

# COASTAL MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT SENTIMENT TOWARDS TOURISM

Sponsored by Coastal Mississippi

Prepared by The University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park

Heather Annulis, Ph.D., CPLP

Jacob Breland, Ph.D., SPHR



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTHERN**  
**MISSISSIPPI.**

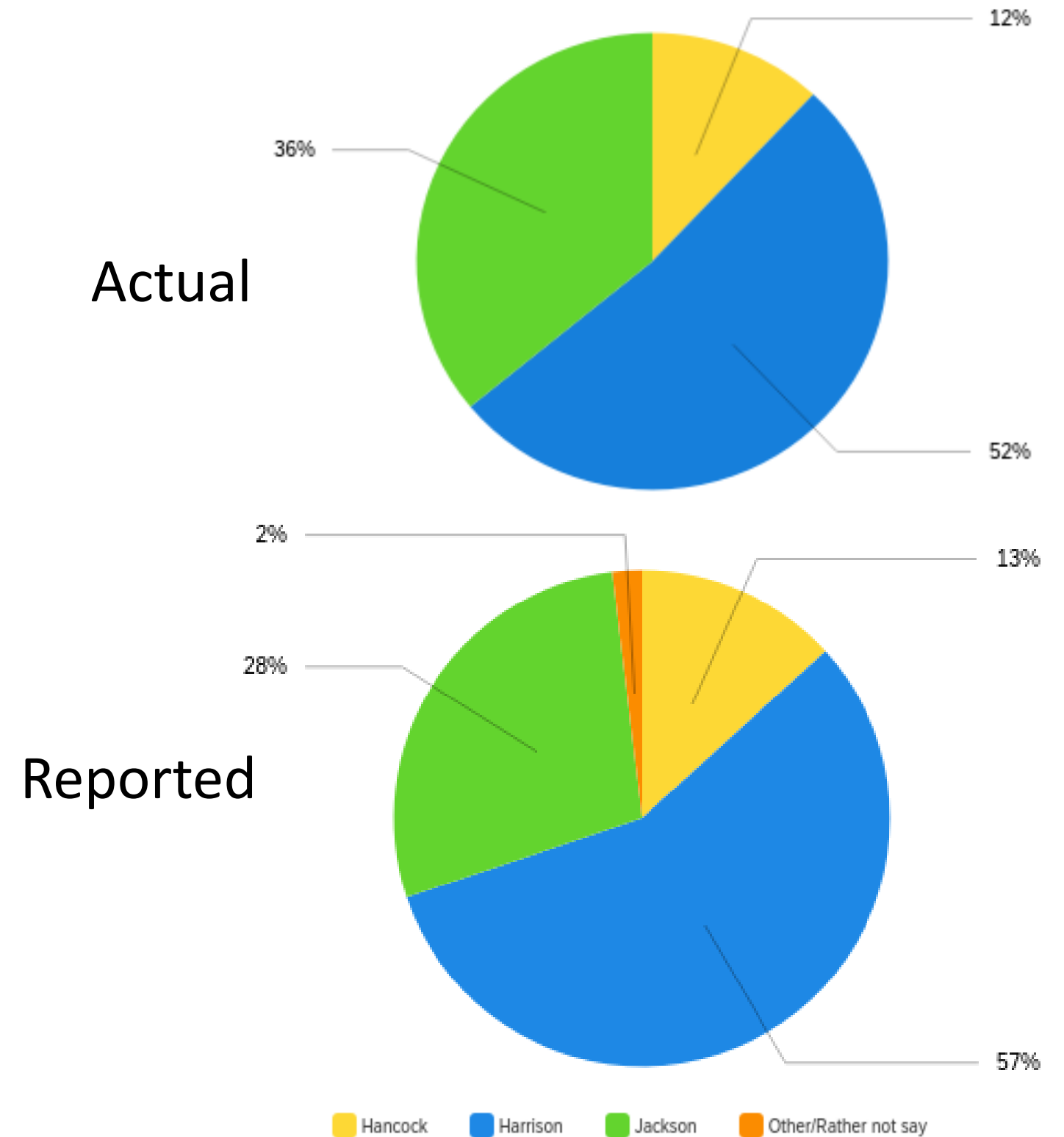
# Today's Presentation

- Representative Sample
- Perceptions of Tourism
- Perceptions of Tourism Growth
- Coastal Mississippi
- COVID-19
- Key Take-aways, Conclusions, and Recommendations

# Representative Sample: n = 2138

n = 2,138

- Minimum for statistical validity = 380
- Comparative county representation
- Qualitative analysis – over 10k comments



