

Southeast Alaska SWOT Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats 2020

At Southeast Conference's February 2020 Mid Session Summit, nearly 300 people representing small businesses, tribes, native corporations, municipalities and community organizations participated in two types of SWOT analyses: one for the region overall, and sector specific SWOTs within the Southeast Conference committee areas. Follow up work occurred between March through October in Zoom meetings and through surveys to improve and prioritize the sector-specific SWOTs. **This document is a summary of each of these Southeast Alaska SWOT analyses.**

A SWOT analysis is an in-depth analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. These regional SWOT analyses identify the region's competitive advantages along with internal or external factors that keep us from realizing our potential. It helps answer the question, "Where are we now?" by identifying critical internal and external factors that speak to the region's unique assets that we can leverage to maximize the economic potential of Southeast Alaska.

The sectors that received their own SWOTs include seafood, mining, energy, transportation, health care, tourism, and timber.

Conducting a SWOT analysis was the first step in a year long planning effort to develop the Southeast 2025

Economic Plan: A five-year economic development strategy that will act as a blueprint for regional collaboration and growth. In order to develop the elements of this plan—a clearly defined vision with prioritized goals & measurable objectives and a strategy-driven Southeast Alaska action plan—it was critical that an analysis of the region's competitive strengths and weaknesses were assessed so that the foundation of the plan could be built upon a common understanding and set of goals.

The first step for each SWOT was asking participants to write down their thoughts, and in doing so generated more than **2,500 individual written comments** that became part of this analysis. Once categories were solidified, Southeast Conference members participated in a series of prioritization exercises to determine the most significant components of the SWOT.

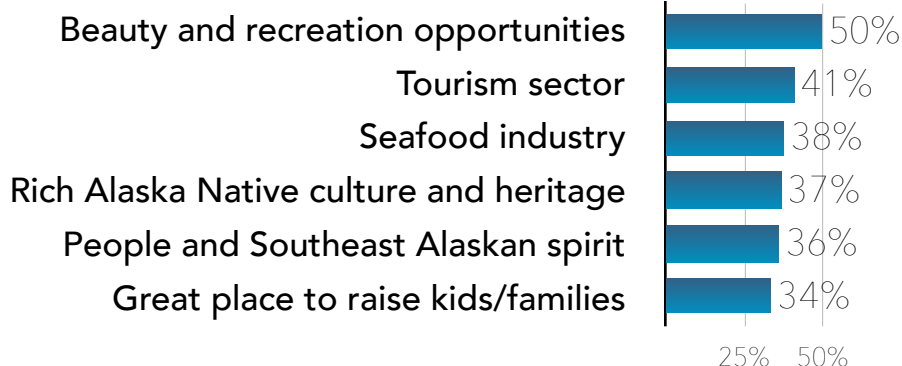
A full analysis of all 2,500 comments was conducted, and is presented on the following pages. A radical decline in ferry service drove three of the four top responses for each overall regional category:

- **Top Strength: Beauty and Recreation Opportunities**
- **Top Weakness: Decline of the Ferry Transportation**
- **Top Opportunity: Strengthening Ferry Connectivity**
- **Top Threat: Loss of Ferry Service**

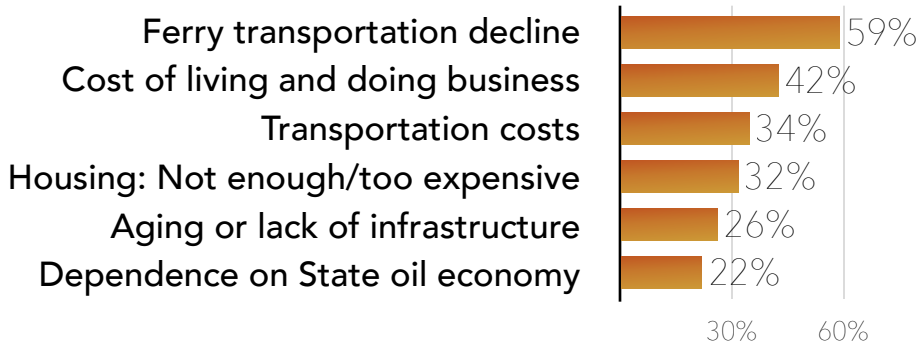


Southeast Alaska's Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats

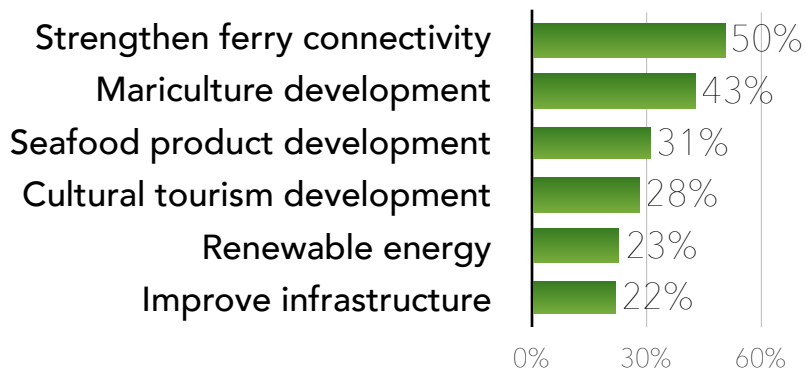
STRENGTHS



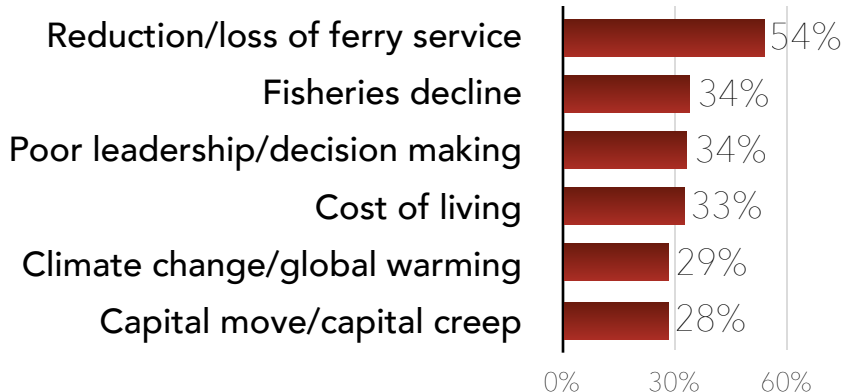
WEAKNESSES



OPPORTUNITIES



THREATS



REGIONAL SWOT SUMMARY

This page provides a summary of the full SWOT process, both for the overall SWOT of the Southeast Alaska economy, as well as for the sector specific SWOTs for seven regional industries.

Seafood

- Top Strength: **High quality product**
- Top Weakness: **Changing ocean conditions**
- Top Opportunity: **Increase value added processing**
- Top Threat: **Ocean acidification & changing conditions**

Health Care

- Top Strength: **Personalized care delivery**
- Top Weakness: **State budget cuts reduce workforce development options**
- Top Opportunity: **Development of health care courses at the university**
- Top Threat: **Growing health care costs**

Visitor Industry

- Top Strength: **Natural beauty of region**
- Top Weakness: **Community communications**
- Top Opportunity: **Collaborate with Alaska Native entities on cultural tourism**
- Top Threat: **COVID 19**

Mining

- Top Strength: **Provides high paying jobs**
- Top Weakness: **Extreme opposition by environmental groups**
- Top Opportunity: **Explore and develop new mineral deposits and expand existing mines**
- Top Threat: **Environmental groups/lawsuits**

Timber

- Top Strength: **High quality wood**
- Top Weakness: **Frequency of litigation**
- Top Opportunity: **Increased state and private lands**
- Top Threat: **Environmental litigation**

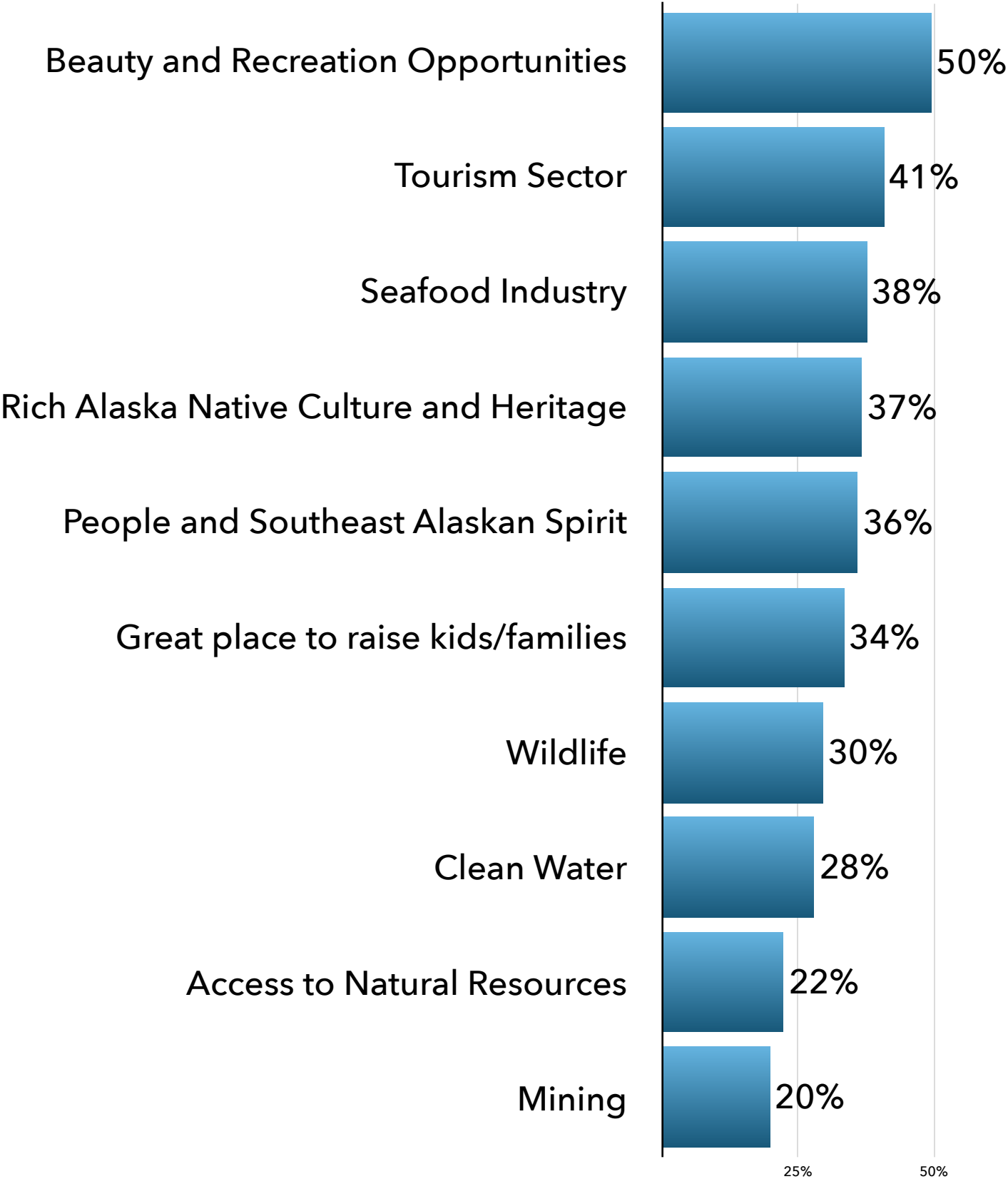
Transportation

- Top Strength: **Strong reliable airline services**
- Top Weakness: **AMHS service reductions**
- Top Opportunity: **Improve ferry service**
- Top Threat: **The demise of ferries**

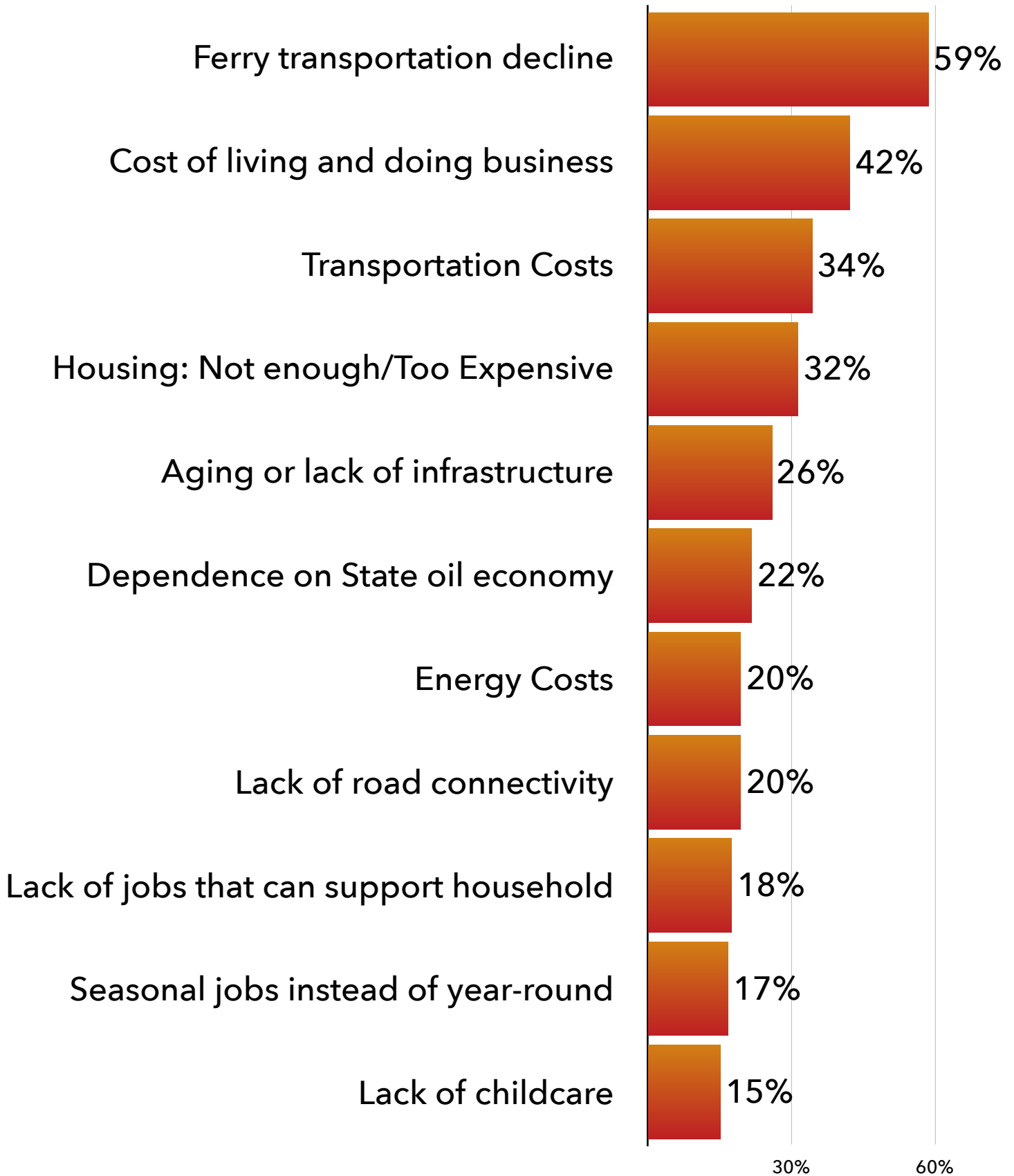
Energy

- Top Strength: **Abundant hydropower**
- Top Weakness: **High costs of infrastructure**
- Top Opportunity: **Expand regional intertie**
- Top Threat: **An economic downturn**

