

Cook Islands Community Attitudes Towards Tourism (Summary Version)

FEBRUARY 2021



Introduction

- The *Cook Islands Community Attitudes Towards Tourism Survey* explores the relationships between community and tourism from a number of perspectives including: economic, cultural, environmental and in terms of general quality of life.
- COVID-19 related questions were inserted into this round of the survey to get a better understanding of the pandemic impact and community responses.
- Online data collection was run with the support of Cook Islands Tourism and Vodafone. The survey ran from 18 December 2020 to 31 January 2021. 1,038 responses were collected. Based on the total population aged over 15 of 13,138 (2016 census) the sample size is estimated to be approximately 8% (NB for ethical reasons the survey only targeted those aged 18 and over).
- The analysis focuses on the following data breakdowns: (1) Cook Island Maori and Non-Cook Island Maori; (2) Age group; (3) Island of residence (Rarotonga and Aitutaki); and (4) employment type* (tourism sector and non-tourism sector)

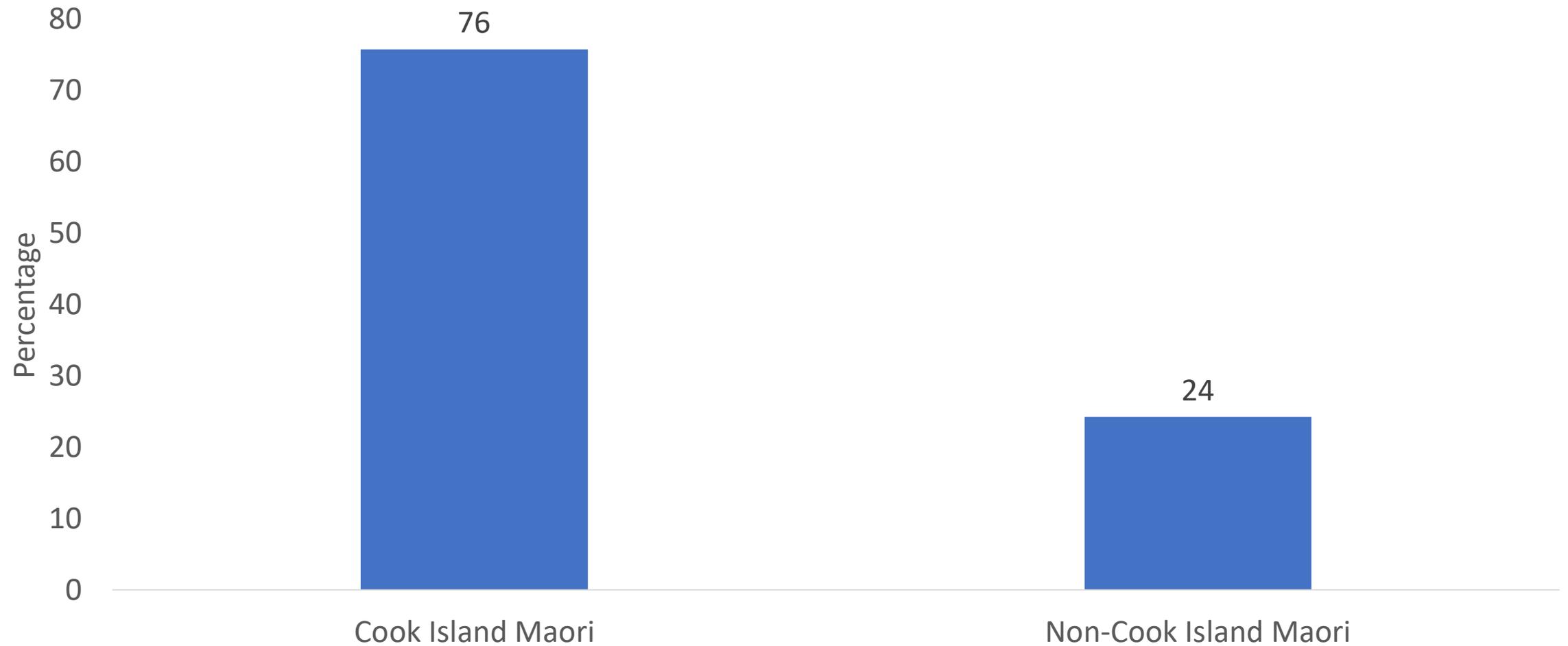
**Note: tourism and non-tourism sector are defined based on question “Do you work in and/or own a business in the tourism sector?” (Ref. slide 26) Tourism sector 41% of respondents, non-tourism 59%.*



Respondent Characteristics

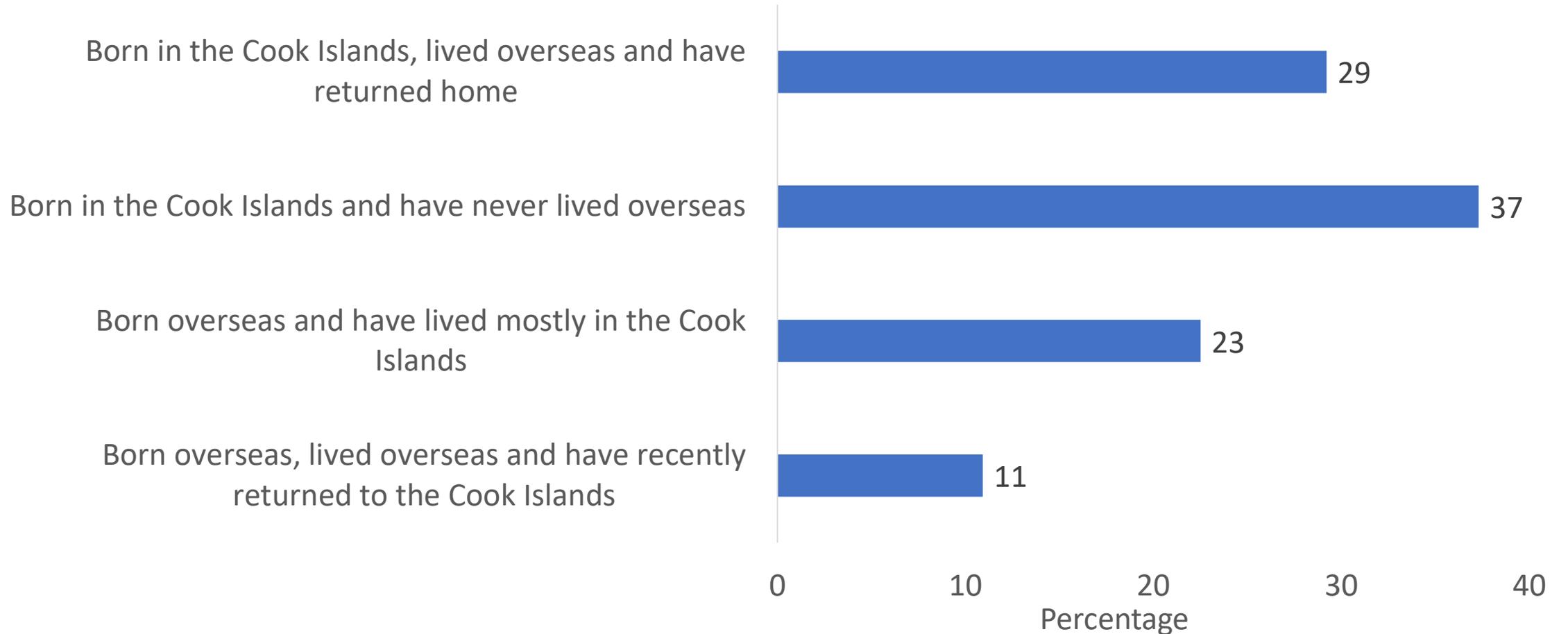


Which of the following best describes you?



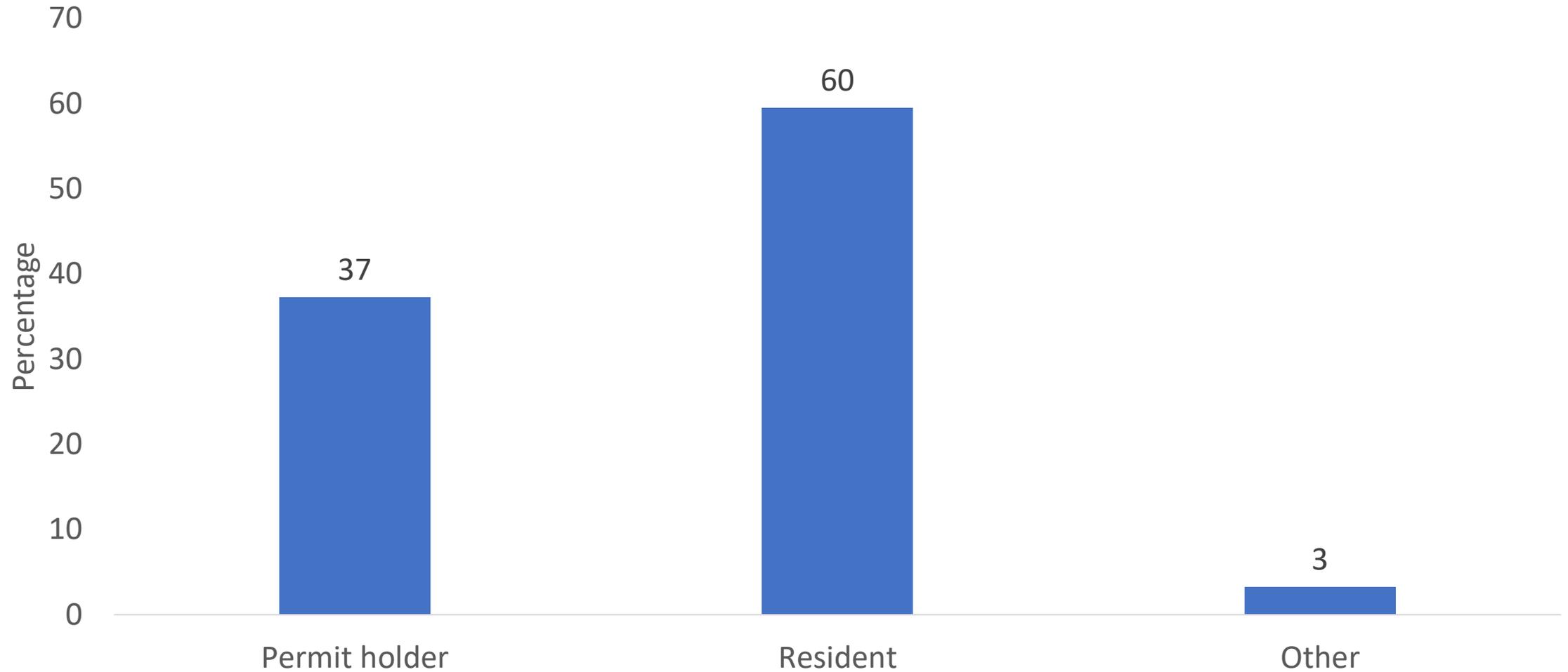
Which of the following best describes you?

Cook Island Maori

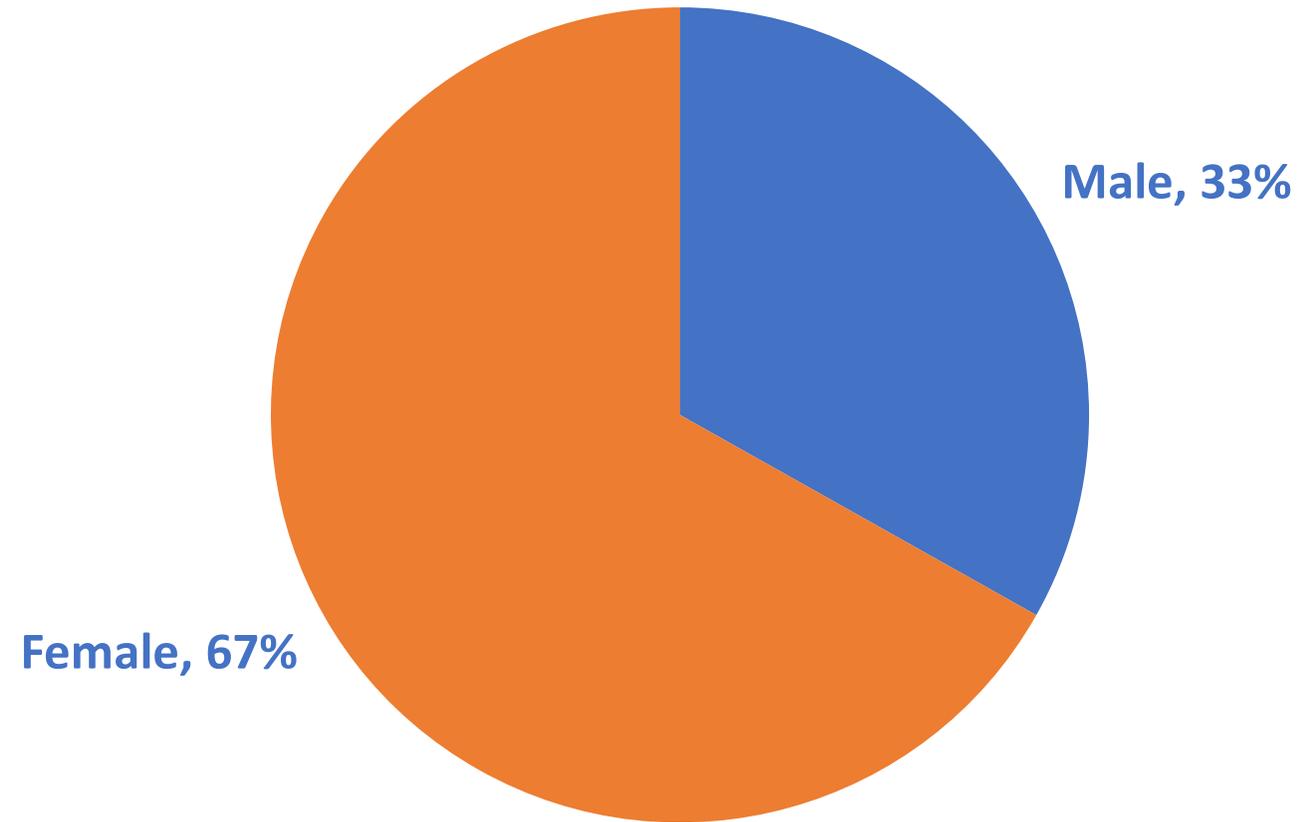


Which of the following best describes you?

