

TOURISM IN THE KOOTENAY ROCKIES REGION DURING COVID-19

# Assessing Resident Sentiment



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# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Project Overview.....	1
Research Considerations.....	3
Results.....	3
Respondent Demographics.....	5
Residency.....	5
Gender Identity.....	5
Age Group.....	5
Sector of Employment.....	5
Tourism Income.....	5
Perceptions of Tourism.....	6
Importance of Tourism.....	6
Comfort Visiting Local Businesses.....	8
Comfort with Welcoming Visitors.....	8
Comfort Travelling.....	9
Comfort with Activities.....	10
COVID-19 Related Concerns.....	10
Level of Happiness Seeing Community Advertised.....	12
Travel Timing.....	12
Travel Motivations.....	13
Comfort Measures.....	14
Safety Expectations.....	15
Tourism Observations.....	15
Concluding Comments.....	18
References.....	19
Appendix 1: Survey Instrument.....	20

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**Publication Date:** April 26 2021

This Selkirk College research initiative has been conducted and funded as part of the *Mitacs Accelerate* program, in partnership Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association.

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# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Traveling restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have left the tourism economy in crisis. The Tourism Association of Canada has stated that “Tourism was the first hit, the hardest hit, and will be the last to recover” from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> As tourism has historically been an important economic driver in the Kootenay Rockies region<sup>2</sup>, a struggling tourism industry has important consequences for the well-being of local communities.

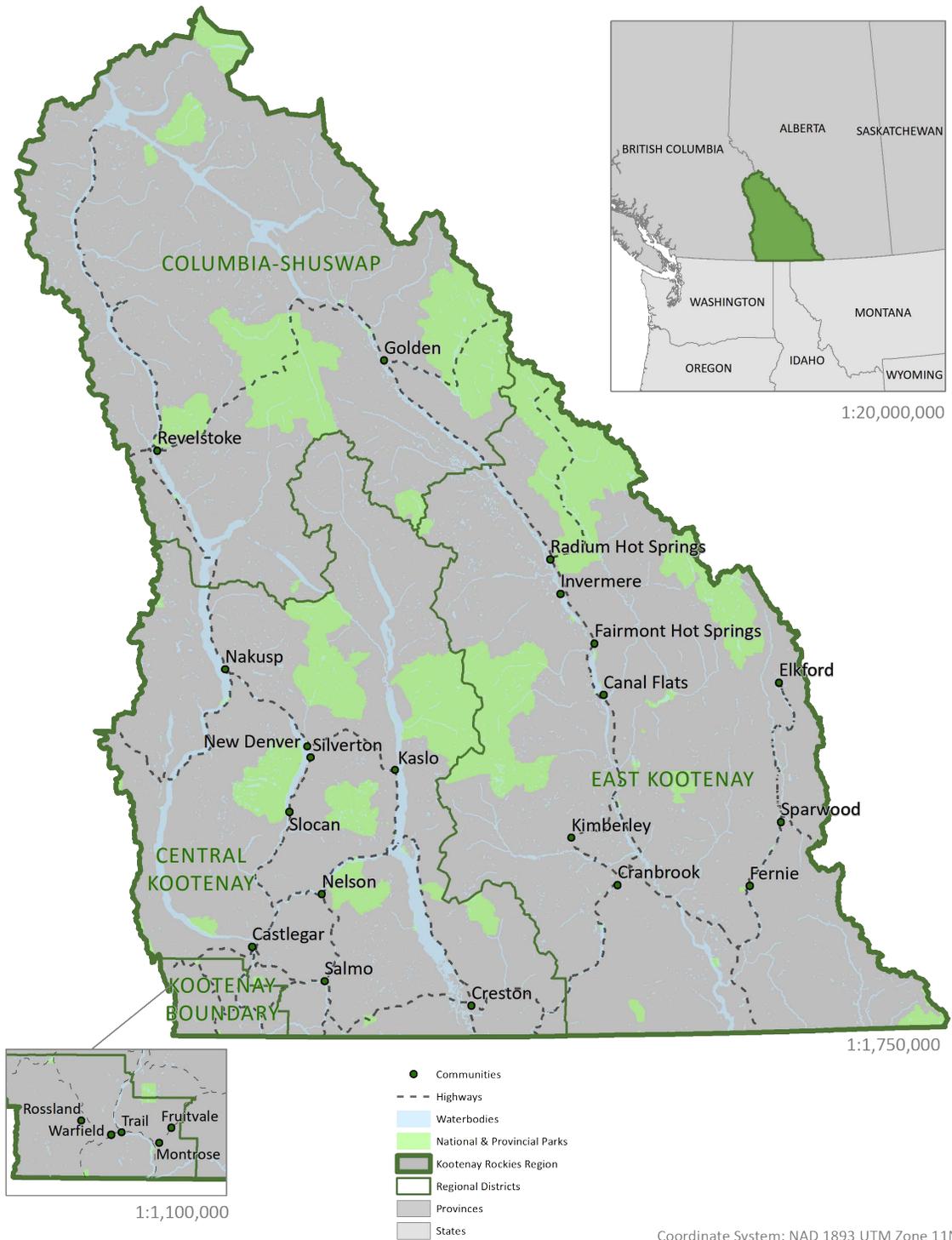
The intended purpose of this project is to help Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association (KRT) understand how residents perceive tourism during the pandemic, to help support the communities to safely welcome back tourism when the time is right, and to provide guidance that allows tourism businesses in the region to maintain their social license to operate during a pandemic. The project has been further defined by the following three priorities:

1. Understanding resident perceptions around welcoming visitors
2. Understanding resident perceptions around visiting other places
3. Understanding resident travel intentions and motivations

This report presents results from the second phase of research, which involved surveying residents of the Kootenay Rockies region from January 11 to 18, 2021. The first phase was completed from June 29 to July 5, 2020, and provided initial perspectives held by residents early in the pandemic. This follow-up survey provides insights into how resident perceptions may have shifted nearly a year after travel restrictions were first implemented.

The Kootenay Rockies region is situated in south-eastern British Columbia and includes the Regional District of Central Kootenay, Regional District of East Kootenay, as well as Electoral Area A and Electoral Area B of the Columbia-Shuswap Regional District, and Electoral Area A and Electoral Area B of the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Kootenay Rockies region of British Columbia, Canada



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## RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

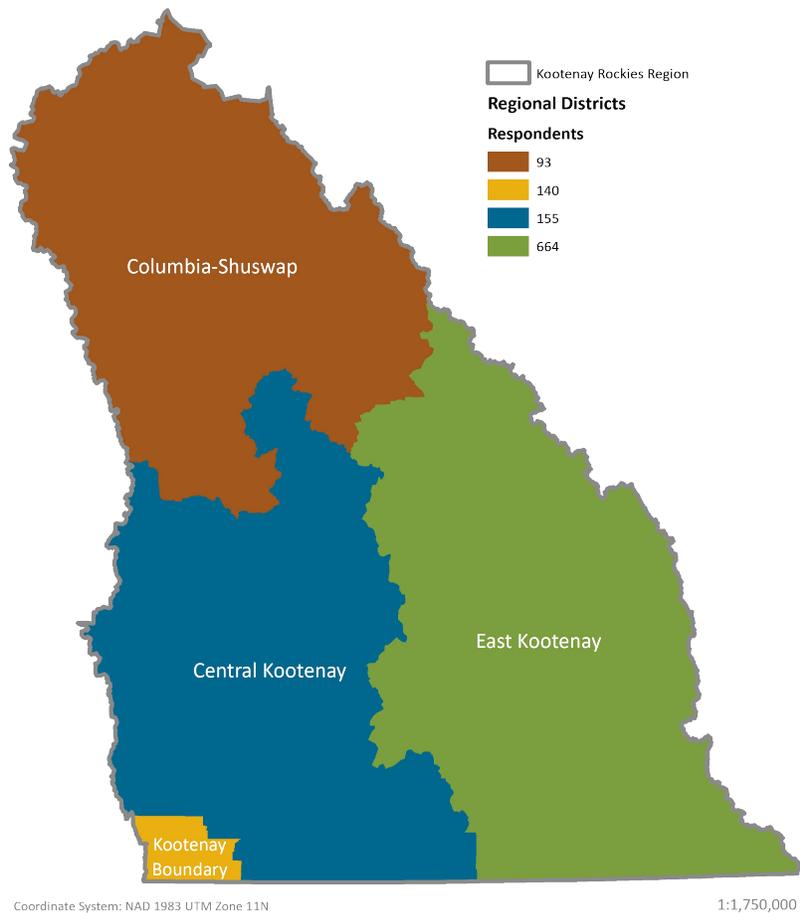
Survey questions were developed by Selkirk College personnel and refined based on feedback from KRT. Efforts were made to align some survey questions with those being asked by tourism associations operating at wider geographic scales (e.g., Destination BC, Destination Canada). Selkirk College conducted the voluntary and anonymous survey using the online platform SurveyMonkey. KRT and community-level destination marketing organizations publicized the survey through their email and social media communications channels. Surveys were completed from January 11 to January 18, 2020. The survey targeted residents of the Kootenay Rockies region who are 19 years of age and older. No incentives or compensation were provided for participation. The respondents were asked to answer the survey instrument based on their sentiments at that point in time during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a high number of COVID-19 cases across British Columbia resulted in restrictions<sup>3</sup> on non-essential travel and gathering with anyone outside of one's immediate household ("bubble"). A copy of the survey instrument is included with this report as **Appendix 1**.

