

COMMUNITY SENTIMENT

SURVEY INSIGHTS // 2023

TE MAURI O
MANAWATŪ

CEDA

CENTRAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

TE MAURI O
MANAWATŪ
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HOW OUR LOCALS VIEW OUR VISITOR INDUSTRY

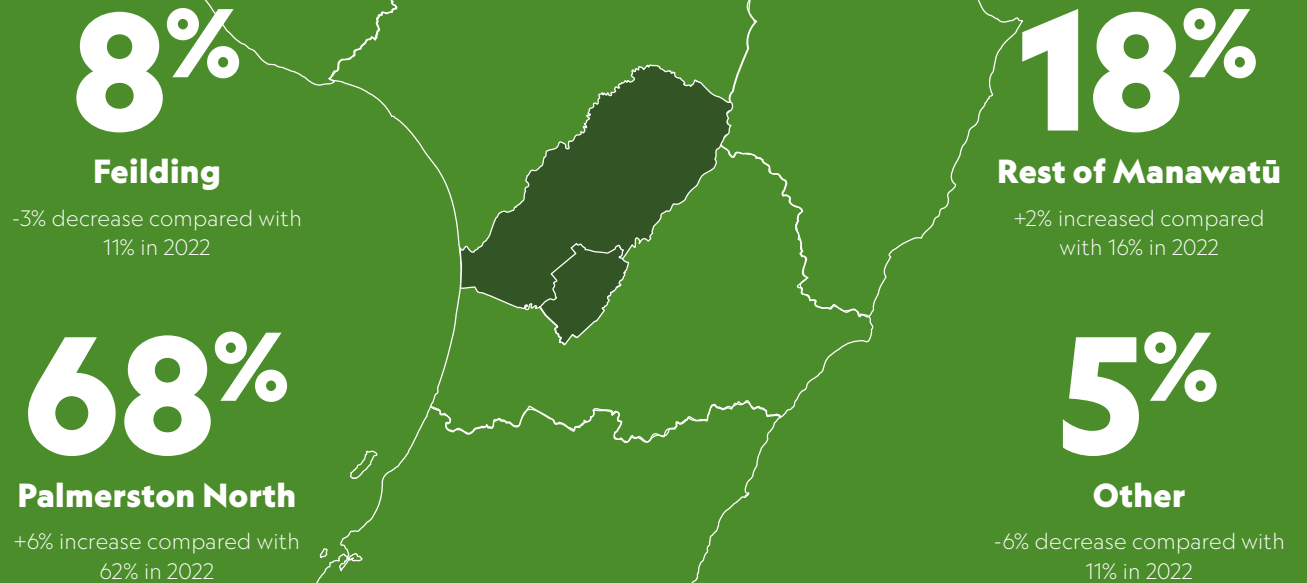
Now in its third year, CEDA undertook a community sentiment survey to help us better understand local perceptions on the value of the visitor industry in our region.

This survey's aim is to highlight how we can work together to sustainably grow visitor activity and value for the benefit of our community.

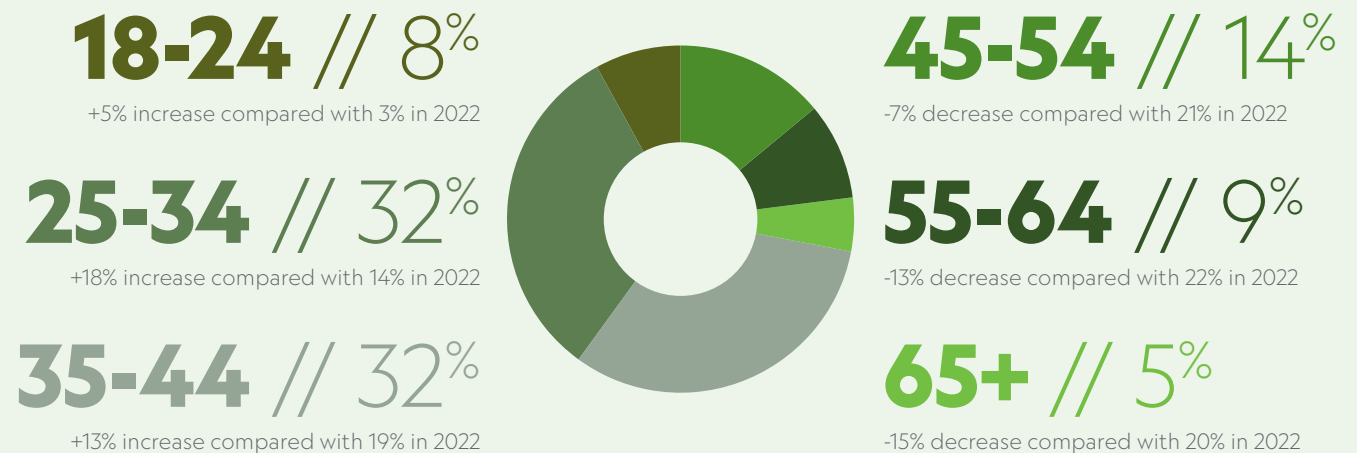
In the year to March 2023, the Manawatū visitor economy was worth over \$345.8 million to the region - with domestic traveller value up 8.8% and international value up 142.2% compared to 2022. Now that we are welcoming both domestic and international guests to our region again, it's more important than ever to understand the community sentiment of our visitor industry. Hearing from our residents helps us to gain a better understanding of how we can align our marketing and business support strategies to bring even more economic activity to the region, and helps measure the ongoing impact of the [Manawatū Destination Management Plan](#).

