

## **Resident Attitudes towards tourism in Montana – Trend analysis**

**August 21, 2020**

**Norma Nickerson, Ph.D.**

**Kara Grau, M.S.**

**Megan Schultz, M.S.**

This is a quick summary of data currently being collected on residents' attitudes toward tourism, a survey ITRR usually conducts each 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Some of the data reaches back to 1992 and can be accessed on ITRR's Interactive Data Website, [Resident Attitudes Towards Tourism](#), for the trends. The data is collected around the state by ITRR surveyors intercepting residents at gas stations and a few rest areas. The survey is short in nature to reduce our infringement on the respondents' time.

Because of the pandemic, which has changed travel in ways we have not seen in about 100 years, ITRR started asking some of the same questions we ask during 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, adding a few more specifically related to COVID-19. Keep in mind, when looking at the data, that in all the other years the data was collected in the months of October through December. The 2020 data reflected here represents data collection from July 1 through August 17, 2020. This time difference in data collection could explain some of the changes in attitudes, especially since this new data is collected in the peak travel season. In addition, COVID-19 itself, can change the attitudes and thoughts of residents. The study will be repeated in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2020 to assess any differences between peak season and off-season attitudes.

The 2020 data in this summary is based on 2,197 respondents. Every county in Montana is represented in the data. The data has been weighted by county population and gender to be representative of the state's population.

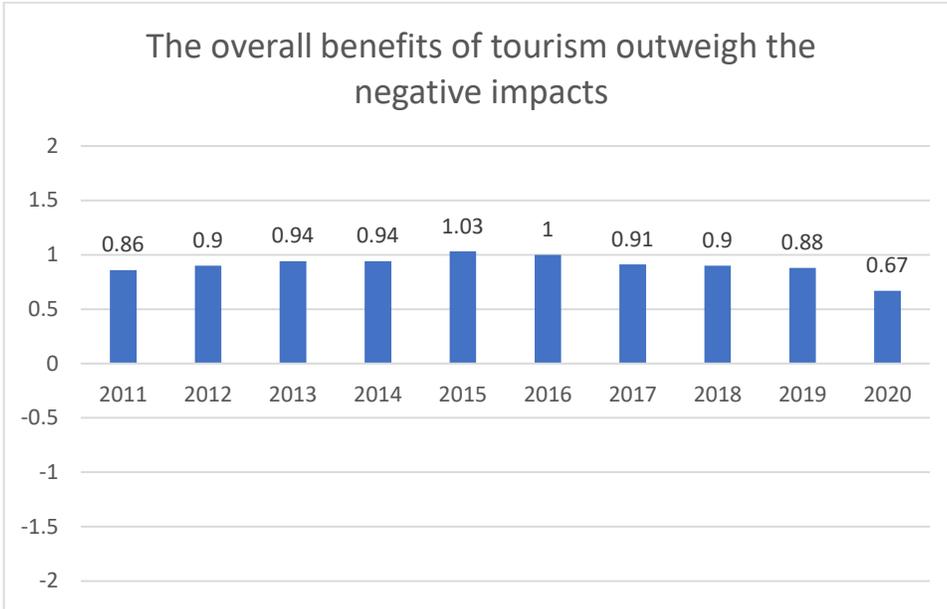
The overall summary is that resident attitudes towards tourism have declined this summer compared to previous years:

- Mean response regarding overall benefits of tourism outweighing the negative impacts is 0.67 (on a -2 to +2, strongly disagree to strongly agree, scale). It has only been below 0.75 one time, and that was in 2001 (0.19). (Figures 1a & 1b)
- Mean response to "If tourism increases in MT, the overall quality of life for MT residents will improve," is at an all-time low with a mean of 0.11. (Figures 2a & 2b)
- Mean response to "In recent years, the state is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists" has always been in the negative (disagree to that statement) however the 2020 data shows more people agreeing, with a mean of 0.20. This sentiment to view the state as becoming overcrowded is also at an all-time high (since record keeping in 1992). (Figures 3a & 3b)

In addition to the above trend data, ITRR collected supplementary attitude sentiments about tourism in Montana:

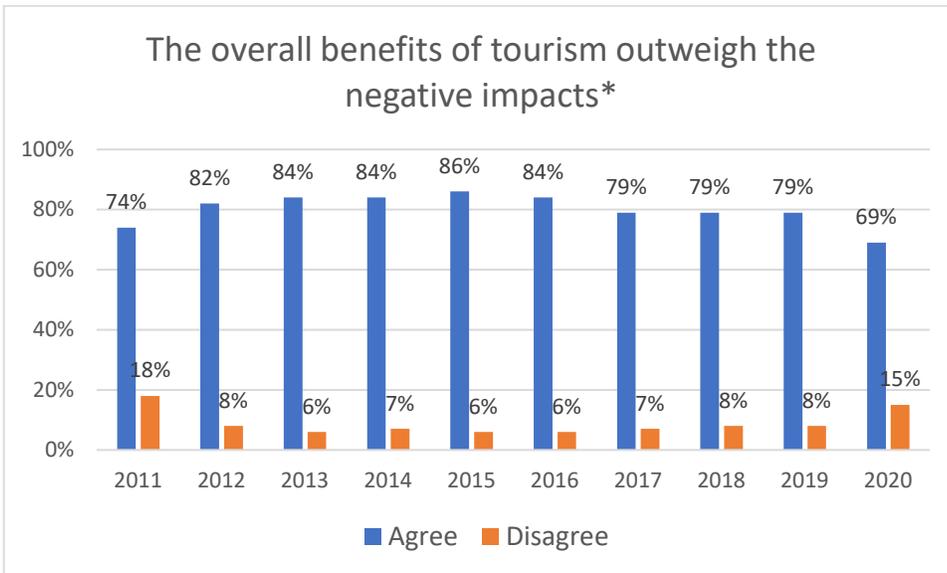
- There was a near equal split of respondents who thought their community was getting overcrowded due to tourists and those who said their community was not experiencing crowding (Figure 4a and 4b).
- Many (72%) Montanans are concerned about visitors in their community due to COVID-19 (Figure 5a & 5b).
- Finally, 78% of Montanans said they are more likely to travel within Montana than out-of-state (Figure 6a & 6b).

**Figure 1a: Sentiment toward: Benefits outweigh negative impacts**



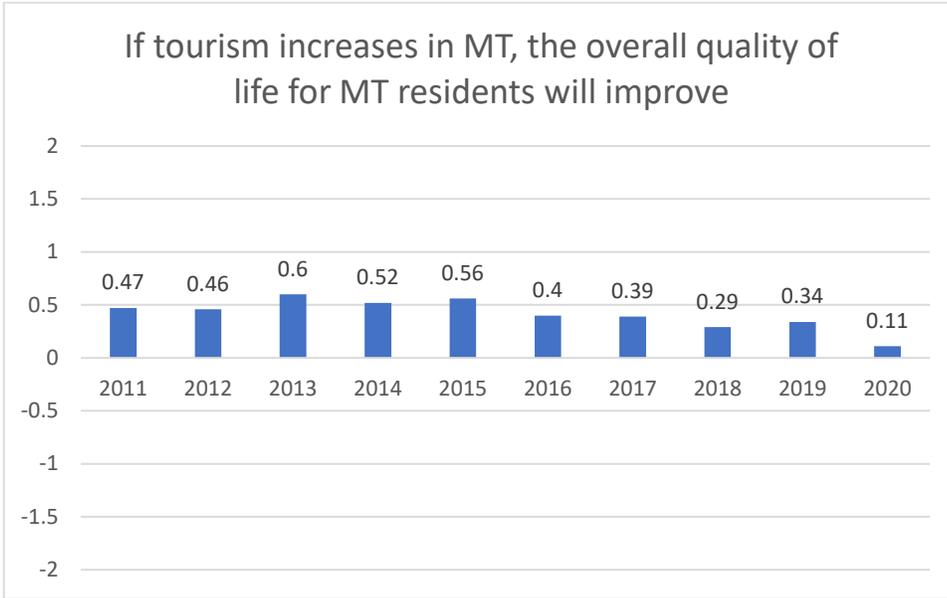
\*Mean values: Scale represents 2= strongly agree; 0=neutral; -2=strongly disagree

