

SAMOA INTERNATIONAL VISITOR SURVEY

Visitors to Upolu Only vs Savai'i Visitors

August 2022 – January 2023



Notes

- The Pacific Tourism Data Initiative (PTDI) team would like to acknowledge the Samoa Tourism Authority (special mention to Pativaine Petaia-Tevita, Kitona Pogi, Werner Tuatagaloa, Dwayne Bentley and the broader email collection and processing team) and Samoa Immigration for their support in this ongoing research.
- The Samoa border was reopened in August 2022. The August 2022 – January 2023 Samoa International Visitor Survey (IVS) data set is analysed to help us understand the international visitors' profile and their spending since the border re-opened.
- There is a total of 1,909 individual respondents in August 2022 – January 2023 Samoa IVS data set. Within these 1,909 respondents, 60% of respondents (n=1,153) only visited Upolu, labelled “Upolu Only”; 27% of respondents (n=522) visited either only Savai'i or Savai'i and other places, which is labelled “Savai'i”.
- The “Samoa IVS Visitors to Upolu Only vs Savai'i Visitors” report includes: (1) the characteristics of visitors to each destination; (2) information sources & purchasing behaviour of “Upolu Only” group and “Savai'i” group; (3) visitor expenditure of each group; (4) COVID responses & comments; (5) visitors satisfaction; and (6) results and indicative quotes from most and least appealing elements of the visit, and improvement suggestions.
- Data have been weighted based on actual arrivals by country of residence over the same time period.
- All general reports and data mining reports from Samoa IVS are available at:

[Pacific Tourism Data Initiative - AUT](#)

Number of visitors: August 2022 – January 2023



522 (27%)
Savai'i visitors
(Includes those who spent time on other islands)

1,153 (60%)
Upolu Only visitors

Contents



1. Visitor Characteristics



2. Information Sources & Purchasing Behaviour



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5. COVID Responses & Comments

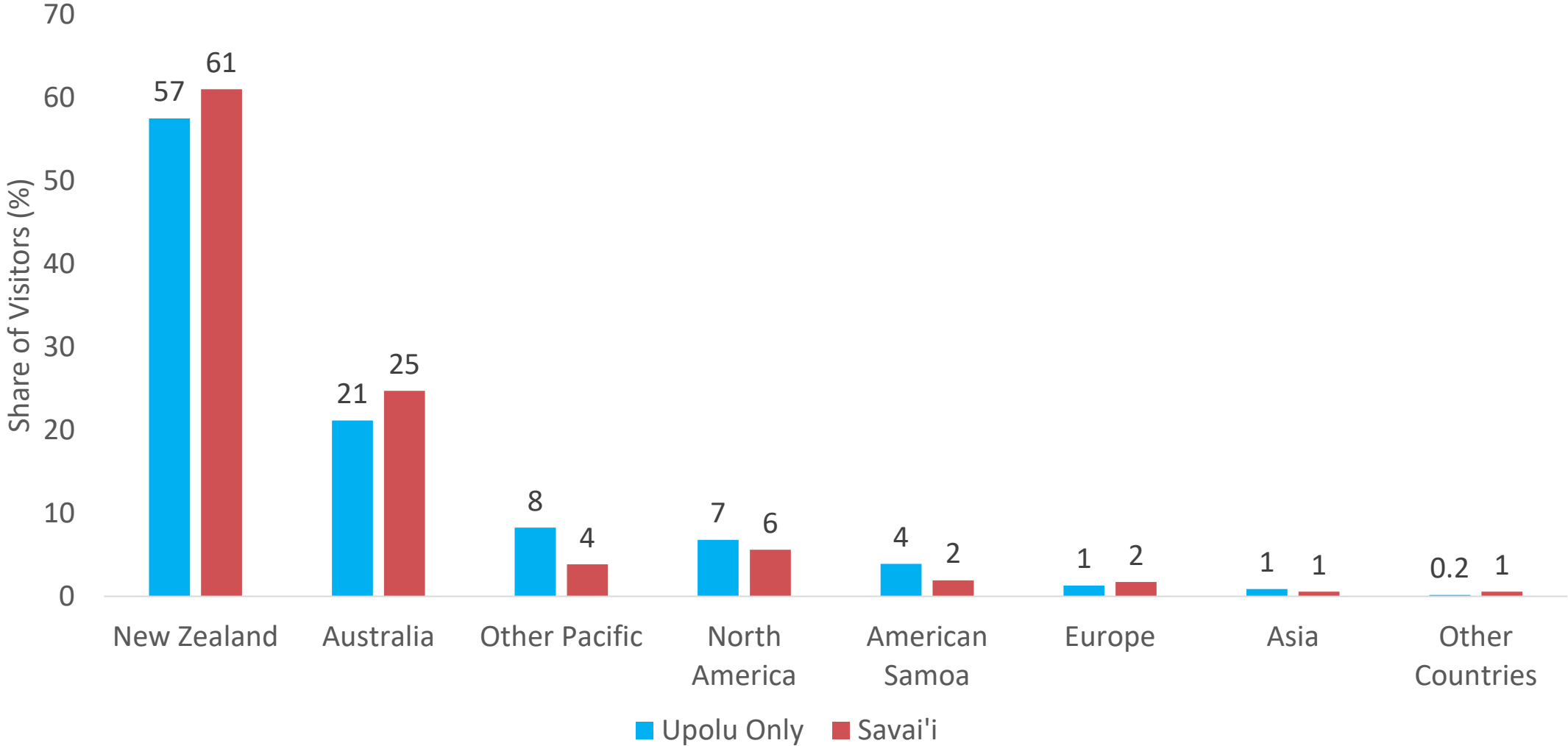


6. Most Appealing, Least Appealing & Improvement

VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

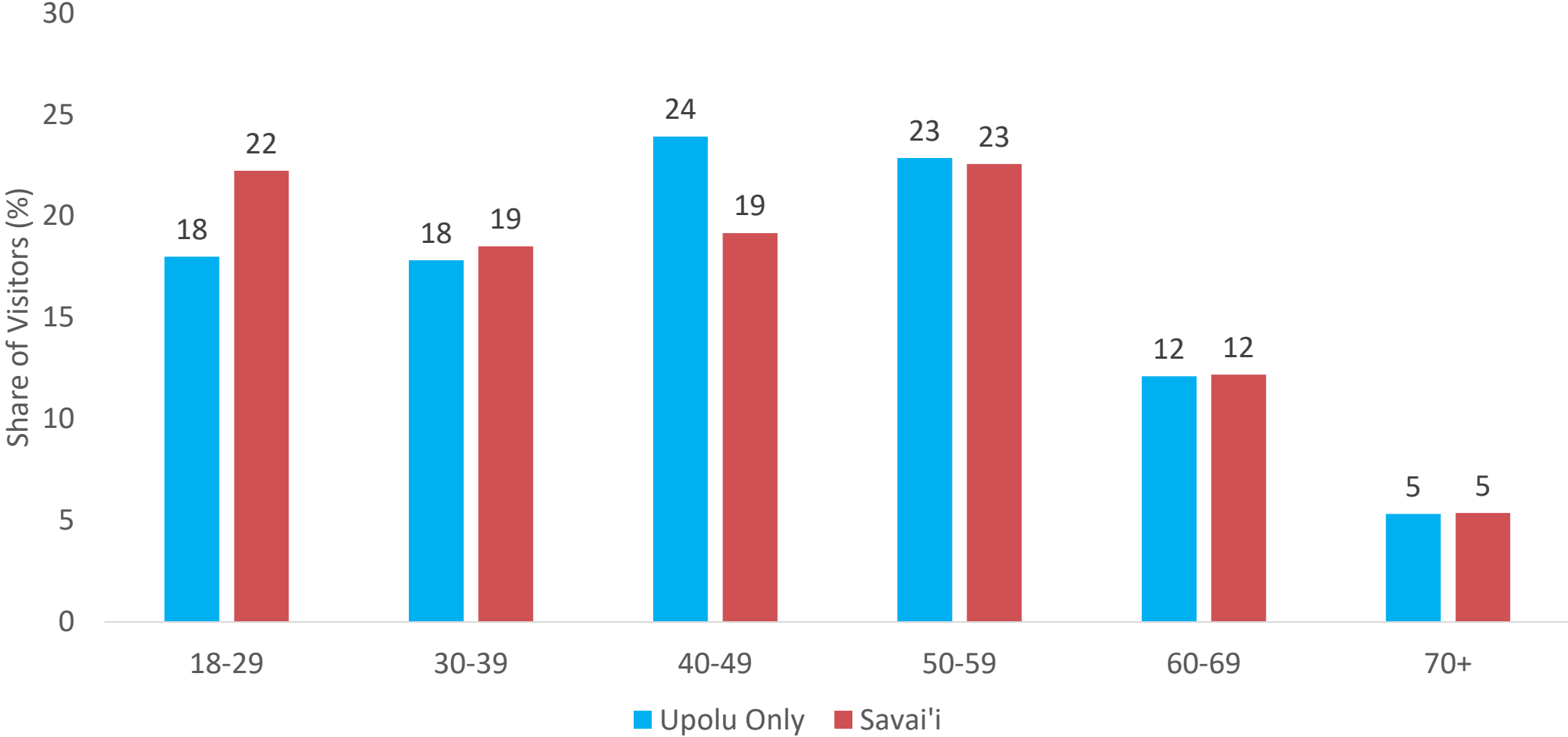


Country of Origin

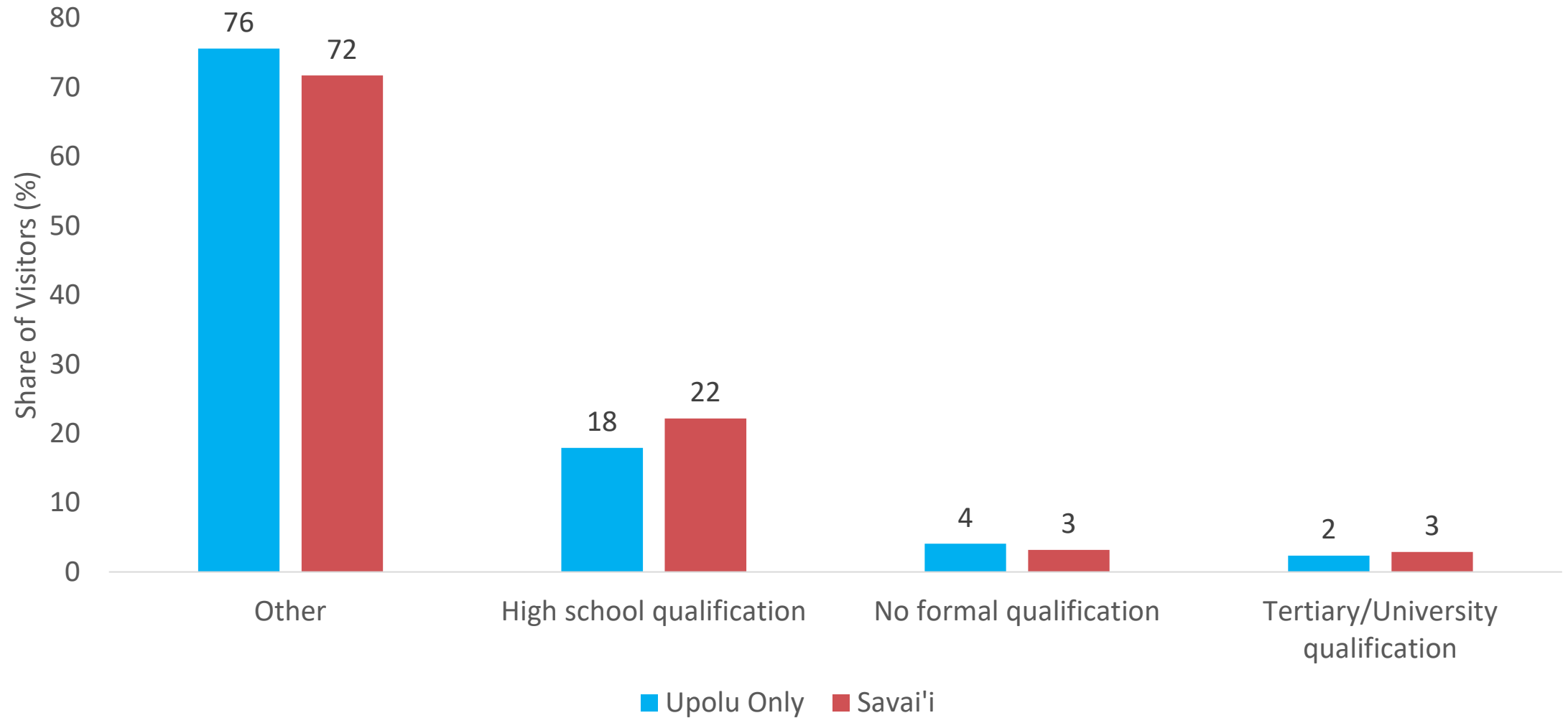


Note: survey data thus unweighted.

