ERBID How's Business Survey

January & February 2026

Published by The South West Research Company Ltd

April 2026

Sample and supporting information

This month's survey has a sample of 54 businesses.

This latest report also includes data produced by Lighthouse (formerly Transparent Intelligence) for Visit Britain looking at the short term rental* market. This provides useful data across the South West region and provides a good comparison to the data produced through the How's Business survey moving forward. Our thanks go to Lighthouse and Visit Britain for making this data freely available for the tourism industry. Lighthouse tracks over 35 million vacation rental listings worldwide and maintains a proprietary database of hundreds of thousands of reservations tracked by month. Listings on three major short-term rental platforms are tracked: Airbnb, Booking.com and Vrbo. Listings data is deduplicated when the same property is advertised on more than one platform.

From September 2025 onwards, Lighthouse has made a change to their methodology. Since November 2024, Tripadvisor has stopped supporting direct bookings for short-term rental properties, instead redirecting users to other platforms. This firstly means that some listings remained searchable but not bookable, and additionally, redirects to other platforms have created duplicates in Lighthouse's supply database. Therefore, Tripadvisor listings have been removed from all historical data, retaining only Airbnb, Booking.com and Vrbo ensures a more reliable view of the bookable short-term rental market. The occupancy data provided in this report has been updated accordingly as a result.

** The UK Government defines a short-term rental property as 'a dwelling, or part of a dwelling, provided by a host to a guest, for use as accommodation other than the guest's only or principal residence, in return for payment, in the course of a trade or business carried on by the host'.*

At a glance – January & February 2026

Compared to January 2025 businesses reported that:

January 2026 Visitor levels:
Increased 25% / Stayed the same 25% / Decreased 50%
Estimated actual change in visitors -5%

January 2026 Turnover levels:
Increased 25% / Stayed the same 25% / Decreased 50%
Estimated actual change in turnover -4%

Compared to February 2025 businesses reported that:

February 2026 Visitor levels:
Increased 26% / Stayed the same 24% / Decreased 50%
Estimated actual change in visitors -6%

February 2026 Turnover levels:
Increased 23% / Stayed the same 26% / Decreased 51%
Estimated actual change in turnover -6%

March 2026 Outlook is:
Better than 2022 15% / Same as 2022 28% / Not as good as 2022 56%

Easter 2026 Outlook is:
Better than 2022 13% / Same as 2022 33% / Not as good as 2022 55%

April 2026 Outlook is:
Better than 2022 11% / Same as 2022 14% / Not as good as 2022 76%

Optimism:
Optimism score is 5.07 out of a possible 10

January & February 2026 Key results

In January 2026, 50% of all businesses reported level or increased visitor/customer numbers compared to January 2025, whilst the same proportion said the same for their turnover. The estimated actual decreases for visitors/customers and turnover for the month were -5% and -4% respectively. February 2026 showed a similar performance with 50% of all businesses reporting level or increased visitor/customer numbers compared to February 2025, whilst 49% said the same for their turnover. The estimated actual decreases for visitors/customers and turnover for the month were -6% each.

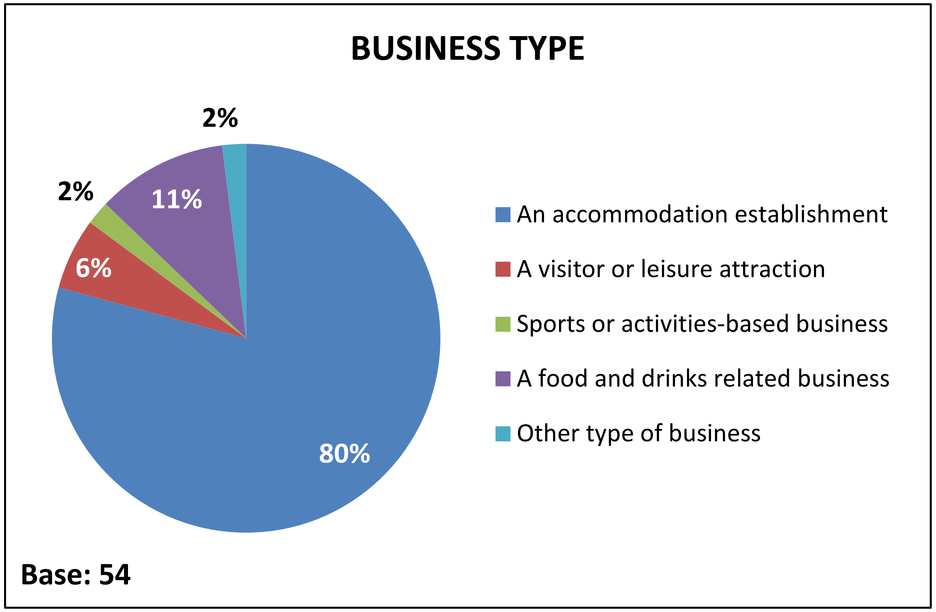
For March and Easter 2026, 56% and 55% of respondents respectively expect their booking levels to be worse than during the previous year, with this proportion increasing to 76% businesses for the month of April as a whole and at 5.07 out of 10.00 the overall optimism score decreased compared to last month.