Many sentiments provided in response to open-ended questions spanned multiple emergent themes. For this reason, the number of responses to open-ended questions is greater than the number of respondents and is represented as the percentage of the total responses, not respondents.

## RESULTS

In total, 1080 surveys were completed across the Kootenay Rockies region (**Figure 2**). Responses were provided from all intersecting regional districts: Columbia-Shuswap (n=93), Central Kootenay (n=155), East Kootenay (n=664), and Kootenay Boundary (n=140). There were 28 respondents who elected not to provide a community of residence. The compiled results from each survey question are included below.

**Figure 2:** Respondents from the regional districts and electoral areas of the Kootenay Rockies region (#)



### Reporting Limitations

This survey was conducted using a convenience sampling method in which respondents volunteered (or self-elected) to take the survey on the internet. As such, survey responses cannot be guaranteed to be representative of the entire study area.

# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

## Residency

Type of Resident	Respondents (%)
Primary	93.5%
Secondary	6.2%
Residence not provided	0.3%

**Table 1:** Respondents who are primary or secondary residents of the Kootenay Rockies region (%)

## Gender Identity

Gender Identity	Respondents (%)
Female	63.3%
Male	34.9%
Other	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	1.3%
Gender not provided	0.3%

**Table 2:** Gender identity of respondents (%)

## Age Group

Age Group	Respondents (%)
19-24	0.8%
25-34	11.4%
35-44	23.1%
45-54	21.3%
55-64	22.0%
65+	21.2%
Age not provided	0.2%

**Table 3:** Age group of respondents (%)

## Sector of Employment

Sector of Employment	Respondents (%)
Accommodation	3.5%
Agriculture	1.1%
Arts & Culture	2.5%
Construction	2.7%
Educational Services	5.8%
Finance/Insurance	2.2%
Food Services	3.1%
Forestry	0.9%
Health Care	6.6%
Manufacturing	2.7%
Mining/Oil & Gas	4.2%
Non-Profit Services	3.1%
Other	4.5%
Professional Services	10.1%
Public Administration	3.2%
Retail	4.3%
Retired	24.7%
Tourism/Outdoor Recreation	11.8%
Transport	0.8%
Unemployed	2.2%

**Table 4:** Respondent sector of employment (%)

## Tourism Income

Tourism Income	Respondents (%)
Yes, all of my income comes from tourism	11.2%
Yes, part of my income comes from tourism	25.8%
No income from tourism	62.8%
No indication of tourism income provided	0.2%

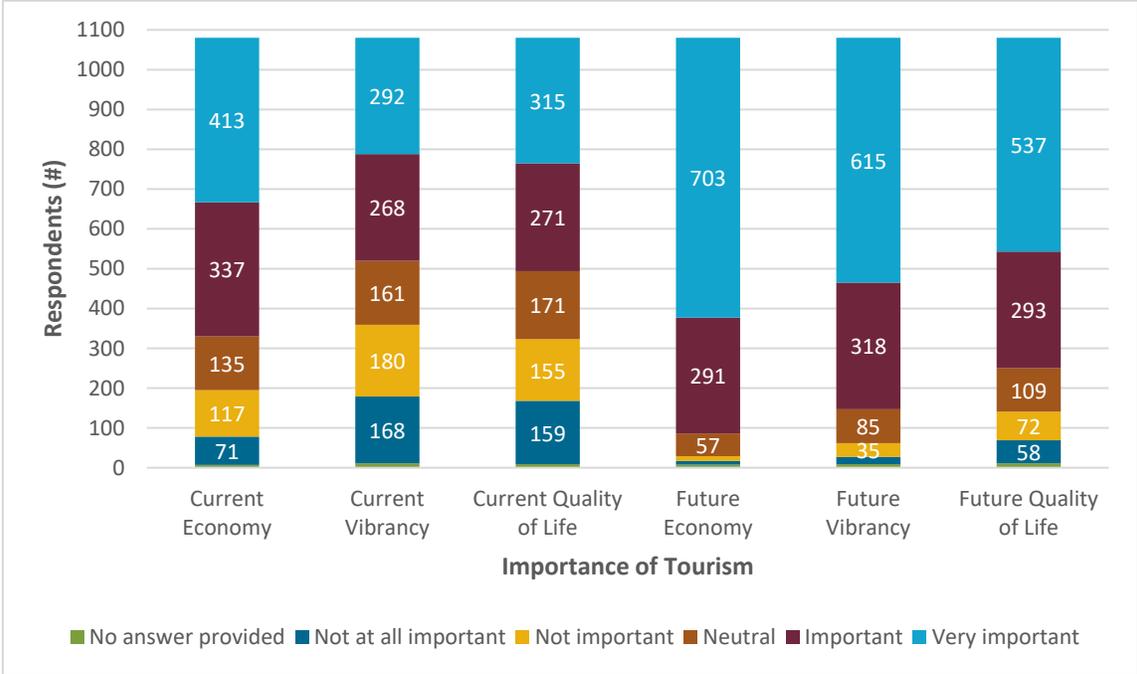
**Table 5:** Respondents who receive income from tourism (%)

# PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM

## Importance of Tourism

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of tourism in relation to three variables: economy, vibrancy, and quality of life.<sup>1</sup> They were asked to do so within the current context (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and in the future (after the COVID-19 pandemic) (**Figure 3**). Respondents were then asked to elaborate on why they rated tourism with that level of importance.

**Figure 3:** Rating the current and future importance of tourism (during and after the COVID-19 pandemic) in supporting community economy, vibrancy, and quality of life (#)



Some respondents rated tourism as not at all important to the economy, vibrancy and quality of life of their community during the COVID-19 pandemic (7%, 16%, and 15%, respectively); however, a high number of respondents rated tourism as being very important contributor to the future of their communities, especially as it relates to the economy and vibrancy (see **Table 6**).

<sup>1</sup> The variables of community well-being were defined as follows:

- Economy: jobs, revenue for businesses, etc.
- Vibrancy: festivals and events, dining and shopping options, lively downtown, etc.
- Quality of life: recreation opportunities, services and amenities, affordability, etc.