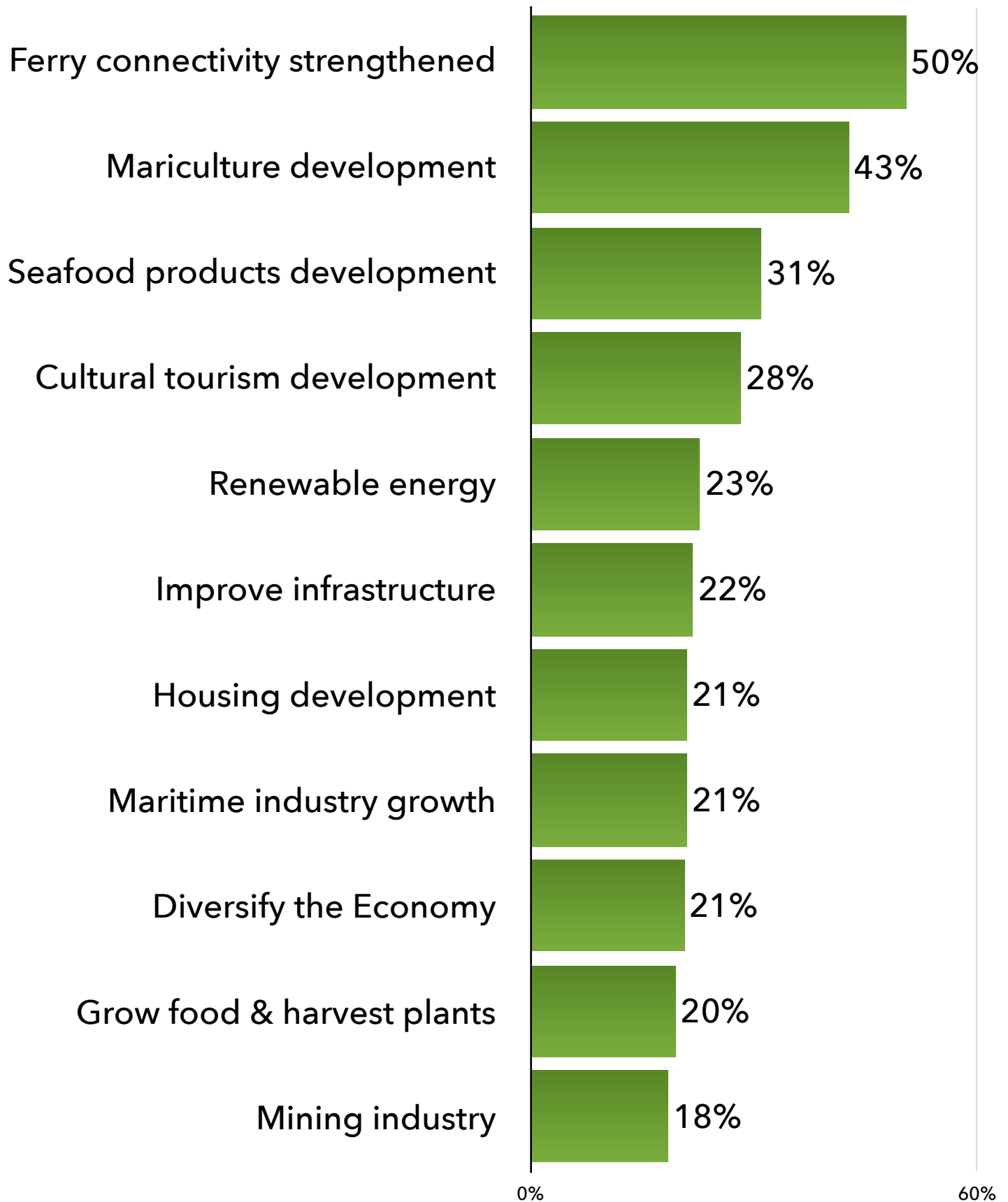
Southeast Strengths



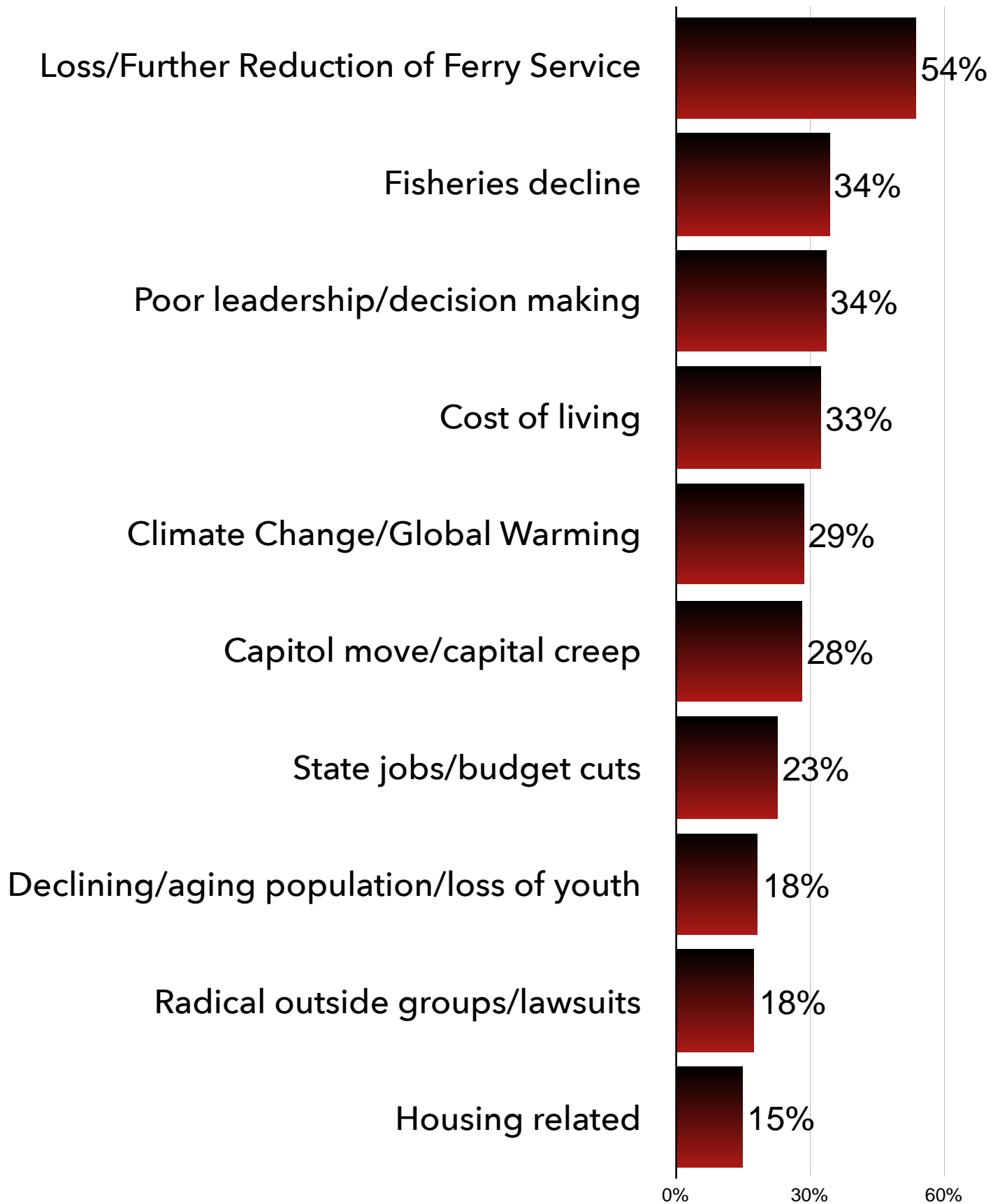
Southeast Weaknesses



Southeast Opportunities



Southeast Threats

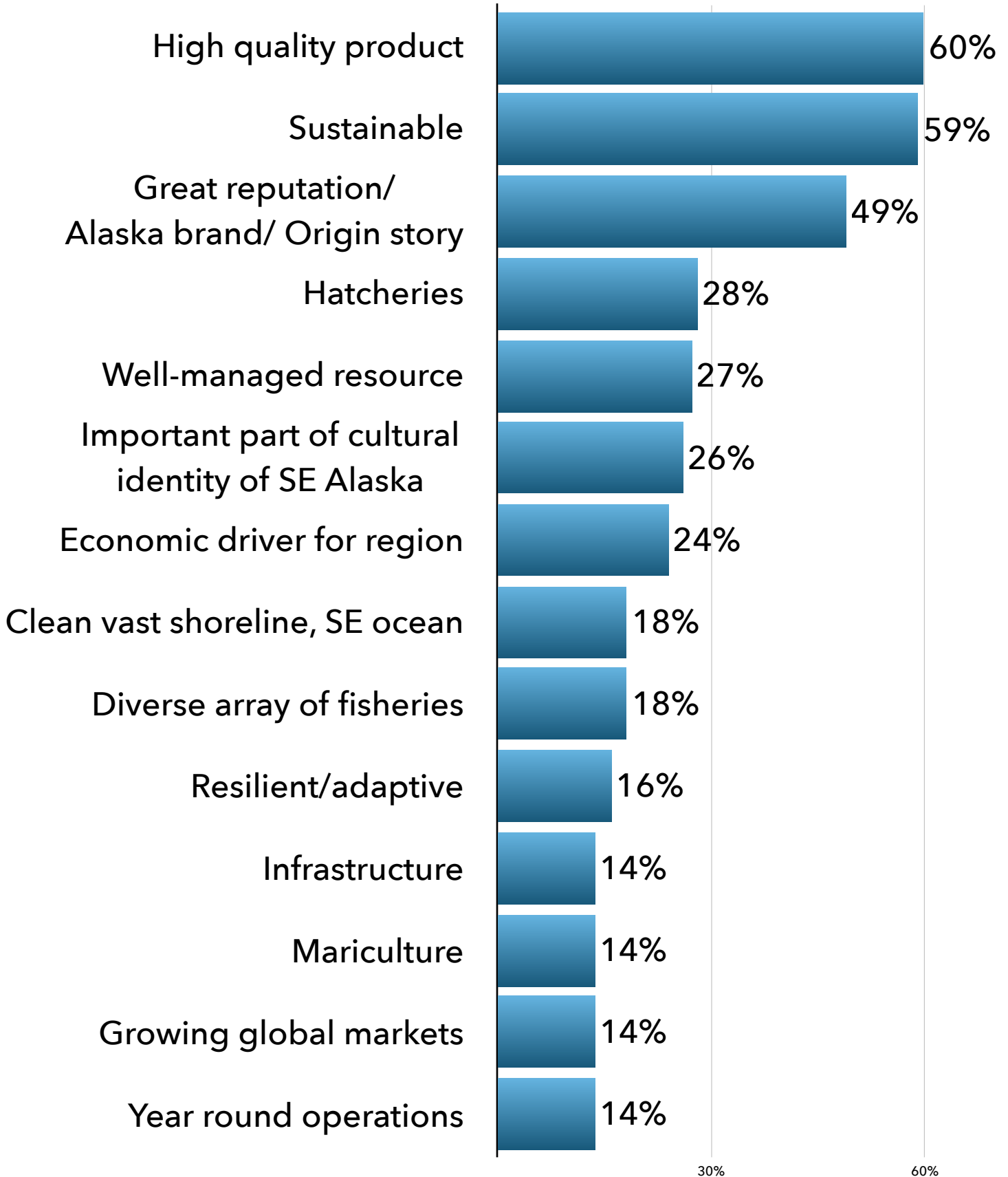


Southeast Seafood SWOT

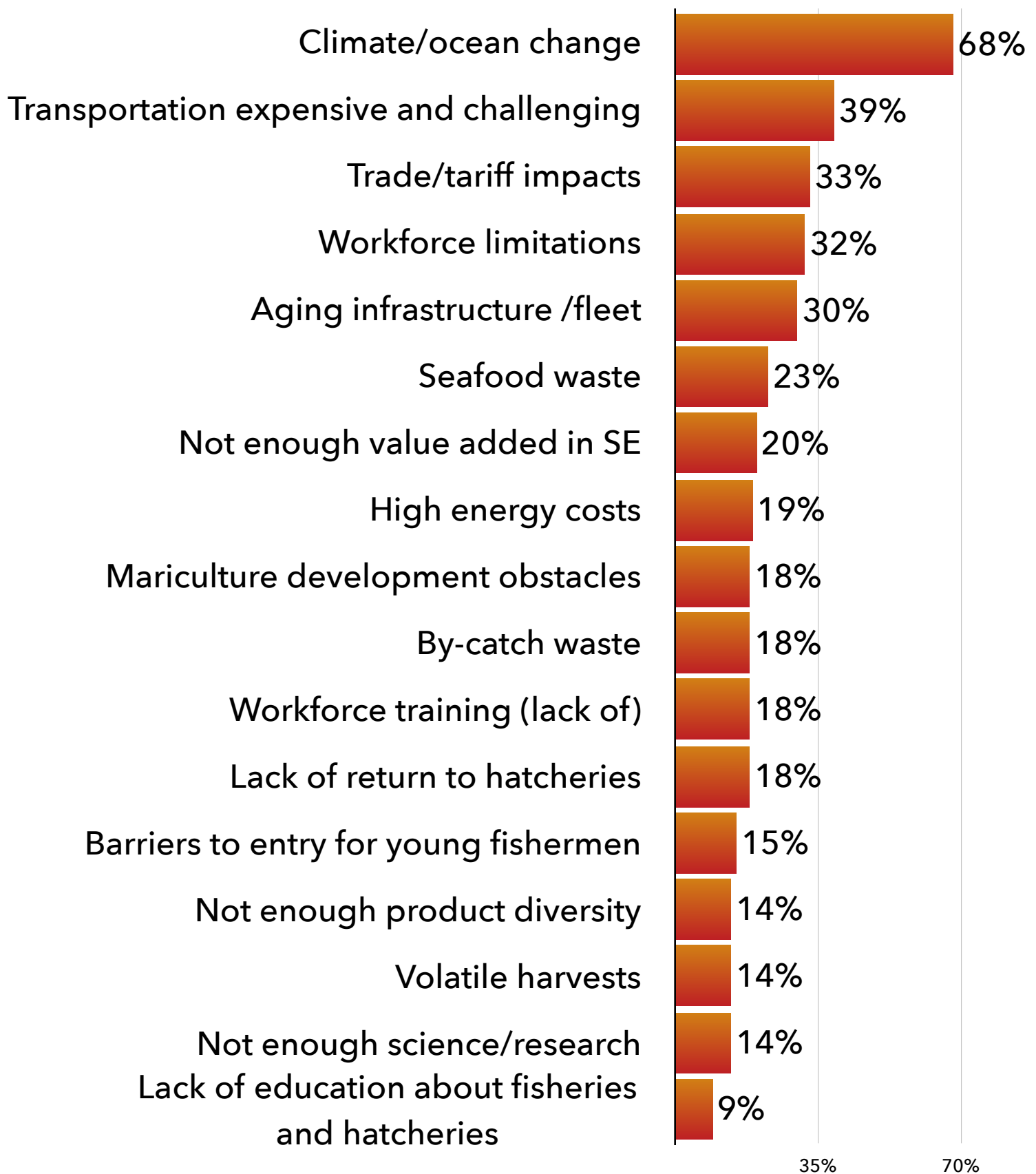
SOUTHEAST SEAFOOD SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Seafood SWOT analysis was conducted by 24 members of the Southeast Conference Seafood and Maritime Industry Committee in a series of meetings on February 4th and April 27 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