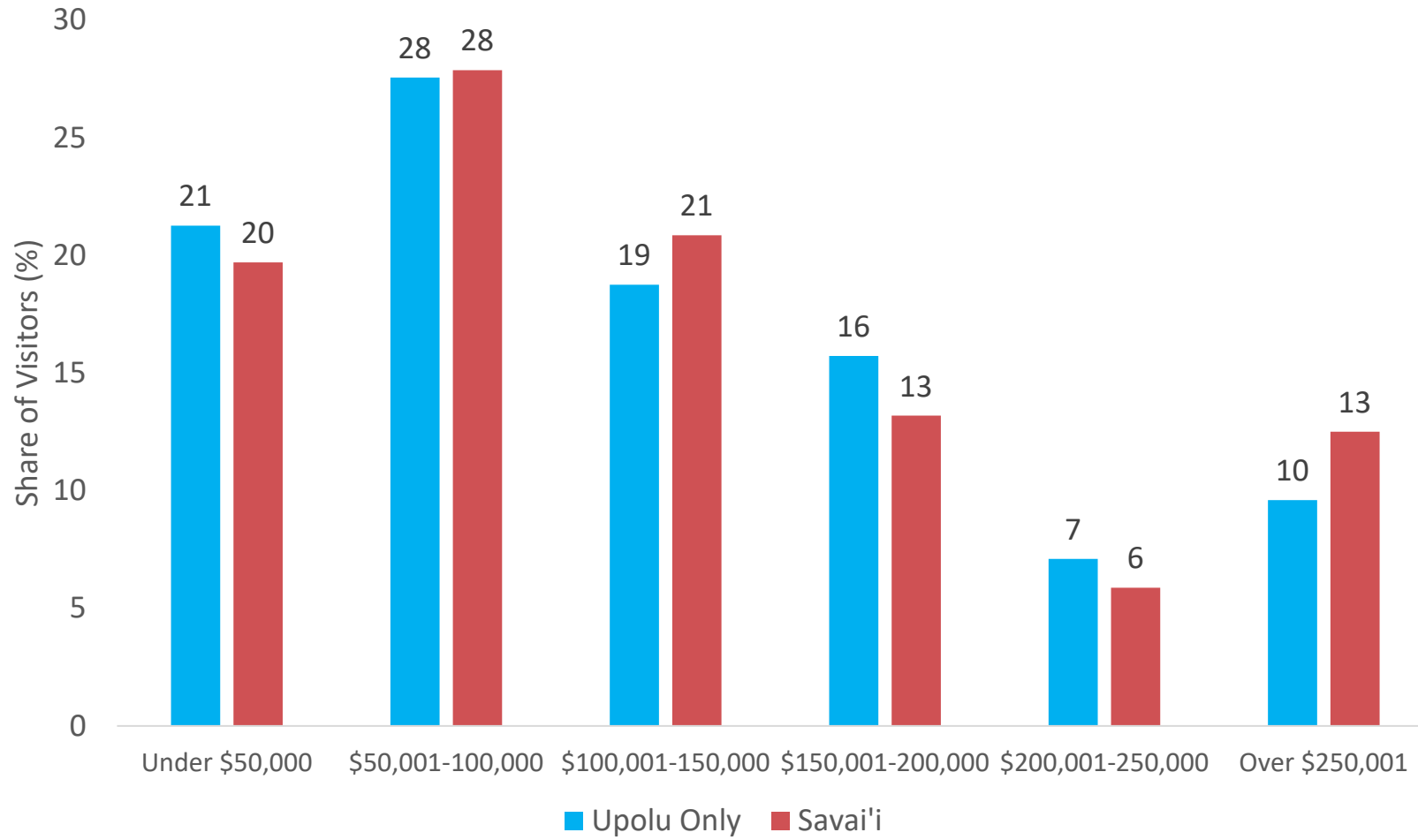
Distribution of age groups



Highest qualifications



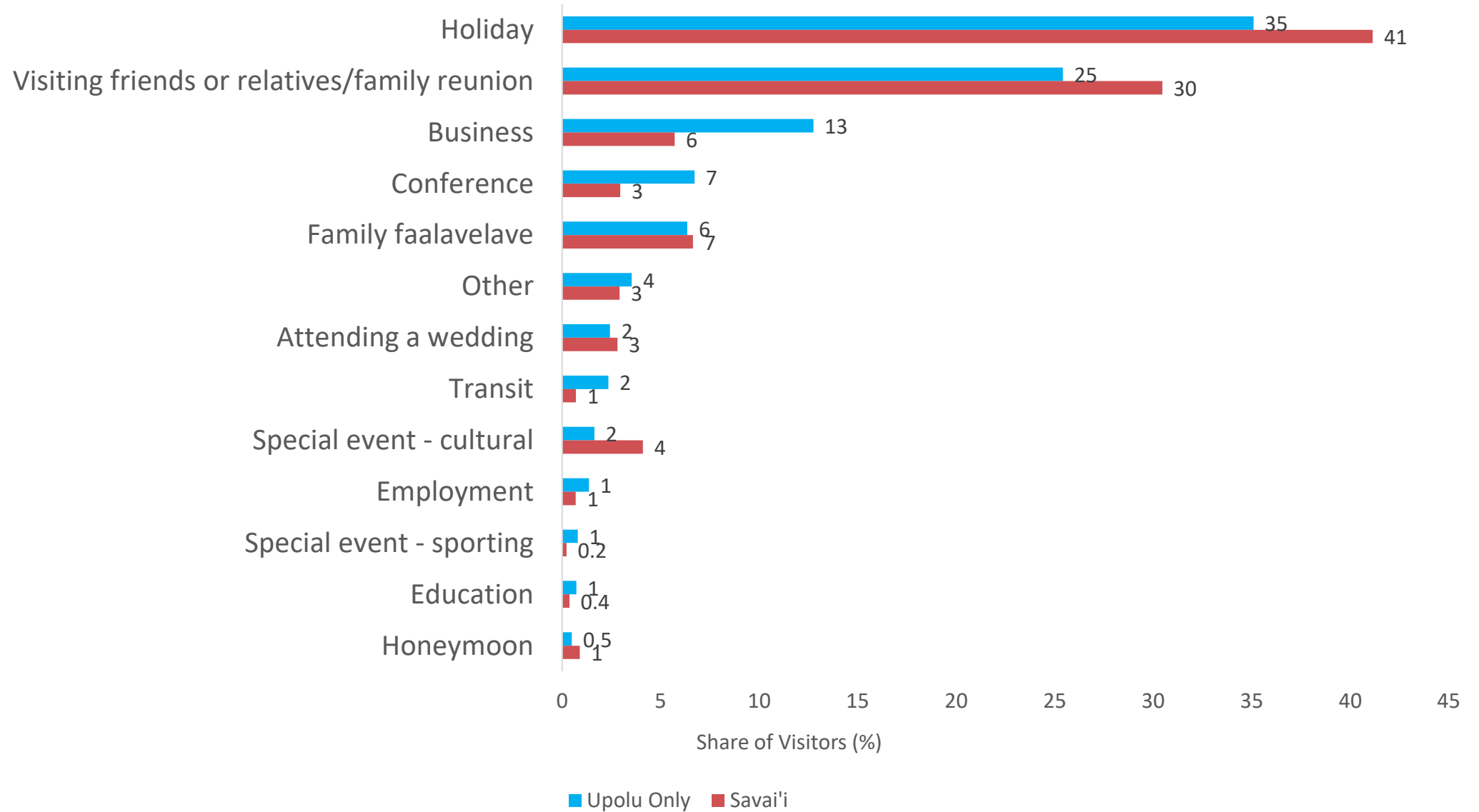
Annual household income



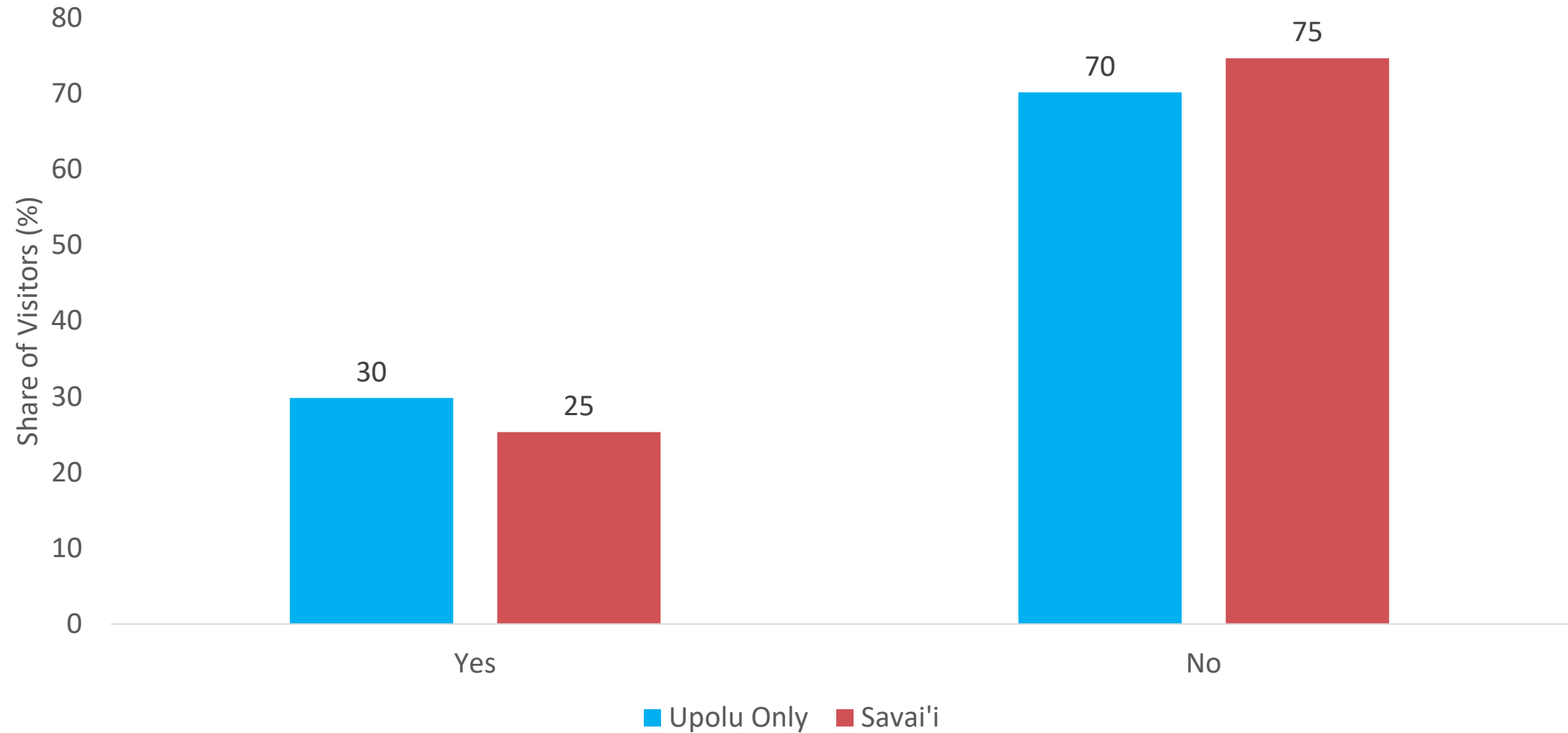
Annual household income

SAT \$234,355 (NZ \$137,143) Upolu Only	SAT \$244,071 (NZ \$142,829) Savai'i
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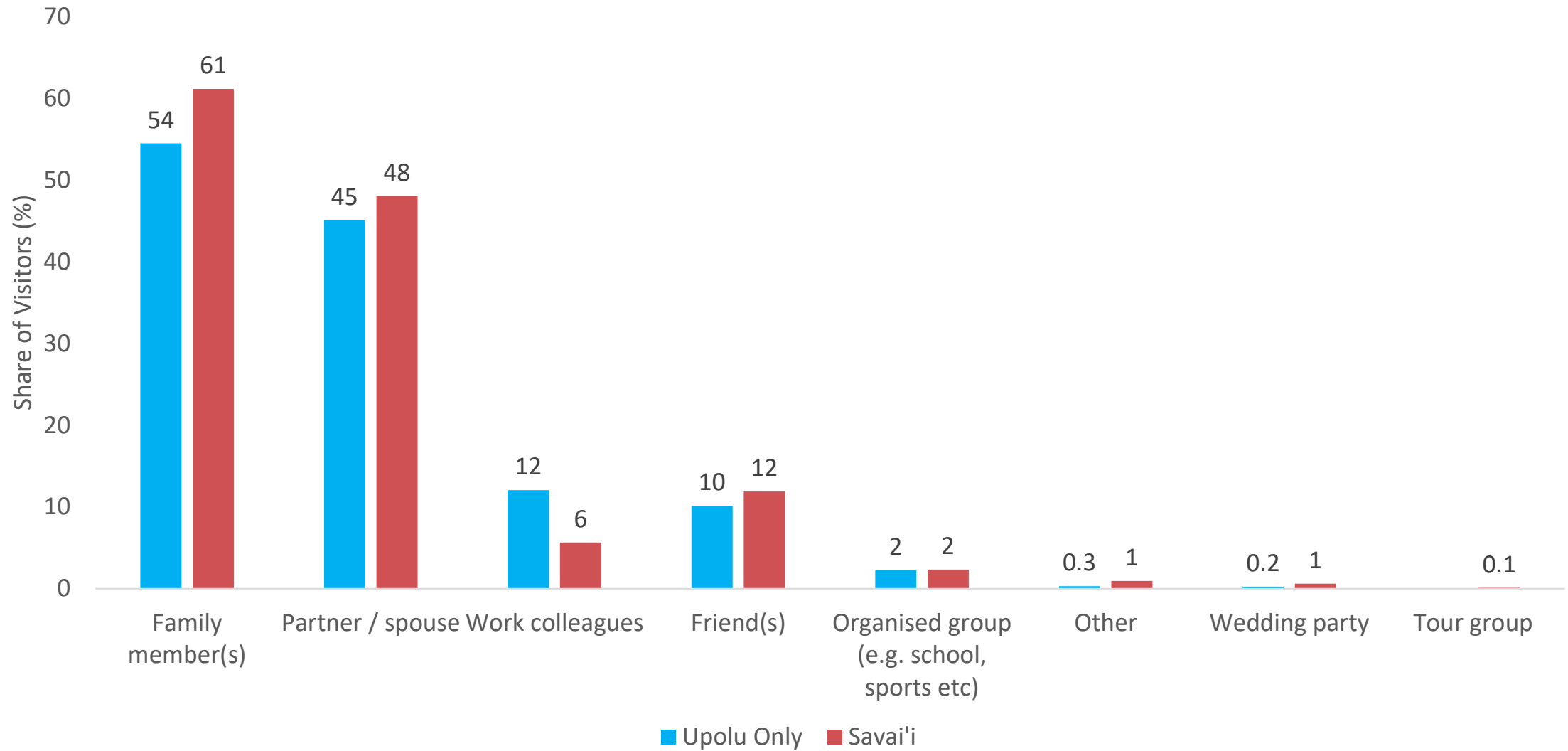
Main purpose of visit



Travelling to Samoa alone or not?

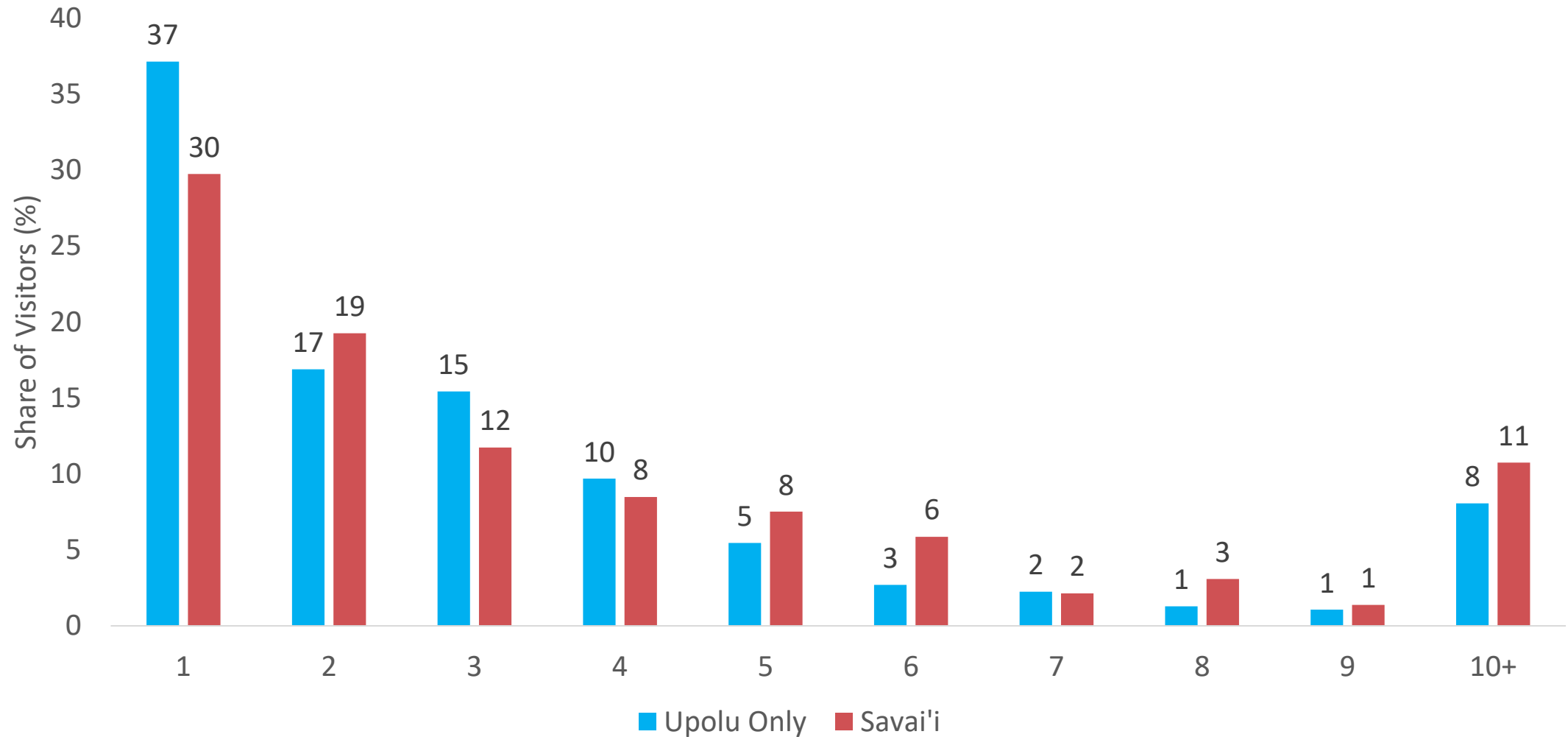


Travelling with whom?

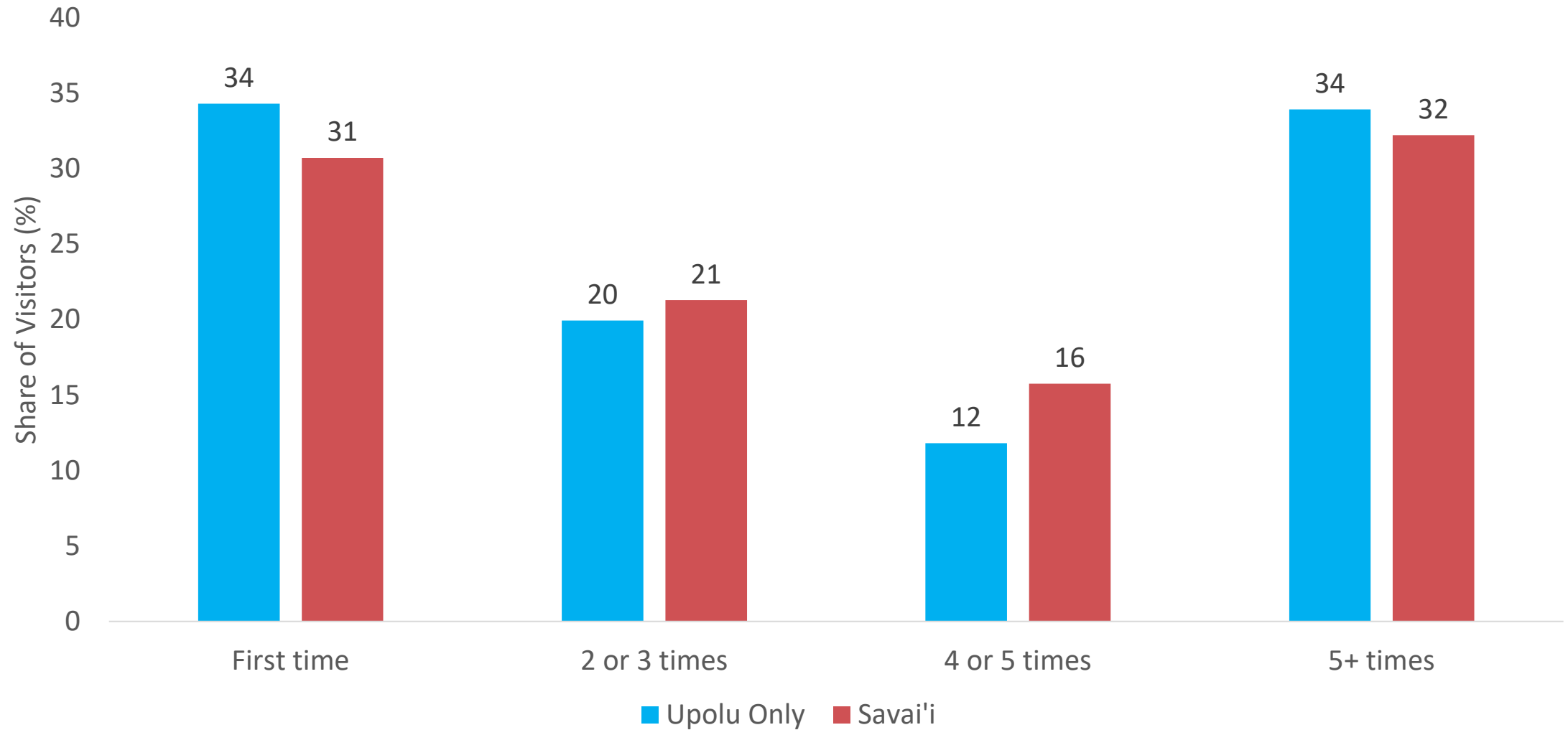


*Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

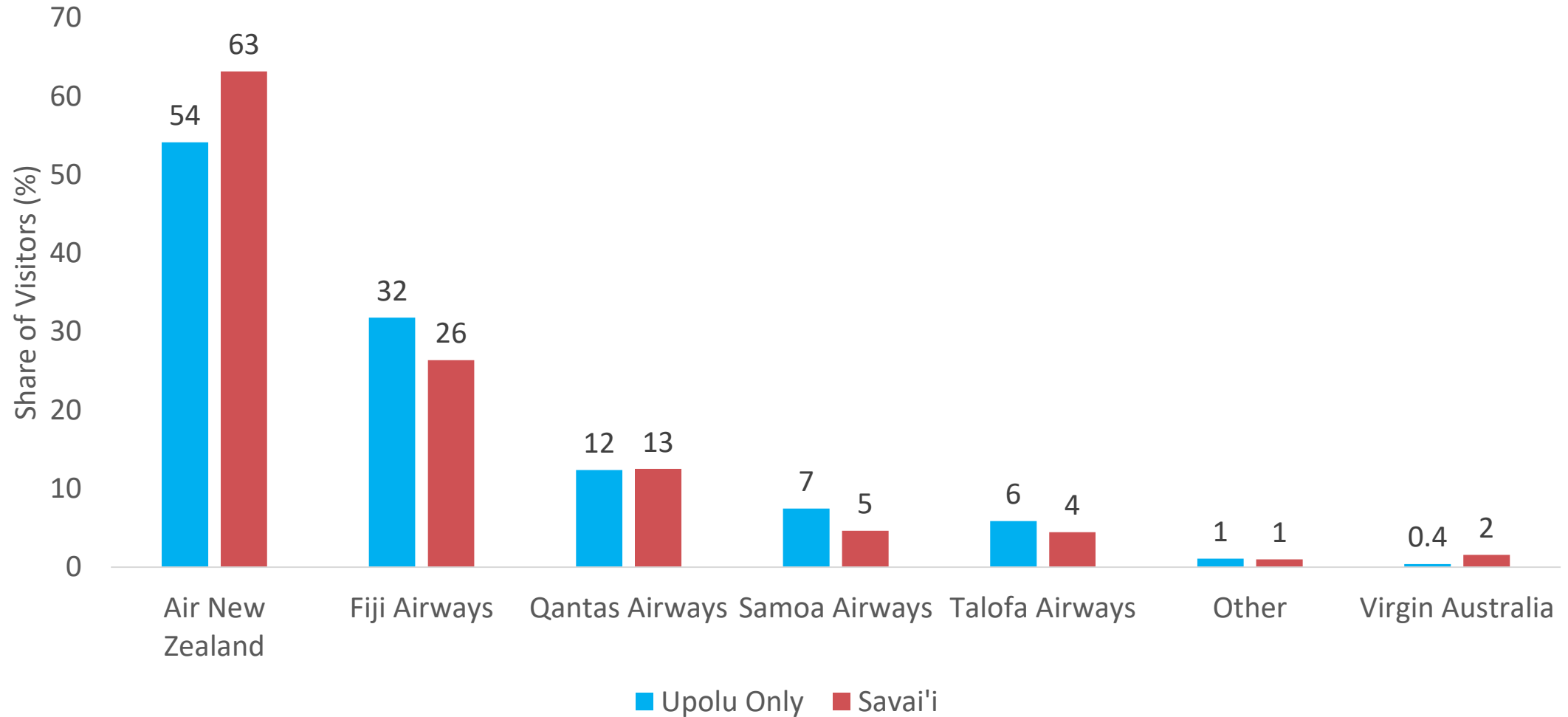
Number of companions



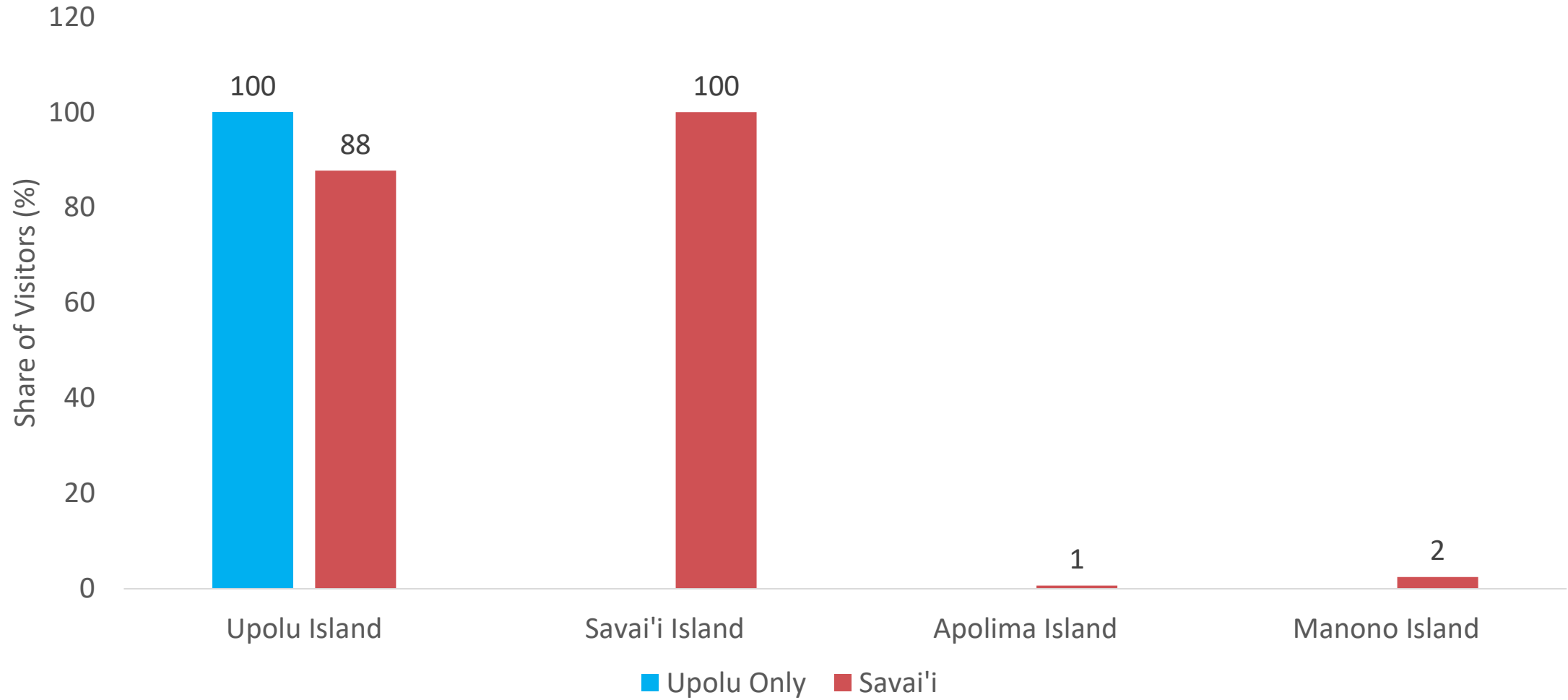
Previous visits to Samoa



Airline used

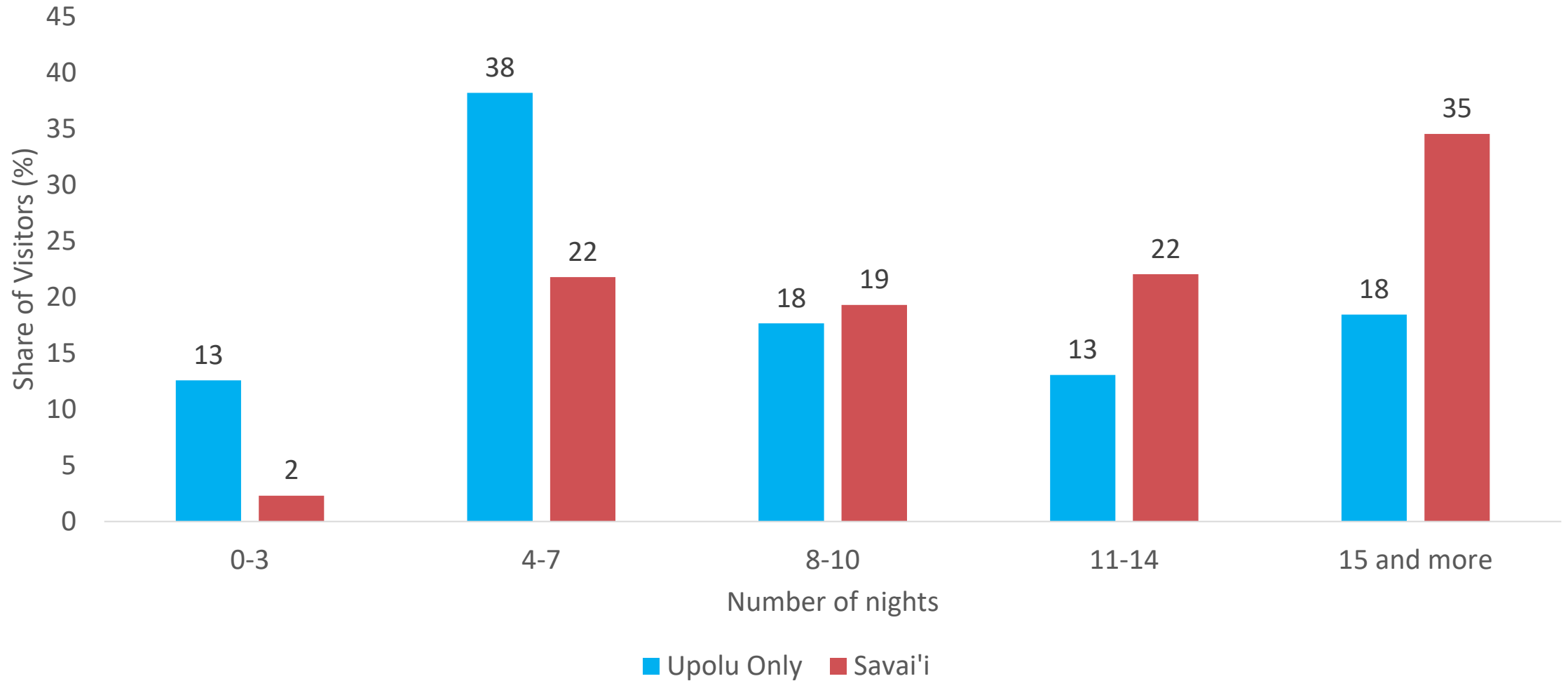


Islands visited



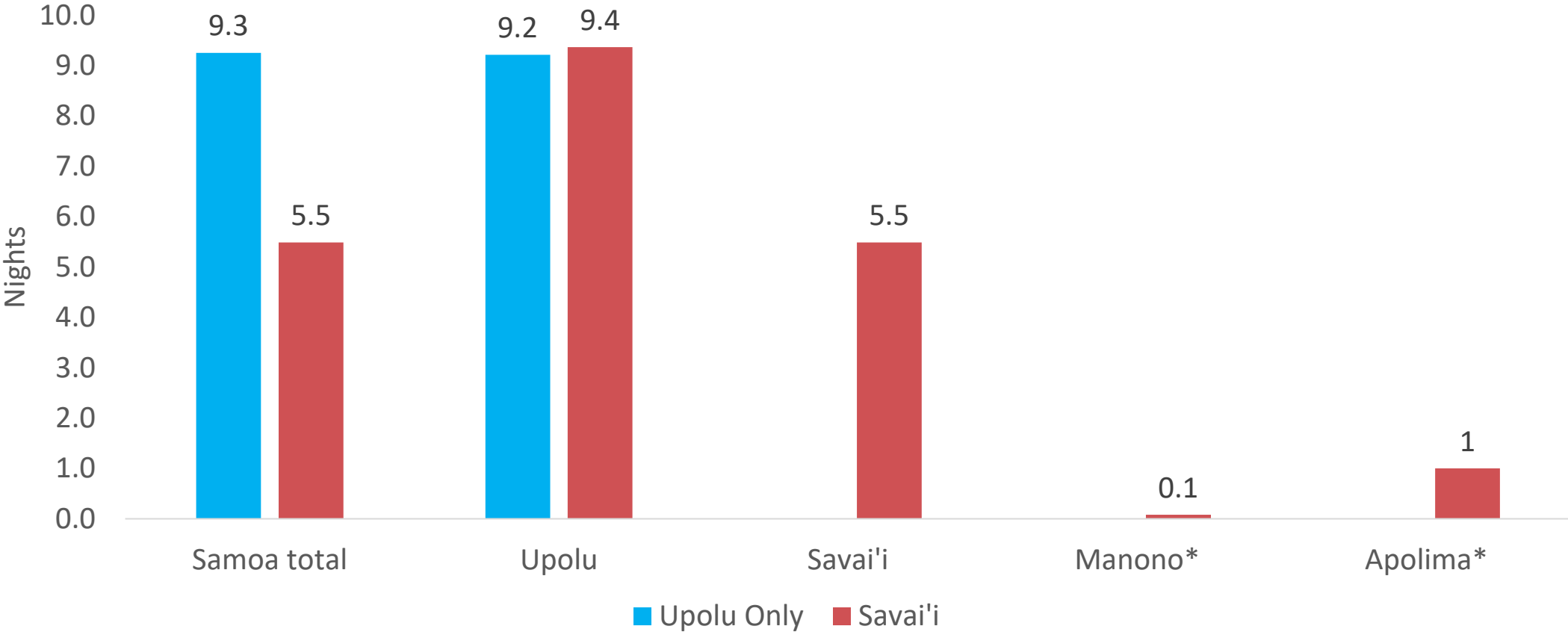
*Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Length of stay



