

# **Yakutat Resident Tourism Opinion Survey**

**PREPARED FOR:**

**City and Borough of Yakutat**

**April 2020**

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# Introduction and Methodology

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The City and Borough of Yakutat contracted with McDowell Group to conduct a survey of Yakutat residents to better understand their opinions and priorities regarding tourism. The survey was designed by the study team in cooperation with City and Borough staff. The survey was fielded from January 14 to February 20, 2020. An incentive of a \$100 Amazon gift card was offered to maximize survey participation. City and Borough staff publicized the survey in the following ways:

- Emails to key people at community-oriented organizations (Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, Yak-Tat Kwaan, Inc, US Forest Service local office, Yakutat Chamber, Tern Festival Committee, and various community members)
- Posted flyers at public locations
- Flyer posted on two Facebook pages (City & Borough of Yakutat and Yakutat Buy Sell Trade)
- Box Holder mail-out to 351 mailboxes through the local US Post office
- Announcements at public gatherings and meetings (Borough Assembly, Planning Commission, Tern Festival Committee, etc.)
- Word of mouth and passing out flyers to residents.

A total of 123 residents participated in the survey, a very high response rate for a town with 504 adults over age 18 according to 2017 Census data<sup>1</sup> (and potentially fewer residing in Yakutat in January/February). The number of people that responded to each question (i.e. sample size) is presented as "n=####" in the upper left corner of each table.

Online surveys are not necessarily representative of Yakutat's entire adult population due to potential self-selection bias. However, a comparison of survey data with Census data show that survey respondents closely reflected Yakutat's demographic characteristics (see table on the following page).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://factfinder.census.gov/>

**Table 1. Age, Gender, and Race**

	% of Survey Respondents	% Census
<b>Age</b>		
Under 18	1	n/a
18 to 34 years	19	28
35 to 44 years	23	20
45 to 54 years	15	14
55 to 64 years	20	20
65 or older	20	19
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	52	45
Male	42	55
Other/prefer not to answer	6	n/a
<b>Race (alone or in combination)</b>		
White	58	62
Alaska Native/American Indian	41	45
Hispanic or Latino	3	6
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	2
Black or African-American	2	1
Asian	2	7
Other	3	2
Prefer not to answer	12	n/a

Sources: Survey results and US Census.

# Economic Development Priorities

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- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) characterized Yakutat's economy as weak or very weak, while 13% said it was strong or very strong. One-fifth (21%) were neutral.

**Table 2. Do you think Yakutat's current economy is very strong, strong, weak, or very weak?**

n=123	% of Total
<b>Strong NET</b>	<b>13</b>
Very strong	2
Strong	11
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>21</b>
Weak	53
Very weak	11
<b>Weak NET</b>	<b>64</b>
Don't know	2

- A majority of respondents (59%) said they would like Yakutat's overall economy to grow at a moderate pace, or between 4 and 7 on a 1-to-10 scale. Three out of ten (29%) preferred a faster pace of growth (between 8 and 10), while 11% preferred no or slow growth (between 1 and 3). The average, preferred pace of growth on the 1-to-10 scale was 6.3.

**Table 3. At what pace would you like to see Yakutat's overall economy grow, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means "no growth" and 10 means "rapid growth?"**

n=123	% of Total
<b>Fast: 8-10</b>	<b>29</b>
10 – Rapid growth	13
9	1
8	15
<b>Moderate: 4-7</b>	<b>59</b>
7	16
6	15
5	18
4	10
<b>No/Slow: 1-3</b>	<b>11</b>
3	7
2	2
1 – No growth	2
Don't know	2
<b>Average</b>	<b>6.3</b>

- A majority of respondents indicated support of growth in four out of six economic sectors. In terms of net support (strongly support plus support), the most supported sector was seafood processing (89%), followed by commercial fishing (86%), tourism (81%), and mariculture (61%). The two sectors with minority support, and much higher levels of opposition, were timber harvest (39%) and mining (27%).
- One out of eight respondents (12%) were opposed to tourism, including 7% who were opposed and 5% who were strongly opposed. Tourism had the fewest “neutral” responses at 8%.

