

# 2023 COOKE CITY

## RESIDENT COMMUNITY SURVEY

*FINAL RESULTS*



MONTANA'S  
**YELLOWSTONE**  
COUNTRY



**RRC**

INSTITUTE FOR  
**TOURISM & RECREATION RESEARCH**  
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Slide  
Number

Introduction 03

Methodology 05

Living in the Area 06

Quality of Life 14

Current Topics in the Region 21

Recreation and Tourism in the Greater Cooke City Region 26

Demographics 34

Conclusion 37

# INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this study was twofold:
  - 1) Capture a representative sample of the perceptions of residents and property owners of Cooke City and Crandall on winter access and recreation.
  - 2) Further explore other topics in the region such as quality of life, summer tourism and recreation, and plans for the future.
- The target audience included both those who live in Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass and the Crandall area year-round as well as those who either own property and live elsewhere or own a second home in the area.

## Survey Distribution

- Respondents were contacted via a mailed paper survey with a password protect option for respondents to alternatively participate online.
- The mailing of these paper surveys was done in coordination with the Cooke City, MT and Cody, WY USPS postmasters, who delivered surveys to potential respondents in Cooke City, Silver Gate, Colter Pass, and along the Crandall Road.
  - Cooke City Post Office forwarded surveys where there was forwarding set up on the account.
- To better capture secondary homeowners and those who get their mail elsewhere than these above locations, mailing address data was gathered from the State of Montana and Wyoming property records.
  - This data was used to further refine the data and capture respondents that may have been missed in initial postal deliveries.

- Surveys were accepted online and by mail-in from October 13 thru December 7, 2023.

---

# 294

**COOKE CITY REGION  
RESIDENT SURVEYS WERE  
COLLECTED**

---

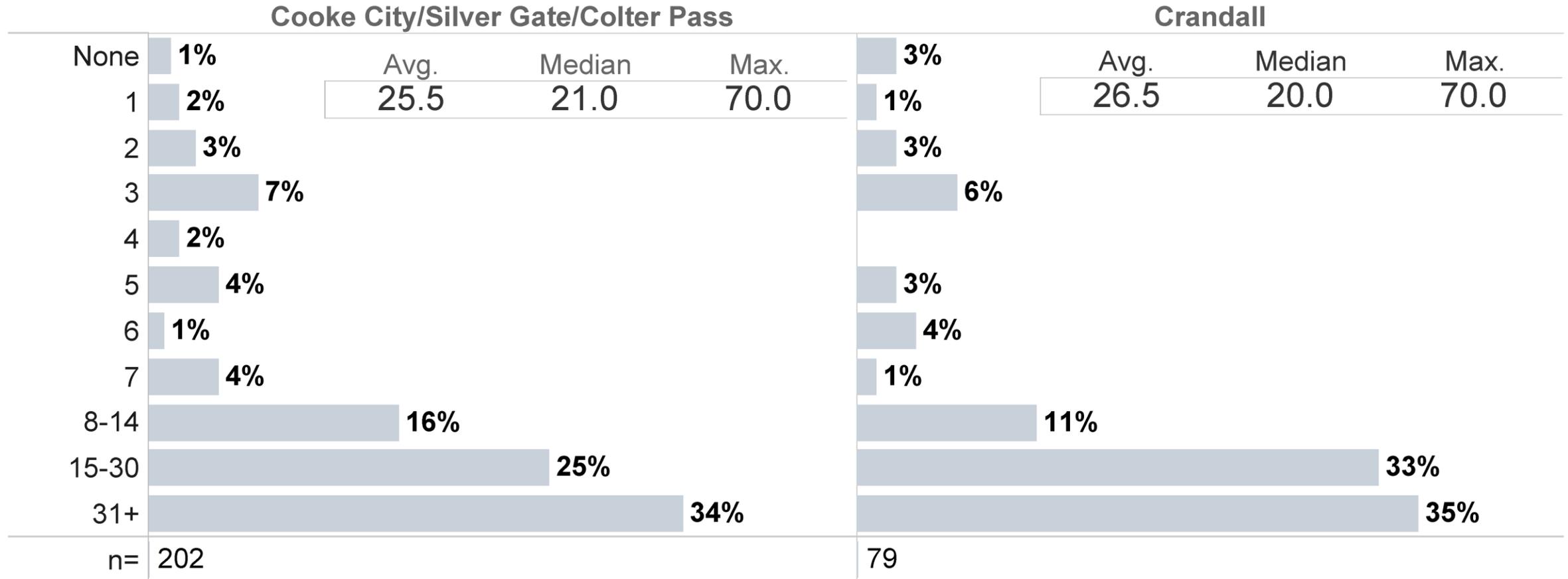
- Approximately 210 surveys came from the Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass area with just over 80 coming from the Crandall area.
- Responses were strong from both residents who live full-time in the region and those that reside elsewhere.



# LIVING IN THE AREA

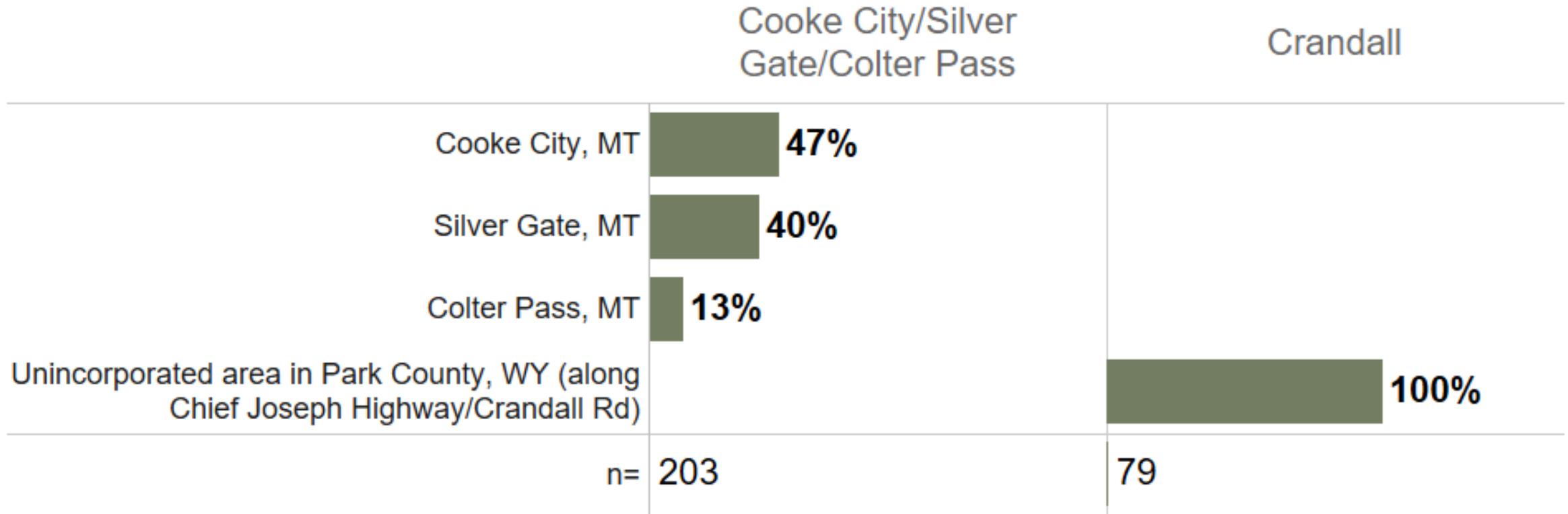
# YEARS IN GREATER COOKE CITY AREA

How many years have you lived in the Greater Cooke City Area? (*Capped at 70 Years*)



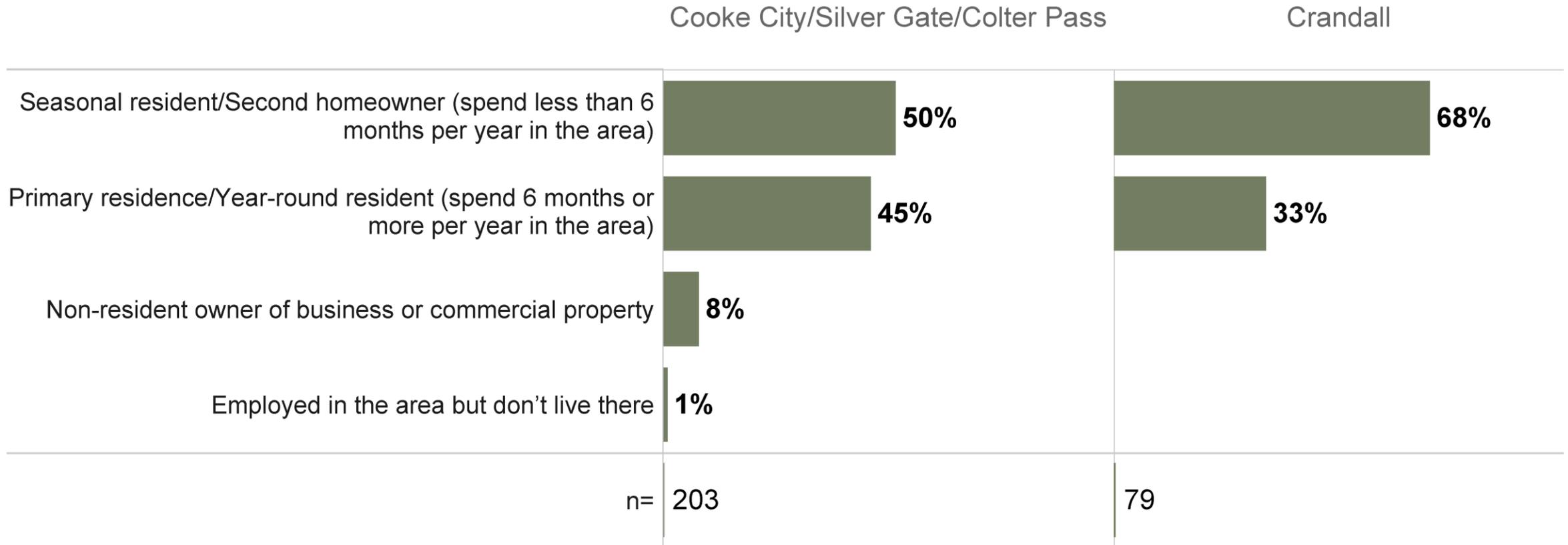
# AREA OF THE REGION

In which part of the Park County, WY / Park County, MT Region do you live or own property?



