Atlantic City Lifestyle Tourism

Preliminary Report – October 2021

Sarah Rose Grady, MA

Assistant Director, LIGHT

Supported by

Jane Bokunewicz, PhD

Associate Professor

Background and Purpose of Study

As Atlantic City continues to evolve, it is imperative that the resort's business operators and advocates develop an understanding of who visits the city, how they experience and perceive it, and what motivates their choice of destination.

With an aim to address these questions, Who, How and What, LIGHT, with the assistance of the Casino Reinvestment Development Association (CRDA) and their consultants Masterpiece Advertising (Masterpiece), conducted a survey in September 2021. The survey, administered online and distributed to a mailing list of Atlantic City visitors provided by the CRDA and Masterpiece, yielded over three thousand completed responses.

In addition to providing a snapshot of the current Atlantic City visitor, the survey also provides some insight into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and public health crisis on visitor perception and behavior. These specific impacts were also examined in the

Executive Summary

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and public health crisis still overshadow the tourism experience of Atlantic City and have led to reduced visitation to the resort. Visitors, drawn from dozens of states across the nation are nevertheless overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience.

While the current visitor is most likely over the age of forty (Gen X and Baby Boomers) and traveling with a spouse or significant other, the next generation (Millennials) is also represented in this sample.

Compared to older generations, Millennial visitors place greater importance on recommendations from peers and the media and are more likely to choose a destination based on a specific event or activity. Millennials' reliance on recommendations and the relatively low importance of "nostalgia/memories of past visits" suggest that they have less direct experience of Atlantic City and their opinions regarding the resort may still be forming. The relative importance of special events and specific activities to this group further suggests that events such as the Beach Concert series, the Air Show and other concerts and shows may be a particularly compelling draw for this category of visitor.

The dominant visitor group Gen X and Baby Boomers place great importance on affordability and discounts/promotional offers, and less importance on recommendations, novelty, and variety suggesting that they may have more direct experience of the resort and, having decided what they like about the destination, are seeking value for money in their tourism experience.

Key Findings

- Respondents originated from 42 U.S. states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico
- 66% of respondents were between the ages of 41 and 66 encompassing the "Gen X" and younger range of the "Baby Boomer" generation. 8% of respondents were of the "Millennial" generation.
- Visitors made less frequent trips to Atlantic City in the past 18 months than in an average year prior to 2020.
- Individuals traveling with a spouse or significant other were the most common travel group size and composition. Groups traveling with children under the age of 3 were rare.
- Respondents and/or their spouse or significant other made most travel decisions.
- 82% of respondents were satisfied with their most recent visit to Atlantic City with 7% dissatisfied with their visit. Dissatisfaction was largely due to pandemic related or induced changes in service or amenities.
- Travel group interests were less h (e)-6 (r)3 mo

- Specific events and activities, and variety of activities at a destination were more important in the travel decision making process of younger respondents (older Gen Z and Millennials) than their older counter parts (Baby Boomers and Post War/WWII).

