

Cook Islands

International Visitor Survey Annual Report
July 2024 – June 2025

SOLO



Acknowledgements

- ❖ The Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) expresses its gratitude to all contributors to this annual report on IVS data from July 2024 to June 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 8,872 responses out of 9,116 collected, representing 11% of actual visitors with a 17% response rate. Among the respondents, 12% were solo travelers, and the average household income was NZD167,051.
- ❖ 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 93% expressed a willingness to return.
- ❖ The average prepaid spend per visitor was NZD2,808 with an estimated 40% (NZD1,123) flowing into the local economy. In-country spending per visitor per trip averaged NZD1,592 with an average stay of 8.7 nights. This contributed to an *estimated** economic impact of NZD 477 million from July 2024 to June 2025.
- ❖ Visitors reported lower levels of satisfaction with the cost of goods and services, as well as with public services, facilities, infrastructure, and the standard and range of activities, entertainments and attractions available. To improve the overall visitor experience, they suggested strengthening public services and infrastructure upkeep, enriching natural attractions and recreational offerings, and implementing effective price regulation to ensure better value for money.

Background

- ❖ The July 2024 – June 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 July 2024 – June 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 July 2024 - June 2025 period was similar, but not exact, to the survey instrument used in the July 2024 - June 2025 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 July 2024 - June 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 (July 2024 – June 2025)

 **53,619** TOTAL VALID EMAILS SENT

 **8,872** TOTAL RESPONSES ANALYZED

Note: 9,916 responses were received. After data cleaning, 8,872 responses remained.

17%
CONVERSION RATE

RESPONSES COVERED

 **15,980** ADULTS  **2,916** CHILDREN

11%
OF ALL VISITORS IN THIS PERIOD

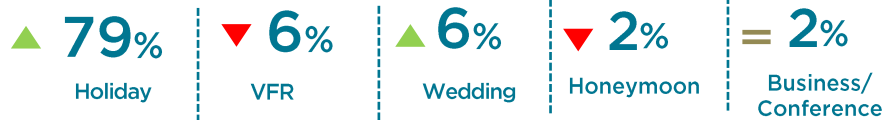
Cook Islands International Visitor Survey

Snapshot July 2024 – June 2025

Country of residence



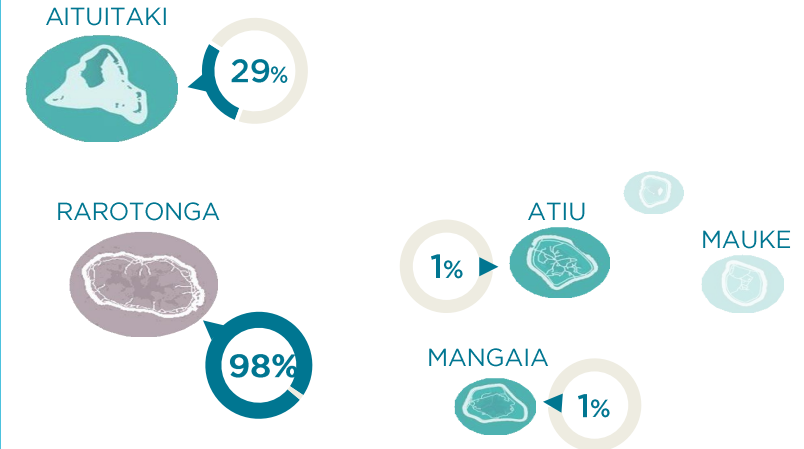
Purpose of visit



Most Participated Activities



Islands visited



Most appealing



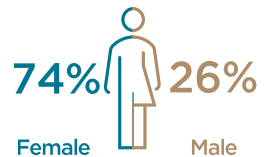
Least Appealing



Improvement



Economic impact

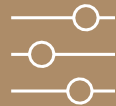


Note: The estimated flow-back rate into the Cook Islands for prepaid spend is 40%. With an average prepaid spend of \$2,808 per person per trip, this equates to \$1,123.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



Visitor Spending
& Impact

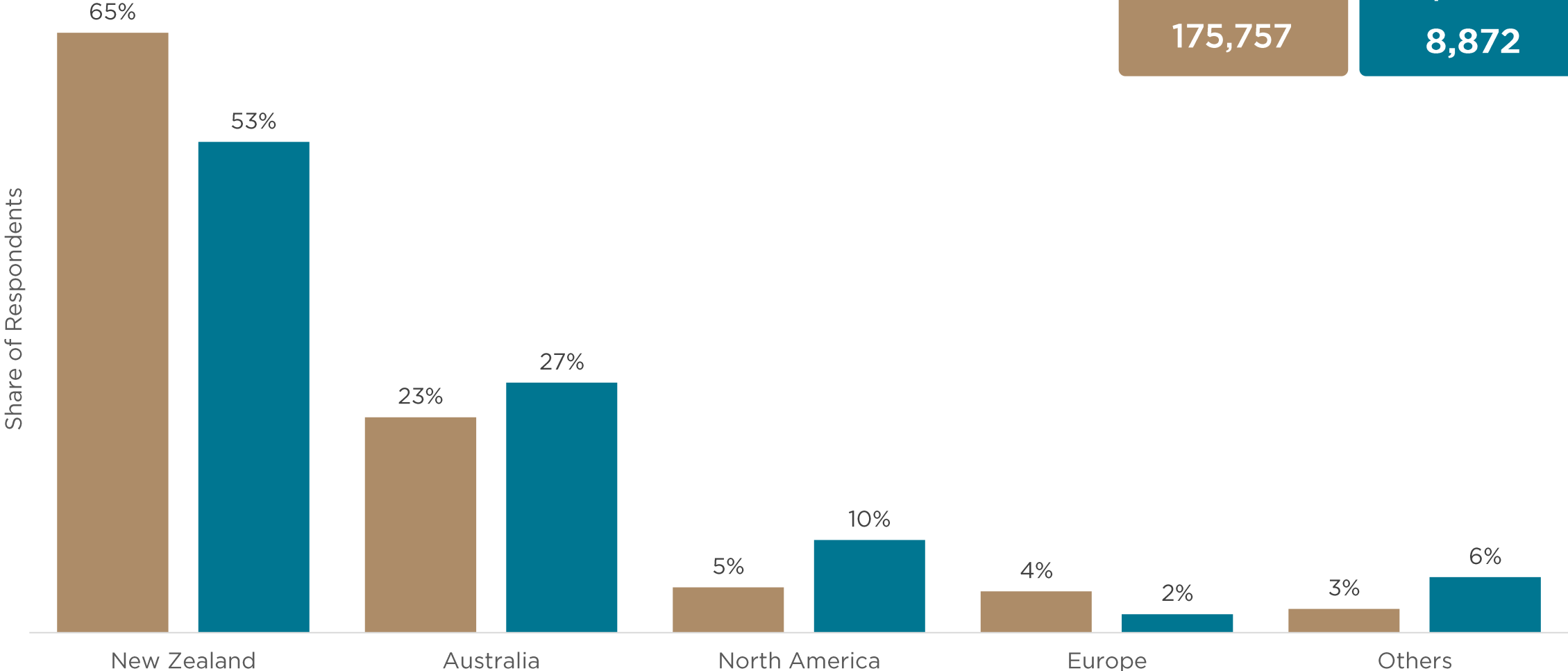


Visitor
Satisfaction

Source Markets: IVS Respondents vs Actual Arrival

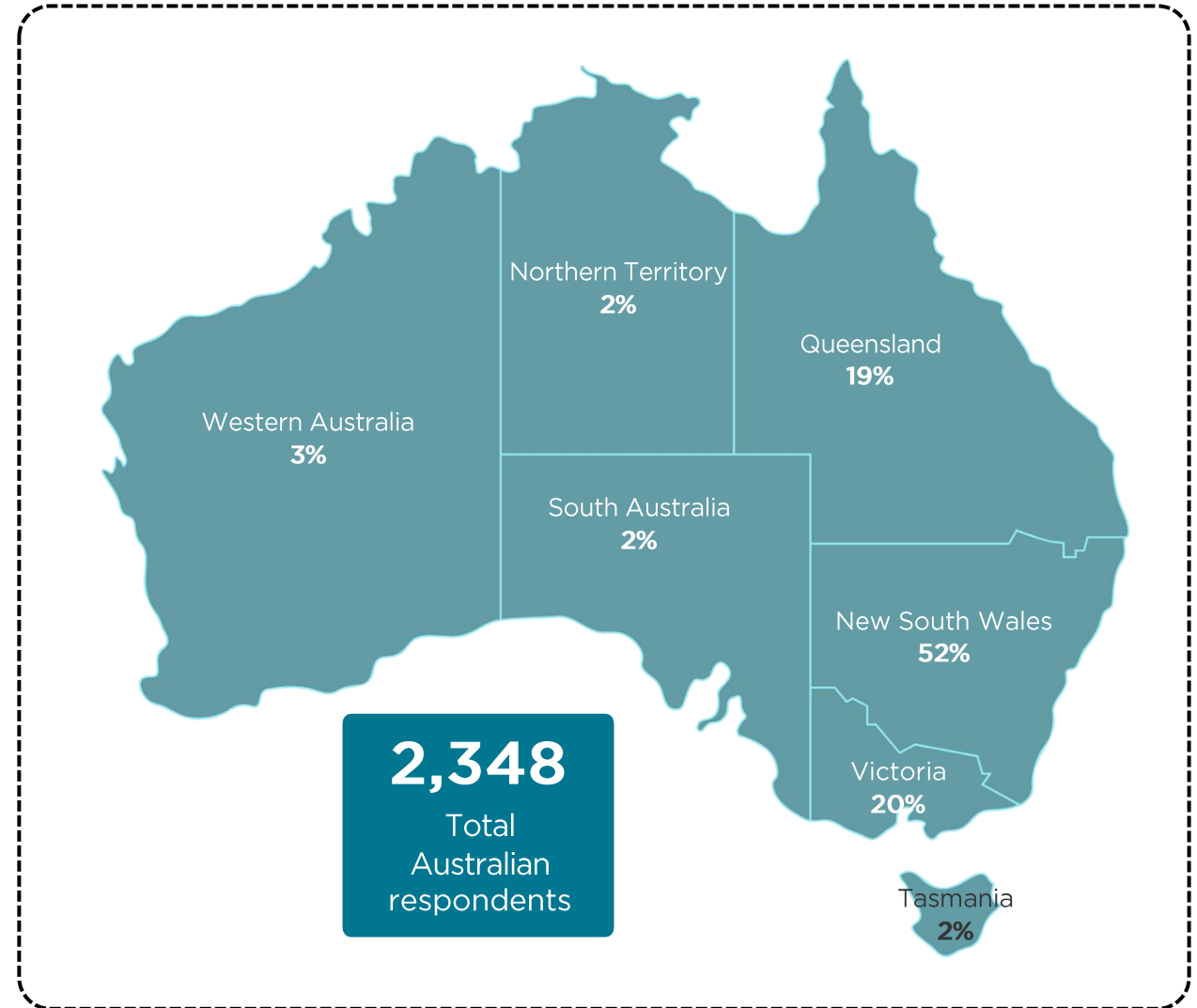
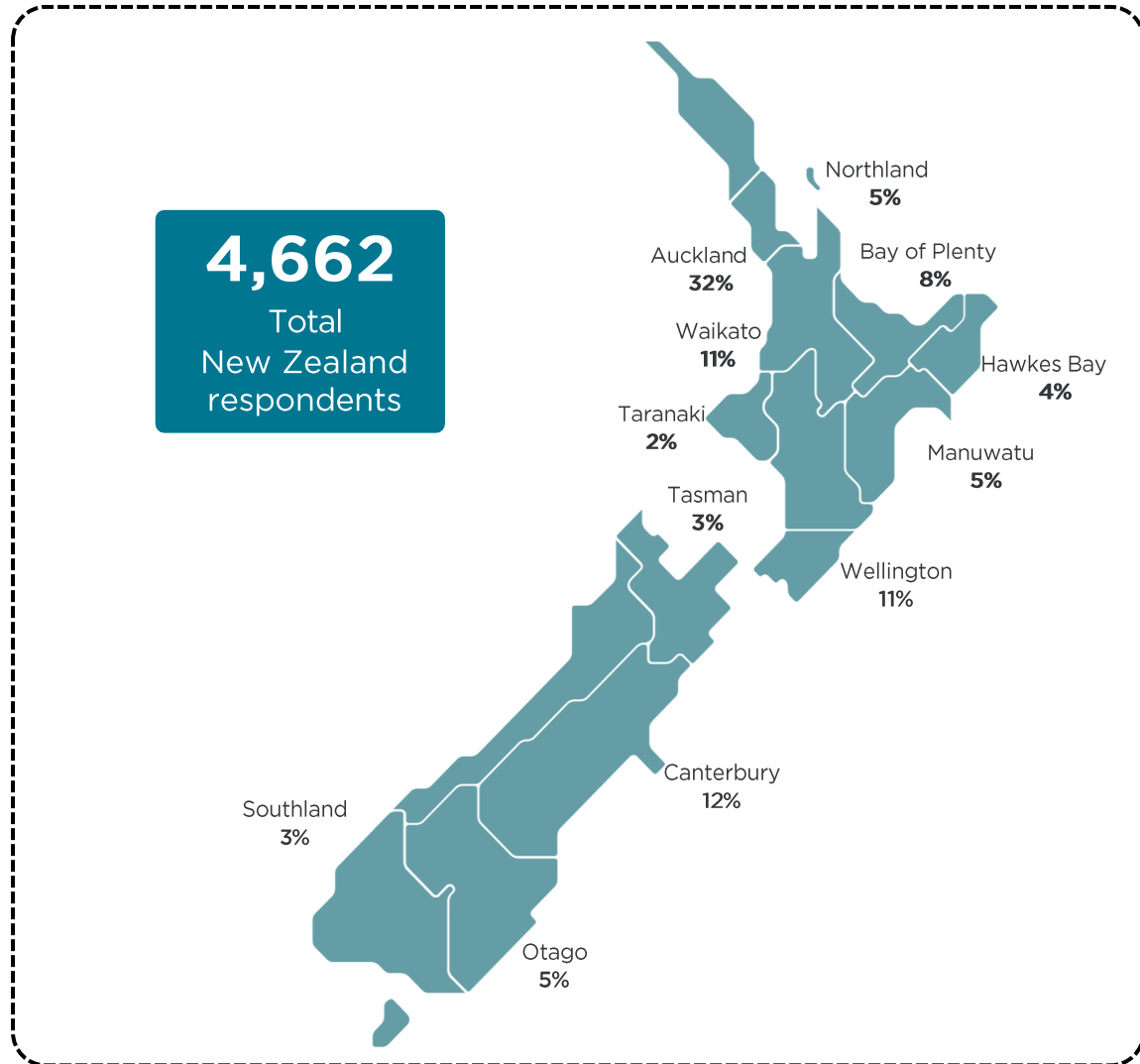
Actual Arrivals
175,757

IVS Respondents
8,872

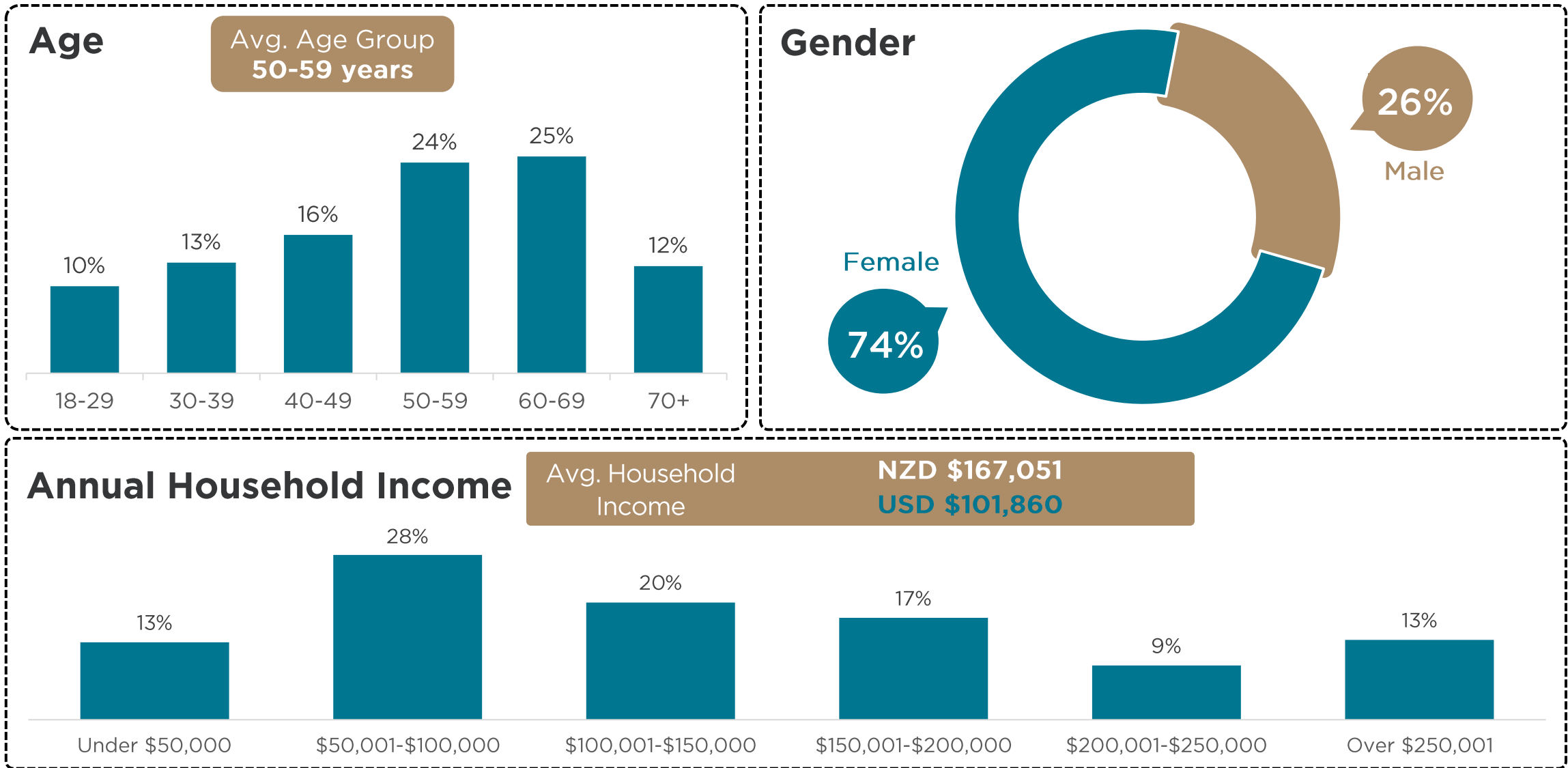


Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%. No weighting was applied, as the sample data is representative..

