

2021/22 visitor insights report

Department of Conservation | Te Papa Atawhai
October 2022



Annual 2021/22 visitor insights report

This report looks at visitation to protected places, and the impacts observed there over 2021/22.

This report informs DOC staff on how things are tracking around the country, and where best to focus DOC's heritage and visitor work. It is not intended as an evaluation.

- ▶ [Overview of visitor activity over 2021/22 nationally](#)
- ▶ [Overview of visitor activity over 2021/22 nationally, by demographics](#)
- ▶ [Where did people go and stay? What did they do?](#)
- ▶ [Visitor activity across DOC's nine regions:](#)

<u>NNI</u>	<u>CNI & ENI¹</u>	<u>WSI</u>
<u>AKL</u>	<u>LNI</u>	<u>ESI</u>
<u>HWT</u>	<u>NSI</u>	<u>SSI</u>
- ▶ [Data and information sources](#)

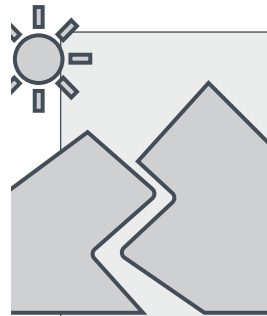
¹Future visitor insight reports will split up Central North Island and Eastern North Island.

2021/22 visitor activity – important takeaways



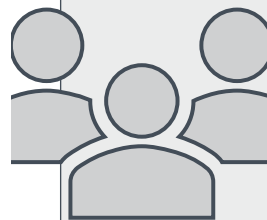
Visitor activity remains far below pre-pandemic levels

High-volume iconic destinations saw a huge decline in visitor activity over 2021/22 compared with pre-pandemic levels (2018/19).



Many New Zealanders reported visiting Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places

While many New Zealanders reported normally visiting protected places at least once per year, there were some New Zealanders who reported not visiting these places.



Around four out of five visitors had a good or exceptionally good experience

Visitors generally had positive responses to their experiences at protected places. Visitors' experiences of protected natural areas were slightly better than those of protected heritage places.

2021/22 visitor activity – important takeaways

Visitor activity remains far below pre-pandemic levels

High-volume iconic destinations saw a huge decline in visitor activity over 2021/22 compared with pre-pandemic levels (2018/19).

While Short Walks and Day Hikes were still popular, activity has significantly declined compared to pre-COVID levels. This effect was particularly evident in the South Island, at several pre-COVID high-volume locations.

An estimated 164,000 people camped at bookable campsites, 73,000 people stayed at bookable huts and 72,700 people experienced a Great Walk over 2021/22.

Looking ahead, demand is high for Great Walks over 2022/23. Great Walks bookings increased by 6% compared to the same time last year (when excluding the Heaphy Track).

Many NZers reported visiting Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places

While many New Zealanders reported normally visiting protected places at least once per year, there were some New Zealanders who reported not visiting these places.

Over 2021/22, 80% of respondents reported normally visiting a Protected Natural Area at least once per year. 75% reported normally visiting a Protected Heritage Place at least once in the past year.

Respondents' reported visitation frequency generally increased with total annual household income. Income appears to be a bigger factor for those choosing to visit nature for the first time.

Greater proportions of people living with a disability reported that they did not visit Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places at all in a year, compared to those with no disability.

Around four out of five visitors had a good or exceptionally good experience

Visitors generally had positive responses to their experiences at protected places. Visitors' experiences of Protected Natural Areas were slightly better than Protected Heritage Places.

Over 2021/22, just over four in five New Zealanders (83%) who visited a Protected Natural Area reported having a good or exceptionally good experience during their most recent visit.

Over 2021/22, around four in five New Zealanders (78%) who visited a Protected Heritage Place reported having a good or exceptionally good experience during their most recent visit.

The proportions of negative responses ('Poor' and 'Extremely poor') for both Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places were very low.



Overview of visitor activity over 2021/22 nationally

Many New Zealanders reported visiting protected places

During 2021/22 (July to June), 80% of respondents reported visiting¹ Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) at least once in a normal year. 75% reported visiting Protected Heritage Places (PHPs) at least once in the same period.²

NZers who reported heading outdoors to visit protected places (PNAs or PHPs) increased; from July 2021 to June 2022, the proportion of NZers visiting PNAs each month went from 42% to 50%, respectively. For the same period, the proportion of New Zealanders who reported visiting PHPs also increased from 29% to 34%. This has taken place amid COVID – including a national lockdown from Aug-Sep 2021, and various disruptions under the COVID-19 Protection Framework in 2022.

From July 2021 to June 2022, just under half of New Zealanders (45%) reported visiting a PNA within the last month. Around one in three New Zealanders (30%) reported visiting a PHP within the last month.

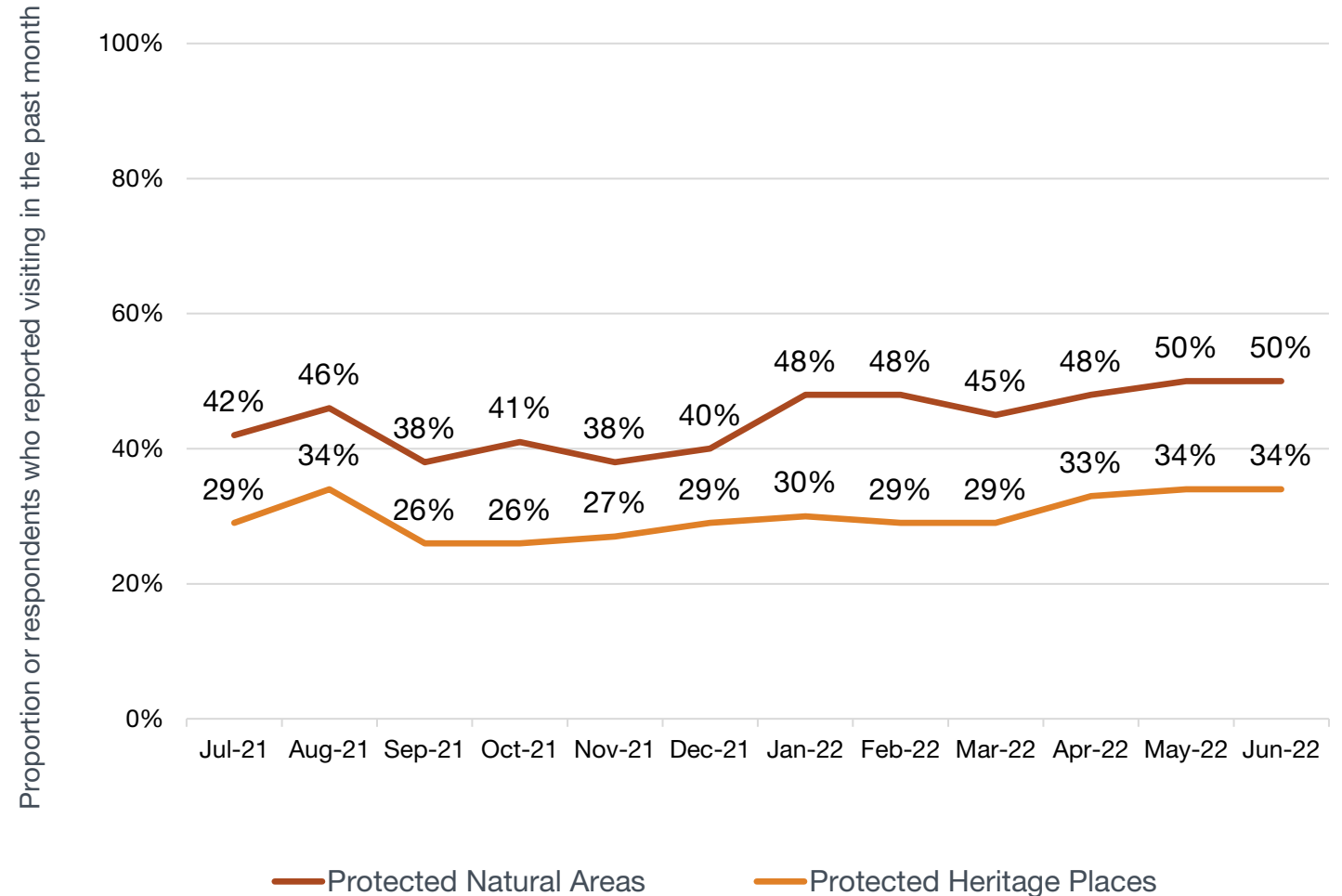


Figure 1: The proportion of respondents who visited any DOC-managed Protected Natural Areas or Protected Heritage Places within the last month.

¹This data was collected from the Public Pulse of Conservation survey. Respondents were asked to estimate their normal visitation within a period. This provides an indication of visitor numbers, not actual visitation numbers.

²In previous visitor insight reports we have reported on the proportion of New Zealanders visiting the outdoors. This report focuses specifically on Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places.

Around four out of five visitors had a good or exceptionally good experience

Visitors generally had positive responses to their experiences at Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) and Protected Heritage Places (PHPs).

Visitors' experiences of PNAs were slightly better than those of PHPs; PNAs evoked greater proportions of both types of positive responses ('Good' and 'Exceptionally good'). The proportion of 'Acceptable/OK' responses, however, was greater for PHPs (20%). The proportions of negative responses ('Poor' and 'Extremely poor') for both PNAs and PHPs were very low.

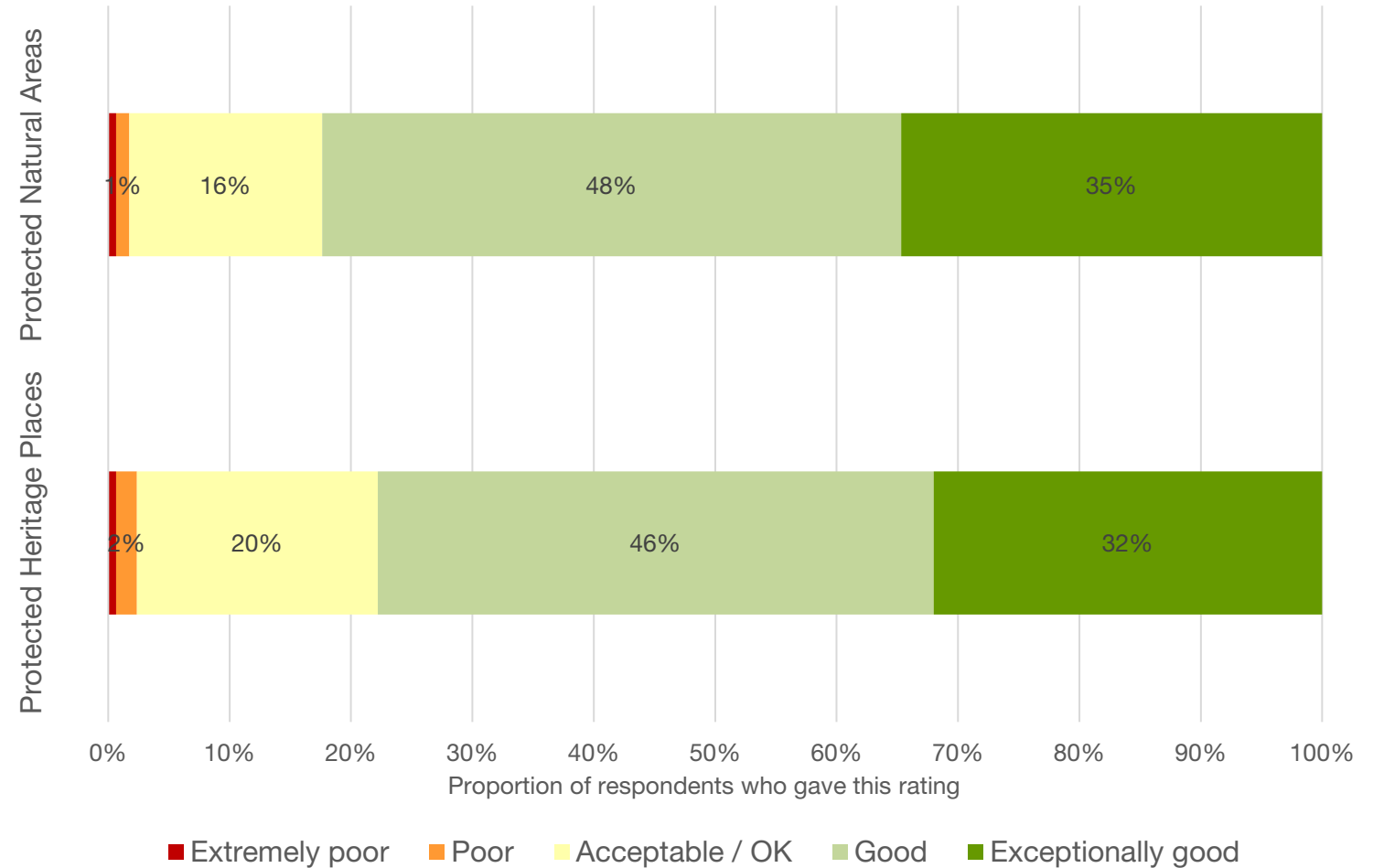


Figure 2: The rounded proportion of respondents who have given certain ratings for their most recent visit to Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places. Note, 1% of respondents gave their most recent visit an extremely poor rating.

¹As this is the first visitor insights report using Public Pulse of Conservation data, we are currently unable to make a comparison to previous years.

Over a third of visitors observed damage from other visitors

During 2021/22, over a third of visitors (38%) to Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) reported that they had noticed damage from other visitors. Similarly, 36% of visitors to Protected Heritage Places (PHPs) noticed damage from other visitors.

Respondents reported the various types of damage they had observed from other visitors. At both PNAs and PHPs, damage to natural landscapes was most observed (16% and 13%, respectively).

Damage to visitor facilities and infrastructure was second-most observed at both places (both 9%). Overcrowding and harm to native plants and animals were observed more at PNAs; damage to cultural/historic features was observed more at PHPs.

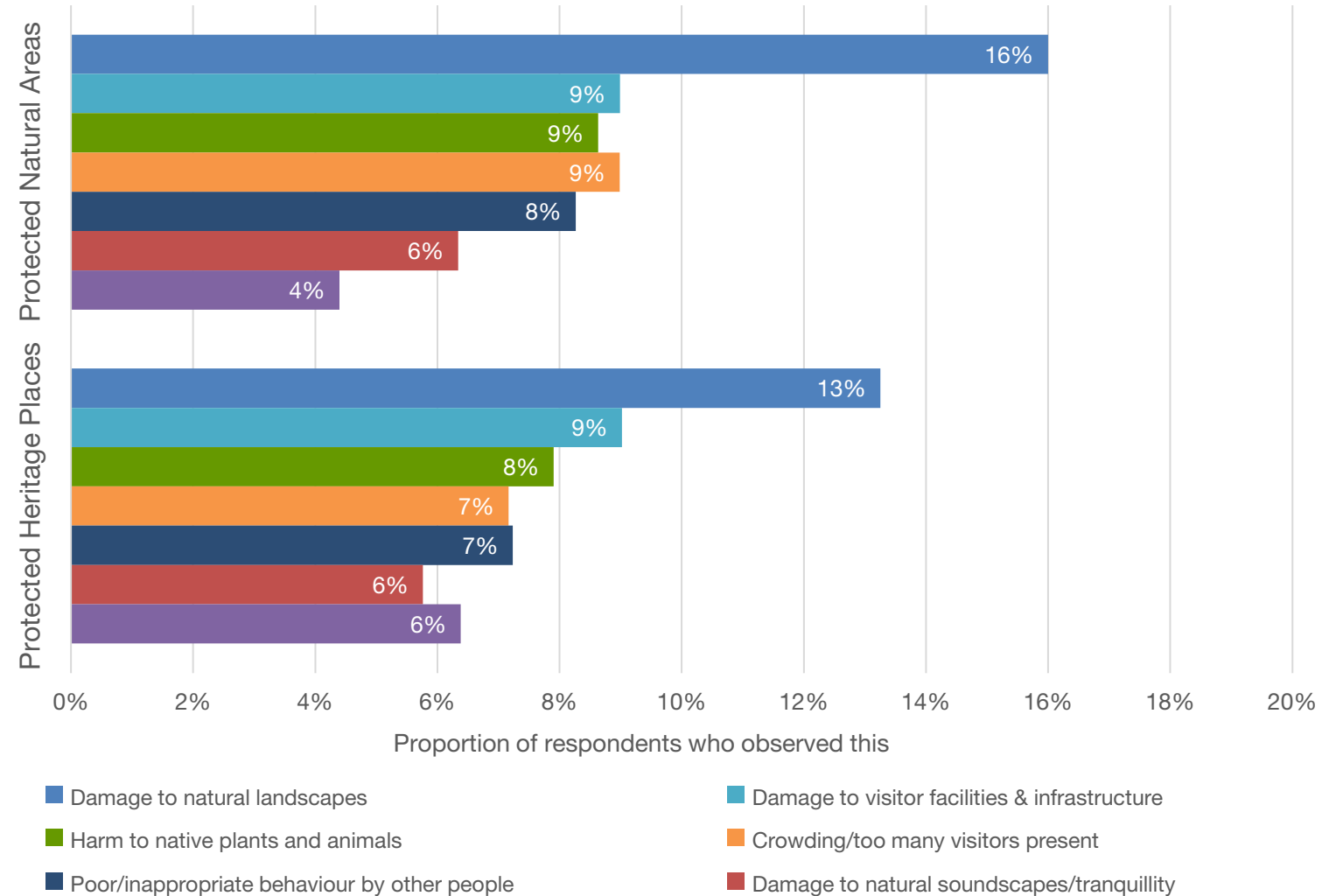


Figure 3: The proportion of respondents who have noticed certain types of damage from other visitors, on their most recent visit to Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places.

¹As this is the first visitor insights report using Public Pulse of Conservation data, we are currently unable to make a comparison to previous years.



Overview of visitor activity over 2021/22 nationally: by demographics

NZers with lower household income report lower visitation

Respondents' reported visitation frequencies generally increased with annual household income. This pattern was reflected between Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) and Protected Heritage Places (PHPs).

From the lowest income bracket, the proportion of respondents who reported that they do not visit either PNAs or PHPs at all in a normal year (28% and 32%, respectively) was around double that of the highest income bracket (12% and 17%, respectively).

The proportion who reported normally visiting more than 10 times a year remained very similar between income brackets.

This suggests that income is more of a factor for those choosing to visit nature or heritage for the first time.

