

Cook Islands

International Visitor Survey Report
October - December 2025

SAFO



Acknowledgements

- ❖ The Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) expresses its gratitude to all contributors to this quarterly report on IVS data from October to December 2025 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 the arrival 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 2,881 responses out of 3,081 collected, representing 14% of actual visitors with a 19% response rate. Among the respondents, 13% were solo travelers, and the average household income was NZD166,110..
- ❖ Visitors were primarily drawn to the Cook Islands for its reputation as a safe destination, warm climate, peaceful and relaxing atmosphere, and the friendliness of its local people. Overall satisfaction was very high, with an average rating of 4.7 out of 5. Notably, 98% of visitors indicated they would recommend the Cook Islands to others, while 96% expressed a willingness to return.
- ❖ The average prepaid spend per visitor was NZD2,532 with an estimated 40% (NZD1,013) flowing into the local economy. In-country spending per visitor per trip averaged NZD1,646 with an average stay of 8.5 nights. This contributed to an *estimated** economic impact of NZD130 million from October to December 2025.
- ❖ Visitors were less satisfied with public transport, some infrastructure and facilities, the high cost of living, and the range of activities and wildlife attractions. To improve their experience, they suggested better public transport and road maintenance, improved quality of tourist activities and wildlife attractions, more helpful services from airport, immigration, and customs staff, more affordable and reliable flight options, and upgrades to some accommodations to improve overall standards.

Background

- ❖ The October – December 2025 Cook Islands Annual 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 2025 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 2025 period was similar, but not exact, to the survey instrument used in the October - December 2024 period. New questions were added, some existing questions were revised or removed, and certain response options were adjusted. In those instances where comparisons cannot be made, we report only the results for the October – December 2025 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 2025)

 **15,304** TOTAL VALID EMAILS SENT

 **2,881** TOTAL RESPONSES ANALYZED

19%
CONVERSION RATE

Note: 3,081 responses were received. After data cleaning, 2,881 responses remained.

RESPONSES COVERED

 **5,570** ADULTS  **1,511** CHILDREN

14%
OF ALL VISITORS IN THIS PERIOD

Cook Islands International Visitor Survey

Snapshot October – December 2025

Country of residence



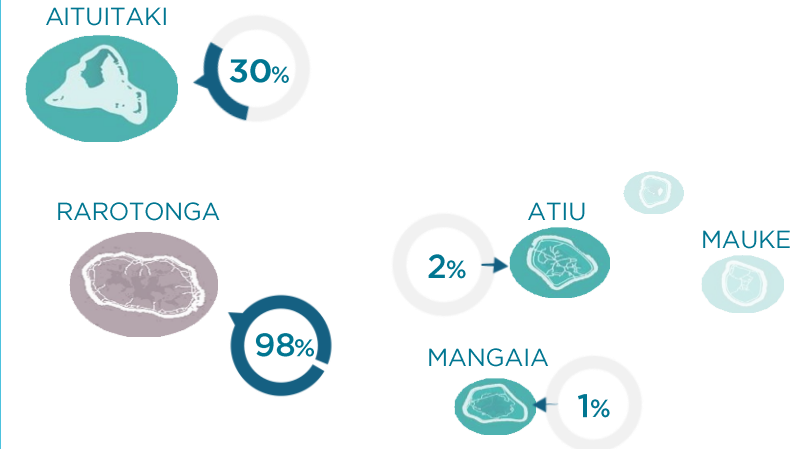
Purpose of visit



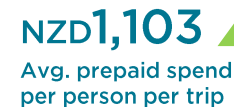
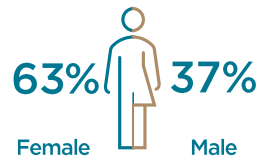
Most Participated Activities



Islands visited



Economic impact

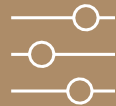


Note: The estimated flow-back rate into the Cook Islands for prepaid spend is 40%. With an average prepaid spend of \$2,532 per person per trip, this equates to \$1,103.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making

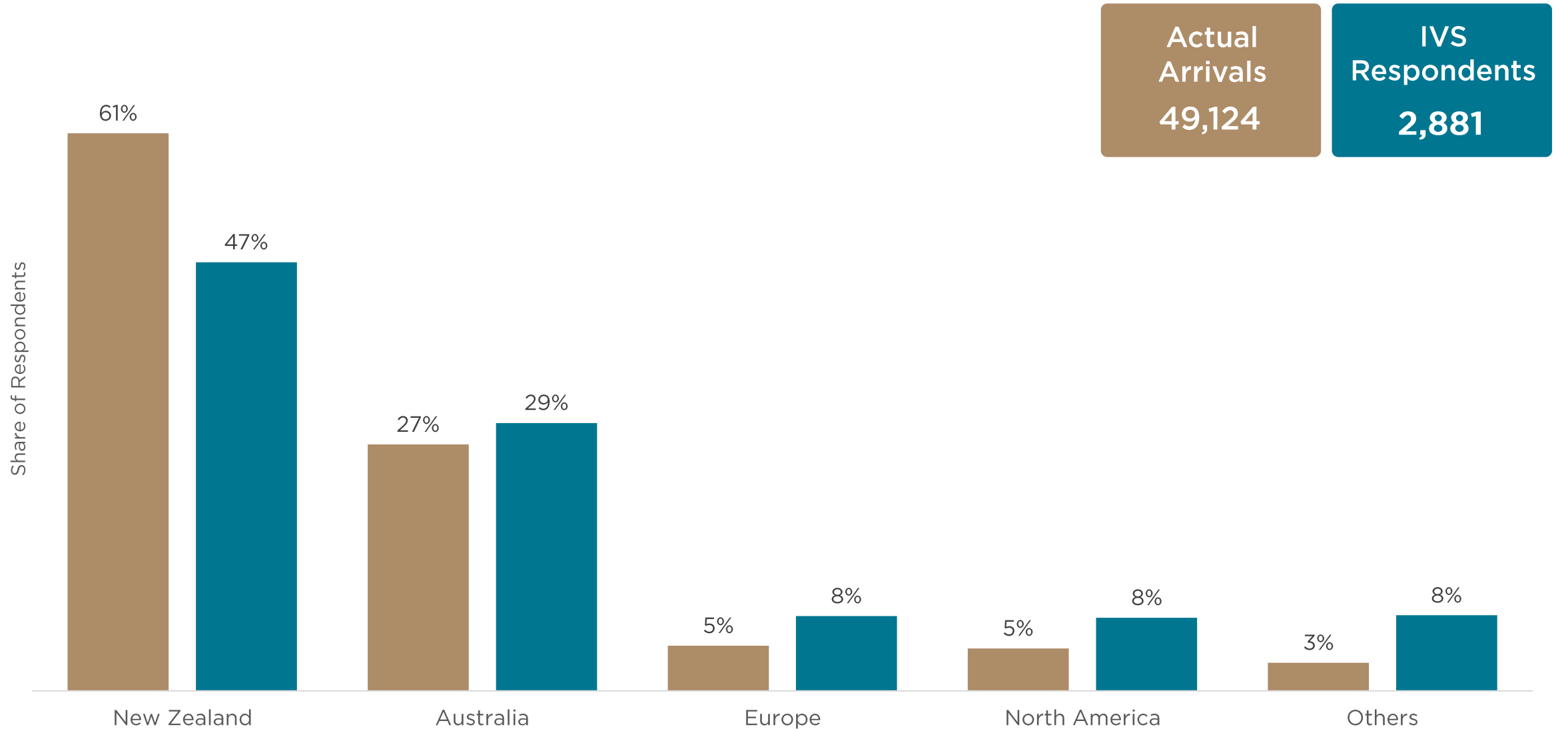


Visitor Spending
& Impact



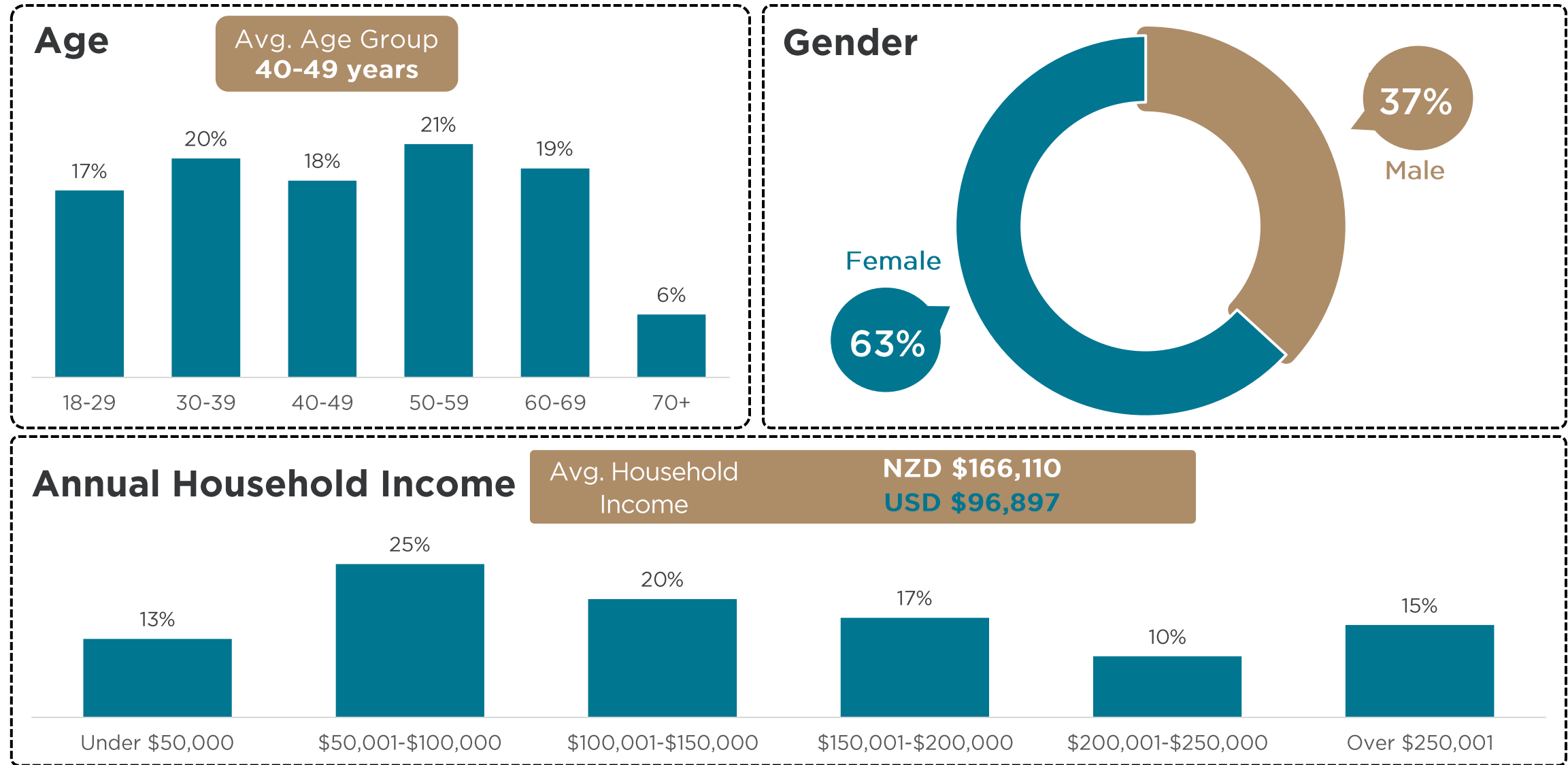
Visitor
Satisfaction

Source Markets: IVS Respondents vs Actual Arrival



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

Respondent Demographics



Note: % share of IVS respondents. \$ in NZD. The average exchange rate to NZD and USD for October-December 2025 was applied.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



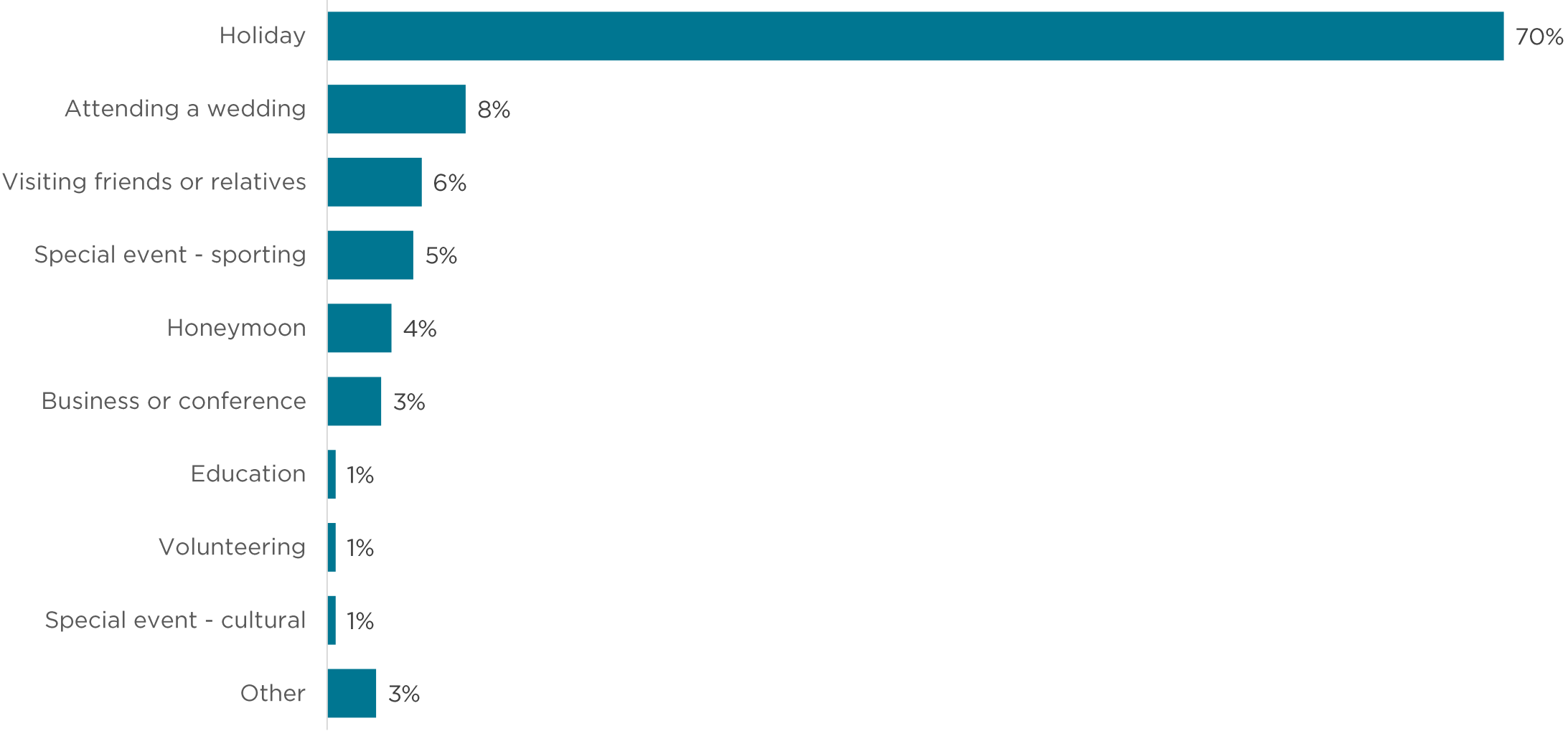
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Purpose of Visit

Q: What was the main purpose of your visit?

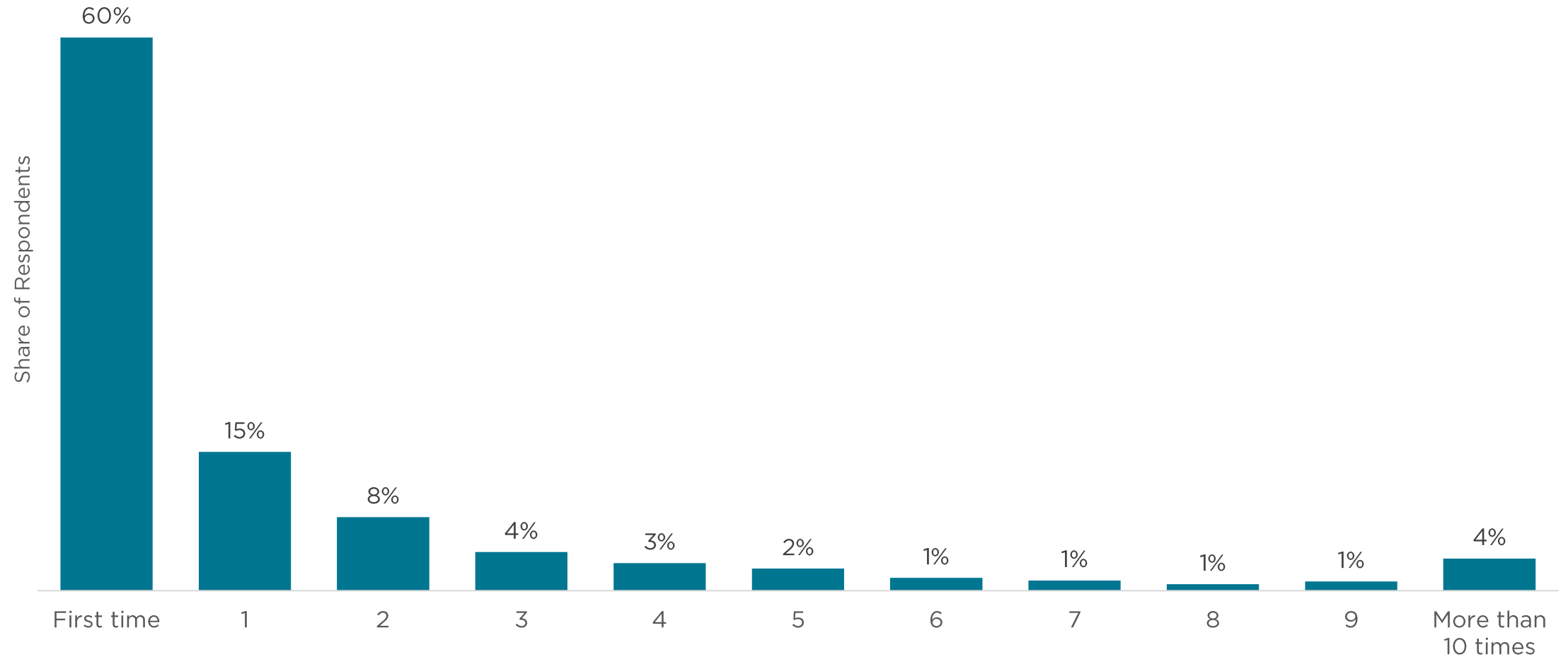


Share of Respondents

Note: N=2,835. Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%. VFR stands for "Visiting Friends and Relatives".

