



Critical Mass Insights

Helping America's
most influential voices

know what to say to America.

Local Travel & Festival Consumer Insights

September 2026

Key Highlights from Study

- According to US Travel Association, interest in domestic travel continues to increase.
- Visiting local destinations is a priority as more than 9 in 10 plan to visit the same or more in the next 12 months. Tourism organizations have a strong opportunity to drive repeat visitation and word-of-mouth advocacy rather than having to create demand from scratch.
- Consumers are prioritizing nearby, affordable experiences, looking for stress relief, fun experiences, and easy-access destinations.
- Local tourism creates emotional and community value and is viewed as a way to support communities and local economies.
- Audio is a very effective tourism marketing channel, not just an awareness channel. Host-read endorsements, interviews, and personality-driven content cited as more persuasive than traditional advertising.

According to US domestic leisure travel spending continues to expand, rising nearly **1% to \$909 billion in 2026.**

Travelers are expected to **shift toward shorter-duration and lower-cost trips**, including regional and drive markets, in response to greater costs.

People Travel Locally By Car and With Friends & Family

9 in 10

Travel by car when visiting local destinations within 50 miles from home

52%

Have visited 3+ local destinations within 50 miles from home in the last 12 months

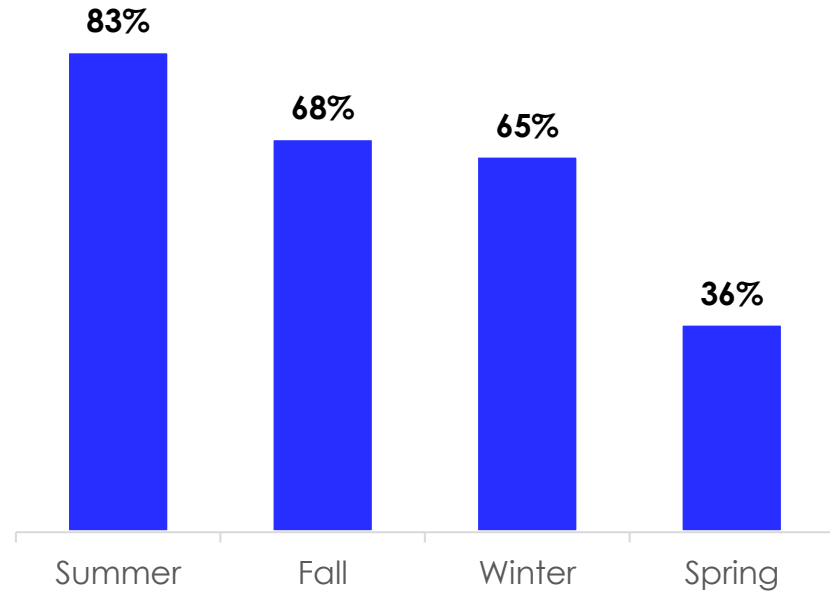
84%

Visit local destinations within 50 miles from home with family and friends

Local Trips Occur In The Summer, Spring & Fall With Planning Beginning Just Before Visiting, Making It Beneficial To Reach Prospects Consistently

