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## Kiwis see benefits of international tourism for NZ

Following a record summer for international visitor arrivals, the majority of New Zealanders remain positive about the impact of tourism and overall sentiment has slightly improved, according to the latest *Mood of the Nation* research released today.

The research, undertaken by Kantar TNS and funded jointly by Tourism New Zealand and Tourism Industry Aotearoa, has been undertaken every six months since 2015 to track public understanding and views on tourism. The latest research was conducted in March 2018.

Almost all New Zealanders surveyed in March strongly agreed or agreed that international tourism is good for New Zealand (96%).

Most of those surveyed believe New Zealand is attracting the right number of visitors or should be attracting more. Approximately 22 percent feel there are too many international visitors – down slightly from 23 percent in the last survey in November 2017.

Concern that tourism growth is putting pressure on New Zealand also declined slightly from 40 percent to 39 percent of respondents.

TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says the greatest value in the *Mood of the Nation* survey is the tracking of public sentiment over time.

“Since we initiated *the Mood of the Nation* in 2015, we have had very strong arrivals growth and a corresponding increase in public concern about things like pressure on infrastructure and congestion.

“It is heartening that this trend has levelled off in the latest survey and overall sentiment has slightly improved.”

*Mood of the Nation* shows 91 percent of New Zealanders are proud New Zealand is seen as an attractive visitor destination. Additionally, 88 percent of New Zealanders take pride in making visitors feel welcome in New Zealand.

“While our landscapes capture the imagination of prospective visitors to Aotearoa, it is manaakitanga, the very Kiwi act of hospitality and sharing, that sets New Zealand apart on the world stage as a highly desirable visitor destination and brings visitors back time and time again,”

says Tourism New Zealand Chief Executive Stephen England-Hall. “It’s so inherently part of who we are it’s reflected in our name – Manaakitanga Aotearoa”.

“Personal recommendation is the number one reason visitors choose a destination, so it’s incredibly encouraging to see the majority of Kiwis embracing manaakitanga and helping to create a positive experience for our visitors.”

Respondents identified economic and employment opportunities as key benefits of international tourism. This included economic growth for the regions (60%), growth opportunities for businesses (59%) and employment opportunities for residents (52%).

International tourism is New Zealand’s biggest export earner, officially contributing \$14.5 billion a year to the economy. Tourism directly or indirectly employs one-in-seven New Zealanders.

“Tourism New Zealand’s purpose is to market our country in such a way as to ensure international visitors enrich New Zealand. Making sure high-value visitors choose New Zealand is our number one objective within that,” says Mr England-Hall. “To do this, we target our marketing, PR and trade activity to high-yield markets such as Australia, China and North America and solely focus on promoting shoulder season travel so that spend is spread more evenly across the year, instead of just peak season.”

Pressure on infrastructure is the top concern New Zealanders have with international tourism; other concerns include accommodation shortages, environmental damage, freedom camping, traffic congestion and road safety.

Queenstown and Auckland continue to be seen as the areas under the most pressure from international tourism by residents. Perceptions from Queenstown tended to be more negative than in the other centres surveyed.

TIA and Tourism New Zealand say all of these issues are being addressed by the private sector and public sector working together.

Mr Roberts says the tourism industry readily acknowledges that the rapid increase in visitor numbers has caught some communities by surprise and created some challenges. The industry is working with central and local government to respond to these challenges.

“With the right market and policy settings, tourism can continue to increase its contribution to New Zealand’s economic and social wellbeing,” he says.

### **About the Mood of the Nation**

*The Mood of the Nation survey is jointly commissioned by Tourism New Zealand (the Government’s tourism marketing body) and Tourism Industry Aotearoa (the industry’s advocacy organisation). It is carried out by Kantar TNS before and after each summer, to measure New Zealanders’ sentiments about international tourism, and identify key issues that might negatively impact perceptions and tolerance for further growth.*

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