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# Well-being outcomes of marine protected areas

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# 1 Well-being outcomes of marine protected areas

2

## 3 **Abstract**

4 Marine protected areas are advocated as a key strategy for simultaneously protecting marine  
5 biodiversity and supporting coastal livelihoods, but implementation can be challenging for  
6 numerous reasons, including perceived negative effects on human well-being. We synthesized  
7 research from 118 peer-reviewed articles that analyze outcomes related to marine protected  
8 areas on people, and found that half of documented well-being outcomes were positive, and  
9 about one-third were negative. No-take, well-enforced, and old marine protected areas had  
10 positive human well-being outcomes, which aligns with most findings from ecological studies.  
11 While on balance larger marine protected areas improved ecological conditions, smaller areas  
12 improved human well-being. Most studies focused on economic and governance aspects of  
13 well-being, leaving social, health, and cultural domains understudied. Well-being outcomes  
14 arose from direct effects of marine protected area governance processes or management  
15 actions, and from indirect effects mediated by changes in the ecosystem. Our findings illustrate  
16 that both human well-being and biodiversity conservation can be improved through marine  
17 protected areas, yet negative impacts commonly co-occur with benefits.

18

## 19 **Main text**

20

21 Many countries have committed to establishing 10% of their marine waters as marine protected  
22 areas (MPAs)<sup>1,2</sup> to stem biodiversity declines and safeguard related ecosystem services<sup>3,4</sup>.  
23 While conservation effectiveness of MPAs has been demonstrated through ecological studies<sup>5,6</sup>,  
24 many MPAs have social goals and outcomes that are less well understood<sup>7</sup>. Understanding how  
25 human well-being may be affected by MPAs is important for ethical reasons with potential

26 implications for biological outcomes. MPAs that support positive human well-being are also  
27 more likely to achieve their conservation goals because they are more acceptable, desirable,  
28 and supported by local communities<sup>8-10</sup>. This, in turn, can increase compliance<sup>11</sup>. Human well-  
29 being is an important end goal, with co-benefits for conservation goals and policies (e.g.<sup>12-15</sup>).  
30 Ensuring that positive human well-being outcomes are associated with implementation and  
31 maintenance of MPAs is thus important for acceptance and effectiveness.

32  
33 Worldwide, increasing establishment of MPAs<sup>16</sup> has stimulated research on well-being  
34 outcomes of MPAs, with a substantial increase in studies in the last decade (Figure S1). The  
35 most recent synthesis of impacts of MPAs on human well-being (hereafter “well-being  
36 outcomes”), published a decade ago, focused only on fishing communities due to data  
37 constraints<sup>7</sup>. That study found that MPA establishment tends to improve food security and  
38 empower local fishing communities, but that effects vary depending on the social and  
39 governance context<sup>7,17</sup>. Since this synthesis was conducted, there have been numerous case  
40 studies (Supplementary References) that document a broad array of positive and negative  
41 social outcomes from MPAs. Given the commitment by countries to establish MPAs<sup>16</sup>,  
42 understanding their effects on well-being outcomes is crucial.

43  
44 We performed a systematic literature review on the well-being outcomes of MPAs (Tables S1,  
45 S2). We examined social, health, culture, economic, and governance domains of human well-  
46 being<sup>18</sup>, and added an environment domain since environmental health is fundamental to  
47 human well-being and vice versa (Table S1). Governance as a well-being outcome refers to the  
48 experience of local people with the quality of governance processes – including actors such as  
49 empowerment, participation, conflict management and accountability<sup>19</sup>. Our analysis allows us  
50 to answer questions critical for assessing well-being outcomes of MPAs. Where and how are  
51 well-being outcomes of MPAs studied? What domains of human well-being are included in

52 scientific studies? Are well-being outcomes consistent across different groups of people (i.e.  
53 stakeholders)? What factors influence whether positive or negative outcomes are perceived or  
54 experienced? Finally, what well-being outcomes co-occur?

55

## 56 **Data on human well-being outcomes of MPAs**

57

58 We identified 118 peer-reviewed articles (Supplementary References, Figure S1) that  
59 investigated an existing MPA or MPAs, and included information about the measured or  
60 perceived impact(s) of the MPA(s) on people (108 articles with quantitative or directional data).  
61 The relevant articles studied 121 MPAs distributed globally (Figure 1a), containing 267  
62 observations of stakeholders (i.e., some articles studied multiple stakeholders, as defined in the  
63 source paper), each of which described one or more well-being outcomes of MPAs (i.e., 606  
64 data points of well-being outcomes). Coastal communities referred to residents in coastal towns  
65 rather than more specific groups such as fisheries or tourism, and recreation was defined as  
66 non-extractive personal activities (e.g., diving, kayaking). 75% of stakeholder data involved  
67 fisheries; of those, 76% were about artisanal and small-scale fisheries, 15% about industrial  
68 fisheries, and 9% about recreational fisheries, but the sample sizes were too small to analyze by  
69 disaggregated fisheries categories. Further disaggregation, while not provided in the papers,  
70 might highlight additional biases in studies (e.g., gender, ethnicity)<sup>20</sup>. Most MPAs with relevant  
71 data were from Asia (especially the Philippines) and Europe, with a fairly even distribution of  
72 MPA size and age categories. The most common types of MPA governance were state-led and  
73 community-based, followed by co-managed. Several study designs were used, with those  
74 asking stakeholders for their perceptions of social change being the most common, followed by  
75 studies before and after MPA establishment, and studies using control-impact design (e.g.,  
76 inside and outside of MPAs). The least common study type was the before-after control-impact  
77 design (Figure 1b).

