ERBID How's Business Survey

March 2025

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May 2025





Sample and supporting information

This month's survey has a sample of 71 businesses, representing a minimum sample of approximately 79 businesses when respondents representing multiple businesses, outlets or sites are also considered.

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 English Riviera 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 the four major short-term rental platforms are tracked: Airbnb, Booking.com, Vrbo and Tripadvisor. Listings data is deduplicated when the same property is advertised on more than one platform.

** 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 – March 2025

Compared to March 2024 businesses reported that:

March 2025 Visitor levels:

Increased 24% / Stayed the same 16% / Decreased 60%

Estimated actual change in visitors -9%

March 2025 Turnover levels:

Increased 31% / Stayed the same 16% / Decreased 53%

Estimated actual change in turnover -6%

Easter 2025 Outlook is:

Better than last year 16% / Same as last year 20% / Not as good as last year 64%

April 2025 Outlook is:

Better than last year 20% / Same as last year 14% / Not as good as last year 66%

May 2025 Outlook is:

Better than last year 20% / Same as last year 19% / Not as good as last year 61%

Optimism:

Optimism score is 4.77 out of a possible 10

March 2025 Key results

Largely as a result of the timing of Easter in 2024, March 2025 saw 60% of all businesses experiencing decreased visitors/customers compared with the same time last year – representing a decrease of -9% (compared with March 2024) and whilst the largest proportion of businesses also reported experiencing decreased turnover during the same period (53%), at -6% the decrease was slightly lower than that for visitors/customers.

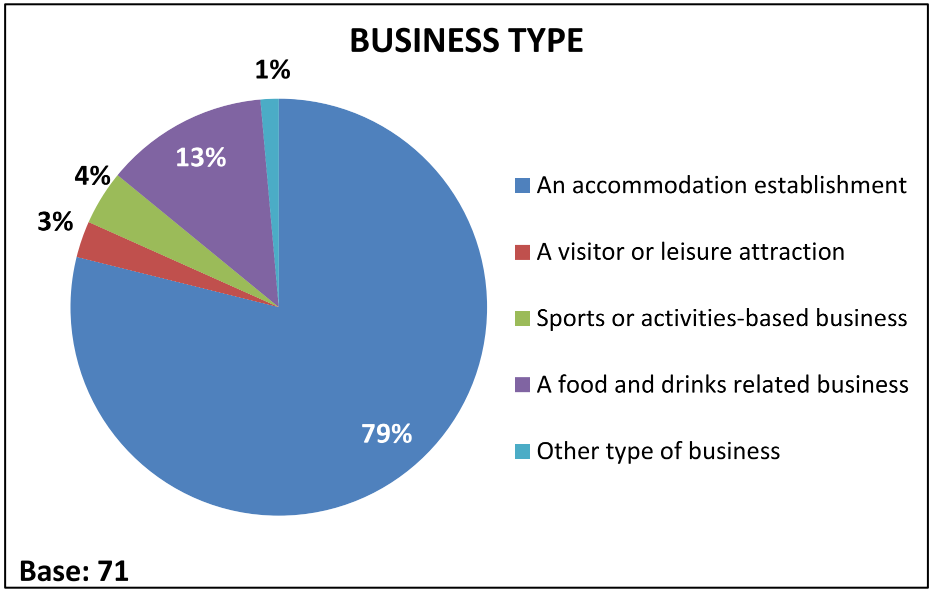
64% of businesses did not anticipate their Easter performance to be as good as 2024 and 66% said the same about their April performance as a whole and whilst there was some warm and sunny weather experienced across the English Riviera during the first half of the Easter school holidays it was all change by the time the Easter long bank holiday weekend came around and just before the schools returned after the Easter break.

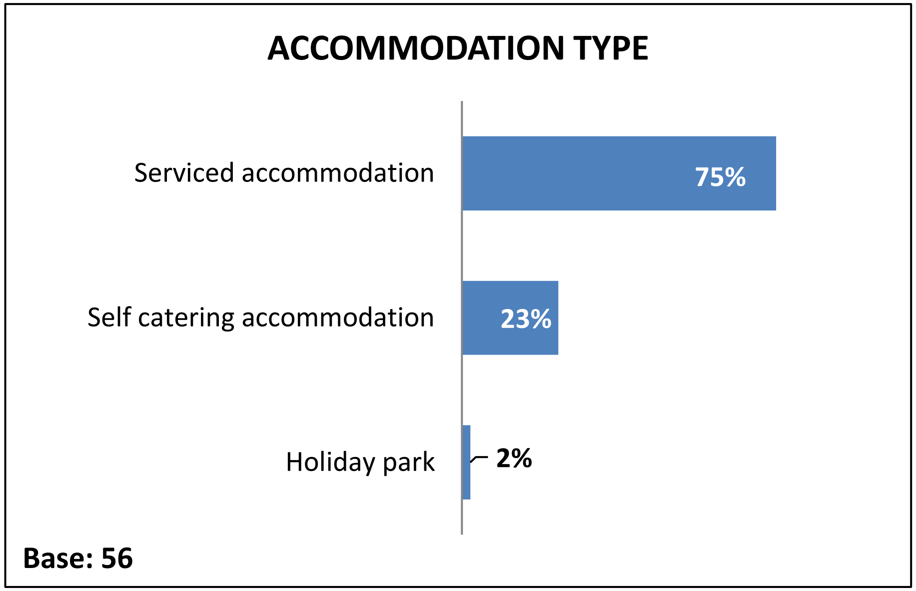
In addition, at the time of data collection, 61% of businesses also anticipate a decreased business performance for May 2025 based on their forward bookings at the time of completing the survey.