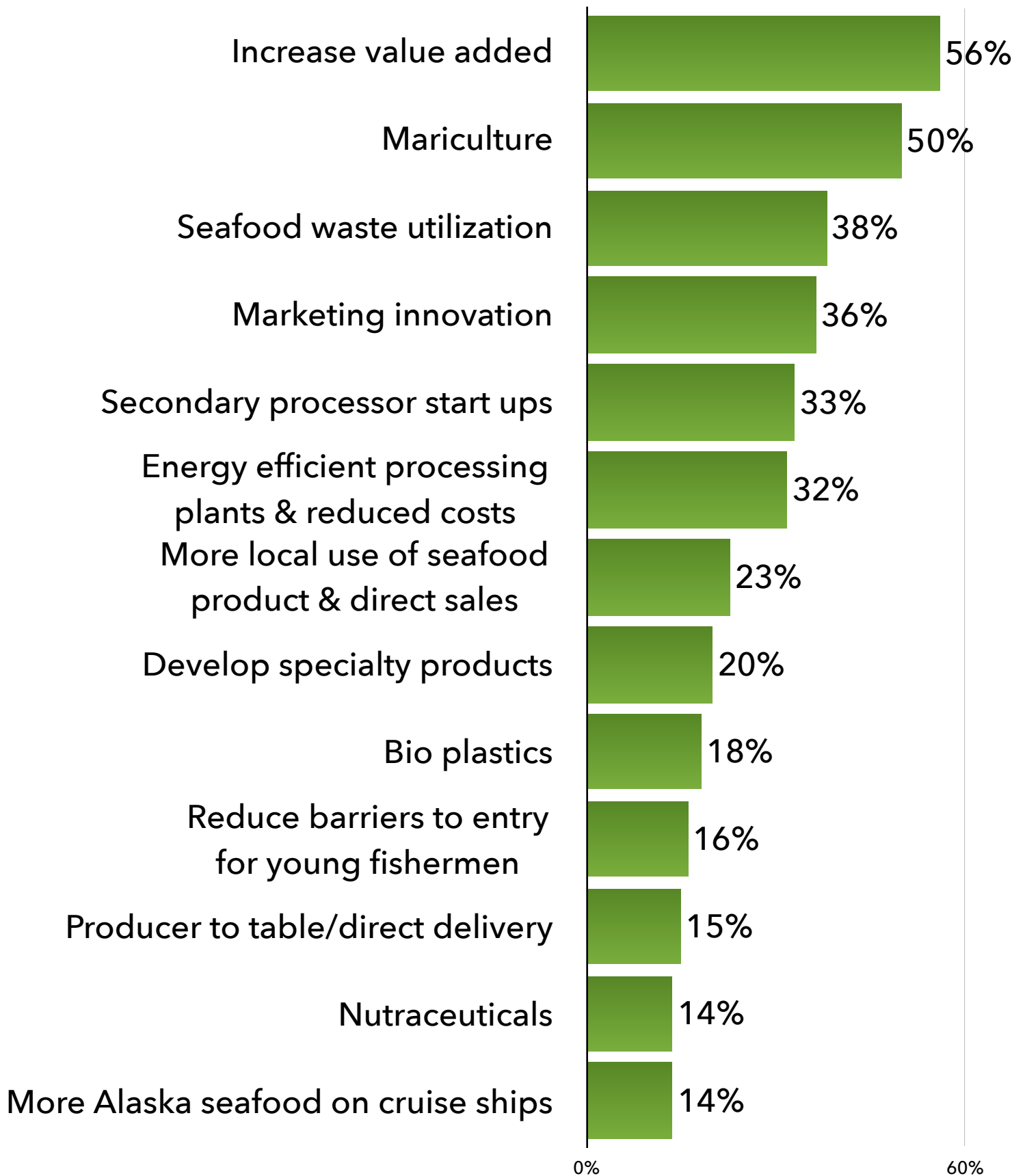
Seafood Strengths



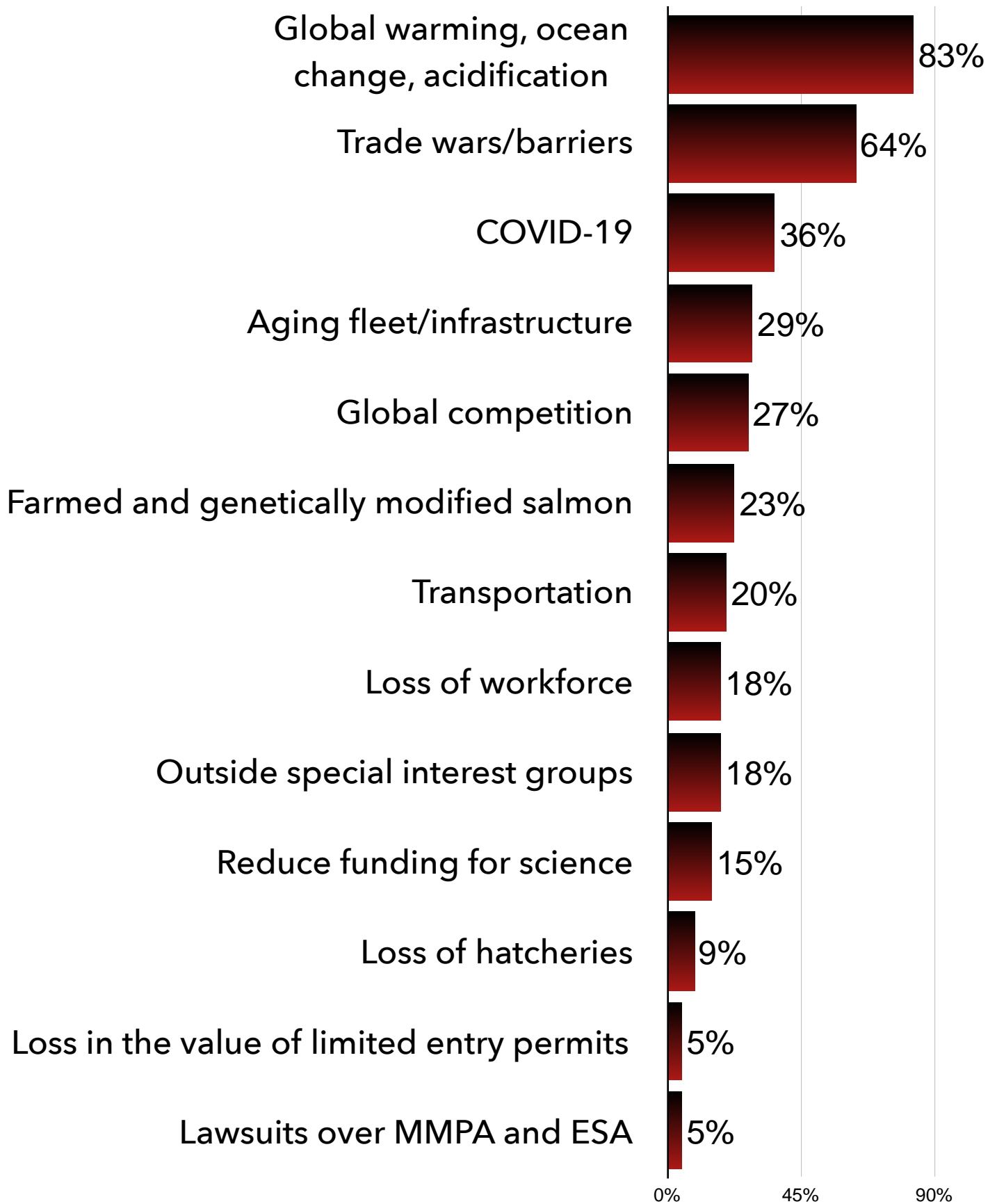
Seafood Weaknesses

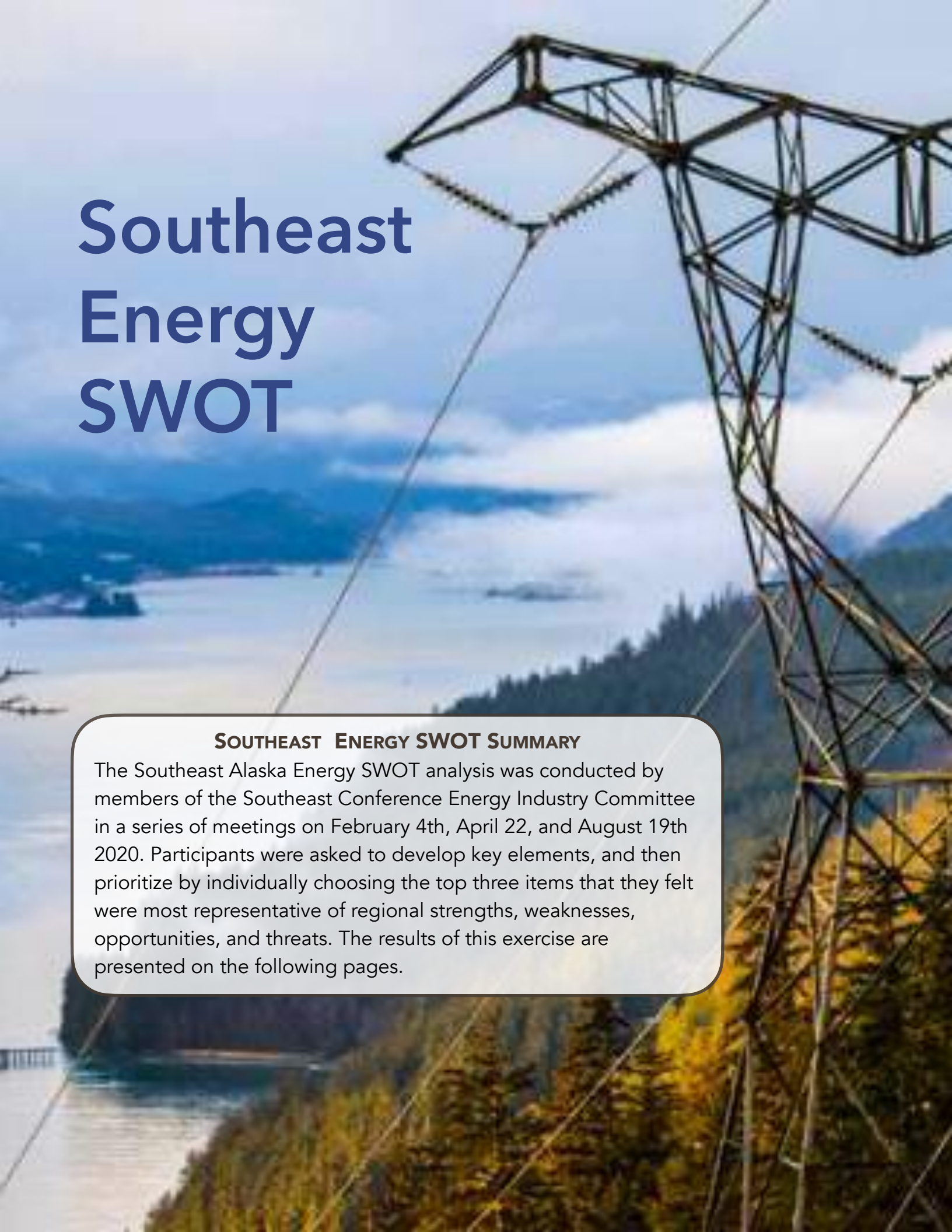


Seafood Opportunities



Seafood Threats



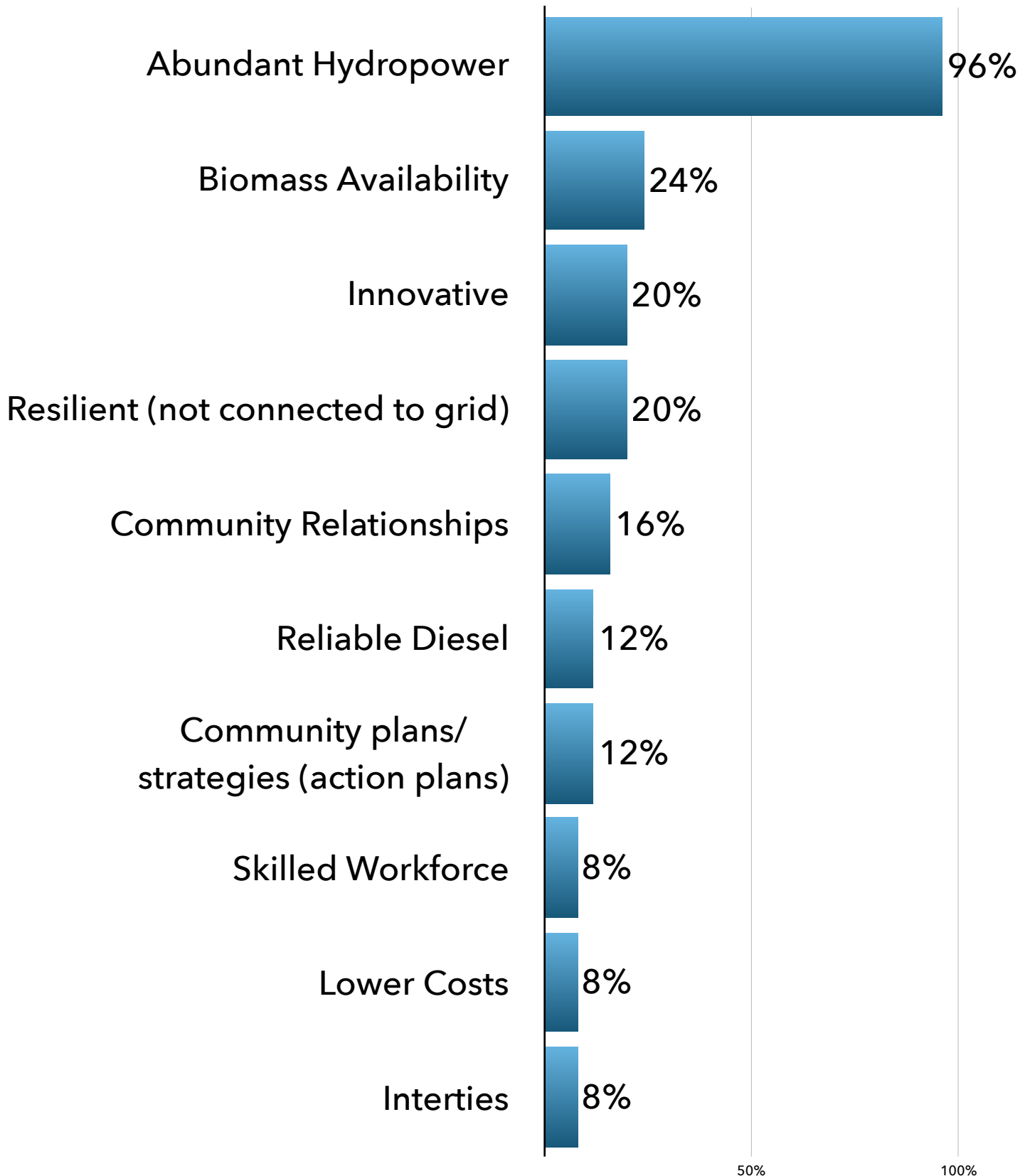


Southeast Energy SWOT

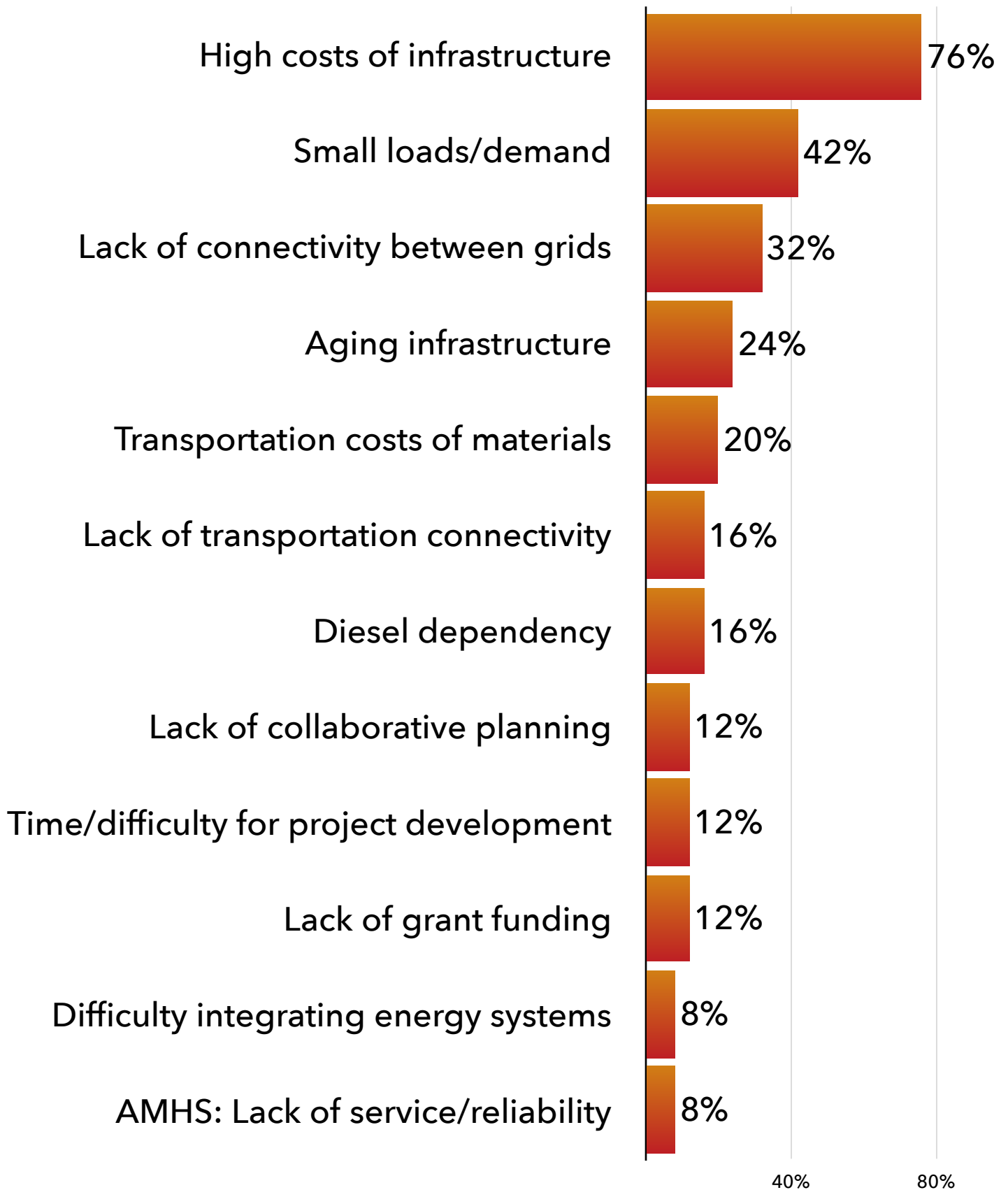
SOUTHEAST ENERGY SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Energy SWOT analysis was conducted by members of the Southeast Conference Energy Industry Committee in a series of meetings on February 4th, April 22, and August 19th 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

