

SQUAMISH RESIDENT SENTIMENT SURVEY

WHAT WE HEARD IN 2025

JANUARY 2026



WHY WE DO THIS SURVEY



- Tourism plays an important role in Squamish, economically, socially, and culturally. At the same time, we know that tourism affects residents in different ways, depending on where they live, how long they've lived here, and how they interact with visitors and shared spaces.
- Tourism Squamish conducts regular Resident Sentiment Surveys to understand how tourism is experienced by people who call Squamish home. These surveys help us listen, learn, and respond, not just to visitor demand, but to community experience.
- The 2025 survey builds on similar surveys conducted in 2021 and 2022. Together, they allow us to track how resident sentiment is changing over time, especially as Squamish continues to grow.
- This work sits alongside other research, including the Tourism Economic Impact Study. While economic research tells us what tourism contributes to the local economy, resident sentiment research helps us understand tourism's social licence, how it shows up in daily life, and where balance is needed.
- Simply put: tourism only works when it works for the people who live here.

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

The 2025 Squamish Resident Sentiment Survey was conducted in the fall of 2025 by Politikos Research on behalf of Tourism Squamish.

- The online survey was in field from September to October 2025
- More than **1,200** residents participated
- Respondents were screened to ensure they live in Squamish or surrounding communities



Results were weighted using Census data so findings are representative of the broader Squamish population. Using the weighted data, the survey results are accurate to within approximately $\pm 3\%$, 19 times out of 20, for the overall population of Squamish.

As with all surveys, results reflect community sentiment during the period in which the survey was conducted. By using a consistent methodology across multiple years, the survey also allows for meaningful comparison of trends in resident sentiment over time.

