

# THE COOK ISLANDS

# INTERNATIONAL VISITOR SURVEY REPORT

April – June 2023

Prepared for Cook Islands Tourism Corporation



NEW ZEALAND  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE  
MANATŪ AORERE



# Key Notes

- IVS data from April to June 2023 are analysed to understand the visitor experience and gain insights into tourism recovery after the border reopening.
- Key comparisons are carried out between the April to June 2019 IVS data and the April to June 2023 IVS data.
- Key results include visitor profile and characteristics, decision-making, spending, satisfaction and COVID-19 responses.
- All reports from the IVS are available at the [Pacific Tourism Data Initiative Resource Page](#)

# Respondents (Apr - Jun 2023)

Total number of e-mail invitations sent:  
**1,292**



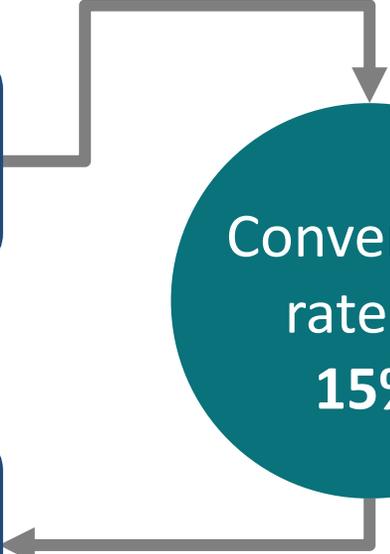
Total number of responses: **194**



Responses cover a total of  
**346 adults** and **47 children**



Conversion  
rate of  
**15%**



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS 2019 vs. 2023

# Apr-Jun 2019

### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



6%  
Visitors are 70 years old or over.



3 ppl  
Avg. number of travel companions.



58%  
Visitors visited for the first time.



\$131,604  
Average household income.

Note: NZ dollars.

# Apr-Jun 2023

### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



15% ▲  
Visitors are 70 years old or over.



3 ppl  
Avg. number of travel companions.



47% ▼  
Visitors visited for the first time.



\$159,675 ▲  
Average household income.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS 2019 vs. 2023

# Apr-Jun 2019



### PURPOSE OF VISIT



4.5/5

Overall, visitors are very satisfied.



96%

Visitors are willing to recommend.



89%

Visitors are willing to return.

# Apr-Jun 2023



### PURPOSE OF VISIT



4.6/5 ▲

Overall, visitors are very satisfied.



98% ▲

Visitors are willing to recommend.



95% ▲

Visitors are willing to return.

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS 2019 vs. 2023

## Apr-Jun 2019

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

**\$2,092**

Prepaid per trip

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

**\$154**

In-country spend per day

**40%**

Flowing into local economy rate



x **8.0** nights  
Average length of stay

**\$840**

Prepaid per trip

**\$1,232**

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

**\$2,072** per trip

**\$259** per day

## Apr-Jun 2023

 PREPAID EXPENDITURE

**\$2,570** ▲

Prepaid per trip

 IN-COUNTRY SPEND

**\$200** ▲

In-country spend per day

**40%**

Flowing into local economy rate



x **9.4** nights ▲  
Average length of stay

**\$1,024** ▲

Prepaid per trip

**\$1,880** ▲

In-country spend per trip

 ECONOMIC IMPACT

**\$2,904** per trip ▲

**\$309** per day ▲

# Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor  
Characteristics  
& Preferences



Information &  
Decision Making

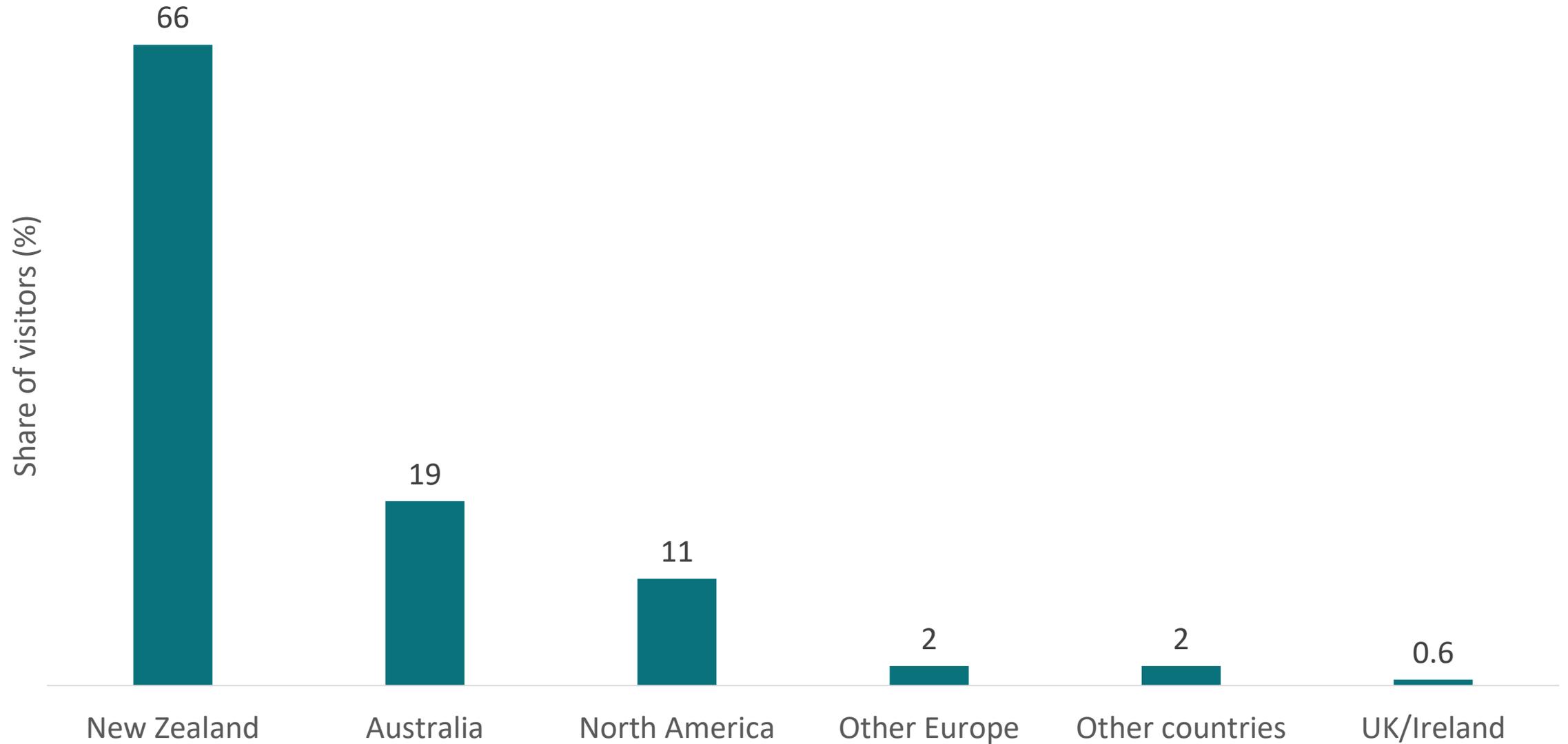


Visitor Spending  
& Impact



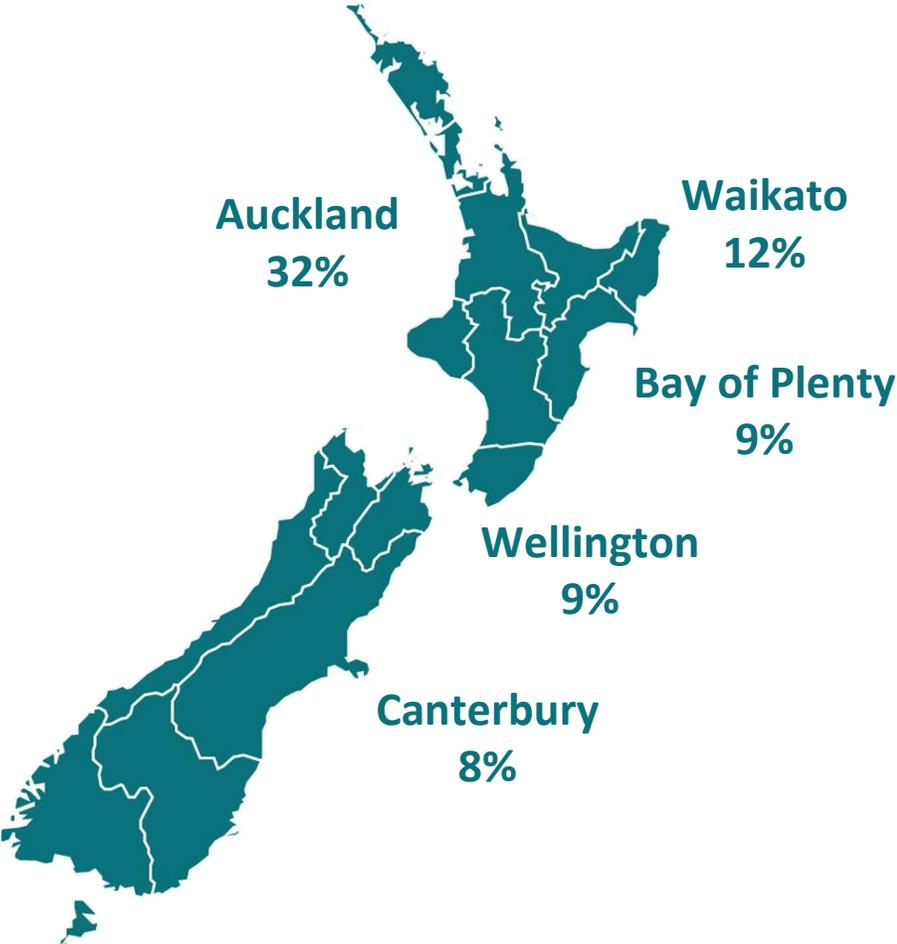
Visitor  
Satisfaction

# Country of Origin



*Note: N = 172. Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%.*

# New Zealand Respondents - IVS Respondent Data

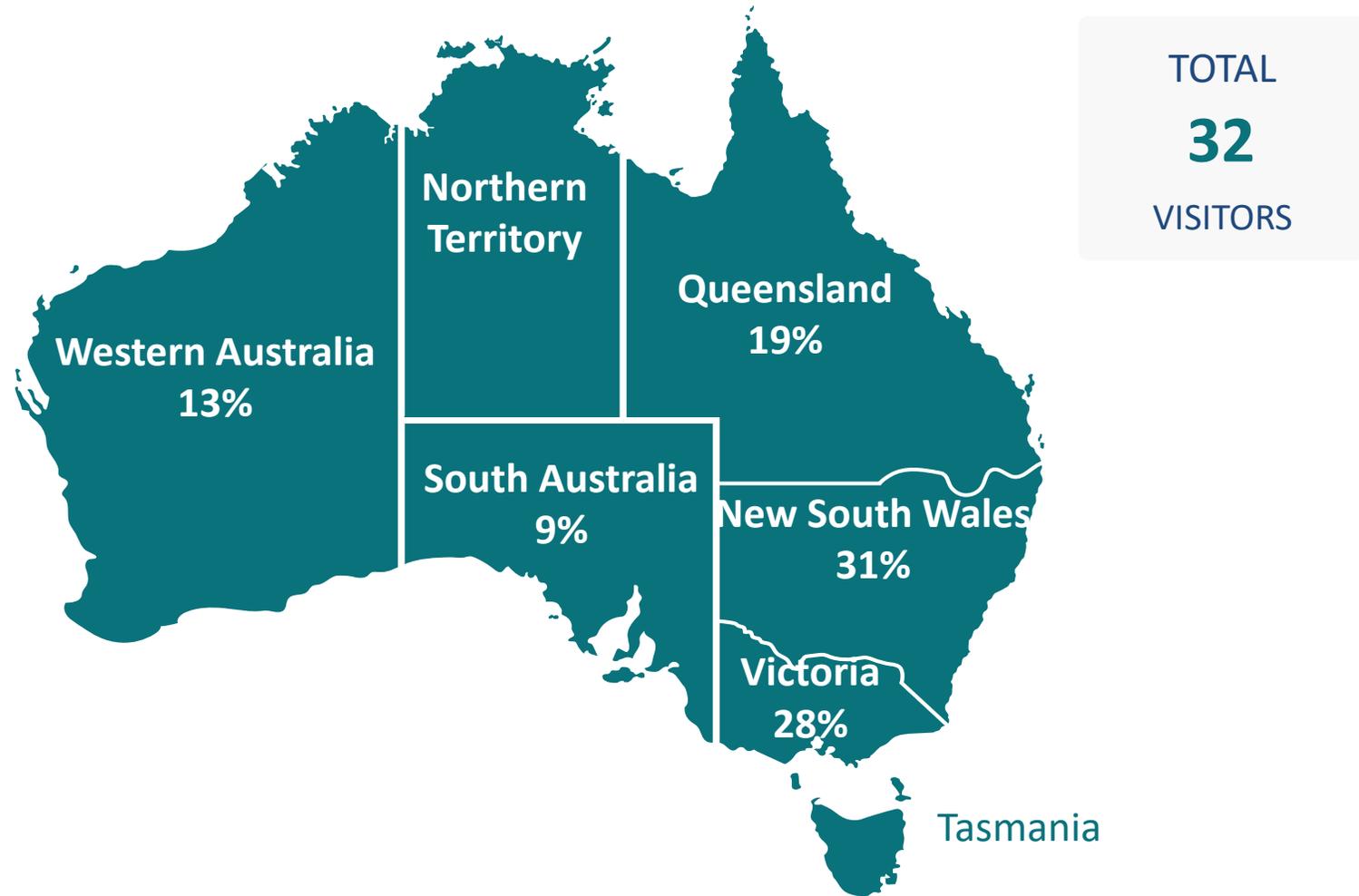


TOTAL  
**104**  
VISITORS

Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Canterbury make up **70%** of all New Zealand visitor arrivals

*Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%*

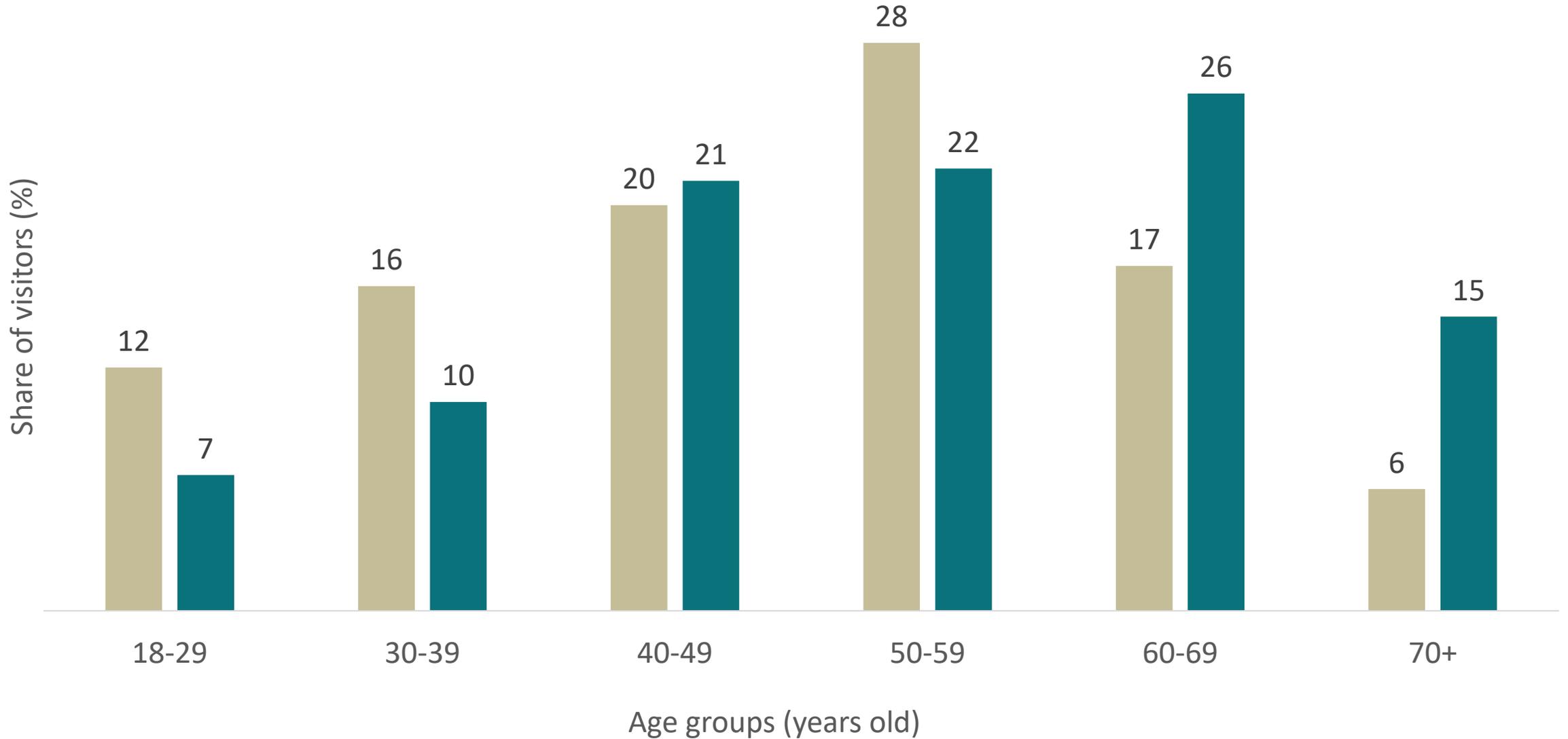
# Australian Respondents - IVS Respondent Data



New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland make up **78%** of all Australian visitor arrivals

*Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%*

# Age Group



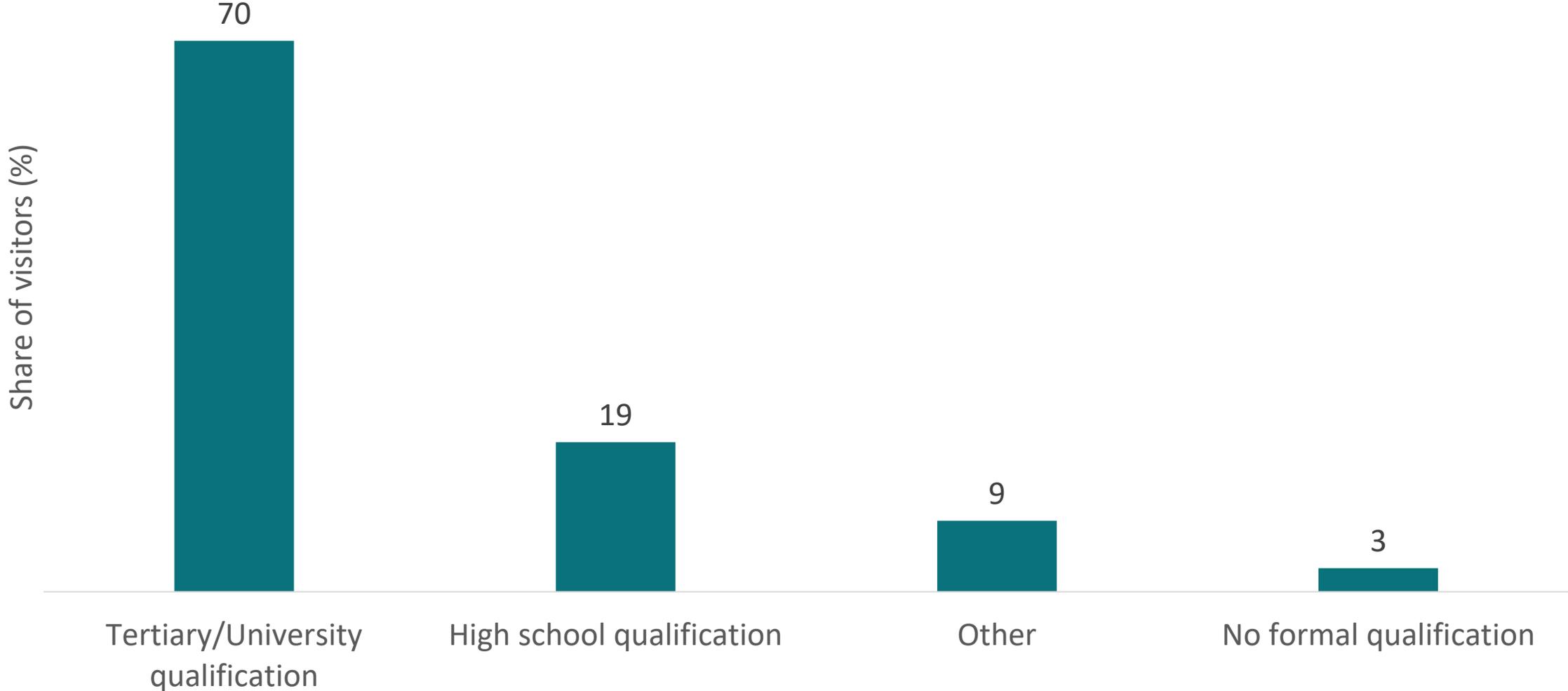
Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

■ APR- JUN 2019 ■ APR- JUN 2023

# Gender



# Education

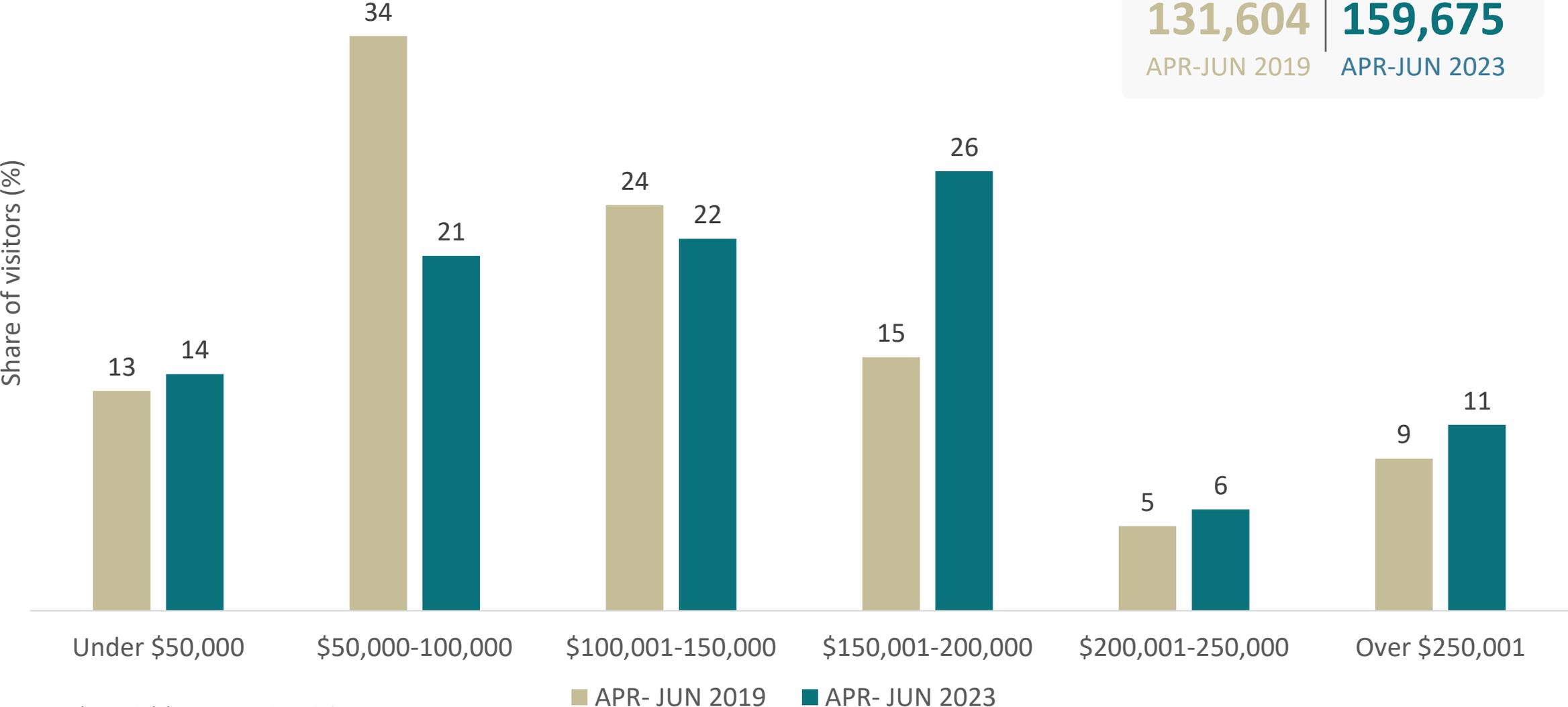


*Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%*

# Annual Household Income

Avg. Household Income

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| <b>131,604</b> | <b>159,675</b> |
| APR-JUN 2019   | APR-JUN 2023   |



Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

# Report Structure



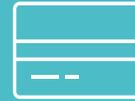
Visitor Profile



Visitor  
Characteristics  
& Preferences



Information &  
Decision Making

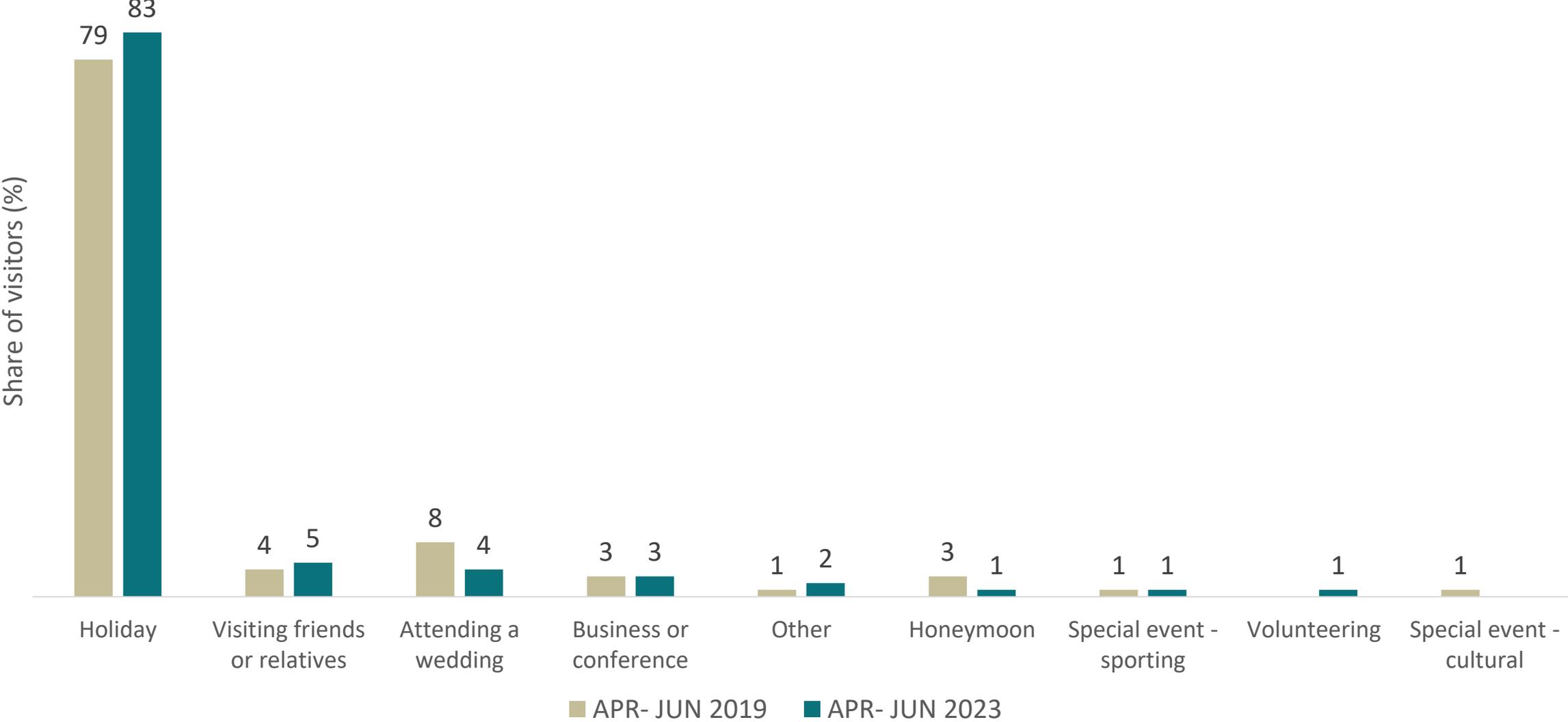


Visitor Spending  
& Impact



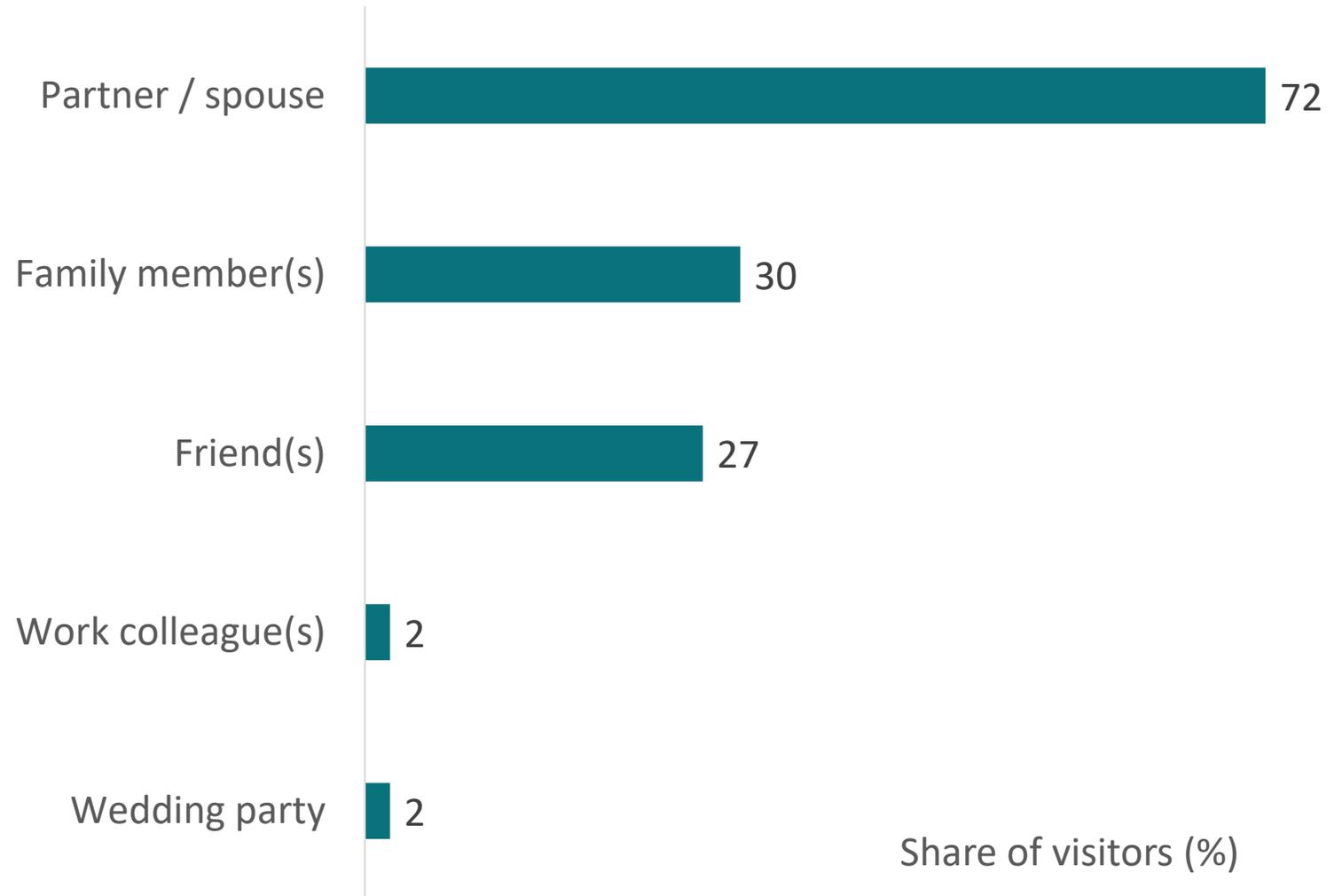
Visitor  
Satisfaction

# Purpose of Visit



Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

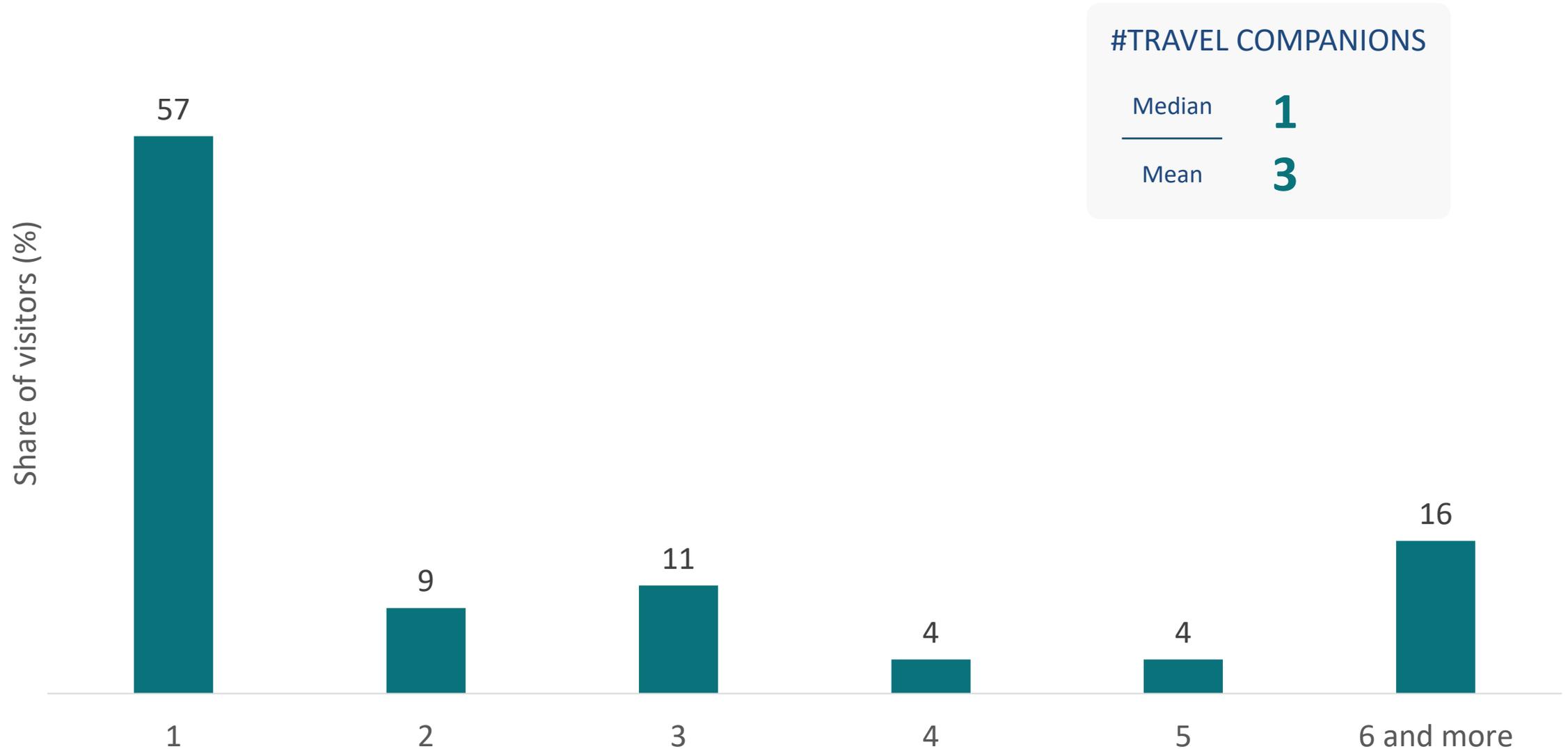
# Travel Companions



Share of visitors (%)

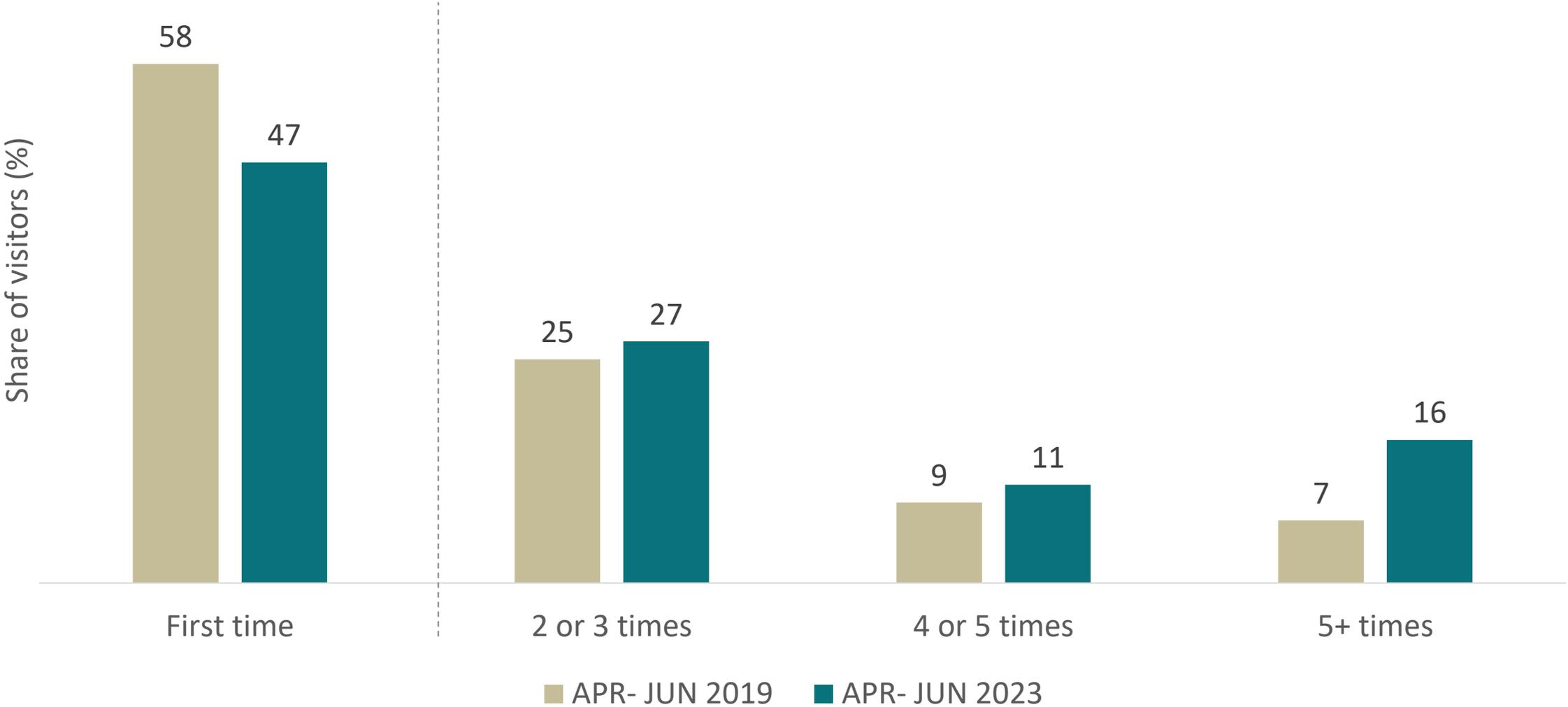
*Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%*

