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# Wales Tourism Business Barometer

## June 2025 wave



Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Wales Tourism Business Barometer: June 2025 wave

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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# **1. Headline findings**

## **Mixed year to date**

About a quarter (23%) of tourism businesses have had more customers to date this year compared to last year, and a further 41% have had the same level. However, 36% report a decrease.

Non-accommodation sectors are close to matching last year's performance, but accommodation sectors have had a challenging year to date, especially the self-catering sector, whereby 17% have had more customers this year but 47% have had fewer.

South East Wales is faring similar to last year, with 27% of businesses seeing increased customers vs 25% seeing a decrease. The other three regions of Wales are all down on balance.

## **Sunny spring weather helped many businesses**

Spring 2025 (March to May) was the sunniest and warmest spring on record in Wales and the UK according to the [Met Office](#). Two in five (40%) businesses with increased customers year to date attribute their upturn in business unprompted to the sunny spring weather.

## **But lack of disposable income is hampering demand**

On the flip side, two in five (40%) businesses with decreased customers attribute their downturn unprompted to 'people lacking in disposable income'.

## **Summer performance depends largely on last minute bookings**

Current occupancy rates for August are 76% in the caravan & camping sector, 72% in self-catering and 65% in serviced accommodation. Many operators say they need more bookings than this in peak season but that there is a strong trend towards booking last minute. The trend is being driven by waiting to see what the weather forecast shows and disposable income, so both factors will influence the performance of Welsh tourism businesses this summer.

## **Confidence to operate profitably**

About one in six (16%) operators feel 'very confident' to operate profitably this year and a further 41% say they feel 'fairly confident'. This is in spite of significant cost pressures.

## 2. Background and method

### What is the Wales Tourism Business Barometer?

The Wales Tourism Business Barometer is designed to give quick feedback on how the tourism industry in Wales is performing at key times during the year. This wave looks at performance year to date and expectations for the summer. The ad-hoc topics this time are tourism imbalance, seasonality, collaboration with other operators and recruitment.

### How was the survey conducted?

We have conducted 901 interviews by telephone. The results of questions asked to everyone are accurate to  $\pm 3.3\%$ . The balance of the sample by region and sector broadly reflects the industry in Wales. The contact database used is a combination of Visit Wales' list of graded businesses and databases of non-graded businesses that we have sourced from an independent supplier.

**Table 1: Research sample by sector and region**

Sector / Region	North	Mid	South West	South East	Total
Serviced accommodation	112	45	73	30	<b>260</b>
Self-catering	83	57	90	27	<b>257</b>
Caravan / campsites	32	22	42	9	<b>105</b>
Hostels	4	6	8	5	<b>23</b>
Attractions	32	20	26	24	<b>102</b>
Activity operators	20	11	11	9	<b>51</b>
Restaurants / pubs / cafes	28	20	31	24	<b>103</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>901</b>

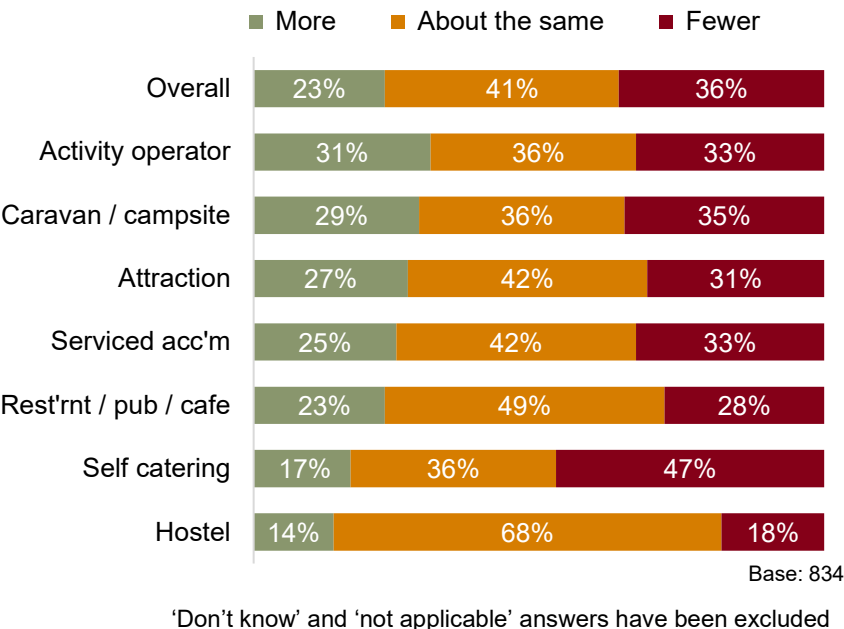
64% of businesses in the sample are graded by Visit Wales. The graded and non-graded samples are spread across the different regions and sectors except restaurants / pubs / cafes, where grading is not applicable.

All telephone interviews have been conducted with business owners or managers between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

### 3. Performance to date in 2025

#### Performance by sector

Figure 1: Q1 "How many customers have you had to date this year compared to the same period last year?" by sector



#### Mixed year to date

About a quarter (23%) of tourism businesses have had more customers to date this year compared to last year, and a further 41% have had the same level. However, 36% report a decrease.

Non-accommodation sectors are close to matching last year's performance, but accommodation sectors have had a challenging year to date, especially the self-catering sector, whereby 47% have had fewer customers. We discuss the reasons under Q3 later.

