On COVID-19 and Tourism:

Drivers of Travel Behavior and Place-based Appeal of Maine Rural Destinations

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- **Meet the Team:**
  - Involved Researchers
- **Reviewing Recent Years**
- **Research Scope, Objectives, and Methodology**
- **Results:**
  - Expressed Socio-demographics
  - Visitation Factors (i.e., Recreational Activities, Influential Conditions, Refined Site-specific Results, Etc.)
  - Place Attachment and Maine
  - Pandemic-derived Changes and Resources
- **Present Conclusions and Future Pathways**
- **Acknowledgments:**
  - Funding and Support

MEET THE TEAM: INVOLVED RESEARCHERS

- Dr. Sandra De Urioste-Stone
- Dr. John Daigle
- Dr. Allison Gardner
- Dr. Brandon Lieberthal
- Dr. Linda Silka
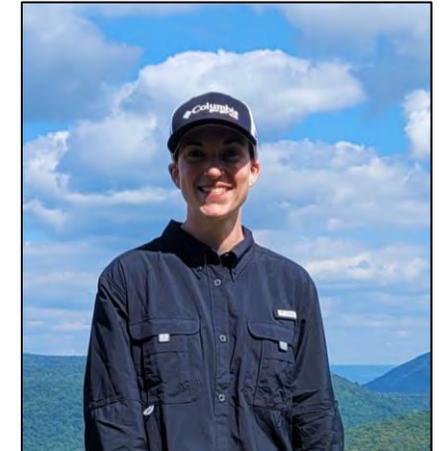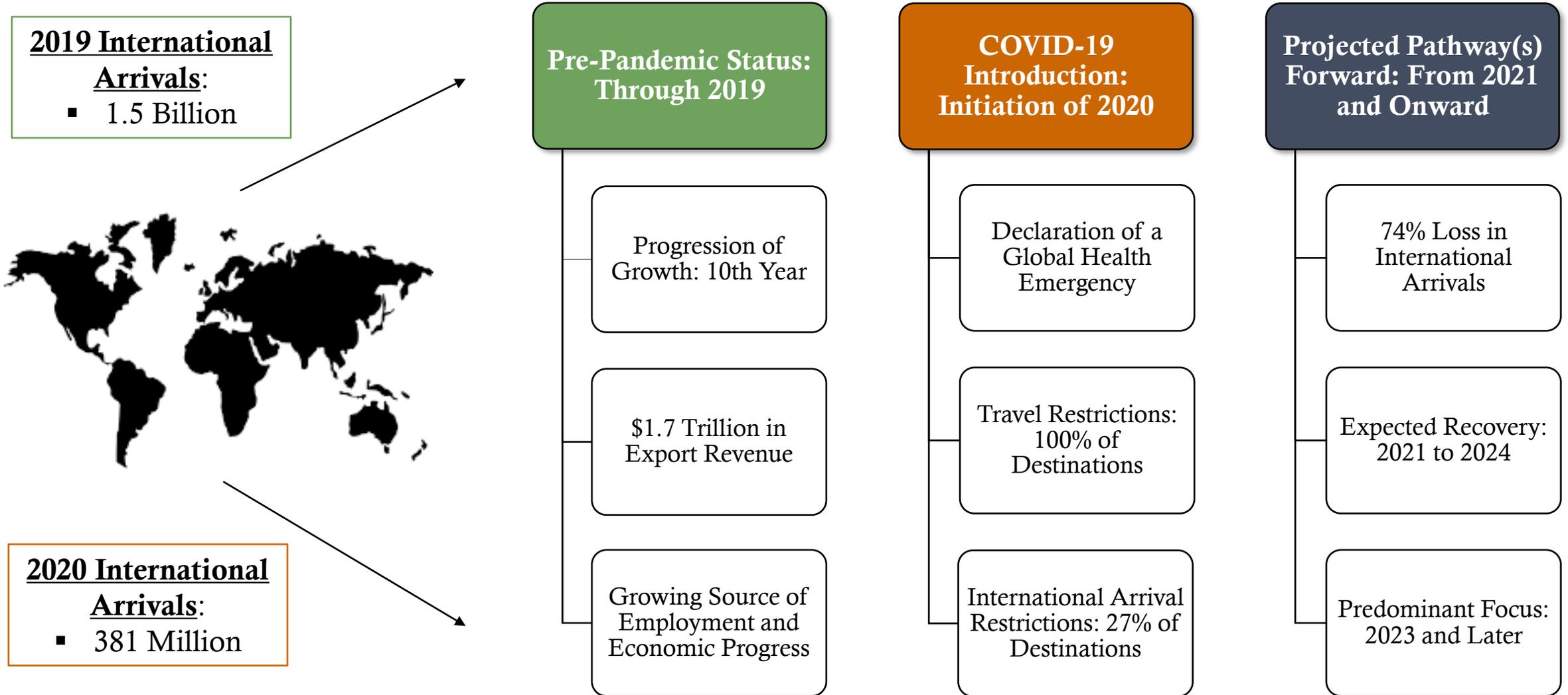- Dr. Karen Beeftink
- Lucy Martin
- Dr. Sarah Jackson

COVID-19: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

2019 International Arrives:
- 1.5 Billion

2020 International Arrivals:
- 381 Million

Pre-Pandemic Status: Through 2019

- Progression of Growth: 10th Year
- $1.7 Trillion in Export Revenue
- Growing Source of Employment and Economic Progress

COVID-19 Introduction: Initiation of 2020

- Declaration of a Global Health Emergency
- Travel Restrictions: 100% of Destinations
- International Arrival Restrictions: 27% of Destinations

Projected Pathway(s) Forward: From 2021 and Onward

- 74% Loss in International Arrivals
- Expected Recovery: 2021 to 2024
- Predominant Focus: 2023 and Later

COVID-19: FOCUSING ON MAINE

2019:
- 16.5 Million Visitors
- $12.2 Billion in Economic Impact

2020:
- 12.1 Million Visitors
- $9 Billion in Economic Impact

Pre-Pandemic Status: Through 2019

- Growth: First-time, Day, and Overnight Visitors
- Out-of-state = 95% of Overnight Visitors
- Recreational Activities Progressed

COVID-19 Introduction: Initiation of 2020

- Restrictions: Tourism Promotions and Processes
- Out-of-state = 75% of Overnight Visitors
- "Restarting Maine's Economy" Launched

Rebounding and Pathway(s) Forward

- "Revisit Maine" Launched in June 2020
- Increased Day Visitation: June to August 2020
- Increased Travel Desires: Rural Destinations

