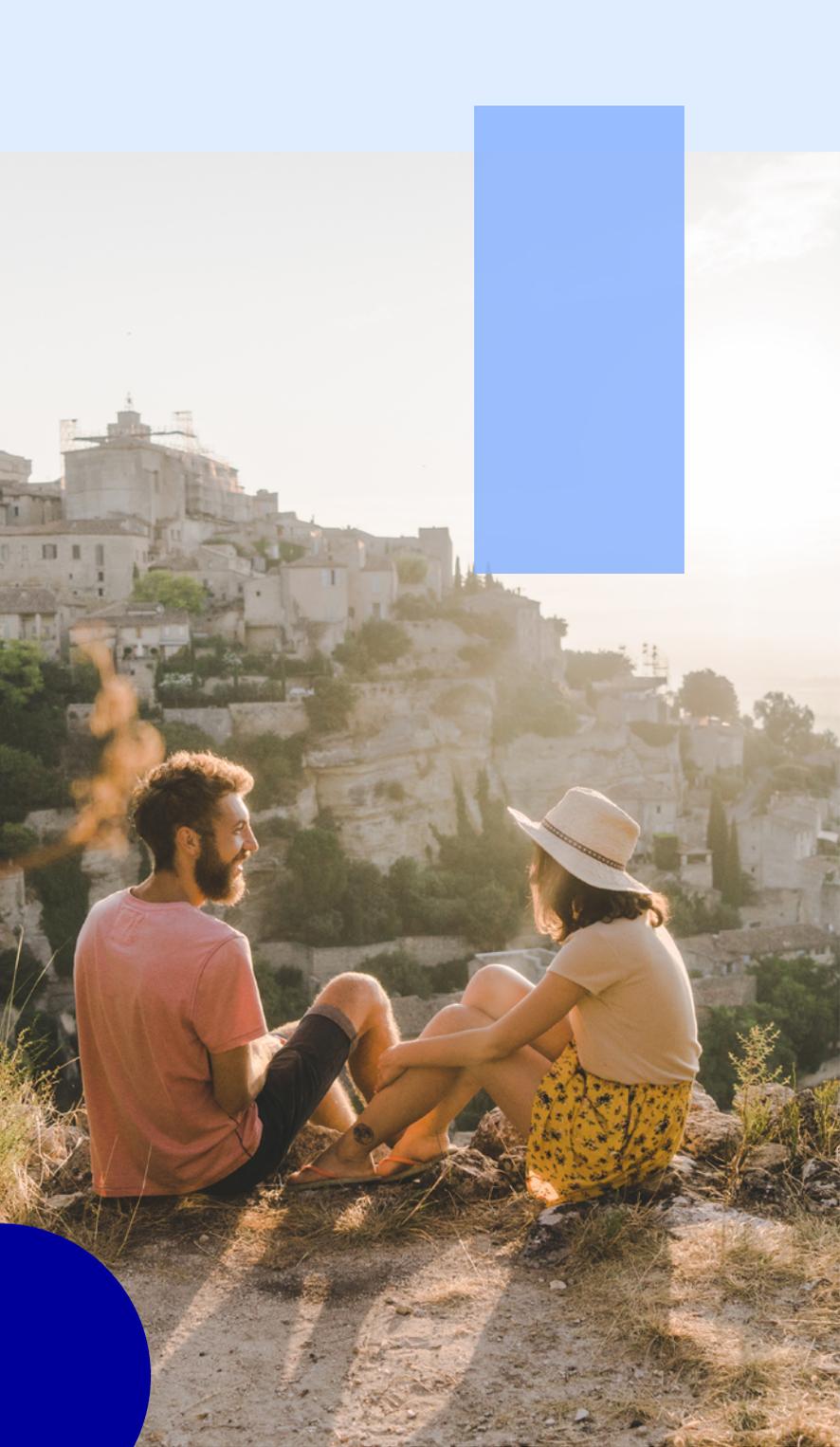


# 2023

## TRAVELER VALUE INDEX

The gap between  
traveler expectations and  
industry perceptions



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# 01

## A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Travel is a force for good — it broadens horizons and bridges divides. It creates connections and jobs around the globe. Our industry has never been more important to the world.

To help you, our partners, build your businesses and delight travelers, we invest in market-leading research to understand travelers' preferences and needs.

You have always wanted to know as much as you can about travelers, your market, and the industry changes that impact your business. In mid-2020, this need for information and data was even more urgent. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we shifted our research strategy to give you in-depth and current insights on emerging traveler behaviors and expectations resulting from the extraordinary circumstances of 2020.

Now, as travel returns in much of the world, we've examined which changes are permanent shifts — and which are temporary. For the first time, we've asked both travelers and industry professionals like yourself to weigh in. The results paint a

picture of where the industry and travelers see things the same way, and where there are disconnects — and therefore opportunities — to better understand each other. Ultimately, we hope these insights are useful to you as you welcome and service travelers — because when the traveler wins, we win together.

We're all evolving with the rapid changes in travel behavior. And as we continue to do so, I'm confident that there is a bright future ahead for travel.

**Ariane Gorin**  
**President, Expedia for Business**  
**Expedia Group**





# 02

## OVERVIEW



In previous research, you've heard directly from consumers about their travel activity and their expectations for their travel experiences. In this report, we also wanted to hear from travel professionals — the hotel and vacation rental owners, airline revenue managers, destination marketers, travel loyalty program managers, and others around the world — who have kept the industry humming.

How do you, your peers, and the broader industry perceive different challenges and opportunities? Has your business recovered from the pandemic only to now be navigating challenges that come with inflation? How have you pivoted your approach to the travel experience you provide? How do your travelers perceive that experience?

To answer these questions and more, we partnered with Wakefield Research to conduct a study that included both consumers and industry professionals. We then paired those insights with first-party data from across our travel marketplace.

What emerges is a snapshot of today's traveler preferences — what has been permanently changed by the pandemic, what were temporary reactions, and what is still evolving. Despite lingering staffing and service challenges and newer concerns around inflation, there is reason to be optimistic. People see travel as an important priority in their lives, business and international trips are resuming, and those of us in travel are working together to deliver great traveler experiences. The future is bright.

Expedia Group  
data from

and

**1 billion**

trips in the last  
decade

**11,000**

people

**1,100**

industry  
professionals

**100M+**

unique monthly  
visitors

across

**200+**

travel websites  
around the world<sup>1</sup>

surveyed in

**11**

markets

<sup>1</sup>Expedia Group, 2022

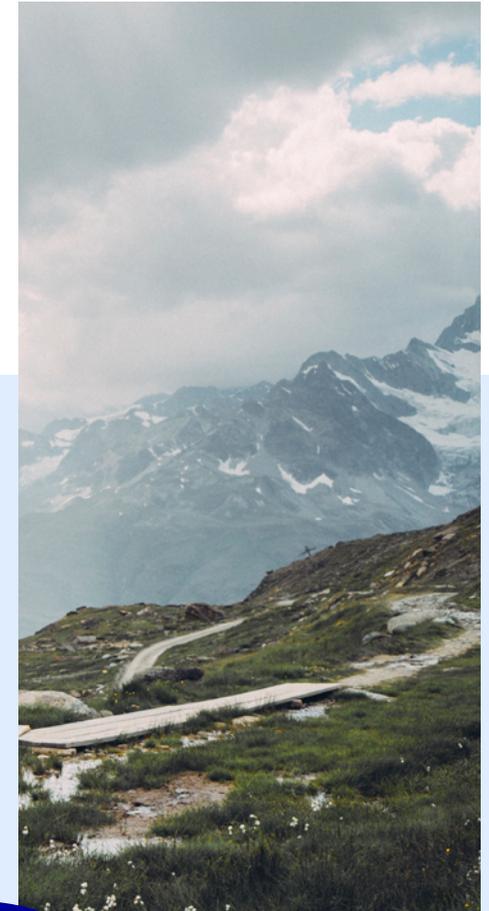
# 03

## PERMANENT PREFERENCES



The pandemic forced us to shift gears — whether as travel providers or as travelers ourselves. People are more hesitant to commit to plans and have heightened expectations of travel experiences. The industry has yet to fully recover from staffing and supply chain challenges.