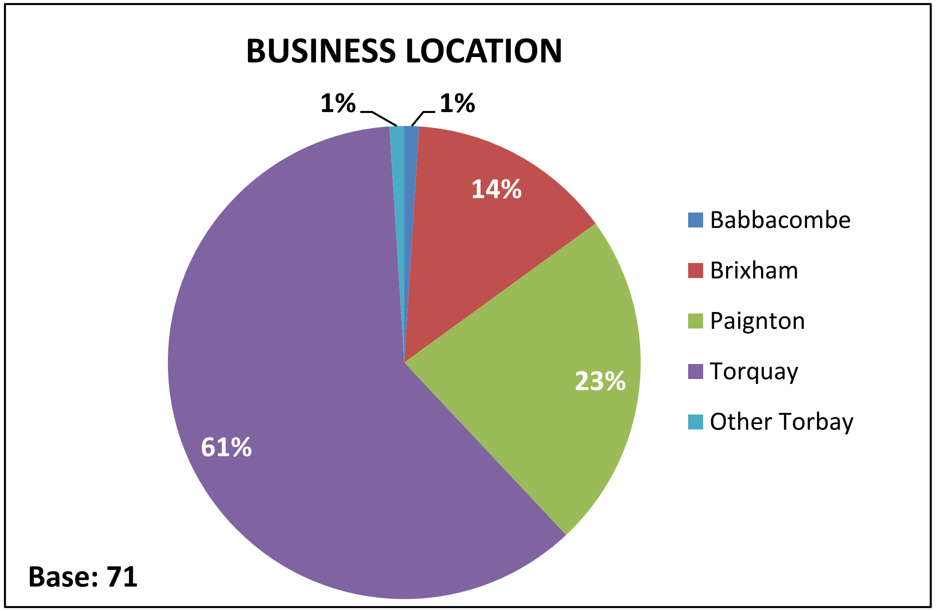
At 73%, businesses are currently most concerned about decreasing visitor numbers/booking levels (an increase of 3% compared with last month), increases in the cost of living generally (63%, a decrease of -4% compared with last month) and increases in other business costs e.g. food (62%, a decrease of -5% compared with last month).

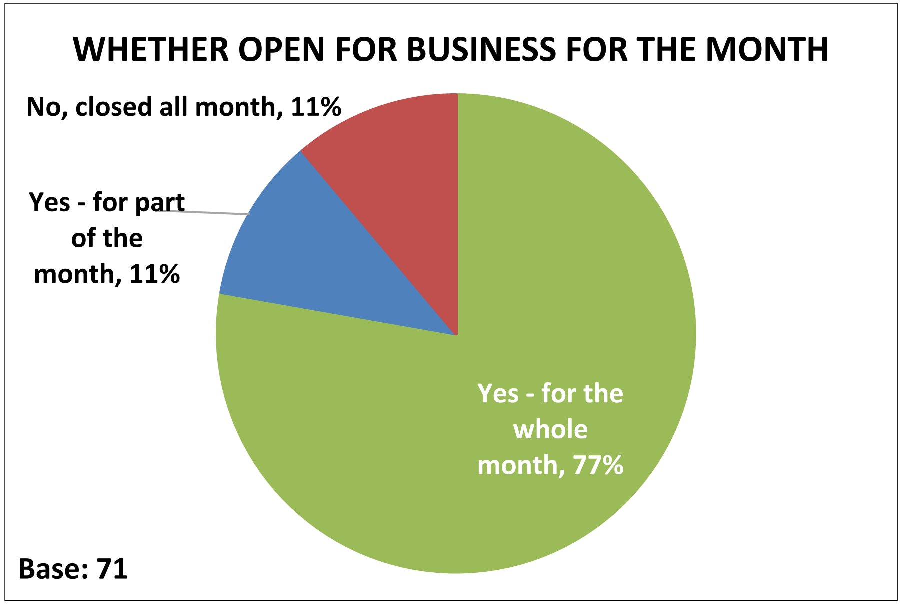
At 4.77 out of 10.00 the optimism score has decreased compared with last month (4.89).

