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Media release

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## Survey finds severe mental health challenges among tourism operators

Eighteen months after New Zealand's borders closed, the mental health of tourism operators is under severe pressure, a new survey has found.

Three-quarters of respondents to the Tourism Industry Aotearoa survey were concerned about their personal health and wellbeing, with 9% being very concerned. Comments provided by respondents were heavily focussed on stress, uncertainty, mental toll, fatigue, depression and financial concerns.

The survey was carried out in July and August, just before the latest lockdown. It was released today by TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts during an industry webinar held to mark the day when **Tourism Summit Aotearoa** was scheduled in Kirikiriroa Hamilton. The Summit has been postponed to 29 November.

"The findings of this survey are sobering. TIA has surveyed members regularly through 2020 and 2021 but this is the first time we have specifically asked about health and wellbeing," Mr Roberts says.

"It is very worrying that a third of respondents (35%) are moderately or very concerned about their own mental health. Tourism operators accept the need to protect New Zealanders from COVID-19 but many owners of once thriving tourism businesses are now facing severe financial hardship. They are part of an industry that was the first to be hit by the pandemic and will be the last to recover.

"We know some have been able to attract more domestic travellers, but many provide services and products that are specifically designed to appeal to international visitors. With the increasing likelihood of another summer with borders closed, some operators are close to breaking point. The current Alert Level restrictions, while necessary, have stopped domestic tourism, adding to the existing stresses reported in this survey."

Overall, the survey found that tourism businesses' turnover has halved (down 48%); and four out of ten jobs have been lost (down 37%) compared to pre-COVID levels.

Thirteen respondents (5%) said their business would not be operating in six months' time, while 43 (16%) said they would be struggling to operate in six months.

However, longer-term confidence levels are healthier, with 70% of respondents expressing confidence that their businesses will be flourishing in five years' time compared to just 11% not being confident.

"We are eagerly looking forward to the day when we can all enjoy the freedom to travel again. The most useful things we can all do right now is regularly check in on each other, and encourage everyone to get vaccinated," Mr Roberts says.

### TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

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TIA has shared the survey findings with the Government and is working on how more mental health support can be provided to the industry.

To read the full survey report, go to <https://www.tia.org.nz/resources-and-tools/insight/covid-19-tourism-industry-survey-results/>

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## KEY FACTS

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Tourism in New Zealand was a \$114.8 million per day industry. Tourism delivered more than \$48 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributed another \$66.7 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism was New Zealand's biggest export earner, contributing \$17.5 billion or 20.1% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2020).
- 13.6% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand worked directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 384,186 people were working in the visitor economy.
- The [Tourism 2025 & Beyond](#) sustainable growth framework/Kaupapa Whakapakari Tāpoi has a vision of growing a sustainable tourism industry that benefits New Zealanders.

Visit [www.tia.org.nz](http://www.tia.org.nz) for more information

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