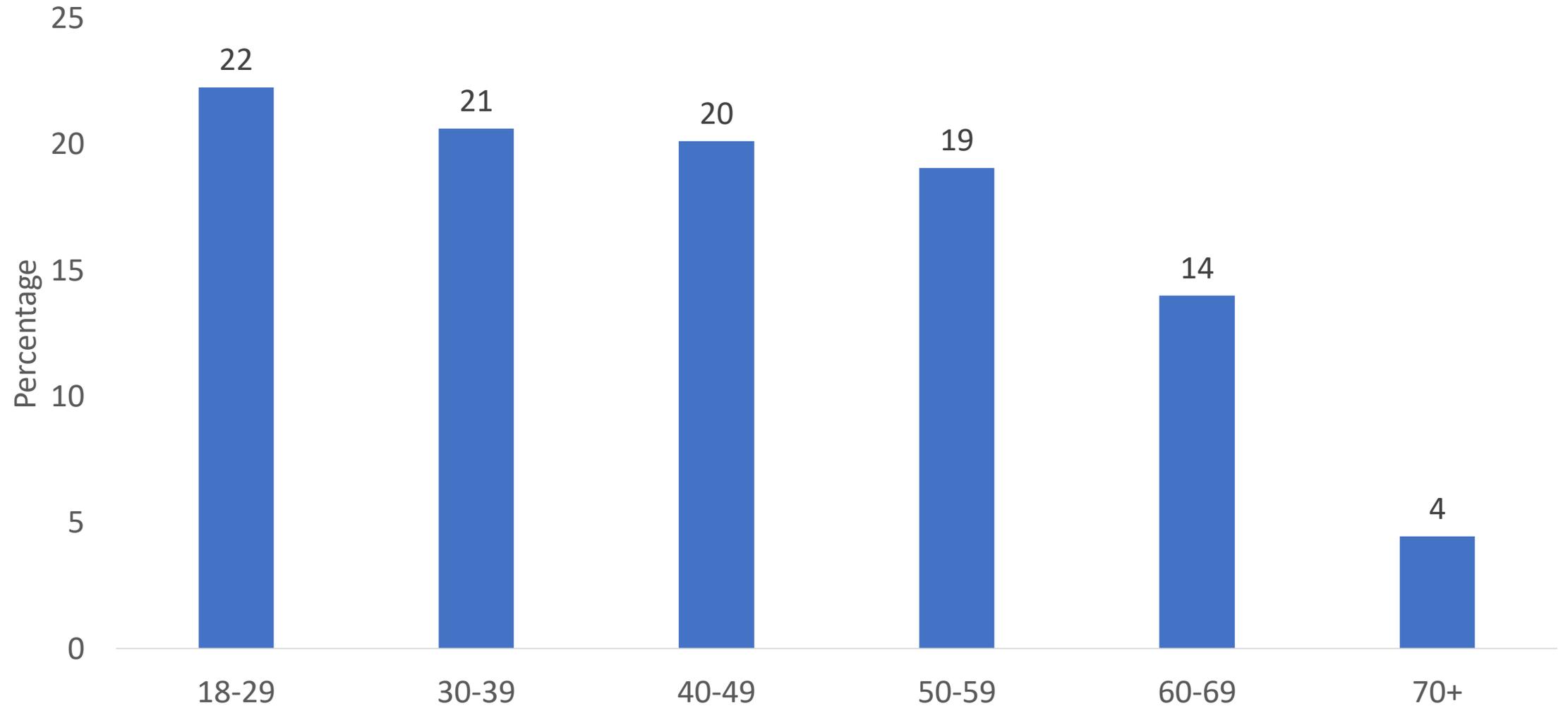
Non-Cook Island Maori



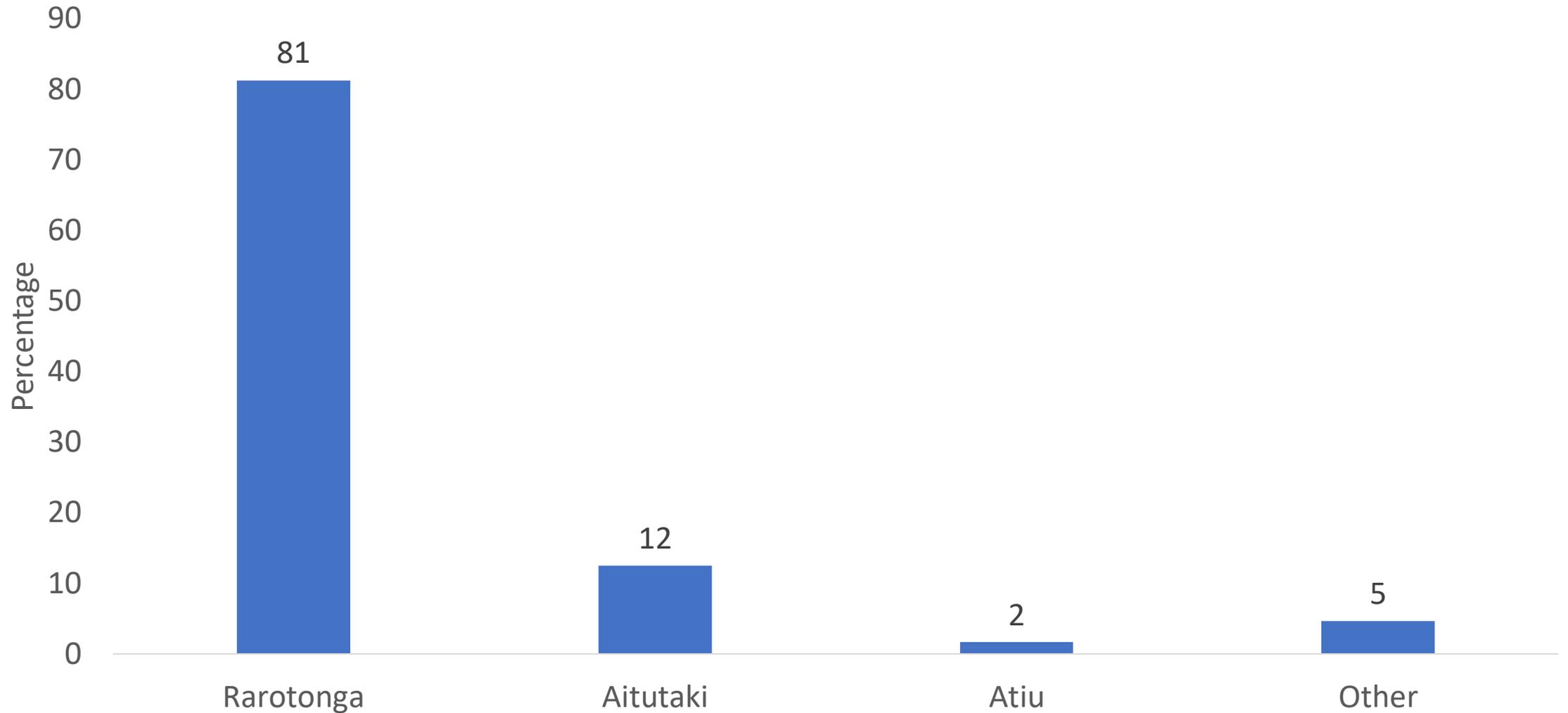
What is your gender

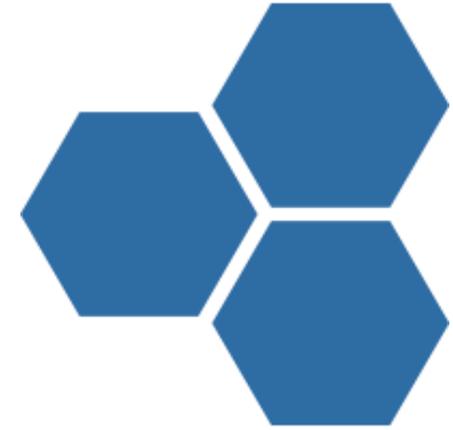


Which age group are you in?



Where do you live in the Cook Islands?

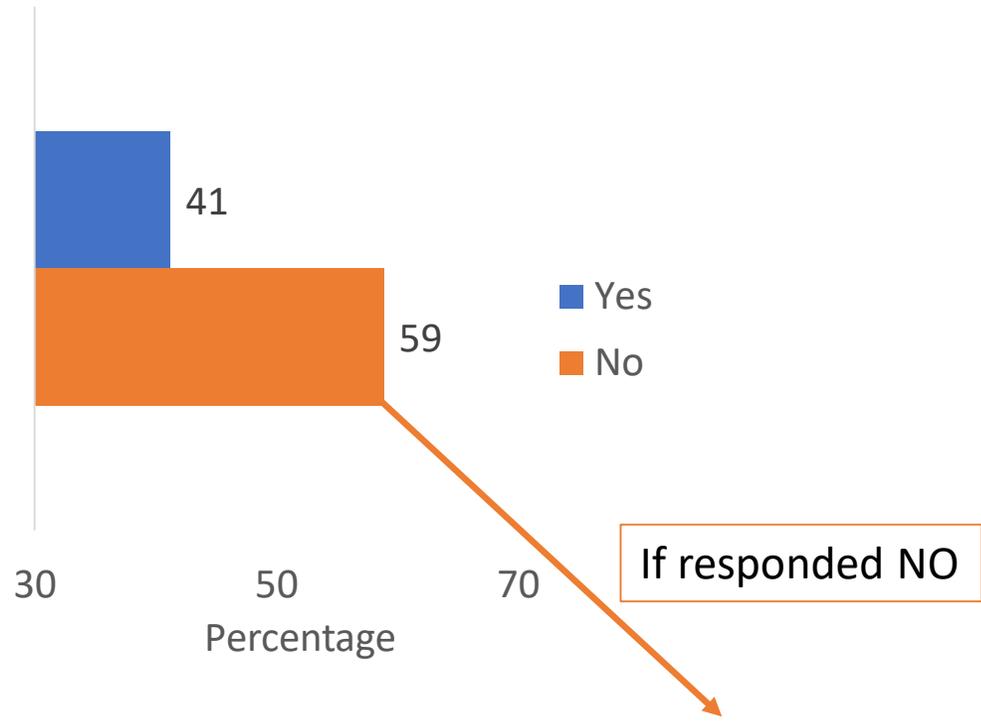




Community Linkages to Tourism

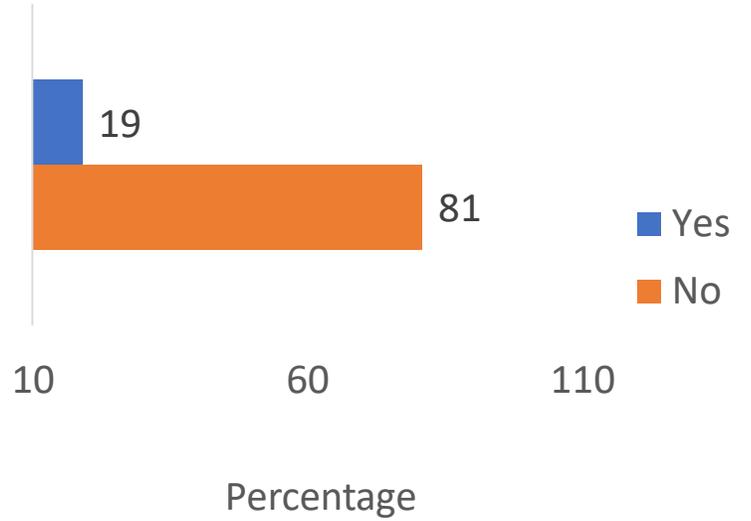


Do you work in or own a business in the tourism sector?

