/community-development/plans-studies>
- Relevance to tourism can be found throughout Chapter 5: Economic Development (p.50-52).
- Additional lesser application can be found throughout, with more specific relevance in Chapter 8: Transportation (p.117), Chapter 16: Historic and Cultural Resources (p.221).

### **Results of Current Comprehensive Plan Update (to date)**

The ongoing update to the Comprehensive Plan reflects current community input and evolving priorities. Early results highlight concerns about livability, housing, infrastructure capacity, and the cumulative impacts of tourism. These findings offer a more up-to-date picture of community sentiment and can help ensure that tourism planning aligns with current values and conditions.

- Available for download on CDD website under "March 2026 Results": [CDD – Our Juneau Comprehensive Plan – City and Borough of Juneau](#)
- P. 55 & 57 are useful data presentations for the VITF, which show correlated actions by percent (p.55), and actions by specific development areas by percent (p.57).

### **Port Communities of Alaska Regional Dynamics Presentation**

This resource examines how cruise traffic and tourism trends affect multiple Southeast Alaska communities. It provides regional context on passenger flows, economic impacts, and infrastructure pressures, helping Juneau understand its role within the broader



cruise network. The presentation underscores how decisions in one port can influence others.

- Can be viewed on the CBJ Assembly Meeting Portal:  
<https://juneauak.portal.civicclerk.com/event/4792/files/attachment/1811>

### **VITF 1.0 Report**

The original VITF report includes a range of recommendations related to visitor management, including the need for ongoing and improved data collection. It provides a useful foundation for this phase of work, particularly in identifying metrics and monitoring approaches that can support long-term, adaptive decision-making.

- Available on the VITF Archive page: [Assembly Visitor Industry Task Force Archive – City and Borough of Juneau](#)

### **Framing Questions for the VITF**

Like all VITF work, this process will be iterative. Members are encouraged to begin considering these issues now so they can contextualize what they hear from cruise lines, developers, and the public within a longer-term framework. This will also help the public better understand the broader considerations as they prepare their testimony.

Several initial key questions are intended to help guide this discussion and to provide early context for the more specific questions above:

- **How should Juneau define its role as the regional hub for Southeast Alaska tourism?**  
As the dominant cruise port in the region, changes in Juneau’s policies and capacity can have ripple effects across other communities. How should that leadership role inform decision-making?
- **How do we translate community values into actionable decision-making tools?**  
Juneau has an extensive body of plans, public input, and survey data that reflect community preferences. The challenge is to convert those qualitative insights into measurable criteria that can guide policy decisions, particularly around visitor volume and infrastructure investment.
- **What does community self-determination look like in practice?**  
How can Juneau ensure that future tourism decisions are grounded in clearly articulated local priorities, supported by data, and resilient to external pressures?

### **Attachment 1: Regional Dynamics Presentation**



# *PORT COMMUNITIES OF ALASKA*



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## Regional Dynamics

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Alexandra Pierce

Visitor Industry Director



# About Port Communities of Alaska

Port Communities of Alaska is a statewide network of municipalities that receive cruise ships. We started in 2020 as an informal monthly meeting to discuss the challenges of managing an uncertain cruise tourism market during the pandemic. Our work expanded to collaborating on the unique issues of managing, balancing, developing or limiting cruise tourism in a region-wide context. Our representatives are municipal employees or designees, and our focus is the nexus between cruise tourism and community.

## **Our Mission:**

PCOA's mission is to support collaboration among local governments with responsibilities impacted by cruise ship activities, ensuring regional strategy alignment.

## **Our Vision:**

The vision of the PCOA is to serve as a not-for-profit professional organization for officials and employees of Alaska's cruise port cities and boroughs to exchange ideas and discuss common port issues.

# Purpose and Intent

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Cruise tourism functions as a network and the fortunes and challenges of individual ports are linked



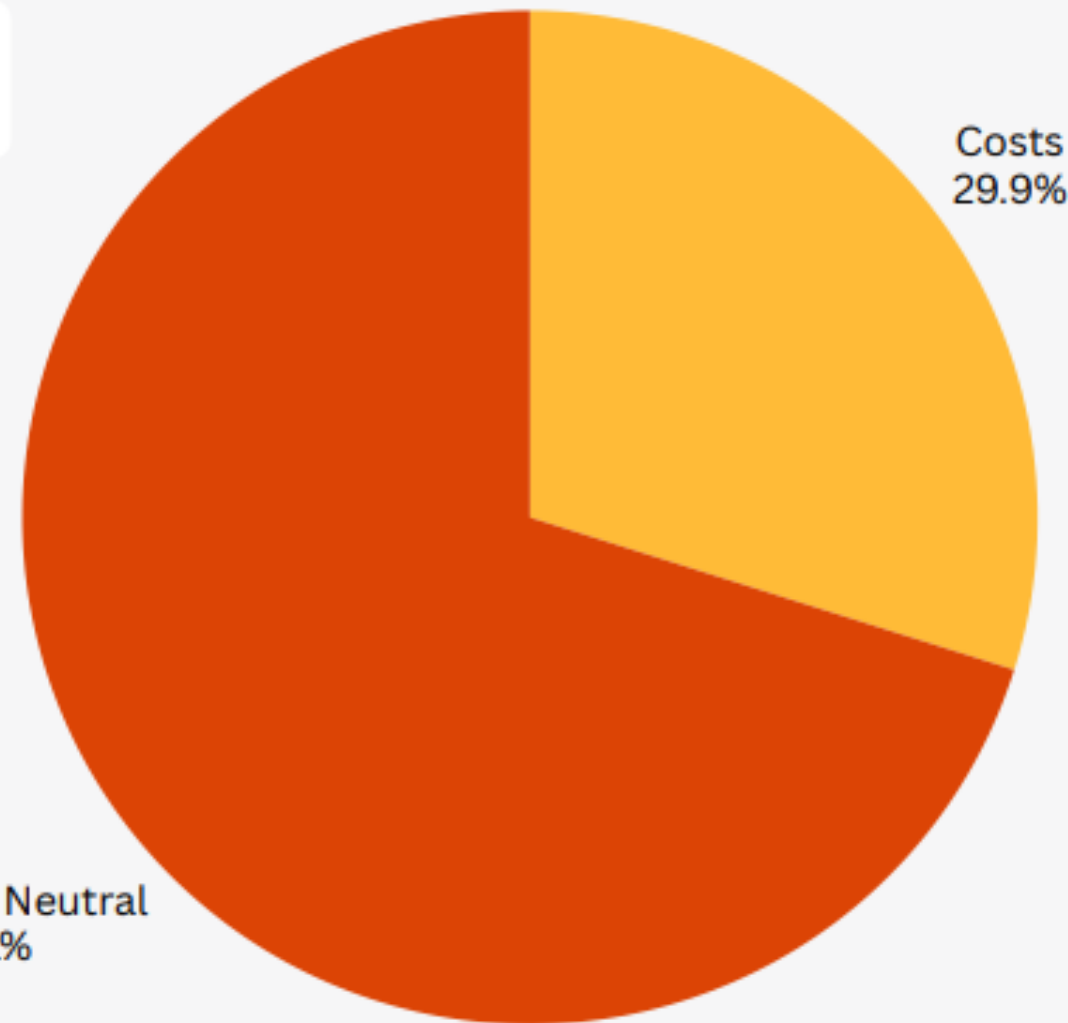
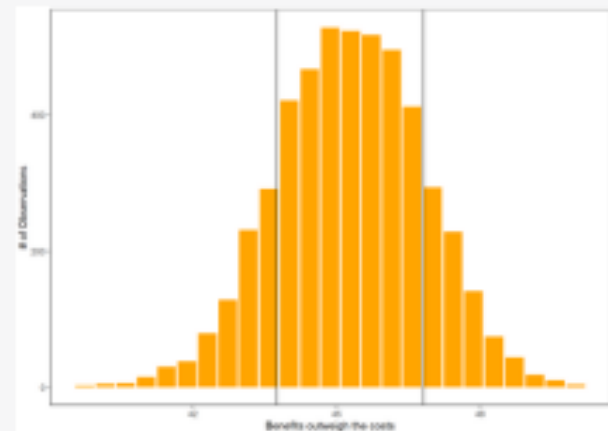
Most regional ports have conducted public processes around cruise tourism over the past several years



Port Communities of Alaska has compiled the key outcomes to identify shared issues across the region