78

79 **Domains of human well-being considered in MPA studies**

80

81 All domains of well-being were mentioned at least once in every paper, whether as the focus of  
82 study, or in the discussion (Figure 2). Economic, governance and environment categories were  
83 most prevalent, often the focus of assessment. Social, health, and cultural domains received  
84 much less attention, usually in the form of a cursory mention in the discussion. The category  
85 mentioned most frequently was economic livelihoods, in which we included fisheries catches  
86 and catch per unit effort (CPUE). Categories of cultural diversity and mental health received the  
87 least attention. We posit that the uneven consideration of categories is due to a combination of  
88 the societal importance placed on economic outcomes, and the challenges in measuring social,  
89 health, and cultural domains. Ten variables across four domains had enough quantitative  
90 information to be further analyzed for outcomes (Figure 3): income, number of users, CPUE,  
91 catches, cost of activity (only mentioned in relation to fishing regarding increasing fuel costs  
92 when distance to fishing grounds increased), stakeholder rights to inform resource management  
93 (hereafter “resource control”), stakeholder support for the MPA, change in spatial use patterns  
94 (hereafter “spatial change”), conflict, and community involvement (Table S1).

95

96 **Well-being outcomes of MPAs**

97

98 Overall, there were more positive (51%) than negative (31%) well-being outcomes reported in  
99 the literature (Figure 3, Table S3). Shifts in the numbers of users differed between stakeholder  
100 groups, with more increases for tourism and recreation, and more decreases for fisheries (Table  
101 S4). The most positive well-being outcomes of MPAs related to community involvement (76%  
102 positive), CPUE (73%), and income (65%). The most negative outcomes manifested through  
103 increasing costs of activities (100%, though only 13 instances, all related to increased cost of

104 fishing), and conflict (79%). We interpreted increased conflict as a negative well-being outcome,  
105 although conflict is not necessarily negative. Debate and to some extent, conflict, is recognized  
106 as a critical element of democratic governance and procedural justice<sup>21</sup>, often providing space  
107 for a diversity of voices, including those of minority groups<sup>22</sup>. The most ambiguous outcomes  
108 (i.e., no change, or could not be interpreted as negatively or positively affecting people)  
109 occurred with shifting spatial usage patterns – mostly of fishing activities – due to the MPA.

110

111 Some explanatory variables had a significant influence on well-being outcomes (Figure 4, Table  
112 S5). MPAs that were single zones, no-take, old, and had high enforcement, indicated more  
113 positive well-being outcomes than other categories (Fisher's exact tests and ANOVAs, p-value  
114 <0.05). Study design was also correlated with outcomes, with studies that ascertained  
115 stakeholders' perceptions (that did not fall into the other research design categories) more  
116 negative than those that objectively measured outcomes. While the data showed that positive  
117 well-being outcomes were more prevalent in tropical systems, the correlation was not  
118 statistically significant when considering combined outcomes (Figure 4, Table S5). When  
119 analyzing specific outcomes (e.g., income, CPUE, number of users, etc.; Table S6), some  
120 additional patterns emerged. Ecosystem type was correlated with income, CPUE, support,  
121 spatial change, and community involvement; no-take zone presence was correlated with  
122 income, support, and community involvement; and compliance was correlated with resource  
123 control, support, spatial change, and conflict; for additional correlations, see Table S6. However,  
124 sample sizes were small when disaggregating outcomes, because most studies only included  
125 one or two outcomes.

126

127 Co-occurrences of outcomes showed some interesting and unexpected patterns (Figure 5). As  
128 expected, an increase in catches correlated with an increase in CPUE. When catches  
129 increased, there was also more conflict (which we interpreted as negative), perhaps due to

130 uneven distribution of benefits. Some co-occurrences, despite showing significant trends, have  
131 small sample sizes and are thus difficult to interpret (catches and income; catches and number  
132 of users; Figure 5), and we emphasize that correlation does not mean causation.

133

## 134 **Discussion**

135

136 Our finding that MPAs have more positive than negative well-being outcomes across diverse  
137 stakeholder groups – similar to findings by Mascia, et al. <sup>7</sup> for fishers – lends credibility to the  
138 potential of MPAs to benefit both biodiversity and people. Research shows that ecologically  
139 effective MPAs require five key attributes: no-take, well enforced, old (>10 years), large  
140 (>100km<sup>2</sup>), and isolated<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, we found that no-take, well enforced, and old MPAs also led  
141 to more positive well-being outcomes. However, our results indicate that small MPAs had more  
142 positive well-being outcomes than large MPAs. Certain aspects of MPA design and  
143 management may thus contribute to both positive ecological and well-being outcomes, whereas  
144 others will require trade-offs. Our findings also highlight that there are both co-benefits and  
145 trade-offs among stakeholder groups, leading to questions of equity, justice, and power.

146

147 The scientific literature on well-being outcomes of MPAs focused on relatively few indicators  
148 mostly within the economic domain, such as income earned or catches, whereas many other  
149 potentially relevant indicators in other domains were mentioned but rarely measured (see Table  
150 S1 for examples of indicator topics for all well-being categories). For instance, indicators of diet  
151 and food availability can reveal changes in health of local populations dependent on coastal  
152 resources. The fact that measurements relate to only a few well-being outcomes is important,  
153 because there is a risk that easily quantifiable indicators come to dominate the discourse about  
154 well-being outcomes of MPAs. Multidimensional aspects of well-being, notably in relation to  
155 values, are particularly difficult to quantify (e.g. power, sense of community), but can have



156 important implications for the acceptance and support of MPAs<sup>17,23</sup>. Without being readily  
157 measurable, there is a danger these aspects of human well-being may inadvertently disappear  
158 from the problem/decision-making context because they are not being measured or reported if  
159 decision-makers are not part of the affected communities (e.g., state managed MPAs).  
160 Furthermore, indicators can become self-perpetuating, with the rationale for using indicators  
161 based on past studies. Indeed, we justified some of the indicators we quantified because they  
162 were assessed in a previous study<sup>7</sup>. Some indicators that are easily measured, such as equity  
163 (e.g., examining outcomes by race, gender, age, location, cultural group, etc.), are rarely  
164 included. Thus, we encourage those studying the well-being outcomes of MPAs to combine  
165 previously tested indicators (see Hicks, et al. <sup>24</sup>) with efforts to develop a broader set of  
166 indicators that represent holistic domains of human well-being<sup>18,25,26</sup>. Furthermore, qualitative  
167 studies are particularly important in providing explanation and context for indicators, which alone  
168 cannot tell the full story<sup>25,27</sup>.

