

Cook Islands

International Visitor Survey Report
October - December 2024



Acknowledgements

- ❖ The Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) expresses its gratitude to all contributors to this report on IVS data from October to December 2024, which provides insights into the visitor experience, enhancing our understanding of travel trends and behaviors across the region.
- ❖ Thank you to the visitors for completing arrival and departure cards, enabling this analysis. Meitaki to the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CIT) for providing the visitor emails to enable survey invitations to be dispatched in a timely manner.
- ❖ We also extend our sincere thanks to the New Zealand Government for their support and collaboration.
- ❖ Appreciation goes to the SPTO researchers and analysts for their meticulous work on visitor profiles, decision-making processes, and expenditure and satisfaction.
- ❖ Further research is needed to refine economic impact estimates, particularly the rate of prepaid expenditure into the local economy. Your ongoing support is highly valued.
- ❖ Thank you to everyone involved.

Executive Summary

- ❖ The survey analyzed 1,523 responses out of 1,613 collected, representing 7% of actual visitors with a 14% response rate. Among the respondents, 11% were solo travelers, and the average household income was NZD160,302.
- ❖ Visitors were primarily drawn to the Cook Islands for its warm and sunny weather, reputation as a safe destination, quiet and relaxing atmosphere, and the welcoming nature of the friendly locals. Overall visitor satisfaction was high, with a rating of 4.7 out of 5. A substantial 97% of visitors indicated they would recommend Cook Islands to others, and 92% expressed willingness to return.
- ❖ The average prepaid spend per visitor was NZD2,457 with an estimated 40% (NZD983) flowing into the local economy. In-country spending per visitor per trip averaged NZD2,370 with an average stay of 9.2 nights. This contributed to an *estimated** economic impact of NZD146 million from October to December 2024.
- ❖ Visitors were less satisfied with public services, facilities, infrastructure, pricing of goods and services, and the quality and availability of food and beverages in restaurants and cafés. To enhance the overall visitor experience, they recommended improvements in public services and infrastructure maintenance, upgrades to accommodation standards and hotel services, and enhancements to activities, natural attractions, entertainment, and events.

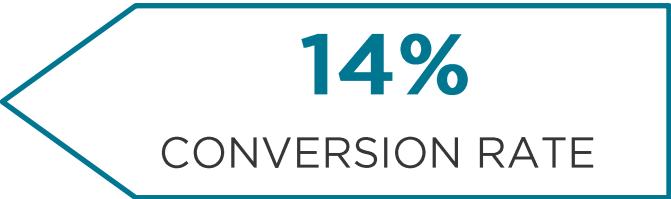
Background

- ❖ The October – December 2024 Cook Islands Visitor Survey is an initiative of the Pacific Tourism Data Initiative, funded by the Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZMFAT), and is conducted by the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO).
- ❖ The report includes key sections on visitor profiles and characteristics, information and decision-making, visitor expenditure and satisfaction.
- ❖ **N.B.** The visitor emails were collected through the passenger arrival cards completed by visitors on their arrival into the Cook Islands.
- ❖ **N.B.** The estimated rate of prepaid expenditure flowing into local economy is 40%, which is observed from other Pacific Island countries. Further research is warranted to establish more accurate estimates.
- ❖ All amounts are reported in **NZD** currency using average rates for the October – December 2024 period.

Disclaimer

- ❖ **Reproduction of Material** - Information contained within this publication, including all charts, information, and graphical representations, may be used, reproduced, or published without prior approval from SPTO and Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CIT). However, the information source must be explicitly referenced and acknowledged in all modes of representation.
- ❖ The **survey instrument** used to collect data for the October – December 2024 period was similar, but not exact, to the survey instrument used in the October – December 2023 period. New questions were added, a handful of existing questions were removed, and the response options for some questions were altered. In those instances where comparisons cannot be made, we report only the results for the October - December 2024 period.
- ❖ **N.B.** All analyses are based on the IVS respondents. No weighting was applied, as the sample data is representative. Therefore, the IVS respondents were not weighted to the actual arrival data.
- ❖ Please note that the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) and the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (CIT) do not accept liability for any loss or damage incurred as a result of the use of information contained in this report. Users are advised to exercise their own judgment in the use of any information provided.

IVS Respondents (October - December 2024)



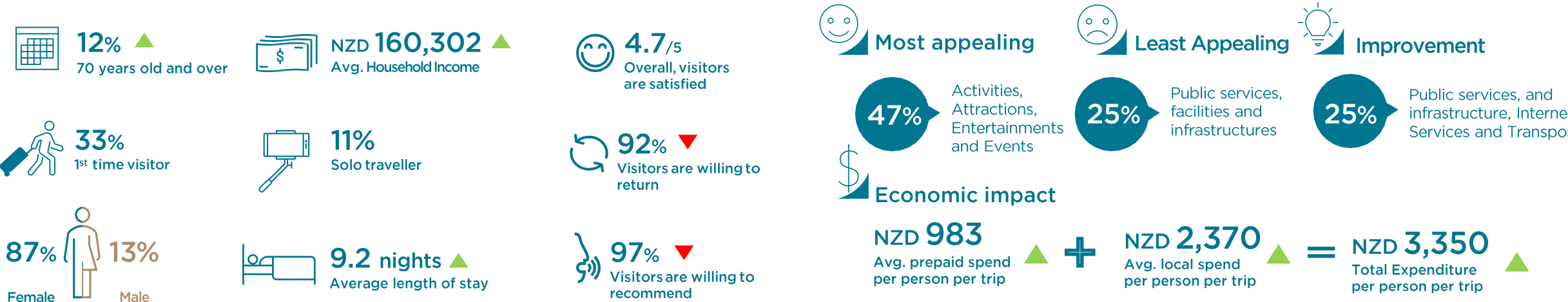
Note: 1,613 responses were received. After data cleaning, 1,523 responses remained.

RESPONSES COVERED



Cook Islands International Visitor Survey

Snapshot October – December 2024

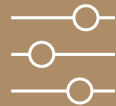


Note: The estimated flow-back rate into the Cook Islands for prepaid spend is 40%. With an average prepaid spend of \$2,457 per person per trip, this equates to \$983.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making

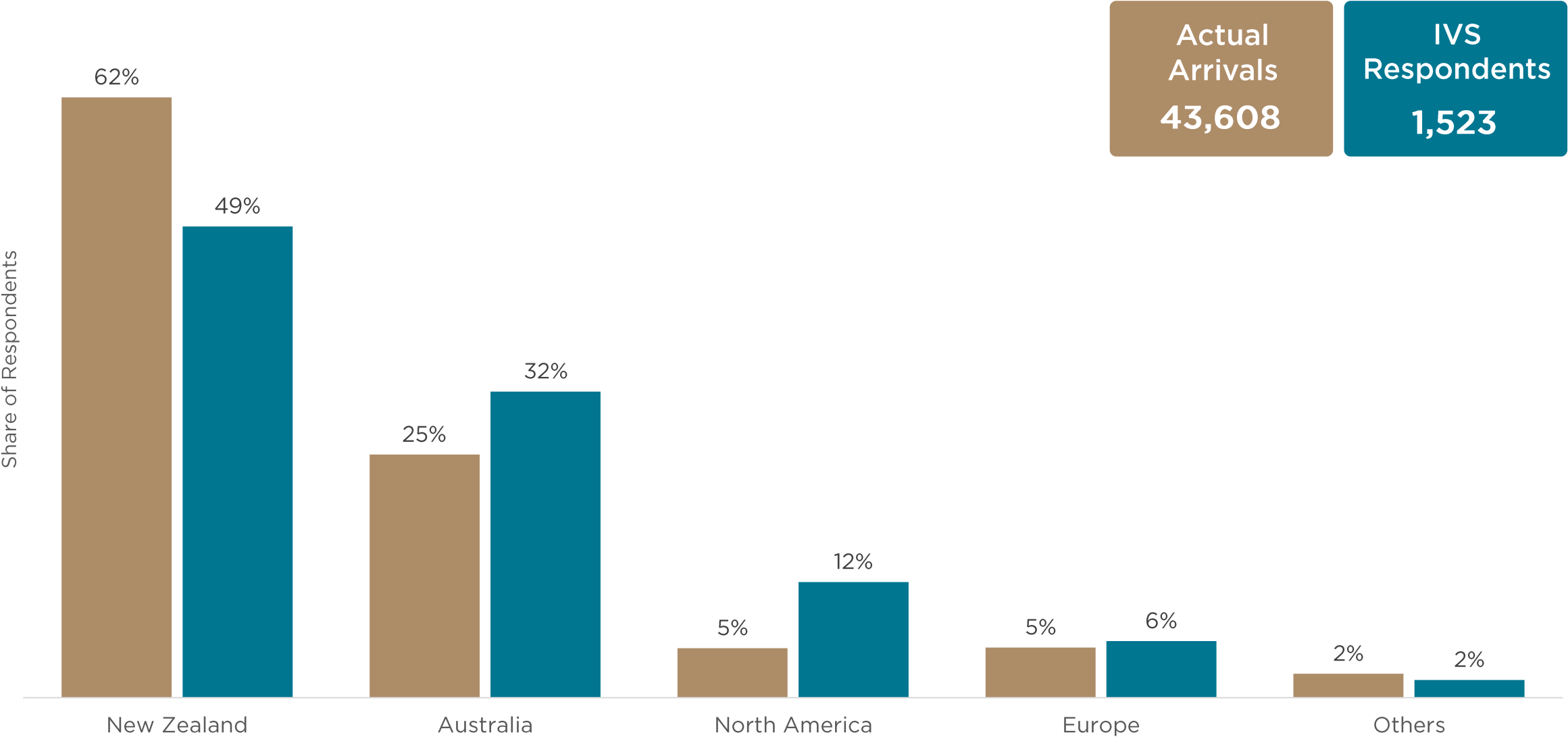


Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Source Markets: IVS Respondents vs Actual Arrival



Actual
Arrivals

43,608

IVS
Respondents

1,523

Share of Respondents

New Zealand

Australia

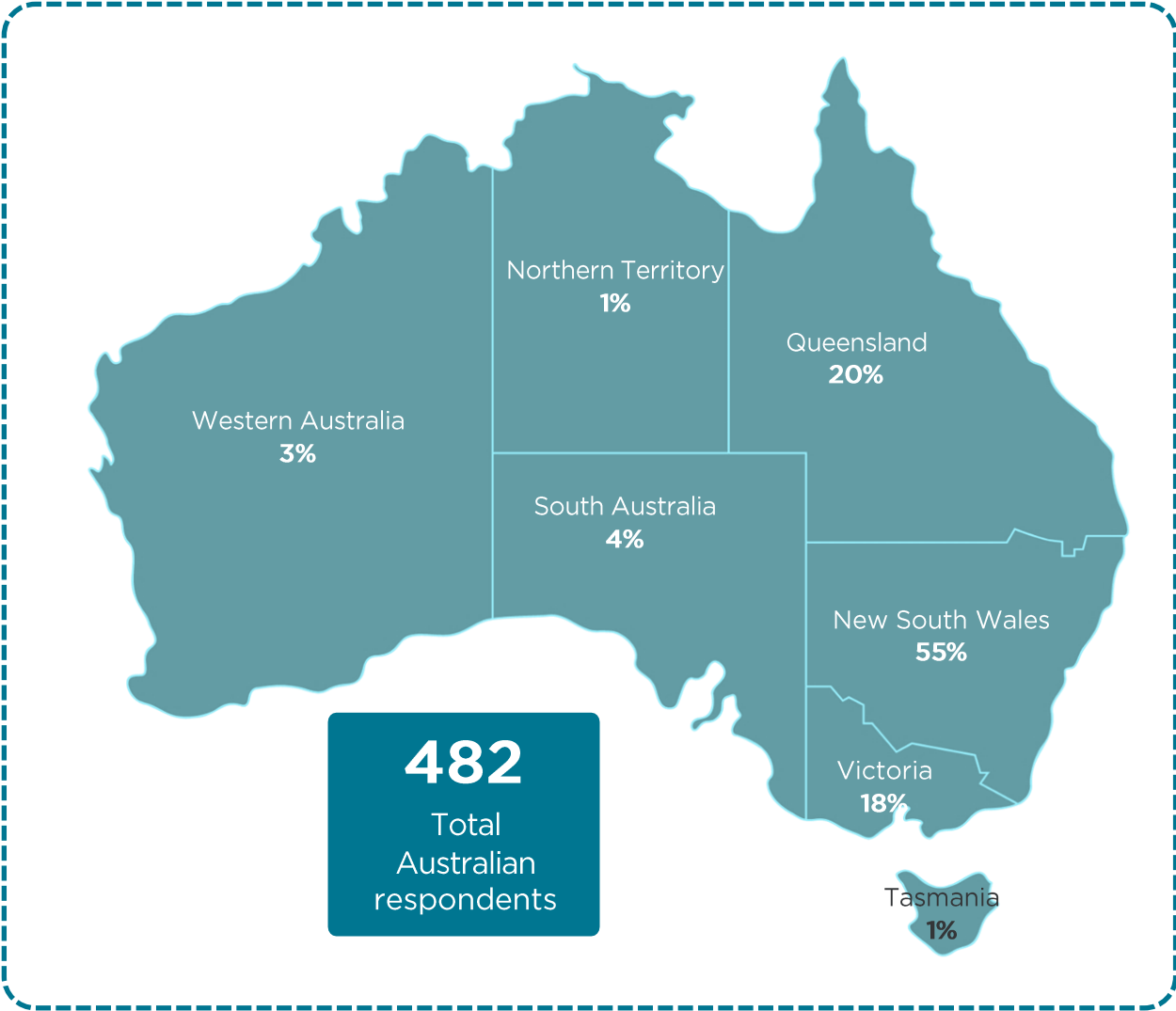
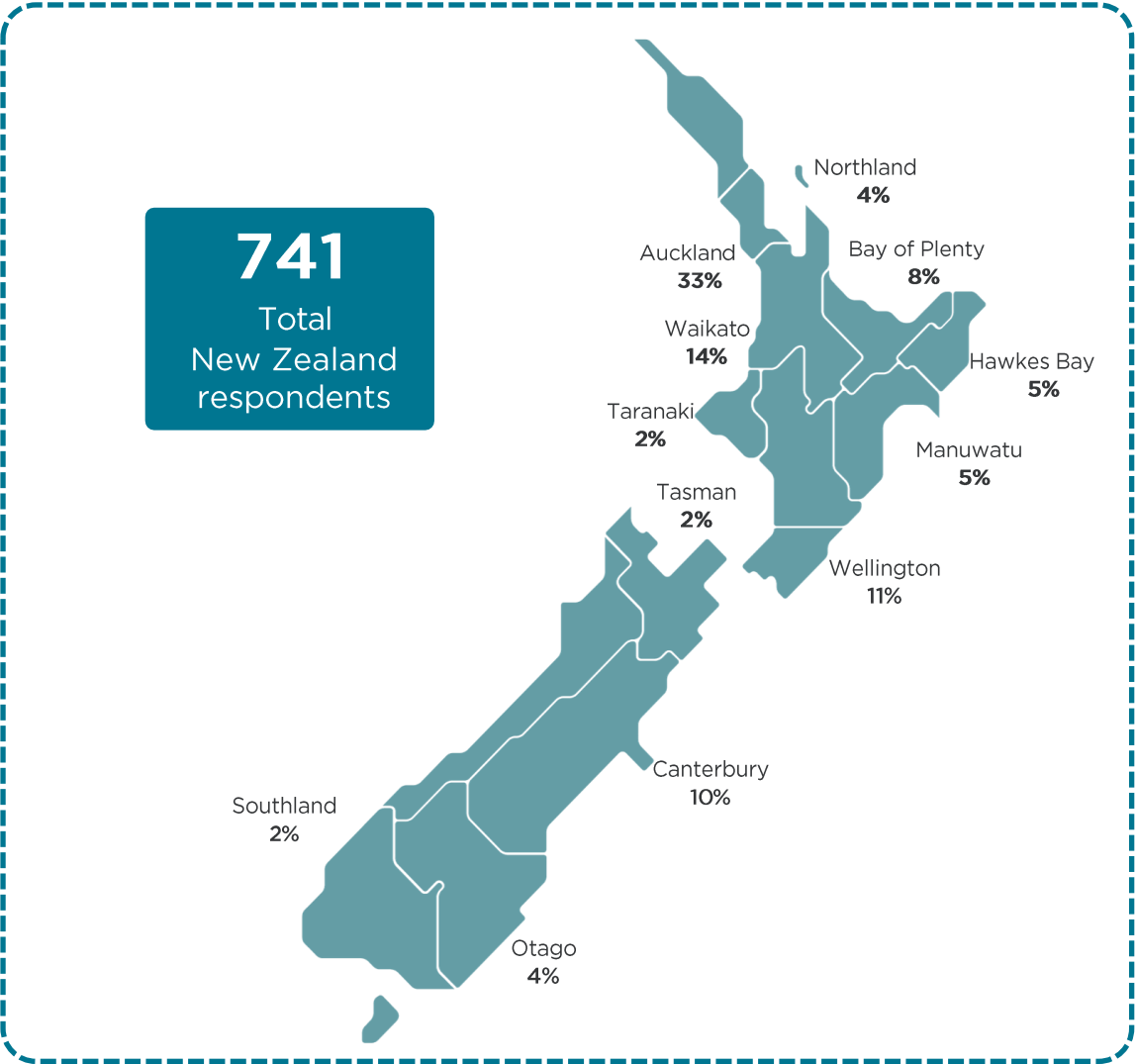
North America

Europe

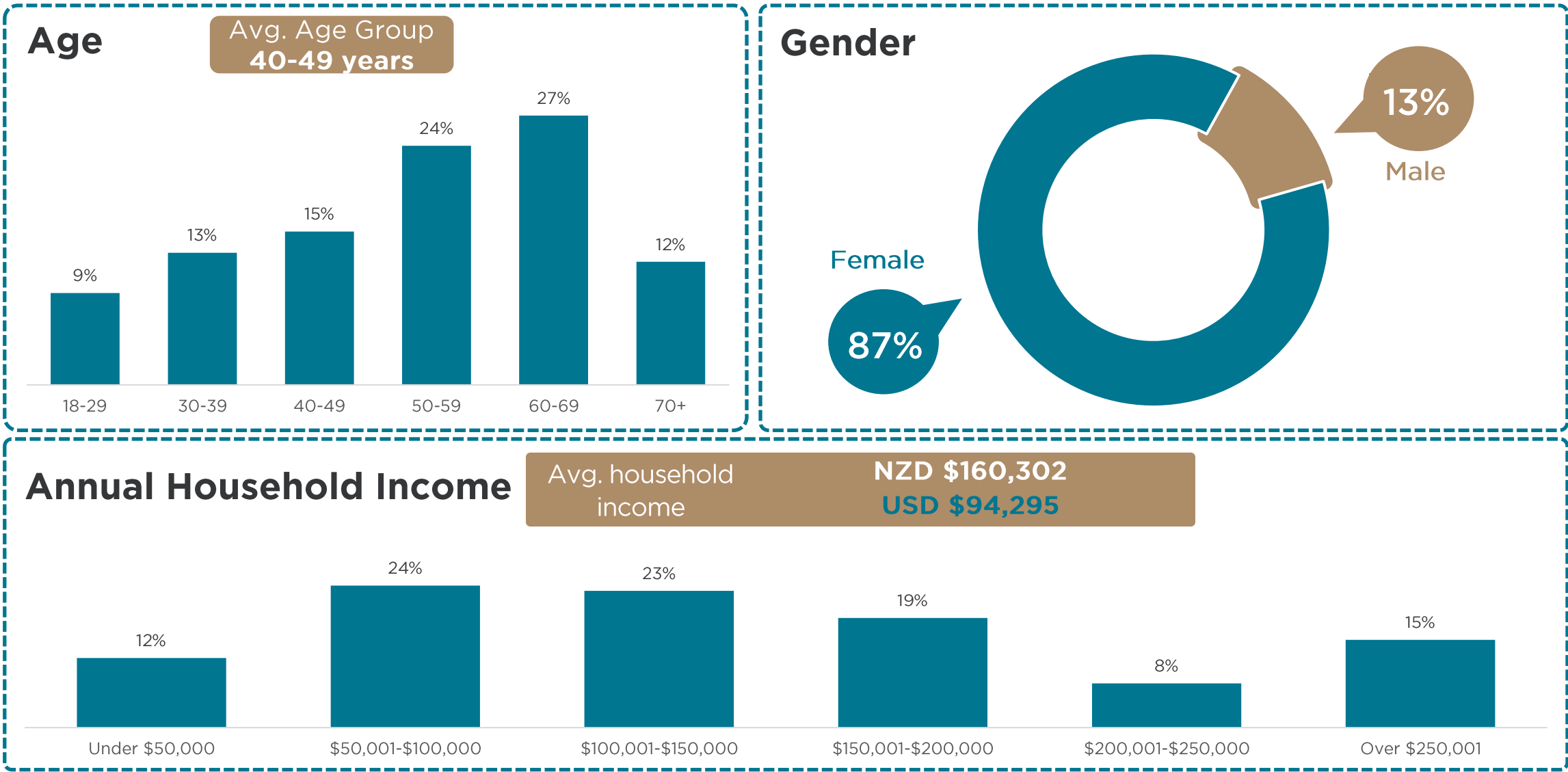
Others

Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%. No weighting was applied, as the sample data is representative..

