

# Tourism Task Force

## Town Hall Results

### November 13, 2023

Held at Harrigan Centennial Hall

Participants: Approx. 250

Data summary by: CBS Planning & Community Development Department



# What makes Sitka a great place to live, and why do you choose to live here?

## Top Themes\*:

- Community & Small-Town Feel – 65%

*Sitka being a close-knit community, familiar faces, caring neighbors, safety, and small-town atmosphere*

- Access to Nature/Outdoor Recreation – 60%

*Natural beauty, wilderness, pristine environment, and access to recreation and subsistence activities*

- Pace of Life – 35%

*Slower pace of life, lack of “hustle and bustle”, peaceful, quiet, and relaxed lifestyles*

\*Many comments mentioned multiple ideas or themes

# How does the cruise calendar impact your daily life and routines?

Avoid going downtown or plan downtown visitation around cruise calendar	31%
Traffic, bike, and pedestrian safety concerns impact transportation habits/timing	19%
Avoiding recreation sites or activities	15%
Little to no impact cited, perhaps some minimal planning of commute times/errands	13%
Impacts to commute times, errands, access to services	11%
Noise and/or pollution impacts	9%
Impacts to telecommunication services	7%
Enjoy downtown on busy days, seeing energy/liveliness	4%
General comments on negative impacts	11%
General comments on economic benefits	8%

\*129 total responses – some comments cited multiple impacts

What recreation sites are important to you to access? Where are you experiencing overcrowding or congestion?



# Please identify locations of challenges or issues related to pollution, noise, or safety hazards:

Top Issues Cited	Description	% of Comments	Top Locations Cited
Safety/Traffic Issues	Congestion, bike and pedestrian safety	38%	HPR: 38% Downtown: 44% General: 22%
Pollution/Environmental Impacts	General pollution, emissions, waste/litter	20%	HPR: 16% Downtown: 22% General: 26%
Noise Complaints	Noise from buses, traffic, cruise dock	11%	HPR: 19% Downtown: 10% General: 13%

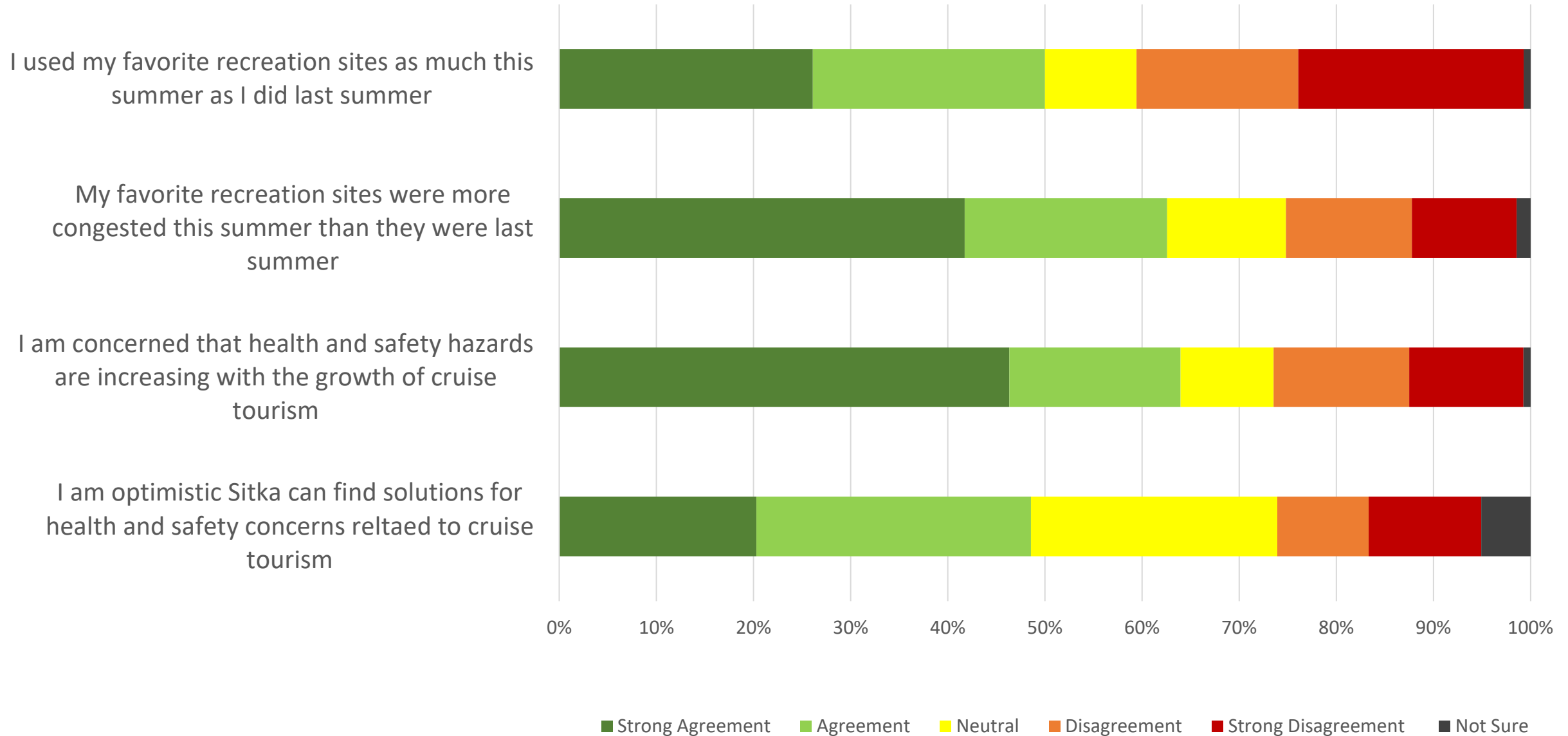
## Other notable comments/themes:

- 28% note issues related to buses
- 7% reference the crossing at the Raptor Center and traffic along SMC
- 5% reference accessibility issues, downtown particularly
- 8% cite concerns about E-Bikes, with 44% of those comments focused on trails, and 56% focused on streets/sidewalks
- 8% of comments are about trails

# Map anything else that concerns you or is important to you:

Top Issues Cited	Description	% of Comments	Top Locations Cited
Traffic/Congestion	Traffic flow, congestion, ability to get around	24%	Downtown: 50% Lincoln Street: 30% General: 20%
Tourism Infrastructure	Inadequate infrastructure to handle increased tourism, impact/wear & tear on existing infrastructure	17%	General: 55% HPR: 22% SMC: 22%
Safety Issues	Bike and pedestrian safety, e-bikes	15%	General: 58% Harbor Mountain: 17% HPR: 8% Downtown: 8% Trails: 8%
Access/Street Closures	Lincoln Street closures, general accessibility	15%	Lincoln Street: 73% General: 27%
Tourism Etiquette	Sharing trails, training for non-local tour operators	9%	General: 10%

# Recreation, Health, & Safety Questions





# How do you benefit economically from cruise tourism?

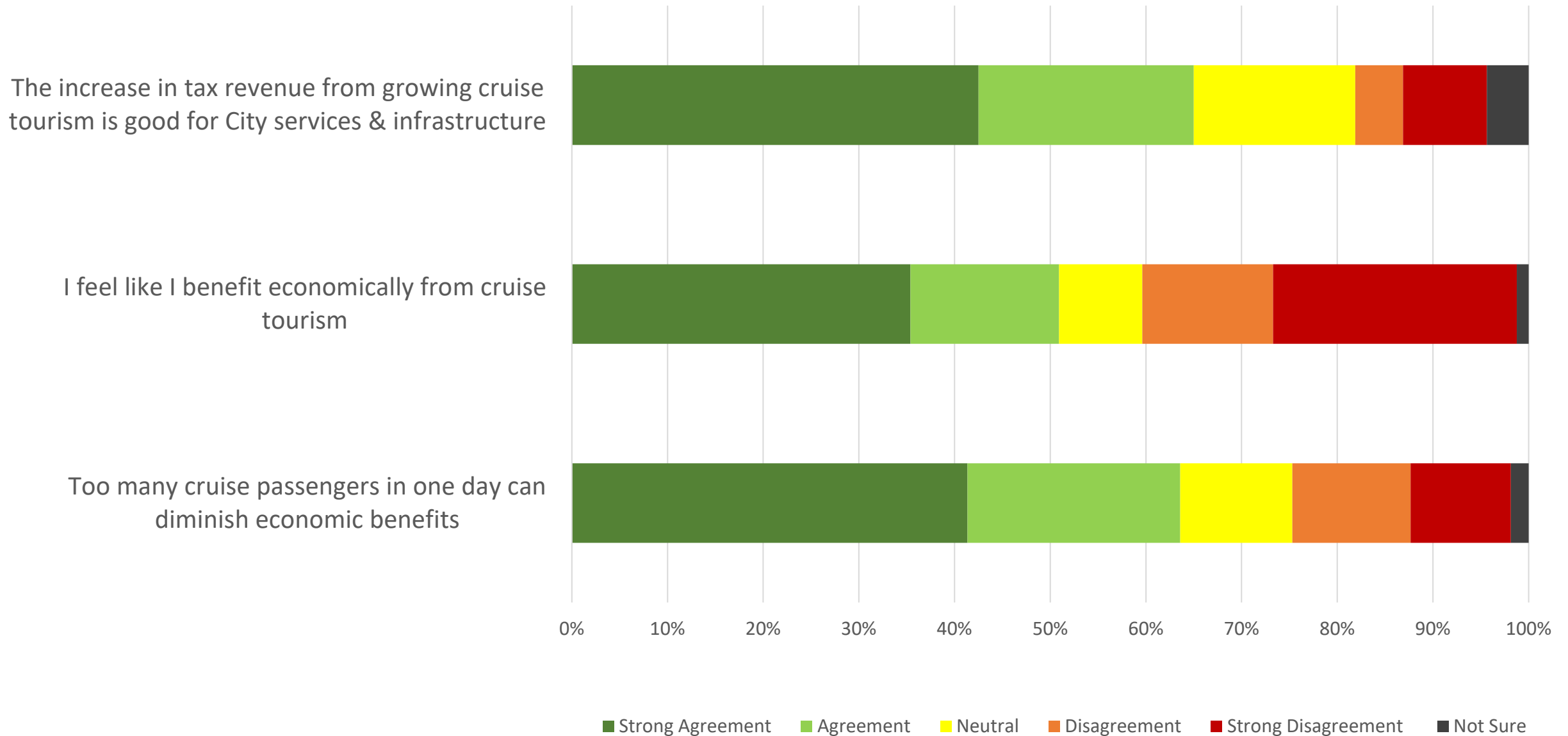
Benefit	Descriptions/Examples	% of Comments
Direct Benefits	Jobs for self or family members, owning/starting a tourism-related business, benefit to existing business, busking fundraisers	32%
No Benefit	"I Don't", own businesses that don't benefit from cruise tourism	28%
Increased Tax Revenue	Sales tax revenue to pay for schools, infrastructure/deferred maintenance, prevents need for new tax revenues	19%
Benefits to General Economy	New business opportunities, employment for young Sitkans, support for year-round businesses	15%
Other	Notable: Desire for more information about increased tax revenue and uses	6%

