Destination Management Planning in the Thames-Coromandel/Hauraki Region

Business Survey Report 2021

Executive summary

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

The online survey was conducted from 27 July to 12 August 2021 generating 258 responses from businesses in the region.

The survey gathered business perceptions of the visitor industry and perspectives on the future of the region's tourism development.

All sectors were invited to participate in the survey.

Executive summary

- The majority (93%) of respondents to the business survey are residents of the region; nearly half (48%) of businesses have been operating for over 10 years.

- Family links and personal connections, and a decision to relocate for lifestyle and community, are the main reasons for choosing to set up and/or run a business in the region.

- Over three quarters (85%) of all businesses indicate they are reliant to some degree on tourism. Only 15% indicate they are not at all reliant at all.

- Over half (58%) of all businesses indicate they are very/extremely reliant on tourism (referred to as 'Tourism Reliant' businesses in the body of the report).

- Just over one quarter of all businesses surveyed are 'accommodation providers'. Most tourism reliant businesses (92%) operate all year-round.

- For the YE July 2021 vs YE July 2020, tourism reliant businesses are more likely to have experienced a decrease in turnover than non-tourism enterprises; only 21% had witnessed an increase.

Executive summary

- Businesses strongly agree that tourism is good for the economy and creates employment opportunities for residents. There is less consensus around the environmental impact of tourism.

- Nearly one in three businesses have experienced problems when recruiting casual hourly paid staff this year.

- Top issues in recruitment relate to fewer applicants, skills shortages and a lack of affordable housing.

- Comments on the impact of tourism on the town/local area where businesses operate mostly relate to the need to improve sustainability and infrastructure.

- Nearly half (46%) of businesses express concerns about tourism in the region during the past summer season (2020/2021).

- Concerns focus on the uncertainty created by COVID-19, limitations in infrastructure provision and capacity, and insufficient investment in destination marketing.

- To address these concerns respondents are looking for improved support from local and central government and, in particular, an increased focus on infrastructure.
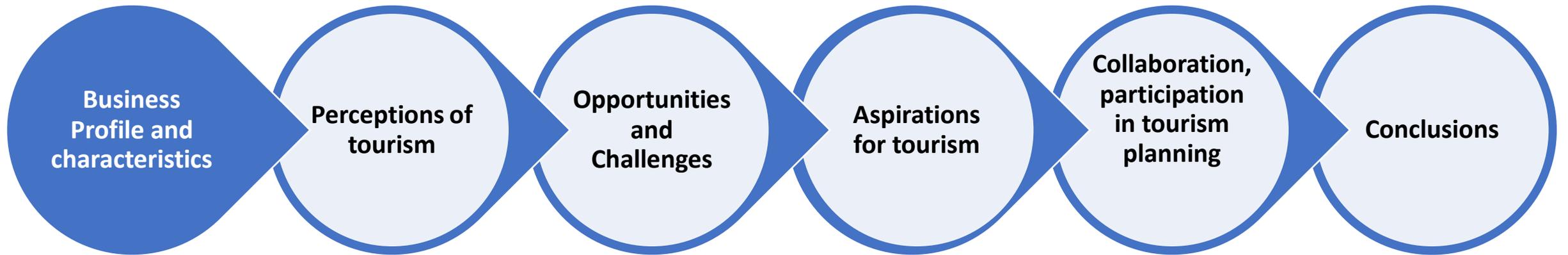
Executive summary

- Challenges for businesses over the next 12 months are seen to lie mostly with general economic uncertainty and COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

- Major challenges facing businesses in the next 2-5 years are the impact of COVID-19, ongoing financial stability and increasing operational costs.

- Finding and accommodating suitable staff is seen as a continuing problem in the future.

- Opportunities for tourism development in the next 12 months focus on experience development and potential to strengthen links with the domestic market.

- The main suggestions to better manage tourism in the respondent's town/local area focus on improving public facilities and infrastructure.

- Beautifying town centres and creating more vibrancy in local areas are also seen as key destination management initiatives.
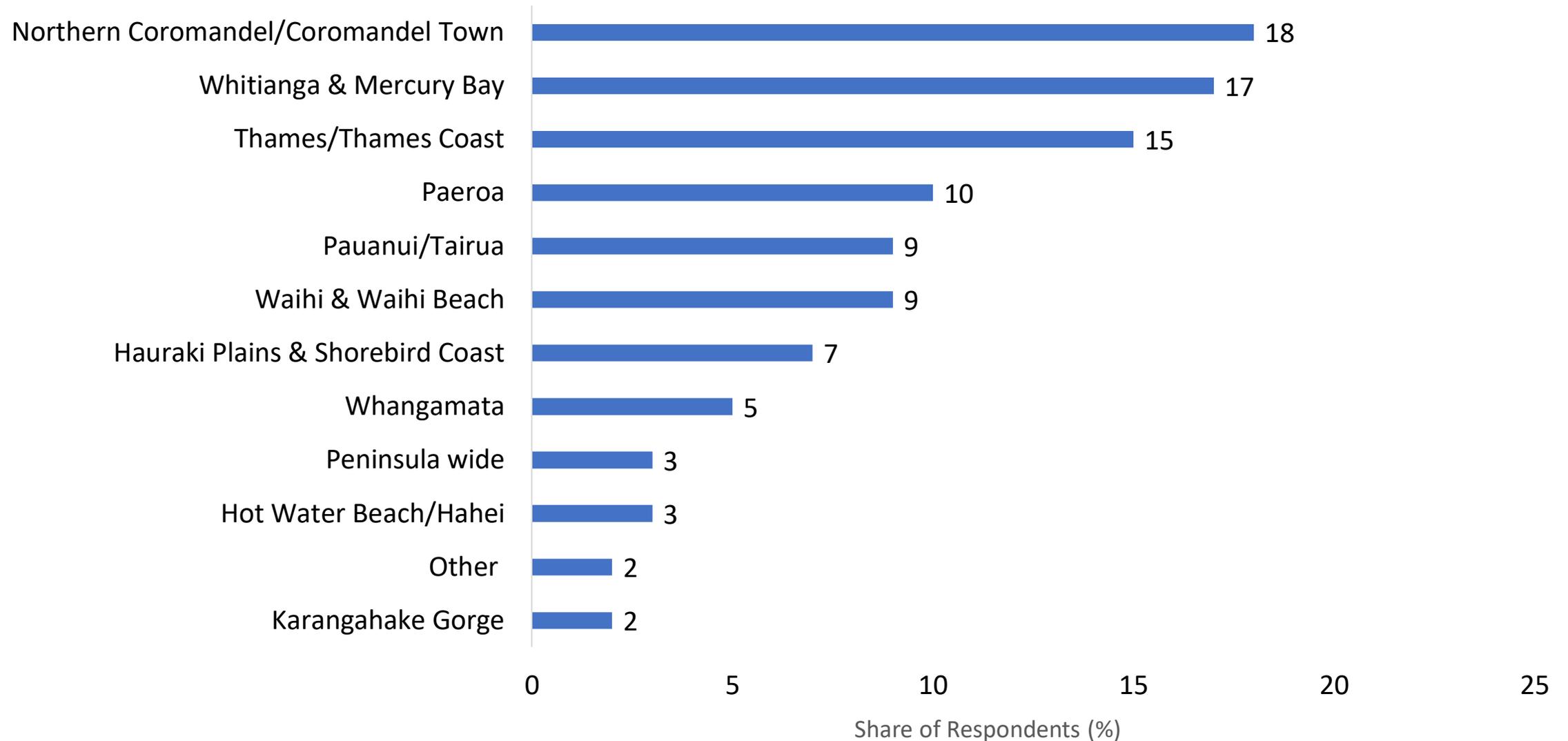
Executive summary

- To ensure businesses in towns/local areas benefit more from tourism, top suggestions from business are enhanced infrastructure and amenities, advertising and promotion of towns, and innovation in the experiences developed.

- Business aspirations focus on a tourism industry that supports and sustains the environment in the future. There is a strong call to emphasize the environmental sustainability of the region in future planning for tourism.

- The majority (56%) of respondents say they would like to see more visitors in the high season, 40% about the same as now, and 4% would prefer fewer visitors.

- Tourism Reliant businesses consider attracting higher visitor numbers in the low season as the top priority for tourism in the region.

- Businesses highlight the need for more collaboration, improved amenities and infrastructure. There is little appetite though for asking visitors to pay a surcharge to use shared facilities.

- There is a clear sense among respondents of a need to work together to develop a sustainable tourism sector in the Thames-Coromandel/Hauraki region.

Report structure

Business Profile and characteristics → Perceptions of tourism → Opportunities and Challenges → Aspirations for tourism → Collaboration, participation in tourism planning → Conclusions

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

Region	Share of Respondents (%)
Northern Coromandel/Coromandel Town	18
Whitianga & Mercury Bay	17
Thames/Thames Coast	15
Paeroa	10
Pauanui/Tairua	9
Waihi & Waihi Beach	9
Hauraki Plains & Shorebird Coast	7
Whangamata	5
Peninsula wide	3
Hot Water Beach/Hahei	3
Other	2
Karangahake Gorge	2

A range of industry sectors are represented, with accommodation dominating.

Industry Sector	Share of Respondents (%)
Accommodation provider (inc. holiday homes, Airbnb)	26
Professional services	17
Restaurant, bar, café, fast food outlet	11
Visitor attractions / activities	7
Retail shopping	7
Tour operator	7
Other	3
Arts, crafts, galleries	3
Spa / health and wellness	3
Trades & construction	2
Food store (supermarket, groceries, dairy)	2
Garage, service station, vehicle supplies	2
Transport provider	2
Museum, heritage, cultural	2
Agriculture, horticulture	2
Community service	2
Rental cars / vehicles / bikes	1
Manufacturing	1

Tourism 73% — *Non-Tourism 27%
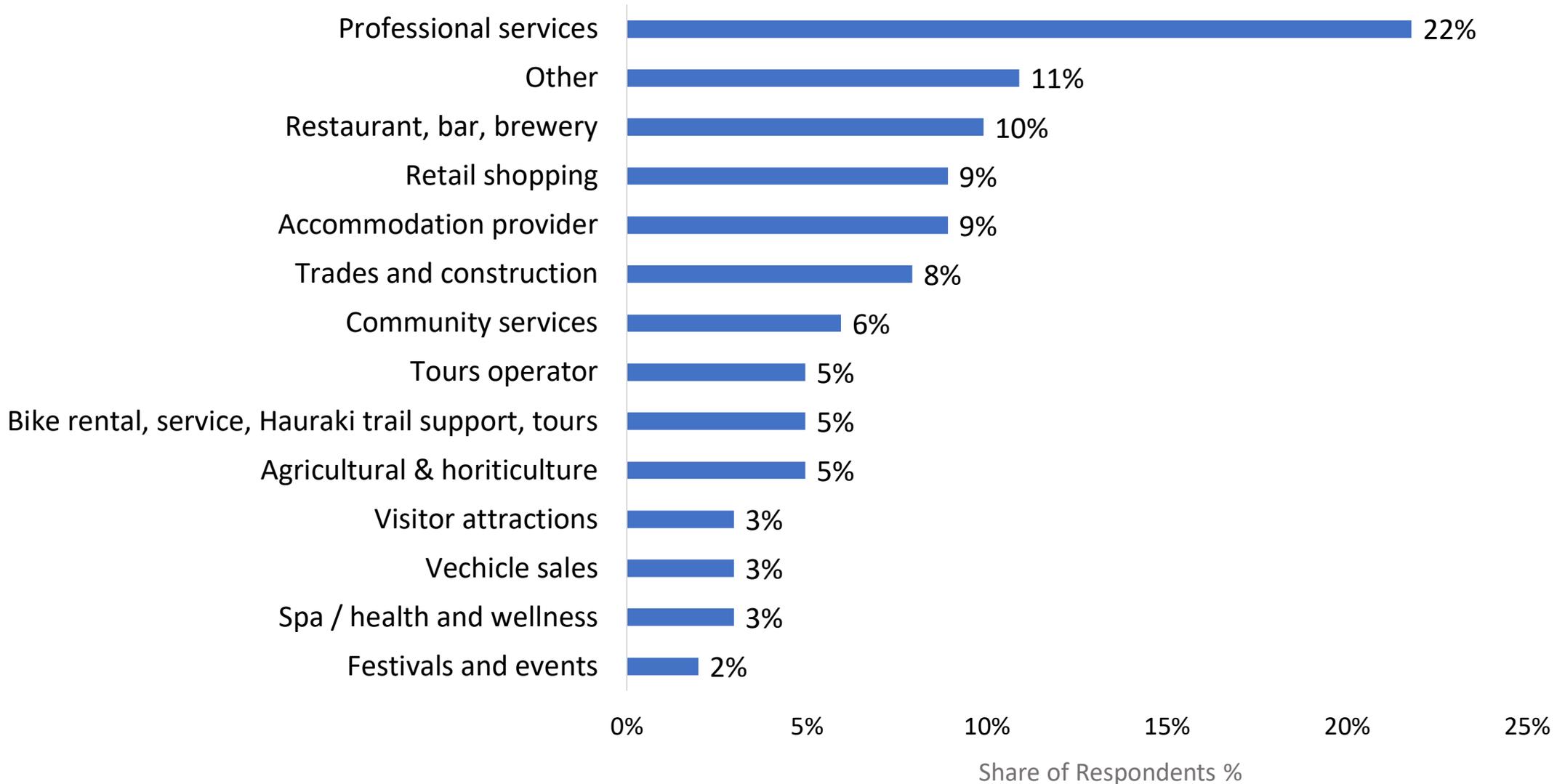
* Non-tourism= Manufacturing, Community service, Agriculture/horticulture, Trades & construction, Professional services and Other. All others categorised as Tourism related businesses.