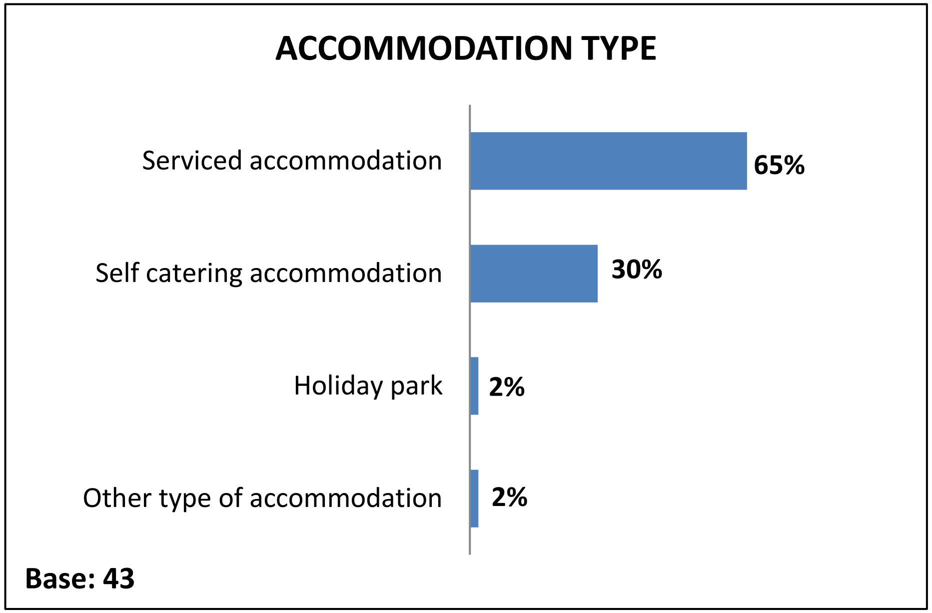
Concerns over rising energy/fuel costs increased dramatically this month cited by 78% of businesses and increasing by 17% compared with last month. This was followed by 67% of businesses in each case citing the increase in other business costs (a decrease of 6% compared with last month), decreasing visitor numbers / booking levels (no change compared with last month) and the increase in the cost of living generally (an increase of 10% compared with last month).

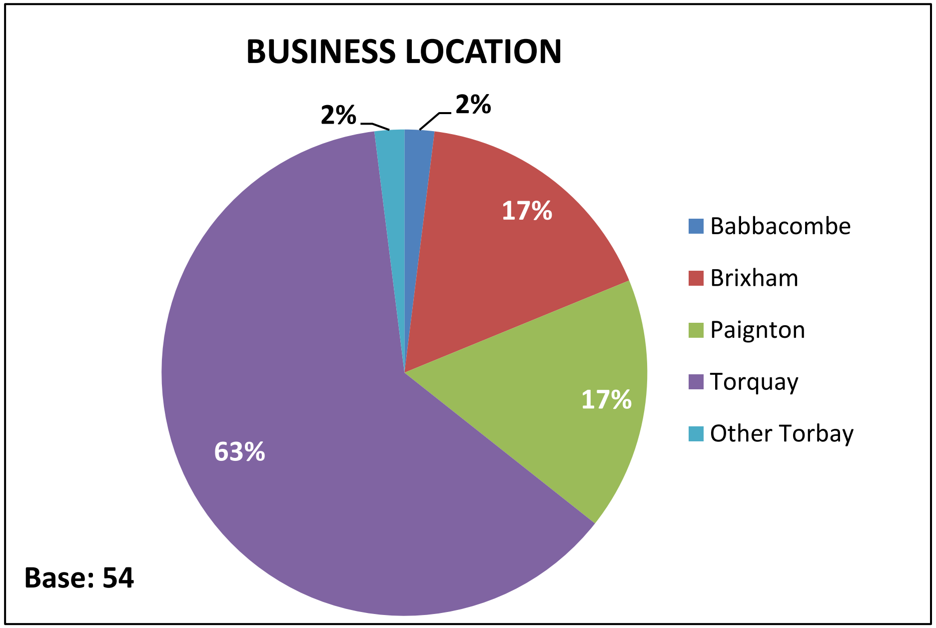
A small number of businesses report pockets of optimism for the coming season, with some seeing encouraging signs of staycation demand driven by geopolitical uncertainty abroad and others noting that last-minute bookings remain a familiar pattern, even if challenging to manage.

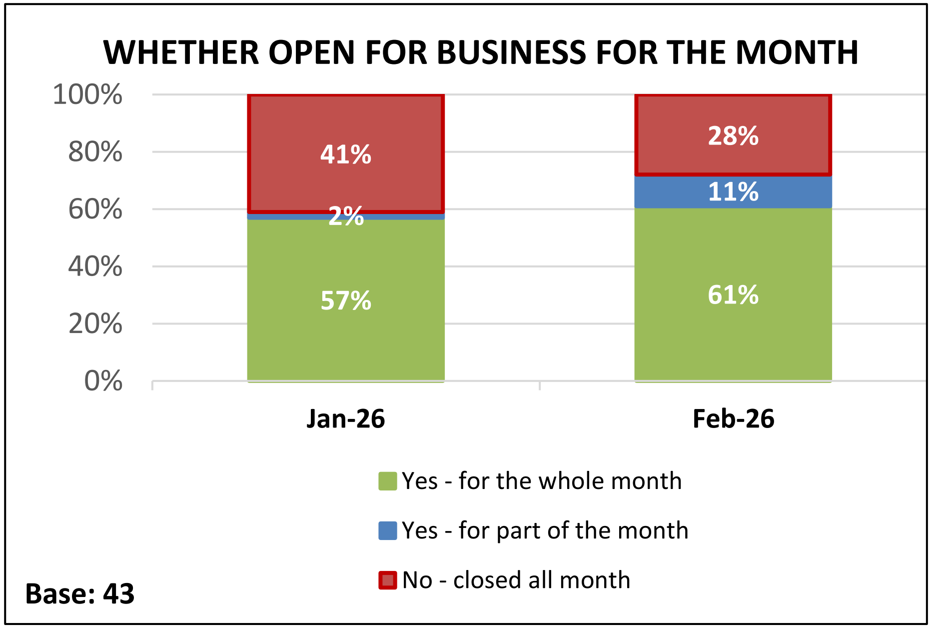
In contrast, the majority of businesses highlight a steep and widespread decline in business performance, with many operators reporting sharply reduced forward bookings, shorter stays and a season that is becoming too condensed to sustain year-round viability. Rising costs spanning marketing, staffing, utilities and supplies are eroding profit margins, while late bookings and discount expectations make planning and pricing increasingly difficult. Local issues such as antisocial behaviour, declining town-centre conditions, construction works and a perceived lack of council support are compounding the impact of national pressures like high living costs.