Here's our community's thoughts.

WHERE PARTICIPANTS RESIDE



AGE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS





77%

of people believe the visitor sector is an important industry in Manawatū

Decrease compared with 81% in 2022



81%

agree that the visitor industry has a positive impact on Manawatū.

Decrease compared with 86% in 2022



53%

know about the ManawatuNZ.co.nz regional website

Increase compared with 48% in 2022



72%

believe the visitor sector provides good employment opportunities in Manawatū.

Increase compared with 65% in 2022



75%

support local tourism businesses in the short to medium term.

Increase compared with 70% in 2022



68%

would actively encourage friends and family to come visit.

Decrease compared with 71% in 2022

WHO DID WE SURVEY?

Distributed via boosted Facebook promotions and by way of CEDA's extensive electronic direct mail databases over a period of several weeks, we heard the voices of 295 locals (a 13% decrease on 2022 respondents).

OUR COMMUNITY VALUES // THE VISITOR INDUSTRY

CEDA's community sentiment survey was distributed between 01 April 2023 - 15 May 2023. While support of the visitor industry has dropped slightly in comparison to 2022, perhaps due to economic and post-pandemic uncertainty, it is still overwhelmingly positive.

TOURISM INITIATIVES

WHEN ASKED IF THEY HAD HEARD OF ANY TOURISM INITIATIVES IN MANAWATŪ, THE MAJORITY (51%) OF RESPONDENTS SAID NO.

Those who had, mentioned concerts, Rural Games, sporting events and motorsport, along with experiences like our walkways, cycle trails, Te Āpiti - Manawatū Gorge Track, mountain bike tracks and glamping.

Tourism promotional initiatives which stood out were social media videos and advertising promotions including the Manawatū 2.0 campaign, Fly a Friend Home For Lunch and the revamp of the Manawatū regional branding.

TAKING THE GOOD WITH THE BAD

When considering community sentiment, it is important to hear the good along with the bad. For the second year now, we asked locals why they think people choose not to visit Manawatū.

The most common theme that came through was a perception that Manawatū is boring (13%, a substantial drop from 44% in the 2022 survey) with no major attractions or draw cards (9%). Some locals believed beaches away from the main centres of the region was a reason why people do not visit (6%). A number of participants (6%) stated weather was an issue, while others (4%) felt the region's reputation worked against us. Some also felt a lack of promotion (4%) was to blame.

TOP FIVE REASONS PEOPLE VISIT MANAWATŪ // ACCORDING TO LOCALS



78%

VISITING FAMILY & FRIENDS

COMPARED WITH 75% IN 2021



54%

CONFERENCES AND BUSINESS

COMPARED WITH 63% IN 2021



46%

SPORTING EVENTS

COMPARED WITH 51% IN 2021



49%

EDUCATION

COMPARED WITH 52% IN 2021



38%

FESTIVALS OR EVENTS

COMPARED WITH 38% IN 2021

MUST DOS // FOR VISITORS

OUR OWN COMMUNITY ARE OUR GREATEST ADVOCATES FOR OUR REGION.

We asked respondents to share with us their 'must do' activities for visitors. We seem to be very keen on the favourites of previous years, with little change in trends. Many responses discussed the great outdoors, events, motor racing and places of interest.

