

U.S. Travel Tracker: July 2021 Highlights



Report Overview

When we released our May Travel Tracker report in mid-June, we were full of confidence that the 2021 summer would be one of the strongest travel seasons in the U.S. Little did we know that two months later, we are slipping quickly back to the abnormal. The U.S. added 321K new COVID cases in the entire month of June. In the first half of August alone, it already added over 1.5 million new cases.

Our July Travel Tracker survey captures the motion of this quick downturn fully. On one hand, July did turn out to be a record-breaking month in travel, with nearly half of Americans taking trips in the month. In addition to leisure travel, business travel for conferences and conventions and international travel all registered healthy growths.

On the other hand, as the Delta Variant quickly swept the country in the last few weeks, consumer sentiments turned negative on all fronts. Forty-five percent of Americans now believe the U.S. economy will worsen in the next 12 months, the highest since December 2020. Confidence in personal financial situation and expected future travel spending also dropped sharply.

On top of this, summer will be winding down in three weeks. How will the battle against the Delta Variant unfold? Will the dark winter that we experienced last year repeat itself? We certainly hope not.

Survey Methodology

Skift Research's U.S. travel tracking surveys are conducted to examine the travel penetration rates and detailed travel behavior of the U.S. population. Respondents are asked to report if they traveled in the previous month and recall travel-related details if they did. The sample population represents the demographic breakdowns of age, gender, income, race/ethnicity, and residential location of the U.S. Census Bureau. We fielded the tracker survey every month in 2020 and are switching to every other month in 2021. All our surveys are conducted in the first week of the month, each with a total sample size of ~1000. All surveys were fielded online by a trusted third-party consumer panel provider.

In addition to the factual travel occurrences, we also asked respondents their perceptions on the macro-level economic condition as well their personal financial and travel outlook. Given those questions reflect what respondents felt at the time of the survey, the date for those questions that we refer to in this report is the month when the survey was conducted, instead of the month when travel happened.

Key Topics

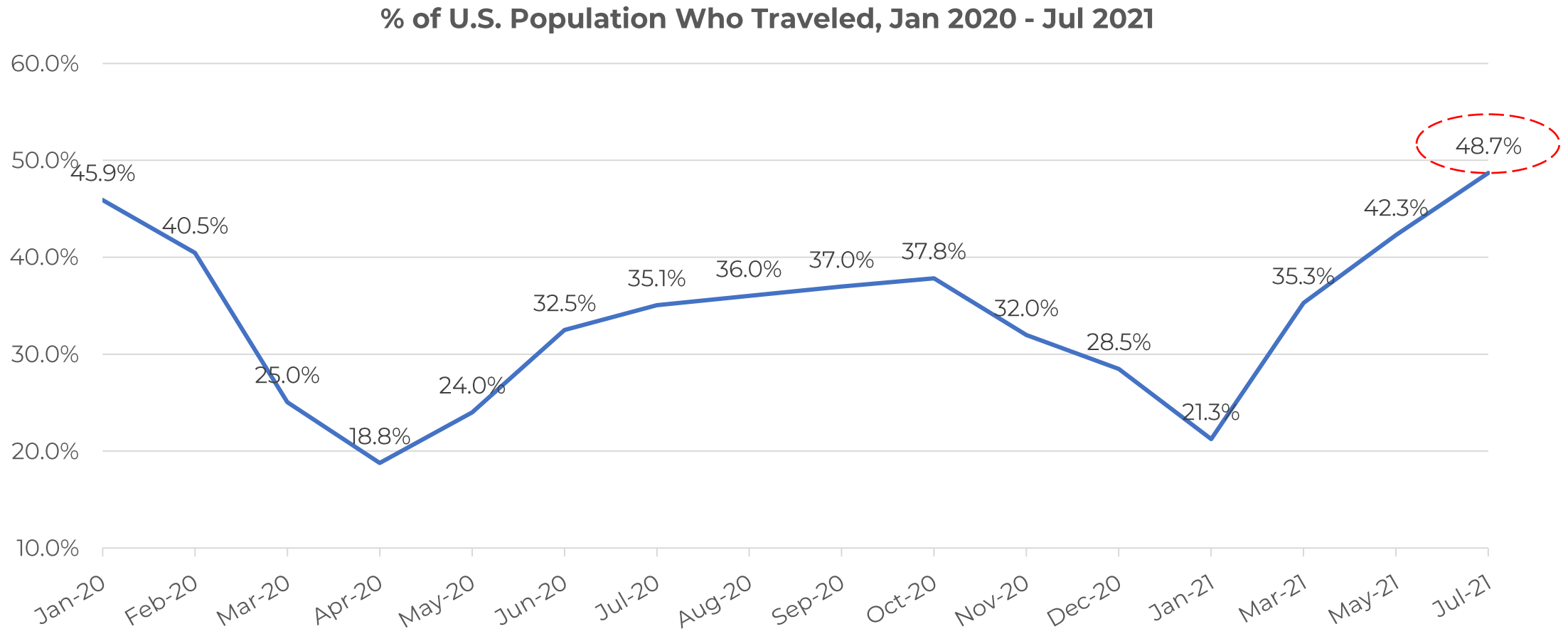
- Travel incidences, January 2020–July 2021
- July travel highlights
- COVID-19 impacted travel, October 2020–July 2021
- Changing consumer sentiments on the economic outlook, February 2020–August 2021
- Consumer intent for the remainder of 2021 travel
- Remote work trend and its impact on travel and mobility
- How COVID-19 vaccination might impact travel



Highlights of July U.S. Travel

Travel Rebound Continued in July

- July was a much-needed good month for the U.S. travel industry. Nearly half of Americans traveled in the month, marking the highest travel rate since January 2020, when we started to track American's travel trends monthly.
- However, as the Delta Variant swept across the country starting in late July, the rebound might be short-lived. As we will reveal later in the consumer sentiment section, concerns about the pandemic and the economy are on the rise again, which, together with the ending of summer months, might put the rebound at halt again in the coming months.

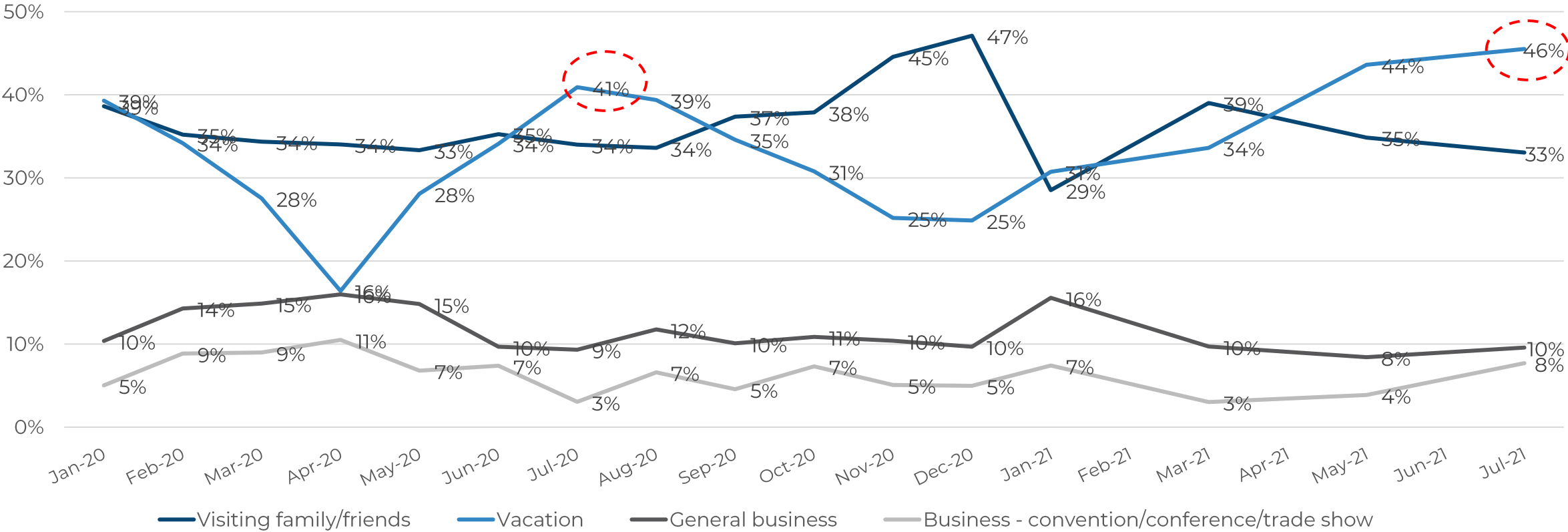


Monthly $n = \sim 1000$
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

Summer Vacation Continued to Be the Main Driver for the Rising Demand

- 46% of all July trips were for vacationing, 5 percentage points higher from July 2020 and an all-time high since January 2020.
- With more people vaccinated and relaxed regulations on large gatherings, in-person conferences and conventions had a small comeback. At 8%, conference travel also reached the highest share since April 2020.

