

Stakeholder Findings Report

SUPPLEMENT TO EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



Purpose & Method

We received and reviewed 710 responses to the Isle of Palms community survey and conducted 9 community interviews lasting approximately 20-60 minutes each.

The survey gave us a broader view of what respondents value, want to protect, and hope to see reflected in the brand; the interviews let us ask why.

Through personal stories and follow-up questions, we heard how people have experienced the island across decades and generations: family homes passed down, relationships sparking on the beaches, daily walks, childhood play, and traditions now shared with children. These details help us understand why Isle of Palms feels like home, beyond a list of survey choices. We considered both sources together as the foundation for the next phase of brand development.

Please note that the survey was self-selected, so its results are not statistically representative; nine interviews provide depth, not a measure of how common any view is.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

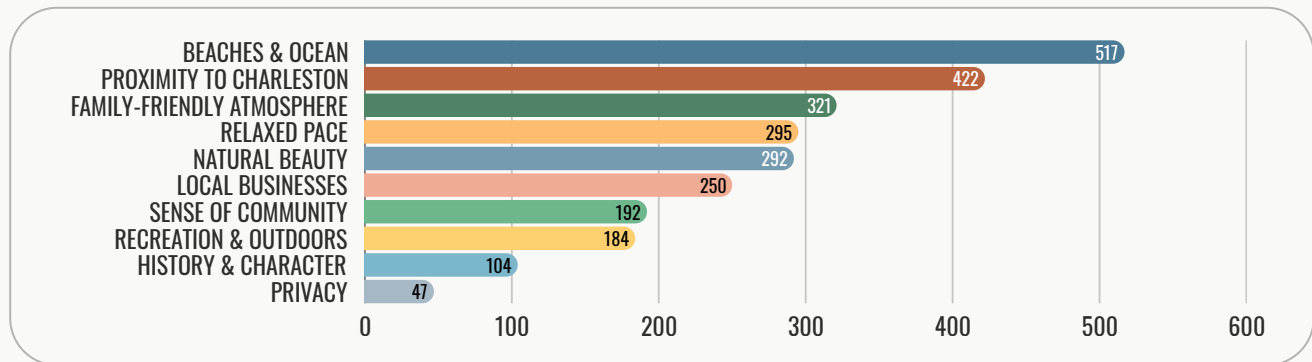
Across interviews and survey responses, “home” means family tradition, familiarity, safety, natural beauty, a slower pace, and the feeling of arrival. Visitors also describe a home-like attachment built through repeat trips and shared memories. Almost everyone agreed that there is something magical that happens as they cross over the connector towards Isle of Palms, they feel like the connector is the final piece of a journey that brings them home whether they’re residents or visiting.

The research points to a working foundation: ***express the island as a lived community whose natural beauty, familiar routines, and shared care make people feel at home.*** The next phase will translate these findings into brand strategy and creative direction for review.

THEME	WHAT EMERGED
HOME & BELONGING	Family history, familiar routines and the feeling of returning are central to the island’s identity.
NATURE AS DAILY LIFE	The beach, marsh, wildlife and outdoor routines shape how people experience home.
WHAT TO PROTECT	Residents value the natural setting, residential character, community life and public access.
WELCOME & STEWARDSHIP	People want visitors to enjoy the island while respecting its neighborhoods and resources.

Survey Findings

QUESTION 3: WHAT MAKES ISLE OF PALMS SPECIAL COMPARED TO OTHER COASTAL COMMUNITIES?



What we're looking at:

The visualization of Question 3 of the survey, 'What makes Isle of Palms special compared to other coastal communities'. The qualities respondents selected as distinctive, along with the words and memories they volunteered.

Why it's important:

Beaches and ocean led the fixed-choice answers, but respondents also pointed to family atmosphere, relaxed pace, natural beauty, local businesses, and community. These qualities explain the island's broader experience.

What we're taking from this:

The beach should remain visible, with the people, routines, and natural setting that make Isle of Palms distinct.

QUESTION 5: COMPLETE THE SENTENCE – ISLE OF PALMS FEELS LIKE ____?

What we're looking at:

"Home" appeared the most – 221 of 710 completions (31%).

Why it's important:

The word speaks to attachment beyond a beach visit.

What we're taking from this:

Belonging is a strong working theme to test in the brand.

QUESTIONS 1,2, 5, 8, 9, 10, & 14

These questions contain short text answers with language that people used on their own. Information was organized into pillars:

What we're looking at:

Language people used on their own, memories and recurring experiences, and specific quotes from the survey.

Language found consistently.

This report leads with the percentage findings. A review of seven narrative questions adds the language respondents used without answer choices.

Among 710 respondents, family-related language appeared in 330 responses; home in 311; community or neighbors in 256; relaxed or slower pace in 224; and welcome or friendly in 223.

Memories and recurring experiences.

A keyword-assisted review of the two memory questions found family and multigenerational experiences in 268 responses; walking, biking, golf carts and neighborhood freedom in 155; nature and wildlife in 98; the Windjammer or Front Beach in 94; Fourth of July and holiday traditions in 77; the connector or bridge arrival in 57; local events and the Recreation Center in 48; weddings and milestones in 39; and Hurricane Hugo or community recovery in 31.

A response may appear in more than one theme.

Anonymous survey quotes:

- *Four generations gathering for vacation.*
- *Mornings with family walking on beach and my kids playing at the Rec.*
- *Paddle boarding with dolphins on Hamlin Creek.*
- *I always love watching turtle hatches on the beach and Fourth of July fireworks.*
- *The community pulling together after Hurricane Hugo.*

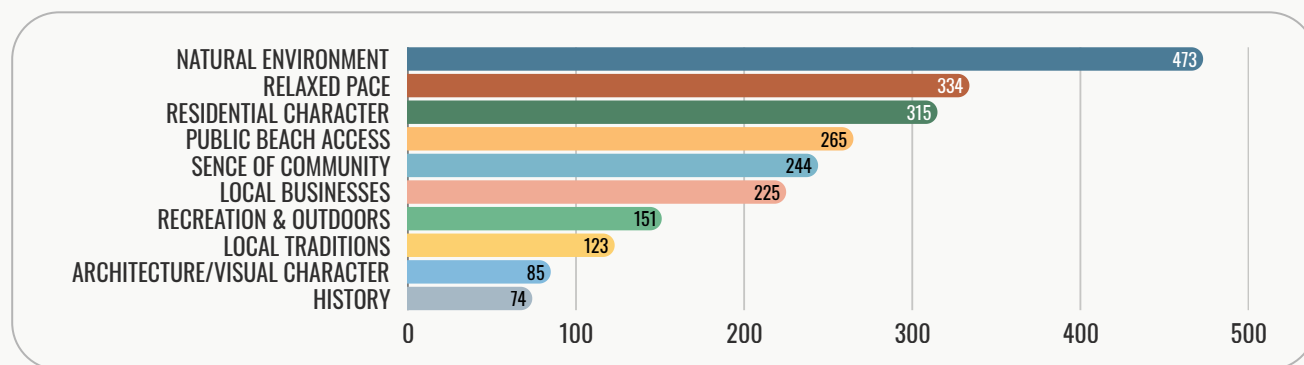
Why it's important:

Even though these survey responses were done individually, there are overarching themes present across the majority of the responses. It's important to note memories and feelings that are consistent across all backgrounds and all residents.

What we're taking from this:

The memories combine people, routines and place: family gathering, crossing the connector, children moving around the island, community events, wildlife encounters and milestones repeated over years. Like the interviews, they show that the island's meaning extends beyond beach access to the relationships and repeated experiences people build here.

QUESTION 11: AS THE ISLE OF PALMS EVOLVES, WHAT FEELS MOST IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE?



What we're looking at:

Respondents' choices about preservation, including the natural environment, relaxed pace, residential character, community life, and public beach access.

Why it's important:

Resident and visitor respondents shared an attachment to natural to natural beauty and a relaxed pace, but emphasized different priorities. Among resident respondents, 54% selected residential character and 43% sense of community; 63% of frequent visitors and visitors selected public beach access.

What we're taking from this:

The brand must hold welcome, access and care for the island together. Open-text survey responses also raised traffic, parking and crowding.

QUESTION 16: WHAT VISUAL QUALITIES FEEL MOST TRUE TO THE ISLE OF PALMS?

What we're looking at:

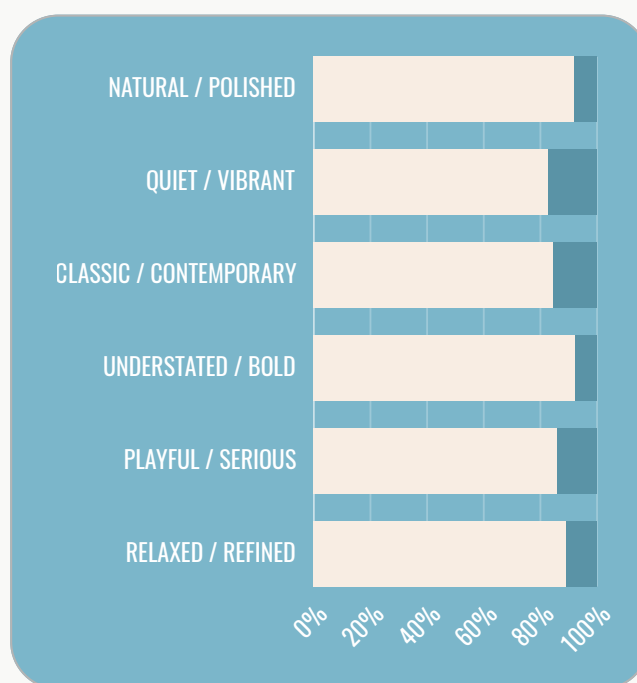
Among respondents who answered each paired question, strong majorities favored natural over polished, relaxed over refined, quiet over vibrant, classic over contemporary and understated over bold.

Why it's important:

The community that makes up Isle of Palms is the best guide for visual direction. Community input helps guide creative decisions.

What we're taking from it:

The brand should reflect the preferred visual direction of the residents and community.



Community Interviews

What we're looking at:

We conducted nine community interviews with long-term, full-time, part-time, and seasonal residents and business owners. Conversations lasted approximately 20 to 60 minutes and explored what feels distinctive, what should be protected, and where change creates concern. Participants are anonymized.

Why it's important:

Across all nine interviews, Isle of Palms was understood first as a home and lived community, and then as a destination. "Home" meant family continuity, familiarity, safety, natural beauty, freedom, everyday rituals, and the feeling of return.

The survey reinforces this interpretation: 221 of 710 respondents, or 31%, used "home" in completing "Isle of Palms feels like..." and home-related language appeared in 311 respondents' open-text answers.

What we heard:

Home & Return: Interviewees described family history, familiar streets, and the connector as signals of belonging. Homecoming is not just a tagline; it should be part of a larger story of recognition.

Nature & Daily Life: Ocean, marsh, wildlife and quiet outdoor routines were part of ordinary life, not just scenery. The brand should highlight the ecosystems as part of the community.

Continuity & Change: Residents valued traditions, local businesses, and public access while raising traffic, parking, rentals, and the loss of year-round neighbors. The work should clarify and protect the island's character.

Welcome & Care: Participants recognized tourism's value and wanted visitors to respect neighborhoods and natural resources. The brand can pair invitation with stewardship.

What we're taking from the stories:

The conversations went beyond preferences into lived experience: a family home passed between generations; relationships rooted in the island; a local grocery's old shorthand in which "a sack of potatoes" meant a pack of beer; three decades of daily beach walks; and parents watching children enjoy the same island freedoms they knew growing up.

These are paraphrased, unlinked examples, not a portrait of any one household. They show why familiar places and rituals carry such weight. Together with the survey, they suggest a brand that protects the conditions behind that sense of home and invites visitors to value the island with care.

COMMUNITY INTERVIEW QUOTATIONS

All quotations are anonymized:

This isn't a rebrand; it's an emphasis on who we are.

It still has an old beach vibe. It's not a big commercialized beach.

Your eyes with the ocean, your smell with the pluff mud – it titillates the soul.

When you cross the peak of the connector and see the island, you feel like you're home.

Hope someday my sons bring their children here and we get to watch them grow up and then bring their friends here – like my husband and I both did.

How the Survey & Community Interviews Inform the Next Steps

These insights create a strong foundation for the branding project and will further guide the executive summary, which is where the official direction will be presented to the city council and Isle of Palms residents.