Sample profile, business location and status

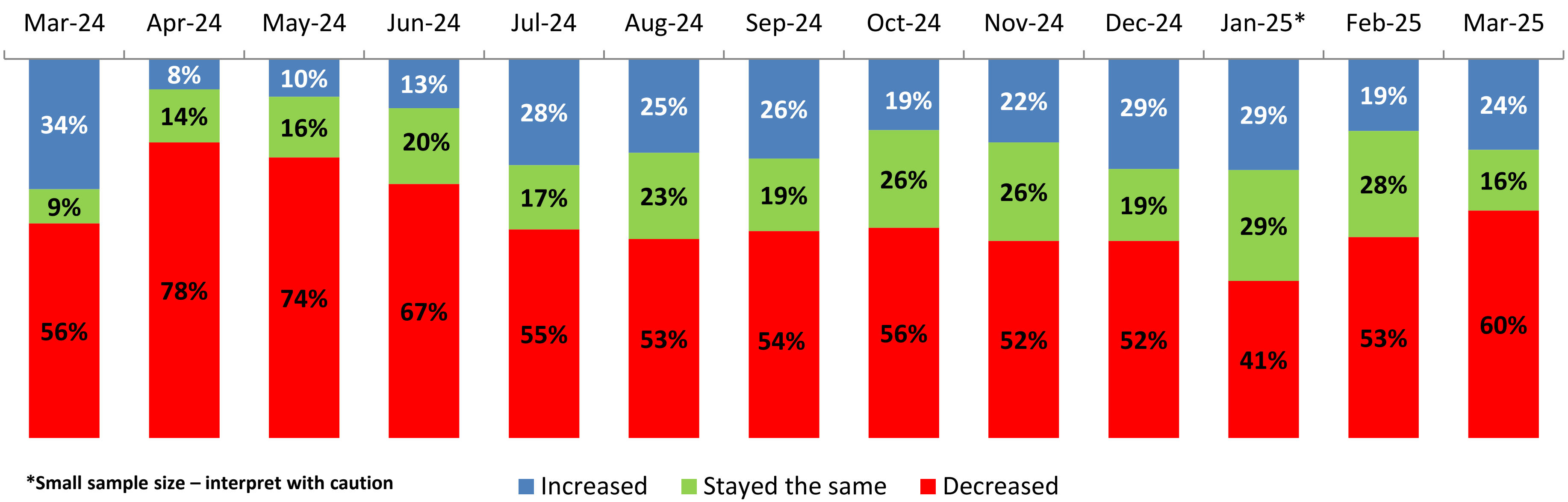




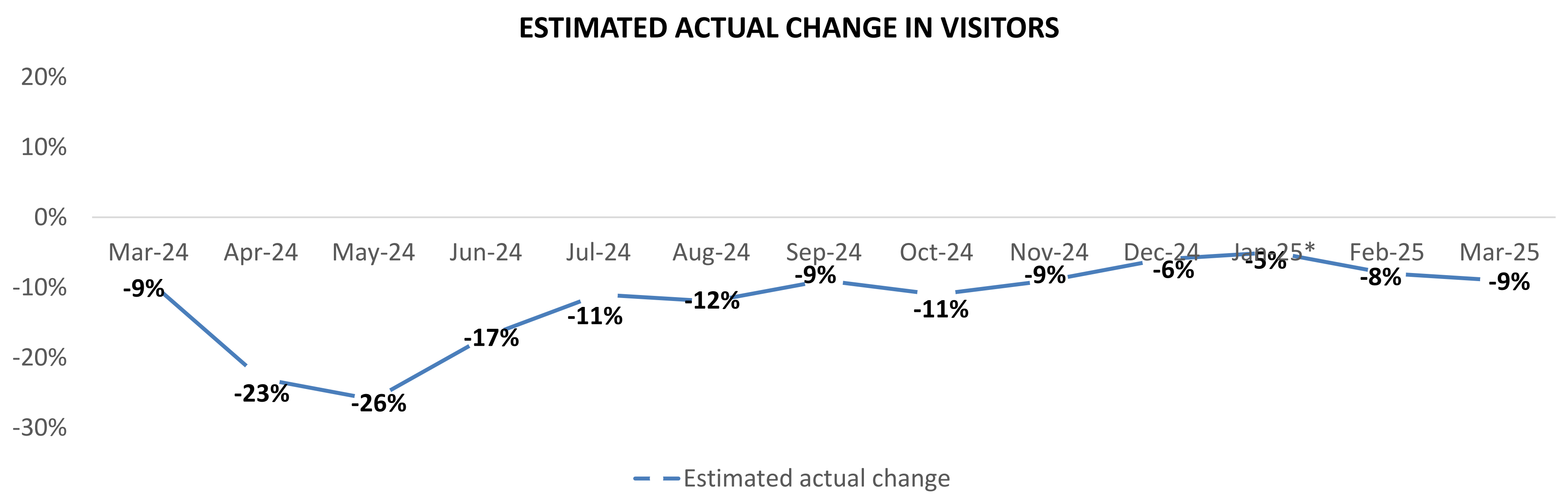




Performance – Number of visitors compared to previous year