169  
170 While social scientists are increasingly called on to assess human well-being outcomes of  
171 MPAs<sup>28</sup>, MPA development and management continues to be primarily occurring without  
172 consistent quantitative or qualitative monitoring of well-being outcomes<sup>29,30</sup>. We need to move  
173 towards ensuring the long-term well-being of people and communities that depend on marine  
174 systems, and develop appropriate studies and indicators to capture the multi-dimensional  
175 outcomes of MPAs. Similarly, participatory processes are critical to ensure that those affected  
176 by MPAs are involved in making management decisions. Social sciences can provide important  
177 methodological and analytical insights for qualitative studies and quantitative monitoring,  
178 regarding ways in which stakeholders frame MPAs in their own terms, and how MPAs are  
179 continually mediated through cultural values and worldviews, media discourses, and perceived  
180 trust in science and institutions. A shift within management agencies is starting to occur, as  
181 exemplified by the recent management focus on diverse ecological and cultural values<sup>31,32</sup>.

182

183 The process of creating MPAs, that are small, local, and managed by communities, has  
184 numerous benefits for human empowerment and well-being, notwithstanding environmental  
185 outcomes<sup>33-35</sup>. Two main mechanisms for well-being outcomes of MPAs were reflected in the  
186 literature: (1) direct effects of MPA governance processes or management actions; and (2)  
187 indirect effects mediated by changes in the ecosystem. Direct effects included, for example,  
188 conflicts arising during MPA planning processes, community involvement in management,  
189 enhancement or displacement of livelihoods, and limitations on access rights (e.g.,  
190 displacement from fishing an area, or exclusive access for some users). Indirect effects of  
191 MPAs on well-being are generally due to recovering marine systems and included increases in  
192 catches, CPUE, and income from resource extraction. These indirect effects are influenced by  
193 the state and management of ecosystems surrounding the MPA<sup>36</sup>. Some aspects of well-being  
194 outcomes may arise with both mechanisms. For instance, conflict can be caused by stakeholder  
195 discussions during MPA establishment and management fora, and it can also result from new or  
196 shifting user groups in the area, or changing availability of resources.

197

198 We found that conflict increased more often than decreased with MPA implementation. A key  
199 source of conflict identified in the reviewed literature related the reconfiguration of stakeholders'  
200 resource access, use and rights as a result of MPA implementation. For example, conflict was  
201 often related to MPA-mediated displacement of users that increased overlap in the use of  
202 marine areas. This was particularly common amongst fishers employing different gear types  
203 (e.g., <sup>37,38</sup>). Further, conflict was often documented in relation to MPA decision-making  
204 processes during which different stakeholder groups vie for influence and control. In many  
205 cases, this conflict occurred between local users (often fishers) and external stakeholders,  
206 including conservation organizations (e.g., <sup>39</sup>) and tourism operators (e.g. <sup>40</sup>). Given the power  
207 differentials between local users and external stakeholders (particularly in Global South

208 contexts), such processes were often documented as further marginalizing local users and  
209 contributing to inequities in resource use or access<sup>41</sup>. However, in some cases it was reported  
210 that MPA establishment was seen as a negotiation opportunity for local users to acquire or  
211 solidify their rights over a marine area. For example, Cudney-Bueno et al.<sup>42</sup> report although  
212 there was substantial conflict over the granting of access rights during MPA implementation,  
213 fishers territorial access rights were strengthened through the process. Further, conflict can  
214 denote debate and deliberative decision-making, essential to democratic governance and  
215 procedural justice<sup>35</sup>. For example, Gurney et al.<sup>41</sup> document how conflict led to improved  
216 governance, whereby MPA management group members fished together in an MPA to highlight  
217 lax enforcement by government officials.

218

219 Given that MPA processes involve reconfiguring resource use and access, and typically involve  
220 a number of competing stakeholder groups, conflict is likely<sup>43</sup>. Conflict also highlights that there  
221 are commonly trade-offs among different people in MPA design and management, and that win-  
222 win situations are rare and difficult to negotiate. Better understanding the nuances of conflict,  
223 and managing expectations, might help inform and innovate future MPA design and  
224 management processes. Collaboration between resource-users may also provide opportunities  
225 for dialogue, sense-making and conflict resolution<sup>44</sup>. Involving the community at initial phases in  
226 the policy decision-making process can promote deliberation and increase the efficiency in  
227 producing workable outcomes<sup>45,46</sup>. However, we need to recognize that access to power is  
228 uneven among stakeholders.

229

230 An interesting finding was that the design of studies affected whether well-being outcomes  
231 appeared more positive or negative. Studies that measured the perceptions of stakeholders  
232 (e.g., their self-assessment of impacts through surveys) were more negative than those that  
233 attempted to measure objective aspects of human well-being (e.g., tracking fisheries landings

234 before and after MPA implementation). Such a discrepancy could be due to who is measuring  
235 the outcome (stakeholders vs. researchers). Also, different aspects of well-being are captured  
236 by subjective and objective measures, with objective measures less able to capture some  
237 aspects of well-being that critically affect people, such as culture, conflict, and social relations.  
238 Subjective measures do not only reflect perception; they can also be self-reports of observed  
239 reality. Perceptions and self-reports clearly matter in their own right, because these can lead to  
240 support for, or opposition to, conservation<sup>19,47,48</sup>. Thus using both objective and subjective  
241 measures is essential, as they can test and lend validity to each other. Understanding why  
242 results of objective measures are sometimes inconsistent with reported perceptions may help  
243 identify more acceptable and robust management actions<sup>49</sup>.