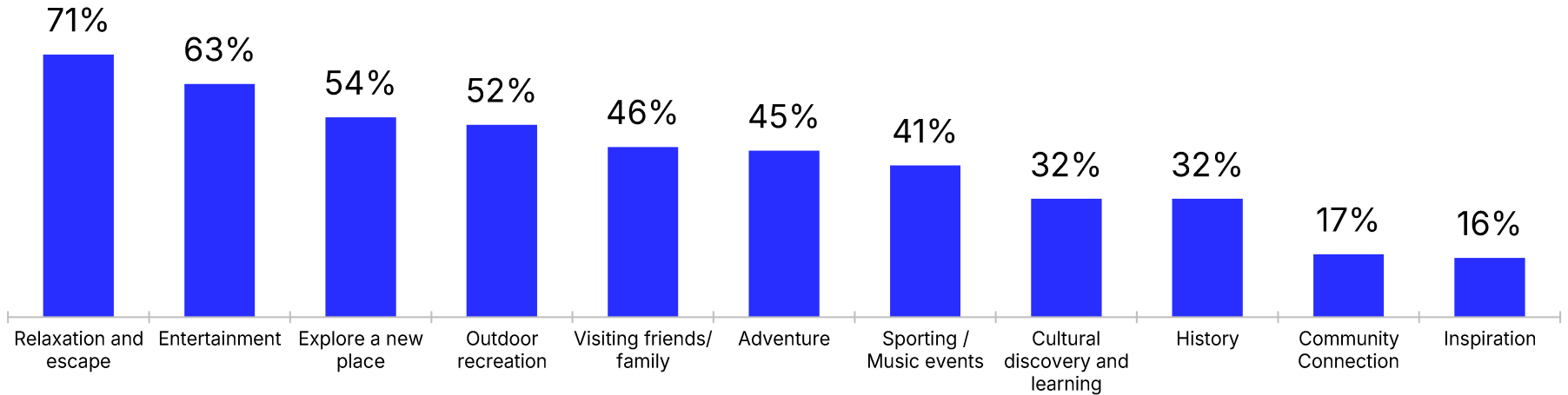
Almost
Half
begin planning to visit local destinations within 50 miles from home within a couple weeks of visiting

Time Of Year Travel Most Often For State Trips



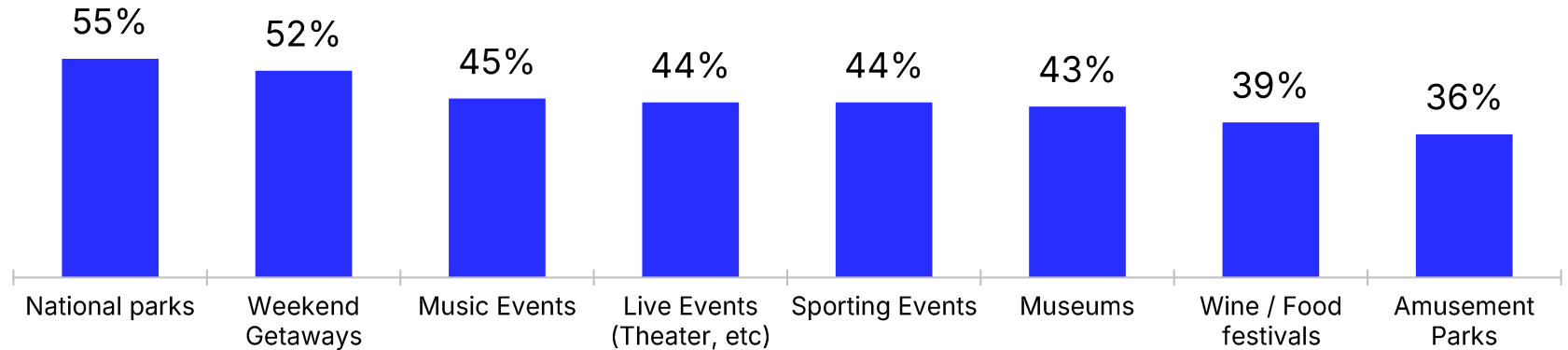
Relaxation And Entertainment Are Top Reasons For Local Travel

