



# Cook Islands Visitor Survey Results

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January – March 2018

Prepared for Cook Islands Tourism Corporation

by

New Zealand Tourism Research Institute  
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[www.nztri.org](http://www.nztri.org)

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## Executive Summary

This report focuses on the characteristics, expectations and expenditure patterns of tourists who visited the Cook Islands between 1 January and 31 March 2018. The data presented is collected from an online departure survey (<http://www.mycookislandsvisit.com>). There were 493 individual respondents to the survey - representing a total of 927 adults and 162 children in the expenditure analysis (this equates to 4% of all visitors during the period – based on the 2018 visitor arrival data for the January to March period from the Cook Islands Statistics Office).

Over half (51%) of visitors surveyed come from New Zealand, 15% come from Australia. Visitors are well educated (73% of visitors have some form of tertiary education) with a relatively high annual household income (53% earn over NZ\$100,000 per year). Over half of the visitors (51%) travel with one companion. Solo travellers are relatively rare (5%).

Over half of those surveyed (61%) are first time visitors to the Cook Islands, a further 22% have visited twice or three times before. The main purpose of visit is holiday-making (70%). The average length of stay in the Cook Islands is 8.8 nights. The majority (92%) of visitors stay either one or two weeks. Over a quarter of visitors surveyed visited Aitutaki (27%) in addition to Rarotonga.

Visitor spend prior to arrival in the Cook Islands (\$2,204 per person) has increased from the 2016/2017 annual average (\$2,042 per person). Spend on the island (per person per day) is \$163. This spend is higher than the 2016/17 annual average of \$150, and the same quarter for the previous year (\$147 for January to March 2017).

The average local spend per visitor during the entirety of their stay is \$1,439. When pre-paid spend and the local spend are combined, it is estimated that each visitor brings \$2,321 to the Cook Islands economy (or approximately \$263 per day). This figure is higher than the \$2,150 average for 2016/17 and lower than the \$2,183 for the same quarter last year (January to March 2017).

Overall visitor satisfaction levels with Cook Islands services and experiences remain high. The most appealing elements are environment cleanliness and weather; local people; atmosphere; activities, attractions, entertainment and events; food and beverage. The least appealing elements are the lack of public services, facilities and infrastructure; price of goods and services; stray animals and mosquitos; rubbish and natural environment care; food and beverage; accommodation; attractions and activities; and poor weather.

The future intentions of visitors remained very similar to the results from the previous year: 92% of those surveyed state that they want to return to the Cook Islands, and 98% would recommend the Cook Islands to friends or family.

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## Introduction

The Cook Islands government, local businesses and communities require a clear picture of the characteristics, expectations and expenditure patterns of visitors to the nation. This information enables effective planning and development of the tourism industry and highlights its crucial role within the broader Cook Island economy.

Visitors to the Cook Islands are asked to complete a web-based survey within a few weeks of the completion of their visit. The Cook Islands online International Visitor Survey has run since mid-2012 and is continuing through 2018.

This report presents the results from January to March 2018. Over this three-month period, 4,052 visitors were contacted by email to take part in the survey, and 493 responses were received: a conversion rate of 12%. These responses cover a total of 927 adults and 162 children. The conversion rate for this period is lower than the January to March 2017 quarter (18%). This reduction reflects some unanticipated delays in receiving email addresses for mail out and we are looking to rectify this in the coming analysis periods.

The data presented includes detailed information on:

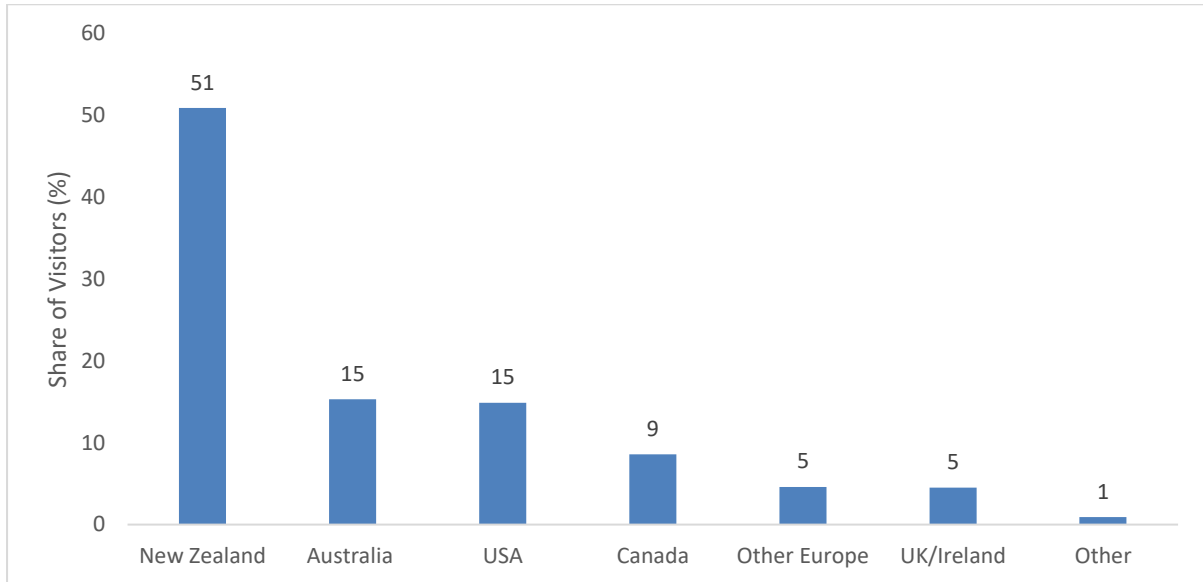
- The characteristics of visitors to the Cook Islands (age, gender, education, country of origin, income, purpose of visit, travelling companions, number of previous visits, length of stay, airline used, islands visited)
- Visitor information obtained about the Cook Islands, the factors influencing in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

Wherever there are significant and/or notable variations from the 2016/17 annual averages or the 2016/17 January to March quarterly findings these figures are highlighted in the discussion that follows.

## Visitor Characteristics

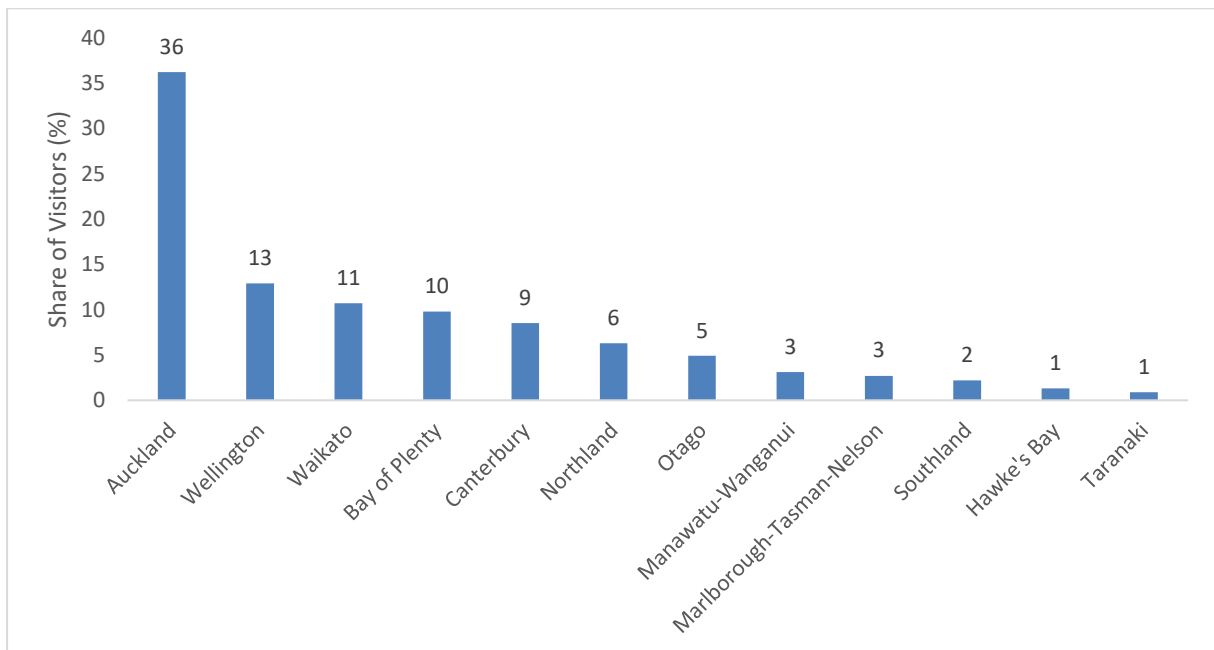
Over half (51%) of the visitors surveyed come from New Zealand (Figure 1). The second largest visitor group is from Australia and the United States, with 15% of respondents respectively. Canada, Europe, and Great Britain represent the other main source markets.

**Figure 1: Country of origin (n=493)**

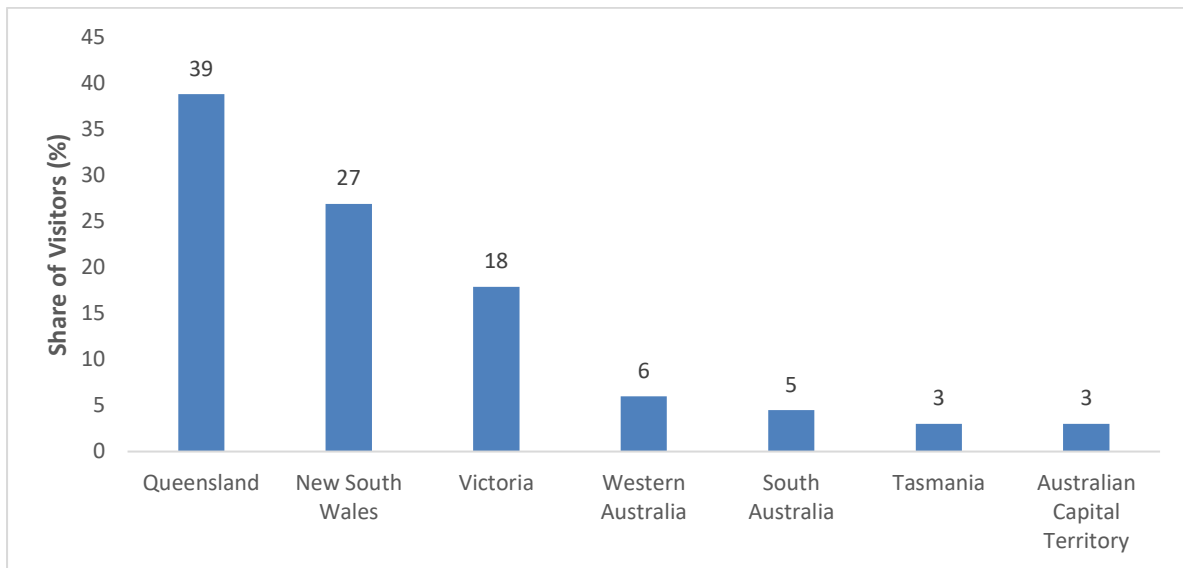


Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty account for 78% of New Zealand visitors. For visitors from Australia, the regions of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria generate the highest numbers of arrivals (84%) (Figure 2-3).

**Figure 2: New Zealand visitors (n=224)**

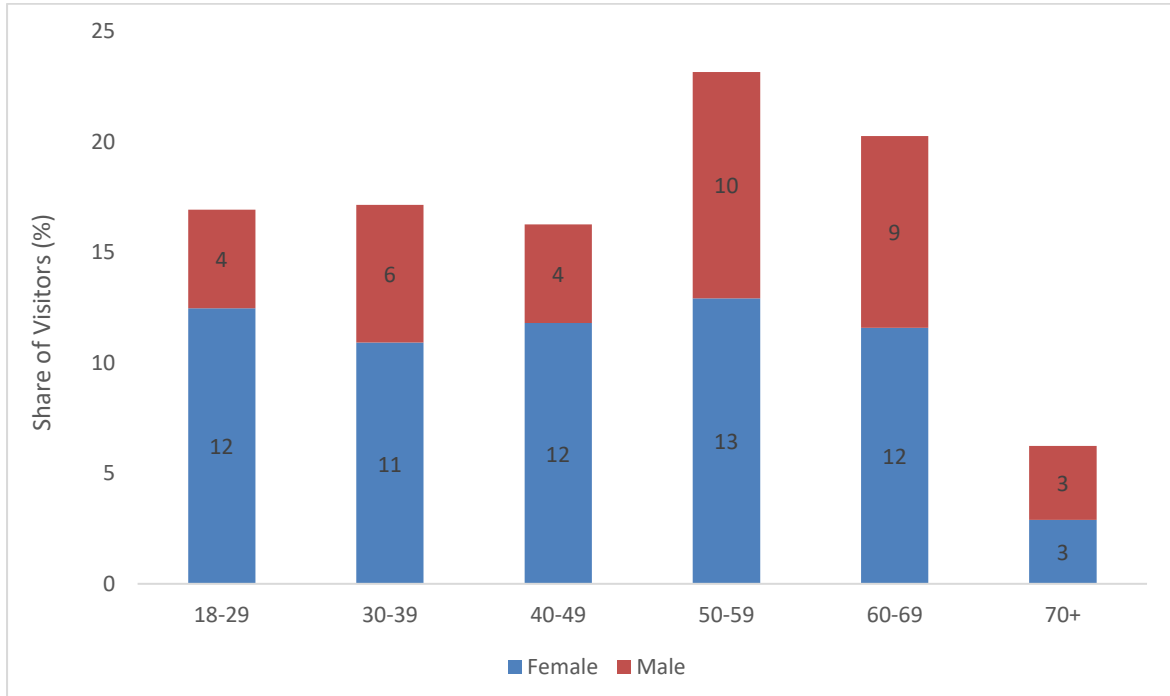


**Figure 3: Australia visitors (n=67)**



More women (63%) than men (37%) completed the survey (Figure 4). The most significant age categories are the 50 to 59 year (23%) grouping, the 60 to 69 year (20%) grouping, followed by those aged 30 to 39 (17%), 18 to 29 (17%), and 40 to 49 (16%). There are relatively few travellers in the 70 plus age bracket (6%).