244

245 Our review revealed several research gaps that require attention. Some systems (e.g., Arctic,  
246 sub-tropical) had no or very little data, and some regions (e.g., South America) and stakeholder  
247 groups (e.g., recreational users) were understudied. A methodological gap was that the most  
248 powerful study design – before-after-control-impact<sup>50</sup> – was also the least prevalent.

249 Furthermore, studies to date predominantly concerned single MPAs. As MPA networks are  
250 being established, there is a need to think about assessing well-being outcomes at the scale of  
251 networks, rather than single sites, which requires attention to potential mismatches between  
252 ecological and social systems. Some limitations of our research are that we do not know  
253 whether MPAs that have been studied are biased towards positive or negative results. We also  
254 considered all indicators of well-being as important, whereas in reality some aspects will be  
255 more important to stakeholders, and this will likely vary by stakeholder group. A more nuanced  
256 understanding of human well-being outcomes of MPAs is critical for creating management  
257 measures that benefit people and ecosystems.

258

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268 C.W. and T.T. reviewed the quantitative data.

269

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398

399



400 Figure 1. (a) Global distribution of the number of studies of MPAs by country included in the  
401 analysis, with MPAs shown in pink outline. (b) Characteristics of the studies and MPAs included  
402 in this review. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of studies (i.e., papers) for study  
403 design (out of 118), and the number of MPAs (out of a possible 121; some MPAs had no data  
404 about some characteristics). BACI stands for before-after control-impact; S., C., and N. stand for  
405 South, Central, and North, respectively; co-mgmt is an abbreviation of co-managed.

406

407 Figure 2. Domains and categories of human well-being mentioned in studies reviewed. Env.  
408 means environmental. For the rationale underpinning our categorization scheme, see<sup>18</sup>. Table  
409 S1 describes details about the domains of human well-being

410

411 Figure 3. Summary of well-being outcomes of MPAs. See Table S3 for interpretations of  
412 negative, positive, and ambiguous outcomes. Sums of percentages may not add up to 100%  
413 due to rounding errors. “Com. involvement” refers to community involvement. % refers to the  
414 percentage of data point that were positive, negative, or ambiguous (neither clearly positive or  
415 negative; or no change). Data points consist of all measures of well-being by stakeholder  
416 group(s) contained in the papers reviewed. See Table S3 for interpretation of positive, negative,  
417 and ambiguous.

418

419 Figure 4. Combined well-being outcomes summarized by explanatory variables. See Table S3  
420 for interpretations of negative, positive, and ambiguous outcomes. Sums of percentages may  
421 not add up to 100% due to rounding errors. Ambiguous refers to no change or unclear  
422 directionality of change. Bolded variables are those that show significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) correlations  
423 (Fisher’s exact tests or ANOVAs) between the variable and synthesized outcomes (Table S5).  
424 For analyses by disaggregated outcomes, see Table S6.

425

426 Figure 5. Co-occurrence of select well-being outcome variables. Blue circles are scaled relative  
427 to each plot to illustrate the sample size (number inside the circle) of co-occurrences, and the  
428 grey bars indicate the sample sizes of the rows and columns. The first variable stated is shown  
429 on the x-axis, and the second on the y-axis. \*\* indicates Fisher's exact test  $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$ .  
430

1 **Methods**

2

3 Selecting papers: We carried out a systematic literature review in Web of Science (capturing all dates,  
4 with the first article appearing in 1973, last searched on 5 June 2018; Table S1) to identify studies that  
5 assessed the outcomes of MPAs on human well-being (hereafter well-being outcomes). We included  
6 original peer-reviewed journal articles that investigated (1) an existing MPA or MPAs, (2) included  
7 information about the measured or perceived impact(s) of the MPA(s) on people. Excluded were studies  
8 about: the impact of users on the MPA; opinion papers; modelling studies with hypothetical or  
9 predictive data; anticipated impacts; descriptive studies of fishing/tourism effort within an MPA without  
10 a temporal comparison; and review papers. Papers included the following research designs: before-after  
11 studies; control-impact (or inside-outside) comparisons; before-after-control-impact (BACI) studies;  
12 distance from MPAs; studies that assessed people’s perceptions that did not fit in the other categories;  
13 and other (e.g., historical narratives, ethnographic studies).

14

15 Qualitative data and analyses on human well-being: We reviewed papers that met our selection criteria  
16 for mentions of possible well-being outcomes (i.e., qualitative information). We tracked the indicators or  
17 phrases mentioned, and summarized them into slightly adapted domains and categories of human well-  
18 being reported by Kaplan-Hallam and Bennett<sup>1</sup> (Table S1). We used this categorization because it  
19 provided a recent review and synthesis of social impacts in conservation and environmental  
20 management and was therefore highly relevant to our study. It synthesizes several related relevant  
21 frameworks, which we also considered e.g.,<sup>2-6</sup>. Our modifications were to add ‘environment’ as a  
22 domain to encompass variables relating directly to the ecological system (although we did not track  
23 quantitative data for this domain); and we added ‘legitimacy’ to governance domain as this is an

24 important component of governance<sup>7</sup>. Ambiguities between domains of well-being meant that some  
25 indicators could fit within multiple domains, so we made a decision about the best fit. For example,  
26 ‘number of users’ can represent the cultural engagement with an activity, and we associated it with the  
27 cultural domain. It could also be an indicator of economic outcomes. We graphed the number of papers  
28 mentioning each of the domains and categories to provide an overview of the prevalence for different  
29 aspects of human well-being.

