

TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK

EXPLORING PEOPLE'S VIEWS AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF THE NATIONAL PARK

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FULL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION



Triglav National Park is located in north-western Slovenia and covers almost the entire Slovenian part of the Julian Alps. It is the only national park in Slovenia with the status of a protected area with strict protection of the core zone and the preservation of a cultural landscape in the surrounding areas. The current zoning comprises four categories: IUCN II (24,500 ha), IUCN V (58,293 ha), nature reserves (1,014 ha) and several natural monuments. The area of the park is about 4% of the area of Slovenia. With the exception of the Mežakla and Pokljuka plateaus and the Vogel ski resort, practically the entire area of the park is protected by NATURA 2000. The vegetation in the park is typically alpine (mainly beech, spruce and larch), but due to its proximity to the Adriatic Sea and the influence of the Mediterranean climate, plants from this area can also be found in the south-western part of the park.

The national park is managed by the public authority of Triglav National Park, which reports to the Ministry of Natural resources and Spatial Planning. The National Park has achieved international status in the following organisations: Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO MAB) since 2003, NATURA 2000 since 2004, member of the EUROARC Federation (since 1986) and the ALPARC network (since 1995). The park was awarded the European Diploma for Protected Areas (2004, renewed in 2009). The park has adopted a management plan for the period 2016–2025, which focuses on protecting nature and cultural heritage and ensuring the conditions for sustainable development. Particular attention is paid to the development of various forms of sustainable mobility and the design of park infrastructure that directs visitors to less endangered areas of the national park, where they are offered opportunities to experience nature without putting at risk natural values.

METHODS



In order to explore people's views on Triglav National Park, we used the Social Impact Assessment Tool for Protected Areas (SOCIAT) which has been developed by researchers at the University of Warwick and the University of Cambridge in collaboration with several park authorities across Europe. This consists of a structured questionnaire including 19 questions covering a variety of topics capturing the social value of protected areas. Further information on SOCIAT can be found here: www.warwick.ac.uk/sociat.

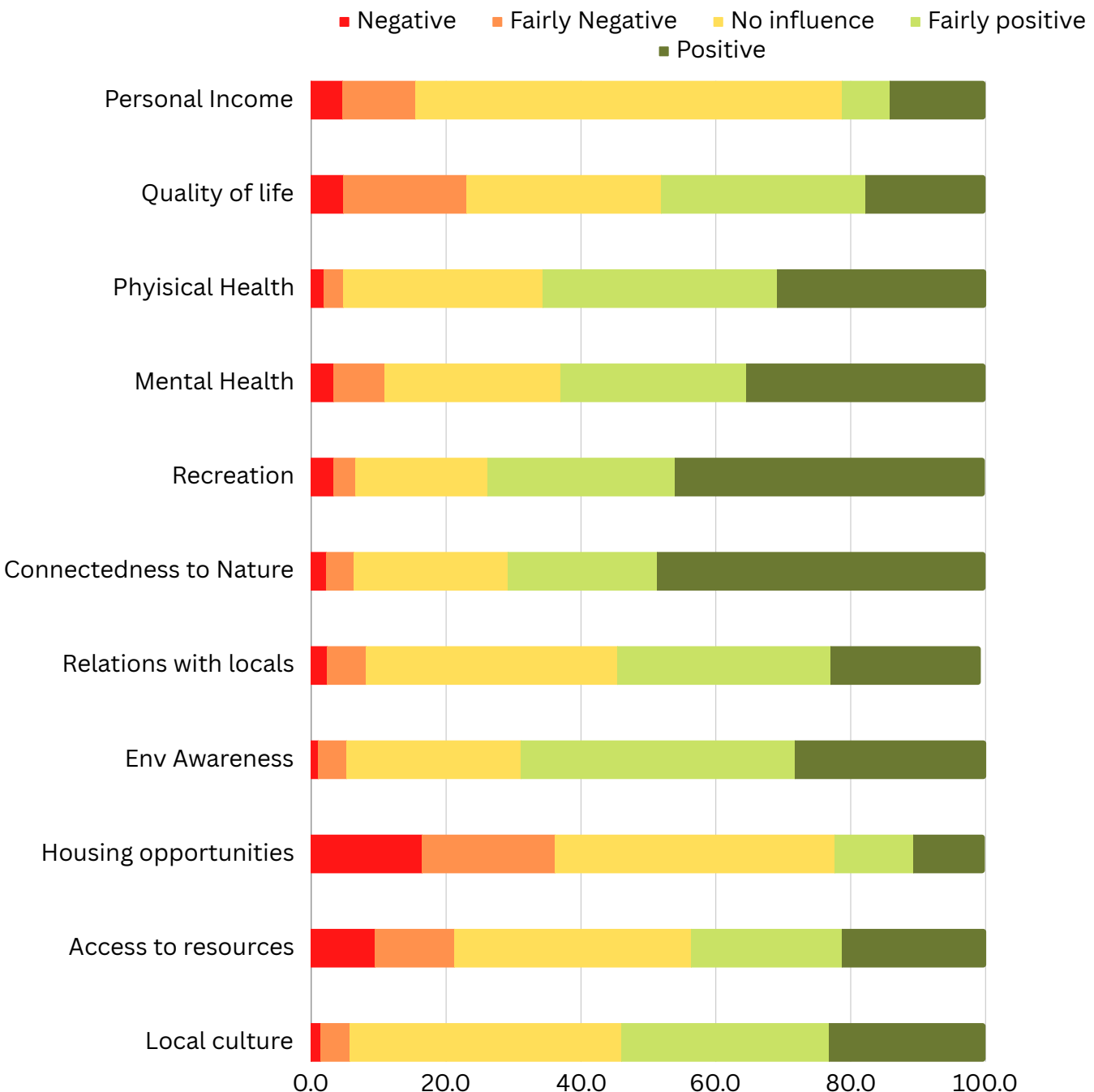
The questionnaire was distributed during October 2022 to local communities living inside the boundaries of or near the national park. A postcard was initially sent to a random sample of households. The postcard explained the main aims of the survey and invited people to access the survey via a link which directed them to a Qualtrics page. After checking the main characteristics of the sample additional respondents were approached to ensure the appropriate geographical distribution of the sample

