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Samoa International Visitor Survey

August 2022 – January 2023

Prepared for Samoa Tourism Authority

by

**Pacific Tourism Data Initiative
Auckland University of Technology**

[Pacific Tourism Data Initiative - AUT](#)

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Executive Summary

This report focuses on the characteristics, expectations and expenditure patterns of international tourists who visited Samoa by air between August 2022 and January 2023 since the boarder was first opened in August 2022 after COVID-19. The data presented is collected from an online visitor survey (www.samoasurvey.com) completed after departure. There were 1,909 individual respondents to the survey (3% of visitors during the period) - representing a total of 2,992 adults and 799 children in terms of local expenditure analysis (the latter figure equates to 6% of all visitors during the period – based on national visitor arrival data from the Samoa Bureau of Statistics).

Over half (59%) of visitors surveyed come from New Zealand, with 23% coming from Australia. Visitors are well educated (74% of visitors have some form of tertiary education) with a relatively high annual household income (the average figure is SAT\$233,915/NZ\$136,886). Solo travellers make up nearly a third (29%) of those surveyed. For those who travel with companions, over a third of visitors (35%) travel with one companion.

Nearly a third of respondents (32%) are first time visitors to Samoa, a further 21% have visited two or three times before. The main purpose of visit is holiday making (36%). The average length of stay in Samoa is 11.1 nights. Three quarters (75%) of visitors stay either one or two weeks. Over a quarter of visitors surveyed visit Savai'i (33%) in addition to Upolu.

Average visitor spend prior to arrival in Samoa is SAT\$2,933 (NZ\$1,716) per person, and we estimate that 55% of this amount - SAT\$1,613 (NZ\$944) reaches the Samoan economy (SAT\$145/NZ\$85 per day). The average visitor spends SAT\$2,128 (NZ\$1,254) while in the country or SAT\$192 (NZ\$113) per person per day. Average visitor spending has increased slightly from 2019 – both in country and pre-paid. If the pre-paid spend and the in-country spend are combined, it is estimated that the total spend per visit is SAT\$3,741/NZ\$2,198 (or SAT\$337/NZ\$198 per person per day).

Overall, visitor satisfaction levels with Samoa services and experiences are high. The most appealing elements are environmental cleanliness and weather; local people; activities, attractions, entertainment and events; culture; and food and beverage. The least appealing elements are the lack/quality of infrastructure, public services and facilities; rubbish and natural environment care; social issues; cost of goods and services; customer service; food and beverage; accommodation; stray animals and mosquitos; and shopping experience.

In terms of the COVID-19 response in Samoa, visitors are generally very satisfied with COVID related processes and requirements. All Likert scale scores for questions related to satisfaction with COVID policies produced mean scores equal to or above 3.5 out of 5.

Visitors' future intentions are very positive with 95% of those surveyed stating that they would return to Samoa, and 96% saying they would recommend Samoa to friends or family.

This report can be read in conjunction with a variety of presentations based on the annual data set, these can be viewed at: [Pacific Tourism Data Initiative - AUT](#)

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Introduction

The Samoan government, local businesses and communities require a clear picture of the characteristics, expectations and expenditure patterns of visitors to the nation. It is vital that businesses and the public sector have a better understanding of the role that the industry plays in the local economy and how industry performance may be improved. The information reported here from the Samoa International Visitor Survey (IVS) is designed to support better decision making at government, business and community levels.

The Samoa IVS involves international visitor data being collected via an online survey. Visitors to Samoa are asked to complete a web-based survey within a few weeks of completing their visit.

This report presents the results from August 2022 to January 2023 since the boarder first opened after COVID-19. Over this six-month period, 17,497 visitors were contacted by email to take part in the survey, and 1,909 responses were received: a conversion rate of 11%. These responses cover a total of 2,992 adults and 799 children.

The data presented in this report includes detailed information on:

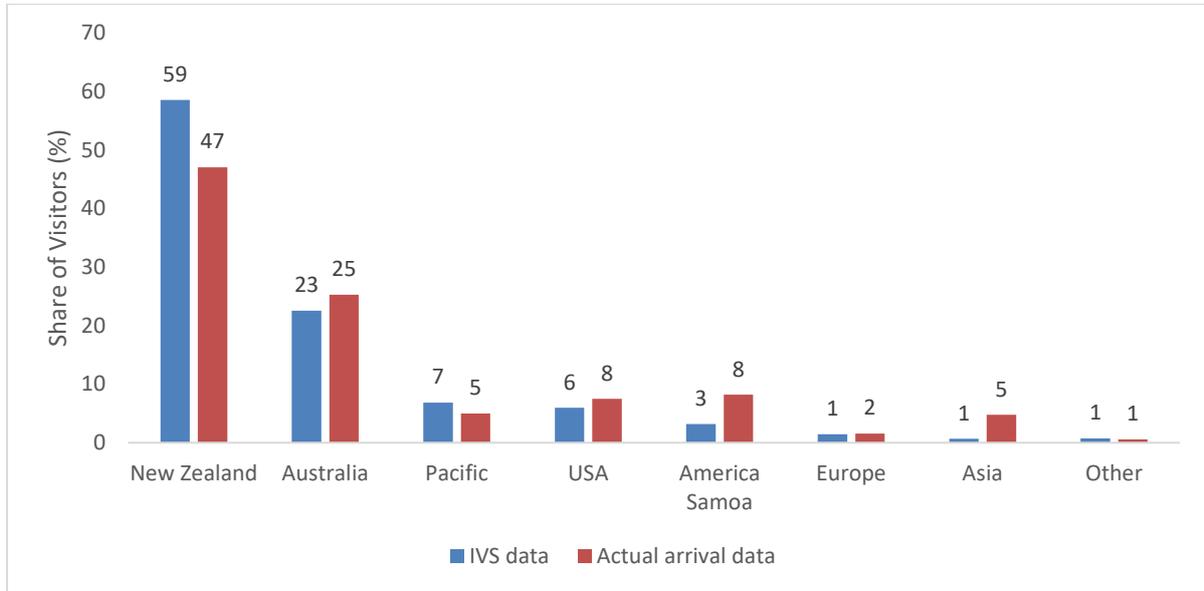
- The characteristics of visitors to Samoa (age, gender, education, country of origin, income, purpose of visit, travelling companions, number of previous visits, accommodation types, length of stay, airline used, islands visited, and destinations visited)
- Visitor information obtained about Samoa, the factors influencing the travel decision making process, and booking information and sources
- Visitor expenditure (amount of money spent prior to arrival and while in Samoa and the breakdown of spending)
- Visitor perceptions of COVID-19 impacts on travel and Cook Islands policies and processes
- Visitor satisfaction (most and least appealing elements of the visit, overall satisfaction, satisfaction with activities)

Data have been weighted based on actual arrivals by country of residence over the same time period. This ensures that results are representative of all visitor arrivals, thereby ensuring that over-sampled or under-sampled countries of residence are adjusted accordingly.

Visitor Characteristics

Over half (59%) of visitors surveyed come from New Zealand (Figure 1). The second largest visitor group is from Australia (23%). The fit between our sample and actual arrivals is good with Pacific and USA, and American Samoa and Asia being under-sampled.

Figure 1: Country of origin



Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty account for 88% of New Zealand visitors. For Australian visitors, the regions of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria dominate (89%) (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: New Zealand visitors (n = 821)

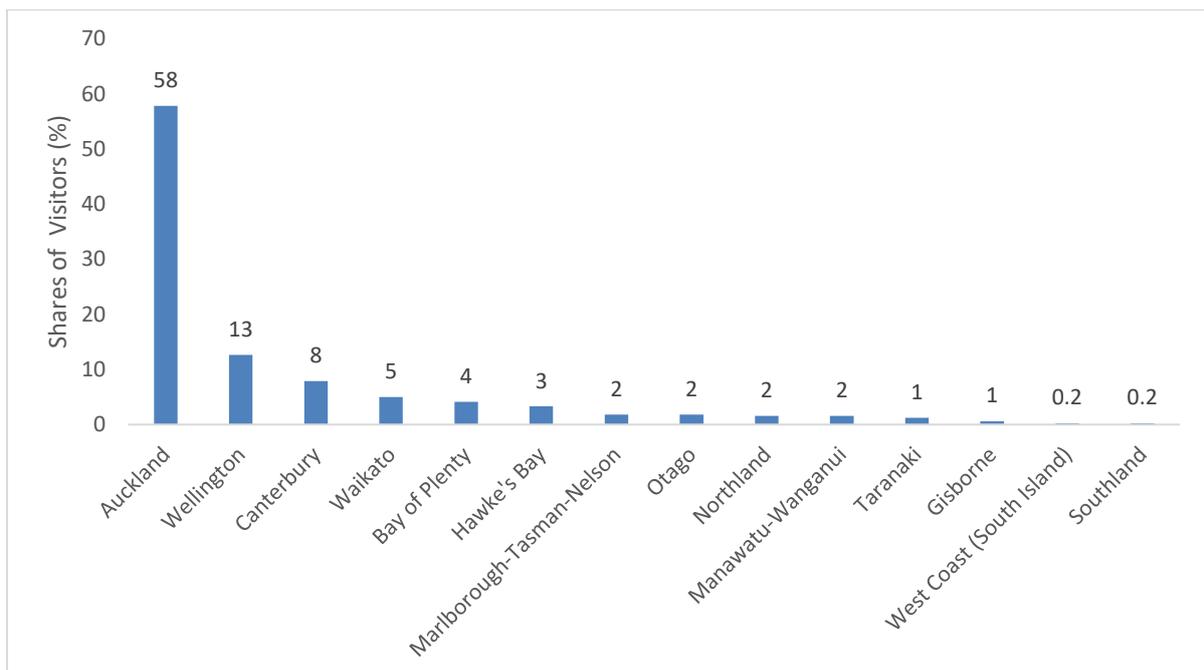
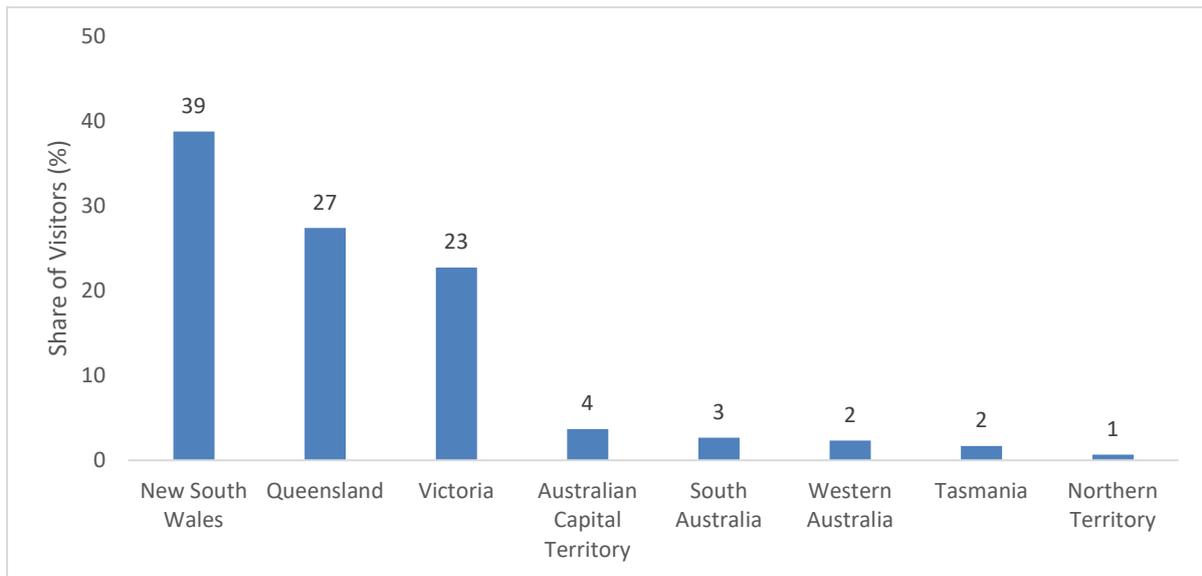
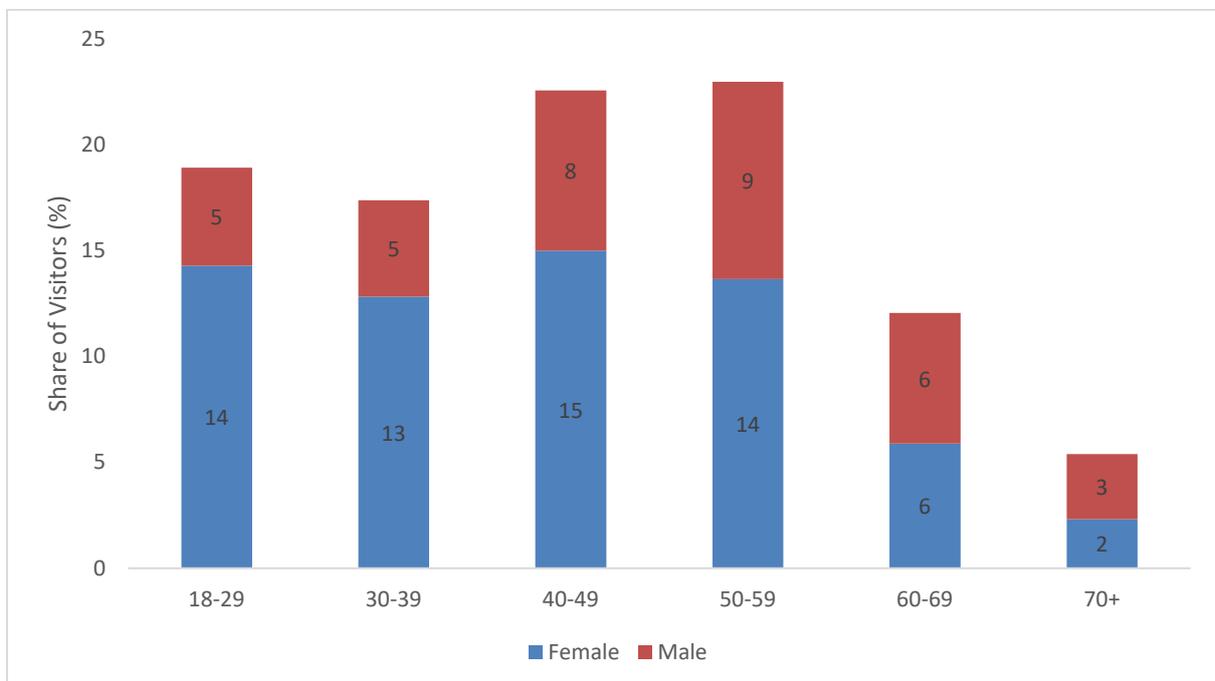


Figure 3: Australia visitors (n = 299)



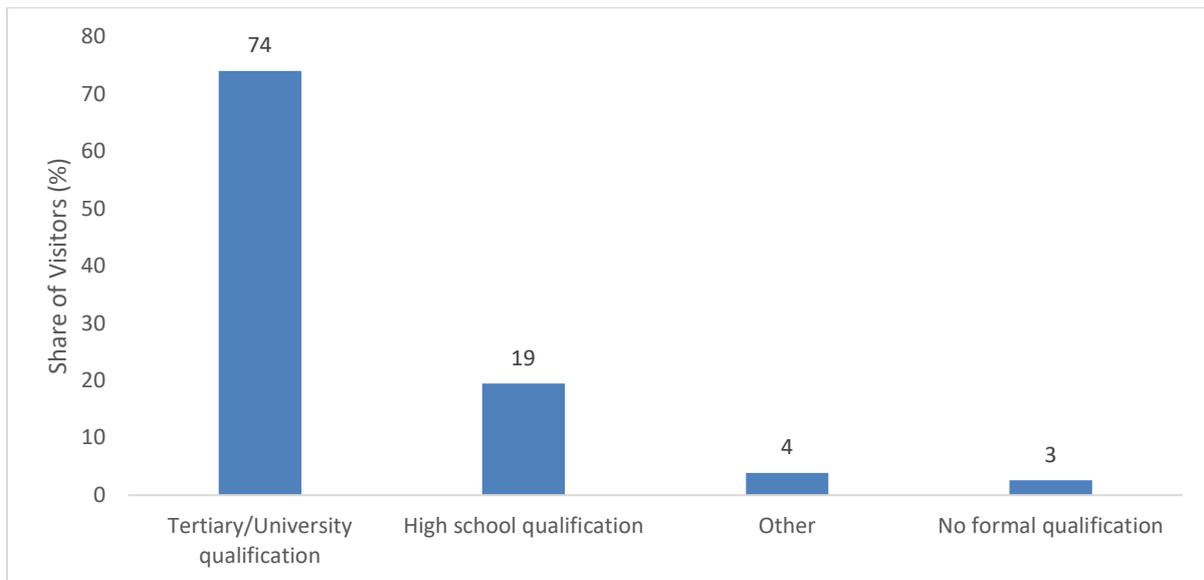
More women (64%) than men (35%) completed the survey (Figure 4), with 1% gender diverse. The most significant age categories are 40 to 49 (23%), 50 to 59 (23%), 18 to 29 (19%), and 30 to 39 (17%), followed by those aged 60 to 69 (12%). There are relatively few travellers in the 70 plus age bracket (5%). Those under 18 are not surveyed for ethical reasons.

Figure 4: Distribution of age and gender (n = 913)



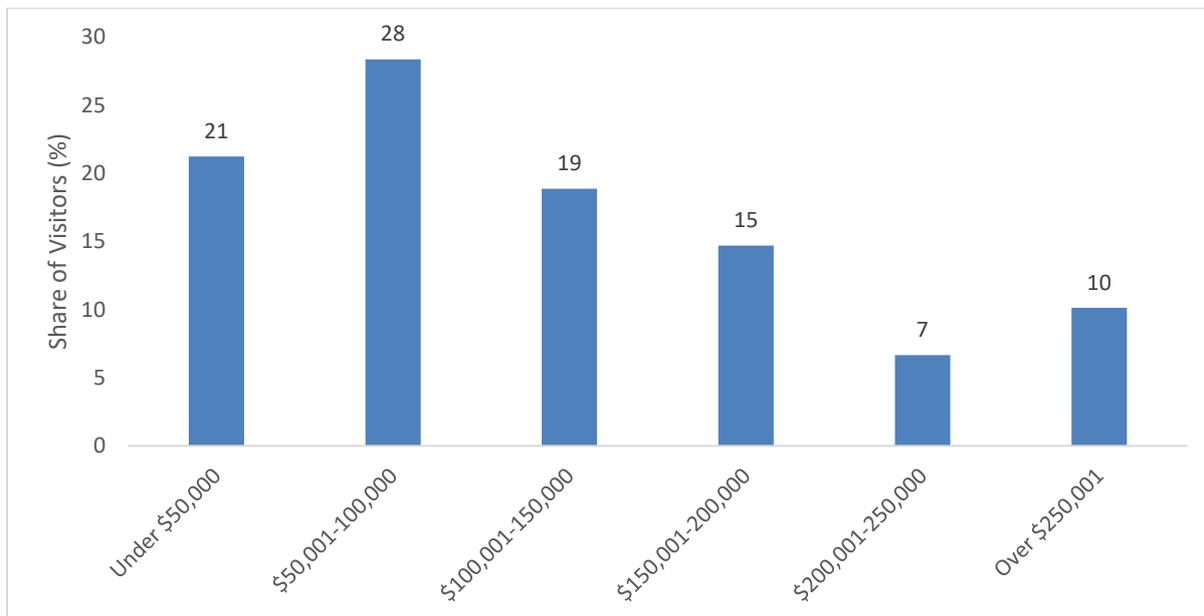
Visitors are generally well educated: nearly three quarters (74%) of those surveyed have some form of tertiary qualification, with a further 19% having completed a high school education (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Highest qualification (n = 1,430)



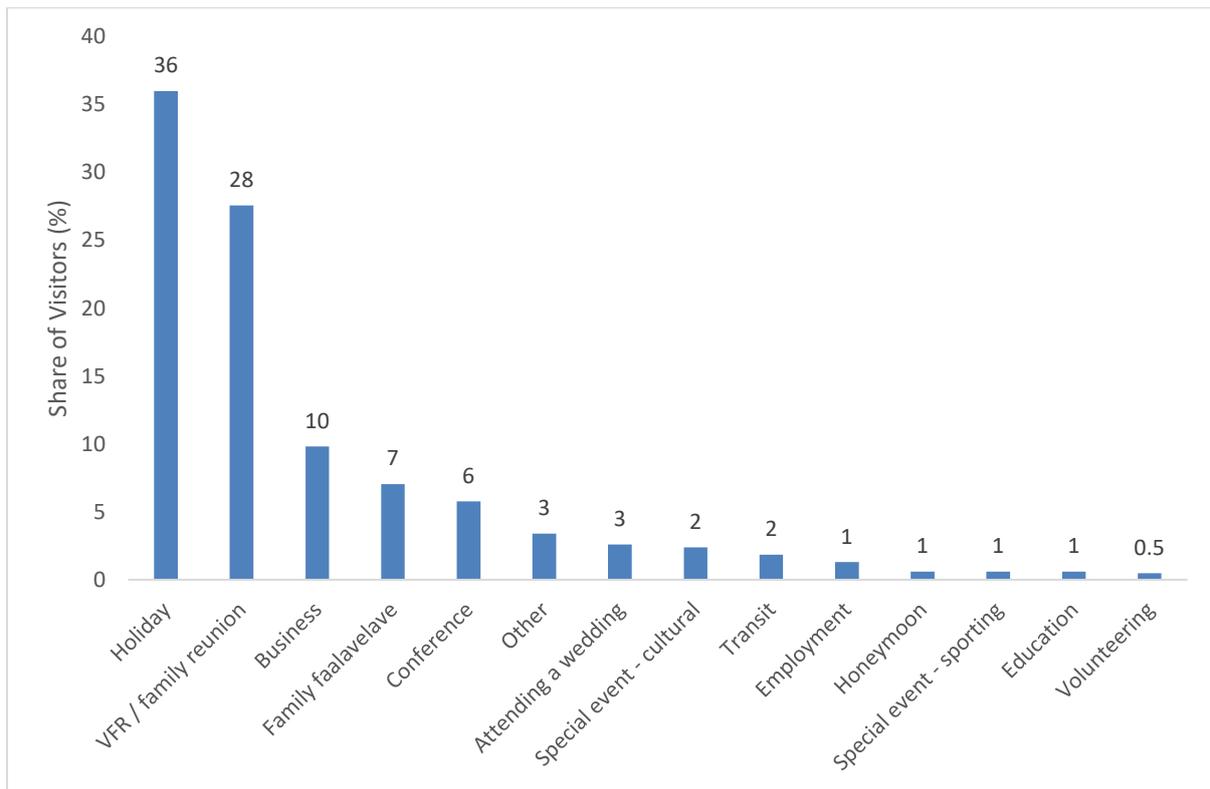
The average annual household income of the visitors surveyed is SAT\$233,915/NZ\$136,886. Nearly a third of visitors (28%) have an annual household income of between NZ\$50,001 and NZ\$100,000. Similarly, nearly a quarter (21%) of those surveyed earn less than NZ\$50,000. Nearly one fifth of visitors (19%) have a household income of between NZ\$100,001 and NZ\$150,000. A further 32% of respondents have a household income of over NZ\$150,000 per year (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Annual household income in NZD (n = 1,140)



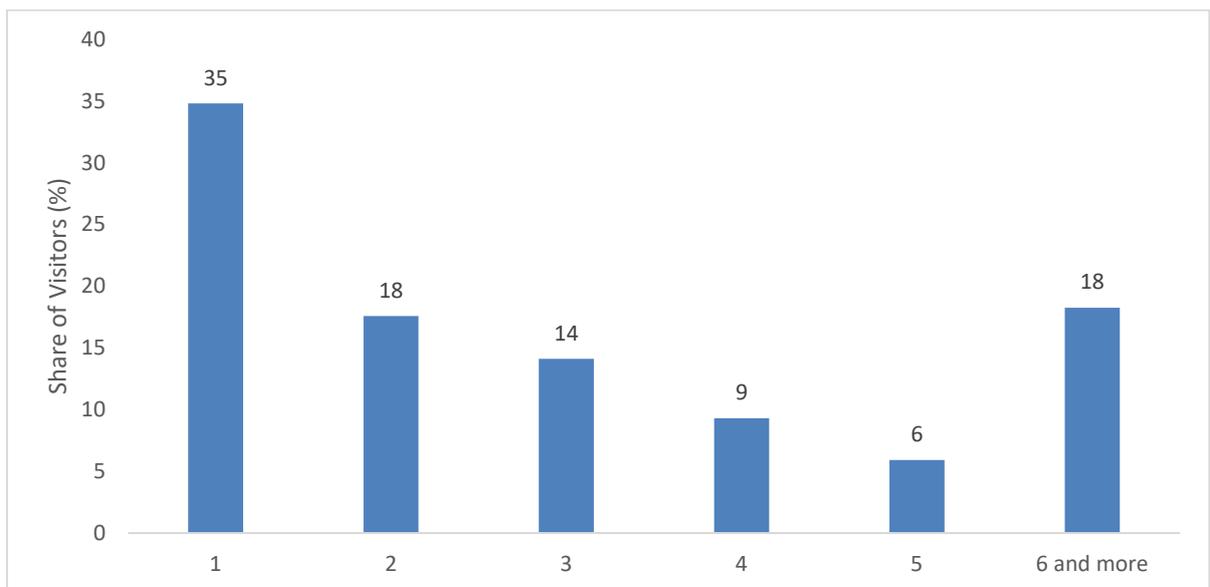
Over one in three visitors surveyed come to Samoa for a holiday (36%) (Figure 7). Other main reasons given include visiting friends or relatives (28%), business (10%), family fa'alavelave (7%), conference (6%), and other (3%).