RESEARCH SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Background and Overarching Scope:

- **Tourism Directly and Indirectly Influences the Vitality of Rural Communities***

- **2019*:**
  - $6.5 Billion in Tourism Spending
  - 116,000 Jobs (About 1 in Every 6 Jobs)

- **Impacts to Rural Tourism Destinations*,**:**
  - Policy Development to Reduce Transmission
  - Changes in Outdoor Recreation Behaviors
  - Challenges Within Protected Area Management
    - Reception of Benefits (e.g., Public Parks)
 - Uncertainty and Increased Anxiety

(Maine Office of Tourism, 2020)

**(Volenec et al., 2021)*

Primary Research Objectives:

- **Identify:**
  - Factors Which Influenced Out-of-state Visitation Decisions and Travel Behaviors During COVID-19
  - Determine Influential Place Attributes Which Attracted or Deterred Visitors

- **Utilize Findings Within Proactive Planning Efforts**

- **Inform Rural Destination Management and Public Health Policies**

- **Focus on Reducing Pandemic-derived Changes:**
  - Socioeconomic
  - Health
  - Environmental

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
RESEARCH SITES

COVID-19 and Tourism

- **State of Maine Overall**
- **Nature-based Areas of Interest:**
  - **Bethel** and Nearby Attractions (Sunday River Resort, Black Mountain, Rumford)
  - **Machias** and Nearby Attractions (East Machias, Machiasport, Roque Bluffs State Park, Cutler Coast)
  - **Mount Desert Island** (Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor)
  - **The Katahdin Region** (Baxter State Park, Millinocket, Katahdin Woods and Waters NM)

(Maine Department of Transportation, 2019)
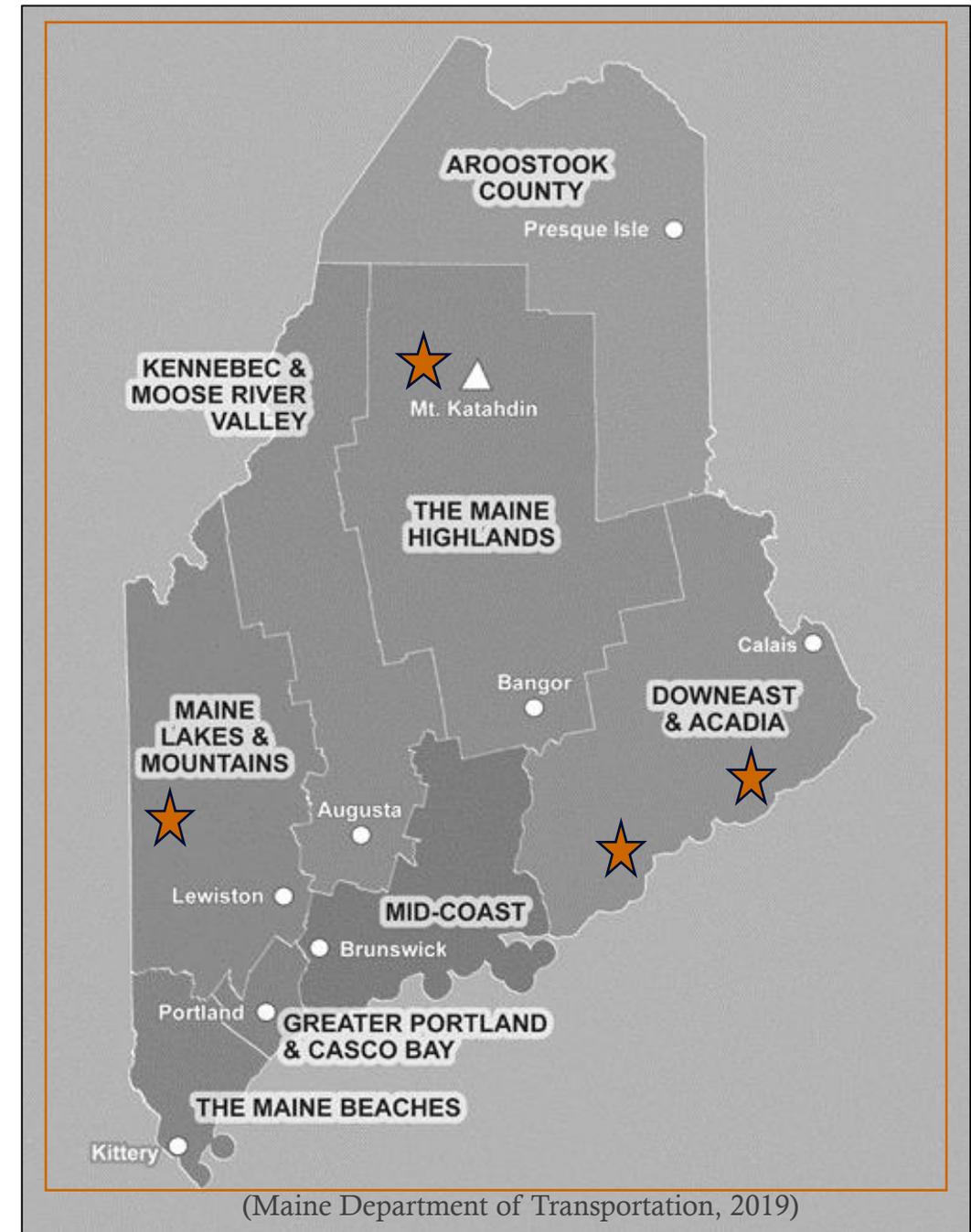
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Question Formatting**:
  - Close-ended and Likert Scales
  - Pre-existing Scales:
    - COVID-19 Experience and Knowledge (Dryhurst et al., 2020)
    - Travel Behavior (De Urioste-Stone et al., 2016)
    - Place Attachment (Wilkins et al., 2018)
    - Destination Attributes (De Urioste-Stone et al., 2015)