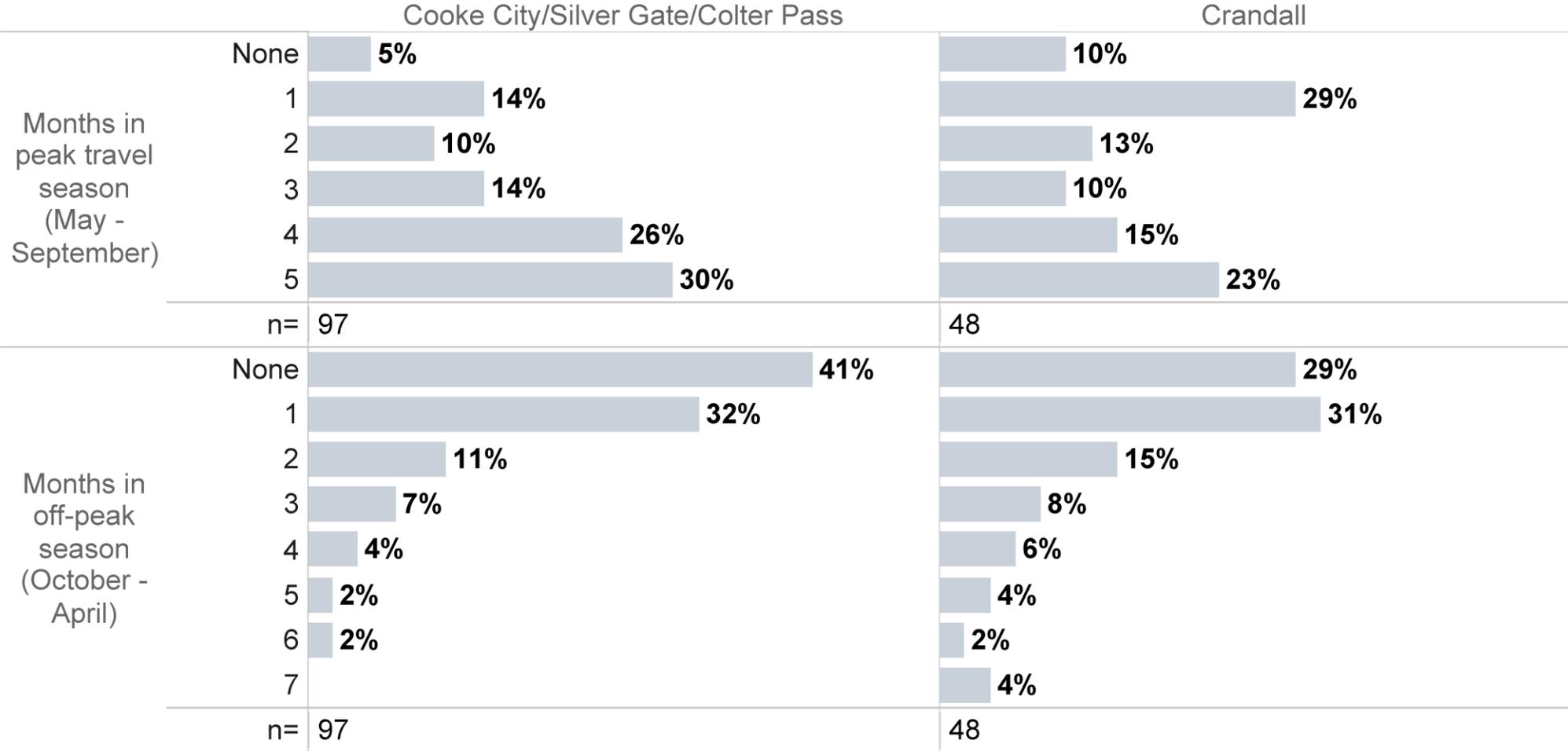
# RESIDENCE TYPE

What describes your residence in the Greater Cooke City Area?



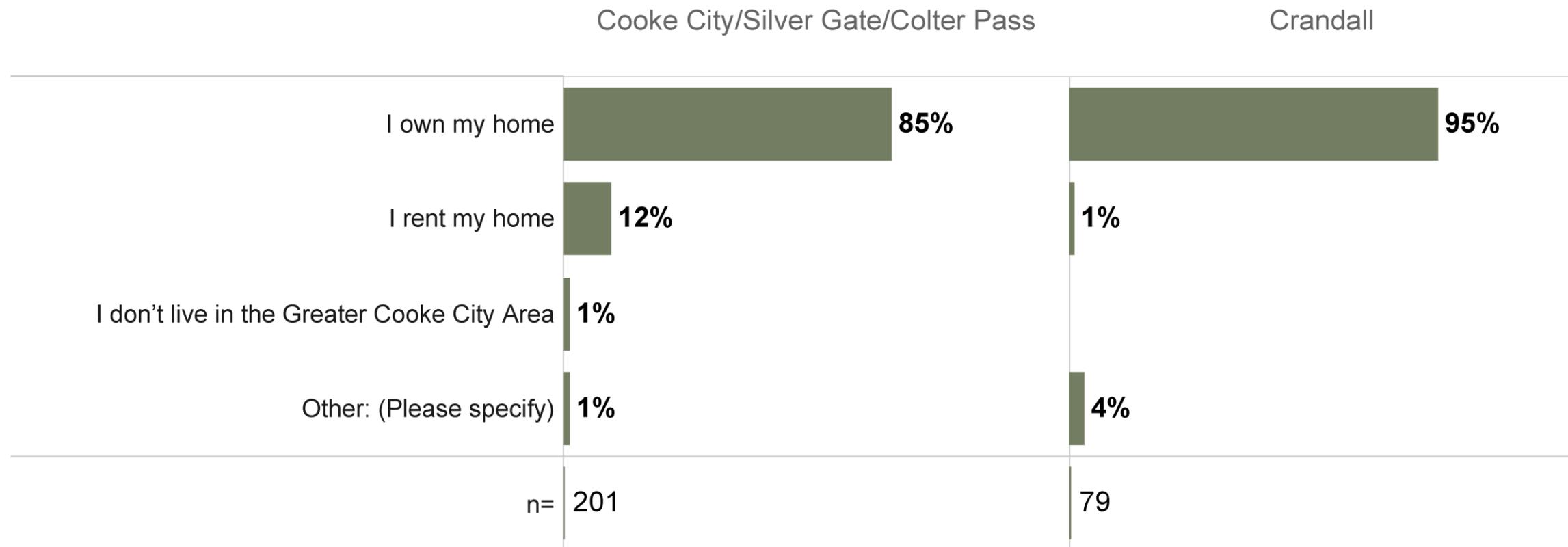
# TIME SPENT IN AREA

How much time do you spend in the Greater Cooke City Area?



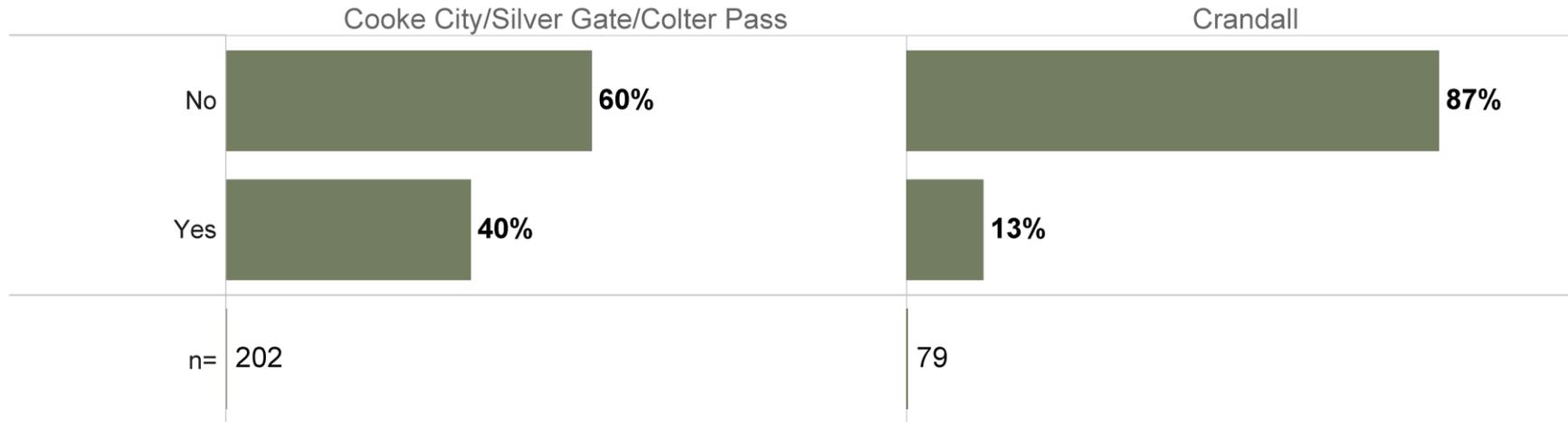
# HOME OWNERSHIP

Do you own or rent your residence in the Greater Cooke City Area?