Figure 7: Main purpose of visit (n = 1,865)



Nearly one third of visitors travelled alone (29%). Of those who travelled with companion(s) to Samoa (71%), 35% travelled with one person (Figure 8). Nearly one in five (18%) visitors surveyed travelled with six or more people and were often visiting for family fa’alavelave, or family reunions.

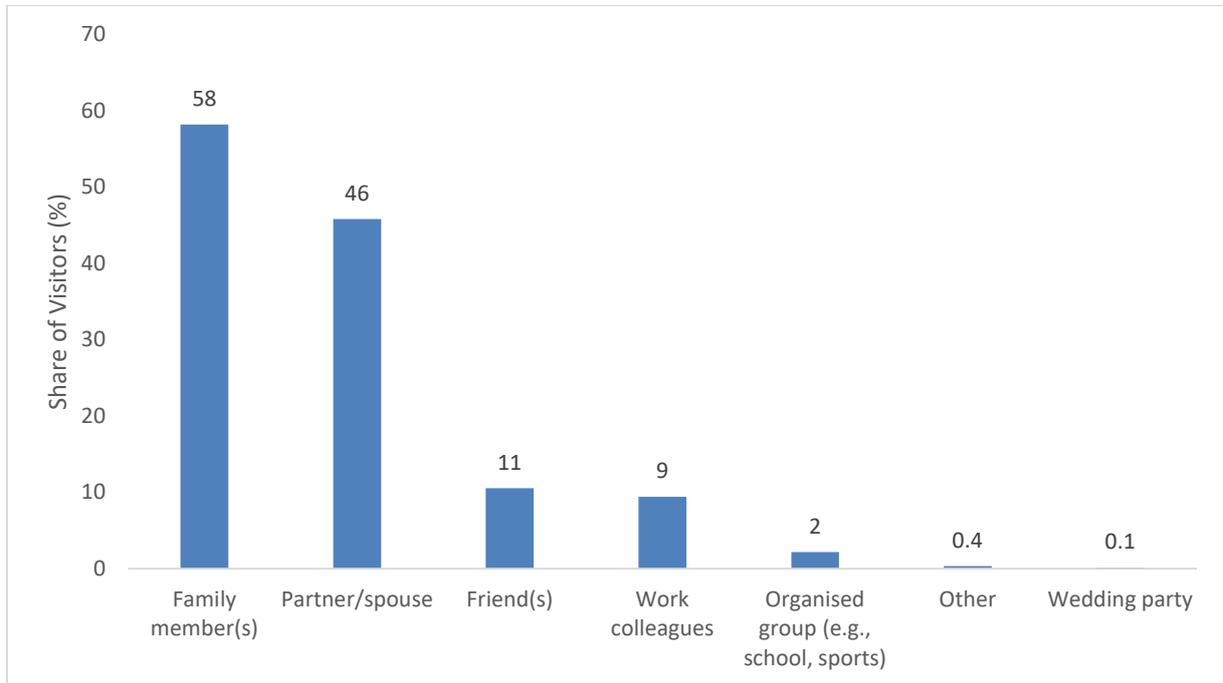
Figure 8: Number of companions on trip (n = 1,189)



Among those visitors who travel with one or more companions, most travel to Samoa with a partner or spouse (58%). Visitors also travel with other family members (46%), or with friends

(11%). Those travelling with work colleagues, in an organised group, in a tour group, or for a wedding party represent smaller shares of the sample (Figure 9).

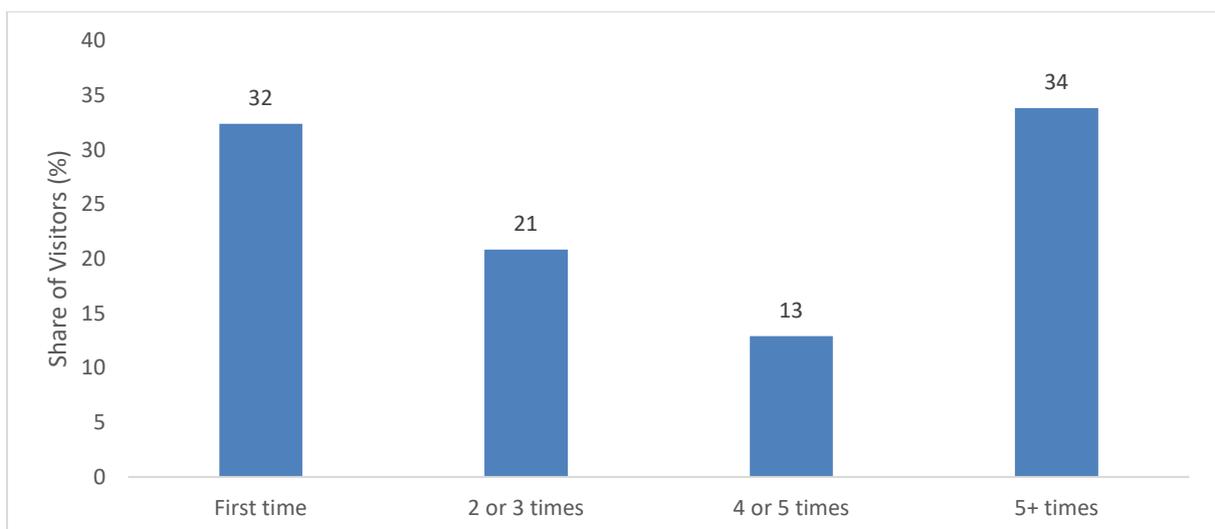
Figure 9: Travelling with whom? (n = 1,317)



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

Nearly a third of visitors (32%) are on their first visit to Samoa. A further 21% have been to Samoa twice or three times before. Nearly half of respondents (47%) have visited Samoa four or more times (Figure 10).

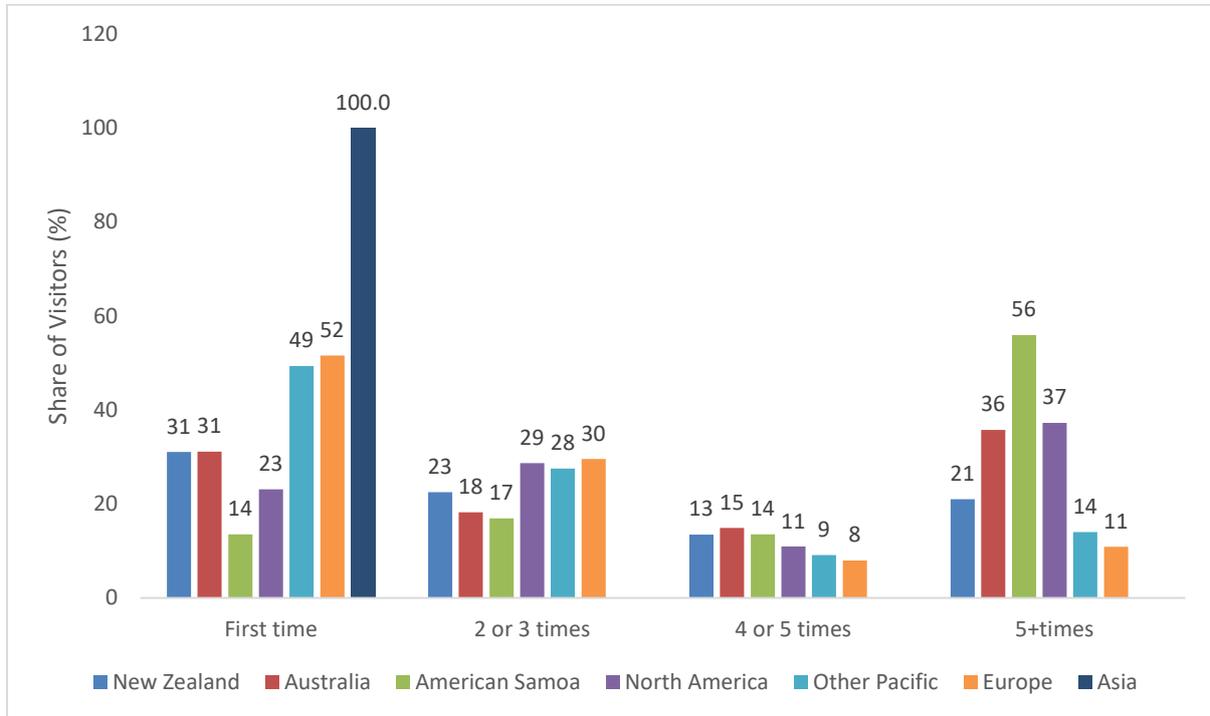
Figure 10: Number of visits to Samoa (n = 1,408)



American Samoa visitors are more likely to be repeat visitors than those from other source markets (Figure 11). Most (86%) of the surveyed visitors from American Samoa have visited Samoa before, compared to only 0% from Asian countries. Nearly a third of visitors from New

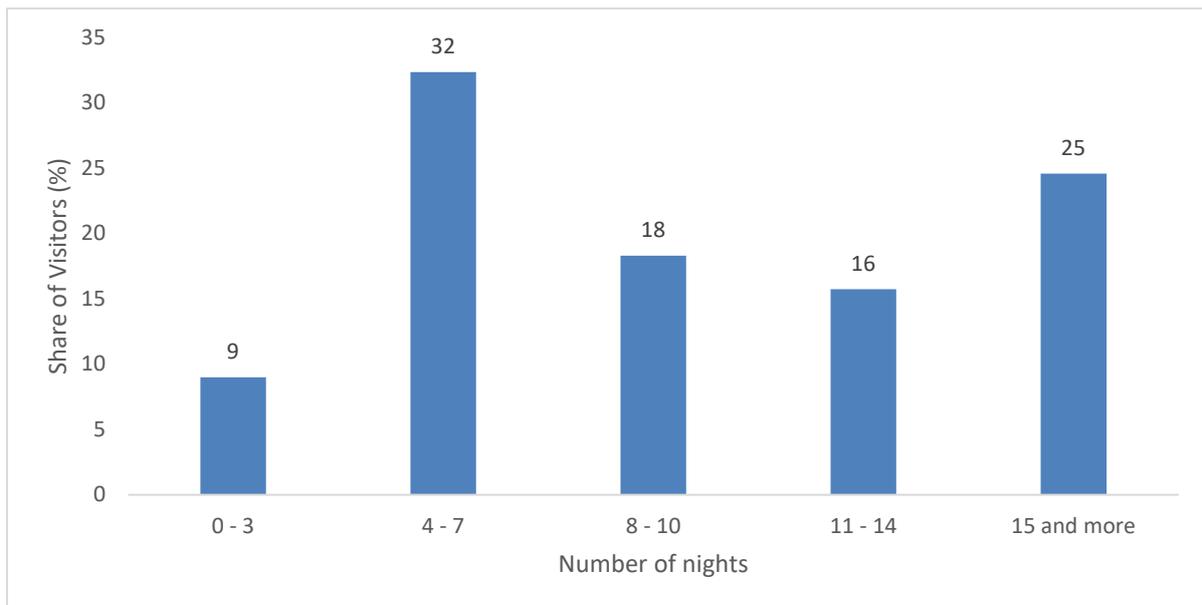
Zealand (69%), Australia (69%), North America (77%), other Pacific countries (51%) and Europe (48%) are repeat visitors to Samoa.

Figure 11: Number of previous visits to Samoa – market breakdown



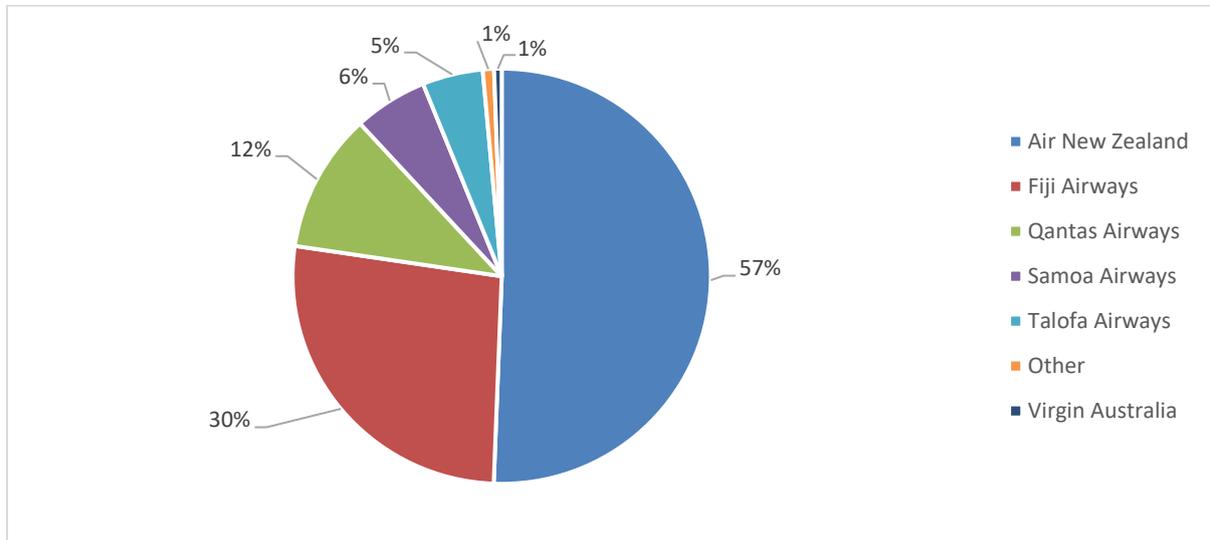
The average length of stay in Samoa is 11.1 nights with 60% of visitors spending 10 or fewer nights in the country (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Length of stay in nights (n = 1,768)



Over half (57%) of visitors travel to/from Samoa with Air New Zealand, a further 30% of visitors fly with Fiji Airways, followed by those visitors travelling with Qantas Airways (12%), Samoa Airways (6%), and Talofa Airways (5%) (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Mode of transport (n = 1,865)

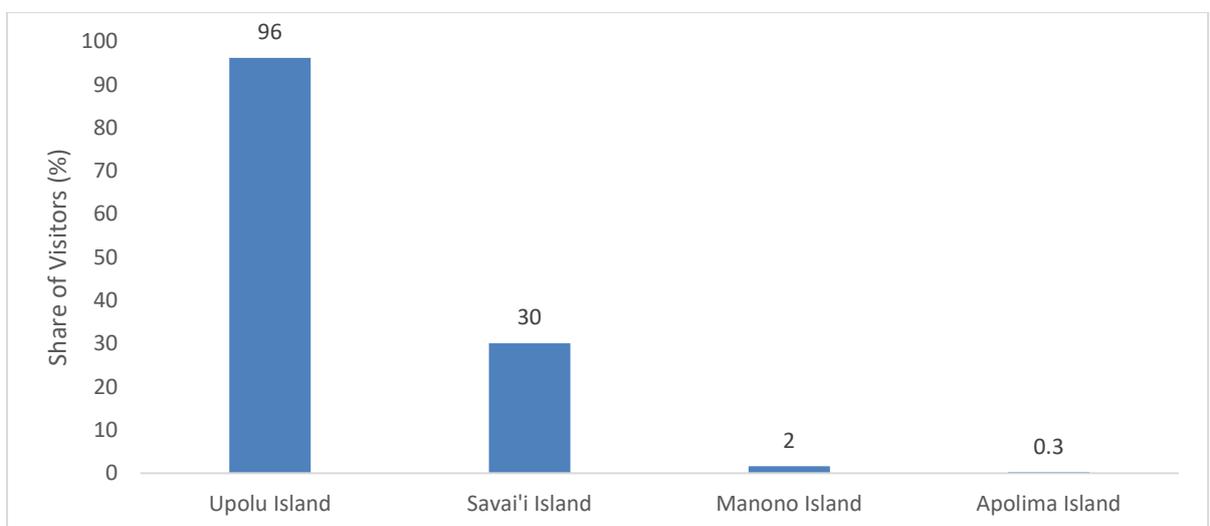


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

For 80% of visitors, Samoa is the sole destination for their trip while for 20% Samoa is part of a larger journey. Of those travelling to other countries as part of a bigger trip, the top destinations mentioned are Fiji (62%), New Zealand (25%), other Pacific countries (15%), America Samoa (11%), Australia (10%), Asia (6%), and the United States of America (1%).

The vast majority (96%) of visitors to Samoa spend time on Upolu, with Savai'i being the second most visited island (30%) (Figure 14). A small percentage of visitors spend time on the Manono (2%), while even fewer visitors travelled to Apolima (less than 1%).

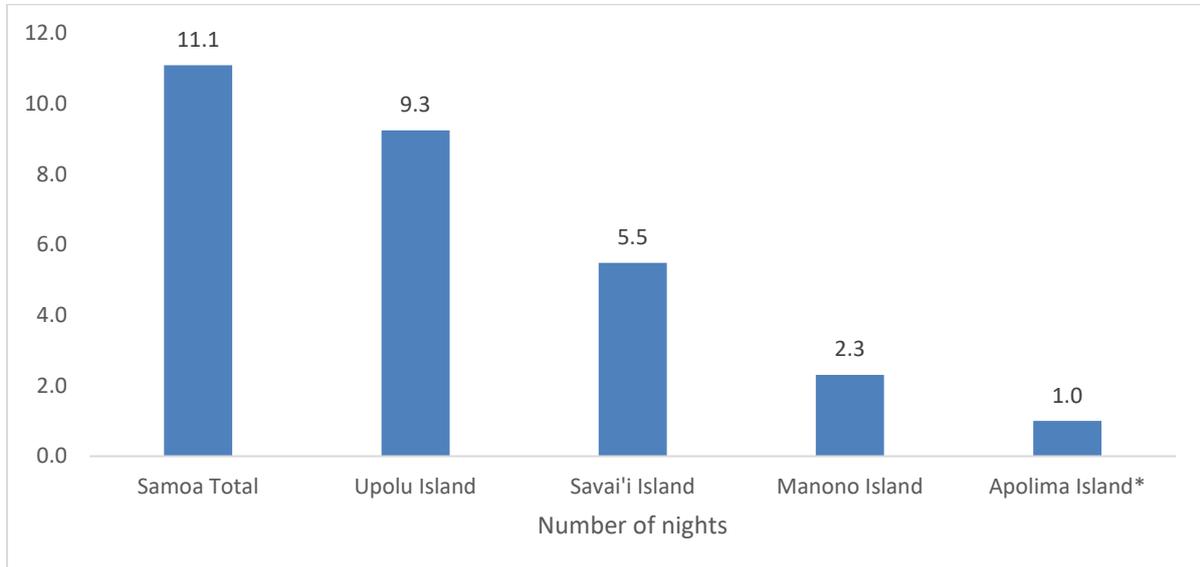
Figure 14: Visited Islands (n = 1,667)



Note: Respondents could visit more than one island, so total may not add up to 100%.

The average length of stay on Upolu Island is 9.3 nights (Figure 15). For the visitors that visited Savai'i, the average number of nights spent on the island itself is 5.5. Visitors to Manono Island and Apolima Island spent an average of 2.3 nights and 1.0 night respectively.

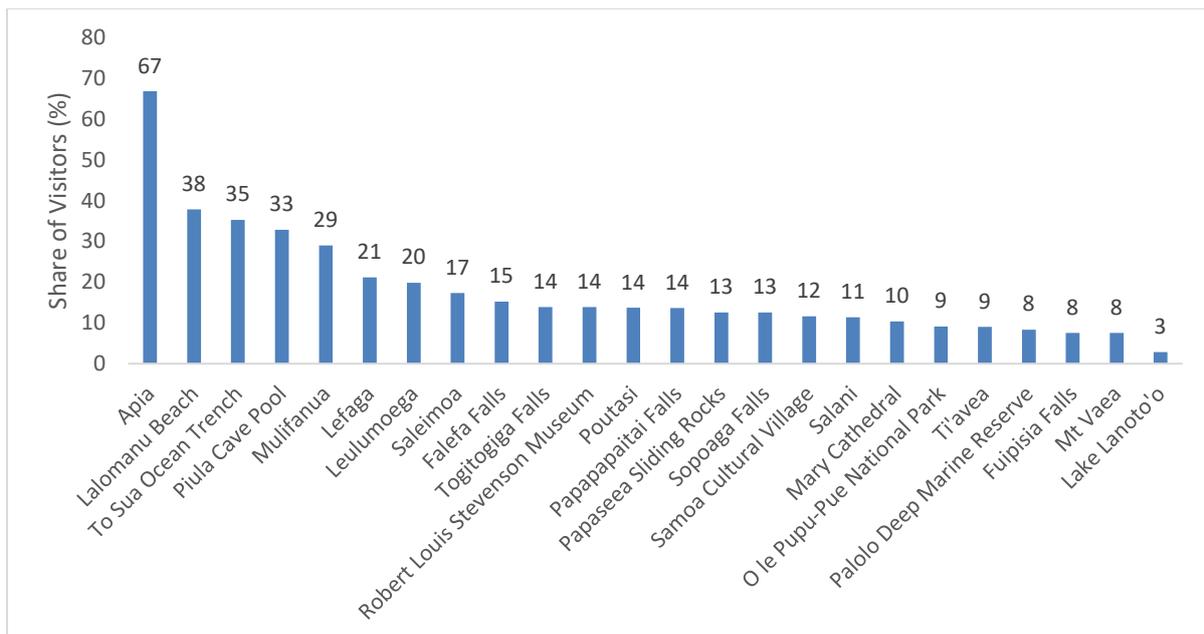
Figure 15: Average length of stay in Samoa and on each island



Note: *n=2

Visitors who travelled to Upolu and/or Savai'i Island were asked to provide information on which specific destinations they visited on each island (Figure 16). On Upolu, the capital city Apia is most commonly visited (67%). The five most popular attractions are: Lalomanu beach (38%), To Sua Ocean Trench (35%), Piula Cave Pool (33%), Mulifanua (29%), and Lefaga (21%).

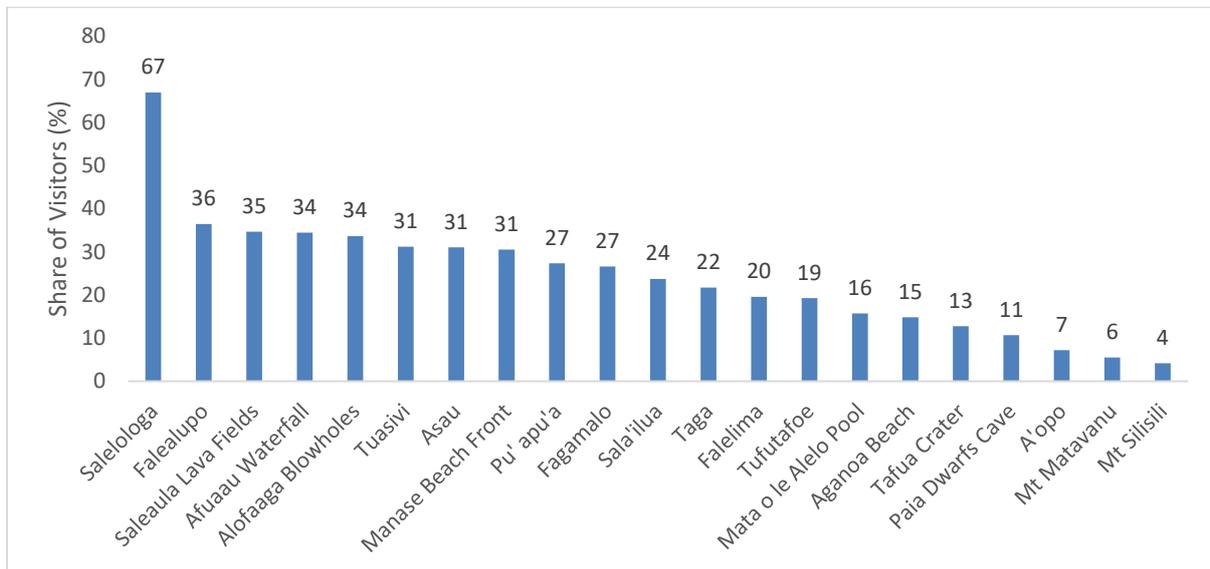
Figure 16: What place(s) did you go to on Upolu Island? (n = 1,498)



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

For those visitors to Savai'i Island (Figure 17), over two thirds of visitors (67%) have been to Salelologa. Other top attractions are Falealupo (36%), Saleaula Lava Fields (35%), Afuaau Waterfall (34%), Alofaaga Blowholes (34%), Tuasivi (31%), Asau (31%), and Manase Beach Front (31%).