30

31 Quantitative data on human well-being: We collated results of measurements (quantitative data) of the  
32 well-being outcomes of MPAs by the most refined yet independent stakeholder group possible, such  
33 that a paper could provide multiple data points relating to different levels and types of social  
34 aggregation (e.g., by village, and/or by stakeholder type, and/or fishing gear type). We collated data for  
35 variables known to be important, and that are commonly measured, as identified by Mascia, et al.<sup>8</sup>:  
36 number of users (e.g., number of fishers, number of tourism operators), community organization (i.e.,  
37 number of active civil society organizations exclusively or primarily of that stakeholder group), income,  
38 and the fisheries-specific measure of catch per unit effort (CPUE). In addition, we tracked other variables  
39 that were commonly measured within the papers reviewed: resource control (i.e., involvement by  
40 stakeholders in governing natural resources within the MPA), support for the MPA, cost of carrying out  
41 an activity (e.g., fuel costs for fishers or tourism operators), conflict, spatial usage change of the MPA  
42 (i.e., whether and how spatial usage patterns changed, mostly relating to fishing), and fisheries-specific  
43 total catches. We obtained quantitative data from the results of the papers, and tables and figures  
44 therein, using WebPlotDigitizer (<https://apps.automeris.io/wpd/>) to acquire data from figures or graphs.  
45 When multiple years were tracked, we used data from the latest year (i.e., longest time since  
46 protection). When multiple species were included (e.g., CPUE for multiple species), we used the data for  
47 the species with the most catches. Given papers used different methods and measures that are not

48 comparable across contexts, we categorized data as increased, no change, or decreased. Some papers  
49 reported different outcomes for a single category of well-being (support: high or increased, medium or  
50 no change, low or decreased; spatial change: displacement; fishing the line; changed pattern; no  
51 change). Therefore, we interpreted these measures as illustrating predominantly positive outcomes,  
52 negative outcomes, or ambiguous outcomes (Table S3). We created a summary of the outcomes by  
53 stakeholder-MPA combinations, categorizing them as positive if only positive outcomes were found for a  
54 stakeholder group, negative if only negative outcomes existed, and tradeoff if both were described for a  
55 stakeholder group; we did not consider ambiguous outcomes in this summary.

56

57 Data on explanatory variables: We collated information provided in the papers about potential variables  
58 that might contribute to the well-being outcome of MPAs on people including characteristics of: the  
59 MPAs (country, continent, size, age), governance (community-based, co-managed, state- or NGO-  
60 managed), management (no-take or multiple use), ecosystem protected (tropical, sub-tropical,  
61 temperate). We also included the study design used in the source papers (before-after, control-impact,  
62 BACI, perception, distance from MPA, other). For the sake of visual comparisons, we classified size and  
63 age into three categories: small (<1km<sup>2</sup>), medium (1-100km<sup>2</sup>), and large (>100km<sup>2</sup>); and young (<5  
64 years), medium (5-10 years), and old (>10 years), respectively. Where details about the MPAs were  
65 lacking, we looked up the MPA on [protectedplanet.net](http://protectedplanet.net) or MPA Atlas to ascertain the size and age. Some  
66 MPAs were not listed and thus had incomplete information. To estimate the age of the MPA at the time  
67 of the study, we used the designation date and the year the study was performed. If date of data  
68 collection was not provided, we assumed data were collected the year before publication. For MPAs  
69 that have had major management changes, we used the date of the change to calculate the age, not the  
70 original MPA designation date. Similarly, when papers mentioned that implementation (i.e.,  
71 management plan) was different from the date of designation, we used the date of implementation. We

72 categorized the stakeholder groups studied (fisheries, coastal communities, tourism, recreation, other).  
73 Where the studies provided the data, we also compiled whether the MPAs had high enforcement (yes,  
74 no), high compliance (yes, no), and clear boundaries (yes, no).

75

76 Quantitative analyses: We summarized the data by calculating the percentage of positive, ambiguous,  
77 negative outcomes for the categories of human well-being that had quantitative data (economic,  
78 governance, social, cultural). Similarly, we summarized the percentage of positive, ambiguous, and  
79 negative outcomes by stakeholder group, ecosystems, MPA characteristics, MPA locations, governance,  
80 and study design. We used Fisher's exact tests (2-tailed, for factor variables) and ANOVAs with Tukey  
81 HSD post-hoc test (for continuous variables, size and age) to assess the statistical significance of the  
82 relationship between synthesized outcomes (positive, trade-off, negative) and the explanatory variables.  
83 We also examined within categories or variables with more than two categories, but these analyses did  
84 not yield any additional insights. We used Microsoft Excel and R to visualize data, and all quantitative  
85 analyses were carried out in R<sup>9</sup>.

86

87 We used balloon plots (in R package gplots<sup>10</sup>) and Fisher's exact tests to gauge co-occurrence of specific  
88 outcomes. We examined co-occurrence of economic indicators by comparing the variable with the most  
89 data (catches, n=124) to other economic variables (income, number of users, CPUE), and the two next  
90 most commonly found variables to each other (CPUE and number of users). We excluded cost of activity  
91 because of limited data points (n=13). We then repeated the analyses comparing catches to governance  
92 variables (resource control, support, spatial change) and social variables (conflict, community  
93 involvement). Small sample sizes precluded statistical analyses with multiple variables.