Top Source Markets



Respondent Demographics

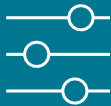


Note: % share of IVS respondents. \$ in NZD. The average exchange rate to NZD and USD for Jan-Mar 2025 was applied.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



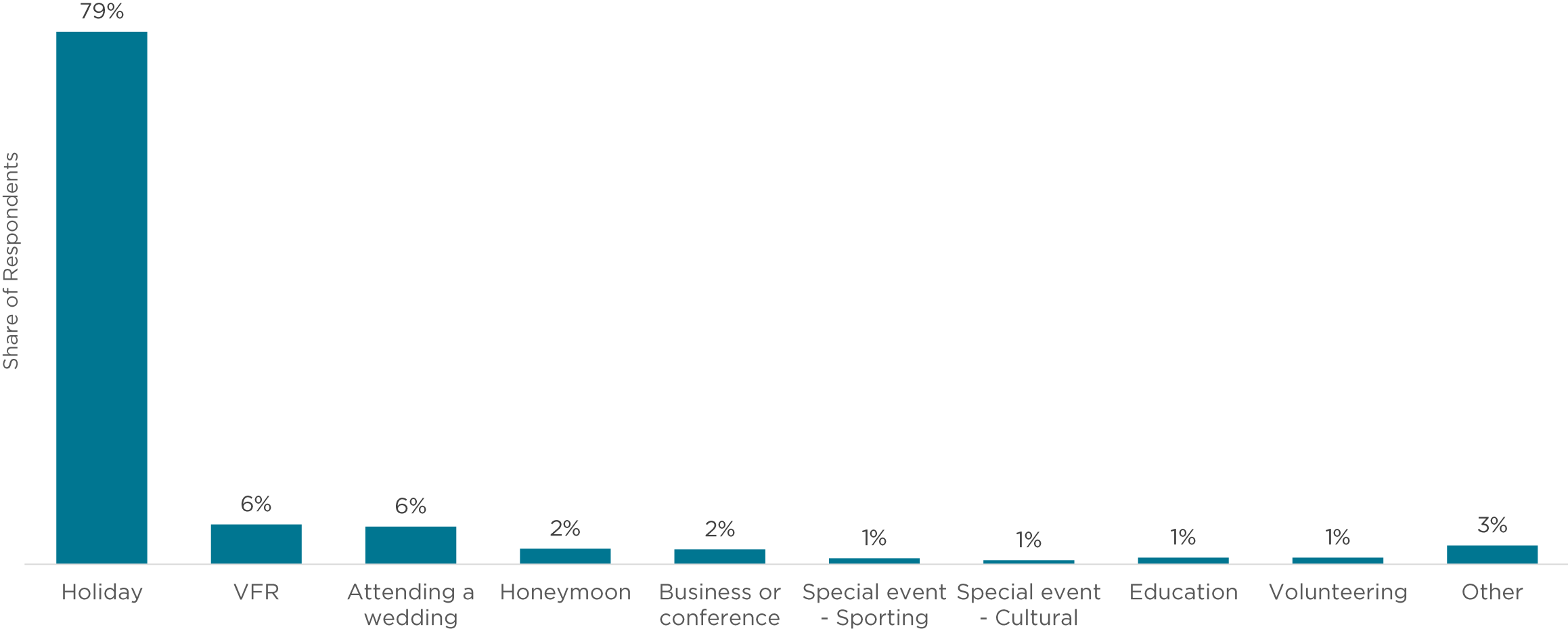
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Purpose of Visit

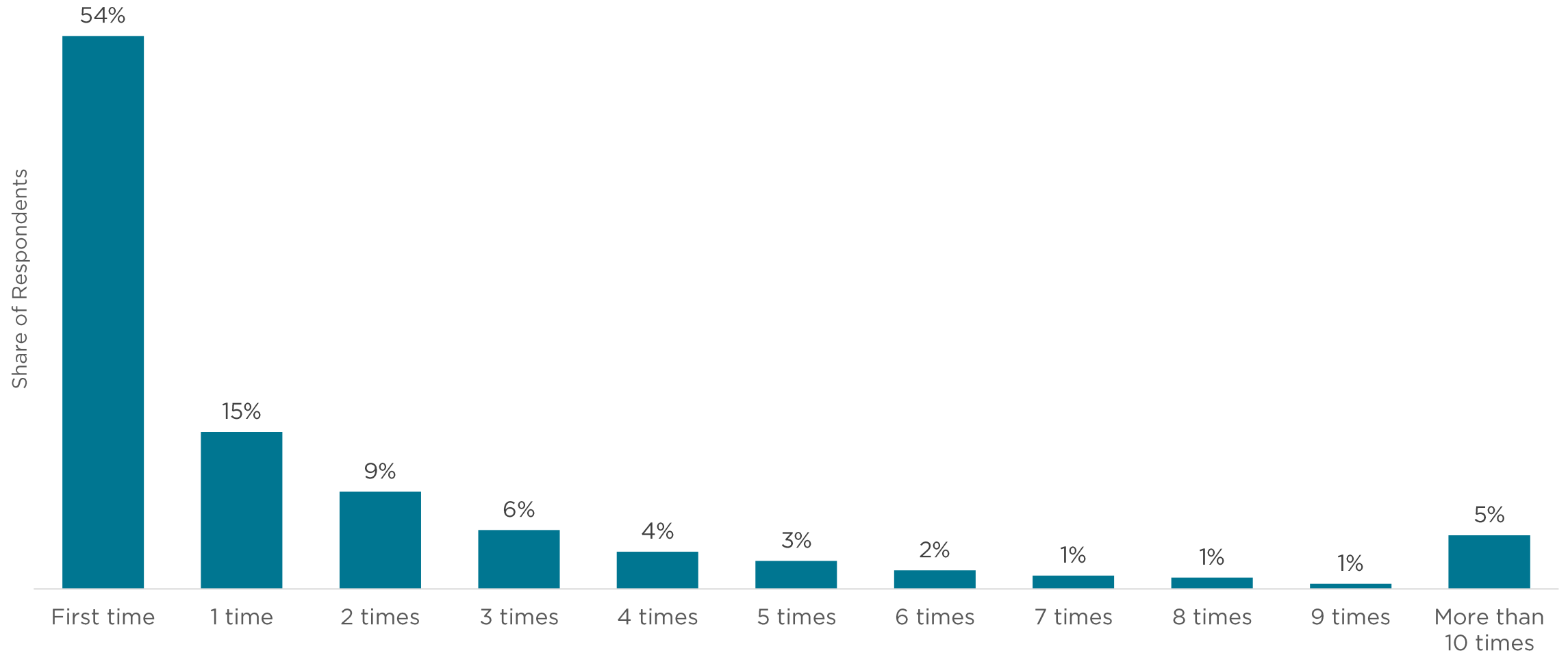
Q: What was the main purpose of your visit?



Note: N=8,810. Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%. VFR stands for "Visiting Friends and Relatives".

Number of Visits

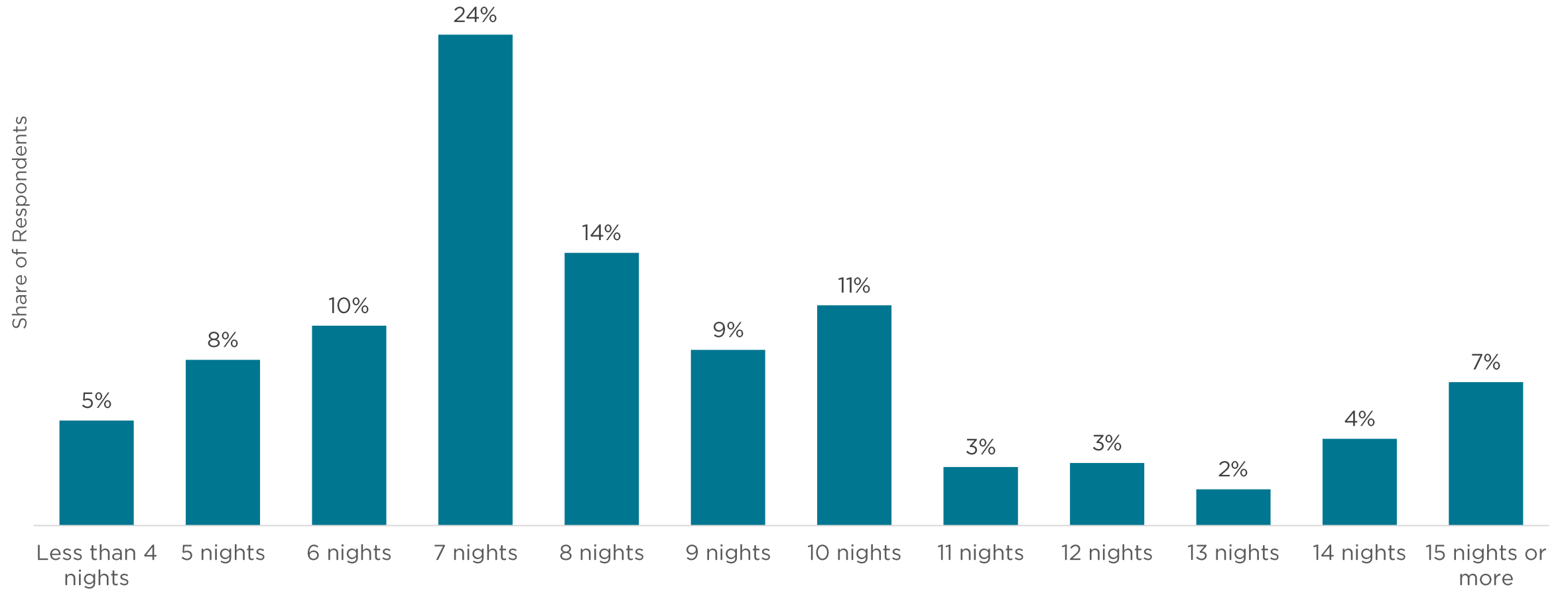
Q: How many times have been to the Cook Islands not including this recent visit?



Length of Stay (nights)

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

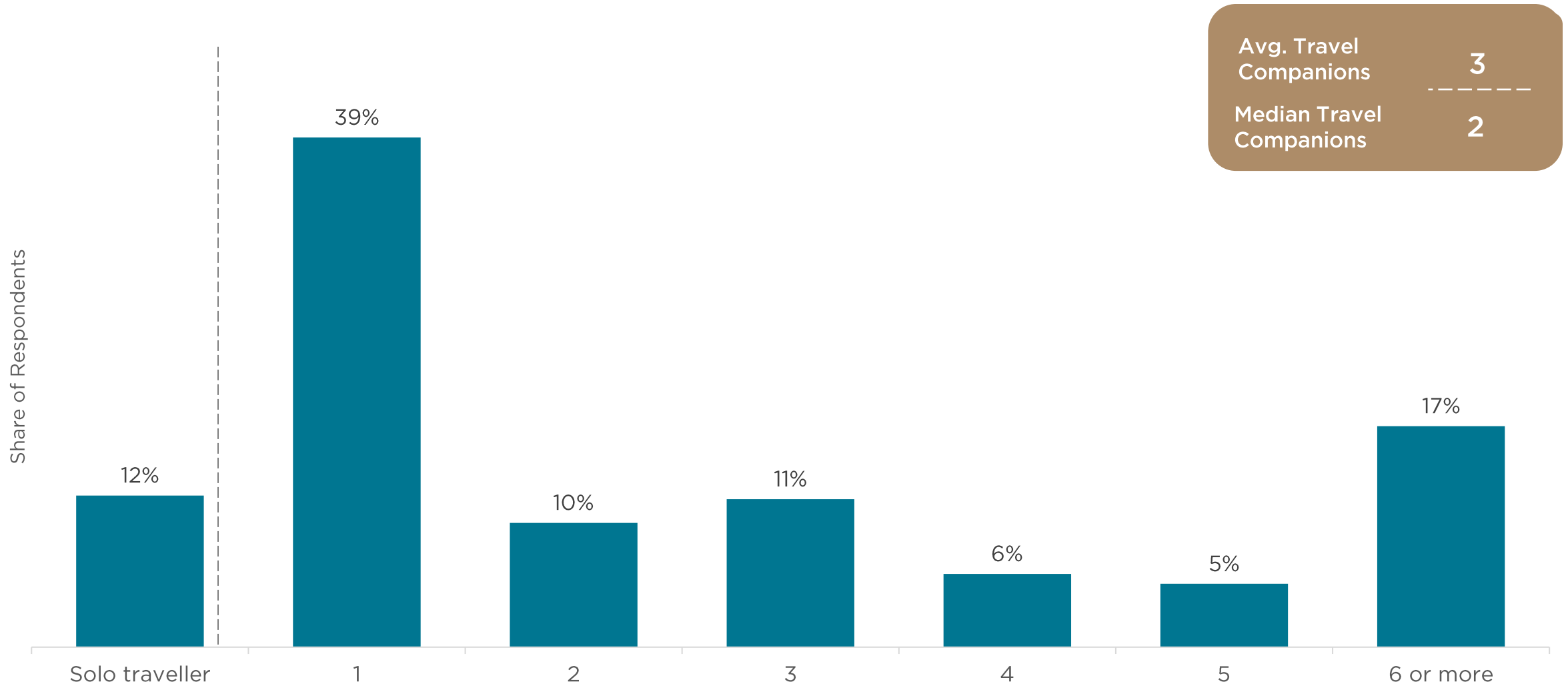
Avg. Length of Stay
8.7 Nights



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

Travel Group Size

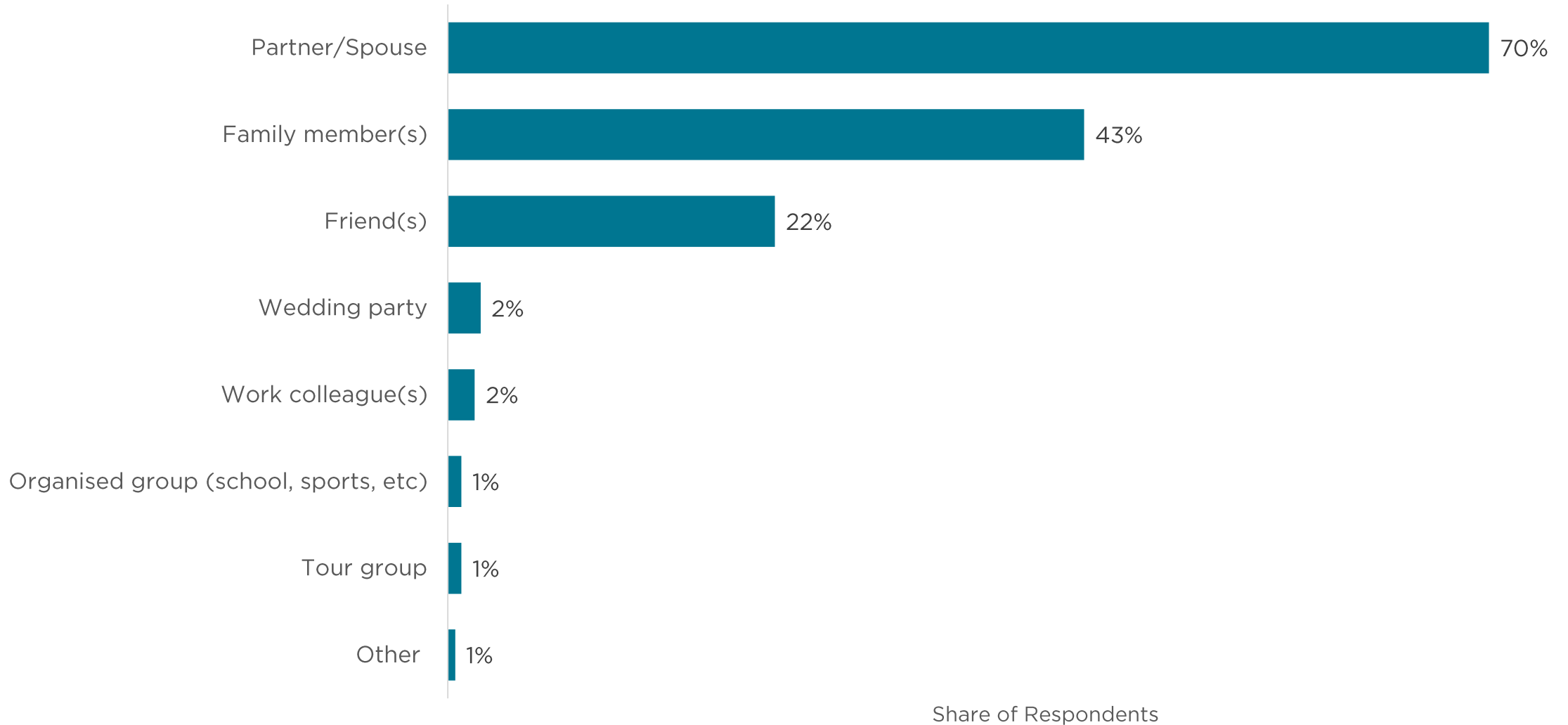
Q: How many people accompanied you on this trip?



Note: N=8,822. Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

Travel Companions

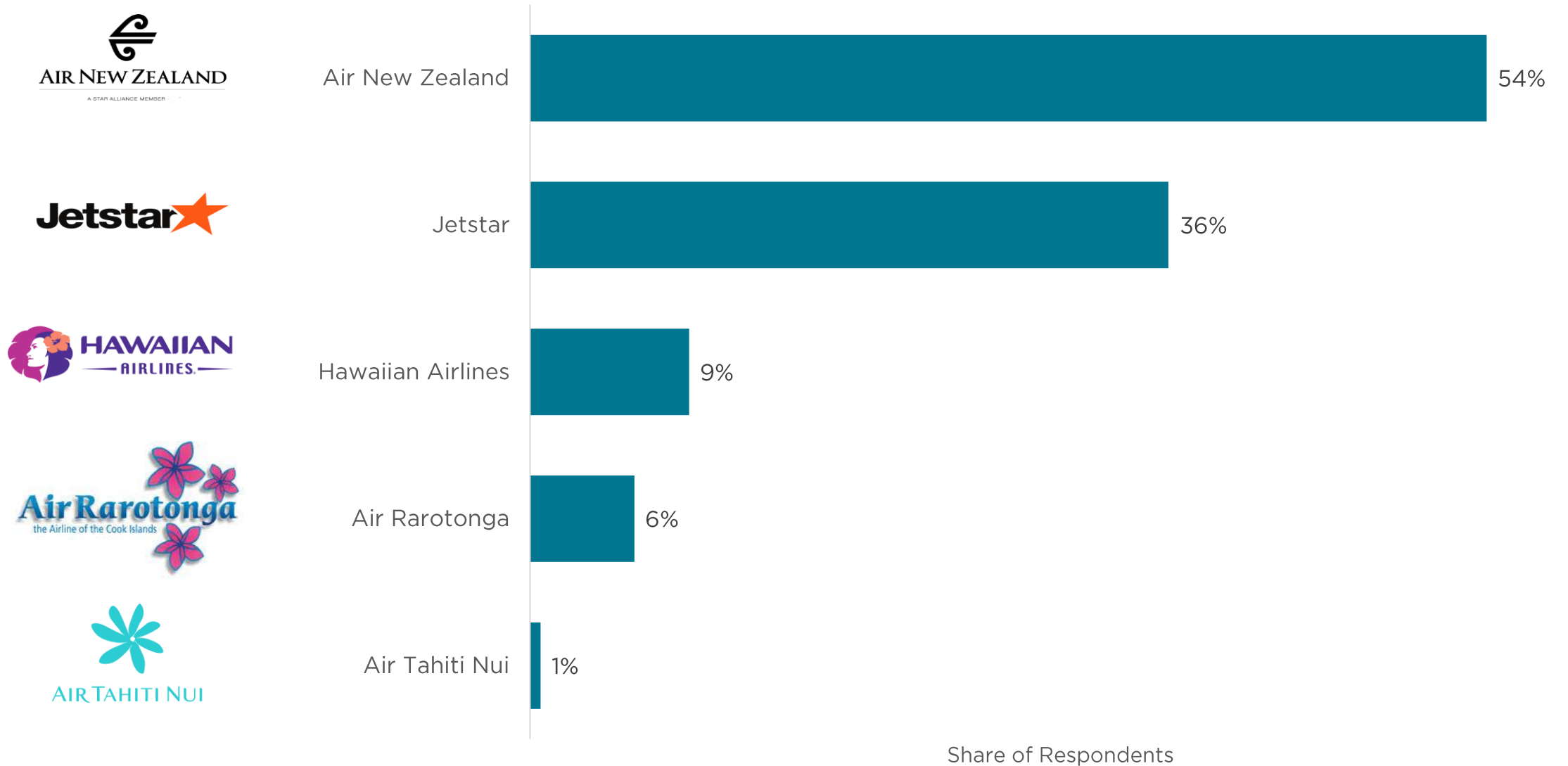
Q: Who were your travelling companions?



