

Cook Islands

International Visitor Survey Report
July - September 2025



Acknowledgements

- ❖ The Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) expresses its gratitude to all contributors to this quarterly report on IVS data from July to September 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 2,277 responses out of 2,757 collected, representing 9% of actual visitors with a 12% response rate. Among the respondents, 13% were solo travelers, and the average household income was NZD158,358.
- ❖ 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 4.6 out of 5. Notably, 98% of visitors indicated they would recommend the Cook Islands to others, while 95% expressed a willingness to return.
- ❖ The average prepaid spend per visitor was NZD2,761 with an estimated 40% (NZD1,104) flowing into the local economy. In-country spending per visitor per trip averaged NZD1,461 with an average stay of 8.7 nights. This contributed to an *estimated** economic impact of NZD145 million from July to September 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 July – September 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 – September 2025 period.

Disclaimer

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- ❖ The **survey instrument** used to collect data for the July - September 2025 period was similar, but not exact, to the survey instrument used in the July - September 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 July - September 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 - September 2025)

 **18,370** TOTAL VALID EMAILS SENT

 **2,277** TOTAL RESPONSES ANALYZED

12%
CONVERSION RATE

Note: 2,757 responses were received. After data cleaning, 2,277 responses remained.

RESPONSES COVERED

 **4,170** ADULTS  **923** CHILDREN

9%
OF ALL VISITORS IN THIS PERIOD

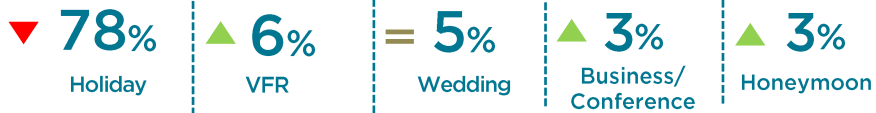
Cook Islands International Visitor Survey

Snapshot July - September 2025

Country of residence



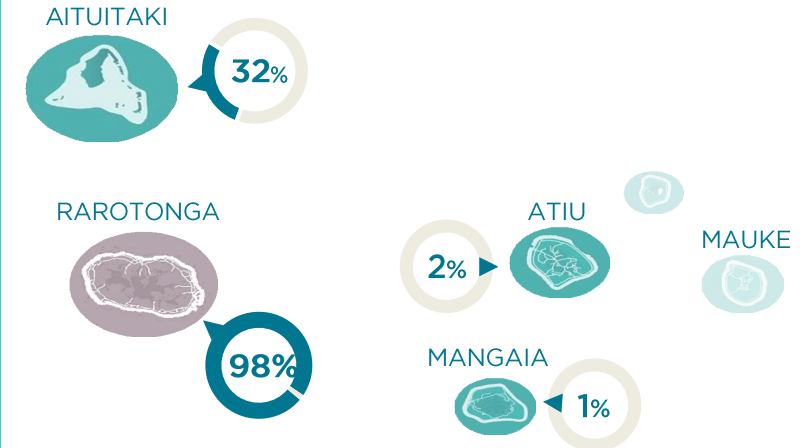
Purpose of visit



Most Participated Activities



Islands visited



Most appealing



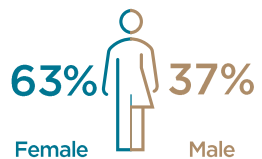
Least Appealing



Improvement



Economic impact

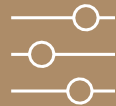


Note: The estimated flow-back rate into the Cook Islands for prepaid spend is 40%. With an average prepaid spend of \$2,761 per person per trip, this equates to \$1,104.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making

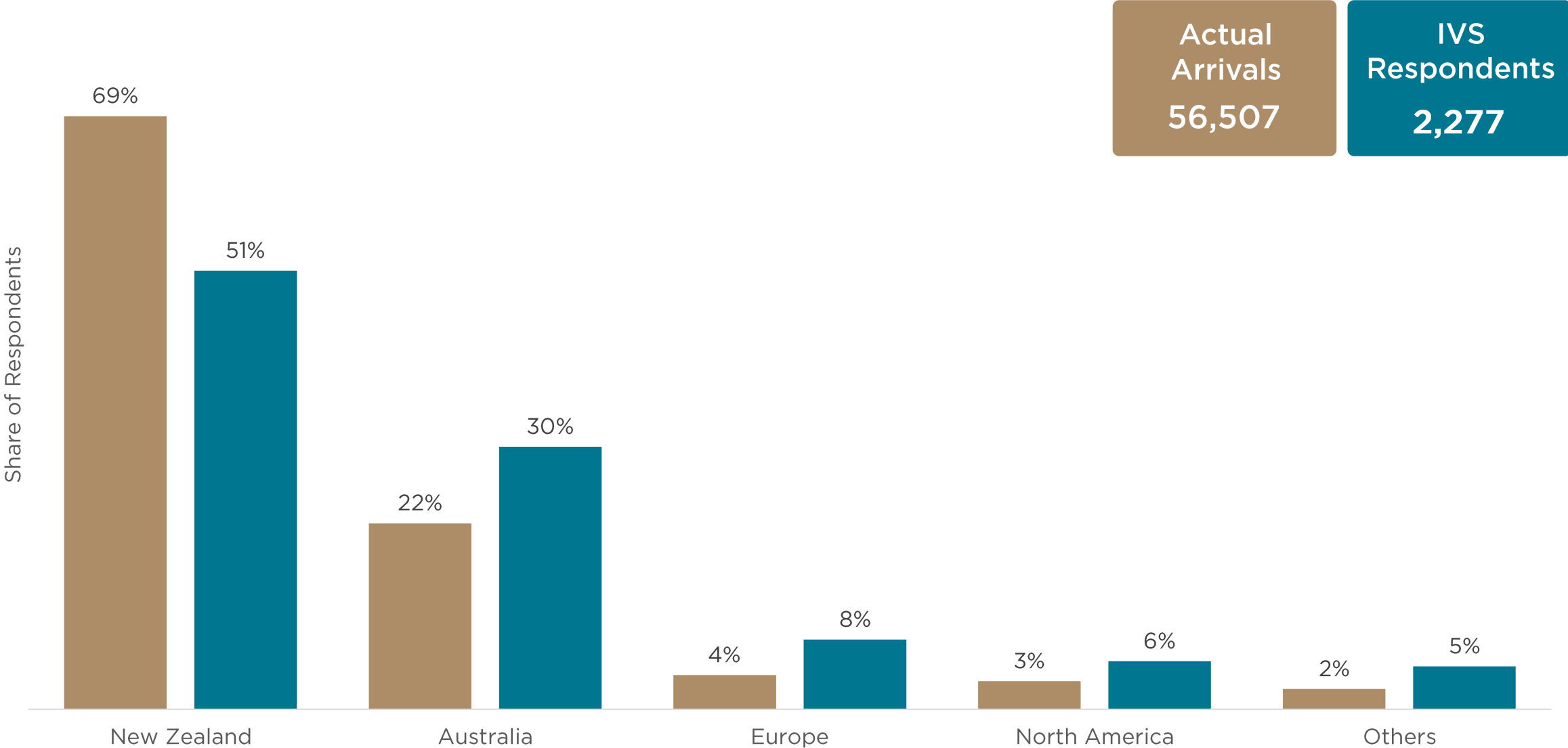


Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Source Markets: IVS Respondents vs Actual Arrival

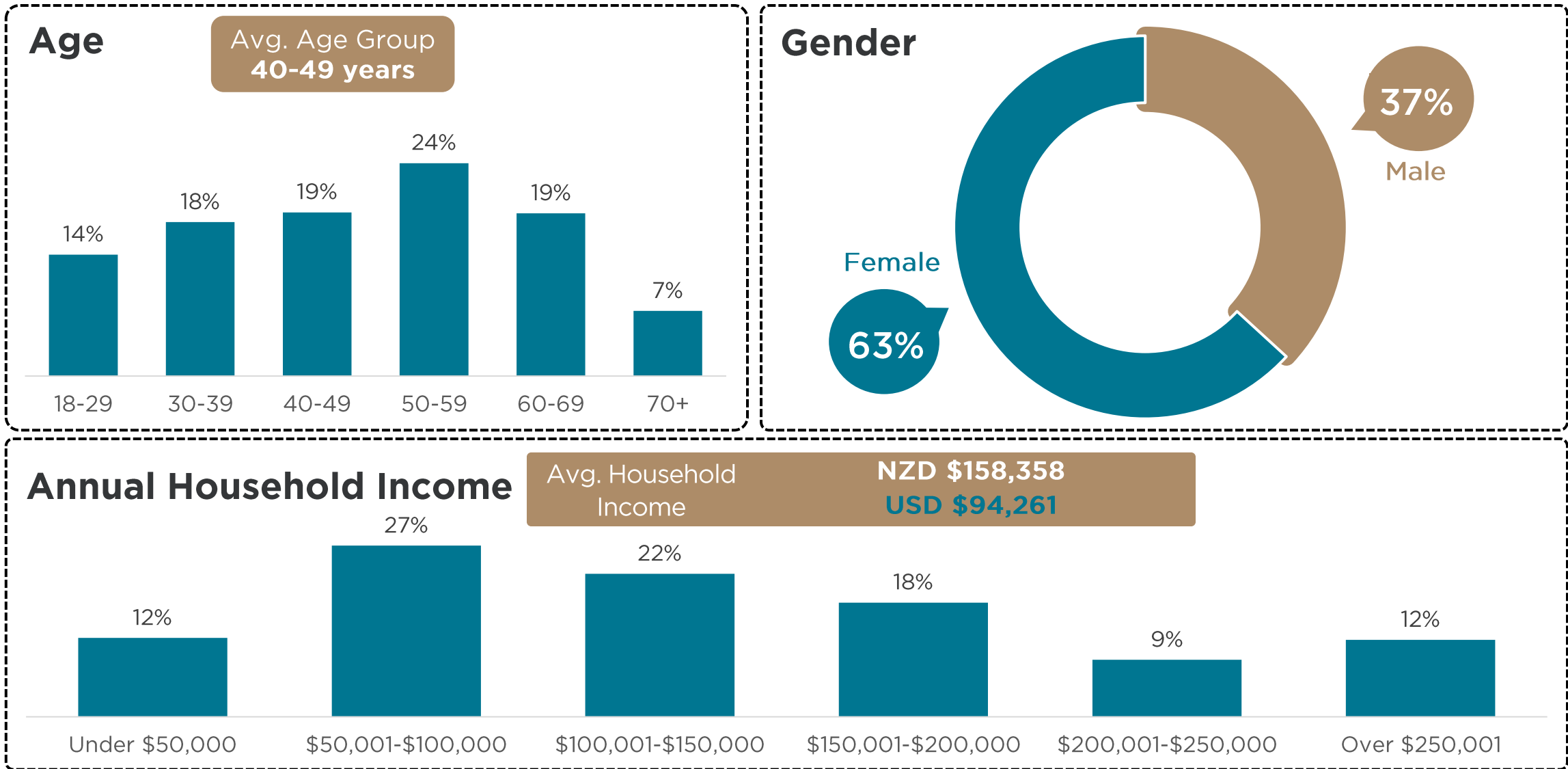


Actual Arrivals
56,507

IVS Respondents
2,277

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 July-September 2025 was applied.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



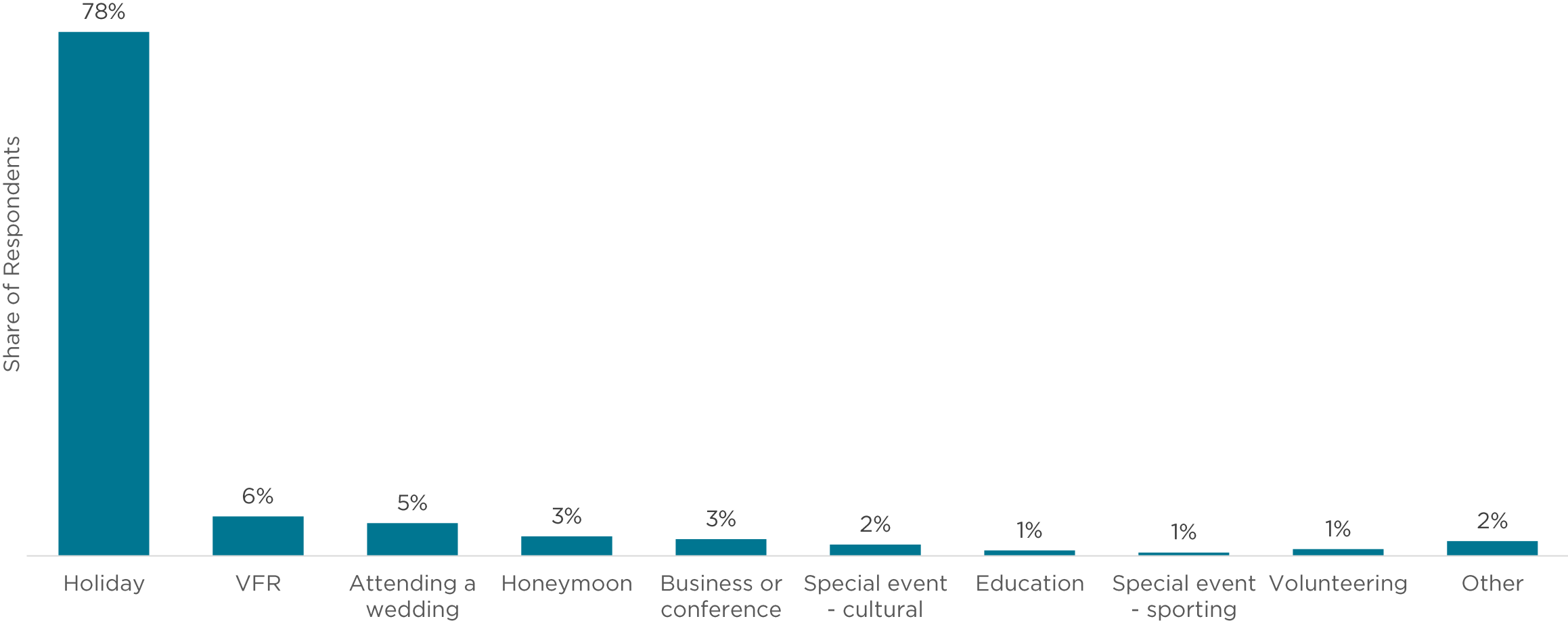
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Purpose of Visit

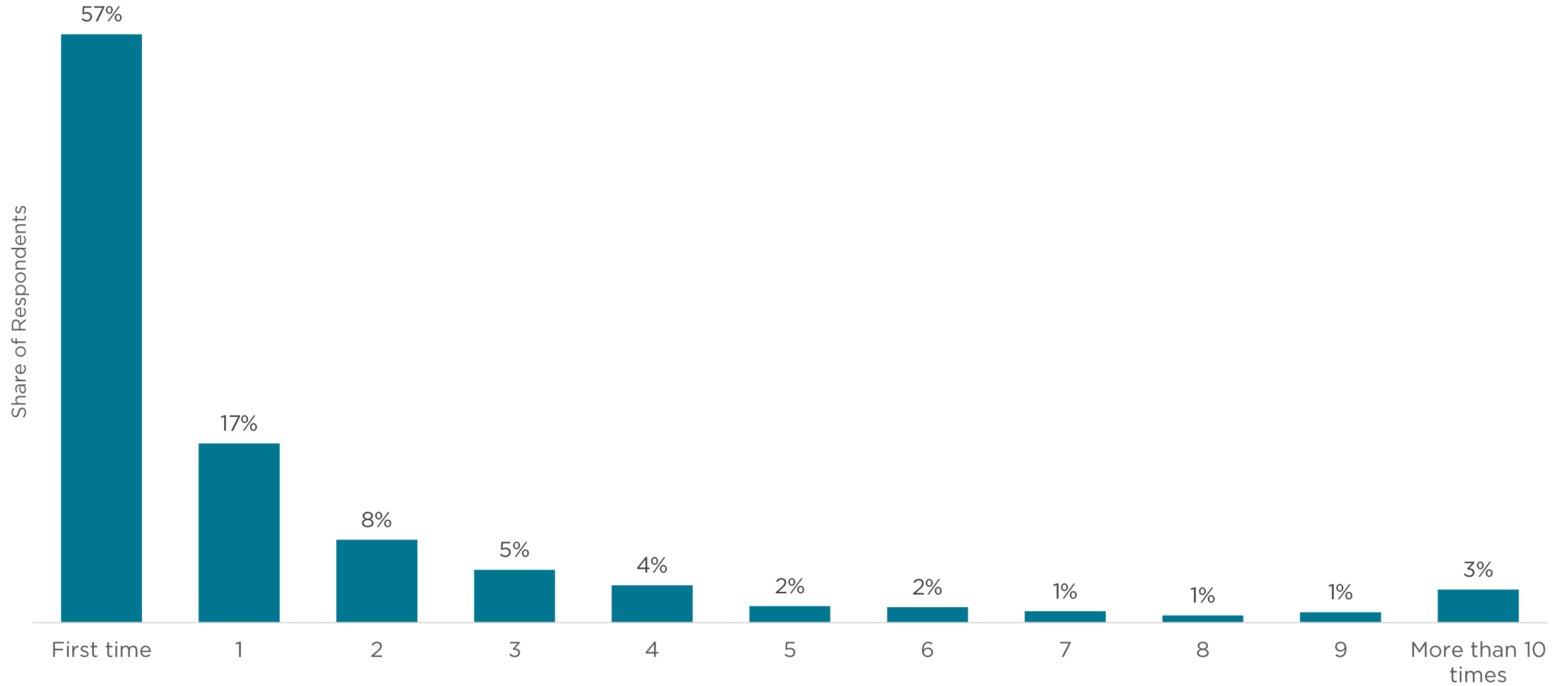
Q: What was the main purpose of your visit?



Note: N=2,241. 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?