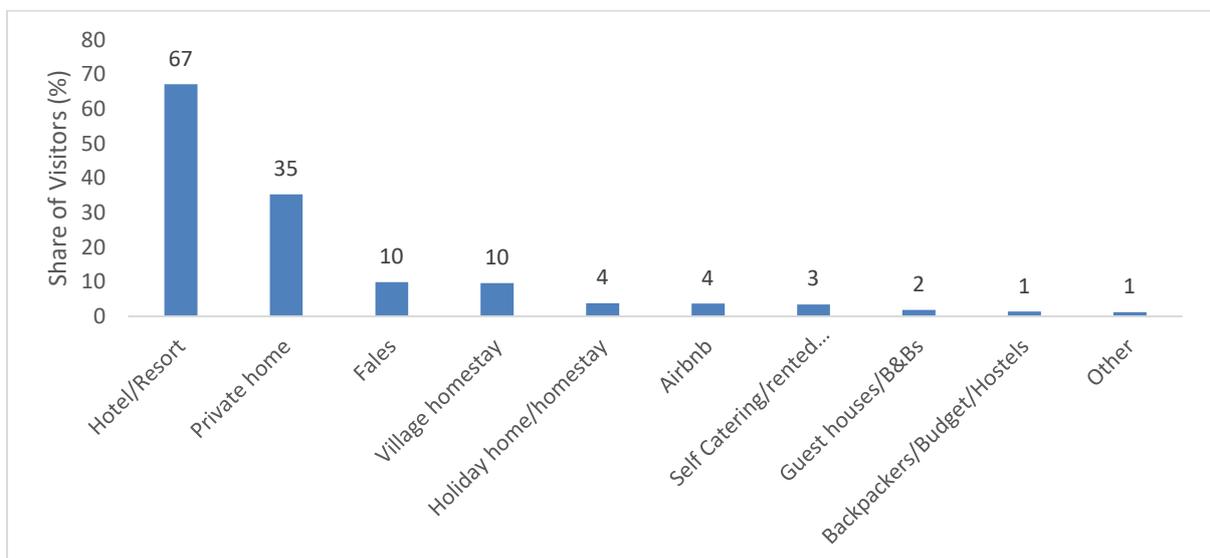
Figure 17: What place(s) did you go to on Savai'i Island? (n = 460)



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

Visitors were asked to select the types of accommodation they used during their stay in Samoa. Over one in three (35%) visitors surveyed stay in a private home (Figure 18). For those who stayed in commercial accommodation, hotel/resorts are most popular (67%), followed by fales (10%). The remaining types of accommodation used include: village homestay (10%), holiday home/homestay (4%), Airbnb (4%), self-catering/rented accommodation (3%), guest houses/B&Bs (2%), backpackers/budget/hostels (1%), and other (1%).

Figure 18: What type(s) of accommodation did you stay in? (n = 1,712)

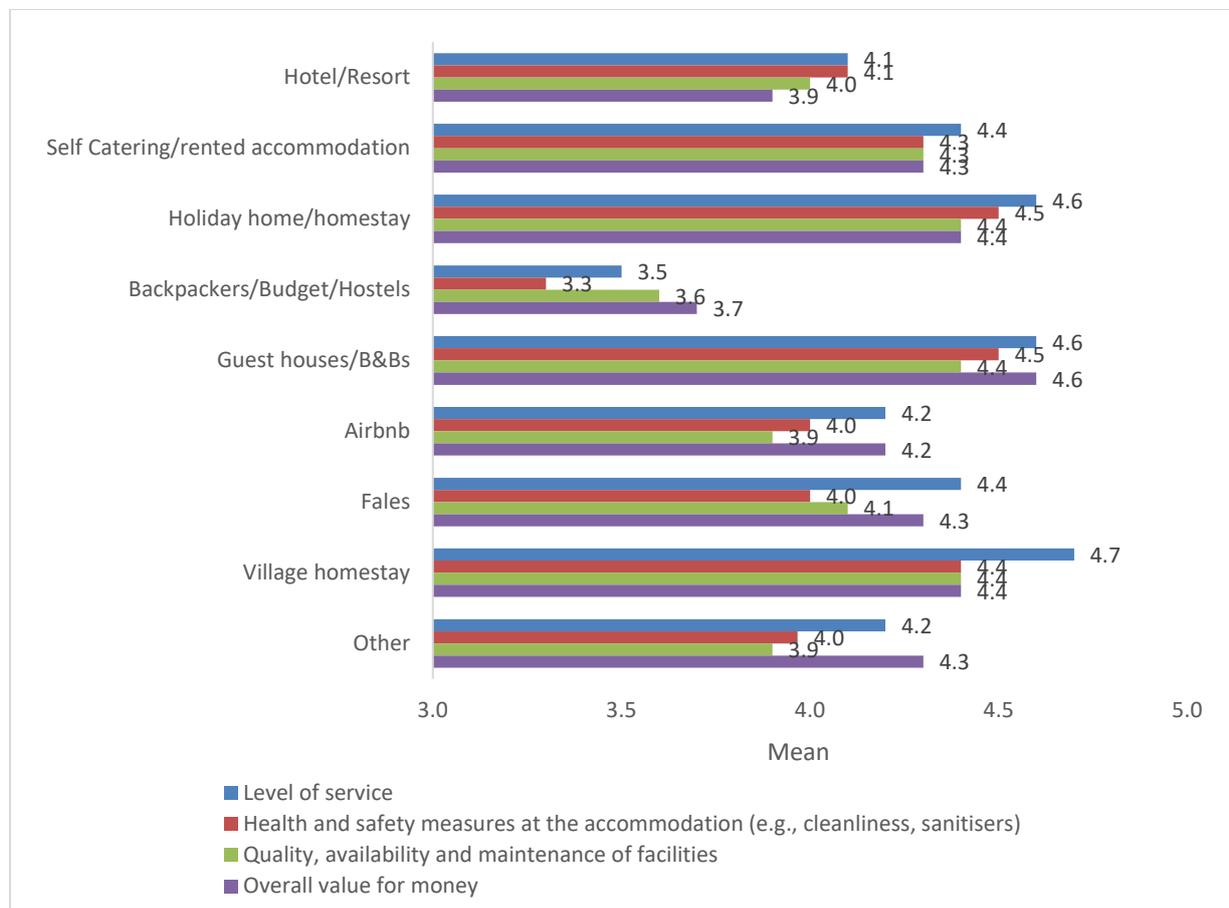


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Respondents were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their accommodation on a scale from 1 'Very Dissatisfied' to 5 'Very Satisfied'. Around 90% of visitors surveyed are either 'Satisfied' or 'Very Satisfied' with their holiday home/homestay, village homestay, or guest houses/B&Bs experience, while visitors staying in the backpackers/budget/hostels show the lowest overall satisfaction among all accommodation types.

Figure 19 shows that visitor satisfaction is universally high for most Samoan accommodation types in terms of level of service, health and safety measures at the accommodation (e.g., cleanliness, sanitisers), quality/availability and maintenance of facilities, and overall value for money. From the perspective of level of service, village homestay receives the highest mean value (4.7), closely followed by holiday home/homestay (4.6) and guest houses/B&Bs (4.6), fales (4.4), self-catering/rented accommodation (4.4) and Airbnb (4.2). Regarding health and safety measures at the accommodation (e.g., cleanliness, sanitisers) aspect, both guest houses/B&Bs and holiday home/homestay are ranked top (4.5). For the quality, availability and maintenance of facilities, most accommodations are either equal to 4 or greater than 4 with the exception of backpackers/budget/hostels (3.6), Airbnb (3.9) and other types of accommodation (3.9). In terms of overall value for money, most accommodation categories are graded as 4 or greater, with the exception of backpackers/budget/hostels (3.7) and hotel/resort (3.9).

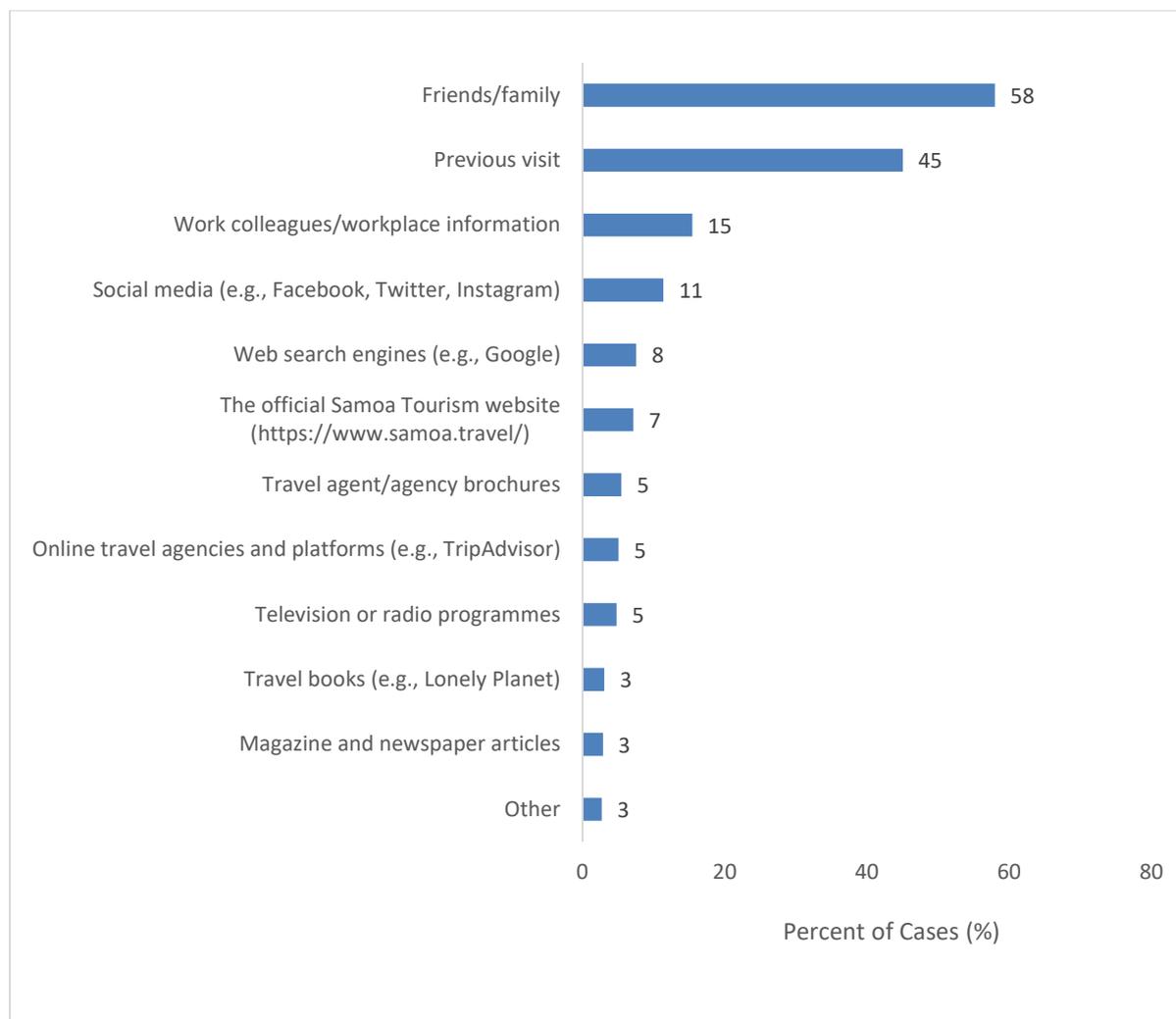
Figure 19: Degree of satisfaction with accommodation used (mean score out of 5)



Information Sources and Purchasing Behaviour

Participants were asked how they had found out about Samoa as a holiday destination (Figure 20). Over half (58%) of respondents indicated they had heard about Samoa via word of mouth from friends and/or family members, followed by previous experience (45%), work colleagues (15%), social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) (11%), and web search engines (e.g., Google) (8%).

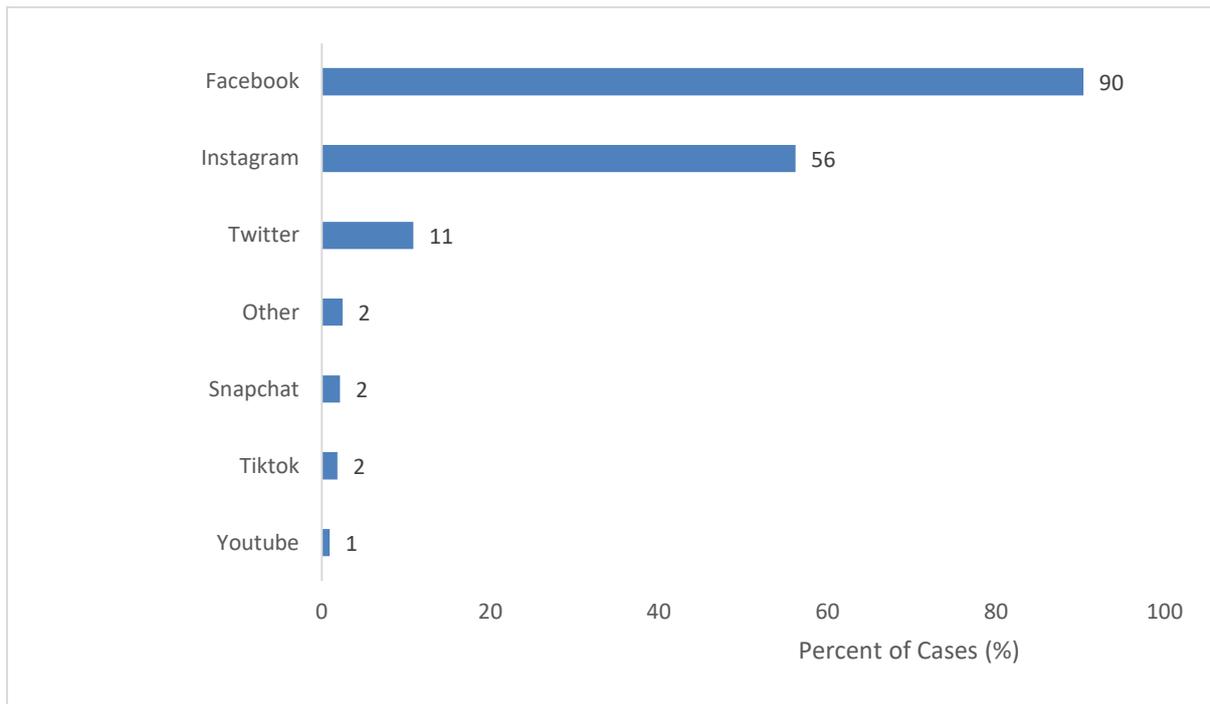
Figure 20: How did you find out about Samoa as a destination (n = 1,847)



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

We ask a further question “what kind of social media did you use?” for those respondents who selected “social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)” item as one of their travelling information sources. Facebook is ranked the top with 90%, followed by 56% of Instagram, 11% of Twitter, and other social medias (Figure 21).

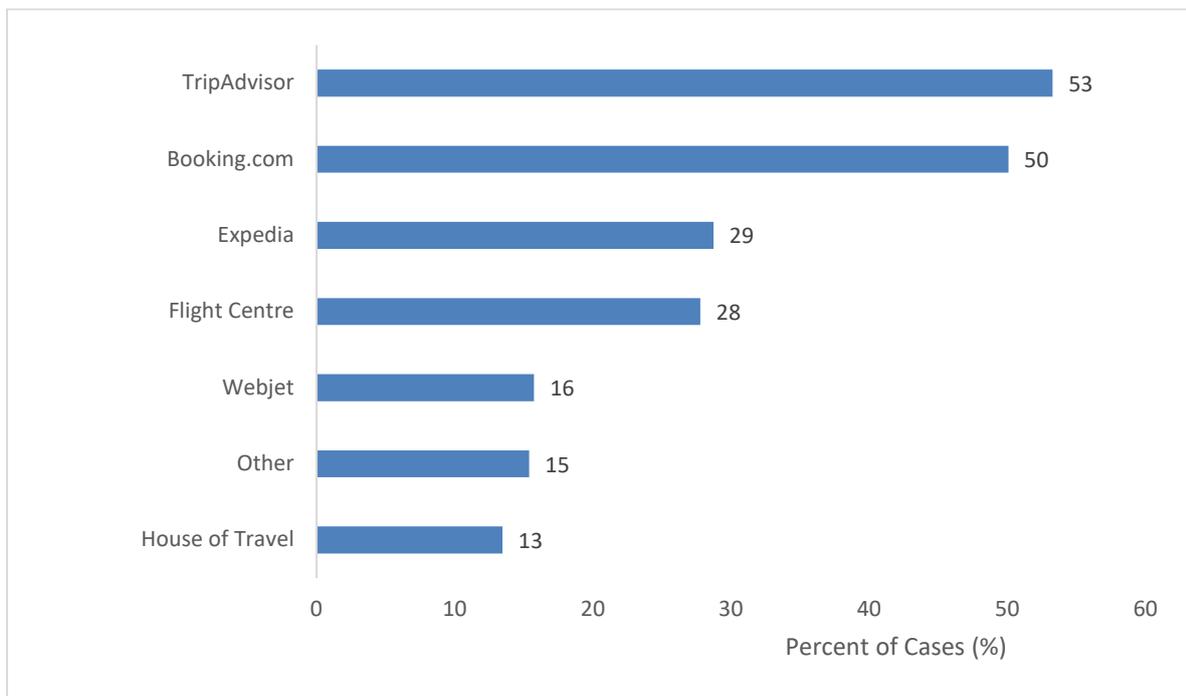
Figure 21: What kind of social media did you use? (n = 209)



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

For those respondents who selected “online travel agencies and platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor)” item, we also ask them to answer the question “what kind of online travel agencies and platforms did you use?” TripAdvisor (53%), Booking.com (50%), and Expedia (29%) are ranked as top three online travel agencies and platforms (Figure 22).

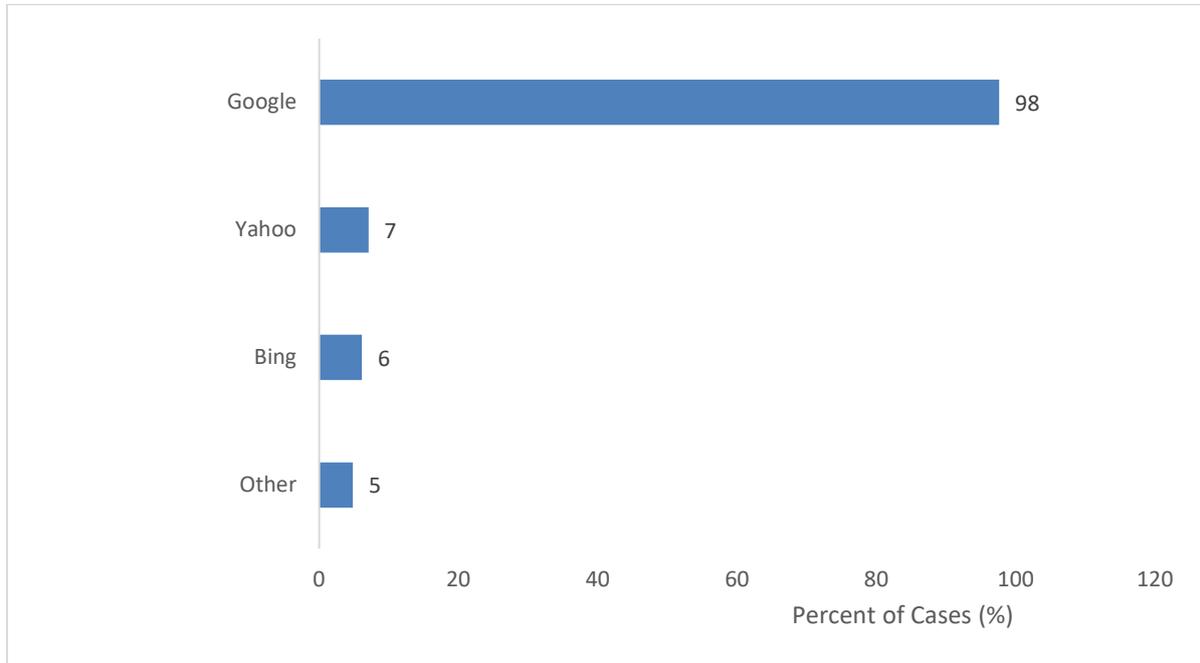
Figure 22: What kind of online travel agencies and platforms did you use? (n = 91)



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

For those visitors who ticked “web search engines (e.g., Google)” item, a filtered question “what kind of web search engines did you use?” was proposed to them. Google (98%) is listed as the top one web search engine (Figure 23).

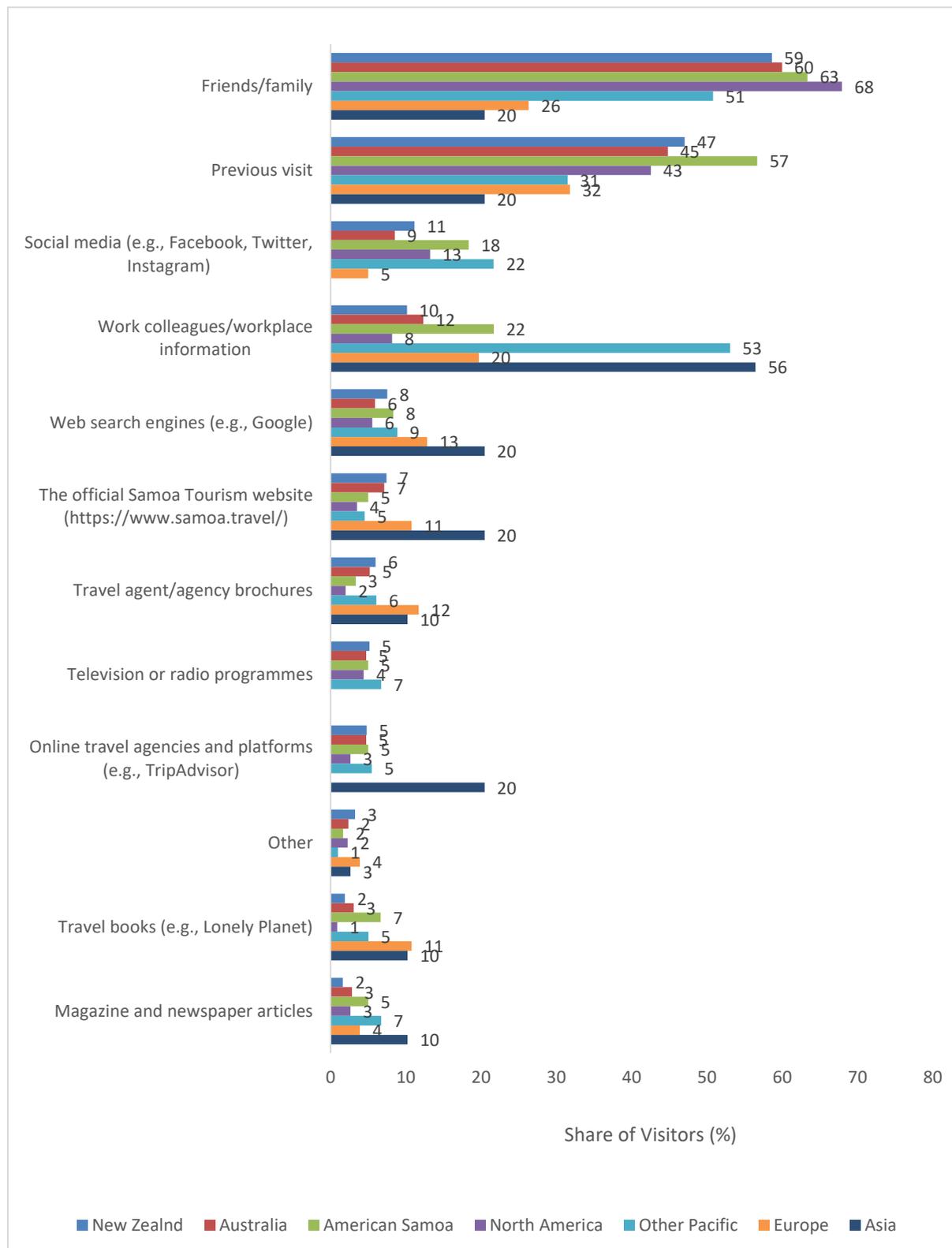
Figure 23: What kind of web search engines did you use? (n = 139)



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

Visitors from North America and are more likely to seek information about the destination via word of mouth from friends and family members (68%), closely followed by visitors from American Samoa (63%) and Australia (60%). There are more repeat visitors from American Samoa, and this is reflected by the fact that 57% of visitors from these markets ranked previous visits as one of the most important sources of information, compared to only 20% of Asian visitors. Asian visitors (56%) are more likely to rate work colleagues as one of their most important sources, followed by other Pacific visitors (53%). Asian visitors are more likely to rate various websites as the most important source of information about Samoa including web search engines (20%), the official Samoa travel website (20%), and online travel agencies and platforms (20%). In addition, over one in ten visitors from European countries (11%) mentioned that they got information about Samoa by way of either travel books (e.g., Lonely Planet) (Figure 24).