As we look beyond the pandemic, what traveler behaviors are here to stay?





# 1.

## Absence made the appetite for travel stronger

Not being able to travel reminded us all how important it is — for connecting with friends and family, for relaxing, for exploring new places and cultures. As travel reopened, people were eager to make up for lost time. Though many resumed some regular travel in 2021, the desire to travel continues to increase as we head into 2023.

**Nearly half (46%) of people say travel is more important to them now than it was pre-pandemic.**

And they're putting their money where their mouth is: while 31% say their travel budget will be the same as it was last year, 43% are

upping their budget for the coming year. The amount people travel is also increasing: 79% say they plan to take a leisure trip in the next year, up from 76% just a few months prior, with the average person saying they plan to take two leisure trips.<sup>2</sup> This demand is reflected in data from across our travel websites as well.

In the second quarter, between April and June of 2022, lodging bookings were the highest in Expedia Group history: gross bookings were up 8% from the second quarter of 2019.<sup>3</sup> Vacation rental demand in 2021 surpassed 2019 numbers and continues to grow. In 2022, demand for all lines of lodging, transportation, and activities has been consistently higher than 2021.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Expedia Group, [Traveler Value Index: Spring 2022 Outlook](#)

<sup>3</sup>Expedia Group, Q2 Earnings Release, May 2022

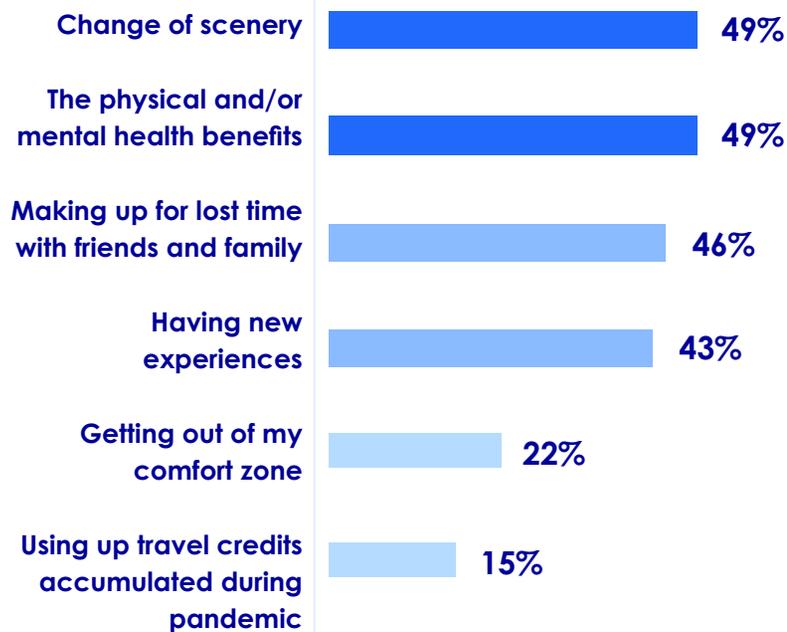
<sup>4</sup>Expedia Group, global bookings by line of business, January 2019-September 2022

Our search data gives us a good indication of what is to come as well. Traveler searches for car and vacation rentals on our travel websites were above 2019 search volumes in the first three quarters of 2022, and searches for cruises and activities saw the highest percent growth year-over-year, compared to lodging and other methods of transportation.<sup>5</sup>

As people have resumed traveling, their first priority has often been to reunite with friends and family. In earlier research, when we asked about reasons for travel, time with friends and family was at the top of the list.

Over 2022, additional reasons for travel emerged. Today, many want to prioritize relaxation, wellness, and new experiences. To cope with the world around us, self-care is now non-negotiable.

### Since the start of the pandemic, which of the following have become more important when consumers make travel decisions?



## Travel allows us to invest in our mental and physical well-being and go on new adventures.

The motivations for travel may vary by individual, but the trend is clear: people value travel more than ever before and will continue to make time and save money for it.



<sup>5</sup>Expedia Group, global bookings by line of business, January 2019-September 2022



## 2.

### Travelers will vote with their values

Travelers weigh many variables when they are booking elements of a trip: price, convenience, safety, flexibility, and more.

Though the importance of each fluctuated throughout the pandemic, one thing hasn't changed: travelers prefer to book with providers that align with their personal values.

Adding to pressures caused by the pandemic, communities around the world are navigating complex and challenging social and political issues — the severity of which seems to have increased over the last few years. One in four consumers say political instability is impacting their travel plans in the next 12 months, with this felt most strongly by those in Germany and South Africa.

An outcome of this turmoil: your company's mission, values, and stance on certain issues play a role in whether travelers want to book with you. Certain factors like price may have more of an impact on traveler decision-making, but, when it comes down to it, whether a brand aligns with their personal values or not can be a dealmaker (or breaker) for many people.

**70%**  
of consumers  
say yes<sup>7</sup>

Would people choose a travel destination, accommodation, or transportation option that was more inclusive, even if it was more expensive than other options?

**64%**  
of industry  
professionals  
say yes



## The importance of inclusion

Travel connects us; it breaks down borders. Inclusive travel means making travel accessible to people of all abilities, backgrounds, and identities.

Our research over the last few years repeatedly shows that people are seeking out businesses that are welcoming and accessible: 70% of people say they are more likely to choose travel options that are more inclusive, even if that comes at a higher cost.<sup>6</sup> Industry professionals acknowledge this preference, with 64% indicating that they believe their customers will choose travel options that are more inclusive, even if they are more expensive.

Nearly eight out of ten (78%) people say they have made a travel choice based on promotions or ads they feel represent them through messaging or visuals. For millennials, that figure is even higher — 84% have made a travel choice based on representation in advertising.<sup>8</sup>

Despite this, only half (52%) of consumers see options that are inclusive of all types of travelers when booking a trip, demonstrating an opportunity for those in the travel industry to fill this gap.<sup>9</sup> Travel businesses that don't prioritize inclusive practices may lose travelers from key demographics. Many say they are taking action: three in five organizations (60%) made changes in the last year to ensure their services are inclusive and accessible, and an additional 21% have plans to do so.



You are the **intersection** of culture and commerce, whether you are aware of it or not. Your open doors are not just to your home or your property, but also to the **experiences and cultures** that everyone who comes through your doors is bringing with them at any point in time.

**Evita Robinson**  
NOMADNESS Travel Tribe  
Vrbo Virtual Partner Summit, 2022





## Spotlight on sustainability

Similarly, sustainable travel is top of mind as travel returns to — and in some cases and places, surpasses — pre-pandemic levels. How can those of us in the industry help people travel responsibly?

According to our recent Sustainable Travel Study, **90% of consumers are looking for sustainable options when traveling.**<sup>10</sup>

Data from reviews across our traveler brand websites shows terms related to sustainability and eco-friendliness being mentioned twice as often in January 2022 as they were in January 2021.<sup>11</sup>

People value these options during their trips. Half are willing to pay more for transportation, activities, and lodging if the option was more sustainable, though many agree that it costs too much to be more

sustainable when traveling. Though some people may not want to compromise on cost, more say they are willing to sacrifice convenience and comfort if they know they are making decisions that are ultimately better for our planet.<sup>12</sup>

If you offer sustainable options, activities, or amenities, make sure to let travelers know: two in three consumers want more sustainability information from lodging and transportation providers to help them make informed decisions — a clear opportunity for travel businesses.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10, 12-13</sup>Expedia Group Media Solutions, [Sustainable Travel Study](#), 2022

<sup>11</sup>Expedia Group, traveler reviews data, January 2021-January 2022

Sustainability is also a priority for the industry. In fact, it is tied with marketing as the highest area of investment for 2023, with one in five industry professionals saying sustainability will be their top investment priority next year.

