



New Zealand Search and Rescue Locator beacons behaviour change campaign

Baseline Research Report
November 2022



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Executive summary

Hemisphere partnered with Nielsen to survey 3,965 New Zealanders over the age of 18 years. The survey was weighted based on Stats NZ population estimates.

The majority of survey participants (2,034) had not participated in any relevant outdoor activities in the preceding 12 months. Day tramping was the most popular activity, followed by recreational boating, mountain biking, kayaking and land-based fishing.

Beacon use was lowest among day hikers and land-based fishers. Beacon use was highest among packrafters, skiers, climbers, hunters and canyoneers.

People going out on their own were most likely to carry a beacon (46%). Men are more likely to go out solo all the time (81%).

21 percent of adventurers have taken a beacon out in the last 12 months although less than half took one every time.

Lack of awareness and lack of perceived need were why most people didn't take a beacon. Likely motivators included reassurance for family, solo adventuring, and ease of access.



Background

New Zealand Search & Rescue (NZSAR) commissioned Hemisphere to undertake a two year comprehensive behaviour change campaign to promote the use of emergency beacons when recreating in the outdoors – on land and in/on the water.

During initial stakeholder engagement, it was identified that there were no recent numbers around when beacons were taken out, by whom and on which activity. The stakeholders agreed that a baseline survey was needed prior to the roll out of any activity.

The contract runs from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024. Campaign activity is to run from October 2022 (with a low level of an earlier campaign running July to October 2022).

Objectives of campaign

The initial objectives of the campaign are to:

- Increase the number of beacons registered
- Prevent unnecessary search and rescue callouts
- Improve individual outcomes for registered individuals
- Reduce search and rescue costs.

These were further refined to:

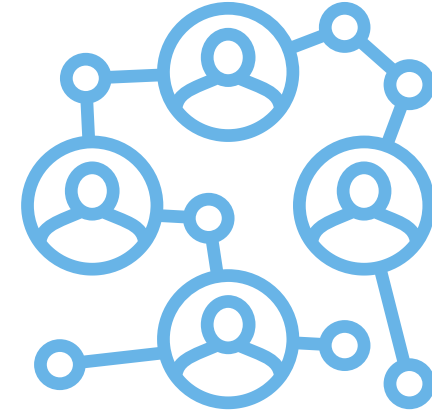
- More people taking beacons on outdoor activities
- Improves search and rescue outcomes for individuals
- Increased engagement and discussion about beacons among target communities.



Stakeholders

The campaign is supported by stakeholders including:

- Coastguard New Zealand
- Department of Conservation
- Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand
- Fish & Game New Zealand
- Land Search & Rescue New Zealand
- Maritime New Zealand
- New Zealand Deerstalkers Association
- New Zealand Game Animal Council
- New Zealand Mountain Safety Council
- New Zealand Police.



Bivouac, Locator Beacons New Zealand and Macpac are also supporting the campaign.

Research parameters

Hemisphere partnered with Nielsen to undertake an online survey into emergency beacon use. The survey was completed by 3,965 people over the age of 8 years between 16 and 20 October 2022. The survey was weighted based on Stats NZ population estimates.

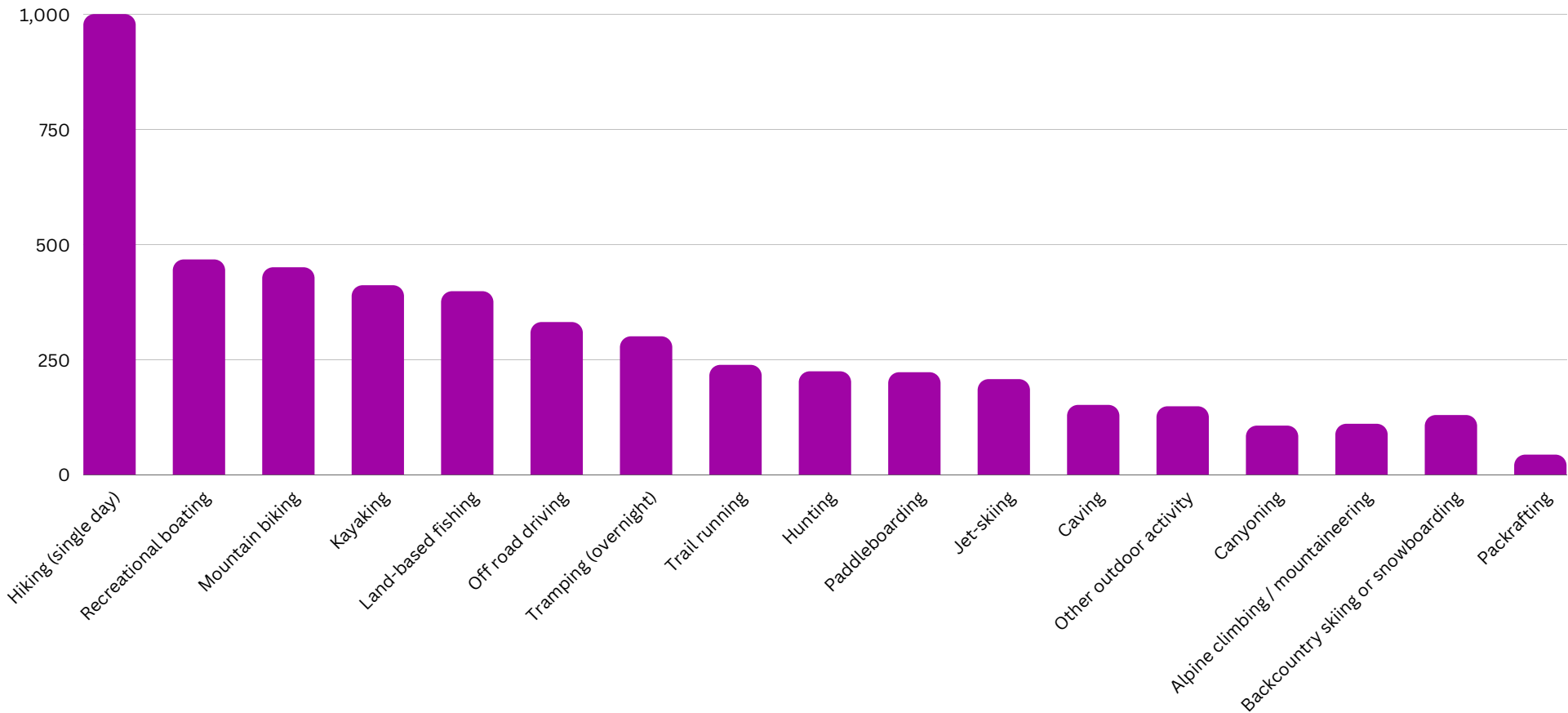
49 percent of respondents were male, 51 percent were female. 33 percent lived in Auckland, 21 percent in the Upper North Island (excluding Auckland), 11 percent in Wellington, 11 percent in the Central and Lower North Island (excluding Wellington), 13 percent in Canterbury and the remaining 11 percent were in the rest of the South Island.

Results: Participation in activities in the last 12 months

Response Count: 3,969
Format: Multi-Choice

Q1: Which of the following activities have you done in the last 12 months?

Figure 1: Participation in activities in the last 12 months



2,034 (51%) people had not participated in any outdoor activities in the last 12 months.

Of those that had done outdoor activities, day hiking was the most popular with 1,004 (25%) participants.

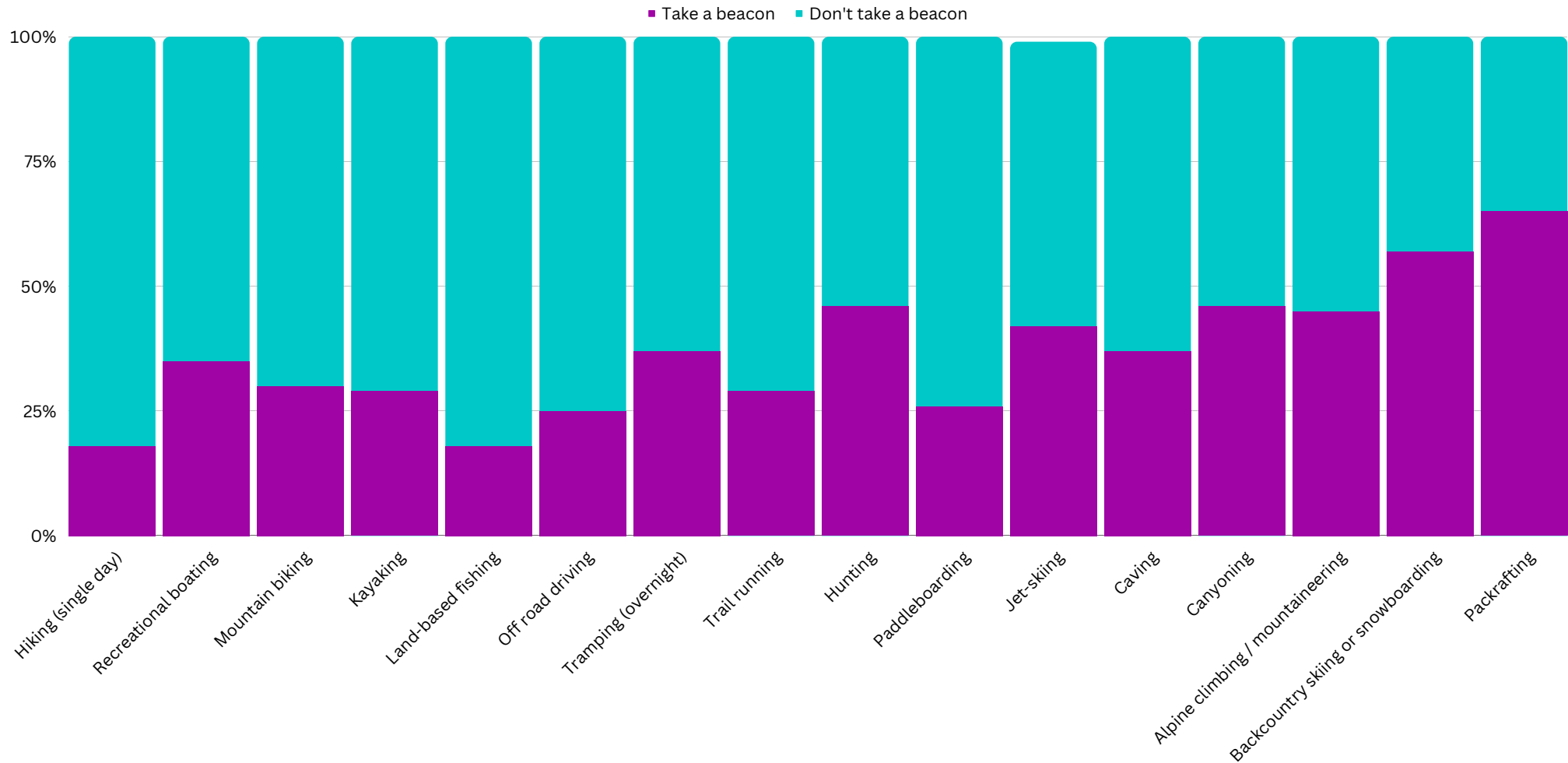
People participating in “other outdoor activity” were least likely to take a beacon (8%) but given the low-risk nature of these activities, we have excluded this group from any further analysis.

Results: Beacon use by activity

Response Count: 3,969
Format: Multi-Choice

Q1: Which of the following activities have you done in the last 12 months?

Figure 2: Beacon use by activity



Day tramping is not only the most common activity, but it is also the one where people are least likely to take a beacon (18%). The other higher participation activities of recreational boating (35%), mountain biking (30%), kayaking (29%) had much higher rates of beacon use with the exception of land-based fishing (18%).

Results: Beacon use by activity

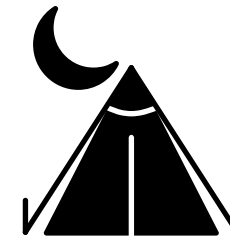
Response Count: 3,969
Format: Multi-Choice

Table 1: Beacon use by activity

Activity	Take a beacon	Do not take a beacon
Hiking	181	823
Recreational boating	165	302
Mountain	133	317
Kayaking	121	290
Land-based fishing	73	325
Off road driving	84	247
Tramping (overnight)	111	189
Trail running	69	168
Hunting	102	122
Paddleboarding	58	164
Jet-skiing	87	119
Caving	56	95
Canyoning	49	57
Alpine climbing/mountaineering	49	60
Backcountry skiing or snowboarding	73	56
Packrafting	28	15
Other outdoor Activity	12	136
None of these	0	0



82% of people who have hiked in the last 12 months *did not* bring a distress beacon



37% of people who have been on an overnight tramp in the last 12 months *did* bring a distress beacon.

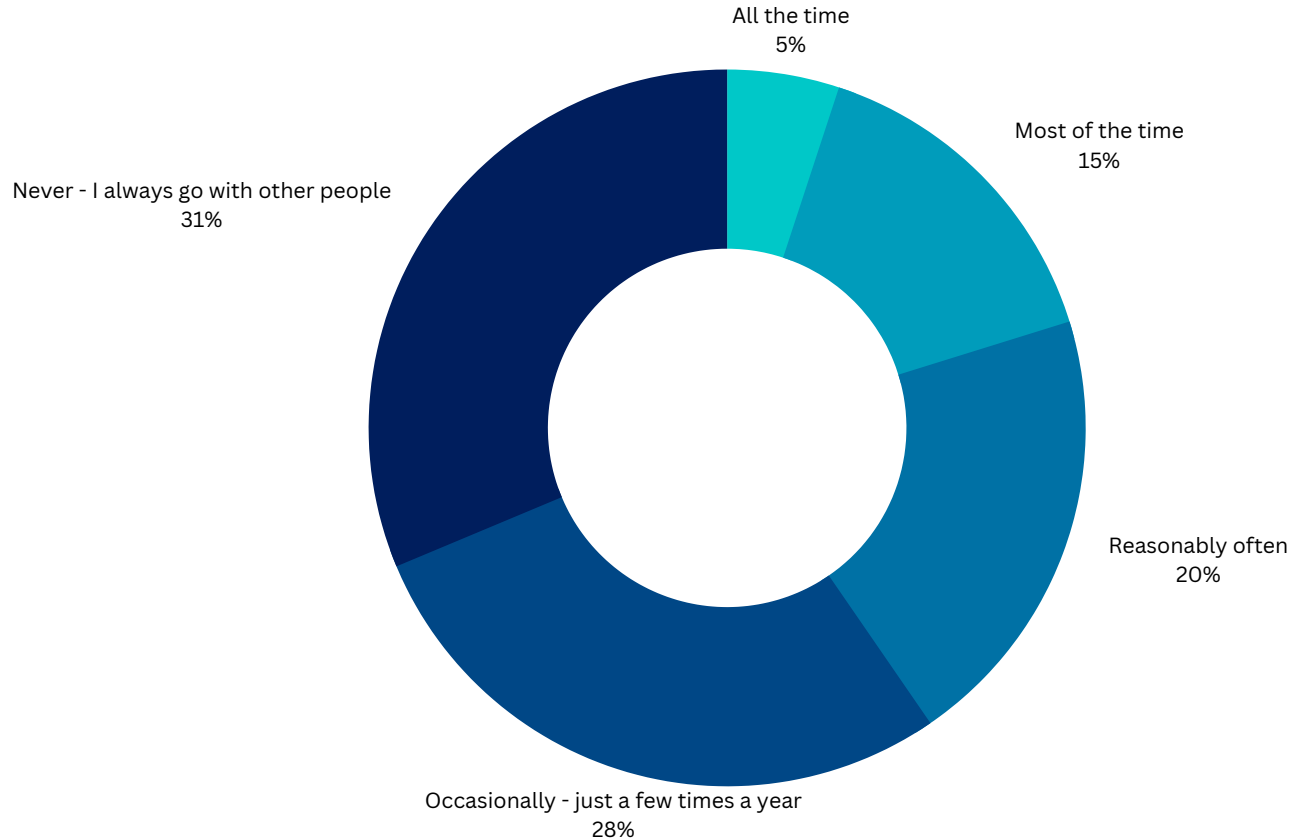
There is considerable scope to increase the use of beacons across all activity types. Day hikers offer the greatest opportunity for change due to high participation rates and low beacon use.

Results: Participation in activities alone

Response Count: 1,930
Format: One Answer

Q2: How often have you done these activities by yourself in the last 12 months?
(Asked of those who have participated in an activity in the last 12 months)

Figure 3: Participation in activities alone



14% of people who do activities alone occasionally or never did not use a beacon.



30% of people who do activities alone all the time, most of the time or reasonably often did use a beacon.

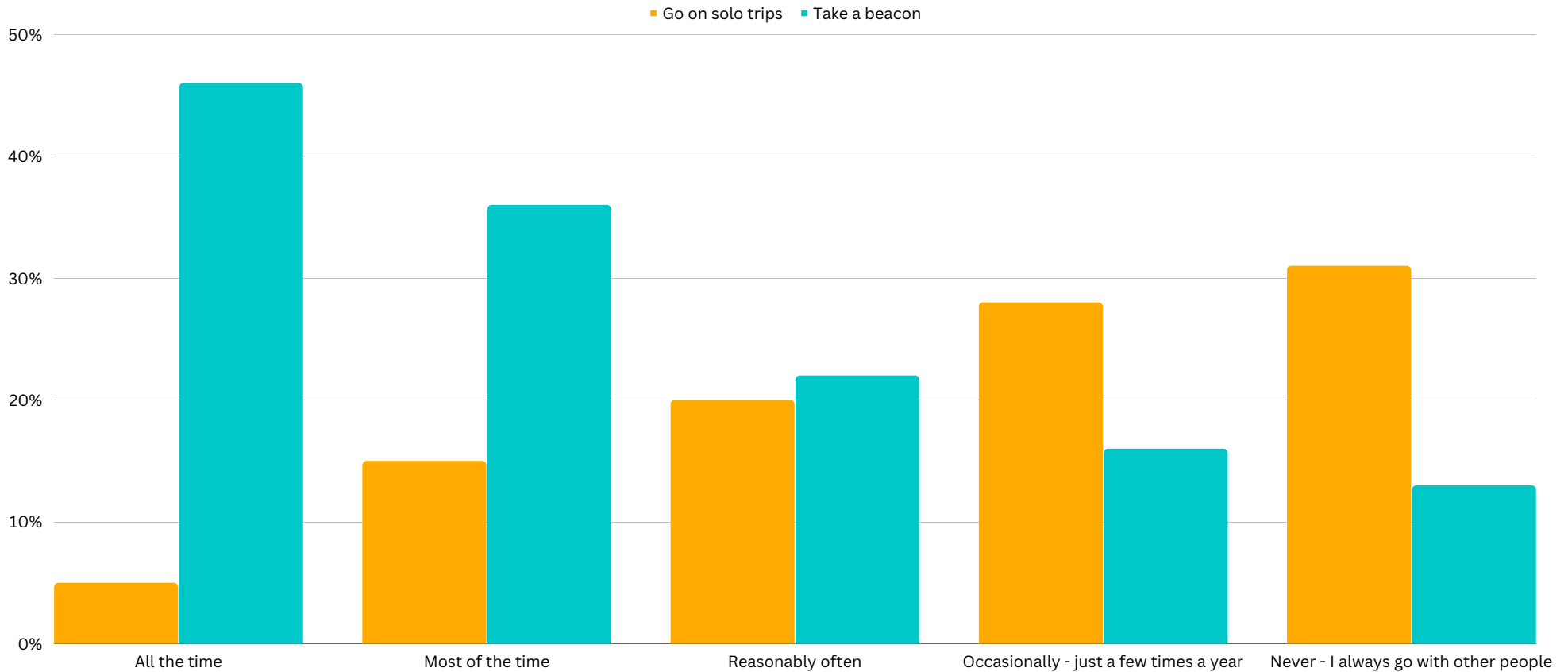
Outdoor pursuits are largely a social activity with 31 percent of people never getting outdoors alone and 28 percent only going solo occasionally. However, 40 percent of people go solo reasonably often (20%), most of the time (15%) or all the time (5%).

87% of those who selected they never do activities alone said they don't use a beacon. We could make the assumption that people feel safer in a group and like they have a lesser chance of getting themselves in trouble.

Results: Solo adventurers

Response Count: 1,930
Format: One Answer

Figure 4: Comparison of beacon use against frequency of heading outdoors alone



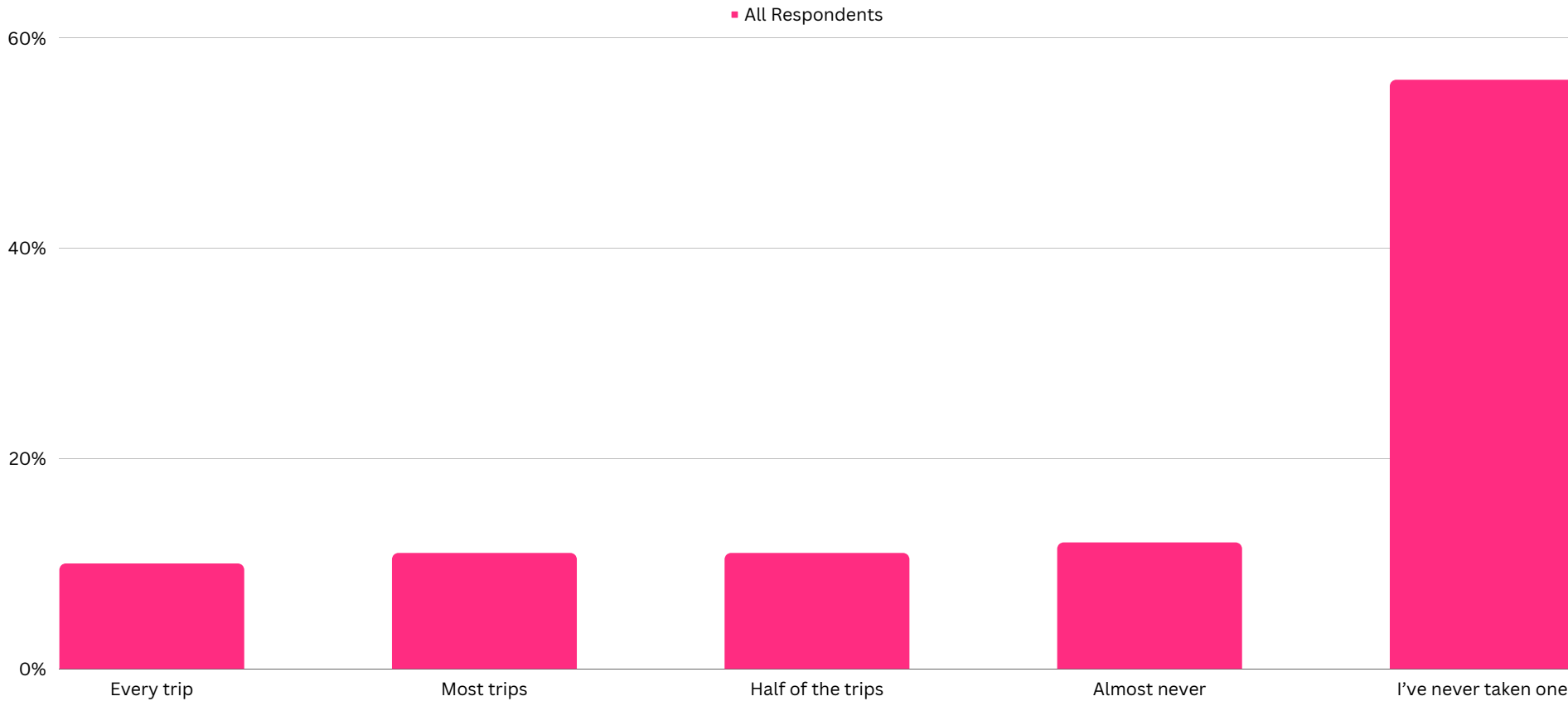
Beacon use is substantially higher for people who go it alone. Peaking at 46 percent for people who do these activities alone all the time. It is notable that men (81%) are more likely to undertake solo activities all the time than women (19%).

Results: Beacon use in the last 12 months

Response Count: 1,930
Format: One Answer

Q3: How often have you taken a beacon out with you in the last 12 months?

Figure 5: Beacon use in the last 12 month



Despite 21 percent of participants having taken a beacon when going outdoors, less than half this number took one on every trip.

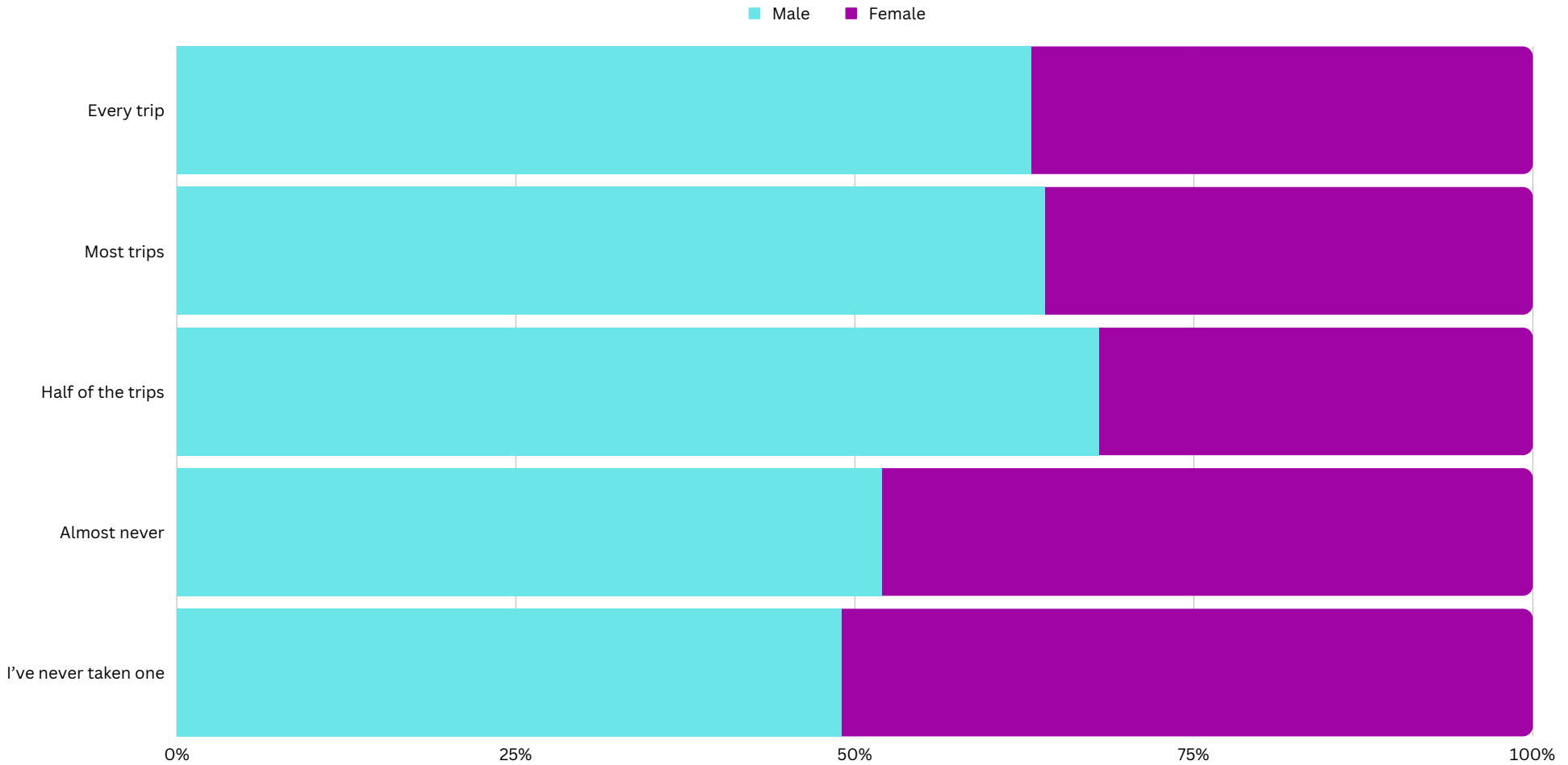
31 percent of people have taken a distress beacon during the last 12 months on more than half of their trips.

Out of the 1,930 people that answered this question 1,085 said they had never taken a beacon.

Results: Beacon use by gender

Response Count: 1,930
Format: One Answer

Figure 6: Beacon use based on gender

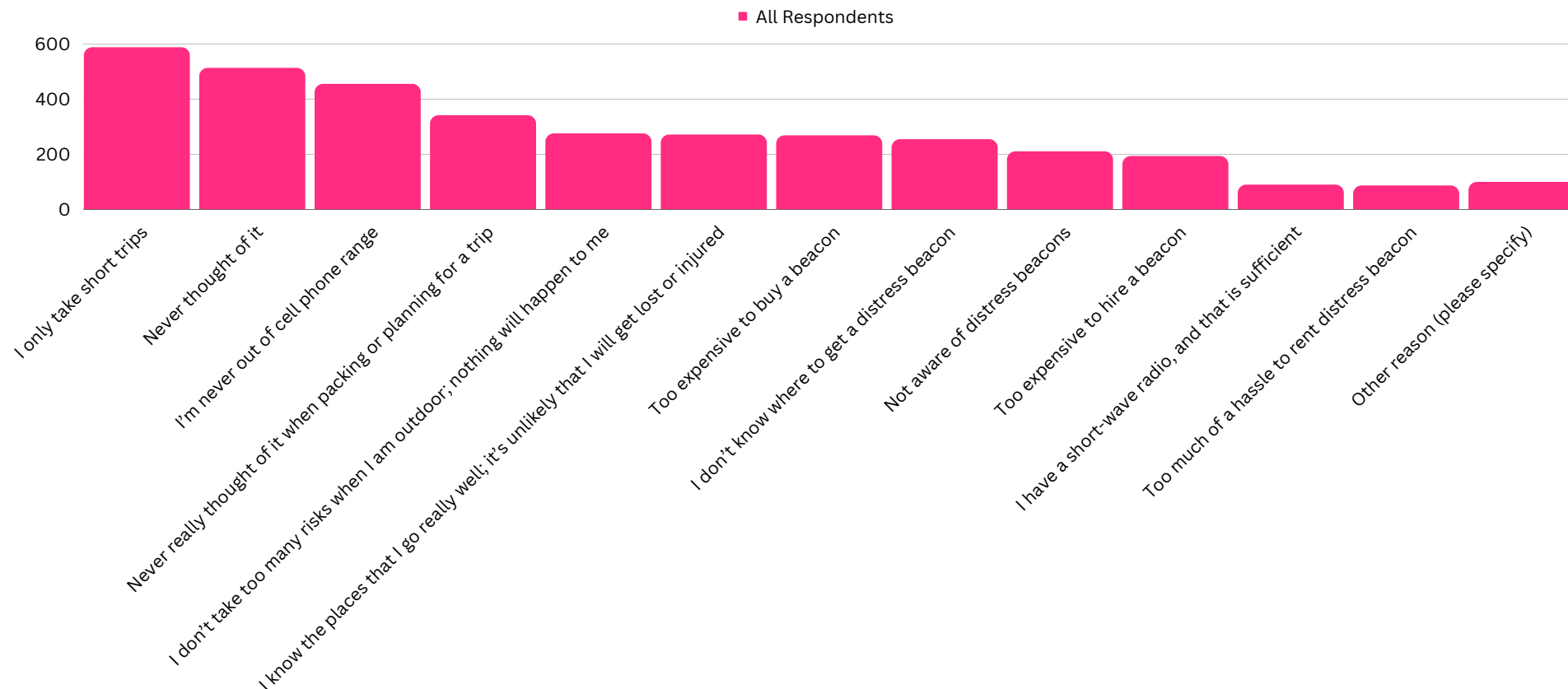


Men are almost twice as likely as women to take a beacon although they are also more likely to go out alone and may see more need for one.

Results: Barriers to beacon use

Q4: What are the reasons for not taking a distress beacon with you on your trips?
(Asked of those who have taken a distress beacon: half of the trips, almost never, or have never taken one)

Figure 7: Barriers to beacon use



The principal reason for not taking a beacon was the length of the trip (38%) probably meaning that perceived risk was low.

A third of people (34%) had never considered the need for a beacon and 30 percent were never out of phone range.

From the responses, it appears that most people do not see their personal activities as high risk enough to warrant a beacon.

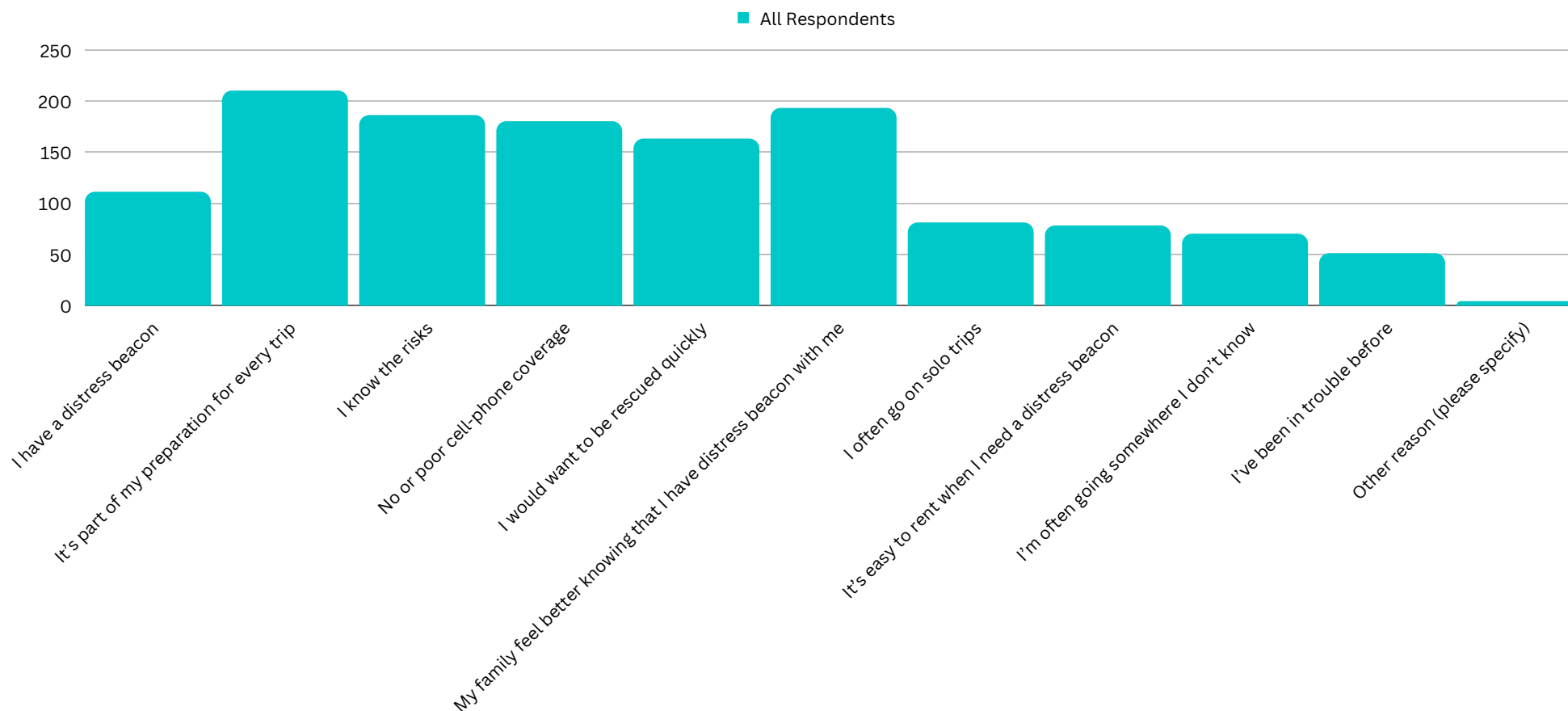
20 percent of responses related to the cost of purchase or not knowing what a beacon is, and where to find them. The current campaign addresses all of these concerns: raising awareness, showing the affordability of hiring vs buying, and explaining when/where/how beacons can be found.

Results: Motivations for beacon use

Response Count: 1,327
Format: Multi Choice

Q5: What are the reasons for taking a distress beacon with you on your trips?

Figure 7: Motivations for beacon use



Half of the respondents (52%) to this question reported that taking a beacon was “part of my preparation for every trip”. This number corresponded to the number who reported taking a beacon on every trip.

People also reported that their family felt better knowing they had a beacon (48%) and that they knew the risks (46%), lack of cell phone coverage (45%) and wanting to be rescued quickly (40%) were also significant motivators.

Discussion

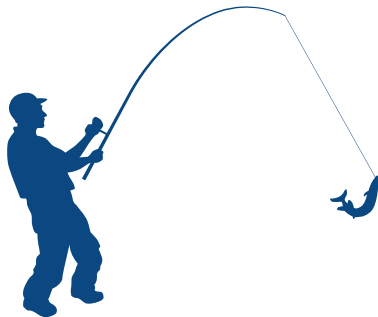
We surveyed 3,965 New Zealanders. The majority (2,034) had not participated in any relevant outdoor activities in the last 12 months.

Day tramping was, by far, the most popular activity with one quarter of respondents reporting that they were trampers.

Other high participation activities were recreational boating, mountain biking, kayaking and land-based fishing.

Beacon use was highest in activities that might be considered high-risk (ie packrafting, backcountry skiing, alpine climbing, canyoning and hunting).

The lowest rates of beacon use were day hiking (which had the highest participation rate and land-based fishing).



Adventurers made far greater use of beacons when going out solo. This peaked at 46 percent for people who always go out solo.

While more than 1 in 5 (21%) of adventurers had taken a beacon, less than half take one on every trip. While men are more likely than women to take a beacon, this likely relates to the frequency they head out alone.

Most people did not take a beacon as they considered that short trips pose little risk, or they just hadn't ever considered it/didn't consider it when packing.

Confidence in their own knowledge of the terrain and their own abilities were also reasons not to take a beacon.

The barriers that could most easily be addressed include awareness of beacons, accessibility, and improved knowledge of risks.

Likely motivators included reassurance for family, solo adventuring, and ease of access.