# Number of Travel Companions



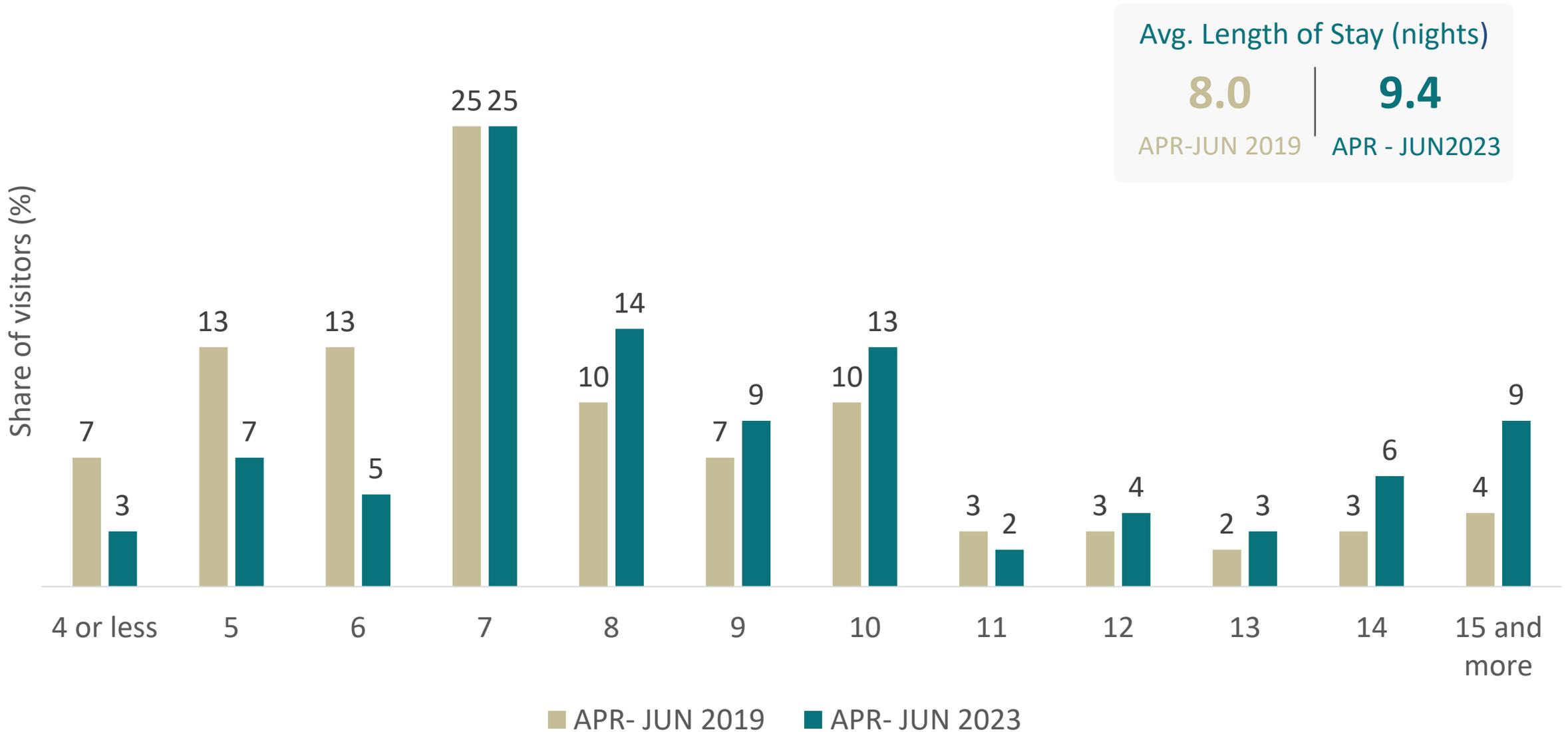
Note: N = 171 (excluding those travelling alone N = 16). Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

# Previous Visits



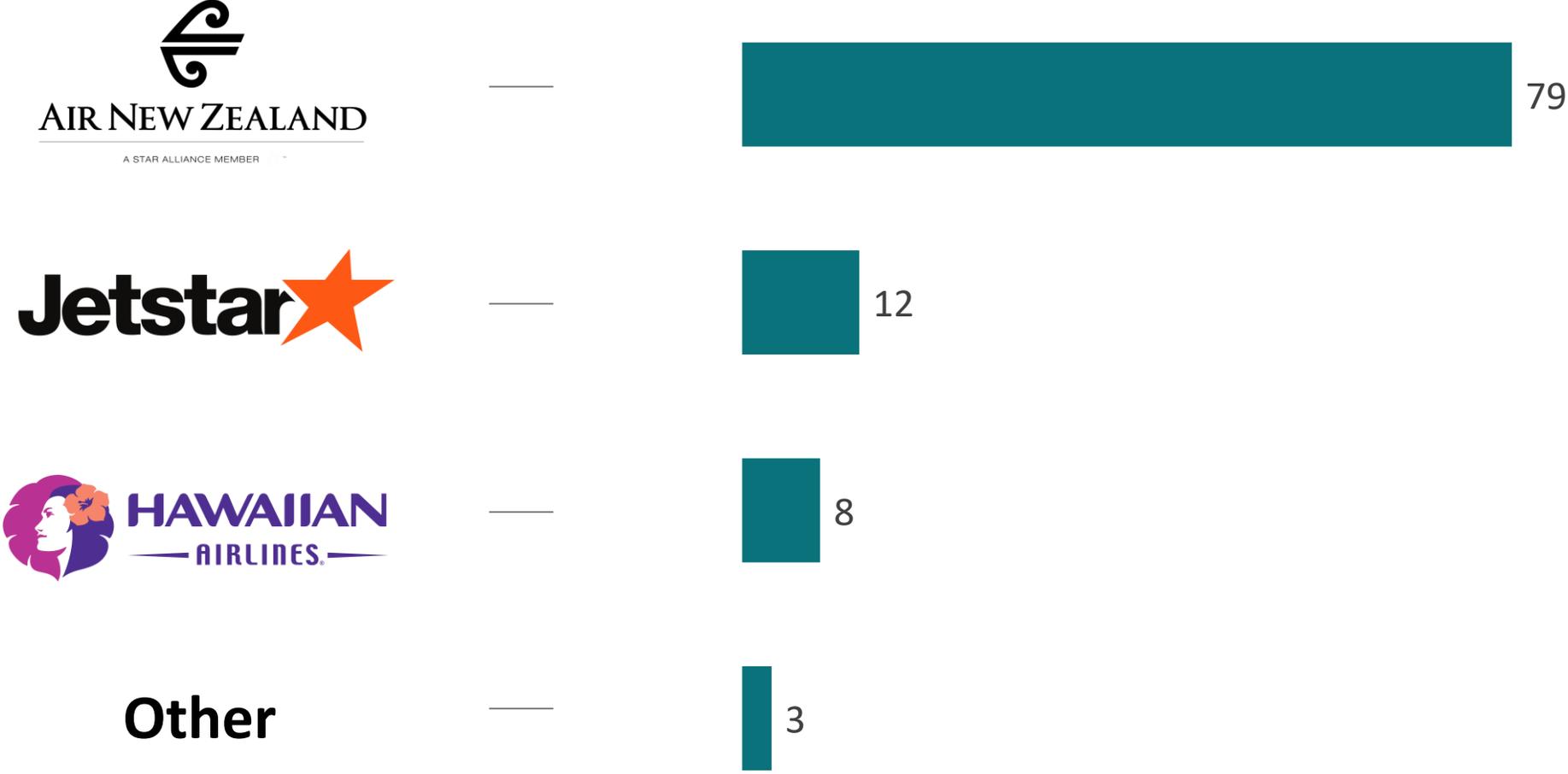
Note: Due to rounding, total does not sum to 100%

# Length of Stay (nights)



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

# Airlines Used for Travel

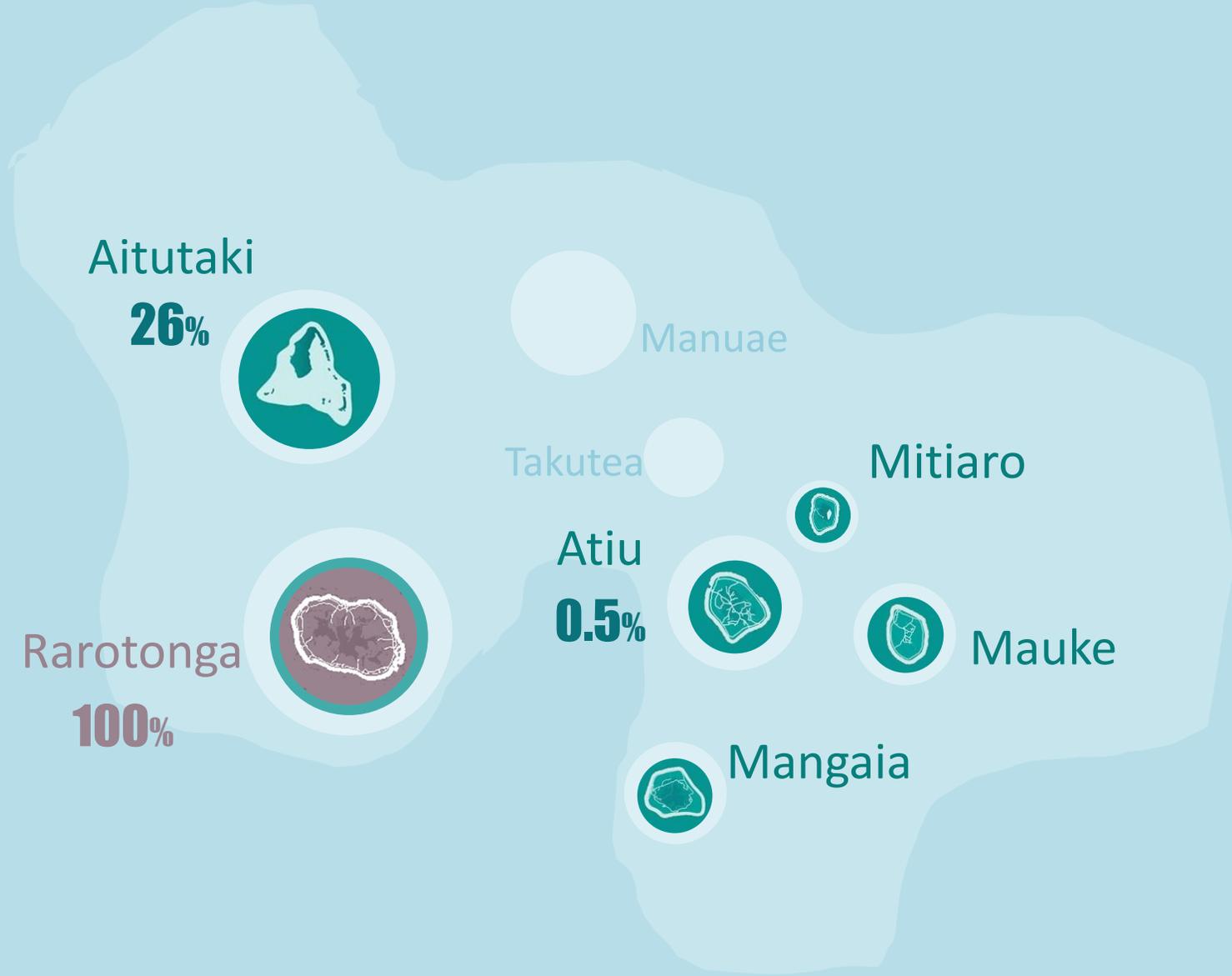


Share of visitors (%)