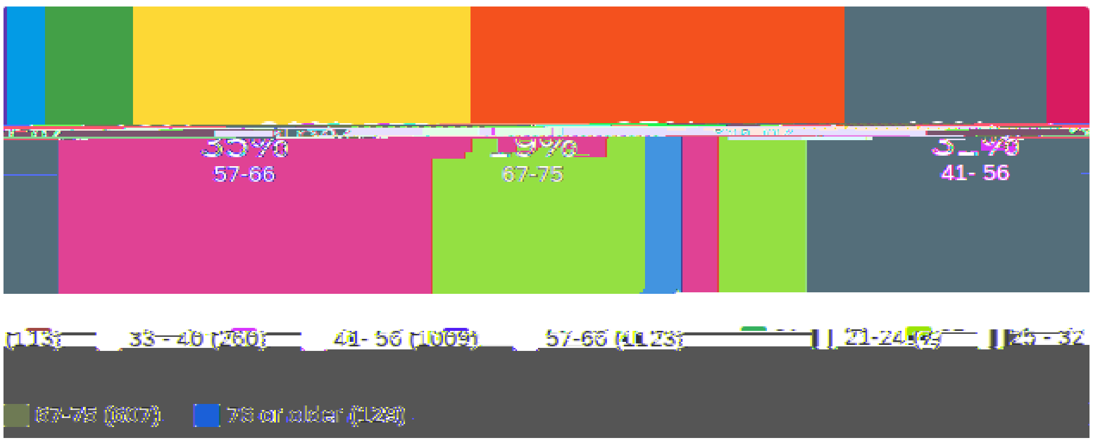
Who: Visitor Demographics

Respondents were asked a series of basic demographic questions to provide context for survey analysis.

Age

While individuals from the Gen Z (24 or younger) through Post War/WWII (76 or older) generations were captured in the survey, the majority of respondents identified as age 41 through 66, encompassing the Gen X and the younger range of Baby Boomers.

"Which of the following captures your age?"



Gender or Sexuality

More than half of survey respondents (62%) self-identified as female. Of the remainder, 34% identified as male and 3% identified as Gay, Lesbian, Trans Woman, Intersex, Questioning, Gender Queer, Agender, Two Spirit or Other, 1% preferred not to answer.

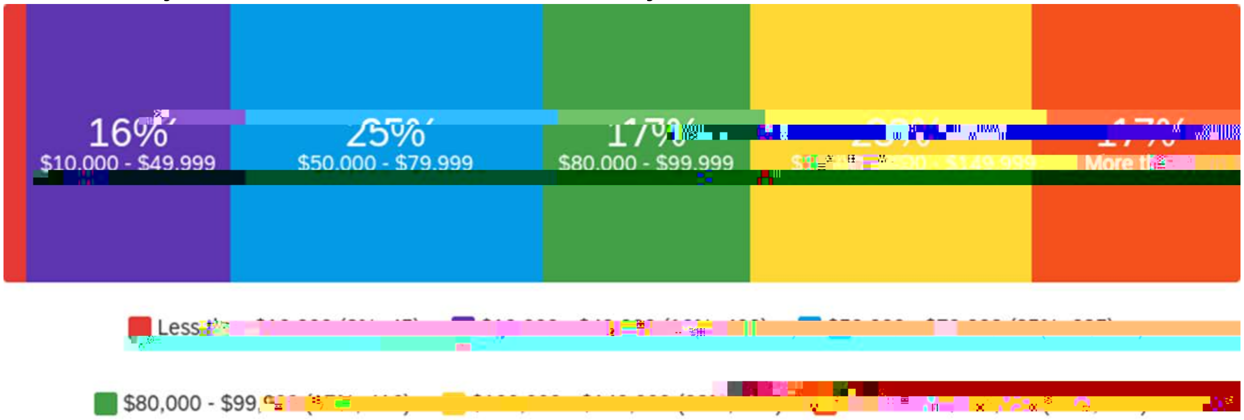
Ethnicity

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents self-identified as White or Caucasian, 11% identified as Black or African American, 4% Hispanic or Latinx, 2% Asian or Asian American, 2% Mixed Ethnic Background, less than 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, less than 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. 1% self-identified as "Other" with several specifying their ethnicity as "Mixed," "American" or simply "Human." 5% of respondents preferred not to answer this question.

Household Income

Respondents were asked to disclose their household income last year before taxes. Nearly a quarter (23%) preferred not to answer this question. Excluding these individuals, 65% of respondents reported annual household income within the $50,000 to $149,999 range.