Top Travel Purposes, Jan 2020 - Jul 2021

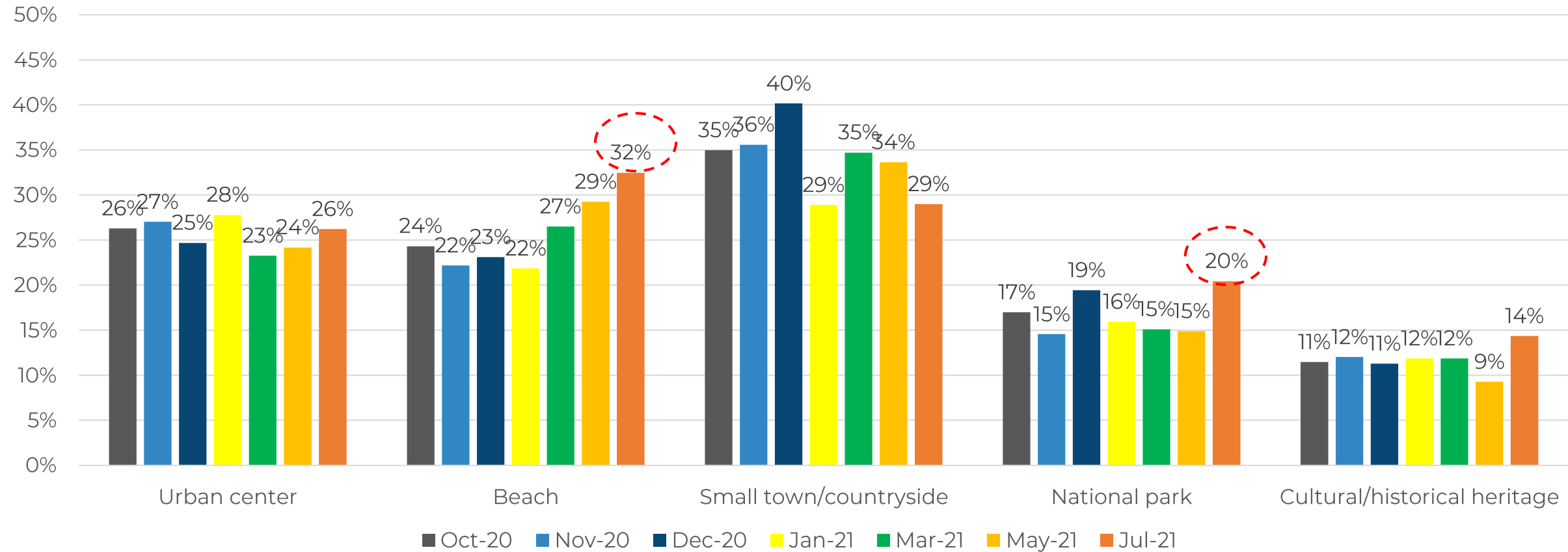


Monthly n = ~1000
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

Vacation Means Beaches and National Parks

- As we expected in our [May Travel Tracker](#), beaches and small towns remained top destinations in July and will likely stay so until early September when summer winds down. National parks also picked up a significant share in July.

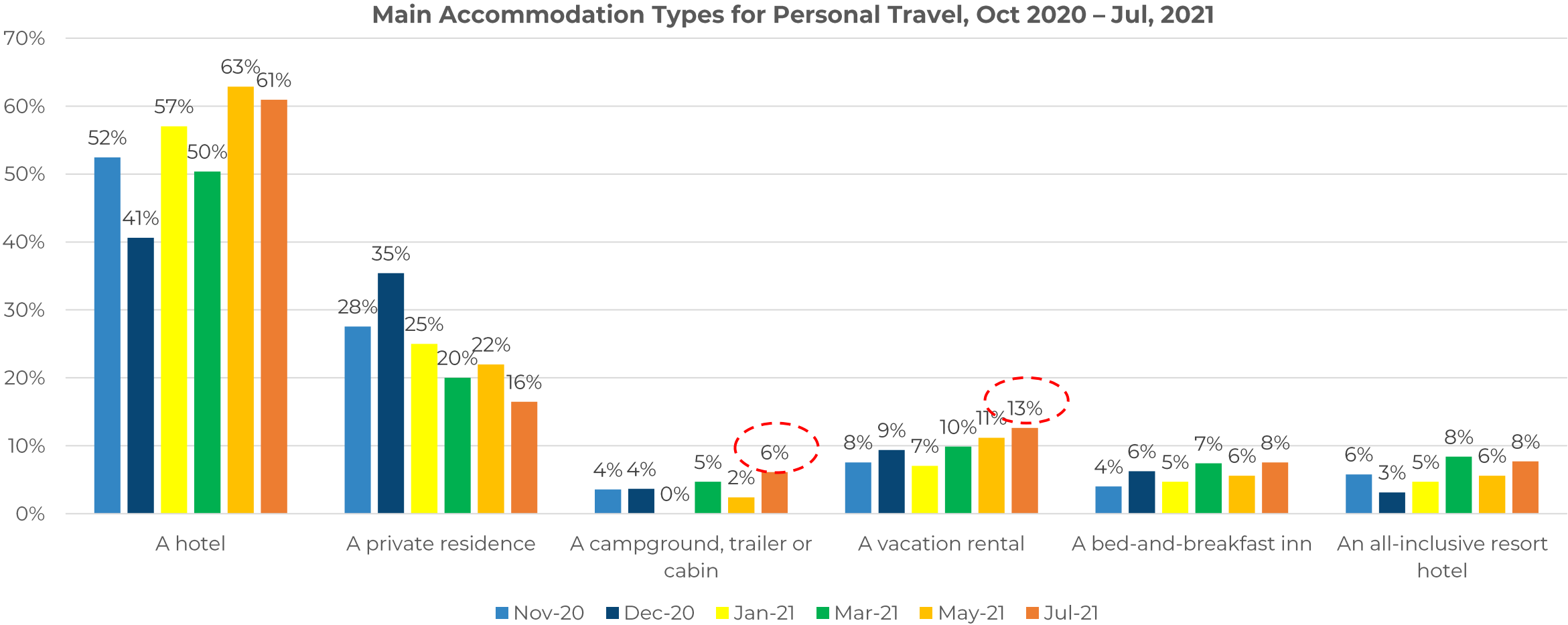
Top Destinations, Oct 2020 - Jul 2021



Monthly n = ~1000
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

Hotels Remained Strong, With Campground and Vacation Rental Also Picking Up Share

- The strong performance of hotels that started in May continued in July, with 61% of all personal trips involving staying in hotels
- Similarly, according to [STR](#), U.S. weekly hotel occupancy for the week of July 18 reached its highest level since October 2019, while room rates hit an all-time high.
- Vacation rentals also registered a strong month, accounting for 13% of all personal travel stays, 3 percentage points higher than July 2020.