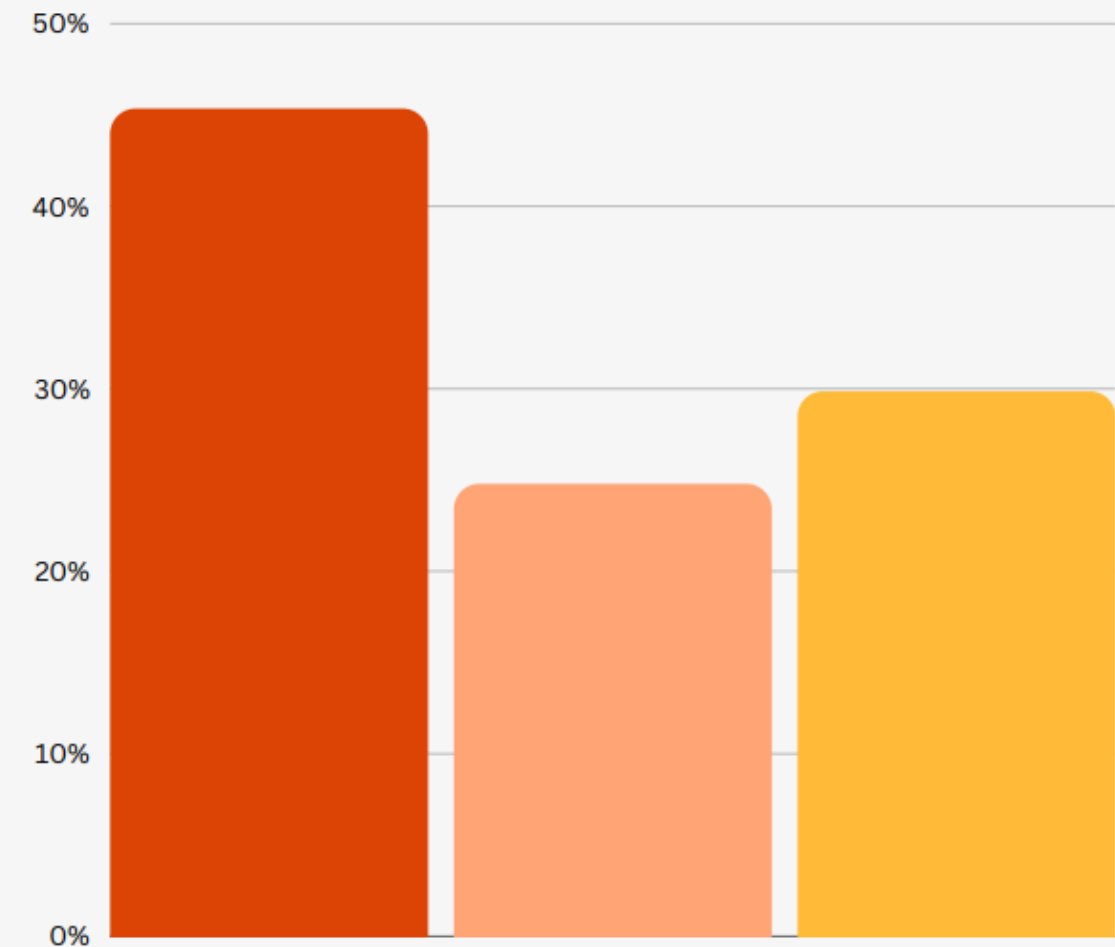
# Skagway – Resident Sentiment Survey

- Costs Outweigh the Benefits
- Benefits plus Neutral



## Skagway 2024

- Benefits Outweigh the Costs
- Neutral: Equal Amount of Benefits and Costs
- Costs Outweigh the Benefits

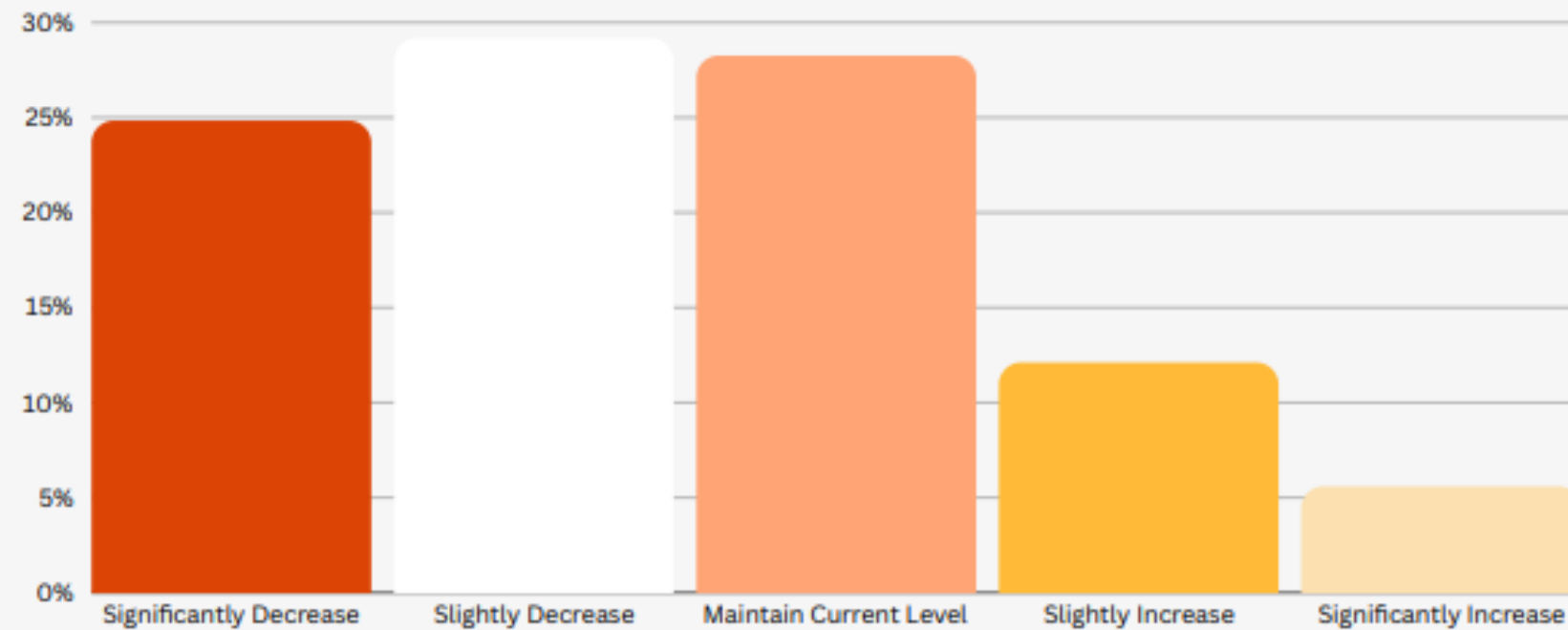


In general, do you feel the benefits of tourism outweigh the costs or the costs of tourism outweigh the benefits of tourism?

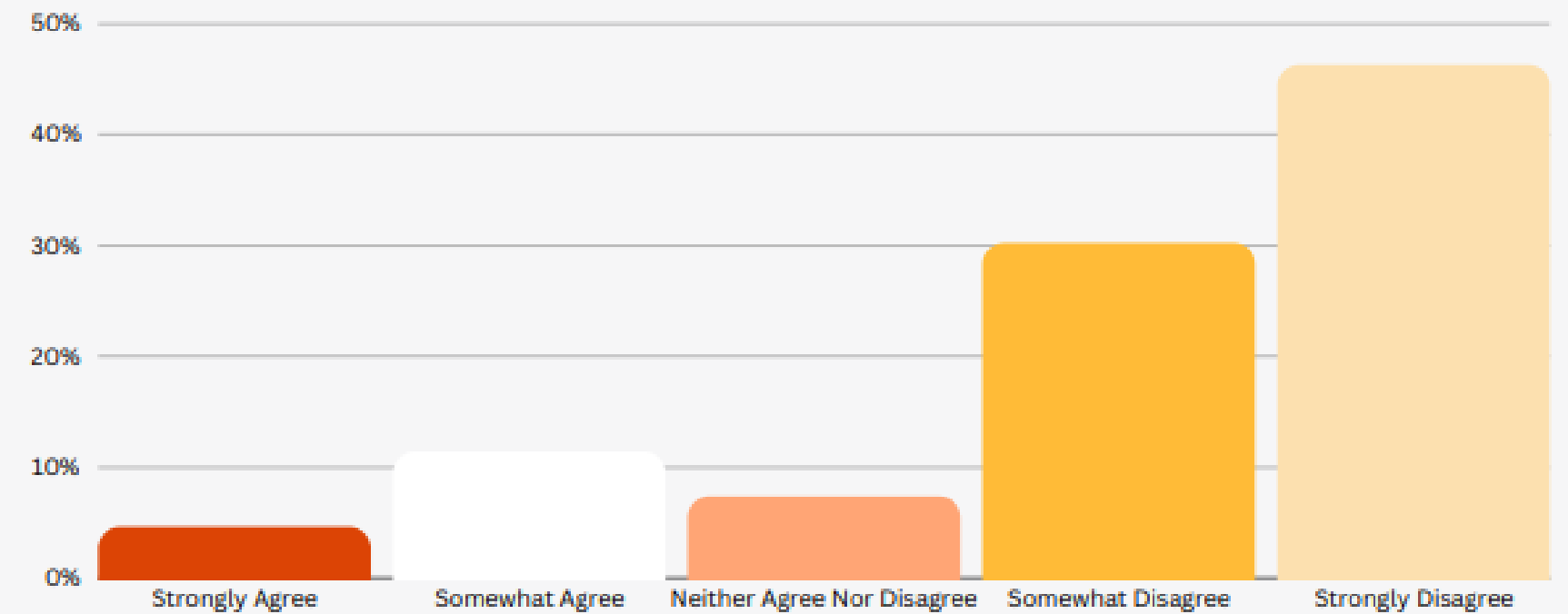


# Skagway – Resident Sentiment Survey

## Tourism Development



## Infrastructure





# Sitka – Tourism Task Force

- Convened in 2022, final recommendations adopted 2024.