Top Source Markets



Respondent Demographics



Annual Household Income

Avg. household income
NZD \$160,302
USD \$94,295

| Income Bracket | Percentage |
|---------------------|------------|
| Under \$50,000 | 12% |
| \$50,001-\$100,000 | 24% |
| \$100,001-\$150,000 | 23% |
| \$150,001-\$200,000 | 19% |
| \$200,001-\$250,000 | 8% |
| Over \$250,001 | 15% |

Note: % share of IVS respondents. \$ in NZD. The average exchange rate to NZD and USD for Oct-Dec 2024 was applied.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



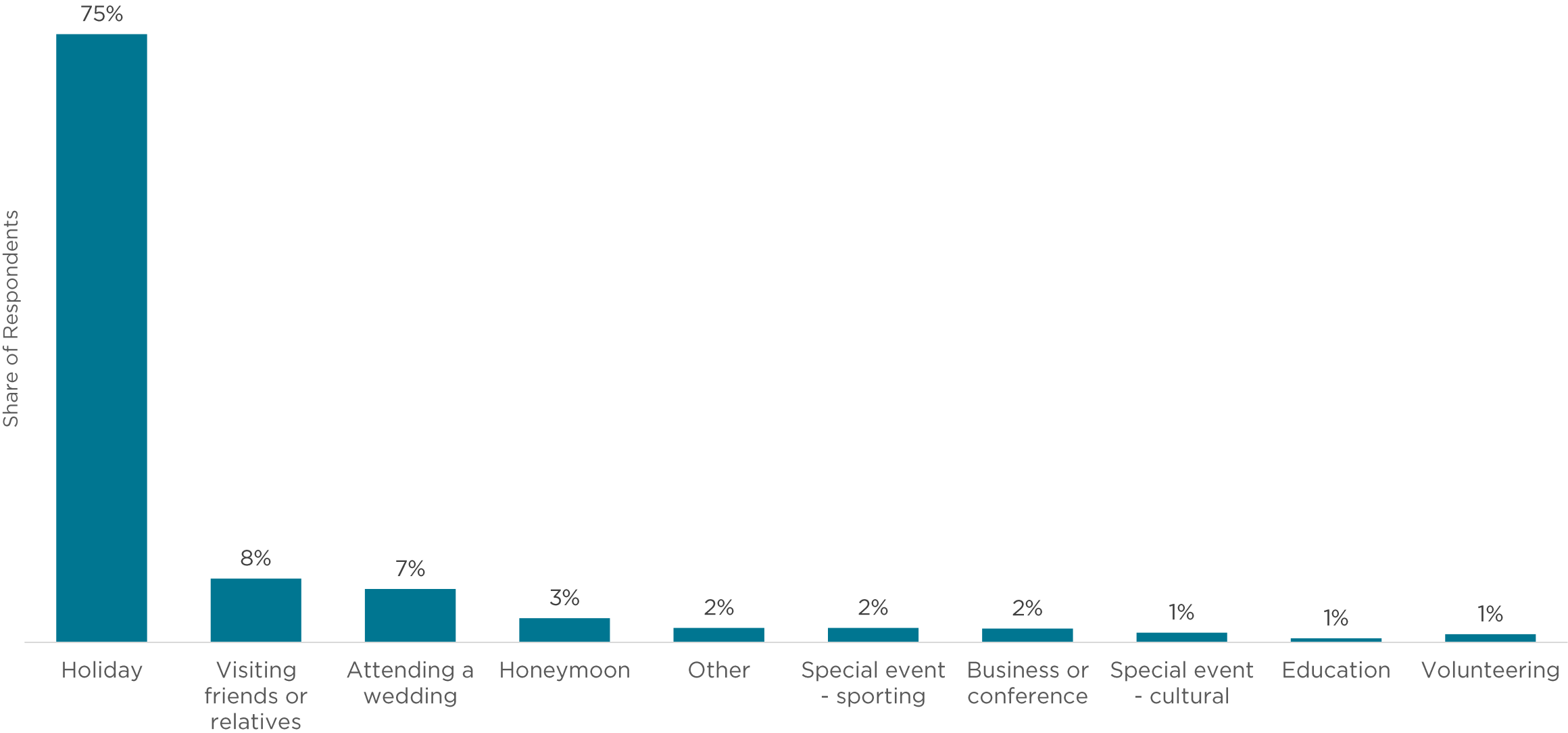
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Purpose of Visit

Q: What was the main purpose of your visit?

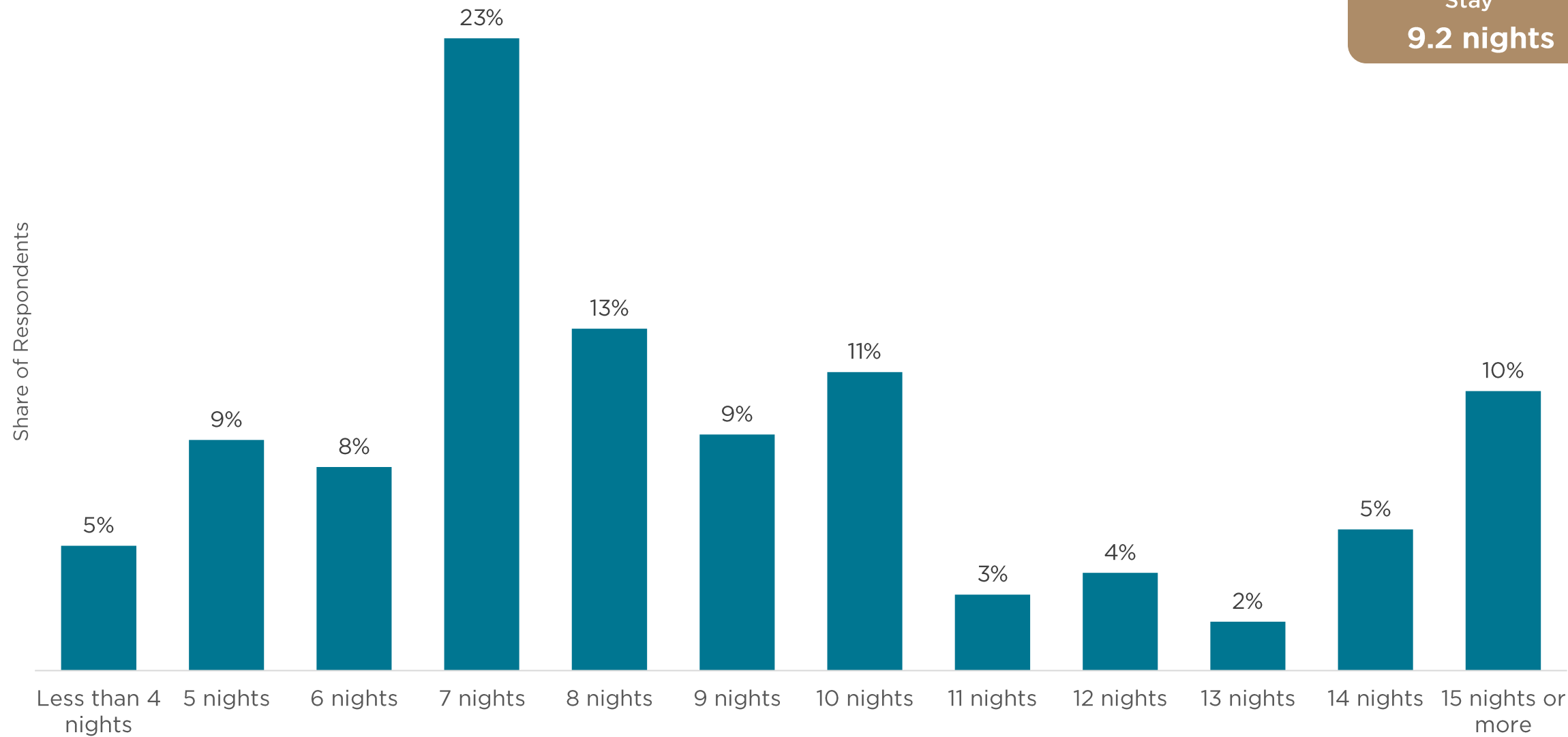


Note: N=1,523. Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

Length of Stay (nights)

Q: How many nights did you spend in Cook Islands?

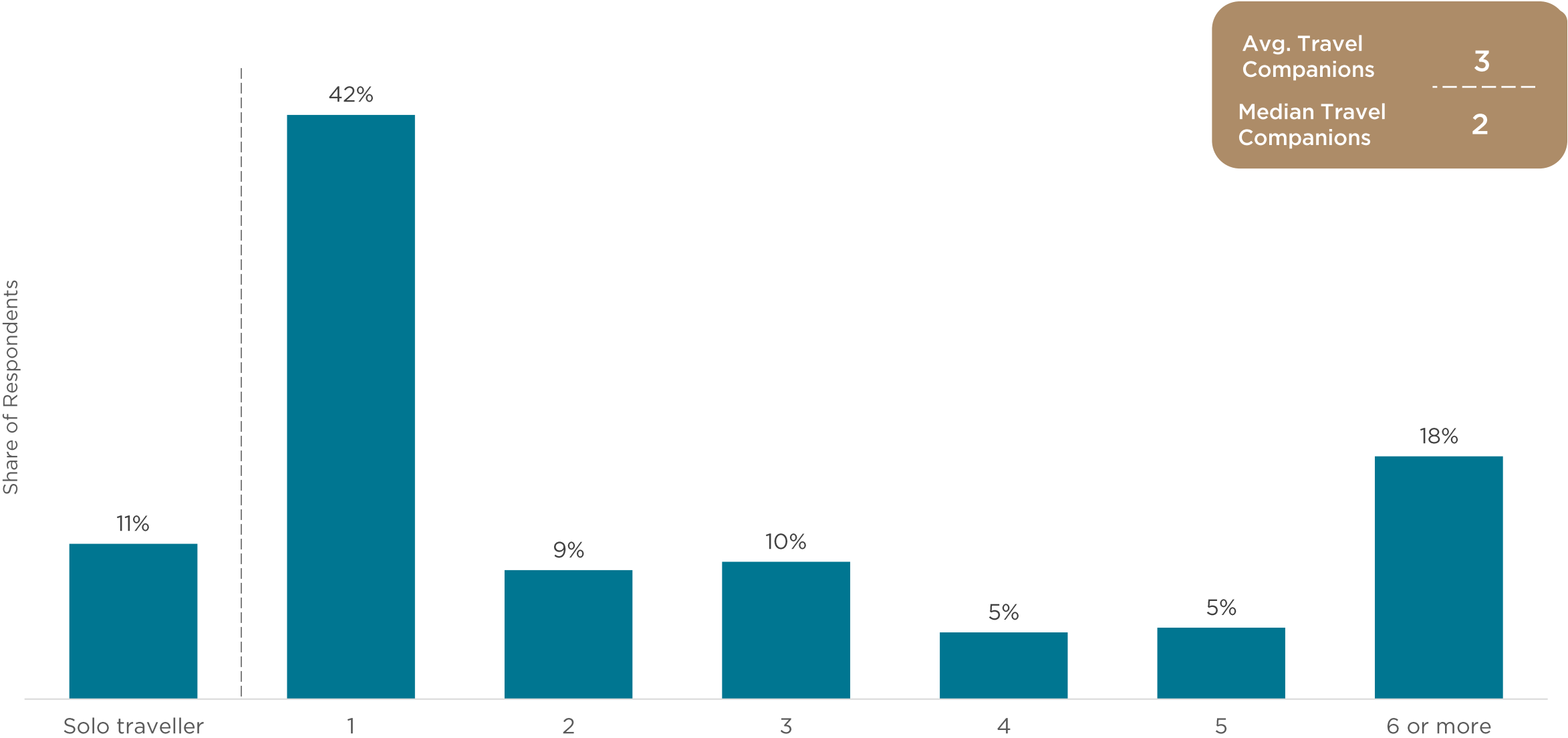
Avg. Length of Stay
9.2 nights



Note: 31 and 31+ days as outliers were removed for length of stay analysis

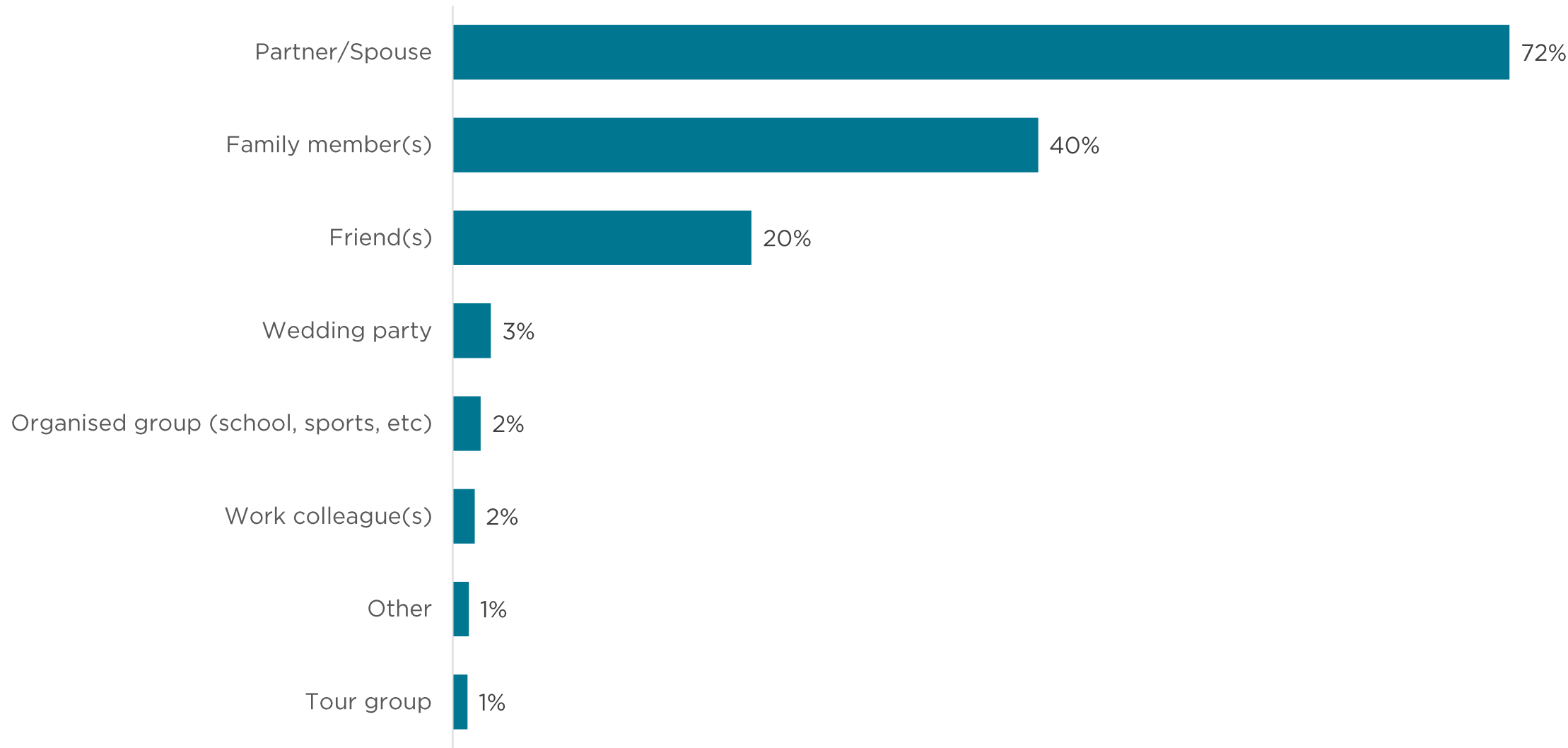
Travel Group Size

Q: How many people accompanied you on this trip?