**Table 6:** Rating the current and future importance of tourism (during and after the COVID-19 pandemic) in supporting community economy, vibrancy, and quality of life (#)

Rating	Current Economy	Current Vibrancy	Current Quality of Life	Future Economy	Future Vibrancy	Future Quality of Life
No answer provided	7	11	9	8	9	11
Not at all important	71	168	159	9	18	58
Not important	117	180	155	12	35	72
Neutral	135	161	171	57	85	109
Important	337	268	271	291	318	293
Very important	413	292	315	703	615	537

### Open-ended responses

When asked to specify why they ranked tourism with that level of importance, a large number (46%) of responses indicated it was due to the economic benefits associated with tourism. However, in many instances respondents provided the caveat that the safety of their residents and community is a priority over the economy, especially during a pandemic. Related to the theme of economic benefits, many respondents noted tourism as the primary industry/sector in their community, and acknowledged that tourism is one of the main sources of income and top employers for many residents in their community. Several respondents also suggested that the revenue generated from tourism allows their local economy to survive and flourish by supporting accommodations, attractions, restaurants, and retail businesses. A few respondents indicated that during the off season, the resident population of their community cannot sustain the level of services demanded by tourism, and that this contributes to the failure of local businesses. Another small group of respondents indicated that tourism attracts investment from new businesses and inspires new residents to move to their community (e.g. young working professionals and young families). Several respondents also indicated that the economic boost that tourism dollars contributed to the services and amenities available for residents, and contributes to upgrading infrastructure.

*“Locals have been great stepping up and support local BUT there are not enough locals to support the business community long term. We need tourism dollars to boost our economy and justify our amenities. We need tourism to add vibrancy and support out local arts community.”*

Another primary theme in these open-ended responses pertained to respondent concerns with tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic (19%). Many respondents shared that they believe tourism increases the risk of the transmission of COVID-19, because tourism inherently involves people travelling. A large number of respondents referenced the non-essential travel restrictions set by the Public Health Agency of Canada and British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, and indicated that they feel tourism is not essential. Many respondents indicated their support for these federal and provincial government guidelines and suggested that residents and visitors alike should be “staying home”. Several respondents emphasized their belief that the health and welfare of community residents should and must be the utmost priority. A few respondents indicated that the small, rural communities that make up the Kootenay Rockies region have limited health-care resources (e.g. access to hospitals, physicians, COVID-19 testing) and that this contributes to their desire for visitors not to come to their community, lest a resident be refused access to services.

*“Our town warmly welcomes tourists in normal years, but this is not a normal year. Do what the Provincial Health Authorities advise: STAY HOME!”*

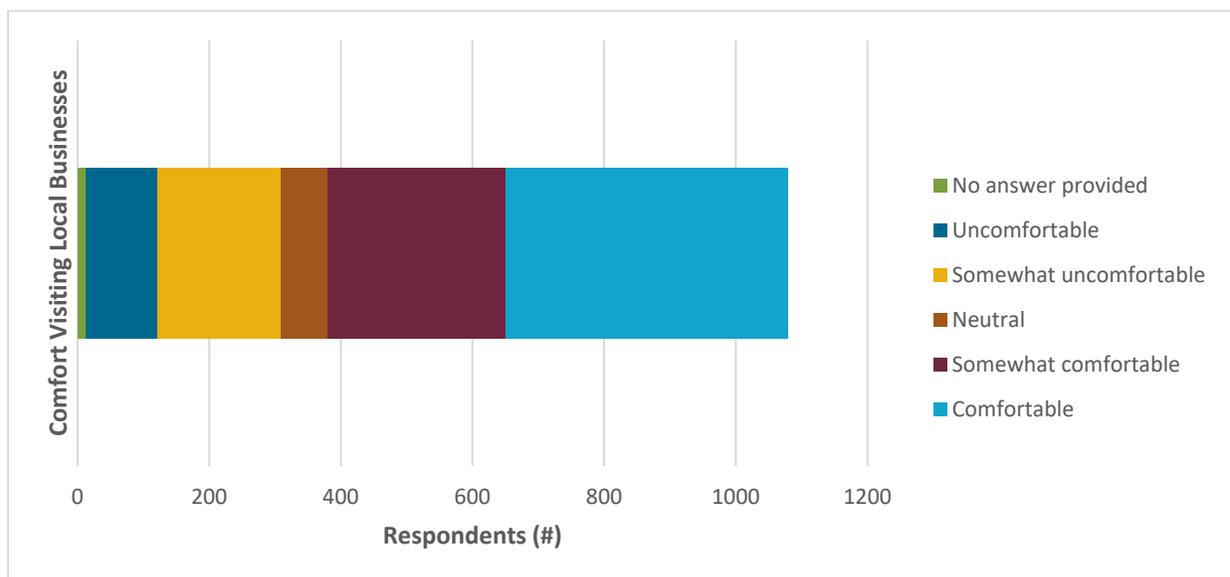
Another common, though less prevalent theme involved negative sentiments about tourism in general (8%), with some respondents touching on their belief that tourism is not a sustainable development strategy for their community. Those respondents indicated that diversifying their economy and reducing the reliance on tourism would be beneficial for their community, given the lessons that the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change crisis are illuminating. Concerns for the environment were brought up by some respondents who feel that tourism contributes to environmental degradation (e.g. increased consumption of fossil fuels, overuse of environmental assets, pollution through littering, increased wildfires, etc.).

*“It is inevitable that tourism is important in my community because there is little diversity here. I would prefer to see a more moderate approach to the development of tourism here because I think the pandemic has illustrated just how precarious the industry is.”*

## Comfort Visiting Local Businesses

Residents were asked to rate their level of comfort visiting local businesses in their community (**Figure 5**). The majority of respondents indicated that they are somewhat or fully comfortable visiting businesses in their community (25% and 40%, respectively). Of the total respondents, 27% indicated that they are uncomfortable on some level with visiting local businesses.

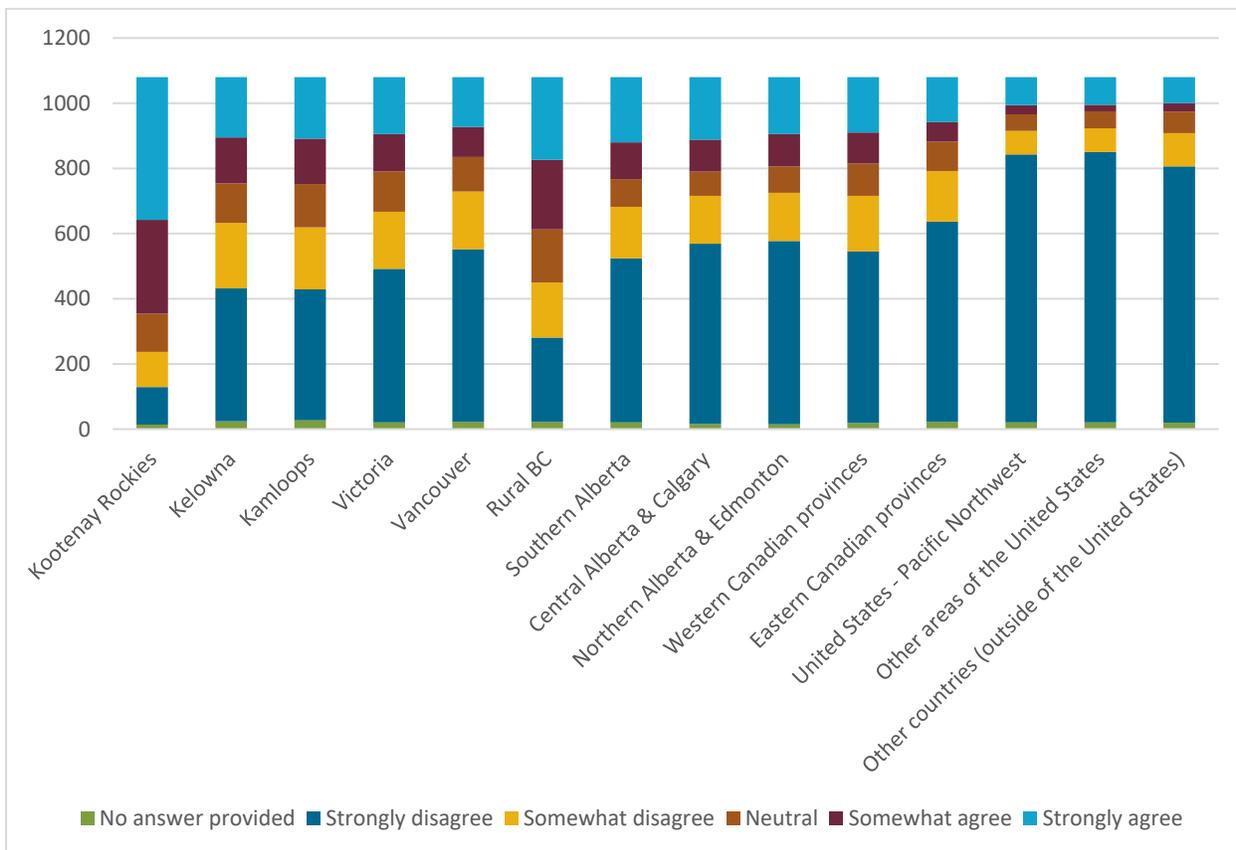
**Figure 4:** Respondents’ current level of comfort visiting local businesses in their community (#)