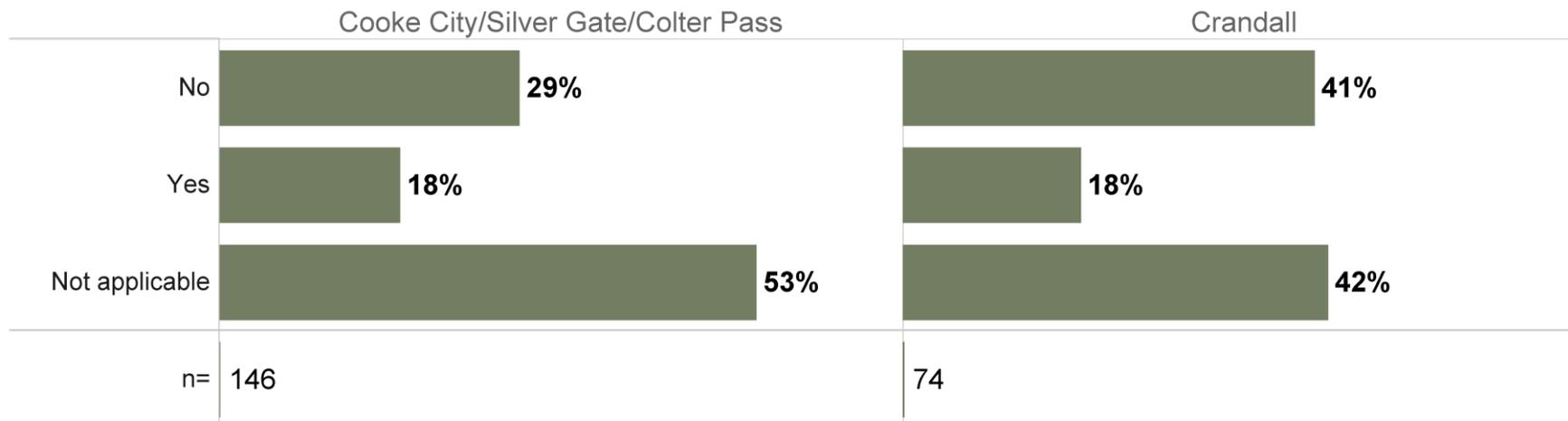


# EMPLOYMENT

## Are you employed in the Greater Cooke City Area?

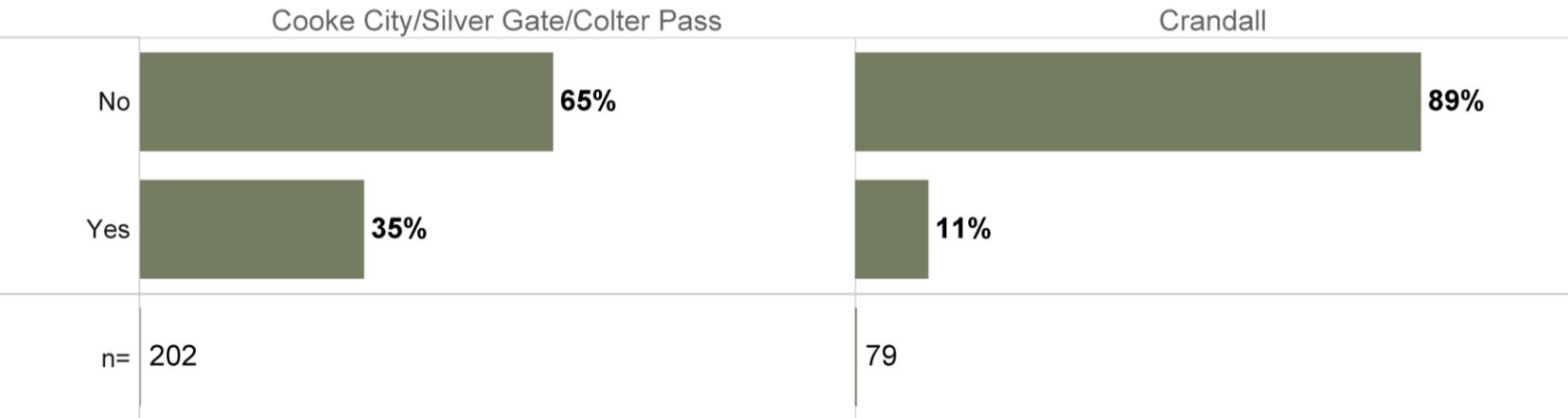


## Do you need to travel outside of the Greater Cooke City Area for work?

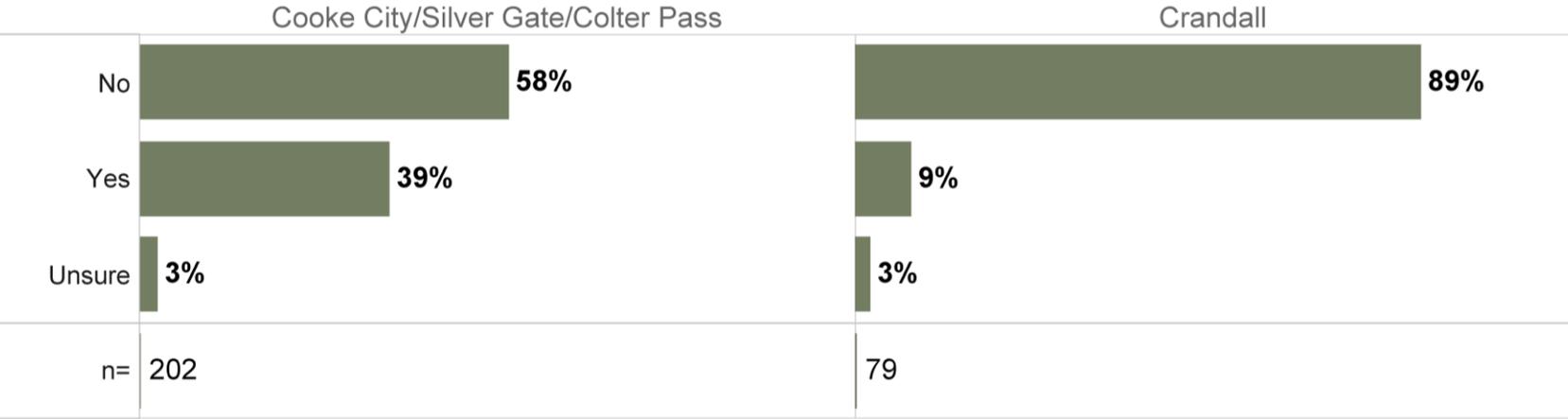


# BUSINESS OWNERSHIP AND INDUSTRY

Do you own a business in the Greater Cooke City Area?



Do you work in the tourism/outdoor recreation industry in the Greater Cooke City Area?



# QUALITY OF LIFE

# IMPORTANCE - COOKE

Please rate how important the following facilities and services are to you and your community's quality of life in the Greater Cooke City Area.

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass				
			1 - Not at all Important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
Emergency services	4.5	201	2%	2%	8%	19%	69%
Safety and security	4.4	201	3%	1%	11%	20%	65%
A place I am proud to tell others about	4.3	201	1%	4%	14%	21%	59%
Diversity of summer recreation opportunities	4.1	198	6%	5%	15%	23%	52%
Family friendly	4.0	199	6%	4%	17%	26%	47%
Local heritage	4.0	195	3%	6%	26%	21%	45%
Close/tight knit community	3.9	200	5%	5%	23%	29%	39%
Availability of workforce	3.9	195	9%	6%	18%	23%	44%
Summer tourism	3.9	201	9%	7%	15%	23%	45%
Diversity of winter recreation opportunities	3.7	200	12%	8%	21%	19%	41%
Variety of restaurants	3.6	202	7%	8%	26%	31%	27%
Winter tourism	3.6	199	15%	9%	18%	20%	38%
Economic opportunities	3.3	199	16%	11%	26%	20%	27%
Diversity of opinions in the community	3.3	201	13%	9%	36%	17%	24%
Schools	3.2	199	23%	10%	25%	10%	33%
Everyday shopping needs	3.1	200	17%	19%	27%	18%	20%
Other (please specify)	5.0	30				3%	97%

# SATISFACTION - COOKE

## How satisfied are you with the region's performance on these factors?

Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass

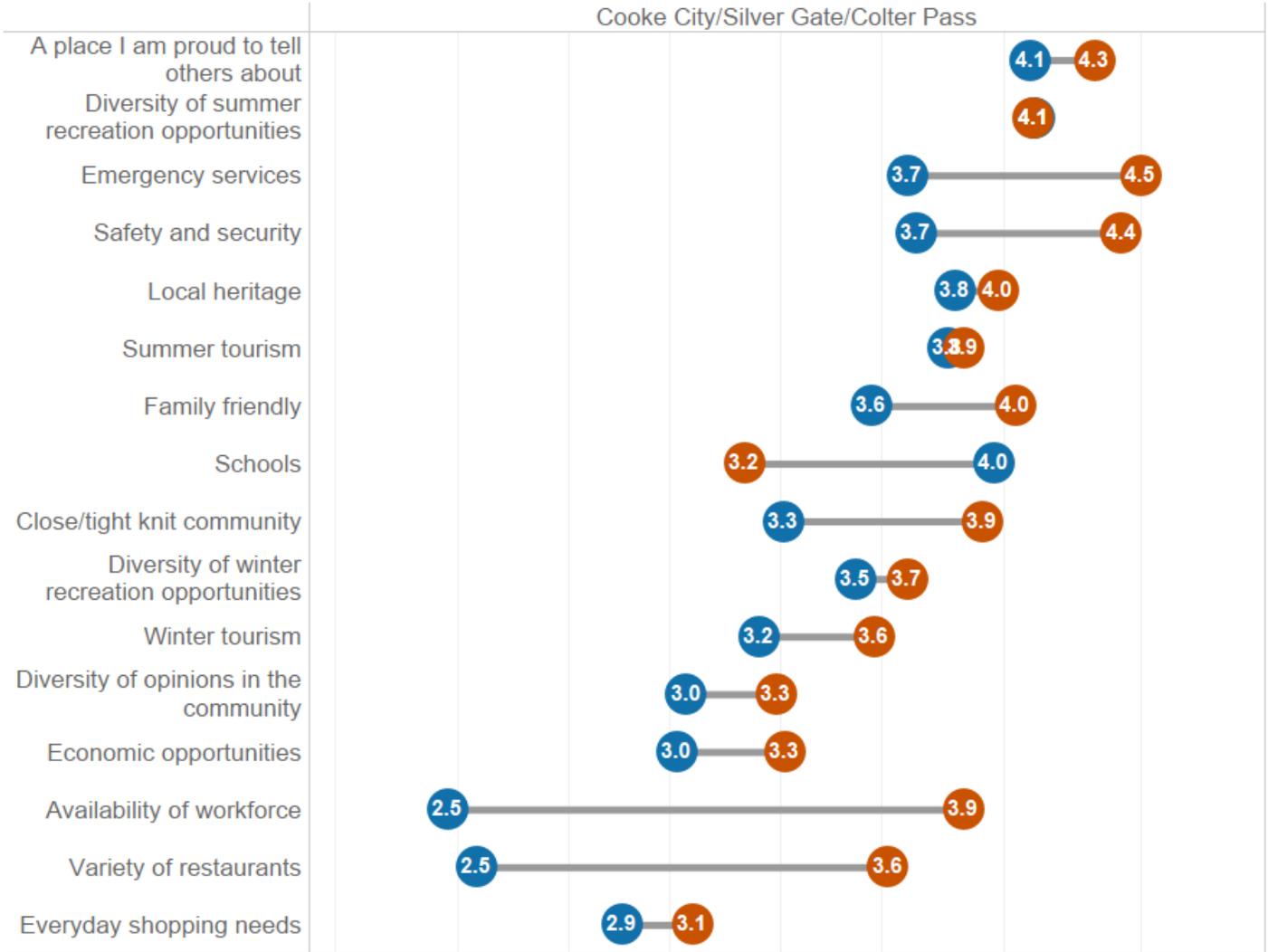
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Very Dissatisfied	2	3	4	5 - Very Satisfied
Diversity of summer recreation opportunities	4.1	182	3%	2%	19%	31%	44%
A place I am proud to tell others about	4.1	187	4%	4%	20%	23%	49%
Schools	4.0	142	7%	1%	28%	15%	49%
Local heritage	3.8	181	4%	6%	27%	29%	34%
Summer tourism	3.8	184	6%	7%	22%	31%	34%
Safety and security	3.7	194	8%	9%	21%	31%	32%
Emergency services	3.7	193	9%	11%	17%	28%	34%
Family friendly	3.6	189	8%	11%	26%	27%	28%
Diversity of winter recreation opportunities	3.5	168	13%	8%	26%	23%	31%
Close/tight knit community	3.3	189	10%	19%	24%	26%	22%
Winter tourism	3.2	172	17%	11%	27%	19%	26%
Diversity of opinions in the community	3.0	186	11%	11%	48%	20%	9%
Economic opportunities	3.0	167	14%	13%	43%	17%	13%
Everyday shopping needs	2.9	190	18%	17%	36%	15%	14%
Variety of restaurants	2.5	194	21%	27%	33%	13%	5%
Availability of workforce	2.5	171	23%	26%	35%	13%	4%
Other (please specify)	2.2	28	54%	14%	11%	4%	18%

# IMPORTANCE VS. SATISFACTION

Average Ratings showing how resident's of Cooke City align on the following two questions:

1. Please rate how important the following facilities and services are to you and your community's quality of life in the Greater Cooke City Area.

2. How satisfied are you with the region's performance on these factors?



Question

■ How important are each of the following facilities and services?

■ How satisfied are you with the region's performance on these factors?

# IMPORTANCE - CRANDALL

Please rate how important the following facilities and services are to you and your community's quality of life in the Greater Cooke City Area.

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Crandall				
			1 - Not at all Important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
Safety and security	4.3	78	1%	4%	9%	31%	55%
Emergency services	4.3	77	1%	3%	16%	29%	52%
Family friendly	4.0	76	7%	1%	24%	22%	46%
A place I am proud to tell others about	3.9	77	9%	3%	21%	23%	44%
Local heritage	3.7	75	7%	5%	31%	28%	29%
Diversity of summer recreation opportunities	3.6	76	12%	7%	20%	32%	30%
Close/tight knit community	3.5	78	6%	8%	35%	29%	22%
Diversity of winter recreation opportunities	3.2	75	21%	7%	24%	27%	21%
Variety of restaurants	3.2	77	17%	10%	27%	29%	17%
Everyday shopping needs	2.9	77	16%	21%	29%	26%	9%
Summer tourism	2.9	75	20%	15%	32%	21%	12%
Diversity of opinions in the community	2.9	76	24%	5%	42%	16%	13%
Availability of workforce	2.9	72	19%	17%	33%	18%	13%
Winter tourism	2.8	74	26%	15%	27%	15%	18%
Economic opportunities	2.5	77	29%	17%	35%	13%	6%
Schools	2.2	75	40%	20%	25%	5%	9%
Other (please specify)	4.2	6	17%			17%	67%

# SATISFACTION - CRANDALL

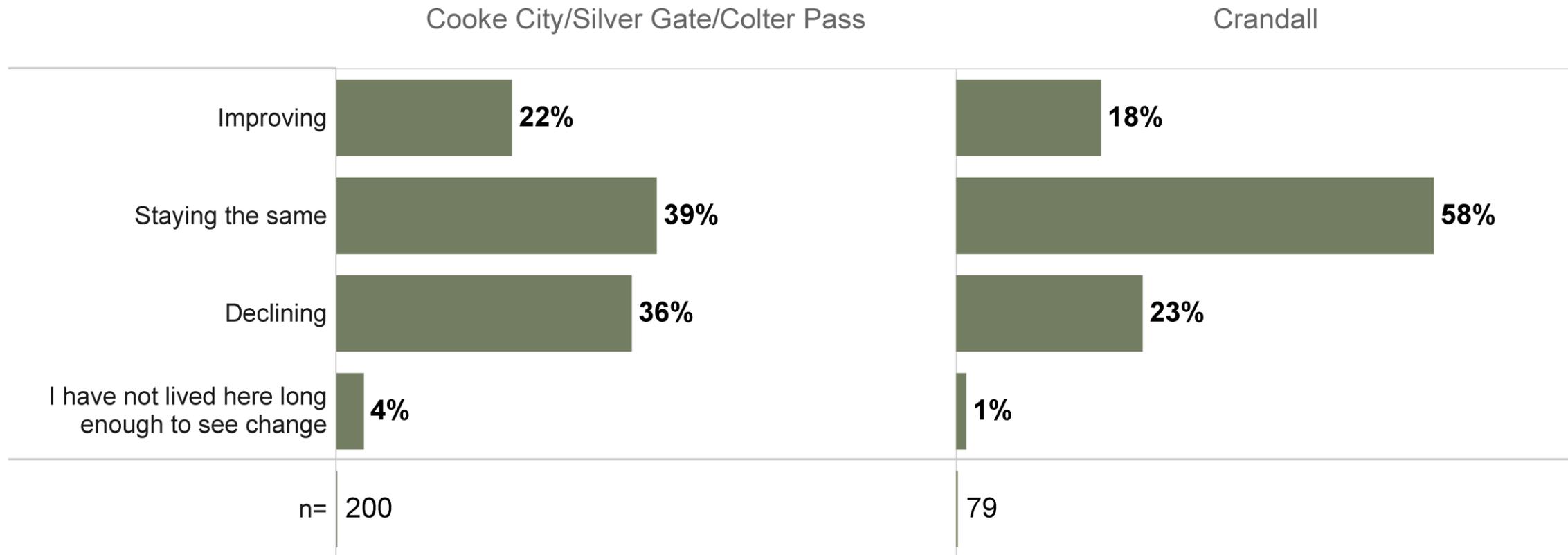
## How satisfied are you with the region's performance on these factors?

