



CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF TOURISM

Tourism Insights Program

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021 REPORT



Industry Trends | February-March 2021

1) Expect more from this summer! The latest news gives us plenty of reason to hope for a much stronger summer this year:

69% of respondents plan to travel more this year than last year

41% of respondents state that they will travel in the next 3 months

54% will travel in the next 6 months

60% will travel in the next 9 months

2) Celebrate the faster pace of vaccinations! Respondents said they will feel comfortable traveling and visiting businesses when at least 59% of the population has been vaccinated. The new faster vaccination rollout [plan](#) may allow us to see much stronger summer tourism.

3) Plan for vaccinated visitors. Over 63% of respondents stated that once they are vaccinated they will feel comfortable engaging in tourism activities, including seeing live performances, attending festivals, and enjoying indoor attractions. The faster the vaccine rollout, the faster visitation will increase.

4) Offer family fun. Since many family gatherings over the holidays were curtailed, the number one type of travel planned for this spring/summer, outside of day trips, is family travel.



For Accommodations | February-March 2021

5) Help the unemployed. 61% said they'd be more willing to patronize hotels that provide aid to those who've lost their jobs due to COVID.

6) Offer promotions for those who have been vaccinated. 60% of respondents would favor a hotel that rewards vaccinated guests.



For Restaurants | February-March 2021

7) Promote that your staff is vaccinated (and still wears masks). If your team has been vaccinated, let your guests know. 63% of respondents favor restaurants that tout this fact.

For Attractions, Events & Retail | February-March 2021



8) Host outdoor events with strict social distancing. 72% of respondents find this highly compelling.

9) Create a friendly competition with like businesses in your area. This trend is gaining traction as businesses challenge consumers to determine “who has the best.” It gives customers a fun reason to support local players and drives business to all participating companies.

10) Retailers, find ways to incorporate the digital world. Even as the pandemic slows, consumers still want the virtual conveniences they are now used to. Find ways to encourage engagement with your digital platforms to enhance the in-store experience.

FRIENDLY RESTAURANT COMPETITION

'Burger Week' Coming in March

Owensboro, Kentucky found a creative way to encourage restaurant patronage this spring—a week-long burger competition.

Who makes the best burger in the county? The Owensboro-Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau plans to find out during Owensboro Burger Week in early March. The competition is open to any restaurant, and every restaurant participating in the contest will sell their burger for \$6, including tax. Throughout the week, a panel of local celebrities and food critics will judge the burgers without knowing what restaurant the burgers belong to. The scores will then be tallied to select an overall winner who will receive a traveling trophy and bragging rights for "Burger of the Year," and patrons who share their burger experiences on social media will receive a prize as well.

The week-long competition was created in attempts to support the hospitality industry during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, boosting local patronage and social media engagement. Other major cities across the country celebrate their own versions of 'Burger Week,' but Owensboro wanted an excuse to celebrate their very own incredible burger options with this friendly competition.



Key Insight

Seek out ways to implement friendly competition that highlights local talent or creativity and encourages patronage and participation.

What sets you apart from the competition? Create a challenge for your business and other local competition to get the creative juices flowing and interact with local consumers. Not only could you earn bragging rights, but new customers and new offerings.



Key Insight

How has your area banded together during this time? Creating safe events that are tailored to supporting the community and the businesses and people within it not only can boost business patronage, but area morale.

EVENT STRUCTURE EVOLUTION

Team-up for spread-out events

While events have been few and far between during the COVID-19 pandemic, those that are managing to take place have a common theme—decentralization.

Most events that have been planned and executed within the past several months have been thanks to local organizations and leaders that have stepped up to support local businesses and consumers in a way best suited for their community. These events, once held in one place to accommodate many people, are now spreading out to help limit crowds and keep event-goers safe.

Here are a few examples of decentralized events across the country:

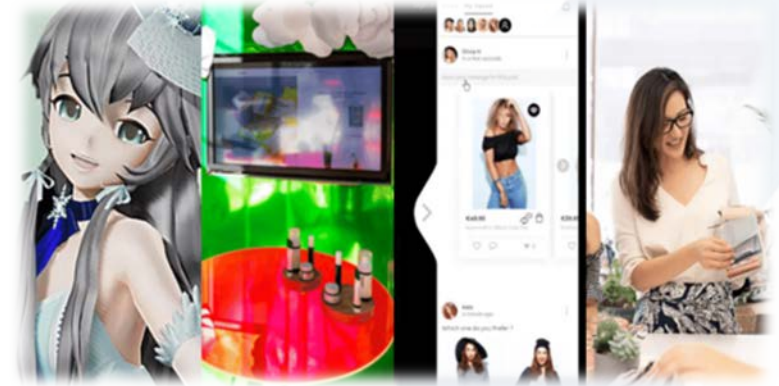
- ✓ **No Boat Show-Boat Show in Somerset, Kentucky**—In the place of one centralized boat show, boat fans can visit the showrooms of local water-related vendors to see all of the boating-related business that the area has to offer.
- ✓ **ArtsFest in Stuart, Florida**—Typically an in-person event, this demonstration and support of local artists is being held virtually to continue keeping the arts alive and well within the community.