## Key outcomes:

- 80% wanted the community to reach common ground so that Sitka can find a balance when it comes to cruise tourism.
- 70% agreed that the ideal number of cruise tourists for Sitka balances economic opportunities and benefits with preserving quality of life.
- 60% stated that they believe CBS should take an active role in determining the number of cruise visitors that come to Sitka. However, the “balanced” number was difficult to discern from the input received.

© Don Klatt

# Sitka – Tourism Task Force, Directive 1

1. Pursue mutual agreements with the industry  
(Daily passenger caps set in 2025)
2. Flatten the (growth) curve
3. Take out the peak
4. Designated quiet days
5. Shorten the length of the season
6. Continue collecting data
7. Prioritize initiatives that enhance and protect Sitka's character and quality of life

# Ketchikan – Community Listening Sessions

- **The quality of life for residents is directly impacted by tourism-related challenges**
  - A focus on improving the local experience will inherently benefit tourism by creating a more authentic, sustainable, and desirable destination for travelers. When a place is a great place to live, it becomes a great place to visit
- **Infrastructure for visitors is outdated and insufficient**
  - Poor pedestrian safety, limited public restrooms, inconsistent Wi-Fi/cell service and traffic bottlenecks detract from visitor experience
- **Sustainable and long-term growth is limited by a lack of diverse, year-round infrastructure**
  - Critical need for action on the housing shortage, childcare and healthcare needs, and lifestyle support for a year-round population and business environment
- **Strong community desire for collaboration & forward-thinking planning**
  - Community members expressed a desire for more collaboration to address shared problems with a proactive, action-oriented approach to planning for the future

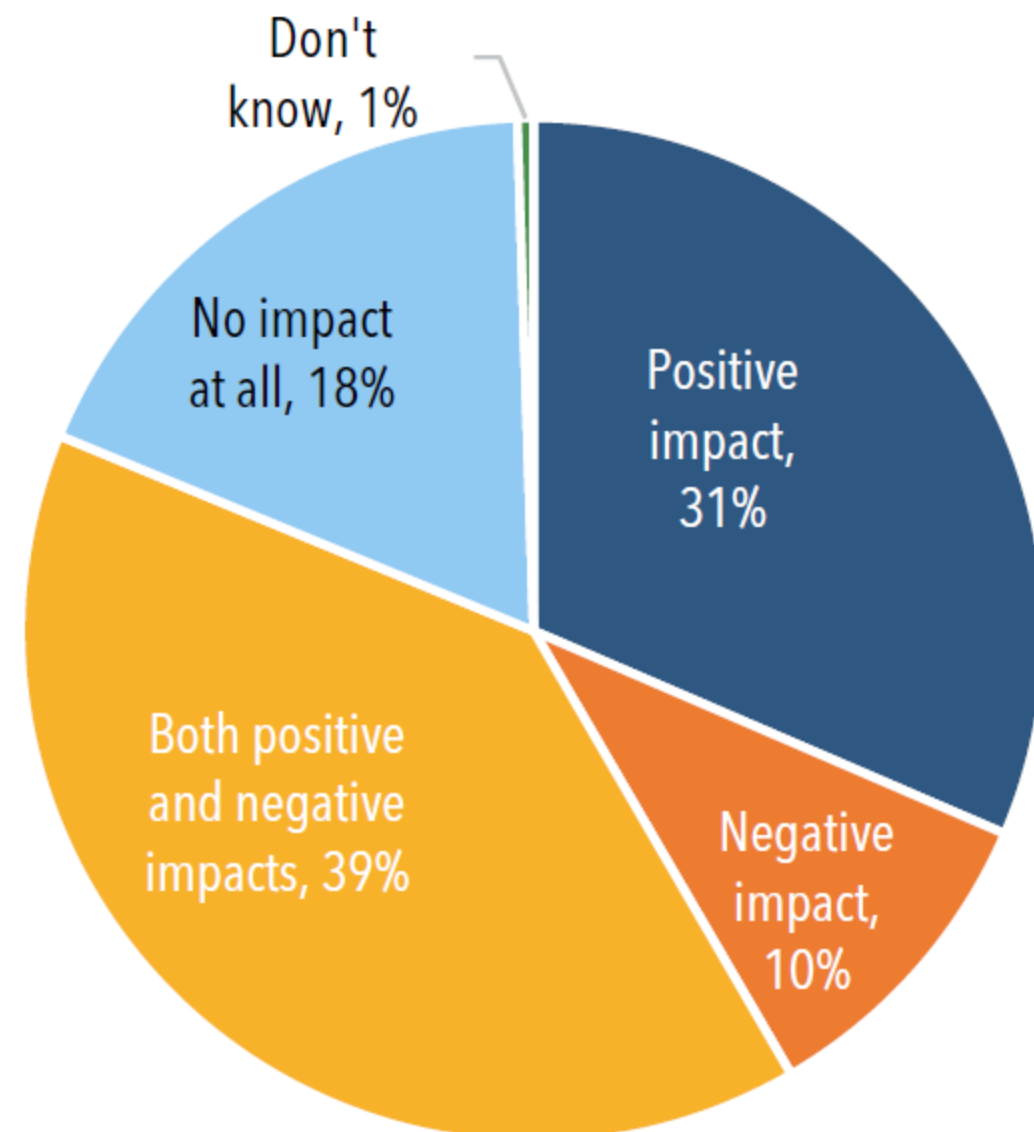
# Ketchikan Gateway Borough – Tourism Strategy

## Goals:

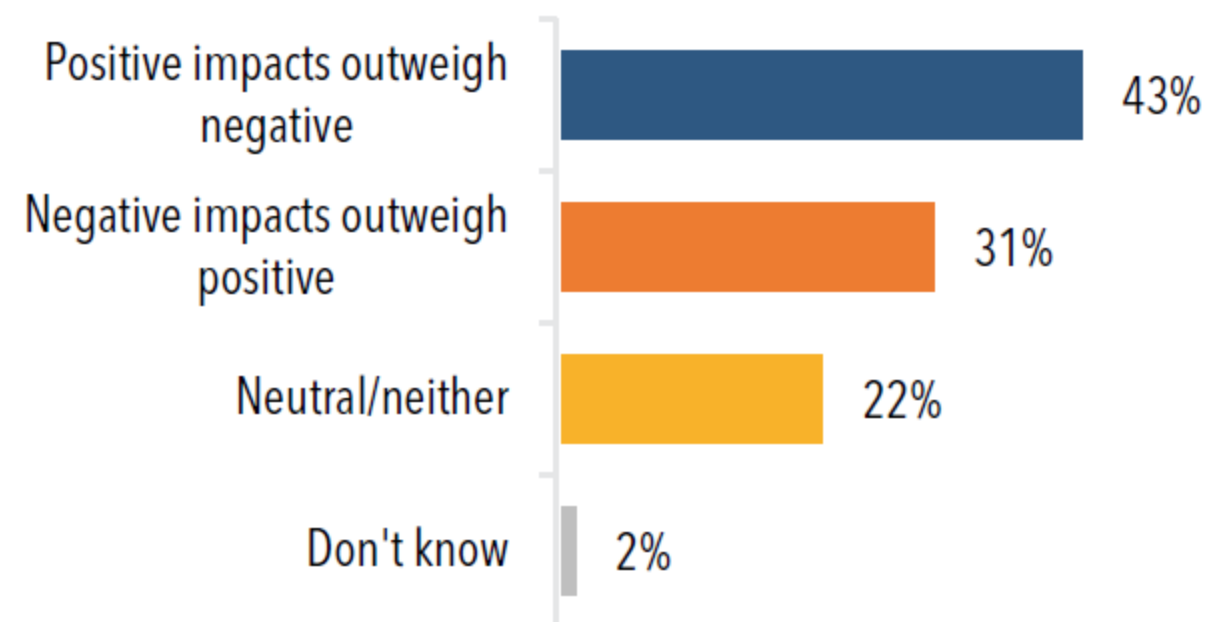
1. Manage visitor flows and operator impacts during tourism peak season
2. Position Ketchikan as a year-round destination
3. Strengthen community engagement and communications around tourism
4. Increase tourism workforce stability
5. Improve mobility and reduce tourism related traffic congestion
6. Support season and year-round solutions for workforce housing
7. Monitor holistic impacts of tourism
8. Establish and implement collective tourism governance

# Juneau – Community Tourism Survey

Do you feel the visitor industry has an overall positive impact, negative impact, both negative and positive impacts, or no impact at all on your household?