# Summary of Demographics (n = 2,138 residents)



Average age of 54 years old  
Range: 18-87 years



Average years living  
on the coast:  
28 years  
Range: 2 months - 83 years



82% white



59% women



58%  
Bachelor's degree or higher



49% Employed Full-time  
28% Retired



62% married



40% living in  
2-person household



Average annual income of  
\$75,000 to \$99,000



88% do not work  
in tourism industry

# Describe tourism on the MS Gulf Coast.

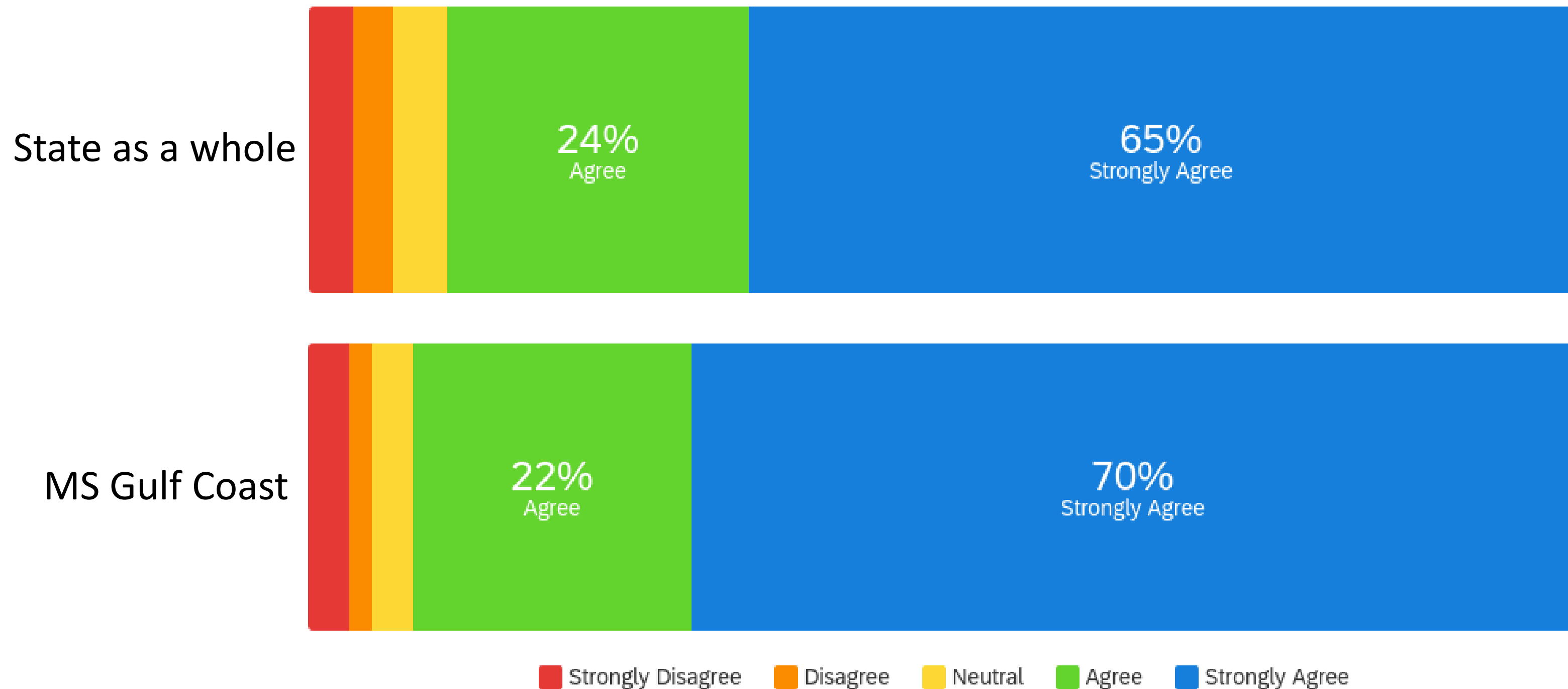


*“I feel that it is growing but we have room for improvement. Would like to see more facilities (non casinos) built to attract a larger variety of tourists, i.e. more venues for conventions, tournaments, etc. We have a beautiful coastline. We need to take advantage of it.”*

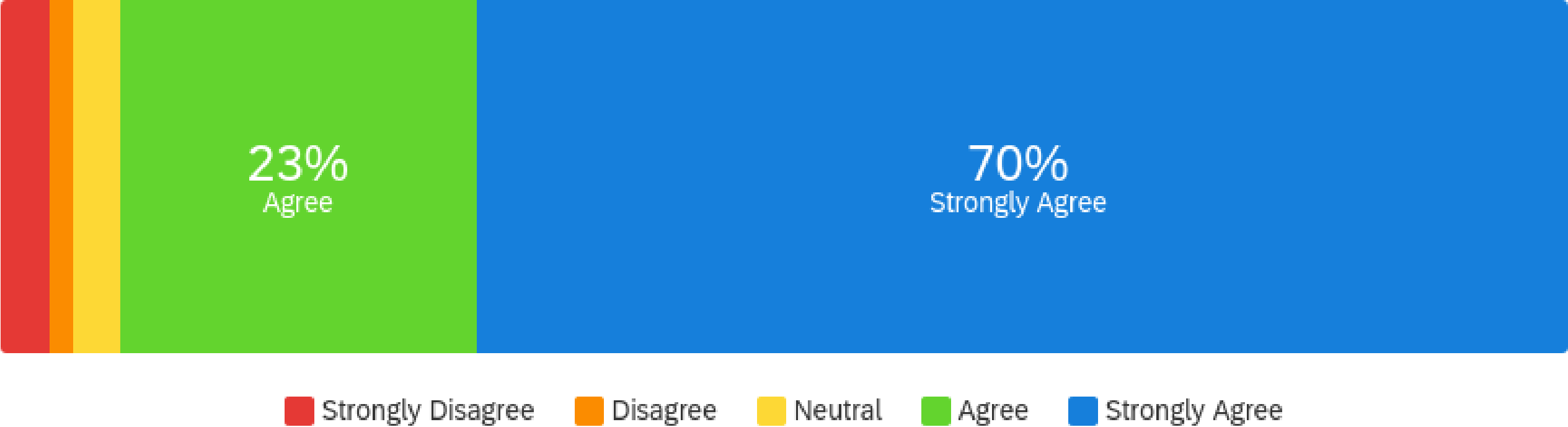
*“We have so many amazing attractions and dining options, but most people don't realize we're even here.”*