"Easter was really good and the first school half term was good too"  
Attraction, Mid

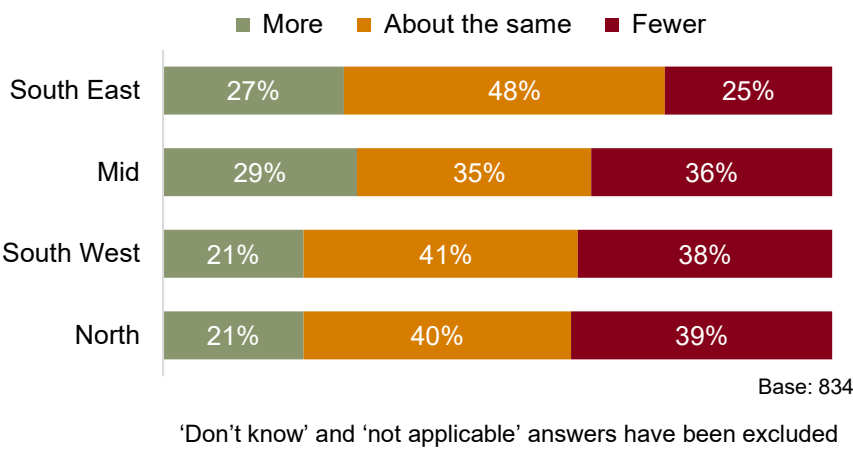
"It is such a disappointing year. My reviews and everything are good but the customers are not travelling to Wales due to the cost of living."  
Serviced, South West

"We are turning people away; it's so busy"  
Serviced, North

"For the first time, I am worried about bookings. We are 35% down this year."  
Self-catering, North

# Performance by region

Figure 2: Q1 "How many customers have you had to date this year compared to the same period last year?" by region



## Balanced performance in South East Wales, but not other regions

South East Wales is faring similar to last year, but the other three regions of Wales are all down on balance.

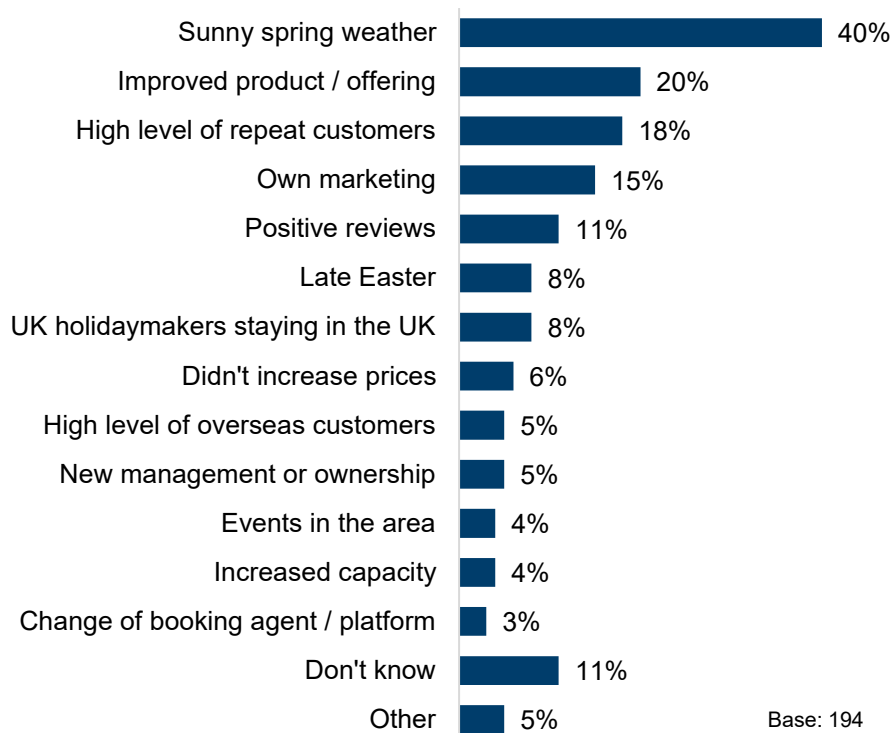
Among South East Wales businesses increasing their customer levels, a third (33%) attribute the upturn to their 'improved product / offering' and 24% attribute it to 'positive reviews. Both these figures are higher than in the other regions of Wales.

"We have had a £1.3 million swimming pool installed. Investments are ongoing."  
Caravan park, South East

"I'm hoping it's going to be better than last year as I can't afford to operate at a loss. I no longer do one night stays."  
Self-catering, Mid

# Reasons for being busier

Figure 3: Q2 "Are there any particular reasons why you have had more customers to date this year?" (unprompted)



Q2 has been asked to businesses having more customers to date (Q1). Respondents could give more than one answer.

## Sunny spring weather

Spring 2025 (March to May) was the sunniest and warmest spring on record in Wales and the UK, according to the Met Office. Two in five (40%) businesses with increased customers year to date attribute their upturn in business unprompted to the sunny spring weather.

“The business is doing better than last year due to sunny weather”  
Caravan park, North

## Investing in the product offering pays off

One in five (20%) businesses with increased customer levels attribute the upturn to ‘improved product / offering’. Some of these businesses have also answered ‘positive reviews’ on the back of their improved offering. There are several reported cases of new management coming into a business, revamping the offering and a significant turnaround in business being seen as a result.

“We have been using our profit to re-invest in the business and try to keep our place as good as possible. Luckily it turns out quite positive as business is getting better over the years.”  
Serviced, Mid

