

Destination management planning in the Thames-Coromandel/Hauraki region

Community survey report 2021



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Executive summary

In 2021 Destination Coromandel commissioned NZTRI to conduct research to inform the development of a Destination Management Plan for the Thames-Coromandel /Hauraki region.

The aim of the survey is to gather the community's perceptions of the visitor economy and input into the future of the region's tourism development.



Executive summary

- The online community survey was conducted from 6 August to 6 September 2021 generating 1,137 responses.
- Of the total sample: 76% (n=871) are Residents and 19% (n=214) are Holiday Homeowners (non-resident), 5% (n=52) are non-resident Mana Whenua. Of the resident grouping 10% (n=68) identified as mana whenua of Hauraki.
- There is good regional coverage in the sample, the following local areas are identified for further breakdown of some findings: Whitianga & Mercury Bay, Thames/Thames Coast, Northern Coromandel/Coromandel Town, Pauanui/Tairua, Whangamata, Waihi/Waihi Beach, Hot Water Beach/Hahei, Paeroa, Hauraki Plains & Shorebird Coast, and Karangahake Gorge.
- Long term residents are common. Nearly half (49%) of resident respondents have lived in the region for over 10 years, with more than one in five (22%) residing for over 25 years.
- Holiday homeowners have an older age profile than residents, with 62% aged 55 years or older.
- Holiday homeowners have a higher income profile than residents, with 71% having an annual household income of over \$100,001, with 27% in excess of \$200,000.
- Nearly half (46%) of residents who work in the region are employed by a business/organisation that provides services and/or products to visitors.

Executive summary

- ‘The natural environment’, ‘sense of community’, ‘lifestyle’ and ‘proximity to main centres and activities’ encapsulate what respondents like most about the region.
- The changes respondents would like to see in the region in the future focus on improved roads and two-lane bridges, better facilities and activities, and more sustainable development practices.
- The region should be known for the beauty and health of the natural environment, as a great place to live and visit and as a champion of sustainability.
- Residents and holiday homeowners agree that tourism is good for the economy and adds to the vibrancy of the region.
- Many concerns about tourism focus on the challenges of seasonality, including overcrowding, and the challenges of inadequate infrastructure.
- When asked what they would like to see in terms of future visitor numbers in the high /summer season 78% of respondents want to see visitor numbers remain constant (61%) or be less than current numbers (17%). One in five respondents (22%) would like to see more visitors.

Executive summary

- There is considerable regional variation in responses to questions about the ideal number of future visitors. Some localities (e.g. Hot Water Beach/Hahei) expressed very limited desire to grow numbers, while others (Paeroa, Hauraki Plains and Shorebird Coast) are far more supportive of further growth.
- The above reflects variation in local attitudes towards the impacts of tourism. Hahei and Hot Water Beach, for example, show clear signs of tourism related stress and tension, whereas respondents from Hauraki Plains and the Shorebird Coast feel very positive about the industry's impacts.
- In general residents are more likely to support the idea of having an increase in visitor numbers than non-resident holiday homeowners.
- Both residents and holiday homeowners express some uncertainty about the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and also the impact of the sector on the cost of living in the region.
- The value of an off-season break also features strongly in feedback from the community; there is appreciation of the opportunity to have a break from peak visitor numbers.

Executive summary

- A tourism industry that supports the environment, and provides jobs with fair working conditions and pay, dominates community aspirations for the future. Increasing visitor numbers in the low season and having fewer, but higher spending visitors are not seen as a ‘must have’.
- Aspirations for the future vary across localities in the region with some areas focused on the potential for future growth in numbers while others are emphasising reduced or consistent numbers and improved management of areas creating tension.
- Suggestions on how to improve tourism benefits to towns/local areas reveal a strong message - an inclusive approach to tourism development needs to be adopted with community *involved* in planning. Showcasing, valuing and protecting the natural environment; improving infrastructure and amenities for residents *and* visitors; and initiatives to enhance employment, education and youth are also important.
- Visitor experiences where family and friends can make memories together are highly favoured by both residents and holiday homeowners to be further developed in the region.
- Holiday homeowners would like to see more outdoor activities developed: including trails, and coastal and marine-based activities. Residents place more emphasis on developing community-based activities that are family friendly and culturally based.

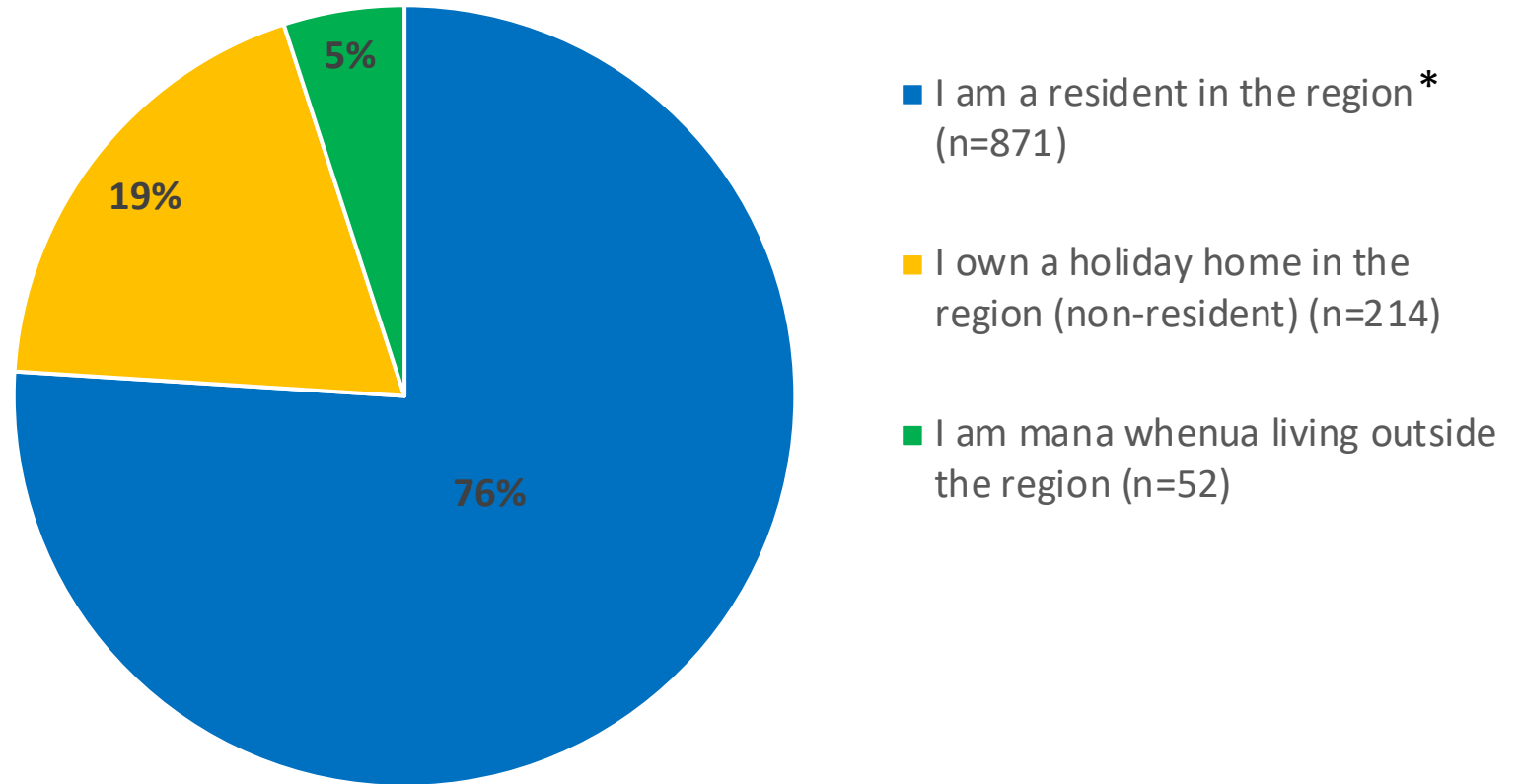
Executive summary

- When asked how best to address concerns related to tourism development, the strongest response was to ‘give community a voice’ at the table and to shift the region’s heavy reliance away from seasonal tourism.
- Over two thirds (68%) of community respondents feel they are not well-informed about efforts to manage and develop tourism in the region.
- Nearly 4 in 5 of respondents (79%) feel that they do not have the opportunity to influence decisions about tourism in the region.
- Over half (51%) of community respondents state that they want to be more involved in decision making that affects and influences tourism development.
- Advisory groups, meetings, working groups and surveys dominate suggested ways to involve community in tourism planning and development.
- The survey itself received positive feedback from respondents – several stating that they valued the chance to respond to important questions about the future of tourism in the region.

Report structure

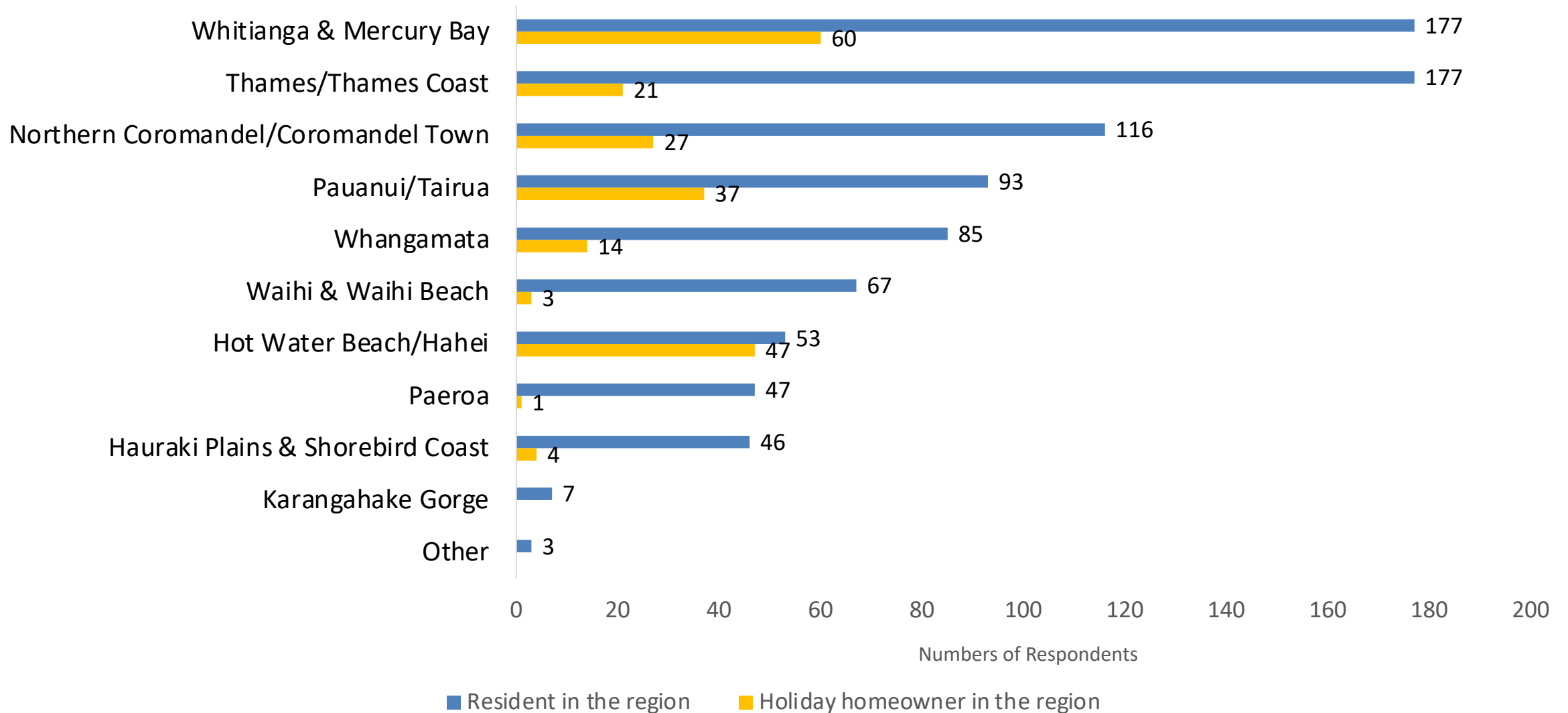


Residents make up over three quarters (76%) of all the respondents, a further one in five (19%) are non-resident holiday homeowners.

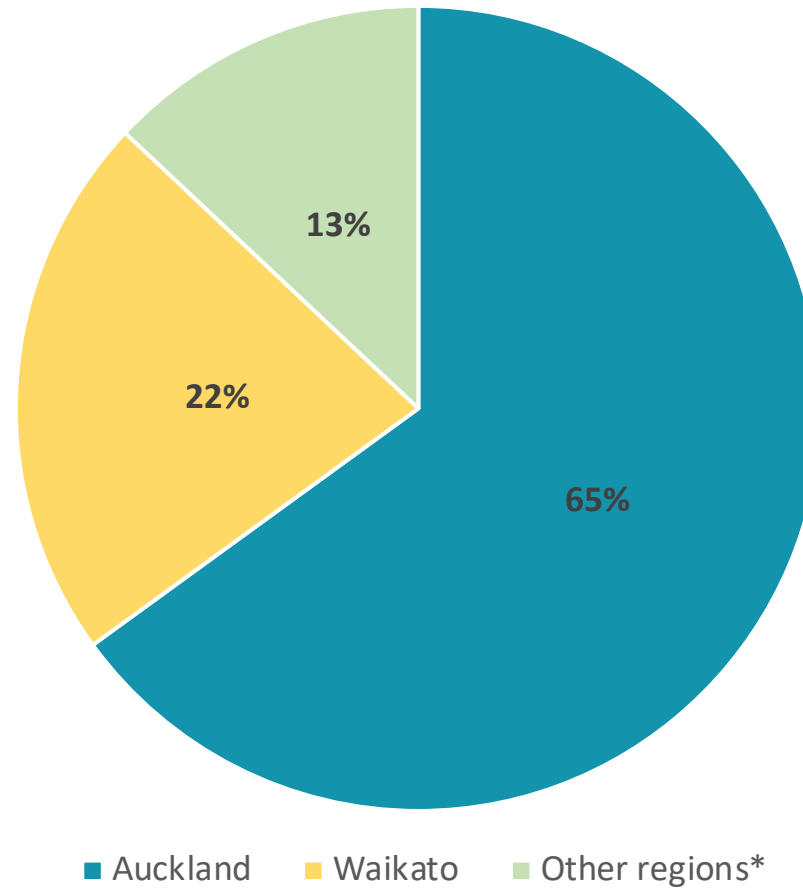


* 10% of residents in the region identify as mana whenua

Destination Coromandel ran an intensive promotional campaign for the survey resulting in broad representation across the region.

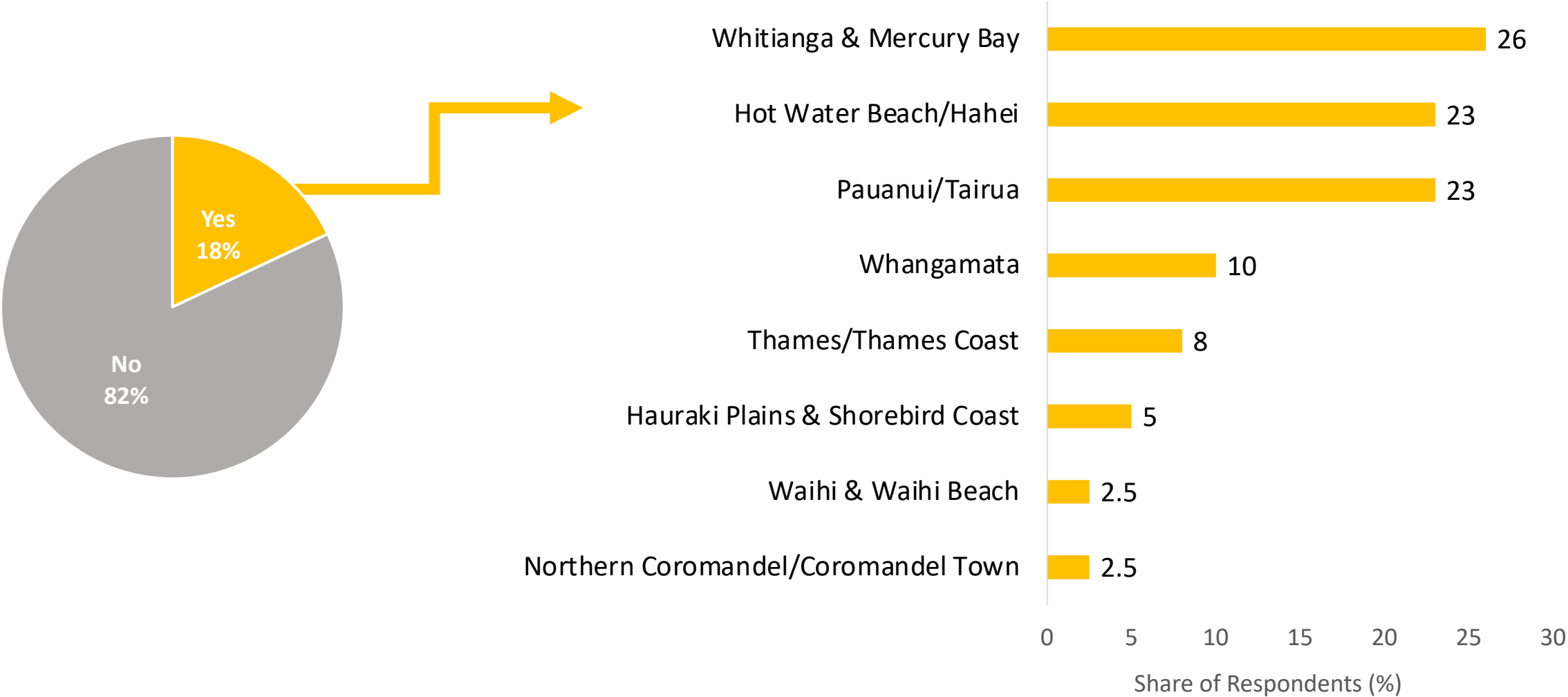


Two thirds of holiday homeowners live in or are residents of Auckland/Waikato

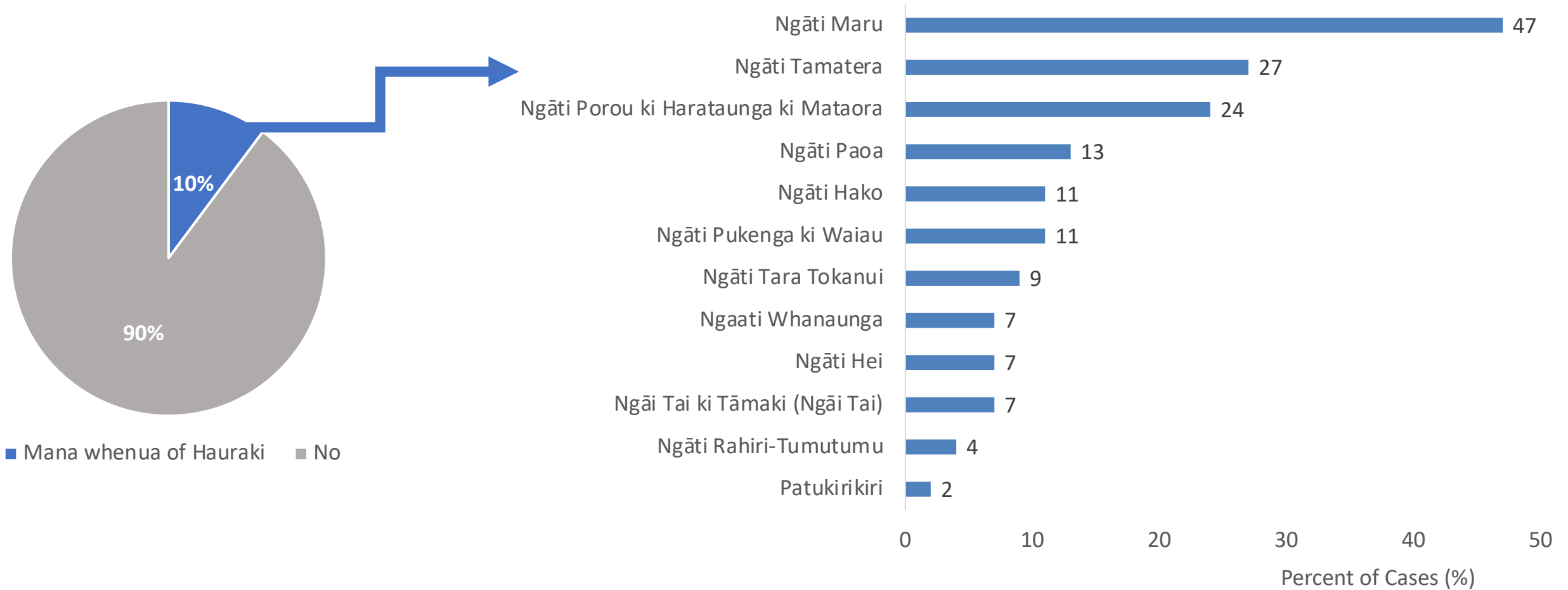


*Other regions include Canterbury, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, Bay of Plenty. A small percentage are based overseas.

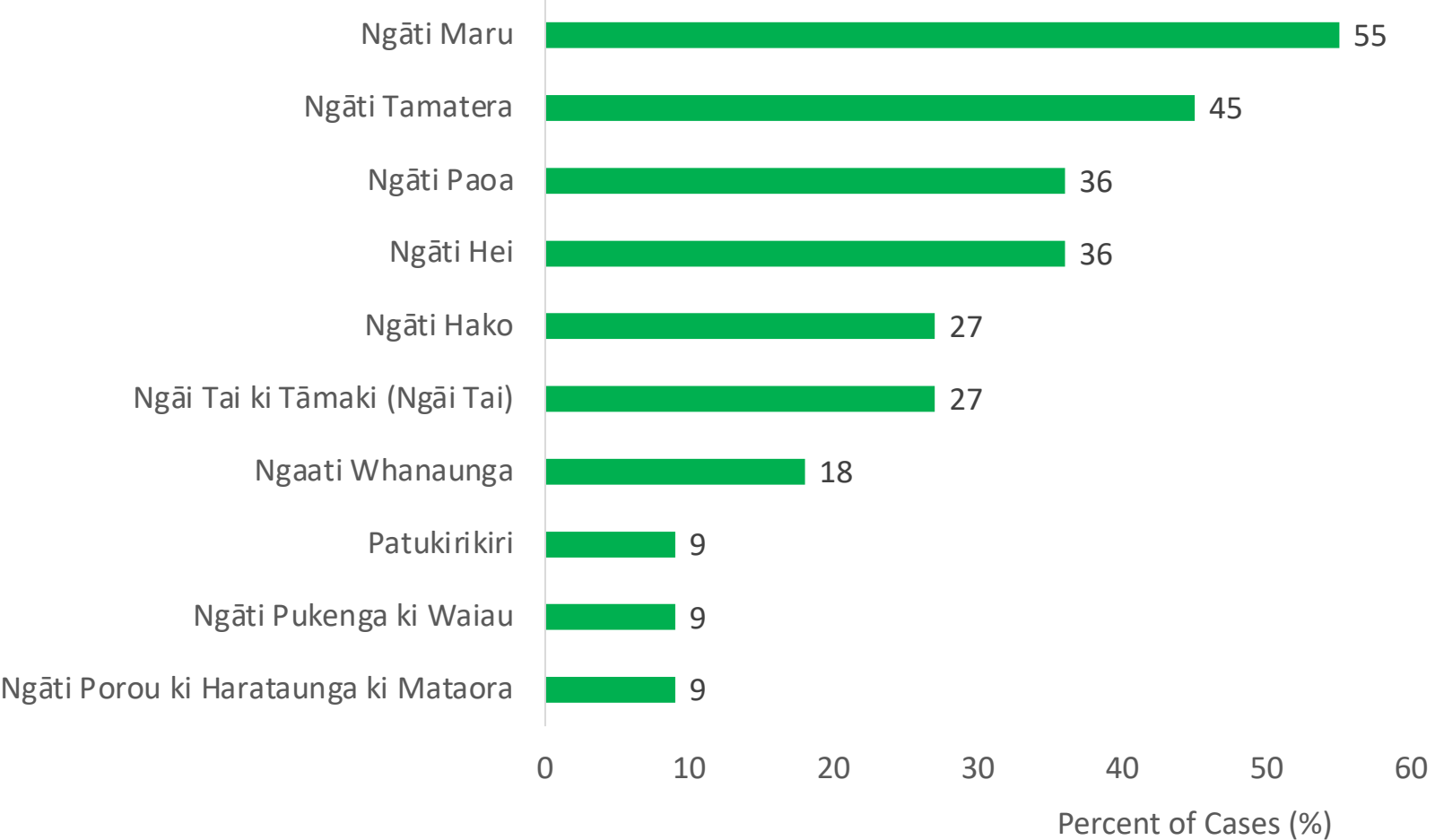
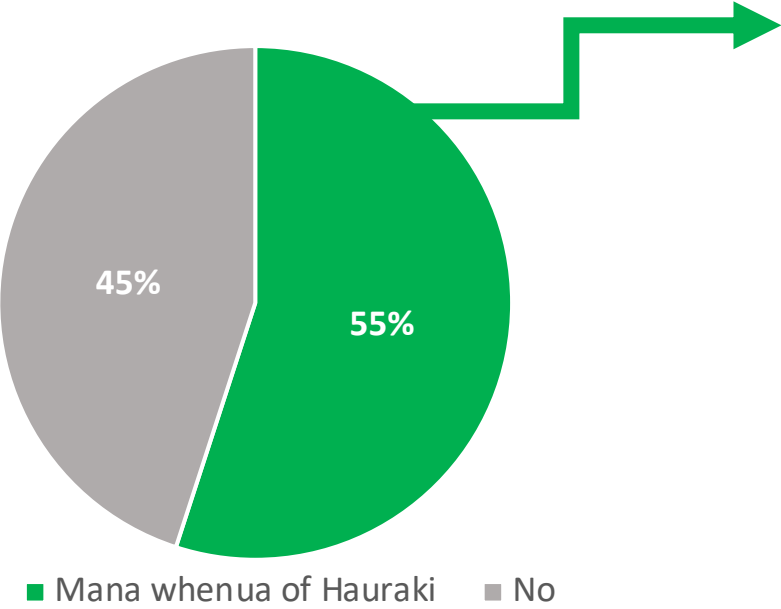
18% of holiday homeowners rent out their holiday homes, the majority of these homes are located on the east coast of Coromandel.



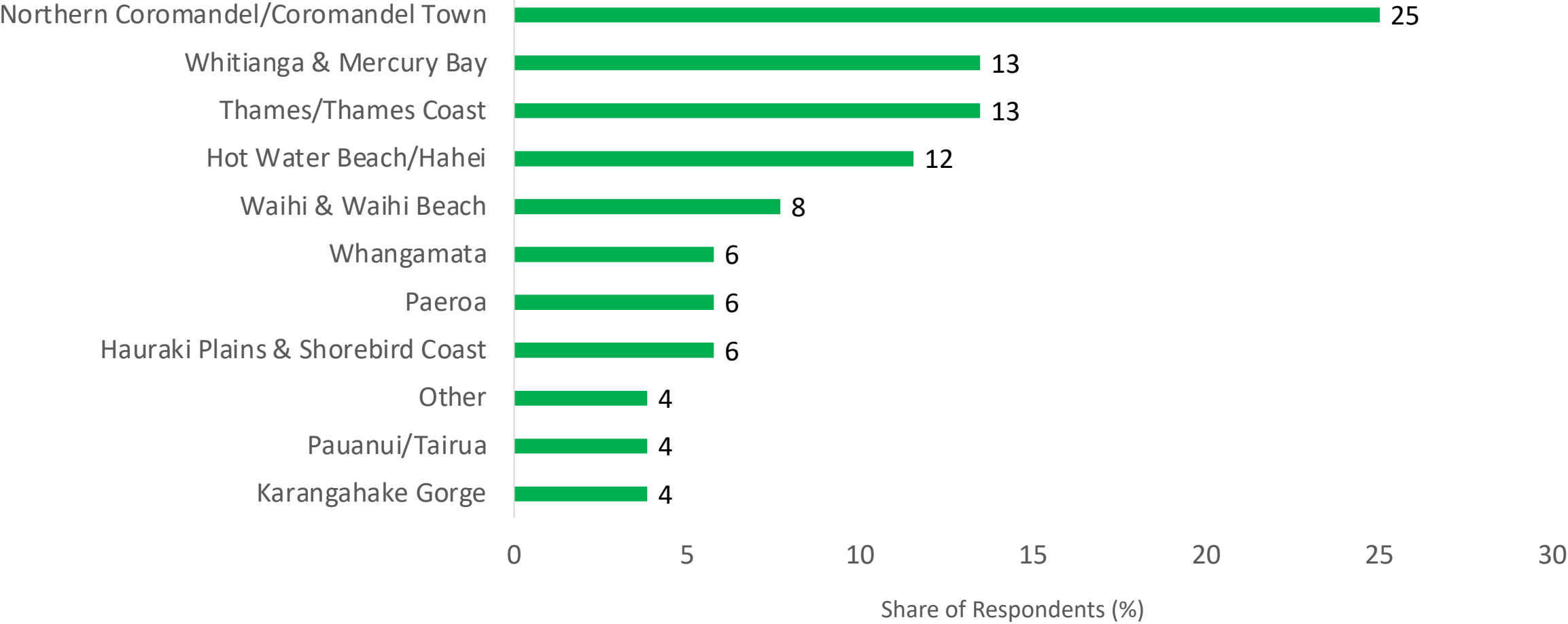
10% of residents identify as mana whenua of Hauraki: 76% named their hapu/iwi, of these 47% are Ngāti Maru.



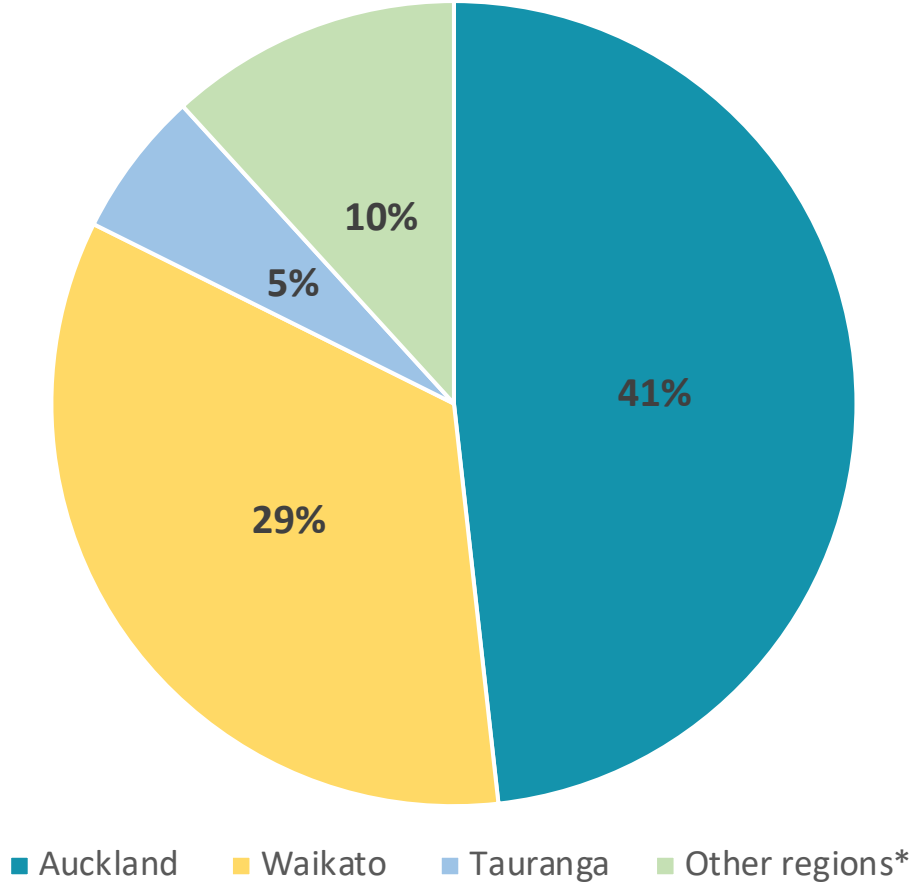
Over half of mana whenua living outside of the region identify as mana whenua of Hauraki: 81% named their hapu/iwi, of these 55% are Ngāti Maru.



A quarter of mana whenua living outside the region indicate strong ties with Northern Coromandel/Coromandel Town. A further 26% note strong links to Thames/Thames Coast or Whitianga/Mercury Bay.

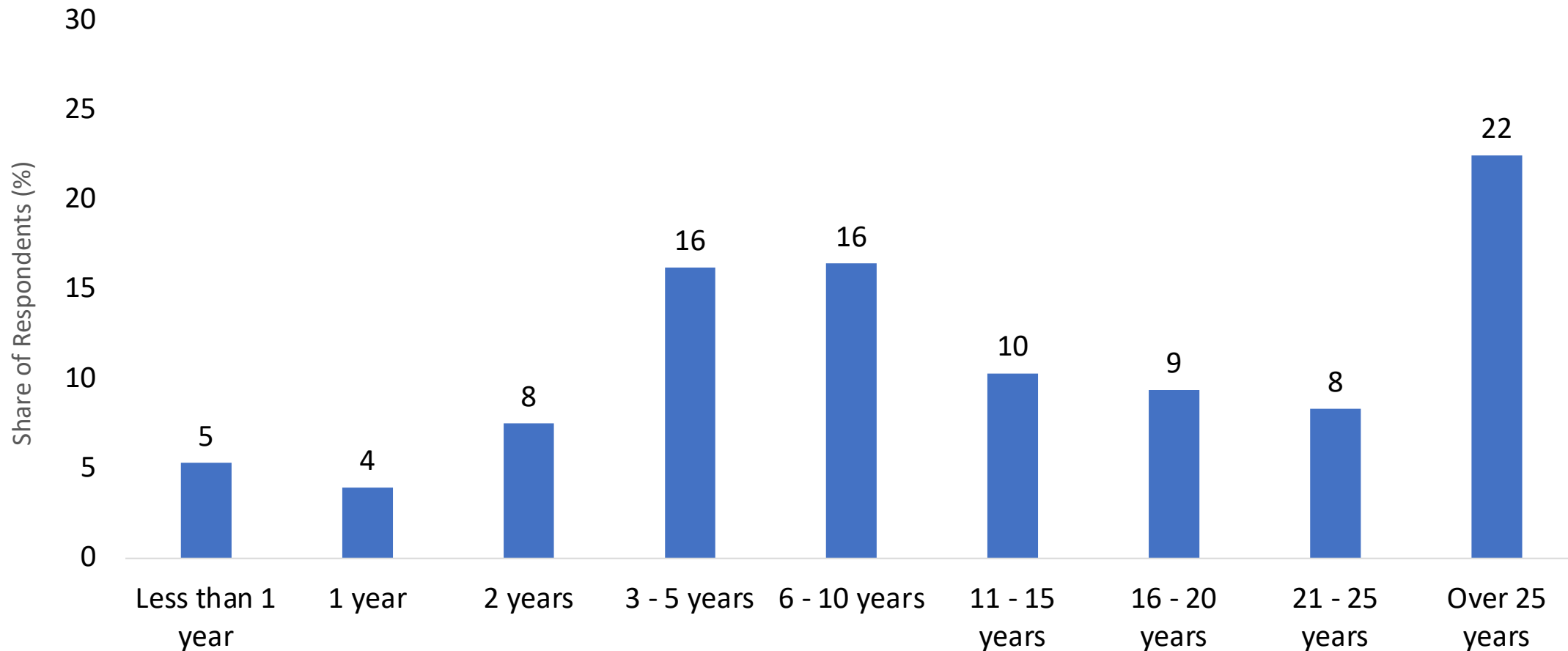


More than two thirds (70%) of non-resident mana whenua live in or are residents of Auckland/Waikato.

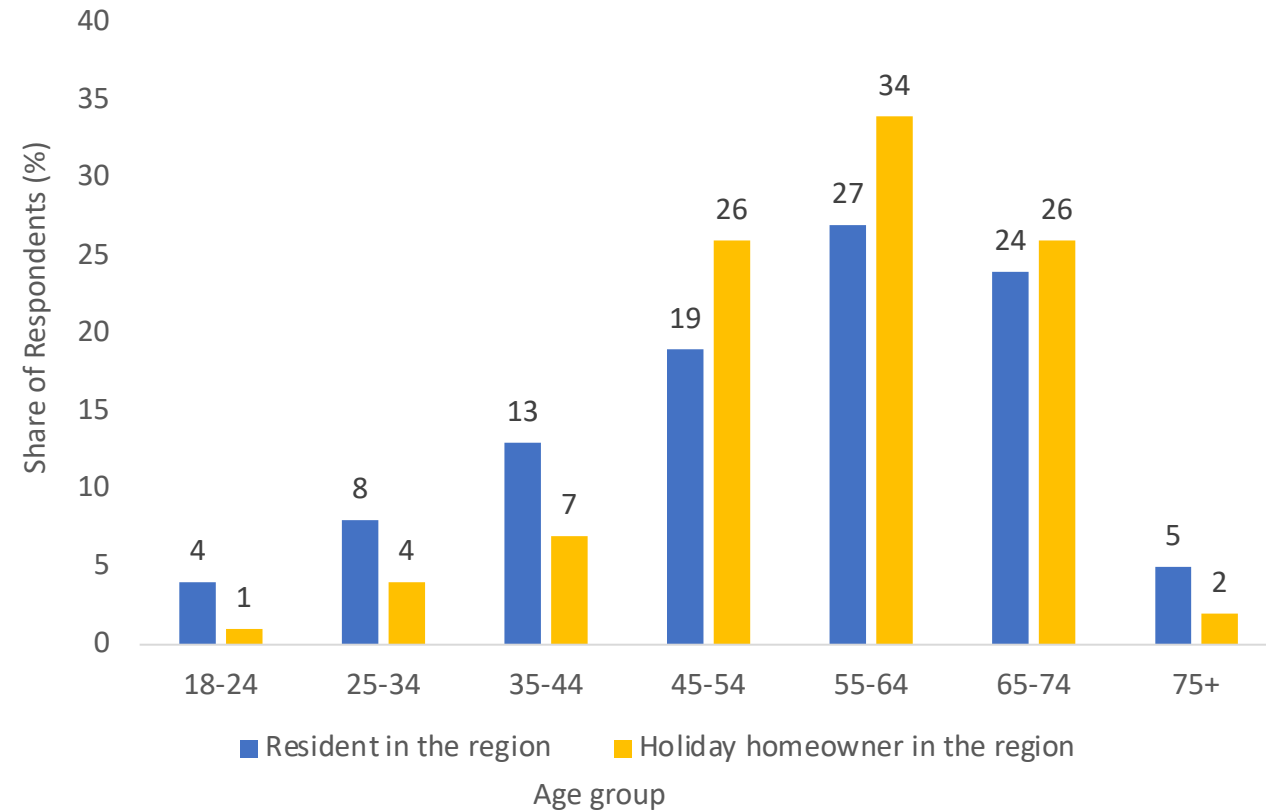
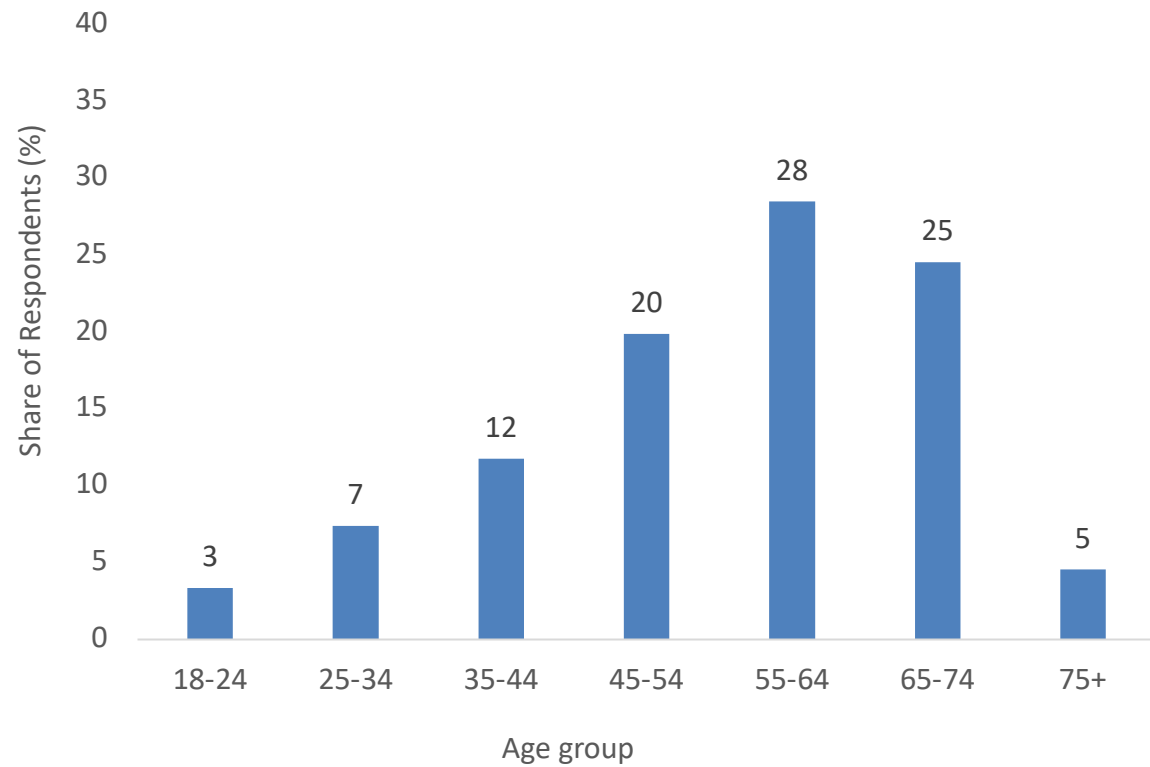


*Other regions include Canterbury, Hawke’s Bay, Wellington.