## Comfort with Welcoming Visitors

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to welcoming visitors (**Figure 6**). Respondents indicated that they were most comfortable welcoming visitors from within the Kootenay Rockies region given pandemic conditions at the time of the survey (41% strongly agreed, 27% somewhat agreed). Respondents were then most likely to welcome visitors from rural British Columbia (43% agreed on some level). The majority of respondents strongly disagreed with welcoming visitors from the United States – Pacific Northwest (76%), other areas of the United States (77%), and other countries outside of the United States (73%). The majority of respondents disagreed on some level with welcoming visitors from the Okanagan, Mainland, Vancouver Island, Alberta, and other provinces across Western and Eastern Canada.

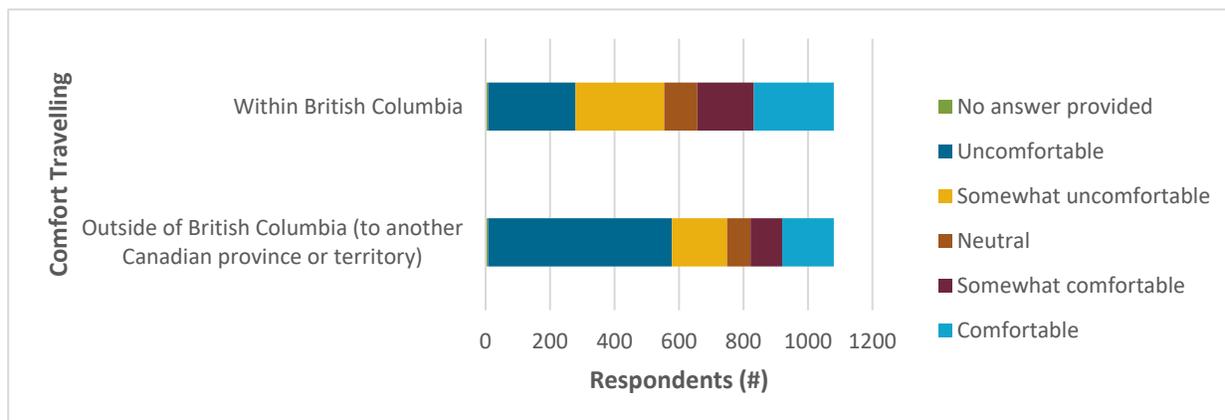
**Figure 5: Respondents' level of agreement with welcoming visitors to their community (#)**



## Comfort Travelling

Residents were asked about their level of comfort with travelling within and outside of British Columbia to other Canadian provinces or territories (**Figure 7**). The majority of respondents were uncomfortable on some level with travelling within British Columbia (51%) and to other provinces and territories (69%).

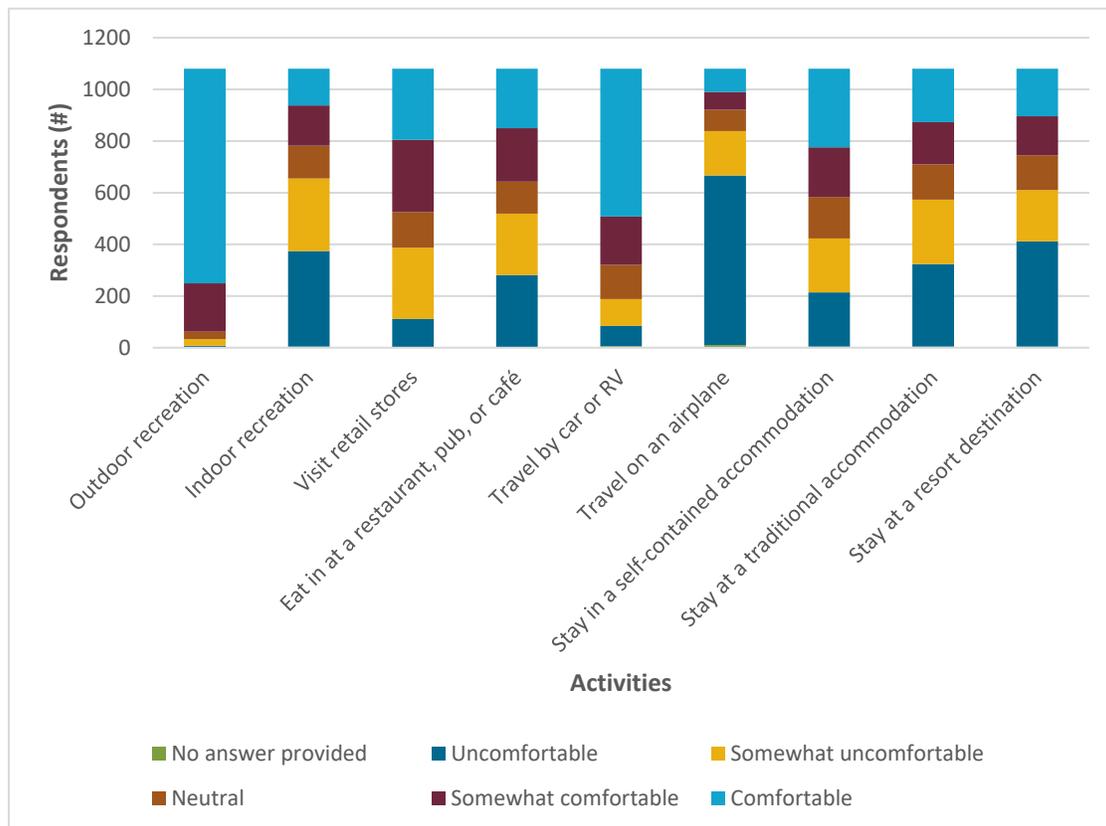
**Figure 6: Respondents' level of comfort with travelling within and outside of British Columbia (#)**



## Comfort with Activities

Respondents were asked to rank their level of comfort with participating in various activities (**Figure 8**) given the pandemic conditions at the time of the survey. For the full definition of activities, please see **Appendix 1: Survey Instrument**. The majority of respondents were most comfortable on some level with participating in outdoor recreation and travelling by a car or RV (94% and 70%, respectively). Most respondents were uncomfortable on some level with travelling on an airplane (77%), participating in indoor recreation (60%), staying at a resort destination (56%), and staying at a traditional accommodation (53%).