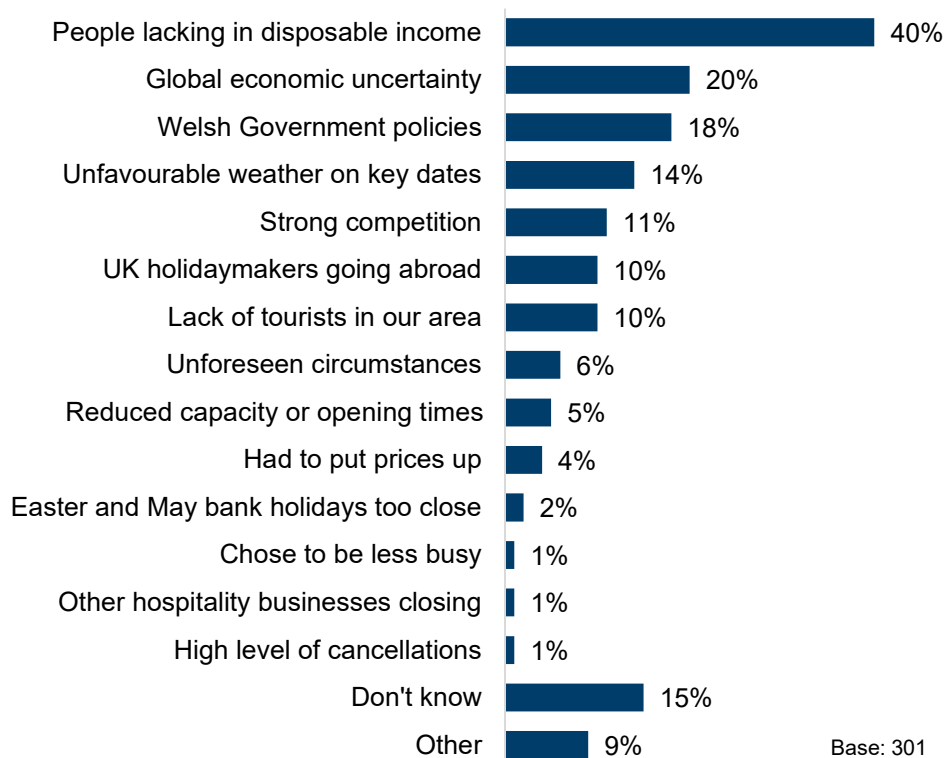


“We are really excited as we have had a retreat launch. More people are showing interest in stargazing as we are promoting it on our socials. We are looking into parties for stargazing and to raise even more awareness. We have just ordered a big telescope to put outside for our guests to stargaze.”  
Caravan park, Mid

“We took over about 18 months ago and put in a lot of our own money into renovations. We got some of the bad reviews from the previous ownership removed and that helped us ... the restaurant is much busier than it used to be.”  
Serviced, North

## Reasons for being quieter

**Figure 4: Q3 "Are there any particular reasons why you have had fewer customers to date this year?" (unprompted)**



Q3 has been asked to businesses having fewer customers to date (Q1). Respondents could give more than one answer.

## Lack of disposable income

Many businesses report that a lack of disposable income is hampering bookings. Some notice this in their regular customers, that they are not visiting as often for this reason.

“It’s been horrid this year. People just haven’t got the money. It’s not like it used to be when people would book the holiday at the start of the year. Now they all just wait until the last minute. Better keeping their money in their own bank account than mine I suppose.”  
Caravan park, North

“Our regulars only come once a year now rather than three times. People don't have the money ... a lot of people just visit the area for the day now rather than staying a few nights.”

Serviced, North

Linked to lack of disposable income is global economic uncertainty. This is believed to be causing some consumers to delay making bookings. A few businesses report cancelled tours from America for this reason.

“A tour group from America has cancelled some of the dates for the tours due to the economic uncertainty for this year.”

Serviced, South West

“Some package deals with UK inbound operators have been cancelled because of a slowdown from the American market”

Serviced, North

## **Welsh Government policies**

Around one in five (18%) businesses cite Welsh Government policies unprompted as a reason for being quieter. This is more so the case among serviced accommodation operators (20%) than non-accommodation operators (8%). Policies which are felt to be hampering bookings are:

- Impending tourism levy, because of customer uncertainty of when, where and how it will be introduced
- ‘182 days rule’, because it gives off an impression to visitors that Wales does not welcome them
- 20mph speed limits

“We are all fighting to keep open ... the possibility of the tourism tax has adversely affected tourism in the area.”

Attraction, South West

“A lot of people have been telling us they don't feel welcome in the area anymore”

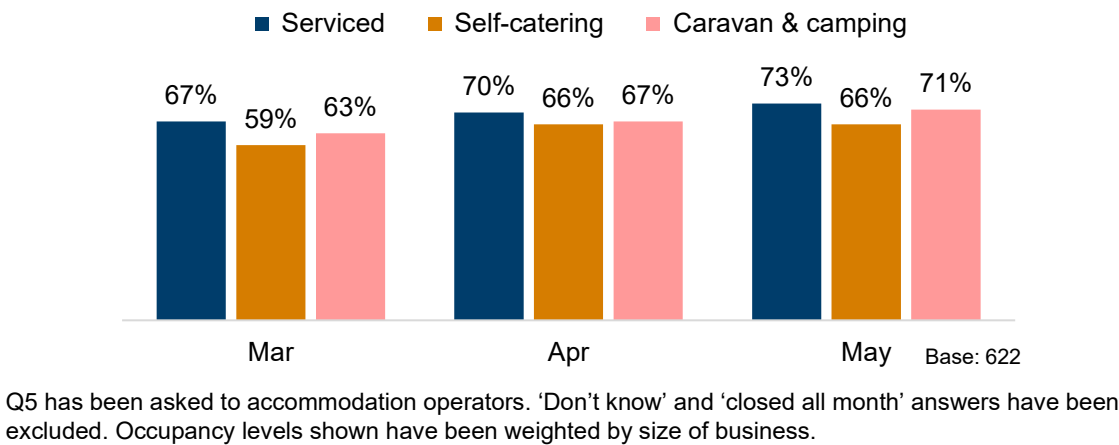
Serviced, North

“We receive a lot of feedback about the 20mph limit and that is one of the reasons our business is not doing well this year.”

Serviced, North

# Spring occupancy levels

Figure 5: Q5 "How much of your available capacity was booked for ... ?" (accommodation operators)



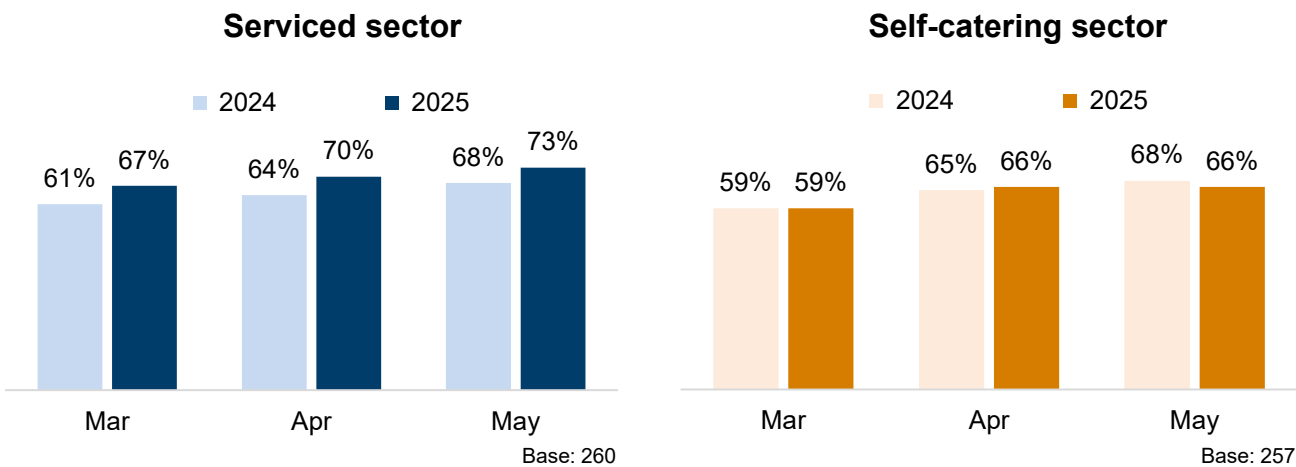
## Spring occupancy rates up on last year for serviced