*“A work in progress...”*

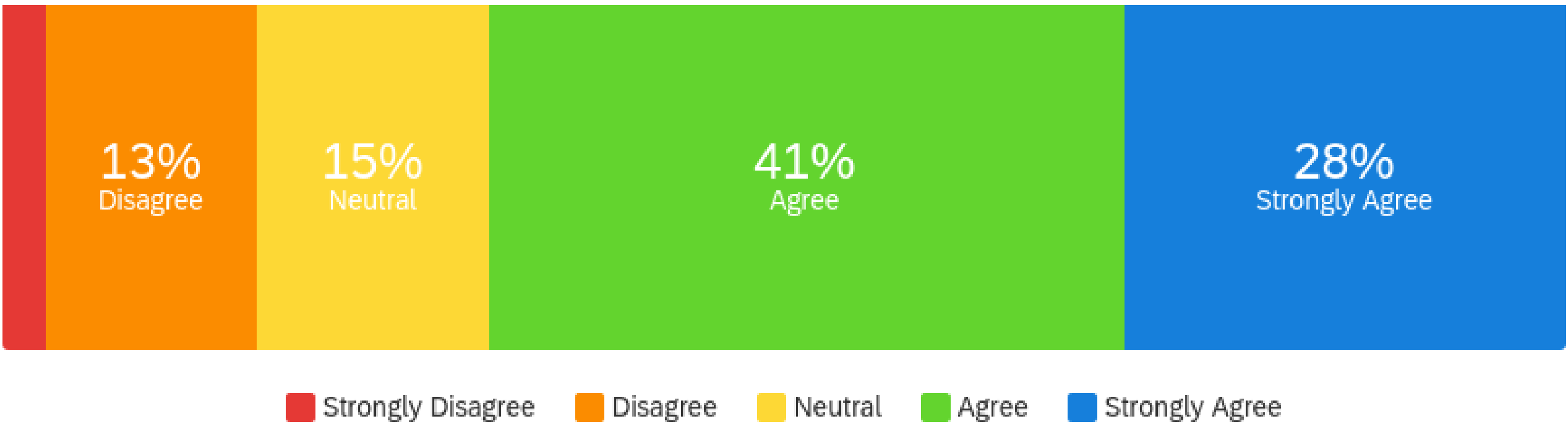
# Overall, I think tourism is good for...



# Overall, I am in favor of the tourism industry on the MS Gulf Coast.

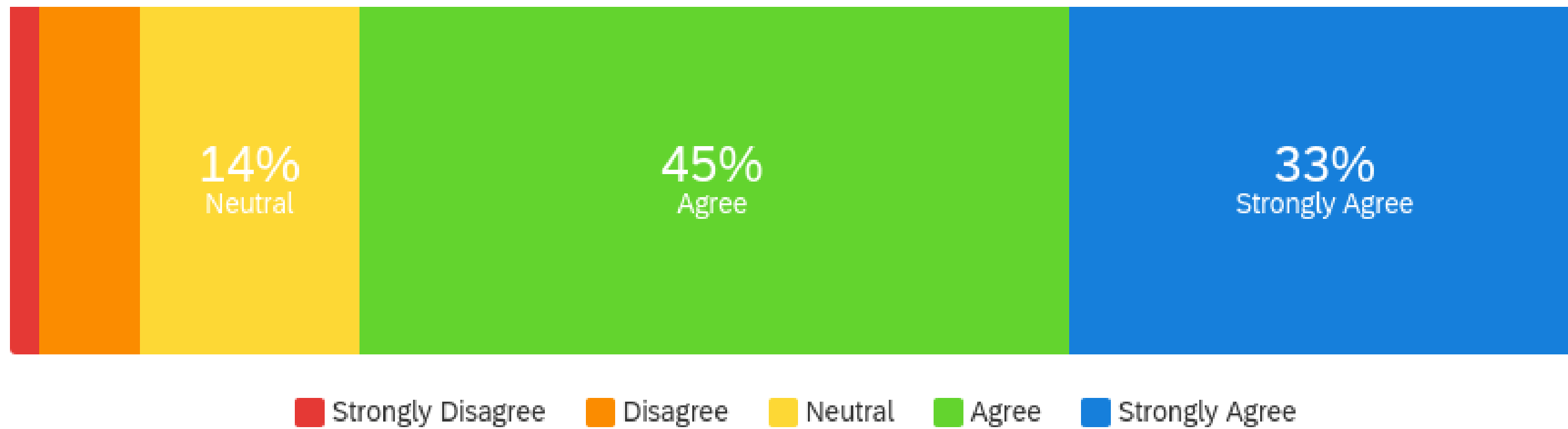


There is a large amount of quality experiences, activities, and amenities on the MS Gulf Coast for visitors to enjoy.