### Types of sustainability information consumers want to see during their trip planning process.<sup>14</sup>



Recommendations for locally owned businesses/restaurants



Transportation options with lower environmental impact



Information on how to best engage with local cultures and communities



Environmentally conscious lodging/accommodations



Recommendations for destinations that support indigenous cultures and heritages

### Top five most prominently mentioned sustainability-related amenities in traveler reviews:<sup>15</sup>

1

Electric car charging stations

2

Solar energy

3

Recycling

4

Elimination of single-use plastics

5

Eco-friendly LED lighting

<sup>14</sup>Expedia Group Media Solutions, [Sustainable Travel Study](#), 2022

<sup>15</sup>Expedia Group, traveler reviews data, January-September 2022

Businesses in the travel space should continue to invest in inclusive and sustainable practices — to both attract today’s travelers and protect travel for generations to come.

## What is your organization doing currently?



Reducing our overall environmental impact



Offering options for buying carbon offsets/carbon offsetting



Working directly with and promoting local businesses



Working directly with and promoting local cultures/communities



Adding or updating offerings to be more inclusive



Improving our accessibility



None of these





Every industry player needs to be thinking about how to put the **local community first**. If we do that, we're going to see some progress toward **long-term sustainability**.

**Peter Debrine**  
**UNESCO**  
**Powering Travel Expedia Group Podcast, 2022**





### 3. Despite fewer barriers to travel, travelers continue to demand flexibility

In all its waves, COVID-19 made it challenging for the public and industry professionals alike to predict how travel will change in the coming months — and coming years.

Many travel providers implemented more flexible rates and reservation policies to adapt to unpredictability and to give travelers the assurance to book.

**In our research, nearly all organizations (96%) say they offer refundable services or credits — with most of them (77%) first introducing some of their refundable offerings because of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

In addition to the increase in demand, there are other signals that people feel more confident booking travel in the current environment. They are comfortable booking five months in advance on average, up from the four months reported in April 2022 research.<sup>16</sup>

Last year, we introduced the [Traveler Value Index](#), a measure of what consumers value when booking travel. We found that consumers valued full refunds and enhanced cleaning practices above all other travel considerations —even price.<sup>17</sup>

Despite increased confidence, people still want to see flexible options. In our latest research, the desire for enhanced cleaning practices dropped in the ranking,

but the importance of refunds remains, ranked second behind pricing.

Being able to change bookings without a fee or penalty, another way to provide flexibility to travelers, was again ranked in the top four values by consumers, demonstrating the importance consumers place on options to easily adjust their travel plans.

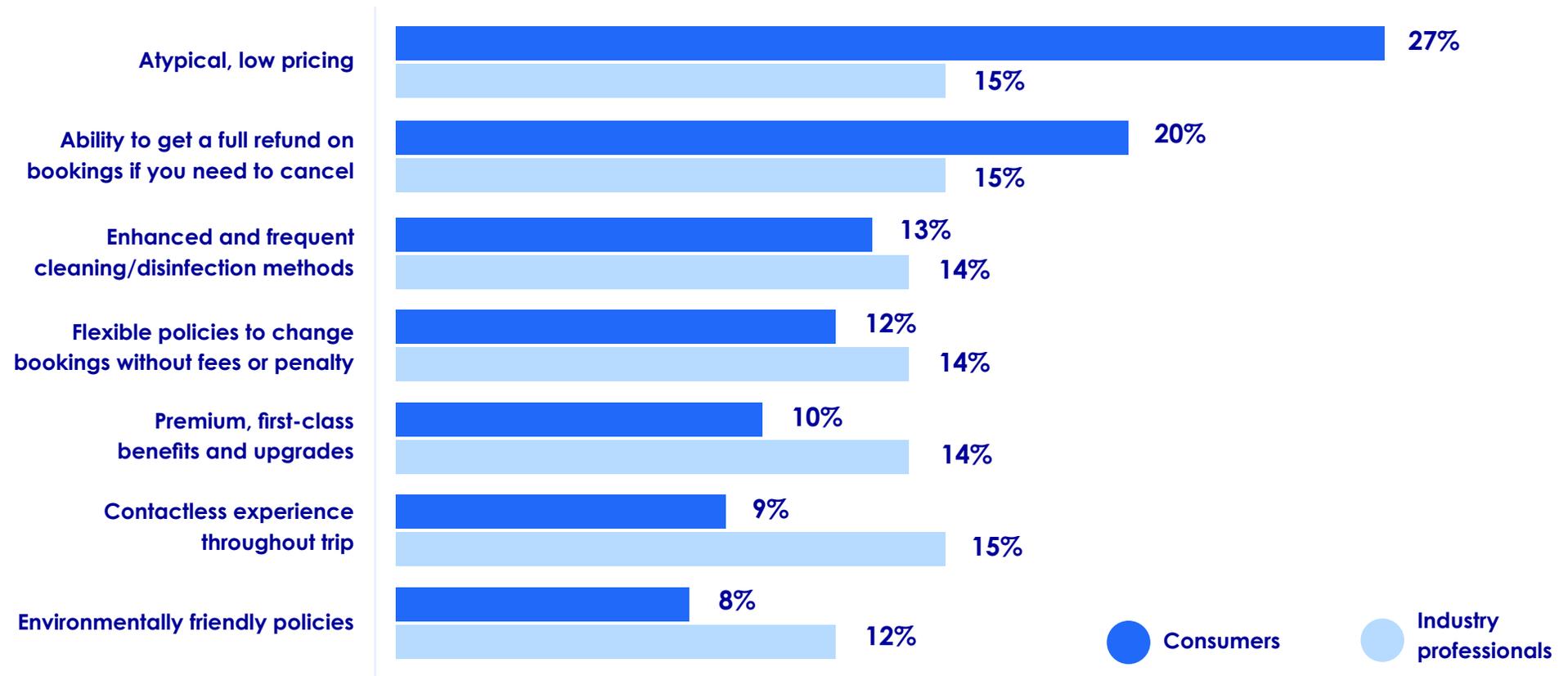
#### **Our annual Traveler Value Index shows how consumers rank the following:**

- **Ability to get a full refund on cancelled bookings**
- **Atypical, low pricing**
- **Flexible policies to change bookings without fees or penalty**
- **Enhanced and frequent cleaning/disinfection methods**
- **Contactless experience throughout trip**
- **Premium, first-class benefits and upgrades**
- **Environmentally friendly policies**

<sup>16</sup>Expedia Group, [Traveler Value Index: Spring 2022 Outlook](#)

<sup>17</sup>Expedia Group, [Traveler Value Index, 2021](#)

## What is the #1 consideration that people value most when booking travel?



In this research, we also asked industry professionals what they thought consumers valued most. On average, industry professionals say that consumers value these considerations more or less equally — but consumers had clear preferences.

Industry professionals rank refunds as important to consumers — though they are underestimating how important. While nearly all industry professionals we surveyed say they currently offer refundable services, credits, or other flexible options, only 63% said they would

continue providing these moving forward. While some in the industry may wonder if traveler desire in flexibility will wane post-pandemic, our research shows otherwise.

Those who have reverted or are considering reverting to strict policies may lose out. Around half of consumers say they would never book non-refundable lodging (47%) or transportation (51%) domestically, even if it was discounted. Even more would refuse non-refundable lodging (57%) and transportation (59%) when traveling internationally.

The preference for flexible travel options increased at the beginning of the pandemic and has not waned — showing up consistently year-over-year and month-over-month in our research. Along with the previous two trends, we expect this to be a permanent shift in traveler expectations — lasting beyond the pandemic itself.

# 04

## TEMPORARY TRENDS



Not all pandemic pivots are permanent — some are temporary responses to an extreme situation.

The pandemic has evolved. Vaccines have become available, most countries have reopened, and businesses have adjusted. Certain changes during the pandemic — like the drop in business and international travel and heightened cleanliness and health standards — will return to pre-pandemic preferences and behavior.