Top Reasons For Visiting Local Destinations



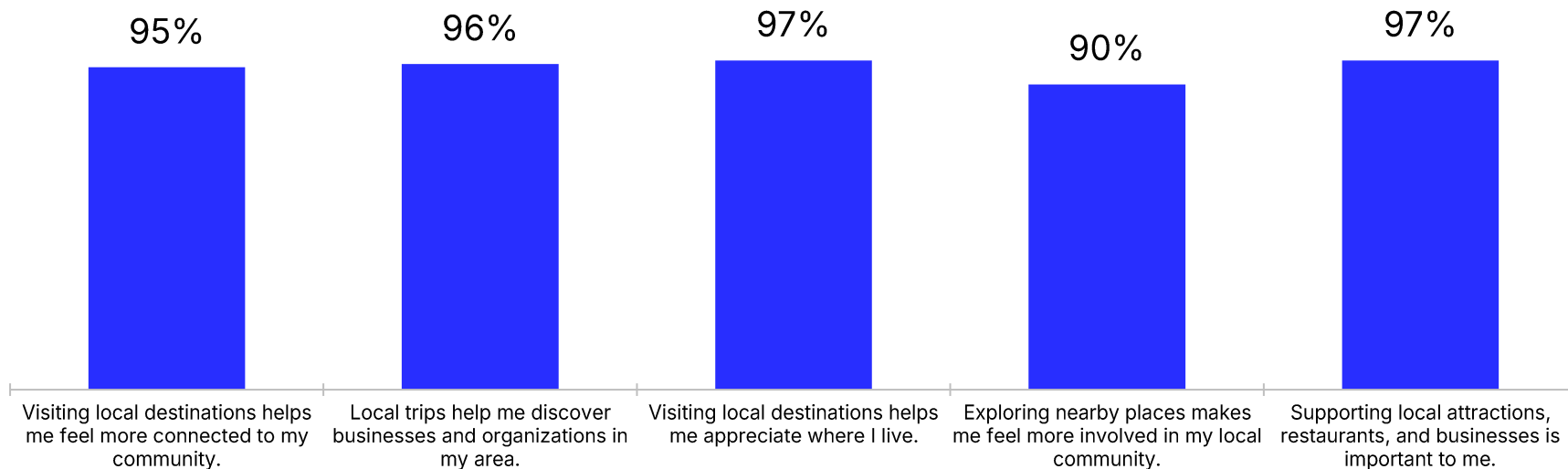
The Need For Relaxation and Entertainment Are Reflected In The Current Types Of Appealing Destinations For Local Travel

Most Appealing Local Destinations



Connection and Community Are Top Reasons For Visiting Local Destinations

Local Travel Sentiment - Strongly or Somewhat Agree



Almost All Who Visit Local Destinations Would Recommend These Locations To Others If They Enjoyed It

96%

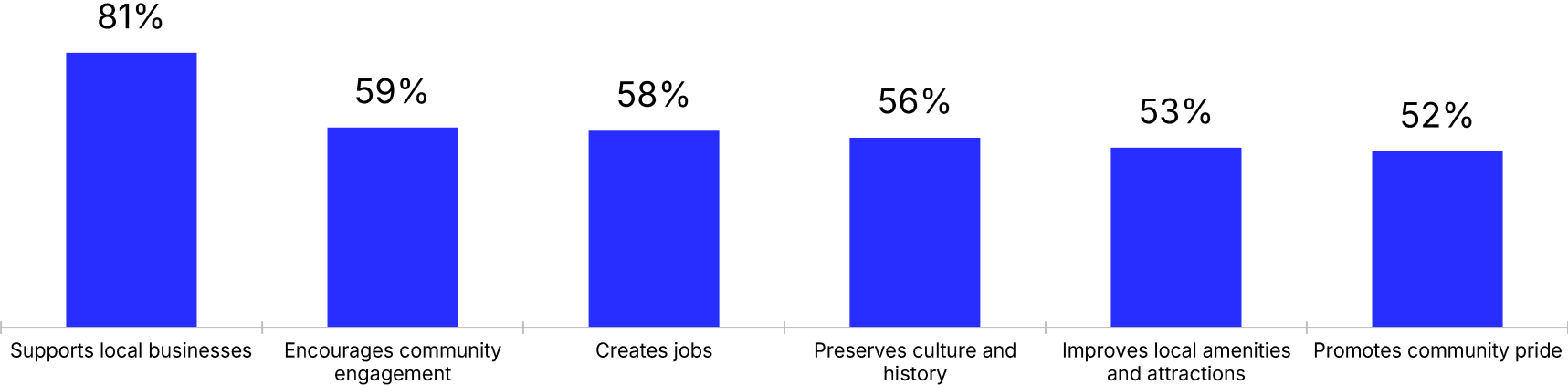
Are planning to visit the same amount or more local destinations in the next 12 months

Nearly all

Would recommend a local destination within 50 miles from home to others if they enjoyed visiting

Community Connection and Support Are Driving Forces Behind Visiting Local Destinations

Local Travel Community Benefits



Sources: Critical Mass Insights Study September 2026. Local Travel = Personal/Leisure Trips Within 50 Miles From Home.