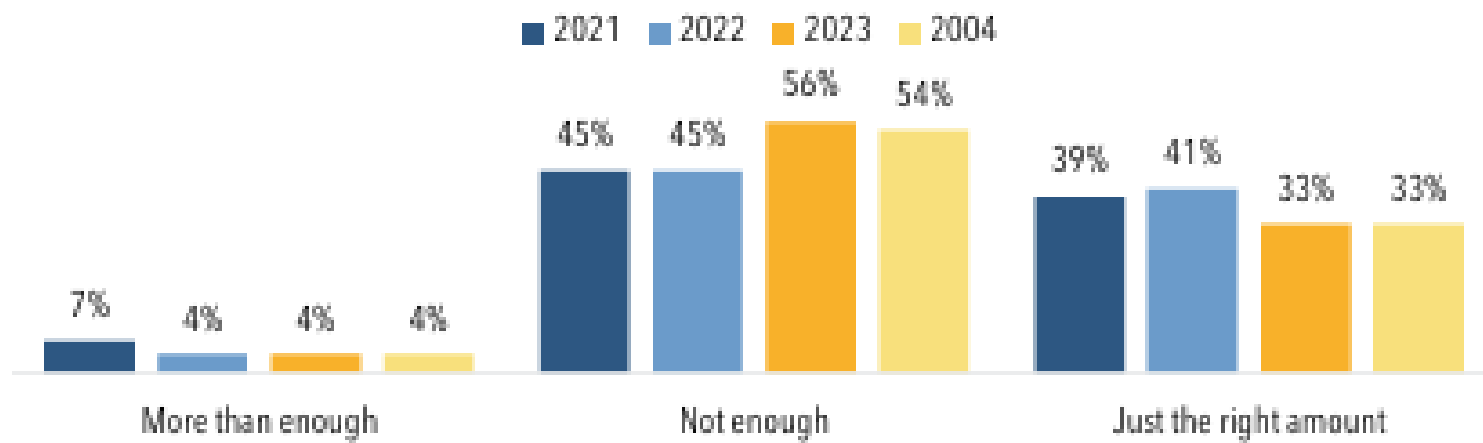


Among those who responded "Both:" Do you feel the positive impacts outweigh the negative impacts or the negative impacts outweigh the positive impacts?

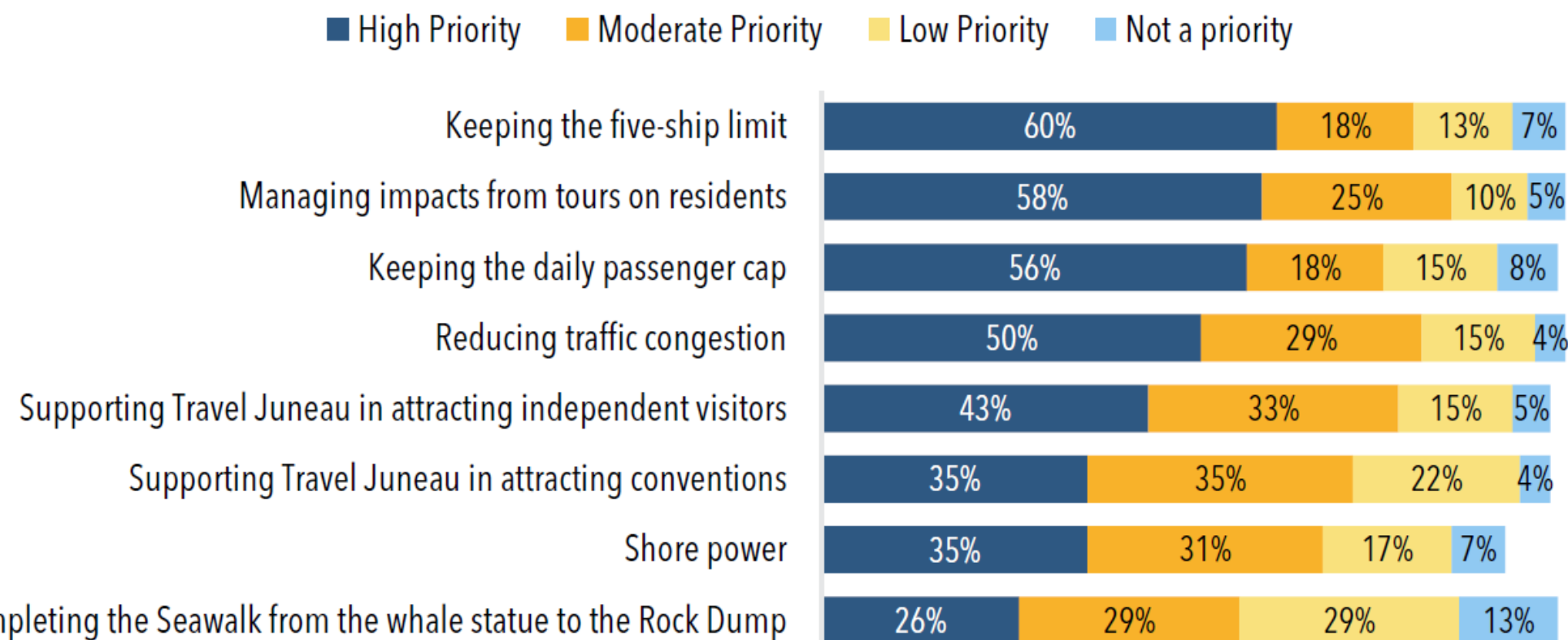


# Juneau – Community Tourism Survey

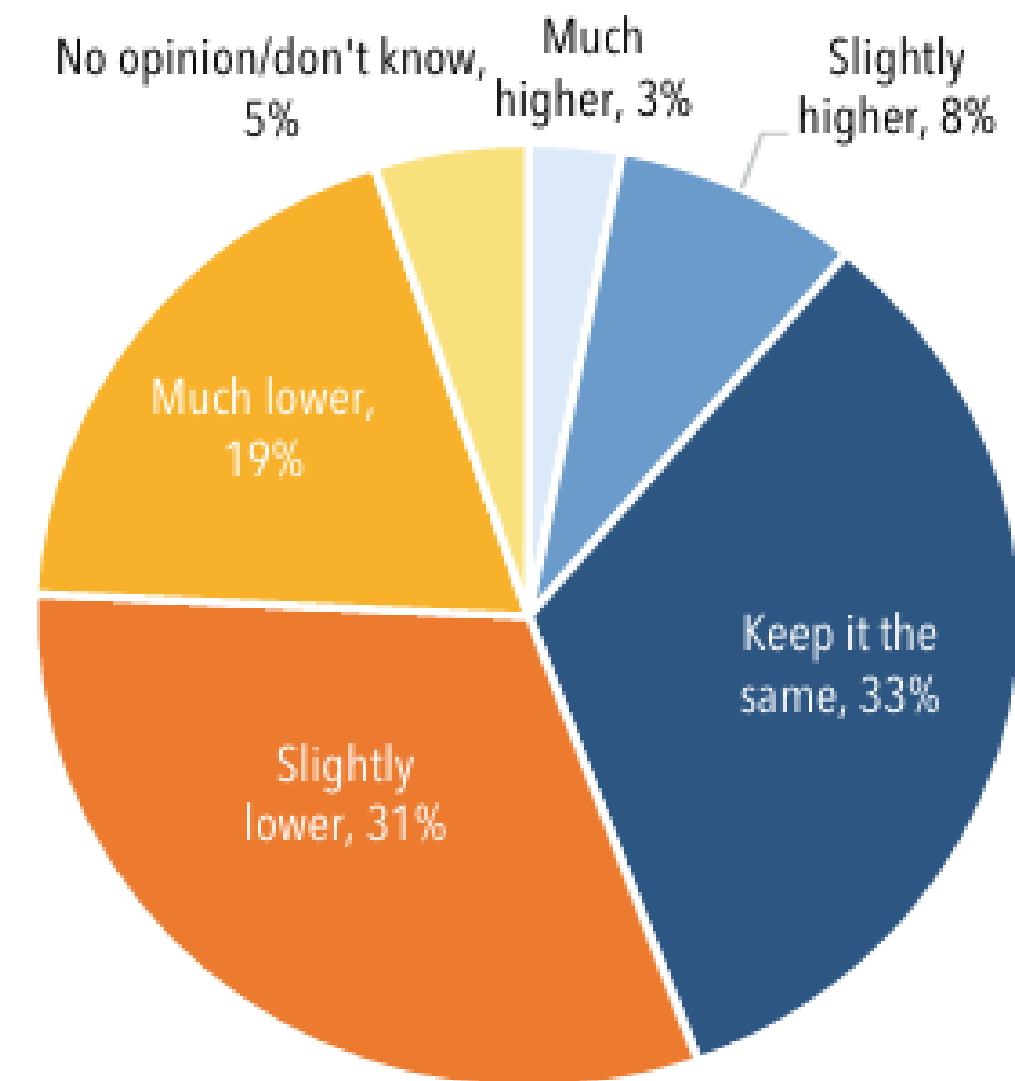
TREND: Is CBJ doing more than enough, not enough, or just the right amount to manage the impacts of the visitor industry? 2021 to 2024