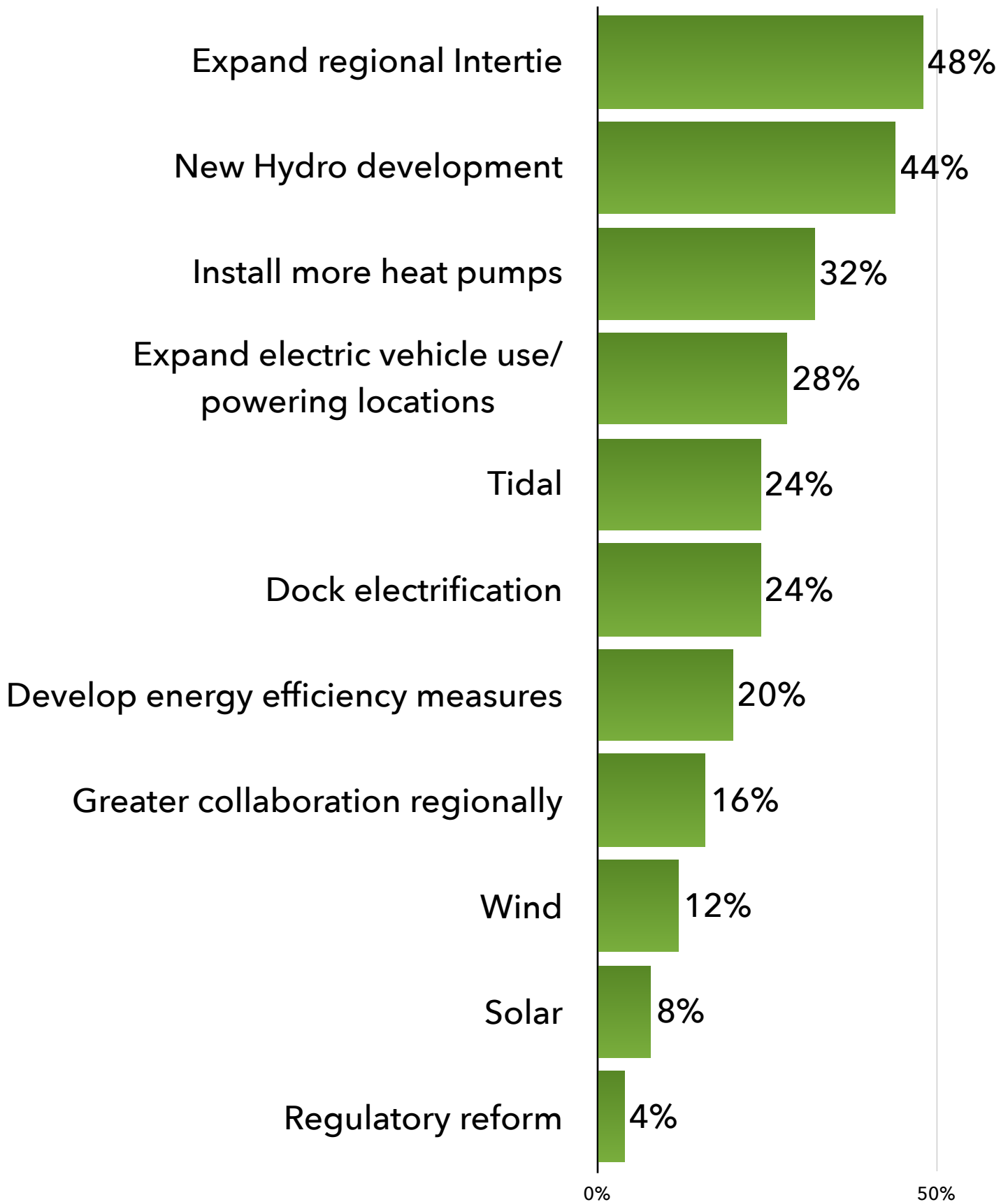
Energy Strengths



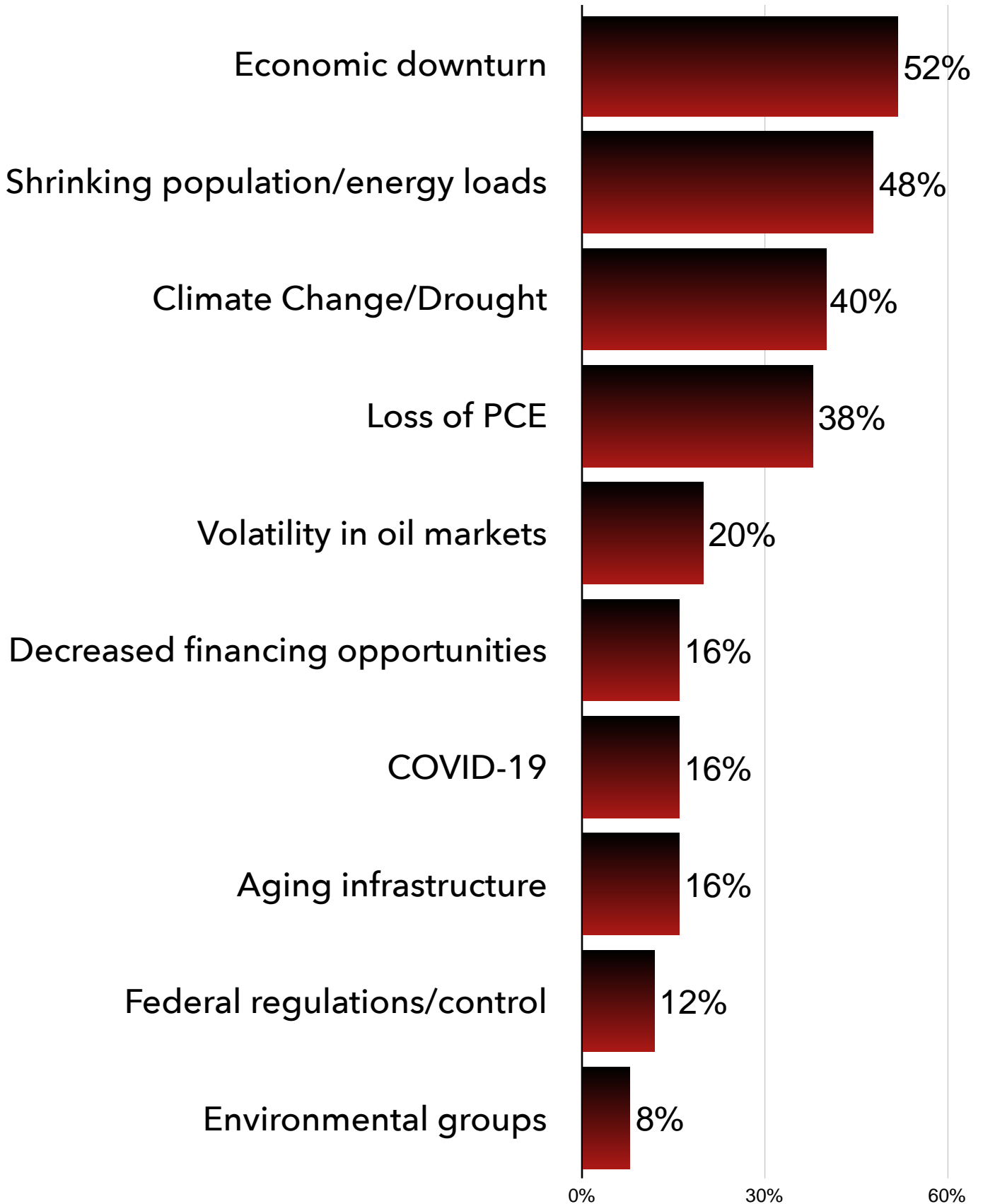
Energy Weaknesses



Energy Opportunities



Energy Threats



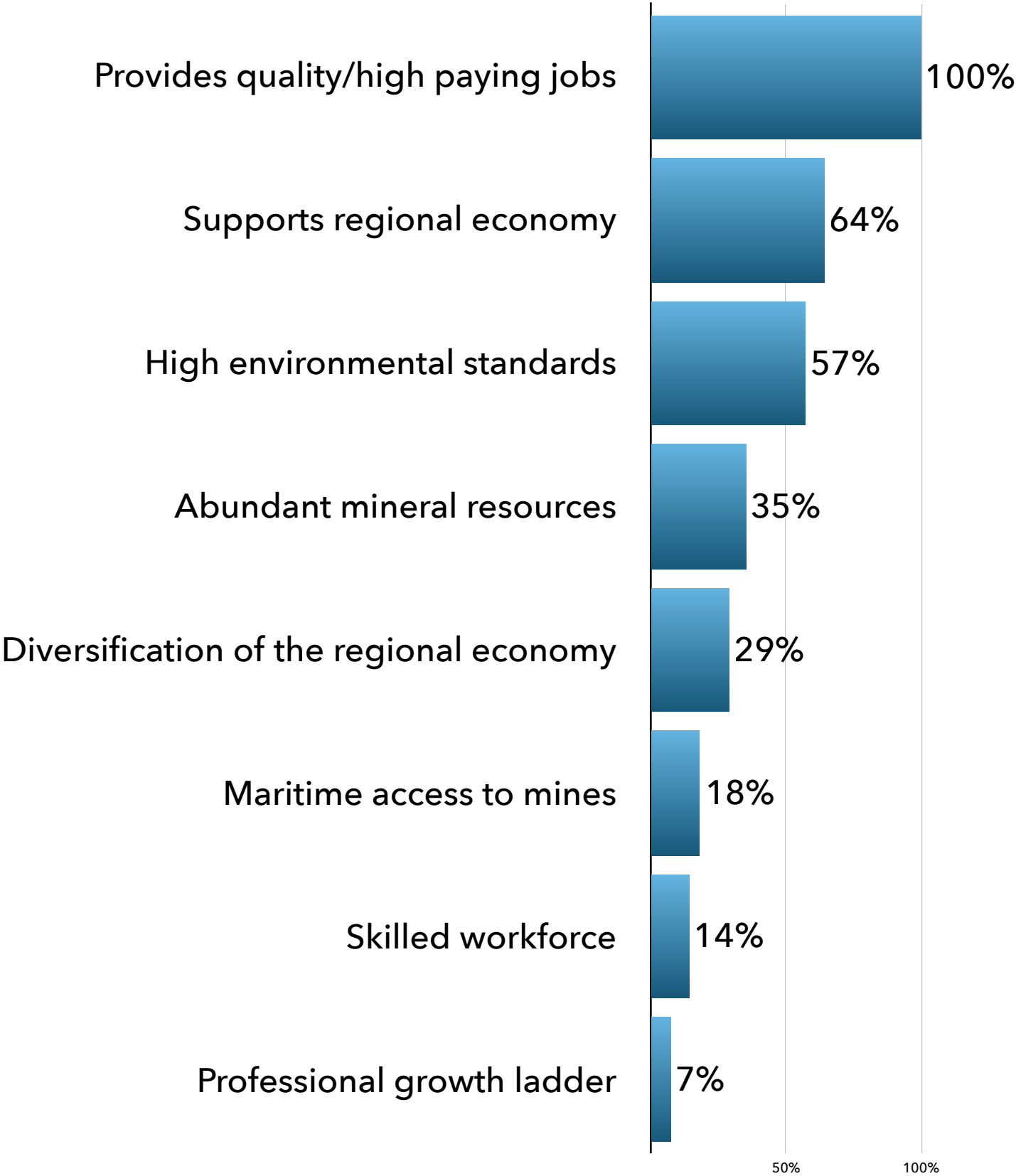
A smiling woman wearing an orange helmet with a logo, blue safety glasses, a blue jacket, and a red safety vest with reflective yellow stripes. She is holding a long wooden staff over her shoulder. The background shows a rugged mountain range with patches of snow under a clear blue sky.

Southeast Mining SWOT

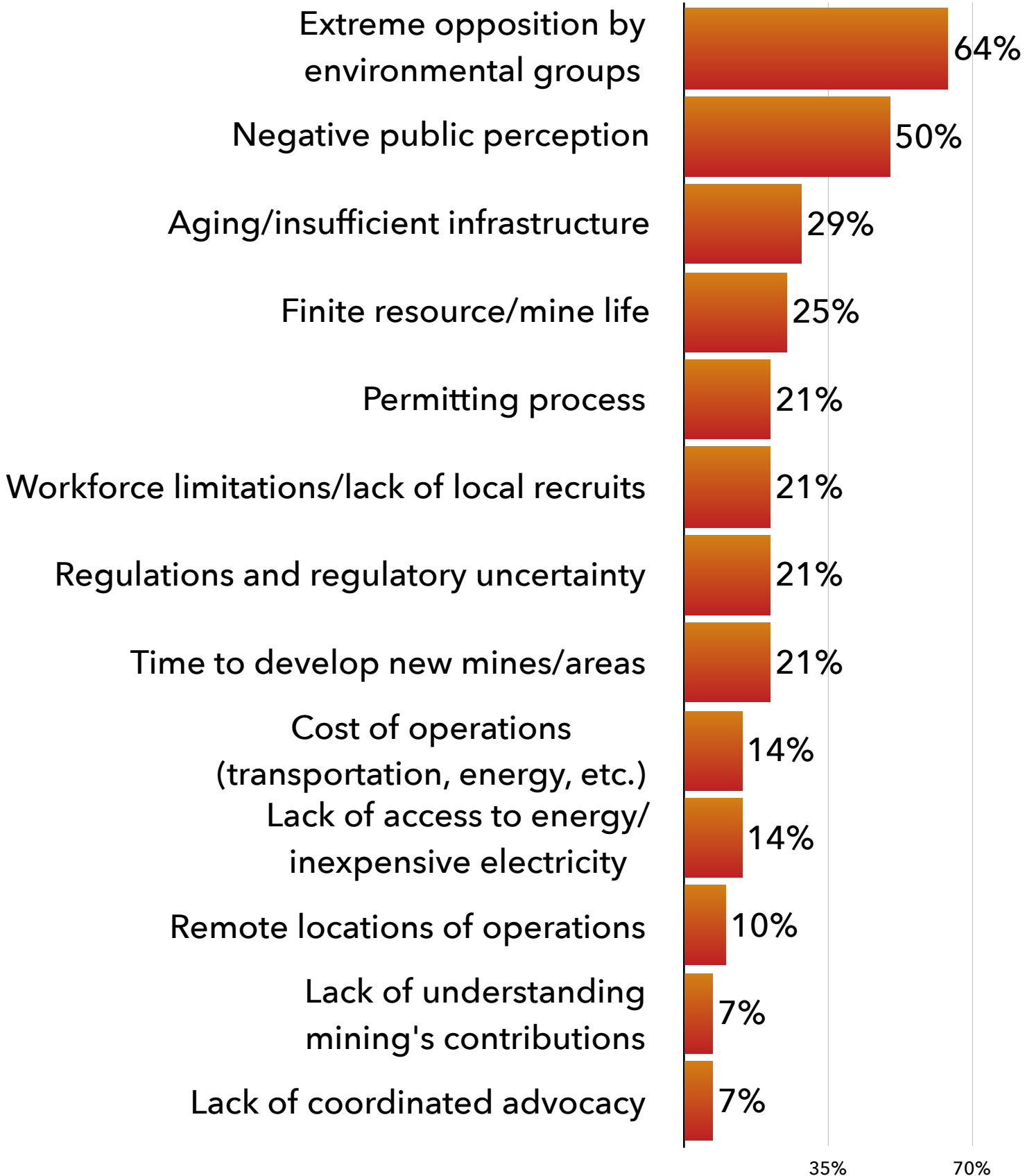
SOUTHEAST MINING SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska mining SWOT analysis was conducted by 20 members of the Southeast Conference Mining Industry Committee in a series of meetings on February 4th and May 13 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