Average length of stay

Average length of stay in the Samoa and on each island



*: n<=10

Attractions visited

Upolu Only

Top attractions on Upolu *

- 68% Apia
- 36% Lalomanu beach
- 34% To Sua Ocean Trench
- 31% Piula Cave Pool
- 21% Mulifanua
- 19% Lefaga

Savai'i & Upolu

Top attractions on Upolu *

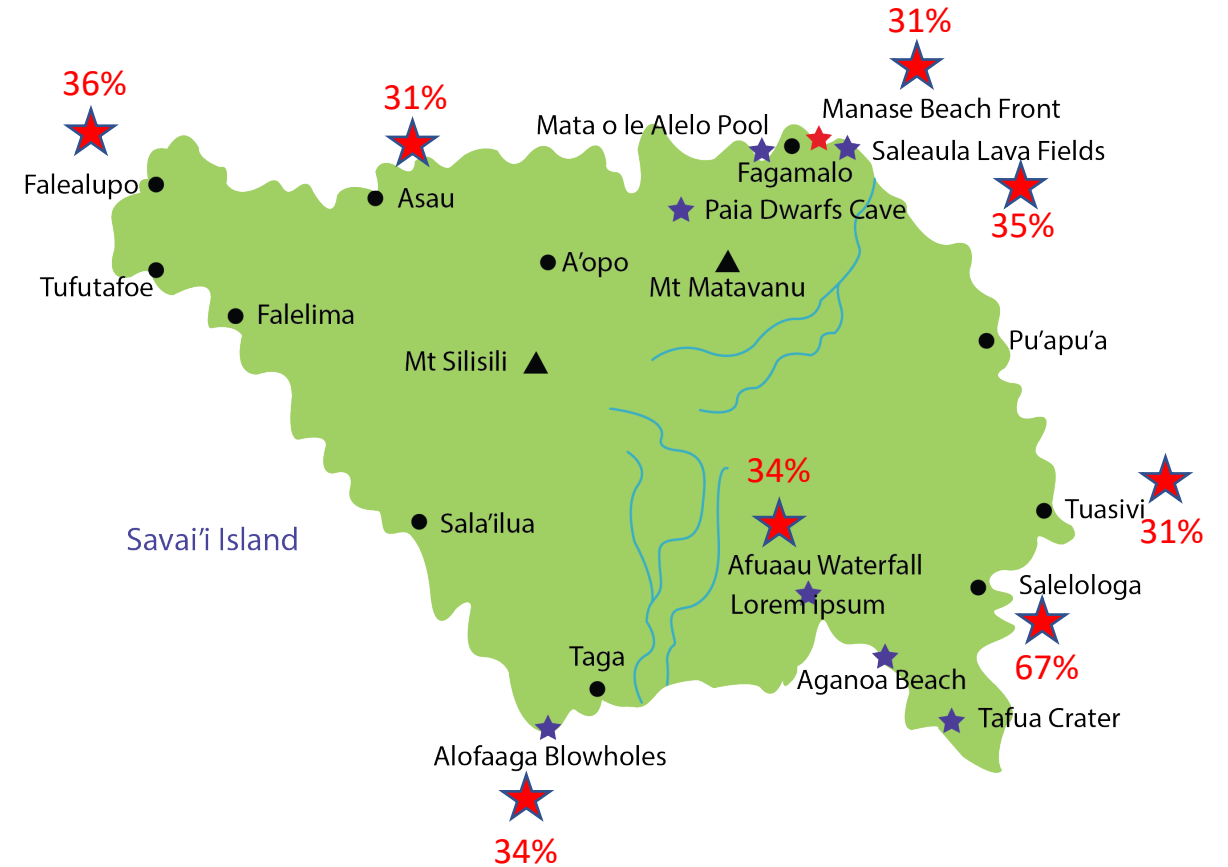
- 64% Apia
- 50% Mulifanua
- 44% Lalomanu beach
- 39% To Sua Ocean Trench
- 39% Piula Cave Pool
- 47% Lefaga

Attractions visited

Savai'i Island

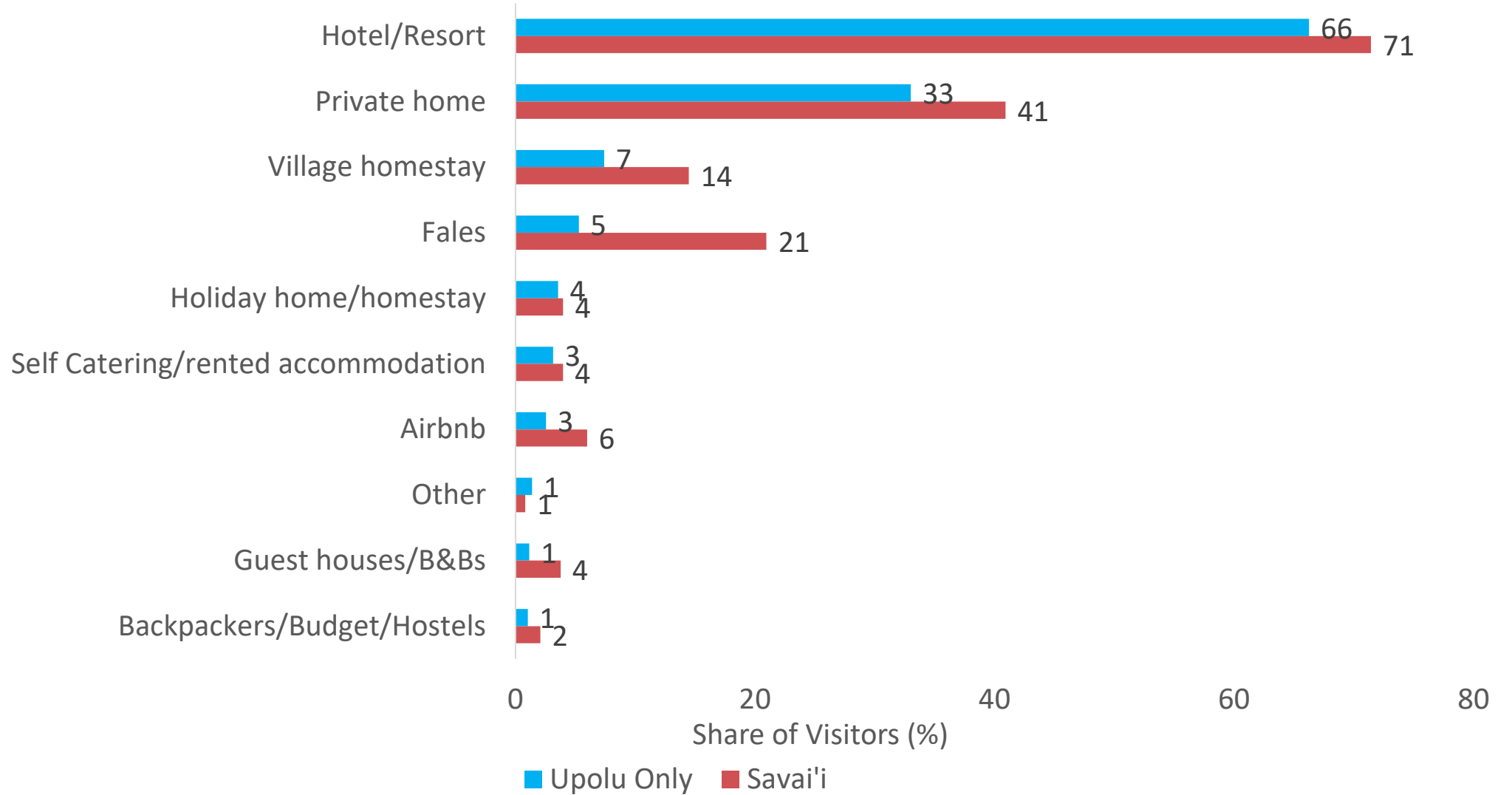
Top attractions - Savai'i *

- 67% Salelologa
- 36% Falealupo
- 35% Saleaula Lava Fields
- 34% Afuaau Waterfall
- 34% Alofaaga Blowholes
- 31% Tuasivi
- 31% Asau
- 31% Manase Beach Front