Crandall

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Very Dissatisfied	2	3	4	5 - Very Satisfied
A place I am proud to tell others about	4.4	66		3%	8%	39%	50%
Diversity of summer recreation opportunities	4.0	65	3%	5%	18%	35%	38%
Local heritage	4.0	69		6%	25%	36%	33%
Family friendly	3.9	65		6%	29%	32%	32%
Safety and security	3.8	70	4%	11%	21%	27%	36%
Close/tight knit community	3.7	66		8%	36%	30%	26%
Diversity of winter recreation opportunities	3.7	56	5%	11%	23%	32%	29%
Diversity of opinions in the community	3.4	54	2%	17%	39%	22%	20%
Winter tourism	3.4	53	8%	11%	34%	30%	17%
Emergency services	3.3	66	8%	8%	36%	39%	9%
Summer tourism	3.3	62	3%	10%	50%	26%	11%
Economic opportunities	3.3	48	2%	21%	35%	27%	15%
Schools	3.2	40	10%	15%	38%	25%	13%
Availability of workforce	3.1	49	2%	16%	57%	16%	8%
Variety of restaurants	3.0	66	9%	21%	38%	24%	8%
Everyday shopping needs	3.0	62	10%	26%	35%	16%	13%
Other (please specify)	2.1	7	29%	29%	43%		

# OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE

Would you say your overall quality of life in the Greater Cooke City Area has been:

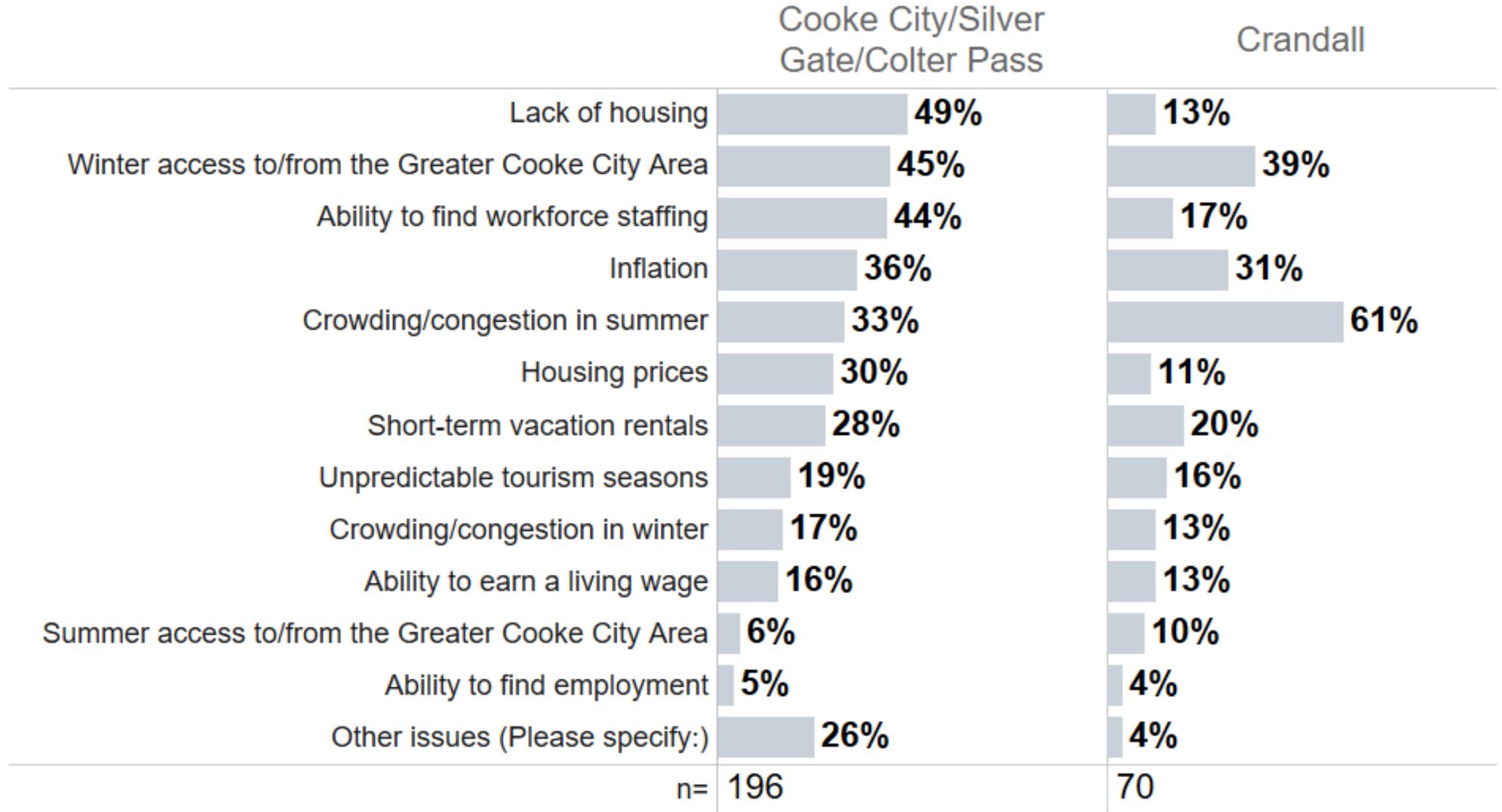




# CURRENT TOPICS IN THE REGION

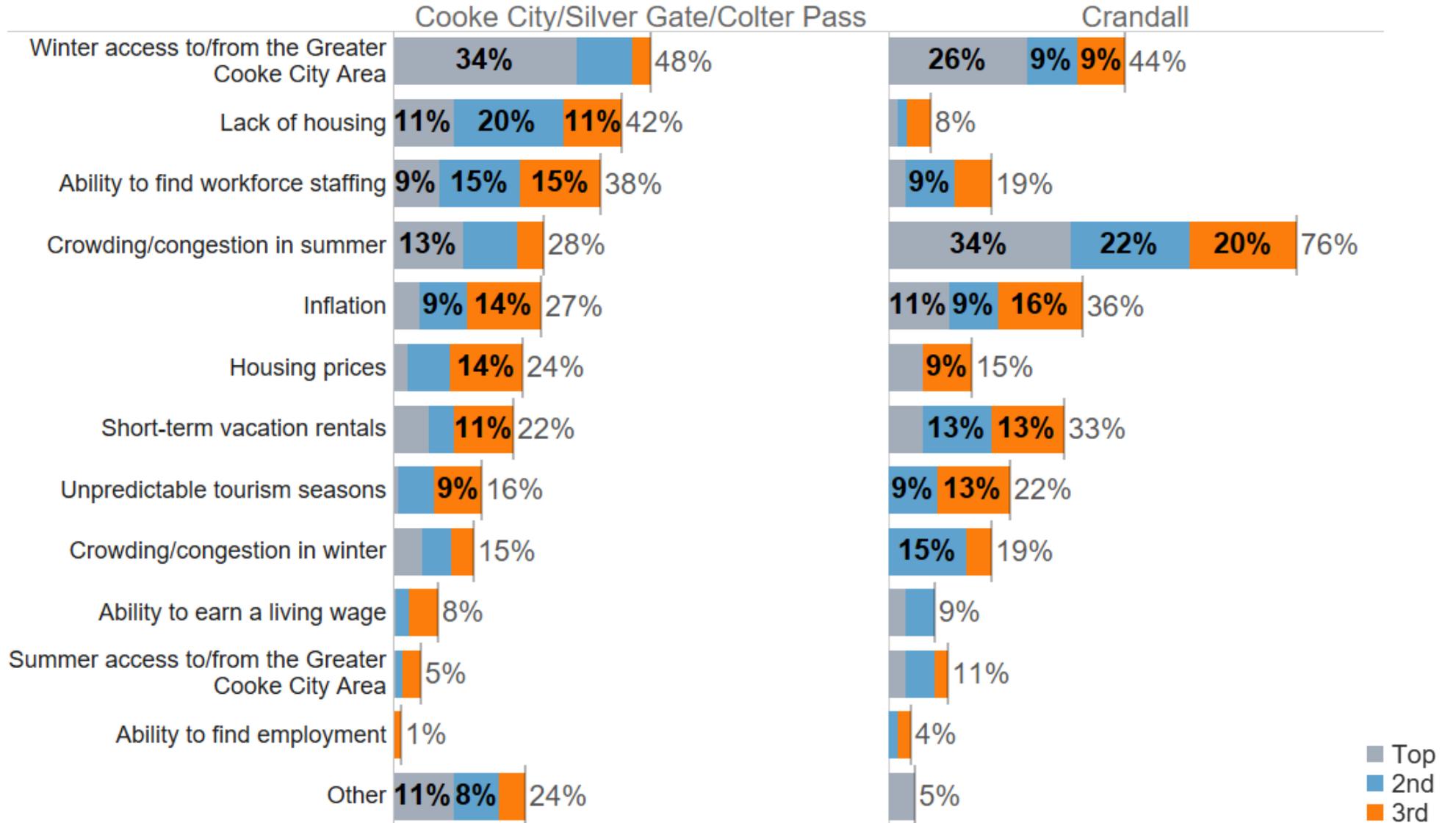
# CHALLENGES

## What are the biggest impacts or challenges affecting you in the Greater Cooke City Area?



# CHALLENGES - TOP 3

## Which THREE issues or challenges do you feel are the most important?





# RECREATION AND TOURISM IN THE GREATER COOKE CITY AREA

# RECREATION ACCESS - COOKE

How satisfied are you with your ability to access outdoor recreation in both the summer and winter in the region?

Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Very Dissatisfied	2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied	3 - Neutral	4 - Somewhat Satisfied	5 - Very Satisfied
Summer recreation	4.4	196	5%	3%	7%	15%	70%
Winter recreation	3.4	181	22%	14%	11%	11%	41%

How important is outdoor recreation access to your quality of life in the region?

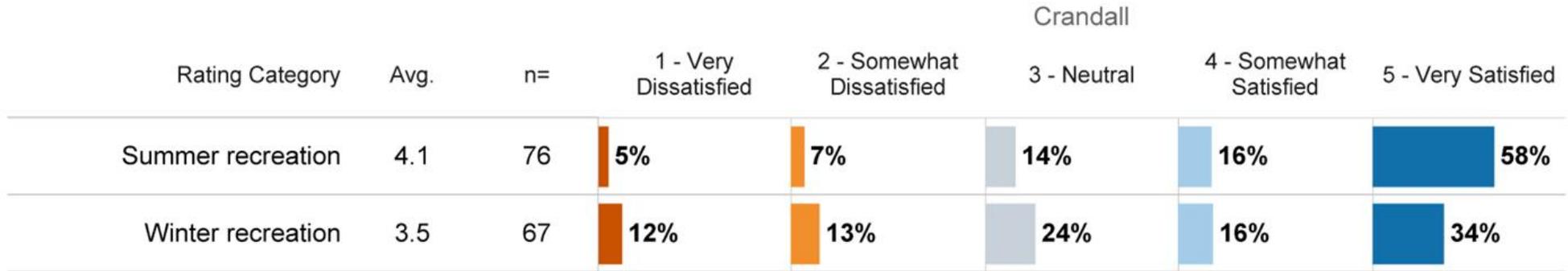
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Not at All Important	2 - Somewhat Important	3 - Moderately Important	4 - Very Important	5 - Extremely Important
Summer recreation	4.4	196	4%	4%	8%	18%	66%
Winter recreation	3.9	186	10%	8%	15%	14%	53%

To what extent do you rely on tourism/outdoor recreation to support your livelihood in both the summer and winter season?