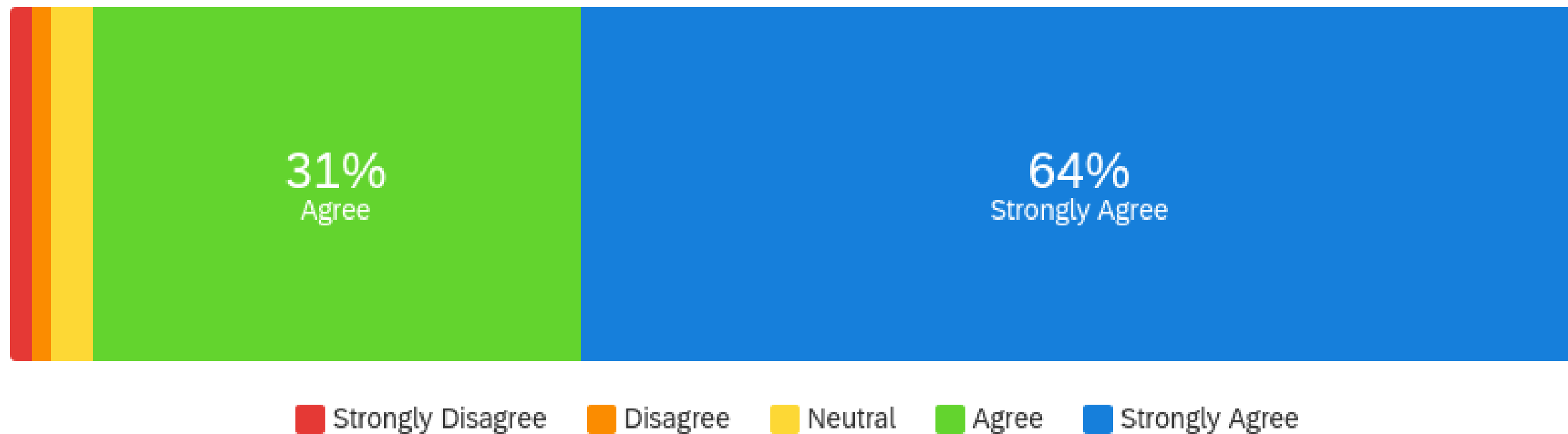




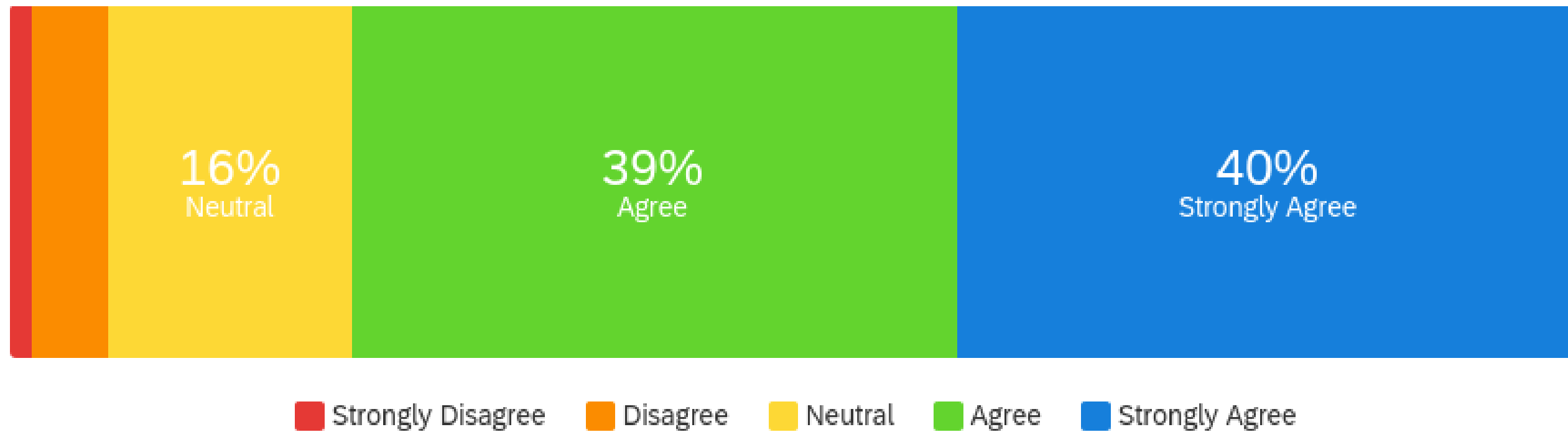
# The MS Gulf Coast is an attractive and desirable destination for visitors.



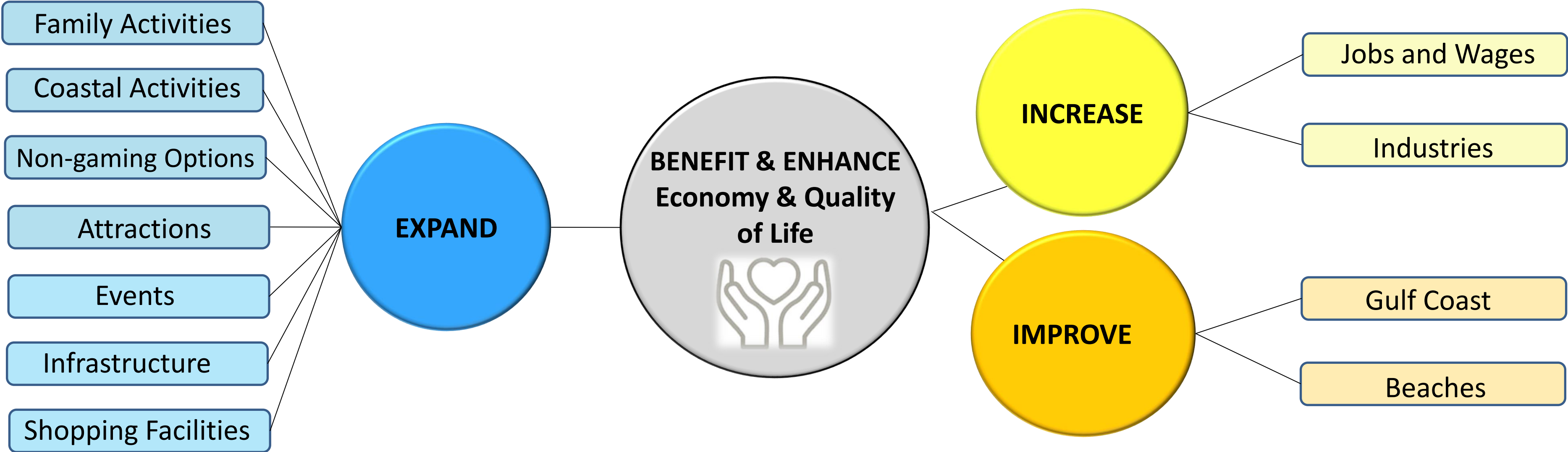
Tourism is good for the local economy (more jobs, better financial opportunities, lower taxes, etc.).



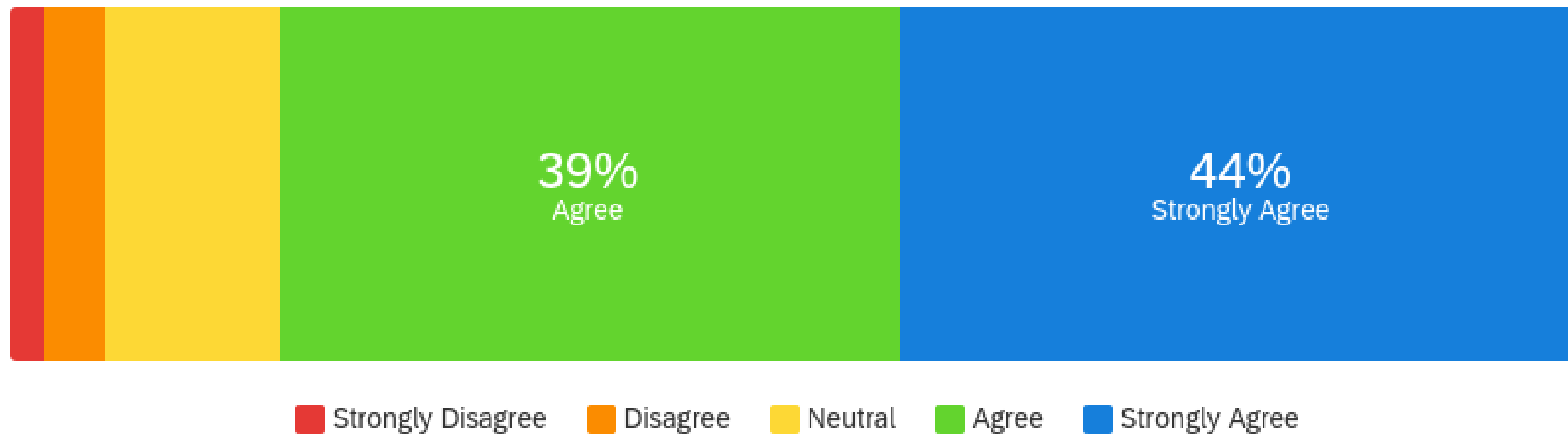
My quality of life is better because of tourism (more places to go, things to do, better facilities and services, etc.).