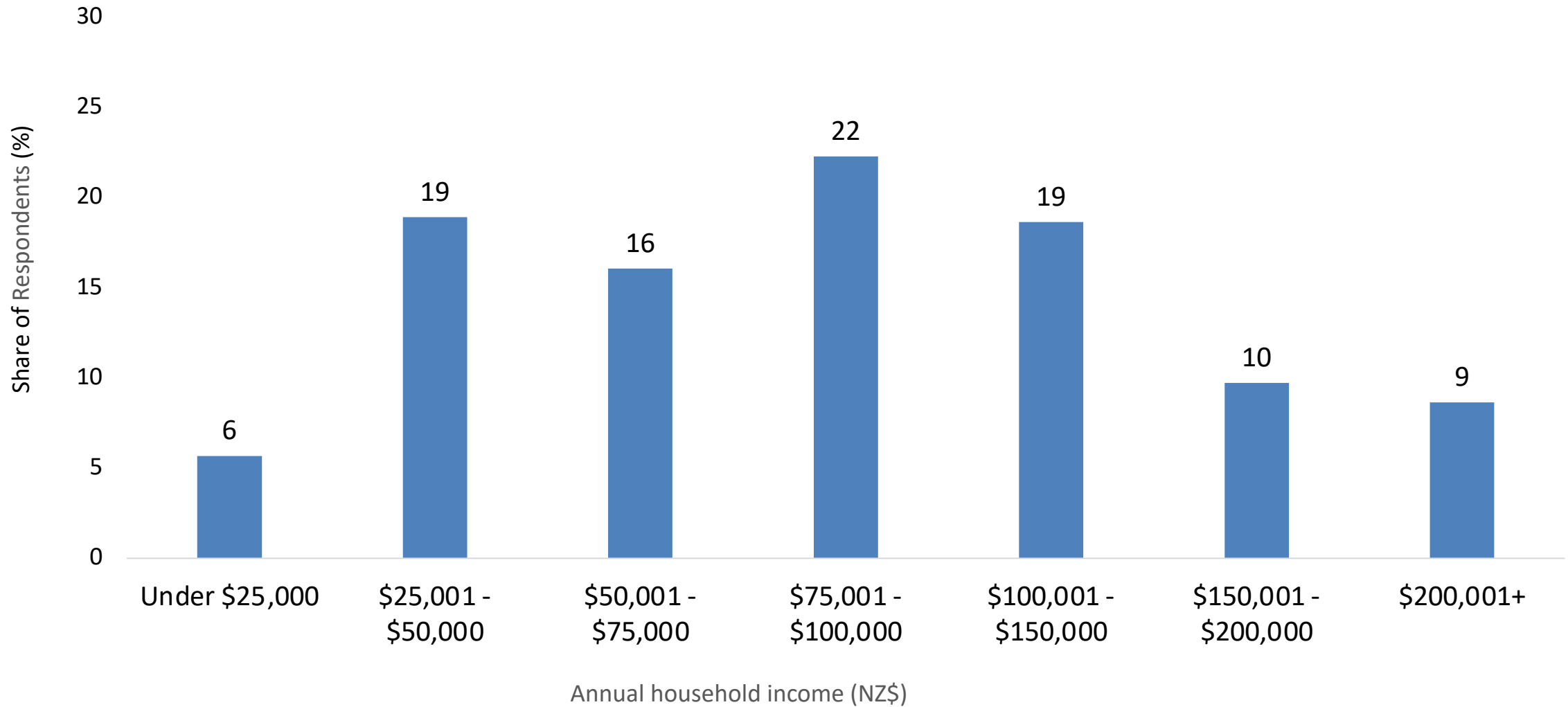
Nearly half (49%) of resident respondents have lived in the region for over 10 years, with more than one in five (22%) residing for over 25 years. A third have moved to the region in the last five years.



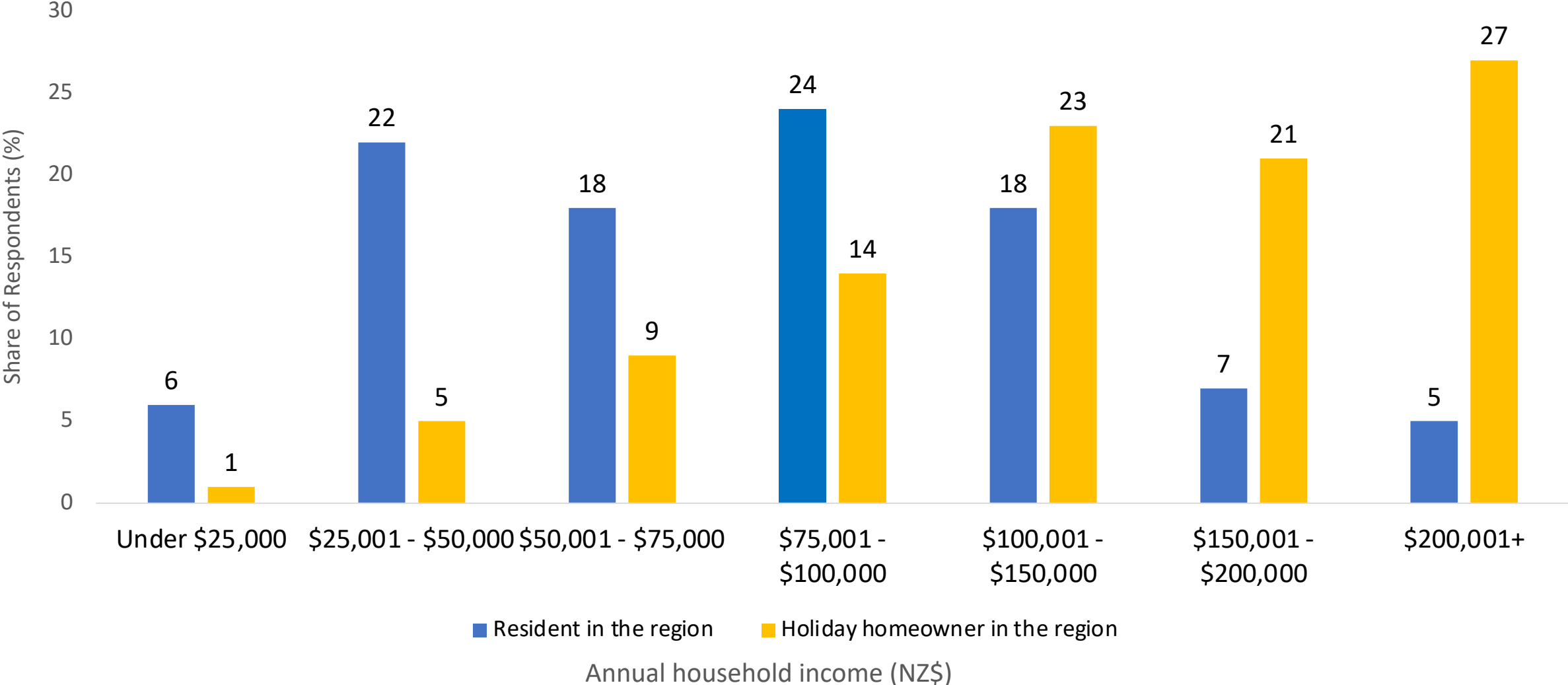
Holiday homeowners have an older age profile than residents, with 62% aged 55 years or older.



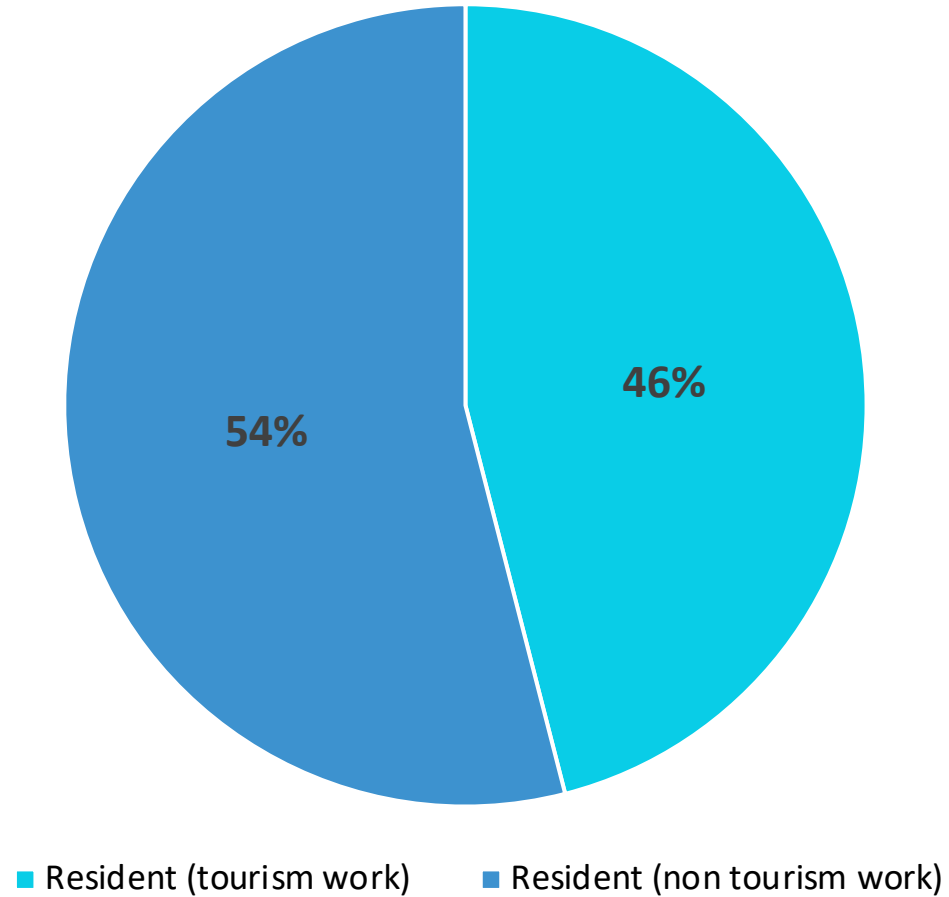
38% of respondents have an annual household income of over \$100,000 with 9% earning over \$200,000.



Holiday homeowners have a higher income profile than residents, 71% have an annual household income of over \$100,000, with 27% in excess of \$200,000.



Almost half (46%) of resident respondents working in the region are employed by a business /organisation that provides services and/or products to visitors.





When asked: *'What do you like the most about living in the Thames-Coromandel /Hauraki region'* the top four responses from residents are:

The natural environment
Sense of community
Relaxing lifestyle
Access/Proximity to main centres and activities

- **The natural environment:** Respondents enjoy the natural beauty of the region's diverse environment – the beaches/coast, ocean, rivers, mountains, bush, countryside, flora and fauna. As a place to live the region offers residents a beautiful natural environment with 'stunning scenery' where they can spend time with friends and family participating in myriad outdoor recreational activities.
- Some respondents express emotional and spiritual connections to the region drawing on whenua and moana as spiritual resources:

"My spiritual connection my whakapapa my whanau my whenua

"Bush, beaches, not too many people most of the time, the spirit of the whenua"

"I love the area, the harbours, the sea and the hills. It has a special feeling."

"There are many beautiful areas of bush, coastline and important areas of cultural significance."

- For holiday homeowners, the tranquillity and 'unspoilt' beauty of the area offers a place to escape to go fishing and enjoy other outdoor pursuits, or to look forward to spending their retirement in.
- For mana whenua who live outside the region, the connection to the land and sea is often even stronger: *"It is my Turangawaewae, I am part of the local iwi and am passionate about the preservation and conservation of our rohe."*

- **Sense of community:** Comments reflect a strong appreciation for local people ‘who look after one another’ and for the ‘community spirit’ in their local area. Many comments were made about how ‘supportive’ the community is and the ‘friendliness’ of the local people’:

“The people, the peaceful environs has moulded friendly open helpful resourceful people.”

- **Relaxing lifestyle:** The region offers a relaxed lifestyle and an easy pace of life. ‘Lifestyle’ is predominantly described as ‘peaceful’ ‘serene’ ‘tranquil’, ‘slow paced’, ‘uncluttered’, with a ‘small town’ feel without the ‘hustle and bustle of city life’. Several respondents comment on the vibrancy and ‘busyness’ of the area in summer, complemented by a slower, quieter pace of life in winter – or as one respondent describes it:

“The heart beat in the summer and the solitude in the winter.”

- **Access/Proximity to main centres and activities** – the region is accessible and ideally located in close proximity to other main centres (Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton). Community appreciate the easy access to outdoor activities:

“The relaxing lifestyle and convenience of the locality: 1 - 1.5 hours to 3 major cities: Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga; 10 minutes - 2 hours from biking and tramping opportunities, fishing, world renowned beaches.”

When asked: *'What is the one thing you would most like to see change in the Thames-Coromandel/Hauraki region?'* the following emerged as key themes:

Improved roads and bridges
Better facilities and activities
More sustainable practices

- **Improved roads and bridges:** The strongest message from respondents is to improve the quality and safety of roads and bridges. Comments reflect the need to upgrade bridges throughout the region with a particular focus on reducing the number of one lane bridges – converting them to allow traffic in both directions.

“Roading access in and out of the region. The roading infrastructure is poor and, in some places, dangerous, extreme weather events continue to damage/restrict access and the one lane bridges create traffic chaos during holiday periods. Given the volume of residents and visitors and the regions location in the upper north island I would have expected greater investment to better support the region's communities.”

“Improve the roading in particular the one-way bridges. The narrow roads are dangerous for motorists and cyclists alike. I would love to ride more but it is simply too dangerous on the narrow roads.”

“Improve the roads - get rid of the dangerous one lane bridges and seal the minor roads (if only to reduce the ongoing maintenance costs).”

- **Better facilities and activities:** Respondents would like to see improvements in health services and medical facilities, shopping areas, wharves and boat ramps, a more secure water supply, more toilets and rubbish bins. Other improvements include, cycle and walking trails and additional facilities to provide more activities for the younger generation (recreational centres, playgrounds, swimming pools, skateparks).

“Better health facilities - another medical centre, radiology etc.”

“More emphasis and quality boat ramps and parking to attract more people to visit the coromandel town.”

“Thames wharf revitalisation/development.”

“Serious implementation of building water retention capacity for Whitianga e.g. reservoirs.”

“Better toilets in Whangamata - currently disgusting and an embarrassment to the town given we have so many visitors.”

“Shared network of cycle and walking trails across the region to connect towns.”

“More options for the youth!! The skatepark in Tairua did not come true, even though the dreams of the kids were big. Teenagers are bored around these ways. There is no youth centre or any place where they could meet and just "hang around" without being forced to spend money. This is sad, they are our future!”

- **More sustainable practices:** A stronger focus on social and environmental sustainability is called for. Respondents are of the opinion that management of freedom camping, mining, weed and pest control, commercial and recreational fishing, and protection of the environment needs to change. They would also like to see more affordable housing and employment opportunities.

“A clear plan to handle climate change and its impacts.”

“A focus on sustainability in all facets of human impacts and activities.”

“Caring more for our environment - focusing on becoming a leader in terms of sustainability.”

“Care and protection for our sea environment and sea creatures.”

“Less holiday homes; more affordable housing for locals.”

“Encourage new industry to come here to create more jobs & encourage people to live here permanently.”

“Greater opportunities for the local communities to grow sustainably while maintaining and enhancing their local identities, flavours and stories.”

Examples of suggestions: What is the one thing you would most like to see change in the region?

Paeroa, Ngatea, Karangahake, Hauraki Plains

- Improve the shopping in Paeroa especially shop frontages
- Heritage buildings need to be looked after better, Paeroa has gorgeous architecture that is unappreciated.
- Improved roading. Around our area (Ngatea) is terrible
- More activities for younger people and public transport between Paeroa/Waihi/Ngatea/Thames
- The main highway diverted past Ngatea town, making it more of a village
- The amount of large deep potholes on the Hauraki Rail Trail
- Car parking in the gorge at Karangahake
- No overtaking in Karangahake Gorge
- Flood prevention in Kaiaua

Waihi and Waihi Beach

- Lifeguards at the 4 Waihi Beach locations for the whole season not just the Dec Jan holiday period
- Mitigation of the air pollution from the Gold Mine Smelter which off and on pollutes the whole Waihi basin.
- More money spent in Waihi for kids. Better playground skate park etc
- Easier excess from Waihi to other areas for those who don't drive
- Upgrading of roading ... state highway 2 Paeroa-Waihi

Examples of suggestions: What is the one thing you would most like to see change in the region?

Coromandel Town

- Update the Coromandel Town park!
- Coromandel Town create a marina like Whitianga to bring in more tourism business
- Wharf in the town of Coromandel for ferry to berth
- A good recreational boat ramp for coromandel town
- A lot more promotion of Coromandel Town
- Being able to cycle from Coromandel Town to Fletchers Bay safely off road
- More walks/hikes opened in the Coromandel Forest Park
- I think coromandel town could really benefit from having an outdoor exercise area with equipment. The old netball courts needs new life.

Hahei/Hot Water Beach/Cathedral Cove

- Better medical services and an upgrade of roading and signage e.g. Hot Water Beach sign on main road
- Better infrastructure for Hahei e.g., sewage, footpaths and water for Hahei residents
- Controlled tourism, particularly in Hahei and Hotty
- At Hahei we need to improve the footpaths and Roads and Sewage systems so that the Children can swim in the Wigmore stream and know after 50 YEARS that it is safe.
- Start charging overseas visitors for using track to Cathedral Cove
- Tourists paying a small fee to visit local attractions like Cathedral Cove

Examples of suggestions: What is the one thing you would most like to see change in the region?

Whitianga

- A hospital in Whitianga and the emergency helicopter working without question.
- A swimming pool in Whitianga
- Better infrastructure and services in Whitianga.
- Development of more walking tracks handy to Whitianga town
- Some bike and mountain bike trails. For example, Coromandel to Whitianga.
- Serious implementation of building water retention capacity for Whitianga e.g. reservoirs
- We live in Whitianga ...The one thing I'd like to see change I guess is to see a lot more native trees being planted in and around the township area and new houses
- Stop any further growth of Whitianga township

Whangamata

- A less windy road to Whangamata
- A marine reserve at Whangamata around the islands
- Better toilets in Whangamata
- Development of the proposed community hub in Whangamata
- Get rid of the mangroves in Whangamata harbour.
- Whangamata Community Marae. This has so many advantages for all levels of the Community as this will have a huge impact with local Maori.
- More family activities- bring back the summer festival activities in Whangamata
- More travel connections between beach towns and big cities... e.g. daily bus Whangamata Hamilton.
- Roads between Whangamata and Waihi really starting to deteriorate

Examples of suggestions: What is the one thing you would most like to see change in the region?

Thames

- Upgrading of the Thames to Coromandel coast road.
- More money put in to beautify Thames to make it more of a destination
- More of a drive to attract people to Thames, not just Whangamata or Pauanui
- Publicity for Thames Heritage
- More events in Thames around Xmas, Matariki and New Year
- Having a marina in Thames ...encouraging water sports such as paddle boarding & canoeing. Offering boat trips up the Thames, fishing etc. it would work well with the rail trail
- Improved water and sewerage infrastructure for the Thames coast
- Thames wharf revitalisation/development

Tairua, Pauanui

- Two lane bridge at Tairua
- Finish the Tairua-Pauanui trail.
- Change to safer roads e.g. Kopitar Hikuai, Tairua and other one-way bridges.
- More options for the youth!! (Skatepark, youth centre)
- Skatepark for the kids in Tairua to go ahead
- Sort out one-way bridges through Tairua
- I hope the undeveloped land such as the Tairua marsh remains natural and undeveloped
- We URGENTLY need to replace all of the 1-way bridges, from Hikauia to North of Tairua. Would love to see Tairua one lane bridge upgraded.
- 100% of the rates we pay in Pauanui to be used in Pauanui

When asked: *'What is the one thing you would like the region to be known for in the future?'* the following key themes emerged:

The beauty and health of our natural environment
A great place to live and visit
A champion of sustainability

- **The beauty and health of our natural environment:** The strongest message from respondents is that the region should be known for its beautiful natural environment (beaches, ocean, outdoor areas). Comments highlight the quality of the (unspoiled/untouched/uncrowded and clean) protected natural environment with rich, flourishing biodiversity.

“Where nature thrives... Locals protect nature and visitors help enhance nature. No predators, with forests, farms and gardens teeming with native life. The marine environment abundant with aquatic life, providing a safe home and sustainable food basket for locals and visitors.”

“Its ability to show its beauty for all her worth.”

“Nature, the natural habitat, native bush, clean rivers, beaches, wildlife, fishing.”

“Preserved nature i.e. Clean green beaches, scallop beds restored, night sky protected, environmentally responsible tourism.”

“The exquisite back-to-nature, quiet environment that hasn’t been tainted by high rise and shops etc.”

“Unspoiled nature and free from mass tourism developments.”

- **A great place to live and visit:** Respondents would like to see the region become known as the best (or 'ultimate') holiday destination, with friendly local people, and as a great place to raise a family and live.

“Local and Tourist friendly destination with multiple activities for all.”

“The best north island holiday destination and family friendly place to live.”

“Having a different feel to other destinations, visitors go away feeling they wish their community felt like ours.”

“Pristine environment, welcoming and safe communities. Well planned and managed to support and enable healthy and sustainable communities for all to enjoy, including visitors.”

“Thames-Coromandel and Hauraki are two quite different regions. I think that this needs to be considered when marketing the wider region. Thames-Coromandel is obviously the beautiful beaches and holiday making spots. For Hauraki I think we could do more to promote the lifestyle as a place to live, particularly in today's climate - the freedom and space and the benefits to families.”

- **A champion of sustainability:** Clearly respondents value the beauty of the natural environment and the supportive communities where they live - some would like to see the region take a lead role in sustainable development and be known as champions of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

“It’s care for people AND place. For being regarded as a place displaying national leadership in the conservation and restoration of our environment ... this is the unique positioning for the peninsula and region.”

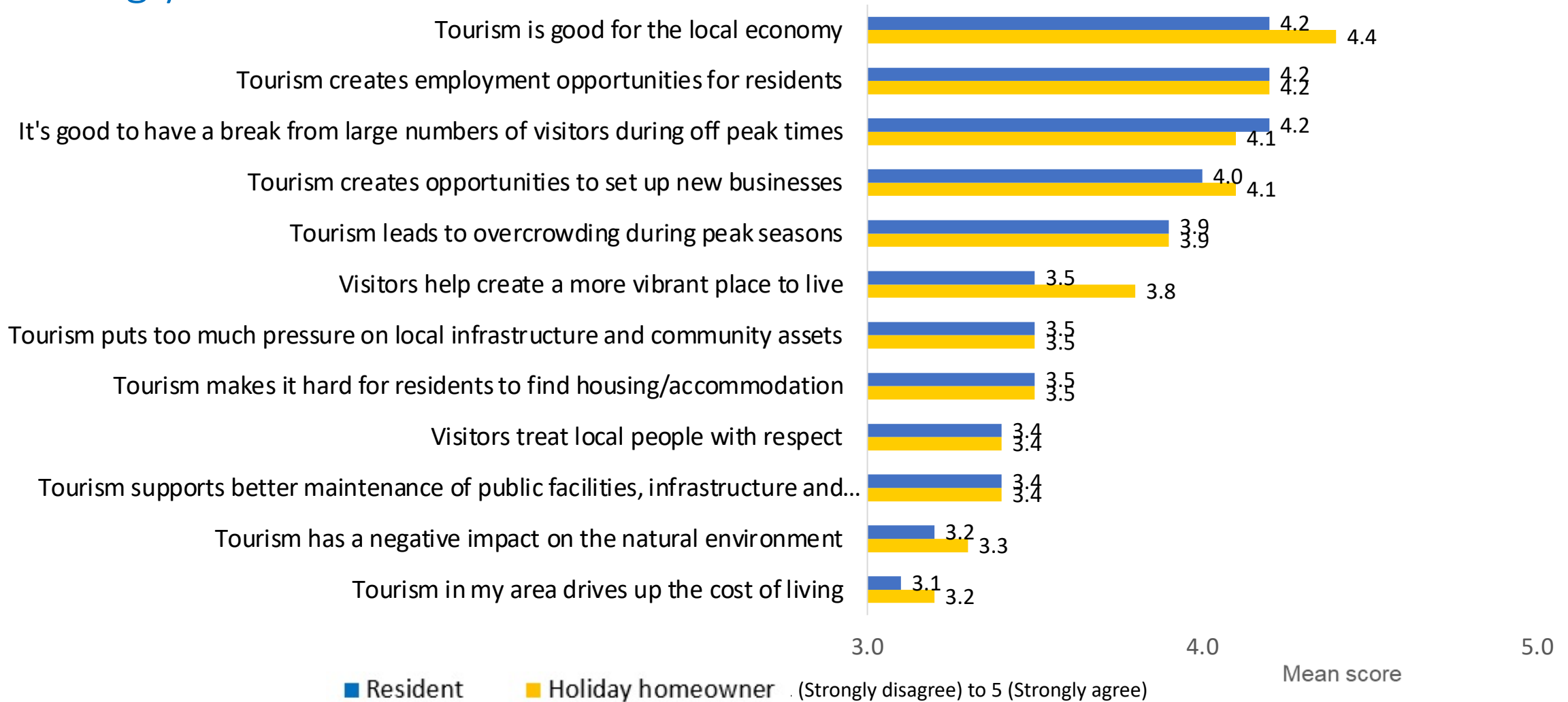
“Being truly clean and green. Champions of sustainability, litter free, a truly proactive, environmentally sound community.”

“Being a truly forward thinking, intelligently governed district which pays heed to Te Tiriti obligations, nurtures its ecosystems and biodiversity, nurtures its youth, values culture, low impact sport (i.e. not car rallies) and community over excessive consumerism, plans for and meets climate change commitments AHEAD of 2050 and looks to be a leading example of “Clean Green New Zealand.”

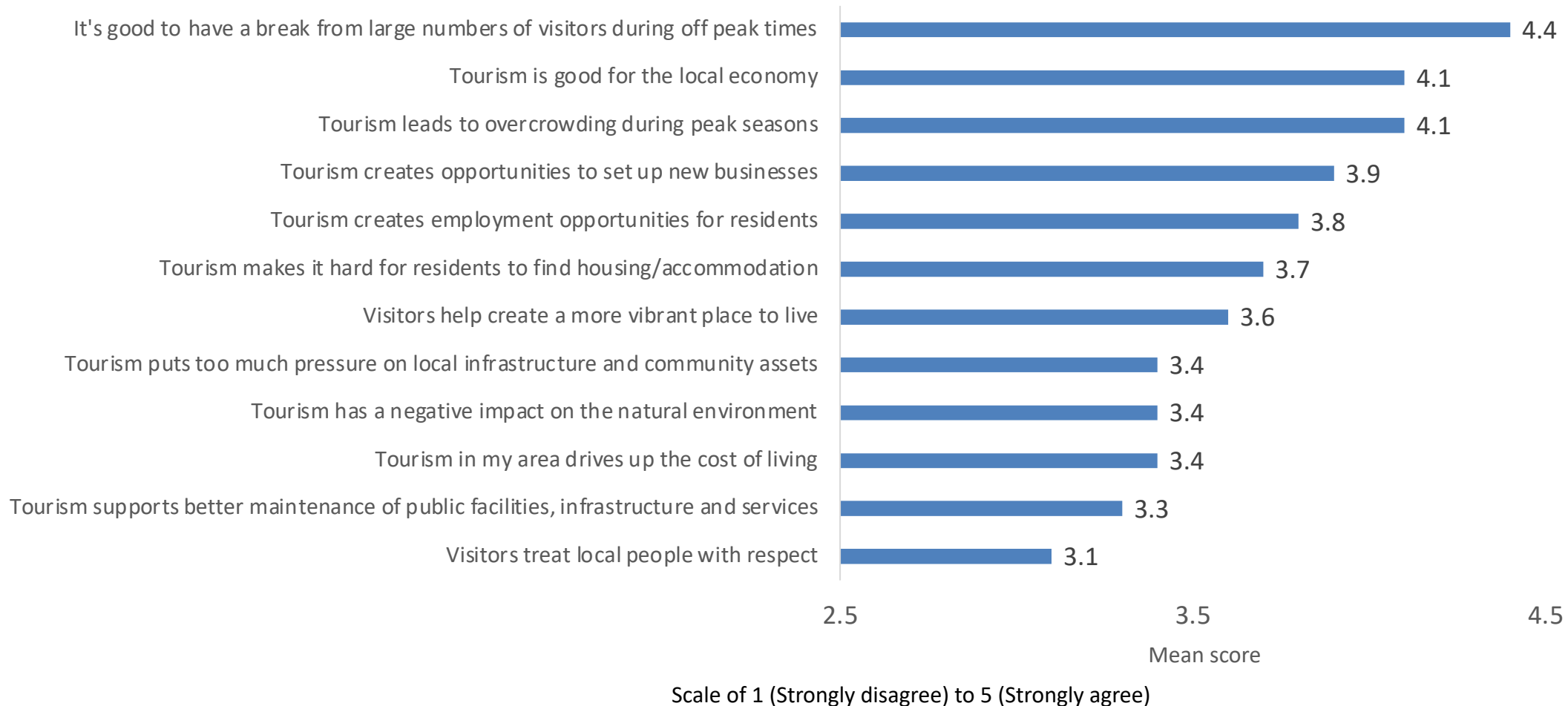
“Being a sustainable community addressing environmental issues and climate change factors.”

“Where the natural environment is pre-eminent and protected through a circular sustainable economy.”

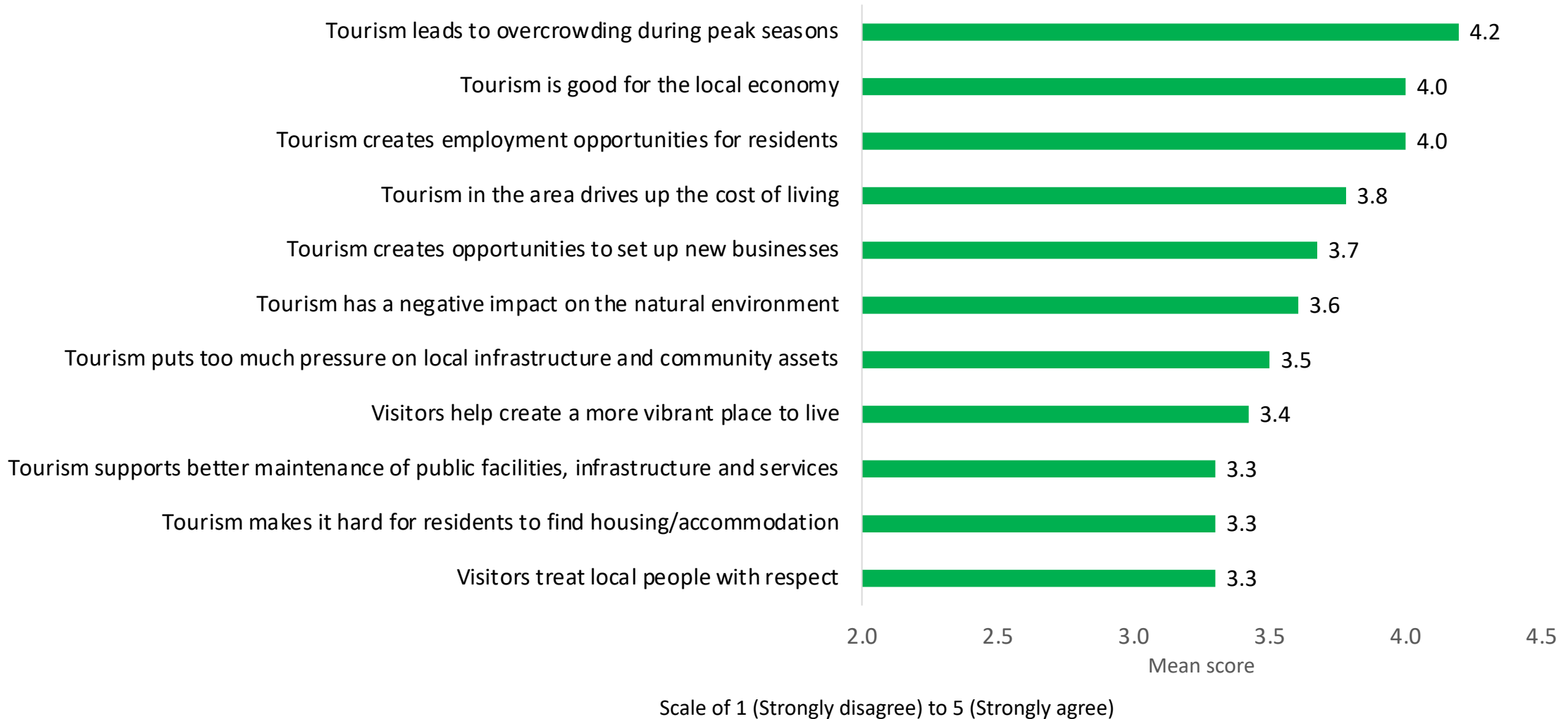
Residents and holiday homeowners agree that tourism is good for the economy and vibrancy of the region. Both groups are less certain about the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and local cost of living. Peak season overcrowding and the value of an off-season break both also feature strongly.



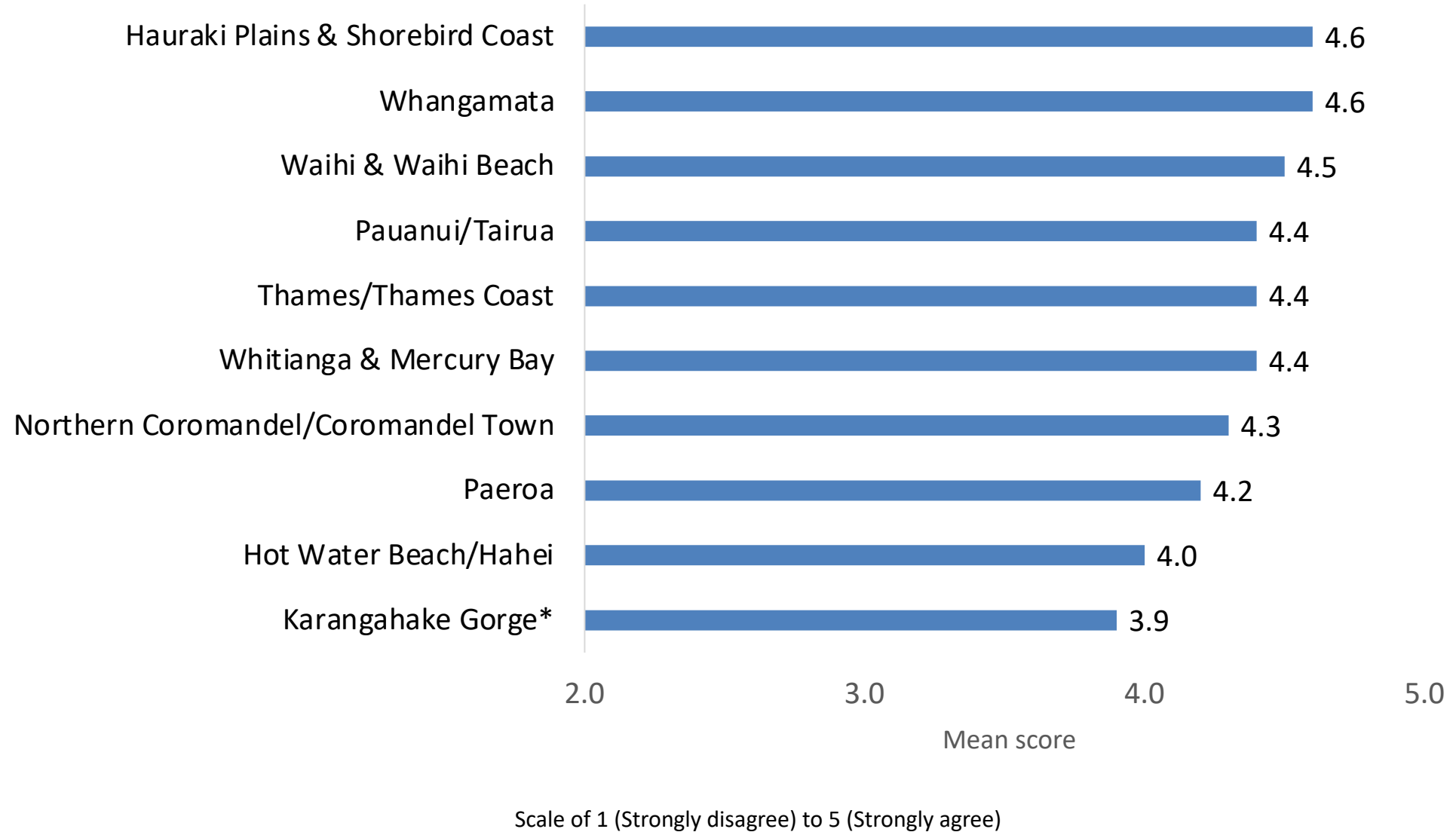
For resident mana whenua, the value of an off-season break features strongly to balance the overcrowding during the peak season. The importance of tourism for the local economy is recognised along with the new business and employment opportunities it brings.