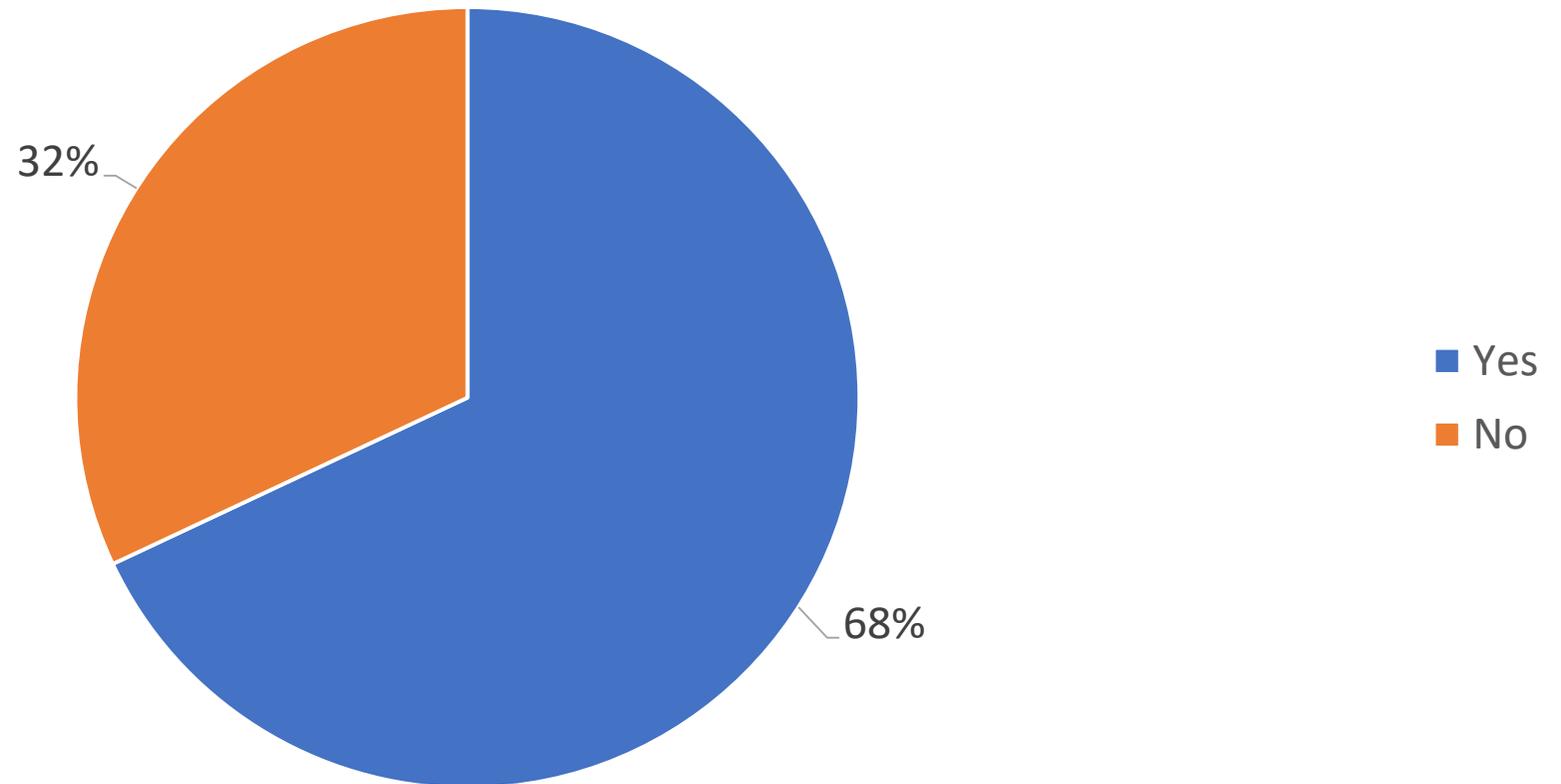


If responded NO

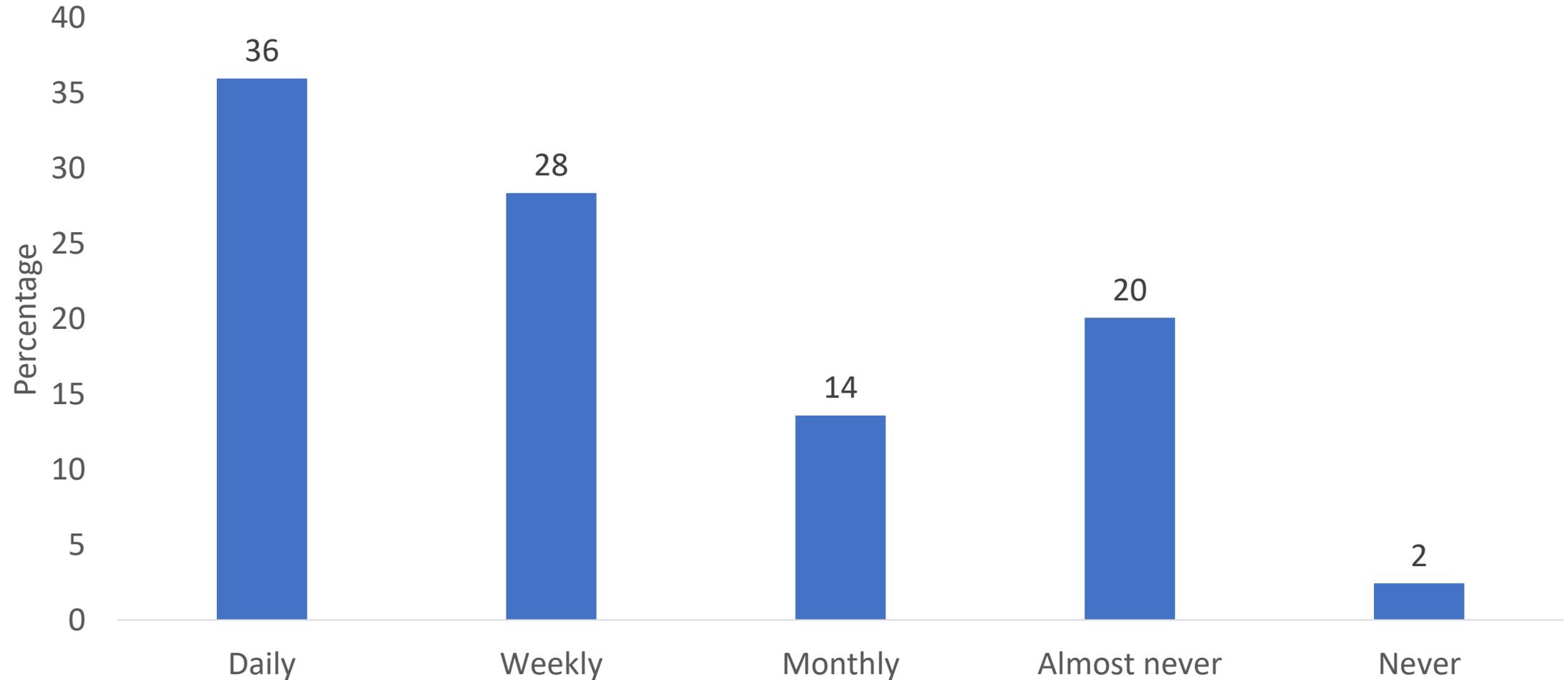
Do you get any income from tourism?

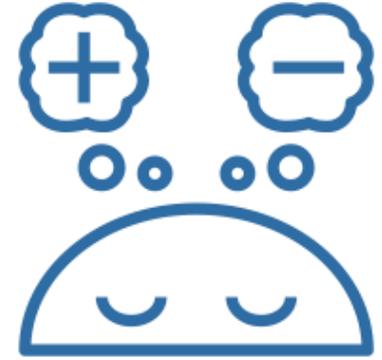


Do you have family members who work in the tourism industry?



How often do you talk with tourists?

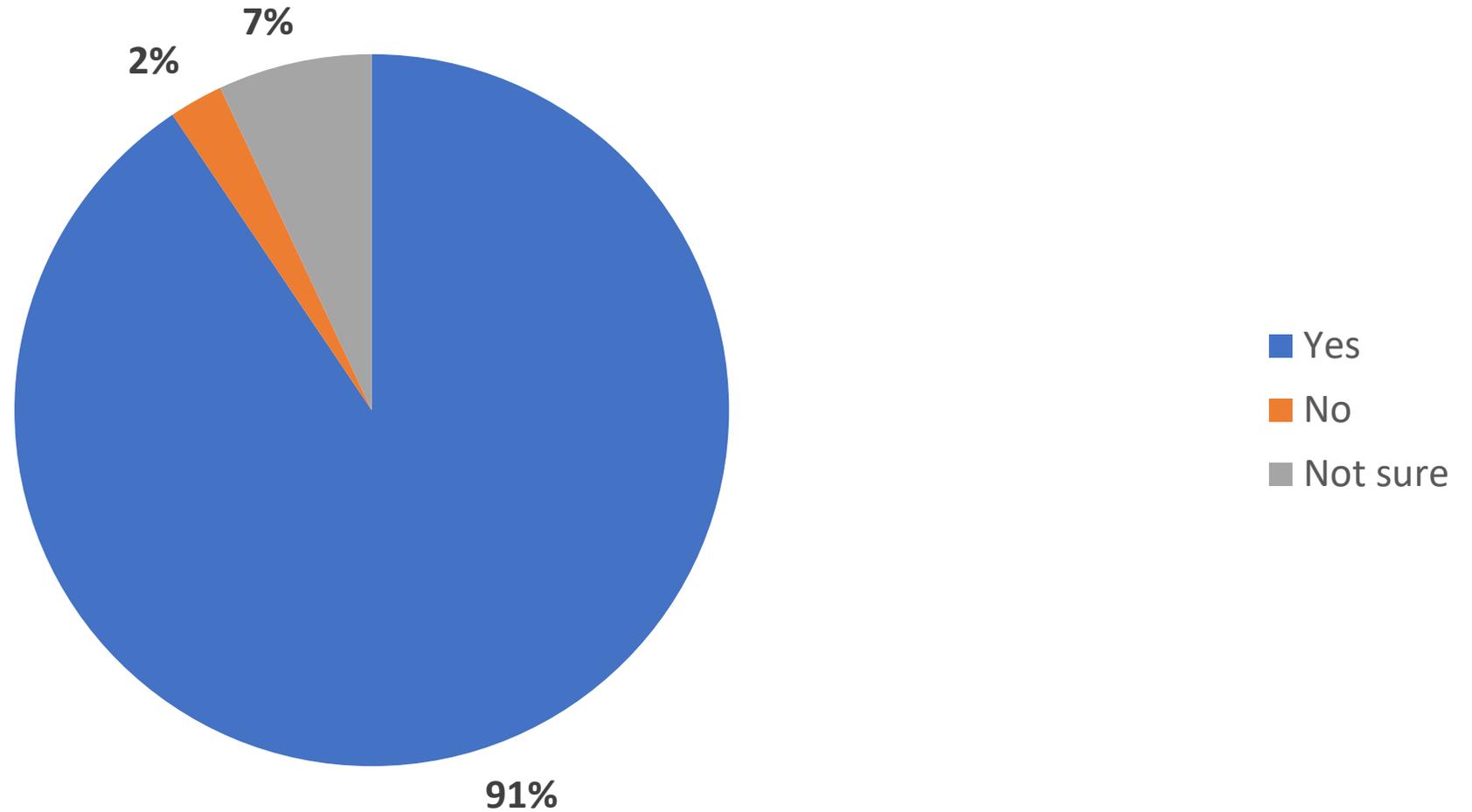




Attitudes towards Tourism

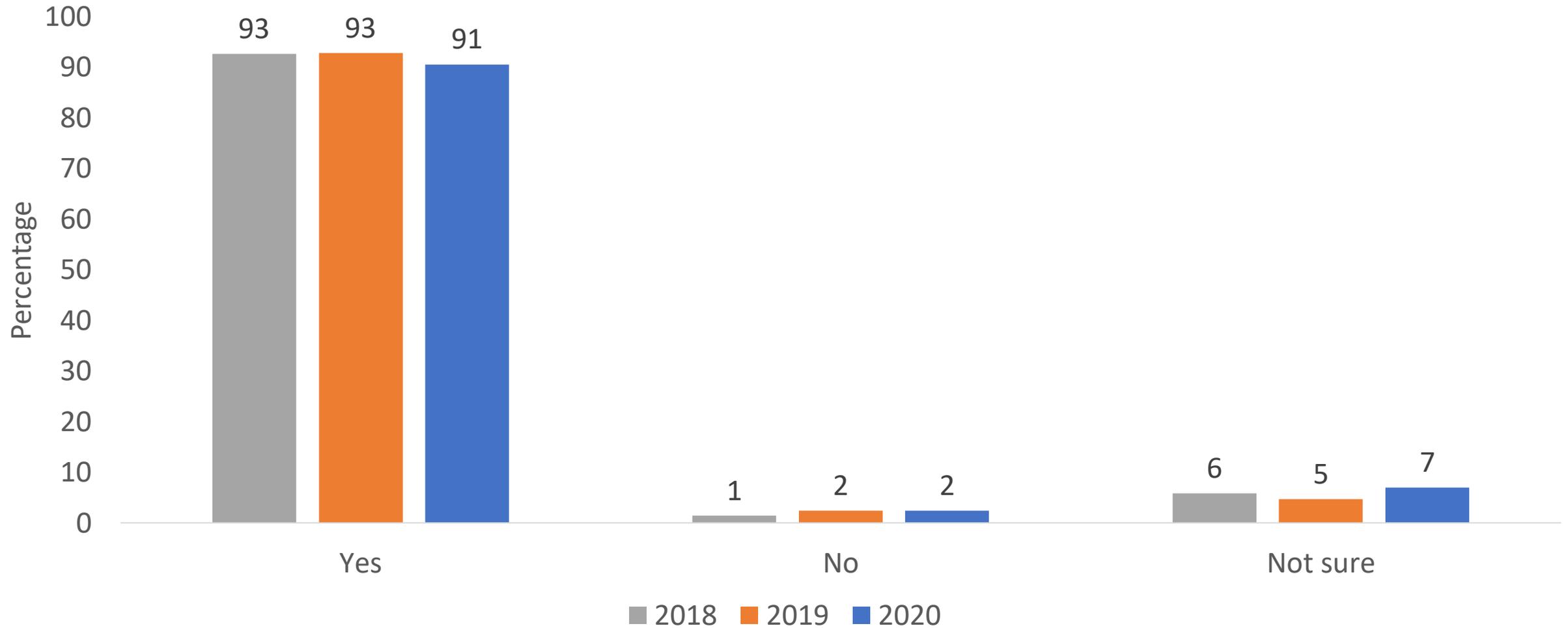


Do you think that tourism is good for the Cook Islands?

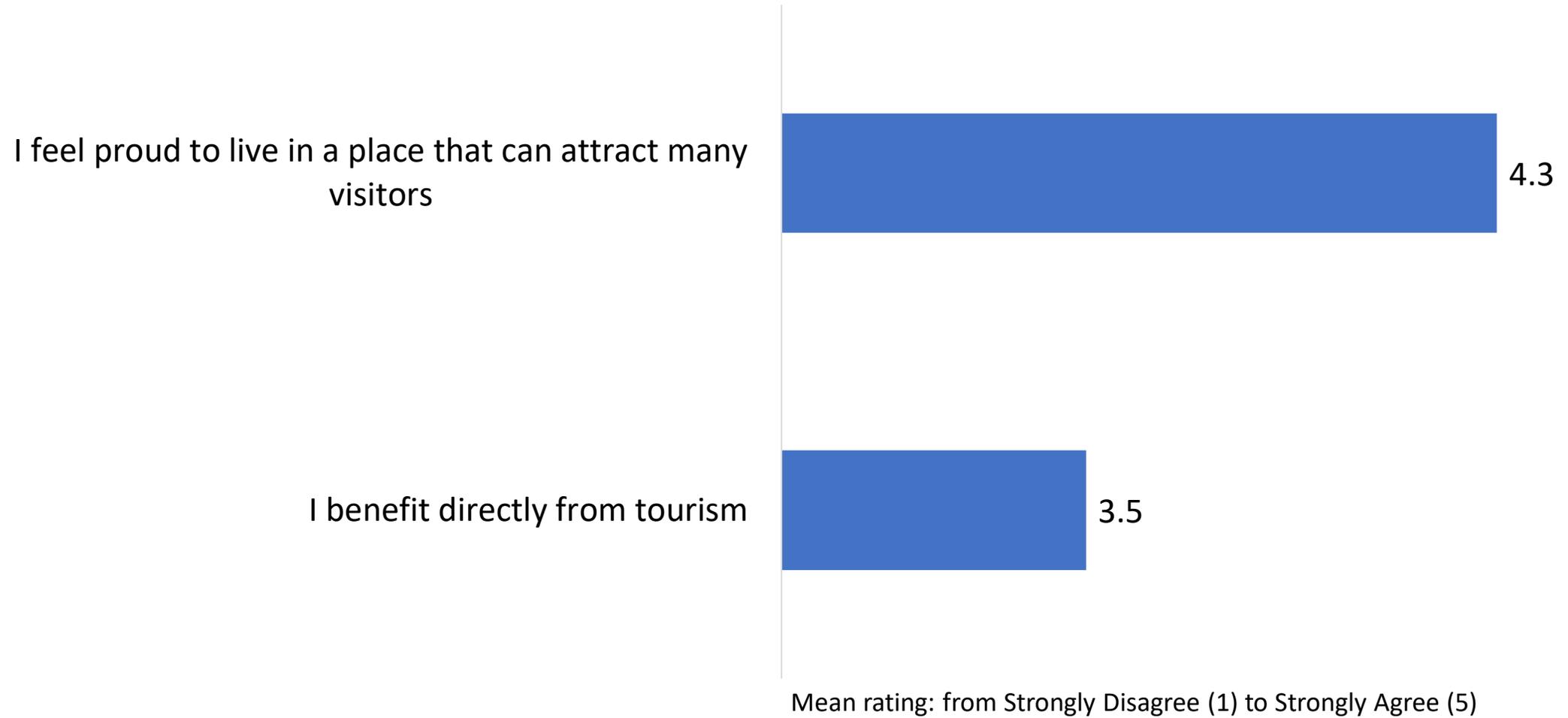


Do you think that tourism is good for the Cook Islands?