Isle of Palms is experienced as home before it is described as a destination. This research synthesis guides the continued work, not a proposed tagline.

A credible brand can connect the island's natural beauty with belonging, familiarity, and shared responsibility. Its language and imagery should be recognizable to people who live here while helping visitors understand the place they are entering.

KEY PILLARS FOR THE NEXT STEPS

Homecoming

Use arrival, return and recognition. The connector, horizon, marsh, pluff mud, palms and familiar streets signal a shift into island life.

Nature as daily life

Show the beach and ocean alongside dunes, waterways, wildlife, sunsets, fishing, shrimping, biking and quiet outdoor routines.

A real community

Represent recreation, local businesses, neighborliness, family milestones and traditions across generations. The beach is the setting; belonging is the differentiator.

Leave your shoes at the door (a welcome, with house rules)

Invite visitors to experience the island as temporary members of the community – enjoy it, respect it and help protect it.

GUARDRAILS DRAWN FROM RESEARCH

- Do not position IOP as a generic resort, luxury enclave, party destination or high-volume attraction.
- Do not imply that success requires more visitation in the peak-season.
- Avoid language or imagery that erases year-round residents, public access, or the island's lived-in character.
- Connect every outward-facing promise to environmental stewardship and resident quality of life.

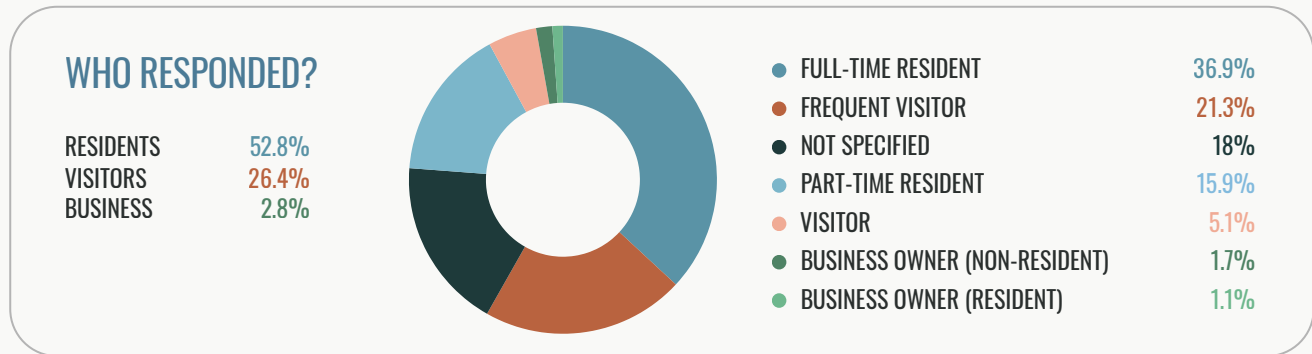
PUBLIC USE SAFEGUARDS

We removed names, contact information, and direct identifiers. Resident quotations are included only when the participant permitted quotation and are attributed by participant type; the participant who declined quotation is not quoted. Open-ended survey responses are quoted only when brief and non-identifying; otherwise they are paraphrased.

The survey received 710 responses. Of those, 582 answered the relationship question and 128 left it blank. Among respondents who answered: 262 were full-time residents, 113 part-time residents, 151 frequent visitors, 36 visitors, 12 nonresident business owners and eight resident business owners. These categories describe the 582 who answered, not all 710 respondents. Multiple-selection percentages elsewhere in the report may total more than 100%.

Community Survey Results

The City promoted the survey through its own channels for just over three weeks (August 21 to September 15, 2026) – totally over 700 respondents across 7 respondent group types:

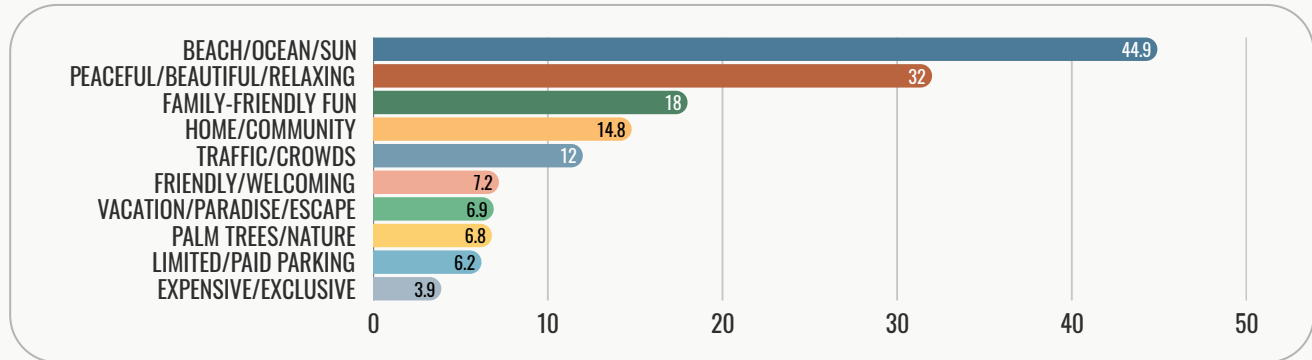


HOW TO READ THE RESULTS

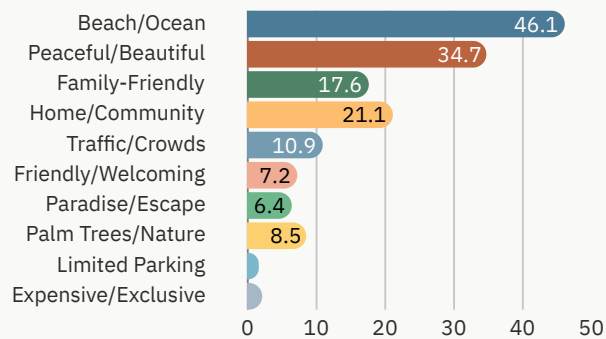
- Respondent types were identified in Question 17.
- Questions show one total aggregate result and results for each respondent type (resident, visitor, business, and not specified), grouped to parent types rather than each individual subset for the purpose of this report. Resident business owners are counted under Business Owners (not Residents).
- Percentages are the share of respondents who answered that specific question.
- Open-ended questions (1, 2, 5, 8-10, 14) chart the 10 words respondents used most often, counted exactly as typed. Filler words (the, and, of, etc.) and the island's name are not counted.
- Read these results as directional – participation was open and self-selected so results describe the people who chose to respond rather than a statistically representative sample.

Q1. WHEN YOU THINK OF THE ISLE OF PALMS, WHAT ARE THE FIRST THREE WORDS THAT COME TO MIND?

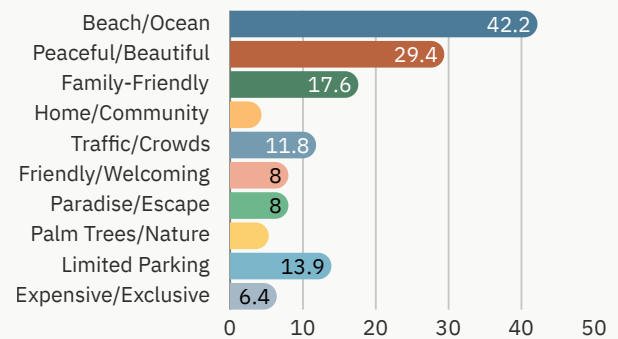
*10 words respondents used most often:



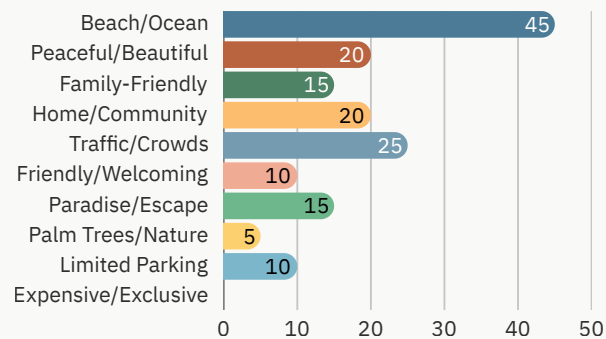
RESIDENTS



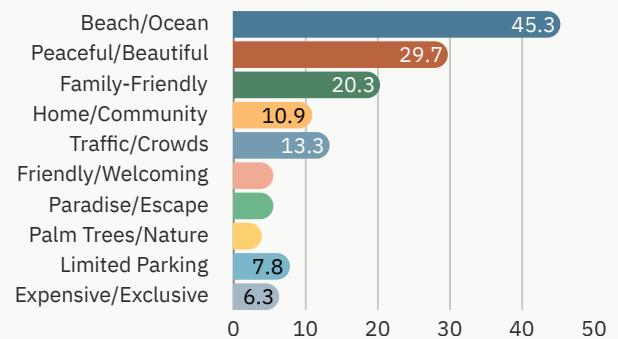
VISITORS



BUSINESSES

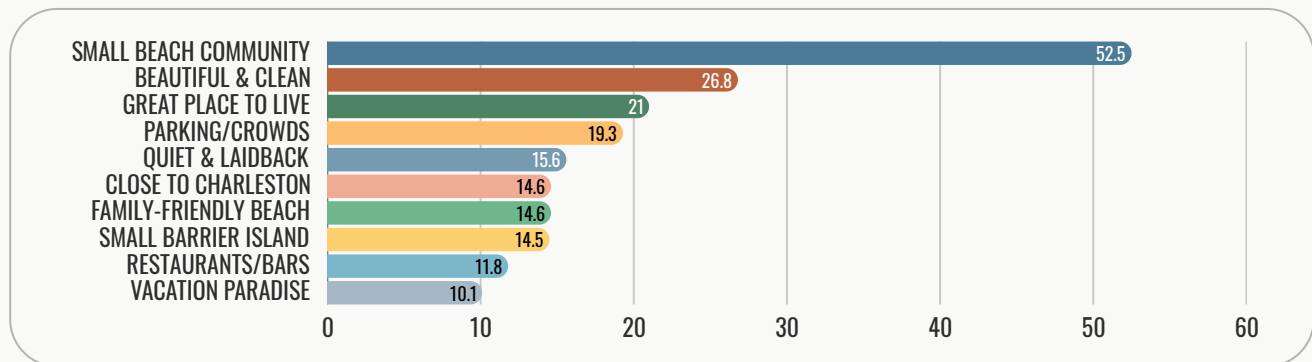


NOT SPECIFIED

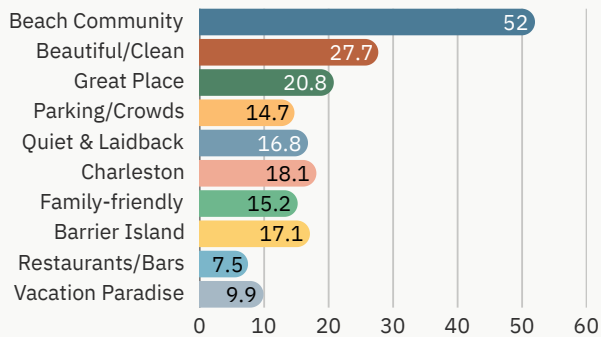


Q2. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE ISLE OF PALMS TO SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER BEEN HERE?