Net occupancy rates in the serviced sector were 5 or 6%pts higher in each spring month compared to last year. In self-catering, monthly occupancy rates in the spring were very similar to last year. This is in spite of more businesses in these sectors reporting customer levels to be down on last year than those reporting to be up (in Q1).

The reason for this apparent anomaly is that the above occupancy rates are weighted by size of business. Results show that large businesses have performed better compared to last year than smaller ones, and their occupancy rates have a greater bearing on the sector.

The charts below show the year-on-year differences in sector occupancy:

Figure 6: Net occupancy year-on-year comparison



"We've been booked for spring through to summer ,so we're very happy"  
Serviced, South West

## Differences by region

**Table 2: Net occupancy by sector and region**

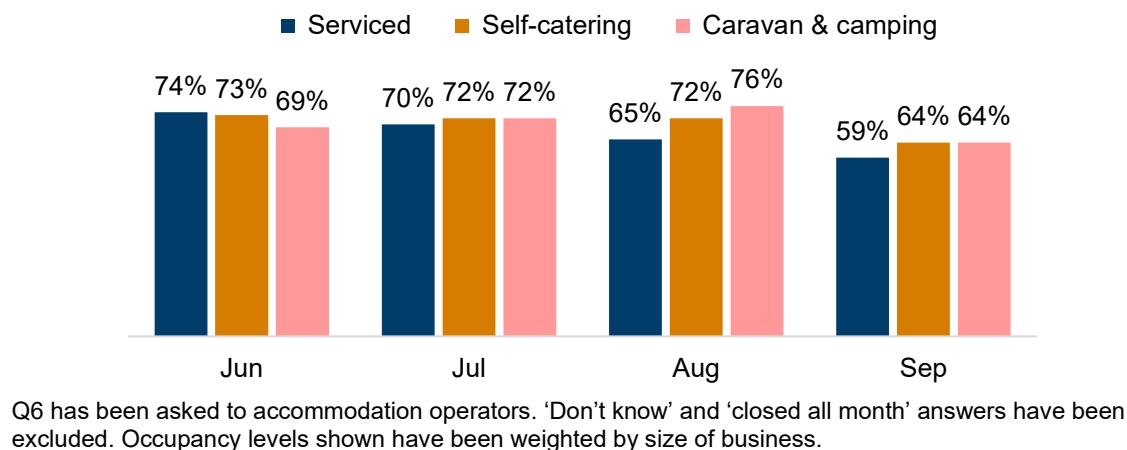
March to May occupancy					
Sector / Region	North	Mid	South West	South East	All Wales
Serviced	74%	69%	64%	69%	70%
Self-catering	70%	59%	56%	72%	64%
Caravan & camping	65%	75%	65%	56%	67%

Some regional sector performances are relatively stronger than others in terms of occupancy. The caravan & camping sector has performed well in Mid Wales during the spring. The self-catering sector has performed much better in North and South East Wales than in Mid and South West Wales.

## 4. Advance bookings, expectations and confidence

### Advance bookings

Figure 7: Q6 "How much of your available capacity is booked for ... ?"



### Summer performance depends largely on last minute bookings

Many operators say they need more bookings than they currently have for the peak season but that there is a strong trend towards booking last minute. The trend is being driven by:

- Waiting to see what the weather forecast shows, with many consumers consulting weather apps on their phone
- Disposable income, the outlook of which can change with government announcements on spending plans or cuts

Both factors will influence the performance of Welsh tourism businesses this summer.

"This year the bookings have been very last minute. Usually my calendar is booked through to August at this time but the bookings are falling off a cliff after June. However, I expect a lot of last minute bookings to come in."  
Serviced, North

"The trend is that people are booking later and later: either the day before or on the day, which as a business is hard to staff. We need to hold our nerve. The weather apps are so good now and people are tuned into that."  
Activity provider, North

"We have changed our offering to single night. We get lots of last minute stays but at more cost for us. A lot of people are weather watching and it has stood us in good stead for the last few weeks"  
Serviced, North

## Differences by region

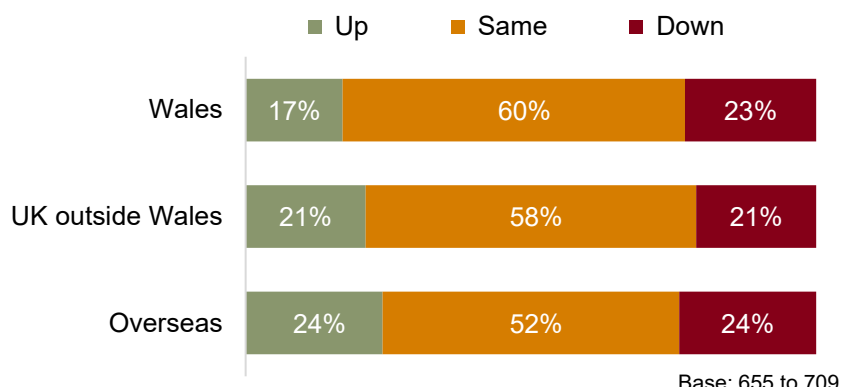
Table 3: Booked occupancy by sector and region

July to September occupancy					
Sector / Region	North	Mid	South West	South East	All Wales
Serviced	68%	53%	61%	70%	65%
Self-catering	75%	57%	69%	75%	70%
Caravan & camping	68%	74%	71%	73%	71%

There are differences by region in current occupancy levels but the last minute booking trend means that this picture could all change come the height of the summer.