Non-resident mana whenua agree that tourism leads to overcrowding during peak season. There is also strong agreement that tourism is good for the economy and creates employment opportunities for residents.

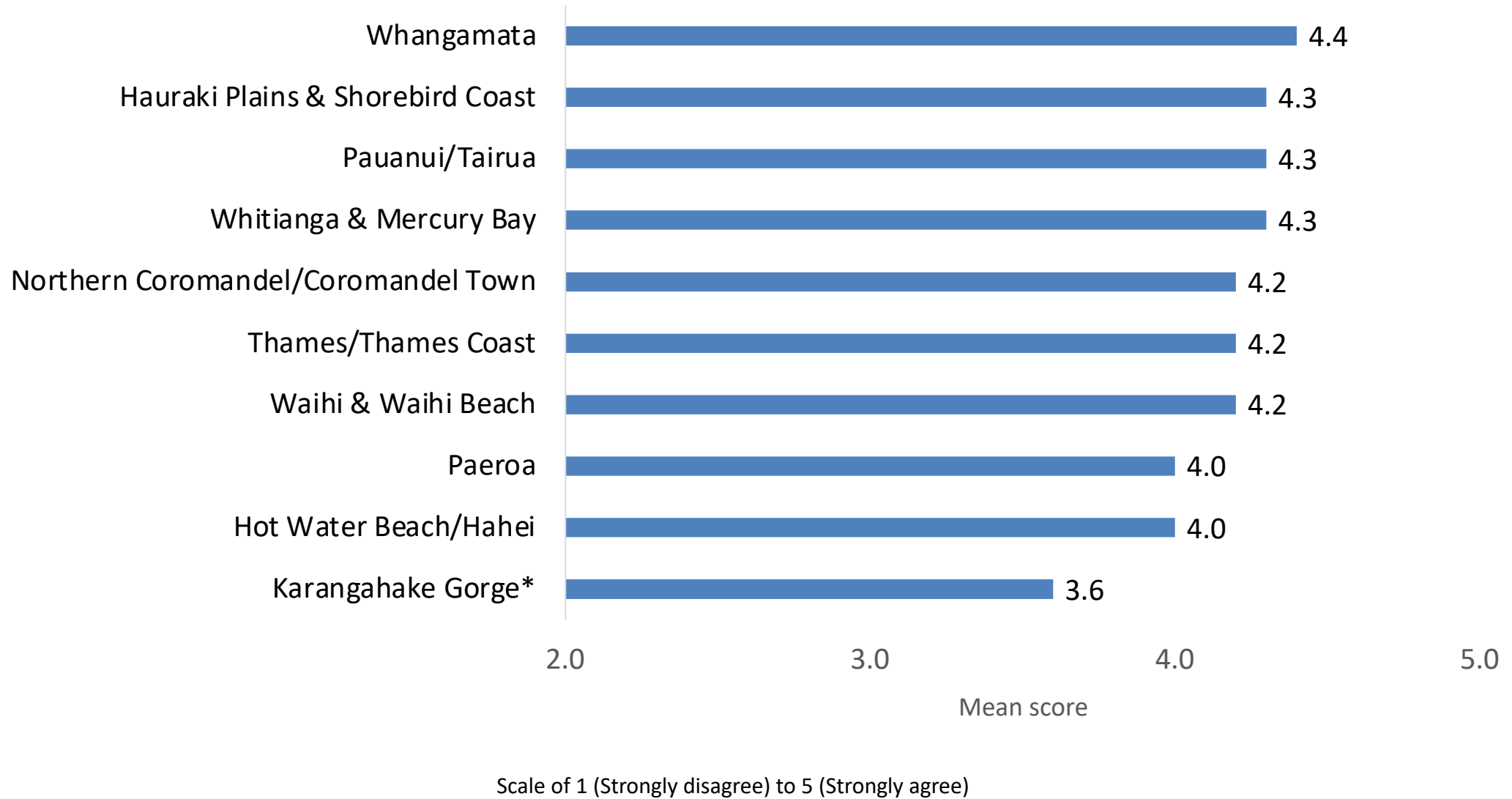


Agreement with: Tourism is good for the local economy



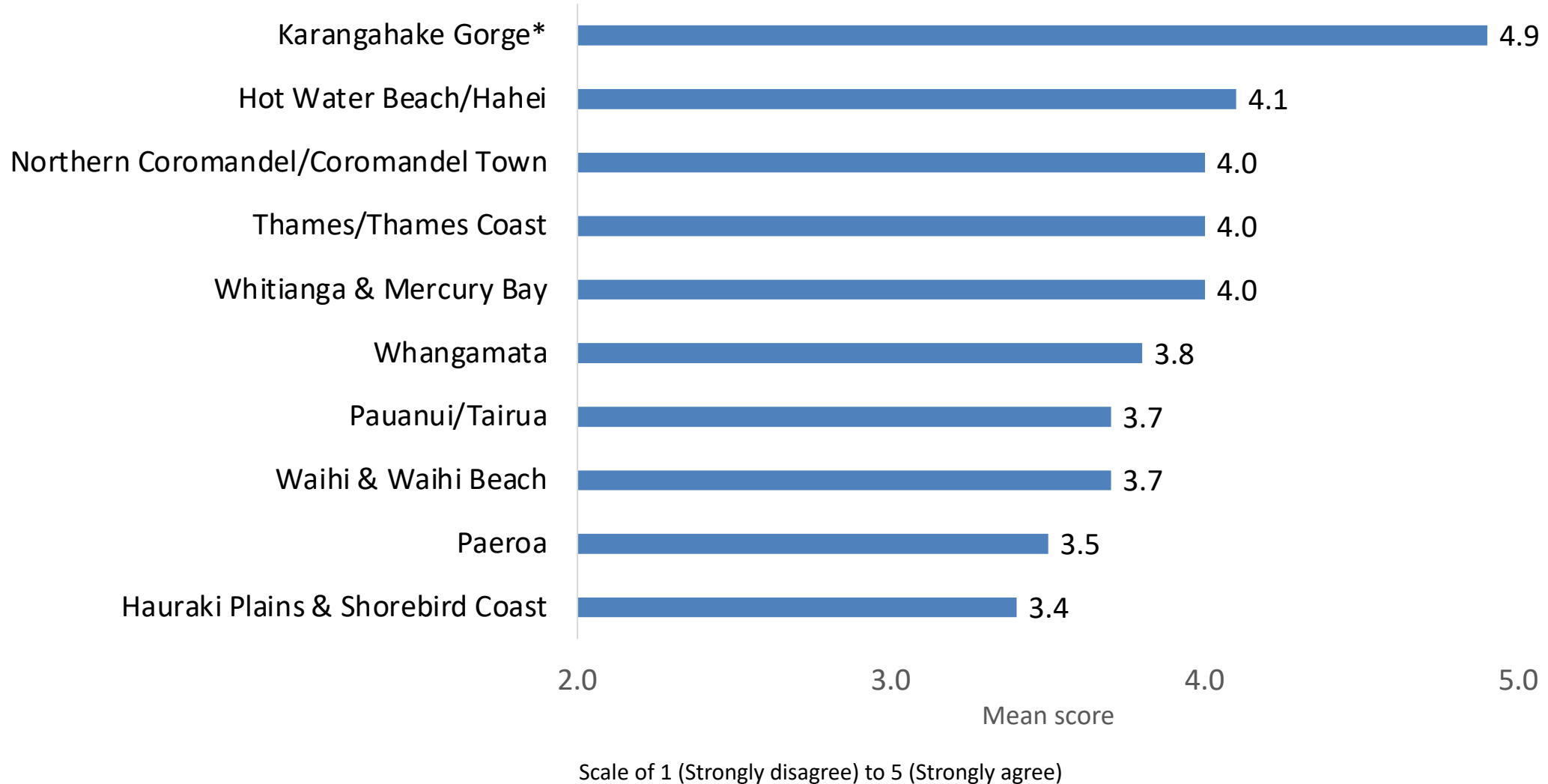
*: sample size is 7

Agreement with: Tourism creates employment opportunities for residents



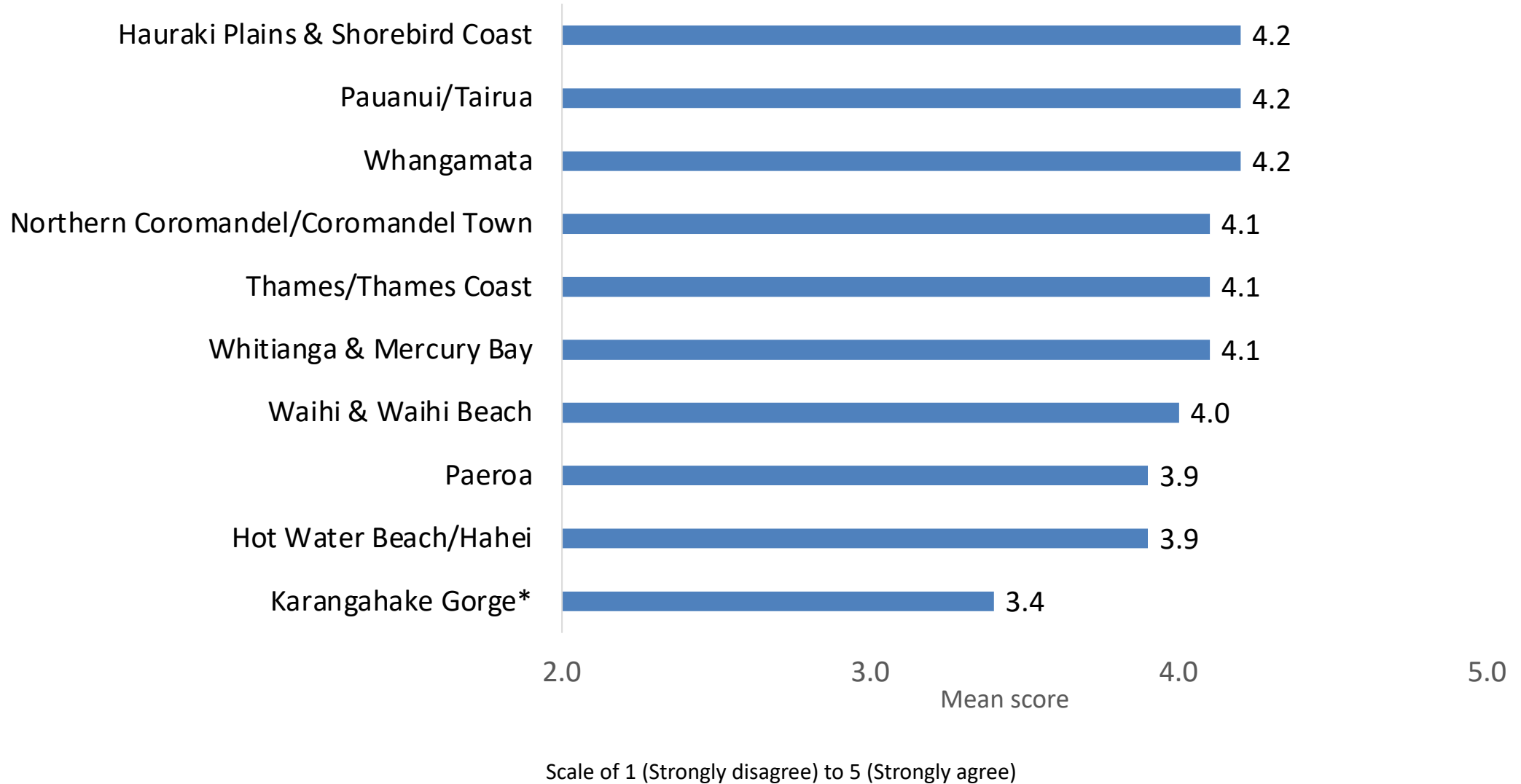
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Agreement with: Tourism leads to overcrowding during peak seasons



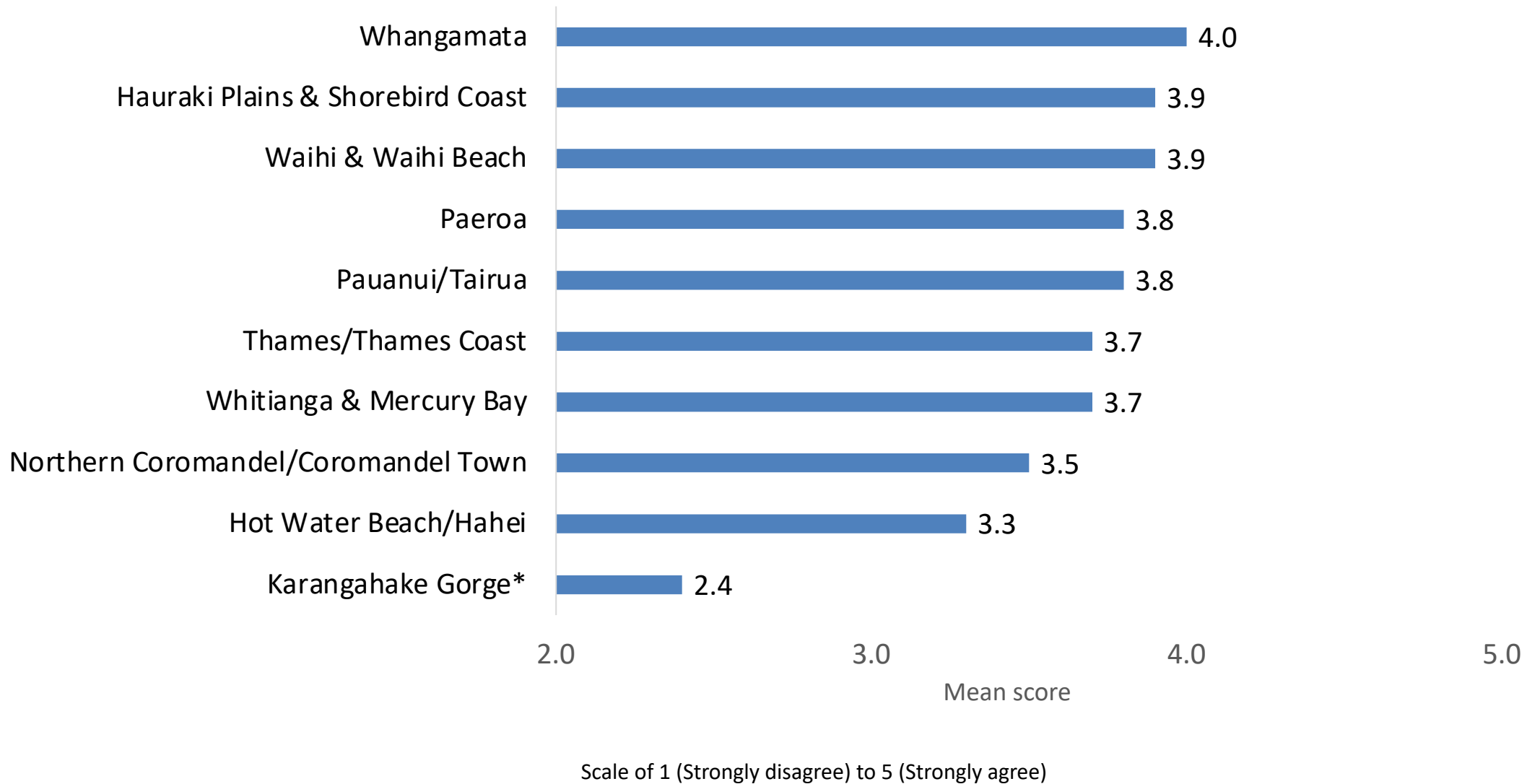
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Agreement with: Tourism creates opportunities to set up new businesses



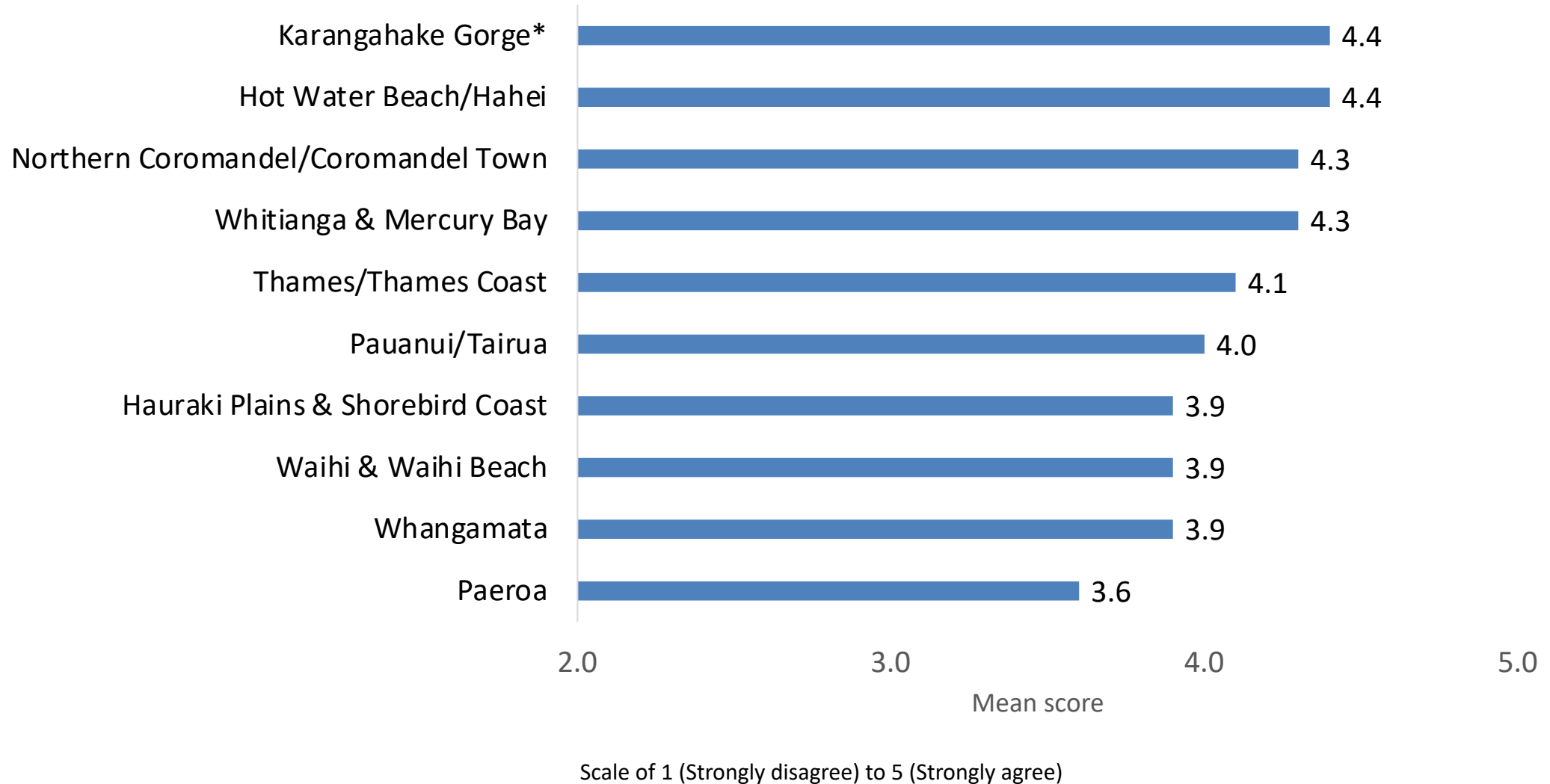
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Agreement with: Visitors help create a more vibrant place to live



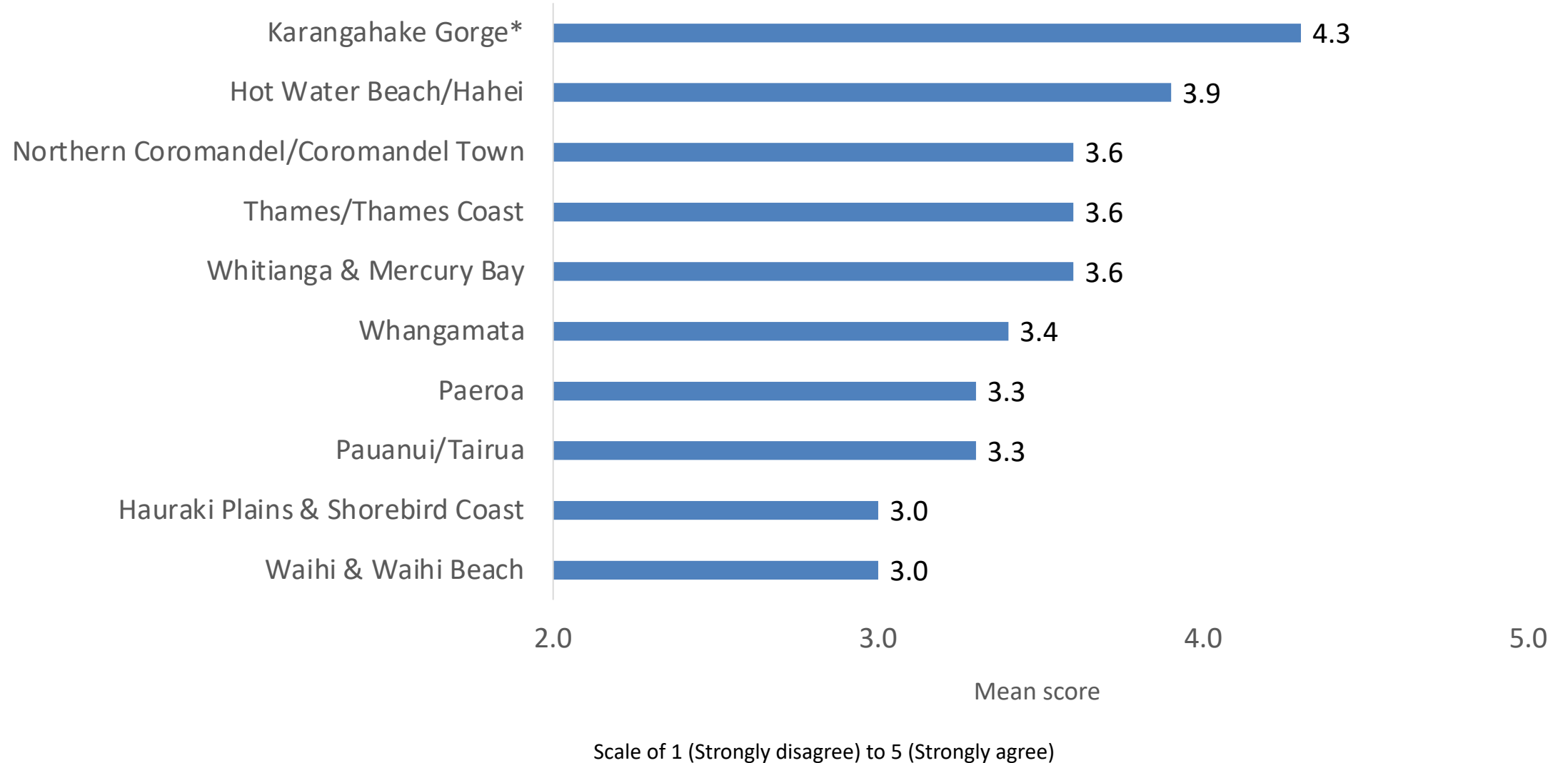
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Agreement with: It's good to have a break from large numbers of visitors during off peak times



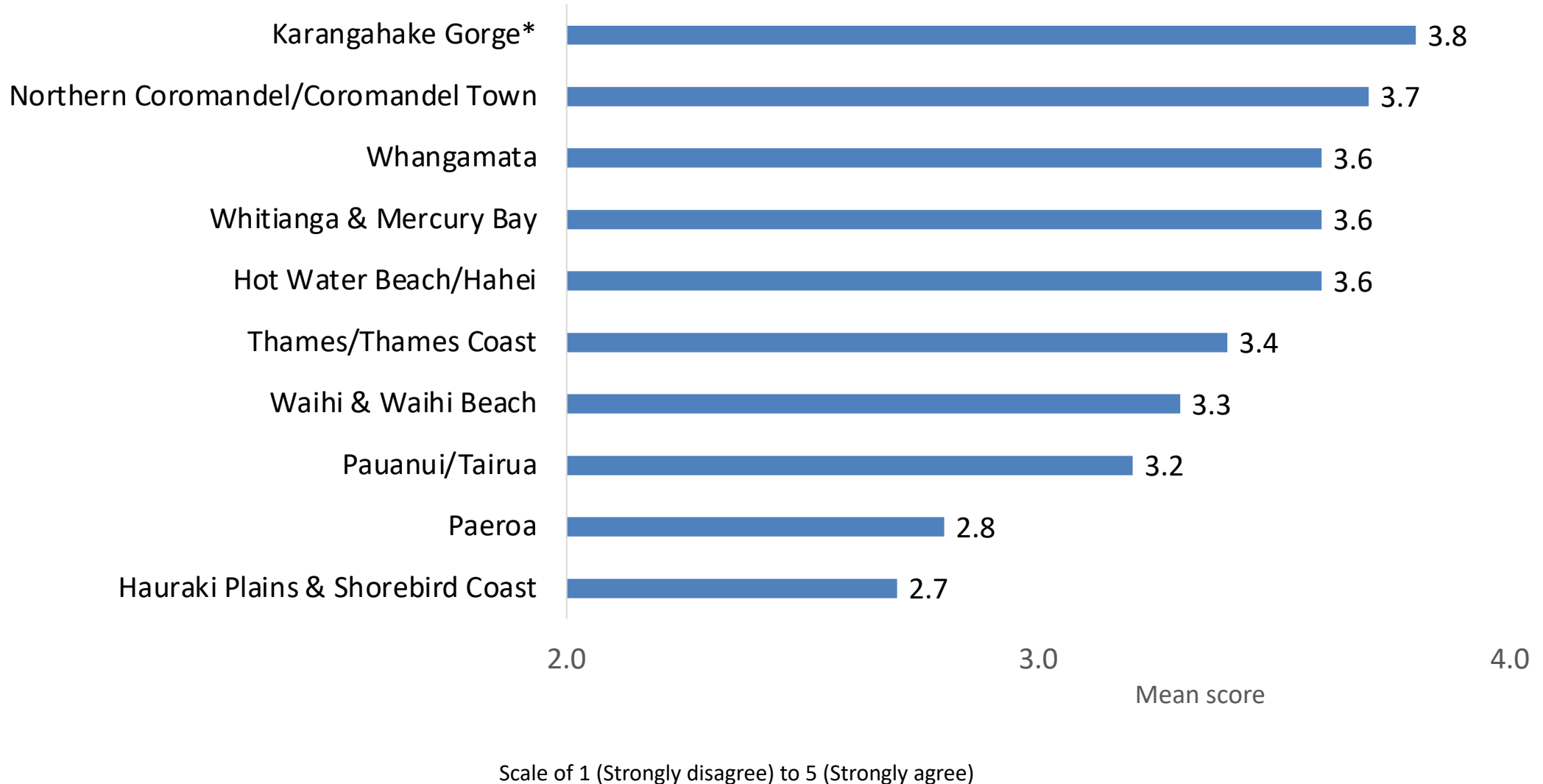
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Agreement with: Tourism puts too much pressure on local infrastructure and community assets



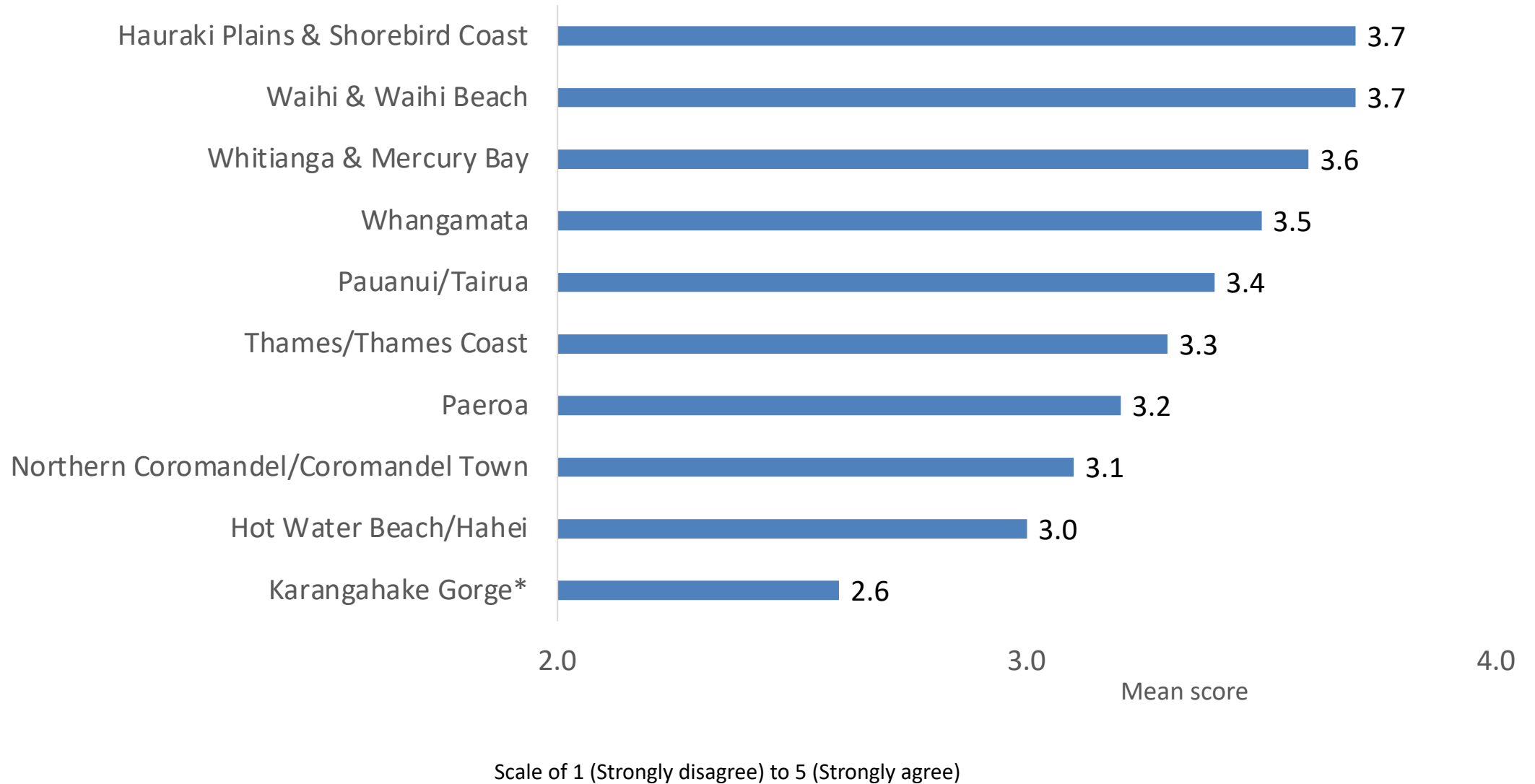
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Agreement with: Tourism makes it hard for residents to find housing/accommodation



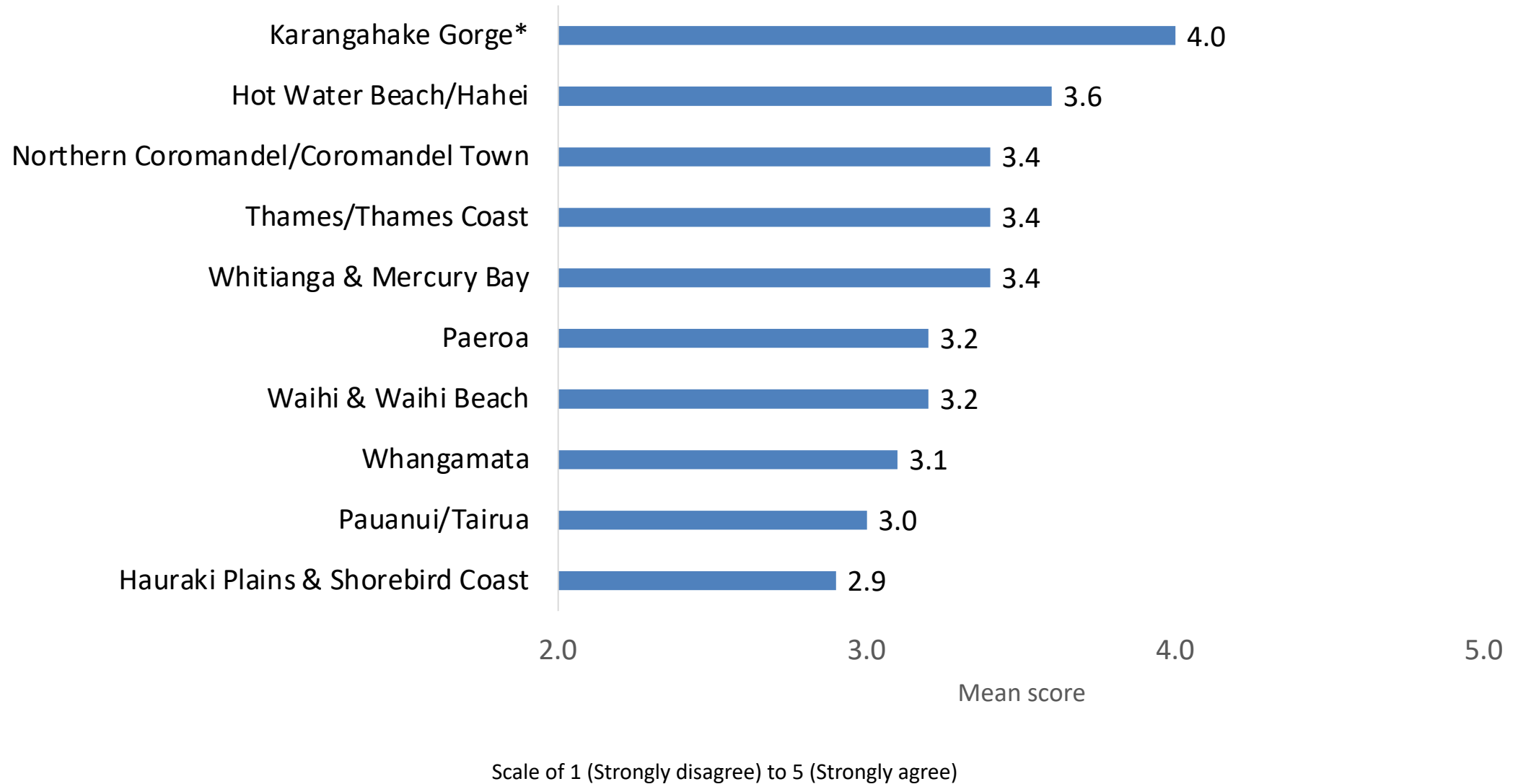
*: sample size is 7

Agreement with: Tourism supports better maintenance of public facilities, infrastructure and services



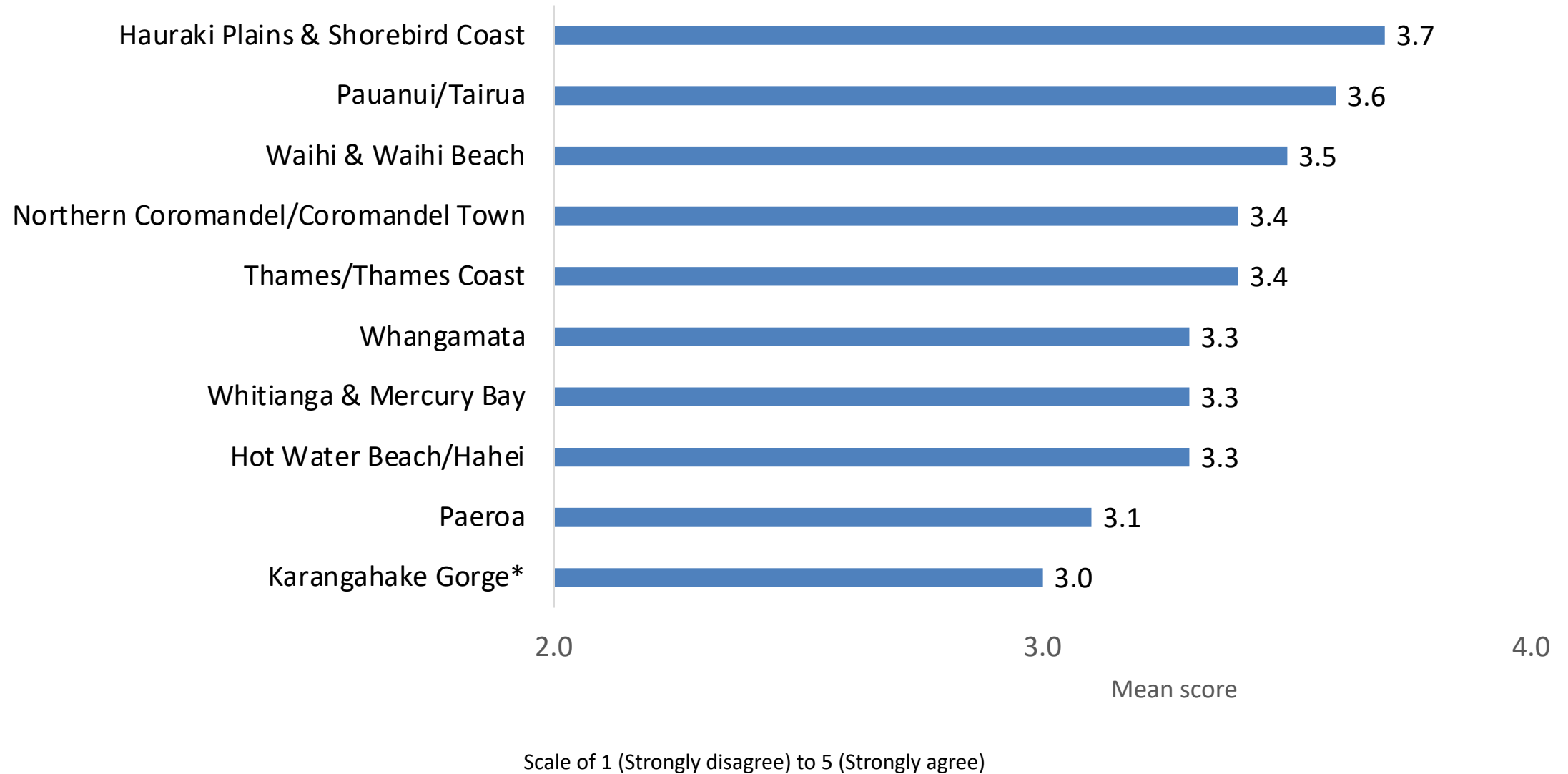
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Agreement with: Tourism has a negative impact on the natural environment



