

2024 COOKE CITY AREA

REGIONAL SURVEY OF PARK COUNTY, MT AND PARK COUNTY, WY RESIDENTS

FINAL RESULTS



MONTANA'S
YELLOWSTONE
COUNTRY



RRC

INSTITUTE FOR
TOURISM & RECREATION RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this study was twofold:
 - 1) Capture a representative sample of the perceptions of residents in the Region about seasonal access and recreation.
 - 2) Further explore other topics in the Region such as quality of life, tourism and recreation, and plans for the future.
- The target audience included residents and/or seasonal residents with mailing addresses in Park County, Montana and Park County, Wyoming.
- The area containing Park County, Montana and Park County, Wyoming is called the “Region” throughout this report.
- Residents of Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass and the Crandall area were not included in this Regional survey. They were surveyed in an earlier, complementary, survey.

- Surveys were accepted online and by mail-in from March 28 thru April 30, 2024.

644

COOKE CITY REGION
RESIDENT SURVEYS WERE
COLLECTED

- Approximately 318 surveys came from Park County, Montana, with another 326 surveys coming from Park County, Wyoming.
- Responses were almost exclusively from those calling the Region their primary residence, with the majority being residents of the Region for 15+ years.

Survey Distribution & Weighting

- Respondents were contacted via a mailed paper survey with a password-protect option for respondents to alternatively participate online.
- A total of **4,900 surveys** were distributed to valid mailing addresses in Park County, Montana (2,422) and Park County, Wyoming (2,478).
- To better represent the residents of each of these counties, responses were weighted based on the U.S. Census 2022 5-Year American Community Survey for both counties.