UP AND COMING RETAIL TRENDS

7 Innovations Shaping New Retail Reality

The COVID-19 pandemic forced retailers to consider brand new approaches to sales and engagement. Now more than ever, retailers need to be investing in understanding the innovation landscape that will frame the future of retail. Those who do so will thrive now and even after the pandemic is behind us. Below are seven retail innovations that highlight the acceleration of trends that were already gaining traction prior to COVID-19.

1. **Virtual live-streamers**—a popular trend used by e-commerce platforms in China that uses 3D computer-generated models using motion graphics to live-stream.
2. **Blending digital and physical worlds**—a brand new social shopping experience where the destination store provides a blend of in-real-life shopping with online interaction and special features.
3. **Virtual storefronts**—online platform that allows shoppers to virtually walk down the street and choose which store they want to shop at before redirecting them to a specific website.
4. **Checkout app replicating in-store experience**—apps that provide in-store shoppers with additional product information allowing shoppers to check-out without having to interact with a store associate.
5. **In-house supply chain software**—customers are more conscious of where products are sourced from, so retailers will need to be more transparent about their global supply chains.
6. **Shopping from home turned group activity**—allows online shoppers to connect with friends for input and advice before making purchases.
7. **Chatbots help determine perfect shopping times**—using real-time data and customer transaction numbers, this chatbot can determine the quietest time for shoppers to visit stores in person.