Note: N=1,474. Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

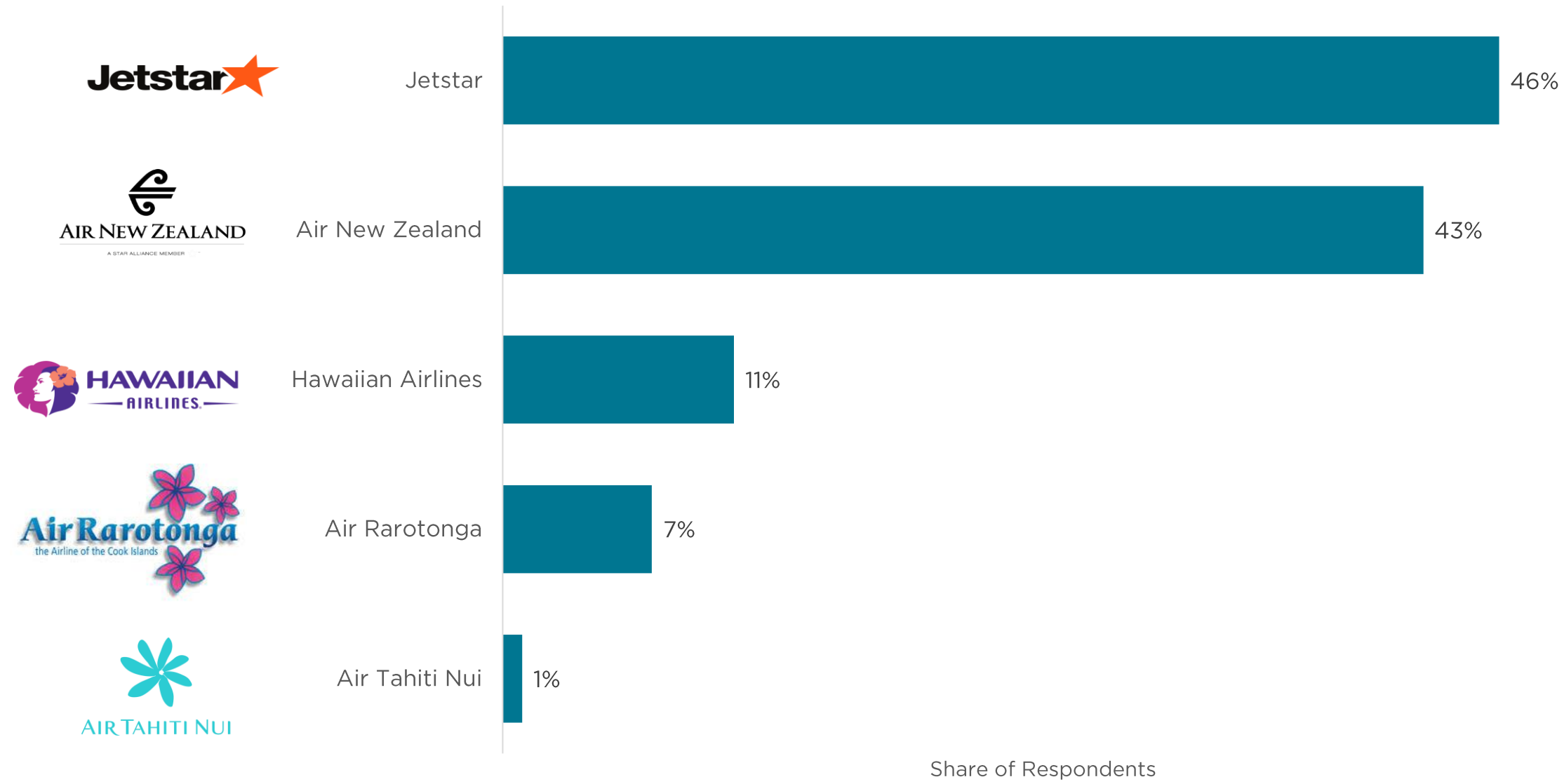
Travel Companions



Share of Respondents

Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Airlines Used for Travel



Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Purchasing of Travel



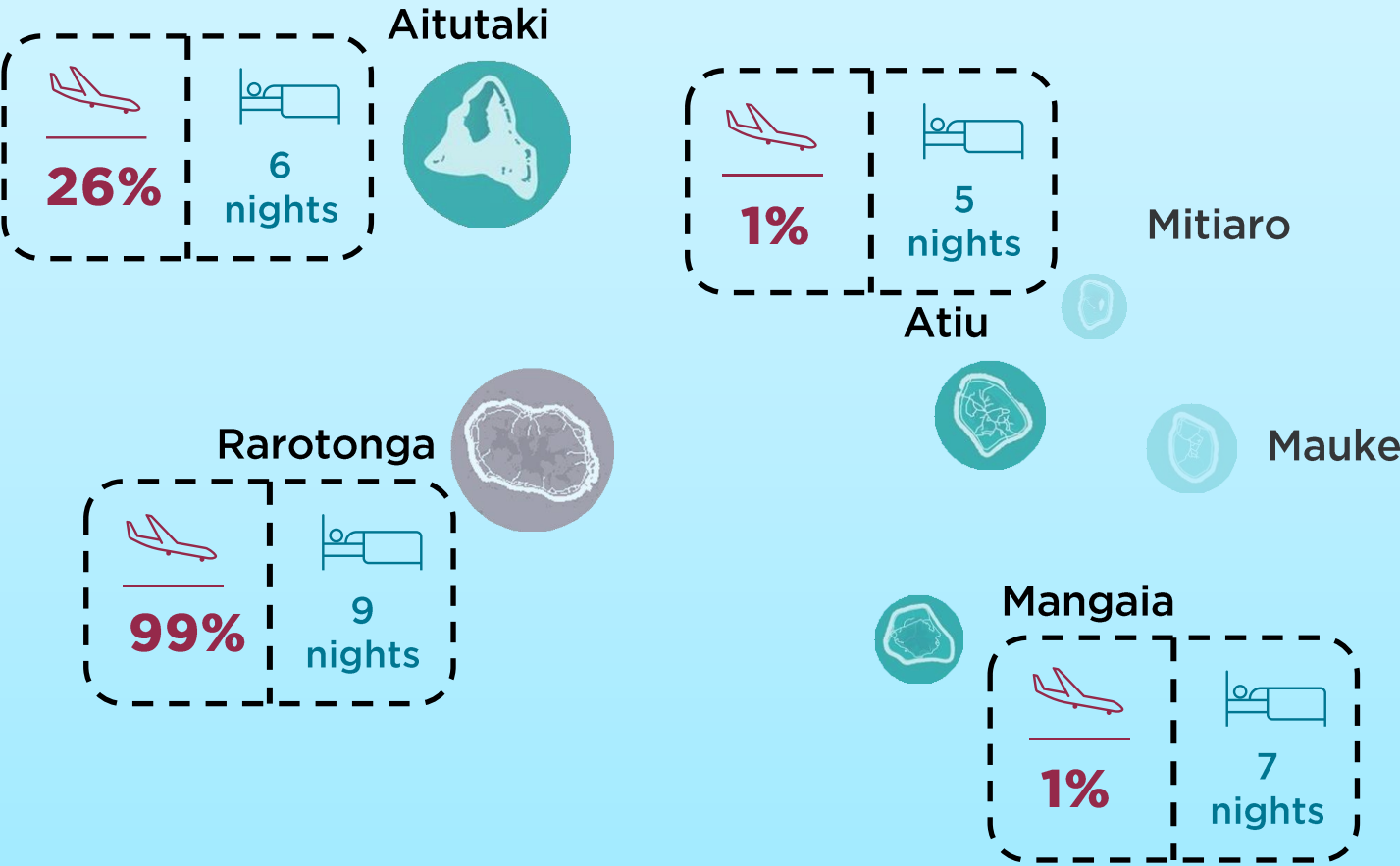
Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Islands Visited & Avg. Length of Stay

Avg. Length of Stay
9.2 Nights

Q: Which island(s) did you visit?

Q: How many nights did you spend on each island you visited?

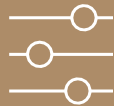


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



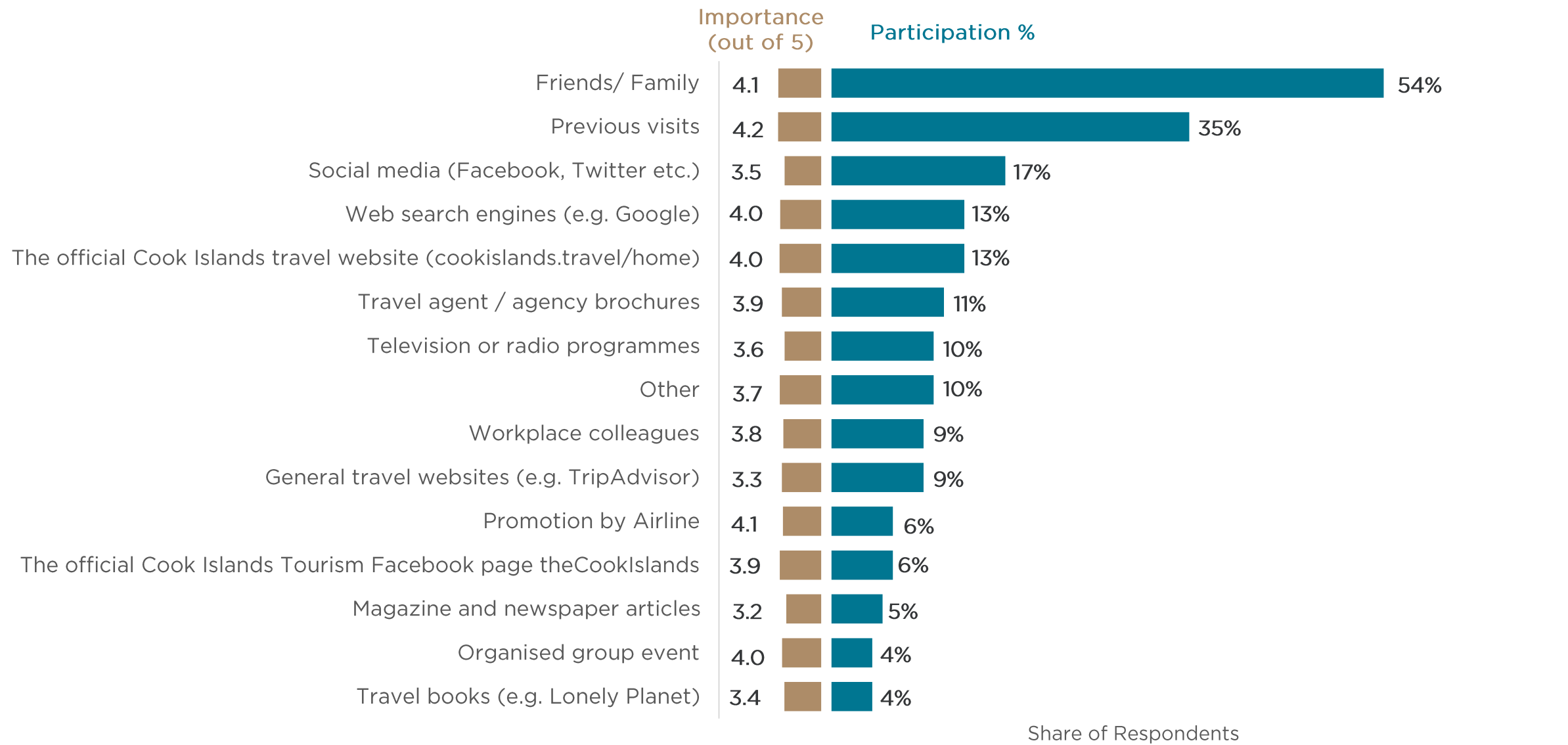
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

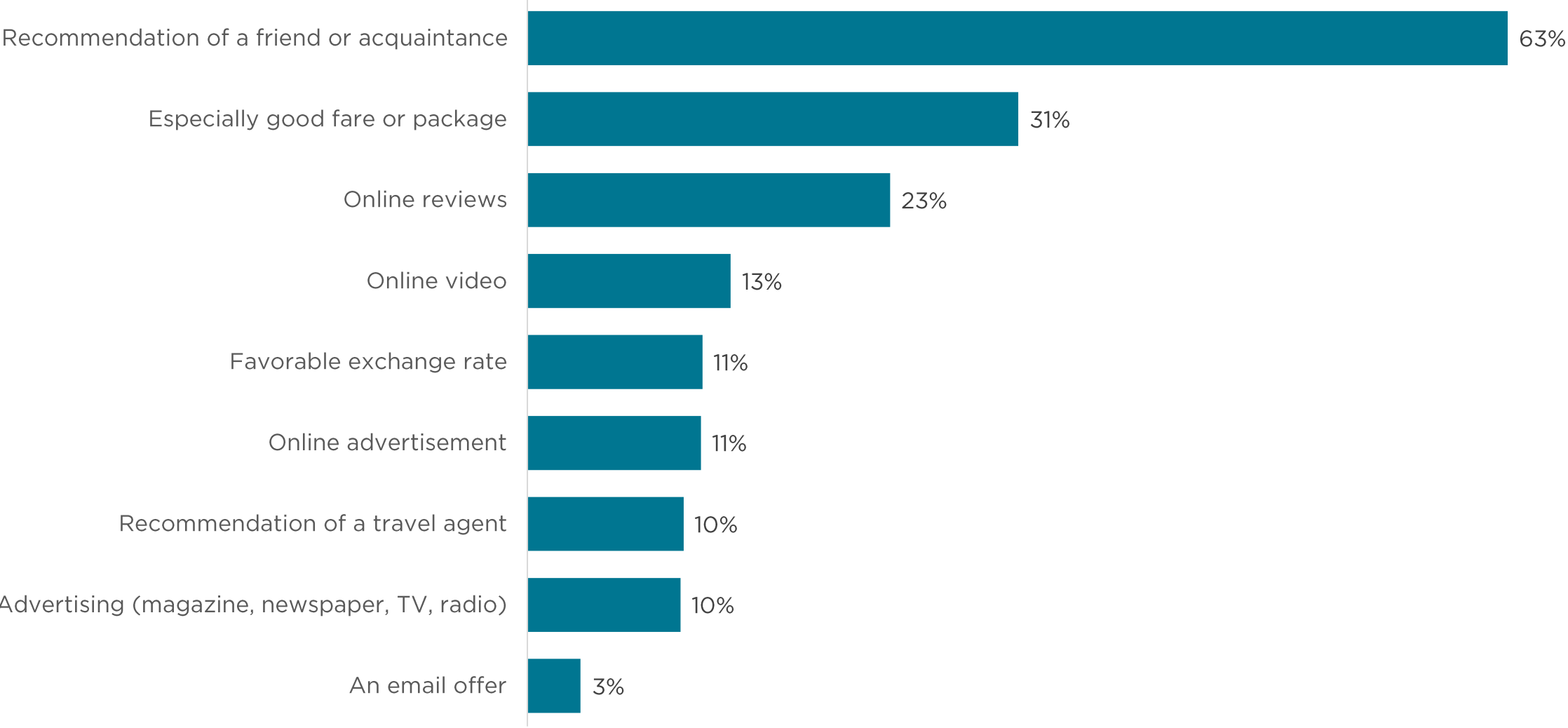
Information Source

Q: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination?
Q: How important was the information source?



Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that information source

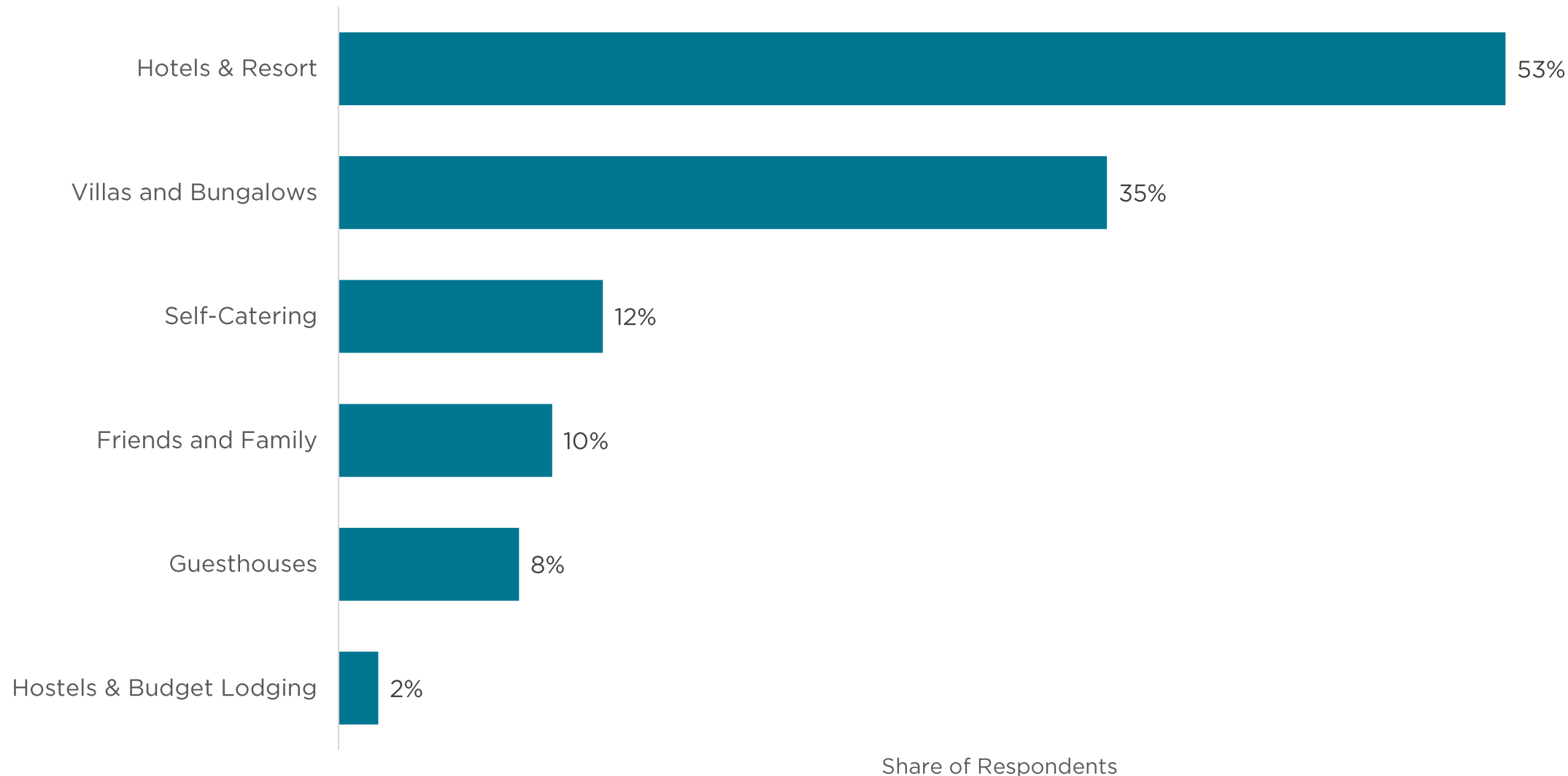
Important Promotion/Advertising Channels that assisted in selecting to visit the Cook Islands



Share of Respondents

Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Accommodation Type



Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

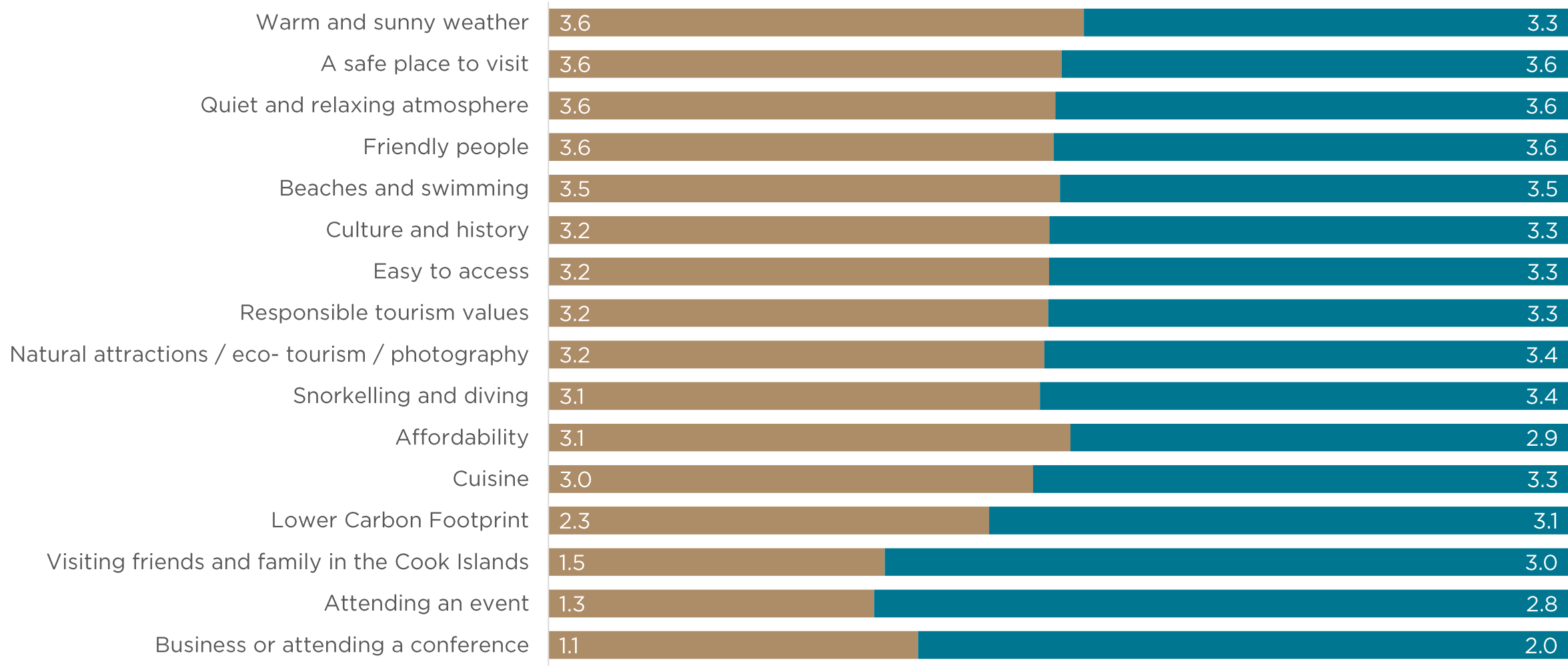
Pre-Travel Perceptions Vs Expectations

Q: How influential were the following factors in your selection of the Cook Islands for your recent visit?