- **Participant Recruitment:**
  - Select States:
    - Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Connecticut, Vermont, Rhode Island, Florida, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina
  - Increased Visitation Reports
  - Visited Maine During 2020 and/or 2021
  - Email Used as Contact Method
- **Data Collection Protocols:**
  - Dillman Tailored Design Method
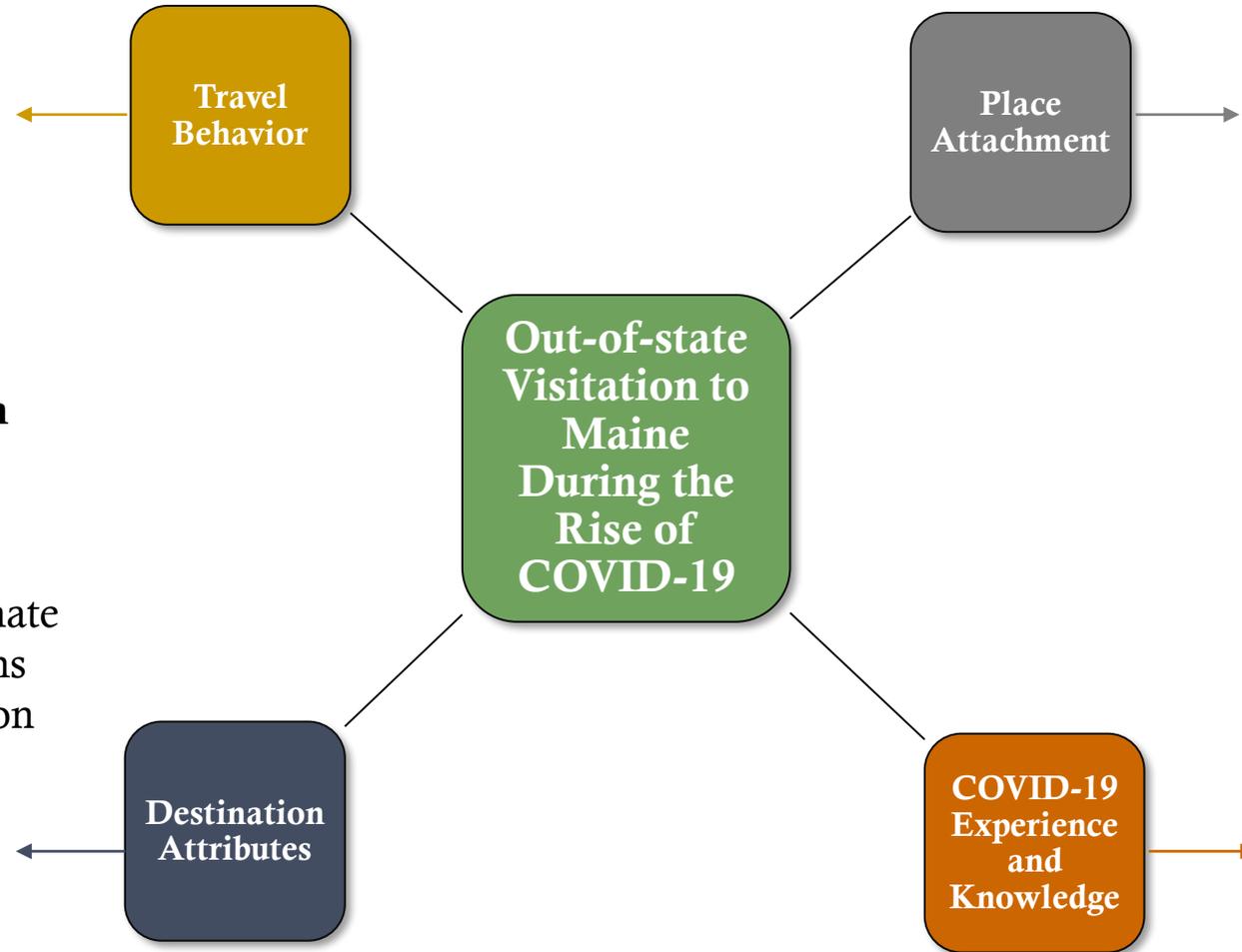- **Completed Responses** = 410

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: SCALES OF INTEREST

- **Destination Selection, Activity Participation, and Travel Timing (De Urioste-Stone et al., 2016):**
  - Visitor Perceptions and Implemented Travel Behaviors

- **Factors Driving Destination Selections by Visitors (De Urioste-Stone et al., 2015):**
  - Push-pull Factors:
    - Weather and Climate
    - Natural Attractions
    - Outdoor Recreation
  - Visitor Perceptions and Composition
  - Travel Behavior Implications

Travel Behavior

Out-of-state Visitation to Maine During the Rise of COVID-19

Destination Attributes

Place Attachment

COVID-19 Experience and Knowledge

- **Place Belongingness, Identity, and Dependence (Wilkins et al., 2018)**
- **Tripartite Framework (Scannell & Gifford, 2010):**
  - Psychological Experiences
  - Individual and Collective Dimensions
  - Social and Physical Characteristics

- **Public Risk Perception (Dryhurst et al., 2020):**
  - Level(s) of Concern
  - Personal Experience
  - Personal and Group Efficacy
 - Behavioral Modifications

RESULTS: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

Variable	Response Options	Percentage	Variable	Response Options	Percentage
Age Range	35-54 years	43.8%	**Race/Ethnicity**	White	73.5%
	18-34 years	42.2%		Black or African American	11.8%
	55-above 64 years	14.0%		Hispanic or Latin American	7.8%
Sex Assigned at Birth	Female	61.0%		Asian	4.0%
	Male	38.7%		American Indian or Alaska Native	2.3%
	Prefer not to reply	0.3%		Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.6%
Highest Level of Education	Associate's degree or Bachelor's degree	37.5%	**Annual Household Income**	$25,000-$49,999	34.7%
	Some high school, high school diploma, or equivalent	32.5%		$50,000-$74,999	23.5%%
	Some college, no degree	22.3%		Less than $24,999	16.4%
	Master's degree or Doctorate degree	7.7%		$100,000-$149,999	10.8%
Political Affiliation	Independent and leaning towards Conservative or Liberal	51.7%		$75,000-$99,999	9.9%
	Liberal-very Liberal	25.4%		$150,000-$200,000	3.4%
	Conservative-very Conservative	22.9%		Greater than $200,000	1.2%