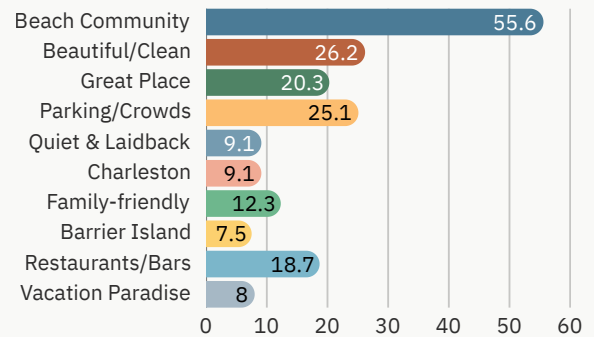
*10 words respondents used most often:



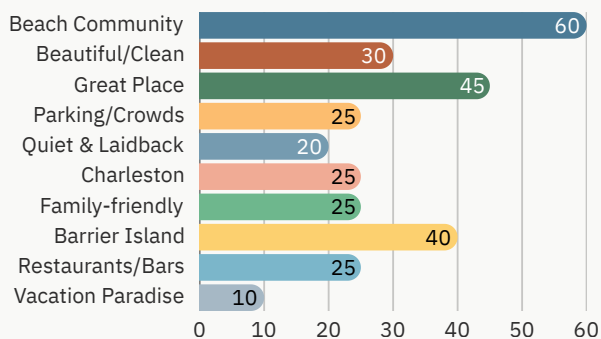
RESIDENTS



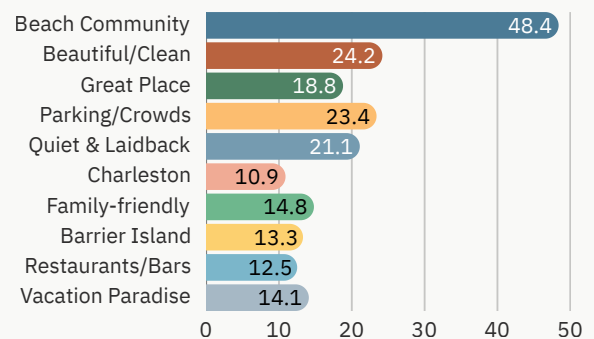
VISITORS



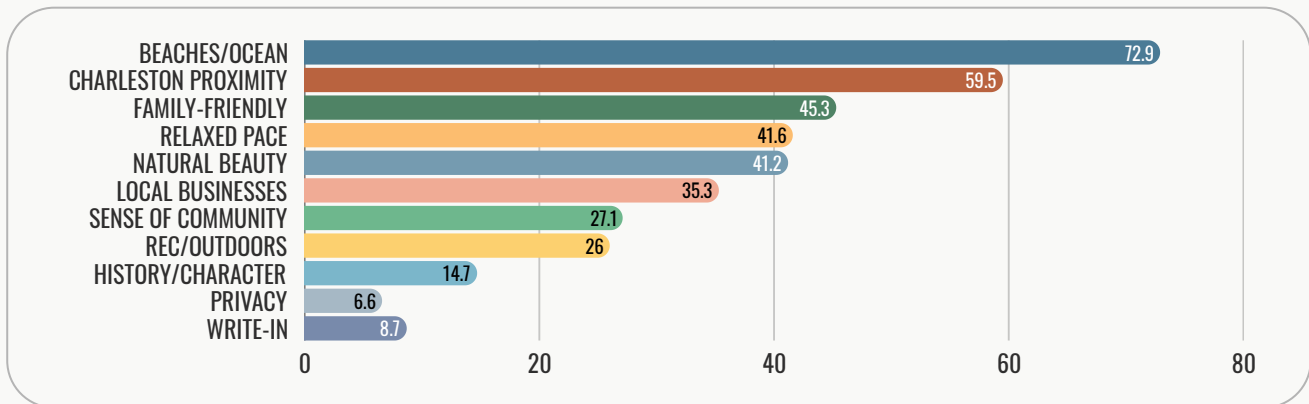
BUSINESSES



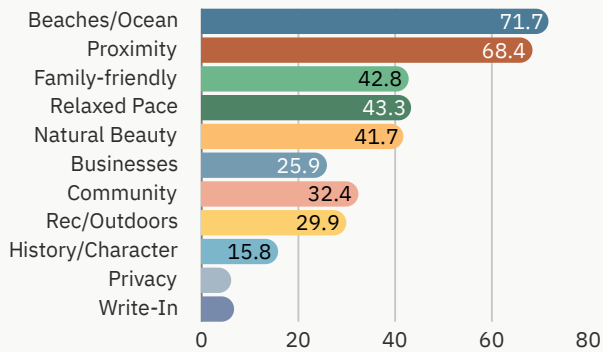
NOT SPECIFIED



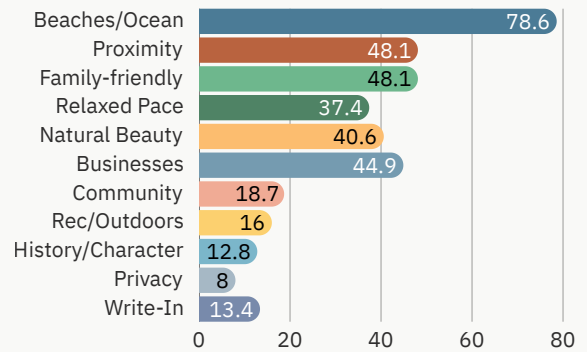
Q3. WHAT MAKES THE ISLE OF PALMS SPECIAL COMPARED WITH OTHER COASTAL COMMUNITIES?



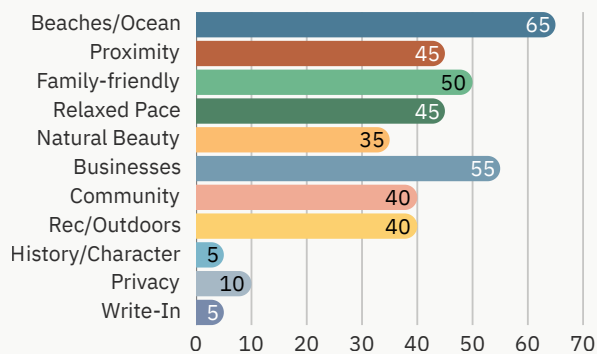
RESIDENTS



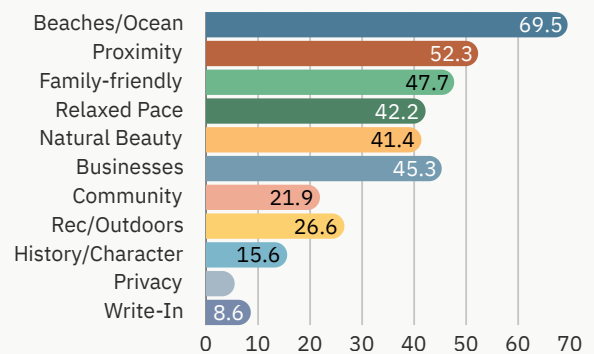
VISITORS



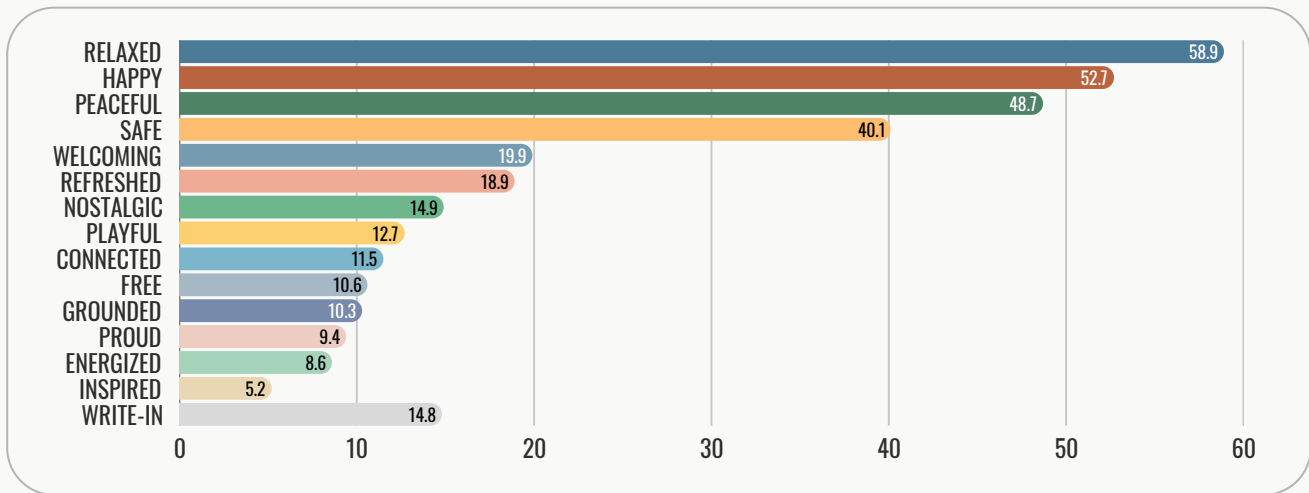
BUSINESSES



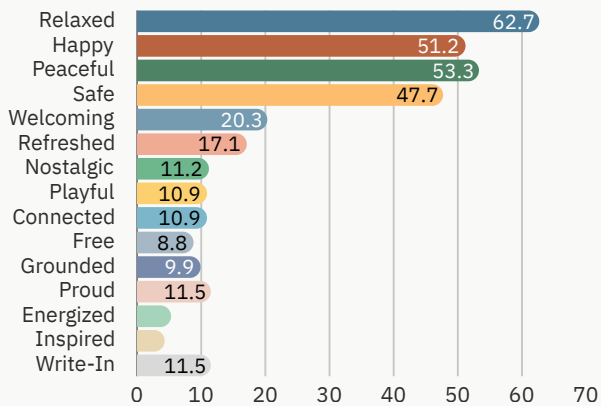
NOT SPECIFIED



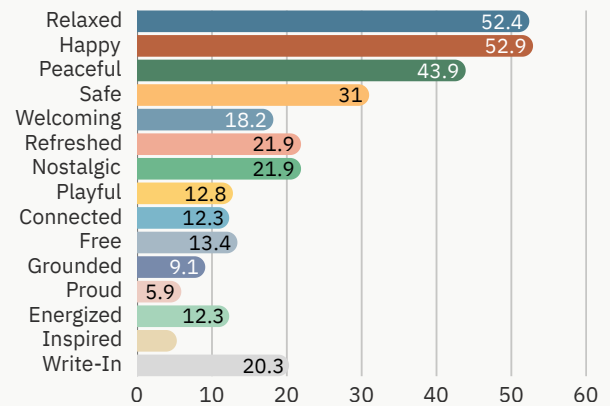
Q4. WHICH FEELINGS BEST DESCRIBE BEING ON THE ISLE OF PALMS?



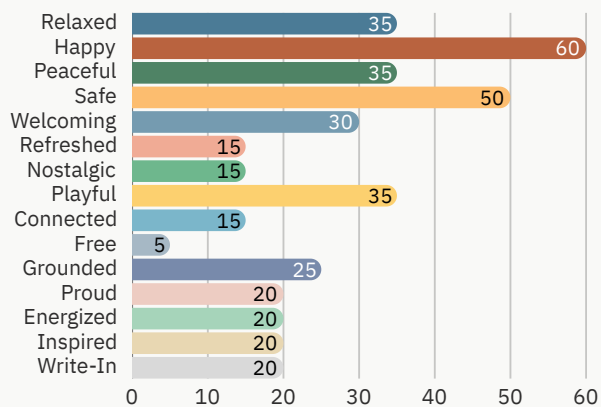
RESIDENTS



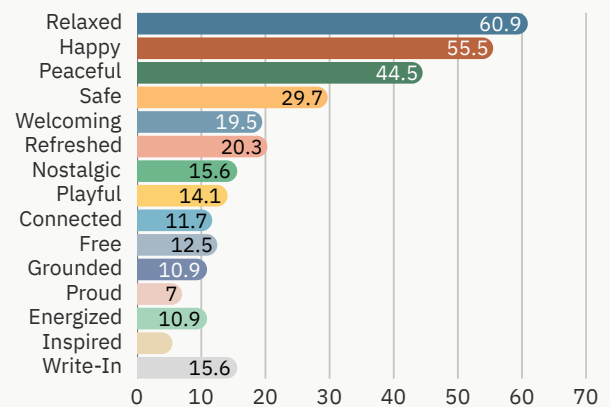
VISITORS



BUSINESSES

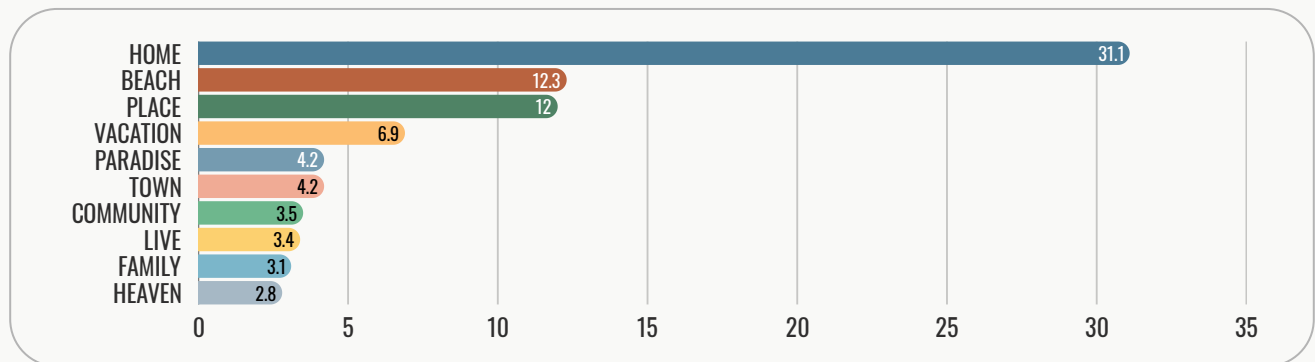


NOT SPECIFIED

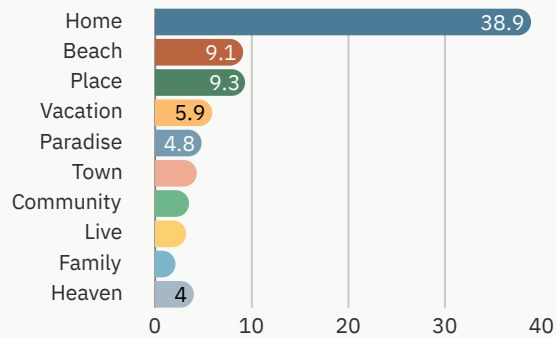


Q5. COMPLETE THE SENTENCE – ISLE OF PALMS FEELS LIKE ____?

