

RESIDENT TOURISM SENTIMENT STUDY

CHANDLERTHINKS

DESTINATION BRANDING SPECIALISTS

Resident Sentiment Study - Main Observations

1. Residents Strongly Recognize Tourism as the Economic Lifeblood of Blowing Rock

Residents overwhelmingly view tourism as **essential to the town's economy**, citing local business survival, jobs, tax revenue, and the ability to fund town services and amenities as the greatest benefits tourism provides.

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Resident Sentiment Study - Main Observations

2. Support for Tourism Is High—When It Aligns with Outdoor Recreation and Quality Experiences

Residents want tourism to focus more on **outdoor recreation, scenic drives, arts and culture, and heritage**, rather than unchecked growth. There is clear support for experiences that fit Blowing Rock's character and leverage its natural assets.

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Resident Sentiment Study - Main Observations

3. Parking, Traffic, and Congestion Are the Top Tension Points

The most consistent concern is **downtown parking and traffic congestion**, especially during peak periods. Residents are calling for practical solutions—additional parking capacity, shuttles, better wayfinding, and improved pedestrian safety—to reduce daily friction.

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Resident Sentiment Study - Main Observations

4. Residents Want Growth Managed—Not Accelerated

Many residents express a desire to **slow or cap development**, protect the town's scale and charm, and tighten zoning and development rules. Concerns about hotel growth and short-term rentals reflect a broader desire to ensure infrastructure and quality of life keep pace with visitation.

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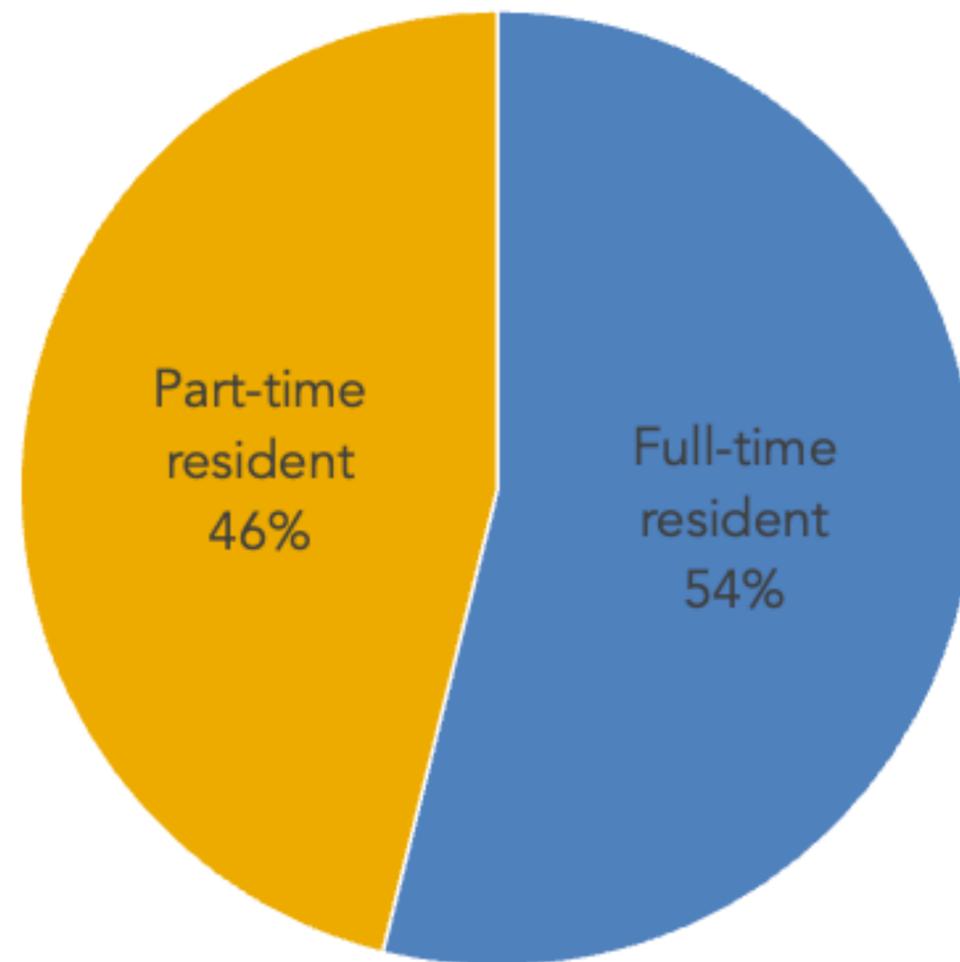


Q: Are you a full-time or part-time resident of Blowing Rock?