Figure 24: How did you find out about Samoa as a destination – market breakdown

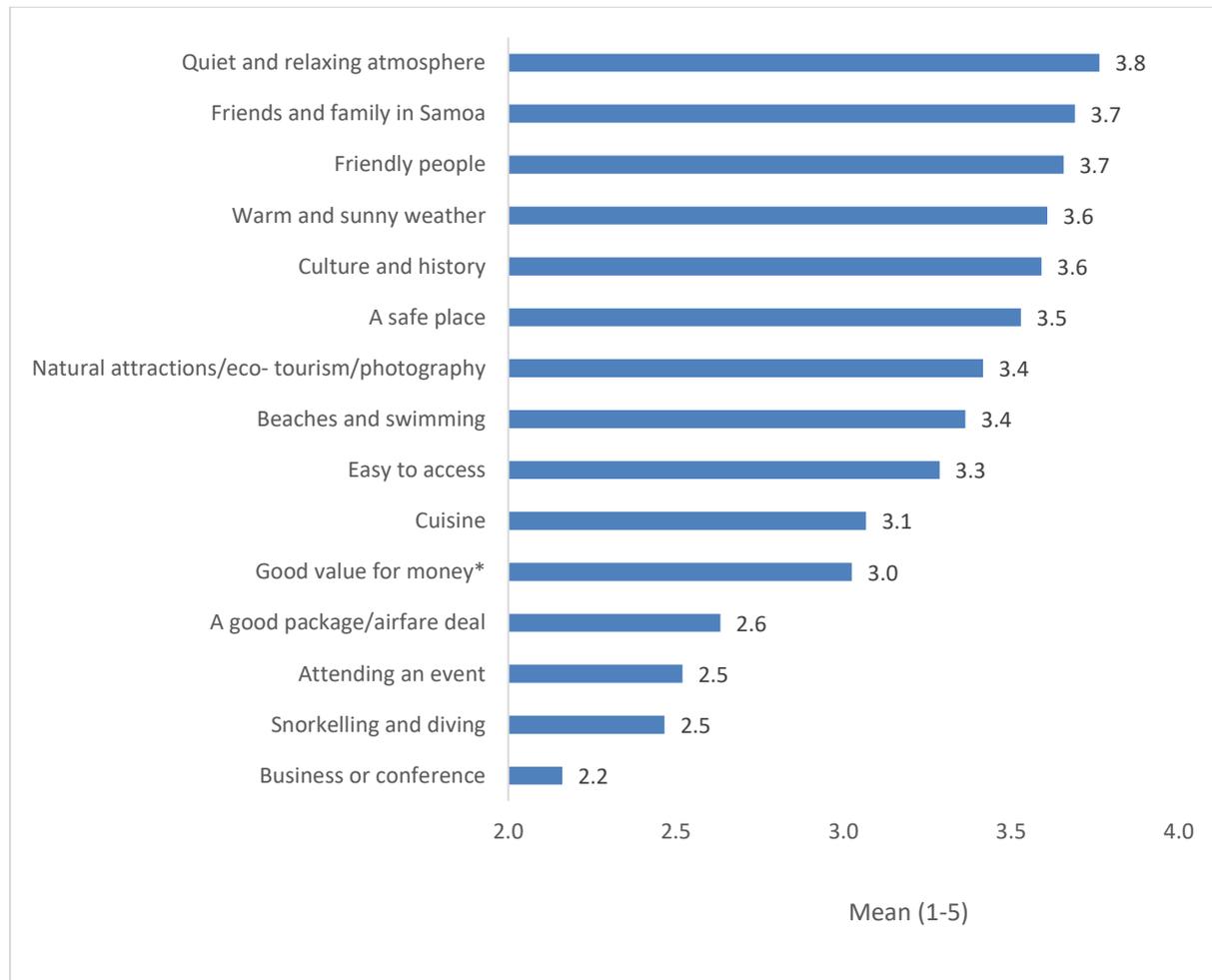


Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%.

Visitors were asked how influential a variety of factors were in their choice to visit Samoa (Figure 25). A variety of factors influence visitor decisions to visit Samoa, including the top three: quiet and relaxing atmosphere (3.8), friends and family in Samoa (3.7), and friendly

local people (3.7). Warm and sunny weather (3.6), culture and history (3.6), a safe place (3.5), natural attractions/eco-tourism/photography (3.4), beaches and swimming (3.4), ease of access (3.3), cuisine (3.1), and good value for money (3.0) also exert influence people’s choice to visit Samoa. Attending an event and business/conference factors are not so influential with scores of 2.2 and 1.8 respectively.

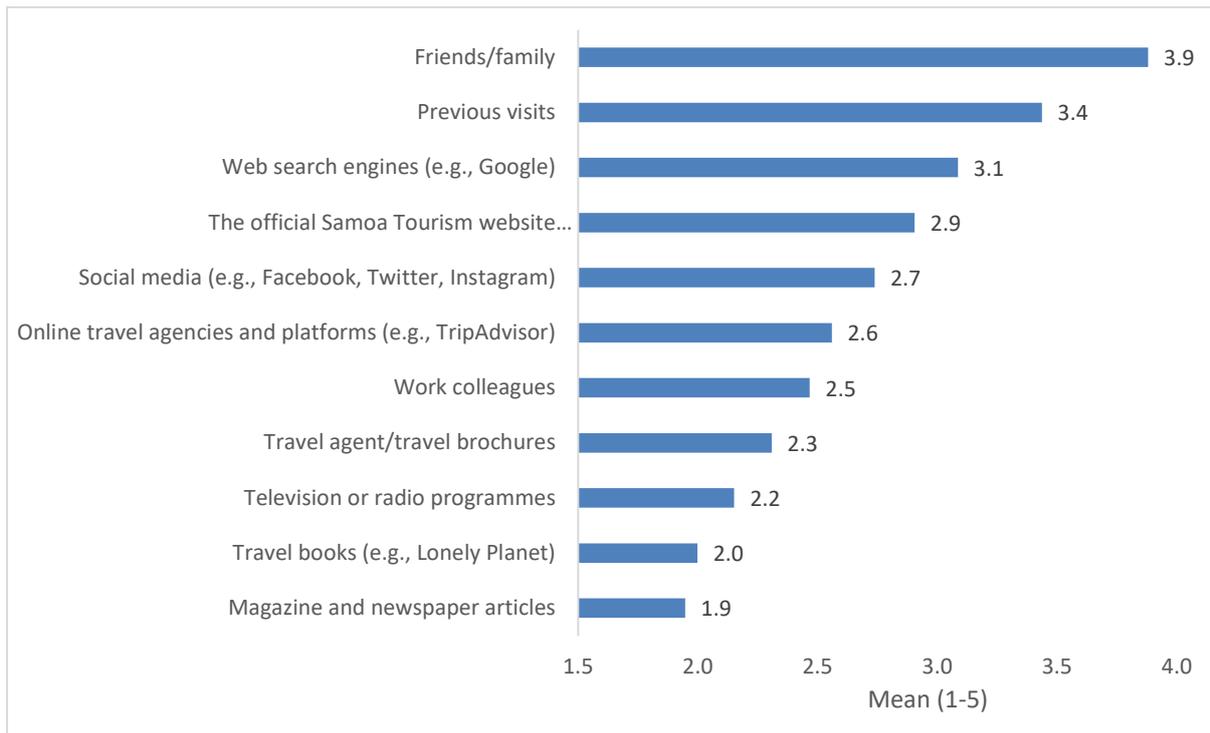
Figure 25: Influence of factors in the choice to visit Samoa (mean score out of 5)



Note: “affordability” was updated into “good value for money” since 2022 IVS.

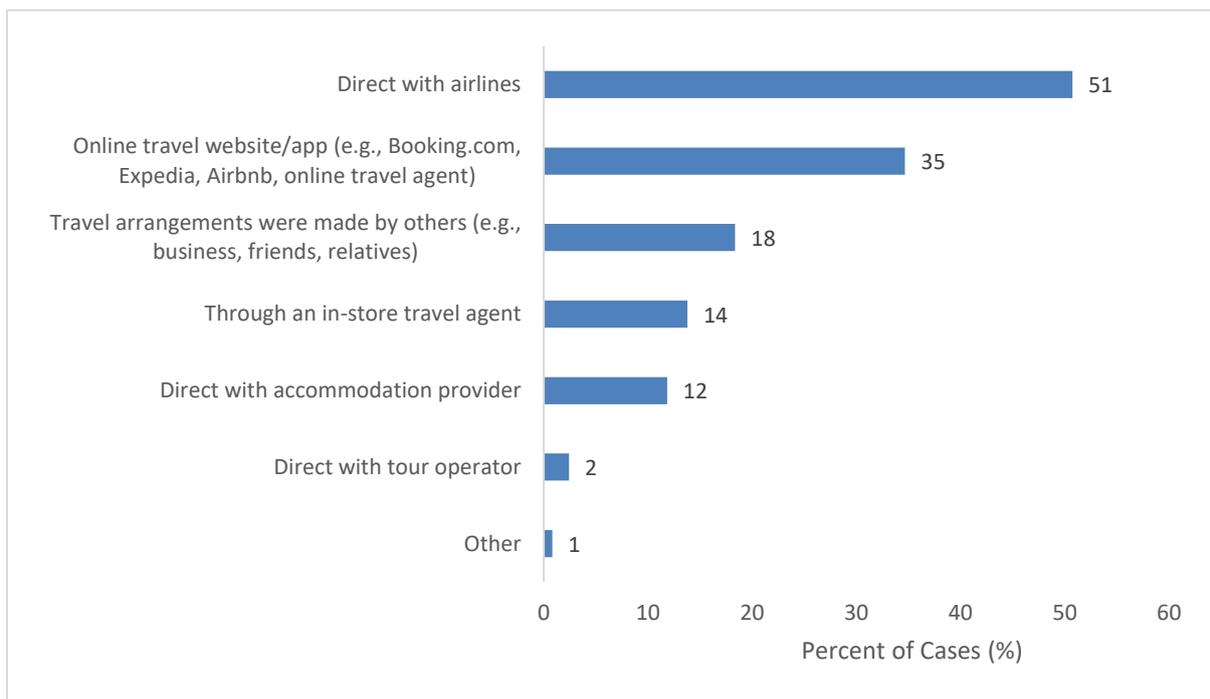
When visitors were asked to rank the importance of listed information sources used to plan their trip, friends/family option is ranked as the most important source (3.9) (Figure 26). Other important information sources included: previous visits (3.4), web search engines (3.1), the official Samoa travel website (2.9), and social media (2.7).

Figure 26: Importance of information source used when planning your trip



Over half (51%) of visitors purchase their travel to Samoa direct with airline (Figure 27). A smaller group of visitors surveyed (35%) made their own travel arrangements through online travel website/app, followed by 18% of visitors whose travel arrangements were made by others such as business, friends, and relatives, or through an in-store travel agent (14%), or direct with accommodation provider (12%), or direct with tour operator (2%).

Figure 27: How did you purchase your travel to Samoa (n = 835)

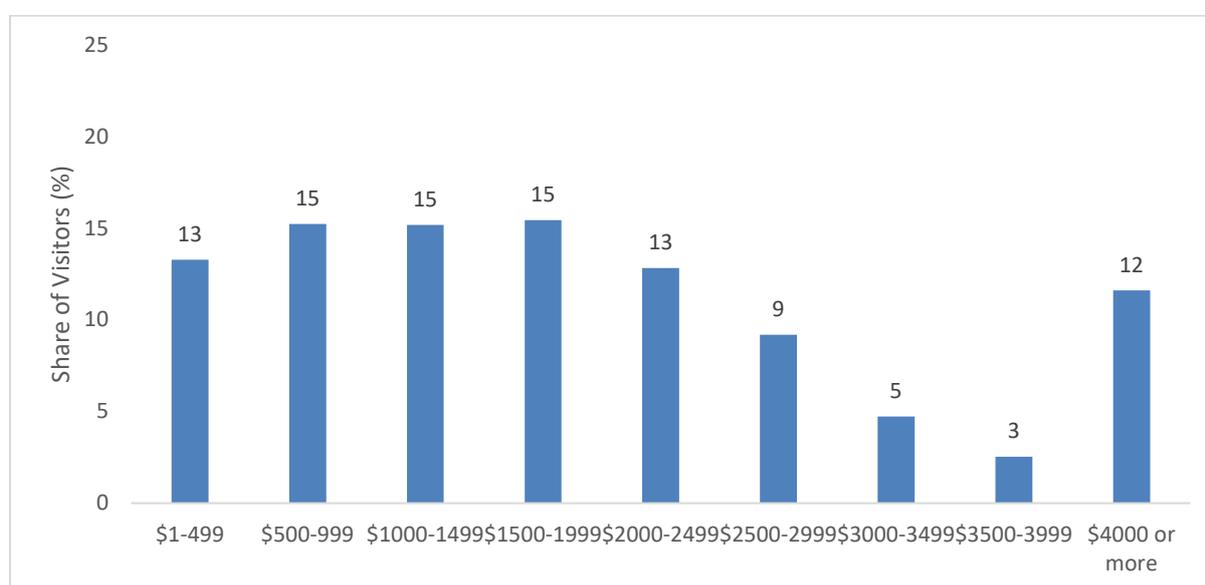


Visitor Expenditure

The IVS asks a range of questions about visitor expenditure, both prior to arrival and while in Samoa. All the figures below are based on respondent estimates of their own spending and any others they spent money on (e.g., spouse, children). The following pre-paid expenditure section is based on the number of adults and children that respondents included in their cost estimates: 2,253 people comprising 1,890 adults and 363 children.

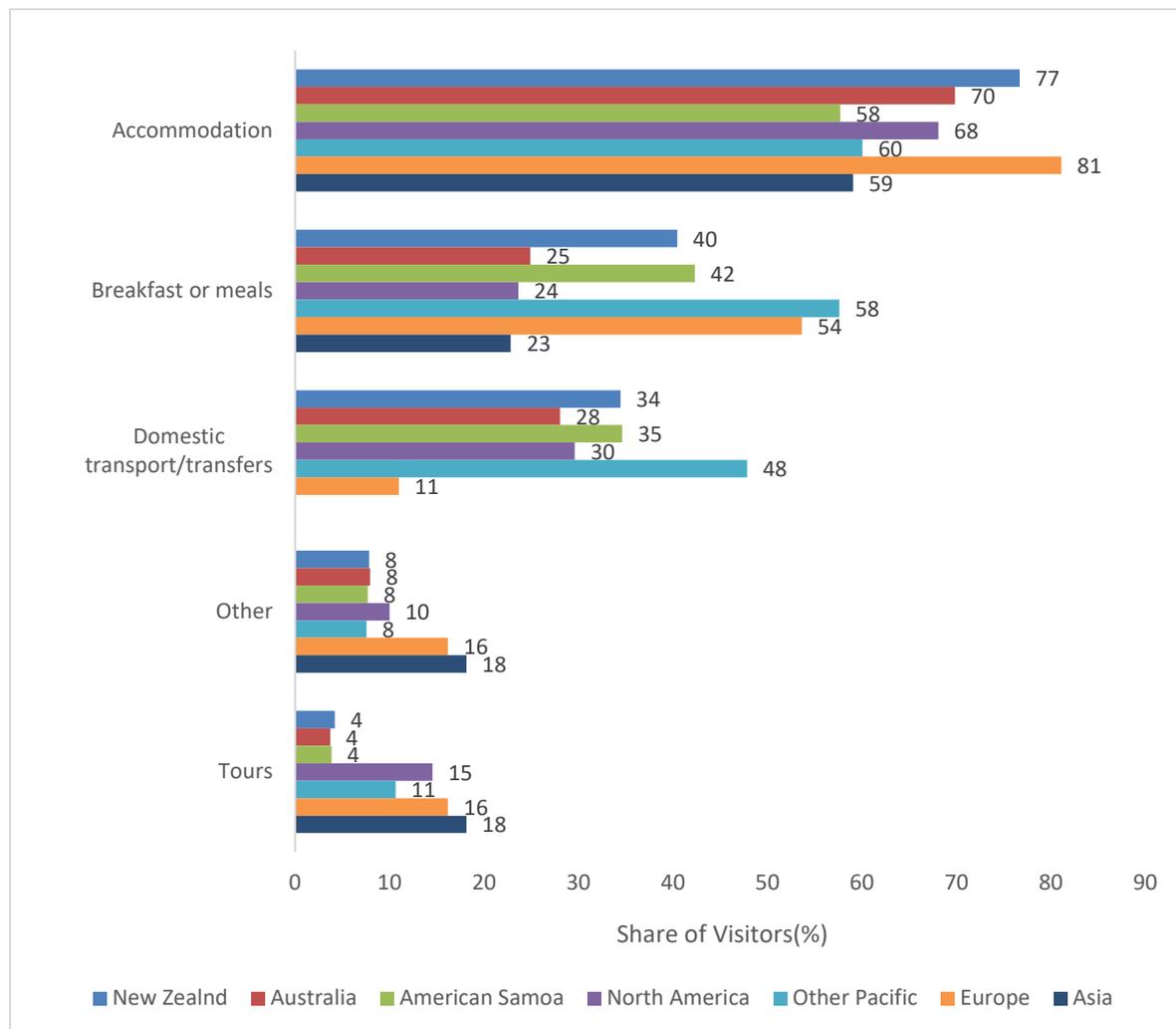
On average, visitors to Samoa spend SAT\$2,933 (NZ\$1,716) per person prior to arrival. Nearly half (43%) of the visitors spend between NZ\$1,000 and NZ\$2,499 prior to arrival, 28% of visitors spend less than NZ\$1,000, and 29% of visitors spend NZ\$2,500 or more (Figure 28).

Figure 28: Amount of money spent per person prior to arrival (n = 826)



Spending prior to arrival usually includes accommodation: 77% of the cases for New Zealand visitors, 70% for Australian visitors, 58% for American Samoa visitors, 68% for North American visitors, 60% for other Pacific visitors, 81% for European visitors and for 59% of visitors from Asian countries (Figure 29). Over on third of visitors (38%) have prepaid for breakfast and meals prior to arrival (40% for New Zealand, 25% for Australian visitors, 42% for American Samoa, 24% for North American visitors, 58% for other Pacific visitors, 54% for European visitors and for 23% of visitors from Asian countries). Tours are much less likely to be included in pre-paid expenses.

Figure 29: Items included in money spent prior to arrival – market breakdown



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

It is difficult to estimate accurately the proportion of the pre-paid spend that flows to Samoa. For the purposes of this study, and based on previous IVS research in the region, we conservatively estimate that 55% of total prepaid spend flows back to the Samoan economy. In summary, for every pre-paid 1 SAT\$, 55 cents flow back to the local economy. We estimate that the pre-paid spend figure flowing back to the local economy, is SAT\$145 (NZ\$85) per day, and SAT\$1,613 (NZ\$944) per visit (11.1 nights).

The total spend per visitor per day while in Samoa (excluding any pre-paid expenditure) is SAT\$192 (NZ\$113) (Table 1). The majority of money spent locally is on accommodation (21%), restaurants, cafes and bars (15%), and groceries (12%). These per person expenditure figures are based on 1,909 survey responses covering a total of 3,791 people (2,992 adults and 799 children).

By multiplying daily spend by the average stay (11.1 nights) we can see that each visitor spends on average SAT\$2,131 (NZ\$1,247) during their time in Samoa. The total figure of what is spent locally and what flows back to Samoa from pre-paid expenses is, therefore, SAT\$337

(SAT\$145 + SAT\$192) / NZ\$198 (NZ\$113 + NZ\$85) per visitor per day, or SAT\$3,741 (SAT\$1,613 + SAT\$2,128) / NZ\$2,198 (NZ\$1,254 + NZ\$944) for each visitor.

Table 1: Average visitor expenditure in Samoa (per person per day)

Expenditure Items	Covering people 3,791	
	Mean (SAT\$)	(% of spend)
Accommodation	41	21
Restaurants cafes & bars	29	15
Groceries	24	12
Donations	23	12
Other	20	10
Vehicle rental	18	10
Shopping	18	9
Petrol	8	4
Tours/activities	5	3
Internet/telecommunication	3	2
Bus/taxi	2	1
Ferry	1	1
Total Expenditure	192	100

Table 2 provides an overview of in-country per visitor per day expenditure by country of origin. Visitors from European visitors have by far the highest average spend per day at SAT\$368, followed by North American visitors (USA and Canada) with a spend per day of SAT\$220, Australian visitors spend per day of SAT\$194, and New Zealand visitors with an average of SAT\$194 per day. Average American Samoa visitors spend per person is SAT\$175 which is higher than that of other Pacific visitors per day (SAT\$155). By comparison, Asian visitors spend least with an average of SAT\$70 per day.

Table 2: Average in-country expenditure per visitor per day by country of origin (SAT\$)

Covering people	n=1818	n=943	n=450	n=306	n=146	n=34	n=79
Markets	New Zealand	Australia	American Samoa	North America	Other Pacific	Europe	Asia
Accommodation	43	38	39	35	40	163	24
Restaurants, cafes & bars	30	30	23	25	19	67	15
Other	25	9	41	21	8	0	0
Groceries	24	26	20	26	15	34	4
Donations	20	27	7	46	15	1	0
Vehicle rental	17	21	21	21	9	38	9
Shopping	15	21	15	28	28	22	7
Petrol	8	11	2	7	6	5	1
Tours/activities	6	5	2	4	3	24	2
Internet/telecommunication	3	3	3	3	4	7	3
Ferry	2	1	0.3	2	1	2	0
Bus/taxi	1	2	2	2	7	5	5
Total in-country spend (SAT\$)	194	194	175	220	155	368	70

Table 3 presents an overview of the average total expenditure per visitor per day by country of origin. As noted above, we estimate conservatively that 55% of prepaid spend flows back to the Samoa economy. We then combine this figure with the daily spend in-country to provide a total per person per day spend figure. Visitors from Europe have the highest average spend per day at SAT\$689. Other Pacific visitors spend the least at SAT\$260 per day.

Table 3: Average total expenditure per visitor per day by country of origin

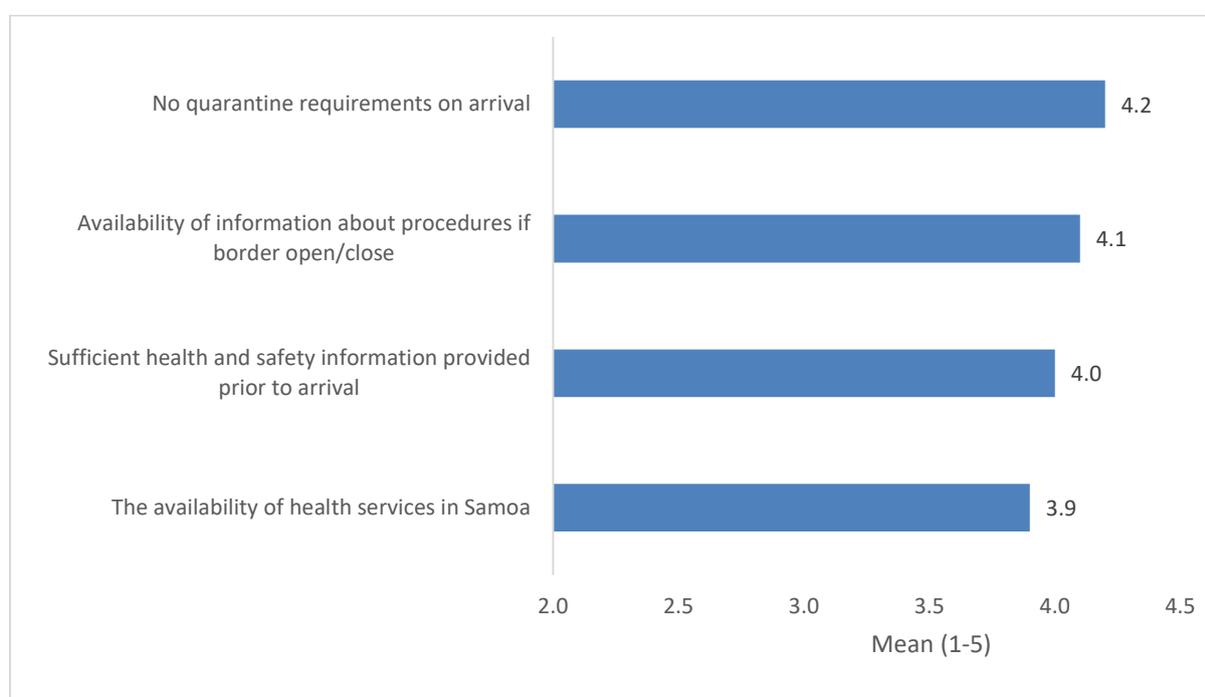
Markets	New Zealand	Australia	American Samoa	North America	Other Pacific	Europe	Asia
55% pre-paid expenditure	142	135	124	160	105	321	216
In-country spend	194	194	175	220	155	368	70
Total spend (SAT\$)	336	329	299	380	260	689	286

Perception of COVID-19 Impacts and Responses

The border opening since August 2022 is subject to a set of criteria including airline and airport preparedness, necessary protocols and frameworks. Several questions related to COVID-19 impacts and responses were inserted into the IVS from August 2022 in order to better understand visitor perceptions of the pandemic’s impact and related responses in Samoa.