Should CBJ place a high priority, medium priority, or low priority on each of the following items?



What is your preference for future cruise passenger volume in Juneau?



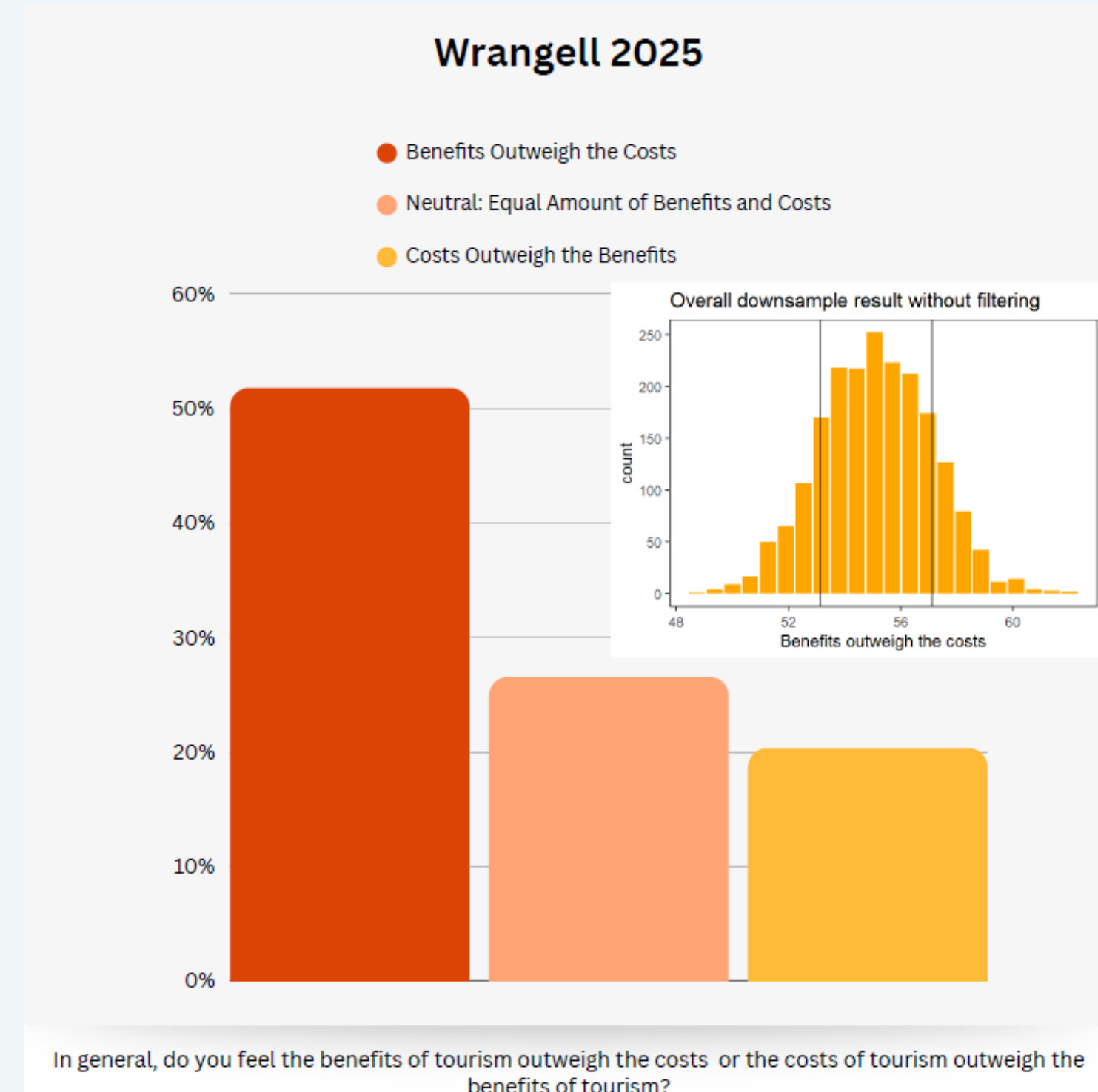
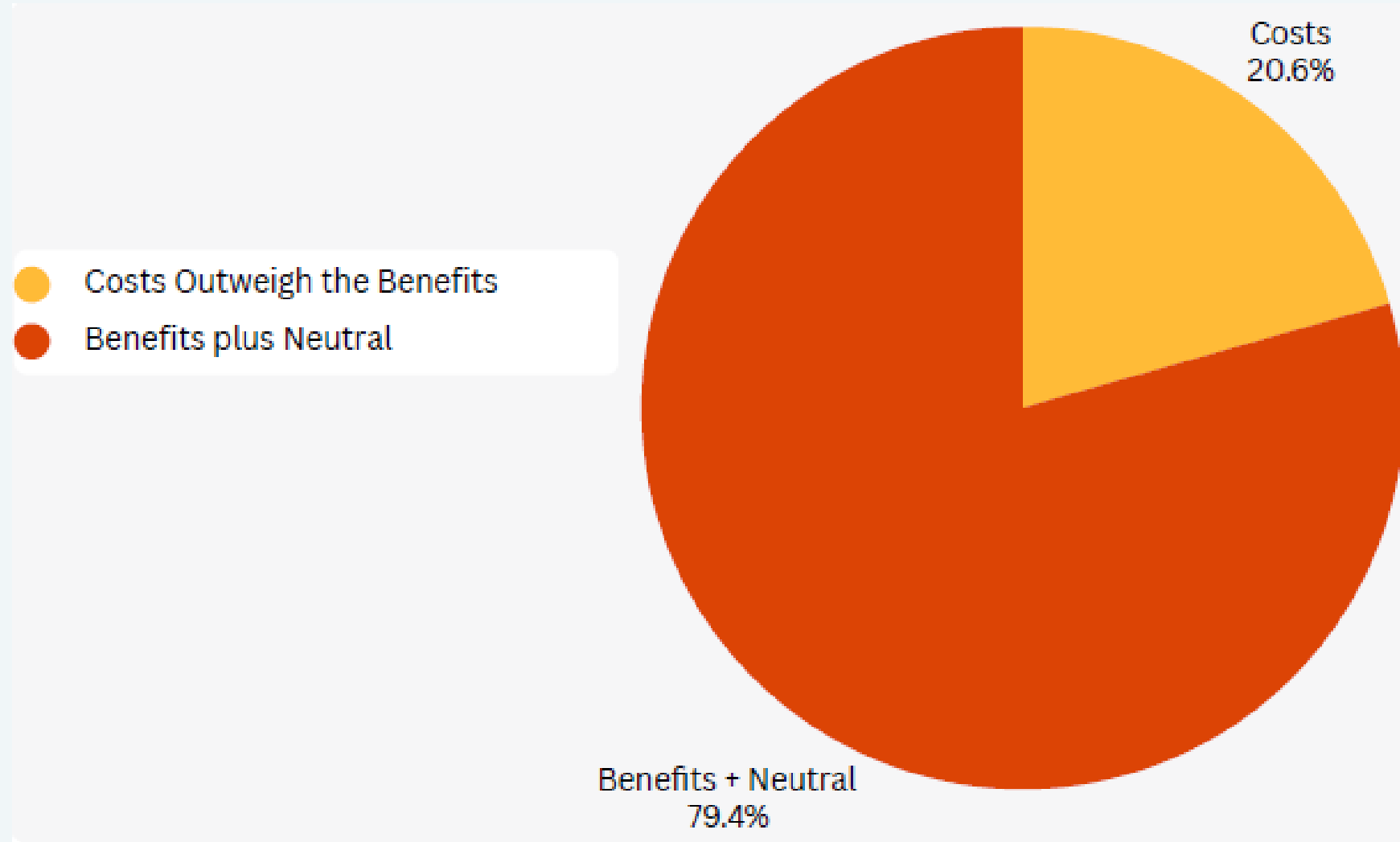
Formerly McDowell Group