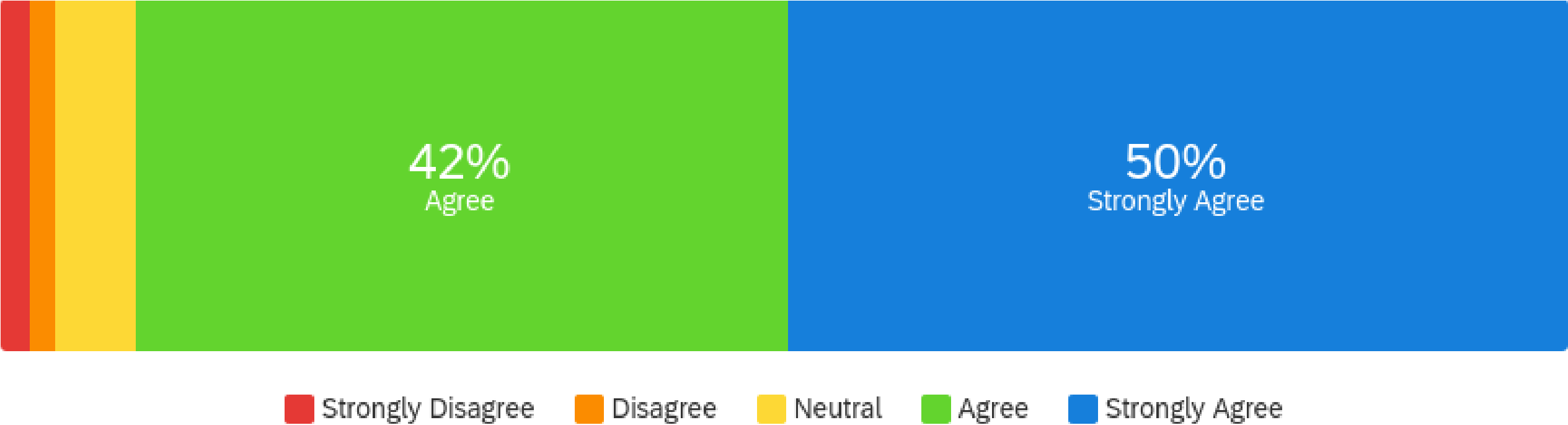
# How can tourism be improved to benefit the local economy and enhance your quality of life?



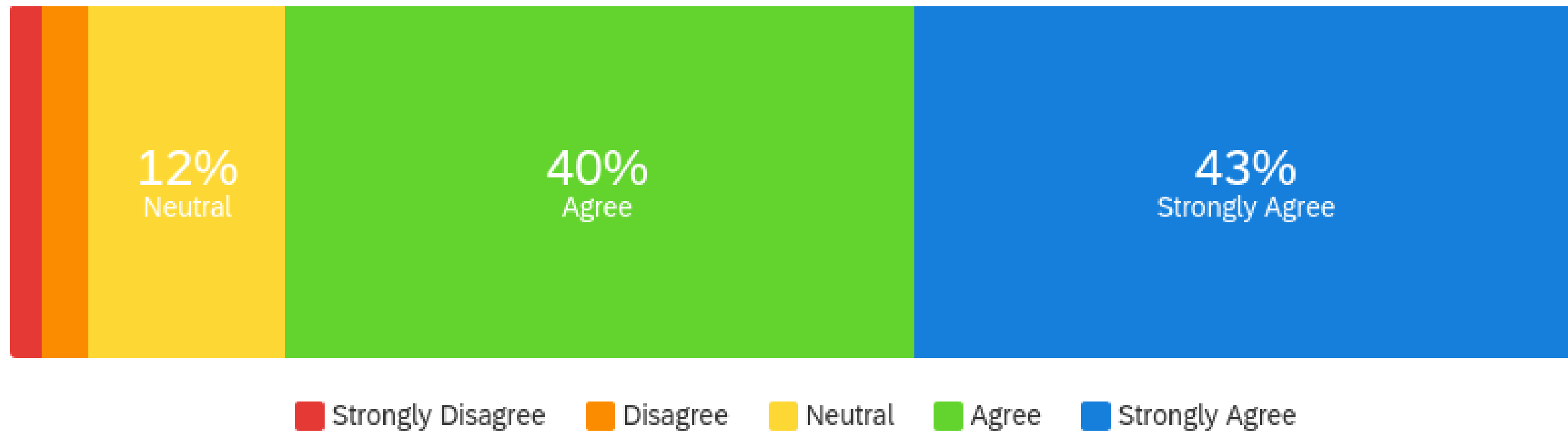
In general, the positive benefits of tourism outweigh any negative impacts.