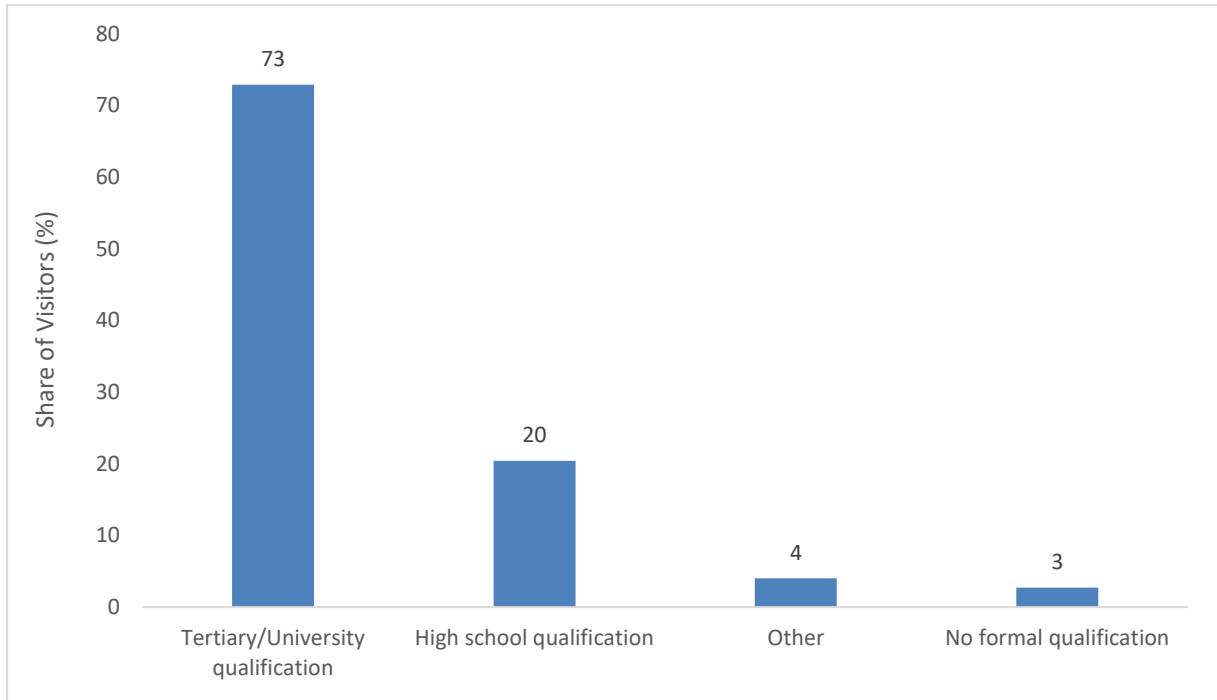
**Figure 4: Distribution of age and gender (n=449)**





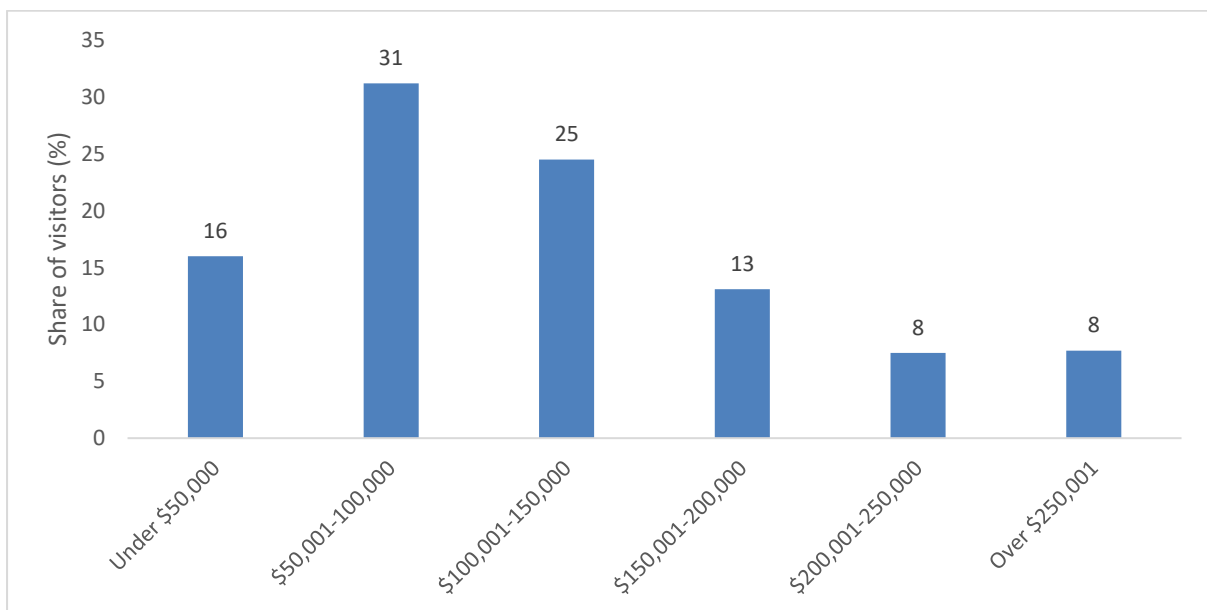
Visitors are well educated: over two-thirds (73%) of those surveyed have some form of tertiary qualification, with a further 20% having completed a high school education (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Highest qualification (n=493)**



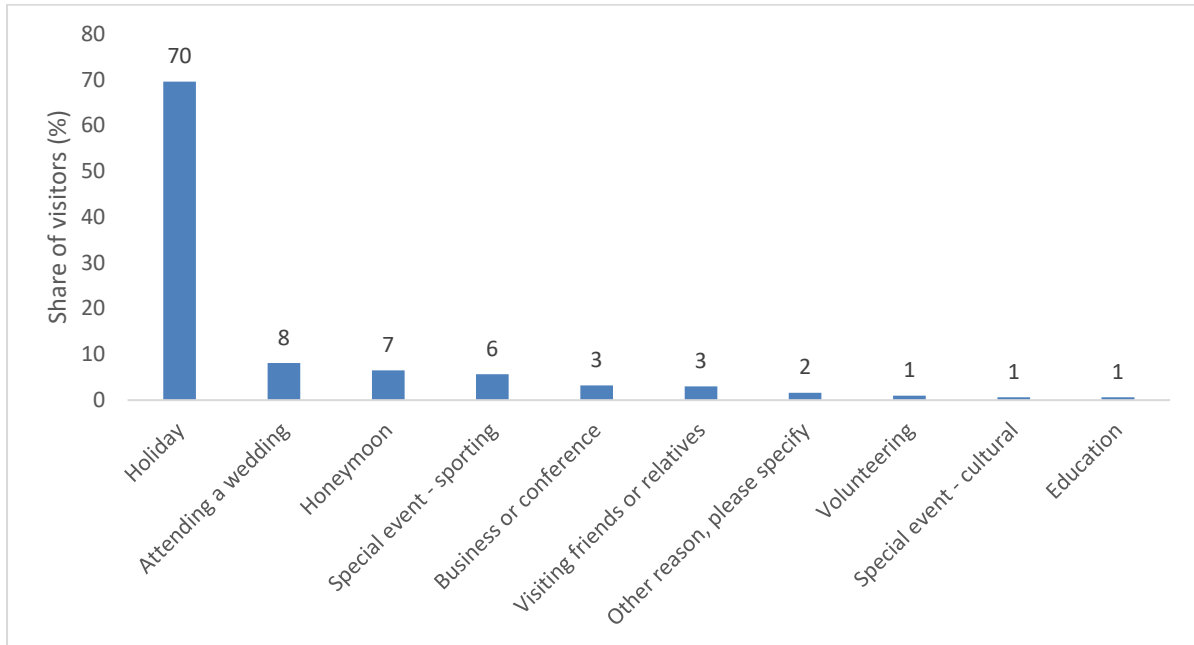
Nearly a third of visitors (31%) have an annual household income of between NZ\$50,001 and NZ\$100,000. A quarter (25%) of those surveyed earn between NZ\$100,001 and NZ\$150,000. A further 28% of respondents have a household income of over NZ\$150,000 per year (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Annual household income in NZD (n=375)**



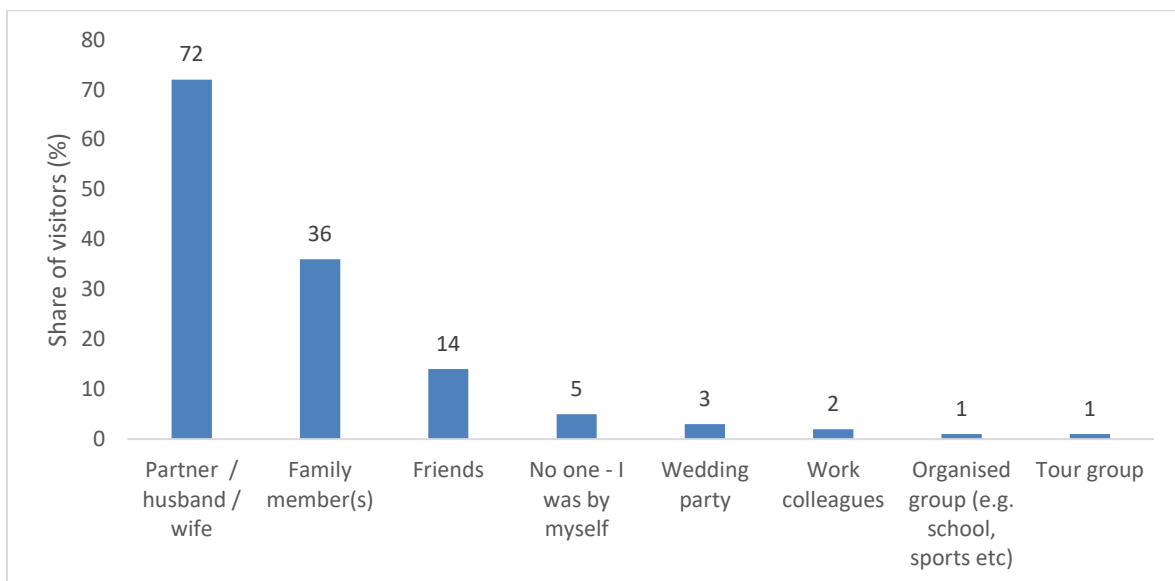
Nearly three quarters of visitors surveyed come to the Cook Islands for a holiday (70%). Other reasons given include attending a wedding (8%), a honeymoon (7%), attending a special sporting event (6%), and for business and conference (3%).

**Figure 7: Main purpose of visit (n=493)**



Most visitors (72%) surveyed travel to the Cook Islands with a partner or spouse. Visitors also travel with other family members (36%), with friends (14%), or travel alone (5%). Those travelling as part of a wedding party, with colleagues, in an organised group or in a tour group represent a smaller share of the sample (Figure 8).

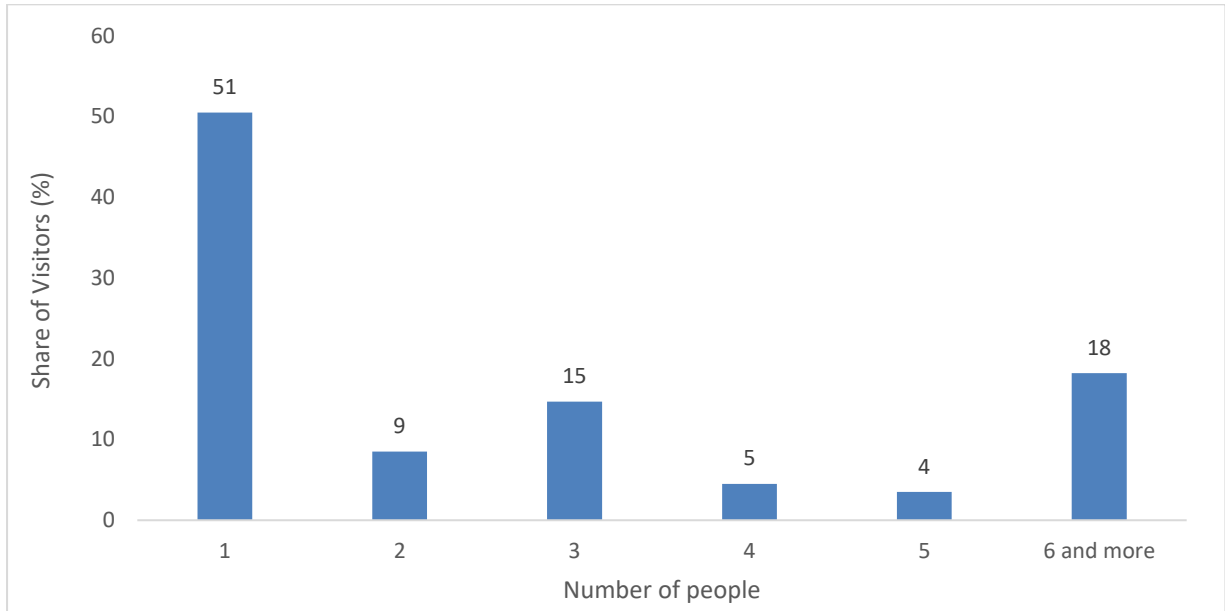
**Figure 8: Travelling with whom? (n=436)**



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

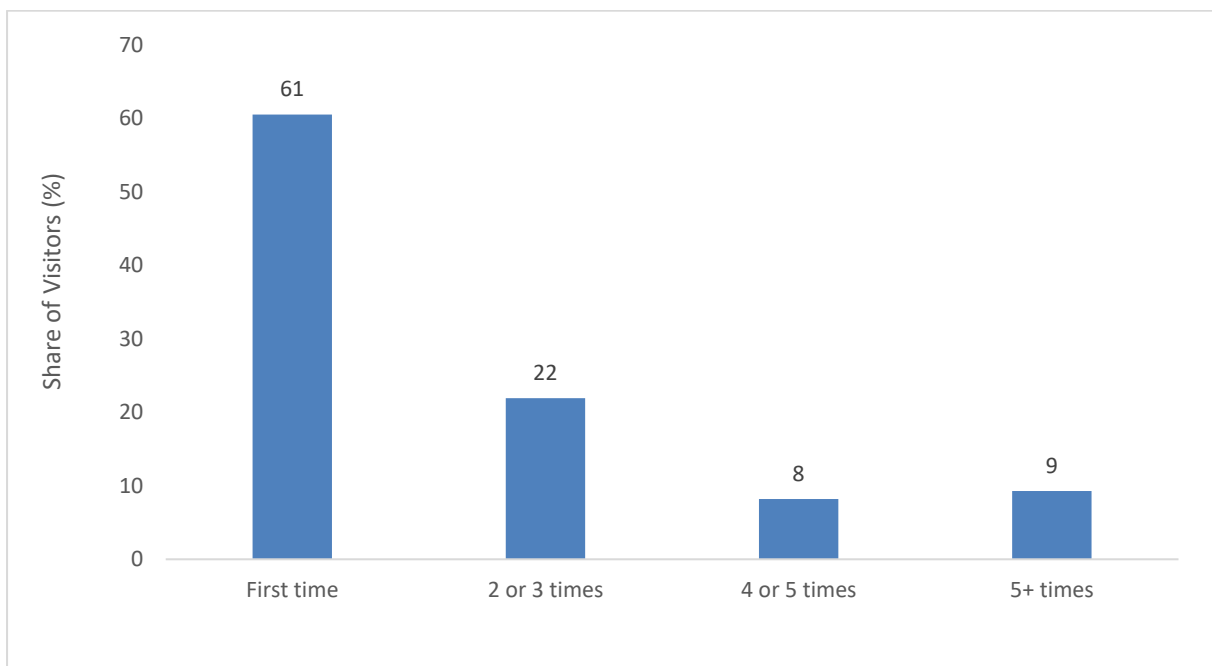
Over half of the visitors (51%) travelled with one companion on their visit to the Cook Islands (Figure 9). Travel groups larger than four people are not very common, with the exception of wedding parties.

**Figure 9: Number of companions on trip (n=402)**



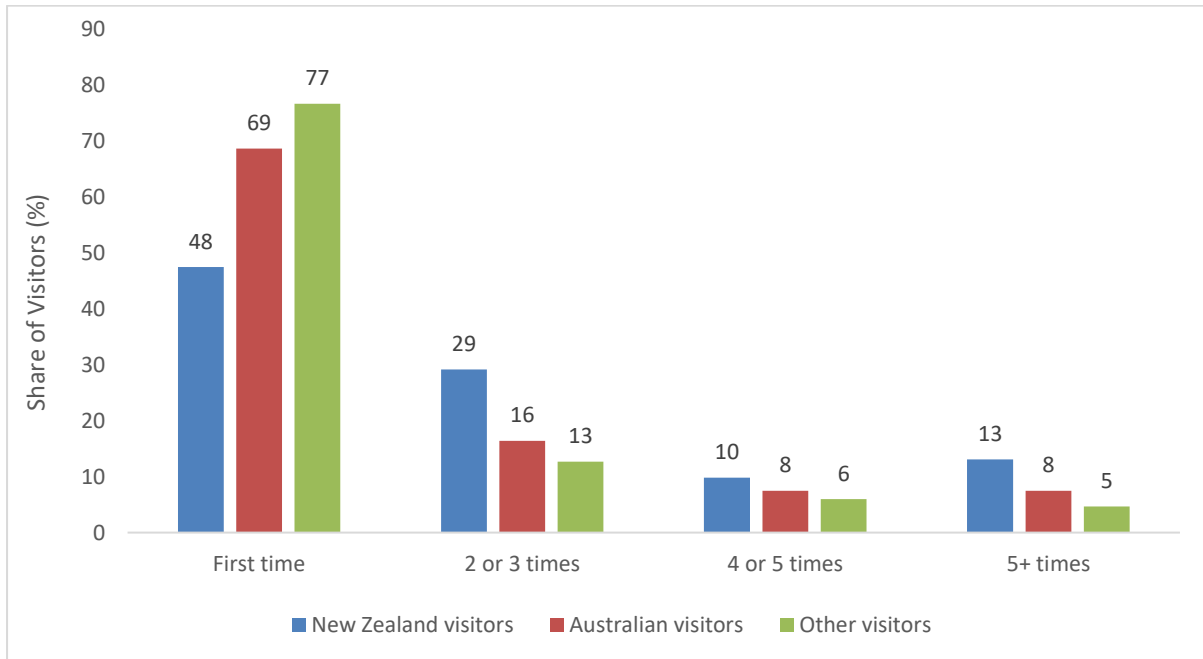
Nearly two thirds of the visitors (61%) are on their first visit to the Cook Islands. A further 22% have been to the Cook Islands twice or three times before. A smaller group (17%) have visited four or more times (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Number of visits to the Cook Islands (n=436)**