Sample profile, business location and status

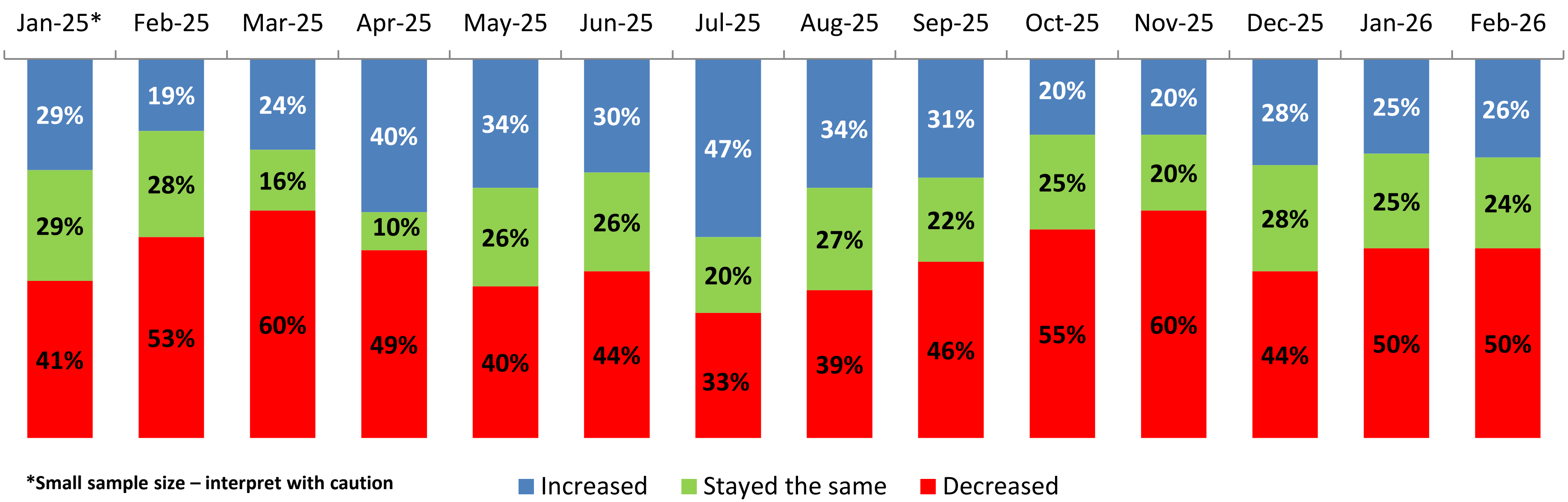




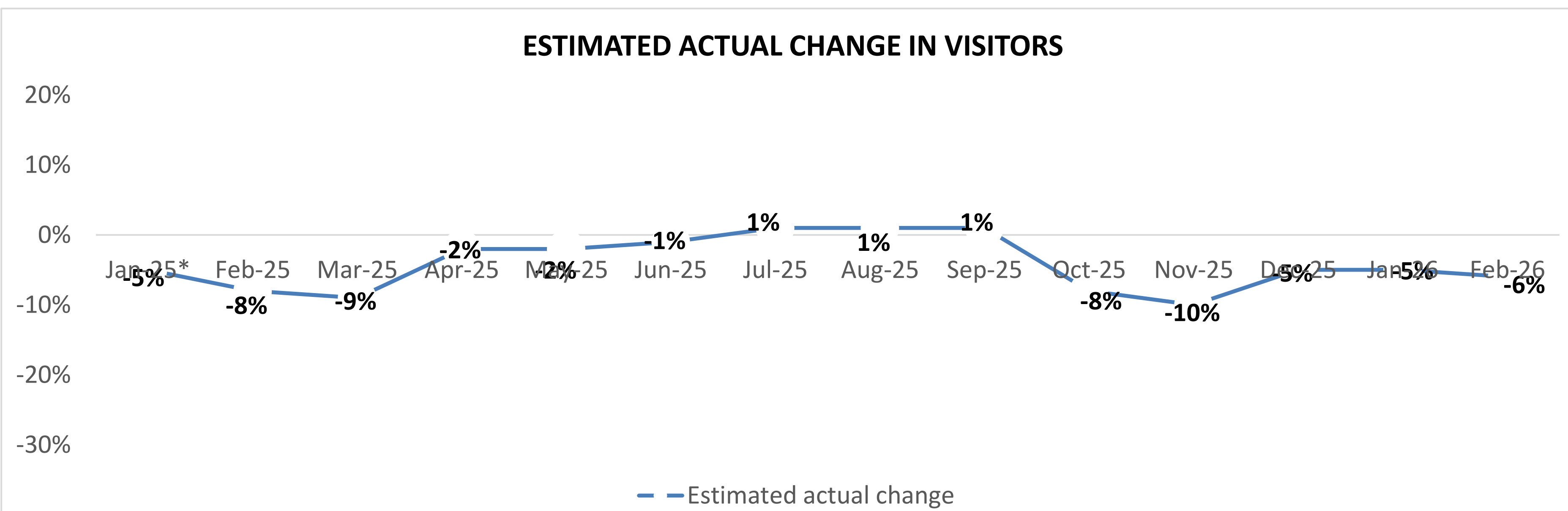




Performance – Number of visitors compared to previous year

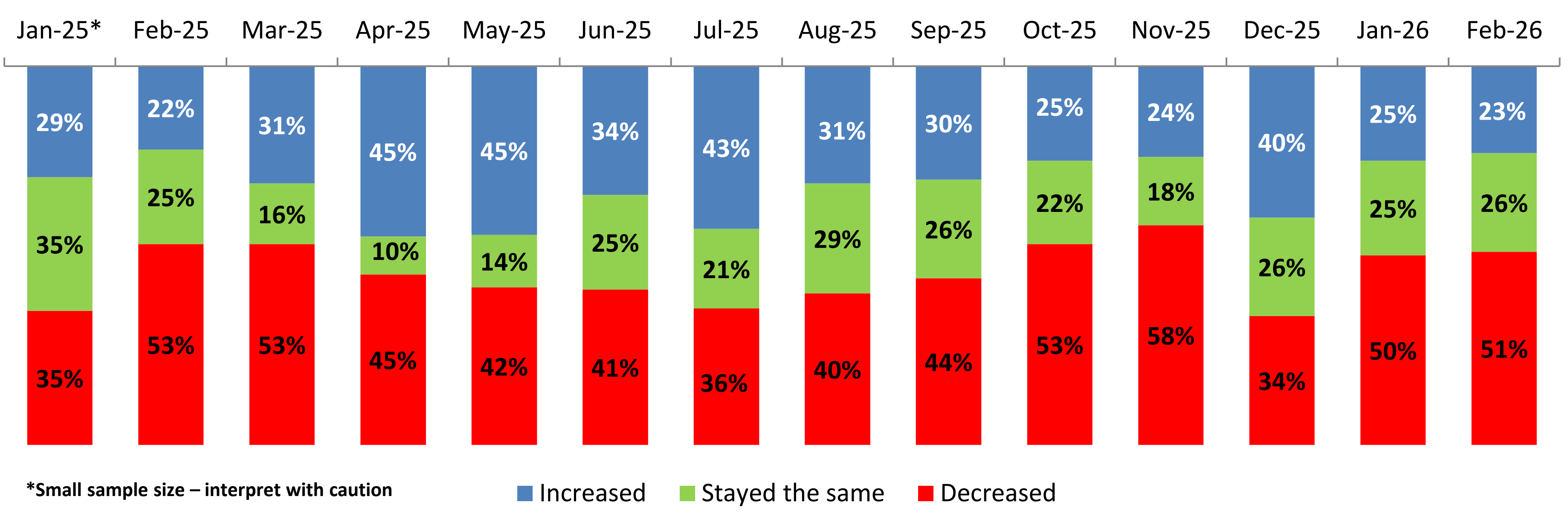


*Small sample size – interpret with caution

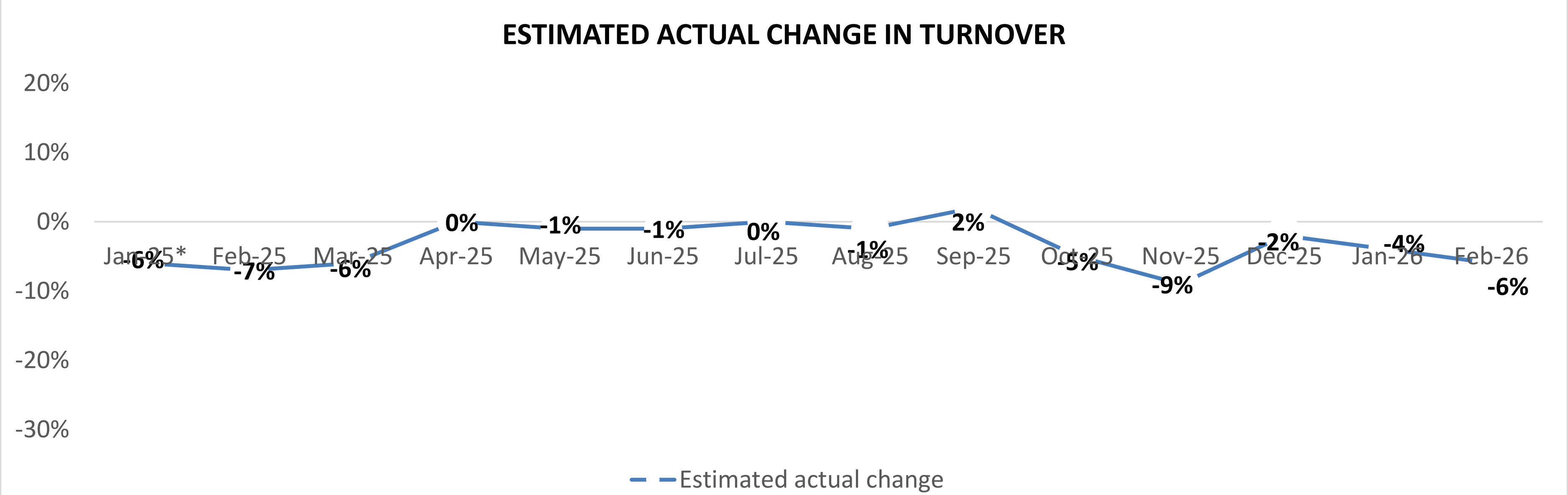


*Small sample size – interpret with caution

