



**STOCKTON**  
UNIVERSITY

LLOYD D. LEVENSON INSTITUTE  
OF GAMING, HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

**Atlantic City Visitor Perceptions and Preferences**  
**Executive Summary - March 2021**

Phil Kening  
Instructor, Business Studies

Supported by  
Jane Bokunewicz, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Institute Coordinator, LIGHT

## Summary

Potential visitors remain anxious about COVID-19 and ongoing pandemic concerns continue to depress visitor volume to Atlantic City. However, survey findings indicate visitor numbers should strongly rebound as pandemic conditions ease.

A strong majority, 72%, of all survey respondents, reported planning to visit Atlantic City within the next 6 months. Those who have visited since July are even more likely to return within the next 6 months (82%).

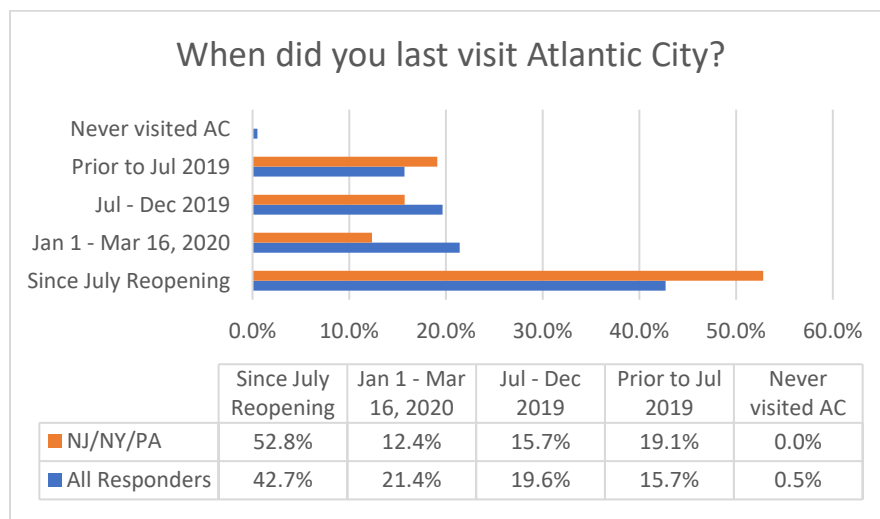
Respondents who have visited the resort since July reported feeling safe from COVID-19 exposure while enjoying their normal activities. This suggests the city has been doing a good job of managing safety protocols.

## Methodology

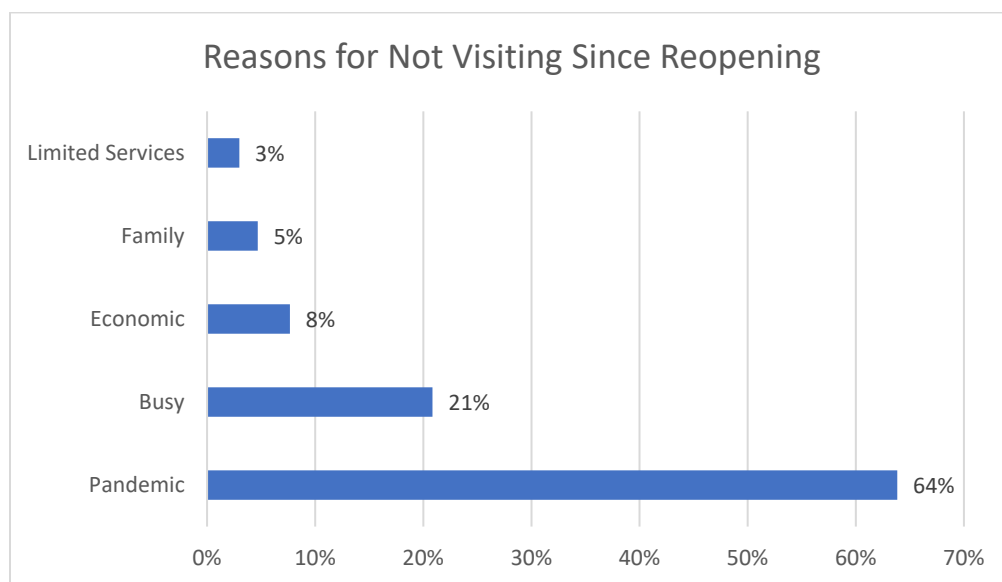
Between mid-January and early February, a convenience sample of visitors to the Do AC website was used to get responses to an online survey. A chance to win a \$50 Amazon gift certificate was offered as an incentive. There were 805 completed responses received after data hygiene was performed to eliminate duplicates and obvious false entries. On average, it took respondents about 5 minutes to complete the 20-question survey.