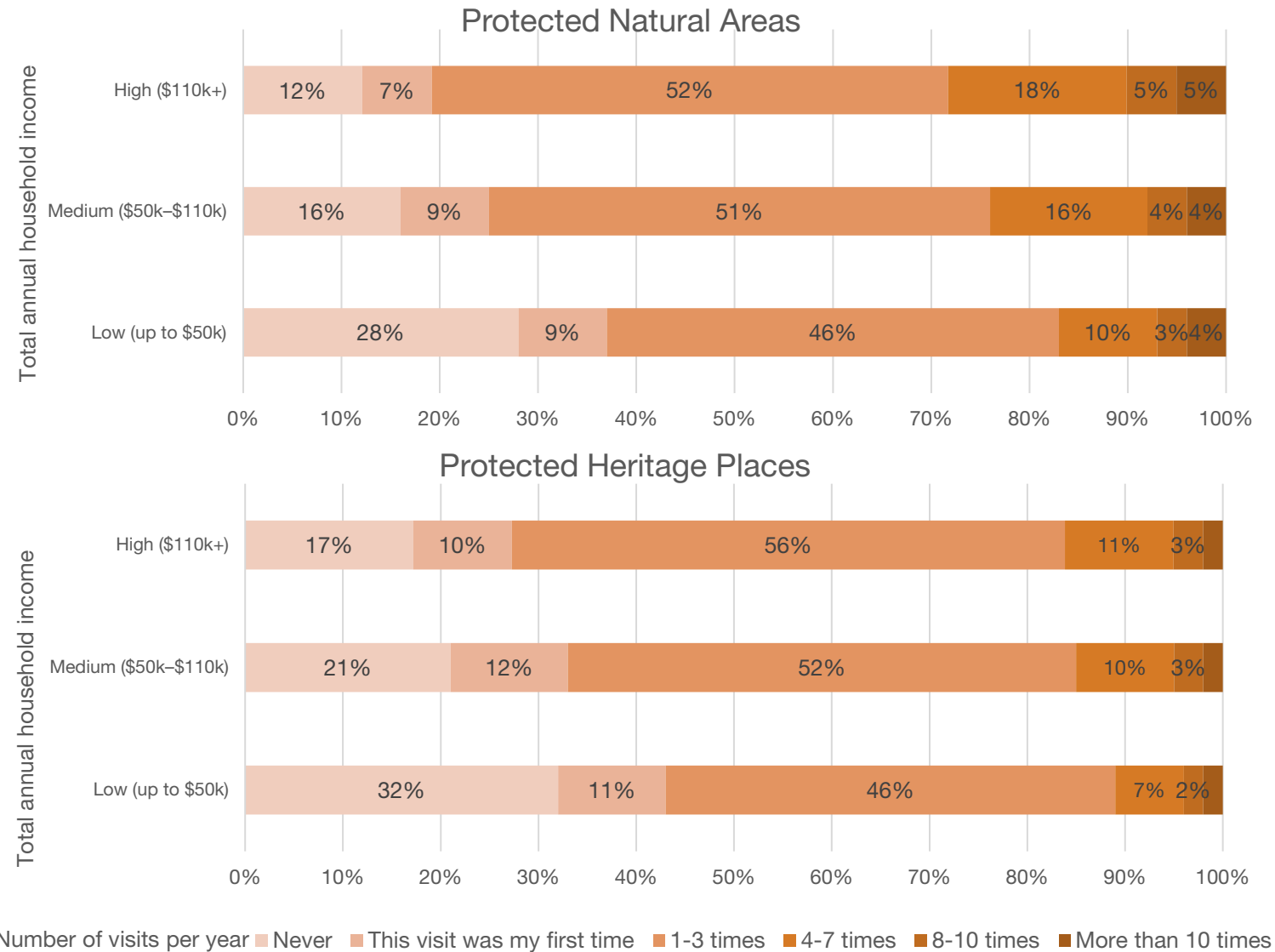


Figure 5: The proportion of respondents from a given income bracket who reported visiting Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places at different annual frequencies.

Reported visitation varies by ethnicity – especially in frequency

Māori reported visiting protected places most often, compared to other ethnic groups; they had the greatest average reported number of monthly visits for both Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) and Protected Heritage Places (PHPs).

A larger proportion of Asian respondents reported visiting protected places than any other ethnic group. They had the greatest proportions of respondents who reported visiting PNAs and PHPs at least once in a normal year.

European and ‘Other’¹ groups had a lower proportion who reported visiting protected places. Both groups had high proportions who reported that they do not visit either PNAs or PHPs at all in a normal year (25% and 26%, respectively). Europeans had the lowest average number of reported visits per month.

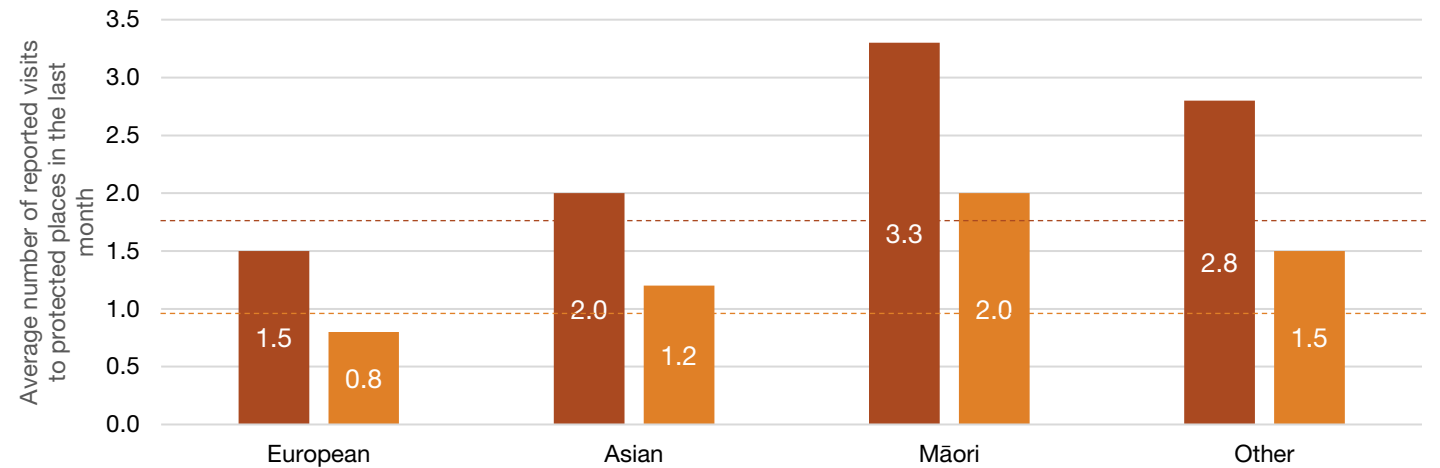


Figure 6: The average number of reported visits to Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places in the last month, by ethnic group¹; overall averages are also provided.

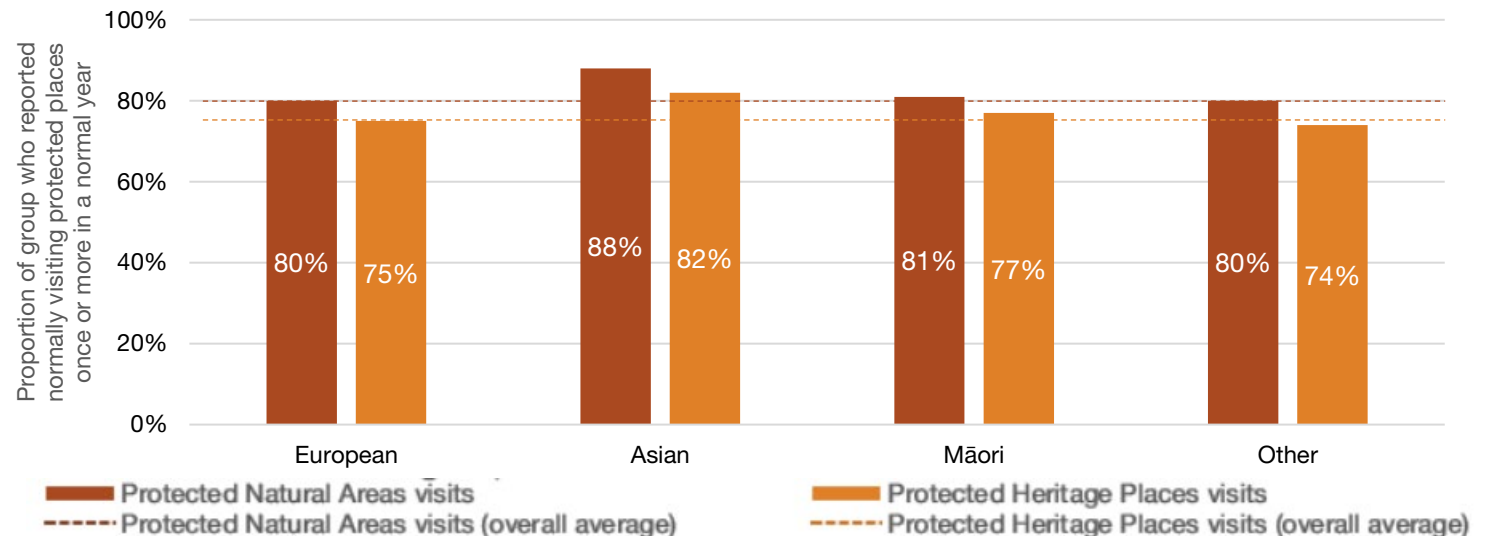


Figure 7: The proportion of a given ethnic group¹ who reported normally visiting Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places at least once in a normal year; overall averages are also provided.

¹Individual ethnicities are combined into broader ethnic groups (e.g., Asian) within the Public Pulse of Conservation dashboard.

People living with a disability report visiting protected places less

Compared to non-disabled respondents, a lower proportion of people living with a disability reported normally visiting Protected Natural Areas (PNAs) (82% vs. 72%, respectively) and Protected Heritage Places (PHPs) (76% vs. 68%, respectively) at least once per year.

However, those with disabilities who did report normally visiting protected places once or more per year tended to visit more frequently than non-disabled visitors.

This has led to greater reported visitation frequencies for people living with a disability compared to non-disabled respondents, for both PNAs (2.6 vs. 1.6 visits per month, respectively) and PHPs (2.0 vs. 0.8 visits per month, respectively).

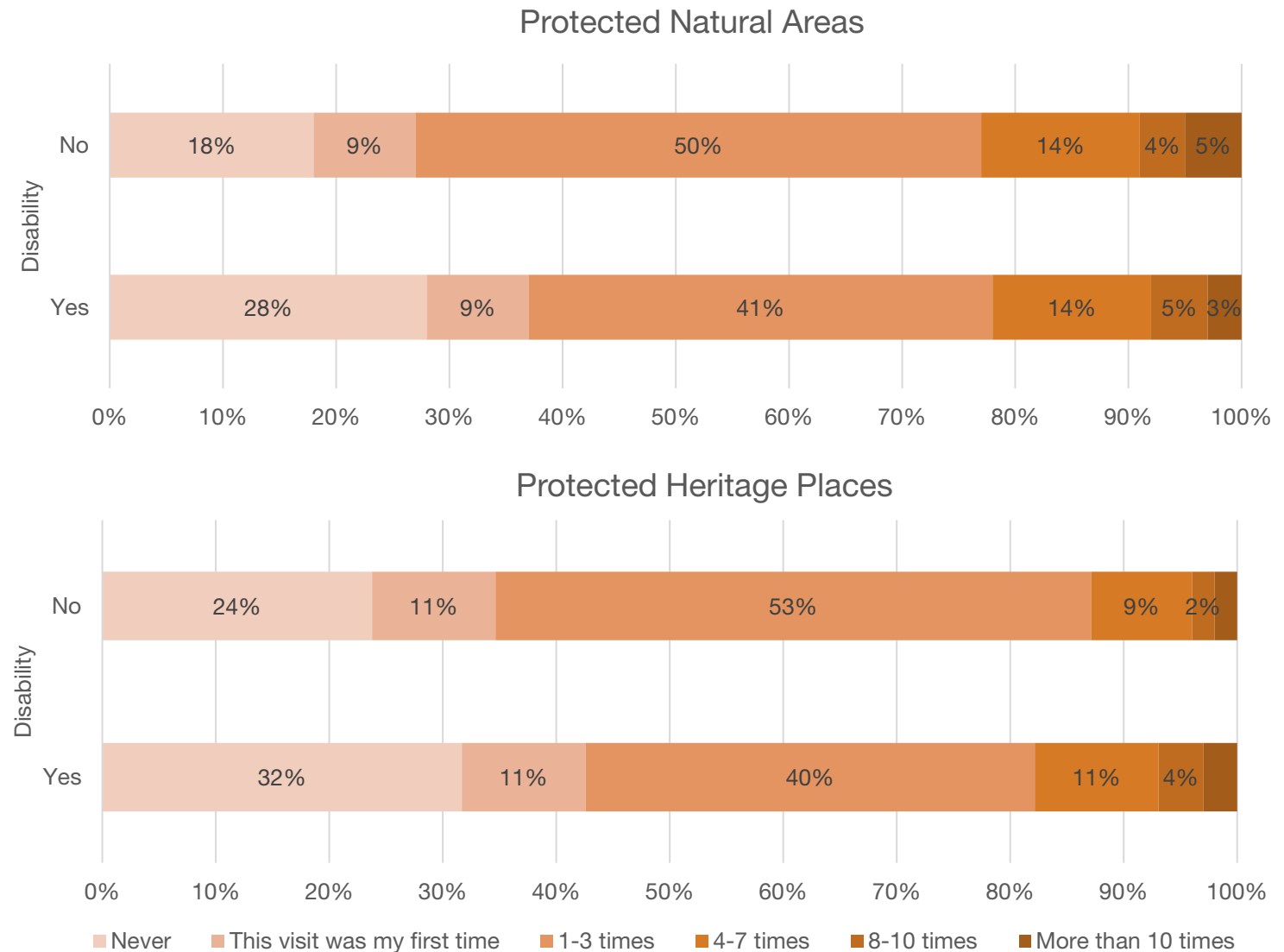


Figure 8: The proportion of respondents living with a disability vs. those without who reported visiting Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places at different annual frequencies.

Generally, reported visitation decreases with age

The proportions who reported normally visiting protected places at least once per year decreased with age. Overall, the youngest age bracket (18-34yrs) had the greatest proportion of respondents who reported normally visiting PNAs and PHPs at least once per year (88% and 80%, respectively).

The frequency of reported visitation to protected places also decreases with age – shown by a decrease in reported visits per month, for both PNAs and PHPs.

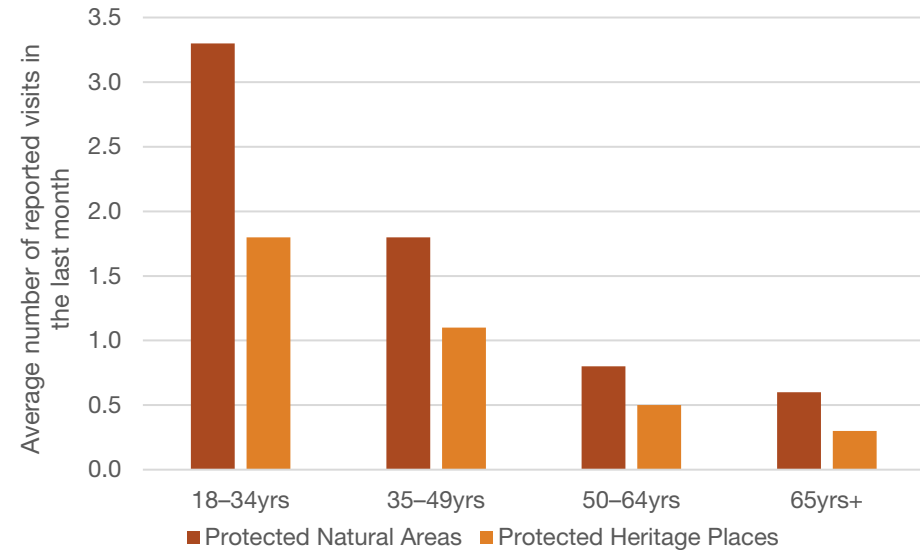


Figure 9: The average number of reported visits to Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places in the last month, by age group.

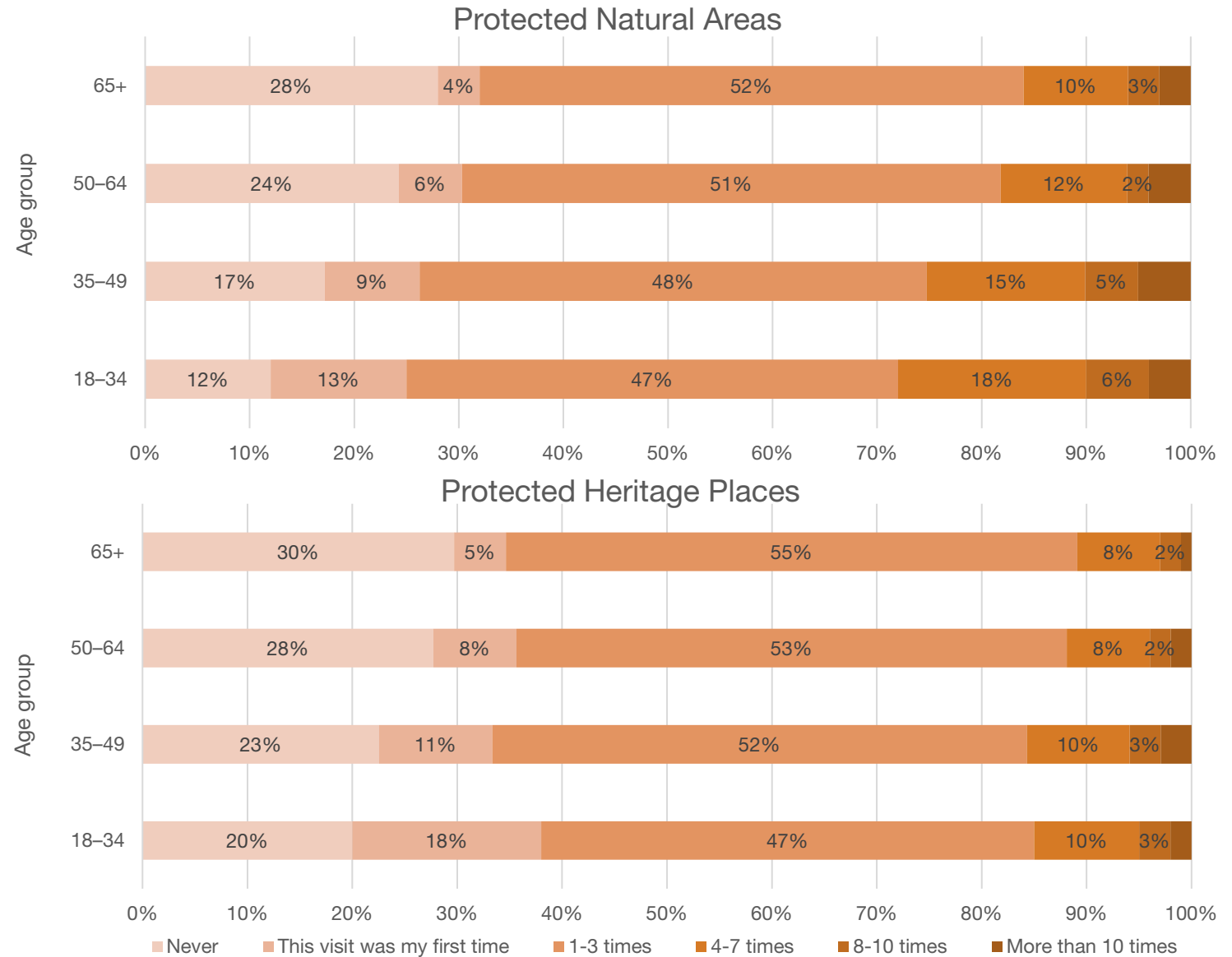


Figure 10: The proportion of visitors who reported visiting Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places at different annual frequencies, by age group.



Where did people go and stay?
What did they do?

Leisurely activities were popular over 2021/22

Short walks (less than 3 hours) were the most popular activities when visiting both Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Areas across New Zealand. Sightseeing and photography were also popular activities. Swimming in the outdoors has been significantly more popular over this summer period.

People living in the North Island were more likely to connect with culture and undertake diving/snorkelling activities. South Islanders were more likely to do short walks, and less likely to go swimming outdoors or connect with culture.

Those of European ethnicity were more likely to do short walks, and less likely to go camping or connect with culture. Those of Asian ethnicity were more likely to do sightseeing, photography and day walks. Māori were more likely to connect with culture and history, go camping, swim outdoors, or go diving/snorkelling. They were also less likely to undertake short walks or do sightseeing.

Table 1: Top 10 activities undertaken during the respondents' most recent visit to Protected Natural Areas and Protected Heritage Places in 2021/22.

Activities (July 2021 – June 2022)	Protected Natural Areas	Protected Heritage Places
Short walk (less than 3 hours)	37%	34%
Sightseeing	29%	30%
Photography	24%	22%
Bird/wildlife watching	24%	17%
Day walk/hike (over 3 hours but not overnight)	23%	15%
Connecting with nature (learning about New Zealand's environment)	23%	18%
Picnic, barbeque, etc	20%	14%
Connecting with history (learning about New Zealand's history)	13%	26%
Camping	13%	11%
Connecting with culture (learning about Māori culture)	10%	15%

Visitor activity remains far below pre-pandemic levels

While many New Zealanders were out and about, high-volume iconic destinations saw a huge decline in visitor activity over 2021/22 compared to pre-pandemic levels (2018/19).