Performance – Turnover compared to previous year

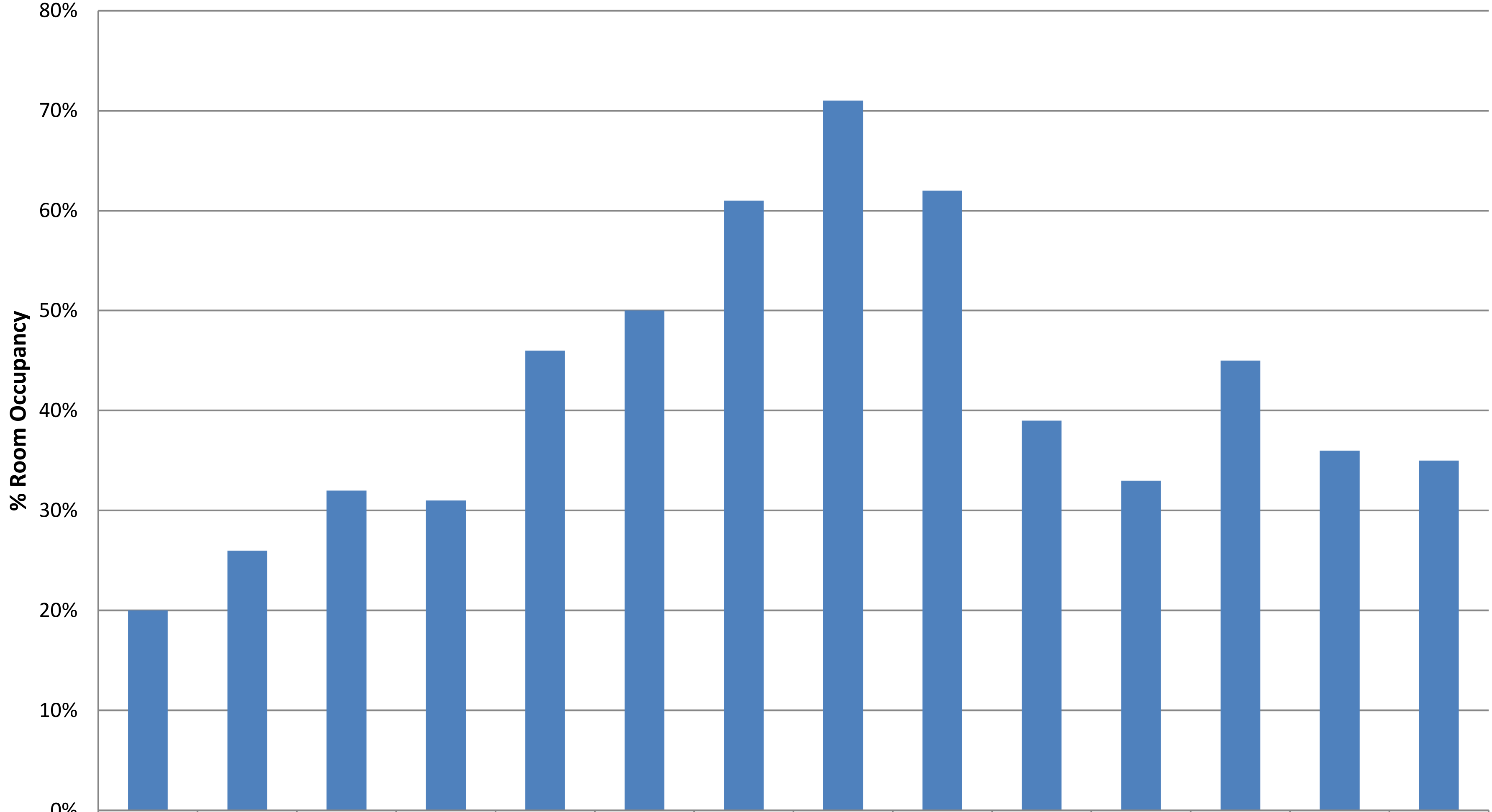


***Small sample size – interpret with caution**



***Small sample size – interpret with caution**

Performance – Serviced Room Occupancy

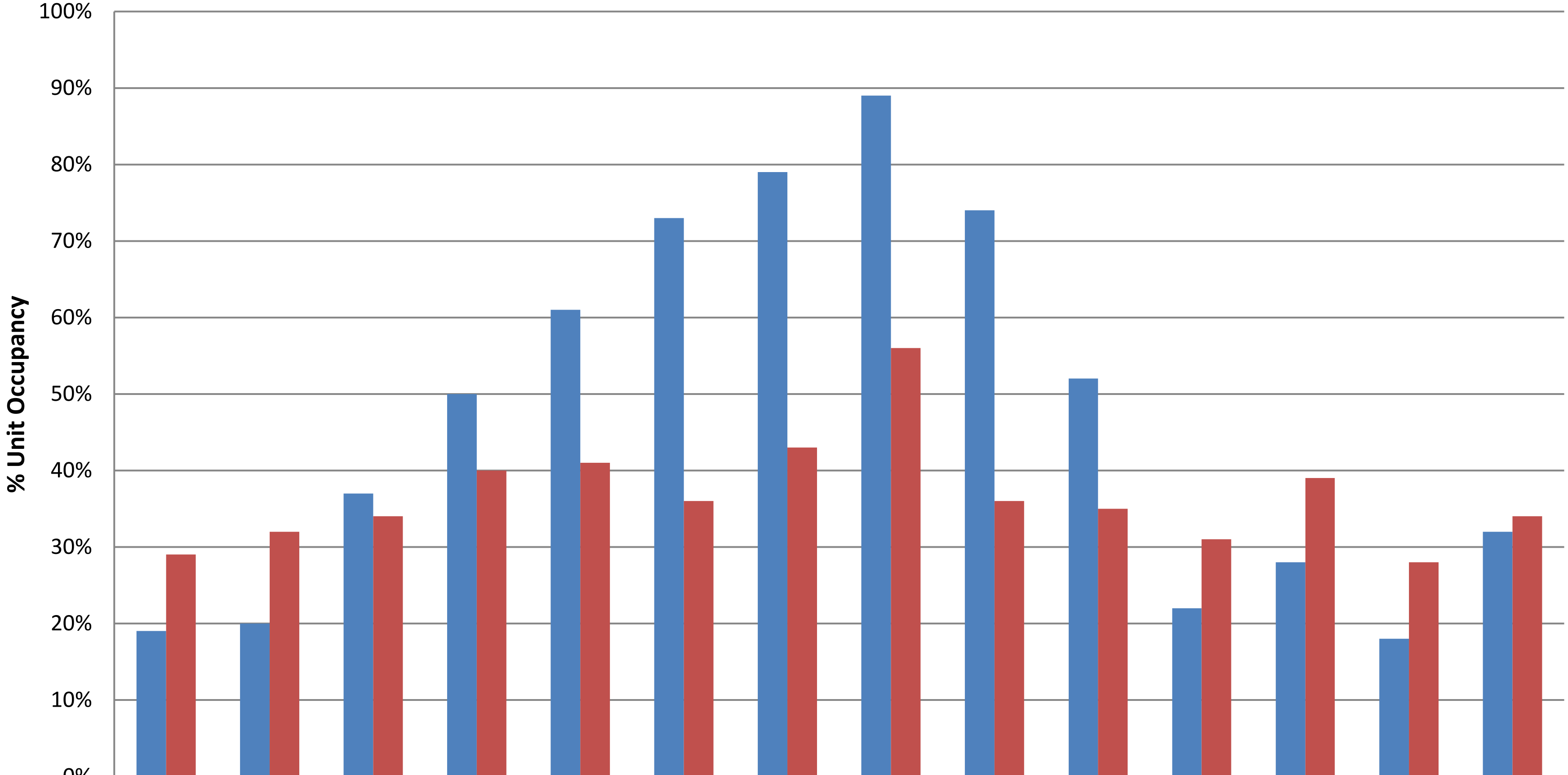


	Jan-25*	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
ER	20%	26%	32%	31%	46%	50%	61%	71%	62%	39%	33%	45%	36%	35%