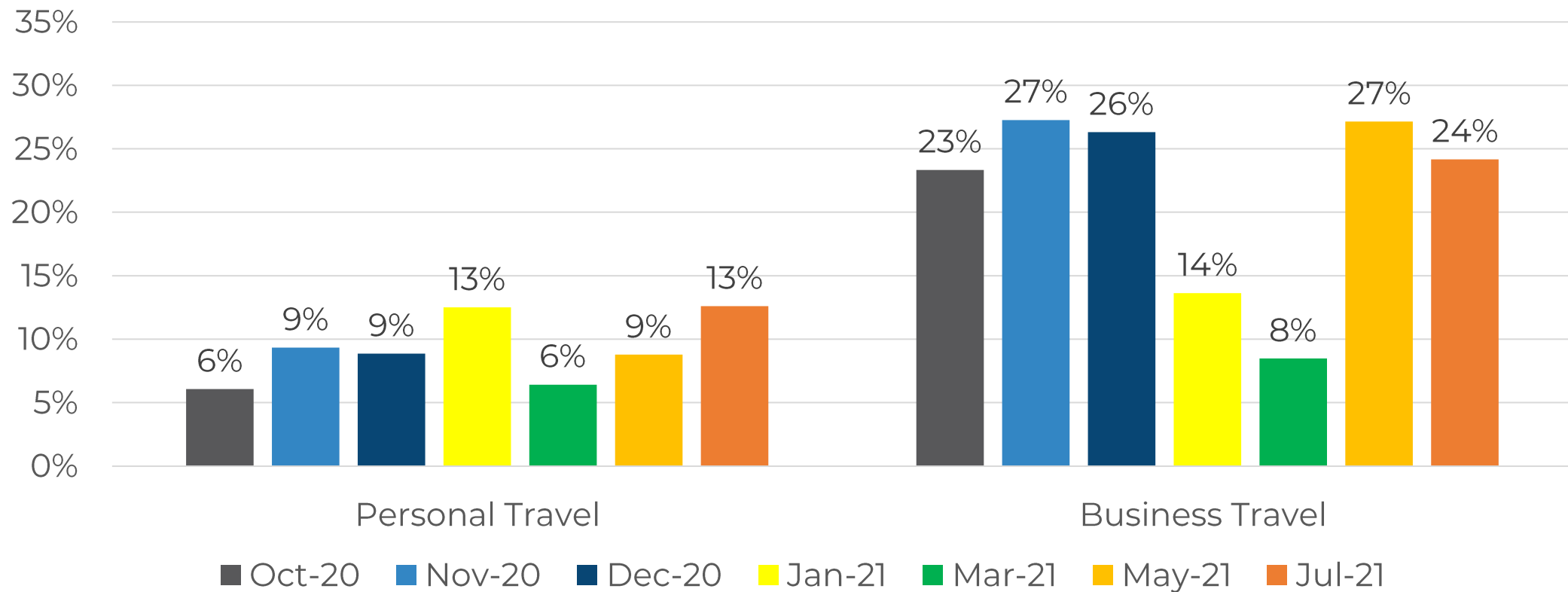


Monthly n = ~1000
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

Share of Air Travel Continued to Rise

- According to [TSA](#), the number of passengers going through U.S. ports reached 63.2 million in July, a 200% increase from July 2020 and only 20% below July 2019 level.
- However, putting this into perspective of total trips that included flights, the number was still small. Personal trips that included flight rose from 9% in May to 13%, still significantly below the pre-pandemic level (28% in January 2020). Air travel for business trips actually dropped from 27% in May to 24%.

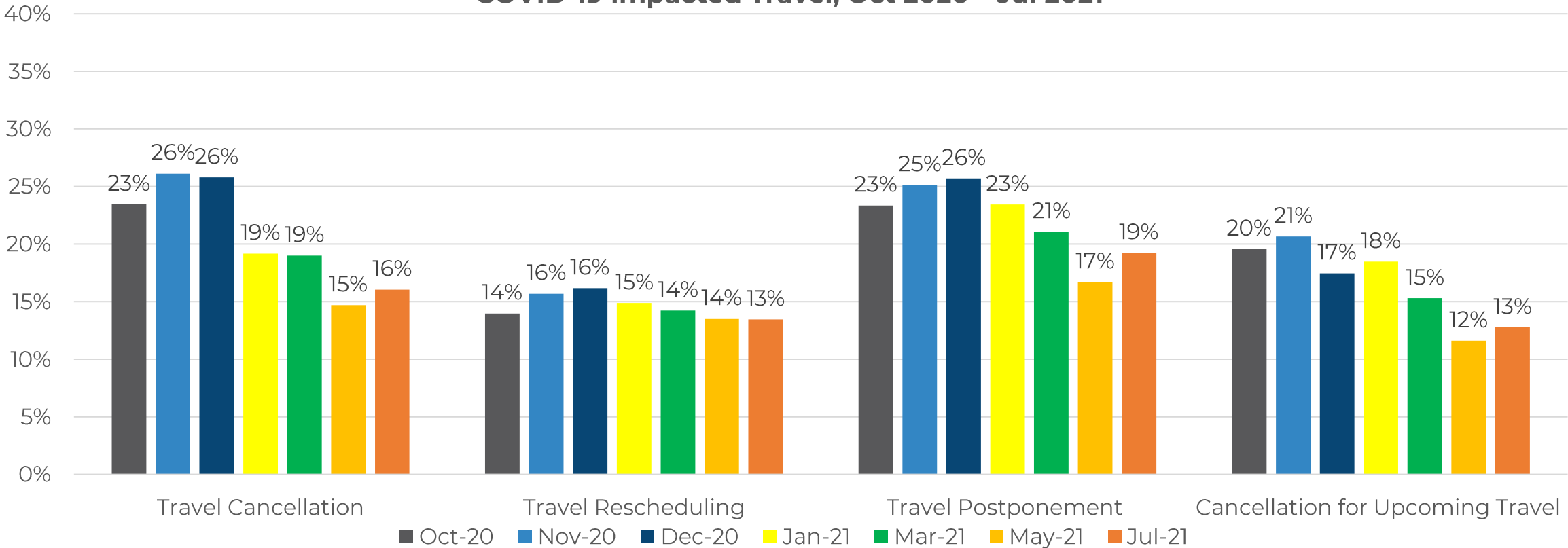
Trips That Include Flights, Oct 2020 - Jul 2021



COVID-Impacted Travel Rearrangement Stopped Declining

- After consistent declining for a few months, the rising new COVID cases led people change their travel plans again. Cancellations, reschedules and postponements, while remaining low, started to increase in July.

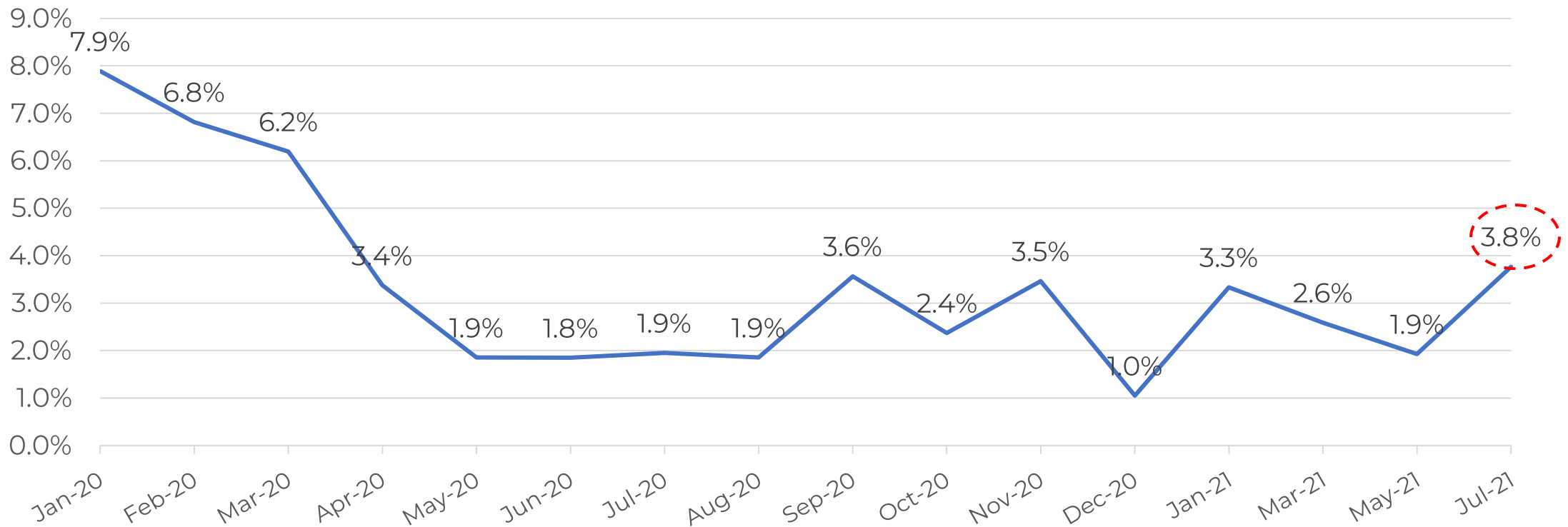
COVID-19 Impacted Travel, Oct 2020 – Jul 2021



International Travel Reached the Highest Since the Pandemic Started

- With many countries opening borders for Americans, in particular, the U.K. and the majority of other European nations that are popular destinations for Americans, international travel had a significant boost, accounting for nearly 4% of all trips in July.
- However, with the surge of the Delta Variant, it remains to be seen if some countries might reinstitute restrictions for Americans yet again.