1=No Influence to 4=Very Influential

Q: Please evaluate how well your experience aligned with your expectations.

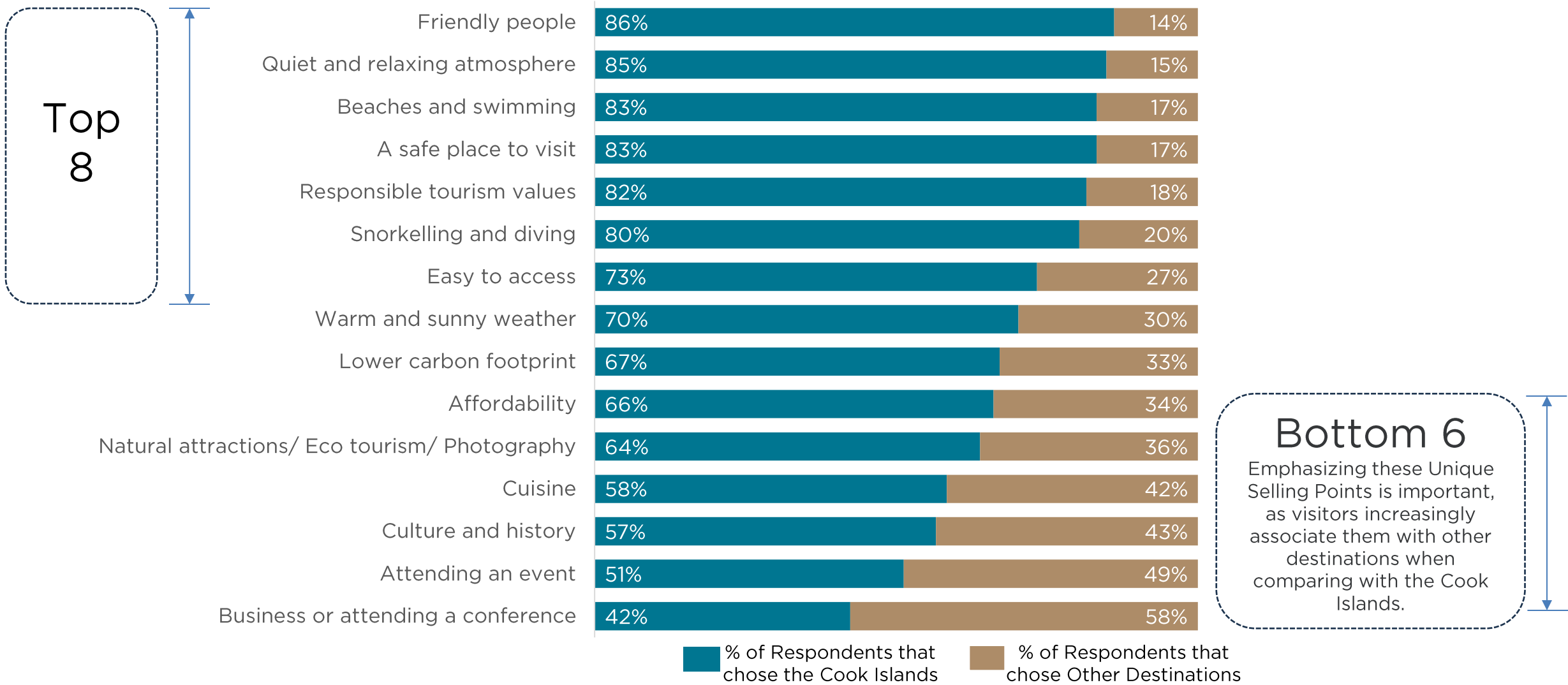
1=Did Not Meet to 4=Exceeded



Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

Unique Selling Points: Cook Islands vs Competitors (based on Visitor Perceptions)

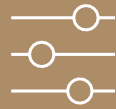
Q: Please attribute each statement below to the country, Cook Islands or Alternative Destination, that best represents its unique appeal



Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



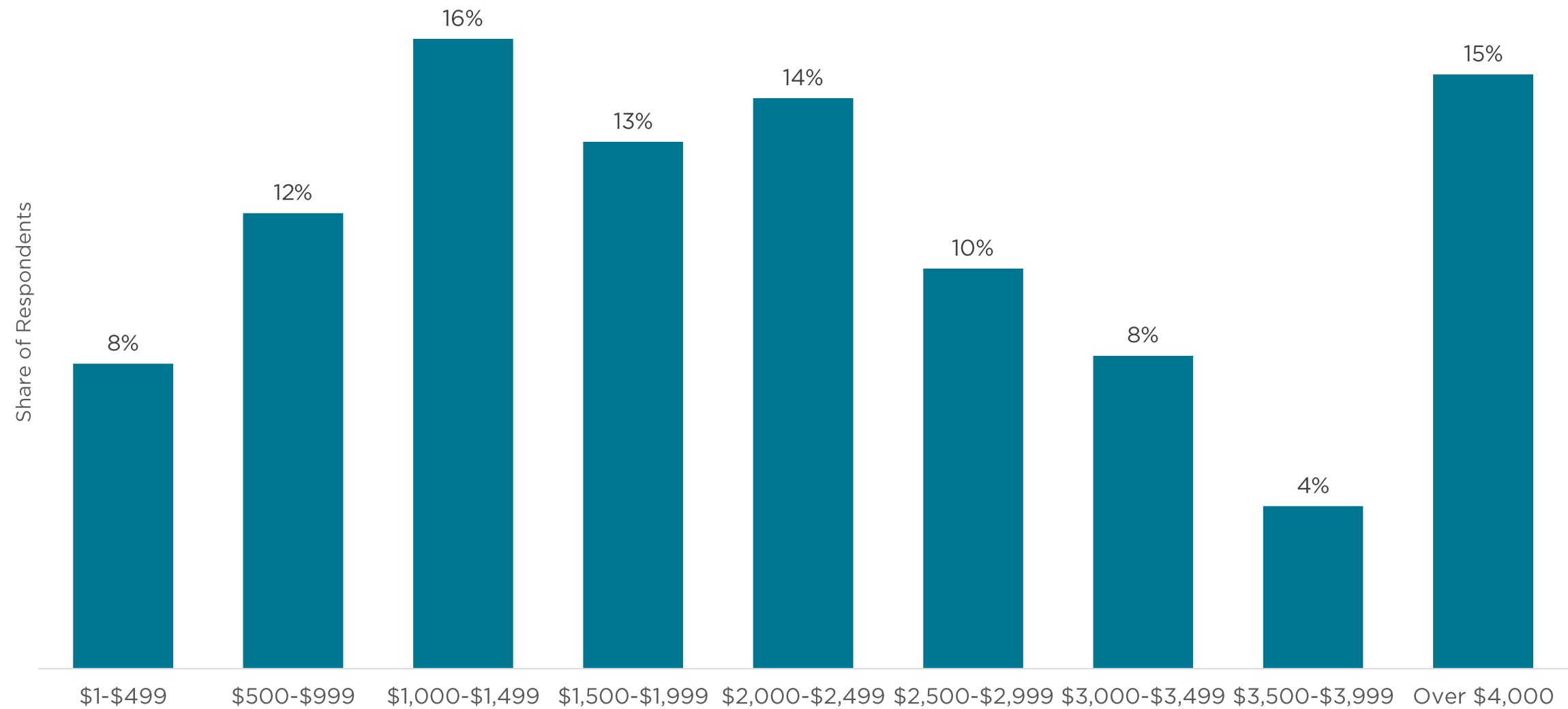
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

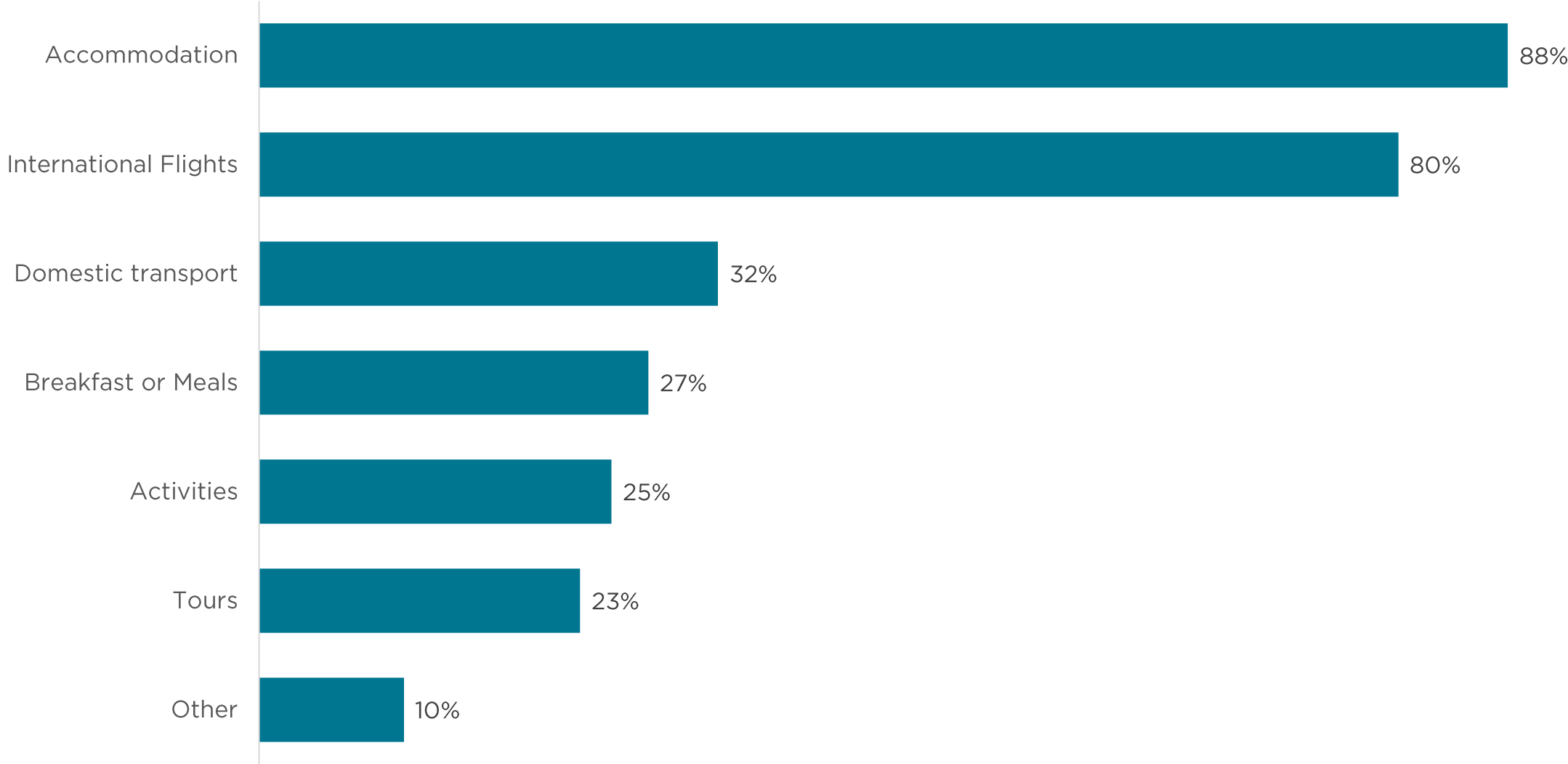
Prepaid Expenditure

Avg. Prepaid per Person
per Trip
NZ\$2,457



Note: NZ dollars.

Prepaid Items



Share of Respondents

Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

In-country Spend Per Person Per Day While in the Cook Islands

| | Local Spend Per Person Per Day | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | <u>% of sector</u> | <u>NZD</u> | <u>USD</u> |
| Accommodation | 50 | 129 | 76 |
| Restaurant, Cafes & Bars | 18 | 46 | 27 |
| Vehicle Rental | 7 | 17 | 10 |
| Petrol | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Domestic Flight | 4 | 9 | 5 |
| Public Transport | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Internet Cost | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Water-based activities | 4 | 10 | 6 |
| Land-based activities | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Groceries | 5 | 13 | 8 |
| Shopping | 8 | 20 | 12 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 100% | 257 | 151 |

Note: Total Economic Impact-Per Trip and Per Day are per-person expenditures and can be used to estimate the total economic impact, through extrapolating to the total number of visitor arrivals during the surveyed period.

Economic Impact - Per Person and Total

| Visitor Expenditure Per Person & Total | | |
|---|-----------------|------------|
| | Oct-Dec 24 | Oct-Dec 24 |
| | NZD | USD |
| Average Spend Prior to arrival | | |
| Per Person Per Trip | 2,457 | 1,445 |
| Flowing into local economy rate - estimated 40% | | |
| Per Person Per Trip | 983 | 578 |
| Per Person per Day | 103 | 61 |
| ----- | | |
| Average Local Spend | | |
| Length of Stay (nights) | mean 9.2 nights | |
| Per Person Per Trip | 2,370 | 1,394 |
| Per Person per Day | 257 | 151 |
| ----- | | |
| Total Economic Impact-Per Trip | 3,353 | 1,972 |
| Total Economic Impact-Per Day | 364 | 214 |

October – December 2023

NZD 130 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 40,772



\$2,204

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$262

In-country spend per day

40%

Flowing into local economy rate



x 8.8 nights
Average length of stay

\$882

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$2,302

In-country spend per trip



\$3,184 per visitor per trip
\$364 per visitor per day

October - December 2024

NZD 146 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 43,608 ▲



\$2,457 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$257 ▼

In-country spend per day

40%

Flowing into local economy rate



x 9.2 nights
Average length of stay ▲

\$982 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$2,370 ▲

In-country spend per trip



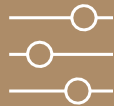
\$3,352 per visitor per trip ▲
\$364 per visitor per day

Note: The amounts are in NZ dollars. The visitor numbers are based on official statistics provided by the CIT office.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



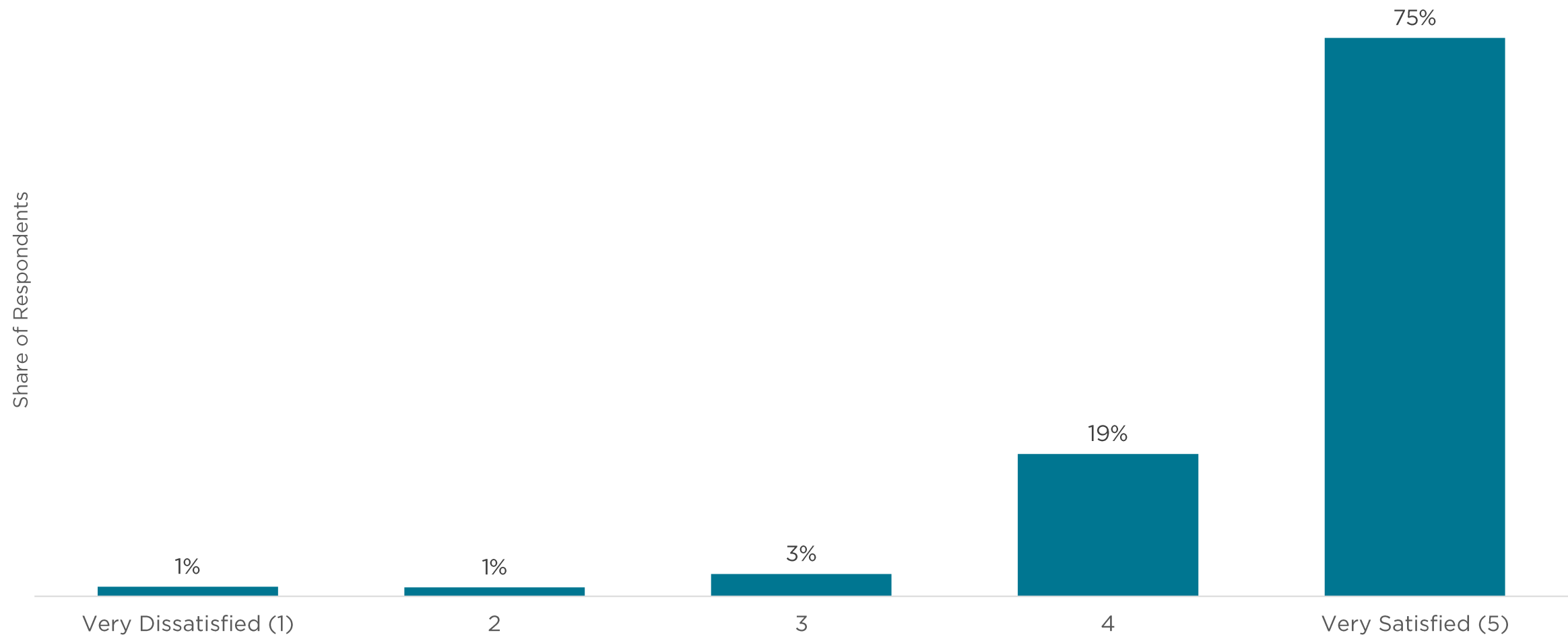
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Visitor Overall Satisfaction