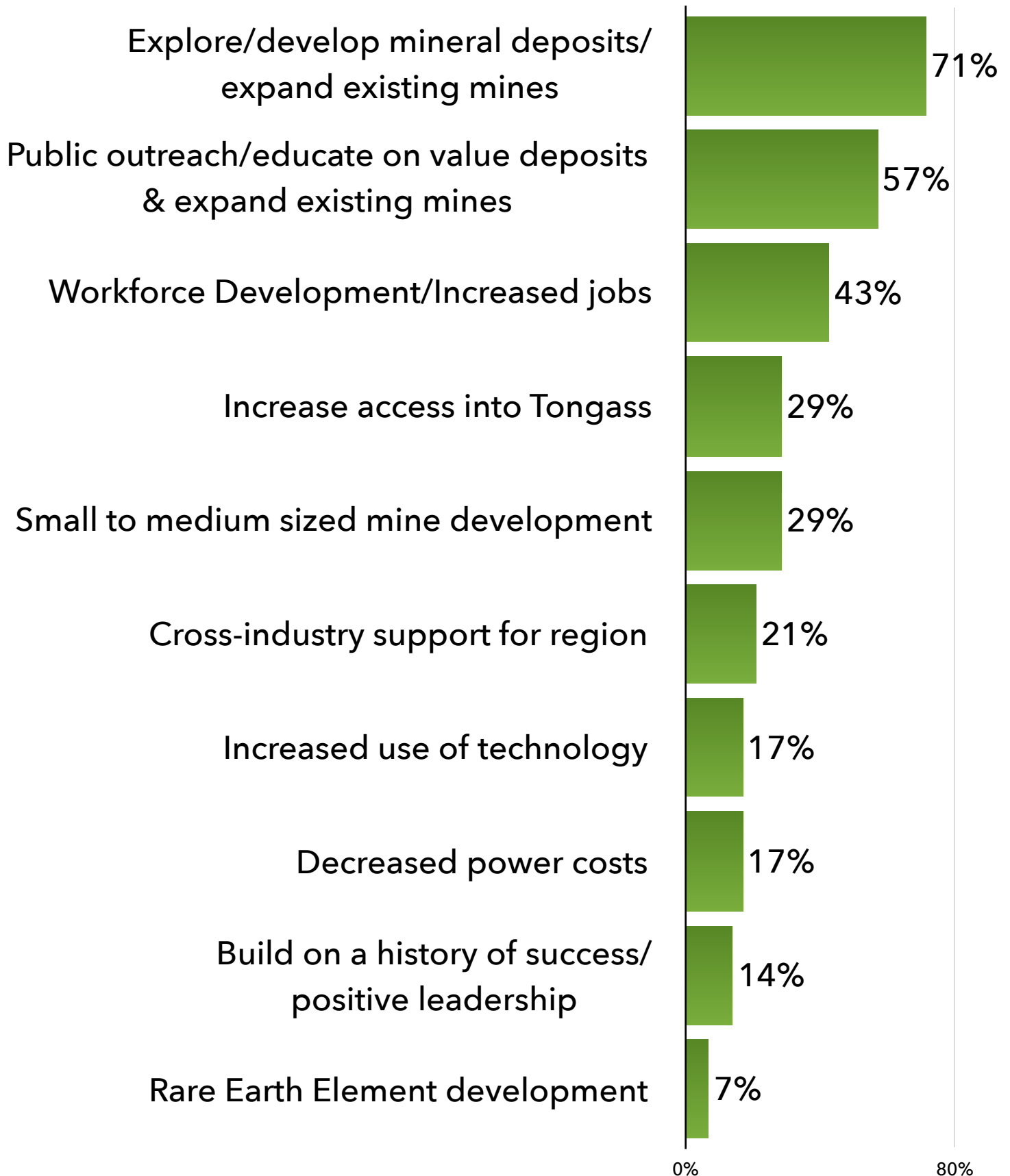
Mining Strengths



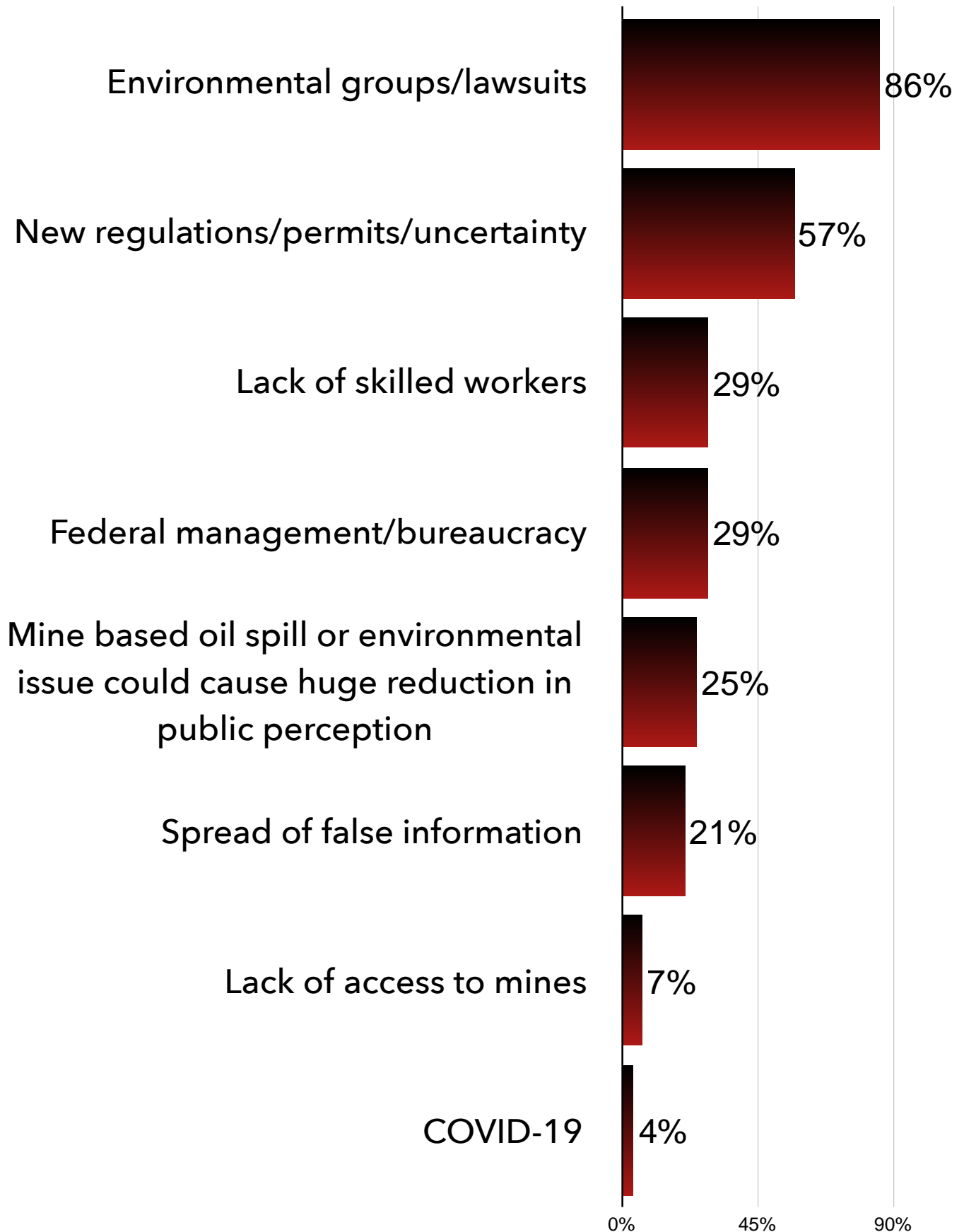
Mining Weaknesses



Mining Opportunities



Mining Threats



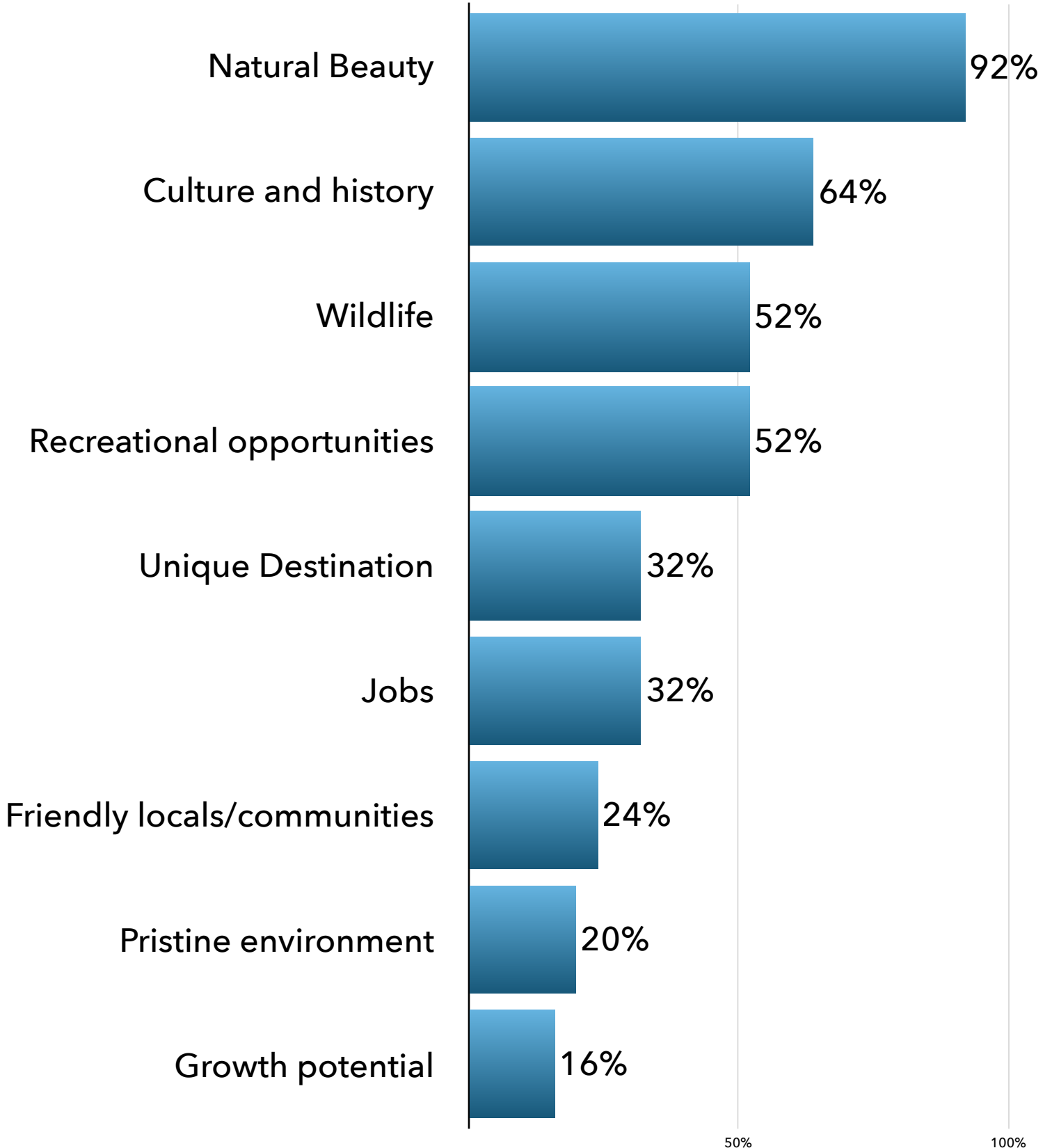
A large cruise ship is sailing on a body of water with snow-capped mountains in the background. The ship is white with multiple decks and is moving towards the right. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue with some clouds. The mountains are covered in snow and are reflected in the water.

Southeast Tourism SWOT

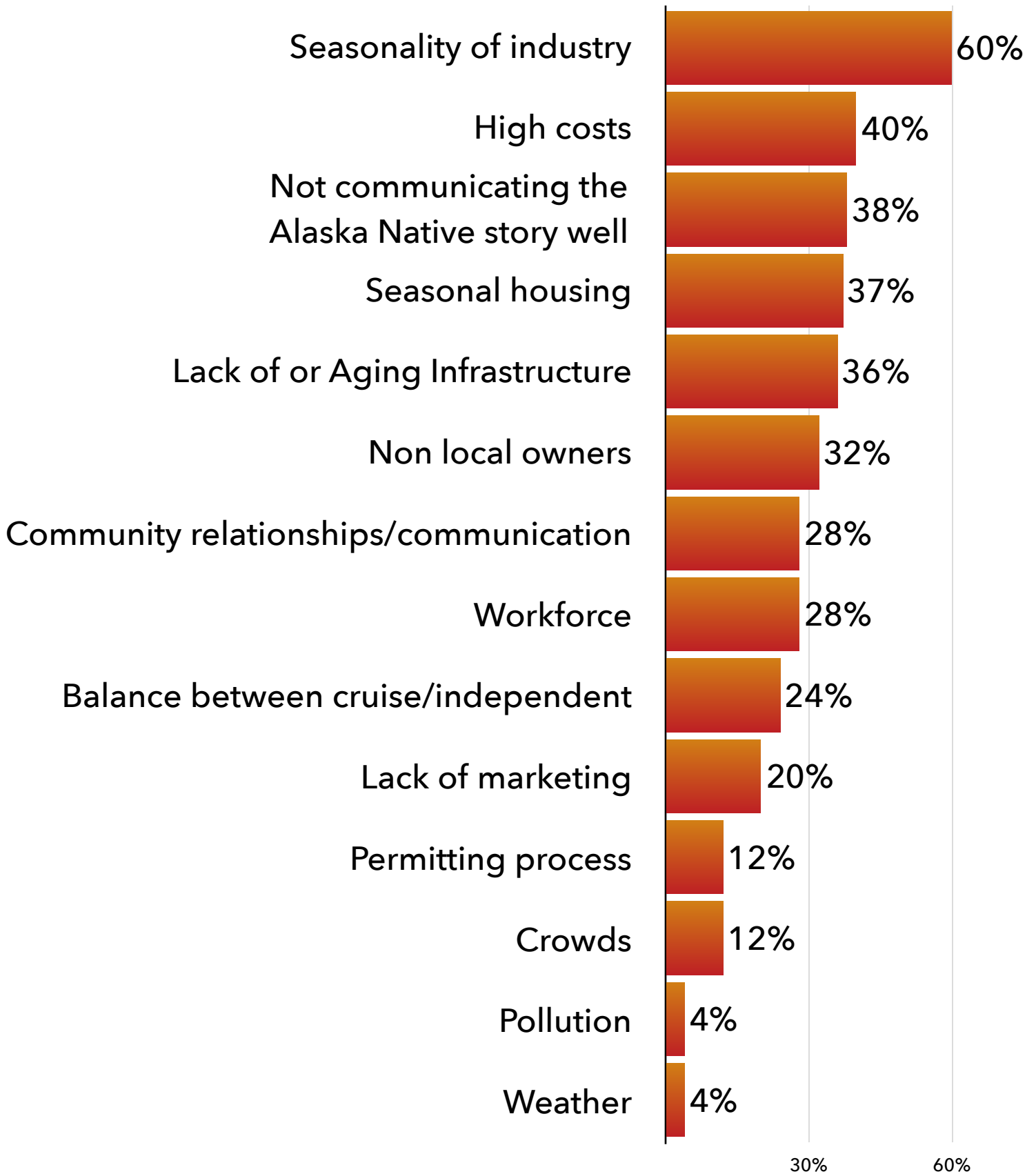
SOUTHEAST TOURISM SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Tourism SWOT analysis was conducted by 45 members of the Southeast Conference Visitor Industry Committee in a series of meetings on February 4th, April 1st, and June 4th 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