Trips That Are Outside the U.S., Jan 2020 – Jul 2021



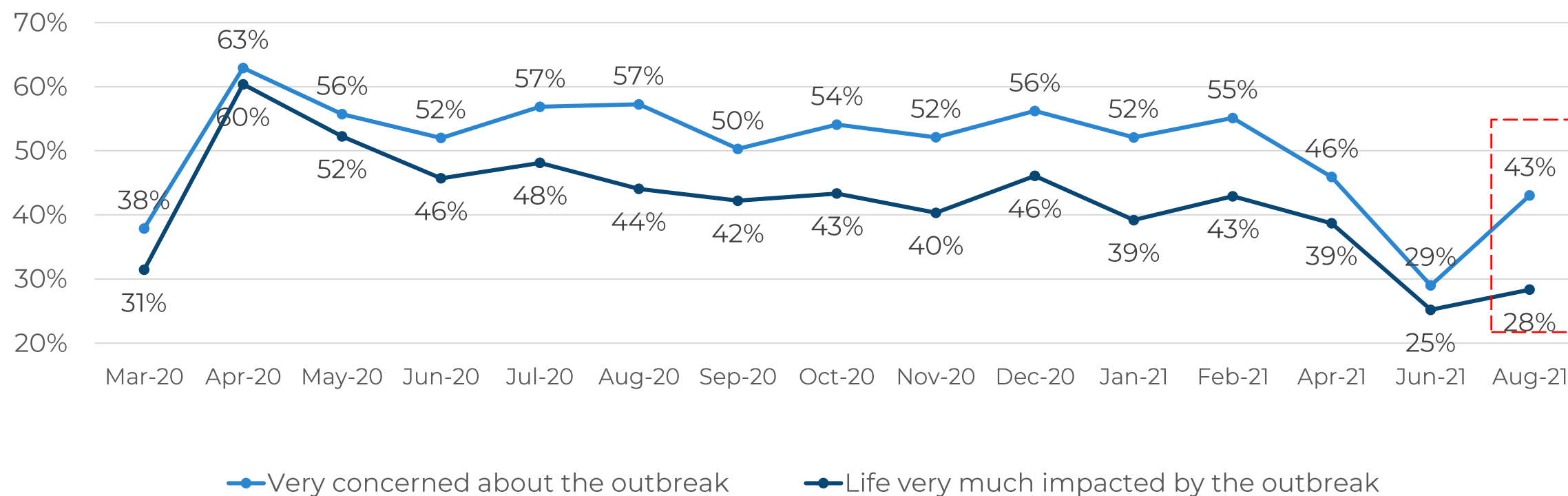


August Consumer Sentiments

Concerns About COVID-19 Rose Again

- The U.S. added 321K new COVID cases in the entire month of June. In the first half of August alone, it already added over 1.5 million new cases.
- With that, concerns about the pandemic rose again. In early August, 42% of Americans said they were very concerned about the virus, 14 percentage points higher than early June.
- However, the number of people who indicated their life was impacted by the pandemic didn't rise as sharply, likely a result of more people getting vaccinated and having lower risk of severe effect or people learning to live with the virus better.

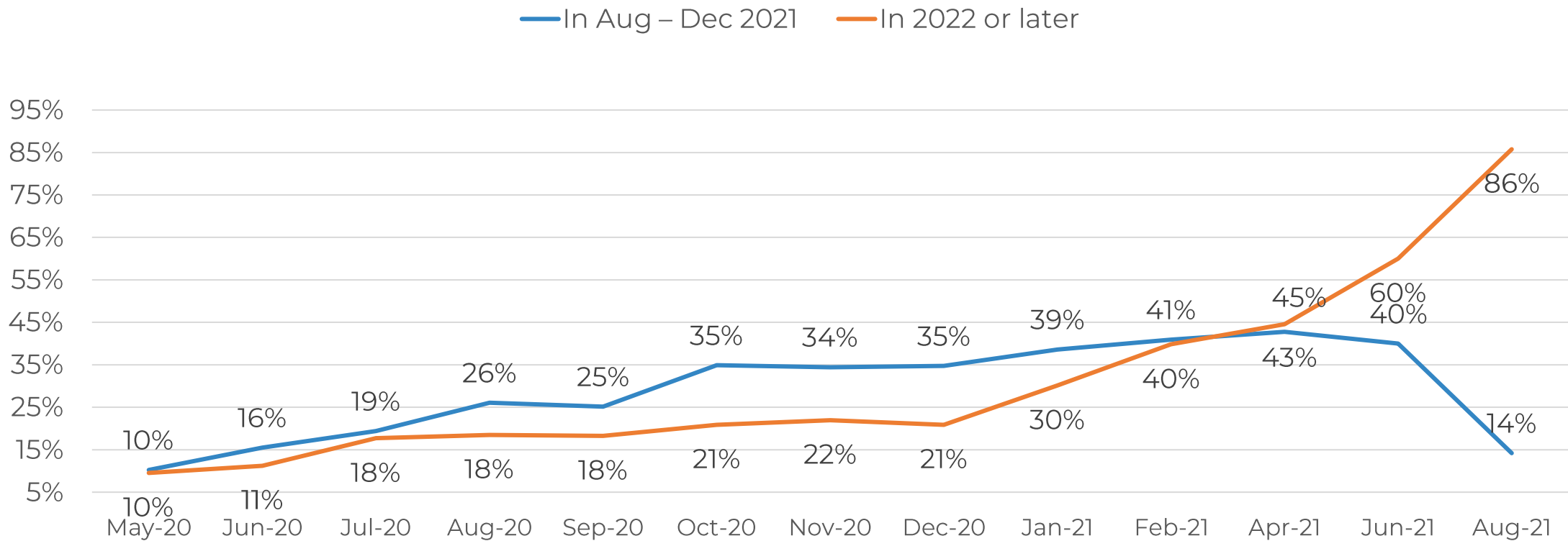
Concerns About and Life Impact of COVID-19, Oct 2020 – Aug 2021



Most Americans Now Believe COVID-19 Will Be a Long-Term Battle

- The number of Americans who believe the pandemic won't be under control until 2022 or later continue to rise, with 86% of Americans saying so in early August, compared to 60% in June.

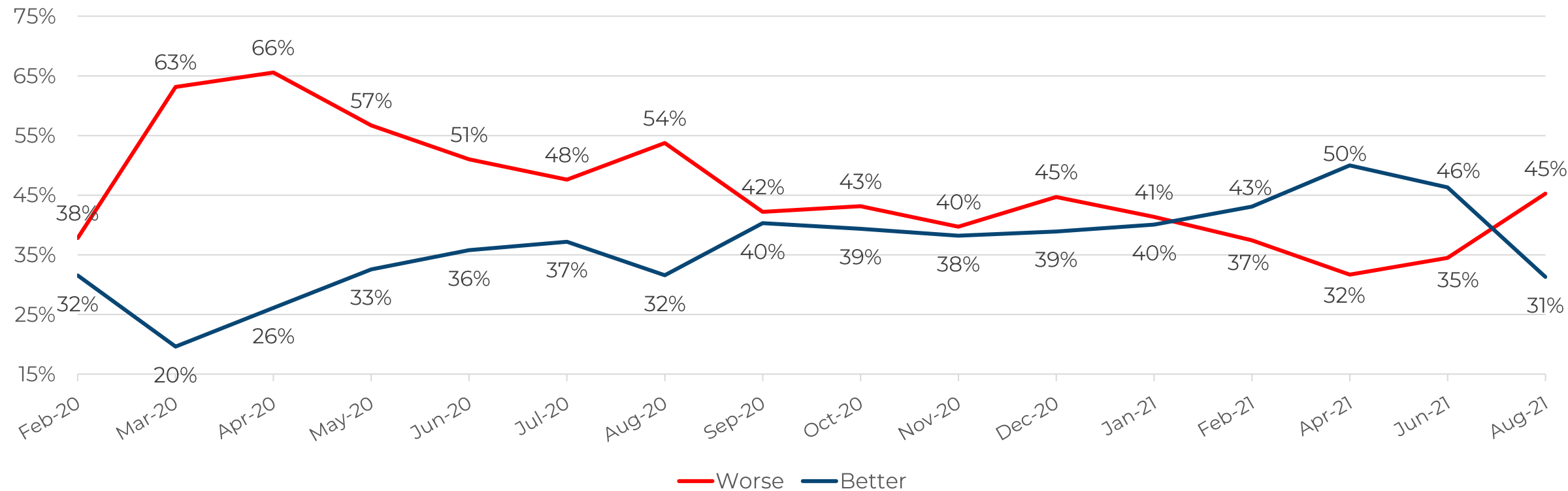
Expected Time When COVID-19 Will Be Under Control, May 2020 - Aug 2021



Concerns About the U.S. Economy Reached the Highest Since December 2020

- July marked the biggest job gain since August last year, with unemployment rate falling to 5.4%. On top of that, economic growth momentum remained high. Amidst all these positive signs, only 31% of Americans now believe the U.S. economy will be better in the next 12 months, a 15-percentage point drop from early June and reaching the lowest point since April 2020. Despite of strong economic growth and labor market, the rising inflation and uncertain future of the Delta Variant are the likely causes for this negative outlook.