## Expectations by market

Figure 8: Q7 "Do you expect the number of customers this summer from ... to be up, down or the same as last summer?"



'Not applicable' answers from businesses which do not receive visitors from a particular market have been excluded

## Overall expectations of stability this summer

On the whole, the industry expects visitor levels from all three main markets to be about the same as last summer. However, the last minute booking trend makes future months more difficult to predict than used to be the case.

"We are seeing more Europeans this year. Last year was busy with Americans but they aren't featuring very much at all this year."  
Serviced, North

"This is the time for overseas guests. We've got more than from the UK at the moment, especially Germans and Dutch."  
Caravan park, North

## Higher optimism among non-accommodation operators

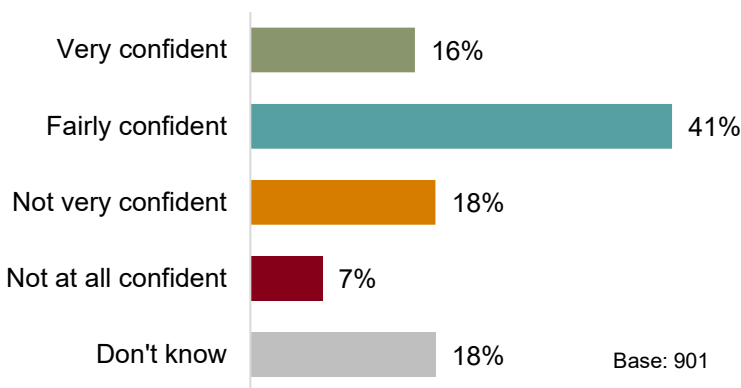
Expectations are more optimistic among non-accommodation operators compared to accommodation operators for all three markets. For the overseas market for example, 30% of non-accommodation operators expect to be up vs 16% expecting to be down. This compares to 23% of accommodation operators expecting overseas visitors to be up vs 27% expecting a decrease.

“We are trying out a few pilots of engagement and guided tours. We are really excited about the summer. There is a lot of learning taking place and we are discovering what our visitors want from us.”  
Attraction, North

“We're expecting a busy summer as we have opened a bigger premises”  
Restaurant, Mid

## Confidence to operate profitably

**Figure 9: Q8 "How confident do you feel about running the business profitably this year?"**



## Mixed levels of confidence

Over half (57%) of operators feel confident about running their business profitably this year. This is in spite of numerous rising cost challenges.

“We are very confident it's going to be a good year and we're hoping for good weather”  
Caravan park, South West

Others however are finding it difficult to make ends meet, even if they are doing well for customer volume. High operating costs in areas such as utilities, food & drink, minimum wage and national insurance mean that businesses ideally need to raise their prices. However, there is a limit to how much they can do that when their customers have cost pressures of their own.

“The national wage increase means we won’t be profitable this year”

Attraction, South East

“It’s really hard to put prices up because people just wouldn’t book”

Self-catering, South West

“It’s getting harder because of the lack of profit. The bills and costs for general upkeep are going up but I can’t put prices up because I will lose customers.”

Serviced, Mid

## **182 day rule having a significant impact on many self-catering operators**

Confidence is lowest in the self-catering sector, with about two in five (39%) saying they are not confident.

Many operators are striving to meet the 182 days occupancy requirement to avoid paying a premium domestic council tax rate on second homes. For some, this means dropping their prices so low that they no longer operate profitably. For others, if they fall short of the 182 days then they view the tax premium as part of their business costs and therefore see their business as unprofitable.

“To meet the 182 days requirement, we need to reduce the selling price.

Overall, we don’t make a lot of profit.”

Self-catering, Mid

“We busted a gut to get 130 nights in the year. We ceased trading around the end of March. I’m saving myself £11,000 a year in council tax because I can’t do 182 days a year.”

Self-catering, South East

“Due to the impact of new tax rules, we are now paying a massive 30% higher taxes than before. This makes us not confident about running our business profitably.”

Self-catering, South East

## **Differences by region and sector**

The highest proportions of operators feeling ‘very confident’ are found among:

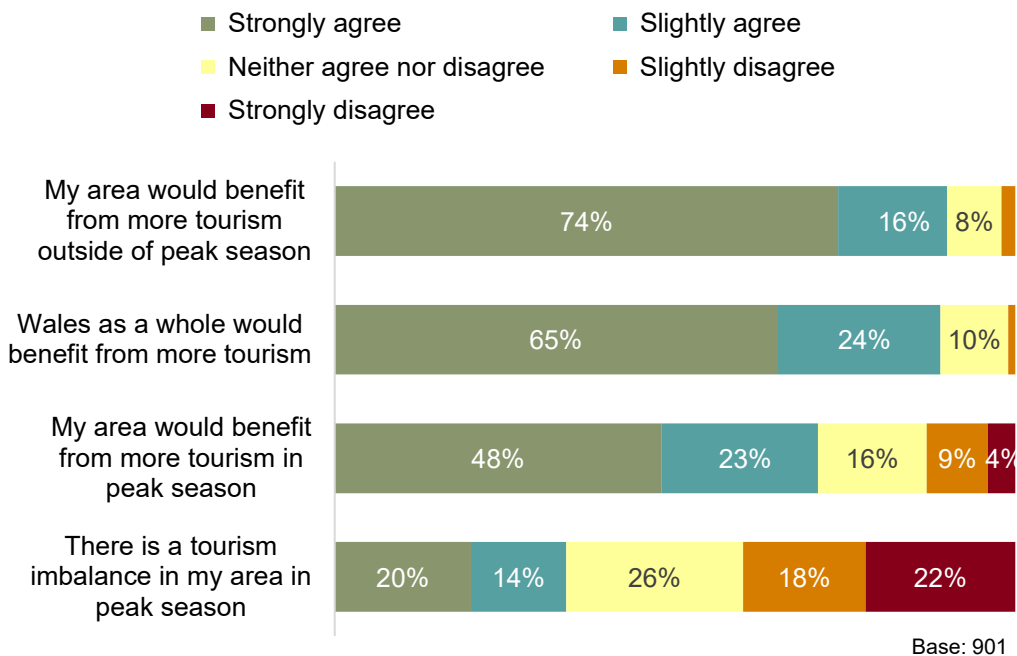
- Restaurants, pubs & cafes (28%)
- Hostels (26%)
- Caravan & campsites (20%)
- Businesses in South Wales (22%)



# 5. Tourism imbalance and seasonality

## Views of businesses

Figure 10: Q10 "How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?"