Over three quarters (77%) of businesses indicate they are reliant to some degree on tourism, only 15% indicate they are not at all reliant at all. 58% of businesses are very or extremely reliant (this group is referred to in the report as **'tourism reliant'**)
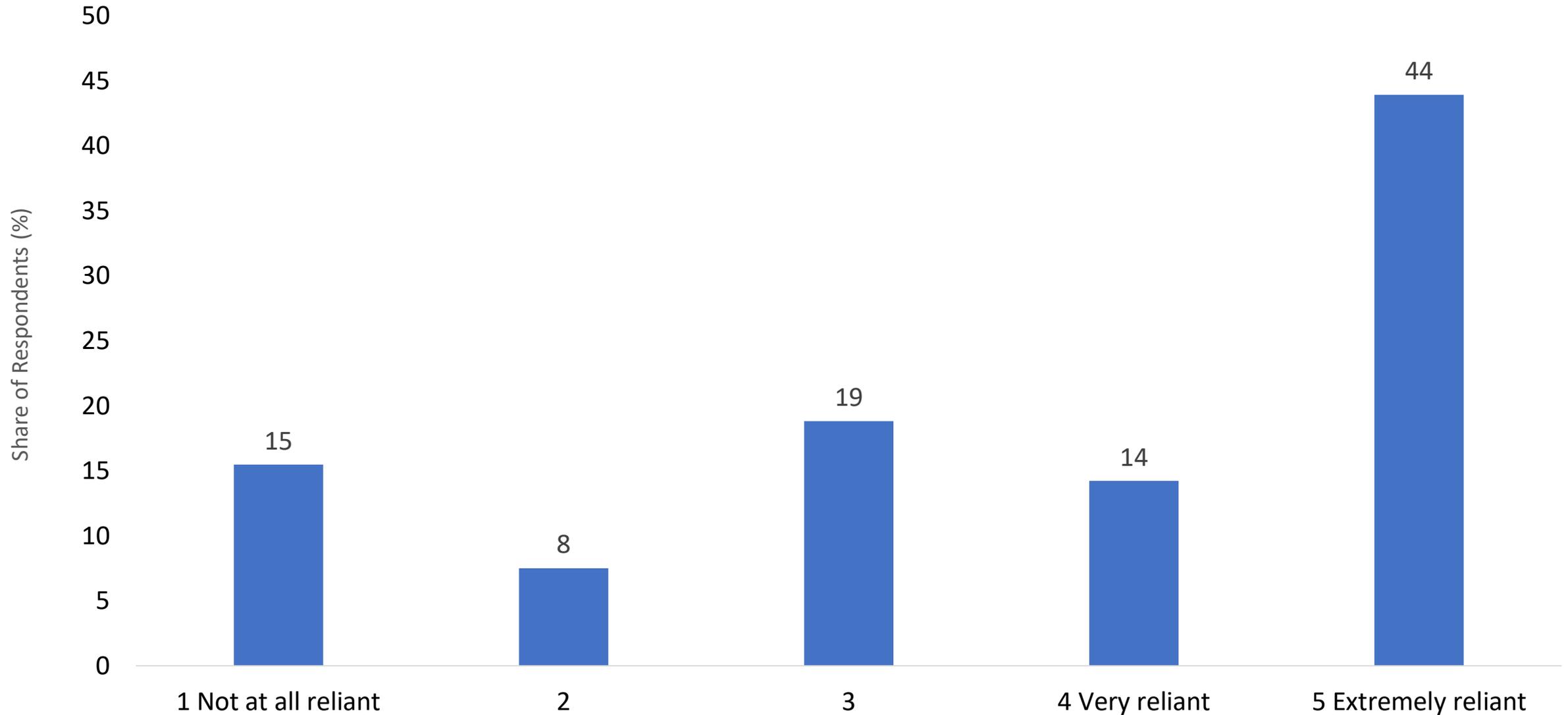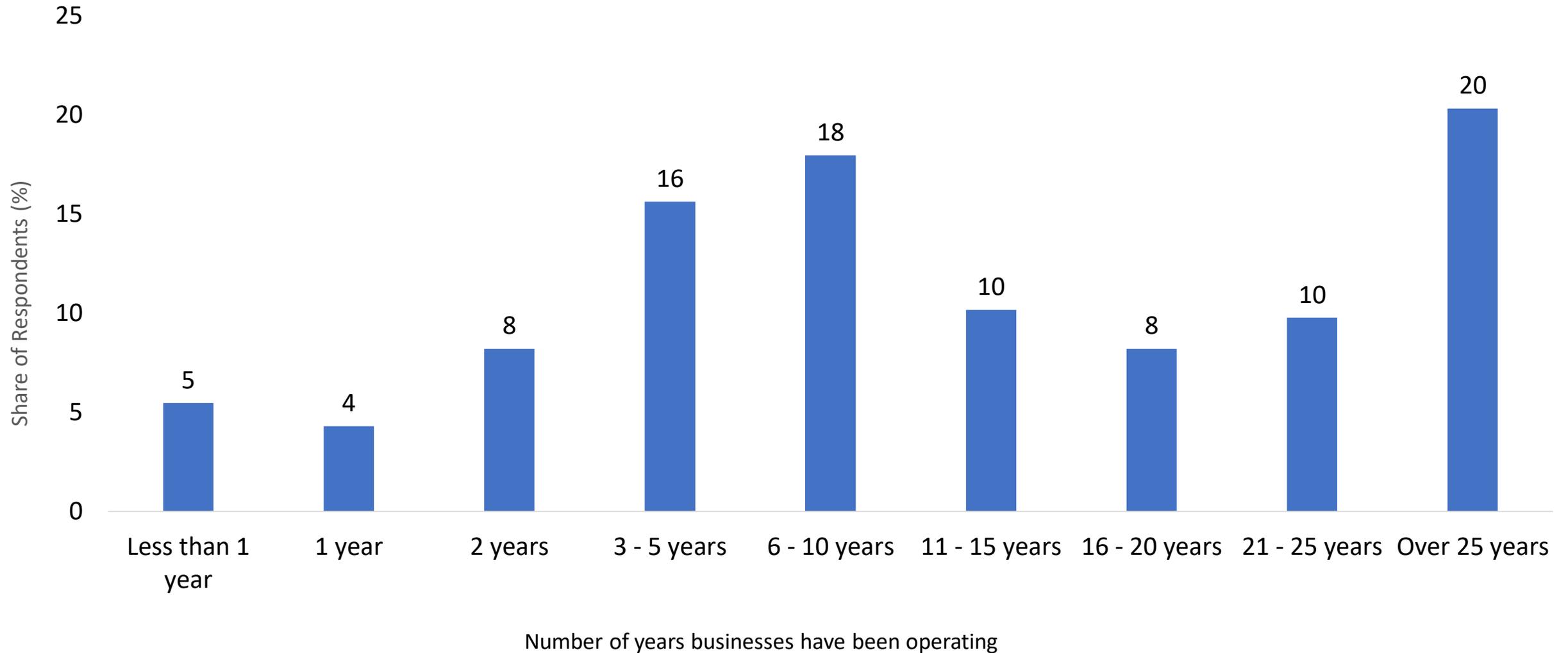
Over a third (37%) operate a secondary business; mostly professional services.

Category	Share of Respondents %
Professional services	22%
Other	11%
Restaurant, bar, brewery	10%
Retail shopping	9%
Accommodation provider	9%
Trades and construction	8%
Community services	6%
Tours operator	5%
Bike rental, service, Hauraki trail support, tours	5%
Agricultural & horiticulture	5%
Visitor attractions	3%
Vechicle sales	3%
Spa / health and wellness	3%
Festivals and events	2%

Professional services: self-selected but usually include a variety of Financial, Legal and Business consultancies, Architects, IT, Medical and Public services etc.
'Other' includes: education, storage, aviation, market operator.

Nearly half (48%) of businesses have been operating for over 10 years. One in five began operations in the past two years.

Share of Respondents (%)

Category	Value
Less than 1 year	5
1 year	4
2 years	8
3 - 5 years	16
6 - 10 years	18
11 - 15 years	10
16 - 20 years	8
21 - 25 years	10
Over 25 years	20

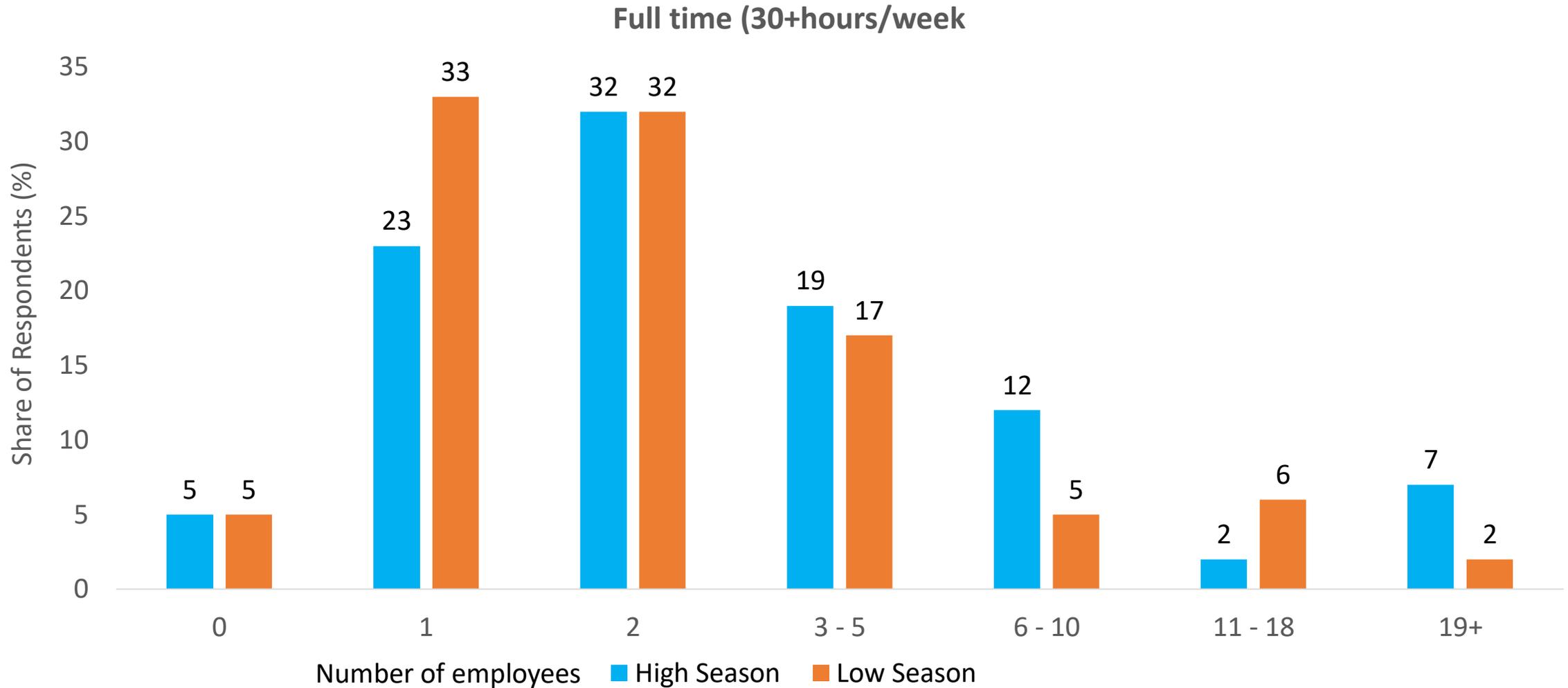Number of years businesses have been operating

Over 9 in 10 business respondents are residents of the region.

- 93% are resident owners/operators of a business in the Thames-Coromandel /Hauraki region

- 7% do not live in the region but own/operate a business there

- 15 respondents state their business is Māori owned/operated - 5 identify as mana whenua
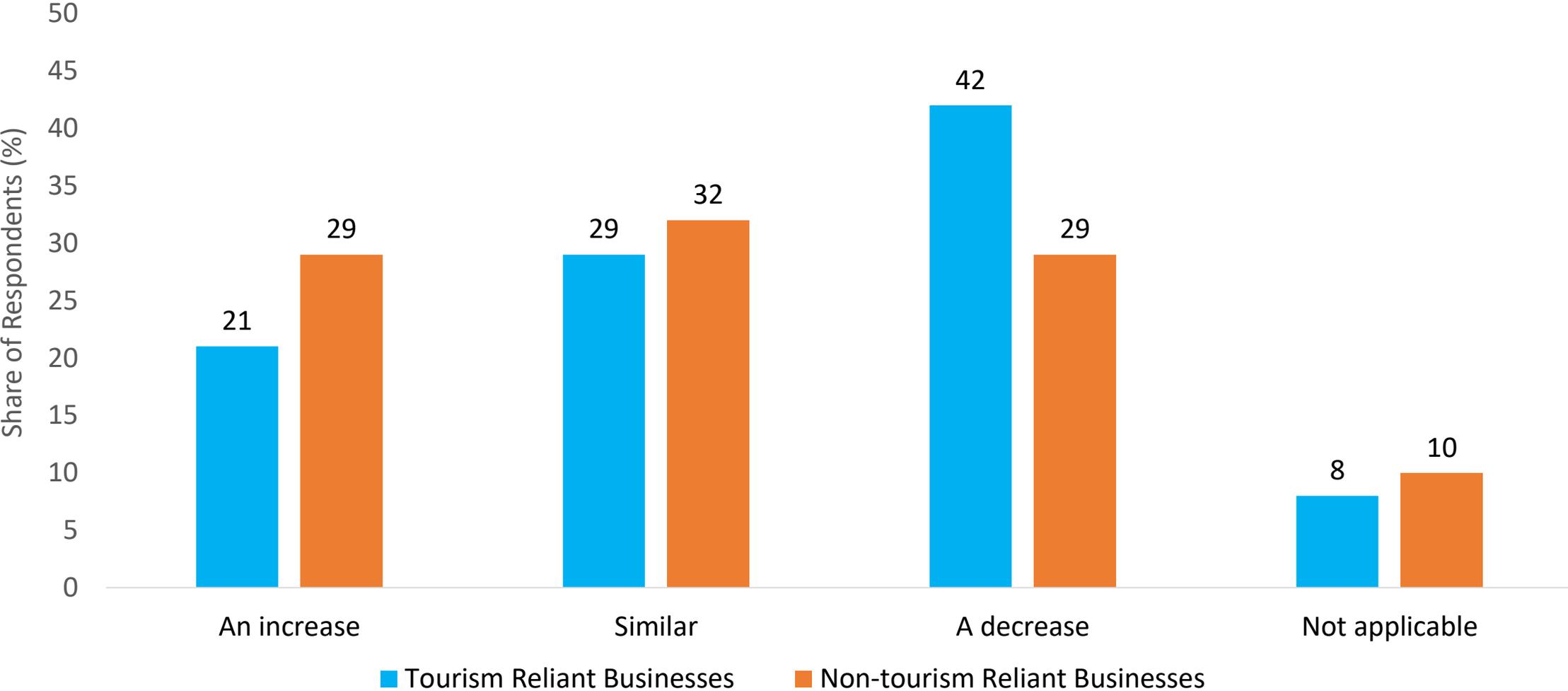
Family links, personal connections, and a decision to relocate for lifestyle and community are the main reasons for choosing to set up and/or run a business in the region.

Reasons	Percentage of responses
Family links and personal connections - lived or grew up in the region or were frequent visitors over an extended period.	37%
Attracted to the region as a place to live - attracted by location, lifestyle and community, and/or the beauty of the natural environment.	34%
Attracted by business opportunities - saw a gap in the market; opportunities for investment; cycle and rail trails; location and/or the natural environment provide ideal conditions for their business.	27%
Other - to provide a community service, to showcase local heritage and history.	2%
TOTAL	**100%**

# The number of employees grows during the high season with the percentage of businesses employing more then 19 or more staff growing more than threefold from a small base.

Full time (30+hours/week

Share of Respondents (%)

Number of employees	High Season	Low Season
0	5	5
1	23	33
2	32	32
3 - 5	19	17
6 - 10	12	5
11 - 18	2	6
19+	7	2

Tourism reliant businesses are more likely to have experienced a decrease in turnover (YE July 2021 vs YE July 2020), **only** 21% had witnessed an increase.

Share of Respondents (%)

Category	Tourism Reliant Businesses	Non-tourism Reliant Businesses
An increase	21	29
Similar	29	32
A decrease	42	29
Not applicable	8	10

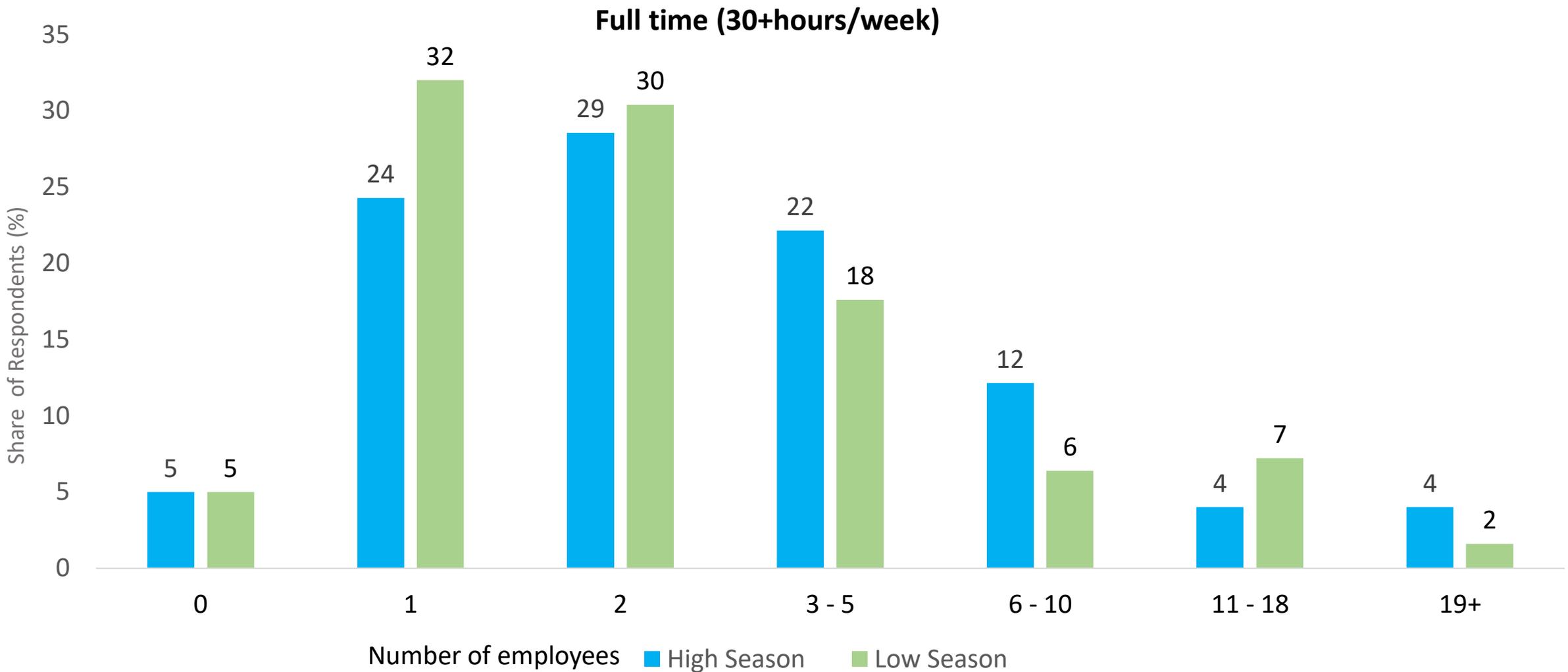■ Tourism Reliant Businesses ■ Non-tourism Reliant Businesses