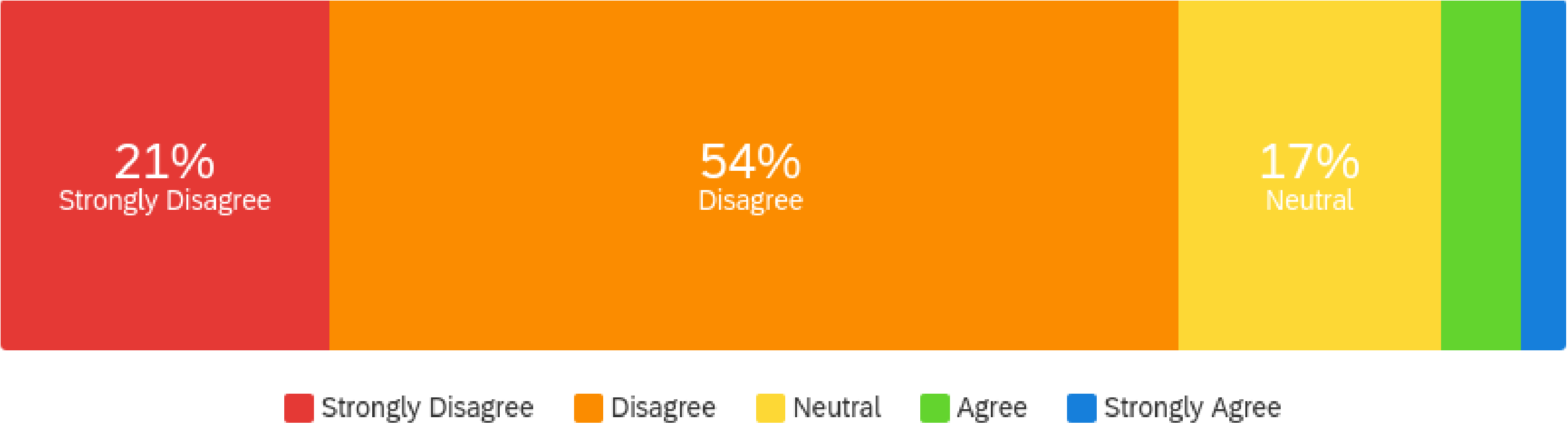
# I support tourism growth on the MS Gulf Coast.



# I would like to see an increase in the number of tourists on the MS Gulf Coast.

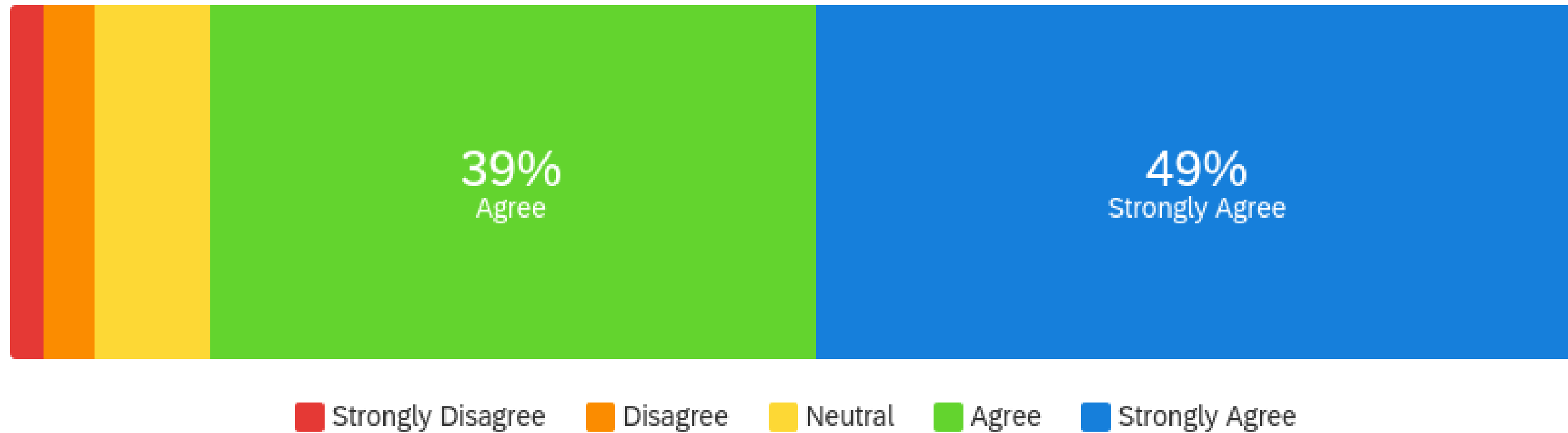


# Tourism development is happening much too fast on the MS Gulf Coast.

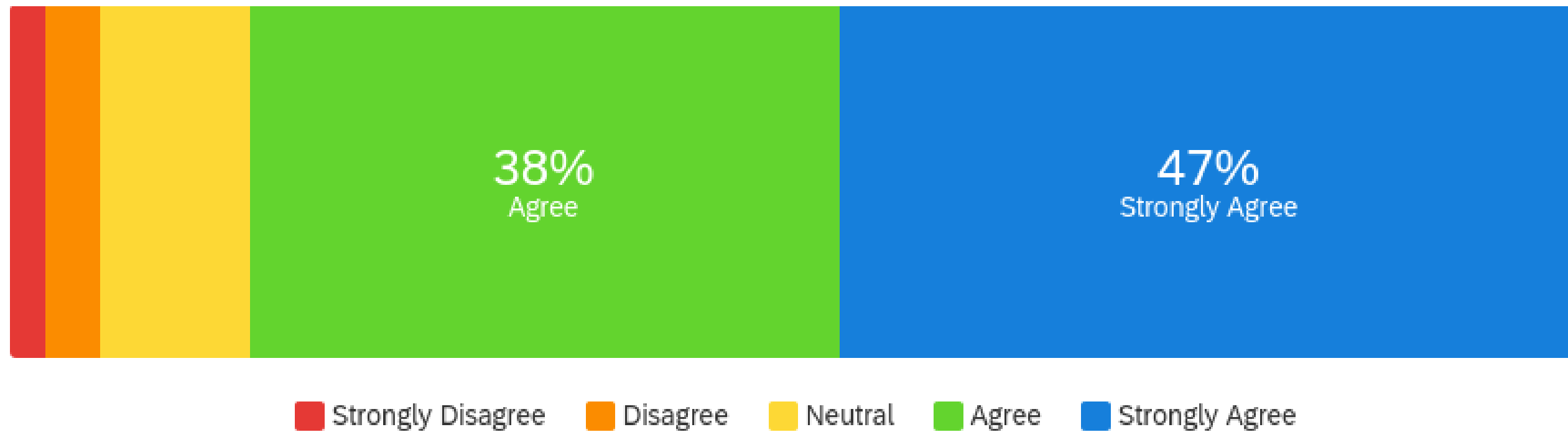




# We should develop/host more major events to attract tourists to our area.



# I support building new tourism facilities that will attract visitors to this area.



# What concerns you regarding tourism growth in your community, and how can the concerns be addressed?

## Diversify Attractions

Need more diversity of attractions and events for all ages and background

Need additional businesses, jobs, and economic support to sustain tourism

## Minimize Crime & Traffic

Need additional police presence to assist with crowds, traffic control, and crime/drug activities