***Small sample size – interpret with caution**

It should be noted that the figures provided represent the occupancy rates for those responding to this survey and the results are not weighted to represent regional and county accommodation stocks.

Performance – Self Catering Unit Occupancy



	Jan-25*	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
ER	19%	20%	37%	50%	61%	73%	79%	89%	74%	52%	22%	28%	18%	32%
Lighthouse	29%	32%	34%	40%	41%	36%	43%	56%	36%	35%	31%	39%	28%	34%

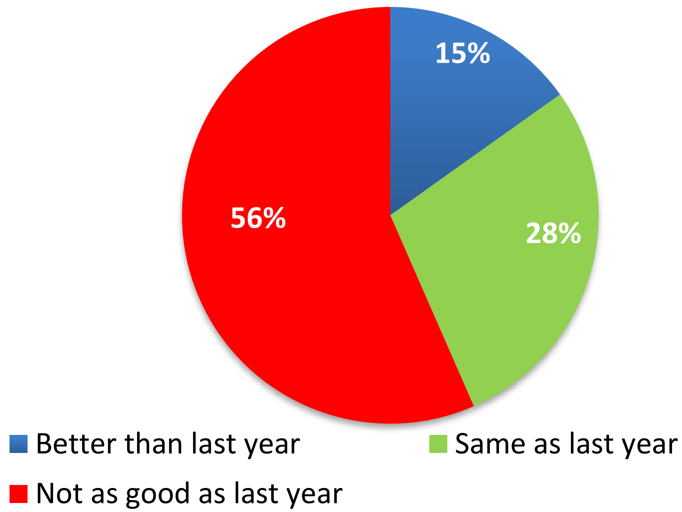
***Small sample size – interpret with caution**

It should be noted that the HB figures provided represent the occupancy rates for those self catering businesses responding to this survey and the results are not weighted to represent regional accommodation stocks.