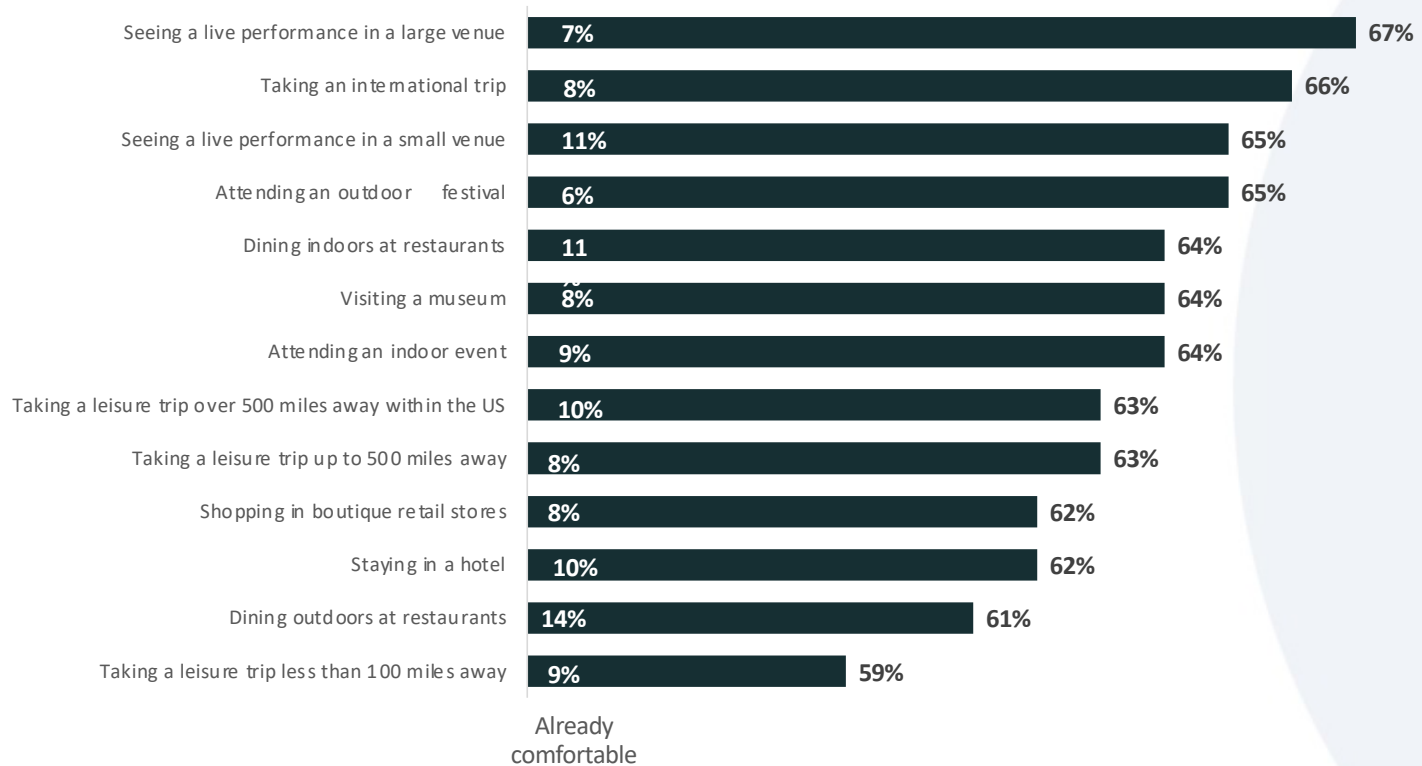


Key Insight

Was your retail establishment keeping up with the latest trends pre-pandemic? As we've seen, retailers that struggled to keep up then and struggle to innovate now are going to be left behind. While some of these innovations will be costly or inconvenient to implement, they could potentially save your business in the long run.

Nearly 60% percent of the U.S. population will need to be vaccinated before New England travelers feel comfortable venturing outside of their homes for fun. However, more than one in four indicate that they are currently comfortable dining outdoors.

Percent of Population Needing Vaccine to Feel Comfortable
% Average

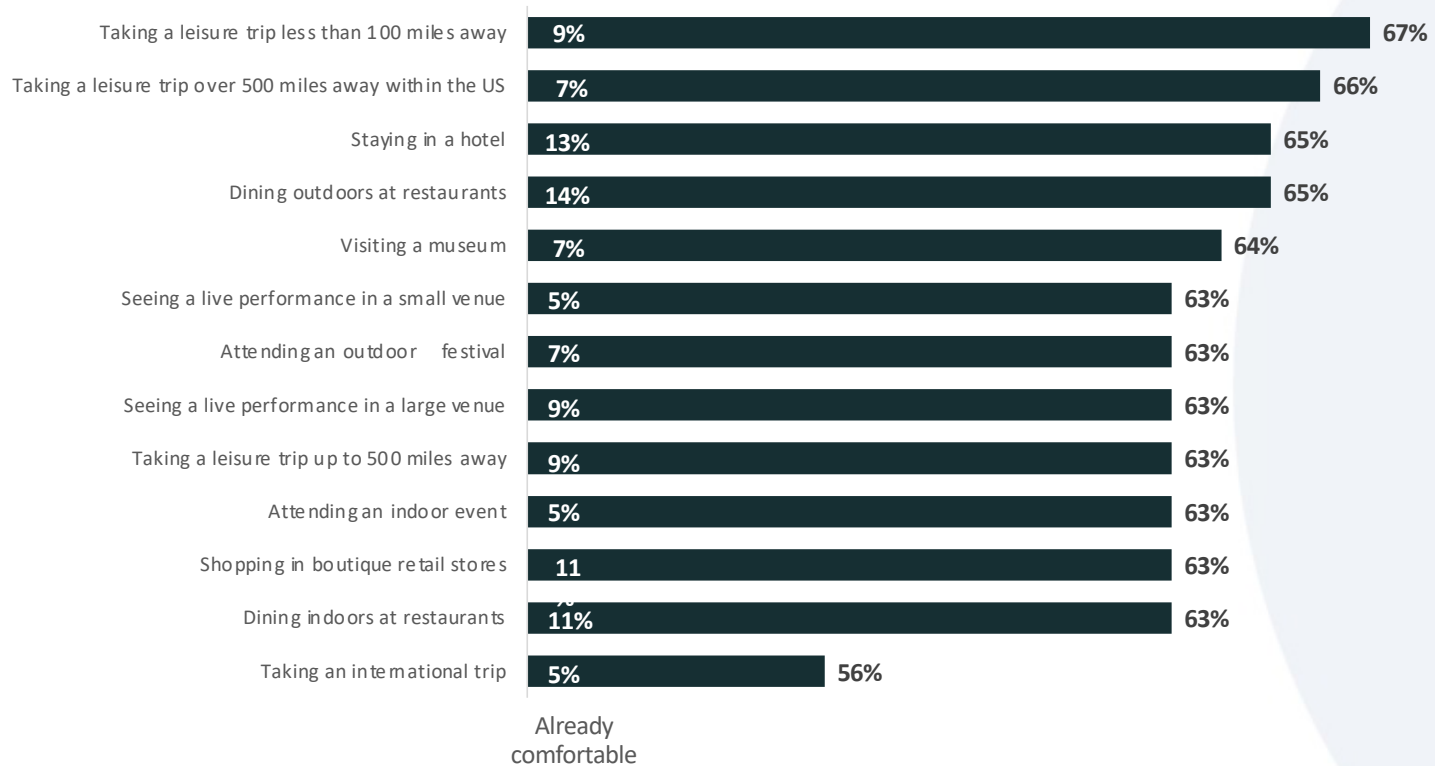


Q15: What percentage of the population needs to have been given the vaccine before you'll feel comfortable doing each of the following?