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Respondents are split between full-time residents and part-time residents.



SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: Are you a full-time or part-time resident of Blowing Rock?

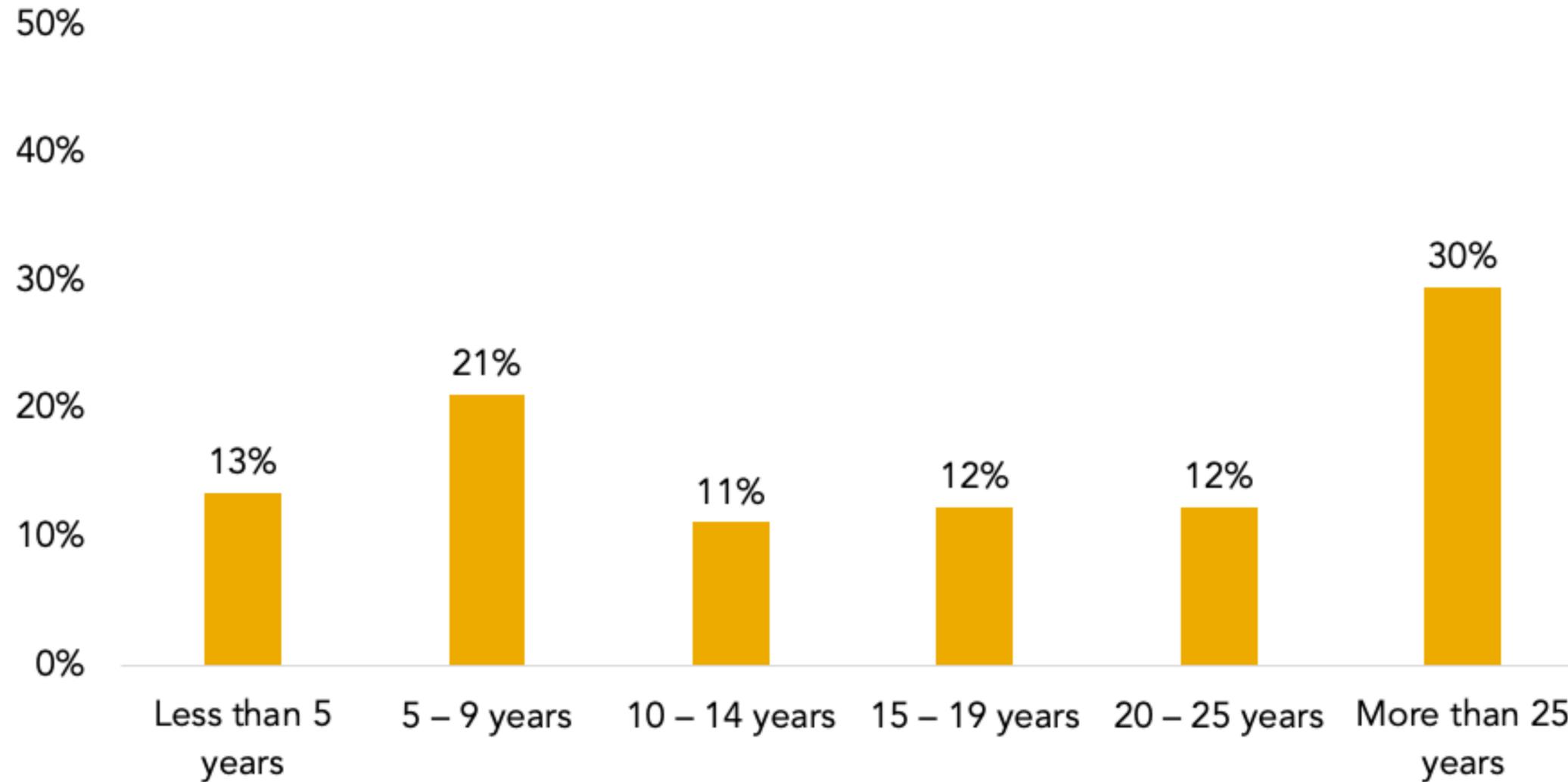


Q: How long have you been a resident of Blowing Rock?