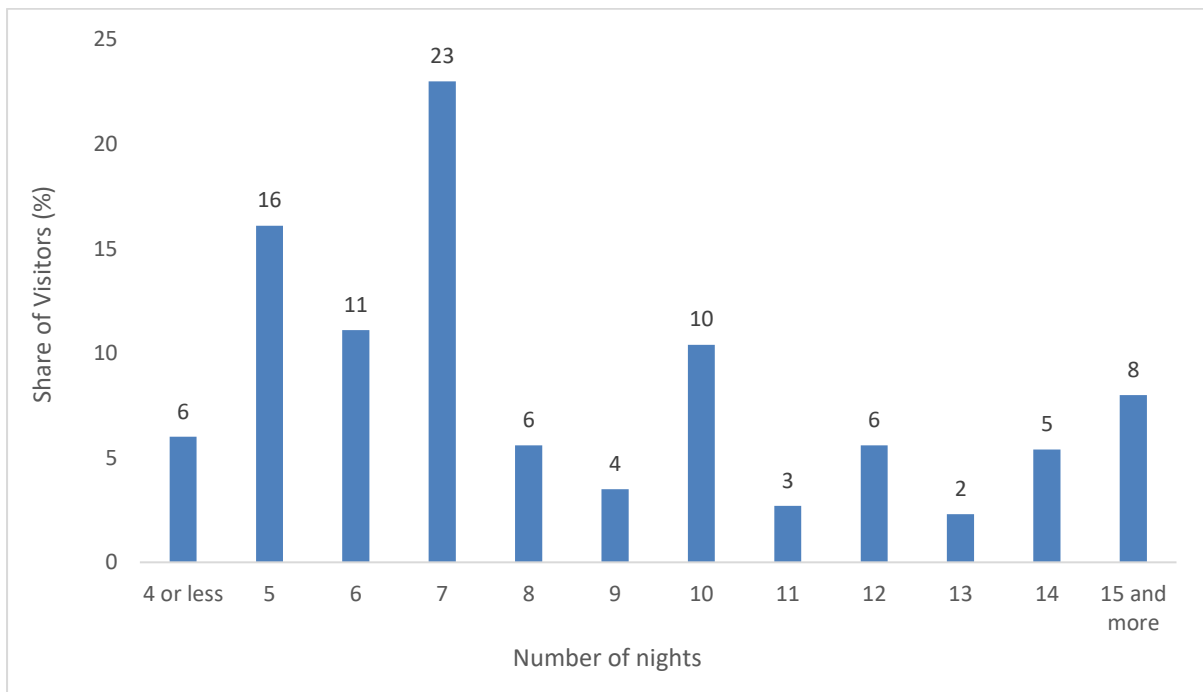
New Zealanders are more likely to be repeat visitors than those from other source markets (Figure 11). Over half of the surveyed visitors from New Zealand (52%) have visited the Cook Islands before compared to only 31% of visitors from Australia and 23% from other countries.

**Figure 11: Number of previous visits to the Cook Islands – country breakdown**



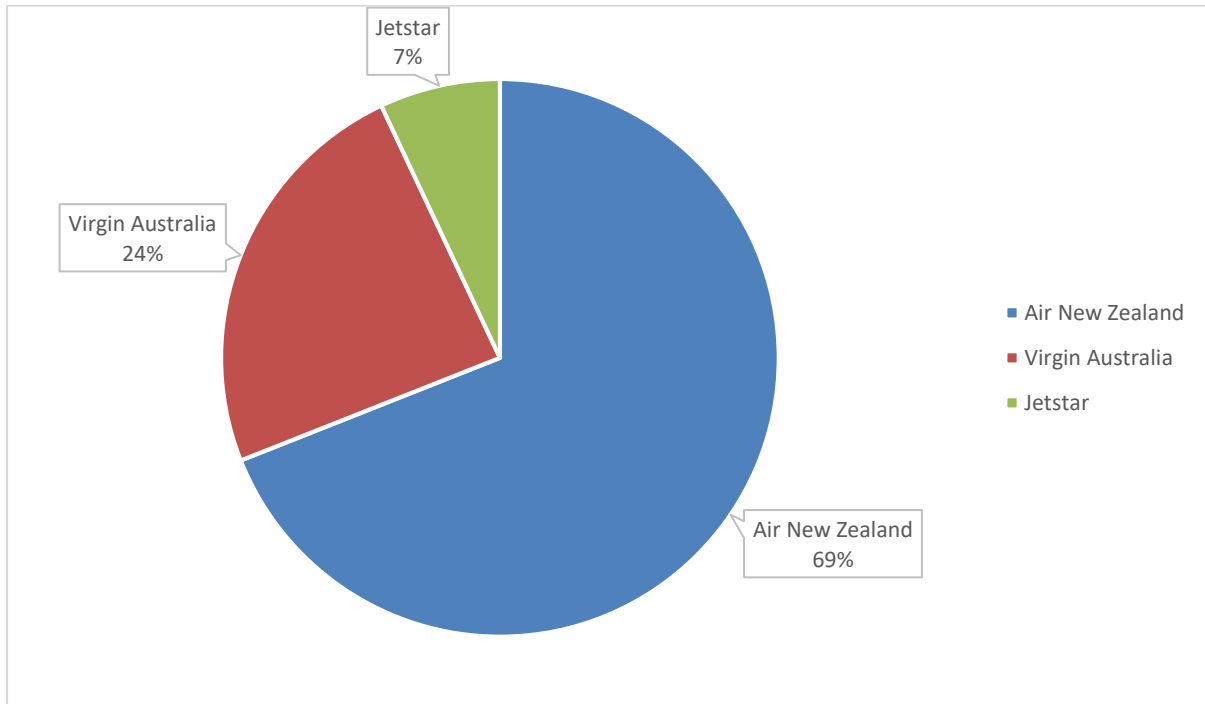
The average length of stay in the Cook Islands is 8.8 nights with 76% of visitors spending 10 or fewer nights in the country (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Length of stay in nights (n=479)**



Over two thirds of visitors (69%) travel to/from the Cook Islands with Air New Zealand, a further 24% visitors fly with Virgin Australia (Figure 13), followed by seven percent of visitors travelling with Jetstar.

**Figure 13: Mode of transport (n=493)**

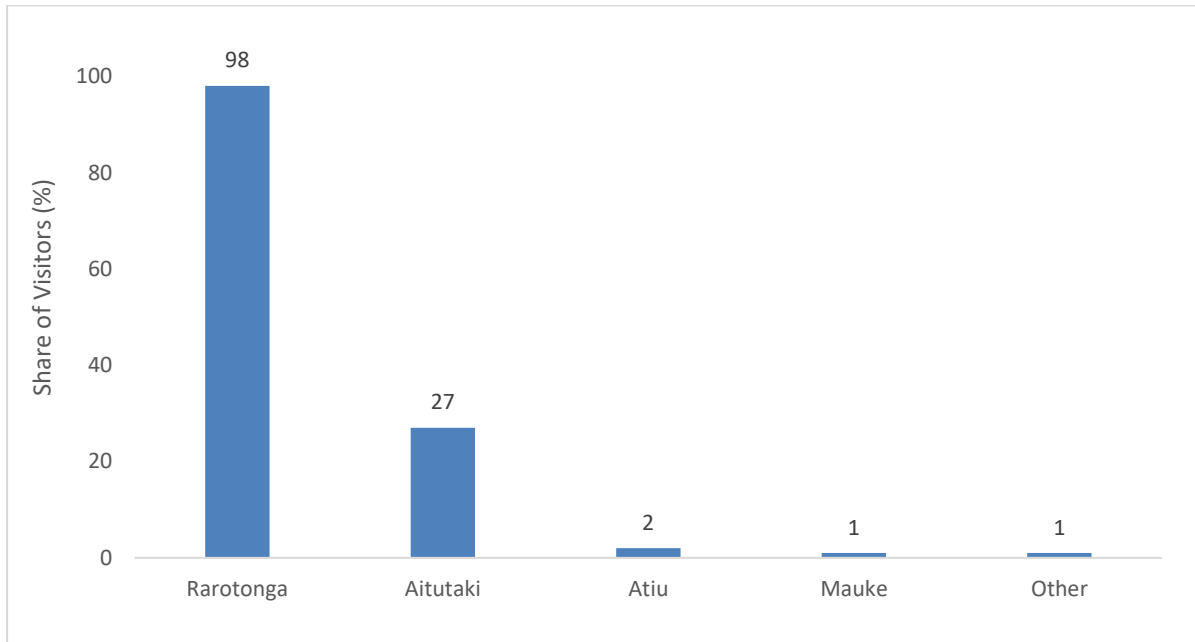


*Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%*

For 82% of visitors, the Cook Islands is the sole destination for their trip. For 18% of the visitors surveyed the Cook Islands is part of a larger journey, including some visitors who are on an around-the-world trip. For those travelling to other countries as part of their trip, the top destination mentioned was New Zealand (83%), followed by travel to Australia (55%), Asian countries (24%), North America (23%), other pacific countries (10%), and Europe (2%).

The vast majority (98%) of visitors to the Cook Islands spend time on Rarotonga, with Aitutaki being the second most visited island (27%) (Figure 14).

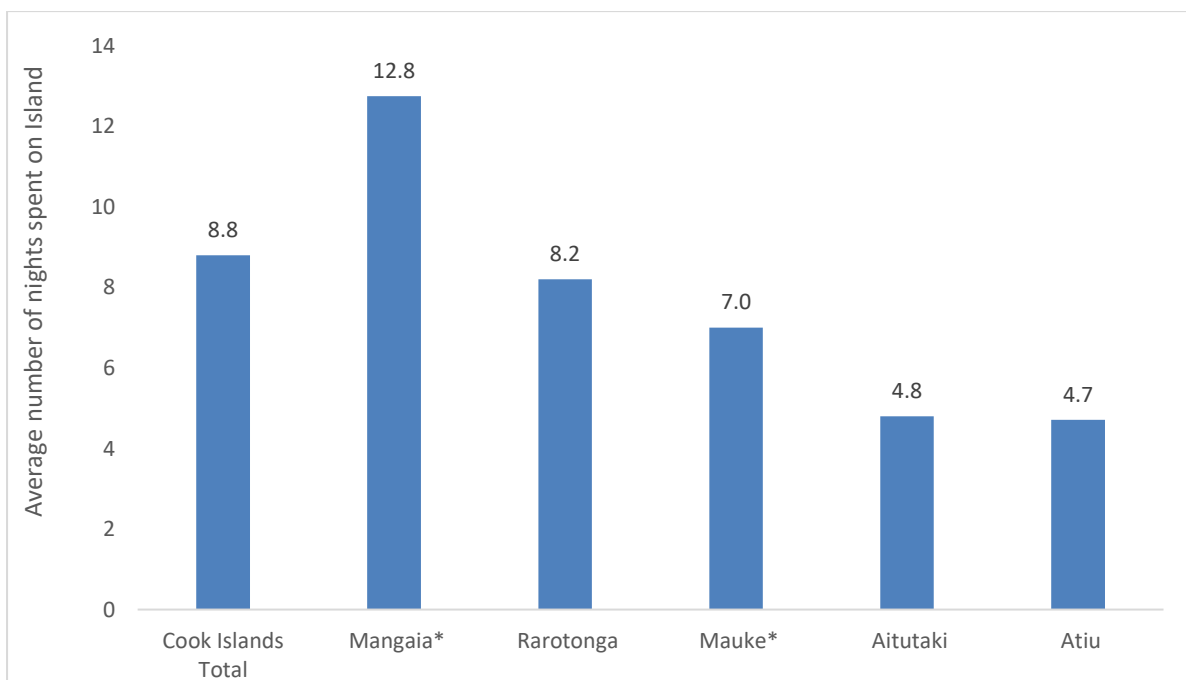
**Figure 14: Visited Islands (n=493)**



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

The average length of stay on Rarotonga is 8.2 nights (Figure 15). For the visitors that went to Aitutaki, the average number of nights spent on the island itself is 4.8. Visitors to Atiu spent an average of 4.7 nights.

**Figure 15: Average length of stay in the Cook Islands and on each island (n=491)**

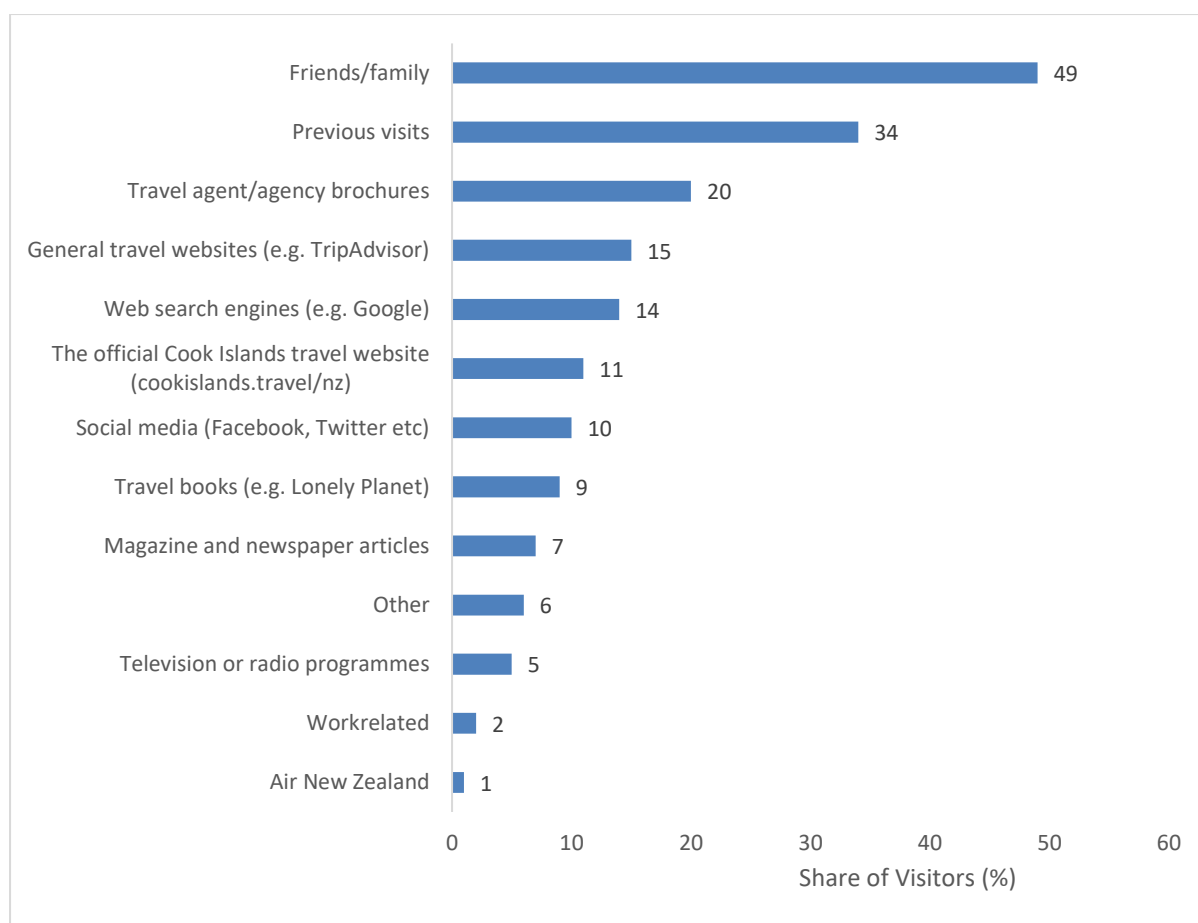


*Note: \*n<5*

## Information Sources and Purchasing Behaviour

Participants were asked how they had found out about the Cook Islands as a holiday destination for this trip, and to rank the three sources of information that were most important (Figure 16). Nearly half (49%) of respondents ranked word of mouth from friends and family members as the most important influence, followed by previous experience (34%), travel agents (20%), general travel websites (e.g. Tripadvisor) (15%), and web search engines (e.g. Google) (14%).