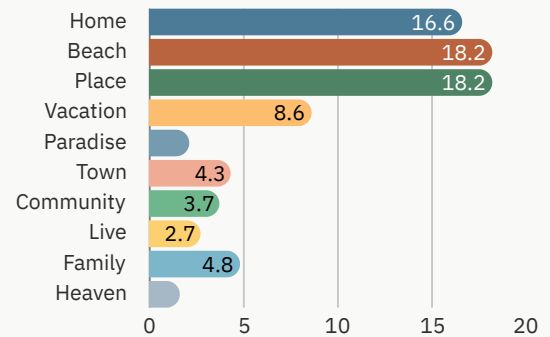
*10 words respondents used most often:



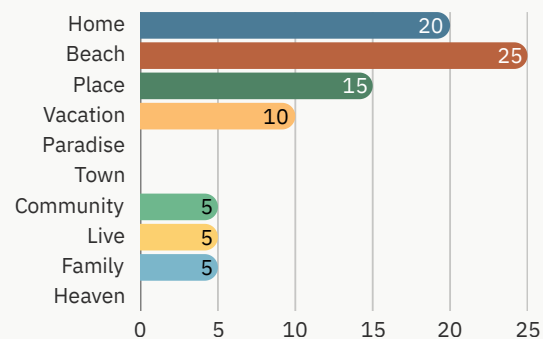
RESIDENTS



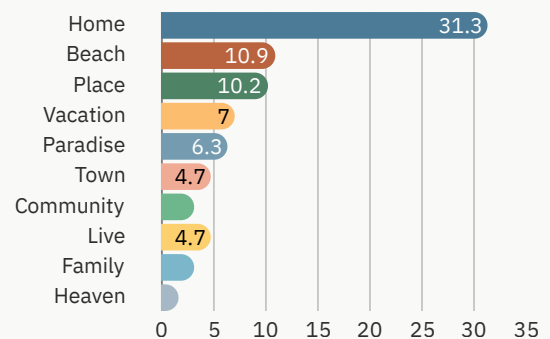
VISITORS



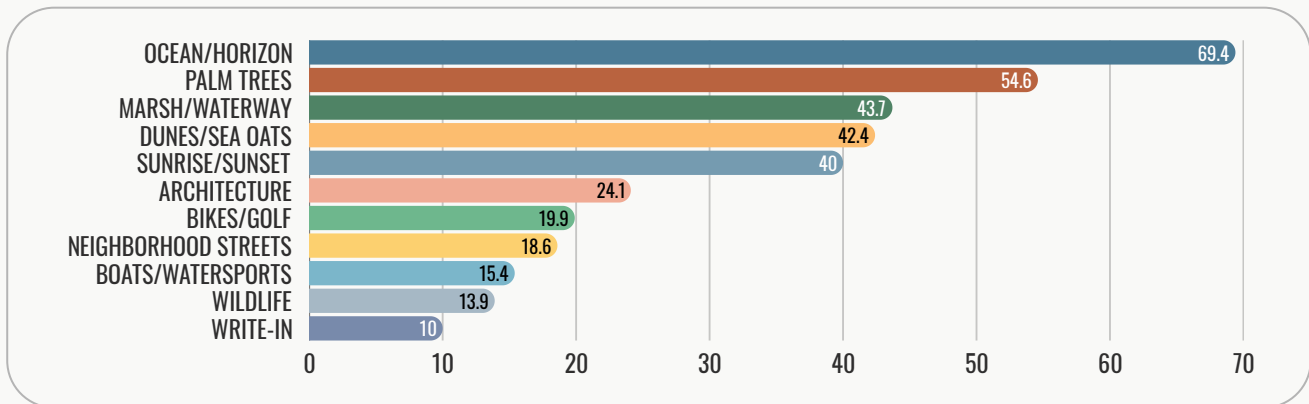
BUSINESSES



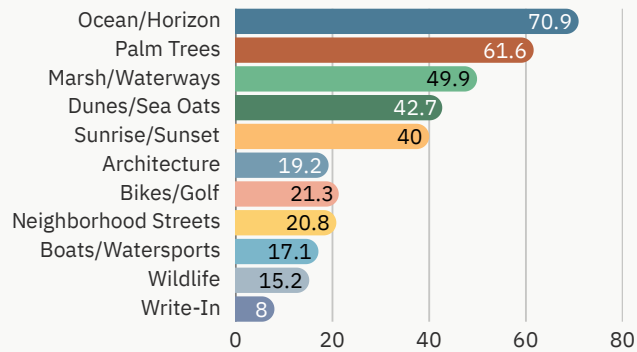
NOT SPECIFIED



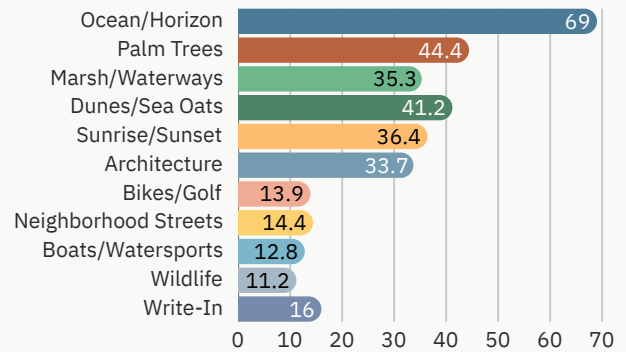
Q6. WHICH SIGHTS FEEL MOST DISTINCTLY ISLE OF PALMS TO YOU?



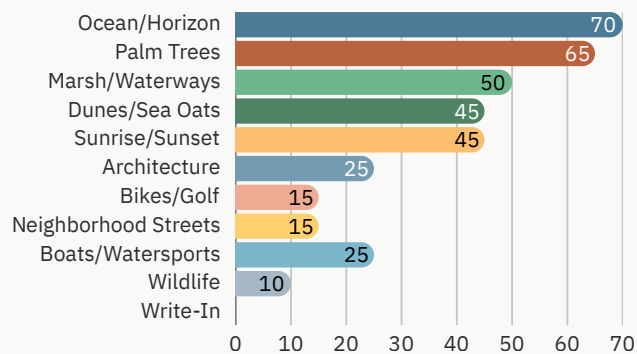
RESIDENTS



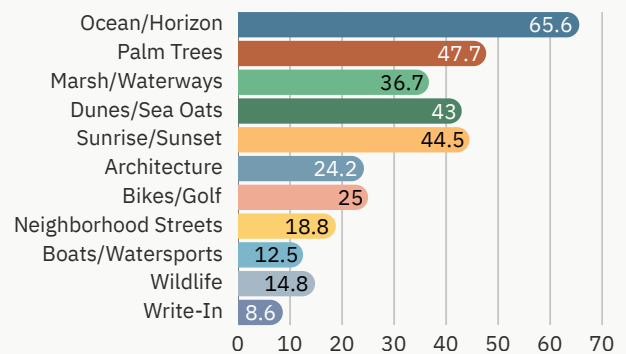
VISITORS



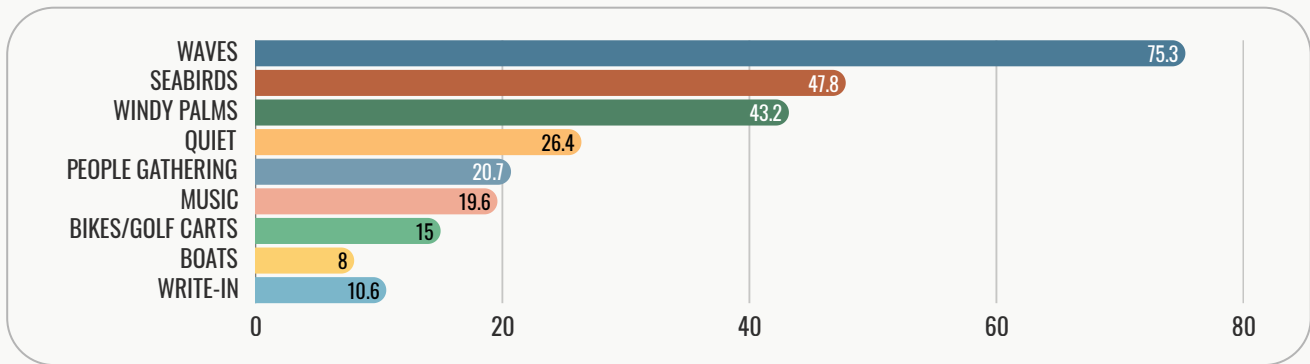
BUSINESSES



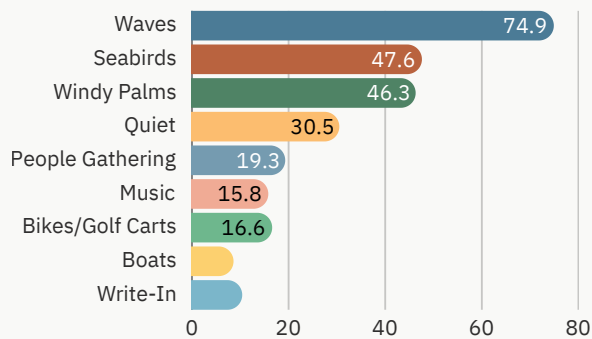
NOT SPECIFIED



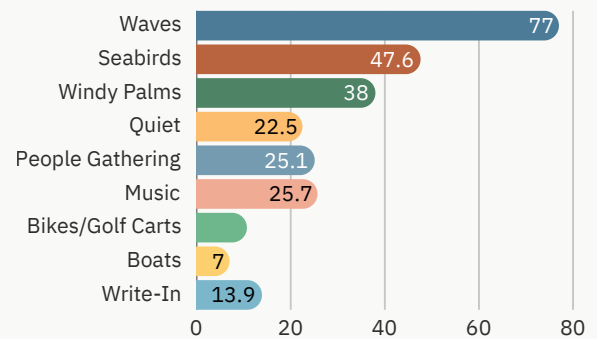
Q7. WHICH SOUNDS IMMEDIATELY MAKE YOU THINK OF THE ISLE OF PALMS?