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



There is longevity with residents.



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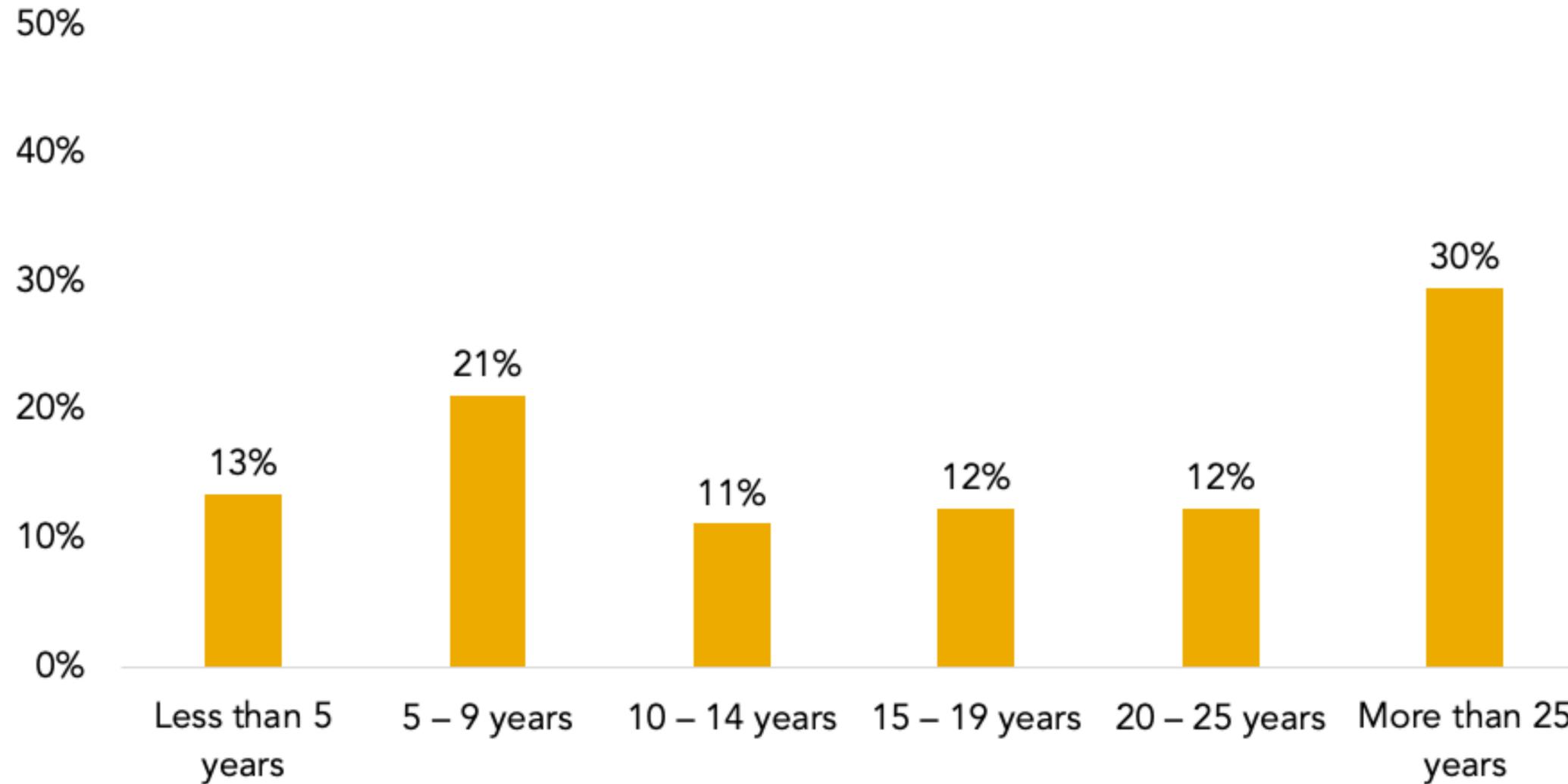