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL JANUARY RESPONDENTS | N=134

Nearly seven in ten New England travelers indicated that they would feel comfortable traveling within 100 miles of their home shortly after receiving their COVID-19 vaccine, while just over half indicated that they would feel comfortable traveling internationally in that same timeframe.

Feel Comfortable Doing 3 Months After Vaccination
% Average

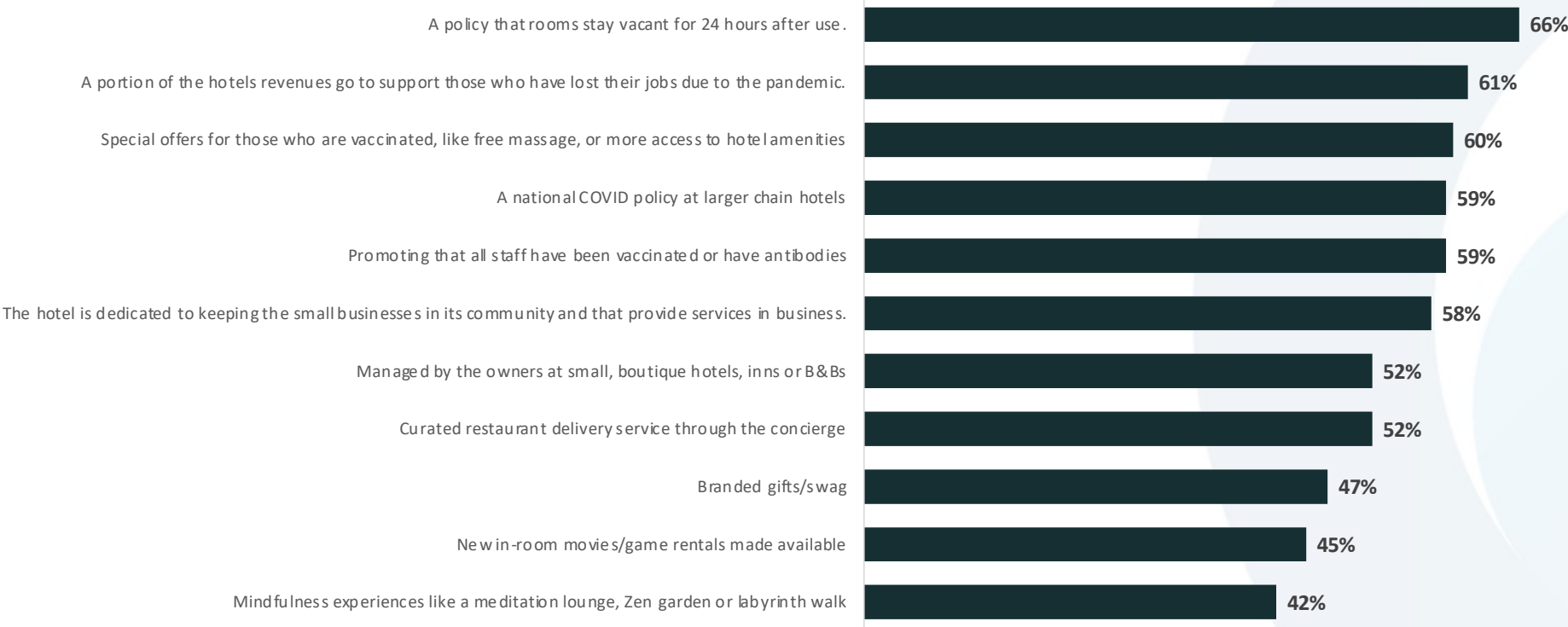


Q16: Once you are vaccinated, how comfortable will you feel doing the following in the next 3 months:

RESPONDENT BASE:
JANUARY RESPONDENTS PLANNING TO RECEIVE VACCINE | N=117

New England travelers would be more willing to patronize hotels that implement 24-hour room vacancy policies in between uses and special offers for those who have been vaccinated.

Impact on Patronizing Hotel
% Somewhat/Significant Increase



Q17: Please rate how much, if at all, the following you increase or decrease your interest in patronizing a particular hotel in the next few months.

New England travelers would be more willing to patronize restaurants that support those who have lost jobs due to the pandemic, as well as special offers to those who have been vaccinated.