Number of Visits

Q: How many times have been to the Cook Islands not including this recent visit?

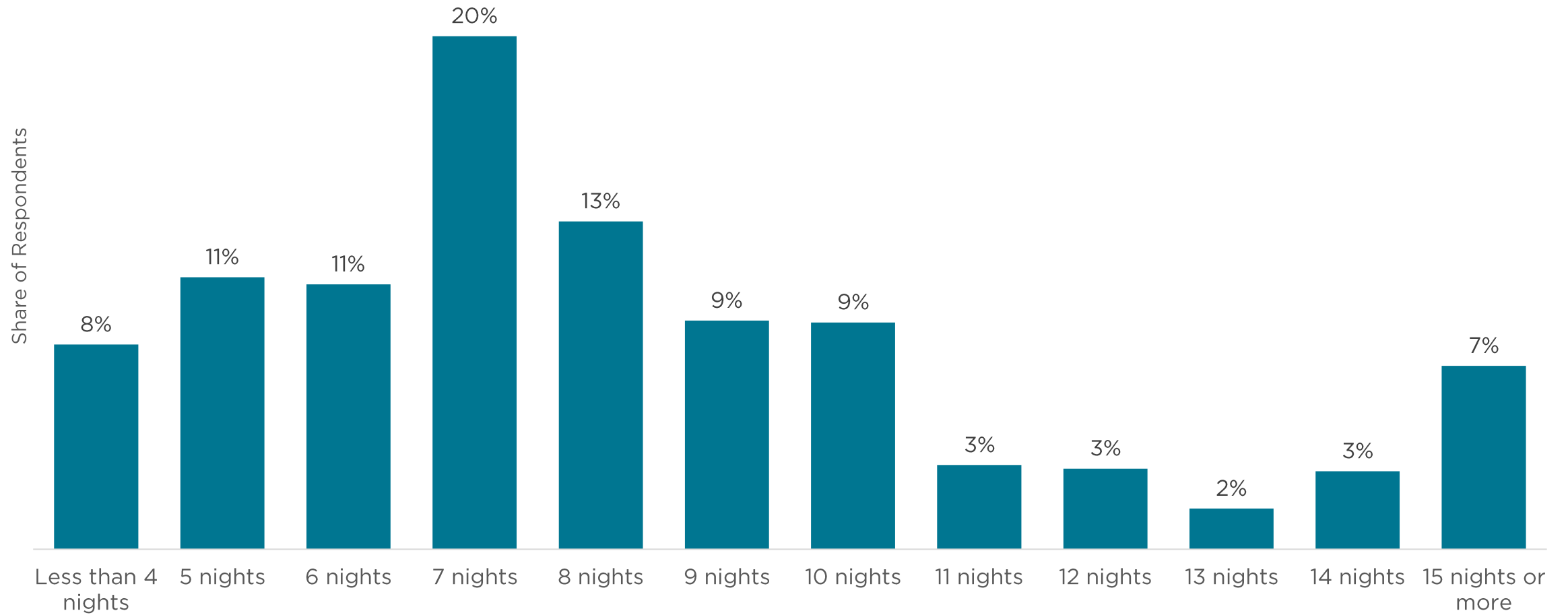


Note: N=2,812 Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

Length of Stay (nights)

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

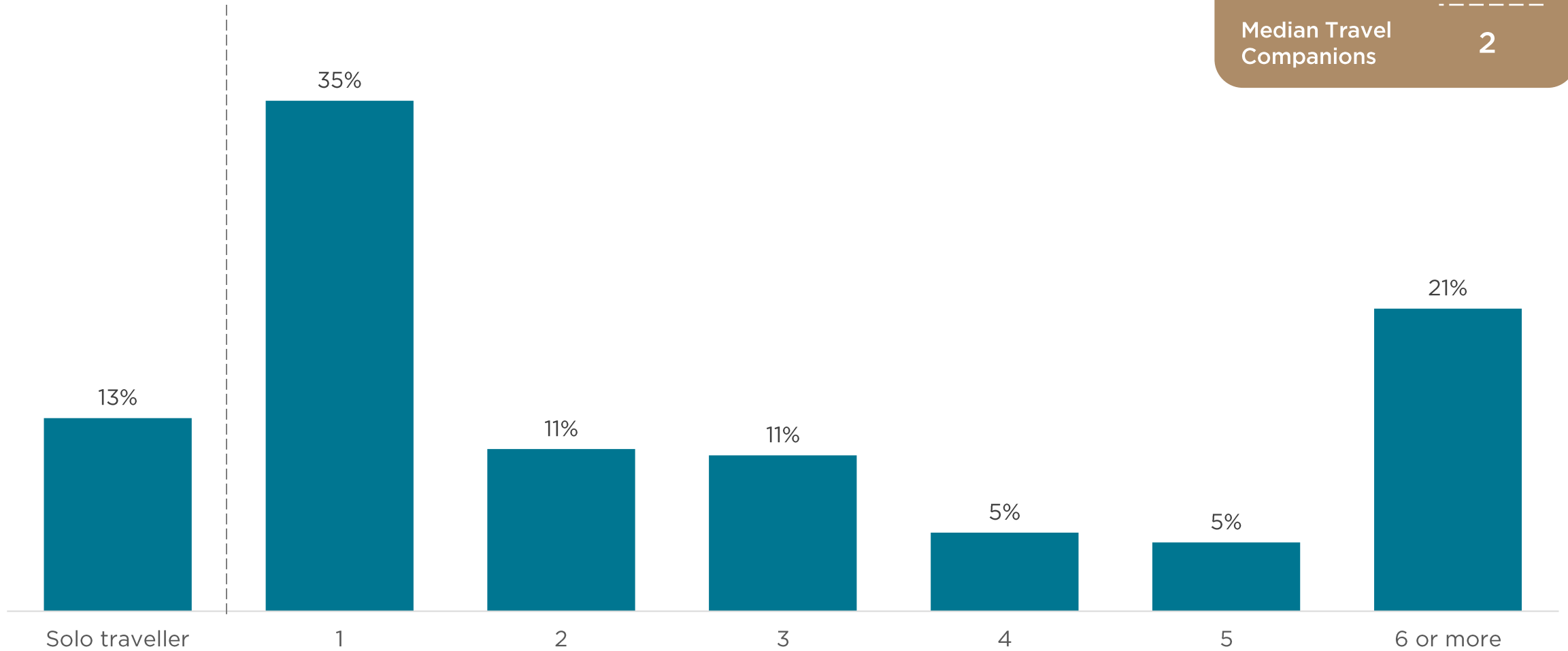
Avg. Length of Stay
8.5 Nights



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

Travel Group Size

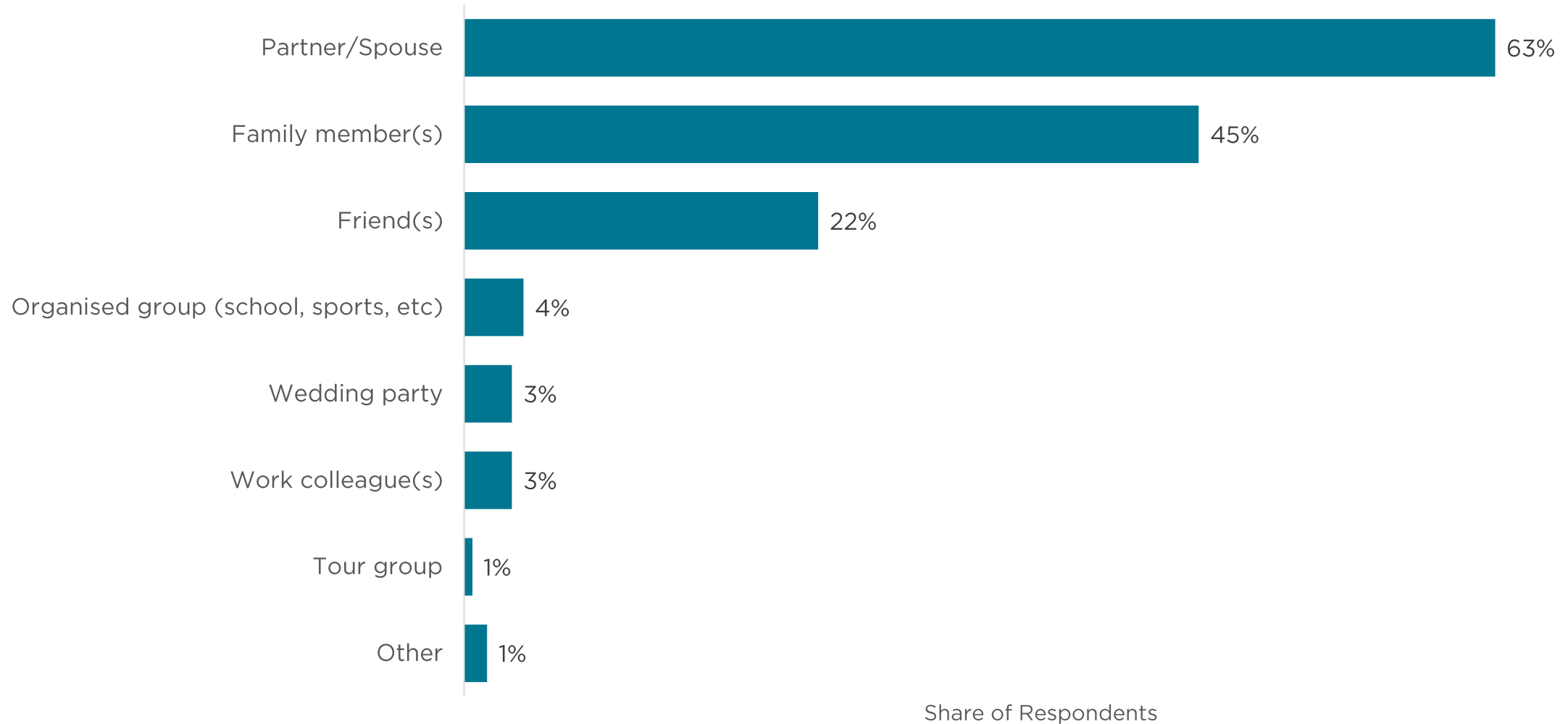
Q: How many people accompanied you on this trip?



Note: N=2,805 Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

Travel Companions

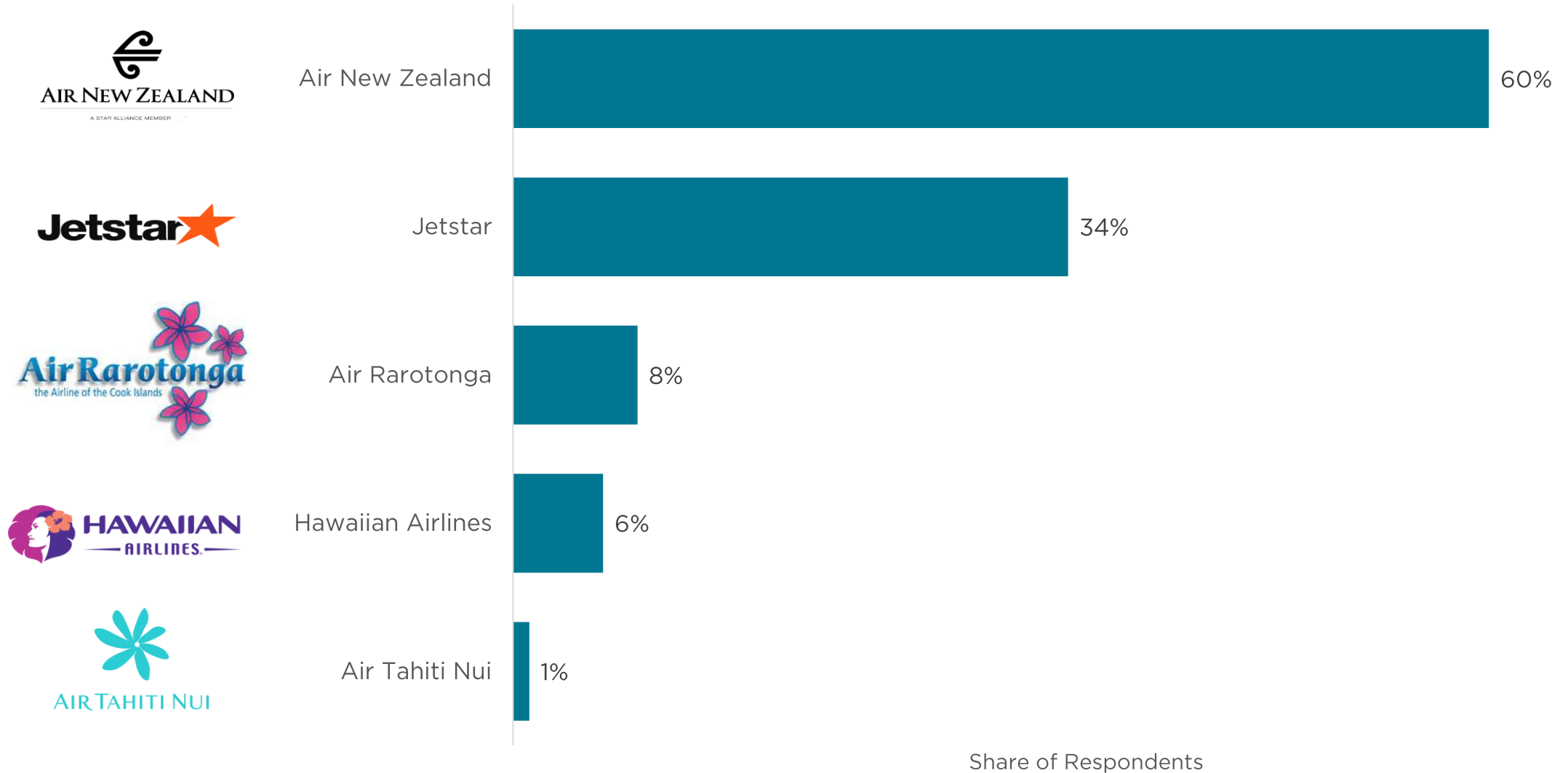
Q: Who were your travelling companions?



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

Airlines Used for Travel

Q: How did you get to the Cook Islands?

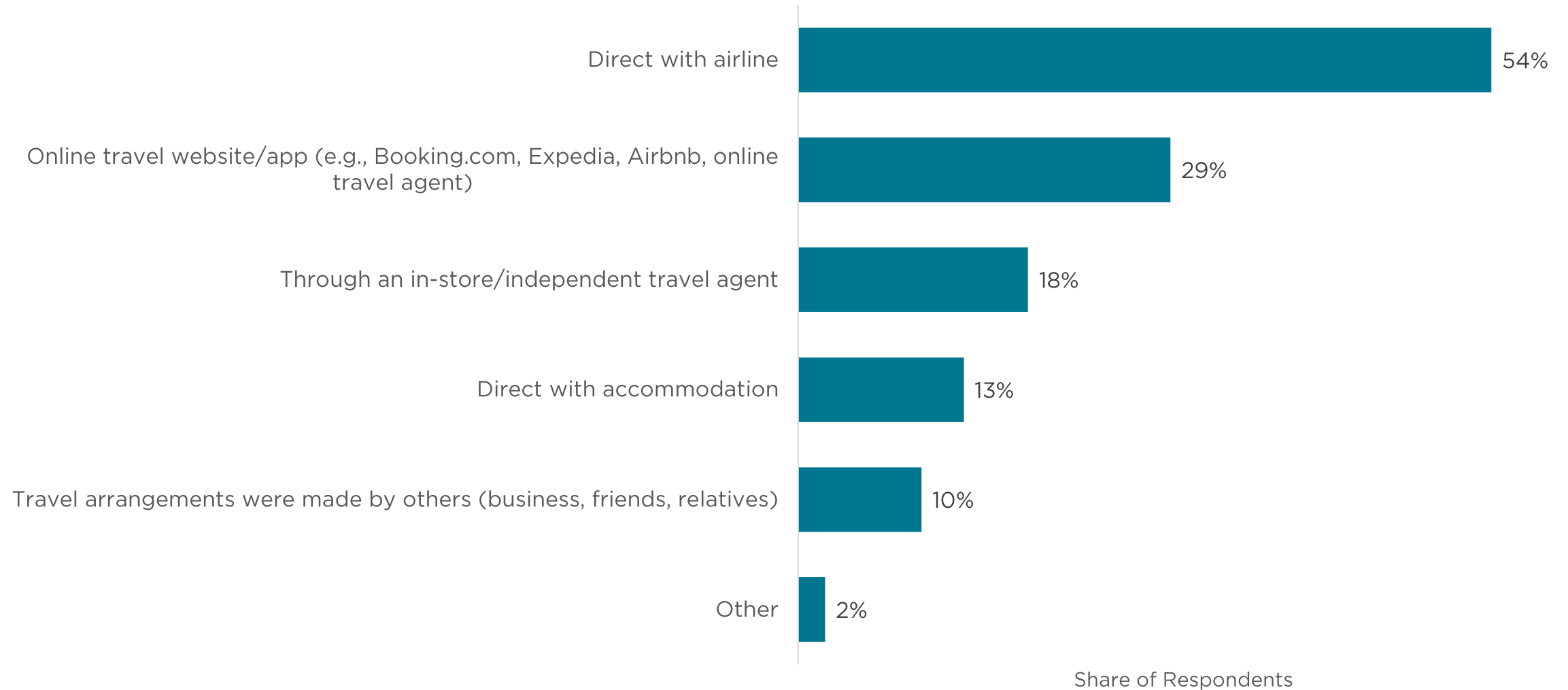


Share of Respondents

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

Purchasing of Travel

Q: How did you purchase your travel to the Cook Islands?