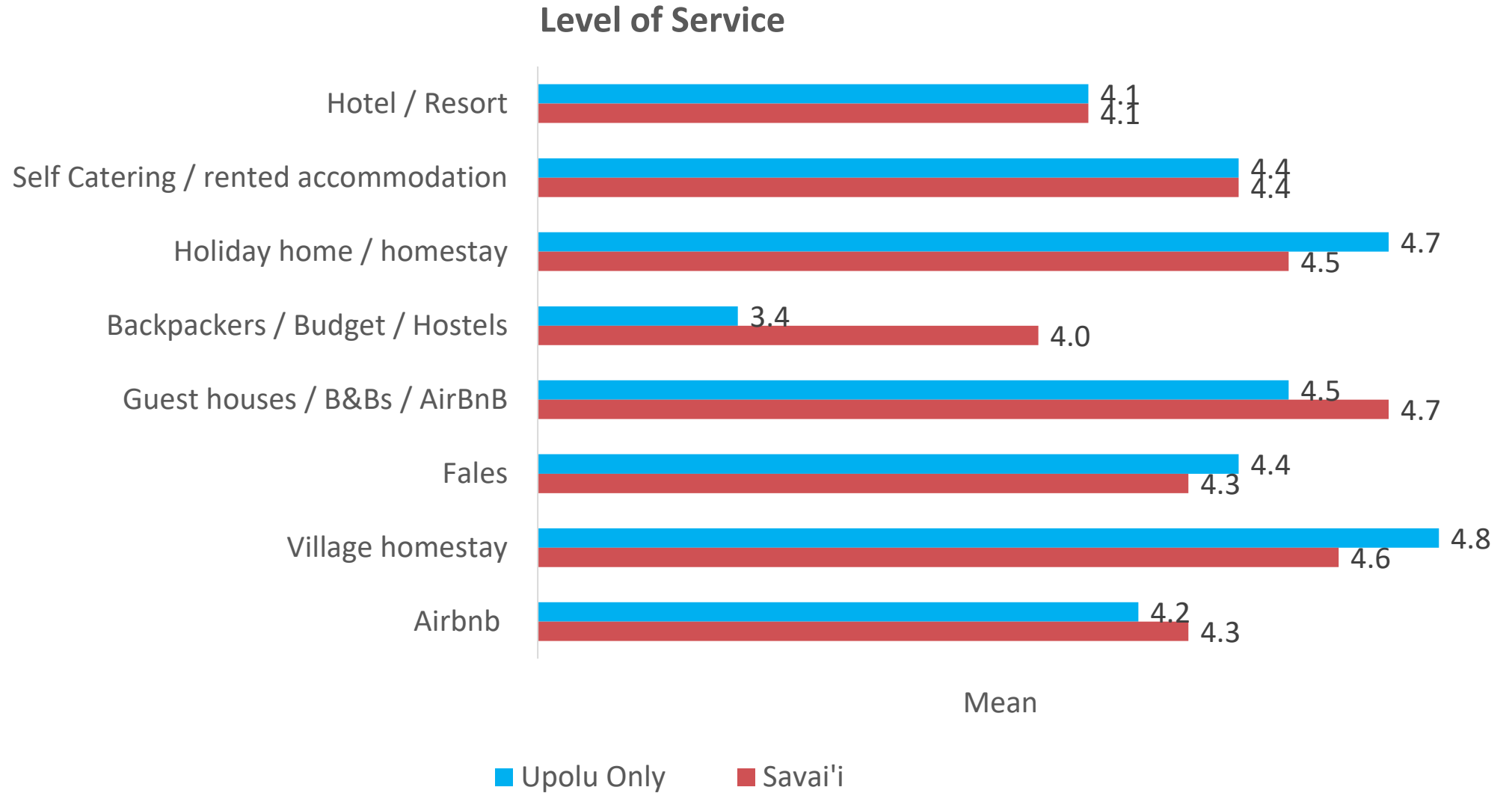


*Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Accommodation types

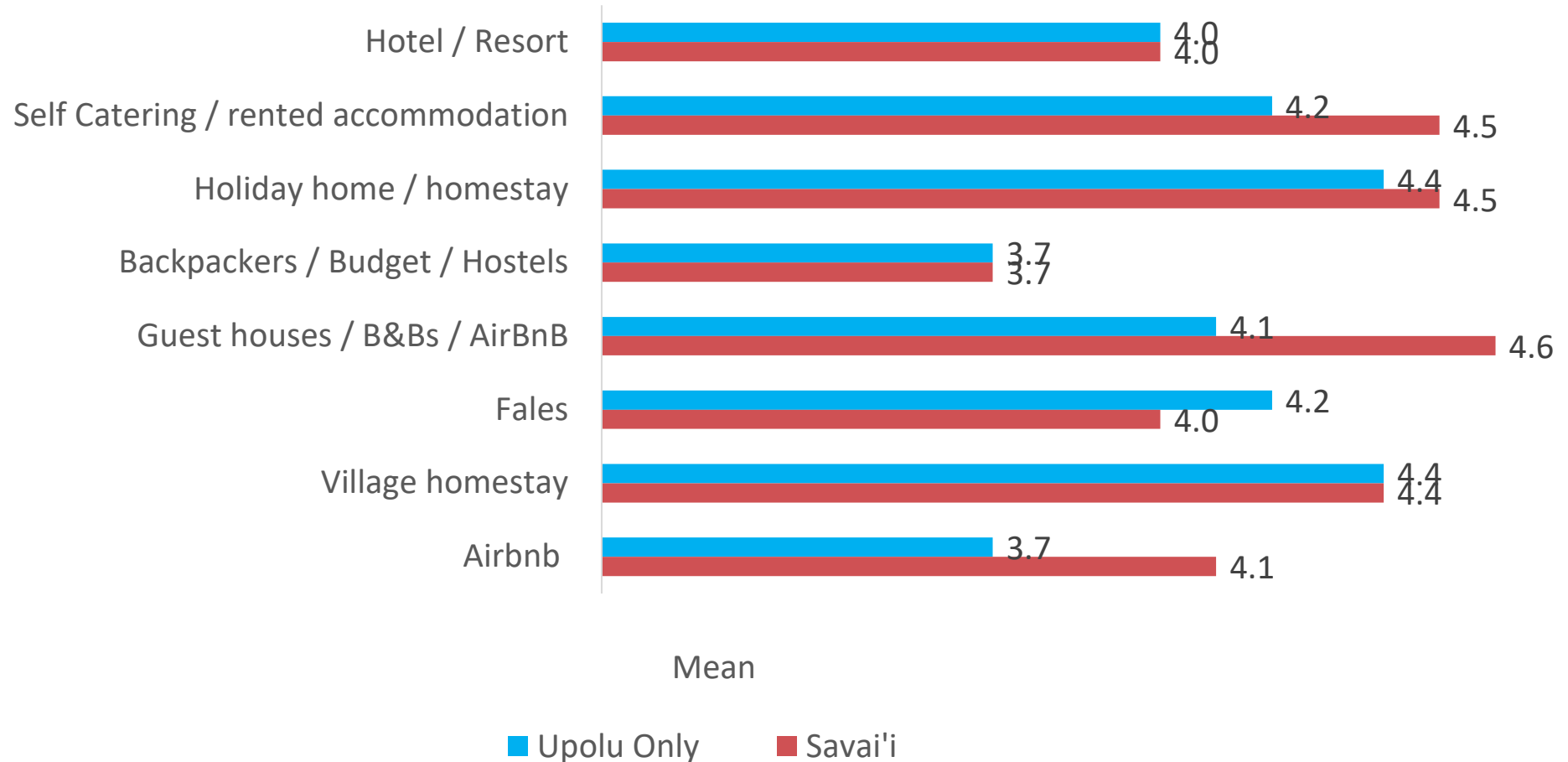


Satisfaction with accommodation types



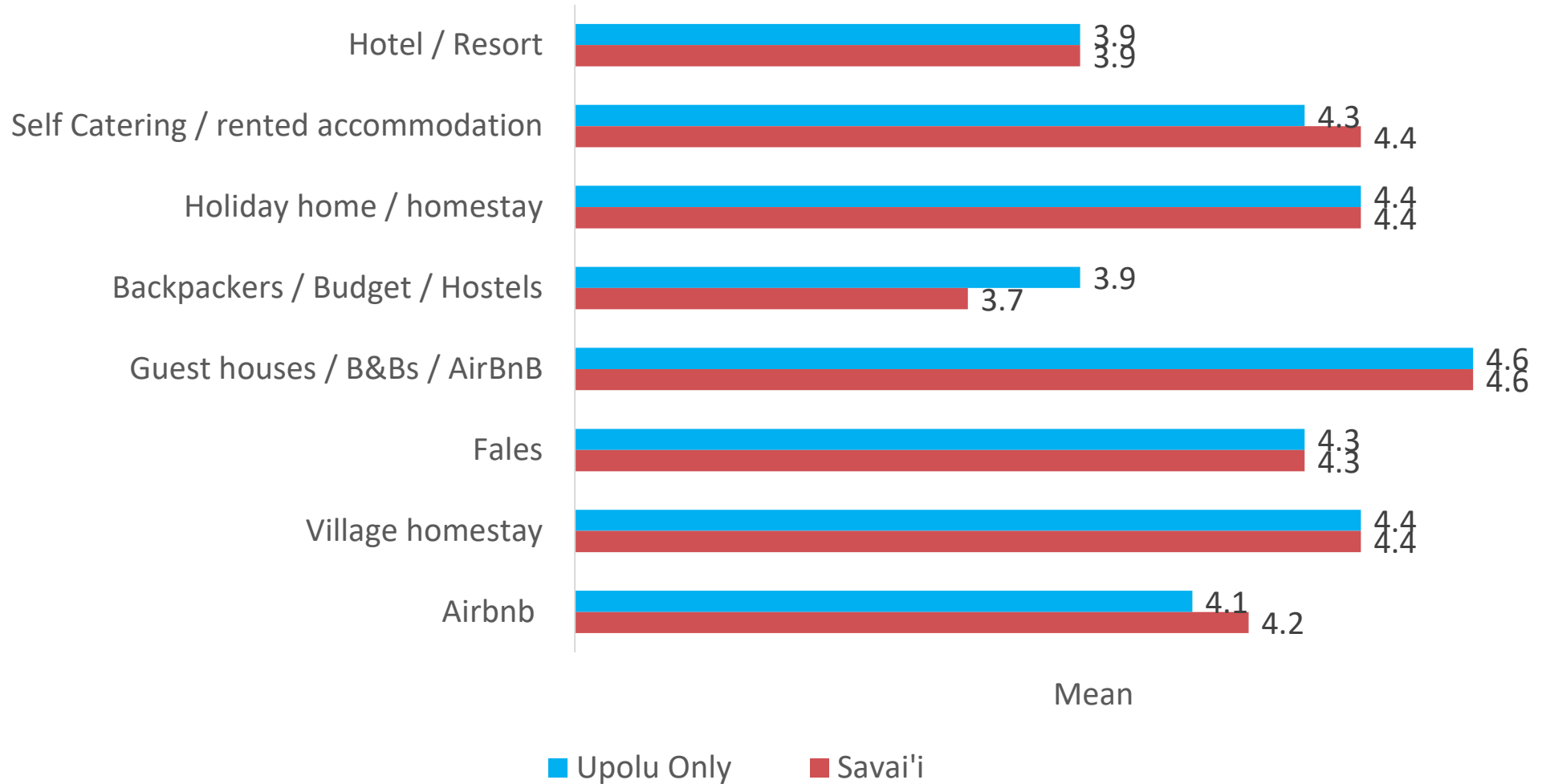
Satisfaction with accommodation types

Quality, availability and maintenance of facilities



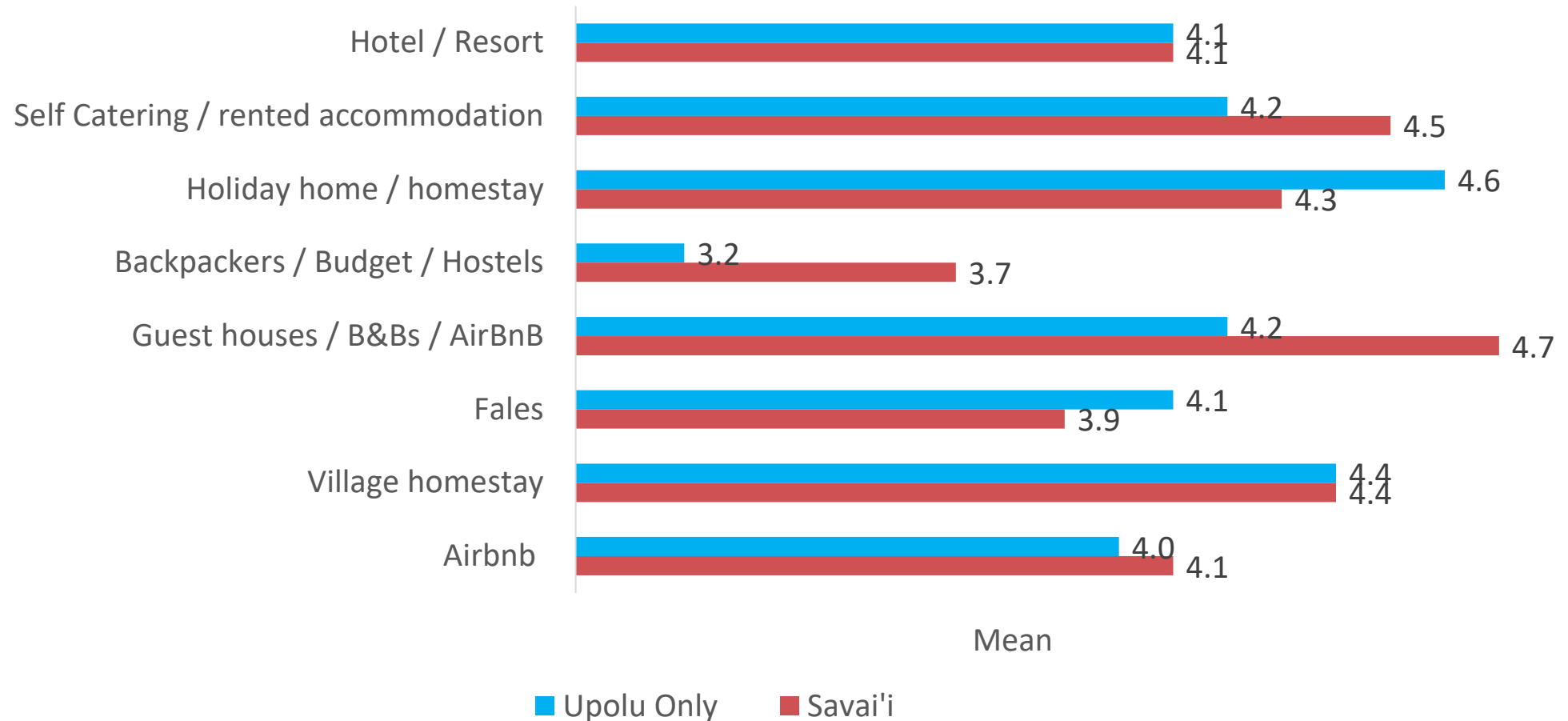
Satisfaction with accommodation types

Overall value of money



Satisfaction with accommodation types

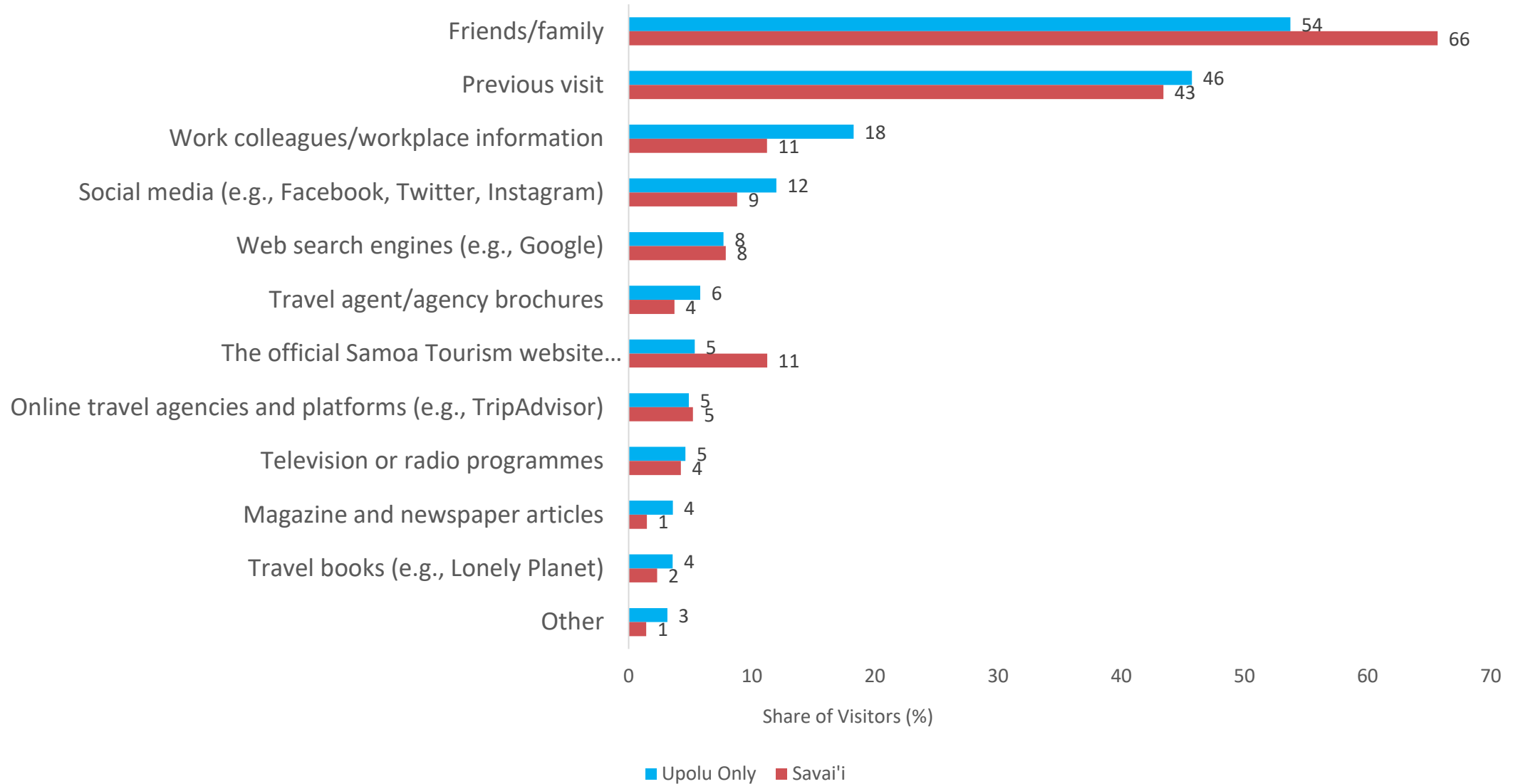
Health and safety measures at the accommodation (e.g., cleanliness, sanitisers)



INFORMATION SOURCES & PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR



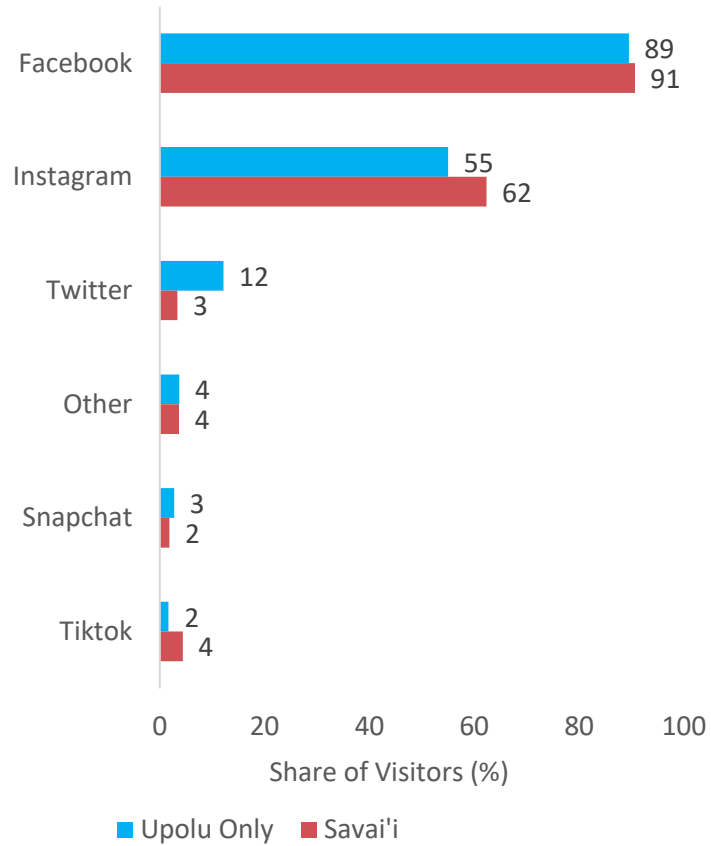
How did you find out about Samoa?



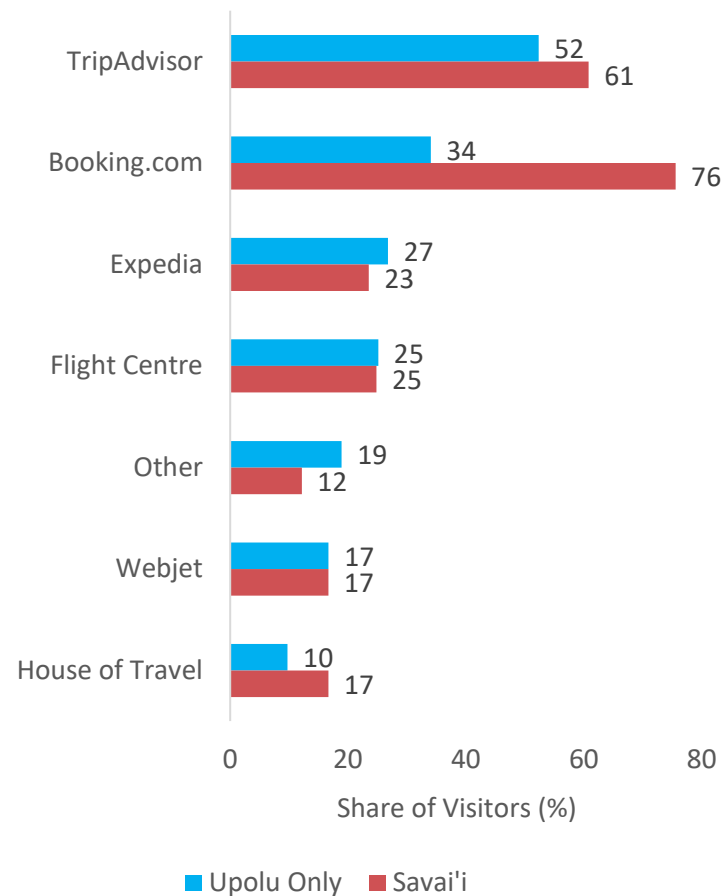
*Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

How did you find out about Samoa?

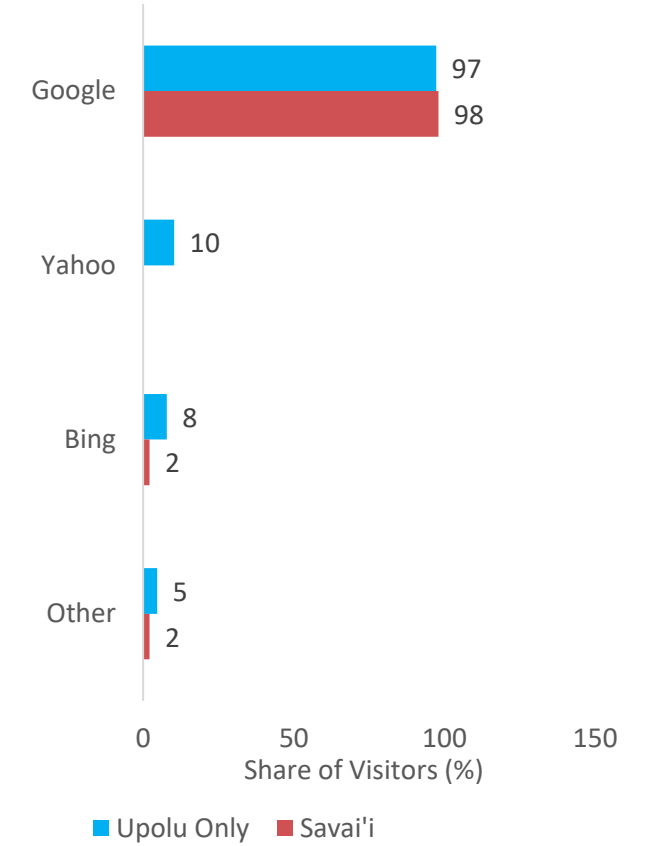
Social media



Online travel agencies and platforms

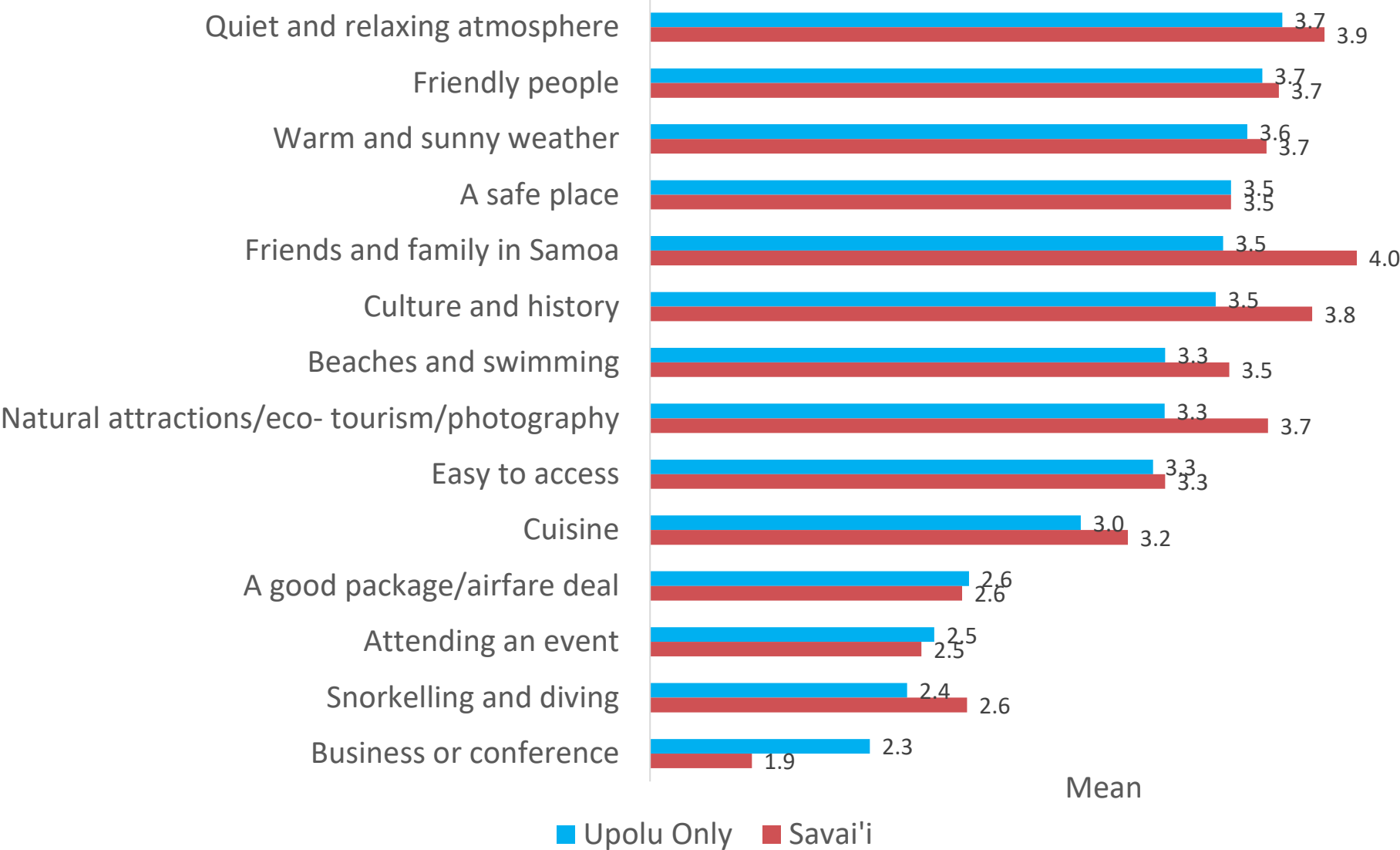


Web search engines

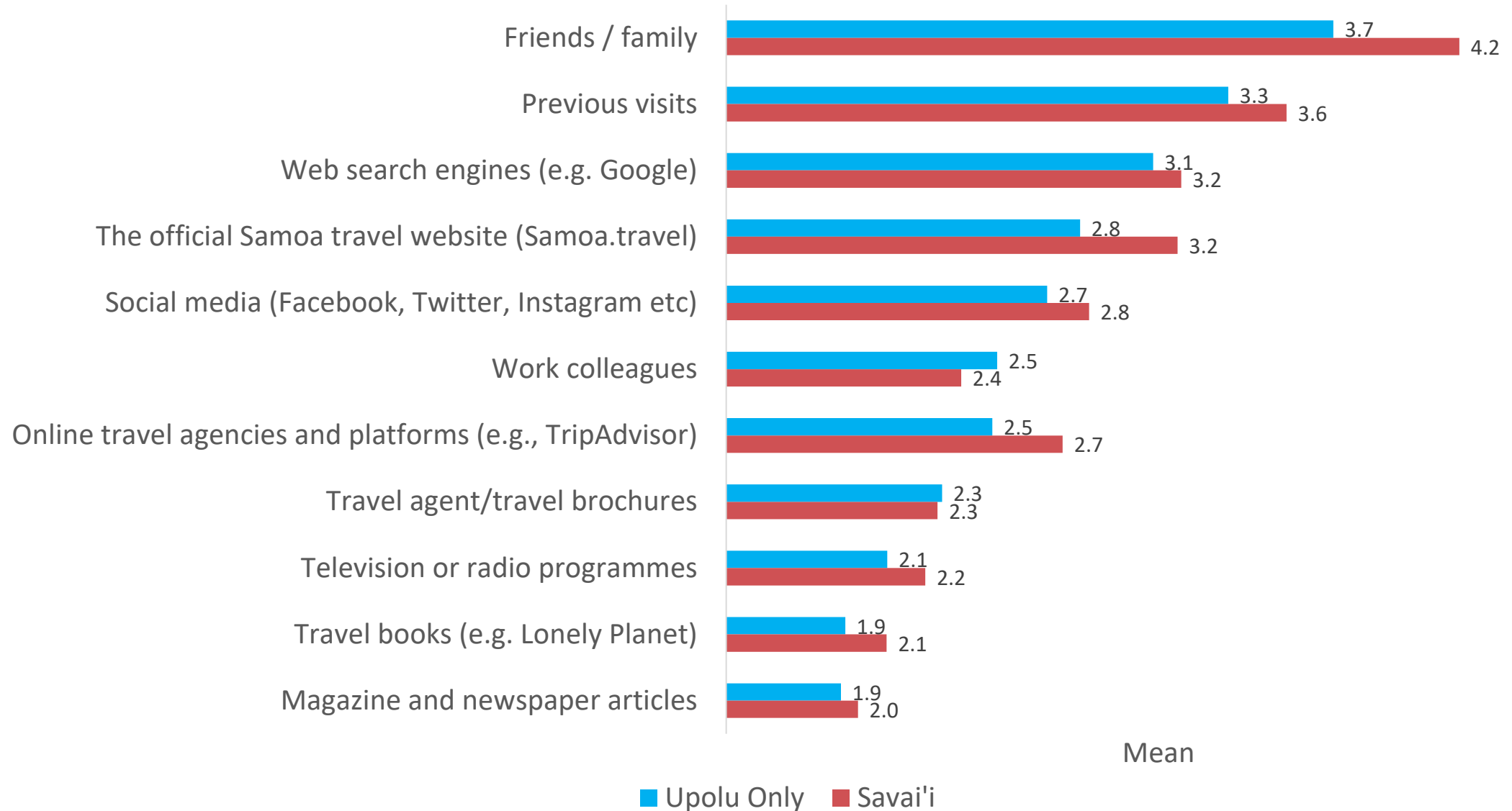


*Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

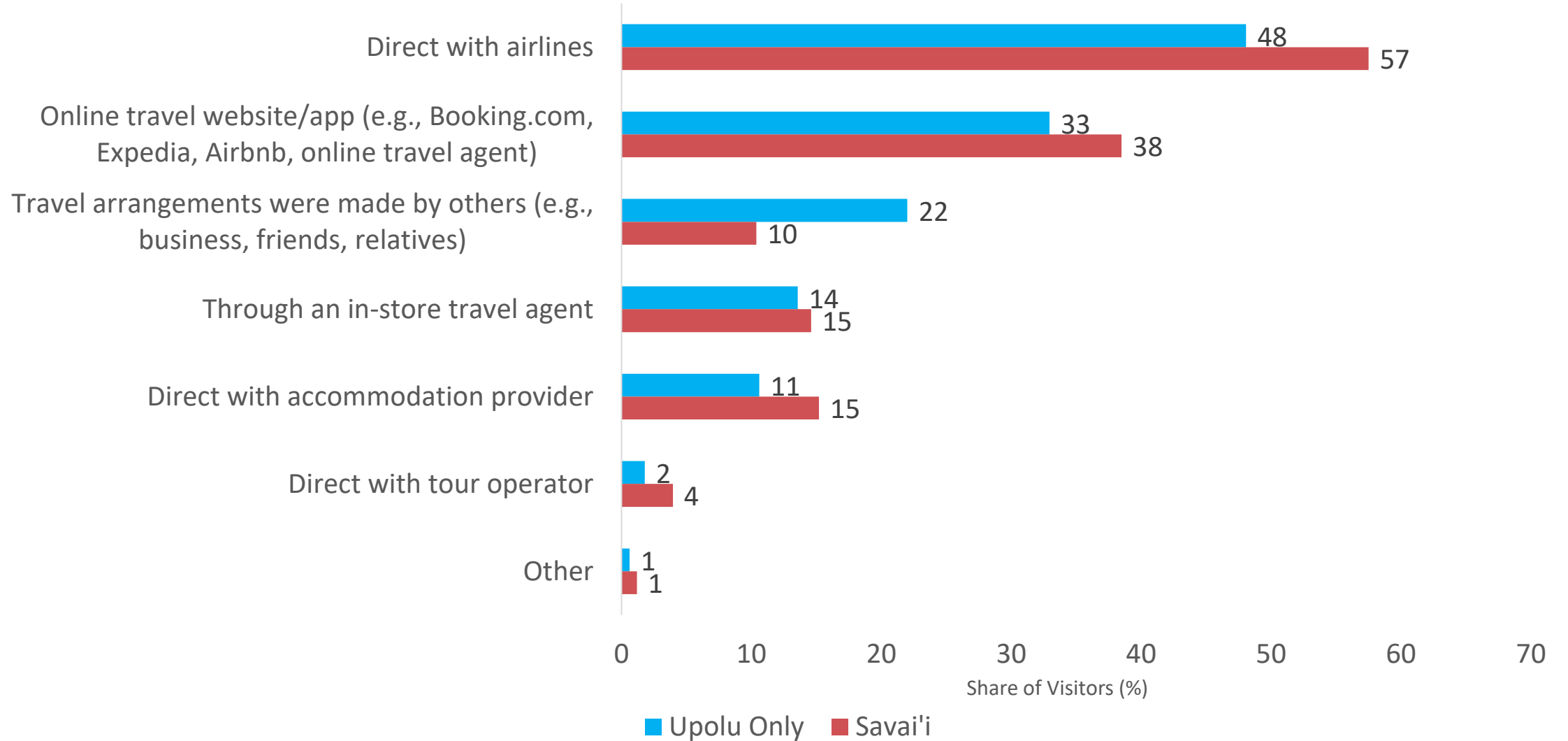
Influential factors in your choice to visit Samoa



