

Huntsville Travel Intention and Perceptions Survey Report



To Our Valued Stakeholders and Community Partners:

This year, as part of our COVID-19 Recovery Plan, the Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association (HMATA) commissioned two surveys from the polling firm Pollara Inc. These surveys were distributed to the general Ontario population as well as to a database of previous visitors to Huntsville. The purpose of these surveys was to learn about the travel intentions of Ontarians during and post-COVID and to discover insights about the perception the Town of Huntsville has within the Province and in the minds of those who have previously visited. The two surveys have given us some very actionable data – some positive and some less so. We would like to share this summary document of the survey findings to help our entire community understand our position and to be able to market ourselves more effectively to potential travellers. We strongly believe that, if we work together, we can help each other grow and prosper through these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Jesse Hamilton and the HMATA Board



Research Methodology

- An online survey was conducted among a randomly-selected sample of N=900 adult (18+) Ontario residents who are very or somewhat likely to travel within Ontario in the summer, fall or winter.
- The interviews were conducted between July 27 to August 5th, 2020.
- As a guideline, a probability sample of this size carries a margin of error of $\pm 3.3\%$, nineteen times out of twenty. The margin of error is larger for sub-segments. Although demographic and regional quotas were employed to ensure reliable and comparable sub-segment analysis, the dataset was weighted to ensure the sample is representative of the Ontario population by region, age and gender. Discrepancies in total % are due to rounding.

Region	Number of Interviews	Margin of error
Toronto	200	$\pm 6.9\%$
GTA Belt	200	$\pm 6.9\%$
Greater Ottawa Area	100	$\pm 9.8\%$
Southwest	200	$\pm 6.9\%$
Eastern	100	$\pm 9.8\%$
Northern	100	$\pm 9.8\%$
Ontario	900	$\pm 3.3\%$

Client Sample – Huntsville Travellers

- Also included in the analysis is a sample of travellers to Huntsville who stayed in local accommodation in the past three to five years.
- A survey tool was designed specifically to capture the attitudes and behaviour of visitors to the Huntsville area.
- A link to the survey was forwarded to these travellers and 804 responded.
- **Caution:** The sample is not random and the results are meant to show insight into how frequent travellers perceive Huntsville, their experience in the area and what draws them to the town.

Pollara Survey Insights – Strengths and Opportunities

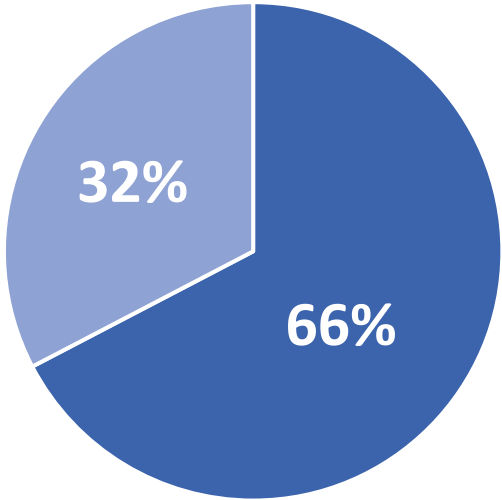
1. Most Ontarians have cancelled out of country fall and winter travel plans, saying they will travel within Ontario or stay home.
2. Scenery and tranquility are most important to travellers to Huntsville. Top 5 activities they are interested in are:
 - Quiet locations with scenic views
 - Areas where you can spend time alone with families
 - Swimming
 - Hiking, biking or Nordic skiing trails
 - Non-motorized boating including canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding
3. Previous visitors to Huntsville were overwhelmingly positive about their experience and extremely willing to return. 92% of respondents said they were satisfied with their last trip to Huntsville.
4. Muskoka as a region is Ontario's most popular summer destination, with 28% of Ontarians planning to travel. Huntsville is the second most popular region in Muskoka as a summer and fall destination, behind Algonquin Park. 91% of Ontarians have heard of Algonquin Park and 75% are somewhat or very interested in visiting the park. It is extremely important to continue marketing our proximity to the Park.

Pollara Survey Insights – Weaknesses and Challenges

1. While over half of Ontarians have at least passed through Huntsville, 64% of the Province say they are unfamiliar with the Town, with 5% saying they have never even heard of Huntsville.
2. Huntsville's cultural activities, shopping and dining are not well known compared to outdoor activities.
3. 42% of Ontarians have never heard of Downtown Huntsville shopping while 57% have never heard of the Algonquin Theatre. 73% have never heard of the Hunter's Bay Trail, which is part of the Great/Trans-Canada Trail, while 41% have never even heard of Arrowhead Park.
4. While Huntsville is a reasonably competitive destination versus other areas of the province, 42% say they are much more or somewhat more likely to travel to Niagara Falls, 40% to Prince Edward County, 38% to the Greater Ottawa region and 37% to Collingwood/Blue Mountain.
5. The top 2 reasons given for being less likely to visit Huntsville are that they are not familiar with Huntsville (21%) or they feel other destinations offer activities that may be more interesting (20%).
6. Huntsville is far less known as a winter destination, with only 9% of Ontarians considering the region for winter travel. Travellers this winter say they are much more likely to travel to city centres such as Toronto and Ottawa, as well as other tourism destinations such as Collingwood/Blue Mountain and the Niagara area over travel to Huntsville, though this may change as the second wave of COVID progresses.

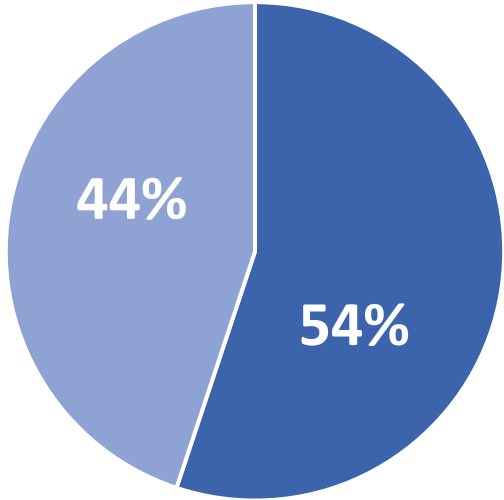
Ontario fall and winter travellers are most likely to travel as planned within the province, but they are more hesitant to travel outside the province and the majority will not travel outside of the country.

