

Introduction

Guam Public Law 35-110 (2020) requires the Bureau of Statistics and Plans to prepare a Guåhan 2050 Sustainability Plan (GSP) that proactively sets out a plan for island sustainability by balancing the interdependent economic, cultural, and environmental concerns of Guam. In preparation for this planning, Market Research & Development (MR&D) conducted an islandwide quantitative survey of Guam's residents to assess the community readiness of Guam to undertake sustainability planning.

The initial survey was conducted via telephone utilizing a CATI interviewing technique. The fieldwork occurred between July 12 and July 27, 2022. It consisted of 500 randomly selected residents of Guam over the age of 18. The survey had an accuracy of $\pm 4.2\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

The Eighth Symposium of Planners was held September 8 – 23, 2023. Questions relating to the sustainability plan were asked in multiple session tracks, and relevant responses are included here.

The second survey took place beginning in December 2024, with the purpose of identifying resident's attitudes regarding key topics including Guam's environment, culture, economy, and village sustainability. Mobile and fixed line telephone numbers were used to randomly collect 702 interviews among adults on Guam over the age of 18 from December 4, 2024, to January 28, 2025. The results have an accuracy of $\pm 4.35\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

Stability of Community Perspectives Over Time

These two comprehensive surveys provide insight into how Guam's residents view the island's future. The results revealed priorities that have remained consistent over time as well as notable changes in emphasis. Relevant responses from the Planner Symposium serve to show how their opinions either corresponded to or contrasted with those of island residents.

Enduring Concerns and Priorities. Across both surveys, residents consistently identified infrastructure as a central concern (Figure 1). In 2022, approximately 74% of respondents considered it a major issue. In the 2024/2025 survey, the priority remained with reliable and affordable power, high living costs, and inadequate housing among the most frequently cited challenges.