A visit to Victoria Esplanade and a walk or cycle along the Manawatū River to He Ara Kotahi continues to be the most popular activity that locals recommend. Our residents praise our hospitality sector, with recommendations for bars, restaurants and cafes coming in strongly. Sightseeing, hiking and bushwalking at Te Āpiti - Manawatū Gorge, mountain biking and visiting our beaches got glowing reviews and were mentioned with pride by our survey participants.

"Palmy is a beautiful city to visit, and a day to the Esplanade with some forest walks, visiting Wildbase and grabbing a nice coffee are definitely on the must-do list for any family that come and visit me."

"Always recommend blueberry picking at Pohangina in the summer."

"The Manawatū Gorge and visit Te Manawa Museum of Art, Science, and History."

"He Ara Kotahi at night. Stock cars is pretty much a right of passage. Try come visit when a cool event are happening like the Kimbolton Sculpture Festival or Foxton Fair."

"Visit our amazing hikes, tramps and walks. Check out Arapuke Mountain Bike Park."

MOST POPULAR MANAWATŪ MUST DOS // AS RECOMMENDED BY LOCALS.

**30% VISITING THE
ESPLANADE**

compared with 20% in 2021

**30% EATING/DRINKING
OUT**

compared with 26% in 2021

**29% WALKING/CYCLING
ALONG THE
MANAWATŪ RIVER**

Compared with 37% in 2021

**29% TE ĀPITI -
MANAWATŪ GORGE**

compared with 19% in 2021

LOCALS' TRAVEL PLANS AND VIEWS ON INDUSTRY



We asked a series of questions around how likely locals were to take holidays domestically or internationally, along with their thoughts on visitors holidaying in our region.

The majority of respondents (52%) were likely to take a holiday in New Zealand within the next 12 months, with 31% having already planned their getaways. The most popular types of holidays planned were visiting family and friends, along with action and adventure.

This year's survey has concluded a massive shift in our communities' support of both domestic and international visitors to our region. In 2023, 90% of locals were comfortable with domestic visitors, compared with only 54% in 2022. Our community are ready to welcome international visitors to our region again, with 91% of locals comfortable with them visiting, compared with 52% in 2022. This change in views may be explained by our country's changing attitudes and approach towards living with COVID-19.

LOCALS' VIEW ON GROWING VISITORS TO THE REGION



90%

of locals are comfortable with growing the number of domestic visitors to Manawātū.

INCREASE COMPARED WITH 54% IN 2022

91%

of locals are comfortable with growing the number of international visitors to Manawātū.

INCREASE COMPARED WITH 52% IN 2022

GROWTH OF OUR VISITOR INDUSTRY



Through this survey, we have been able to get insights into our locals' thoughts on the growth of our visitor industry. The majority (47%) of participants have no concerns about this industry's growth, however, 12% of participants have concerns and 41% were unsure on the matter.

Here were some of their concerns:

"That it won't grow enough in comparison to other regions, due to underinvestment in public transport (intra and inter-regional)."

"Employment security and creating a reliance on tourism to drive our local economy. Tourism fluctuates and is precarious, seen recently due to the effects of COVID-19."

"Only that our housing shortage will be exacerbated by a growth in AirB&Bs and other holiday accommodation."

When we asked people how we can make Manawatū an even better destination for visitors, we noticed a few recurring themes. Some ideas echoed what we heard last year, while others brought fresh perspectives to the table. According to the data, people are looking for more exciting experiences to offer our visitors, with 12% of respondents expressing a strong desire for more events and festivals and 7% wanting improved accommodation options in Manawatū. There were also suggestions to improve the ambience of the CBD (6%) and outdoor areas (5%), to offer more outdoor activities (4%), enhance public transportation access (5%), and offer increased or cheaper parking options (4%).

"Trendy cafe/cafes on the river. Riverside market or cool big weekend market anywhere."

"I especially love to see our council partner with our local iwi. I love learning about historical places and stories that are special to Rangitāne... Promote our strong Māori culture and heritage more."

"More investment in destination walkways (like the Tora walk for example), adding more character to Palmy's city centre, offering more boutique accommodation options, having a food festival similar to Wellington on a Plate."

"We need more indoor and "self-contained" things to do, like indoor mini-golf, easy-access paintball, etc. The escape room in town is good, but often it feels like Manawatū can only have one of these things at a time, we don't necessarily gain more options."

"Having affordable luxe accommodation options with pool/spas or day spas/retreat. Not many options for mums to go treat themselves except the cafes and focal point."

TE MAURI O
MANAWATŪ



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