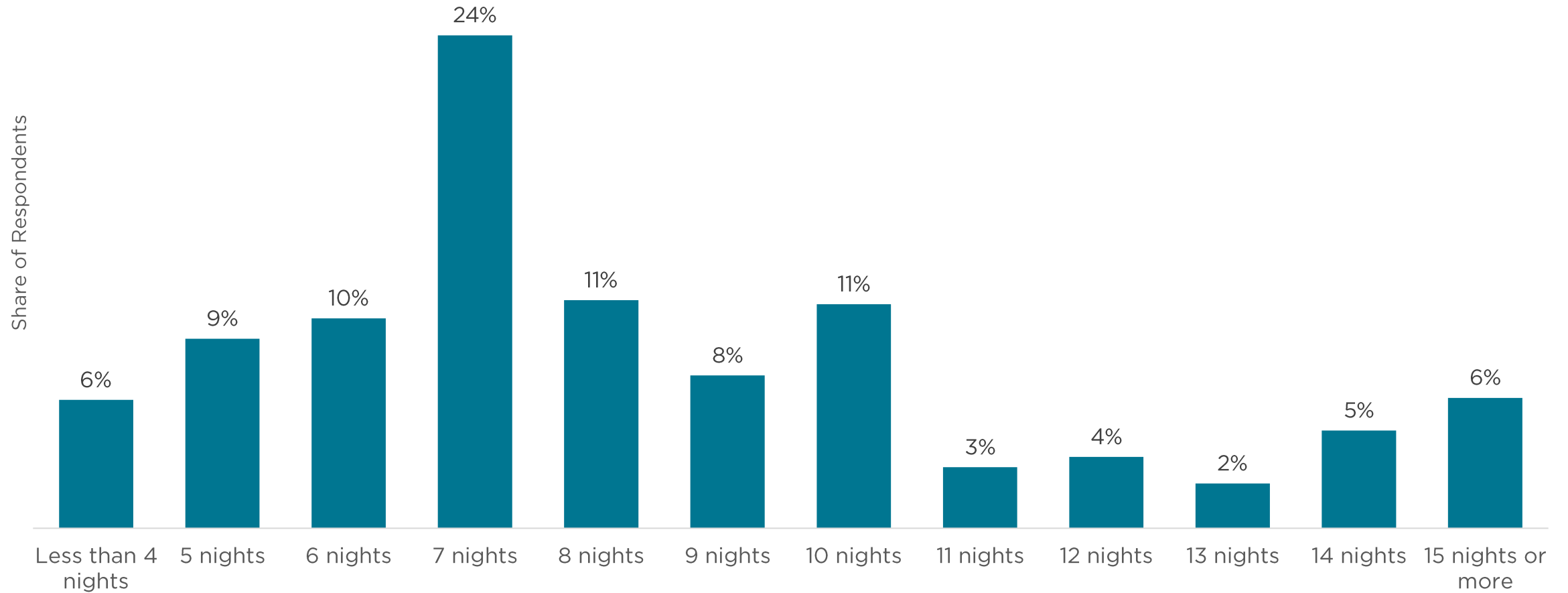


Note: N=2,219 Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

Length of Stay (nights)

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

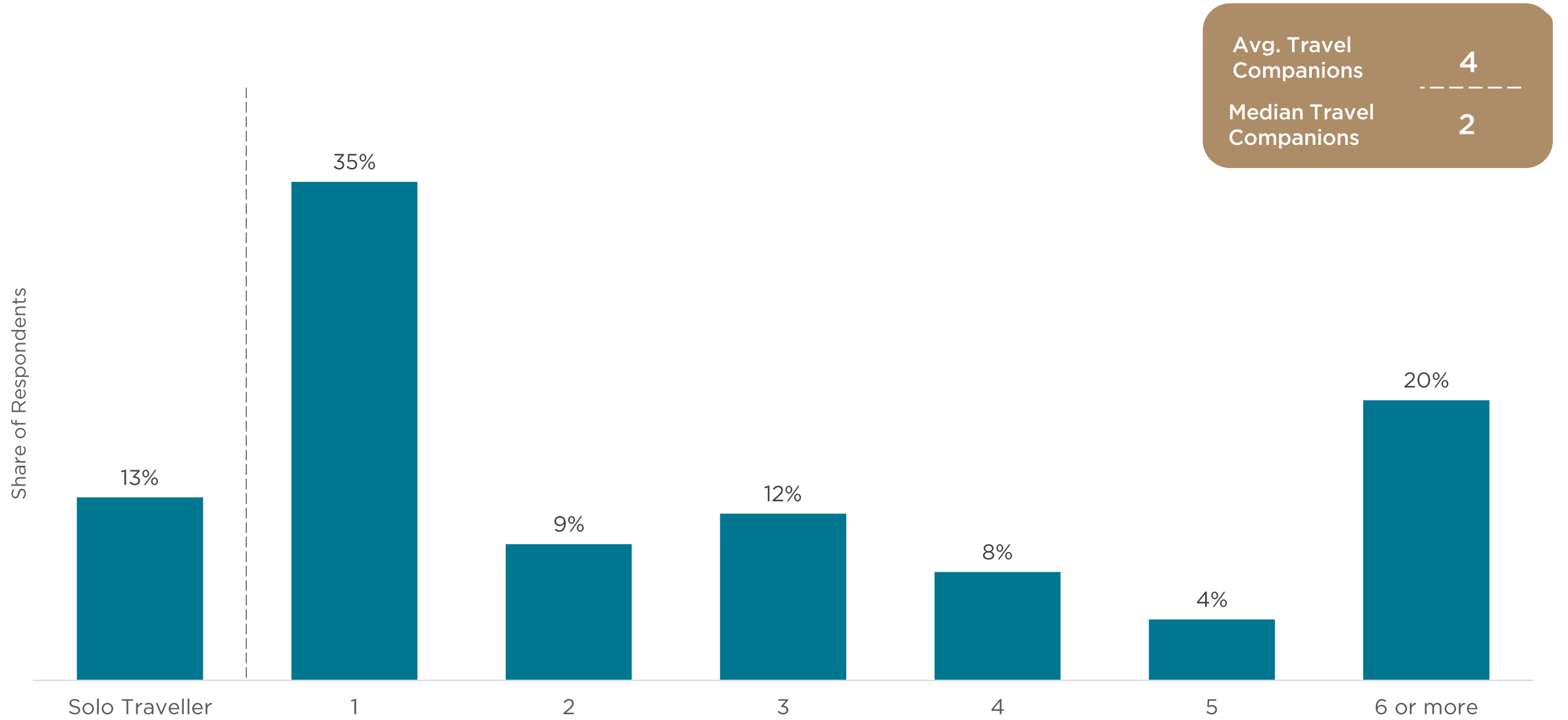
Avg. Length of Stay
8.7 Nights



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

Travel Group Size

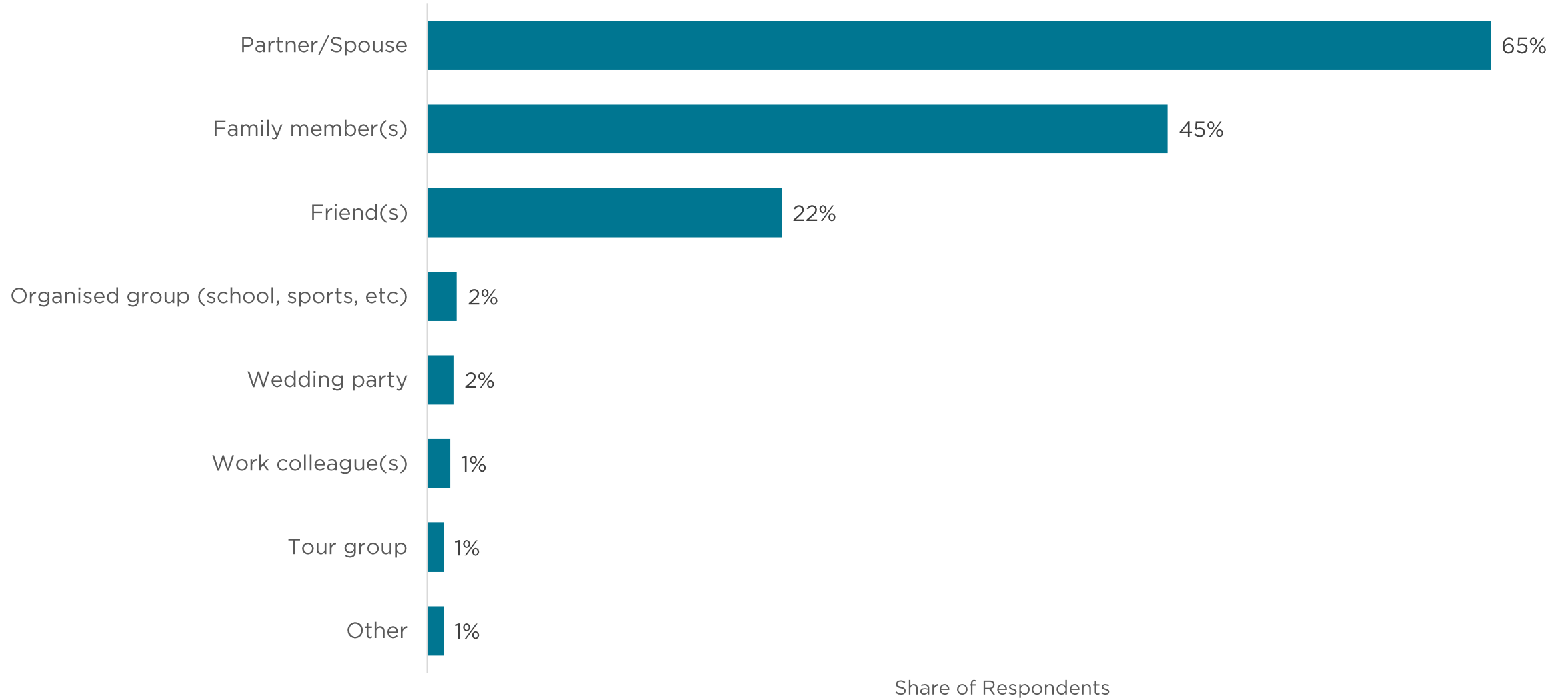
Q: How many people accompanied you on this trip?



Note: N=2,211 Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

Travel Companions

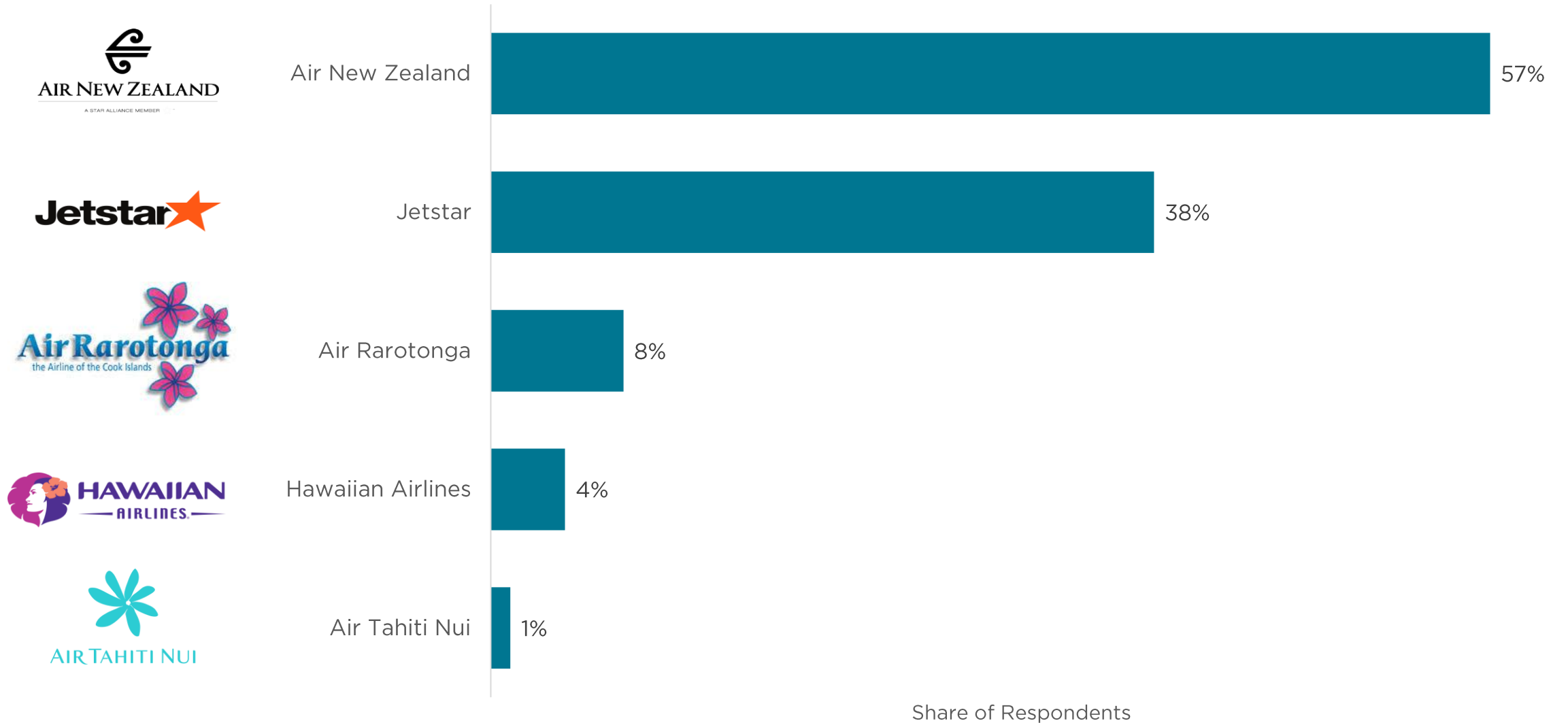
Q: Who were your travelling companions?



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

Airlines Used for Travel

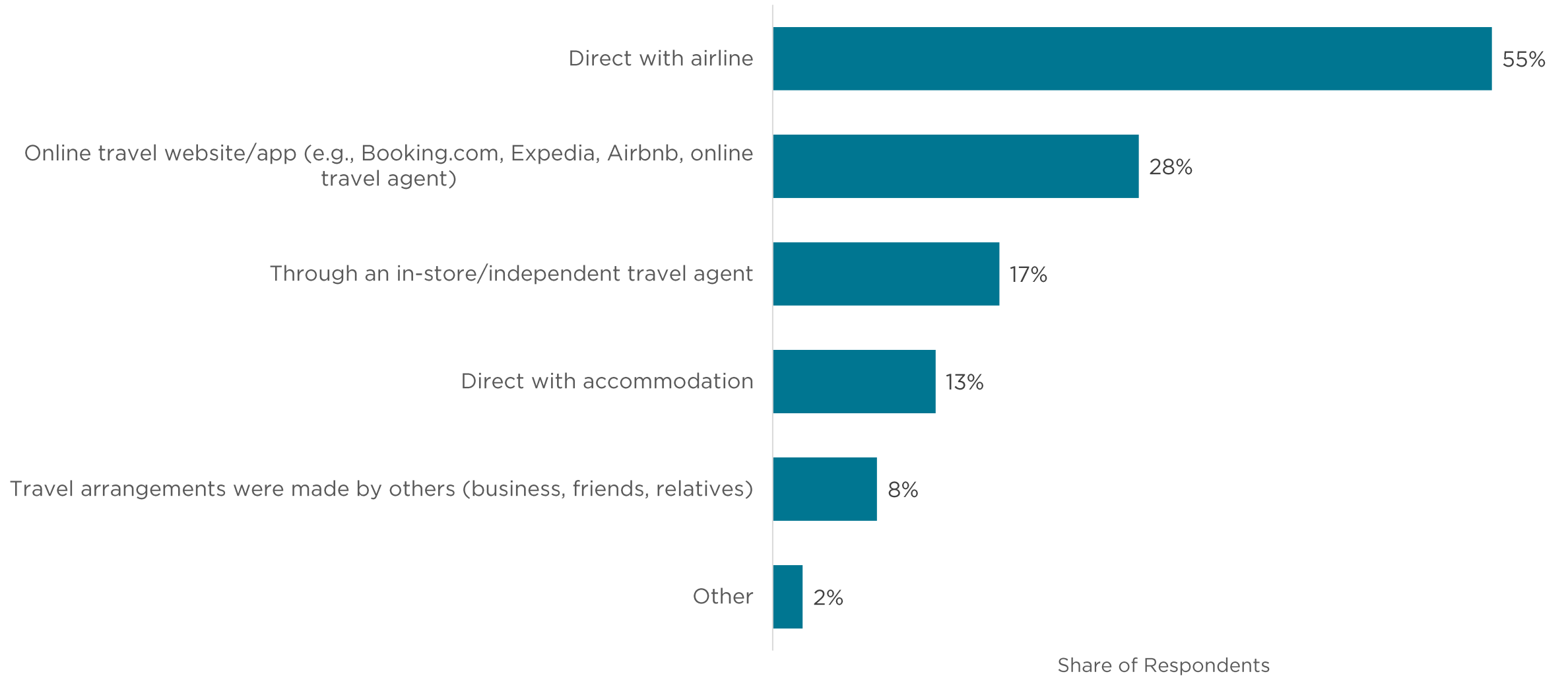
Q: How did you get to the Cook Islands?



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?