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

Airlines Used for Travel

Q: How did you get to the Cook Islands?



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?



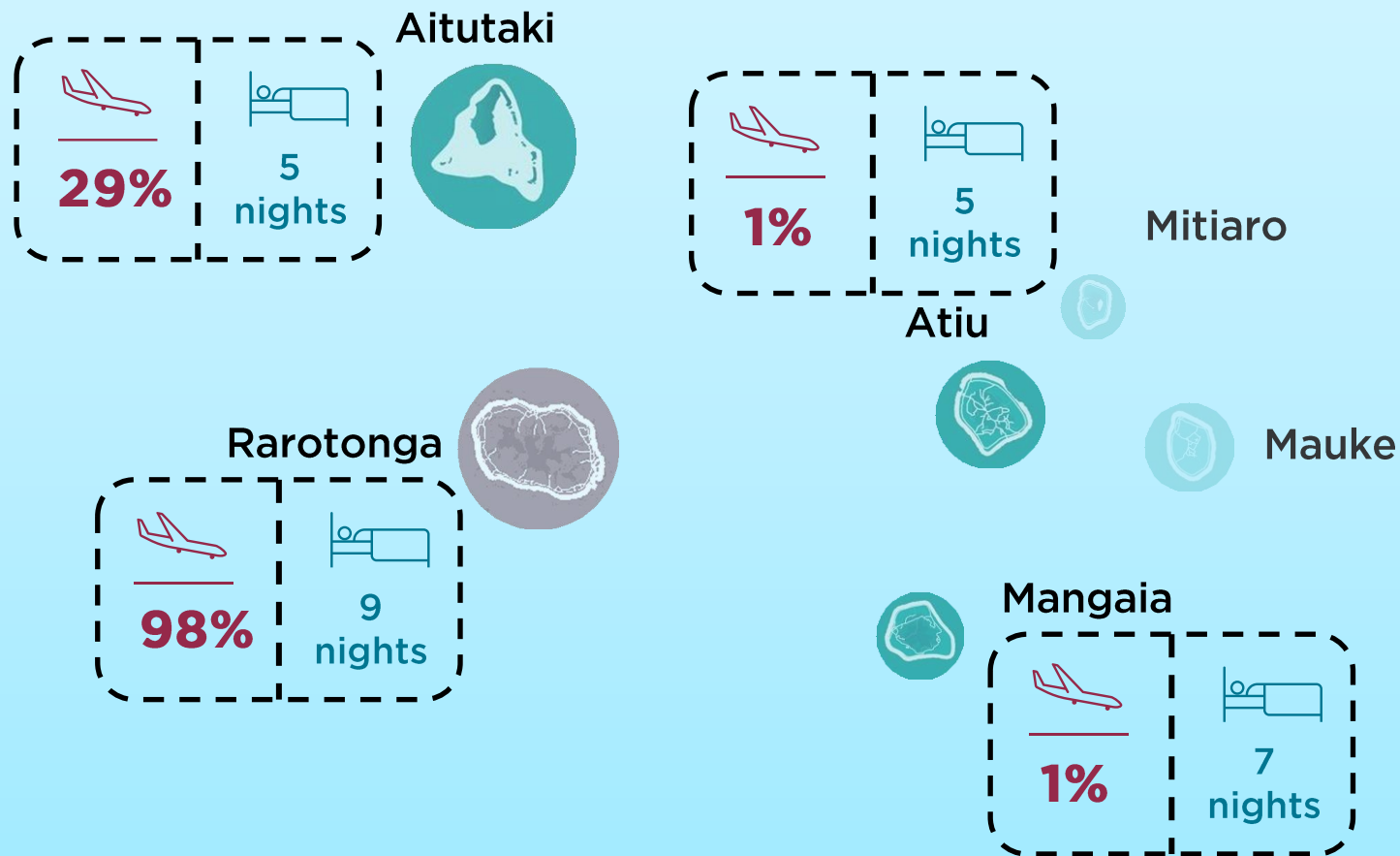
Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Islands Visited & Avg. Length of Stay

Avg. Length of Stay
8.7 Nights

Q: Which island(s) did you visit?

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

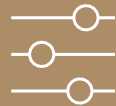


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



Visitor Spending
& Impact

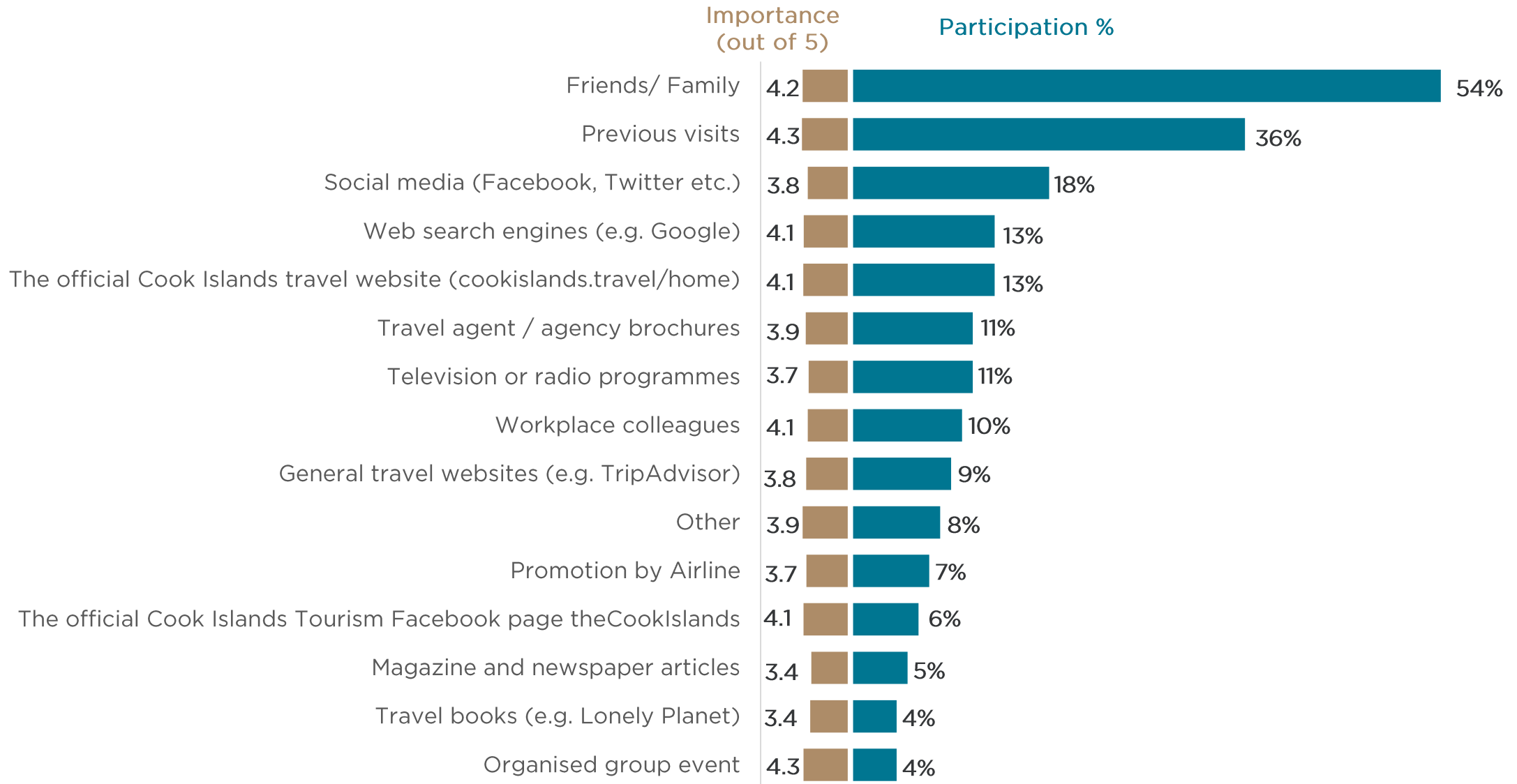


Visitor
Satisfaction

Information Source

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

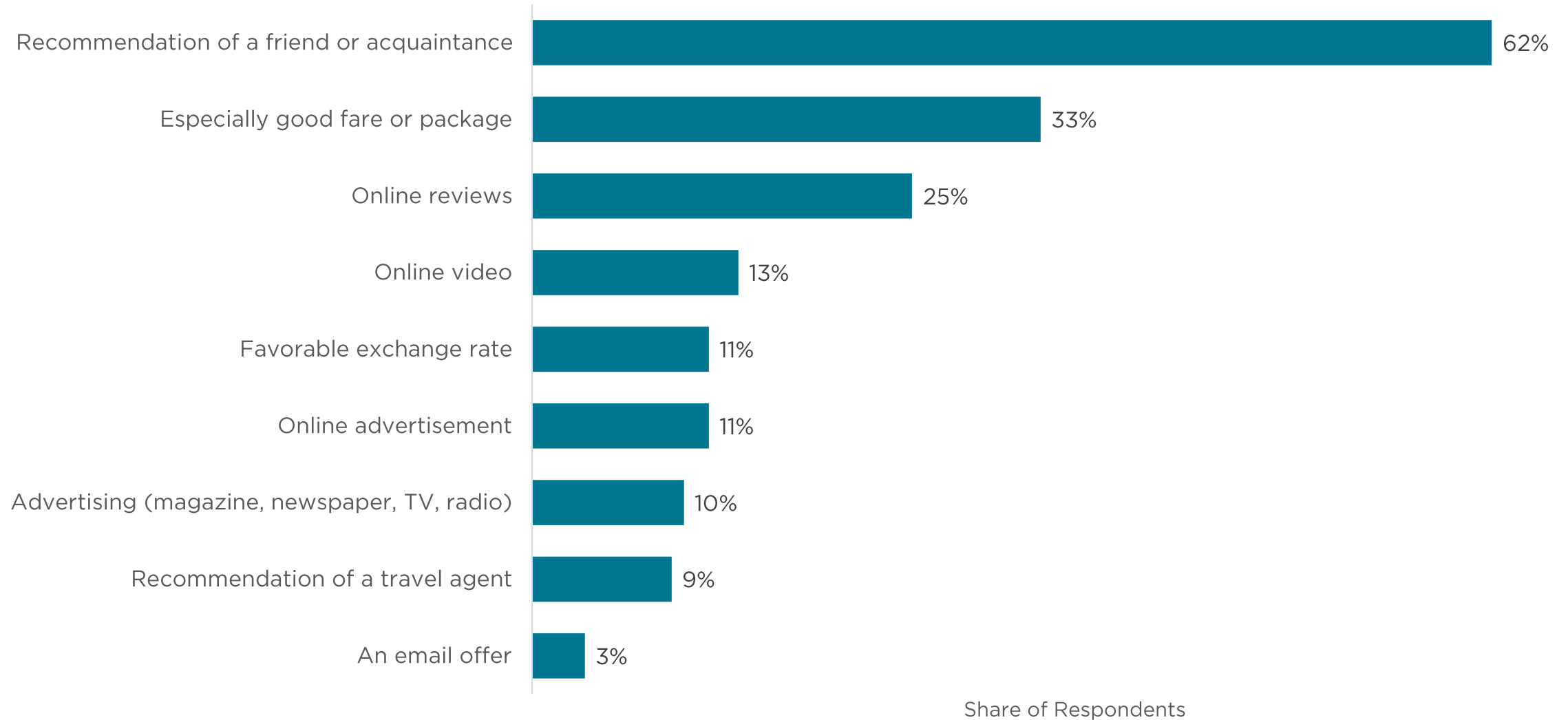
Q: How important was the information source?



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

Promotion/Advertising Channels

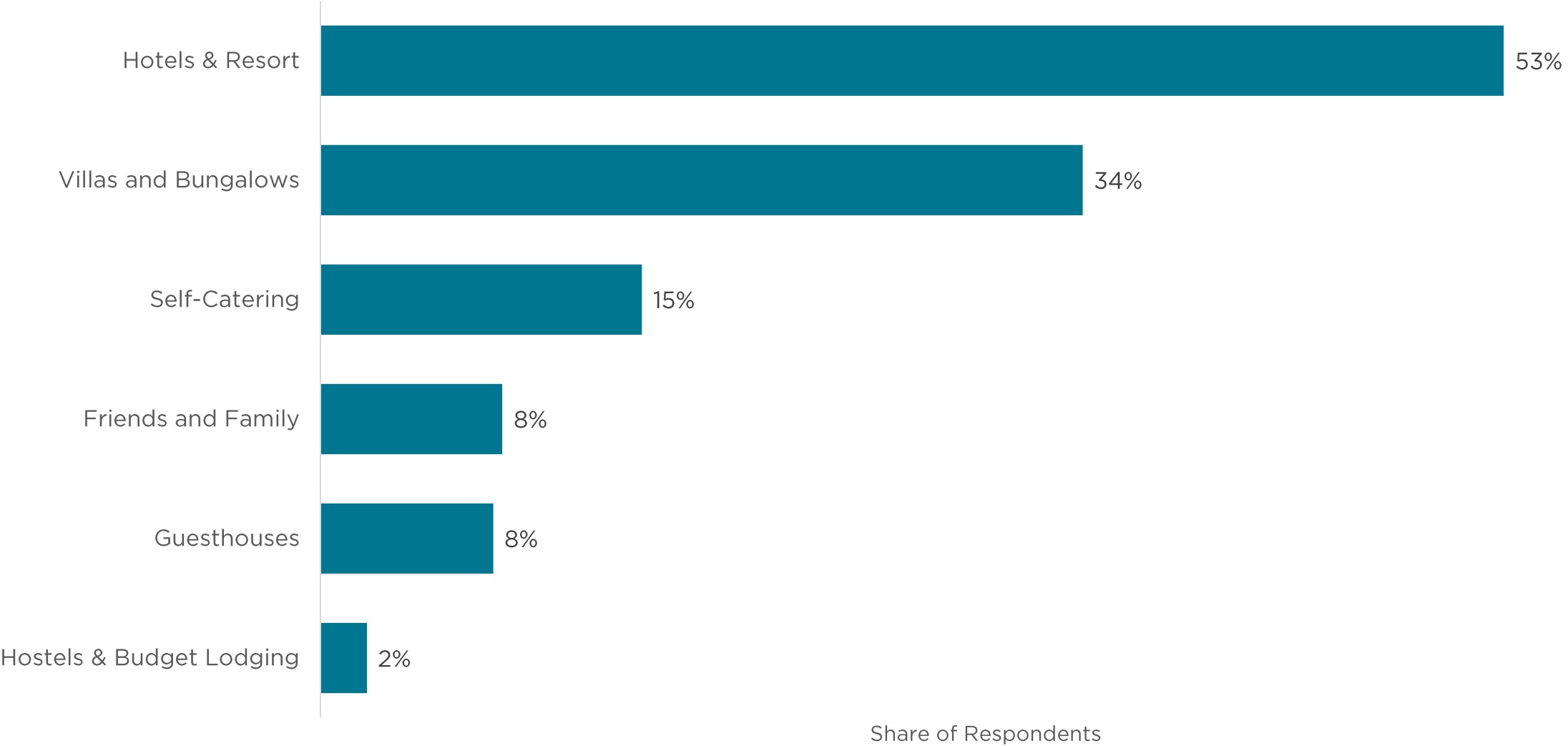
Q: Which promotional or advertising channels influenced your decision to visit the Cook Islands?



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%.