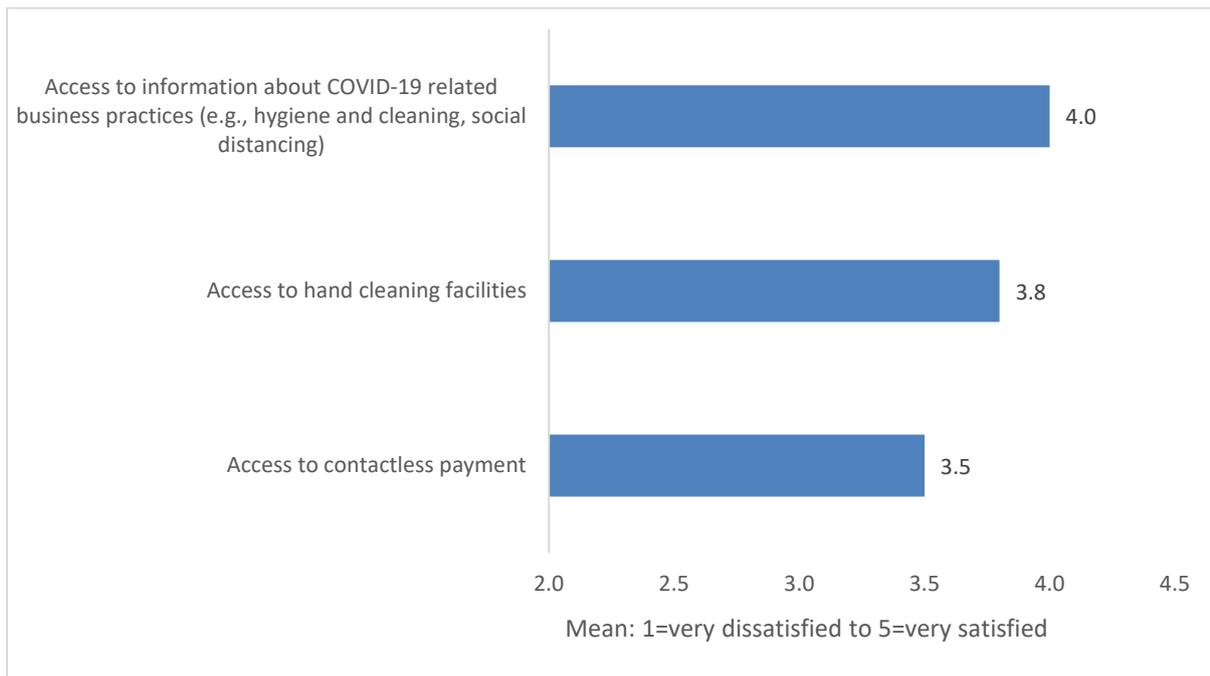
When asked about the importance of COVID-19 related factors in influencing the decision to travel to Samoa, “no quarantine requirement on arrival” was ranked as the most significant factor, followed by “availability of information about procedures if border open/close” (Figure 30).

Figure 30: The important factors in your decision to travel to Samoa (n = 1,275-1,331)



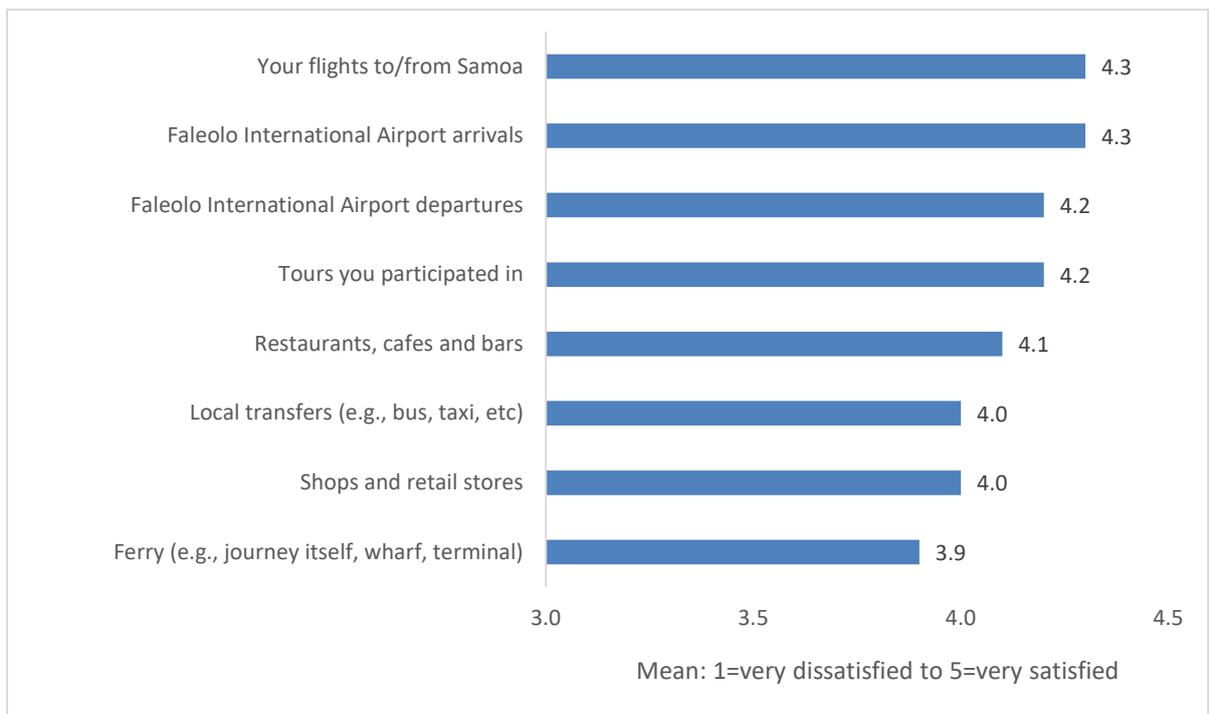
In terms of the COVID-19 responses in Samoa (Figure 31), visitors feel satisfied with access to information about COVID-19 related business practices (e.g., hygiene and cleaning, social distancing) (4.0 out of 5), and access to hand and cleaning facilities (3.8). Visitors expressed a relatively lower level of satisfaction with access to contactless payment options (3.5).

Figure 31: Degree of satisfaction with COVID-19 responses (n = 1,139-1,258)



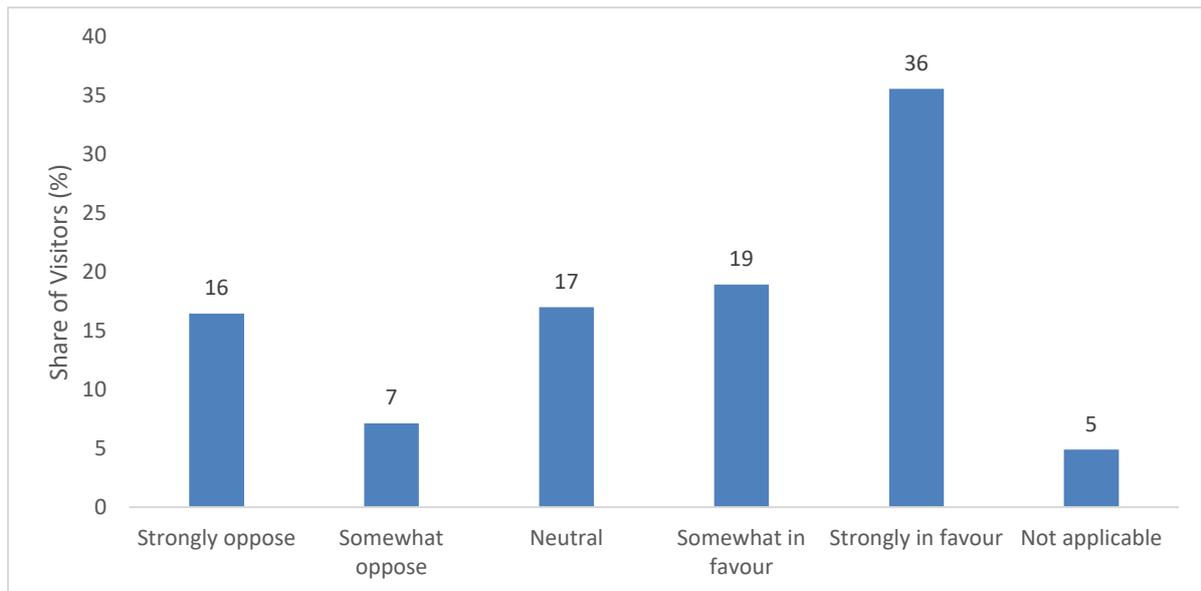
Visitors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with health and safety measures during their trip to Samoa (Figure 32). Overall, respondents give high scores (all above 4 out of 5) across a range of activities and sectors. The health and safety aspect of “Ferry (e.g., journey itself, wharf, terminal)” received the lowest score (3.9).

Figure 32: Degree of satisfaction with health and safety measures (n = 572-1,374)



The Samoa government is currently considering introducing a tourism levy designed to support local businesses impacted by COVID-19 and to strengthen their resilience against future pandemics and natural disasters. The proposed 20 Tala levy would be added to the departure fee included in your air ticket. Visitors were asked to whether they would support this fee (Figure 33). Overall, over half (55%) of respondents are in favour of this initiative, with 17% of respondents hold a neutral idea.

Figure 33: Would you support the 20 Tala levy fee? (n = 1,427)



A total of 540 respondents provided further comments about their perception of COVID-19 related management during their time in Samoa. 26% of the comments include visitors state that they enjoyed the stay and had no concerns regarding COVID-19, and 23% of respondents say that they had nothing to say regarding COVID-19. Comments include:

"I didn't have any issues or concerns."

"We had no problems at all."

"Felt safe the whole time."

"None I can think of."

COVID protocols and concerns (e.g., mask; hand sanitiser)

32% of the comments provided talking about the themes of "COVID protocols and concerns (e.g., mask; hand sanitiser)" in both positive and negative ways. The topics include: No face masks; Enjoyed the visit; Feel safe; Well-managed, no issues; Nice staff to help visitors recover from COVID. Positive comments include:

“Everything was perfect in terms of services provided directly for COVID 19...The pre-departure information of what Samoa expected from each passenger that would arrive in Samoa was really helpful.”

“I felt safe travelling around the island with a mask on buses and in busy areas. Great safety precautions having only the fully vaccinated people to visit etc. So, Samoa keeps safe!”

“Great health measures implemented by Ministry of Health in regard to COVID-19 protocol.”

“I WAS SATISFIED WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF SAMOA TOWARDS COVID AWARENESS AND PRECAUTION.”

“Very well done, information is very well written and understood. Health protocol and procedures are amazingly done. Safety of visitors were indeed prioritized.”

“Appreciated hand sanitizer and so many things outdoors! I still wore mask inside and a few people asked me why (in a nice way).”

“The government did Prime Minister did her best by putting the Samoa first to protect her country.”

“Samoa had some really good messages regarding maintaining healthy living.”

“It was great that signage, masks, cleaning products and hand sanitizers were still available. It was good to see some health and safety measures were still practiced e.g., social distancing.”

Within the themes of “COVID protocols and concerns (e.g., mask; hand sanitiser)”, some comments provided are negative in nature, including: Contracted COVID-19 in or after trip; Poor protocols, confusion, concern; Arrival or departure experience; Flight; Concerns with sick people around; Distance; No information; Mask; Hand wash or sanitizer etc. Negative comments include:

“...Some of the rules regarding covid testing were confusing & costs us NZ\$400 just for tests alone only to arrive in Samoa & find out others only provided results from a RATs test that was NZ\$50. The inconsistency of valid information was annoyingly hard to find.”

“The day 2 test is unnecessary when an expensive pre-departure test is required anyway. Such measures seem redundant when Samoa is so highly vaccinated.”

“People were not wearing masks and there was no social distancing. Hand sanitizers not available in shops/banks/restaurants etc.”

“Requiring COVID test within 3 days of arrival and paperwork required to travel is restrictive and needing a supervised test before departure is definitely a very large negative being costly and restrictive.”

“Not many contactless payment options available. Should require people to wear mask between AM Samoa and Apia vice versa when flying on those small planes. People were coughing the entire trip over to Apia. Just a thought.”

“A lot of people in the community were sick - I had RAT tests with me but these should have been available for those that needed to test.”

“There was more that could have been done for covid 19 protocols to have made it safer for both tourists and locals.”

“Glad I didn't catch it whilst here. No body wears masks despite sneezing or obviously having flu symptoms. No social distancing.”

“Travellers should still have a negative rapid test before boarding the flight.”

“Some visitors with cold symptoms had not tested for covid or wore masks.”

“It was a bit lacking in the usual protocol for Covid 19 than in NZ.”

“Maybe more hand sanitizer in places.”

“My father and sister both contracted Covid whilst in Samoa (departed from Samoa on 6/11/22).”

“Unfortunately, I caught Covid while in Samoa - but difficult to avoid in a context where no one is masking!”

“I got covid on my arrival back to NZ so I would have got it either at the airport, in Samoa or in Fiji, no one wears masks anymore, maybe a handful and that was all I saw. I had to isolate myself at home for a week. This is my first time getting covid so it is still spreading out there.”

“Nobody wore masks and I got Covid for the second time while I was in Samoa.”

In addition, 8% of respondents mentioned the theme of public service, followed by COVID awareness and self-protection (6%), lack of information (4%), Satisfied with restrictions removal (3%), Arrival or departure experience (3%), Pre-departure requirements (3%), COVID tests on the island (3%), and others (3%). Comments include:

Public service

“Great and accessible medical care while ill.”

“We were not informed that a covid 19 test was required on day 4 of my trip. This did not upset my itinerary, but it may have for others if they were locating out of Apia.”

We were given a form at Faleolo arrival hall advising us to be tested and provide the result to Public Health at the 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.”

“Lack of medical experience or no close hospital at the airport.”

“Apia and surrounding areas need to be cleaned the hygiene was my main issue public toilets are disgusting and McDonald's toilets need some attention.”

“Health Workers must treat everyone equally, not only just returning Samoans but all visitors. An incident upon our arrival, a few Samoan returning passengers were cutting through the lines and were processed by the Health Workers while all other passengers were waiting in line.”

COVID awareness and self-protection

“I still kept my distance when I feel that a person shows symptoms.”

“In Samoa, everything is like normal as if no COVID19. Despite the fact that it is still spreading within the country. For me and my family, we are still vigilant and taking necessary precautions.”

“COVID is up to the people to take care of their self’s.”

“As I carry my own sanitisers/masks/test kits; I did not take much notice of what facilities were available; though I did see sanitising stations at the Sunrise Restaurant and the National Bank of Samoa I attended.”

“Self prepared prior to arrival in Samoa.”

“Continue promoting good handwashing.”

“Needs a bit more security with covid 19.”

“Covid now free but still a plan should still be in place if it strikes again.”

“Samoa has adopted the NZ model of Covid safety procedures which gives the people the responsibility to exercise their own common sense on how to self-care and protect themselves from catching covid in public settings. I’m happy with this approach providing that the public are kept up to date with any new development that could impact the health of the people.”

“Mutual respect of each other's right to stay healthy. We were a risk for the Samoan people ourselves as we had travelled through busy airports, so we took care regarding this.”

Lack of information

"No information was given to us when we arrived about what to do if we contracted Covid in Samoa."

"Have not received sufficient info about the spread of the virus."

"Not very clear that we need to report back to the health authorities about our check status and even calling the contact line that was provided no responses."

"Very little health advice on covid."

"Clear signs outside stores. More information needed about 3-day covid check - costs etc and locations."

"Some of the rules regarding covid testing were confusing & costs us \$400Nzd just for tests alone only to arrive in Samoa & find out others only provided results from a RATs test that was \$50nzd. The inconsistency of valid information was annoyingly hard to find."

"It was good to see that the level of knowledge our Samoan people have on Covid-19 and it's preventions 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."

Satisfied with restrictions removal

"So glad all restrictions for Samoa were opened in time for our unplanned trip."

"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."

"It was good because no covid 19 test and no travel insurance."

"So glad all restrictions for Samoa were opened in time for our unplanned trip. We had travel insurance in case needed. Good to see Samoa still encouraging its people to have high level of public awareness but at the end of the day it's an individual responsibility to their loved ones."

"The restrictions had passed and we were not affected."

"Delighted to travel with no COVID restrictions."

Arrival or departure experience

"The hand sanitizers in the airport were empty upon my arrival as well as on my departure date."

"Told to bring covid card but not using it at all upon arrival."

“Good instruction by the staff members at the airport.”

“Well organised screening and prevention services. Better than Auckland airport.”

“The arrival process at the international airport was very unorganized and could be streamlined significantly.”

Pre-departure requirements

“Vaccines are vital so it’s important that people do get their vaccines done and upgraded.”

“Vaccines are vital so it’s important that people do get their vaccines done and upgraded.”

“The day 2 test is unnecessary when an expensive pre-departure test is required anyway. Such measures seem redundant when Samoa is so highly vaccinated.”

“Should have a COVID test at the airport prior to travelling out of Samoa.”

COVID tests on the island

“Grateful that our resort was able to take us to get our RAT tests.”

“Seamless day 3 testing. Easy and quick.”

“3 days after arrival we had to go for RAT tests so we went to the main hospital tent. The staff were very efficient & we were quickly processed, no problem.”

Visitor Satisfaction

Visitors were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their experience of Samoa on a scale from 1 'very dissatisfied' to 5 'very satisfied' (Figure 34). The majority (87%) of the visitors surveyed indicated they were either "satisfied" (29%) or "very satisfied" (58%) with their Samoa experience. Very few visitors (4%) were unsatisfied (a score of 2 or lower out of 5) with their visits.

Figure 34: Overall satisfaction with experience of Samoa (n = 1,472)

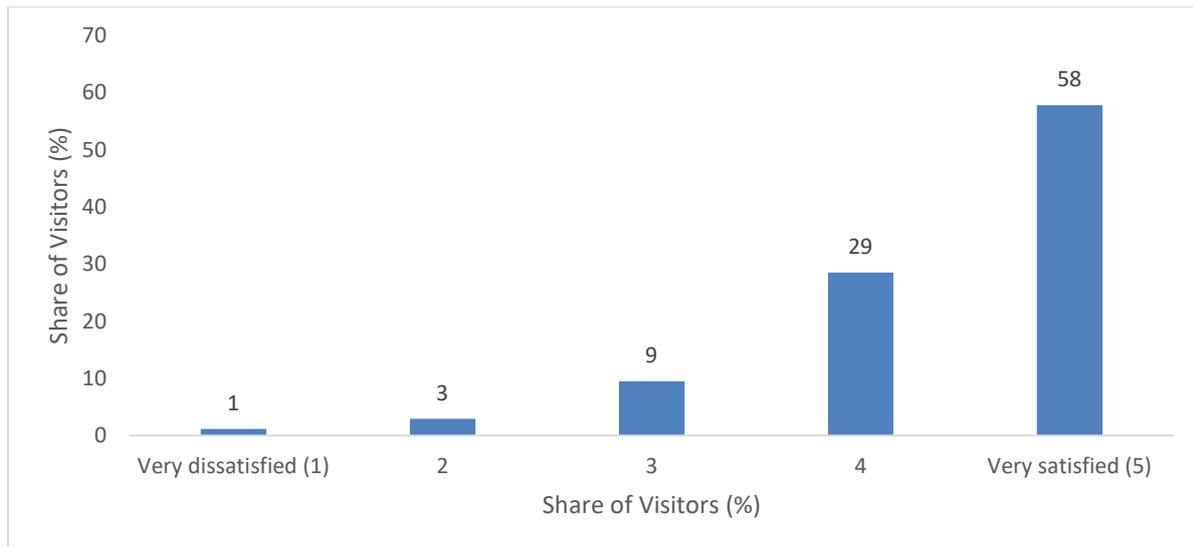


Figure 35 shows the percentage of respondents who undertook specific activities while on their visit to Samoa. Almost all visitors went to at least one restaurant, bar or café (91%) during their stay. Most of the respondents visit beaches (82%) and local markets (85%) and shop local clothing (81%).

Visitor satisfaction is generally high for all activities undertaken (Figure 36). Most activities register more than 3.5 out of a possible high of 5 only except surfing (3.4). Activities involving cultural interaction (average satisfaction of 4.5) rank the highest, followed by shopping (4.3), land-based activities (4.1), and water-based experiences (3.9).

Figure 35: Degree of participation in activities (n range = 156-1,481)