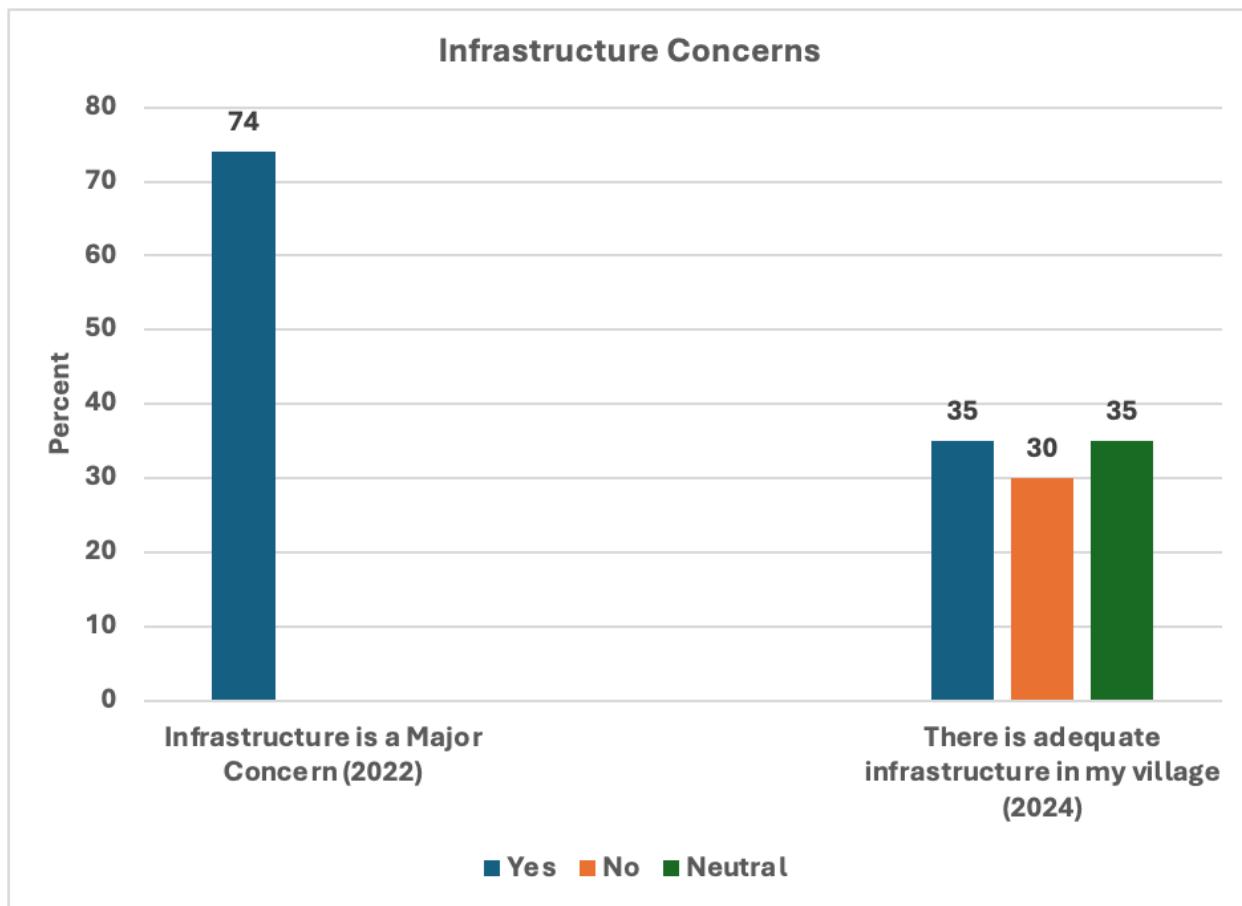


Figure 1.

The Planner Symposium attendees agreed: Infrastructure problems, specifically power, water, roads, and sewer, were of great concern. Public transportation, resilient telecommunications, and stormwater management and flood zones were also mentioned as priorities to address in a sustainability plan. Barriers to affordable homes were cited, such as high costs of construction, high cost of living, and competition with the military housing allowance, along with lack of available land to build on, and lack of incentives to build affordable housing.

Economic stability was also a recurring concern (Figure 2). In 2022, 69% of respondents expressed unease about Guam's economic trajectory. In the 2024/2025 survey, 48% expressed dissatisfaction with the direction of the economy. In 2022, there was some optimism, with 60% believing that economic conditions would improve over time, an outlook less apparent in the later survey.