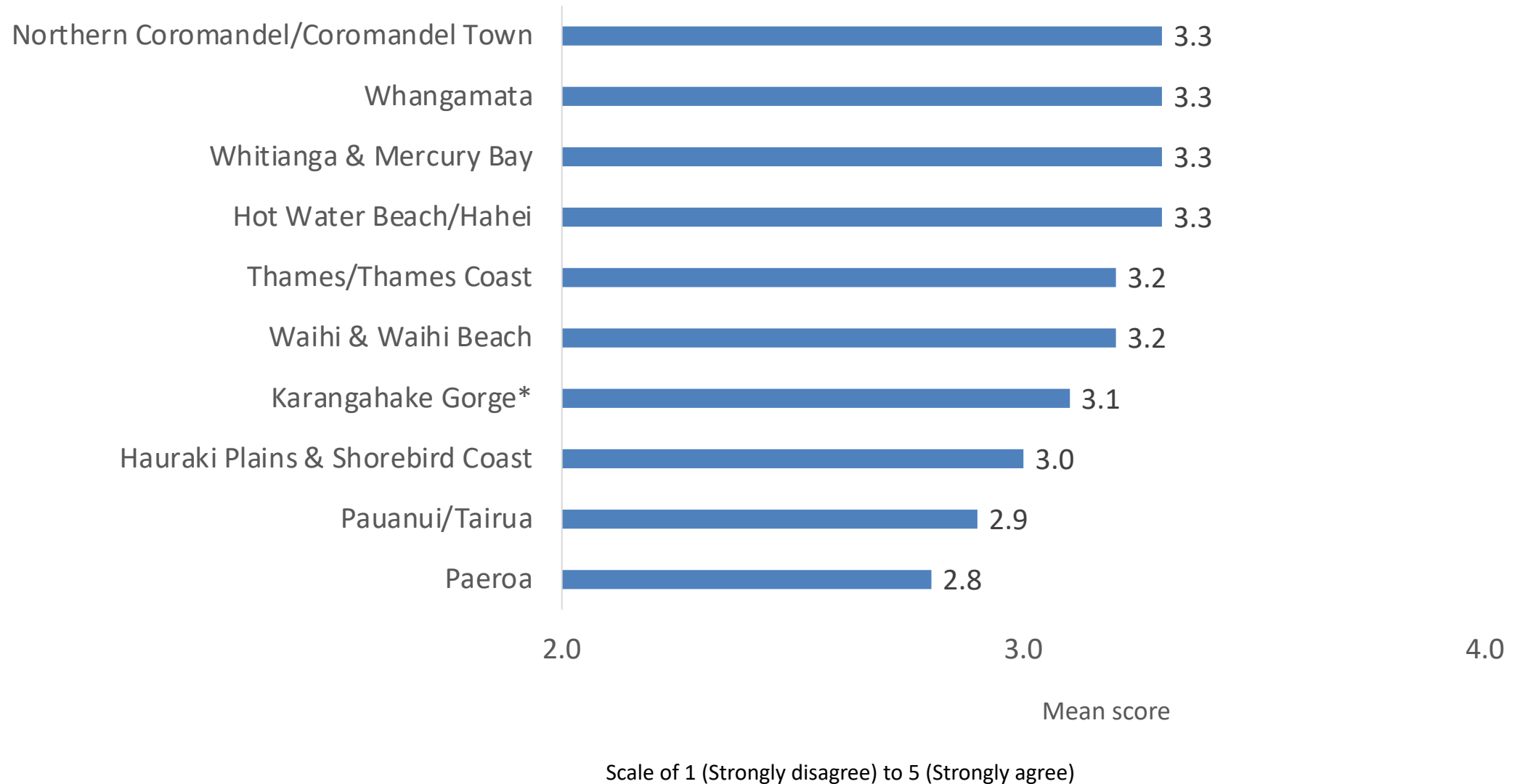
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Agreement with: Visitors treat local people with respect



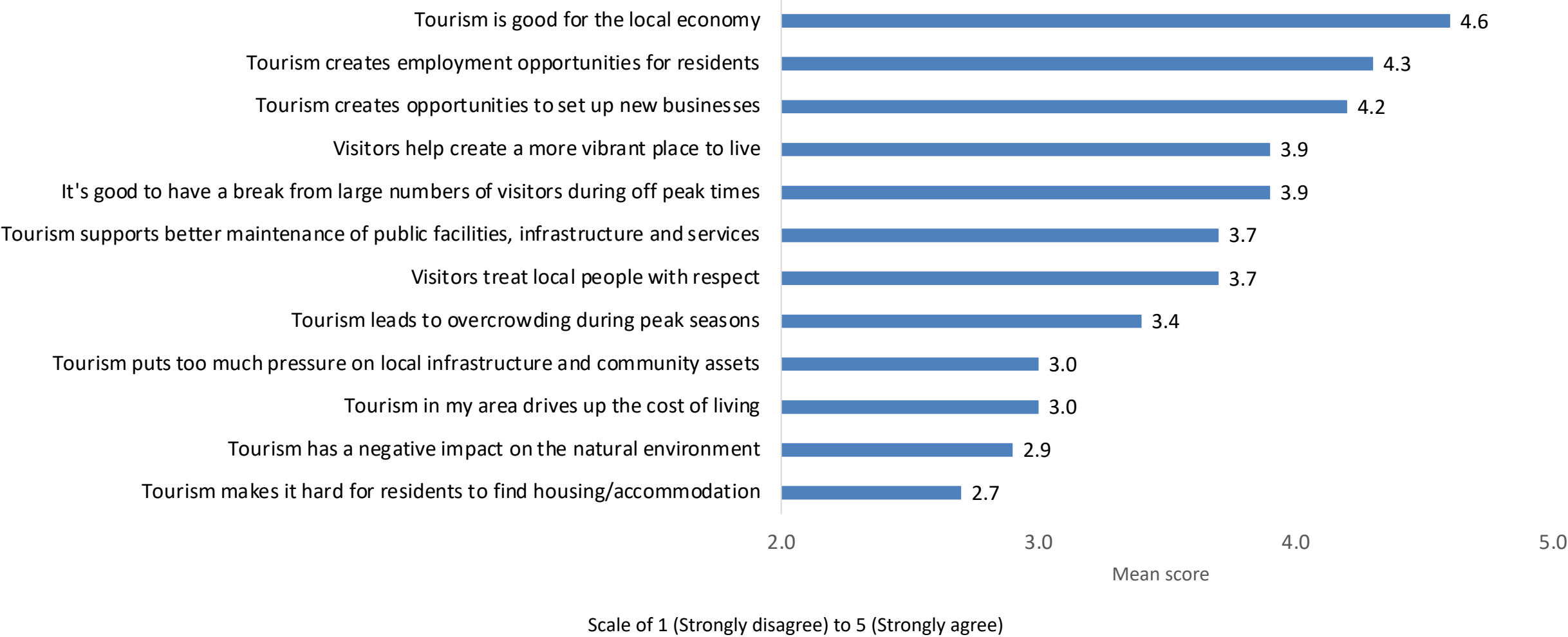
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Agreement with: Tourism in my area drives up the cost of living

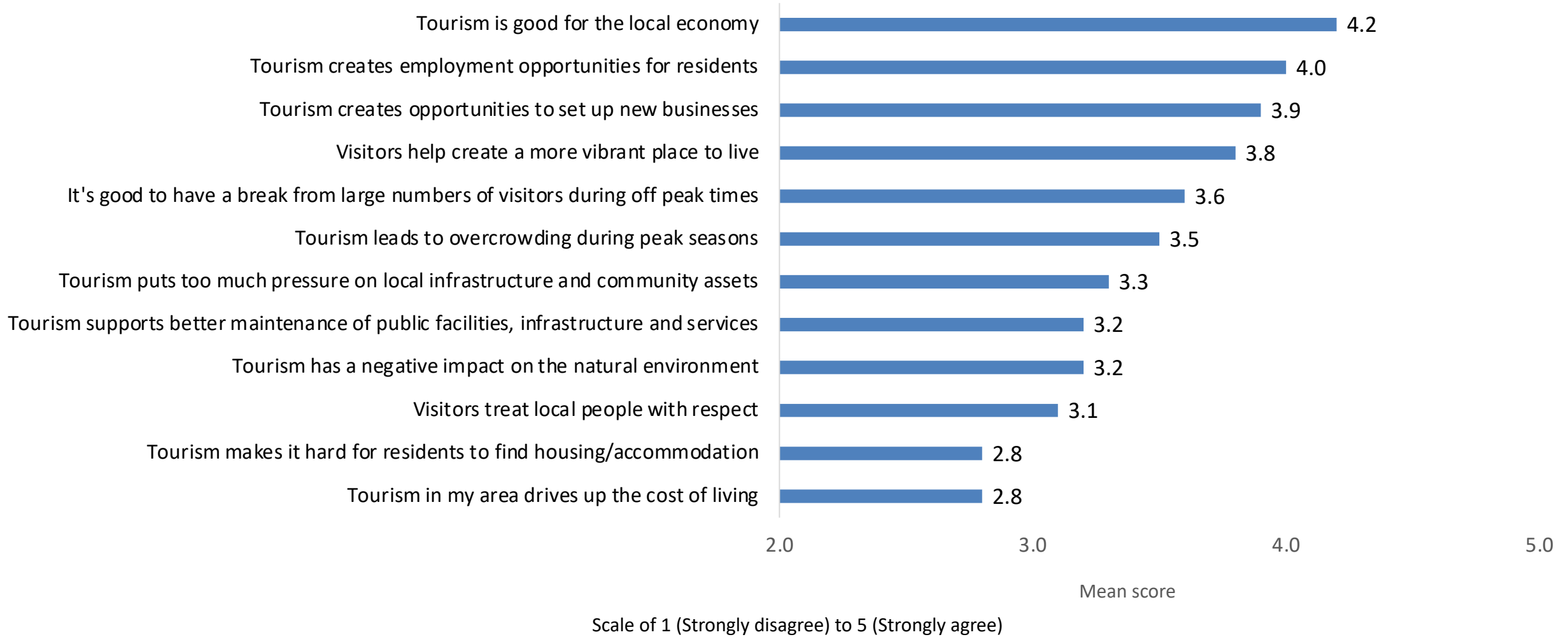


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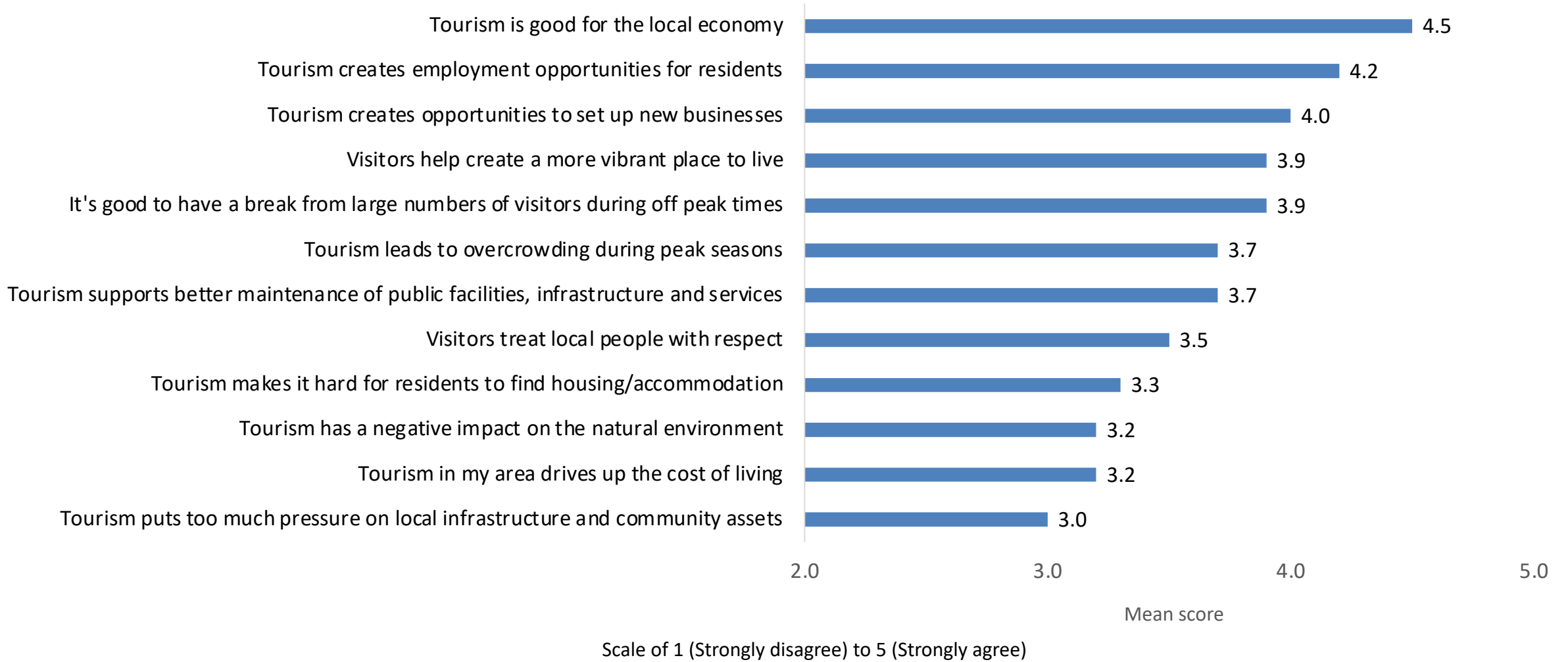
Hauraki Plains & Shorebird Coast: Agreement with Impact Statements



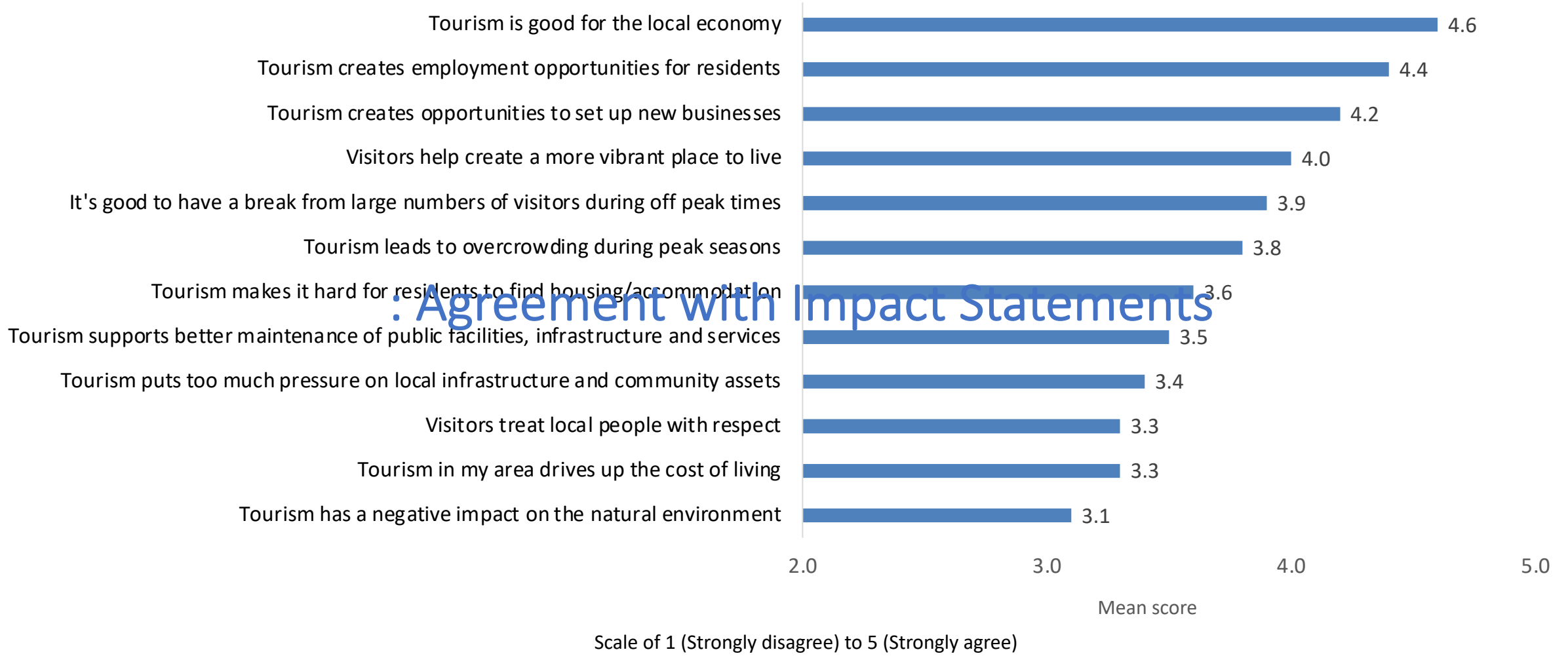
Paeroa: Agreement with Impact Statements



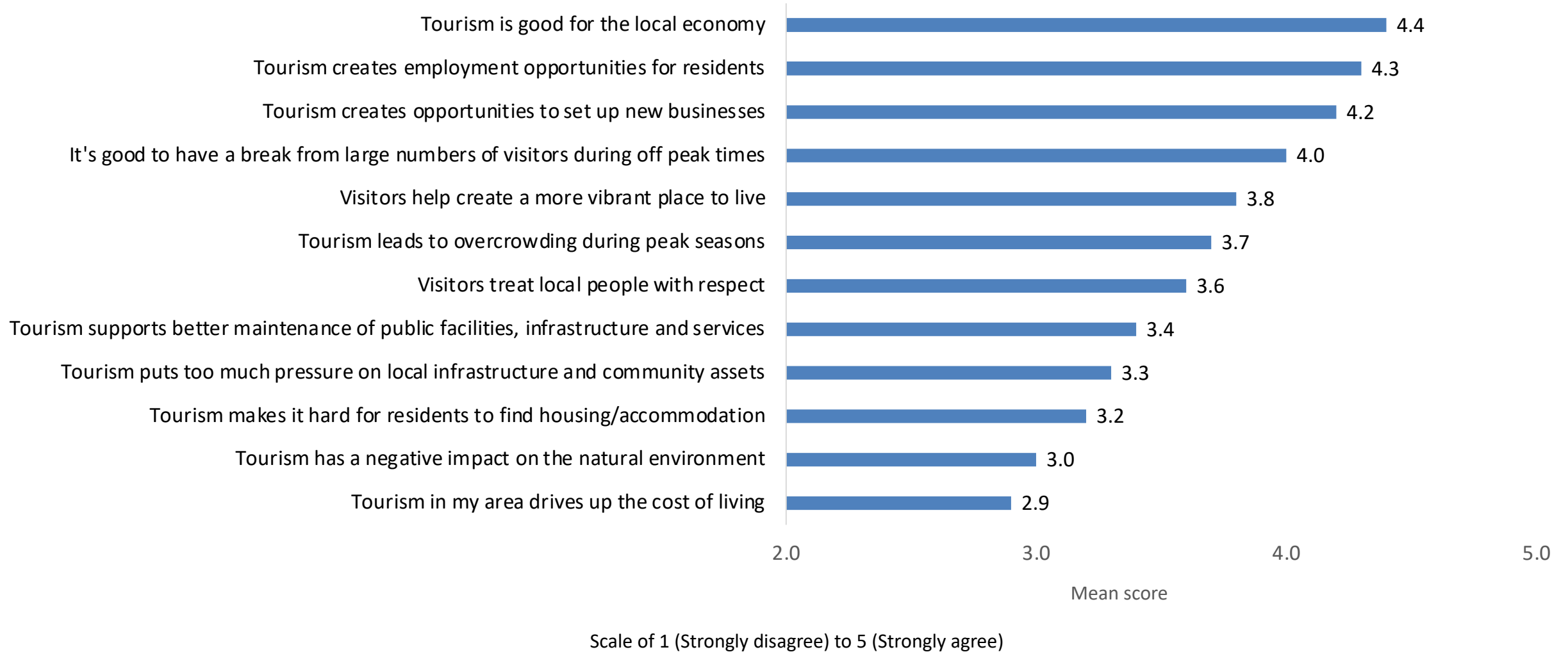
Waihi & Waihi Beach: Agreement with Impact Statements



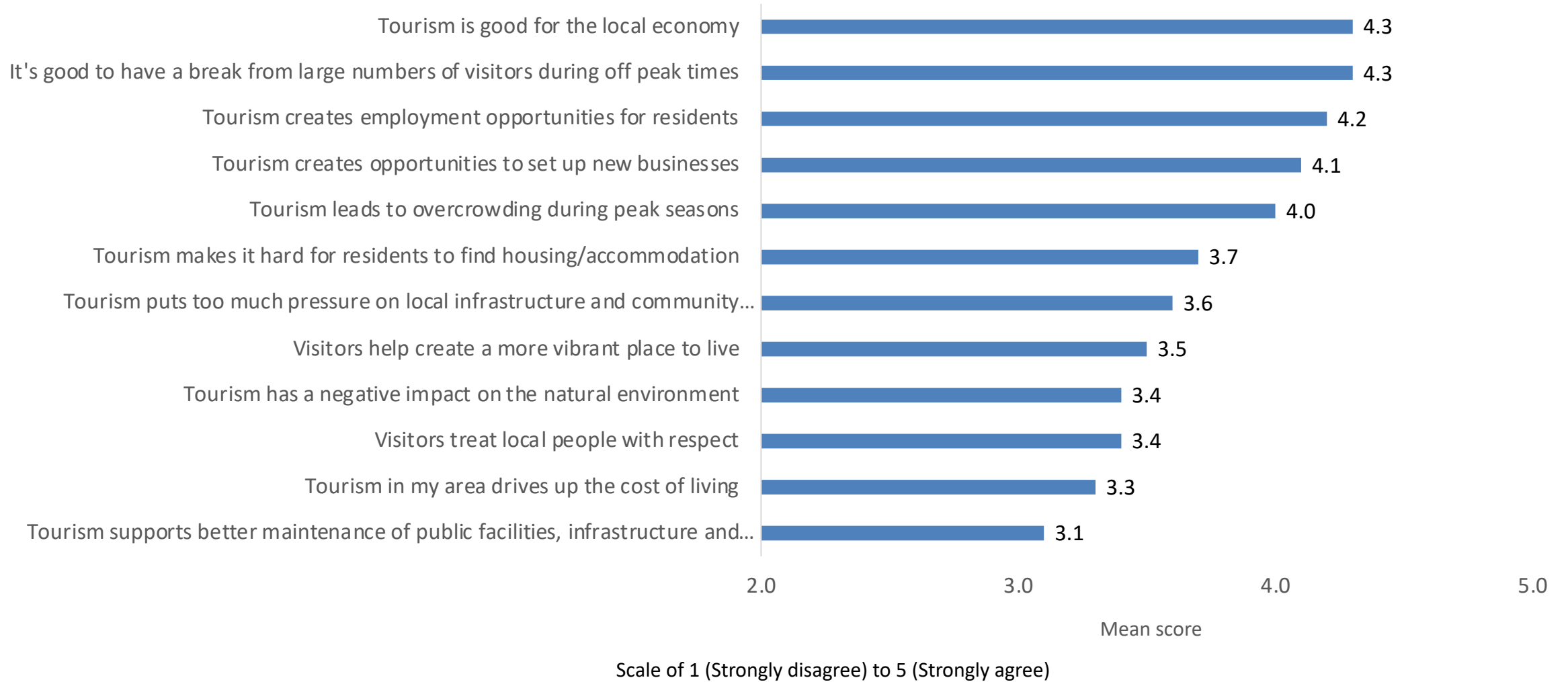
Whangamatā: Agreement with Impact Statements



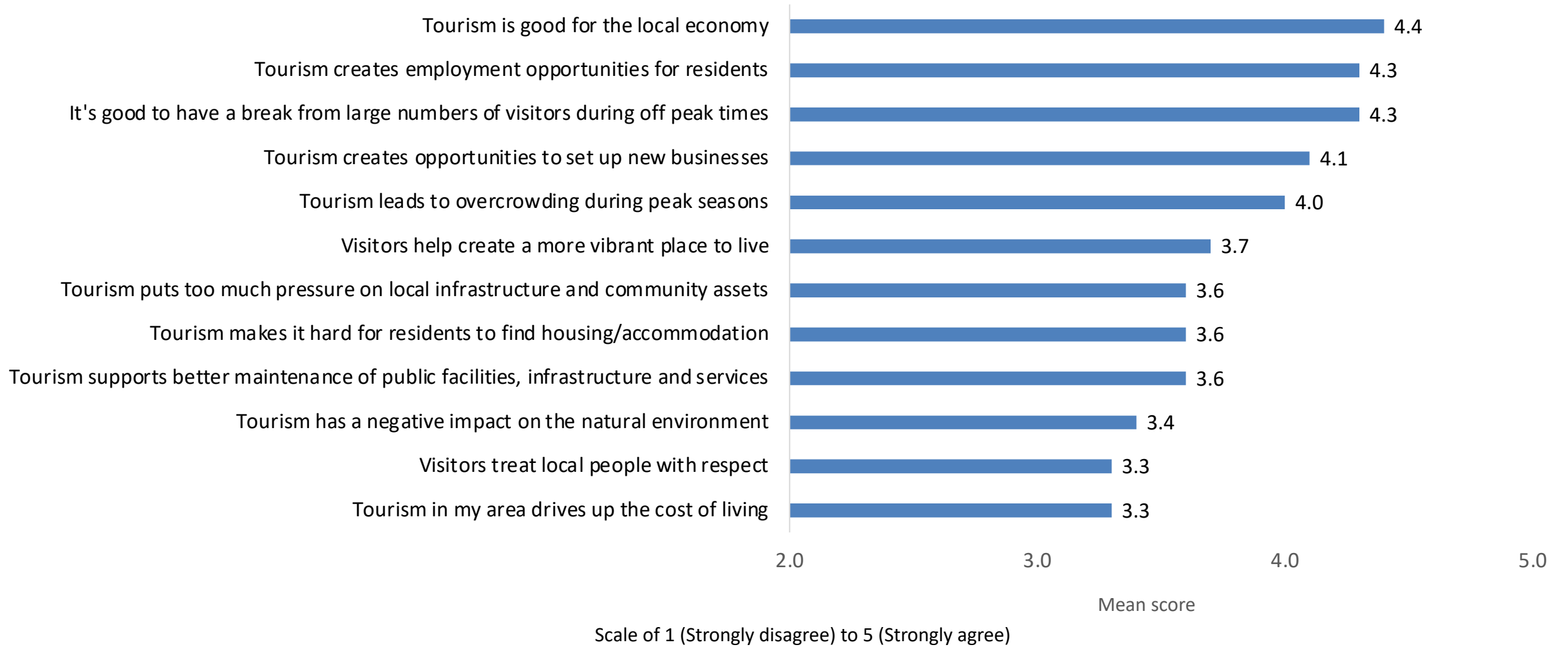
Pauanui/Tairua : Agreement with Impact Statements



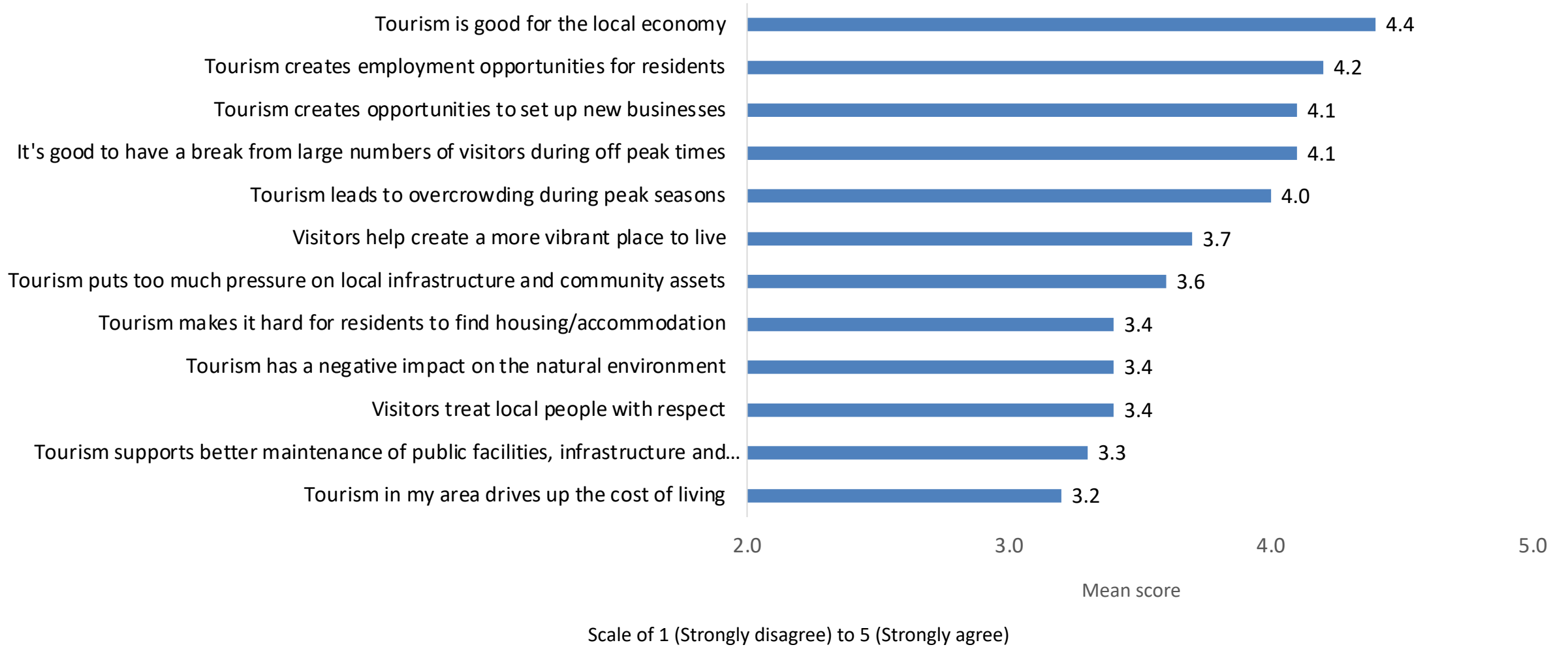
Northern Coromandel/Coromandel Town : Agreement with Impact Statements



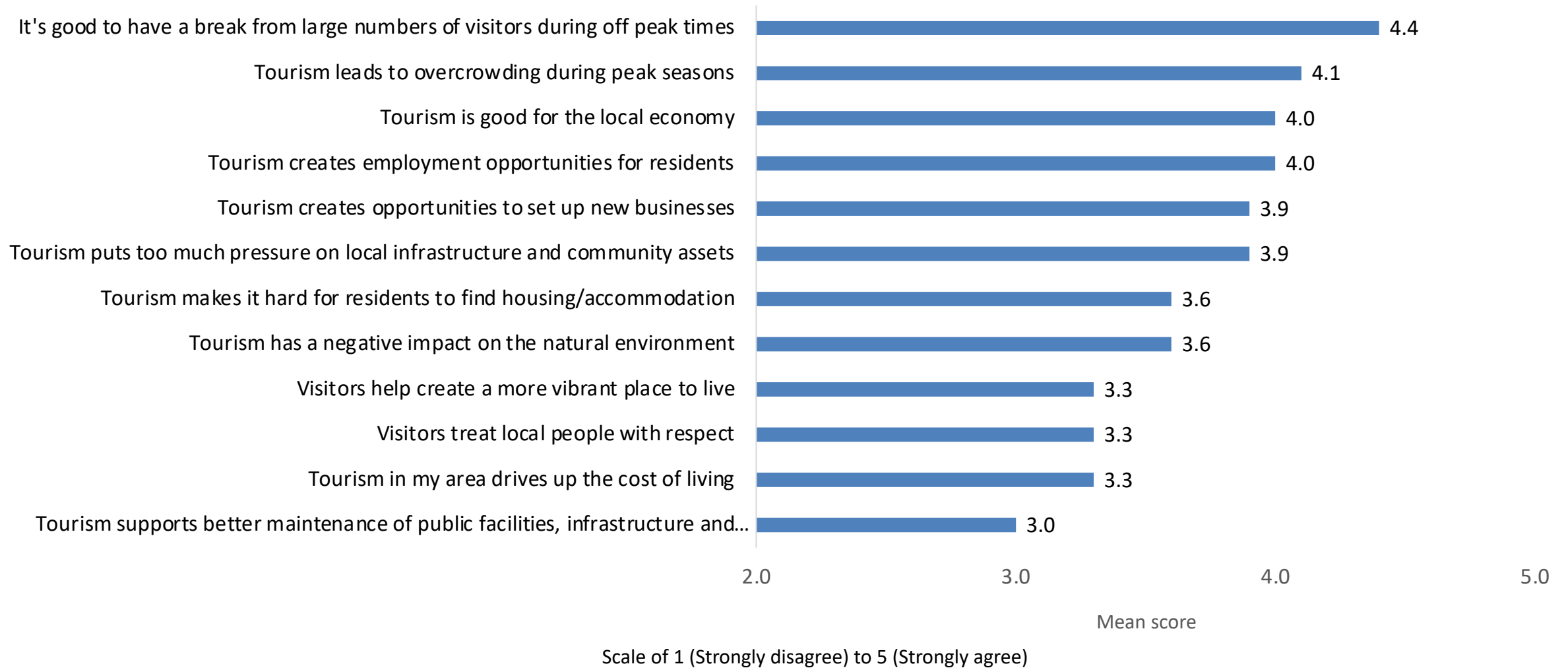
Whitianga & Mercury Bay: : Agreement with Impact Statements



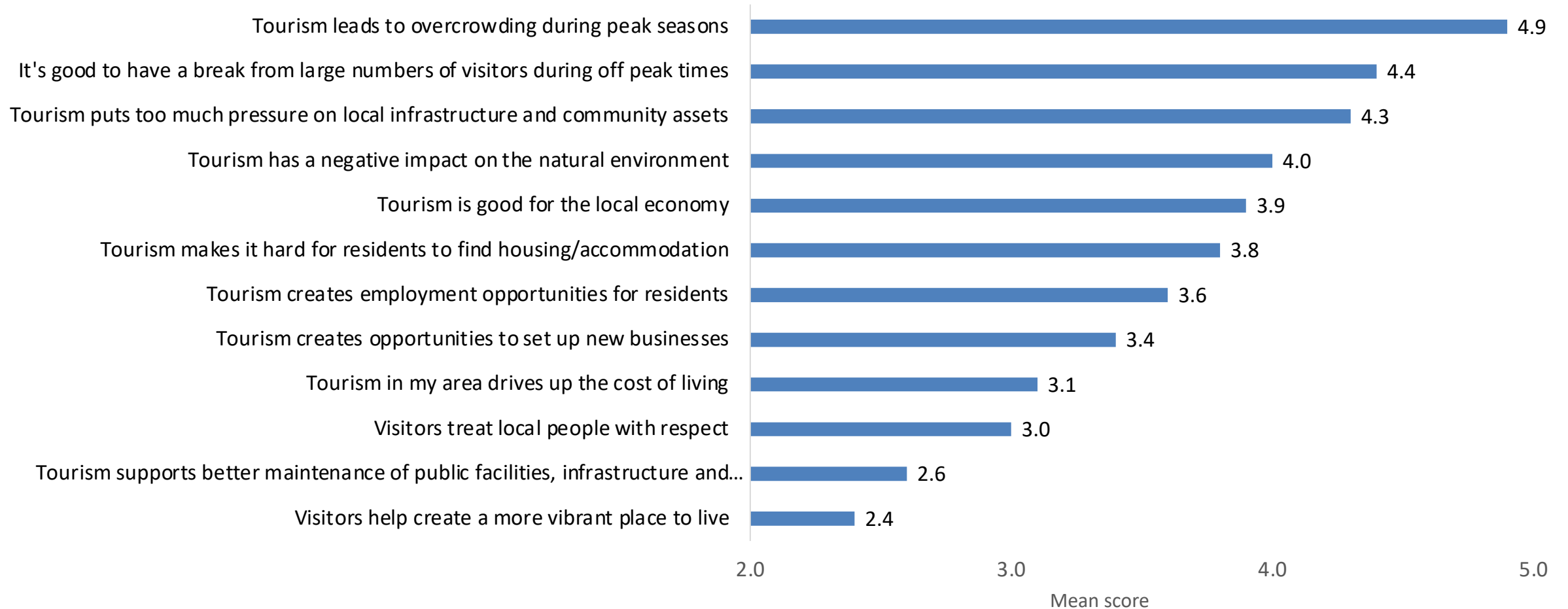
Thames/Thames Coast: Agreement with Impact Statements



Hot Water Beach/Hahei : Agreement with Impact Statements



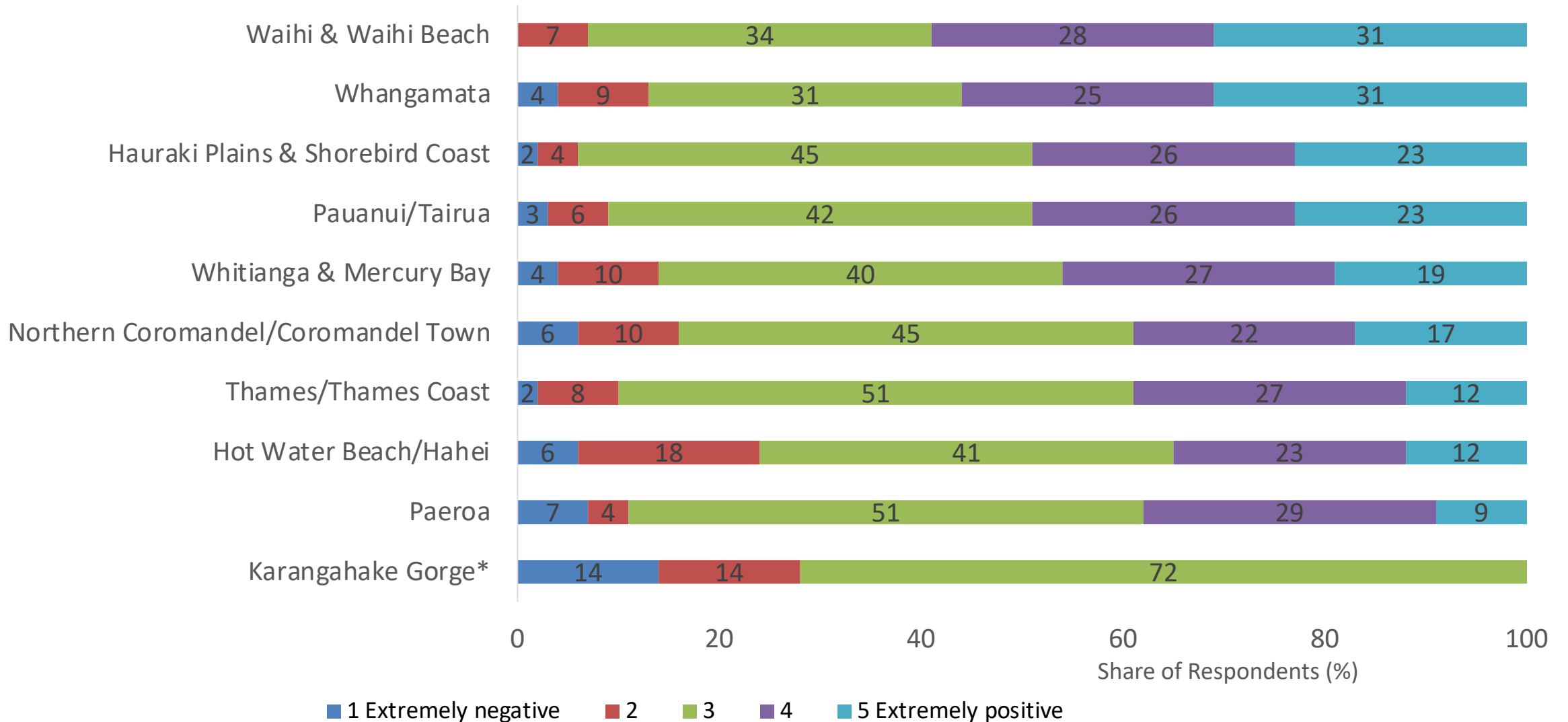
Karangahake Gorge* : Agreement with Impact Statements



* sample size is 7

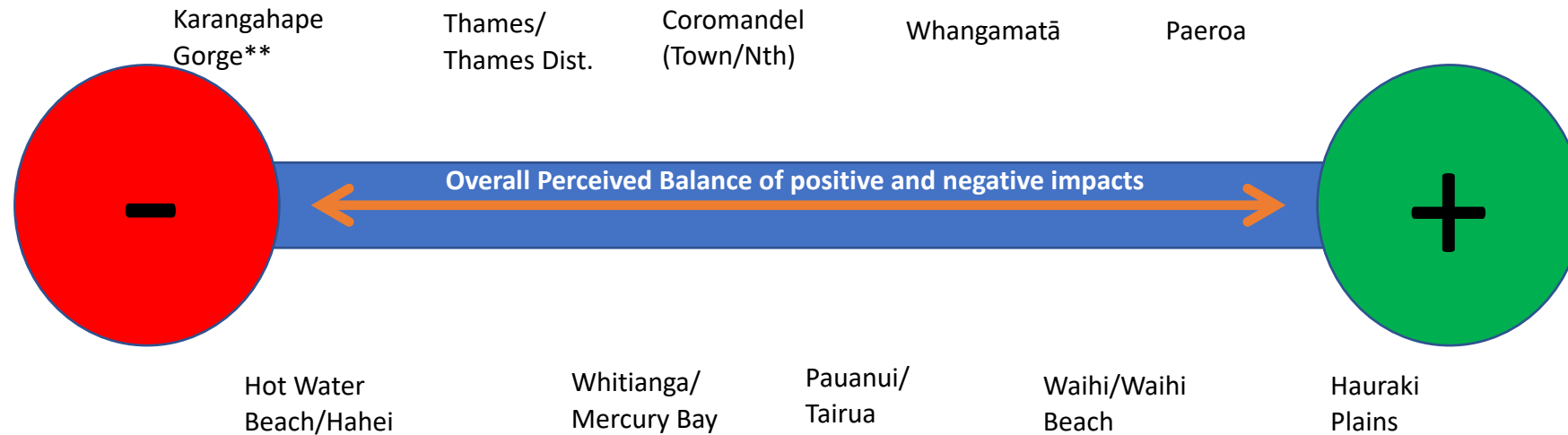
Scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)

The perceived impact of tourism on quality of life varies considerably across the region.