94

95 The data that support the findings of this study are available as supplementary materials.

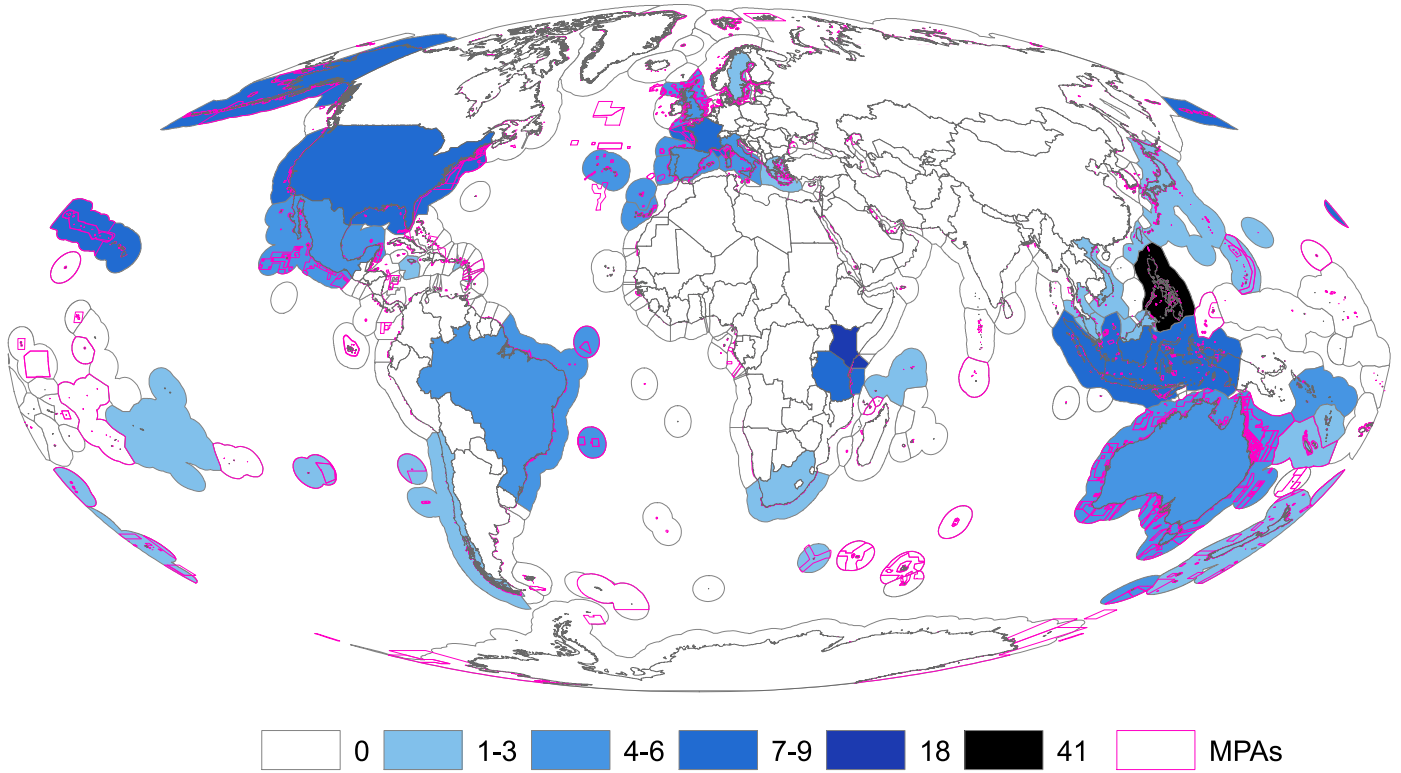
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97 **Methods references**