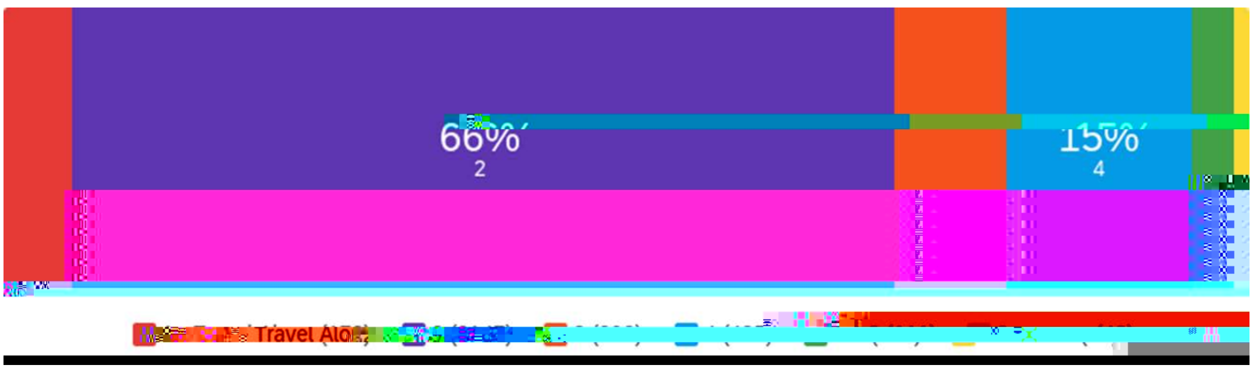
“What was your annual household income last year before taxes?”



Group Size and Composition

The most common size of travel group for respondents was 2 (66%). The second most common travel group size was 4.

“Including yourself, how many people are usually in your travel group?”



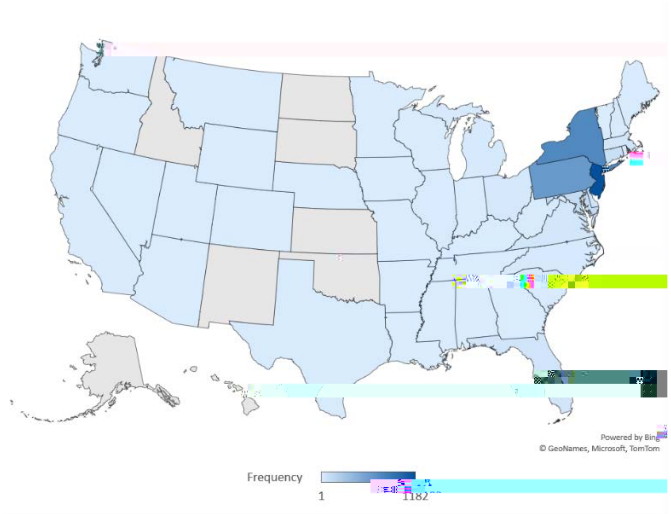
When asked who they travel with most often, the majority of respondents indicated that they traveled with a “spouse or significant other.” “friends” or “other family members” were also common travel companions. “adult children or grandchildren,” and “children or grandchildren 13 to 18 years old were less common travel companions and groups including “children or grandchildren 3 years old or less” were rare.

These findings are consistent with past studies including the previously cited *Atlantic City Visitor Perceptions and Preferences 2021* and the annual *Atlantic City Restaurant Week Patron Survey* (the 2020 and 2019 editions).