**Table 4. Please indicate if you strongly support, support, are neutral, oppose or strongly oppose growth in the following economic sectors in Yakutat. (%)**

n=123	Support NET	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Oppose NET	Don't know
Seafood processing	<b>89</b>	43	46	<b>11</b>	-	1	<b>1</b>	-
Commercial fishing	<b>86</b>	53	33	<b>11</b>	1	1	<b>2</b>	1
Tourism	<b>81</b>	36	45	<b>8</b>	7	5	<b>12</b>	-
Mariculture	<b>61</b>	30	31	<b>20</b>	4	9	<b>13</b>	6
Timber harvest	<b>39</b>	15	24	<b>17</b>	25	17	<b>42</b>	2
Mining	<b>27</b>	9	18	<b>19</b>	15	35	<b>50</b>	4

# Tourism Development Priorities

- Over 90% of respondents were supportive of four tourism sectors: outdoor adventure (96% supportive), museums/historical sites (93%), Alaska Native culture (92%), and wildlife and bird viewing (91%). Two-thirds (65%) were supportive of small cruise ships. The two sectors with the least support were sportfishing (44%) and large cruise ships (23%).
- Large cruise ships was the only sector with over half of respondents opposed (56%). One-fifth were opposed to sportfishing (21%) and small cruise ships (19%). Opposition ranged from 2% to 3% for the other four sectors.

**Table 5. Please indicate if you strongly support, support, are neutral, oppose or strongly oppose growth in the following tourism sectors in Yakutat. (%)**

n=122	Support NET	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Oppose NET
Outdoor adventure (rafting, surfing, hiking, fat-biking, kayaking, canoeing, etc.)	<b>96</b>	66	30	<b>2</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>
Museums/historical sites	<b>93</b>	53	40	<b>4</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>
Alaska Native culture (dance, art, storytelling, etc.)	<b>92</b>	66	26	<b>7</b>	1	1	<b>2</b>
Wildlife and bird viewing	<b>91</b>	52	39	<b>6</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>
Small cruise ships (<300 passengers)	<b>65</b>	25	40	<b>15</b>	7	12	<b>19</b>
Sportfishing	<b>44</b>	21	23	<b>34</b>	13	8	<b>21</b>
Large cruise ships (300+ passengers)	<b>23</b>	7	16	<b>20</b>	17	39	<b>56</b>

Note: "Don't know" responses accounted for zero to 1% of responses.

## Are there any other kinds of tourism you'd like to see developed in Yakutat?

Thirty percent of respondents had suggestions for other kinds of tourism:

A good start would be walking tours! Plenty of places around town to show folks.  
Air taxi year round  
Any kind of local arts and products, not just Alaska Native  
Anything and everything Native  
Anything having to do with art/music  
Aviation fly in and airshow  
Controlled  
Cultural experiences  
Cultural Tourism  
Eco Tourism Higher Education for natural resource studies (University level)  
End of road to lake  
Guided photography trips  
Heliskiing  
Helicopter & bus tours, horseback riding (City lease/sale large lots) dock facilities for fish & cruise  
I would like to see more business facilities (i.e. hotels, convention halls/centers).  
IF any, ECO tourism, come, enjoy and not take anything unless sold by a local.  
Independent traveler sightseeing, glacier tour and sportfishing  
Native Cultural village, restaurant, gift centers  
Open to ideas

Options to explore Alaska specific cuisines  
Organized highly publicized structured Native events in summer  
Photography groups  
Photography, survival skills  
Running events, Women's Outdoor retreats, Summer Camps for families  
Space port (spin launch)  
Spin launch!!!!  
Surfing (2)  
Tourism brings in money. True... and it drives up the price of land. Look at Hawaii.  
Tourism that does not involve outsiders fishing our waters, might be what this town needs to grow.  
We need decent infrastructure first. We need ADFG to restore our king salmon and crab resources first.  
Wedding destination  
Wellness  
World War II historical facts intertwined with Tlingit culture impacts

- More than 60% of respondents were supportive of nine out of ten suggested tourism development initiatives, with the outlier being "develop infrastructure for large cruise ships," for which only 23% were supportive.
- The highest level of support was for "develop trails and outdoor recreation infrastructure" (89% supportive or very supportive), followed by "develop maps, signage, and interpretive displays for visitors" (85%), and "build a Museum, Science Center, and/or Cultural Center" (84%).
- Opposition was highest for "develop infrastructure for large cruise ships" (57%). While opposition was much lower for the other nine initiatives, more than 10% opposed four initiatives: "develop infrastructure for small cruise ships" (19% opposed), "build Dangerous River to Dry Bay ATV trail" (16%), "fund a marketing program to promote Yakutat as a visitor destination" (11%), and "build a traditional Alaska Native village" (11%).

