



COVID-19 Research Roundup

September 21, 2020

Pemberton, Vancouver Coast & Mountains

British Columbia is in Phase 3 of BC's Restart Plan

On June 24, 2020, it was announced that British Columbia is taking the next step in [BC's Restart Plan](#) with a gradual transition to Phase 3, including the smart, safe and respectful return of travel and tourism within the province.

On September 18, 2020, Canadian and US officials agreed to keep the border between the two countries closed to non-essential travel until at least October 21, 2020.

While BC is in Phase 3 of the BC Restart Plan, and is not open to non-essential travel from the US or International countries, information provided in this Research Roundup Report highlights not only local insights, but global insights which may be applicable to BC now.





Destination BC is rounding up relevant research and articles each week related to the travel and tourism industry and COVID-19.

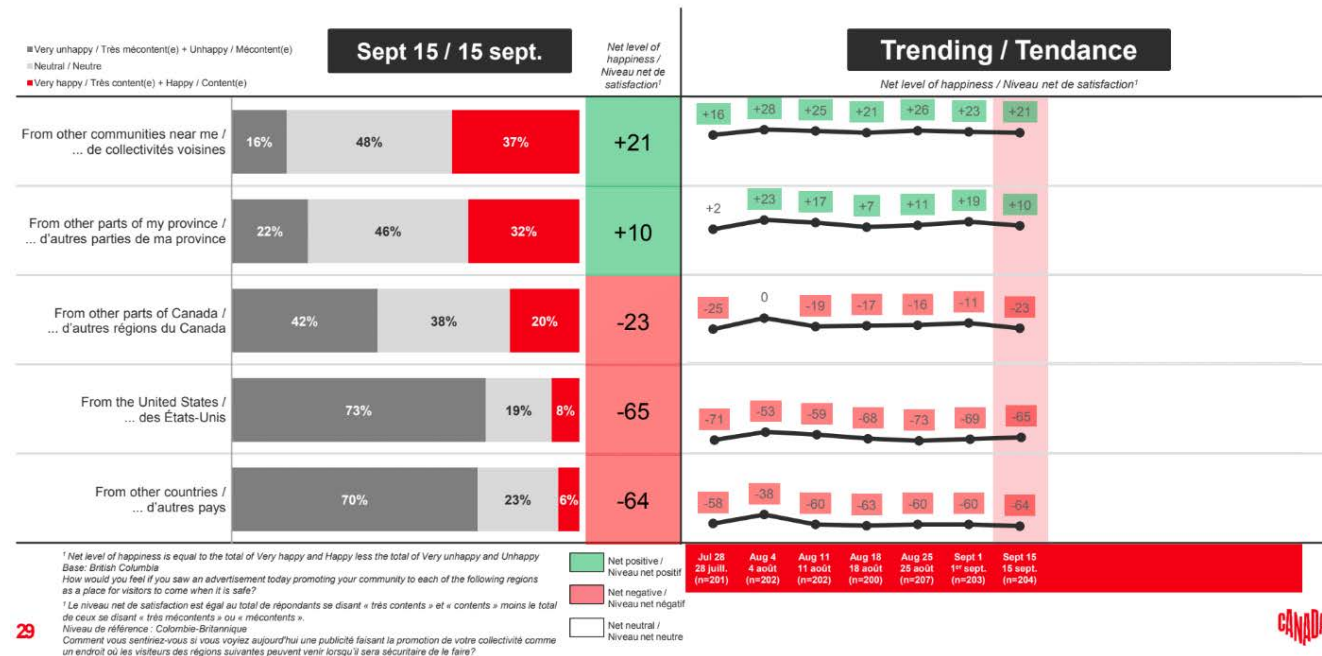
Last week in brief:

- BC resident receptivity of advertising to visitors from other parts of Canada decreases
- Travel-related Google searches in BC decline
- BC residents are no more comfortable with travel than previous wave
- BC hotel ADR dropped -33.8% year-over-year for the week of Sept 6-12
- BC's overall domestic overnight visitation week-over-week decreases, following Labour Day weekend
- BC's overall domestic overnight visitation decreases again after a one week year-over-year increase
- Movement within BC's retail and recreation sector is down 7%
- Only 25% of BC tourism firms surveyed are operating with business as usual
- Vaccine and stabilized infection rates are biggest factors to increase Canadians comfort level for travel
- US travellers more likely to take domestic leisure trips
- 54% of American travellers are confident they can travel safely now
- Travel rearrangements slow in the US
- Most European travellers want flexible refund/rebooking options
- International visitation down 65% for the first half of 2020
- Tourism and COVID-19 dashboard and reporting resources available

BC resident receptivity of advertising to visitors from other parts of Canada decreases