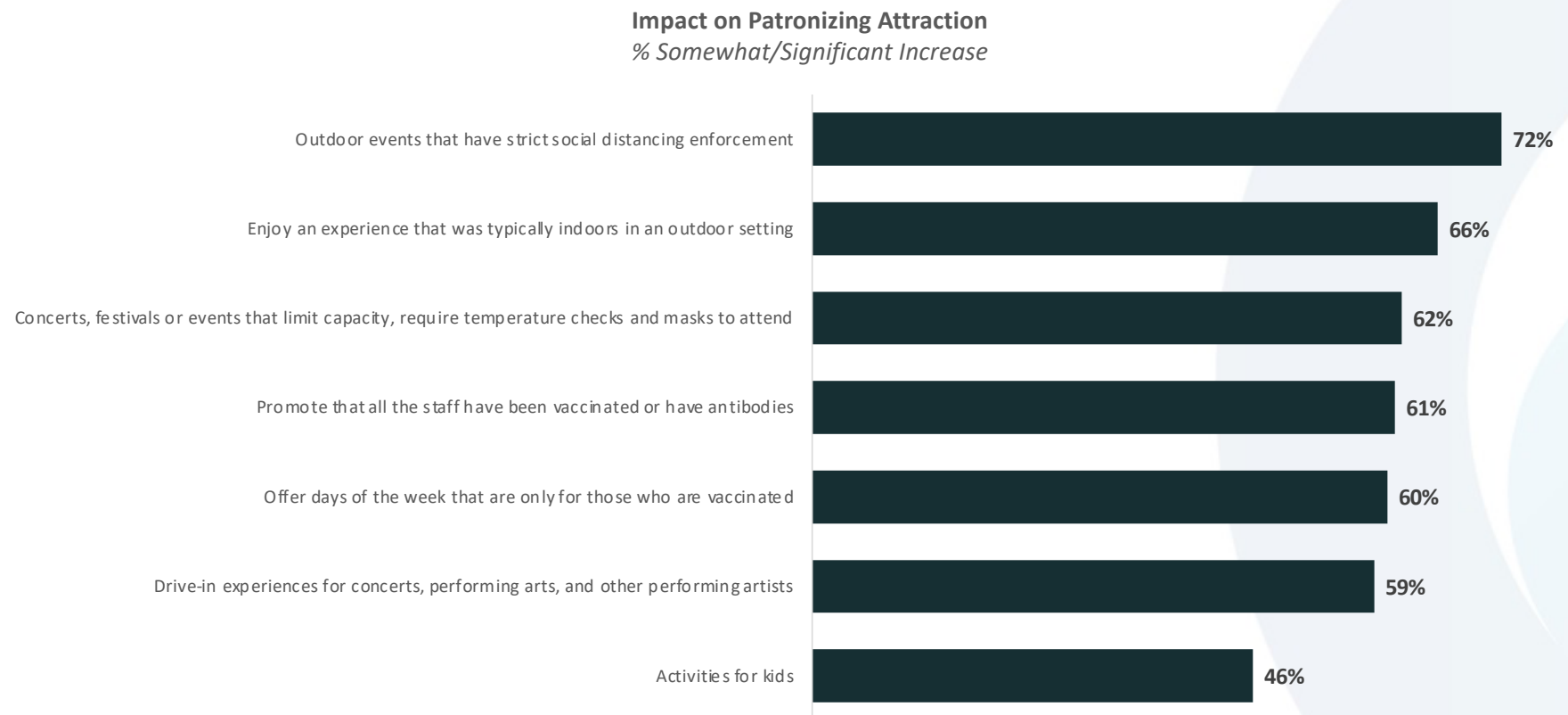
Impact on Patronizing Restaurant
% Somewhat/Significant Increase



Q18: Please rate how much, if at all, the following you increase or decrease your interest in patronizing a particular restaurant in the next few months.

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL JANUARY RESPONDENTS | N=134

While social distancing outdoors is the most ideal action that attractions can do to encourage patronage, limiting capacity, checking temperatures and making masks mandatory are also important.



Q19: Please rate how much, if at all, the following you increase or decrease your interest in patronizing a particular attraction in the next few months.

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL JANUARY RESPONDENTS | N=134

Retail establishments can best encourage patronage by offering online or curbside shopping options, as well as encouraging and promoting staff vaccination.

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Impact on Patronizing Retail Establishment *% Somewhat/Significant Increase*

