

MONITORING SENTIMENT FOR DOMESTIC AND INTRA-EUROPEAN TRAVEL

WAVE 6 | 04/21



# WAVE 6 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

This report monitors sentiment and short-term intentions for domestic and intra-regional travel within Europe and is the **sixth wave of market research**, initiated in September 2020. Responses are collected from European citizens from 10 high-volume source markets in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

- Europeans' desire for travel climbs to its highest level since the survey begun, with 56% of total respondents planning to take a trip by the end of August. 22% of all surveyed Europeans intend to travel between May and June 2021, while an additional 36% are in favor of taking trip later in the summer.
- 29% of 'early-bird' travellers target the May and June period, while an additional 46% favour July and August for their next trip. As for destination choice, 49% aim to travel to another European country and 36% to remain within their domestic borders.
- Vacations remain the predominant travel motivation for Europeans: 66% of early-bird travellers will travel for leisure up from the 56% pre-pandemic benchmark<sup>2</sup>, while visiting friends and relatives is the main purpose for 19% of travellers.

# **RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS**

- The impact of COVID-19 vaccines on travel sentiment is fairly positive; 48% of all surveyed Europeans feel much more confident about planning trips in the next 6 months as a result of the vaccine rollout. 31% have neutral feelings, while 21% of respondents are still very sceptical.
- Interest in holidays by the sea remains strong; 34% of early-bird travellers favour this kind of trip. A preference for nature and the outdoors is stated by 15% of respondents and is particularly strong among those from central European markets.
- Over half of early-bird travellers (52%) show a willingness to make their next trip by plane, though in Britain, there appears to have been a falling off in air travel confidence, with an 11% decrease in this preference. Car travel remains the second most popular choice for 36% of Europeans with short-term travel plans.

# **RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS**

- Despite the efforts made by EU countries to bolster tourism in face of the pandemic, Europeans are still experiencing challenges in following their original travel plans: only 9% of all respondents have not modified plans for their upcoming holidays.
- When it comes to personal health, air travel is mentioned by 17% of all Europeans surveyed as the most worrisome part of the trip, followed by visiting bars and restaurants (13%).
- While quarantine measures are the leading concern for early-bird travellers (16%), there is growing anxiety (11%) regarding limitations on activities available and "things to do" at the destination.



# INSIGHTS ON TRAVELLERS' ONLINE SENTIMENT

The report is also complemented by insights on travellers' online sentiment for major European destinations for the period of January 2021 compared to January 2020.

- 36% of all travel social media mentions are made by the 35-44 age group double the number of those made by the hyper-connected young Millennials age group (aged 25-35).
- In January 2021, the **Tourism Product Index**<sup>2</sup> measuring tourists' satisfaction with the offering of European destinations was 60%, representing a 7% decrease compared to January 2020 and a small 4% increase from December 2020. This slight improvement could indicate that both tourists and destinations are slowly adapting to tourism in the COVID-19 era.
- The Hotel Satisfaction Index<sup>2</sup> during January 2021 was 64% the same as in January 2020 and only slightly below its December 2020 level of 66%. Also in this case, stability indicates an adjustment to the 'new normal'.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESTINATIONS



- As concerns among travellers regarding the destination experience grow, NTBs and DMOs<sup>1</sup> should communicate clearly which attractions are currently open and which restrictions/ rules apply to visitors. Consistent and transparent messaging will be the key to managing travellers' expectations and re-building confidence.
- Developing and communicating strict COVID-19 protocols for bars and restaurants is critical. Campaigns employing a funnier and engaging approach to COVID-19 measures would boost consumers' confidence and address health anxieties to visit such places.
- To accommodate road-trippers and nature seekers, destinations could offer special itineraries, off-the-beaten-track experiences and outdoor family fun stops. A good example of engaging content would be playlists of local music to accompany car rides, making the experience more immersive.
- Responsible travel is at the forefront of restarting tourism. Destinations should undertake initiatives such as brand story telling cultivating a "sense of care", partnering with environmental NGOs and including guests in local community events and activities.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESSES



- After a long wait, businesses should capitalise on the positive travel sentiment and customer confidence for the spring-summer periods. 'Buy now - save later' deals, free upgrades, lead-nurturing strategies and re-marketing campaigns will motivate hesitant customers.
- As many sun and sea destinations announce opening dates, independent hotels and resorts could strengthen staff training in adjusting to the new circumstances, further developing resilience thinking, implementing health and safety protocols and using brand values to provide worry-free vacations for their quests.
- For 3 in 4 Europeans, travel is the time to get together with their family/partner. Therefore, tourism brands can market themselves as the ideal setting for families and partners to share quality time and extraordinary experiences.
- With travel corridors being agreed between countries and direct bookings on the rise, service providers - accommodation, airlines and car-rental businesses - could collaborate on discount "fly/drive and stay" packages and promote them directly to niche audiences.