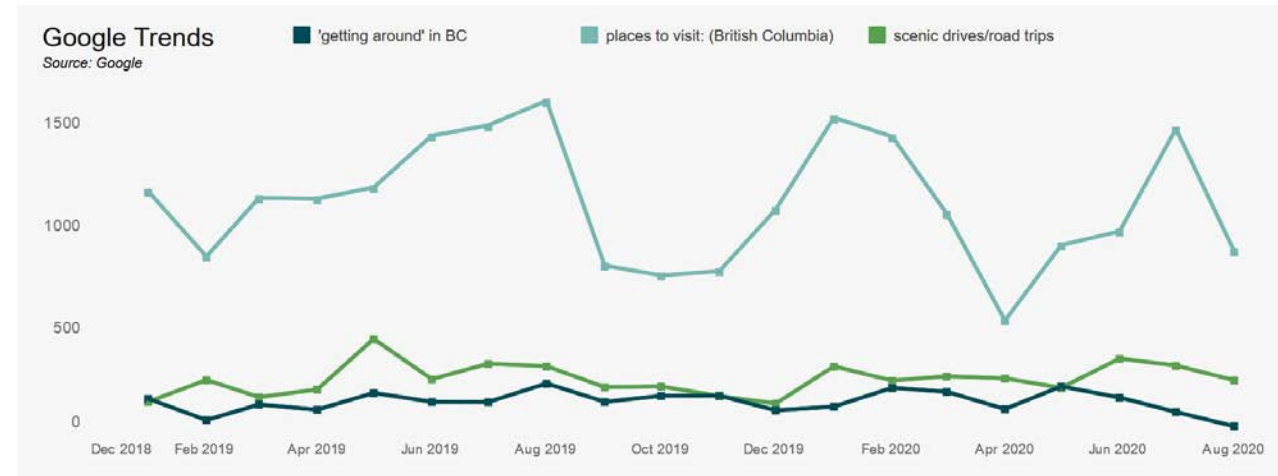
- Destination Canada's Resident Sentiment Wave 18 (September 15) report shows that the sentiment of BC residents, receptivity of promoting their community as a destination has decreased towards visitors from other parts of Canada, down 10 points from September 1.
- Destination Canada has transitioned the cadence of the Resident Sentiment research to bi-weekly from weekly.

British Columbia / Colombie-Britannique



Travel-related Google searches in BC decline

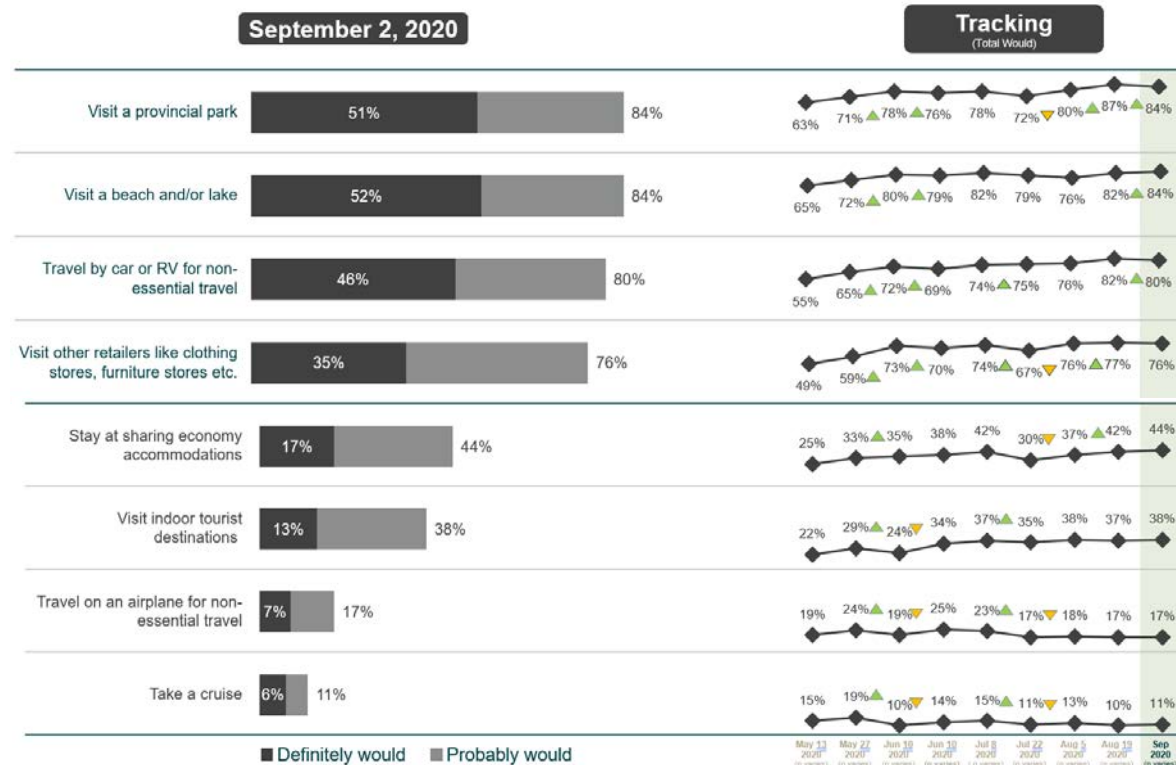
- Travel-related Google searches dropped in August for key terms “getting around in BC”, “places to visit: British Columbia” and “scenic drives/road trips”.
- These insights from Google and more can be found in the Signals & Sentiment dashboard located on the Destination BC COVID-19 Hub, under [Destination BC Response Signals & Sentiment Dashboard](#) tab.



Source: [Signals & Sentiment Dashboard, Destination BC](#)

BC residents are no more comfortable with travel than previous wave

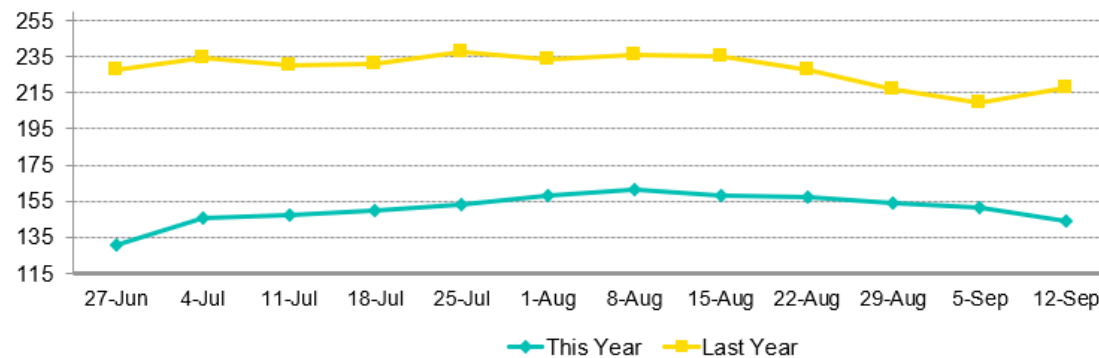
- Compared to Wave 8, BC residents' comfort with tourism activities and modes of travel have not changed significantly. This comes after two weeks of several upticks in comfort.
- Activities with the highest level of comfort continue to be social distance-friendly activities, such as outdoor recreation and vehicle travel, while activities with lower levels of comfort continue to be mass transport, such as airplanes and cruises, as well as visiting indoor tourist destination.