## Strong need for extending the season

Many tourism businesses are challenged by seasonality and find it hard to break even over the course of a full year. Many self-catering businesses now have the added challenge of achieving 182 nights occupancy to qualify for non-domestic rates and avoid paying a premium domestic rate on a second home.

Businesses across all sectors and local authority areas, including tourism hotspots, are very keen to see more tourism outside of peak season.

“There’s a huge drop off in customers during the off-peak season. Everything just falls off a cliff.”  
Caravan park, North

One significant challenge in attracting visitors off-peak, especially in the winter, is that many businesses close and so there is a lack of things for visitors to do and places to eat.

“Everything shuts in the off-season in Newquay and I could do with them being open: places like chip shops, ice cream places, the shops. They all shut down.”  
Caravan park, Mid

“We are finding that pubs in the area are closing in the winter or are not serving food anymore. I think there are staffing issues.”  
Serviced, South West

## **All areas would also like more tourism in peak season**

The view among businesses across Wales is that whilst peak season is busy with visitors, it's not busy enough in terms of the revenue they need to cross-subsidise the quieter months. This sentiment is less strong in tourism hotspots Anglesey and Gwynedd, but nevertheless views there lean more towards wanting more tourists in peak season. About two in five (41%) businesses in Gwynedd 'strongly agree' with this, and 16% 'slightly agree'. About three in ten (29%) businesses in Anglesey 'strongly agree' and 23% 'slightly agree'.

## **Mixed views on tourism imbalance**

Some businesses admit that whilst they would benefit from more tourists in peak season, there is an imbalance from a wider perspective taking into account the needs of local residents. However, some say the issue is not so much having too many tourists but that there needs to be better management at peak times.

“I don't think there's overtourism but there needs to be logistics to accommodate more tourism”  
Activity operator, Denbighshire

“I think other local operators and I agree that the peak season in Anglesey is pretty filled up”  
Serviced, Anglesey

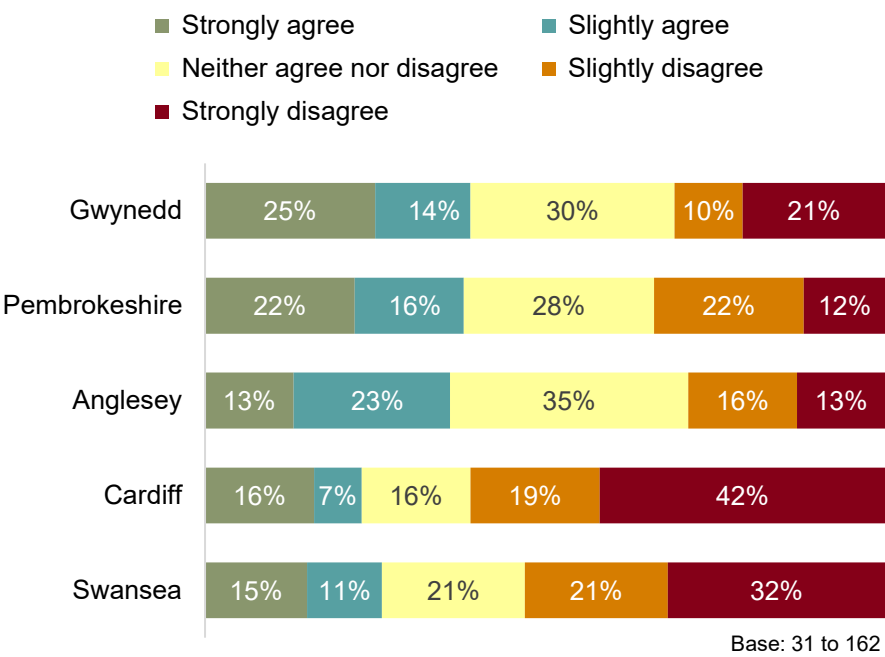
“I don't think there's a tourism imbalance yet”  
Self-catering, Swansea

“We do get some overtourism in peak season”  
Self-catering, Gwynedd

“We don't want any more tourists here in the summer. The infrastructure cannot cope as there isn't enough parking and we get a lot of day trippers who spend very little. We don't want any more of them.”  
Serviced, Conwy

Sample sizes for many local authorities are quite low, so caution should be used when interpreting the results, but the chart below shows the answers for businesses based in tourism hotspots:

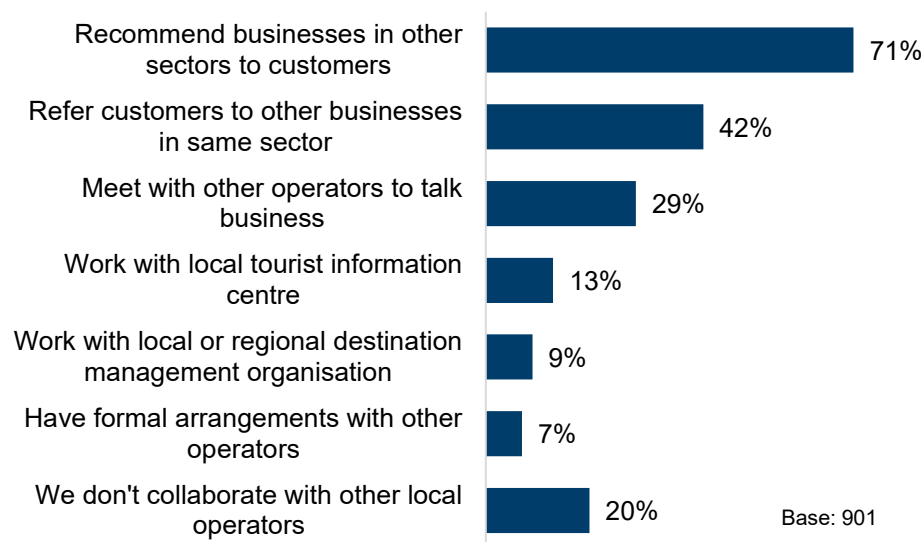
**Figure 11: Q10 "How much do you agree or disagree with the statement, ‘there is a tourism imbalance in my area in peak season?’"**



# 6. Collaboration with other operators

## Different ways of collaborating

Figure 12: Q11 "In what ways, if any, does your business collaborate with other tourism & hospitality operators in your local area?"