Importance of information sources

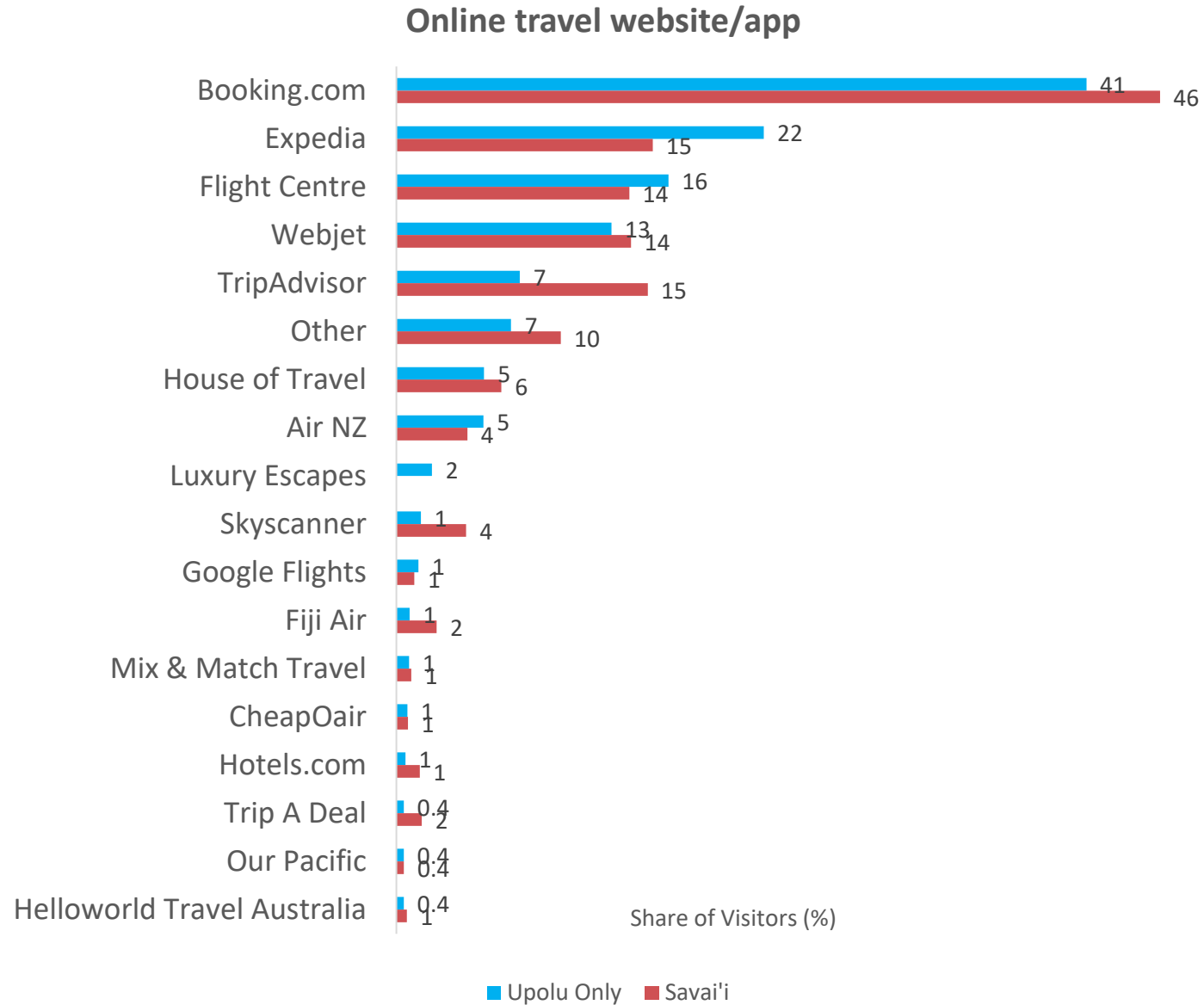


How did you purchase your travel?



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

How did you purchase your travel?

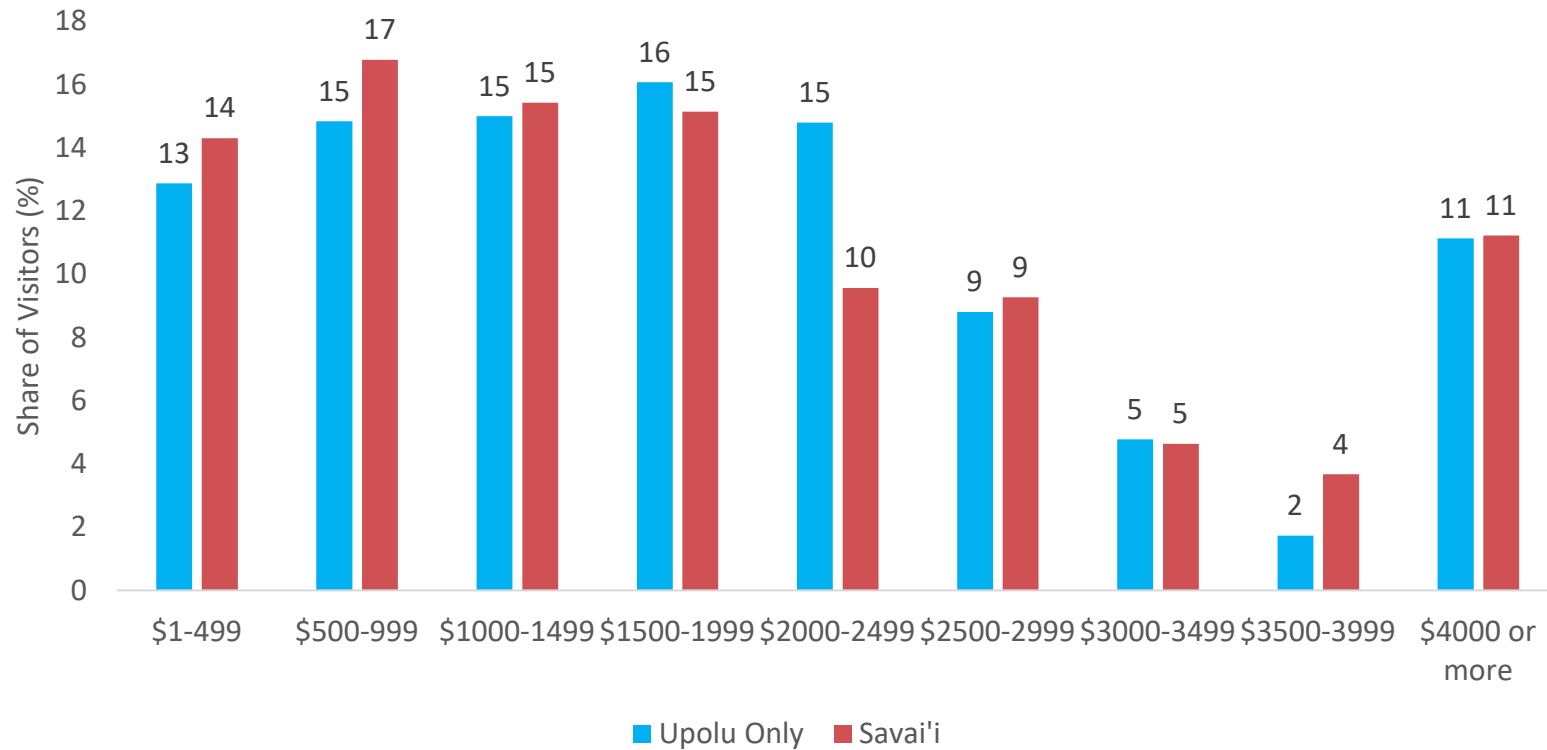


*Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

VISITOR EXPENDITURE



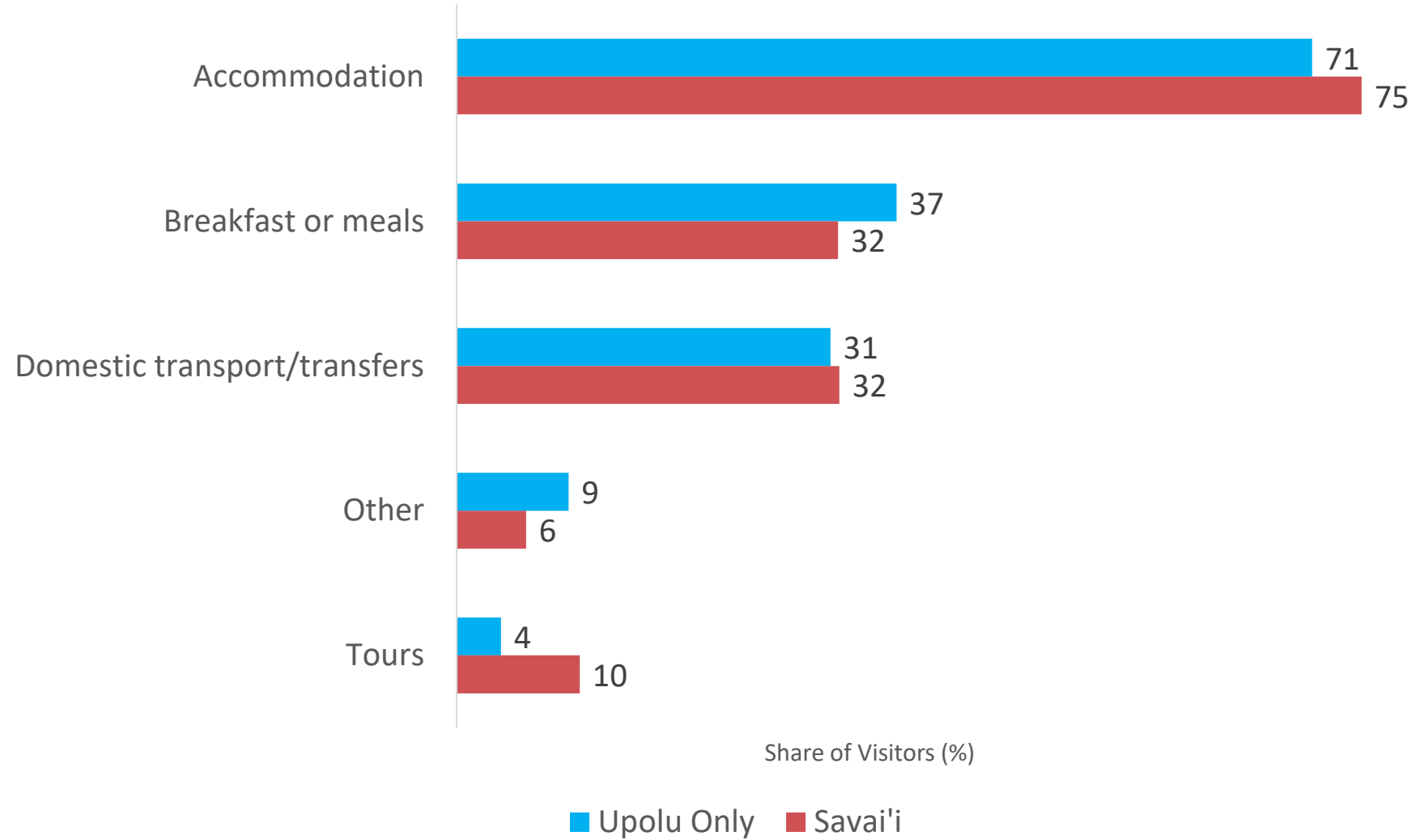
Prepaid expenditure



Per person prior to arrival

<p>SAT \$3,012 (NZ \$1,763)</p> <p>Upolu Only</p>	<p>SAT \$2,717 (NZ \$1,590)</p> <p>Savai'i</p>
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Prepaid items



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

In-country expenditure per person per day

Expenditure Items	Upolu Only (SAT\$)	Savai'i (SAT\$)
Accommodation	44	39
Restaurants cafes & bars	31	26
Vehicle rental	19	18
Petrol	8	8
Bus/taxi	1	2
Ferry	0.5	3
Groceries	26	20
Shopping	21	16
Tours/activities	5	6
Donations	24	22
Internet/telecommunication	3	3
Other	25	13
Total Expenditure	208	176

Per person per day while in

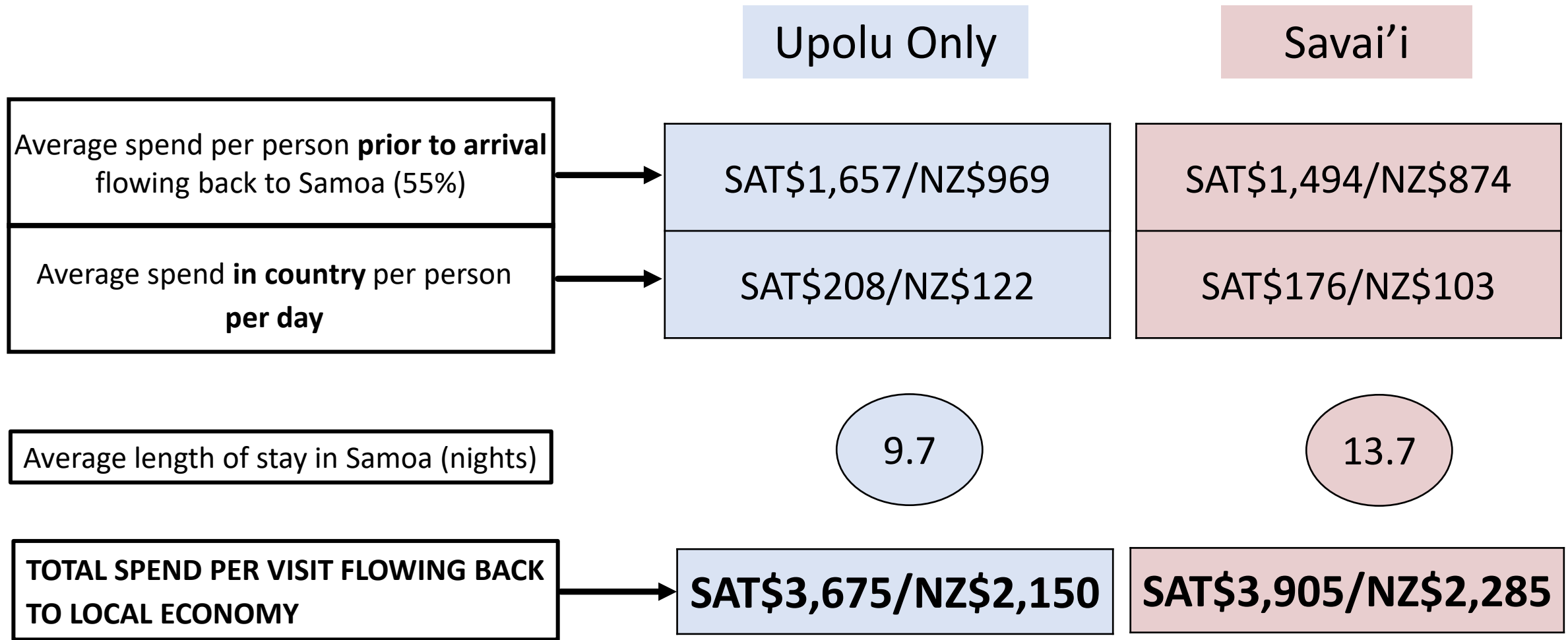
SAT \$208
(NZ \$122)

Upolu Only

SAT \$176
(NZ \$103)

Savai'i

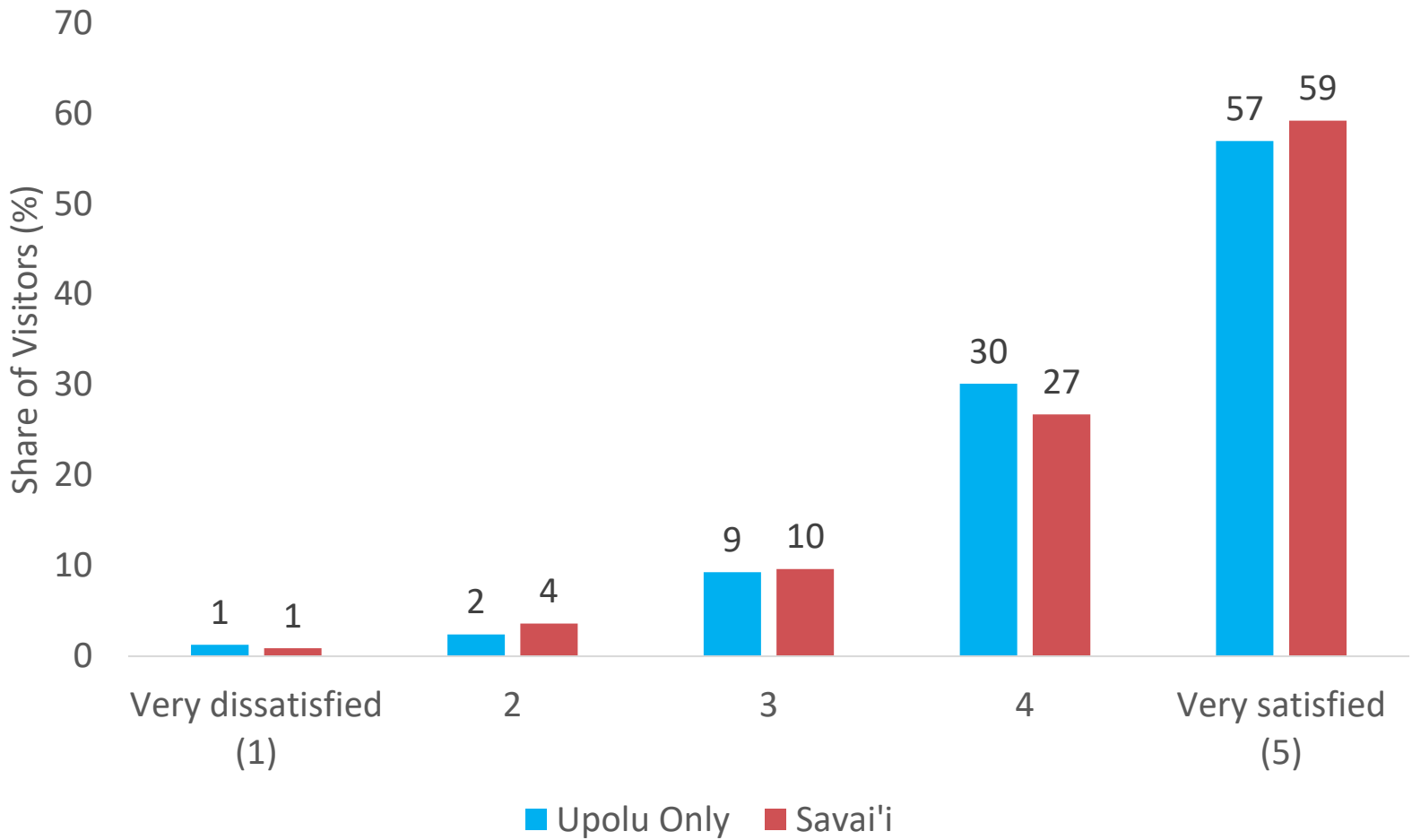
Spending



VISITOR SATISFACTION



There are more “Very satisfied” visitors to Savai’i than visitors to Upolu only.