**Figure 1b: Sentiment toward: Benefits outweigh negative impacts**



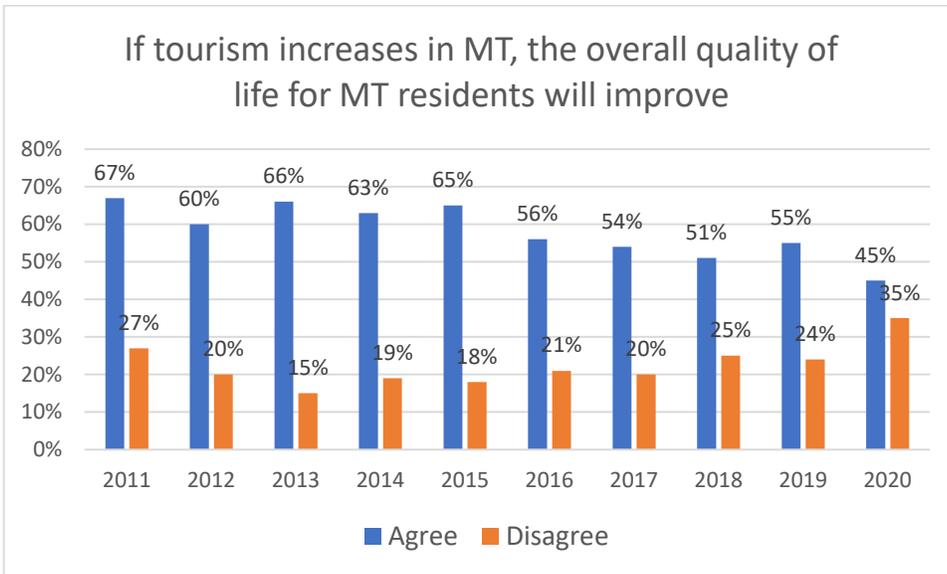
\*Note: The addition of agree and disagree percentages do not add to 100%. The missing value are respondents who did not agree or disagree to the statement.

**Figure 2a: Sentiment toward: Tourism increasing personal quality of life**



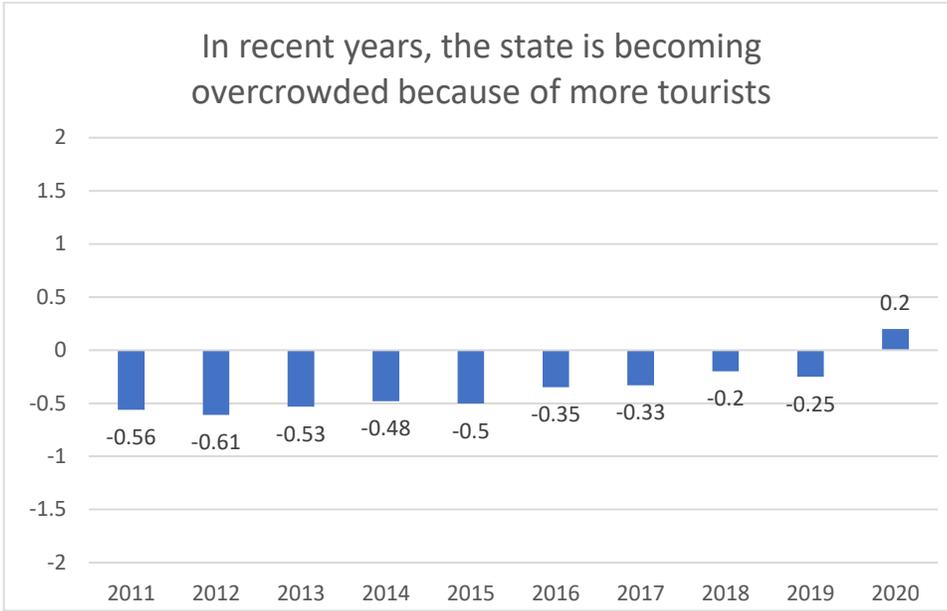
\*Mean values with scale representing 2= strongly agree; 0=neutral; -2=strongly disagree