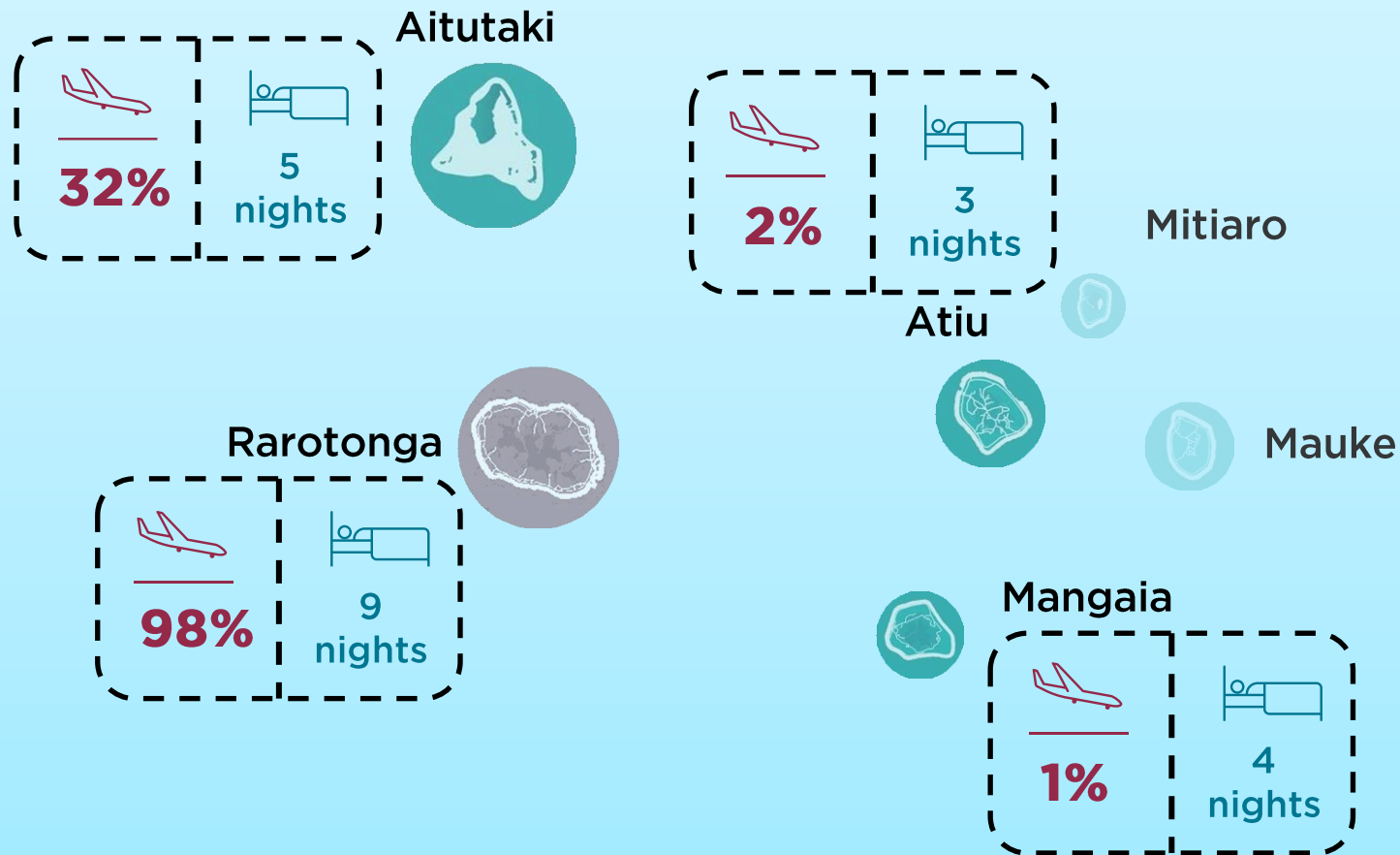
Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

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?

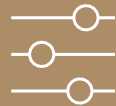


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



Visitor Spending
& Impact

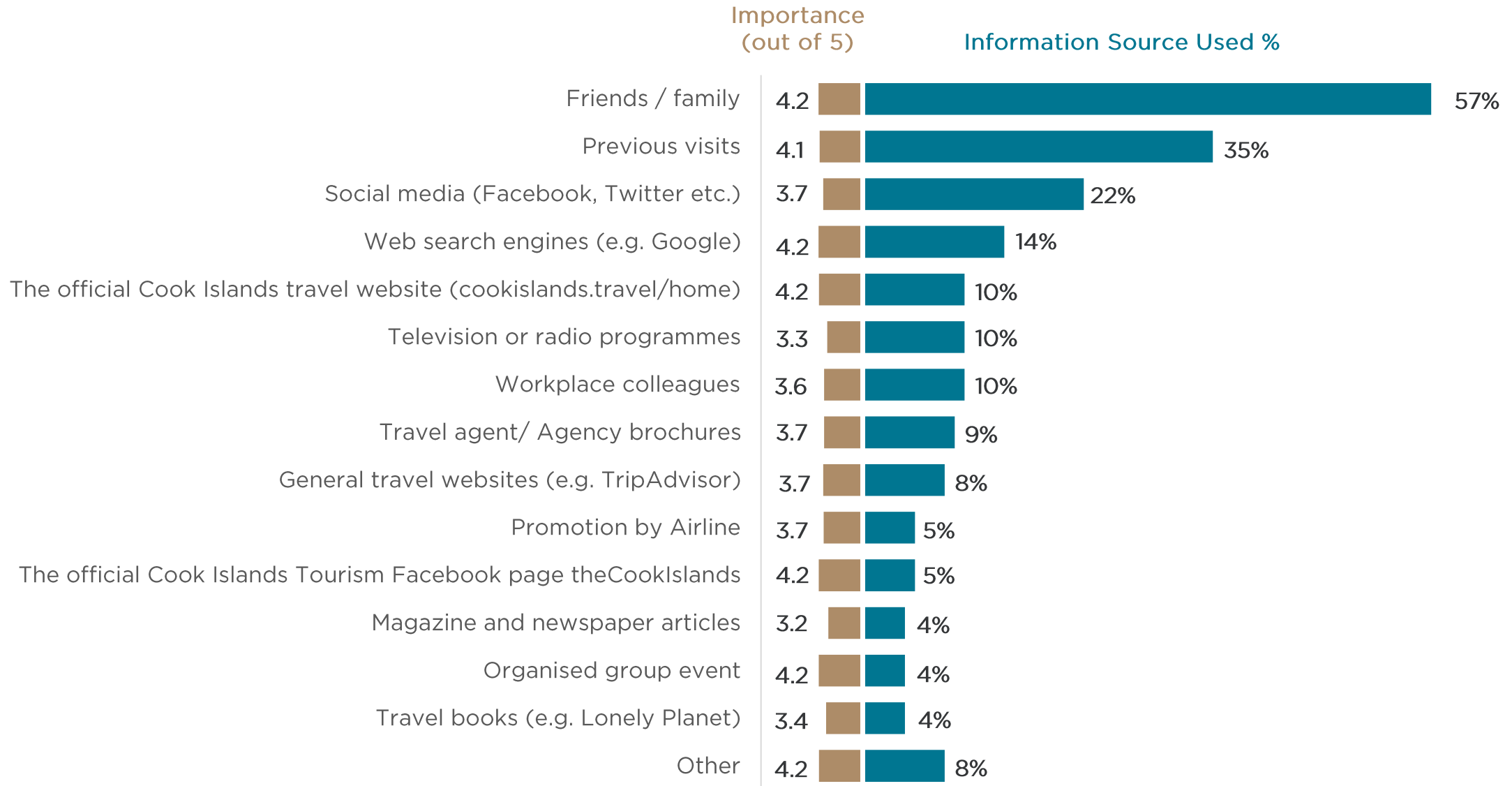


Visitor
Satisfaction

Information Source

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

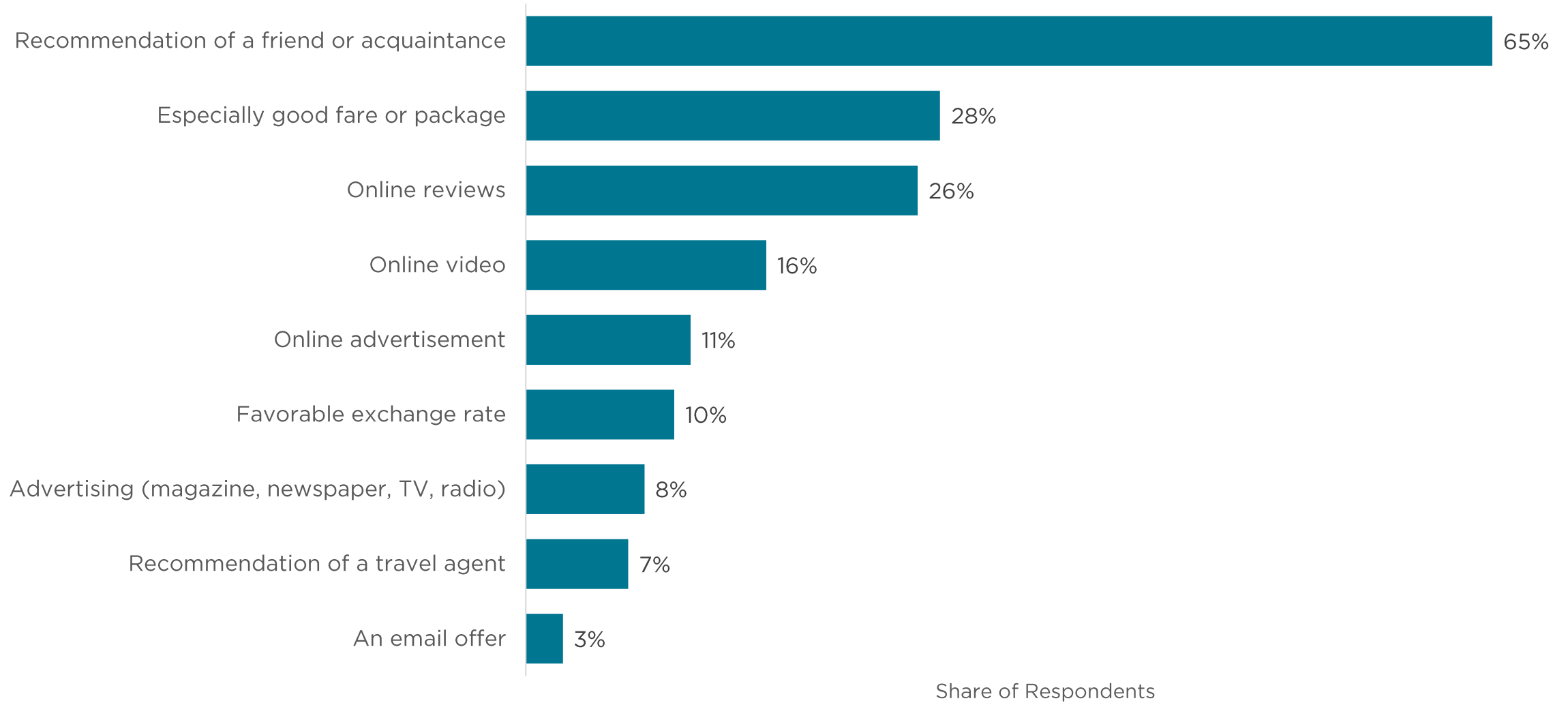
Q: How important was the information source?



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

Promotion/Advertising Channels

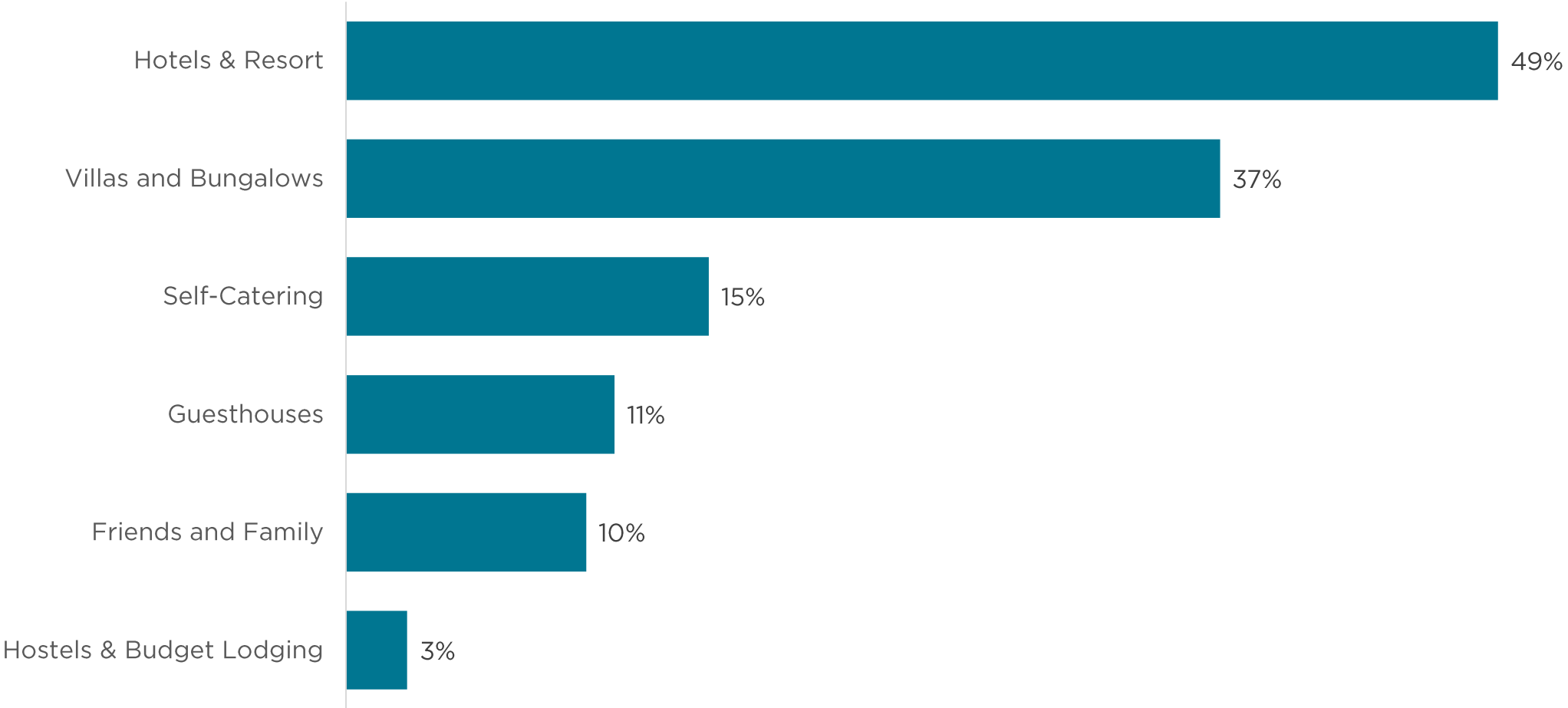
Q: Which promotional or advertising channels influenced your decision to visit the Cook Islands?



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%.