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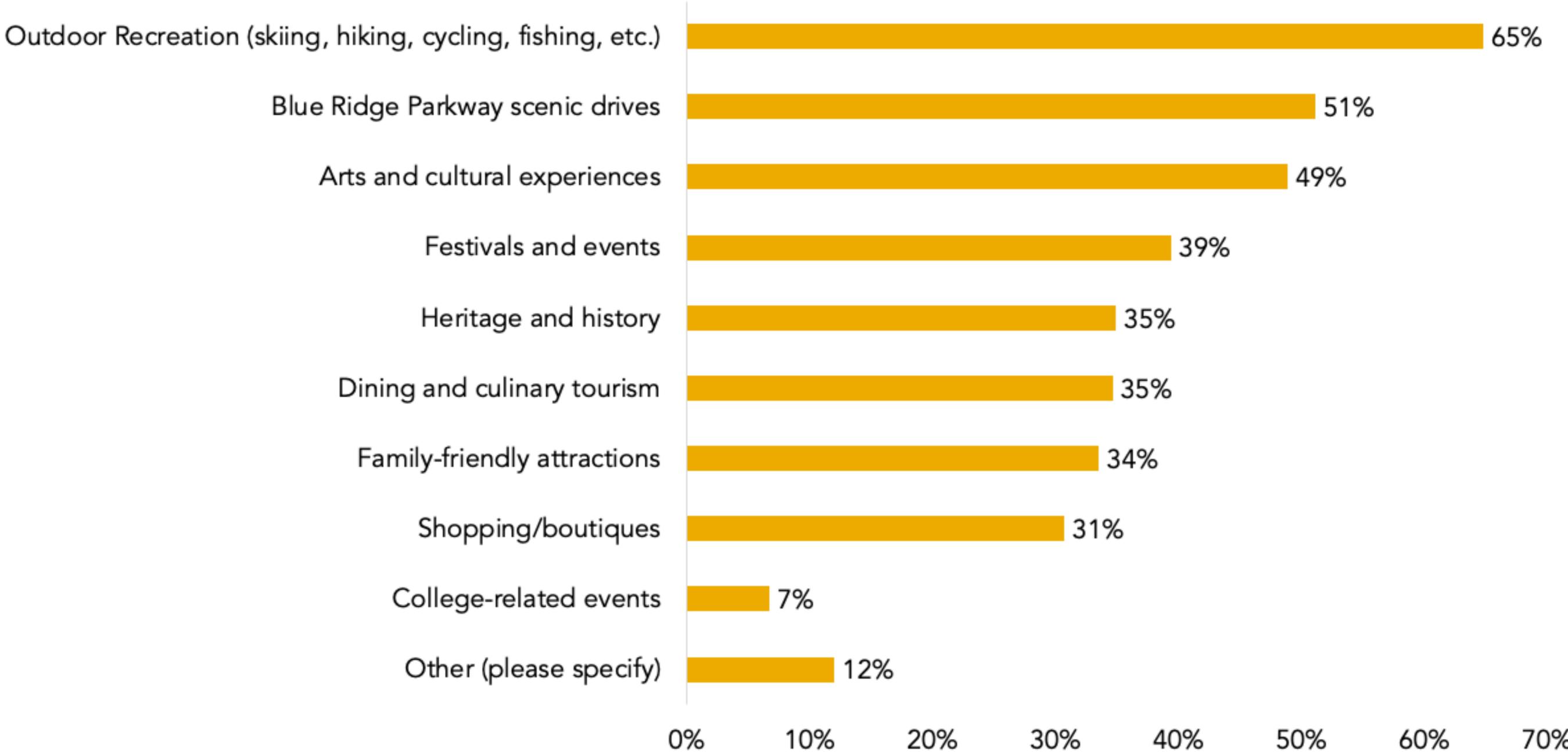


Q: What types of tourism do you believe Blowing Rock should emphasize more? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED]

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Residents believe Blowing Rock should emphasize outdoor recreation more.



SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What types of tourism do you believe Blowing Rock should emphasize more? [MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED]



Q: What do you believe is the biggest challenge tourism creates for Blowing Rock residents?

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Parking, traffic and congestion is the biggest challenge tourism creates for residents.

