

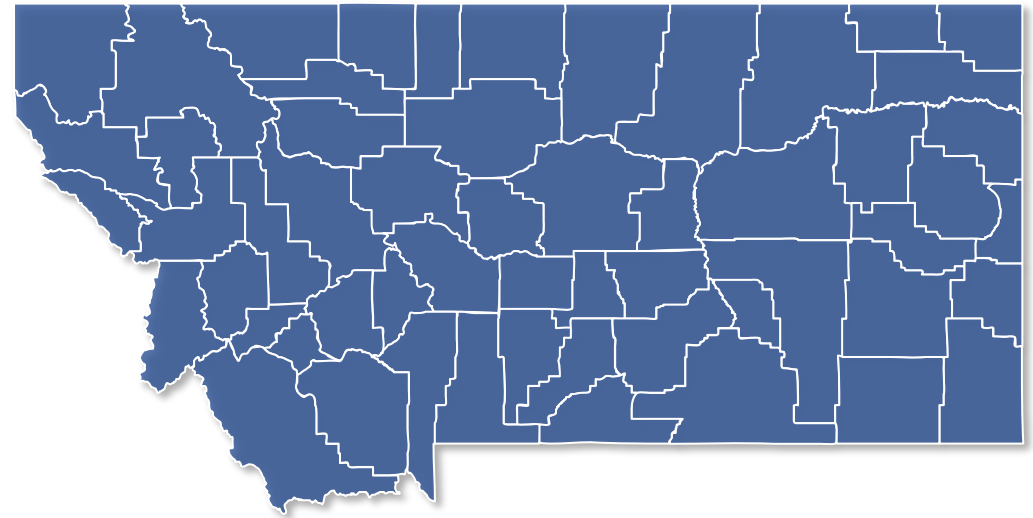
University of Montana Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative

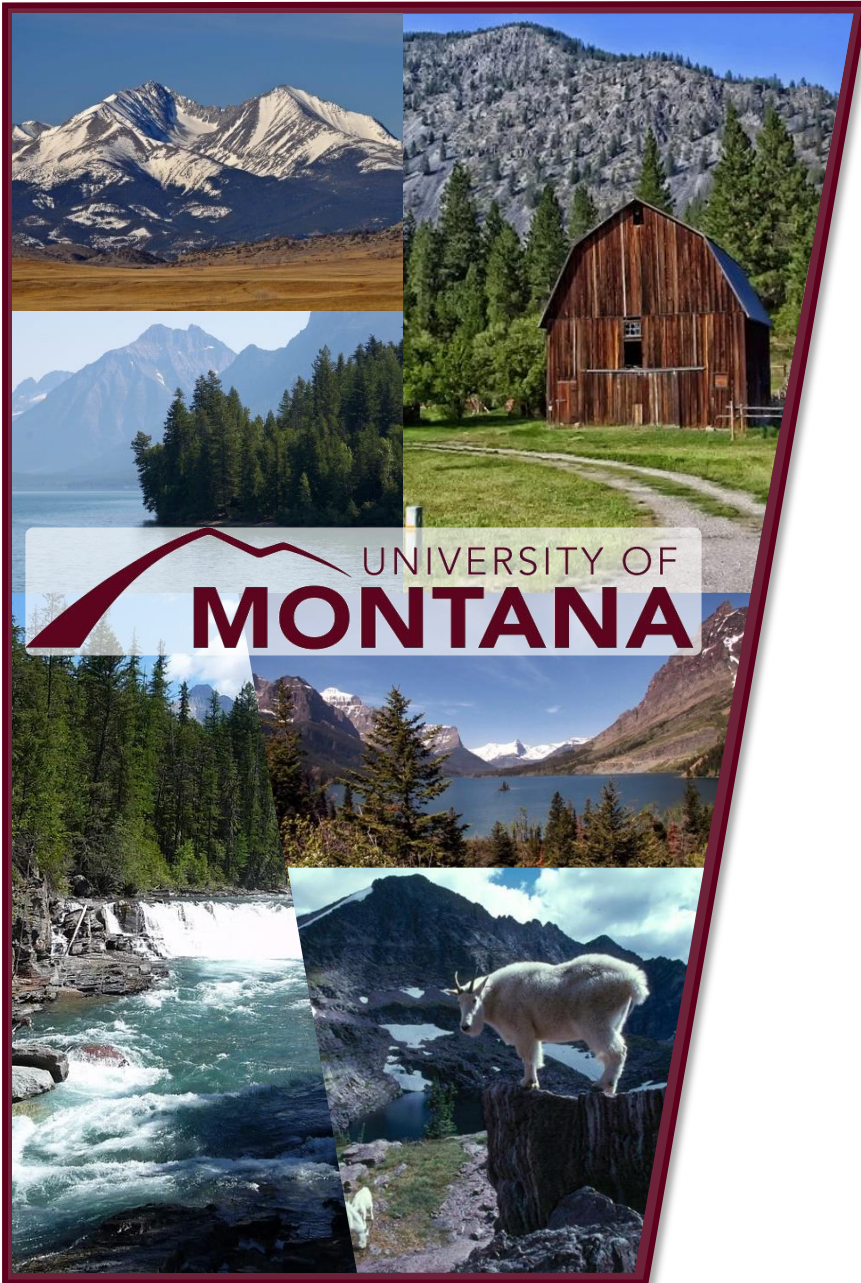
2024 Montana Statewide Survey Findings



Methodology

- Survey was conducted by a bipartisan research team: New Bridge Strategy (Republican) and FM3 Research (Democrat).
- N=500 interviews conducted with registered Montana voters.
- Statistically valid sample with an overall margin of sampling error of $\pm 4.38\%$ at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample.
- Interviews conducted March 23-28, 2024, on landline/cell phones and via text invitations to online survey.
- Trend data from similarly conducted surveys of N=500 registered voters conducted June 2014, May 2016, April 2018, March 2020 and April 2022.





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The Montana Way of Life

Access to public lands and water is the top aspect Montana voters want to retain for future generations.