**Table 6. Please indicate if you strongly support, support, are neutral, oppose or strongly oppose growth in the following tourism development initiatives. (%)**

n=120	Support NET	Strongly support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Oppose NET
Develop trails and outdoor recreation infrastructure	<b>89</b>	55	34	<b>6</b>	4	1	<b>5</b>
Develop maps, signage, and interpretative displays for visitors	<b>85</b>	44	41	<b>8</b>	2	4	<b>6</b>
Build a Museum, Science Center and/or Cultural Center	<b>84</b>	56	28	<b>9</b>	3	4	<b>7</b>
Develop a visitor center or kiosk	<b>79</b>	37	42	<b>14</b>	2	5	<b>7</b>
Collaborate with Tribal entities to develop Alaska Native cultural tourism	<b>79</b>	47	32	<b>15</b>	2	4	<b>6</b>
Fund a marketing program to promote Yakutat as a visitor destination	<b>68</b>	35	33	<b>20</b>	3	8	<b>11</b>
Develop infrastructure for small cruise ships	<b>66</b>	28	38	<b>13</b>	6	13	<b>19</b>
Build Dangerous River to Dry Bay ATV Trail	<b>64</b>	40	24	<b>20</b>	5	11	<b>16</b>
Build a traditional Alaska Native village	<b>64</b>	37	27	<b>25</b>	5	6	<b>11</b>
Develop infrastructure for large cruise ships	<b>23</b>	10	13	<b>19</b>	18	39	<b>57</b>

Note: "Don't know" responses accounted for zero to 2% of responses.

### **Do you have any other suggestions for tourism development initiatives in Yakutat?**

One-quarter of respondents (26%) offered additional suggestions:

Absolutely NO CRUISE ships whatsoever! They have proven to abuse the water.  
As long as it is non-consumptive tourism, I think the community can get behind these initiatives.  
ATV trail to the Fjord  
Bicycle rental/guided tours  
Brewery  
Build a boat ramp to the fjord  
Designated place open during summer to rent surfing, hiking, biking, canoe, raft, camp, safety gear.  
Develop adventure destination, surfing, fat-tire biking, hiking to fjord and mountains, zipline, ATV  
Develop road access to fiord where there is now a trail out past nine-mile bridge  
Develop trails? We already have them...just stop closing the old ones  
Environmental Tourism... start it please.  
Expand harbor so we're attractive to visitors who might travel here by boat?

Flightseeing

Go slow

Improve overall visual quality of our town's signage and Main Street landscapes

Increase user days on certain rivers, such as Dangerous River so one could utilize new ramp.

Keep it small and don't let it overwhelm the community

Market Yakutat's Wild Fish

Marketing program to promote current small businesses

Must be careful not to lose the town's identity and the ability for a young couple to buy land

Promote the independent traveler to spend time in the community

Road to Harlequin lake and Russell Fjord

Sidewalk

Small business support to develop activities to enjoy Yakutat, not just throw \$\$, but actual knowledge

Small hotels or lodging. Cultural centers or locations for artisans

The city of Yakutat needs cheaper energy in order to grow

Tourists really come to Alaska to see Native culture, especially how Natives lived years ago.

Trails should be at least 4-5 wide, cleared for all people to enjoy. Handicap elders etc.

Yakutat space port with Spin Launch company to improve high speed communications.

Yes. Perhaps go look at what tourism hasn't done...

# Tourism Impacts

- A majority of respondents supported increasing tourism activity in only three areas: Yakutat vicinity (58%), Yakutat Glacier/Harlequin Lake/Dangerous River (53%), and Russell Fjord (53%). This is interesting in light of the fact that 81% of respondents supported growing tourism in Yakutat.
- The most popular areas for decreasing tourism activity (although relatively few desired decreases) were Situk River (36%), Tawah Creek/Lost River (19%), and Arhnklin River/Estuary (16%).