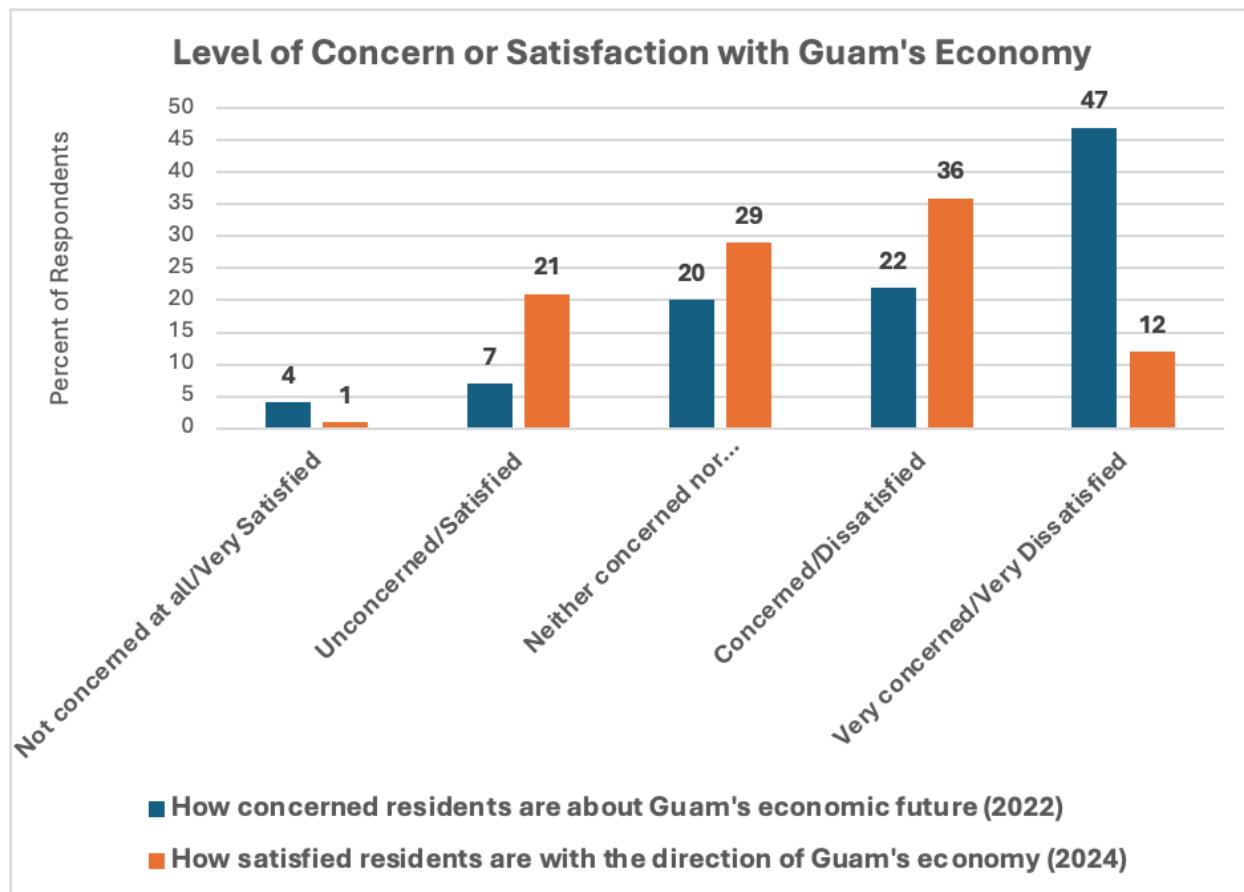


Figure 2.

Tourism's role in the economy was important in both periods, but perspectives evolved. In 2022, 76% supported increasing tourism as a primary strategy for economic growth. By 2024/2025, there was stronger interest in managing tourism expansion. A majority preferred rehabilitating and improving existing hotels rather than building new ones (92%) and supported developing additional tourist-serving attractions and optional tours (77%).

Planners attending the symposium agreed that tourism was very important to Guam's economy (82%) but also agreed (79%) that the economy needed more diversity and opportunities for fulfilling employment. They also suggested that more culturally based tourist attractions and activities should be promoted, such as heritage parks and cultural centers, along with "boutique" B&B tourism rooted in local culture.

Environmental protection remained a high priority (Figure 3). In 2022, 96% of respondents valued clean air and water, and 80% identified climate change and sea-level rise as significant threats. In 2024/2025, these concerns persisted, with greater focus on renewable energy and conservation as solutions.

Planners attending the symposium felt environmental protection to be a top priority, specifically in relation to safeguarding the Northern Guam Aquifer, Guam greatest water resource. Attendees cited runoff/erosion and climate change (24% each) as two of the biggest threats to Guam's natural underwater resources and felt that implementation and enforcement of existing policies would work to protect natural resources and improve conservation. Ninety-seven percent of attendees were concerned about the impacts of climate change such as sea level rise, increasing heat, and changes in precipitation. Overdevelopment and invasive species were cited as the biggest threats to Guam's land-based natural resources; strict implementation of existing regulations and increased enforcement were cited as ways to protect these resources.