KEY FINDINGS:
THE BIG PICTURE



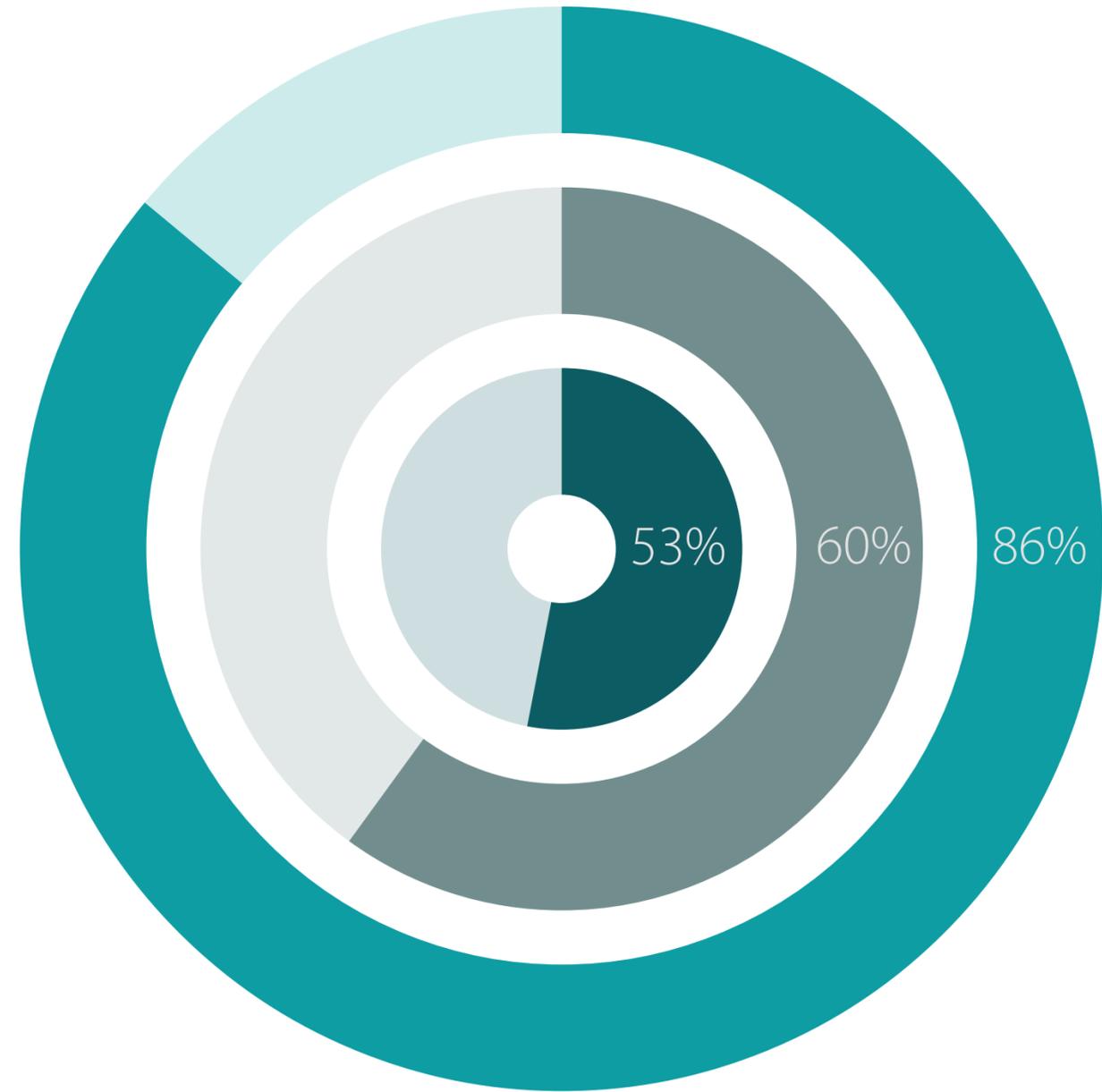
OVERALL SUPPORT REMAINS STRONG

Most residents continue to support tourism in Squamish.

- 86% agree tourism is important to Squamish's economy
- 60% of residents agree the benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts
- 53% describe tourism's overall impact as positive

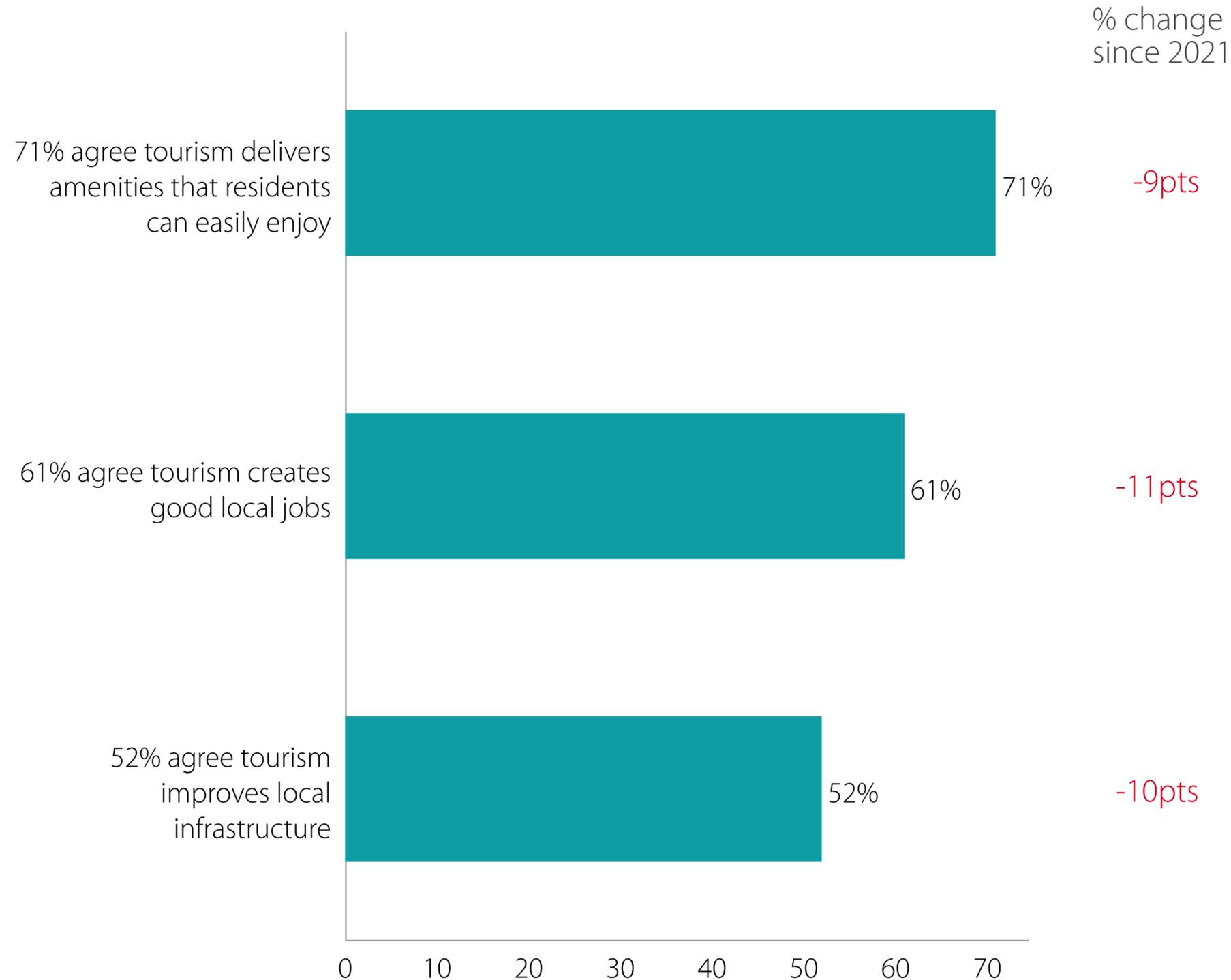
These results have remained relatively stable since 2022, as visitation and the Squamish population has continued to grow.