OVERALL SATISFACTION

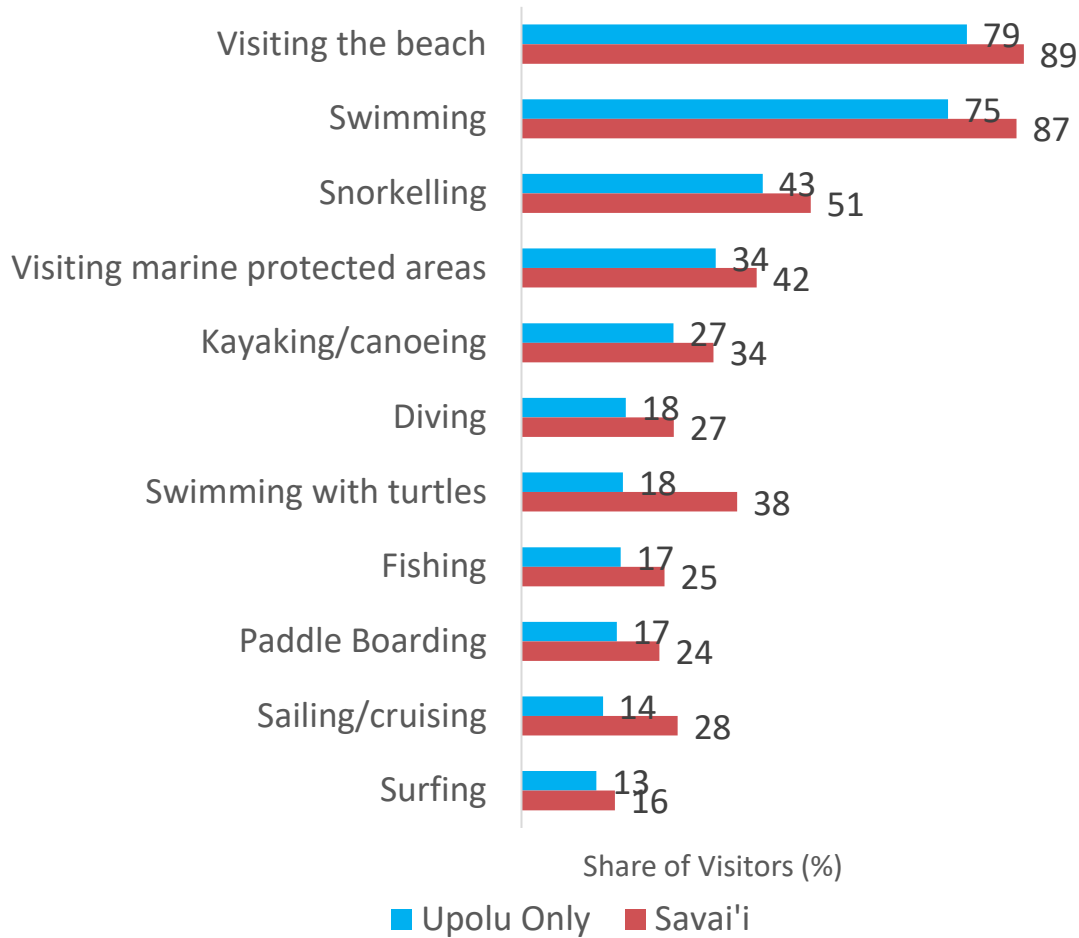
4.4
Upolu Only

4.4
Savai'i

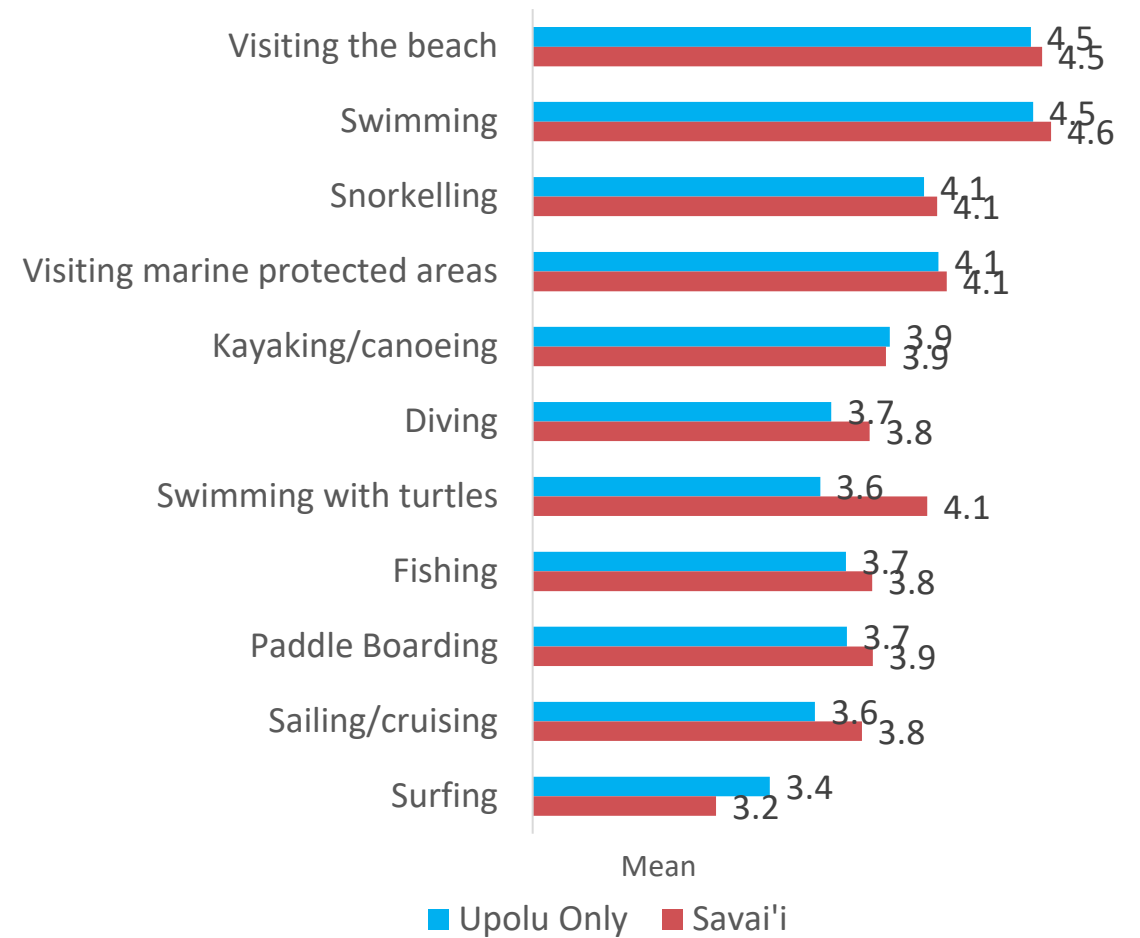
Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures.