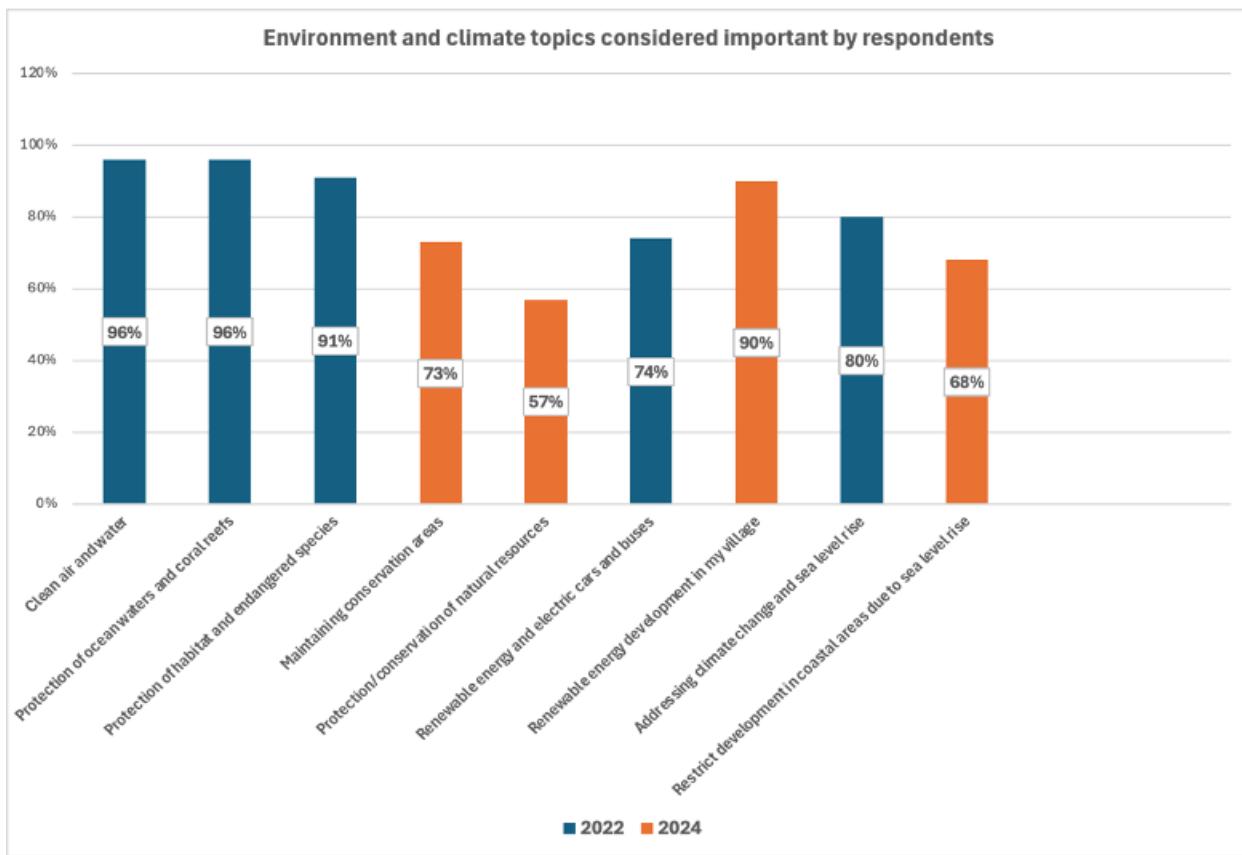


Figure 3

Cultural preservation also showed consistency (Figure 4). In 2022, 62% of respondents emphasized the importance of protecting Chamorro heritage. Similar views were expressed in the 2024/2025 survey.

Symposium attendees had multiple suggestions for ways that the culture could be sustained and preserved, from protection and redevelopment of significant cultural sites such as the Paseo, Plaza de Espana, Inalaham Pools, and Malessos' Pier; expanding

CHamoru education; promoting authentic cultural tourism; to promoting language visibility.

