

# Booking lead times to Great Britain

International Passenger Survey 2024

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VisitBritain Research



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Explore the quarterly\* IPS data in more detail on the [VisitBritain website](#) via the pivot tables (Excel) and interactive dashboards.

\*data for 2024 is at the GB level



See additional analysis from the IPS survey covering [accommodation stayed in, states of residence, long term trends, subregional](#) and [towns](#) data.



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# Background and methodology

VisitBritain sponsors a number of questions each year on the International Passenger Survey, to gain a greater understanding of the UK's international visitors. This study is conducted at dozens of ports of exit from the UK (air, sea, and rail). In 2024, VisitBritain asked a question to provide more information about how far in advance visitors booked their trip to Great Britain. The data for Northern Ireland is from a different source, so the question was only asked to passengers departing Great Britain.

*When did you book this visit to the UK? By booking we mean when did you make the final decision to visit the UK this time. In the last...*

- *2 weeks*
- *3-4 weeks*
- *1-2 months*
- *3-6 months*
- *More than 6 months*
- *Don't know*

Note: 8% of the total sample were not asked the bookings question and therefore the analysis has been re-based to reflect the sample asked.

# Important notice for interpreting data - 2024

2024 data in this report is based on the **revised estimates** from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on the morning of **26<sup>th</sup> August 2025** covering **2024**.

## Please note due the ONS' ongoing planned improvements to the travel and tourism statistics:

- 2024 final estimates are badged as '*official statistics in development*' and estimates are subject to future change as further improvements to the methods are introduced. The ONS are not endorsing comparisons with previous years.
- VisitBritain notes that the decline in visit numbers this data shows for the second half of 2024, compared to 2023, is in contrast to several other data sources that we have access to, which suggest moderate growth. In particular, there is a sharp decline in visits from Dover to Calais in the IPS data as well as a notable decline in lorry drivers surveyed. This is more likely to impact business visitors, those visiting from Eastern Europe and some Western European markets, and those visiting Southern and Central England. We have included trended data for transparency and completeness, but we urge caution when interpreting these estimates and advise users to note the ONS' badging of the 2024 data as '*official statistics in development*'. The ONS have noted this and are investigating the survey design and admin data used for calibration to better to understand this (point 5 in the [ONS update](#)).
- VisitBritain also notes the new incorporation of NISRA data into the UK estimates which is inconsistent with previous years (point 4 in the [ONS update](#)).
- The ONS are also undertaking a review of the historical data, so previous years data may be subject to marginal change.

Please see the ONS website for information on the [2024 data](#) and an [update on improvements to the travel and tourism statistics](#).

# Key insights

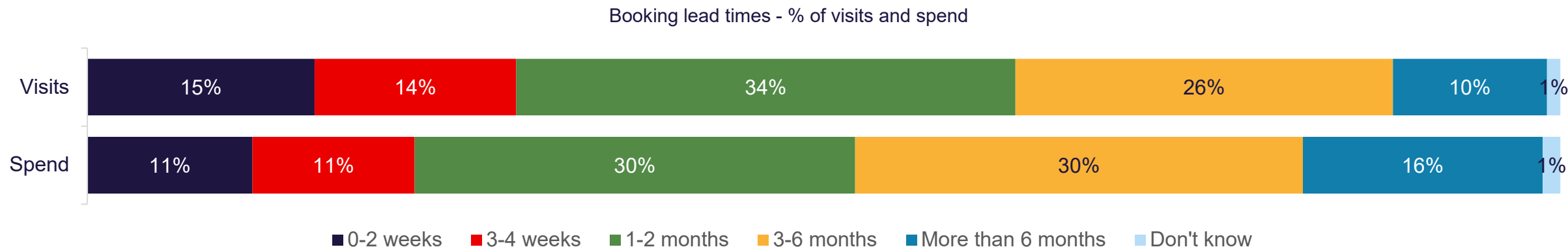
- Most visits to Great Britain in 2024 were booked 1-2 months in advance of the trip (34%), followed by 3-6 months (26%), 2 weeks (15%) and 3-4 weeks (14%) prior. Those that booked more than 6 months in advance made up the smallest proportion of overall trips (10%).
- Visitors booking furthest in advance are more likely to spend more per visit and stay for longer, whilst those who book last minute spend more per night on average.
- Inbound visitors during the summertime (Jul-Sep) tend to book further in advance than those visiting in the shoulder and off seasons.
- Whilst lead times by journey purpose varied greatly; study and holiday visitors booked furthest in advance, followed by VFR visitors, with business visitors having the shortest lead times.
- Holidaymakers from Oceania were most likely to book furthest in advance whilst those from GCC booked at the shortest notice, with more variation within Europe.
- Visitors staying in more than one region had longer booking lead times vs those who only went to one region. Those staying in Scotland booked furthest ahead, whilst those visiting the Midlands and Northern England had the shortest booking lead times.
- Those staying for free or in hotels tended to book at shorter notice while those staying as in a holiday village, hostel/university/school accommodation, camping/caravans and paid guests with family/relatives booked furthest ahead.