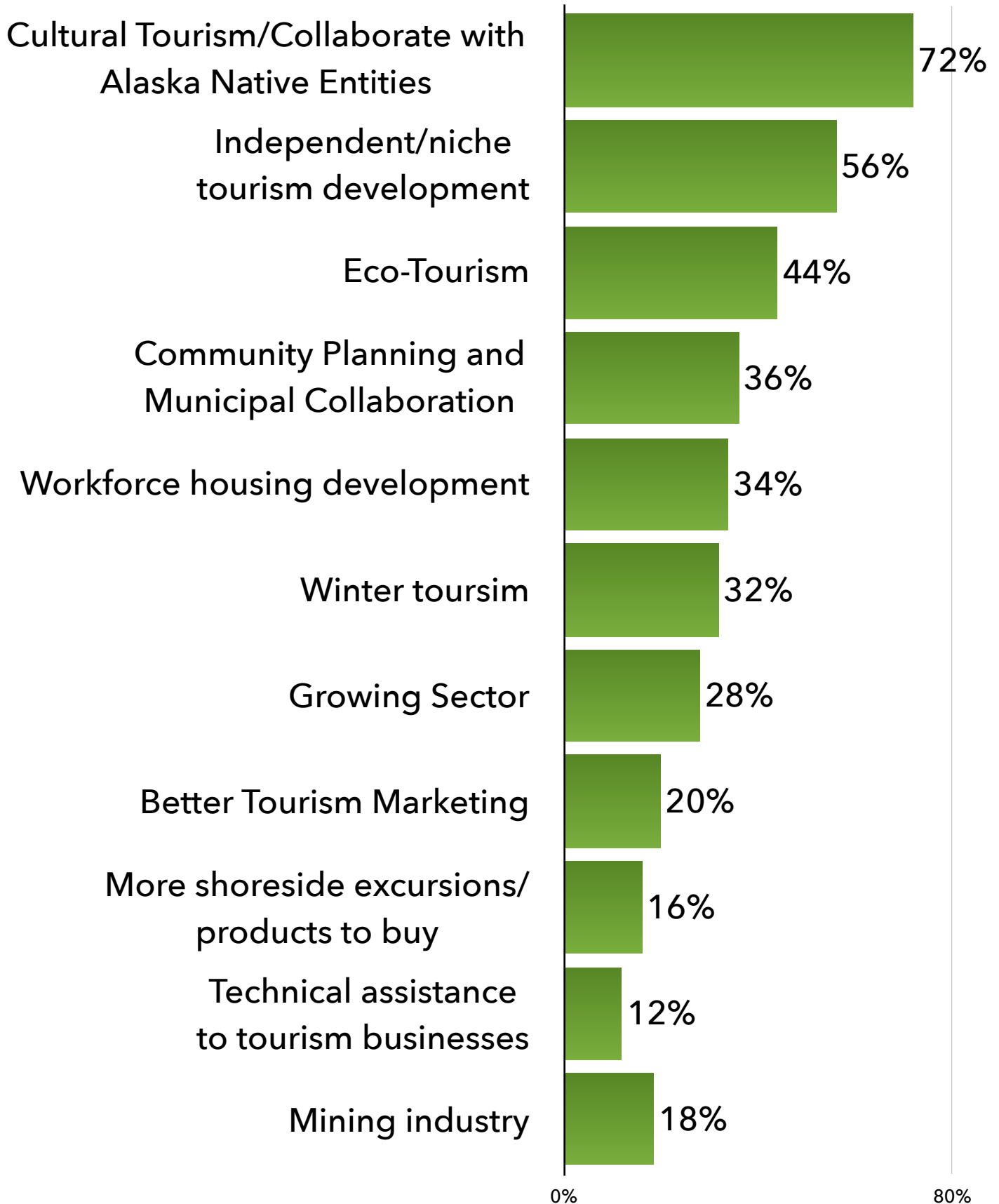
Tourism Strengths



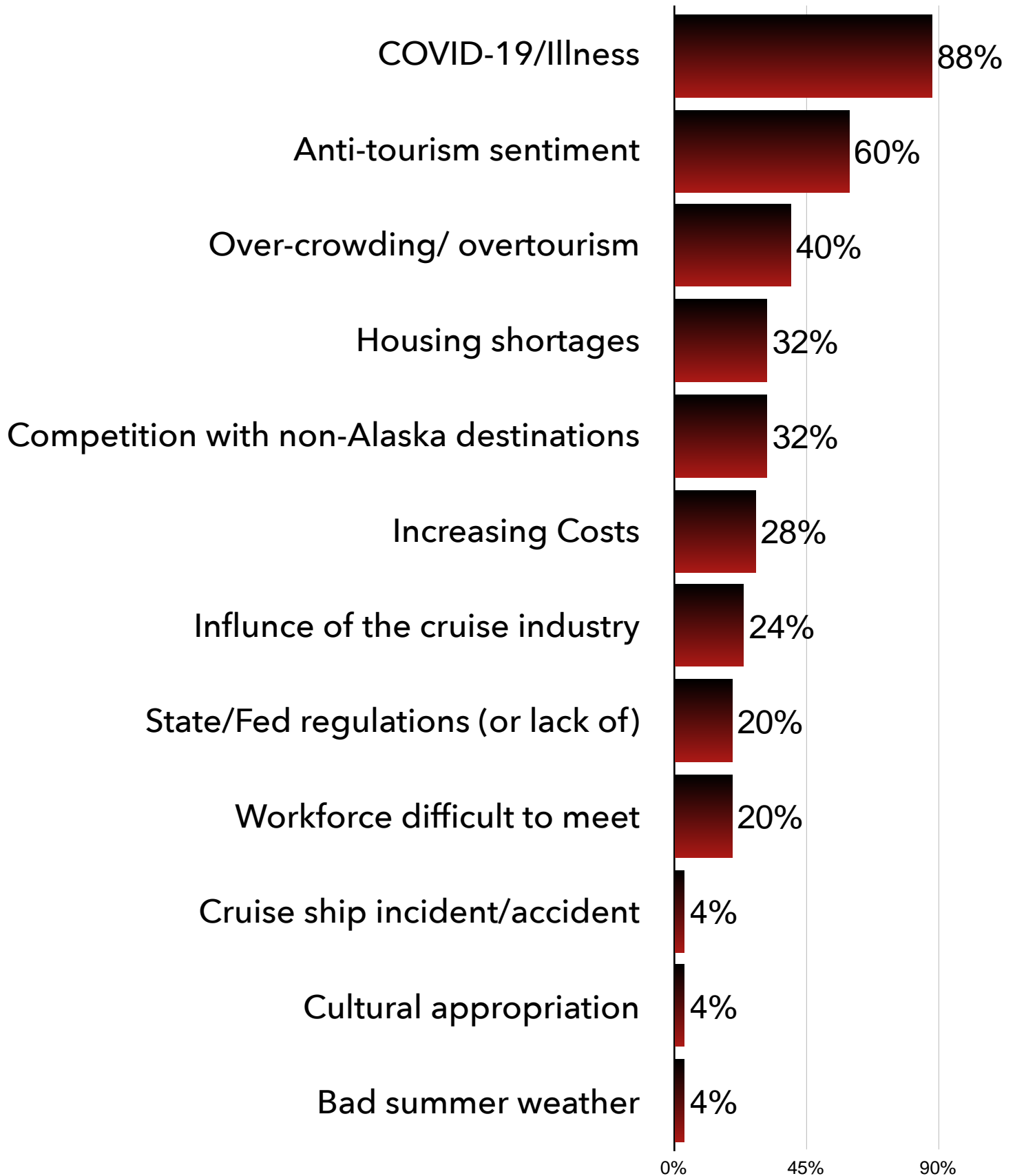
Tourism Weaknesses



Tourism Opportunities



Tourism Threats



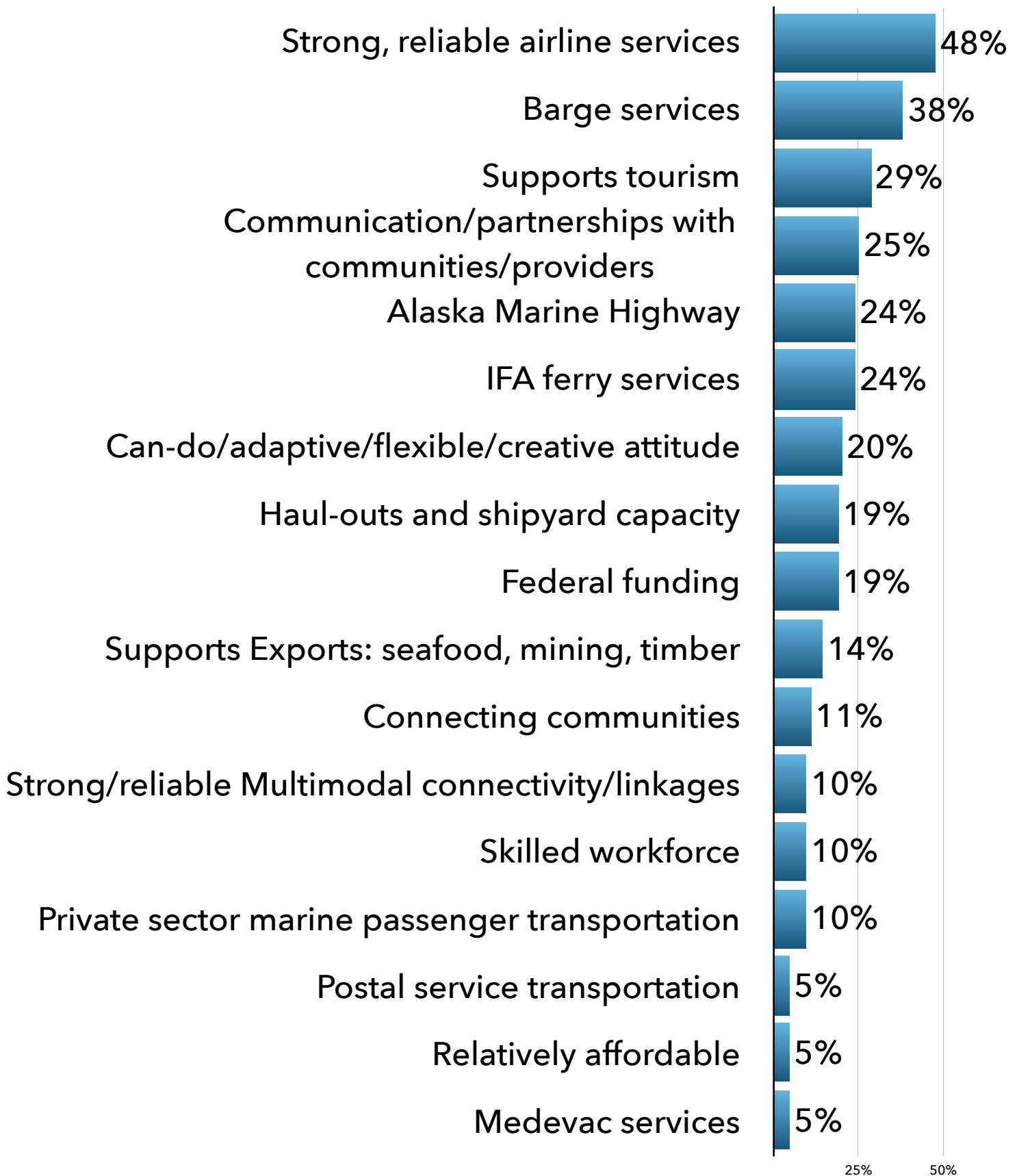
Southeast Transportation SWOT



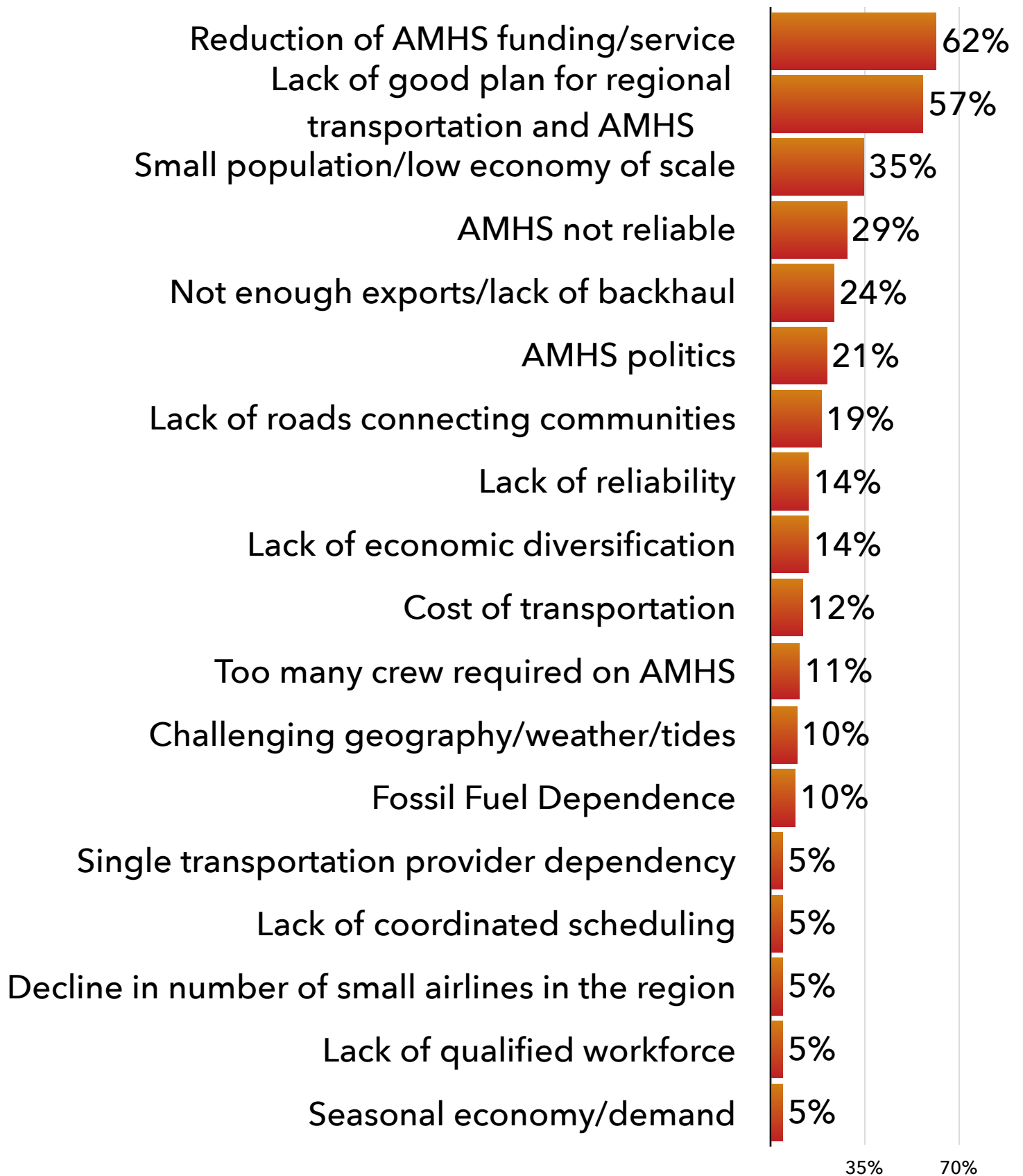
SOUTHEAST TRANSPORTATION SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Transportation SWOT analysis was conducted by 46 members of the Southeast Conference Transportation Industry Committee in a series of meetings on February 4, April 29th, and August 12th 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