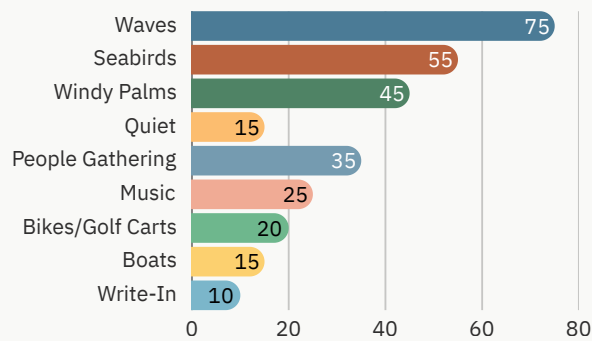
RESIDENTS



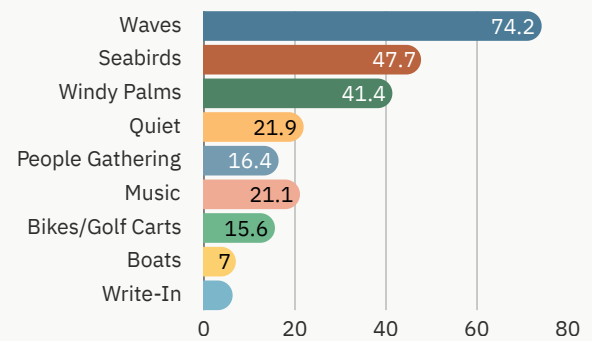
VISITORS



BUSINESSES

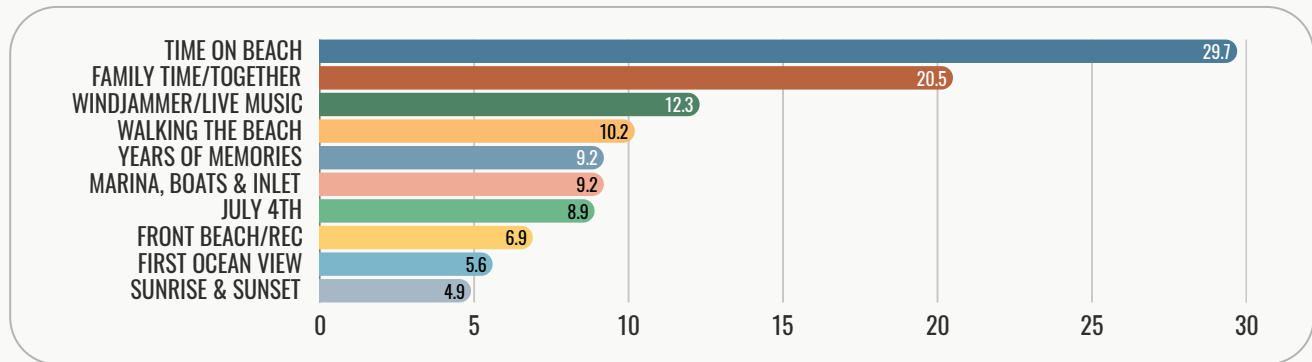


NOT SPECIFIED

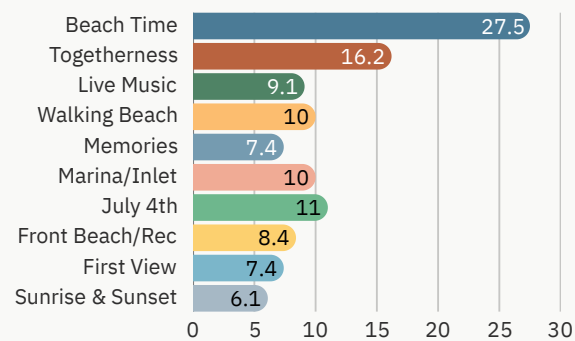


Q8. IS THERE A SPECIFIC PLACE, TRADITION, MOMENT OR MEMORY THAT REPRESENTS THE ISLE OF PALMS TO YOU?

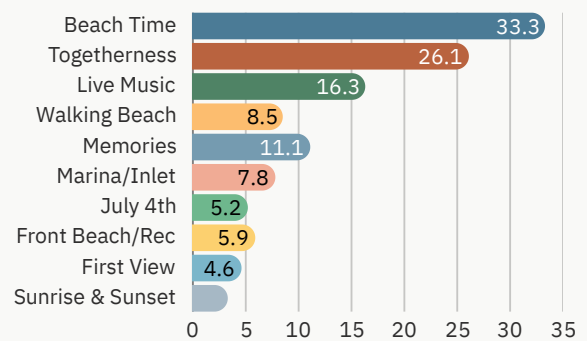
*10 words respondents used most often:



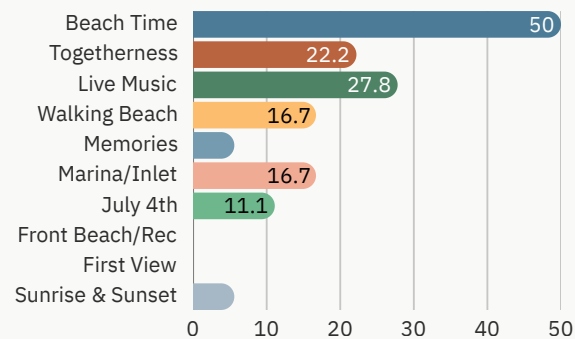
RESIDENTS



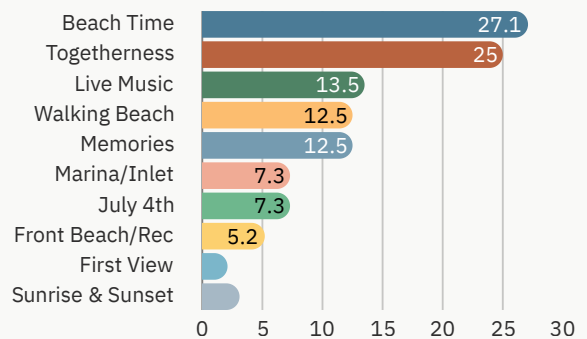
VISITORS



BUSINESSES

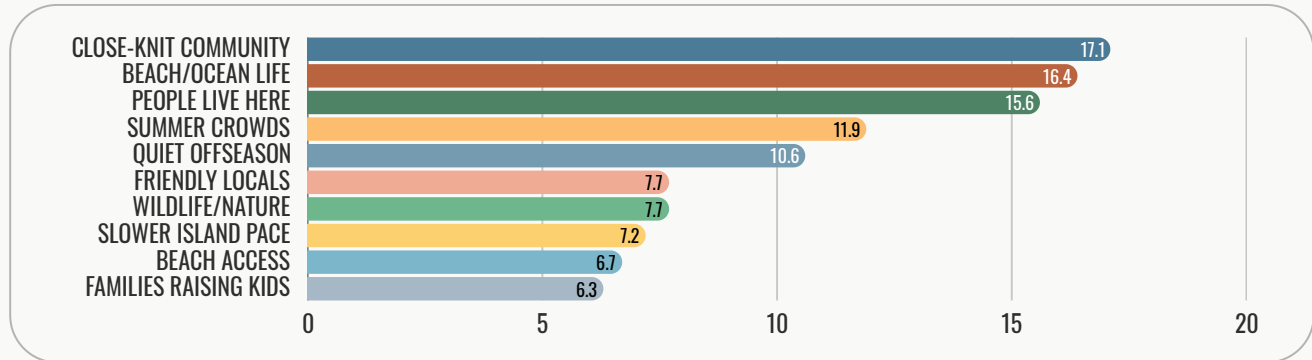


NOT SPECIFIED

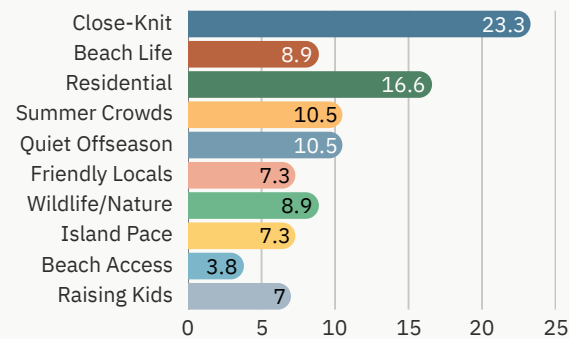


Q9. WHAT IS ONE SMALL DETAIL ABOUT LIFE HERE THAT SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LIVE HERE MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND OR NOTICE?

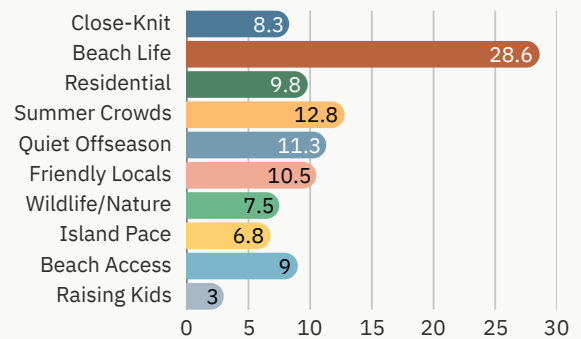
*10 words respondents used most often:



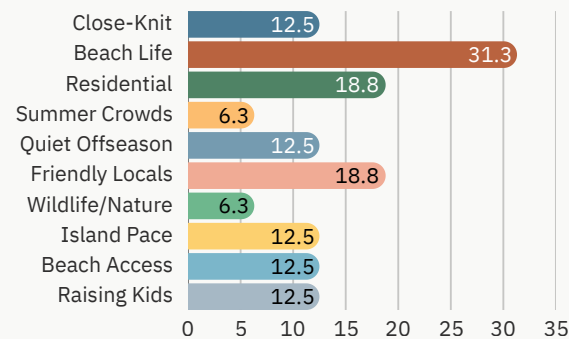
RESIDENTS



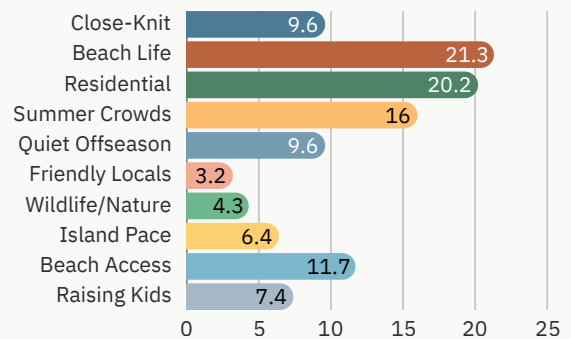
VISITORS



BUSINESSES

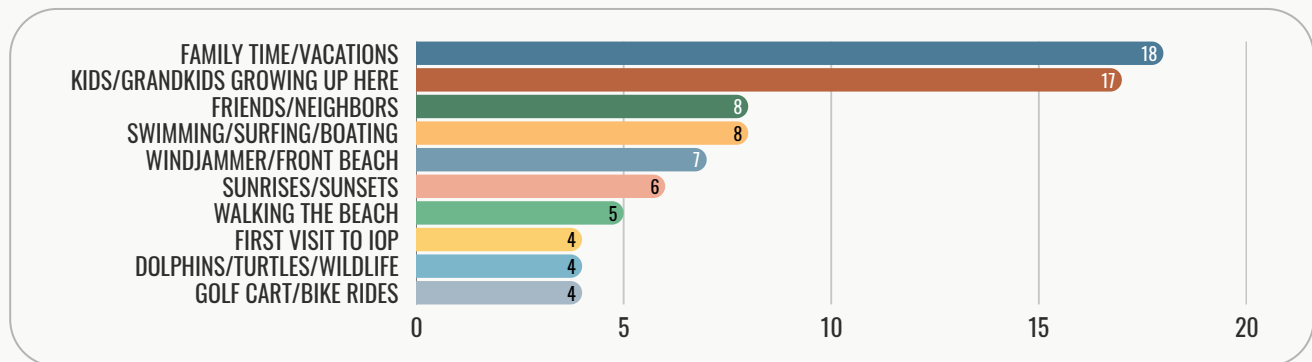


NOT SPECIFIED

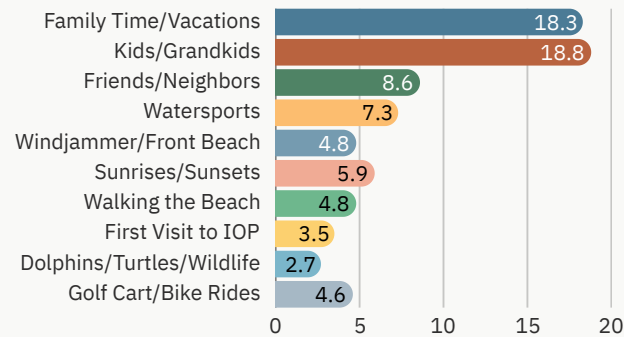


Q10. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE MEMORY OF THE ISLE OF PALMS? TELL US ABOUT IT.