## Key Findings

- About half of all respondents live in the Mid-Atlantic states of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.
- 42% of total respondents reported at least one visit to Atlantic City since the reopening of casinos in July 2020 – concern about COVID-19 was the primary reason the others have not visited.
- 53% of respondents living in the Mid-Atlantic states have visited AC since July 2020.



- Respondents who reported not having visited the resort since July 2020 (57.3% of all respondents) were asked “Why have you not visited Atlantic City since the casinos reopened in July?” This was an open-ended question and responses were coded into logical categories and counted.



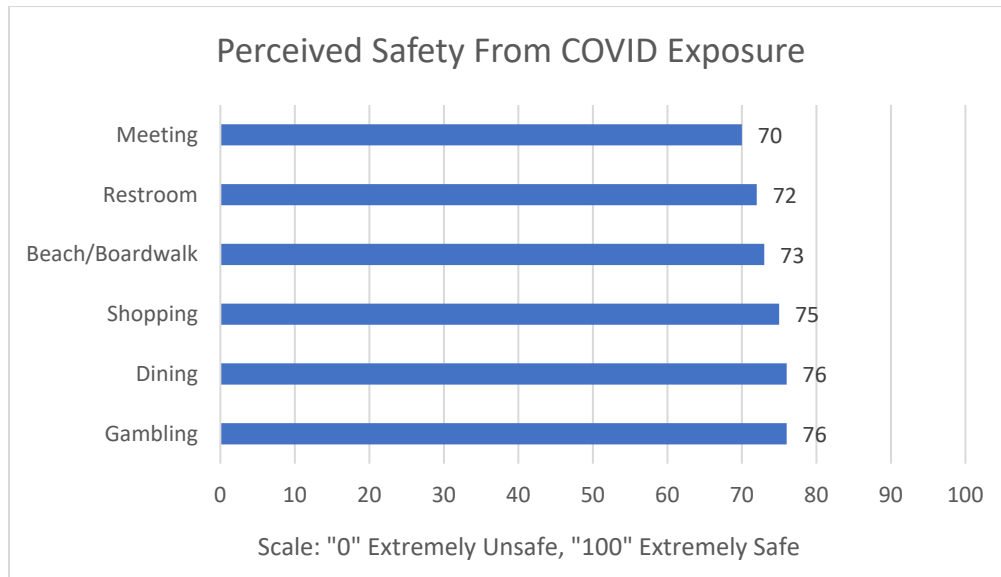
A strong majority (64%) of respondents cited pandemic-related concerns as the reason for not visiting. When combined with the 3% of respondents who specifically identified limited dining or entertainment options due to shutdowns (also related to the pandemic), the number increases to 67%, or 2 out of 3 respondents. The second most frequently stated reason was that respondents were too busy to take a trip (21%) followed by economic reasons (8%) and family reasons (5%).

There is no indication that visitation patterns won't revert to “normal” once all venues are operating at normal capacity and hours, and concern about COVID-19 diminishes. The relatively low (8%) number of respondents citing economic reasons for not visiting is a good sign. If more people reported being harmed economically that would indicate less discretionary income and more concern for future visits.