In total, 265 responses were recorded. After excluding responses from non-residents and missing answers the final sample in the survey was 215, of which 201 were permanent residents. 22.7% of respondents live in the area between 21 and 30 years and 21.2% have lived in the area 31-40 years. 47.6% of respondents were female and 45.4% male. 2.8% had completed primary education, 38.7% had completed secondary education and 32.5% higher education. 9.4% had completed postgraduate studies.

RESULTS

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Connectedness to nature and Access to recreational activities were the most beneficial outcomes of Triglav National Park in the past 5 years according to respondents. The positive outcomes of the national park were also evident in a number of other aspects such as mental and physical health, environmental awareness and influencing positively relations between locals and maintaining local culture, traditions and social relations. The impact of the national park on personal income was more neutral with 63.2% of participants stating that it had no influence. Opportunities for owning a house was also relatively neutral with 41.5% of respondents stating that the park had no influence on this aspect. In the graph below percentages (with no missing answers) are presented.

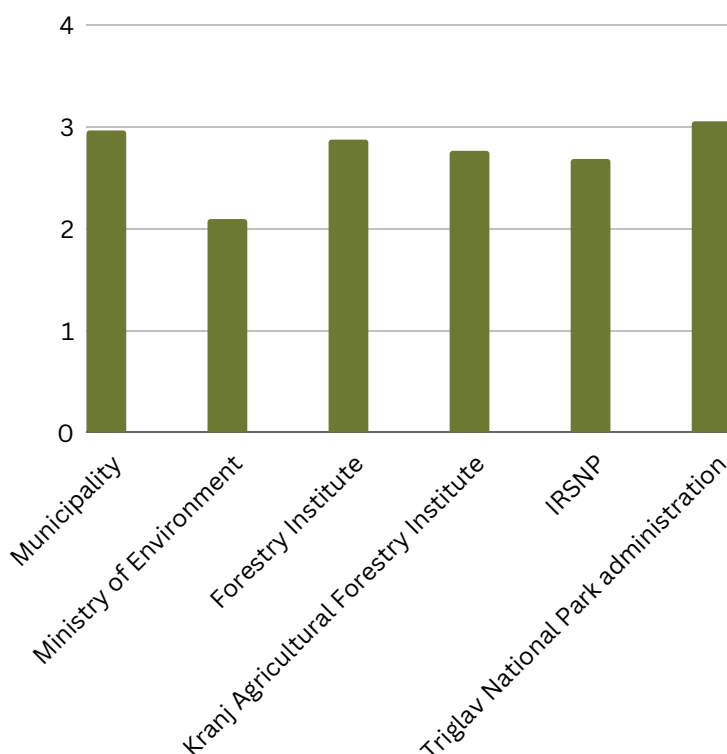
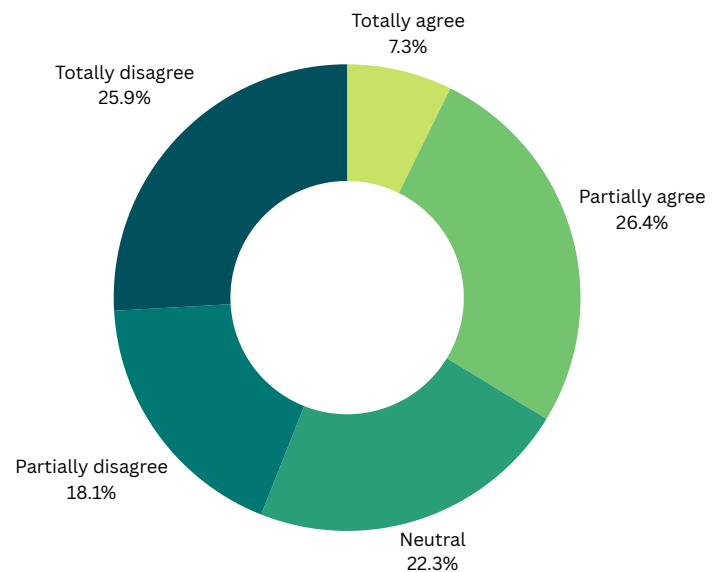


GOVERNANCE & TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

Approximately 54% of participants said that they have volunteered in an activity that helps protect Triglav National Park in the past 5 years (e.g. cleaning campaign of litter in villages/mountain and their surroundings, mowing the meadows in the park, cleaning of mountain trails). Respondents were asked whether they feel they have enough time, money and opportunities to engage with such activities supporting the park. 33.7% stated that they totally or partially agree with this statement and 25.9% stated that they totally disagree.

Level of agreement: I have enough time, money and opportunities to support the nature reserve

25.9% of respondents felt that they don't have enough time, money and opportunities to support the park.