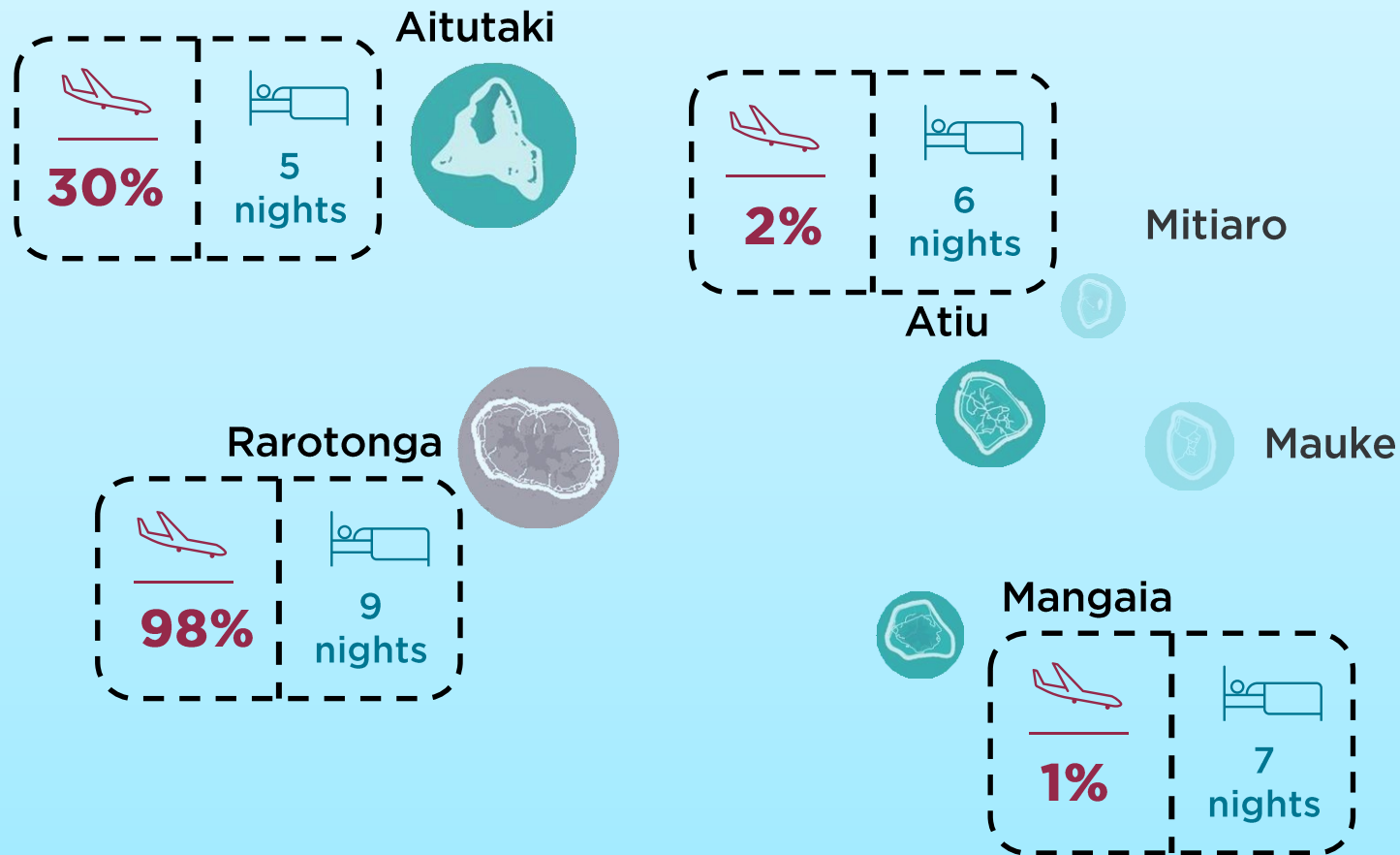
Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Islands Visited & Avg. Length of Stay

Avg. Length of Stay
8.5 Nights

Q: Which island(s) did you visit?

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

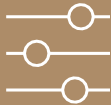


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

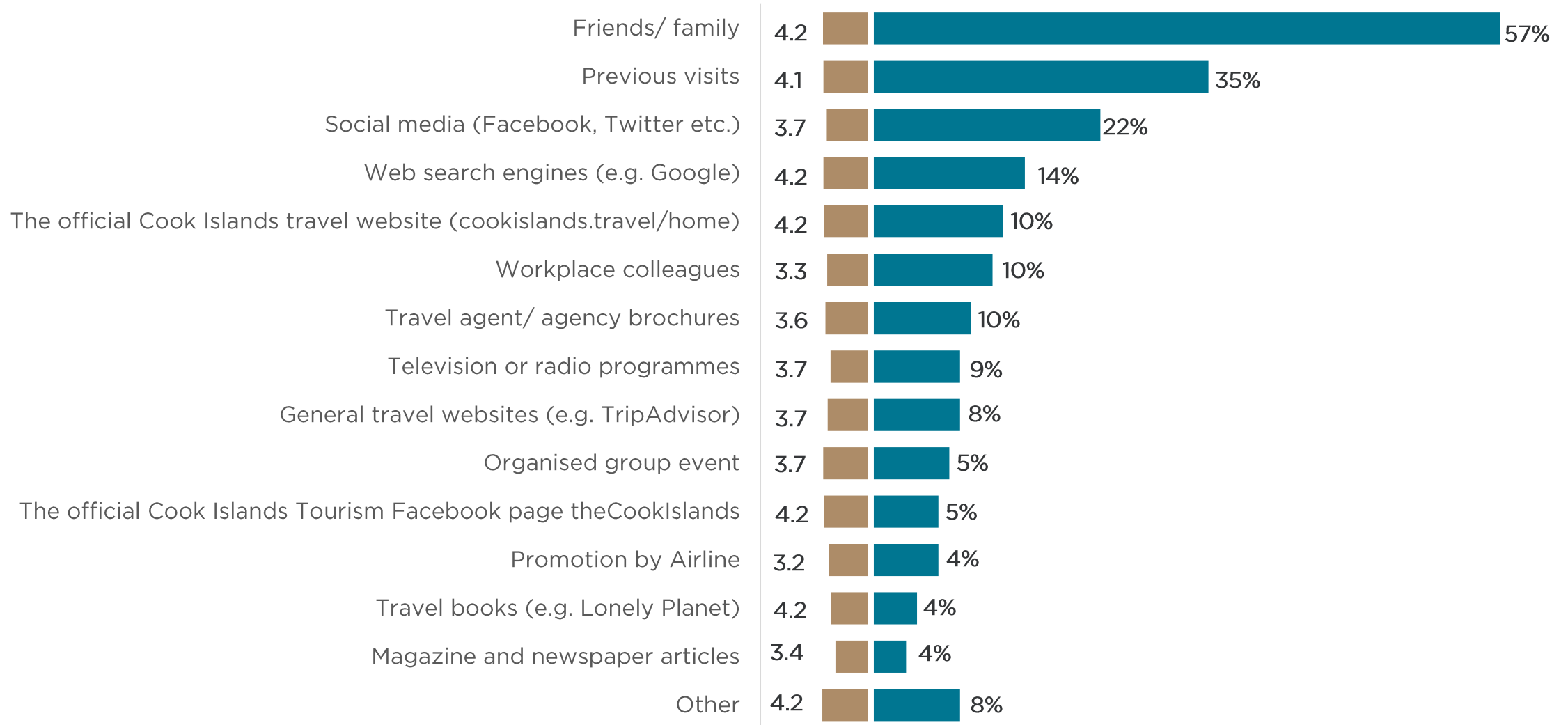
Information Source

Q: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination?

Q: How important was the information source?

Importance
(out of 5)

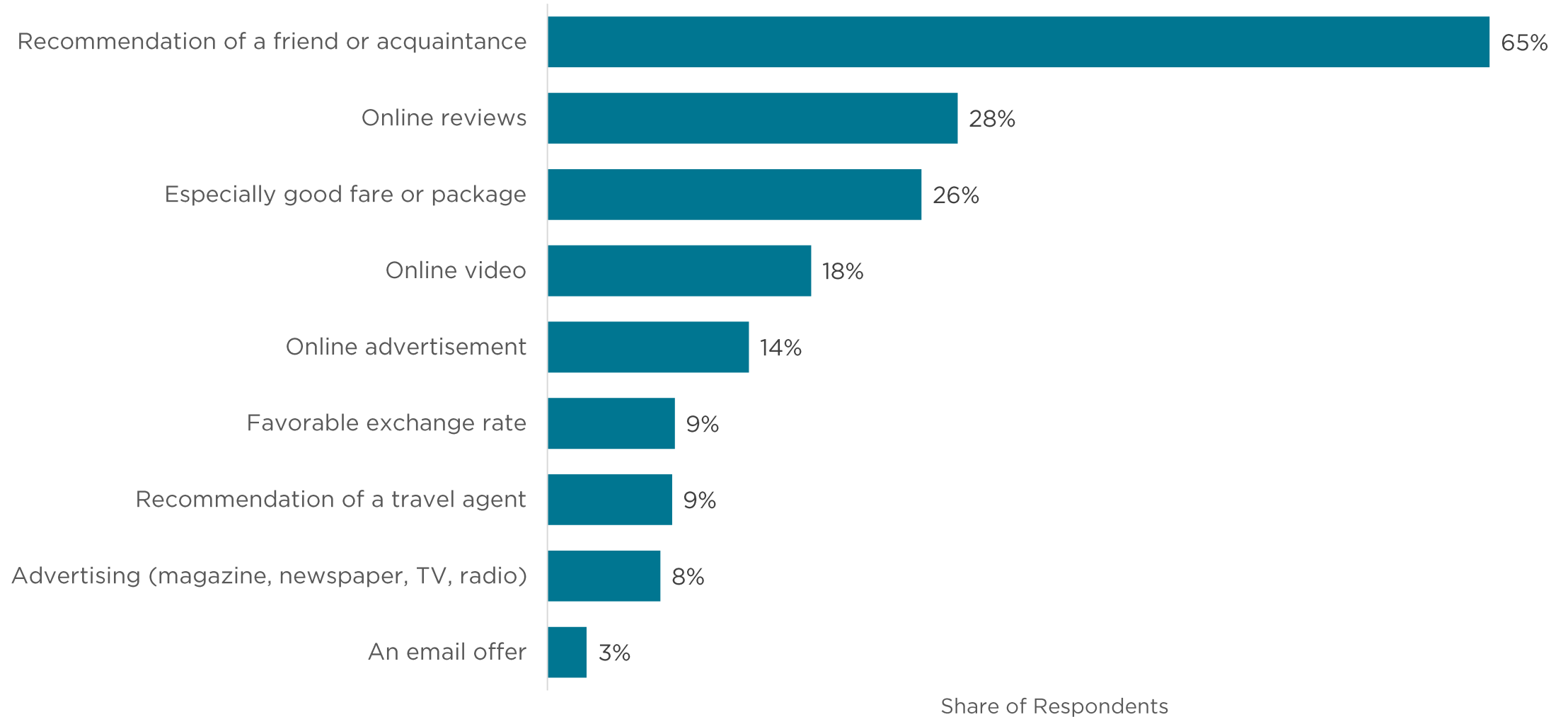
Information Source Used



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

Promotion/Advertising Channels

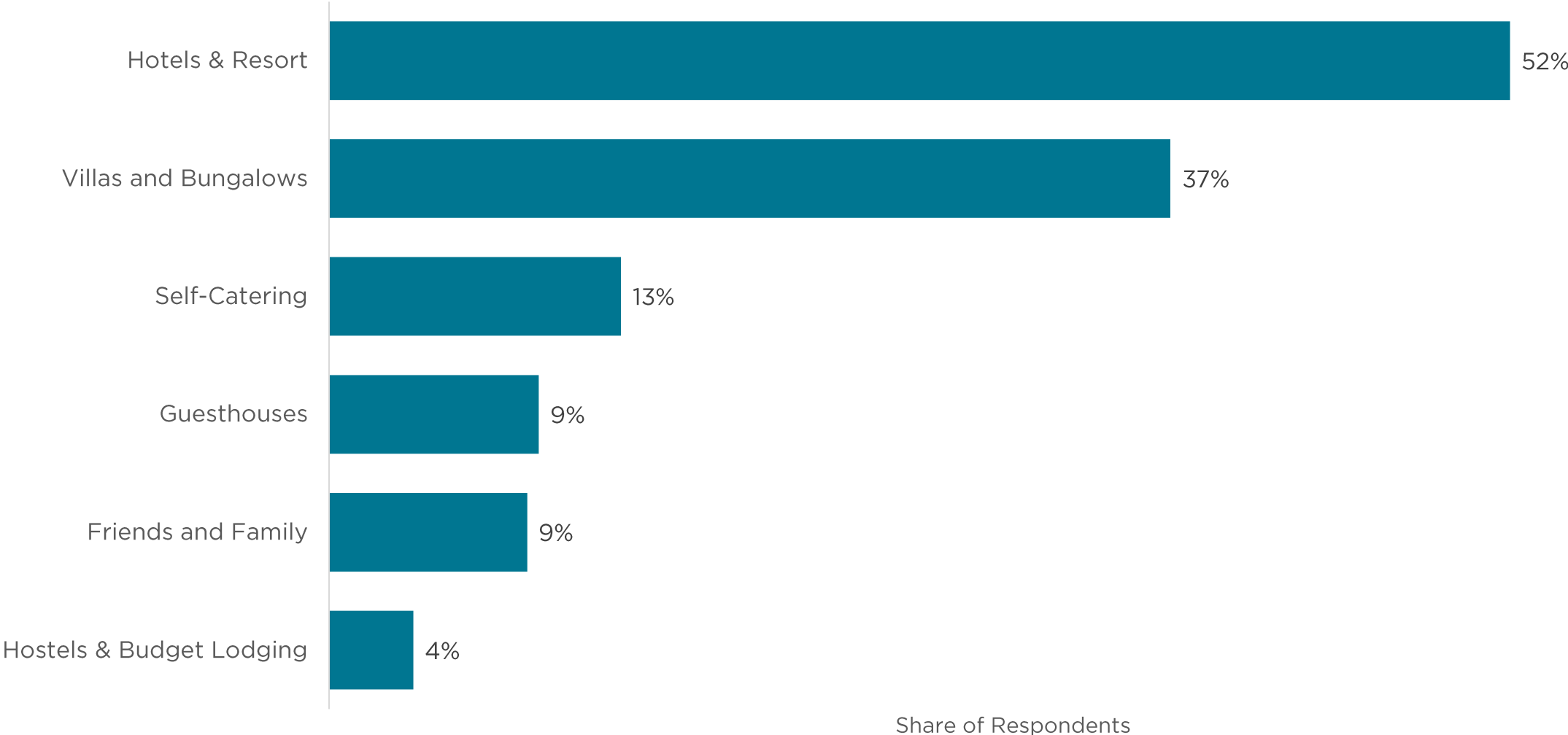
Q: Which promotional or advertising channels influenced your decision to visit the Cook Islands?



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

Accommodation Type

Q: What type of accommodation did you stay in during your visit to the Cook Islands?