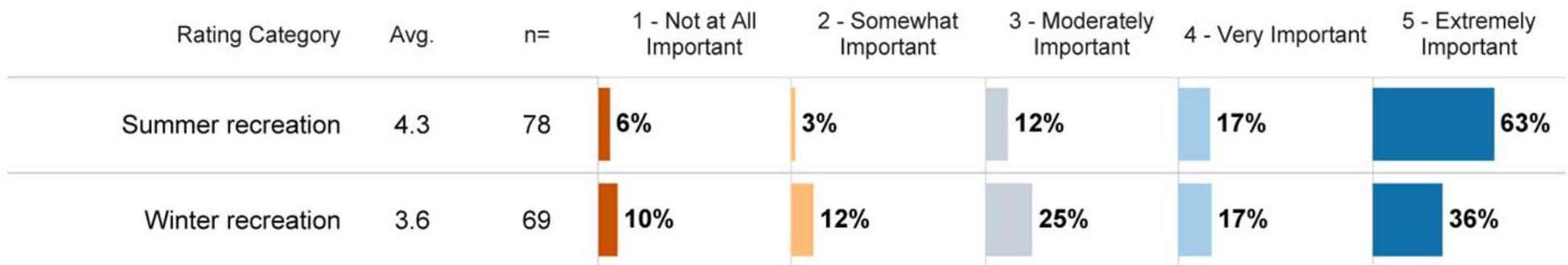
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Not at All Dependent	2 - Somewhat Dependent	3 - Moderately Dependent	4 - Very Dependent	5 - Extremely Dependent
Summer tourism/recreation	2.8	188	46%	3%	7%	13%	31%
Winter tourism/recreation	2.5	185	52%	5%	10%	7%	26%

# RECREATION ACCESS - CRANDALL

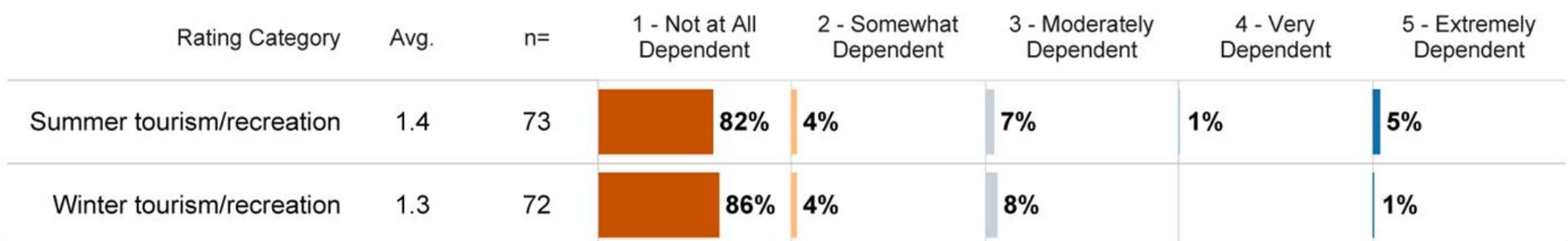
How satisfied are you with your ability to access outdoor recreation in both the summer and winter in the region?



How important is outdoor recreation access to your quality of life in the region?

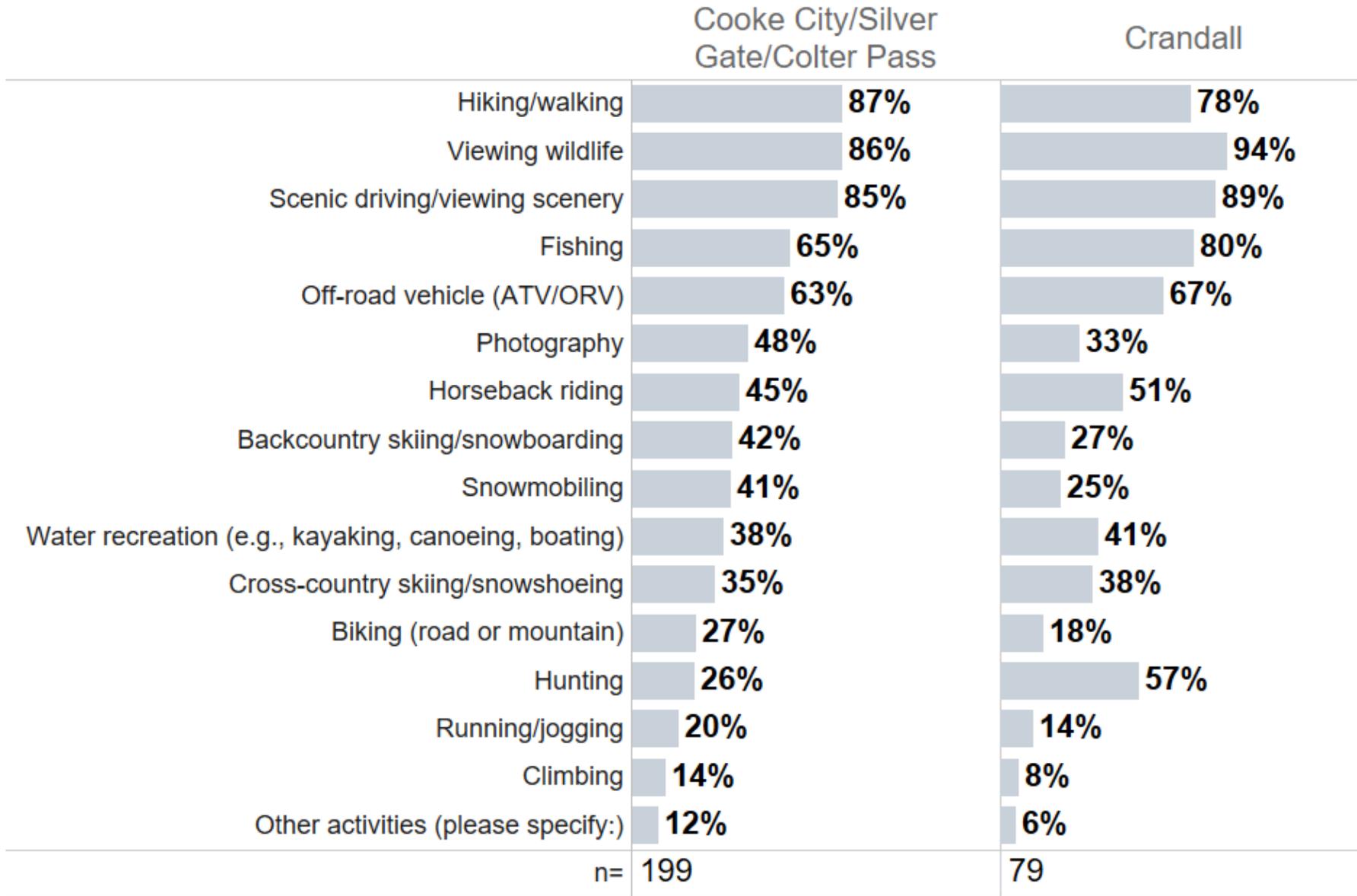


To what extent do you rely on tourism/outdoor recreation to support your livelihood in both the summer and winter season?



# OUTDOOR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

Which of the following outdoor activities do you personally participate in throughout the year in the region?



# WINTER TOURISM - COOKE

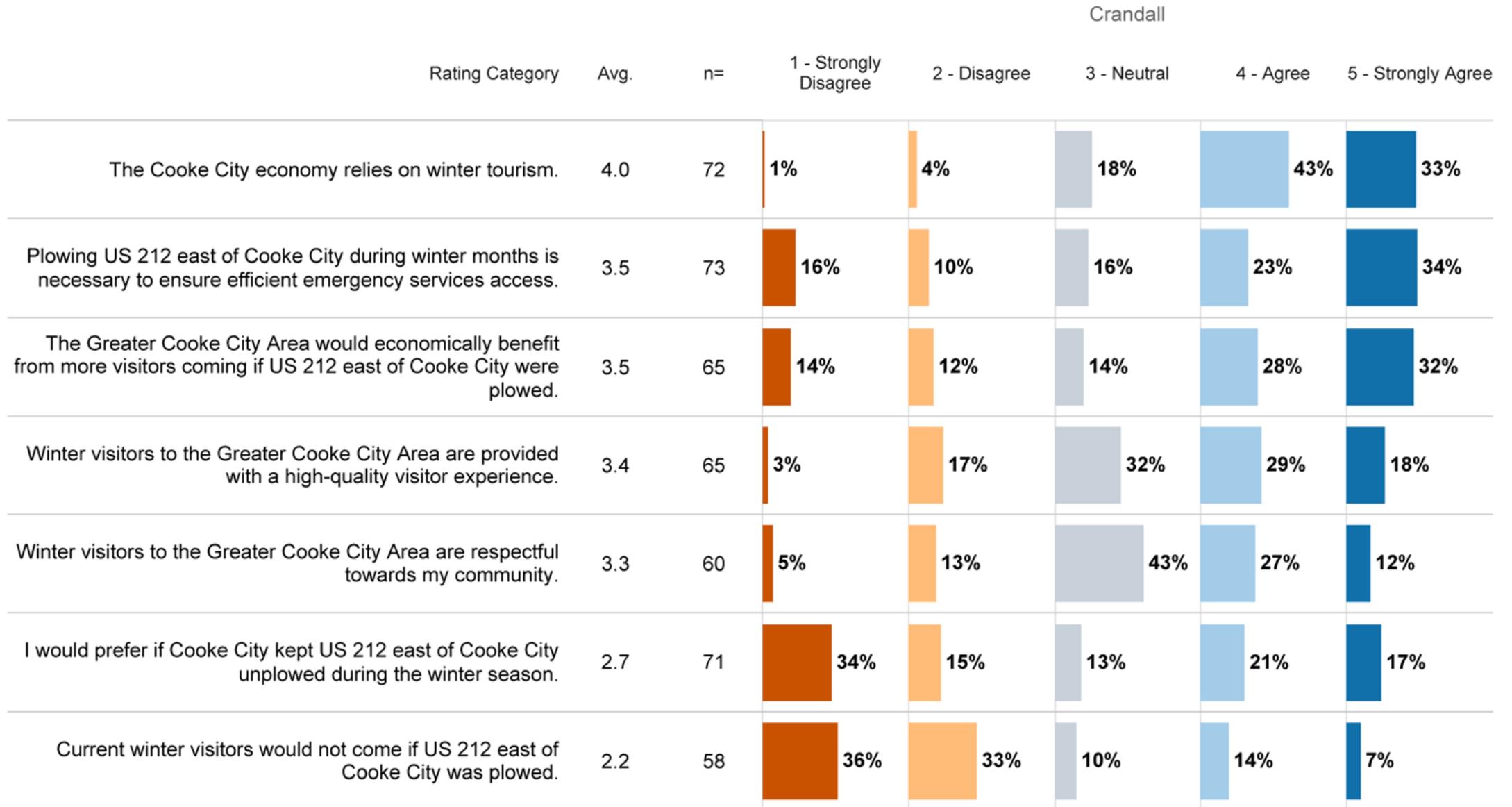
## How much do you agree or disagree that...?

Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The Cooke City economy relies on winter tourism.	4.2	193	2%	3%	14%	33%	49%
The Greater Cooke City Area would economically benefit from more visitors coming if US 212 east of Cooke City were plowed.	3.5	187	17%	13%	12%	21%	37%
Winter visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are provided with a high-quality visitor experience.	3.5	181	7%	13%	28%	27%	25%
Plowing US 212 east of Cooke City during winter months is necessary to ensure efficient emergency services access.	3.4	191	22%	13%	12%	7%	46%
I would prefer if Cooke City kept US 212 east of Cooke City unplowed during the winter season.	2.8	187	43%	7%	11%	6%	33%
Winter visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are respectful towards my community.	2.8	176	18%	24%	24%	20%	13%
Current winter visitors would not come if US 212 east of Cooke City was plowed.	2.4	176	42%	18%	15%	11%	14%

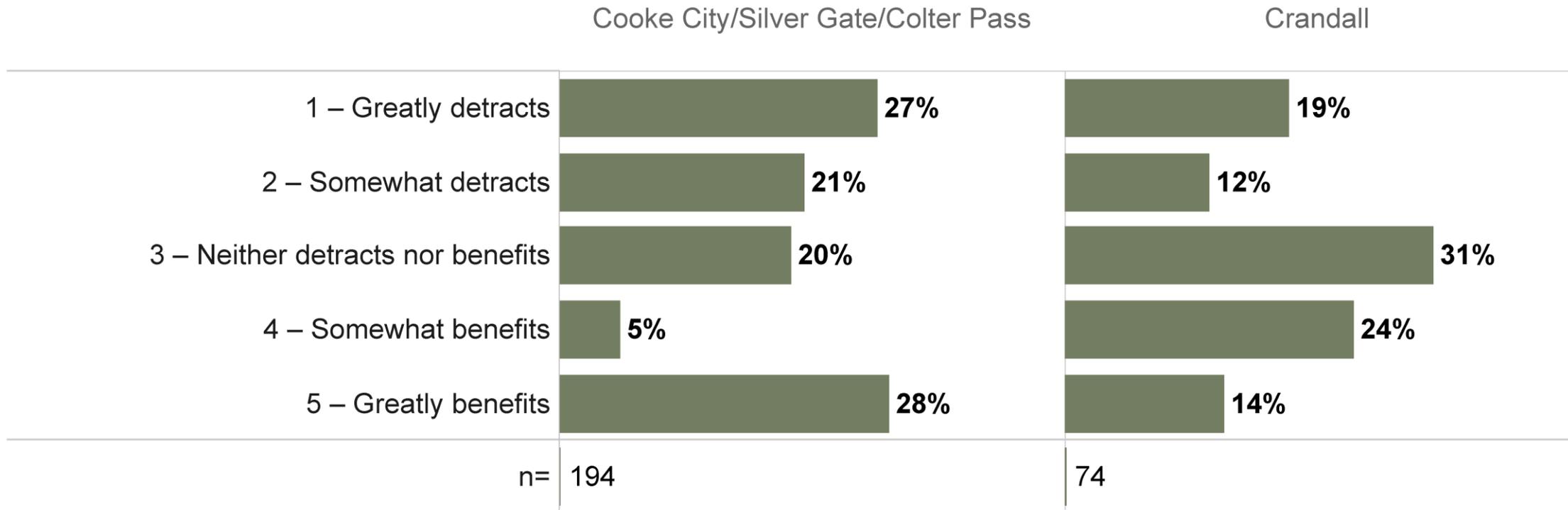
# WINTER TOURISM - CRANDALL

## How much do you agree or disagree that...?



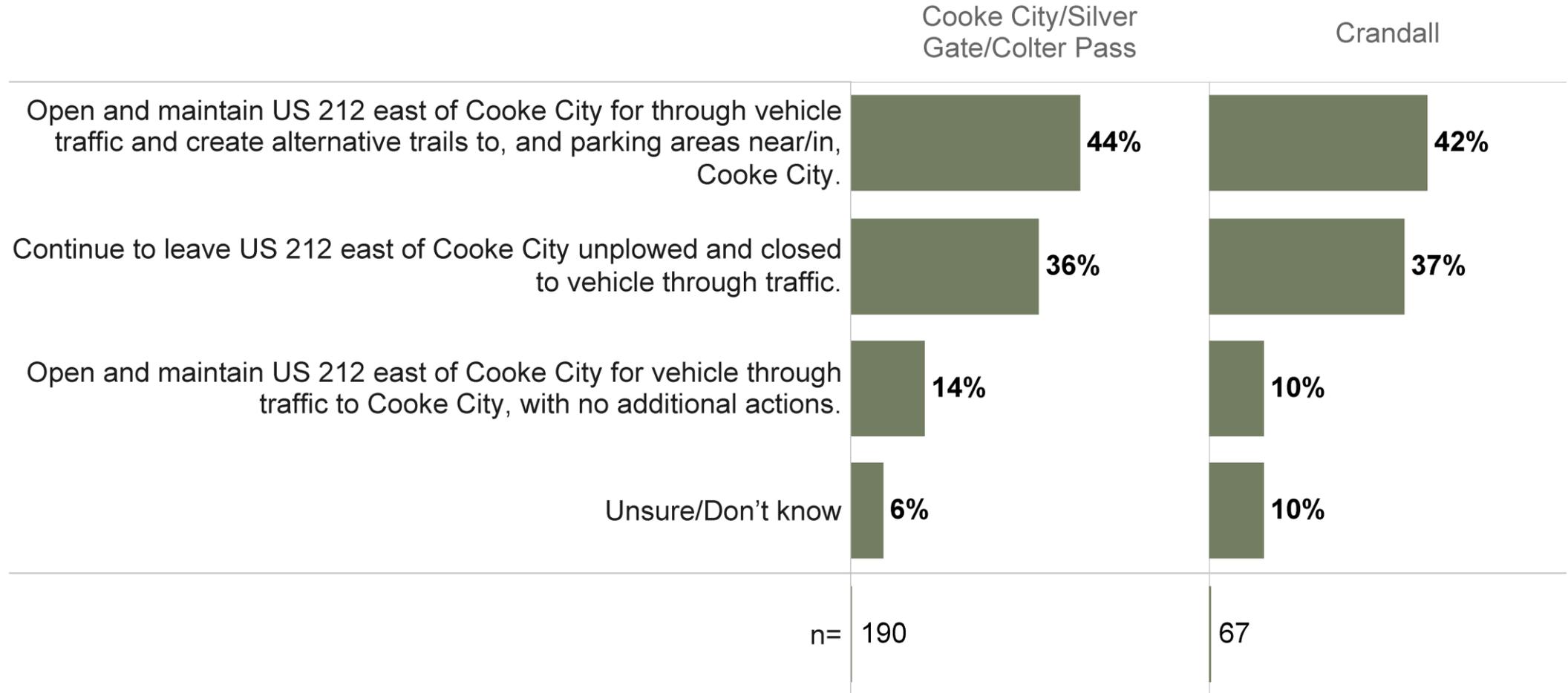
# WINTER ACCESS VISITOR EXPERIENCE

To what extent do you believe the current winter access in Greater Cooke City Area either benefits or detracts from the visitor experience?



# HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO

Based on hypothetical future scenarios, which scenario would you prefer for the Greater Cooke City Area for winter access on US 212 east of Cooke City?



# SUMMER TOURISM - COOKE

## How much do you agree or disagree that...?

Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
Summer recreation and tourism benefits the Greater Cooke City Area's economy.	4.7	193	4%		3%	10%	83%
The Greater Cooke City Area is in need of more workforce during the summer season.	4.2	178	1%	1%	19%	33%	47%
Visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are provided with a high-quality visitor experience.	3.8	189	3%	7%	23%	38%	29%
Summer visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area behave respectfully towards my community.	3.4	184	5%	13%	29%	40%	14%

# SUMMER TOURISM - CRANDALL

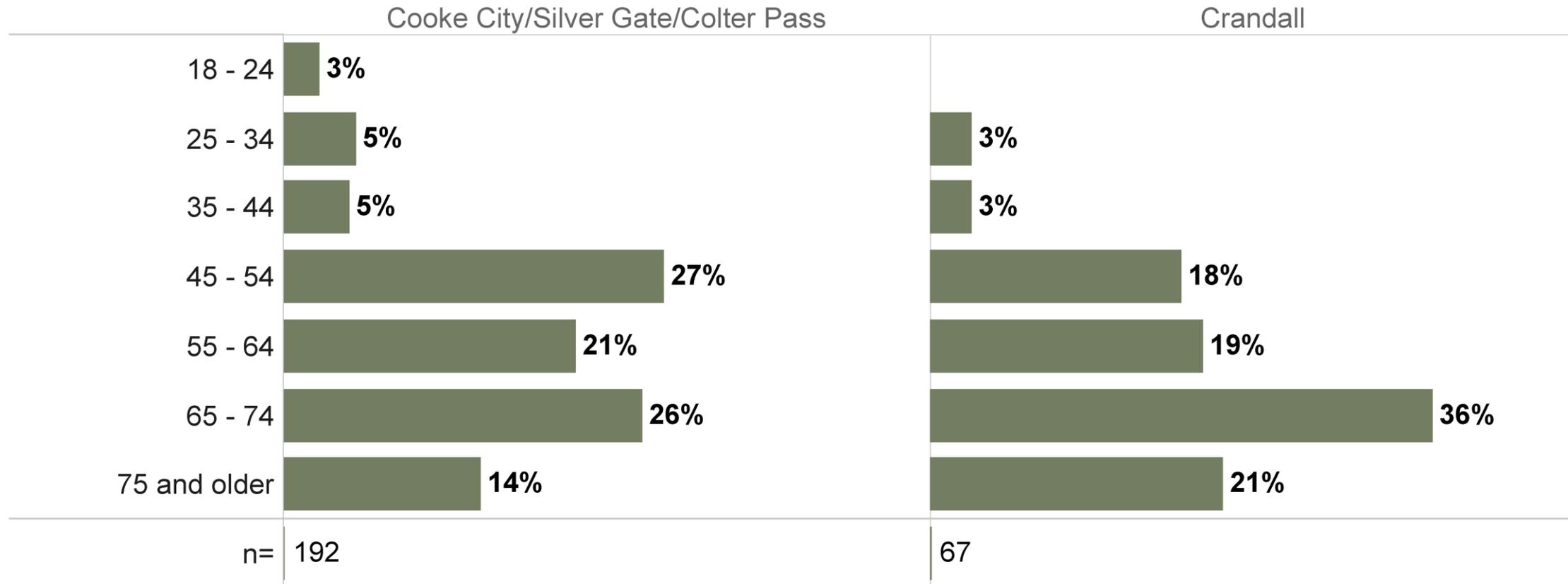
## How much do you agree or disagree that...?