Time Series

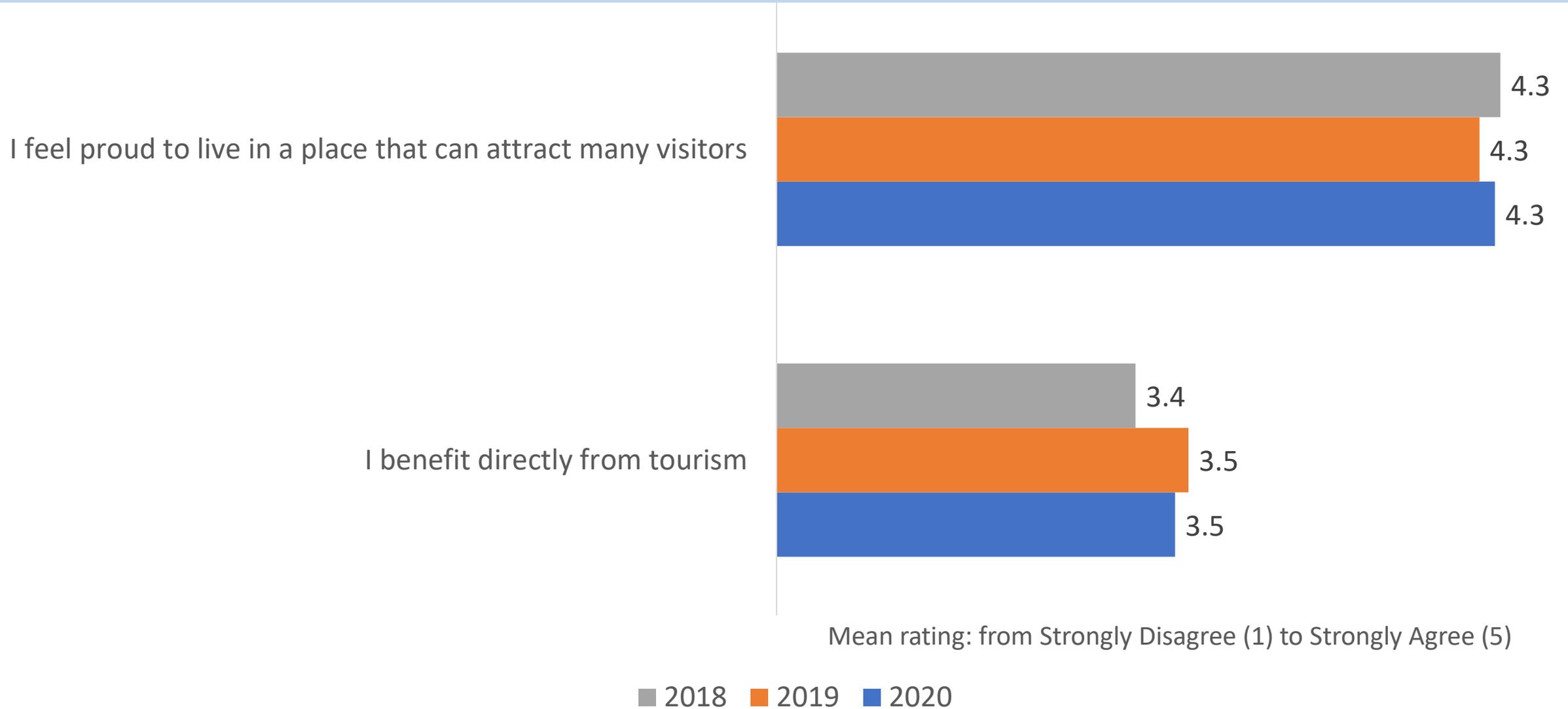


Tourism as a source of pride and direct benefit



Tourism as a source of pride and direct benefit

Time Series

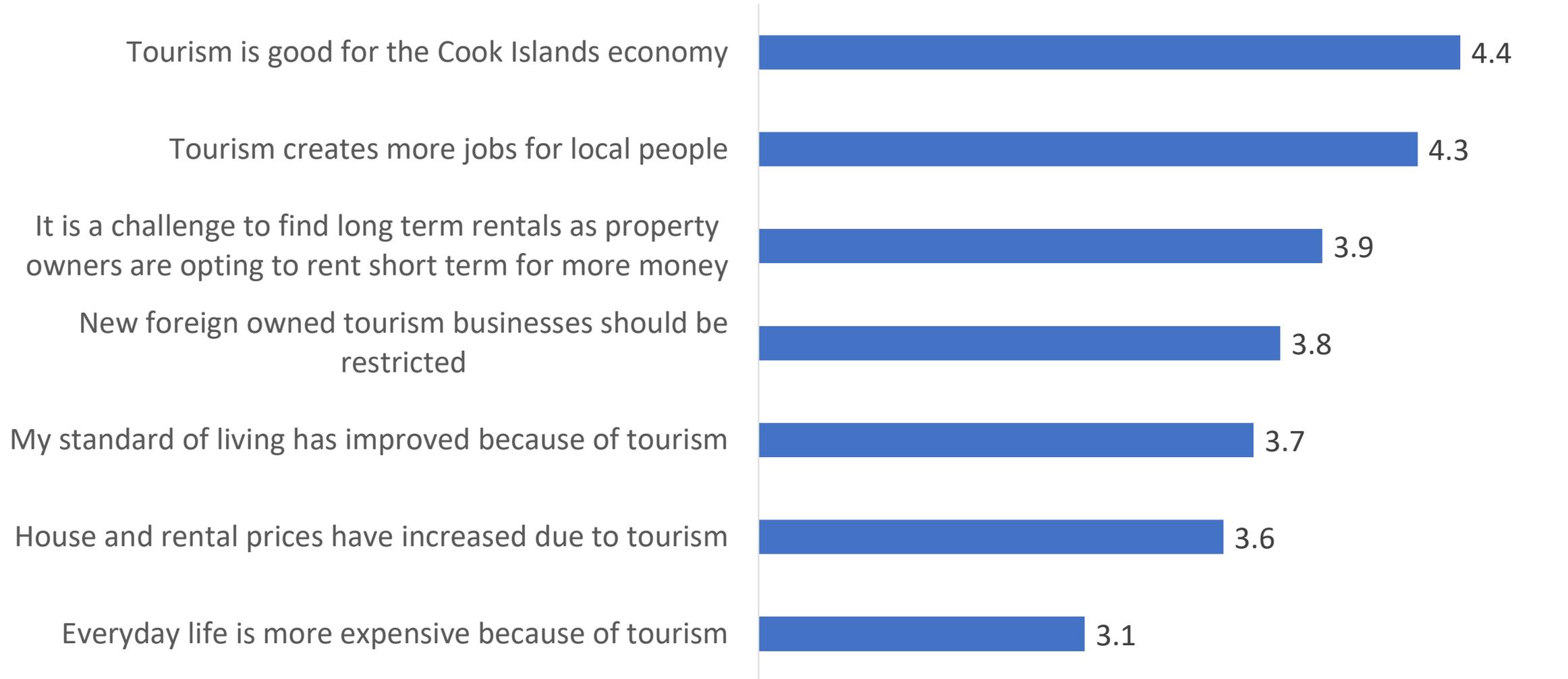




Tourism and Economic Dimensions



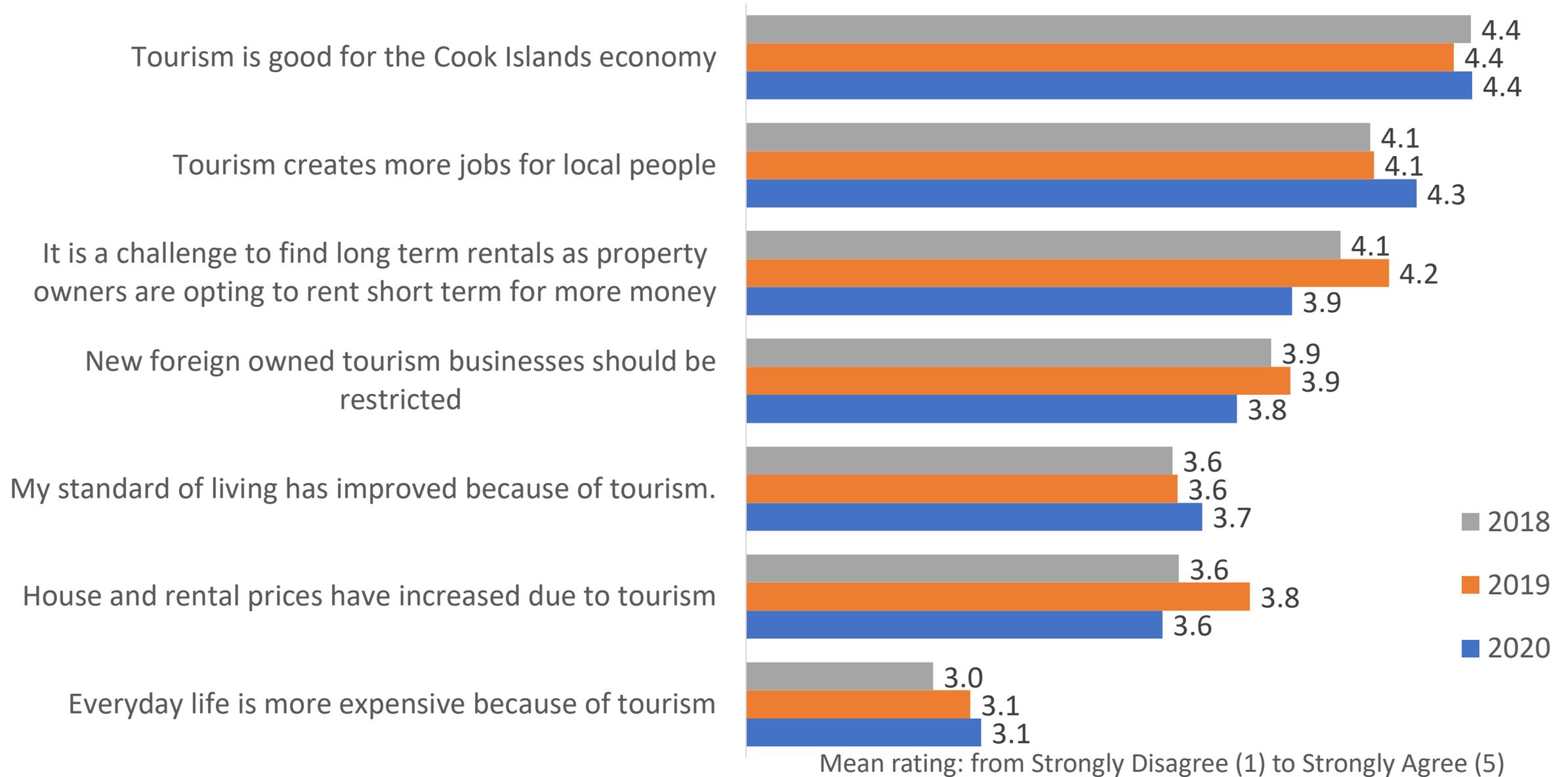
Tourism and economic dimensions



Mean rating: from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Tourism and economic dimensions