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# How to read

# Wave 6

1. Dates on the graphs refer to the following data collection periods for each research wave:

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	<u>Wave 6</u>
Surveys	27 Aug –	21 Sep -	19 Oct –	20 Nov -	18 Dec '20 –	5-19 Feb '21
dates	15 Sep '20	9 Oct '20	6 Nov '20	3 Dec '20	7 Jan '21	

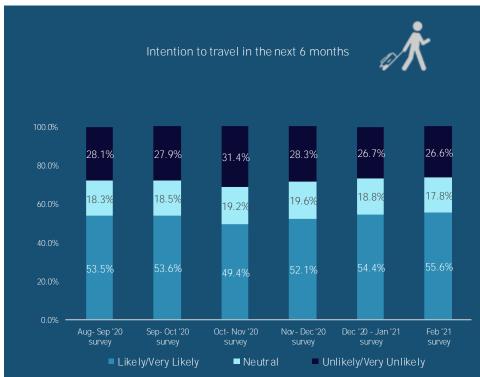
- 2. To present Wave 6 timings in which respondents are most likely to take their next trip, the following time periods should be used as a reference:
  - This month; February 2021.
  - In 1-2 months; March April 2021.
  - In 3-4 months; May June 2021.
  - In 5-6 months; July August 2021.
- 3. To present data and insights, the following distinct groups have been analysed:
  - Total respondents; 5,837
  - Respondents with short-term travel plans/ most likely to travel in the next 6 months ("early-bird travellers"); 3,246
  - Respondents selecting outbound European destinations; 4,122
- 4. Only significant changes between current and previous waves are shown; Significant changes refer to >2.5% for the total sample and >5% for the smaller samples, in absolute numbers. To indicate these changes, the following symbols were used:

  - Numbers next to the arrows reflect the <u>percentage of change in the share of respondents</u> selecting a specific response between current and previous waves
- When mention of new COVID-19 cases is made, it refers to the data collection period.
- All data and insights refer to domestic and intra-European travel, unless otherwise stated.



# Travel sentiment climbs to its highest level since September 2020: 56% of Europeans intend to travel by the end of August 2021



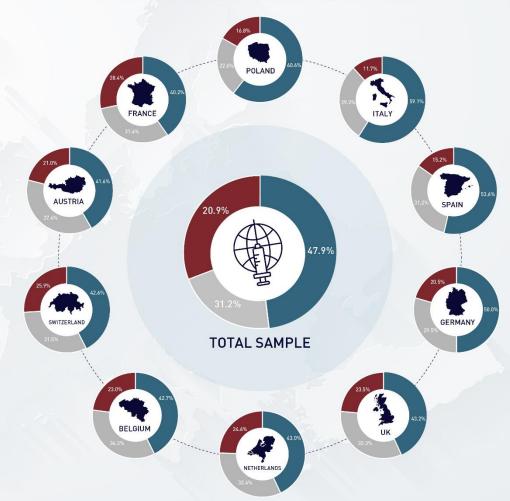


# 1 IN 2 EUROPEANS FEEL MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT TRAVEL AS A RESULT OF THE VACCINE ROLLOUT

COVID-19 vaccine sparks more optimism among respondents over the age of 45 (52%), compared to respondents aged 44 and below (45%).

- Agree/Strongly agree
- Neutral
- Disagree/Strongly disagree

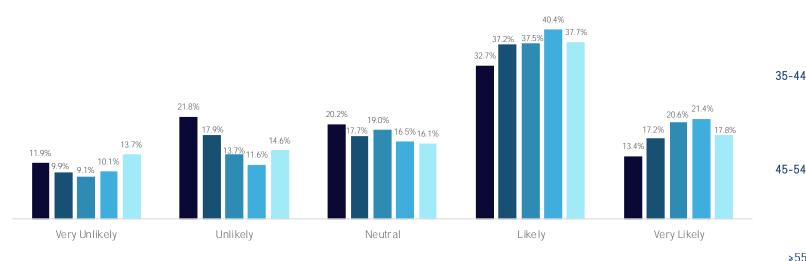
Q22.To what extent do you agree/ disagree with the following statement: 'Now that a treatment/ vaccine for COVID-19 has been found, I feel much more optimistic and confident about planning trips in the next six months'.



## Interest in travel by summer's end surges among 45 to 55-year-olds, while Gen Z (18-24) hesitancy persists

Vaccine rollout brings travel confidence in only 28% of Gen Z respondents as opposed to 36% among those over 35.





Feb '21 survey







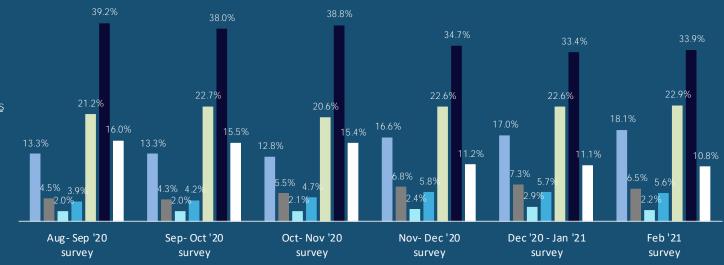
≥55

# Despite rise in interest for sun and beach holidays, urban destinations maintain a steady fascination among European travellers

Respondents most likely to travel in the next 6 months, per type of traveller



- Bleisure travellers
- Business travellers
- Explorers of cultural identity & roots
- Immersive explorers
- City life enthusiasts
- Gastronomy lovers



## The overall sample displays increasing certainty about trip timing, with many eyeing July-August

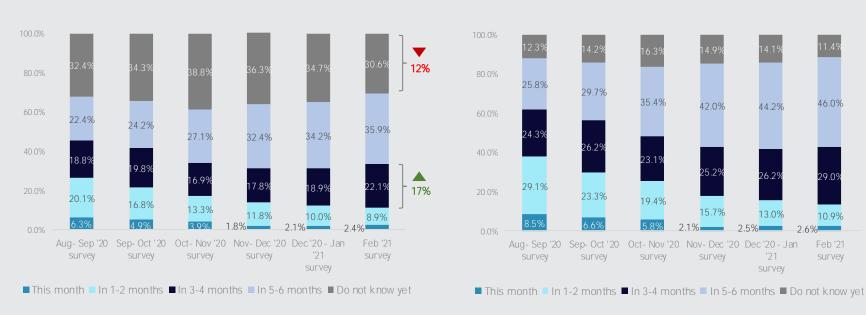
#### When will Europeans travel next? Total sample vs. early-bird travellers