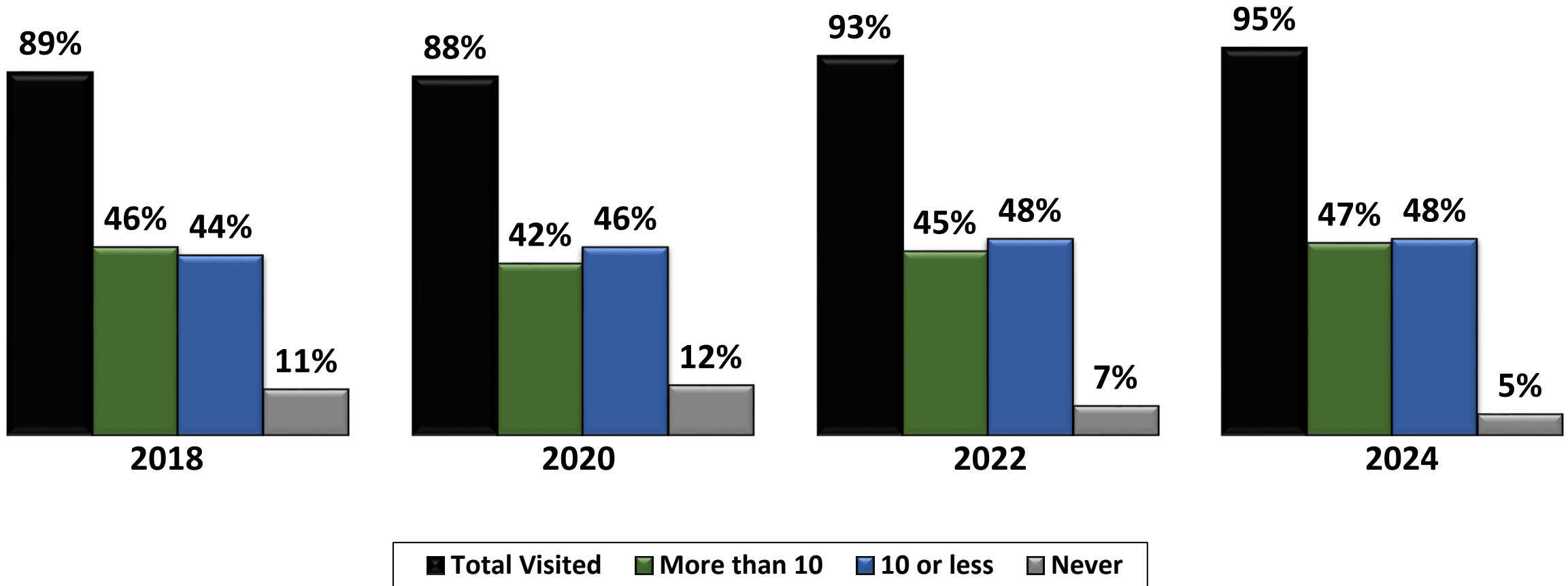
“Access to public lands, constitutional right to clean and healthy air and water.”
Male, Age 35-44, Democrat, Missoula County

“The amount of public land should never decrease.”
Female, Age 18-24, Republican, Ravalli County

“Clean water and recreational areas.”
Male, Age 65+, Independent, Gallatin County

When you think about life here in Montana and what you would like to keep for future generations growing up in the state, what are the two or three things you would NOT want to change about Montana?

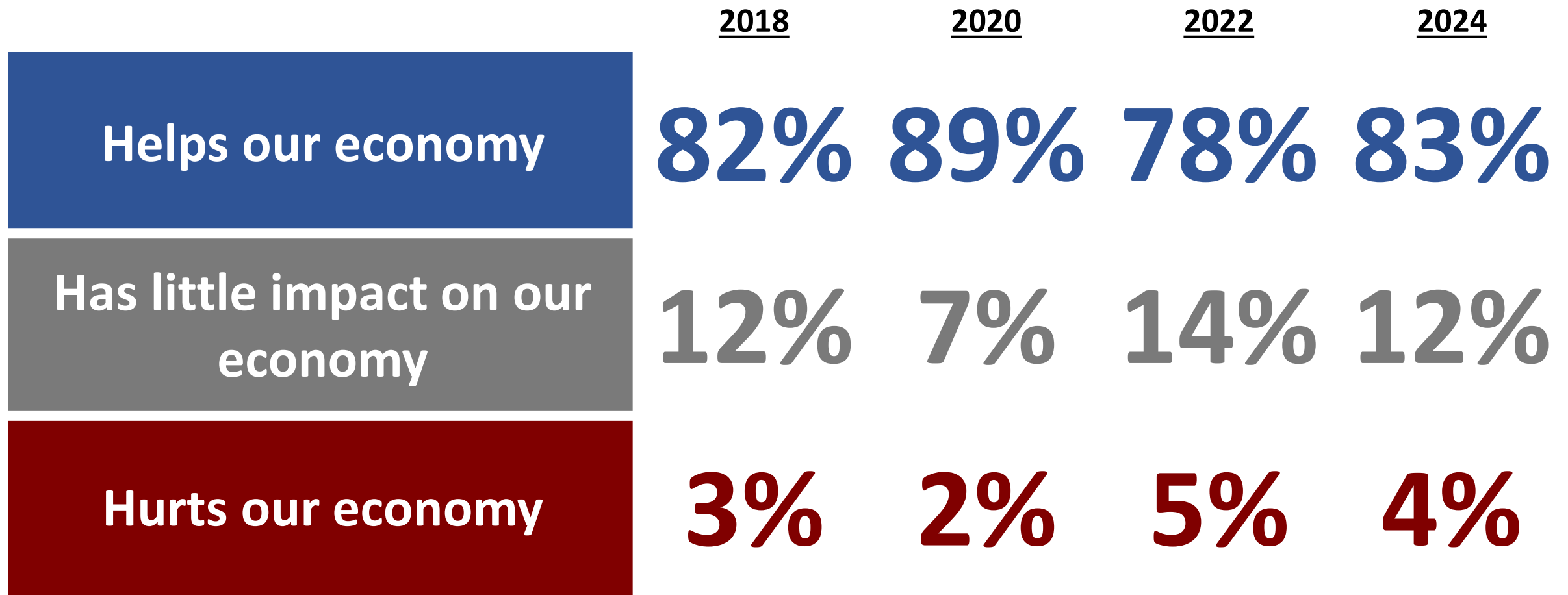
There has been a slight but gradual increase in visiting national public lands over time.



Over the past year, how many times do you think you have visited national public lands such as national parks, national forests, national monuments, national wildlife refuges, or other national public lands?

Due to rounding, totals may not equal the sum of individual answer choices or add up to 100%.

A majority of Montana voters continue to say that the presence of national public lands in the state helps the economy.