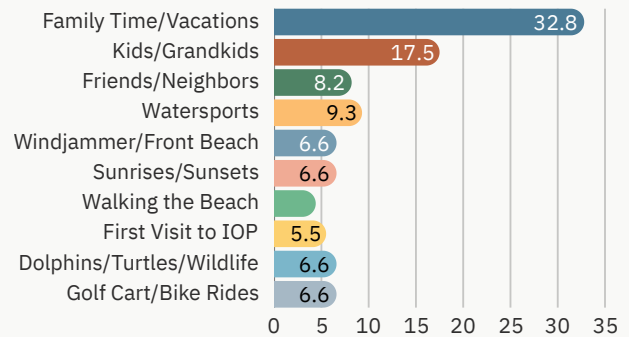
*10 words respondents used most often:



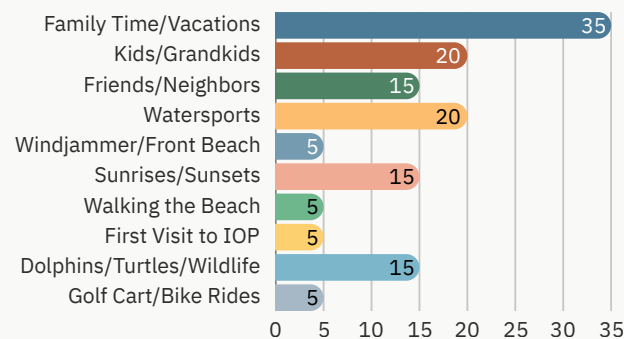
RESIDENTS



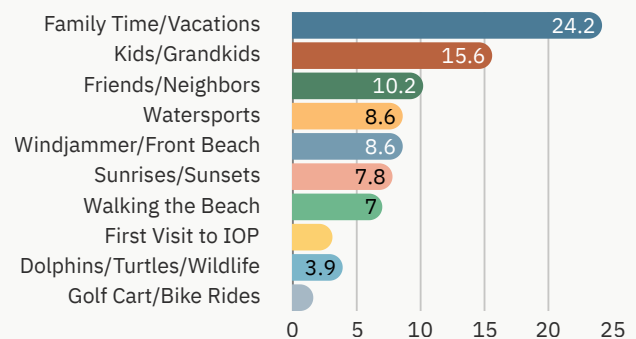
VISITORS



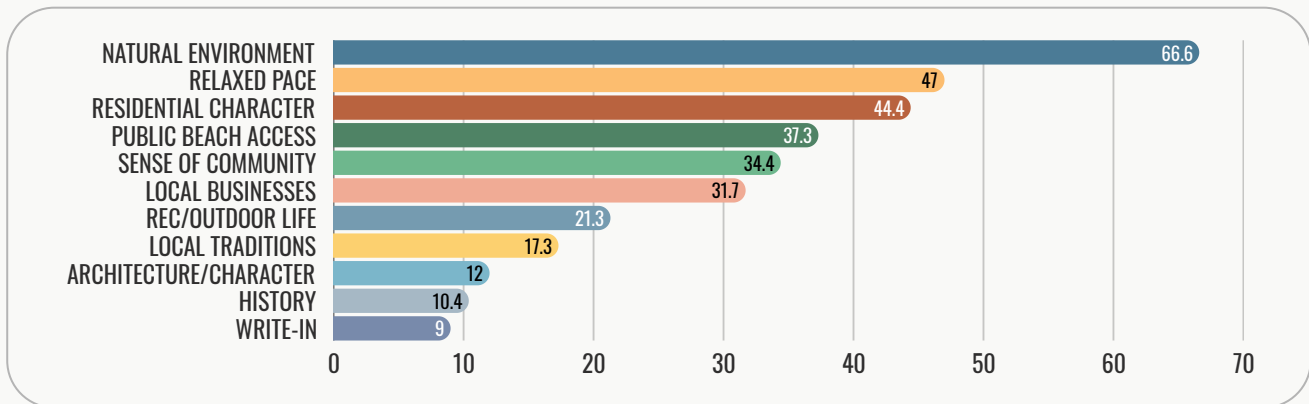
BUSINESSES



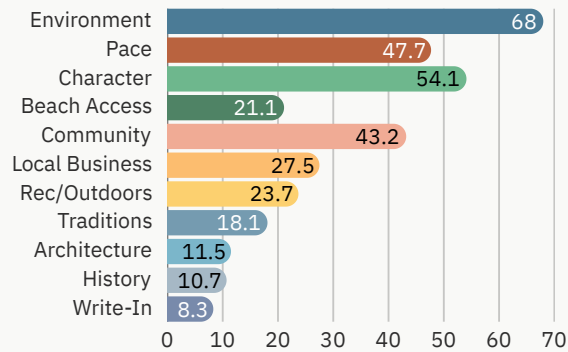
NOT SPECIFIED



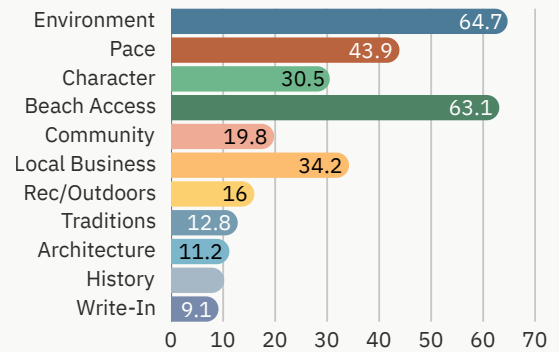
Q11. AS THE ISLE OF PALMS EVOLVES, WHAT FEELS MOST IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE?



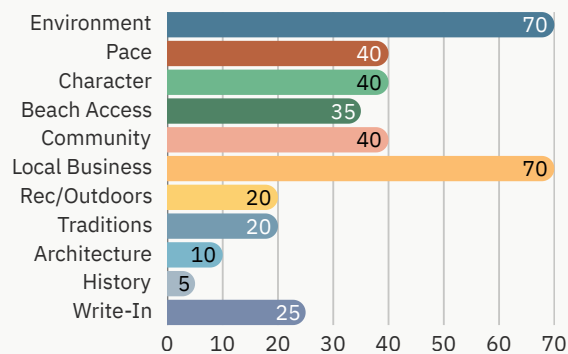
RESIDENTS



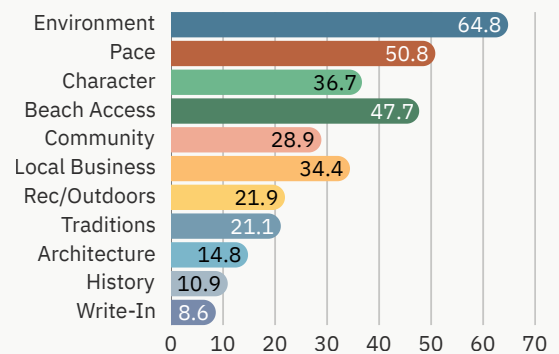
VISITORS



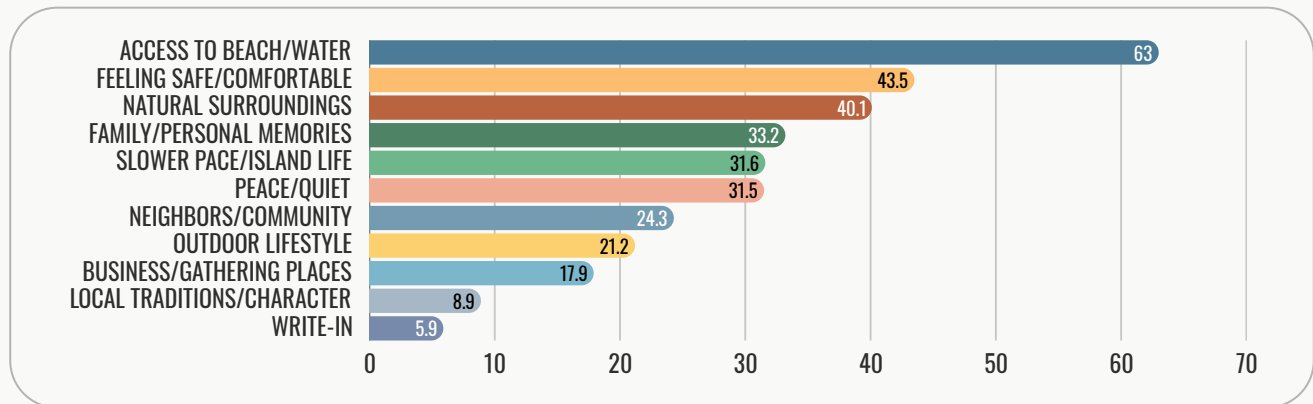
BUSINESSES



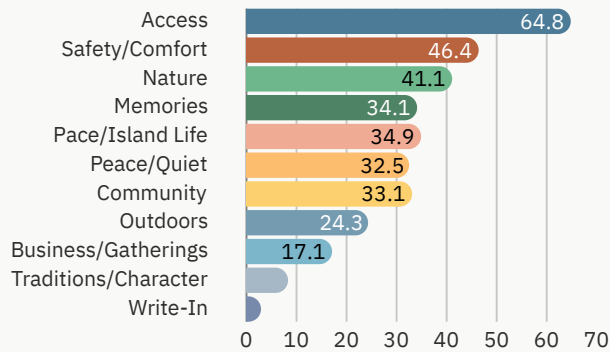
NOT SPECIFIED



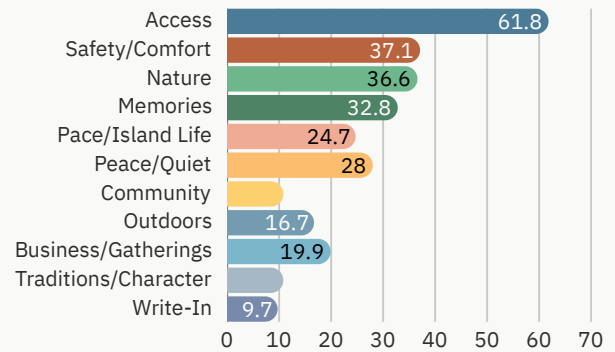
Q12. WHICH ASPECTS OF LIVING ON THE ISLAND CONTRIBUTE MOST TO YOUR HAPPINESS HERE?