46.0%

29.09

10.9%

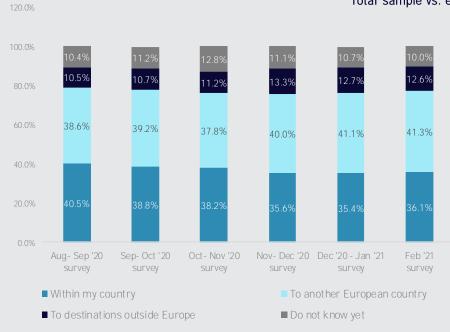
survey



No. of respondents: 5,837 No. of respondents: 3,246

# International travel within Europe remains respondents' leading choice, a trend that is even stronger among "early-bird" travellers

# Where will Europeans travel within the next 6 months? Total sample vs. early-bird travellers







## PREFERRED COUNTRIES FOR THE

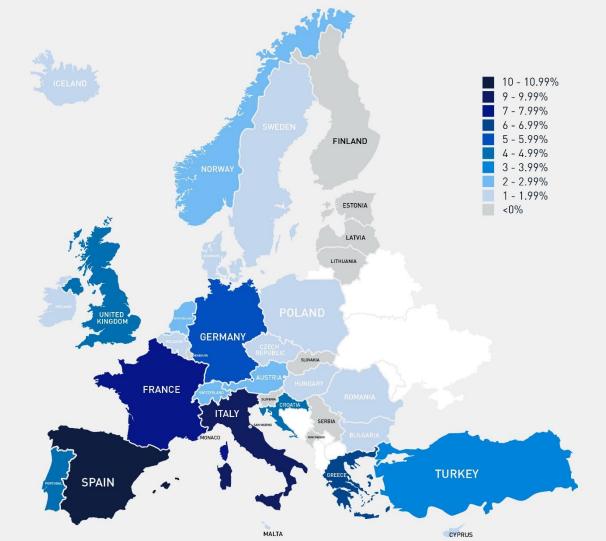
#### **NEXT EUROPEAN TRIP**

Italy narrows the gap with Spain while top 5 destinations hold their positions

#### **TOP 10 COUNTRIES**

Spain	10.4%
Italy	9.0%
France	7.0%
Greece	6.2%
Germany	5.2%
Portugal	4.7%
United Kingdom	4.2%
Croatia	4.0%
Turkey	3.5%
Netherlands	2.9%

Please use this map as a reference only

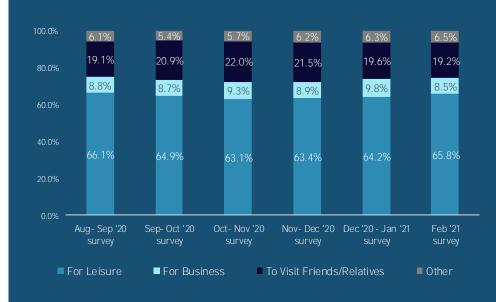


<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question

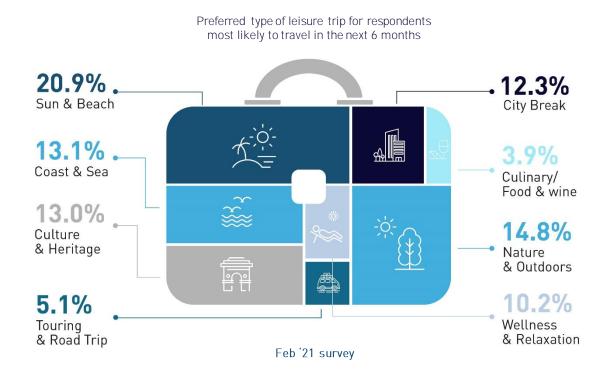
# Leisure is the predominant travel motivation for the upcoming spring and summer



# Purpose of travel for respondents most likely to travel in the next 6 months



# Over 1 in 3 Europeans with upcoming travel plans will head for the sea, while scenic natural settings are in demand for 15% of respondents





72% of respondents planning a culture and heritage trip see health & safety protocols in a positive light, vs. 62% of those planning to travel for nature and outdoors

<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question

# Holiday preferences remain unchanged except for a 61% rise in sun and beach interest among the Swiss



# The great outdoors holds a particular appeal for Central Europeans and residents of Benelux countries



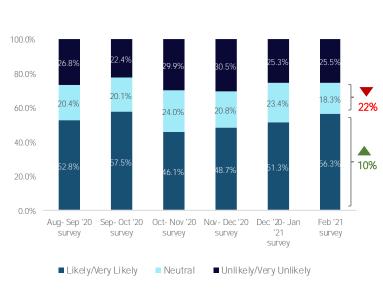
#### **GFRMANY**

22

More than 1 in 2 Germans are optimistic about travelling in the next 6 months, with a particular emphasis on July and August trips



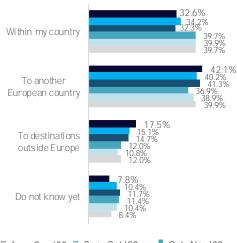
#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months



#### When will Germans travel?



## Where will Germans travel within the next 6 months?





survey

Q10.Where do you plan to travel in the next 6 months?