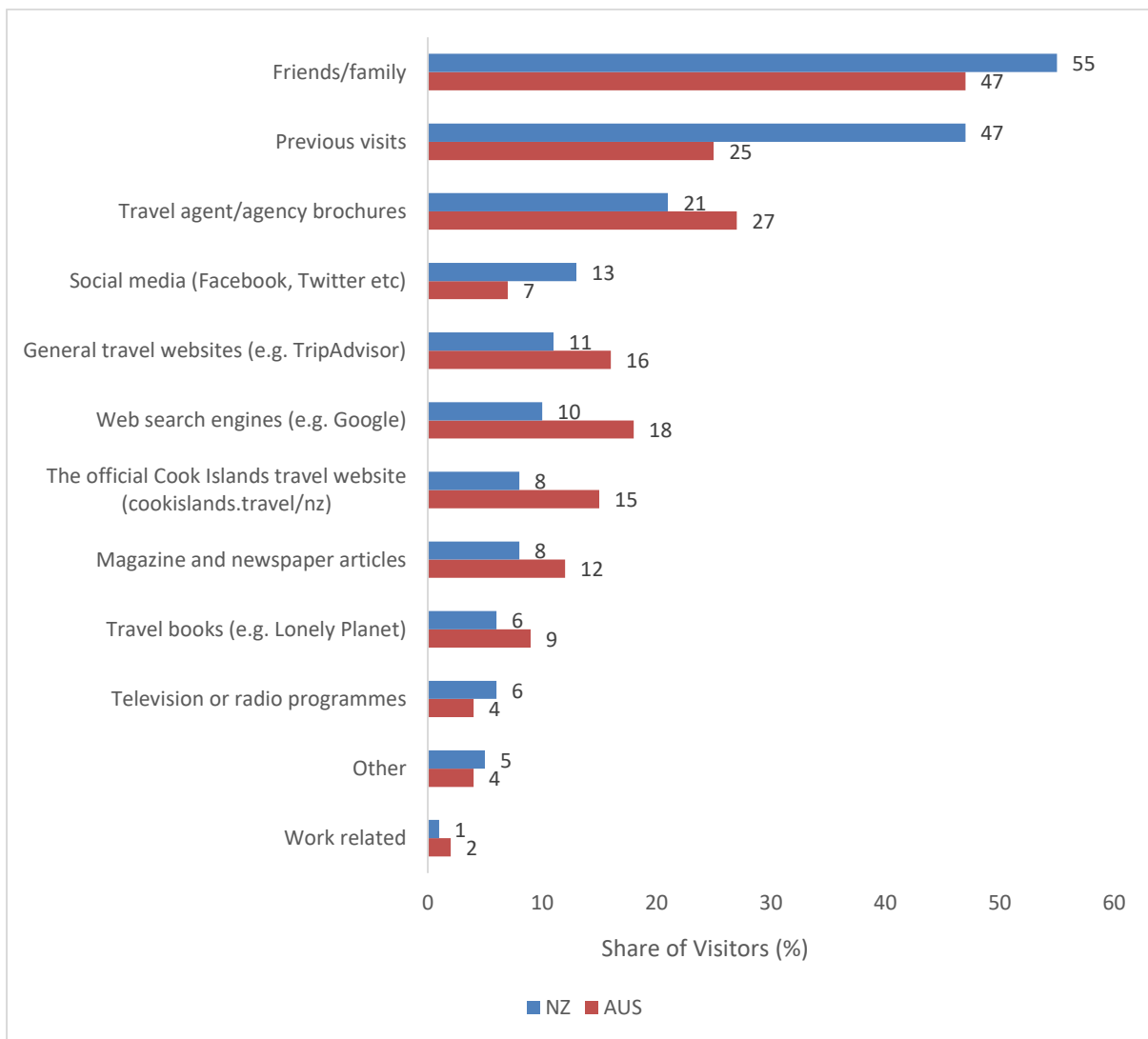
**Figure 16: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination (n=493)**



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

Visitors from New Zealand are more likely to seek information about the destination via word of mouth from friends and family members (55%). There are more repeat visitors from New Zealand than Australia and this is reflected by the fact that nearly half of visitors from New Zealand (47%) ranked their previous visits as the most important information source (Australian visitors 25%). Australian visitors were more likely to rank travel agent/agency brochures, travel websites, web search engine, the official Cook Islands travel website, magazine and newspaper articles, and travel books as the most important influence.

**Figure 17: How did you find out about Cook Islands as a destination – country breakdown**

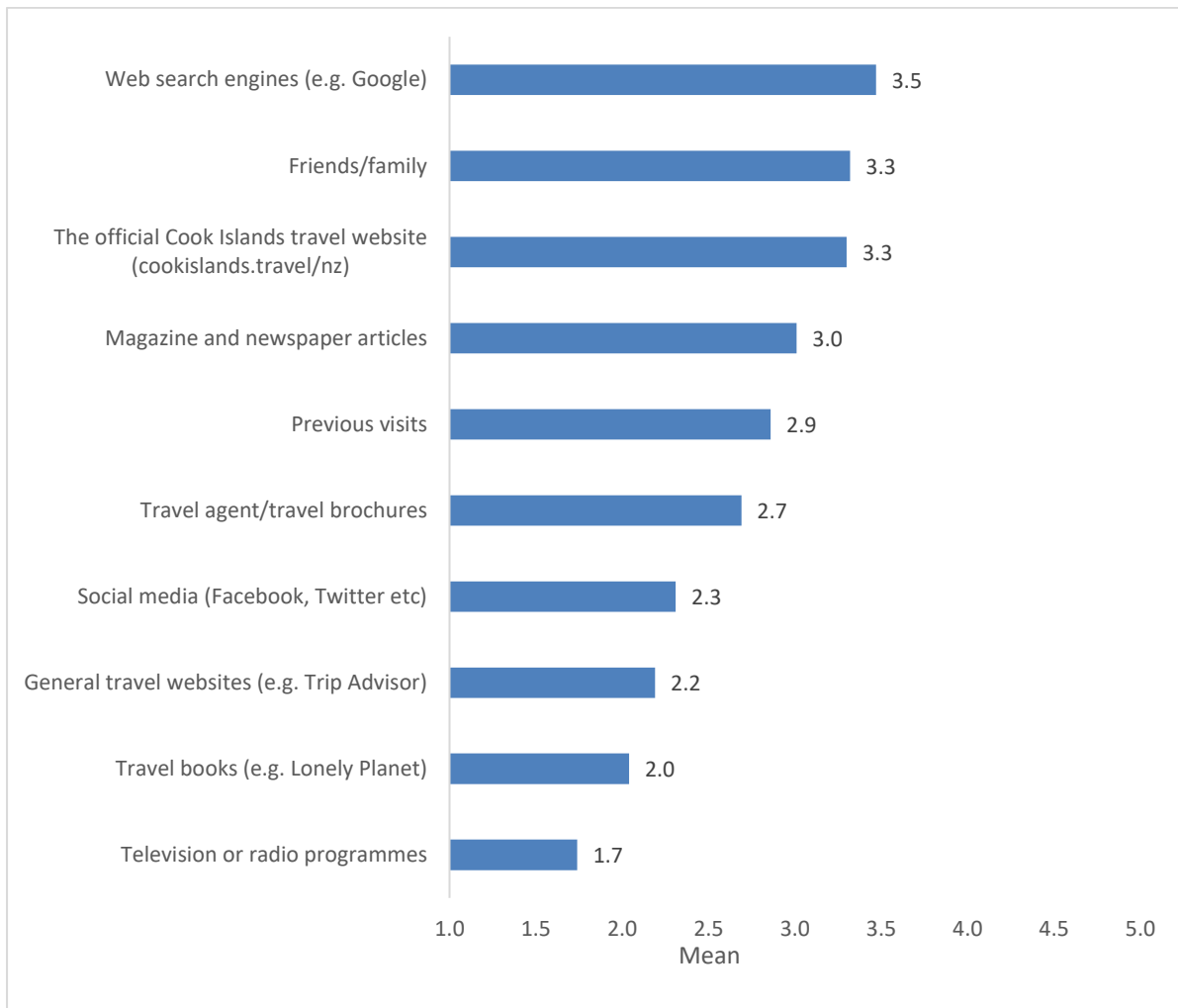


*Note: Multiple responses, therefore total does not add up to 100%*

When visitors were asked to rank the importance of the listed information sources used to plan their trip, web search engines are ranked as the most important source (3.5) (Figure 18). Other important information sources are friends and family members (3.3), the official Cook Islands travel website (3.3), magazine and newspaper articles (3.0), and previous visits (2.9).

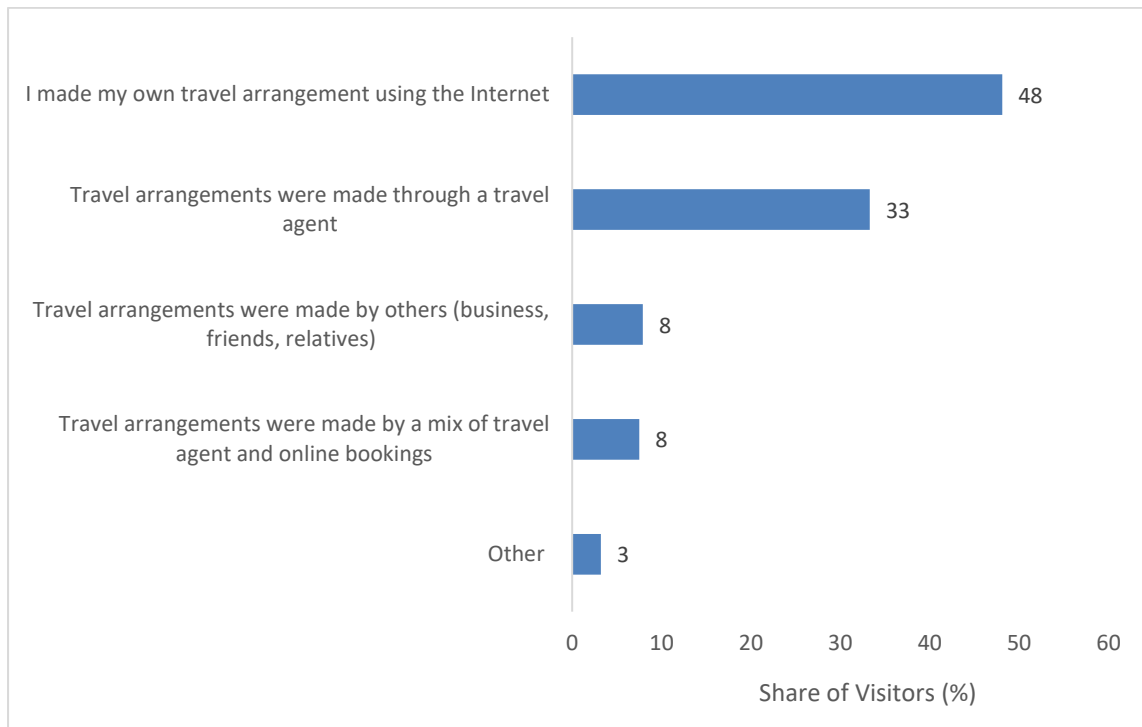


**Figure 18: Importance of information source used when planning your trip (n=358)**



Nearly half of visitors surveyed (48%) make their own travel arrangements through online websites or have booked directly with hotels or airlines (Figure 19). A smaller group of visitors surveyed (33%) purchased a pre-paid trip through travel agents, followed by 8% of visitors whose travel arrangements were made by others such as business, friends, and relatives, or a mix of travel agent and online bookings.

**Figure 19: How did you purchase your travel to the Cook Islands (n=493)**

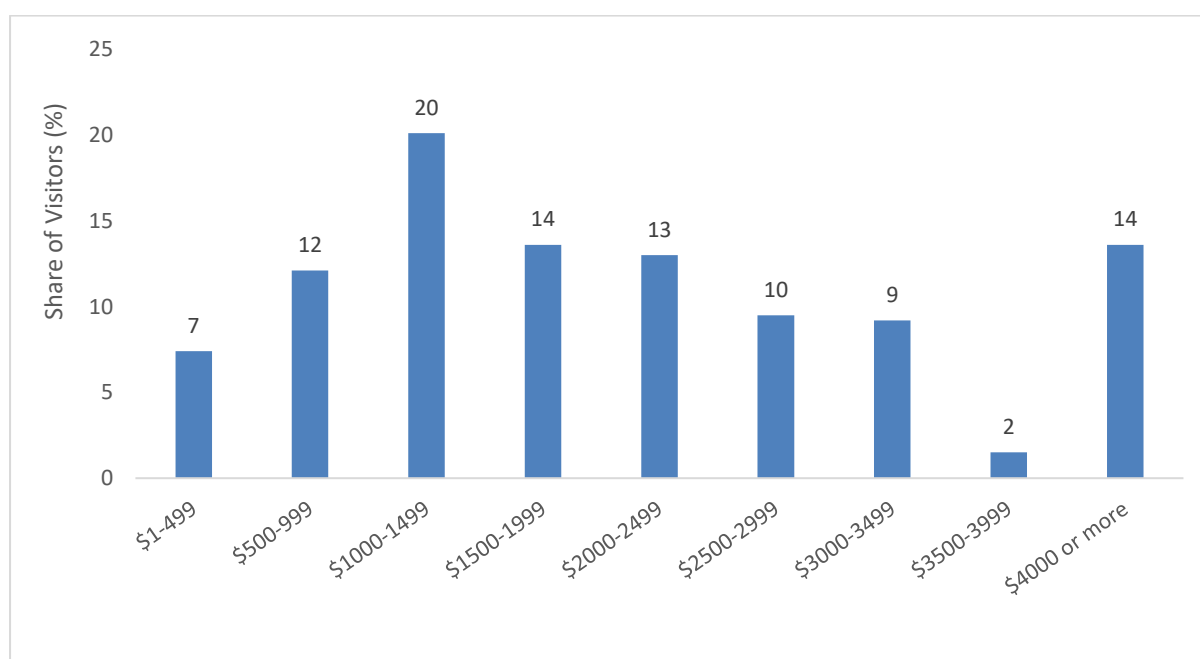


## Visitor Expenditure

The survey asks a range of questions about visitor expenditure, both prior to arrival and while in the Cook Islands. 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: 1,089 people comprising 927 adults and 162 children.