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Crandall				
			1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
Summer recreation and tourism benefits the Greater Cooke City Area's economy.	4.7	68	1%			28%	71%
Visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are provided with a high-quality visitor experience.	4.0	68	3%	1%	21%	41%	34%
The Greater Cooke City Area is in need of more workforce during the summer season.	3.9	58	2%	3%	19%	57%	19%
Summer visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area behave respectfully towards my community.	3.4	62	5%	8%	39%	37%	11%



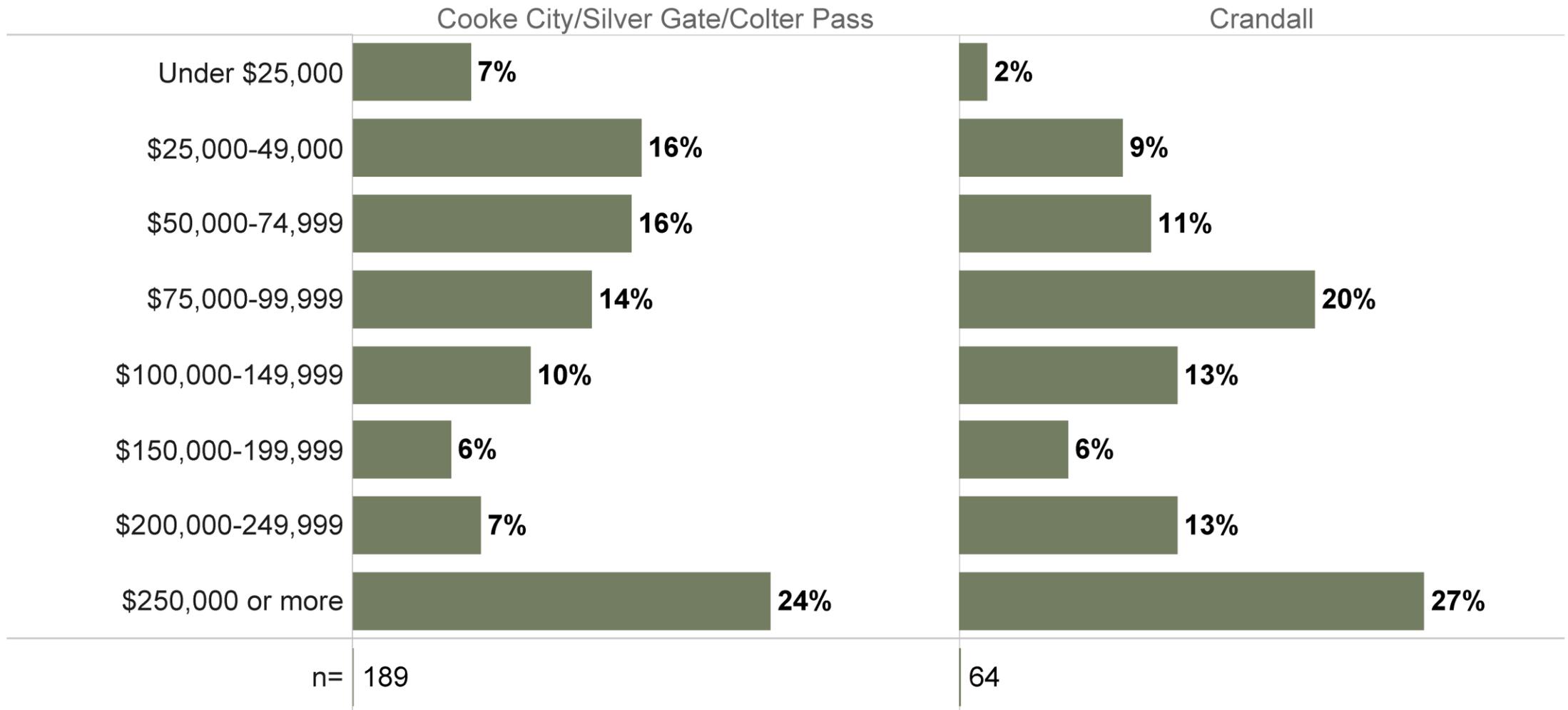
# DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHICS

## What is your age?



# HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Which of these categories best describes the total gross annual income of your household (before taxes)?





# CONCLUSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS

# KEY FINDINGS



- Respondents of the Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass (Greater Cooke City) area are largely made up of people who've lived in the area for 15+ years (59%) as a mix of primary (45%) and secondary (50%) residents.



- These respondents have identified the reputation of Cooke City, as well as the diversity of summer recreation opportunities as items that were ranked highly in terms of their importance to, and current satisfaction in meeting, quality of life in the region.



- Availability of workforce, variety of restaurants, and emergency services showed large differences in their average level of importance and their average level of satisfaction; illustrating a need that is not currently being met to the expectations of the Greater Cooke City respondents.

# KEY FINDINGS



- Additional challenges that the Greater Cooke City respondents identified were winter access to/from the Greater Cooke City area, lack of housing, and ability to find workforce staffing.



- A majority of Greater Cooke City respondents agreed that Cooke City relies on winter tourism (82%), that the Greater Cooke City Area would benefit from US 212 east of Cooke City being plowed (58%), the winter visitors are provided a high-quality experience (52%), and that plowing US 212 east of Cooke City is necessary to ensure efficient emergency services (53%).



- Consistent with the high share of Greater Cooke City respondents that ranked emergency services and safety and security as important to the community's quality of life, 44% of respondents chose the hypothetical scenario of opening and maintaining US 212 east of Cooke City with additional action to create alternative trails and parking. Just over one-third of respondents (36%) wanted to continue to leave US 212 east of Cooke City unplowed.



# THANK YOU!



# RRC

## **RRC Associates**

4770 Baseline Road, Suite 355  
Boulder, CO  
80303

(303) 449-6558

[www.rrcassociates.com](http://www.rrcassociates.com)

# CONCLUSION

- Respondents have identified several challenges and concerns that impact their community's quality of life. More than a third of the Greater Cooke City area respondents believe that overall quality of life in the area is declining, with another third saying it's staying the same.
  - Winter access to/from the Greater Cooke City Area is top of list, with this challenge further underscored by how highly emergency services and safety and security ranked for the people of Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass.
  - Economic issues facing the region followed, with the respondents identifying a lack of housing and ability to find workforce staffing the second and third ranked challenges for the community, respectively.
- However, this group has also expressed a great deal of satisfaction with their summer recreation opportunities, the reputation and heritage of Cooke City, and their schools. Indicating that while there's much that respondents want improved, there's also much that they're already quite satisfied with.
- While it was clear that the Greater Cooke City area respondents know that winter access is a challenge for the community, both the decision on whether it's a benefit or detractor, as well as what ultimately should be done were largely split.
  - The greatest share of Greater Cooke City area respondents identified the current winter access to the area as a detractor from the visitor experience.
  - Consistent with this, the largest share of respondents opted to open and maintain US 212 east of Cooke City for through vehicle traffic and create alternative trails to, and parking areas near/in, Cooke City.

# WINTER TOURISM – NON-BUSINESS OWNERS

How much do you agree or disagree that...?

Non-Business Owner (Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass R..)

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The Cooke City economy relies on winter tourism.	4.1	122	2%	3%	15%	38%	42%
The Greater Cooke City Area would economically benefit from more visitors coming if US 212 east of Cooke City were plowed.	3.6	119	13%	11%	12%	29%	35%
Winter visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are provided with a high-quality visitor experience.	3.6	112	5%	10%	32%	29%	23%
Plowing US 212 east of Cooke City during winter months is necessary to ensure efficient emergency services access.	3.6	120	17%	12%	14%	10%	48%
I would prefer if Cooke City kept US 212 east of Cooke City unplowed during the winter season.	2.6	117	45%	9%	13%	8%	26%
Winter visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are respectful towards my community.	2.8	108	17%	27%	29%	19%	8%
Current winter visitors would not come if US 212 east of Cooke City was plowed.	2.3	109	41%	19%	17%	10%	12%

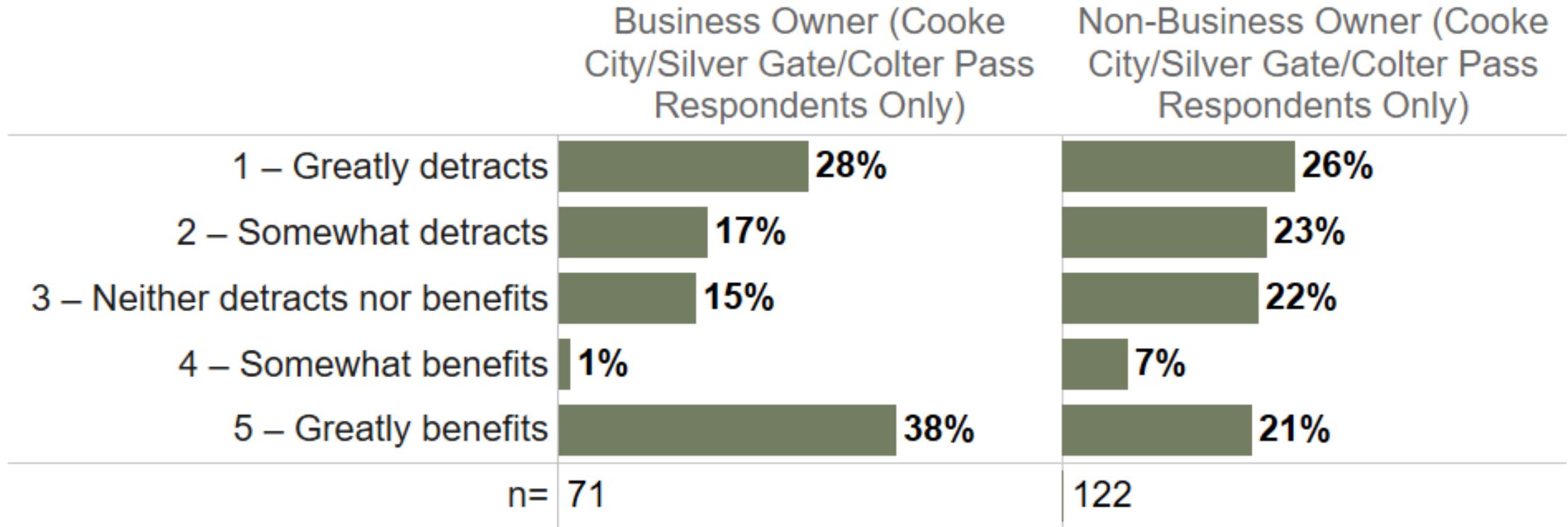
## How much do you agree or disagree that...?

Business Owner (Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass Respondents Only)

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The Cooke City economy relies on winter tourism.	4.4	70		3%	11%	24%	61%
Winter visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are provided with a high-quality visitor experience.	3.4	68	9%	19%	22%	24%	26%
The Greater Cooke City Area would economically benefit from more visitors coming if US 212 east of Cooke City were plowed.	3.3	67	21%	18%	12%	7%	42%
I would prefer if Cooke City kept US 212 east of Cooke City unplowed during the winter season.	3.1	69	41%	4%	7%	3%	45%
Plowing US 212 east of Cooke City during winter months is necessary to ensure efficient emergency services access.	3.1	70	30%	16%	9%	3%	43%
Winter visitors to the Greater Cooke City Area are respectful towards my community.	3.0	68	21%	21%	18%	22%	19%
Current winter visitors would not come if US 212 east of Cooke City was plowed.	2.4	66	44%	17%	11%	11%	18%