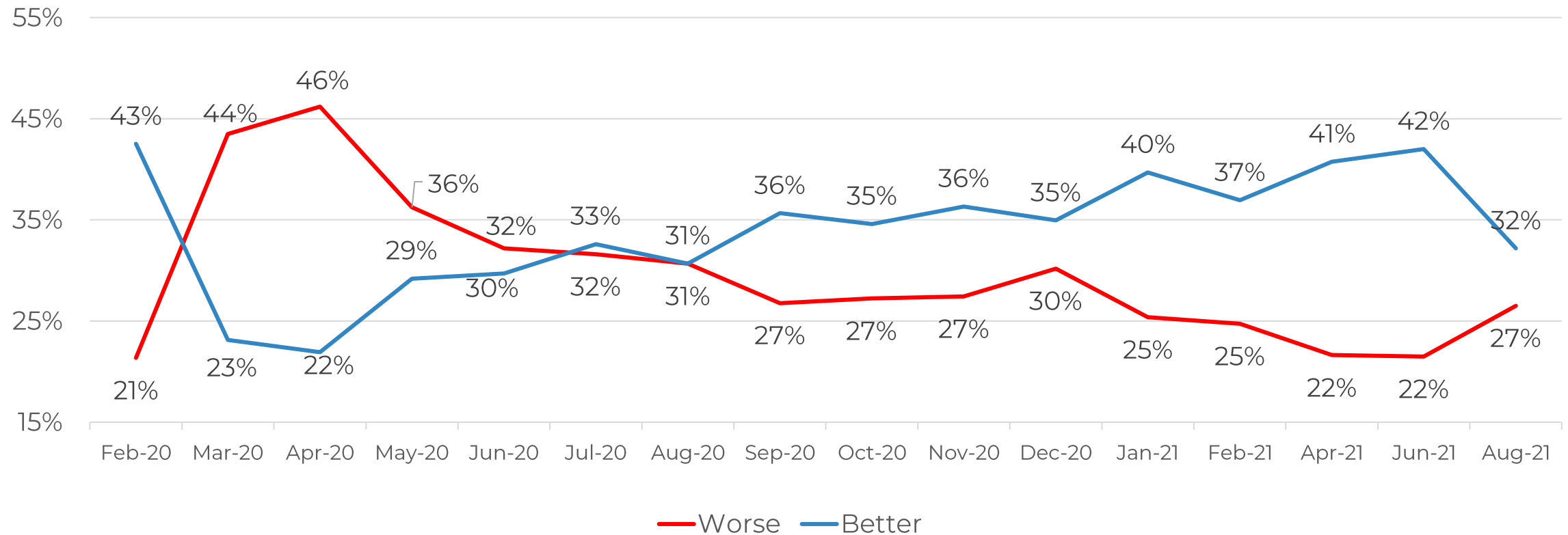
Perception of the U.S. Economic Condition in the Next 12 Months, Feb 2020 – Aug 2021



Confidence in Personal Financial Condition Also Dropped

- Similarly, 32% of American consumers now expect their financial condition will be better in the next 12 months, a 10-percentage point drop from two months ago.
- On the other hand, those who believe their financial condition will worsen increased from 22% in June to 27%.

Perception of the Personal Economic Condition in the Next 12 Months, Feb 2020 – Aug 2021



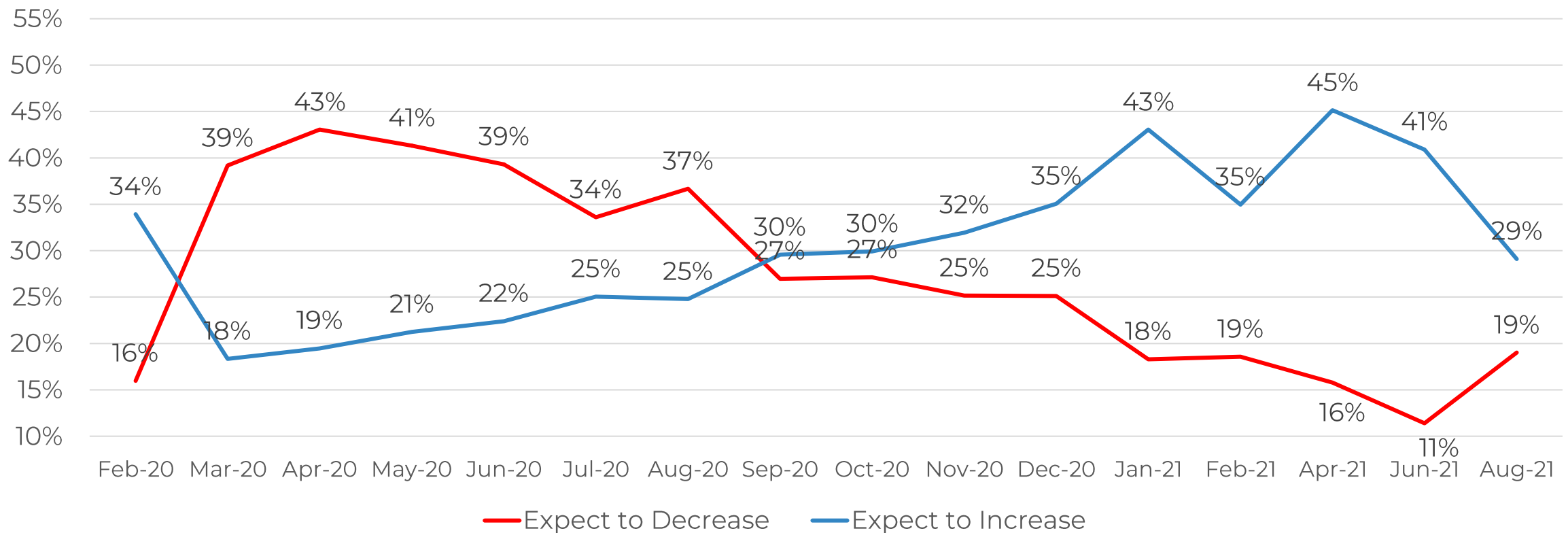


2021 Travel Expectations

Number of Consumers Expecting to Increase Travel Spending Dropped Sharply

- Concerns about the future economy translated into more reservation on personal spending. The number of Americans who expected to spend more on travel in the next 12 months decreased from 41% in June to 29% in August. This is even lower than last winter, when the U.S. was falling into the second wave.

Expectation of Travel Spending Changes in the Next 12 Months, Feb 2020 – Aug 2021

