

# Tourist perceptions of anti-mass tourism demonstrations and sustainable tourism in Tenerife, Canary Islands

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## 1. Introduction

With its warm weather all year round, attractive resorts and stunning coastlines, it is no surprise that Tenerife is one of the most popular European holiday destinations. By the end of 2024, Tenerife itself received an annual 7.38 million tourists (ISTAC, 2024a). However, since the 1980s, the Canary Islands' economy has developed a strong economic dependence on tourism, with most of the earnings going to the foreign tourism companies that operate on the islands. The 2024 annual earnings in Tenerife for tourist accommodations alone clocked at €2 billion, 36% of the entire island's earnings (ISTAC, 2024b).

The increase in tourism to the Canary Islands, including Tenerife, has resulted in massive pressure on the local residents due to policies heavily focusing on providing for tourists. As a result, local residents face several challenges, with 29.4% risk of poverty in 2024 and 46.3% of the poorer residents having to spend over 40% of their earnings on housing expenses (Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en el Estado Español [EAPN], 2023). About 13.2% of individuals living with families earn less than €560 per month (EAPN, 2023), which falls below the poverty threshold. As a result, three major anti-over-tourism demonstrations have been carried out since 2024: 20-A, 20-O and 18-M, calling for unsustainable tourism to end.

On behalf of Geotenerife, we conducted surveys to gauge the situation from the tourists' point of view. This included their awareness of the Canary Islands' socioeconomic situation and the ongoing demonstrations.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Survey design and data collection

To obtain the tourists' view on the current situation of tourism in Tenerife, we conducted a survey in selected focus points on the island, especially in the south. After deliberation between members of GeoIntern 2025's Groups:

- Group B (Amelia Lee, Chase LaGro, Luca Graziano, Ronan Brennan, and Stephanie Sanchez).
- Group D (Aariya Thoumoung, Ayyub Elmedhem, José Miguel García Barrera, and Willem Hawley-Bourcier).

The final result was a bilingual survey in English and Spanish, using Google Forms, consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions ([survey](#)). The questions were split into two categories:

- **Profiling questions.** Questions related to age, gender, nationality, reasons for choosing Tenerife as a destination, etc.
- **Awareness questions.** Questions related to the level of awareness the tourist surveyed had about the anti-mass tourism demonstrations, the problems around housing or the environment caused by over-tourism, etc.

After designing the survey, we chose seven locations across the island, mainly in the southern part of Tenerife, to carry out in-person surveys over two days over these points (8 July 2025 and 9 July 2025). The locations were split into:-

- Day 1 - Costa Adeje, El Médano, La Orotava, Los Cristianos, Puerto de la Cruz
- Day 2 - Costa Adeje, La Caleta, Las Americas, Los Cristianos

We focused primarily on the Costa Adeje-Las Américas-Los Cristianos urban continuum due to the high annual influx of tourists in this area. El Médano, La Caleta, La Orotava and Puerto de La Cruz were used as contrast locations, having slightly different profiles of tourists (e.g. sport tourism, residential tourism).





Figure 1: Chosen locations to survey.

By the end of the surveys, we received 402 answers from participating tourists, split into 359 answers in the English survey and 43 for the Spanish. Most of the 402 respondents did not answer the open-ended questions due to varying reasons (lack of time, knowledge, interest, and/or the option of skipping the open-ended questions), with a select few who were able to answer.

## 2.2. Data cleansing and coding

After collating the answers, the next procedure was data cleansing. This included deleting answers from primary residents in Tenerife, which we identified based on the survey questions on whether they were residents of Tenerife and whether they own or rent a primary property on the island. Along with correcting typos for questions about nationality, social media or news, we combined the English and Spanish surveys for the data analysis.

The open-ended questions were:

- “What attracted you to Tenerife? (Check all that apply)”.



- "Based on your experience, what do you think the main goals of the anti-mass tourism demonstrations are?"
- "What changes would you like to see in how tourism is managed in Tenerife?"

We coded the answers in order to quantify the number of answers collected and convert qualitative data to quantitative data. Due to the nature of the questions, more than one code has been assigned to several answers.

For the second question, regarding the aims of the demonstrations, we grouped the answers into seven different codes:

- **Housing:** answers related to rent inflation, shortage of houses, difficulty in finding apartments...
- **Environment / Resources:** answers related to the harming of the natural environment because of tourism, or the overuse of certain natural resources for the tourism industry.
- **Responsible tourism:** answers related to the claims of a different touristic model, reducing the number of visitors or establishing a cap, overtourism, overcrowding, etc.
- **Labour:** answers related to the accessibility to jobs and earning better wages or better working conditions
- **Anti-tourism:** answers related to being against the tourists' presence or against tourism as a whole.
- **Government:** answers related to being against the government or related to corruption.
- **Social Issues:** answers related to the loss of identity, locals tired of the disrespectful behaviour of tourists, culture, etc.

For the third question, regarding the changes in how tourism is managed, we grouped the answers into seven different codes:

- **Waste management:** proposals regarding cleaning services, adding more bins, implementation of recycling, etc.
- **Degrowth:** proposals regarding degrowth models, such as the stop of new tourist developments or capping the number of tourists.
- **Taxation:** proposals regarding the addition of a tax for tourists, ecotax...
- **Property policies:** proposals regarding rent control policies, housing incentives or Airbnb regulations.

- **Environmental sustainability:** proposals regarding a more “green” model:  
better usage of water, eco trips and ecotourism.



- **Security:** proposals regarding the addition of more police corps, creating policies to ban scooters that create hazards for pedestrians.
- **Miscellaneous:** various proposals that do not fit any other category, nor have an impactful number to be their own category: awareness campaigns, raising prices...

Finally, coding was also implemented for the question “How did you become aware?”, regarding the anti-mass tourism demonstrations, creating the category “Witnessed in person” for all the people who saw the demonstrations during their stay on the island.

### 3. Results of the survey.

a.

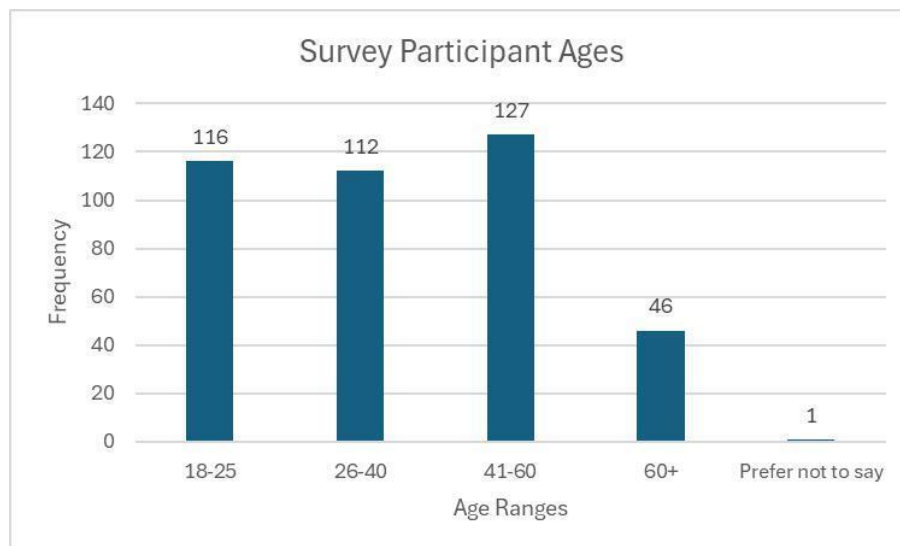


Figure 2: Results of the age range of respondents.

Here, the respondents' age ranges were compared to gauge the audience that was surveyed. The 41-60 age range had the most respondents, which meant the most represented opinions in the survey were from roughly middle-aged tourists in Tenerife. This could be due to the fact many of them have visited Tenerife before, witnessed changes during their visits and felt that they wanted to express their opinions.



**b.**

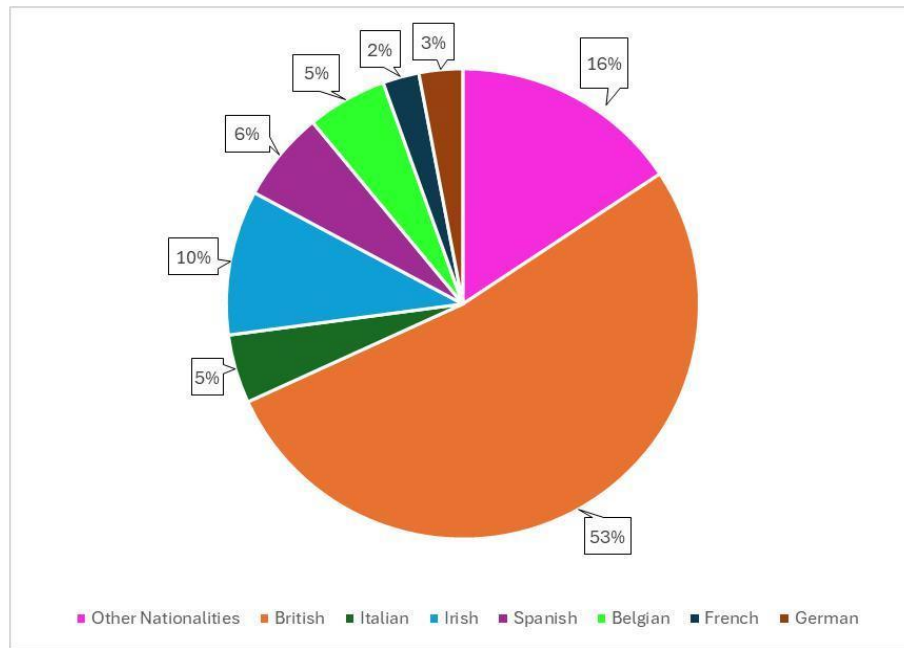


Figure 3: Results of the surveyed nationalities visiting Tenerife.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the respondents' nationalities, with British tourists accounting for over half of the participants. With all other nationalities accounting for just about 47% of the total respondents, it appears that Tenerife has a higher influx of British tourists.



**C.**

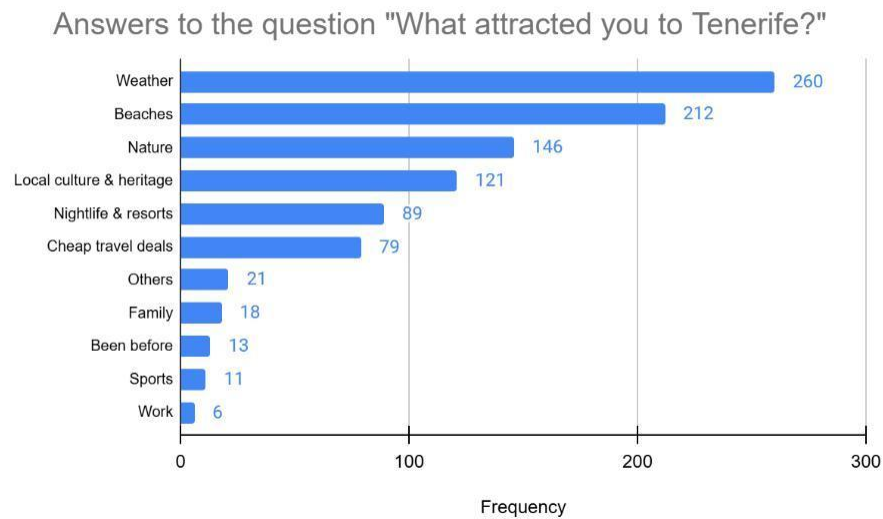


Figure 4: Results showing responses to what drew visitors to Tenerife. The most common responses were tied to the island's weather and its beaches.

When asked about factors that influenced the respondents' travel to Tenerife, the weather stood out as a major influencing aspect for tourists when it came to their travel decisions. The beaches, nature, and local culture followed right after as other major reasons for their visit. Although lower, the resorts, nightlife, and cheap travel deals were important factors that stood out to tourists about choosing to travel to Tenerife. These results point to Tenerife being a very attractive, affordable holiday destination and why many tourists come to the island, especially for sun-and-beach tourism.



**d.**

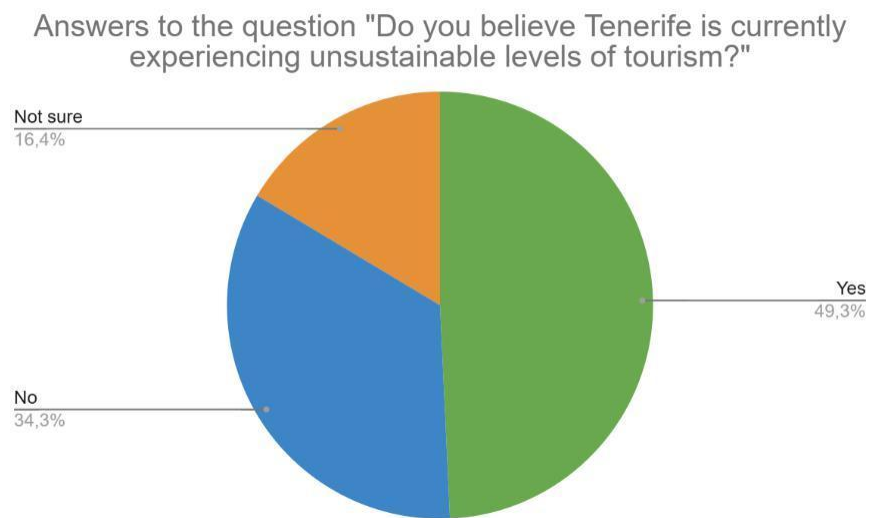


Figure 5: Responses to whether tourism in the island is unsustainable.

Figure 5 shows that interestingly, almost half of the participants agreed that Tenerife was facing unsustainable levels of tourism. Meanwhile, over 34% of the respondents did not agree with the statement, with the rest of the respondents unsure.

**e.**



Answers to the question "Since 2024, have you become aware of over-tourism demonstrations in Tenerife?"

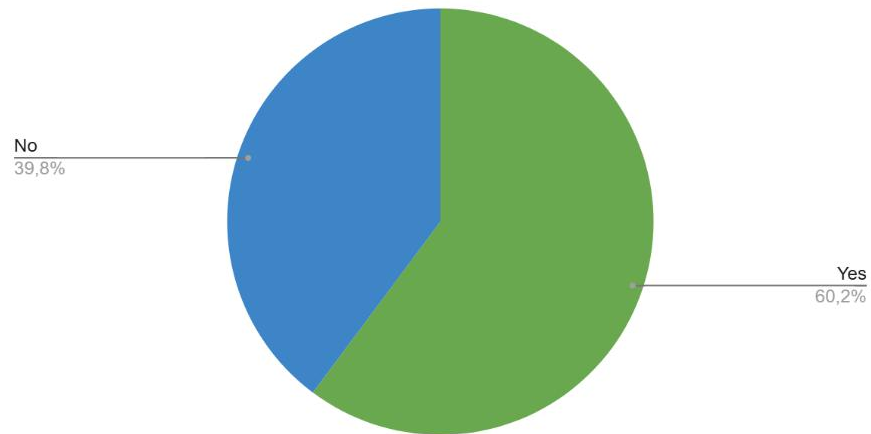


Figure 6: Results of tourist's awareness of the demonstrations.

The following chart shows that 242 respondents (around 60% of total respondents) were aware of the anti over-tourism demonstrations in Tenerife, while the remaining 160 (close to 40%) were not aware.

**f.**

Answers to the question "How did you become aware?"

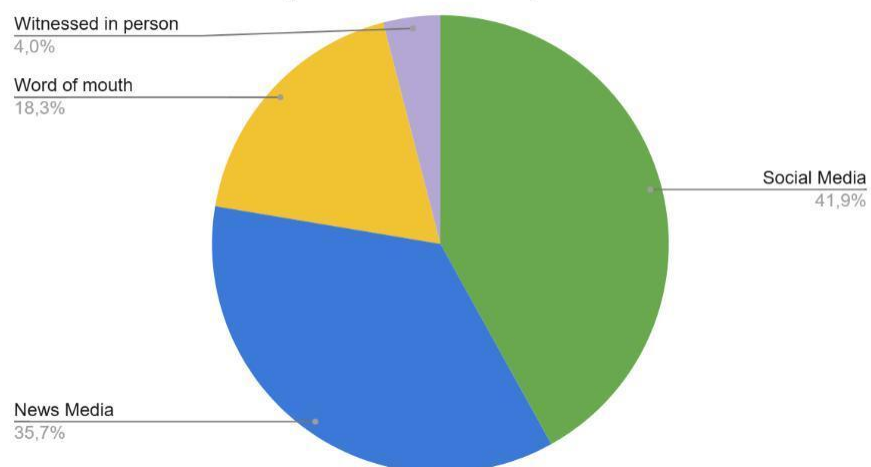


Figure 7: Results showing how tourists became aware of the demonstrations.

This chart highlights that the majority of the people who were aware of the over-tourism demonstrations found out about them through various media



platforms: 135 via social media and 115 from news media. A smaller number (59) heard of them via word of mouth, and a select number of people (13) witnessed the demonstrations in person.

9.

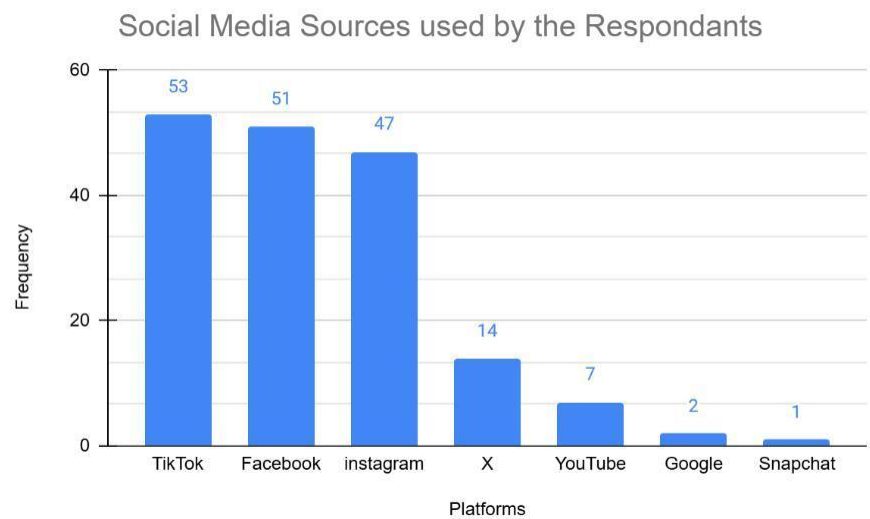


Figure 8: Results showing the most popular social media platforms which informed the surveyed tourists about the demonstrations.

Regarding the social media platforms that the participants used to find out about the demonstrations, this chart highlights that the most popular medium of awareness of the demonstrations was through TikTok, followed closely by Facebook and then

Instagram. TikTok and Instagram likely owe their popularity to the younger audience who took part in the survey, while facebook in second place was likely from the



older age range (41-60 years). The rest of the less frequently used sources were through other platforms like X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, etc.

**h.**

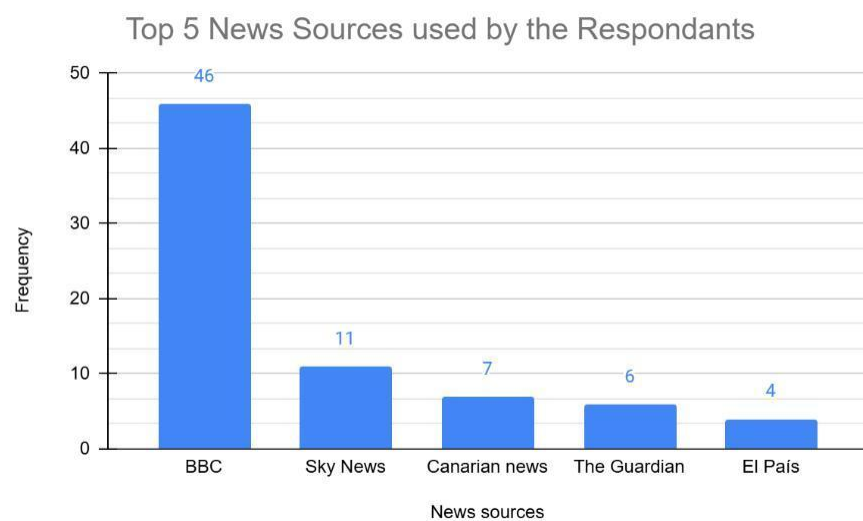


Figure 9: Results of the most popular news media platforms that have informed the surveyed tourists about the demonstrations.

For news media, this bar chart points to the BBC as the most prominent channel used, likely owing to the large number of British tourists who participated in the survey. Sky News and The Guardian were significantly lower in comparison. Some



respondents also pointed to local Canarian news sources as their source of knowledge.

i.

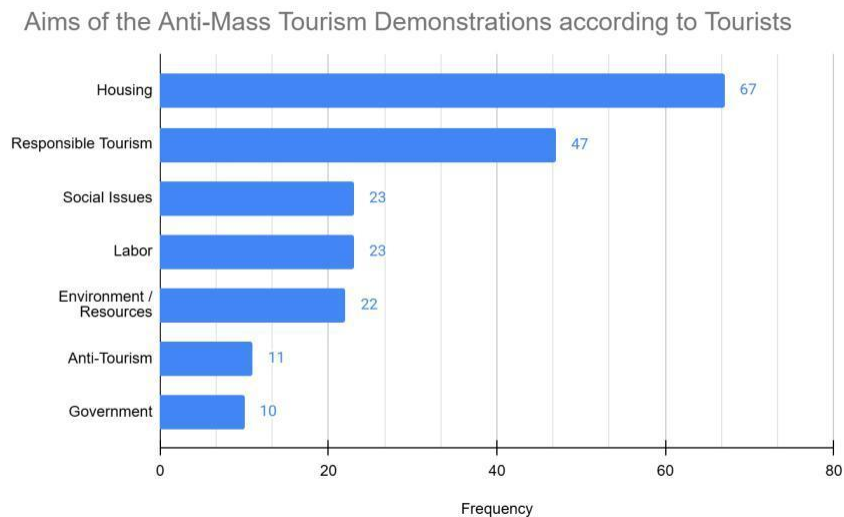


Figure 10: Results of the tourists' knowledge of the mass demonstration's goals.

When asked about the aims of the demonstrations, figure 10 shows that most of the respondents believed that the high housing costs and the unsustainability of the current tourism model were the main objectives of the protests. Other aims cited by the respondents included social issues, labour rights, environmental protection etc. Anti-tourism was not believed to be a major objective for the demonstrations.

j.



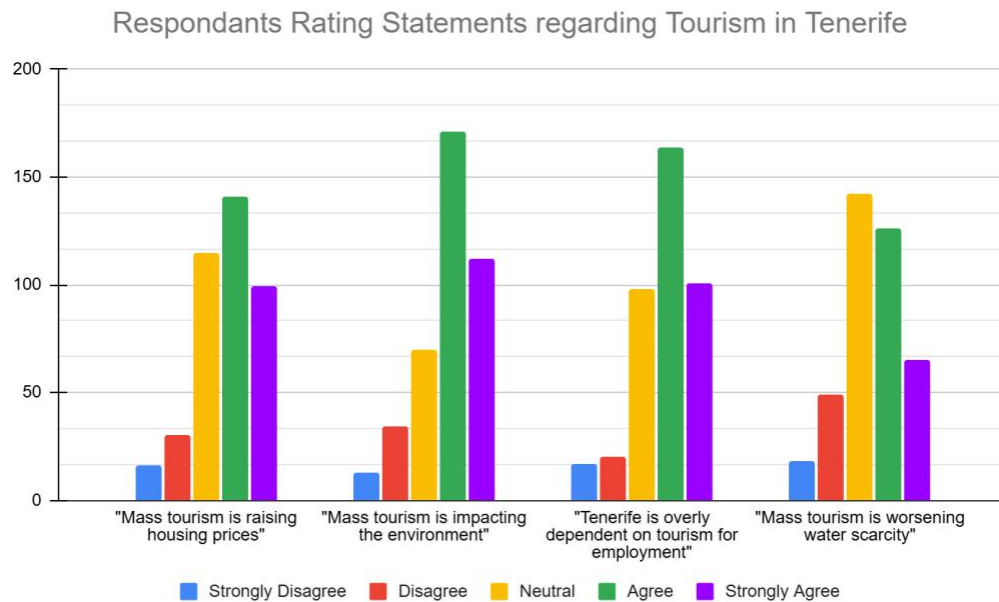


Figure 11: Results from the rating questionnaire regarding the various effects caused by mass tourism in Tenerife. Note the more mixed responses regarding water scarcity.

The survey included a section that had respondents answer statements based on what extent they agreed or disagreed with them. Based on figure 11, it appears most respondents agreed that mass tourism on the island was affecting the environment, raising housing prices, and that Tenerife is overly dependent on tourism for employment. These statements were generally not polarising, and all respondents, regardless of whether they were aware of the anti-over-tourism demonstrations or not, were in agreement.

However, when it came to the statement that tourism worsens water scarcity, the opinions were rather mixed, with most people not necessarily having a strong opinion on the connection of tourism in Tenerife with the island's water scarcity. This might be due to assumptions that, given the water supply many tourist accommodations provide, tourists are likely to assume that there is no water shortage on the island.

**k.**



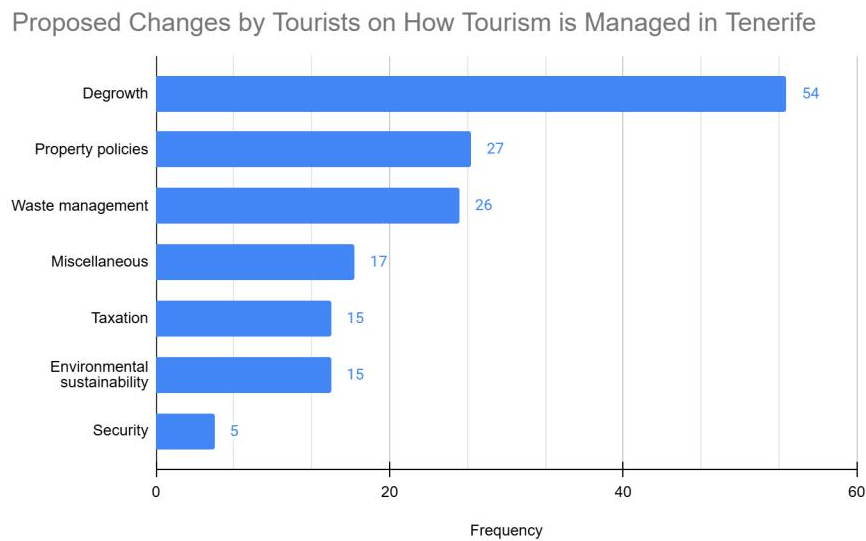


Figure 12: Results showing the tourists' proposed changes on how to manage and improve tourism in the island.

For figure 12, a representation showing the participants what they thought should change about the management of tourism in Tenerife.

A great number of tourists centred their responses around degrowth - a socioeconomic theory that aims to decenter an economy's focus on generating profits to recentering it to prioritise citizen wellbeing and the planet by becoming more sustainable. Other proposed ideas included tourist taxes, improving infrastructure for locals, reducing dependence on tourism for employment, and reducing the number of tourists in Tenerife.



## **4. Limitations**

Certain limitations during the surveys occurred that could have impacted results and analysis.

Firstly, the survey could only be conducted at seven locations across Tenerife and mostly concentrated in southern Tenerife. While tourism is seen as more extractive and harmful in the south, the north also experiences high levels of tourism, though with different opinions based on the responses received there. The surveys in the north also found out that most businesses there were owned by local residents and did not see tourism as a major issue for the north of the island. Areas such as San Cristóbal de La Laguna and Santa Cruz de Tenerife were not surveyed due to time and resource constraints.

Secondly, the surveys were conducted on the 8th and 9th of July 2025, from 12:00 to 17:00 and 13:45 to 16:30, respectively. The timings (afternoon), the days (Monday and Tuesday), and the time of year (summer) could have impacted the tourists surveyed and the answers received.

Finally, the demography of the surveyors could have also impacted the type of respondents that were approached and surveyed, given that the highest number of participants were roughly middle aged.

## **5. Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the GeoTenerife team for giving us the opportunity to conduct an in-depth survey as unique as this. We want to especially thank Sharon Backhouse for designing this programme, Sergio Parra Alfaya for aiding during the survey-making process, and Ajay Wynne Jones for aiding with the survey and the report. We would also like to thank Group B (Amelia Lee, Chase LaGro, Luca Graziano, Ronan Brennan, and Stephanie Sanchez) for helping with the initial brainstorming of the survey. Last but not least, we would like to thank all fellow GeoInterns 2025 for zealously helping conduct the surveys on both days and contributing to the total number of responses received.



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