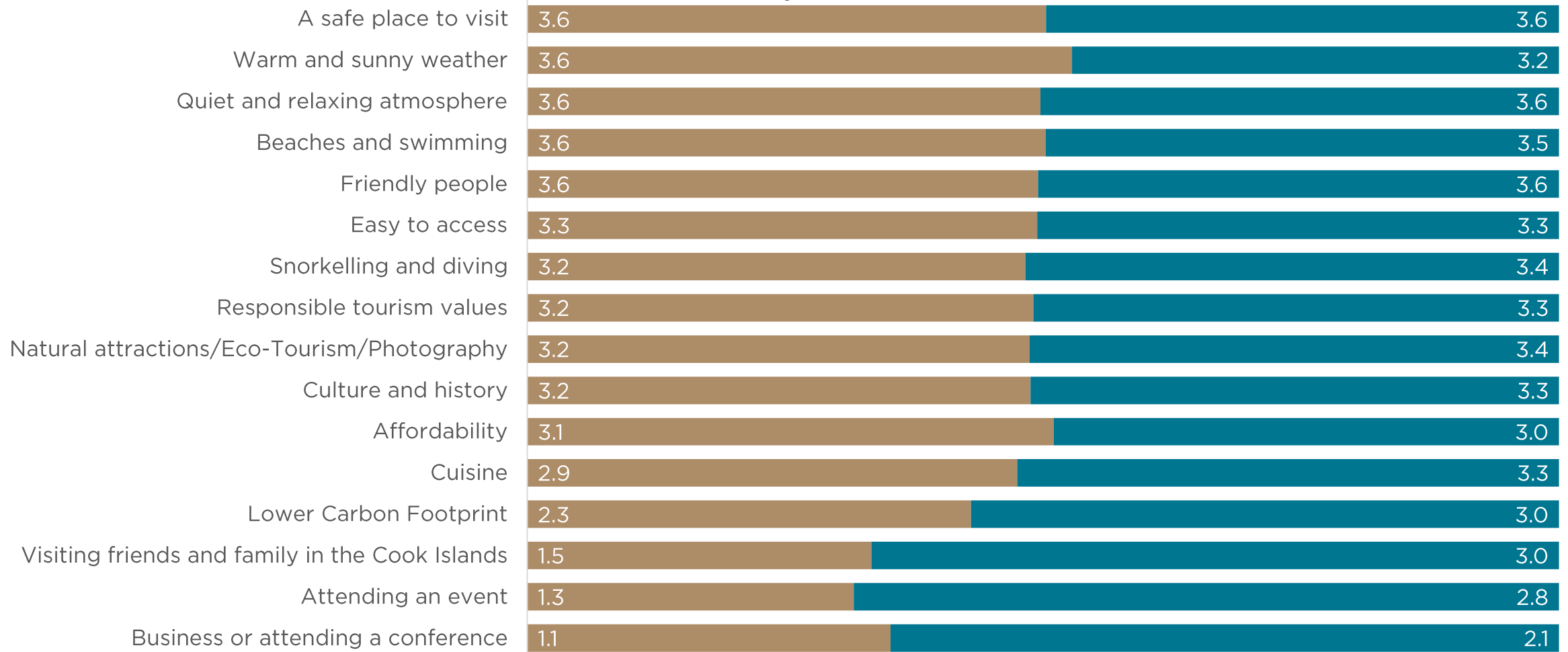
Pre-Travel Perceptions Vs Expectations

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

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

1=No Influence to 4=Very Influential

1=Did Not Meet to 4=Exceeded

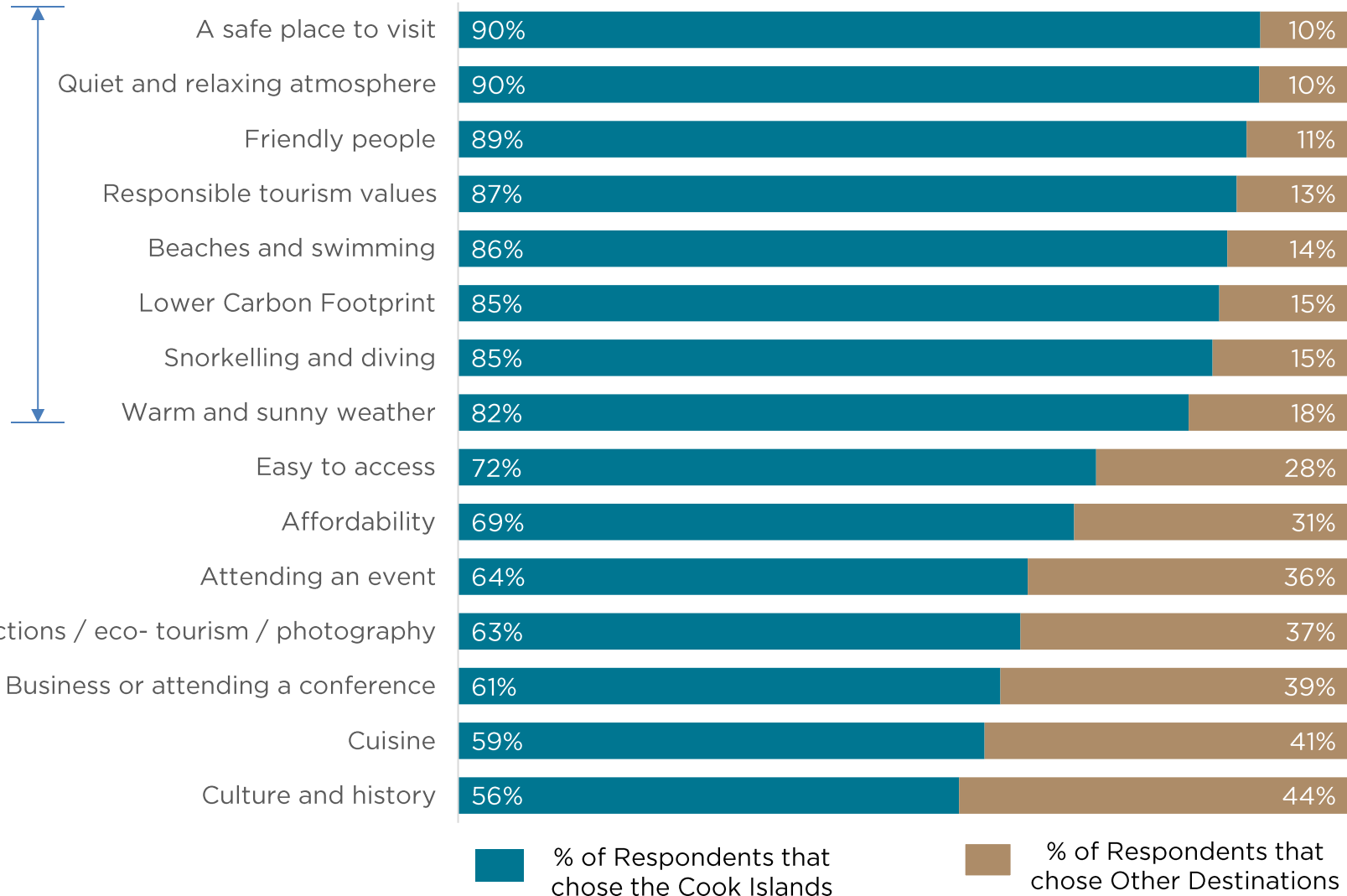


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

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

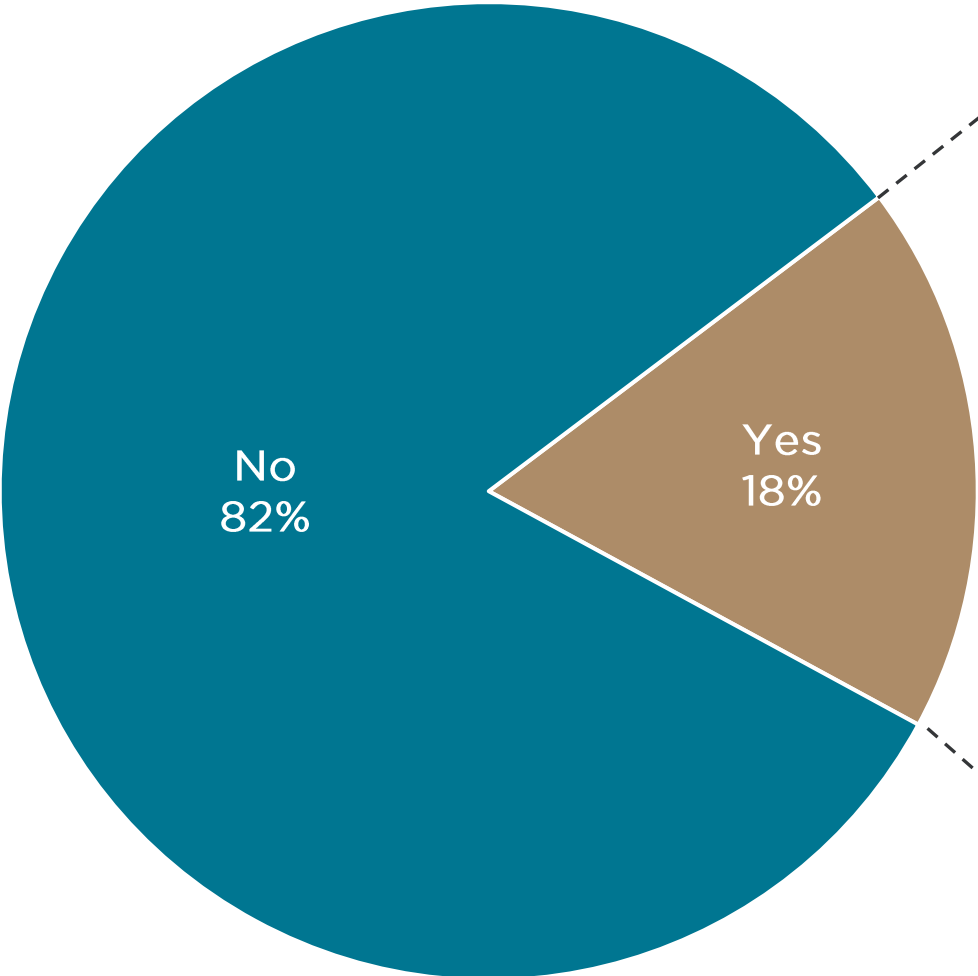


Bottom 6

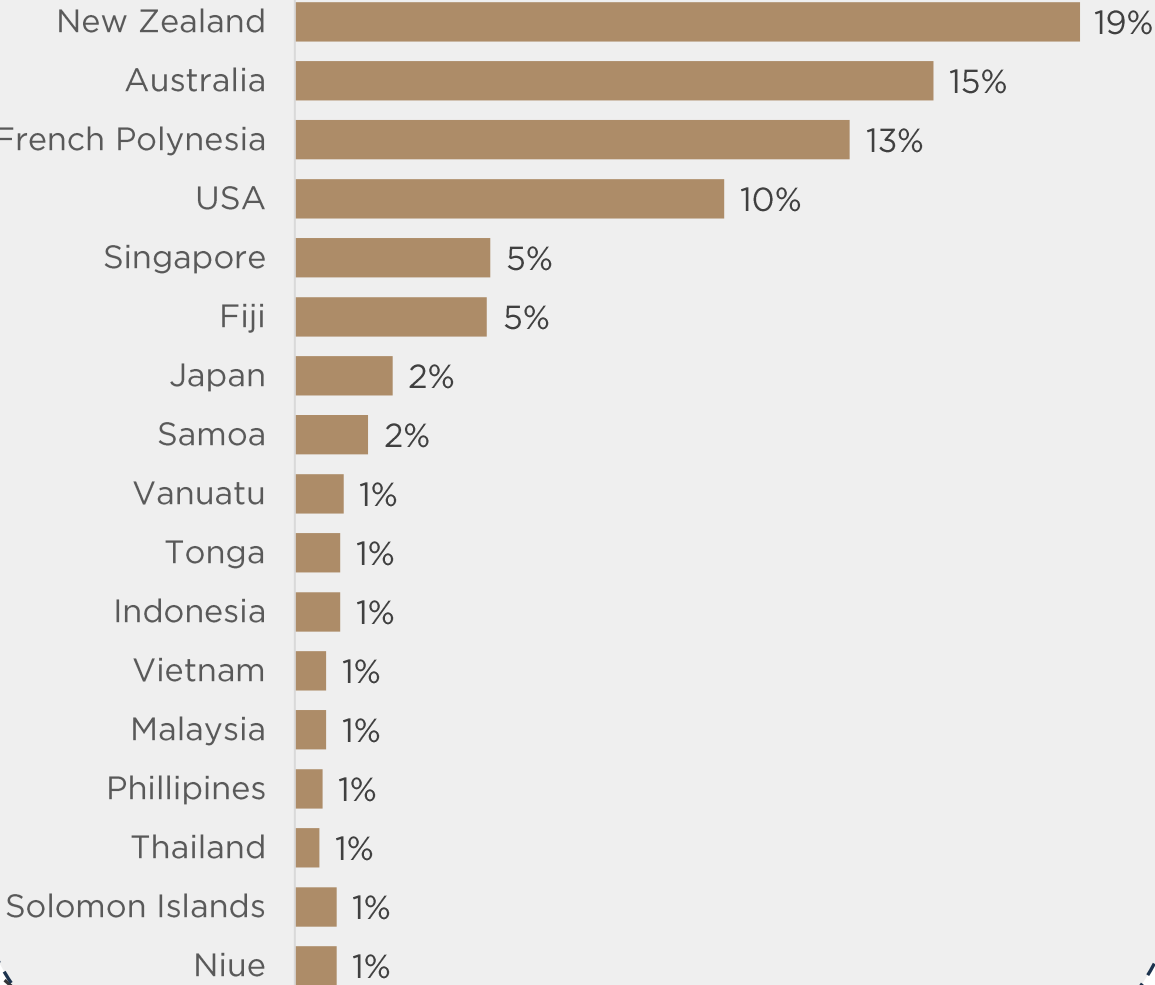
Emphasizing these Unique Selling Points is important, as visitors increasingly associate them with other destinations when comparing with the Cook Islands.

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 visit?

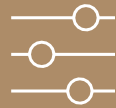


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



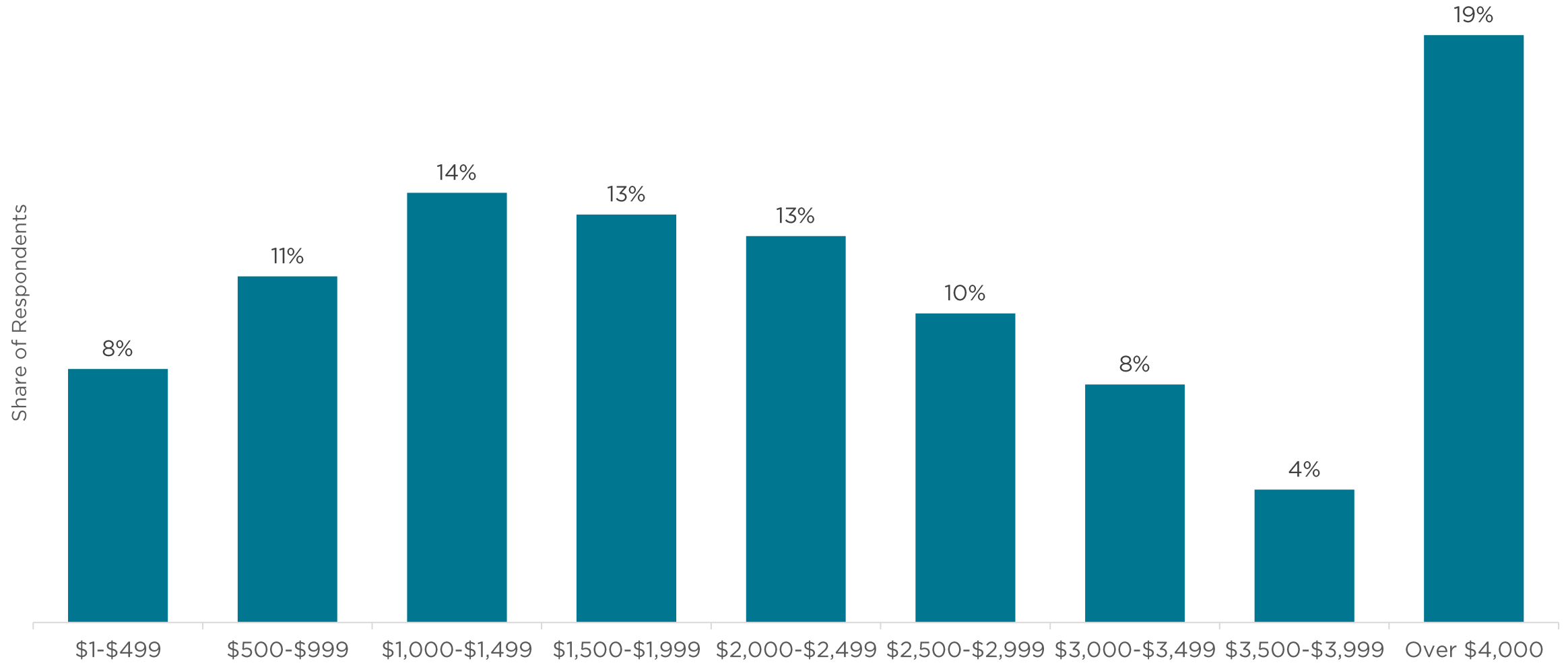
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Prepaid Expenditure

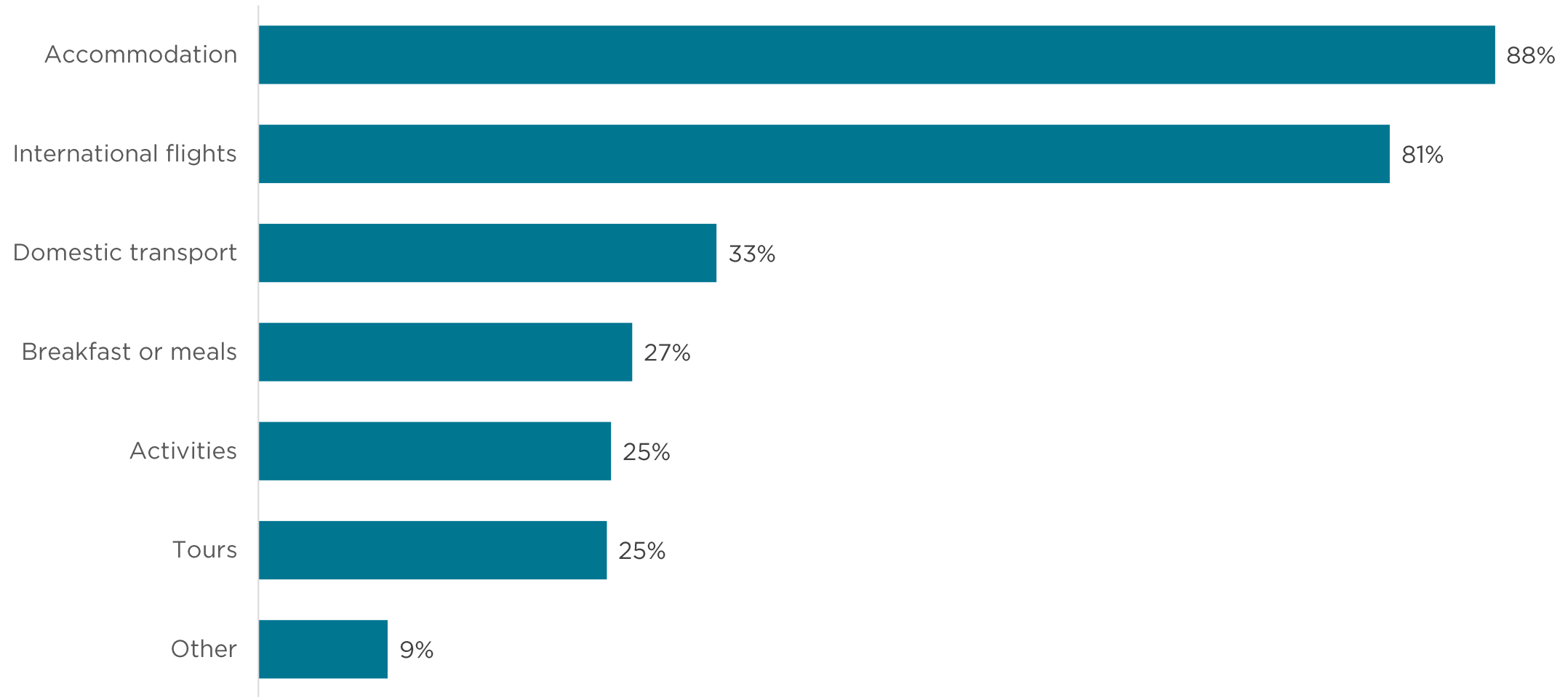
Avg. Prepaid per Person
NZ\$2,808



Note: NZ dollars.