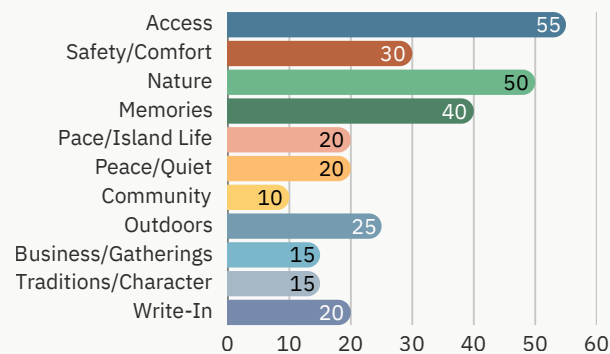
RESIDENTS



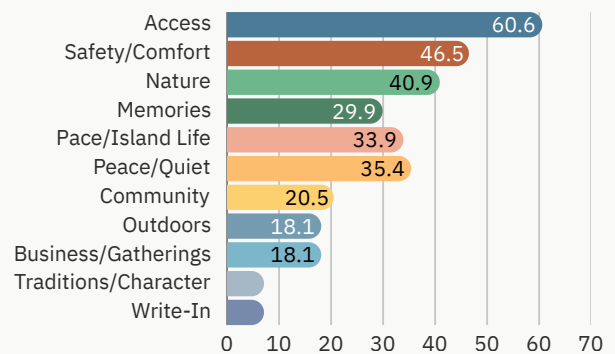
VISITORS



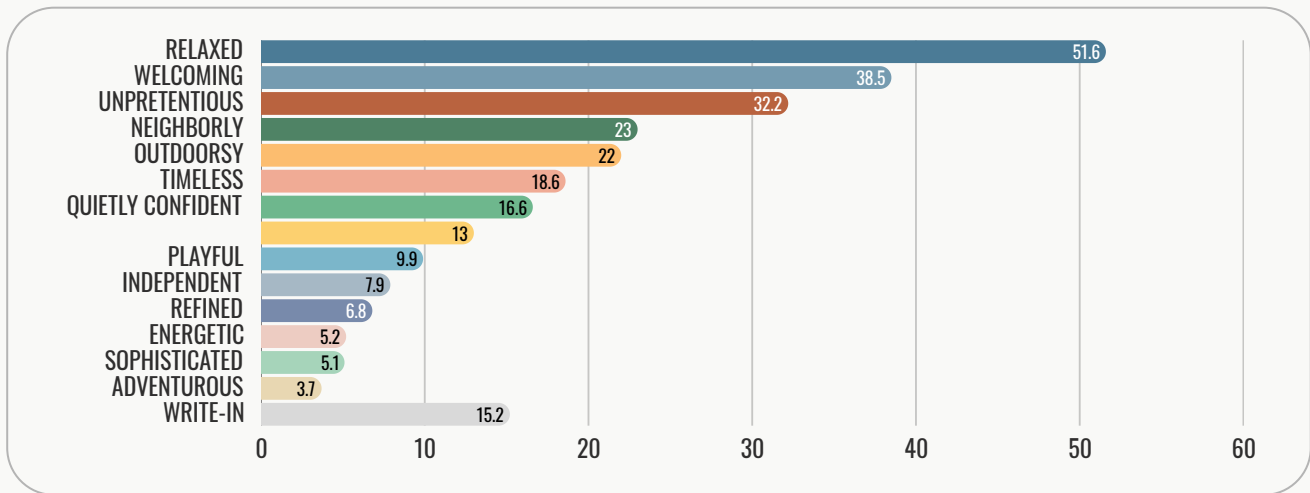
BUSINESSES



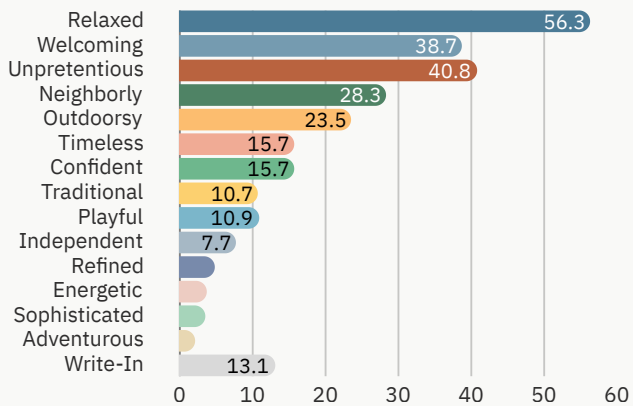
NOT SPECIFIED



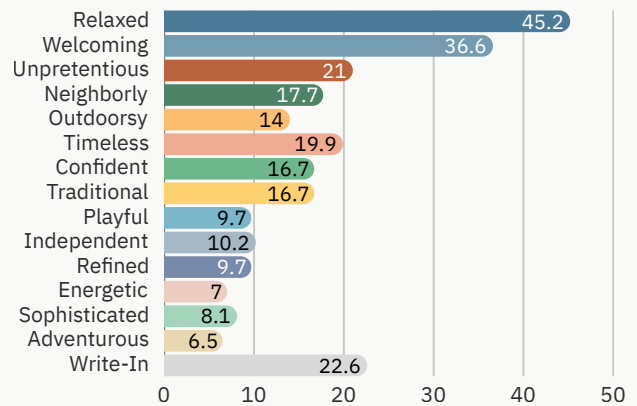
Q13. IF THE ISLE OF PALMS WERE A PERSON, WHICH QUALITIES BEST DESCRIBE THEM?



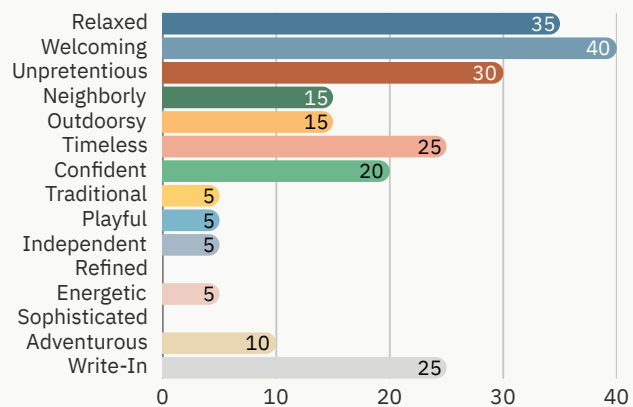
RESIDENTS



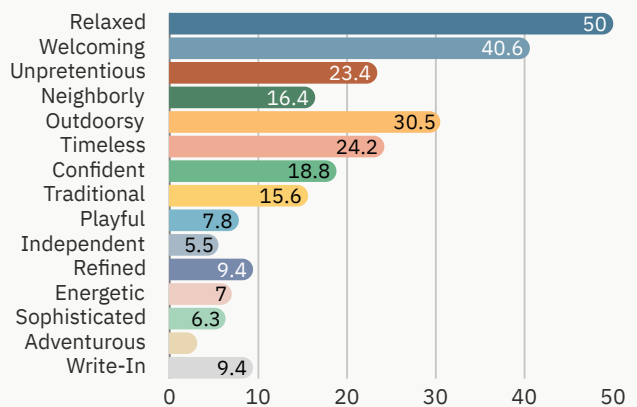
VISITORS



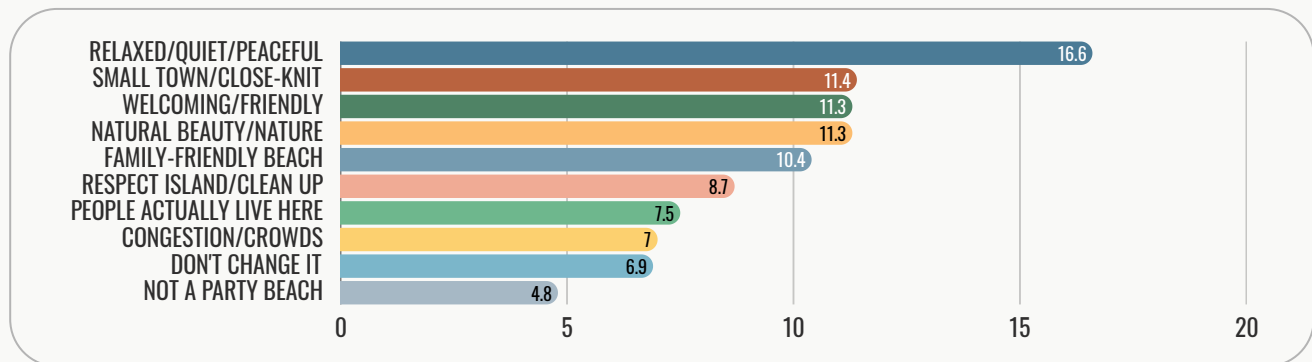
BUSINESSES



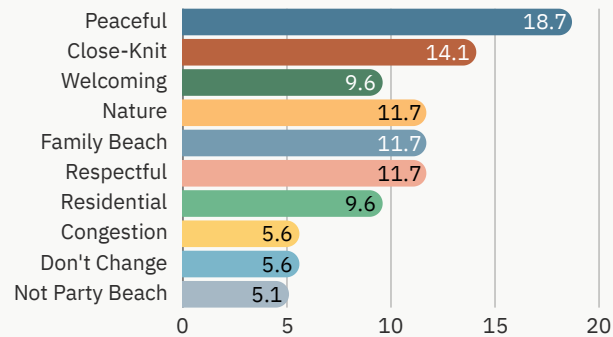
NOT SPECIFIED



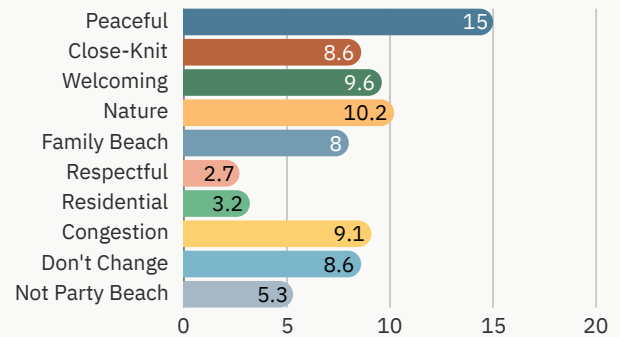
Q14. IF THE FUTURE IOP BRAND COULD COMMUNICATE ONE THING, WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE UNDERSTAND ABOUT THIS PLACE?



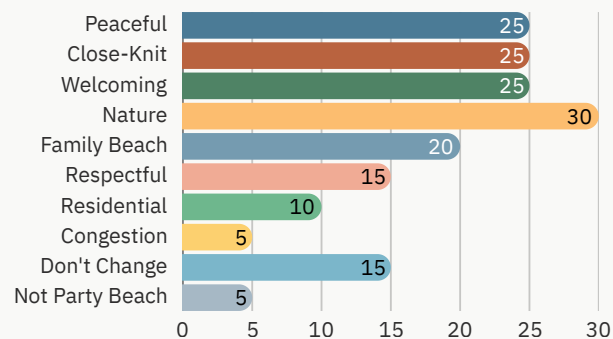
RESIDENTS



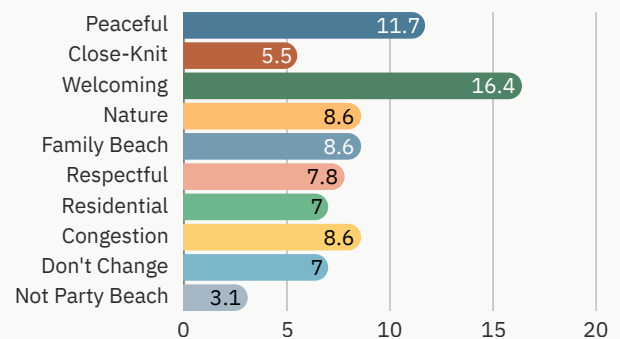
VISITORS



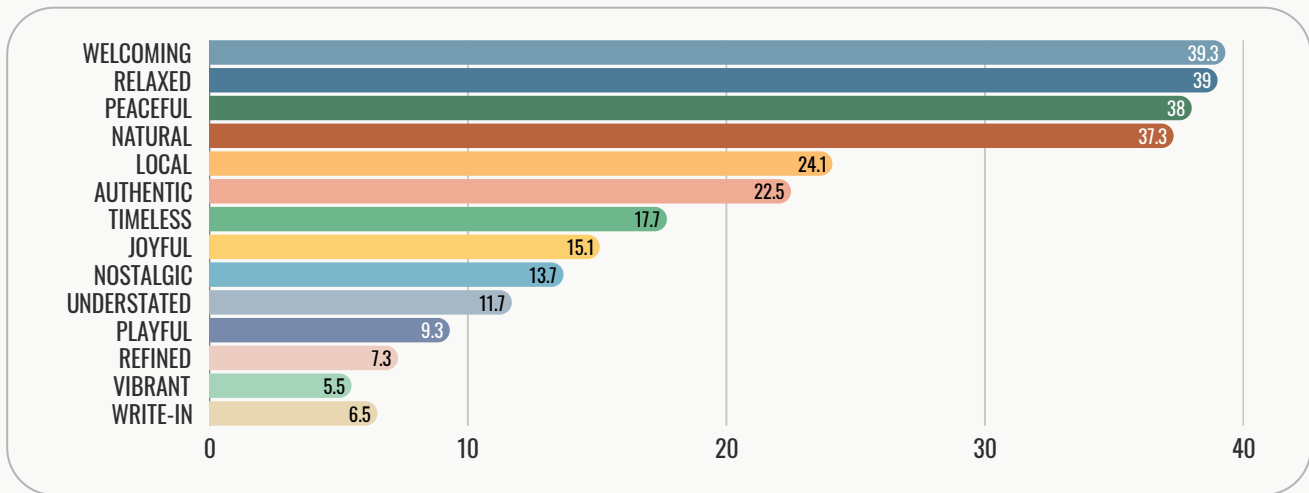
BUSINESSES



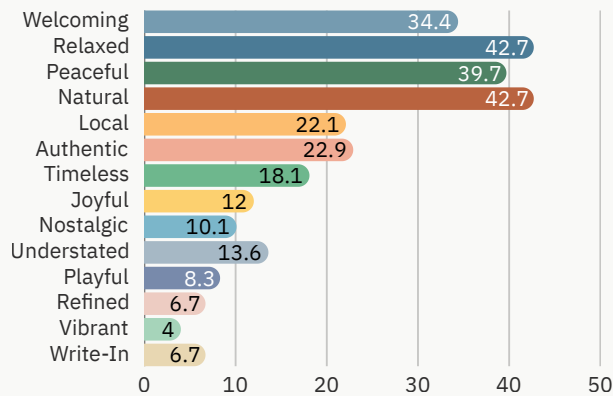
NOT SPECIFIED



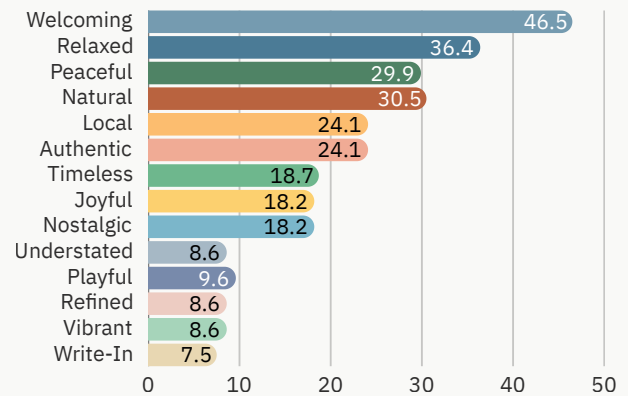
Q15. WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING REPRESENTING THE ISLE OF PALMS, WHAT SHOULD IT FEEL LIKE?