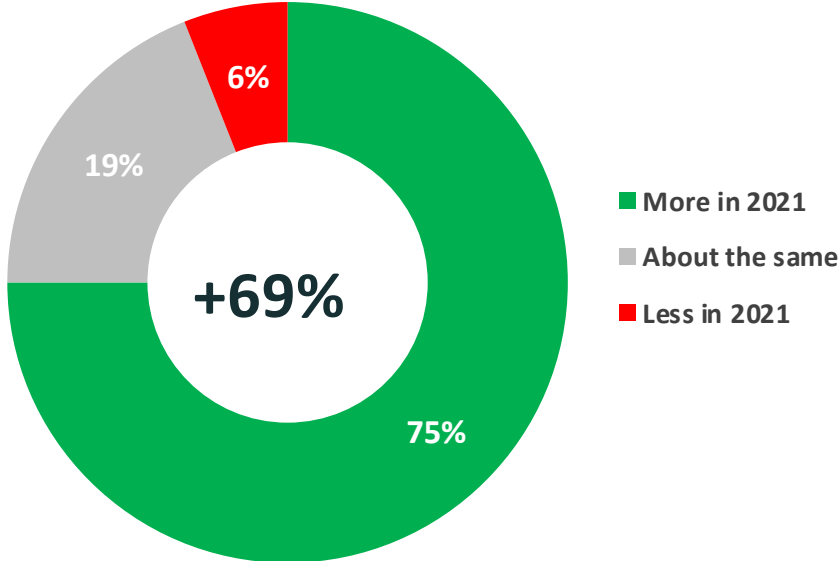


Q20: Please rate how much, if at all, the following you increase or decrease your interest in patronizing a particular retail establishment in the next few months.

RESPONDENT BASE: ALL JANUARY RESPONDENTS | N=134

Three-quarters of New England travelers plan to travel more this year than they did last year.

2021 Travel vs. 2020 Travel



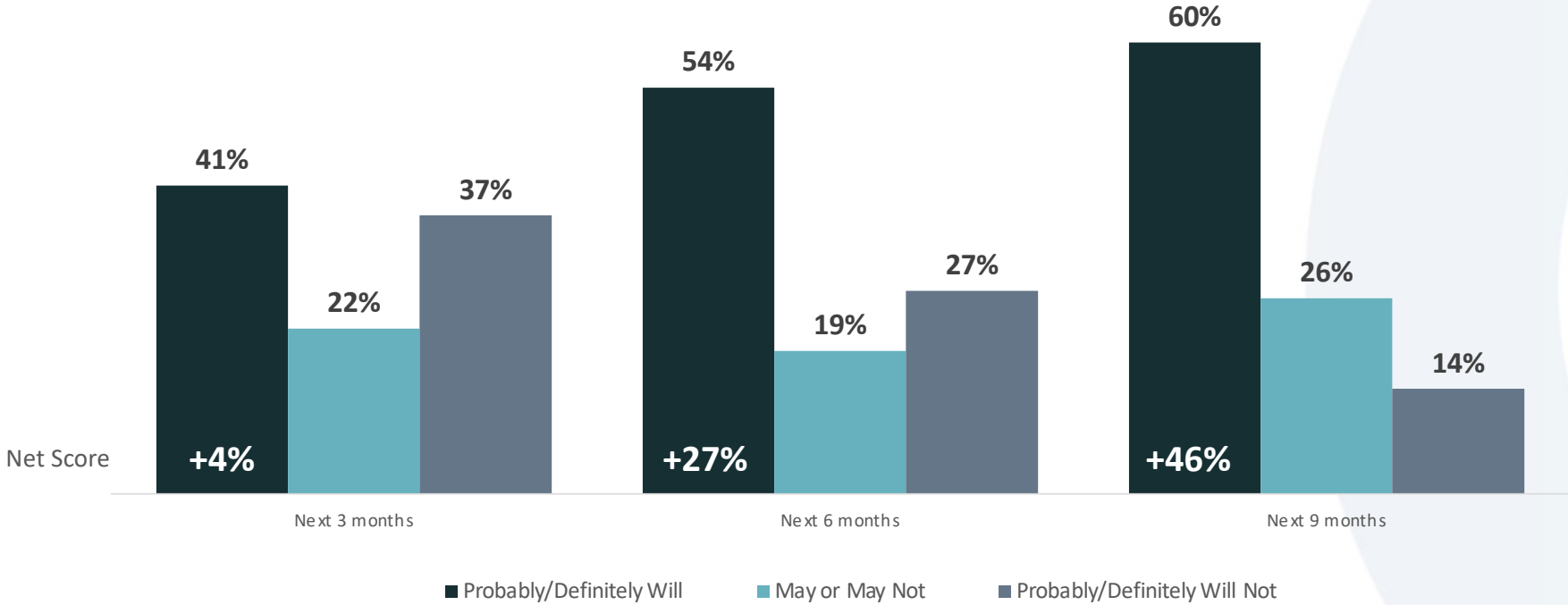
Key Insight

Pent-up travel demand and the beginning of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution has many travelers making travel plans for this year—more than they did last year. While the travel industry is far from returning to normalcy, destinations and attractions will need to be prepared for the upcoming influx of travelers.

Q23: Overall, which of the following statements best expresses how your plans for engaging in travel and entertainment activities is likely to change in 2021 compared to 2020?

Unsurprisingly, New England travelers have a higher intent to travel in nine months than they do in the next three. However, more than one in ten travelers indicated that they have no intentions of traveling even in nine months' time.