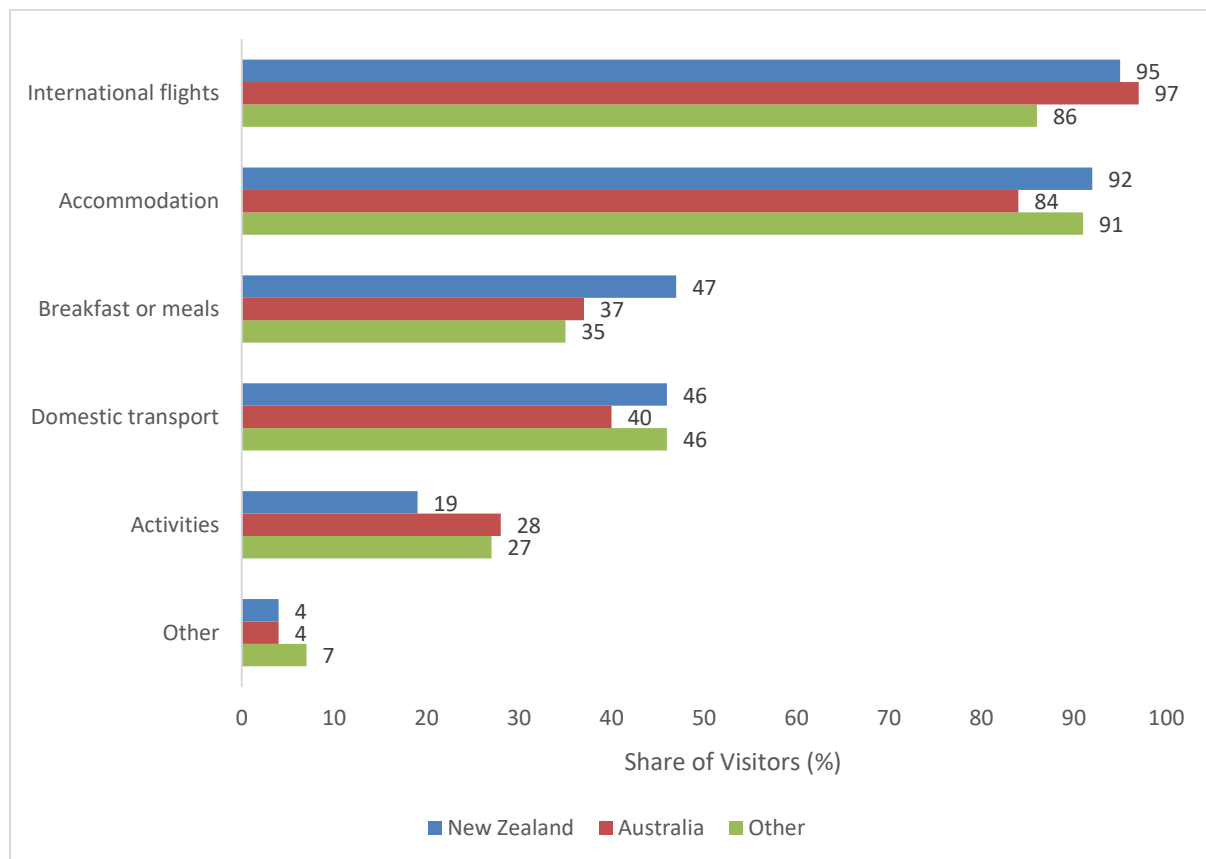
On average, visitors to the Cook Islands spend NZ\$2,204 per person prior to arrival. Nearly half (47%) of the visitors spend between NZ\$1,000 and NZ\$2,499 prior to arrival. These figures are higher than the data from the previous year (average spend of NZ\$2,042 for 2016/17), and the same quarter for 2016/17 (NZ\$2,003) (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Amount of money spent per person prior to arrival (n=338)**



In addition to international flights and domestic transport, spending prior to arrival usually includes accommodation: in 92% of the cases for New Zealand visitors, 84% for Australian visitors, and for 91% of visitors from other countries (Figure 21). Under half of visitors prepaid for breakfast and meals prior to arrival (47% for New Zealand, 37% of Australian visitors, and for 35% of visitors from other countries). Activities are much less likely to be included in pre-paid expenses.

**Figure 21: Items included in money spent prior to arrival**



*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 the Cook Islands. For the purposes of this study, and based on previous research in the region, we conservatively estimate that 50% of the pre-paid spend is allocated to airfares. Of the remaining 50% of the pre-paid spend, 80% of this flows back to local operators. In total this means that for every pre-paid dollar, 40 cents flows to the Cook Islands. We assess that the pre-paid spend figure per day flowing back to local operators, excluding flights, is NZ\$100 and for the average total visit is NZ\$882 (8.8 nights).

The total spend per visitor per day while in the Cook Islands (excluding any pre-paid expenditure) is NZ\$163 (Table 1). This figure is higher than overall spend figure for 2016/17 (NZ\$150) and same quarter in 2016/17 (NZ\$147). The majority of money spent locally is on accommodation (43%), restaurants, cafes and bars (19%), and shopping (6%). These per person expenditure figures are based on 493 survey responses covering a total of 1,049 people (885 adults and 164 children).

By multiplying daily spend by the average stay (8.8 nights) we can see that each visitor spends on average NZ\$1,439 during their time in the Cook Islands. The total figure of what is spent locally and what flows back to the Cook Islands from pre-paid expenses is therefore NZ\$263 per visitor per day (\$163+\$100), or NZ\$2,321 (\$1,439+\$882) for each visitor.

**Table 1: Average visitor expenditure in the Cook Islands (per person per day)**

Expenditure Items	N=1049	
	Mean (NZ\$)	(% of spend)
Accommodation	71	43
Restaurant, cafes and bar	31	19
Shopping	14	8
Domestic flights	10	6
Activities	10	6
Vehicle rental	9	6
Groceries	8	5
Other	4	2
Cruising	3	2
Internet cost	2	1
Petrol	2	1
Public transportation	1	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 provides an overview of the in-country expenditure by the visitor's country of origin. Visitors from North America have the highest average spend per day at NZ\$174. By comparison, New Zealand visitors spend on average NZ\$10 less than North America visitors per day (NZ\$164).

**Table 2: Average expenditure per visitor per day by country of origin**

Expenditure Items	n=199	n=169	n=570	n=62
	USA/ Canada	Australia	New Zealand	Europe
Accommodation	81	77	65	68
Restaurant, cafes and bar	34	23	34	28
Shopping	13	15	14	10
Activities	10	8	11	7
Vehicle rental	9	7	10	6
Domestic flights	9	11	10	10
Groceries	9	7	7	10
Other	1	2	6	0
Petrol	2	2	2	1
Cruising	2	5	2	2
Internet cost	2	2	2	3
Public transportation	1	1	1	1
<b>Total spend (NZ\$)</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>148</b>

Average Australian spend per person for this quarter (NZ\$160) was lower compared to the 2016/17 average of NZ\$185, and lower than the same quarter in 2016/17 (NZ\$198). New Zealanders' spend of NZ\$164 per person per day was higher than the average of \$143 for 2016/17 and the same quarter in the previous year (NZ\$128). European visitor spend at NZ\$148 per person per day was up from the average for 2016/17 of NZ\$146, but lower than the same quarter in the previous year (NZ\$153). The average spend of NZ\$174 for visitors from USA/Canada for this period was higher than the 2016/17 average of NZ\$162, and the same quarter in 2016/17 (NZ\$158).

## Visitor Satisfaction

Visitors were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with their experience of the Cook Islands on a scale from 1 'very dissatisfied' to 5 'very satisfied' (Figure 22). Over two thirds (69%) of the visitors surveyed were 'very satisfied' with their overall experience of the Cook Islands. Very few visitors (3%) were unsatisfied (a score of 2 or lower out of 5) with their visit.

**Figure 22: Overall satisfaction with experience of the Cook Islands (n=456)**

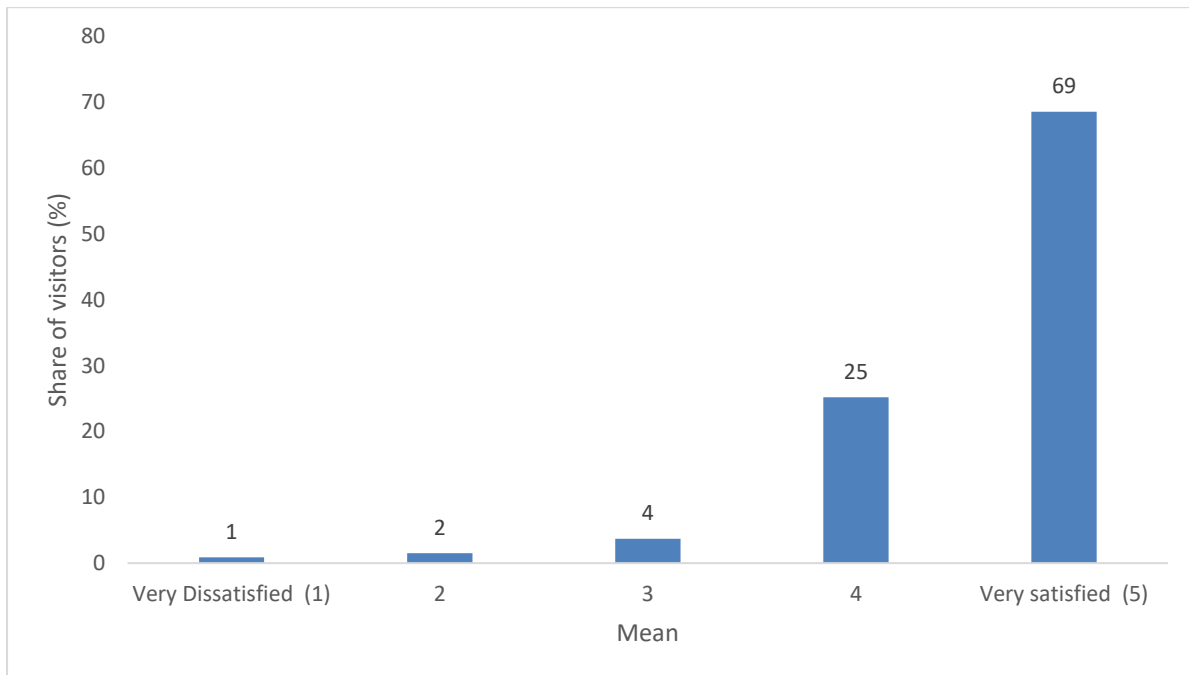
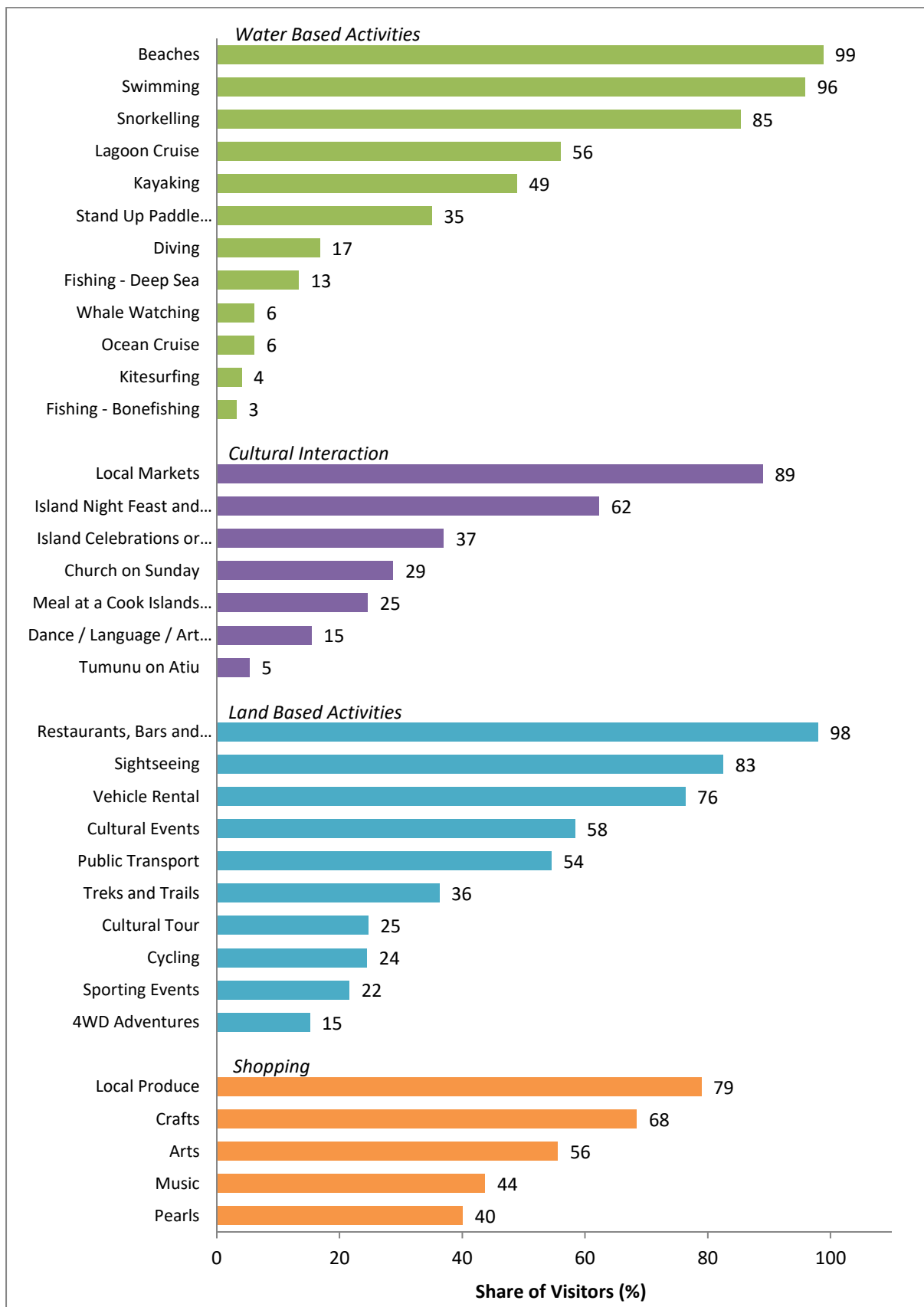


Figure 23 shows the percentage of respondents who undertook specific activities while on their visit to the Cook Islands. Almost all visitors (98%) participate in water activities and visit at least one restaurant or café during their trip. Most of the respondents (89%) visit a local market, and 59% of visitors experience an Island Night and Feast Show.

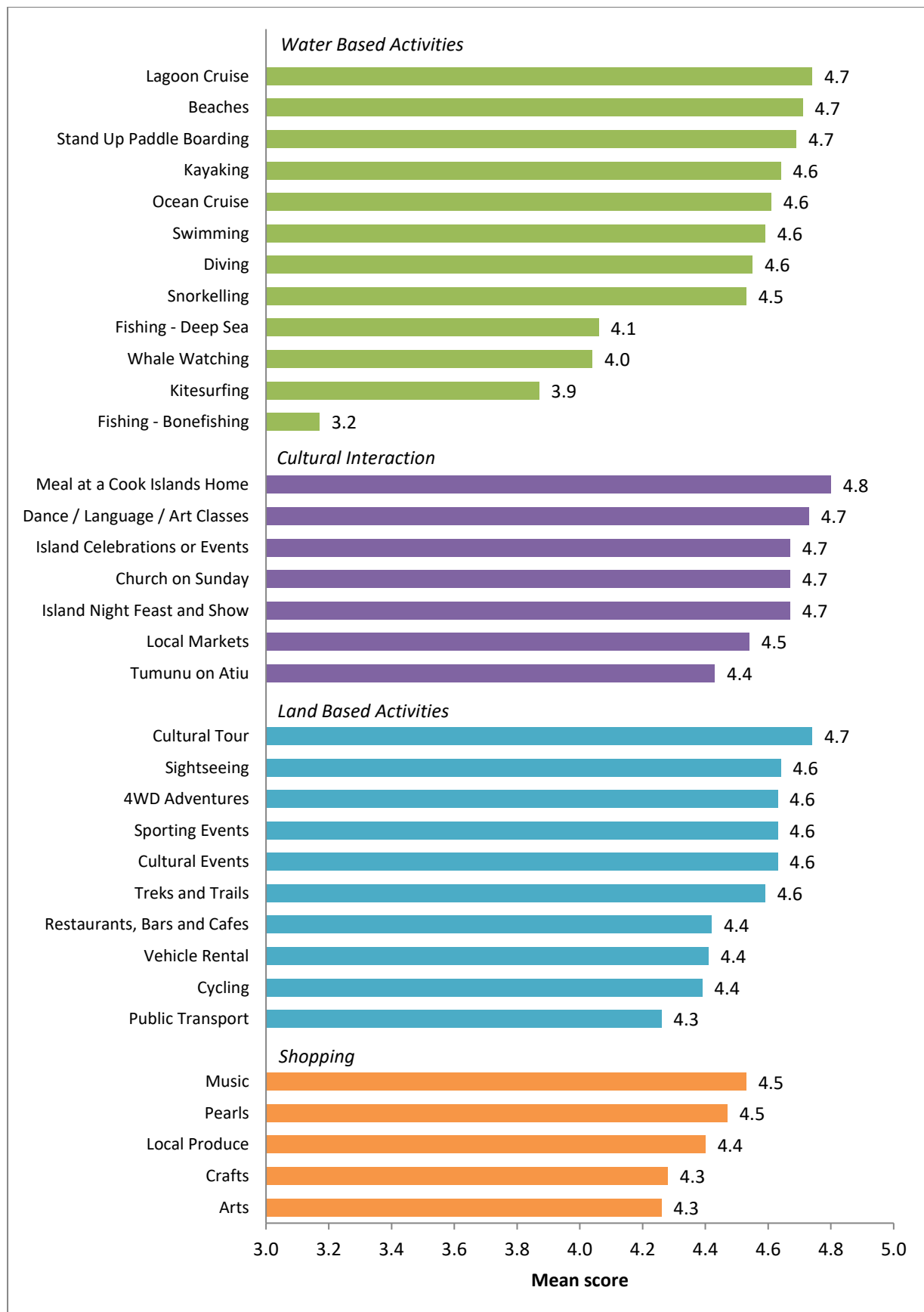
Visitor satisfaction is generally high for all activities undertaken (almost all registering more than 4 out of a possible high of 5 except bonefishing and kitesurfing) (Figure 23). Activities involving cultural interaction (average satisfaction of 4.6) rank the highest, followed by land-based products (4.5), water-based experiences (4.4), and shopping (4.4). It should be noted that some activities e.g. kitesurfing, Tumunu on Atiu, bonefishing, are characterised by relatively low numbers of participants (n=12-21).