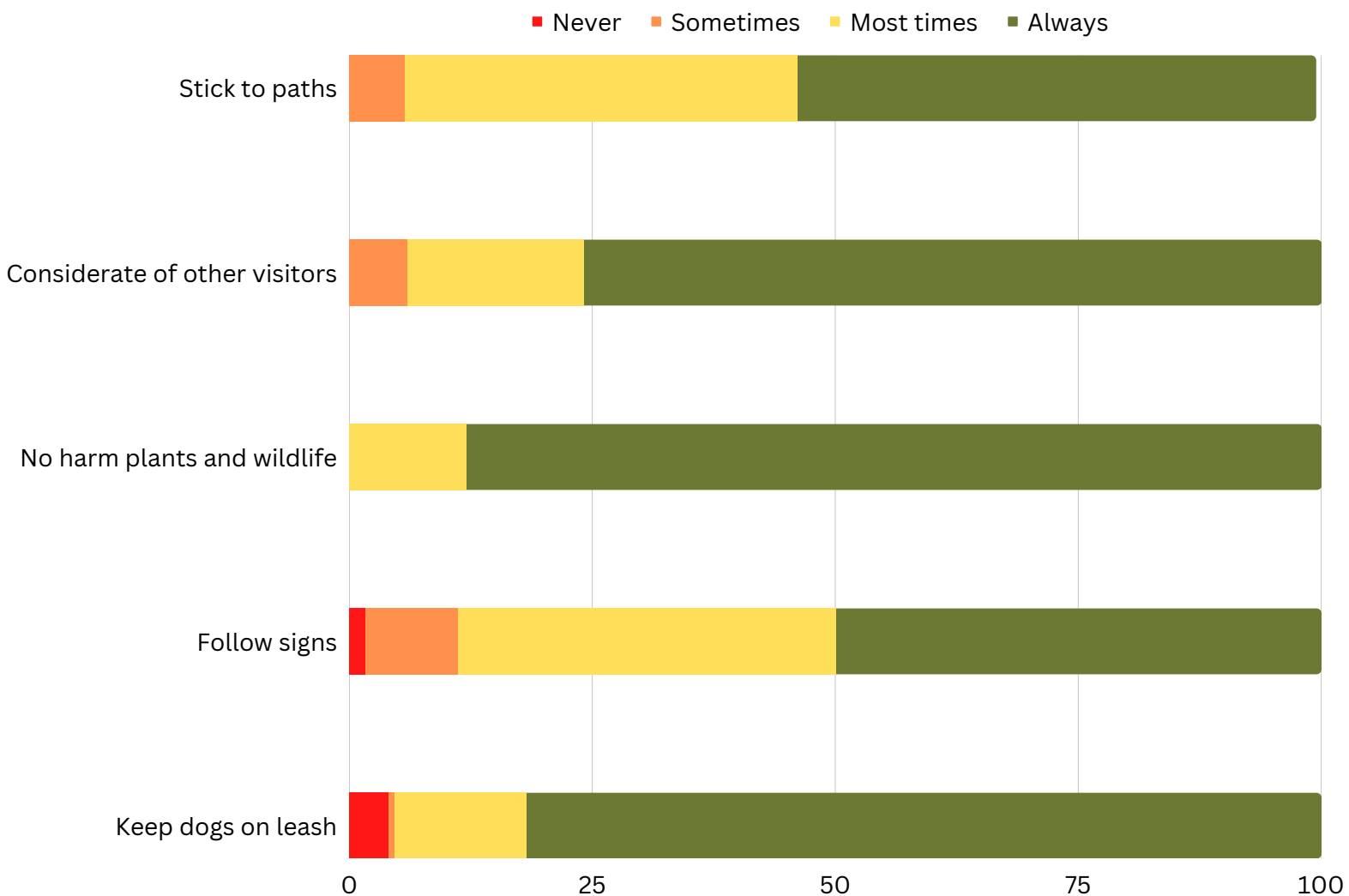


36.1% of participants trust (fully or partially) the management authority of Triglav National Park

Respondents were also asked how much they trust five institutions involved directly or indirectly in the management of the nature reserve. This was measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing the lowest and 5 the highest level of trust. The institution trusted the most (close to the average score of 3) was the management authority of Triglav National Park followed by the local municipality and the Forestry Institute.

ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR

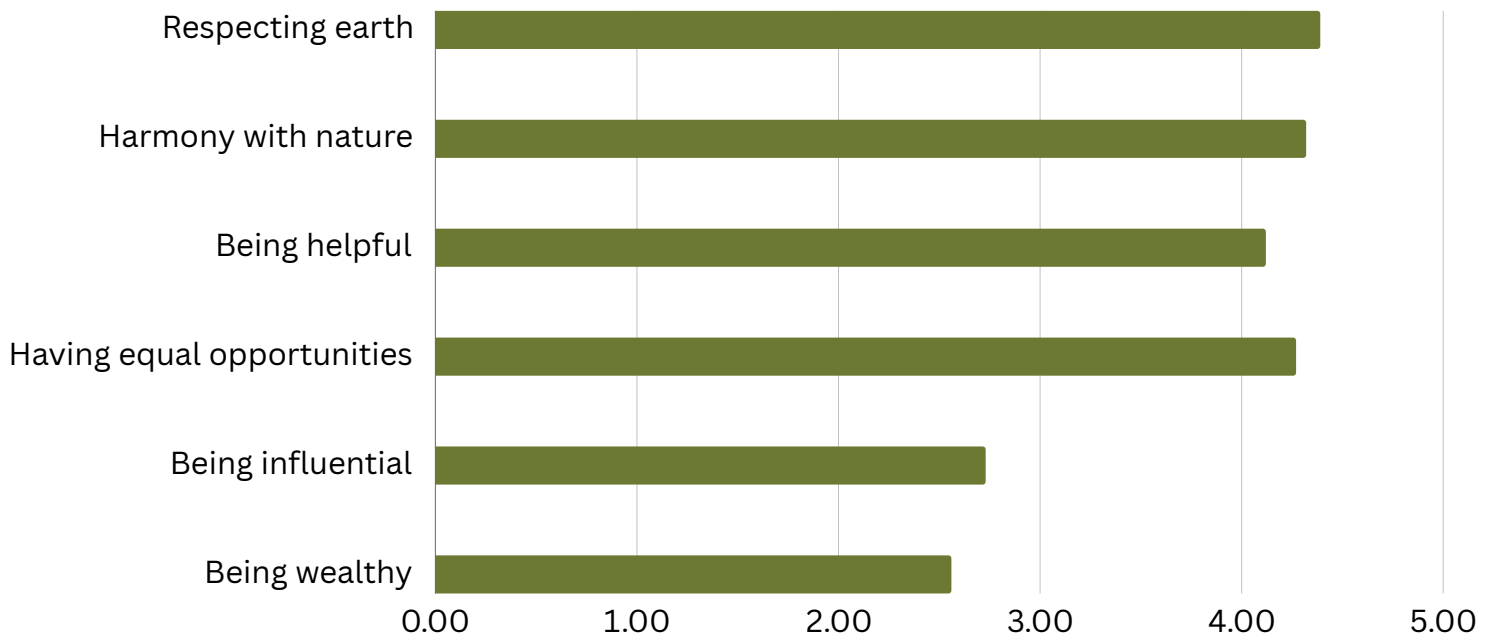
41.9% of respondents stated that most people use the national park responsibly and 26.3% mentioned that only a minority acts responsibly when in the national park. Regarding their own personal behaviour most participants in the survey are responsible when they use Triglav National Park. Over 90% of the sample stated that they always or most times consider other users, stick to the designated paths and are careful not to harm plants and wildlife.



SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & PLACE VALUES