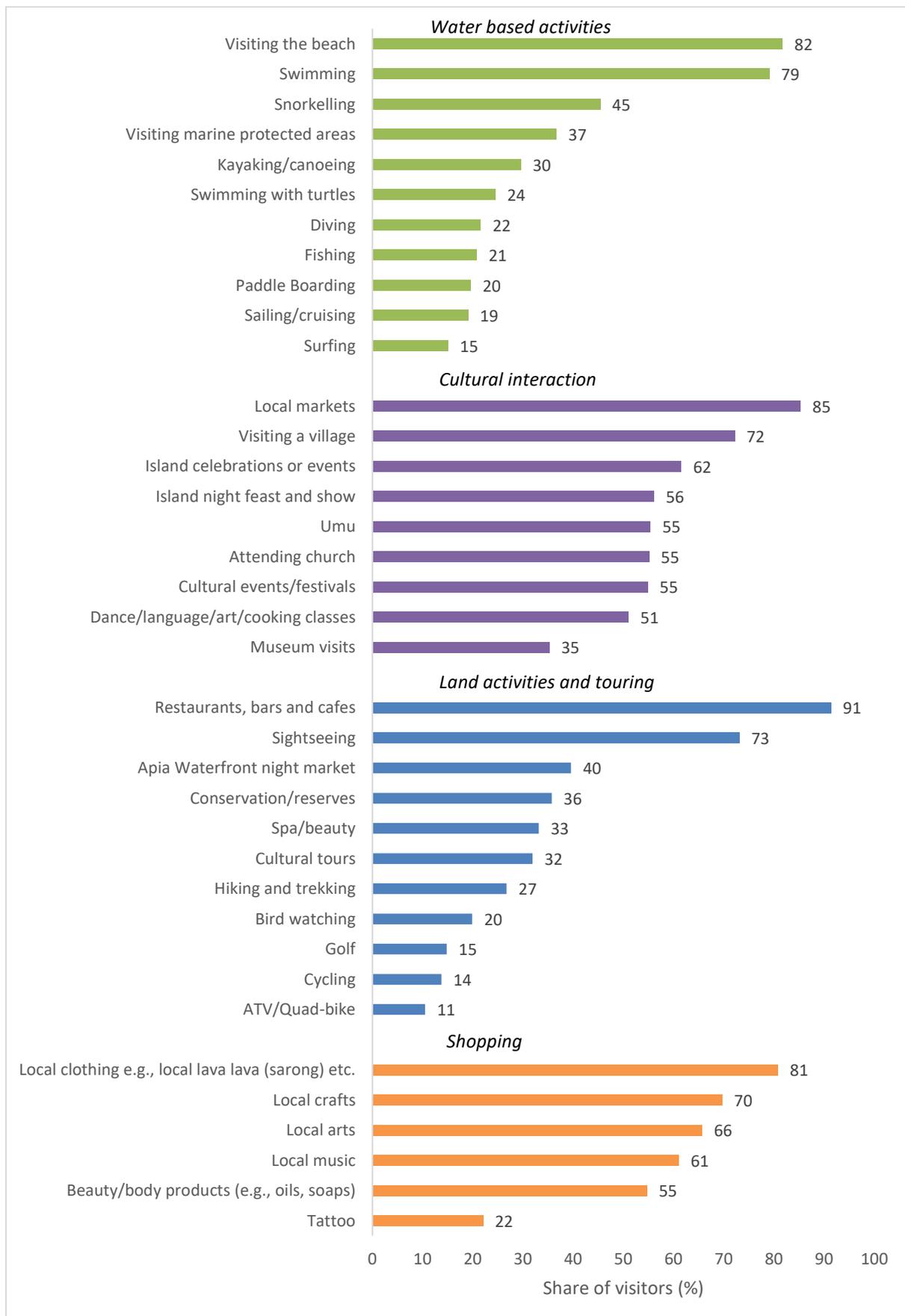
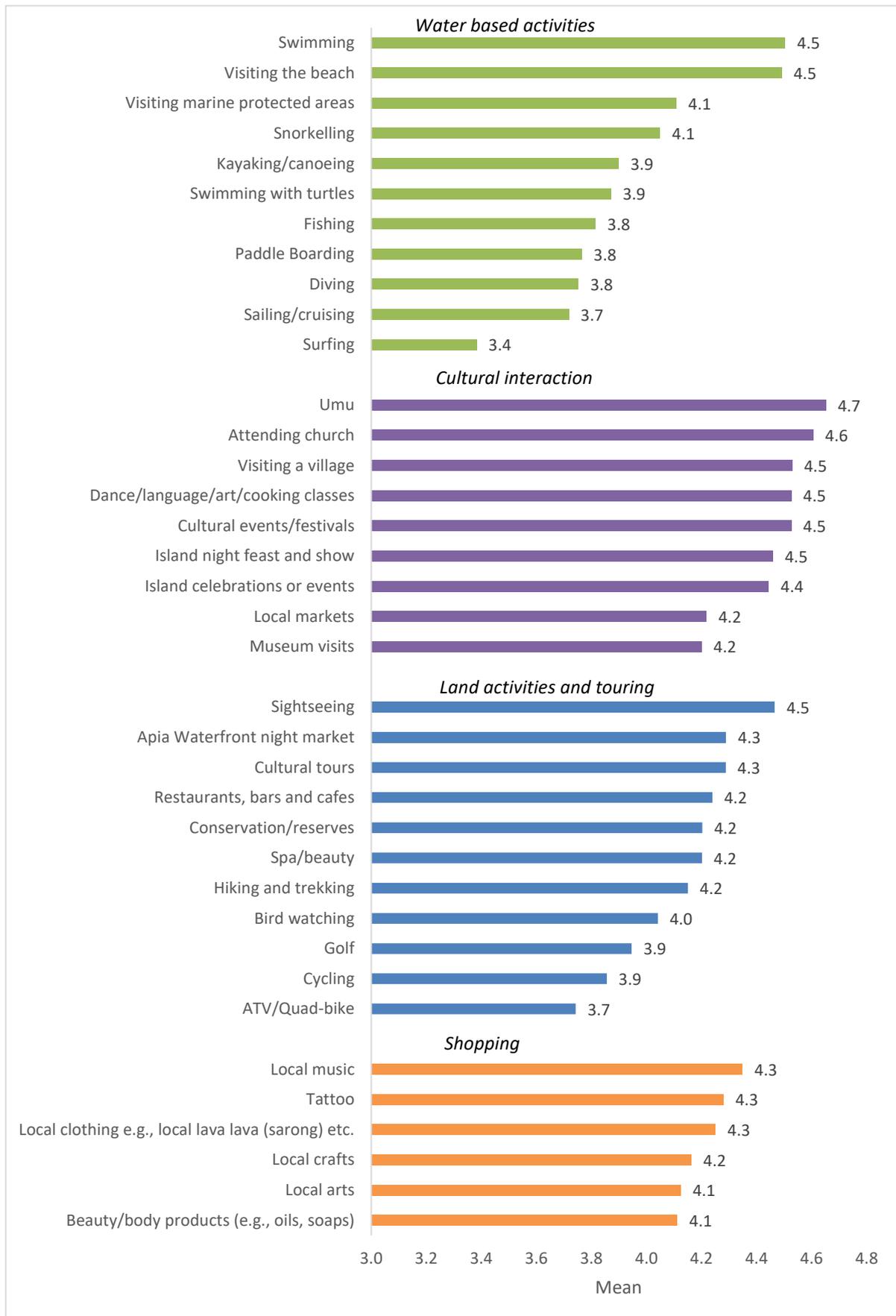
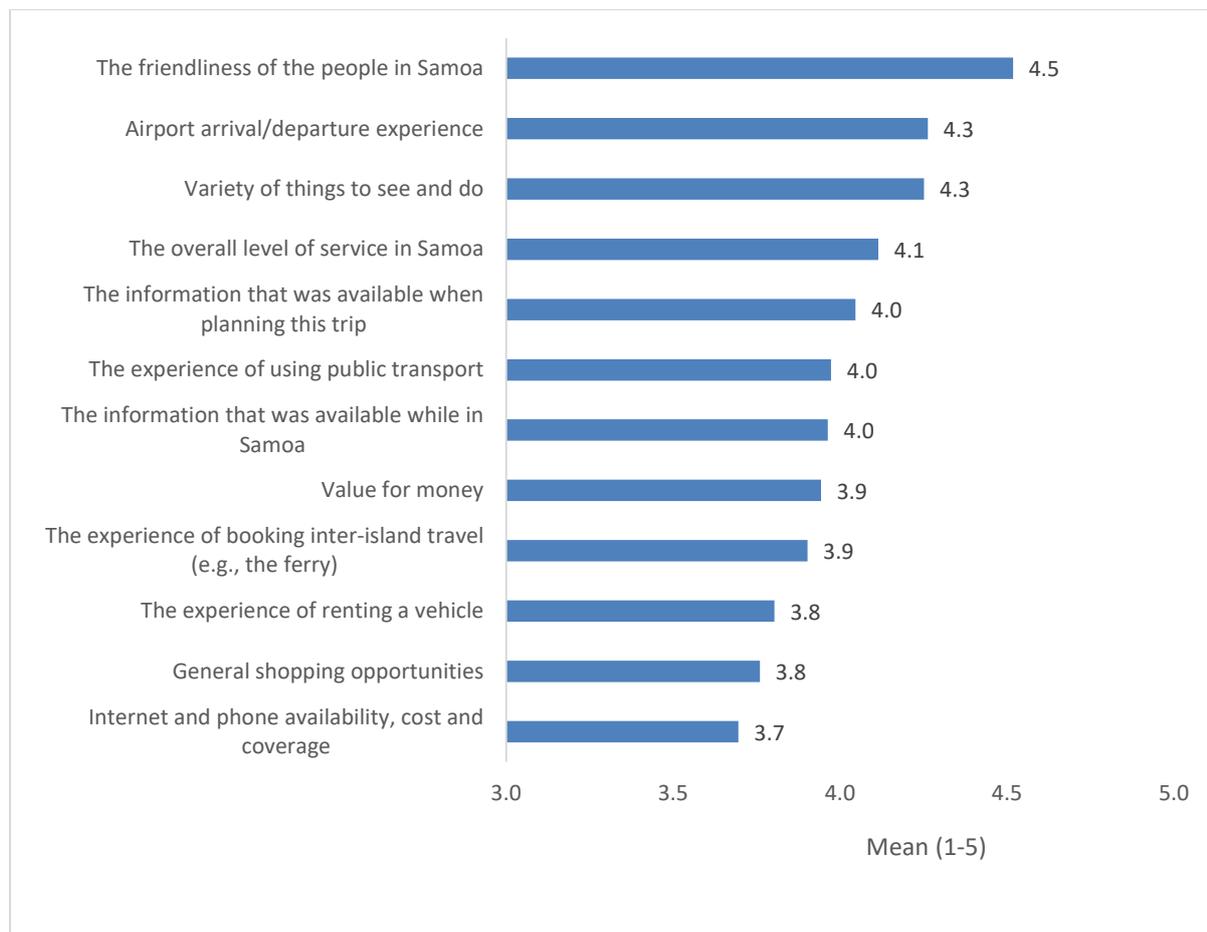


Figure 36: Degree of satisfaction with activities participated in (mean score out of 5)



Visitors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with eleven different statements relating to their most recent visit to Samoa. As shown in Figure 37, respondents rate the friendliness of the people in Samoa the highest (4.5). The airport arrival/departure experience (4.3), variety of things to see and do (4.3), and the overall level of service in Samoa (4.1) are relatively highly ranked as well. Some services scored lower than 4 including value for money (3.9), the experience of booking inter-island travel (3.9), the experience of renting a vehicle (3.8), general shopping opportunities (3.8), and Internet and phone (availability, cost and coverage) (3.7).

Figure 37: Degree of satisfaction with Samoa services



Most appealing aspects of Samoa

Visitors were asked “What did you find most attractive or appealing about Samoa on your most recent visit?” (Table 4). The most appealing elements of the Samoa experience are the beautiful and clean natural environment with its warm weather and tropical ‘feel’ (48%), and the friendly and welcoming authentic local people (37%). Other important factors include: activities, attractions, entertainment and events (13%), the authentic Samoa culture (13%), food and beverage (12%), peacefulness and relaxing ambience and atmosphere (9%) and the ability to reconnect with ‘owner’ Samoa family and culture (9%). Smaller numbers of visitors mentioned the accommodation (6%), the upgrade of infrastructure, public service and facilities (5%), new developments (5%), customer service (4%), overall good experience (2%), not overly commercialised and unspoiled (2%), and affordable, accessible and effortless (2%).

Table 4: Most appealing aspects of Samoa (n = 1,446)

Themes	Share of respondents (%)
Environment	48
Local people	37
Activities, attractions and entertainment, events	13
Culture	13
Food and beverage	12
Ambience and atmosphere	9
Reconnecting with ‘own’ Samoan culture (family, traditions)	9
Accommodation	6
Infrastructure, public service and facilities	5
New developments	5
Customer service	4
Overall good experience	2
Not overly commercialised and unspoiled	2
Affordable, accessible and effortless	2
Savai’i	1
Emotional connection	1

* Share of respondents who made a comment in each theme. Respondents could give more than one answer, so total does not add up to 100%.

Environment, cleanliness & weather

Nearly half of the respondents (48%) considered the destination’s beautiful scenery, natural environment, and the warm waters and climate to be the most appealing aspects of their Samoa experience. Visitors used words such as ‘beautiful’, ‘clean’, ‘amazing’, ‘loved’, ‘stunning’ and ‘green’ to describe the environment. Most comments here focused on the beauty and the cleanliness of the beaches, the weather, the warm and clear water, the colourful flora, and the beauty of the island in general. Comments included:

“Lush jungle, beautiful clean water.”

“Beautiful scenery.”

"It is a natural and unspoilt place which is beautiful. It retains its cultural integrity and is not too over-commercial like the trappings of Fiji. It allows you to relax and just be you. I really love the place."

"Beautiful beaches."

"The most attractive in my last visit to Samoa is the cleanliness of each village (Nu'u). How beautiful family homes with flowers in the front of their house. Everything is needed and clean."

"The landscape and natural beauty of Samoa - just wonderful."

"The weather and the natural beauty of the island."

"Cleanliness and beautiful of the country especially Apia town."

"Very beautiful scenery, clean water to swim. To Sua was magical. Fiafia night was fun."

"Love their beaches, waterfalls, blowholes and the green plantation."

"Samoa is a pretty island. I love how the villages separate themselves by plants and decorations."

"The cleanliness of the island"

"Swimming in beautiful ocean."

"The beauty of the place and the people."

"Generally stunning - people take such pride in their property - homes and gardens. Was so clean and tidy, and beautiful."

"A beautiful, unspoilt paradise, hopefully you can maintain that uniqueness so that many others can also enjoy all that Samoa can offer."

"Beautiful unspoilt beaches and the friendly people."

"The natural beauty of Samoa is breathtaking."

"Weather, scenery."

"The natural environment - forests, walks, the reef and the sea."

"Beautiful colour of the sea no matter which beach we went to."

"Weather and beaches."

"The flags and tidiness of the villages (especially when there is no littering and rubbish)."

"The natural beauty."

"The greenery beautiful plants n flowers the views of the ocean the amazing colours"

"The island is one of the most naturally beautiful islands in the world. Mountains, jungles, beaches, waterfalls. But it needs more to attract tourists than just natural beauty!"

"Protected areas/Conservation efforts."

Local people

Over one in three respondents (37%) noted that the most appealing part of their visit was their interaction with local people in Samoa, with comments focused on the friendly and welcoming nature of local people. Key words that dominated the responses included 'friendly', 'respectful', 'polite', 'welcoming', 'helpful', 'lovely', 'wonderful', 'kind', 'warmth', and 'accommodating'. Some visitors emphasized that they were touched by Samoan friendly nature. Comments included:

"The people! They're the best part."

"Warmth and friendliness."

"...The people smiling and waving everywhere you went."

"Friendliness of Samoan people."

"The welcoming nature of the people..."

"The friendly people are so amazing. Happiest people."

"The people. this is what makes Samoa great."

"The people. How friendly and accommodating people are."

"...Loved the people I felt really welcome."

"Wonderful people, kind and helpful..."

"Most of all was how people in Samoa welcoming the overseas people and they were really friendly which made my trip very comfortable and more interesting not only for me but for my two kids who I bring them with me to Samoa for their very first time in

Samoa and they didn't want to come back to New Zealand as they loved every bit about Samoa and their people."

"...how people would greet and smile every time meeting at different places."

"Always the friendly people!"

"The incredible people."

"...friendly people, easy nature, happy disposition"

"Everyone I met was so friendly and welcoming. I felt very safe as a solo young female traveller. The natural attractions were fantastic as well."

"The people are fantastic - super friendly and easy going."

"The people were lovely & friendly."

"Best part of Samoa is always relaxing and chatting with locals, enjoying a beer at sunset, walking or swimming at the beach. Samoan people are always lovely, helpful and friendly."

"Love the people - so friendly, respectful, polite, and helpful."

"The wonderful people"

"Samoans are very friendly and inclusive people. Most of the people I was in contact with spoke English quite good which I find impressive. I love the traditional food and then best of all is lua'au 🍷."

"The lovely kind people."

"The people and their warmth."

"The people of course are friendly and very committed to their trades, selling and interacting with others in an accommodating way. I enjoyed my walks and shopping in Apia. It was a short trip, but I enjoyed it very much."

Activities, attractions, entertainment & events

Another thirteen percent (13%) of respondents mentioned activities, attractions and entertainment as the most appealing aspect of their visit to Samoa. Key words to describe their participation in activities and attractions included 'things to do', 'attractions', 'activities', 'museum', 'To Sua Ocean Trench', 'pool' and 'church'. Comments included:

"To Sua Trench was gorgeous and everyone we met was so happy and wonderful."

"The boat fishing was great, the people who we meet and spent time with were wonderful. I feel very safe on my own traveling around Samoa and joining it activities."

"The waterfront, the best place to sit and enjoy a nice hot koko samoa with pagikeke and starting my day with a beautiful sunrise and sunsets."

"Umu; Snorkeling; Reef; Kayaking; Tosua trench; Lalumanu."

"The waterfront."

"Natural attractions like piula."

"Handicraft market, clothes market & food market."

"Snorkling and Bike riding."

"Surfing."

"To Sua Trench and Taula."

"The markets and Maninoa beach."

"Swimming at the To Sea trench was the absolute highlight, swimming in the sea and poolside at Sinalei Resort, super relaxing atmosphere."

"To Sua trench is amazing."

"The natural attractions. Although the waterfall we visited was dried up on the west side, the other attractions like piula and to sua trench were amazing. The hotels we stayed at were great- return to paradise and taumeasina. They had great service and lots to do."

"The new friendship park especially the new FAST government."

"Church buildings - Different churches with its unique designs."

"Visiting Taumeasina & To Sua. Lalomanu was great but the beach had a lot of rubbish on the sand & in the water. Maninoa beach was beautiful also."

"The water holes, beaches and the local makets."

"Island cultural village market in town."

"The Apia waterfront night markets"

"There were just a lot of attractions and places to visit. Am definitely looking forward to my next visit."

"Lalumanu and swimming with the turtles. Also the Fiafia show and taking the local bus as an experience."

"Always enjoy shopping at the Fish Market on Sunday morning!"

"Saletoga Sands Matatufu, Robert Louis Stevenson Museum, Lalomanu."

"The visit to the Giant Clams."

"Very beautiful scenery, clean water to swim. To Sua was magical. Fiafia night was fun."

Culture

The island's unique local culture was mentioned by thirteen percent of respondents (13%) as an appealing aspect of their Samoa visit. Respondents referred to the authenticity of the culture, history and traditional way of life in addition to referencing the overall enjoyable aspects of Samoa's culture. Comments included:

"The village decorations for the 60th Independence Day competition."

"The flags for the celebration of independence."

"The cultural and religious aspects of Samoa."

"Clean and beautiful villages, well decorated for Independence celebrations."

"How beautiful the inland villages were kept maintained."

"...the beautiful gardens that I saw."

"Samoa has moved forward in maximising its tourist program and has made excellent progress in beautifying her island paradise and keeping her culture intact."

"...the way of life culturally and religiously."

"...cultural affiliation events..."

"Is the place itself, so unique and rich in culture, environment and scenery."

"Less traffic compared to Fiji. Most businesses owned by Samoans. Lot of church buildings and of high standard."

"We loved the friendly people and culture! It's a beautiful place to visit and we hope it doesn't change too much. Didn't particularly like the harrassment around Apia, with people trying to get money from you."

“Church buildings - Different churches with its unique designs.”

“Experiencing/ getting a glimpse of the local and cultural way of life.”

“The opportunity to be participate in the culture.”

“The culture and the view.”

“The everyday lifestyle, culture and family.”

“The friendliness of the people and their willingness to share their culture.”

“Language & Culture, beautiful beaches, friendly people.”

Food and Beverage

Twelve percent (12%) of respondents mentioned food and beverages as the most appealing aspect of their trip. Their comments focused on the quality and range of fresh food available in Samoa. Many visitors commented on the selection and variety of options of good cafes and restaurants, about the food markets and on the availability of tropical fruit. Comments included:

“Giordano's Pizzeria and Coffee Roaster were probably the only two good things we did in Samoa...”

“Food : coconuts and oka.”

“Being back after 4 years is so amazing What I love about Samoa are the people they are so friendly and the food is so delicious so so good to get back home and do what we love most.”

“The cuisine.”

“Neat and tidy. Food is delicious.”

“Freshness of the local food.”

“The local foods sold in the markets.”

“Cafe & Restaurant meals...”

“Readily available fresh foods like fruits and vegetables, fish.”

“The opportunity to eat food prepared without processed ingredients and the highest quality fruits found on the islands.”

“The Island food.”

"Always the food."

"Samoa food like luau."

"The people are very friendly and courteous. Food is excellent and better restaurants."

"Beautiful beaches and variety of cuisine to choose from."

"The beautiful cafes and bars that have recently opened."

"Samoa Food plus our culture."

"The native food available and cultural cooking practices of preparing food."

"Restaurants and food when dining out in Upolu was great."

"Food scene has improved with better quality restaurants."

"The food, lots of different restaurants."

"The opportunity to eat food prepared without processed ingredients and the highest quality fruits found on the islands."

"I love the Samoa Food especially seafood."

Ambience and atmosphere

Nine percent of visitors (9%) surveyed focused on the relaxed atmosphere of Samoa. They considered Samoa to be very relaxing, quiet, peaceful, and laidback, which made it a good destination to 'relax' and 'unwind'. Comments included:

"Relaxing environment and it's home for me."

"...the relaxing atmosphere. Samoa is still beautiful."

"The simplicity and peace of Apia."

"It is a natural and unspoilt place which is beautiful. It retains its cultural integrity and is not too over commercial like the trappings of Fiji. It allows you to relax and just be you. I really love the place."

"The slow pace making me relax and the hot sun."

"Definitely the lifestyle and good weather. It's nice to see the different lifestyle and how innovative our people are in terms of how they do things, it's very humbling and nice to see. But most importantly the sunrise and sunsets are absolutely beautiful!"

"Lovely people and laid back way of life."

"A relaxing holiday destination, being able to relax on the beach and enjoy the lovely weather!"

"The friendly laid back atmosphere."

"How laid back everything was."

"Beautiful scenery and relaxing atmosphere."

"It was a very peaceful place, where the people were friendly and respectful. The island itself is beautiful and a large part of its charm is that it was not overly busy with tourists - many of the 'tourists' were Samoan. "

"The ability to fully relax and enjoy the natural surroundings without stress or pressure to be rushing round doing heaps of things,."

"I love the place my homeland an Cousins relatives family I just always feel at home in peace when there"

"The overall feel of the country - friendly, relaxed. The beaches and the swimming opportunities."

"The east going laidback vibe, as well as the ease of swimming all day day, as well as snorkeling. Our favourite part of our trip was our stay at Tanu Beach Fales"

"Calm and relaxed atmosphere"

"Beautiful scenery welcoming people laid back relaxed lifestyle."

"the relaxed lifestyle, slower pace of daily life, colour, food, swimming/climate"

"Lay back way of life"

"Slower pace (lifestyle)"

"Nice relaxing place to go and unwind"

Reconnecting with 'own' Samoan' culture

Another nine percent of visitors (9%) surveyed focused on the pleasure of re-connecting with family, friends, and Samoan culture. Comments included:

"Seeing the family again after 3 years since covid. The welcoming at the airport was fantastic, so proud of the efforts Samoa put into that. Well done, awesome job."

"Being able to finally visit home & see family! I forgot how colourful Samoa is! 🇸🇲"

“Reconnecting with friends and family after three years of border closures. Seeing vast improvements to the roads. Witnessing the depth of creativity and wealth of talent of students and staff at the National University of Samoa.”

“It was my first ever visit to Samoa and to be able to travel to such a beautiful island and see where my grandparents/parents were raised was so emotional and beautiful! Seeing my Family was the best part of this whole trip so grateful for an amazing trip and the beautiful experience I had can’t wait to book another. 🥰”

“Being with all the family members.”

“The Natural breath of air, the smell of food being cooked passing a house in the villages. The small details of every building I saw. The amount of land families owned. The tall trees and everything that nature has. What I found most attractive was seeing my people having the strength to live with limited resources and using nature to build, eat& survive from. Seeing my culture thrive with limited opportunities and having the disadvantage of the privileges I have in my country makes me a proud Samoan, its a heartfelt reminder for me to be grateful for what I have and what I’m able to achieve in the near future to be one of the people to help maintain the identity and culture through its history and help my country in every way needed. Personally that was the most attractive thing to me.”

“Just being back home.”

“Visiting Family Being immersed back into customary norms of faasamoa, the language and culture Always a blessing to be reminded that life isn’t always about living glamorous and that happiness is really found in the simplest of things....like enjoying a coconut drink on a beach.”

“Everything, not just any, the attractiveness of my family, the food, culture, the bus ride, the smell of the mosooi blooms, the gathering of my village people, seeing friends, all the things we take for granted when we leave Samoa and families behind in search of a better lifestyle in order to support our families back home. Everything we value about Samoa is forever attractive in my view.”

“Listening to the locals speak my language.”

“Always love the beautiful weather, getting together with families, and have fun, never forget the country we born.”

“Reuniting with family after 3 years being away due to covid.”

“Love spending quality time to Samoa where I was born and raised.”

“Everything. The people, the country, the music, nothing is more beautiful than returning home with so much humility and gratitude with knowing you’re grounded

in a sacred country that fulfils your soul with such passion like nothing else. It was beautiful being back at home, I missed everything and especially bringing our nana home I'm most certainly looking forward to returning back."

"As a Samoan returning, cultural pride is what first comes to mind. Seeing my family make do in the village and living off the land and other family members succeeding in their business. Samoa is a beautiful and a land of opportunities it's sad to see so many skilled able bodied workers in NZ and Australia. "

"Our land! The green pastures, the ocean views! Always good to be back."

"First and foremost, the lovely people. The food and just everything in general. Seeing loved ones again and reuniting with parents and relatives. Embracing the precious times we have with each other every single day."

"It is the same always when we go home. It is the people. They are the reason we go back and will always be the reason we visit as often as we do. Family, strangers regardless of where you go. It is the same everywhere."

"Lots of changes now are days my beautiful Samoa I'm sooo proud to be a blessing Samoan God bless you Samoa. ♥"

Accommodation

Six percent of respondents (6%) noted that the accommodation they stayed in was an appealing aspect of their visit to Samoa, referring to the facilities, the location, the level of service, and the warm welcome from their hosts. Comments included:

"Many of the hotels are able to hold professional conventions or conferences."

"Saletoga resort. Lovely place, lovely people."

"Our resort was very close to Apia so we could go in for a few hours for markets and cafes etc, but still felt like we were in an isolated oasis when we were there."

"The resort was amazing (Taumeasina Island)."

"...the accommodation (Lyn's Getaway)."

"It was beautiful and an amazing experience, especially the Amoa Resort. Great staff, amazing breakfast and dinner, overall would recommend to others."

"Location of my accommodation, 3 nights Apia (Olivia's) 5 nights Lupes, Maninoa. Enjoyed snorkelling at Palolo Deep, swimming off the beach at Maninoa, To Sua Trench and generally looking around the island."

"The people and the warm hospitality. Taumeasina Island Resort was amazing."

“Love the Taumeasina Resort. Didn't need to go anywhere. Everything is there to enjoy. Very friendly staff.”

“No bugs in my hotel, beautiful surroundings, peaceful hotel and private and got the rest I needed.”

“Aga reef resort was the best place and most amazing service from their staff we definitely will return because of Aga reef.”

“The resort was amazing, very tropical.”

“The resort provided entertainment.”

“We just wanted a relaxing holiday in a resort. The gardens & resort location were excellent.”

Infrastructure, public service and facilities

Five percent of the respondents (5%) considered the infrastructure, public service and facilities to be the most appealing aspects of their Samoa experience. More comments focused on the improvements in condition of the roads. Comments included:

“The beautiful maintenance of the island and the tourists spots mainly trench and water falls.”

“In some ways it was different with the country slowly improving with more modernised approach to infrastructure coming into place and creating a more jobs to the locals. And in many aspects, it's good that they are still able to retain some of the beauty that makes Samoa what it is in terms of culture and the beautiful landscape. I'm still gutted that haven't truly explored all around Samoa but hopefully sometime in the near future.”

“Airport departing n entering.”

“Infrastructure development. Roads, building (Cathedrals). Clothing and locally made items/food. Beautiful and friendly people.”

“Cleanliness, and availability of sim card at the airport. Transportation.”

“The streets/roads are getting better in Upolu.”

“New look of Apia town area; good roads from Apia to Malua; beautiful layout of villages...”

"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."

"...the roads and traffic lights..."

"Infra-Structural changes. Good town planning has avoided traffic jams. One-Stop Shop with public services in one place."

"Infrastructure relative to other Pacific Islands."

"A lot cleaner. Roads are better. Needs to be better signals on free left turn at red traffic lights"

"The roads being fixed."

"The new airport, changes of the roads and happy to see my family"

"Improvements to the infostructure"

"The roads were in a lot better conditions. Good to see more super markets opened throughout the island."

"Airport looking awesome and VIP lounge we tried was great! Roads being fixed so good! Just being in the islands with our people was amazing!!"

"The level of development in terms of infrastructure as compared to other small island states in the Pacific"

"Samoa infrastructure has improved a lot, easy access to some things.eg Shops provide all sorts of stuffs which is interesting which not found overseas. People are still selling the traditional Samoan food which is good its fresh."