Time Series

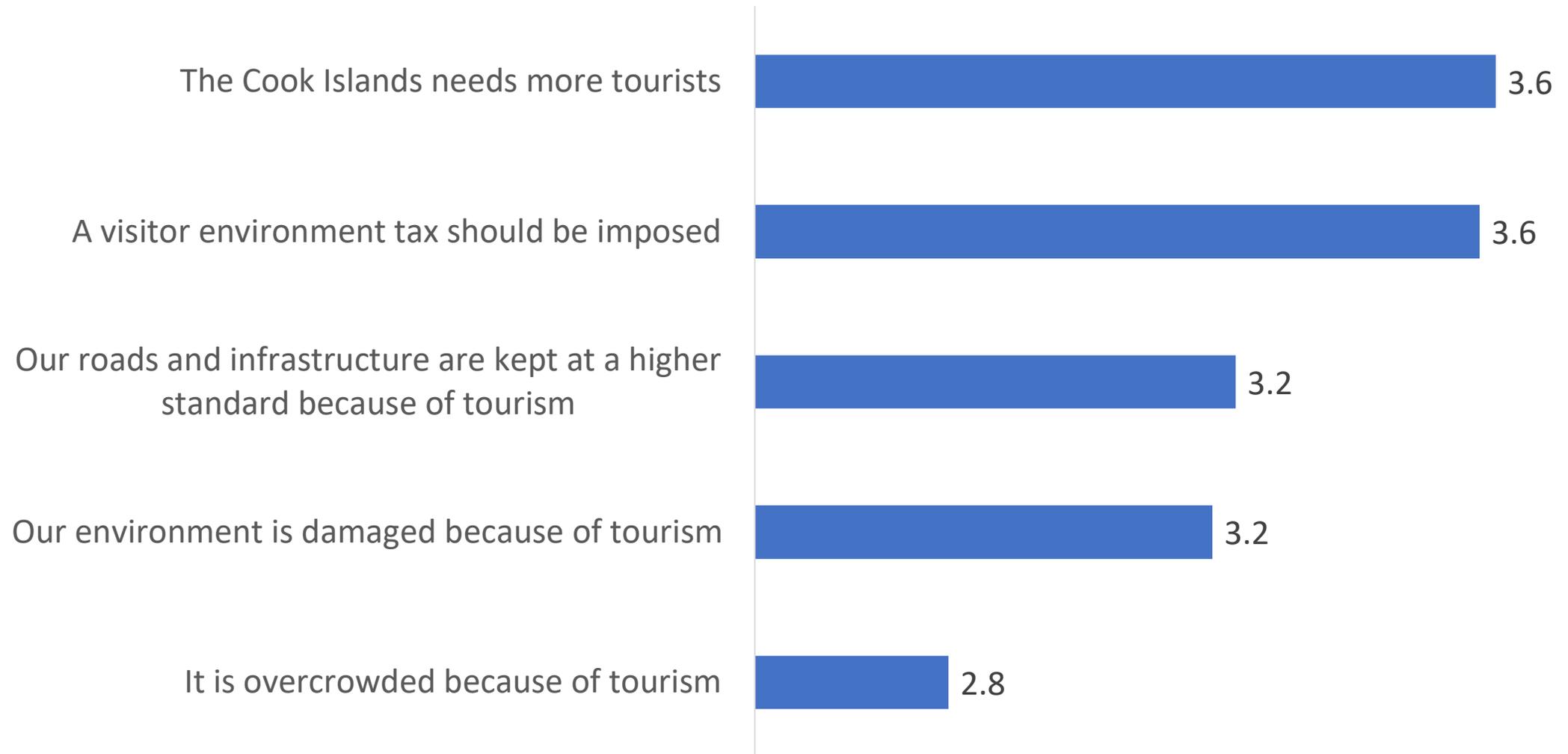




Tourism and Environmental Dimensions



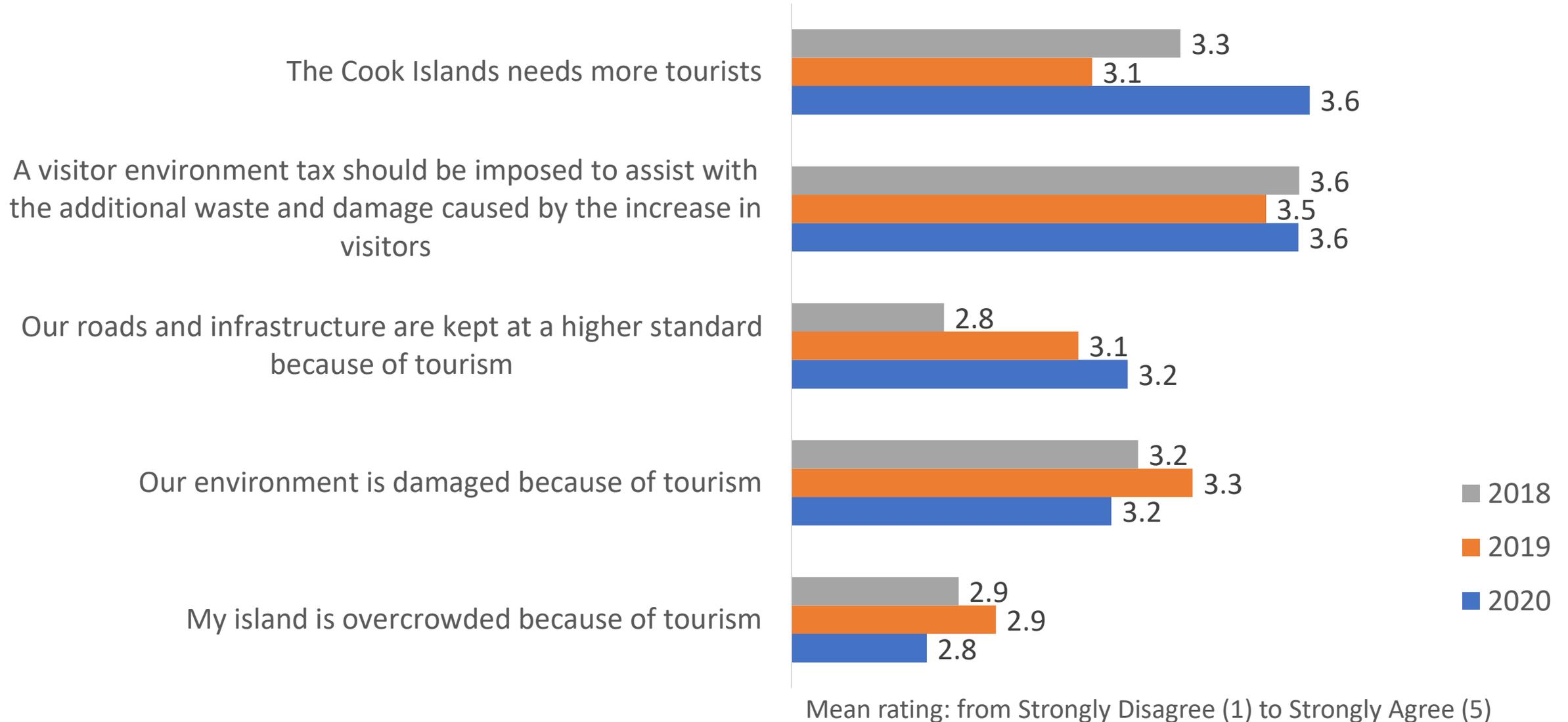
Tourism and environmental dimensions



Mean rating: from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Tourism and environmental dimensions

Time Series





Tourism and Cultural Dimensions



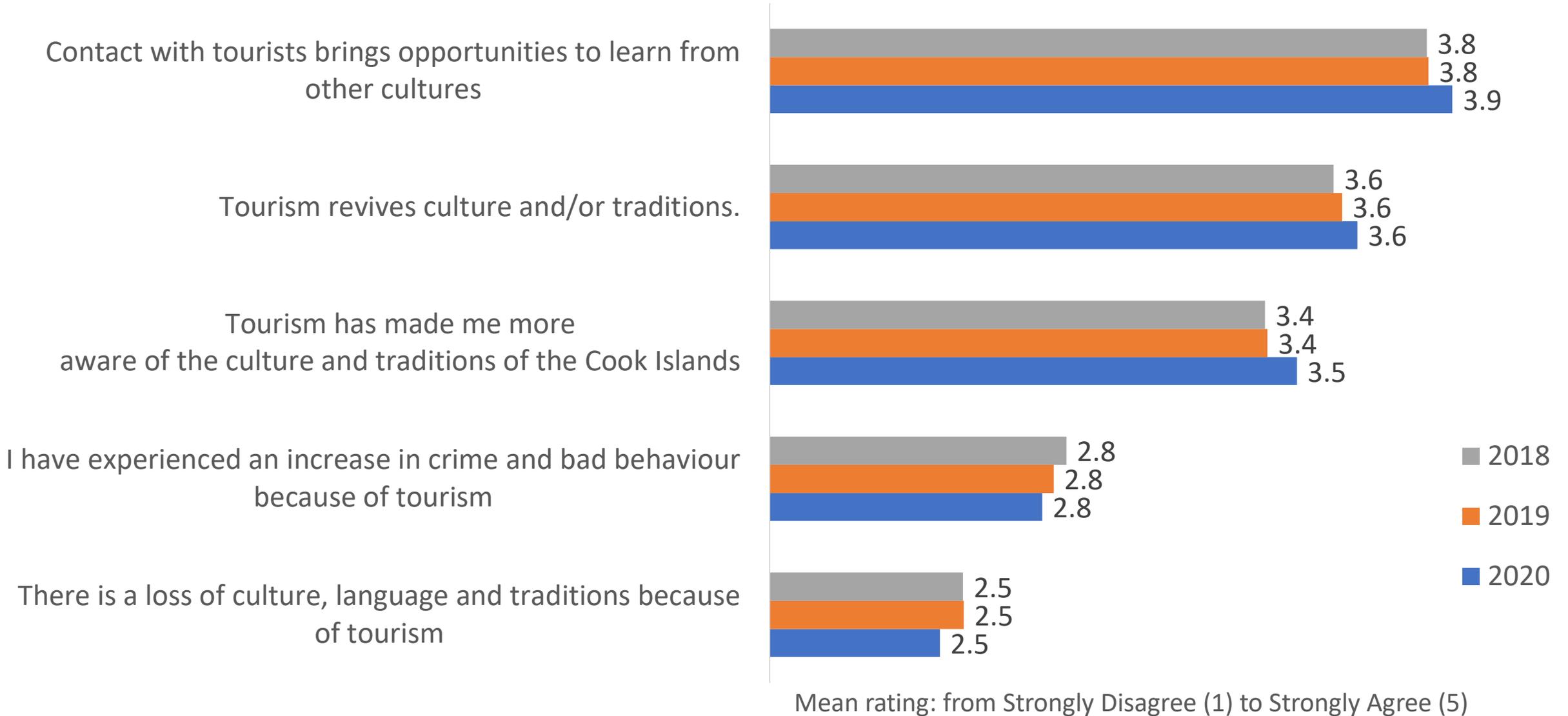
Tourism and cultural dimensions



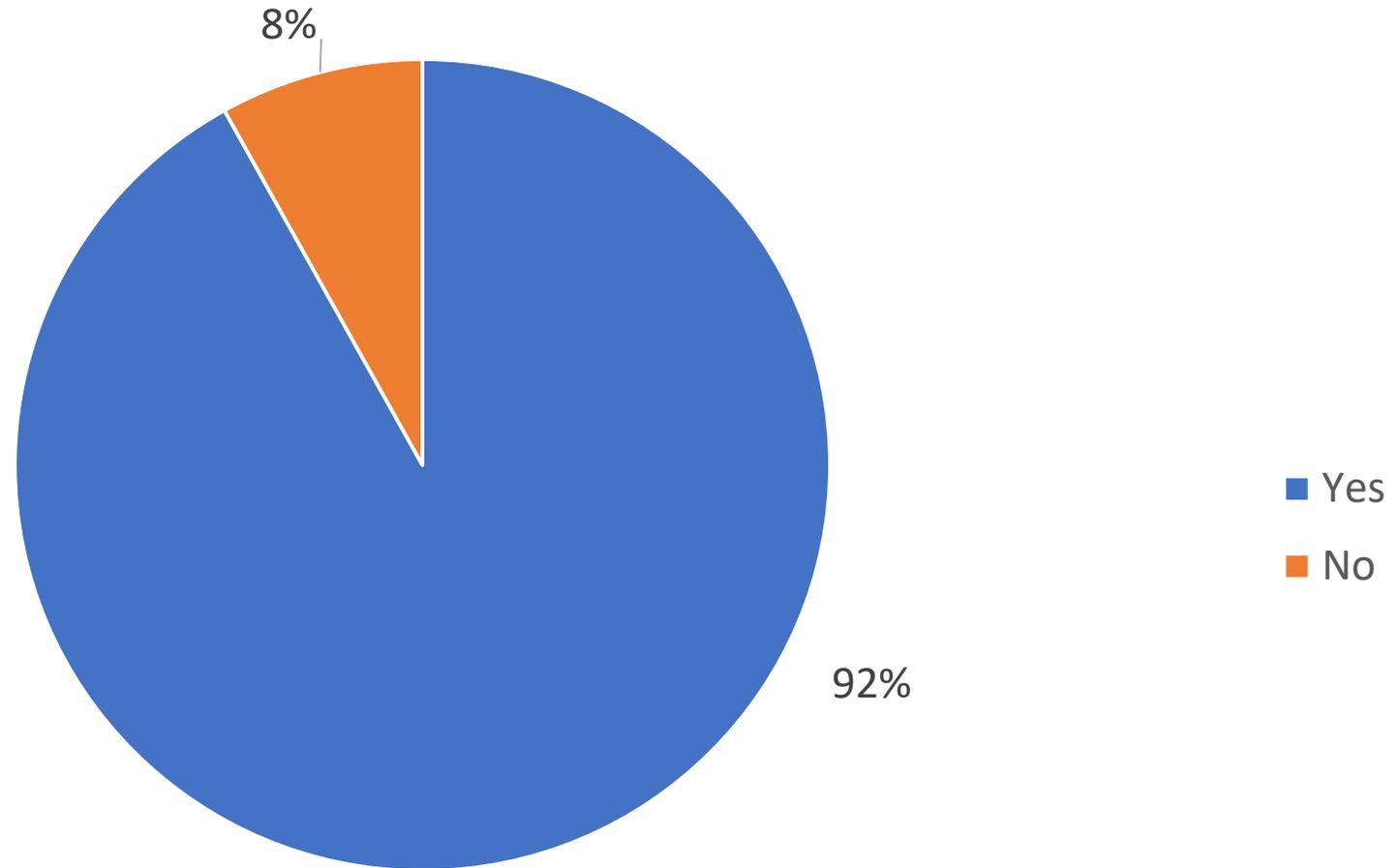
Mean rating: from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Tourism and culture dimensions