Lighthouse data represents the short term rental market on the English Riviera.

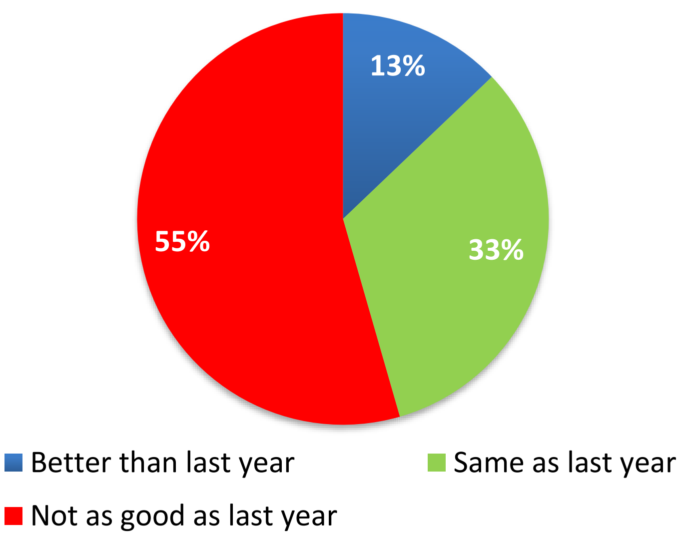
Outlook – Based upon forward booking levels