RESULTS: RESIDENTIAL AND VISITATION STATUS

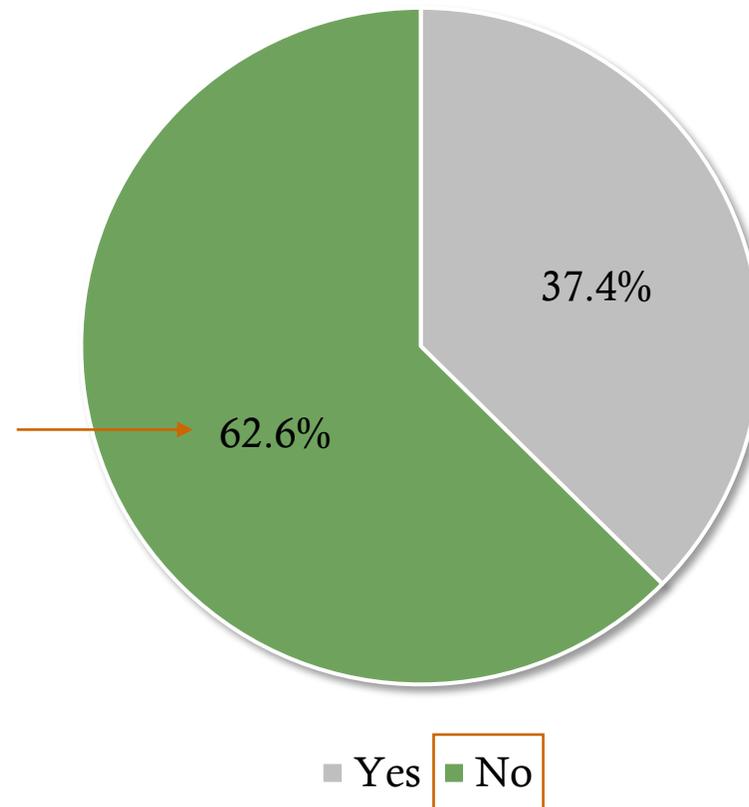## Current Residential Status
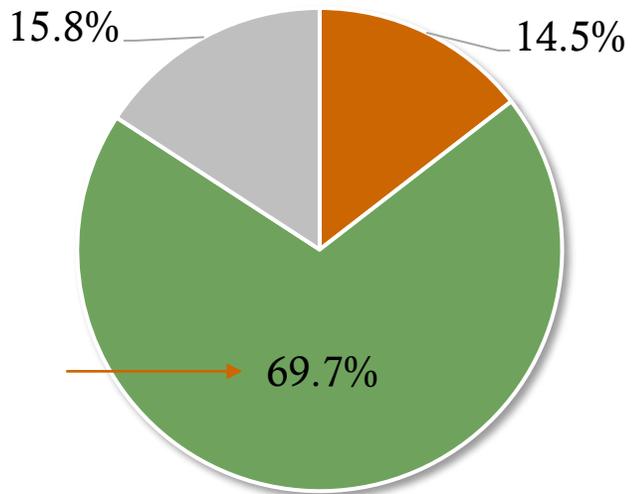
- ■ I am a seasonal resident of the state of Maine (at least 6 months of the year)
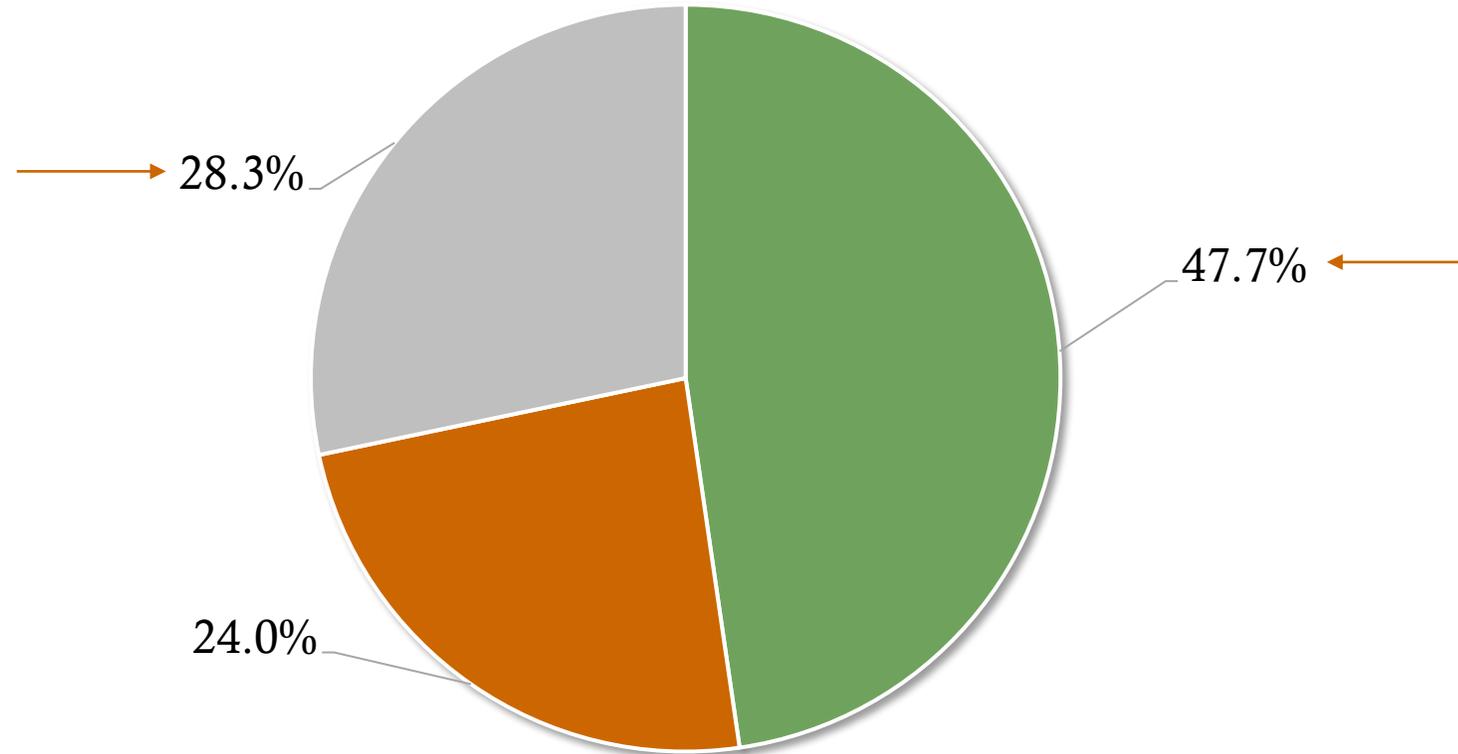- ■ I am NOT a resident of the state of Maine
- ■ I am NOT a Maine resident, but own land, a camp, and/or second home in Maine