*: sample size is 7

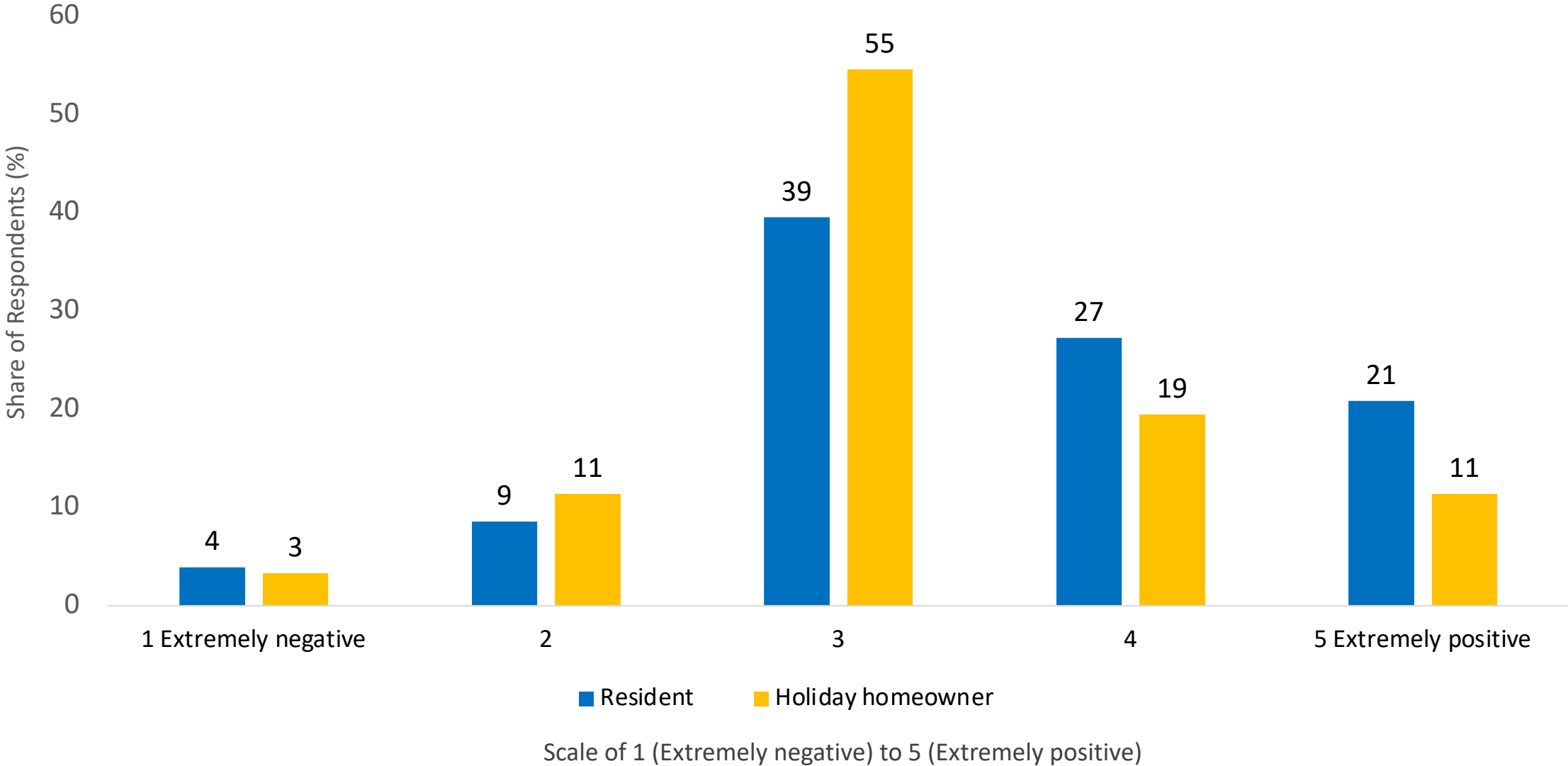
The Current positioning of Localities on a Tourism Impact Continuum*



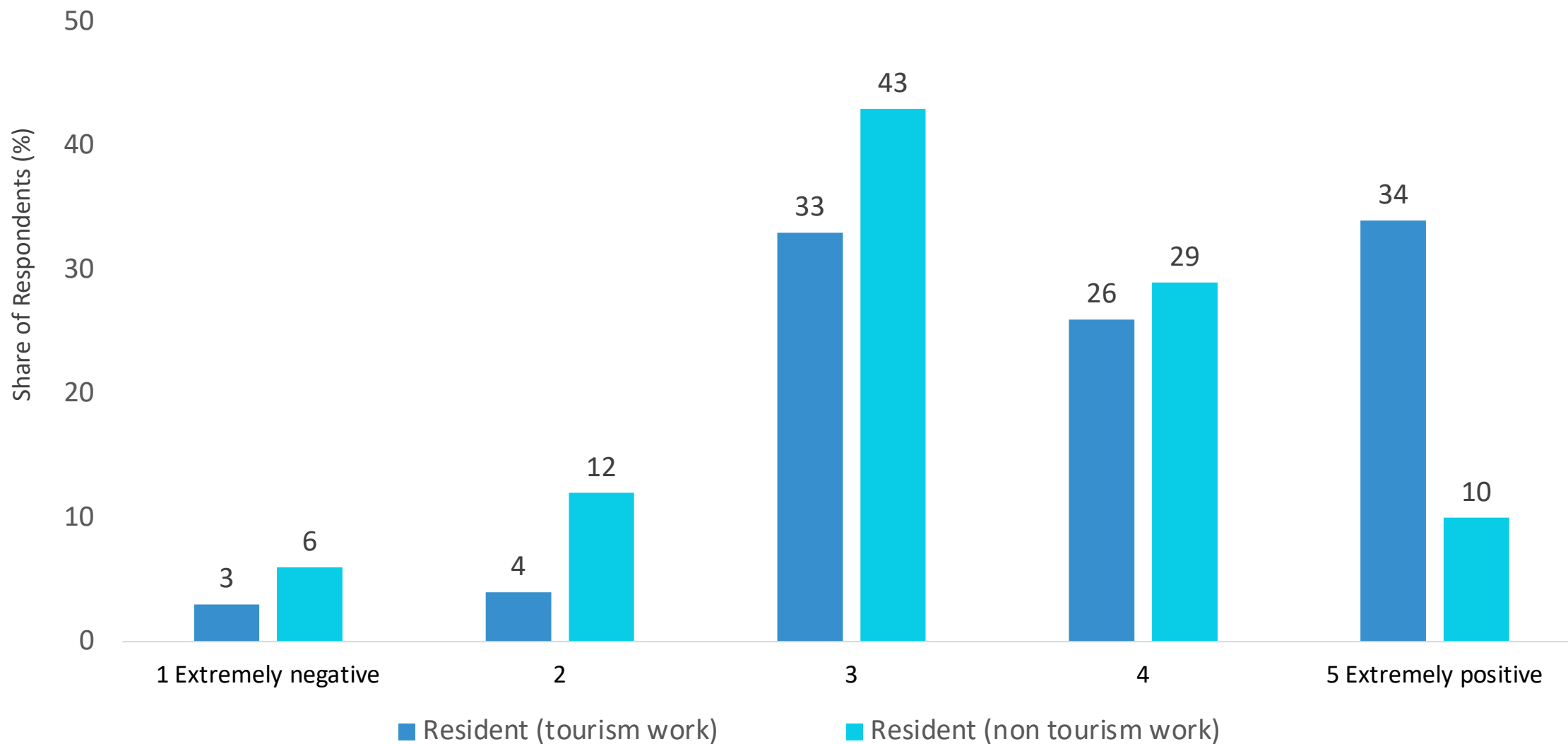
* Position on the continuum reflects survey community feedback on key indicators and broader quality of life (slides #38-63)

** Karangahape Gorge - 7 respondents.

Nearly half of residents (48%) describe the impact of tourism as being very or extremely positive on their quality of life. Holiday homeowners are more likely to be ambivalent about the impact.



Sixty percent of residents **working in tourism** are very or extremely positive about the impact of tourism on their quality of life, compared to 39% of those who work in non-tourism activities.



Community concerns related to tourism during the recent high/summer season.

Four in ten (39%) respondents said 'yes' they did have concerns related to tourism during the recent high /summer season. Over 400 comments were made by these respondents about their concerns, with the impact of visitors during peak season and inadequacy of local ranked infrastructure the most commonly mentioned. Concerns over COVID-19 and visitor behaviour also appear.

Concerns related to tourism in the region
Heavy reliance on seasonal tourism
The region's inadequate infrastructure
Ongoing impact of COVID-19
Visitor behaviour - behaviour of 'out of town kids'
Other - social issues and freedom camping

- **Heavy reliance on seasonal tourism:** This is a major concern related to tourism in the region as reflected in comments such as “simply too many visitors”, “too crowded”, “too busy” and ‘too many over a short period of time’. Comments were made about local towns/areas already being ‘at capacity’ and that during the peak season they are ‘over capacity’.

“The area was overcrowded, there were water shortages. The people that came had different lifestyles to us and made us feel like strangers in our own town. I found myself crying one day in lockdown last year as the impact of how much of the lifestyle I loved had been slowly eroded away hit me and i was shocked to realise what I had lost.”

- **The region’s inadequate infrastructure:** respondents pointed out that their area does not have the ‘local infrastructure to support the number of visitors’ they are hosting. Concerns raised include ‘traffic congestion’, ‘water shortages’, ‘wastewater issues’, ‘deteriorating roads’, ‘one lane bridges’, and ‘not enough public toilets, parking or rubbish bins’.

“Ever increasing numbers putting huge pressure on water supplies and water quality, roading infrastructure, fragile ecosystems, fisheries, natural areas, resident communities.”

- **The ongoing impact of COVID-19:** This is being felt throughout the community with comments about how local businesses who rely on 'international visitors' are now 'struggling to cope' without them. The impact of the 'lack of international visitors' on local employment was also highlighted with the 'incomes of many people' traditionally relying on 'seasonal tourism'.

"We are heavily dependent on tourists for a consistent flow of customers in the shoulder seasons .. Lack of tourists makes it very hard to run a profitable business and employ staff on decent wages all year round"

Comments were also made about the Aucklanders coming to their '2nd homes' to escape stricter lockdowns rules due to COVID-19. Many commenting that they would prefer Aucklanders stayed away referring to them as "Covid spreaders" and "they need to be kept OUT at all costs, and at all times".

"Aucklanders able to flee lock down to their Peninsula batches thus risking all of us!"

- **Visitor behaviour:** While communities are open to welcoming visitors to their area, comments were sometimes made about their behaviour and the 'lack of respect' shown not only to the locals, but also to the natural environment. There were several comments about visitors 'leaving rubbish everywhere', 'poor driving skills', their 'wasteful use of water' (while 'locals try to conserve'), and 'excessive fishing'.

"Our domestic tourists set a bad example of how to treat the Coromandel - rubbish, vandalism and disregard of rules (fishing etc)."

- **Behaviour of 'out of town kids':** Particularly their behaviour during peak holiday times is a concern with the following quotes summing up the issues raised:

"At New Years there was no entertainment for people under the age of 18, this caused a riot and local people's property & businesses to be destroyed. Very poor planning on the Councils behalf and we were horrified by the out of town city kids behaviour."

"Lots of youngsters racing around, trouble on News Years Eve, not a party pooper but many rentals used as party houses."

Other concerns

- **Social issues:** This was associated with youth especially those under 18 years and beyond just behaviour observed over the New Year period. Most of the comments related to there being a the 'lack of things to do' in the local areas/towns for this group leading to boredom and anti social behaviour

"Youths excessively drinking & acting up. Vandalizing public restrooms our rates have gone to. It's such a pity & shame."

"Lack of entertainment for the underage teenagers and children who visit our town which needs addressing."

- **Freedom campers:** many commented about finding 'rubbish and human waste' in popular camping spots like beaches. Comments were also made about 'limited policing of freedom camping' in popular areas, which impacts on the ability of locals to enjoy going to their favourite places.

"Freedom campers disrespectful of environment. Leaving rubbish, hanging washing out in parking area. Generally not pleasant to locals. Disregard of rules. Not having self contained vehicles"

Freedom campers - why encourage and offer free what residents provide and pay for e.g. toilets and rubbish when there is a reduction in resident rubbish collection for this period..."

Local examples of concerns related to tourism from the past summer season (2020/21).

Paeroa, Ngatea, Karangahake, Hauraki Plains

- Rubbish everywhere, particularly in the Karangahake gorge.
- The amount of ratepayers money spent e.g. fixing public toilets at Karangahake
- Parking and toilets for visitors using the rail trail and especially Karangahake gorge.
- The HRT is a blood sucking vampire that bleeds the ratepayers in the area. The Karangahake Gorge is over-touristed to the extent it impacts negatively on the local residents in the season peak.
- Many visitors from outside the area that stayed in our AirBnB accommodation commented on the amount of potholes on the Hauraki Rail Trail...and some thought a bus service between Paeroa to Waihi Beach.
- Paeroa has no amenities!

Waihi and Waihi Beach

- The whole place seems to be fuelled on alcohol. Not the healthiest look... tourist activity is mostly about getting drunk and partying, and destroying our beautiful natural environment, leaving trash everywhere, causing havoc and violence - e.g. stabbings and murders at Waihi Beach and Bowentown at New Years - because all the police funding has been cut!
- Long long waits at the Waihi beach turn off getting into Waihi. The bridge below the Owhara waterfalls is an absolute nightmare, no visitors understand the rule of one car at a time.

Local examples of concerns related to tourism from the past summer season (2020/21).

Coromandel Town

- Condition of gravel roads north of Coromandel town (Kennedy Bay, Tuataewa, Colville Hill) deteriorated rapidly - really dangerous corrugations & potholes over summer period caused by 2-wheel drive cars, campervans, trailers which made it difficult to control vehicle even at really low speeds.
- The industry has been completely destroyed, and Coromandel Town particularly has been left in the government wilderness as a backwater. Kiwis are disastrous DISASTROUS tourists in their own country, basing their sense of value in Coromandel on their sense of inability to go overseas to get "cheap".
- Southbound from Coromandel town to Thames can be incredibly slow during December to March as local traffic are stuck behind, campers, trucks and towed boats.

Hahei/Hot Water Beach/Cathedral Cove

- Camper vans parking all day at the beach and then walking to Cathedral Cove. Still not enough policing of vans staying overnight.
- Despite Covid 19, it was still overrun at the beach in Hahei, Cathedral Cove and Hotwater Beach. There has been a lot of promotion of the area in national media.
- Too many people on Cathedral Cove track during peak season and Hahei completely overwhelmed by visitors that you don't even want to leave your own home during peak times.
- Too many people visiting Hahei/cathedral cove. Sooo much traffic.
- Overtourism, too many people thronging to hotspot places e.g. Cathedral Cove and ruining the experience, noisiness of tourists
- The recent trend to charge for parking in places like Hot Water Beach.

Local examples of concerns related to tourism from the past summer season (2020/21).

Thames

- For Thames, only one supermarket
- How to attract more visitors to Thames
- The speeding along the Thames Coast Rd.
- Way too many RV's on the road! And they just don't know how to drive our narrow roads, puts the rest of us in danger, especially down the Thames Coast road which is super narrow
- Bringing COVID and getting to THAMES Supermarket, doctors and dentists.
- COVID has been a grim reminder that our local tourism sector needs to develop experiences, activities and indoor tours which cater to a wider range of New Zealanders (all year long, in all weather), as opposed to relying on the foreign tourist. There is a great opportunity to do this in the Thames urban area.

Whitianga

- Restaurant offerings in Whitianga in a sad way compared to past years.
- We didn't have enough visitors to Whitianga.

Whangamata

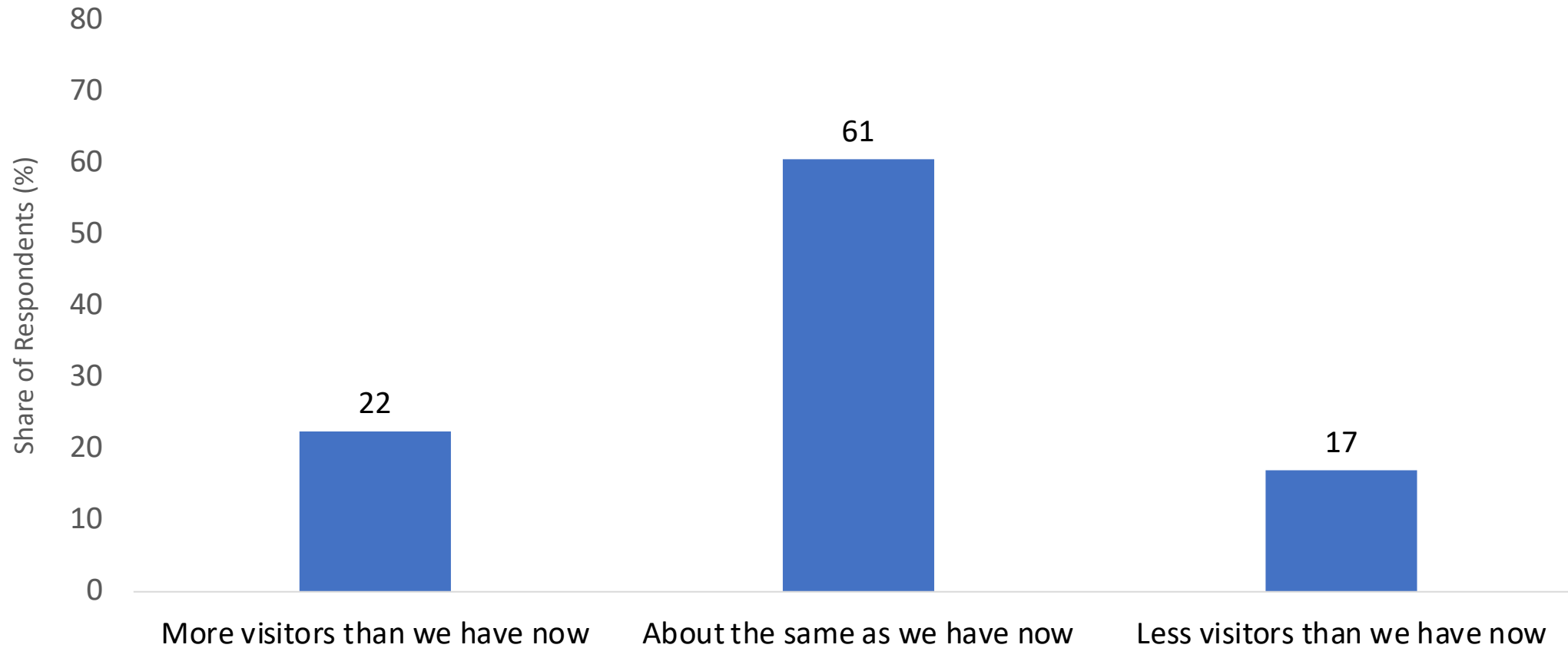
- Lack of infrastructure in Whangamata.
- Police called to a party in Whangamata - risky/reckless behaviour affecting elderly population.
- The pressure on Whangamata's grocery store

Tairua, Pauanui

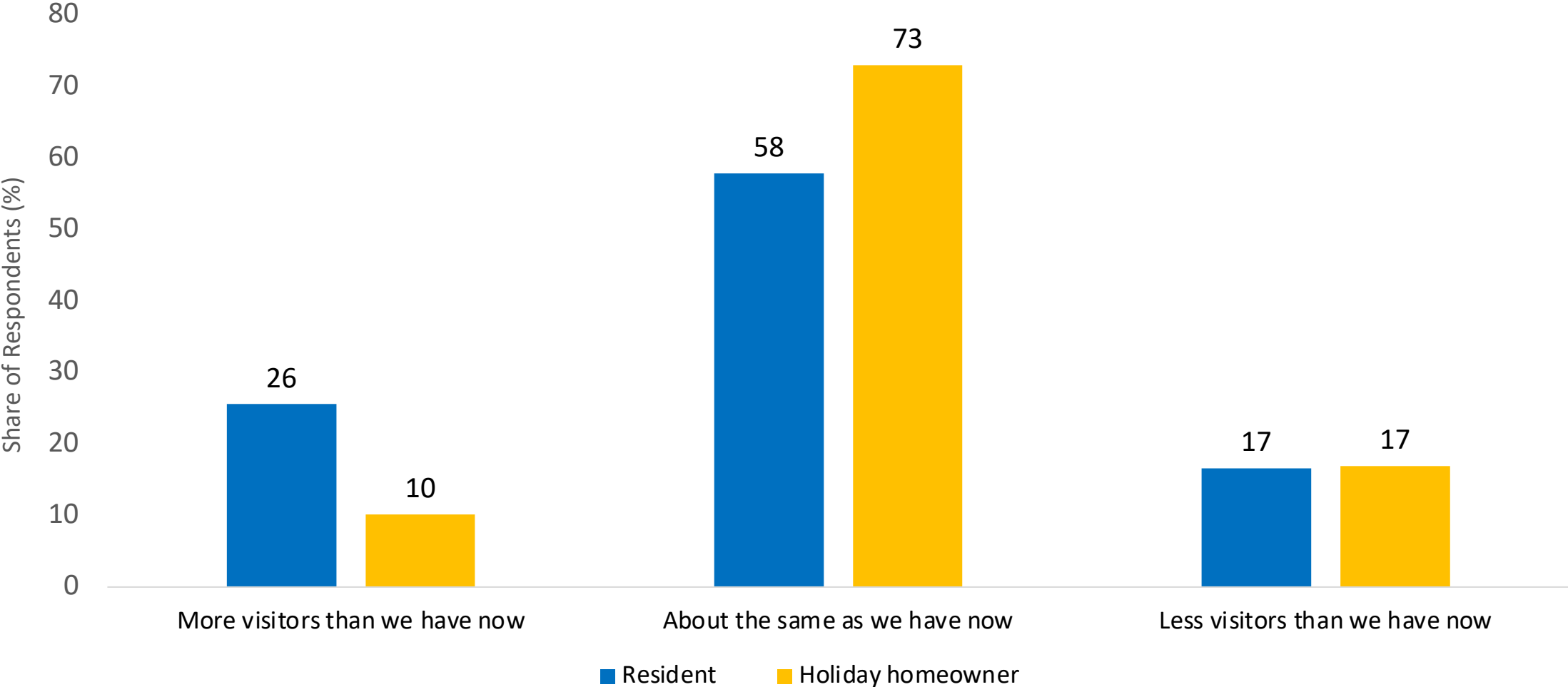
- The one way bridges especially in Tairua
- Traffic delays at one lane bridges at Tairua
- Traffic especially into Tairua. The one way bridge cause traffic delays up to 2 hrs. I work in Tairua & Pauanui and can't afford these delays as I'm in the health sector



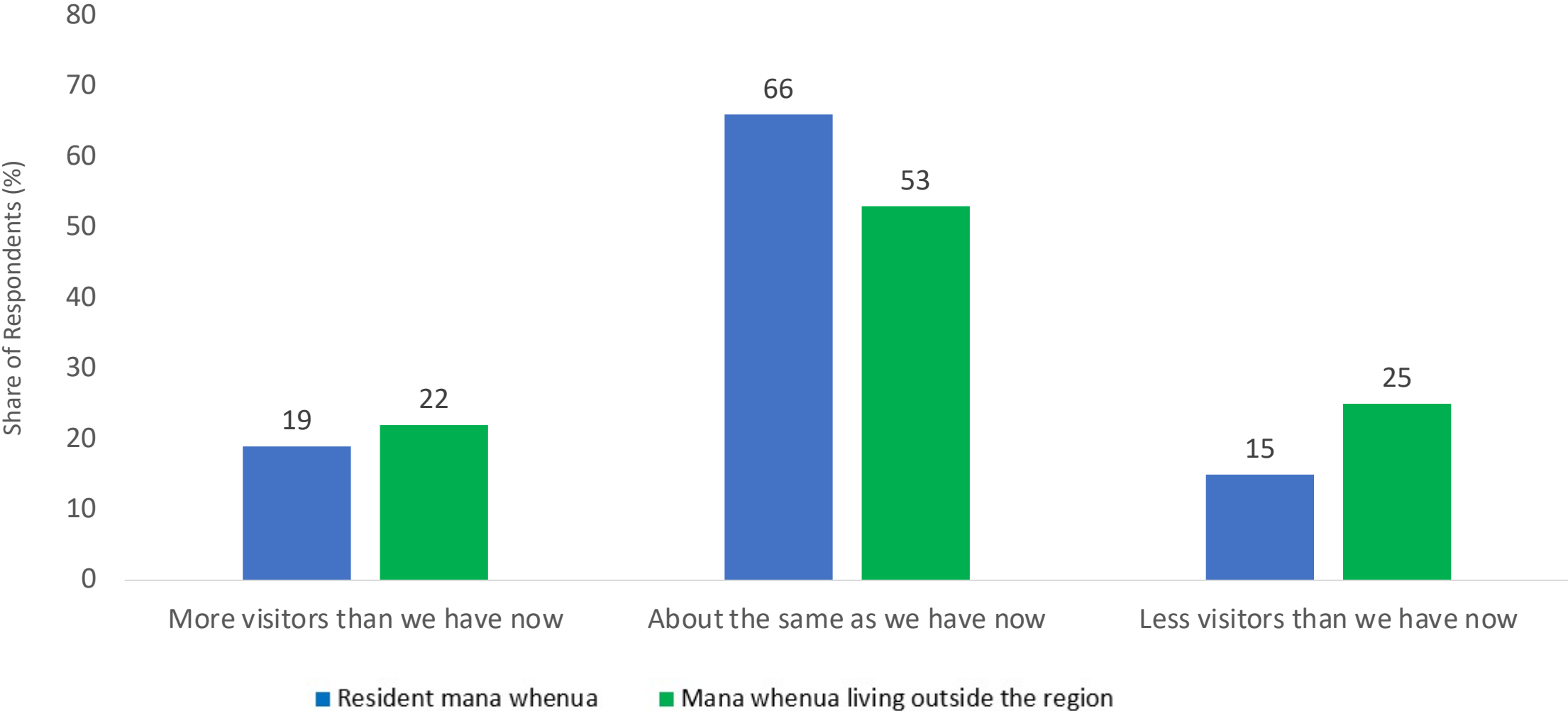
When asked what they would like to see in terms of visitor numbers in the summer high season, most respondents want to see visitor numbers remain constant.



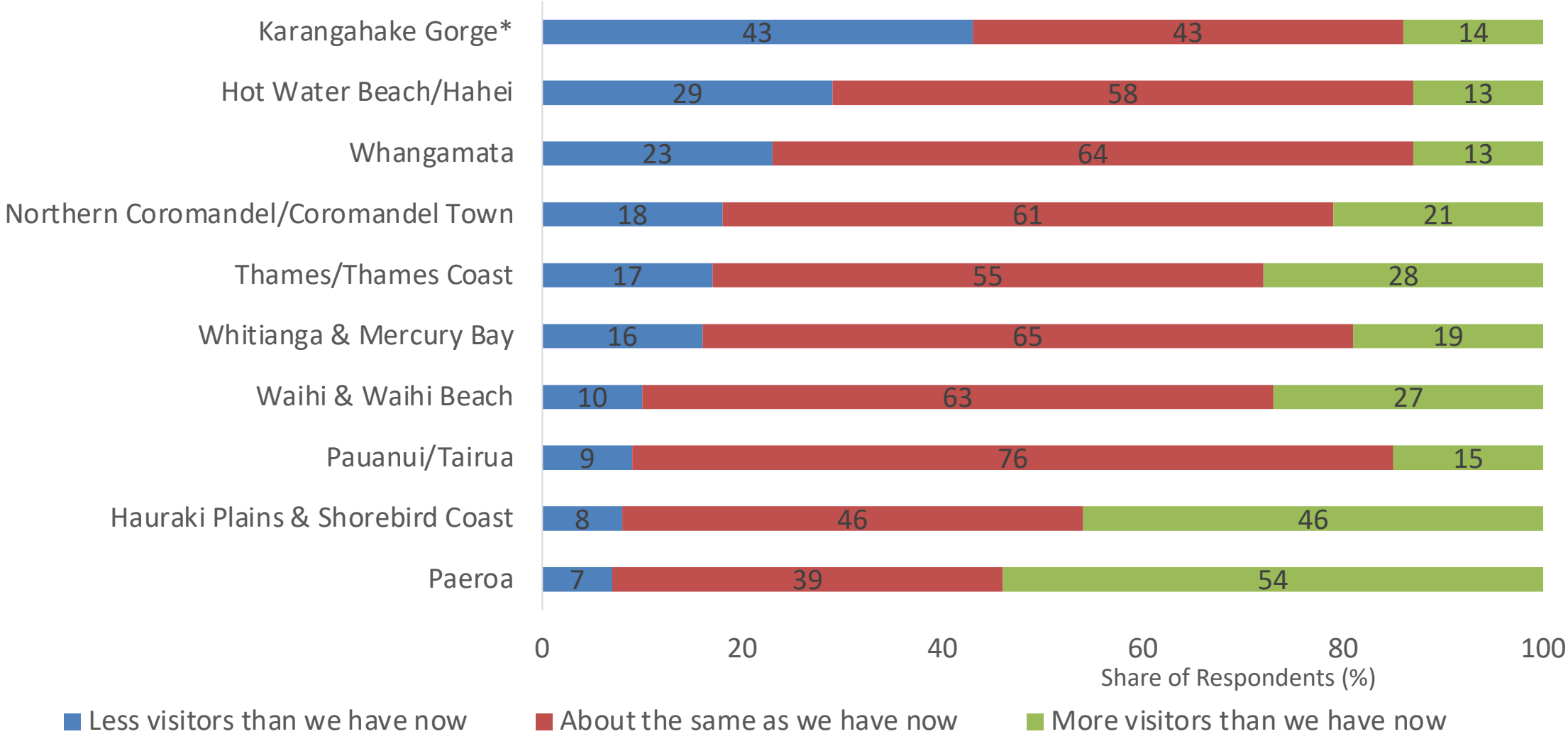
Nearly three quarters (73%) of holiday homeowners would prefer the 'status quo', while over a quarter (26%) of residents who would like to see 'more visitors' to their town/local area.



The vast majority of mana whenua both residents, and non-residents, would like to see visitor numbers remain 'about the same' or to decrease. A quarter of non-resident mana whenua would like to see fewer visitors.

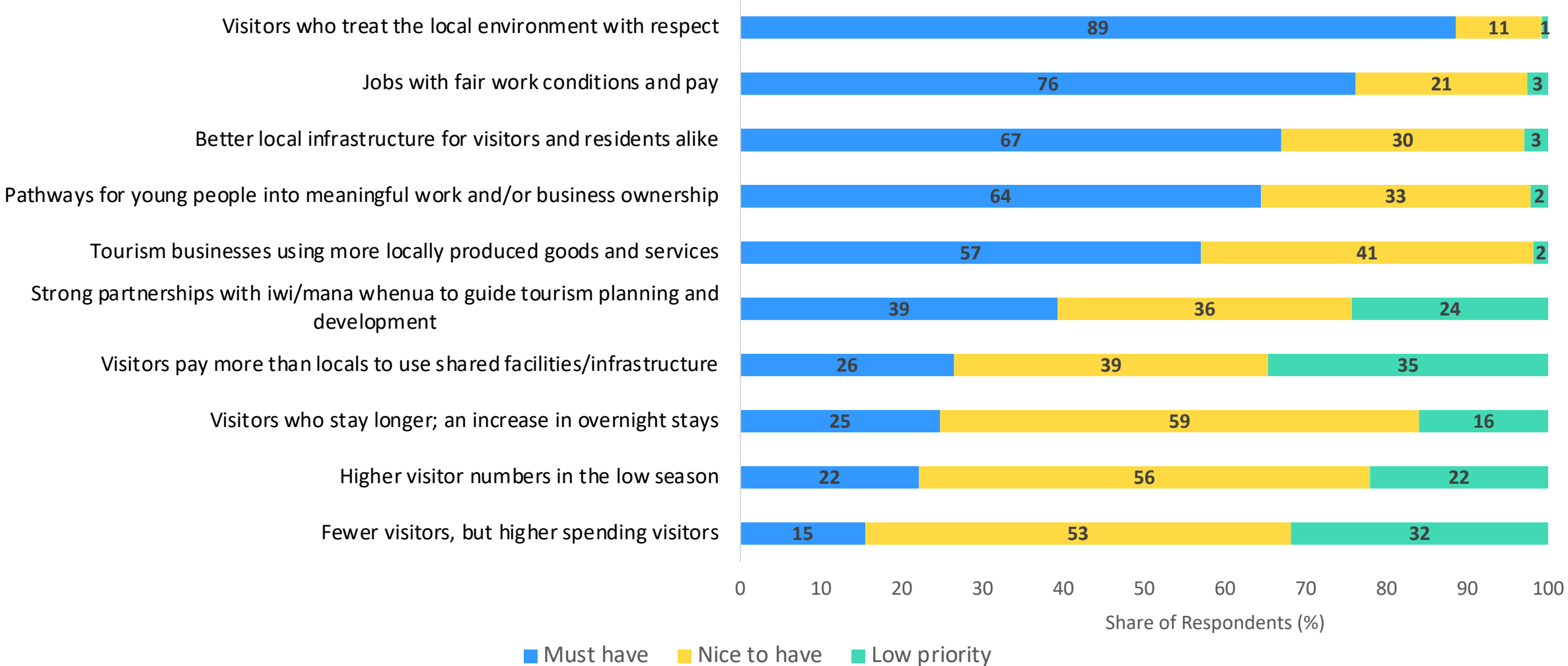


Attitudes to future visitor numbers in the high season vary considerably around the region. The appetite for growing visitor numbers in some destinations is very low (e.g. Hot Water Beach/Hahei) whereas it is strong in Paeroa.

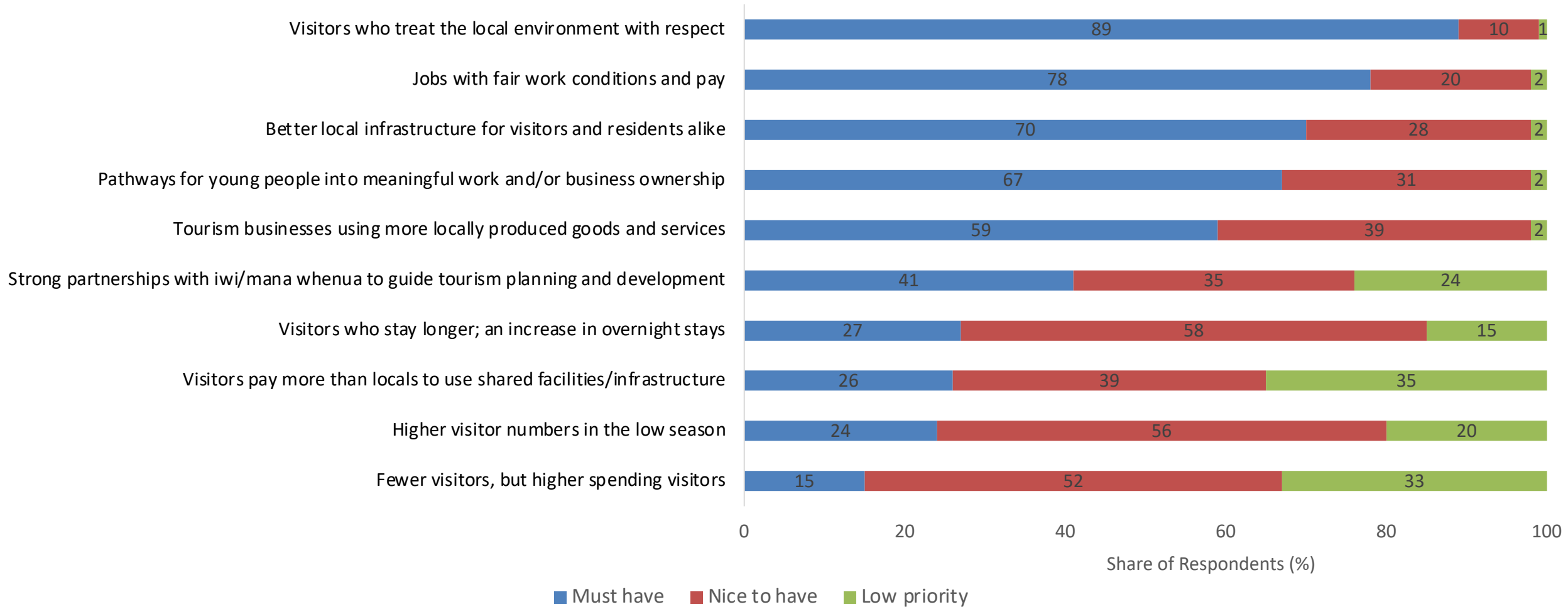


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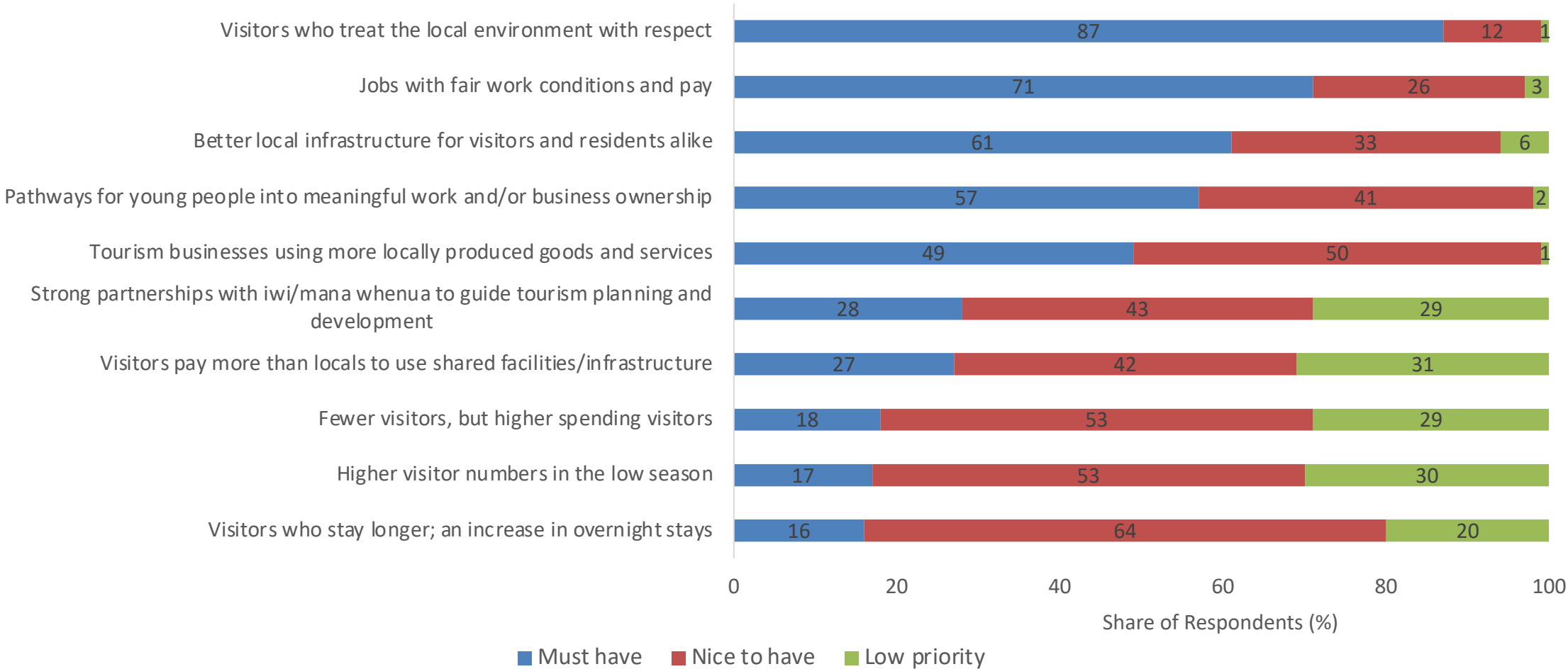
A tourism industry that supports the environment, and which provides jobs with fair working conditions and pay, dominates community aspirations for the future. Increasing visitor numbers in the low season and having fewer, but higher spending visitors are not seen as a ‘must have’.