# Overview of booking lead times



# How far in advance were visits booked in 2024?

Most trips were booked between 1-2 months in advance of a trip to Great Britain with longer lead times of up to 3+ months in advance making up almost half of all spend.



At the total level, most **visits** to Great Britain in 2024 were booked 1-2 months in advance of the trip (34%), followed by 3-6 months (26%). A small proportion of visits had shorter lead times, booking within 2 weeks (15%) and 3-4 weeks (14%) prior. Those that booked more than 6 months in advance made up the smallest proportion of overall trips (10%).

For **spend**, lead times within 1 month of the trip made up 22% of total inbound spend, whilst trips booked 1-2 months in advance made up 30% of spend. Almost half of spend came from those booking 3+ months in advance.

Lead time	Visits (000)	Spend (£m)
0-2 weeks	5,529	£3,333
3-4 weeks	4,904	£3,275
1-2 months	12,147	£8,895
3-6 months	9,181	£9,040
More than 6 months	3,749	£4,842
Don't know	327	£358

# How do booking lead times impact trip length and spend?

Those that book further in advance are more likely to spend more per visit and stay for longer whilst those who book last minute spend more per night on average.

★ = highest average by booking lead time

Booking lead time	All	0-2 weeks	3-4 weeks	1-2 months	3-6 months	More than 6 months
Average spend per visit	£818	£603	£668	£732	£985	★ £1,292
Average spend per night	£111	★ £134	£124	£113	£106	£104
Average length of stay	7.4 days	4.5 days	5.4 days	6.5 days	9.3 days	★ 12.4 days

Booking lead times of 6+ months had the highest average **spend per visit** of £1,292, followed by visits with lead times of 3-6 months (£985). Visitors with these lead times had a higher average spend per visit vs the average visitor (£818). Trips with shorter lead times had a lower average spend; £603 for visits booked less than 2 weeks in advance and £668 for trips booked 3-4 weeks in advance. For holiday visits, spend per visit increased with lead time length apart from trips booked less than two weeks in advance which was higher than trips booked 3-4 weeks in advance.

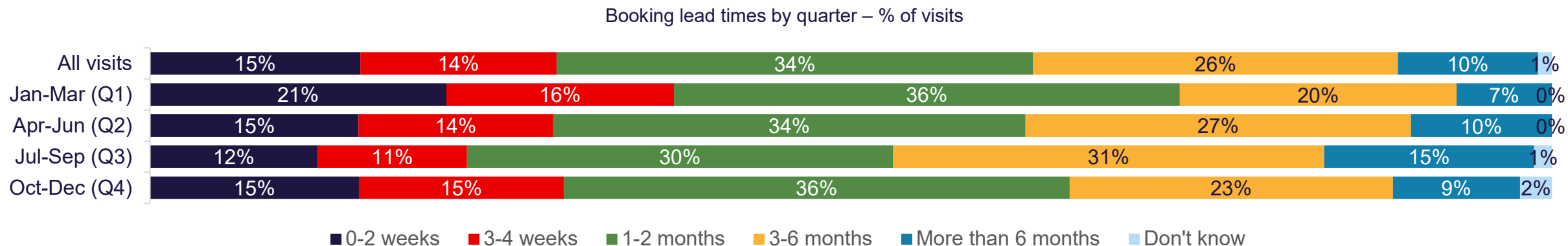
In contrast, those who booked more last minute tended to have a higher average **spend per night**; £134 (2 weeks in advance) and £124 (3-4 weeks in advance). Spend per night for holiday visits had less of a pattern with the longest lead times having the highest spend per night out of all booking lead times, followed by trips booked up to 2 weeks in advance.