# Juneau – Visitor Industry Task Force

- Convened 2019-2020
- Developed 45 recommendations for visitor industry management in Juneau
- MOAs with the cruise industry direct result of VITF
  - 2022 – behavioral MOA
  - 2023 – five ship limit
  - 2024 – daily passenger caps (16,000 Sunday-Friday, 12,000 Saturday)
- VITF 2.0 launched December 2025

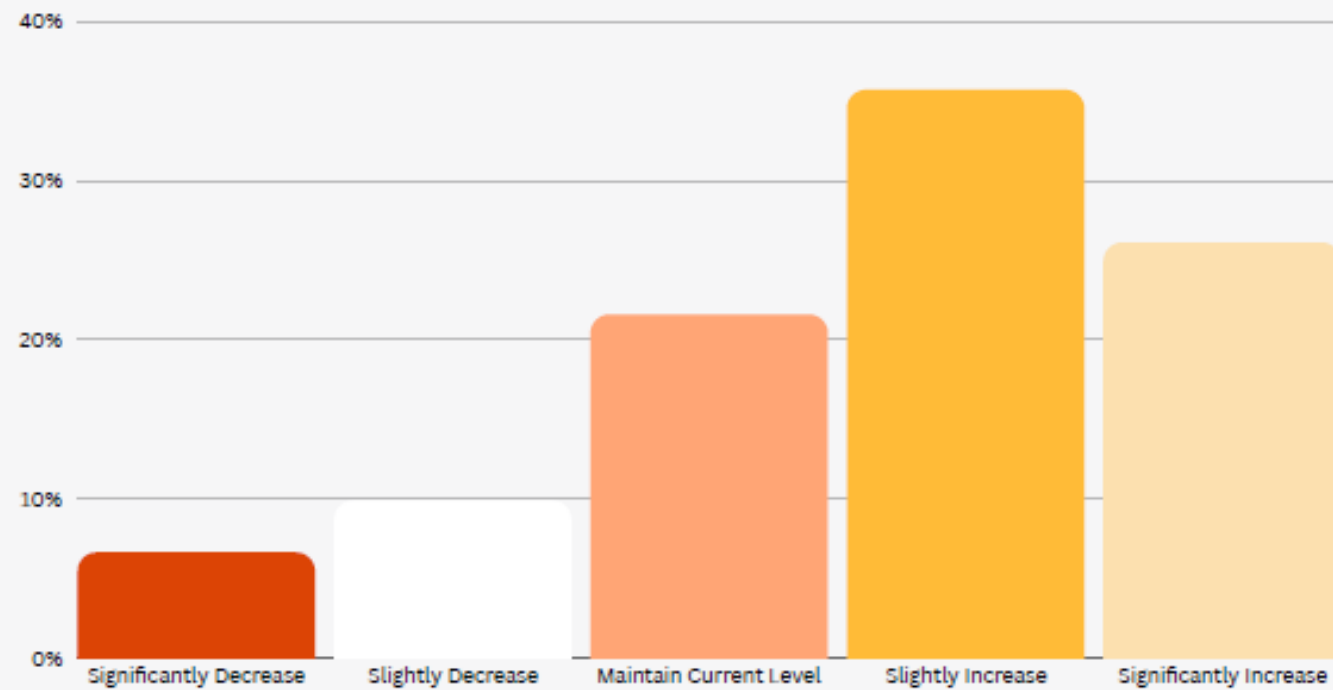


# Wrangell – Visitor Sentiment Survey



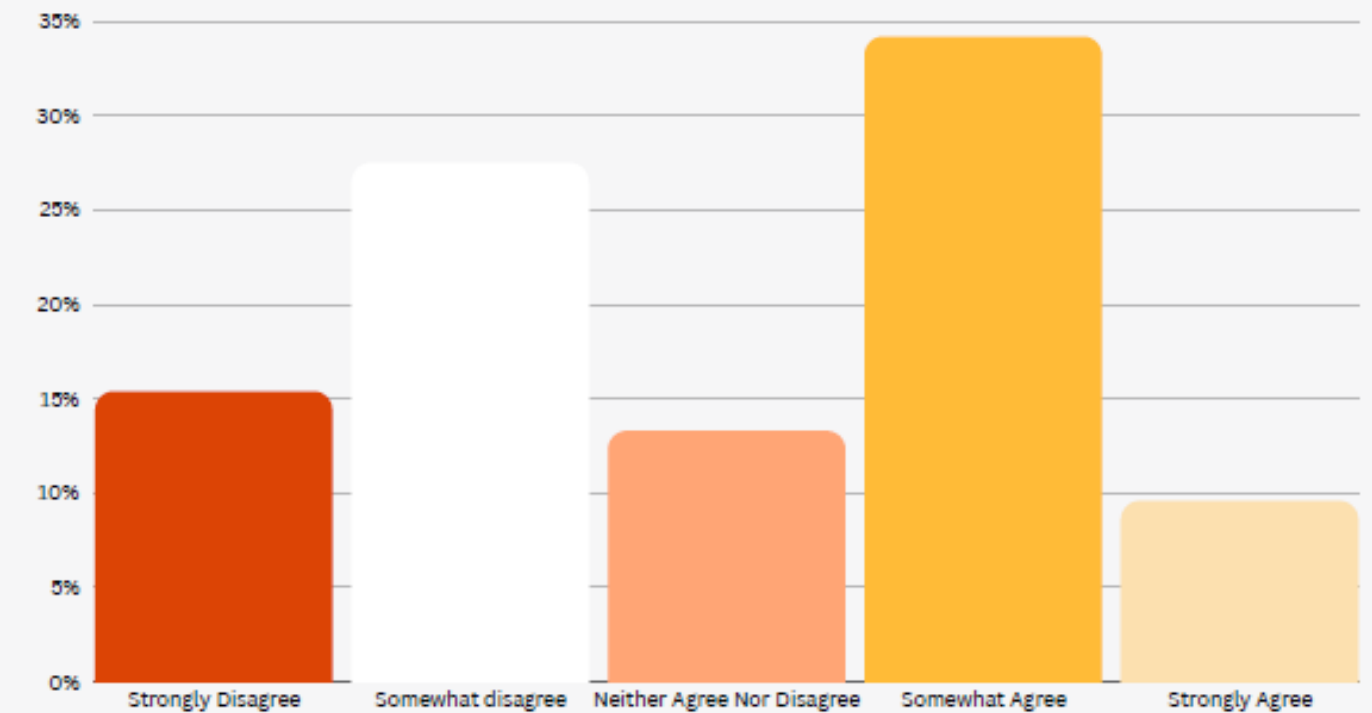
# Wrangell – Resident Sentiment Survey

### Tourism Development



Do you support more or less tourism development in our town?