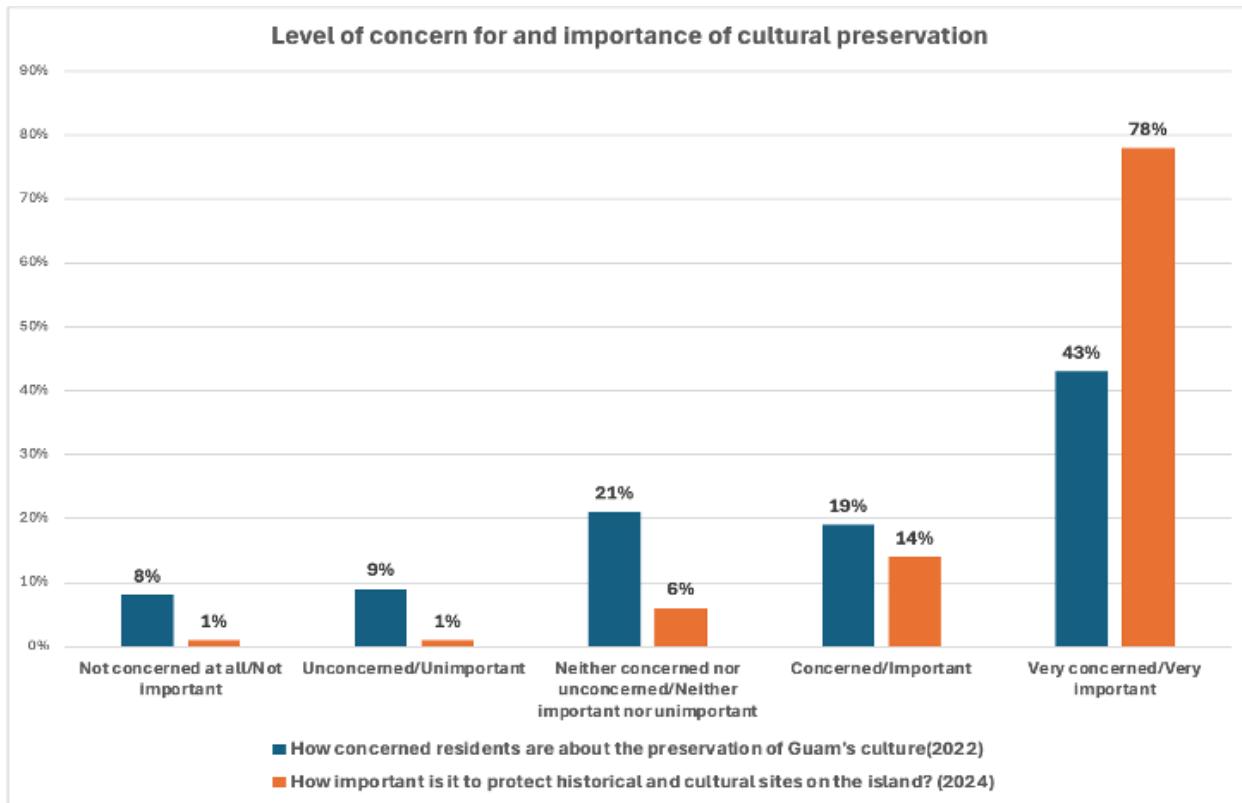


Figure 4.

Public safety and social well-being were continuing concerns (Figure 5). In 2022, 56% reported that crime had worsened, and 51% believed Guam was not doing enough to address homelessness. By 2024/2025, attention shifted more toward solutions (Figure 6). 87% supported affordable housing construction in their villages, and 11% linked residential development to improved economic prosperity in their community.

Attendees at the 2023 Planner Symposium rated community safety on average at 5.5 out of 10. The most pressing public safety concerns cited were drug use and its ripple effects; crime and violence; lack of police presence; road and infrastructure safety; feral and stray animals; social and economic factors including homelessness; environmental and community neglect; and overall community wellbeing and prevention. Suggestions to improve public safety included a greater police presence and re-opening of police kobans in villages, as well as infrastructure improvements such as more streetlights and building illumination.