# Can too many passengers in one day diminish economic benefits?

Observation	Description	% of Comments
Less Local Business	Locals avoiding downtown, leaving stores with long lines, fewer stores downtown with products for locals and/or open year-round	33%
Maxed Business Capacity	Businesses at capacity and turning customers away, visitors spending less (generally or because of store overcrowding), increased costs to provide more service, employee burnout	32%
No/Not Observed	No, personal shopping habits unchanged, tourism needed	13%
Seasonality	Fewer year-round businesses to provide jobs and services, empty storefronts, lack of local employment and locally-owned businesses, residents leaving Sitka due to tourism	11%
Infrastructure and Cost of Living	Impacts on infrastructure and services, increased costs for housing and goods	10%
Impact on Independent Travel	Diminished experience due to congestion decreases likelihood to return, difficulty accessing tours/attractions	4%
General Yes	Yes, town is overwhelmed	2%

\*Some comments included multiple observations

# Economy Questions



# Economic Health:

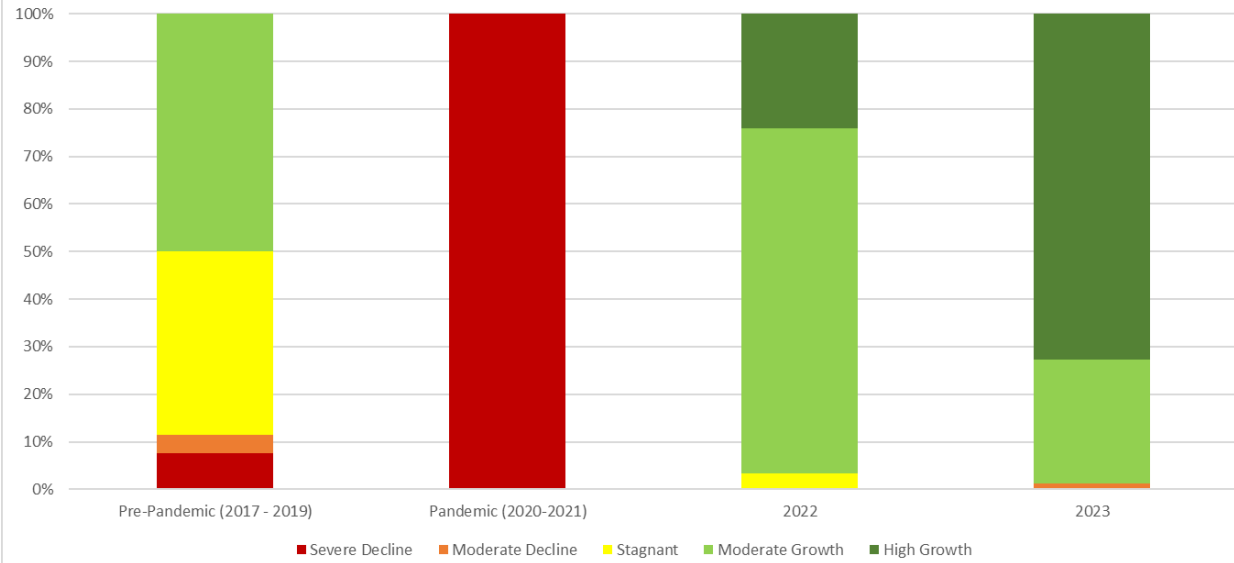
Rate the economic health of the following sectors  
and how it has changed over time

Sectors:

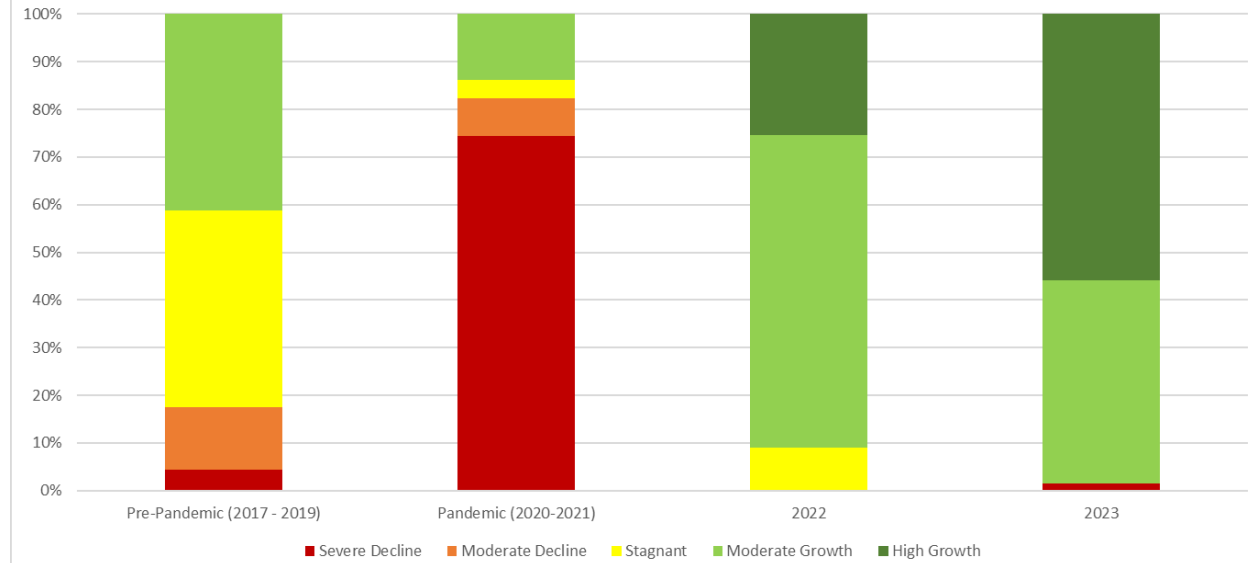
- Businesses with significant cruise customers
- Businesses without significant cruise customers
- New businesses
- Seasonal employment
- Year-round employment
- Maintaining/improving City services and infrastructure

Results are shown graphically on the following two slides.

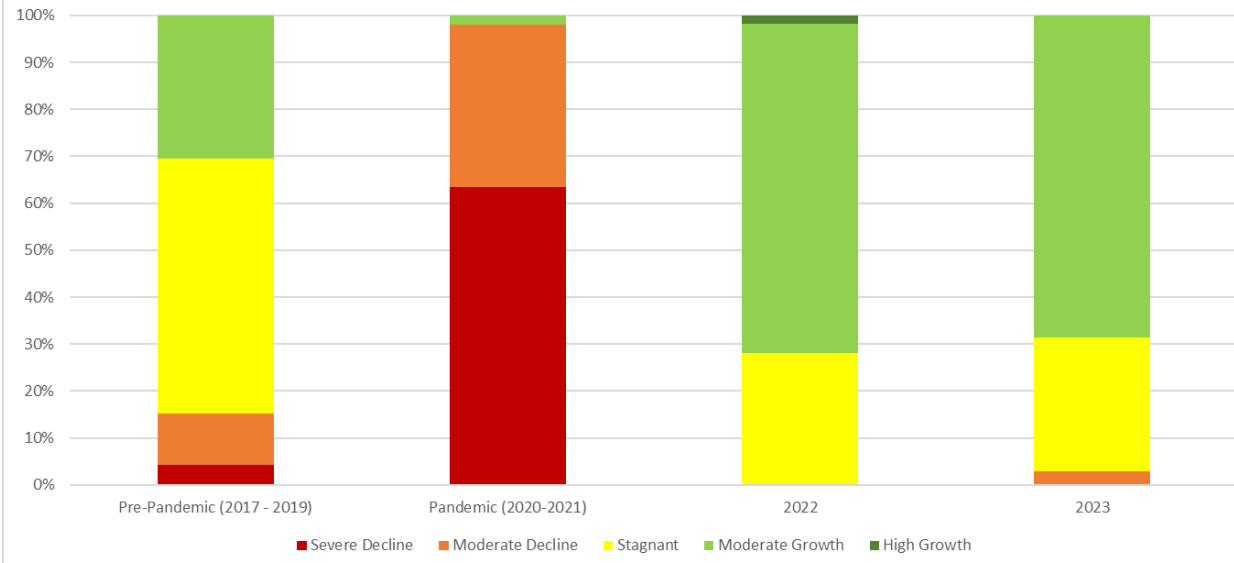
Economic Health: Businesses with significant cruise customers