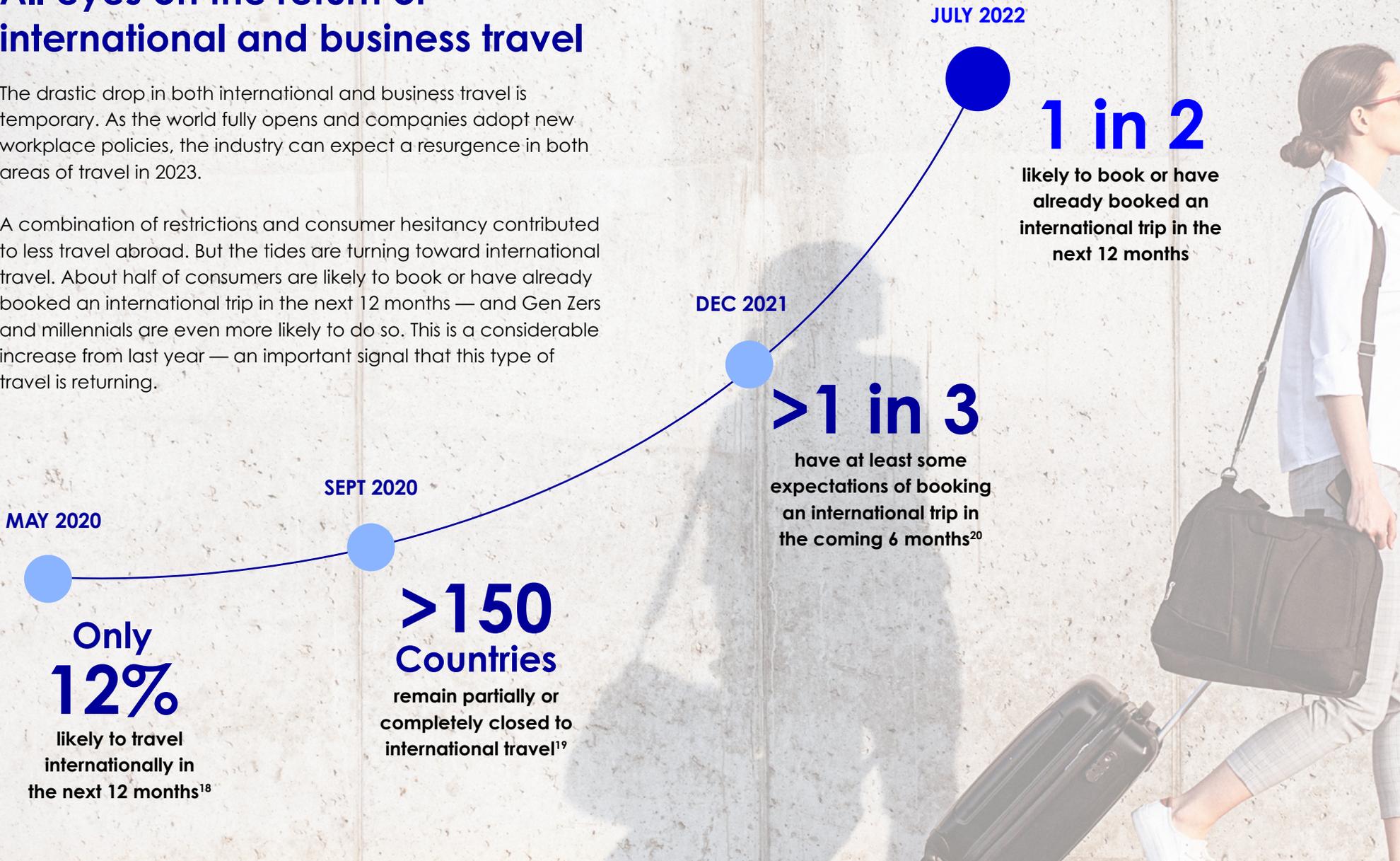


# 4.

## All eyes on the return of international and business travel

The drastic drop in both international and business travel is temporary. As the world fully opens and companies adopt new workplace policies, the industry can expect a resurgence in both areas of travel in 2023.

A combination of restrictions and consumer hesitancy contributed to less travel abroad. But the tides are turning toward international travel. About half of consumers are likely to book or have already booked an international trip in the next 12 months — and Gen Zers and millennials are even more likely to do so. This is a considerable increase from last year — an important signal that this type of travel is returning.



<sup>18-19</sup>Expedia Group, [What Travelers Want, 2020](#)

<sup>20</sup>Expedia Group, Traveler Value Index: 2022 Outlook

In terms of destinations, travel patterns today closely resemble those from 2019. These were the top 10 destinations for travelers from each super-region in the beginning of 2019. The icon next to a destination denotes when it was outside of the super-region, indicating international travel. People from Latin America (LATAM) were doing more international travel than those from other regions.

## Top booked destinations JANUARY-MARCH 2019

### From the US and Canada to...

NEW YORK  
 LAS VEGAS  
 ORLANDO  
 LOS ANGELES  
 CANCUN ✈️  
 SAN FRANCISCO  
 LONDON ✈️  
 CHICAGO  
 MIAMI  
 HONOLULU

### From LATAM to...

NEW YORK ✈️  
 MEXICO CITY  
 PARIS ✈️  
 CANCUN  
 SAO PAULO  
 ORLANDO ✈️  
 LAS VEGAS ✈️  
 LONDON ✈️  
 MADRID ✈️  
 ROME ✈️

### From EMEA to...

LONDON  
 NEW YORK ✈️  
 DUBAI  
 PARIS  
 AMSTERDAM  
 BARCELONA  
 ROME  
 BERLIN  
 TOKYO ✈️  
 ISTANBUL

### From APAC to...

TOKYO  
 HONOLULU ✈️  
 BANGKOK  
 SEOUL  
 OSAKA  
 TAIPEI  
 SINGAPORE  
 LONDON ✈️  
 HONG KONG  
 PARIS ✈️

Fast forward two years to early 2021 and the picture shifts quite a bit. New destinations appear (noted by the shaded boxes), including more beach locations, but this primarily shows travel within the same super-region. Travelers from LATAM were still traveling outside of their region more than others, though not quite as far. Travelers from the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region seemed to be doing the least international travel, as the region was the most impacted by the pandemic.

## Top booked destinations JANUARY-MARCH 2021



Destination outside of this super-region

Change from 2019

Looking at our latest data, many of those shaded boxes are gone and more icons have reappeared — this list looks a lot like it did in 2019. The change from 2021 for the APAC region is particularly noticeable — from no travel outside of the region in early 2021 to four cities in the US and western Europe cracking the top ten now.<sup>21</sup>

## Top booked destinations JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022

### From the US and Canada to...

NEW YORK  
 LAS VEGAS  
 LOS ANGELES  
 ORLANDO  
 CHICAGO  
 CANCUN ✈️  
 LONDON ✈️  
 BOSTON  
 SAN FRANCISCO  
 MIAMI

### From LATAM to...

MEXICO CITY  
 NEW YORK ✈️  
 CANCUN  
 SAO PAULO  
 PARIS ✈️  
 RIO DE JANEIRO  
 MADRID ✈️  
 LAS VEGAS ✈️  
 ORLANDO ✈️  
 LONDON ✈️

### From EMEA to...

LONDON  
 NEW YORK ✈️  
 PARIS  
 DUBAI  
 ISTANBUL  
 BARCELONA  
 COPENHAGEN  
 AMSTERDAM  
 BERLIN  
 STOCKHOLM

### From APAC to...

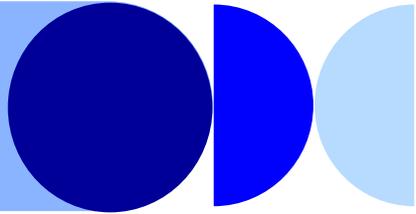
TOKYO  
 SEOUL  
 SINGAPORE  
 LONDON ✈️  
 BANGKOK  
 SYDNEY  
 PARIS ✈️  
 NEW YORK ✈️  
 MELBOURNE  
 HONOLULU ✈️