This significant decline is expected given the closure of international borders and with parts of the country at different Alert Levels from August to November 2021.

Places that have been most impacted include:

- Milford Sound/Piopirotahi¹ – down 86%
- Punakaiki Pancake Rocks and Blowholes – down 85%
- Franz Josef Glacier – down 83%
- Roys Peak Track – down 83%
- Tongariro Alpine Crossing – down 79%.

Visitor activity over 2021/22 dropped at all the selected high-volume places, except for Mangawhai Cliffs Walkway in Northland.

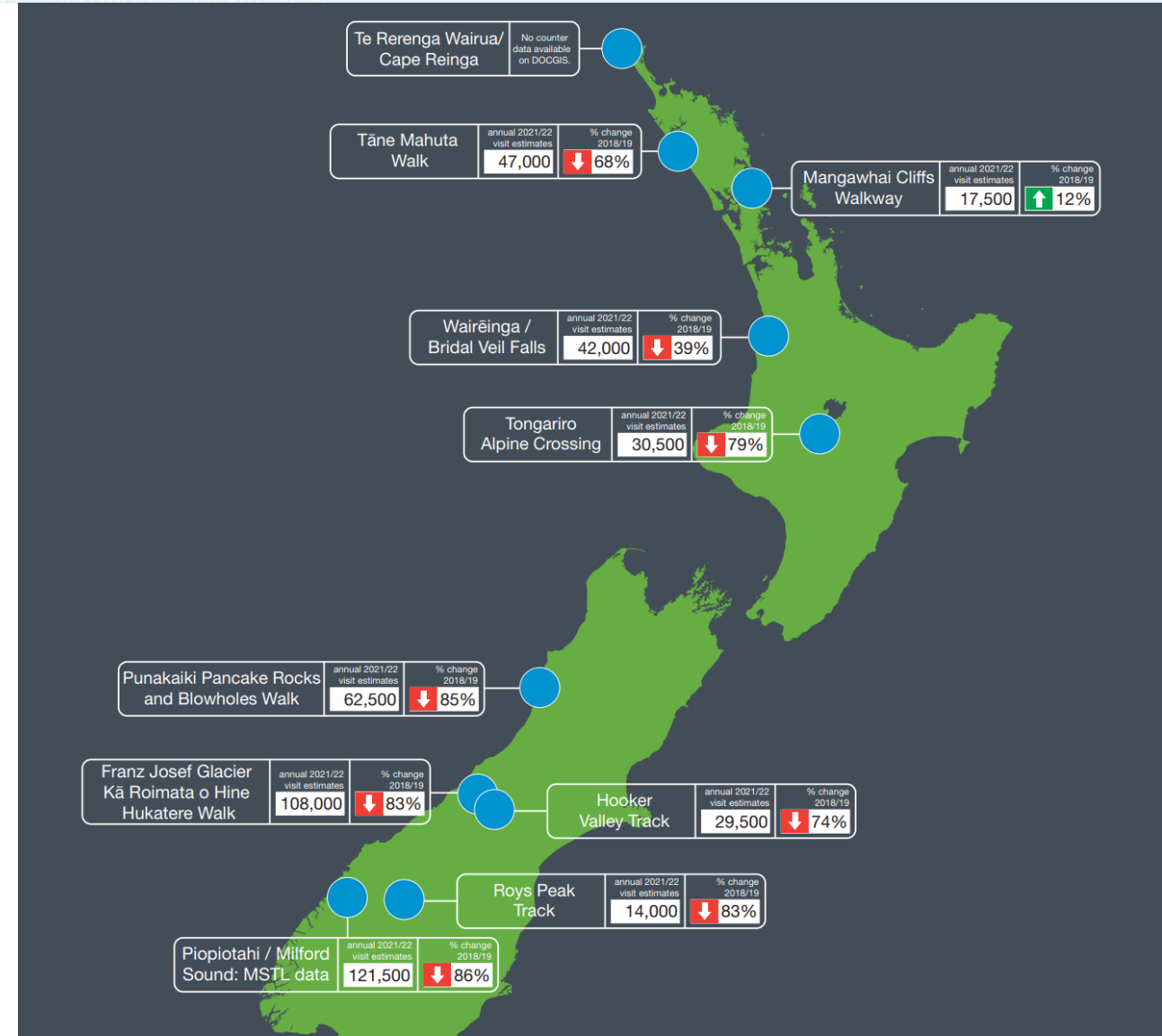


Illustration 1: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to each site.

¹Data is from MSTL (Milford Sound Tourism Ltd.) passenger figures.

Short Walks visitor activity is down since COVID-19

Generally, Short Walks activity has significantly declined compared to pre-COVID levels. This effect was particularly evident in the South Island, at several high-volume locations:

- Blue Lakes/Tasman Glacier, Aoraki – down 75%
- Blue Pools Track, Makarora – down 73%
- Cape Foulwind Walkway, West Coast – down 72%
- Devil’s Punchbowl, Arthur’s Pass – down 71%
- Wainui Falls Track, Nelson/Tasman – down 60%

Visitor activity on the Mangawhai Cliffs Walkway, however, has increased since pre-COVID levels (by 12%).

Hokitika Gorge welcomed significant visitor numbers (41,500). This was the most popular of the Short Walks with available data for 2021/22 (data was unavailable for Cathedral Cove, which was most popular last year).

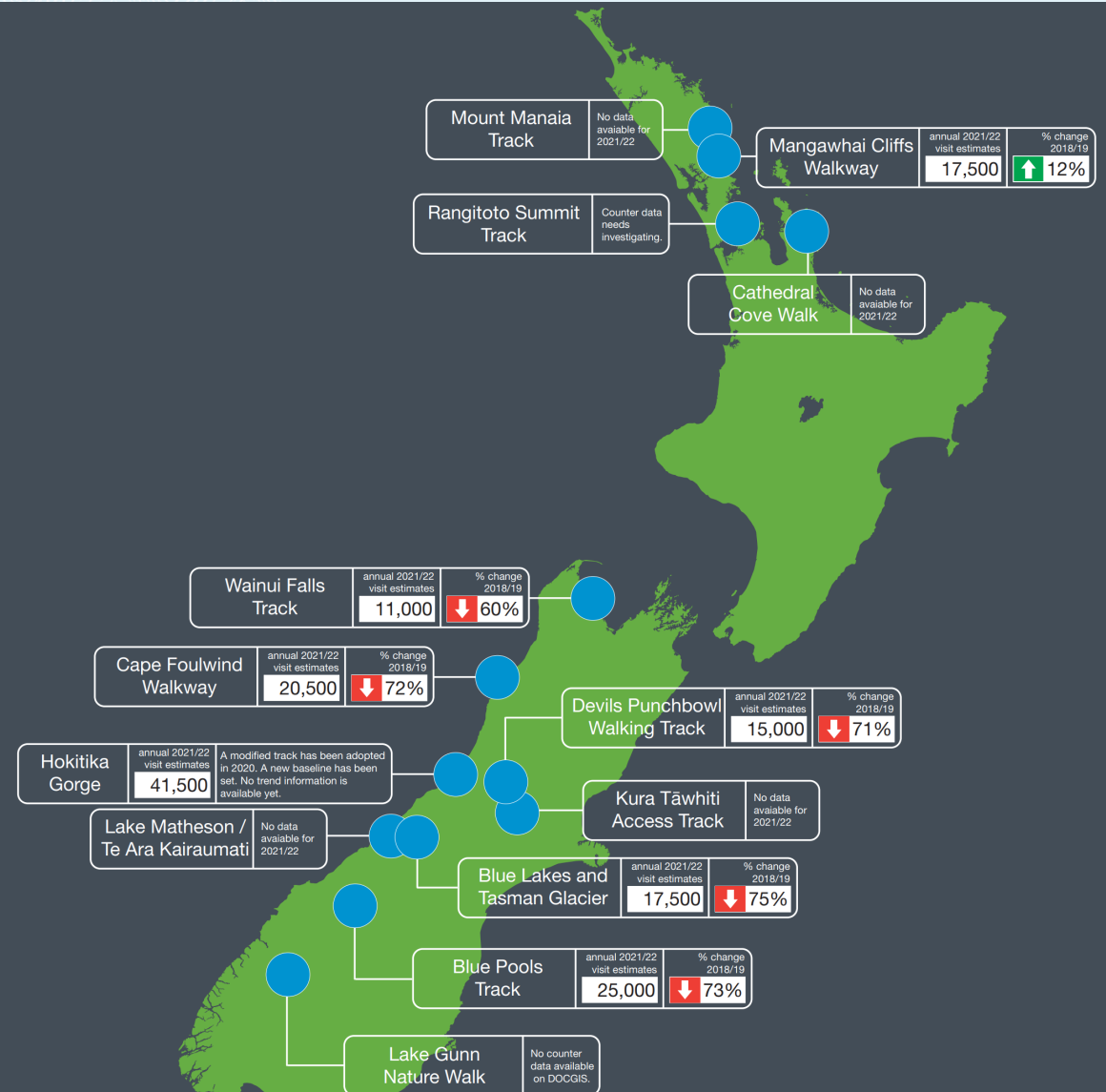


Illustration 2: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at Short Walks. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to each site.

Day Hikes activity remains comparatively low

Popular Day Hikes significantly decreased in activity over 2021/22, compared to pre-COVID levels, as expected.

Several high-volume Day Hikes suffered similar large declines in activity, including:

- Roys Peak Track, Wānaka - down 83%
- Tongariro Alpine Crossing, Central Plateau - down 79%
- Hooker Valley Track, Aoraki - down 74%.

Visitor activity at Te Whara Track (Northland), a lower-volume site, has also decreased since pre-COVID levels (by 43%).

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing remains the most popular amongst Day Hikes, despite losing over an estimated 100,000 annual visitors since pre-COVID levels.

The Hooker Valley and Roys Peak Tracks also accounted for the loss of significant visitor numbers - losing around 80,000 and 65,000 annual visitors since 2018/19, respectively.

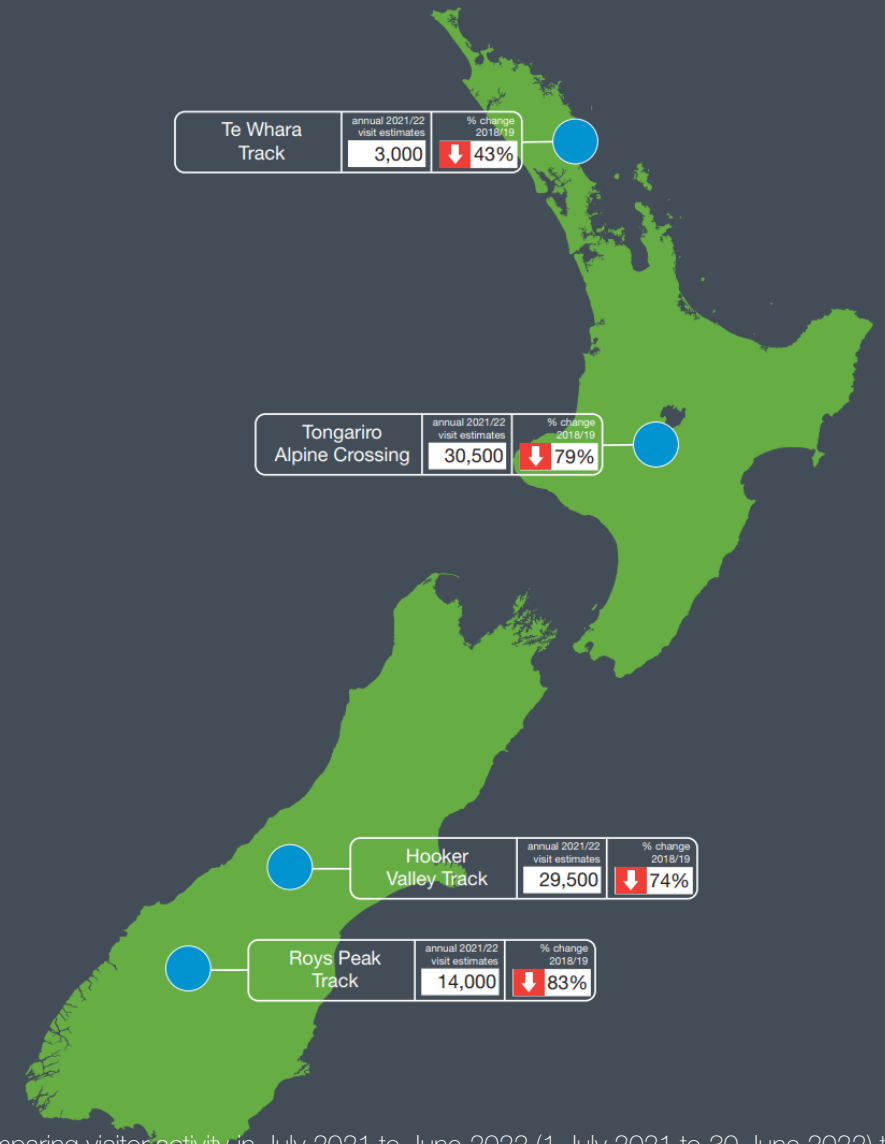


Illustration 3: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at Day Hikes. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to each site.

Tohu Whenua visitation is down from pre-pandemic levels

Tohu Whenua sites located on public conservation land have declined in visitor activity since pre-COVID levels.

Arrowtown Chinese Settlement has seen significant declines amongst Tohu Whenua sites. The destination has lost 64% of its annual visitor activity since 2018/19, causing it to drop below Bannockburn Sluicings (Central Otago) as the most visited Tohu Whenua site (on public conservation land). Bannockburn Sluicings was a filming location for *The Power of the Dog*; a spike in visitor activity was observed there in April 2022, following the Academy Awards.

Otago Central Rail Trail and Ruapekapeka Pā (Northland) have also experienced significant declines since pre-COVID.

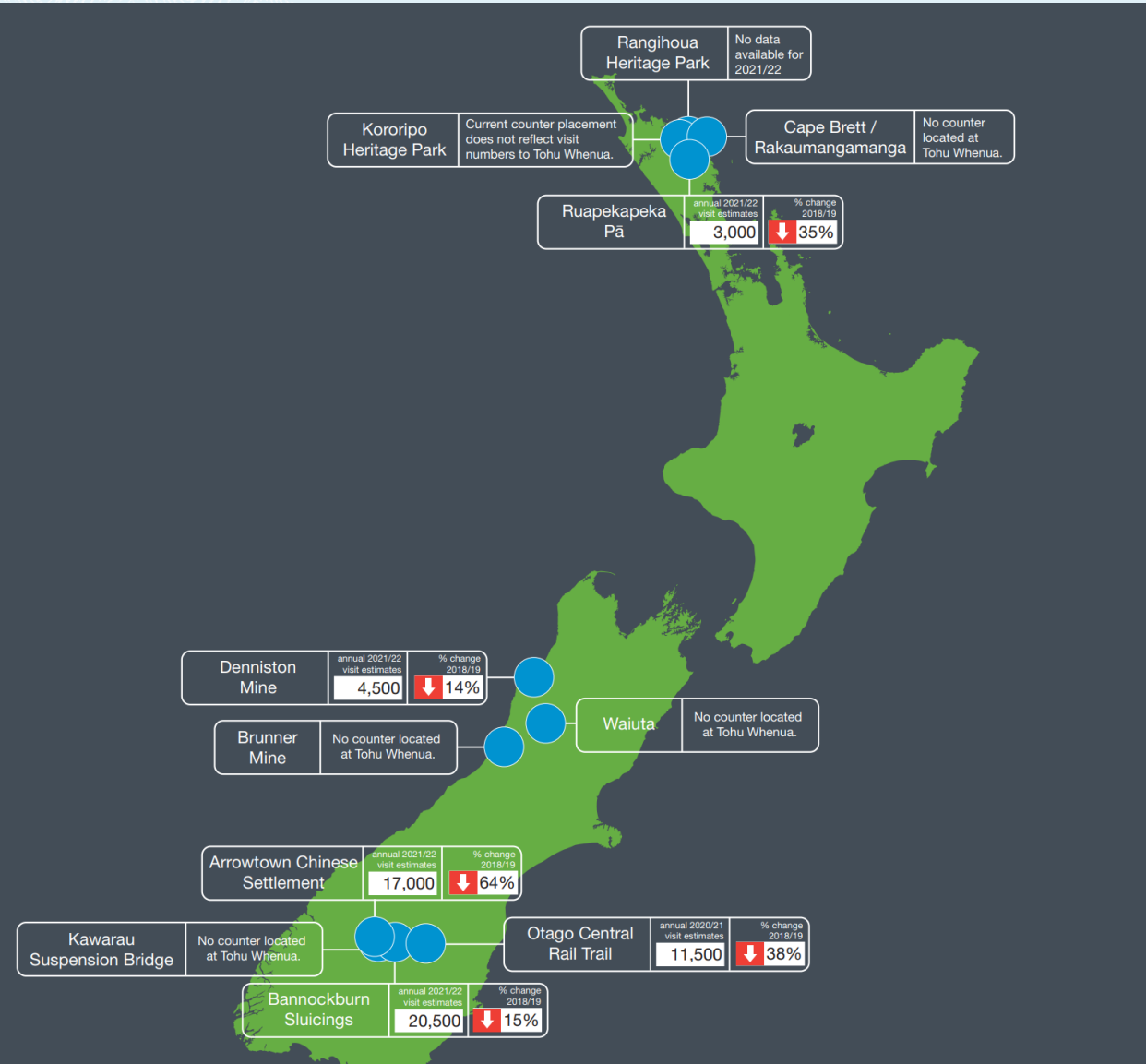


Illustration 4: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at Tohu Whenua. Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to each site.

Great Walks over 2021/22

Even with COVID-19 disruptions, there was high demand for Great Walks. Around 72,700 people stayed overnight at Great Walk huts and campsites over the year (booking period starts 1 July 2021 and ends 30 June 2022).

Many New Zealanders took the opportunity to experience the Great Walks; 96% of overnight visitors in 2021/22 were domestic. However, the total number of domestic visitors had dropped by 17% compared to the previous year.

Great Walk hut occupancy rates were an average of 46%, busiest during December, January and April. The Milford Track was at full capacity during the Great Walks season. Routeburn and Kepler huts were also popular. Paparoa huts were popular over summer months.

With by far the most accommodation spaces available, the Abel Tasman Coastal Track remains the busiest Great Walk over 2021/22 – with double the amount of people who stayed at other Great Walks.¹

¹ The Abel Tasman, Paparoa, Heaphy and Rakiura tracks are bookable year-round. The Whanganui Journey and alpine Great Walks (Milford, Routeburn, Kepler and Tongariro Northern Circuit) require bookings during the Great Walks season (October to April).