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

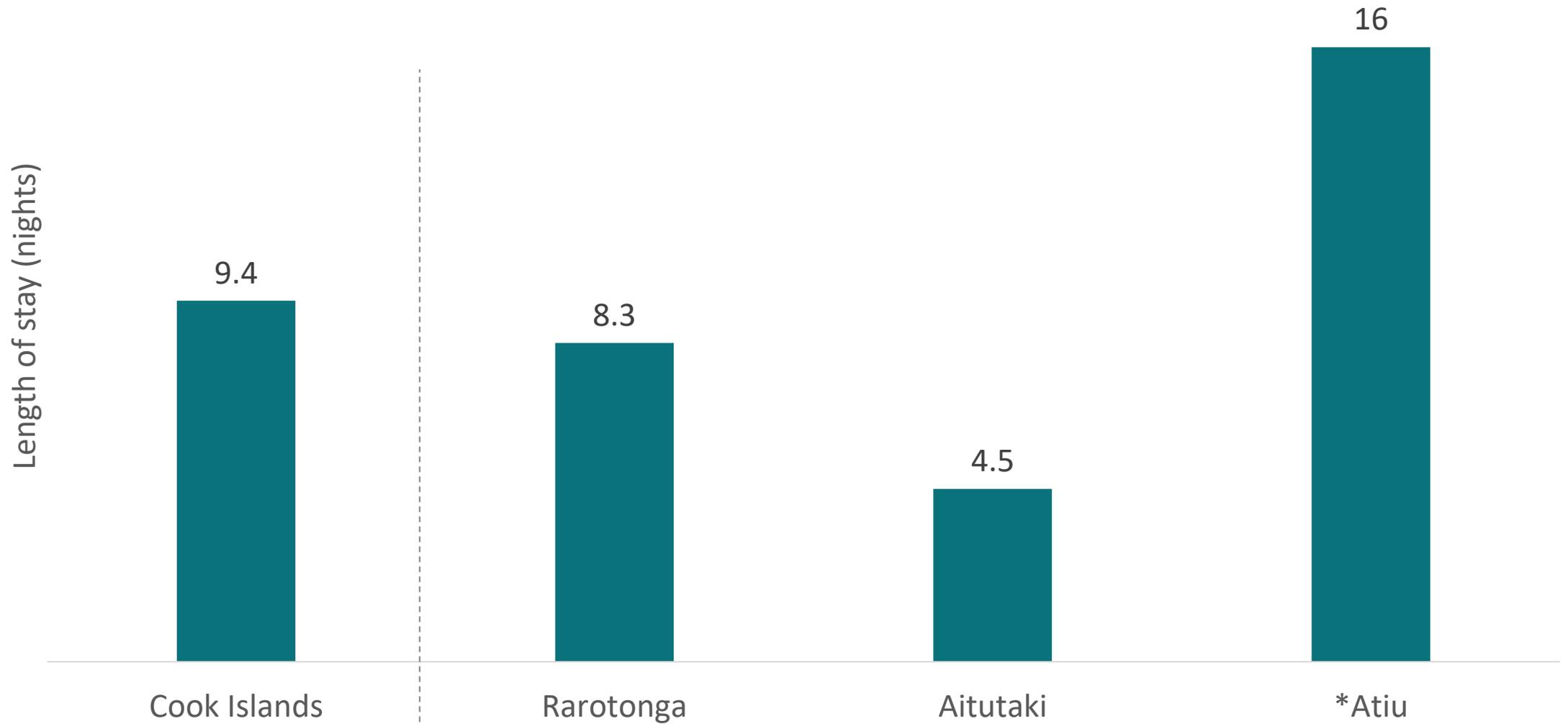
# Islands Visited

**194**  
TOTAL VISITORS



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

# Average Length of Stay on Each Island (Nights)



Note: \* n <=3

# Report Structure



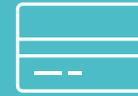
Visitor Profile



Visitor  
Characteristics  
& Preferences



Information &  
Decision Making

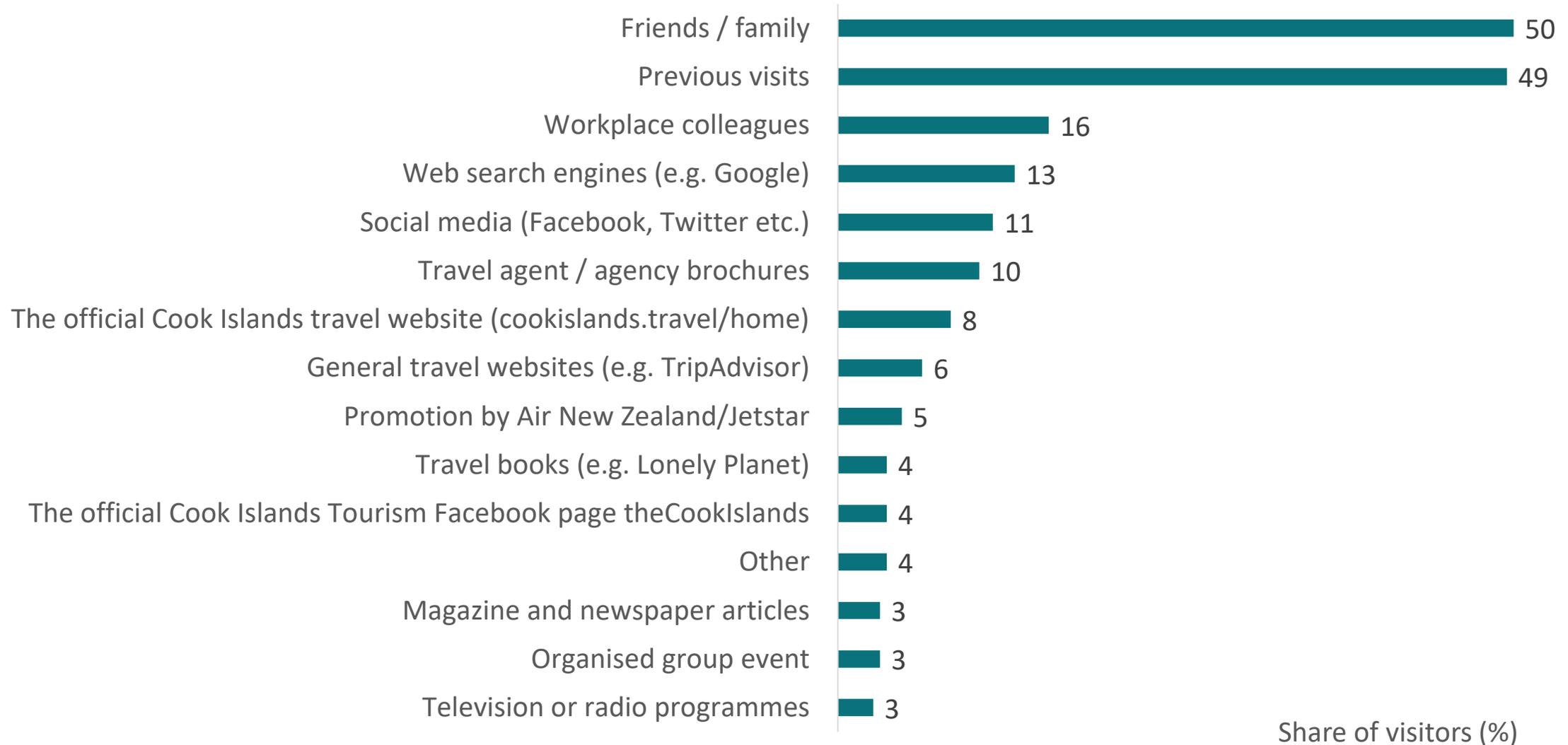


Visitor Spending  
& Impact



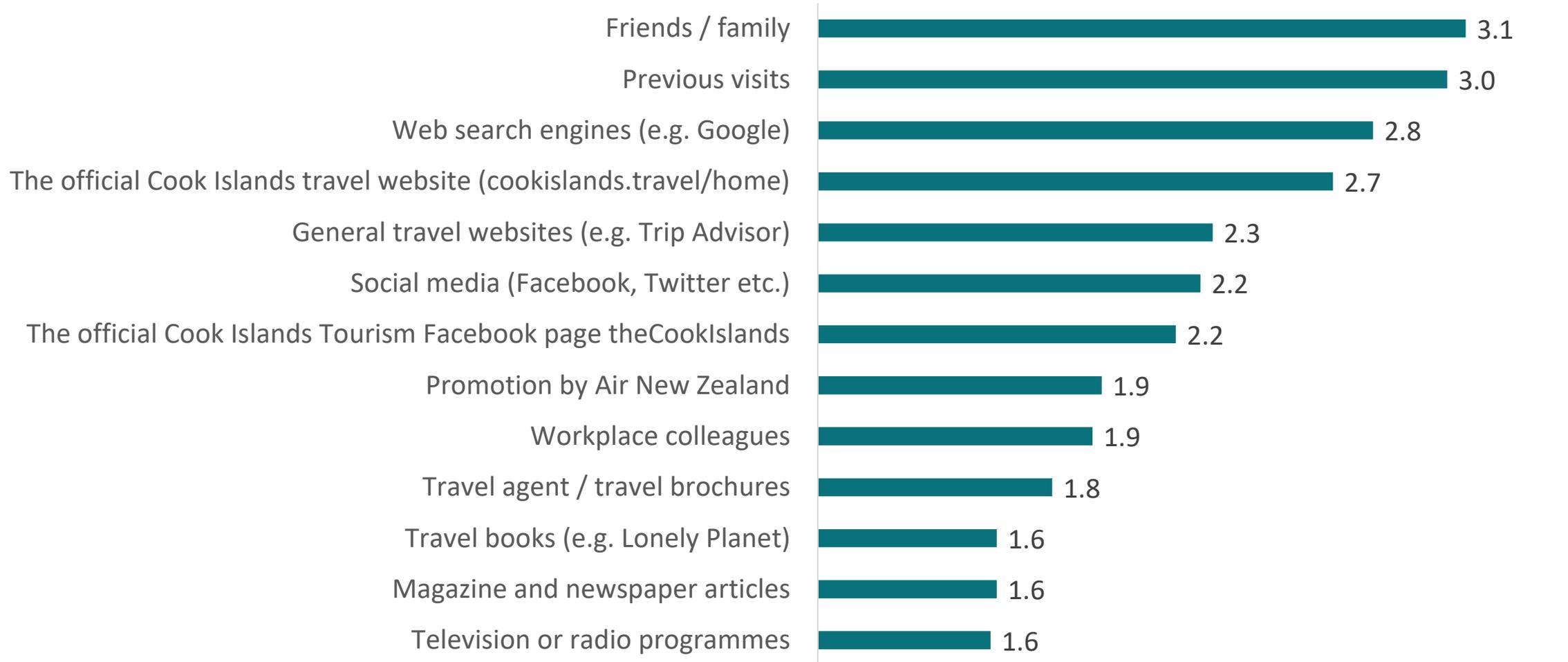
Visitor  
Satisfaction

# Information Source: How did you find out about the Cooks Islands as a destination?



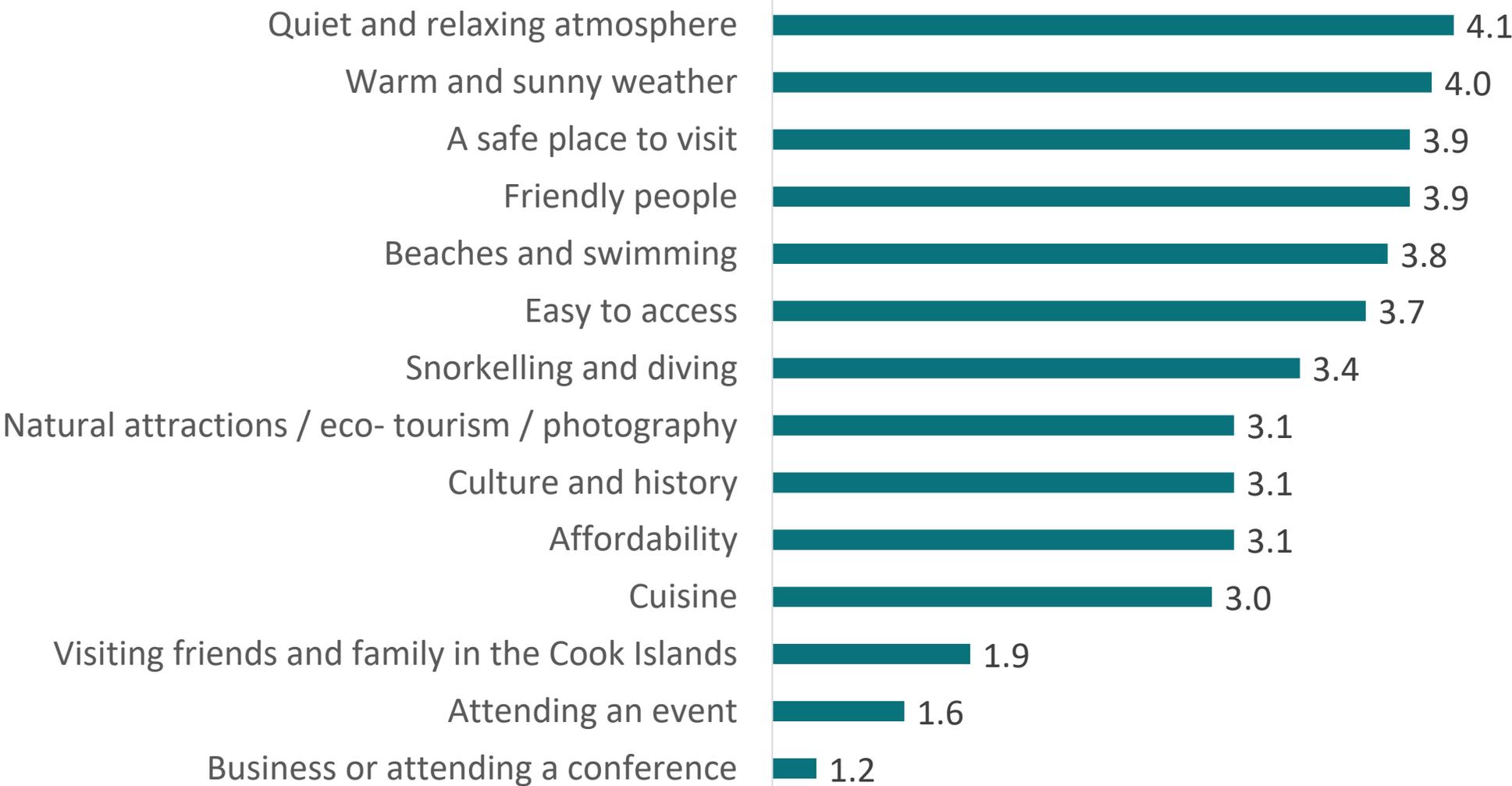
Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%

# Information Source: How important was the information source when planning your trip?



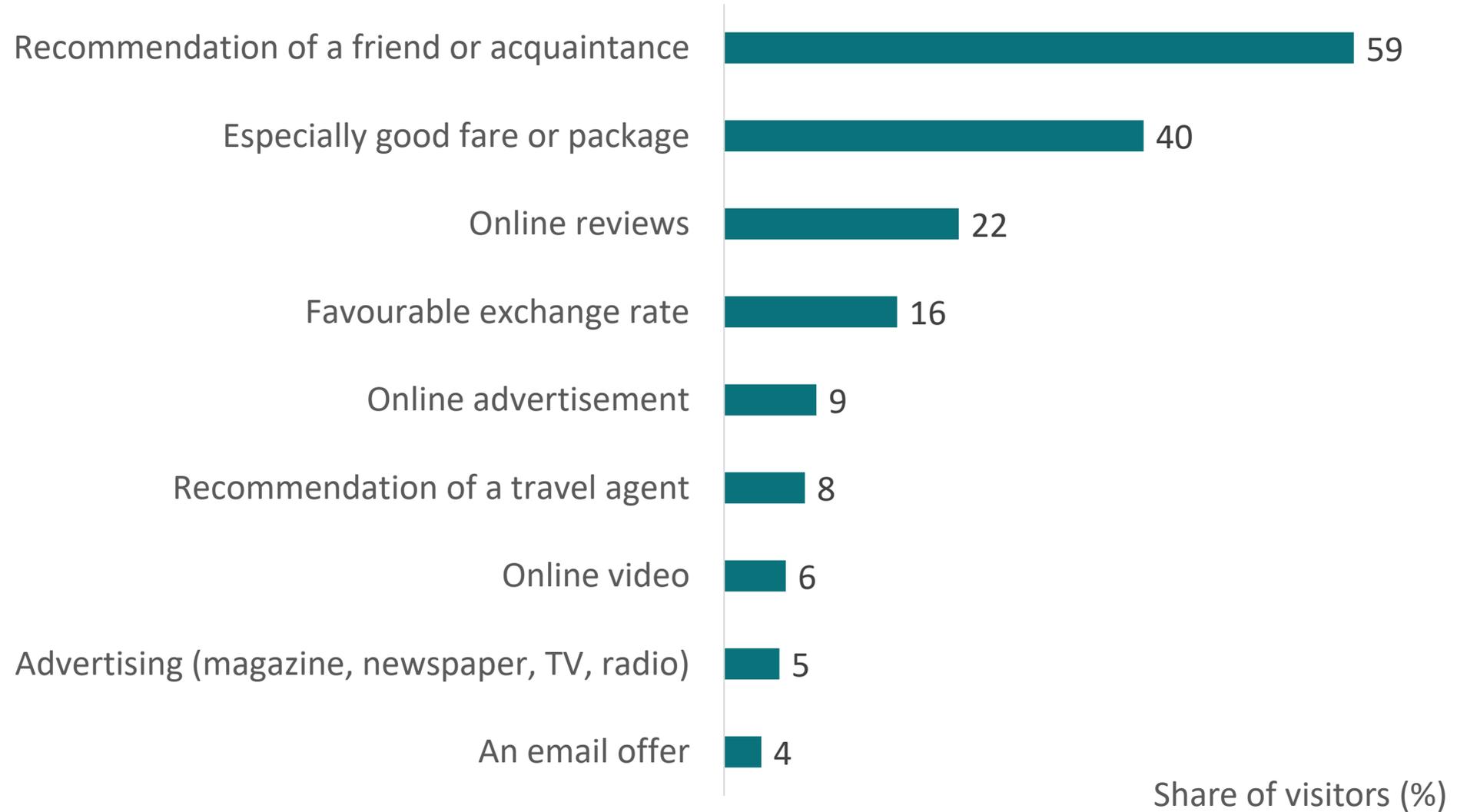
Scale: 1=Not at all important to 5=Extremely important

# Influential factors on the decision to choose the Cook Islands



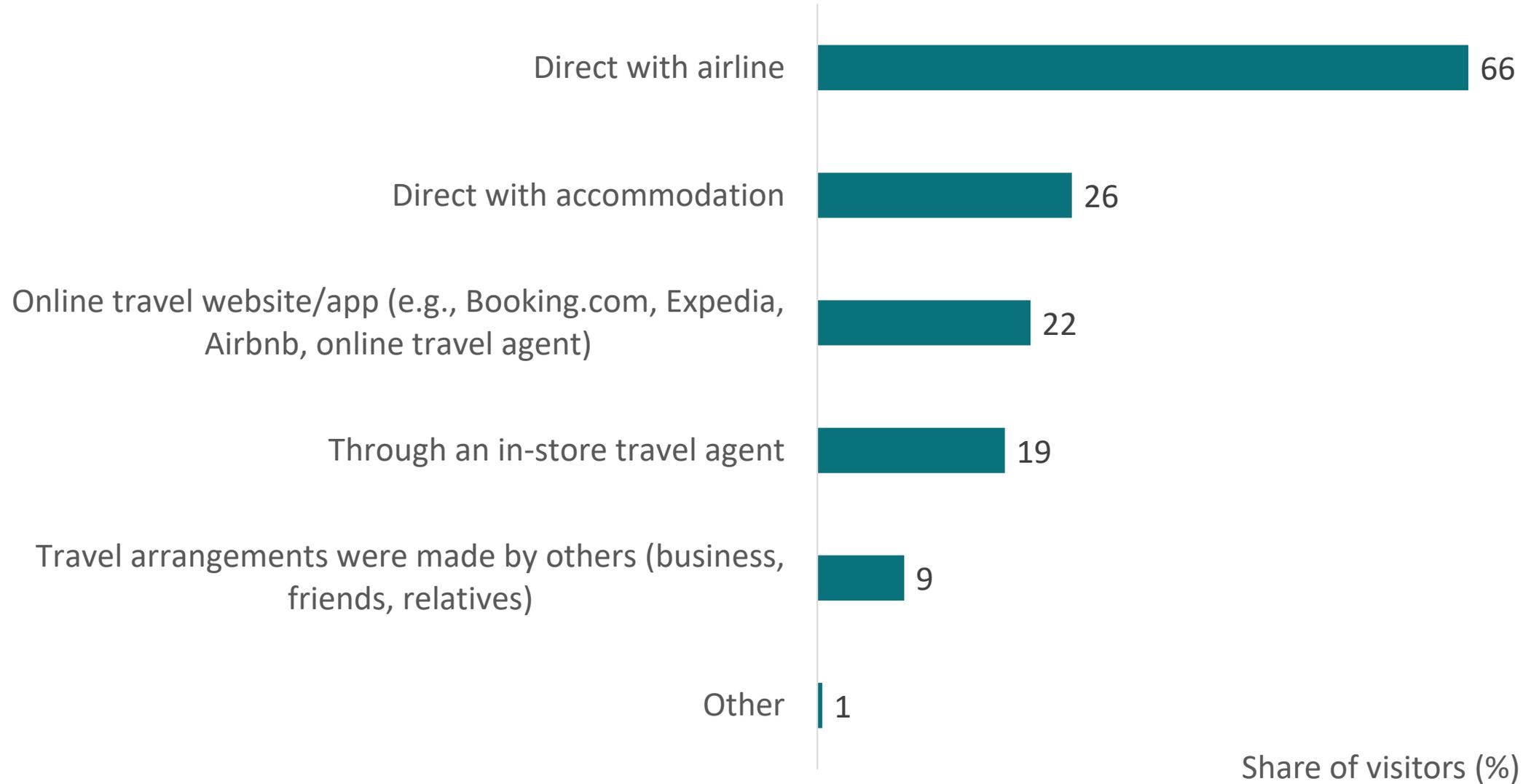
Scale: 1=Not at all important to 5=Extremely important

# Important factors on the decision to travel to the Cook Islands



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

# Purchasing of Travel



# Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor  
Characteristics  
& Preferences