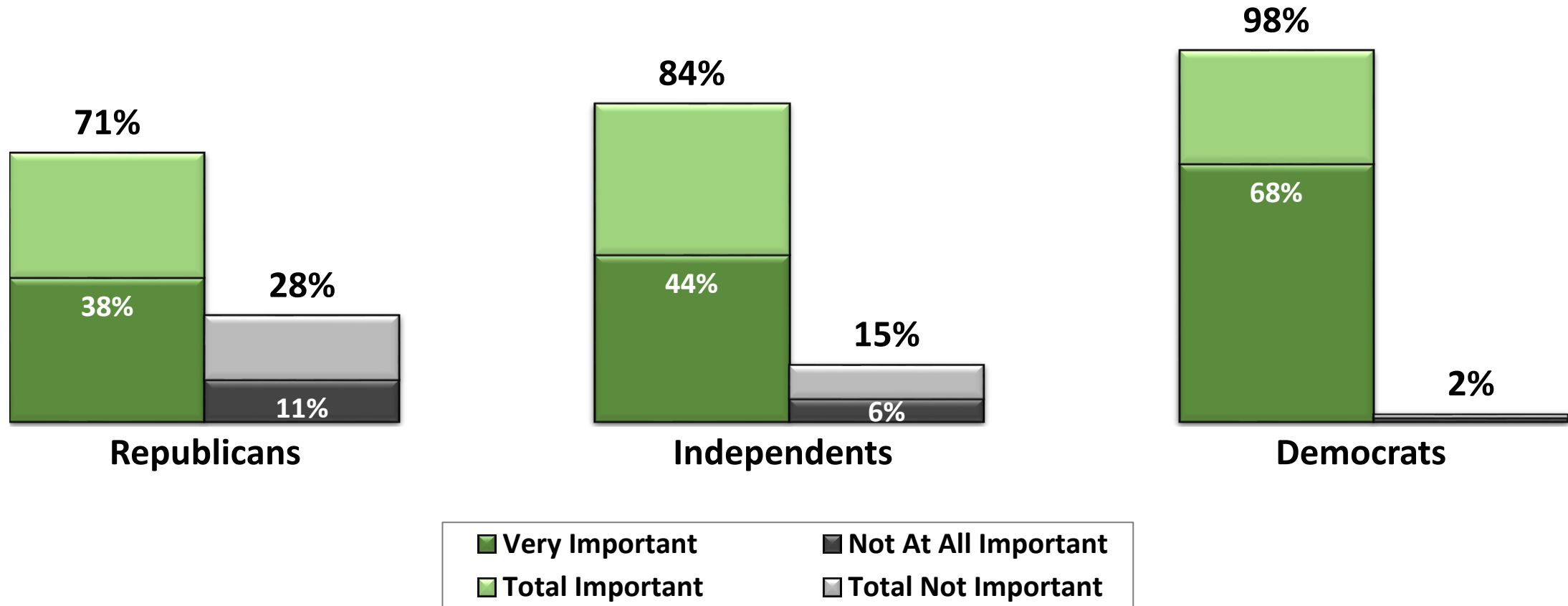
When you think about the presence of national public lands in Montana – do you think that having such lands helps our economy, hurts our economy, or has little impact on our economy?

Over the past 10 years, conservation issues have been seen as an important factor in deciding whether to support an elected public official.

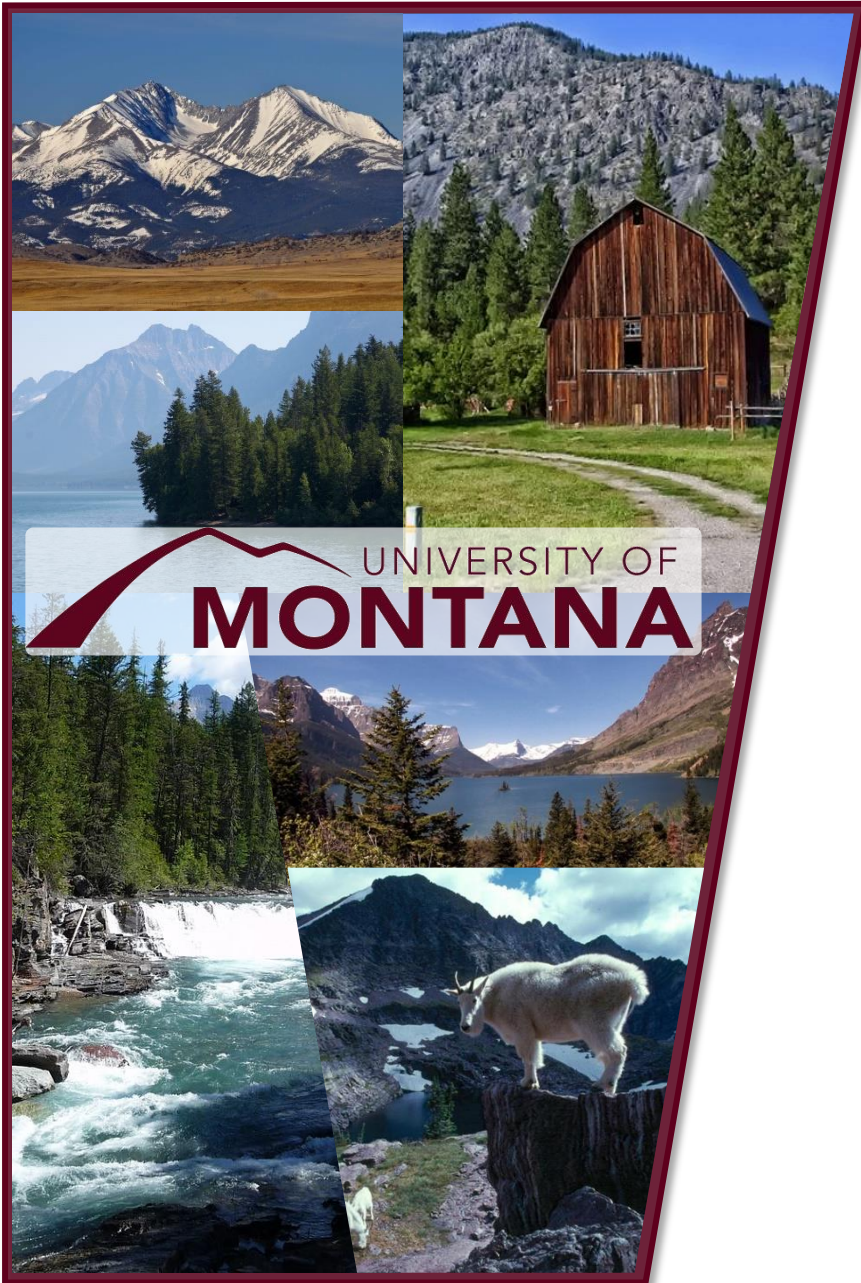
	<u>2014</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2024</u>
Very important, they are a primary factor in deciding whether to support an elected public official	48%	41%	48%	44%	47%
Somewhat important; they are one of several issues you consider	38%	48%	39%	41%	36%
Not too important; they are not a significant factor considering in deciding whether to support an elected public official	9%	7%	9%	8%	10%
Not at all important for you in deciding whether to support an elected official	4%	4%	4%	6%	7%

Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving clean water, clean air, open spaces and public lands for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?

Regardless of party, most Montana voters say conservation issues are important in deciding whether to support an elected public official.



Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving clean water, clean air, open spaces and public lands for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official?



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Challenges to the Montana Way of Life

Over three-fifths of Montana voters say that the quality of life in their area is worse compared to five years ago.