survey

survey

Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

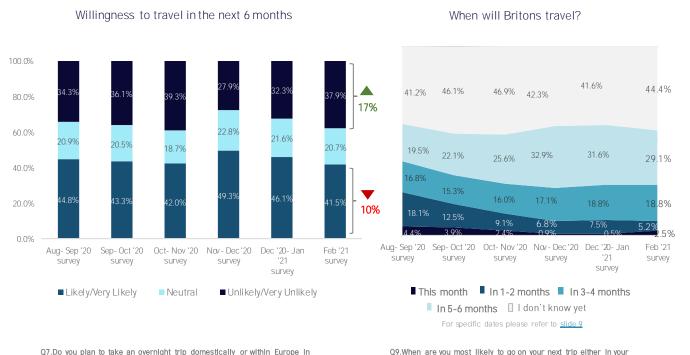
Q9.When are you most likely to go on your next trip either in your Q10.Where do you plan to tr country or within Europe?

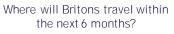
#### UNITED KINGDOM

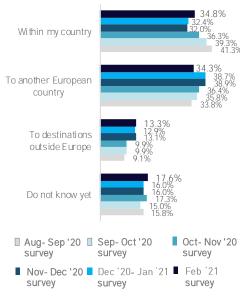
## Britons' sentiment greatly deteriorates in light of UK government advice

against non-essential international travel\*









Q10.Where do you plan to travel In the next 6 months?

Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

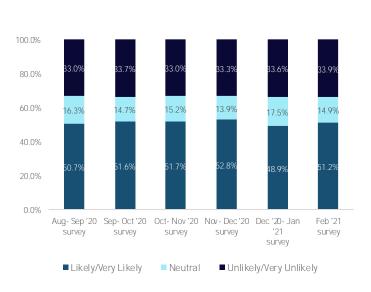
Q9.When are you most likely to go on your next trip either in your country or within Europe?

#### **FRANCE**

# The French maintain a stable travel sentiment with 39% looking at July and August for their next vacations



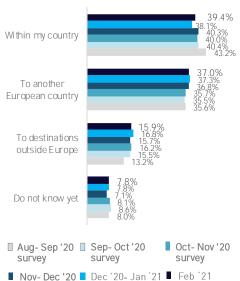
#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months



#### When will French travel?



Where will French travel within the next 6 months?



Q10.Where do you plan to travel In the next 6 months?

survey

survey

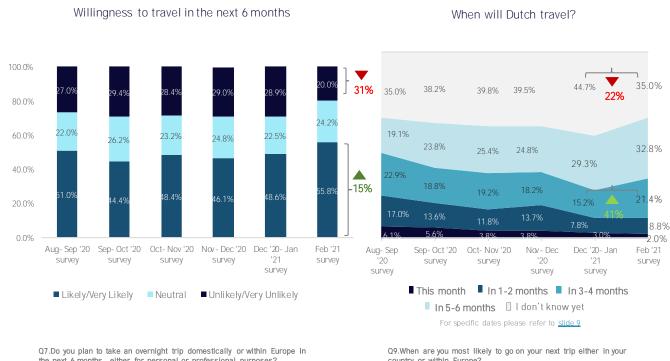
survey

Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

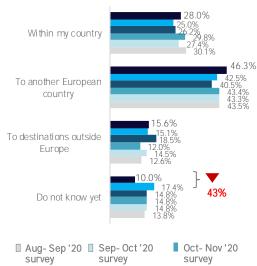
#### **NETHERLANDS**

The Dutch are now more interested in taking a trip during the next 6 months (+15%), with destinations abroad\* becoming more appealing (+7%)





Where will Dutch travel within the next 6 months?



Q10.Where do you plan to travel in the next 6 months?

survey

Nov- Dec '20 ■ Dec '20- Jan '21 ■ Feb '21

survey

country or within Europe?

the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

25

\*Refers to other European countries and countries outside Europe.

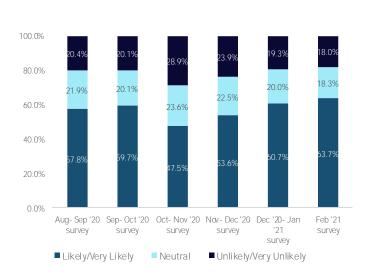
survey

#### ITALY

# 2 in 5 Italians plan to take a trip around mid to late summer, favouring domestic destinations



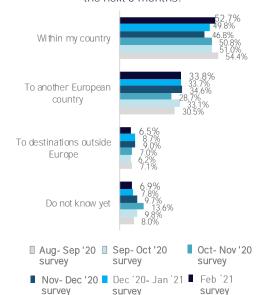
#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months



#### When will Italians travel?



## Where will Italians travel within the next 6 months?



Q10.Where do you plan to travel In the next 6 months?

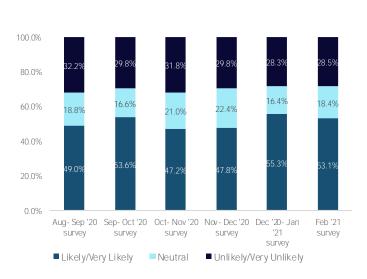
Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

#### **BELGIUM**

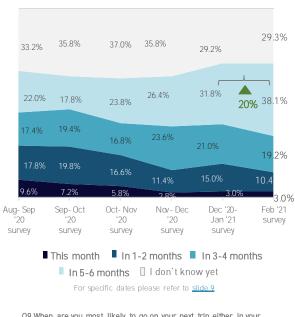
Belgian respondents show preference for intra-European travel with July and August (+20%) perceived as the most feasible time for trips



#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months

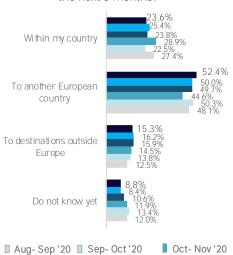


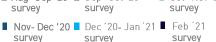
#### When will Belgians travel?