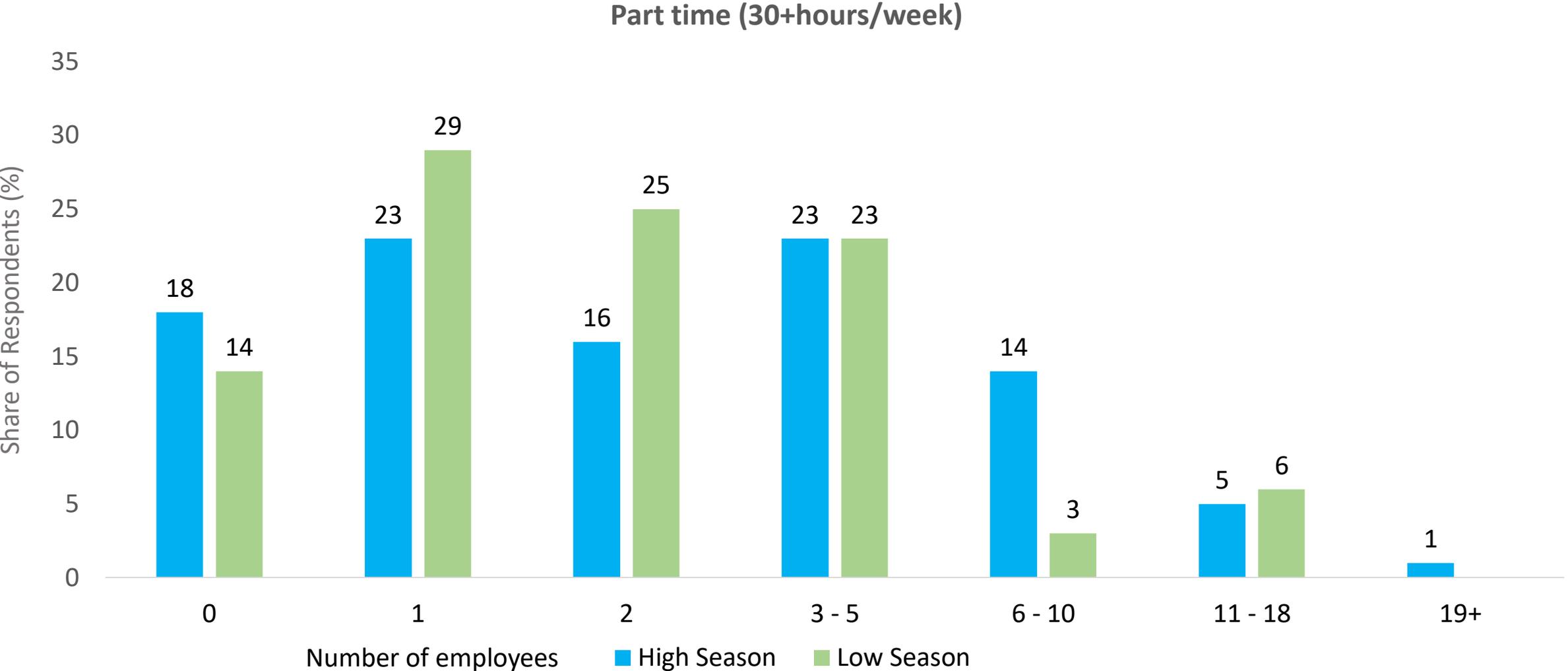# 92% of tourism reliant businesses operate all year-round.
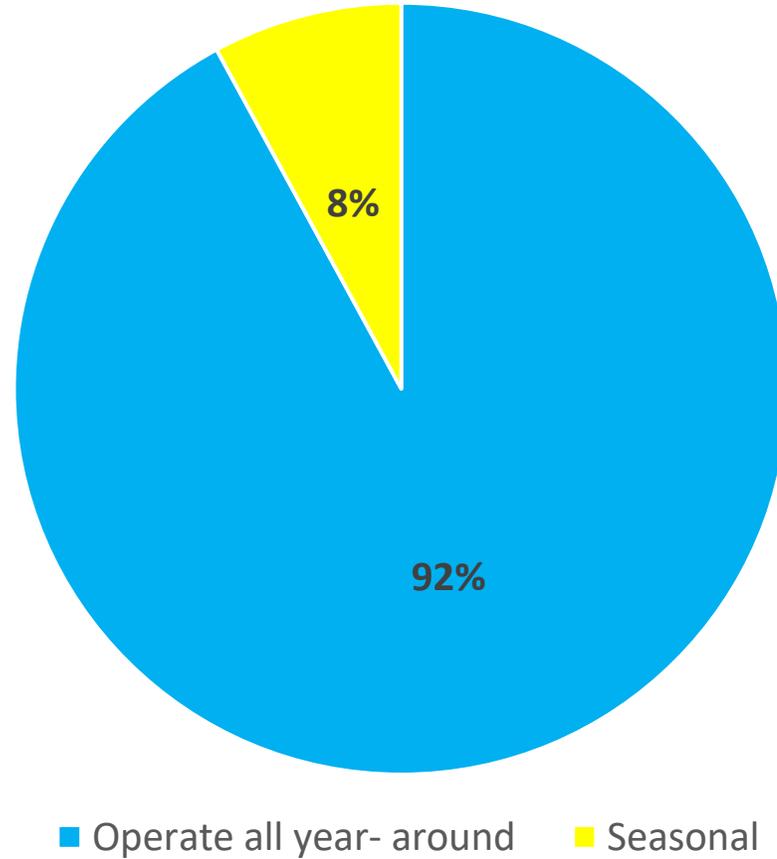
Reasons for not operating all year round: insufficient demand (91%), it suits my lifestyle (18%) and staffing issues (18%)

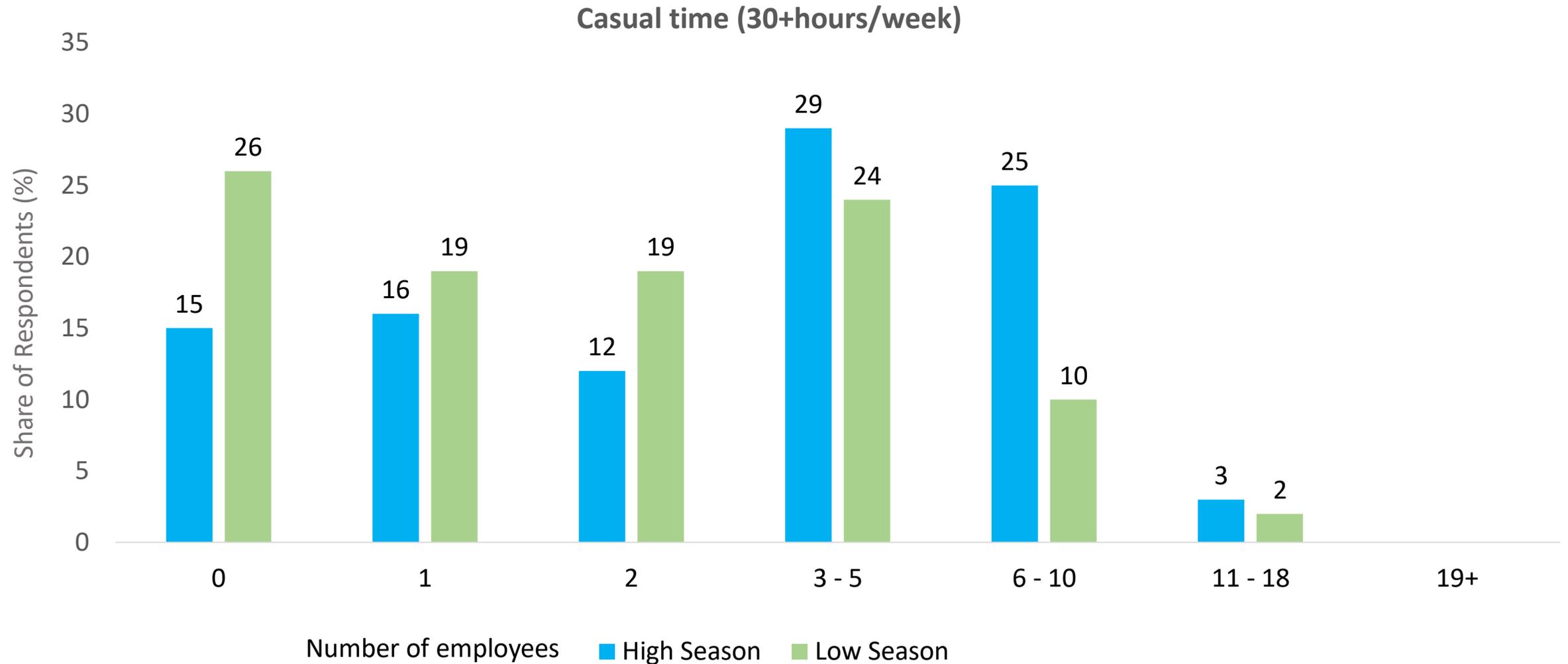# 80% of tourism reliant businesses employ between one and five **full-time staff** in the low season. In the high season this figure drops to 75%.

Full time (30+hours/week)

Share of Respondents (%)

Number of employees	High Season	Low Season
0	5	5
1	24	32
2	29	30
3 - 5	22	18
6 - 10	12	6
11 - 18	4	7
19+	4	2

The percentage of tourism reliant businesses hiring 6 or more part-time staff falls from 20% in the high season to 9% in the low.

Part time (30+hours/week)

Share of Respondents (%)

Number of employees	High Season	Low Season
0	18	14
1	23	29
2	16	25
3 - 5	23	23
6 - 10	14	3
11 - 18	5	6
19+	1	

Over a quarter (28%) of Tourism reliant businesses employ 6 or more casual staff in the high season. In the low season this drops to 12%.

Casual time (30+hours/week)

Share of Respondents (%)

Number of employees	High Season	Low Season
0	15	26
1	16	19
2	12	19
3 - 5	29	24
6 - 10	25	10
11 - 18	3	2
19+		

Number of employees ■ High Season ■ Low Season

Nearly one in three businesses have experienced problems when recruiting casual hourly paid staff this year.

Reasons	Percentage of responses
Fewer applicants - lack of applications - nobody around, shortage of seasonal workers, some not willing to work, opting for full time work, location/moving to big cities.	52%
Gaps in the workforce, skill shortages - lack of people with suitable qualifications and experience; poor soft skills (e.g. reliability, attitude, commitment). Lack of cleaners, hospitality, and shift workers.	33%
Housing shortage - to accommodate staff.	8%
Other - end of wage subsidies, lack of resources.	7%
TOTAL	**100%**

Top issues when recruiting casual hourly paid staff relate to lack of willing workers, skilled and unskilled staff (mostly soft skills) and housing shortages.

Quotes: Fewer applicants

"It's hard to find people that want to work, we pay more than the living wage, offer free accommodation WIFI etc"

"Lack of staff in our industry in general. Unsociable hours (nights/weekends) makes it often difficult to recruit"

"Not many interested, losing them to full time jobs"

"The people living in the area do not want to work, potential staff get paid too much on the dole"

"Over summer we are only closed Christmas day and staff don't like committing to days working that are normally public holidays. Also mums apply but only want to work school hours."

Quotes: Gaps in the workforce/skill shortages

"Finding on call casual staff in our location with barista skills"

"Lack of overseas staff that have prior experience and a great attitude."

"We spend thousands training people up for them to move on to an apprenticeship or a higher paying job which is great for them in the mid to long term but totally hopeless and costly for us as a business."

"It's hard to find quality guides with flexible availability - but this has always been the case, not just since Covid."

"Reliability - lateness - no car licence."

"No body wants to clean or spray weeds and the location its not worth people coming to clean to drive 30 minutes each way and clean for 1.5 - 2 hrs."
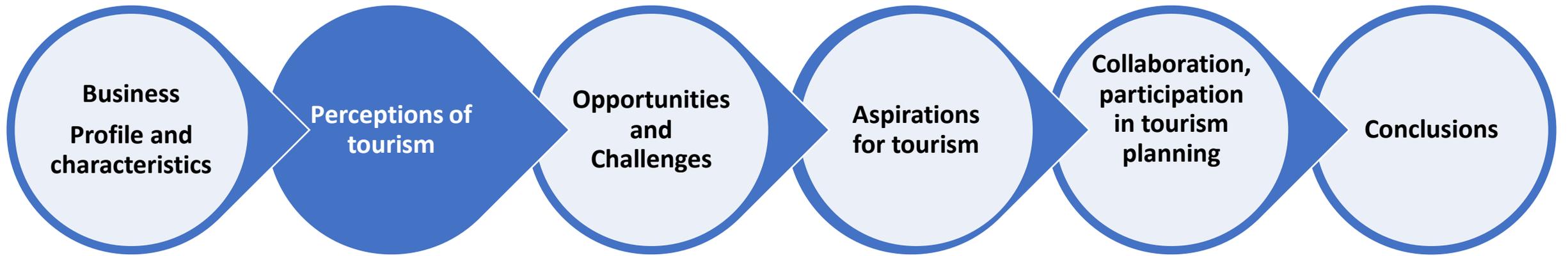
Quotes: Housing shortage

"Attracting staff to live in Whitianga due to the accommodation, and we are in a very specialized industry."

"Housing issue hinders to attract new people."

"Shortage of accommodation."

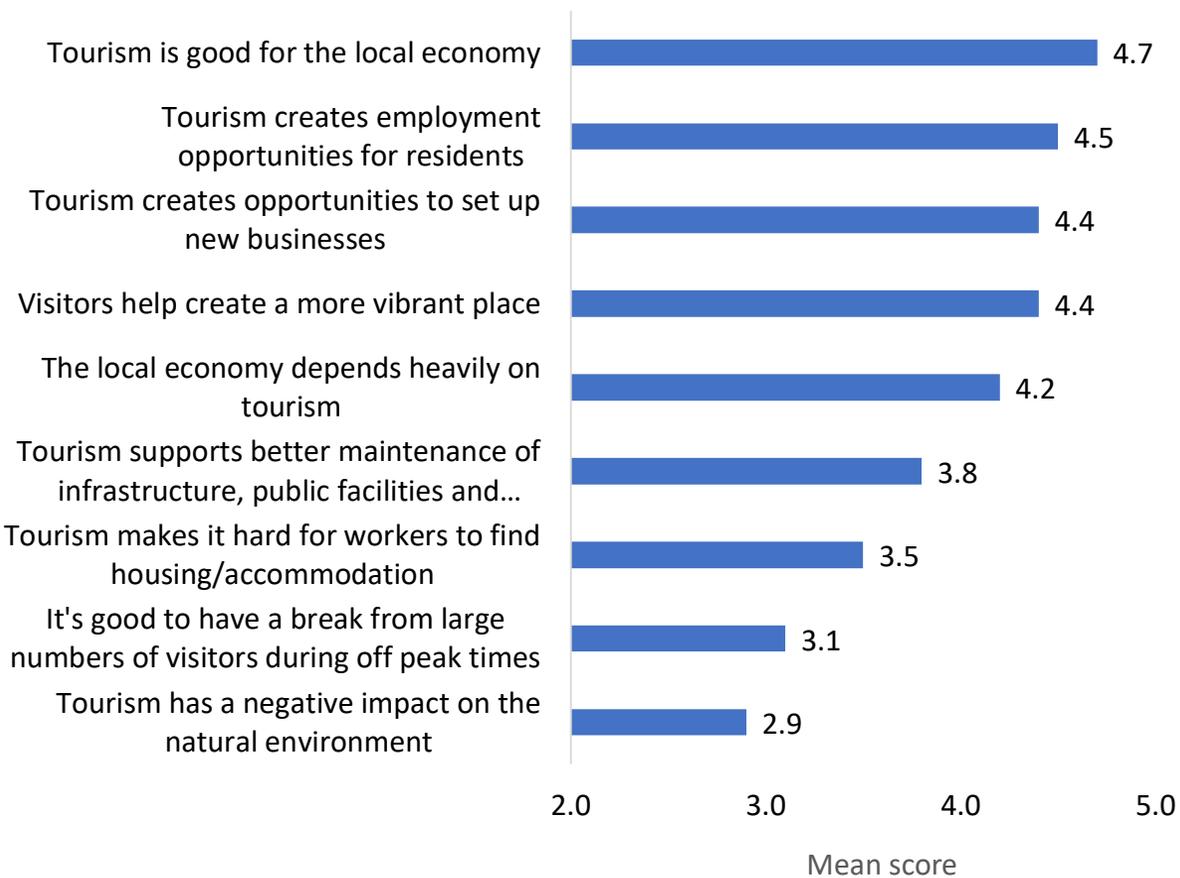*"No accommodation available."*

"Finding them and housing them."