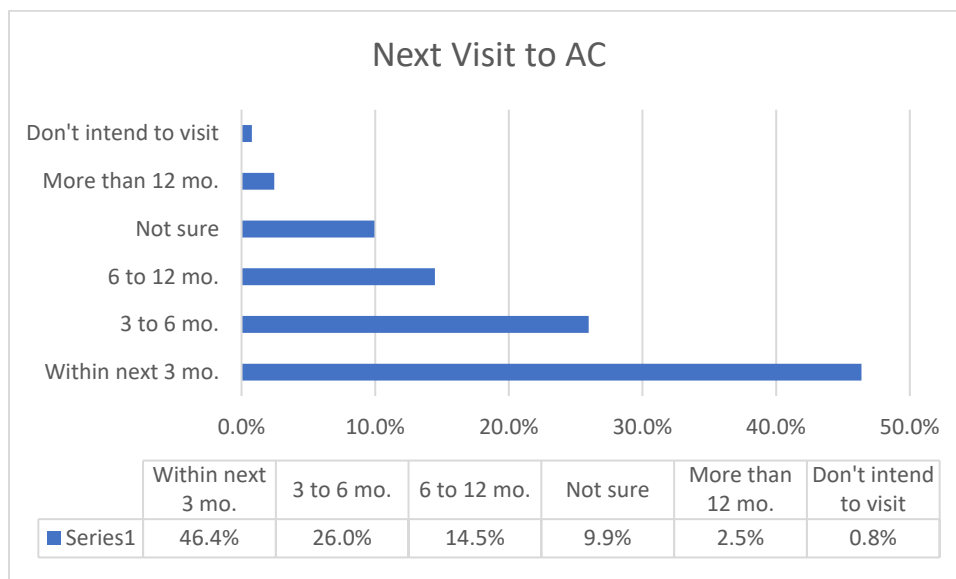
A sample of open-ended responses for the reason they have not visited:

- “COVID shutdown”
  - “COVID, busy being essential employee”
  - “No drinks and indoor dining, no clubs”
  - “Due to the serious epidemic situation, I seldom go out and recently choose to stay at home”
- 73% of all survey respondents were between the ages of 21 and 49, which is disproportionately higher than the US Adult population for those age ranges. Based on the 2019 estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau, Adults ages 21 to 49 represent 51.3% of the U.S. Adult 21+ population.

- The post-reopening visitors also skewed younger than the U.S. Adult age range with ages 21-49 at 64.7% versus 51.3%. A possible explanation for this is that older people are significantly more at risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19 and were more likely to stay home than younger, lower risk visitors.
- Visitors reported satisfaction with their post-reopening trip even with the COVID-19 safety restrictions; 78% reported being either “extremely satisfied” or “very satisfied”, while only 9% expressed dissatisfaction.
- Most respondents believed they were safe from COVID-19 exposure while doing their normal activities such as dining, gambling, or walking the Boardwalk on their visit(s) to Atlantic City since July 2020. This reflects well on business operators’ implementation and enforcement of safety protocols including mask wearing and enhanced cleaning practices.



- 72% of total respondents said they plan to visit Atlantic City within the next six months.



Of those respondents who have visited post-reopening, 82% say they will visit again within the next 6 months. This is heartening news as the respondents took the survey during the winter at a time when the pandemic was spiking, there were tough capacity restrictions in place and the bars and restaurants had to close at 10 p.m. A three- to six-month window for return trips would see most respondents visiting Atlantic City during the spring and summer 2021 tourism season.

## Looking Ahead

This summer, Atlantic City should see a significant uptick in the number of visitors as pandemic fears start to recede. Recent news of increased capacity rates at casinos and restaurants, lower COVID-19 hospitalization numbers and rising vaccination rates can be viewed as positive signs.

Survey results show that many respondents who have stayed home due to COVID-19 concerns are planning to visit Atlantic City within the next 6 months. This is a strong indicator of pent-up demand. The operators are perceived as having done good job of enforcing safety protocols for mask-wearing and cleaning/disinfecting by the people who have visited since the reopening. Continuing these efforts, combined with the ease of occupancy restrictions, should make the guest experience much more enjoyable this summer.