Destination outside of this super-region

Change from 2019

<sup>21</sup>Expedia Group, top booked destinations, Jan-Mar 2019 vs. Jan-Mar 2021 vs. July-Sept 2022



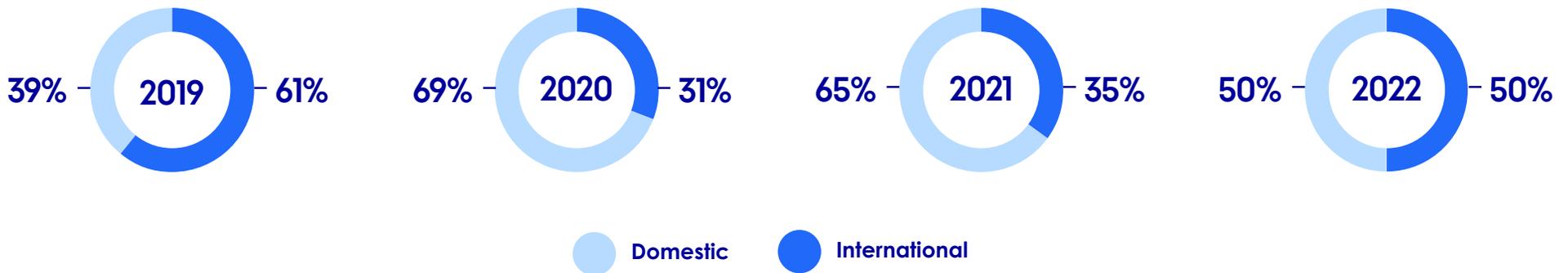
In our research, only 8% of industry professionals say leisure travel is back to pre-pandemic levels. Those in the hotel (39%) and airline (33%) industries and those from Brazil (21%) are most confident that leisure travel has already returned. But nearly two-thirds (63%) expect it to return within two years. International travel is likely to play a large role in closing that gap, particularly for regions most impacted by restrictions.

Interestingly, according to our first-party data, international bookings account for half of all package bookings thus far in 2022 — also a return to pre-pandemic levels — and 20% of those international bookings come from a mobile device.<sup>22</sup>

International travelers have a lot to plan when traveling — making it easy for them to book multiple elements of a trip at once is a great way to attract them.



### Share of package bookings<sup>23</sup>



<sup>22-23</sup>Expedia Group, international vs. domestic package bookings, January 2019-September 2022



The industry is similarly optimistic about business travel: 70% say they expect it to return within two years to pre-pandemic levels. Professionals in the hotel industry are particularly optimistic. Appetite for business travel rapidly accelerated in just the last six months. Earlier this year, a majority said they weren't planning any business travel.

Today, one in three people are — and of those, **many (85%) are looking forward to their next work trip.**

<sup>24</sup>Expedia Group, [What Travelers Want, 2020](#)  
<sup>25</sup>Expedia Group, [Traveler Value Index: 2022 Outlook](#)  
<sup>26</sup>Expedia Group, [Traveler Value Index: Spring 2022 Outlook](#)

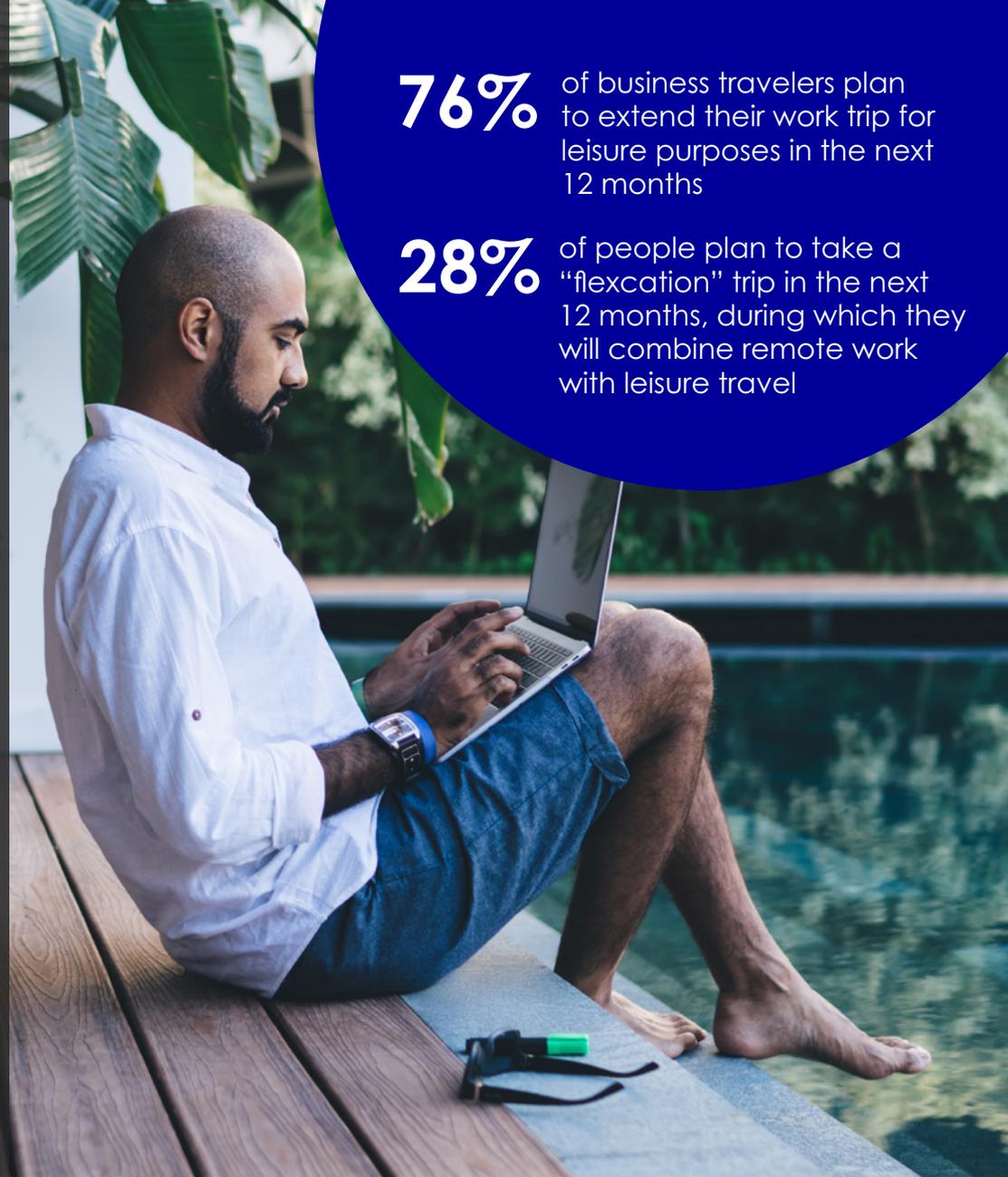
Like travel, the way we work drastically changed because of the pandemic — perhaps forever. As it returns, business travel may look different than it did before, with employees traveling for different reasons than pre-pandemic. Where we may have traveled for in-person job interviews or big team meetings before, we're more likely to travel to maintain customer relationships and attend industry events. Travelers will also take advantage of more flexible work arrangements to combine leisure and business trips.

### Why will consumers travel for business in the next 12 months?



**76%** of business travelers plan to extend their work trip for leisure purposes in the next 12 months

**28%** of people plan to take a "flexcation" trip in the next 12 months, during which they will combine remote work with leisure travel



The slowdown of international and business travel is a temporary trend — the resurgence of this demand represents the next big bright spot for the travel industry in 2023. Travel professionals say business travelers (51%) are their organization's highest priority travelers, followed closely by international travelers (48%) and families (46%).