**Figure 7:** Respondents' level of comfort with various tourism-related activities (#)



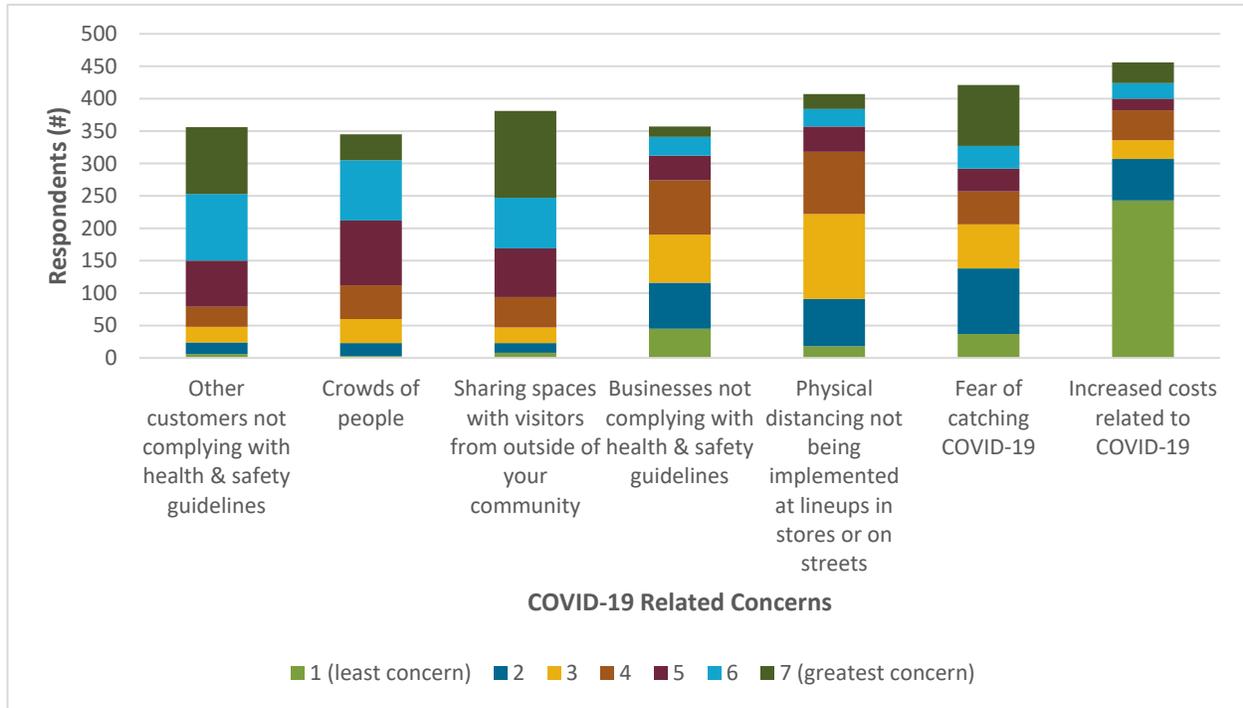
## COVID-19 Related Concerns

When asked if they have any COVID-19 related concerns when visiting local businesses and attractions in their community, 52% of respondents agreed. These respondents were then asked to rank a pre-populated list of concerns related to COVID-19 from least (1) to greatest (7) concern (see **Figure 9**).

Over 58% of all survey respondents did not answer this question, and several respondents noted in open-commentary questions that they experienced difficulty completing this question; the response rate for this question is therefore low. Of the responses received (n=502) there was less concern (ranking of 1, 2, or 3) about increased costs related to COVID-19 (31%) and physical distancing not being implemented in public spaces (21%). Respondents were more concerned (ranking of 5, 6, or 7) about sharing spaces with visitors from outside their community (27%), other customers not complying with health and safety guidelines (26%), and crowds of people (22%).

Respondents were also invited to share other concerns they had related to COVID-19 when visiting local businesses and attractions in their community. Some respondents felt that all of the pre-populated concerns are equally concerning. The most shared concern was related to the presence of visitors: visitors bringing the COVID-19 disease (including different variants) into their community, the compliance of visitors with provincial health guidelines, and that people are choosing to travel during government restrictions of “non-essential travel”. A few respondents emphasized that they are concerned with the risk of being exposed to COVID-19, or fearful that they would transmit the virus themselves. Respondents also shared their concerns about people who don't believe in the pandemic and/or disagree with government restrictions.

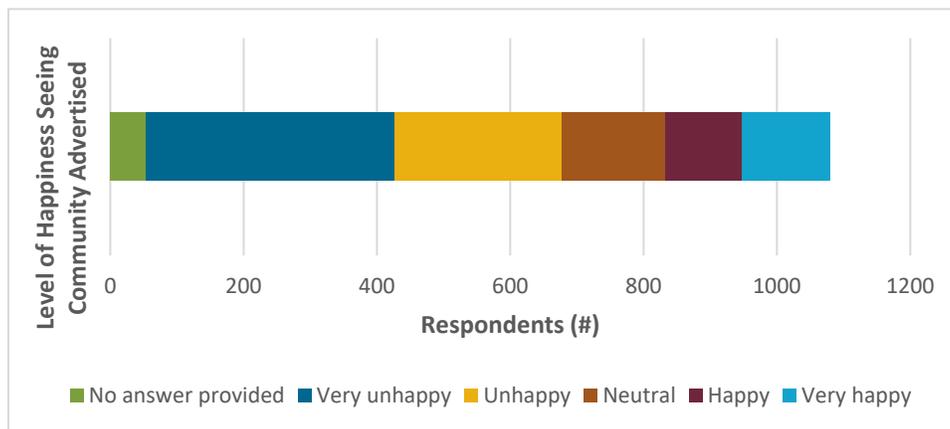
**Figure 8:** Respondents ranking of COVID-19 related concerns from least to greatest concern (#)



## Level of Happiness Seeing Community Advertised

Respondents were asked to rate how they would feel if they saw an advertisement promoting their community as a place for people to visit at that time (**Figure 10**). The highest number of respondents indicated that they would be very unhappy (35%) or unhappy (23%) seeing an advertisement promoting their community.

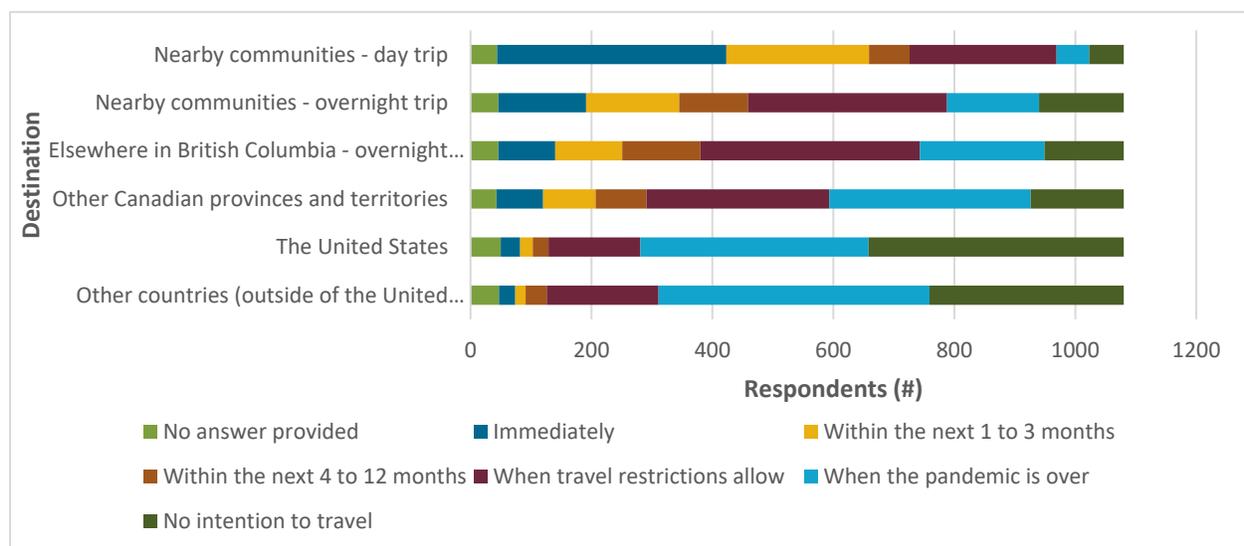
**Figure 9:** Respondents level of happiness seeing their community advertised as a place to visit (#)



## Travel Timing

Respondents were asked to indicate the likelihood of when they will make trips to various destinations (**Figure 11**). Responses show that, within the 3 months following the survey, respondents generally only intend to travel for day trips to nearby communities. Travel for overnight trips or to other BC destinations is more dependent on the status of travel restrictions, and travel over international borders is most likely to occur only when the pandemic is over.