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	28	51	31
Restaurant, Cafes & Bars	28	51	31
Vehicle Rental	9	16	10
Petrol	2	3	2
Domestic Flight	4	7	5
Public Transport	1	1	1
Internet Cost	1	1	1
Water-based activities	7	12	7
Land-based activities	3	6	4
Groceries	7	13	8
Shopping	10	18	11
Other	1	2	1
TOTAL	100%	183	112

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	
	Jul 24 – Jun 25	Jul 24 – Jun 25
Average Spend Prior to arrival	NZD	USD
Per Person Per Trip	2,808	1,712
<i>Flowing into local economy rate - estimated 40%</i>		
Per Person Per Trip	1,123	685
Per Person per Day	129	79

Average Local Spend		
<i>Length of Stay (nights)</i>	<i>mean 8.7 nights</i>	
Per Person Per Trip	1,592	971
Per Person per Day	183	112

Total Economic Impact-Per Trip	2,715	1,656
Total Economic Impact-Per Day	312	190

July 2023 – June 2024

NZD 520 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 163,418

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

\$2,462

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$247

In-country spend per day

40% Flowing into local economy rate

x 8.9 nights Average length of stay

\$984

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$2,197

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$3,181 per visitor per trip
\$357 per visitor per day

July 2024 – June 2025

NZD 477 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 175,757 ▲

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

\$2,808 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$183 ▼

In-country spend per day

40% Flowing into local economy rate

x 8.7 nights ▼ Average length of stay

\$1,123 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$1,592 ▼

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

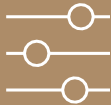
\$2,715 per visitor per trip ▼
\$312 per visitor per day ▼

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

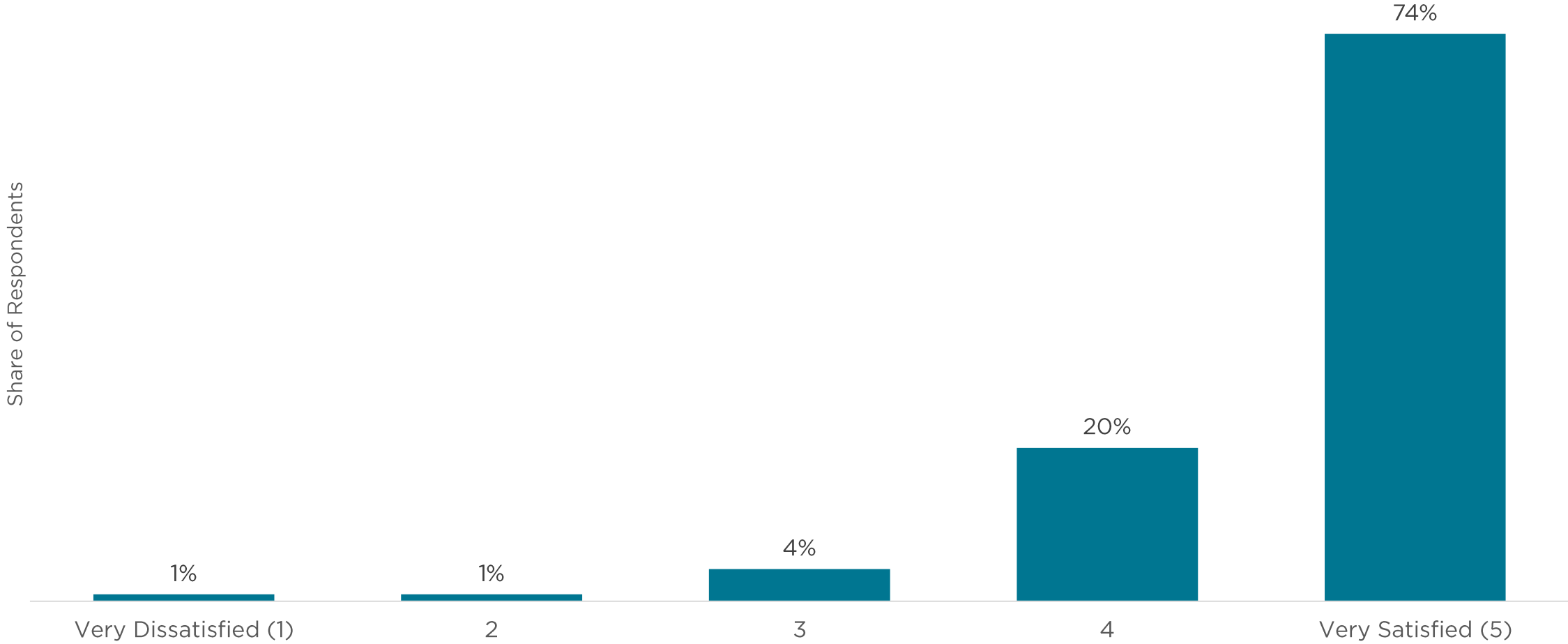


Visitor
Satisfaction

Visitor Overall Satisfaction

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

Avg. Overall Satisfaction
4.7

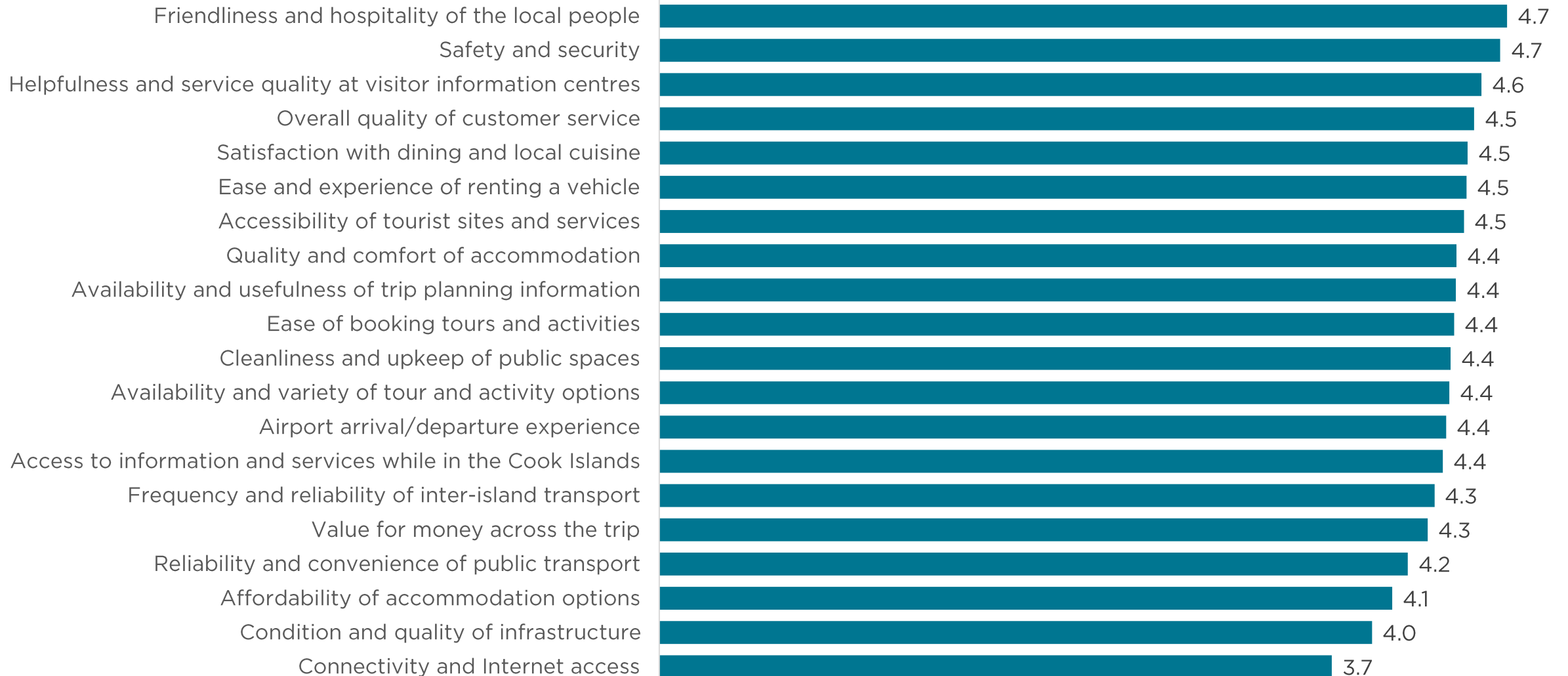


Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%

Satisfaction with Travel Experience

1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

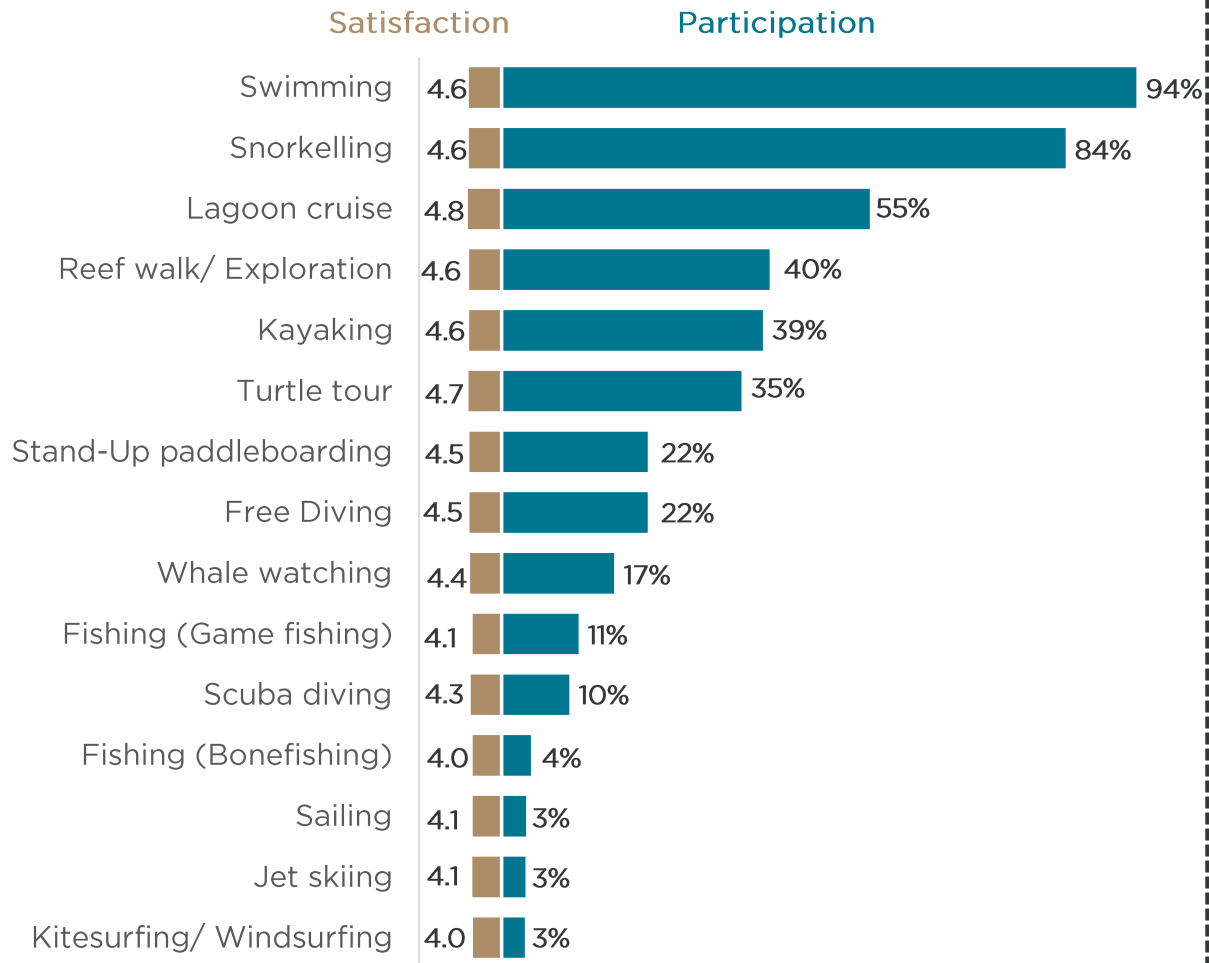


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

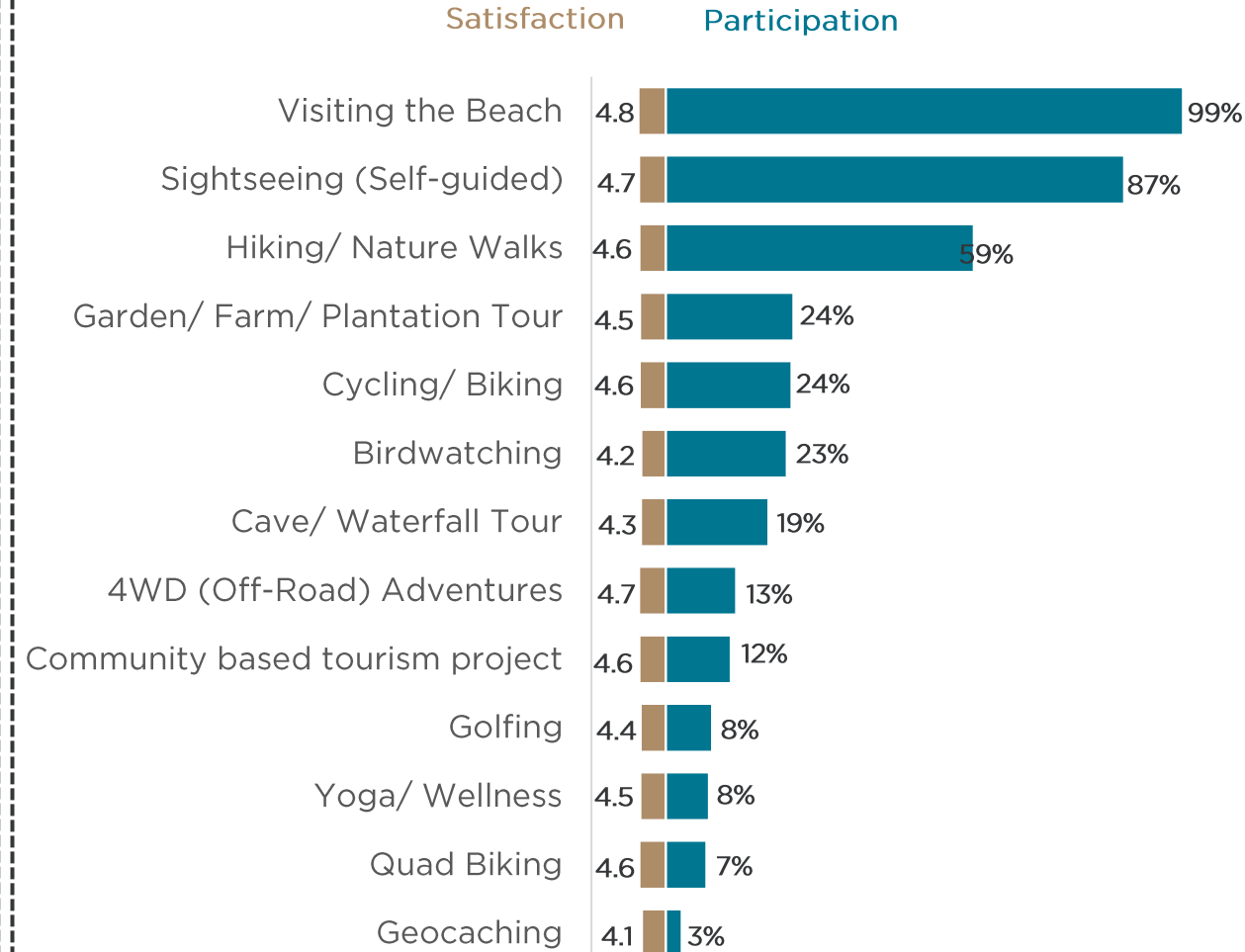
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Water-based activities



Land-based activities



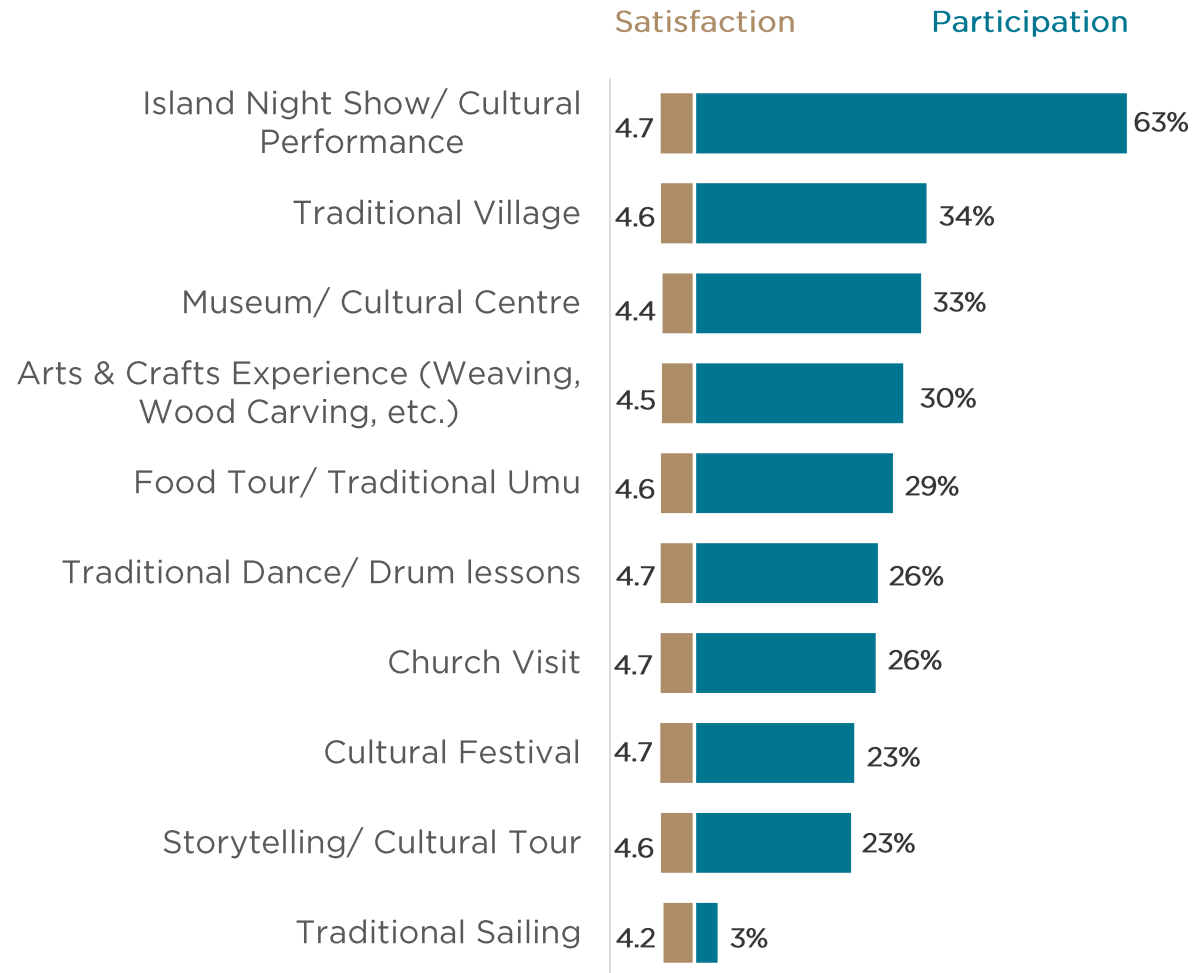
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