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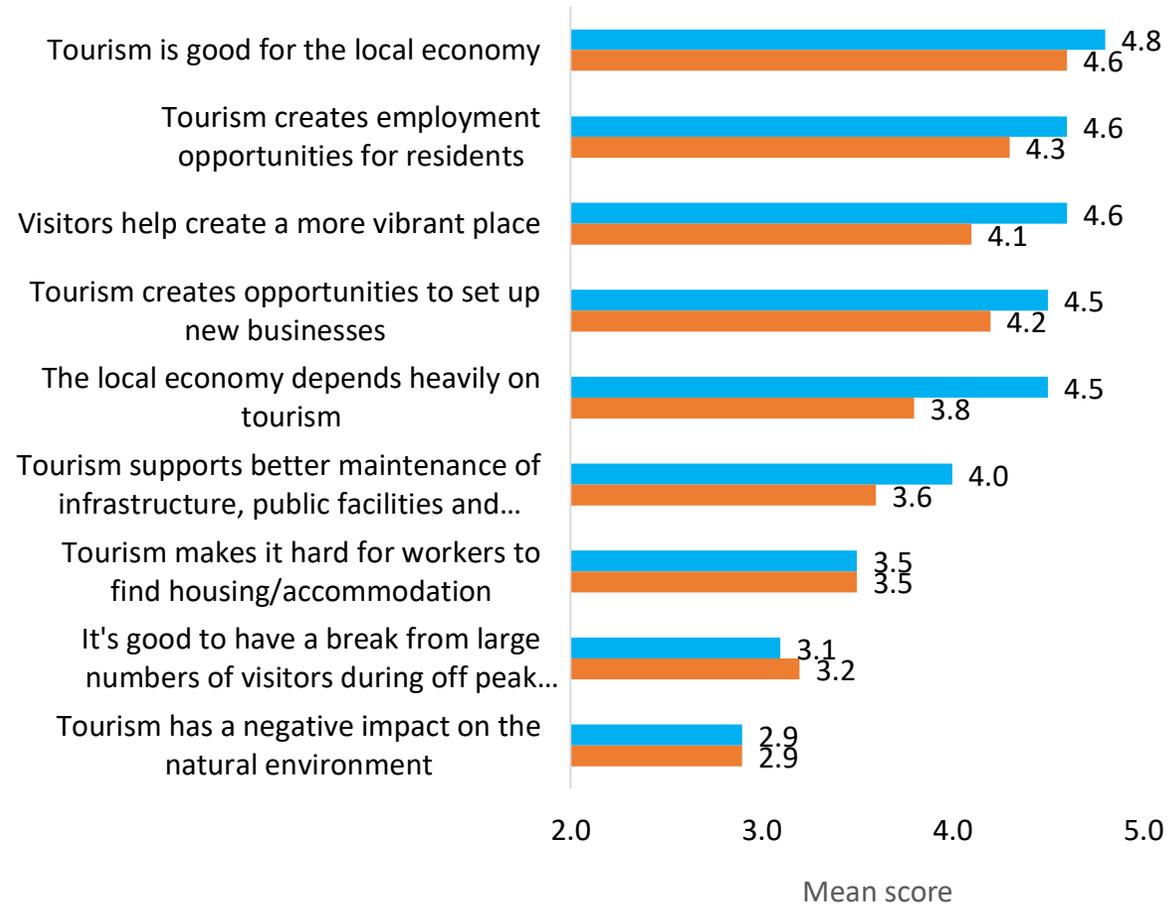
Businesses that are reliant on tourism are more likely to agree that the industry brings a range of economic benefits to local economies. There is considerably less agreement tourism across both groups that tourism has a negative impact on the natural environment.

All Businesses

Statement	Mean score
Tourism is good for the local economy	4.7
Tourism creates employment opportunities for residents	4.5
Tourism creates opportunities to set up new businesses	4.4
Visitors help create a more vibrant place	4.4
The local economy depends heavily on tourism	4.2
Tourism supports better maintenance of infrastructure, public facilities and…	3.8
Tourism makes it hard for workers to find housing/accommodation	3.5
It's good to have a break from large numbers of visitors during off peak times	3.1
Tourism has a negative impact on the natural environment	2.9

■ Tourism Reliant Businesses / ■ Non-tourism Reliant Businesses

Statement	Tourism Reliant	Non-tourism Reliant
Tourism is good for the local economy	4.8	4.6
Tourism creates employment opportunities for residents	4.6	4.3
Visitors help create a more vibrant place	4.6	4.1
Tourism creates opportunities to set up new businesses	4.5	4.2
The local economy depends heavily on tourism	4.5	3.8
Tourism supports better maintenance of infrastructure, public facilities and…	4.0	3.6
Tourism makes it hard for workers to find housing/accommodation	3.5	3.5
It's good to have a break from large numbers of visitors during off peak…	3.1	3.2
Tourism has a negative impact on the natural environment	2.9	2.9

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

Comments about the impact of tourism on the town/local area where businesses operate tend to focus on sustainability and infrastructure.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Sustainability (social, environmental, economic) - vital part of the economy, impact on pristine areas, ongoing issues with freedom campers.	39%
Insufficient Infrastructure and amenities - conflict use of local resources, infrastructure - load and wear, burden on rate payer, Internet, power outages etc	26%
Adds to local vibrancy, local pride - show off the town, meet new people, and stimulate local businesses.	13%
Housing shortage (staff and residents)	10%
Local Government, Council COVID-19 response	6%
Other - businesses diversifying, closing due to COVID-19	6%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: Sustainability (social, environmental, economic)

"Tourism provides the bread and butter for many of the local businesses. To have lost this stream of business over the past 17 months has been devastating for our business."

"Though Tourism can create pressures on the environment the funding that comes with it helps fund protection of our natural resources and helps educate others."

"I do not support 'side-show' tourism which encourages tourists in consuming our environment and communities, rather than engaging and connecting with them. I would like to see more conservative tourism, iwi-based tourism and engagement with arts and crafts. More engagement with small operators."

"Homeowners using their second home to create income restricts fully committed businesses to earn an income and availability for renters."

"The natural environment is affected as some tourists often abuse it... that tourism encourages consumption mentality and opens up what has been a pristine region to be broken up by tourists that now want a piece of the area...it will eventually negatively be affected by pollution."

Quotes: Insufficient infrastructure and amenities

"Huge impacts on roading wear and tear and impacts on waste management."

"Constantly increasing visitor numbers...places a load on utility infrastructure that is difficult for rate-payers to fund."

"Increased wear and tear on our backcountry roads with large numbers of campervans venturing further afield than international tourists would. Noticeable increase in the amount of rubbish left lying around on the roadside and more vandalism occurring in isolated places."

"Current infrastructure could not cope with tourist numbers pre COVID."

"Roading - higher volume of vehicles on roads that have poor ability to pass safely on - resulting in accidents as desperate people try to pass - particularly when locals are on their way to flights or appointments. Actual passing lanes are desperately needed. Toilets - need more in remote but visited areas."

Quotes: Insufficient infrastructure and amenities

"We need a far better infrastructure to cope with the influx of people, especially power outages and internet problems. Next will be water and sewerage. Also, the burden on the one lane bridges in the area is dangerous."

"It creates anxiety and conflict when the facilities provided (the wharf) don't can't keep up with increased traffic."

"In our area the western end Otama Beach stands out. Rubbish - a disgusting level of rubbish along all roadsides on the Coromandel. This is impacting on our marine environments as that is where it is ending up."

"Take a good look at the Kopu Hikuai - it is unbelievable. And it is not a desirous entrance to visitors to our region nor does it encourage them to take care in protecting our fragile environment while they are here."

Quotes: Adds to local vibrancy, local pride

"Tourism creates vibrant flow; it boosts and enhances local business that is already established extending vertical growth. I'm a screen printer and offer services to existing local business. I am also working on a clothing brand/design that markets and promotes Coromandel and all its natural gifts. Gifts of the whenua and moana present for tourism or currently resident kiwis with a taste for enjoying the outdoors."

"It is awesome for people to see that there is so much more to Paeroa and to get to meet the amazing Paeroa people."

"Acknowledging a town's tourist attractions creates a sense of pride and appreciation of that town amongst its own residents."

"Makes the town more vibrant. Tourists spend money and then the locals spend money."

"We support and encourage people to come and visit our community."
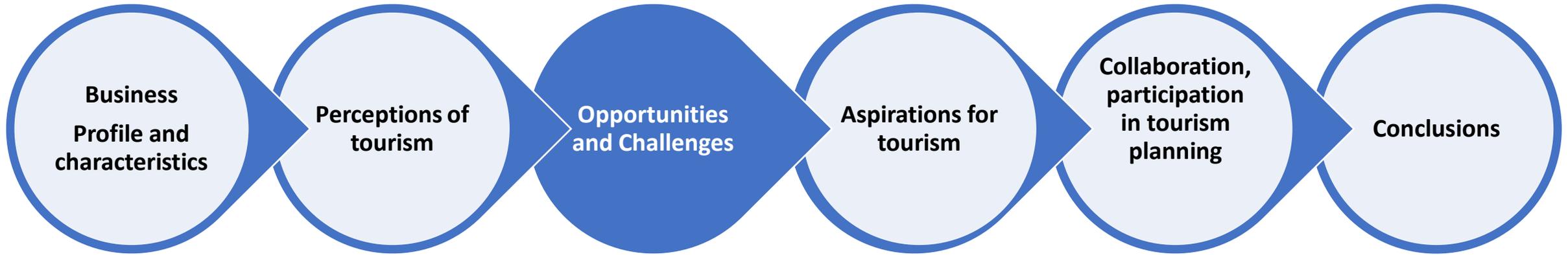
Nearly a half (46%) of businesses expressed concerns about tourism in the region during the 2020/2021 high season. Comments on the impact of COVID-19 and infrastructure investment were common.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Ongoing impact of COVID-19 - general uncertainty, less overseas visitors, less money in the economy, some businesses finding it hard to adapt to domestic market.	33%
Insufficient investment in infrastructure and amenities - carrying capacity, lack of maintenance – roads, tracks, trails. Rubbish on roadside and beaches.	15%
Insufficient investment in promotion and visitor activities - develop visitor attractions, promote the region and its gateways. Coherent strategy for shoulder season.	12%
Reliance on the domestic market	11%
Workforce shortages and housing for staff and employment.	11%
Environmental - ongoing issue with freedom campers	9%
Social impact, local community - visitors don't have the same values as locals, concern about COVID-19 entering the community.	5%
Other - Miranda Hot Pool closure, potential water shortage, 1080 drop.	4%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: Ongoing impact COVID-19

"Local council not planning ahead for what they know will be the issues around our area for safety of locals and visitors."

"My business and many like me rely heavily on international tourists and of course they weren't here. Domestic tourism utilises accommodation such as holiday houses more than B&B. Bookings tend to be short term and last minute making any planning difficult."

"Not enough foreign tourists. Kiwi tourists don't spend as much."

"The COVID impacted tourism sector meant all regions were active promoting to the domestic only market. Ensuring the region retained it's relevance in a crowded marketplace was important."

"The high summer season was definitely shorter. Usually around 8 weeks of high season but last year was pretty much 3 weeks."

"The lack of overseas tourists that normally come after the kiwis holiday period didn't happen creating lesser income going into the quieter winter season."

Quotes: Insufficient infrastructure and amenities

"Infrastructure problems on Hauraki Rail Trail, sustainability needs to be focused on."

"The roads and some parking areas are extremely busy and verging on unsafe since we're so close to Auckland."

"The Whitianga Wharf needs a major upgrade to cope with the growth of the area."

"We need to encourage freedom camping but do it in a way where public toilets are available for use with plenty of rubbish bins. So our tourist are not polluting our beautiful area. If we don't get these tourist it means they don't shop and businesses struggle."

"Driving conditions on the peninsula are also a massive concern. More efforts need to go into educating people on safe driving practices on the narrow metal roads and also keeping the roads in good repair."

"Continued failure of TCDC to put some effort into improving the Ferry Service into Coromandel Town."

Quotes: Insufficient investment in promotion and visitor activities

"That our expenditure for our region will never be high until we develop more attractions. You can only spend so much on ice cream. We have limited activities and eateries. If the metrics are based on credit card activity then our true potential is not being measured. We are relevant to any market because of our location. We need investment in our destination."

"Our local council appears to create policy that is anti tourism. Potentially closing the local i-SITE centres is an example."

"We could be better promoted e.g. Thames gateway, rather than outsiders heading directly over the hill. Council supporting new start up businesses more and not making it harder."

"Destination Coromandel still very (too) focused on peak season, with no obvious coherent strategy to build shoulder season numbers."

When asked how these concerns could be addressed, respondents focused on improved support from local and central government, improving infrastructure, and easing borders imposed as a result of COVID-19.

Themes	Percentage of responses
More input, investment and support from Council and government - more strategic planning and investment in the region. Better consultation and collaboration with businesses and community.	32%
Improve infrastructure and amenities - focus on parking, roading, accessibility, better maintenance of DoC tracks. More toilets in remote areas, better signage to promote environmental awareness.	17%
Ease border restrictions - some opening needed.	14%
Housing and workforce - plan for and encourage those who offer affordable housing for workers.	10%
Actively promote the region - plan ways to expand the shoulder season, advertise outside the area. More target marketing for the Coromandel area to attract domestic tourism. Create more events.	9%
Ongoing management of freedom campers - limit spots available.	8%
Other - undecided how to address these concerns.	10%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: More input, investment and support from Council and government

"More solid funding to Hauraki Rail Trail Trust to maintain safe trail network. Encourage and financially support business to kick-start sustainability programs link it to local initiatives."

"Initiatives supported by council for growth especially on Western coast not just East coast of peninsula."

"By letting people who live in area have a say and not just council deciding."

"Local council planning ahead and making changes to the area … paid parking or wardens… allowing us to put more signage out to advertise.. doing free advertising on the rail trail for local businesses right there who give back."

"More support for operators to better able to attract customers through development…"

"Strategic marketing program and messaging."

Quotes: Improve infrastructure and amenities

"Better infrastructure and management to control flow of people (area around Owharoa Falls) - i.e. need more parking, improved access on bridge."

"Provide regular council rubbish pickups, signage to warn tourists not to chuck their rubbish around, encourage farmers to mulch and stop burning green waste with big fines, add more training and rules around owning dogs and fines for people who let their dogs roam."

"TCDC could either increase the frequency of road maintenance or bring in weight or length restrictions for some vehicles on some of the roads that contribute to the corrugations."