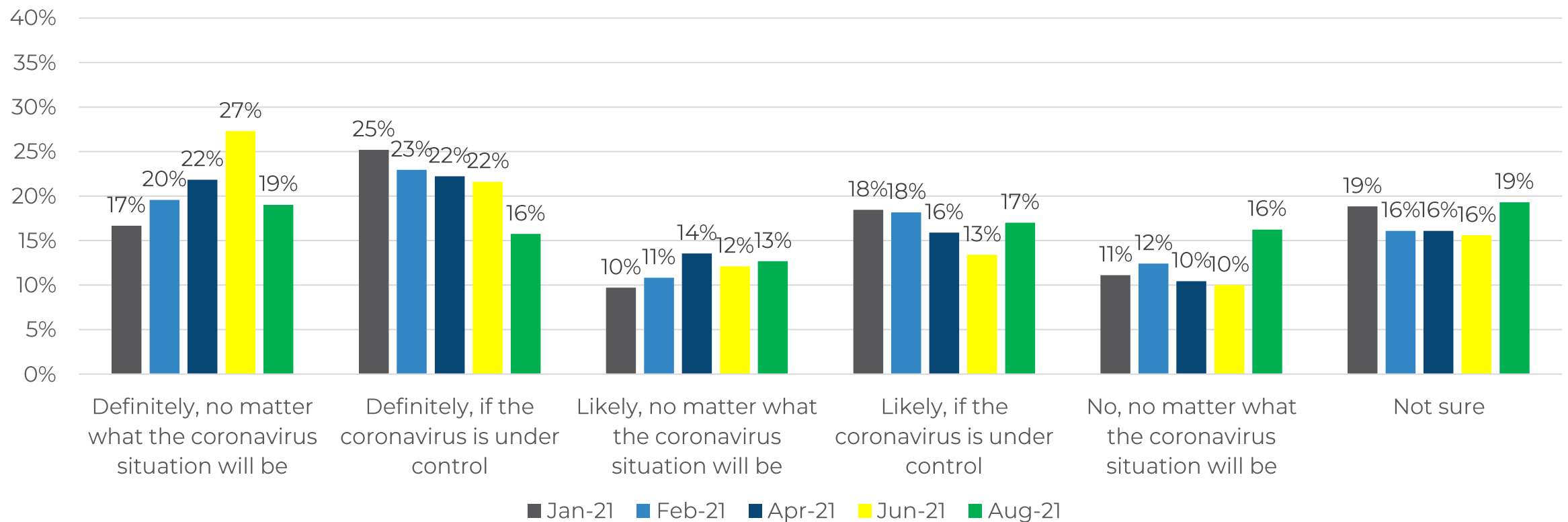


Monthly n = ~1000
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

Travel Intent for the Remainder of 2021 Also Dropped Sharply

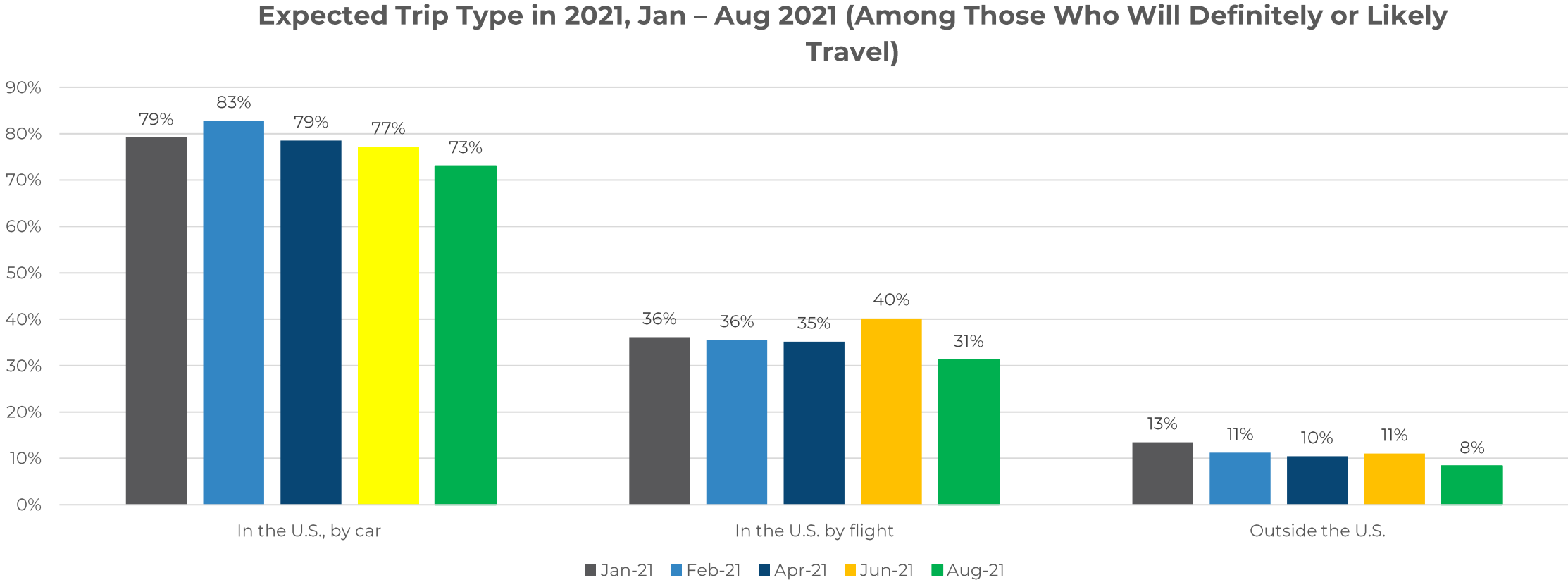
- The number of Americans who said they would definitely travel in 2021 no matter the COVID-19 situation declined from 27% in June to 19% in August.
- While it is likely that some people might've already completed their 2021 travel plan, rising concerns about the new variant and the economic future are also likely contributing factors to this lowered travel expectation.

U.S. Population Who Plan to Travel in 2021, Jan – Aug 2021



Interest in Road Trips Remained Dominant, and Air Travel Expectation Declined

- 37% of Americans expected their trips for the rest of 2021 to be by car, slightly lower than in June.
- However, the number of Americans expecting to travel by air they dropped to the lowest since the beginning of 2021, to 31%. And despite a strong month of international travel in July, the number of Americans planning to take international trips for the rest of 2021 also decreased to the lowest since January.