Share of Respondents

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

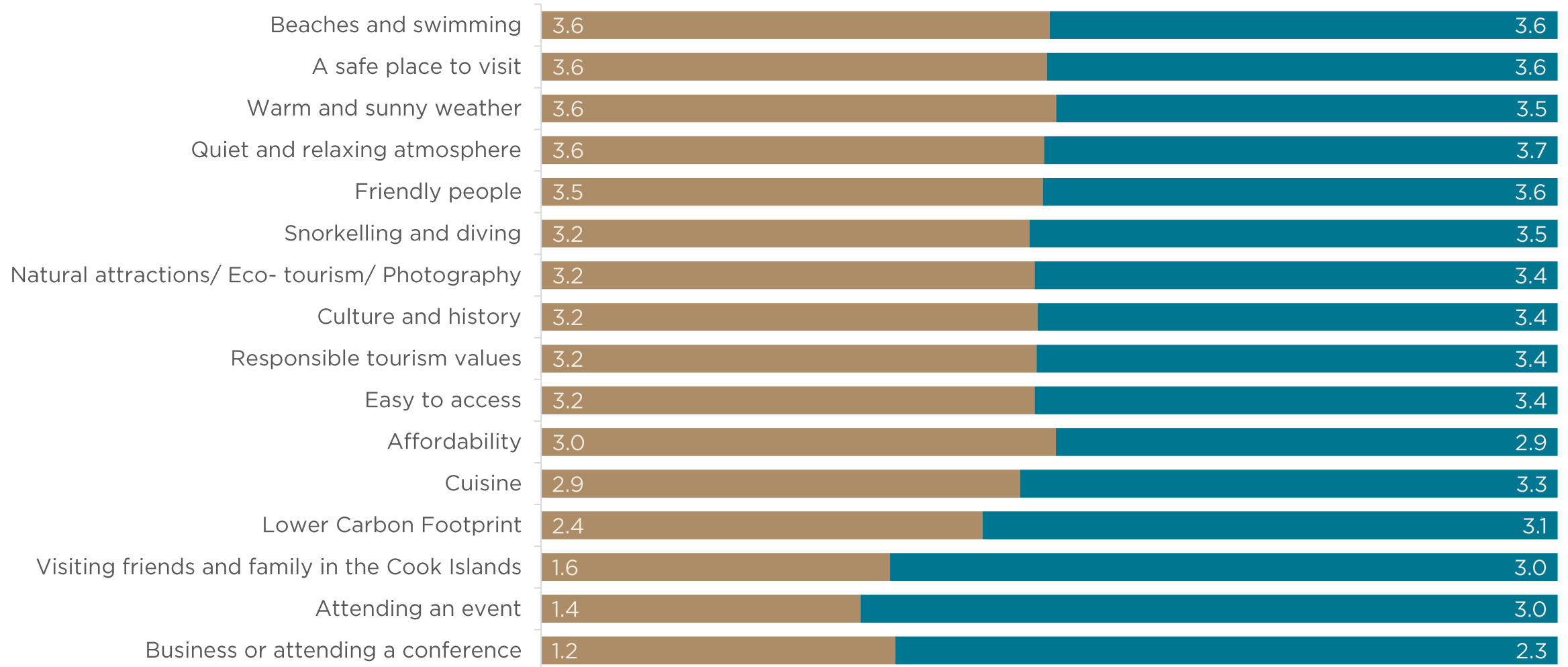
Pre-Travel Perceptions Vs Expectations

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

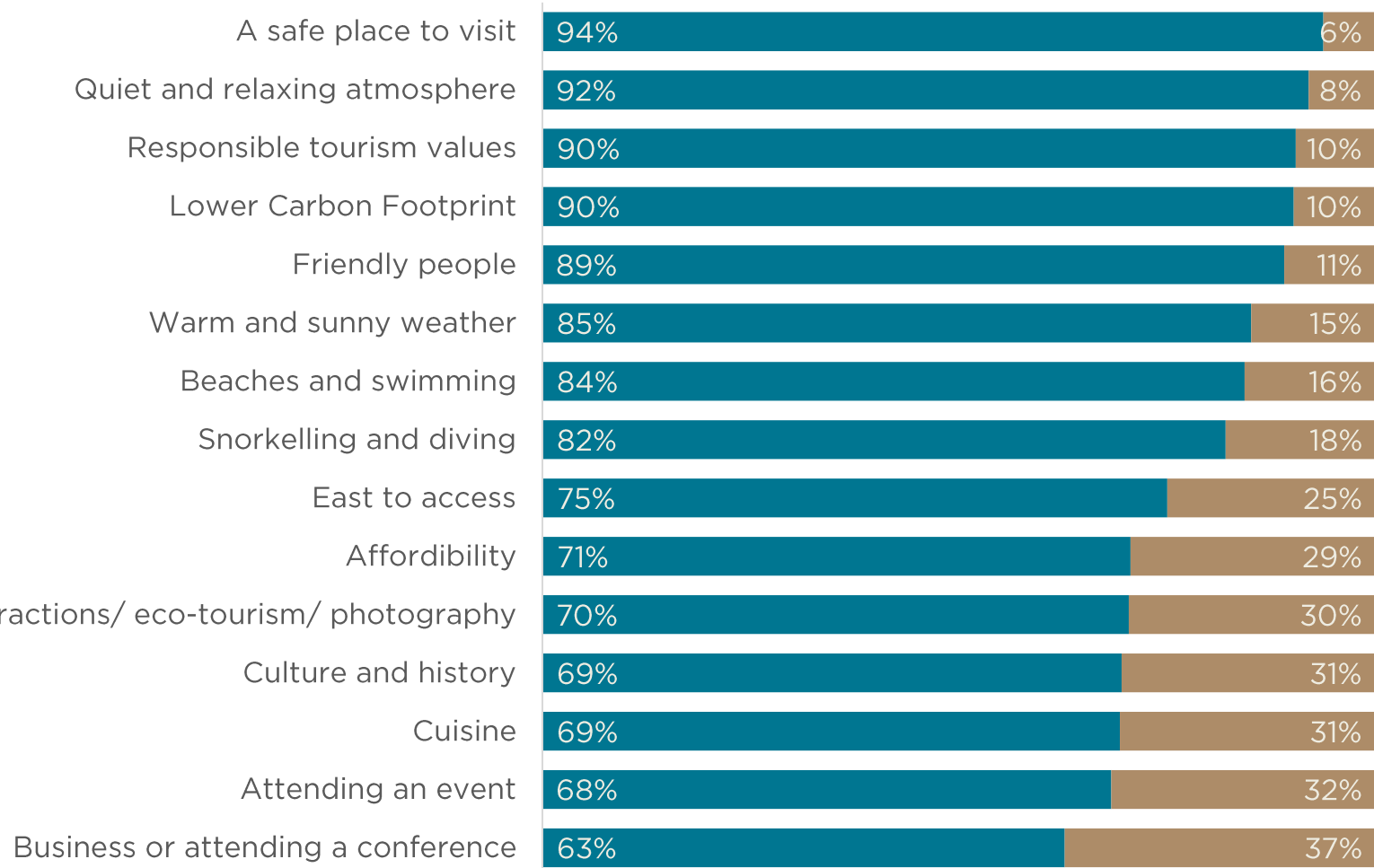


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

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.

Top 8



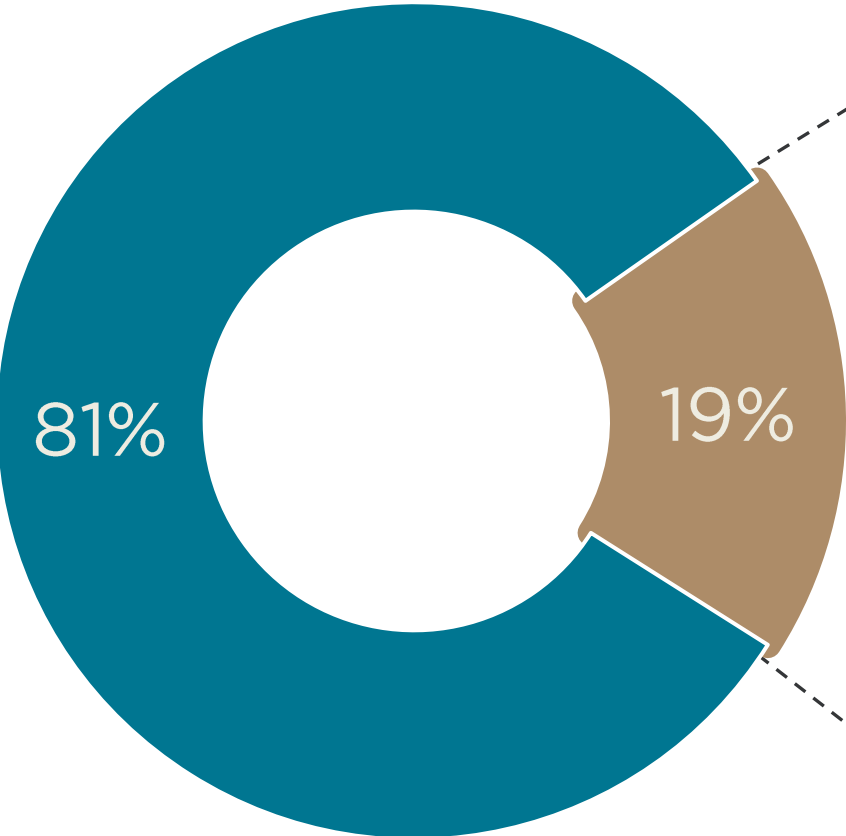
Bottom 6

Emphasizing these Unique Selling Points is important, as visitors increasingly associate them with other destinations when comparing with the Cook Islands.

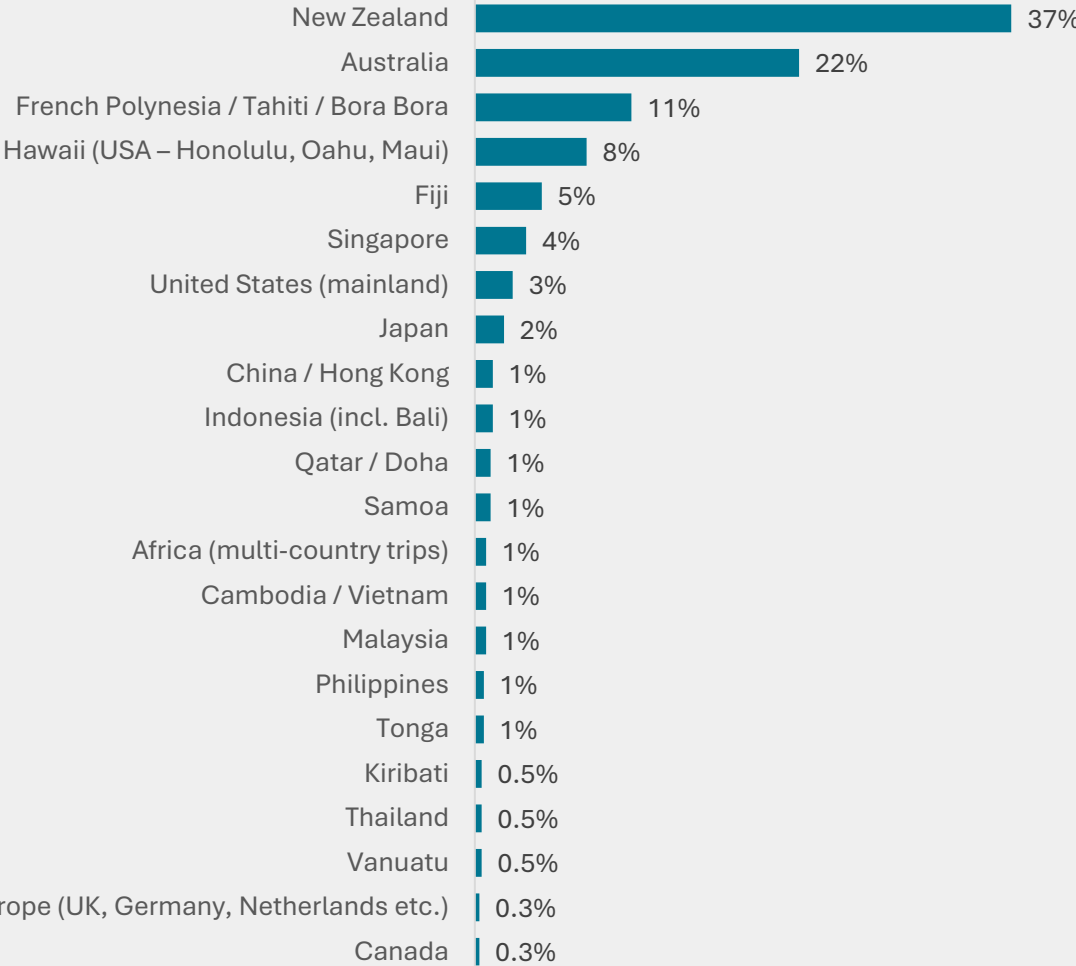
■ % of Respondents that chose the Cook Islands
 ■ % of Respondents that chose Other Destinations

Other Considered Destinations

Q: When planning your trip, were there other destinations you were also contemplating but ultimately chose the Cook Islands?



Q: If Yes, what other destinations did you consider?

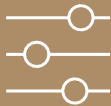


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



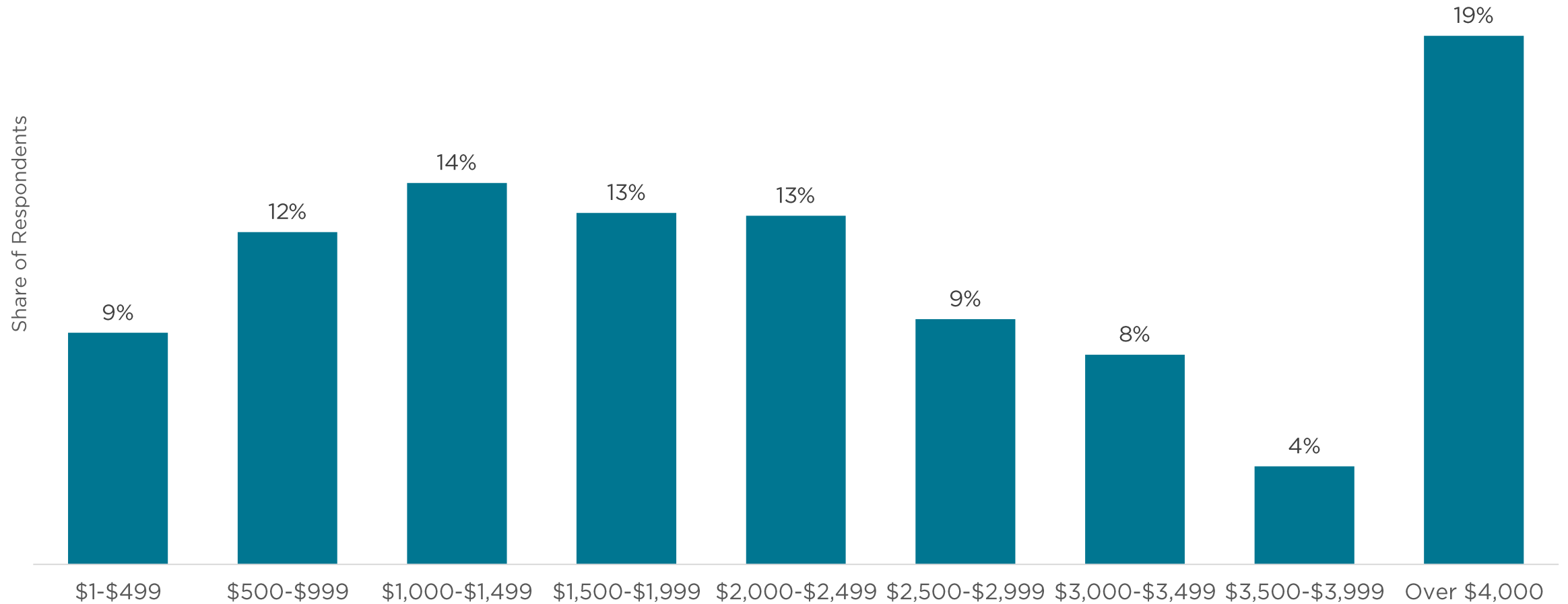
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Prepaid Expenditure

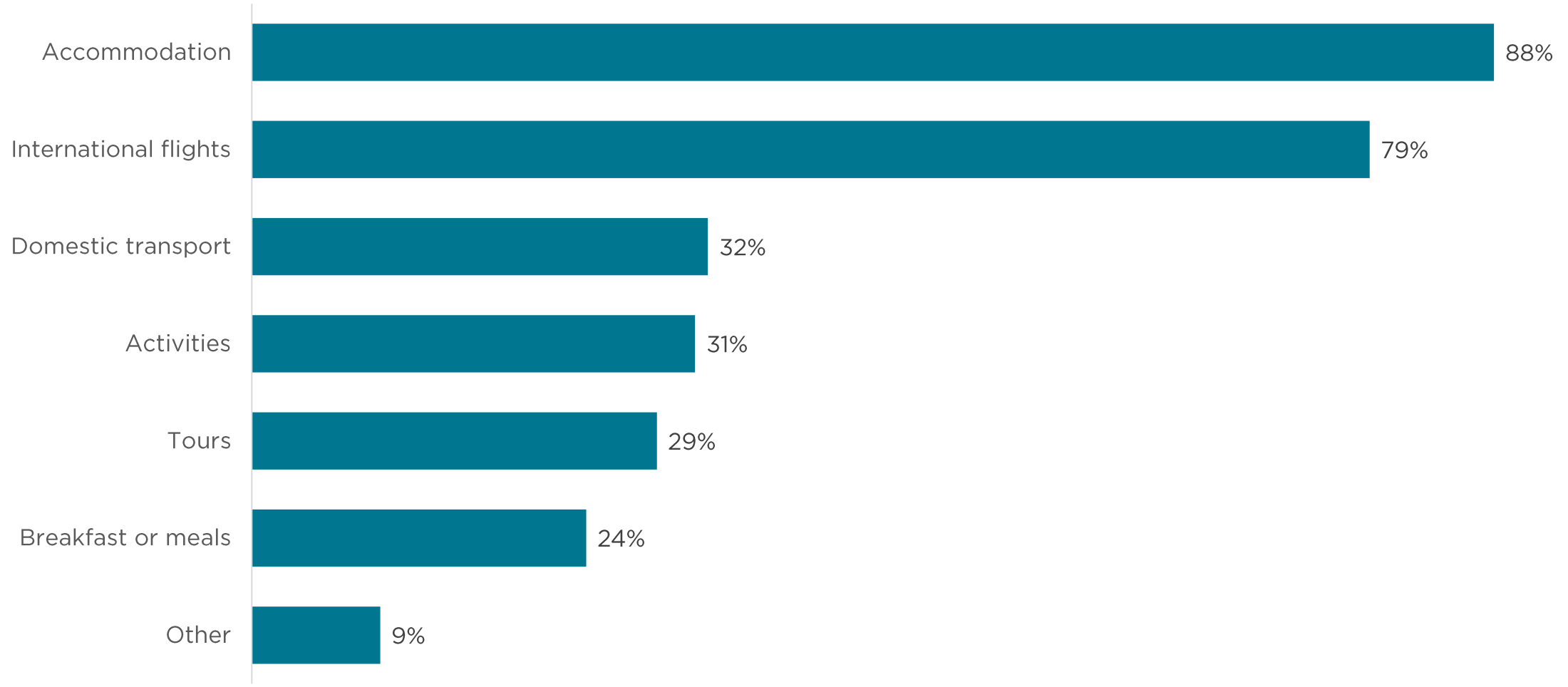
Avg. Prepaid per Person
NZ\$2,532



Note: NZ dollars. Outliers are not included in the average calculation.

Prepaid Items

Q: What items or services were included in your "Prepaid Spend"?