Information &  
Decision Making

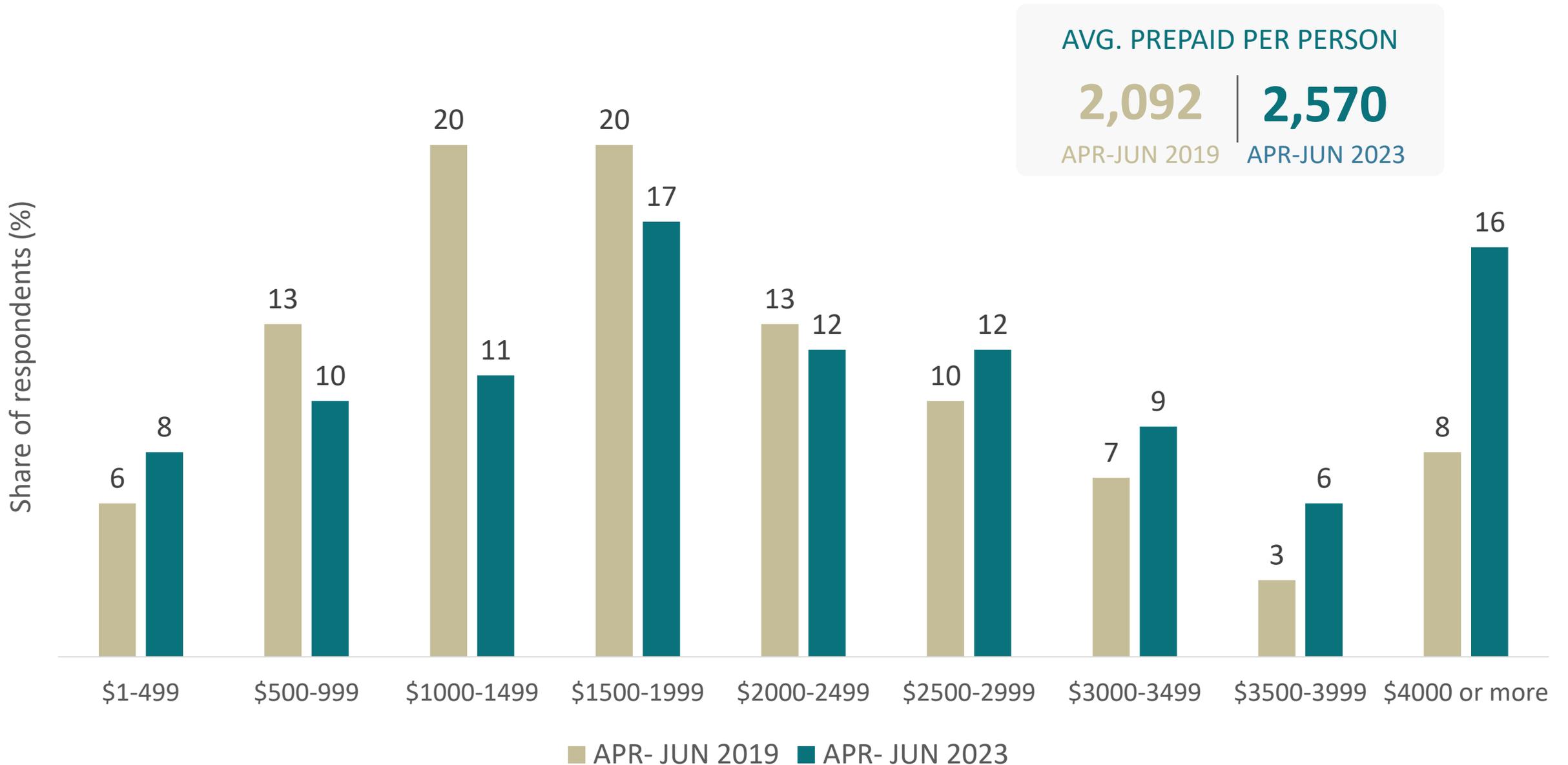


Visitor Spending  
& Impact



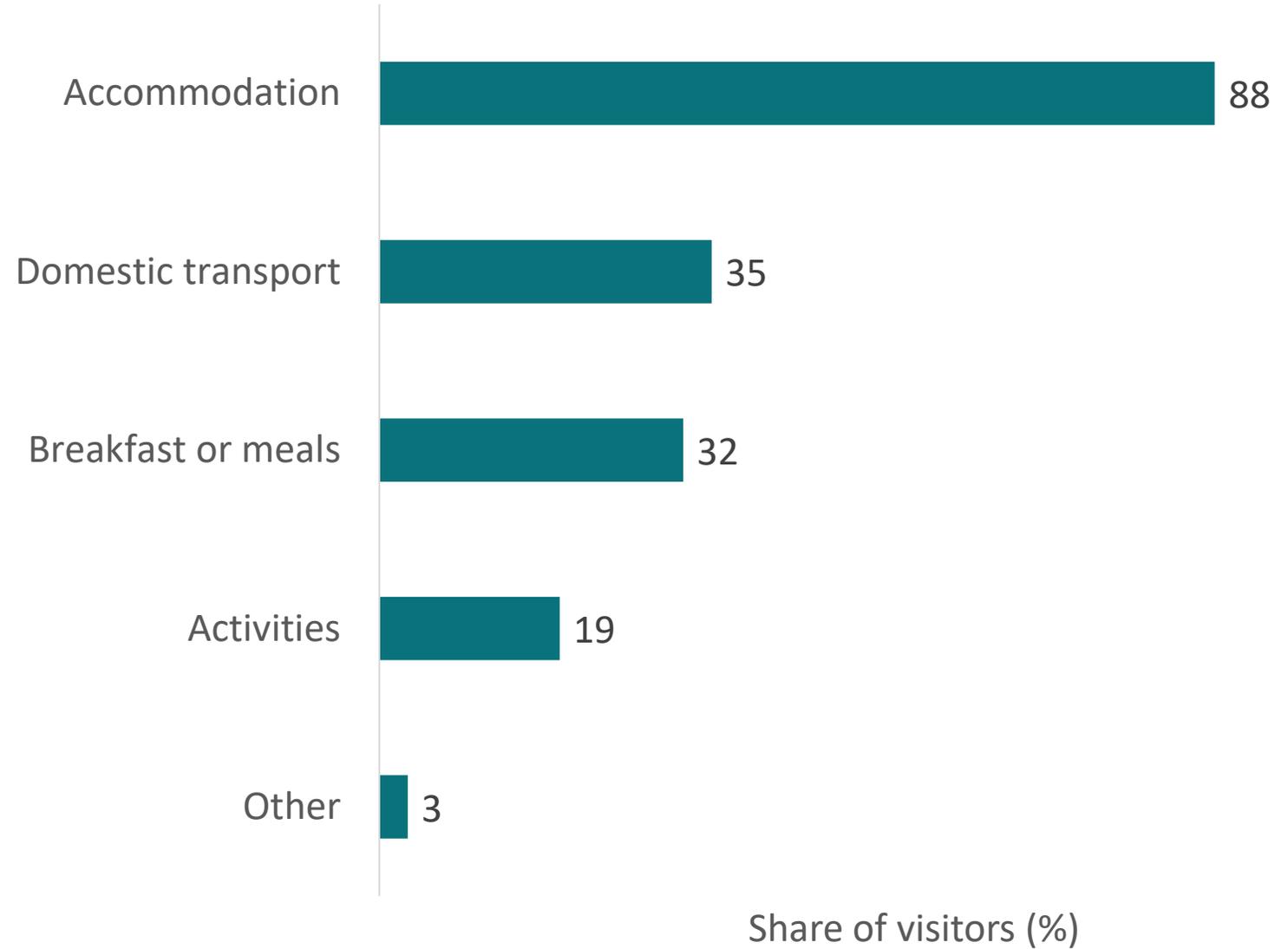
Visitor  
Satisfaction

# Prepaid Expenditure



Note: Average exchange rates for NZD from April to June 2019 and April to June 2023 applied.

# Prepaid Items



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

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

|                           | Apr-Jun 2019              |                    | Apr-Jun 2023              |                    |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
|                           | <u>Per Person Per Day</u> | <u>% of sector</u> | <u>Per Person Per Day</u> | <u>% of sector</u> |
| Accommodation             | 68                        | 44                 | 87                        | 43                 |
| Restaurants, Cafes & Bars | 33                        | 21                 | 44                        | 22                 |
| Vehicle Rental            | 9                         | 6                  | 12                        | 6                  |
| Petrol                    | 2                         | 1                  | 2                         | 1                  |
| Domestic flights          | 8                         | 5                  | 13                        | 6                  |
| Public transportation     | 1                         | 0.4                | 1                         | 0.4                |
| Internet cost             | 2                         | 1                  | 1                         | 1                  |
| Activities                | 8                         | 5                  | 10                        | 5                  |
| Groceries                 | 7                         | 5                  | 10                        | 5                  |
| Shopping                  | 11                        | 7                  | 17                        | 9                  |
| Other                     | 4                         | 2                  | 3                         | 1                  |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>154</b>                |                    | <b>200</b>                |                    |

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

# Economic Impact – Per Person and Total

|  | Apr-Jun 2019      | Apr-Jun 2023      |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Average Spend Prior to Arrival</b>              | <b>NZD</b>        | <b>NZD</b>        |
| Per Person Per Trip                                | 2,092             | 2,570             |
| <i>Flowing into local economy rate – estimated</i> | <i>40%</i>        | <i>40%</i>        |
| Per Person Per Trip                                | 840               | 1,024             |
| Per Person per Day                                 | 105               | 109               |
| <hr/>  |                   |                   |
| <b>Average Local Spend</b>                         |                   |                   |
| <i>Length of Study (nights) - mean</i>             | <i>8.0 nights</i> | <i>9.4 nights</i> |
| Per Person Per Trip                                | 1,232             | 1,880             |
| Per Person per Day                                 | 154               | 200               |
| <hr/>  |                   |                   |
| <b>Total Economic Impact-Per Trip</b>              | <b>2,072</b>      | <b>2,904</b>      |
| <b>Total Economic Impact-Per Day</b>               | <b>259</b>        | <b>309</b>        |

# Report Structure



Visitor Profile



Visitor  
Characteristics  
& Preferences



Information &  
Decision Making



Visitor Spending  
& Impact



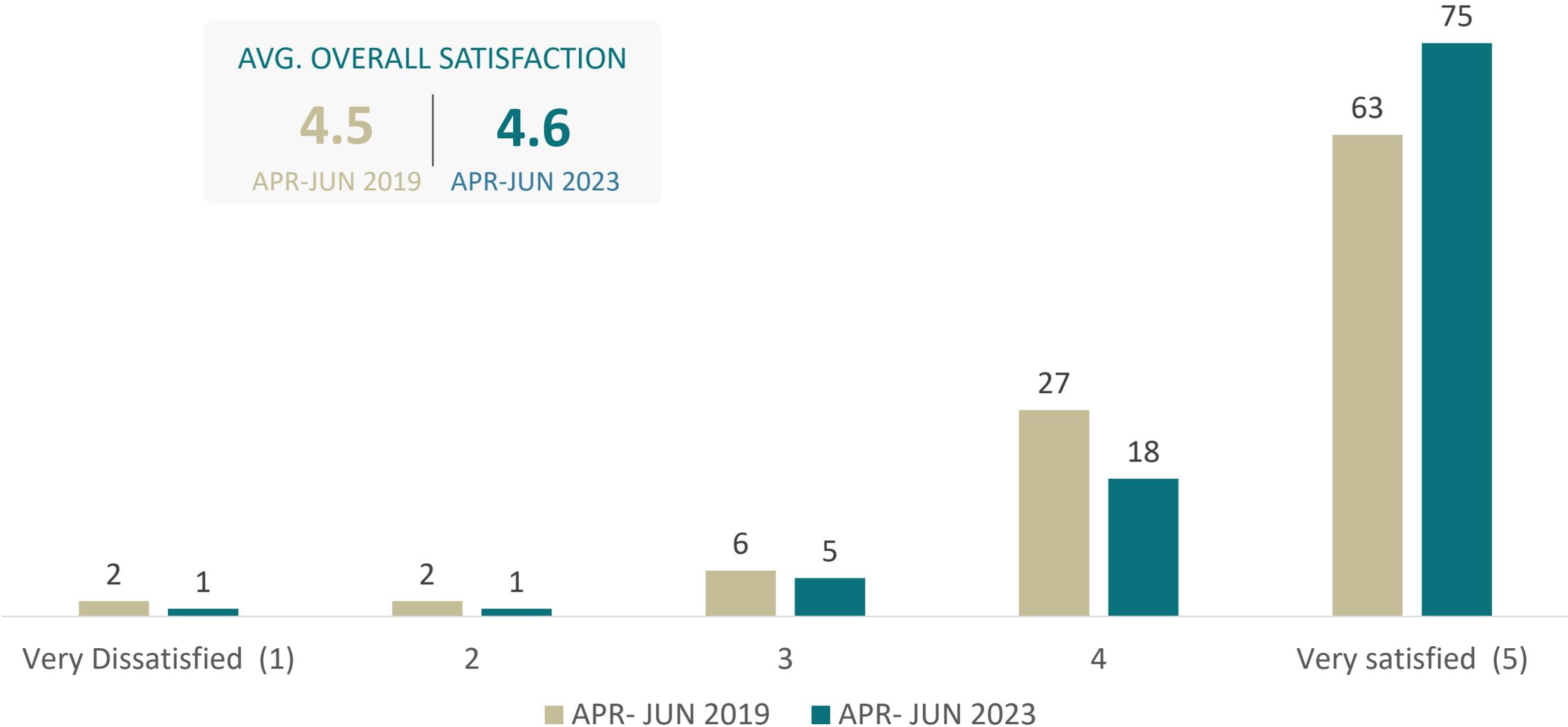
Visitor  
Satisfaction

# Visitor Overall Satisfaction

AVG. OVERALL SATISFACTION

**4.5** | **4.6**

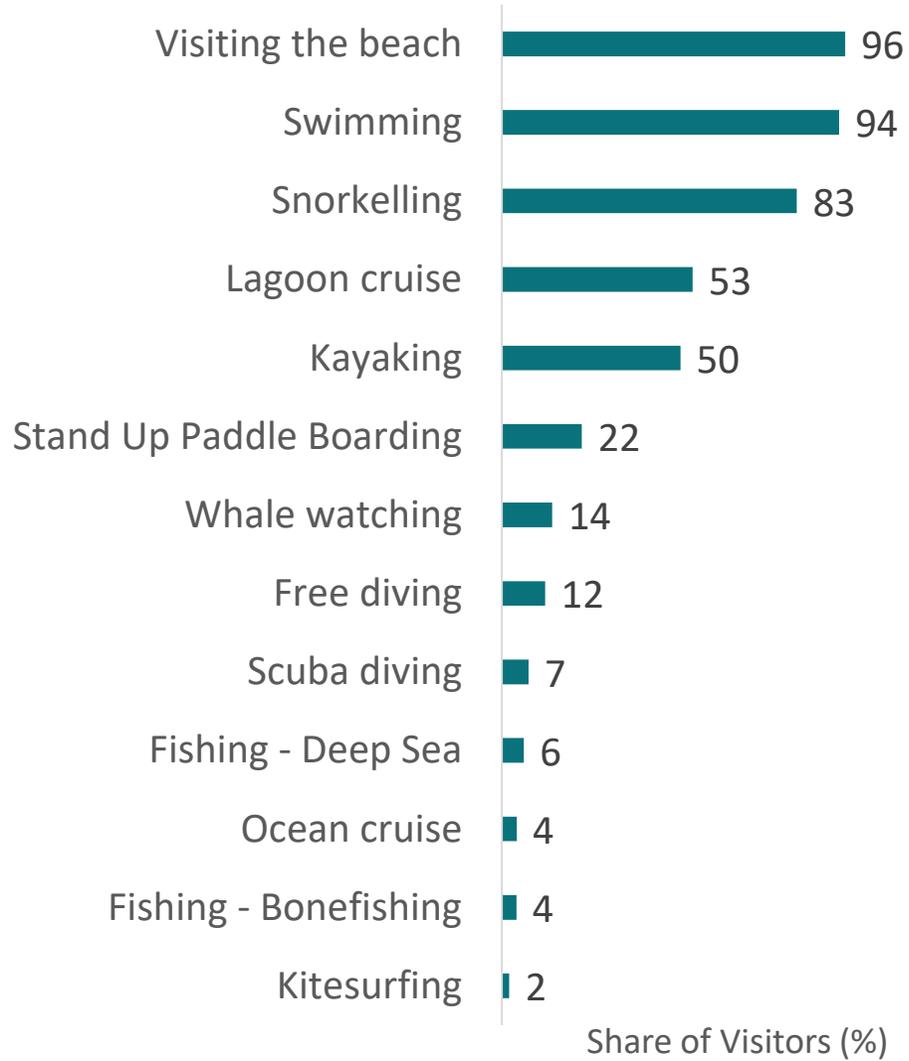
APR-JUN 2019 | APR-JUN 2023



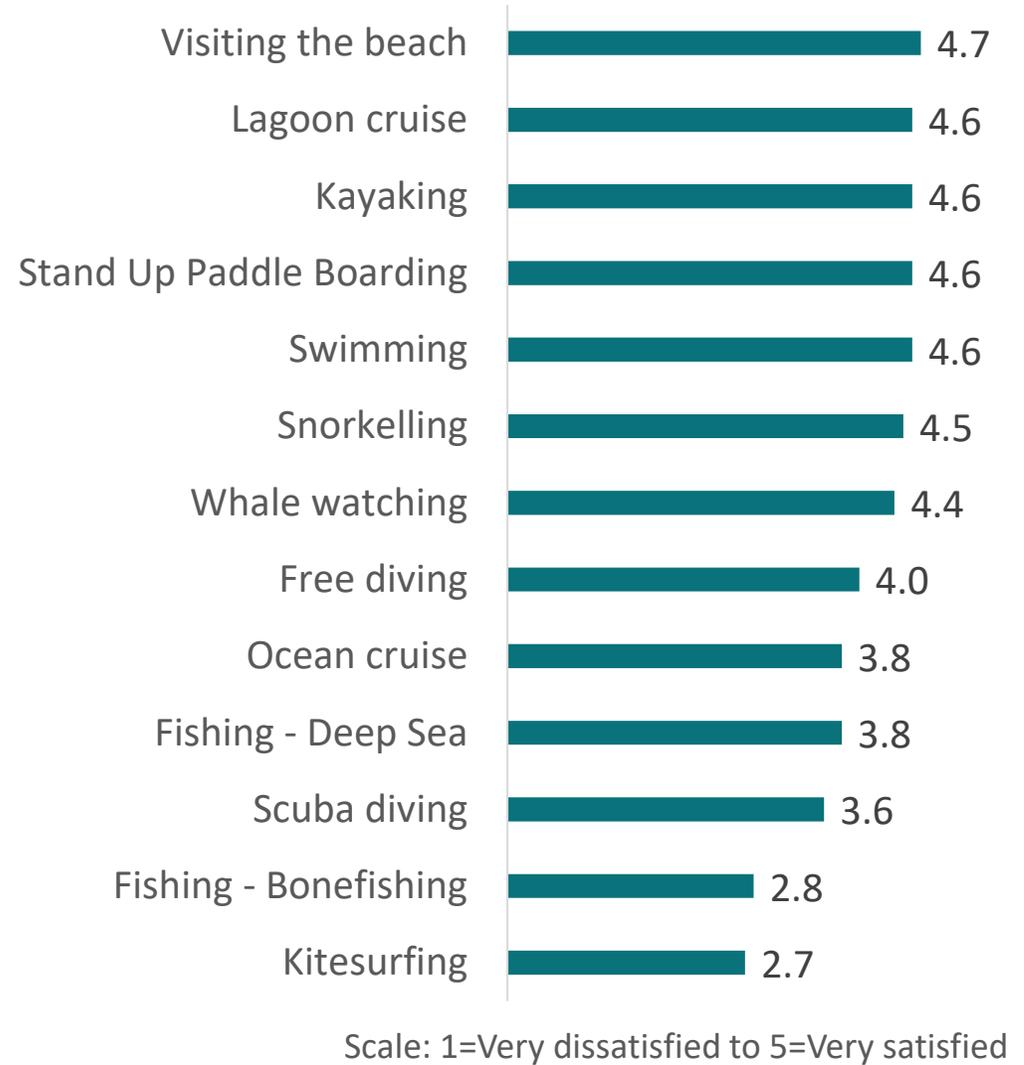
Note: Due to rounding, some totals do not sum to 100%.