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



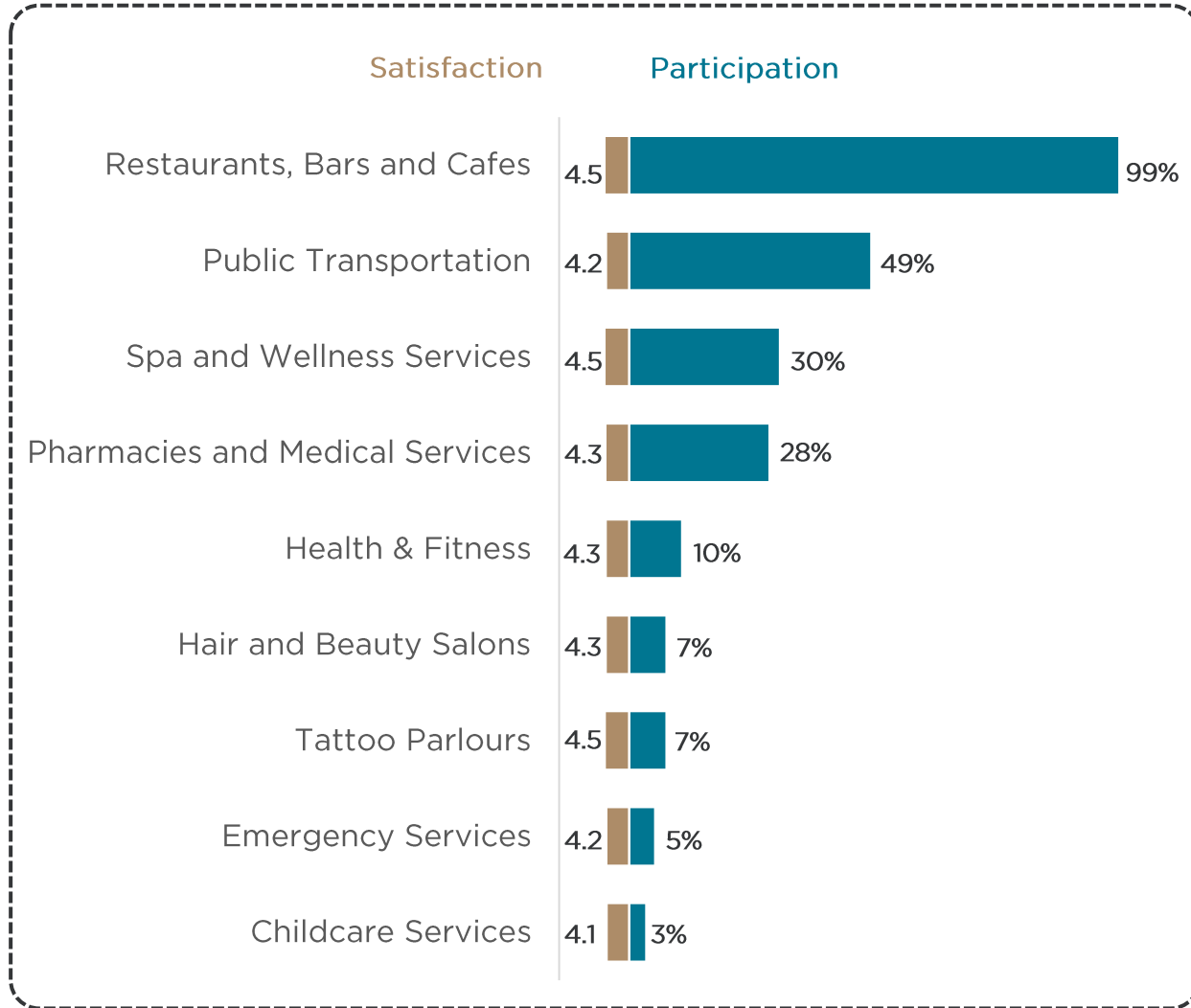
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

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?

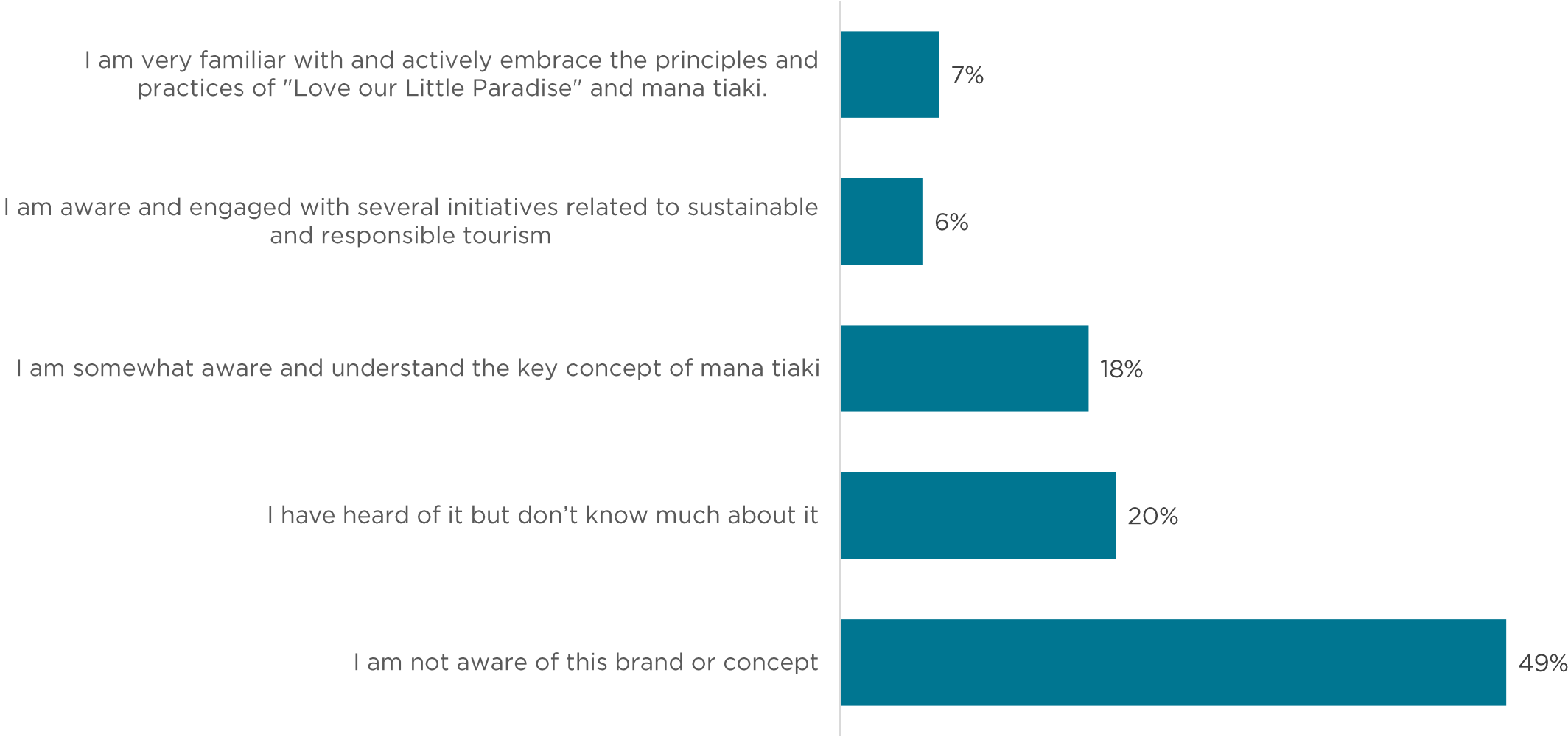
Services



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.

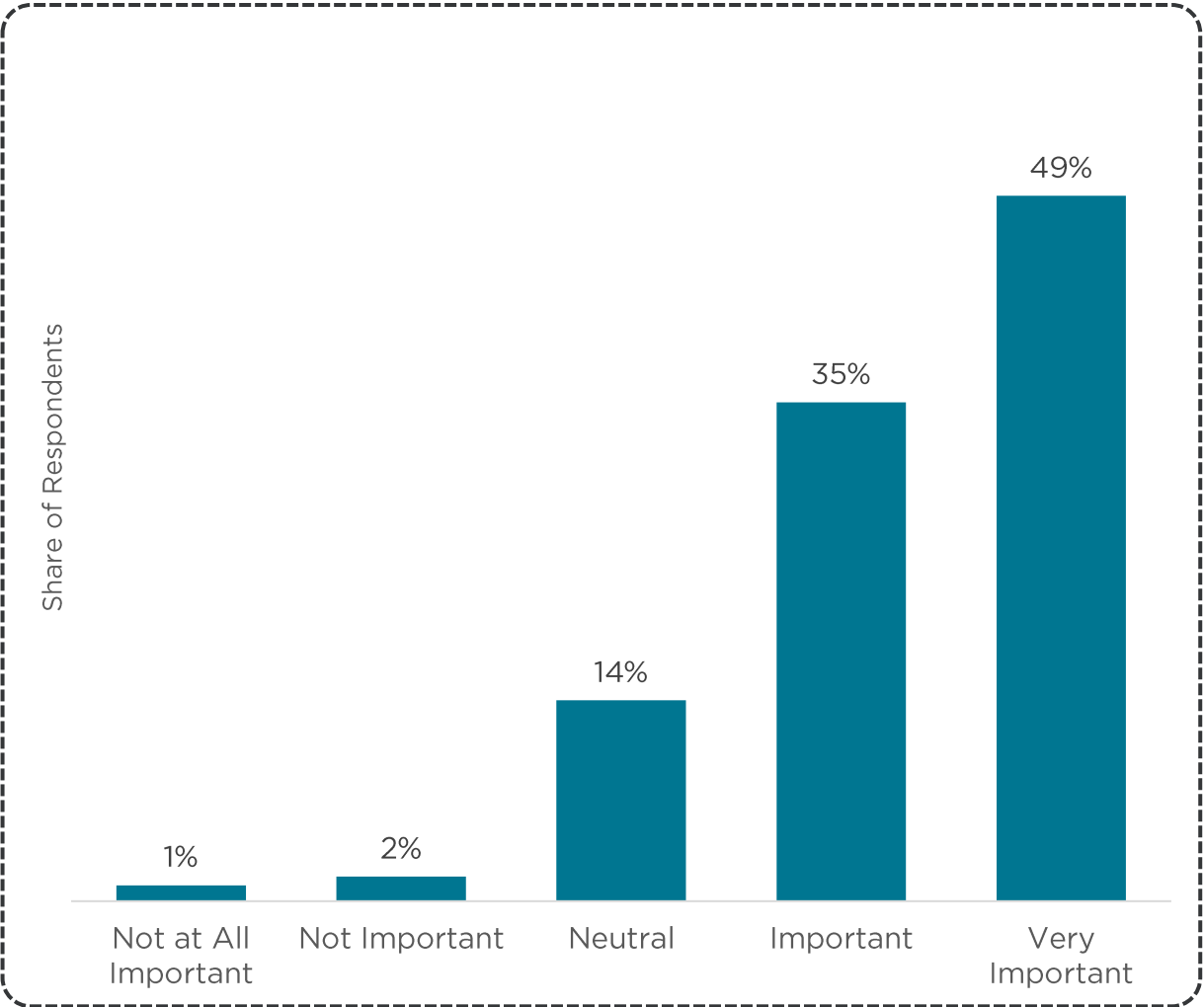
Awareness of "Love Our Little Paradise" and Mana Tiaki



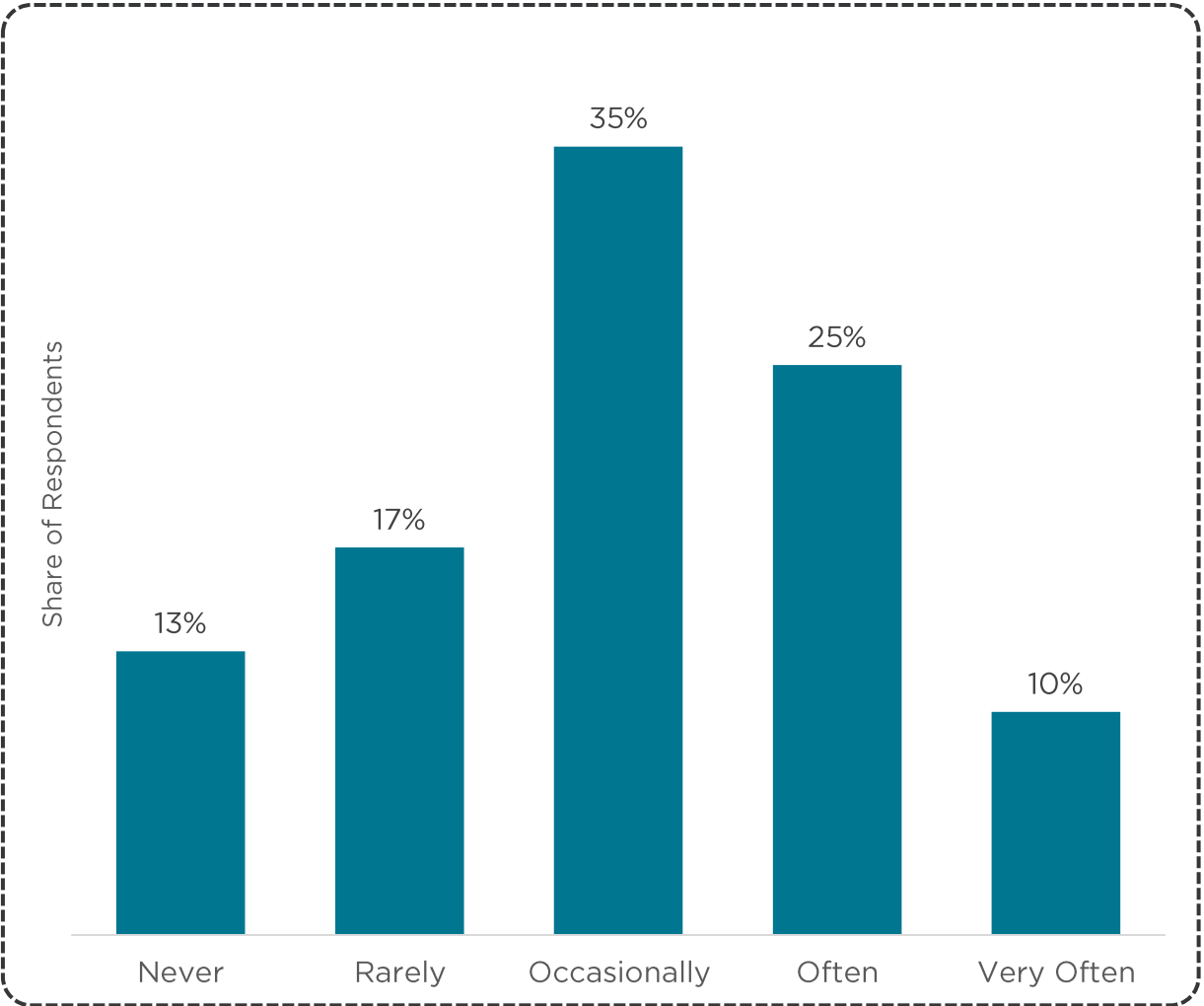
Note: New variable added for the July 2024-June 2025 survey period to address the question on the "Awareness of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation branding".

Perceptions and Engagement in Sustainable Tourism

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

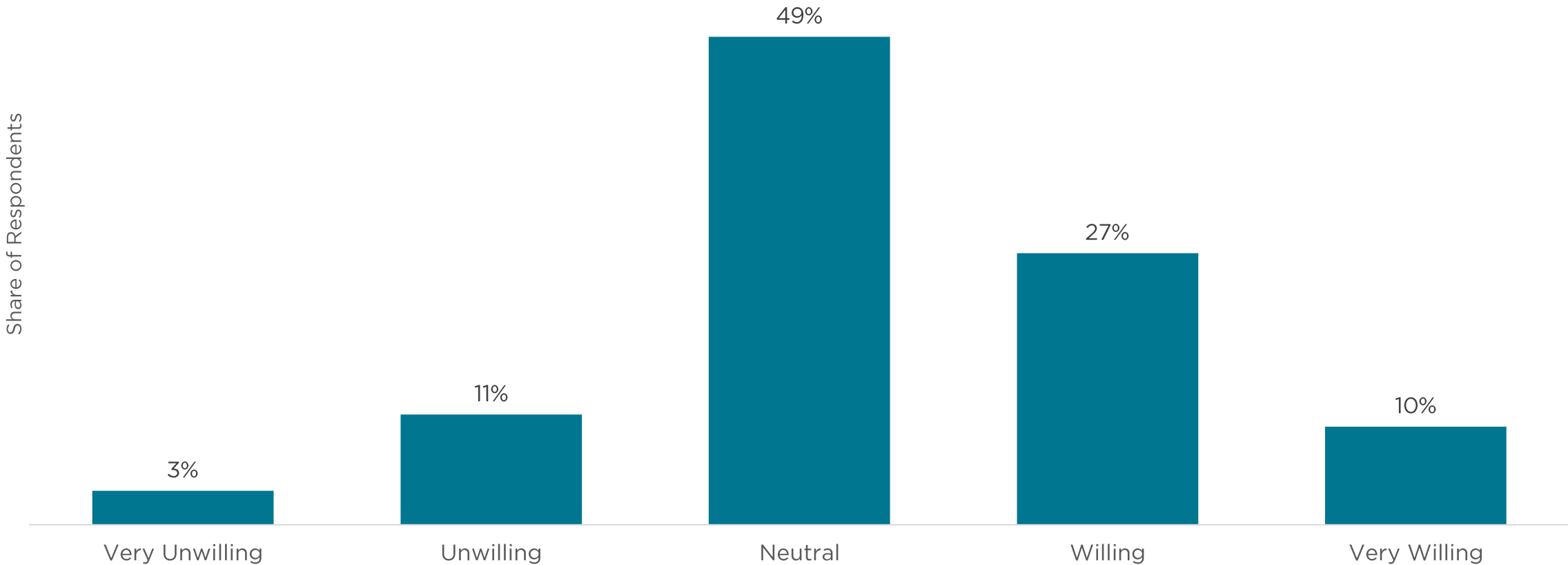


Q: During your visit, how often did you observe or participate in sustainable or responsible tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts)?