"DOC to increase the frequency of maintenance on tracks to keep them at a better standard. Currently DOC have a low profile on the Northern Coromandel and we have seen an increase in vandalism."
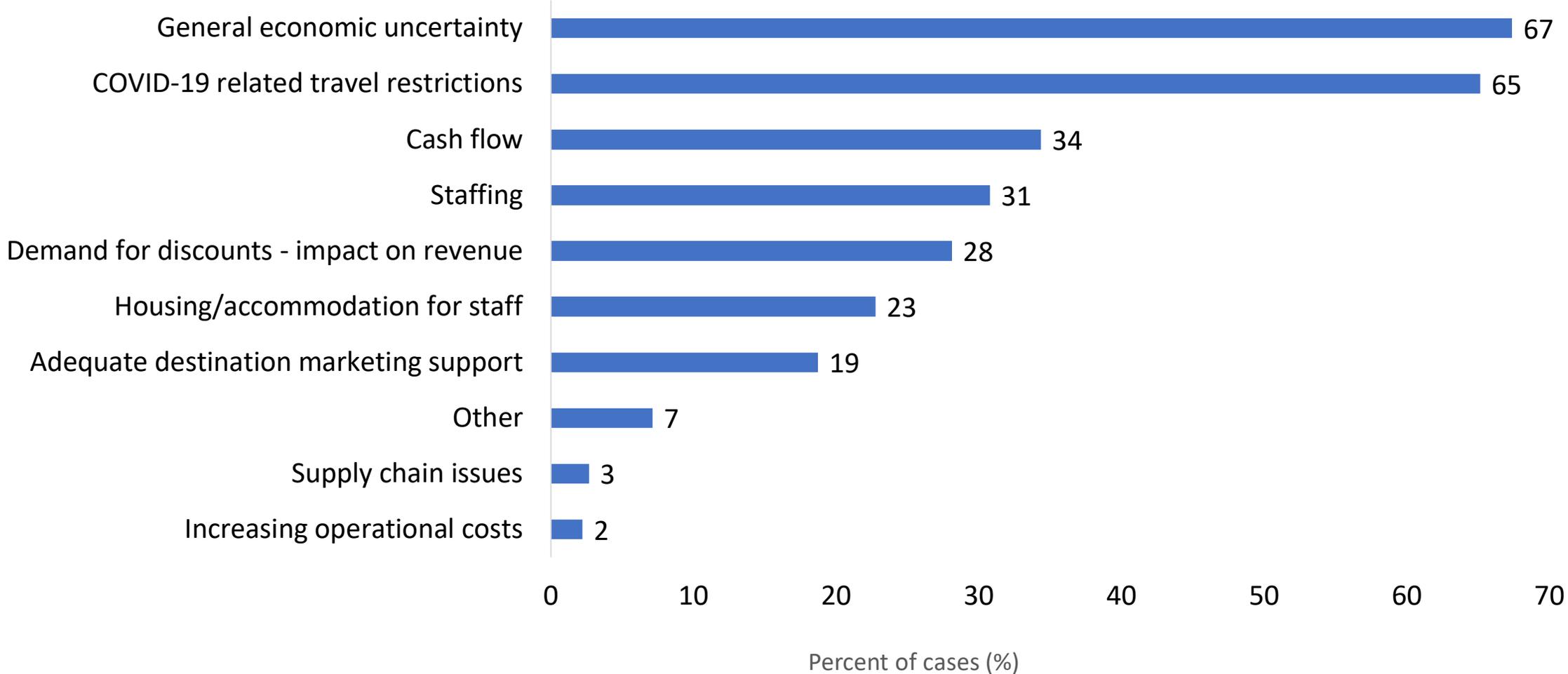
"More passing lanes on our hill roads. More toilet facilities in remote areas."

"Better 'do action' signage (e.g. 'leave only footprints, take your rubbish with you. 'Keep the Coromandel litter free''. Summer refuge station in the northern peninsula region."

Who is best placed to address tourism related concerns? Local government is favoured but several comments emphasize the need for a multi-faceted approach.

Stakeholders	Percentage of responses
Local government, Council	48%
Multi-faceted approach - Council, local businesses, Destination Coromandel, community and tourism operators working together.	33%
Destination Coromandel	8%
Local businesses - all sectors.	5%
Other - voters, business associations, scientists.	6%
TOTAL	**100%**

The major challenges for businesses in the next 12 months are general economic uncertainty and COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

Challenge	Percent
General economic uncertainty	67
COVID-19 related travel restrictions	65
Cash flow	34
Staffing	31
Demand for discounts - impact on revenue	28
Housing/accommodation for staff	23
Adequate destination marketing support	19
Other	7
Supply chain issues	3
Increasing operational costs	2

Percent of cases (%)

Multiple response therefore total does not add to 100%

Major challenges facing businesses in the next 2-5 years: impact of COVID-19, ongoing financial stability and increasing operational costs. Finding and accommodating staff is also a concern.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Ongoing COVID-19 uncertainties - impact of border closures, economic uncertainty, viability of operating with only domestic market, being competitive.	33%
Financial sustainability - lack of capital - unable to expand/grow business, rules and regulations, debt to sales ratio.	16%
Increasing operational costs - rising costs - wages, freight charges, compliance costs, ongoing maintenance/upgrades.	14%
Staffing - affordability and availability, lack of experienced /qualified staff.	10%
Housing and accommodation - for staff and visitors, impact of AirBnB and short-term rentals.	6%
Supply chain issues - border restrictions, limited stock supplies .	5%
Infrastructure - roading, water quality, lack of water, ferries, internet.	4%
Other - impact of climate change, promotion, location, government/council.	12%
TOTAL	**100%**

Major opportunities for businesses in the next 12 months: innovation in experience development, growing the domestic market and easing of border restrictions.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Innovation in experience development - experiences linked to the Hauraki Rail Trail, 'foodie' experiences, heritage, arts, and cultural. Enhanced marketing activities and product development. More diverse events and enhance customer service overall.	19%
Growth in domestic tourism - capitalising on Kiwi's 'stuck' in NZ, developing 'loyalty' to the region.	19%
Easing of border restrictions - importance of Australian bubble, open to vaccinated tourists, make the region the destination of choice.	16%
Sustainability (social-community, environmental, economic) - high net worth visitors, pay more to buy local, shape demand to connect to New Zealanders who share similar values to locals.	7%
Collaborating/working together - combine efforts to attract visitors to the region, grow retail and activities on offer, share information around local events, activities.	6%
Advertising and promotion - enhanced online presence, target new markets within New Zealand.	6%
Increased visitor numbers overall - especially during the low season, regional dispersal of visitors.	6%
Infrastructure and amenities - improve connectivity, link biking and hiking trails, roading.	5%
Other - permanent population growth, more skilled workforce, just 'staying afloat'.	14%
TOTAL	**100%**

Suggested improvements from businesses regarding local infrastructure and/or facilities to help better manage tourism in their local area will also benefit the local community.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Improved public facilities - beautification in town centres, larger venues for events, more green spaces, toilets and parking.	33%
Improved local infrastructure - water care/supply, investment in roading networks, new two-lane bridges, parking, harbours and wharves, ferry services.	31%
Support for local towns - local i-SITES, pedestrian friendly spaces, trails, develop of evening activities/destinations, off season activities and events, extending opening hours.	23%
Better signage - directional and informational signage to showcase what is available in each area, feature local products.	8%
Other - management of freedom camping, more visitors.	5%
TOTAL	**100%**

The top suggestions to ensure businesses in towns/local areas benefit more from tourism include: improved infrastructure, more effective advertising and promotion, and innovative visitor experience development.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Infrastructure and amenities - beautification projects, improve aesthetics of main thoroughfares, improve roads, transport, parking, airports, ferries, and accommodation.	27%
Advertising and promotion - increase focus on the west side of Coromandel (Thames to Coromandel Town) as well as Waihi and Hauraki; more promotion of towns and surrounding areas; promote the whole region to the rest of NZ.	22%
Innovation in experience development - different types of events (and more of them) especially in winter months; bring more extended family groups; incorporate local Māori history and culture; highlight activities/experiences in various towns.	21%
Collaborating/working together	12%
Sustainability (social-community, environmental, economic)	6%
Other - seasonality, workforce, growth in domestic tourism	12%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: Infrastructure and amenities

"Improving infrastructure e.g. roading, water quality to prevent having to replace fixtures constantly through silt and mineral damage."

"Get a soul into the centre of Whitianga. Trees in Parks for people to eat lunch under. Art Displays etc. The best e.g. of this is downtown Queenstown with Buskers, Music, Cuisine…"

"More effort put into creating a more vibrant and beautiful town centre. The main street of Thames is very ordinary and could be made a whole lot better by utilising the lovely old buildings, i.e. shopfronts and second stories of buildings being painted more in heritage colours - not garish yellow beside red or purple."

"Investment in infrastructure: welcome freedom campers and provide adequate facilities; invest in public facilities."

"Better facilities to promote tourism will result in spin-off for businesses, especially shops, eateries and accommodation providers."

Quotes: Advertising and promotion

"Coromandel is heavily promoted but Waihi/Hauraki, not so much. Waihi in particular has so much to offer to domestic tourism in NZ but being on the cusp of three districts, feel we are overlooked too often."

"Marketing campaign targeted to Thames town and the surrounding area. Particularly the Kauaeranga Valley and Thames Coast and their proximity to Thames town. Targeted at young /younger people and families from around NZ who may be keen to explore the great outdoors."

"Stop the focus on the eastern Coromandel, as lovely as Whitianga and Whangamata are - the west (Thames to Coromandel Town) has just as much to offer. Stay in the west, visit the east, get away from the crowds (especially in summer). Where did our Gold Rush Market Day go?"

"We should stop trying to under cut each other (stop under valuing what we have) and work together to market to the greater NZ ,letting our own people (NZ) know how lucky we are to live in Gods own."

Quotes: Innovation in experience development

"A Maori cultural experience would be great for tourists when the borders open up."

"Development of Trail Town concept to make riders feel safe and welcome."

"Investment in attractions, events and promotions to extend the holiday season.'

"More family activity options in Thames, events that bring in visitors like the new country music festival, using the racecourse and other spaces to get things happening in our town."

"A public exposé of significant art pieces around the idea of ' nature', earth, sky and rivers, Maori cultural and spiritual energy in this area of Karangahake and pakeha experiences in latter years."

"Grants to create other events around winter months - food, cyclists, family skate and scooter events, bring more extended family groups."

Who is best placed to implement suggestions to ensure localities benefit more from tourism? Respondents prefer a collective effort with support from Council. Government's role is clearly seen as vital.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Collective approach - local business, Destination Coromandel, Council and Iwi working together.	41%
Council/Local government	33%
Businesses (only)	11%
Destination Coromandel	7%
Community led	5%
Other - Tourism New Zealand, i-SITE.	3%
TOTAL	**100%**

Business Profile and characteristics → Perceptions of tourism → Opportunities and Challenges → Aspirations for tourism → Collaboration, participation in tourism planning → Conclusions
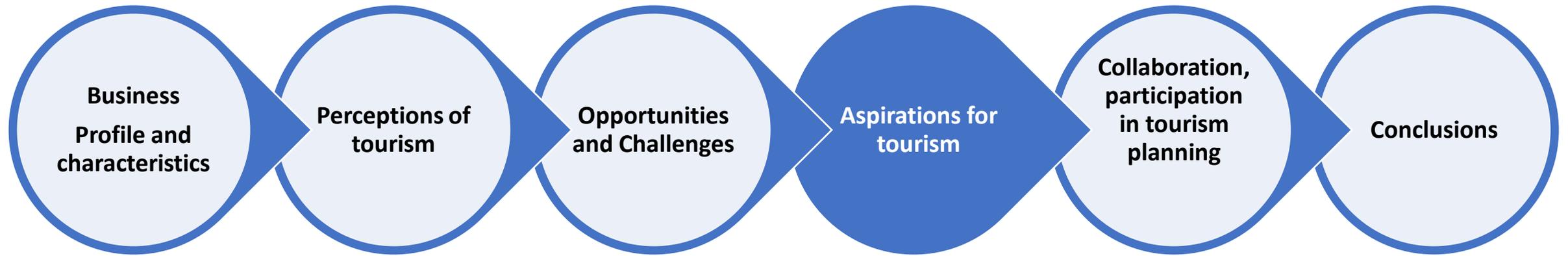
Business aspirations for future tourism focus on an industry that supports the environment. Visitors paying more than locals to use shared facilities is not seen as a future 'must have'.

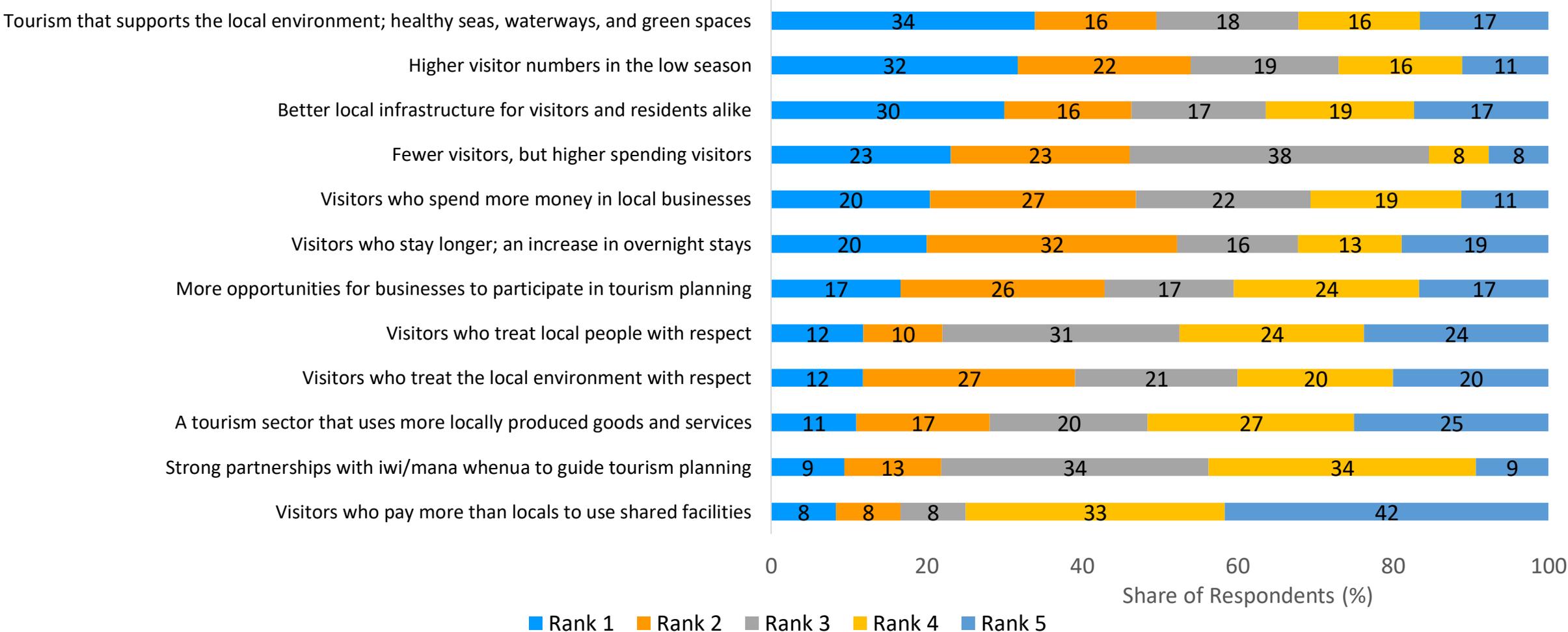| Aspiration	Must have	Nice to have	Low priority
Tourism that supports the local environment, healthy seas, waterways, and green spaces	84	16	
Visitors who treat the local environment with respect	83	16	1
Better local infrastructure for visitors and residents alike	71	27	2
Visitors who spend more money in local businesses	63	36	1
Visitors who treat local people with respect	59	37	4
Visitors who stay longer; an increase in overnight stays	57	41	2
A tourism sector that uses more locally produced goods and services	49	46	5
Higher visitor numbers in the low season	47	49	4
More opportunities for businesses to participate in tourism planning	43	50	6
Strong partnerships with iwi/mana whenua to guide tourism planning	29	44	27
Fewer visitors, but higher spending visitors	15	54	32
Visitors who pay more than locals to use shared facilities	14	37	49

Share of Respondents (%)

■ Must have　■ Nice to have　■ Low priority

From a business perspective, what would you like to see from tourism in the region? What should we aspire to?
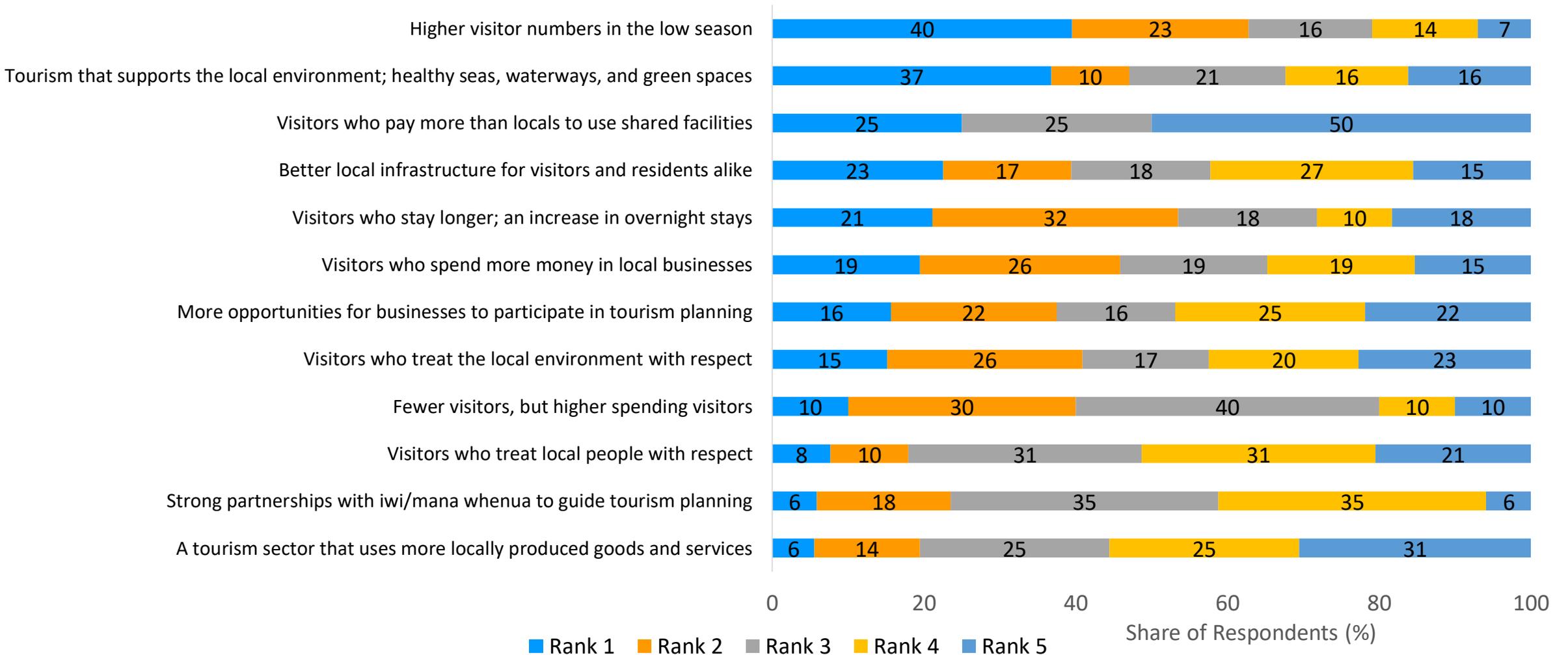
Businesses clearly feel that future tourism must support and sustain the environment. The 'right' type of visitor also needs to be encouraged (higher local spend, longer stay, improved seasonal spread). Infrastructure improvements are also seen as important.