1st Time Visiting Maine

■ Yes ■ No

RESULTS: YEARS VISITING MAINE
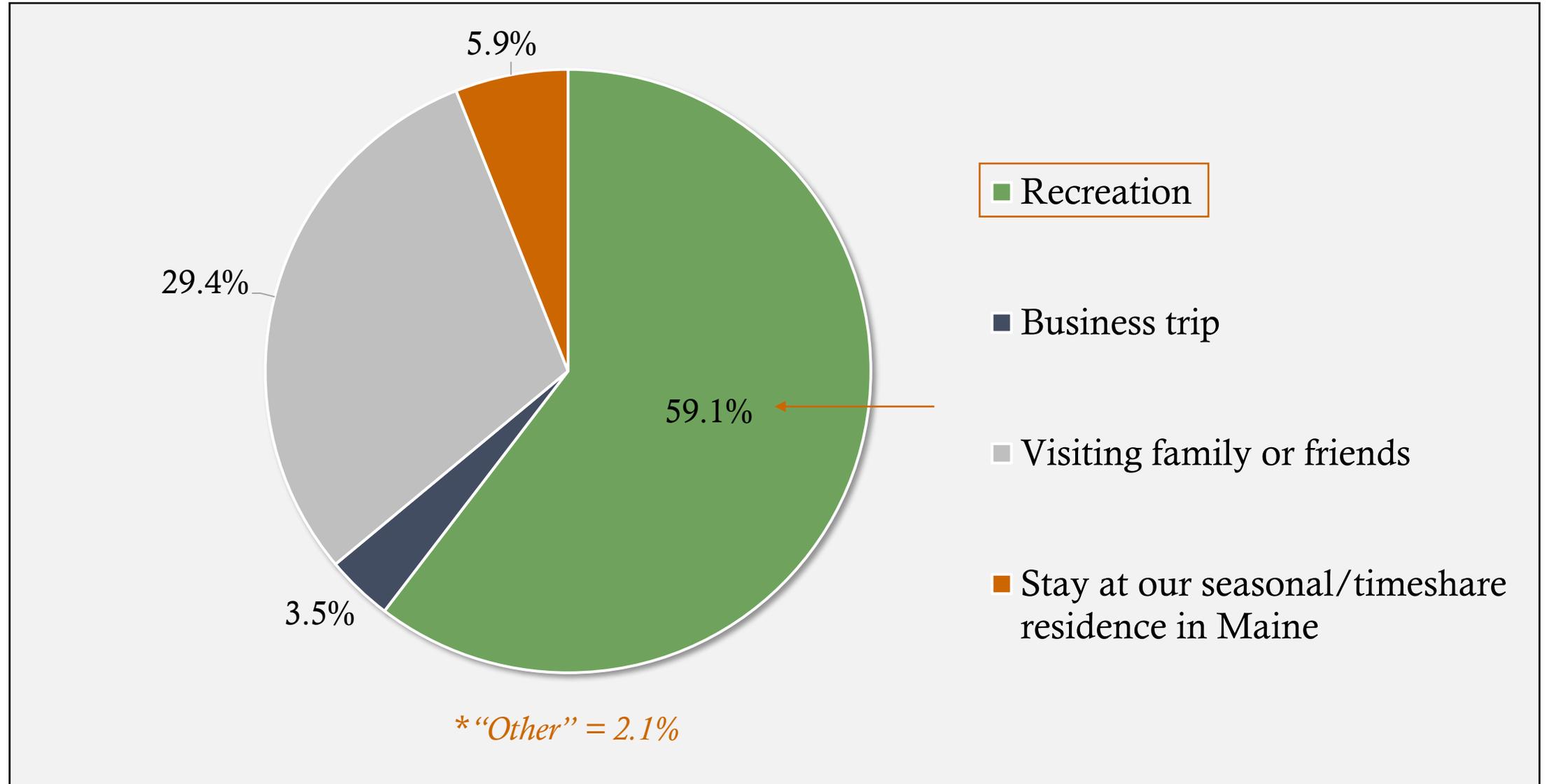

28.3%

47.7%

24.0%

- ■ I visited Maine in 2020
- ■ I visited Maine in 2021
- ■ I visited Maine in both 2020 AND 2021