**Figure 10:** Respondents likely timing of trips to various destinations (#)

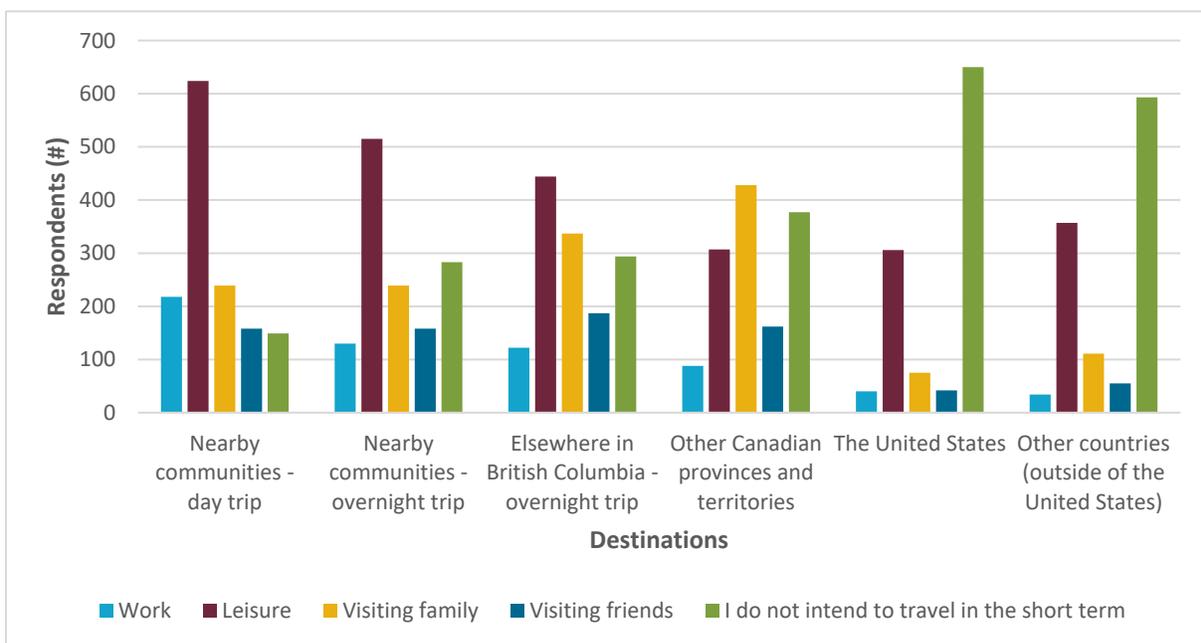


## Travel Motivations

After being asked about the likely timing of their next travelling, respondents were asked to follow up with their motivation for travelling to that destination (**Figure 12**). The majority of respondents indicated they would make day trip visits to nearby communities for leisure purposes (58%). Leisure was also the top motivation for overnight trips to nearby communities and elsewhere in British Columbia (48% and 41%, respectively). Other respondents indicated that visiting family will be their highest motivation for visiting other Canadian provinces and territories (40%). Many respondents indicated that they do not intend to travel in the near term to the United States or other countries (60% and 55%, respectively).

Respondents were also invited to indicate other motivations for travelling. The most frequently mentioned responses were travelling for medical or dental purposes, followed by travelling to access goods and services.

**Figure 11:** Motivation of respondents to next travel to the various destinations (#)



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## Comfort Measures

Respondents were asked to specify what kind of measures would make them feel more comfortable in welcoming visitors to their community. The most prevalent theme in these responses related to following and/or enforcing government guidelines for preventing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Respondents specifically mentioned the preventative measures and safety restrictions put in place by federal and provincial government agencies (Canadian Centre for Disease Control, Public Health Agency of Canada, British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, and British Columbia Centre for Disease Control).

*“Consistent and steady local enforcement of COVID-19 protocols.”*

*“I think appropriate measures are in place, it’s more a matter of people obeying them.”*

Of the 364 references to following and/or enforcing guidelines (31%), responses included: wearing masks in public spaces, abiding by physical distancing recommendations, implementing occupancy limits indoors at businesses and attractions, and personal hygiene (hand washing/sanitizing). A group of responses (11%) also indicated that respondents would feel more comfortable if all visitors (including inter-regional) tested negative for COVID-19 immediately prior to arrival, and that visitors self-isolate (quarantine) for 14 days upon arrival.

Of the total responses shared, 18% indicated that respondents are uncomfortable with visitors of any kind in their community, and that they would prefer if people stay home and do not travel. Many of these respondents included a note that they were following the “non-essential travel” restrictions ordered by the British Columbia Provincial Health Officer, and believed that others should be following suit.

*“People spread the virus. Everyone who’s life doesn’t depend on it should stay put. This is also to protect all those that cannot stay because they serve us. Non-essential travel is not an option until we have reached herd immunity through vaccination. There are no measures that could make me feel comfortable welcoming visitors to [my community] at this point in the pandemic.”*

The sentiments shared in some responses didn’t fit into the emergent themes and were categorized as “other” (10%). These responses were varied and ranged from the desire for people to use “common sense”, to implementing consequences for non-compliance with safety guidelines (e.g. fines, monitoring), to improving the COVID-19 data released to the public, to improving how we “live” with the virus because of the perceived side-effects of the safety guidelines (e.g. impacts to mental health and the economy). A few respondents also suggested that visitors should make community-minded choices about their travel behaviours, such as: staying for an extended period of time, not travelling back and forth between primary and secondary residences, not gathering with people from outside of their household, and preparing for their visit by making essential purchases in their own community prior to travelling (e.g. food, fuel).

*“Ask visitors to use common sense.”*

The implementation of a COVID-19 vaccination program was mentioned in 9% of the total responses, while 2% of responses indicated that respondents are already comfortable with welcoming visitors to their community. Some responses indicated that respondents would feel comfortable when government restrictions are changed or lifted (4%), or, when the pandemic is declared “over” (2%). A few responses

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(2%) expressed that respondents would feel more comfortable if the government communications around COVID-19, and related guidelines/restrictions, were more clear or concise. A very small group of responses (0.3%) referenced that “locals only” incentives would make respondents more comfortable, such as designated shopping times.

*“Strong, clear communications about COVID-19 protocols and safety expectations.”*

## Safety Expectations

Respondents were asked to specify how they expect local businesses and attractions to ensure the safety of residents and visitors. The majority of responses indicated that respondents expect local businesses and attractions to follow and/or enforce the government guidelines for preventing the transmission of COVID-19 (75%). Specific expectations for employees and patrons included properly wearing masks (19%), maintaining good personal hygiene through handwashing and hand sanitizing (12%), and maintaining space through physical distancing (10%). There were also several mentions of expectations related to government guidelines including indoor occupancy limits, upholding cleanliness and sanitation, and conducting contact tracing.

*“Comprehensive health and safety protocols in place and the continued diligent enforcement of these enhanced measures.”*

The sentiments shared in some responses didn’t fit into the emergent themes and were categorized as “other” (12%). Some respondents indicated they expect businesses and attractions to clearly communicate their rules/restrictions (e.g. signage). Another sentiment shared in a small group of responses (0.6%) was for businesses and attractions to implement programs and incentives for local residents. Examples included: encouraging local travel through “stay local” promotions, creating “locals only” days/times, catering to locals, and to recapture resident patronage by not permitting visitors. Of the total responses, 7% indicated that respondents believed that the guidelines at the time of the survey were adequate for local businesses and attractions to ensure the safety of residents and visitors.

*“Continue what they are doing, all precautions necessary are already in place and are being followed to the best of the businesses abilities.”*

Other responses indicated that respondents do not support travel or visitors from out of community during “non-essential” travel restrictions, and that they would be upset to see promotions or endorsements for tourism (5%). Another group of responses indicated that respondents think safety is a personal responsibility (2%).