LIVING IN THE AREA

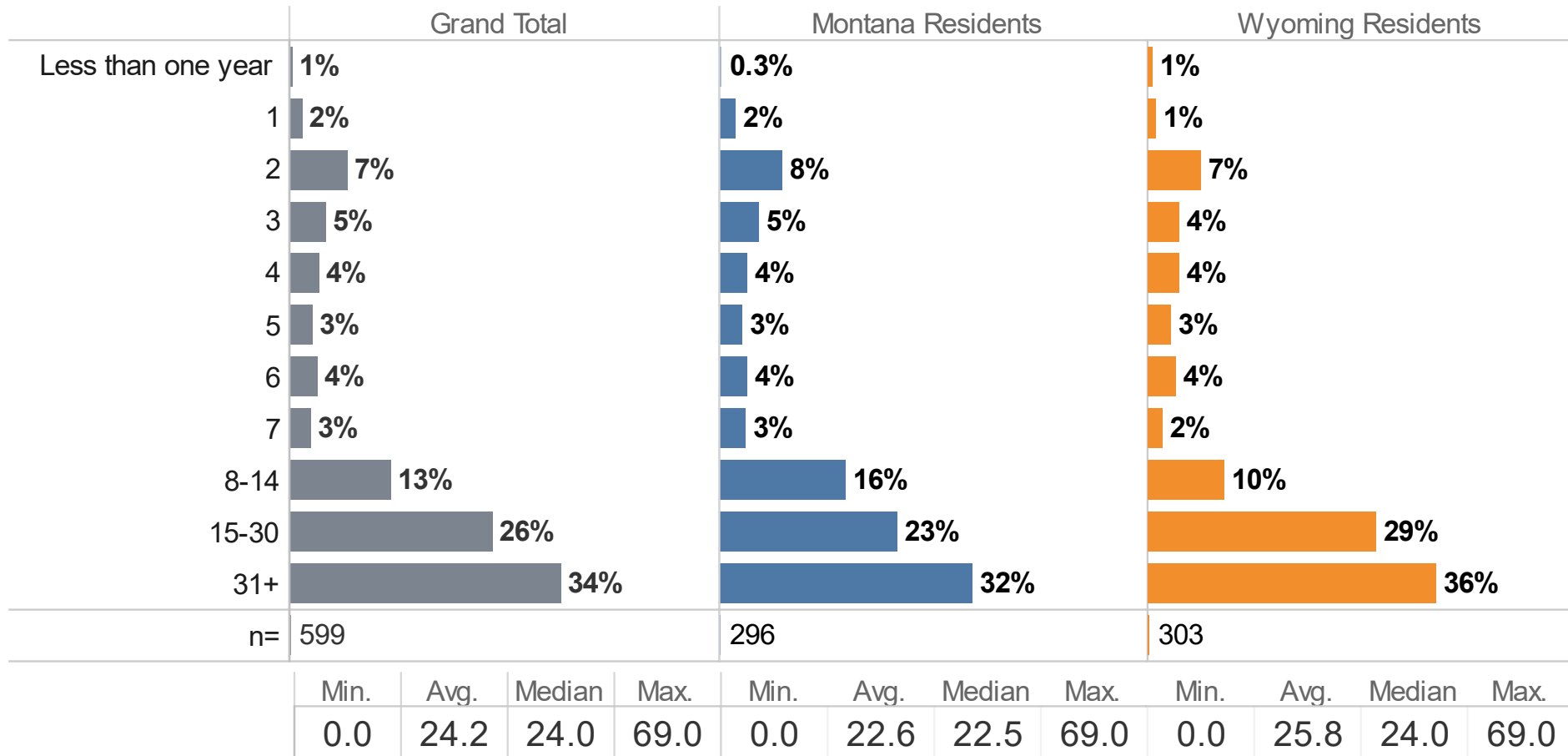
AREA OF THE REGION

Top 5 Cities of Residence

	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
Livingston	38%	77%	
Cody	34%		66%
Powell	15%		30%
Gardiner	5%	9%	
Emigrant	3%	6%	
Other	6%	8%	4%




RESIDENCY LENGTH

How long have you lived in the Park County, WY / Park County, MT Region? (Capped at 70 Years)



RESIDENCE TYPE

What describes your residence in the Region?

	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
Primary residence/Year-round resident (spend 6 months or more per year in the Region)	 99%	 100%	 99%
Seasonal resident/Second homeowner (spend less than 6 months per year in the Region)	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
Non-resident owner of business or commercial property	0.1%		0.2%
n=	636	315	321

HOME OWNERSHIP

Do you own or rent your residence in the Region?

	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
I own my home	90%	87%	92%
I rent my home	8%	11%	6%
Other: (Please specify)	2%	1%	2%
n=	641	316	325

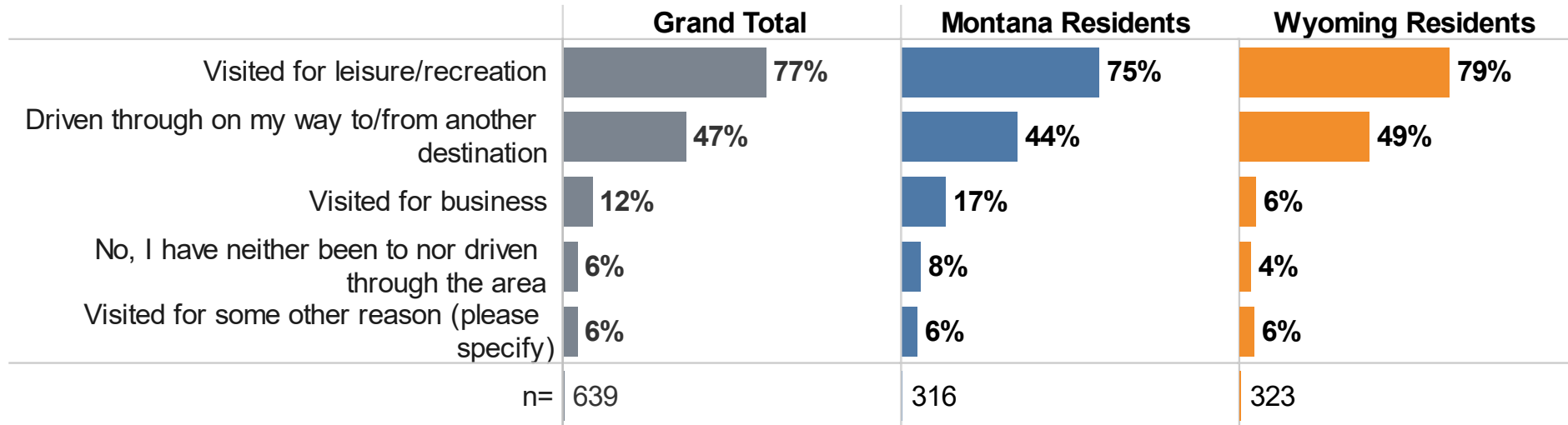
RECREATION & ACCESS IN THE REGION

RECREATION ACCESS IN THE REGION

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

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 - Very dissatisfied	2 - Somewhat dissatisfied	3 - Neutral	4 - Somewhat satisfied	5 - Very satisfied
Summer recreation	Montana Residents	3.8	302	14%	7%	9%	24%	45%
	Wyoming Residents	4.1	312	6%	15%	5%	14%	60%
Winter recreation	Montana Residents	3.8	292	10%	7%	17%	25%	41%
	Wyoming Residents	3.7	292	8%	16%	14%	20%	42%