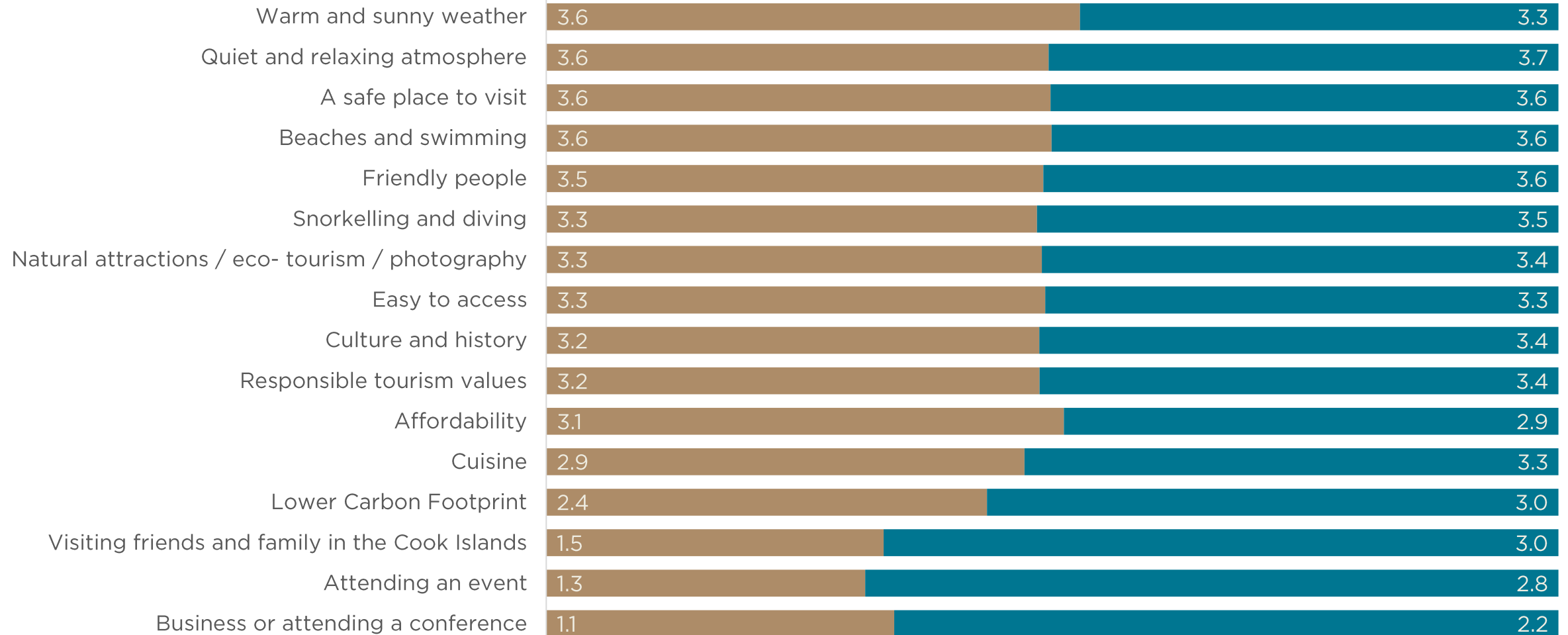
Pre-Travel Perceptions Vs Expectations

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

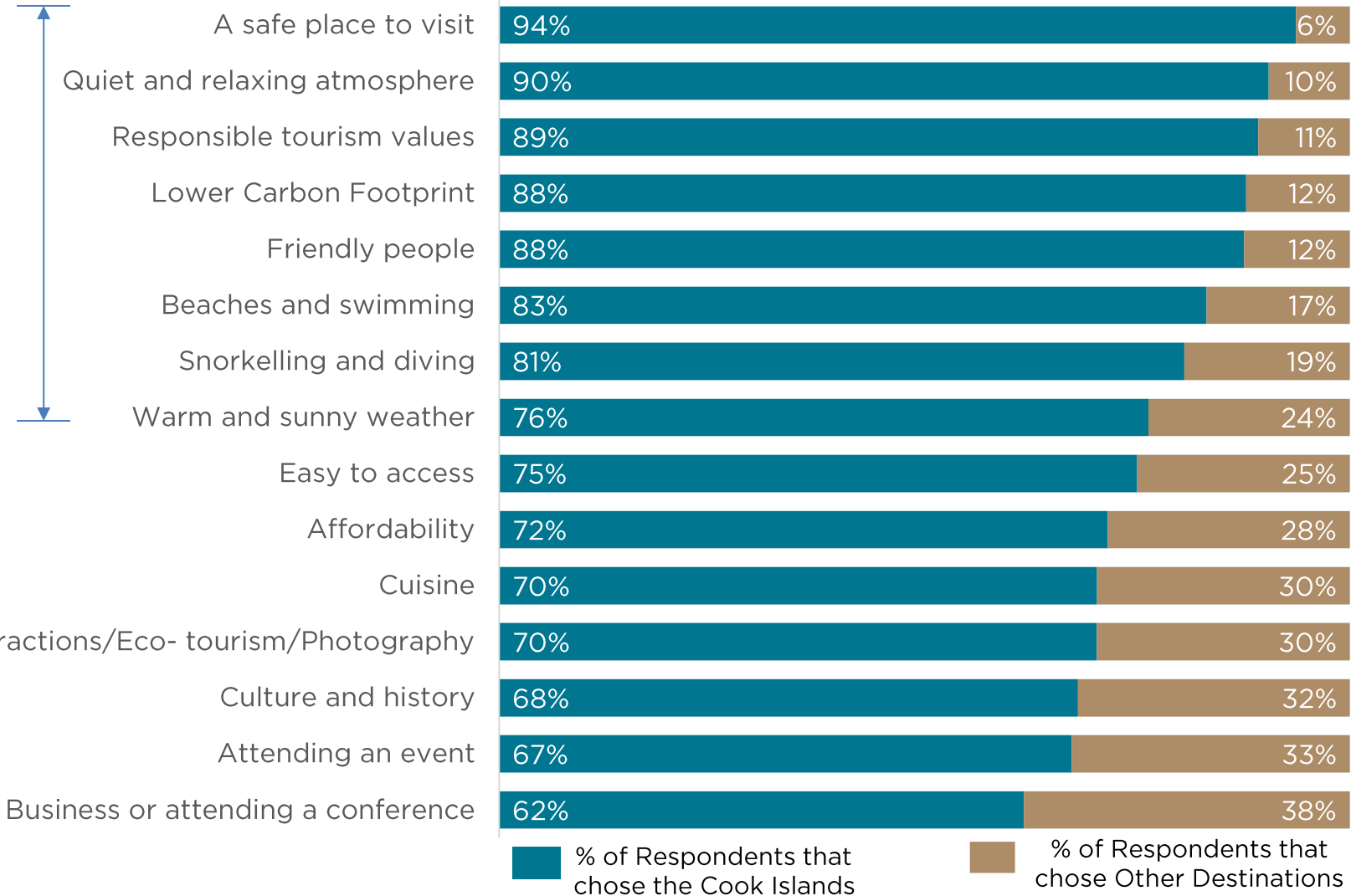


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

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

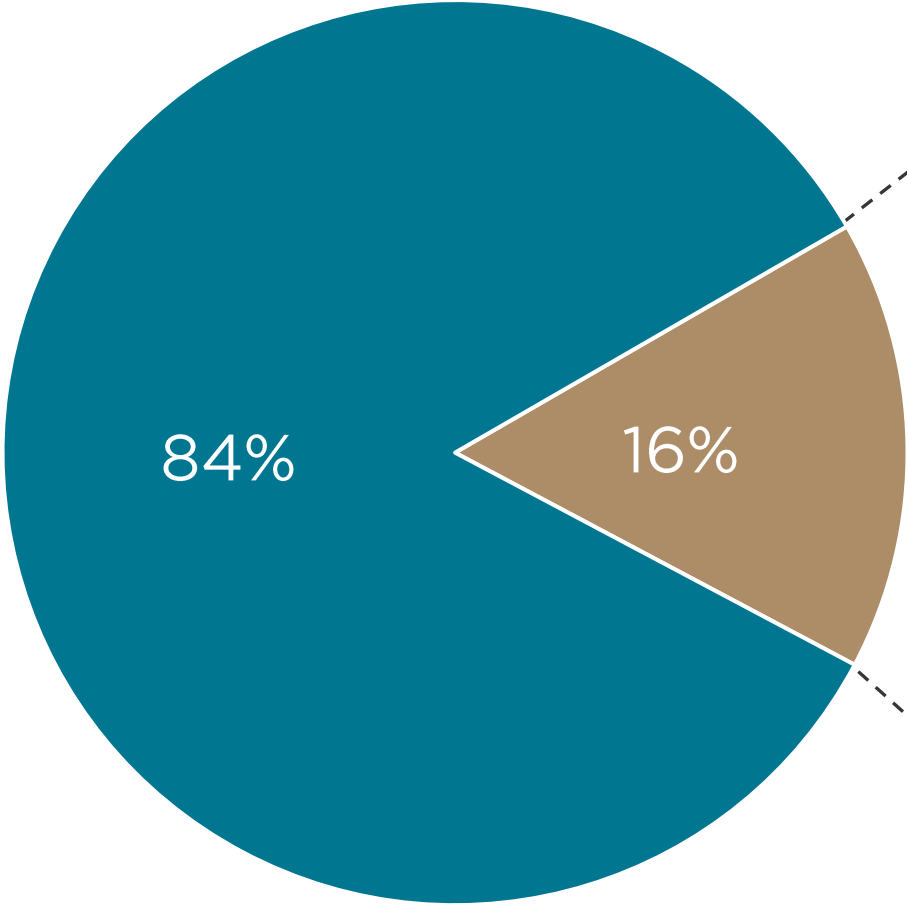


Bottom 6

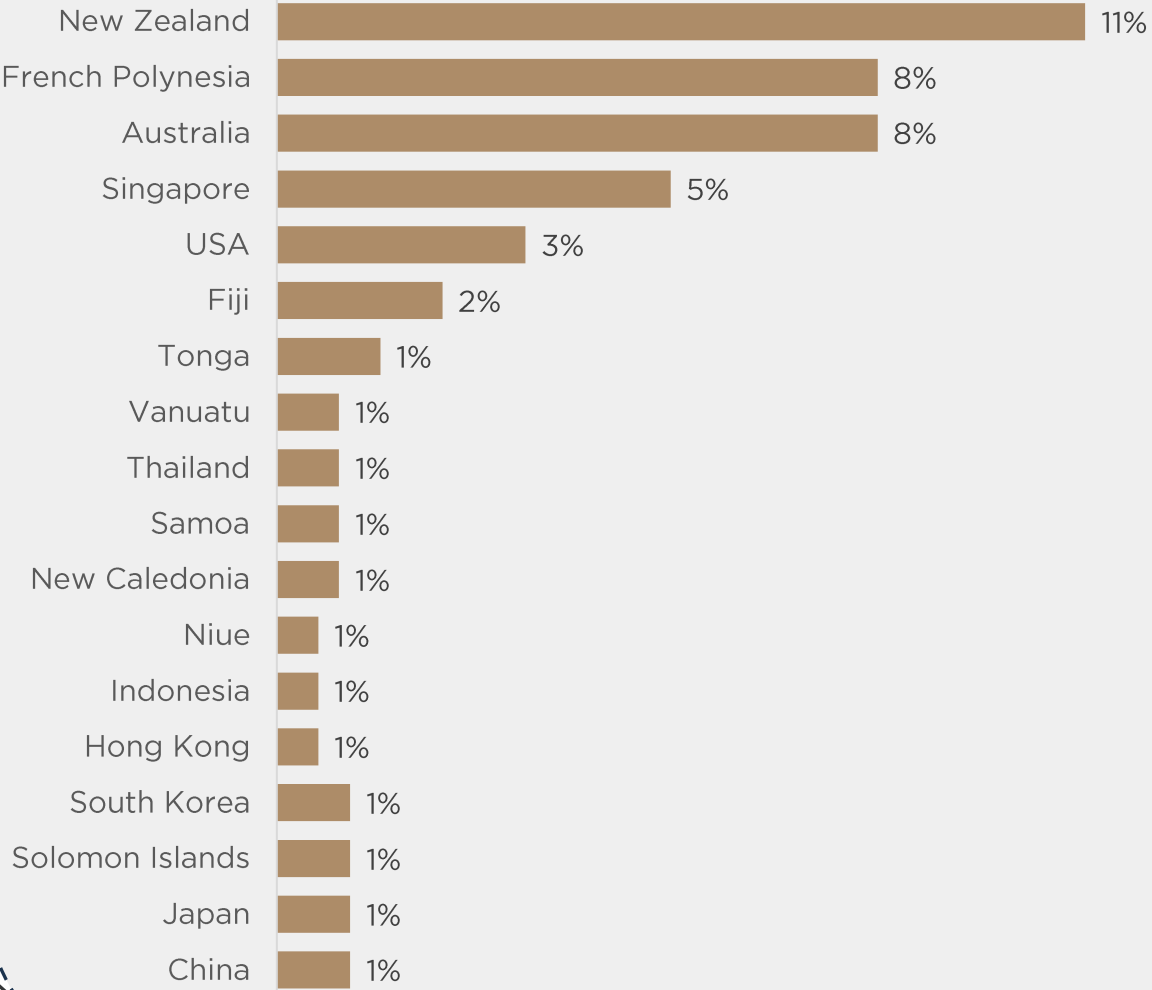
Emphasizing these Unique Selling Points is important, as visitors increasingly associate them with other destinations when comparing with the Cook Islands.

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 consider?

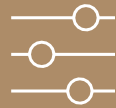


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor
Characteristics
& Preferences



Information &
Decision Making



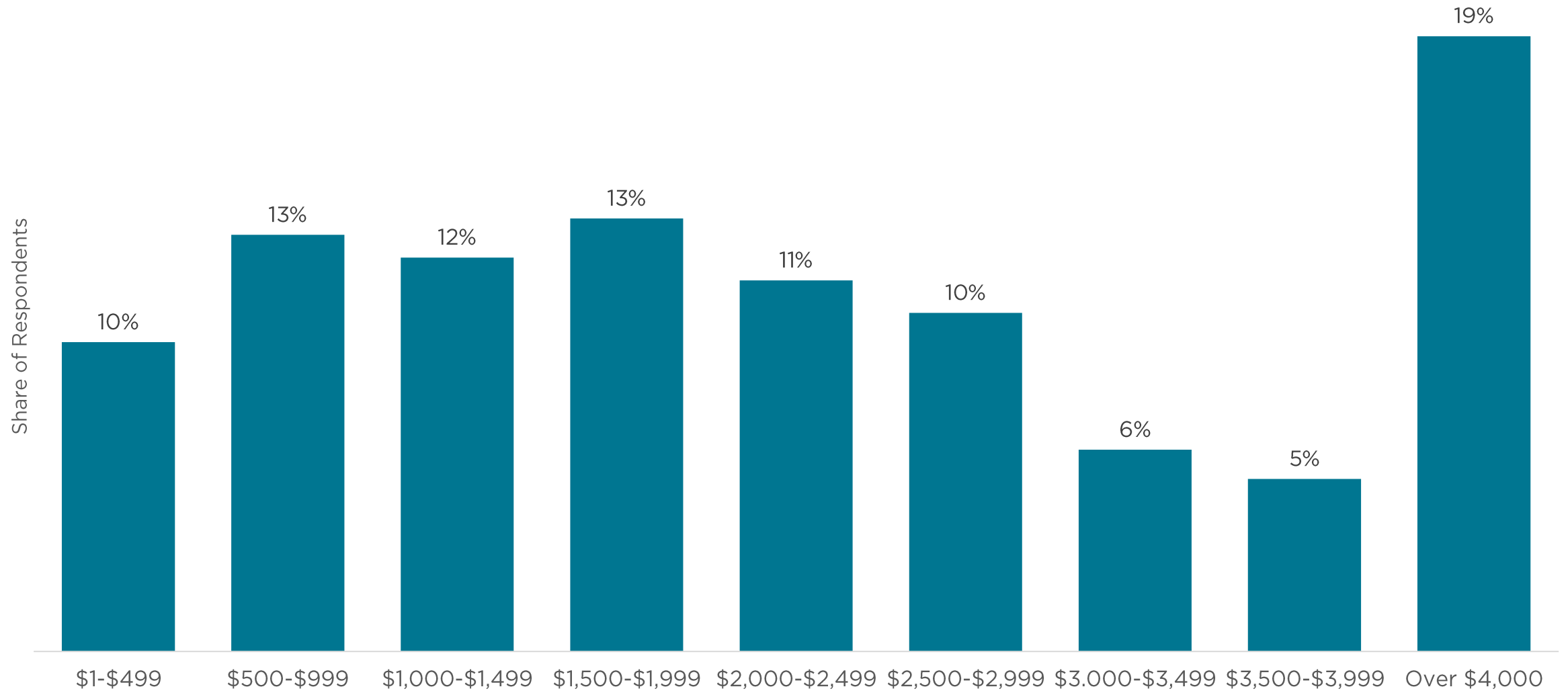
Visitor Spending
& Impact



Visitor
Satisfaction

Prepaid Expenditure

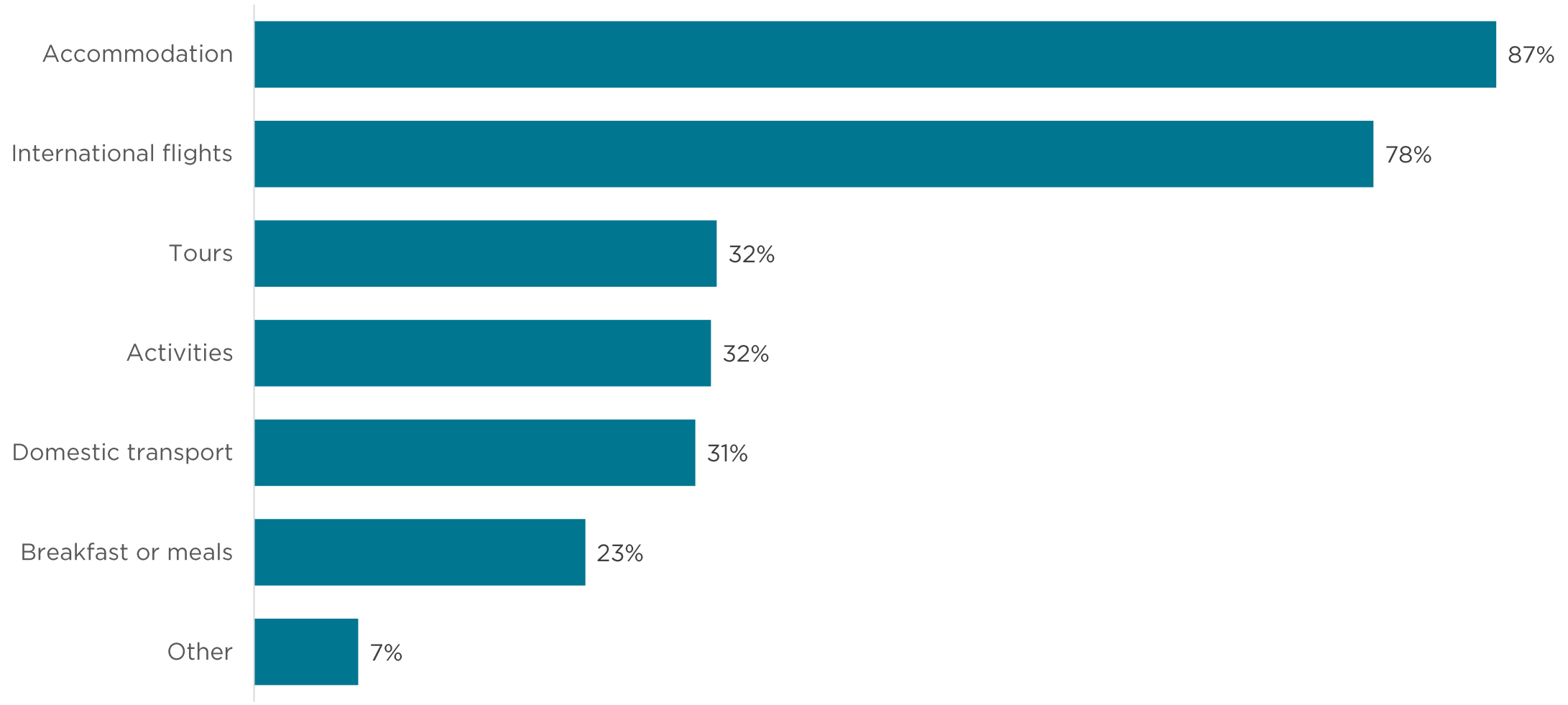
Avg. Prepaid per Person
NZ\$2,761



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 | 27 | 45 | 27 |
| Restaurant, Cafes & Bars | 27 | 45 | 27 |
| Vehicle Rental | 9 | 15 | 9 |
| Petrol | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Domestic Flight | 5 | 8 | 5 |
| Public Transport | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Internet Cost | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Water-based activities | 7 | 12 | 7 |
| Land-based activities | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| Groceries | 7 | 12 | 7 |
| Shopping | 11 | 18 | 11 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 100% | 168 | 100 |