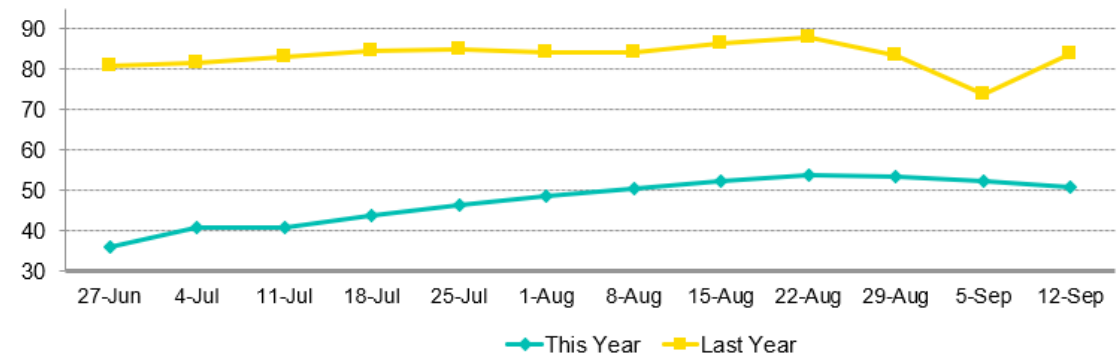
BC hotel ADR dropped -33.8% year-over-year for the week of Sept 6-12

- STR, an agency which captures BC hotel performance, shows the average weekly ADR for BC was \$144.20 for the week of September 6-12, which represents a -33.8% change year-over-year (September 8-14, 2019).
- Of the six cities tracked, the City of Vancouver saw the highest year-over-year rate of ADR percent change at -51.0%, followed by Richmond (-41.9%), Victoria, (-21.2%), Kamloops (-13.3%), Whistler (-6.9%), and Kelowna (-5.8%).
- BC hotel occupancy was 50.9%. This represents a decrease of 1.4 points from the previous week and a decrease of -39.3 points compared to the previous year.

Weekly ADR - Jun 27, 2020 to Sep 12, 2020



Weekly Occ (%) - Jun 27, 2020 to Sep 12, 2020

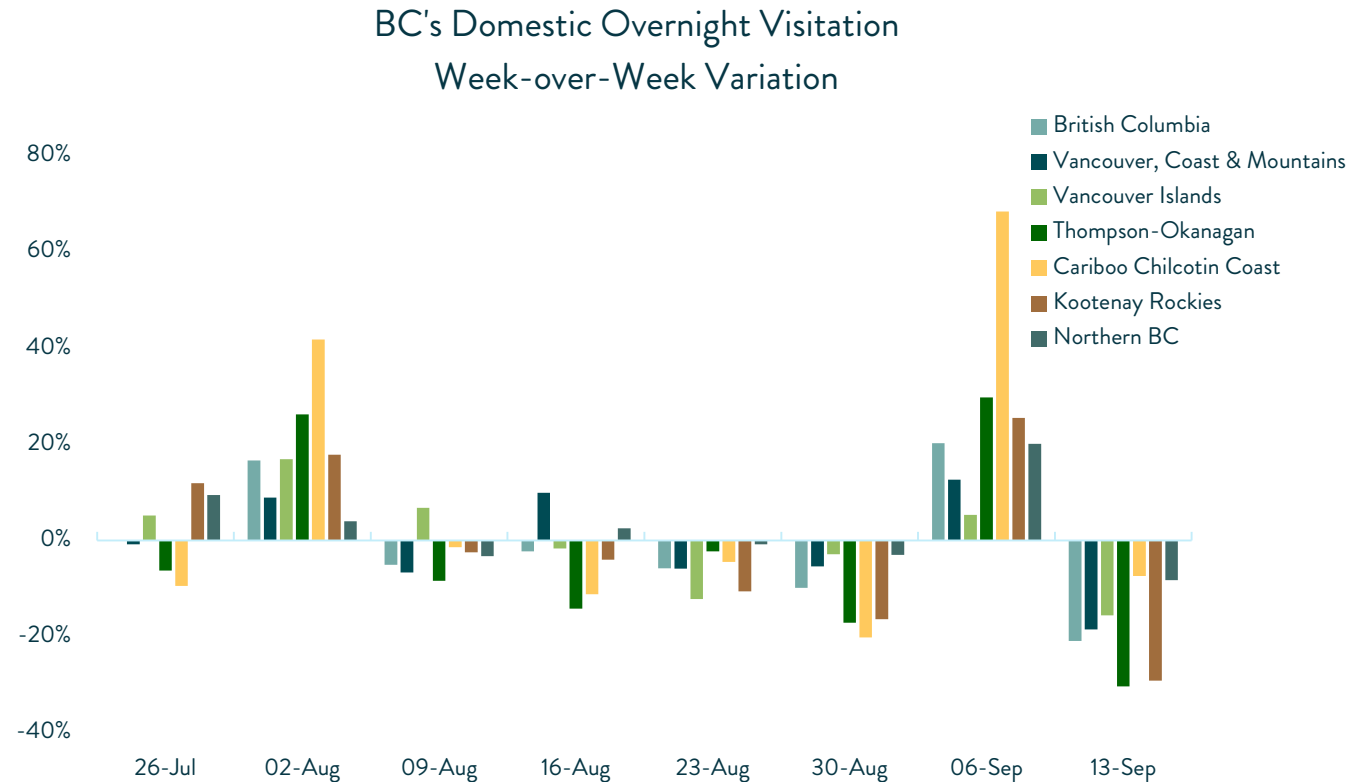


Source: [2020 STR, STR Global Ltd](#)