# Water-based Activities

Participation



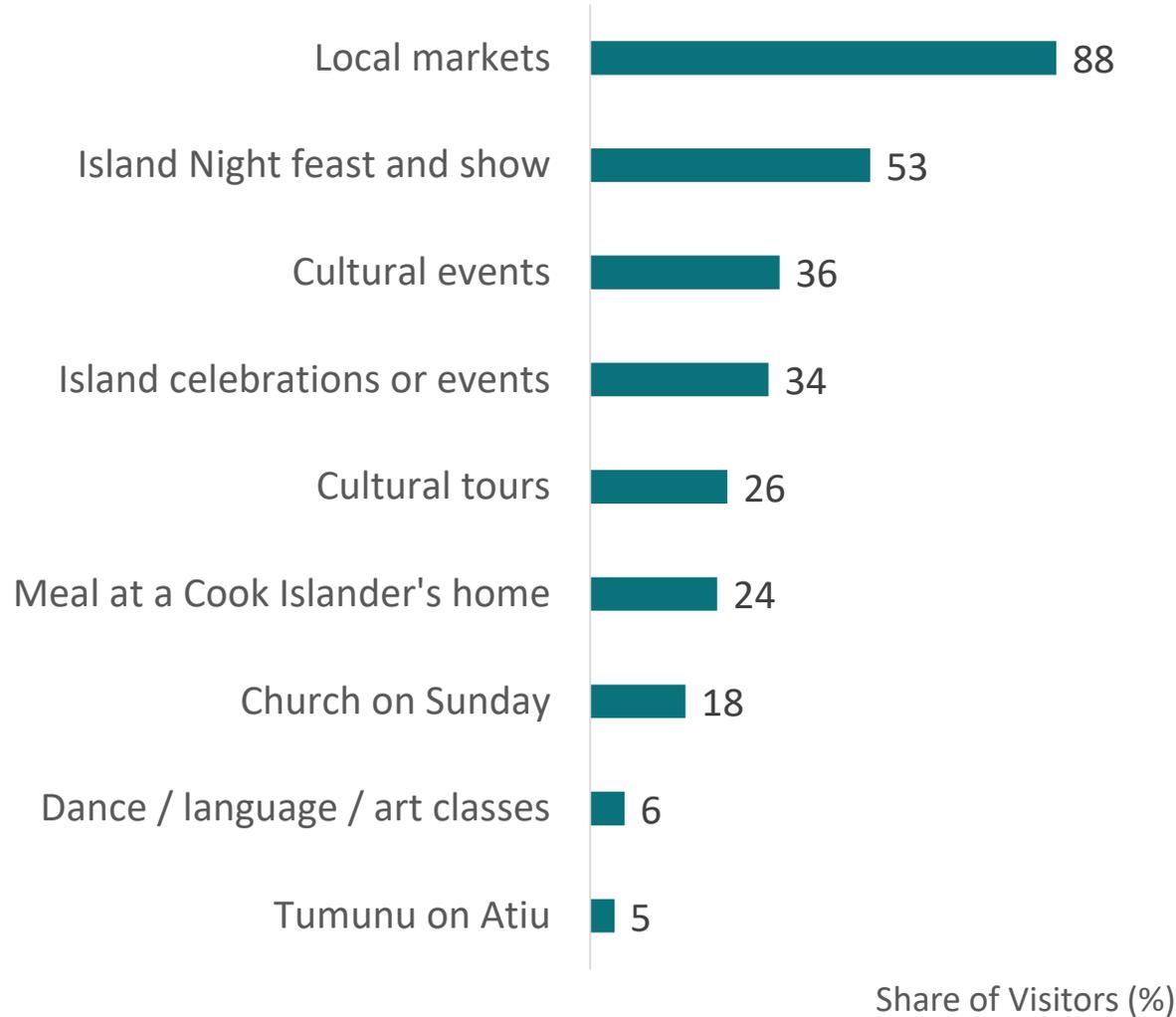
Satisfaction



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

# Cultural Interaction

Participation



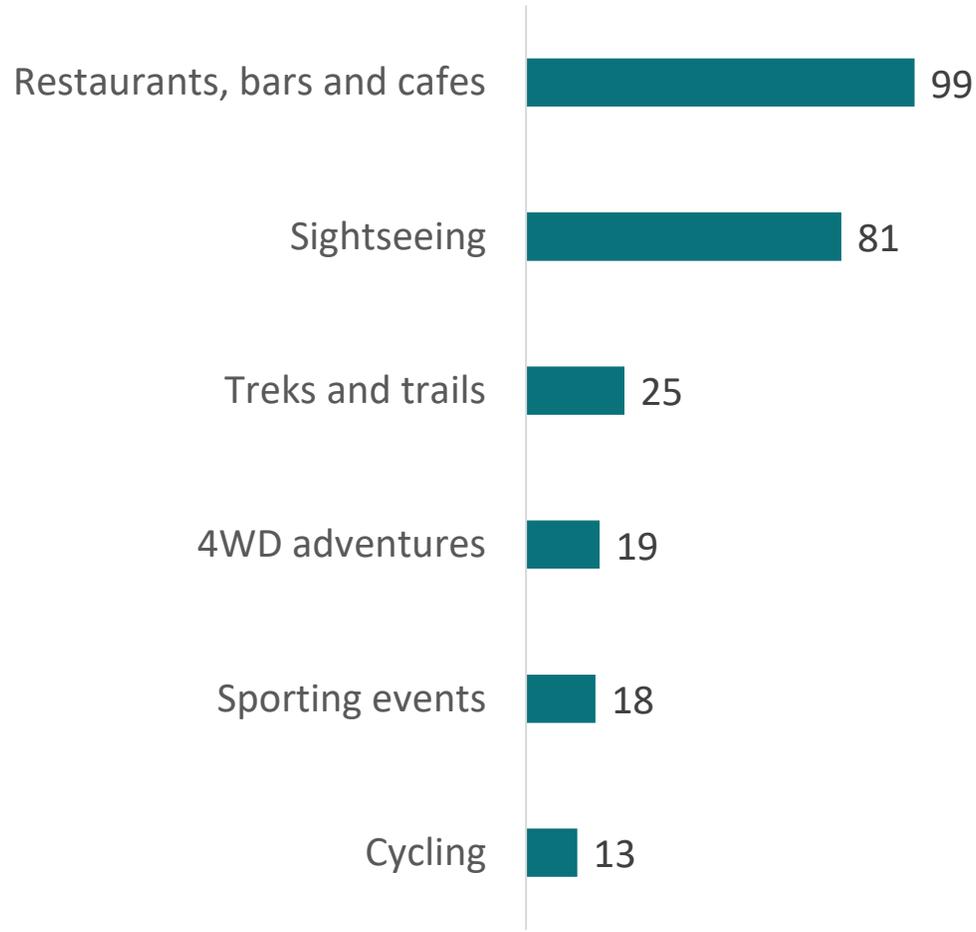
Satisfaction



Note: \* n < 10. Multiple responses, so total does not add up to 100%

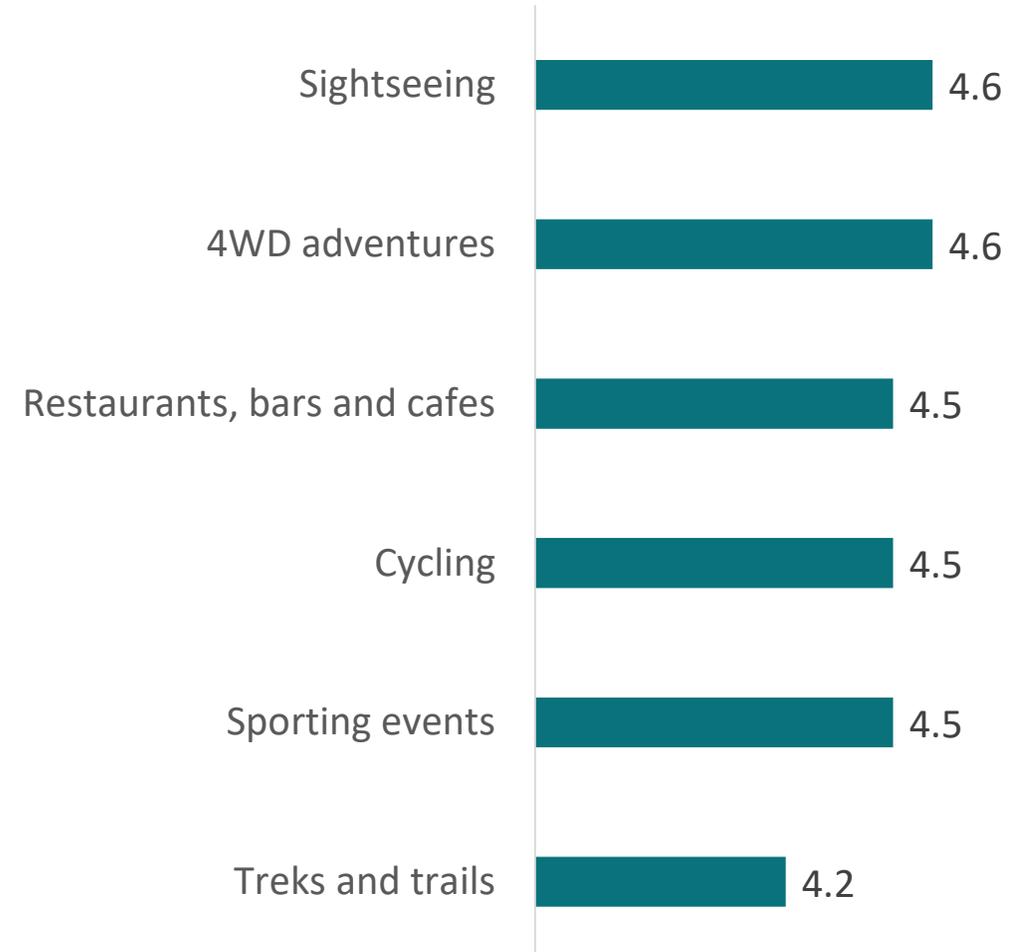
# Land-based Activities

Participation



Share of Visitors (%)

Satisfaction

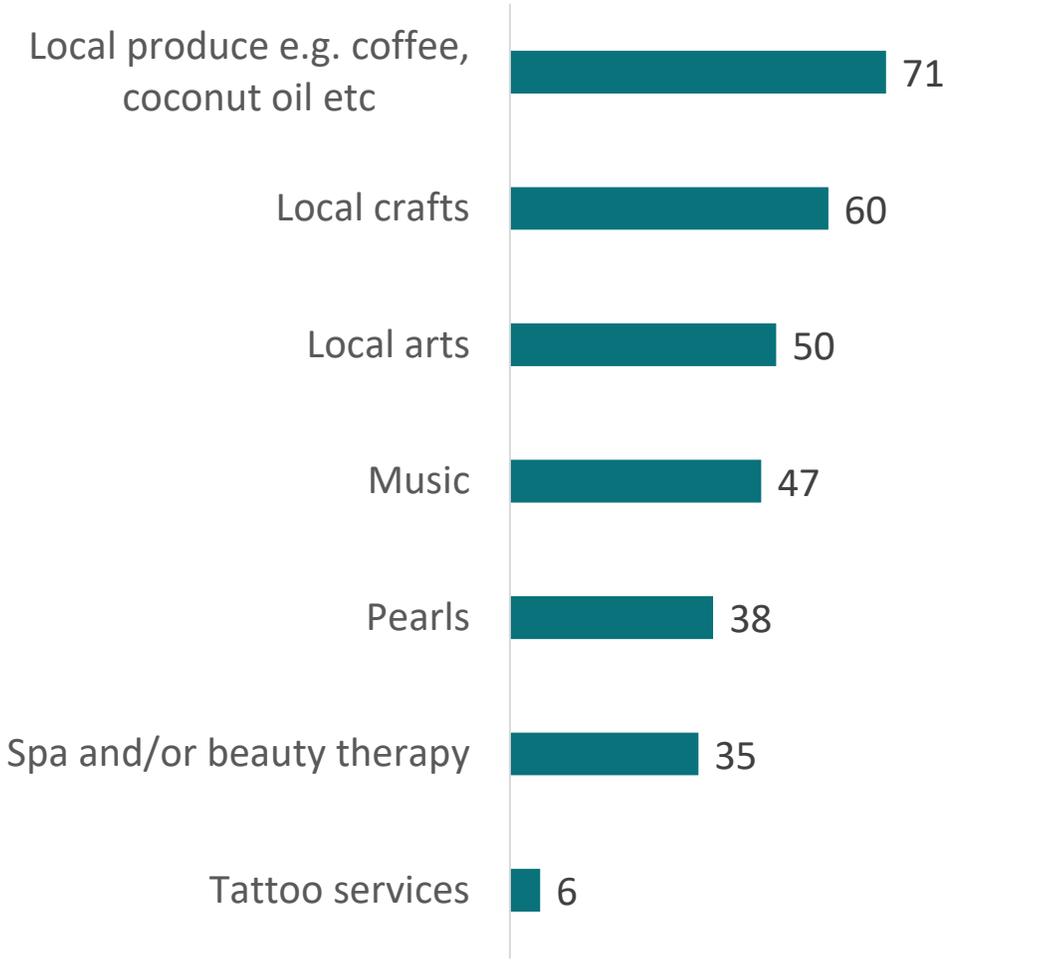


Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

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

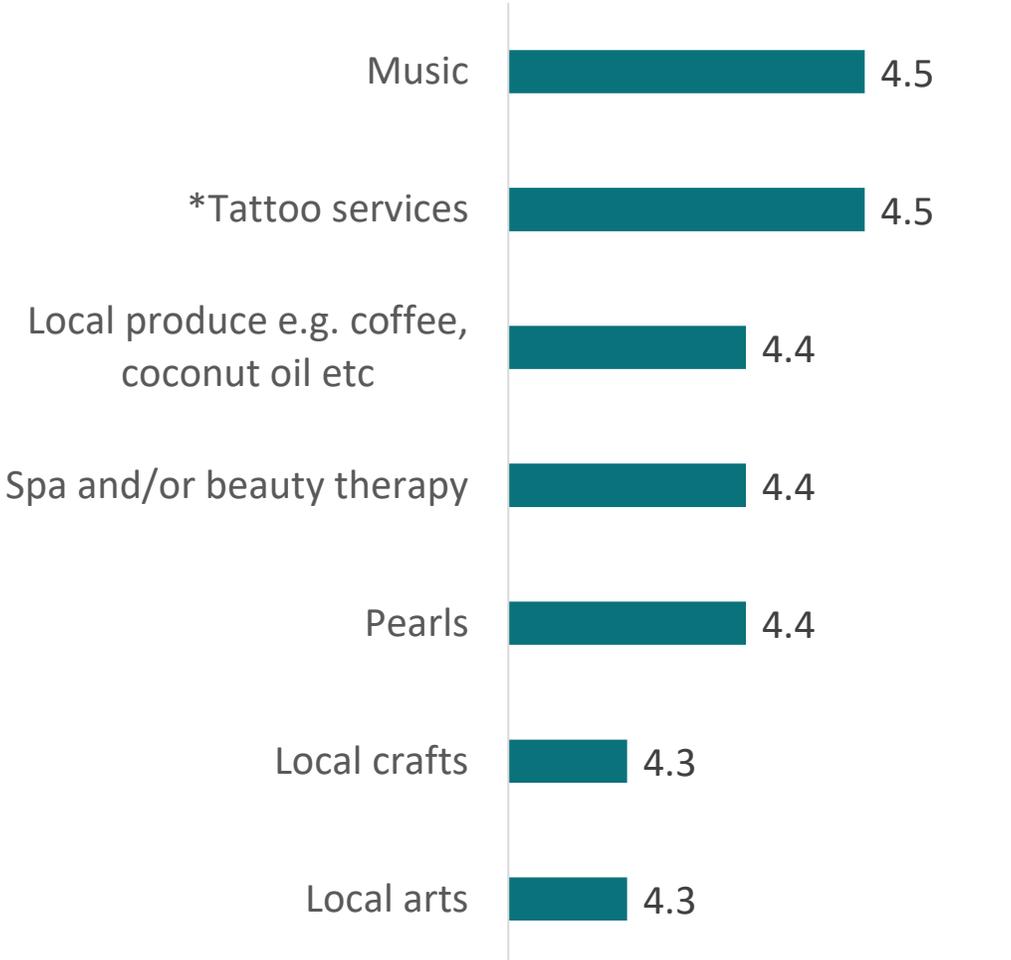
# Shopping Activities

Participation



Share of Visitors (%)

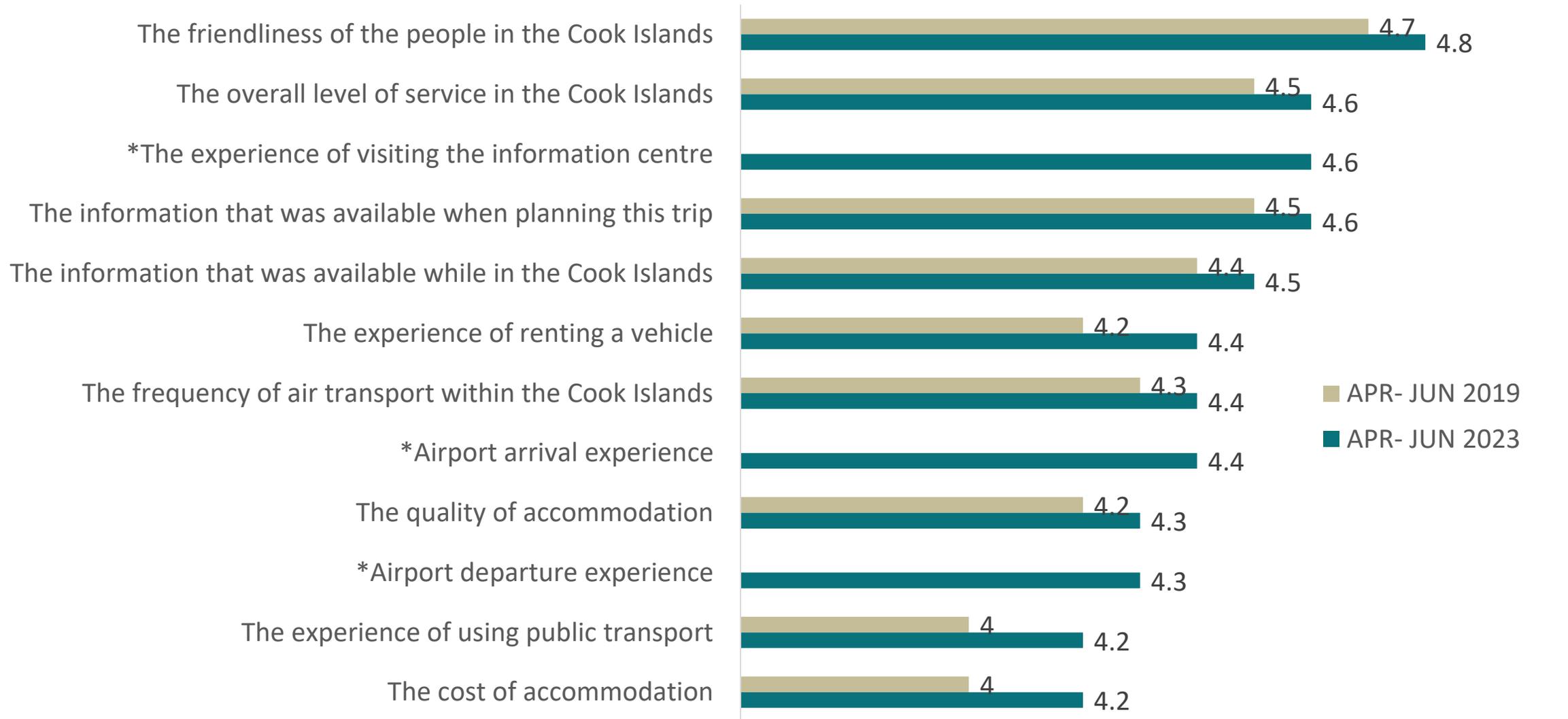
Satisfaction



Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

Note: \* n < 10. Multiple responses, so total does not add up to 100%

# Satisfaction with Cook Islands Services

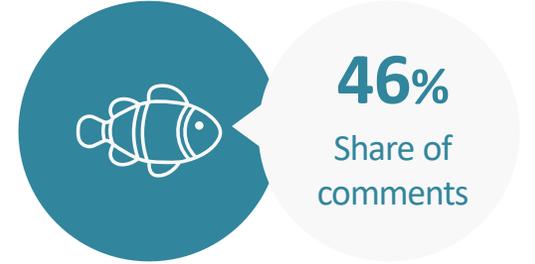


Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

# Most Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands



# Most Appealing – Environment, Cleanliness and Weather



- + Beauty of the beaches and lagoon.
- + Nice beaches, nice reef, ability to do whale watching from the shore.
- + Scenic landscape. Blue water, green mountains.
- + The natural beauty of the Islands and relaxing atmosphere.
- + Clean and no signs of rubbish or litter.
- + How lush the vegetation was.
- + The lagoons, turtles, the people.
- + The warmth on Aitutaki, the beautiful lagoon and lovely accommodation at Heaven to Sea.