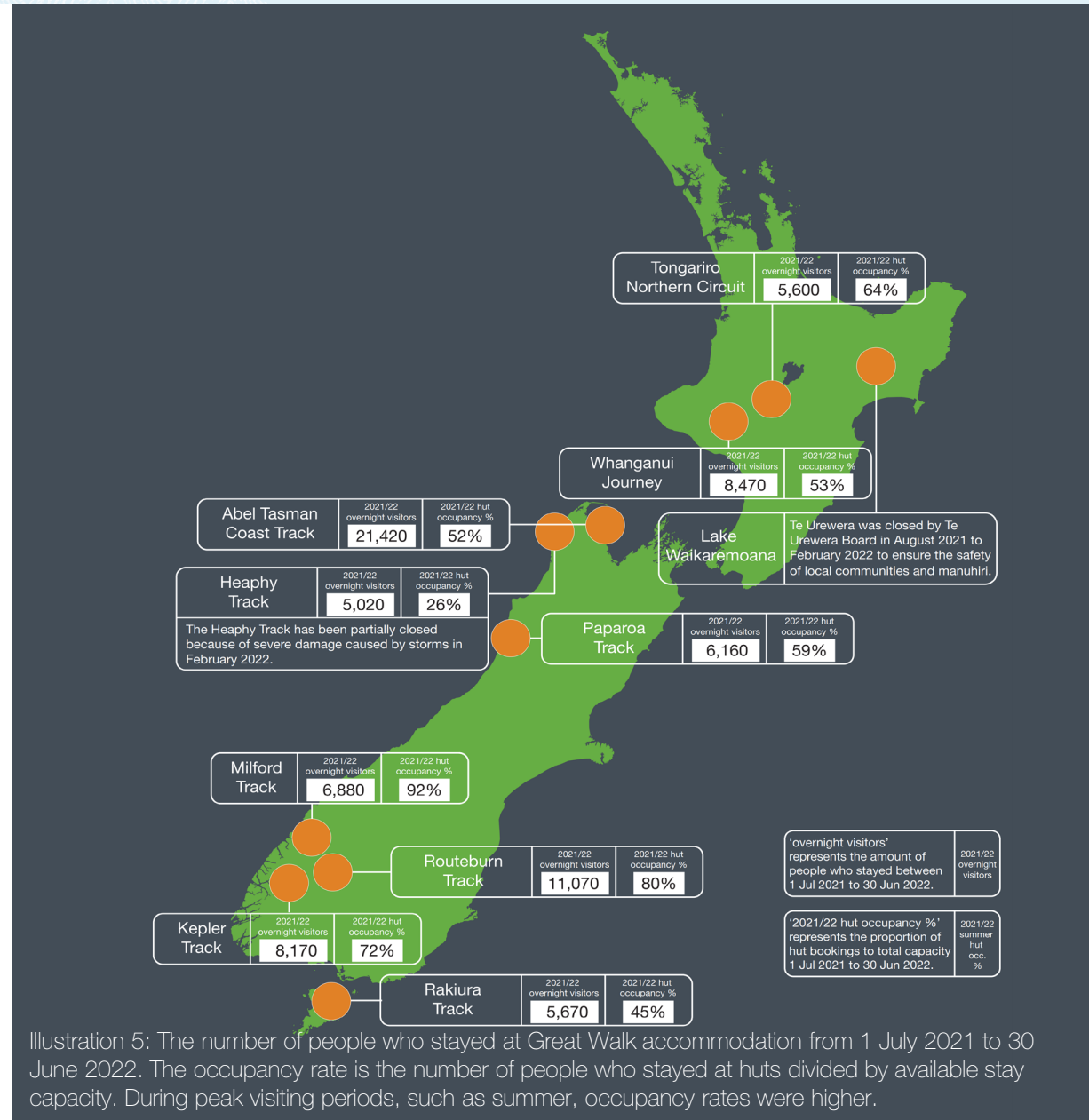


Illustration 5: The number of people who stayed at Great Walk accommodation from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. The occupancy rate is the number of people who stayed at huts divided by available stay capacity. During peak visiting periods, such as summer, occupancy rates were higher.

Looking ahead, strong demand for Great Walks continues in 2022/23

Overall fewer bednights¹ were booked on the Great Walks over 2022/23 than the same time last year – from 167,800 to 159,200. This decrease is largely due to the partial closure of the Heaphy Track. When excluding the Heaphy Track, bookings increased by 6%.²

For 2022/23, the proportion of bookings belonging to New Zealanders has fallen to 82% (down 8%) with the return of international visitors, compared to 2021/22 booked visitation. International visitors make up 18% of total bookings for 2022/23.

The Abel Tasman Coast Track is shaping up to be the busiest Great Walk this season, with 35,500 bednights booked – up 9%.

The Milford Track remains popular with all available spaces on the track reserved for the upcoming season in three minutes.

The Tongariro North Circuit, Kepler Track and Whanganui Journey have an increase in bednights booked over 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 – up 25%, 18% and 16%, respectively.

There is currently good availability to book the Tongariro Northern Circuit, Whanganui Journey and Lake Waikaremoana Great Walks.

Table 2: Comparing the amount of bednights booked between July 2022 to June 2023 as of 1 August 2022 to the previous year, between July 2021 to June 2022 as of 1 August 2021.

Great Walk	Bednights	% change
Abel Tasman Coast Track	35,500	9%
Heaphy Track	3,100	-85%
Kepler Track	25,800	18%
Lake Waikaremoana <small>(Data provided courtesy of Tūhoe – Te Uru Taumatua)</small>	7,200	-36%
Milford Track	22,300	no change
Paparoa Track	12,800	-2%
Rakiura Track	9,800	11%
Routeburn Track	23,500	11%
Tongariro Northern Circuit	9,100	25%
Whanganui Journey	10,100	16%
Great Walks – total	159,200	-5%

¹ A bednight is one person (assigned to one bed) for one night. This differs from other Great Walk metrics within this report (the number of people who stayed overnight at accommodation).

² Excluding the Heaphy Track provides the opportunity to see underlying trends that are not impacted by events such as track or facility closures.

Popular bookable campgrounds hosted over 150,000 visitors in 2021/22

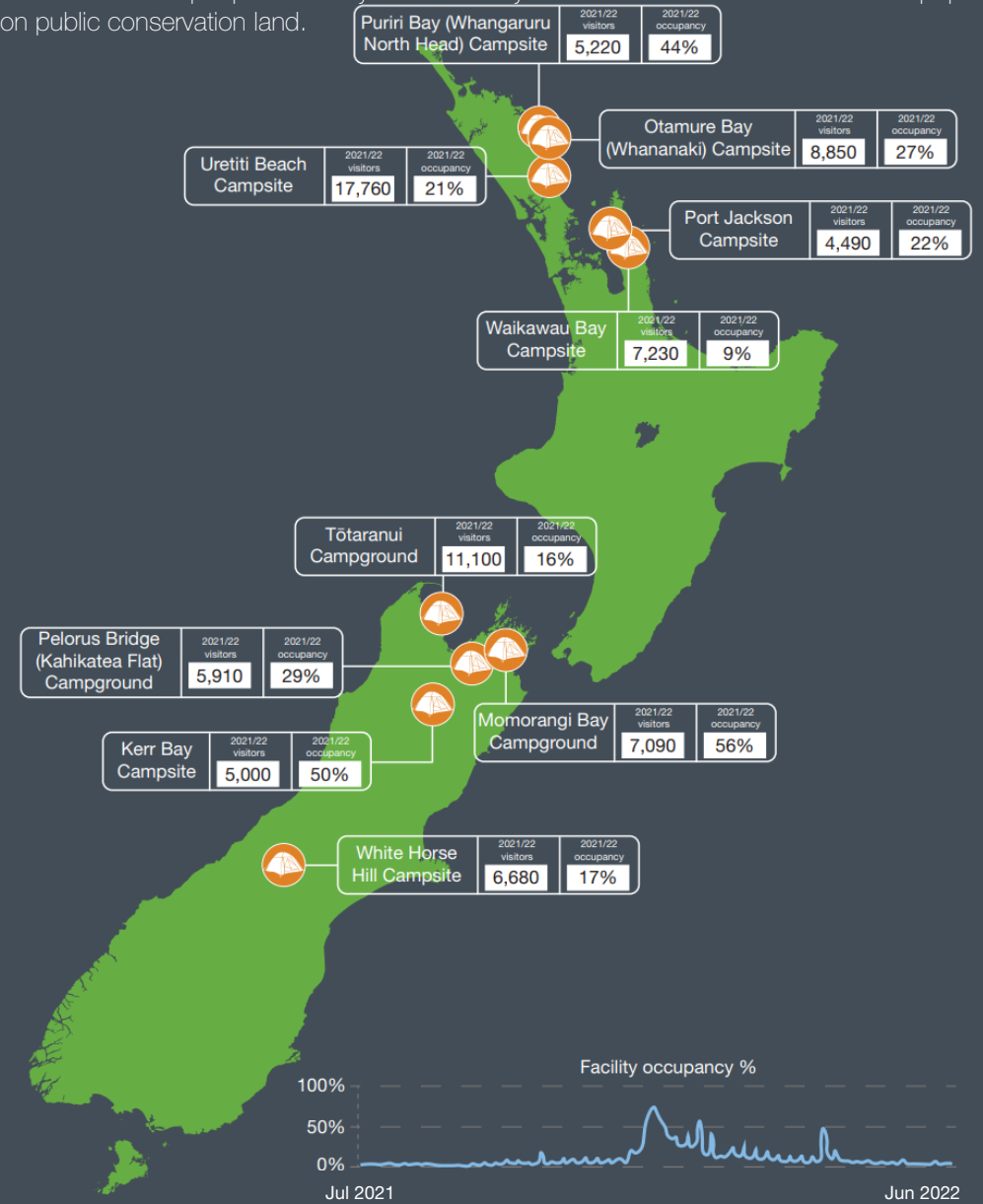
Bookable campgrounds attracted around 164,000 overnight visitors in 2021/22 (July to June), down only 3% from last year.

63% of overnight visitation was during the summer period (December to February). Visitation peaked over the Christmas/New Year period and long weekends, when many campgrounds were at or near full capacity. Over summer, Uretiti Beach (Northland), Tōtaranui (Abel Tasman), Waikawau Bay (Coromandel) and Otamure Bay (Whananaki, Northland) proved most popular.

Uretiti Beach Campsite remained the most popular bookable campground in 2021/22 overall, attracting 17,760 visitors (though down from last year). Tōtaranui Campground attracted 11,100 overnight visitors (down from 15,030 in 2020/21).

Overnight visitor numbers decreased at several other popular campgrounds, including Otamure Bay (Whananaki) and Puriri Bay (Whangaruru North Head) Campsites.

Illustration 6: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at the most popular campsites on public conservation land.



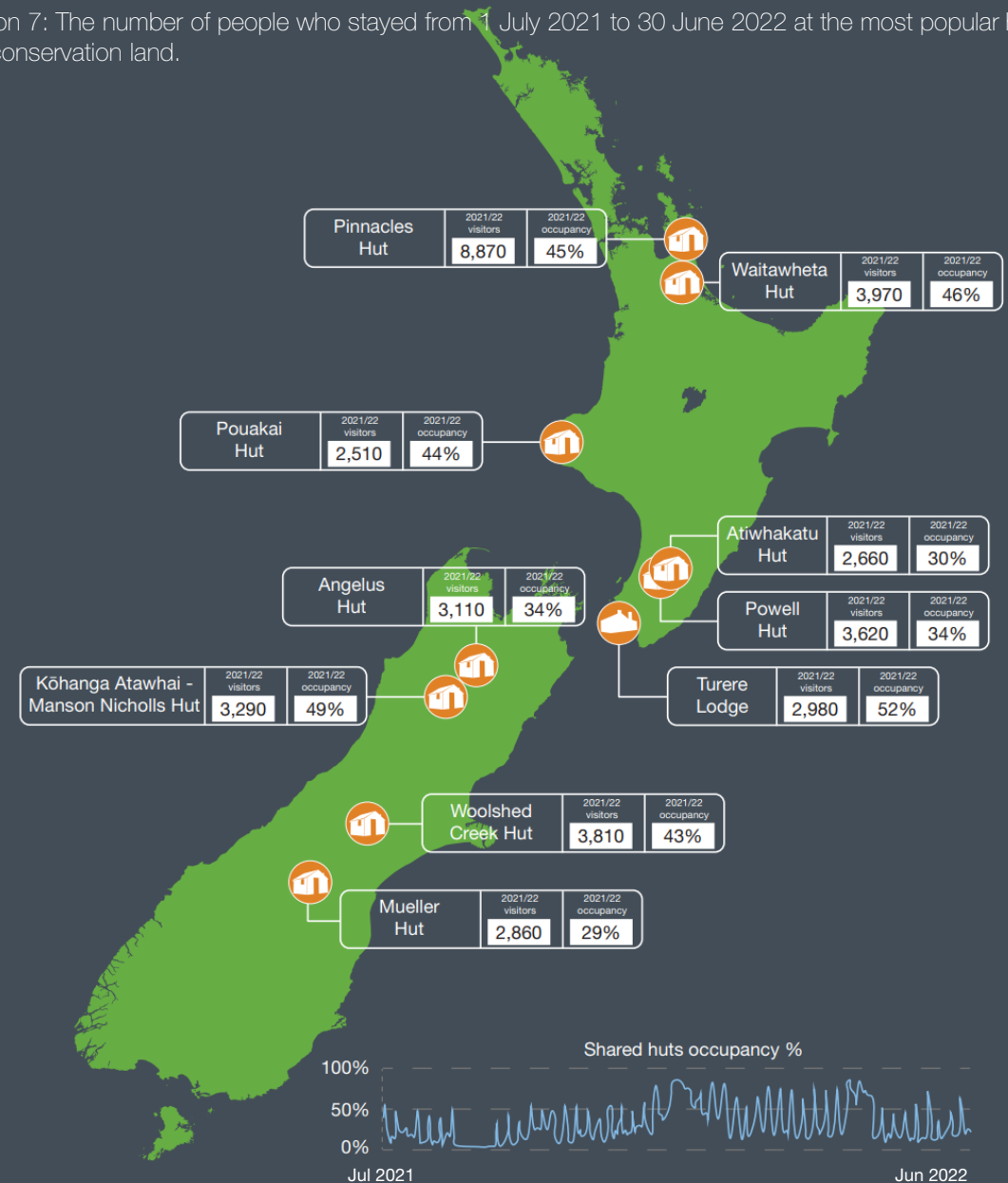
Popular bookable huts host 73,000 visitors over 2021/22

Bookable huts remained a stable attraction for domestic visitors; they hosted around 73,000 overnight visitors in 2021/22 (July to June), down only 4% from last year. 38% of overnight visitation was during the summer period (December to February).

Hut occupancy rates averaged 46% occupancy over 2021/22. Visitation peaked over the Christmas/New Year period and long weekends, when many popular huts were at or near full capacity. Over summer, Pinnacles Hut (Coromandel), Mueller Hut (Aoraki) and Angelus Hut (Nelson) proved most popular.

Pinnacles Hut remained the most popular bookable hut in 2021/22 overall, attracting 8,870 visitors and reaching an average of 45% occupancy. This was, however, a 42% decrease in total visitors from the previous year.

Illustration 7: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at the most popular huts on public conservation land.



Iconic biking trail activity was varied over 2021/22

Visitor activity on iconic biking trails followed varied trends in 2021/22 when compared to pre-COVID (2018/19) levels.

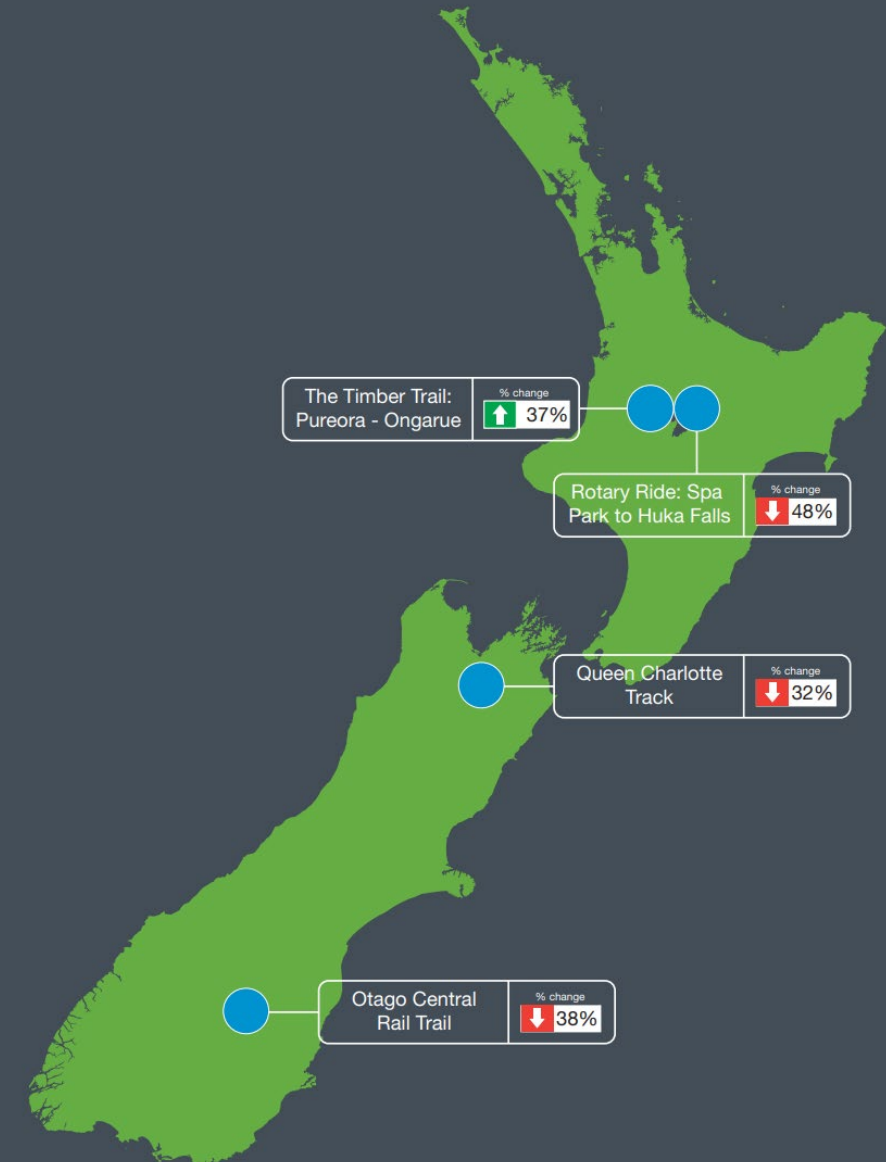
Trails that have experienced significant decreases include:

- Rotary Ride (Taupō) – down 48%
- Otago Central Rail Trail – down 38%
- Queen Charlotte Track – down 32%.

Conversely, the Timber Trail (Waikato) has experienced significant growth (37%) in visitor activity compared to pre-COVID levels. However, biking activity on the Timber Trail dropped 25% when compared to the previous year.

Interestingly, this contrasts visitor trends at the nearby Rotary Ride.

A 2021 report¹ shows evidence that cycle tourism activity in New Zealand was growing prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has an important future in New Zealand's tourism offering.



¹[Cycle Tourism Insights Research Report – August 2021 \(mbie.govt.nz\)](https://mbie.govt.nz).

Illustration 8: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected biking trails.

Climate change is affecting DOC-managed visitor infrastructure

The climate is changing and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These changes are already affecting our environment.

Heritage, visitor and conservation infrastructure sites are vulnerable to many climate change impacts, including flooding, landslips and sea-level rise. This is evident during 2021/22 and previous years. Extreme weather impacts around the country have highlighted our vulnerability to changing weather patterns.

Recently, there have been many incidences of extreme weather in the upper South Island; these have created storm damage, causing the closure of some tracks. The illustration does not include damage caused by flooding in previous years at iconic destinations in Fiordland (2020) and on the West Coast (2019).