MARCH 2026



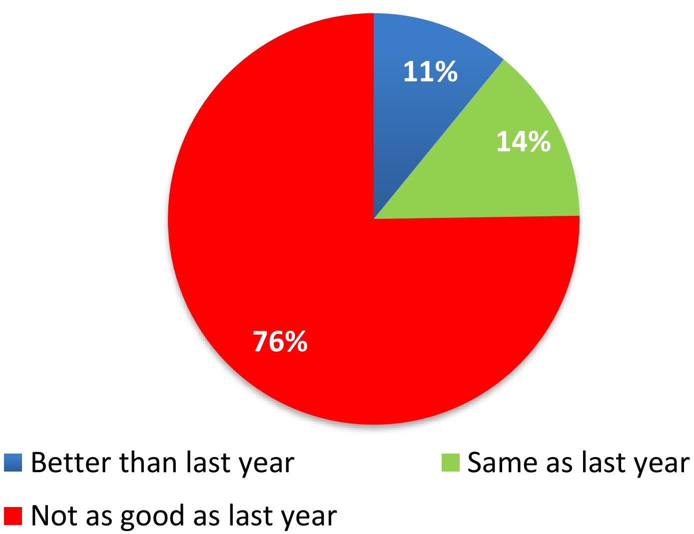
Base: 39

EASTER 2026



Base: 40

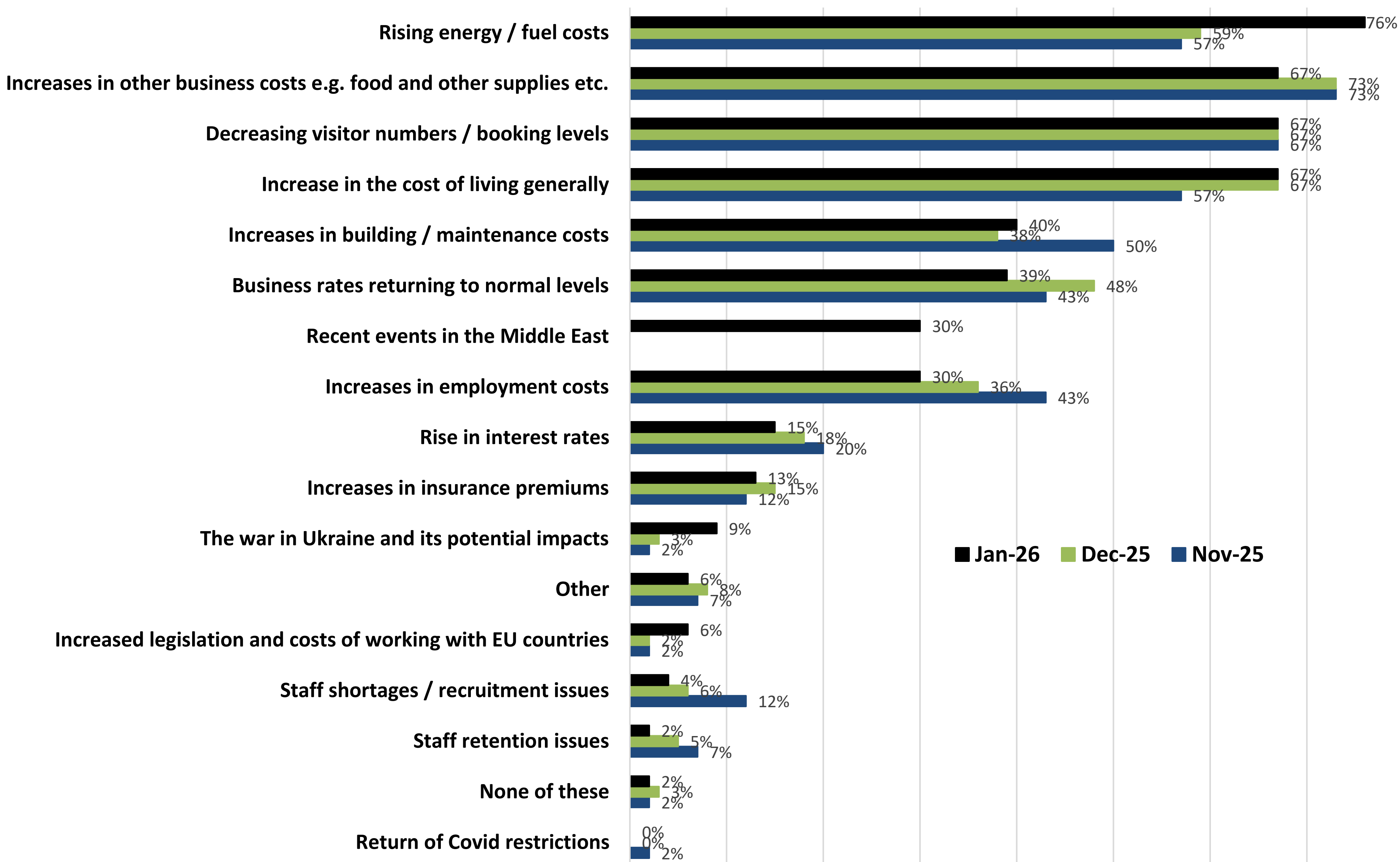
APRIL 2026



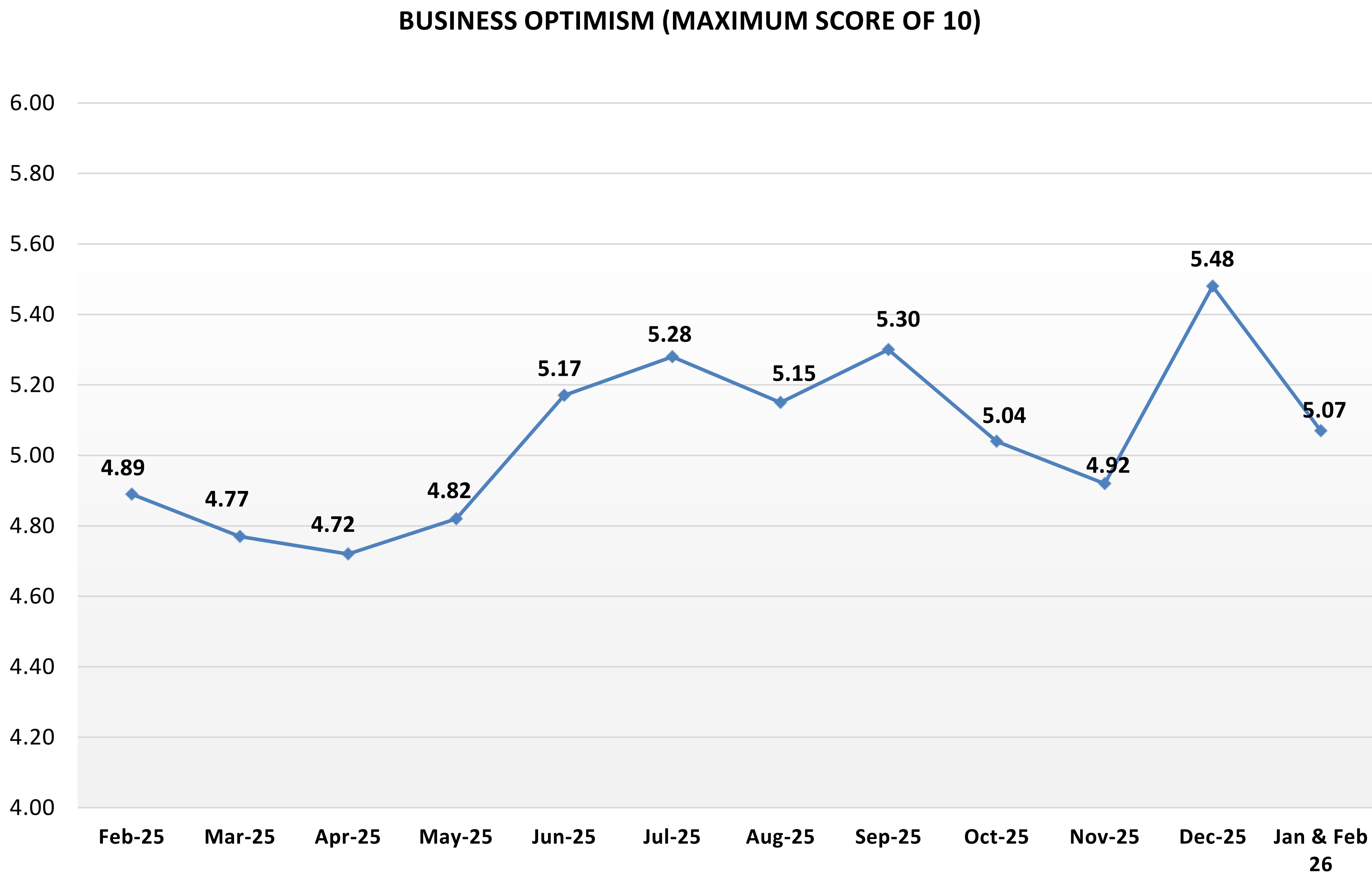
Base: 37

Top 5 business concerns (pre-defined list)

TOP 5 MOST CONCERNING FACTORS FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COMING MONTHS



Business optimism



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