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 - Sep 25 | Jul - Sep 25 |
| | NZD | USD |
| Average Spend Prior to arrival | | |
| Per Person Per Trip | 2,761 | 1,643 |
| <i>Flowing into local economy rate - estimated 40%</i> | | |
| Per Person Per Trip | 1,104 | 657 |
| Per Person per Day | 127 | 76 |
| ----- | | |
| Average Local Spend | | |
| <i>Length of Stay (nights)</i> | <i>mean 8.7 nights</i> | |
| Per Person Per Trip | 1,461 | 870 |
| Per Person per Day | 168 | 100 |
| ----- | | |
| Total Economic Impact-Per Trip | 2,565 | 1,527 |
| Total Economic Impact-Per Day | 295 | 176 |

July - September 2024

NZD 151 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 51,482

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

\$2,570

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$212

In-country spend per day

40% Flowing into local economy rate

x 9.0 nights Average length of stay

\$1,028

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$1,905

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$2,933 per visitor per trip

\$326 per visitor per day

July - September 2025

NZD 145 MILLION

FROM VISITORS 56,507 ▲

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

\$2,761 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$168 ▼

In-country spend per day

40% Flowing into local economy rate

x 8.7 nights ▼ Average length of stay

\$1,104 ▲

Prepaid per visitor per trip

\$1,461 ▼

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$2,565 per visitor per trip ▼

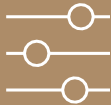
\$295 per visitor per day ▼

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

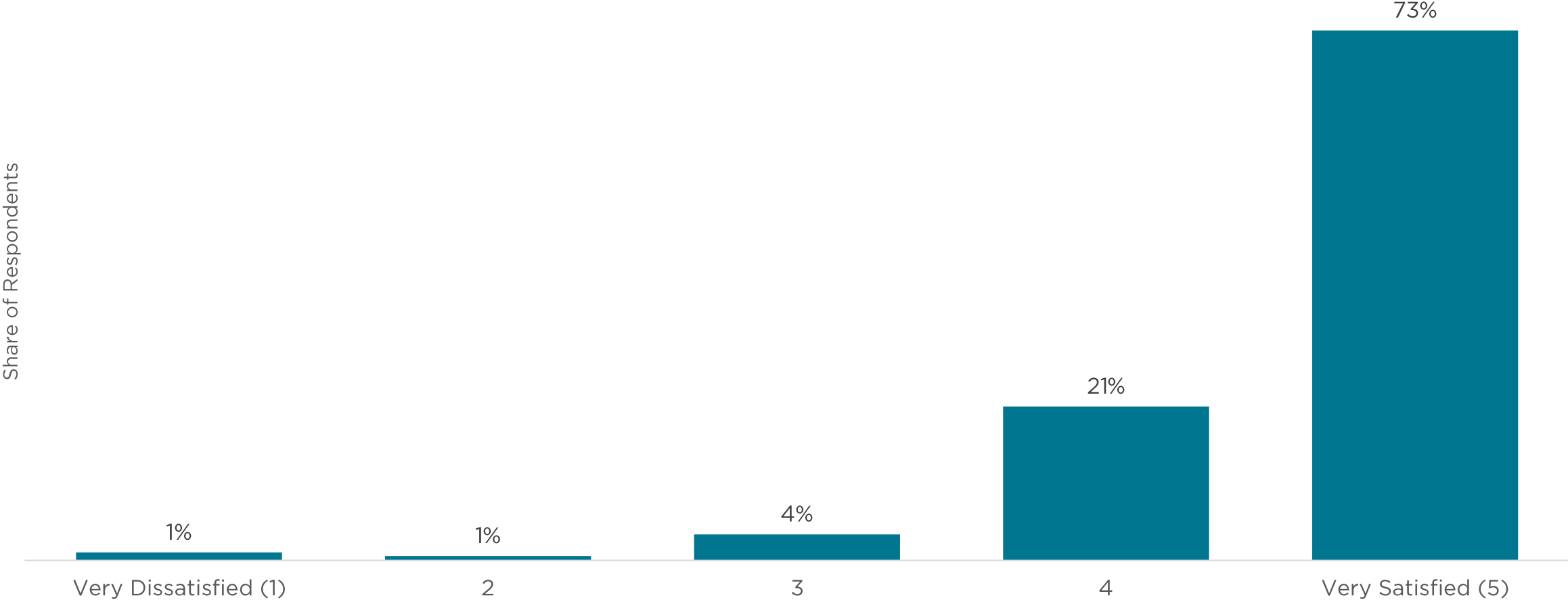


Visitor
Satisfaction

Visitor Overall Satisfaction

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

Avg. Overall Satisfaction
4.6

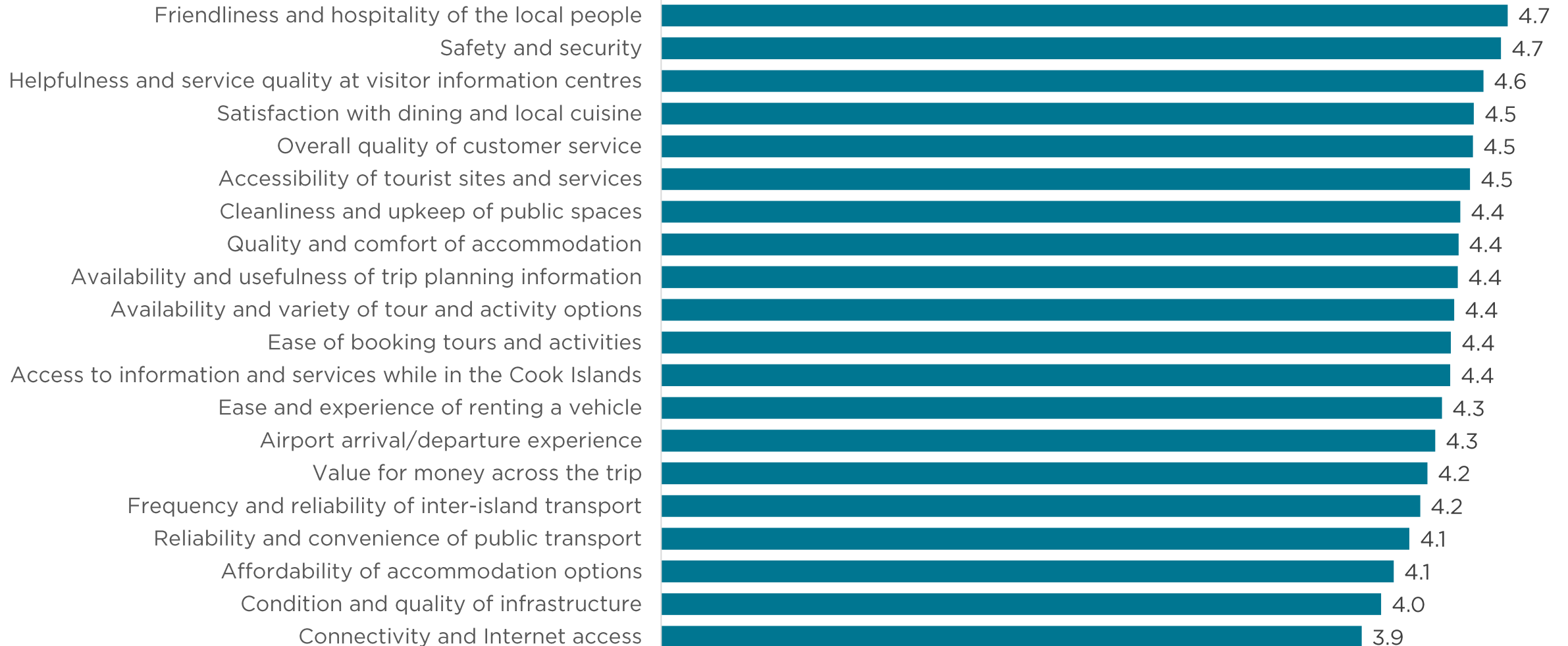


Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%

Satisfaction with Travel Experience

1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

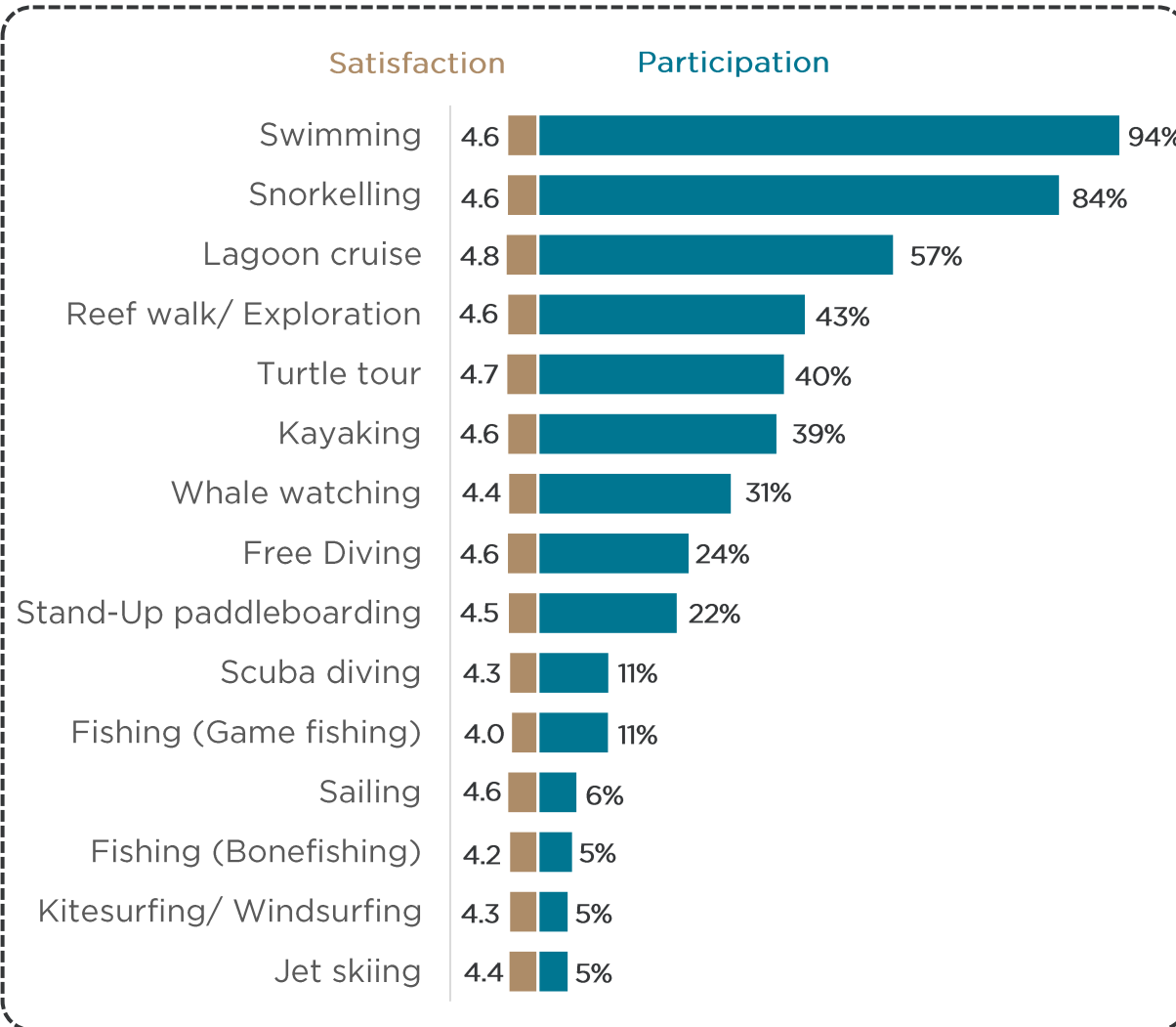


Note: The satisfaction rate is the average of all ratings given by respondents for that attribute.

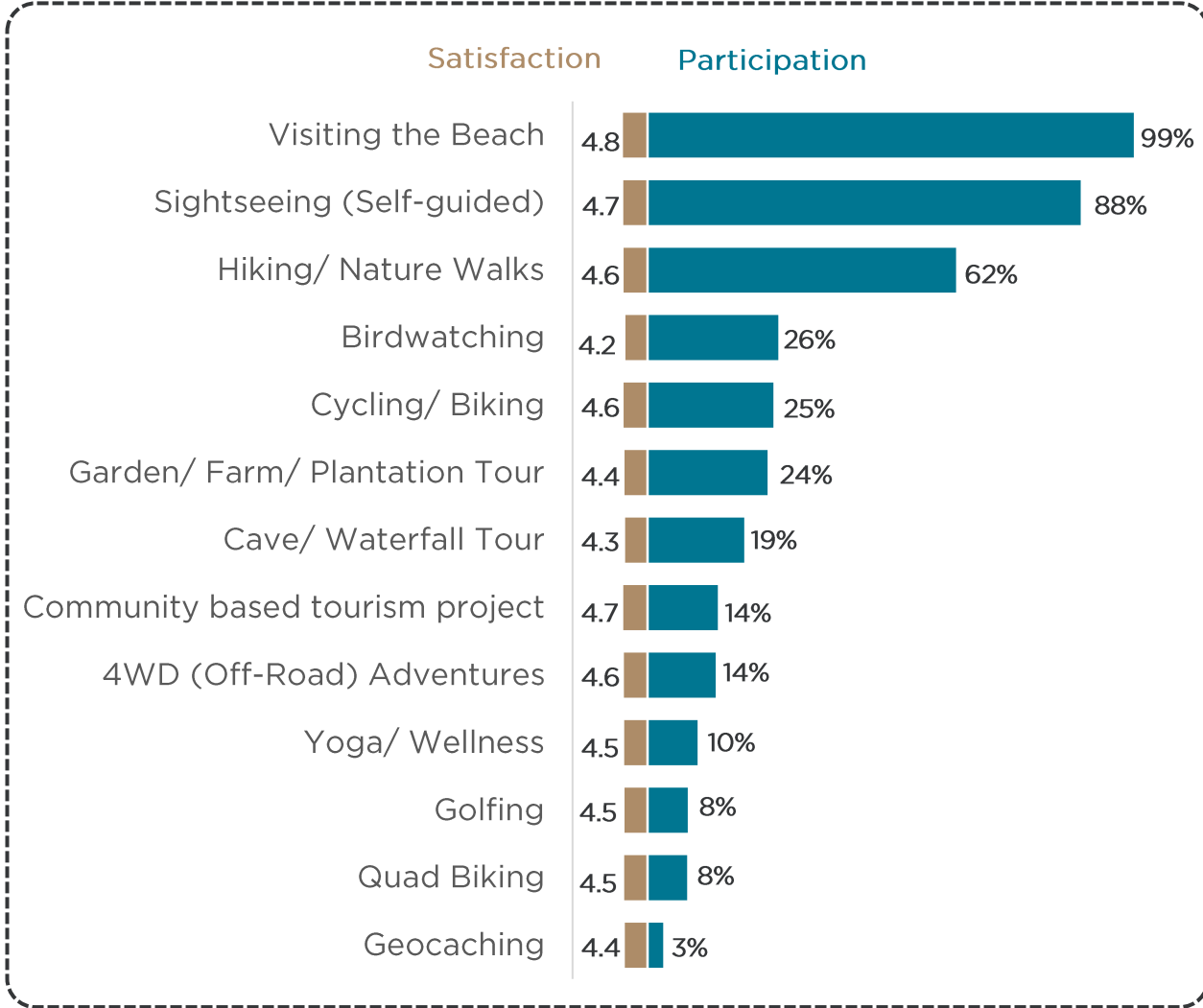
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Water-based activities



Land-based activities



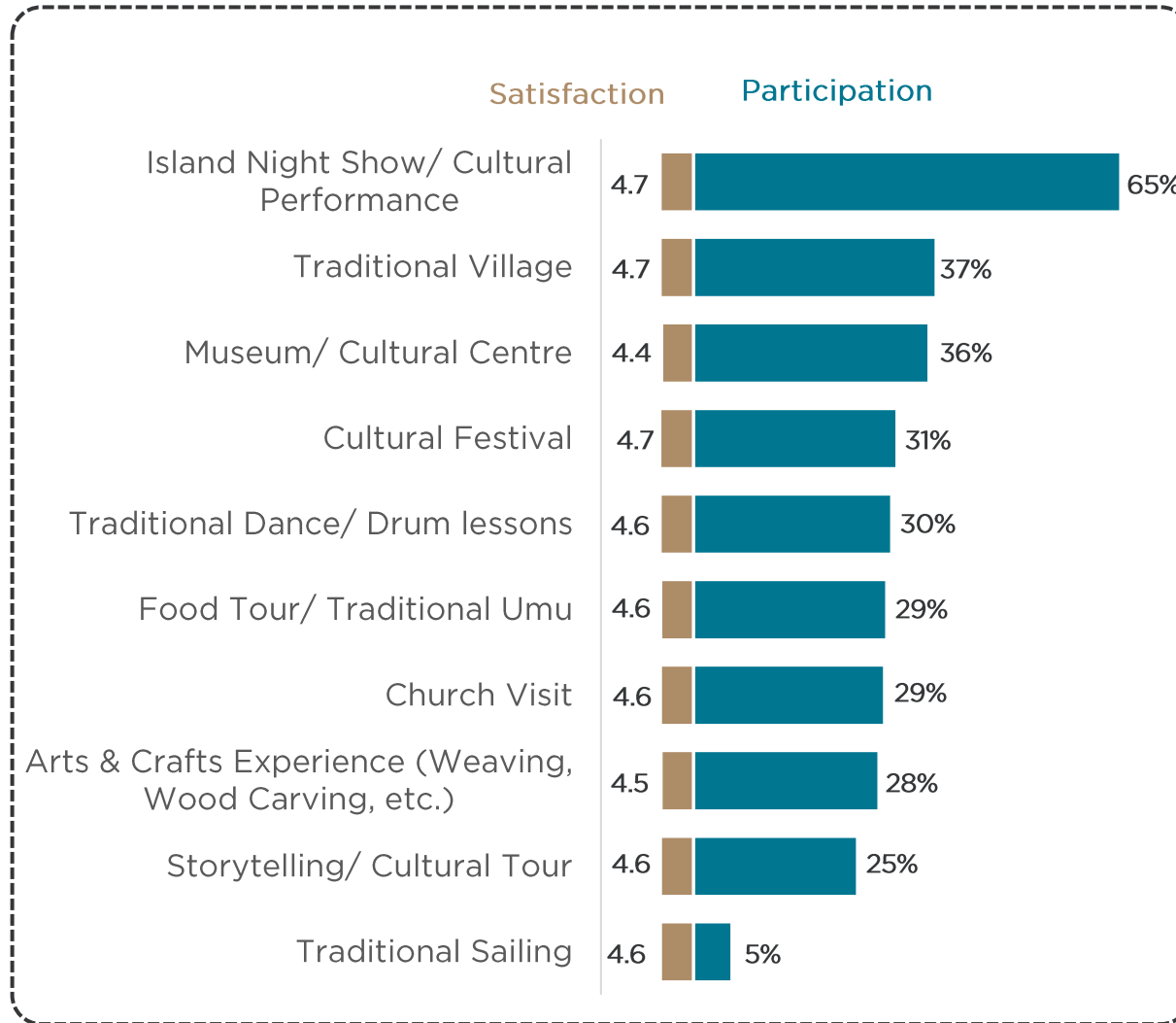
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