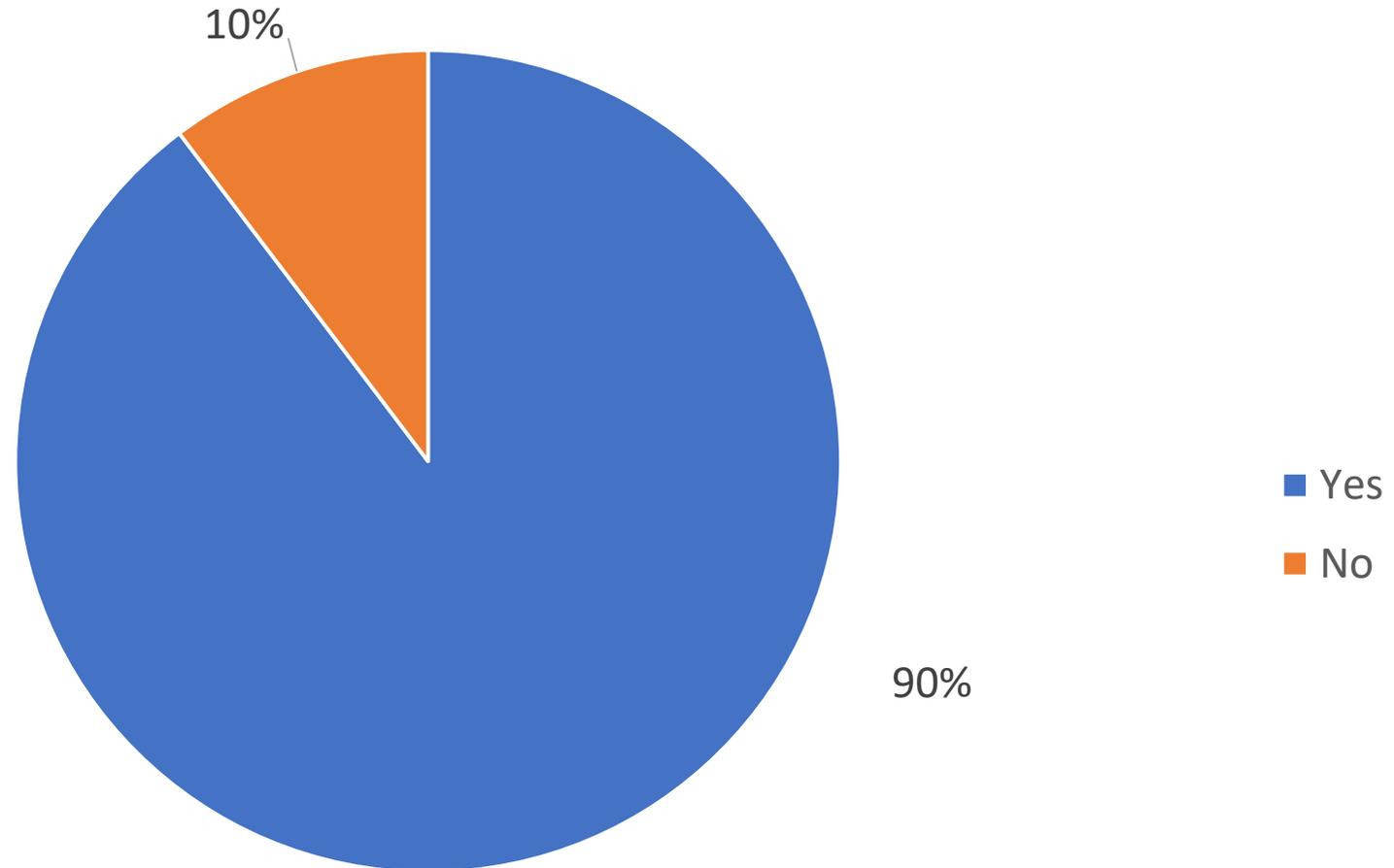
Time Series



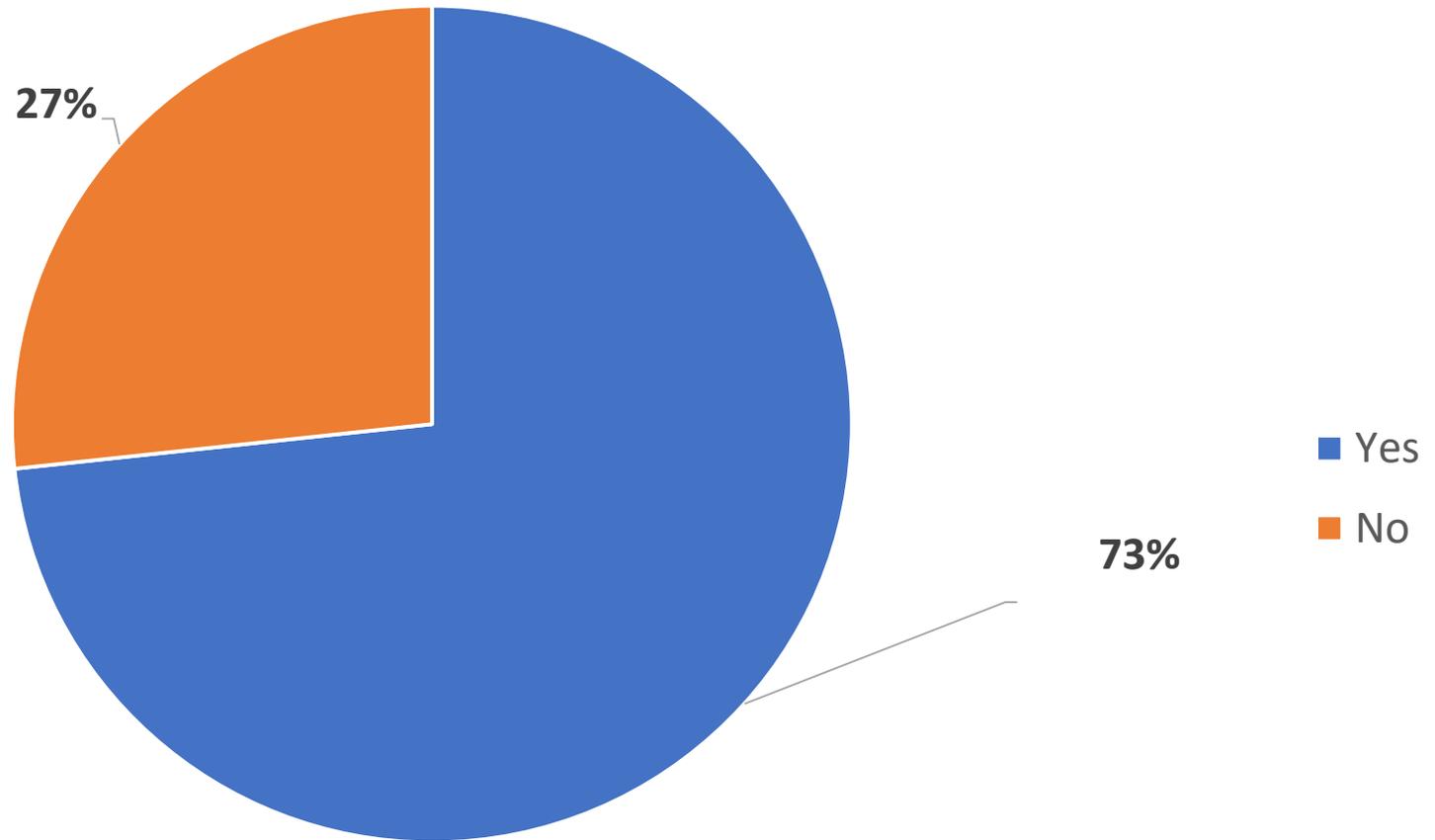
I would like to share my culture and values with tourists



I am aware of the Kia Orana Values programme.

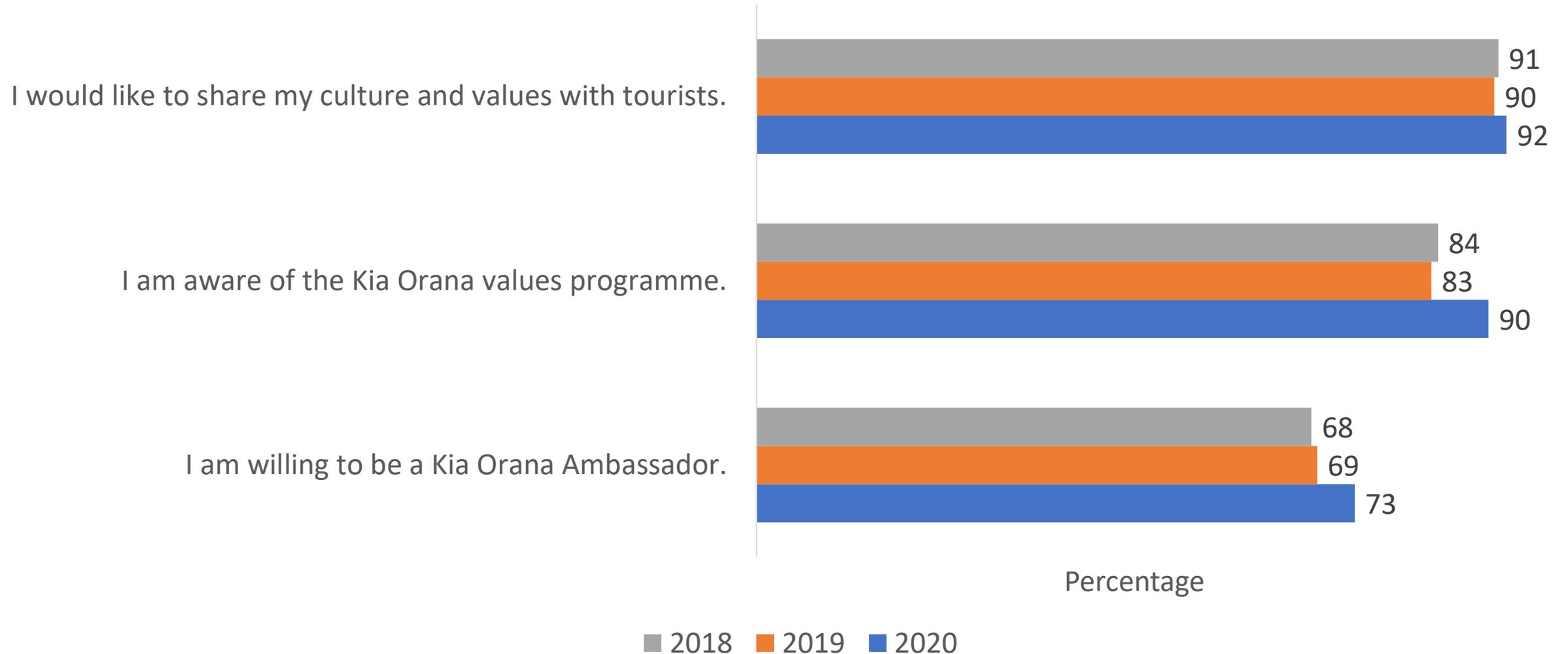


I am willing to be a Kia Orana Ambassador



“Yes” to the following questions

Time Series

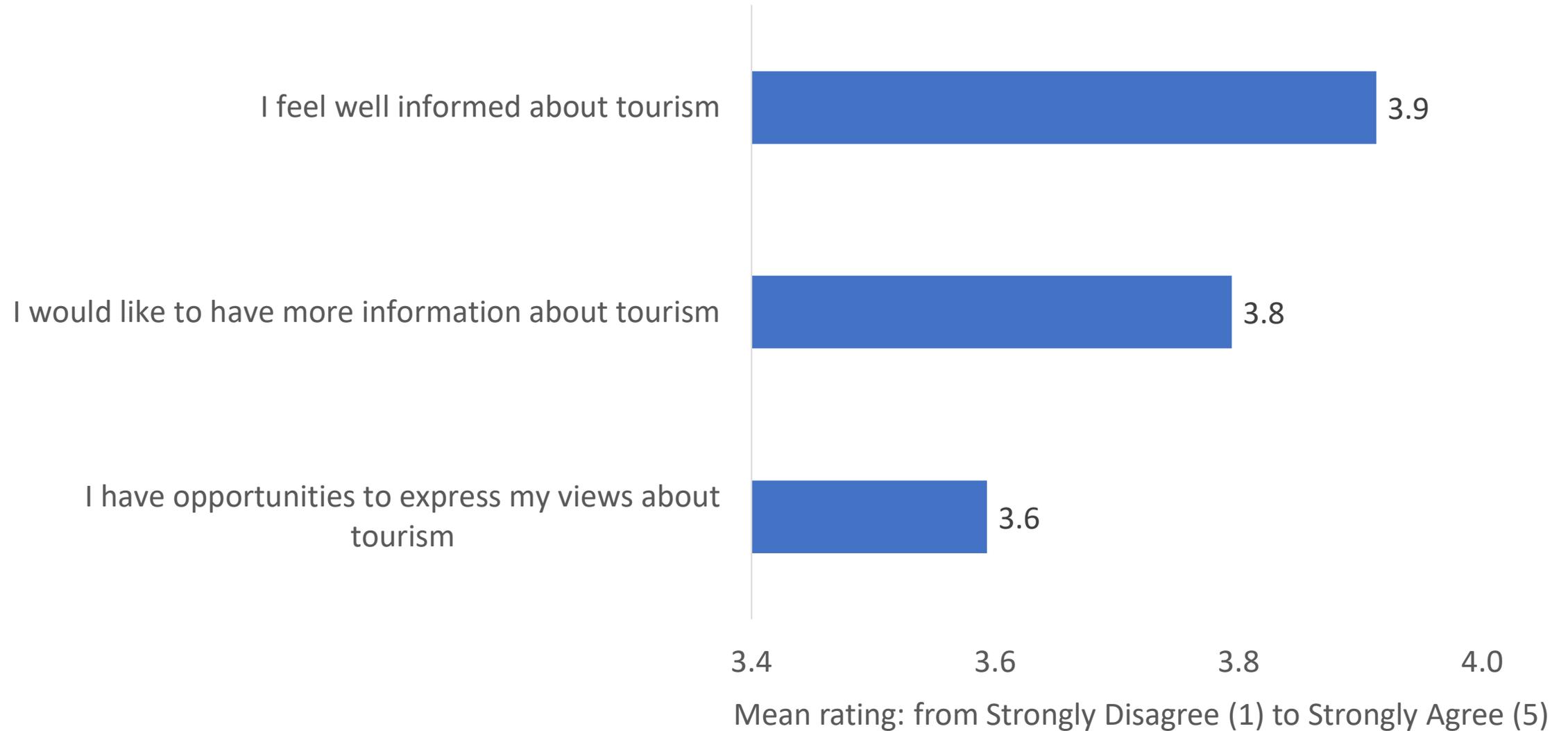




Tourism and Information Access

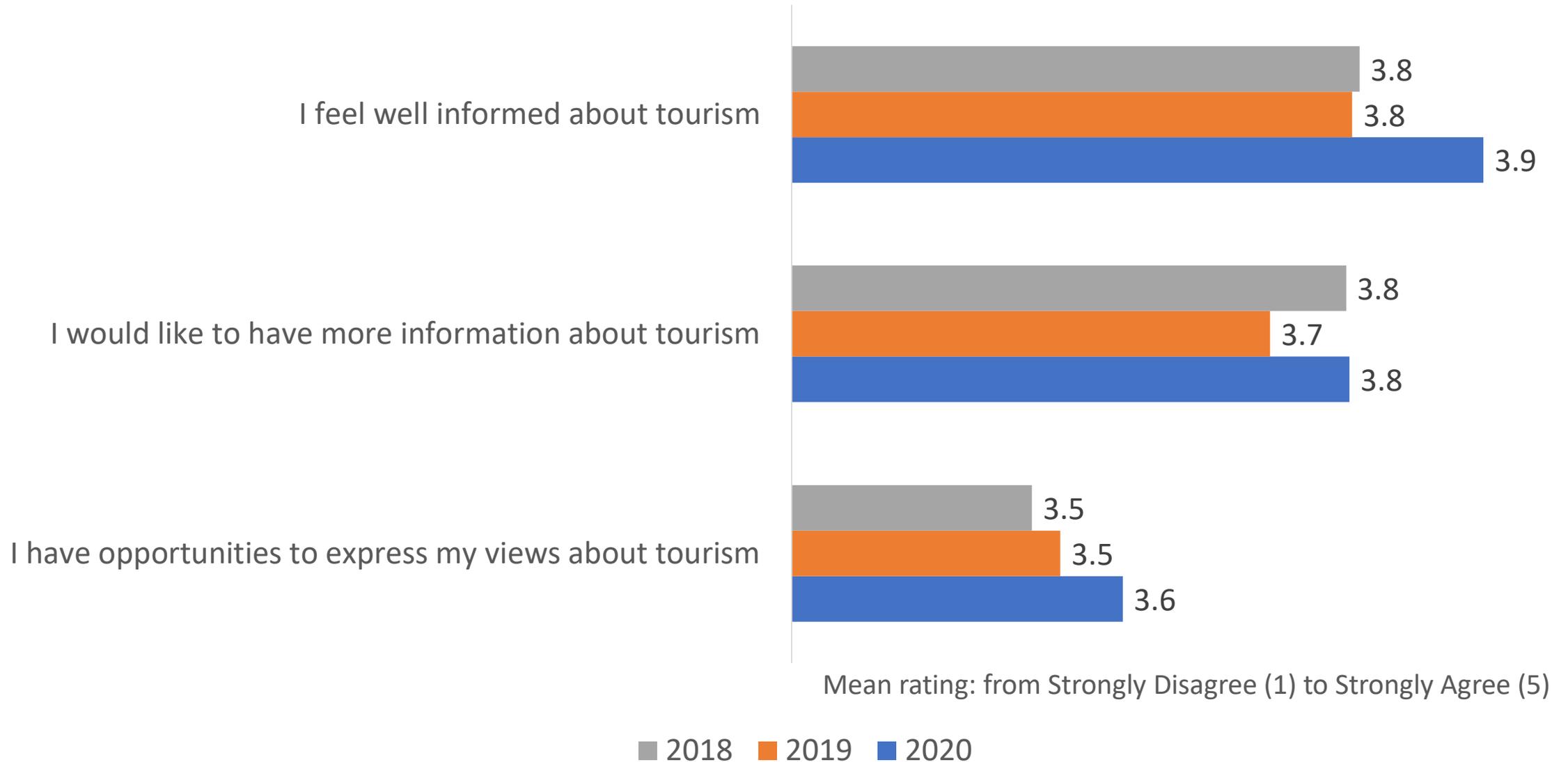


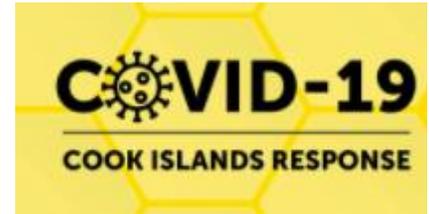
Tourism and information access



Tourism and information access

Time Series

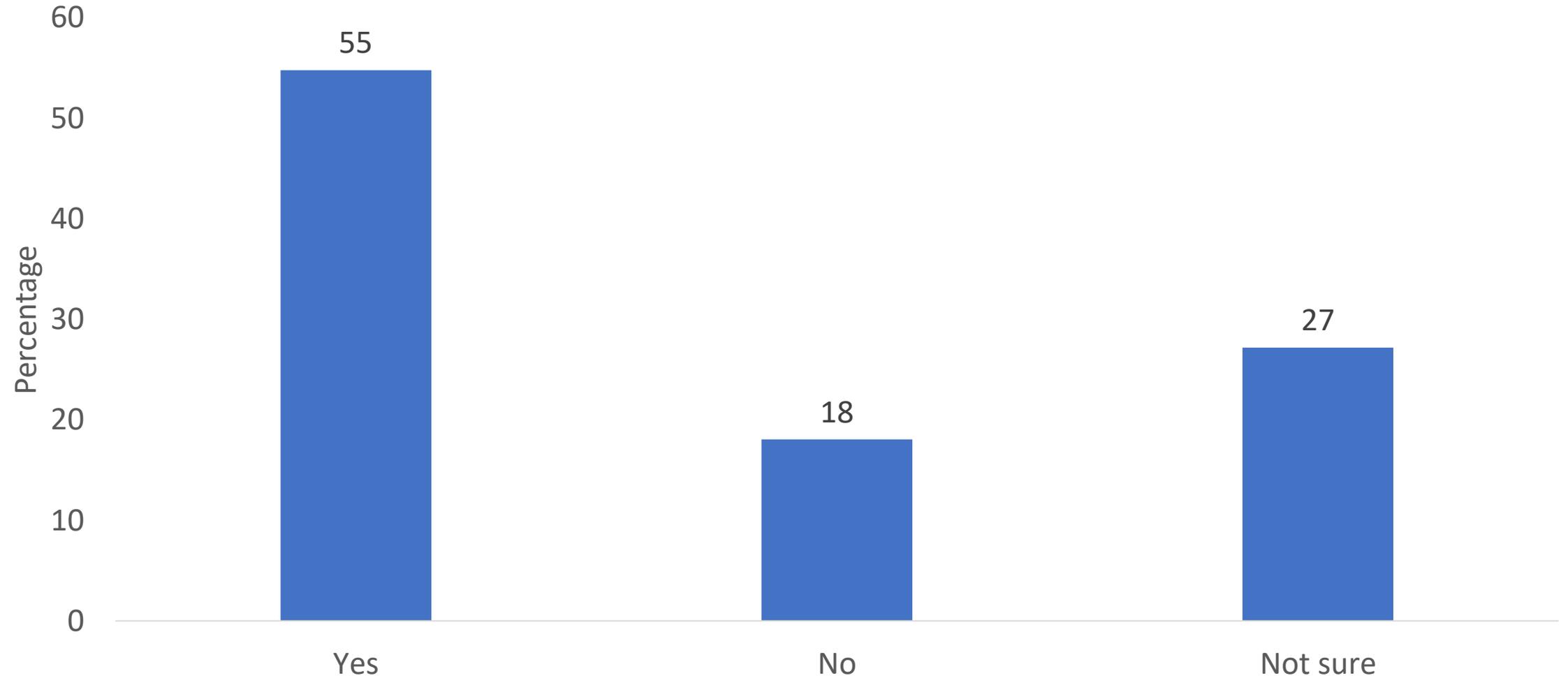




COVID-19 Responses



Do you think tourists should be allowed back in the Cook Islands?