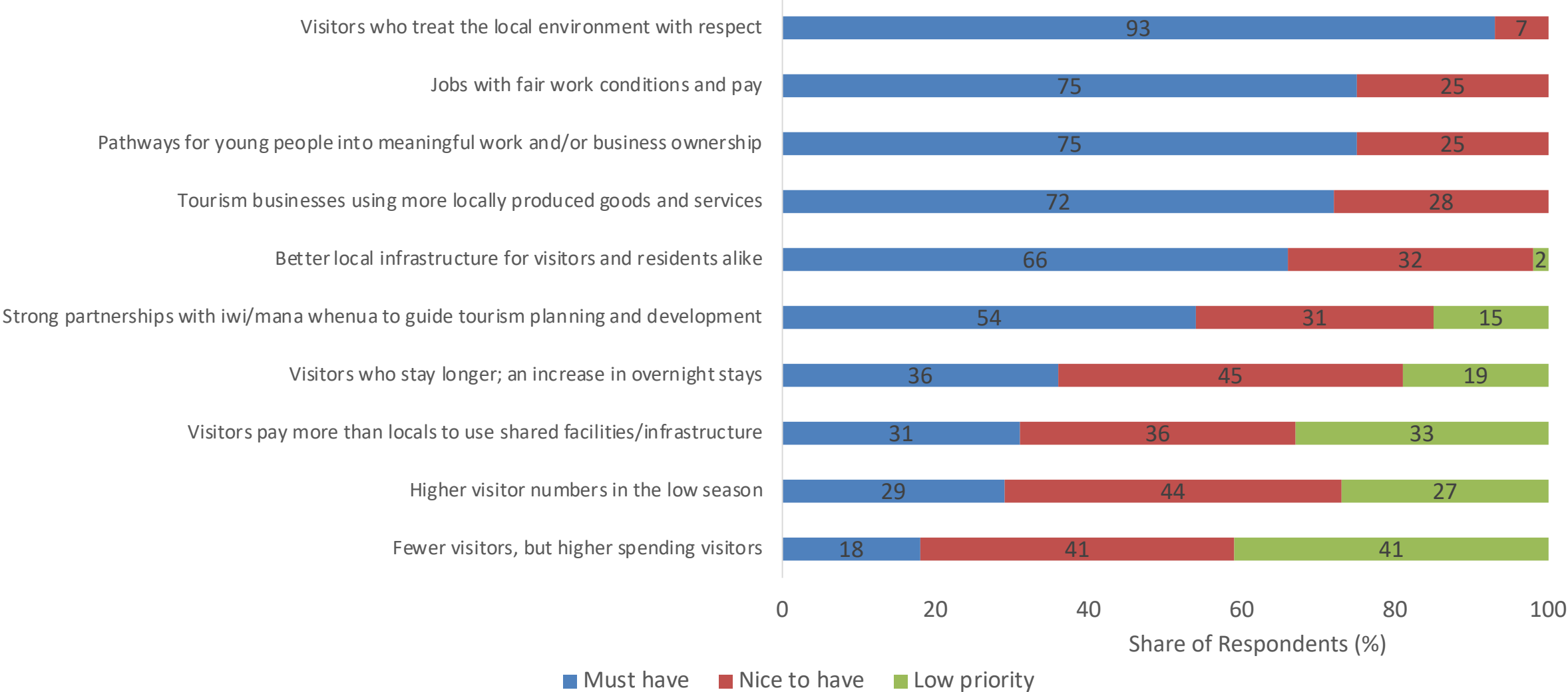
Residents of the region focus on environmental, work and infrastructure when asked about future aspirations for tourism.



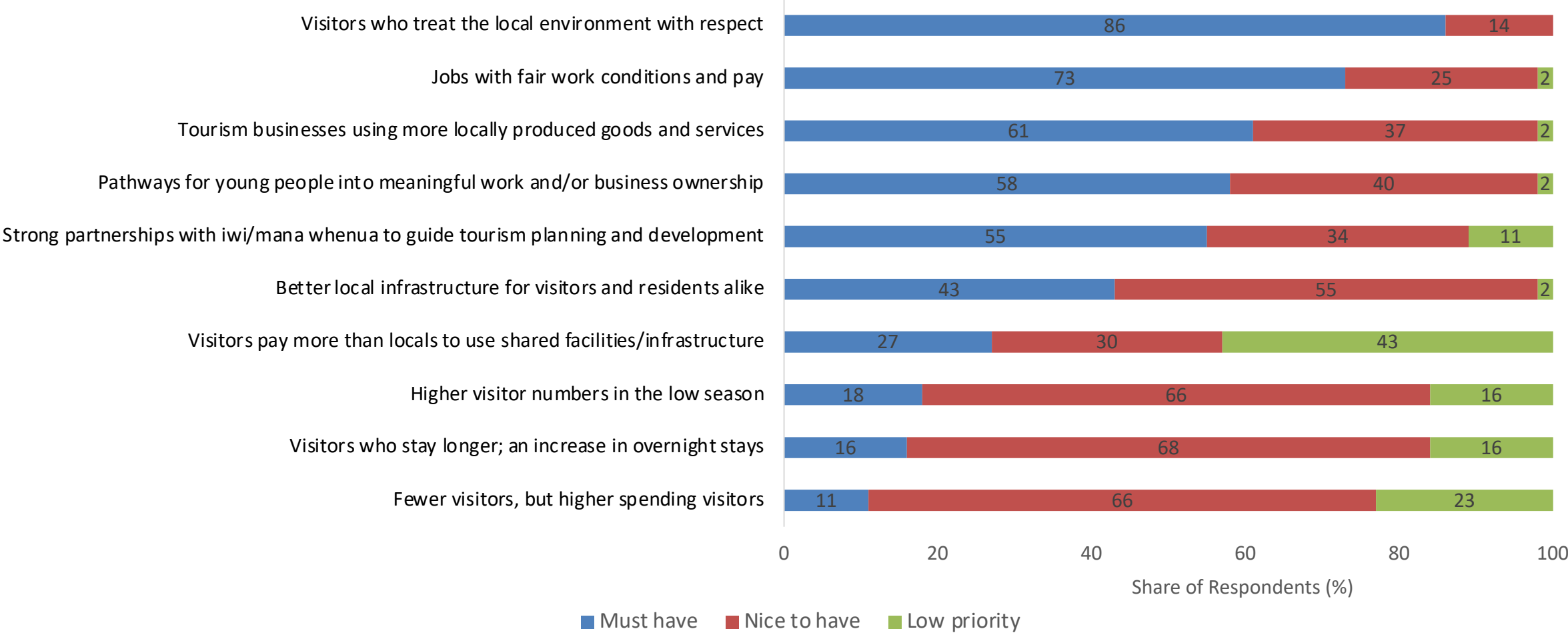
Non-resident holiday homeowners do not differ greatly in the focus of their aspirations for tourism from their resident counterparts.



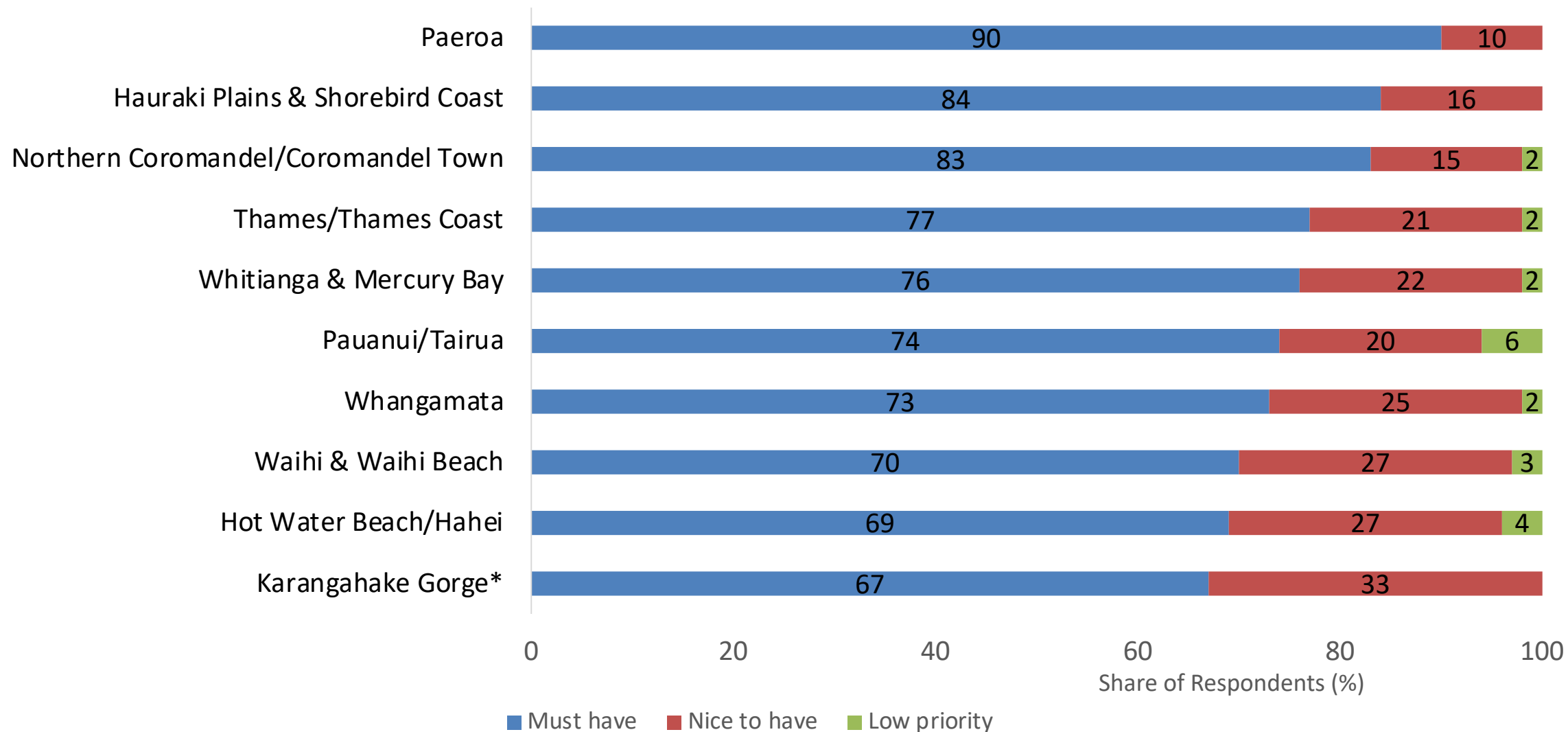
Resident mana whenua do not differ greatly in the focus from the general responses, but they place a particularly strong emphasis on environment.



Non-resident mana whenua reflect the broader themes raised in the sample but place more emphasis on the need to build partnerships with iwi/mana whenua.

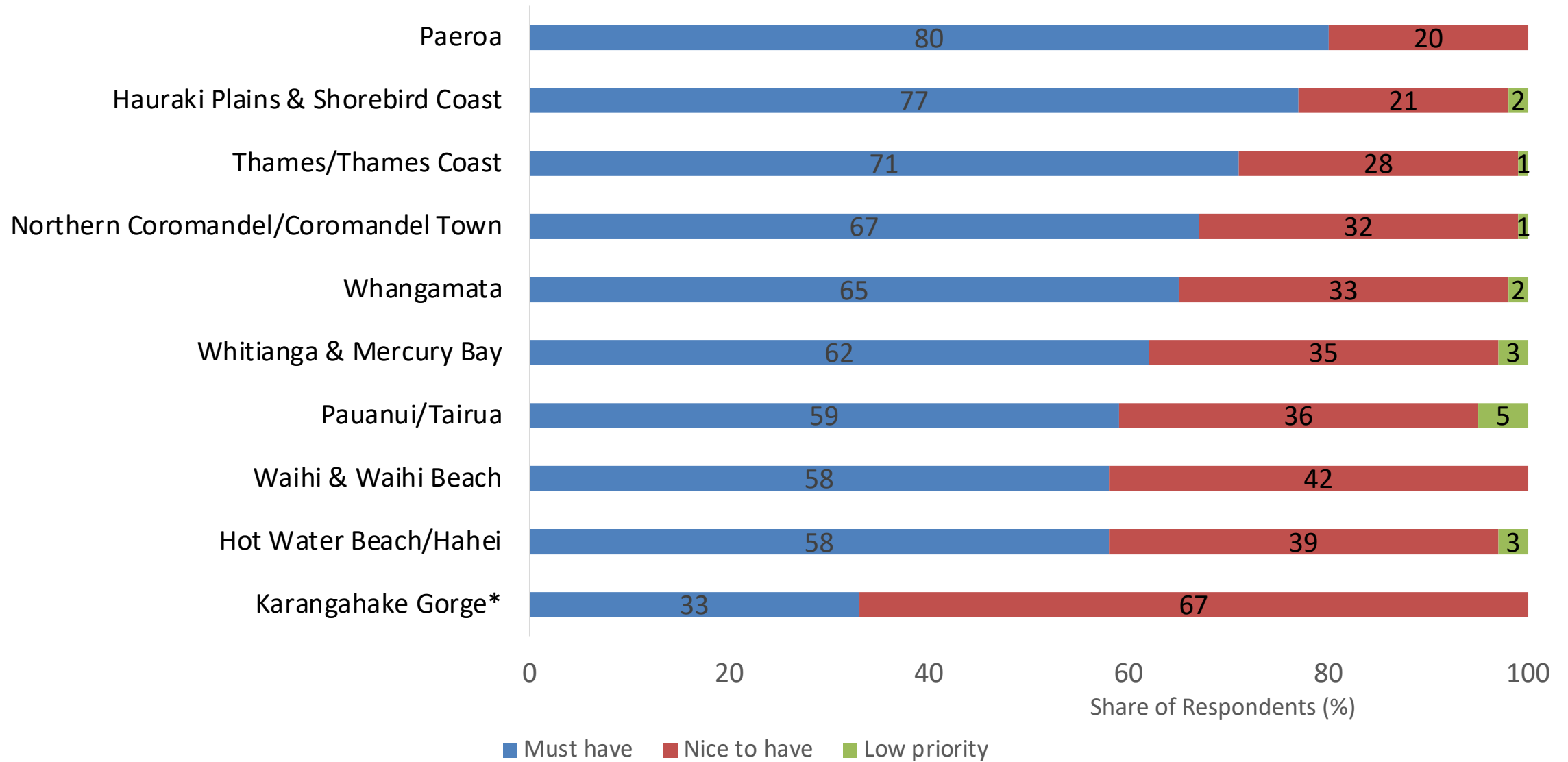


By statement: Jobs with fair work conditions and pay



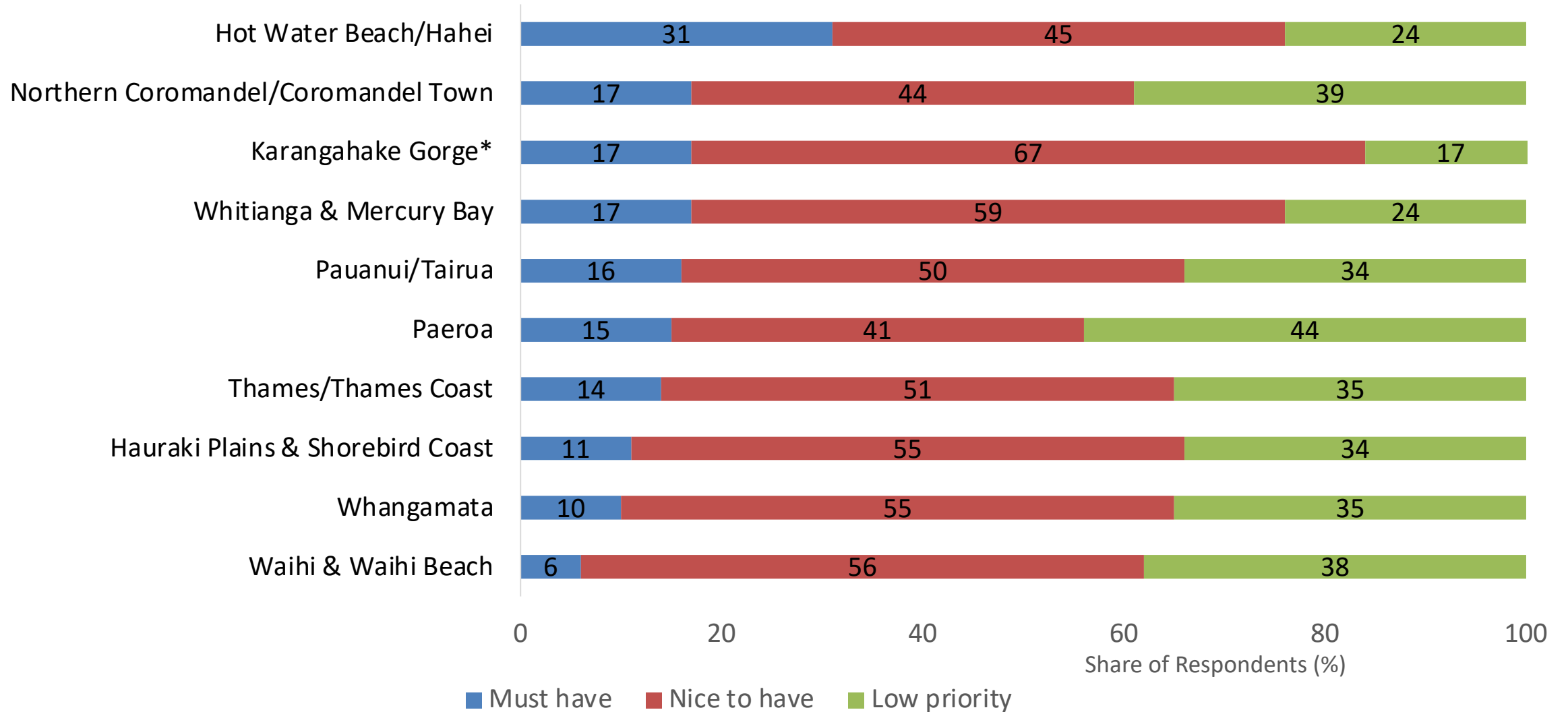
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Pathways for young people into meaningful work and/or business ownership



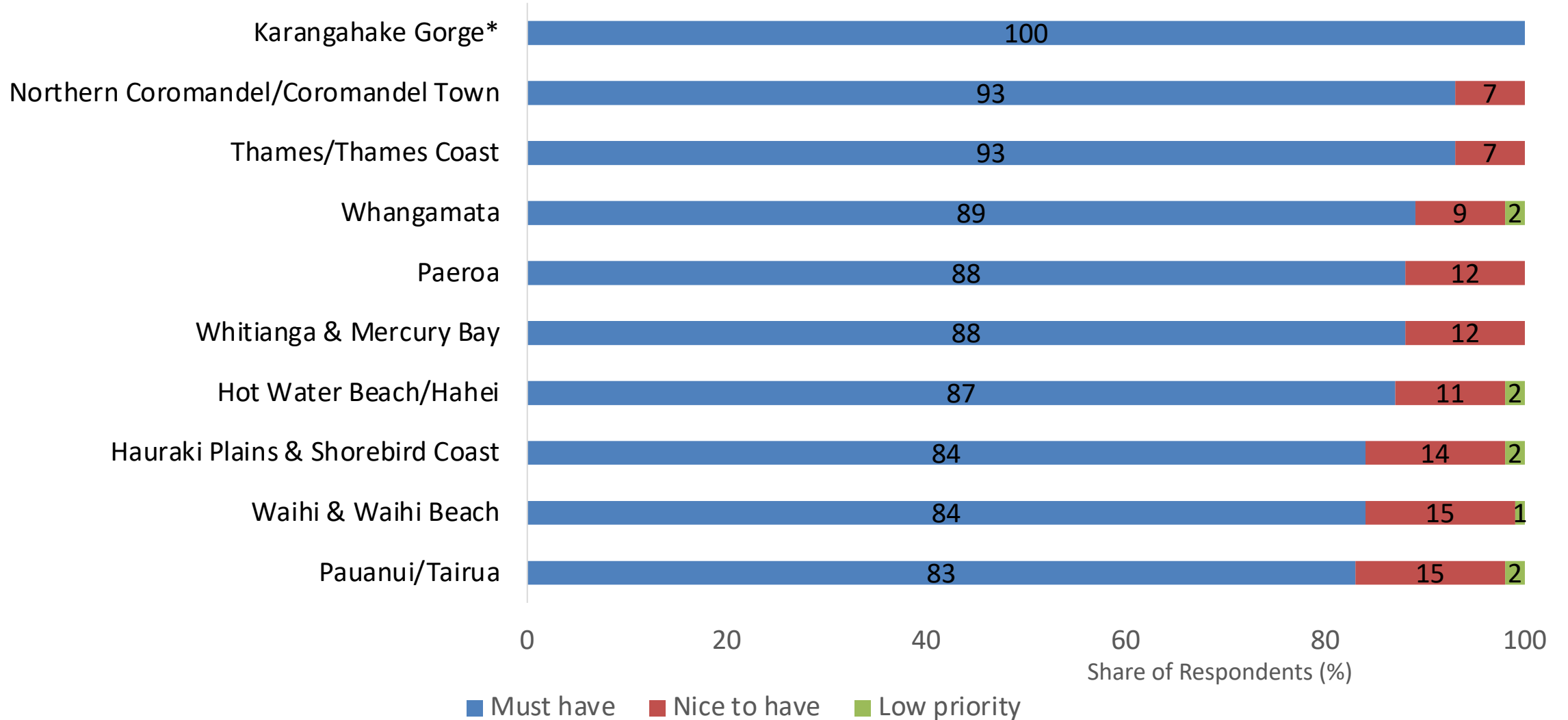
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Fewer visitors, but higher spending visitors



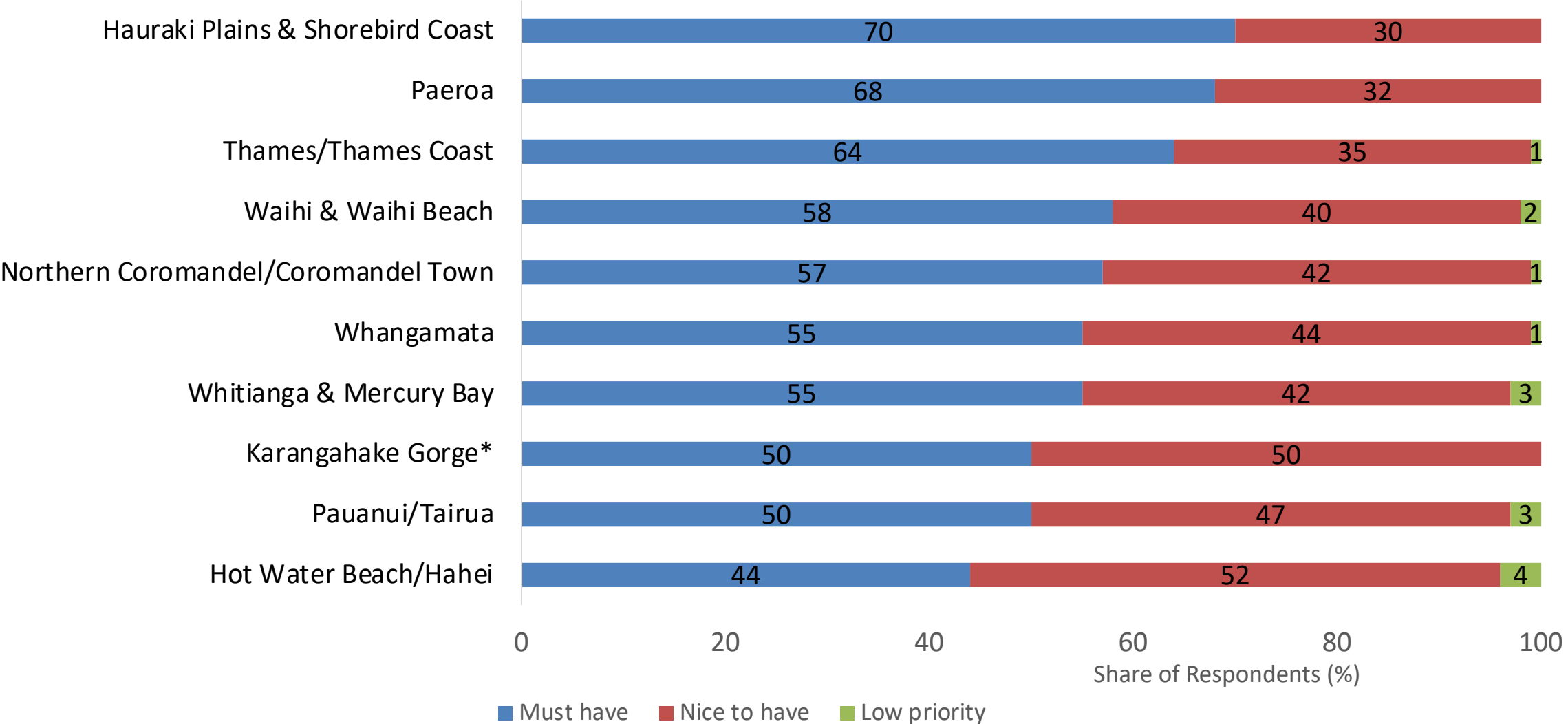
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Visitors who treat the local environment with respect



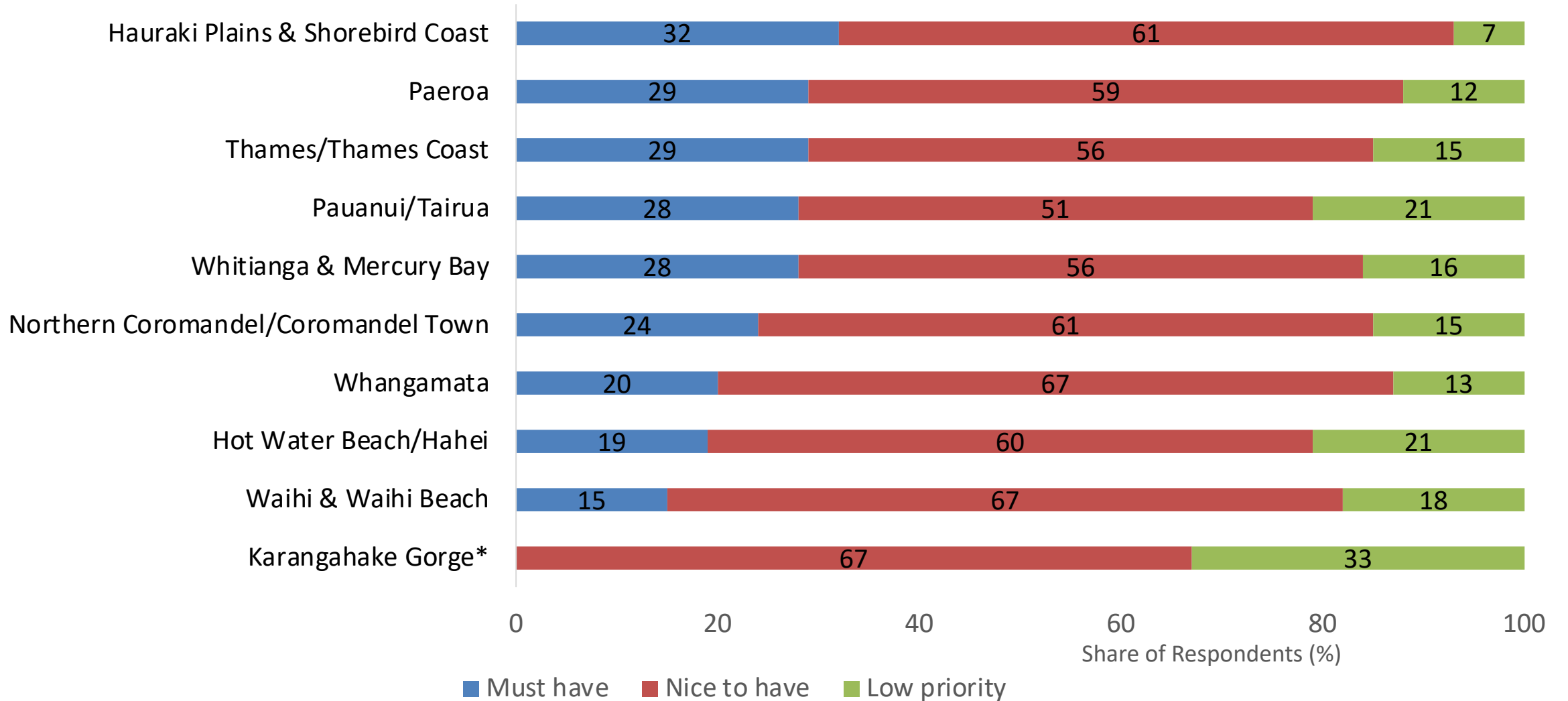
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Tourism businesses using more locally produced goods and services



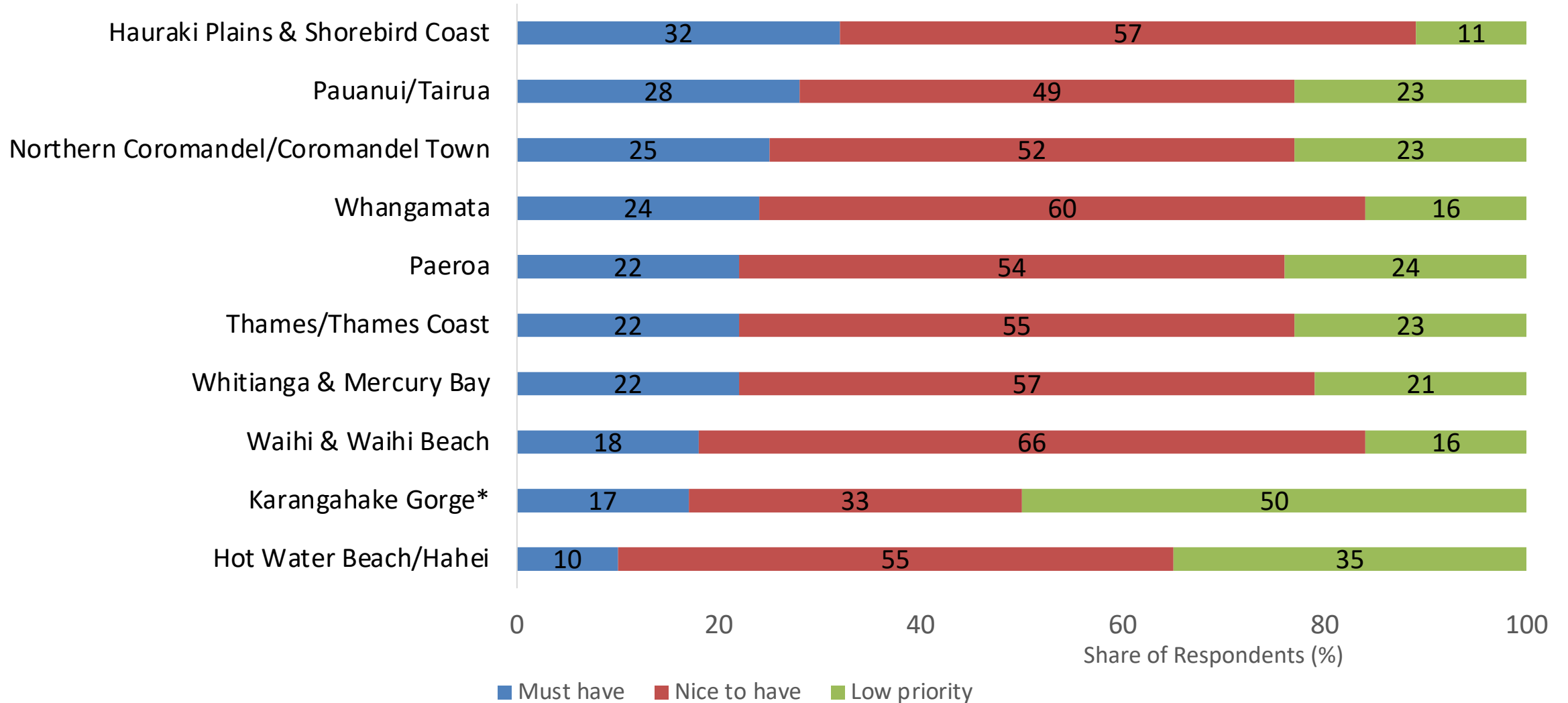
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Visitors who stay longer; an increase in overnight stays



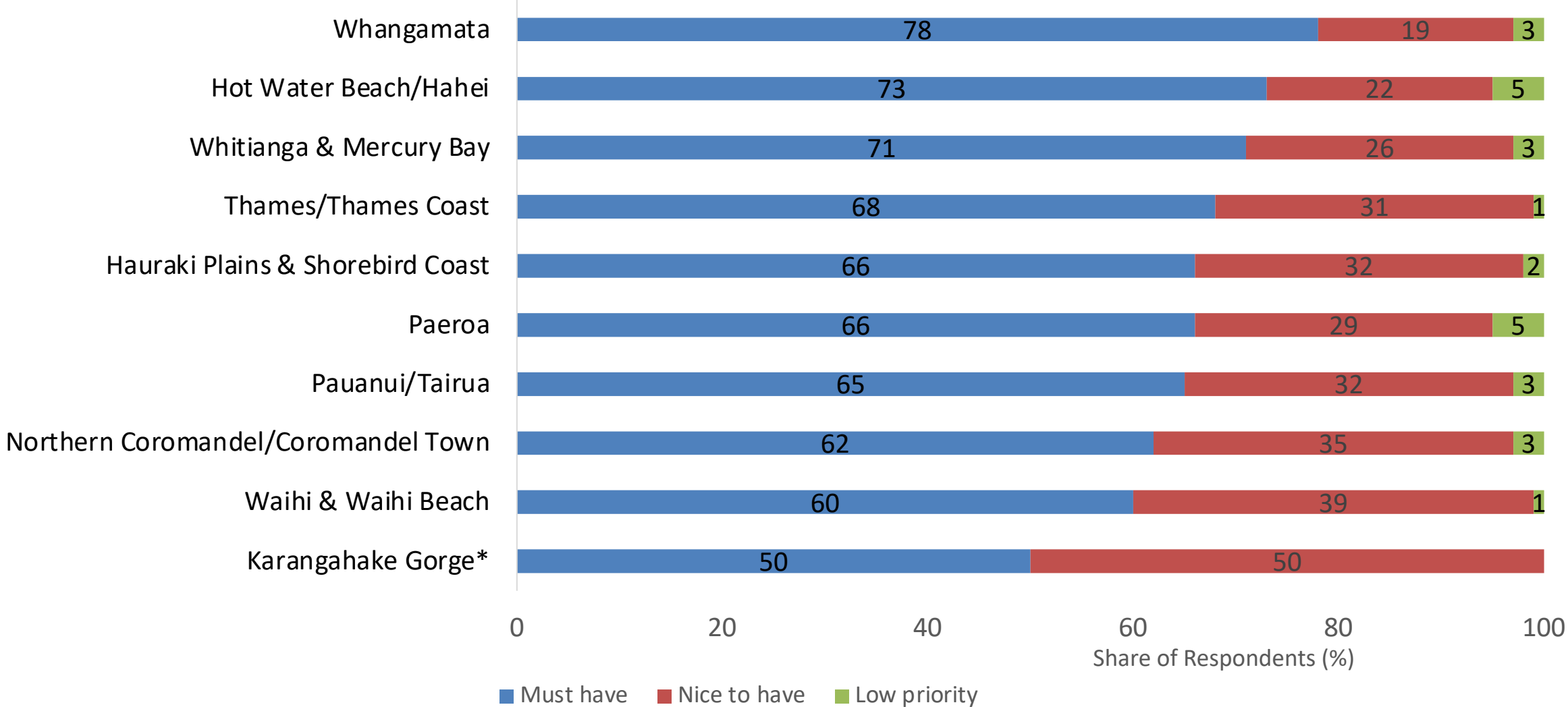
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Higher visitor numbers in the low season