78.9% of respondents have a strong place attachment with the area of Triglav National Park

A set of questions explored social, environmental and place values of local communities in Triglav National Park. These questions were measured on a 5 point Likert Scale with 5 representing highest agreement. Strong environmental values were recorded with the mean score for the importance of respecting earth being 4.39. Egoistic values, such as being influential and being wealthy were considered as less important by respondents.



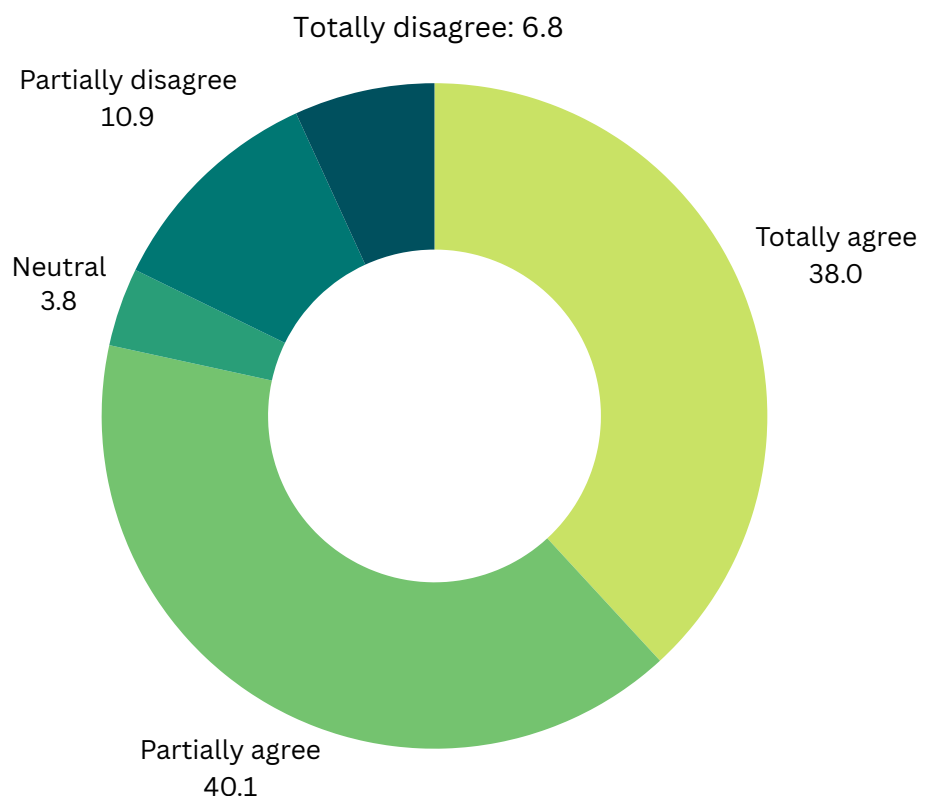
PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