Avg. Overall Satisfaction
4.7

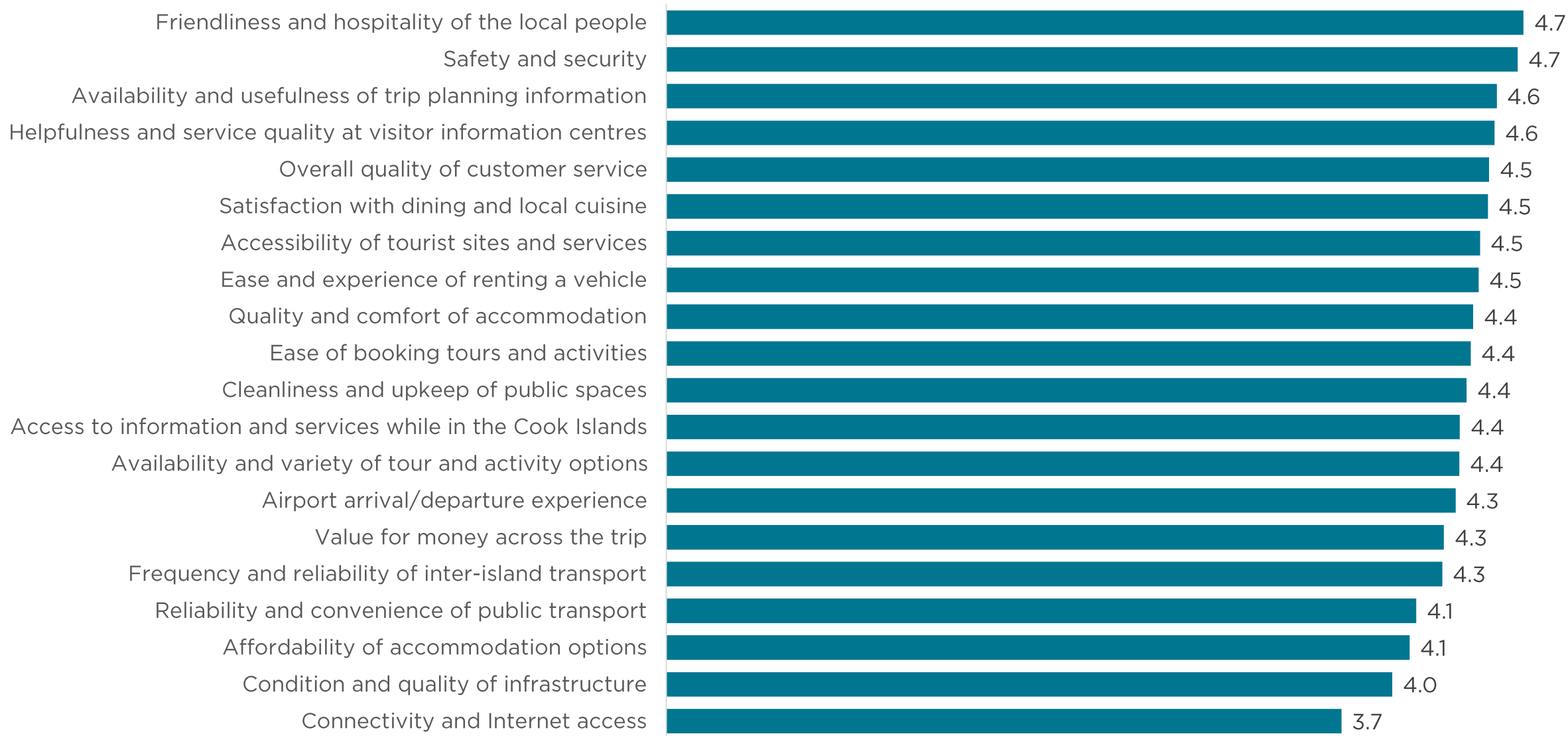


Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%

Satisfaction with Travel Experience

1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

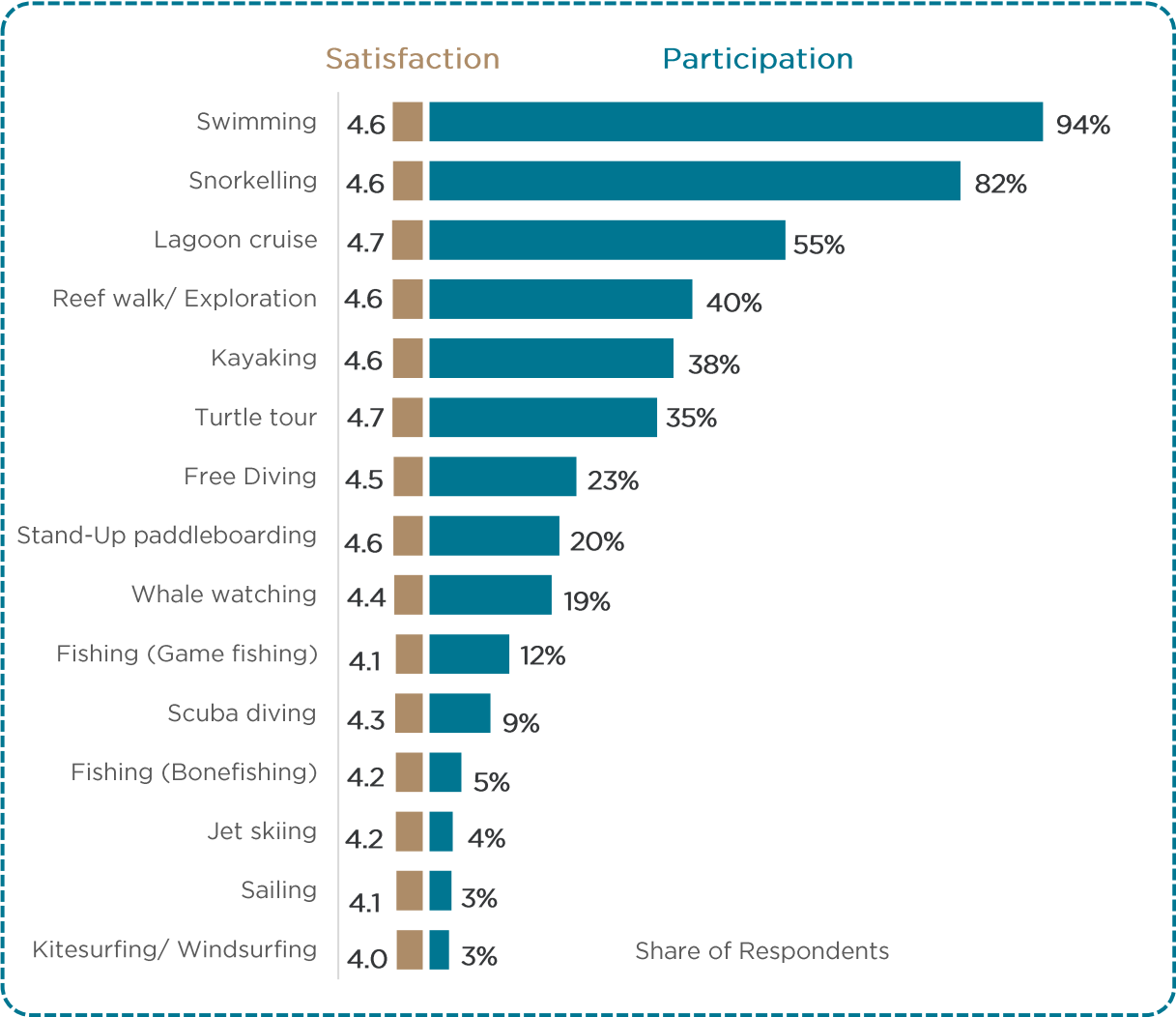


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

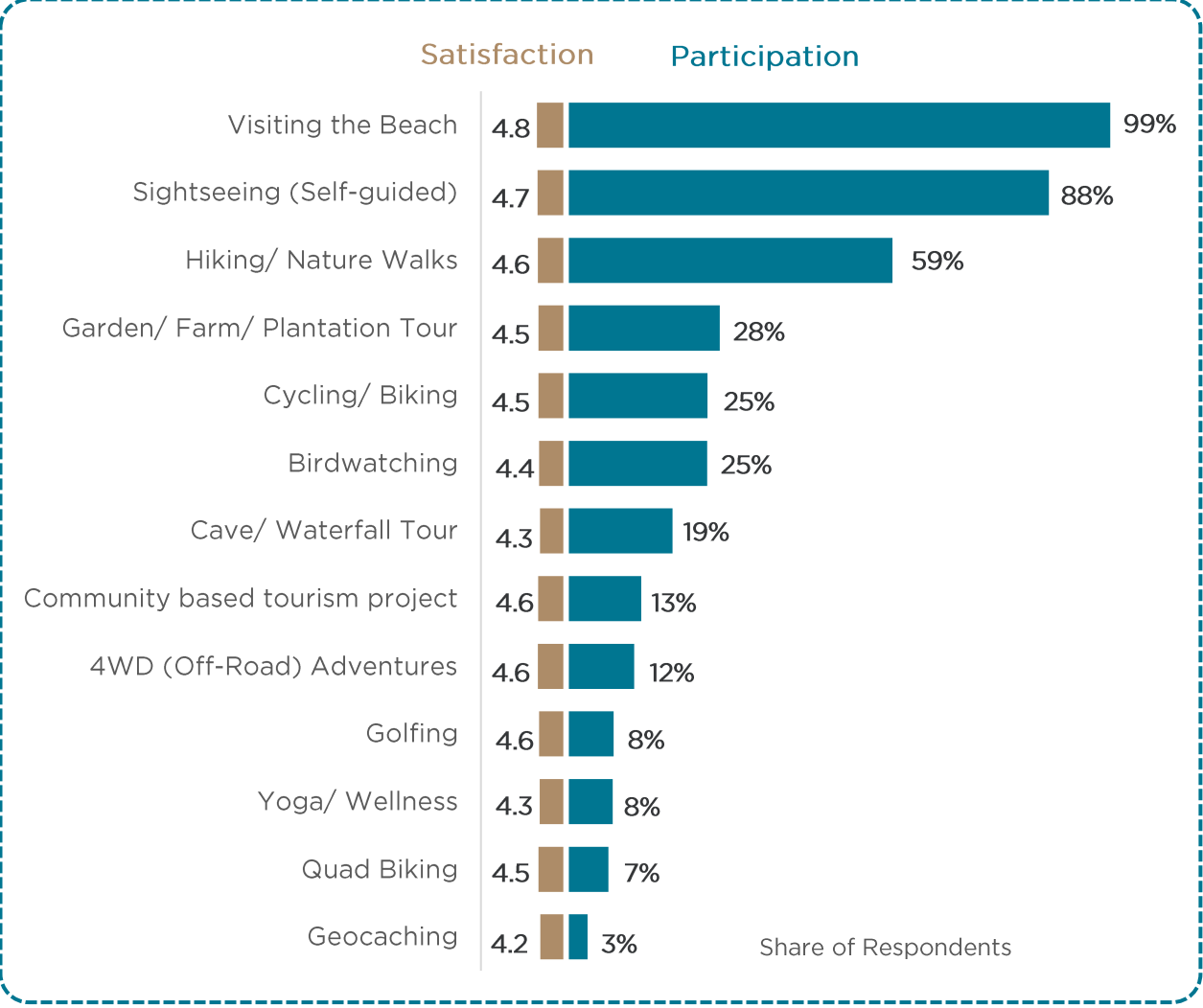
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Water-based activities



Land-based activities



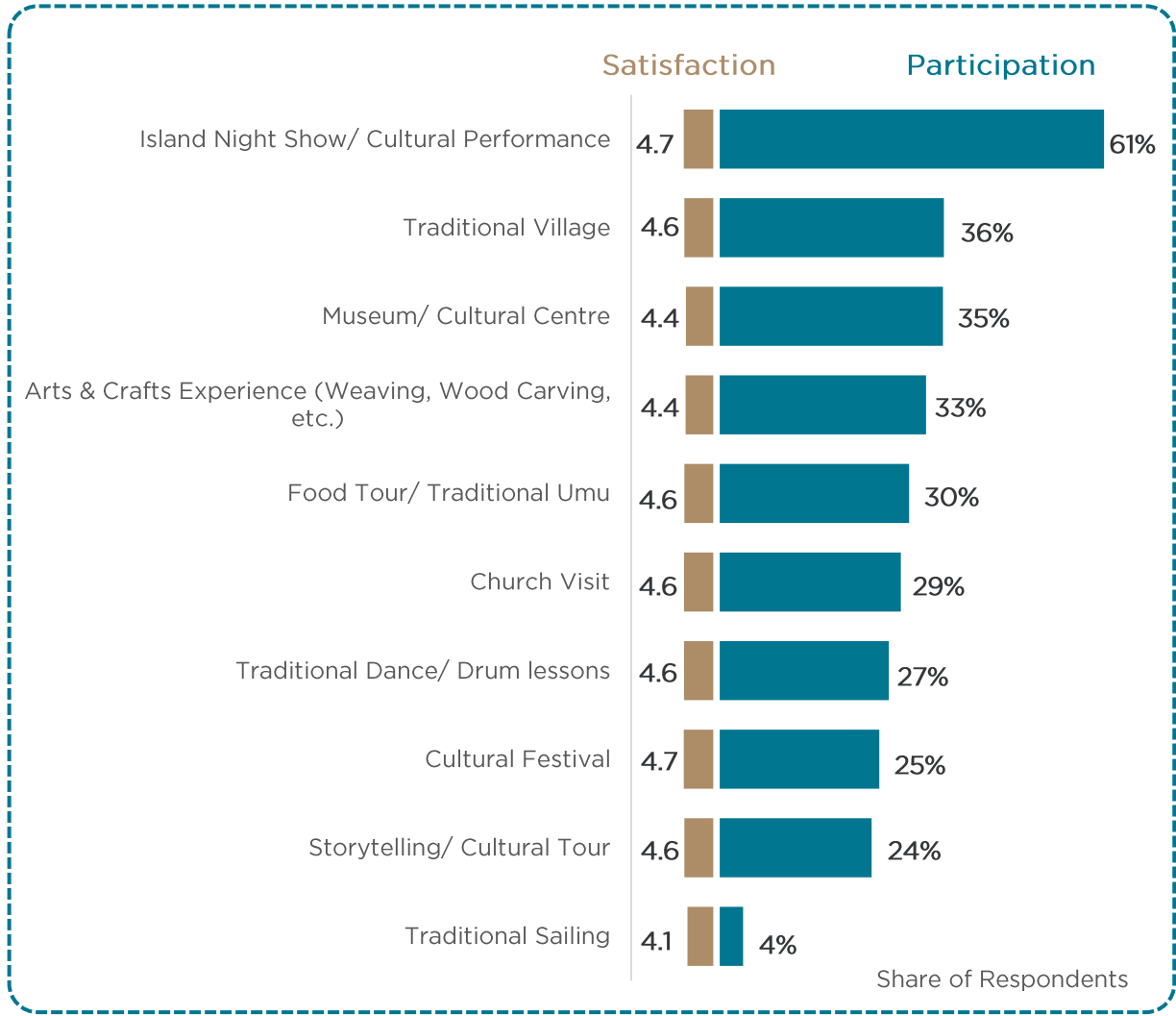
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%. Satisfaction is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that activity.

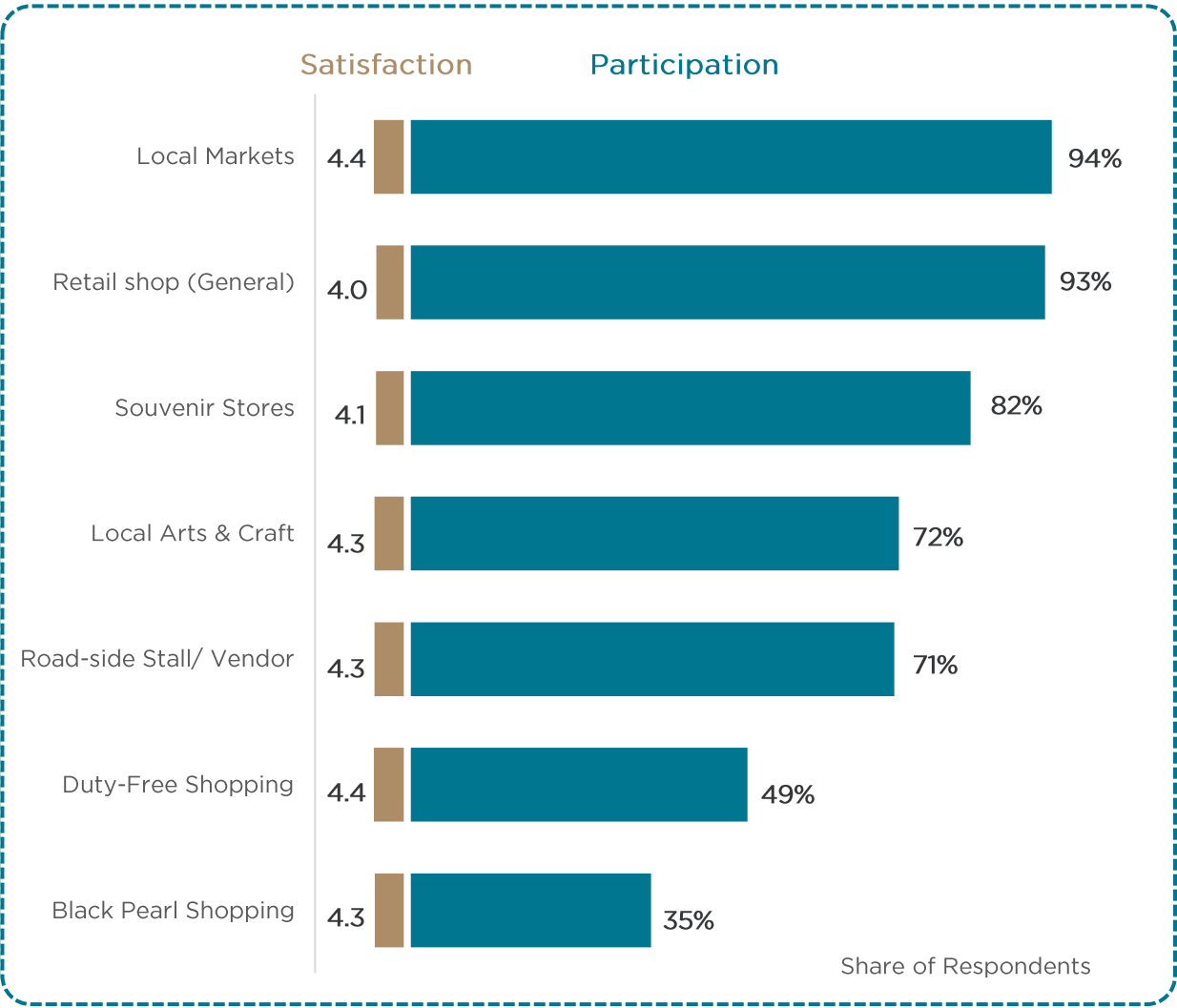
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Arts and Cultural Activities



Shopping activities



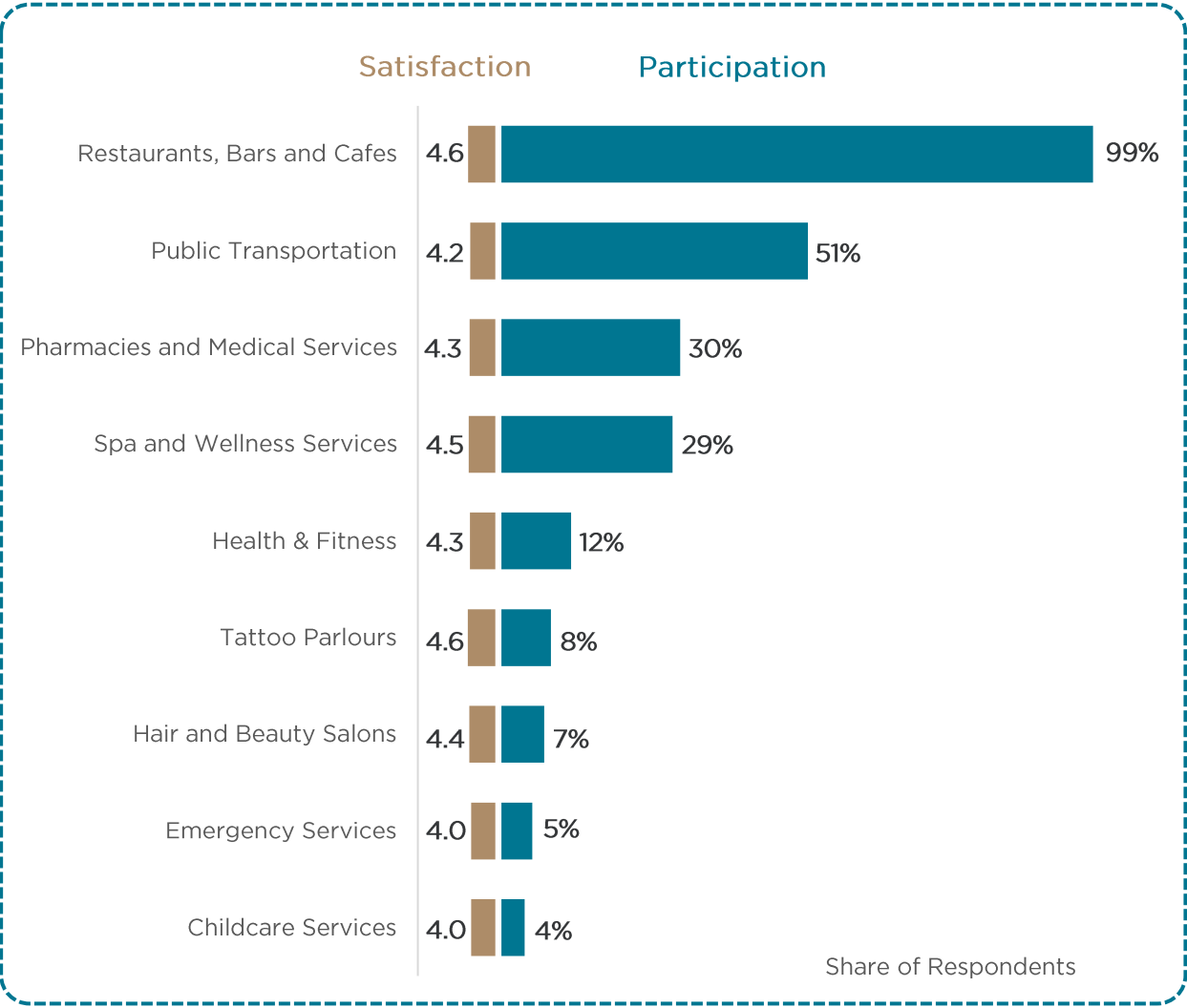
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%. Satisfaction is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that activity.

Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

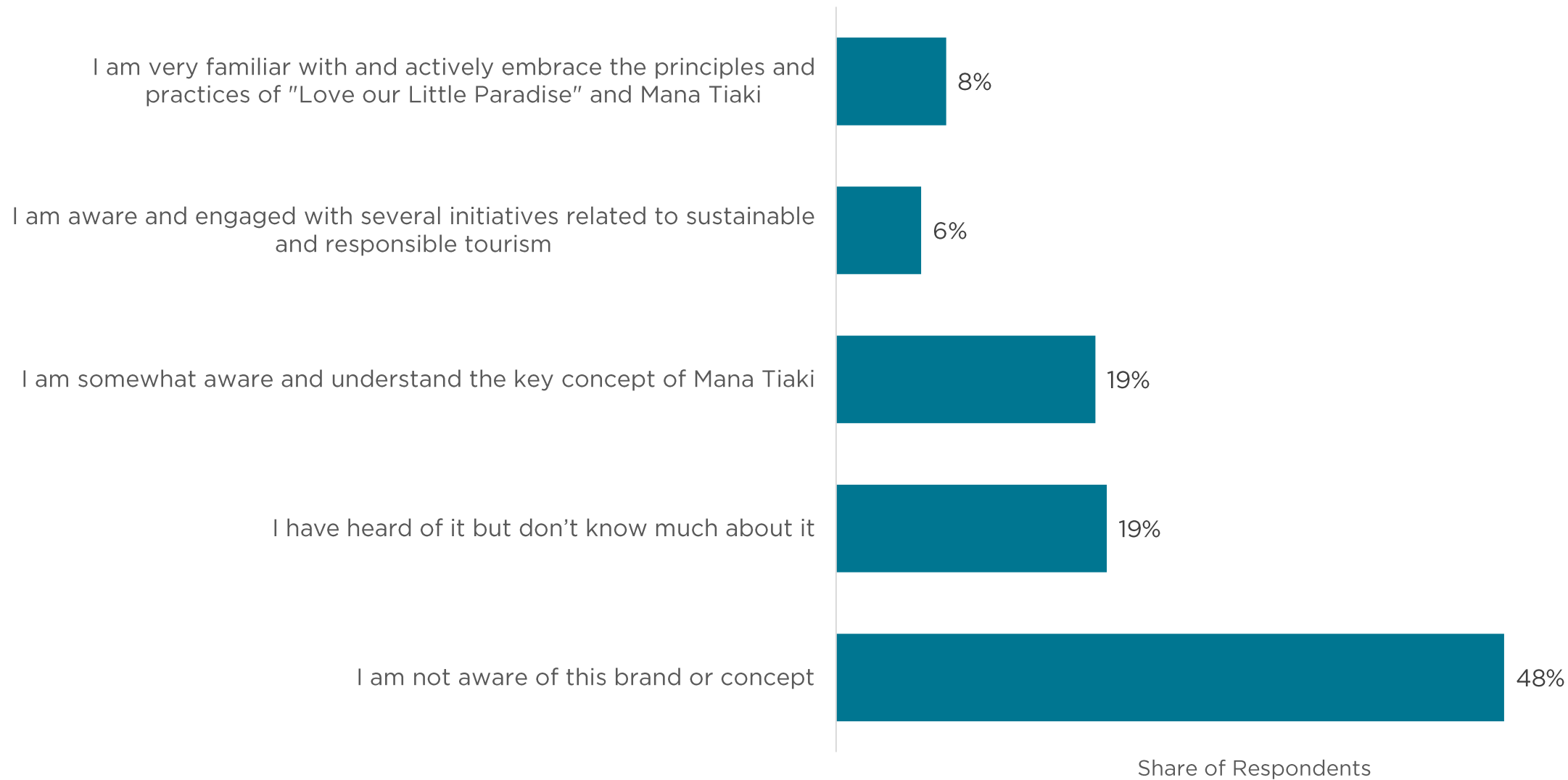
Services



Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%. Satisfaction is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that activity.

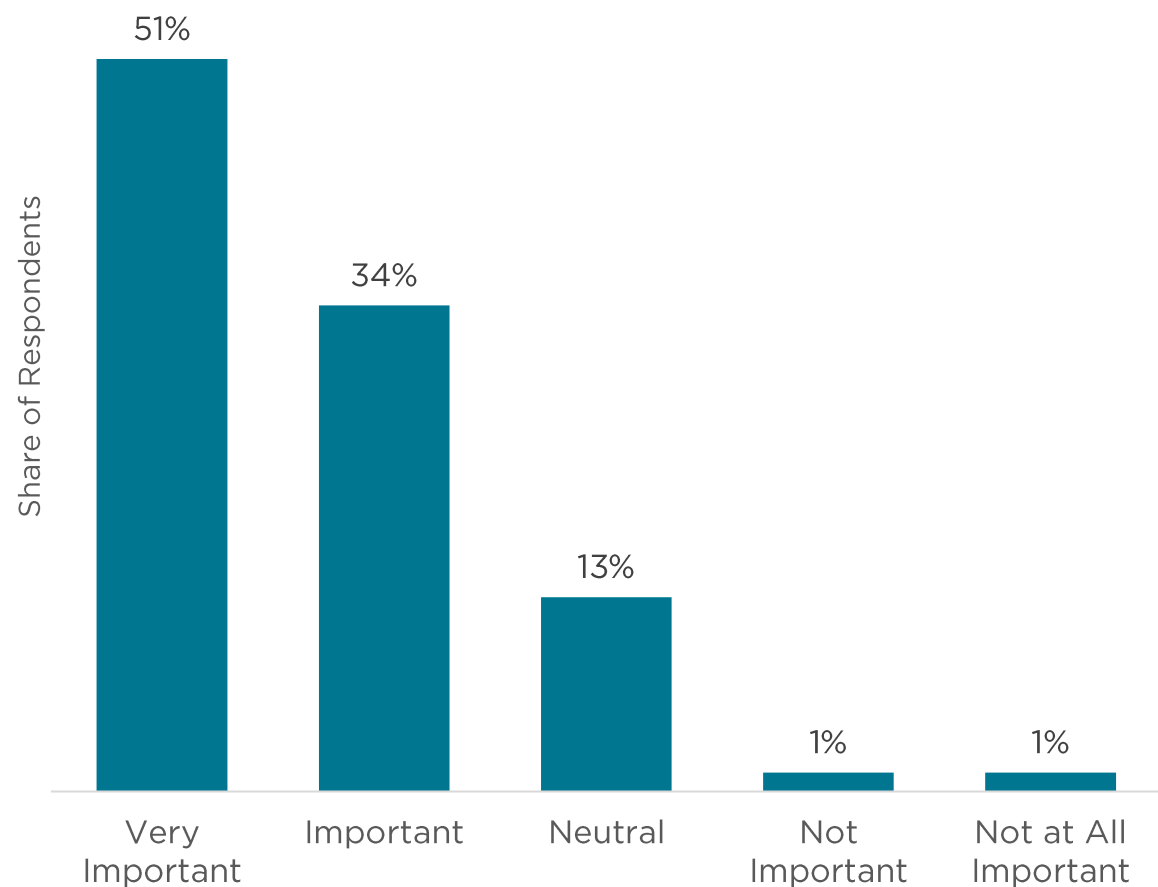
Awareness of "Love Our Little Paradise" and Mana Tiaki



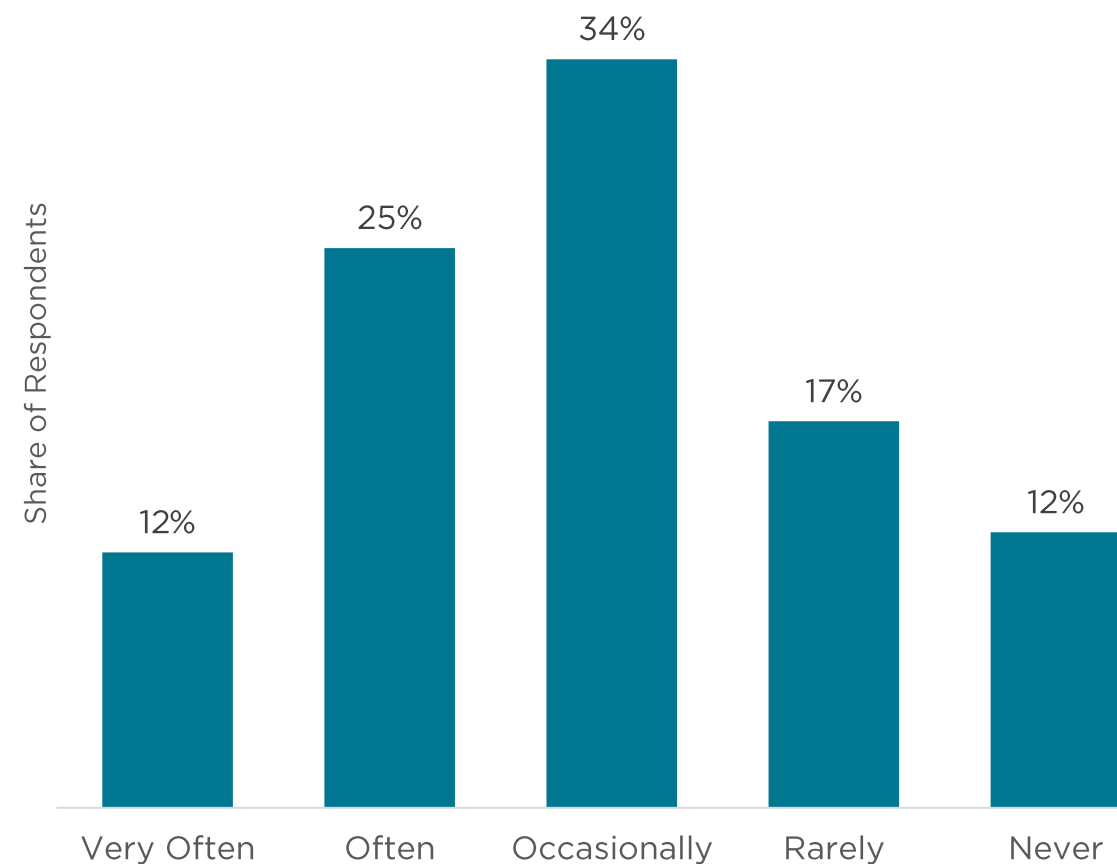
Note: New variable added for the July 2024-June 2025 survey period to address the question on the "Awareness of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation branding".

Perceptions and Engagement in Sustainable Tourism

Q: How important is it to you that the Cook Islands tourism industry operates sustainably and responsibly?

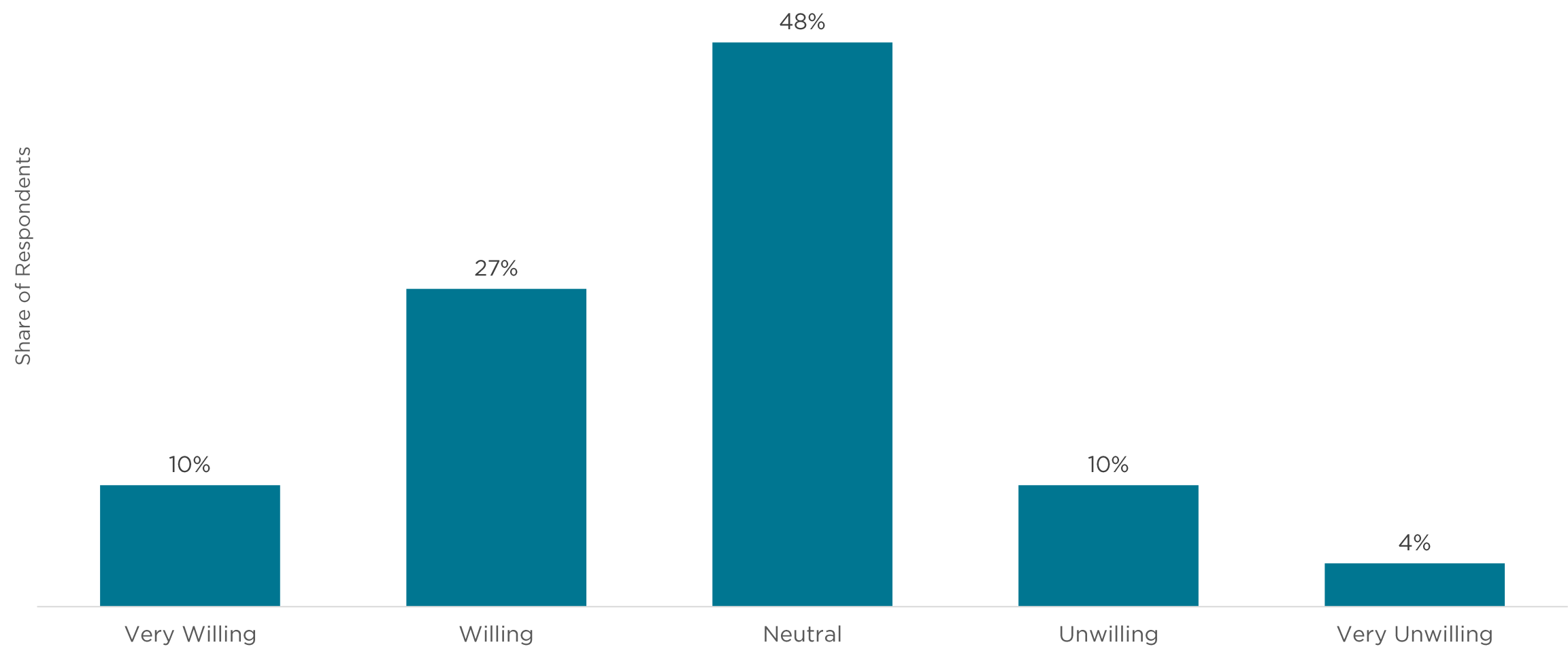


Q: During your visit, how often did you observe or participate in sustainable or responsible tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts)?



Note: New variable added for the July 2024-June 2025 survey period to address questions related to the "Perceptions and engagement in Sustainable Tourism".

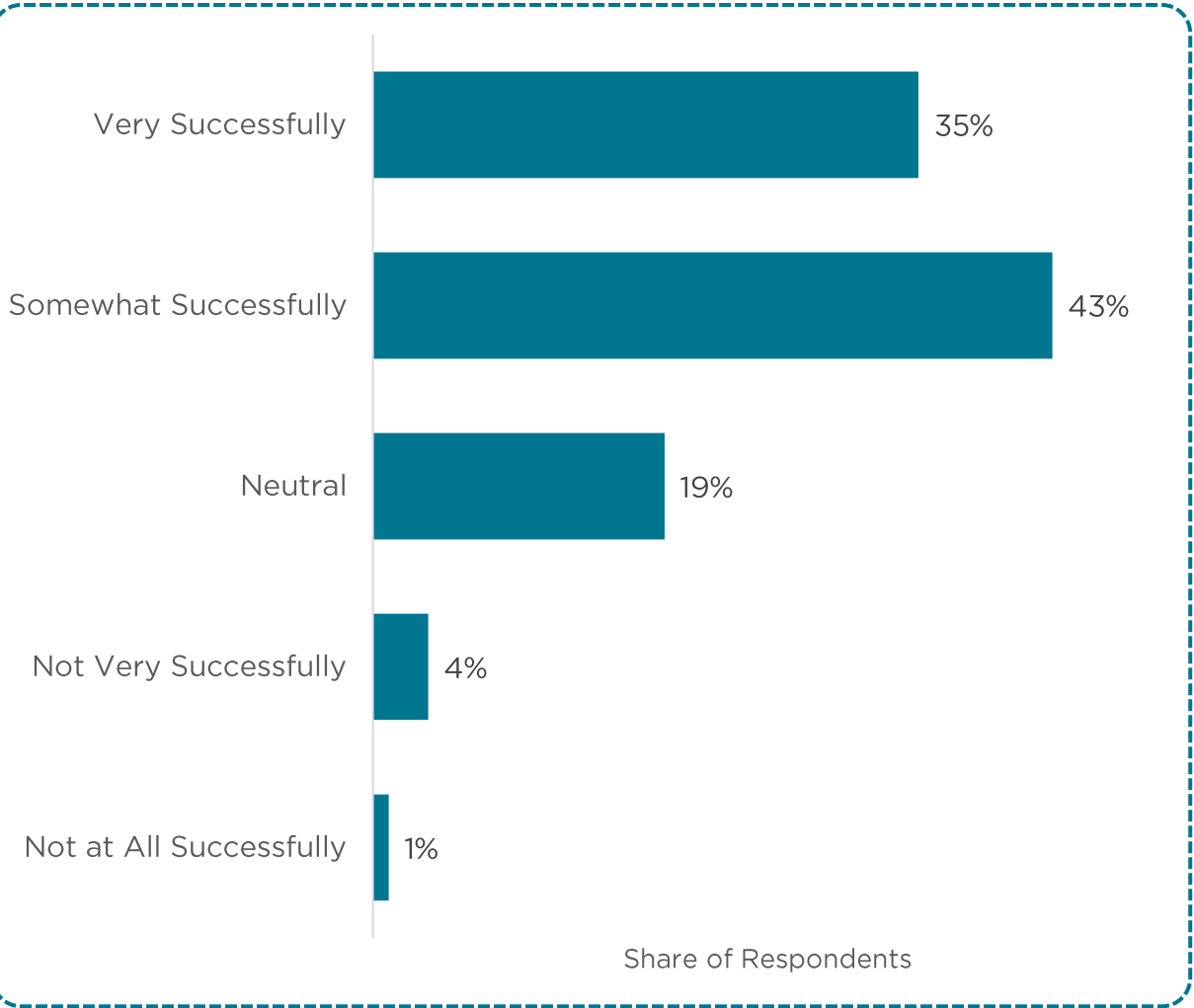
Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give-Back Initiatives