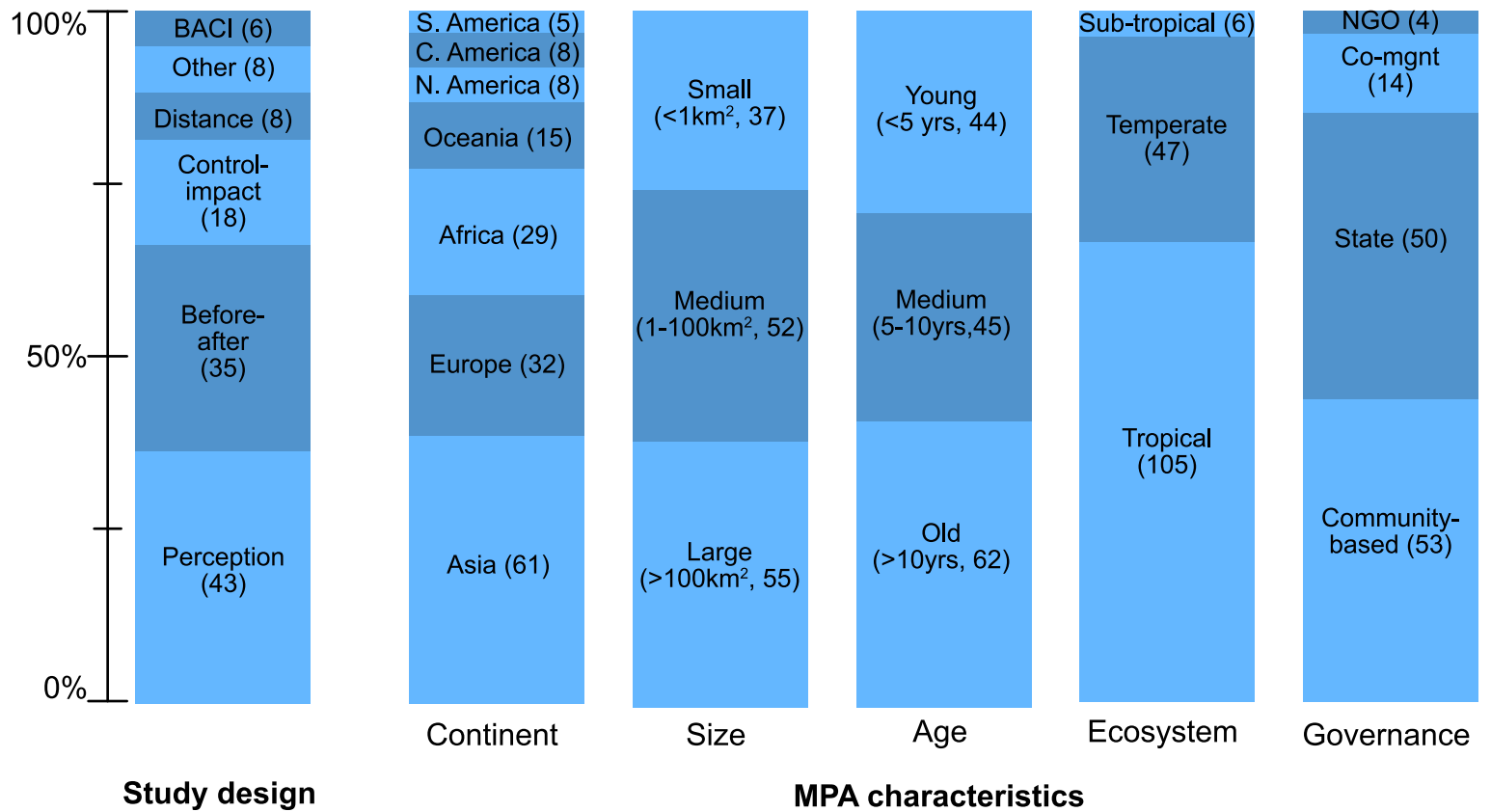
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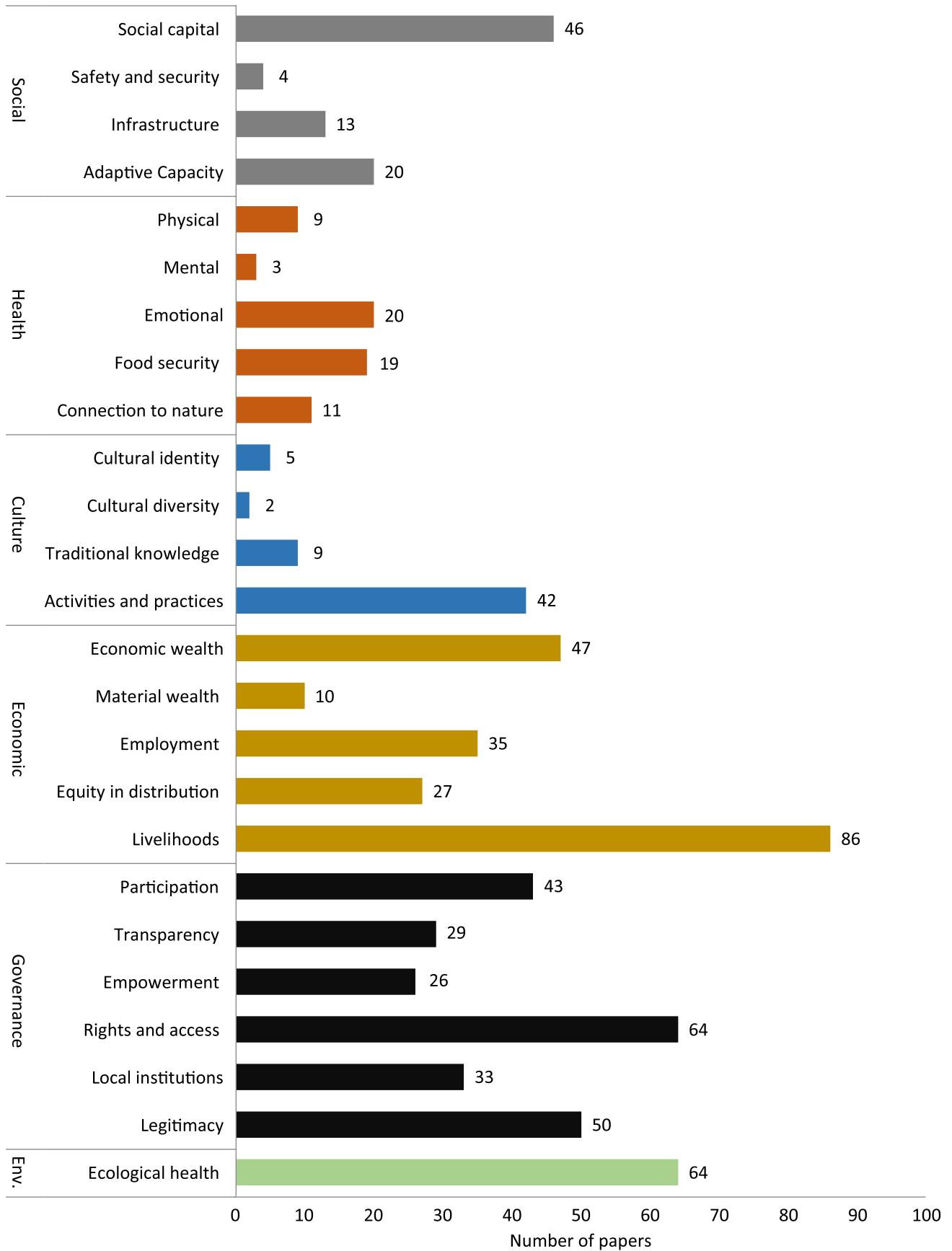
(a)



(b)