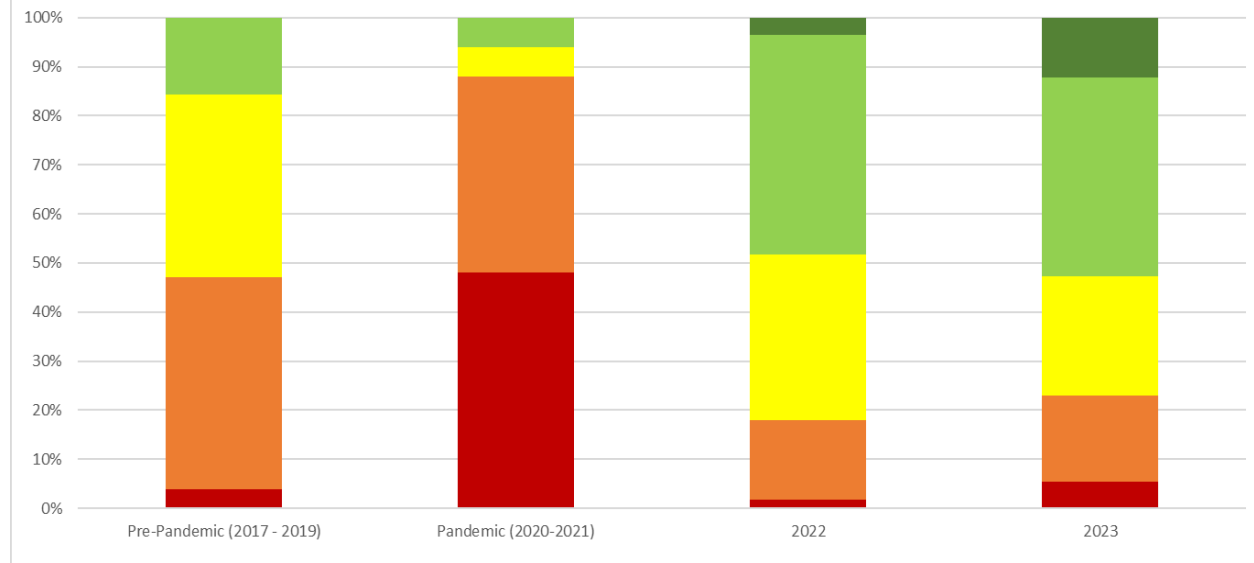
Economic Health: New Businesses



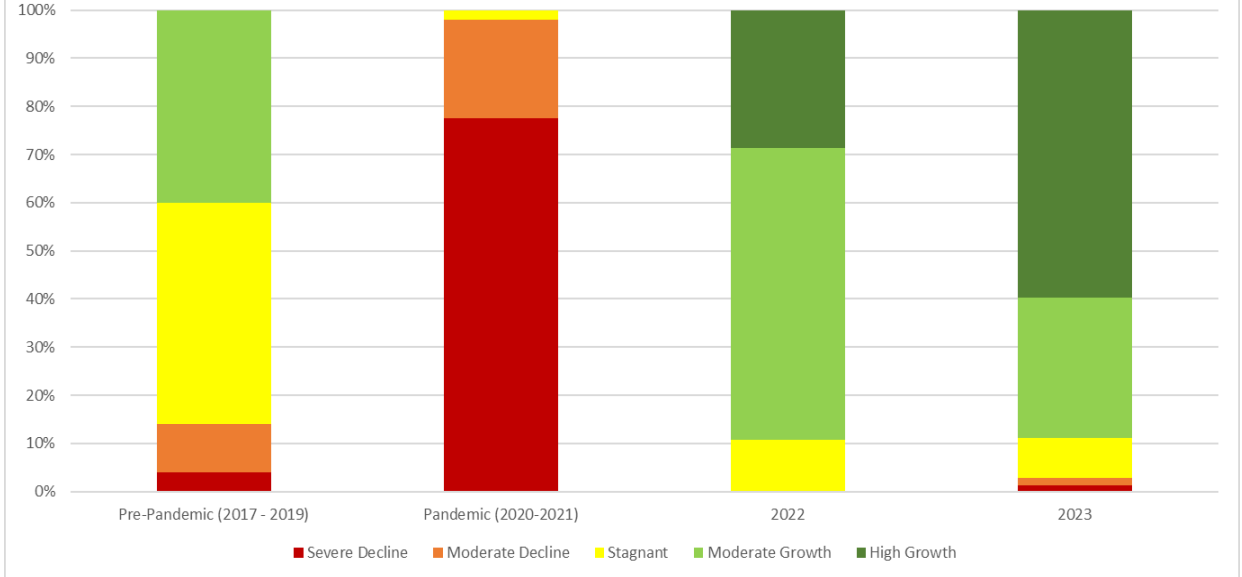
Economic Health: Businesses without significant cruise customers