**Figure 2b: Sentiment toward: Tourism increasing personal quality of life**



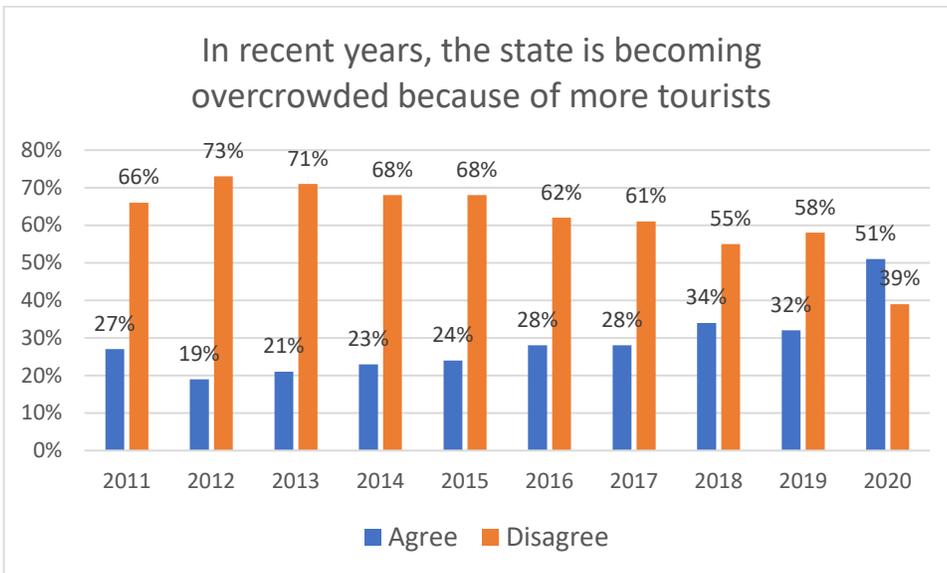
\*Note: The addition of agree and disagree percentages do not add to 100%. The missing value are respondents who did not agree or disagree to the statement.

**Figure 3a: Sentiment toward: Overcrowding due to tourists**



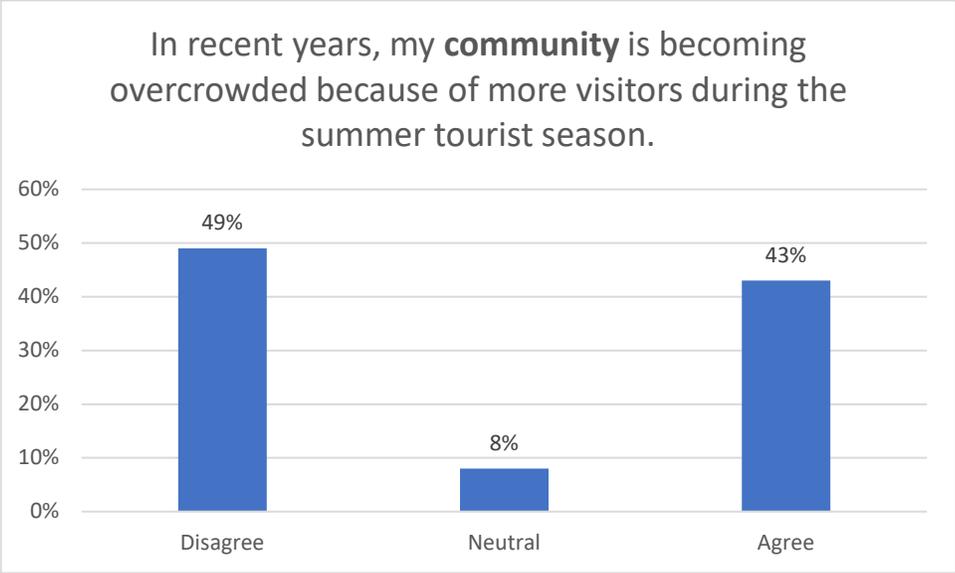
\*Mean values with scale representing 2= strongly agree; 0=neutral; -2=strongly disagree