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

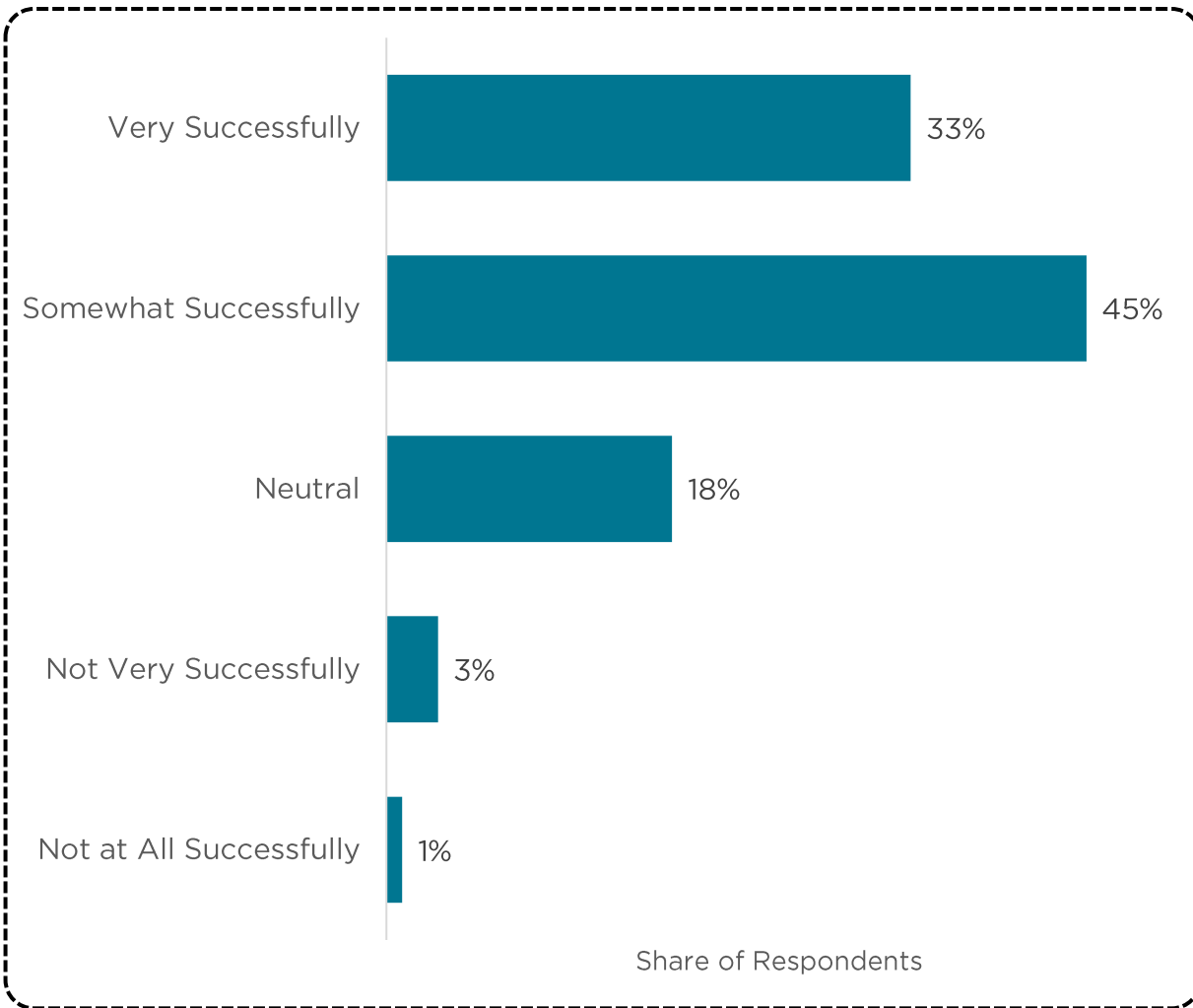
Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give-Back Initiatives



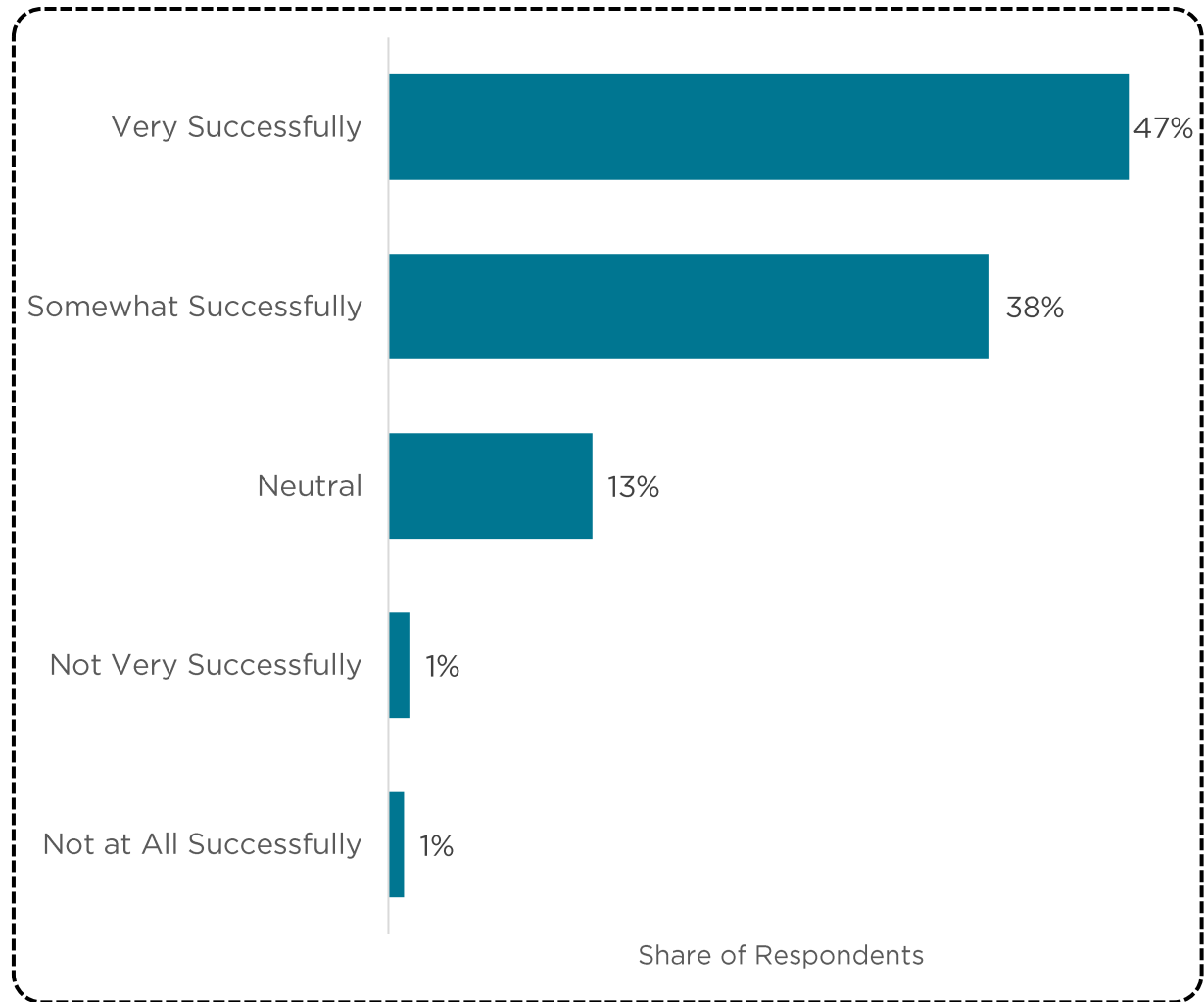
Note: The neutral bar rating of 49% for "Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give Back Initiative" indicates a significance portion of respondents are uncertain, presenting an opportunity to engage and address their concerns to shift opinions more favorably.

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)?

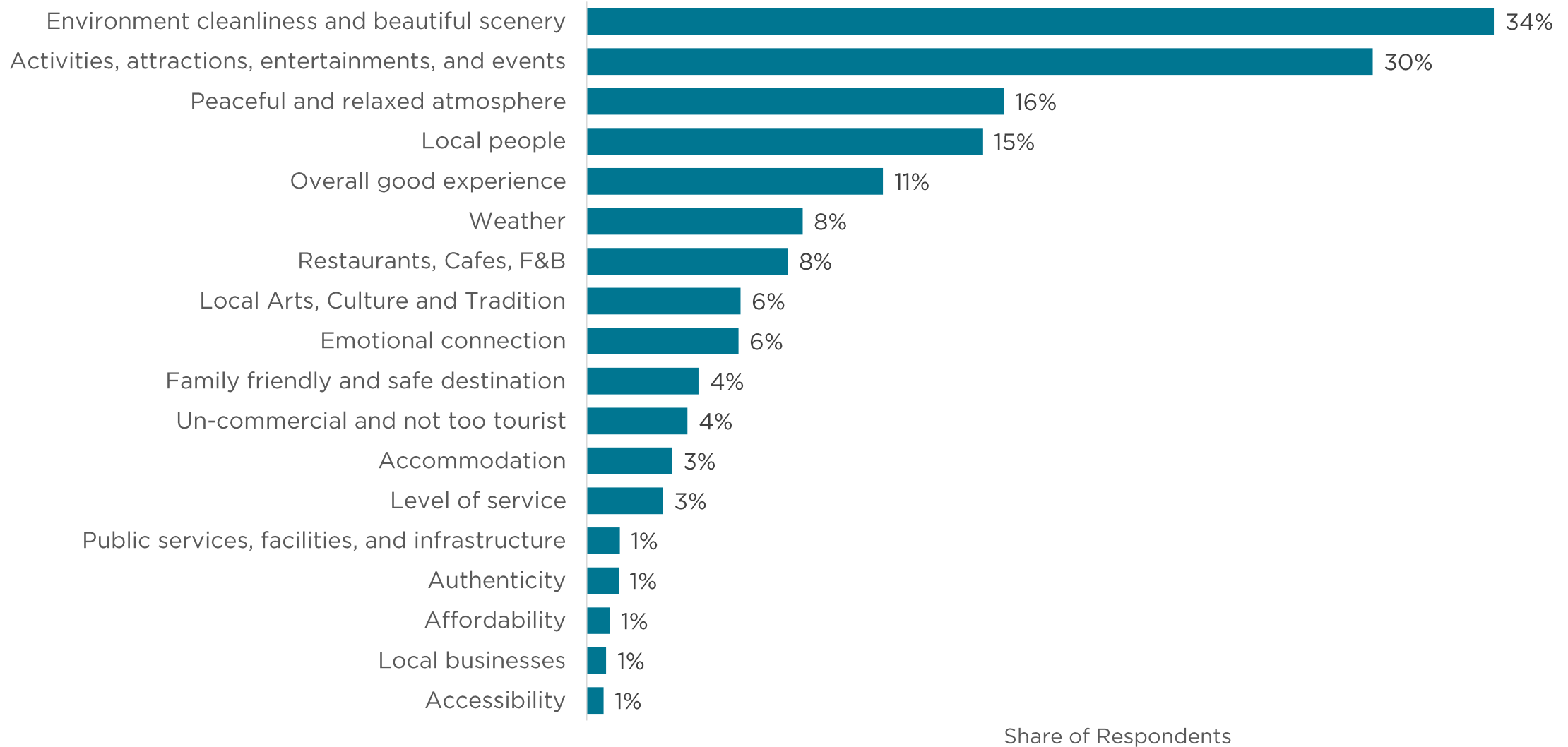


Q: How well do you think the Cook Islands is protecting its cultural identity and supporting local communities (e.g., traditional performances, Cook Islands Māori language, local arts and crafts)?



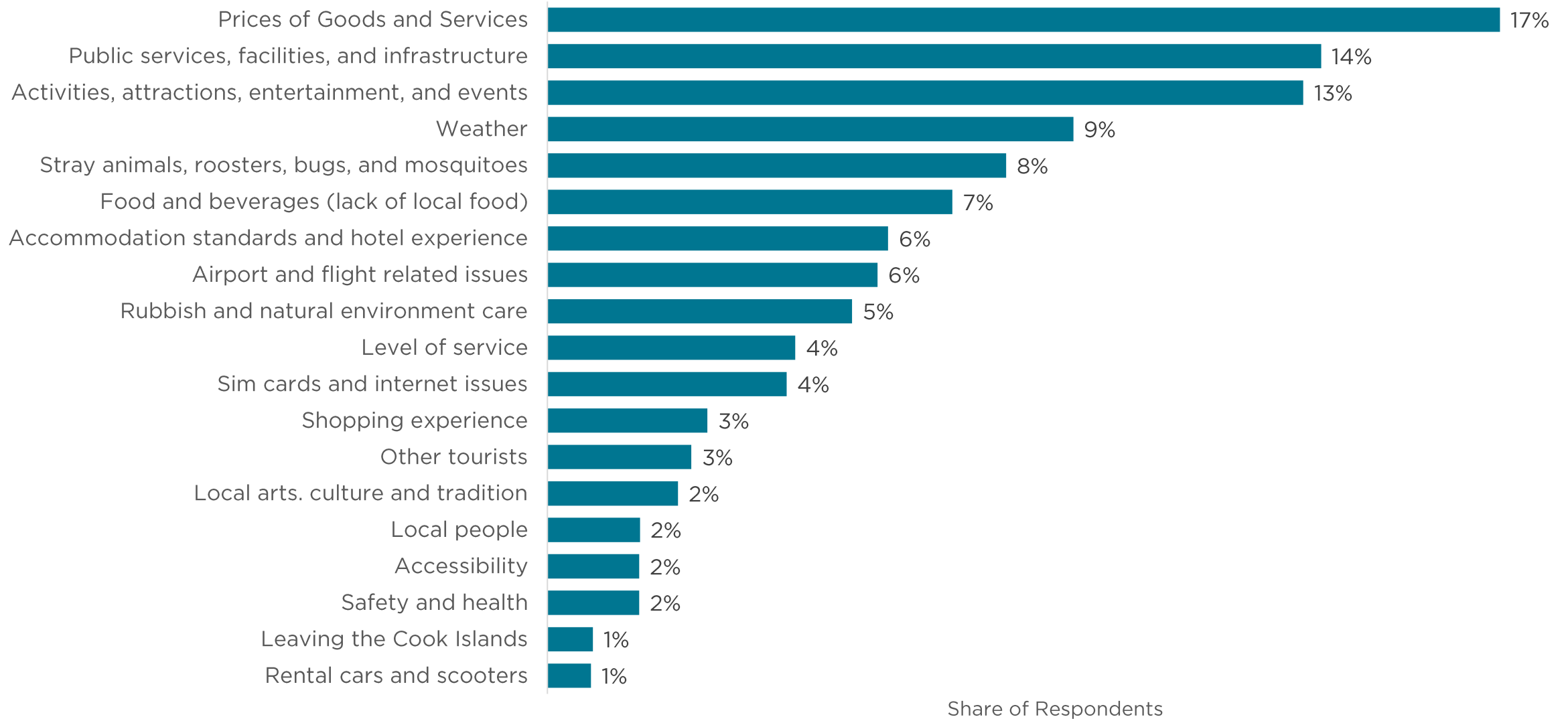
Note: New variable added for the July 2024-June 2025 survey period to address questions related to the "Protection of the Natural Environment and Cultural Identity, as well as support for Local Communities".

Most Appealing Aspects



Note: Total response N=6,379. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Least Appealing Aspects



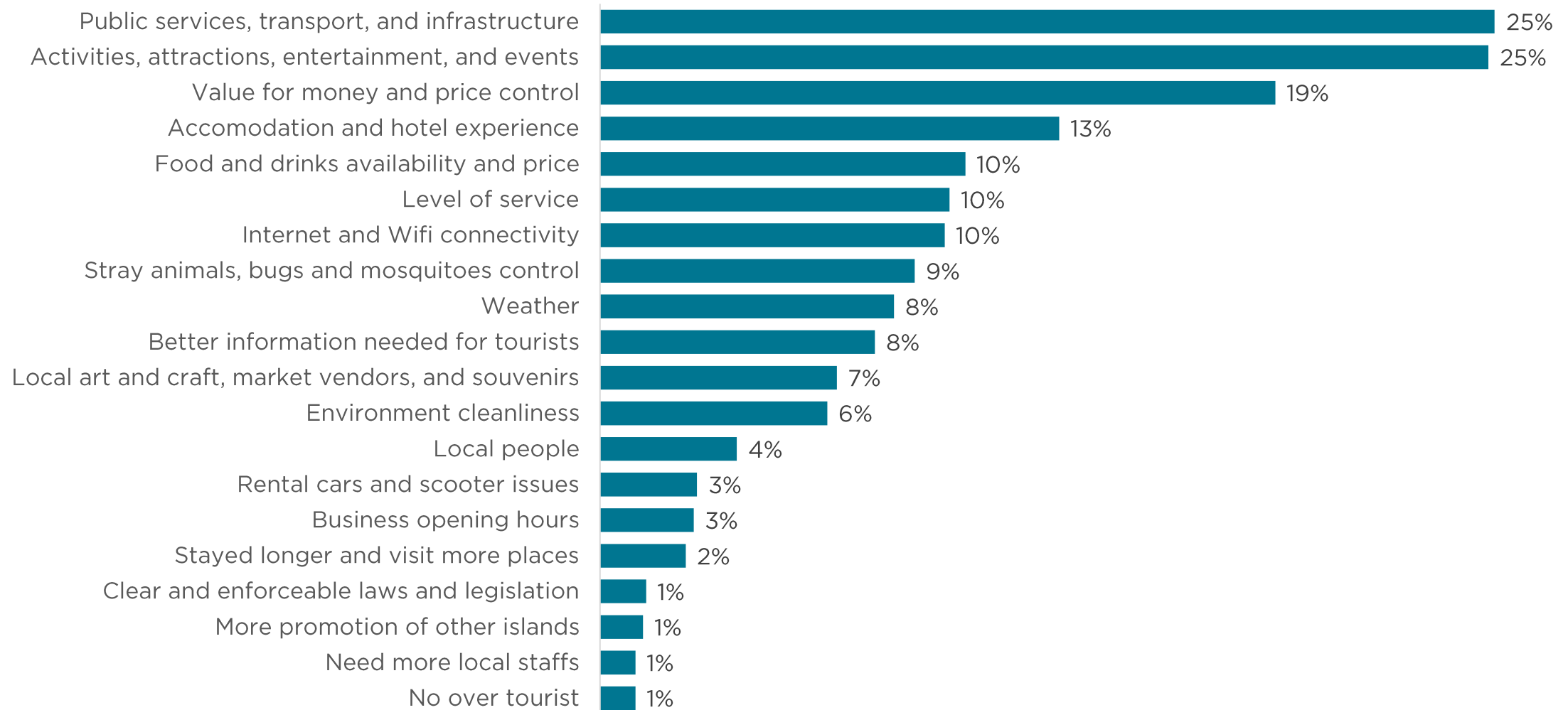
Note: Total response N=5,961. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Quotes for Least Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands

- *Cost of accommodation. Limits of food choice, fruits and vegetables and celiac choices particularly in resorts, limited and very expensive.*
- *Glass & plastic pollution on the beach, dogs running loose everywhere are very off putting. Break ins in local properties led to feeling of insecurity. Lack of activities for school age kids (need a holiday kids day club e.g., Nerf guns, soccer, scooters, art classes).*
- *Accommodations were only signposted from the road and not from the beach side, so it was difficult to know what accommodation was what for consideration of our next trip. 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 garbage- not very environmentally conscious and not nice to walk past locals burning their garbage while walking on the beach. Dog fights kept us up a new nights.*
- *Airport and customs is a bit slow. The times I have been now I notice when everyone gets to the front of the line the customs officers ask for proof of a return ticket. No one else in the world does that in my experience. No one is prepared for this, so they must start messing around with phones, email or paper bookings to prove their return trip. This at least tipples the time it takes to get through immigration. Either put a big sign up while people are lining up to make sure they have their return documentation ready or better still scrap it!*
- *Cook Island young generation losing its native language so it would be a great idea to be able to teach the young people at school again cause Cook Island losing it.*
- *Did not think the island was as "paradise like" as I had expected. Seeing many spots where people were burning their garbage (and or garden clippings) on a warm day, did not make me feel I was in paradise while being on my way to our accommodation.*
- *Food options can be healthier, a lot of fried foods can be accessed but not so much healthy options (for takeaway or eating on spot), food options for gluten free and cost of soft drinks and snacks.*
- *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.*
- *Main road surface quality was poor, given there's only one single road it isn't well maintained and no footpath for walking isn't ideal.*



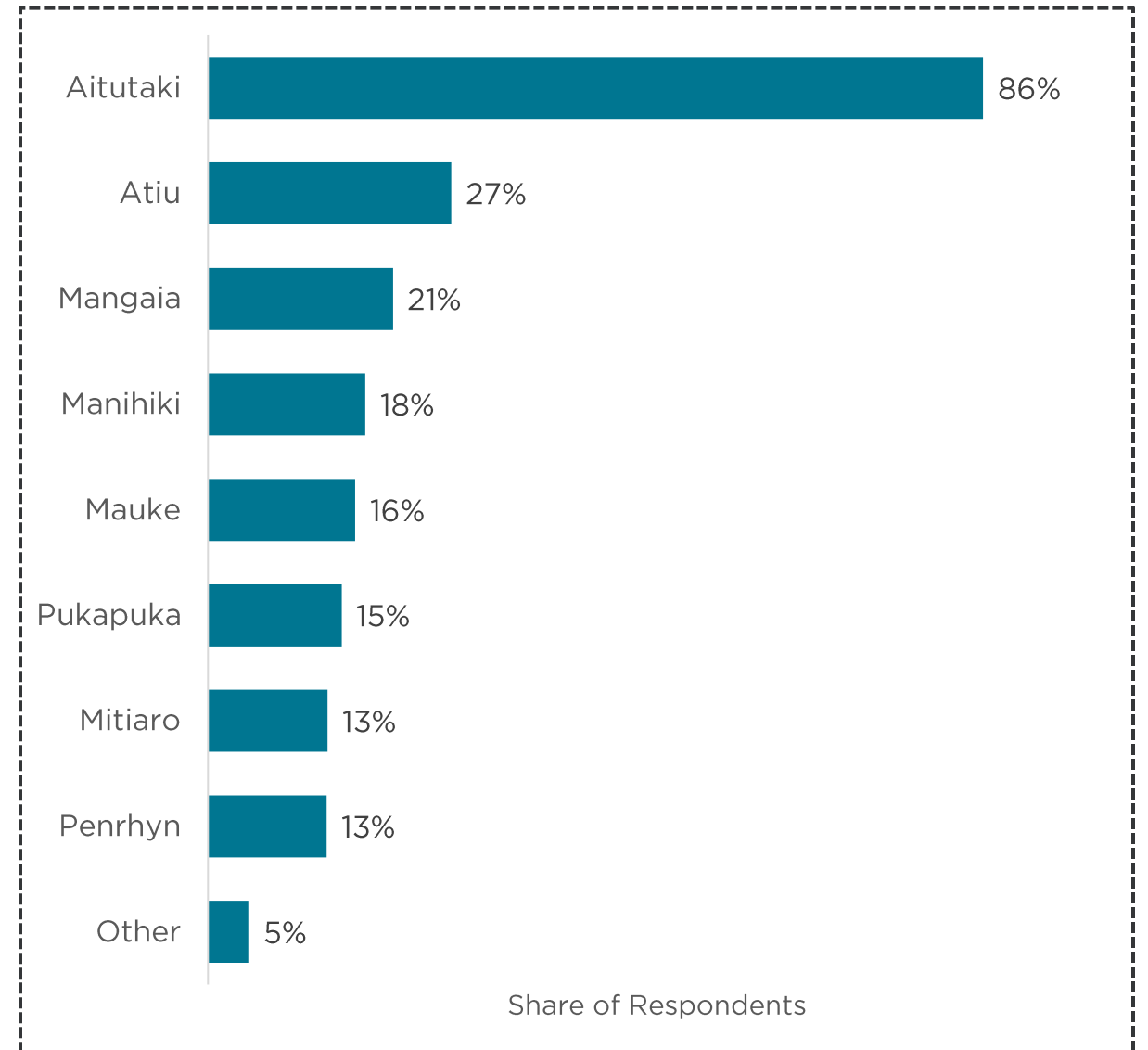
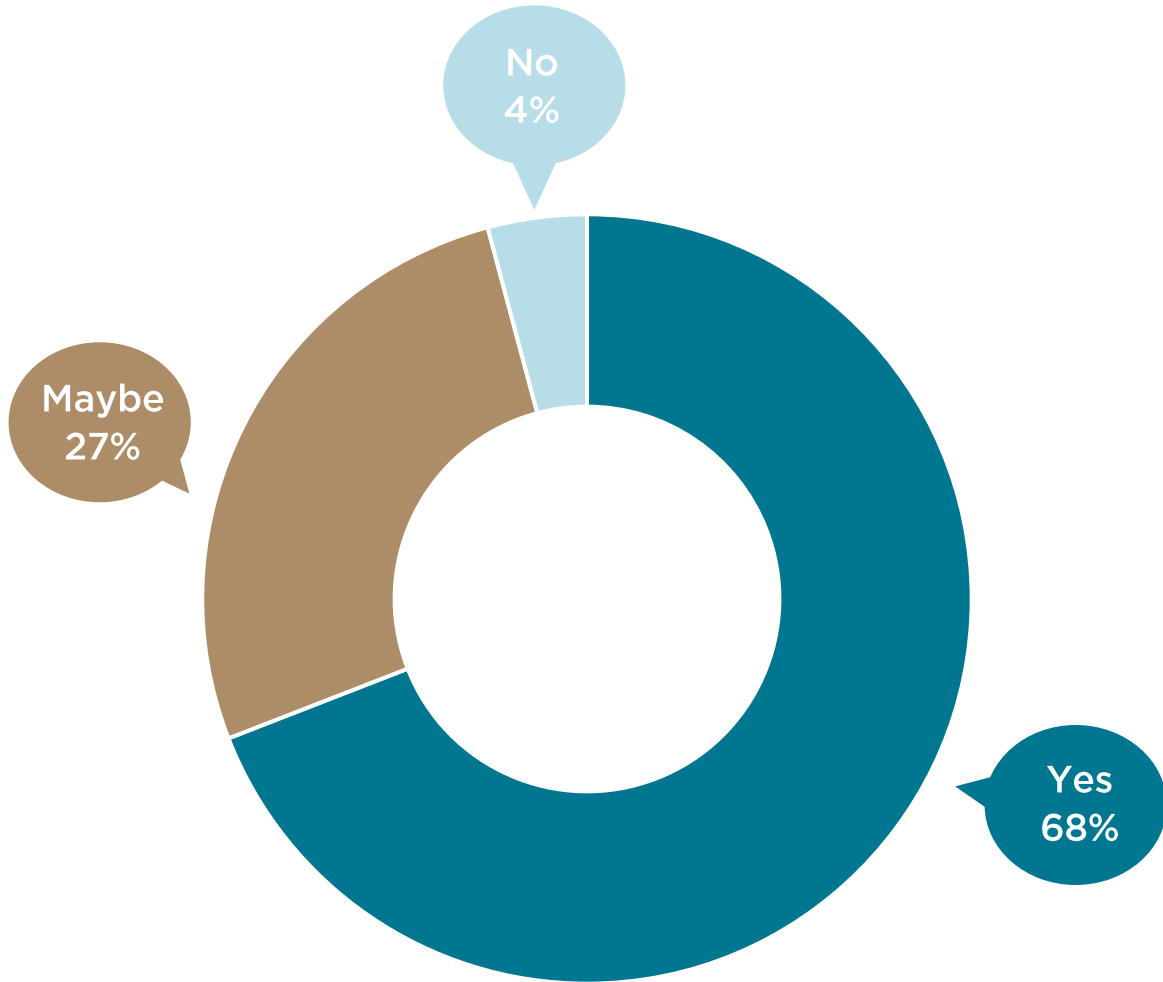
Suggestions for Improvement



Share of Respondents

Note: Total response N=2,227. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

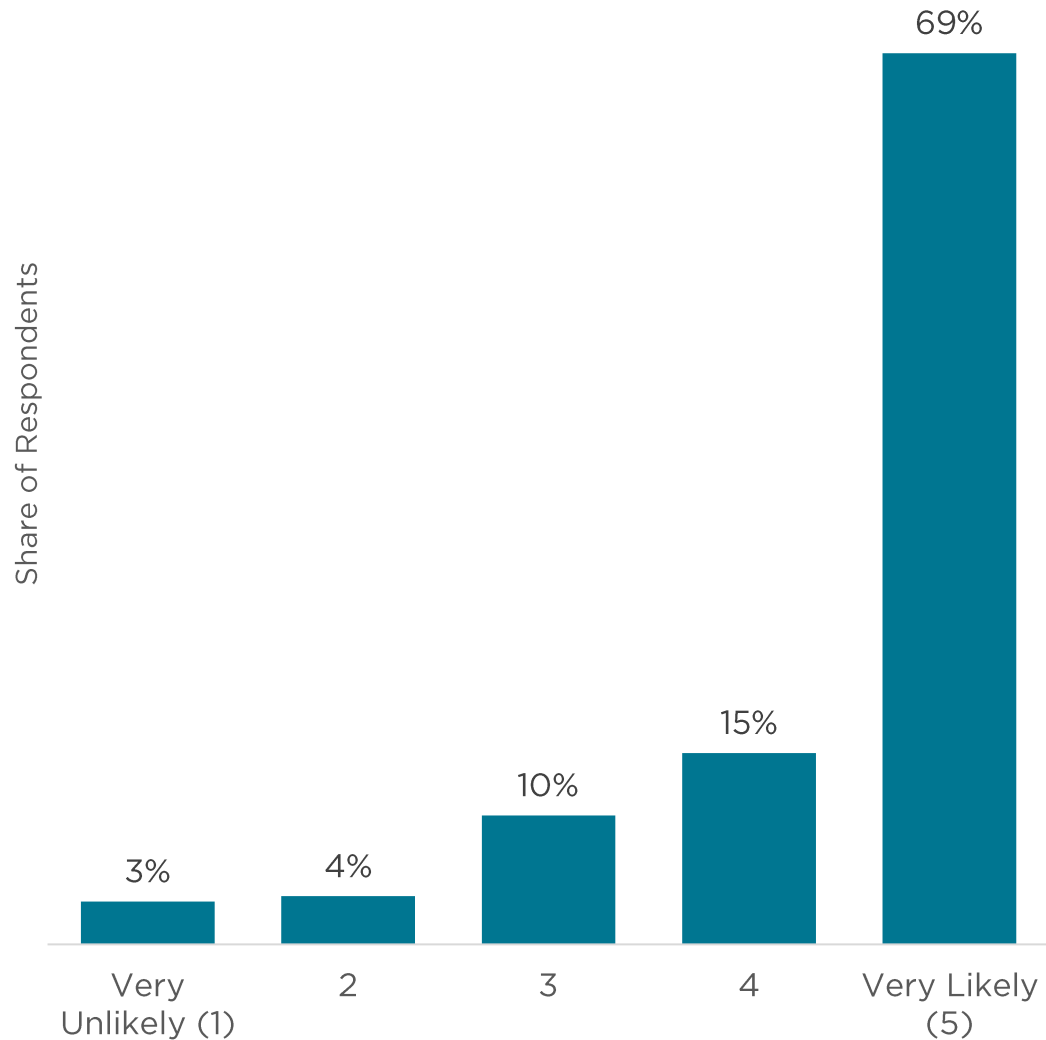
Willingness to Visit Outer Islands



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

Future Motivations

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

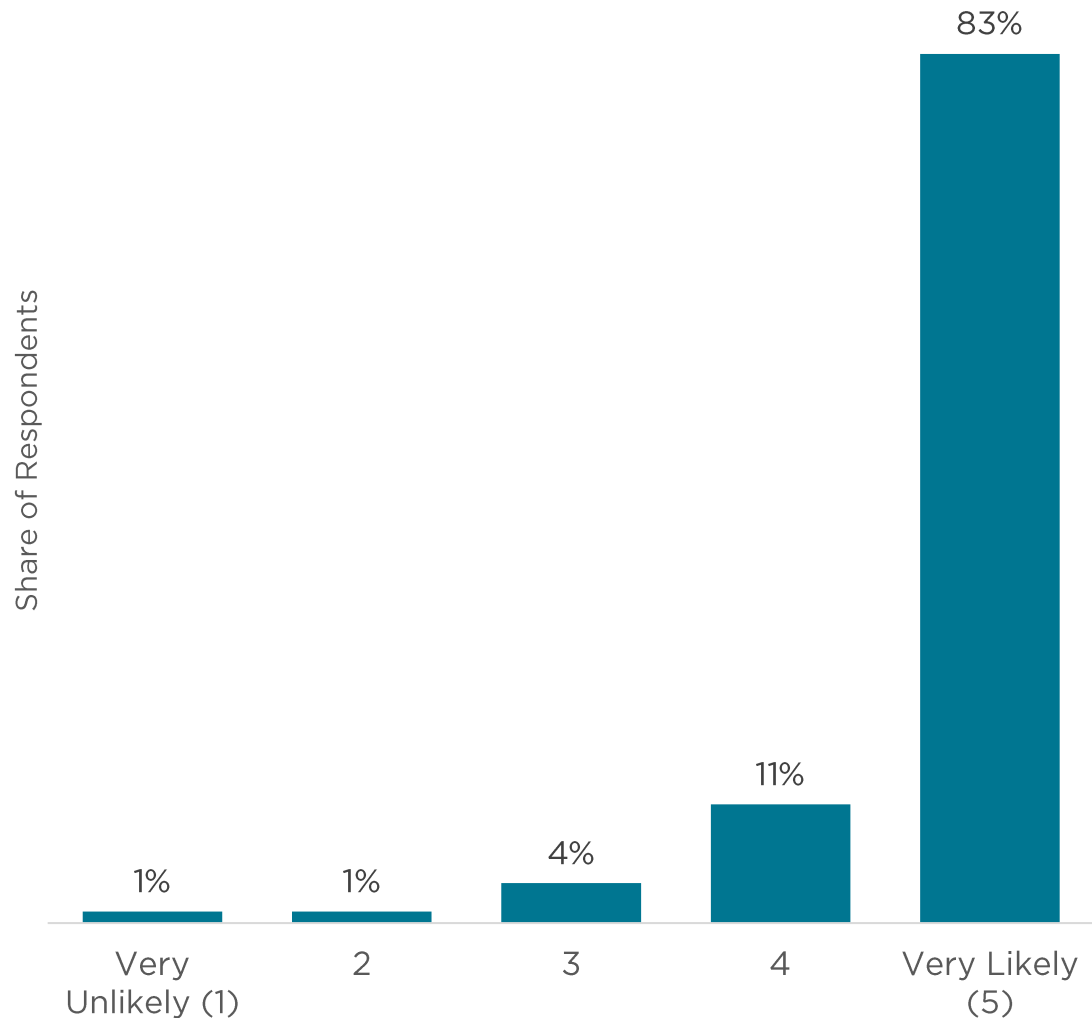


Quotes: Reasons to not return

- *Some people are intermittently rude (tourist office, market vegetable woman, post office, Vodaphone shop etc.). All the young people were lovely. People say there isn't a service culture, but I've never experienced the rudeness of Rarotonga anywhere in the world, is it resentment of tourists? We came to the island to volunteer and help in the community, so this was an added surprise. There is a lack of respect towards foreigners or maybe it is just to everyone.*
- *There is no connection with the outer islands, compared to French Polynesia this is incredible, the woman in tourist info has only been to Aitutaki and most people just suggested it was cheaper to go to Bali! Where is the pride in your outer island culture? The people don't even have a decent government boat to get back home, but money is spent on a police boat and a TV station. Check out the Tuhaa Pae in FP or the Aranui. Surely more of a connection would fight the feeling that Rarotonga is a suburb of Auckland.*
- *So many signs on Rarotonga don't deliver, places don't open when they say they will or close early for no reason or never open at all. Cafes, bars, the heritage house with the yellow sign.*
- *The passport/customs man at the airport could be friendlier, I'm not expecting smiles, but mild rudeness is a surprise. The most helpful people were the Fijians and Filipino workers.*
- *The Vodaphone situation is ridiculously expensive and works poorly, it's better in India and Africa! If I was the government I would be embarrassed, it feels like they can't manage to negotiate a better deal for the islanders, and they must put up with some system where everyone must live for Vodaphone's last minute special deals when the rest of the world has unlimited data.*
- *Compared to French Polynesia everything is a bit ugly, I would get a national designer to make Rarotonga (signage, government websites etc. clearer and more attractive. In FP they take great pride in the craft of things. The Vodaphone UX to check your data is terrible.*

Future Motivations

Q: How likely would you recommend the Cook Islands?



Quotes: Reasons to not recommend

- *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.*
- *Beaches too rocky. Inadequate public transport. Difficulty finding cafes that cater for non-meat eaters; especially for breakfast.*
- *I found Rarotonga boring, I had a day trip snorkeled, but it was again very hard against the tide. No shopping malls etc. to venture into not many food outlets accept hotel. and that was basic.*
- *The Cook Islands in my opinion are not ready for massive amounts of tourism, the grocery stores are severely lacking supplies to support the residents and tourists, additionally finding tourists attractions that were on maps, was nearly impossible (the waterfall in RAROTONGA)*
- *I just didn't really enjoy my holiday, mainly because of the false advertising for the accommodation and from having my money stolen.*
- *Because airport safety is important. I would never tell someone I love to visit based off my airport experience. Being robbed and having no way to get help or talk to anyone that works there because the staff is doing the crime is very scary.*

SURFERS



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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