# Most Appealing – Local People

- + The friendliness of the people.
- + How friendly people were.
- + Friendly trustworthy people. Safe honest people.
- + The people were extremely nice and happy to see tourists.
- + Absolutely love the island and the people. It is our home from home!
- + The people, they make the place what it is and I can't wait to go back.
- + The people are brilliant. We have locals as family friends & they are brilliant.
- + We visit the Cook Islands each year, we come back as we love how we are treated as guests, nothing is ever too much trouble, everyone is friendly and happy. We always feel like we are coming home.

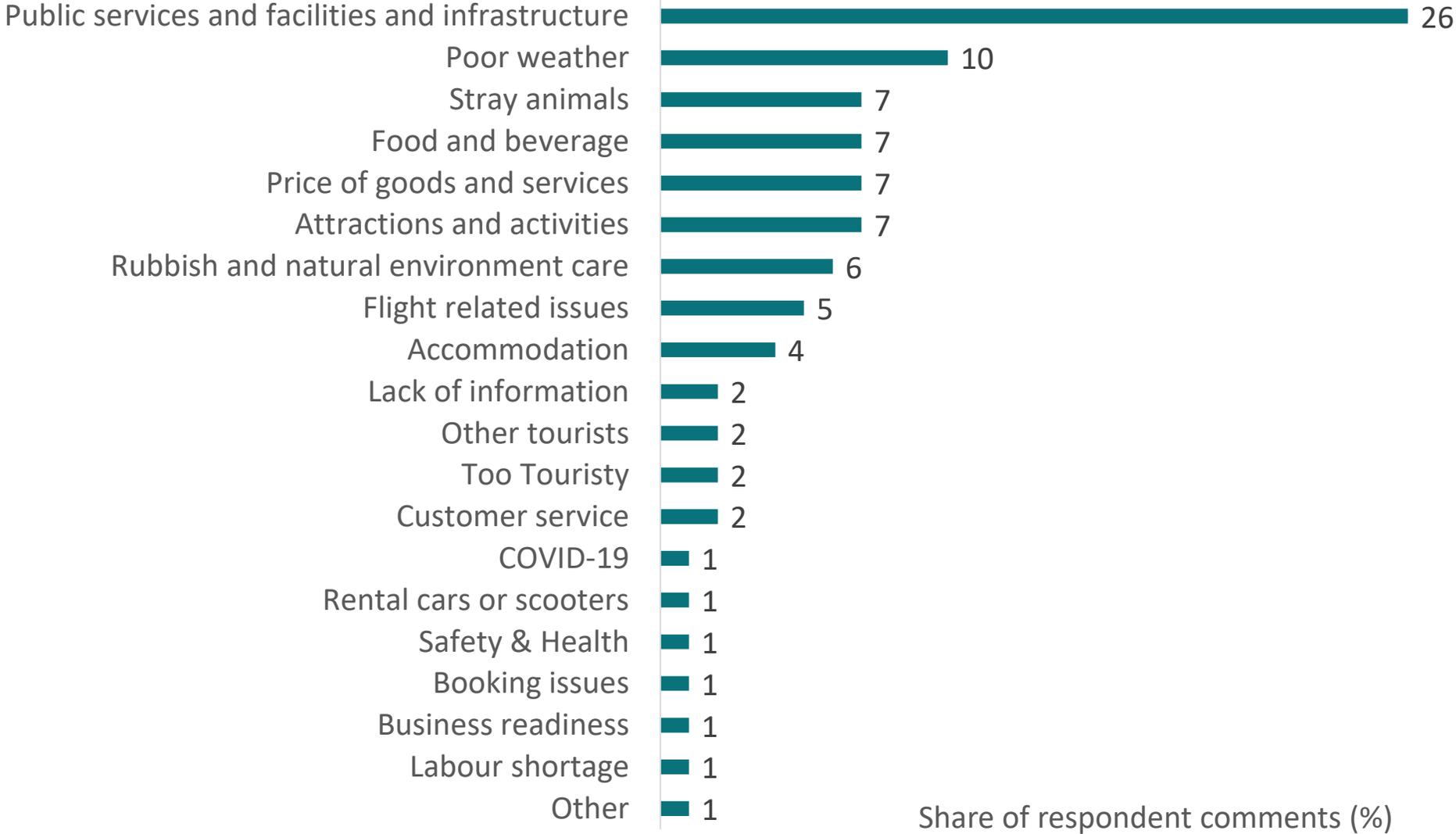


# Most Appealing – Activities, Attractions and Entertainment



- + Safe swimming , kayaking and snorkelling.
- + Glass bottom boat.
- + Swimming with the Turtles was life changing
- + Playing golf.
- + Snorkeling, lagoon trips, the bus on Raro.
- + Scuba diving, island night, clean beaches.
- + The cultural sites and sightseeing and the markets.
- + The beautiful and safe lagoon, also really enjoyed trip to museum.
- + We loved the snorkelling seeing incredible fish that was easy with our 8-year-old. Also loved just wandering along the beaches and seeing what we could find.

# Least Appealing Aspects of the Cook Islands



Share of respondent comments (%)

Note: Total responses for the question N=163. Multiple responses, so total does not add up to 100%.

# Least Appealing - Public Service and Infrastructure



**26%**  
Share of  
comments

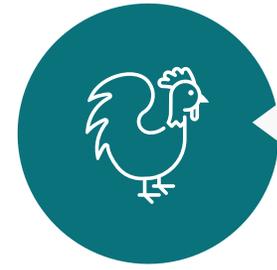
- + The roads when it rains.
- + The poor lighting of the road, which has no sidewalk or bike lane.
- + A bit harder to get around on Raro without a car. Bus service quite slow.
- + Bus service anti clockwise finishes too early to use after dinner meaning walking back to hotel.
- + Lack of internet service. Need better internet.
- + Wait to get through customs on arrival.
- + The rundown look in some buildings.
- + Everything closed on Sundays - it was very difficult to find somewhere to eat during the day.

# Least Appealing Aspects – Poor Weather



- + The weather in Rarotonga was not good.
- + Stormy weather during our stay meant we didn't swim or snorkel.
- + Few activities to do when the weather is bad.
- + Weather - had some bad weather which made water visibility poor.
- + Rubbish windy wet weather.
- + It rained nearly every day.
- + Not as warm as we hoped.

# Least Appealing - Stray Animals



**7%**  
Share of  
comments

- + Roaming dogs, didn't always feel safe.
- + DOGS, Dogs were out of control, couldn't go out at night without being attacked. Even during the day walking on the street Dog would rush you aggressively.
- + Dogs. Especially when barking all night. It could put me off returning if not sorted out.
- + Roosters crowing and dogs barking all night!
- + The roosters at 4am in the morning.
- + Worrying about dogs and chickens running around roads.

# Least Appealing Aspects – Food and Beverage



- + Shortage of coffee shops.
- + Food choices are a bit limited.
- + Poor breakfast provided. Not as warm as we hoped.
- + Would like to eat and have available traditional local food available. Western food showed its dominance.
- + Lack of variety of fresh fruit and vegetables. Very expensive basic healthy groceries at the supermarkets.
- + Food, eating out we found that it wasn't the best quality.

# Suggestions for Improvement



Share of respondent comments (%)

Note: Total responses for the question N=61. Multiple responses, so total does not add up to 100%.

# Suggestions for Improvement - Indicative Quotes

- + Upgrading the Roads. More footpaths.
- + More frequent and timetabled bus services.
- + The feral dogs need to be leashed or not allowed on the beach by themselves.
- + Please get rid of the many loud rooster. Annoying during the night.
- + We would love more flights to outer islands!
- + I don't think it's appropriate for a 40-minute flight from Raro to Aitutaki should cost the same price as I paid as an international flight from Sydney to Raro.
- + Accommodation was pretty dated. It is expensive for what you are asked to pay for. If you compare it to the star ratings, they have assigned to the accommodation doesn't stack up.

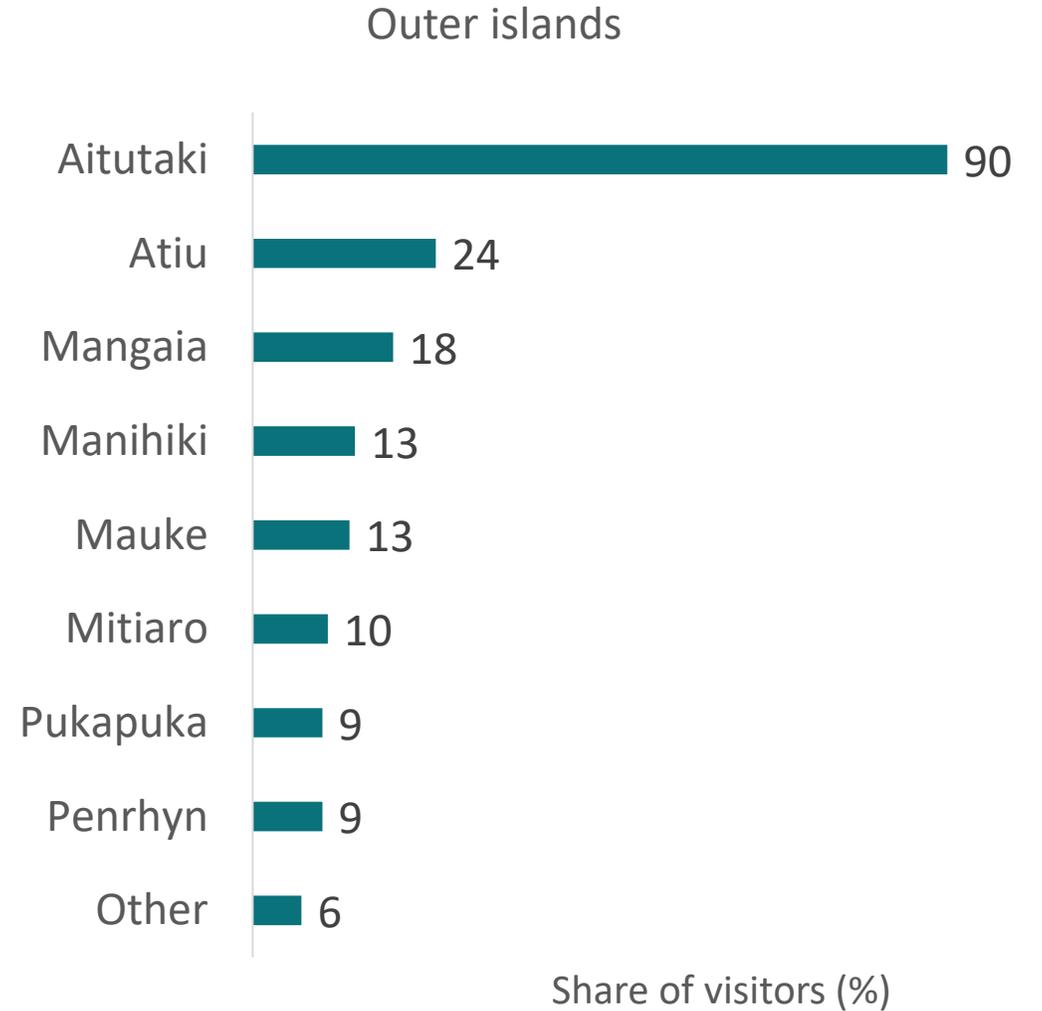
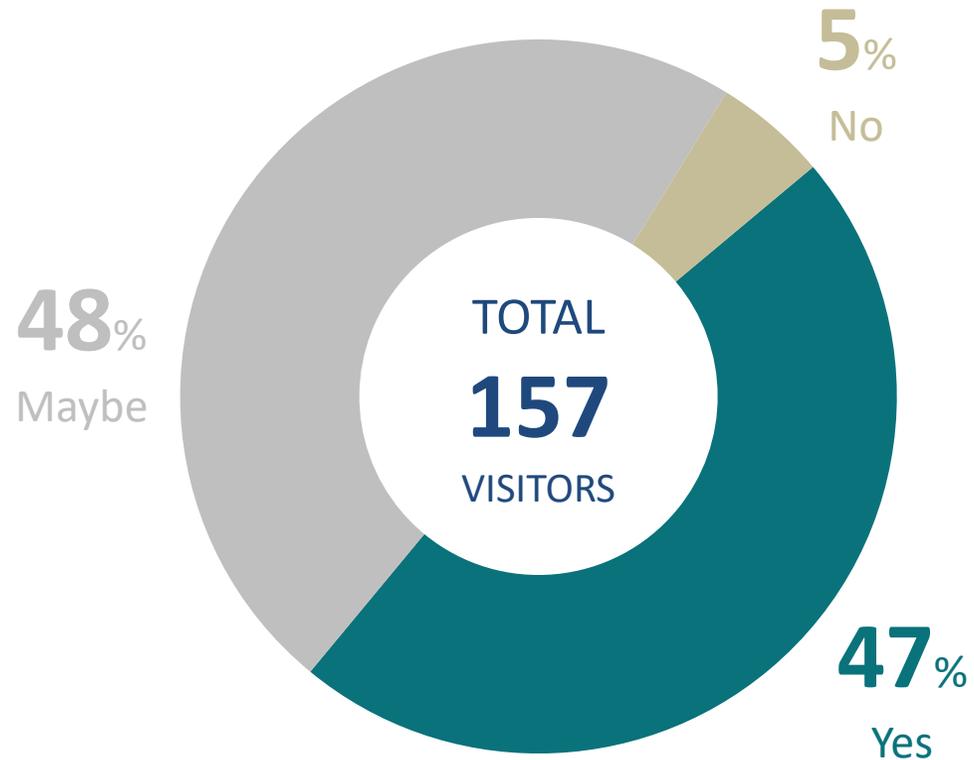
# Willingness to Return



## Reasons for Not Willing to Return -Indicative Quotes

- + A paradise but seen it now (for us a holiday for once in a lifetime).
- + Too boring especially when wet weather. Lack of healthy food options. Price of hotels can get me much better quality elsewhere.
- + Very expensive for what it was. There are cheaper options with better weather.
- + The terrible DOG problem - you are trapped in your hotel as it's not safe to walk streets day or night as dogs attack.

# Willingness to Visit Outer Islands



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

# Willingness to Recommend

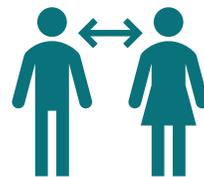


## Reasons for Not Willing to Recommend - Indicative Quotes

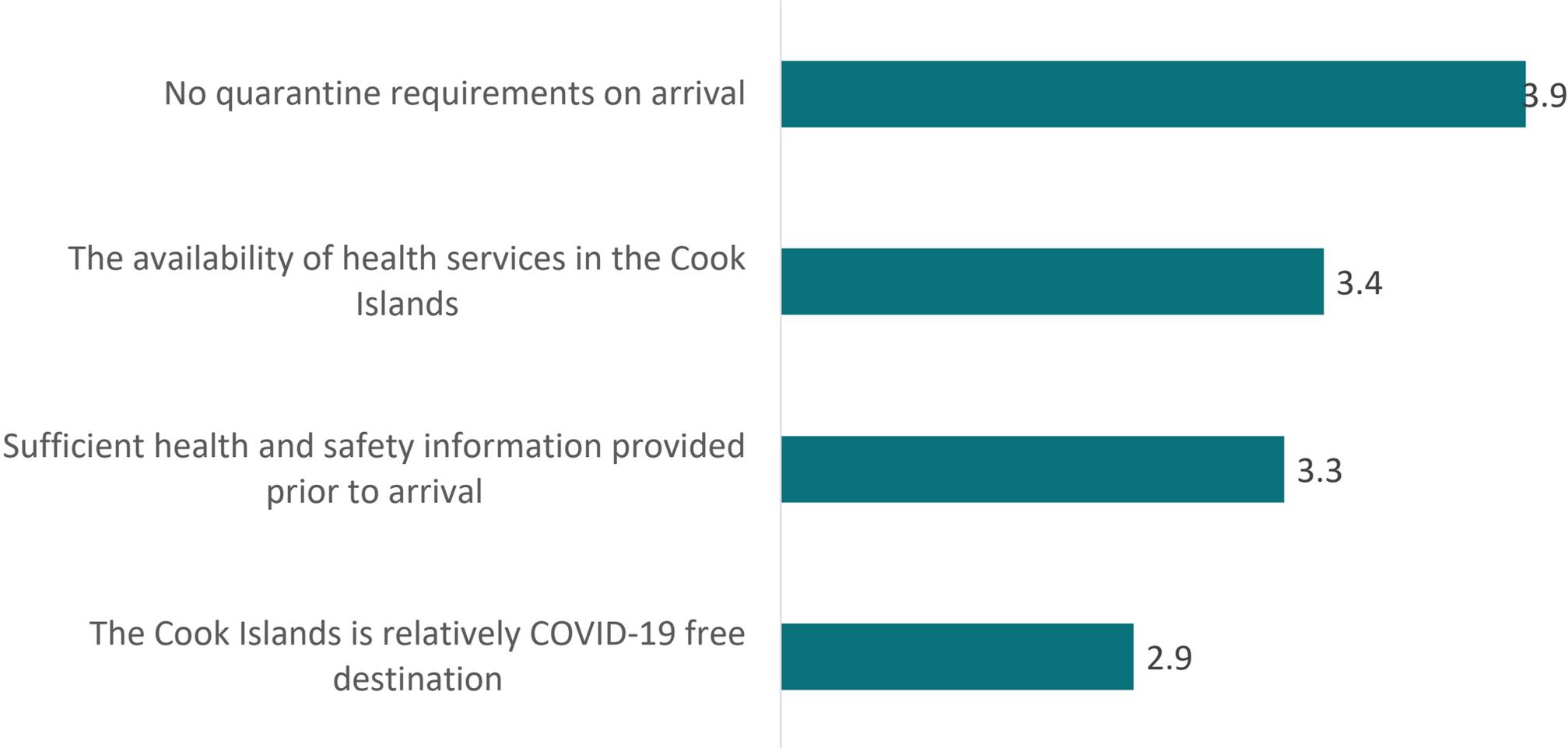
- + All the aggressive DOG, not a fun place.
- + Still developing tourism. Better facilities and closer-to-home options are available elsewhere.
- + Lack of food options. Too expensive.