Q9. When are you most likely to go on your next trip either in your country or within Europe?

# Where will Belgians travel within the next 6 months?





Q10.Where do you plan to travel in the next 6 months?

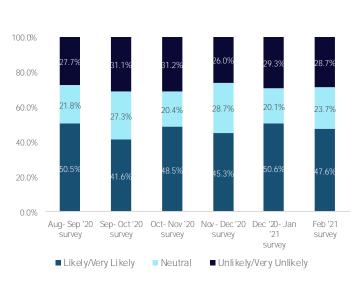
Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

#### SWITZFRI AND

The Swiss are starting to pinpoint exact timing of their next trip, reporting a 72% surge in their travel plans for the period May-June 2021



#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months

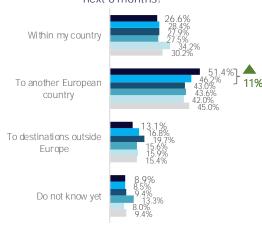


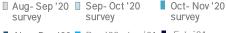
#### When will Swiss travel?

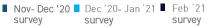


country or within Europe?

#### Where will Swiss travel within the next 6 months?







Q10.Where do you plan to travel In the next 6 months?

Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

28

#### **SPAIN**

29

## Spanish respondents display the second strongest desire for domestic travel from all surveyed markets, without committing to an exact date



31.4% 32.6% 31.5%

Oct- Nov '20

survey

survey

12.6% 12.3% 14.8%

15.0% 12.4%

Where will Spaniards travel within the next 6 months?

Within my country

To another European

country

To destinations outside Europe

Do not know vet

■ Aug-Sep'20 ■ Sep-Oct'20

survey

survey

■ Nov- Dec '20 ■ Dec '20- Jan '21 ■ Feb '21

survey

survey

#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months



#### When will Spaniards travel?



Q10.Where do you plan to travel in the next 6 months?

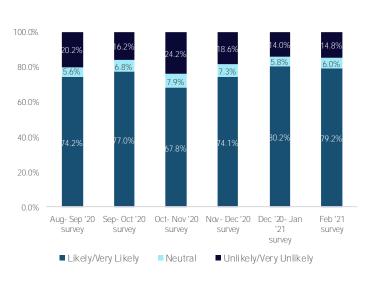
Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

#### **POLAND**

Eager to be on the move, more Poles (+61%) are targeting May and June and are primarily interested in visiting foreign destinations



#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months



#### When will Poles travel?



#### Q10.Where do you plan to travel In the next 6 months?

survey

survey

Nov- Dec '20 ■ Dec '20- Jan '21 ■ Feb '21

Oct- Nov '20

survey

survey

Where will Poles travel within the next 6 months?

Within my country

To another European country

To destinations outside Europe

Do not know yet

■ Aug-Sep'20 ■ Sep-Oct'20

survey

survey

Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

No. of respondents: 500

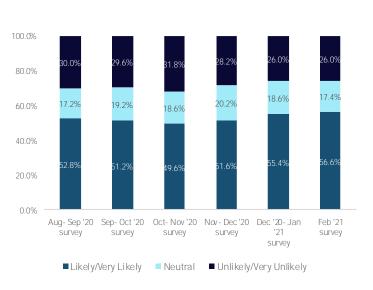
country or within Europe?

#### **AUSTRIA**

# Austrians are now keener on travel than at any time in the last 6 months, with a 48% rise in planned trips for May and June



#### Willingness to travel in the next 6 months



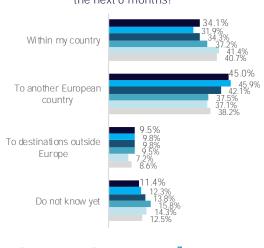
## Q7.Do you plan to take an overnight trip domestically or within Europe in the next 6 months, either for personal or professional purposes?

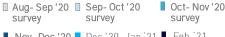
#### When will Austrians travel?



Q9.When are you most likely to go on your next trip either in your country or within Europe?

# Where will Austrians travel within the next 6 months?





■ Nov- Dec '20 ■ Dec '20- Jan '21 ■ Feb '21 survey survey survey

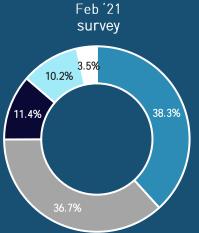
Q10.Where do you plan to travel in the next 6 months?



## 3 in 4 Europeans will use their next trip for spending time with their family or partner



Preferred travel companion for respondents most likely to travel in the next 6 months.