1. Parking, Traffic, and Congestion (Overwhelming #1 Issue)

By far the most frequently cited concern is **parking availability and traffic congestion**, especially during peak weekends, holidays, and leaf season.

- Residents report avoiding downtown altogether due to lack of parking.
- Frustration is amplified by paid parking systems, fines, and limited resident accommodations.
- Traffic congestion impacts daily errands, access to the post office, safety, and emergency response.
- Pedestrian safety issues (speeding, jaywalking, narrow sidewalks) are repeatedly noted.

2. Overcrowding & Loss of Resident Access

Residents consistently express that **tourism crowds them out of their own town**.

- Restaurants are inaccessible without long waits or reservations.
- Events and peak weekends limit residents' ability to enjoy amenities they help support.
- Many residents plan their lives *around* avoiding tourists rather than participating in town life.

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What do you believe is the biggest challenge tourism creates for Blowing Rock residents?



Challenges tourism creates cont..

3. Threat to Small-Town Charm, Character, and Sense of Place

A deep emotional concern centers on **losing Blowing Rock's charm and identity**.

- Overdevelopment, dense condos, hotels, and short-term rentals are seen as eroding the village feel.
- Residents fear Blowing Rock becoming "just another resort town."
- Visual clutter (signage, parking infrastructure, development scale) is cited as diminishing charm.
- Many believe tourism success is ironically threatening the very qualities that attract visitors.

4. Housing Affordability & Workforce Sustainability

Tourism-driven demand is seen as **pricing out residents and essential workers**.

- Rising housing costs and proliferation of short-term rentals limit long-term housing.
- Local workers (teachers, police, service staff) struggle to live in or near town.
- Staffing shortages at restaurants and businesses are linked directly to housing costs.

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What do you believe is the biggest challenge tourism creates for Blowing Rock residents?



Challenges tourism creates cont..

5. Infrastructure Strain & Governance Concerns

Residents express concern that **infrastructure has not kept pace with tourism growth.**

- Roads, parking, water, and public services feel overburdened.
- Many believe residents disproportionately bear the cost while businesses benefit most.
- Frustration exists with perceived prioritization of tourists and developers over residents.
- Calls for better long-term planning, impact fees, and tourism paying its “fair share” are common.

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What do you believe is the biggest challenge tourism creates for Blowing Rock residents?