BC's overall domestic overnight visitation week-over-week decreases, following Labour Day weekend

- According to Environics Analytics Weekly COVID Tracker Report, during the week ending September 13, BC experienced a week-over-week decrease in domestic overnight visitation (down -20.9%) from the previous week, which had greater movement due to the Labour Day weekend.
- All areas across the province saw week-over-week decreases in movement as well:
 - Thompson Okanagan (-30.4%)
 - Kootenay Rockies (-29.2%)
 - Vancouver, Coast & Mountains (-18.5%)
 - Vancouver Island (-15.6%)
 - Northern BC (-8.3%)
 - Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (-7.4%)

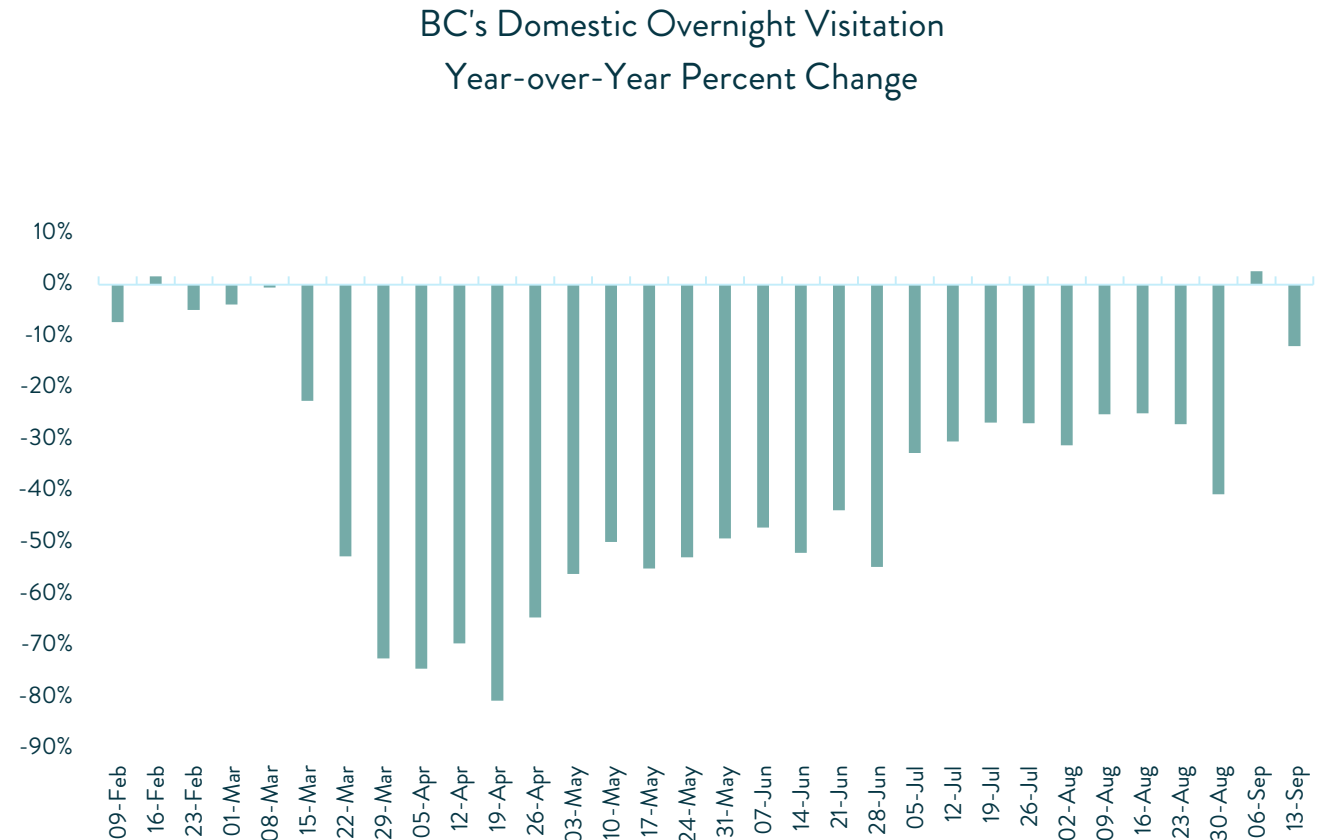


Source: [Environics Analytics Weekly COVID Tracker Report, September 13, 2020](#)



BC's overall domestic overnight visitation decreases again after a one week year-over-year increase

- Environics Analytics also reports year-over-year analysis in the Weekly COVID Tracker Report. Following the first year-over-year increase since mid-February during the week ending September 6, BC resumes the year-over-year decrease in visitation trend for the week ending September 13 (-11.9%; compared to the same week in 2019).
- While year-over-year increases in visitation were not seen in most tourism regions across BC, such as Vancouver, Coast and Mountains (-22.9%), Thompson Okanagan (-15.7%), Vancouver Island (-14.0%), and Kootenay Rockies (-4.8%), increases were seen in Cariboo Chilcotin Coast (+72.2%) and Northern BC (+3.9%).