Travel Within Ontario



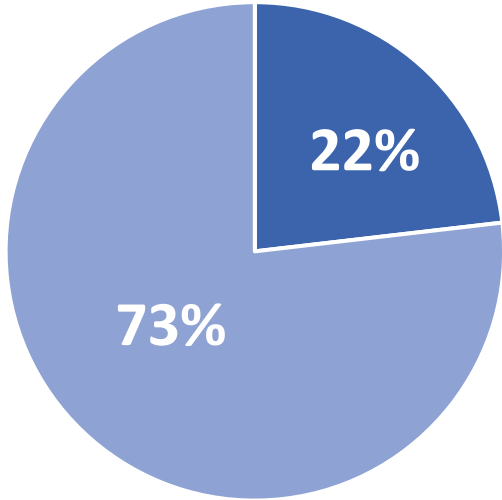
■ Definitely/Likely ■ Unlikely/Won't

Travel Within Canada



■ Definitely/Likely ■ Unlikely/Won't

Travel Outside Canada

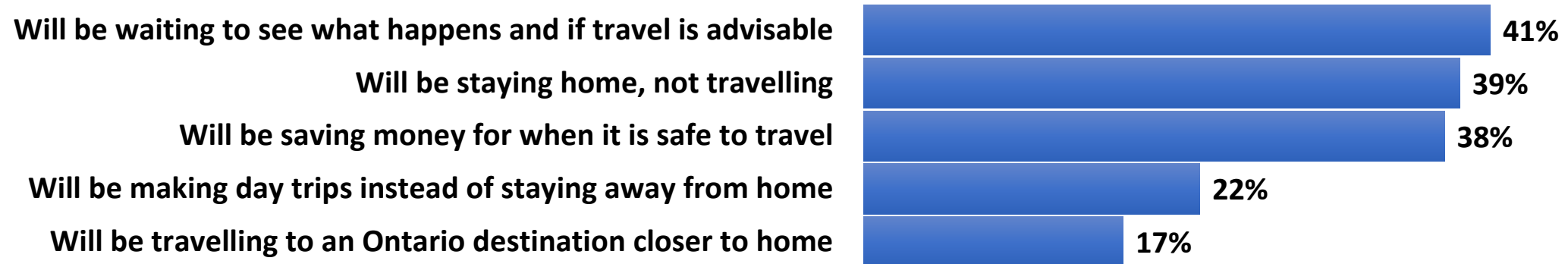


■ Definitely/Likely ■ Unlikely/Won't

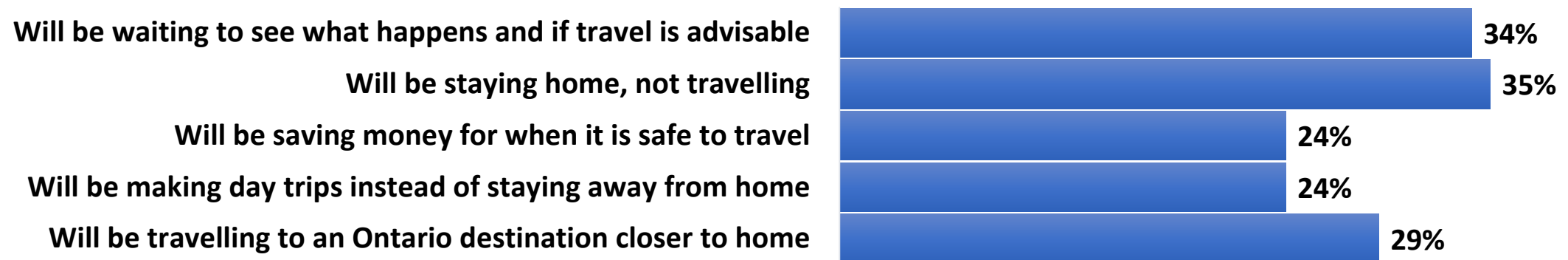
A4. You mentioned that you had made plans to travel in the Fall or Winter. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, how likely do you think it is that you will be traveling as planned?

Ontarians who are cancelling fall and winter plans will wait until travel is advisable or stay home.