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	24	46	27
Restaurant, Cafes & Bars	26	51	30
Vehicle Rental	8	16	4
Petrol	2	3	2
Domestic Flight	12	23	13
Public Transport	1	1	1
Internet Cost	1	1	1
Water-based activities	6	12	7
Land-based activities	3	6	4
Groceries	7	14	8
Shopping	10	20	12
Other	1	1	1
TOTAL	100%	194	110

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 25	Oct - Dec 25
	NZD	USD
Average Spend Prior to arrival		
Per Person Per Trip	2,532	1,481
<i>Flowing into local economy rate - estimated 40%</i>		
Per Person Per Trip	1,013	592
Per Person per Day	119	70

Average Local Spend		
<i>Length of Stay (nights)</i>	<i>mean 8.5 nights</i>	
Per Person Per Trip	1,646	963
Per Person per Day	194	113

Total Economic Impact-Per Trip	2,659	1,555
Total Economic Impact-Per Day	313	183

October - December 2024

NZD 146 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 43,608

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

\$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

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$3,352 per visitor per trip

\$364 per visitor per day

October - December 2025

NZD 130 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 49,124 ▲

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

\$2,532 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$194 ▼

In-country spend per day

40% Flowing into local economy rate

x 8.5 nights ▼ Average length of stay

\$1,013 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$1,646 ▼

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$2,659 per visitor per trip ▼

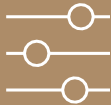
\$313 per visitor per day ▼

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

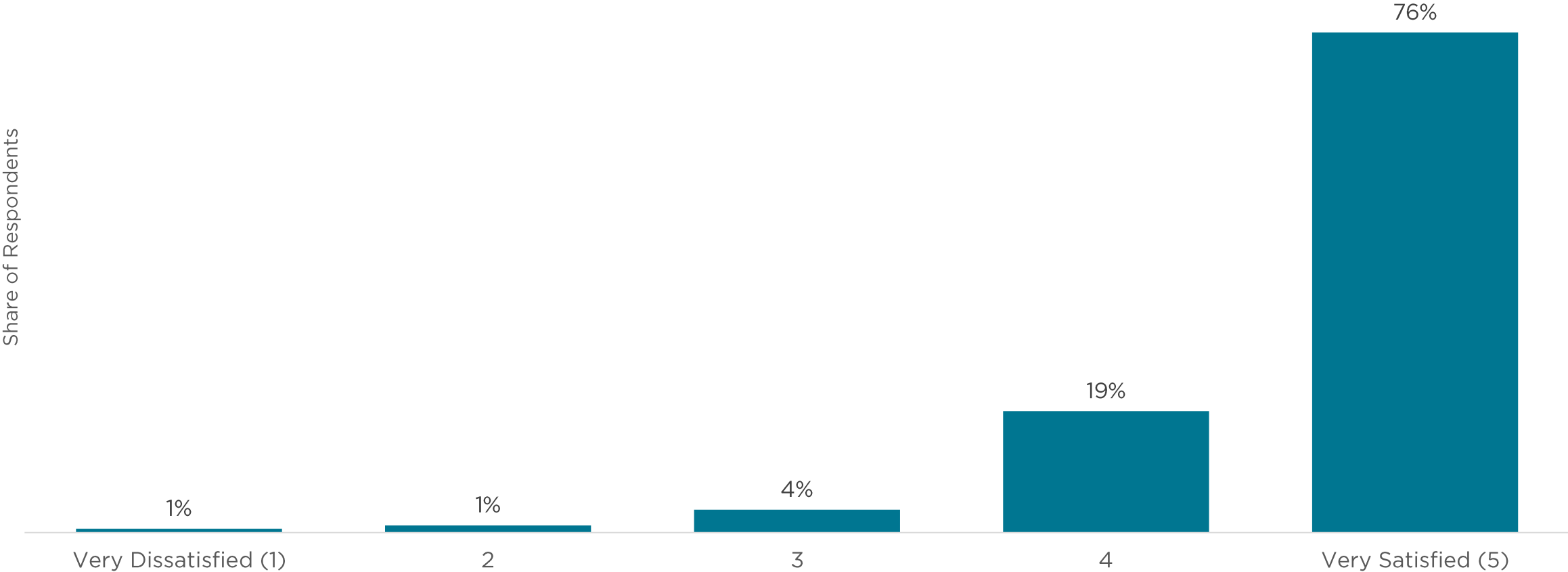


Visitor
Satisfaction

Visitor Overall Satisfaction

Q: How satisfied were you with your overall experience of the Cook Islands?

Avg. Overall Satisfaction
4.7

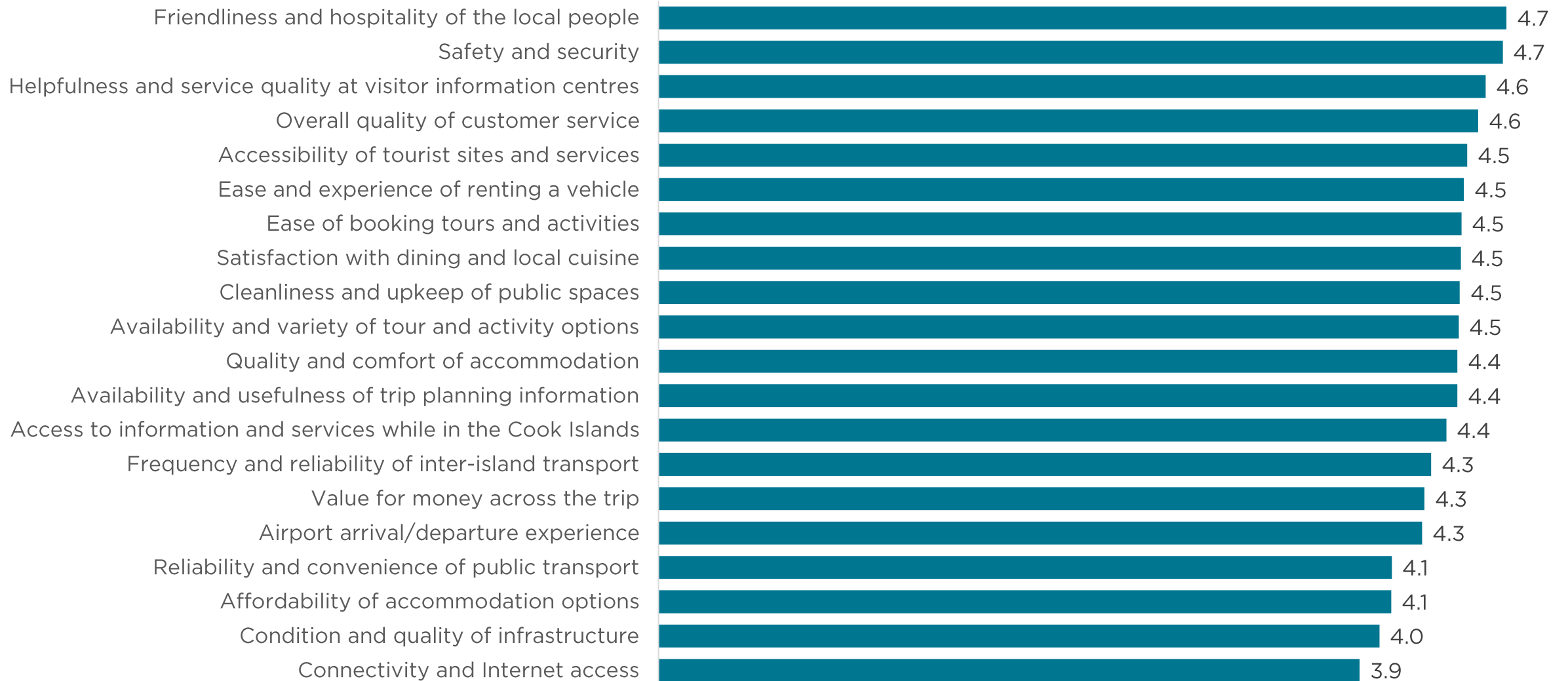


Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%

Satisfaction with Travel Experience

1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

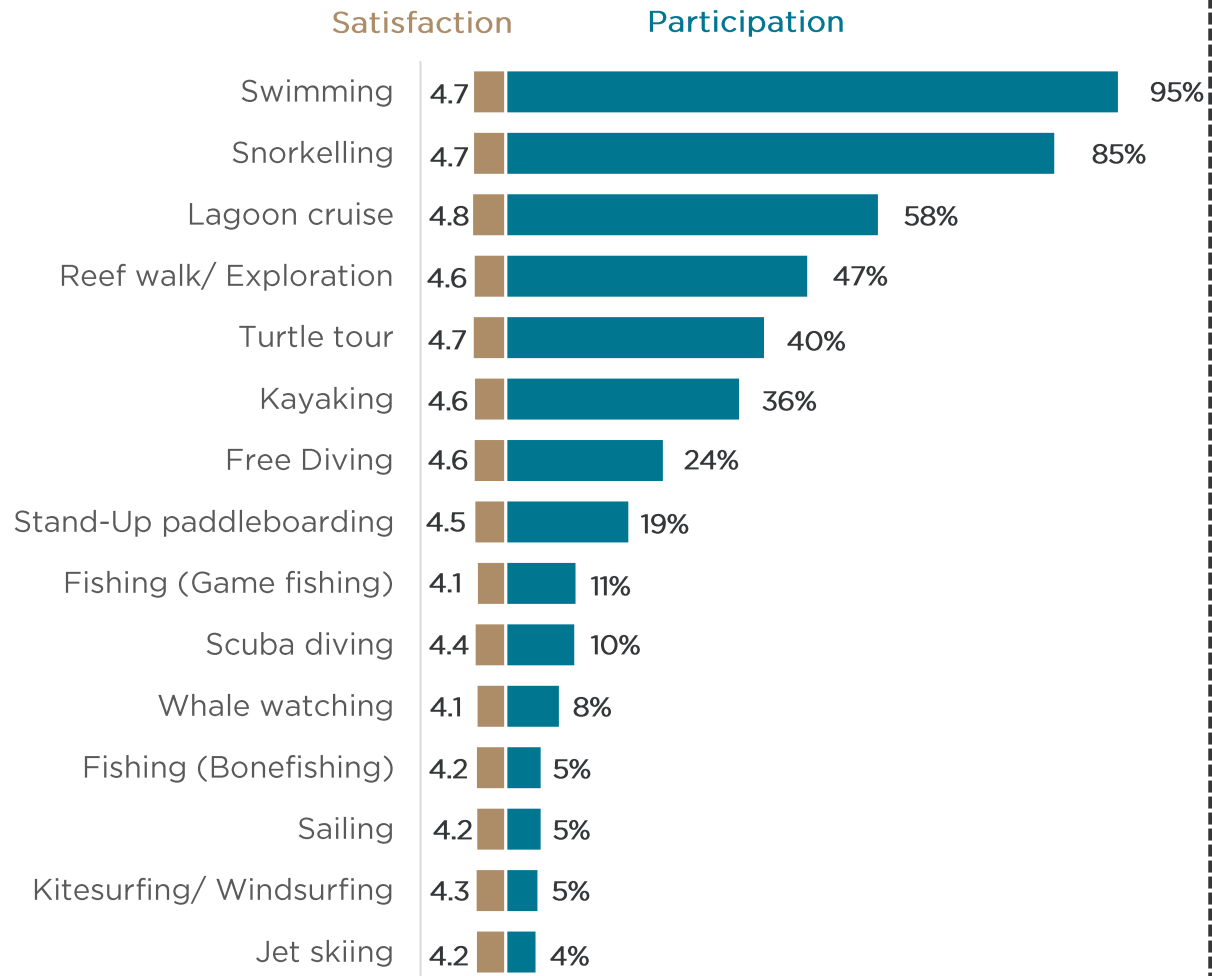


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

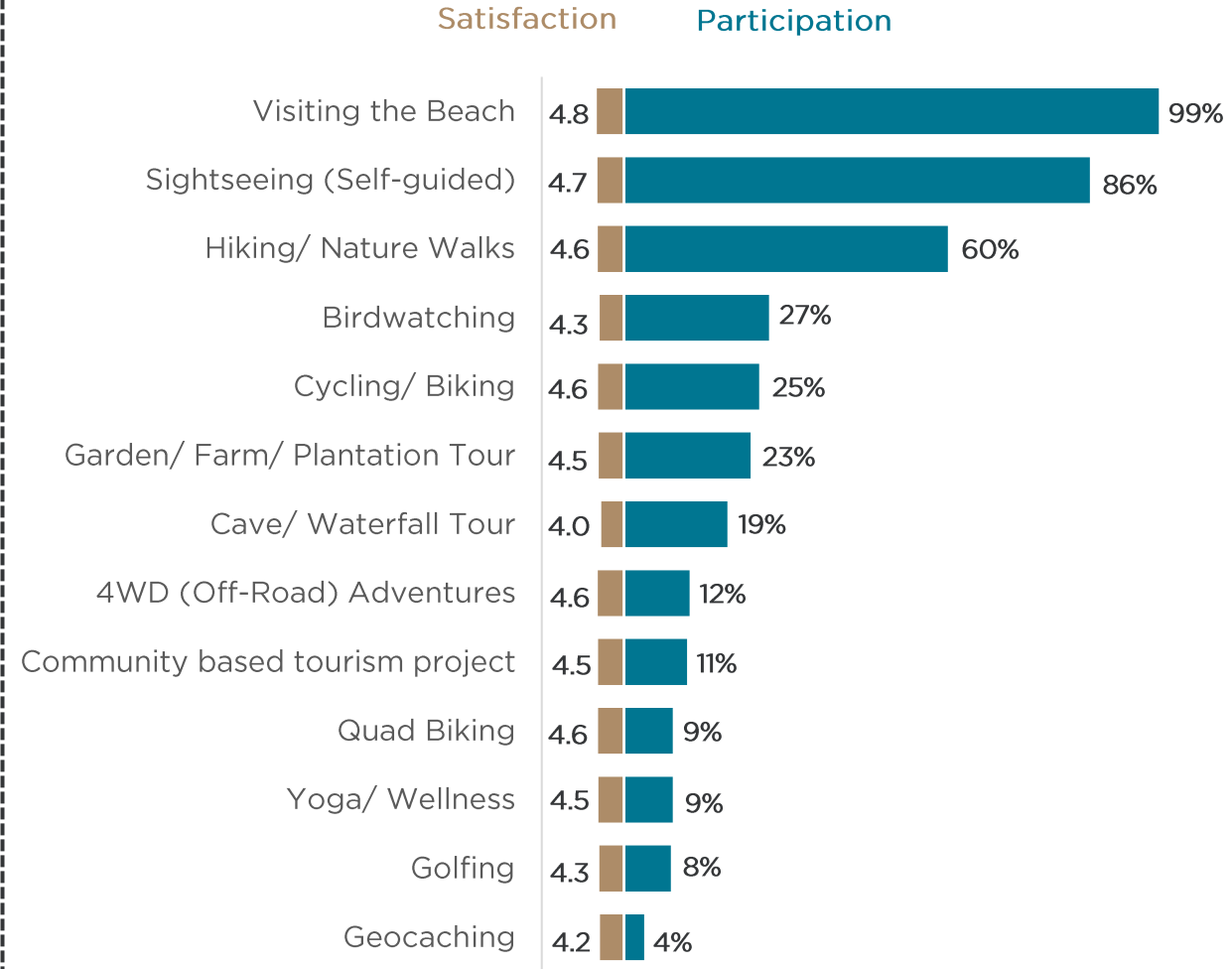
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Water-based activities



Land-based activities



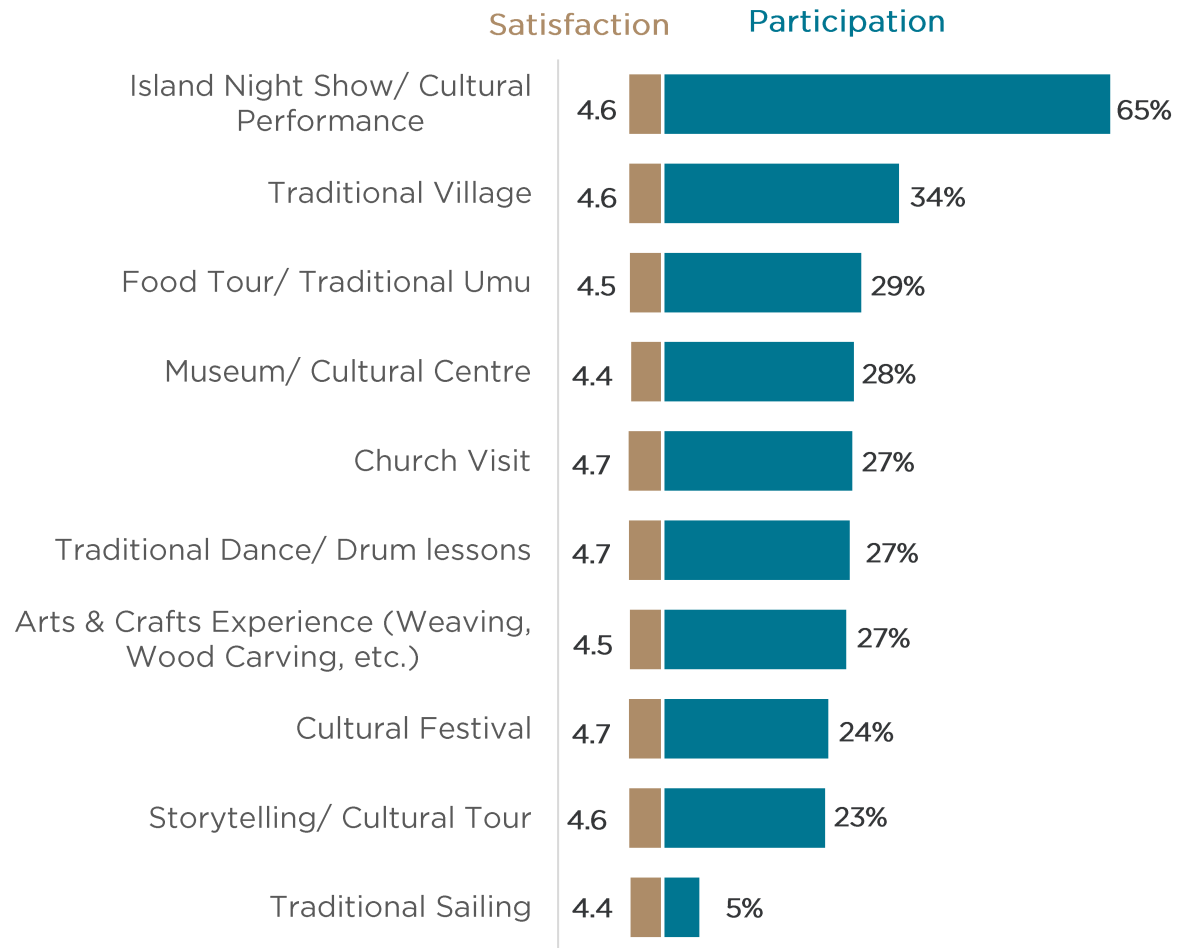
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