Visitors that book further in advance tended to stay for significantly longer, with average **length of stay** rising from 4.5 days for bookings made 2 weeks ahead to 12.4 days for those made more than 6 months in advance, with the same pattern for holiday visits.



# How do booking lead times vary by quarter?

Visitors from Jul-Sep have longer booking lead times followed by shoulder seasons and then the off season.



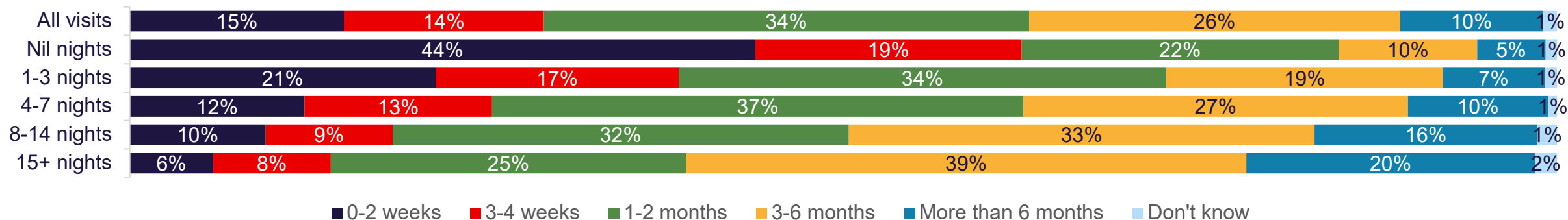
Those who visit Britain in the summer (Jul-Sep) tended to book furthest in advance with 46% booking 3+ months ahead, driven by holiday visits. This was followed by visitors in Q2, Q4 and then Q1. In contrast, visitors from Jan-Mar were more likely to book at shorter notice with 21% booking just 2 weeks prior to their trip, followed by visitors in Q4, Q2 (equal) and then Q3. Across Q1, Q2 and Q4, the largest share of visitors – around one third in each quarter – booked 1-2 months in advance, with a slightly lower proportion of 30% in Q3.

Visits (000)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
0-2 weeks	1,626	1,418	1,170	1,316
3-4 weeks	1,249	1,323	1,042	1,290
1-2 months	2,776	3,213	2,973	3,185
3-6 months	1,519	2,620	3,008	2,035
More than 6 months	524	960	1,464	801
Don't know	0	0	125	201

# How do booking lead times impact trip duration?

Visitors who stay for longer are more likely to book their trip in advance.