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Tourism that supports the local environment; healthy seas, waterways, and green spaces	34	16	18	16	17
Higher visitor numbers in the low season	32	22	19	16	11
Better local infrastructure for visitors and residents alike	30	16	17	19	17
Fewer visitors, but higher spending visitors	23	23	38	8	8
Visitors who spend more money in local businesses	20	27	22	19	11
Visitors who stay longer; an increase in overnight stays	20	32	16	13	19
More opportunities for businesses to participate in tourism planning	17	26	17	24	17
Visitors who treat local people with respect	12	10	31	24	24
Visitors who treat the local environment with respect	12	27	21	20	20
A tourism sector that uses more locally produced goods and services	11	17	20	27	25
Strong partnerships with iwi/mana whenua to guide tourism planning	9	13	34	34	9
Visitors who pay more than locals to use shared facilities	8	8	8	33	42

Share of Respondents (%)

■ Rank 1 ■ Rank 2 ■ Rank 3 ■ Rank 4 ■ Rank 5

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

All businesses - 'Must Have' ranked in order of priority

Tourism reliant businesses consider attracting 'higher visitor numbers in the low season' as the top priority for tourism in the region. Support for the environment features strongly. Half of respondents rank Visitor surcharge as a low priority – by far the highest of any category.

Category	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Higher visitor numbers in the low season	40	23	16	14	7
Tourism that supports the local environment; healthy seas, waterways, and green spaces	37	10	21	16	16
Visitors who pay more than locals to use shared facilities	25		25		50
Better local infrastructure for visitors and residents alike	23	17	18	27	15
Visitors who stay longer; an increase in overnight stays	21	32	18	10	18
Visitors who spend more money in local businesses	19	26	19	19	15
More opportunities for businesses to participate in tourism planning	16	22	16	25	22
Visitors who treat the local environment with respect	15	26	17	20	23
Fewer visitors, but higher spending visitors	10	30	40	10	10
Visitors who treat local people with respect	8	10	31	31	21
Strong partnerships with iwi/mana whenua to guide tourism planning	6	18	35	35	6
A tourism sector that uses more locally produced goods and services	6	14	25	25	31

Share of Respondents (%)

■ Rank 1   ■ Rank 2   ■ Rank 3   ■ Rank 4   ■ Rank 5

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

Tourism reliant businesses - 'Must Have' ranked in order of priority

In commenting on what businesses would like to see from tourism in the future, the value of collaboration was highlighted along with improved amenities and infrastructure. Businesses would like to see an innovative and sustainable approach taken to tourism development in the region.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Collaboration - small operators working together, cohesion amongst agencies, working towards common goals.	21%
Infrastructure and amenities - fewer one lane bridges, improve roading, ferry services, walking and cycling tracks, connectivity.	17%
Innovation in experience development - tap into the local history, story telling, local organics, clean green region - 'good for your health'.	17%
Sustainability (social-community, environmental, economic) - protect the biodiversity, support for small businesses, low impact tourism, respectful.	17%
Advertising and promotion - market Thames as a destination, highlight local activities and events.	9%
Other - growth in the domestic market, healthy tourism sector supporting community.	19%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: Collaboration

"I would like to see tourism supporting businesses working together to create a package that promotes more visitors. Local and National Government supporting our industry by funding local marketing, not just more toilets in the region."

"Much stronger collaborative and visible presence of tangata whenua around the tourism table, particularly around the sustainable environmental tourism issue."

"More collaboration and cohesion amongst agencies with everyone aiming for same / similar goals e.g. we have initial scoping for Rail Trail Hub in Owharoa Falls region (bike hire/food outlet/ information hub/extra parking/ EV charging station) but would require involvement of DOC, HDC, DC, HRT Trust, - hard to know where to start and how to engage all parties. How to manage tourism development more effectively - how can we consult?"

"Would like to have Tourism supported by regional and local body without increasing costs to residents. Prioritising what is most important."

"Collaboration with other groups to create key storytelling & empathy of the region, mauri ora."

Quotes: Infrastructure and amenities

"The lack of services has had a huge effect on my businesses recently with Internet Connectivity (our provider cut the northern tip off, and I've just spent around $12k to get internet…Still no/limited cell phone coverage…almost third world when internationals come and stay."

"SH25 Thames to Coromandel - which is maintained by Waikato District Council, not TCDC- for safety needs a speed limit decrease perhaps to 80Kph max on the open parts (not 100k) and a walking/cycle track on edge of the road so that visitors and residents alike can use this."

"Locals need to be looked after more than they are, also outsiders need to respect area a bit more than they do maybe permits need to be issued for various things in. Road usage, rubbish, etc."

Quotes: Innovation in experience development

"More promotion of local industrial history, Steampunk and creative character of the Thames region as a point of difference from the rest of the Coromandel peninsula; more marketing to the large population centres of Auckland and Hamilton to attract weekend visitors."

"I would like the Coromandel/Hauraki region to develop a niche brand of being POISON FREE, i.e. support for all the organic businesses, horticulture, honey, wild meat and fur products etc."

"A truly, clean and green place will attract tourists specifically to be in a toxin-free environment. i.e. "Coromandel good for your soul" but also "Good for your health". In other places where pesticides have been banned, ecotourism grew. IF there are smart, visionary and future-focused people developing Tourism Coromandel marketing, they would understand that this is a growing trend globally and would do something like this."

Most businesses would prefer more visitors in the high/summer season, with tourism reliant operators slightly more positive. Fewer than 1 in 20 bsuinesses would prefer less visitors in the high season.

All Businesses

Share of Respondents (%)

- More visitors than we have now: 56
- About the same as we have now: 40
- Less visitors than we have now: 4

■ Tourism Reliant Businesses / ■ Non-tourism Reliant Businesses

Share of Respondents (%)

- More visitors than we have now: 58 / 54
- About the same as we have now: 37 / 44
- Less visitors than we have now: 5 / 2
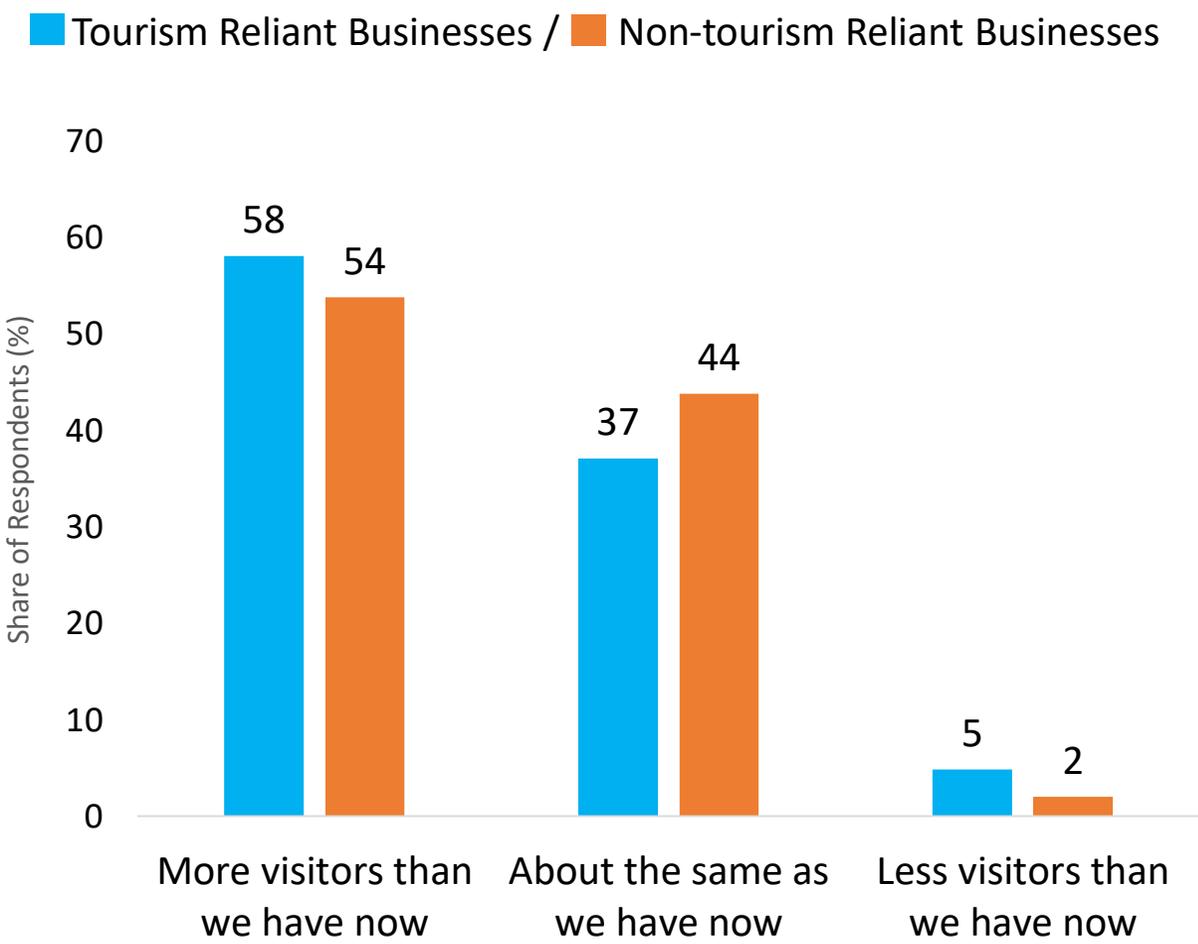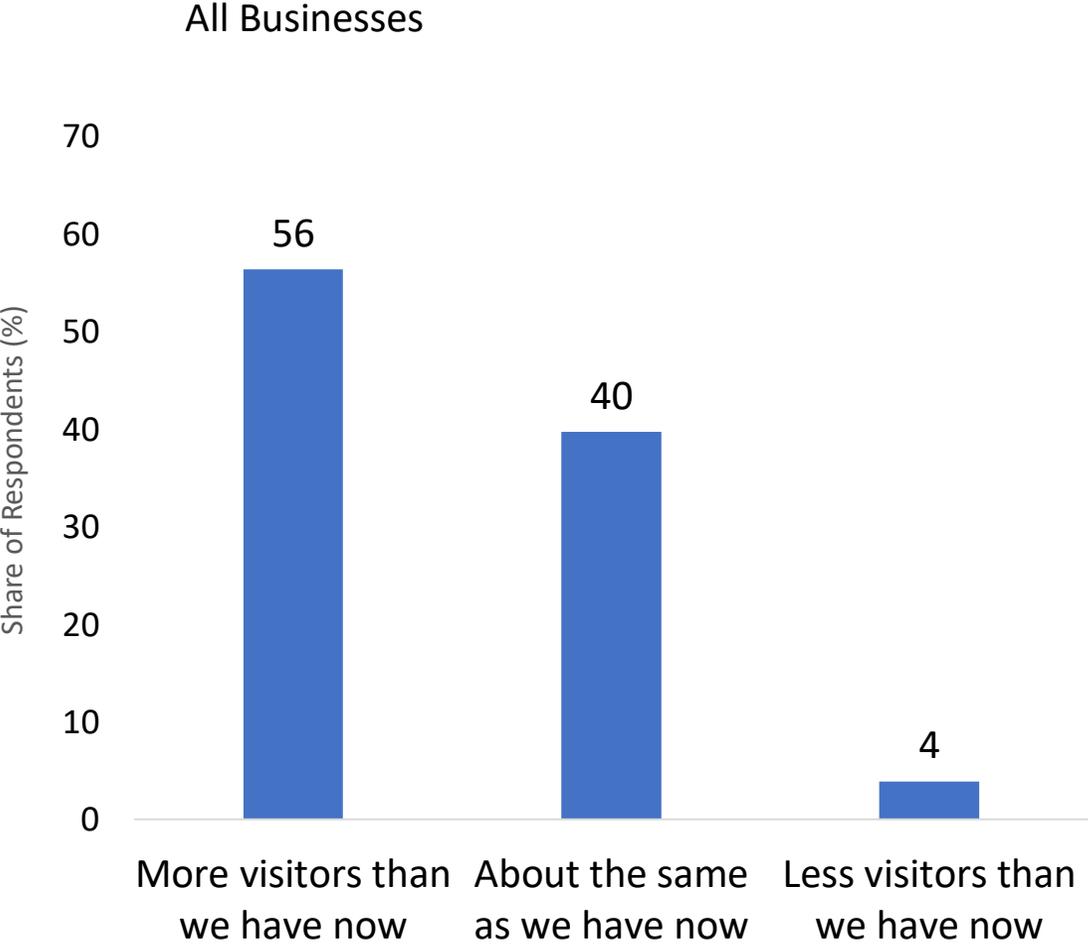
Nearly all (92%) respondents believe the region has a unique point of difference from other destinations. Comments highlight the critical role of the natural environment.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Beautiful natural environment - beaches to the bush and mountains, coastal and marine, flora and fauna.	48%
Proximity to main population centres - easy access for visitors from Auckland, Tauranga and Hamilton.	11%
Culture and heritage of the region - gold mining past and present, Māori settlement, timber, artists/creatives.	9%
Ambience - relaxing, small-town charm, 'Island' feel, artistic creative vibe.	8%
Diverse range of activities - outdoor adventures, cycleways, walkways, parks.	8%
Other - affordability, safety, sustainability, friendly people.	16%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: Beautiful natural environment

"World famous natural attractions, oceans/mountains in close proximity, and an overall atmosphere and 'vibe' that feels like an island."

"It is one of the most spectacular places in the world, esp. the Coromandel Peninsula - full of natural beauty, flora and fauna, and has lots for active visitors to enjoy beyond the views!"

"The natural geography, the most beautiful bays per coastline in NZ."

"Native bush clad hills, clean streams and rivers, and stunning beach/coastal areas. History of good offshore fishing. Amazing dive country. All bundled up in a small corner of NZ."

"Amazing natural resources that are only a small drive away from each other."

"In our area its the fact that the natural scenery is UNDEVELOPED. That's what a lot of people want. If they didn't, then they would go to Pauanui or Whangamata or Tairua."

Quotes: Proximity to main population centres

"Affordable, accessibility, proximity to Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga."

"Coromandel has always had a mystique due to its remoteness and yet proximity to major population centres."

"This is an area that visitors from the city can get away and be by the sea and it feels like that are actually getting away from the hustle and bustle of the city."

"Easy access from 3 heavily populated regions (Auckland/Hamilton/Tauranga) and their airports Also means easy access for the higher income earners / socio-economic markets."

"It's proximity to the major cities yet being able to be both remote and urban within a very small distance."

Quotes: Culture and heritage of the region

"The history relating to timber, gold, flax and kahikatea exploitation and natures subsequent regeneration."

"Quirky unique towns full of local heritage."