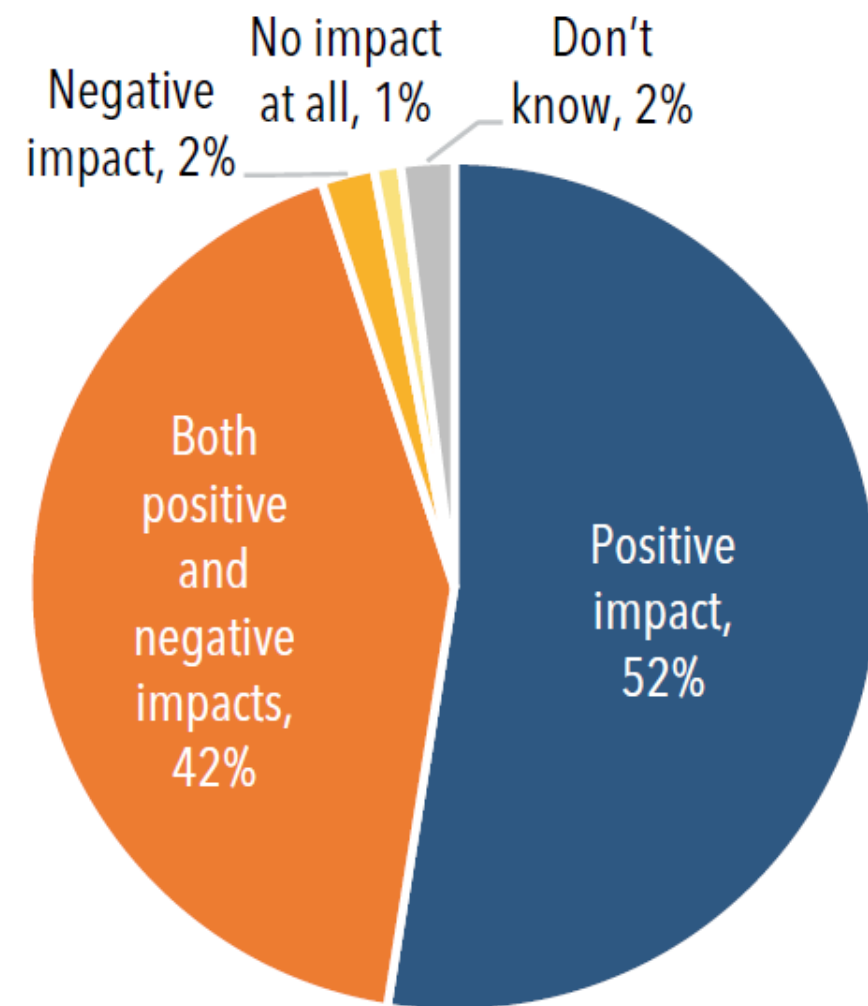
### Infrastructure



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
The current infrastructure and visitor services can support the volume of tourism in my town?

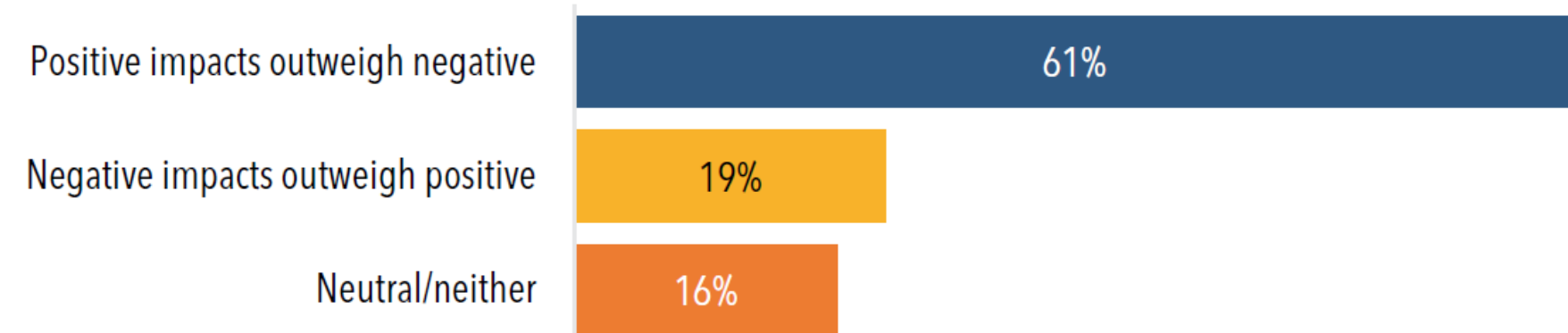
# Haines – Community Tourism Survey

## Cruise Industry Impacts



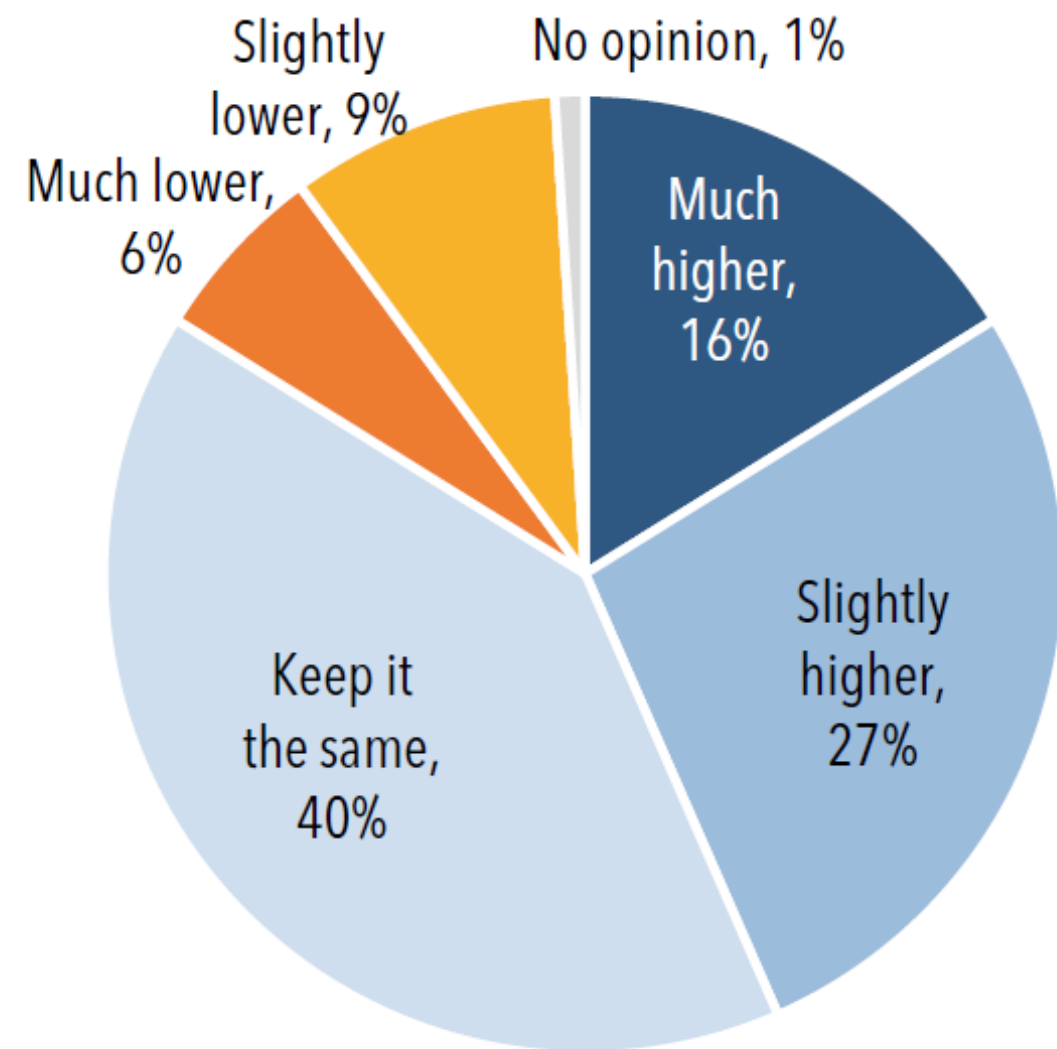
## Positive vs. Negative Impacts

Base: "Both positive and negative"