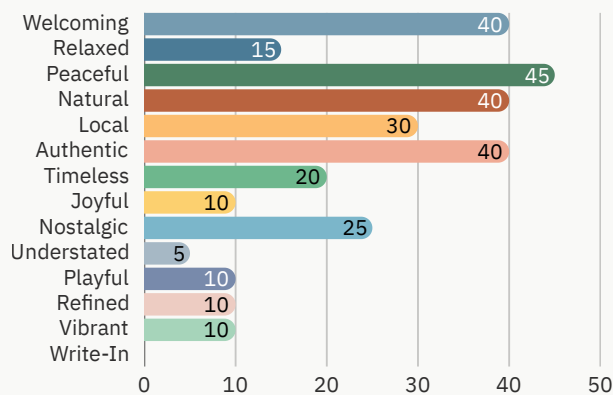
RESIDENTS



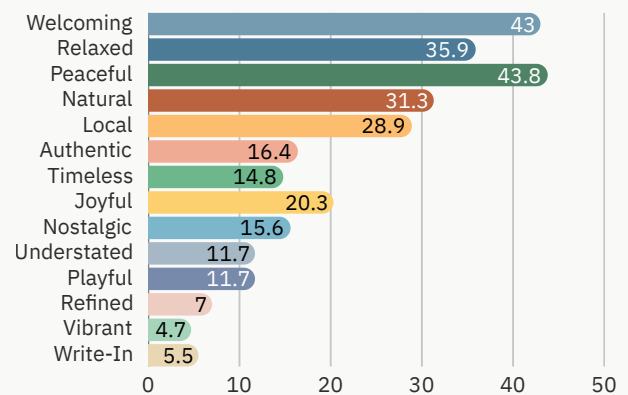
VISITORS



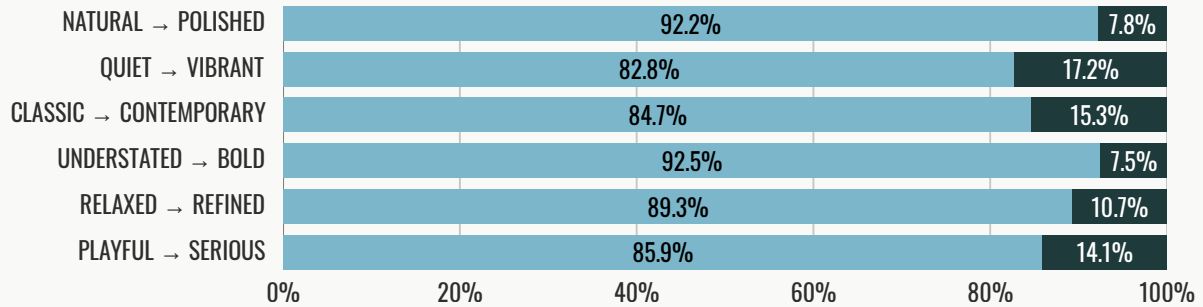
BUSINESSES



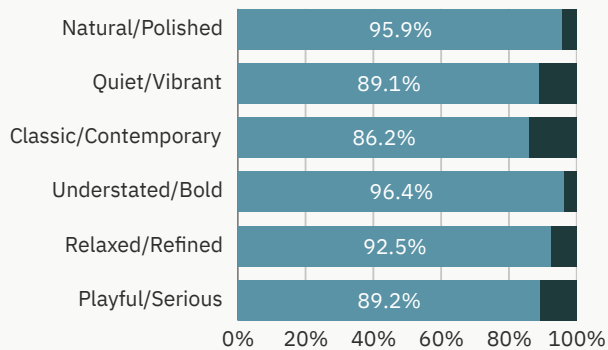
NOT SPECIFIED



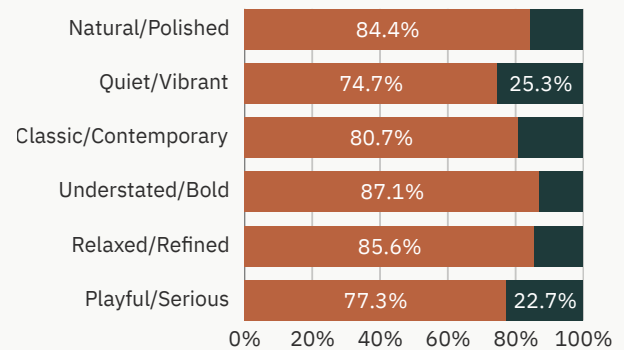
Q16. WHICH ASPECTS OF LIVING ON THE ISLAND CONTRIBUTE MOST TO YOUR HAPPINESS HERE?



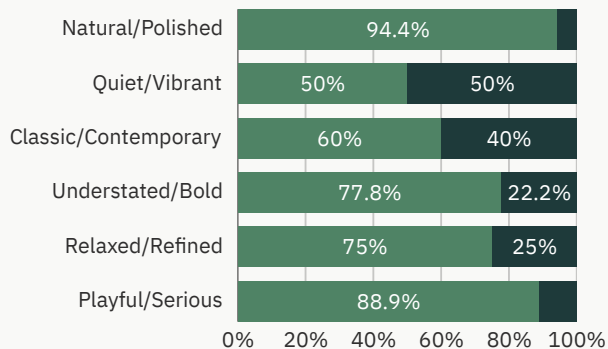
RESIDENTS



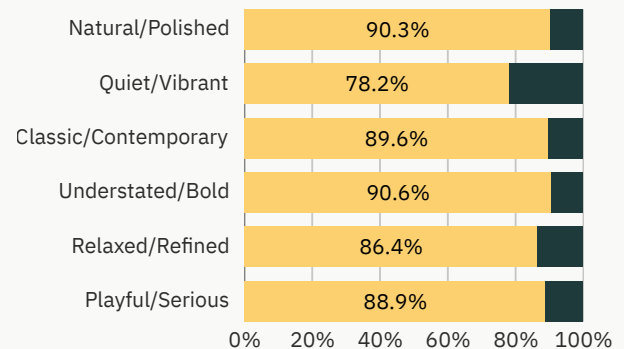
VISITORS



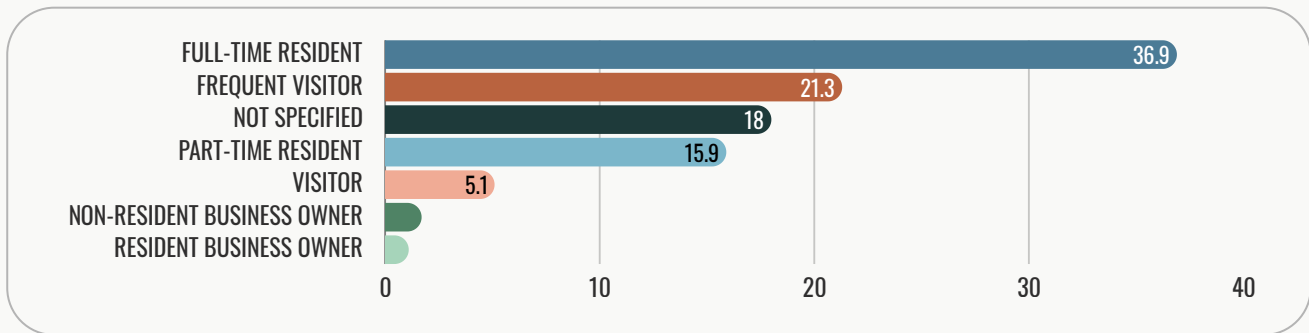
BUSINESSES



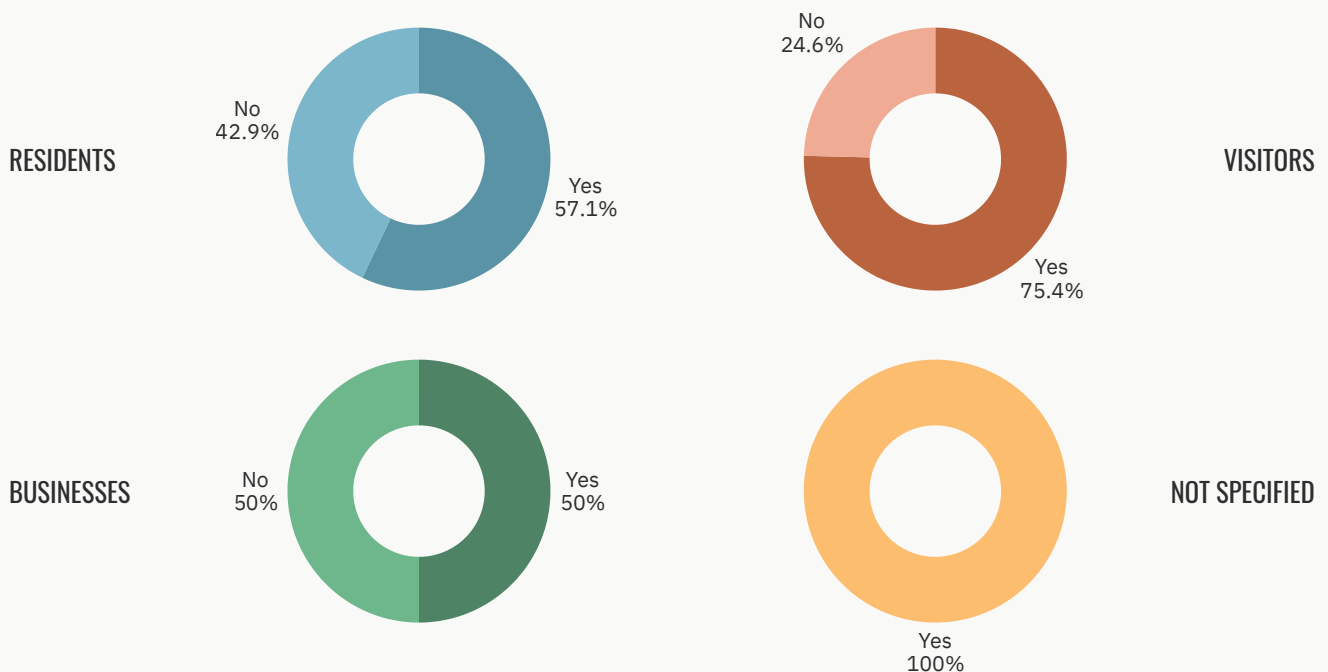
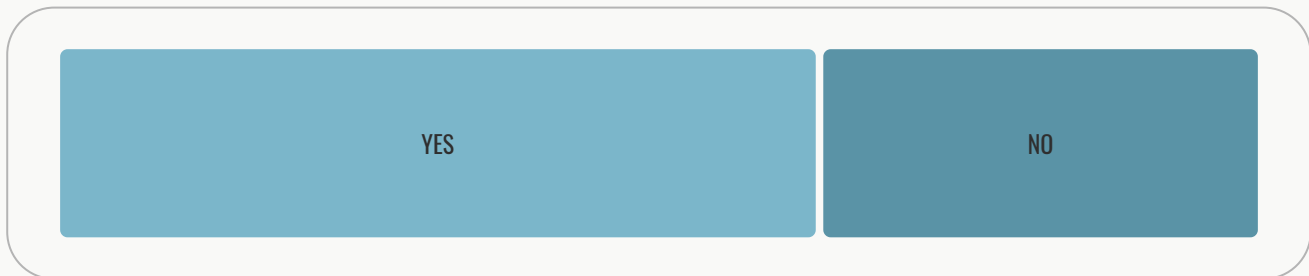
NOT SPECIFIED



Q17. WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE ISLE OF PALMS?



Q18. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SCHEDULE A MORE IN-DEPTH 30-MIN INTERVIEW TO PROVIDE MORE OF YOUR ISLE OF PALMS INSIGHT?



Sources

City of Isle of Palms Interdepartmental Branding Survey (2026)

City of Isle of Palms Community Survey (2026)

Independent Stakeholder Interviews (2026)