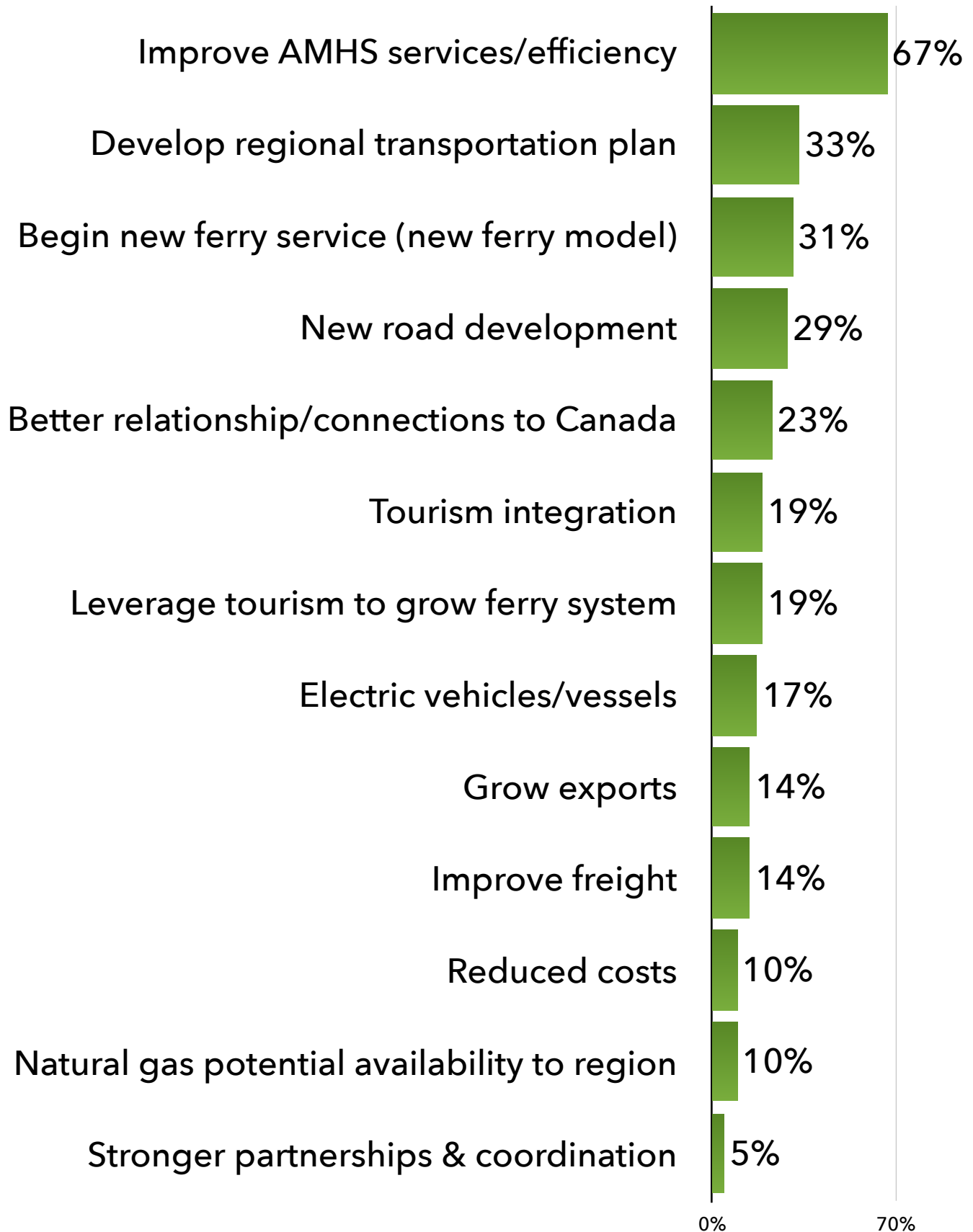
Transportation Strengths



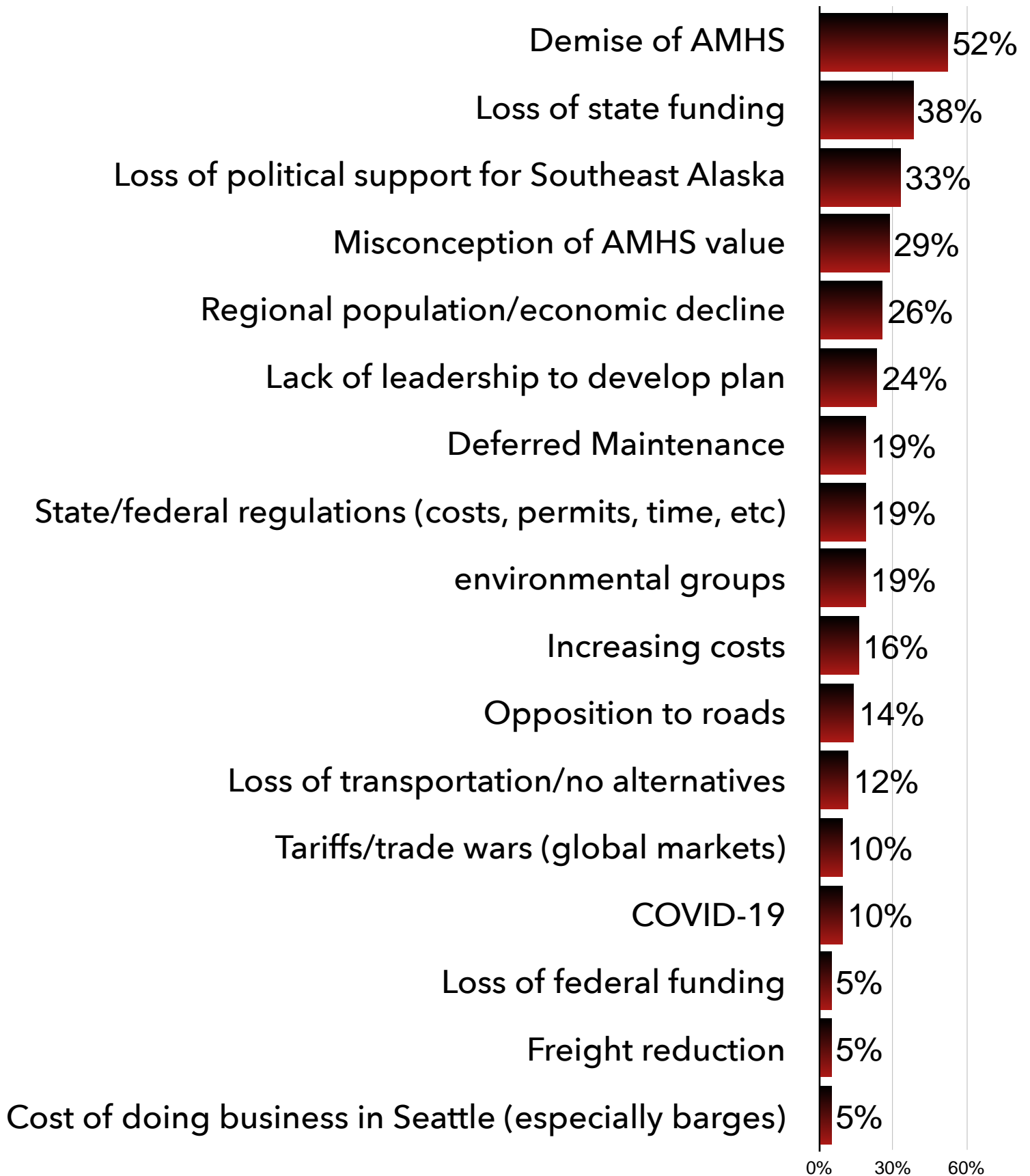
Transportation Weaknesses



Transportation Opportunities



Transportation Threats



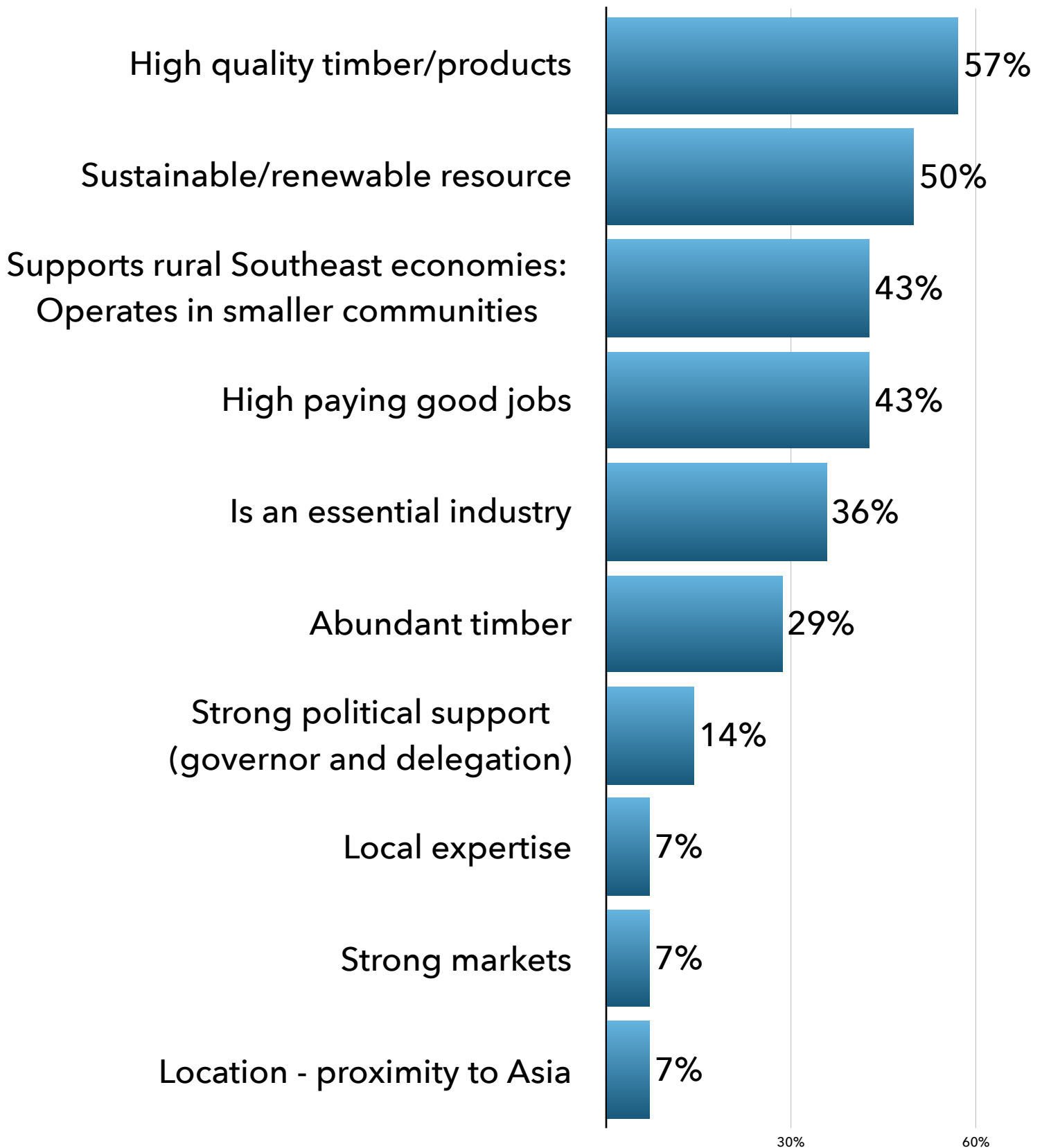
Southeast Timber SWOT



SOUTHEAST TIMBER SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Timber SWOT analysis was conducted by 15 members of the Southeast Conference Timber Industry Committee in a series of meetings on February 4, May 6th, and August 5th 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

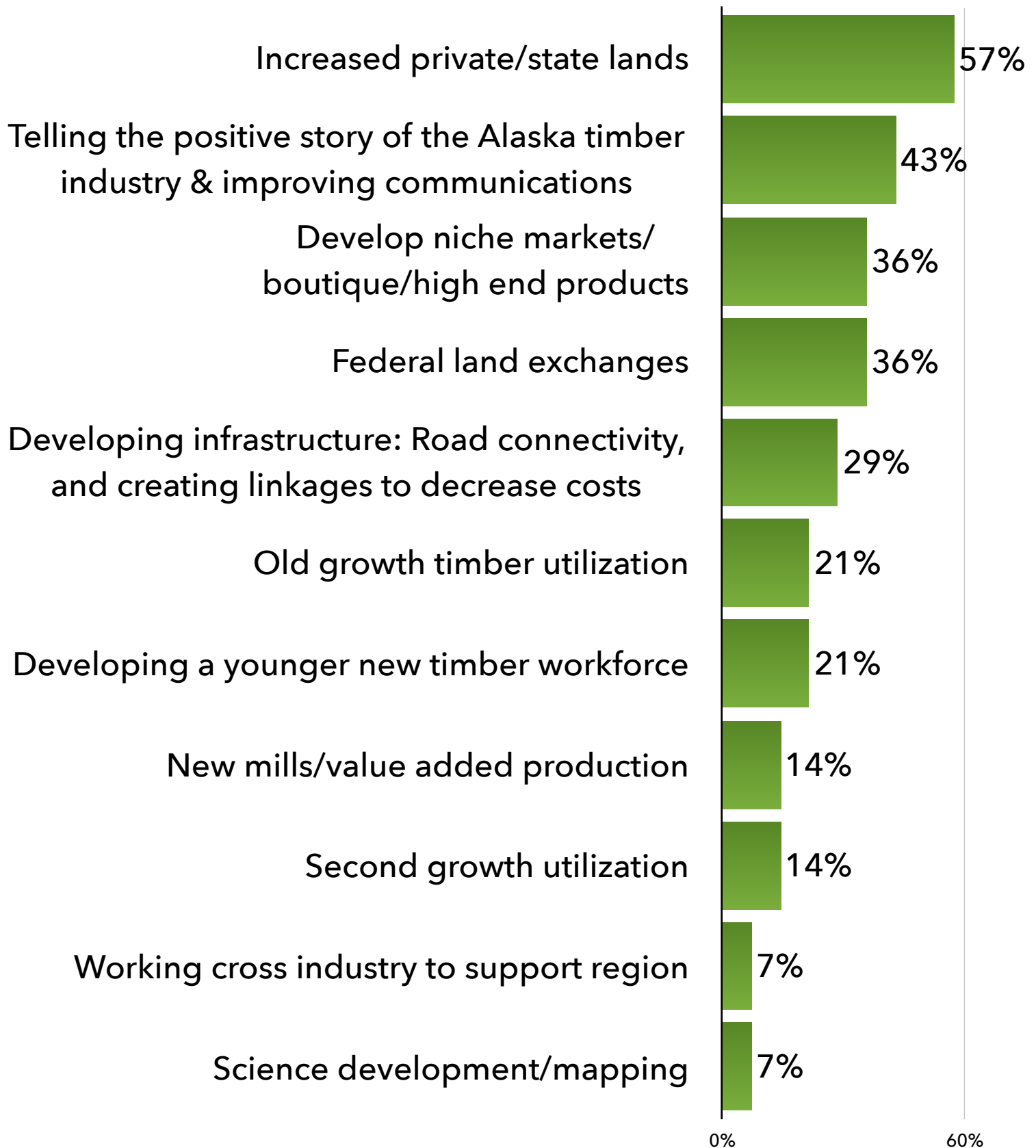
Timber Strengths



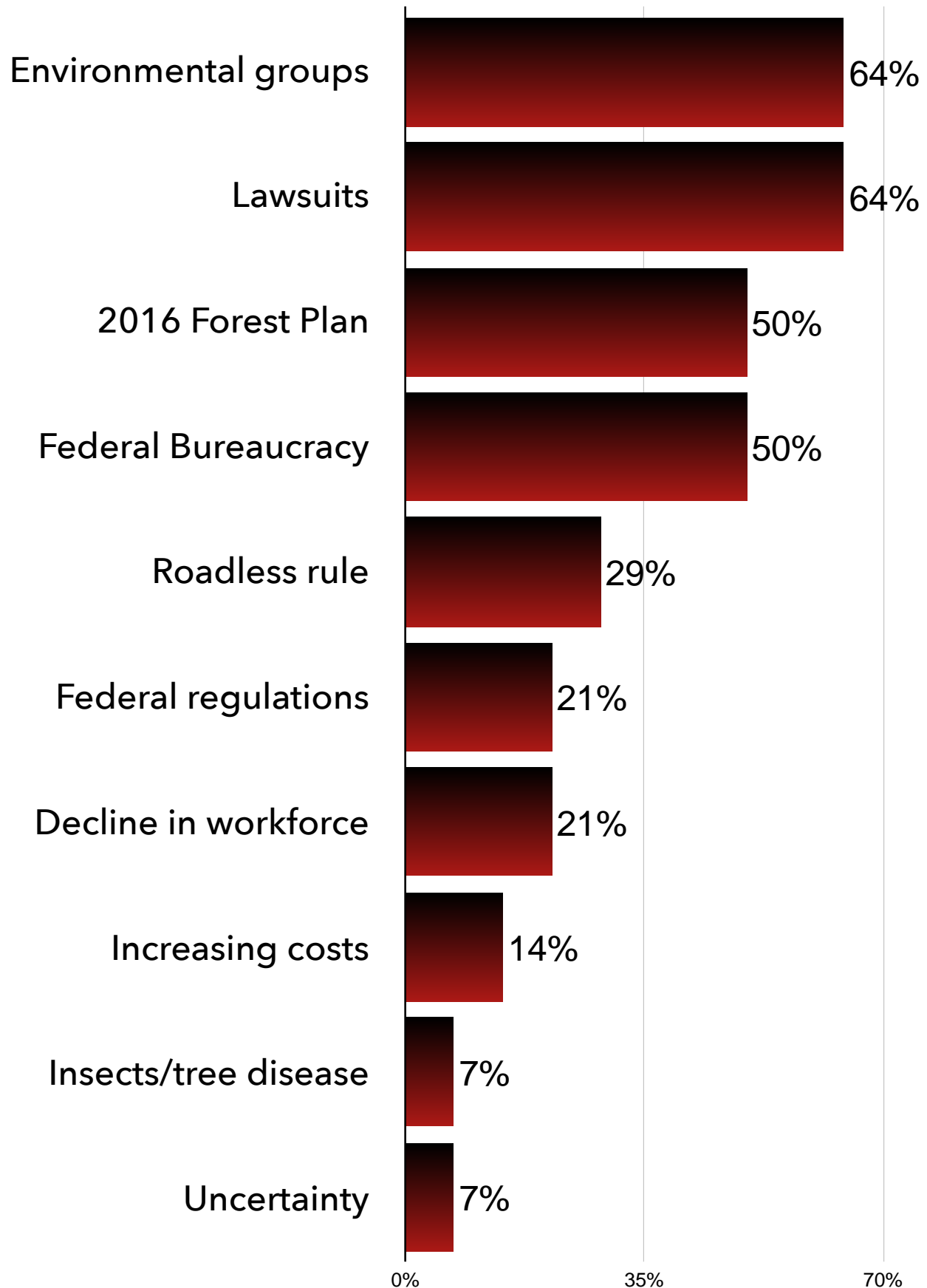
Timber Weaknesses



Timber Opportunities



Timber Threats



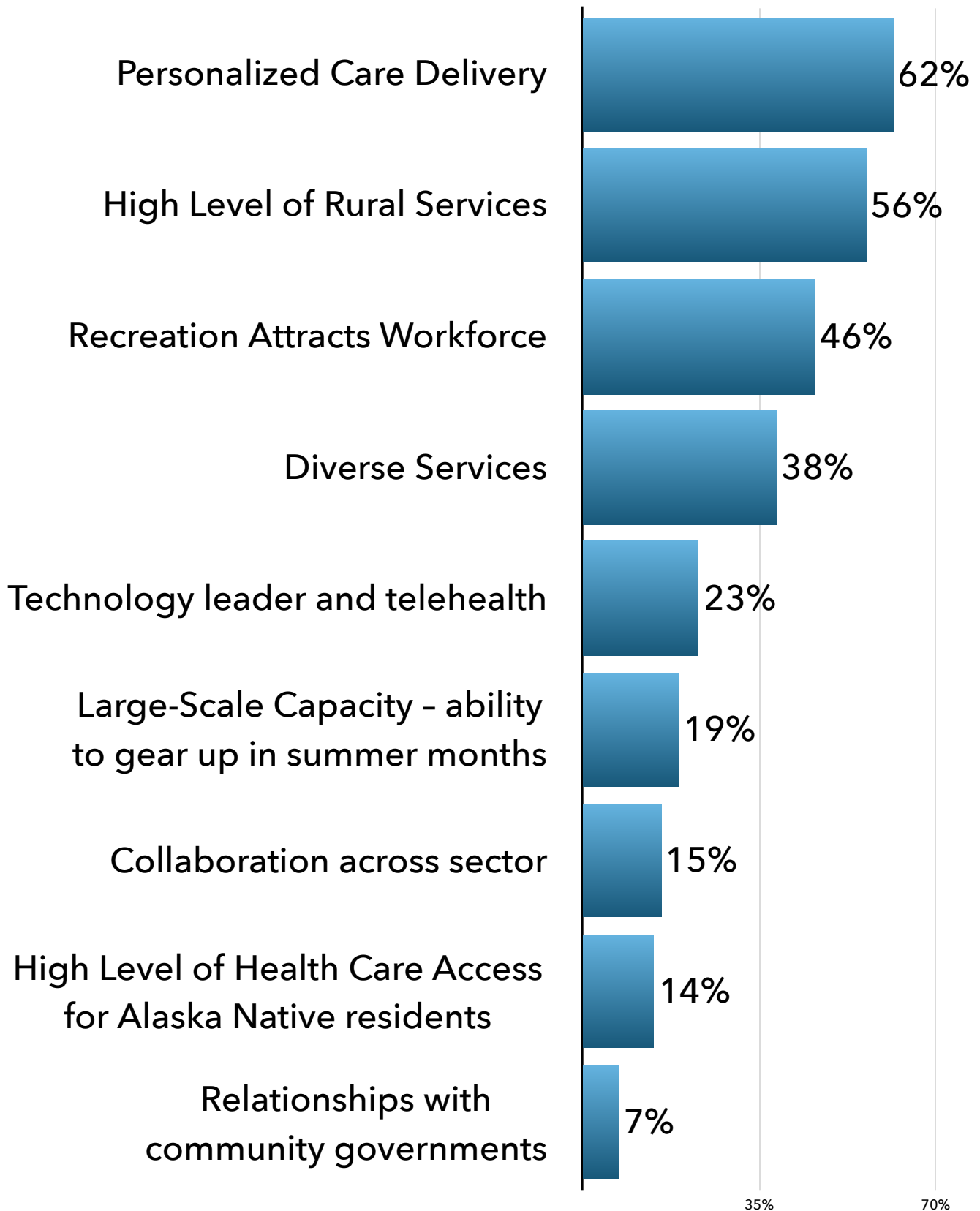
A healthcare professional, likely a doctor or nurse, is shown in a clinical setting. She is wearing a white lab coat over a patterned top and has an orange stethoscope around her neck. She is pointing her right hand towards a whiteboard that is covered with various documents and charts. The background shows a typical hospital or clinic environment with a window and a door.