**Table 7. For each of the following areas of Yakutat, do you think the level of tourism activity should be increased, decreased, or maintained? (%)**

n=118	Increased	Maintained	Decreased	Don't know
Yakutat vicinity (within about three miles)	58	32	8	3
Yakutat Glacier/Harlequin Lake/Dangerous River	53	36	7	3
Russell Fjord	53	36	7	5
Hubbard Glacier/Disenchantment Bay	49	36	12	3
Cannon Beach	47	44	6	3
Dry Bay/Italio/Akwe River/Tanis/Ustay	42	36	9	12
Situk/Mountain Lake	42	42	10	6
West Yakutat (Malaspina Foreland/Icy Bay/Yakataga/Tsiu)	42	37	11	10
SE Outer Coast (Dry Bay to Cape Fairweather)	40	39	8	13
Ankau/Ocean Cape	39	45	11	5
Khantaak Island	36	40	14	11
Tawah Creek/Lost River	29	43	19	9
Ahrnklin River/Estuary	29	43	16	12
Situk River	14	46	36	5

## Do you experience any negative impacts from tourism in Yakutat?

Over one-third of respondents (38%) said they experienced negative impacts, described as follow:

Concerns over the amount of fish taken by sport fishermen.

Disrespectful behavior is allowed driving reckless careless.

Disrespectful people!

Do I now? Vague question.

Empty houses and property all over town not owned by locals and reallocation of our fish resources  
For consumptive tourism, levels need to DECREASE in all areas where our salmon is harvested.

In recent years, the Situk is increasingly busy with sport fishermen.

It's a closed loop that is using our resources doesn't contribute proportional  
Jobs for youth teens

Lack of infrastructure and information causes people to not come and spend money locally

Lack of infrastructure for day visitors

Littering. People not following rules and regulations. I.e. off-road fish/hunt where not allowed.

Lodges have a monopoly on Situk river usage. Would like small businesses to be given an opportunity to use

Motorboat on the Situk River past the wier for salmon fishing.

No appropriate accommodation for large groups and cost effective

No except for Situk being somewhat overused. Bay activities increase can offset less Situk River  
Not respecting the land and resources  
Other than the trash they leave behind  
Outside vendors  
Outsiders not being respectful of the land and people.  
Overcrowded Situk  
Over-fishing road system rivers.  
Over-fishing, trash in the environment  
Pollution from cruise ship dumping of onboard waste  
Rising prices  
Rude drunk sport fisherman speeding through town.  
So much trash that washes up on our beaches from cruise ships  
Sometimes over-crowding in sportfishing areas  
Sportfish activity is very high  
Sportfisherman not being regulated and taking more fish/resources than allowed.  
Sportfishermen are over-crowded on Situk and not having a good experience  
Sporties take more fish than they should.  
Standing in the streets, parking on the highway  
The harvesting of resources  
too many user and user groups on the major river systems  
Too many visitors fishing under sport but actually are meat takers, thus taking too much sockeye.  
Yes, conflict between users. Bear hunters vs fishermen.  
Yes, crowds ruin every good destination.  
Yes, drunk sportys hauling a\*\* through town and neighborhoods.  
Yes, less fish over the years  
Yes, locals are getting priced out of regular housing  
Yes, people!

### **Do you have any concerns about the growth of tourism in Yakutat?**

Over half of respondents (54%) said they had concerns about tourism growth in Yakutat:

Being a small town, it could easily overwhelm infrastructure  
Being left out by big companies buying up all the land and owning all the businesses  
Concerned and not supportive of large cruise ships  
Concerned that cruise companies will attempt to buy their way into planning and development process.  
Continued over-fishing and trash in the environment  
Decreasing salmon runs in the Situk river  
Exploiting the land and bringing in chaos versus organized powerful unique adventures in healthy ways.  
Financial support tour community  
Fish harvest increasing  
Have designated areas for recreation with informational kiosks at sites.  
I am concerned that if tourism is the only sector to grow, Yakutat will have worse economic swings.  
I don't like the idea of cruise ship companies buying up land and businesses here.  
I think tour ships are a great idea but only a few a month there also needs to be a tourism plan  
I would like to see it done properly. Where locals are making the profits and not outsiders  
I would like to see tourism that benefits multiple user groups and community as a whole.  
I'd like to see it developed, but if I had the choice not through large cruise ships  
If not controlled many of the ecosystems could be destroyed.  
If we increase tourism, then we need to have appropriate accommodation  
I'm concerned about 3,000 person ships coming in and if we have the infrastructure to support them.  
Increase in sport fishery