Worse

62%



About the Same

31%



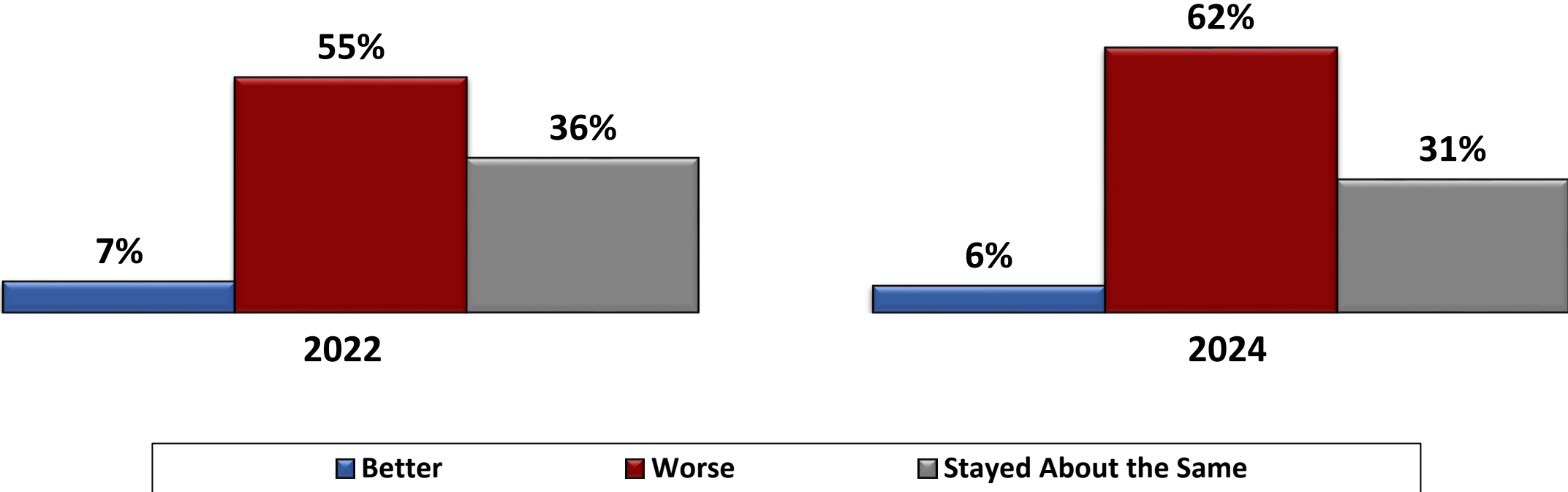
Better

6%

Compared to five years ago, would you say that the quality of life in your area of Montana is better, worse, or about the same?

Asked of N=447 who lived in MT 5+ years

This represents a seven point increase in the last two years in those saying that their quality of life has gotten worse.



*Compared to five years ago, would you say that the quality of life in your area of Montana is better, worse, or about the same?
Asked of N=447 who lived in MT 5+ years*

Drought and sprawling development are seen as extremely/very serious problems by around three-in-five Montana voters.

<i>Ranked by % Extremely/Very Serious</i>	Extremely/Very Serious	Total Serious
Drought**	60%	90%
Development sprawling into what were once ranches or open lands	59%	90%
Changing character of the state	57%	84%
Low snowpack*	56%	78%
Crowding and more people at places where you recreate outdoors	46%	78%

The following is a list of issues some people say are problems in Montana. For each one, please indicate if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in the state.

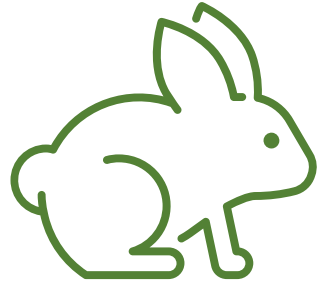
**Sample A, N=250 **Sample B, N=250*

Sprawling development and the changing character of the state have increased as extremely/very serious problems in Montana.

<i>% Extremely/Very Serious</i>	2022	2024
Development sprawling into what were once ranches or open lands	52%	59%
Changing character of the state	45%	57%
Crowding and more people at places where you recreate outdoors	45%	46%

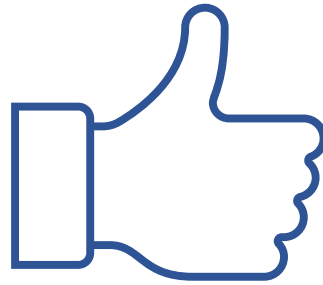
The following is a list of issues some people say are problems in Montana. For each one, please indicate if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in the state.

Virtually unchanged since 2022, most Montana voters say that the rate of growth and development in their community is too fast.



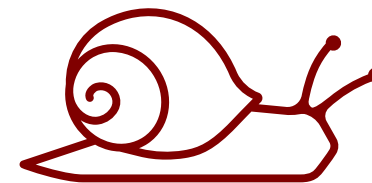
57%

Too Fast



33%

About Right



9%

Too Slow

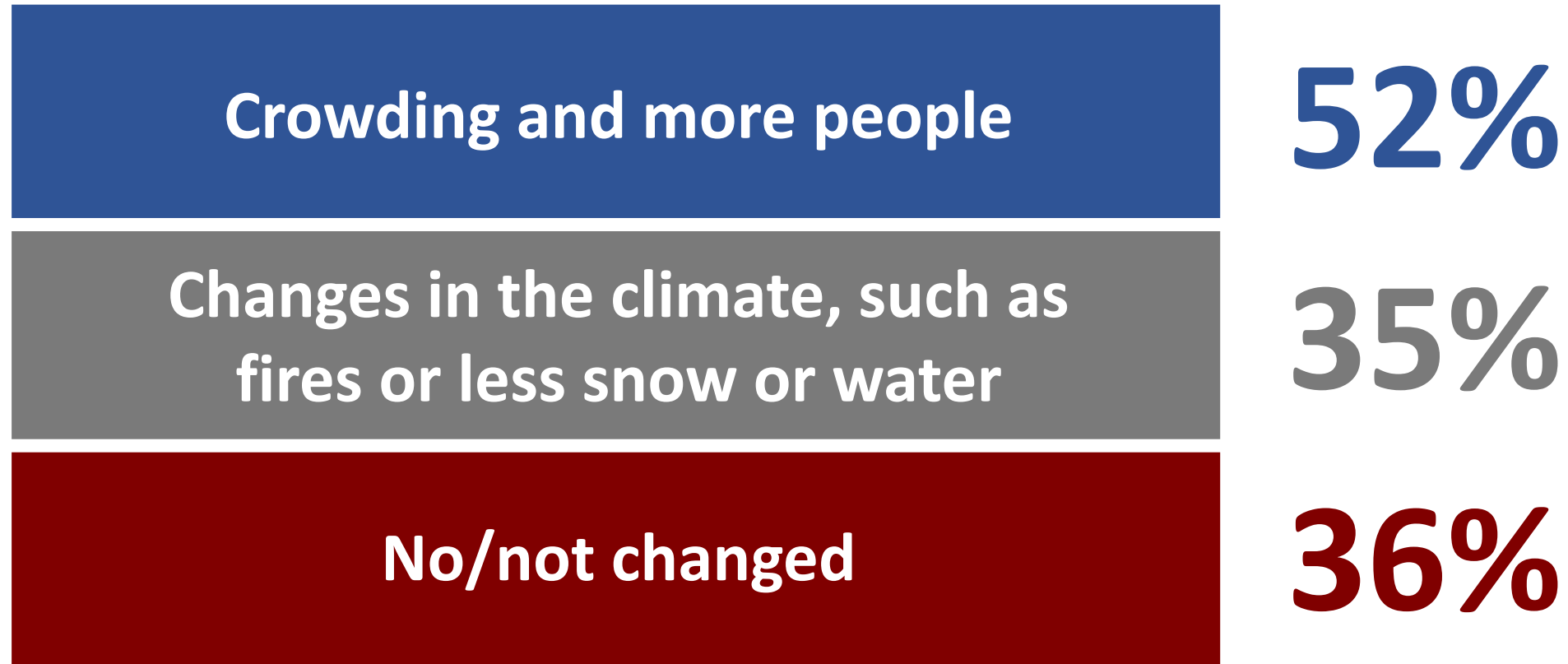
In general, do you think the rate of growth and development in your community is too fast, about right, or too slow?