■ **Recurring Visitation = 62.6%**

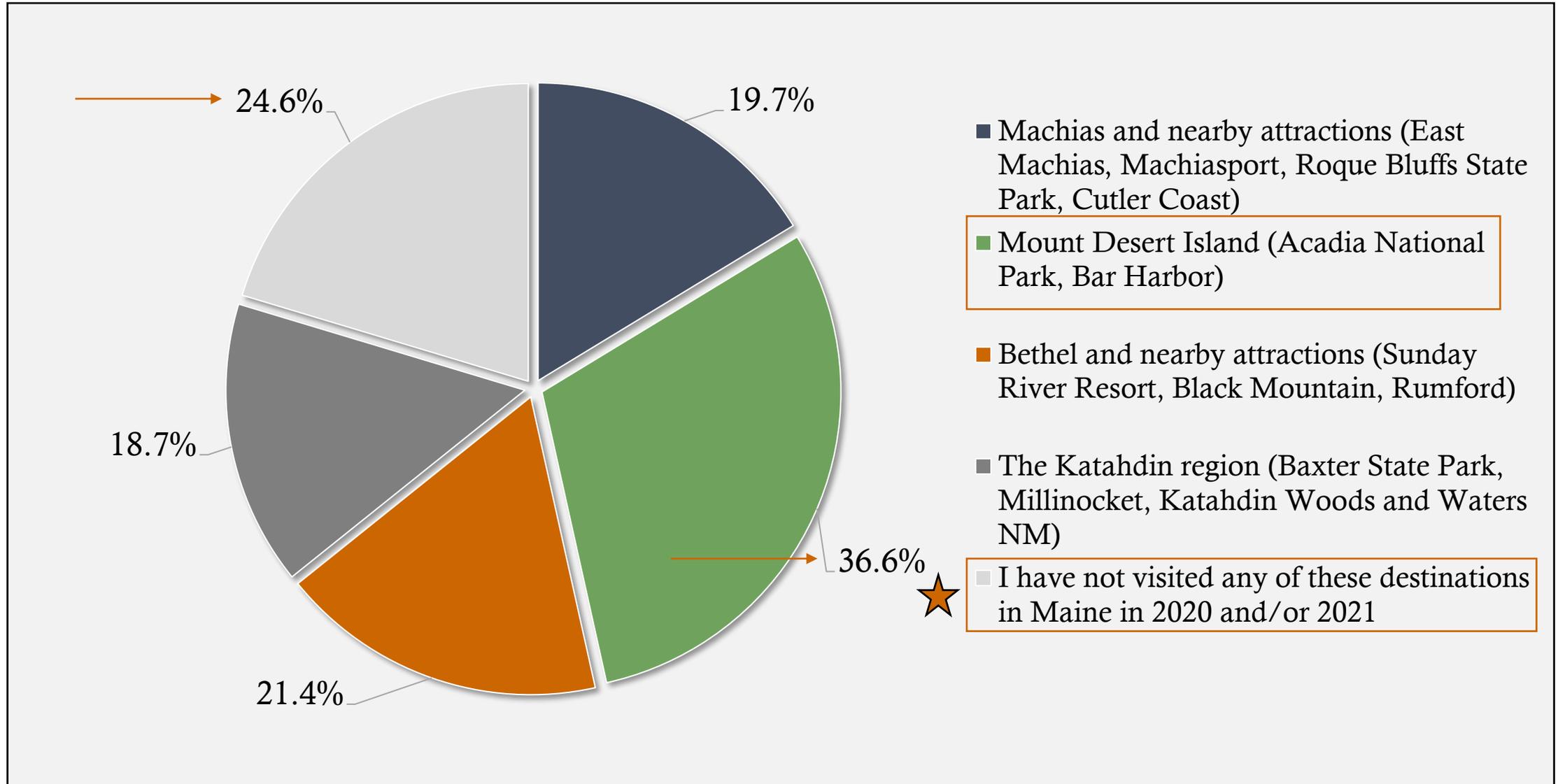# RESULTS: PRIMARY VISITATION PURPOSE*
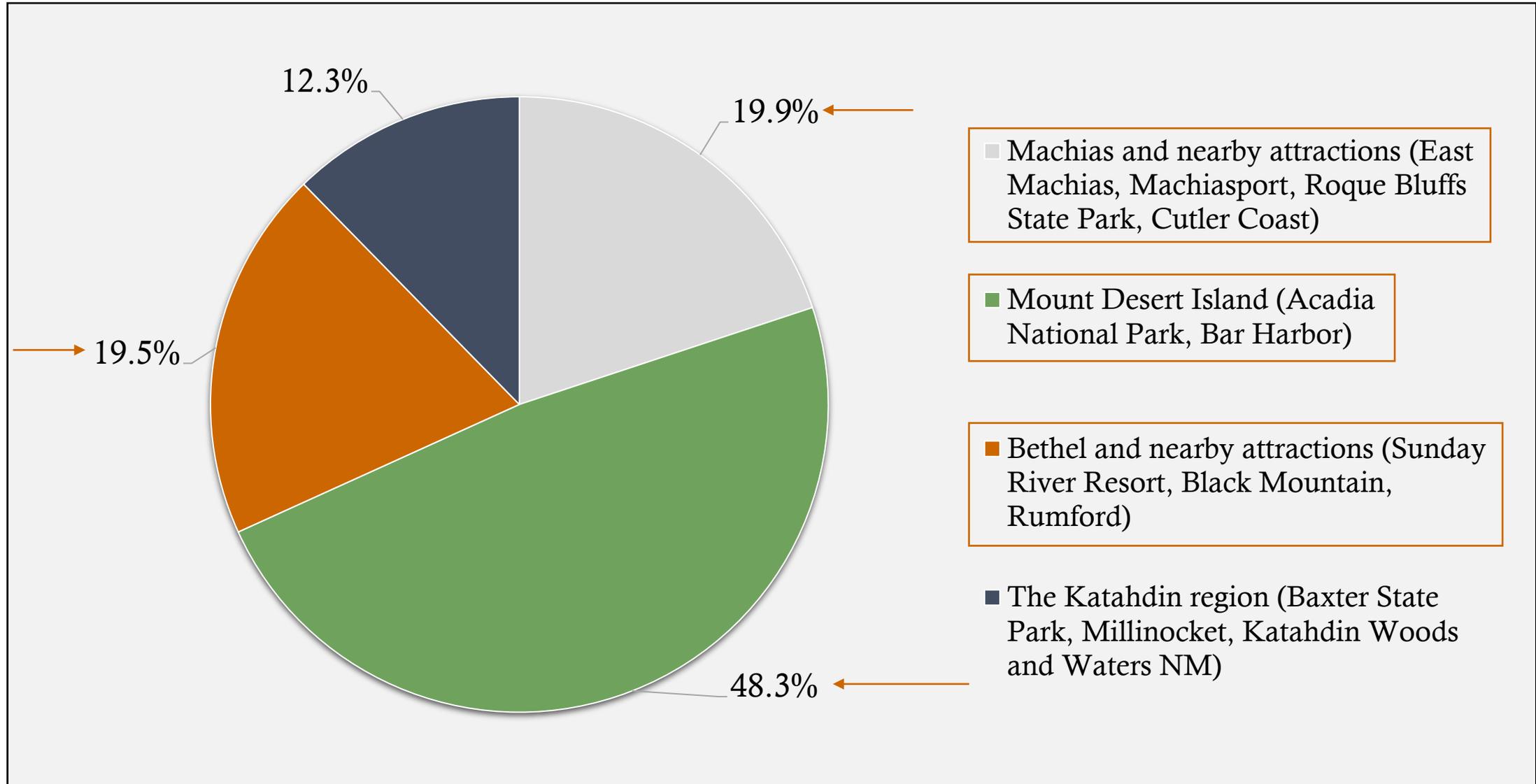

5.9%

29.4%

59.1%

3.5%

Recreation

Business trip

Visiting family or friends

Stay at our seasonal/timeshare residence in Maine

*"Other" = 2.1%

RESULTS: TOP 15 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Recreational Activities: **Top 15** Participant Responses	2020 (Percentage)	2021 (Percentage)
1. Walking	7.1%	7.0%
2. Camping	5.7%	5.7%
3. Driving for pleasure/sightseeing	5.5%	5.7%
4. Hiking	5.4%	5.2%
5. Nature photography	4.7%	4.5%
6. Fishing	4.6%	4.3%
7. Attending fairs/community events	4.4%	4.2%
8. Biking	4.2%	4.0%
9. Viewing wildlife	4.1%	3.9%
10. Picnicking	3.9%	3.9%
11. Backpacking	3.8%	3.5%
12. Visiting historic sites	3.6%	3.5%
13. Swimming	3.5%	3.4%
14. Walking my dog	3.3%	3.4%
15. Outdoor festivals	3.3%	3.4%

RESULTS: MAINE DESTINATION(S) VISITED

24.6%

19.7%

18.7%

21.4%

36.6%

■ Machias and nearby attractions (East Machias, Machiasport, Roque Bluffs State Park, Cutler Coast)

■ Mount Desert Island (Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor)

■ Bethel and nearby attractions (Sunday River Resort, Black Mountain, Rumford)

■ The Katahdin region (Baxter State Park, Millinocket, Katahdin Woods and Waters NM)