"Its bush, beaches and natural beauty combined with its historic elements..."

"Yes. Beachy, Vibey.....Whitianga Artistic in music and visual arts, which is really interesting."

"Its Māori heritage and its goldmining heritage - not just the established attractions but just as importantly its built/architectural heritage which is readily accessible through walking tours of the streets of Thames and Coromandel."

When asked which types of visitors should be attracted to the region businesses focus on responsible low impact travellers, high value visitors are also seen as important.

Visitor type	Percentage of responses
Responsible, low impact - environmentally aware, respectful.	29%
High value - spend more, stay longer, repeat visitors.	25%
A 'mixture' - attract all types from campers, backpackers to high spending visitors.	18%
Families, retirees - family groups, mature visitors with disposable incomes.	9%
Outdoor and nature enthusiasts - active, enjoys nature.	8%
Other - younger visitors, friendly, winter visitors, engaging.	11%
TOTAL	**100%**

When asked to choose what types of visitor experiences should be developed in the region experiences revolving around family and friends rated particularly high.
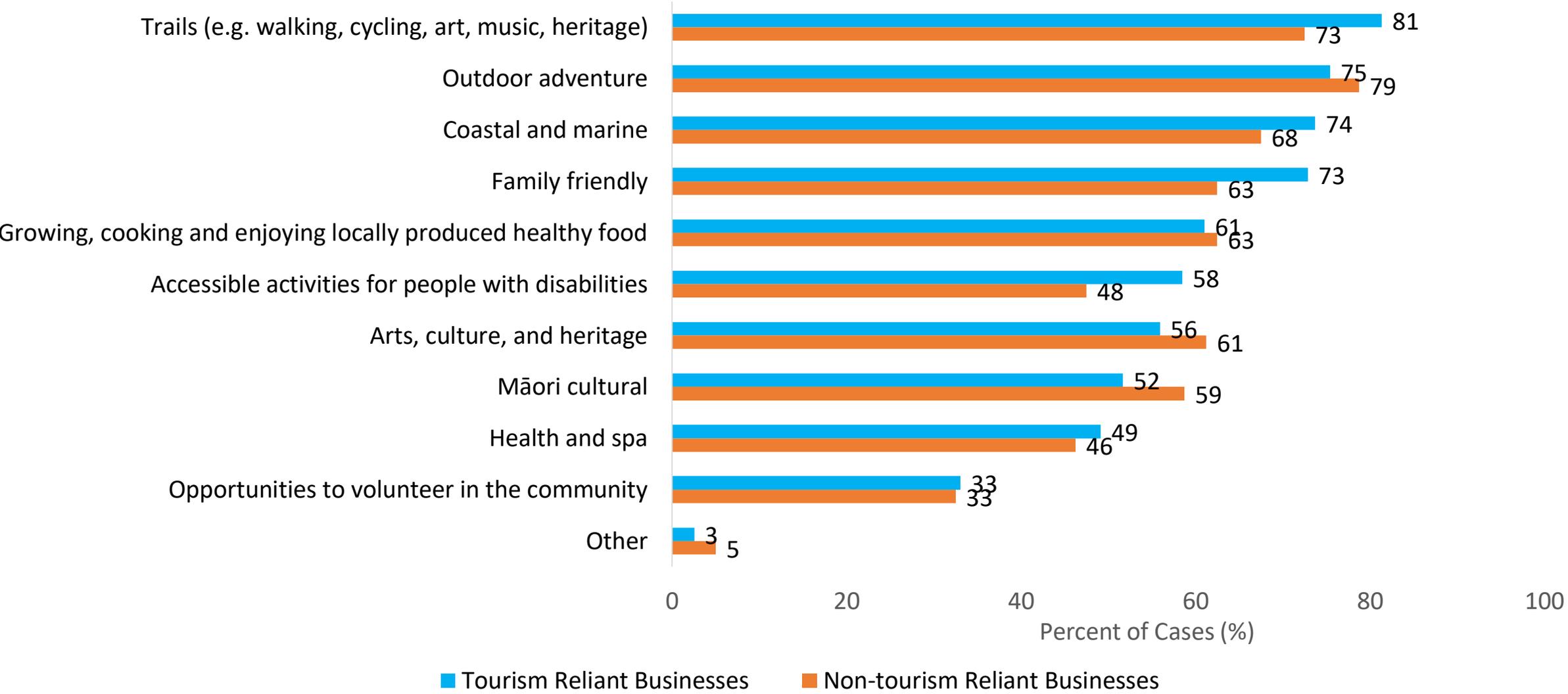
All businesses

Experience	Percent of Cases (%)
Experiences where family and friends can make memories together	88
Experiences where visitors can have fun, learn new skills and gain knowledge about other cultures and ecosystems	69
Experiences that place a focus on the health and wellbeing of the mind, body, and soul	61
Experiences where visitors could give back to our community e.g. conservation activities	59
Other	6

Multiple response therefore total does not add to 100%

When asked to choose what types of visitor experiences should be developed in the region tourism reliant businesses were more likely to focus on health and wellbeing.

Experiences where family and friends can make memories together
- Tourism Reliant Businesses: 89
- Non-tourism Reliant Businesses: 86

Experiences where visitors can have fun, learn new skills and gain knowledge about other cultures and ecosystems
- Tourism Reliant Businesses: 68
- Non-tourism Reliant Businesses: 71

Experiences that place a focus on the health and wellbeing of the mind, body, and soul
- Tourism Reliant Businesses: 67
- Non-tourism Reliant Businesses: 53

Experiences where visitors could give back to our community e.g. conservation activities
- Tourism Reliant Businesses: 59
- Non-tourism Reliant Businesses: 58

Other
- Tourism Reliant Businesses: 3
- Non-tourism Reliant Businesses: 9

Percent of Cases (%)

■ Tourism Reliant Businesses   ■ Non-tourism Reliant Businesses

Multiple response therefore total does not add to 100%

Tourism reliant businesses would like to see more outdoor and family friendly activities. Non tourism reliant businesses would like to see more arts, heritage and Maori cultural activities developed in the region.

Category	Tourism Reliant Businesses	Non-tourism Reliant Businesses
Trails (e.g. walking, cycling, art, music, heritage)	81	73
Outdoor adventure	75	79
Coastal and marine	74	68
Family friendly	73	63
Growing, cooking and enjoying locally produced healthy food	61	63
Accessible activities for people with disabilities	58	48
Arts, culture, and heritage	56	61
Māori cultural	52	59
Health and spa	49	46
Opportunities to volunteer in the community	33	33
Other	3	5

Percent of Cases (%)

■ Tourism Reliant Businesses   ■ Non-tourism Reliant Businesses

Multiple response therefore total does not add to 100%

Six in ten businesses incorporate sustainability practices in their operations. The most adopted practices are: reducing waste, contributing time/services to the community, and making more of local supply chains.

Practice	Percent of Cases (%)
Reducing waste	85
Making a contribution to local community groups e.g. donations of goods/services or time	72
Making more use of local supply chains	70
Supporting local conservation/environmental initiatives	61
Trying to employ more local residents	61
Developing new sustainable products and experiences	43
Reducing carbon emissions	35
Supporting Māori/iwi/hapū initiatives	24
Other	6

Percent of Cases (%)

Multiple response therefore total does not add to 100%

Six out of ten tourism reliant businesses participate in the TIA Tourism Sustainability Commitment. The Tiaki Promise and Qualmark also feature.
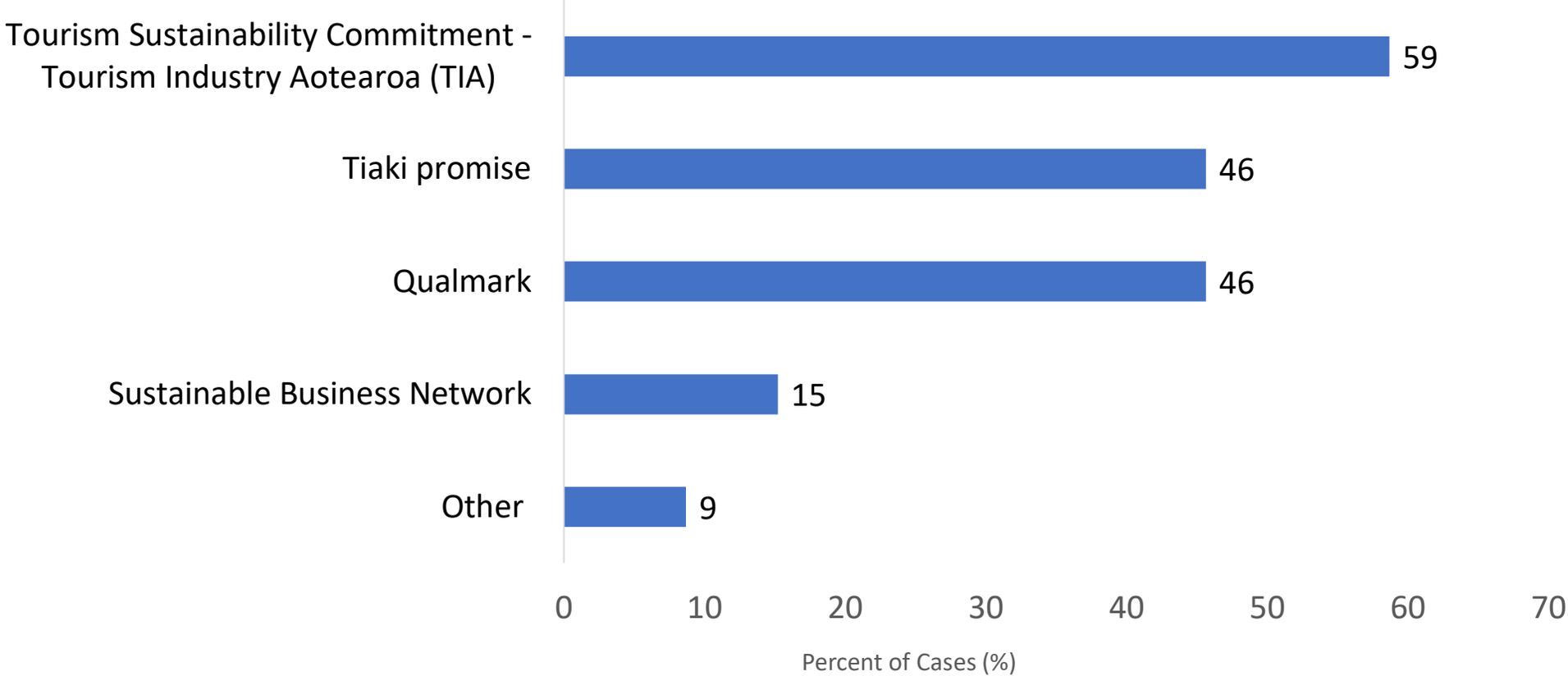
Half of all businesses have a risk management plan in place. Tourism reliant businesses are more likely to have one than their non-tourism reliant counterparts.

Business Profile and characteristics → Perceptions of tourism → Opportunities and Challenges → Aspirations for tourism → Collaboration, participation in tourism planning → Conclusions
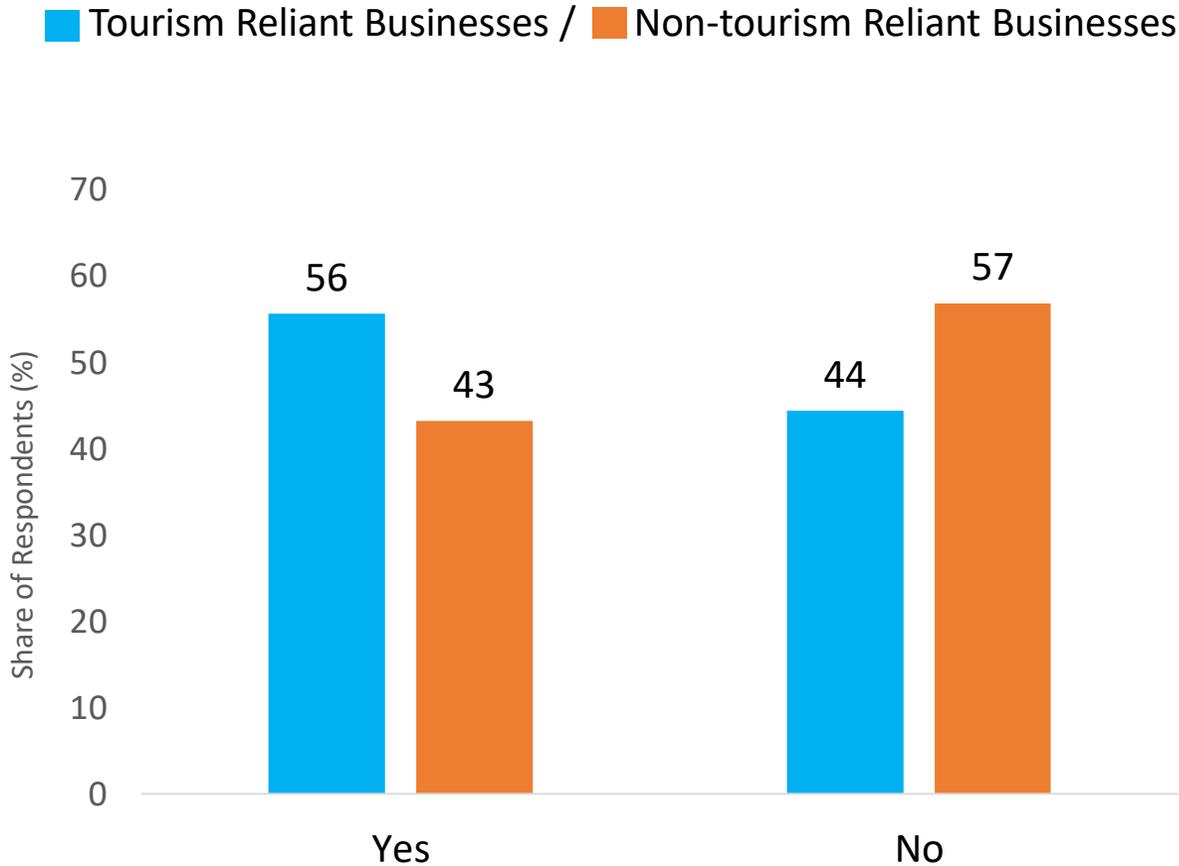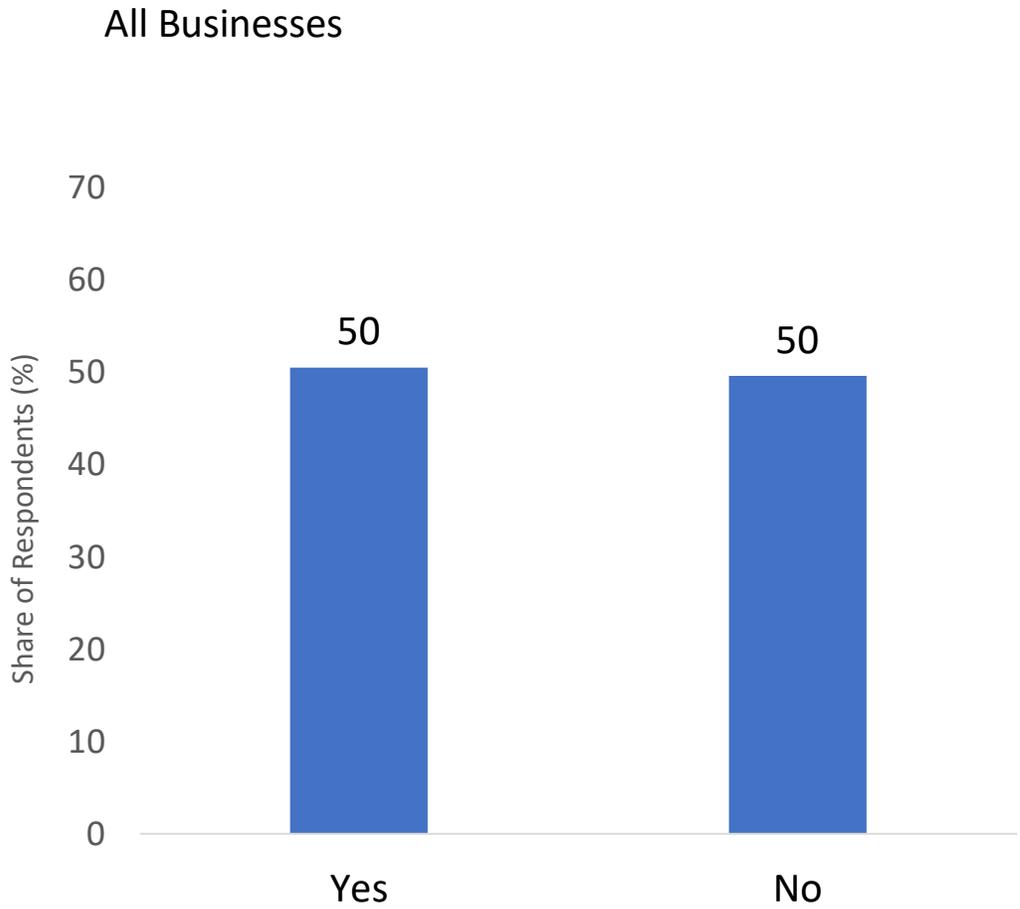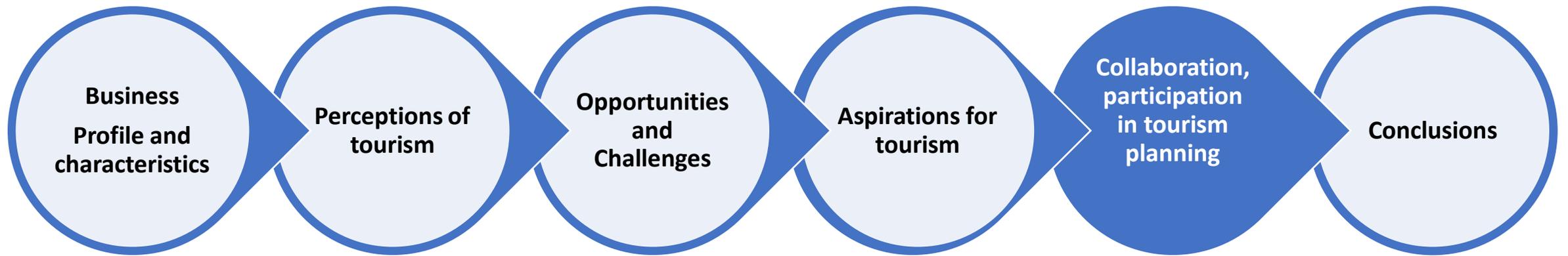
Non-tourism reliant businesses generally see more benefit from business networks /associations than their tourism reliant counterparts.