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



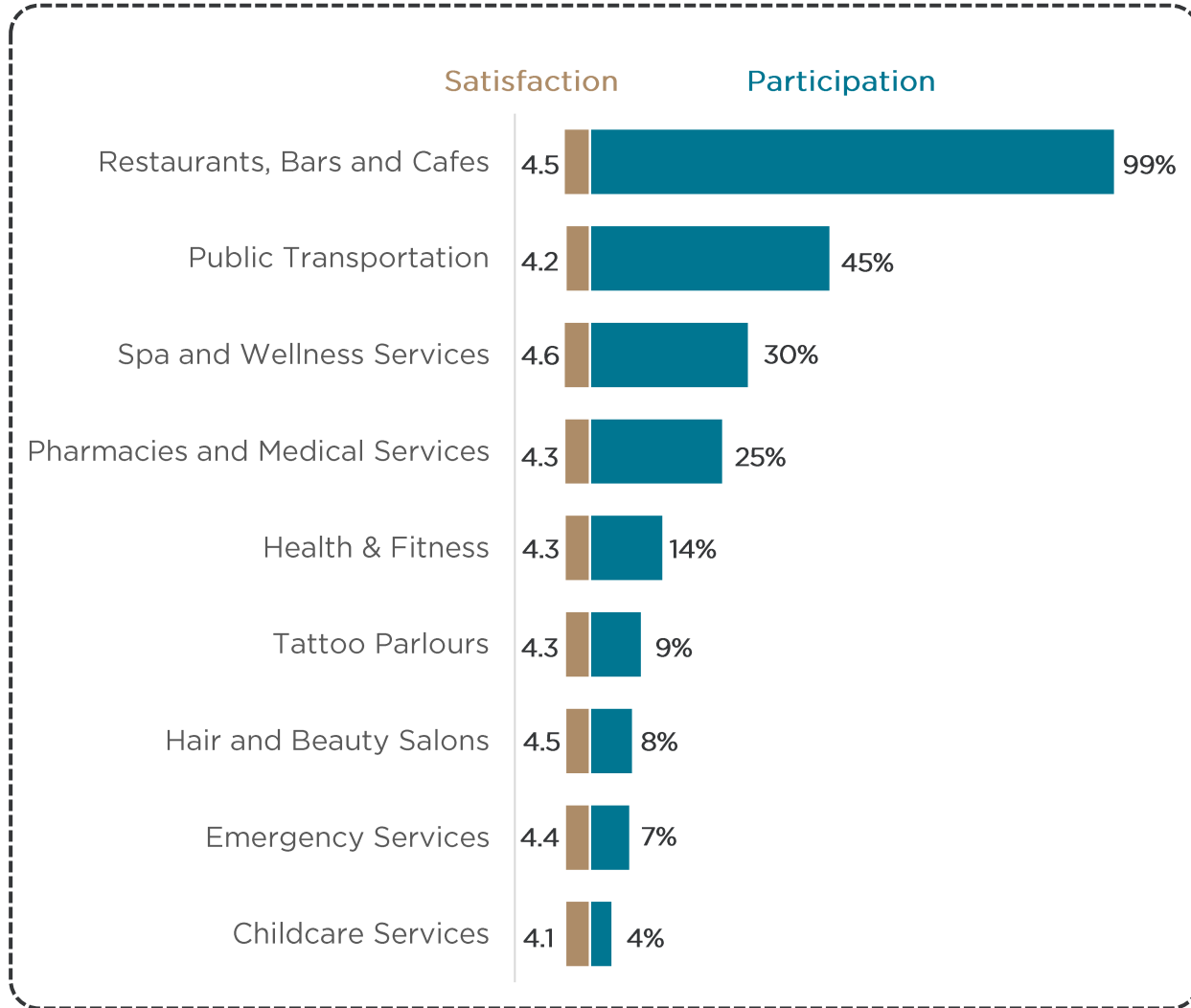
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

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?

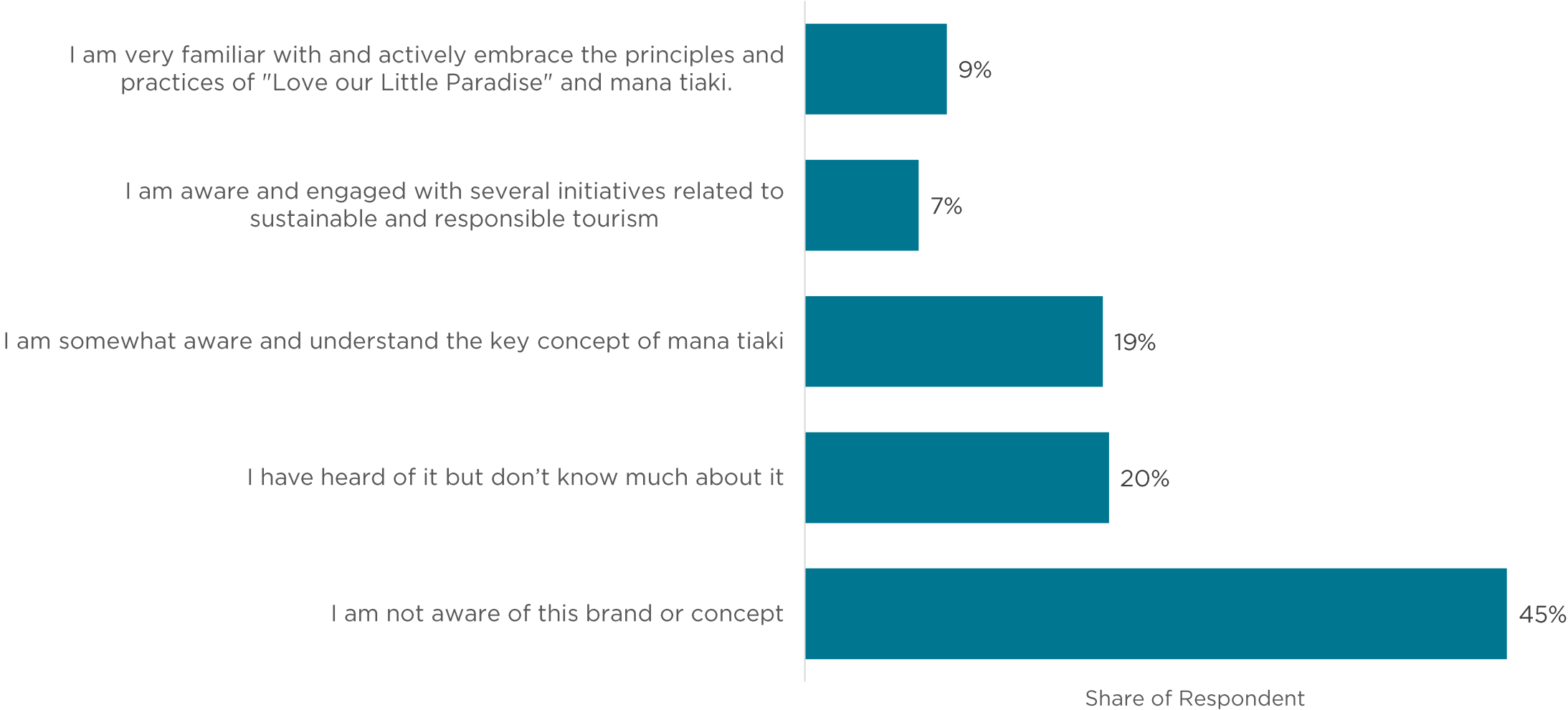
Services



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.

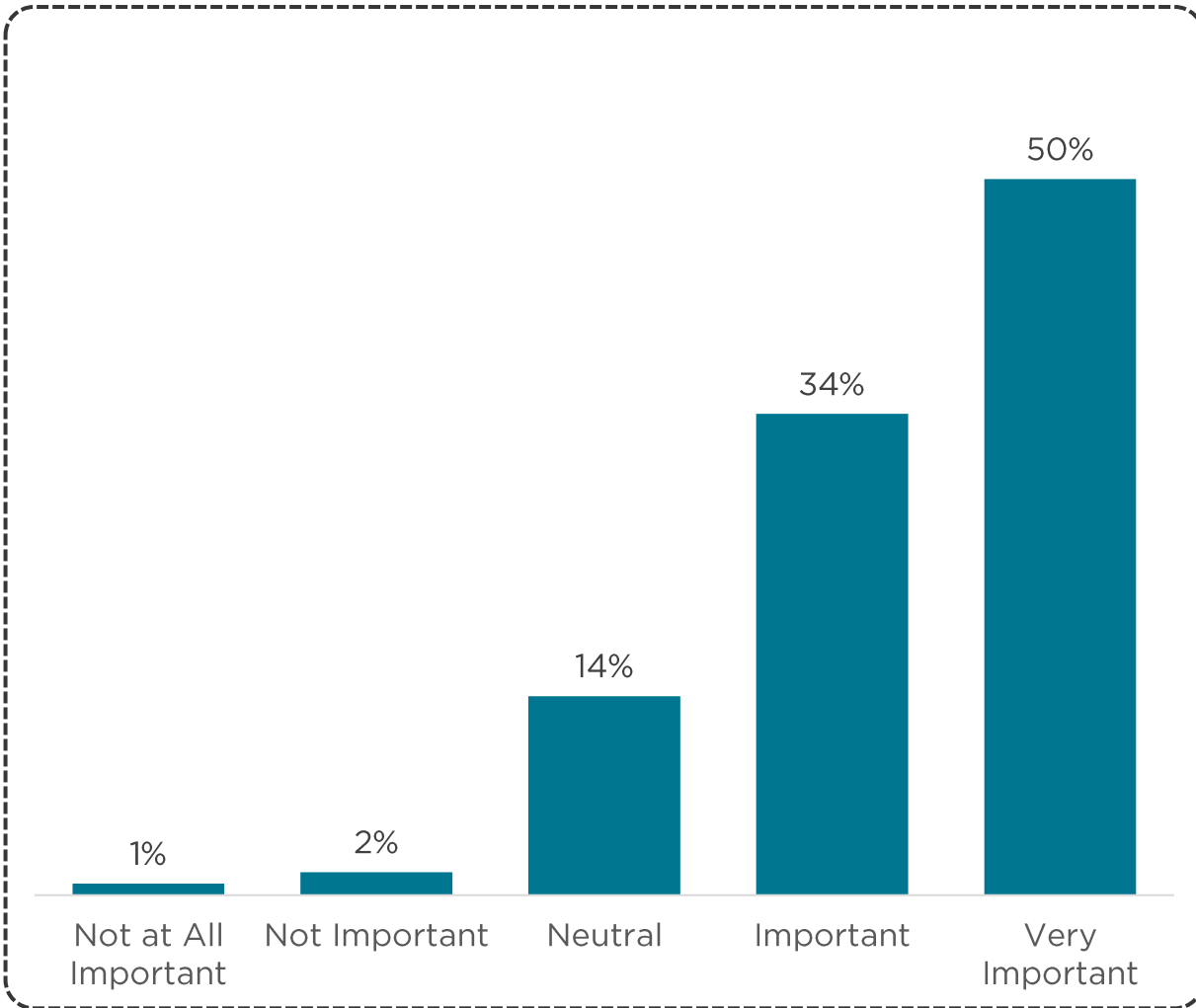
Awareness of "Love Our Little Paradise" and Mana Tiaki



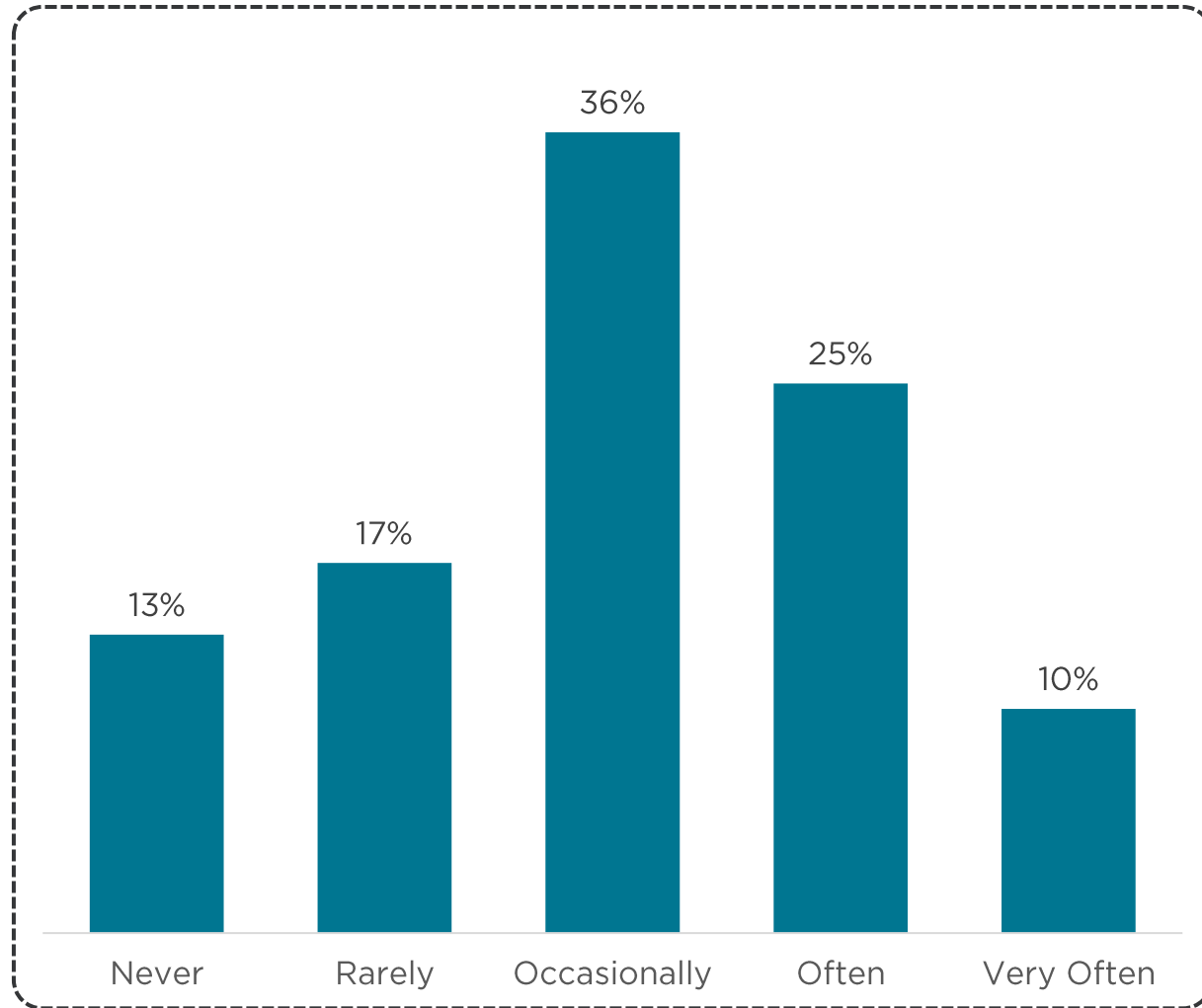
Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%.

Perceptions and Engagement in Sustainable Tourism

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

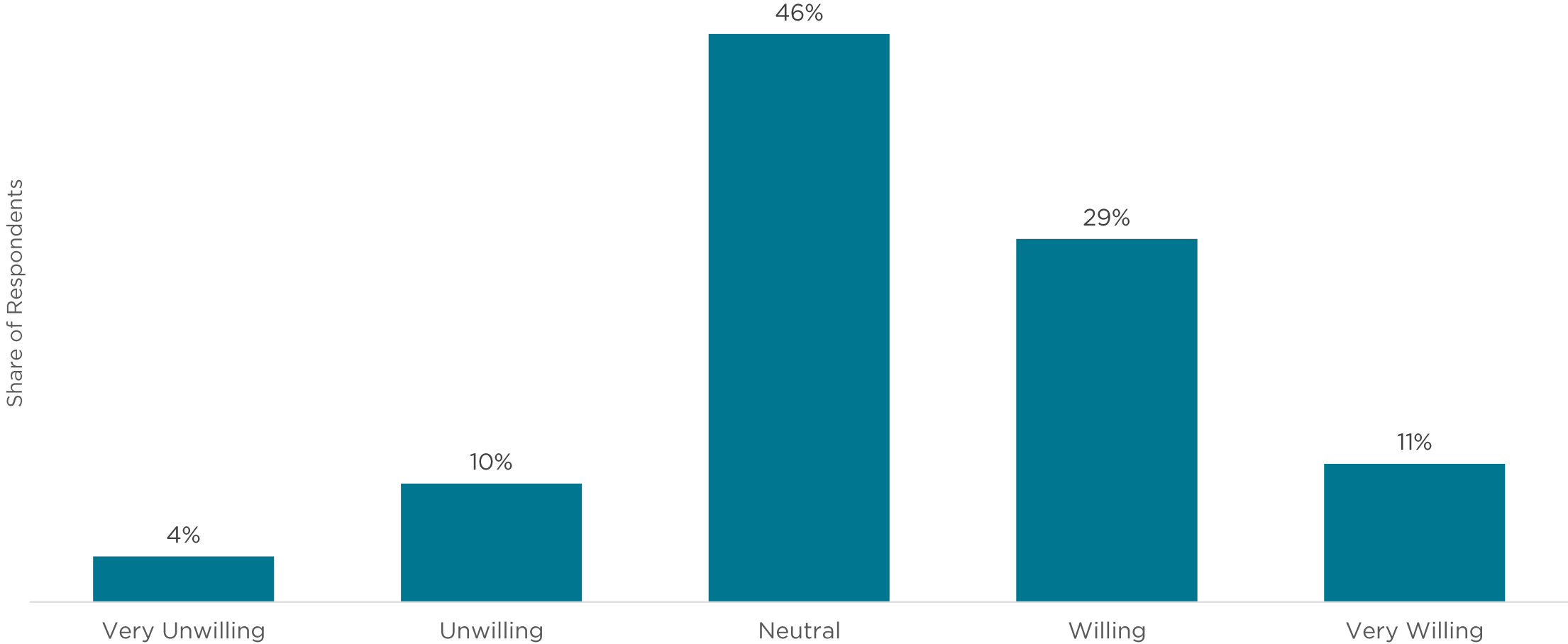


Q: During your visit, how often did you observe or participate in sustainable or responsible tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts)?