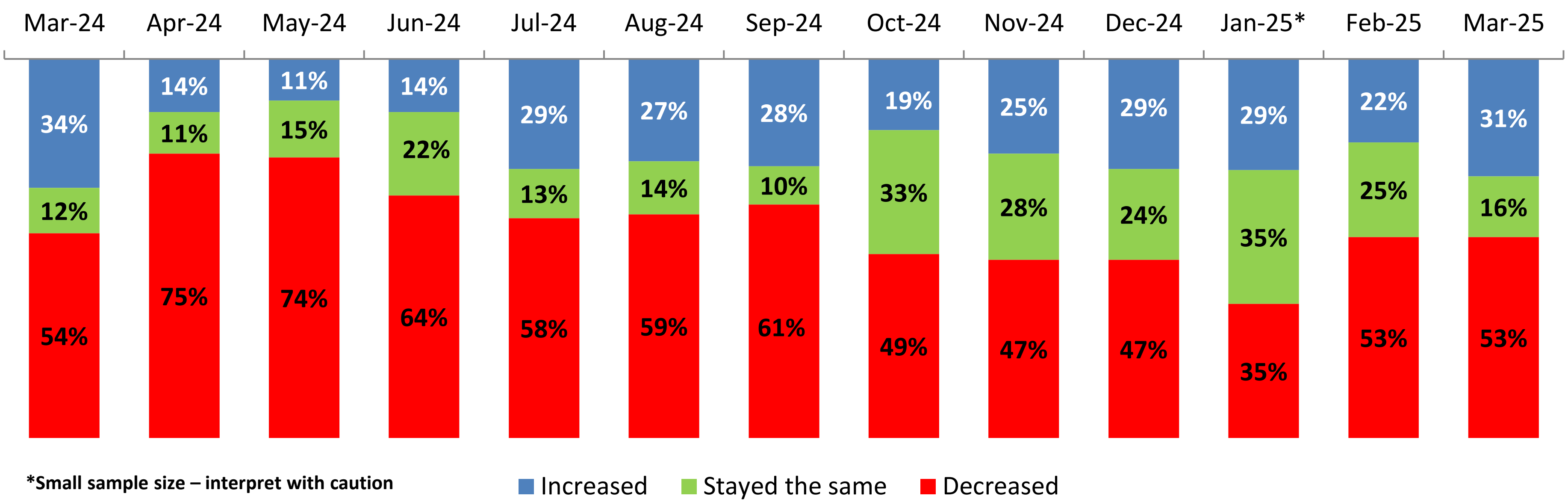


*Small sample size – interpret with caution



*Small sample size – interpret with caution

