

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## 38pc of people plan to travel more for business post-pandemic: report

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*Ninety-seven of respondents noted that their companies experienced negative impacts directly related to business travel restrictions. Image credit: VistaJet*

By KATIE TAMOLA

Many business executives are flocking back to travel post-pandemic in an effort to recover from financial losses.

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According to a new [report](#) from private aviation firm VistaJet, worldwide travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to countless disruptions and missed financial opportunities for several businesses, while private aviation simultaneously demonstrated its value. More in-person meetings and increased business travel are widely anticipated.

"The COVID-19 pandemic upended our world, including travel," said Matteo Atti, executive vice president of marketing and innovation at [VistaJet](#), in a statement. "It also showed that some business travel is truly essential and having to forgo in-person trips came at a real cost to companies: any savings in travel budgets were exceeded by the cost of missed opportunities, sometimes worth several millions."

The findings are based on a survey of more than 200 high-level global executives about business travel, conducted by WSJ Intelligence and VistaJet in April 2021.

Where to go from here

In the year before the pandemic, 86 percent of respondents had flown private for business, using either full or part-ownership, jet cards, membership programs or on-demand charter services. During the same time frame, the same percentage had flown roundtrip on commercial first class and 96 percent took at least one business class commercial roundtrip.

COVID-19 limited travel for 90 percent of the companies in the report, with commercial airline traffic down to a third of 2019 levels.



*The value of private aviation was highlighted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Image credit: VistaJet*

During the pandemic, high-net-worth travelers flew private, either to observe social distancing guidelines or because so many commercial flights were canceled. This helped the private aviation industry demonstrate its critical value.

Only 10 percent of respondents reported that their companies had not restricted business travel, while 27 percent said their companies allowed no travel whatsoever. Ninety-seven noted that their companies experienced negative impacts directly related to business travel restrictions.

Among executives whose companies had restrictions on travel in the past year, 87 percent had a massive or substantial disruption in at least one area of business, and 24 percent indicated massive or substantial disruptions across all eight areas measured.

More than a third of companies surveyed, 34 percent, cited missed opportunities while 33 percent cited fewer deals closed.

Many business leaders believe that virtual meetings cannot replace human interaction. Without the ability to meet in person during the pandemic, businesses experienced deals fall through and financial losses.

"It is hard to read a room when everyone is in individual windows on a screen," said Ian Moore, chief commercial officer of VistaJet, in a statement. "Misunderstandings can occur, especially across cultures.

"And these, in turn, can become costly mistakes," he said.



*Private aviation use could continue to soar post-pandemic. Image credit: VistaJet*

A third of respondents said they prioritize private travel for problem-solving with key clients, and 31 percent prioritized relationship-building with their current network and delivering a presentation to clients.

If they were limited in the number of private flights they could take, 55 percent of respondents still said they would travel to "save" a large client relationship while 53 percent said they would travel to deliver on a commitment.

#### Return to the skies

With the lockdowns being lifted, comes a capitalization of the pent-up anticipation and excitement consumers have for travel, whether for business or leisure pursuits.

In January, a survey from online platform Private Jet Card Comparisons, reported that 41 percent of new private aviation clients plan to continue flying privately "regularly" after the pandemic. Furthermore, about four in 10 respondents who were flying privately before the pandemic expect to increase their usage once the pandemic ends

([see story](#)).

A return to business travel would also be a boost for the luxury hotel industry.

As the travel industry begins to recover, resort destinations appealing to leisure travelers are faring better than more urban areas that are more reliant on business travelers. After tourists, the next segment to return will be business travelers, followed by small groups and eventually, in the next two to three years, large groups of convention-goers ([see story](#)).

Six in 10 respondents expect more in-person meetings in the future compared to a "typical" year before the pandemic. Among frequent users of private aviation who take eight or more private flights a year, 60 percent plan to significantly increase in-person meetings, compared with 38 percent of total respondents.

Eighty-one percent of executives said business travel will be more important than ever to driving success.

"The notion that private travel is the solution to the new fluidity in travel has become evident to most executives," Mr. Atti said. "The importance to be able to manage sudden changes in policies has taken center stage."

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