

# 1000 Islands Tourism Business Survey

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2021 REPORT AND SUMMARY

1000 Islands International Tourism Council  
December 2021

**Survey Overview:**

The survey was sent to businesses and organizations in the 1000 Islands International Tourism Council's database of local tourism organizations, attractions, lodging, and recreation businesses. Based on the answer to a survey question, the majority of those responding get more than 50 percent of their trade from tourists.

Those invited received an email invitation(s) and could complete the survey online. Almost 100 percent of the Council's database entries include an email address; Council staff opted to use only digital collections in 2021 instead of sending paper copies to be returned and manually entered. Survey invitations were mailed about October 25 through Nov. 17 and collected until No. 23.

The survey contains a core set of questions that have been asked in similar surveys conducted since 1999. The results are tracked against previous years to illustrate shifts in business performance and confidence. This year, 177 surveys were returned, which is more than received in 2020.

**Satisfaction with 2021 Business and Optimism for the Future**

Better. That's the overall sentiment by a majority of businesses that responded when asked about 2021 performance. 2020 produced the greatest disappointment recorded in the survey's then-22-year history. More than 80 percent of 2021 responders reported being satisfied or pleased with the season, a level that surpasses 2020 and 2019 reporting. Record-high optimism levels set in 2020 were surpassed in 2021, with 86 percent of responses anticipating improvement for the regional tourism industry in the next five years.

**American and Canadian Perspectives**

Performance reviews were more favorable among American operators than Canadian, likely owing to less restrictions on travelers and businesses in New York than Ontario for much of 2021. Canadians remain on par with Americans, however, in optimism for the future of the regional tourism economy.

**Sector-based Success**

Unsurprisingly, businesses that reported the highest satisfaction came from the camping, retail, agritourism/craft beverage and recreation/sports sectors. While camping and recreations/sports reported strongest performances in 2020, the retail rebound correlates with public sales tax data reports showing increased spending.

**Covid-19 Fallout**

Few responding seasonal businesses reported closing ahead of traditional shutdowns and reasons for doing so were varied, though staffing struggles was the most cited factor. When considering how a variety of Covid-related factors could impact future operations, businesses cited equal concerns about those offered. No single factor stood out among a majority of businesses.

Considering your own business, how would you rate your feelings about this year's summer season?

	Overall	Ontario	New York
Very Pleased	29%	12%	37%
Pleased	34%	27%	41%
Satisfied	19%	27%	11%
Disappointed	13%	29%	8%
Very Disappointed	5%	5%	4%

Answer Options	Attractions	Recreation & Sports	Lodging	Food	Retail	Events/ Entertainment	Marine	Campgrounds	Agriculture/Craft Beverage	Other
Very Pleased	45%	33%	24%	32%	53%	29%	18%	50%	50%	21%
Pleased	23%	33%	41%	41%	18%	35%	54%	30%	25%	21%
Satisfied	10%	17%	15%	0%	18%	12%	7%	20%	8%	29%
Disappointed	19%	14%	17%	23%	12%	18%	18%	0%	17%	14%
Very Disappointed	3%	3%	4%	5%	0%	6%	4%	0%	0%	14%

Compared to last year, how would you describe overall 1000 Islands tourism for the summer season?

	Overall	Ontario	New York
Much Better	29%	22%	33%
Somewhat Better	42%	42%	42%
About the Same	25%	27%	21%
Somewhat Worse	5%	7%	3%
Much Worse	2%	2%	1%

Thinking about the next five years, do you believe your own business will...?

	Overall	Ontario	New York
Improve Significantly	30%	34%	25%
Improve Slightly	52%	51%	54%
Be About the Same	15%	10%	18%
Decline Slightly	2%	2%	3%
Decline Significantly	1%	2%	0%

Thinking about the next five years, do you believe overall 1000 Islands tourism business will...?

	Overall	Ontario	New York
Improve Significantly	34%	44%	30%
Improve Slightly	54%	49%	56%
Be About the Same	10%	5%	12%
Decline Slightly	2%	2%	2%
Decline Significantly	0%	0%	0%

What is your estimate of the percentage of your business that comes from tourists?

	Overall	Ontario	New York
More than 75%	44%	49%	44%
51% to 75%	17%	20%	16%
26% to 50%	14%	7%	14%
10% to 25%	18%	17%	19%
Less than 10%	7%	7%	7%

What kind of effect have the following factors had on your business this year?

Overall	Very Positive	Positive	No Effect	Negative	Very Negative
Summer weather	18%	56%	18%	7%	1%
General economic conditions	7%	49%	21%	19%	5%
Canadian/US Dollar Exchange	2%	8%	78%	8%	5%
Ease of crossing border	7%	6%	27%	28%	33%
Gas prices	5%	10%	46%	32%	7%
Water levels	4%	13%	54%	23%	7%
Marketing of the 1000 Islands	8%	59%	30%	2%	1%
Competition from other areas	2%	11%	64%	22%	1%
US/Canadian relations	5%	8%	44%	33%	10%
Opening of new attractions nearby	3%	20%	74%	3%	0%
Covid-19	4%	20%	16%	32%	28%

What best describes your business in each spring through fall month this year?

Overall	Very Strong	Fairly Strong	Moderate	Somewhat Weak	Very Weak
May	8%	19%	32%	19%	23%
June	17%	34%	28%	13%	12%
July	52%	25%	13%	8%	2%
August	54%	24%	15%	4%	4%
September	22%	36%	26%	8%	4%
October	8%	21%	34%	15%	22%

New York	Very Strong	Fairly Strong	Moderate	Somewhat Weak	Very Weak
May	6%	27%	35%	22%	11%
June	16%	42%	31%	9%	3%
July	56%	27%	11%	5%	1%
August	59%	23%	11%	3%	4%
September	20%	41%	23%	9%	7%
October	4%	29%	30%	19%	18%

Ontario	Very Strong	Fairly Strong	Moderate	Somewhat Weak	Very Weak
May	6%	0%	23%	14%	57%
June	8%	15%	28%	15%	33%
July	28%	28%	23%	15%	8%
August	37%	27%	27%	5%	5%
September	22%	27%	32%	10%	10%
October	15%	8%	38%	13%	28%

For seasonal operations, did you close around the same time of year as your traditionally do?

Yes, we closed around the same time.	68%
No, we stayed open later this year.	21%
No, we closed earlier this year.	11%

If you closed earlier this usual, please share the main reason.

Struggled to find staffing.	43%
Struggled with supply chain and getting product.	14%
Capacity and other regulations made staying open later in the season cost-prohibitive.	29%
Burnout from increased demand and other factors.	14%

Rank the following factors in order of importance to your operation’s future, with 1 having the most impact and 5 having the least.

	1—Most Impact	2	3	4	5 – Least Impact
Loosening of US-Canadian border restrictions to pre-Covid-19 behaviors.	26%	16%	16%	16%	27%
Finding reliable, skilled workers.	29%	22%	20%	15%	14%
Maintaining visitor expectations for things such as cleaning, distancing, touchless technology, etc.	11%	12%	21%	29%	26%
Marketing to new visitors/customers to building market share.	23%	21%	25%	22%	9%
Retaining “new” visitors/customers who discovered your operation since 2020.	25%	28%	23%	10%	15%

Which of the following best matches your 2022 marketing plans?

I will invest more resources into marketing to sustain and build demand.	21%
I will invest less into marketing because of scarcity of resources/other expenses.	10%
I will invest about the same in 2022 as I did in 2021 when it comes to marketing.	68%

Respondents: Total of 177 responses

Country	
USA	58%
Canada	42%

Type of Business:	
Attractions	31
Recreation & Sport	36
Lodging	54
Food	22
Retail	17
Events/Entertainment	17
Marine	28
Campgrounds	10
Agriculture/Craft Beverage	12
Other	14

**Considering your own business, how would you rate your feelings about this year's summer season?**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Pleased	29%	22%	14%	32%	15%	27%	23%	15%	16%	19%	19%	19%	15%	14%	26%	13%	21%	13%	23%	28%	22%	33%
Pleased	34%	12%	30%	41%	27%	41%	35%	25%	28%	31%	29%	36%	22%	23%	30%	29%	34%	28%	27%	31%	23%	43%
Satisfied	19%	20%	29%	18%	24%	20%	26%	37%	29%	30%	32%	31%	33%	34%	25%	27%	26%	29%	31%	26%	31%	13%
Disappointed	13%	22%	20%	7%	23%	9%	14%	22%	22%	20%	17%	13%	22%	24%	17%	26%	17%	28%	17%	12%	25%	10%
Very Disappointed	5%	24%	8%	1%	10%	3%	1%	2%	6%	1%	3%	2%	7%	4%	2%	6%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%

**Compared to last year, how would you describe your own business for this year's summer season:**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Much Better	31%	17%	6%	23%	12%	17%	15%	10%	8%	12%	7%	13%	9%	8%	15%	5%	14%	11%	6%	15%	13%	25%
Somewhat Better	35%	16%	29%	43%	20%	45%	39%	26%	27%	34%	30%	35%	23%	21%	40%	28%	31%	27%	37%	42%	32%	44%
About the Same	24%	10%	31%	23%	27%	26%	26%	34%	33%	31%	35%	30%	34%	35%	28%	35%	36%	35%	30%	26%	22%	23%
Somewhat Worse	6%	19%	26%	11%	28%	10%	18%	26%	25%	21%	24%	20%	26%	28%	15%	25%	18%	22%	19%	15%	31%	5%
Much Worse	4%	38%	8%	1%	14%	2%	1%	4%	7%	2%	4%	2%	8%	5%	2%	8%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%

**Compared to last year, how would you describe overall 1000 Islands tourism for this year's summer season:**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Much Better	29%	11%	2%	20%	4%	16%	8%	6%	5%	7%	5%	11%	2%	1%	8%	0%	3%	5%	6%	4%	5%	20%
Somewhat Better	39%	15%	21%	43%	14%	47%	38%	23%	18%	31%	18%	34%	8%	11%	26%	12%	27%	19%	24%	33%	16%	49%
About the Same	25%	10%	49%	30%	32%	28%	38%	41%	45%	44%	49%	38%	48%	42%	44%	44%	48%	42%	40%	38%	37%	23%
Somewhat Worse	5%	29%	23%	6%	41%	9%	16%	26%	27%	16%	26%	15%	37%	35%	20%	40%	20%	30%	26%	15%	41%	7%
Much Worse	2%	36%	6%	1%	9%	1%	2%	4%	4%	1%	2%	2%	6%	5%	3%	5%	2%	4%	4%	3%	1%	1%

Thinking about the next five years, do you believe overall tourism business in the 1000 Islands will:

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Improve Significantly	34%	33%	14%	19%	21%	21%	15%	12%	16%	10%	12%	14%	11%	4%	16%	10%	14%	21%	16%	20%	18%	30%
Improve Slightly	54%	48%	45%	58%	45%	40%	47%	47%	43%	55%	41%	56%	48%	33%	42%	44%	38%	45%	57%	46%	52%	38%
Be About the Same	10%	11%	36%	20%	29%	35%	30%	29%	29%	27%	36%	22%	29%	32%	27%	28%	30%	24%	20%	22%	19%	17%
Decline Slightly	2%	4%	5%	3%	5%	4%	8%	10%	11%	7%	10%	9%	10%	21%	15%	15%	18%	5%	5%	7%	9%	10%
Decline Significantly	0%	5%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	4%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%	5%

Thinking about the next five years, do you believe your own business will:

	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99	
Improve Significantly	30%	28%	15%	22%	19%	20%	19%	20%	15%	14%	16%	16%	19%	12%	26%	19%	18%	25%	22%	31%	27%	35%
Improve Slightly	52%	44%	53%	50%	53%	47%	47%	49%	53%	53%	42%	54%	51%	43%	41%	46%	46%	50%	56%	44%	52%	43%
Be About the Same	15%	19%	26%	25%	21%	25%	26%	24%	24%	26%	35%	22%	21%	25%	25%	29%	25%	17%	13%	18%	16%	17%
Decline Slightly	2%	5%	6%	2%	6%	4%	8%	6%	6%	6%	5%	7%	6%	14%	7%	6%	11%	6%	7%	3%	4%	4%
Decline Significantly	1%	4%	0%	2%	1%	5%	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%

**What best describes your business in each summer month this year? (JUNE)**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Strong	17%	9%	9%	15%	7%	12%	7%	4%	6%	12%	6%	12%	10%	11%	12%	8%	8%	7%	7%	12%	8%	
Fairly Strong	34%	17%	20%	42%	19%	34%	25%	25%	18%	30%	20%	21%	24%	21%	30%	15%	26%	18%	19%	23%	24%	
Moderate	28%	13%	31%	24%	27%	32%	42%	36%	34%	32%	41%	36%	25%	35%	32%	35%	37%	36%	28%	35%	33%	
Somewhat Weak	10%	15%	23%	14%	23%	20%	20%	26%	31%	18%	25%	22%	29%	19%	17%	29%	22%	26%	32%	20%	24%	
Very Weak	12%	47%	18%	5%	21%	2%	6%	10%	12%	9%	8%	10%	13%	11%	8%	14%	7%	12%	14%	9%	12%	

**What best describes your business in each summer month this year? (JULY)**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Strong	52%	28%	29%	55%	28%	46%	39%	32%	27%	29%	28%	32%	28%	25%	13%	24%	34%	19%	28%	35%	25%	
Fairly Strong	25%	15%	35%	27%	30%	35%	38%	34%	33%	36%	35%	33%	23%	33%	30%	30%	33%	36%	34%	29%	33%	
Moderate	13%	20%	20%	13%	16%	15%	16%	19%	24%	22%	25%	24%	27%	24%	32%	25%	23%	27%	24%	20%	19%	
Somewhat Weak	8%	13%	11%	2%	14%	2%	6%	12%	11%	11%	9%	8%	15%	11%	18%	16%	8%	12%	11%	12%	20%	
Very Weak	2%	24%	5%	2%	8%	1%	1%	2%	5%	1%	3%	3%	6%	5%	9%	5%	2%	5%	3%	3%	3%	

**What best describes your business in each summer month this year? (AUGUST)**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Strong	54%	33%	35%	54%	36%	46%	39%	35%	33%	30%	30%	37%	29%	34%	46%	29%	34%	25%	37%	36%	33%	
Fairly Strong	24%	19%	37%	30%	30%	35%	39%	36%	41%	40%	36%	36%	35%	33%	32%	32%	37%	38%	37%	34%	36%	
Moderate	15%	18%	16%	13%	22%	10%	12%	21%	15%	18%	23%	21%	20%	20%	14%	25%	18%	24%	20%	25%	19%	
Somewhat Weak	4%	14%	10%	2%	8%	6%	9%	8%	8%	10%	8%	4%	11%	7%	7%	12%	10%	9%	4%	4%	8%	
Very Weak	4%	16%	2%	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	4%	3%	4%	2%	8%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	4%	

**What best describes your business in each summer month this year? (SEPTEMBER)**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7
Very Strong	22%	17%	15%	21%	13%	17%	13%	13%	12%	17%	9%	13%	10%	15%	21%
Fairly Strong	36%	25%	29%	39%	33%	32%	35%	26%	26%	25%	23%	25%	28%	22%	29%
Moderate	26%	19%	36%	21%	30%	30%	27%	31%	31%	34%	35%	36%	38%	31%	26%
Somewhat Weak	8%	13%	16%	15%	14%	16%	19%	21%	19%	13%	27%	16%	13%	18%	14%
Very Weak	8%	26%	5%	5%	7%	4%	6%	9%	12%	11%	7%	11%	11%	9%	9%

**What kind of effect have the following factors had on your business this year?**

***Summer weather***

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Positive	18%	37%	19%	51%	8%	55%	33%	12%	14%	46%	31%	43%	9%	8%	36%	9%	51%	11%	42%	42%	2%	31%
Positive	56%	34%	43%	38%	23%	32%	44%	33%	29%	31%	43%	37%	17%	21%	42%	33%	29%	14%	36%	35%	14%	45%
No Effect	18%	28%	14%	6%	13%	7%	14%	18%	20%	13%	15%	13%	21%	17%	12%	22%	11%	20%	10%	7%	17%	15%
Negative	7%	1%	19%	4%	34%	2%	7%	32%	27%	8%	10%	6%	36%	38%	8%	29%	8%	39%	10%	14%	45%	9%
Very Negative	1%	0%	4%	1%	19%	4%	1%	5%	9%	2%	2%	1%	18%	12%	1%	7%	1%	12%	1%	0%	22%	0%

***Canadian/US dollar exchange rate***

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Positive	2%	0%	2%	4%	5%	7%	8%	1%	3%	3%	5%	3%	5%	4%	9%	7%	3%	3%	6%	14%	7%	14%
Positive	8%	5%	19%	24%	22%	18%	20%	21%	26%	27%	20%	21%	15%	21%	22%	21%	20%	14%	28%	16%	28%	15%
No Effect	78%	75%	58%	53%	50%	41%	35%	53%	53%	48%	47%	48%	51%	43%	36%	38%	50%	52%	35%	39%	29%	23%
Negative	8%	8%	18%	16%	19%	25%	27%	20%	17%	17%	22%	23%	24%	22%	22%	26%	25%	27%	21%	19%	23%	25%
Very Negative	4%	13%	4%	3%	1%	8%	10%	5%	1%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%	10%	6%	1%	0%	10%	11%	13%	22%

***Ease of crossing the border***

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	99
Very Positive	6%	3%	2%	6%	4%	2%	2%	1%	6%	2%	4%	2%	7%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%				
Positive	6%	2%	20%	25%	21%	23%	23%	21%	20%	15%	15%	13%	9%	9%	10%	8%	6%	3%				
No Effect	27%	16%	55%	52%	52%	49%	47%	53%	42%	50%	41%	42%	33%	44%	38%	33%	41%	41%				
Negative	28%	14%	22%	14%	16%	22%	22%	20%	28%	28%	28%	29%	32%	29%	36%	42%	34%	37%				
Very Negative	33%	64%	1%	3%	2%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	12%	14%	18%	10%	13%	13%	16%	10%				

**Gas prices**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0
Very Positive	5%	5%	2%	6%	5%	12%	15%	4%	6%	3%	5%	2%	9%	5%	2%	6%	3%	3%		3%	
Positive	10%	24%	20%	22%	25%	56%	53%	17%	11%	7%	10%	16%	12%	5%	8%	6%	7%	8%		7%	
No Effect	46%	68%	55%	47%	50%	25%	22%	25%	25%	15%	19%	38%	46%	11%	29%	15%	20%	23%		47%	
Negative	32%	2%	22%	24%	16%	6%	8%	45%	51%	58%	51%	36%	27%	44%	46%	45%	48%	47%		36%	
Very Negative	7%	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	8%	7%	17%	14%	8%	5%	28%	15%	24%	20%	15%		7%	

**General Economy**

	21	20	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0	
Very Positive	6%	7%	8%	19%	5%	9%	10%	4%	7%	2%	5%	3%	6%	5%	2%			4%	3%	1%	
Positive	49%	27%	39%	59%	36%	49%	40%	27%	20%	20%	14%	17%	12%	7%	24%			14%	21%	17%	
No Effect	21%	24%	33%	11%	39%	23%	18%	18%	19%	24%	19%	25%	23%	21%	35%			24%	29%	34%	
Negative	19%	30%	19%	10%	16%	15%	29%	43%	48%	46%	52%	46%	45%	51%	35%			47%	41%	41%	
Very Negative	5%	13%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	8%	6%	9%	11%	9%	14%	10%	4%			6%	6%	5%	

**Lake/River Water Levels**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	2	1	0
Very Positive	4%	14%	2%	17%	2%	4%	6%	3%	7%	1%	4%	5%	4%	5%	2%	2%	1%				
Positive	13%	25%	6%	35%	10%	19%	29%	22%	19%	1%	14%	6%	14%	21%	8%	6%	13%				
No Effect	54%	54%	26%	38%	18%	52%	53%	57%	47%	35%	62%	57%	63%	56%	48%	68%	58%				
Negative	23%	6%	29%	9%	29%	16%	9%	14%	23%	42%	12%	22%	15%	9%	29%	20%	16%				
Very Negative	6%	2%	38%	1%	40%	9%	3%	4%	3%	21%	6%	11%	4%	4%	10%	3%	7%				

**Competition from other areas**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13
Very Positive	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%	3%	3%	2%
Positive	11%	9%	13%	18%	13%	16%	14%	14%	10%
No Effect	64%	76%	61%	57%	63%	61%	55%	57%	56%
Negative	22%	11%	24%	20%	15%	21%	26%	23%	28%
Very Negative	1%	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%	3%

**Awareness of the 1000 Islands as a destination**

	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13
Very Positive	8%	10%	12%	17%	9%	14%	14%	7%	9%
Positive	59%	47%	57%	72%	55%	60%	57%	56%	56%
No Effect	30%	39%	29%	9%	29%	23%	23%	27%	25%
Negative	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	2%	6%	9%	9%
Very Negative	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

**Covid-19**

	21	20
Very Positive	4%	19%
Positive	20%	19%
No Effect	16%	6%
Negative	32%	16%
Very Negative	28%	41%