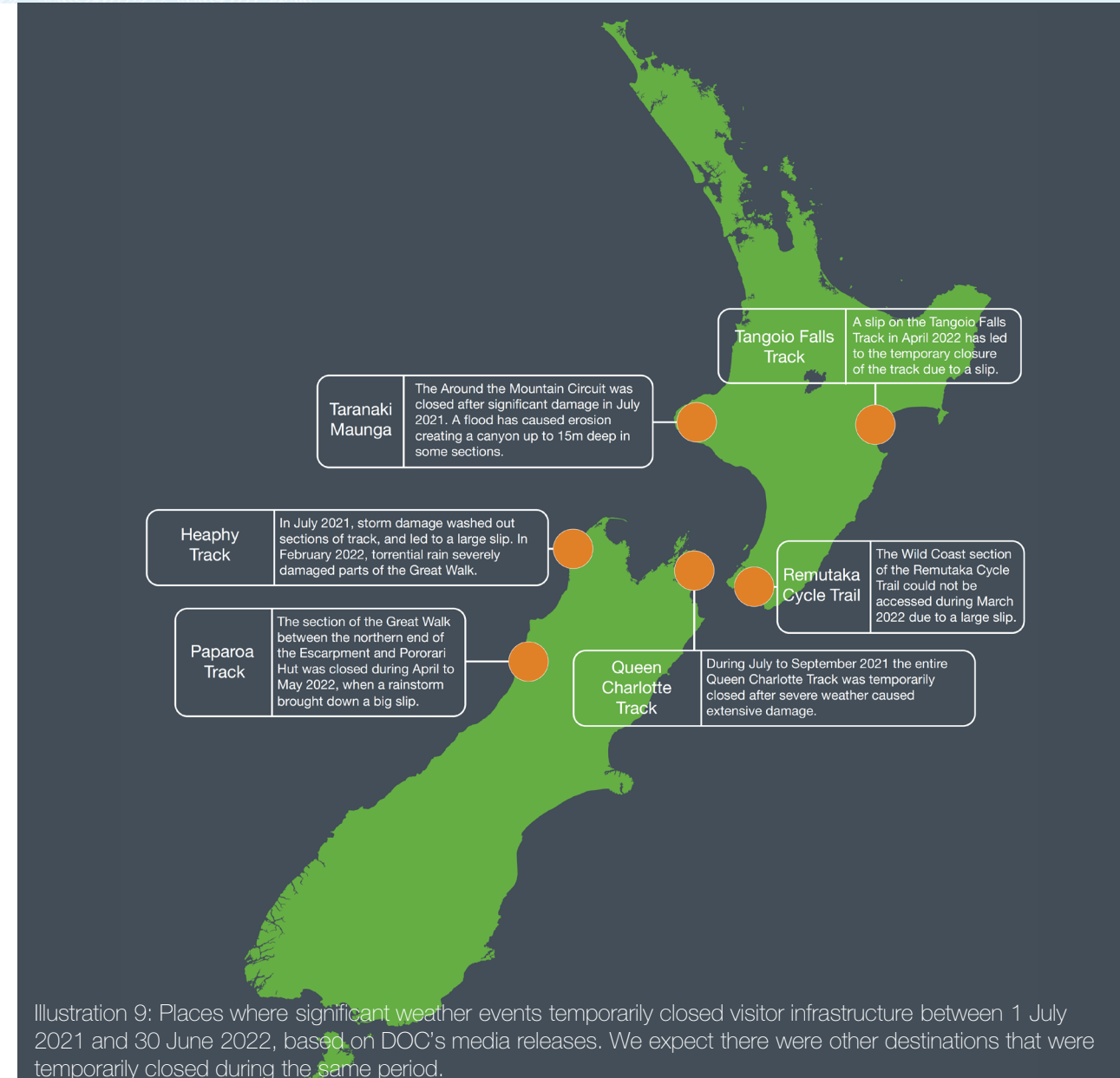


Illustration 9: Places where significant weather events temporarily closed visitor infrastructure between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, based on DOC's media releases. We expect there were other destinations that were temporarily closed during the same period.

¹[Department of Conservation Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan - updated action tables \(August 2022\)](#)



Visitor activity across DOC's nine regions¹

¹Future visitor insight reports will split up Central North Island and Eastern North Island.

2021/22 – a regional overview of the year that was

Northern North Island (NNI)

- Visitation has generally decreased since pre-COVID and last year, affecting popular sites.
- NNI had relatively high overnight visitation and occupancy rates.
- Uretiti Beach Campsite remains DOC's most popular bookable accommodation, though down from last year.

Central & Eastern North Island (CNI/ENI)

- Visitor activity in the Central North Island has been impacted significantly since pre-COVID: TAC saw a 79% decrease.
- Overnight visitation has generally decreased, with some exceptions.
- Matatā Campsite was the most popular accommodation in CNI & ENI.

Western South Island (WSI)

- The West Coast has suffered significant declines in most of its popular destinations.
- However, the total number of overnight visitors has increased slightly.
- Welcome Flat Hut has dropped below Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut as the most popular accommodation in WSI.

Auckland (AKL)

- Change since pre-pandemic levels was relatively less extreme, though visitation was negligible from Aug-Dec 2021 when extended lockdowns affected AKL.
- The region regained significant visitor activity following NZ's move to the traffic light system.

Lower North Island (LNI)

- Limited available data showed variable visitor activity in LNI.
- Overnight visitation increased slightly overall since the previous year.
- Tararua and Remutaka Forest Park huts experienced significant demand, especially on weekends.

Eastern South Island (ESI)

- Post-COVID trends were highly variable in ESI: both large increases and decreases were seen at popular locations.
- Overnight visitation increased slightly overall, compared to the previous year.
- Facilities close to Christchurch had high occupancies, often reaching full capacity on weekends.

Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki (HWT)

- HWT has seen changes since pre-COVID.
- Much of HWT's overnight visitation is accounted for by facilities in the Coromandel, where Pinnacles Hut remained NZ's most popular hut – despite a fall from last year.
- Pouakai Hut and Arohena Campsite were visited most in Taranaki and Waikato.

Northern South Island (NSI)

- Visitor activity has generally decreased, with marked decreases at all of the region's most popular destinations.
- Overnight visitation has dropped overall since 2020/21.
- Tōtaranui Campground remains the region's most popular facility.

Southern South Island (SSI)

- All popular destinations in SSI saw decreases in visitor activity; several high-volume sites have suffered massive declines since pre-COVID.
- There has been some growth in overnight visitation in the Catlins, especially at Purakaunui Bay Campsite, the region's most popular bookable accommodation.



Northern North Island (NNI)

Where did people go in NNI over 2021/22?

Compared to pre-COVID levels, Northern North Island destinations had generally seen significant decreases in visitor activity.

The Tāne Mahuta Walk (Waipoua Forest), Trounson Kauri Park Loop Track and Flagstaff Hill/Te Maiki (Bay of Islands) are among those destinations most impacted by the lack of visitors. Other destinations saw similar declines but to a lesser extent.

Mangawhai Cliffs Walkway, however, shows a very different trend from most other declining destinations in the region. This destination has seen a 12% increase in visitor activity from pre-COVID times, despite a lack of international visitors. The popular Short Walk is less than two hours from Auckland.

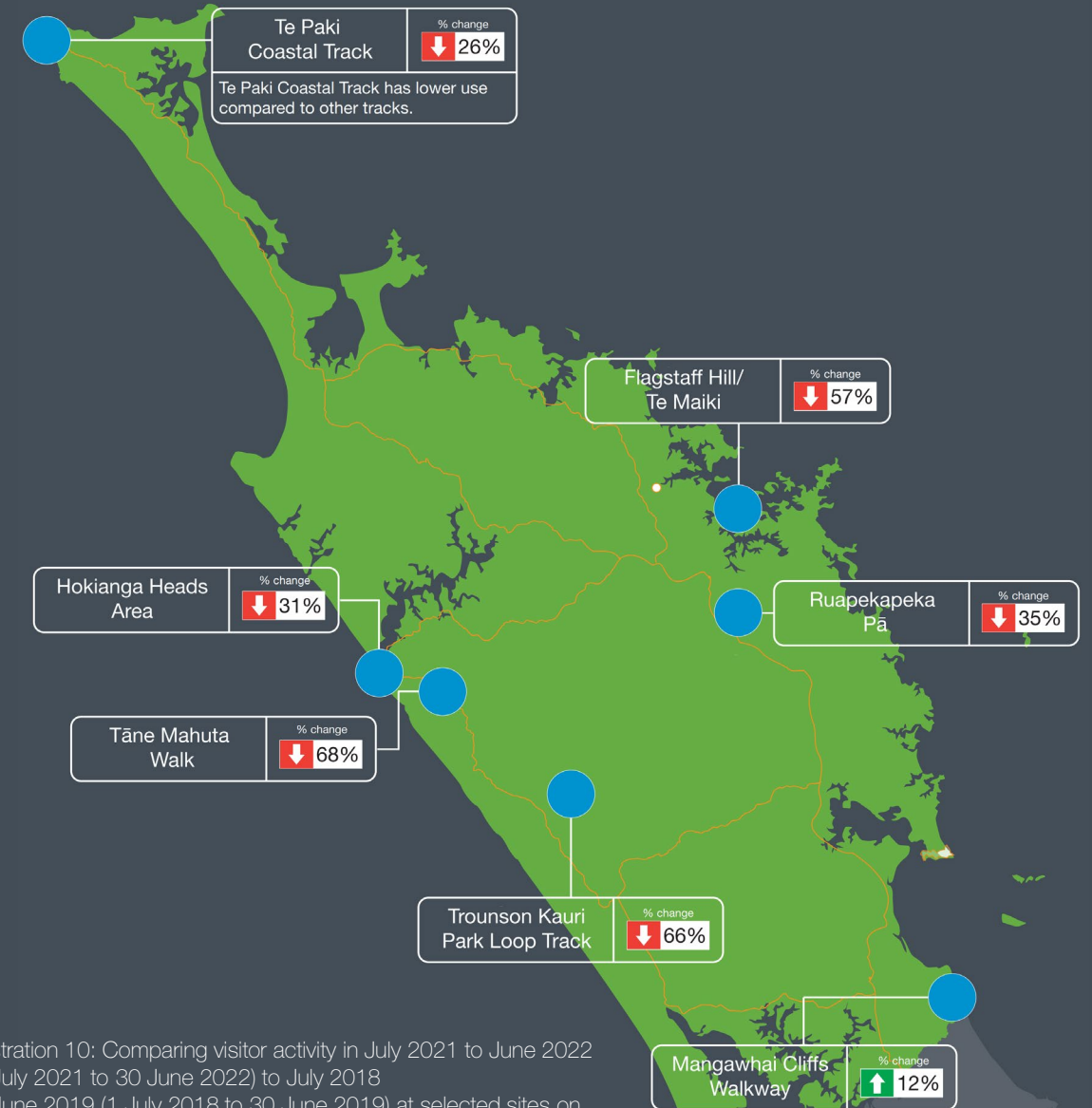


Illustration 10: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land in Northern North Island.

Where did people stay in NNI over 2021/22?

In 2021/22, the total number of overnight visitors to Northland decreased by 16% compared to the previous year. However, Northland continued to welcome a high number of overnight visitor numbers compared to other regions. Overnight occupancy was also high relative to other regions (22% on average).

Bookable accommodation in the region was particularly busy over the Christmas/New Year period, at the end of January (around Auckland Anniversary weekend), and other long weekends.

Uretiti Beach Campsite remained DOC's most popular bookable accommodation, though numbers have dropped since the previous year. In 2021/22 it welcomed around 18,000 overnight visitors, compared to over 24,000 the previous year.

Visitor numbers have also dropped at Otamure Bay (Whananaki) Campsite by around 2,000, compared to last year.



Illustration 11: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Northern North Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.



Auckland (AKL)

Where did people go in AKL over 2021/22?

The Auckland region experienced relatively less extreme change compared to pre-COVID levels.

Goat Island Walkway experienced an 11% increase in visitor activity, despite the lack of international visitors.

Visitor activity at Kaitoke Hot Springs Track, on Aotea/Great Barrier Island, decreased by 16%. This is consistent with low booking numbers of DOC accommodation on the island.

Te Henga Walkway (near Muriwai Beach) saw a slight decrease in activity (down 5%) compared to pre-COVID levels.



Illustration 12: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land in Auckland.

Where did people stay in AKL over 2021/22?

In 2021/22, Auckland hosted the lowest visitor numbers of all regions, with Aotea/Great Barrier Island capturing a high proportion of this.

Tiritiri Matangi Island bunkhouse was at high occupancy amongst the region, at 55% occupancy for 2021/22 – although down from last year (79%). Mt Heale Hut occupancy also decreased from last year (from 35% to 24%).

Notably, Auckland accommodation was almost nil across the region from August-December 2021, when extended lockdowns disproportionately affected this region (as Aucklanders were under much tighter and longer restrictions). This likely contributed to very low visitor numbers for this region in 2021/22.

Soon after New Zealand moved to the traffic light system (and Aucklanders were allowed to travel again), the region did regain visitor activity. Auckland was busiest over the Christmas/New Year period and long weekends in the following months.

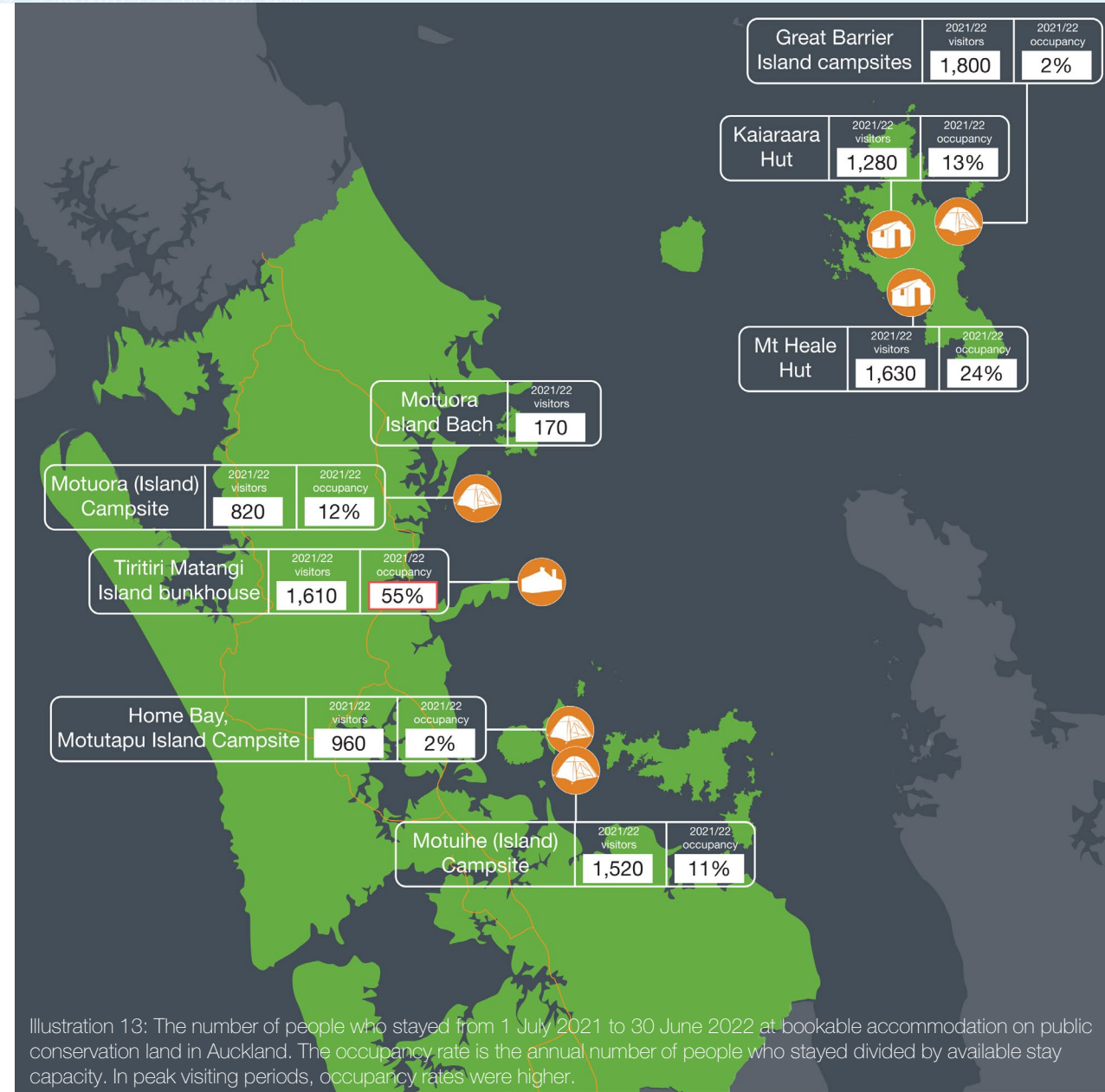


Illustration 13: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Auckland. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.



Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki (HWT)

Where did people go in HWT over 2021/22?

Visitation in the Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki region followed varied trends relative to pre-COVID times.

Wairēinga/Bridal Veil Falls saw a significant decrease (39%), while The Timber Trail (a popular biking trail) experienced a 37% increase in visitor activity.

The Hakarimata Summit Track saw a notable decrease in visitor activity since pre-COVID, as did the Pouakai Crossing: Mangorei Track, despite an increase in the number of overnight visitors to Pouakai Hut. As part of an extensive network of tracks on the Hakarimata Range north of Hamilton, the Summit Track had been closed while the region was at Alert Levels 3 and 4.

The Nikau Walk and Kaniwhaniwha Caves experienced a slight increase.

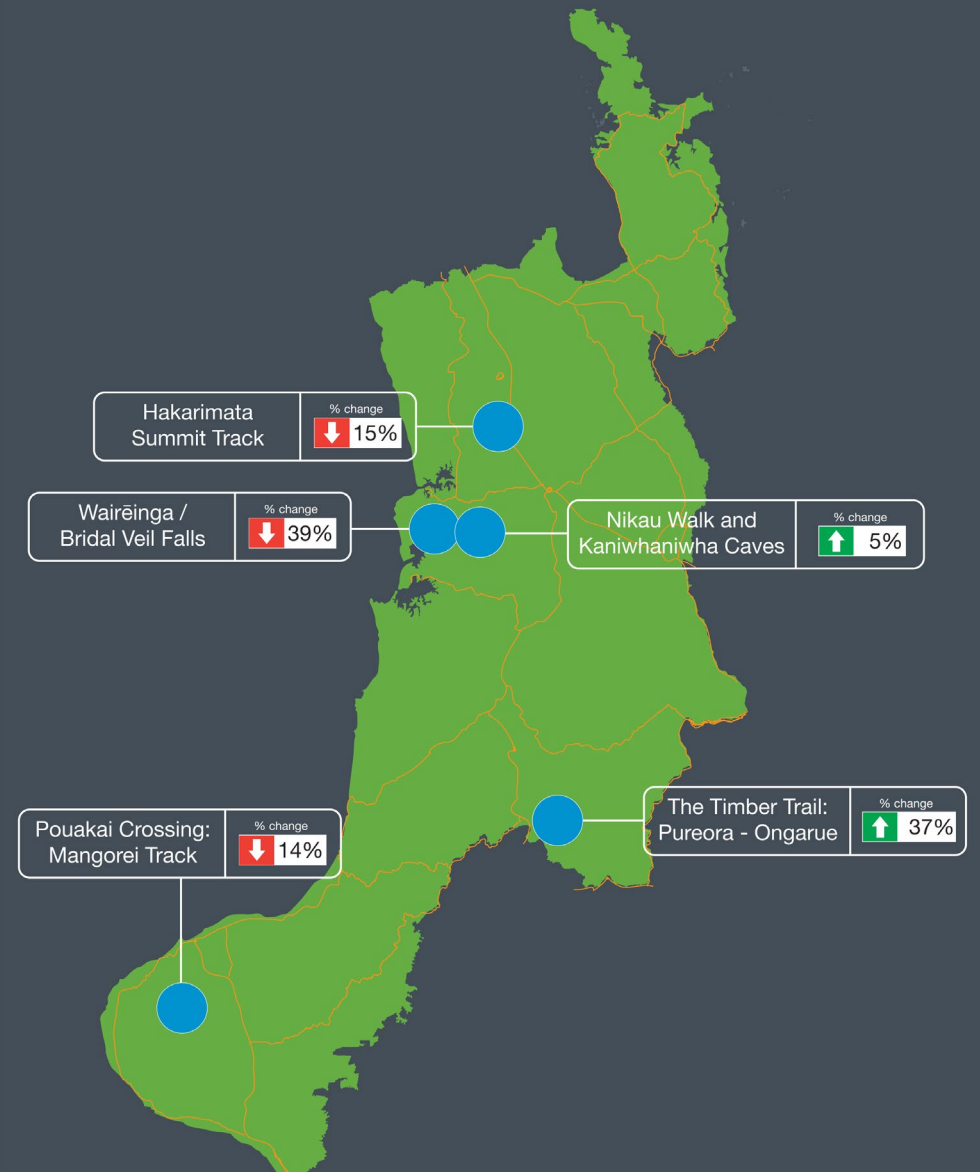


Illustration 14: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land in Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki.