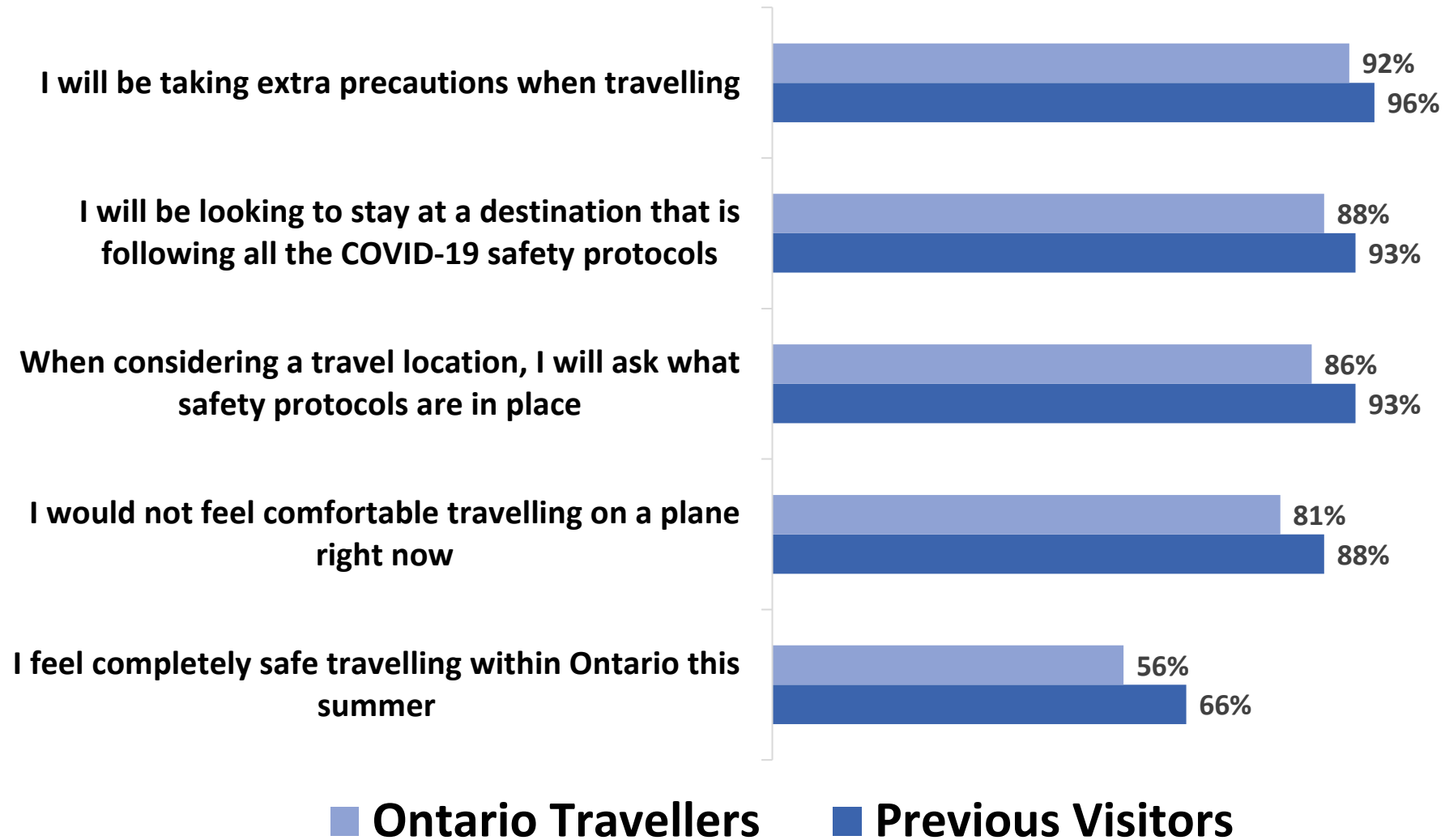
Ontario General Population Survey



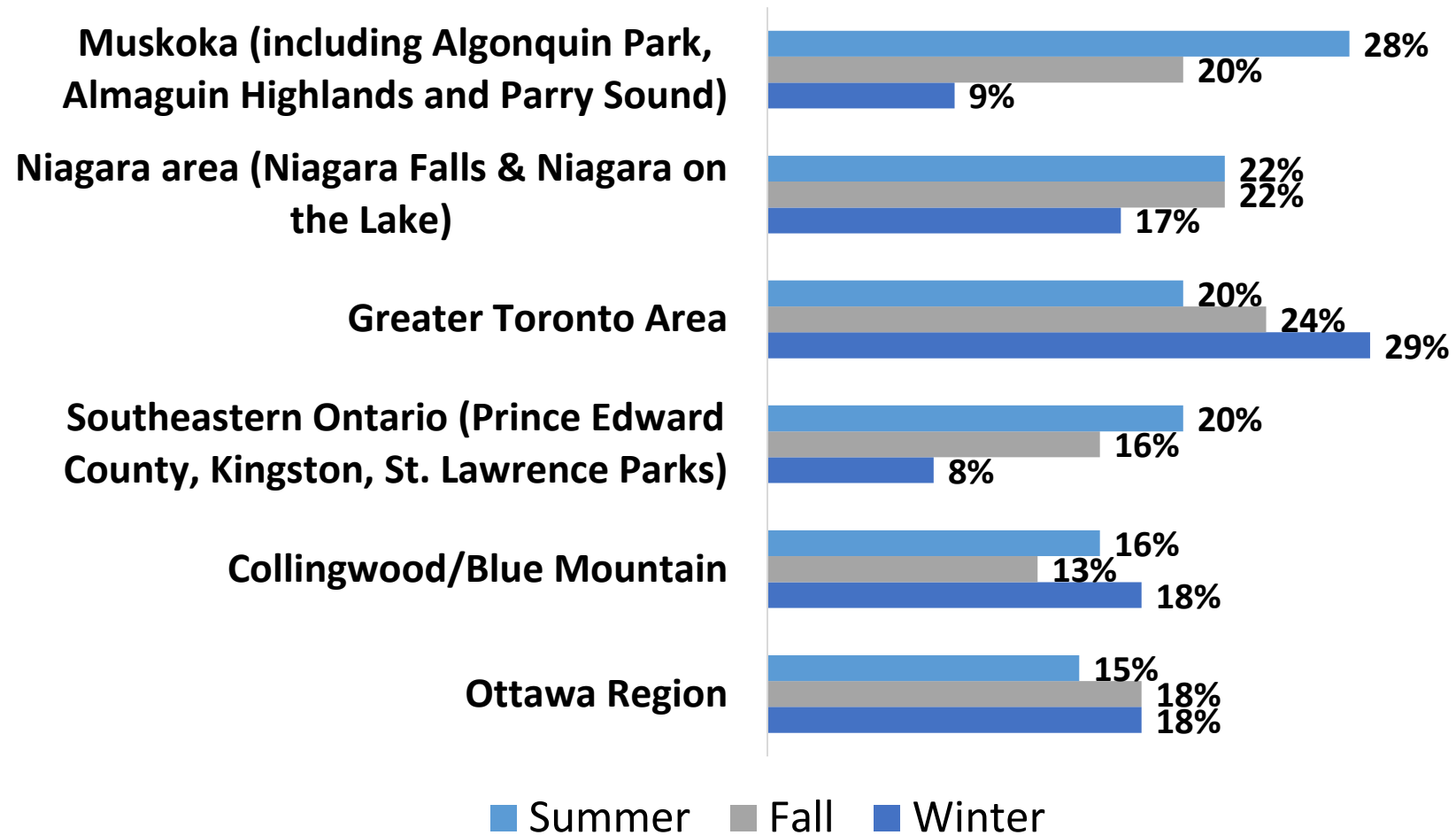
Previous Visitor Survey



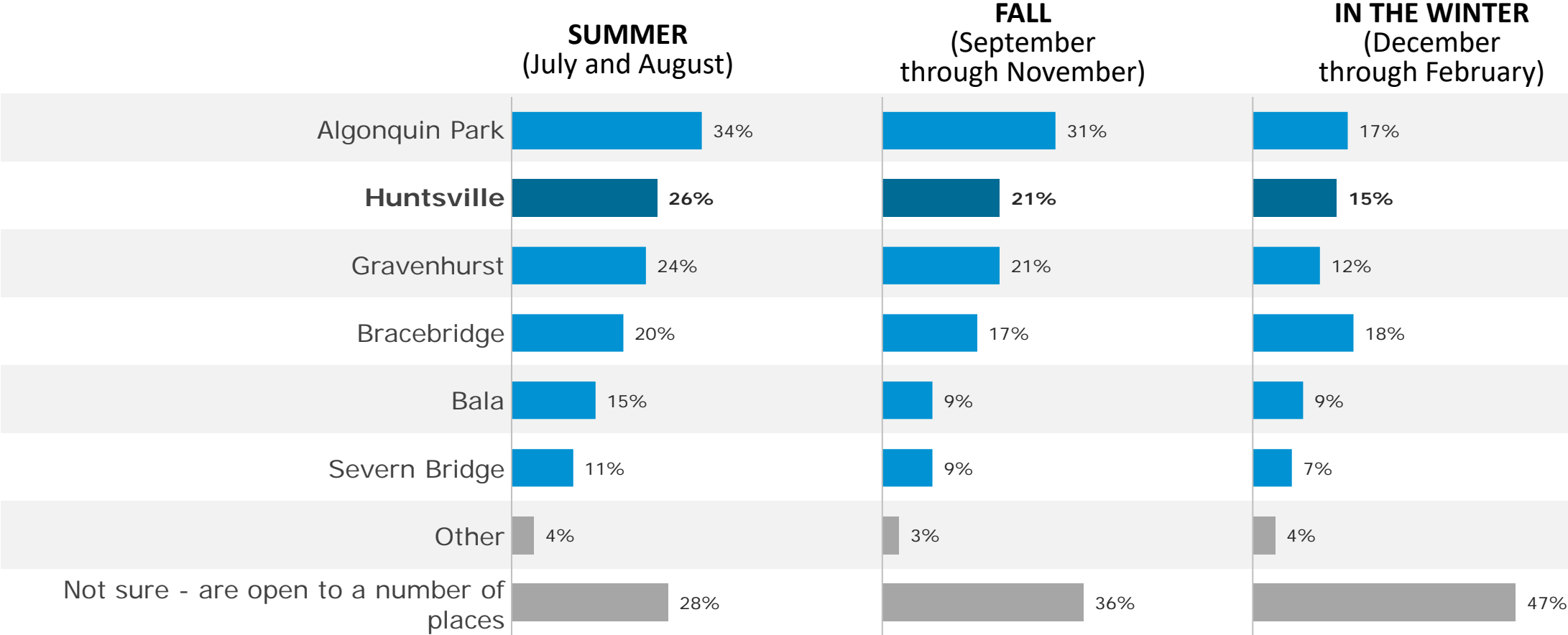
Travellers are feeling cautious and will take safety precautions when travelling.



The surveys show that Muskoka is the most popular destination in Ontario during the summer and third most popular in the fall, but drops sharply in popularity as a winter destination.



Huntsville is the second most popular Muskoka destination in the summer and fall, but drops behind Bracebridge in winter.

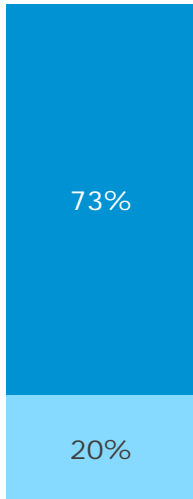


B5. Where in Muskoka would you consider travelling?