What this tells us: Tourism retains broad social licence in Squamish, but maintaining that support requires ongoing care and attention.



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BEYOND THE ECONOMY: WHERE PERCEPTIONS ARE SHIFTING



While residents largely agree on tourism's economic importance, perceptions are changing when it comes to everyday community benefits.

Compared to past surveys, residents are less likely to agree that tourism:

- Creates good local jobs
- Improves local infrastructure
- Delivers amenities that residents can easily enjoy

These shifts do not indicate a rejection of tourism. Instead, they suggest growing skepticism about whether the benefits of tourism are being felt evenly or visibly across the community.

What this tells us: Economic value alone is no longer enough. Residents want to see clearer, more tangible benefits in daily life.

TOURISM & QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life is where resident opinion is most divided.

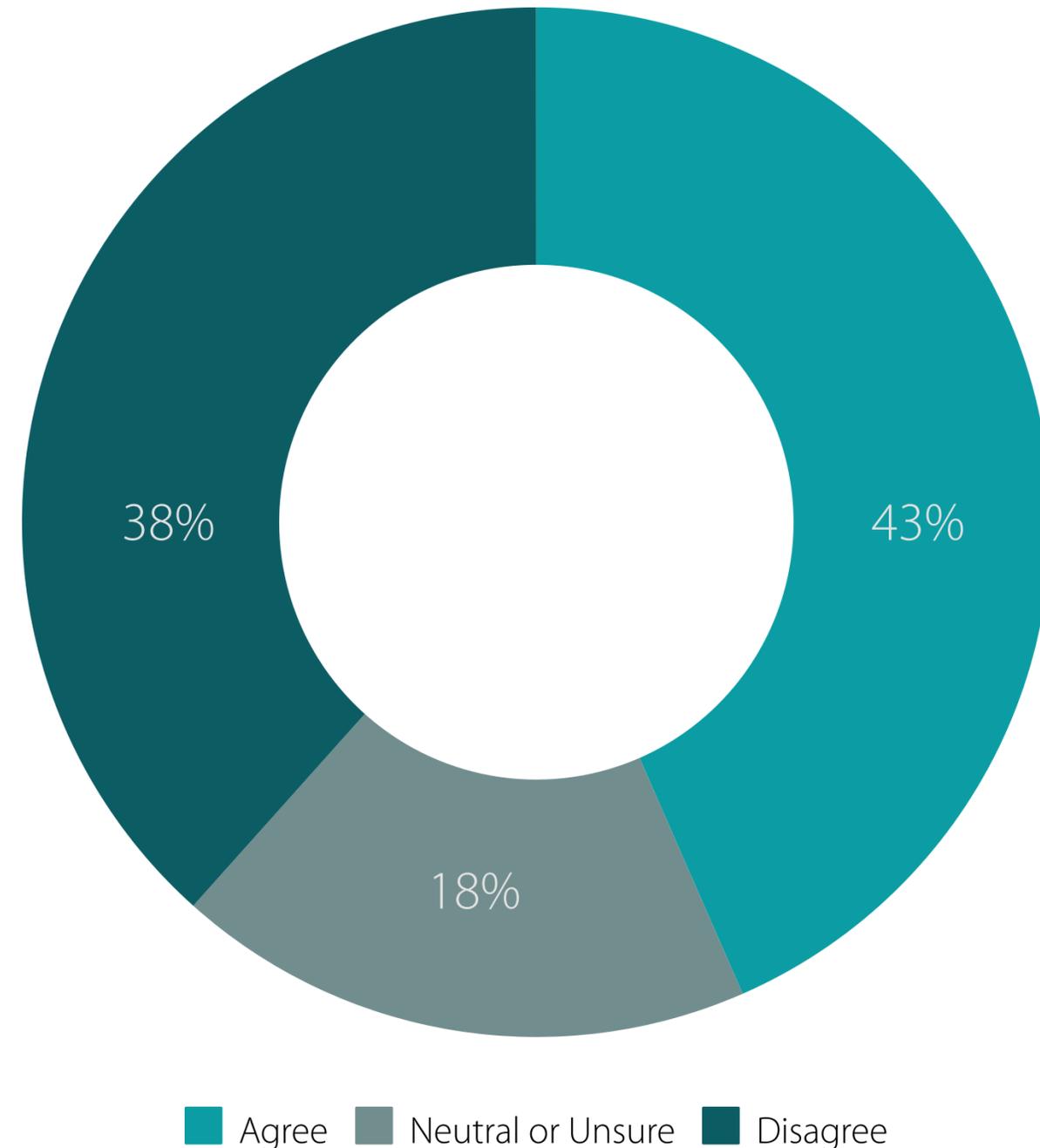
- 43% of residents agree tourism enhances quality of life
- 18% feel neutral or unsure
- 38% disagree

While these proportions are similar to previous years, fewer residents now strongly agree that tourism improves quality of life. At the same time, neutrality is increasing, suggesting uncertainty rather than opposition.

Residents are not necessarily saying tourism is bad for Squamish. Many are saying they are unsure whether it is making life better.

This is the central tension in the survey and the clearest opportunity for action.

Tourism Enhances Quality of Life in Squamish



A photograph of two mountain bikers riding on a dirt trail through a forest. The biker on the left is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a white helmet with 'SMITH' written on it. The biker on the right is wearing a grey short-sleeved shirt, dark pants, and a black helmet with 'POC' written on it. They are both looking back over their shoulders towards each other. The background is a dense forest with green foliage and tree trunks.

WHAT RESIDENTS TOLD US

OPEN-TEXT THEMES

THEME 1: CROWDING & ACCESS

*'We love living here — it just feels busier and harder to **access** the places we used to enjoy.'*

*'Appreciate that sustainable tourism measures get put into place but there should be a system in all instances that prioritize local community (**park access**, parking, etc).'*

*'Maintaining **free access** and free parking for residents at key recreation sites in Squamish is an important part of maintaining positive attitudes towards tourism.'*

*'One of the key issues I see related to tourism in Squamish, particularly in summer, is **lack of access** to our local lakes. I would love to see Tourism Squamish advocate for shuttle service to local lakes to reduce vehicle congestion.'*