Audio Offers The Top-Of-Mind Awareness And Trust Needed To Reach Local Travel Prospects Throughout Their Planning

8 in 10

Are more likely to visit a local destination they heard about on the radio or a podcast.

93%

agree that radio is a good way to learn about local destinations.

88%

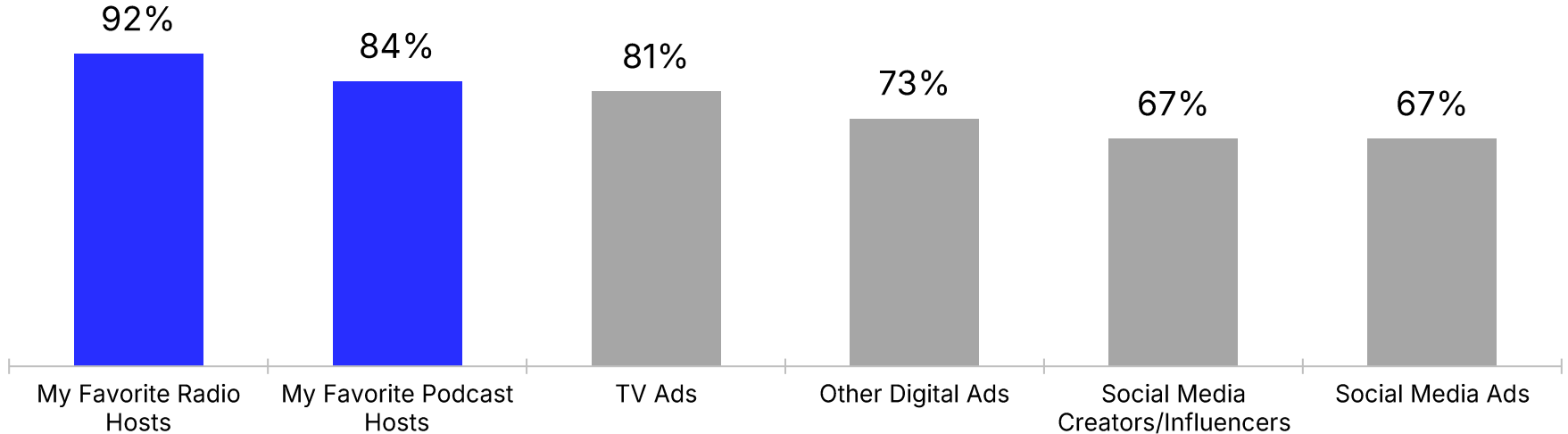
agree that audio content helps them feel connected to what's happening in their local area.

8 in 10

have attended a local event, festival, attraction, or destination after hearing about it on radio or a podcast

Radio And Podcasts Hosts Are Seen As More Trustworthy Compared To Other Media

Trust In Recommendations About Travel And Tourism From Different Media



Radio Reaches Those Traveling Domestically with Sports, Alternative and Spanish Formats, Plus Arts, Science & Tech Podcast Formats.

Radio Reaches Over

86%

of personal/leisure
domestic travelers

Top Radio Formats

Sports (120i)
Alternative (113i)
Spanish Contemporary (111i)
News/Talk(110i)
Adult Contemporary (110i)

Top Podcast Topics

Arts (135i)
Science (135i)
Technology (133i)
Business (130i)
Education (127i)

METHODOLOGY

DATES OF FIELDING: September 2026

N=953 Adults 18+ Radio Listeners

Respondents weighted to reflect total population of the target audience

THANKS FOR WORKING WITH



For additional insights and information, please contact:

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