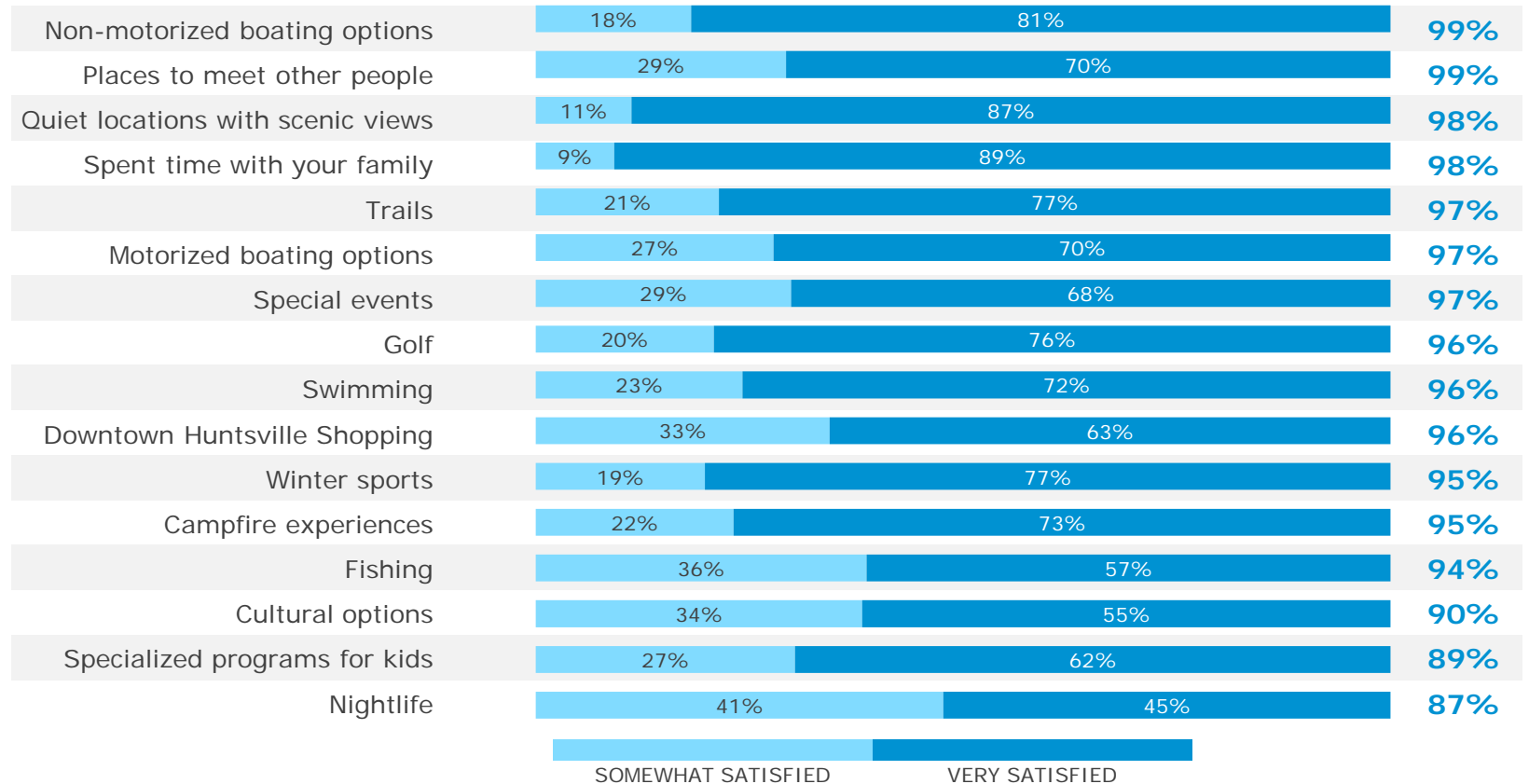
Huntsville is succeeding in meeting travellers' expectations.

Visitors were satisfied with their last trip

92%
SATISFIED



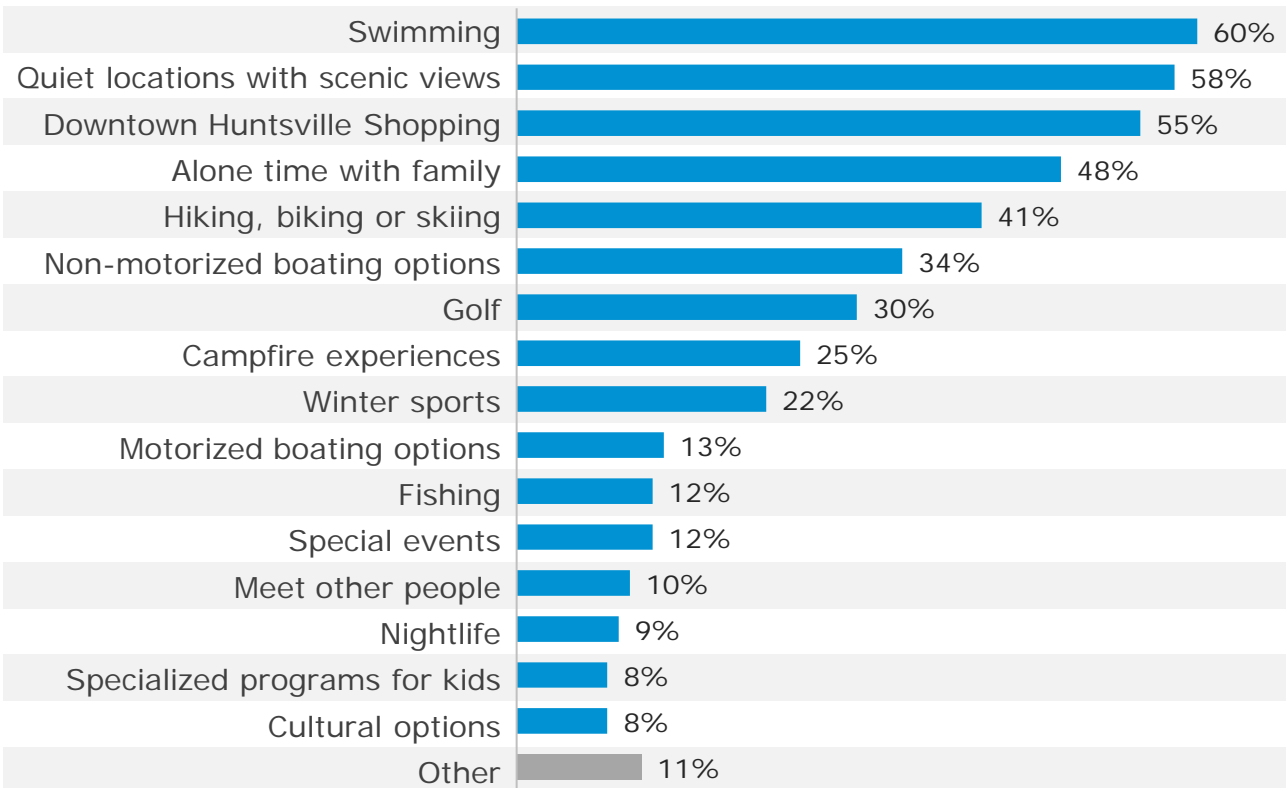
Visitors were satisfied with Huntsville's activities