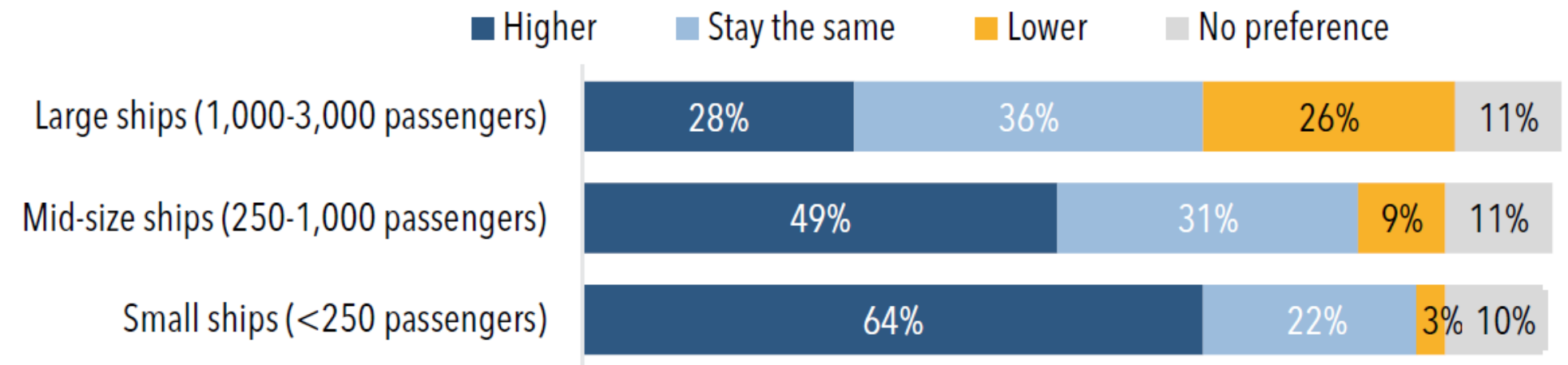


# Haines – Community Tourism Survey

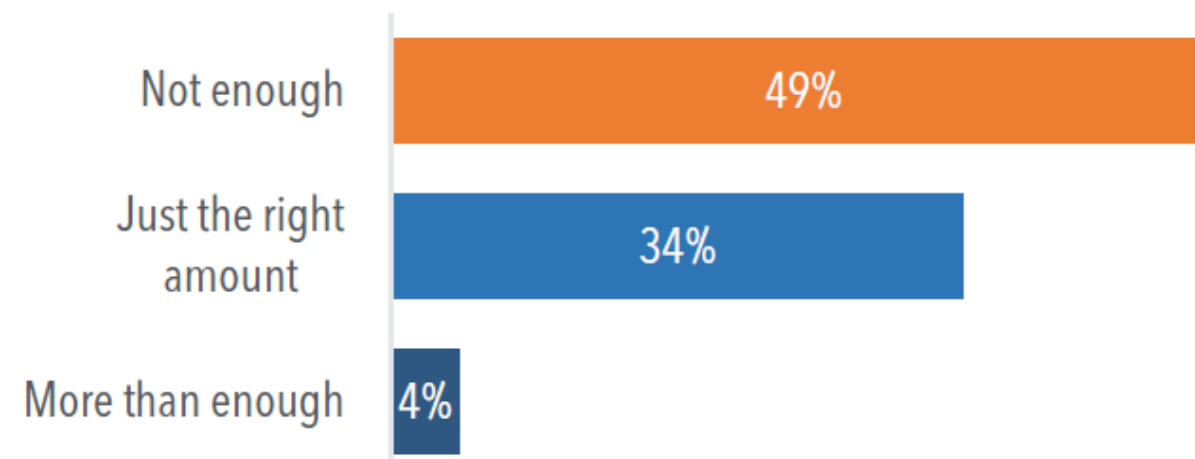
Preference for Future Cruise Volume Compared to 2024



Preference for Cruise Volume Growth by Ship Size

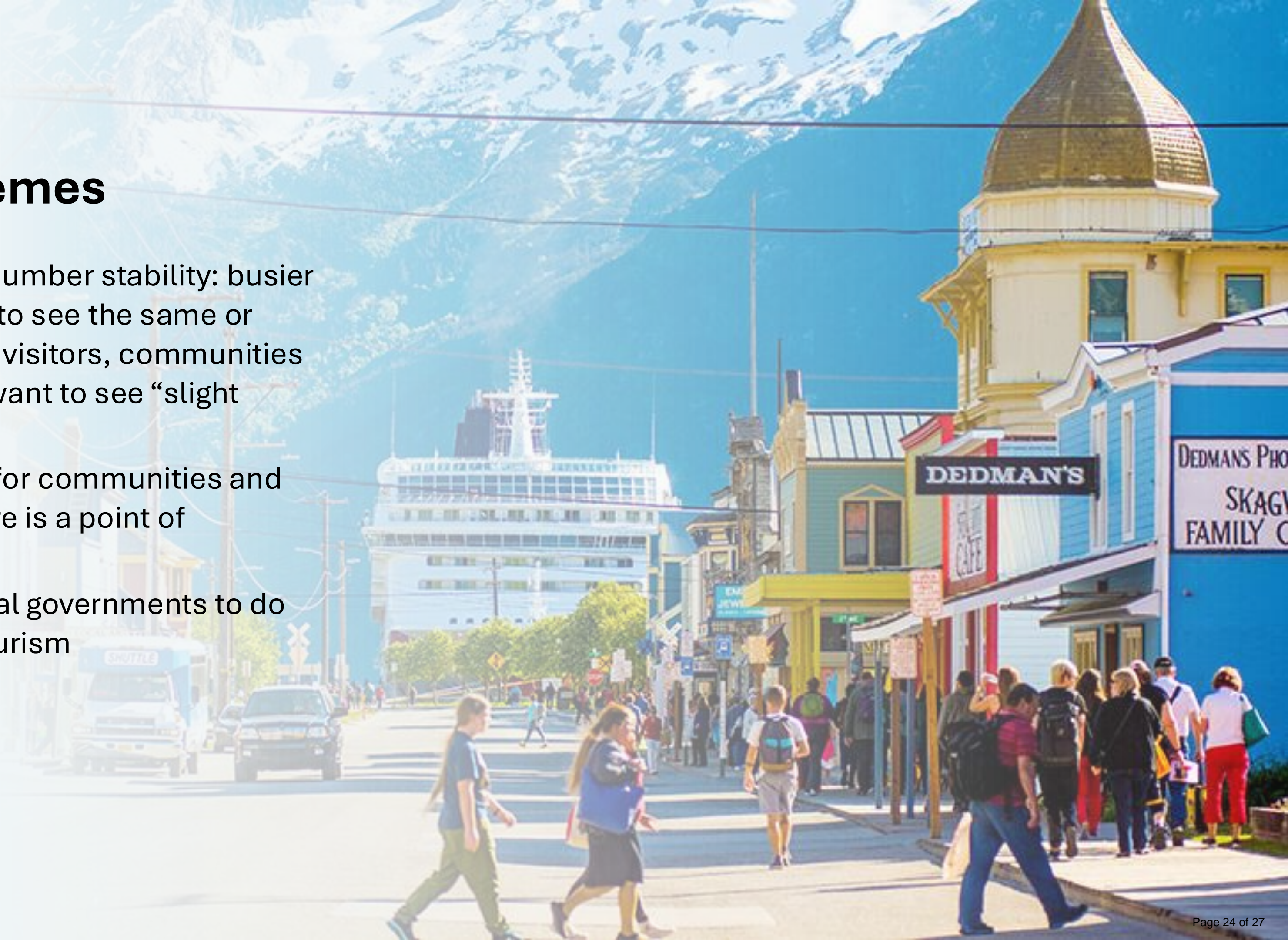


Borough Management of Cruise Industry Impacts: Are they doing...



# Common Themes

- Support for visitor number stability: busier communities want to see the same or reduced number of visitors, communities looking for growth want to see “slight increases”
- Tourism is positive for communities and economies but there is a point of diminishing return
- Residents want local governments to do more to manage tourism



# Global Dynamics – Cruise Limits

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## Legislated and Negotiated Ship and Passenger Caps

- **Juneau, AK:** 16,000 passengers/day 12,000 on Saturdays and five ships/day (negotiated)
- **Sitka, AK:** 7,000 daily passenger cap (negotiated)
- **Bar Harbor, ME:** 1,000 daily passenger cap (legislated)
- **Dubrovnik, Croatia:** 5,000 passengers and two ships/day (negotiated)
- **Santorini, Greece:** 8,000 daily passenger cap (legislated)
- **Bay of Cannes, France (includes Cannes, Nice, Villefranche-sur-Mer, and Menton):** 3,000 daily passenger cap per port (annual average of 2,000), one ship/day over 1,300 passengers, 15 ships/month during July and August (legislated)
- **Palma de Mallorca, Spain:** Three ships/day with one large (5,000+ passenger) ship (negotiated)
- **Amsterdam, Netherlands:** 100 cruise calls annually, reducing over time (legislated)
- **Venice, Italy:** Ban on large ships in historic center (legislated)

# Global Dynamics – Cruise Limits

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## Infrastructure Limits

- **Barcelona:** Terminal reduction lowering peak capacity, reducing cruise terminals from seven to five
- **Key West, FL:** Infrastructure limits of one private dock accommodating large ships and one public dock accommodating small ships
- **Monterey, California:** Cruise ships largely stopped visiting after passenger landing services were withdrawn, effectively halting cruise calls

Note that several port authorities that control all cruise ship berths in a city have limited cruise capacity through policy. For example, Quebec City has a 15,000 passenger/day limit by port policy.

Different sources have different definitions of "cruise port" but there are an estimated 1,100 – 2,400 ports receiving cruise ships globally.



## PCOA Goals & Upcoming Work

- Develop a comprehensive database of port documents to provide templates or materials for comparative research
- Create scalable community engagement toolkits to help members conduct effective and meaningful public engagement with outcomes that can be used by the group
- Continue to identify topics for advocacy and ensure that information and follow up is shared strategically
- Work together to amplify the needs of regional neighbors – use regional data to inform local public processes
- Conduct a global fees study to see how we compare to the rest of the world
- Participate in global port governance study