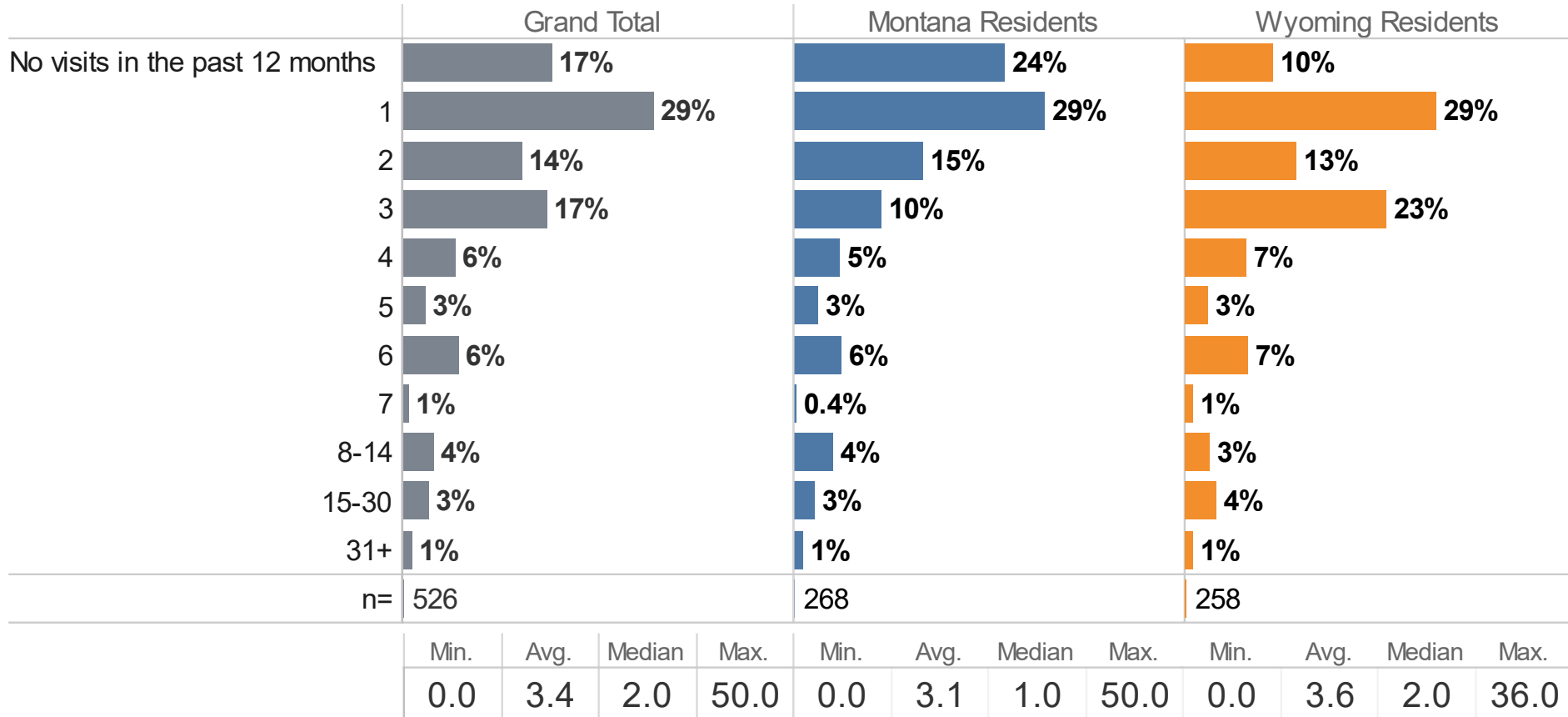
Have you been to Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass area?



If you HAVE BEEN to Cooke City/Silver Gate, have you been there between the months of December to March?

	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
No, I have neither been to nor driven through the area during these months	47%	26%	67%
Visited for leisure/recreation	45%	62%	30%
Visited for business	9%	16%	2%
Driven through on my way to/from another destination	7%	9%	5%
Visited for some other reason (please specify)	3%	5%	2%
n=	600	291	309

If you HAVE BEEN to Cooke City/Silver Gate, how many visits have you made to Cooke City/Silver Gate over the past 12 months?



ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

If you **HAVE BEEN** to Cooke City/Silver Gate, what are some of the specific activities you have taken part in in the Cooke City/Silver Gate area?

	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
Scenic driving/viewing scenery	84%	81%	86%
Viewing wildlife	60%	60%	60%
Hiking/walking	48%	48%	48%
Fishing	24%	17%	31%
Photography	23%	23%	23%
Snowmobiling	22%	25%	19%
Off-road vehicle (ATV/ORV)	22%	14%	29%
Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing	10%	16%	5%
Backcountry skiing/snowboarding	9%	12%	7%
Hunting	7%	4%	9%
Running/jogging	6%	5%	6%
Water recreation (e.g., kayaking, canoeing, boating)	5%	3%	7%
Biking (road or mountain)	5%	4%	5%
Horseback riding	3%	2%	4%
Climbing	1%	0.5%	1%
Other activities: (Please specify)	12%	14%	11%
n=	593	288	305

REASONS FOR NOT VISITING THE REGION

If you have NEVER been to Cooke City/Silver Gate, are there any specific reasons for this?