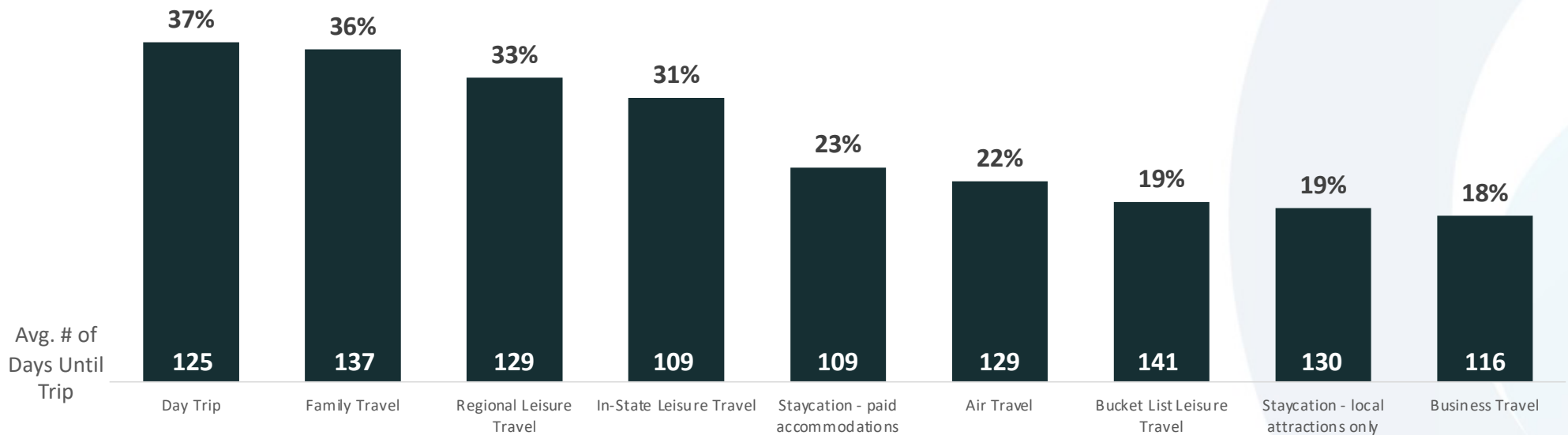
Visitation Outlook



Q22: Please indicate your intent to visit restaurants, hotels, attractions, events or travel for a leisure trip in Connecticut in the...

When it comes to anticipated spring/summer travel plans, day trips are the most popular, followed by family travel, regional leisure travel and in-state leisure travel. However, those with in-state leisure travel plans will be traveling sooner.

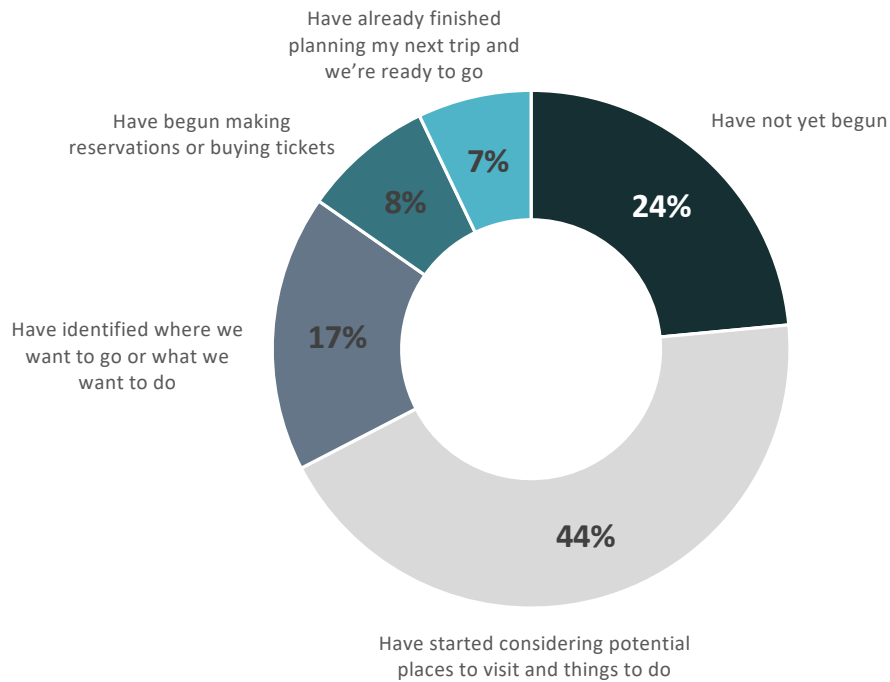
Trips Planned For This Spring/Summer



Q25: Which of the following types of trips do you plan to take this spring/summer? (check all)
Q26: When do you anticipate taking this trip?