Where did people stay in HWT over 2021/22?

Accommodation in the Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki region was also affected by lockdown restrictions in August/September 2021, including reduced maximum capacity.

HWT accommodation generally experienced spikes over the Christmas/New Year period and long weekends; much of HWT's overnight visitation is accounted for by facilities in the Coromandel.

Pinnacles Hut (Coromandel) remained the most visited hut in NZ over 2021/22. It was at or near full capacity often over the Christmas/New Year period and on weekends in 2022. Visitation was impacted by reduced maximum daily capacity. This was reflected in a decrease in visitor numbers from 15,000 to 8,870.

Campsites along the Kauaeranga Valley Kauri Trail hosted similar visitor numbers in 2021/22.

In Taranaki and Waikato, Pouakai Hut and Arohena Campsite were the most visited facilities, and increased in visitor numbers when compared to last year.

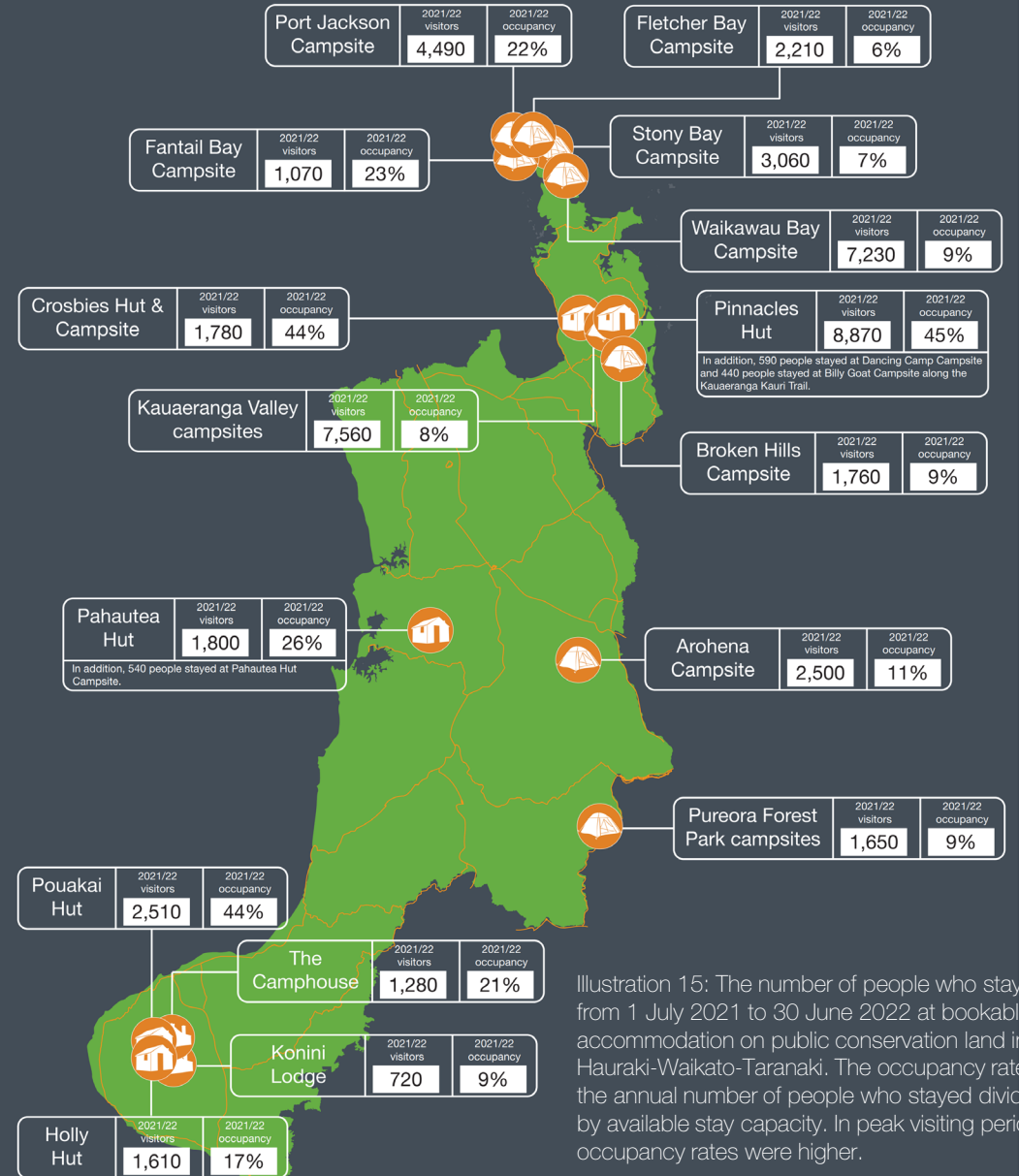


Illustration 15: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.



Central North Island (CNI) & Eastern North Island (ENI)¹

¹ Future visitor insight reports will split up Central North Island and Eastern North Island.

Where did people go in CNI & ENI over 2021/22?

Visitor activity in the Central North Island has been impacted significantly since pre-COVID times. The Tongariro Alpine Crossing experienced a 79% decrease in visitors since 2018/19.

The Okere Falls and Rotary Ride: Spa Park to Huka Falls tracks have also been impacted significantly; activity on these tracks has approximately halved since pre-COVID. The Tarawera Trail has also experienced a significant decrease.

The Gordon Park Loop Track (close to Whanganui), which has relatively low-volume of visitors to other tracks, has seen a large increase in visitor activity.

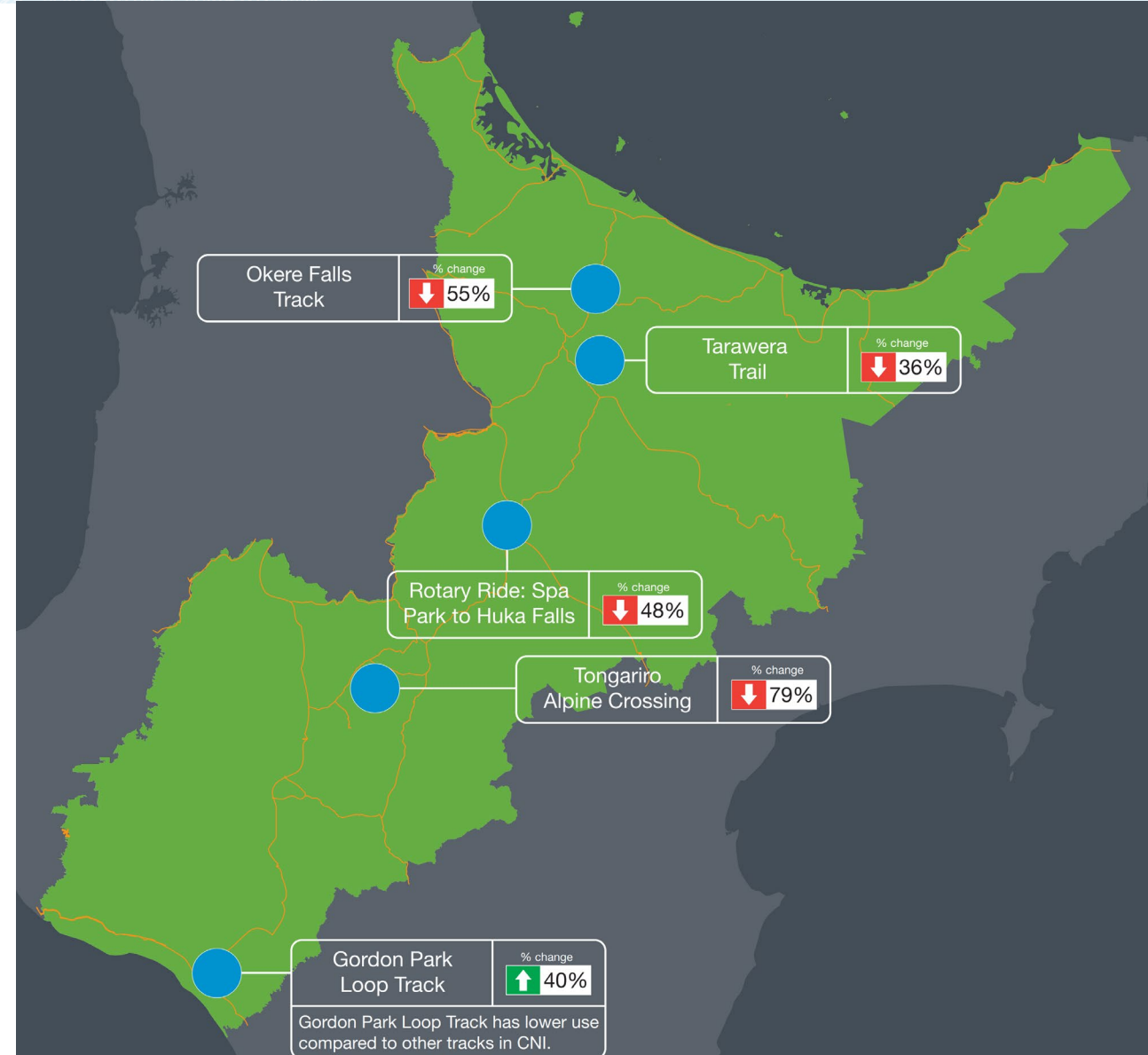


Illustration 16: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land in Central North Island.

Where did people stay in CNI & ENI over 2021/22?

Overnight visitors generally decreased across the Central North Island's bookable DOC accommodation (those shown), reflecting the lack of visitors during COVID-19 restrictions in September/October 2021.

Waitawheta and Te Whare Okioki Huts (Kaimai Ranges) generally reached high occupancy on weekends, although slightly down from last year.

Matatā Campsite was the most popular bookable accommodation in the region, despite only becoming bookable in December 2021. It was at or near full capacity over the Christmas/New Year period and long weekends.

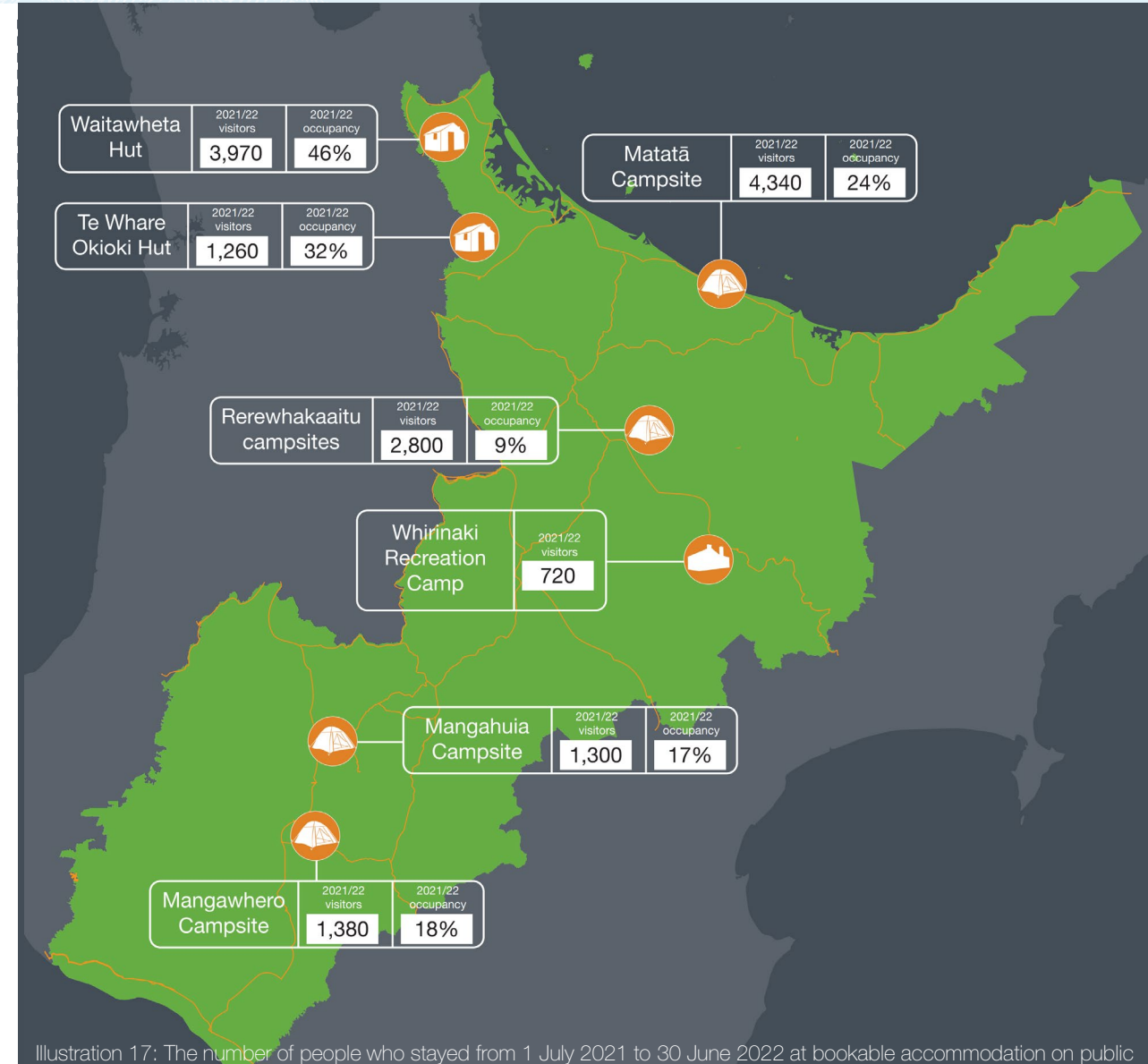


Illustration 17: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Central North Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.



Lower North Island (LNI)

Where did people go in LNI over 2021/22?

Based on available up-to-date counter data, tracks in the Lower North Island varied in visitor activity.

At Papaitonga Scenic Reserve (near Levin), visitor numbers to the lookout track were slightly up (2%) compared to pre-COVID levels.

The Nikau Loop Track at Mōrere Springs had fewer visitors compared to pre-COVID levels; the track has declined in visitor activity by 65% since 2018/19. Pūkaha Loop Track at the Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre saw a similar trend, down 42% compared to pre-COVID levels.

Comparative counter data to pre-COVID levels is not available for Manawatū Gorge Tawa Loop Track and Kāpiti Island: Trig Track, where track counters were only recently installed.

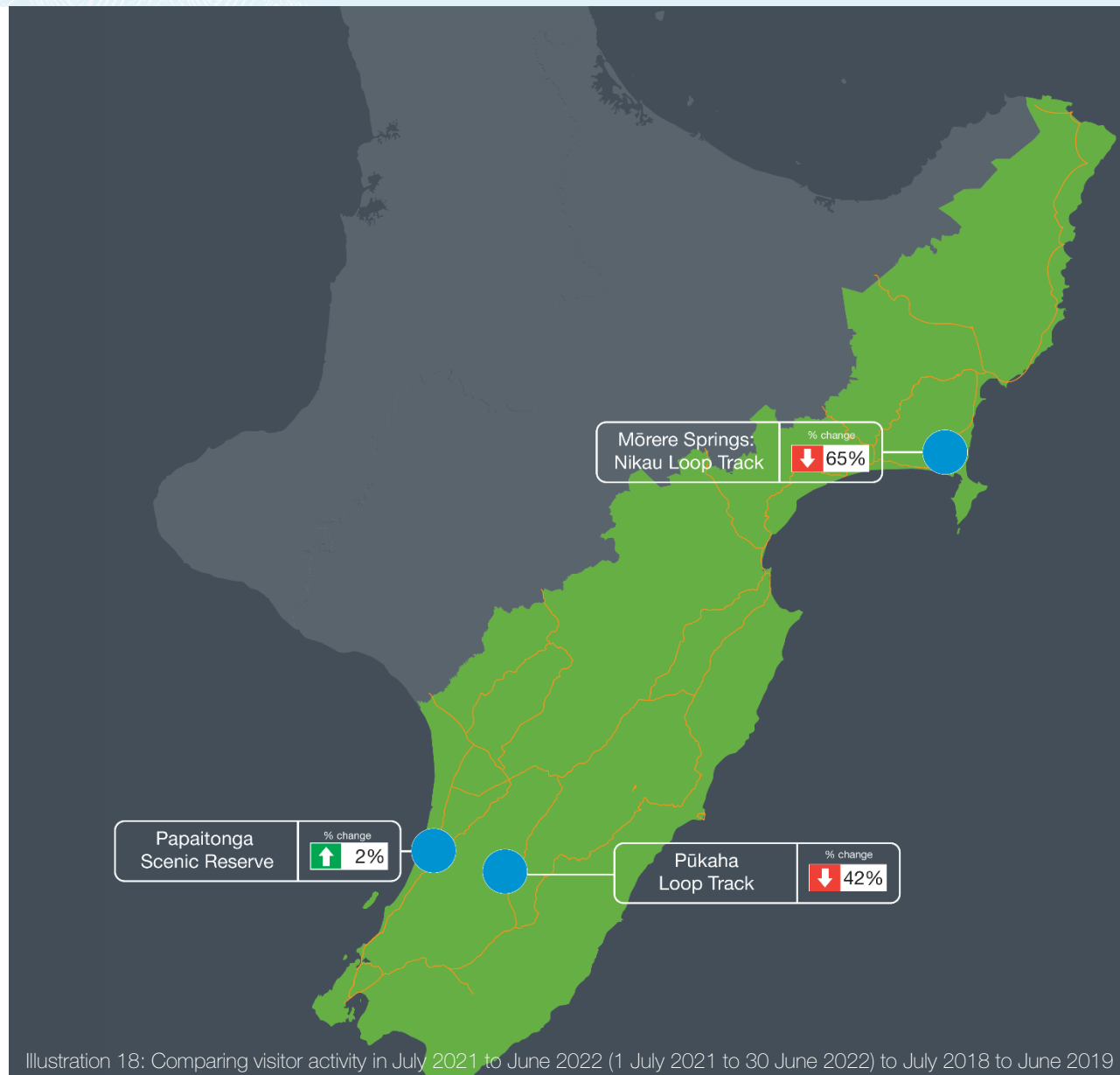


Illustration 18: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land in Lower North Island.