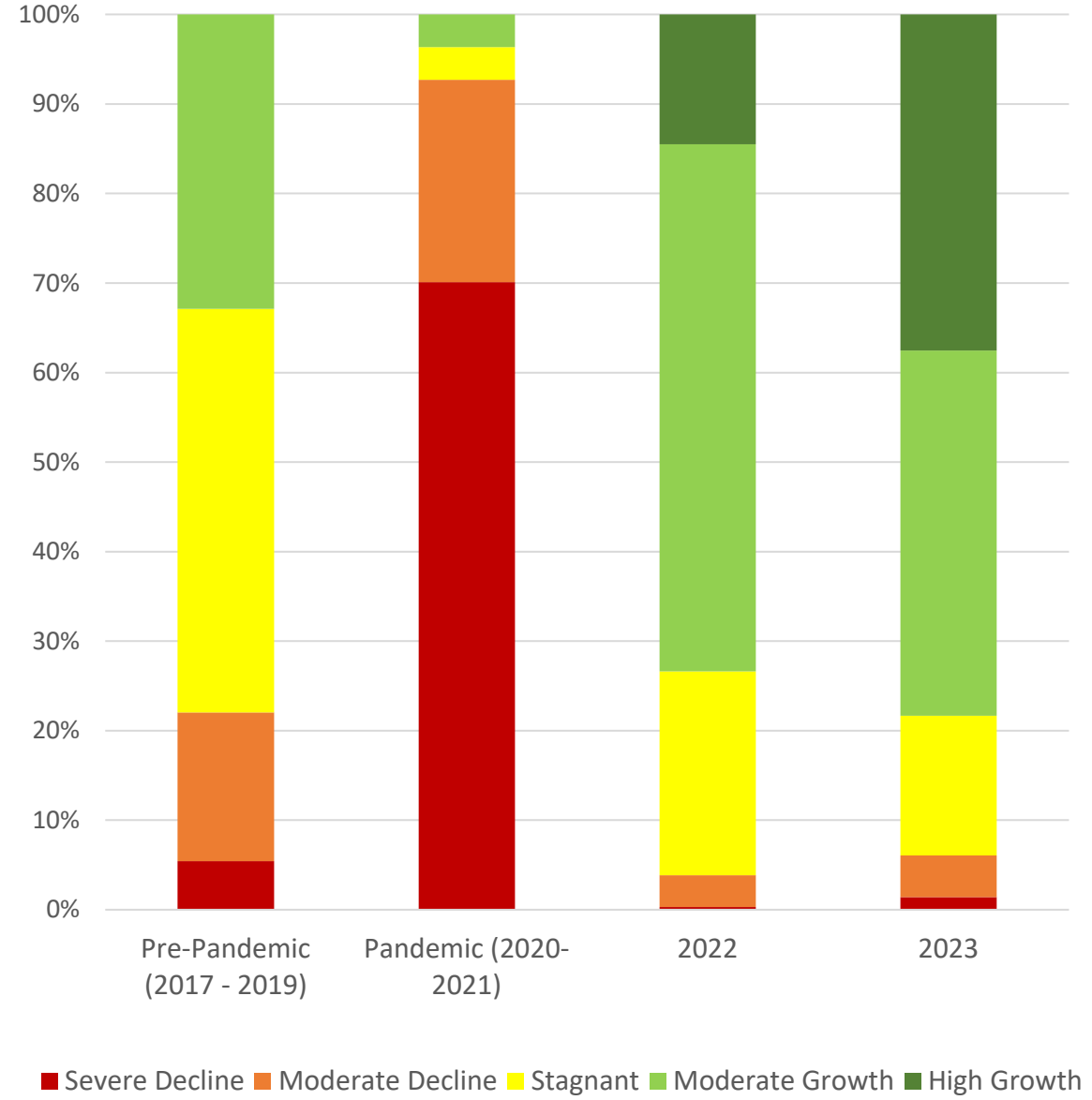
Economic Health: Maintaining and/or improving City services & infrastructure