Source: [Environics Analytics Weekly COVID Tracker Report, September 13, 2020](#)

Movement within BC's retail and recreation sector is down 7%

- Compared to a pre-COVID-19 baseline, movement, captured via mobility data, in BC for retail and recreation has decreased by 7% for the week ending September 6.
- Areas with the greatest positive mobility changes for retail and recreation in BC are Alberni-Clayoquot (+103%), Okanagan-Similkameen (+97%), and Columbia-Shuswap (+66%).
- Areas with the greatest negative changes in the retail and recreation sector are Metro Vancouver (-20%), Capital (-7%), and Peace River (-6%).

Alberni-Clayoquot

Retail & recreation

+103% compared to baseline



Okanagan-Similkameen

Retail & recreation

+97% compared to baseline



Columbia-Shuswap

Retail & recreation

+66% compared to baseline



Metro Vancouver

Retail & recreation

-20% compared to baseline



Capital

Retail & recreation

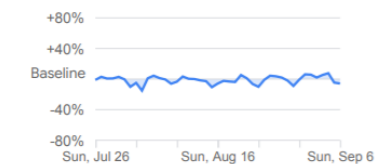
-7% compared to baseline



Peace River

Retail & recreation

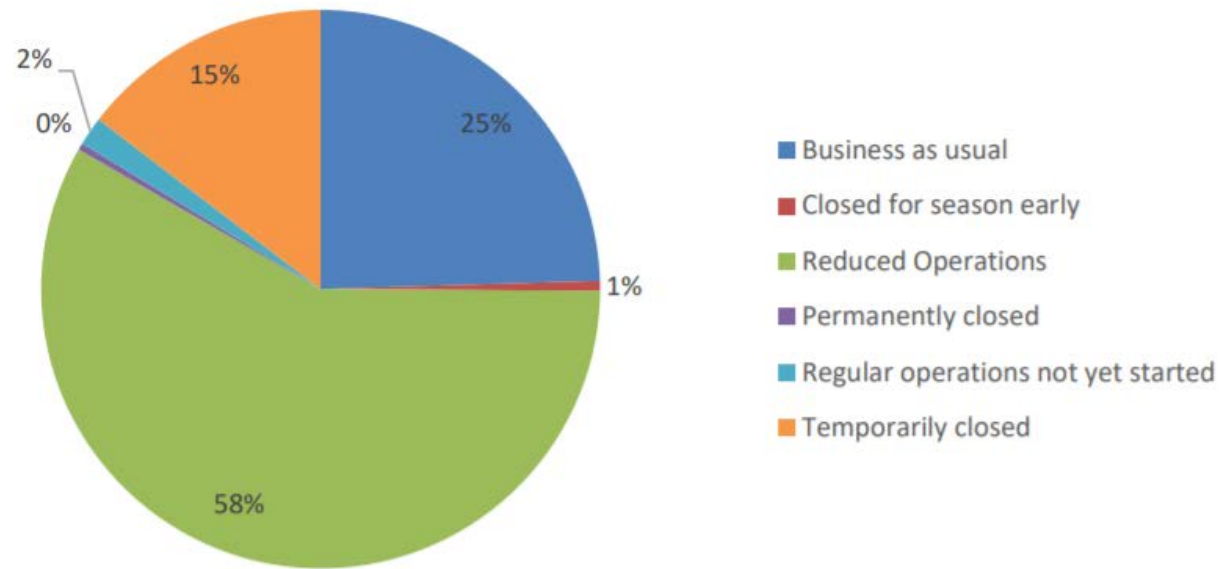
-6% compared to baseline



Source: [British Columbia Mobility Changes, Google, September 6, 2020](#)