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

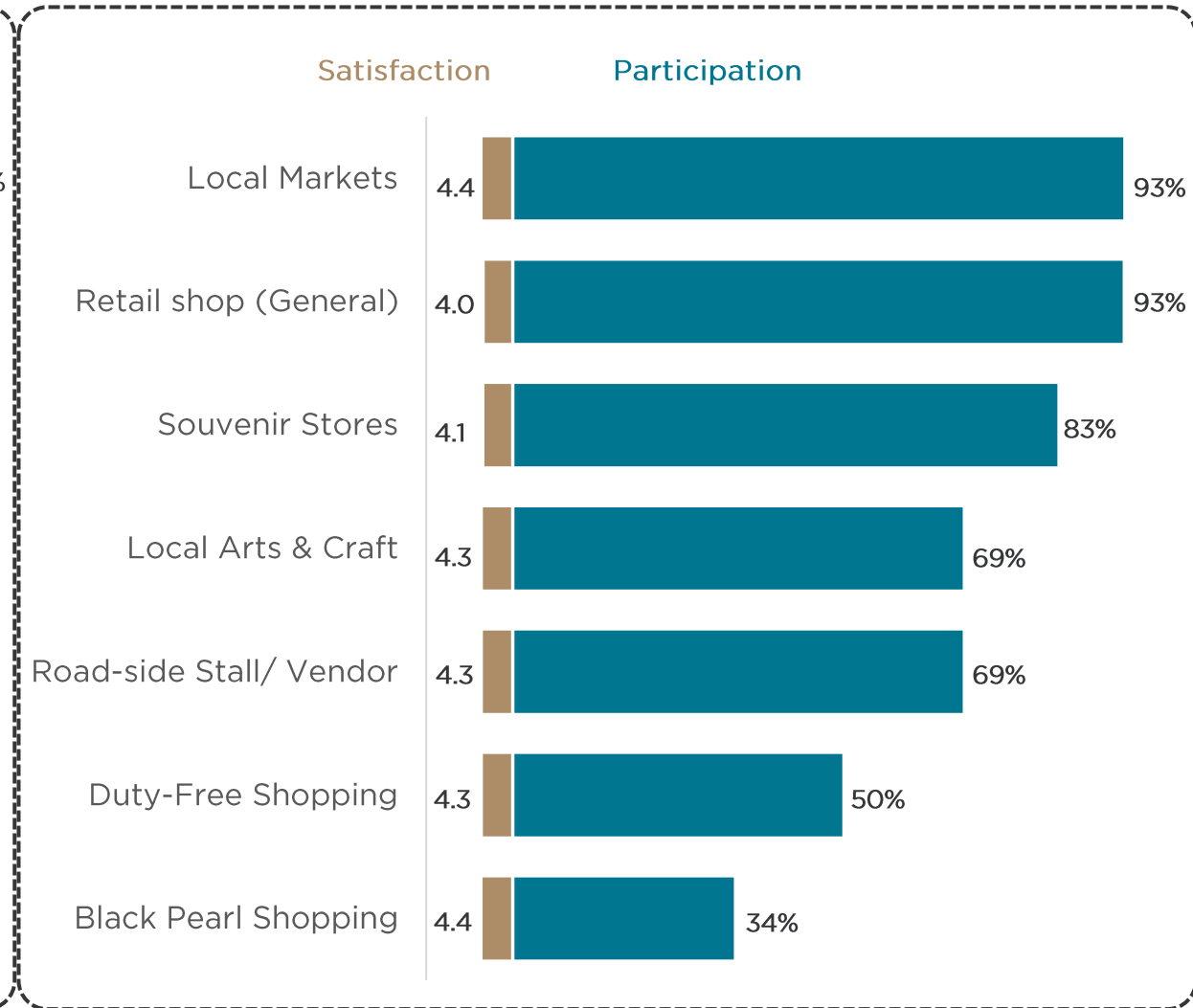
Satisfaction with Activities

Q: How satisfied were you with the following?

Arts and Cultural Activities



Shopping activities



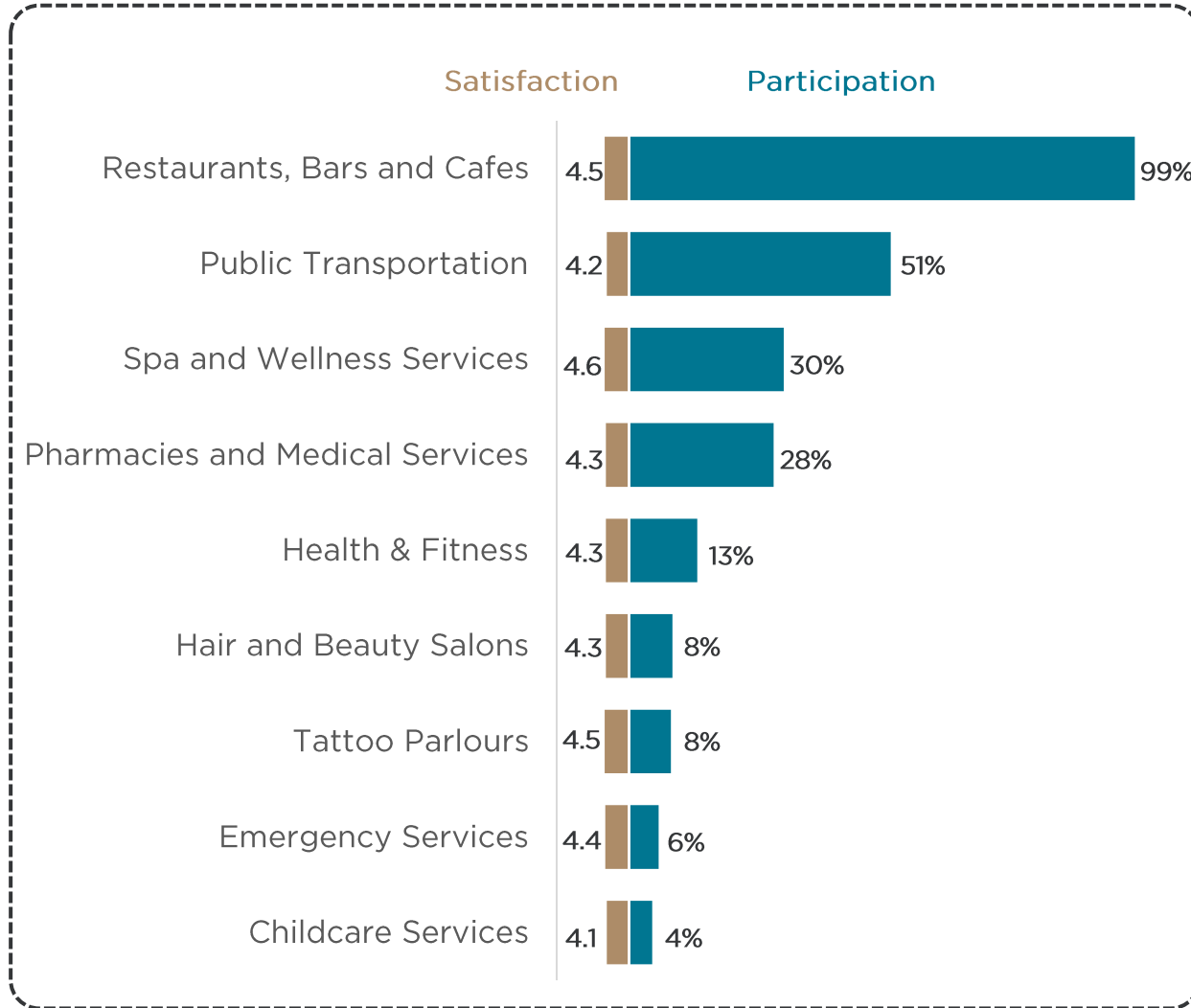
Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied to 5=Very Satisfied

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?

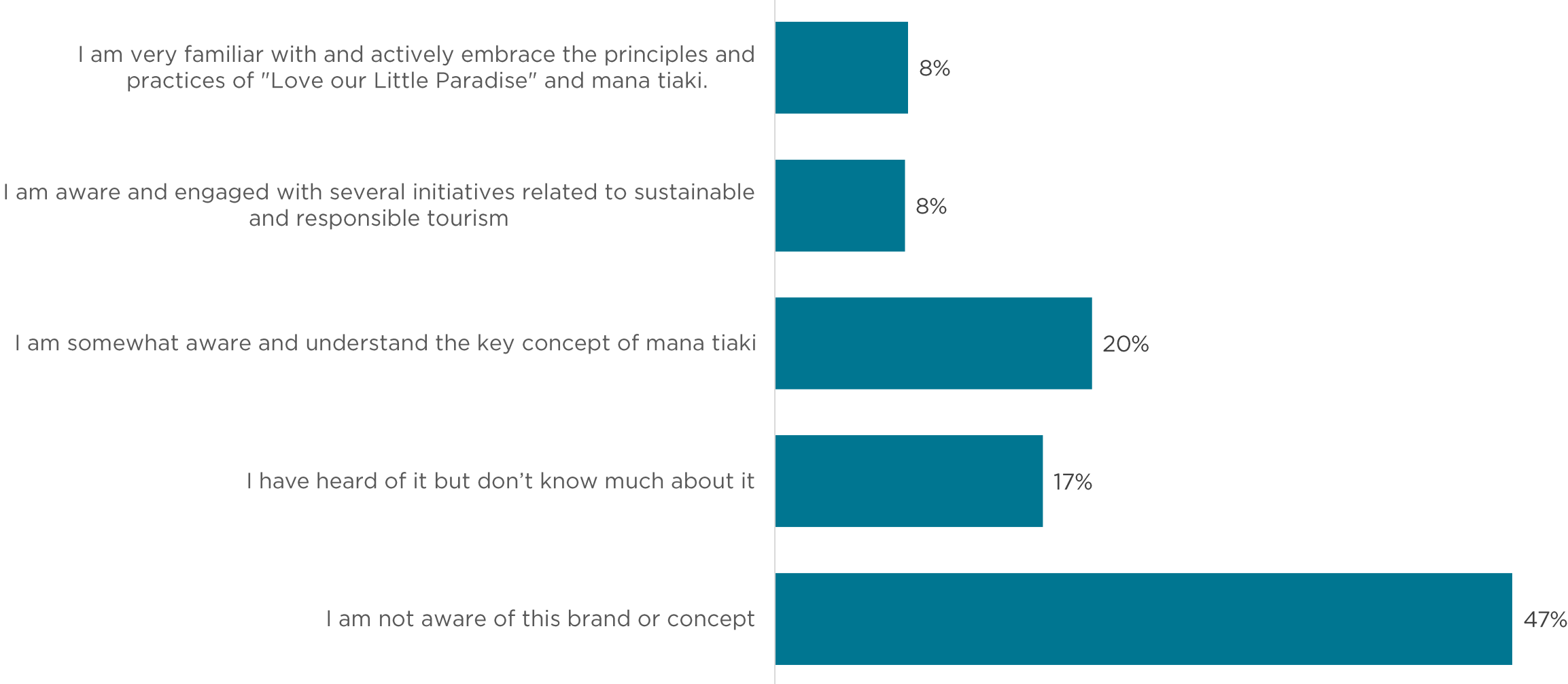
Services



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.

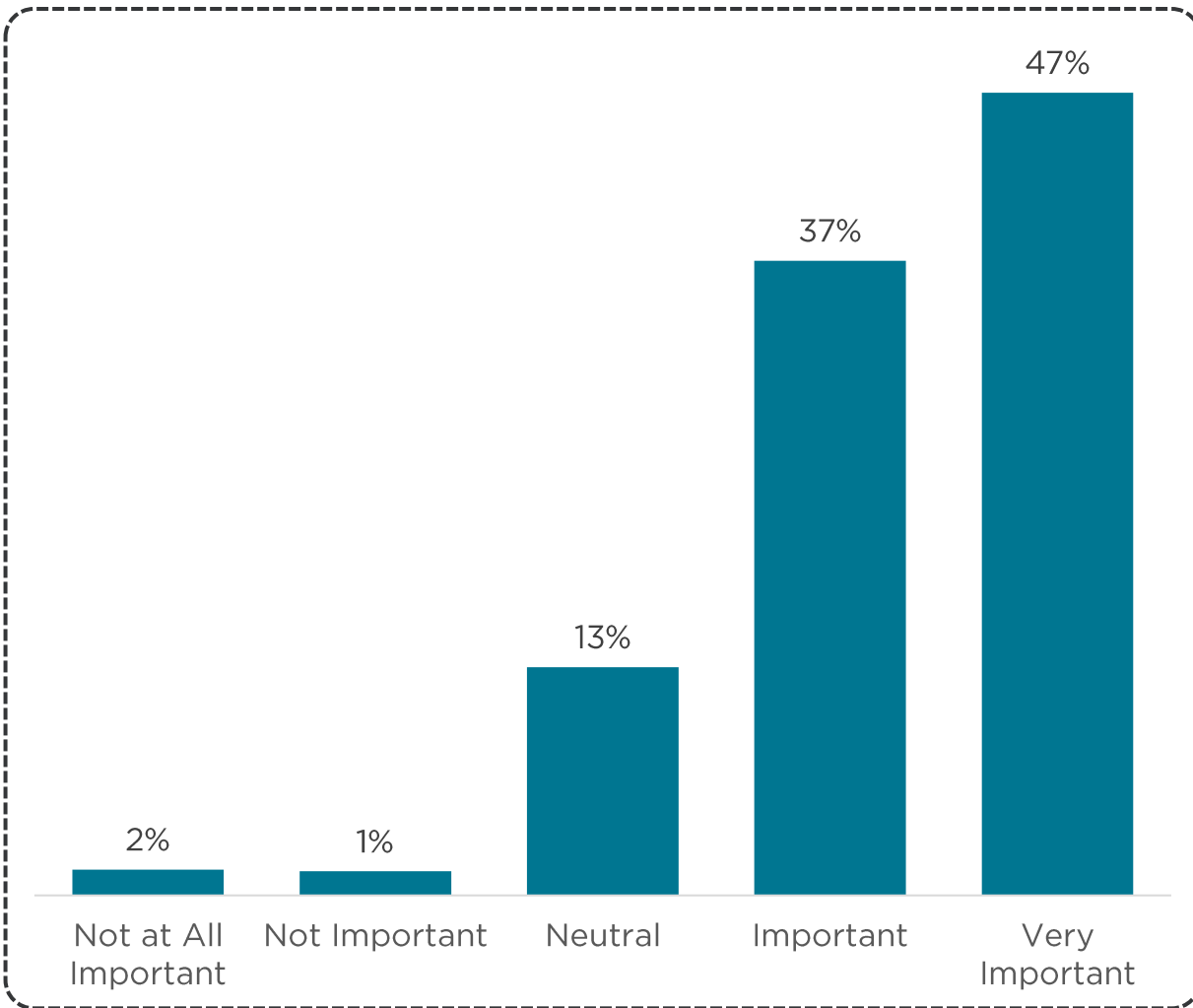
Awareness of "Love Our Little Paradise" and Mana Tiaki



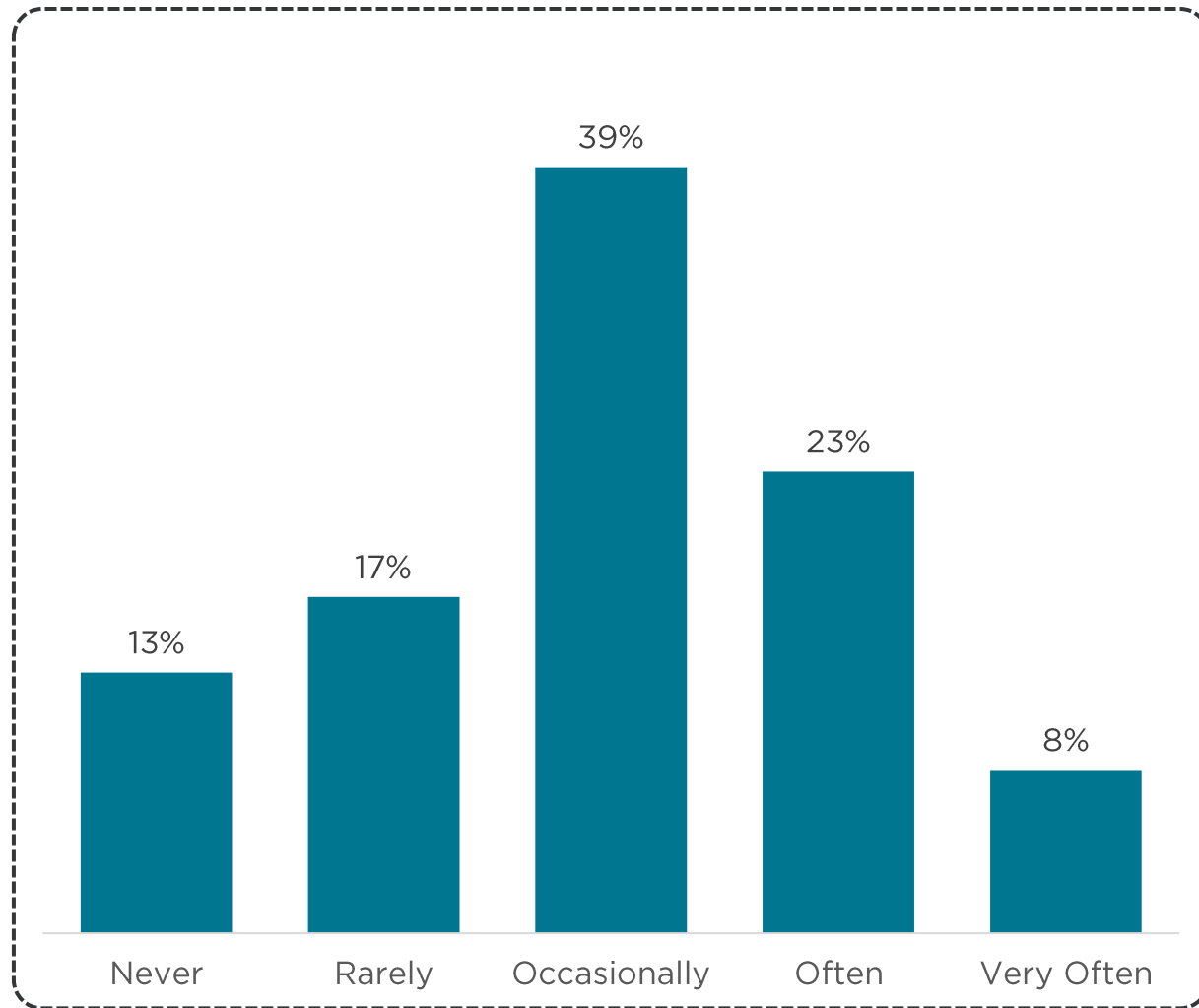
Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%.