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

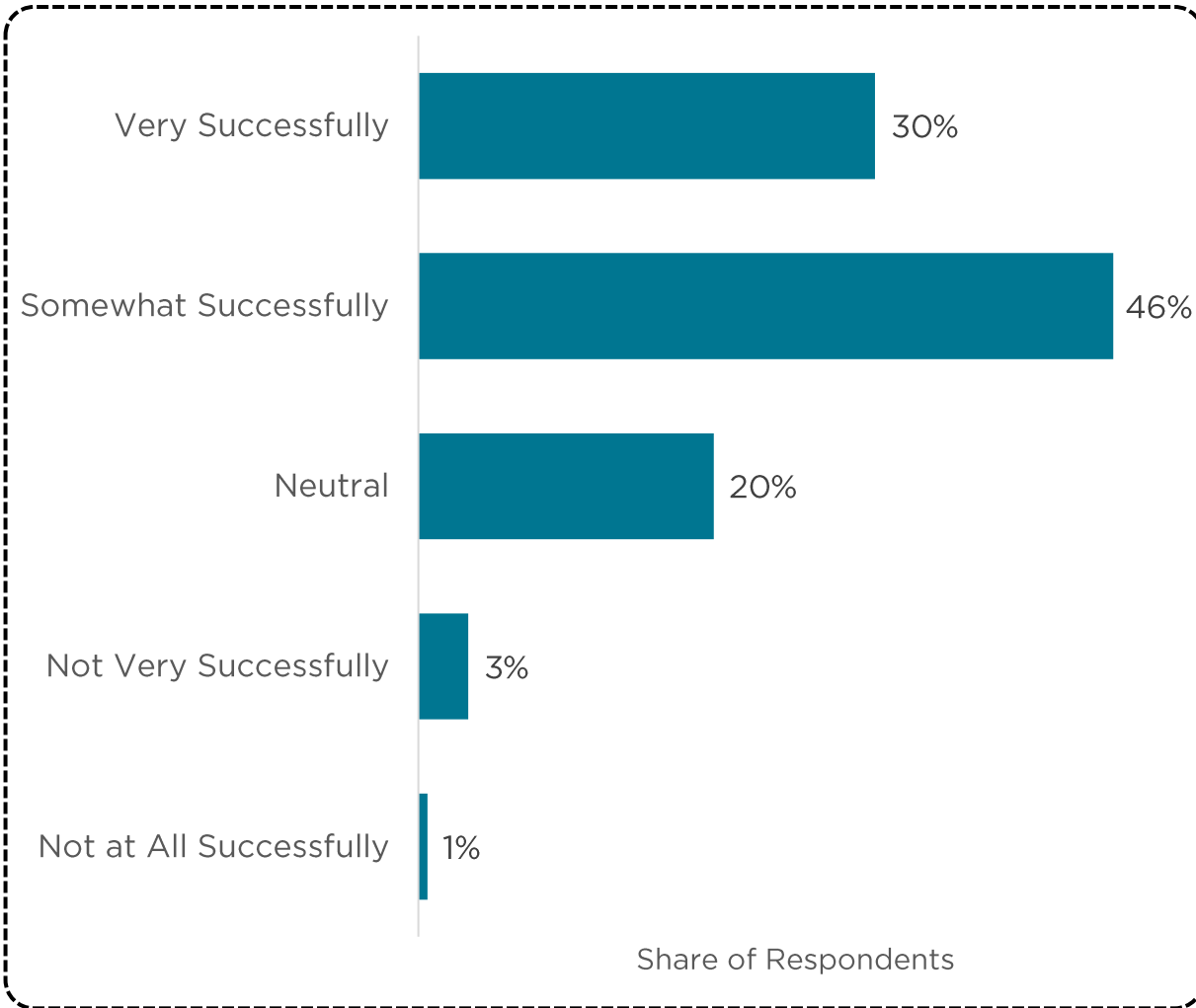
Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give-Back Initiatives



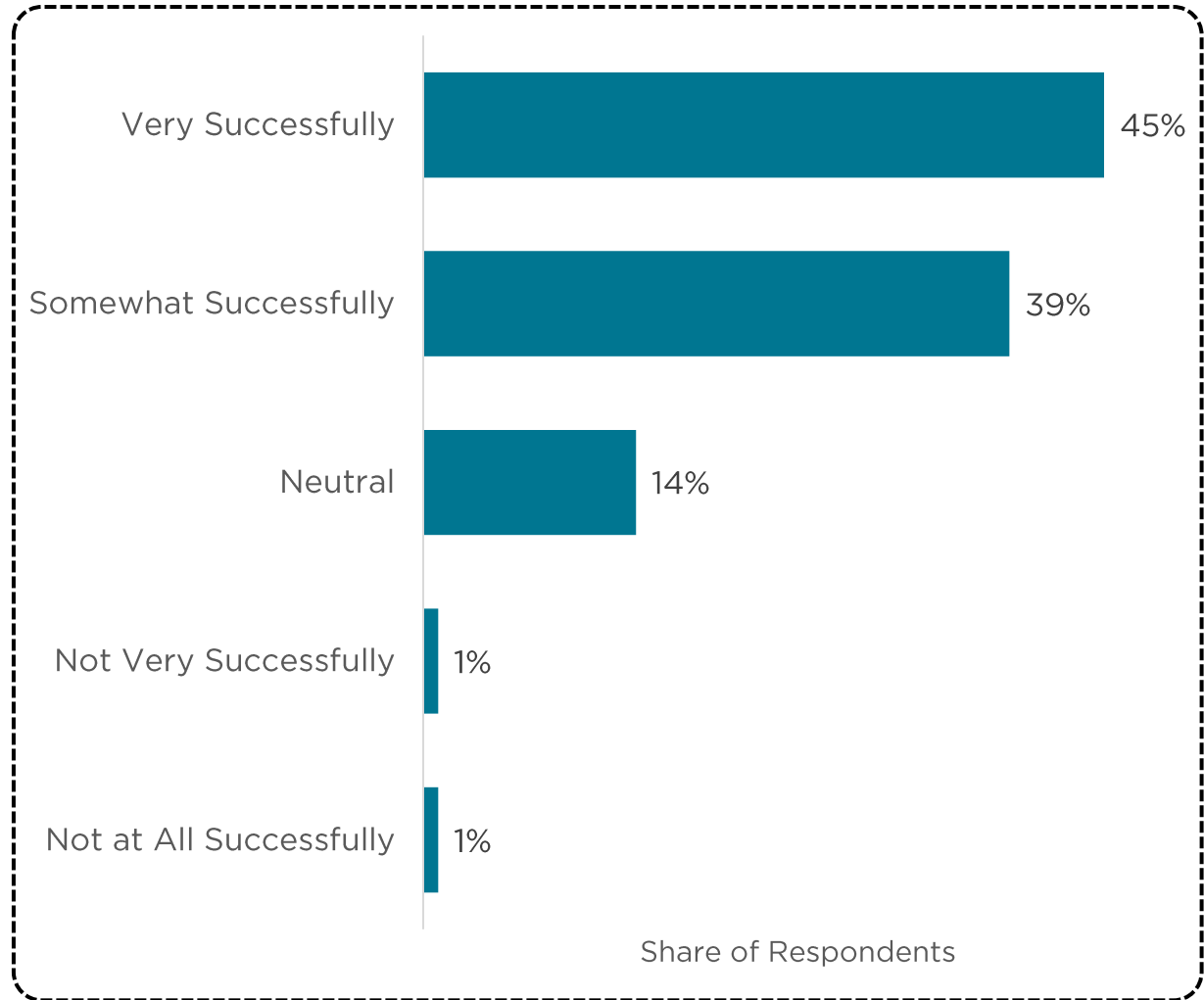
Note: The neutral bar rating of 46% for "Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give Back Initiative" indicates a significance portion of respondents are uncertain, presenting an opportunity to engage and address their concerns to shift opinions more favorably.

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)?

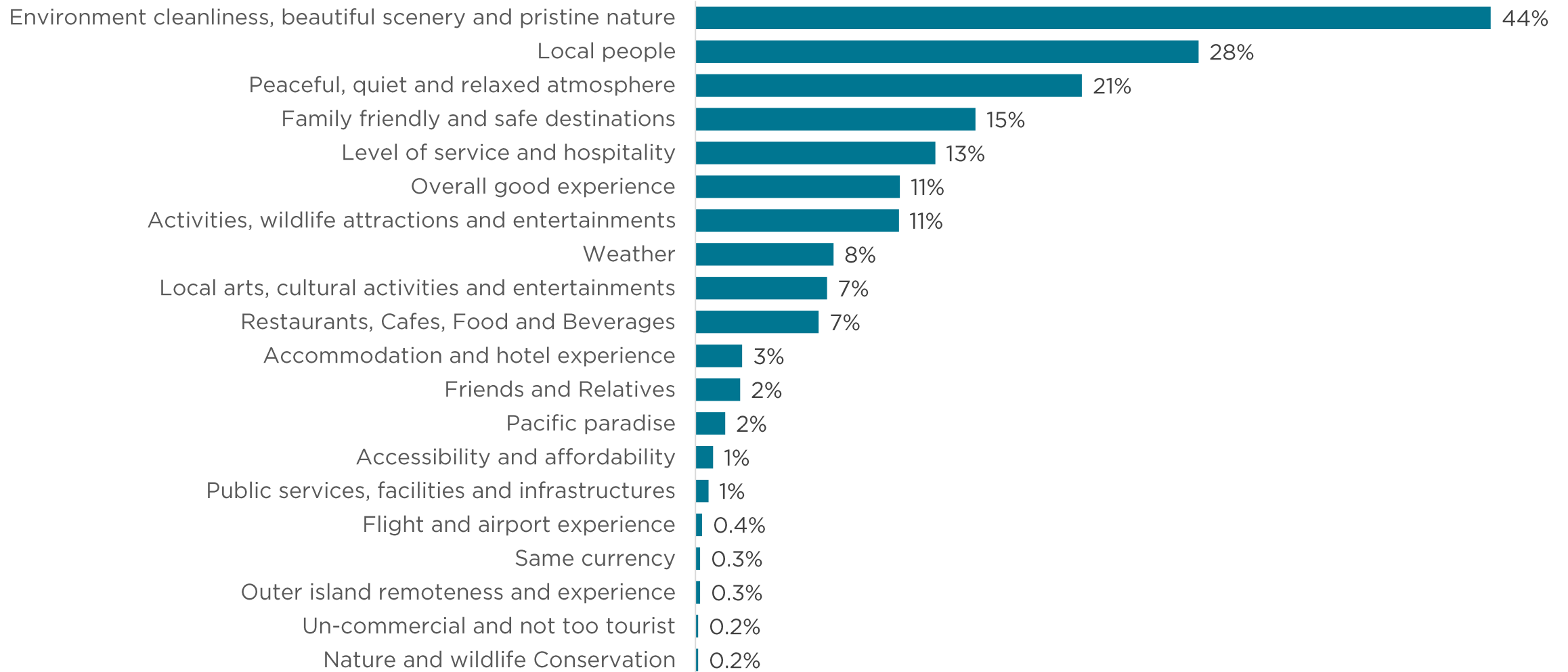


Q: How well do you think the Cook Islands is protecting its cultural identity and supporting local communities (e.g., traditional performances, Cook Islands Māori language, local arts and crafts)?



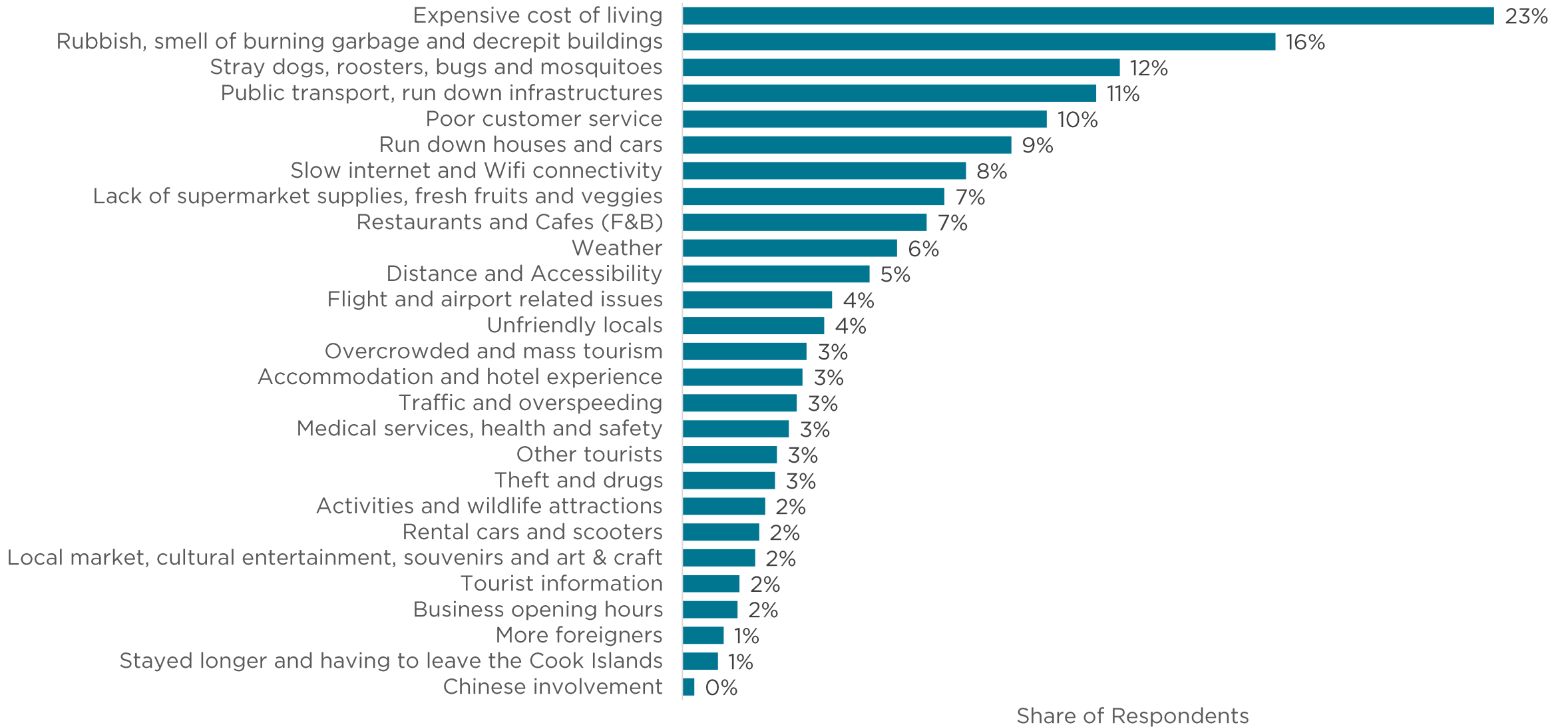
Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%.