Only 25% of BC tourism firms surveyed are operating with business as usual

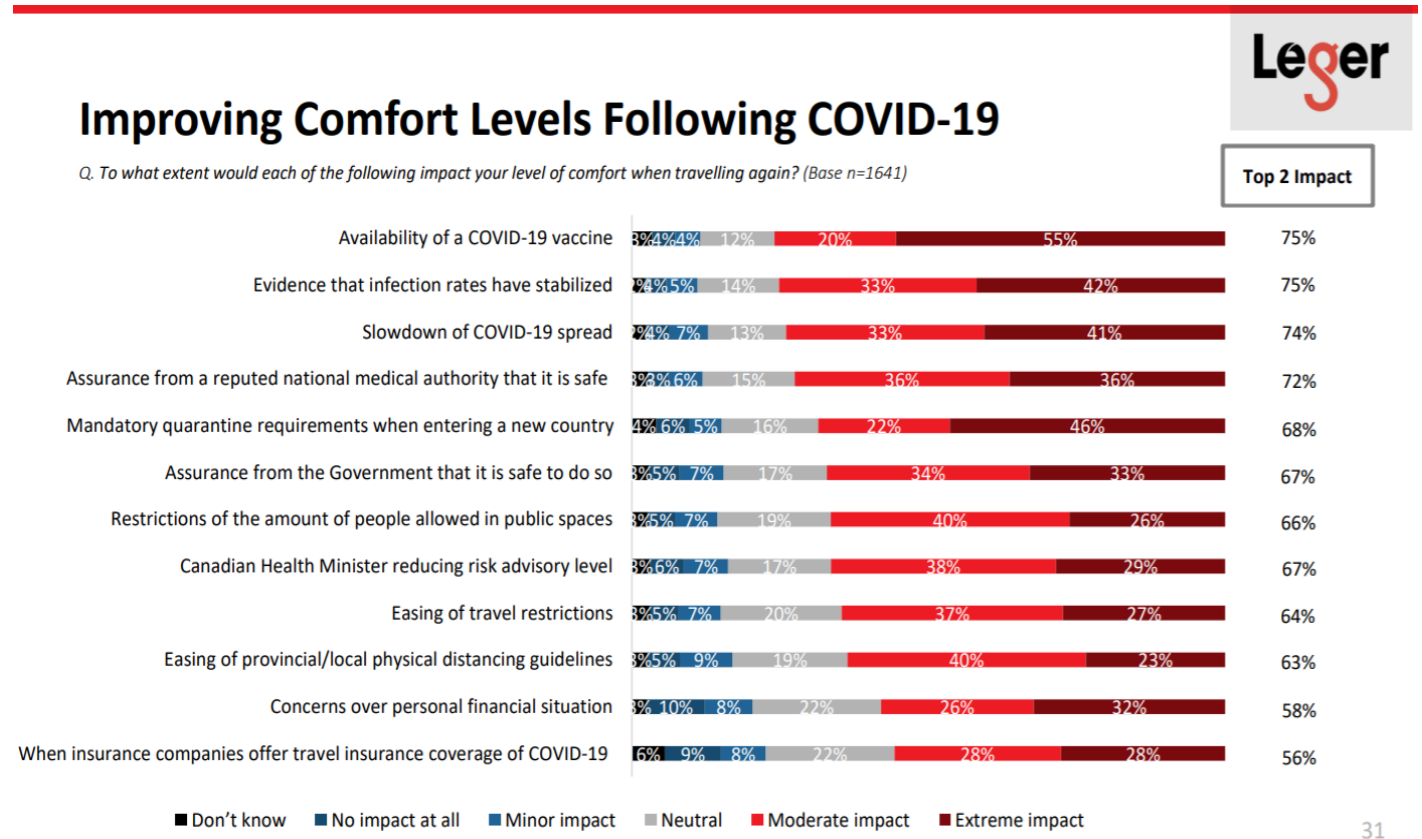
- According to September's BC Regional Tourism Secretariat COVID-19 Tourism Impact Report, 25% of BC firms are now operating with business as usual, though this is lower than the 35% national average for hospitality firms.
- Most tourism businesses in BC were able to regain some lost revenue during the summer season, though this has been uneven across regions.
- 58% of firms had at least a 25% decrease in year-over-year revenue.
- Rural and remote firms have the largest number of layoffs and lower rehiring rates.
- An estimated 10% of rural firms are not planning on opening for 2021 due to the pandemic.



Source: [COVID-19 Tourism Impact Report, BC Regional Tourism Secretariat, September 2020](#)

Vaccine and stabilized infection rates are biggest factors to increase Canadians comfort level for travel

- A new in-depth report by Leger shows that 40% of Canadians are comfortable travelling. Biggest factors in improving comfort levels will be:
 - Availability of a vaccine
 - Evidence that infection rates have stabilized
 - Slowdown of virus spread
 - Assurances of safety from reputed medical figures
- The most important comfort and safety factors currently remain to be ‘visible and frequent cleaning and providing hand sanitizer’.
- When asked how COVID-19 is impacting their travel intentions, 21% said they do not trust the current situation, while 14% said they will only travel within Canada and 14% said they will wait until there is a vaccine.

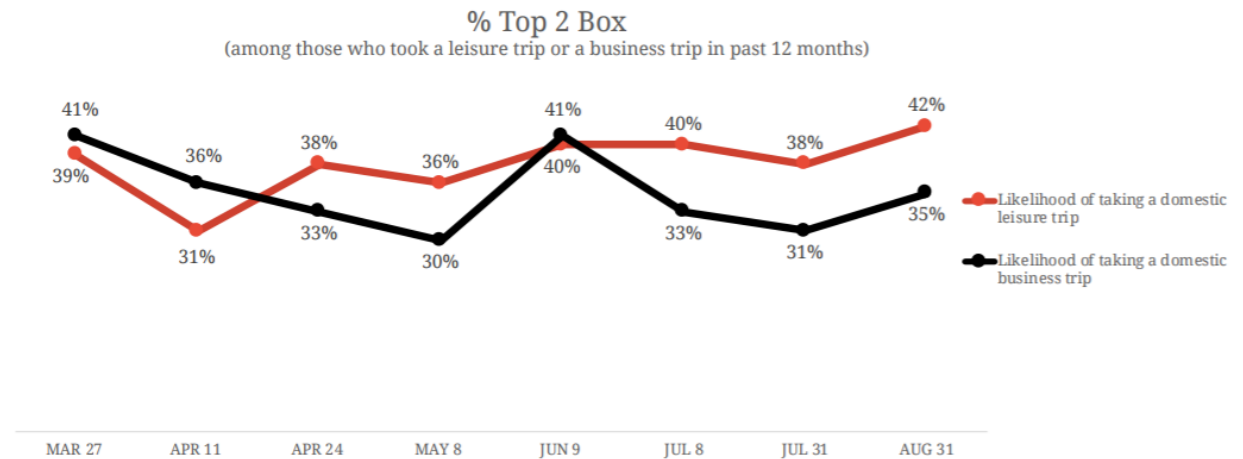


Source: Tourism in Canada: Assessing the Impact of COVID-10 on Current and Future Travel, Leger, September 8

US travellers more likely to take domestic leisure trips

- 42% of US travellers are at least somewhat likely to take a domestic leisure trip in the next six months. This is the highest since the survey's inception in mid-March.
- 35% of those applicable are at least somewhat likely to take a domestic business trip in the next six months, up from 31% in the past survey wave.
- Respondents' likelihood to take an international business trip during the next six month increased. This is a reversal of a two-month trend.
- Almost 75% of respondents are planning to travel by personal car in the next six months.
- The influence of great travel deals increased to 33% from 30%.