# 5.

## Travelers' need for extreme clean is waning

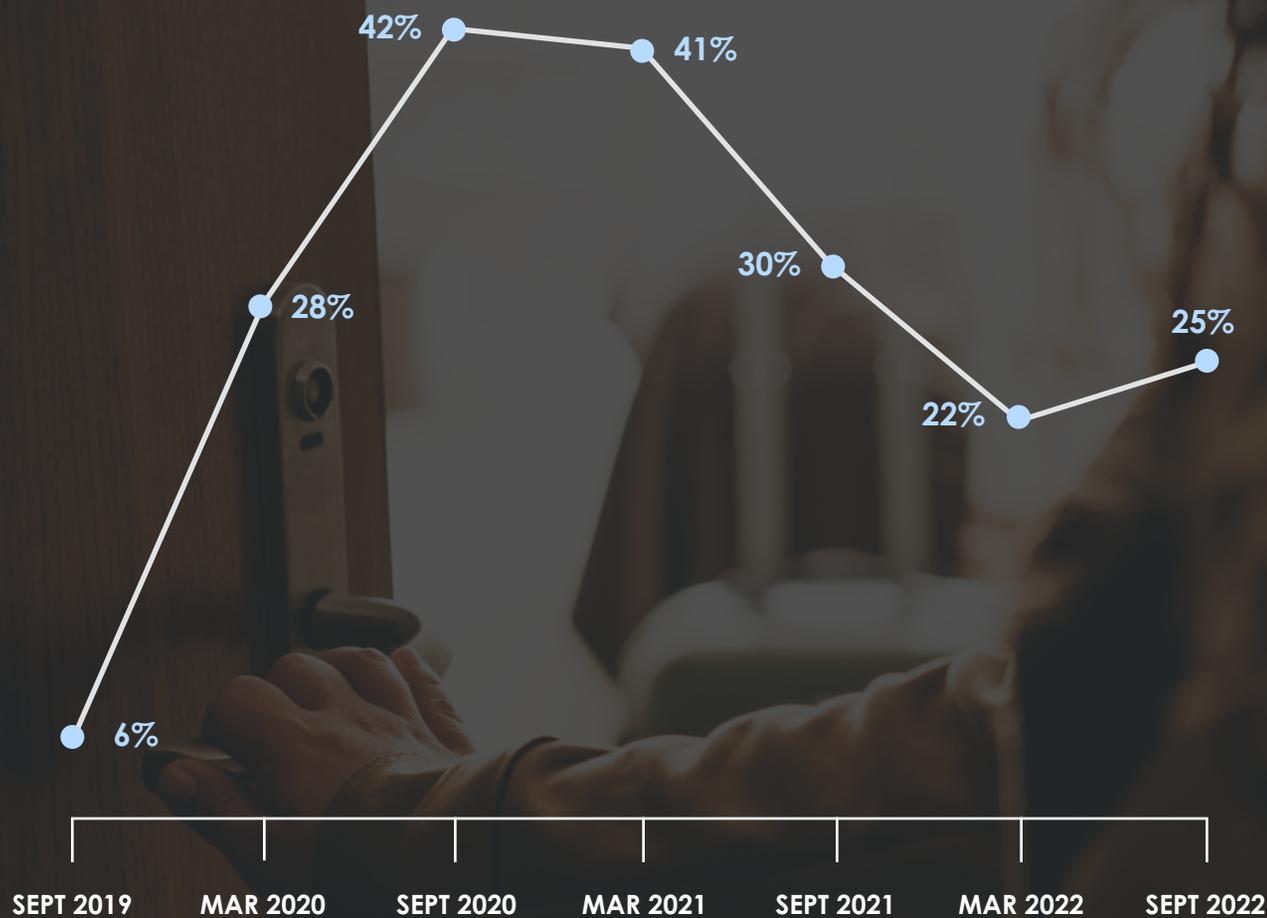
In our research throughout 2020 and 2021, travelers valued their personal health and safety above all else when booking travel. However, a noticeable shift occurred once vaccines were widely available. While cleanliness standards will always be important to travelers — who would want to experience dirty or unsafe conditions? — it is no longer the most important to them.

In the latest Traveler Value Index, when we look at what consumers ranked in their top three most important considerations, enhanced cleaning methods does not appear on the list when booking accommodation, transportation, or activities, whereas it was a top three consideration across all areas last year.

This waning importance is also reflected in our traveler review data. Prior to the pandemic in late 2019, the percentage of reviews that included mentions related to cleanliness was between 5-12%. Review mentions rapidly increased in early 2020, peaking in September 2020 (42%) and then again early 2021 (41%). At the end of 2021, that average dropped to 25% — higher than pre-pandemic but continuing to decrease from peak times.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Expedia Group, traveler reviews, 2019-2022

### Cleanliness-related mentions in traveler reviews



Despite enhanced cleaning methods no longer being the most important consideration for travelers, the pandemic is still impacting travel plans and mindsets. As waves spike and wane, half say ongoing health and safety concerns due to the pandemic will impact their travel plans in the next 12 months.

In contrast, travel professionals may be overestimating how much travelers worry about their COVID-19 risk — and underestimating other factors that are impacting their customers, like inflation.

An explanation for this slight gap might be the continued concern from industry professionals about their own health. More than three-quarters of travel professionals are concerned for their health and safety at work as COVID-19 restrictions lift, with those in the airline industry most concerned. More than half of professionals say their business was still encouraging or requiring testing and personal protective equipment for both staff and travelers and maintaining enhanced cleaning protocols.

While COVID-19 still weighs on the minds of consumers and industry professionals alike, consumers are now more concerned about something else: the rising cost of everyday life.

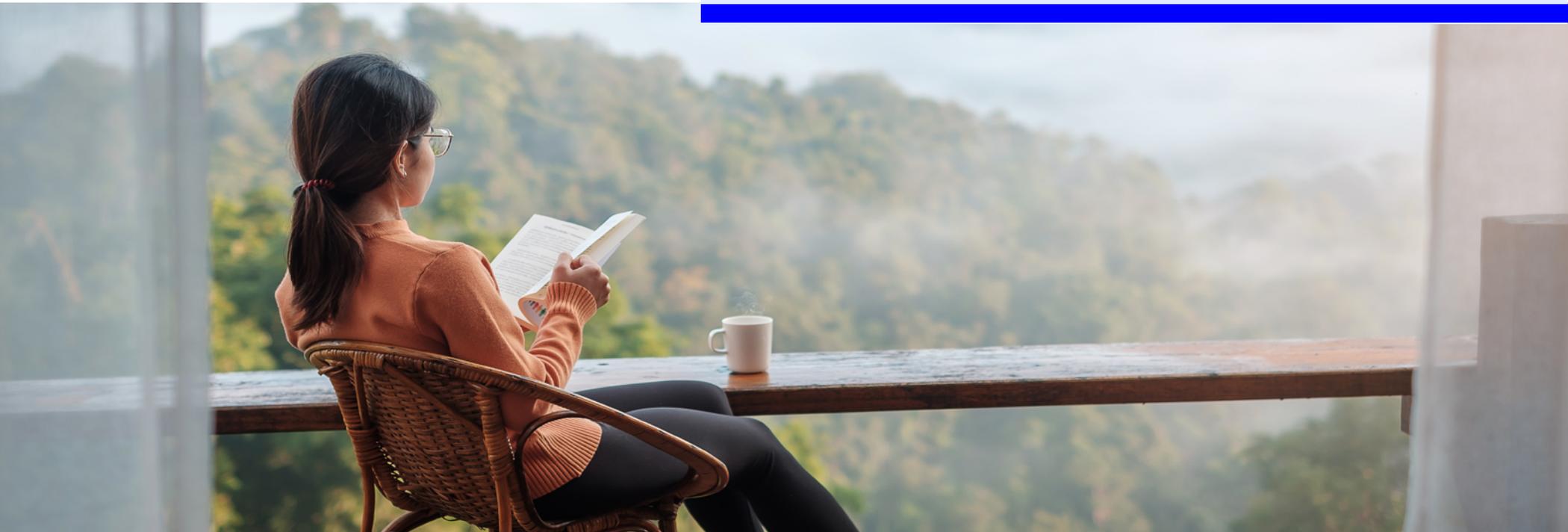
## What is impacting consumers' travel plans in the next 12 months?