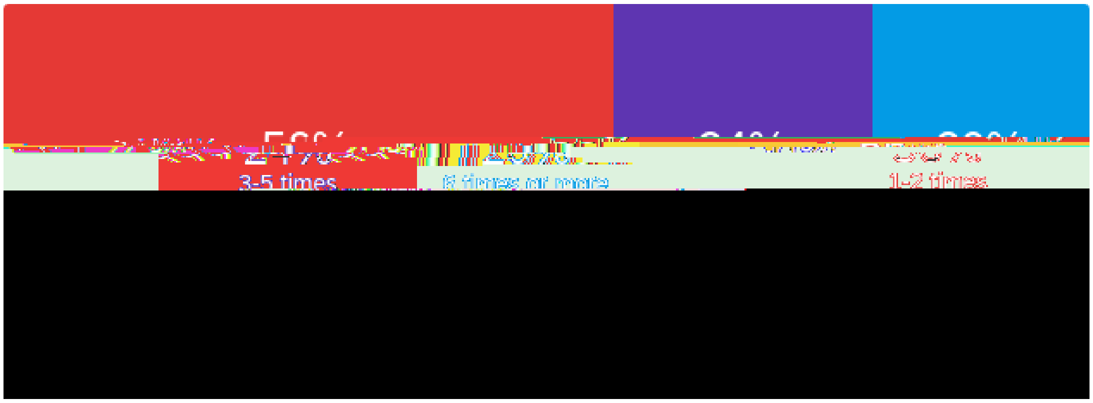
Origin

Respondents were asked to provide the zip code of their primary residence. These zip codes were then organized into county, state, sub-region and regional groupings as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Consistent with prior research, the majority of respondents (81%) originated from the Middle Atlantic states of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania

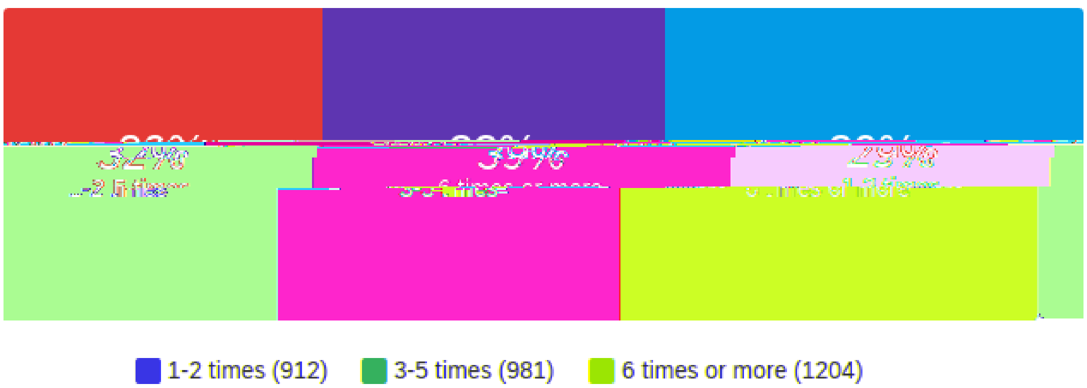


“How many times did you visit Atlantic City in the past 18 months?”



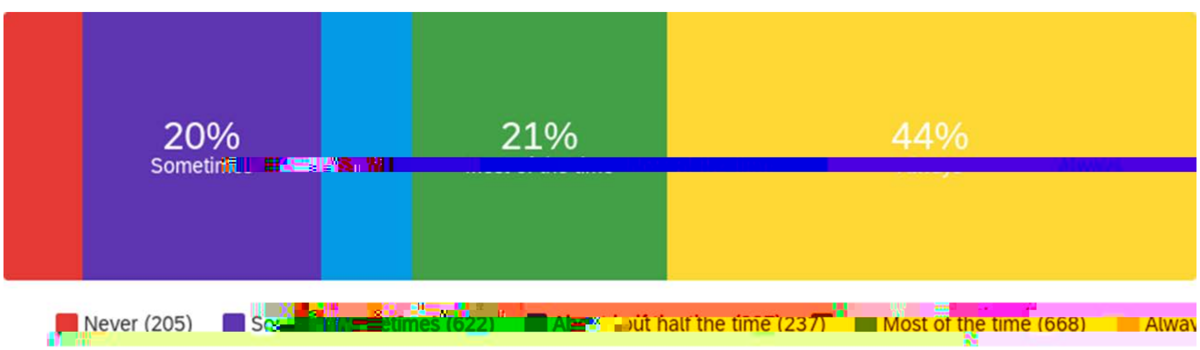
Prior to the pandemic, respondents reported more frequent visits to the resort. Again, excluding respondents who live or own property in the region, 29% of respondents (912 of a total 3,097) visited 1 or 2 times in a given year compared to 39% of respondents (1,204) who reported visiting Atlantic City 6 times or more annually.