**Figure 3b: Sentiment toward: Overcrowding due to tourists**

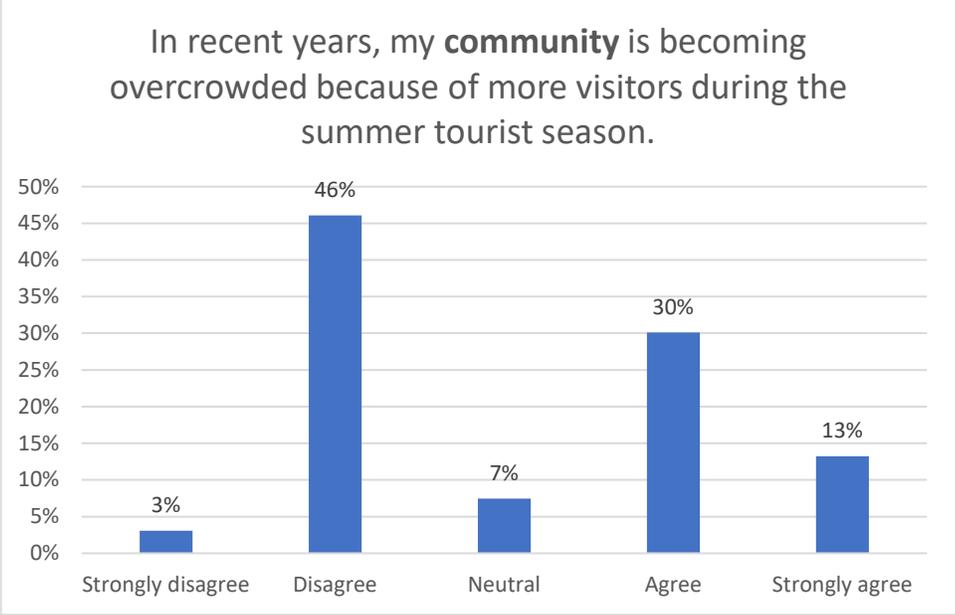


\*Note: The addition of agree and disagree percentages do not add to 100%. The missing value are respondents who didn't agree or disagree to the statement.

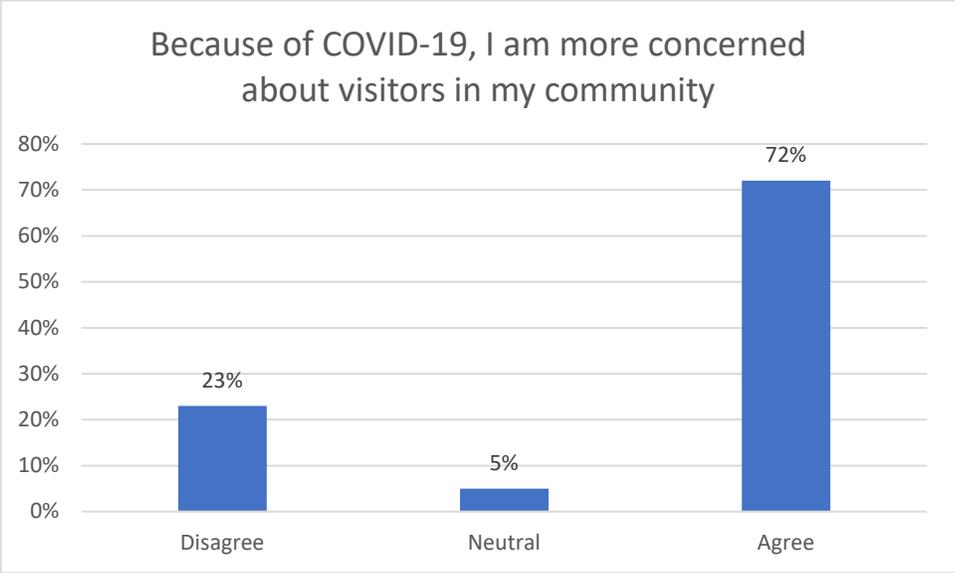
**Figure 4a: Sentiment toward: Community overcrowding due to tourists**