*'Please work to keep spaces **accessible**, both financially and access wise, to locals in the face of increasing tourism.'*

*'I highly value the income generation tourism brings to Squamish, but I fear many people see tourists as a hinderance (more litter, **more crowds**, less parking) and I think we need better marketing to show how important they are. Parking passes for local to avoid paying for parking might help. Places like the gondola already have a very reasonable rate for locals, it would be great to maintain that and apply it across all tourist destinations.'*

In addition to rating-scale questions, residents shared open-ended comments about their experiences with tourism. These comments provide important context and help explain the quantitative results. There were 532 open text comments recorded.

Theme 1: Crowding & Access

- Many residents expressed concern about feeling squeezed out of local spaces, particularly trails, parks, and recreation areas during peak periods.
- Residents spoke less about visitors themselves, and more about the pressure created when demand exceeds available space, access, or infrastructure.

THEME 2: TRAFFIC, PARKING & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Traffic congestion and parking challenges were among the most frequently mentioned concerns.
- Residents often link these pressures to tourism, even when they are also driven by broader population growth and development.
- What residents are asking for is not fewer visitors but better planning, management, and infrastructure that keeps pace with growth.

*'Squamish must rely on tourism given the setting and unique activities available in this natural playground. It's important the availability of those spaces (**parking**, camping) keeps expanding with the needs and that residents can maintain their lives without being inundated with tourists taking over their opportunities (better access to more places). I also wish the city planning was better to support a more connected community and entertainment within a central hub downtown (look at Moab, Utah for example).'*

*'Squamish needs **infrastructure**- we don't have capacity for locals therefore definitely not for tourists. **Parking, public toilets, shower, camping.**'*

*'Squamish population is growing too fast for the existing **infrastructure so parking, traffic, grocery stores, climbing areas** are all a nightmare on the weekend in good weather on account of our existing population and tourists just add to it.'*

*'Supporting **infrastructure** is critical to long term viability. We are good at building the attraction but we need work on building the **supporting infrastructure to support it (parking, turning lanes, toilets, garbage disposal, collection of user fees).**'*

*'The pace of tourism has rapidly increased in Squamish in the past ten years. However, the pace of **infrastructure upgrades** that also benefit residents is remarkably slow. Our **parking facilities** and public washrooms are inadequate for the local recreation population, let alone the hundreds that come each weekend.'*

THEME 3: GARBAGE, STEWARDSHIP & VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

*'I do not like the **garbage** and disrespect for our community left behind by some tourists'*

*'I would love to see more **educational information** given to tourists or even newcomers into Squamish. They may not have the same understanding and desire to keep our natural environments safe from human **garbage** and activities. Tourism is great for the city but definitely not at the expense of hurting the natural environment and the people who actually live here.'*

*'There simply is not adequate infrastructure to support the influx of permanent and transient residents/ tourists. The impact on **garbage, human waste, trails**- as an example, is appalling.'*

*Tourism ought to lead to the preservation of natural spaces but this has not actually been the result. Instead we see a lot of **trail erosion, garbage, noise, and disrespect for local ecosystems**. We also see industry such as woodfibre threatening ecological recovery in our region. Traffic and safety impacts are severe. We have not seen provincial support for better regional transit options either.'*

*'We need better infrastructure at many high use areas. Complete lack of management including: **garbage cans**, toilet facilities, camping and firebans is no doubt impacting visitor satisfaction and brand reputation.'*

- Residents care deeply about Squamish's natural environment and shared spaces.
- Concerns about garbage, waste, and environmental impact were common, alongside calls for better visitor education and clearer expectations about respectful behaviour.
- These comments reflect pride of place and a desire to protect what makes Squamish special, for residents and visitors alike.

WHO FEELS WHAT

The survey shows some patterns in who tends to be more supportive or more skeptical of tourism.