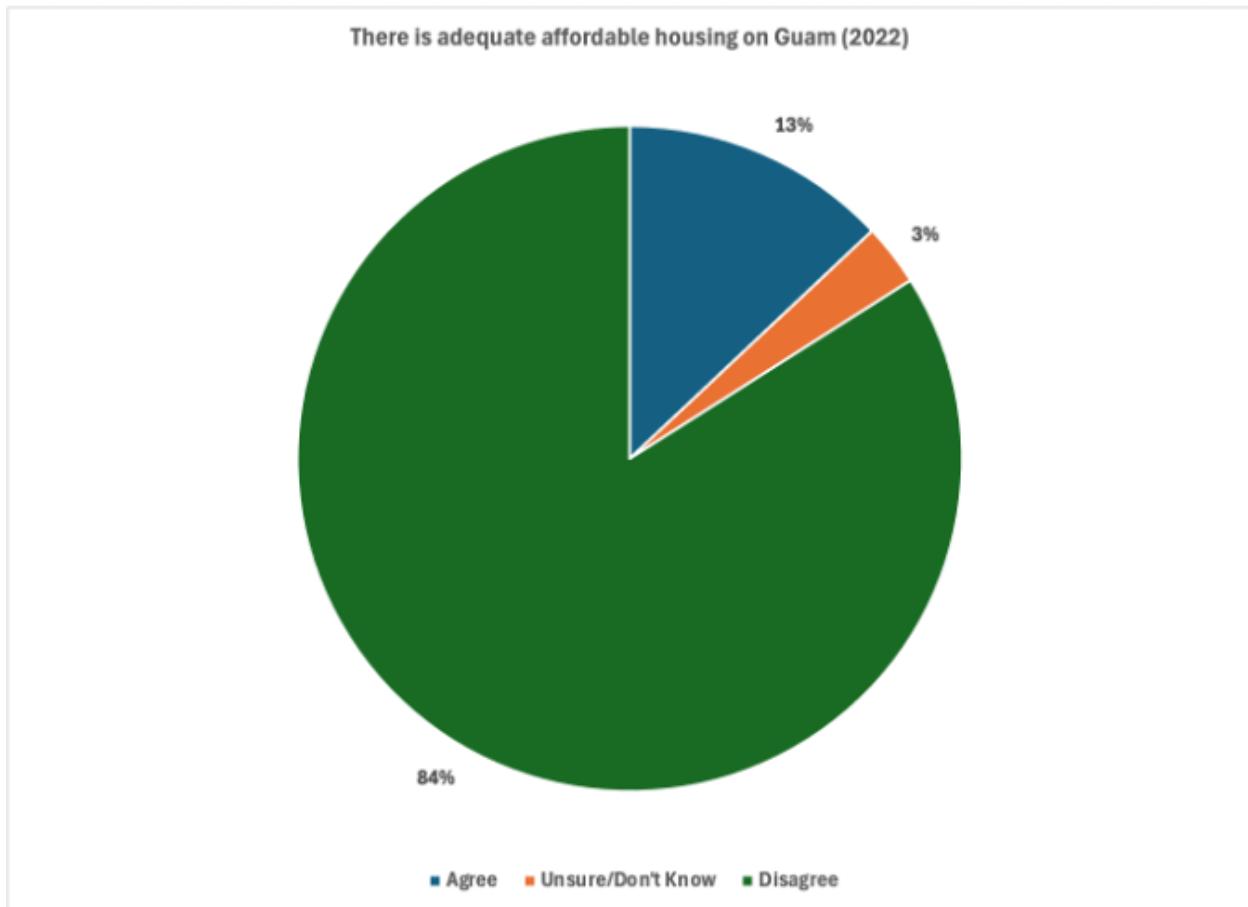


Figure 5.

