



TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

WORKFORCE SURVEY REPORT

AUGUST 2025

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

In 2022, Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) surveyed tourism workforce and industry readiness post-Covid-19. Since then, with support and funding from Ringa Hora, TIA has commissioned Angus & Associates to conduct five additional workforce surveys. These findings will help TIA advocate for tourism businesses, identify opportunities, address workforce shortages, and assess readiness for upcoming seasons.

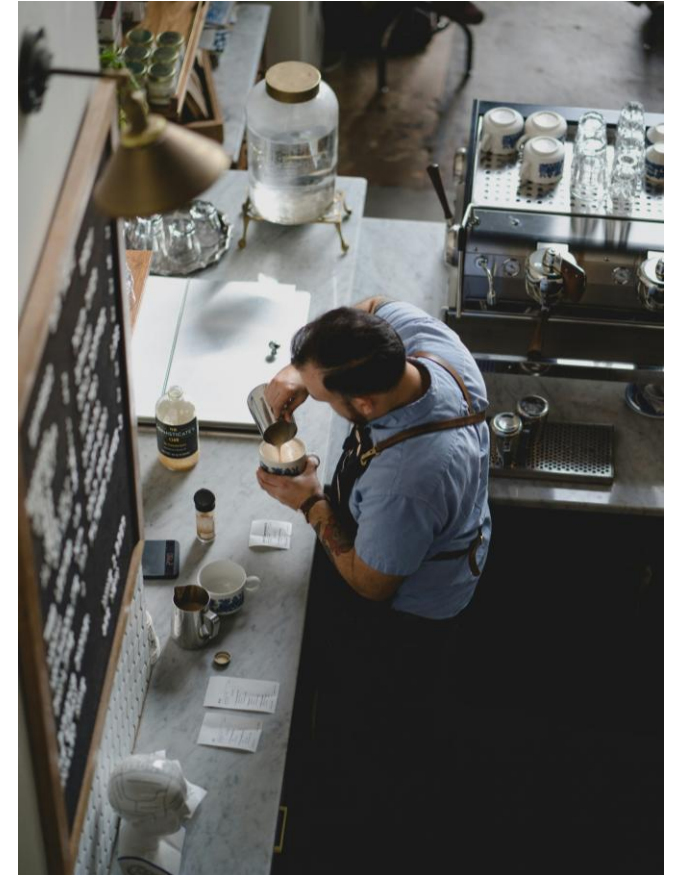
This report presents findings from the fifth survey, undertaken in August 2025. Findings from Survey #1 (March/April 2023), Survey #2 (July/August 2023), Survey #3 (March 2024) and Survey #4 (September 2024) have been incorporated into the report where relevant.

Methodology:

The online survey was distributed to 1,200 TIA members via an email to primary contacts. Non-members were also given the opportunity to 'opt-in' to participate in the survey. This process was facilitated through a weblink leading to an online opt-in page, which was shared across various industry organisations, as well as through industry social media channels and e-newsletters.

A total of 304 organisations (303 TIA members) completed the online survey between 1-17 August 2025. The survey took approximately 7 minutes to complete and, to encourage participation, respondents were entered into a prize draw to win one of three \$100 Bunnings or Office Max vouchers.

Note: Some sector-specific insights are based on small sample sizes (e.g. 18 organisations in the Attractions, Conferences, and Events sector). Where sample sizes are limited and caution is advised, these findings should be viewed as indicative rather than statistically definitive.



KEY TAKEAWAYS : RECRUITMENT

Current Recruitment Situation

In August 2025, 47% of tourism organisations were actively recruiting, a level that has remained stable over the past two years. The average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) vacancies per organisation has also shown little change during this period.

Vacancy distribution by skill level has been steady, with more than half of vacancies (55%) considered mid-level or skilled.

The most common vacancies are in customer service/frontline/reception, housekeeping, and food and beverage. Nearly half (48%) of vacancies are seasonal, particularly in roles such as outdoor adventure guides and shuttle drivers.