Performance – Turnover compared to previous year



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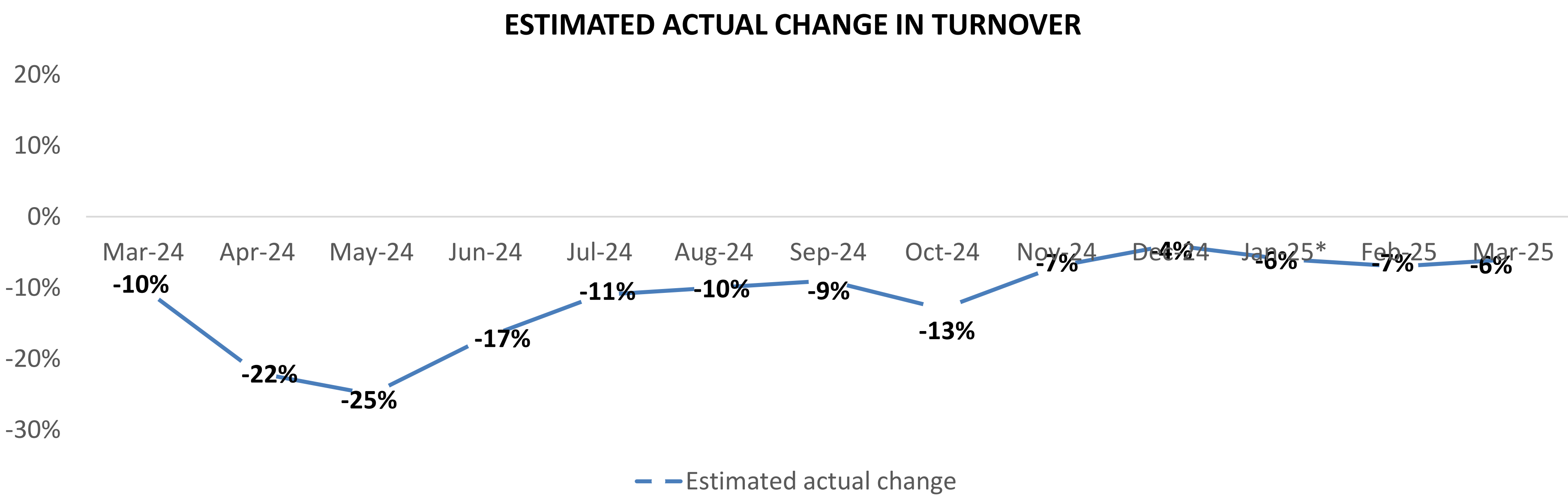
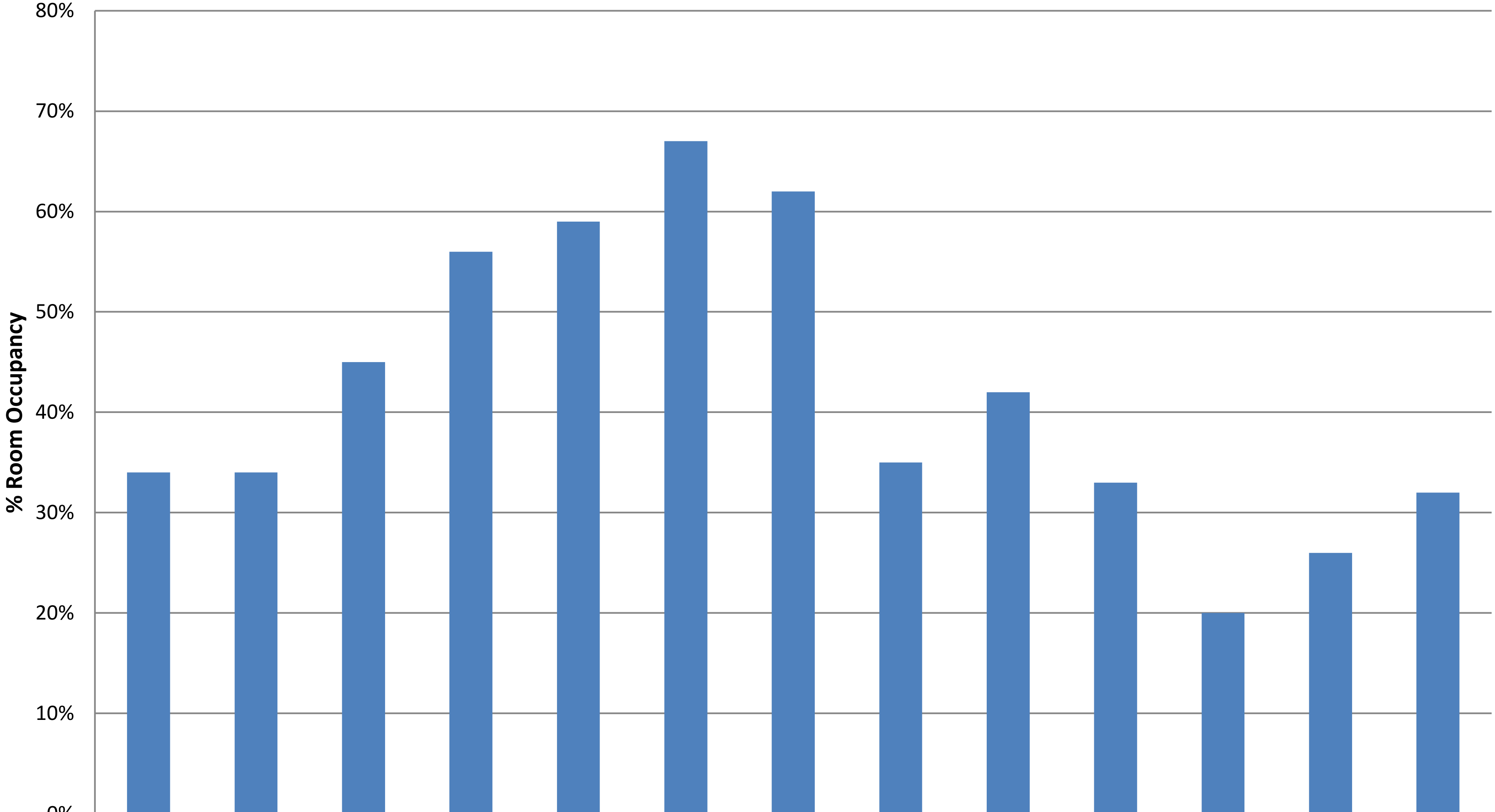