Do you think tourists should be allowed back in the Cook Islands. No.

Health and safety concerns	75%
Maintain current COVID-19 free situation	39%
Until vaccine is applied	17%
Lack of sufficient medical resources	15%
Only if travel restrictions applied	12%
Not until COVID-19 is controlled or cleared	11%
Recover from over-tourism	10%
Refocus on the local industry and people	8%
Not until we are confident with Government's approach	7%

Comments: tourists should not be allowed back...

“It would benefit us yes but it's too risky during this pandemic.”

“For the safety of our vulnerable and our people of the Cook Island we must not welcome tourists into our country just yet till we are well aware that this COVID-9 is up on the all clear. The health of our people are more important than to welcome tourists that will highly endanger our people. Keep our bubble small and safe.”

“We need to remain COVID-19 free for as long as we can.”

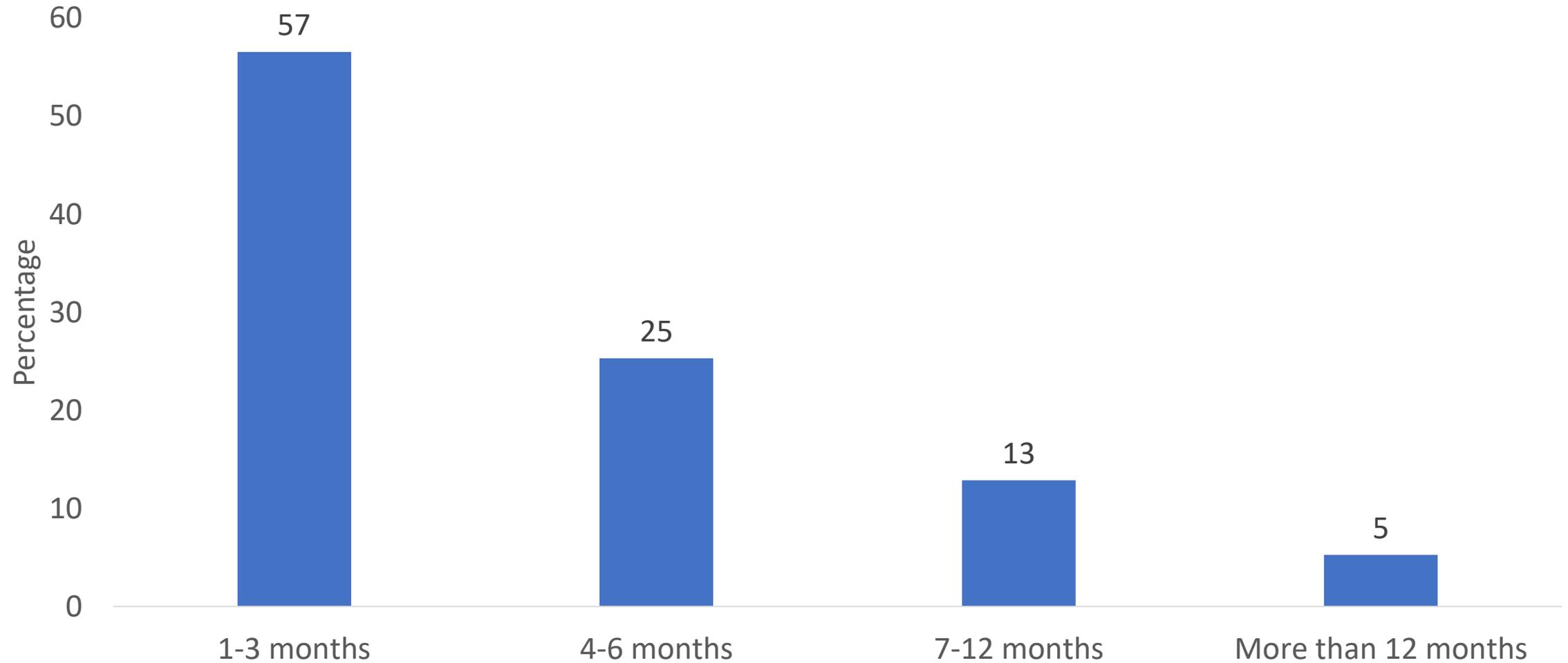
“Our health system is not yet ready to handle COVID if it arrived. e.g. CT scan unit not ready; shortage of clinical personnel such as doctors & nurses; very limited availability of respiratory units; tracking app works sometimes at someplace; our emergency unit is unacceptable.”

“Once a safe number of people are vaccinated some can come.”

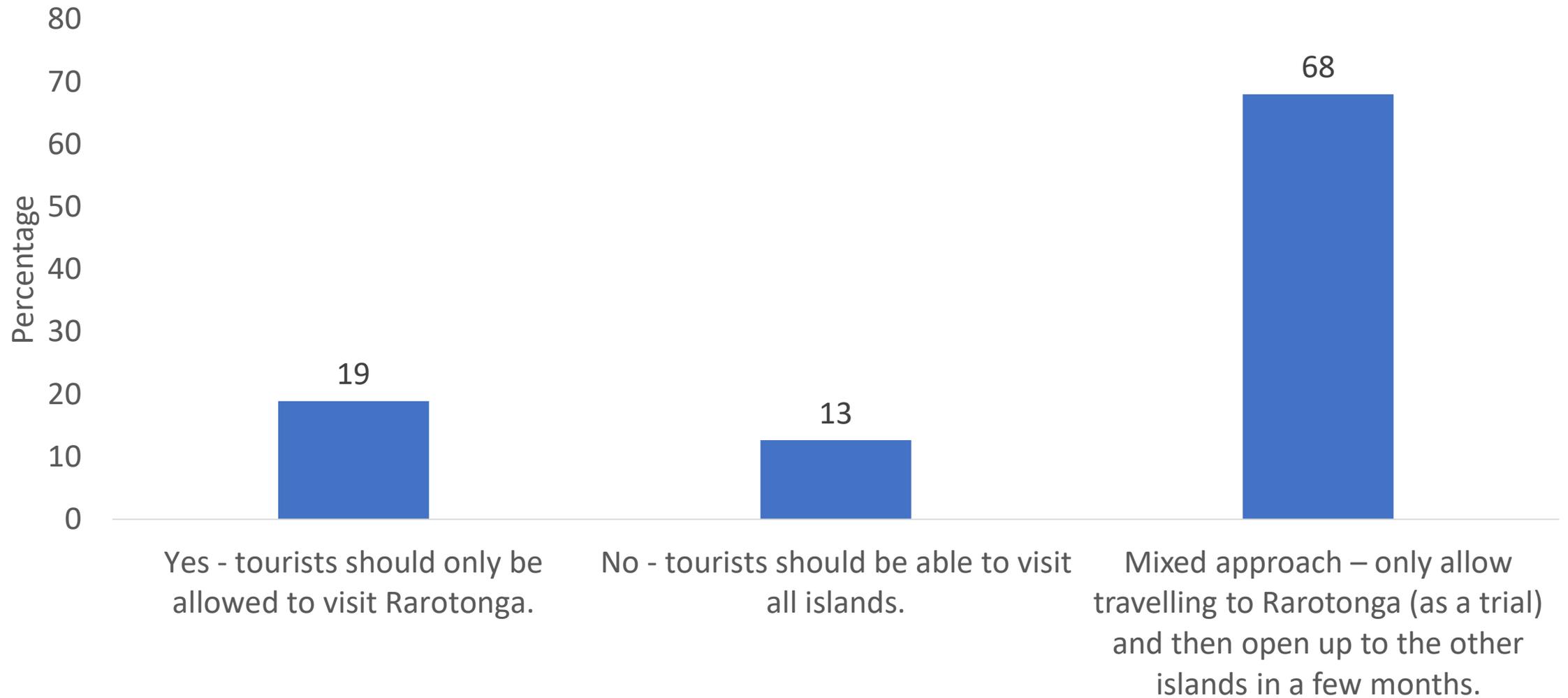
“We just need to hold back on travelling and concentrate more on our infrastructure, our environment and even reviving some of our traditional practices on farming and planting to avoid bringing in toxic chemicals that impact our natural resources. We need to be resilient towards ourselves first.”

“Until we are confident in our government ministries and health ministry.”

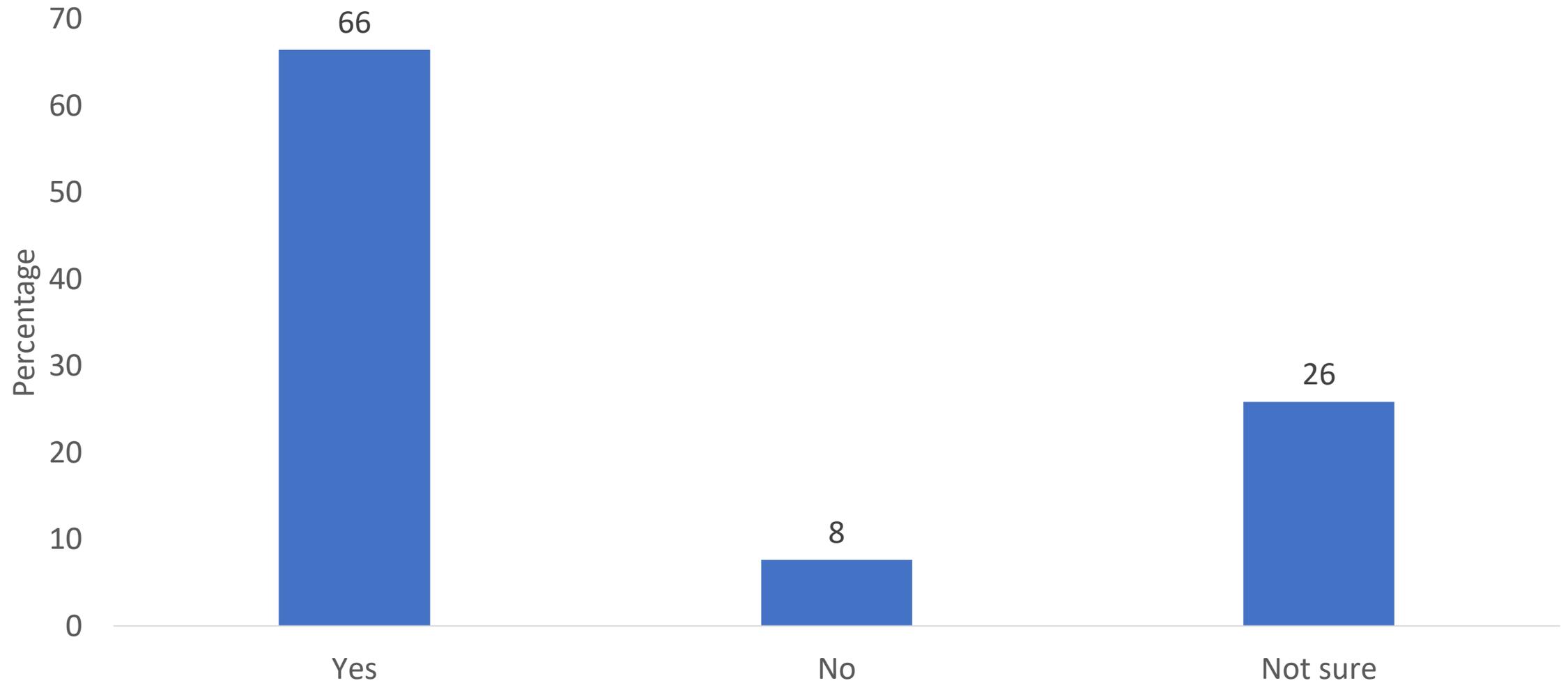
For those who answered “yes” visitors should be able to return:
How soon do you think visitors should be allowed back in the Cook Islands?



If the borders open to tourists, do you think tourists should only be allowed entry into Rarotonga?



For those living in outer islands: Are you willing to welcome tourists back to your island?



Comments : not willing to welcome tourists back

“It’s better to make sure that the safety of the people comes first.”