Most Appealing Aspects



Share of Respondents

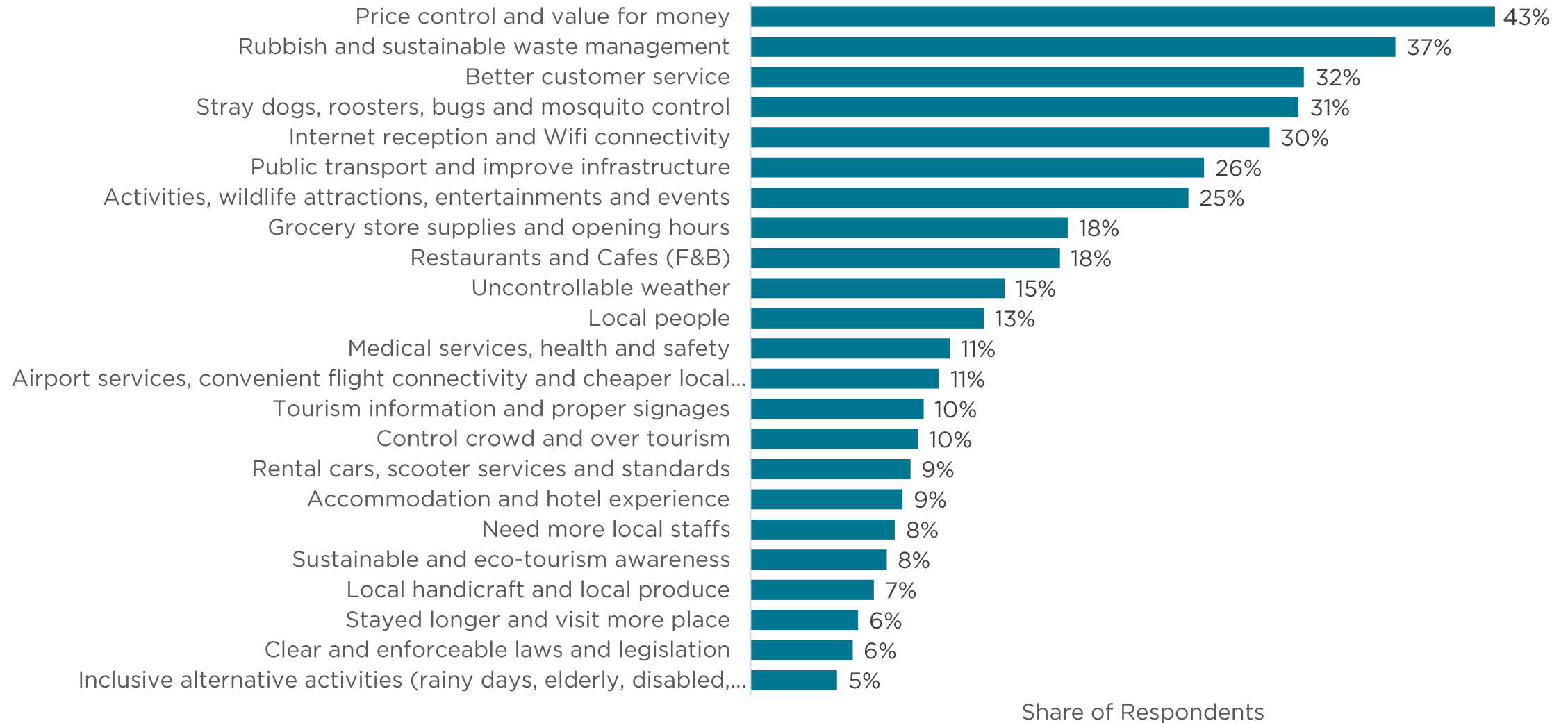
Least Appealing Aspects



Share of Respondents

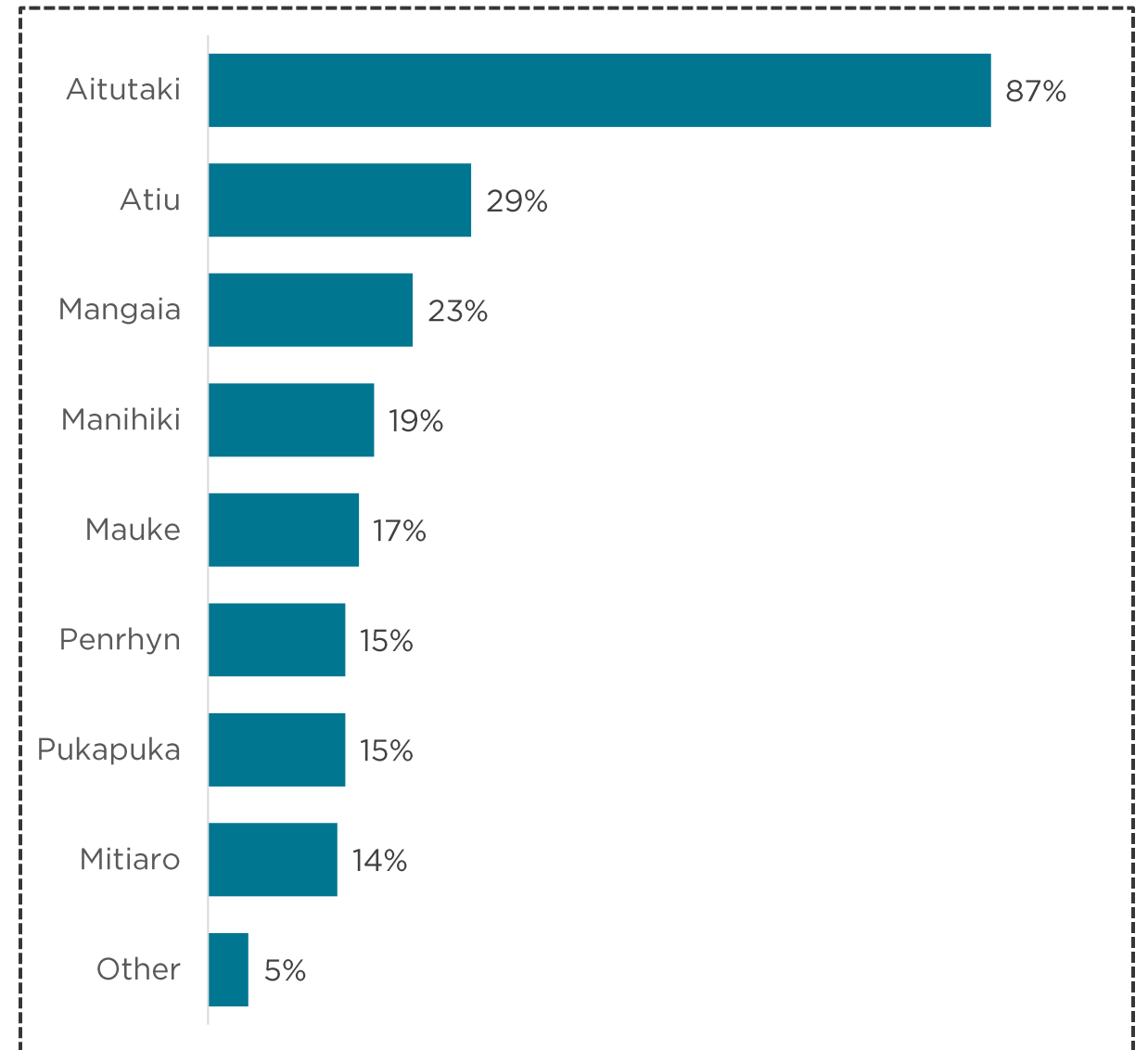
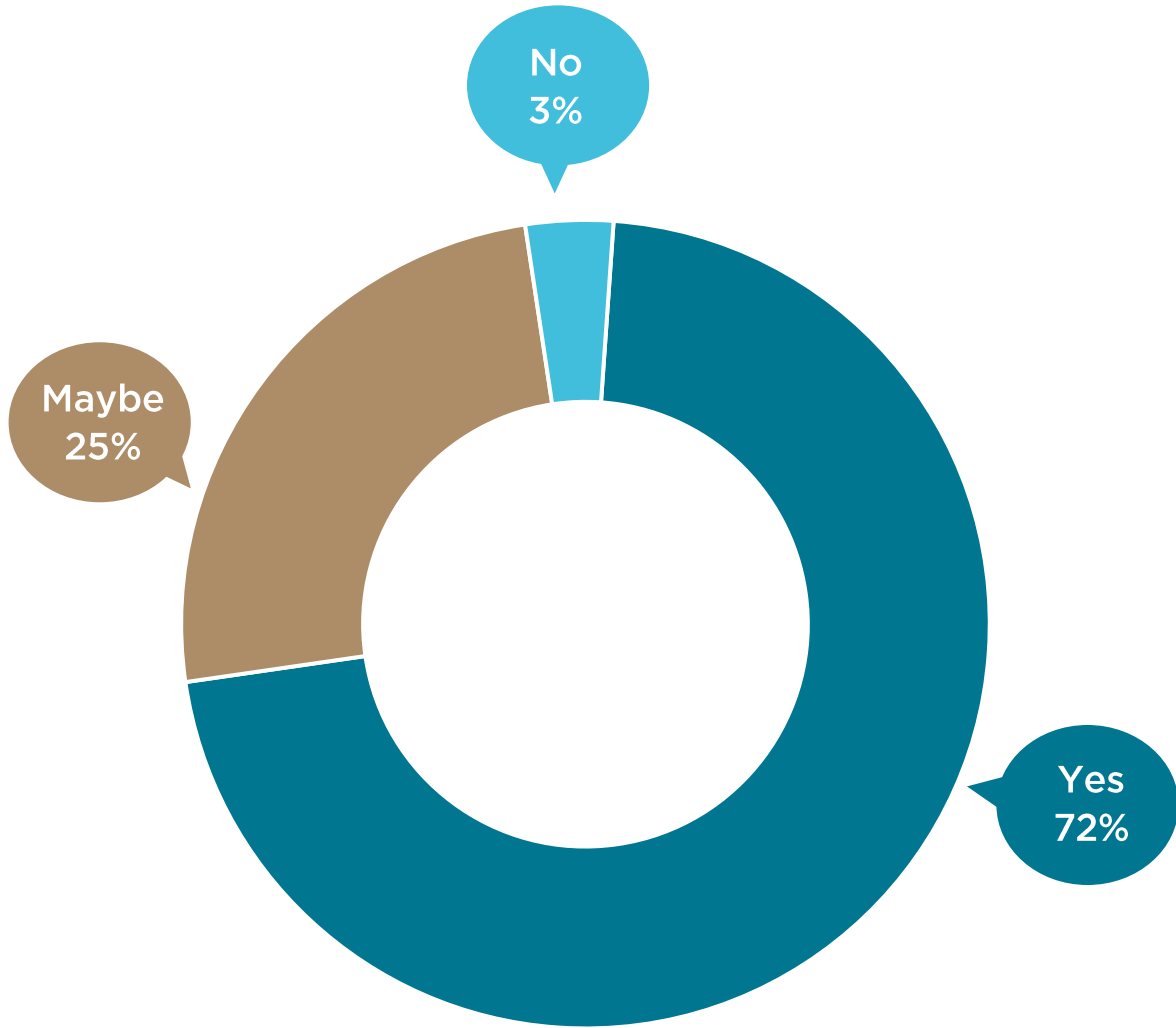
Note: Total response N=1,830. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Suggestions for Improvement



Share of Respondents

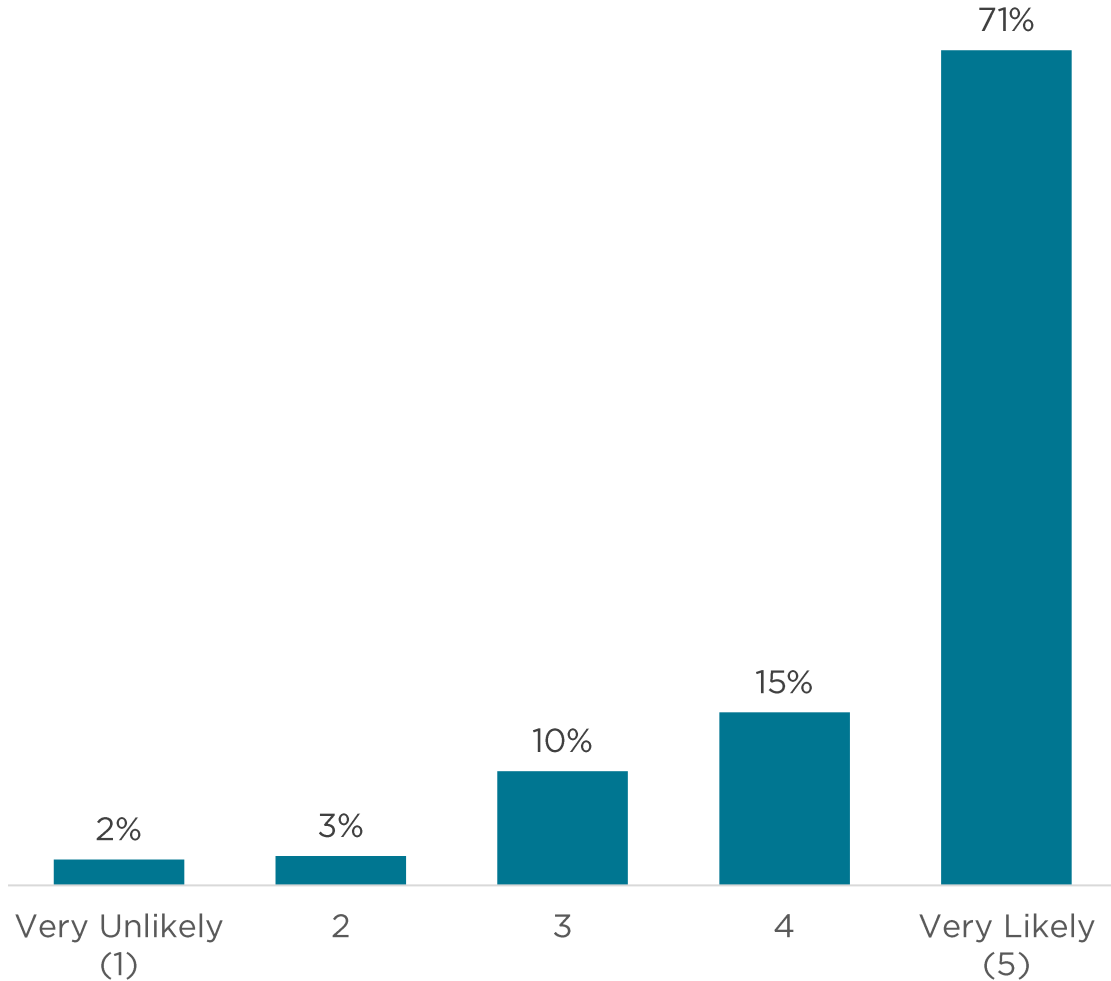
Willingness to Visit Outer Islands



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

Future Motivations

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

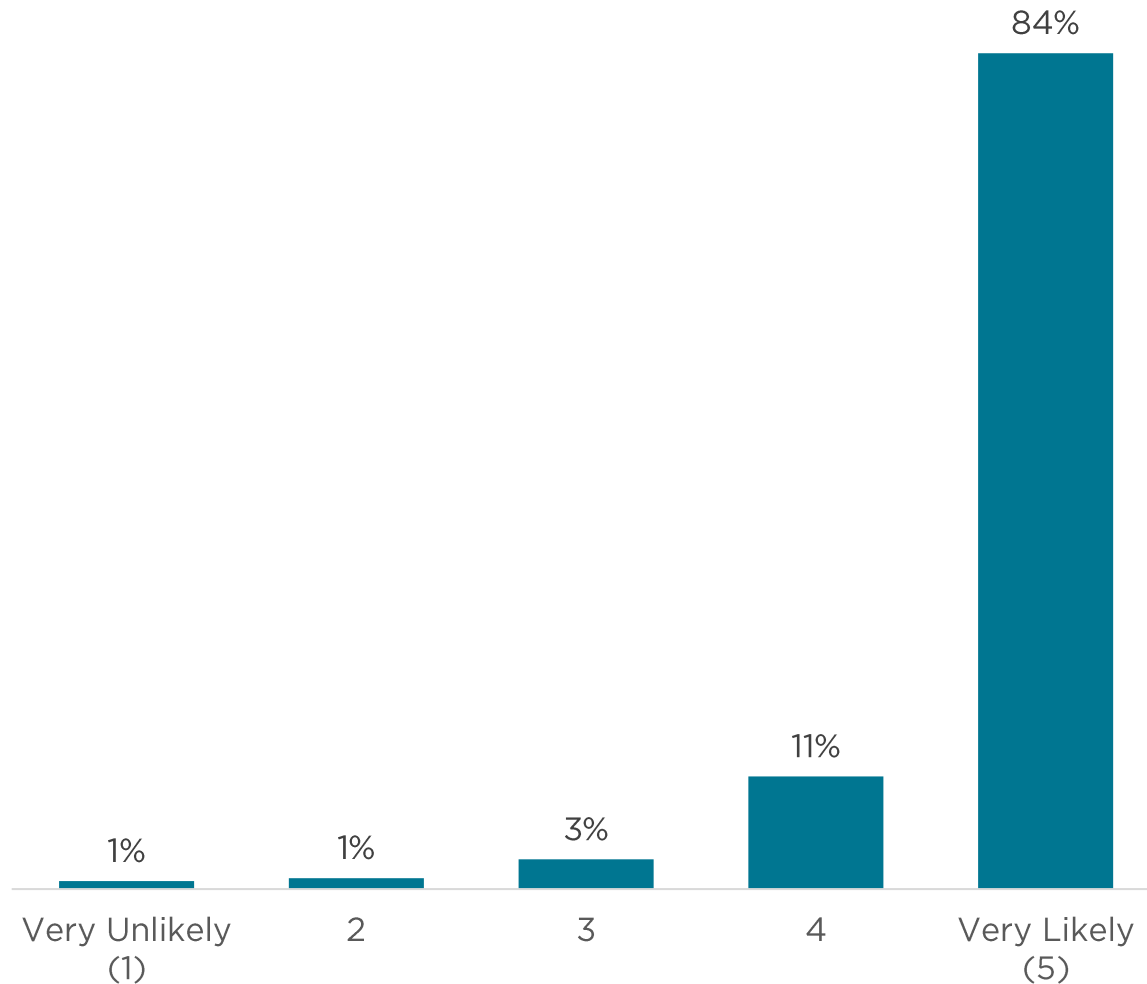


Quotes: Reasons to not return

- *Unfriendly immigration.*
- *Try something culturally different. Eating out options are expensive and few.*
- *Travel from Russia is expensive. For example, this time I was in Australia, and getting from there is inexpensive.*
- *Too similar to NZ. May go back to an off island, but unlikely to just Rarotonga.*
- *Too many other places to see in the world.*
- *Too many other destinations yet to see and we try not keep going to new destinations.*
- *Too far from UK. Unfortunately.*
- *It was a very expensive week.*
- *It was a great and pleasant experience to visit Cook Islands, but it is quite expensive and time consuming to get there from Europe.*
- *I've seen what you have to offer. I like the people and the island, but the lack of environmental efforts to protect your unique environment, the atrocious food choices, poor supermarkets (all the things I listed earlier) do not encourage me to return.*
- *I'm not very sure for the next holiday.*
- *I would like to visit other places.*
- *Because I live on the other side of the world.*
- *Avis Car Rentals - my experience has been tarnished by their theft and in recent research, it appears I am not the only person to fall prey to them.*
- *I would like to visit other places.*
- *I would but feel things could be improved with my last comment.*
- *I was there to attend my sister's wedding so I had to be there, barring a special occasion, there is no reason to attend somewhere so expensive when for half the price I could stay twice as long in somewhere like Thailand or Bali.*
- *Limited outdoor activities. Shallow reef making it unsuitable for swimming and snorkeling, kayaking. A few days is adequate on Cook Islands.*
- *lack of food available for diet.*

Future Motivations

Q: How likely would you recommend the Cook Islands?



Quotes: Reasons to not recommend

- *Until you have these diseases under control, I could not recommend travel to Rarotonga at this time.*
- *Throughout my entire journey, I often felt frustrated and baffled due to the challenges with public transport and limited information for visitors. Additionally, markets and shops had very limited hours, which made it difficult to access food and services, especially for visitors relying on public transport. These issues made it hard to fully enjoy the islands, which is why I would be unlikely to recommend the Cook Islands to others.*
- *There's nicer spots for cheaper.*
- *There are other destinations closer and better.*
- *There are better places to holiday that are far less expensive.*
- *It would have to match the person I was giving recommendation to, there would be some people it would suit, just not me.*
- *It needs a bit of care and maintenance.*
- *Issues with Vodafone monopoly.*
- *If locals are unfriendly, why would I want others subjected to that?*
- *I'd rather travel to beautiful places in NZ or even around Australia where it doesn't get so busy.*
- *I think there are better alternatives in SE Asia for people coming from Europe.*
- *Avis Car Rentals - as they are allowed to continue to operate despite their regular behavior of withholding deposits, yet claiming they have returned them, then it says a lot about the 'behind the scenes' underbelly culture of the island and how it is managed by local authorities. An underbelly exists that has poked its head out, tarnishing my entire trip.*

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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. For any queries regarding this report, please contact the SPTO Manager Research and Statistics Mr. Prashil Parkas pparkas@spto.org or SPTO Senior Research Officer, Mr. Rovarovaivalu Vesikula rvesikula@spto.org. SPTO's Head Office is located at Level 3, FNPF Place, 343-359, Victoria Parade, Private Mailbag, Suva.