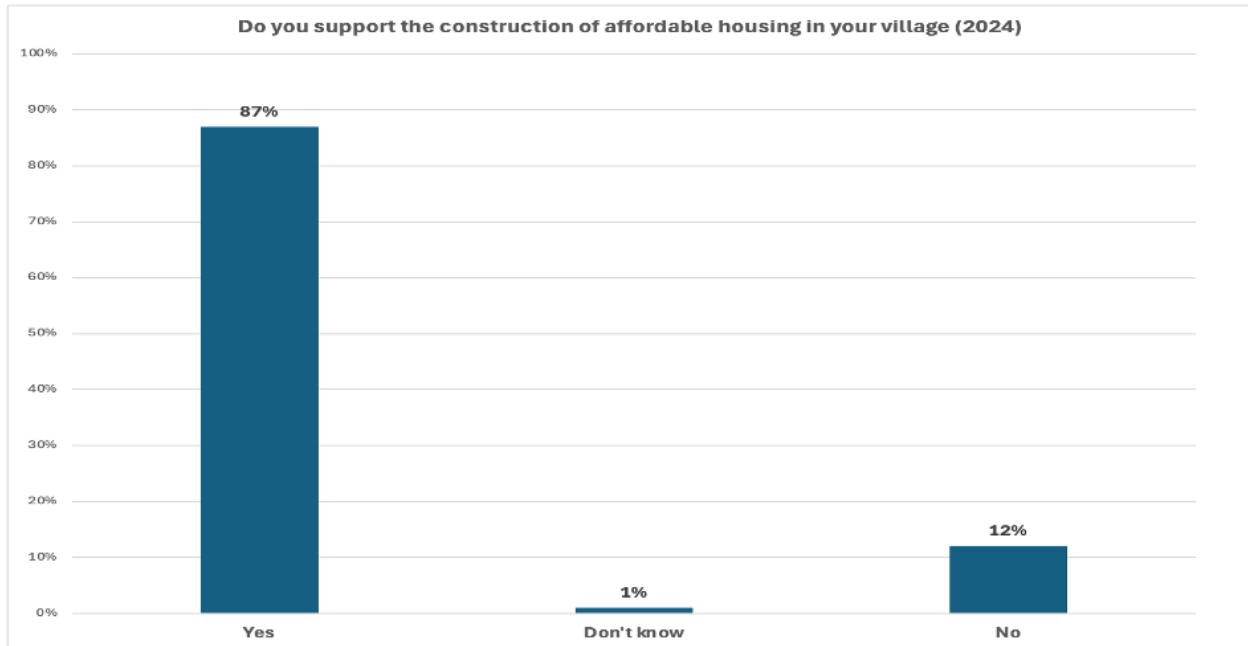


Figure 6.

Evolving Emphases and Differences. While the main themes were consistent, certain shifts in emphasis were evident. Sustainability was recognized as a priority in both surveys, but understanding of the concept differed. In 2022, only 56% were familiar with the term and just 27% defined it as meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. The 2024/2025 survey reflected a more operational focus on renewal energy and conservation, suggesting a more developed public understanding.

Some topics in 2022 received less attention in 2024/2025. The role of the U.S. military was examined in greater detail in 2022 (Figure 7), with 57% viewing it positively for job creation and economic benefits, while 15% expressed concerns related to land restrictions, cultural impacts, and social issues. This topic was not explored to the same extent in the later survey.