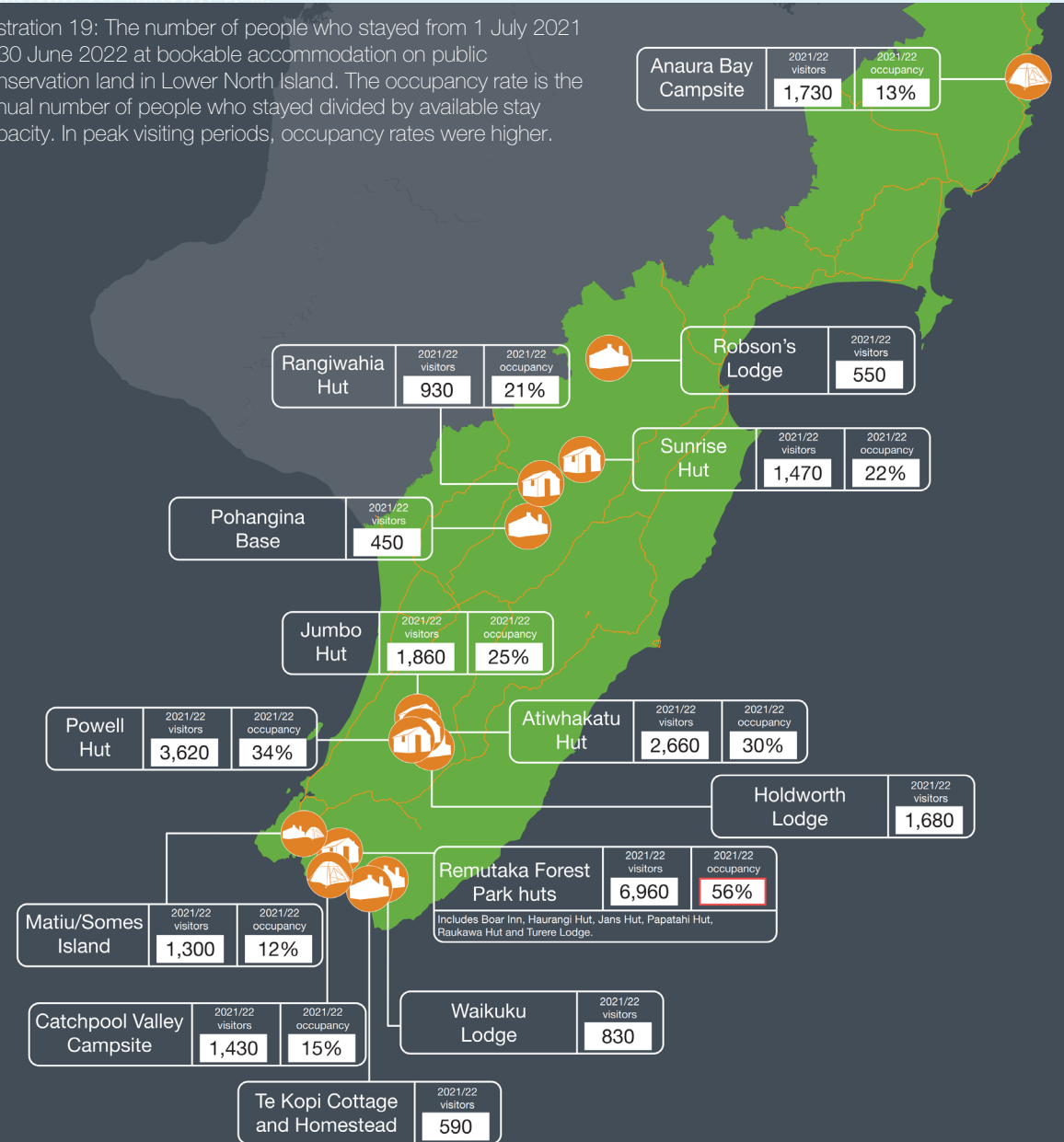
Where did people stay in LNI over 2021/22?

Overnight visitors in the Lower North Island region increased slightly overall compared to the previous year.

Tararua and Remutaka Forest Park huts experienced high demand, with similar occupancies to last year. This reflects the predominant visitor group who consistently use these facilities.

Many huts and lodges experienced significant weekend demand, with occupancy rates greater than 90% on Saturday nights. Visitation was particularly high over Labour Weekend, the Christmas/New Year period and other long weekends.

Illustration 19: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Lower North Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.





Northern South Island (NSI)

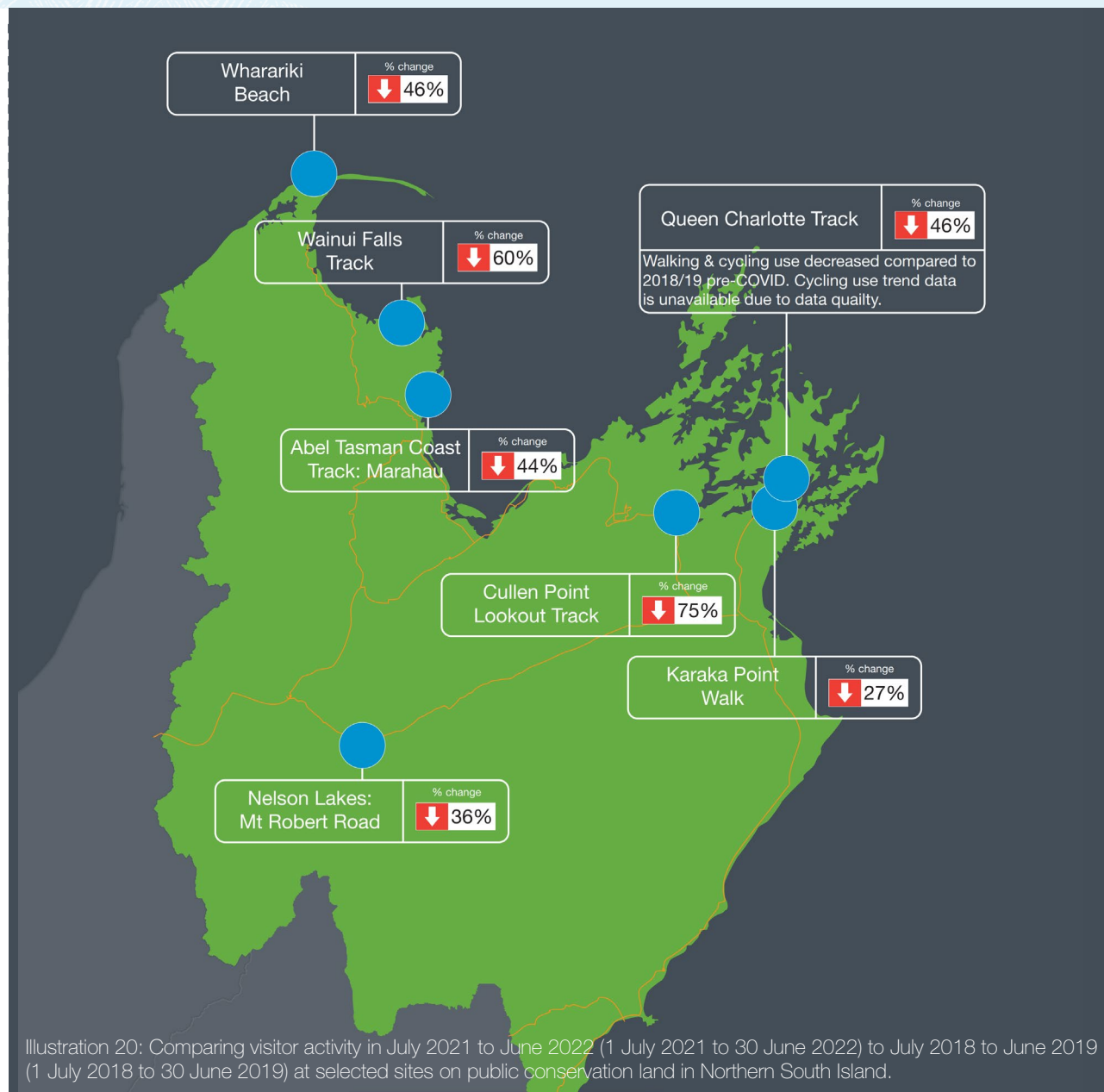
Where did people go in NSI over 2021/22?

Visitor activity decreased markedly across the Northern South Island region.

The most significant decline occurred at Cullen Point Lookout Track (down 75%).

Typically iconic tramping tracks such as the Queen Charlotte Track and Abel Tasman Coast Track (near Marahau) suffered significant declines in visitor activity since pre-COVID times. The Queen Charlotte Track was temporarily closed during July to September 2021 after severe weather caused extensive damage.

Visitor activity at Wainui Falls Track was also less than half of what it was pre-COVID. Other significant declines occurred at Nelson Lakes (Mt Robert Road), Wharariki Beach and the Karaka Point Walk.



Where did people stay in NSI over 2021/22?

Overall, overnight visitation has dropped slightly in the NSI region compared to the previous year.

Tōtaranui Campground remains the regions most popular bookable campground managed by DOC, although occupancy has dropped by 4,000 people since 2020/21. This campground was popular throughout summer and over Easter.

The rest of the region followed a similar trend, peaking over the Christmas/New Year period.

Pelorus Bridge, Kerr Bay and Momorangi Bay Campsites also attracted many overnight visitors – Kerr Bay experienced a notable increase from 2020/21. Angelus Hut also continued to prove popular.

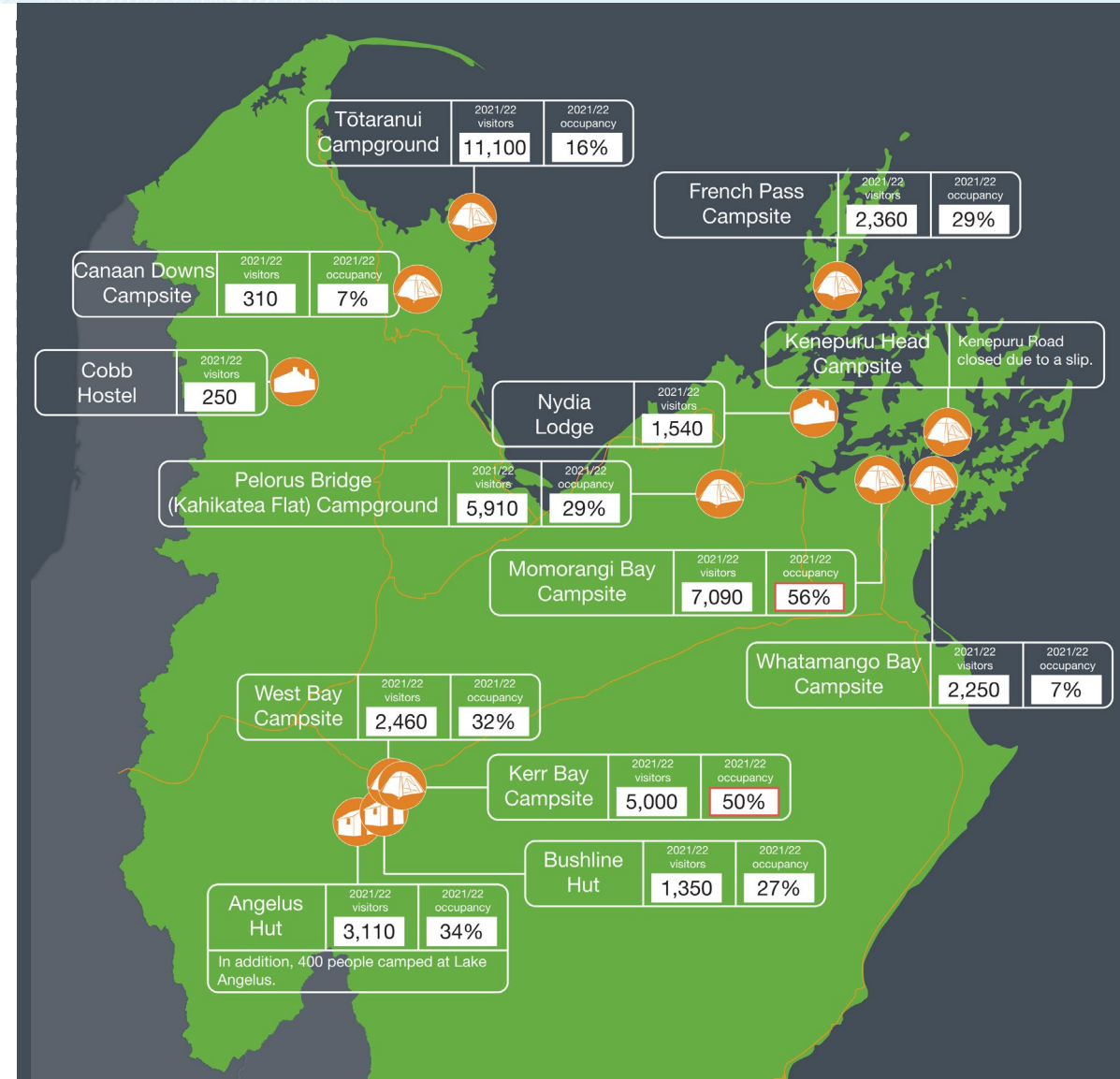


Illustration 21: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Northern South Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.



Western South Island (WSI)

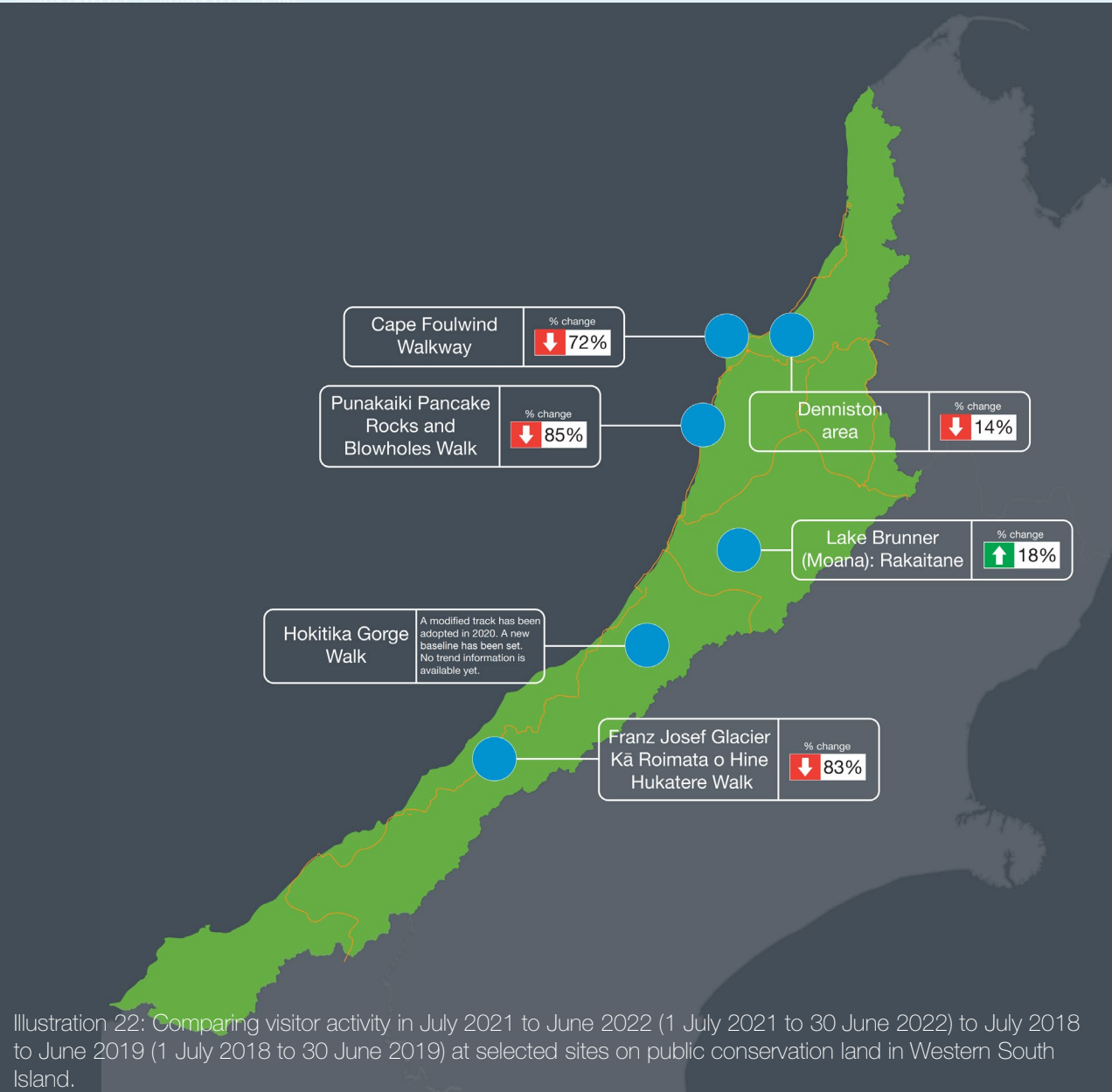
Where did people go in WSI over 2021/22?

The West Coast has suffered significant declines in visitor activity from pre-COVID levels.

Punakaiki Rocks and Blowholes Walk has seen an 85% decrease since the loss of international visitors.

Franz Josef Glacier Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere Walk has declined by 83% since 2018/19. Cape Foulwind Walkway has also seen a similar pattern.

Lake Brunner (Moana): Rakaitane, however, has experienced an 18% increase since pre-COVID.



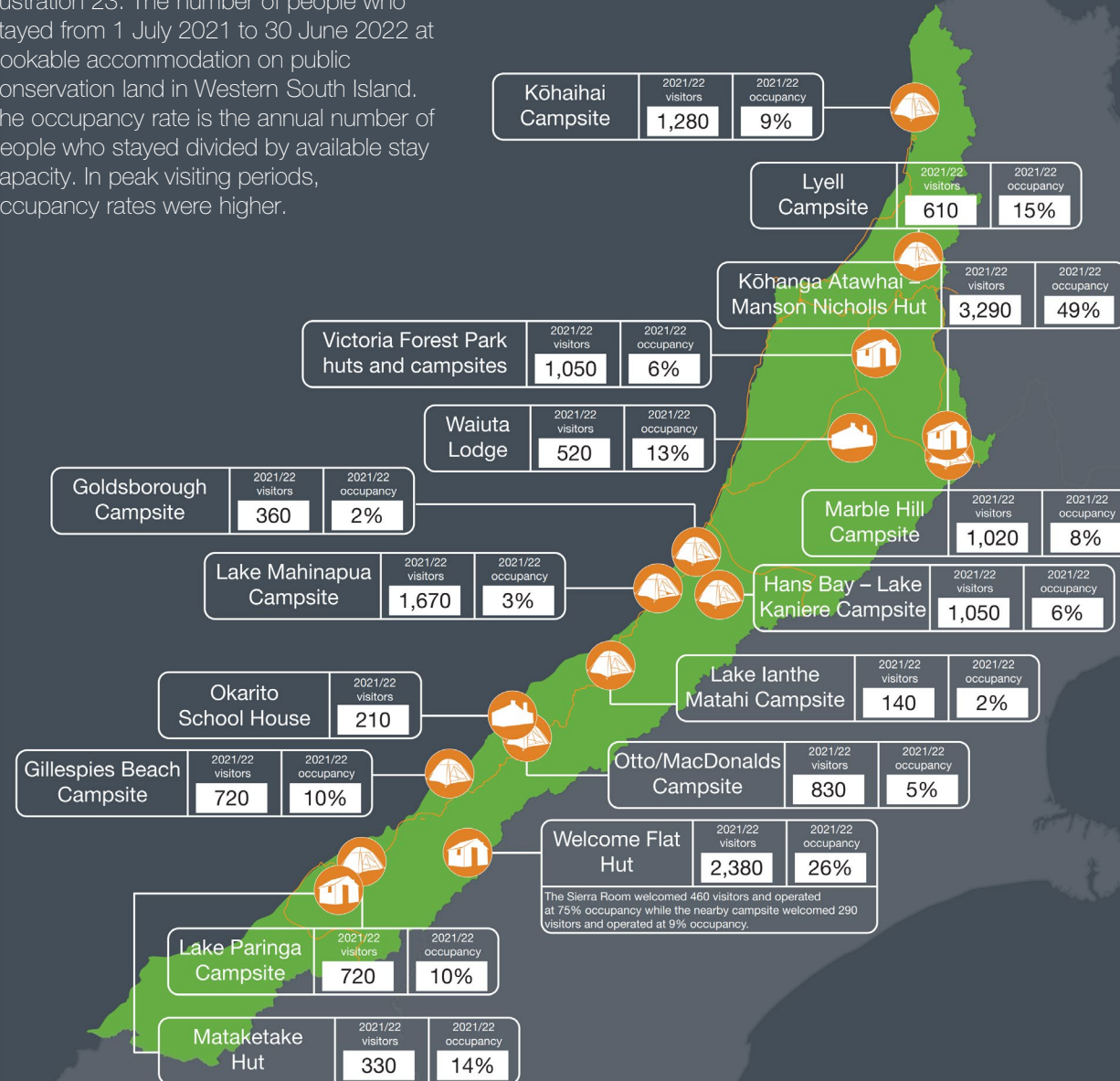
Where did people stay in WSI over 2021/22?

In the WSI region, the total number of annual overnight visitors increased compared to the previous year, peaking over the Christmas/New Year period.