I have not visited any of these destinations in Maine in 2020 and/or 2021

RESULTS: PRIMARY DESTINATION(S) AND TIME SPENT

RESULTS: VISIT TO RECREATION/CONSERVATION SITES

Year	Sites Visited	Percentage	Year	Sites Visited	Percentage
	Maine State Parks and State Historic Sites	16.3%		Maine State Parks and State Historic Sites	15.4%
	Local municipal parks and open spaces	13.5%		Local municipal parks and open spaces	13.6%
	White Mountain National Forest	11.8%		Farms and other agricultural sites that are open to the public for visitation	11.4%
	Acadia National Park	10.6%		Acadia National Park	11.2%
	Farms and other agricultural sites that are open to the public for visitation	9.4%		Private land open for recreation	8.8%
2020	Private land open for recreation	9.3%	2021	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuges	8.6%
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuges	8.4%		White Mountain National Forest	7.8%
	Baxter State Park	7.8%		Maine Public Reserved Lands (i.e., Bigelow Preserve, Deboullie, Donnell Pond, etc.)	7.6%
	Maine Public Reserved Lands (i.e., Bigelow Preserve, Deboullie, Donnell Pond, etc.)	6.2%		Baxter State Park	6.0%
	Properties owned by land trusts (i.e., Maine Coastal Heritage Trust, DownEast Coastal Conservancy)	4.6%		Properties owned by land trusts (i.e., Maine Coastal Heritage Trust, DownEast Coastal Conservancy)	5.8%
	Other	2.2%		Other	3.6%

Response Options	No influence	Slight influence	Moderate influence	Very influential	Extremely influential	
Outstanding scenery	3.9%	3.6%	14.8%	31.8%	46.0%	
Environmental quality	7.4%	6.5%	15.5%	29.8%	40.8%	
Unique attractions	5.1%	6.5%	20.8%	29.5%	38.1%	
Personal safety	6.8%	8.0%	18.3%	31.1%	35.8%	
Low risk of contracting COVID-19	14.2%	7.0%	18.2%	26.1%	34.5%	
Opportunity to visit a park	6.9%	6.6%	17.0%	35.2%	34.3%	**69.5%**
Diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities available	5.4%	8.7%	21.1%	32.5%	32.2%	**64.7%**
Weather conditions	6.8%	9.2%	22.9%	28.9%	32.1%	**61.0%**
Availability of activities for families	12.2%	7.0%	20.7%	30.1%	30.1%	**60.2%**
Inexpensive to travel within Maine	7.5%	8.7%	25.7%	29.3%	29.0%	
Ability to easily maintain social distance when recreating outdoors	14.9%	8.3%	23.2%	25.3%	28.3%	
High COVID-19 vaccination rate	25.1%	10.7%	21.1%	19.3%	23.9%	**43.2%**
Other	57.3%	4.3%	7.1%	12.3%	19.0%	

■ **Extremely or Very Influential= 77.8% to 31.3%**

RESULTS: IMPACT ON VISITATION QUALITY

Positive → Negative →

Category	
Visitors hiking off trails	
Visitors respecting COVID-19 regulations	
→ Traffic congestion	
People wearing masks	
→ Short wait times at restaurants	
Ease of access to overnight accommodations in the destination	
Low potential of exposure to COVID-19	
High COVID-19 vaccination rates at destination	
High temperatures	
Heat waves	
Extreme rain events	
→ Exposure to ticks	
→ Exposure to mosquitoes	
→ Ease of getting reservations at restaurants	
Ease of accessing tourism attractions	
Crowding at tourism attractions	
Crowding in parking lots	
→ Affordable overnight accommodations in the destination	