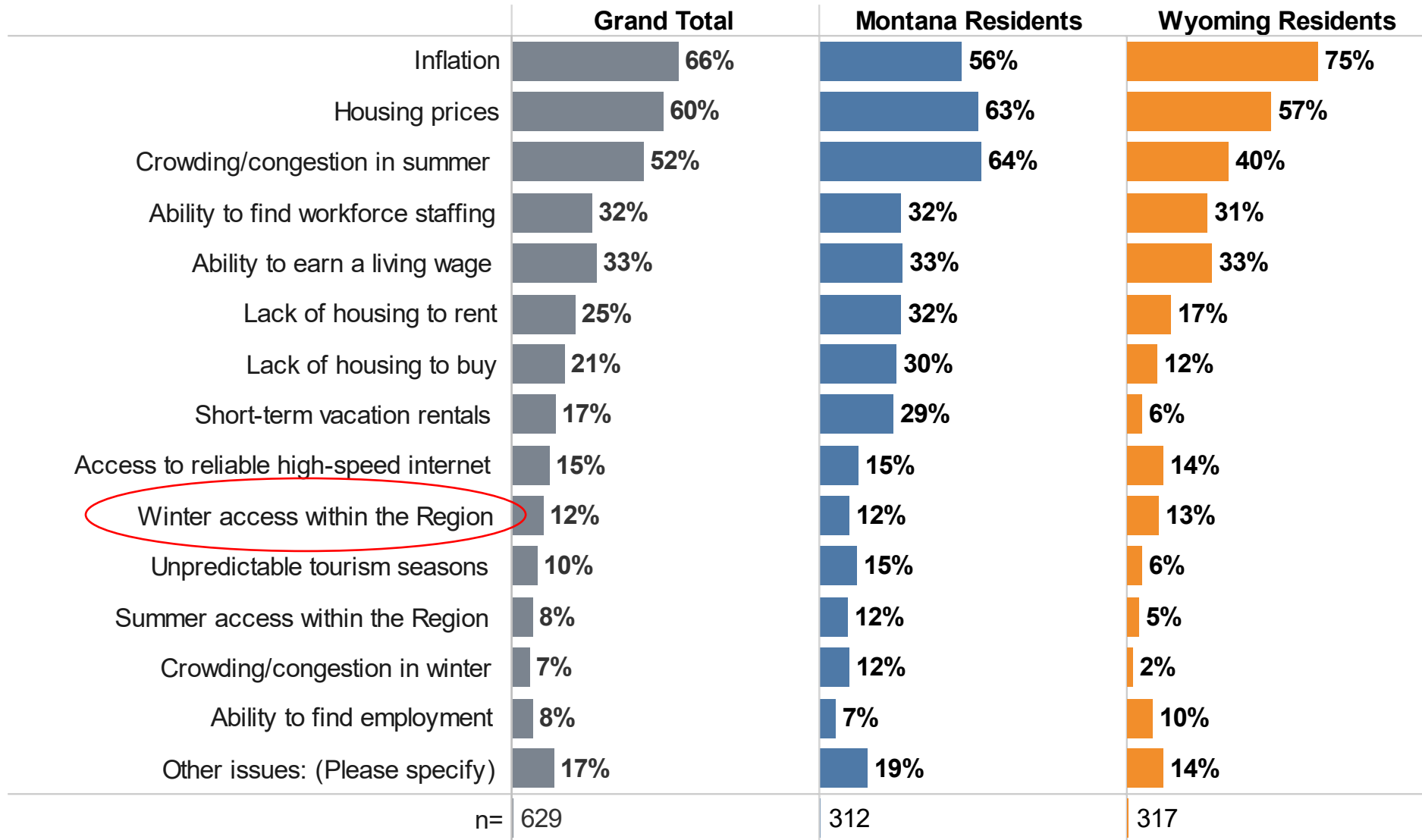
	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
There isn't a specific reason I haven't been to Cooke City/Silver Gate	43%	53%	26%
Don't know enough about it	35%	19%	61%
Distance/Time to get to Cooke City/Silver Gate	26%	32%	16%
Lack of interest in the area	14%	18%	7%
Too difficult to get to in the winter	14%	19%	4%
Too difficult to get to in the summer	5%	5%	4%
Cost	5%	5%	4%
Other: (Please specify)	17%	20%	12%
n=	31	19	12