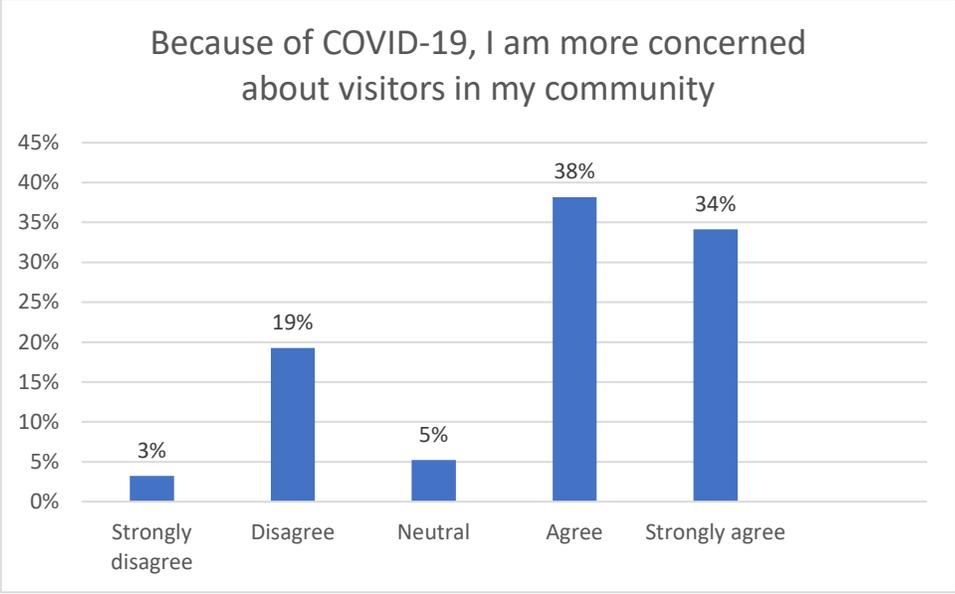
**Figure 4b: Sentiment toward: Community overcrowding due to tourists**



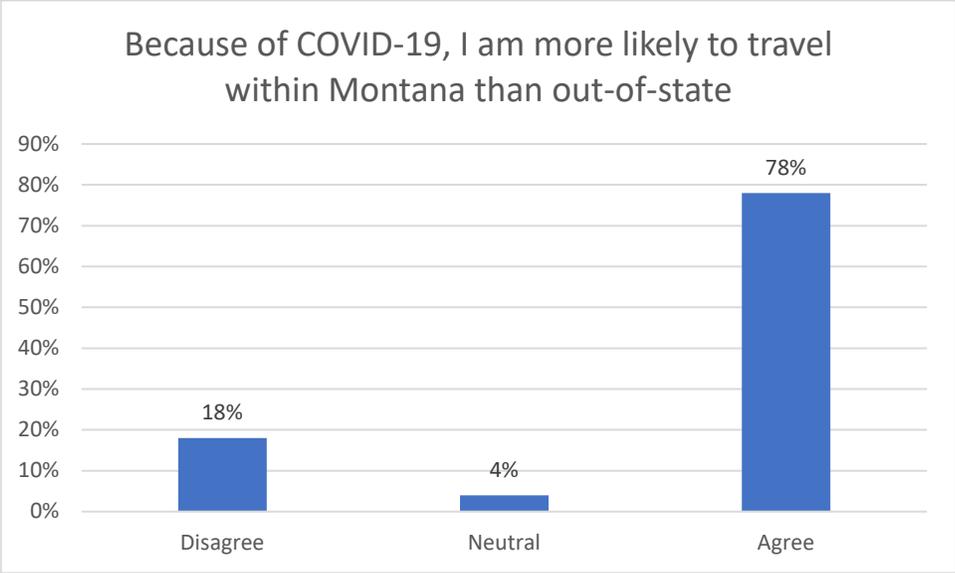
**Figure 5a: Sentiment toward: Visitation in my community**



**Figure 5b: Sentiment toward: Visitation in my community**



**Figure 6a: Sentiment Toward: Traveling in-state**



**Figure 6b: Sentiment Toward: Traveling in-state**