Recruitment Channels and Challenges

In the past year, 82% of tourism organisations recruited or attempted to recruit staff, with recruitment levels and channel effectiveness largely unchanged from last year. Seek, social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), and staff referrals were the most effective channels.

The main recruitment challenge continues to be a lack of quality applicants, followed by difficulties offering sufficient hours for full-time roles and managing unrealistic salary expectations.

Secondary Schools and Tertiary Providers

Around two in five organisations (39%) have engaged with, or plan to engage with, secondary schools or tertiary providers to recruit staff. Internship programmes are the main strategy for connecting with students, followed by career expos and information sessions. Gateway initiatives and noticeboard advertising are used more often than online job portals.

The main reason organisations do not engage with secondary schools and tertiary institutes is the need for experienced staff, as many roles require specific qualifications (e.g., a full driver's licence with passenger endorsement, mountaineering experience, and life skills) that younger applicants typically lack. Small businesses are also less inclined to engage due to limited staffing needs. Other barriers include the mismatch between peak travel seasons and school term times, limited student awareness of tourism careers, and high turnover due to less competitive benefits, which reduces incentives to invest in student engagement.

KEY TAKEAWAYS : IMMIGRATION

Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) Scheme

The Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) scheme continues to be used actively by accredited organisations, who see recent changes as having a positive impact on easing workforce challenges.

One in three organisations (33%) are accredited through the AEWV scheme to hire overseas workers. Accreditation is particularly high in the Hotels & Lodges sector (84%) and in Queenstown (83%). Among non-accredited organisations, only 14% are likely to seek accreditation in the future.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of accredited organisations are at least somewhat likely to hire workers through the scheme in the next 12 months. One in three organisations (36%) reported employees using interim visas while awaiting AEWV approval, nearly half of which (47%) were in the Hotels & Lodges sector. Most accredited organisations (77%) viewed the removal of the median wage requirement positively, considering it at least slightly helpful.

In February and March 2025, Immigration NZ made significant changes to the AEWV scheme: reducing the work experience requirement from three to two years; amending employer engagement requirements with MSD; increasing visa duration for ANZSCO level 4-5 roles to three years; and granting interim work rights to applicants. Over half of organisations (57%) reported that these changes made hiring easier, and a similar proportion expect them to have a moderate to significant impact on alleviating workforce shortages.

Since April 2024, Immigration NZ has required AEWS applicants for ANZSCO level 4 and 5 roles to meet English language standards. Among accredited organisations, only 6% expect this change to affect current AEWV workers seeking visa extensions.

Working Holiday Visas

One in three tourism organisations (33%) plan to hire Working Holiday Visa (WHV) holders to work during the 2025/26 summer period. Among them, nearly three-quarters (74%) consider WHV workers very or extremely important.

Specific Purpose Work Visas

In late 2024, the Government introduced a Specific Purpose Work Visa as an interim measure to provide short-term relief for employers in industries with seasonal peaks. To be eligible, the seasonal work must be directly affected by weather conditions (e.g., ski instructing). To date, only 2% of organisations have used this visa to hire staff.

KEY TAKEAWAYS : OUTLOOK

Business Confidence – Next 12 Months

Business confidence has increased significantly across the board since last year, with 86% of tourism organisations feeling confident about the year ahead and no significant difference in confidence between sectors or RTOs. Within this group, 15% are *very optimistic*, 38% are *optimistic*, and 33% are *somewhat optimistic*.

Confidence in Staffing – Next 3 Years

Tourism organisations hold a generally positive outlook on staff attraction and retention. Over the next three years, 10% are *completely confident*, 26% *very confident*, and 48% *somewhat confident* in their ability to attract and retain sufficient staff. Confidence is highest in the Hotels & Lodges sector, where 94% feel at least somewhat confident.

Additional FTE Roles - Next 3 Years

Most tourism organisations (71%) expect to recruit for at least one additional FTE role within the next three years, consistent with last year. This demand is especially strong in the Attractions, Conferences & Events, and the Hotels & Lodges sectors.

Concerns / Challenges – Next 12 Months

Rising costs and product pricing remain the primary challenges facing tourism organisations in the next 12 months. Weather-related challenges also remain a concern.