Support tends to be stronger among:

- Newer residents
- Commuters
- Higher-income households
- People working in or connected to tourism

Skepticism tends to be higher among:

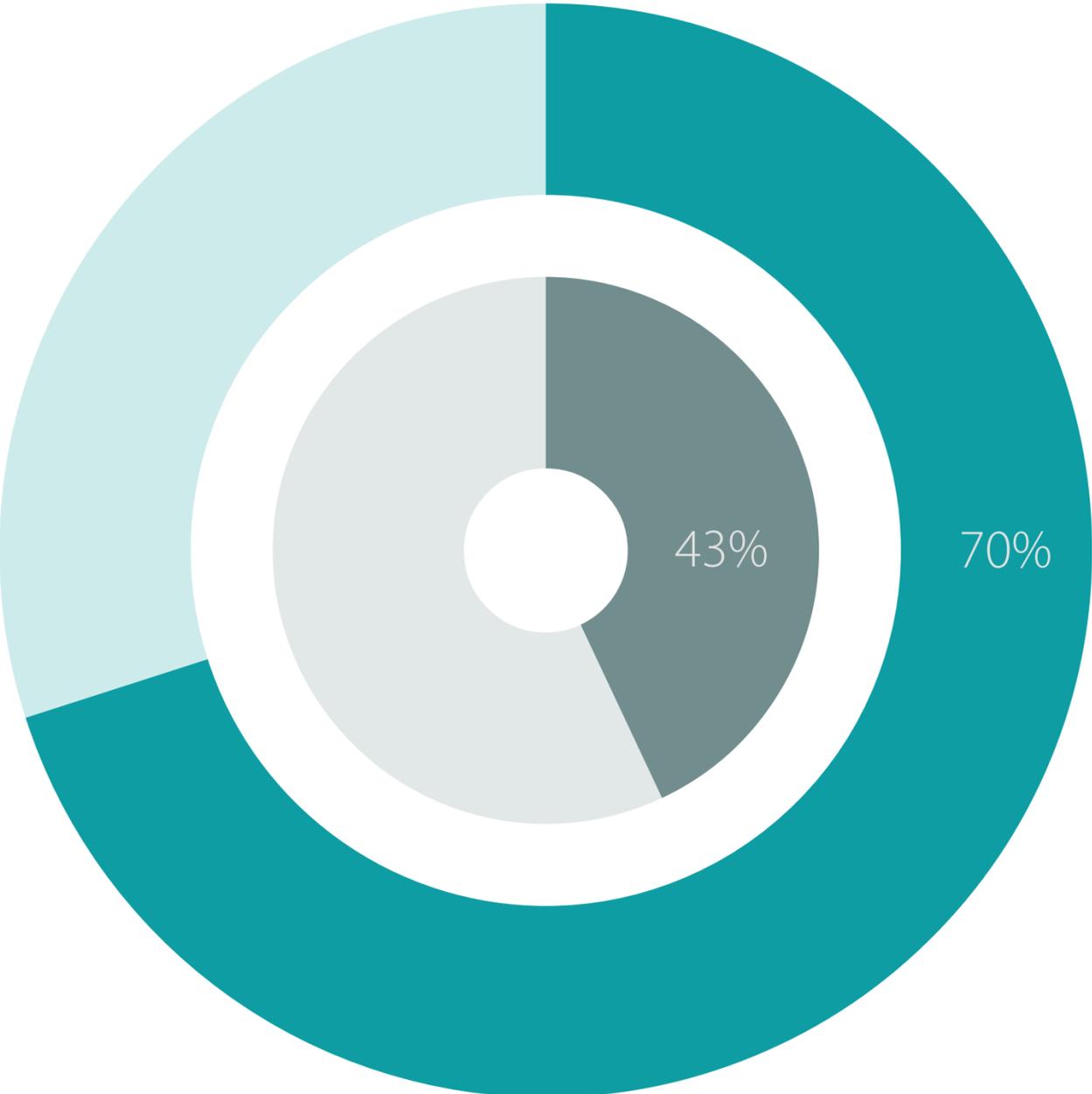
- Long-time residents
- Residents in outlying areas
- Lower- and middle-income households

Importantly, demographics alone do not explain attitudes.