CURRENT TOPICS IN THE REGION

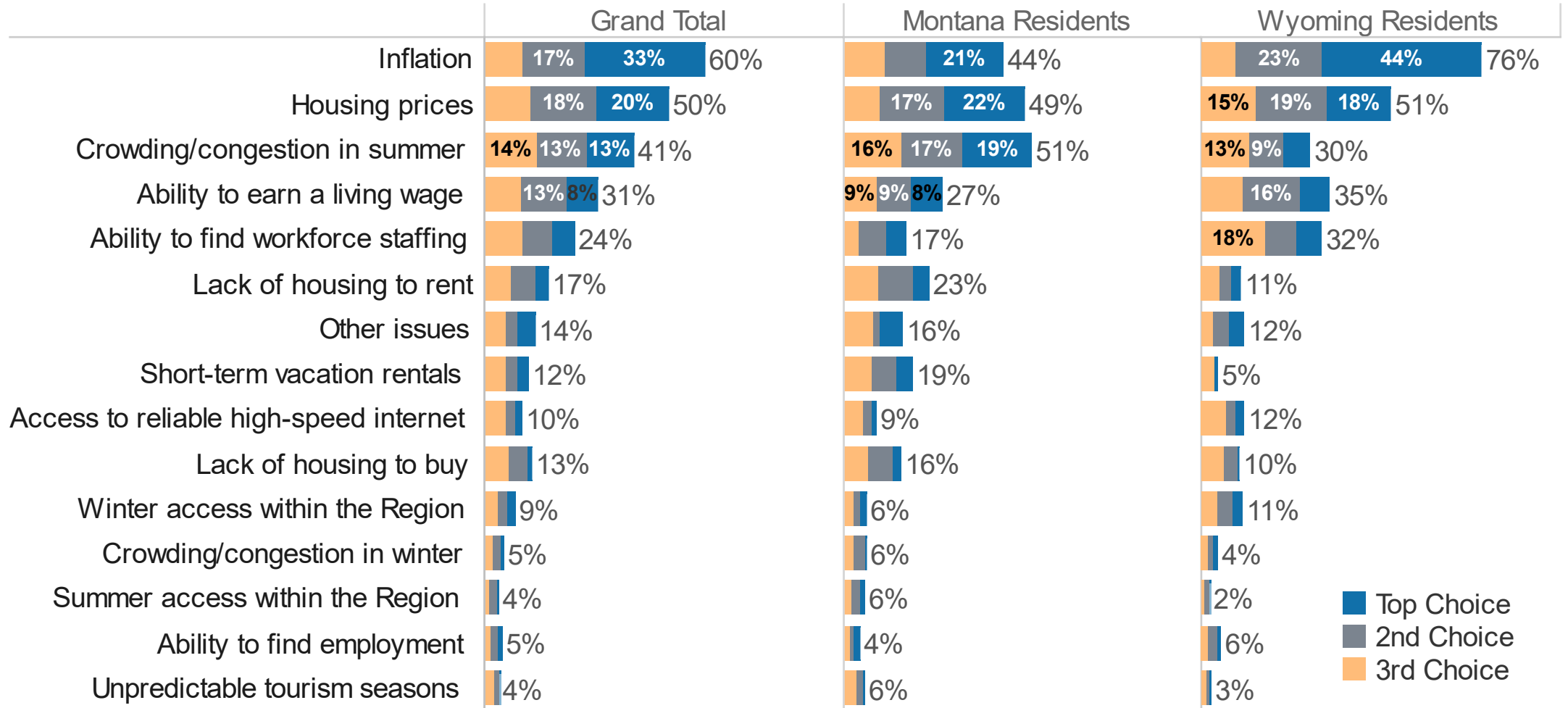
CHALLENGES IN THE REGION

What are the biggest impacts or challenges affecting you in the Region?