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0% 90.0% 100.0%

■ **Positive impact**   ■ **No impact**   ■ **Negative impact**

RESULTS: PLACE ATTACHMENT TO MAINE
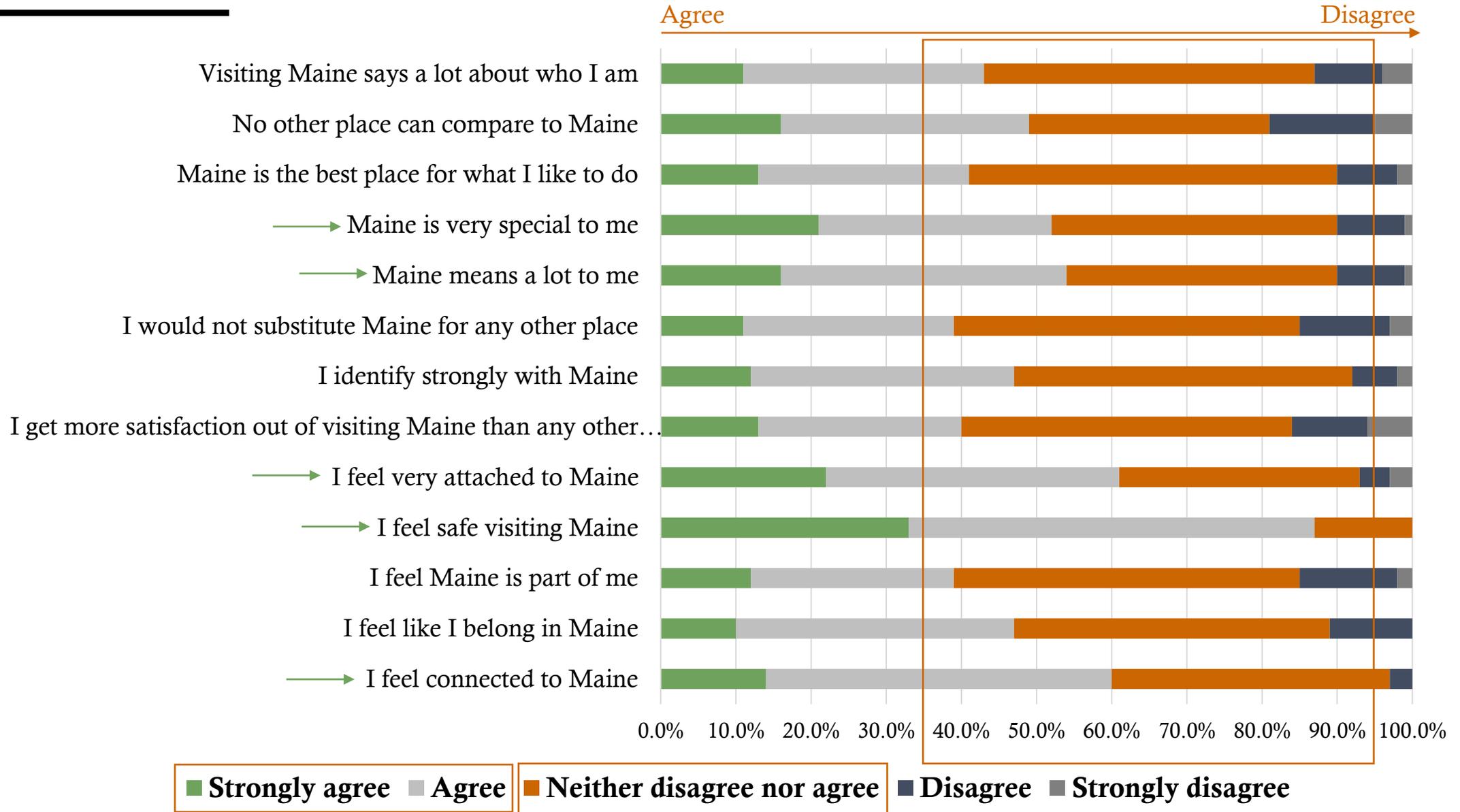
RESULTS: TRAVEL CHANGES DUE TO COVID-19

4.4%   4.9%

8.8%

10.8% ←

7.4%

- Canceled travel plans
- Changed travel plans
- Changed travel location
- Changed travel activity
- Changed mode of travel
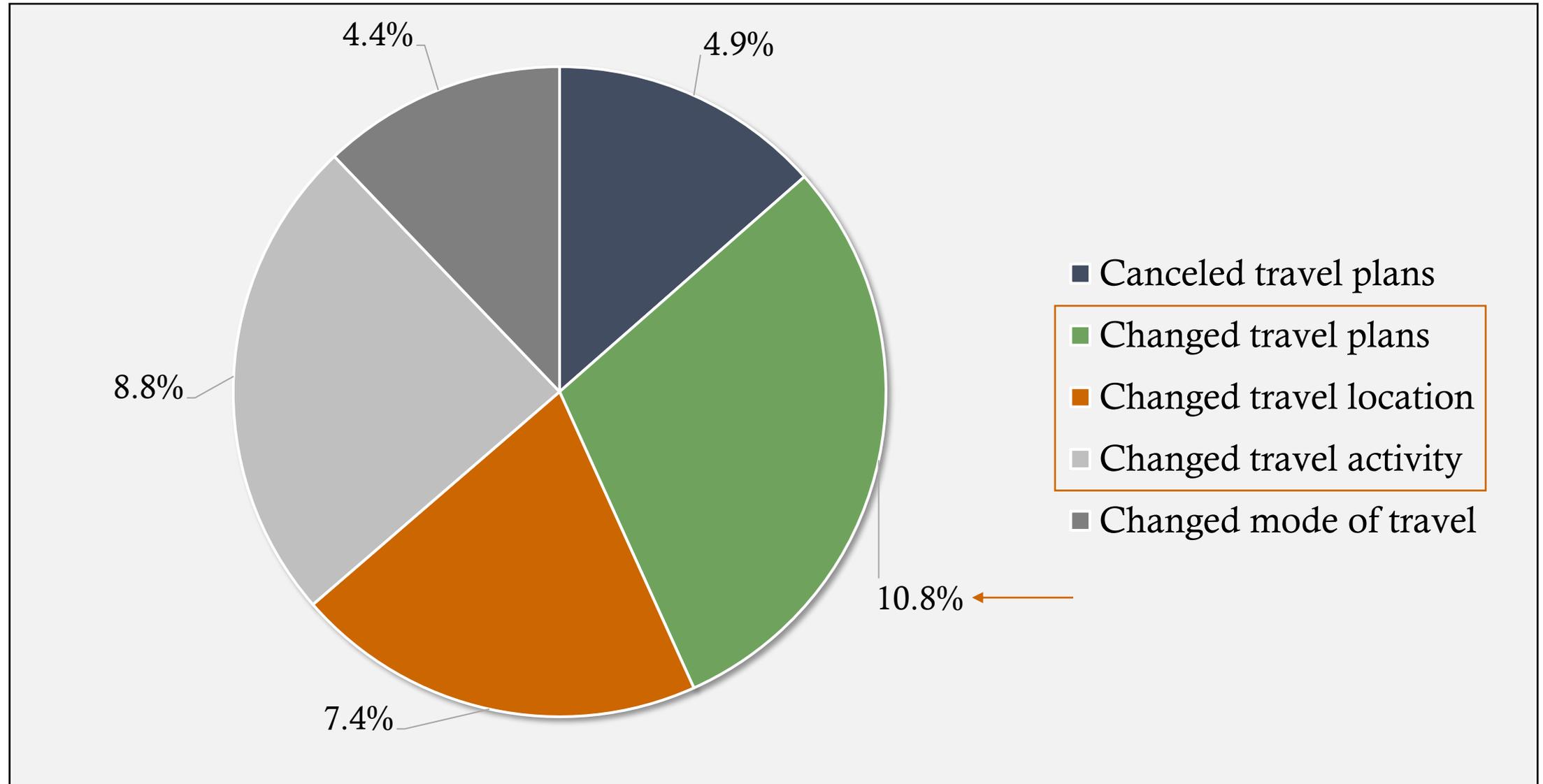
RESULTS: VISITOR PERCEPTIONS AND COVID-19

RESULTS: TRUST IN INFORMATION SOURCES

Agree   Disagree

I trust social media to provide accurate information on COVID-19

I trust news media to provide accurate information on COVID-19

I trust family and friends to provide accurate information on COVID-19

I trust the government to share accurate information on COVID-19

I trust scientists to provide accurate information on COVID-19

0.0% 10.0% 20.0% 30.0% 40.0% 50.0% 60.0% 70.0% 80.0% 90.0% 100.0%

■ **Strongly agree** ■ **Agree** ■ **Neither disagree nor agree** ■ **Disagree** ■ **Strongly disagree**

PRESENT CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PATHWAYS

Visitor Quote*:
"I appreciate the beautiful sites in Maine and the respect for everyone's safety in regards to covid-19."

Visitor Quote*:
"We planned a picnic in our beloved Maine. We will be back for overnights once we can be assured this pandemic is in our rear view mirror. **We trust Maine**, we just don't trust others to do what is right."

*Verbatim Visitor Quotations

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FUNDING AND SUPPORT

COVID-19 and Tourism

- University of Maine →

  THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

- University of Maine System (UMS) Research Reinvestment Fund (RRF) →

  Global Impact Local Relevance
  Maine's Research University at Work
  Carnegie R1 Top-Tier Research Institution

Thank You for Your Participation and Time:
QUESTIONS?