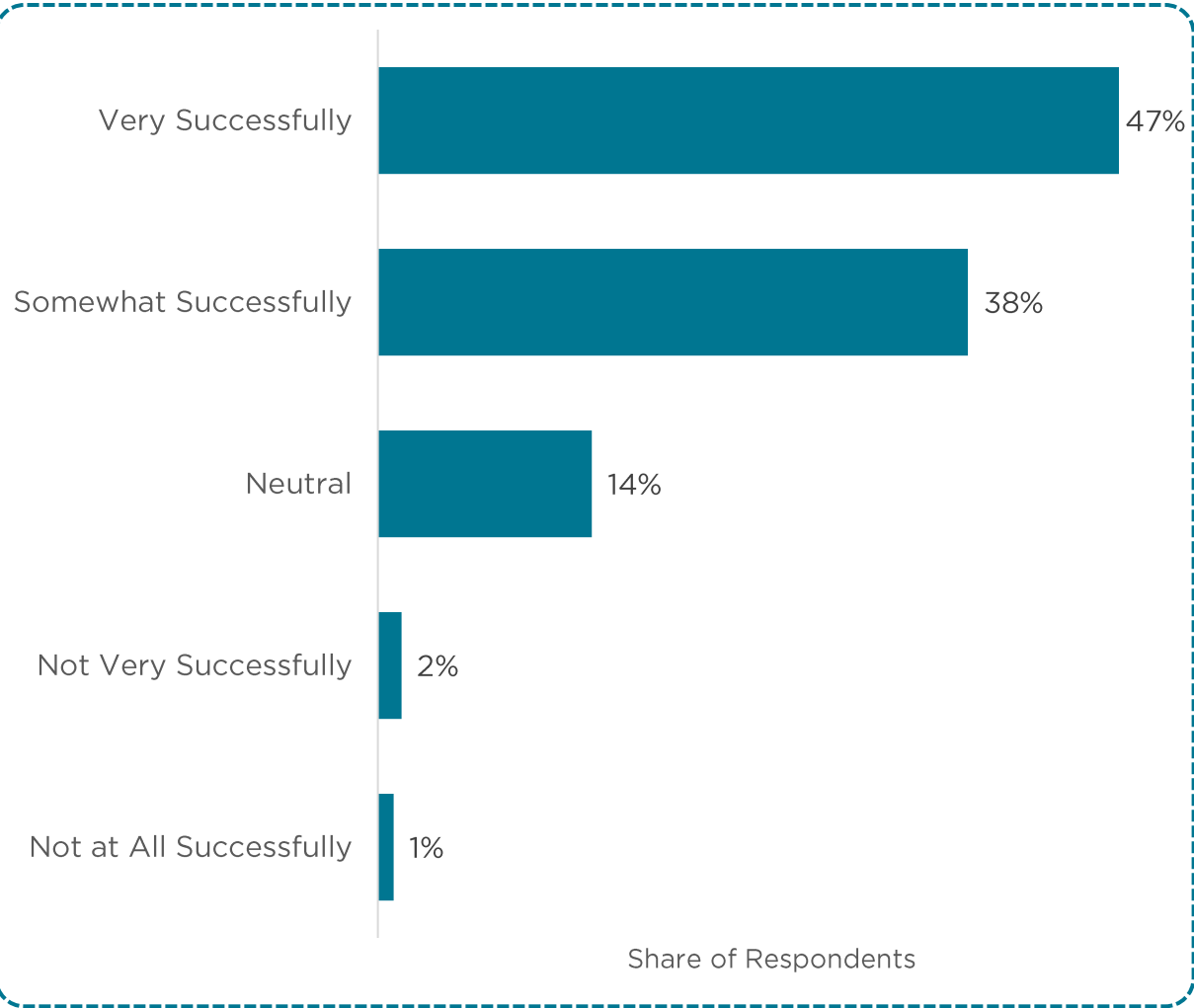
Note: The neutral bar rating of 48% for “Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give Back Initiative” indicates a significance portion of respondents are uncertain, presenting an opportunity to engage and address their concerns to shift opinions more favorably.

Protecting Natural Environment, Cultural Identity and Supporting Local Communities

Q: How well do you think the Cook Islands is protecting its natural environment (e.g., marine life, reefs, forests, beaches)?

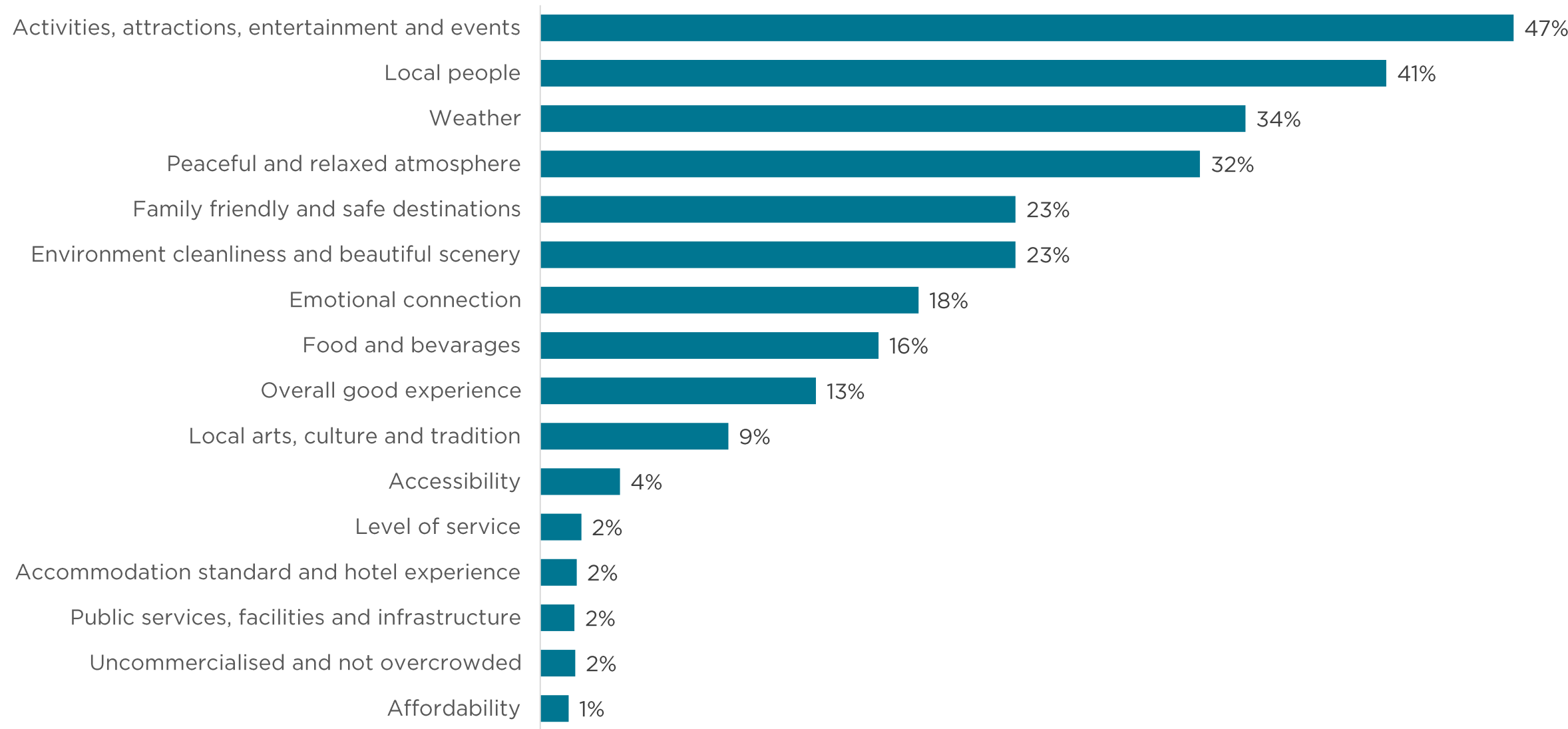


Q: How well do you think the Cook Islands is protecting its cultural identity and supporting local communities (e.g., traditional performances, Cook Islands Māori language, local arts and crafts)?



Note: New variable added for the July 2024-June 2025 survey period to address questions related to the “Protection of the Natural Environment and Cultural Identity, as well as support for Local Communities”.

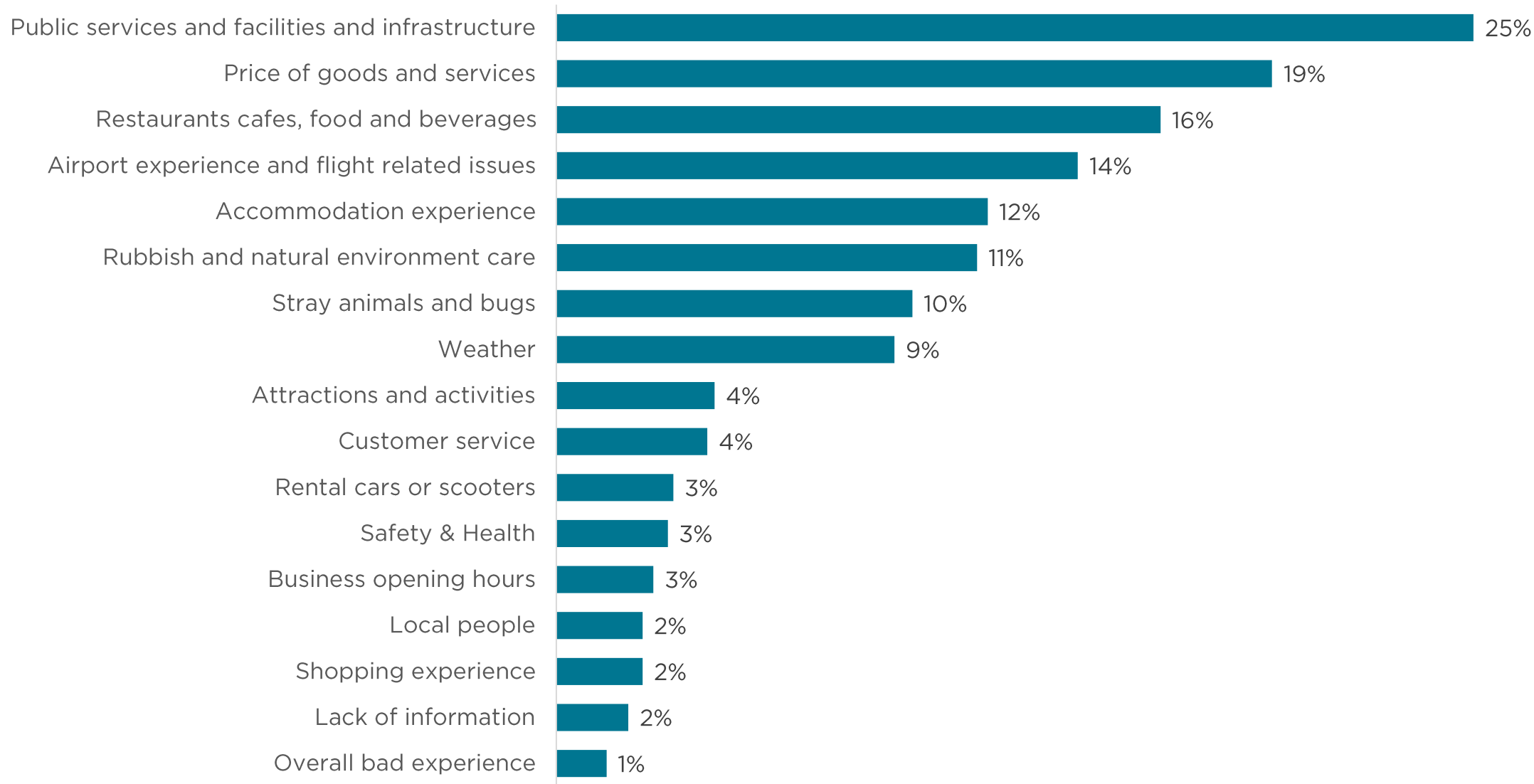
Most Appealing Aspects



Share of Respondents

Note: Total response N=1,081. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Least Appealing Aspects



Share of Respondents

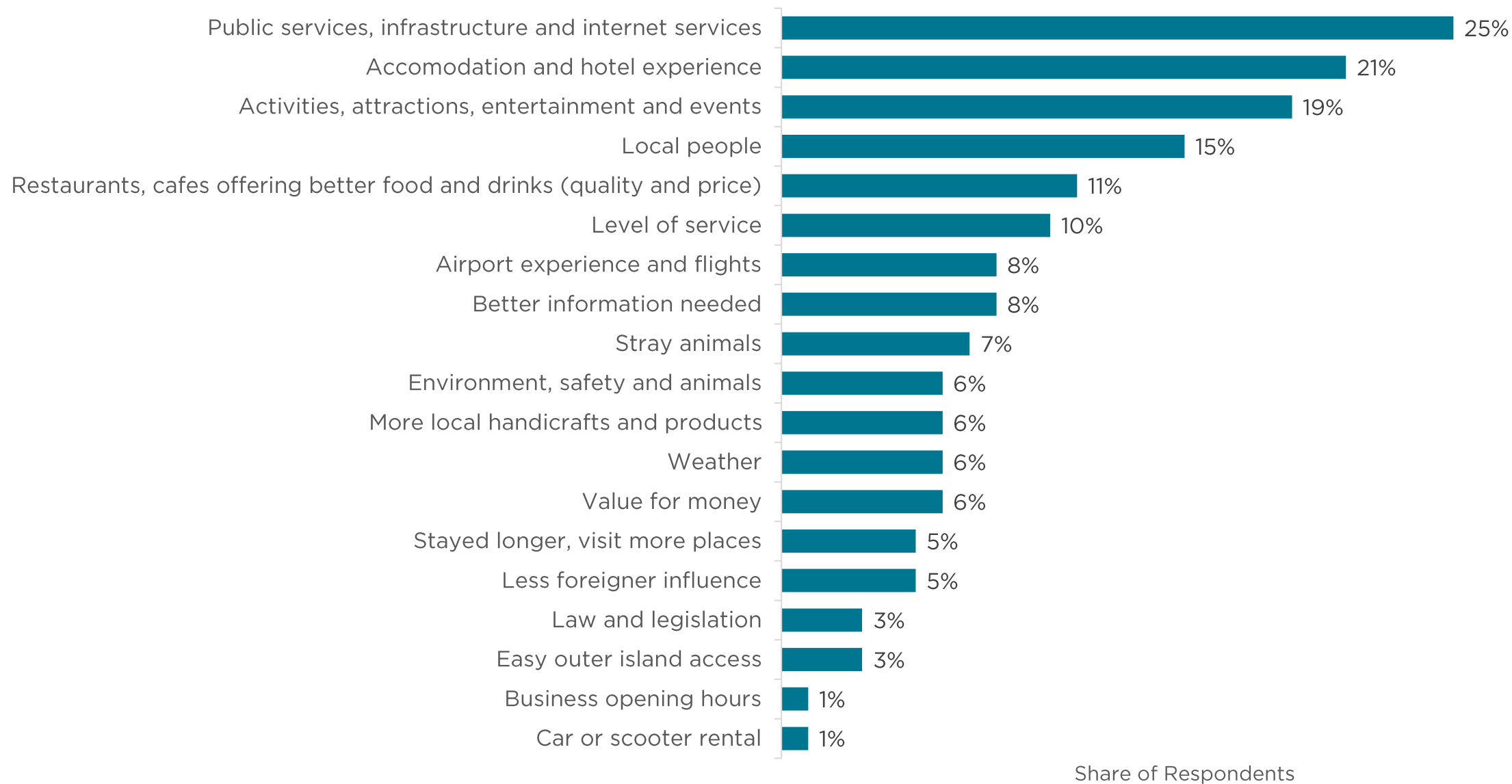
Note: Total response N=1,024. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Quotes for Least Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands

- + *A local telling us that we could not park at the western end of the airport runway after 10 pm as we wanted to watch a plane land and that the signs, could not find the signs, the smell of cigarettes and alcohol. Not happy at all.*
- + *Accommodation websites not up to date. Being cancelled 4 different places because of overbooking after paying and confirming online prior to arrival.*
- + *Burning of the rubbish- not very environmentally conscious and not nice to walk past locals burning their rubbish while walking on the beach. Dog fights kept us up a few nights.*
- + *Difficulty in figuring out when stores were open, drove by the museum multiple times and it was never open.*
- + *Fishing charter. The skipper was great, friendly, but was really annoyed to find we don't get to keep all of our catch and is sold off to restaurants. We had paid good money for the charter; we had other families that were not in a position to do the charter due to accessibility yet enjoy fish. It was an issue to take fish home for them also.*
- + *Found customer service in mainly hotel/resort bars inattentive and rude at times. Cost of living is quite high, otherwise great.*
- + *I got robbed of my phone camera and more. Police was a joke. We could track the stolen phone and shared the location with the police they told us they can't get into the property. Worst experience I ever had in 40 years traveling in over 70 countries.*
- + *Internet connectivity is poor, current carrier hot spots are inconsistent. and was non existent in our accommodation.*
- + *It is very hard to get around which restricted activities we could do around the island. Taxis were very expensive and the motor bikes are dangerous, especially with all the potholes and rough roads. Also, the weather was rainy and gloomy except for a few hours in the afternoon.*
- + *Litter and broken glass on the beaches, tourist spots, road sides and roads. No rubbish bins placed at public areas.*