Need proper planning to ensure local residents and businesses are safe

## Preserve Quality of Life

Need to find a balance to ensure the coastal area is well preserved and not over-exploited

Need strong leadership, planning, and commitment from officials and government

# How do you feel tourism growth has or will impact your quality of life on the MS Gulf Coast?

*“More visitors, more money, better lifestyle”*

*“It pays for good schools for our children, funding for roads and bridges, and enhances the quality of life for the local resident.”*

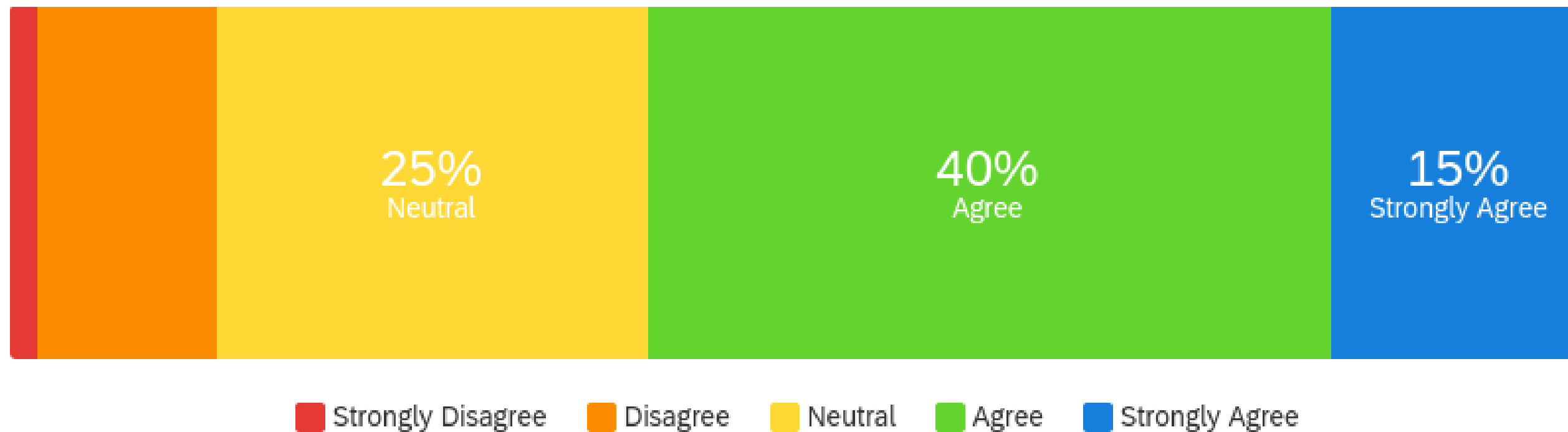
*“On the plus side, more attractions, activities and restaurants. On the downside, traffic congestion and possibly more crime.”*

*“It means more people working.”*



Coastal MS, the MS Coast's tourism marketing entity, does a good job promoting the MS Gulf Coast to visitors.

92% of residents are aware of Coastal Mississippi



# What can Coastal Mississippi do to improve their marketing of the MS Gulf Coast?

## Improve Visibility

- Social media
- TV/radio
- Web marketing
- Billboards
- Magazine ads
- Brochures
- Offer promotions
- Local discounts
- Out-of-state ads