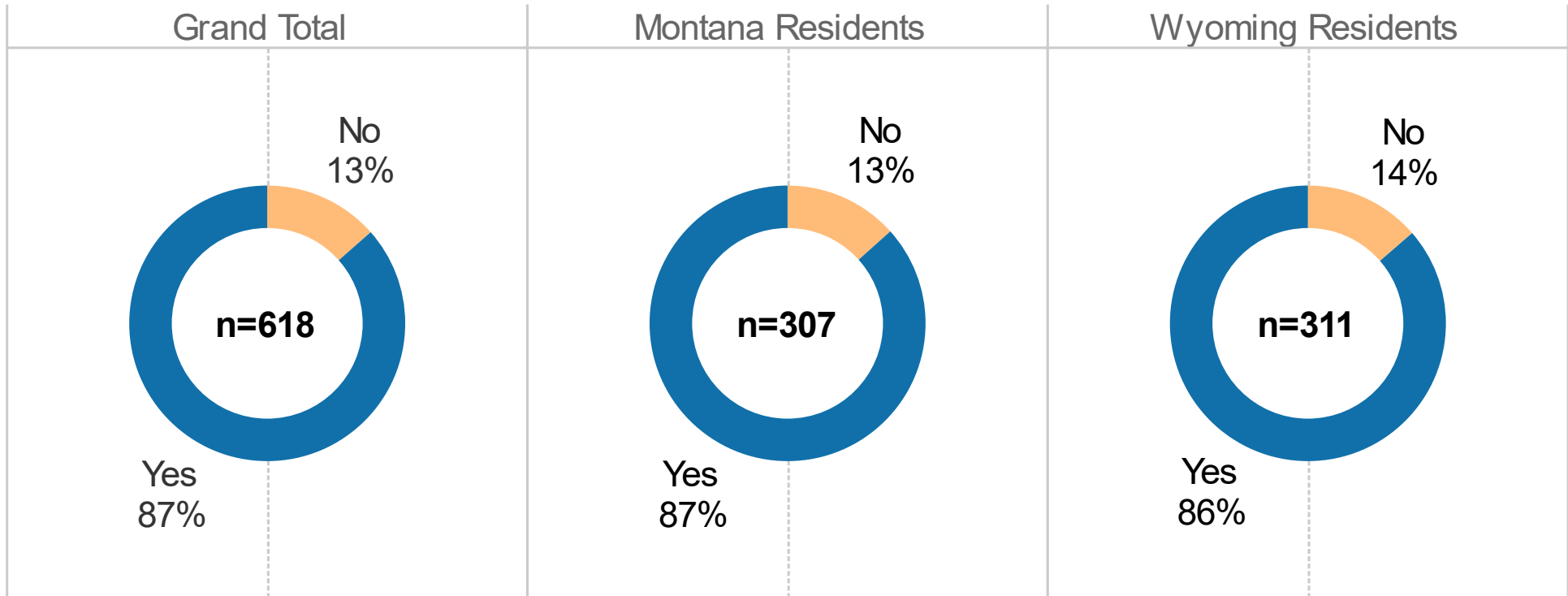


CHALLENGES – TOP 3

Which THREE issues or challenges from the previous question do you feel are the most important?



Prior to this survey, were you aware that the section of US212 described above was unplowed in winter months and used as a snowmobile trail?



HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS IN THE REGION

Given the following hypothetical winter road access scenarios on US 212 East of Cooke City, how likely are you to visit the Cooke City area in the future under each scenario?

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 - Very unlikely	2 - Somewhat unlikely	3 - Neutral/No change in likelihood	4 - Somewhat likely	5 - Very likely
Open and maintain US 212 East of Cooke City and add replacement trails and additional parking.	Montana Residents	3.2	264	17%	16%	27%	16%	25%
	Wyoming Residents	3.6	283	13%	8%	23%	19%	36%
Open and maintain US 212 East of Cooke City with no additional actions.	Montana Residents	2.9	275	27%	11%	27%	15%	20%
	Wyoming Residents	3.4	290	18%	11%	19%	20%	33%
Continue to leave US 212 East of Cooke City unplowed and closed to vehicle traffic.	Montana Residents	3.1	279	26%	6%	30%	8%	30%
	Wyoming Residents	2.3	294	47%	16%	14%	8%	15%

LIKELIHOOD TO RECREATE IN THE REGION

To what extent would your likelihood of recreating/visiting Yellowstone National Park be impacted if US212 were open to vehicle traffic during the winter?

Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 - Much less likely to visit	2 - Somewhat less likely to visit	3 - No change in likelihood of visiting	4 - Somewhat more likely to visit	5 - Much more likely to visit
Montana Residents	3.0	309	10%	8%	61%	14%	8%
Wyoming Residents	3.6	320	8%	2%	38%	21%	31%

IMPACT ON RECREATION IN THE REGION

If the currently unplowed section of US212 were to be plowed each winter with additional parking and a replacement trail, please indicate whether you would be likely to change your participation in each of the following :

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 - Much less often	2 - Somewhat less often	3 - No change	4 - Somewhat more often	5 - Much more often
I would go to Cooke City in the winter for general recreation/leisure purposes	Montana Residents	3.2	294	7%	5%	64%	13%	11%
	Wyoming Residents	3.8	293	5%	2%	37%	21%	35%
I would take trips to recreate in Yellowstone National Park in the winter season	Montana Residents	3.2	295	10%	2%	61%	15%	12%
	Wyoming Residents	3.8	297	9%	1%	31%	20%	38%
I would go to Cooke City in the winter to participate in nature viewing (wildlife, scenery, etc.)	Montana Residents	3.1	291	7%	4%	64%	16%	9%
	Wyoming Residents	3.8	300	5%	1%	42%	16%	37%
I would go to Cooke City in the winter to participate in nonmotorized snowsports (skiing, snowshoeing, etc.)	Montana Residents	3.1	293	8%	7%	59%	16%	10%
	Wyoming Residents	3.5	286	8%	1%	49%	15%	28%
I would go to Cooke City in the winter to participate in motorized snowsports (snowmobiling)	Montana Residents	2.9	284	12%	5%	71%	7%	5%
	Wyoming Residents	3.2	283	8%	5%	59%	8%	20%