Only a majority in the Great Falls media market are satisfied with the rate of growth and development in their community.

Media Markets/Areas	Too Fast	About Right	Too Slow
Missoula	66%	28%	4%
Butte/Bozeman	69%	24%	6%
Great Falls	23%	54%	19%
Billings	56%	33%	11%
Rural markets	52%	34%	14%

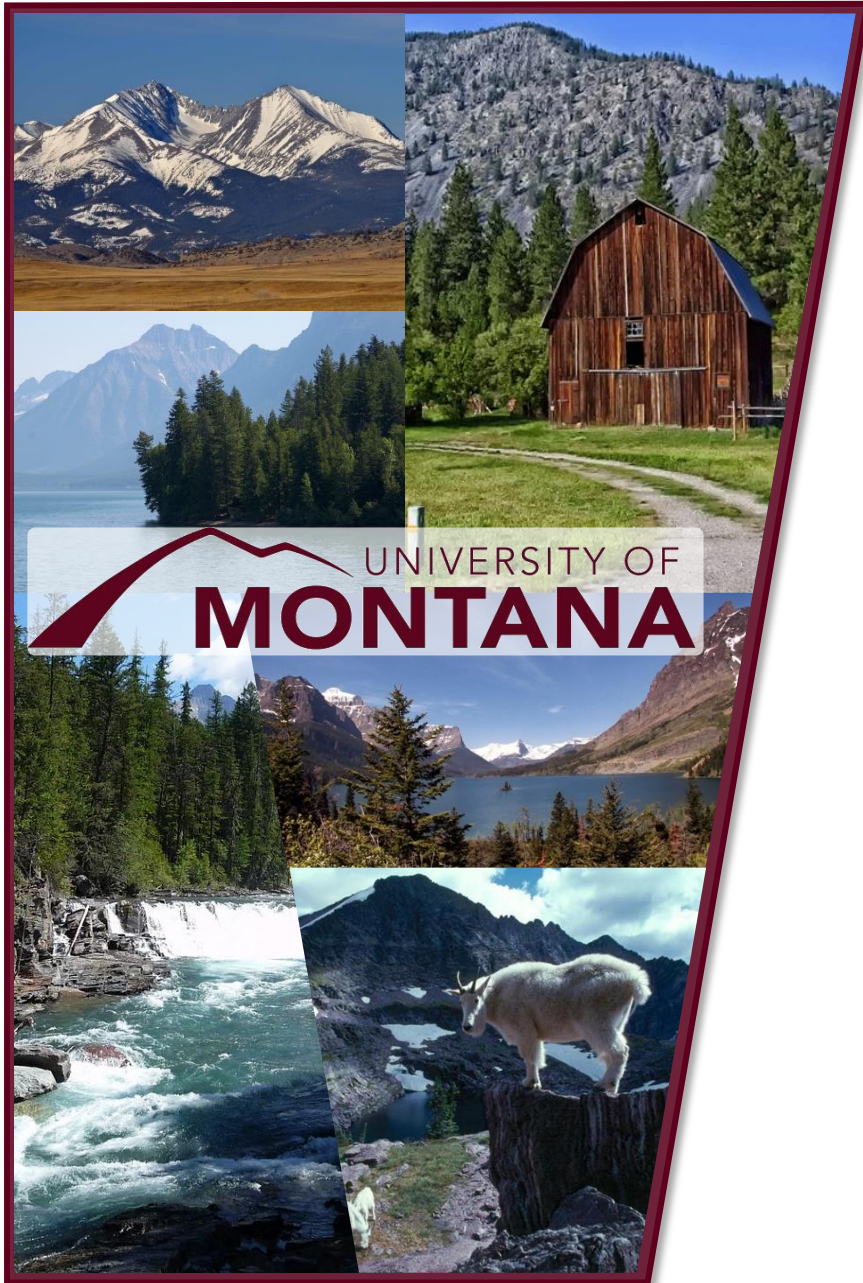
In general, do you think the rate of growth and development in your community is too fast, about right, or too slow?

A majority of Montana voters who regularly participate in outdoor activities have made changes in where or when they recreate due to crowding and one-in-three due to changes in the climate.



In the last two or three years, have you made changes in where or when you recreate outdoors, due to...