### CONSUMERS SAY...

- 1 Inflation
- 2 Ongoing health and safety concerns due to the pandemic
- 3 Travel restrictions
- 4 Political instability

### INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS SAY...

- 1 Ongoing health and safety concerns due to the pandemic
- 2 Travel restrictions
- 3 Inflation
- 4 Political instability





# 05

## FLUCTUATING FACTORS



Like the pandemic, some patterns remain hard to predict. Consumer preferences change quickly and vary by geography, industry, and background. Only time will tell whether these emerging trends are a passing fad or here to stay for the long term.

## 6. Price sensitivity returns as inflation rises

As we emerged from the worst of the pandemic, people were eager to travel and were willing to pay more to do so. In last year's Traveler Value Index, consumers ranked both refundable reservations and enhanced cleaning above price.<sup>28</sup> In the biggest change year-over-year, low pricing reappeared at the top of the list when booking all elements of a trip: 27% of people say it is what they value most when booking travel. Reinforcing this, consumers also say inflation is impacting their travel plans more than ongoing pandemic concerns and travel restrictions, particularly those in North and South America and Europe.

In stark contrast, industry professionals underestimate the impact of inflation and consumers' current sensitivity to price. Across all modes of travel, accommodation, and activities, low pricing is within the top three considerations for consumers, along with flexible policies and refundable rates. Travel professionals in most of these industries, however, do not rank price in travelers' top three considerations.

**% of people who most value atypical, low pricing when booking:**



**A car rental  
31%**



**A flight  
27%**



**A tour/activity  
27%**



**A vacation rental  
26%**



**A cruise  
25%**



**A hotel  
23%**

**58%**  
of professionals say  
consumers' travel budget  
will be larger than last year



**43%**  
of consumers say their  
travel budget will be larger  
than last year



And while many people (43%) say their travel budget will be larger this year than last, that's lower than travel professionals' expectations, 58% of whom expect consumers' spending on travel to increase. Price and value play a bigger role in the decisions of today's travelers than they did a year ago, a reality that the industry should be sensitive to.

<sup>28</sup>Expedia Group, [Traveler Value Index, 2021](#)

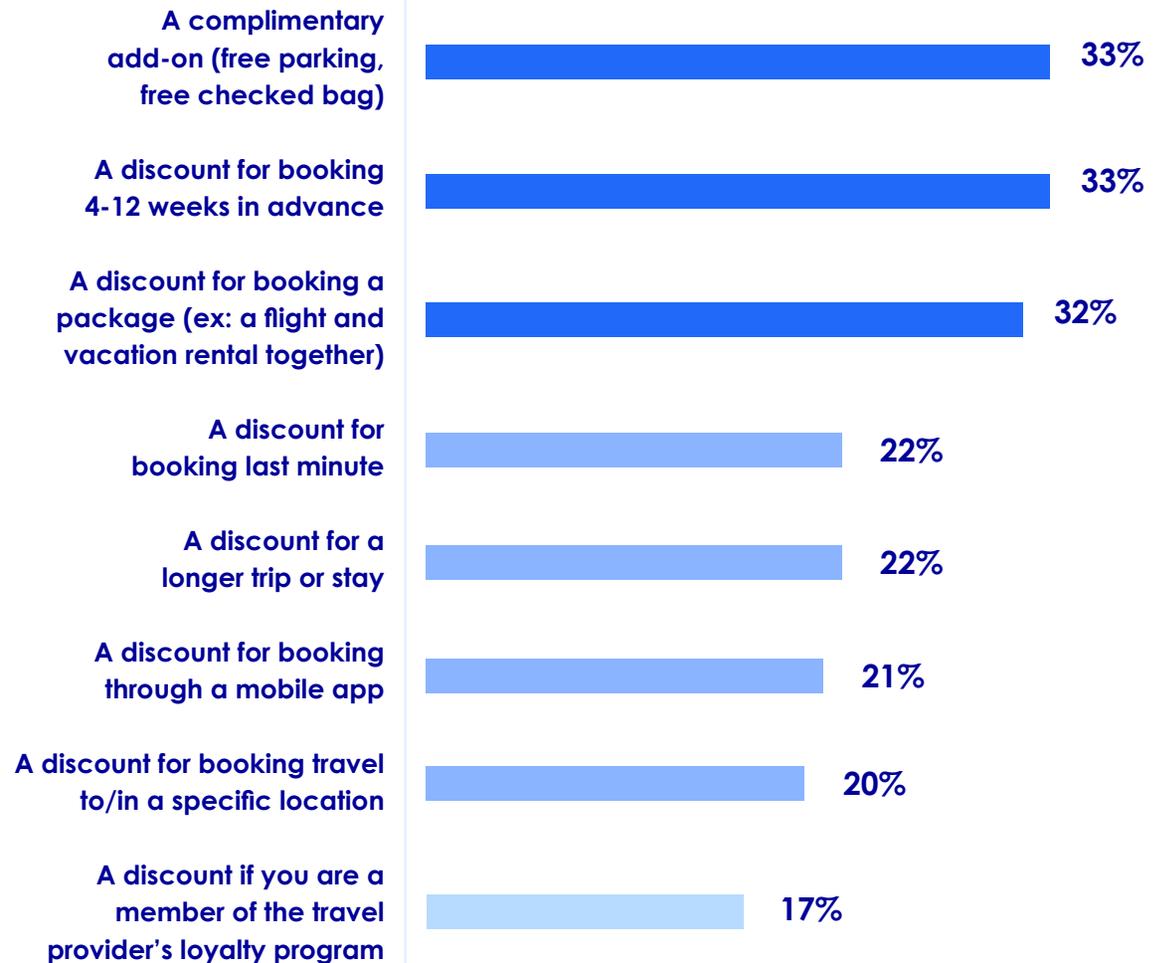
Price sensitivity doesn't necessarily mean consumers are hunting for the cheapest rate. Many people may feel comfortable increasing their overall budget for travel — but they want to get their money's worth.

In fact, they say feeling that “the experience was worth the cost” is the most important factor for a positive trip experience. On the flip side, they say that feeling like they did not receive the full service or experience they paid for was the top reason for leaving a negative review for a travel provider.<sup>29</sup>

Due to the pandemic, travelers are more closely evaluating every aspect of their travel experience. What is this airline's cancellation policies? Is the pool open at this hotel? Will the tour only go through outdoor areas? Are local businesses closed or operating at reduced capacity in this destination? If their experience doesn't match their expectations — or the price they paid — there is a disconnect.

If inflation comes under control soon, consumers may care less about price than they do now. But until costs come down, those in the travel space should not underestimate the impact high prices are having on their customers and should be agile in how they adjust their pricing and thoughtful in their messaging and marketing.

## Most appealing deals to consumers when they book travel:



<sup>29</sup>Expedia Group, Traveler Value Index: Spring 2022 Outlook

# 7.

## Travelers have yet to fully realize the benefit to travel loyalty programs

Brand trust and loyalty were tested over the last few years. Many businesses were managing never-before-seen challenges, and it was nearly impossible for travelers to avoid these challenges. No business was immune to staffing issues, supply chain problems, or the growing pains of adopting new technology — which means people were likely experiencing more issues while traveling than they were prior to the pandemic. While most of those in the industry (82%) say they think consumers were understanding of staff and service limitations, it is likely that customer loyalty took a hit.