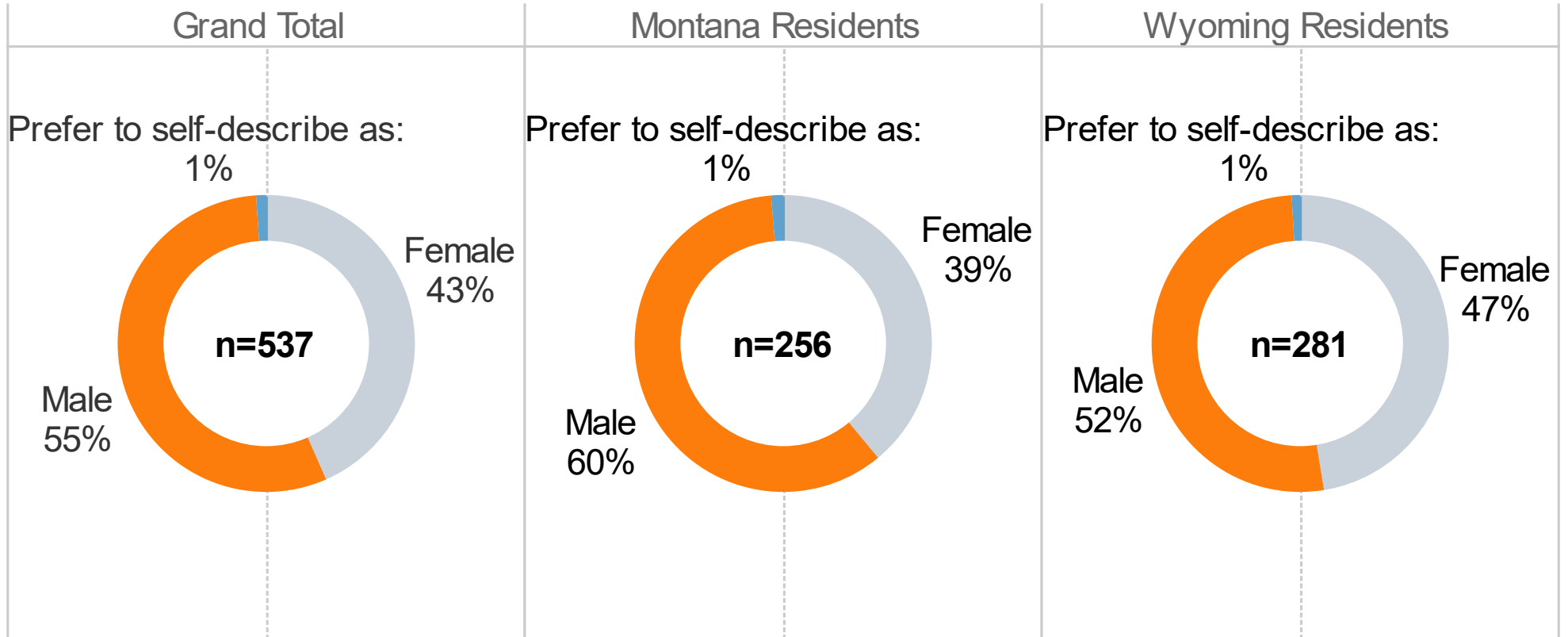


DEMOGRAPHICS

What is your age?

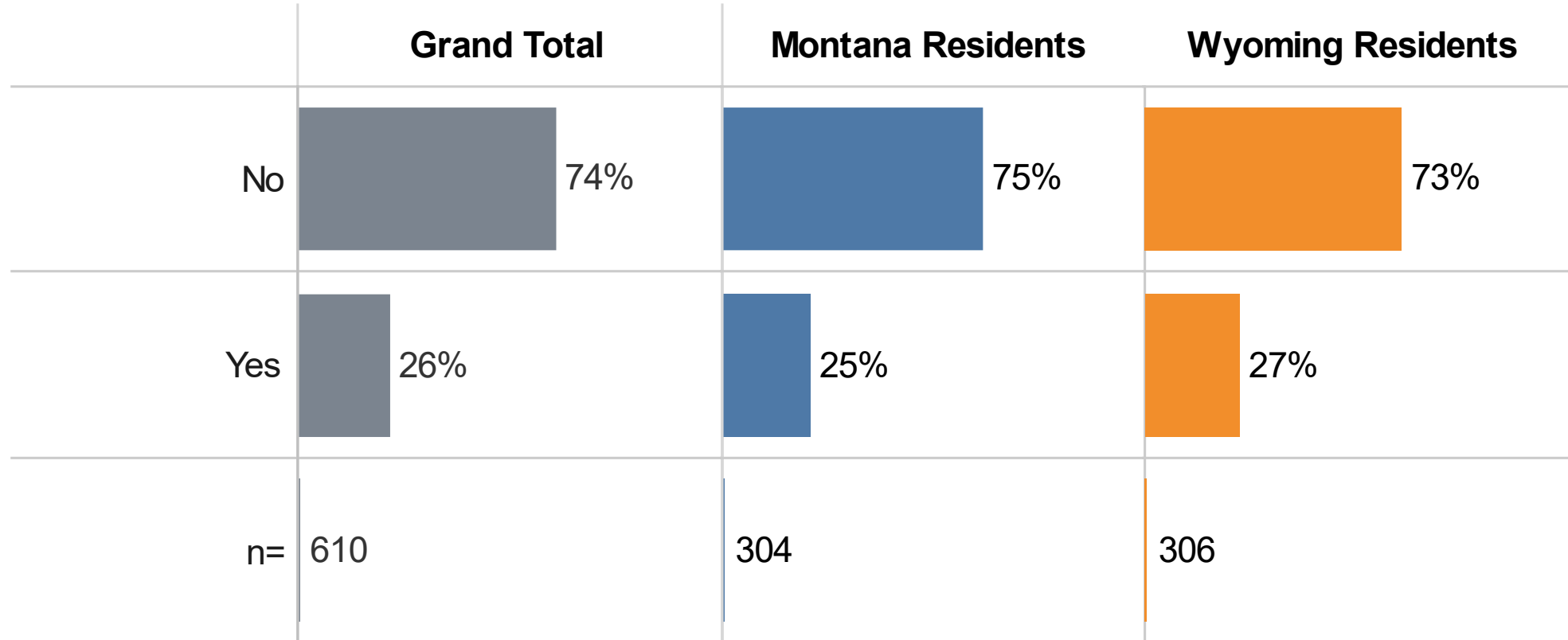
	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
18 – 24	8%	7%	9%
25 – 34	14%	15%	13%
35 - 44	15%	16%	15%
45 - 54	14%	15%	14%
55 - 64	19%	20%	19%
65 - 74	18%	18%	18%
75 and older	12%	11%	13%
n=	633	311	322