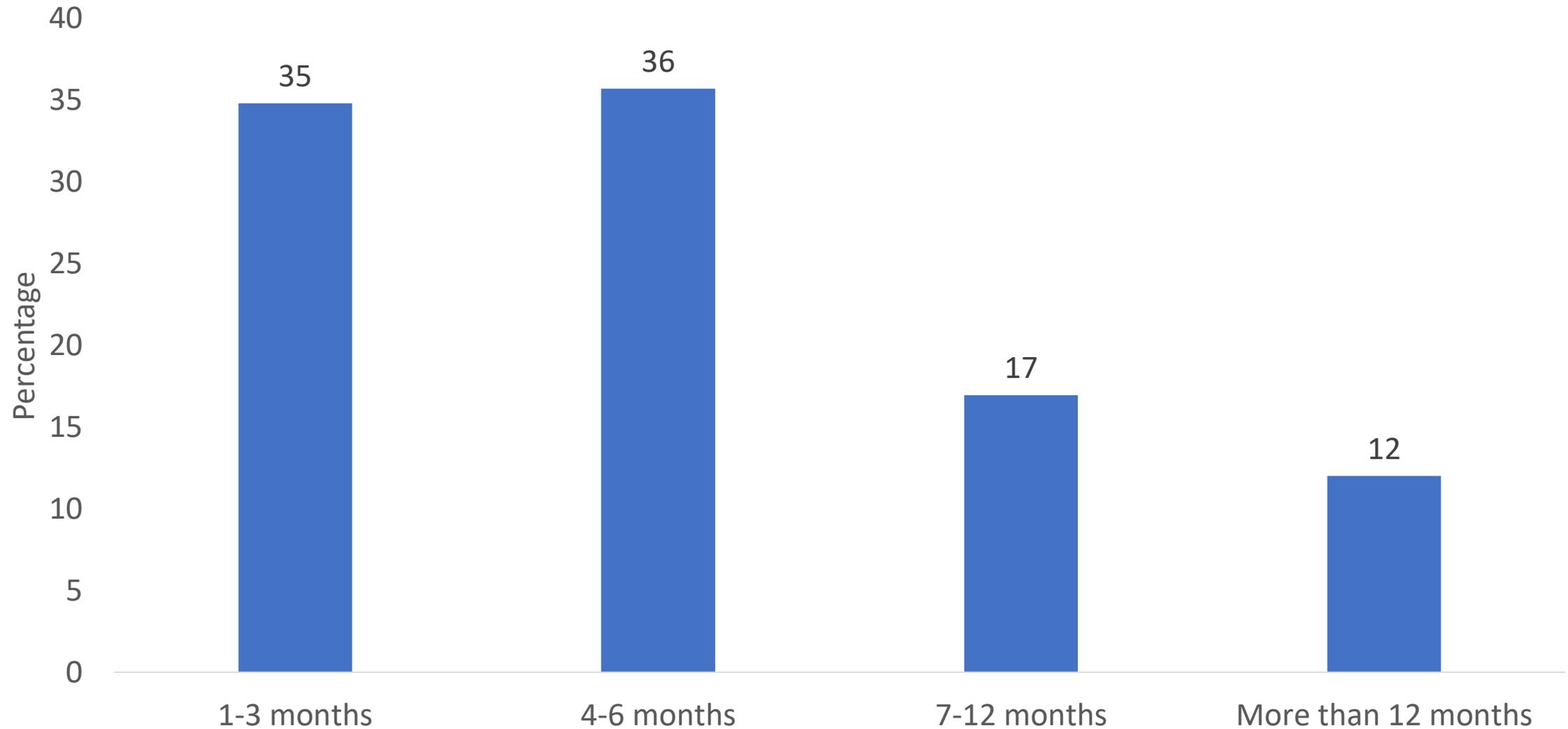
“The RISK of bringing COVID-9 into the country is there. No, thank you.”

“Not until we are certain that the vaccine is properly trialled, and we are sure that it is safe”

“I only like the local tourists from Rarotonga to continue coming to Mangaia.”

“me e turoto no rarotonga ua mai ka akatika au me no vao ake ia rarotonga kare au akatika ki runga i toku enua no te mea ka viviki ua te maki te tua ki runga uatu te tai tangata. *(Translation: If its visitors from Rarotonga I will allow but if its visitor from outside of Rarotonga then I won't allow on my island because the spread of the pandemic will be quick amongst the people)*”

For those who answered “yes” to the question:
How soon do you think visitors should be allowed back in the Cook Islands?



Positive	56%
Negative	31%
Suggestions on practices to reduce risk	20%
Uncertainty or mixed positive and negative	7%
Not much effect or changes	7%

Creating more job opportunities or giving jobs back	46%
Economic benefit	43%
Benefit community well-being	9%
Tourism industry recovery	8%
Positive overall	7%
Back to normal life	4%
Being able to share our culture and tradition	4%
Family reunion	1%

Raised health/safety concerns and worries	73%
Over-crowded, traffic and environment damage	10%
Lose our culture and value and life quality	7%
Enjoyed the border closure	6%
Negative overall	4%
Higher living cost	4%

Health protocols e.g. Border control, test, vaccine and quarantine	55%
Community actions e.g. distancing, mask, CookSafe	26%
Control tourist numbers or allow only specific groups to come back	11%
Depends on the situation	8%
Communication and education	2%
Slow and steady process to welcome tourists back	2%

Positive effects on Cook Islands if tourists are allowed back

“It would open up more job opportunities especially for those that lost theirs due to closed borders”

“Definitely restore family income.”

“It will be good for the economy and tourism operated businesses. It will definitely be a change of scene as we haven’t had tourist on island in a long time.”

“It obviously will have a positive impact on our economy which is really hurting.”

“Positively.”

“So likely to be positive, this can affect our peoples well being mentally, physically and emotionally”

“Some tourists would stay with myself where they would learn about the culture of the Cook Islands.”

“Things will be back to normal. Our community will be up and running again.”

“Can re-unite with extended family.”

Negative effects on Cook Islands if tourists were allowed back

“I will feel unsafe as I'm unsure if they are a carrier of COVID and they don't realise it.”

“Risk of our children families and loved ones being affected with this pandemic going around”

“It will be a scary experience for our little nation because we are COVID free .”

“Keeping a distance from everyone. No more kissing or meeting others.”

“Over populated accommodations. Damage to our lagoon pollution due to cruise tours. Sewage & sanitation overflow problem. Water shortage.”

Suggestions of practices to reduce risk

“Tourists should undergo a 14 days quarantine just to be safe to me and my community and also the people of the Cook Islands.”

“Cap tourism numbers. Quality over quantity.”

“All depends on how COVID is progressing around the world”

“Good and bad.”

“I believe it is due to the lack of information awareness and communication from Health”

“It will not be easy for sure for the first few days or months but we need to focus on the future and put aside our past. Slowly we can rebuild ourselves to be normal again.”

Uncertainty or mixed emotions about tourism's return

“With tourism borders opening soon there will be mixed feelings amongst the community. It has been nice to have no tourism having the island to ourselves and letting the environment restore itself.”

“Mix feelings of happiness and scary at same time as of now.”

“Well I don't know. It could be negative or positive. It all depends on the process.”

“There are pros and cons in allowing tourist back, pros would be an income instead of unemployment and the cons would be that we are putting our young and old/vulnerable at risk of maybe getting sick/virus.”

Little of no effects of tourism return

“My daily life is not significantly impacted by tourism and I feel it wouldn't have a notable affect on me due to my limited interactions with tourists.”

“Not much I suppose since we already experienced tourism before.”

“It won't affect me directly as I do not work in the Tourism industry.”

“I don't think our little community will be affected if the right procedures are followed.”

COVID-19 related statements

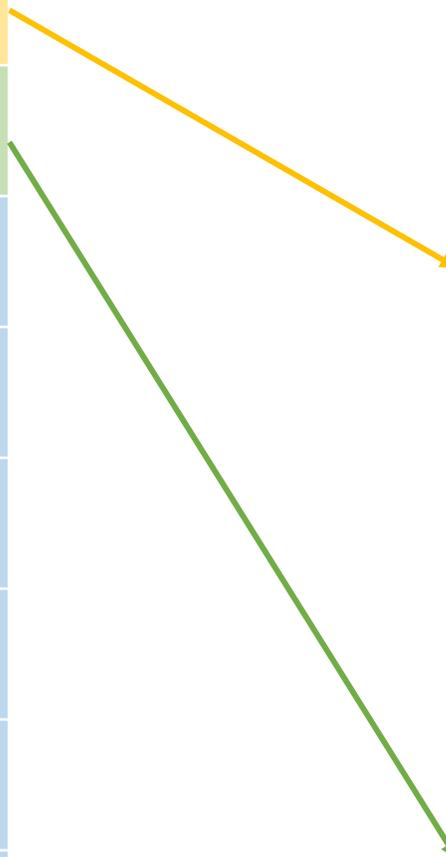


Mean rating: from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Prefer closing the borders for a while	31%
Opening the borders with conditions	30%
Suggestions on tourism development	8%
Opening the borders or welcoming tourists back	8%
Supporting government's approach or appreciation of the government support	5%
Tourism is important for the Cook Islands	5%
Prayers and best wishes	5%
Appreciation of being asked	4%
Diversifying the economy	3%
Community education and involvement	2%

Safety is priority	51%
Keeping COVID free	29%
Doing good without tourists	15%
Having not prepared well	8%

Quarantine, pre-test, and other precautions	56%
Welcoming NZ tourists back	22%
Being vaccinated	14%
Tourism back slowly or carefully	11%
To prepare ourselves better	7%
Open borders until COVID clear	3%
Keeping visitors in Rarotonga	2%
Welcoming Australian tourists back	2%



Prefer closing the borders for a while

“We have done so well this year so why change that now? Our island has thrived throughout this pandemic without tourists. In my opinion we are actually doing pretty good right now. So if we were to bring and allow tourists back I pray that nothing goes wrong because so far it hasn't with the closure of the borders...”

“I agree that tourism plays a major role in our economy however we have just run so fast forward with infrastructure and businesses because of tourism without considering the impact to our environment, our island. It has been a pleasure to have our island to ourselves again, to see our people enjoying the beaches even, we barely did that, just focused on work.”

“Health crisis shutdown all economic activities so better be safe and stand independently surviving locally as the Cook islands have sufficient resources to cater for its people's basic needs and wants. A small island nation need to focus on its people's well-being or face an economic cost it cannot afford.”

“Safety of our people should be the utmost priority.”

Opening the borders with conditions

“Just maintain the social distancing, use the mask, practice proper hygiene.”

“Providing New Zealand has no or very small community transmission, our borders should be open for quarantine free travel between our two countries. This should be for a three month trial and if there are no problems then look at other COVID free Pacific countries and COVID free states in Australia. All 'hot spot' countries should be banned until Covid is under control and all travellers have proof of vaccination.”

“Since there's no COVID cases in Wellington and Christchurch we should immediately open our borders to them but in a safe way. Then Work on Auckland.”

“Appropriate health checks and precautions plus the buffer of having to spend time in NZ without community transmission and the need to carry health/travel insurance are suitable precautions.”

“COVID vaccination should be mandatory for every person living in the Cook Islands so the risk of opening up the border are mitigated.”

Opening the borders and welcoming tourists back

“Cook Islands can not go on for another 7 months without tourism and also it will be very hard for us to get back into this routine of entertaining and sharing with our tourist since most of us have been on a very long break.”

“COVID is the new norm. Our economy will not survive without the borders being opened. The cost of living has not been cheaper during COVID. Cost of goods have increased with no one really monitoring the price of goods. We need a price tribunal to ensure smaller stores are not hiking their prices to maximise revenue from the general public.”

“The Cook Islands is blessed to be COVID-19 Free, so I believe at this time since the border in Australia will re-open, we the Cook Islands should clean our island and ready to welcome tourist back in the Cook Islands 😊”

“There will be the right time to open opening the borders. We will just have to wait and survive off what our land gives us, food, water, etc. It is like we are doing the things or the way of living we had many years ago.”

“We here need jobs , need tourists for our continued life.”

“Let the tourists come and enjoy our paradise. Our country is ready for them.”

Suggestions for future tourism development

“There should be a cap on tourism numbers based on the carrying capacity of each island.”

“The banks should continue mortgage repayment holiday until tourists come back.”

“In the past 3 years, I talk to our tourists, they are continually being over charged. This needs to stop... They talk over the internet and could destroy the industry if not cleaned up.”

“Environment tax needs to be reinstated and transparency needed for it’s use. Application of funds, NGOs and private sector should also receive this funding like in Palau. Airbnb or other rental need to be taxed or discouraged. Local discount card scheme across board. At least 40% discounts.”

“Tourism was uncontrolled before COVID. Too much growth too fast. Slow growth is best. We should maintain at 80 -100,000 tourists until cultural, environmental, education, health and infrastructure issues are addressed.”

Supporting government's approach or appreciation of the government support

"I am sure the government will not look at the profit first before its own citizens and work or seek expert opinions from other country's that are doing a good job maintaining this pandemic."

"With the current situation I believe the government is trying to assist the Tourism Industry I want to thank The Cook Islands government for looking after workers, pray that the Lord will richly blessed Cook Islands as a whole."

"We should really abide with the NZ Govt's approach when they conduct their assessment."

"I believe in our government and health sectors in making the right choice for our people in the Cook Islands...thanking you all for a great job you all provide for our people. Kia Orana e Kia Manuia."

Tourism is important for the Cook Islands

“Well, Tourism helps us Cook Islanders. With Tourism we try to achieve more in everything we do, our culture, our standards and most importantly, who we are. Tourism lets us experience other countries' cultures or ways of living without leaving our country to see it.”

“I believe that tourism is a vital part of Community here in Aitutaki not only because it brings in visitors who of course bring money into our island but also it gives us the benefit of sharing and exposing our culture and our story to the globe.”

“It is common knowledge that tourism is the number 1 revenue maker for our country.”

“The sooner we get tourists on the island the better it will be for our economy.”

“In my opinion Tourism is an integral part of any country in the world, it provides opportunities to preserve and showcase the real beauty and what type of people or culture the country has to offer in the world. Tourism helps also in economic development of the Country.. COVID 19 is only one of the challenges which I believe tourism and the Government can provide positive measures for, creating a positive impact or outcome for the Country.”

Diversifying the economy

“Our marine resources is a billion dollar industry if managed properly. Our agriculture is a million dollar industry if once again managed properly. This COVID-19 has evidenced how vulnerable our tourism industry is and how easily it can be wiped out.”

“Stimulate other industries instead of being solely dependent upon Tourism.”

“Only a few years ago we were questioning the economic benefit of Tourism (the tourism satellite account?), and looking at diversifying the economy. Now is an opportunity to explore and prop up other industries so we do not need to rely on tourism.”

“Instead of relying on the Tourism industry to develop our Economy, other industries should be developed, e.g. Agriculture & Fisheries, Seabed mining, Offshore Banking for Rich.”

“Diversity is the key, not just tourism...its time to invest in and build other industries especially food supply.”

Community education and involvement

“Education of all Cook Islanders is the key to getting tourists back. People are scared not because of Covid but unfortunately the information from churches etc has been incorrectly put across. It is very difficult to change peoples mindset when they are given wrong information. Its understandable to be scared of the unknown and is very difficult to figure out a way to reassure people when no one really has the answer.”

“We are not informed as to the capabilities of practically treating patients here. The scattered development of facilities at Health Dept are not convincing.”

“Education of the local community is also essential to reduce the spread of any misinformation - it seems that some comments or opinions on social media indicate a complete lack of understanding of the virus, how it's spread and measures to deal with it. Some of this 'panic-mongering' has a negative impact on the good work that is being done to start re-building the economy.”

“Lets work together first then we can all move forward together. Don't leave us behind because we don't want trouble. One people one Cook Islands.”

Appreciation of being surveyed

“Thank you for asking my opinion on COVID 19 and tourists. I hope the Government listens to me.”

“Thank you for this survey it shows we can still have an opinion and to place our concerns within this polling...Meitaki Maata.”

“Thank you for the survey provided as there were some topics I haven’t thought about till it was brought up.”

“All your questions are good and I have answered correctly to how I feel. It is good for our tourism in the future and to deal with this COVID.”

“Thank you giving insight and for taking into account others opinions and concerns.”

“Meitaki Maata for giving me the opportunity to answer your question as truthfully as I possibly can. Kia Orana.”



Thank you!



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