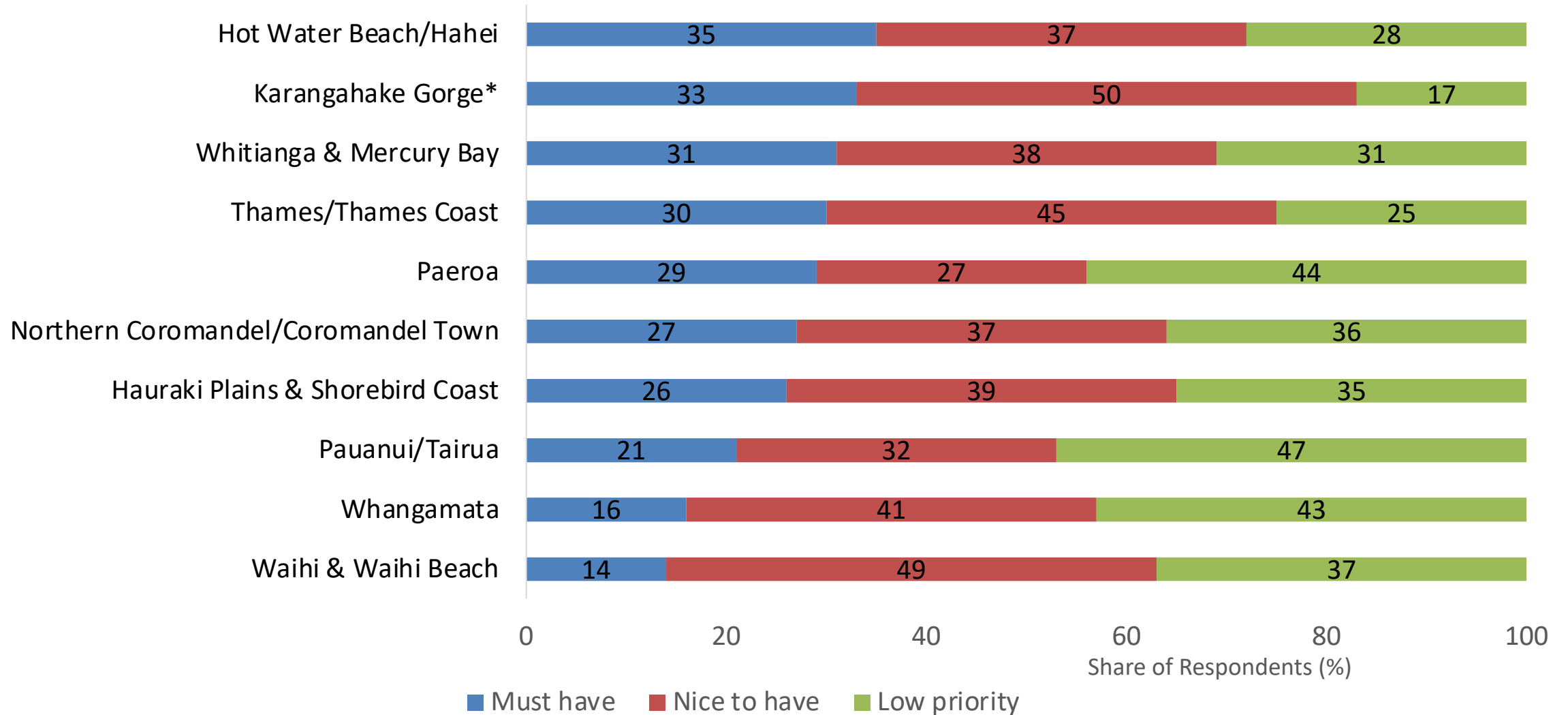
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Better local infrastructure for visitors and residents alike



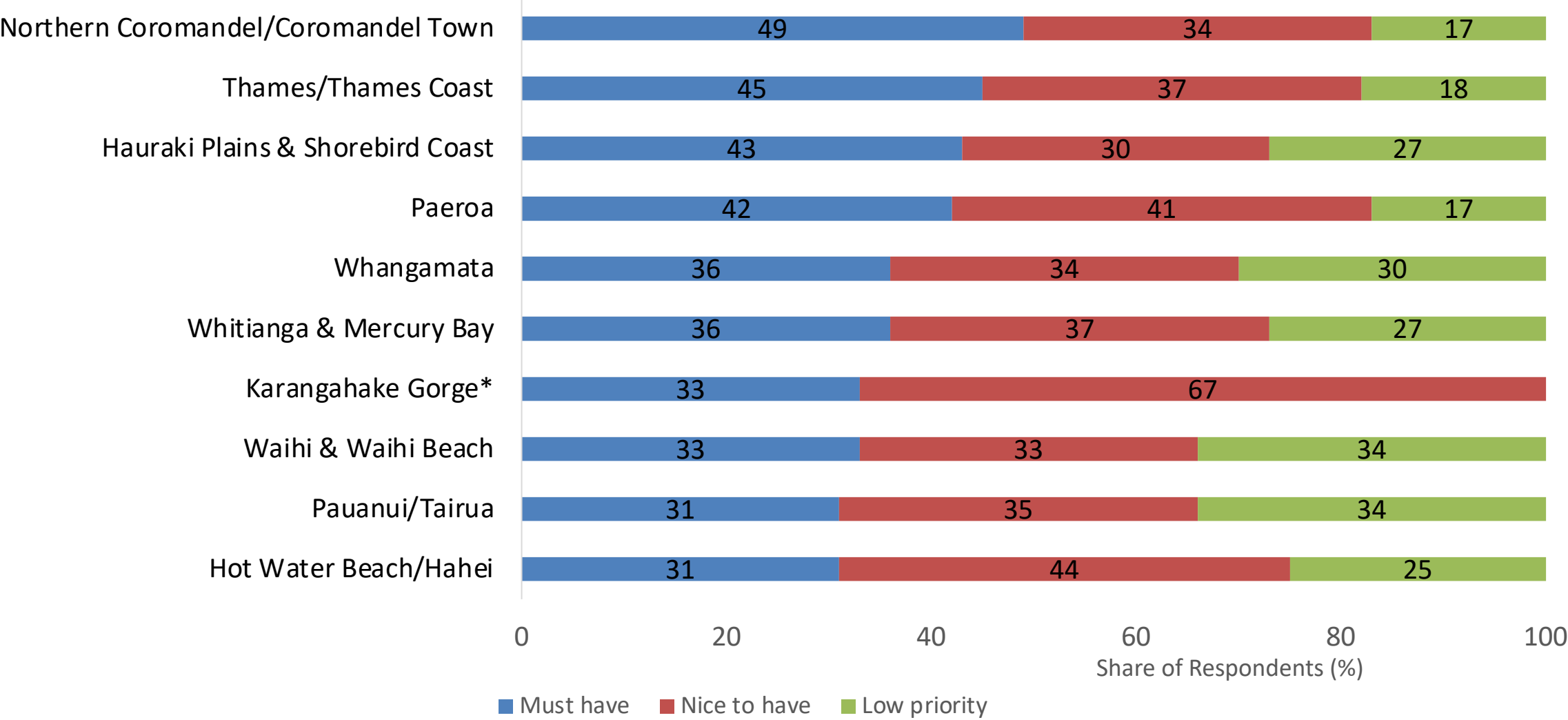
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Visitors pay more than locals to use shared facilities/infrastructure



*: sample size is 7

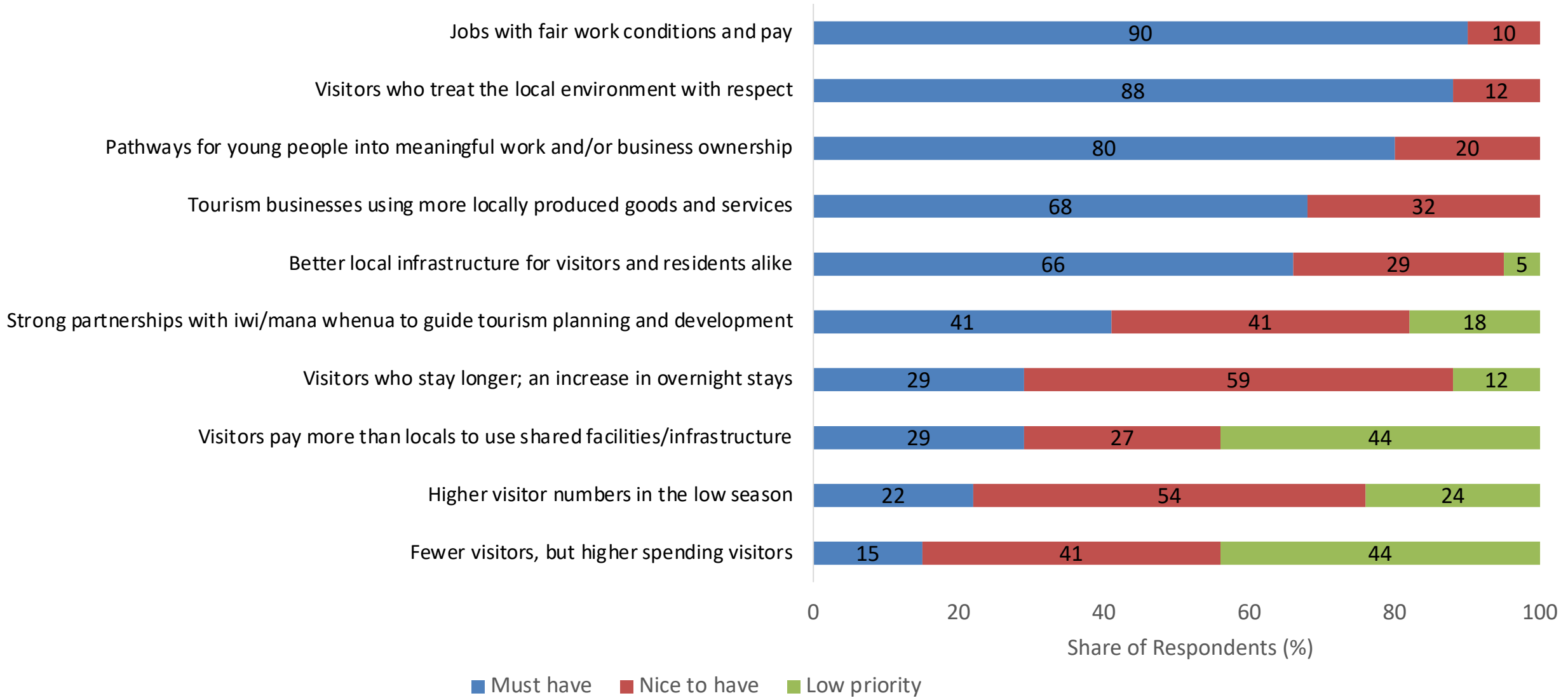
Strong partnerships with iwi/mana whenua to guide tourism planning and development



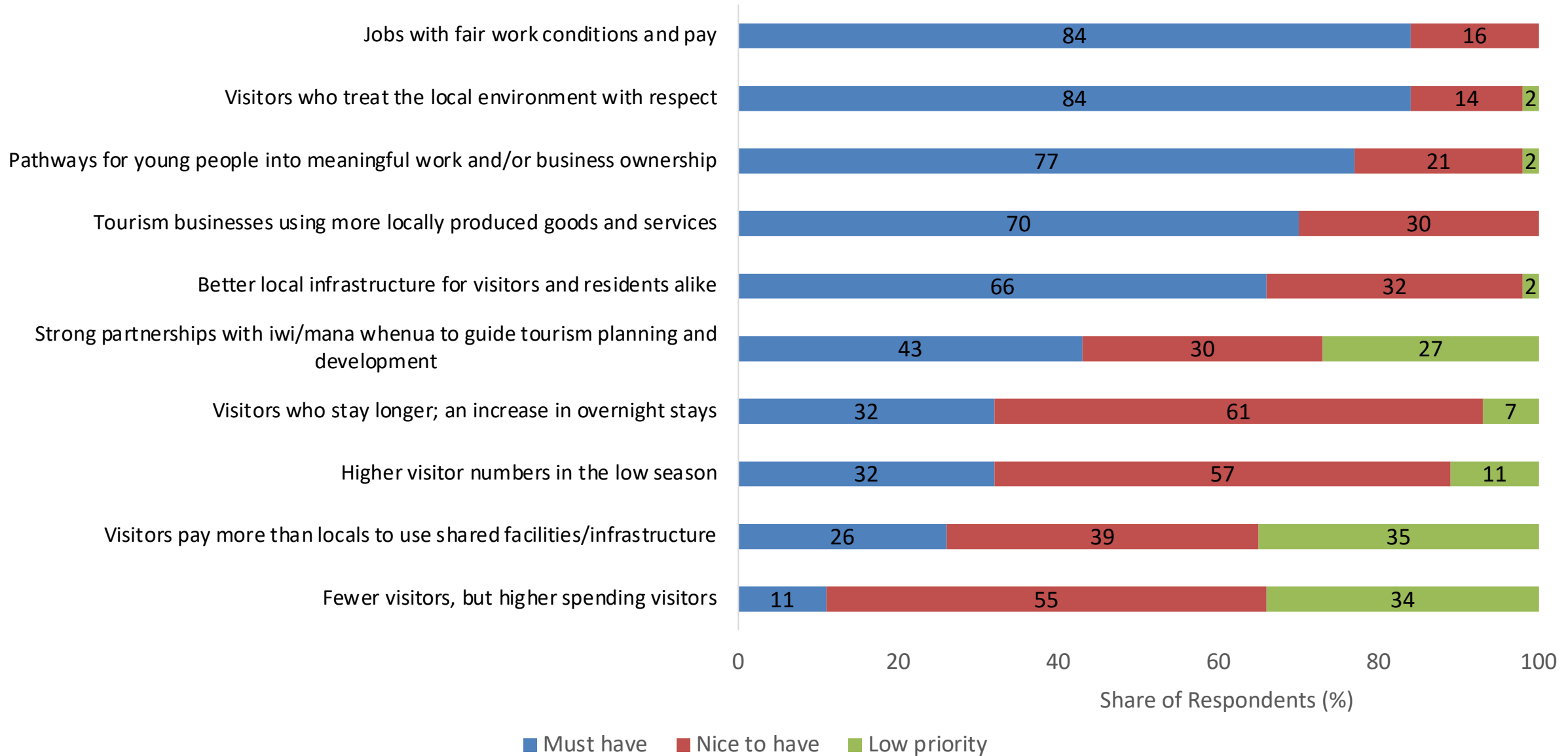
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By Area:

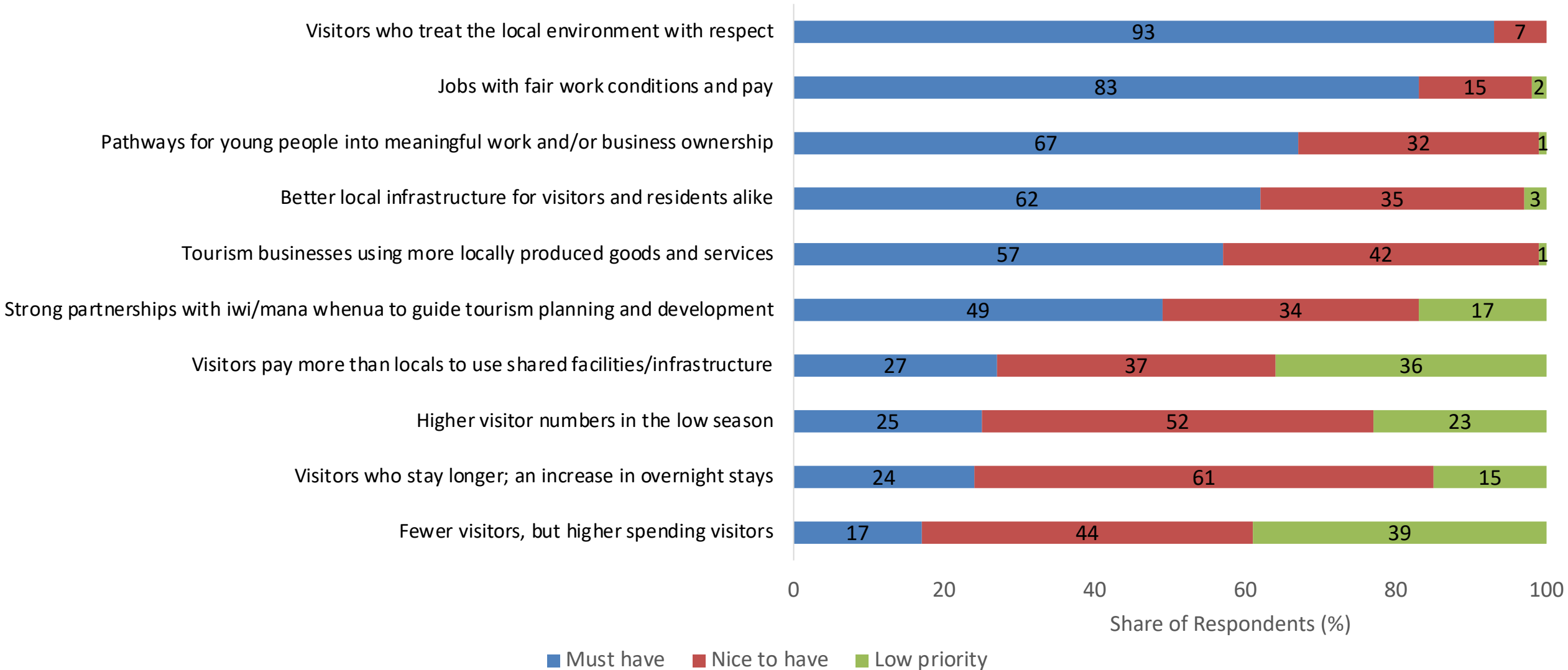
Paeroa



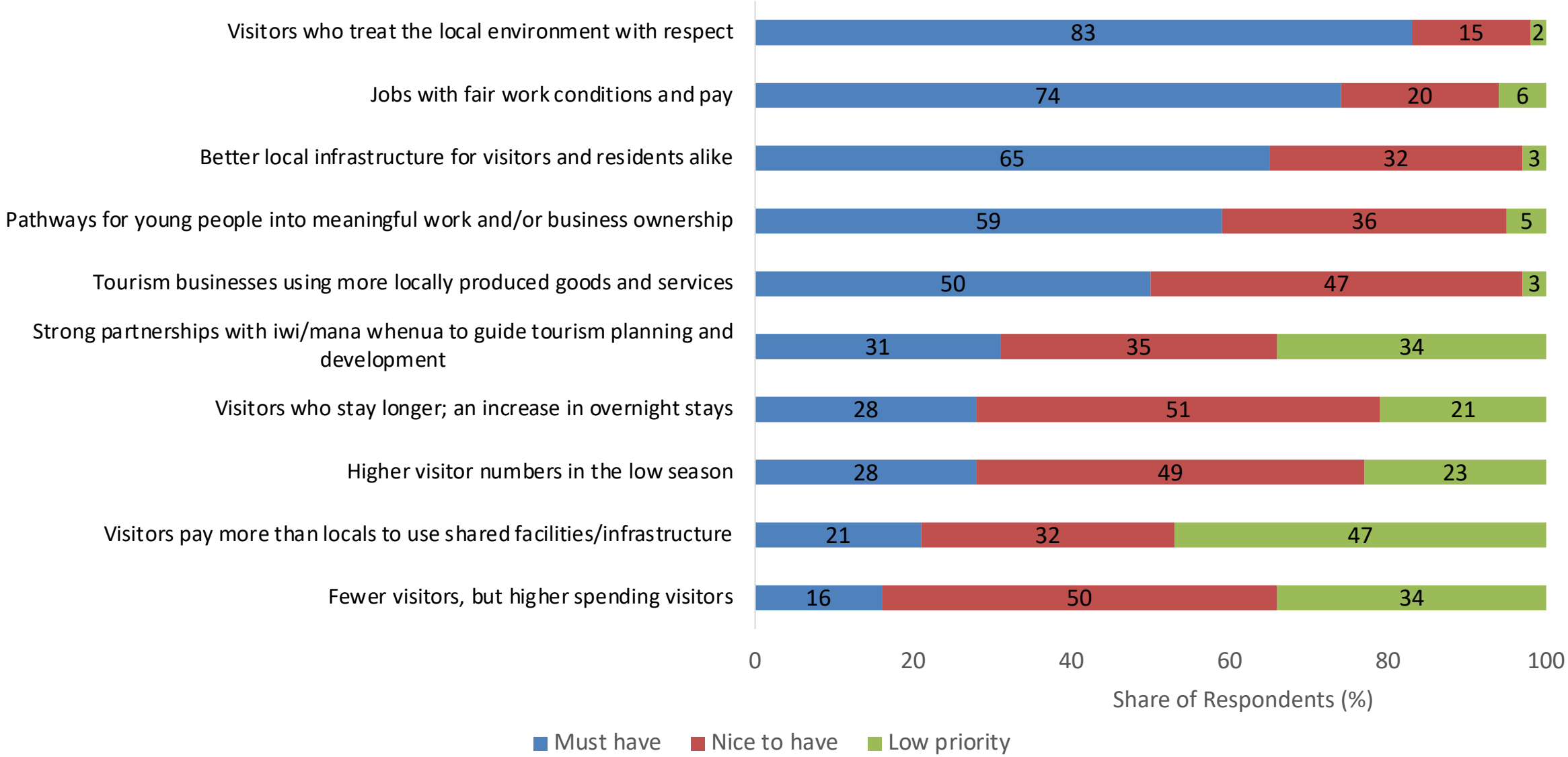
Hauraki Plains & Shorebird Coast



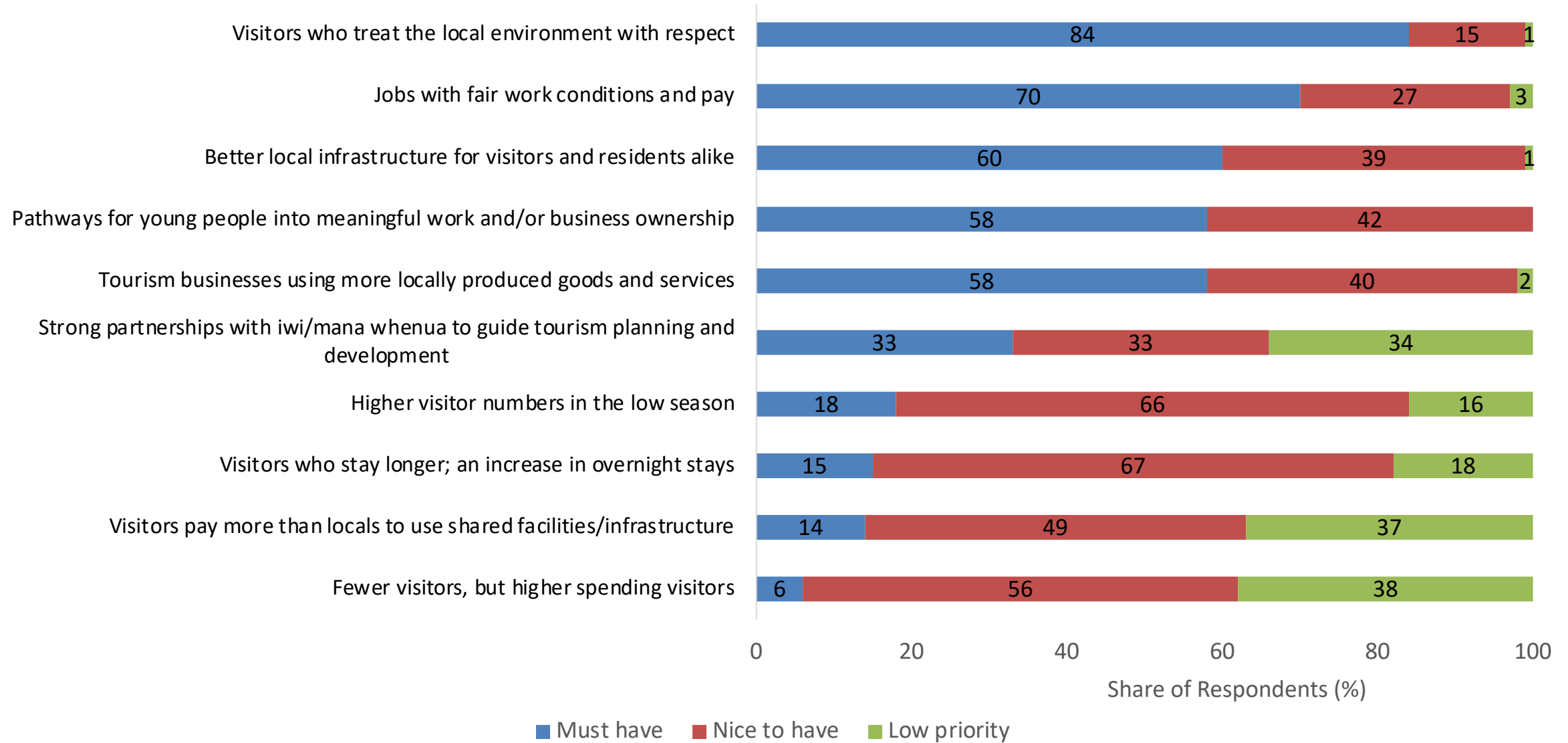
Northern Coromandel/Coromandel Town



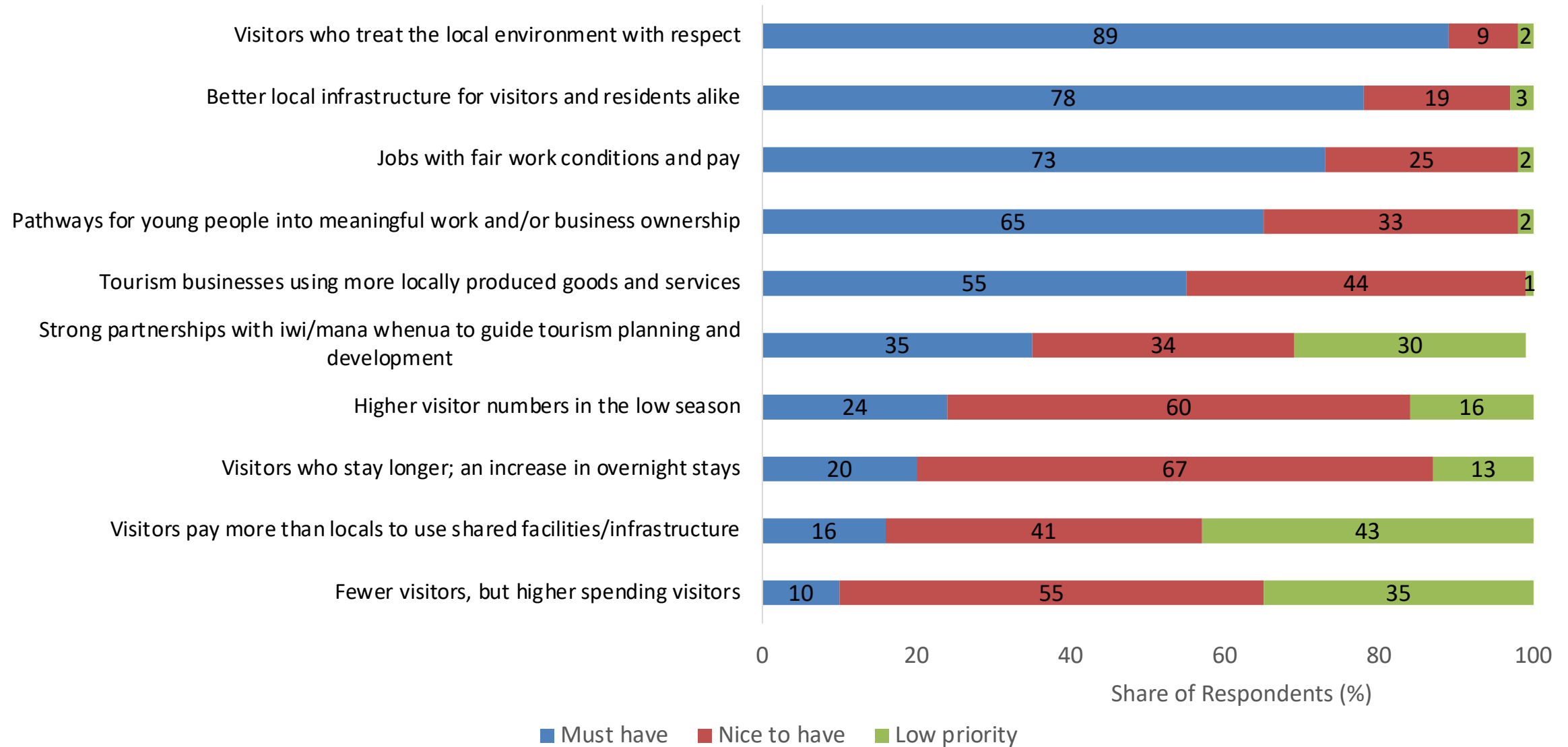
Pauanui /Tairua



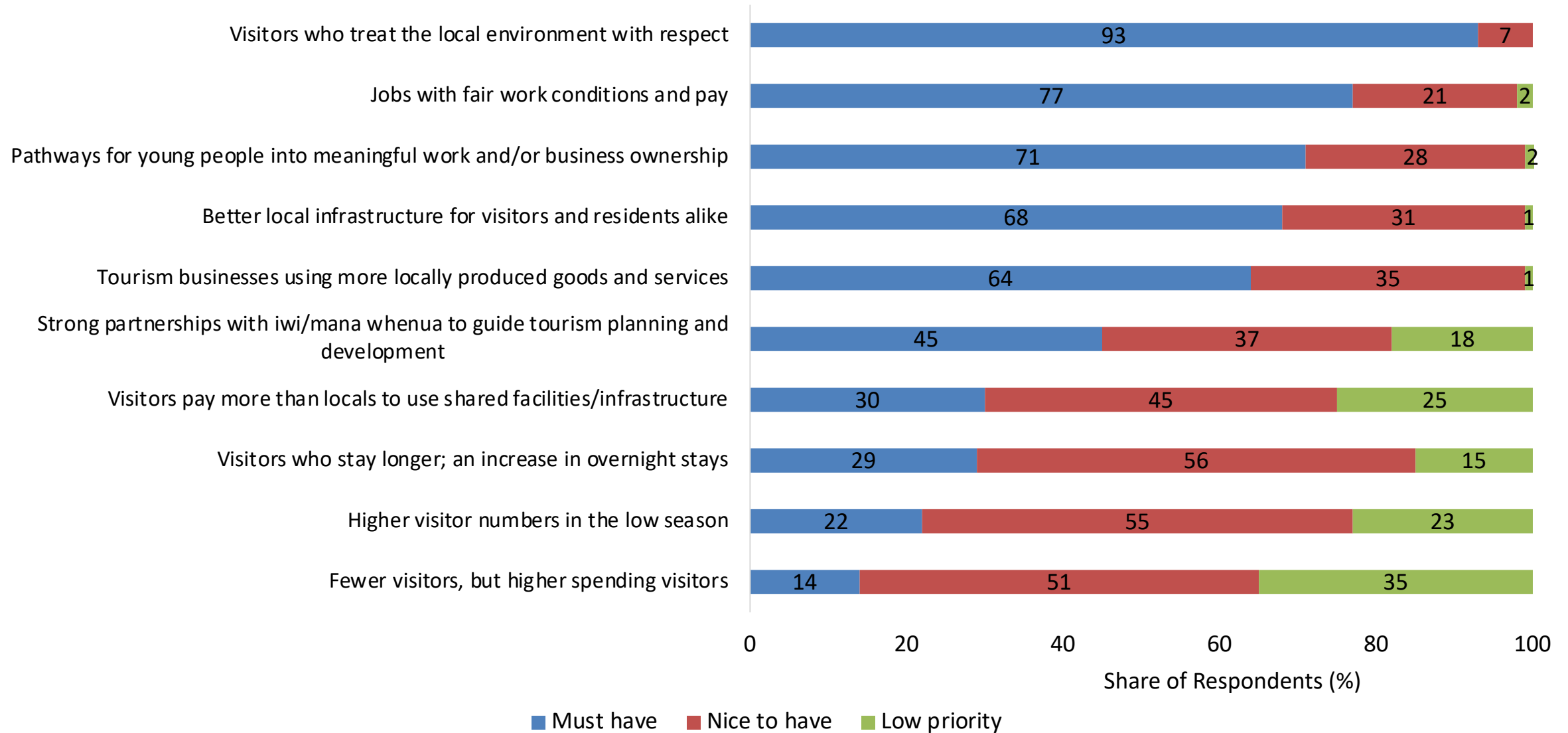
Waihi & Waihi Beach



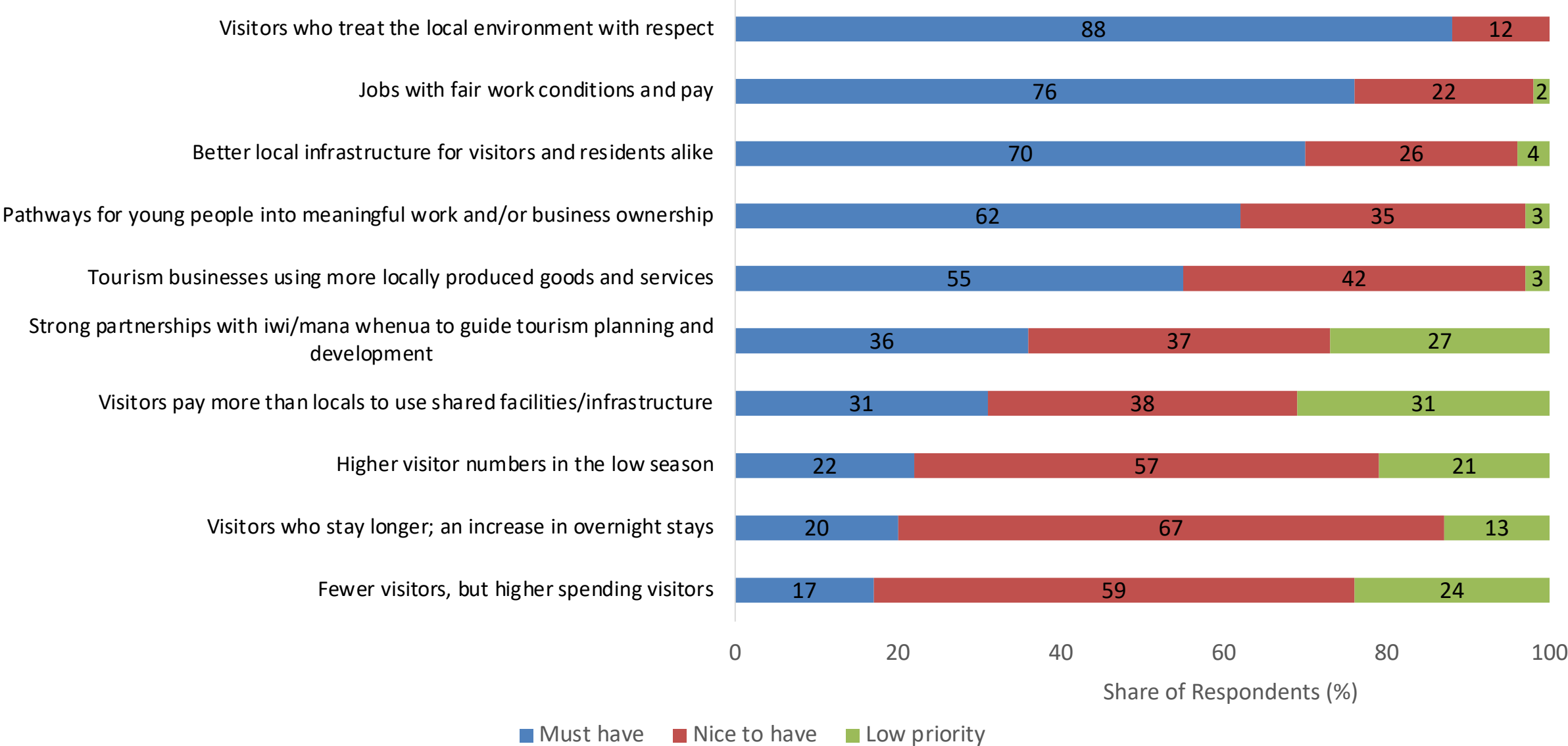
Whangamatā



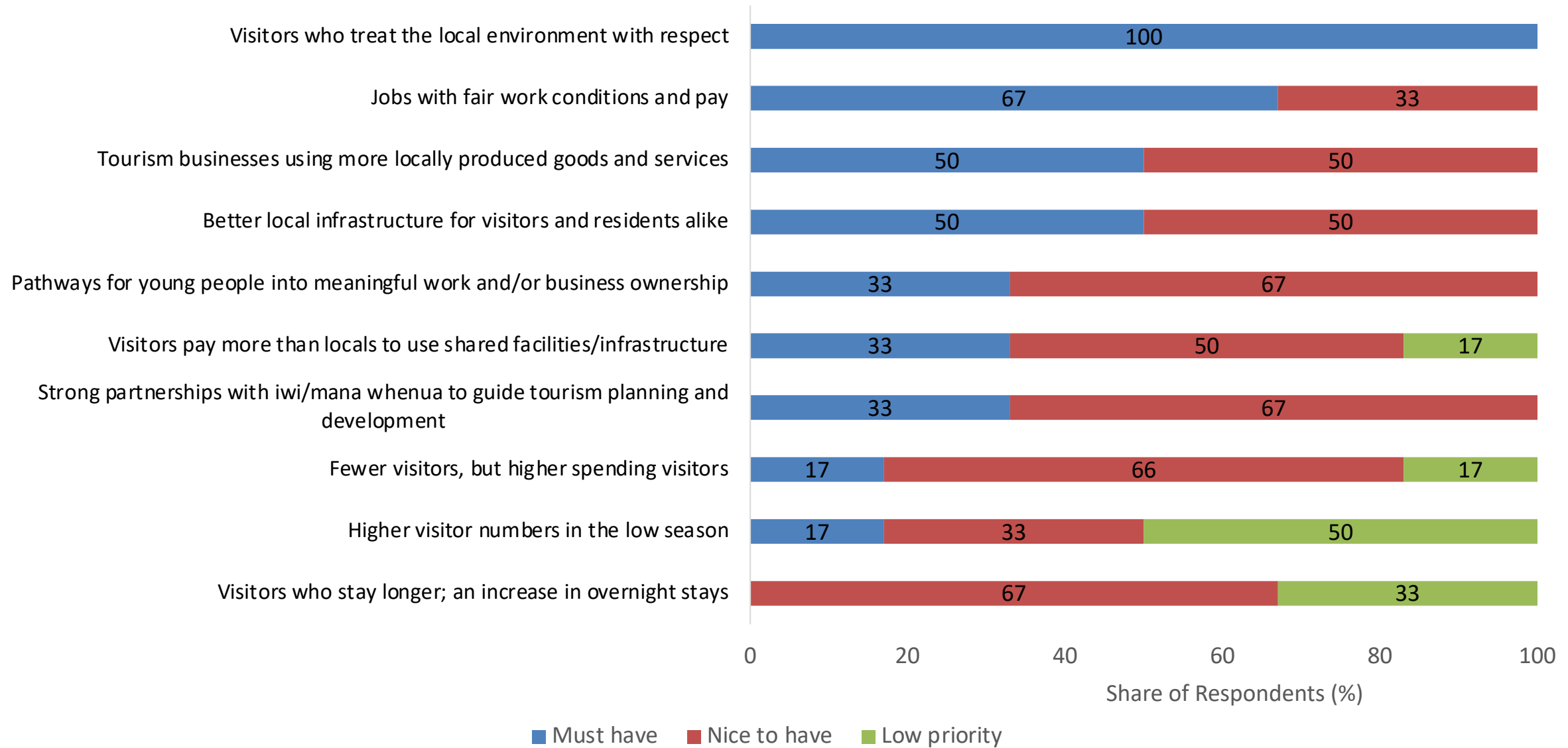
Thames/Thames Coast



Whitianga & Mercury Bay

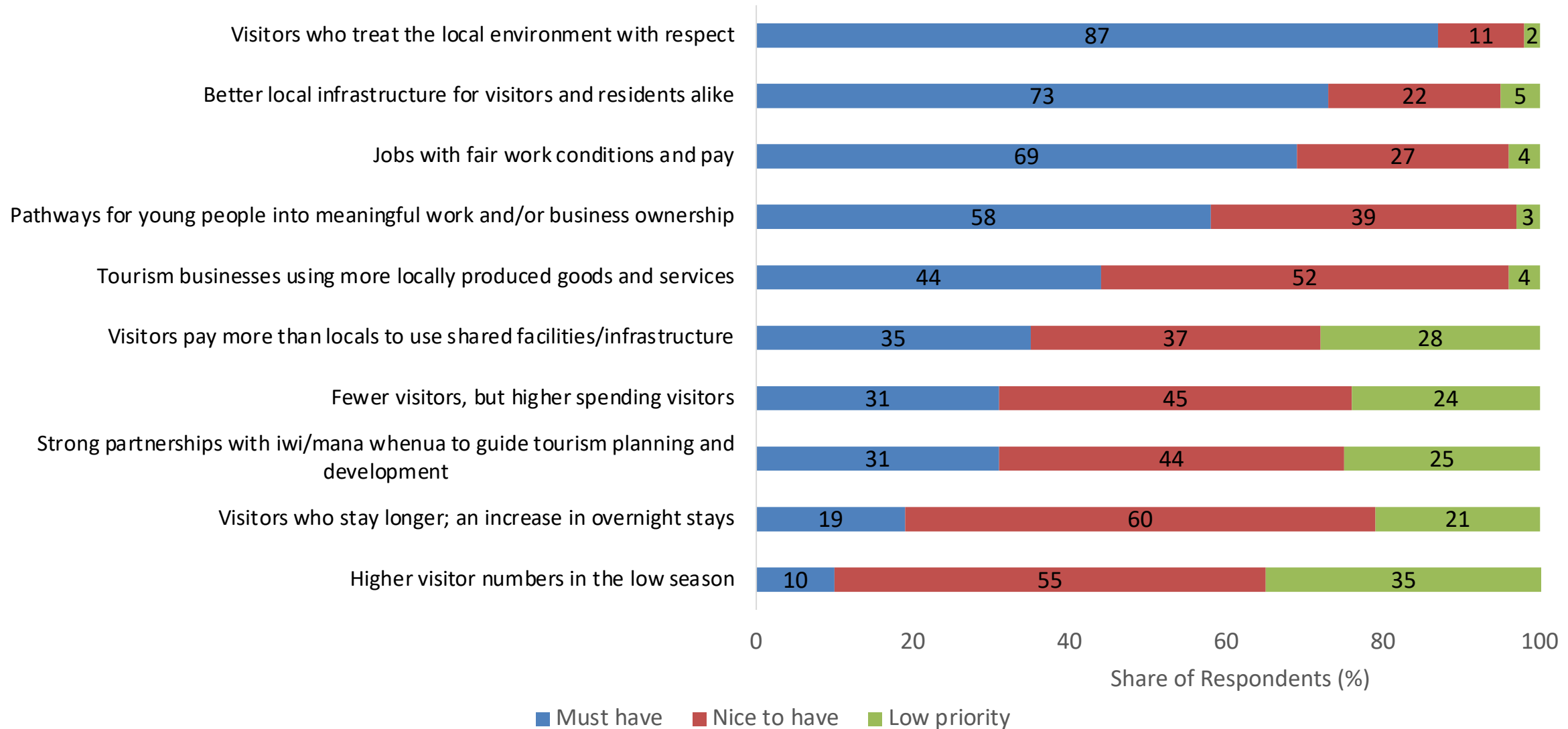


Karangahake Gorge*



*: sample size is 7

Hot Water Beach/Hahei



When asked 'How can community benefit more from tourism? the following four major themes emerged:

Adopt an inclusive approach to tourism development
Showcase, value and protect the natural environment
Improve infrastructure and amenities for residents <i>and</i> visitors
Employment, education and youth

- **Adopt an inclusive approach to tourism development:** It is clear that community desire a stronger voice in tourism and greater opportunities to become *involved* in the destination planning process. Respondents would like to see tourism developed in an inclusive and systematic way; one that involves iwi, community, business, and local government.
- Respondents deem it vital that planning activities clearly outline a comprehensive course of action with financial and people resources allocated to ensure ‘things actually happen’. They also want to be *involved* in decision-making around the allocation of funding and use of local resources.
- More Council support is requested for community-led activities; encouraging local ideas and optimising available local talent. Making better use of technology (websites, booking systems, informing community) is important across all aspects of tourism development.