**Figure 23: Degree of participation in activities (n range=12-475)**





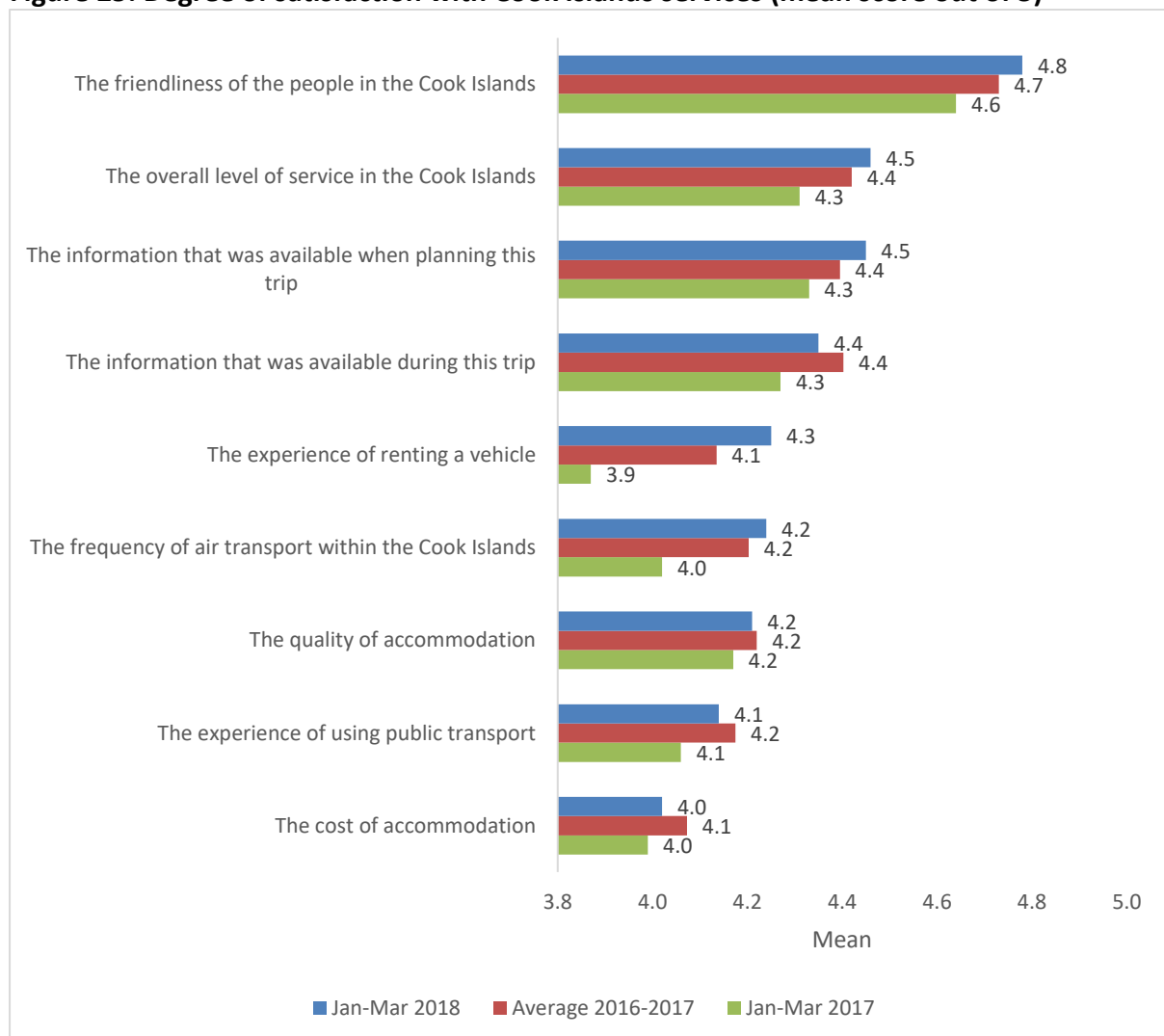
**Figure 24: Degree of satisfaction with activities participated in (mean score out of 5)**



Visitors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with nine different statements relating to their most recent visit to the Cook Islands. Responses from the period of January to March are compared to the annual average for 2016/17, and the same quarter for 2016/17 (Figure 25). Respondents have consistently given the friendliness of the people in the Cook Islands the highest score.

As can be seen from Figure 25, visitor satisfaction level are generally higher than the annual average of 2016/17 and the same quarter of 2016/17. Notable, the level of satisfaction with the information was available during this trip, the quality of accommodation, and the cost accommodation are slightly lower than the annual average for 2016/17.

**Figure 25: Degree of satisfaction with Cook Islands services (mean score out of 5)**



## Most appealing aspects of the Cook Islands

Visitors were asked “What did you find most attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?” (Table 3). The most appealing elements of the Cook Islands experience were the beautiful and clean natural environment (56%), the friendly and welcoming local people (45%), the peacefulness and relaxing atmosphere of the islands (29%), and the tourist attractions and activities on offer (23%). Smaller numbers of visitors mentioned aspects such as food and beverage (12%), convenience and safety (6%), culture (6%), not commercialised (6%), accommodation (4%), level of service (3%), and overall good experience (3%).

**Table 3: Most appealing aspects of the Cook Islands (n=456)**

Themes	Share of respondents
Environment, cleanliness & weather	56%
Local people	45%
Atmosphere	29%
Activities, attractions and entertainment, events	23%
Food and beverage	12%
Culture	6%
Un-commercial	6%
Convenience & Safety	6%
Accommodation	4%
Overall good experience	3%
Level of service	3%

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

### ***Environment, cleanliness & weather***

Well over half of the respondents (56%) considered the destination’s beautiful scenery, natural environment, and the warm waters and climate to be the most appealing aspects of their Cook Islands experience. Visitors used words such as ‘beautiful’, ‘clean’, ‘clear’, and ‘paradise’ to describe the environment. Most comments here focused on the beauty and the cleanliness of the beaches and lagoons, the warm weather, the warm and clear water, and the beauty of the islands in general. Comments included:

*“It was very beautiful, the colors are very nice. Nice warm water.”*

*“Clean environment.”*

*“The people and the environment. A very beautiful place.”*

*“The beaches and the sea - very clean and crystal clear water, the local fauna - variety of beautiful plants.”*

*“How beautiful and 'small' everything is compared to my home. It's like a different,*

*paradise world but still very easy to access by all the services provided.*

*"The amazing clear ocean with the mountains as back view."*

### **Local people**

Forty five percent of the respondents noted that the most appealing part of their visit was their interaction with local people in the Cook Islands with comments about the warmth and welcoming nature of local people. Key words that dominated the responses included 'friendly', 'welcoming', 'helpful', 'smile', 'nice', 'happy', and 'beautiful'. Comments included:

*"The Locals where very friendly and helpful. Lots to do if you wanted to do anything. And lots of room to lie on the beach with noon around."*

*"The people! So welcoming and friendly."*

*"People are friendly, simply, happy and smile every time / the sea is fantastic."*

*"The people were great and everyone seemed to be invested in doing a good job. Relaxing, no hassling or harassing by vendors, just a general vibe of contentment."*

*"The way of life and happy relaxed people."*

*"The friendliness of the locals and welcoming smiles."*

*"The relaxed environment. Nobody is in a hurry to get anywhere. The people are very warm and friendly."*

### **Atmosphere**

Twenty eight percent of visitors surveyed (29%) focused on the relaxed atmosphere of the Cook Islands. They considered the Cook Islands to be very peaceful, quiet, relaxing, and laid-back, which made it a good destination to 'relax' and 'escape from big cities'. Respondents used words such as 'relaxing', 'slow', 'peaceful', 'unwind' and 'chilled' to describe the overall atmosphere of the Cook Islands. The notion of 'island time' was also mentioned. Comments included:

*"Relaxed and friendly atmosphere."*

*"Pace of life."*

*"Being away from the city, chilled relaxed atmosphere."*

*"Relaxing, no hassling or harassing by vendors, just a general vibe of contentment."*

*"Tranquillity and safety and amazing views."*

*"The best place ever to unwind and have a relaxing, easy holiday. We love Rarotonga and go often."*

### **Activities, attractions, entertainment & events**

Activities, attractions, entertainment and events were mentioned by 23% of respondents as the most appealing elements of their visit to the Cook Islands. Most comments in this category focus on water-based activities such as swimming, snorkelling, diving, kayaking, fishing and lagoon cruises. Land-based activities that respondents mentioned included cultural events, hiking, walking, cycling, cruise tours, visiting a local church and local markets. Aitutaki lagoon is often referred to as an outstanding attraction of the Cook Islands. Comments included:

*“Independence celebrations. The markets on Saturday we go every Saturday that we are there. The night markets at Muri.”*

*“Loved the Te Vara Nui island night cultural show - and the food there was amazing. I enjoyed the Saturday market and the performance there, although unfortunately it was raining and the market isn't really set up to accommodate rain.”*

*“Loved riding bikes around Rarotonga!”*

*“The people! Loved the snorkelling, kayaking and paddle boarding. Great lagoon cruise with Black pearl.”*

*“The area around Muri Beach, cafes and night market.”*

*“Beach and swimming in Raro. Muri market was a great experience (should promote more).”*

*“Snorkelling the lagoon in Aitutaki. We loved our tour guide, touring the islands (including one foot island) the snorkelling, and the food!”*

*“Aitutaki was mind-blowing. We enjoyed our lagoon cruise. We also enjoyed the warm welcome we received from the local during Sunday service!”*

### **Food and beverage**

Just twelve percent of respondents (12%) mentioned food and beverage as the most appealing aspect of their trip. Their comments focused on the quality and range of fresh food available in the Cook Islands. They used words such as ‘great’, ‘awesome’, ‘excellent’, ‘nice’, ‘good’, ‘delicious’, and ‘fresh’ to describe the food. Many visitors commented on the selection and variety of options of good cafes and restaurants, about the food markets and on the availability of fresh seafood and tropical fruit. Comments included:

*“Abundant and reasonably priced fresh fish.”*

*“The quality of meals at the restaurants I ate at.”*

*“And the FOOD. Oh my goodness, I can't even express how much we enjoyed the local food. Everything was fresh and tasty, and we tried lots of vegetables we've never had before. YUM.”*

*“Lots of new restaurants and cafes to try.”*

*“The market and eat amazing meals.”*

*“Had so much delicious fruit just given to me by locals. Passionfruit eaten cold out of the fridge on a hot afternoon is incredible!”*

*“Local Food.”*

### **Culture**

The island’s unique local culture was mentioned by five percent (6%) of respondents as an appealing aspect of their Cook Islands visit. Respondents referred to the local events, history and performance in addition to referencing the overall enjoyable aspects of Cook Islands culture. Comments included:

*“Visited a local drum night with some locals. Found the people so friendly and sharing and the music was amazing. Was so nice to see how vibrant and lively the Cook Island culture is.”*

*“The country is not over commercialized and feels authentic to its own roots and culture. The people have great pride in their home and are super nice and seem happy for visitors to come and witness their country.”*

*“The Island and it's culture it is just a great place to unwind and rest. I have travelled extensively and it is my most favourite place in the World. I have visited many times over the past 30 years and plan to visit some more in the future.”*

*“Amazing crafts, great music.”*

*“Learning about the cultural heritage and links with New Zealand.”*

### **Not too commercialised**

Six percent (6%) of respondents mentioned the Cook Islands 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 it the way it is. Comments included:

*“The beauty of not being able to find everything through your search engine, the absence of massive hotel chains and the remote character of the Islands is what made the trip most memorable for me.”*

*“Not commercialised so it’s a better place to relax than Hawaii.”*

*“I liked the laid back island life style and the absence of tall buildings & chain hotels.”*

*“We also really liked that Aitutaki has ordinances in place to keep it from becoming overpopulated and more native.”*

*"I really appreciated that there were no big hotels and too much mass tourism (I think Cook's tourists are respectful of the place). You can still breathe true perfumes of Polynesia."*

### **Convenience & Safety**

The convenience and safety of the Cook Islands as a holiday destination were mentioned by six percent (6%) of respondents. They referred to the ease of getting to the Cook Islands and moving around the islands, the convenience of using the New Zealand dollar and speak English. Some tourists emphasised safety of the country. Comments included:

*"How easily accessible it is from New Zealand in terms of flight times and costs."*

*"Easy to get around, casual, great place for a holiday with young children."*

*"The ease of moving around the island."*

*"Less Australians and use NZ currency."*

*"The country is safe, low crime and no pedlars or drugs dealers."*

*"Not fearing for life as a pedestrian, although cycling probably wouldn't feel as safe as I noticed no cycle roadways..."*

### **Accommodation**

Another four percent (4%) of respondents noted that the accommodation they stayed in was an appealing aspect of their visit to the Cook Islands, referring to the high quality, the location, the setting, the level of service, and the warm welcome from their hosts. Comments included:

*"Feeling like you are being welcomed by a community... not just a resort..."*

*"We also really loved our resort. Magic Reef Bungalows. Great location, clean room, very friendly and accommodating staff!"*

*"The villa we rented was perfect."*

### **Overall good experience**

Three percent (3%) of visitors surveyed simply stated that their whole experience was a good one, and that they 'loved everything'. Some visitors expressed their desire to visit the Cook Islands again in the future. Comments included:

*"I loved everything."*

*"Everything was great but I went with no expectations. Loved it."*

*"Everything, will definitely come back."*

*“This was my fifth trip, like coming home. Always a pleasure to visit!”*

*“I have travelled extensively and it is my most favourite place in the World. I have visited many times over the past 30 years and plan to visit some more in the future.”*

### **Level of service**

A five percent (3%) of visitors commented on the service they encountered while in the Cook Islands. Respondents had positive comments on the local hospitality they experienced. Mentioning the ‘friendly’, ‘welcoming’ and ‘helpful’ staff at the resorts, restaurants, bars, hotels, and shops. Visitors also emphasised the lack of pressure or hassle to buy which made them feel comfortable. Comments included:

*“The helpfulness of staff in accommodation and on tours.”*

*“I loved the fact that whilst the accommodation and service was top class it didn't overwhelm the overall vibe of the island.”*

*“Staff at hotel - helpful and friendly.”*

*“People. Service at Pacific Resort Aitutaki.”*



## Least appealing aspects of the Cook Islands

Visitors were asked: “What did you find least attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?” Table 4 summarises key themes respondents felt were unappealing. Comments ranged from issues with public services and facilities, price of good and service, stray animals and mosquitos, rubbish and natural environment care through to disappointment with the safety issues.

Mention of rubbish and natural environment care was down from 15% in the previous year (2016/17 average) to 10% in this quarter. Negative comments, which have been strongly associated with the algal blooms at Muri Lagoon, peaked in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2015/16 (20%) and re-peaked again during the same period in 2016/17 (17%).