# APR-JUN 2023 VISITORS

# COVID RESPONSES

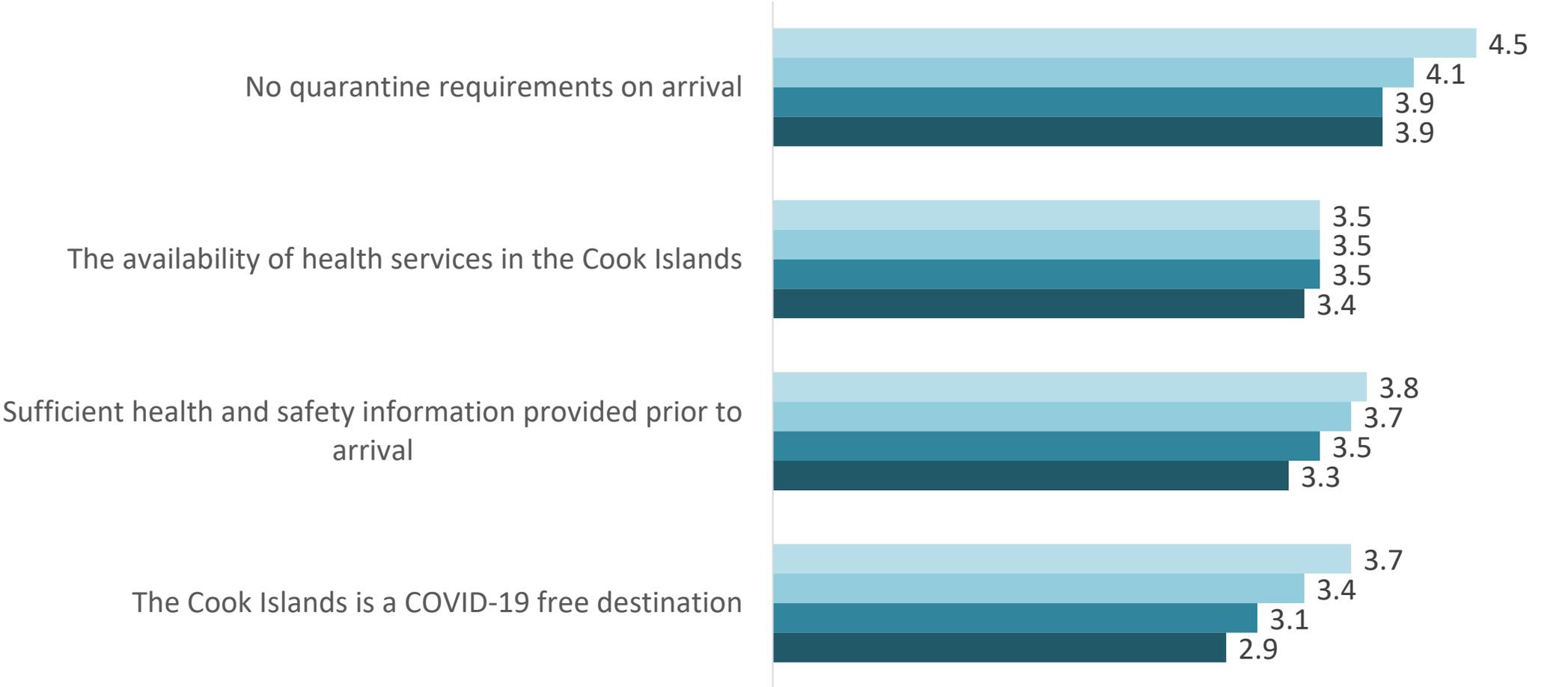


## The important factors in your decision to travel to the Cook Islands



Scale: 1=Not at all important to 5=Extremely important

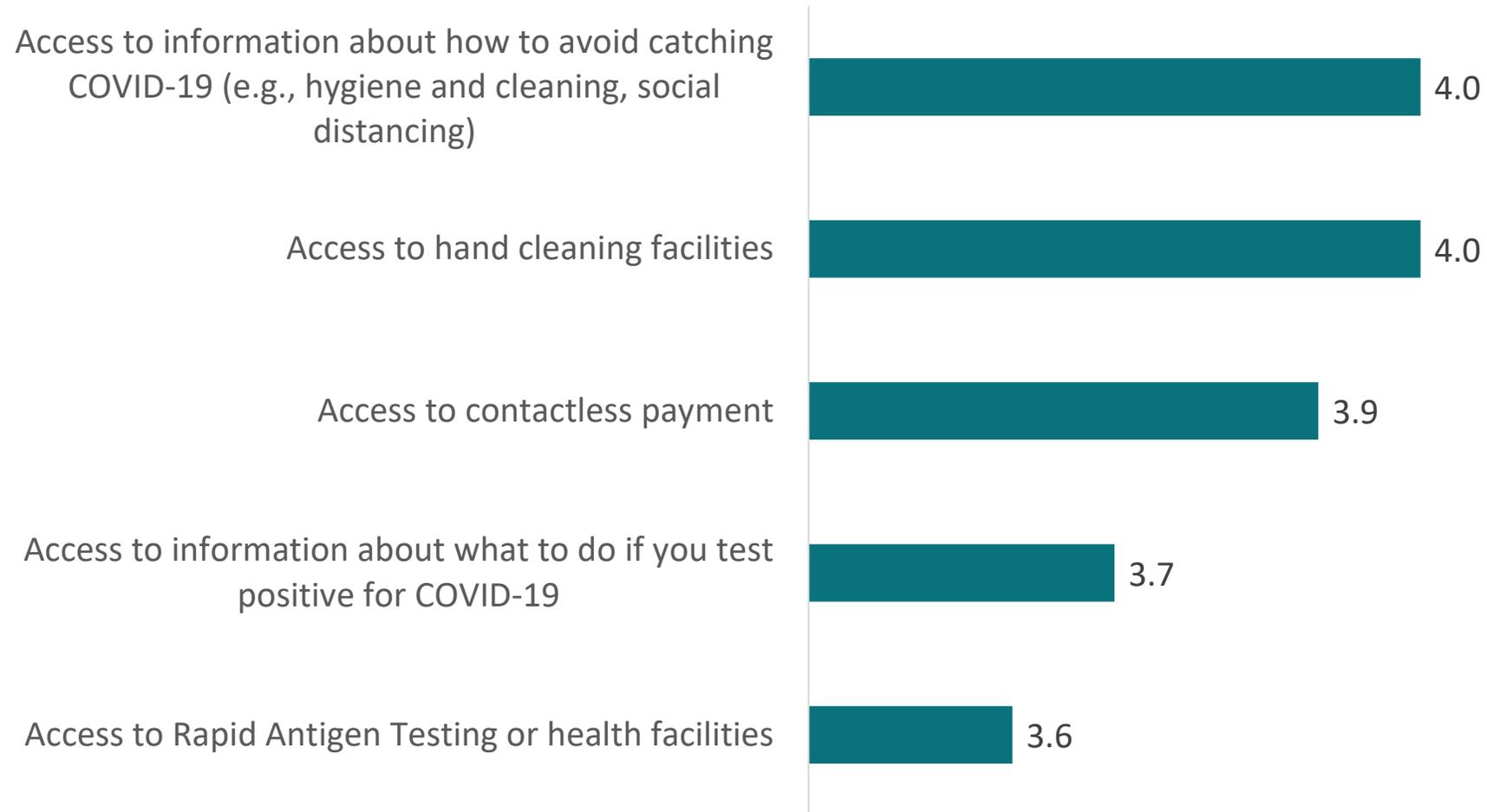
# The important factors in your decision to travel to the Cook Islands – Time series



Scale: 1=Not at all important to 5=Extremely important

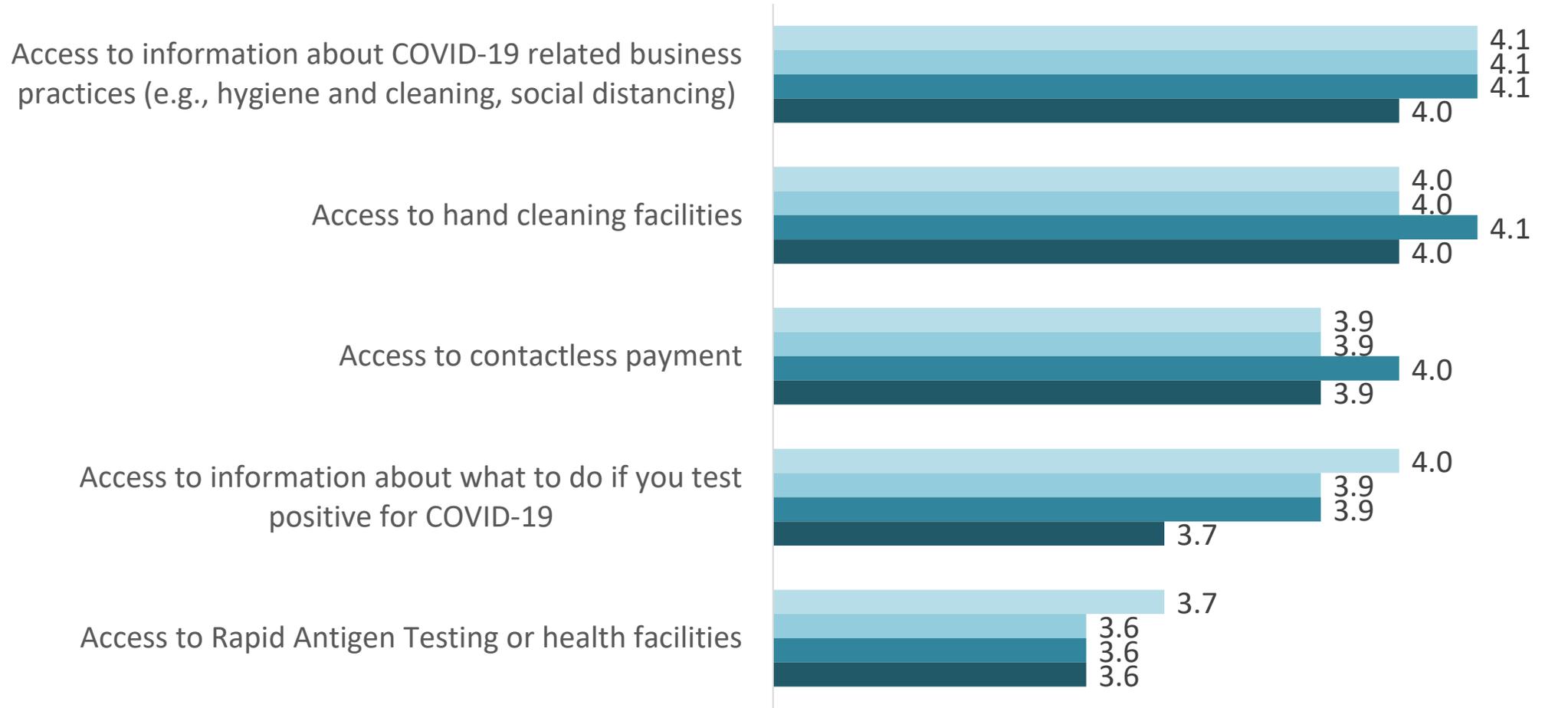
■ July to September 2022   ■ October to December 2022   ■ January to March 2023   ■ April to June 2023

## Satisfaction with COVID responses



Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

## Satisfaction with COVID responses –Time series



Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

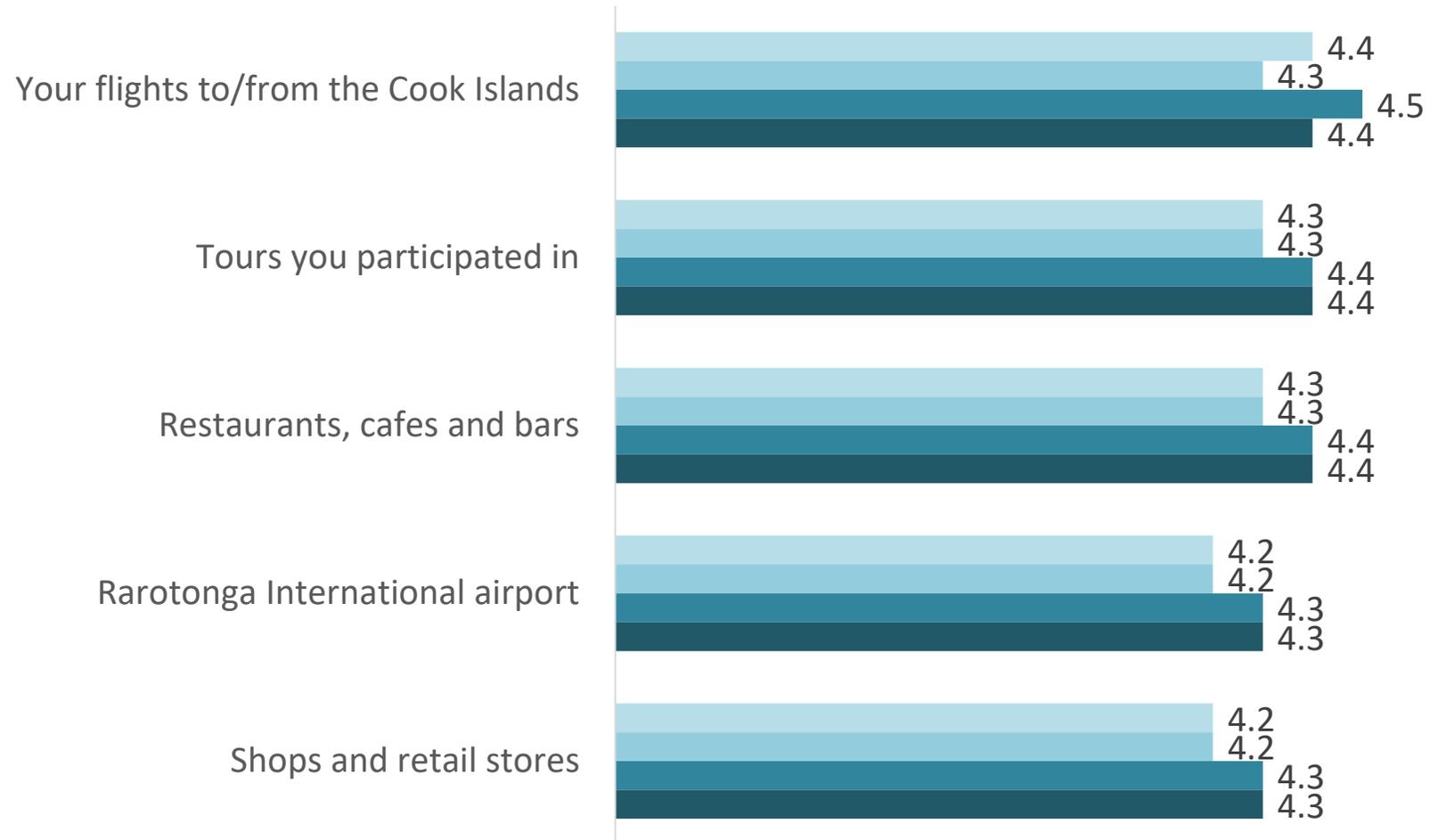
■ July to September 2022 
 ■ October to December 2022 
 ■ January to March 2023 
 ■ April to June 2023

## Satisfaction with health and safety measures



Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

## Satisfaction with health and safety measures –Time series



Scale: 1=Very dissatisfied to 5=Very satisfied

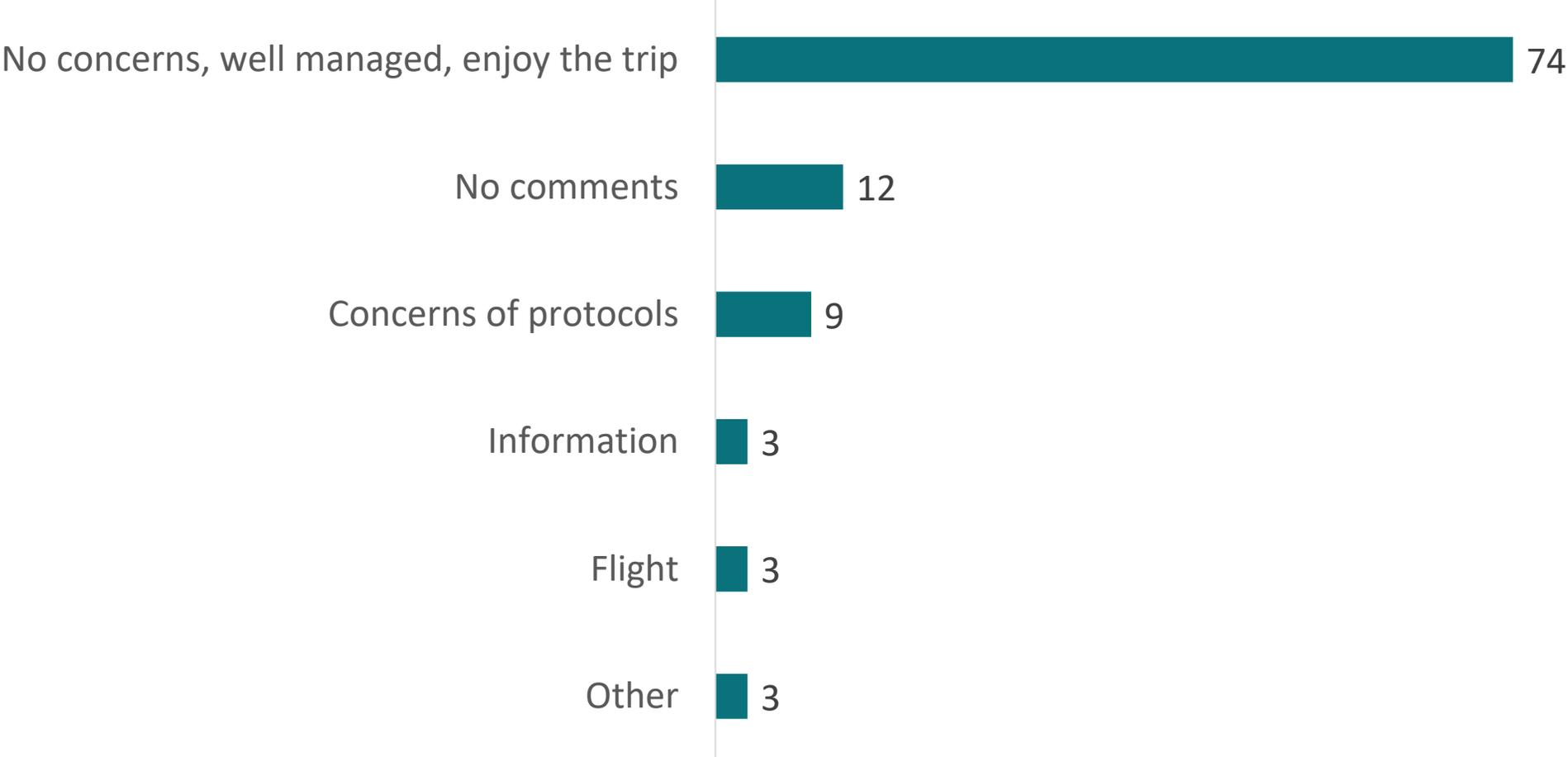
July to September 2022

October to December 2022

January to March 2023

April to June 2023

# Further Comments on COVID-19



Share of respondent comments (%)

Note: N=34

# Further Comments on COVID - Indicative Quotes

74%  
NO CONCERNS



- + Knowing Cook Islands is relatively COVID free.
- + Doesn't raise a hair with me, it's a virus like any other virus,
- + Was never an issue at any place we visited when we visited, the pandemic was history.
- + Accessed all information needed at all times.
- + Perfect amount of care and everything open.
- + It's a cold! Get over it! Move on! it's no longer a thing!

9%  
CONCERNS OF  
PROTOCOLS



- + I think more advertising and announcements in public places to wear a mask if you have symptoms of cold, for COVID.
- + No apparent precautions being taken anywhere.
- + I got very sick the last two days. There were no COVID tests available at hotel.

# Thank you

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