All Businesses

Tourism Reliant Businesses / **Non-tourism Reliant Businesses**

All Businesses	Mean score
Local businesses are supportive of the visitor industry	3.7
Local business associations/networks are of benefit to my business	3.4
Local businesses work well together	3.4

Tourism / Non-tourism	Tourism Reliant	Non-tourism Reliant
Local businesses are supportive of the visitor industry	3.7	3.8
Local businesses work well together	3.3	3.5
Local business associations/networks are of benefit to my business	3.2	3.7

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

More could be done to encourage and create opportunities for collaboration. Local parochialism can be an issue.

"Collaboration' in our district is very poor; more like 'each for him/herself'. Maybe this is an indication of the need for a regional Management Plan that we can all engage with."

"I have found it hard to get local businesses to work together in regard to putting together packaged deals, which help promote our region."

"Much more coordination and collaboration needed. There is enormous potential for this to occur now that Thames has a Business Association, but the operational part of the association is constrained by lack of resources."

"I would like to see a lot more collaboration, communication and imagination between ourselves to share the passion we have for our beautiful Coromandel."

"Too many groups trying to promote /or do similar events on their own. If everyone got together and worked in together would make to much easier to succeed."

"I don't believe Whitianga works well with nearby communities like Hahei etc."

Participation in decision-making about regional tourism development

54% of business respondents feel they are **well-informed** about efforts to manage and develop tourism in the region.

64% feel that they **do not have the opportunity** to influence decisions about tourism in the region.

60% of business respondents **want to be more involved** in decision making that affects tourism development.

Email is the preferred **method to be kept informed.** Other options include Facebook, meetings/networking and events.

When asked how businesses could be be more involved in decision-making affecting tourism development in the region, 'having a voice' at the table is top priority.

"AS we are on the front line, we would like to be consulted. Draft plans submitted sent to us for comment. Meetings that engage all stakeholders (like the one that HDC ran a few years ago when drafting their tourism strategy)."

"We would like to see a regional decision-making structure/process that involves local interests feeding into the overall process, maybe including a regional development group, representative of local interests."

"I'd like to be kept in the loop, invited to relevant conversations where feasible."

"I would like to be more involved by getting a say in how our businesses could be marketed and how we can work together as a collective to promote tourism in the area."

"Give us more opportunities to do so, keep us informed of happenings and just take us local businesses into account when coming up with strategies for area...I find this is not being done on a scale it should be done, by promoting us without it costing us down the line."

Businesses like the idea of targeted research/information and regular face to face meetings as ways to be kept informed about tourism development in the region. Email or social media posts are also seen as effective tools.

"By being given the opportunity to provide feedback to Council through surveys, and by the Council liaising more with local businesses and tourist attractions on what they are proposing."

"This survey is a great start :) well done!"

"I suppose surveys like this are a good start. as I mentioned before it is the decisions without discussion with the stakeholders by council /government that cause most of the problems for businesses up here."

"Monthly meeting with local tourism business initiating various brainstorming areas feasible to the growth and wellbeing of all involved! This should be facilitated by DC."

"We would like representatives of both District Council and Destination Coromandel to periodically pop into businesses even if for 10 minutes - so that they have a better picture of what tourism businesses are doing and what their world looks like."

"I would like to be more informed about plans for and future events taking place in our region, either through email newsletters or social media posts, even better would be meeting each other in person at evening events to discuss ideas."

Access to local and regional tourism data, research and insights.

75% of respondents would like to have better access to **regional t**ourism data, research and insights

78% would like to have better access to **local** tourism data, research and insights

When asked for final comments on the future development of tourism in their town/local area, sustainable forms of tourism dominated, along with the infrastructure in place to support this. There is room for enhanced collaboration and governance.

Themes	Percentage of responses
Sustainability (environmental, economic, social) - respect for the environment, change to more sustainable practices, safeguard natural resources, more trails, don't want to be 'another Queenstown'	23%
Improve infrastructure and amenities - upgrades to boat ramps and wharfs, ferry services, upgrades to roading to benefit visitors and locals, more trails and walks – 'Great walk' concept.	16%
Collaboration - better networks, communication, work together to solve challenges	14%
Governance - shared voice in planning, better tourism management, funding seen as roadblock, harsh regulations, how development and marketing funds are collected/allocated.	12%
Innovate - make more of what we've got already, better linkages across the region, dispersal. Māori cultural experiences, how to attract new customers & return visitors in winter.	12%
Words of encouragement - thanks for the opportunity to provide feedback, to contribute.	9%
Other - role of Tourism NZ, domestic tourism will look after itself, embrace what we offer.	14%
TOTAL	**100%**

Quotes: Sustainability (environmental, economic, social)

"I believe there is an opportunity for more sustainable tourism such as cycling, hiking etc. There is too much focus on road transport."

"The focus on sustainable and environmental endeavours is clearly the way of the future and is successful in other regions/countries. It would be fantastic to see us move faster in this direction."

"Tourism is essential to this area, as long as the visitors do not become overwhelming and start to cause deterioration to our ecosystem."

"We have changed from a sleepy little east coast fishing village to the Queenstown of the north island. So close to the mess of Auckland, the little gem we have here must be guarded from commercial aquaculture, forestry, mining and anything that has an adverse effect on our already struggling environment."

"Don't develop it too much! Solitude is a highly valued aspect of the area, but also the thing that pulls many people here. It's got to be well balanced and cared for."

"More tourists will equal more dollars, however this should not be to the detriment of the natural beauty of the Coromandel. Definitely don't want a Queenstown-like explosion here!"

Quotes: Improve infrastructure and amenities

"Wharf age is limited in Whitianga. The Marina has no further capacity for commercial boats. Priority needs to be given to develop an area for local charter boats to operate from or there risks being few sea-based activities for visitors to do."

"I believe the development of a 'Great Walk' along the spine of the central ridge from Waihi to Port Jackson would be a game changer."

"Coromandel town is suffering with the state of the Jacks Point boat ramp. It is basically unusable, we normally send visitors back to Waikawau boat ramp for all tide access."

"We have crap roading infrastructure which I believe greatly restricts day visitor numbers over the busy season. Day visitors we see spend a lot more money quickly."

"People only have so much time on holiday and if half of that is for negotiating unreliable ferry times to and from Auckland or hazardous roads (locals are used to it but most are not) then we will always be blocking the numbers."

Quotes: Collaboration

"If all areas of the Tourism industry work together in the Coromandel we will leverage of each other and maximise the opportunities of this fantastic Region."

"I am not a tourism business operator but would like to understand tourism in the area via membership of the Business Association and Destination Coromandel."

"Unfortunately, businesses in Thames who aren't in the TBA are ignored and I am sick of local organizations and officials assuming they speak for the majority of Thames businesses when they clearly do not."

"There is a significant disjoint between destination Coromandel and Coromandel based companies that work primarily in international market."

"I think we have a fantastic natural resource and many passionate locals, but we need better networks of communication and more collaboration to grow tourism into the future."

Quotes: Innovate

"Maori culture would be a great tourist attraction but is lacking in the Coromandel e.g. heritage week concentrates on the colonised gold rush days. Maori were here hundreds of years prior but their culture is not included in this celebration."

"We have to stop worrying about a few very busy weeks each year (generally only about 20 days) and concentrate on what we should do in the other 49 weeks to attract new customers & encourage returnees."

"Coromandel is gold!! iconic events need support and new events developed in order to increase value and reason to come to the region outside peak."

"Please push for a hotel and conference centre - Thames is within 90 minutes of half of NZ's population and corporates cannot even come here for a strategic planning day/weekend - it is disheartening to say the least."

"If we are truly going to be a tourist destination then the businesses need to start acting like it. Being open would be a good start, this means 6 or 7 days a week, not 4 or 5 but only if you feel like it, that is not a business, that is a hobby."
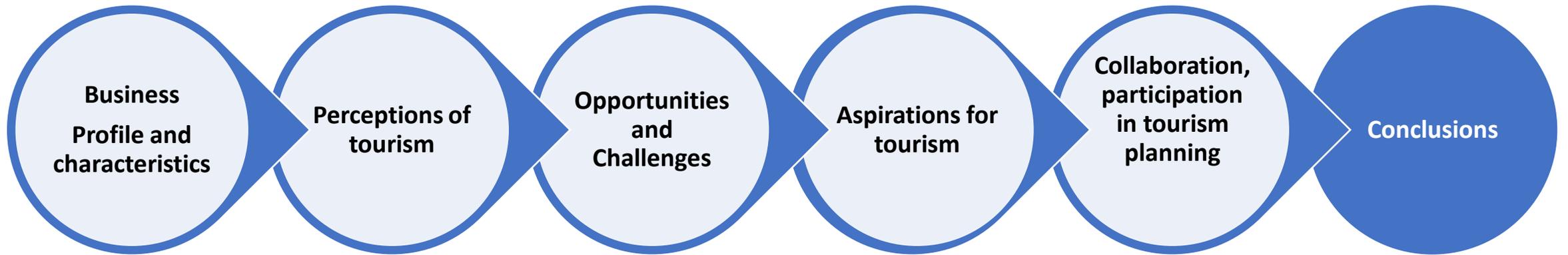
Quotes: Governance

"Funding will always be a roadblock and international visitors get a free ride in our region compared to what we have to pay when we visit overseas attractions."

"Look after and promote local businesses more than outside businesses, let us have a say in what's happening and council needs to stop putting blockages up either in harsh regulations or monetary values."

"Don't overregulate us; don't put us all in one box. the Coromandel has many different experiences available from 5 star to camping, let the tourists pick how they want to experience the Coromandel."

"I think our council need to get behind some ideas instead of making it hard for anyone bringing an idea to make our town which will encourage our tourist to stay another day or so."

"Thanks for asking the tough questions - feel the movement is happening! Keep it moving"

Business Profile and characteristics → Perceptions of tourism → Opportunities and Challenges → Aspirations for tourism → Collaboration, participation in tourism planning → Conclusions

Tourism is vital and valued

- Businesses clearly see the value and importance of tourism. They perceive the sector as being good for the local economy - contributing both employment and new business opportunities.

- The vast majority of businesses are themselves reliant on tourism to some extent.

- Tourism, sense of community and the local environment play a significant role in attracting businesses to the region. Frequent visitors (often over an extended period of time) are drawn to the area as a place to live and set up business. Cycle and rail trails, local heritage and culture, and the beauty of the natural environment provide ideal conditions for business including opportunities for investment.

- Businesses perceive that tourism brings a level of vibrancy and local pride to the region's communities and provides opportunities to meet new people, and enhance local business performance.

Uncertainty and challenges lie ahead

- The ongoing impact of COVID-19 has led to economic uncertainty among the tourism business community. With borders closed, there is an absence of international visitors resulting in largely static or decreased levels of turnover.

- Limitations in infrastructure provision and capacity, and insufficient investment in destination marketing, dominate concerns about tourism.

- Some businesses are finding it hard to adapt to the domestic market. Bookings tend to be short-term and last minute, or dependent on school holidays making any planning difficult.

- More marketing and product development is needed to ensure the region retains relevance in a crowded domestic marketplace and to encourage return visitation.

- Businesses would like to see increased attention from local government in terms of investment in and planning for tourism in their town/local area especially around Hauraki, Thames and Waihi.

- Border closures and lack of housing affect the ability of businesses to find suitable staff. Challenges in recruitment of casual staff relate to fewer applicants and difficulties in finding willing and skilled workers; as one respondent stated "there's just nobody around".

Sustainability is the way forward

- Having often lived in the region for many years, business operators are embedded in their local communities. Business owners/operators have a strong sense of attachment to the beautiful, natural environment of the region and enjoy the strong sense of community that exists in their towns/local areas.

- The beautiful natural environment and proximity to main population centres are perceived as key points of difference for the region. Suggestions for new experience and product development focus on outdoor adventures, cycleways, walkways, and trails.

- The hiatus created by COVID-19 has provided many businesses with the chance to reassess their operations and to rethink their relationship and role within tourism more generally.

- It is important to shape demand and attract visitors who will assist in attaining economic development goals and be part of a sustainable industry that does not degrade the environmental and community resources upon which it depends.

Sustainability is the way forward

- While there is not a strong agreement from businesses that tourism is damaging the environment there is clearly concern expressed in this space. As respondents shift their gaze to the future and what initiatives are needed to support and sustain tourism, so too does the emphasis on environmental sustainability become clearer. The region must focus on environmental issues in its management of tourism and could have much to offer (and gain) from being a leader in sustainable development.

- Several respondents provided examples of tourism overwhelming local infrastructure and amenities, leading to degradation of the local environment. This is damaging for business and also broader community quality of life and support for tourism.

- Business 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 infrastructure development and planning to address the impacts associated with visitor numbers.

Deepen experience, link to culture and community

- Business respondents 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 the local areas that make up the heart and soul of the region.

- While more can be made of gold mining (past and present) and the colonial past, several respondents highlighted the important history of Māori settlement and the opportunities for visitors to learn more about the worldview of tangata whenua and mana whenua.

- The ambience of the region is described by some as having an artistic, creative and relaxing vibe, with a small-town charm and an 'Island' feel. Towns and communities are where hosts and visitors interact and business clearly feels there are opportunities for local vibrancy to be enhanced for the benefit of both groups.

- 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

- Businesses highlight a need to improve overall levels of collaboration and 'working together' within local areas <u>and</u> across the Thames-Coromandel/Hauraki region. The lack of collaboration impedes marketing, product and place development and planning.

- Respondents express the desire to have more opportunity to influence decisions about tourism in the region and want to be more involved in decision making that affects tourism development.

- There is a call by both tourism and non-tourism businesses for more 'fine grained' local and regional data to be made available. There is a need to monitor the performance of the industry against local needs and other key metrics. It is vital now that indicators of tourism performance are developed, measured on a regular basis and communicated to all.

- The research presented in this report provides a baseline for later monitoring of the industry and the goals that are set for it. The survey tools and the method adopted can be easily adjusted to meet evolving information needs. Several businesses commended the survey itself as an example of effective and valuable engagement.

- In simple terms it is clear that business is pleased to have an opportunity to have their voices heard on tourism and its future planning.

Authorship

This research was conducted by the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI) at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) on behalf of Destination Coromandel (DC). The research team was led by Simon Milne. The report was prepared by Suzanne Histen, Carolyn Deuchar, Jin Yi and Simon Milne.

Contact Details

New Zealand Tourism Research Institute
Auckland University of Technology
smilne@aut.ac.nz

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