*“Safety of residents should be priority. Cancel all non-local trips – travel & tourism are not 100% essential to life at this time. If not for medical reasons or work it simply should not be happening.”*

## Tourism Observations

Respondents were invited to share observations they made regarding tourism in their community over the 12 months prior to completing the survey (e.g. visitor activities, behaviours, origin, volume, etc.). The observation most frequently mentioned was that visitor activity increased, or, remained consistent with pre-pandemic levels (33%). While most of those respondents indicated that they felt neutrally or negatively about their observations of consistent/increased visitor activity, a few respondents expressed positive sentiments. Some respondents shared that they observed increased visitor activity occurred during the summer of 2020 (June to September) and again during the winter (December 2020 to January

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2021). Many of the respondents who observed consistent or increased visitor activity indicated that they mostly observed visitors from other parts of British Columbia and western Canada (particularly Alberta), but that visitors from the United States were also observed during the winter (e.g. saw vehicles with American license plates parked at the ski hill).

*“Honestly, it’s been scary watching tourists come here against the Public Health Orders. It seems that there is no consequences for rule breakers, and it’s incredibly frustrating for people that have given up so much by sticking to the public health orders.”*

Along with consistent or increased visitor activity, there were several reported observations of visitors not following government guidelines and/or behaving disrespectfully (19%). Many of these respondents indicated that they perceived the visitors to be ignoring or willfully disobeying the “non-essential” travel restrictions and other government guidelines for preventing the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Conversely, another group of responses reported a decrease in visitor activity (16%) and it was perceived that those visitors appeared to be following guidelines and/or behaving respectfully (11%).

*“With few exceptions, I feel that businesses, residents and visitors have followed pandemic guidelines.”*

The sentiments shared in some responses didn’t fit into the emergent themes and were categorized as “other” (11%), including the desire for visitors to follow government guidelines by staying home, and the belief that the government has been divisive and confusing as a result of their restrictions/guidelines for businesses and attractions. A small group of responses (1%) indicated that residents are stepping up to support local businesses and attractions and help them survive the pandemic.

Observations were shared about activities occurring outdoors (5%). Respondents indicated that they observed an increase in those activities (camping, hiking, cycling, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, etc.) and perceived that the spaces often frequented for those activities appeared busier this year over previous years. There were many negative observations around people using outdoor spaces during the summer months, including: overflowing parking at recreational areas, lack of space for local residents due to high levels of activity, increased pollution through littering and improper disposal of human waste, and a lack of considerate outdoor behaviour (making new trails, camping in areas where it isn’t permitted, etc.). Negative observations shared about outdoor recreation during the winter included: visitors arriving to ski or snowmobile and not following guidelines (not self-isolating upon arrival, not wearing masks, congregating in groups, etc.) and visitors disregarding the “non-essential” travel restrictions and travelling from other areas of Canada and the United States to come and ski.

*“A significant increase in trail based outdoor recreation (cycling, hiking, walking, XC skiing, fat biking, snowshoeing, etc). Unfortunately we do not have enough designated trails in our area which causes the crowds to congregate on the few areas we have. Parking is overflowing, user conflict on the trails is an issue, new users do not understand trail etiquette... We need to spread people out, this will not change once the pandemic is over.”*

A few responses (4%) shared some observations about local businesses and attractions. This included the perception that many local businesses and attractions experienced difficulties related to the government-implemented shutdowns and restrictions, or conversely, where some respondents observed non-compliance with government guidelines and others noted the successful efforts of businesses to follow government guidelines. Some respondents noted that they make extra effort to support local businesses and attractions which they have observed adapting to the government guidelines and exercising diligence to keep their employees and patrons safe. A small group of responses

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mentioned that respondents feel a sense of rejuvenated community-mindedness and that residents of their local have been rallying together to support local businesses and attractions (1%).

*"I appreciate that locals are being encouraged to participate and support our local economy."*

Several responses indicated that respondents have observed local residents not following guidelines, behaving rudely, or being publicly intolerant of visitors (2%).

*"The only observation I see is that some of our local community members are treating visitors poorly. This is unnecessary and may cause future visitors to take their business elsewhere based on the treatment received during this time."*

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## Concluding Comments

To conclude the questionnaire, respondents were invited to share any other comments they had about the survey. A large number of responses reiterated respondent sentiments about wanting residents and visitors alike to follow the “non-essential” travel restrictions by not traveling and staying home (31%).

*“We cannot follow public health guidelines and encourage visitors at the same time....health before wealth.”*

Sentiments shared in some responses didn’t fit into emergent themes and were categorized as “other” (28%). Some of these “other” sentiments were shared by multiple respondents, including, but not limited to:

- Negative impacts of COVID-19 (poor mental health, economic downturn, perceived issues with guidelines);
- Belief that safety is a personal responsibility;
- Need to balance community safety with tourism (preventing COVID-19 while still supporting the local economy);
- Negative perceptions of tourism (catering to visitors over locals, impacts to the natural environment, creating a busier community dynamic in historically rural areas)
- Poor behaviour of residents (being rude, intolerant, or judgemental towards visitors, even prior to the pandemic)
- Gratitude to local businesses, attractions, and tourism operators for perseverance related to COVID-19 challenges
- Emphasizing the importance of “being kind”

*“We don’t know the underlying reasons behind any visitors activities. There is no need to harass our neighbours. Understandably, everyone is tired of our current situation, but sadly Covid is here for the foreseeable future. If everyone does their part, chill, be kind, be patient, and work together towards our common goal, we will weather the storm.”*

Responses also reiterated respondents’ desire to see residents and visitors alike following government guidelines for preventing the transmission of COVID-19, as well as increased enforcement of said guidelines (11%). Another 7% of responses indicated the wish to see the government guidelines and restrictions end or be changed, in some instances, due to beliefs about their inefficacy and negative impacts.

*“I truly believe that we need to learn how to adapt, and manage life during this pandemic. We know a lot more about how to prevent the virus from spreading. We should be moving forward cautiously, but still move forward. Continued shut down will have drastic negative effects on so many levels.”*

Several responses (6%) highlighted how local residents have been sustaining local businesses and attractions throughout the pandemic by shopping locally, and how this level of support needs to continue. There were positive sentiments shared about promotions for local tourism.

*“I think it is extremely important to support small businesses at this time.”*

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A few responses were comments about the survey process itself with positive feedback or criticisms (6% and 4%, respectively). The main message from the positive comments was that residents of the Kootenay Rockies region were grateful to have the opportunity to share how they feel about tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 4% of responses criticizing the survey shared the belief that the questionnaire was biased (towards economic/tourism practices and not objectively obtaining resident sentiments) and that the questions were inappropriate or contradictory to government guidelines/restrictions at the time of deployment. Those respondents also shared their belief that their responses will not matter or be shared in the final results.

Some responses concluded the survey by emphasizing the dependence of their community or business on tourism (3%), while others shared their vision for life after the COVID-19 pandemic and offered suggestions for tourism strategies (3%). These suggestions focussed on the changes necessary for the evolution of tourism post-pandemic, including marketing based on current guidelines/ restrictions (e.g. a consumer's "bubble") and proactively making changes to tourism activities impacted by restrictions (e.g. innovative solutions for tight spaces such as buses, planes, and cruise ships).

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Tourism Industry Association of Canada. (2021). *2021 Tourism Recovery Plan*. [https://tiac-aitc.ca/Tourism\\_Recovery.html](https://tiac-aitc.ca/Tourism_Recovery.html)

<sup>2</sup> Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. (2021). *State of the Basin*. <https://stateofthebasin.ca/>

<sup>3</sup> Government of British Columbia. (2021). *Joint statement on B.C.'s COVID-19 response, latest updates (2021, Feb. 8)*. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0001-000026>

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## APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

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## Kootenay Rockies Tourism – Resident Sentiment Survey Introduction and Questions

### *Survey Introduction: A Message from Kootenay Rockies Tourism*

Dear residents,

Kootenay Rockies Tourism (KRT), as the official Regional Destination Management Organization for southeastern BC, works diligently towards the sustainable development of our region as a prime and unique travel destination.

Our whole organization believes that a strong and sustainable visitor economy is a critical component of a resilient community with an exceptional quality of life.