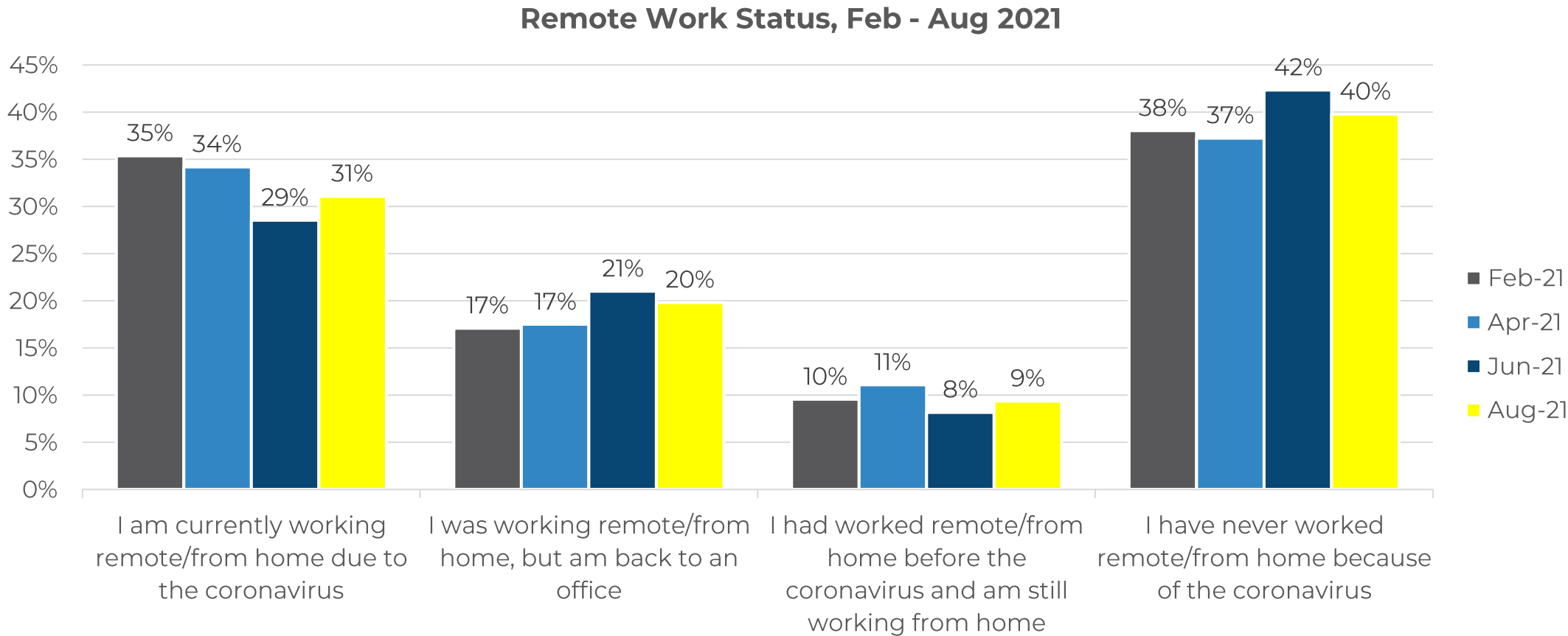




Remote Work and Travel During the Pandemic

Remote Work Rose Slightly

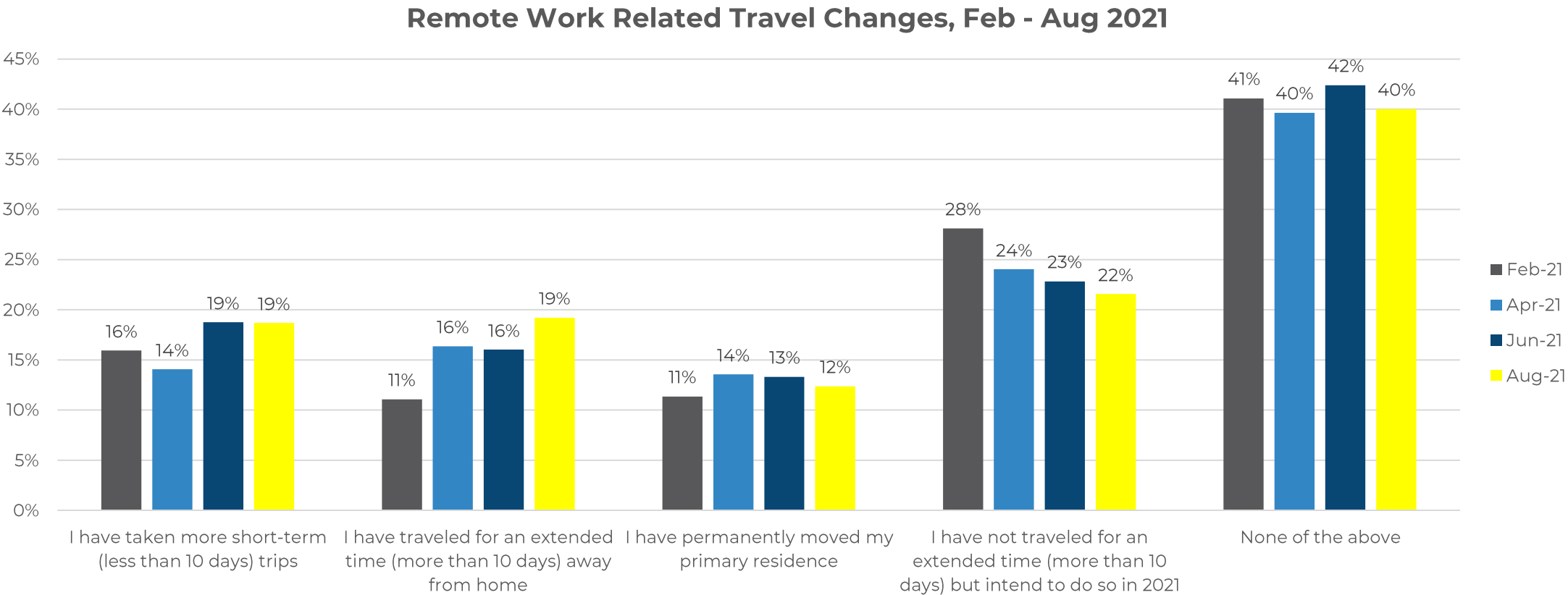
- The new surge might've already made some companies extend their remote work policies or reverse the back-to-office ones. Compared to June, our August survey sees a slight increase in the number of respondents who are currently working remotely and a decrease in the number who were working remotely but are back to an office.



Including full-time employed, part-time employed, and self-employed
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

Remote Work Triggered Travel Still High

- Compared to June, more remote workers said they had taken more long trips due the remote work status in August, with 19% saying so.



including current and past remote workers
Source: Skift Research, August 2021

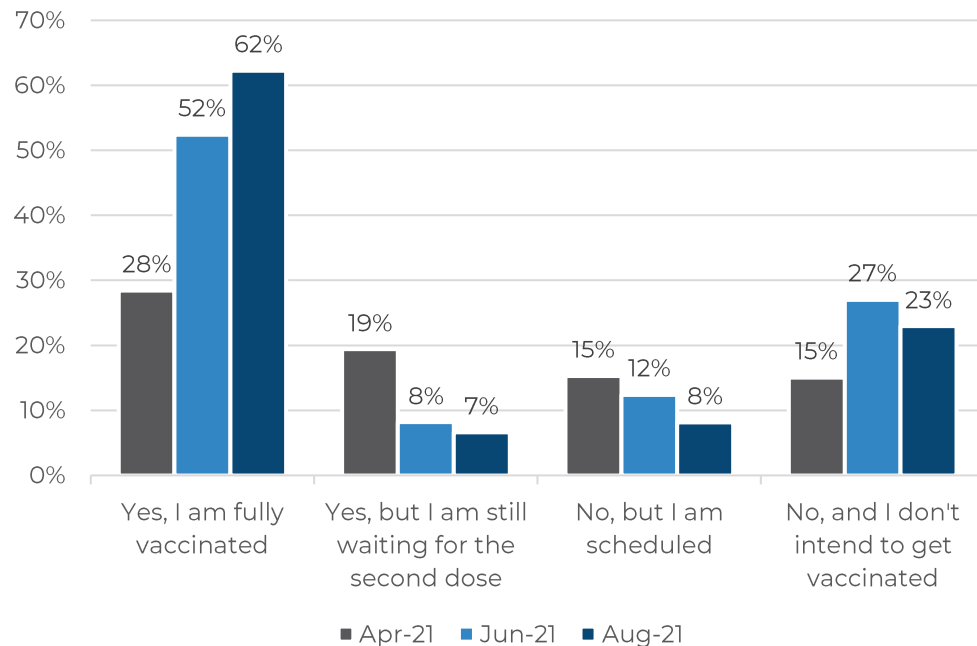


Vaccine Impact on Travel

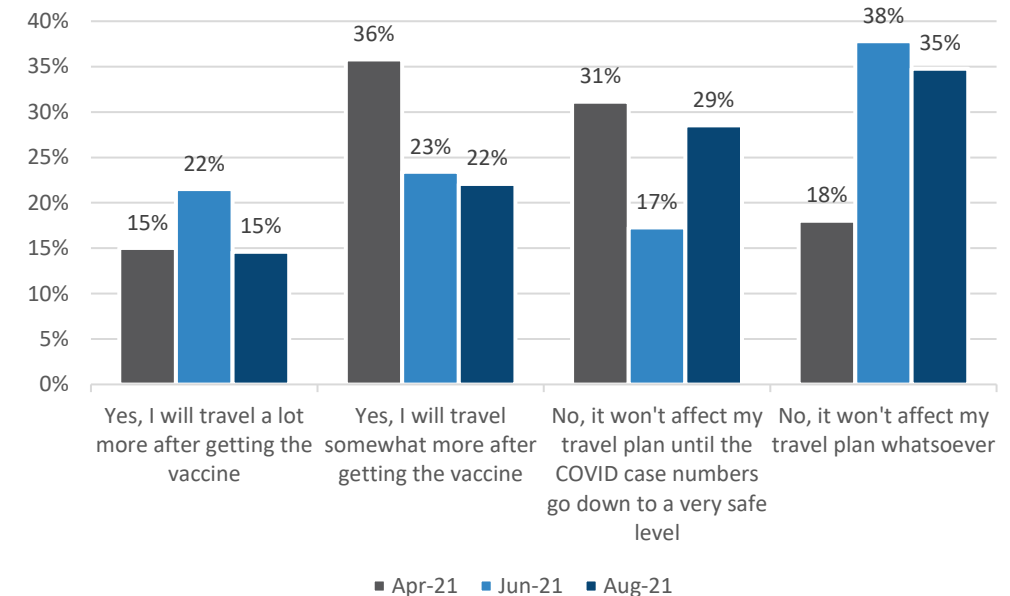
Vaccine Resistance Still High and It's Impacting The Vaccinated

- 62% of Respondents in our August survey were fully vaccinated, in line with the national record.
- However, there are still 23% of surveyed who don't intend to get vaccines, only four percentage points lower than in June when the COVID threat reached the lowest point in the country.
- Confidence in vaccines is dropping again for those who are vaccinated. The number of respondents who said vaccine status wouldn't affect their travel plan until COVID cases drop down to a safe level jumped from 17% in June to 29%.