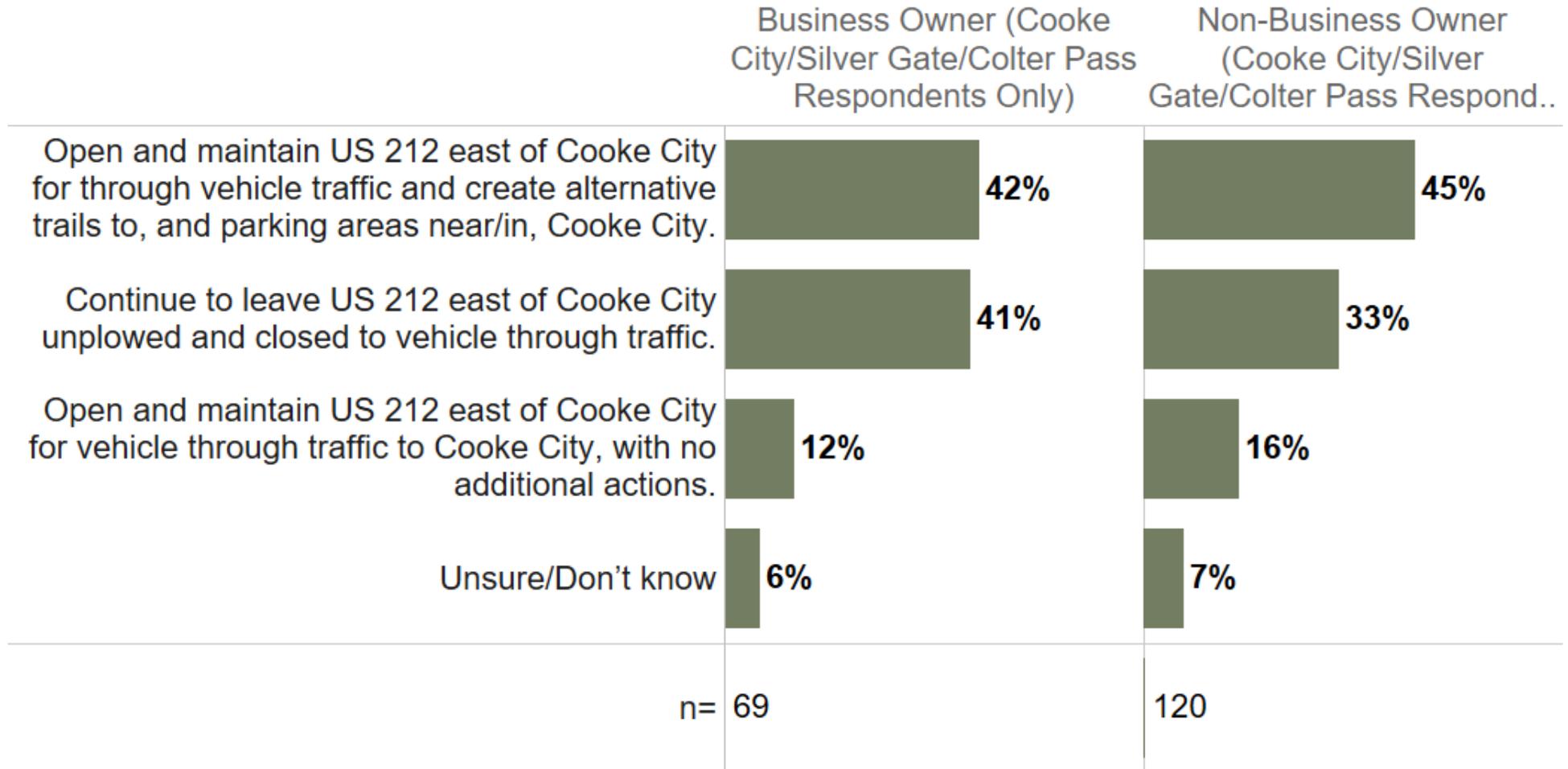
# WINTER ACCESS VISITOR EXPERIENCE

To what extent do you believe the current winter access in Greater Cooke City Area either benefits or detracts from the visitor experience?



# HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO

Based on hypothetical future scenarios, which scenario would you prefer for the Greater Cooke City Area for winter access on US 212 east of Cooke City?



# SATISFACTION – PRIMARY HOMEOWNERS

## How satisfied are you with the region's performance on these factors?

Primary or year-round resident (Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass Respondents Only)

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Not at all Important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
Diversity of summer recreation opportunities	4.0	83	7%	2%	17%	28%	46%
Schools	4.0	75	12%		21%	9%	57%
Summer tourism	3.8	84	12%	5%	19%	23%	42%
A place I am proud to tell others about	3.7	88	8%	7%	28%	23%	34%
Local heritage	3.5	80	9%	9%	33%	25%	25%
Safety and security	3.5	87	13%	10%	23%	25%	29%
Emergency services	3.5	85	15%	12%	16%	25%	32%
Diversity of winter recreation opportunities	3.3	84	20%	12%	19%	20%	29%
Family friendly	3.0	86	17%	15%	29%	22%	16%
Winter tourism	2.9	85	29%	14%	18%	15%	24%
Close/tight knit community	2.8	88	18%	28%	23%	18%	13%
Diversity of opinions in the community	2.8	87	17%	15%	46%	10%	11%
Economic opportunities	2.8	87	21%	18%	36%	14%	11%
Everyday shopping needs	2.6	87	32%	15%	30%	10%	13%
Availability of workforce	2.4	82	34%	22%	26%	11%	7%
Variety of restaurants	2.1	87	36%	34%	22%	3%	5%
Other (please specify)	1.9	15	67%	13%			20%

# SATISFACTION – SECONDARY RESIDENTS

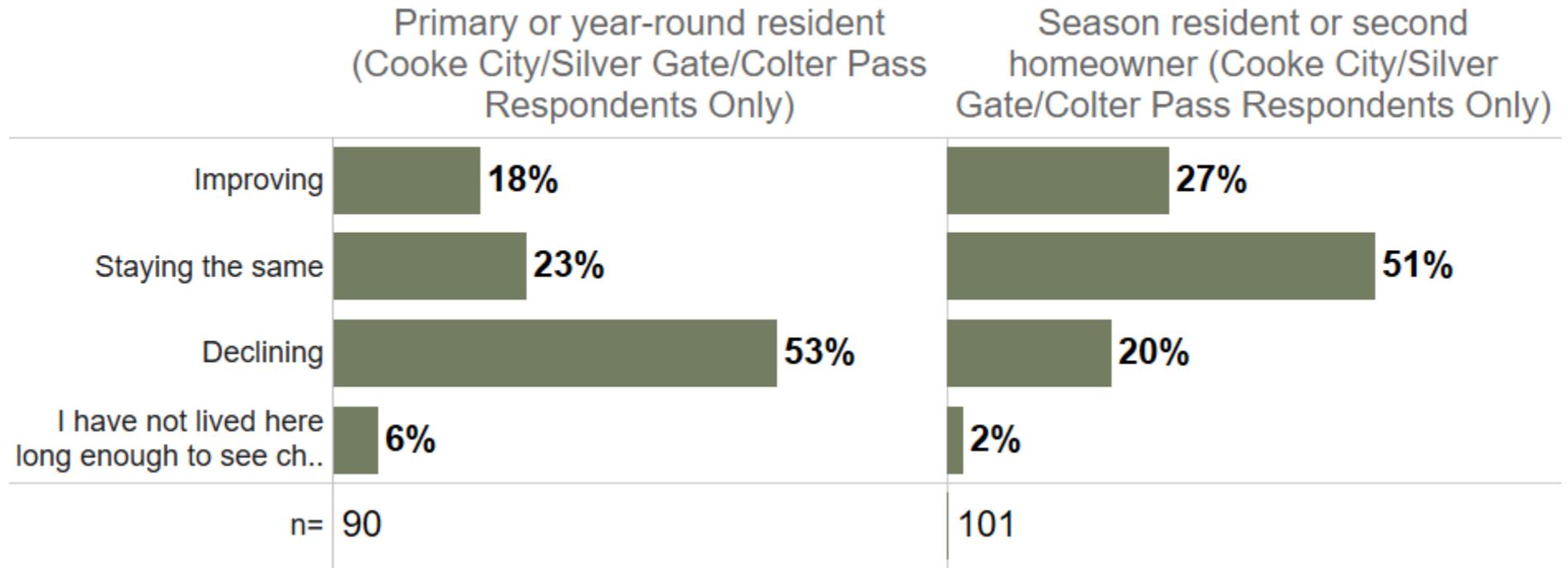
## How satisfied are you with the region's performance on these factors?

Season resident or second homeowner  
(Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass  
Respondents Only)

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 - Not at all Important	2	3	4	5 - Very important
A place I am proud to tell others about	4.5	91	1%		12%	22%	65%
Diversity of summer recreation opportunities	4.2	90		2%	21%	33%	43%
Local heritage	4.1	92		4%	24%	29%	42%
Family friendly	4.1	93		4%	25%	30%	41%
Schools	4.0	60	2%	3%	35%	18%	42%
Safety and security	3.9	97	4%	7%	18%	36%	35%
Emergency services	3.9	98	4%	11%	16%	30%	39%
Summer tourism	3.8	91	1%	8%	26%	36%	29%
Diversity of winter recreation opportunities	3.8	76	3%	4%	36%	22%	36%
Close/tight knit community	3.8	91	3%	8%	22%	35%	32%
Winter tourism	3.6	79	4%	9%	35%	23%	29%
Diversity of opinions in the community	3.3	89	4%	8%	51%	29%	8%
Economic opportunities	3.3	71	6%	7%	52%	21%	14%
Everyday shopping needs	3.2	93	6%	19%	40%	18%	16%
Variety of restaurants	3.0	97	10%	20%	40%	24%	6%
Availability of workforce	2.7	79	10%	28%	46%	16%	
Other (please specify)	2.5	13	38%	15%	23%	8%	15%

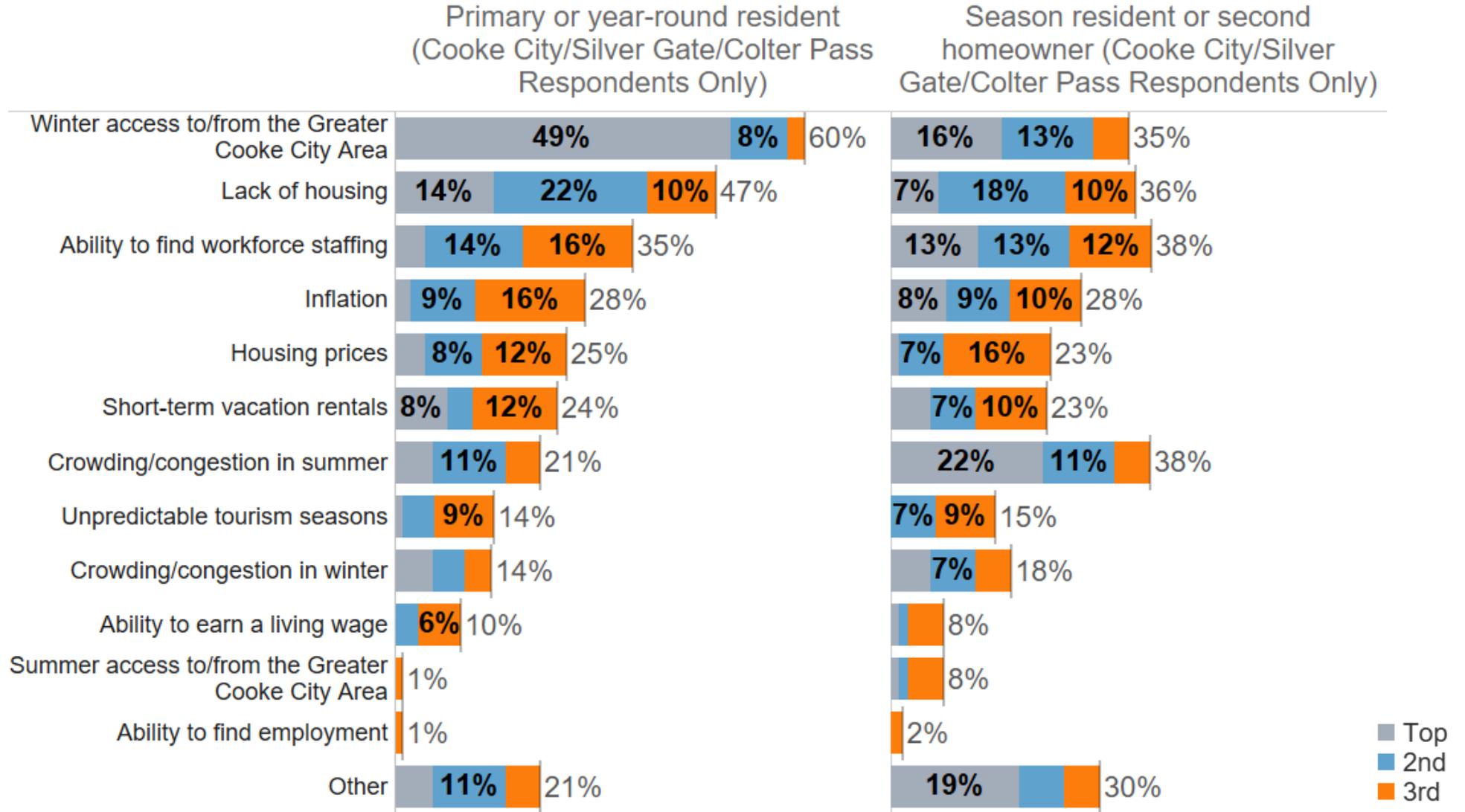
# OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE

Would you say your overall quality of life in the Greater Cooke City Area has been:



# CHALLENGES – TOP 3

## Which THREE issues or challenges do you feel are the most important?



# WINTER ACCESS VISITOR EXPERIENCE

To what extent do you believe the current winter access in Greater Cooke City Area either benefits or detracts from the visitor experience?