Perceptions and Engagement in Sustainable Tourism

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

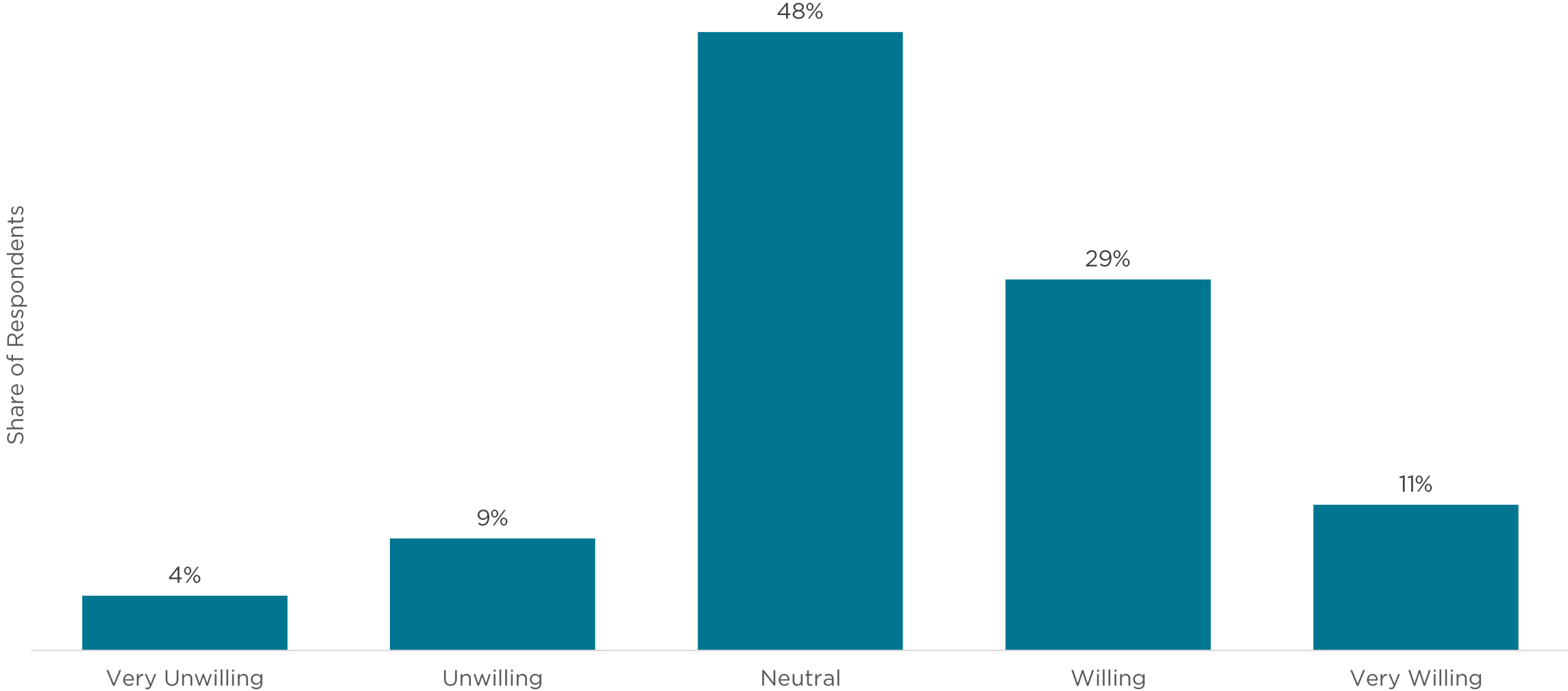


Q: During your visit, how often did you observe or participate in sustainable or responsible tourism practices (e.g., eco-friendly accommodations, conservation efforts)?



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

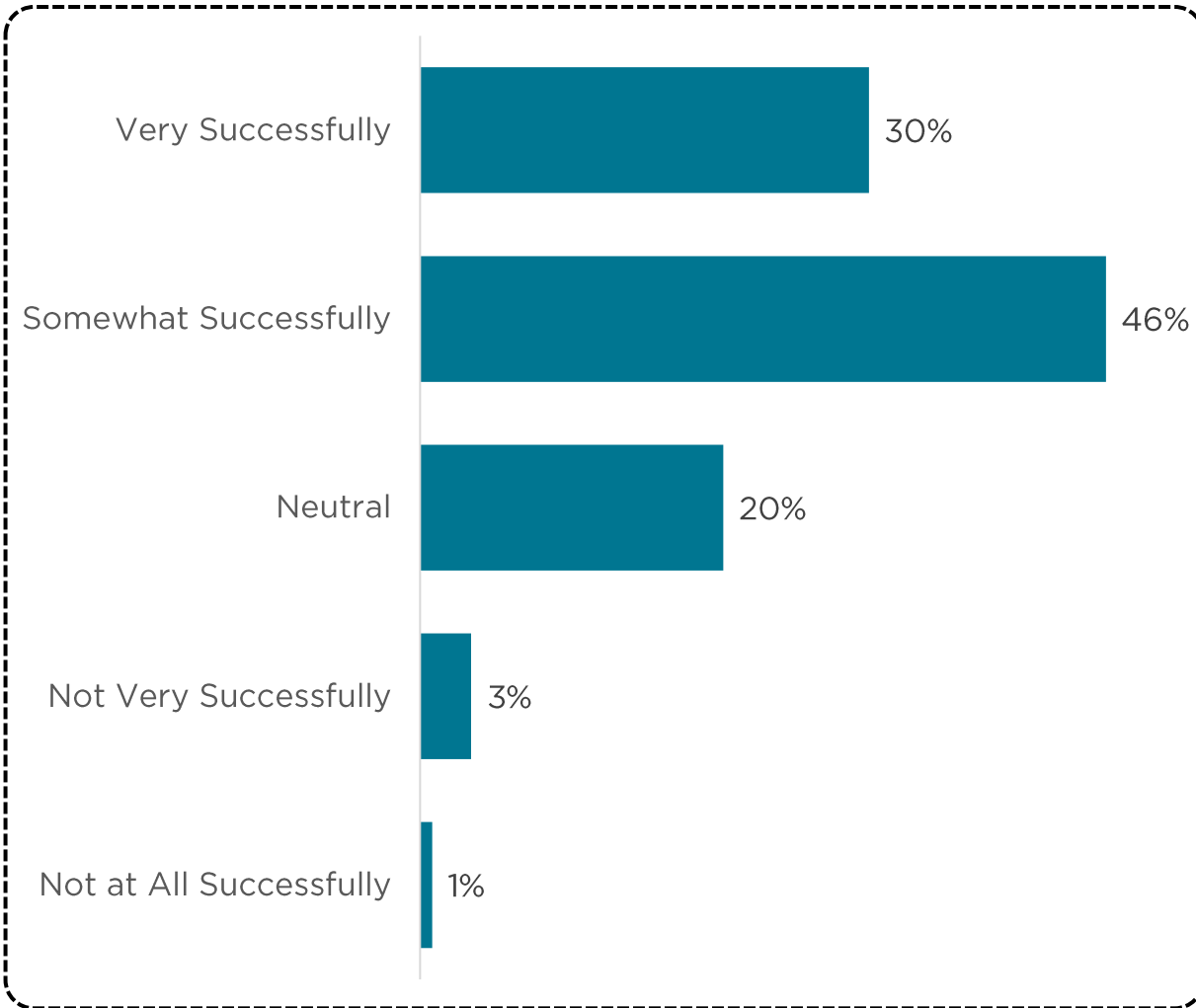
Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give-Back Initiatives



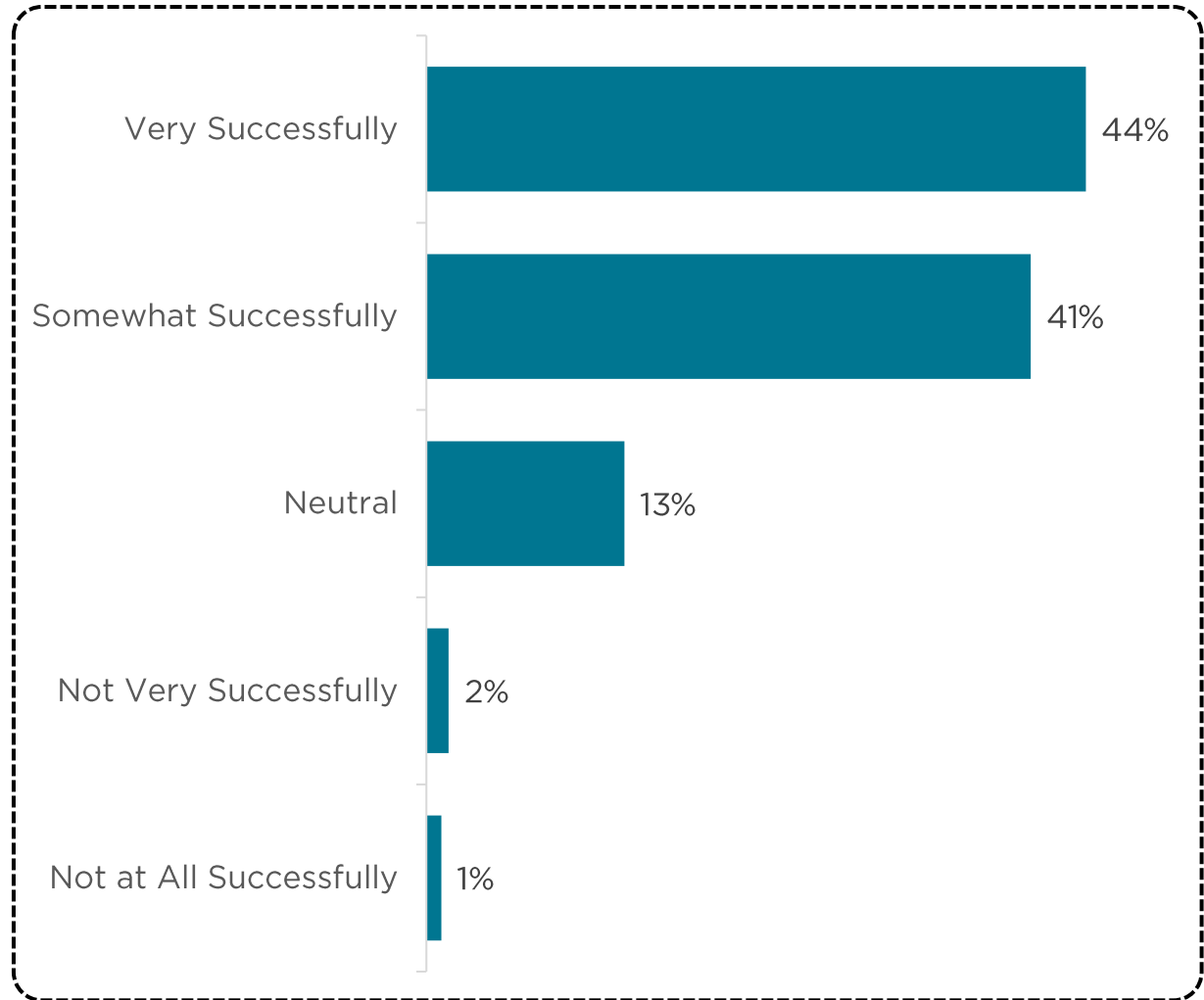
Note: The neutral bar rating of 48% for "Willingness to Contribute to Tourism Give Back Initiative" indicates a significance portion of respondents are uncertain, presenting an opportunity to engage and address their concerns to shift opinions more favorably.

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

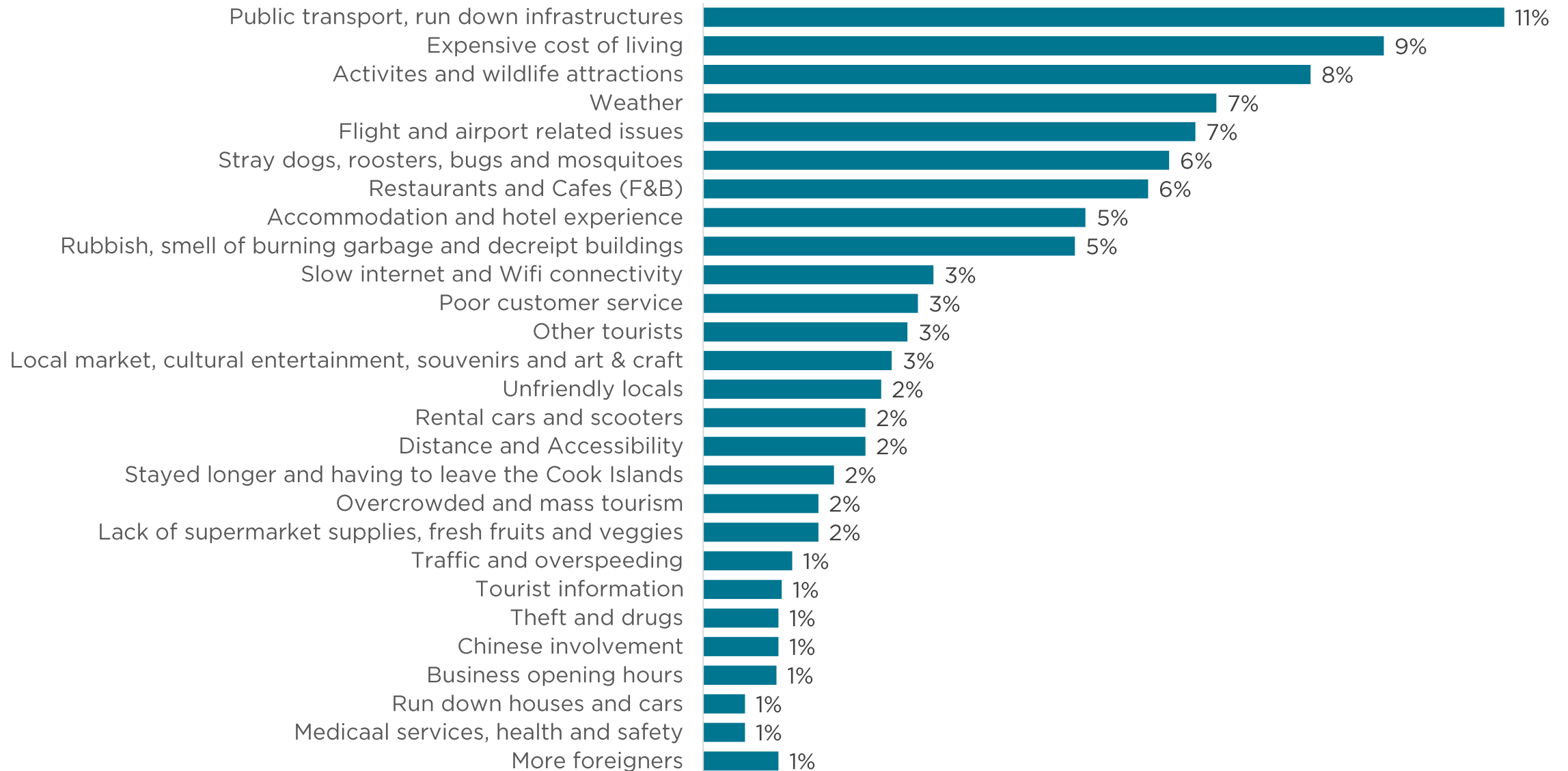
Most Appealing Aspects



Share of Respondents

Note: Total response N=1,526. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Least Appealing Aspects