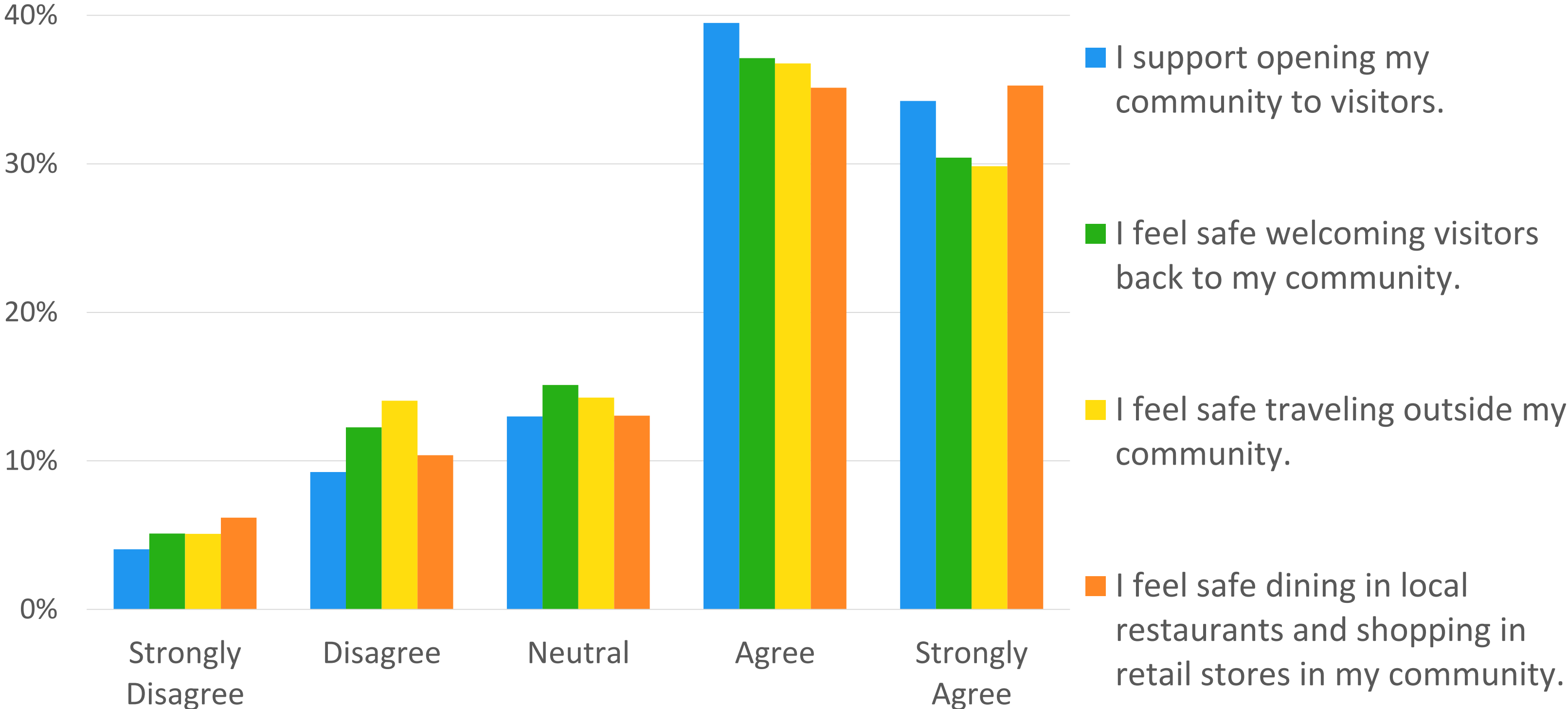
## Establish Partnerships

- Feature local businesses
- Work with city/state gov't entities
- Partner with private investors

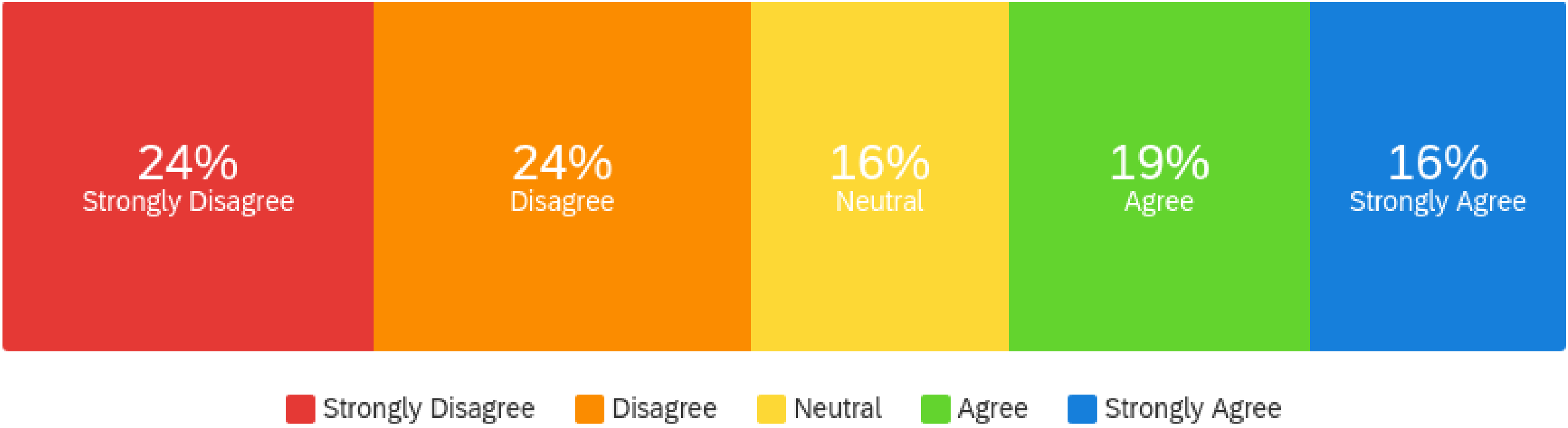
## Enhance Research

- Evaluate other states' tourism models
- Ensure careful planning with appropriate stakeholders
- Highlight the Gulf Coast's uniqueness

# COVID-19



# COVID 19: I do not plan to travel until there is a COVID-19 vaccine.





# Key Take-aways

**Key Take-away:** Overall, residents report that the positive benefits of tourism outweigh any negative impacts.

**Key Take-away:** *“Impact of tourism growth is more positive than negative.”*

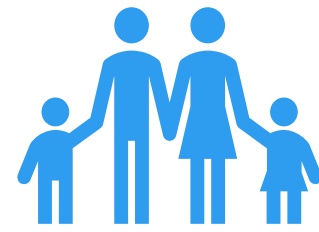
**Key Take-away:** *“[Coastal Mississippi] should advertise more often.”*

**Key Take-away:** COVID-19 does not appear to be a deterrent to tourism for the majority of MS Gulf Coast residents.

# Conclusions

- Residents are *enthusiastic about the impact of tourism and tourism growth*.
- Perceptions that *tourism enhances quality of life* is strong.
- Generally, residents report that the *benefits of tourism outweigh negative impacts*.
- The majority of residents report *awareness of Coastal Mississippi* and that they are *doing a good job*.
- Regarding COVID-19, residents report an *eagerness to welcome visitors to the MS Gulf Coast*.
- Overall, perceptions of tourism on the MS Gulf Coast are positive, but residents offer *opportunities for improvement*.

# Recommendations



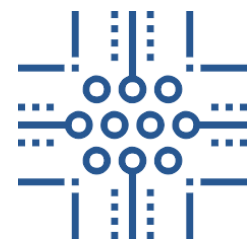
- Diversify activities



- Increase opportunities



- Increase and enhance marketing awareness



- Build infrastructure and policy alignment



- Consistently monitor progress and identify emerging issues through additional studies and focus groups

This project was sponsored by  
Coastal Mississippi and prepared by  
The University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Park  
Heather Annulis, Ph.D., CPLP  
Jacob Breland, Ph.D., SPHR