## Most businesses work with others

Most (80%) tourism businesses work with other businesses or tourism organisations in some way, either through formal arrangements or informal recommendations. This is a common finding across all sectors and regions.

“We have marketing initiatives with about 15 other attractions in the area. We liaise and collaborate with local hotels and each other.”  
Attraction, Mid

“I'm in a Caravan Watch scheme. We get together to discuss things.”  
Caravan park, North

## Recommending businesses in other sectors to customers

The majority of operators in every sector will recommend places to eat, visit or stay to their customers. It is important that their customers have a fulfilling visit to the area.

“We try our best to promote local businesses to customers like local eateries and tourism attractions”  
Caravan park, Mid

“I list restaurants and pubs in the confirmation email I send out. Lots of people go to the Goat for Sunday lunch.”  
Self-catering, North

## Referring within the same sector

Some businesses in the same sector in a particular area don't see each other as competitors, but rather they help each other out for the greater good of their local tourism industry. It is quite common for accommodation providers to give enquirers an alternative place to contact if they are fully booked. Non-accommodation businesses also help each other out, especially activity providers (69% do this).

"We often recommend other businesses if we are fully booked"  
Restaurant, Mid

"We're all in the same boat here. We're not getting many customers and so we all try to support each other."  
Caravan park, North

## Working with local tourist information centres

This is most common among attractions (26% do this) and activity providers (22%). Some businesses say they used to work with TICs much more but booking methods have changed and/or TICs have been shut down.

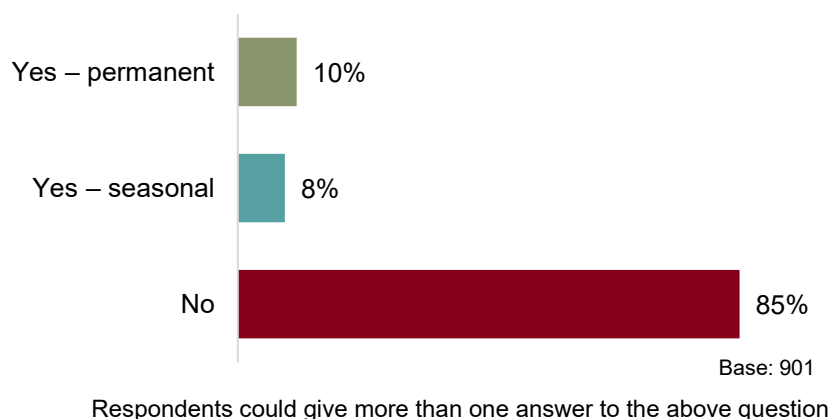
"We used to work quite closely with the tourist information centre. They would call us regularly."  
Serviced, Mid

"We don't work with the tourist information centre as much as we used to. It used to be every day but everyone's booking online now."  
Serviced, Mid

## 7. Recruitment

### Filling current vacancies

Figure 13: Q12 "Are you currently trying to fill any staff vacancies, whether that's permanent or seasonal?"



### A minority of businesses are currently trying to recruit

At present, 15% of business are trying to fill staff vacancies. This is most common among restaurants / pubs / cafés (23%), serviced accommodation (21%) and attractions (20%). Differences by region are not significant.

Some say they can't afford to recruit staff because of the rises in National Minimum Wage, National Living Wage and National Insurance.

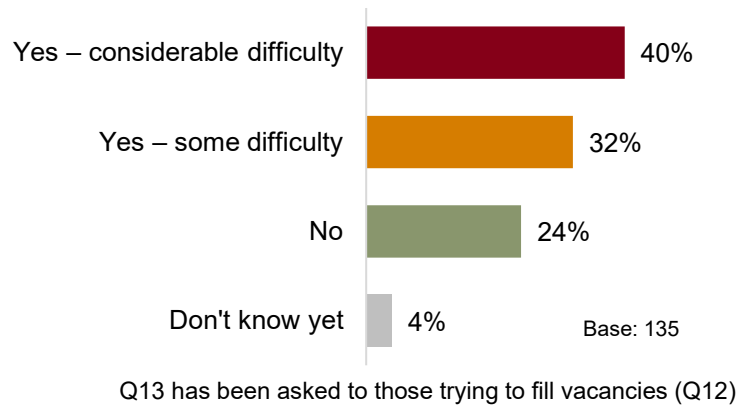
"I make a profit but only because I cut all costs and I do everything myself like cleaning and managing"  
Self-catering, South West

"I won't take on any staff, due to the NI involved"  
Self-catering, South West

"We do the cleaning, otherwise we wouldn't make any profit"  
Self-catering, North

# Extent of difficulties in recruiting

Figure 14: Q13 "Are you currently experiencing any difficulty in recruiting staff?"



## Much difficulty

The majority (72%) of businesses trying to fill vacancies are experiencing difficulties. Sample sizes by sector and region are small and so should be treated with caution, but the indication is that recruitment is more difficult for accommodation operators (especially serviced) and in North & Mid Wales.

“We're always looking to take people on but have issues. Some don't even turn up to interviews. Possibly lack of experience and a generation thing.”  
Pub, Mid

“We're all getting older. We're all volunteers in our 80s. We need volunteers in their 60s. We put callouts in the newsletters but get no interest.”  
Attraction, South East

## Levels of employment causing difficulty

Figure 15: Q14 "Which of the following levels of skill and experience do you have difficulty recruiting?"