Share of Respondents

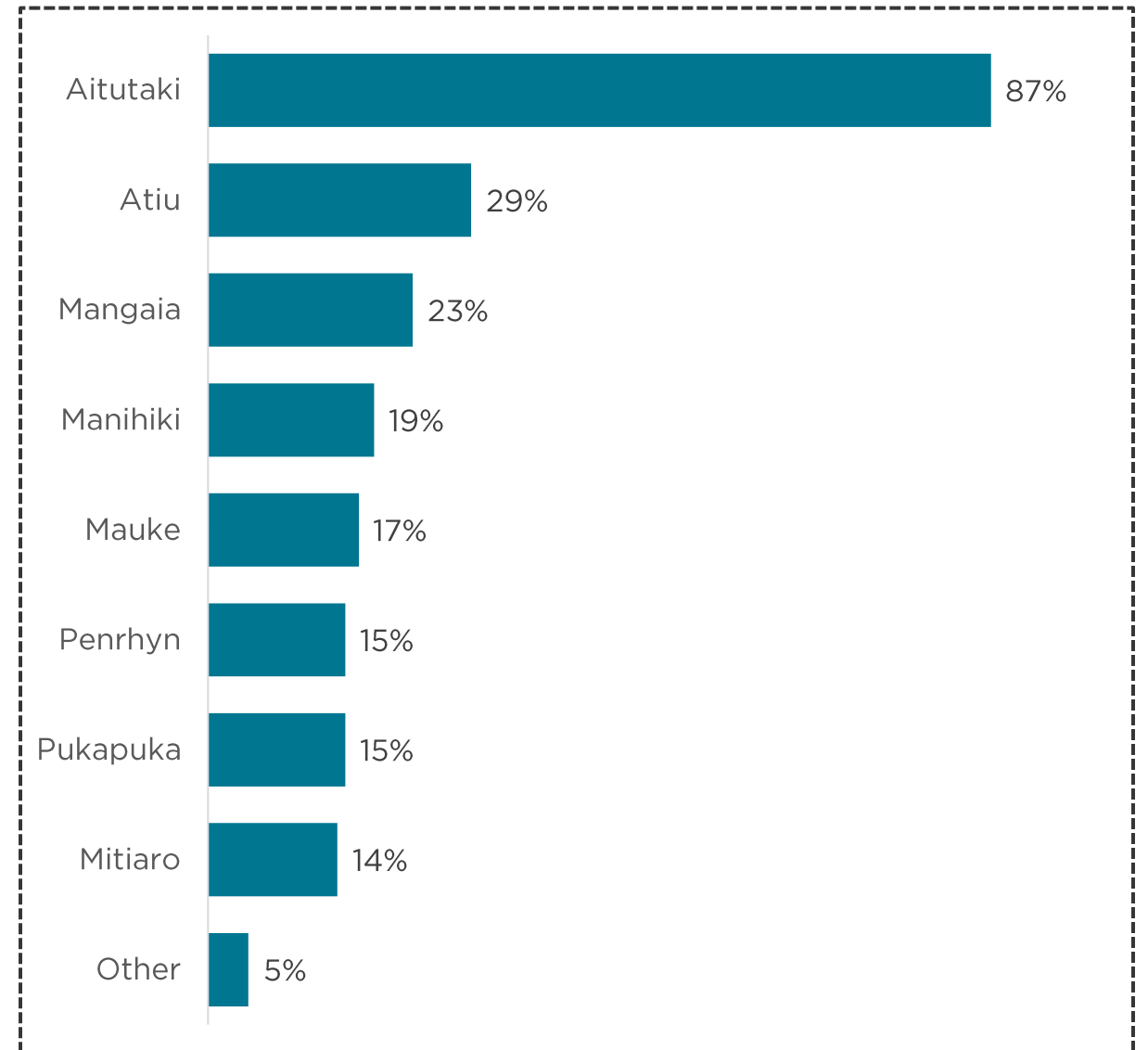
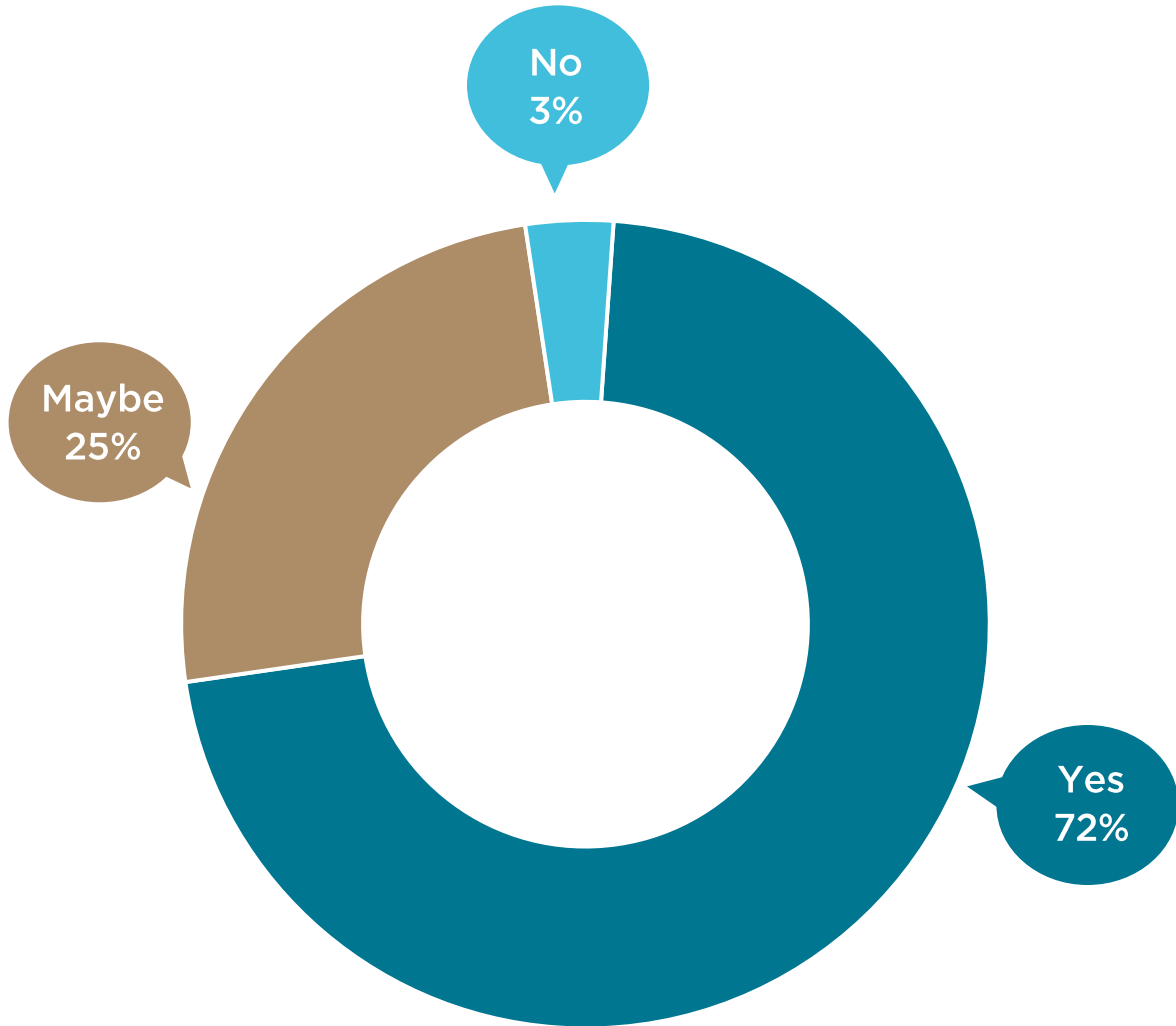
Note: Total response N=1,437. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

Suggestions for Improvement



Note: Total response N=533. Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

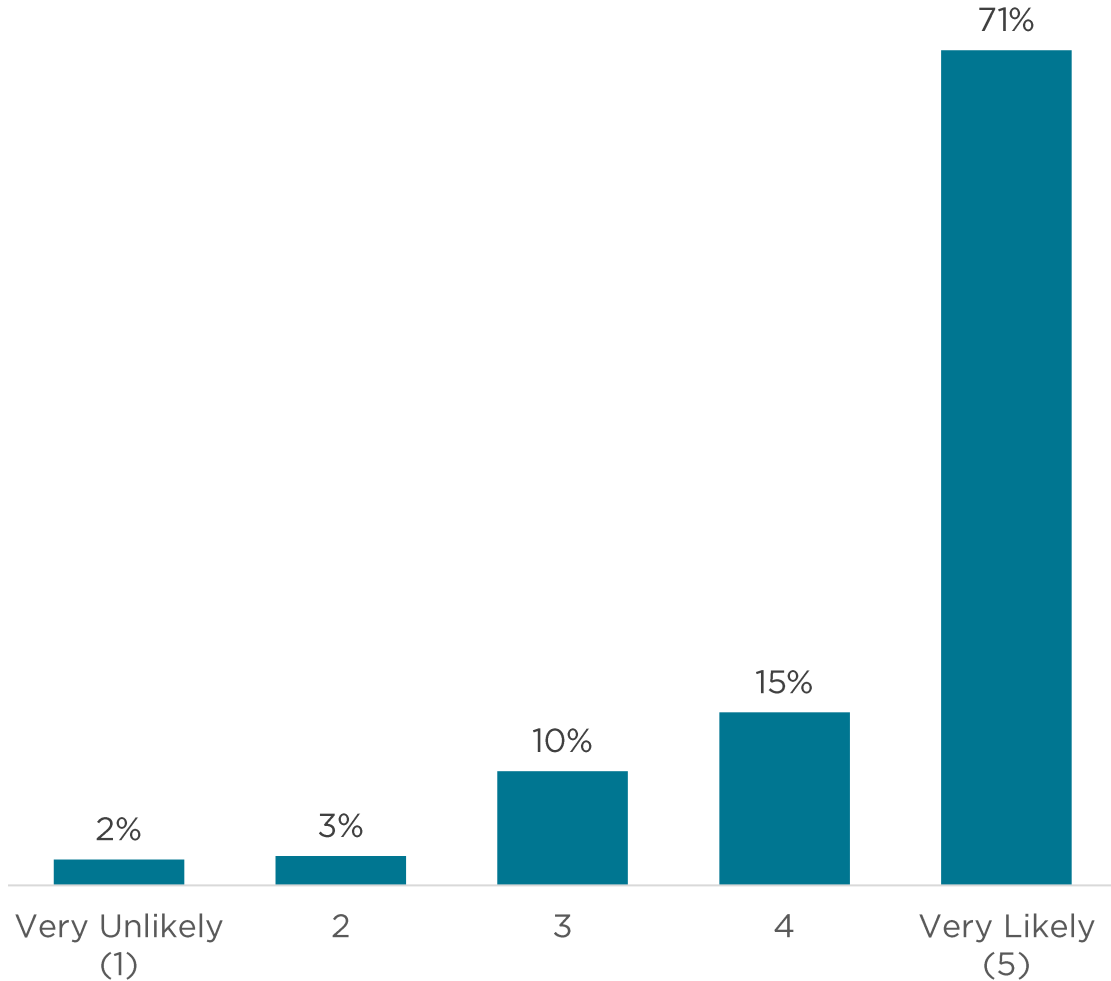
Willingness to Visit Outer Islands



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

Future Motivations

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

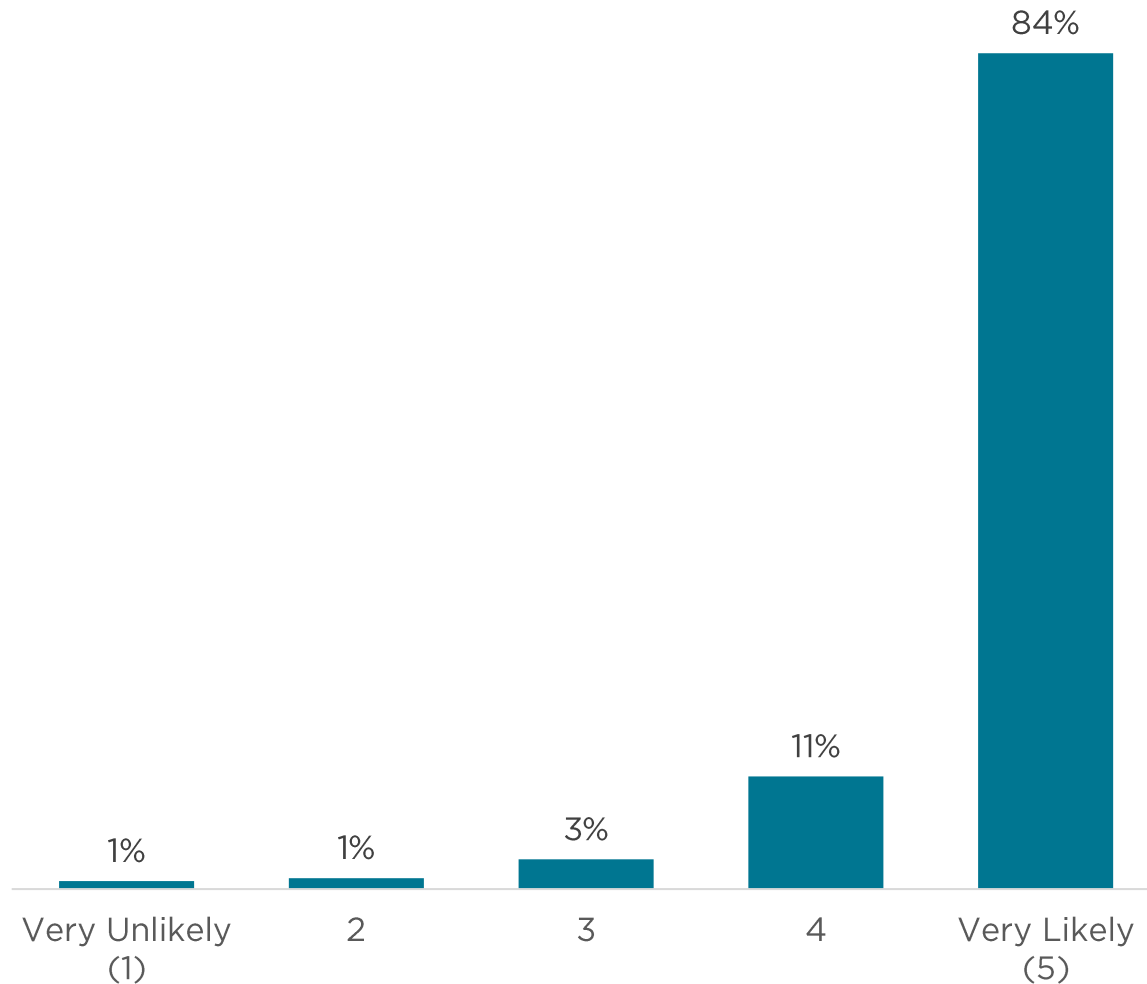


Quotes: Reasons to not return

- Accommodation too expensive, no hire car to get around for the first week. Too expensive to go to other islands. Would probably try a different country.
- It feels like an echo chamber. With no one allowed to live there that isn't a native, there's no new thoughts or money coming in. I like and value diversity and I didn't feel like they valued the fact that I spent thousands of dollars and 20 hours on planes to get there.
- Dangerous dogs and buses not stopping at night at some stations and just passing you even you put the hand up.
- I feel that the overall quality is low. Comfort in accommodation—its facilities, rooms, and food—is very important to me when traveling. However, the prices are far too high for what the properties actually offer. The facilities are not impressive, the staff are not well-trained, and the hotel breakfasts are extremely basic. I only became a repeat visitor because the ocean was beautiful. This time, I visited Aitutaki, which has a strong reputation, and yes, the sea is indeed beautiful. But beautiful beaches exist elsewhere too, not only in the Cook Islands. Overall, I do not feel motivated to pay higher prices for a holiday with low-quality accommodation and services, just because the sea is beautiful.
- Locals without exception all very unfriendly, unwelcoming and clearly resent tourists. Local bus driver (young man with earring and trendy haircut) RUINED my holiday by deliberately jerking the bus when I went to ask him to stop at our villas. I lost my balance and to stop myself from falling out of bus I had no choice but to grab his arm to steady myself at which he recoiled and shouted 'don't touch me it's rude to touch people as if I'd chosen to touch him!!! He then publicly humiliated me by shouting as I walked back to my seat that I could just have shouted that instruction from my seat! How was I supposed to know? So rude. Upset me and really put me off the whole holiday.
- Our experience was ruined by a mistake by the resort, and I was made to feel it was my fault; I was ready to just leave it was so bad
- Since I've already gone twice within 2 years.

Future Motivations

Q: How likely would you recommend the Cook Islands?



Quotes: Reasons to not recommend

- *Terrible accommodation, rude unfriendly staff, need to have booked activities months prior to visit, exorbitant prices. There are many places that cost less and give way better service.*
- *The cost of accommodation was very high, and the standard was not worth the money spent. The cost of food is also quite high. It would be a place I think I would go again if I was a bit older, but probably not while I am still quite young.*
- *It's run down, people are rude and things are overpriced. Way too many foreign people running places.*
- *Immigration treatment of tourists, dysfunctional immigration office and rude indifferent staff*
- *I don't want to make it sound like the Cook Islands are a fantastic place and tell people that when it is not anymore. 7 years ago, was my first visit to Cook Islands and I would have told everyone they should visit, but not anymore.*
- *Cook Islands don't sufficiently prioritize domestic transportation. Until a modern world approach is adopted, Cook Islands will always remain an underdeveloped tourism destination.*
- *If the person I'm talking to is super religious, then I would recommend it but no one I know is.*
- *Overpriced. We will recommend other neighboring countries and get a lot more for the same price.*
- *It's not my type of holiday and not culturally rich.*
- *Unfriendly locals and to me it was an obvious sort of a couple of successful businessmen and largely left the native locals out.*
- *Not worth the cost given the limited availability of activities.*

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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 Research Officer, Mr. Josese Ragigia jragigia@spto.org. SPTO's Head Office is located at Level 3, FNPF Place, 343-359, Victoria Parade, Private Mailbag, Suva.