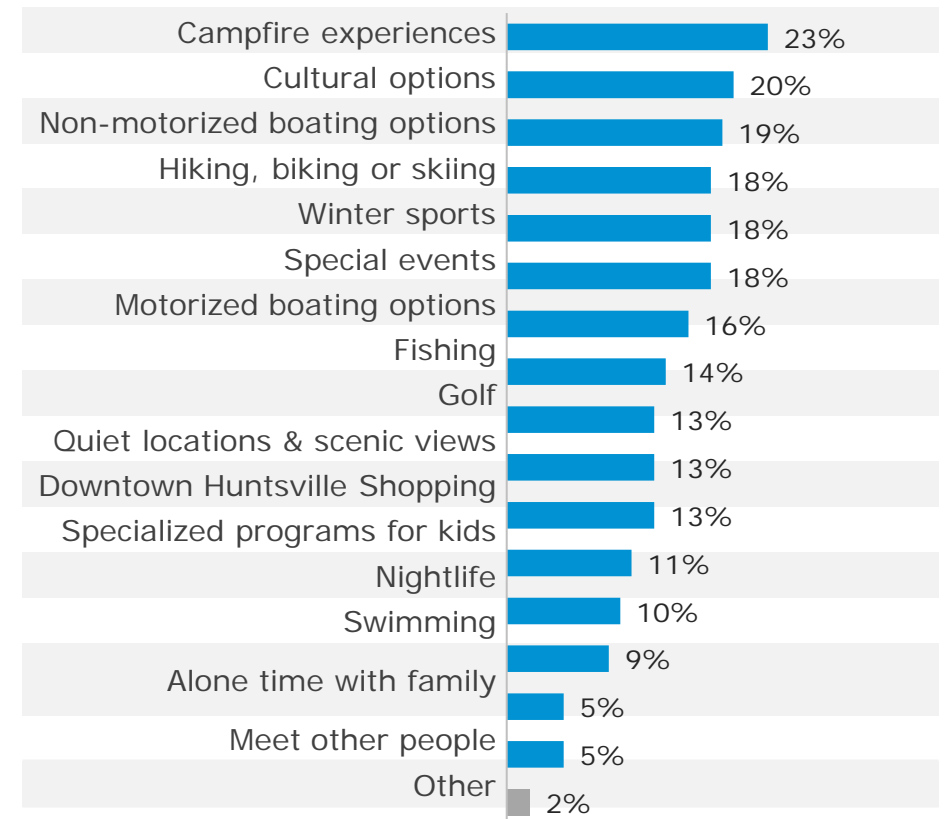
B4. Overall, how satisfied were you with your last trip to Huntsville? (Again please consider the last time where you stayed overnight in Huntsville at paid accommodations).

Previous travellers to Huntsville enjoyed swimming, scenic views and shopping.

ACTIVITIES DONE IN HUNTSVILLE



ACTIVITIES WOULD BE INTERESTED IN DOING IN HUNTSVILLE

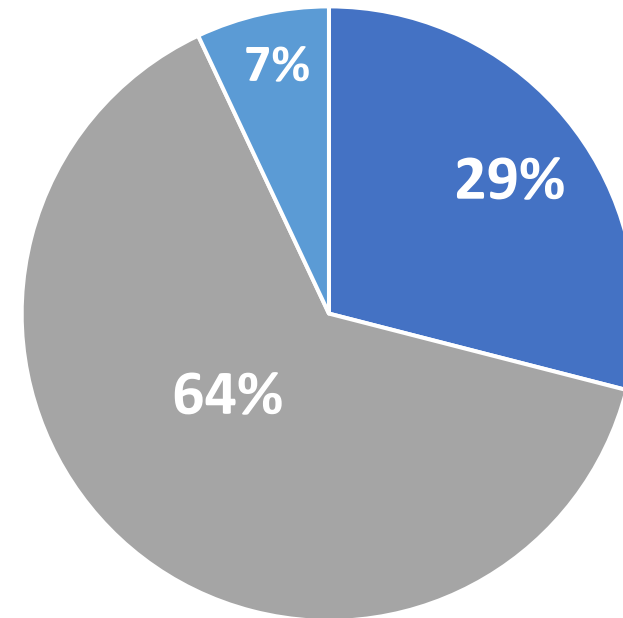


B5. Which of the following activities have you taken part in, on your trips to Huntsville?

While many Ontarians have travelled to Huntsville, overall the Province is unfamiliar with the town.

30% of Ontarians say they have travelled and stayed in Huntsville, while 26% report that they have been to Huntsville for day trips. However, 64% say they are unfamiliar with the town.

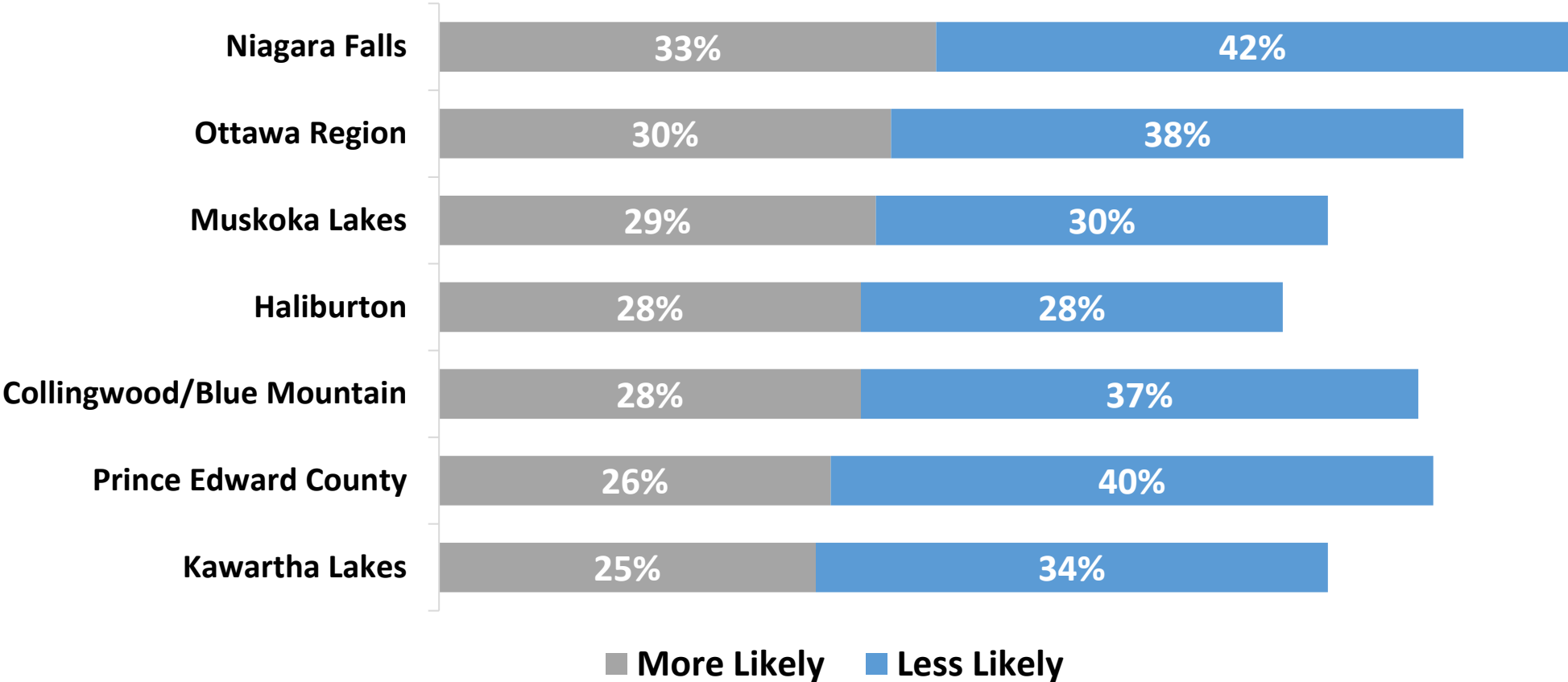
How Familiar Are You With Huntsville?