Kōhanga Atawhai – Manson Nicholls Hut has surpassed Welcome Flat Hut as the most popular facility in the region, with over 3,000 overnight visitors; Welcome Flat has suffered a significant decrease.

The Sierra Room (a sole-occupancy section of Welcome Flat Hut) remained popular, accommodating 460 visitors and operating at 73% occupancy.

Illustration 23: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Western South Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.





Eastern South Island (ESI)

Where did people go in ESI over 2021/22?

Trends in visitor activity compared to pre-COVID were highly variable in the Eastern South Island region. Generally, destinations near Christchurch increased in visitor activity, while places further away from urban centres decreased in activity.

Some popular destinations such as the Hooker Valley, Devil's Punchbowl, Tasman Glacier and Aoraki/Mt Cook Village experienced large declines in visitor activity.

In contrast, the Awaroa/Godley Head: Pilgrims Way Coastal Track saw the largest recorded increase in visitor activity (78%) compared to pre-COVID levels. This was most likely due to the track's reopening following seismic strengthening, and its close proximity to the Christchurch CBD. The increase occurred despite the temporary closure of the Awaroa/Godley Head Campsite.

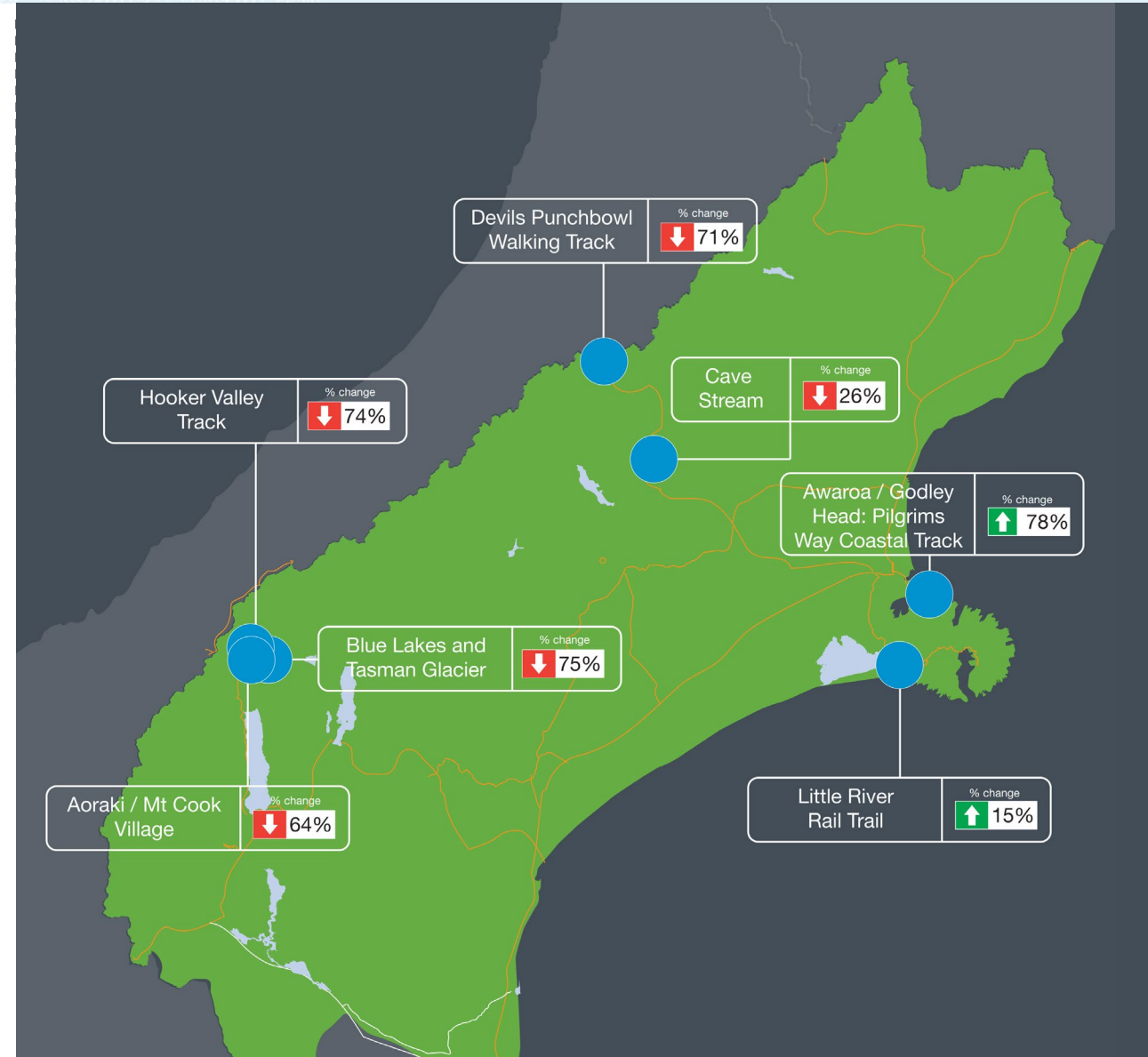


Illustration 24: Comparing visitor activity in July 2021 to June 2022 (1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to July 2018 to June 2019 (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019) at selected sites on public conservation land in Eastern South Island.

Where did people stay in ESI over 2021/22?

In the ESI region, the number of overnight visitors increased slightly from the previous year.

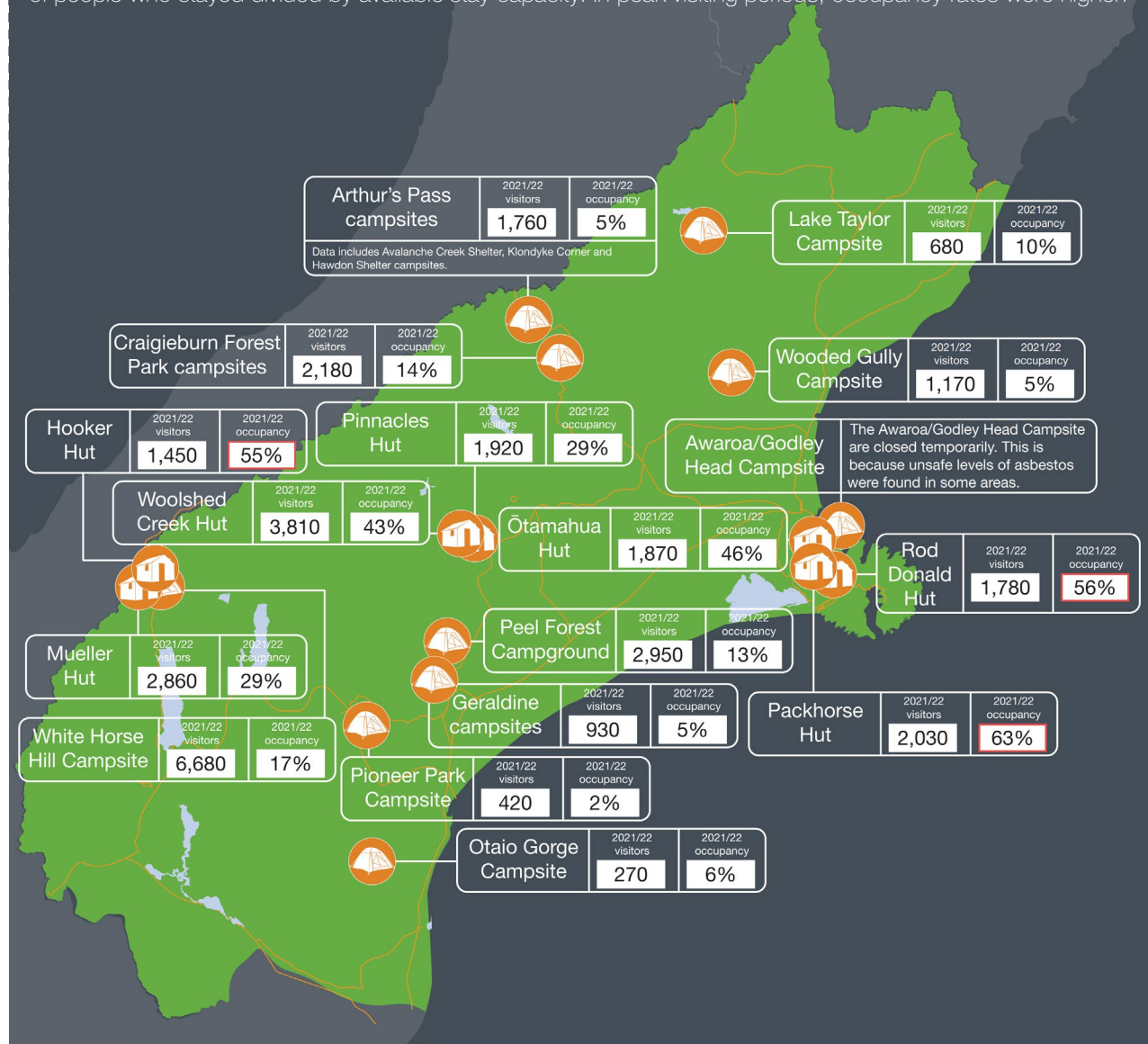
White Horse Hill Campsite remains the most popular facility in the region, with over 6,600 visitors – an increase from last year. This campground reached full capacity over the New Year, and also proved popular over Easter.

Woolshed Creek Hut, Peel Forest Campground and Mueller Hut also attracted many overnight visitors.

Those facilities in close proximity to Christchurch had high occupancies, often reaching full capacity on weekends. This includes huts on Te Ara Pātaka.

However, Awaroa/Godley Head Campsite (which typically hosts significant visitor numbers, and is a significant attraction near Christchurch) was closed temporarily due to asbestos concerns.

Illustration 25: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Eastern South Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.





Southern South Island (SSI)

Where did people go in SSI over 2021/22?

All destinations analysed in the Southern South Island region experienced decreases in visitor activity compared to pre-COVID levels.

Several high-volume attractions have suffered massive declines due to the lack of international visitors, including Piopiotahi/Milford Sound, Lake Marian Track, Roys Peak Track, Blue Pools Track (Makarora) and the Arrowtown Chinese Settlement.

Significant declines were also observed at tracks near Dunedin, including the Sandfly Bay and Tunnel Beach tracks.

Interestingly, Bannockburn Sluicings and Ulva Island has less pronounced declines amongst the region. Bannockburn Sluicings was a filming location for *The Power of the Dog*; a spike in visitor activity was observed there in April 2022, following the Academy Awards. Ulva Island (just offshore of Rakiura/Stewart Island) has seen relatively steady domestic visitation since the start of the pandemic.

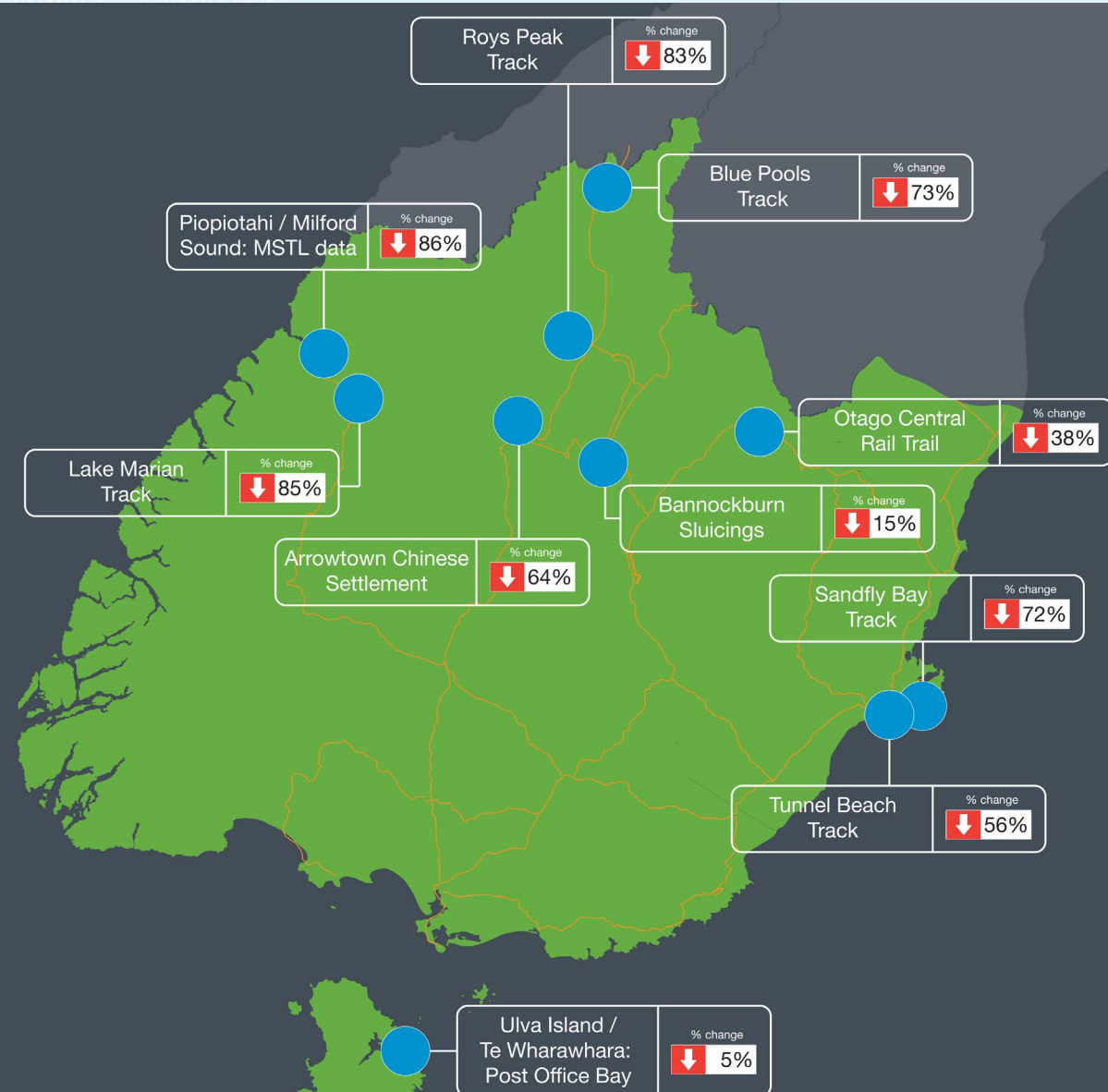


Illustration 26: Comparing visitor activity during 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022) to 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 at selected sites on public conservation land in Southern South Island.

Where did people stay in SSI over 2021/22?

The Southern South Island Great Walks were all popular. The Routeburn Track welcomed many visitors; the Milford Track was at full capacity.

Aside from Great Walks, the number of people who stayed in the Southern South Island region was very similar to the previous year, and has decreased only slightly overall (-1%).

In the Catlins, there was growth in visitor numbers compared to the previous year. This was especially evident at Purakaunui Bay Campsite, the most popular non-Great Walk accommodation in the region.

Other accommodation had similar overnight visitor numbers to the previous year – with the exception of the temporarily closed Boundary Creek Campsite.

Milford road campsites were among those with particularly low annual occupancies.

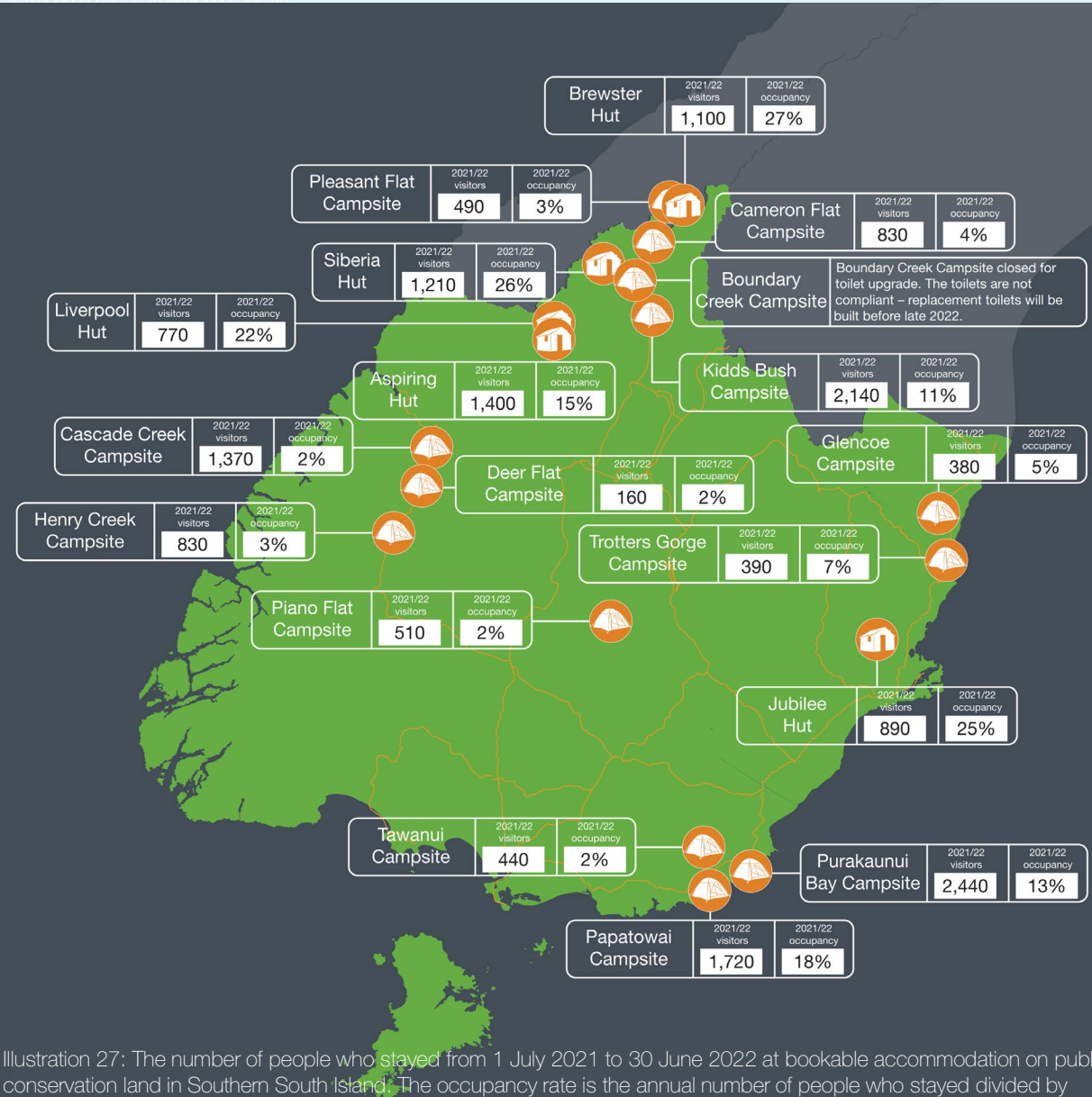


Illustration 27: The number of people who stayed from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 at bookable accommodation on public conservation land in Southern South Island. The occupancy rate is the annual number of people who stayed divided by available stay capacity. In peak visiting periods, occupancy rates were higher.

Data and information sources

DOC Public Pulse of Conservation (PPoC) (n=1,000)

- From July 2021 to June 2022, 1,000 NZ adults (18+) participated in an online panel survey each month.
- The sampling method uses a quota to ensure demographic and geographic representation of the entire New Zealand population (aged 18 years or older).
- The PPoC survey is designed and managed by the Social Research Team, and administered and reported by Ipsos NZ Ltd.

DOC activity counter system

- DOC identified 109 activity counters (from over 700 nationwide) to prioritise data downloading for over 2021/22. 55 of these counters provided data for this report. 25 counters had over 90% days of 2021/22 downloaded.
- Visit estimates are based on activity counts with assumptions made to estimate annual visits to that track.

DOC bookable accommodation data

- The DOC booking system currently collects accommodation data for bookable huts, campsites and lodges across New Zealand.
- Visitor numbers and occupancy rates are from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.