"The roads are smoother, most villages were kept clean, the beaches were clean and beautiful. More supermarkets that are close to the back villages."

"Infrastructure is getting better. Roads have improved."

New developments

Five percent of respondents (5%) mentioned new developments as the most appealing aspect of their trip. Comments included:

"How Samoan people becoming independent and utilizing the land to grow their own food becoming self-sustained. Seeing how they are using their own land to grow plantation, selling food stall along the side of the main road."

"The villages preparations to clean and make their homes and front roads beautiful, didn't see dogs and pigs chased after the cars and buses, the restaurant's that opened at nights cause it's good to go out that time when it's cool, the big beautiful buildings in town, the roads are so better now, the road to my house in lefaga is done now I almost cried, cause I felt sorry for taxis when they took me home before, the families grow their vege and food gardens around their home, the laughter of children and the smell of beautiful food, the fruits that hangs on trees in different colors, the church and school buildings, the kids swimming in village pool, and the river that runs through my village called " The Vai o Sina"."

"The way the island had developed."

"EVERYTHING I mean I hadn't been back for over a decade and when I did I was amazed.well done to all involved in making our beautiful Samoa and even better place it is now a truly beautiful paradise. ❤️"

"Good to see progress of the country as a whole."

"New changes."

"All the new development."

"The island is very beautiful. It has improved in many ways since the last time I visited Samoa."

"interacting with locals as well as enjoying the weather and fishing palolo most of all was witnessing the high improvement of health living conditions particularly- public toilets."

"progress the development growth in Samoa improve to see villages look after their villages nice and clean."

"Samoa had change a lot in the past 10 years I believe in terms of its development which is something goods."

"Seeing all the new and big changes around Samoa, e.g., the roads have gone nice and smoother the food is upgraded and so good, the views and seeing more stores & clothes in stores."

"The new govt house Eleele Fou (previously called). The new waterfront - design was awesome. Malo lava ❤️"

Customer service

Another four percent of visitors (4%) commented on the service they encountered while in Samoa. Respondents had positive comments on the local hospitality they experienced,

especially mentioning the friendly, accommodating and helpful staff at the restaurants, hotels, and resorts. Visitors also emphasised the lack of pressure or hassle to buy which made them feel comfortable. Comments included:

"Friendly services of people in the airport."

"Ulalei Lodge went out of their way to make us comfortable, safe and well fed."

"The friendly welcomes and willingness to give good customer service."

"Hotels and there presentation not only the prices but their hospitality,seki 👍"

"Customer Service at hotels, bars and restaurants excellent."

"The warm friendly people and service. The feeling you were in their village communities. Where and how they live."

"The smiling faces of the people of Samoa. Greeting the tourists and the restaurant service e.g., buffet service was really good and highly recommend visiting Samoa."

"The friendliness of the people and the hospitality of staff at the resort."

"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."

"Service was always great, enjoyed Samoa's hospitality"

"The staff at all resorts, bars or restaurants were amazing and helpful. Recovering from COVID closures was a highlighted issue and although staff were new in many areas they did their jobs and smiles on faces."

"Service and friendly people."

"Hospitality of Samoan people."

Overall good experience

Two percent of visitors (2%) surveyed simply stated that their whole experience was a good one, and that they 'loved everything'. Comments included:

"The weather, the people, the scenery, the cleanness ... everything. Can't wait to come back."

"Friendly people, culture, food. Loved everything about my trip to Samoa."

"EVERYTHING."

"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."

"Everything in Samoa."

"Everything. It's simplicity and it's beauty. It's everywhere you look... Samoa is just simply beautiful."

"Everything. I just love my Samoa so much."

"Most of all was how people in Samoa welcoming the overseas people and they were really friendly which made my trip very comfortable and more interesting not only for my but for my two kids who I bring them with me to Samoa for their very first time in Samoa and they didn't want to come back to New Zealand as they loved every bit about Samoa and their people."

"The whole thing."

"Everything about Samoa is beautiful. The people, the culture, the land, the lifestyle and it's a Beautiful country to live in to appreciate life. I wish I could live there for a few years."

Not overly commercialized and unspoiled

Another two percent of respondents (2%) mentioned Samoa as being a place that is not over-commercialised or too touristy. Some visitors also emphasised the importance of preserving the destination from mass tourism development and keeping the way it is. Comments included:

"Quiet and not overly commercial."

"Peaceful non commercialized island."

"Not overdeveloped and ruined by non-natural elements (e.g. wires, cables, poles,) where you can see the natural beauty of Samoa."

"Unspoiled, non-intrusive environment, steeped in history and tradition."

"Not overcrowded."

"Not too commercialized."

"My father's village and everywhere that hasn't been touched by modernized facilities. Apia city is not very attractive."

"How relaxing it is, not overly commercialised like some other destinations."

"Low amounts of other tourists."

"The quiet and lack of crowds, warm clean water in the ocean and clean beaches."

"The absence of crowds (other than at the Tumeasina resort)."

"Still untouched compared to other Pacific Islands (Fiji and Cook Islands) despite the foreign investment."

"It was a very peaceful place, where the people were friendly and respectful. The island itself is beautiful and a large part of its charm is that it was not overly busy with tourists - many of the 'tourists' were Samoan."

"The people, and the general beauty of the area. Also, it wasn't too 'touristy'."

Affordability and accessibility

The affordability and accessibility of Samoa as a holiday destination was mentioned by two percent of respondents (2%). Visitors considered Samoa as a destination where you could get good value for money. They also referred to the ease of getting to Samoa and also of getting around the islands. Comments included:

"Easy to get to, affordable, looked like it would be a good island getaway."

"...value for money."

"...ease of visiting."

"Relaxing place good value for money, easy to get around."

"Air NZ grab a seat. It was an easy holiday and well-priced."

"Got a lot of value for NZ dollar."

"Reasonable pricing overall; awesome activities; great food."

"The weather, variety of activities, the food, and reasonable prices."

Savai'i

Savai'i was also mentioned by one percent of respondents (1%). Comments included:

"We love Savaii and return to Savaii Lagoon because of its location, weather, snorkelling and easy going clean facilities and friendly staff!"

"Spending time with family in the village of Iva, Savai'i."

"Savai'i how beautiful and clean the island is kept. Going to Seeti beach fales and the beaches so blue and clear."

"Trip around the island of Savai'i."

"Savai'i island in general."

"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."

"Savai'i and people."

"Everything about Savaii, the landscape the tourist attractions and the service."

"My own village environment and entertainment in Savai'i better than Upolu."

"I found Savai'i and all the sights there to see appealing (especially the Taga blowholes)."

"The Apia waterfront and some of the outer villages in both Upolu and Savai'i."

Emotional connection

The emotional connection towards Samoa was mentioned by one percent of respondents (1%). Comments included:

"Home away from home."

"Being home!"

"Always the scenery and being able to come home where the heart belongs is always the best feeling!"

"warm weather, friendliness of people, returning to familiar places."

"Being in Samoa after all this time was the best thing."

"The people, serenity & culture. Samoa attracts a peace that I longed for, and I was so grateful & blessed to have had the opportunity to reset in the beautiful island of

Samoa. I became a local & realised how happy one can be with the simplest things on this earth. Samoa enhances the idea that true happiness is within & I cannot wait to return & experience it all over again."

Least appealing aspects of Samoa

Visitors were asked: “What did you find least attractive or appealing about Samoa on your most recent visit?” Table 5 summarises the key themes respondents identified. Comments ranged from issues with infrastructure, public services and facilities (21%), the amount of visible rubbish, and environmental degradation (14%), social issues (12%) through to the cost of goods and services (10%) and customer service (10%). Other areas included: food and beverage (8%), accommodation (6%), stray animals and mosquitos (5%), shopping experience (4%), attractions and activities (4%), the airport and arriving and departing (3%), rental cars or scooters (3%), bad weather (3%), feeling unwelcome and exploited (3%), and local people (3%).

Table 5: Least appealing aspects of Samoa (n = 1,374)

Themes	Share of respondents %
Infrastructure, public services and facilities	21
Rubbish and natural environment	14
Social issues	12
Cost of goods and services	10
Customer service	10
Food and beverage	8
Accommodation	6
Stray animals and mosquitos	5
Shopping experience	4
Attractions and activities	4
Airport and arriving and departing	3
Rental cars or scooters	3
Bad weather	3
Feeling unwelcome and exploited	3
Local people	3
Lack of information	2
Apia	2
Safety	1
Too touristy or commercial	1
Taxi	1
Beach access	1
Covid-19 and its impact	1
Business closures	1
Local culture	1

* Share of respondents who made a comment in each theme. Respondents could give more than one answer, so total does not add up to 100%.

Infrastructure, public services and facilities

The most common theme recognised as least appealing by respondents was infrastructure, public services and facilities (21%). The majority of these comments focused on road conditions, poor Wi-Fi or communication amenities, a lack of signage, limited general transport options and lack of public toilets. Some visitors also mentioned poor medical service and hospital facilities. Comments included:

"Internet very poor..."

"The roads, especially the main road leading from Faleolo to Apia. It is terrible even worse than when I was there in 2019."

"The public facilities especially the bathrooms. Very untidy."

"Infrastructure, particularly the road; poor, rough and unstable to drive on."

"Poor internet connectivity - and expensive."

"The connectivity of cell phones while away from the hotel was frustrating."

"The lack of large visible road signs for directions especially at intersections. We drove ourselves around and got lost a lot."

"Travel on Savaii ferry. Left before the timetabled time - left us stranded on island."

"The public buses when it gets full, people have to sit on each other when the Bus is full."

"Poor internet and mobile coverage."

"Getting places is difficult so wider experiences are hard to get outside of what the resort has to offer."

"Still some work needed on signage - particularly attractions. It would be a good idea (at each attraction) to show directions and information about the next things to see or do in either direction. IE: at To Sua say 'lolomanu beach is 15 minutes away' or Spoanga falls are 20 minutes in this direction."

"Misinformation. Sights on private land are not always safe and maintained. Maps don't have street names. Mah tree indicated 10 min walk. Turns out it was much longer, and trek was dangerous. Overgrown pathways tree roots bad for those wearing non sturdy shoes."

"No public toilets that were easily seen."

"The inside of Apia hospital where my grandson was admitted to. Considering it is only about 8 years old the condition of it was dreadful. Toilet filthy. Switches hanging off of walls (this was in the paediatric ward too). Old lights/and paraphernalia left on the

floor with no concern about safety. Plaster coming off of walls leaving holes. Generally an unclean environment to put any child into."

"Street signage and lack of signs made it difficult to find streets and places. Also, there is a lack of signs on significant buildings which was disappointing for a tourist."

"The wards at the hospital in Savaii is 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."

"Internet services - I was unable to roam or connect to the Internet. A lot of rubbish along the roads and by beaches. Finding a beach that we could swim at, finally met a work colleague who took us down to their beach and it was stunning. Our rental vehicle would not be road worthy in NZ and island time meant that we did not get our vehicle until an hour after we had landed and when we returned it, they were not open."

"Transports and information about it but I have learned how it works."

"Lack of public toilets."

"The road from the airport to Apia did not give a good first impression."

"Lack of hygienic facilities at local market on wharf and availability of public toilets."

"Major Roads still need more improvements and maintenance."

"Never any accessible clean toilets to use."

"Public Toilet needs a well maintain a look afternoon they are NOT well manage and its looks really bad and will put down Samoa beauty for tourist."

"The hospital in Savaii was horrible, needs help ASAP. The ferries also need to be cleaned and maintained."

Rubbish and natural environment

A number of visitors (14%) mentioned that the visible rubbish both inside and outside built areas was a big concern. The amount of rubbish was frequently raised as a scar on the landscape and found to be off putting and saddening from a visitor perspective. Comments included:

"...rubbish everywhere."

"...I also would say I was completely shocked and appalled to see all the litter thrown all over the roads, in reserves, at the beach, and it seems no one cares about the environment there."

"Central Apia a little dirty."

"We felt the rubbish laying around the roadside had got really bad since we last came (2019). So the villages need to encourage rubbish bins, collections, cleanliness again if you want tourists back..."

"Not as clean as it was pre-Covid."

"General environmental degradation. In places the dumping of rubbish near roads."

"Sooo disappointed about the state of the coral and lack of fish whilst snorkelling."

"The littering was very bad and shocking to see people throw rubbish into the sea. That definitely has to change."

"...villages in Upolu have become dirty."

"Town - too much rubbish and needs to be maintained even going to the back villages, so much rubbish along the side of the road. Witnessed cars in front of us throwing their rubbish out the window."

"The rubbish - on Savai'i there was a lot of rubbish outside of the villages."

"Rubbish everywhere. Plastic wrappers. Rubber off cuts, apparent lack of pride in local surroundings."

"So much rubbish along the coastline - government needs to have strict laws to ensure no one throws any rubbish out their windows. Please keep Samoa clean like Rarotonga. Pay villagers along the coastline to keep it clean."

"Roadside litter."

"The pollution on the roadside when travelling around the island of Upolu in Particular. It appeared people just thought rubbish out of their cars as they were driving. Savaii was lot cleaner."

"City is not very clean, and markets need to be better. Cleaning wise in the city is not very up to standard especially for the tourism industry."

"It worried me about the level of rubbish around some villages, I want to come back and help clean up (if that is not offensive) all the plastic that has been brought to the island. The worst food I have ever seen was at the airport cafe in the departure area at airport- terrible way to leave the Island after such wonderful fresh and local food."

"Not enough rubbish bins around town especially the markets to avoid people throwing rubbish anywhere, everywhere in town."

"The rubbish - everywhere. On the sides on road etc. People are not respecting the land."

"There are empty plastic bottles all along the long stretches of road between the villages. I remember thinking 'surely people aren't throwing JUST BOTTLES out of the window when driving, it has to be someone intentionally dumping them'. I saw this on both islands. I even think of coming back to Samoa just to clean it up."

"Rubbish on the beaches. We paid \$50 to swim in Lalomanu but no one picked up the vast amount of rubbish that was on the sand, empty cans, bottles and food packaging".

Social issues

The social issues discussed by 12% of respondents included themes surrounding begging (both adult and child), child vendors, treatment by locals, theft, visible poverty levels, the health and hygiene and the Chinese influence in Samoa. Comments included:

"Young people hustling in town areas."

"The lack of care for those who are homeless."

"Child vendors."

"I've seen young children with their mother or maybe Anties running around selling soda, bottle of water, etc.in the town area, Wow!"

"The lack of access to free education for the children."

"Feel sorry for a local people that who owned the small shops. Can't get the same amount of money they used to have before."

"Poverty."

"Cleanliness and basic hygiene. We know it is the islands and people are poor."

"Almost everybody is friendly but will try to sell you things that you don't need. There's this street vendor that I thought was giving me free Samoa bracelets but after giving me 3 pcs, asked me for \$10.00 for them. I gave him 4.00 but I only took 1 pc."

"Chinese influence and driving past the Chinese embassy which is a blight on the landscape."

"Locals suffer from great poverty. Help them, fa'amolemole."

"The wages of the locals."

"Too many dogs roaming the streets; too many child vendors; too many beggars & drunks sleeping on foot paths day and night; lack of Police foot patrols all the time. At night too many cars with multi coloured lights & air horns and without WOF appear at night. I hate being charged to swim at beaches and to park car at resorts. WHO OWNS the beaches in Samoa; lack of signs warning people of parking charges & charges for swimming or even taking pictures - ITS a BIG RIP OFF and Id sooner go to Rarotonga, Fiji or Tahiti because of all the items I've listed."

"Start to see the China government influence with chain supermarkets that the big local families are struggling to compete with (Carruthers, Meredith's, Ah Mau."

"Children who are not sent to school are sent to sell goods in town at a young age to provide for the family. Child Labour."

"Our guide was pretty negative about Samoa, government, local management, it was kind of off putting."

"Most kids education is very bad. The government must stop children under 19 from smoking and drinking."

"Amount of drunk people around the city area."

"Young children selling on streets Chinese products in stalls too much plastic! US currency in motels & hotels. Need street names for better navigations."

"Dogs in town and beggars on the streets mostly drunk. Child vendors harassing tourists and people was also a problem. They are everywhere causing problems."

"Terrible, but I have to say the hawkers who constantly hound you with their products to sell. Children as young as 6. I can't get out of my car when I stop at a supermarket. They are constantly coming up to you, also when you're walking. The customer service of some of the restaurants! Shocking."

"Still children out on public places selling stuff - not a good looking. These kids should be in school. Thought these have been sorted by the current govt. Please assist 🙏🙏"

"Young children selling things and asking people if they want to buy stuff instead of being at school."

"Children working long hours selling items, food, soft drinks, razors, at night. I was concerned for their safety."

"No offence to the Chinese but, there are a lot of shops owned by Chinese; made me sick of how Chinese is making a wealth out of our poor people. It's pathetic!"

"The poverty was really noticeable. Also knowing that all service staff at the resort and also other places we visited were being as little as \$3 WST an hour - that felt unfair given how hard they all work."

Cost of goods and services

10% of the respondents suggested that the cost of goods and services in Samoa was unappealing, referring to the high prices of food, accommodation, shopping, tourist activities and travel. Many stated that they saw a large increase in the cost of all items when compared to their previous trips to Samoa. Many visitors felt unsatisfied with the entrance fee to be charged for visiting a waterfall, or a beach. Comments included:

"Pay to hike in villages."

"Prices of goods."

"Cost of living is really expensive. I would say I just can't afford to live in Samoa within a week."

"The cost of everyday necessities."

"The prices at the resort we stayed at were very high priced for meals and drinks and only one menu to order off so less availability to offer."

"Expensive costs of food."

"The goods are getting expensive."

"Being charged too much at Lulamanu Beach for one swim. 50 SAT. For a 10-minute swim. "

"The money currency very low."

"Very expensive for food and drinks."

"Cost of living so high yet people's wages still remain very low."

"Cost of living has increased."

"Service at hotels- no urgency to guests requests or orders from bars Prices of beach entry/car entry not displayed at entrances- prices vary from car to car even though you are in the same family visiting the beach. Unfair on tourists who are trying to enjoy what Samoa has to offer. I understand this is how certain villages earn an income but a tourist should be able to make a decision before they arrive and should know how much they are required to pay prior to entering the site. To Sua trench is a great example."

"Everything cost too much."

"The expensive costs of products specifically food in comparison to the prices here in NZ."

"The currency rate of the Samoan Dollar...Back in 2012 I was able to get triple the amount of Samoan Tala: I changed \$300 Australian Dollars and got \$900 Tala... My recent visit, I changed \$1,000 Australian Dollars and got \$1,800 Samoan Tala."

Customer service

Customer service was mentioned by 10% of respondents as the least appealing element of their visit to Samoa. Visitors indicated the level of service was found to be "off putting", "poor" and "rude" at the hotels, airport and shops. Comments included:

"I thought that some of the service in the resort-hotel was slow and disorganised and it seemed (as compared with Fiji) that Samoa was less ready to cope with visitors."

"Poor service at Hotel - still waiting to be refunded for being charged twice."

"The service at hotel and villages in Upolu have become dirty."

"The hospitality of waiters in restaurants still needs improvement."

"The level of customer service varies, when it's great, its great - but when it's not good, it really isn't good."

"Wait times for food."

"The customer service in Hotels. Most of the employees are students. Spoke to some of them and indicated that after their courses then apply for seasonal working overseas to earn more money, therefore the visitors are constantly served by students who barely know what they are doing."

"Sometimes customer service was off putting."

"The customer service of our people. I understand Samoa is currently having to forgo their skilled labourers for the schemes that are happening so many are new to the workforce - especially in the customer service/hospitality sector, but the attitudes, lack of attention and inability to provide simple things like smiles & manners is incredible. And what I noticed was how differently we were treated when they realised we were fluent Samoan visitors. "

"Customer service. I was applauding with some staff at the airport and local bars. The way they spoke to us were unacceptable!!"

"The level of service has dropped significantly since my last visit in 2018."

"Too many inexperienced staff working in hotels. Hotels not kept up to scratch with regards to the cleanliness, flat batteries in remote controls for air condition, tv and even the safe. The complimentary continental breakfast was a let-down with chocolate cake and fried rice for breakfast. Overall, the service and maintenance of the hotels visited were disappointing. If I could, I would love to train our people in customer service - with a smile!"

"The customer service was a bit poor from the moment I arrived at the airport."

"Unfortunately, it's the same every trip. Not all but just a few cashiers that need to smile when serving customers and I'm not sure if it's a shop policy or not but if the customer hands the cash in the cashiers hand, then it would be expected for the customer to hand the change in the customers hand rather than slam the change on the counter. In other words, if you are not attractive looking... Then please, please. Be makaakaaka i kaimi uma. Otherwise, Samoa is a wonderful holiday destination. Thanks for the question."

"Customer service still needs work. Food options for vegetarians are limited."

"Customer Service really dropped points for our trip. People very rude in stores or even talking to people like they want to fight. Some were nice but majority were very rude, swearing in front of customers."

"Lack of customer service but that was expected as we understand it was peak and a lot of people did not have the training to deal with an influx of visitors so tried hard not to let it get to us."

"Customer services was very poor at some shops, presentation meaning uniform or clothing they wear to work was not appropriate."

"Hospitality & retail staff giving you attitude whenever you needed their help. Or avoided you altogether. The cost of groceries, if it's a big pinch to my wallet, then it would be ten times worse to the locals. Really stupid mentality amongst local workers that see their best behaviour with palagi's and not Samoans given some are horrendous. Random shortage of certain items throughout the island."

"Awful and poor customer service of most stores rude & hostile, was standing waiting to pay shopkeeper just pulled money out of hand and did not say anything. Their law where you can't drive with a full unrestricted overseas/Australian license in Samoa and there's no information of it available at airport. When Samoan people travel to Samoa, they can drive with Samoan license in Australia up to 3 months."

"Customer service everywhere, so rude."

“Customer service still needs a lot of work, especially in the hotels/resorts, they are still rude and do not know how to cater with a smile.”

“Level of customer service was very bad in most of the resorts and hotels I stayed in and restaurants I visited. Very young inexperienced staff.”

Food and beverage

Of the respondents, 8% noted that the least appealing part of their visit was food and beverage they experienced. Comments were critical of both the resorts and restaurants, including a lack of local food, and a poor range of options. Comments included:

“The food... more fresh fish, vegetables, and produce, and more traditional dishes. Too much imported or food that was trying to imitate other Western dishes.”

“Price increases in food and beverage.”

“I would have enjoyed it if the places we stayed had more authentic local cuisine. I would have loved to have some palusami for example, and even taro wasn't on the menu. I can get western food at home. I really enjoy trying new things to eat.”

“Supply chain issues affecting a variety of foods/goods...”

“Dietary requirements as I have several issues with food.”

“A little disappointed in the eating options and the cocktails weren't great (anywhere).”

“Would have liked more options for light meals/snacks/sandwiches during the day rather than paying for restaurant meals. Food was very good but choices were often limited.”

“Lack of food options for vegetarians.”

“Food...need more fruit on table.”

“Food variety.”

“Worst part of Samoa is always trying to find ‘foreign’ food and good coffee.”

“The lack of fresh produce (salads, seafood), activities and resort entertainment.”

“Not many tourist things to do and also not many vegetarian options when eating out.”

“The food quality was terrible. Chefs/cooks need training.”

“Food hygiene in certain places.”

“Quality of food at resort.”

“Food and dining out in Savaii is pretty limited and very expensive. It's 50/50 or worse if the place you visit will have the things on their menu. Some days Stevenson's was limited to 2-3 things. There is no reliable supply of goods to the island to keep things running consistently.”

“Not being able to find food I have been dying to eat cause it's either all sold out or have to come back next day to have owners say it's sold out again.”

Accommodation

Six percent of the respondents found that their personal accommodation experiences in Samoa were the least appealing part of their visit. Common themes raised were the lack of cleanliness, a small range of the food options, hygiene, poor customer services, high costs, and the poor quality of facilities. Comments included:

“Internet access in resorts.”

“There is still some work to be done in bringing some accommodation up to standard. Our Resort was brilliant but a hotel we stayed in was not clean and very noisy. Paper maps are still handy for planning. We worry about the ferry shudder... the bearings need replacing!”

“The standard of food at the resort.”

“At the resort we stayed at there wasn't enough traditional Samoan food on the menu. Some nights the resort ran out of the food we wanted to order for dinner.”

“The customer service do the airbnb we stayed at.”

“Food /Breakfast at resort. Not up to same standard as other countries visited for the money charged.”

“Service standards at our resort were variable, partly due to a language barrier with some people.”

“When booking most hotels looked full and offering full services but we only found out later that they partially opened. Would have been good to know or understand. When we visited we saw the pool is still empty - that would have been really disappointing so we were relieved we hadn't booked there.”

“Cockroaches in my hotel room.”

“The level of service in our hotel and the standard of food, drinks etc and the high hotel prices for What they offered!”

"A lot of the resorts had limited facilities but still high prices. The food was pretty bad in most places except Paddles Restaurant."

"One of our resort stays had dirty running water during our stay. Not sure what the cause was so we had to make do with our small bottled water till we could buy more the next day. Other than that, there wasn't anything I could fault on my experience."

"Accommodation on Savaii booked non-refundable 7 nights left after 1 because of hygiene and the state of the place they need to be visited by the health department and would not give any credit even after I posted the photos on booking .com so unfair."