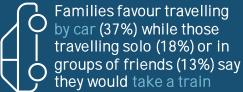


By myself



With friends

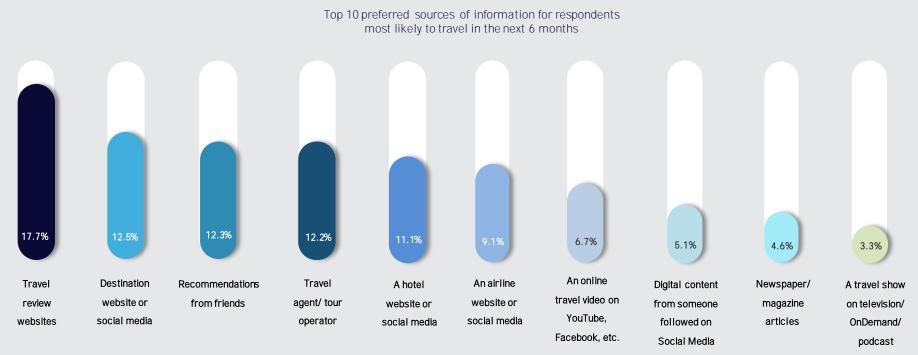




<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question

## Europeans tap review websites and destinations' digital touchpoints

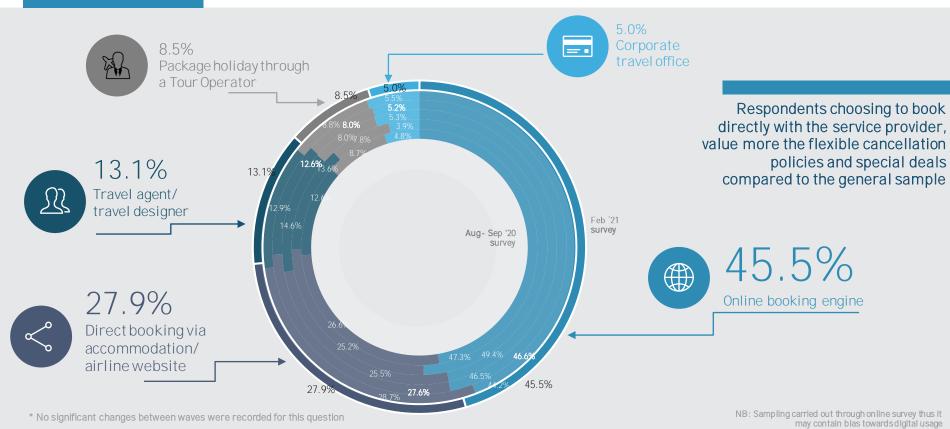
when planning their next getaways



Feb '21 survey

<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question

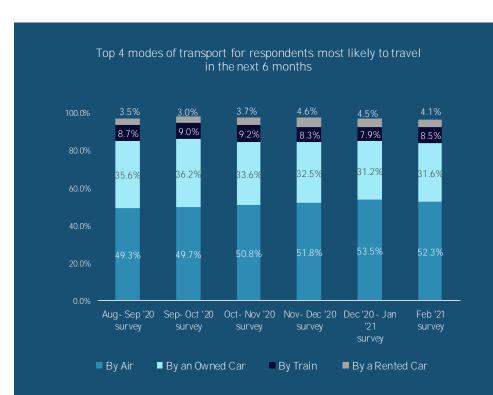
## Booking methods are consistent with previous survey waves, with online booking engines (45.5%) way ahead



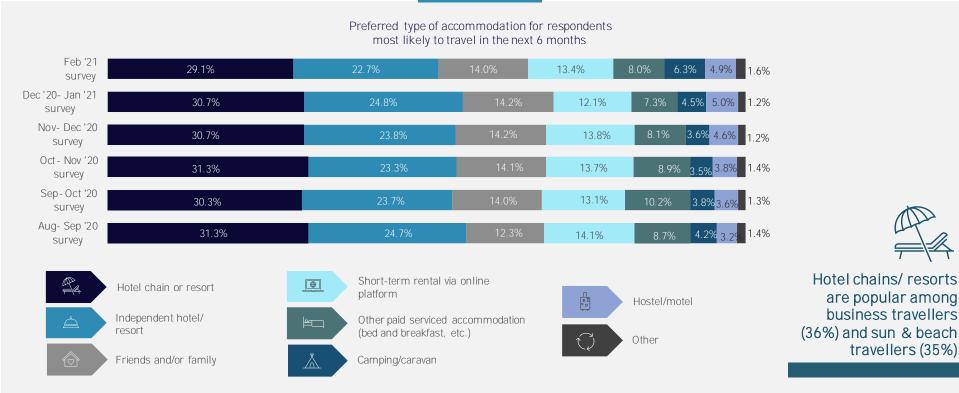
Q13. How will you book your next trip within Europe?

# Although more than half of early-bird travellers plan to fly for their next trip, Britons (-11%) are now slightly more reluctant





## Although staying at a hotel or resort is less popular than in previous waves, it prevails as the go-to option for 52% of respondents



<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question

are popular among

business travellers

travellers (35%)

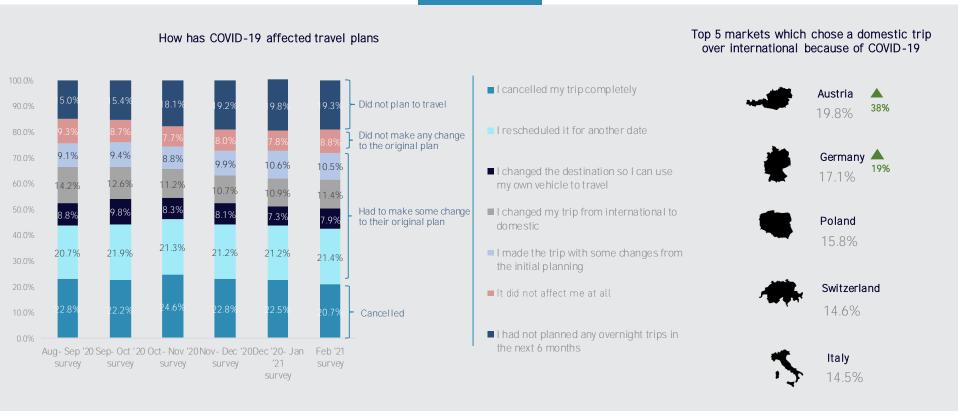
# With relaxation, comfort and fun higher on everyone's agenda, COVID-19's grip on travel sentiment begins to slightly loosen