- Very or Somewhat Familiar
- Not Very or Not at All Familiar
- Never Heard of it or Don't Know

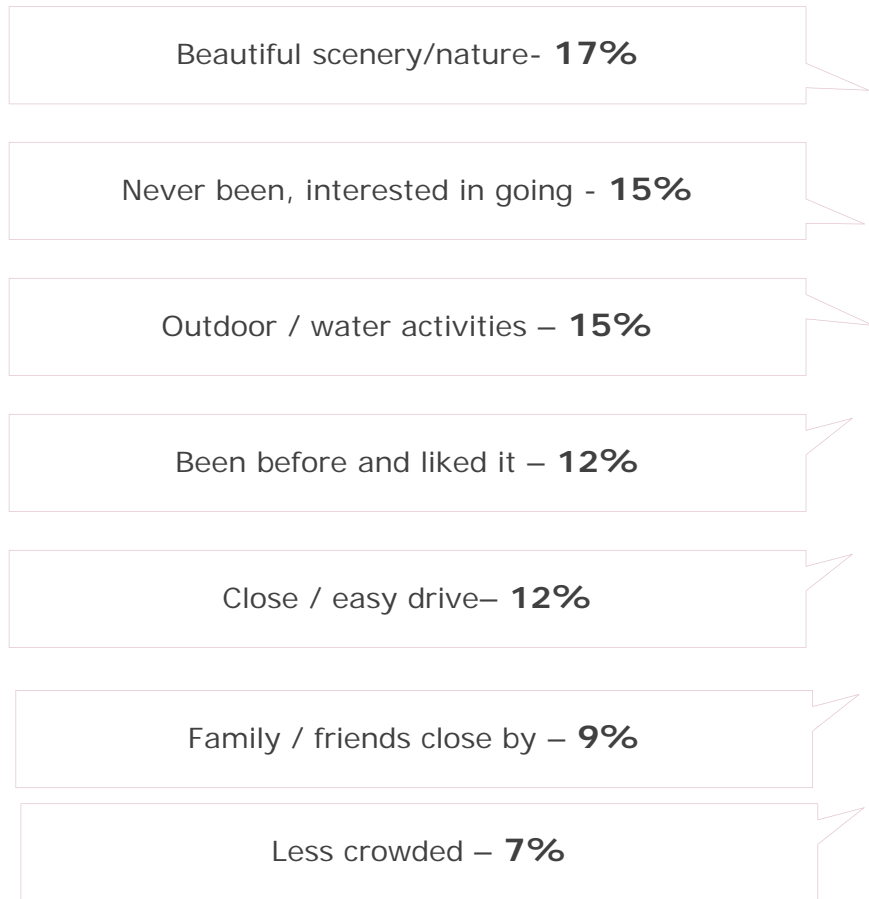
Huntsville is not always the preferred destination for travel within Ontario, but the town remains competitive.

How Likely Would You Be To Consider a Trip to Huntsville Over Each of the Following Destinations?



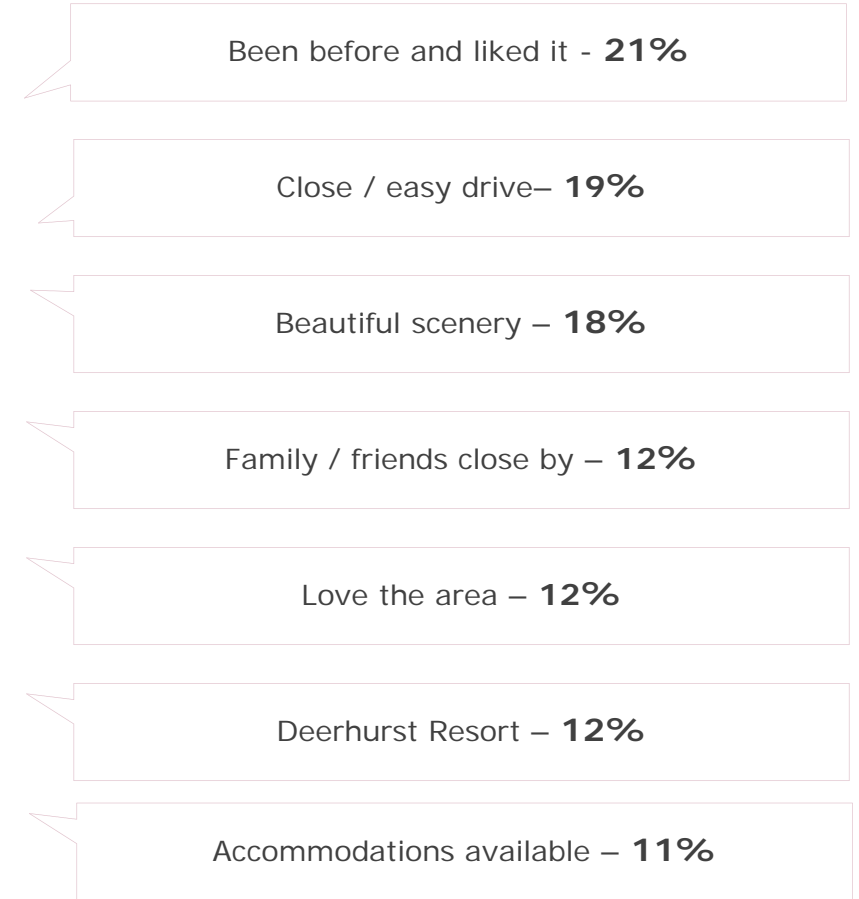
Travellers who prefer Huntsville have multiple reasons including nature and familiarity.

Ontarians



**TOP OF MIND
REASONS TRAVELLERS
ARE MORE LIKELY TO
VISIT
HUNTSVILLE**

Previous Visitors



Ontarians choose other destinations because of the lack of knowledge of Huntsville and interest in other areas in the province.

Ontarians

Not familiar with Huntsville - **21%**

Other destinations also offer activities and may be more interesting - **20%**

Far away and prefer a closer destinations – **14%**

Have already been and would like to try someplace new – **7%**

No family/friends in the area – **5%**

Not interested in Huntsville – **5%**

**TOP OF MIND
REASONS TRAVELLERS
ARE LESS LIKELY TO
VISIT
HUNTSVILLE**

Previous Visitors

Other destinations also offer activities and may be more interesting - **27%**

Have already been and would like to try someplace new – **16%**

Far away and prefer a closer destinations – **16%**

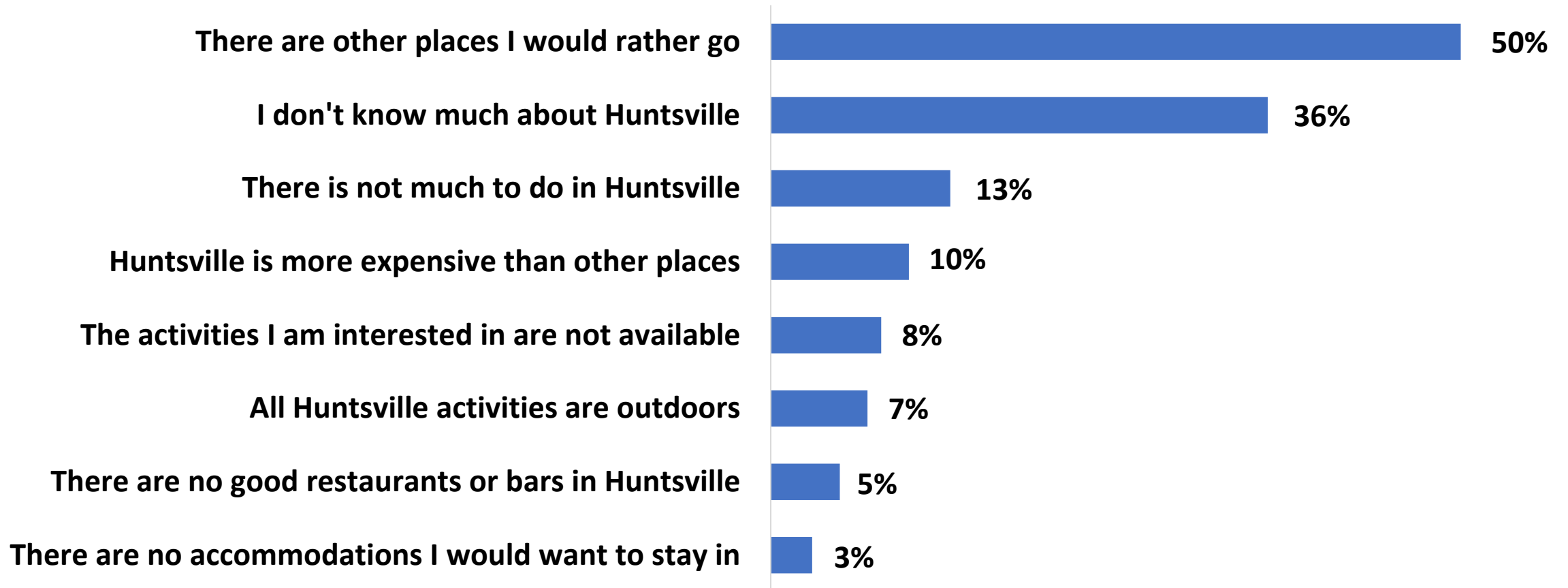
Expensive – **10%**

Too crowded and too many tourists – **6%**

Not familiar with Huntsville – **3%**

When prompted, many Ontarians would choose other destinations because they are unaware of what Huntsville has to offer or have pre-conceived notions about the town.

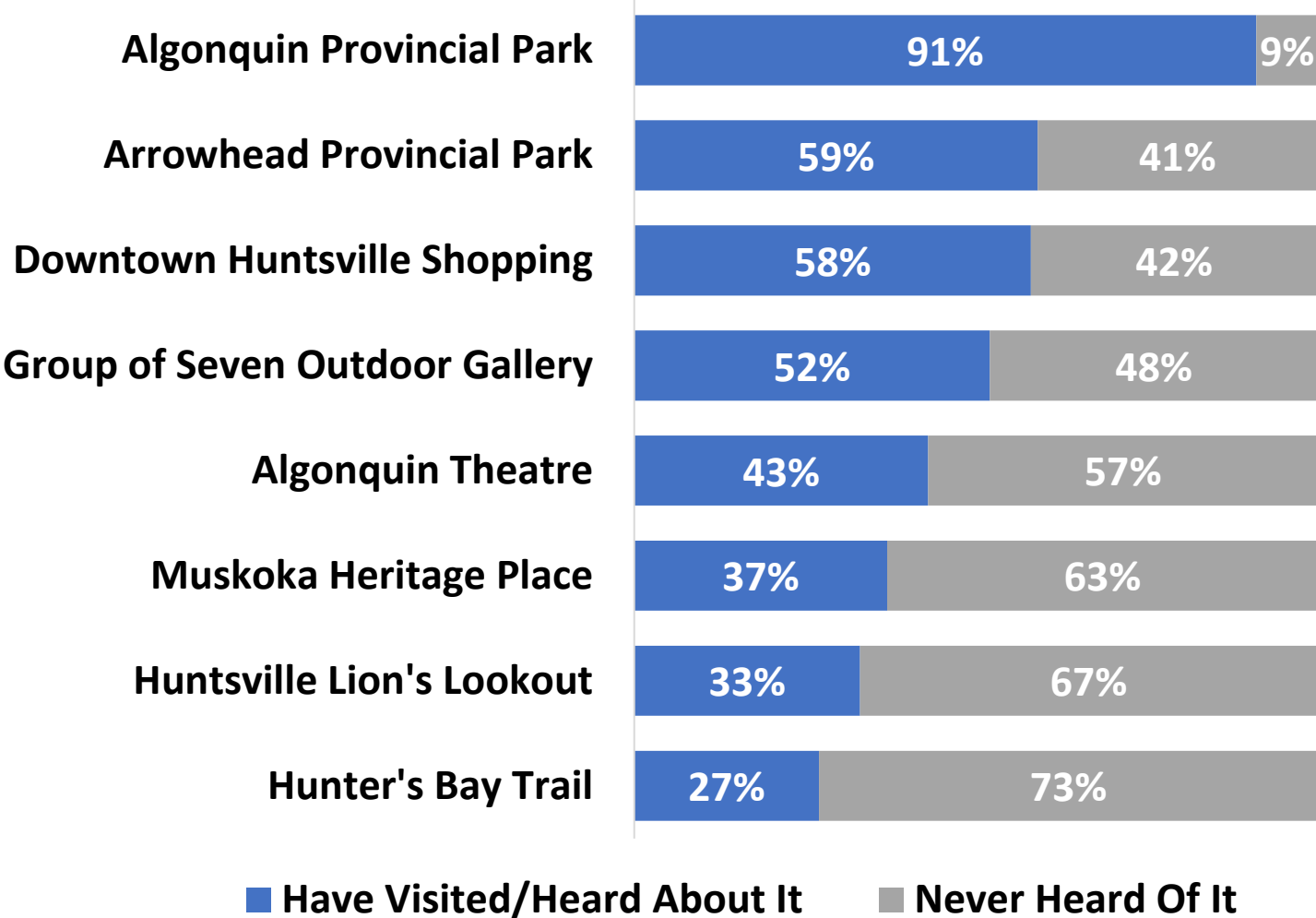
Reasons For Not Considering Huntsville



B14. Which, if any, are reasons that you are less likely to consider Huntsville compared to other areas of the province?

While most Ontarians are familiar with our Provincial Parks, there is a significant percentage of the province that has never even heard of some of Huntsville’s most important assets and attractions.

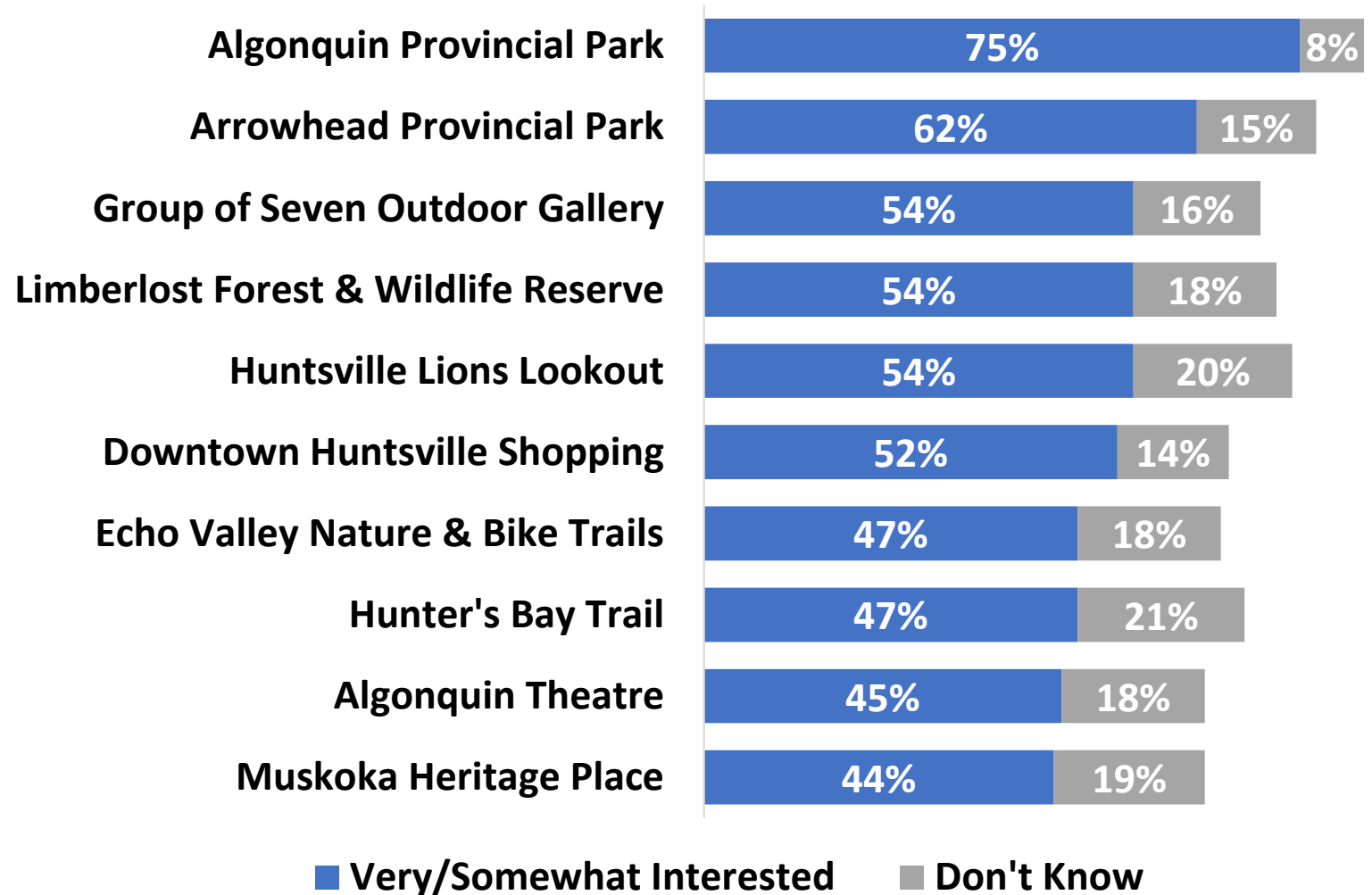
How Familiar Are You With The Following?



C15. How familiar are you with each of the following?

Provincial Parks are the most appealing attractions Ontarians are interested in visiting. However, as we look at some of Huntsville’s major attractions such as Downtown Shopping, the Algonquin Theatre and Muskoka Heritage Place, a high percentage of Ontarians answered don’t know, which suggests a low knowledge of these important assets.

How Interested Would You be in Visiting the Following?





Summary of Findings

Huntsville is popular for their outdoor activities, but less for cultural experiences

- For the general population, the Muskoka region is the most popular travel destination in the summer and is also popular in the fall. Huntsville is the second most popular destination within this region (behind Algonquin Park). As the winter months approach, Ontarians begin gravitating toward cities such as Toronto and Ottawa as travel destinations.
- Huntsville is a competitive destination with many other areas of the province. While it's the preferred destination for the Huntsville visitors, the general population who are less familiar with Huntsville are just as likely to consider travel to other regions.
- Despite the fact that more than half of the general population has been to Huntsville, most have a low familiarity with the area. It is best known for its scenic views, tranquility and outdoor activities. However, travellers are less aware of a different side of Huntsville, that offers different experiences for families or adults, culture or even shopping. Outside of Algonquin Park and, to a lesser degree, Arrowhead Park, travellers are unfamiliar with Huntsville attractions.
 - As well, frequent travellers to the area are not that familiar with some of the local activities in Huntsville including some nature spots and cultural activities but would be interested in learning more.
- Hearing about the Huntsville offerings, even in the confines of the survey, increased interest in visiting the area among the general population of Ontarians in all season with the largest increase in the fall.
 - Huntsville travellers are sold on Huntsville and consider it a preferred provincial destination, so hearing about the Huntsville offerings did not encourage them to consider a visit.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- COVID offers a unique opportunity to encourage more Ontarians to stay in the province when travelling and Huntsville offers activities, attractions and beautiful scenery year-round that attracts visitors.
- Huntsville does not need to fight against any negative impressions among Ontario travellers. It is a popular area of Muskoka and would be a travel consideration compared to most other areas of Ontario.
- Huntsville's primary draw is its beautiful scenery and tranquil nature along with its close proximity to Algonquin Park, one of Ontario's better known outdoor attractions.
- While the scenery and Algonquin are reasons that Ontarians consider Huntsville, they also **need to know more about what Huntsville has to offer** to encourage travel to the area in the summer and other seasons. Increasing awareness in other sides of Huntsville, such as cultural activities dining/patio options or shopping, could increase interest and competitiveness. This could also differentiate it from other areas of Muskoka, increase the lengths of stay to the area and provide more reasons to travel through winter months.
- Frequent Huntsville travellers are very satisfied with their experiences and are likely to be frequent visitors and travel in multiple seasons, highlighting the importance of attracting first-time visitors and promoting seasonal activities.
- Safety is a consideration for travellers and stressing safety measures and in-province travel as a safer alternative for holidays could alleviate some of the fears of travelling.
- Increasing awareness presents a challenge. Key messages that resonate with travellers include:
 - Huntsville offers tranquility and beautiful scenery and is close to Algonquin
 - Huntsville offers a wide variety of activities that includes outdoor and cultural activities
 - Travellers to Huntsville are more than satisfied with what the area has to offer
 - In-province travel is a safe alternative for holidays