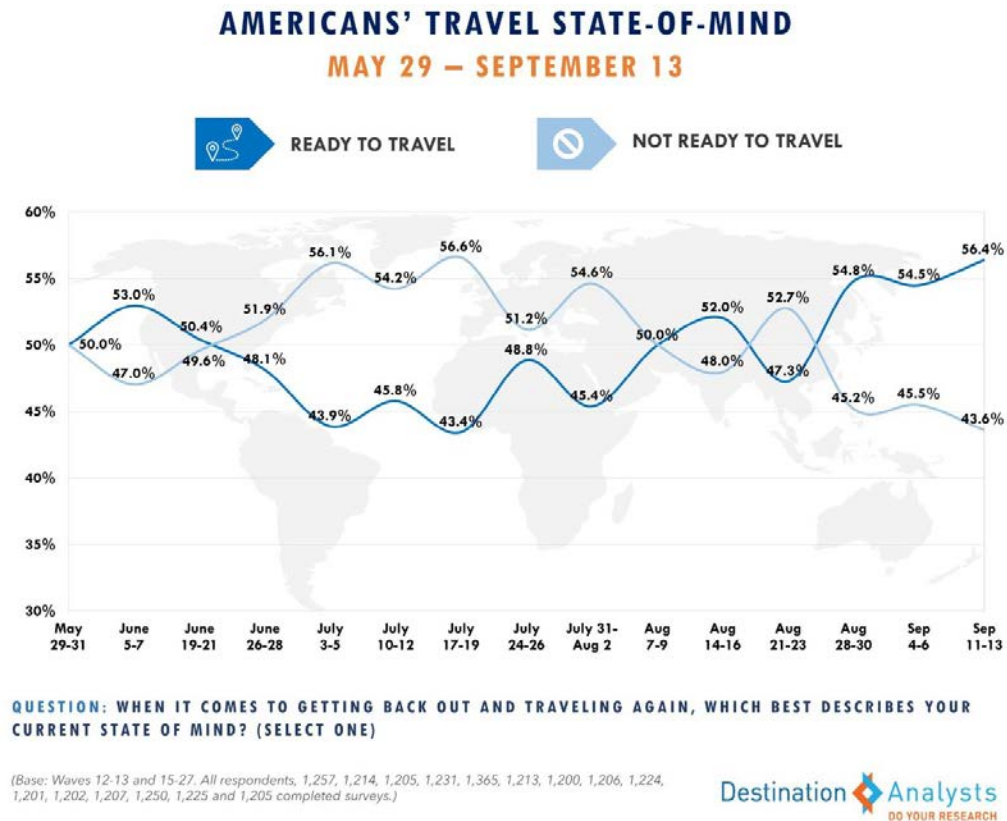
Likelihood Of Taking A Domestic Leisure Trip (Next Six Months) Now The Highest Since The Pandemic Began



Source: [Travel Intentions Pulse Survey, MMGY, September 4, 2020](#)

54% of American travellers are confident they can travel safely now

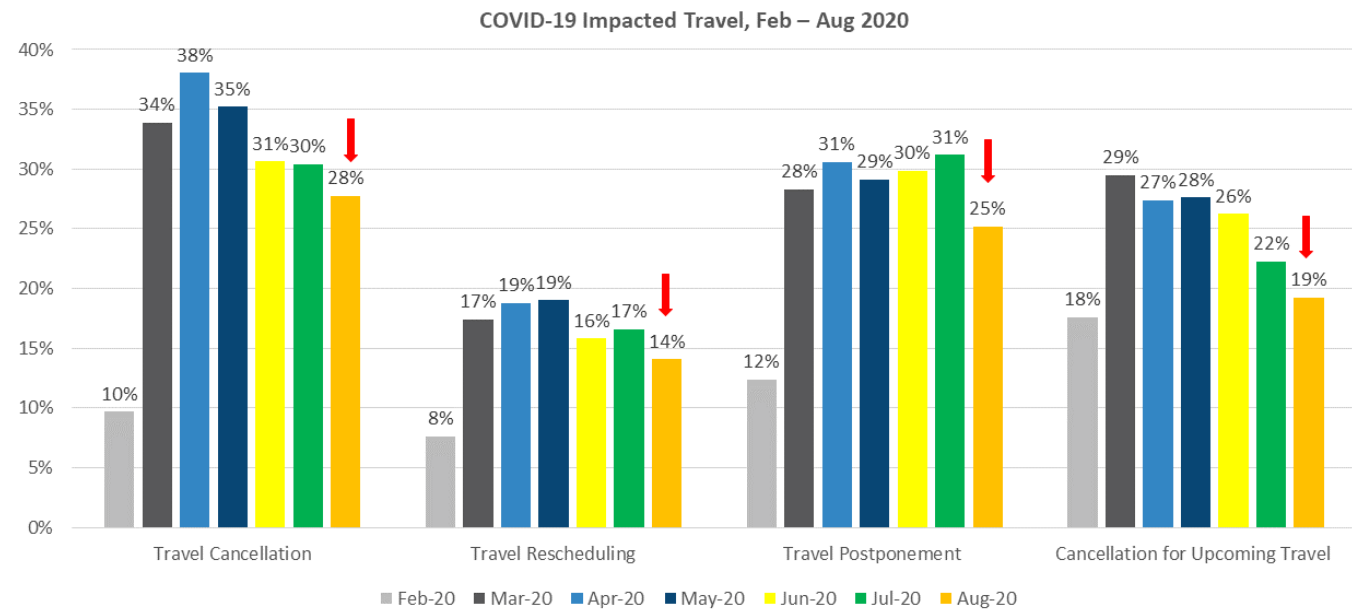
- According to Destination Analysts, though still strong, health and financial concerns of Americans are the lowest they have been since the pandemic started. 54% of American travellers are now at least somewhat confident they can travel safely in the current environment and 56% ready to travel.
- 78% of Americans report that they have some form of trip plans, with the “ready-to-travel” mindset at a high for the pandemic period.