“Prior to the Pandemic how many times did you visit Atlantic City annually?”



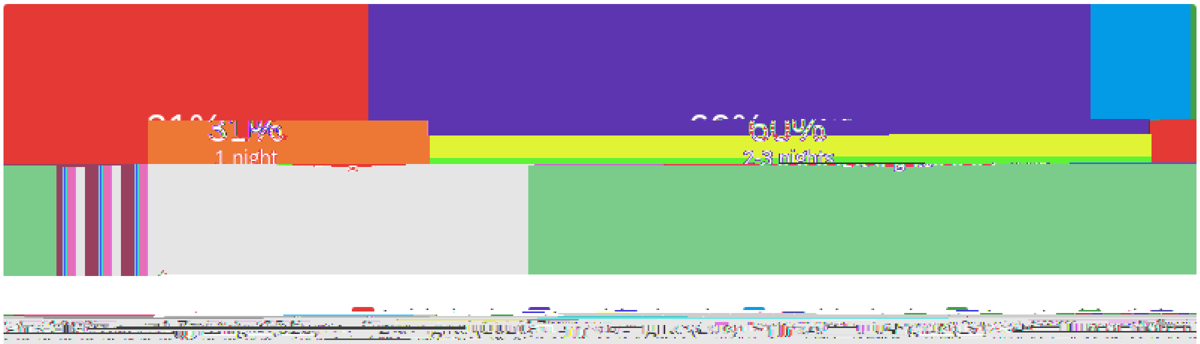
Excluding respondents who live or own property in the region, more than half (65%) of visitors stay overnight in the city “most of the time” or “always.”

“How often did you stay overnight at your destination in the city?”



Again, excluding respondents who live or own property in the region, over half of visitors (60%) spend 2-3 nights in the city during their visit.

"How long on average were your overnight stays in the city?"



Spending

Over half of respondents (65%) indicated that they spent "more than $100" per person per day when traveling including food & beverage, lodging, entertainment and transportation costs. The next largest group (18%) spent between $76 and $100 per person per day.

Anticipating that the cost of overnight lodging would drive up visitor spending per person per day, the data was filtered to consider only individuals who "never" or only "sometimes" stay overnight at their destination in the city. Spending rates for these individuals were only slightly lower than the general sample: 56% spent "more than $100" and 19% spent "$76-$100" per person per day. Lower ranges of spending were more represented among this group with 10% spending "$26-$50" compared to 6% of the general sample.

A more pronounced difference was seen in the spending of individuals based on reported annual household income. 49% of individuals reporting annual household income of less than $50,000 (representing 18% of the general sample), spent "more than $100" per person per day on their trip compared to 84% of individuals who reported annual household income of greater than $150,000 (representing 17% of the general sample).

Satisfaction

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with their most recent trip to the city. The majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they were "somewhat satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with the experience. A few respondents (7%) expressed dissatisfaction with their trip.

**How satisfied were you with your most rTn /TT0/nr m rTn /t(o)-4 r(ed)-8p rTn (s)-5 Ai rTn ledt rTn

What: Visitor Motivations

Interests

“How important were the following in choosing your destination?”

There was some variation across generations in terms of the importance of these decision factors including a few key standouts. With regard to Accessibility/Mobility at destination, 50% of individuals 76 years or older felt it was “very” or “extremely important” compared to 33% of the general sample. While 76% of the general sample felt a

Perhaps less direct personal experience of the resort can explain why recommendations from peers held more weight with older Gen Z and younger millennials than with other generational groups. 46% of younger Millennials said the recommendations of peers were “very” or