Infrastructure is needed to support growth  
Infrastructure must keep up. Maybe never for big cruises. Residents get on board, change attitude.  
It must be controlled  
It should be carefully considered and supported  
It will take away what we love about this place  
Lack of respect for the people and the land  
Large organizations buying up land, and only offer seasonal employment. Destroying natural resources.  
Locals may not be able to enjoy/access places they love and rely on for subsistence.  
Locals not weathering the time it takes to become profitable so everything becomes owned by big business  
Loss of traditional subsistence opportunities  
More and more B&B's, no plan to spread the pressure out to other fish streams. No branching out.  
More of what I said in the above statement  
Most concerns are around the decreasing amount of fish that flow through our waters  
Need the proper infrastructure and protection of natural resources  
Negative impact on environment, pristine feel of Yakutat  
NO DRUGS AND NO MORE BARS  
No large cruise ships  
Overuse of Situk River impact on Hubbard Glacier  
Pollution  
Properly managed  
Rising prices  
Russell Fjord Wilderness, designated by Congress requiring FS to maintain tourism as the same.  
The major cruise ship players taking over the economy  
This is a leading question  
To be too commercialized and consumer friendly  
Tourism growth can quickly get out of control. Keep the experience quality but limited  
Try to enhance local development and joint planning  
Waste management if all types  
We cannot afford to continue with consumptive tourism: mining, timber, sports fishing.  
We don't have the infrastructure yet to accommodate large tourism.  
Yes by sportfishermen abusing  
Yes impact on the environment  
Yes, it will become just another lame tourist town. The character will be lost.  
Yes, too much focus on killing fish. Need to develop more non-consumptive tourism  
Yes. At this pace tourism is influencing USFS and ADF&G regulations more than locals  
Yes. Who will directly benefit?  
You don't get what you're inviting. Yakutat can't even keep the sewage under control.

# Demographics

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- Respondents reported an average age of 48 years old. The most common age range was 35 to 44.
- Respondents were more likely to be female (52%) than male (42%). The remainder declined to provide their gender.
- Most respondents were white (58%) and/or Alaska Native (37%).

**Table 8. Age, Gender, and Race**

n=118	% of Total
<b>Age</b>	
Under 18	1
18 to 34 years	19
35 to 44 years	23
45 to 54 years	15
55 to 64 years	20
65 or older	20
<b>Average age</b>	
<b>48 years</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	52
Male	42
Other/prefer not to answer	6
<b>Race</b>	
White	58
Alaska Native	37
American Indian	4
Hispanic or Latino	3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3
Black or African-American	2
Asian	2
Other	3
Prefer not to answer	12

- The vast majority of survey respondents (85%) were employed, including 63% who were employed full-time, year-round, and 22% who were employed part-time and/or seasonally. Thirteen percent were retired.

**Table 9. Employment Status**

n=118	% of Total
<b>Employed</b>	<b>85</b>
Employed full-time year-round	63
Employed part-time year-round	3
Employed full-time seasonally	14
Employed part-time seasonally	5
Student	2
Retired	13
Disabled	1
Don't know	1

- Respondents reported an average household income of \$73,000. The most common income range was \$50,001 to \$75,000 (27%).

**Table 10. Annual Household Income**

n=118	% of Total
<\$15,000	3
\$15,001 to \$25,000	7
\$25,001 to \$50,000	18
\$50,001 to \$75,000	27
\$75,001 to \$100,000	14
\$100,001 to \$125,000	10
\$125,001 to \$150,000	6
Over \$150,000	4
<b>Average income</b>	<b>\$73,000</b>
Prefer not to answer	10

- Three-quarters of respondents lived in Yakutat 12 months of the year, while 11% lived there between seven and 11 months, and 15% lived there six month or less.

**Table 11. How many months of the year do you live in Yakutat?**

n=118	% of Total
Six months or less	15
Seven to 11 months	11
Year round	74