*Small sample size – interpret with caution

Performance – Serviced Room Occupancy

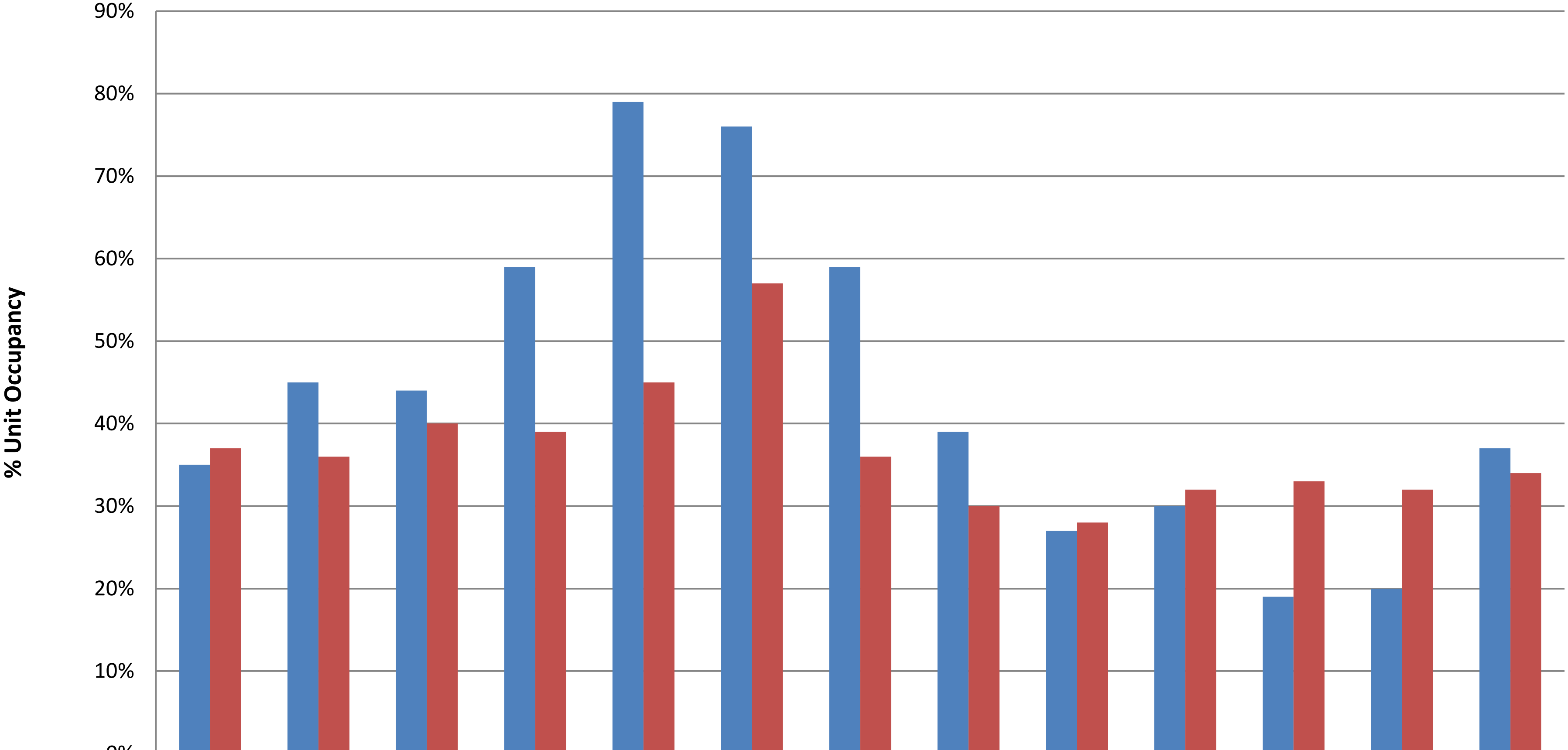


	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25*	Feb-25	Mar-25
ER	34%	34%	45%	56%	59%	67%	62%	35%	42%	33%	20%	26%	32%

***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



	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25*	Feb-25	Mar-25
ER	35%	45%	44%	59%	79%	76%	59%	39%	27%	30%	19%	20%	37%
Lighthouse	37%	36%	40%	39%	45%	57%	36%	30%	28%	32%	33%	32%	34%

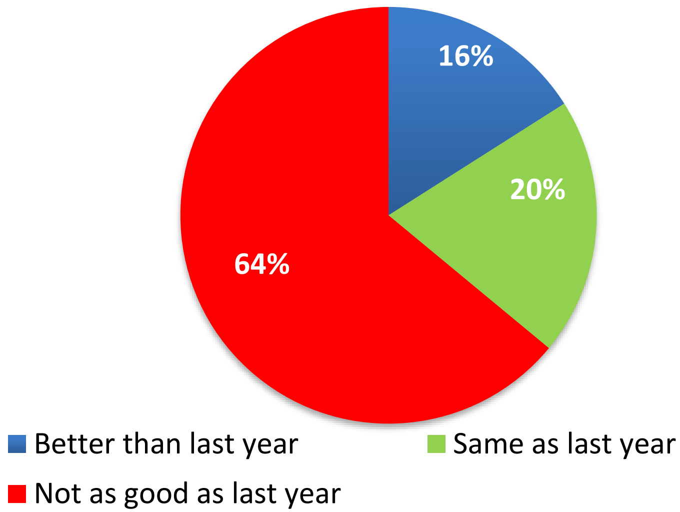
***Small sample size – interpret with caution**

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.

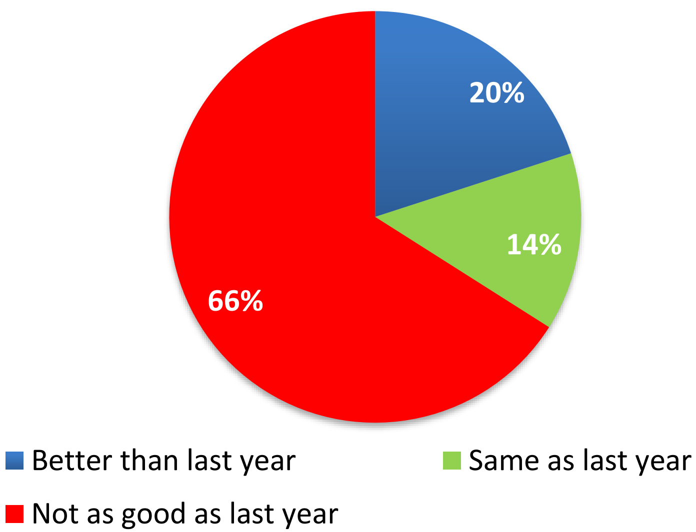
Outlook – Based upon forward booking levels