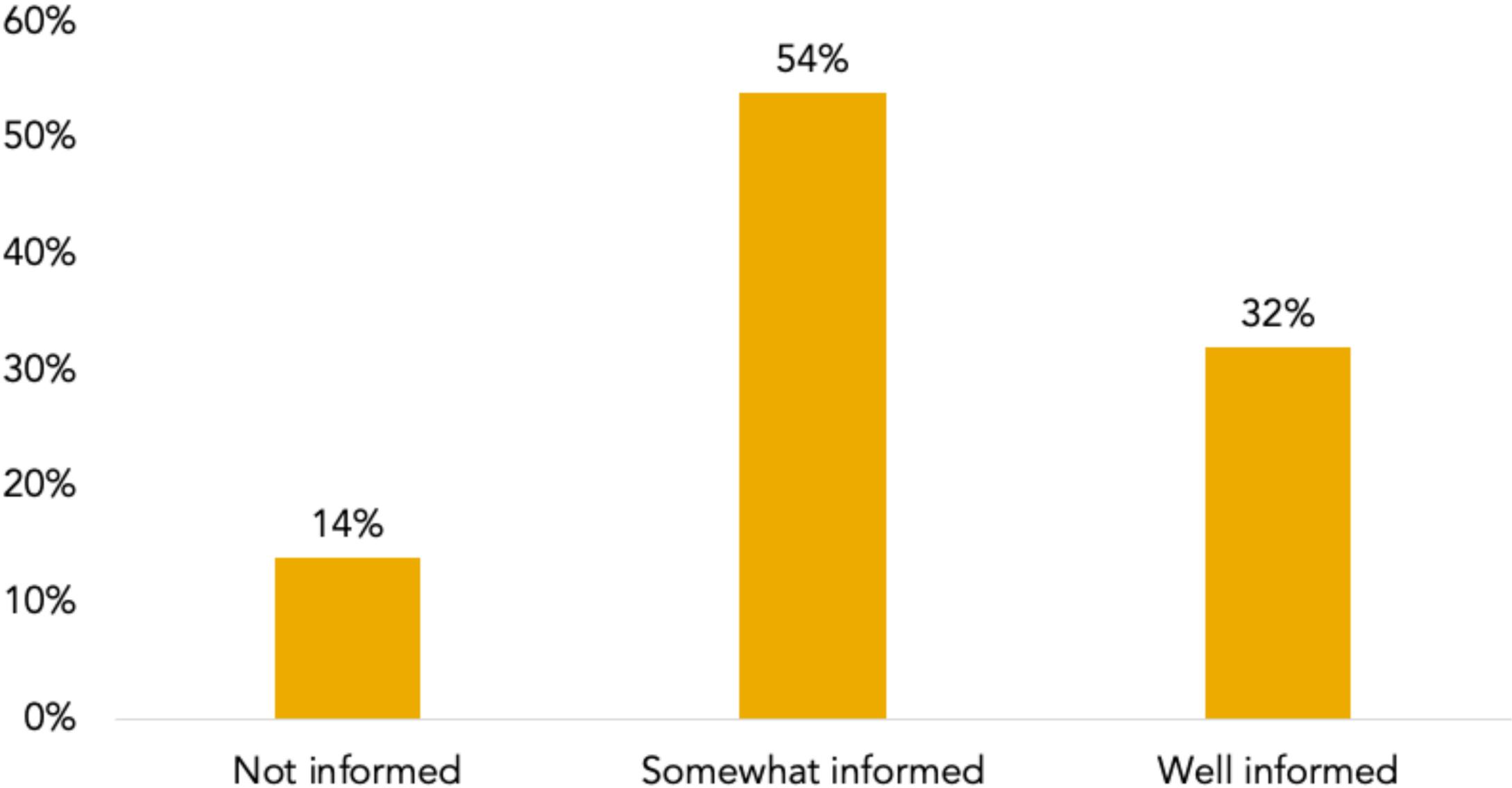


Q: How well-informed do you feel about tourism-related plans, initiatives, or events in Blowing Rock?

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Residents feel informed about tourism tourism related plans, initiatives, and events.



SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: How well-informed do you feel about tourism-related plans, initiatives, or events in Blowing Rock?



Q: What is the greatest benefit tourism brings to Blowing Rock overall?

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Residents feel informed about tourism tourism related plans, initiatives, and events.

1. Economic Lifeblood of the Town (Overwhelming #1)
2. Survival & Success of Local Businesses
3. Jobs & Employment Opportunities
4. Tax Revenue & Town Services
5. Vibrancy, Amenities & Quality of Life

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What is the greatest benefit tourism brings to Blowing Rock overall?



Q: What suggestions do you have for improving the balance between tourism and resident life?

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY



Parking and traffic are the top suggestions for improving the balance between tourism and resident life.

- **Fix parking**

- More downtown parking capacity (another deck/level)
- Remote lots on/near **321** with **shuttles/trolleys**
- Better wayfinding to existing lots/garage
- More bathrooms/trash cans as supporting infrastructure

- **Manage traffic, pedestrian safety, and congestion**

- Better traffic control on Main/221/Sunset; protected turns
- More police presence for flow + crosswalk compliance
- Speed limit enforcement; safer crossings
- Consider pedestrian-only zones or Main Street closures on peak weekends

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What suggestions do you have for improving the balance between tourism and resident life?



- **Slow or cap growth and tighten development rules**

- “Hold the line” on density; protect charm/scale
- Stronger zoning/building codes; fewer waivers/exception approvals
- Moratorium/limits on new hotels/large condo projects until infrastructure catches up

- **Regulate short-term rentals and tourist housing**

- Limit STR proliferation (especially in residential neighborhoods)
- Higher STR impact/visitor taxes; enforce existing rules
- Reduce “places to sleep” to reduce peak-day pressure

- **Prioritize residents through access, perks, and engagement**

- Resident parking decals/passes; free or preferred resident parking
- Resident discounts (“locals nights”), resident cards, priority reservations/tickets
- Ongoing resident input: transparency, better communication, and meaningful participation in decisions

SOURCE: RESIDENT SENTIMENT STUDY Q: What suggestions do you have for improving the balance between tourism and resident life?