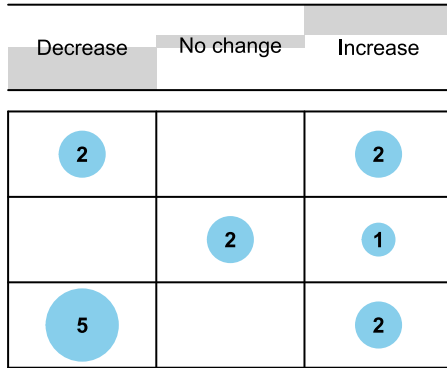




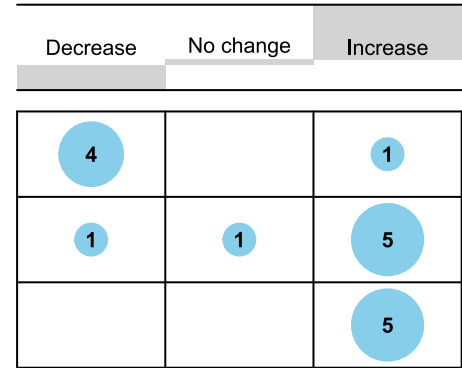


|                     |                      | Positive effects (%) | Negative effects (%) | Ambiguous effects (%) | Number of data points |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Stakeholders        | Fisheries            | 53                   | 31                   | 17                    | 452                   |
|                     | Tourism              | 46                   | 23                   | 30                    | 56                    |
|                     | Recreation           | 47                   | 12                   | 41                    | 17                    |
|                     | Coastal communities  | 43                   | 39                   | 19                    | 80                    |
| Ecosystems          | Tropical             | 57                   | 28                   | 15                    | 474                   |
|                     | Sub-tropical         | 24                   | 44                   | 32                    | 25                    |
|                     | Temperate            | 43                   | 35                   | 22                    | 207                   |
| MPA characteristics | Multiple zones       | 41                   | 39                   | 20                    | 246                   |
|                     | Single zone          | 60                   | 22                   | 17                    | 232                   |
|                     | No-take area         | 54                   | 27                   | 19                    | 367                   |
|                     | No no-take area      | 35                   | 38                   | 27                    | 77                    |
|                     | High enforcement     | 63                   | 21                   | 16                    | 136                   |
|                     | Not high enforcement | 51                   | 41                   | 8                     | 106                   |
|                     | High compliance      | 75                   | 11                   | 15                    | 102                   |
|                     | Not high compliance  | 42                   | 43                   | 14                    | 104                   |
|                     | Clear boundaries     | 68                   | 19                   | 13                    | 47                    |
|                     | Unclear boundaries   | 59                   | 37                   | 4                     | 49                    |
|                     | Young age            | 43                   | 35                   | 22                    | 192                   |
|                     | Medium age           | 47                   | 34                   | 19                    | 178                   |
|                     | Old age              | 60                   | 27                   | 13                    | 202                   |
|                     | Small size (<1km2)   | 66                   | 22                   | 13                    | 111                   |
|                     | Medium size          | 50                   | 32                   | 18                    | 221                   |
| Large size          | 45                   | 36                   | 19                   | 228                   |                       |
| MPA locations       | Africa               | 64                   | 27                   | 9                     | 102                   |
|                     | Asia                 | 58                   | 29                   | 14                    | 219                   |
|                     | Central America      | 41                   | 41                   | 19                    | 37                    |
|                     | Europe               | 45                   | 31                   | 24                    | 153                   |
|                     | North America        | 41                   | 28                   | 31                    | 32                    |
|                     | Oceania              | 33                   | 40                   | 27                    | 48                    |
|                     | South America        | 40                   | 33                   | 27                    | 15                    |
| Governance          | Community-based      | 70                   | 21                   | 9                     | 174                   |
|                     | Co-managed           | 43                   | 35                   | 23                    | 75                    |
|                     | NGO-managed          | 33                   | 44                   | 22                    | 9                     |
|                     | State-managed        | 41                   | 34                   | 25                    | 212                   |
| Study design        | Before-after         | 55                   | 26                   | 19                    | 206                   |
|                     | Control-impact       | 65                   | 13                   | 21                    | 67                    |
|                     | BACI                 | 64                   | 27                   | 9                     | 11                    |
|                     | Distance             | 69                   | 3                    | 29                    | 35                    |
|                     | Perception           | 40                   | 44                   | 15                    | 262                   |
|                     | Other                | 56                   | 20                   | 24                    | 25                    |

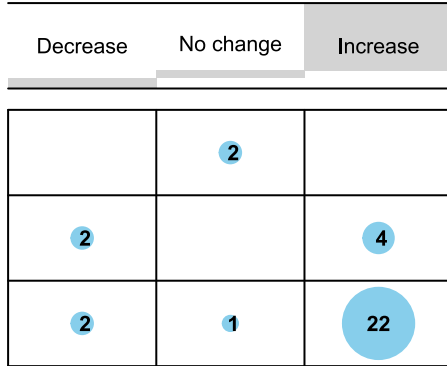
**Catches vs Income\***



**Catches vs number of users\*\***



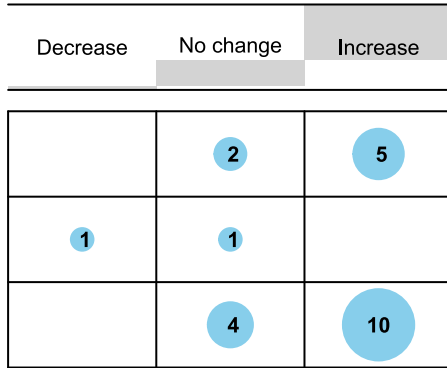
**Catches vs CPUE\*\***



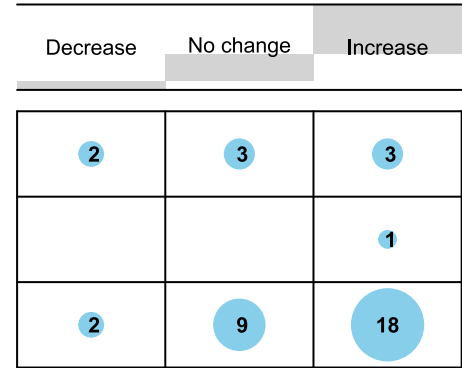
**CPUE vs number of users**



**Catches vs Resource control**



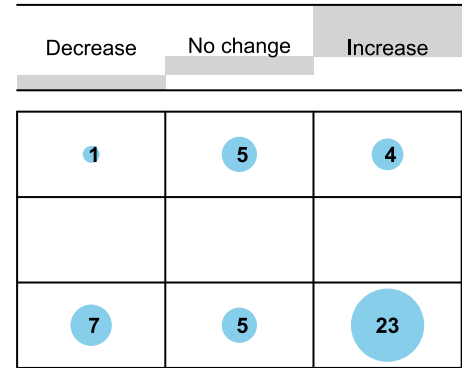
**Catches vs Support**



**Catches vs Spatial change**



**Catches vs Conflict\***



**Catches vs Community involvement**