Source: [Destination Analysts, September 14, 2020](#)

Travel rearrangements slow in the US

- According to Skift's latest travel tracker survey, the number of travel rearrangements made by consumers declined across all metrics in August. Rearrangements include cancellations, rescheduling, and postponements. This may be because future bookings are decreasing, while booking windows are getting shorter.
- The percentage of US residents who travelled increased by only 1% in August from the previous month, up to 36%. Declines may come with the ending of the summer season.
- Business travel as a percentage of total travel in the US rose from 9% in July to 12% in August, while conference and trade show travel rose from 3% to 5%.
- Outdoor recreation in the US continues to increase in popularity, as do vacation rentals, campgrounds, and RVs.



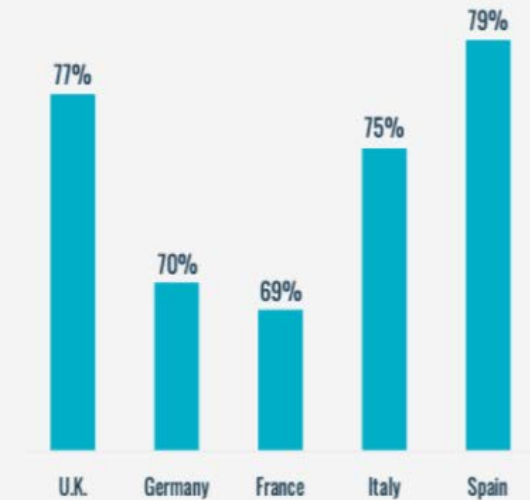
Source: [U.S. Travel Tracker August 2020](#), Skift, [September 2020](#)



Most European travellers want flexible refund/rebooking options

- Phocuswright reports that European travellers only want to book with providers who offer flexible cancellations or rearrangements, from 69% (France) to as many as 79% (Spain) of travellers.
- Many travellers are now looking to private accommodations and rentals, specifically full home or apartments. Large hotels are now considered to be the riskiest form of accommodation, and a third of travellers now find them less appealing.

Travelers who want flexible refund/rebooking

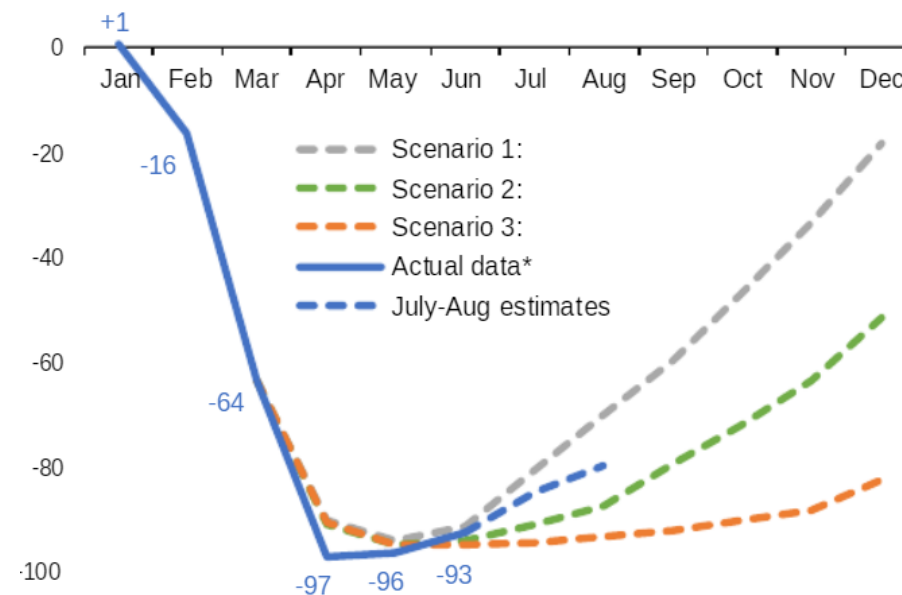


Source: [Phocuswright, September 2020](#)

International visitation down 65% for the first half of 2020

- A UNWTO report states international visitors declined by 65% in the first half of 2020, with June visitation down 93%.
- This decline has amounted to a reduction in 440 million international arrivals and approximately USD \$460 billion in export revenues.
- Domestic tourism is rising in many large markets, such as China and Russia. Air capacity in China reached 90% of 2019 levels in July.

International tourist arrivals in 2020: YTD results and scenarios (y-o-y monthly change, %)



Source: UNWTO

*Actual data includes estimates for countries which have not yet reported results.
Dotted blue line corresponds to UNWTO estimates for July and August 2020.

Source: [World Tourism Barometer Volume 18 Issue 5, UNWTO, September 2020](#)



Tourism and COVID-19 dashboard and reporting resources

- The UNWTO has an [online dashboard of international statistics](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector.
- MPI has created a [coronavirus resource page](#) that pulls together meetings and events information as well as links to several other resources helpful to the Business Events segment in our sector.
- Skift has a live roundup of [coronavirus-related tourism news](#), as well as a [global travel reopening timeline](#).
- The BC Tourism Resiliency Network hosts [tourism impact reports and travel pattern studies](#).
- Destination BC uses a [Signals & Sentiment dashboard](#) to follow core markets and inform their approach through COVID-19.
- Destination BC also hosts [general research and insights](#) on their website.
- The Travel and Tourism Research Association links to many [research & analytics companies](#) on their COVID-19 Resource Centre.





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This report can be found online on the [Destination BC COVID-19
Research & Insights](#) webpage

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