When it comes to future travel plans, nearly half of travelers fall into the second stage of trip planning—considering potential places and things to do. Less than one-third of travelers have even identified where they would like to go or what they would like to do.

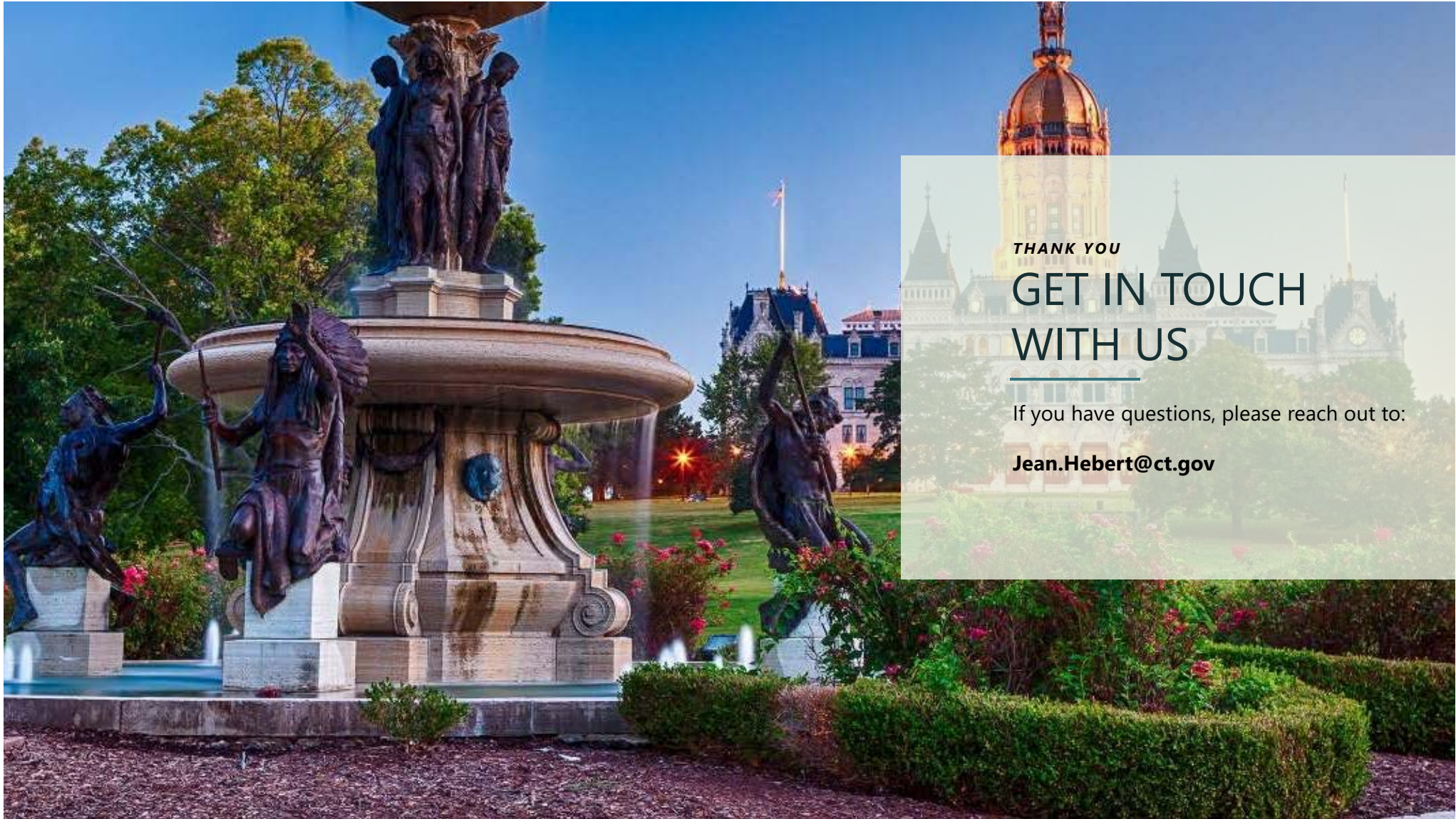
Travel Planning Process



Key Insight

Consumers plan to travel this year, but likely haven't yet decided where to go or what to do. This is the opportune time to sell your state, cities and businesses as the ideal travel destination for 2021 travel. Potential travelers want to travel somewhere they feel safe and can have responsible fun. Those who have decided on a destination are likely still deciding how they plan to spend their time while traveling. Make sure they know what your destination has to offer.

Q30: Where are you in the travel planning process for your anticipated Connecticut day trip, overnight trip or leisure activities?



THANK YOU

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

If you have questions, please reach out to:

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