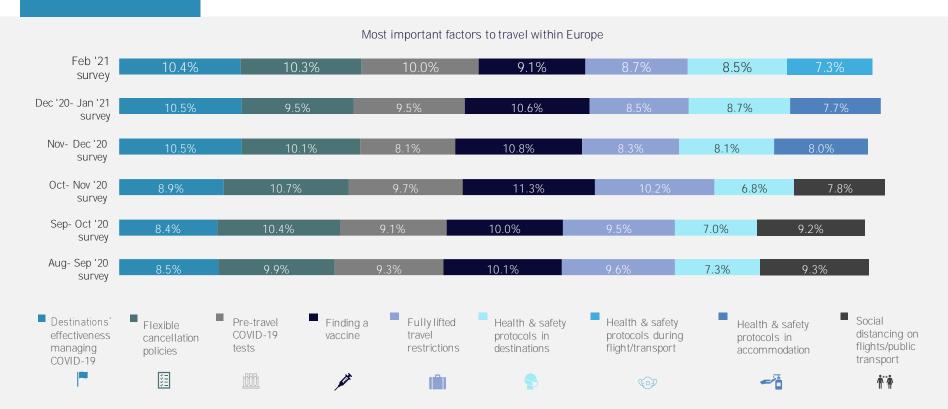
<sup>\*</sup>It is the first time for 'Fun' to appear in the top 6 travel qualities



# Despite Europe-wide efforts, travellers still face challenges sticking to their original plans. The majority shared that they had to reschedule or change their destination

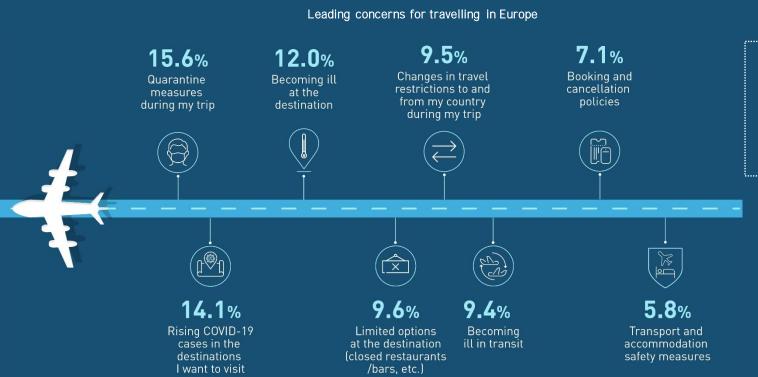


### Destination effectiveness in managing COVID-19 and flexibility in cancellation lead trip planning factors; in-transport health and safety protocols a new entry



<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question.

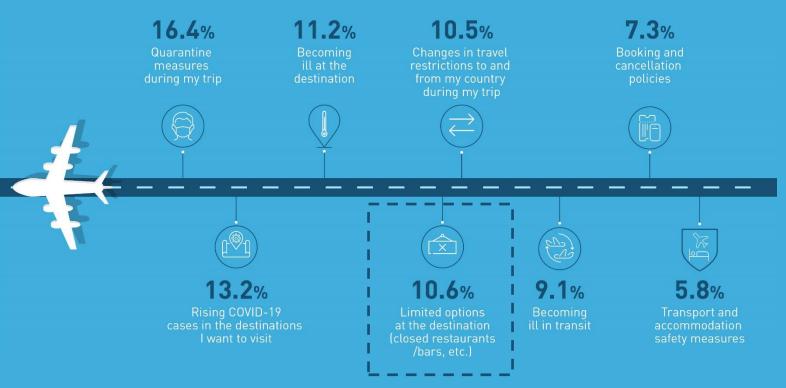
## SIZING UPTRAVEL ANXIETIES Quarantine at the destination remains a major deterrent to European travel



Compared to other age groups, respondents over the age of 55 are slightly more concerned about the rising COVID-19 cases and becoming ill at the

# TRAVEL CONCERNS OF "EARLY-BIRD" TRAVELLERS An increasing number of respondents with short-term plans question whether they can get the most out of their in-destination experience

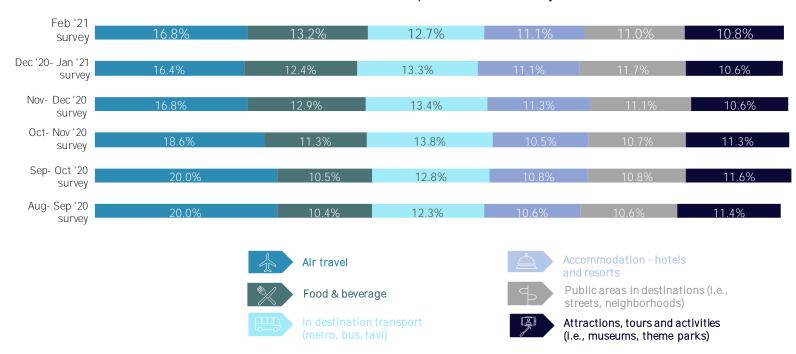
Leading concerns for those who are most likely to travel next



<sup>\*</sup> No significant changes between waves were recorded for this question.
Q4.What currently concerns you the most about travelling within Europe?

# Visiting destination's bars and restaurants is now causing more anxiety among Europeans

## The most worrisome touch points during travel in relation to personal health & safety



#### 2 IN 3 TRAVELLERS FEEL MORE REASSURED WHEN TRAVELLING TO PLACES WITH STRICT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS 38.6% 40.0% 37.6% 35 35 28.1% 28.8% 29.7% 30 30 30 25 25 25 20 20 20 11.7% 13.2% 13.0% 13.4% 15 15 15 10.1% 10.2% 8.4% 8.0% 9.1% 10 10 10 Nov - Dec '20 survey I feel more I feel I cannot I feel much safer, It does not I feel that strict knowing that my relaxed to make any enjoy everything protocols can health is a top concern enjoy my stay difference that a place has damage the joy for the destination to offer of travelling to me

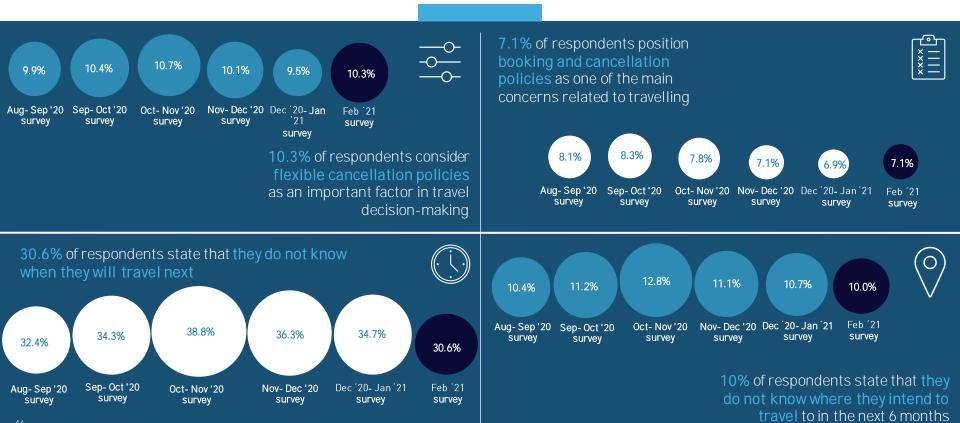
Notes: • Q18. Please select a response which describes you the most:

"When I travel to places with strict health and safety protocols...

• Refers to survey respondents that are most likely to travel by the end of August, n=3,246

#### THE UNCERTAINTY CONTROL PANEL

4 KPIs illustrating the level of uncertainty for domestic and intra-European travel





## **METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX**

## **THE SURVEY**

- Online market research. Survey participants are consumers with at least 2 overnight trips in 2019.
- Distribution/ data collection period:
  - Wave 1: 27 August 2020 15 September 2020; sample= 5,762/ Wave 2: 21 September 2020 9 October 2020; sample= 5,876/ Wave 3: 19 October 2020 6 November 2020; sample= 5,832/ Wave 4: 20 November 2020 3 December 2020; sample= 5,742/ Wave 5: 18 December 2020 7 January 2021; sample= 5,855/ Wave 6: 5-19 February 2021; sample= 5,837
  - · Countries: Germany, United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Poland and Austria
  - Languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish and Dutch
- Research themes examined: Travel personas (1 question), Travel concerns and COVID-19 impact on travel (8 questions), Travel intentions, preferences and trip planning (10 questions), COVID-19 and responsible travel (3 questions).
- Wave 6: 50% of respondents are male and 50% are female.
- Number of respondents and age group per source country:

	Country										Total		
		UK	IT	ES	AT	FR	DE	PL	BE	СН	NL		
Age	18 - 24	88	79	45	74	105	92	56	109	97	149	894	
	25 - 34	135	120	74	134	142	153	106	113	125	141	1,243	
	35 - 44	126	146	101	113	155	150	120	120	106	109	1,246	
	45 - 54	138	180	105	96	161	168	93	78	42	54	1,115	
	≥55	263	225	175	83	128	187	125	79	27	47	1,339	
Total		750	750	500	500	691	750	500	499	397	500	5,837	

## **METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX**

## TRAVELLERS' ONLINE SENTIMENT

- Objective: Benchmark major European tourism destinations in terms of tourist satisfaction and interests based on social media mentions
- **Destinations**: United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Croatia, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain
- Origin markets; Germany, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland and Austria
- The following indicators are analysed:
  - TPI > The Tourist Products Index, measures the level of satisfaction with the offer (products) of the destination in its various categories: Arts & Culture, Gastronomy, Sunbathing, etc. This index is obtained by analysing the distribution of positive, negative and neutral comments on Twitter and TripAdvisor.
  - HIS > The Hotel Satisfaction Index, measures the level of visitor satisfaction with the entire accommodation sector of a destination based on relevant comments that guests make on TripAdvisor, Expedia and Booking.
- Indexes are calculated by using advanced Natural Language Processing, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning techniques to analyse millions of spontaneous tourist interactions on social media or reviews sites.
- Index scoring system: The calculated indices show values between 0 and 100 points as follow:
  - 0 to 24 points: Very low levels of satisfaction and confidence and therefore a priority area for reconfiguration.
  - 25 to 49 points: Relatively low level of satisfaction and confidence. Considerable potential for improvement.
  - 50 to 74 points: Good to very good satisfaction level. Moderate potential for improvement.
  - 75 to 100 points: **Excellent satisfaction and confidence** levels. In some cases there are margins for improvement, although most of them constitute level to maintain and consolidate.

For a more detailed description about the specific indices please visit the following <u>link</u>.

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#### Study on Monitoring Sentiment for Intra-European Travel

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Please note that while every possible effort has been made to ensure the data in this report is accurate, it is not possible to completely eliminate every margin of error.

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