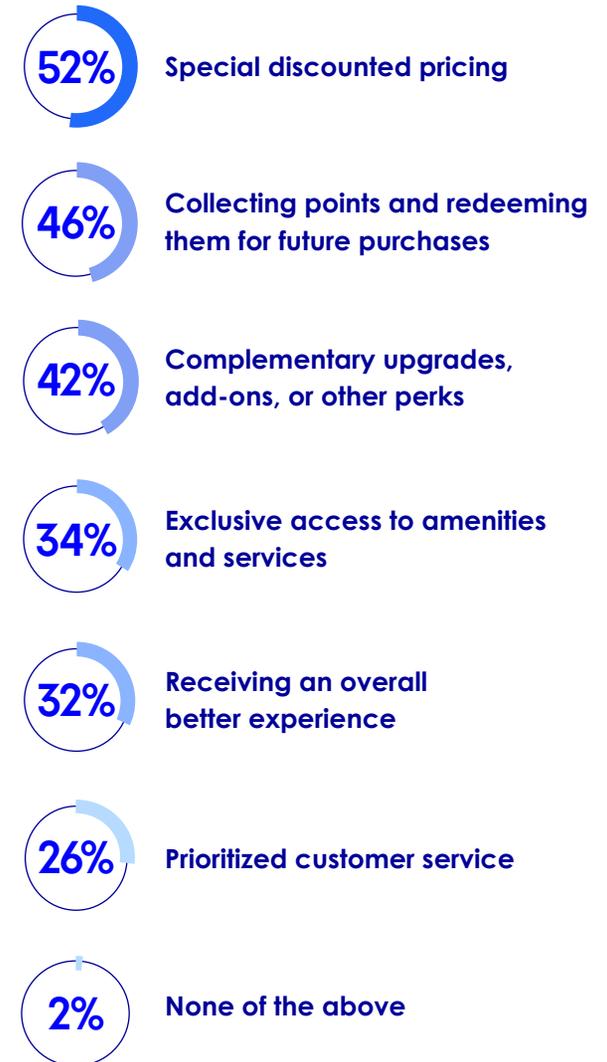
Customer loyalty means repeat business. Three in four organizations say they operate loyalty programs to encourage travelers to book with them time and time again. However, while important to businesses, industry professionals may be overestimating consumers' engagement in loyalty programs. Fewer than half of consumers (44%) are

members of a loyalty program, representing an opportunity for businesses that operate in the travel space to acquire new members, particularly those in the Japanese and German markets where membership is the lowest.

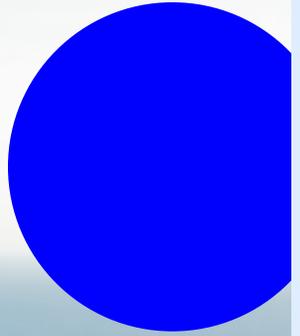
Those who are in loyalty programs value them — more than half (53%) say it is more important now to travel and stay with providers where they are a loyalty member than it was before the pandemic. In our own loyalty program, slowly but surely since 2018, more bookings across our primary traveler websites have included the redemption of loyalty points/rewards. Though bookings decreased overall during the height of the pandemic, the percentage of bookings with loyalty points remained steady throughout and has increased in 2022.<sup>30</sup> That said, when it comes to booking, factors like price, flexibility, and even cleanliness have more of an influence on travelers than where they are a loyalty program member.

Companies offering loyalty programs should ensure they are providing perks that their members truly value — and communicating the benefits of their program to potential new members. With the current price sensitivity, offering discounts to members is the most valuable perk. As the industry stabilizes and accelerates, the businesses that offer travelers the best, most reliable experience will attract loyal customers.

## What do consumers value most from travel loyalty programs they are a member of?



<sup>30</sup>Expedia Group, percent of bookings with loyalty redemption on Hotels.com, Orbitz, and Expedia, 2018-2022



# 06

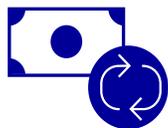
HOW TO TAKE  
ACTION



**People recognize that travel is a gift — an opportunity not to be wasted or taken for granted.**

At the same time, the pandemic created more discerning consumers with higher expectations for their travel experience, from booking a place to stay to the taxi ride home. They weigh a variety of factors when making booking decisions. Today, flexibility and price are top of mind, but other considerations are also at play.

# To stand out to travelers and prepare for a successful 2023



## **Maintain your refundable rates and flexible policies.**

Flexibility continues to be one of the top considerations for travelers, particularly those traveling internationally. Highlight your flexible options by ensuring your refundable rates and flexible cancellation policies are reflected in your listing content and any marketing materials.



## **Set realistic expectations with travelers — and have realistic expectations for your staff.**

Only 15% of industry professionals say their business is currently providing full hours and services, and that number was even lower for those in Germany and South Korea. Ensure the information you communicate to travelers pre- and post-booking and during their time with you accurately reflects what their experience will be like. Rebuilding trust is key.



## **Be thoughtful about discounts and perks.**

Your customers may be more price sensitive now than they were a year ago, so consider what types of incentives will be most effective and include those in your offerings and marketing and promotions strategy. Complimentary add-ons, discounts for advanced booking, and travel packages are effective tactics for encouraging consumers to book with you. If you offer a loyalty program, keep in mind that discounts and points are most important to members. Access to specific amenities may be more of a draw for business travelers, who can be convinced to stay for leisure as well.



## **Appeal to travelers' desire for relaxation.**

Travelers are looking for a change in scenery and rejuvenation. Brands in the travel space have an opportunity to play into these motivations by highlighting their amenities and experiences that provide that sense of escape.



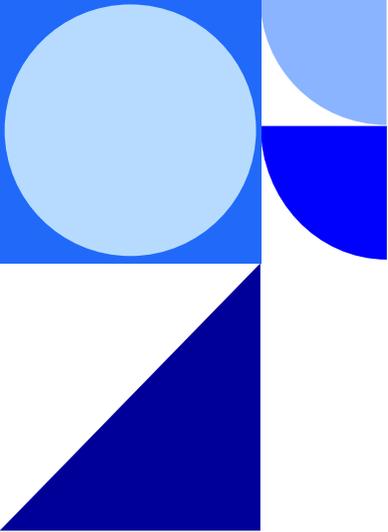
## **Lean into and showcase your brand values.**

A third of industry professionals say they are promoting specific company values or priorities, like sustainability initiatives, to encourage bookings from their key traveler audiences. If you offer special accessibility amenities, make efforts to reduce your environmental impact, or have other inclusive practices, showcase them to travelers. Consumers will continue to book based on their personal values and will be loyal to the destinations and businesses that walk the walk in these key areas.



## **Keep a pulse on traveler feedback to understand how they perceive their experience.**

Whether through reviews, social media, or your own channels, collecting and acting on feedback is key to optimizing the travel experience you provide. Just over half of the organizations in our research relied on customer reviews to measure the guest experience, and the same amount make changes often due to feedback — meaning there is a big opportunity for more businesses in the travel space to be taking advantage of feedback loops. A positive travel experience attracts loyal customers.



## Go deeper with industry-specific insights:



**Hotel**



**Vacation rental**



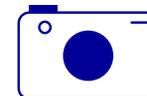
**Cruise**



**Car rental**



**Airline**



**Tours and activities**



**Destination marketing organization**



# 07

METHODOLOGY



The consumer research was conducted by Wakefield Research among 11,000 nationally representative adults ages 18+ in eleven markets (Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States) in June-July 2022, using an email invitation and an online survey. The data was weighted to ensure reliable and accurate representation. The overall margin of error for this study is +/- .93 at the overall level and +/- 3.1 in each market, at 95% confidence.

The industry professional research was conducted by Wakefield Research among 100 travel professionals each in 11 markets (Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States) in June-July 2022, using an

email invitation and an online survey. Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.0 percentage points for the total 1,100 respondents, and 9.8 percentage points for the 100 respondents in each country, from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.



# 08

ABOUT  
EXPEDIA GROUP

# POWERING TRAVEL FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE — TOGETHER.

As the world's leading traveler technology platform, Expedia Group connects businesses big and small to the universe of travel through access to data, tools, technology, and hundreds of millions of global travelers.

Our trusted and loved travel brands combined with a robust B2B distribution network and game-changing technology solutions create exponential opportunities for businesses to build, grow, and scale in new and innovative ways.

With over two decades of experience and expertise, we help businesses maximize potential and drive meaningful results.

**Partner with us**





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