EASTER 2025



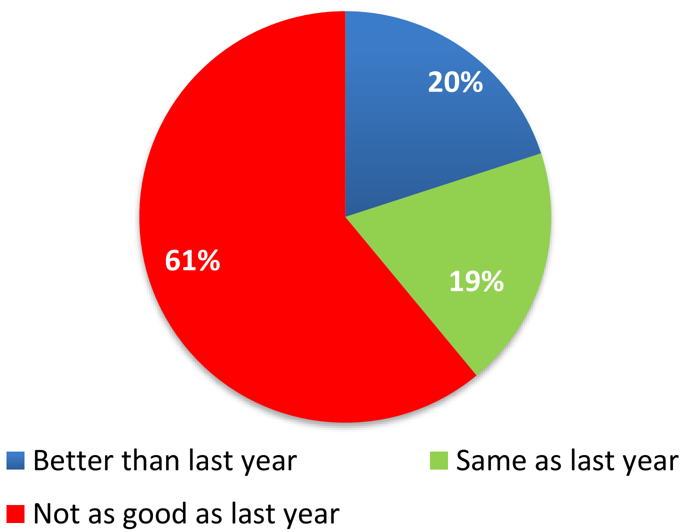
Base: 56

APRIL 2025



Base: 56

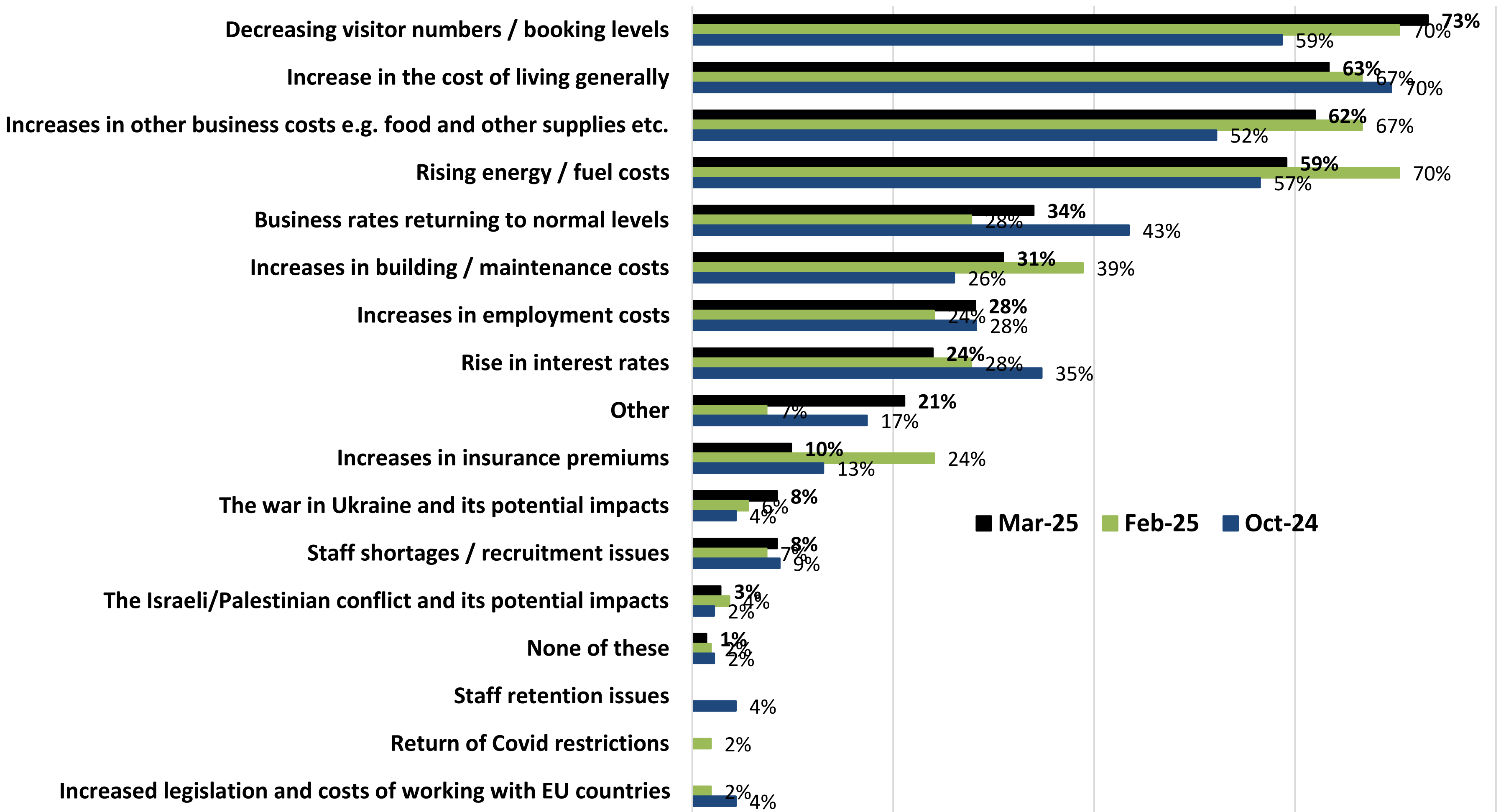
MAY 2025



Base: 54

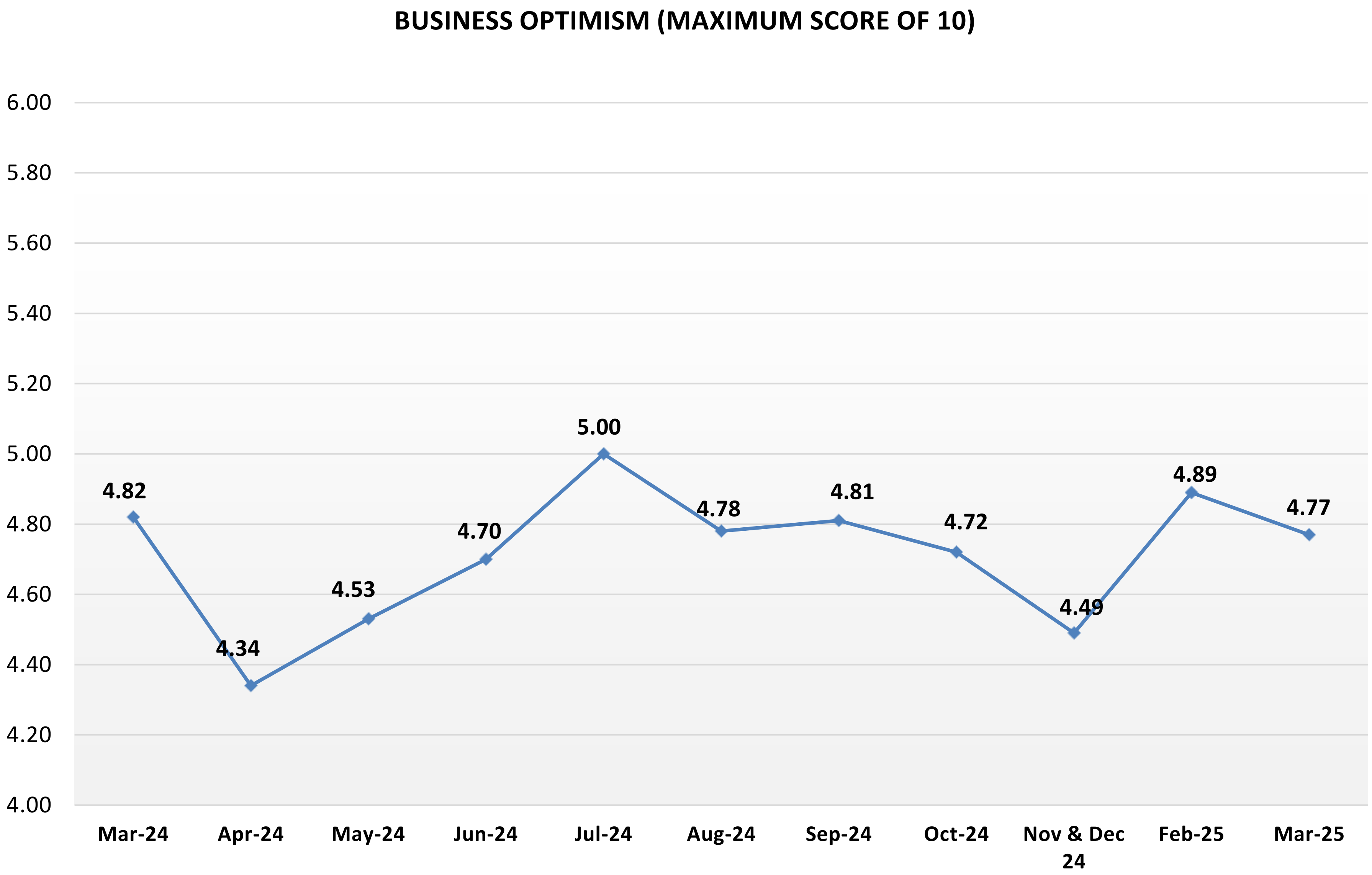
Top 5 business concerns (pre-defined list)

TOP 5 MOST CONCERNING FACTORS FOR BUSINESSES IN THE COMING MONTHS



*Small sample size – interpret with caution

Business optimism



Key results – Sample of other comments on impacts

Torquay was bustling this March and so much busier comparing to previous years. The advertising campaign is obviously working. We are excited for the season ahead!

Currently as from today, 14 April 2025, we have one booking for the Easter bank holiday. Compared to last year we were fully booked over the bank holiday. We have one booking in May so far. We have not increased our room rate for two consecutive years to try and encourage bookings. Despite increases we have had to pay for such as, Council tax, laundry service, insurance increase, energy increases…..the list goes on. We cannot think of anything else we can do to improve bookings. To advertise, it is very expensive for small businesses, so we have not gone down this route yet. We have faith that things will improve; however we are unable to compete with the larger hotels and that is something which is out of our control.

Booking levels are awful for this point in the year. Even reasonable weather is not bringing visitors in any numbers. Those who are coming are regularly commenting on how empty and lifeless everywhere feels.

This is becoming too hard...not enough visitors to keep going...worst in 15 years.