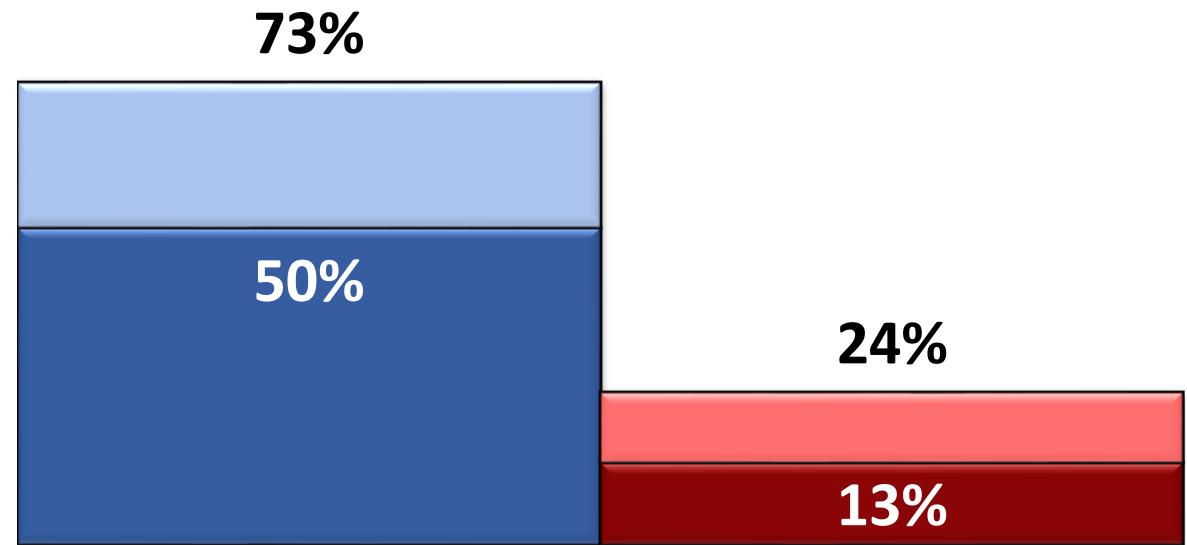
**Asked of those who regularly participate in outdoor activities, N=480*



Conservation Policies and Actions

Most Montana voters support the U.S. Forest Service having a public process on allowing new hardrock mining at the headwaters of the Smith River.

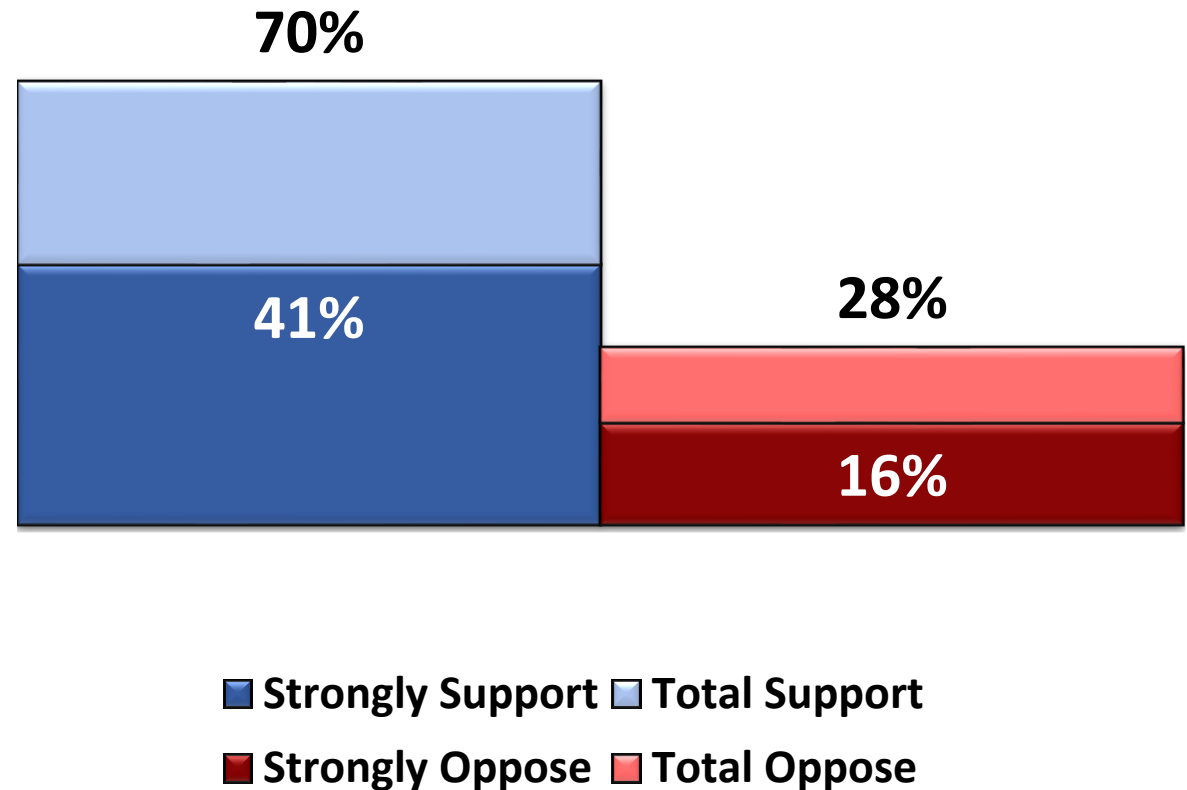
The Smith River flows for 60 miles and empties into the Missouri River, just upstream of Great Falls. Do you support or oppose the U.S. Forest service having a public process that allows Montanans to weigh in on whether to allow any new hardrock mining on public lands at the headwaters of the Smith River?



■ Strongly Support ■ Total Support
■ Strongly Oppose ■ Total Oppose

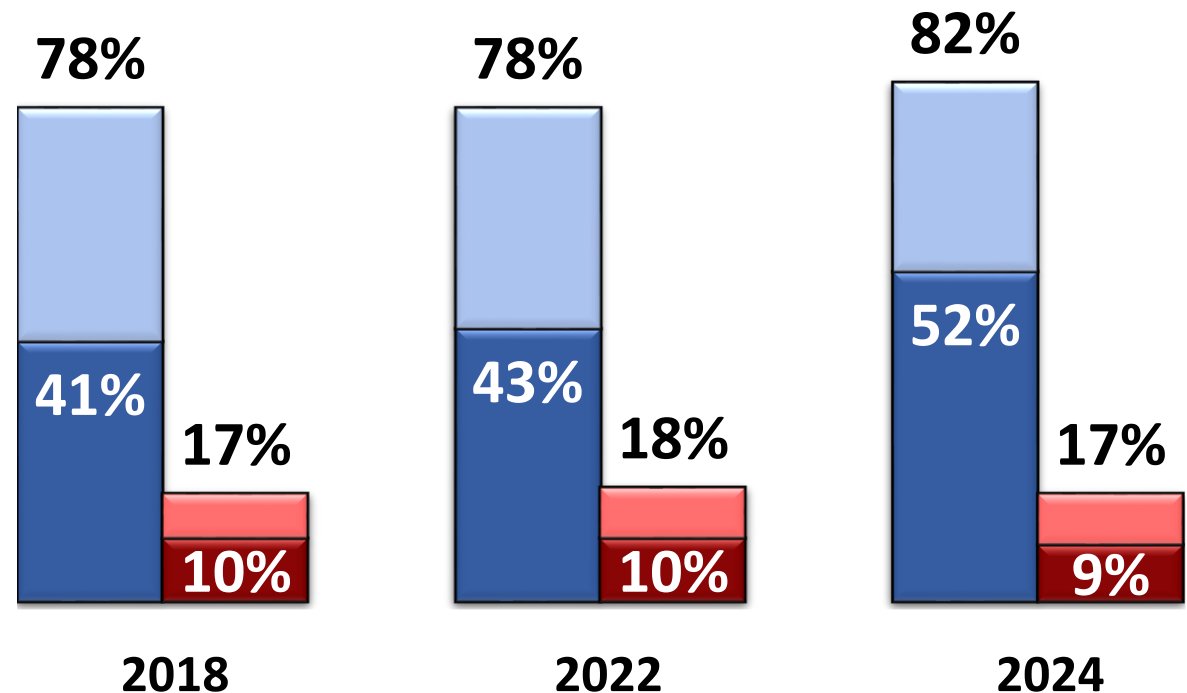
Seven-in-ten Montana voters are supportive of the new Conservation Rule proposed for the lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Bureau of Land Management, the agency that manages more than 8 million acres and 2500 miles of streams in Montana's public lands, recently proposed a new rule, under which land restoration and conservation would be given the same level of consideration as uses like mining, oil and gas drilling, recreation, grazing, and timber harvesting. Do you support or oppose allowing conservation and restoration to be considered a use of these lands?