"Overpriced accommodation with no maintenance."

"Hotels not ready for visitors, hotels with no information and not helpful. No car to hire, limited food available. No snorkel and masks to hire. Just overgrown gardens! hotels that advertise 3 restaurants but only have one open. We stayed at the Sheraton /Aggie greys, lovely staff but only pets of hotel open. Just disappointing."

"Lack of tourist information at hotels, bus routes and how to get around the island."

Stray animals and mosquitos

Another five percent of respondents (5%) mentioned the least appealing aspect of their Samoa visit being stray animals and mosquitos. Comments mainly focused upon the presence of stray dogs, with some noting their presence as saddening, while others found them dangerous. Comments included:

"Dogs everywhere and could not feel comfortable taking a scooter out on the roads."

"Mosquitoes."

"The dogs were scary when cycling as they chased us."

"All the wild dogs roaming around suffering from malnutrition and even witnessed a pack of dogs mauling a dog to death in Apia with my grandchildren screaming with fear in the car! We are dog lovers and could not believe the way these dogs are treated or should I say not treated!"

"Bugs and mosquitoes."

"The poor animals the dogs and the cats roaming the streets some of my homes was better than when I went years ago not so many skinny and sick animals otherwise aside from that everything else is fantastic."

"Dogs resulting in dog attack at on my husband when returning rental car to rental company thereby losing two and a half weeks of holiday and visiting very run down

hospital no air con working, mouldy walls and ceilings for daily dressings. No doctor on duty in ED on Saturday morning. Third world treatment.”

“The amount of dogs on the roads.”

“The starving cats and dogs but in particular while waiting at the Ferry. It was upsetting seeing so many uncared and unloved.”

“The number of stray dogs on the streets...very upsetting ...can this problem be addressed...poor creatures.”

“...the dangerous dogs at night.”

“...mosquitoes bites.”

Shopping experience

Four percent of respondents mentioned the shopping experiences in Samoa as being least appealing. Many found that a lack of local goods, lack of variety, undesirable shopping surroundings, poor customer services, and being hassled. Comments included:

“Shops shut by 2pm.”

“Actually I wanted to buy Samoan materials, BUT there was not much choices as I was expected. I could tell that there are lots of already sewn clothes and I believe that instead of selling the material they sew and sell the already made clothes.”

“Have craft products.”

“Lack of crafts etc was disappointing but understandable following lock down.”

“Supply chain issues affecting variety of foods/goods.”

“The central Apia shopping area seemed run down and not very appealing to walk around.”

“Silly thing, but aside from a pharmacy in Apia it was almost impossible to find sunblock/sunscreen. We ended up driving from Lefaga to the airport to try find some but with no luck! Ideally the supermarkets/Dairies/Frankies would have some of this in stock but none did!”

“Markets - too small.”

“Taxi prices so high that they seem to make it up. The fact that they always expect a tip and giving poor service. Grocery stores so expensive for things that should only cost a dollar like in America at the dollar stores. Store hours not even posted.”

“The stores...I used to go to the malls with big and high buildings.”

"Most shops in Apia closed at 5 PM."

"Products in grocery stores it really need to get in to the mode of checking on the expiration date of every items especially of the Asian and less Samoan owners shops..."

"TOO MUCH ASIAN PRODUCTS; SUCH AS CLOTHING, FOOD, BUILDING PRODUCTS ETC. NOT ENOUGH LOCAL SUPPLY."

"Some areas in Apia were too congested to wander around during our shopping spree and did not represent a cleaner environment."

"Rude marketers."

Attractions and activities

Another four percent of visitors surveyed focused on the attractions and activities of Samoa. Visitors mentioned that there was a lack of activity options, a lack of information about activities and attractions. Comments included:

"There wasn't a huge amount open as the island had just reopened after COVID. It was ok for us, but I feel if you were a real action go-er there weren't a lot of options just now."

"Also, not that much activity to do."

"I didn't find anything wrong with Samoa. Maybe more water attractions would be nicer, but overall, it was great."

"The cultural village wasn't open."

"Still some work needed on signage - particularly attractions. It would be a good idea (at each attraction) to show directions and information about the next things to see or do in either direction. IE: at To Sua say "lolomanu beach is 15 minutes away" or Spoanga falls are 20 minutes in this direction."

"Limited day tours."

"Not enough activities."

"Some tourist attractions are rundown and not maintained, falealupo and vae of most is a bit sad etc But the lava fields are looked after by the villages. Maybe government help."

"We were unprepared for the distance between the resorts and attractions. Also the difference between the resort description and photographs and what we actually found, we were disappointed."

“Many sightseeing places closed, in poor repair and customer service bad at times. Lack of information about sightseeing venues information out of date and not replying to emails. Apia Friday Night Waterside Markets did not operate yet I went to Apia and ask 2 different staff at the Visitors Centre if it was running on the Friday it was supposed to run.”

Airport and arriving and departing

Three percent of respondents mentioned the airport and arriving or departing related issues as the least appealing aspect of their time in Samoa. Visitors mentioned issues with the airport facilities and shopping options, difficulties with dealing with the customs officials and flight-related issues. Comments included:

“The arrival process in the airport took too long.”

“The cost of the airfares - I understand the borders had just opened.”

“Airport check in for departure.”

“When arriving into Samoa at the airport most workers are not as welcoming or greeting /smiling at visitors.”

“Limited food choices at the airport and very expensive.”

“The arrivals at Faleolo Airport, we had to write the documents rather than on the plane, it was very time consuming!”

“When we arrive at the airport it was silent. There was no music playing and we did not feel welcomed. The airport staff did not smile and they looked like they did not want to be there. The store keepers and food places at the airport were lovely but the people checking our passports upon arrival and checking our bags were sour faced.”

“Airport is not friendly. Need to play some music or something.”

“Airport staff. Definitely the worst experience I've ever had. I've heard about it but to experience it is definitely the worst. No smile, so rude and not friendly at all. Our flight was 7hrs and 15 mins late. They only offer a packet of chips and 1 bottle of water. Announcement was shocking. Not very clear. ATS staff needs a full customer training. A smile and thank you will definitely go a long way.”

“Services by the airport luggage team was very poor. They unload our bags from Air Samoa arriving from Pago Pago and they told us they were only 5 suitcases arrived from the flight. Luckily one lady saw her suitcase being unloaded by the team from Air Samoa, she went and checked with the team outside and found her suitcase was on the trolley that the team brought from the plane. Also at the local market, the local sellers actually raised the prizes of their items when they noticed visitors, so we ended

up getting the local family members to buy ula fala, i.e. lavalava & letoga on our behalf.”

“The security guard at the airport was so rude and unprofessional. We were in the front of the check-in line and he took us all the way to the back and start again. My husband and I tried asking him questions and he got upset. We were in front of the check-in line again and he came all the way just to prove his point, tapping my arm three times saying I need to watch it or something else is going to happen. My husband told him ok we got his message and he told my husband to watch himself and behave. The fact that nobody came to help us and help the situation really upsets me. But a good friend that works there too came over to make sure everything was ok.”

“The long wait and no communication about being able to get ‘air side’.”

Rental cars or scooters

The theme of rental cars was mentioned by three percent of the visitors (3%) surveyed. Price, poor service from the rental agent, difficulties with booking and the actual quality of cars themselves were identified as unappealing features. Comments included:

“Expensive to rent a car.”

“- making car rental bookings from NZ. Emails were answered on a weekly basis for the 6 weeks prior to my arrival. There were errors in the costings which I had noted and the responses to my query were poorly constructed and took a long time for them to work out. There appears to be little urgency for those working at the car agency when myself, sitting outside Samoa wants to have clarity and to be sure I have all my requirements made before I arrive without the stress of worrying about having a car. The other issue is that I have booked a vehicle to be available at the airport, only to arrive in Samoa and it is not there. I called the rental agency who told me to catch a taxi to town to collect the car. I had to remind them to refund my \$60 I paid for airport pick up fee. It is important that all travel requirements are settled in a timely fashion before people arrive. With that being said I still stuck with this Samoa owned rental car business as I have used them before and have had no issues. I do like them despite the issues.”

“Rental cars were impossible to find.”

“Being robbed by a fat prick rental car jerk that also demanded I leave my passport with him.”

“The rental car was a disaster as they didn’t put petrol in.”

“Rental Car companies was my annoyance this time around. They should be able to advise straight away what vehicles are/not available while they have the customer on

the phone. Almost every rental company would tell me they'll call me back but not one returned my call. Very frustrating and unprofessional. This sector needs a lot of work."

"Lack of available car hire."

"Car rental company experience with Samoan rental. Had to change car 4 times and tyres keep getting flat. Their cars are not road worthy but still charging ridiculously high prices."

"Our rental car company (budget) had sold out of rental cars even though we had pre booked a month prior."

"Difficulty with hiring a rental car."

Bad weather

A small number of respondents (3%) mentioned the unpleasant weather in Samoa. The heat and humidity made some tourists feel uncomfortable, and wet weather prevented people from enjoying outdoor activities. Most of the visitors acknowledge that this is beyond anyone's control. Comments included:

"Weather, was raining."

"How hot the weather was on some days."

"WET SEASON."

"Humidity."

"The weather too hot to handle."

"Weather a little hot for me but we realised that would be the case when we rebooked."

"The heat but that can't be helped lol."

"It was very hot and humid."

"It was probably too hot for me, maybe best to go during our winter."

"Hot weather, nothing too bad."

Feeling unwelcome and exploited

Three percent of respondents mentioned feeling unwelcome and exploited as the least appealing aspect of their trip to Samoa. Their comments mainly focused upon being harassed by con men or businesses seeking money and being overcharged due to their foreign or visitor status. Comments included:

"Getting ripped off through Airbnb."

"Shops rip off people especially overseas..."

"...the hassle at the market with sarong sales on the streets."

"People trying to push you into buying stuff on the street."

"Some racism and being ripped off because you are white, resorts are not even half full but still charging big money per night, some special deals would be nice."

"Getting scammed by a very friendly man who pretended he remembered me from Customs at the airport, chatted to me, gave me 2 little bracelets, then asked me for a donation ..."

"Businesses and people being rude to and/or ripping off their own people who were visiting from overseas. Making us feel like we are not welcome or they are mad at us for no reason. No integrity and very loto leaga 90% of the trip... So embarrassing and very dishonest. Be better! Do better!"

"The trash everywhere and disregard of the locals for the area was sad. But more disturbing was the blatant disrespect for the tourist and opportunistic behaviour. Many stores, restaurants and attractions don't have signs or published prices. Therefore the locals are charged one price and tourists another which is often double or triple. For example, a 5 tala meal was charged as 15 tala. When parking at any beach, people suddenly appear and demand 100 tala to park. You have no way of knowing whether you have to pay this fee or not because there are no signs."

"Sometimes the costs of things can be outrageously expensive and it you off from buying. I would buy if it worth the value, but not when you are getting ripped off."

Local people

Three percent of respondents stated local people as one of their least appealing aspects. Comments are referring to local drivers, pushy, fights in the public. Comments included:

"The bad drivers on the road."

"Cigarette smoking."

"People not friendly and impatient drivers."

"Found men in Apia city intimidating and often trying to start fights."

"Fat shaming out loud, we visited Coconut Beach resort and a staff member and a local made fun of my husband and I, this put a bad taste in my mouth. People whispering

and staring and thinking because you're from overseas you don't understand the language."

"The people can be kind of rude."

Apia

Apia was mentioned by two percent of participants (2%) as the least appealing experience. The main criticism was of the city's appearance and lack of interesting activities. Comments included:

"Central Apia a little dirty."

"Not much to do in Apia and restaurants that serve Samoan local food."

"Apia was very busy & congested."

"Apia harbour was lined with litter but had a sparkling white cruise ship docked. What a contrast!"

"Apia itself I found a bit unclean, and I didn't see many cafes or restaurants."

"Litter and cheap shops in Apia."

"I believe Apia and surrounding villages nearby needs updating re renewing a lot of the old shops."

Lack of information

Two percent of respondents mentioned a lack of information as the least appealing aspect of their Samoa visit. Respondents referred to the lack of availability of information online, in person and from reading materials. They found that more information was required on public transport, tourist activities, and safety, also suggesting that the Apia information centre was extremely unhelpful. Comments included:

"Lack of bus drivers helping out, lack of map knowledge to get around."

"Plus more communication over pre departure Covid requirements. Perhaps the Tourism website could have confirmed above - and include a list of tourism operators closed due to weather events or the pandemic (siding rocks)."

"Poor signage for many businesses etc - They would have been hard to find if I had not had the advice of family member who had lived in Samoa. e.g., some well-known clothing retail outlets and cafes."

"Information wasn't easily accessible."

"The lack of maps and easy directions to places."

"We would have appreciated clear information at signs at village owned beaches, e.g., open or closed, entry fee and what the fee covers, yes a bit of this info is on websites but difficult to remember weeks after you have read it. Sua trench has very clear info about costs and what it covers so there are no surprises."

"Hard to find information about things to do."

"Lack of information to figure out where things are - maps, descriptions, pictures. More internet access, info for National Park and hiking trails, vegetarian food would be great!"

"The mass of unfriendly faces that greeted me at stores or checkouts."

"The lack of information about specific tourist spots for example, at Tututafoe, there are men that stand there to collect \$\$\$ for you to park there and have a look around but no one there to tell you the significance of this place."

Safety

One percent of respondents mentioned safety concerns. Comments included:

"Theft."

"Lost -n-found. Lost my I-Phone but never was able to recover it during my stay."

"Potential for petty crime."

"I was warned off walking alone in the evening."

"I was warned about potential for crime."

"the lights in the town area.. few dark spots - not safe."

"News of fatalities of young children at the hands of parents in Samoa during the time we were in Samoa? Feeling unsafe of out and about in the evenings."

"Being robbed by a fat prick rental car jerk that also demanded I leave my passport with him."

Too touristy or commercial

Few respondents (1%) mentioned the Samoa developed too touristy or commercial under their travelling experience. Comments included:

"Too much imported or food that was trying to imitate other Western dishes."

"The crowdedness in the city centre on weekends."

“Apia is becoming over commercialized and too busy. Some areas need a good tidy up and a pot of paint.”

“I think there were a lot of people from overseas which was a bit annoying, but it can't be helped with COVID-19 happening. Other than that, everything was good.”

“Due to large influx of overseas tourists / ex-pat Samoans visiting from overseas, there was a general shortage of car rentals, hotel accommodation and bags of taro chips.”

“Christmas time is a busy period but 2022 was exceptionally busy due to the borders reopening.”

Taxi

One percent of visitors surveyed also specifically stated that they had negative experiences with local taxi transport. Drivers themselves were suggested to be too pushy and a lack of consistency around charging was found to be unappealing. Comments included:

“Taxi drivers at times try to fleece tourists.”

“Taxi drivers not speaking English.”

“Rip off taxi drivers.”

“Terrible taxi driver, lied told me he could take credit card, then made me go to ATM at the airport, and did not want to give me a receipt. terrible because I needed receipt for my travel claim. Also, too many stories of people stealing phones.”

“The Drivers/Driving was scary. The opulence of the church and the poverty of the people. Too many churches and too many beggars.”

“Overcharge of local cab drivers.”

“Taxi drivers charging way too much for a 5km travel.”

COVID-19 and its impact

One percent of respondents mentioned COVID-19 and its impact on Samoa tourism, these comments mainly appeared in the first three months since the border opened in 2022. Comments included:

“Nothing it's just the health risk human health risk of people due to covid.”

“They were not very prepared for the borders opening in terms of Samoa t-shirts, Taro chips very hard to find. The rental car we hired we had to return after the second day as it had cockroaches, side mirror was cracked, didn't seem very safe to drive.”

“Not enough open for tourists yet.”

Business closures

One percent of respondents mentioned the issue of business closures, these comments mainly appeared in the first three months since the border opened in 2022. Comments included:

"Lots of things were closed. But that's OK."

"It felt like the tourism businesses weren't operating at 100%."

"A little bit run down since our last visit in 2019, it appears many shops/restaurants did not survive the lock down."

Beach access

One percent of respondents mentioned difficulties with the beach access in terms of hard to find, the roughness of the beach, as well as payment for the beach access by the locals. Comments included:

"That we had to pay to lie on the beach."

"Paying to visit beach is terrible."

"The cost of visiting the beach. For example it cost us \$50 Tala to visit Lalomanu which is just unbelievable and made us think twice about wanting to go there again."

Local culture

One percent of respondents mentioned local culture theme in Samoa. Comments included:

"Too many religious buildings."

"Culture."

"The flags at all the villages in Savai'i."

Suggestions to improve the visit to Samoa

When asked if there was anything that could have improved their visit to Samoa, the following suggestions were made by visitors: infrastructure, public services and facilities (25%), customer service (16%), and cost or overcharging visitors (10%). Other areas of focus include: accommodation (9%), the availability, quality, and price of food and drinks (9%), rubbish and natural the environment (8%), airport facilities and services (7%), information (7%), activities and attractions (6%), a longer stay or to visit more places (6%), social issues (6%), car rentals (5%), stray animals, mosquitos and animal care (3%), health and safety (3%), flight related issues (2%), tourism development (2%), weather (1%), and friendliness of local people (1%). Comments on these themes included:

"Improved internet access throughout the capital, e.g., Wi-Fi."

"Internet services and cost should be cheaper."

"The government really needs to work on our road."

"Fixing the road so the journey into Apia is pleasant."

"Better road signage."

"More waste management."

"Need more toilets in town for the public and they need to be clean."

"Sidewalks."

"...develop more restaurants and similar amenities towards airport and wharves; improve road conditions; build more visitors depots around the islands for visitors' information gatherings."

"Public Transport."

"Adding more streetlights to the roads as it tends to get very dark and is unsafe for not only tourist but locals that have to walk home after a long day of work."

"Internet service would have been good."

"There were very limited Island nights, and this wasn't easy to Google, so we ended up missing out. Signage to some attractions is very hard to see."

"Public toilets and well signposted."

"Less trash in water more trash cans in public places."

"More info about transports."

"Some additional streetlights around main routes in Upolu. Example Leulumoega Uta to Lefaga."

"WiFi connectivity and availability."

"Traffic control."

"Taxi system."

"Get a Sunday AM boat to Savaii e.g., 9 or 10am."

"Sanitized public bathrooms and more parking spaces."

"Customer service training for staff in small businesses as well as staff in major hotels who deal with customers face to face."

"Customer service is very poor, they need to upgrade their customer service, especially at the airport and retailers."

"The people working at the airport gates, need to upskill in customer service. The checkout people for the airlines are awesome but the ones that stand at the gate letting you in were very rude on this trip."

"You need to give the airport officers some lessons about customer service and to really stop serving their family first before other people. Be professional."

"Hospitality services & training."

"Service was often slow and inconsistent, meals and drinks were forgotten, bills inaccurate."

"Everyone speaking Samoan made it hard to communicate for us who don't speak or understand Samoan. The language barrier."

"More restaurants selling Samoan food."

"Better choice of foods more variety."

"I've got acute diarrhoea bug from drinking cooldrink from the market, on arrival travellers must be warned to drink only bottled water."

"Cost of dining."

"Level of service and limited food options on the menu due to covid and staffing."

"More upgraded and organic/good dining/restaurants."

"More tonic water."

"Better hotel staff training."

"Better customer service with a smile."

"A good training is needed for general customer service."

"I hope you don't rip off tourists in market."

"Too much stealing going around people trying to rip you off Samoa needs to improve the service in some hotels I found it expensive Fiji has better deals with flights and hotels."

"Mobile connectivity and costs."

"People are being charged with random fees for taxis."

"The availability and the affordability of airlines and airfares."

"Better internet at resorts to help with planning daily activities and places to visit/eat."

"Resorts maintenance and fair prices for visitors."

"Airport services upon arrival. Airports staff and immigration services must treat all visitors equally with respect."

"Process at arrival at the airport."

"The airport service and maybe chairs for older folks to sit while waiting for bags or exchanging money."

"More competition for flights perhaps & cheaper fares to encourage/enable more visitors."

"Affordable flights with more options of dates availability."

"Cheaper airfares."

"The covid response at the airport was too much."

"Reopen duty-free shopping on arrival at the airport."

"Information brochures before exiting the plane."

Reasons not to return to Samoa and recommend to others

The majority of visitors (95%) indicated that they would consider re-visiting Samoa in the future. Of the five percent of visitors who indicated they would not want to return to Samoa, the majority stated that they would simply like to visit other places around the world. Some respondents indicate that there are the high costs of goods and service, or that limited attractions, activities and entertainment would not attract them back to Samoa next time. A few visitors considered that Samoa is under-developed, not ready for tourists. Other reasons given for not wishing to return included quality and cost of accommodation, customer service, food and beverage, stray animals and mosquitos, long distance from their home country, the flight issues, and social issue in Samoa. Comments included:

"Visit other places."

"Only reason would be that I have many other countries to visit."

"Been three times now, need to try other places."

"Too expensive. Maybe if things get cheaper."

"Costs of living and airfares expensive and the service received is not worth the money you pay."

"Spent 2 weeks there. Was a bit too long to spend in a country that is not ready for much tourism. Expensive as well as no real amenities. Hard to find restaurants and food outside of Apia. Even Apia was mainly closed."

"Snorkelling not as good as other islands."

"Service was average the whole trip and never really felt a warm welcome."

"Samoa is beautiful, but so far away from Austria."

"Not enough to do on Sundays, not enough clean restaurants open or tourism open on Sundays."

"But only if you look after your dog problem."

"Because of how dirty your country is. The animal cruelty to your street dogs. The lack of vehicles available and lack of customer service shown by locals at The Sheraton Hotel."

Nearly all visitors surveyed (96%) said that they would recommend the destination to their families and friends when they return home. Only 4% of visitors would not recommend Samoa to others and here comments largely focused on high costs and a lack of value for money; the lack of attractions and activities; a lack of environmental care; not ready for tourists; low-

standards of customer service; stray animals and mosquitos; limited local food; a lack of facilities; a lack of information; not safe; social issues; accessibility; not friendly locals; and weather. Comments included:

"So expensive."

"Everything is expensive, I went with s budget and ended up spending more. For a Samoan it's sad that families don't make enough to live on after taxes and other fees taken out of their pay checks if they are lucky to have a job."

"Too expensive for Accommodation & vehicle hirage, Although it's my Homeland I prefer to Stay in Hotel & Resorts."

"Too expensive to travel there and living is a lot more expensive now."

"Need more to do."

"Unless there is a change in the hospitality side and people feel more secure when they work - then yes I would recommend."

"The rubbish and the dogs and the services."

"But I would warn them about those poor dogs."

"Only really suitable if you have family that you are visiting."

"Not right now while the country recovers from covid."

"I would only recommend Samoa to people travelling with locals or know someone there, otherwise it didn't seem very set up for tourists."

"Hotel service / cleanliness not up to standards."

"For tourists not really as it is difficult to figure out what you can do, food is not great, and safety in Apia for tourist does not seem great."

"Humidity, less activities."

Final observations

This report shows that the Samoa tourism industry generally performed well during the survey period from August 2022 to January 2023, since its border first opened in August 2022. It is clear that the tourism industry makes a vital contribution to the Samoa economy, with spend per visitor being substantially increased when comparing with 2019 levels. It is essential, however, that further efforts be made to enhance yield per visitor. Such an approach not only creates more jobs and income, it also inevitably enhances the visitor experience. A higher yield, value added, approach to future tourism development will also place less pressure on the Island's cultural and environmental resources, with the focus shifting away from simply increasing visitor numbers.

There is room to enhance the visitor experience and to increase the economic yield and broader community benefits associated with tourism. As this is the first report after the border restrictions were lifted, there is an obvious message that the visitors felt very pleased to visit Samoa and were impressed with the high coverage of the COVID-19 vaccine and its well-managed COVID protocols. However, this research highlights some issues, for example, with a significant number of international visitors' perceiving that "infrastructure, public service and facilities" are lacking, it is clear that there are measures that can be adopted to improve both visitor and local experiences and that will reap long-term dividends for the country. Tourists have also mentioned the availability, cost and coverage of Internet and phone, general shopping experiences, the unpleasant experience of using public transport, poor value for money, poor waste management, and the lack of information are still a nuisance. The local government could solve these issues by improving infrastructure development, facilities and public transport management, and strategizing better environmental care practices. Resolving these issues could prove beneficial to the tourism industry in Samoa, and to the local community.

Overall, visitor satisfaction and willingness to return remain high, with the majority of respondents expressing a willingness to recommend Samoa as a place to visit to others, and it is clear that the destination is making a generally positive impression on visitors. It is vital now to build on this positive performance and to convert it into even greater economic benefits for businesses and communities. It is critical to find ways to build on and develop the visitor experience in a manner that enhances local economic linkages. By developing new product offerings, and more importantly, enhancing the quality and 'value added' of existing activities and experiences, the tourism industry can increase visitor satisfaction and enhance the generation of positive local economic outcomes.

As the survey continues, it will be possible to explore in more detail the characteristics of different market segments and to measure industry performance over time. Finally, this report provides a snapshot of how the industry was performing since the border opened in 2022 after the 3-year COVID period. The 6-month IVS report provides a benchmark against

which we can view the impact on Samoa tourism of the global pandemic and also enables us to measure and guide the journey to recovery that will occur in the coming months.