**Table 4: Least appealing aspects of the Cook Islands (n=420)**

Themes	Share of respondents %*
<b>Public services and facilities and infrastructure</b>	22%
<b>Price of good and service</b>	13%
<b>Stray animals and mosquitos</b>	11%
<b>Rubbish and natural environment care</b>	10%
<b>Accommodation</b>	10%
<b>Attractions and activities</b>	10%
<b>Food and beverage</b>	9%
<b>Customer service</b>	7%
<b>Poor weather</b>	6%
<b>Flight related issues</b>	5%
<b>Too touristy</b>	4%
<b>Rental cars or scooters</b>	3%
<b>Law and Legislation</b>	3%
<b>Lack of information</b>	3%
<b>Local people</b>	2%
<b>Safety</b>	2%

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

### ***Public services, facilities, and infrastructure***

Most respondents (22%) considered the destination’s public services and facilities to be the least appealing aspects of their Cook Islands experience. Most comments here focused on the road conditions, public transport and poor internet, and the bus services. Comments included:

*“The cell tower was out, which made it nearly impossible for me to work while I was there (it was a business trip); but I understand that it was a freak occurrence and unlucky timing. In general, though, it would be great if the Cook Islands could improve internet connectivity for business travellers.”*

*"The access to WiFi was unanticipated. My trip was during a time when the island experienced an arsonist who had recently burned the cell tower. WiFi access from Blue Sky was extremely expensive! Without a SIM card, WiFi was necessary to communicate with the rest of the wedding party and family around the island, so paying the extreme WiFi prices was unavoidable. Additionally, I had planned to do some work during my stay - but limited and expensive access to WiFi made this impossible."*

*"Lack of Internet and mobile phone service."*

*"Communications are a major pain - I could not believe there is no international roaming, and one cannot use a cell from abroad. Internet access was also major pain."*

*"Exceptionally poor condition of road between Aroko and Titikaveka."*

*"Poor road condition, made cycling around the island a bit worrying."*

*"Public transport idea of buses looping the island in alternate directions is awesome, timeliness and facilities to wait, not so awesome."*

*"The frequency of public transportation at night. It would be nice to have additional busses so we could enjoy food and drink on other parts of the island without needing a designated driver or the expense/ hassle of getting a cab."*

*"Transport could be a challenge on islands outside Rarotonga."*

### **Price of goods and service**

Thirteen percent of the respondents (13%) noted that the least appealing part of their visit was the price of goods and services with comments about food, transfers, accommodation, flights, and internet. Key words that dominated the responses included 'costly', 'expensive', 'overpriced', and 'poor value'. Comments included:

*"Our accommodation was overpriced."*

*"Cost of accommodation compared with the Gold Coast and other close to NZ destinations. Cost of living i.e. supermarket, restaurant and cafe prices. Whilst I understand a lot of goods are shipped from NZ. Local produce is sometimes still more expensive than NZ."*

*"The price of supermarket and retailer goods."*

*"Considering how close the accommodation is to the airport, the transfers are quite expensive."*

*"Too expensive to go to the other islands - so we just stay on the Main Island."*

*“When I asked for a glass of water in the restaurant and was given a jug of water only to discover in the bill I was charged \$7.50, if I had known that I was being charged for the water I would have requested a sealed bottle of water.”*

*“I wish that Air Rarotonga flights were a lot cheaper. It does a huge disservice - particularly to the Islands other than Rarotonga to have such expensive ticket prices.”*

### **Stray animals and mosquitos**

Stray animals, noisy roosters, chickens, mosquitoes or insects, and sea cucumbers were mentioned by 11% of respondents. In particular, they complained that the dogs roaming on the streets, mosquitoes and the roosters made their trip miserable at the Cooks Island. Respondents used a variety of words to describe this theme including ‘annoying’, ‘off putting’ and ‘excessive’. Comments included:

*“There has always been quite few running around in the past but this time I noticed particularly large amount of dogs roaming around in small packs on the beaches and to be honest being a bit of a nuisance when you are trying to enjoy the beach etc. and the odd one not particularly friendly.”*

*“The number of dogs was a little off putting although they were generally well behaved.”*

*“Many dogs where on the streets, it was dangerous when motor biking.”*

*“We found Raratonga becoming more overrun than anticipated and while we love dogs, they were EVERYWHERE following us snorkeling and standing on the coral.”*

*“The flipping chickens with their midnight clucking!”*

*“The early rooster calls.”*

*“Starving dogs not cared for by their owners.”*

*“The mistreatment of domestic animals- undernourished stray dogs and cats, this broke my heart.”*

*“Animal welfare - we are very disappointed to see that attitudes towards animals appear to have worsened in the 15 years that we have visited Rarotonga. While it is only some individuals who have these attitudes, it is the government's total lack of vision, leadership and pro-activeness on animal welfare issues that are most disappointing. It seems that most animal welfare initiatives are led by non-locals, but they are extremely politically unsupported in their endeavours, sometimes even obstructed.”*

### **Rubbish and natural environment care**

Rubbish and natural environment care were mentioned by 10% of respondents as the least appealing elements of their visit to the Cook Islands. The poor condition of the lagoons and beaches, polluted water, degraded coral reefs, and threatened marine life concerned a group of visitors. Comments included:

*"The rubbish. I picked up rubbish off the beaches every day I walked. Around the resorts is fine, but away from the hotels it was bad. There were very few rubbish bins around. Where do the locals dispose of plastic? During our stay the neighbours, possibly the developers, burnt the rubbish which included PVC. The fumes were toxic and was so bad we had to leave the house, we could not do anything as visitors and our hosts neighbours!"*

*"Was not impressed with the state of the Waterfall, was so much rubbish strewn all over the place, is such a beautiful place to visit, would have stayed longer if not for the rubbish making it less inviting."*

*"Most disappointed that the coral and number of fish has disappeared since last visit."*

*"The amount of Christmas visitors and the noise and their garbage and looting of the local resources."*

*"The corals were bleached and the lagoons were empty. Too many sea cucumbers, no fish or plants."*

*"Dead coral and lack of fish."*

*"The lack of environmental protection for marine life in the Cook Islands with over-fishing by international trawlers who have been allowed to buy fishing licenses in Cook Island ocean waters and for Rarotonga's reef's obvious deterioration of marine diversity and the way the island is now being over-built with resorts without consideration for its environmental sustainability and impact e.g. needed sewage treatment facilities."*

*"Pollution of the lagoons!!! Degradation of the marine environment especially the coral general trash. Including the many shipping containers on private land. Constant cutting of palm trees and other trees, overcrowding of private property with rental units. A real eye sore! Plastic plastic plastic!"*

### **Accommodation**

Ten percent of visitors surveyed (10%) focused on accommodation of the Cook Islands. Visitors surveyed mentioned that the cost of accommodation is expensive for the value received, that some accommodation places are in need of an upgrade of facilities and services. Comments included:

*"The resort shouldn't be allowed to operate in its current state."*

*“Standard of accommodation e.g. cleanliness.”*

*“Accommodation was comfortable but is showing its age and needs an upgrade.”*

*“We'd been before and stayed at the same place, we thought there were overall less staff, and the level of service had dropped which was a shame as it had been excellent previously. The staff didn't seem as happy.”*

*“Our accommodation and the subsequent credit card fraud committed by the owner caused a huge amount of stress.”*

*“Some of the accommodations were very poorly maintained.”*

*“Mistake with our accommodations. Hotel had us checked out one night early, so had nowhere to go, and the staff were not very helpful at all.”*

*“The quality of the accommodation - we were moved 3 times due to maintenance problems within the resort.”*

### **Attractions and activities**

Ten percent (10%) of respondents mentioned the least appealing aspect at Cooks Island were the attractions and activities including limited attractions and/or activities, swimming/snorkelling because of the environment issues, weather, lack of information, poor services. Comments included:

*“Organizing activities was very difficult - There is only one or two companies operating snorkelling tour is on the lagoon, they only take cash as payment, and the only two cash machines on the island were very far away from our hotel.”*

*“The lack of communication from tour operator regarding pickup. It was difficult to contact and understand them.”*

*“It would be nice to organize a local market (ex. crafts) and group lessons on culture and local art, to involve all the people of the island and teach tourists respect for the culture and customs of the place.”*

*“The pollution in Mûri lagoon and the raucous snorkelling tours operating there.”*

*“Lack of quality souvenirs.”*

*“The snorkelling gear at the Edgewater Resort was shocking. Our masks kept leaking making snorkelling less enjoyable.”*

*“The disturbance caused by the 4WD adventures clogging the road and creating noise and pollution.”*

*“Not many night activities if you're not a party person.”*

### **Food and beverage**

Another 9% of respondents noted that the food and beverage at Cooks Island was the least appealing aspect of their visit, referring to the high prices, the lack of local produce (especially fresh fruit, veggies and fish), limited food choice, poor customer services, and food hygiene. Comments included:

*"Most of us got sick after eating a beautiful seafood feast one night."*

*"Markets were not very appealing. Hygiene a concern some family members contracted a stomach bug from eating chicken cooked in the night market."*

*"Food quality, food variety."*

*"Lack of variety in food and limited food options some days of the week."*

*"I found sit down restaurants to be pretty expensive and some not so good when compared to the food you can find at the market and at roadside BBQ. I mainly cooked for myself and found getting groceries a bit challenging."*

*"Would have liked more opportunities to try local food."*

*"The lack of food available on the late night arrivals. Going to a resort I would have thought there would have been something available to eat!!!! Not potato chips."*

*"Too much junk food, quiet hard to find a local restaurant with local fresh product."*

*"Lack of variety and fresh produce in grocery stores."*

### **Customer service**

Seven percent respondents (7%) mentioned customer service as the least appealing aspect of their trip to the Cooks Island. Their comments focused on visitor handling services at the accommodation, transport, airport and restaurants. Most visitors used words such as 'no response', 'long waits', 'rude', 'poor attitude', 'unfriendly' and 'least impressive' to describe the services. Comments included:

*"The Service at the Rarotongan Beach Resort and Spa, especially at the front desk. Not willing to help. Unfriendly, rigid, chaotic."*

*"Some tourist staff treated you as just another. Locals could be quite rude especially at main service station."*

*"Waiter service was very slow in most restaurants."*

*"The car hire lady was not that friendly, came across as aggressive. Resort staff, were not very service orientated."*

*"The staff ... were unhelpful, absent or told us the marked price was wrong and charged me more."*

*“Delays- i.e. standing in long que to rent a car. Island time communication practices at airport and hotels.”*

*“The service people are wayyyyyyyyyy too relaxed about international flights.”*

### **Poor weather**

Six percent (6%) of visitors commented on poor weather while in the Cook Islands. Respondents expressed their disappointment with the weather conditions on the Cook Islands. In particular, complaints were made about the rain and wind, although some respondents acknowledged the weather was seasonal and cannot be changed. Comments included:

*“The weather! It was unpredictably cold and windy!”*

*“How windy it was- didn't realise that kite surfing season meant too windy for snorkelling or kayaks.”*

*“The weather could have been better but that nothing anybody can do about that.”*

*“The weather was a little dicey but it didn't deter us.”*

*“Weather, so not best for snorkelling or golfing.”*

### **Flight related issues**

Five percent (5%) of respondents mentioned flight related issues as the least appealing aspect at Cooks Island. Visitors mentioned the limitations of flights to and from various destinations such as infrequency, cost, arrival and departure times, customer service, lost luggage, and airport facilities. Comments included:

*“Our luggage was lost by the airline so we needed to buy some essentials when we arrived.”*

*“Trouble with Air New Zealand constantly cancelling flights - cut our trip short by a day and half which we had already prepaid the accommodation.”*

*“Lengthy gaps in flight connections getting there from Brisbane via Auckland.”*

*“My flight experience was very bad. I flew with Jetstar and almost all the luggage was left in Auckland. The communication about this was very bad. I had to go to the airport every day to see if the luggage was there. I found out that Jetstar does this often and leaves the luggage behind on purpose. They already know this beforehand. In my opinion this is something that you simply cannot do, and IF you do it then communicate with people before the plane takes off so that we can take precautions...”*

*“Lost luggage by the airline on our flight from Auckland - not handled professionally in Rarotonga.”*

*"The once per week flight schedule from North America makes it challenging."*

*"More accessibility to other islands would be great (price and frequency was an issue and more flight options in/out) of the islands would be helpful."*

### **Too touristy**

Four percent (4%) of respondents mentioned the Cook Islands as being a place that is too touristy, commercialised, and overcrowded with visitors. Tourists also mentioned some negative behaviour from other visitors. Comments included:

*"It's become very developed since my last visit 13 years ago. Every 3rd building seems to be some type of tourist accommodation."*

*"On Raratonga not as laid back for tourists - a bit overpriced and sometimes pushy."*

*"Rarotonga is attracting some guests for package trips, who are noisy and badly behaved, like hens and bucks groups."*

*"I was there in Nov 2015 and then again in Nov 2017. In just two years I was amazed. The first time there I could go 2 to 3 minutes when driving around the island before I would meet someone coming in the other direction. Now it almost seems as congested as LA. I have a great fear that your beautiful island are going to be thrashed by too many people. The Muri lagoon is already showing signs. I am glad I got to see Raro in 2015 when it was still somewhat a pearl in the world."*

*"The island gets busier with every visit."*

*"Drunk tourists."*

### **Rental cars or scooters**

Three percent (3%) of respondents mentioned Rental cars and scooters as least appealing aspect of their Cook Islands visit. Respondents referred to the rental cars and scooters as being highly expensive, unreliable service, old vehicles, and process of getting a scooter licence. Comments included:

*"Rental cars were in rough shape."*

*"The rental cars weren't as tidy as I'd hoped."*

*"Waiting several hours to hire push bikes and the poor condition of these bikes. I believe there are better rental agencies than the one we used, which was recommended by our hotel."*

*"Trying to find a vehicle to rent was an absolute nightmare - basically wasted an entire day trying to sort this out."*

*"Difficult to rent a scooter that works well for a reasonable price."*



### **Law and Legislation**

Another three percent (3%) of visitors surveyed simply stated that their whole experience was disappointing because of the Island's laws and regulations, from wearing helmets, licensing, and shops closing on Sundays. Comments included:

*"Being pulled over for not wearing a helmet on the scooter. Upon my other visits to Rarotonga one of the most treasured activities is riding around without a helmet. As a visitor- having to wear a helmet when locals do not is very dividing and not consistent."*

*"There appears to be a Local and Tourist divide! We have to wear helmets on my bikes they don't! Little kids hanging off the back of their parents on bikes and none wearing helmets! (really!!) I'm not sure how Cook Islanders would feel if the same applied to them in NZ. One law for us another for them."*

*"Helmet law, everyone should wear one."*

*"No supermarkets open, limited liquor sales on Sunday."*

### **Lack of information**

Lack of information available was mentioned by three percent (3%) of visitors surveyed. Areas where information was lacking included attractions/activities available, events happening, public transport, and directional information. Comments included:

*"Access of information on events happening around the island."*

*"Lack of information regarding public transport and safety regarding the reef and stonefish."*

*"Lack of information in relation to island night so didn't get to experience it as booked out before heard about it."*

*"The lack of information as to where to snorkel without needing a guide."*

*"Would have liked a little more information on hiking trails."*

### **Local people**

One percent of the respondents (2%) noted that the least appealing part of their visit was their interaction with local people in the Cook Islands. Common themes are the unhelpfulness and rudeness of local people, and some social issues. Comments included:

*"Low key racism from locals towards the papaá (white people)"*

*"Poverty"*

*"Locals could be quite rude especially at main service station"*

## **Safety**

Safety of the Cook Islands as a holiday destination was mentioned by two percent (2%) of respondents. In particular, they referred to increase in crime rate and low road safety as being paramount at the Island. Comments included:

*“One crime incident; inability to feel as safe as in previous years (we have been there yearly for 10 years).”*

*“The speed at which people go on the narrow road when coming up to a cyclist.”*

*“The amount of theft on the island and violence in the night clubs.”*

*“Bicycling was convenient but the roads were sketchy and I was worried about my safety.”*

## Suggestions to improve the visit to the Cook Islands

When asked if there was anything that could have improved their visit to the Cook Islands, over a third (39%) of respondents said 'yes'. Of the group that made suggestions: focused on public services and infrastructure (25%), entertainment, activities, transport (22%), environment/safety/animal care (14%), value for money (12%), accommodation (11%), information (10%), attitude of locals and service levels (9%), availability, quality, and price of food and drinks (9%), a longer stay or to visit more places (8%), weather (7%), availability of and flight schedules in and out of Cook Islands (7%), and law and legislation (5%). Five percent of respondents said things were fine as they were. Comments on these themes included:

*"Tidy up the rubbish, the island paradise is being spoiled by locals with poor, unsupportive infrastructure."*

*"Just the internet, I had to work over there and it was too expensive to get those prepaid card. There's a big need for affordable Wi-Fi."*

*"Cheaper cell phone and internet packages."*

*"The airport could do with an upgrade."*

*"Improve the road so people who are riding have one that is more comfortable. A more frequent bus service particularly at night when going to a restaurant."*

*"Improved infrastructure. Safe water and treatment to preserve the lagoons."*

*"Stop land development until sewage and water infrastructure is upgraded as well as solar power!"*

*"Lighting in the street at night. Help local people to improve their activities (restaurant, local market) and amusing spaces for their child (seesaw, basket, etc.)"*