Presidents using their Antiquity Act powers to designate national monuments receives its strongest support yet.

Presidents of both parties have used the ability to protect existing public lands as national monuments in order to maintain public access and protect the land and wildlife for future generations. Knowing that...Do you support or oppose Presidents continuing to use their ability to protect existing public lands as national monuments?



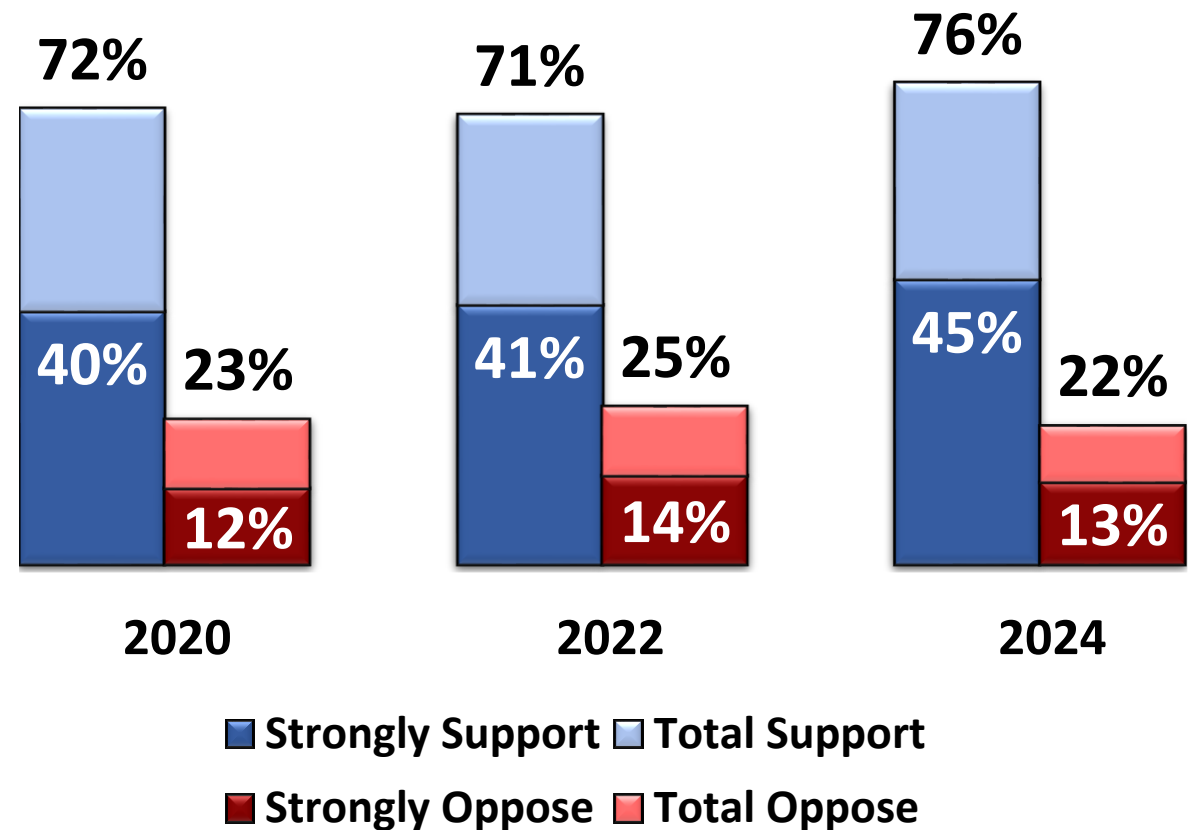
■ Strongly Support ■ Total Support
■ Strongly Oppose ■ Total Oppose

**In 2018, we asked about Presidents having the ability, rather than continuing to use their ability to protect existing public lands as national monuments.*