“End to end involvement in planning, decision making and performance monitoring.”

“Action Plan, 1 Priority to plans 2 Dollars committed to each plan, 3 A time given for completion, and in all cases, the persons controlling each plan.”

“Allow dialogue and working groups where people can share ideas about plans for anything to do with tourism.”

- **Showcase, value and protect the natural environment:** The need to develop and support initiatives to protect the environment was a focus for many comments.
- Respondents see opportunities to draw on the natural environment to present the region to its best advantage in promotional and marketing activities. At the same time, they emphasise the need to value the beauty of the region and take measures to prevent degradation of the environment.
- Common themes raised relate to the dispersal of visitors to lesser known places to ease congestion, better management of freedom camping, and improved infrastructure and amenities to protect the environment (toilets, waste management, signage, dedicated cycle trails), environmental education for tourists and locals. Some comments also mention 'user pays' initiatives for access to natural areas and the need to foster opportunities for visitors to donate time and/or money to support local environmental initiatives.

“Greater leadership from local government to support RTO, tourism industry and community group vision (particularly based around the special significance of this place). Leadership with actionable initiatives that are implemented/enforced. The region is under delivering on best practise for the environment, and also being out-performed by other regions. This space (natural environment) should be a competitive advantage for our region, to a point that the area is a highlight to visit and privilege to live in. But more importantly the natural environment should simply be a priority, because it is the right thing to do.”

- **Improve infrastructure and amenities for residents *and* visitors:** While many respondents would like to see improvements to roads, bridges and signage, there is consensus in opinion that improvements in infrastructure and public facilities should focus on the needs of locals. Community would like to see consideration of local needs in terms of water and waste management especially during peak tourism seasons.
- Respondents do, however, see a clear link between improving infrastructure for locals and the importance of doing so for the visitor industry. They also call for the retention of i-SITES and information centres which some believe provide vital links between visitors and locals.

“Put local first in regards to infrastructure and initiatives. “

“Facilities shouldn’t just be built for tourist it should be for local use as well – e.g. if I’m a tourist on a walking track or in a restaurant my experience is much greater if I bump into locals on that track or in that restaurant.”

“Support local information centres - they should be the heart of the tourism industry and be well supported by locals.”

“Ensure local services such as water and wastewater treatment are prioritised so everyone can access water.”

- **Employment, capacity building and youth:** Community would like to see increased opportunities for young people to gain the skills they need to enter the industry, and to grow local capacity for business. Broader education and awareness building of the value of tourism is also important.

“Incentivise youth training & support small start-up tourism ventures that attract eco tourists.”

“Korero to better understand how, what, why tourism is good in our whenua.”

“More education to local communities (information distribution/sharing) on the value of tourism. Developing opportunities for participation in tourism activities.”

“Offering training opportunities - supporting apprenticeship type work experience and mentoring. Matauranga.”

“Start up grants for small businesses from local boards that meet criteria e.g. environmentally friendly, build youth work capacity.”

- **Other comments** relate to designing activities and events that appeal to visitors *and* locals; and differential pricing for visitors.
- Events and activities that feature artists, artisans, heritage and culture are suggested visitor experiences that also offer opportunities for community engagement. Farmers markets, family-friendly, sports, fun and ‘unique’ events are seen as opportunities for visitors and locals to get to know each other. Enhanced promotion and advertising of the region is also called for – especially during the low season. *“I think we need to talk less about "tourism" and more about local and community activities and interactions. In a vast region and in today's climate it's important that we try to foster better relationships with each other and build activities/product that can be used by residents, businesses and visitors alike.”*
- Several respondents suggest that offering discounts for local people to visit attractions, or charging visitors – especially from overseas - a premium to use shared facilities would bring benefits to their communities. In turn, income gathered could be returned to the community to fund local infrastructure.

“Charge visitors for visiting key destinations and ensure that income is spent in local community. For example, if there was a \$10 entrance fee to Cathedral Cove, and 10% was allocated to local community, there would be much more support locally.”

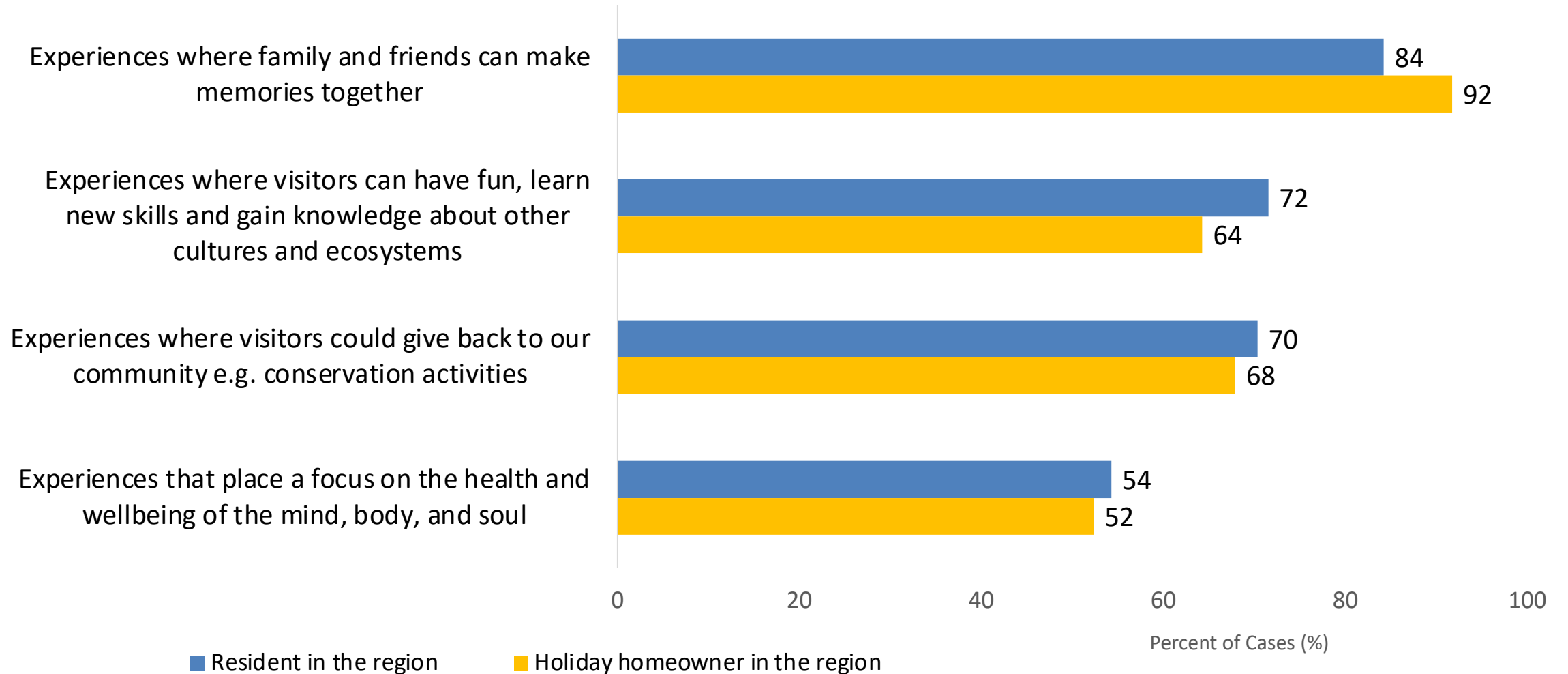
Examples of locally focused suggestions to enhance community benefit from tourism.

<p>Karangahake Gorge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charge a fee for the HRT [Hauraki Rail Trail] and charge a fee for parking in the Karangahake Gorge in the peak of the season.• Have a Park and Ride from Paeroa for the Gorge in season, local Paeroa businesses would benefit from people parking in Paeroa.	<p>Thames</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make it a destination so people will stay. Promote it.• Keep the information centre in Thames.• Train more locals in hospitality related skills. Make having hospitality skills more like doing a hotel apprenticeship. Open a tourism school in Thames.• Improving ferry services from Auckland and bus services from Thames and elsewhere - develop local transport service around the region and Coromandel township and Whitianga so that tourists can get from A to B without a car.
<p>Coromandel Town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boat ramps. Sort out the one in Coromandel Town, the benefits will be 10-fold.• Support ambitious community driven- enterprises like Driving Creek Railway.	<p>Colville</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of a walking track from Colville Township out along the southern side of Colville Bay (Cabbage Bay) to the furthest point on Te Whau Point. Locals know this walk, past the ancient pre-history flounder trap, and along the collapsed road to the old 2nd deep water wharf - then onto the tip of Te Whau Point - great fishing spot out there - but dangerous for anyone not aware of the depth and the swiftness of the tide.

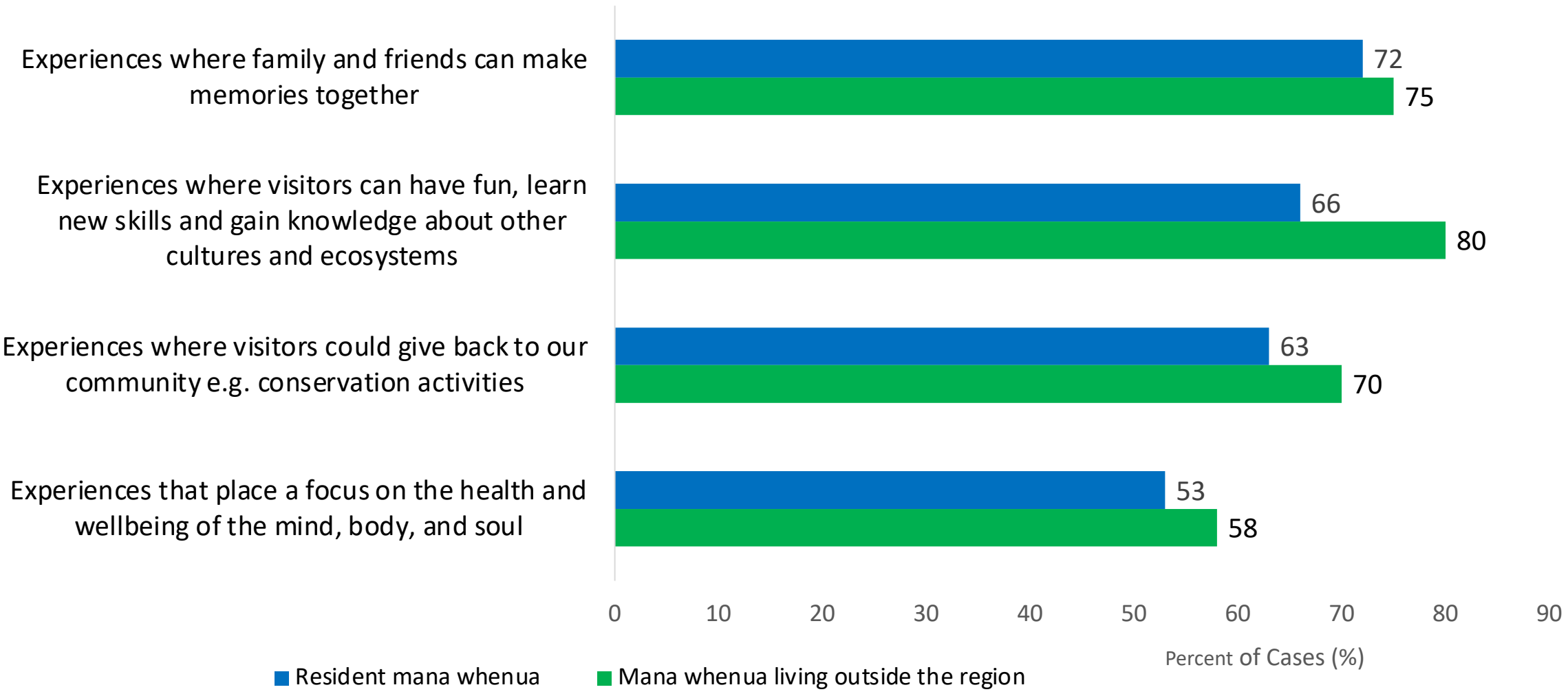
Examples of locally focused suggestions to enhance community benefit from tourism.

<p>Tairua Pauanui bike/walk trail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get the key stakeholders on board to drive the initiatives. What about completing the Tairua Pauanui bike/walk trail!! Instead of a group of volunteers driving it really needs Council tourism groups initiatives etc. This trail alone would have massive benefits to the local community the ferry would run more often, health and fitness, weekend bike groups, bike repair shops, cafe, the list goes on just get it done.	<p>Tairua</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would be good to have the walkways - Ferry Landing to Tairua completed - great opportunity for cycle and walking guide, B&B, businesses (like A2O and Otago bike trails)• Skatepark for the kids in Tairua to go ahead• Sort out one-way bridges through Tairua
<p>Hahei/Cathedral Cove</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hahei. Electric park & ride vehicles. Maybe electric vehicles that do loops from car park to beach to top of Grange road and back. (Holiday Time)• Start charging for parking in Hahei and put the money towards the upkeep of the Cathedral Cove track.• More bike trails in the Mercury Bay area.• MTB park / tracks. Possible to connect cooks beach, Hot Water beach and Whitianga.	<p>Whitianga</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give access to reserve already in place that would make an outstanding extension to an existing walkway in Whitianga - specifically the Robinson Road walkway that has no physical ability to access the reserve at the canal entrance. Would make an outstanding finish to a stunning walkway with a wee bridge• Add a hockey turf and public indoor pool at Whitianga.• In Whitianga we need more than one source of water supply.

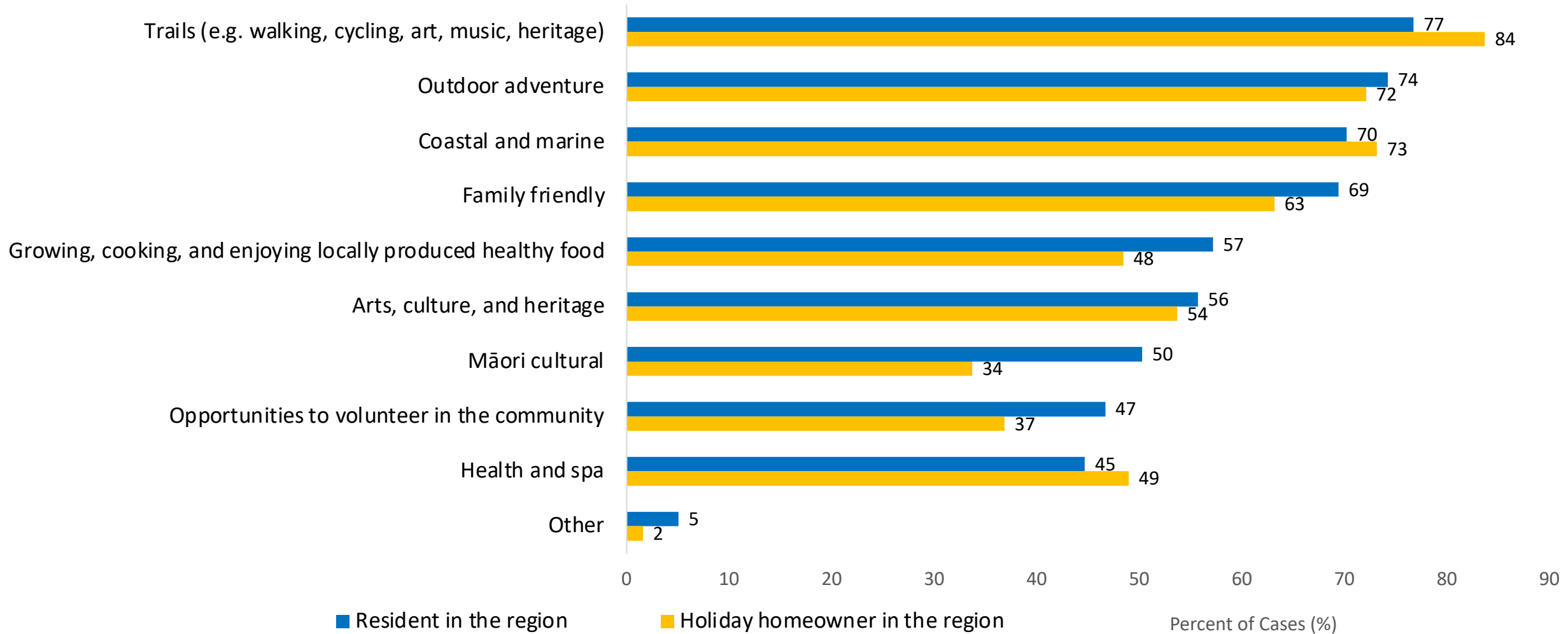
Visitor experiences where family and friends can make memories together are highly favoured for further development in the region by both residents and holiday homeowners.



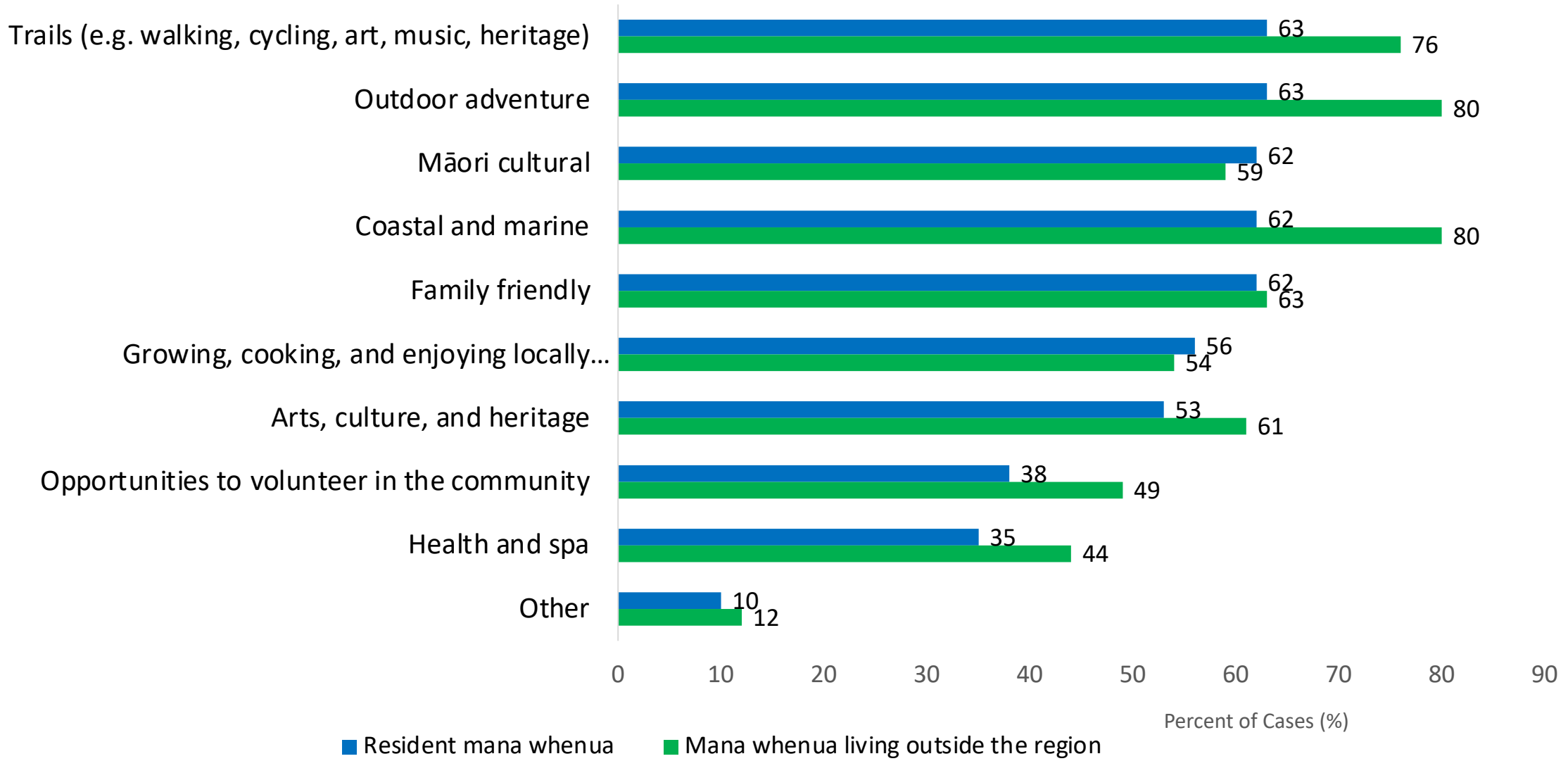
Resident mana whenua are more likely to support experiences that family and friends can enjoy and ones that give back to the local community.



Holiday homeowners would like to see more outdoor activities developed, including: trails, and coastal and marine-based activities. Residents place more emphasis than holiday homeowners on activities that are family friendly and culturally based.



Resident mana whenua would like to see more trails and outdoor adventures developed, along with activities focused on Māori culture.



The community would like to focus on visitors who respect community and the environment, and who spend money in local areas

Residents would like to see a mix of visitors including families– different age groups, different interests (adventure, outdoor enthusiasts), or simply ‘all’ or ‘anyone’. While many would like high spending visitors the strongest theme to emerge is to **attract visitors who are respectful of the environment and local people.**

“High quality, well paying guests that respect nature and community.”

Holiday homeowners have a stronger focus on attracting ‘higher end’, ‘high spending’, ‘high value’ ‘high quality’ visitors especially families ‘who can afford it’. They would welcome those interested in preserving the beauty of the area, and who respect the environment and locals.

“Higher value spender.”

“Higher End Traveller that will appreciate the beauty, biodiversity of the region and spend on high quality products, F&B and services.”

Mana whenua (from outside the region) **would welcome all visitors.** They would also like to attract visitors who appreciate the unique culture of the area and respect the environment.

“All visitors - young + old, rich + poor.”

“Sightseeing visitors who are interested in the rich Māori culture of the Hauraki rohe.”

“The type of visitor that wants leave the ocean in better condition then when they arrived.”



375 respondents who stated they had concerns about tourism in the region made suggestions on how to address the issues raised. The two main suggestions being to invest in local infrastructure to support visitor and locals needs, and to shift the region's heavy reliance away from seasonal tourism.

Suggestions on how to address concerns about tourism in the region – ranked in order of frequency
Investment in local infrastructure
Shift away from reliance on seasonal tourism
Plan for sustainability not limitless growth; Capping visitor numbers
Other - managing visitor behaviour, focus on youth, COVID-19

- **Increased investment in local infrastructure:** This is seen as a major step in helping to alleviate many of the pressures currently placed on local infrastructure with suggestions ranging from ‘upgrades to the water and sewage treatment facilities’, ‘more rubbish/recycle bins and public toilets’ to “replacing all one-way bridges in the region’ to help reduce traffic congestion.

“Increase water capacity for storage and treatment, build a dam up in the hills... great employment opportunity and service for the region.”

“Improve the roading throughout the Coromandel, double bridges right through, to keep traffic flowing... We must look forward to the future as numbers will increase 10 fold in this new era not only because of covid, but coastal living and remote working from home is the norm now.”

- The need for ongoing maintenance and upgrades of the existing road networks throughout the region is also suggested to improve traffic flow and road safety. Alternative transport options e.g. ferry services, more public transport and air travel are also suggested by some to relieve traffic pressures on the roads.

“Roading infrastructure needs addressing and money diverted from main highways to support heavy tourist traffic especially on the Coromandel roads.”

- Better parking options for locals and visitor is also suggested including a ‘park and ride’ system with shuttle buses in the peak season to minimise the number of vehicles in holiday hotspots like Hot Water Beach and Cathedral Cove. Charging visitors to park while providing free parking for residents is also seen as an option.

“Provide parking for locals at tourist destinations i.e card for ratepayers to park at busy spots. Can’t even get near Cathedral cove because it is all bus lanes. Who wants all that?”

- **Diversifying businesses to lessen reliance on seasonal tourism** and also encourage greater visitor spend - “we need to create more ways for people to spend their money other than on ice cream”
- Suggestions to achieve this include developing new activities beyond the ‘traditional free attractions’ to help spread the benefits and impacts of tourism. Ideas put forward include promoting the region as an eco-tourism destination and developing tours which are themed or historically linked to the local area e.g. mining.

“A focus on how the Hauraki Coromandel could be a regenerative tourism market. The HC has the opportunity to be an eco-tourism destination such is the quality of our biodiversity. A much greater focus on our natural environment and biodiversity in our tourism storytelling.”

“Develop fun tour packages which are themed, or historically linked.(School of Mines / Goldmine Experience / Bella St Pump house is a good example of a popular linked tour”.

“The steampunk headquarters is a great opportunity to link to another market and it ties in a more modern approach to the Heritage sector. Ultimately Steampunk is a vital tool to link the historic, business and tourist sectors. Develop one day tours and weekend tour packages.”

- Suggestions also included *“promoting the Coromandel and bringing more people to the area to live and work”.*

- **Put the focus on planning for sustainability not limitless growth:** Supporting new businesses that focus on sustainable products by using local suppliers is suggested to help diversify the business sector and to offer “long-term meaningful employment for local people”

“Reduce the dependence on tourism. Redirect to other areas such as Generating organic food and materials for an increasing market.”

- **Capping numbers:** Reducing visitor numbers to holiday hot spots like Cathedral Cove is suggested to lessen the impact of tourism on the local community especially in peak times. Others suggest to stop promoting the region as a destination to help manage visitor numbers, some commented that the region is ‘already well known’ so people will continue to come regardless.

“Limit high use site visitor increases by reducing continual promotion and developing new opportunities to spread load.”

“Stop promoting the Hahei and Hotwater Beach and providing tourism infrastructure with Taxpayer/Ratepayer funds.”

- Charging a visitor levy to key attractions in the region is another way to manage numbers, and to help generate funds to provide visitor facilities beyond just charging for parking.

“Tourist charge for foreign tourists to be taken as a tax, such payments to be reimbursed to each council to reduce the overall individual payment by each and every rate payer.”

- **Managing visitor behaviour:** Making visitors aware of their potential impact on the local community and the environment when staying in the region - *"Somehow people need to realize we are a community, not just a holiday destination, and respect that."* Many residents would like to see a much higher police presence in local communities e.g. to handle those 'partying' in rental properties during New Year celebrations. Stronger enforcement of the rules around freedom camping by wardens/ambassadors is also suggested as a way of keeping on top of the situation during busy times.
- **Focus on youth:** Creating entertainment spaces/events targeting those under 18 years is suggested as a way to provide a positive environment for youth. Providing training for youth to take on hospitality roles could also be a win-win by providing employment and also addressing the lack of seasonal workers due to border closures.

"Formal entertainment programmes for all age groups to prevent vandalism for bored age groups. Outdoor movies, a dj - anything to keep them entertained on the prime holiday nights."

"Better training of young hospitality, incentives to attract trainees to replace lack of foreign seasonal hospo workers."

- **Ongoing impact of COVID-19:** Some comments stress that the focus should be on the domestic market and that, as a region, it is important to look at ways of 'diversifying' the tourism offerings to 'attract more domestic visitors', and to 'encourage return visitation'.

Over a third (35%) of respondents commented on who is best placed to address concerns raised about tourism during the 2020/21 high season. A collective approach to the decision-making process with support from Council is preferred to address major infrastructure issues. There is a call for more enforcement by local authorities to address visitor behaviour, freedom camping, overfishing, and biosecurity issues.

Who is best placed to address the following concerns about tourism in the region – key themes
Decision making - collective approach with local business, Destination Coromandel, Council and Iwi working together.
Infrastructure - council/Local government working with Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency
Enforcement - more police presence and freedom camping wardens/ambassadors. Increased monitoring by NZ Fisheries, Ministry of Primary Industries and Department of Conservation
Marketing and promotion - Tourism New Zealand, regional tourism organisations and councils

- Overall, the community would like to see a ‘collaborative approach’ taken to address concerns raised about tourism by ‘working together’ with local iwi, business/community leaders, business associations, community boards, Destination Coromandel, regional and local councils etc.

“Council Organisations in direct association with the areas in question eg; TCDC, Hauraki, Auckland City Council?”

- Most of the community see the government and councils taking the lead in addressing the lack of investment in the region’s infrastructure to support not only tourism, but also local population growth. The community task Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency and local councils to improve the regional roading network to create better traffic flow and safer roads.
- There is a call for a higher police presence to deal with issues in the community around visitor behaviour especially those partying in rental accommodation. For more specific issues around overfishing, and biosecurity concerns the community suggest that are best addressed by the NZ Fisheries, Ministry of Primary Industries and Department of Conservation.

“DoC could be much more proactive if better funded to control poaching on land and MPI could do the same in the coastal zone.”

- The role of Tourism New Zealand, regional tourism organisations and councils play in attracting domestic visitors to the area is seen as a positive thing to help the local economy, but some members of the community would prefer it was promoted less as a destination to ease the pressure from tourism.

“Concerns about improving promotion of local tourism providers needs to be done by local tourism centers or information centres.”

Participation in decision-making about regional tourism development

68% of community respondents feel they are **not well-informed** about efforts to manage and develop tourism in the region.

79% of respondents feel that they **do not have the opportunity** to influence decisions about tourism in the region.

51% of community respondents **want to be more involved** in decision making that affects tourism development.

Advisory groups, meetings, working groups and surveys dominate suggested ways to involve community in tourism planning and development.

Active participation in advisory groups and at meetings

Most respondents would like the opportunity to be actively *involved* in tourism planning and development, rather than be passive participants in tourism processes. They would like to represent their communities at hui, stakeholder meetings, forums, on advisory groups, in committees and working groups, panels, seminars and focus groups. Many feel they have expertise, ideas and knowledge to contribute and seek an opportunity to influence decisions through feedback processes.

“Participate in stakeholder meetings: iwi, Community Board, Business Assoc, Council, other.”

“Feedback process around ideas, local focus groups that draw on community, iwi and business expertise.”

“Be involved in meetings. Be educated on pertinent stats around tourism and its impact here.”

“By actively supporting positive changes. Being part of an organization that make Council take responsibility for their responsibilities.”

“Community representative on the panels. Currently a few operators are involved but no one with a community focus.”

“Have hui at our marae to discuss and enlighten us to overall vision and objectives of Tourism and how that aligns with our Tikanga.”

“By being part of an advisory panel.”

Advisory groups, meetings, working groups and surveys dominate ways to involve community in tourism planning and development.

Surveys

Respondents express their appreciation of the opportunity to participate in this survey and would like to see more of them. They would like regular surveys and the opportunity for community to read reports.

“More surveys and opportunities to put forward ideas.”

“By having the opportunity to feedback via mechanisms such as this survey. I would also value seeing the results of this survey so we can understand where the rest of the survey participants place their value in local tourism.”

“Like this survey on a regular basis, more reporting to the wider community.”

“More surveys like this and at a local level.”

“More surveys like this so that the people who live here can help offer solutions and help with the development so that you have buy in from the actual locals. And meetings as decisions get made to offer further feedback

Being informed and kept in the loop:

For some, the ability to receive more information about plans for tourism is all that’s needed.

“More informed rather than involved directly. This type of survey is a good start. As ratepayers we should be informed directly where practical.”

“Be informed before decisions of importance are made so community input can be asked for.”

Words of thanks for the survey research and a plea to consider the environment and future generations dominate final comments on the future development of tourism in the region.

Appreciation for this research: Respondents leave many words of thanks for the opportunity to participate in this survey research. However, they also express hope that their input will be listened to and actioned as - for some - this may not have been their experience in the past.

“Thanks for opportunity to comment on the future of such an incredible environment.”

“Good idea to have this survey as long as results are listened to!”

“Appreciate the opportunity to be heard but the proof is in the pudding”

“Perhaps we could have another survey in 10 years time to see if this survey was ever acted on.”

A plea for the future: There is a general sentiment that the direction of tourism needs to be in the hands of all with heartfelt comments emphasising the need to consider the environment and future generations:

“Need to take community along via involvement with tourism direction and get agreement from local communities on the vision, objectives ,goals and ensure other major players have input into process for identifying these aspects.”

“Please don’t let it become a mini Auckland, my days are numbered but I’m thinking of my children and grand children, who have had the privilege of growing up in this idyllic place. They don’t deserve to have it changed.”

“We need to be careful not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Rustic beauty cannot be replicated.”



Tourism is vital and valued

- Community have a strong attachment to the beautiful, natural environment of the region and enjoy the proximity to main population centres.
- Communities clearly see the value and importance of tourism. They perceive the sector as being good for the local economy - contributing to incomes, employment and a sense of vibrancy.
- The benefits of tourism do, however, need to be weighed against the costs associated with high visitors numbers including: crowding, infrastructural deficiencies and environmental degradation.
- The delicate balance between the benefits and costs associated with tourism varies across the region. In some localities (e.g. Hauraki and Shorebird Coast) community feedback provides a clear sense that the benefits outweigh the costs. In other areas (Hot Water Beach/Hahei for example) there is clear evidence of tensions related to tourism growth and a strong desire for effective management approaches to be put in place.

Sustainability is the way forward

- While there is not a strong sense from respondents that tourism is currently damaging the environment there is very clearly concern that is a growing issue that needs to be addressed.
- As community members were asked to shift their gaze to the future, and to contemplate what initiatives are needed to ensure a sustainable relationship between tourism and local quality of life, the emphasis on environmental sustainability became far clearer.
- The message from community is clear: the region must focus on environmental issues in its management of tourism and has much to offer (and gain) from being a leader in sustainable development.
- Community wants to encourage and attract visitors who will also be aware of and cherish the environment and sense of community that locals love. There is a desire for visitors who will also connect to the local economy and engage in more than just 'free' activities.
- Community also express a desire for good and fair work opportunities to be created through tourism, for local as well as outside workers. There is a clear sense that community don't want the region to be 'another Queenstown' depending on absentee workers and struggling to accommodate a local workforce.

Sustainability is the way forward

- Several respondents provided examples of tourism numbers overwhelming local infrastructure and amenities during the high season. This can lead to degradation of the local environment and in turn damage community quality of life and the very resource that attracts visitors.
- Community feedback points very clearly to the need for improvements in infrastructure (roading, internet, wharves, bridges, toilets, waste management/rubbish, power, water). There were numerous calls for future planning to address the impacts associated with visitor numbers and a clear sense from the data that most respondents want visitor numbers not to exceed current levels.
- The challenges of balancing the positive and negative impacts of tourism are clearly being experienced differently across the region. It will be important for any future regional tourism planning to address these variations in more detail and to address specific local needs and concerns.

Deepen experience, link to culture and community

- Community members identify a range of potential opportunities for tourism experience development. They highlight a need to broaden and diversify the range of activities on offer and to also focus on family-oriented activities.
- While more can be made of the colonial past, several respondents commented on the importance of highlighting the unique Maori heritage of the region and also its vibrant culture. There is a desire to enable visitors to learn more about the worldview of tangata whenua and mana whenua.
- Communities shared many ideas about enhancing the vibrancy of their local area and often discussed the development of infrastructure and experiences that will be of value to both visitor and community alike.
- Respondents would like to see their own towns/local areas receive more attention in terms of marketing, beautification, infrastructure investment and also new experience development.

Collaboration and communication

- The community highlights the need for better communication and deeper engagement in the future development and planning of tourism.
- It is clear that COVID and resultant shifts in tourism flows have placed the need for a 'reset' of tourism at the forefront of many people's minds. The community have experiences and ideas they would like to share in future tourism development and planning and it is vital that information is disseminated and modes of engagement developed.
- Feedback through the community survey showed that respondents are very pleased to have an opportunity to have their voices heard on tourism and its future planning. They value the focus on future issues and the chance to take this moment in time to rethink some of the actions that have driven the industry in the past. Several community members commended DC for commissioning the work and felt it was a good example of effective and well targeted engagement.
- The research presented in this report provides a baseline for future monitoring of the industry and the goals that are set for it. In the future it will be vital to place community perspectives at the centre of industry performance reviews. The survey tools and the method adopted can be easily adjusted to meet evolving information needs.

Acknowledgements

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