Water-based Activities

Degree of Participation

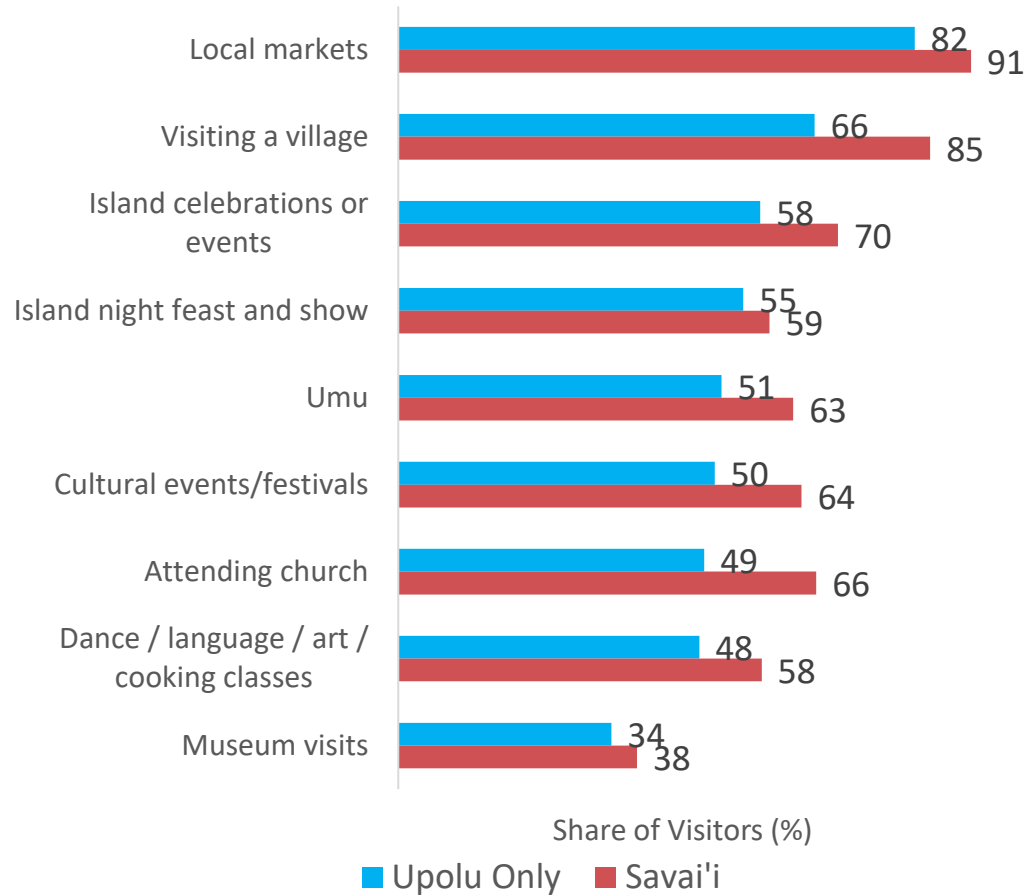


Degree of Satisfaction

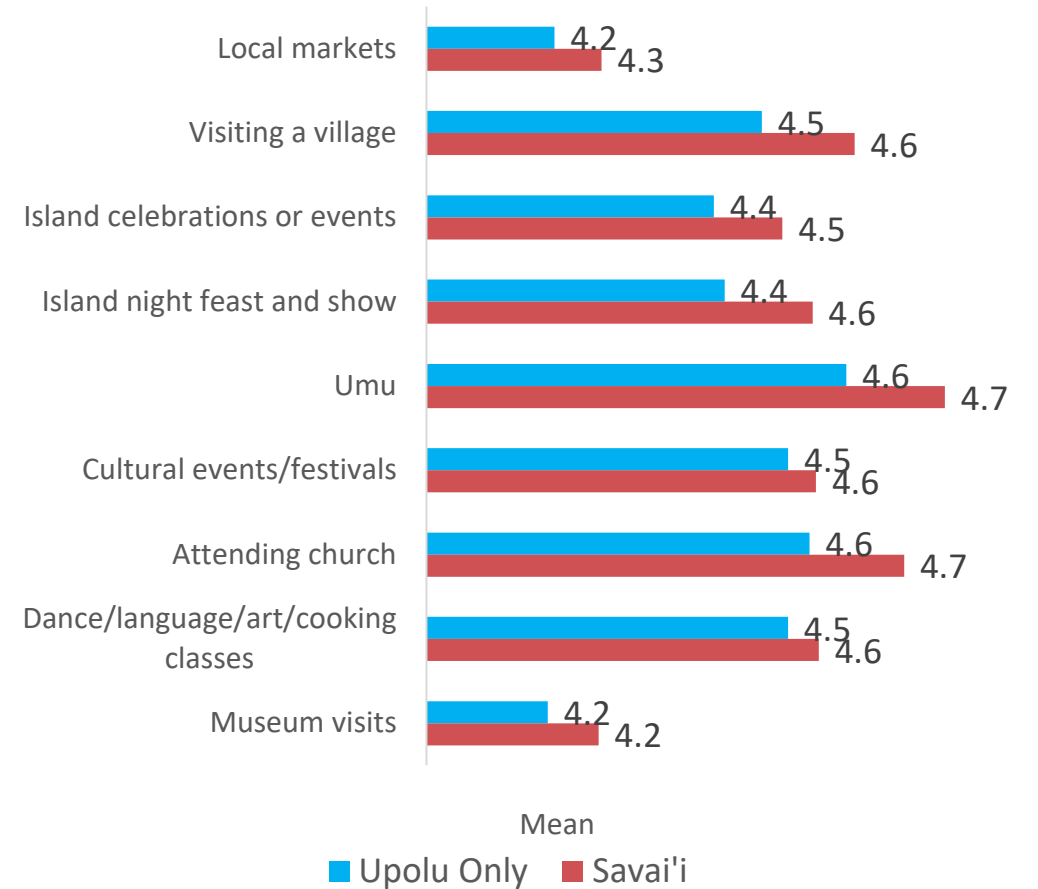


Cultural Interactions

Degree of Participation

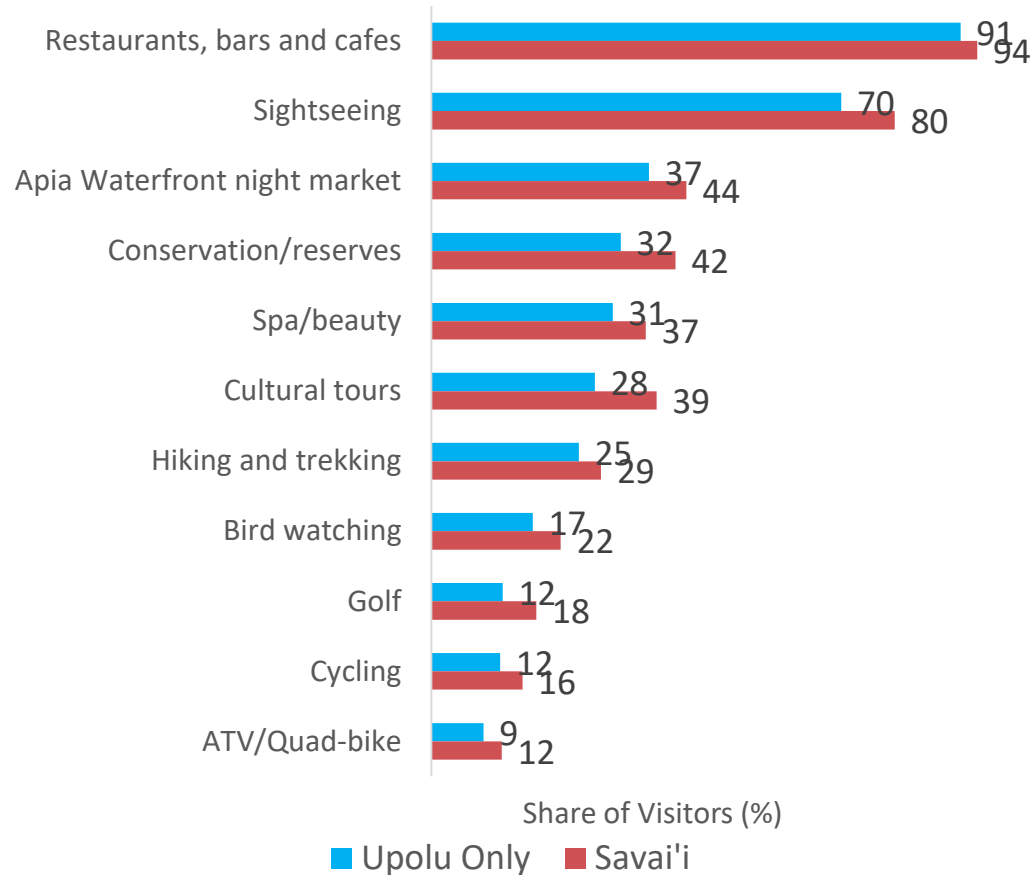


Degree of Satisfaction

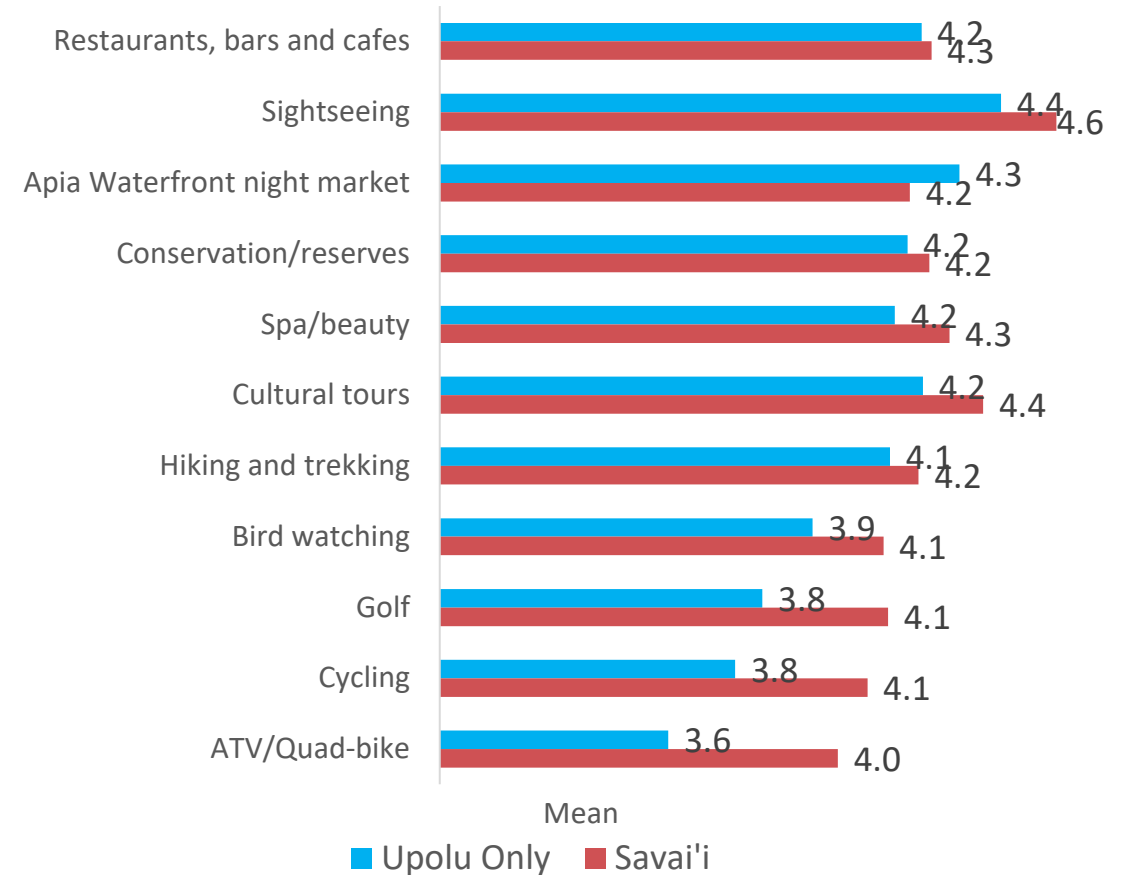


Land-based Activities

Degree of Participation

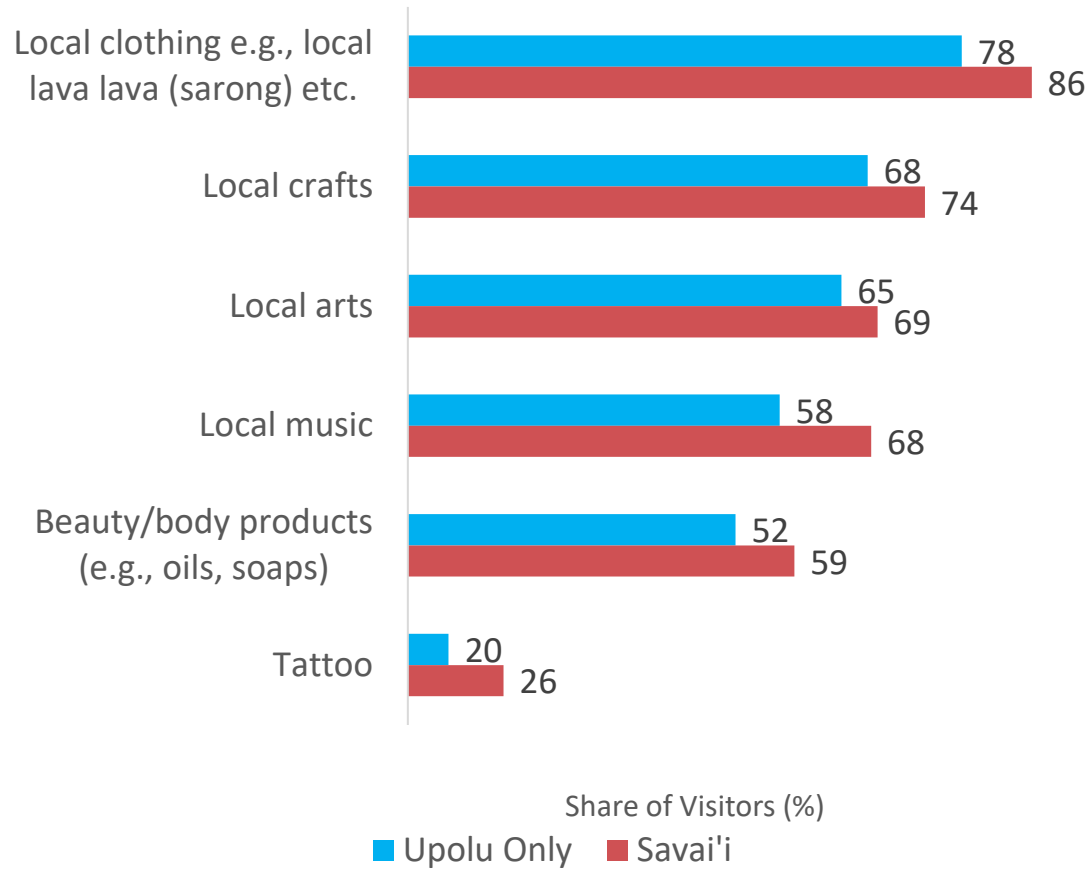


Degree of Satisfaction

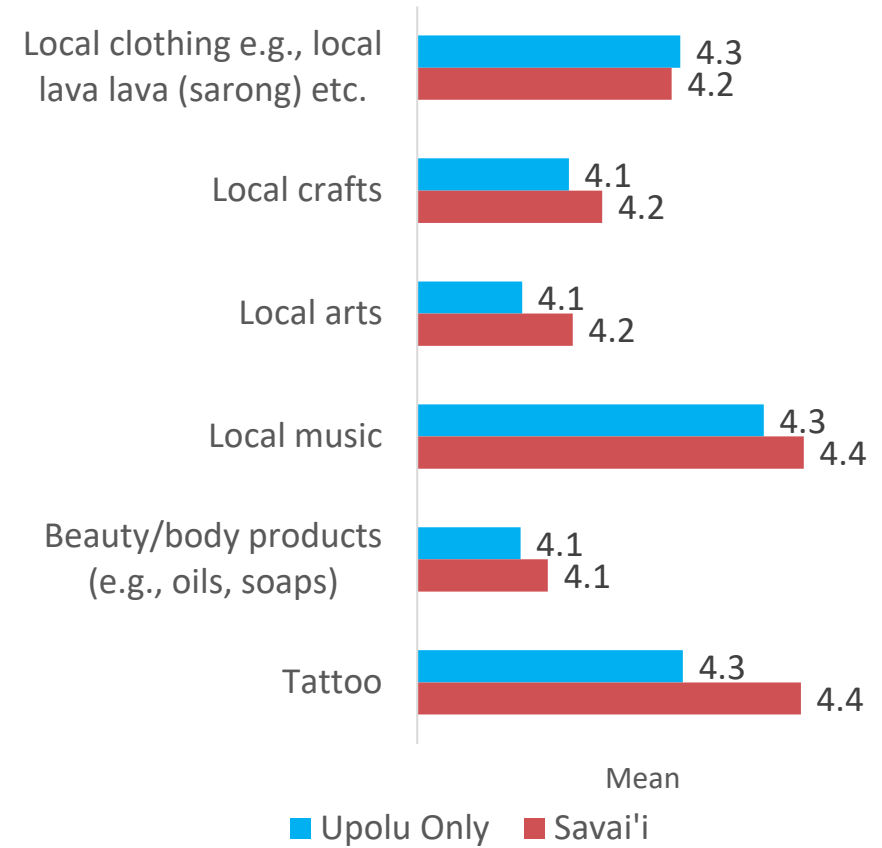


Shopping

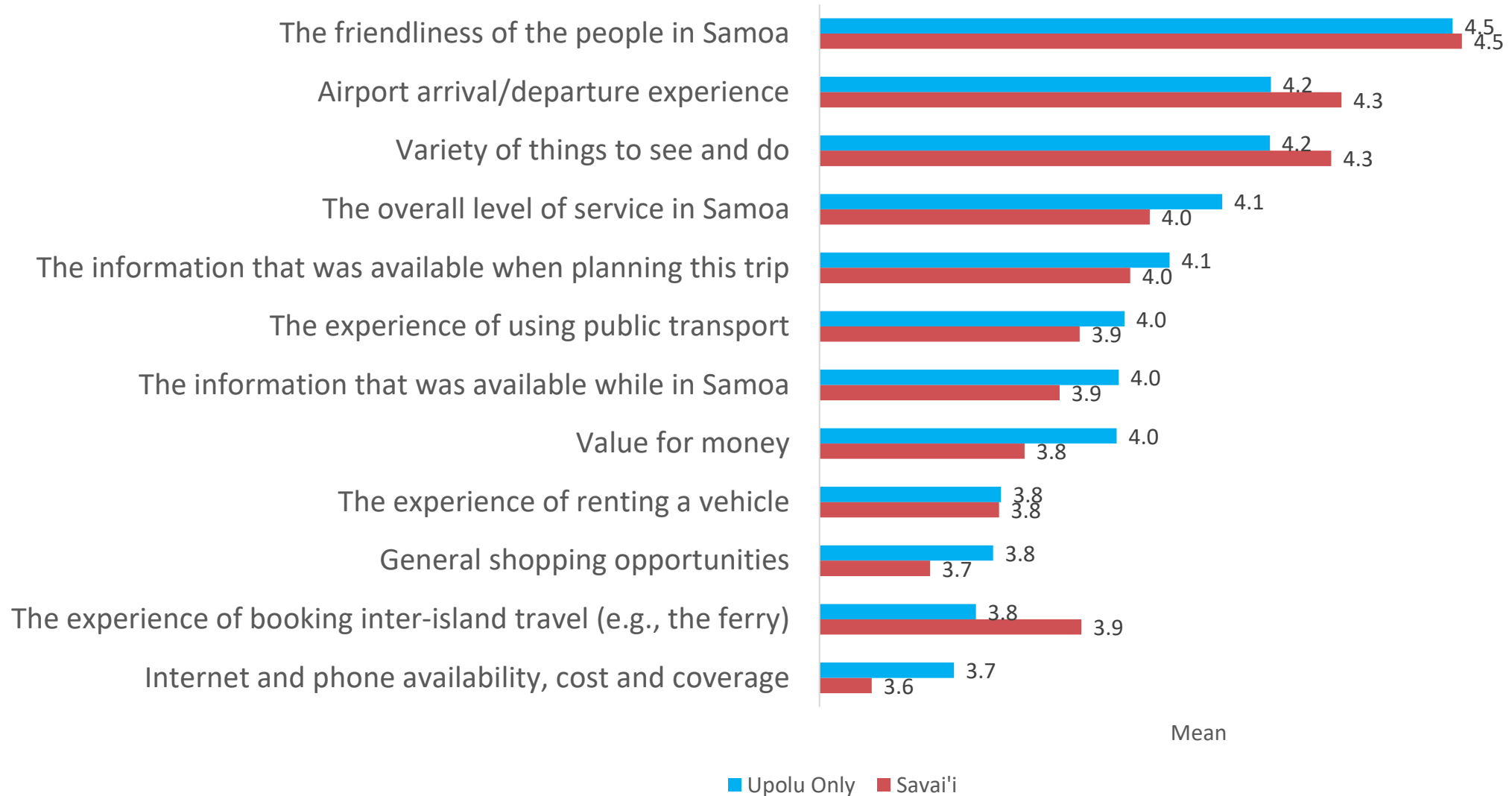
Degree of Participation



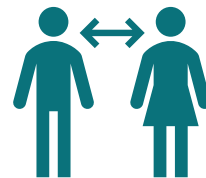
Degree of Satisfaction



Satisfaction with Samoa

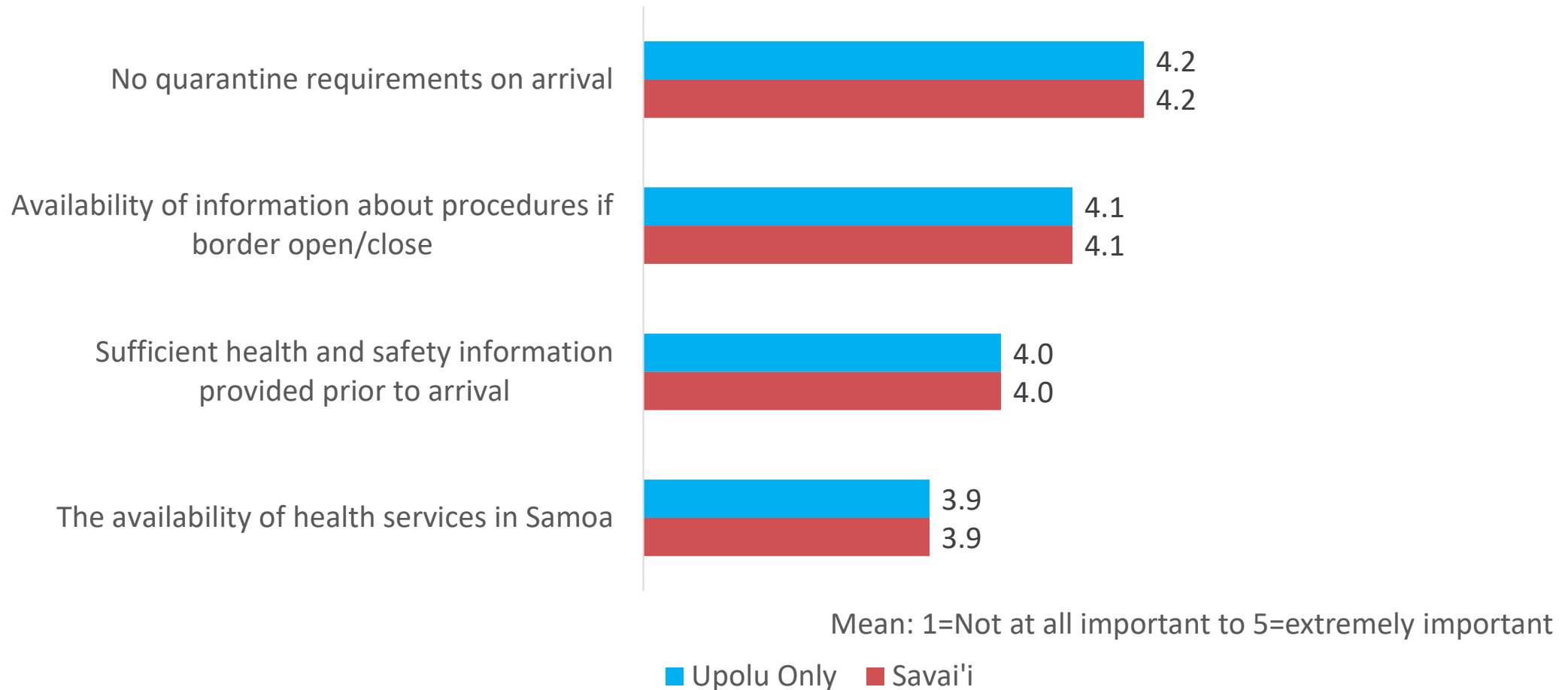


COVID RESPONSES & COMMENTS



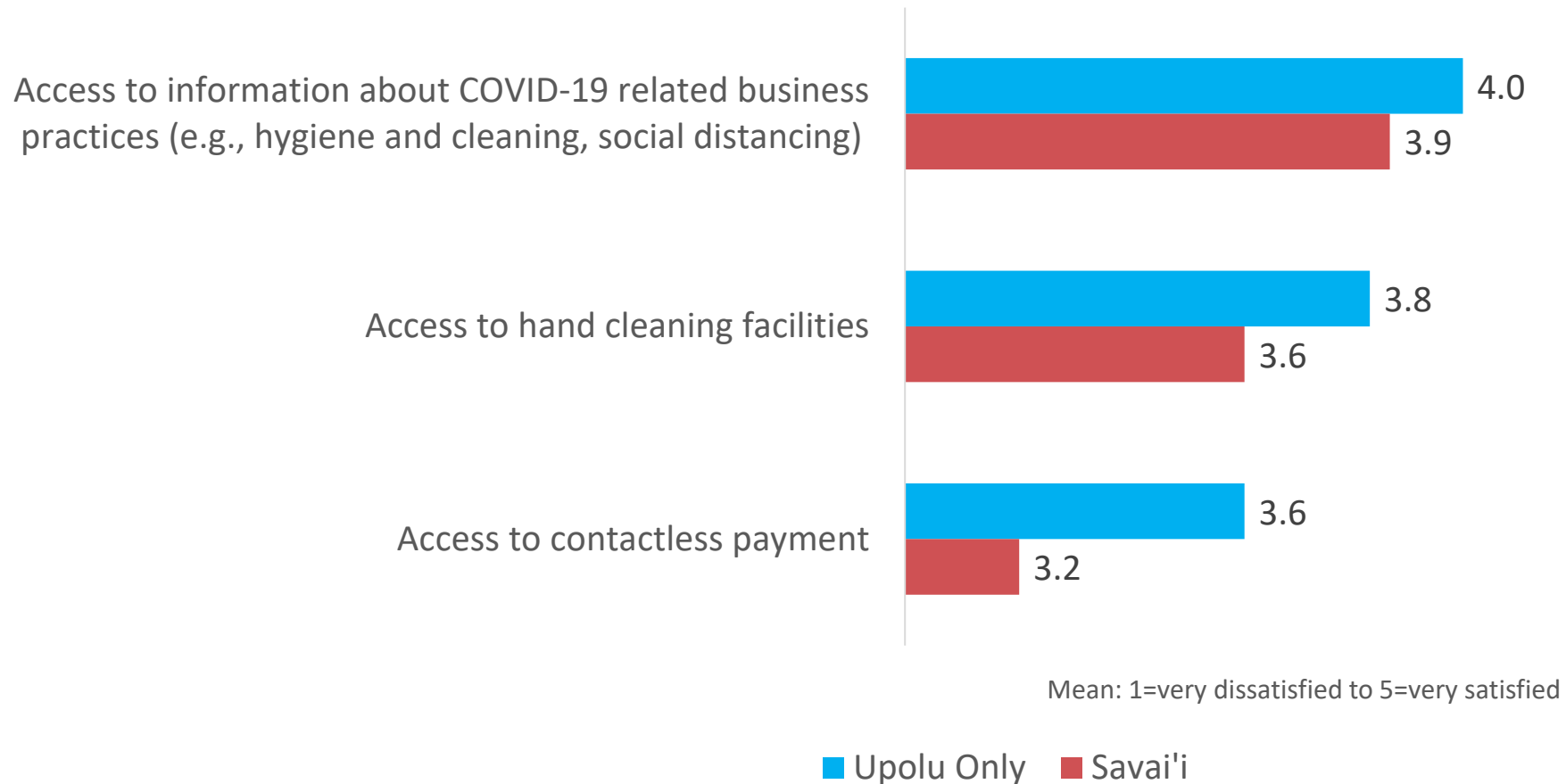
COVID Section 1: Visitors to Upolu only and Savai'i show similar importance levels in terms of factors in the decision to travel to Samoa

Q How important were the following factors in your decision to travel to Samoa?



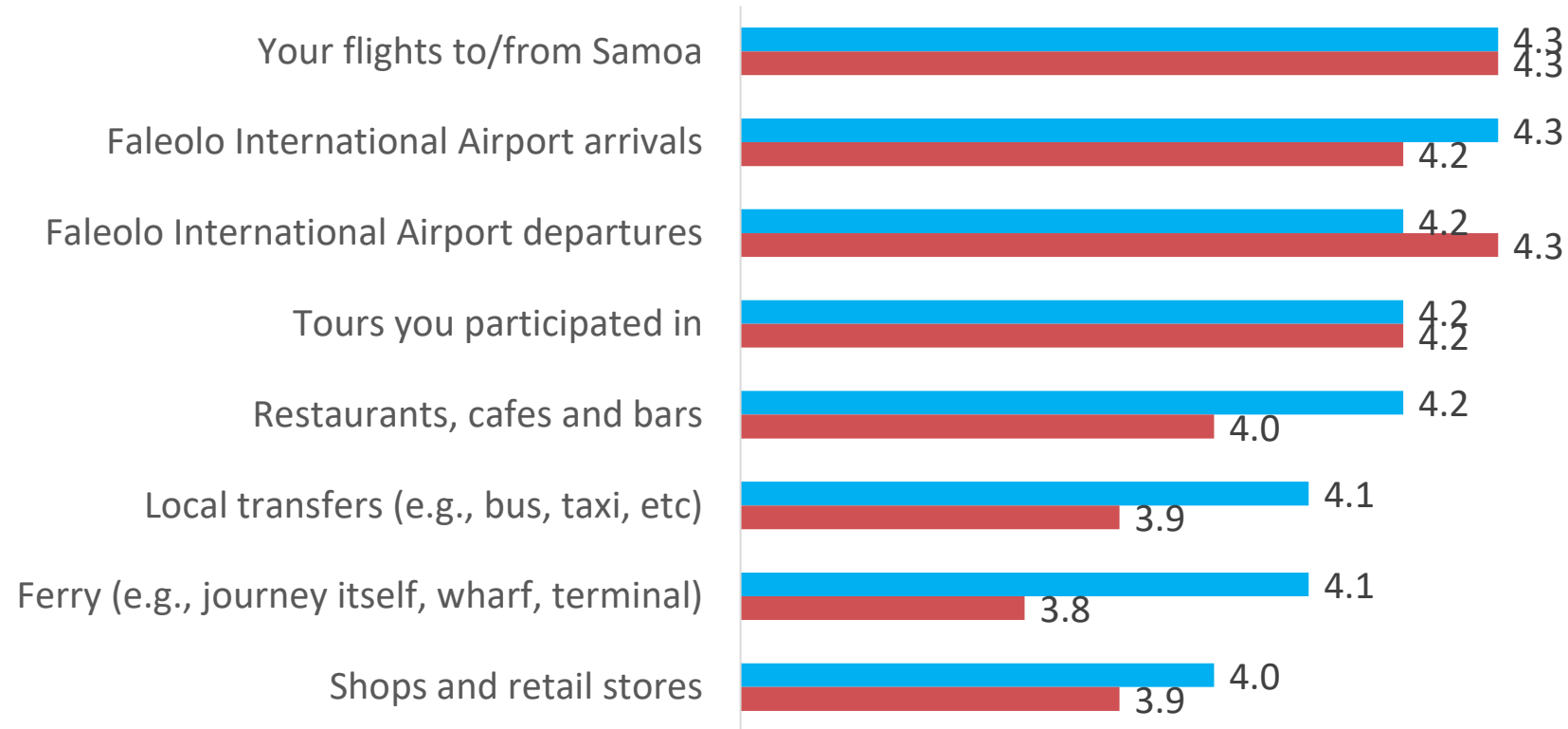
COVID Section 2: Visitors to Upolu only are much more satisfied than visitors to Savai'i in terms of satisfaction with COVID practices

Q Satisfaction with COVID practices



COVID Section 3: Visitors to Upolu only are generally satisfied with health and safety measures in different settings in Samoa than visitors to Savai'i

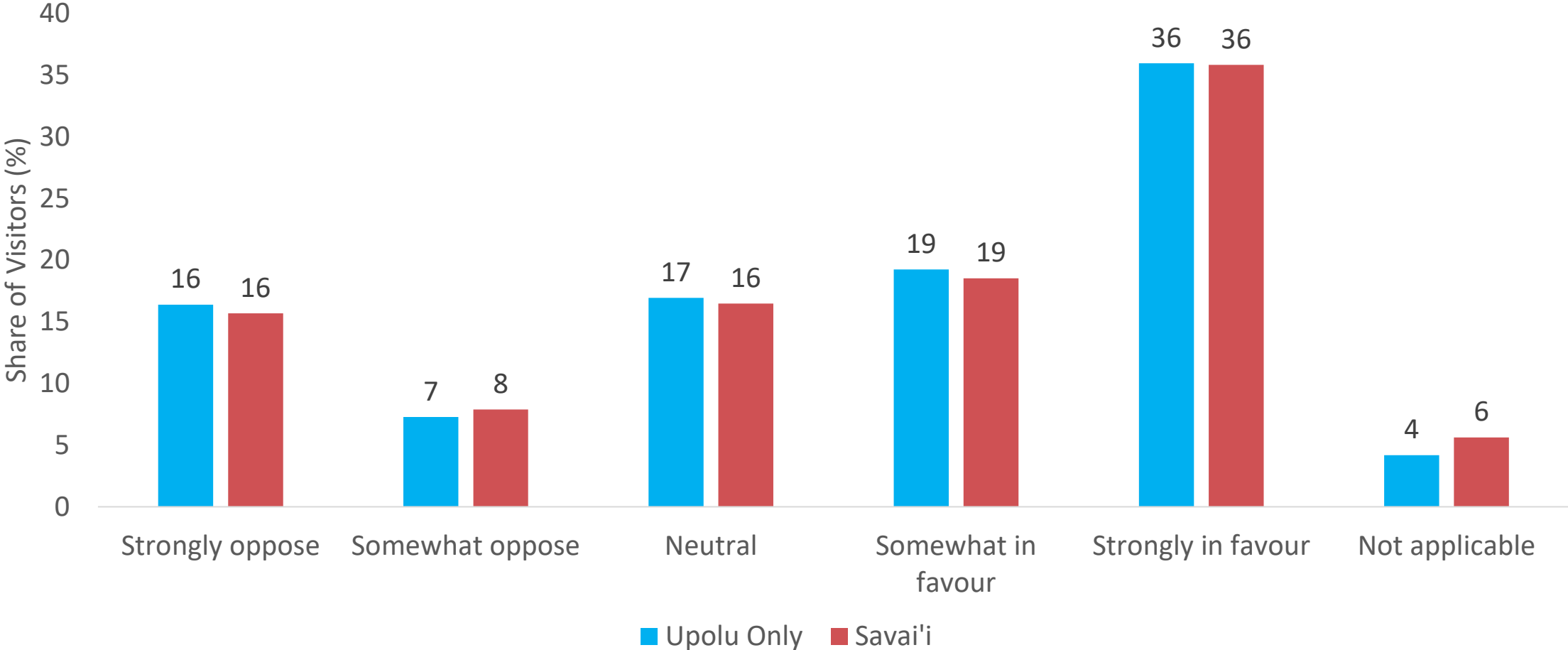
Q Satisfaction with Health and Safety Measures



Mean: 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied

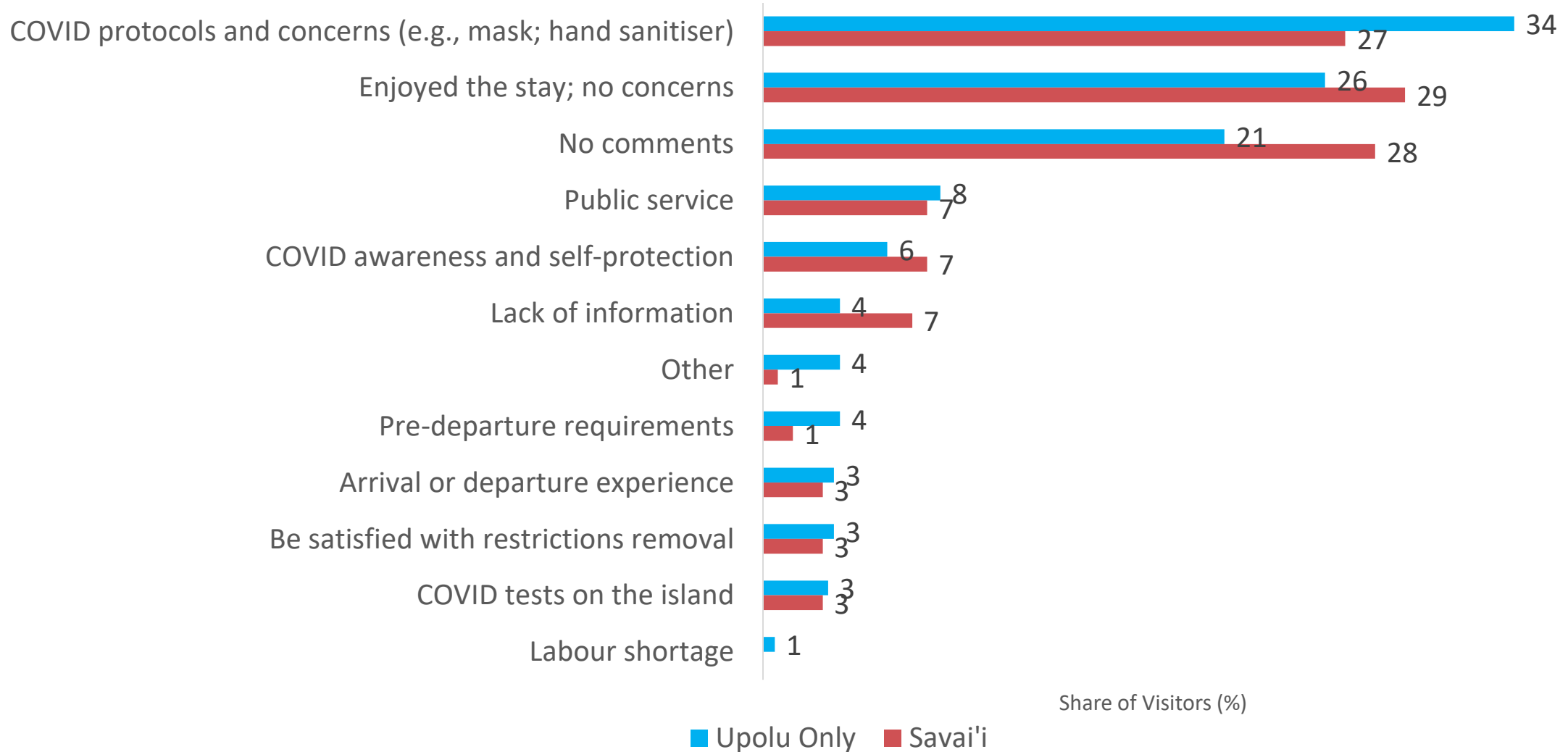
■ Upolu Only ■ Savai'i

Visitors to Upolu Only and Savai'i show similar attitudes towards the proposed 20 Tala levy to be added to the departure fee included in the air ticket: more than one-third (36%) of respondents are “Strongly in favour” of it.



Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures.

COVID comments



Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%
 *: Survey data thus unweighted.

COVID comments - Upolu Only

- “We didn't really have any great concern but just need people to be more aware of what Covid had done to the world so we all need to work together to make sure our be-loving nation Samoa is safe.”
- “I was pleased to see Samoa getting back to service and business delivery.”
- “We felt safe wherever we went because we and our locals took every precaution to be safe around others in the community and at home. Thank you.”
- “To be honest, COVID was a minor consideration when booking to travel to Samoa. The biggest concern was the borders closing unexpectedly (from the New Zealand side). I feel that everything was well balanced in Samoa regarding staying safe without being overbearing or restrictive. At no stage during the time there did I feel that there was undue risk or that appropriate care wasn't being taken and it was refreshing to have access to things without overbearing procedures in place.”
- “The government did Prime Minister did her best by putting Samoa first to protect her country.”
- “Almost as normal and peaceful.”
- “It was so nice and good to be back to visit my family since the COVID 2 years ago enjoy and spending time together will last forever looking forward to next year.”
- “Clear signs outside stores. More information needed about 3-day covid check - costs etc and locations.”

To be continued

COVID comments - Upolu Only

- “There was not a lot of information regarding keeping safe, i.e., wearing masks, etc. If an outbreak had occurred, there was no information as to what to do. I know that the medical facilities in Samoa are not up to standard.”
- “The restrictions had passed and we were not affected.”
- “Seamless day 3 testing. Easy and quick.”
- “Lack of medical experience or no close hospital at the airport. There’s hardly any hand hygiene around.”
- “It was great that signage, masks, cleaning products and hand sanitisers were still available. It was good to see some health and safety measures were still practised e.g., social distancing.”
- “Good to be able to have a holiday without Covid -19 restrictions.”
- “Felt safe the whole time.”
- “COVID is up to the people to take care of themselves.”
- “Expected staff shortages and tour closures so didn’t get annoyed when we couldn’t too seining with Turtles and other activities we had envisioned doing.”