*** In 2022, the introduction was changed to reflect President Trump's use of this tool as well.*

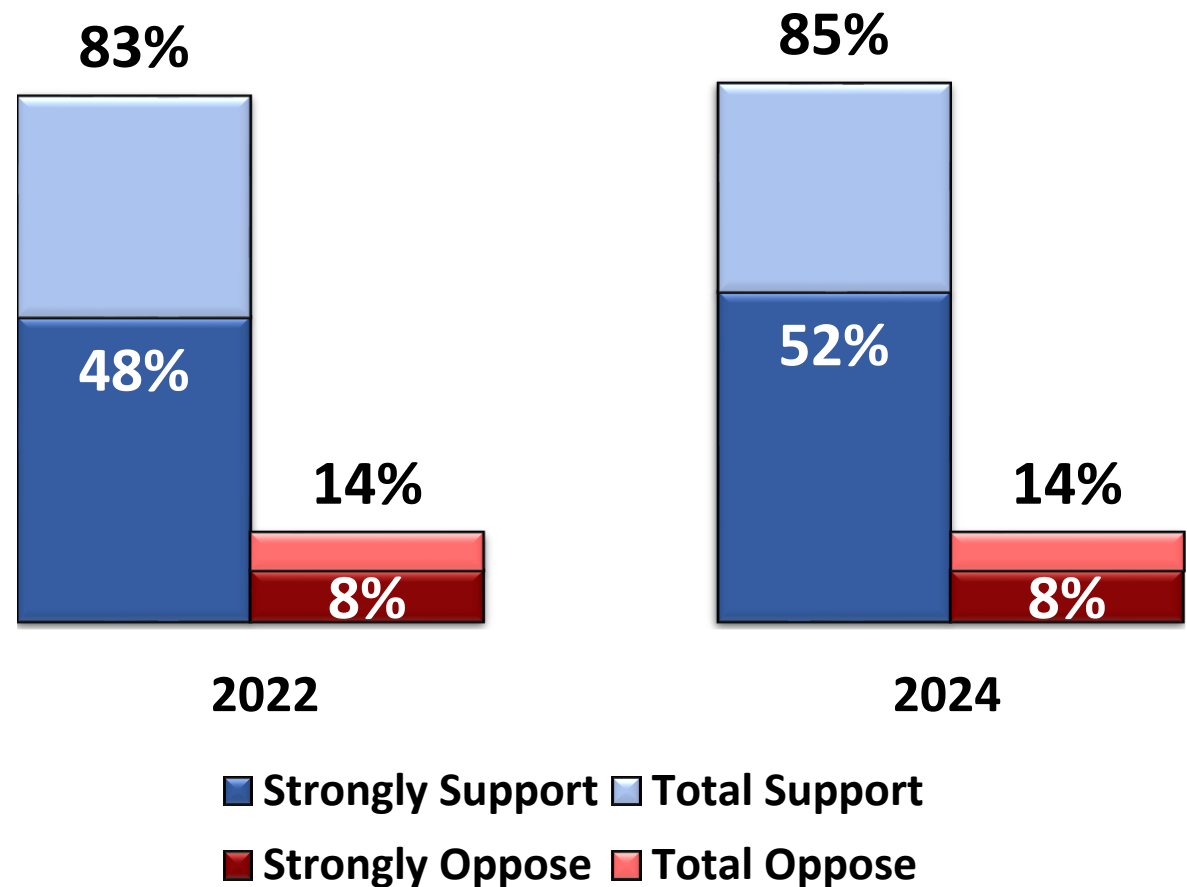
There is growing support for the Lincoln proposal, with over three-quarters saying they are supportive of it.

Increasing protections on national forest lands in western Montana, near the town of Lincoln, by promoting forest restoration, protecting existing snowmobile access, and providing a better trail system for motorized recreation and mountain bikes to help avoid conflicts with local property owners. The proposal would add fifty-five thousand acres of Wilderness in the headwaters of the Big Blackfoot River, including additions to the Scapegoat Wilderness and exclude new mining and oil and gas development for around one hundred and twenty thousand acres mostly along the continental divide and in the Blackfoot River's headwaters.



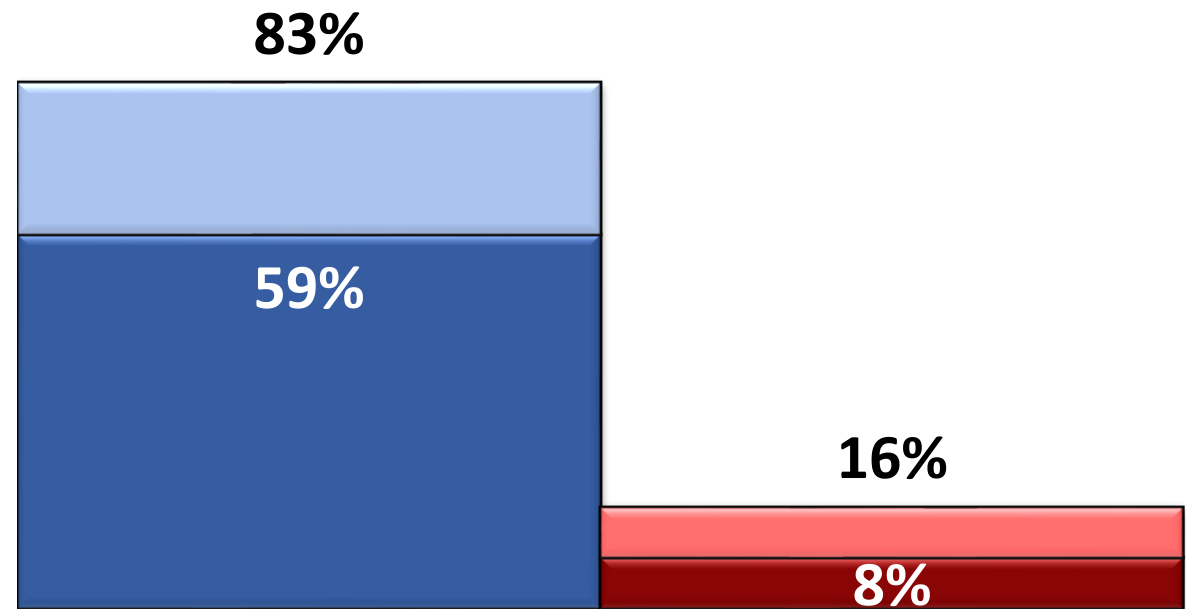
The Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act continues to receive support from over four-in-five Montana voters.

Enacting the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act in western Montana, which would ensure hunting and fishing access, safeguard streams flowing into the Blackfoot River, add nearly eighty thousand acres of existing public lands to the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Mission Mountains wilderness areas, and create two new recreation areas and sustain timber harvest and habitat restoration.



The Headwaters proposal to designate more areas as Wild and Scenic rivers is supported by an overwhelming majority.

Designating segments of twenty rivers and streams flowing through public lands as Wild and Scenic rivers, including segments of the Gallatin, Madison, Yellowstone and Smith rivers, which ensures those rivers remain free-flowing, clean, and not harmed by new projects or development, such as new dams, without affecting private property rights, water rights or public access.



■ Strongly Support ■ Total Support
■ Strongly Oppose ■ Total Oppose

There is strong support for these pieces of legislation across political party lines.

Showing % Total Support

Conservation Policy	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
Lincoln Proposal	70%	75%	87%
Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act	82%	82%	94%
Headwaters Proposal	75%	84%	96%

There are some other proposals concerning existing public lands here in Montana that have been developed by local land users such as hunters, anglers, ranchers, business owners and others over several years – For each one, please tell me if that seems like something you would support or oppose

Nearly a third of voters would prefer Congress increase protections in 7 wilderness study areas, which is higher than previous years.

Here in Montana, there are seven areas of public lands protected as Wilderness Study Areas managed by the U.S. Forest Service. These seven Wilderness Study Areas include such places as the Big Snowy Mountains, the West Pioneers and the Gallatin Range. These public lands are accessible to hunters, anglers, hikers, and others on foot and horse, and allow grazing, mountain bikes, and motorized vehicle use in limited areas, but do not allow mining, drilling, or logging.

Only Congress can change the status of these areas, so would you prefer that Congress --

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2024</u>
Increase protections in all seven areas	23%	23%	31%
Keep the seven areas as they are now	52%	49%	44%
Add protections in some areas and eliminate protections in others	14%	19%	15%
Eliminate existing protections in all seven areas	8%	6%	9%



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www.crown-yellowstone.umt.edu/voter-surveys/2024/