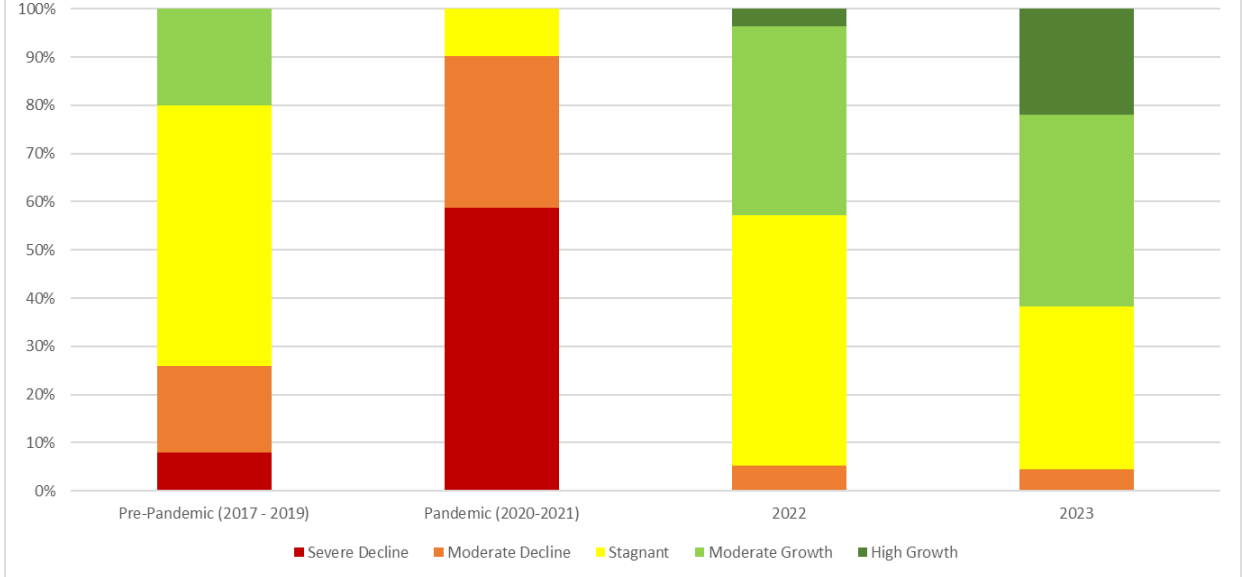
Economic Health: Seasonal employment



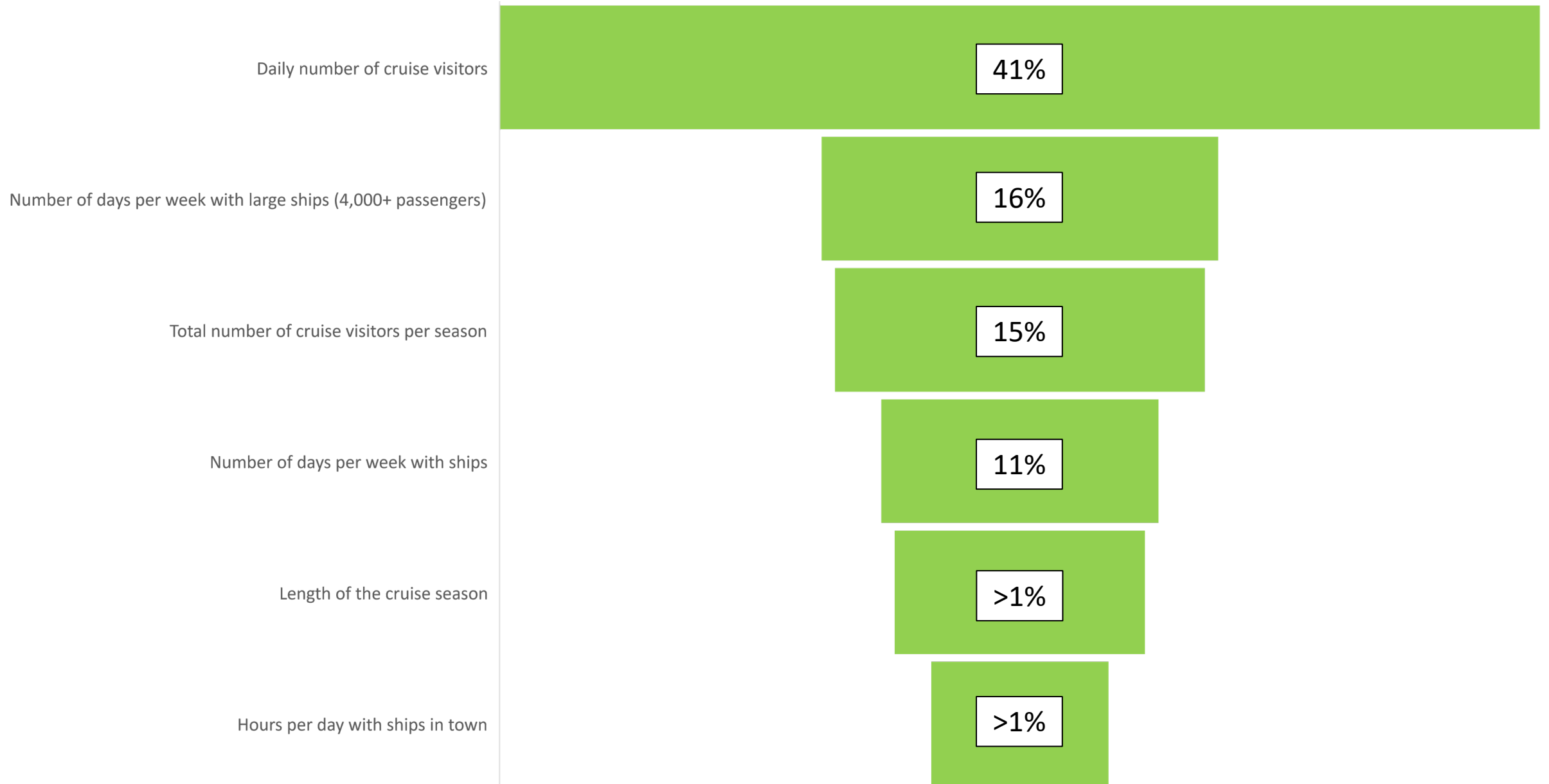
Economic Health: Summation of all Sectors