Tourism is one of the most important economic sectors in the Kootenay Rockies region. The region welcomes 2.3 million overnight visitors annually, which is approximately 11% of total visitors to BC. On average, 50% of our visitors are from Alberta, with a proportion reaching 70% for the eastern side of the region. Each year, visitors bring \$725,000,000 in visitor spending, which translates to approximately \$2.5 billion in tourism revenue. Over 7,300 people are employed in the tourism industry in this region, and many of the jobs are full-time and year round. Beyond the economic contribution that tourism brings, it also provides countless cultural, social and recreational benefits to the region, and some services enjoyed by residents that could not be sustained without the influx of visitors.

As a resident of the Kootenay Rockies Tourism region, you are the heart of our communities and the foundation on which our region thrives. It is crucial that we understand your thoughts and feelings about tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your responses to our resident survey will help us understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and inform the re-building of the tourism industry.

We thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback and share your sentiment regarding tourism.

The KRT team

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## Survey Questions

1. In which community do you reside?
  - Canal Flats & Area (Columbia Lake 3, East Kootenay F, Fairmont Hot Springs)
  - Castlegar & Area (Central Kootenay I, Central Kootenay J)
  - Cranbrook & Area (East Kootenay C, Cassimayooks (Mayook) 5, Isidore's Ranch 4, Kootenay 1)
  - Creston & Area (Central Kootenay C, Creston 1)
  - Creston Valley (Central Kootenay B)
  - Elkford
  - Elk Valley (East Kootenay A, excluding Elkford, Sparwood and Fernie)
  - Fernie
  - Fruitvale, Montrose & Area (Kootenay Boundary A)
  - Golden & Area (Columbia-Shuswap A)
  - Invermere & Area (Panorama, Windermere, Shuswap)
  - Kaslo
  - Kimberley & Area (East Kootenay E)
  - Kootenay Lake East Shore (Central Kootenay A)
  - Kootenay Lake North (Central Kootenay D)
  - Nakusp & Area (Central Kootenay K)
  - Nelson & Area (Central Kootenay E, Central Kootenay F)
  - New Denver
  - Radium Hot Springs & Area (East Kootenay G)
  - Revelstoke & Area (Columbia-Shuswap B)
  - Rossland
  - Salmo & Area (Central Kootenay G)
  - Silverton
  - Slocan
  - Slocan Valley (Central Kootenay H, excluding New Denver, Silverton and Slocan)
  - South Country (East Kootenay B, Tobacco Plains 2)
  - Sparwood
  - Trail, Warfield & Area (Kootenay Boundary B)
  
2. Are you primarily a resident of the Kootenay Rockies region?
  - Yes, my primary residential address is in the Kootenay Rockies region
  - No, my primary residential address is outside of the Kootenay Rockies region (second home owner, foreign worker, etc.)
  
3. What is your gender identity?
  - Female
  - Male
  - Other
  - Prefer not to answer
  
4. What age group do you fit into?
  - 19-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64

- 65+

5. In which sector are you employed?

- Accommodation
- Agriculture
- Arts & Culture
- Construction
- Educational Services
- Finance/Insurance
- Food Services
- Forestry
- Health Care
- Manufacturing
- Mining/Oil & Gas
- Non-Profit Services
- Professional Services
- Public Administration
- Retail
- Retired
- Tourism/Outdoor Recreation
- Transport
- Unemployed
- Other (please specify)

6. Do you get part or all of your income from the tourism industry? (For example: working in a tourism business, earning income from a vacation rental, selling arts & crafts to visitors.)

- Yes
  - Part of my income
  - All of my income
- No

7. Please rate the following statement:

- **Currently**, during the COVID-19 pandemic, how important is tourism in supporting the following aspects of your community:

	Not at all important	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Economy (jobs, revenue for businesses, etc.)					
Vibrancy (festivals and events, dining and shopping options, lively)					

downtown, etc.)					
Quality of life (recreation opportunities, services and amenities, affordability, etc.)					

8. Please rate the following statement:

- **In the future**, after the COVID-19 pandemic, how important will tourism be in supporting the following aspects of your community:

	Not at all important	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Economy (jobs, revenue for businesses, etc.)					
Vibrancy (festivals and events, dining and shopping options, lively downtown, etc.)					
Quality of life (recreation opportunities, services and amenities, affordability, etc.)					

9. In the last two questions (7 and 8), we asked you to rate the importance of tourism in supporting your community, now and in the future (during and after the pandemic). Please specify why you have rated tourism with that level of importance.

- *Open commentary*

10. Please indicate your current level of comfort visiting local businesses in your community.

- Uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Neutral

- Somewhat comfortable
- Comfortable

11. Please select all that apply. Given the current COVID-19 situation, I would welcome visitors travelling to my community from...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The Kootenay Rockies region					
Kelowna					
Kamloops					
Victoria					
Vancouver					
Rural BC					
Southern Alberta					
Central Alberta & Calgary					
Northern Alberta & Edmonton					
Western Canadian provinces					
Eastern Canadian provinces					
United States - Pacific Northwest					
Other areas of the United States					
Other countries (outside of the United States)					

12. Please indicate your current level of comfort travelling **within British Columbia**.

- Uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat comfortable
- Comfortable

13. Please indicate your current level of comfort travelling **outside** of British Columbia to another Canadian province or territory.

- Uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Neutral
- Somewhat comfortable
- Comfortable

14. Currently, what is your level of comfort doing each of the following activities?

	Uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Neutral	Somewhat comfortable	Comfortable
Outdoor recreation (walk, hike, bike, ski/snowboard, snowshoe, paddle, etc.)					
Indoor recreation (visit a museum, art gallery, tasting room, gym, public swimming pool, etc.)					
Visit retail stores (clothing, furniture, etc.)					
Eat in at a restaurant, pub or café					
Travel by car or RV					
Travel on an airplane					
Stay in a self-contained accommodation (vacation rental, condo, cabin, etc.)					
Stay at a traditional accommodation (hotel, motel, etc.)					
Stay at a resort destination (vineyard, hot springs, spa, etc.)					

15. Do you have any COVID-19 related concerns when visiting local businesses and attractions in your community?

- Yes
- No (*embed with skip-logic so that respondents who answer “No” are forwarded to question 17*)

16. What COVID-19 related concerns do you have when visiting local businesses and attractions in your community? Please rank from least (1) to greatest (7) concern.

- Other customers not complying with health & safety guidelines
- Crowds of people
- Sharing spaces with visitors from outside of your community
- Business not complying with health & safety guidelines
- Physical distancing not being implemented at lineups in stores or on streets
- Fear of catching COVID-19
- Increase costs related to COVID-19
- Other (please specify) (*open commentary*)

17. Given the current COVID-19 situation, how would you feel if you saw an advertisement promoting your community as a place for people to visit?

- Very unhappy
- Unhappy
- Neutral
- Happy
- Very happy

18. Given the current COVID-19 situation, at what point are you likely to make trips to the following destinations?

	Immediately	Within the next 1 to 3 months	Within the next 4 to 12 months	When travel restrictions allow	When the pandemic is over	No intention to travel
Nearby communities - day trip						
Nearby communities - overnight trip						
Elsewhere in British Columbia - overnight trip						
Other Canadian provinces and territories (outside of British Columbia)						
The United States						
Other countries (outside of the United States)						

19. When you next travel to the destinations in Question 18, what will your motivation for travelling be?

	Work	Leisure	Visiting family	Visiting friends	I do not intend to travel in the short term
Nearby communities - day trip					

Nearby communities - overnight trip					
Elsewhere in British Columbia - overnight trip					
Other Canadian provinces and territories (outside of British Columbia)					
The United States					
Other countries (outside of the United States)					

Other (please specify) – *open commentary*

20. Given the current COVID-19 situation, what measures would make you feel more comfortable in welcoming visitors to your community? Please specify.

*Open comment box*

21. How do you expect local businesses and attractions to ensure the safety of residents and visitors? Please specify.

*Open comment box*

22. What, if any, observations have you made regarding tourism in your community over the last 12 months? (visitor activities, behaviours, origin, volume, etc.)

*Open comment box*

23. What comments would you like to add to this survey?

*Open comment box*