Across the data, lived experience and access to information matter more than age, income, or length of residence. This means perceptions can change, especially when residents see tourism being managed well and delivering local benefits.



HOW SQUAMISH COMPARES TO PROVINCIAL RESULTS



■ 70% of residents across BC and VCM region agree that tourism contributes positively to quality of life
■ 43% of Squamish residents agree that tourism enhances quality of life

Tourism Squamish is sometimes asked how local resident sentiment compares to provincial and regional findings, including Destination British Columbia’s annual Resident Perceptions of Tourism survey.

- In Destination BC’s 2024/25 results, about 70% of residents across BC and the Vancouver, Coast and Mountains (VCM) region agree that tourism contributes positively to quality of life in their community. In Squamish, the comparable figure is lower, with 43% of residents agreeing that tourism enhances quality of life.
- While this difference may appear significant, it reflects important contextual differences between BC as a whole and Squamish, rather than a lack of support for tourism in Squamish.

WHY THE DIFFERENCE EXISTS

Squamish experiences tourism more directly.

Provincial and regional results reflect a wide mix of communities, many where tourism is less visible in daily life. Squamish is a high-visitation community where residents and visitors share the same trails, parks, roads, oceanfront, and recreation areas. As a result, tourism is experienced as a daily, lived reality rather than an abstract benefit.

Economic value is not in question.

Both surveys show strong agreement on tourism's economic importance. In Squamish, **86% of residents agree tourism is important to the local economy (vs. 80% across the VCM region)**. The difference emerges around quality of life, where residents clearly distinguish economic contribution from day-to-day experience.



Shared spaces shape perception.

Squamish residents are heavy users of the same natural and recreational spaces that attract visitors. This overlap can make tourism pressure feel competitive during peak periods, particularly when access, parking, or infrastructure are strained.

Growth and infrastructure matter.

Residents frequently link tourism to traffic, parking, waste, and pressure on natural areas. Even when these challenges are driven by broader growth, tourism is often the most visible factor. Where services and infrastructure lag behind use, perceptions of quality of life are more likely to soften.

QUALIFIED SUPPORT, NOT REJECTION

Squamish residents continue to recognize tourism's economic value, while expressing growing concern about quality of life impacts.

This pattern reflects qualified support for tourism, where benefits are acknowledged, but expectations for better management and shared benefit increase as visitation grows.



What This Means

Taken together, the provincial and Squamish results tell a consistent story:

- Residents broadly accept tourism's economic value
- Quality of life becomes the key question in high-visitation communities
- Effective destination management, not just promotion, becomes essential

For Tourism Squamish, this reinforces the importance of focusing on how tourism is managed, how benefits are shared locally, and how community impacts are addressed as Squamish continues to grow.



FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

HOW THIS RESEARCH IS SHAPING OUR WORK

The Resident Sentiment Survey is not an academic exercise. It directly informs how Tourism Squamish approaches destination management, partnerships, and advocacy.



In response to what residents told us, Tourism Squamish is focusing on:

- Making community benefits of tourism more visible
- Communicating and strengthening visitor education and stewardship efforts
- Supporting locals-first programs and experiences
- Partnering with organizations that care for trails, parks, and waterways
- Using resident data to advocate for infrastructure and service improvements

Our goal is not simply to attract visitors, but to ensure tourism contributes positively to Squamish's long-term community well-being.

LOOKING AHEAD



Squamish is growing, and tourism will continue to be part of that story.

This survey shows that residents remain proud of their community and largely supportive of tourism, while also asking for better balance, clearer benefits, and thoughtful management.

Tourism Squamish is committed to listening, adapting, and working with partners to ensure tourism evolves in a way that reflects community values.

We will continue to track resident sentiment over time, and to share what we learn.

QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK?

For more information about this report or Tourism Squamish's research work, please contact:

courtney@tourismsquamish.com

This report summarizes findings from the 2025 Squamish Resident Sentiment Survey conducted by Politikos Research. The full technical report is available upon request.