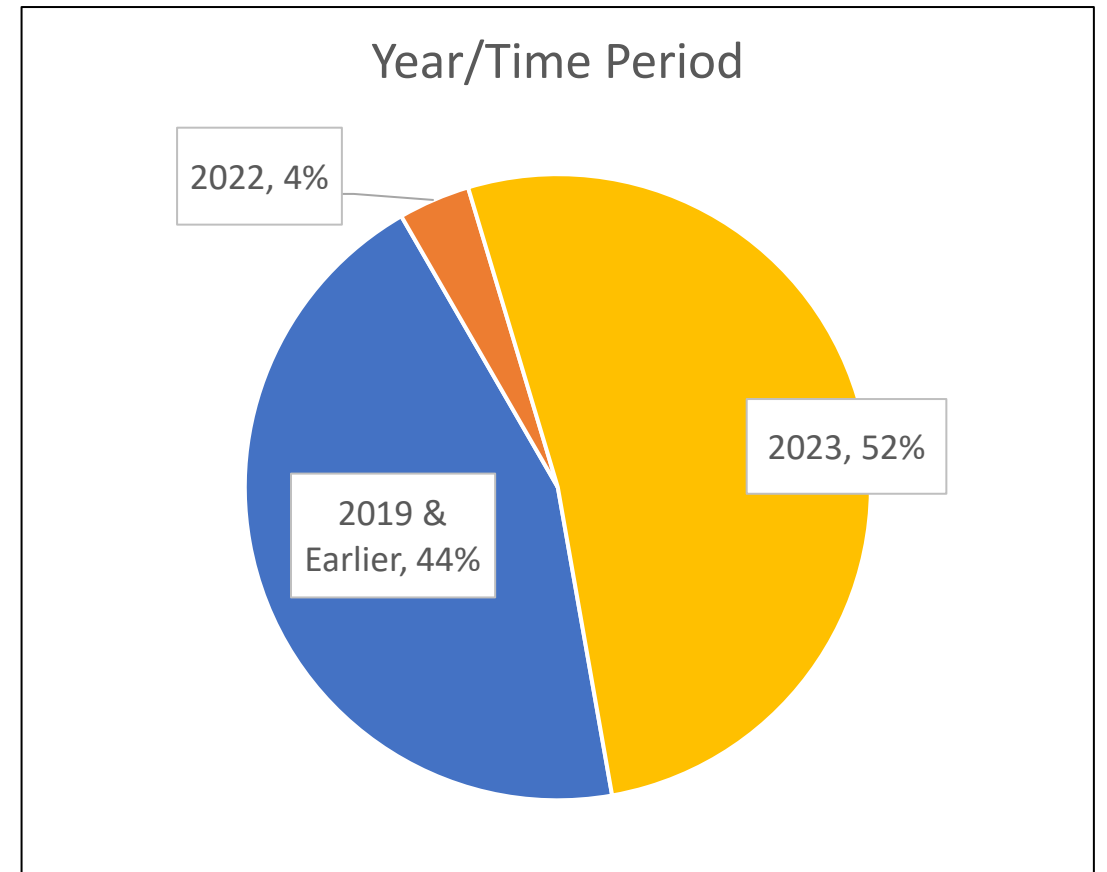
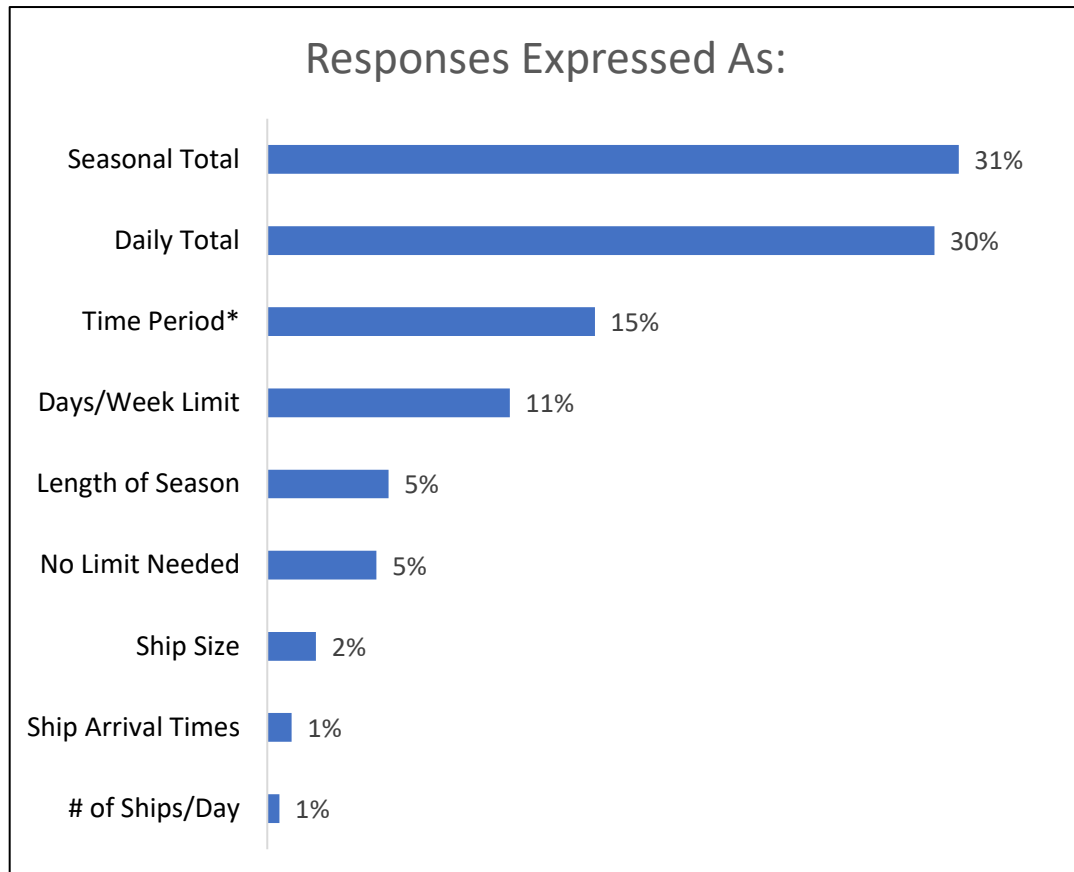
Economic Health: Year-round employment



# What are your priorities for management of cruise numbers?



# What do you think the right level of cruise tourism is for Sitka? (Open Answer)



\*Time Period: Response expressed as "Pre-Pandemic" or by a specific year



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