Battling so many headwinds at once is proving a huge challenge. Taxation increases are bitterly cruel especially when you know that those responsible for them are getting second homes, heating and generous expenses paid for all at our expense and then getting freebies like concert tickets thrown in as well. June and July hold out the hope that the summer might be reasonable BUT it simply won't be enough to make up for so many disastrous months in the meantime. A pin prick of light at the end of the tunnel would be welcome but just at the moment everything seems so dark and hopeless.

Easter bookings are dismal. General outlook for season is a bit gloomy.

Continue to live on borrowed time, decimating the little savings we have against spiraling food and energy costs, now increased staff costs and a mortgage up for renewal in July set to double. Without our biggest season ever, we won't have enough in the bank to survive the winter. Unable to sell as no-one wants to risk getting into hospitality, or if they do and need a mortgage then interest rates would be prohibitive. Add to that the rapid decline of the bay in the last decade, and global financial uncertainty - the outlook is bleak.

We were open for all of March which was a waste of time. Bookings going forward we are not very optimistic at the moment. Easter is going to be a wash out. At one time we were full up for Easter a month before hand..
Airshow weekend we still have availability, again we were full weeks before. Too many new Hotels being allowed to be built. We have one in Torquay near completion, we cannot compete price wise, tourist numbers are for sure down. Small guesthouse are struggling, many diversifying their business. At the end of this season we are looking to turn ours in to flats.

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