Respondents were asked how much they agree with the existence of the national park. A relatively high percentage (78.5%) totally or partially agreed with the existence of Triglav National Park. Only, 17.7% of respondents stated that they disagree or partially disagree with the existence of the national park.

Respondents were asked to provide further explanation of their answer. Our analysis showed that those who support the park emphasized the importance of the protected area for preserving precious and unspoilt nature, the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the cultural landscape and the high level of protection the park offers against rapid changes in their living environment, especially considering the importance of nature protection for future generations.

In the group of respondents who stated that they did not support the park, two main subgroups were identified. One group agreed in principal with the existence of the national park but they also believed that protection laws should be less restrictive for local residents who have lived in and with this natural environment for centuries. However they support more restrictive rules for visitors and investors. Some respondents also stated that it would be necessary to exclude highly populated areas from the park or to declare protection regimes at higher altitudes. In the second subgroup, who do not support the park, this is mainly due to less opportunities for development and financial benefits, increasing problems with growing population of wolves, bears and excessive restrictions in obtaining permits for the construction of residential (non-tourist) facilities.

**Approximately 78.5%
of participants
support the existence
of Triglav National
Park**



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Our research revealed the multiple beneficial outcomes that Triglav national park offers for local communities. The park serves as a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, providing numerous recreational opportunities. These activities promote physical well-being, contributing to the overall quality of life for locals. Triglav National Park also plays a crucial role in cultural heritage preservation, maintaining the traditions and lifestyles of nearby communities. While the park's conservation objectives may restrict certain economic activities, the social advantages it provides in terms of education, health, and cultural identity are undeniable.

Volunteerism plays a pivotal role in Triglav National Park, with a very large percentage of respondents stating that they have given their time to support activities within the park. Beyond the significant contribution of volunteering activities for biodiversity conservation (trail maintenance, habitat restoration, and wildlife monitoring), these activities also often create a sense of community and shared responsibility. Further increasing these efforts can strengthen the network of individuals committed to the well-being of the National Park. The voluntary contributions of time and expertise are invaluable, demonstrating how community engagement can serve as a powerful force in safeguarding natural treasures like Triglav National Park for present and future generations.

Our research showed that local communities within Triglav National Park have a very strong connection to nature and strong environmental values. Connectedness to Nature was also one of the most important benefits recorded in our survey. Our results show that locals share a profound and intimate connection with nature that is deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and daily lives. This connection goes beyond economic considerations, fostering a profound appreciation for the intrinsic value of Triglav National Park in the hearts and minds of the local population. It has become a part of their collective identity, influencing their way of life and reinforcing the importance of preserving the park for future generations.

While Triglav National Park enjoys substantial support from most of the respondents, a fraction within the local communities remains less enthusiastic, primarily due to perceived constraints imposed by the park's regulations. Within those that were less enthusiastic about the park, one group suggested that restrictions could be eased for long-term residents, while simultaneously advocating for more stringent regulations targeting visitors and investors. Another group had concerns for the limited development opportunities and financial benefits. Bridging these perspectives is crucial for sustainable coexistence, as striking a balance between conservation objectives and the needs of local residents is a complex challenge. Open communication channels and collaborative decision-making processes could foster a more inclusive approach, ensuring that the voices of all community members are heard and considered in the ongoing management of Triglav National Park.

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