COVID comments - Savai'i

- “More sanitisers being present in each stores esp on the boats.”
- “Keep Samoa clean.”
- “We felt adequately aware and advised while in Samoa because NZ had been through all the levels before Samoa.”
- “The check-up at hospital on the third day since we arrived was great, it was easy to find because of good information, and it was advised by the health workers at the airport. It was great seeing all of them in all their COVID uniforms helping us with the right papers to fill and the information helped a lot.”
- “It didn't feel or seem like an issue. It was not mentioned in any of the settings that I recall.”
- “Great and accessible medical care while ill.”
- “Covid now free but still a plan should still be in place if it strike again.”
- “Health officials are very good right from the airport ant they manage the visitors well.”
- “Very happy that they had opened the borders to vaccinated and unvaccinated and have no quarantine laws. this was the major reason for travelling here. Thank you.”

To be continued

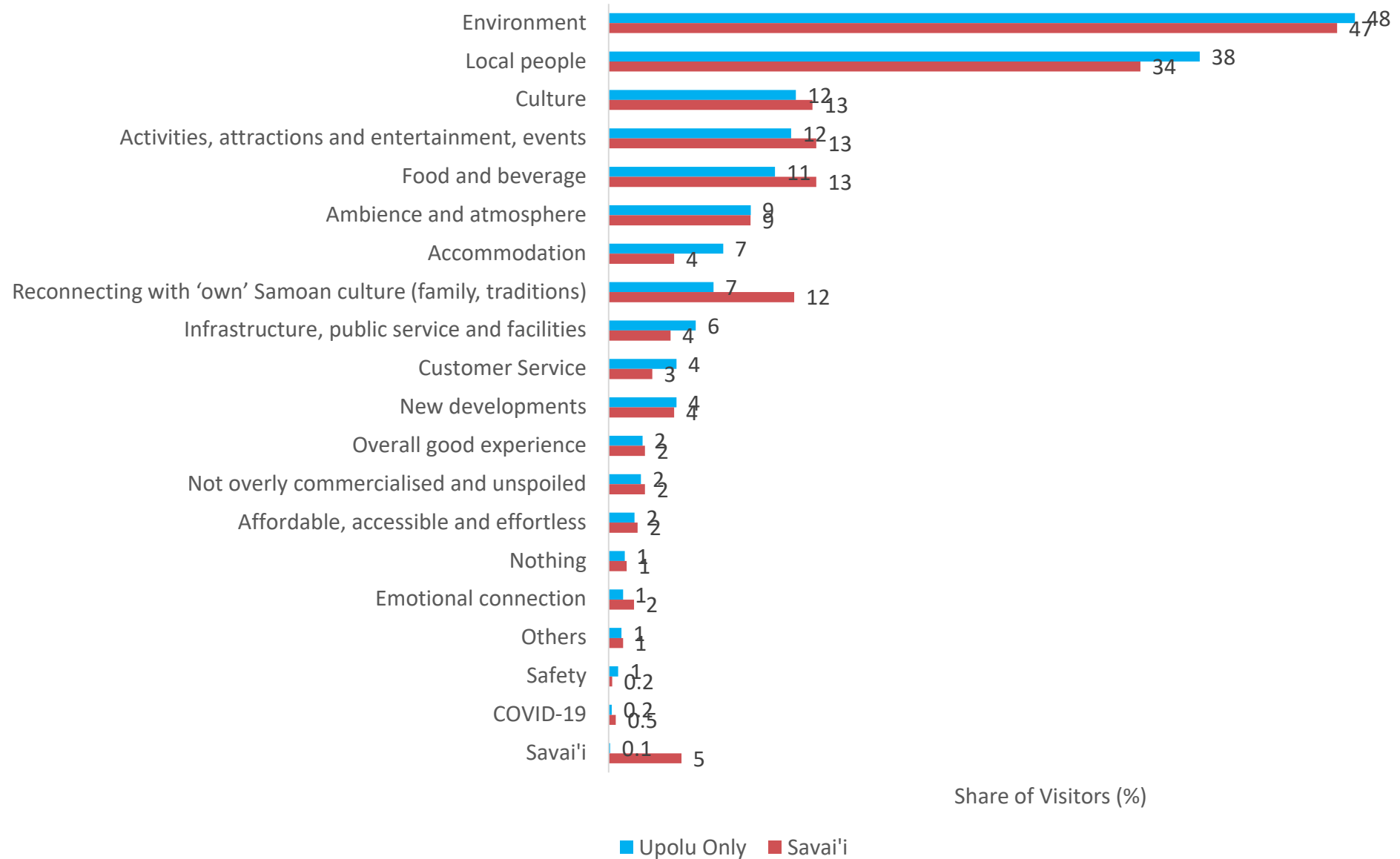
COVID comments - Savai'i

- “It was good to see that the level of knowledge our Samoan people have on Covid-19 and its prevention is fairly good. It would be great for the govt. and the airport and especially MOH to practice the same legislation of the day when flights come into Samoa. Too many travellers were returned due to inconsistent information on covid-19. That was a very sad thing to see after the borders were open. Therefore, for future health emergencies, please do better Samoa.”
- “People were really careful.”
- “Seldom available hand sanitizer and some public amenities were dirty and unsanitary.”
- “The arrival process at the international airport was very unorganized and could be streamlined significantly.”
- “There was no concern.”
- “There was not much talk or mentioning of COVID-19 at most places apart from COVID-19 testing at the main hospital...”
- “Tour operator drove us to the hospital so that we could do our Day 3 RAT. Very helpful. Covid restrictions had changed by the time we left Samoa.”
- “When I was in Savaii, It took half a day for us to find a clinic where I could conduct my 72-hour test...it would be great if locations for such activities would be available online.”

MOST APPEALING, LEAST APPEALING & IMPROVEMENT



Most Appealing Aspects



Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%
 *: Survey data thus unweighted.

Most appealing – Upolu Only

- “You could get a good sunset from anywhere. So beautiful and mesmerising!”
- “Wonderful people, kind and helpful. Lovely place. Pure nature. The place where to be. Quiet, wilderness, relaxing part of the world.”
- “The streets road are getting better in Upolu.”
- “The staff were extremely friendly and helpful, even though it was clear they were lacking some workers and skills due to hospitality industry shortages globally.”
- “The sightseeing like Lalomanu beach, Upolu etc.”
- “The people are so friendly and helpful. Out the back of Upolu was beautiful and so relaxing.”
- “It was much cleaner in Upolu.”
- “The visit to the Tu Sua trench was wonderful. The locals are lovely and willing to do anything for you. the beaches were great.”
- “The village I come from and my holiday home, the beauty of the natural resources, mountains, trees, bats in the evening flying over my house, serenity, gardens, and eco atmosphere.”

To be continued

Most appealing – Upolu Only

- “The Tosua Range.”
- “The sunset and the stunning beach at Maninoa. The impressive new airport at Faleolo. The variety and quality of food and takeaways available in Apia.”
- “The simplicity and peace of Apia.”
- “THE SAMOAN CULTURE.”
- “The resort was amazing (Taumeasina Island). Being able to snorkel off the beach made my day, every day!”
- “The relaxed lifestyle, slower pace of daily life, colour, food, swimming/climate.”
- “The people, the places we visited Taumasenia resort, Lava Hotel, Sateloga Resort, Piula pool, Lalomanu Beach, driving through the villages.”
- “The people, the culture, the beaches just everything about Samoa made us fall in love. We visited 3 years ago before covid then got engaged and knew where we wanted to get married. We introduced nearly 50 friends and family to Samoa through our wedding (held at Coconuts Beach Resort) and I know that I as well as many others will be back.”

To be continued

Most appealing – Upolu Only

- “I loved To Sua trench and swimming and kayaking in the warm sea water.”
- “Saletoga Sands Matatufu, Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, Lalomanu.”
- “People and hotel stays, and dinners out especially at Bistro Tatau.”
- “Not overdeveloped and ruined by non-natural elements (e.g. wires, cables, poles,) where you can see the natural beauty of Samoa.”
- “No place like home. Love Samoa, the natural environment. Easy to adopt to Samoa way of life. It's people and culture. Big change, eg. more businesses, love the environment, sightseeing and people and our Samoan culture.”
- “My family Village at Tapatapao and LaVasa Resort.”
- “Loved that there was an improvement in the roads although much of the corridor from Apia to the Airport is still under construction, appreciated that something was being done for Samoa’s people.”
- “Location of my accomodation, 3 nights Apia (Olivia's) 5 nights Lupes, Maninoa. Enjoyed snorkeling at Palolo Deep, swimming off the beach at Maninoa, To Sua Trench and generally looking around the island.”

Most appealing – Savai'i

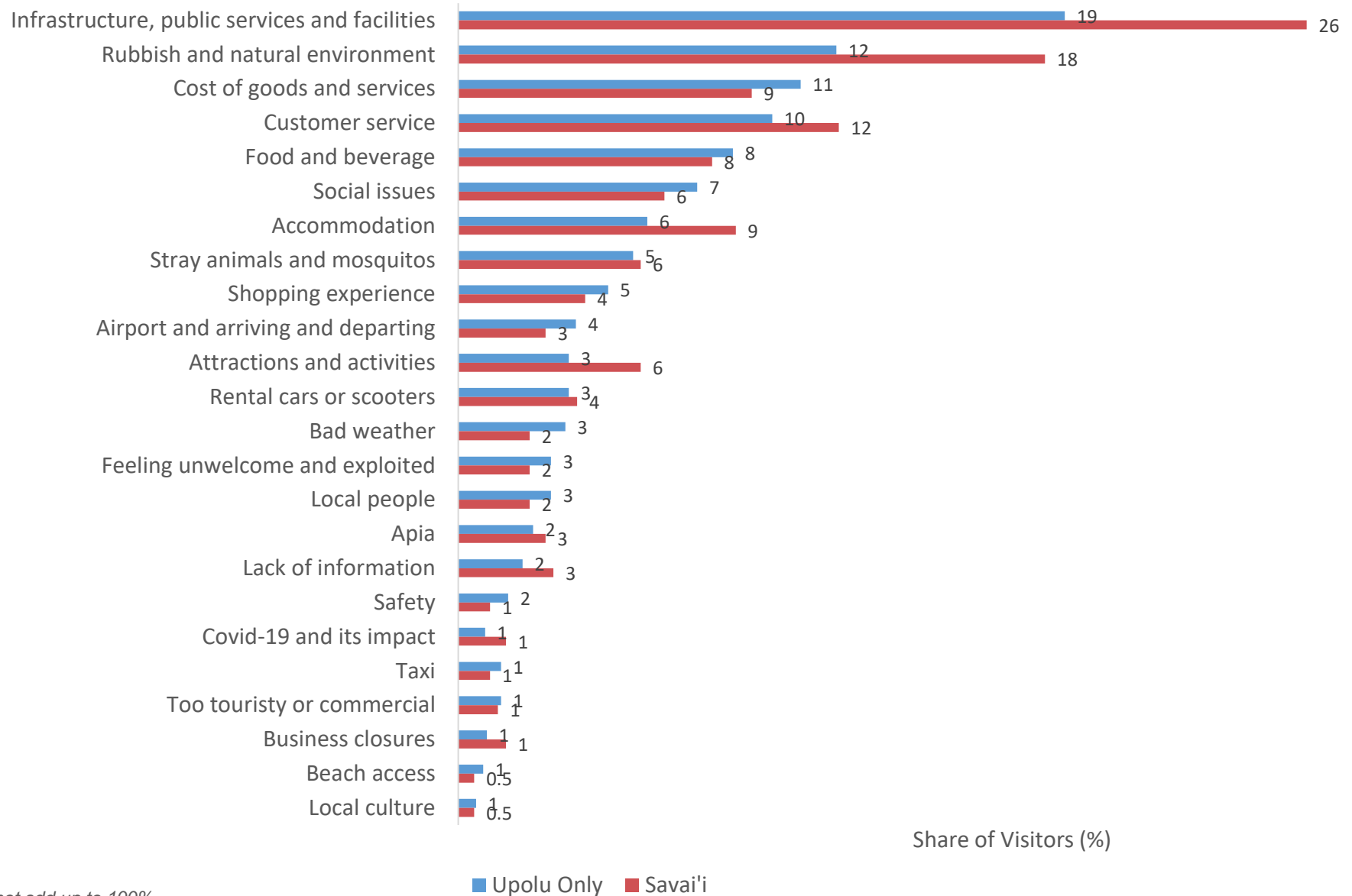
- “There are things that attracted me and urged me to visit again to Samoa. I didn't have time to visit any historical places in Upolu. I also wanted to get the ferry to Savai'i. I like the clean environment, and the beautiful people of Samoa. I also learnt that most big businesses even a bank owned by the Samoans, that is great.”
- “Local cuisine n beaches loved Savai'i Lagoon.”
- “Visiting family, swimming spots, fales on Savai'i.”
- “Trip around the island of Savai'i.”
- “The Tosua trench and other hotspots around Upolu, the villages in Savai'i were so clean and well maintained.”
- “The people were wonderful to help us and very glad to see us there. Loved snorkelling with turtles on Savai'i, to Sua trench and blowholes. We were lucky not many other tourists there.”
- “The natural beauty, especially Savai'i, of the beaches, water, birds, turtles. The friendliness and helpfulness of the people was always excellent too.”
- “The lovely people on the Island of Savai'i and how clean and beautiful it is.”

To be continued

Most appealing – Savai'i

- “The beaches on the east coast of Savai'i.”
- “We love Savai'i and return to Savaii Lagoon because of its location, weather, snorkelling and easy-going clean facilities and friendly staff!”
- “The Apia waterfront and some of the outer villages in both Upolu and Savai'i.”
- “That Savai'i is still beautiful and Upolu...well, it's Upolu. Once the main roads on Upolu are completed. I think it would look very good and make the trip to Faleolo and Mulifanua more pleasurable. People are still humorous despite the cost of living going up.”
- “Spending time with family in the village of Iva, Savai'i.”
- “Savai'i island in general. it was a beautiful and amazing experience, especially at the Amoa Resort. Great staff, Amazing breakfast and dinner, overall would recommend to others.”
- “Savai'i and people.”
- “Our visit to Savai'i was the highlight of our Trip. Since Samoa had been closed to the world during Covid, I found it hard to find up-to-date information on pricing, current pictures and reviews. It was a Facebook message then followed up with emails by the awesome team at Le Lagoto that delivered a great experience for me and my family.”

Least Appealing Aspects



Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%
 *: Survey data thus unweighted.

Least appealing – Upolu Only

- “Zero availability of public transport or any regular hotel to city centre transport other than for-hire taxis.”
- “Amount of rubbish around every road you drive around in the Upolu island.”
- “Markets - too small.”
- “Infrastructure, particularly the road; poor, rough and unstable to drive on.”
- “I would like to see a bit more to do in Apia. I was surprised not to have a lot of rental services on the waterfront - fishing charters, kayak rentals, food stands, etc. Things like the marine reserve are amazing and I think there is potential to do a lot of this kind of activity.”
- “I guess Samoa wasn't ready for the amount of overseas people that were going to visit hence why it was hard to get via Kipolo or pay so much in Apia. But we live and learn from these things, keep up the good work Samoa.”
- “Hotel restaurant was not good, others were fine.”
- “Food was expensive.”

To be continued

Least appealing – Upolu Only

- “First aid not available or lack of, at most beaches and holiday places.”
- “Dogs on the street.”
- “COVID has definitely affected things like staffing, and the service was a bit patchy. Some (the majority) were really good, but some should not have even had/kept a job.”
- “Cost of living is really expensive. I would say I just can't afford to live in Samoa within a week..”
- “Challenging to walk around Apia because of vehicle traffic in and out of driveways. Service in some restaurants was a bit slow and staff lack energy.”
- “Apia was very busy & congested.”
- “Apia is becoming over-commercialized and too busy. Some areas need a good tidy up and a pot of paint.”
- “Apia not been clean.”

Least appealing – Savai’i

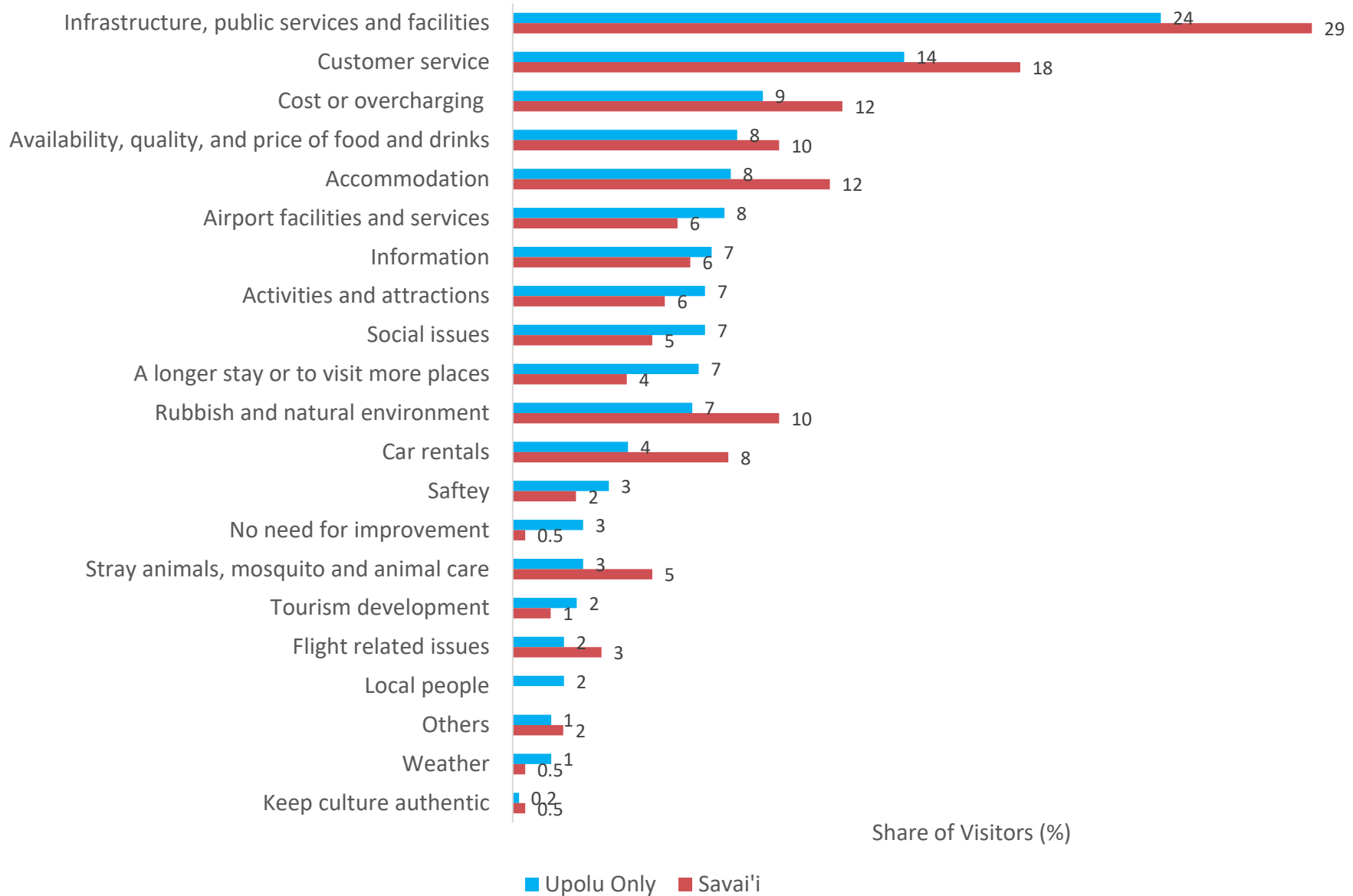
- “Roadside rubbish - tons of it for the full length of Savai’i.”
- “We had some great service but also some poor service. Healthy food options were also a little tricky to find. And the ferry between Upolu and Savai’i felt very crowded and unsafe.”
- “The ferry ride to Savai’i! ... Suggestion would be to please not overbook the ferries!”
- “Difficulty in communicating, the ferry left early and we were left stranded on Savai’i. Food was really average.”
- “Markets, both Savai’i and Apia.”
- “I think seeing how hospitality providers of fale accommodation and restaurants are really struggling after Covid and having no income for so many years, remembering that before Covid was the measles epidemic too. This isn’t a criticism - more a worry for their future without support. Having visited Samoa many times in last 10 years on our own & taking family and spending time in Upolu & Savai’i, it is more evident than ever that Savai’i has been the forgotten island but has so much potential for the local people and Samoa as a whole. If they had some financial help from government to invest in upgrading facilities, maintenance and training.”

To be continued

Least appealing – Savai'i

- “Lack of shops tua Savai'i.”
- “The hospital in Savai'i was horrible, needs help ASAP. The ferries also need to be cleaned and maintained.”
- “The wards at the hospital in Savai'i (Tuasivi) are badly maintained. Bad hygiene with bathrooms for the sick not built for purpose. Resources need to be redirected to that hospital to bring its standard up to acceptable standards. I took my mother out the very next day after I arrived in Samoa because our home was cleaner.”
- “Clear signage was minimal while driving on both islands (Savai'i moreso). When travelling around islands, it can be difficult to match map location venues with real-time signage. Many venues were closed (post Covid-19). There is a lack of a variety of available fresh vegetables to purchase to balance meals healthily.”
- “Food and dining out in Savai'i is pretty limited and very expensive... There is no reliable supply of goods to the island to keep things running consistently.”
- “The cellphone service was very slow or almost no service in Savai'i...”

Suggestions for Improvements



Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%
 *: Survey data thus unweighted.

Improvement – Upolu Only

- “Travel around the Upolu island.”
- “Fixing the road so journey into Apia is pleasant.”
- “A smooth drive from the airport to Apia.”
- “Vegetarian options and more awareness off things to do in Samoa even things to do in Apia like bowling, mini golf, escape room etc.”
- “Stop the kids begging - and sort out Apia - tourists need to feel safe not be robbed at knife point.”
- “Night market in Apia.”
- “More info on what to do in Apia - seems that we missed a lot.”
- “I appreciate how clean the public toilets were near the library in Apia. I did tell the couple that were taking care of it.”
- “Forgot to mention ** restaurant in Apia - incredible food at a great price! Didn’t see it advertised anywhere but luckily met the owner when looking for your visitors’ info centre!”
- “Ability to buy local village arts and crafts, nothing where we were and market in Apia too far away.”

Improvement – Savai'i

- “Not overbooking the ferry to Savai'i so that we didn't have to pay for a night's accommodation where not needed.”
- “Get a Sunday AM boat to Savai'i e.g., 9 or 10 am.”
- “Information in the resort reception about places of interest to visit around Savai'i.”
- “You could consider having a well-advertised bus for tourists to go to things like Mt Vaea, the sea trench, even the canopy walk on Savai'i.”
- “We were cycling on Savai'i. The dogs are a problem.”
- “Yes. Better service for devices in Savai'i, please. Apia is awesome no need to find an area to get service on my phone when I was there but Savai'i massive difference... Better network connectivity for devices in Savai'i will be much appreciated.”
- “Our accommodation in Savai'i was below average and disappointing.”

Future intentions



Return

Upolu Only	95% would return
Savai'i	95% would return



Recommendation

Upolu Only	96% would recommend
Savai'i	97% would recommend



Thank you

PTDI team

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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government.