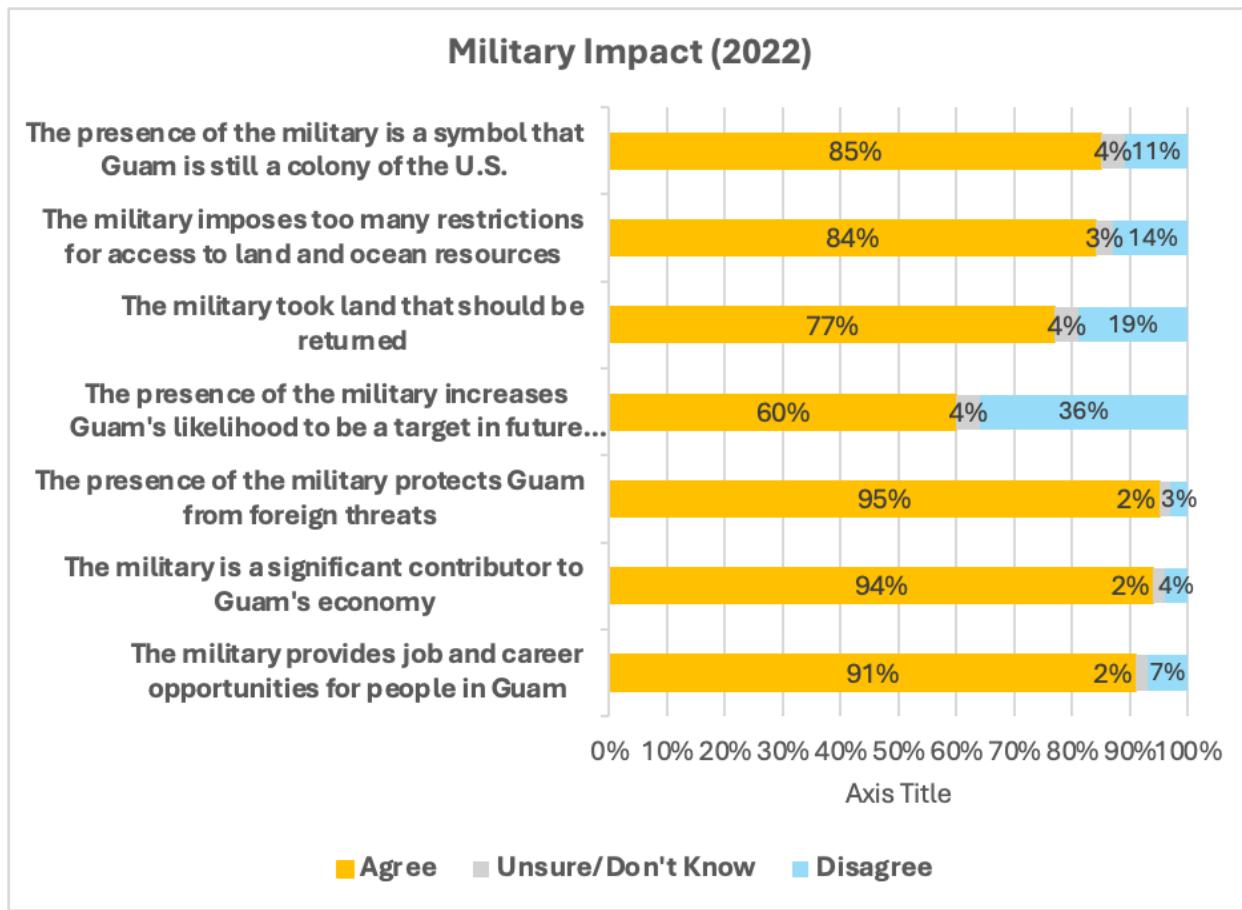


Figure 7.

Education and healthcare concerns persisted but were framed differently. In 2022, specific issues such as school maintenance (84%) and teacher pay (76%) were highlighted.

Healthcare concerns included high costs (90%), a shortage of doctors (87%), and long wait times (83%). In 2024/2025, these topics were discussed in more general terms without the same level of detail.

The Planner Symposium discussion results on education and healthcare were similar to concerns expressed by residents in 2022: more emphasis on maintenance in the schools, focus on improving existing facilities or rebuilding in the same location as earlier schools rather than using new locations, consolidating schools; improve schools that are not safe. Healthcare could be improved by maintaining government facilities, increasing the number of facilities, having smaller facilities, more use of telehealth/telemedicine, lowering the costs of health insurance, and increasing access to care by increasing the number of health professionals.

Capital improvement priorities also differed. In 2022, the highest priorities included building a new hospital and medical campus (37%), repairing K-12 schools (30%), and investing in waste-to-energy projects (30%). The 2024/2025 survey did not identify capital improvement projects as a distinct category.

Overall, the two surveys show a community with stable priorities around infrastructure, economic resilience, environmental health, cultural preservation, and public safety, but with evolving perspectives on how to address them. Likewise, the priorities of professional planners echoed those of the community for the most part. While the vision for Guam's future continues to be shaped by long-standing concerns, the strategies favored by residents are adapting in response to changing conditions and a deepening understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead.