



CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF TOURISM
Tourism Insights Program

DECEMBER 2020/JANUARY 2021 REPORT

HOTELS OFFERING SOME UNIQUE EXPERIENCES

Hotels Aren't Just for Sleeping In Anymore

Hotels are finding new and unique ways to bring in business that often don't even include an overnight stay—but can if the marketing is right.

An example of such an arrangement is between Philadelphia's Walnut Street Café and the AKA University City hotel, dubbed the "Walnut Suite Café." The café has created individual, three-course dining experiences within the hotel, located 23 floors above the restaurant in the same mixed-use space. This dinner option is available in 15 of the hotel's one- and two-bedroom suites and is available for time frames anywhere between three hours and overnight. The arrangement allows the café to serve some 60 customers a night, nearly the same number of customers they were able to serve indoors before the pandemic. The arrangement has plans to continue for as long as demand and room availability allow.

Similarly, right here in Connecticut, Room Service at The Goodwin Hotel presents a night filled with mystery, elegance, and delightful bewilderment, all centered around a 3-course Chef's dinner curated by the renowned Chef Tyler Anderson. Think escape room meets dinner theater — the first progressive dinner experience of its kind. Plus, a percentage of proceeds goes to Hands on Hartford. We know from past research that proceeds going to those in need during Covid goes a long way to enticing consumers to choose your business over another.

Key Insight

Seek out complimentary business partnerships that expand your offerings and allow you to provide more for your consumer.

Don't want to cater to fine dining? Offer up the chance to rent out the pool to a private party and partner with a restaurant to bring in a barbeque menu. Bring the taste of summer to your indoor pool this winter and earn income on a space that typically doesn't generate revenue. For the icing on the cake, upsell an overnight stay for those guests and partner with other local restaurants for breakfast and lunch options.



BRINGING THE HOTEL EXPERIENCE HOME

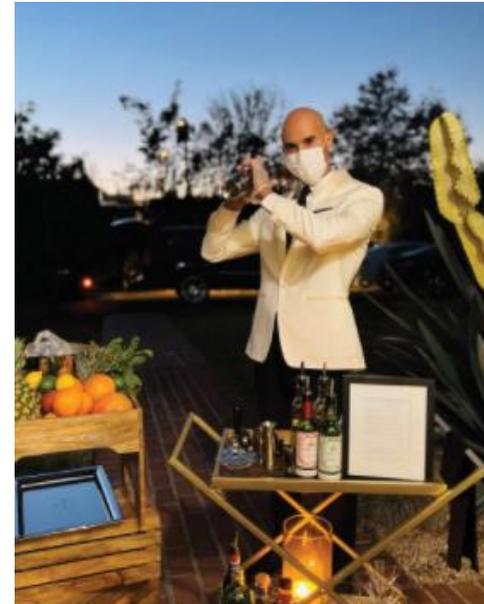
Mobile Mixology

In early December, Los Angeles' mayor passed a "safer at home" order that called for no more eating out, no more gatherings and no more staycations at nearby hotels. With hotels having to close down their dining rooms and bars, they have been forced to get creative. The Maybourne Beverly Hills hotel in particular has recently made a major splash with its new Mobile Mixologist. Those who feel like they need a little hotel-style pick-me-up can order Maybourne's mixologist to come right to their door and hand deliver them a drink.

This intimate outdoor experience begins with a knock on the door from the hotel's mixologist and bar manager, who both come masked, gloved and will stand a solid six feet away. Next, the duo sets up their car bar experience for patrons to select a drink from the hotel's handcrafted cocktail menu. Once patrons receive their cocktail, the mobile bar team packs up their bar and leaves you to enjoy your drink in peace.

Key Insight

Do you have services at your hotel going unused because of the pandemic? Offer up these services as safe in-home experiences to locals in order to boost revenue.



BRING THE PUB EXPERIENCE HOME

Virtual Pub Events

BrewDog, a Scotland-based multinational brewery and pub chain, recently launched an initiative to repurpose their bars, as pandemic-related lockdowns have greatly affected bars worldwide. The brewery will be setting up an online bar to connect every single brick and mortar BrewDog bar worldwide—from the UK to the USA, from Germany to Australia.

The BrewDog Online Bar is set to launch Friday, March 27th at 6pm, giving locals and regulars a chance to reconnect, share a beer and much more every Friday night. Some of the other tricks that BrewDog has up their sleeve for their online patrons include:

- ✓ Live beer tastings with co-founders and other beer experts,
- ✓ Home brew masterclasses,
- ✓ Virtual pub quizzes,
- ✓ Q&As with BrewDog crew members,
- ✓ Live music and comedy.

And in case those virtual activities weren't enough to pique your interest, the online bar also has plans to include giveaways and exclusive merchandise.



Key Insight

Did your restaurant host any kind of gathering pre-pandemic? As we've seen, any gathering can be done virtually with a little help from zoom, google meet, or even Facebook rooms. The cost to host the virtual event is minimal and registration fees from attendees can boost revenue. Be sure to include an incentive (prize for winning games, drawing for a random attendee to win a prize, etc.) to encourage people to attend.

Online marketplace launches for local retailers

After months of development, Fort Collins' visitor bureau has launched a service that allows customers in the city—as well as across the country—to buy goods and services from local vendors from one centralized website and payment system. Dubbed the Visit Fort Collins Marketplace and even called the “Amazon for Fort Collins’ small retailers,” the service counts more than forty retailers and nearby businesses as participants.

The idea for the marketplace formed early during the pandemic, as shutdowns significantly shifted the sales patterns for local businesses. As consumer spending went mostly online and travel died down, the visitors bureau and its partners spent nearly thirteen weeks developing the site and bringing on merchants. If people couldn't come to Fort Collins, the online marketplace would help bring Fort Collins' retail to people, especially during an important time of the year for the already battered retail industry.

The marketplace—the first of its kind in the U.S.—allows consumers to purchase products and services, as well as gift cards and vouchers for future events. While it is possible that these businesses may not survive long enough for their consumers to utilize gift cards or event vouchers, the hope is that these purchases will provide much-needed cash flow ahead of usual summer peaks, boosting the likelihood of long-term survival. Consumers will also be given the chance to trade in their vouchers and gift cards if that particular business goes under before they have a chance to use them. Marketplace creators claim that the service is a longer-term strategy and will stay on after the pandemic calms down. The marketplace was created during the pandemic as a bridge to keep registers ringing but will serve as a compliment to in-person shopping as shopping behavior returns to normal.



Key Insight

Partnering with businesses across your immediate city or county can help businesses survive the short-term until the pandemic subsides.

TRENDING

Family Fun

Over the holidays, many families had to cancel their large gatherings for Thanksgiving and Christmas. But shortly thereafter, vaccines started becoming available and consumers are itching to get out and spend time with family they missed. Businesses that cater to letting families gather are starting to see an uptick in their doors swinging open—especially those that are promoting their safe spaces while Covid is still a big factor.

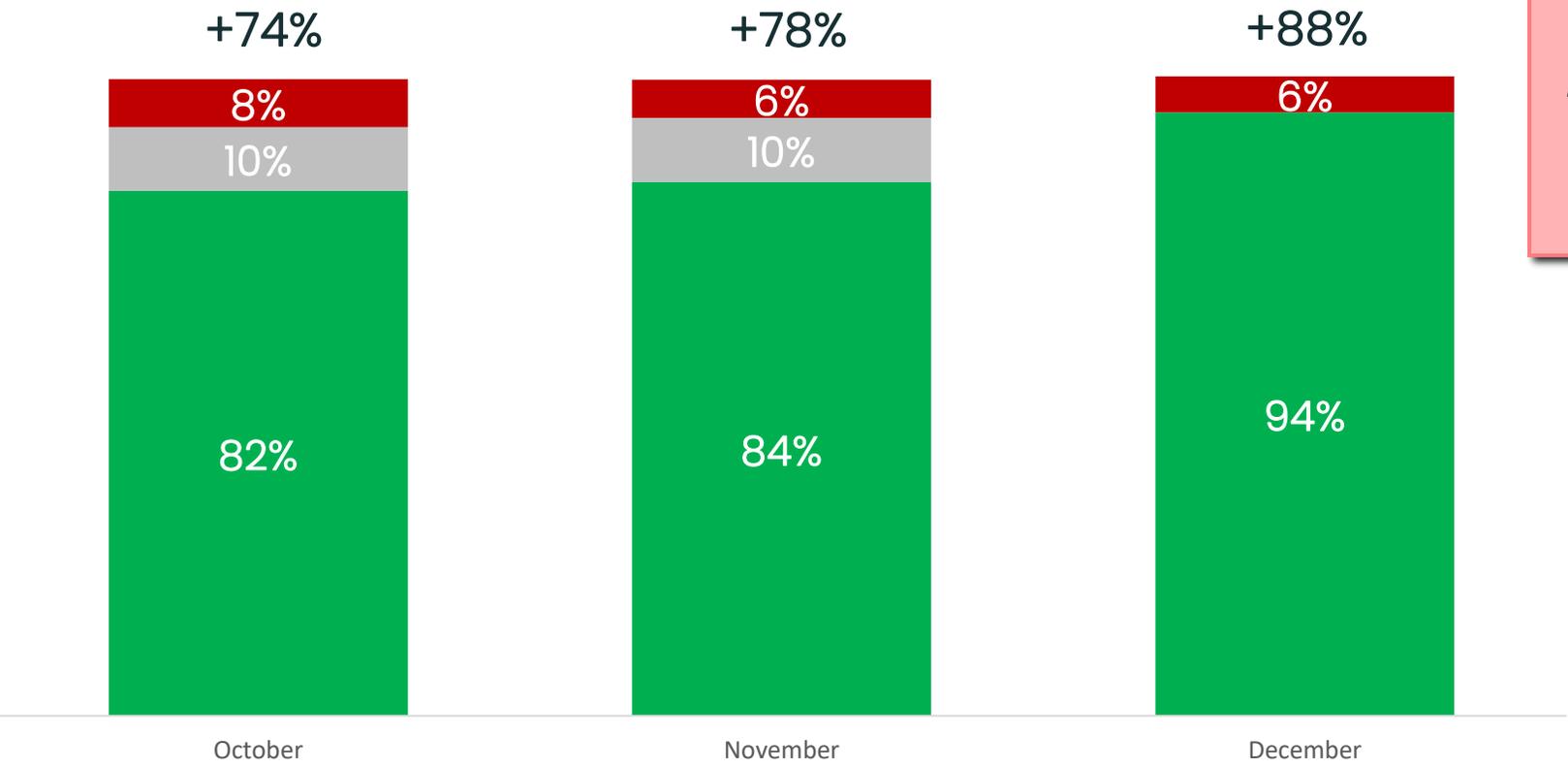
Just Hold On

The uptick in family gatherings, the distribution of the Covid vaccine and the pent-up demand to get out of the house is all showing us that it will soon be full steam ahead for businesses everywhere. In a few more weeks, more vaccines are predicted to be available, and past research has shown us that as soon as that happens, consumers say they'll be ready to get back to normal activities fast. Businesses should be prepared now for this to happen while still promoting what they're doing to keep consumers safe as it will take time for enough people to be vaccinated to have a "herd immunity" affect.



As COVID-19 cases have spiked across New England, the impact of mask mandates has become more positive than ever.

Mask Mandate Impact



💡 Key Insight

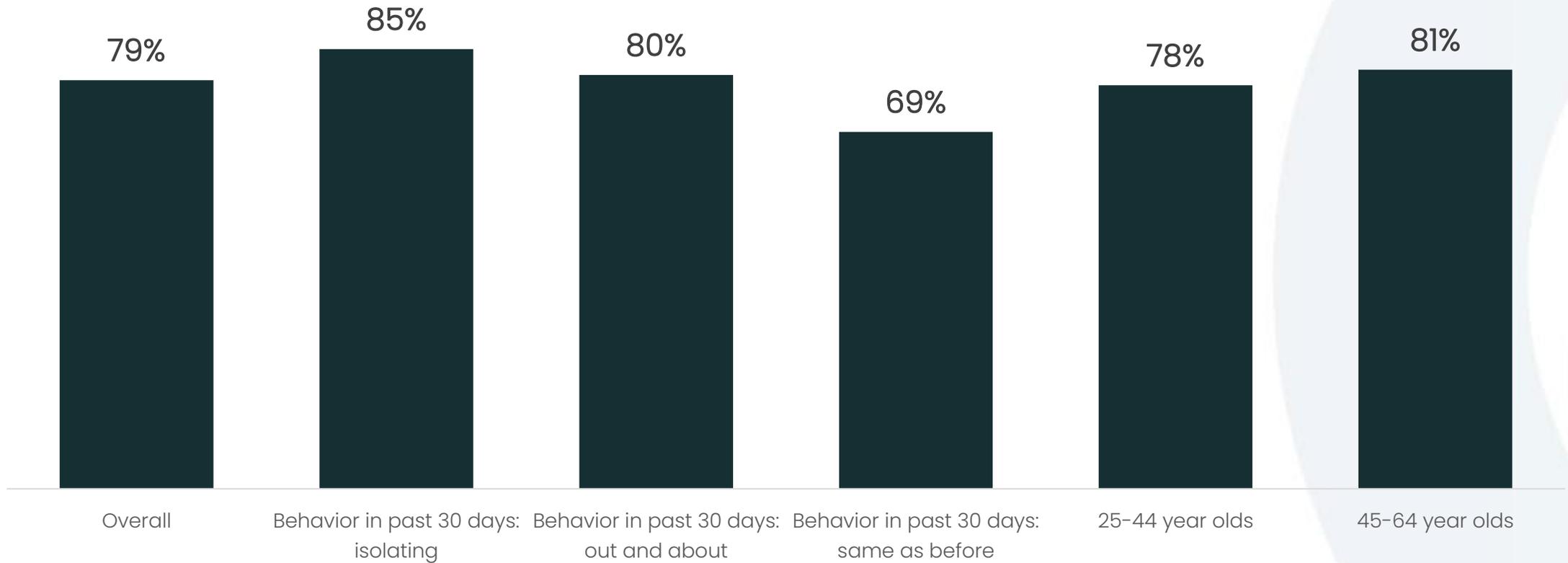
There is no longer room to question whether mask mandates will take away from your business. All businesses will benefit from taking the proper COVID-19 precautions and enforcing them.

- Positive Impact
- No Impact
- Negative Impact

Q13: When thinking about a place you are considering visiting, what impact (if any) do mask requirements have upon your decision to visit a restaurant, hotel or attraction?

Those who have been isolating the past 30 days are the most willing to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available.

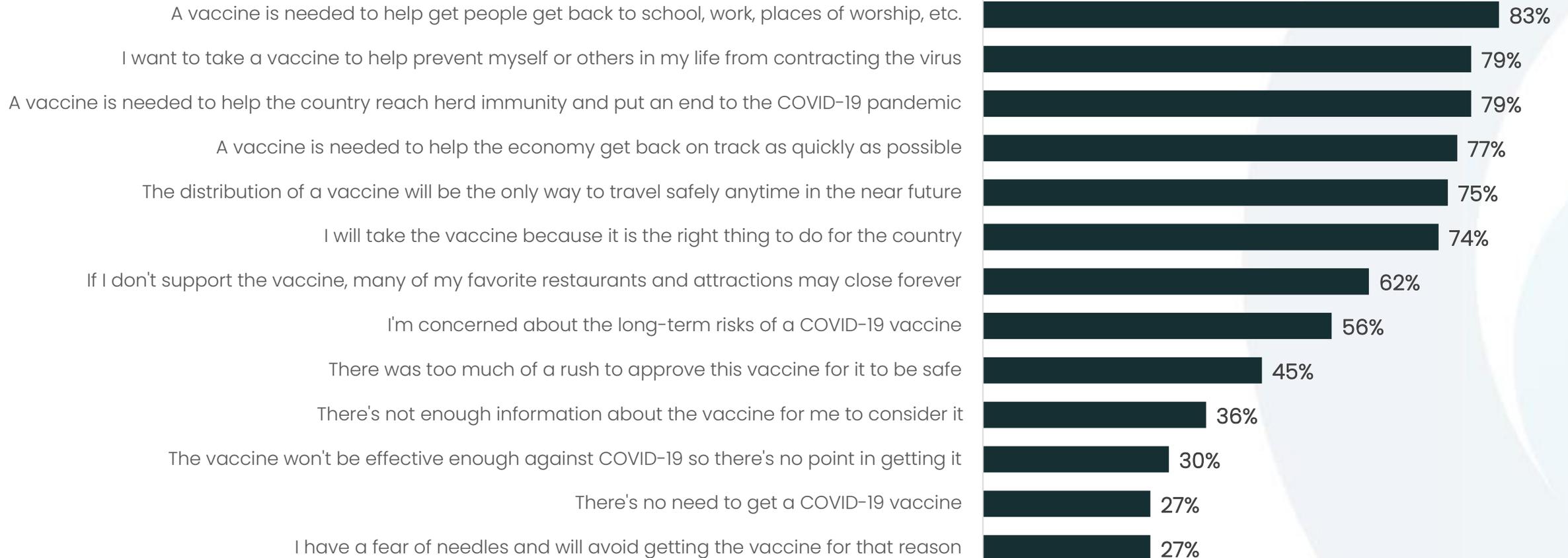
Willingness to Get COVID-19 Vaccination
% Definitely/Probably Will



The vast majority of New England travelers plan to get the vaccine once it's available. Furthermore, there is a generally positive attitude toward the vaccine, with few having a fear of effectiveness or the perception of a lack of information about the vaccine. The more businesses can promote masking, distancing and vaccinations to their patrons, the faster the pandemic will be under control and business can go back to some sort of new normal.

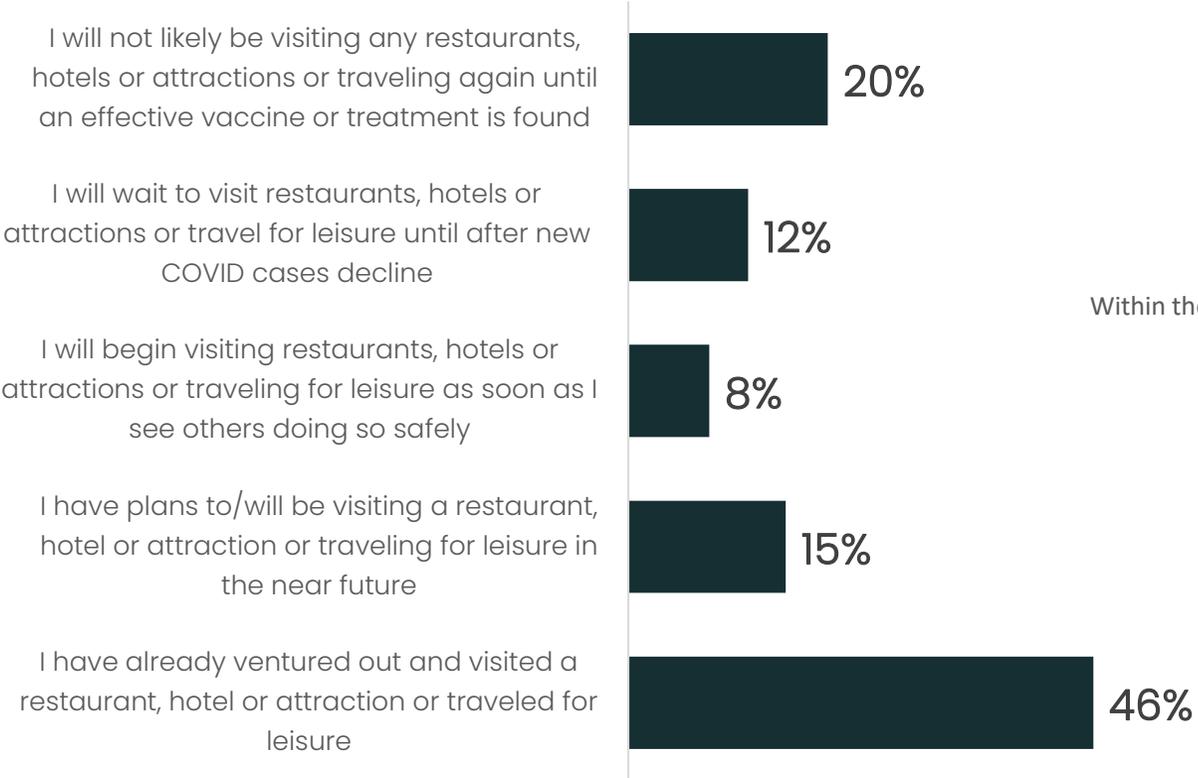
COVID-19 Vaccine Statements

% Agree/Strongly Agree



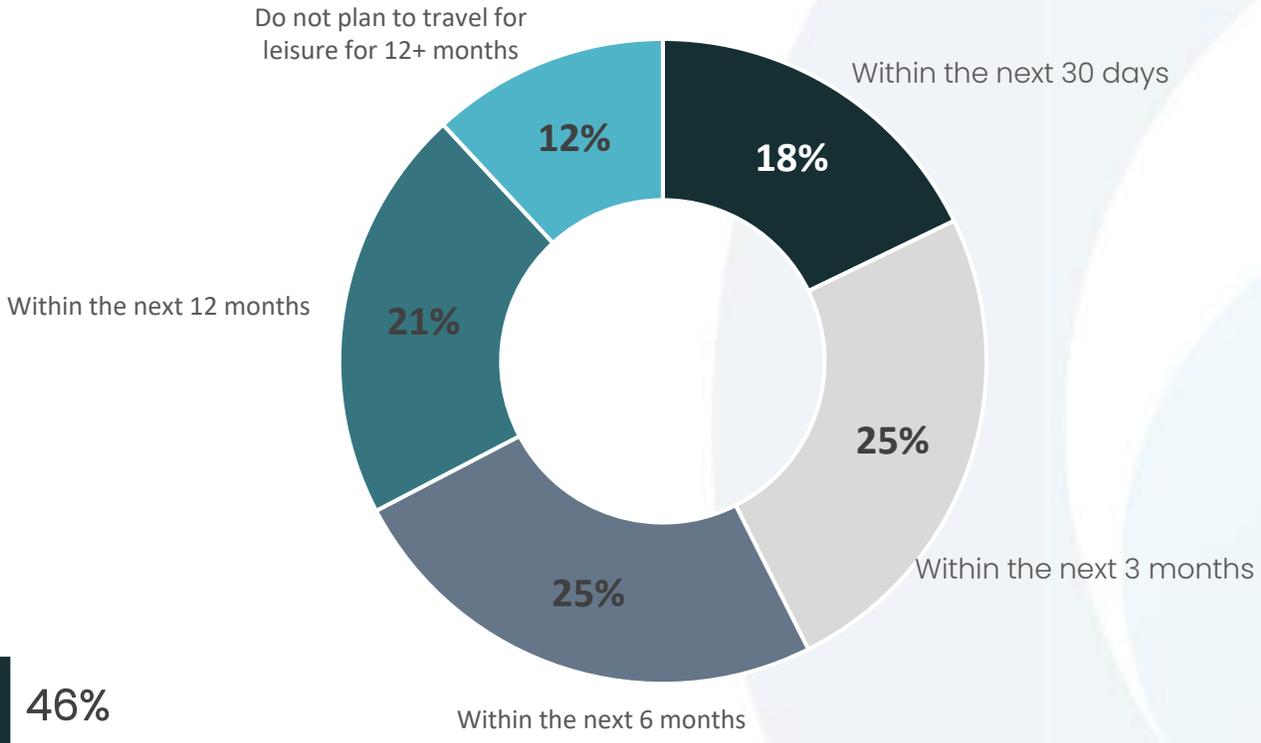
Nearly half of respondents have already ventured out to visit a restaurant, hotel or attraction, while nearly 7 in 10 respondents plan to take a leisure trip sometime in the next 6 months.

Visitation Outlook



RESPONDENT BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS NOV-DEC | N=266

Plans for Next Leisure Trip



RESPONDENT BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS YEAR TO DATE | N=400

Q23: Which of the following phrases best describes your outlook on visiting a restaurant, hotel or attraction?

Q24: When do you expect to take your next leisure trip?

Winter Activities Most Likely to Engage In



With so many consumers venturing out or planning to, it's extremely important for Connecticut businesses to be ready for consumers and give them a reason to choose your business. Consumers want to shop local, take part in outdoor activities, participate in virtual events and visit new drive-through experiences.

Furthermore, our past insights have shown us that enhanced safety measures, enforcement of mandates and new ways to enjoy old spaces are the ways that set the most successful businesses apart from those that are failing.

 **Key Insight**

As consumers venture out this winter, the key to success will be to keep your potential customers informed about your practices, enforce your own and your local government's policies and find ways to partner with other area businesses to keep everyone afloat during these unprecedented times.

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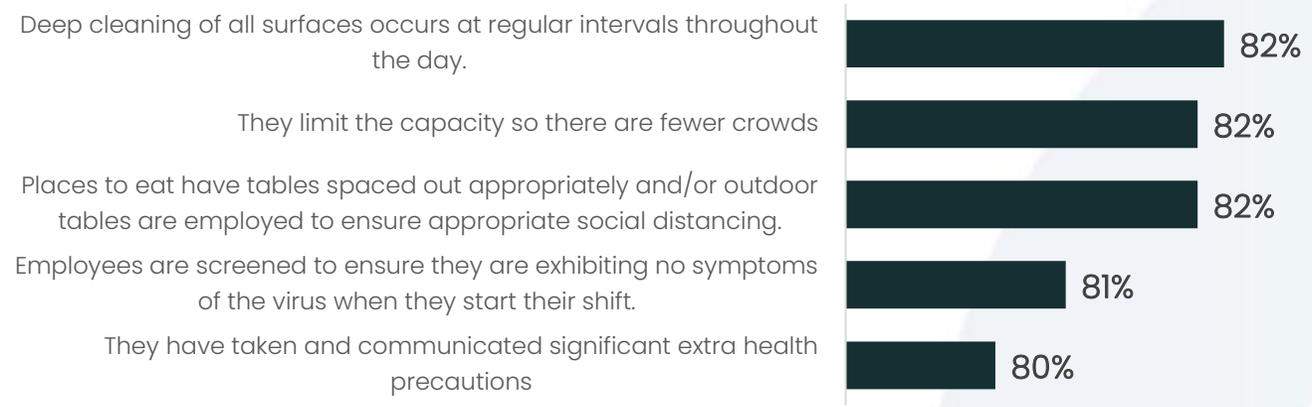
OTHER RESEARCH FINDINGS

Consumer Considerations & Motivators

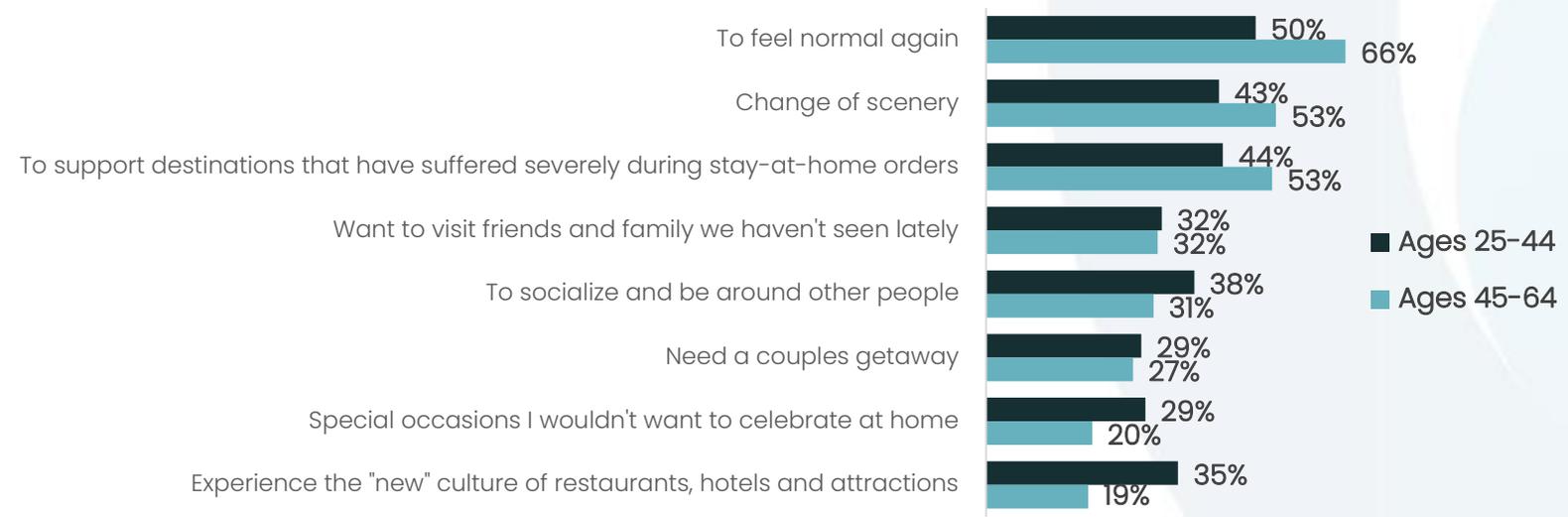
Don't let them see crowds. Limiting crowds has jumped in importance to consumers this month. It always ranked as important, but this month it's the number one most important factor for deciding to visit a business.

Help them feel normal again. Guests, especially those over 45, listed their primary motivation for wanting to visit a restaurant, hotel or attraction this winter is "to feel normal again". So promote that great normal feeling!

Top 5 Considerations of Visiting an Attraction, Restaurant or Hotel



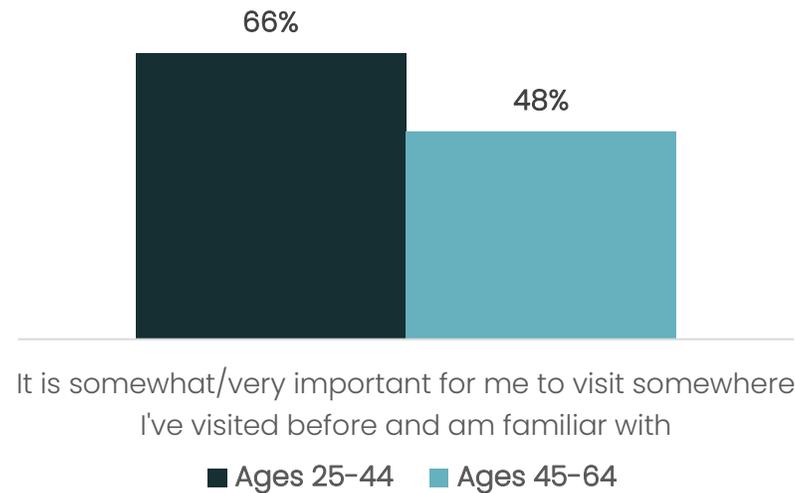
Primary Motivations for Visiting Attractions, Restaurants or hotels



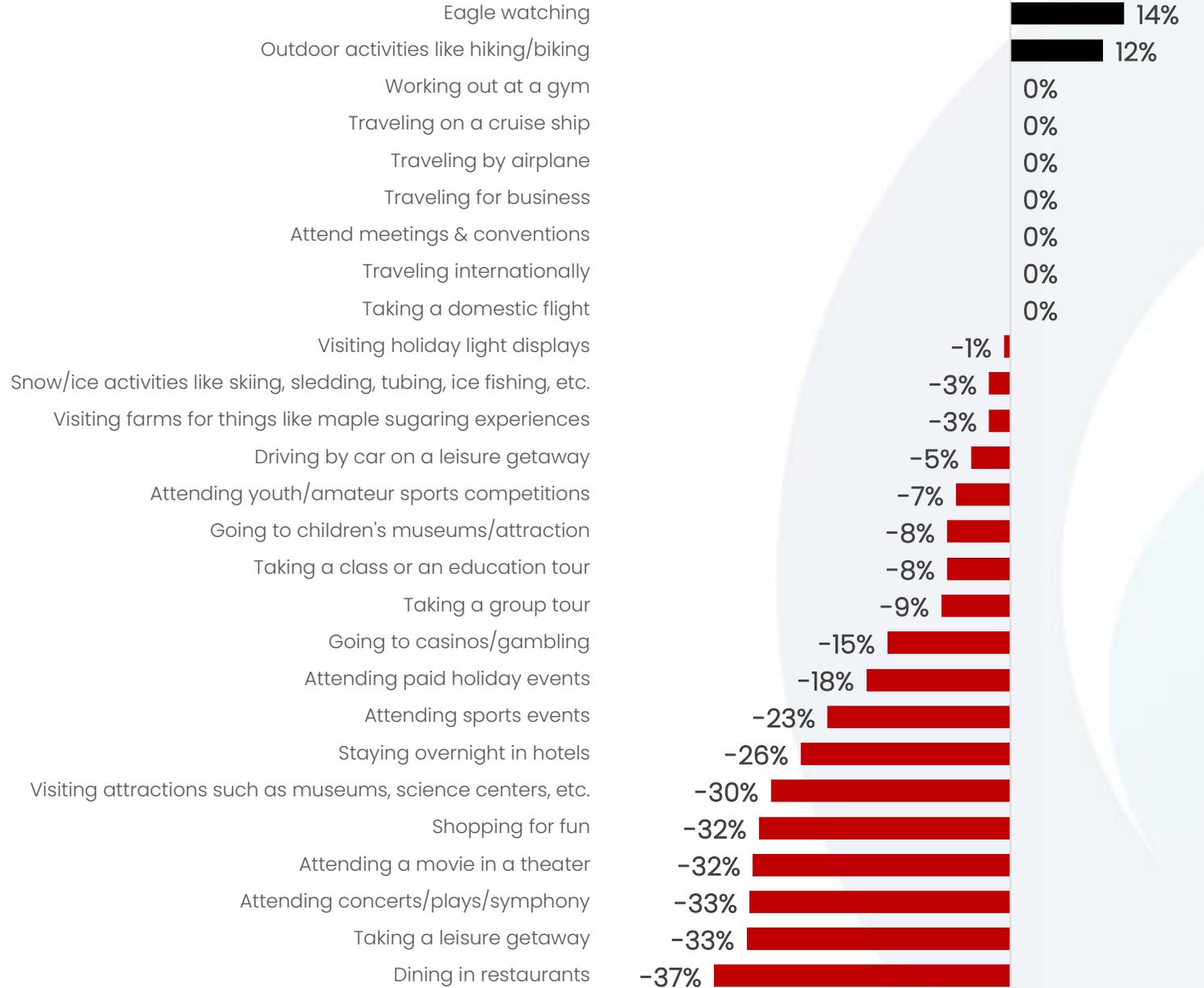
Familiar Outdoor Locations

Target your Millennial regulars. Millennials were far more likely than older respondents to prefer to visit already-familiar locations this winter.

Show them Eagles. Respondents are more concerned about most activities they typically do in the winter. But not Eagle-Watching. They are as interested and willing as ever for this particular pursuit, along with other outdoor activities like hiking/biking.



Variance in Activity Participation (Before Pandemic vs. After)





THANK YOU

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

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