Health Care SWOT

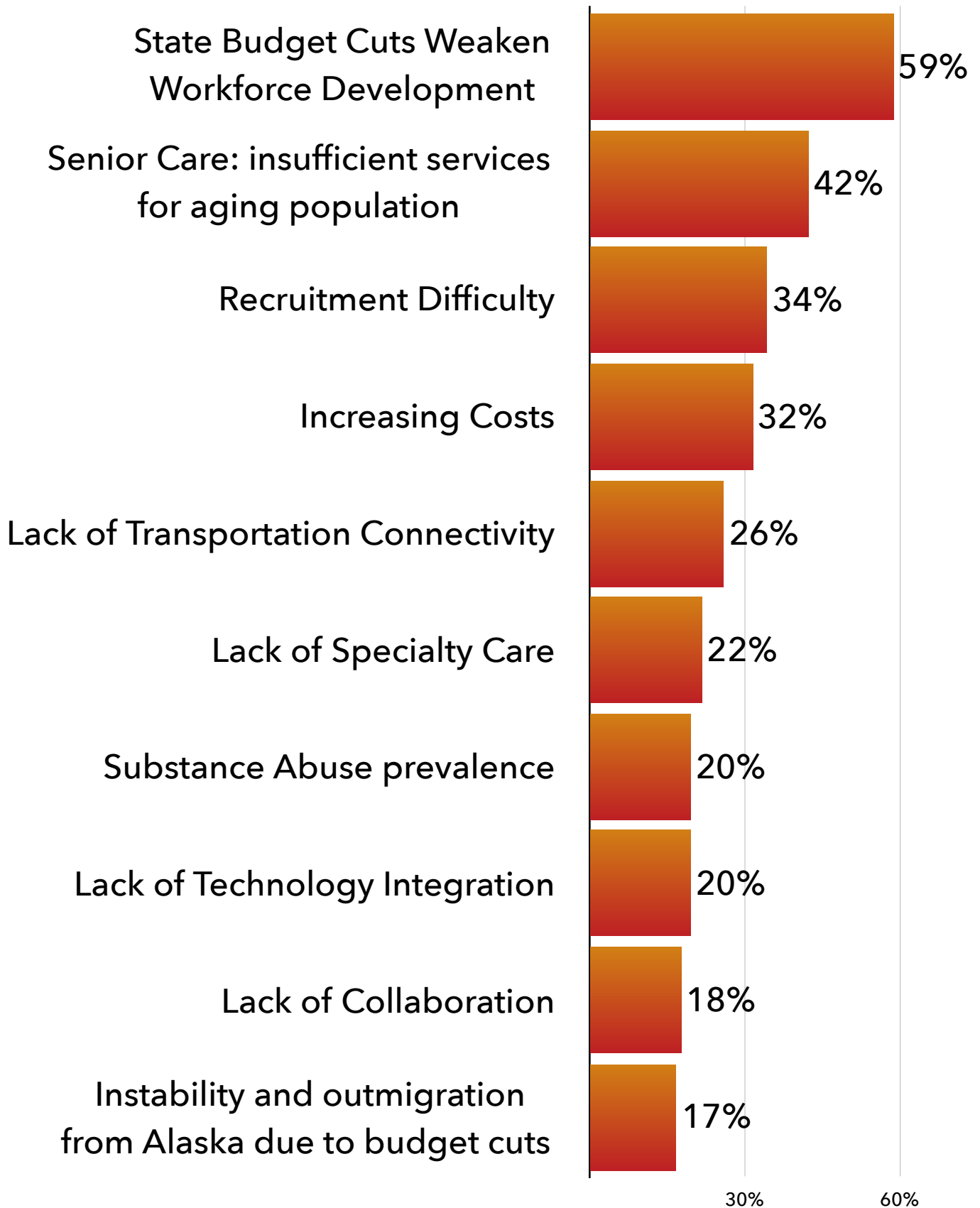
SOUTHEAST HEALTH CARE SWOT SUMMARY

The Southeast Alaska Health Care SWOT analysis was conducted by 20 members of the Southeast Conference Health Care Industry Committee in a series of meetings on October 9 2019 and July 22nd 2020. Participants were asked to develop key elements, and then prioritize by individually choosing the top three items that they felt were most representative of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this exercise are presented on the following pages.

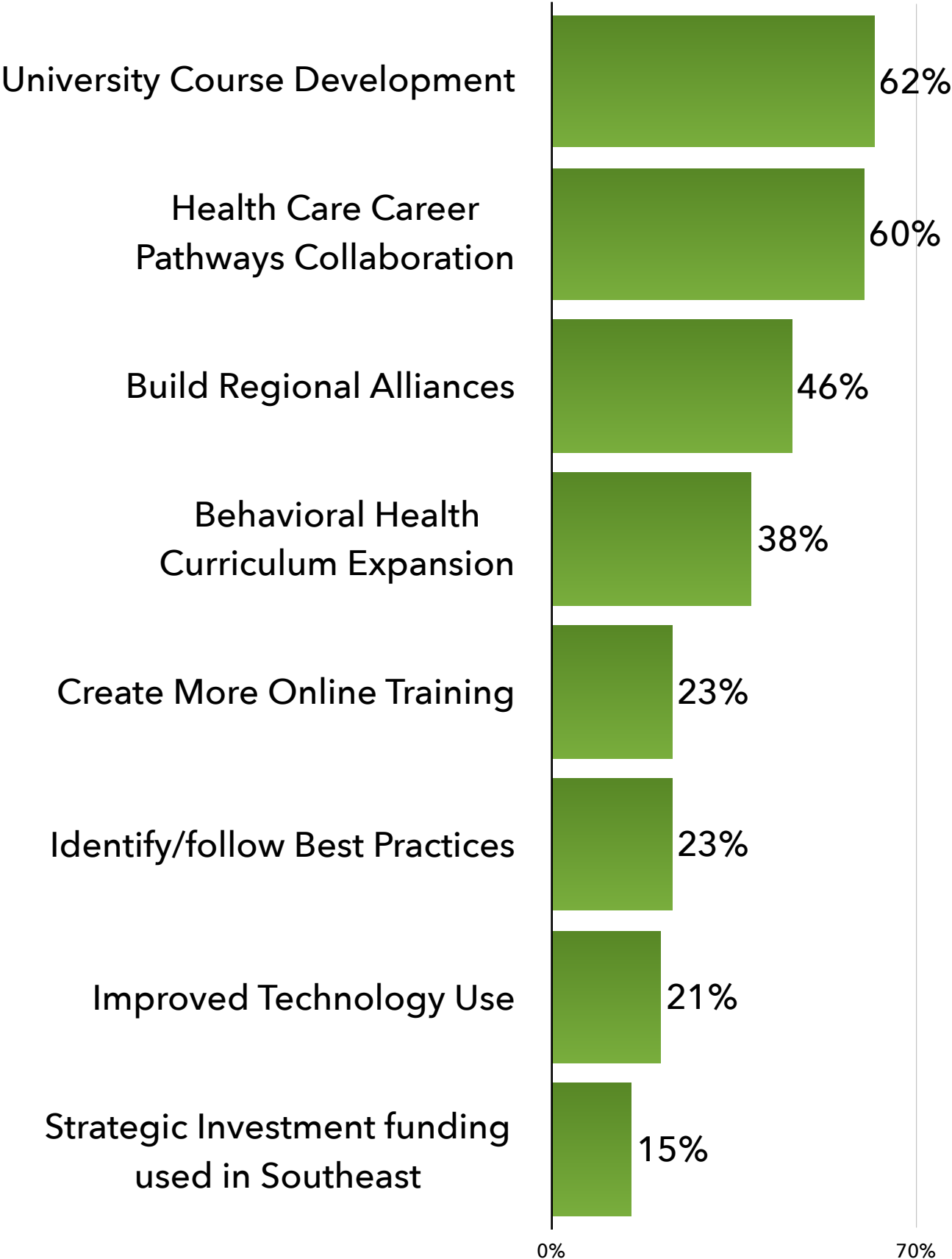
Health Care Strengths



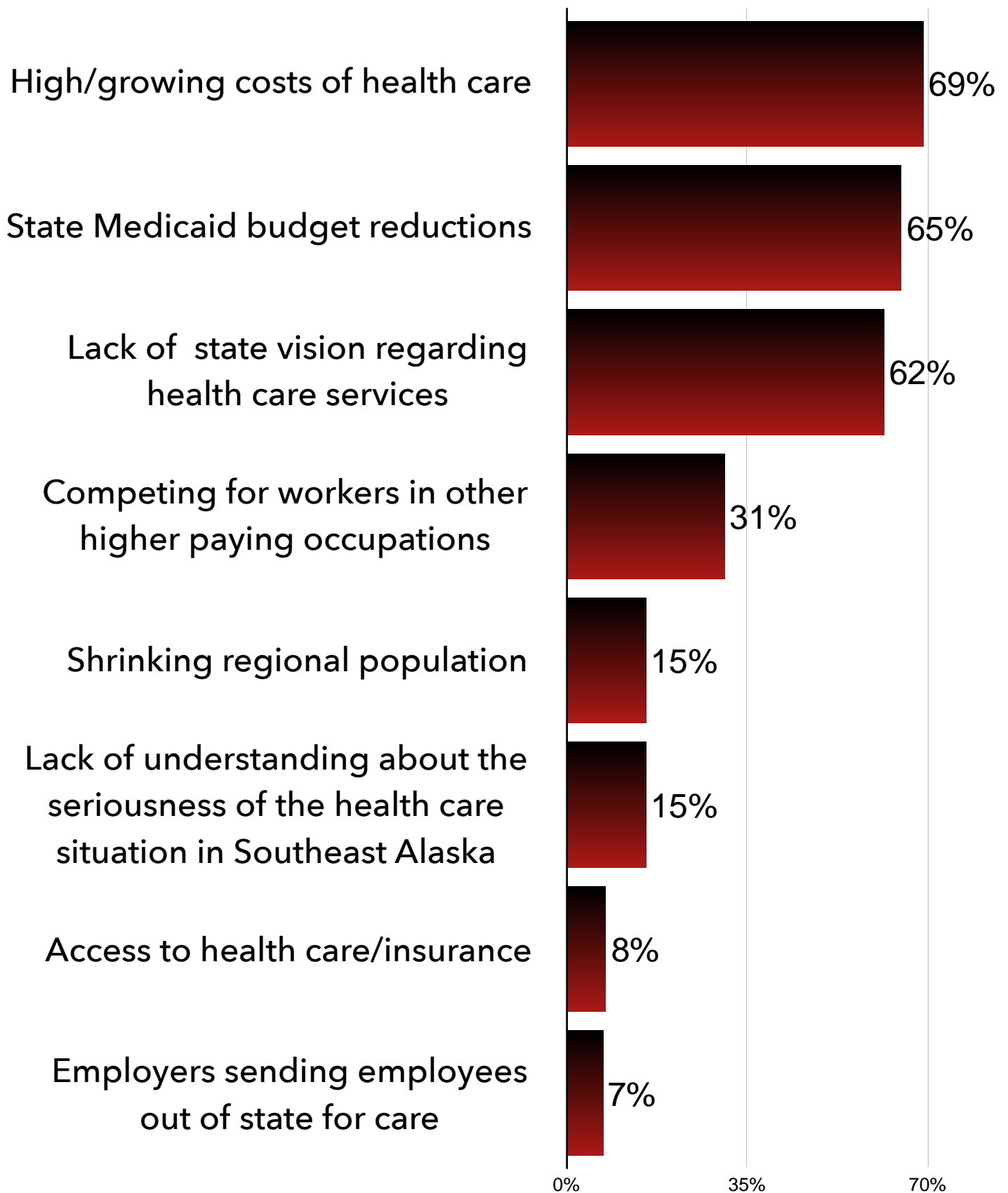
Health Care Weaknesses



Health Care Opportunities



Health Care Threats



Health Care SWOT Analysis

Strengths: What does the Southeast Alaska health care industry do well?

What unique resources can we draw on? What are our strengths for attracting health care workers?

- **Personalized Care:** Because our communities are small we are able to deliver personalized care to those areas.
- **Rural Services:** We are delivering care to communities that would not have health care due to their remote nature, and we are able to deliver a much broader level of health care services to our residents than communities of the size we have here would typically be able to access.
- **Access to Recreation:** Our unique environment and access to world class recreation is the basis for a high quality of life in the region, which is very attractive to our health care workforce.
- **Diverse Services:** In Southeast Alaska we deliver a large array of health care services to nearly every community.
- **Technology:** Alaska had been the leader in use of technology in health care. We are able to provide some services to our remote communities with smaller populations through telehealth connectivity.
- **Scalable Capacity:** Small communities have developed large-scale capacity in the summer months. Our summer tourist population is unique. We are able to accommodate health care needs of all tourists.
- **Collaboration:** Our many health care organizations across the region work well together in order to create more opportunities and better care for our residents. The recently developed Southeast Alaska Health Care Workforce Analysis developed in partnership with 10 organizations is a testament to this.
- **Health Care Access:** Overall, a high percentage of Southeast Alaska residents have access to health care, due to the fact that SEARHC receives some funding from the Indian Health Service to provide care to the Alaska Native community in the region (making up nearly a quarter of the regional population).

Weaknesses: What could our regional health care industry improve?

Where do we have fewer resources than others?

What are our weaknesses?

- **State Budget Cuts:** Deep budget cuts to the university system and health care related activities by the State of Alaska means that while our health care needs are growing (in order to serve an aging population and a growing visitor population), we do not have the funding to develop health care workforce training programs to be responsive the need for additional health care workers.
- **Senior Care:** Our population is rapidly aging, and we do not currently have the capacity and diversity of services needed to offer sufficient services to seniors.
- **Recruitment Challenges:** It is difficult to attract outside workers to the region. There has been a lack of creative solutions in finding different ways to recruit new talent.
- **Higher Costs:** Developing the infrastructure needed to support health care is more expensive in Southeast Alaska. Facilities, care, and construction costs are all higher.

- **Increased Costs:** Increasing costs associated with health care lead to growing financial pressures and new efforts to contain costs.
- **Lack of Specialty Care:** Difficulty in offering specialty services. Many health care dollars leave the region when residents travel outside to get specialty services.
- **Substance Abuse:** Southeast Alaska has a high percentage of a
- **Transportation Costs:** Our remoteness and lack of transportation access makes it hard to attract and retain workers from outside Alaska, and this makes serving our communities more costly.
- **Technology:** We have not deployed technology as well as we could have, and there are better examples of success in technology use in the Lower 48. Technology should play a much larger role in our current health care processes/ We are moving toward a model in which there will be more telehealth care services, which requires better technology integration
- **Lack of Collaboration:** We are not maximizing resources with other health care organizations across the region and creating an economy of scale.
- **Lack of Efficiency:** Health care operations in Southeast Alaska can lack innovation, efficiency and effectiveness. There can be an unwillingness to look at doing things differently, especially in working with the State of Alaska.

Opportunities: What opportunities are open to the regional health care industry? What trends could we take advantage of? How can we turn our strengths into opportunities?

- **University Course Development:** Build UAS and UAA programming to be responsive to the critical health care workforce needs identified by the Southeast Alaska Health Care Workforce Analysis.
- **Health Care Career Pathways.** There are several programs and organizations that are working to place students in health care training camps and programs. There is room for these organizations to do a better job of working together and with the industry to connect the dots between programs.
- **Build Regional Alliances:** We can and need to partner more within the regional health care industry. We want to understand the opportunities that we can extend to our patients by working together and creating an economy of scale. For example, the way the payment model occurs at the national level makes it difficult. We can't get buy in on telehealth payer models. An alliance is instrumental and can result in a number of unexplored opportunities.
- **Behavioral Health Curriculum Expansion:** Behavioral health training is ongoing in Southeast. The curriculum is in place for a 9-credit course work program, and the first entry level behavioral health aid classes started with 17 students in the class.
- **Online Coursework:** Health care professionals wanting additional training, as well as working students, find it difficult to take university classes during the day. A CNA course was developed with the inclusion of an online portion so that students can complete these requirements when it is convenient for them. Three different distant sections have been offered with a 100% completion rate. This successful model can be expanded to provide more access to health care training.

- **Follow Best Practices:** Other places in the U.S. have similar challenges (aging population, remote care delivery, lack of workforce, etc.). Identify models that have worked so that we can apply solutions that have already been achieved elsewhere. We will match elements we have identified as weaknesses and threats, and find good models that can be applied to Southeast Alaska.
- **Improved Technology Use:** There is an opportunity to expand the use of technology and telehealth around the use of specialty care, coordinating services, and education. Increased use of modeling and analytics will improve the delivery of health care access. Alaska was once ahead of the curve in terms of use of advanced technology in the early 2000s. We have lost that advantage, and we now need to work to catch back up.
- **Strategic Investment:** The UAA College of Health has received strategic investment funding from statewide UA to expand health workforce programs. They want to use that funding in Southeast Alaska immediately if concrete outcomes can be demonstrated.

Threats: What threats (from outside the sector or region) could harm the Southeast Alaska health care industry?

What obstacles do we face?

What threats do our weaknesses expose us to?

- **Costs:** High costs of health care.
- **State Medicaid Cuts:** State Medicaid budget reductions.
- **Lack of State Strategy:** There is a lack of vision as to where the state wants to be regarding health care services. Examples include nursing home locations and a critical access hospital. The state is not answering questions so that an effective strategy can be deployed. This uncertainty leads to lack of investment, until such time that clarity can be provided.
- **Competition for Workers:** Competition with outside universities, training options, and employers. We have to compete for workers with other high-paying occupations. We try to grow our own health care workforce, but in order to continue their training, or to get that first job, our Alaska-trained workforce leaves and does not return.
- **Declining Populace:** Our population has been shrinking for four years in a row.
- **Lack of Information:** Lack of education and understanding by potential grantor of the seriousness of the health care situation.
- **Lack of Access to Health Care:** Lack of access to health care/insurance (less of a threat for SEARHC, which has a sliding scale).
- **Not Innovative:** Unwillingness to provide services differently.