Vaccination Status, Apr - Aug 2021



Impact of Vaccination Status on 2021 Travel, Apr – Aug 2021





Other January 2020 – July 2021 Data

General Travel Behavior

Trip Frequency

How many trips did you take this month?																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
1	76%	73%	77%	79%	71%	72%	74%	70%	69%	74%	70%	73%	77%	78%	72%	70%
2	18%	20%	21%	18%	23%	25%	21%	25%	26%	19%	26%	22%	21%	17%	21%	23%
3 or more	6%	7%	3%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%	7%	4%	6%	3%	6%	7%	7%

Trip Purpose

What was the main purpose of your trip?																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
Visiting family/friends	39%	35%	34%	34%	33%	35%	34%	34%	37%	38%	45%	47%	29%	39%	35%	33%
Vacation	39%	34%	28%	16%	28%	34%	41%	39%	35%	31%	25%	25%	31%	34%	44%	46%
General business	10%	14%	15%	16%	15%	10%	9%	12%	10%	11%	10%	10%	16%	10%	8%	10%
Business - convention/conference/trade show	5.0%	8.8%	9%	11%	7%	7%	3%	7%	5%	7%	5%	5%	7%	3%	4%	8%
To stay with or near my family because of the coronavirus			5%	9%	6%	4%	3%	1%	3%	5%	4%	4%	6%	2%	1%	2%
To stay in a safer place than where I live because of the coronavirus			2%	5%	3%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	100%
Medical treatment	2%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Wellness retreat	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Other	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%	2%	6%	1%	7%	6%	4%	0%

General Travel Behavior

Domestic vs. Outbound

Where did you go for this trip?																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
In the U.S.	92%	93%	94%	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%	96%	98%	97%	99%	97%	97%	98%	96%
Outside the U.S.	7.9%	6.8%	6.2%	3.4%	1.9%	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%	3.6%	2.4%	3.5%	1.0%	3.3%	2.6%	1.9%	3.8%

Destination Type

What best describes the destination of your trip?																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
Small town/countryside	26%	28%	33%	37%	34%	36%	35%	30%	32%	35%	36%	40%	29%	35%	34%	29%
Urban center	31%	32%	30%	28%	25%	21%	24%	27%	25%	26%	27%	25%	28%	23%	24%	26%
Beach	28%	26%	21%	24%	26%	29%	32%	29%	31%	24%	22%	23%	22%	27%	29%	32%
National park	12%	13%	9%	19%	15%	16%	20%	22%	18%	17%	15%	19%	16%	15%	15%	20%
Amusement/theme park	13%	16%	10%	11%	9%	7%	13%	8%	10%	11%	12%	13%	12%	11%	13%	13%
Cultural/historical heritage	13%	15%	13%	11%	10%	14%	11%	14%	13%	11%	12%	11%	12%	12%	9%	14%
Wellness retreat	7%	5%	5%	5%	4%	6%	4%	6%	5%	6%	3%	4%	6%	5%	7%	3%
Sporting (skiing, golfing, etc.)	9%	9%	6%	4%	4%	5%	7%	5%	9%	5%	5%	6%	8%	7%	6%	6%

General Travel Behavior

Trip Planning

Which of the following sources did you use when planning for this trip?																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
Online search	54%	45%	45%	46%	43%	64%	50%	50%	46%	49%	46%	42%	47%	47%	54%	52%
Recommendations from friends and/or family	35%	33%	29%	35%	31%	41%	37%	34%	38%	32%	36%	29%	30%	31%	35%	36%
Travel review websites (such as TripAdvisor)	17%	18%	18%	19%	12%	21%	19%	18%	20%	19%	16%	21%	17%	16%	18%	22%
Destination websites	16%	11%	9%	16%	13%	18%	14%	15%	15%	12%	13%	15%	12%	8%	12%	17%
Online websites that aggregate many hotels and airlines, etc. where you can book directly (such as Expedia)	12%	9%	11%	9%	8%	14%	14%	11%	12%	10%	9%	9%	13%	9%	11%	12%
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	7%	10%	8%	9%	8%	15%	10%	9%	8%	10%	10%	7%	8%	10%	11%	9%
Online travel publications (such as LonelyPlanet and Frommer's)	7%	10%	5%	6%	7%	11%	8%	8%	8%	7%	4%	8%	10%	8%	6%	10%
Online websites that aggregate booking sites where you can click through to book on separate websites (such as Kayak and Trivago)	5%	6%	4%	9%	5%	11%	6%	8%	7%	5%	5%	7%	4%	4%	6%	9%
Travel books / Guides	5%	9%	4%	7%	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%	4%	7%	5%	6%	6%	6%	7%
Newspapers / Magazines	4%	5%	4%	5%	3%	7%	4%	7%	4%	6%	4%	5%	7%	3%	4%	4%
Traditional travel agents	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Travel related TV shows	2%	4%	6%	6%	4%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	7%	3%	4%	5%	6%
Travel related radio	2%	4%	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Other	7%	6%	10%	8%	12%	14%	9%	8%	10%	9%	13%	14%	9%	12%	10%	7%

Personal Trip

Accommodation

What type of accommodation did you use for this trip?																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
A hotel	60%	60%	50%	42%	35%	43%	47%	47%	48%	56%	52%	41%	57%	50%	63%	61%
A private residence	25%	23%	35%	41%	46%	28%	29%	23%	27%	25%	28%	35%	25%	20%	22%	16%
A bed-and-breakfast inn	5%	4%	1%	6%	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	6%	5%	7%	6%	8%
An all-inclusive resort hotel	2%	3%	2%	4%	1%	3%	2%	5%	6%	3%	6%	3%	5%	8%	6%	8%
A campground, trailer or cabin	2%	3%	2%	3%	5%	12%	10%	10%	7%	7%	4%	4%	0%	5%	2%	6%
A vacation rental	6%	4%	6%	2%	6%	11%	10%	15%	11%	9%	8%	9%	7%	10%	11%	13%
A hostel	0%	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	2%	2%	2%	4%	1%	4%	3%	4%
Owned timeshare	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	3%	0%	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%	1%	4%	3%	3%
A cruise ship	2%	3%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Other	4%	6%	4%	6%	8%	6%	6%	2%	4%	3%	4%	8%	8%	4%	3%	1%

Personal Trip

Transportation

What type of transportation did you use during this trip?*																
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
Rental car			15%	12%	7%	12%	11%	13%	12%	14%	15%	15%	18%	15%	18%	20%
My own car			69%	77%	84%	76%	82%	82%	78%	81%	76%	78%	73%	77%	75%	69%
Bus			6%	3%	2%	4%	3%	2%	5%	4%	3%	4%	4%	6%	5%	4%
Train			4%	1%	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%	4%
Cruise			1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Flight	28%	30%	20%	9%	7%	9%	9%	5%	8%	6%	9%	9%	13%	6%	9%	13%
* Question was "Did you take any flight(s) during this trip?" for January and February 2020 surveys																

Business Trip

Accommodation

What type of accommodation did you use for this trip?															
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
A hotel	82%	83%	79%	77%	80%	71%	75%	65%	72%	66%	66%	68%	71%	70%	75%
An all-inclusive resort hotel	8%	10%	14%	16%	22%	22%	18%	23%	17%	20%	21%	23%	10%	23%	23%
A bed-and-breakfast inn	8%	8%	2%	12%	16%	22%	14%	19%	5%	18%	5%	7%	14%	13%	13%
Owned timeshare	5%	2%	9%	7%	12%	12%	13%	8%	5%	11%	11%	9%	12%	6%	13%
A hostel	3%	4%	7%	12%	12%	15%	11%	8%	8%	9%	18%	5%	12%	10%	13%
A cruise ship	3%	1%	4%	0%	6%	7%	4%	2%	2%	5%	0%	0%	0%	3%	5%
A vacation rental	2%	6%	5%	7%	10%	15%	16%	6%	10%	9%	5%	7%	7%	9%	9%
A private residence	2%	6%	4%	2%	8%	10%	2%	2%	3%	11%	3%	5%	7%	3%	2%
Other	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	2%	2%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Business Trip

Transportation

What type of transportation did you use during this trip?*															
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Mar-21	May-21	Jul-21
Rental car			36%	30%	44%	34%	32%	32%	32%	39%	26%	32%	47%	46%	29%
My own car			41%	49%	40%	59%	54%	54%	54%	32%	45%	57%	47%	44%	49%
Bus			2%	14%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	11%	9%	14%	13%	18%
Train			11%	2%	8%	12%	14%	14%	14%	11%	8%	5%	10%	13%	13%
Cruise			4%	9%	8%	2%	0%	0%	0%	9%	5%	0%	8%	6%	7%
Flight	61%	52%	30%	14%	26%	17%	20%	20%	20%	27%	26%	14%	8%	27%	24%
* Question was "Did you take any flight(s) during this trip?" for January and February 2020 surveys															



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