*"If the busses ran in both directions later then we would've tried more restaurants around the island."*

*"Reopen the Whale watch centre it was excellent!"*

*"Alternative options for transport to and from the airport."*

*"Reliable rental/transportation options."*

*"More efficient service when it comes to help with flights and rides to the airport."*

*"A lot of the snorkelling areas in Rarotonga are being destroyed by people as you can see from the state of the coral. I think more effort needs to be made to ensure this does not get any worse. Also more public access to beaches, as most seemed to be accessible only through resorts."*

*"More shops open after hours."*

*“Service levels need to be improved. The tourists are the customers and not ‘a pain’.”*

*“More information how I can help protect the environment and fish there.”*

*“Best info was in blogs and private websites, although the official site is good too - need more resources for independent travellers.”*

*“Being able to learn more about how island systems run- waste management, power supply, supplies etc.”*

*“Strongly suggest that the tourism stakeholders be honest and forthcoming about the existence and danger of Stone Fish. By not being forthcoming, it causes visitors to stay away from the Cooks for fear of other dangers not being reported.”*

*“Better respect for animals.”*

*“We expected the hotels to be of a standard, and two of the four we experienced were not at all representative of the rest.”*

*“Late checkout for a reasonable rates as most flight leave in the evening and after a late arrival there are no meals available.”*

*“I would look into making the flights on Air Rarotonga more affordable--it will increase tourism!”*

## Reasons to return to the Cook Islands and recommend to others

The majority of visitors (92%) indicated that they would consider re-visiting the Cook Islands in the future. This figure is the same as the 2016/17 annual average and slightly higher than the identical quarter in 2017 (91%). Of the 8 percent of visitors who added reasons why they would not want to return to the Cook Islands, the majority stated that did not wish to return because of the long distance or want to visit another destination. Some visitors commented that a holiday to the Cook Islands is expensive (especially accommodation and food) and that it is not good value for money. A few visitors said that they 'had been there and seen it all'. Other factors given for not wishing to return included the degraded lagoon condition, a lack of activities, and poor service. Comments included:

*"The accommodation and activities were overpriced and therefore unless you spent lots of money there wasn't so much to do for a family. We had a bad experience with the weather too."*

*"Try somewhere different - no particular reason."*

*"It is very far away from home and now that I've seen it I am satisfied."*

*"A bit expensive to travel between the islands which is what we liked best."*

*"Fiji or Bora Bora offer much better accommodation and higher class activities!"*

*"Because the Chinese are building a big hotel there and it will increase the number of tourists and there are already too many."*

Just under half (47%) of the visitors mentioned that they would definitely include the outer islands in their next visit. A further 48% of visitors indicated they will "maybe" visit outer islands next time. Of those who said they would/maybe visit outer islands next time, most (88%) of them mentioned they would like to include 'Aitutaki'. 'Atiu' was the second most mentioned island at 43%; another 35% of visitors stated that they would like to visit Mangaia, 27% of the respondents would like to visit Mauke. A small number of visitors mentioned Manihiki, Palmerston, Penrhyn, Pukapuka, or as many as they can visit. A few mentioned the high cost of visiting outer islands as a barrier for not visiting.

Nearly all visitors surveyed (98%) said that they would recommend the destination to their family and friends which is consistent with previous survey periods. Only 2% of visitors would not recommend the Cook Islands to others and this is largely based on the high prices, a lack of environmental care, touristy, flight related issues, and limited attractions or activities.

## Final observations

This report shows that the Cook Islands tourism industry generally performed well during the survey period of January to March 2018. Visitor satisfaction levels and the desire for return visitation have remained very high, and it is clear that the destination is making a generally positive impression on visitors. Visitor yield has remained strong and it will be important to see if this trend is sustained for the rest of the year. In comparison with previous third quarters in 2016/17 there has been a clear decline in environmental issues and concerns and this clearly relates to a down turn in visitor comments about algae and related problems in Muri Lagoon.

Despite the overall positive performance and growth in visitor spend this report again highlights that there is room to enhance the visitor experience and to increase the economic yield and broader community benefits associated with tourism. As with previous reports, this quarter's research highlights issues around the lack of public services, facilities and infrastructure in the Cook Islands.

Overall visitor satisfaction and willingness to return are high, particularly, the majority of the respondents expressed their willingness of visiting one of the outer islands next time. It is vital now to build on this positive performance and to convert it into even greater economic benefits for local people. 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.

## Appendix – Cook Islands Visitor Survey



简体中文

### Cook Islands Visitor Survey

#### Information for participants

Kia Orana and warm Pacific greetings to you. As a recent visitor to the Cook Islands, we invite you to participate in research designed to improve the visitor experience as well as support us to make good decisions for tourism in our beautiful island nation. The research is funded by the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation and conducted by the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand.

If you are a permanent Cook Island resident, thank you for your interest but this Survey is focused on non-resident visitors to the Islands.

We would like to know about your most recent visit to the Cook Islands and ask you to complete this Visitor Survey within two weeks of your trip if possible.

Participation is entirely voluntary. To participate in this research, simply click on the button below. The Survey asks a number of questions where you select your answer from a range of options given. Some questions ask you to type your comments in your own words into the box provided. We would appreciate it if you could fill this survey out as accurately as possible. All questions are optional. The survey will run until the end of 2017.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

[Take the survey](#)

All answers are confidential and can in no way be linked to your personal details. By taking the survey you are giving consent to be part of this research.

Aggregated results of this research may be used in journal and conference publications. A summary of the results of this research will also be available on [www.nztri.org](http://www.nztri.org) in 2017.

## ABOUT YOUR VISIT:

This survey is about your most recently completed visit to the Cook Islands. We would ask you to complete this survey within two weeks of your return home if possible.

(If you are a permanent Cook Islands' resident, thank you for your interest but this survey is focused on non-resident visitors to the Cook Islands)

By completing the survey you are giving consent to participate in this research.

1. Using the calendar below, please select the date you arrived in the Cook Islands.

2. How many nights did you spend in the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?

3. What was the main purpose of your visit?

- Holiday
- Wedding party
- Business or conference
- Visiting friends or relatives
- Honeymoon
- Special event - sporting
- Special event - cultural
- Volunteering
- Education
- Other reason, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. How did you get to the Cook Islands? (tick as many as apply)

- Airline - Air New Zealand (1)
- Airline - Virgin Australia (2)
- Airline - Air Tahiti (3)
- Ferry (4)
- Private charter plane (5)
- Private boat (6)

5. Did you travel by yourself to the Cook Islands?

- Yes
- No

5.1 Who were your travelling companions? (tick as many as apply)

- a) Partner / husband / wife
- b) Family member(s)
- c) Friends



- d) Work colleagues
- e) Tour group
- f) Organised group (e.g. school, sports etc)
- g) Wedding party
- h) Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many people accompanied you on this trip?

- a) 1
- b) 2
- c) 3
- d) 4
- e) 5
- f) 6
- g) 7
- h) 8
- i) 9
- j) 10+

7. How did you find out about the Cook Islands as a destination? (tick as many as apply)

- Previous visits (1)
- Friends/family (2)
- Travel agent/agency brochures (3)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) (4)
- Television or radio programmes (5)
- Travel books (e.g. Lonely Planet) (10)
- Magazine and newspaper articles (6)
- The official Cook Islands travel website ([cookislands.travel/nz](http://cookislands.travel/nz)) (7)
- General travel websites (e.g. TripAdvisor) (8)
- Web search engines (e.g. Google) (9)
- Other (10) \_\_\_\_\_

8. How important were the following sources of information when planning your trip to the Cook Islands? (from 1 to 5, 1 refers to not at all important and 5 refers to extremely important)

Previous visits (1)

Friends/family (2)

Travel agent/travel brochures (3)

Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) (4)

Television or radio programmes (5)

Travel books (e.g. Lonely Planet) (9)

Magazine and newspaper articles (6)

The official Cook Islands travel website (cookislands.travel/nz) (7)

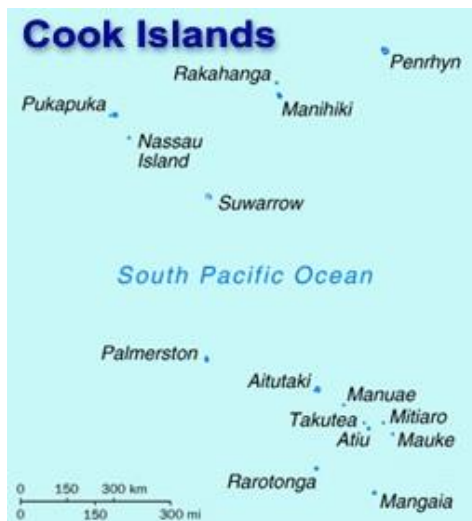
General travel websites (e.g. Trip Advisor) (8)

Web search engines (e.g. Google) (9)

9. How did you purchase your travel to the Cook Islands?

- Travel arrangements were made through a travel agent (1)
- I made my own travel arrangement using the Internet (2)
- Travel arrangements were made by a mixture of travel agent and online booking (5)
- Travel arrangements were made by others (business, friends, relatives) (3)
- Other - please specify (4) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Which islands did you visit on this trip? (Tick as many as apply)



10.1 How many nights did you spend on each island?

- a) Rarotonga
- b) Aitutaki
- c) Atiu
- d) Mangaia
- e) Mauke
- f) Other

10.2 Please select the accommodation(s) you stayed in on Ratrotonga? (Hold down the Ctrl key to choose more than one accommodation)

10.3. How satisfied were you with the following aspects in terms of your recent visit?

The level of service provided at this accommodation (1)

The quality, availability and maintenance of facilities provided at this accommodation (2)

The overall value for money (3)

10.4 Please select the accommodation(s) you stayed in on Aitutaki? (Hold down the Ctrl key to choose more than one accommodation)

10.5 How satisfied were you with the following aspects in terms of your recent visit?

The level of service provided at this accommodation (1)

The quality, availability and maintenance of facilities provided at this accommodation (2)

The overall value for money (3)

10.6 Please select the accommodation(s) you stayed in on Atiu? (Hold down the Ctrl key to choose more than one accommodation)

10.7 How satisfied were you with the following aspects in terms of your recent visit?

The level of service provided at this accommodation (1)

The quality, availability and maintenance of facilities provided at this accommodation (2)

The overall value for money (3)

10.8 Please select the accommodation(s) you stayed in on Mangaia? (Hold down the Ctrl key to choose more than one accommodation)

10.9 How satisfied were you with the following aspects in terms of your recent visit?

The level of service provided at this accommodation (1)

The quality, availability and maintenance of facilities provided at this accommodation (2)

The overall value for money (3)

10.10 Please select the accommodation(s) you stayed in on Mauke? (Hold down the Ctrl key to choose more than one accommodation)

10.11 How satisfied were you with the following aspects in terms of your recent visit?

The level of service provided at this accommodation (1)

The quality, availability and maintenance of facilities provided at this accommodation (2)

The overall value for money (3)

11. On your most recent visit to the Cook Islands, please indicate below (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied') the activities that you engaged in and how satisfied you were with your experience.

*Water based activities:*

- a) Beaches
- b) Swimming
- c) Snorkelling
- d) Diving
- e) Kayaking
- f) Fishing - Deep Sea
- g) Fishing - Bonefishing
- h) Lagoon Cruise
- i) Ocean Cruise
- j) Whale Watching
- k) Kitesurfing
- l) Stand Up Paddle Boarding

*Cultural interaction:*

- a) Island Night Feast and Show
- b) Meal at a Cook Islands Home
- c) Church on Sunday
- d) Island Celebrations or Events
- e) Tumunu on Atiu
- f) Local Markets
- g) Dance / Language / Art Classes

*Land based activities and Touring:*

- a) Restaurants, Bars and Cafes
- b) Cultural Events
- c) Sporting Events
- d) 4WD Adventures
- e) Cultural Tour
- f) Treks and Trails
- g) Cycling
- h) Sightseeing
- i) Vehicle Rental
- j) Public Transport

*Shopping:*

- a) Pearls
- b) Arts
- c) Crafts
- d) Music
- e) Local Produce e.g Coffee, Coconut Oil etc

Please tell us about any other activities you participated in:

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12. On your most recent visit, how satisfied were you with the following (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied')?

- a) The information that was available when planning this trip?
- b) The information that was available during this trip?
- c) The cost of accommodation?
- d) The quality of accommodation?
- e) The experience of renting a vehicle?
- f) The experience of using public transport?
- g) The frequency of air transport within the Cook Islands?
- h) The overall level of service in the Cook Islands?
- i) The friendliness of the people in the Cook Islands?

13. What did you find most attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?

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14. What did you find least attractive or appealing about the Cook Islands on your most recent visit?

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15. Is there anything that could have improved your visit to the Cook Islands?

- a) No
- b) Yes

## **EXPENDITURE**

Information on how much money you spent during your visit helps the planning and development of the Cook Islands economy.

We would appreciate it if you could fill out this section as accurately as possible.

16. Did you prepay for any of your travel arrangements prior to arrival?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16.1. In the expenditure estimates you will provide below, how many people are included (including yourself)?

- a) Adults
- b) Children (0- 16 years old)

16.2 Please indicate below the total value of what you paid prior to your arrival to the Cook Islands (including purchases made via travel agents or the internet), in the currency specified below:

- a) NZD
- b) AUD
- c) GBP
- d) USD
- e) EUR
- f) CAD
- g) Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

16.3 Please indicate below the total value of what you prepaid (including purchases made via travel agents or the Internet) (Please enter only numbers in the box provided e.g. 1000).

16.4 What does this amount above include? (tick as many as apply)

- a) International flights
- b) Accommodation
- c) Breakfast or meals
- d) Domestic transport
- e) Activities
- f) Other

17. Did you spend any money while in the Cook Islands?

- a) Yes
- b) No

17.1 In the expenditure estimates you will provide below, how many people are included (counting yourself)?

- a) Adults
- b) Children (0- 16 years old)

17.2 During your most recent visit to the Cook Islands, how much do you estimate that you spent in each island in local currency (NZ\$)? Please enter your spend figures in the boxed provided e.g. 1000)

- a) Accommodation
- b) Restaurants, Cafes & Bars
- c) Vehicle Rental
- d) Petrol
- e) Domestic flights
- f) Public transport
- g) Internet cost
- h) Cruising
- i) Groceries
- j) Shopping (e.g. souvenirs, clothes)
- k) Activities (e.g. water sports, sightseeing)
- L) Other

18. Was the Cook Islands the only country you visited on this trip?

- a) Yes
- b) No

18.1 What other destinations were included in that bigger trip?

19. Would you return to the Cook Islands? Why?

- a) Yes
- b) No- please give reasons why not \_\_\_\_\_

19.1 Would you visit the outer islands next time?

- a) yes
- b) maybe
- c) no

19.2 Would you include the following outer islands? (tick as many as apply)

- Aitutaki (1)
- Atiu (2)
- Mangaia (3)
- Mauke (4)
- Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

20. Would you recommend the Cook Islands to others? Why?

- a) Yes
- b) No - please give reasons why not \_\_\_\_\_

21. How satisfied were you with your overall experience of the Cook Islands (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very dissatisfied and 5 being 'very satisfied')?

## **ABOUT YOU**

22. How many times have you been to the Cook Islands prior to your most recent visit?

23. Your age group:

- a) 18-29
- b) 30-39
- c) 40-49
- d) 50-59
- e) 60-69
- f) 70+

24. Your gender:

- a) Female
- b) Male

25. What is your highest qualification?

- a) No formal qualification
- b) High school qualification
- c) Tertiary/University qualification
- d) Other



26. What is your approximate annual household income in your home currency? Please use the following format: e.g. 50,000 and specify currency in question 26.1.

26.1 Please select your currency

- a) NZD
- b) AUD
- c) GBP
- d) USD
- e) EUR
- f) CAD
- g) Other - please specify

27. Where do you live? (Please select from list of all countries)

27.1 If you are from New Zealand, which region do you live in (Please select from the list)?

Please provide your New Zealand post code in the box below. ( This helps the Cook Islands to garget its limited marketing budget).

27.2 If you are from Australia, which state do you live in (Please select from the list)?

Please provide your Australian post code in the box below. ( This helps the Cook Islands to garget its limited marketing budget).

*Survey Powered By Qualtrics*