What is your gender?



CHILDREN AT HOME

Do you live in household with children under 18 at home?



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

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

	Grand Total	Montana Residents	Wyoming Residents
Less than \$25,000	4%	3%	5%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	15%	16%	14%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	34%	38%	30%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	28%	27%	29%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	9%	10%	9%
\$200,000 to \$249,999	5%	3%	7%
\$250,000 or more	5%	3%	8%
n=	518	264	254



CONCLUSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS

KEY FINDINGS



- Respondents were split largely between the two Park counties, **49.5% of respondents were from Park County, Montana**, with another **50.5% representing Park County, Wyoming**. In both samples, most respondents were primary residents (99%+) who have lived in the Region for 15 or more years (55%+).



- Respondents were largely consistent with the top three challenges facing the Region; **1) inflation (60%)**, **2) housing prices (50%)**, and **3) crowding/congestion in the summer (41%)**. Wyoming respondents were particularly concerned over inflation, with **76% citing it among their top three challenges** in the Region.



- Respondents were familiar with the Cooke City/Silver Gate/Colter Pass area, with **94% having visited for some reason** and **86% having prior knowledge of the section of US 212 remaining unplowed in winter months and used as a snowmobile trail**.

KEY FINDINGS



- When given hypothetical scenarios regarding road access on US 212, respondents were consistent regardless of state of origin in their preference. On average, **both respondent types slightly preferred opening and maintaining US 212 with replacement trails and additional parking**, and were **more likely to visit Cooke City in the future under the scenario** (3.2 on a 5-point scale for Montana respondents, 3.6 for Wyoming respondents).
 - **However, Wyoming respondents' second highest choice was opening and maintaining the road with no additional action (3.4)**, with Montana residents preferring to leave the road as is (3.1).



- Consistent with their higher average interest in plowing the road with additional trails/parking, Wyoming residents were also more likely to recreate in Cooke City and Yellowstone in the winter than Montana respondents (ranging from 0.3 – 0.7 points on average). That said, **Montana residents were most likely to not be impacted by the decision**, with a majority (59%+) unlikely to change their level of participation in the Region due to plowing the road with additional trails/parking.

CONCLUSION

- Cooke City and winter access along US 212 are topics that the surrounding Region is aware of, as the majority of respondents knew of the issue before taking the survey.
 - However, this knowledge does not necessarily register as a major problem for residents of the Region, as **less than one in ten respondents identified winter access as one of their top three challenges to the Region.**
- Results are largely consistent with Cooke City Resident results, **with a slight majority/plurality of respondents in preference of the hypothetical solution “Open and maintain US 212 East of Cooke City and add replacement trails and additional parking.”**
 - This sentiment is strongest across the board among Wyoming residents, who are historically the group that would have the greatest challenges reaching Cooke City or Yellowstone in the winter.
 - Despite lowered average sentiment than Wyoming residents, and a secondary preference to “Continue to leave US 212 East of Cooke City unplowed and closed to vehicle traffic”, Montana residents anticipate being largely unimpacted by the hypothetical decision to plow US 212, with most stating their travel habits to Cooke City and Yellowstone having “no change”.
- Because of this, **there is reason to believe that plowing US 212 with additional action would benefit Wyoming residents while impacting Montana residents minimally.**



THANK YOU!



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