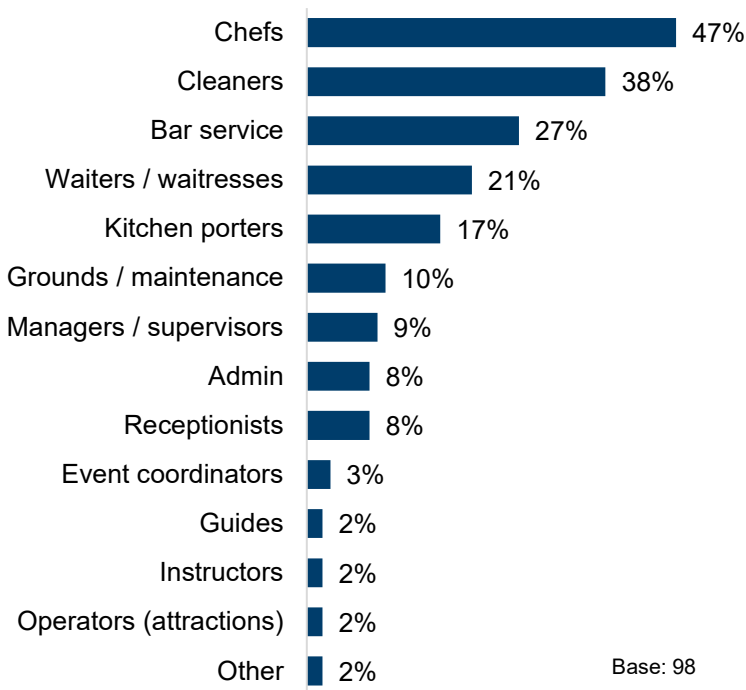
## Difficulties are across different levels of skills and experience

For non-managerial positions, businesses are experiencing recruitment difficulties regardless of skill or experience level. The above results may look at first as if managerial positions are less difficult to recruit, but given that there are far fewer managerial positions available in workplaces than non-managerial positions, the number of businesses trying to recruit them is likely to be lower.

“It’s very difficult to get any staff across the board”  
Serviced, North

## Job roles causing difficulty

Figure 16: Q15 "And which job roles do you have difficulty recruiting?" (Unprompted)



Q15 has been asked to those experiencing difficulty recruiting (Q13)

## Chefs and cleaners are hard to find

If a business is looking for a new chef or cleaner, they may well have a hard time finding one. Some manage to fill these positions, only to find that the new employee leaves soon after.

“There are no chefs around. We're having to employ on the Skilled Worker visa route. It's the only way we can stay open.”  
Serviced, Mid

“All the polish and other East European chefs we had have gone back home”  
Serviced, North

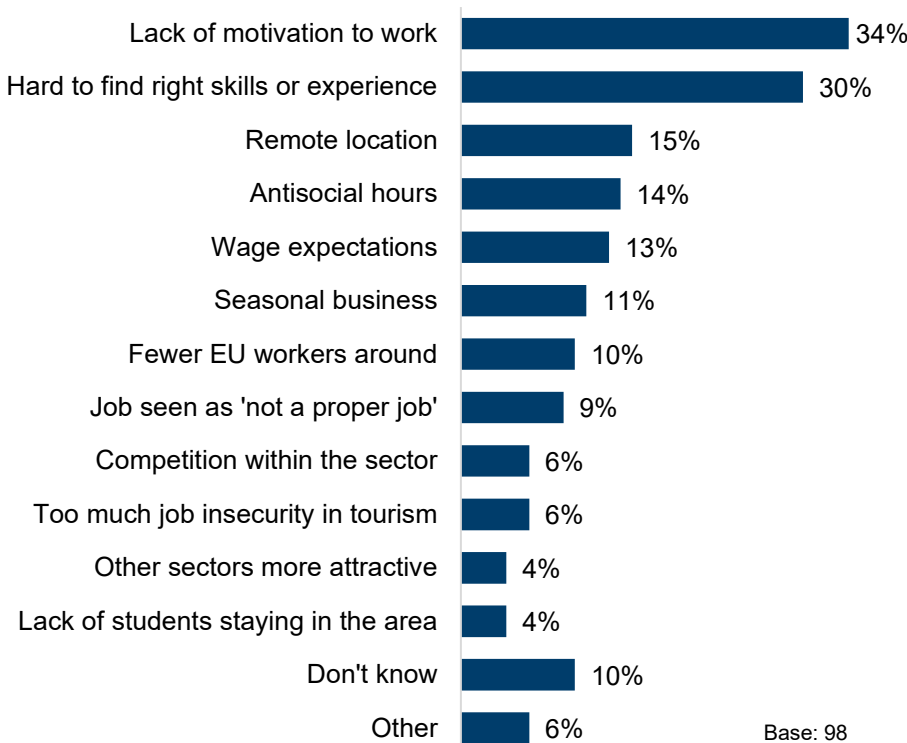


“We've been advertising for a cleaner for at least 12 months. There are only four rooms and it's only two hours a day. People last a couple of weeks and then say, ‘it's not for me’. People don't want to work.”  
Serviced, North

“It's difficult finding people who want to do the work. We'd employ a kitchen porter who interviews well and seems keen but then disappears after a couple of weeks.”  
Restaurant, South East

# Reasons for difficulties

Figure 17: Q16 "Why do you think you have difficulty recruiting those roles?" (Unprompted)



Q16 has been asked to those experiencing difficulty recruiting (Q13)

## Lack of motivation to work

This is a commonly cited reason for recruitment difficulties. Some operators say that potential workers weigh up being on benefits and not having to work vs receiving a bit more income but having to work for it. The job often comes off unfavourably. Others rely on young people who are studying but it's becoming harder to find those who are motivated to find a seasonal or part time job.

“The students from age 18 to 25 years old are not interested in working. They will apply but have no motivation or work ethic.”  
Serviced, Mid

“People in job interviews have told us that the benefits they're getting are too good to take on a job.”

Self-catering, North

“We used to employ a lot of seasonal 'mature youngsters', 16/17/18 years old, but that's virtually dried up. I think the parents are too generous.”

Caravan park, Mid

“We've had the job ad for an assistant manager out for about three years. I've interviewed people and they've said, ‘Do you know what? I don't really want to work weekends!’”

Restaurant, Mid

## **Finding the right skills or experience**

Some jobs require a specialist skill such as instructors, or the business wants to maintain a high standard of service and so will only seek staff who can maintain that high standard.

“We have a high standard and require staff to have high standards so they will suit the job roles”

Caravan park, South West

“It's hard to find educational instructors in peak season”

Activity provider, Mid