Suggestions for Improvement



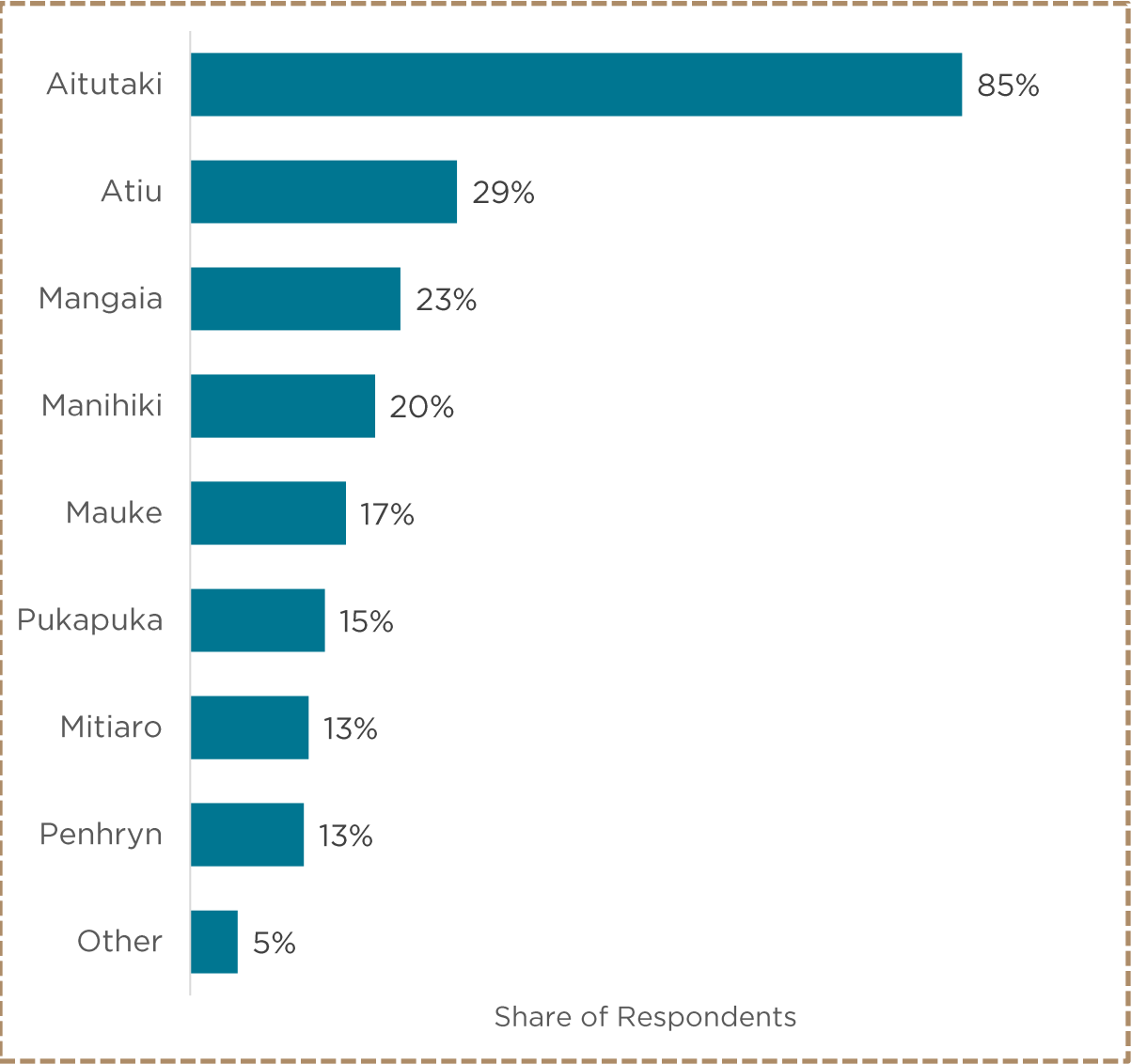
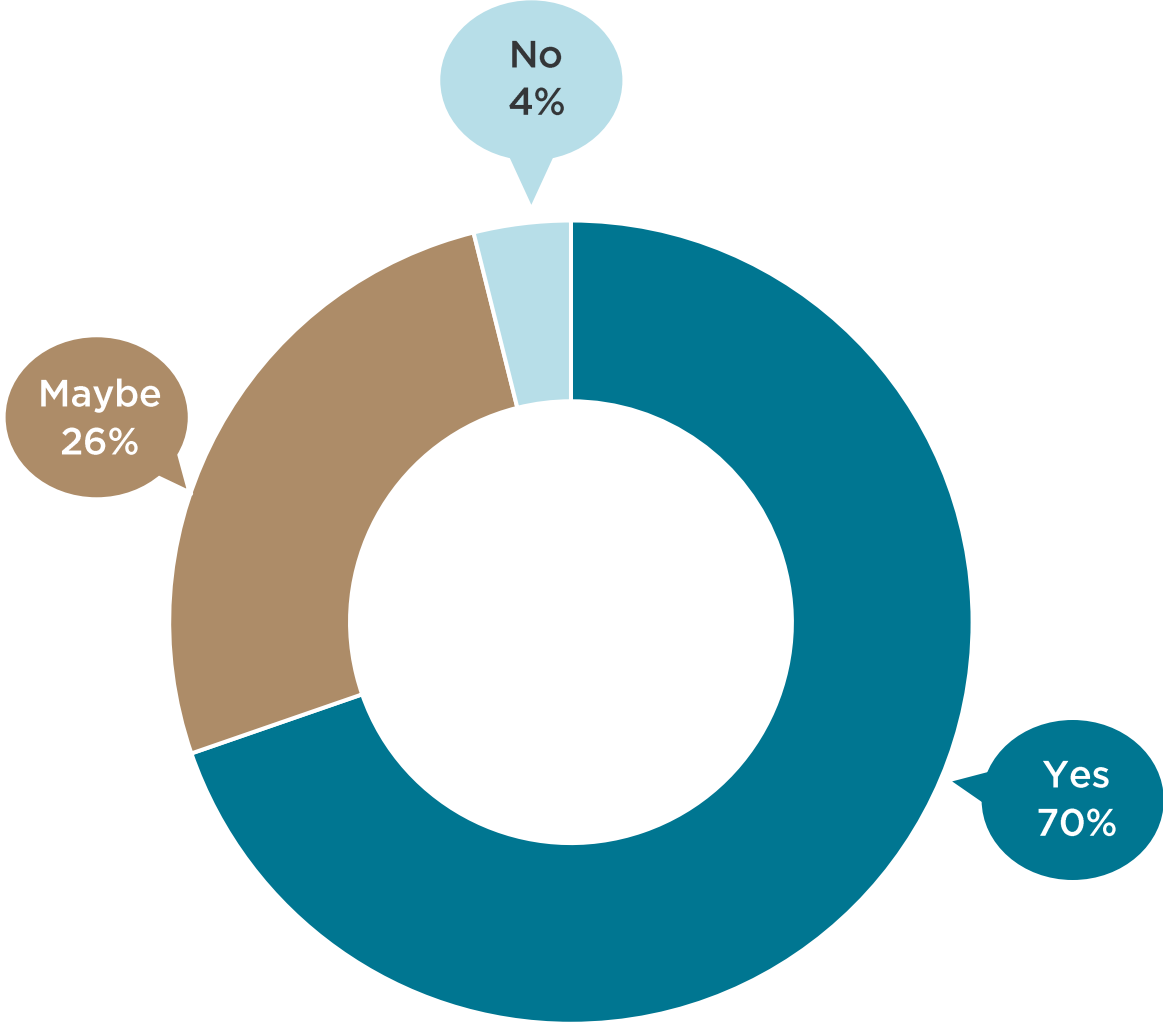
Note: Total response N=380 Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Quotes for Suggestions for Improvement



- + A bicycle path and a pedestrian path are needed.
- + A local pricing structure for commodities and a tourist pricing structure for the same, especially locally grown goods.
- + Alternative activities for bad weather. More information on how windy the lagoon area is. Do not offer snorkeling trips to areas where there is nothing to see.
- + Air NZ reinstating direct flights from Sydney with Premium Economy seating to make the red eye flight more bearable.
- + Being able to stay connected while overseas is very important, as is being able to back up any photos, videos and such to the cloud without constantly having to pay to top up my data limit.
- + Better customer services and better custom or immigration personnel service at airport and at office when arriving, be kind to visitors in speech and manner no need for crass language.
- + Better public transport, better internet/phone reception, less litter at beaches, affordable airport transfers.
- + Better water treatment and being more well for the holiday.
- + Clearer road markings when the road goes two lanes each way. (I nearly caused an accident because I hadn't realized the outer lane wasn't opposing).
- + Cook islands should never sold their soul to the devil. Strict guidelines should be implemented to control such a rude, entitled ignorant person. He is a thorn in the side of some of the most beautiful caring proud and giving cultural people. No other improvements please! Cook Islands are perfect. Yes, expensive but worth every penny. Jo and Odette offer incredible hospitality for such an affordable price. Campbell in Aitutaki had the best e-bikes. The sweet smell of the yard fires are magic. The lagoon tours are the best. Forget any more resorts. Promote and support the locals to create Airbnb more affordable accommodation and enterprise in the form of government grants to locals only. Promote locals to get together and join forces to create employment by creating their own business opportunities. Consult the locals and no longer feed that horrible man.
- + Go back to your roots lol I'm happy to stay in my own country it is so stressful travelling overseas now it's become too over commercialized it's lost its appeal it's a rot.
- + Having to use motor transport to travel short distances due to lack of sidewalks, eg. from accommodation to a local cafe or bakery.

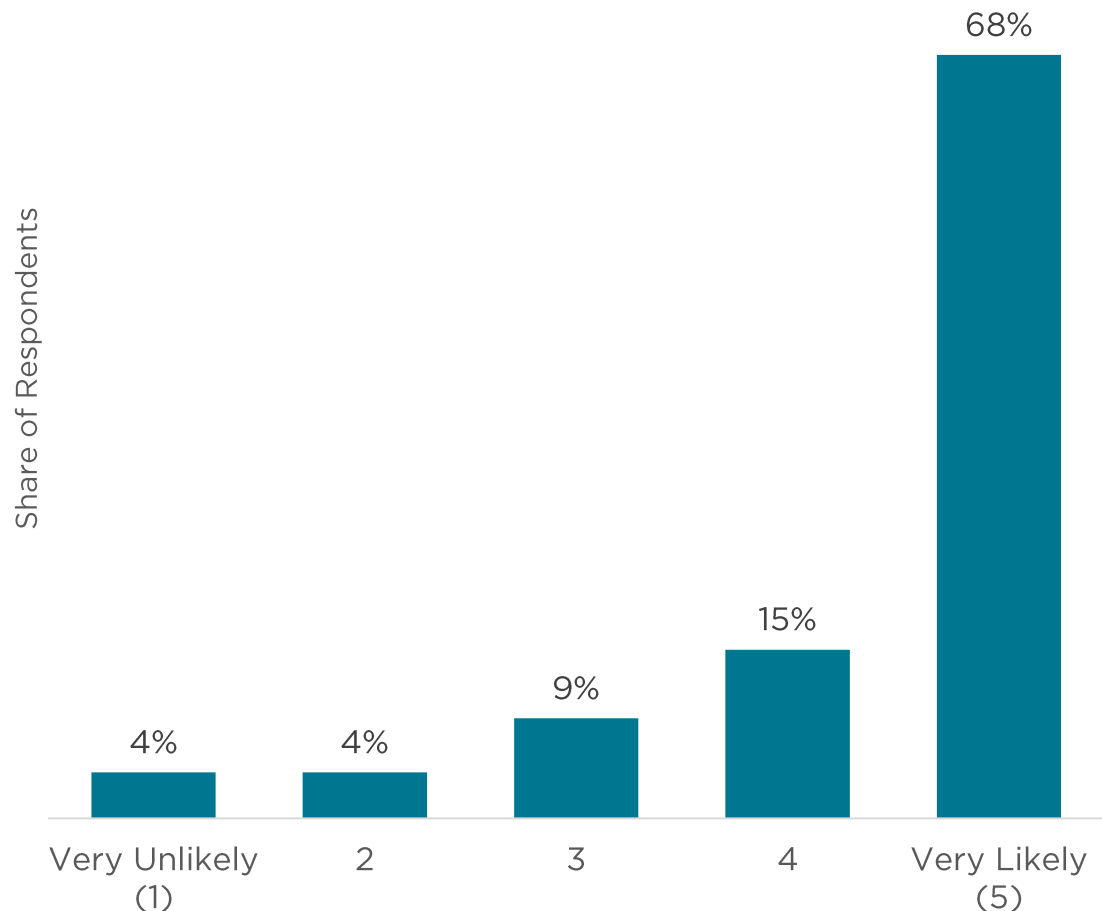
Willingness to Visit Outer Islands



Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%.

Future Motivations

Q: How likely would you return to the Cook Islands?

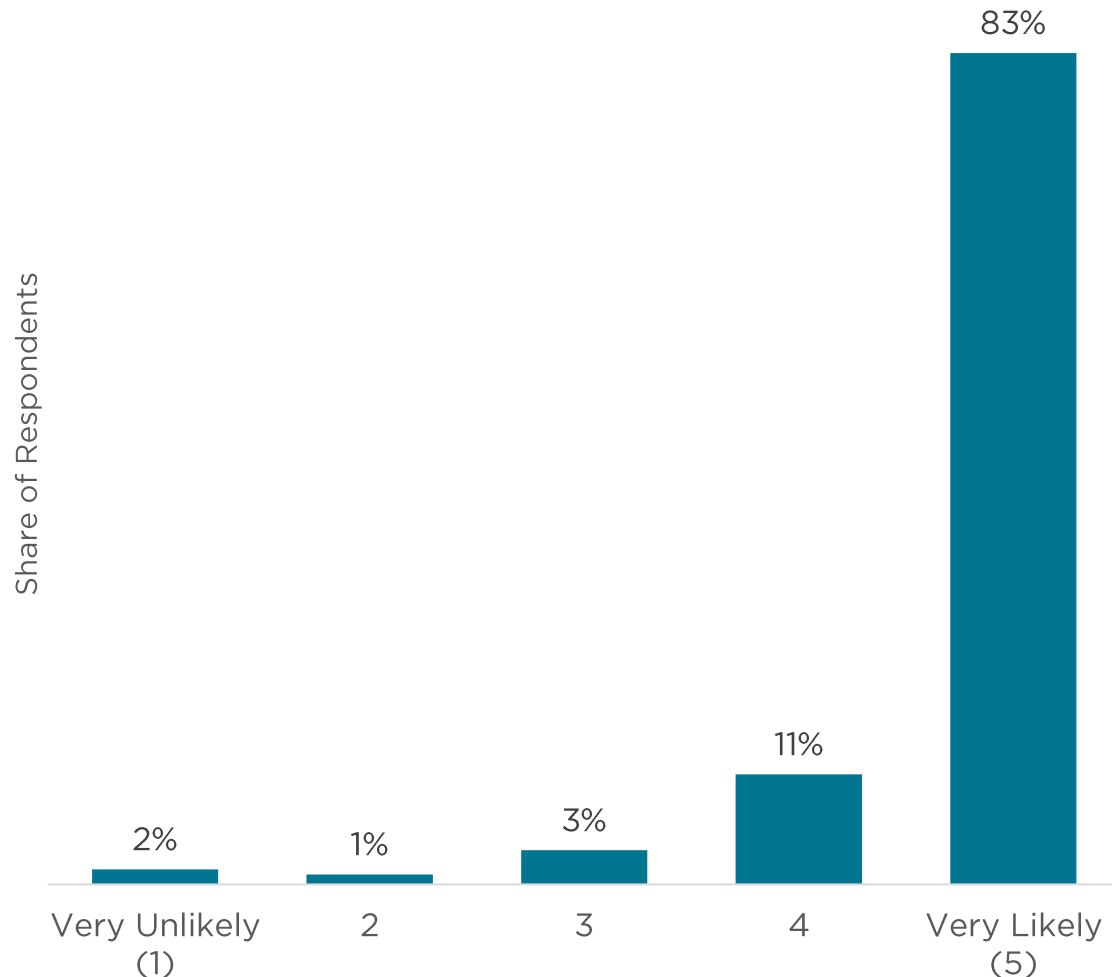


Quotes: Reasons to not return

- + *Would consider returning to Rarotonga but its 10,000 miles from home and the whole Aitutaki experience was poor and there are lots of other places that make us feel more welcome!*
- + *We've now been there six times, and want to go somewhere different. We want also to see the rest of the world. Cook Islands was combined with our trip to New Zealand.*
- + *Value for money , bed sheets hygiene, we got bed bugs and fungal infections.*
- + *Too expensive to go to a place I didn't enjoy as much as others and I have many other countries I want to see.*
- + *The local vibe has changed from being inviting and sharing of the local lifestyle and culture to the desire to take as much money off tourists as they can.*
- + *Much more affordable and better resorts elsewhere.*
- + *It was a bucket list, one off, trip. I've done it, have not plans to return. It is understandably an expensive destination to visit. However, if the opportunity ever comes up, we would be delighted to return. We have recommended it to many friends and relatives.*
- + *I don't want to get robbed again and not getting any help.*
- + *Had a bad experience with young man assistant at airport for disabled daughter, who made her stand waiting for 45 mins while she was fainting and ignoring me when I asked to get her wheelchair so I had to hold her the whole time while she was passing out and she's 24 so not light, not impressed because his job was as an assistant for disabled, so won't be returning for that reason.*
- + *Food is a big part of what I enjoy about travel. If the food options are not good as a vegetarian it really takes away from the enjoyment of the trip.*

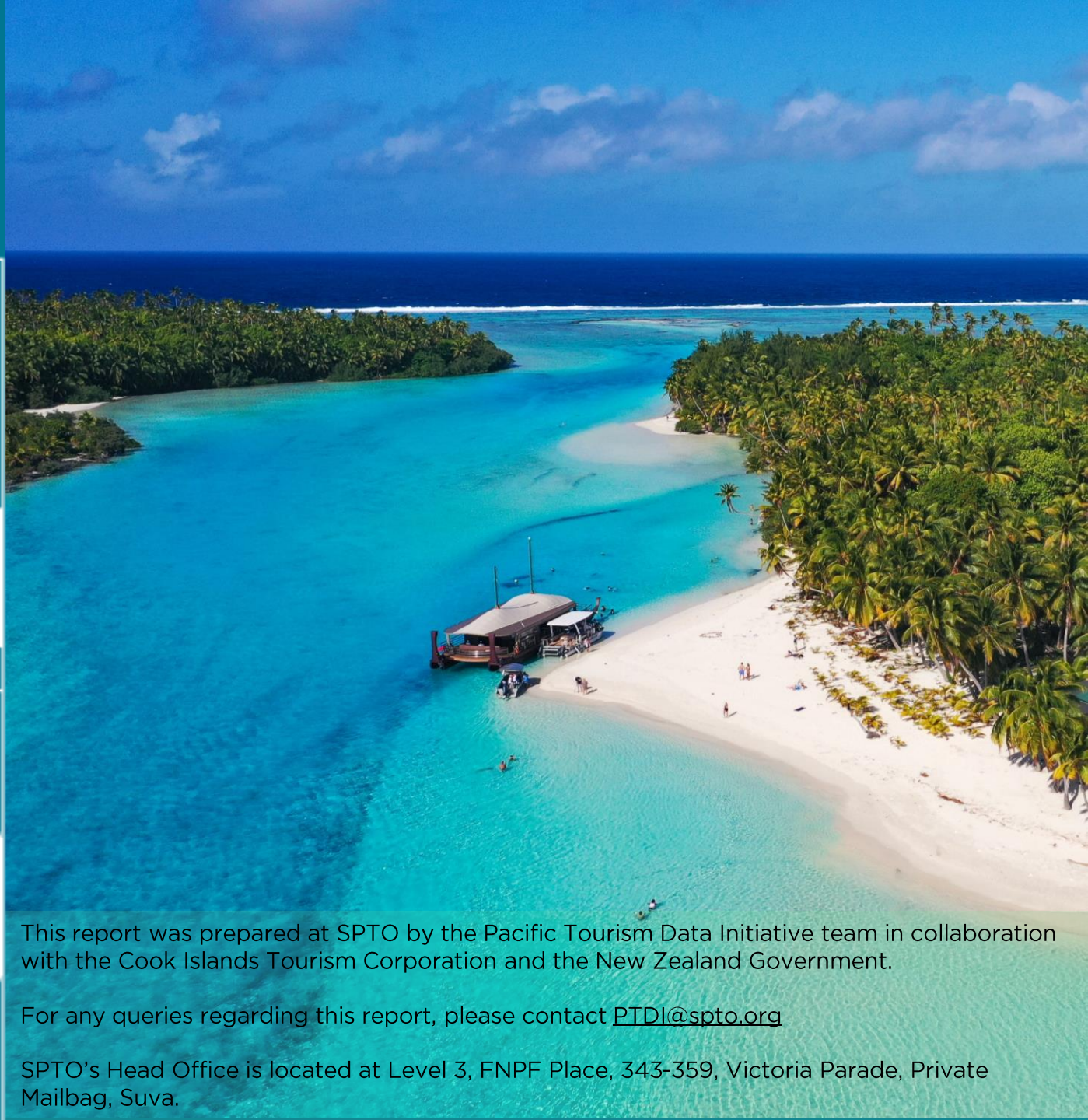
Future Motivations

Q: How likely would you recommend the Cook Islands?



Quotes: Reasons to not recommend

- + *They canceled our trip to the other island but took other people from our tour group and we had prepaid for the trip. We would tell people not to go there especially if you wanted to visit other islands and the hotel that we stayed at was in need for an update it was from the 80s not updated since.*
- + *Resorts to overpriced for old rooms and expensive dining and drinks half if more priced in Vanuatu.*
- + *Australia has its beauty and one of nicest place on earth I think the trend is to stay at home with all world dramas and the over commercialism and greed and environmental problems the world has changed so badly I'm sure I'm not the only one that thinks the same. I'm sorry that's my opinion your welcomes into Cook Islands felt so fake the food was shocking the accommodation so poor and no one really cared only just how much money they got from us starting from Avis's car rental at airport and the two accommodation places this last trip was the worst we will never go back Cook Islands has lost its charm.*
- + *Cost of food is over the top. Imported food is understandably costly but locally grown food should reflect the ease and accessibility i.e.. bananas shouldn't cost \$1 each and coconuts shouldn't cost upwards of \$5 each.*
- + *Bad experience at airport for my disabled daughter.*
- + *Safety is an issue but not addressed by the authority.*
- + *Whilst Jetstar is the only airline from Australia I will not recommend.*
- + *We were not impressed based on our experiences.*
- + *Lack of information*



This report was prepared at SPTO by the Pacific Tourism Data Initiative team in collaboration with the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation and the New Zealand Government.

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