Booking lead times by length of stay – % of visits



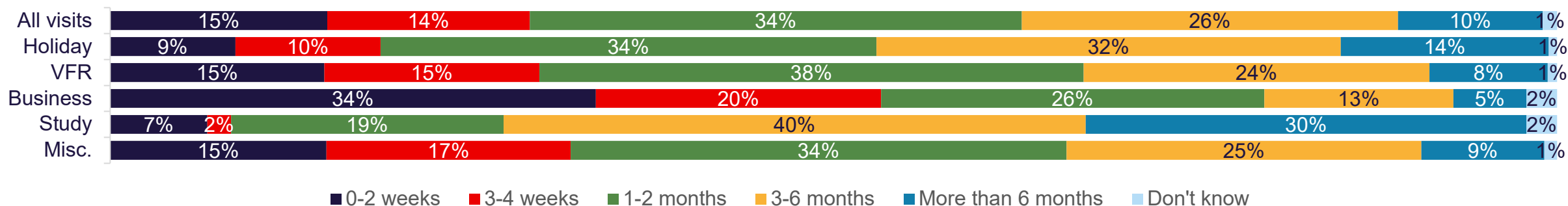
There was a strong correlation between length of stay and booking lead times with over half of inbound visitors (59%) who stayed for 15+ nights booking their trip more than 3 months in advance vs 14% for those who visited for less than one day. These nil night visitors tended to book last minute with 44% booking up to 2 weeks in advance vs 6% for those who stay 15+ nights. Visitors staying overnight for less than one week were most likely to book 1-2 months in advance, and for longer stays over one week, bookings were most likely to be made between 3-6 months in advance. Holiday visitors saw the same pattern but generally had a higher propensity to book their trip further in advance.

Visits (000)	Nil nights	1-3 nights	4-7 nights	8-14 nights	15+ nights
0-2 weeks	341	2,894	1,615	496	184
3-4 weeks	145	2,303	1,734	464	259
1-2 months	173	4,611	4,914	1,666	783
3-6 months	75	2,619	3,552	1,700	1,234
More than 6 months	37	961	1,300	814	636
Don't know	6	119	80	72	49

# How do lead times vary by journey purpose?

Booking times vary greatly by journey purpose with study visitors planning furthest ahead and business visitors booking at the shortest notice.

Booking lead times by journey purpose – % of visits

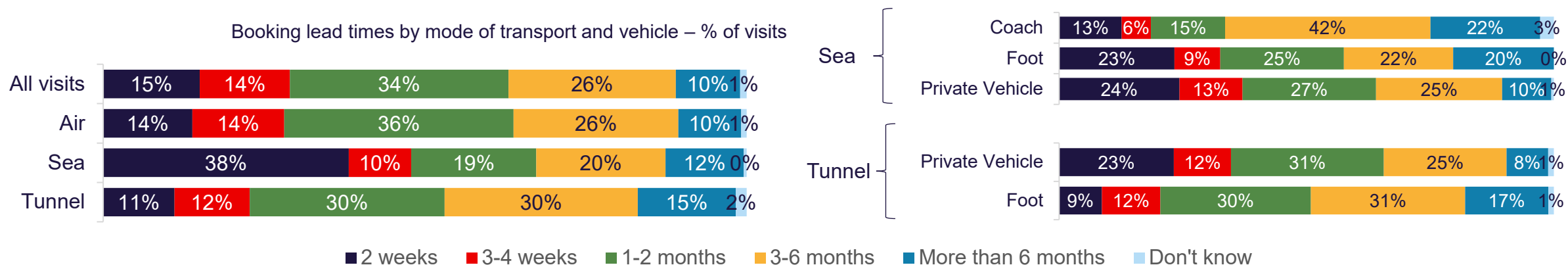


**Holiday** visitors are more likely to book their trip 1-2 months (34%) or 3-6 months in advance (32%) with 14% booking 6+ months ahead of their trip. Whilst 62% of **VFR** visitors book between 1-6 months ahead, 30% also book within a month of visiting Britain. **Business** visitors are most likely to have shorter lead times; 34% book up to 2 weeks in advance and a further 20% book within 3-4 weeks prior, and just 18% book 3+ months in advance. Those who come to Britain to **study** book their trip furthest in advance (71% book more than 3 months in advance), with just 7% having ultra short lead times.

Visits (000)	Holiday	VFR	Business	Study	Misc.
0-2 weeks	1,253	1,848	2,057	32	340
3-4 weeks	1,452	1,853	1,207	8	383
1-2 months	4,961	4,693	1,623	91	779
3-6 months	4,646	2,983	801	194	557
More than 6 months	2,079	1,019	310	147	194
Don't know	85	81	130	10	20

# How booking lead times vary by mode of transport?

Air and tunnel passengers are more likely to book further ahead compared to sea passengers.



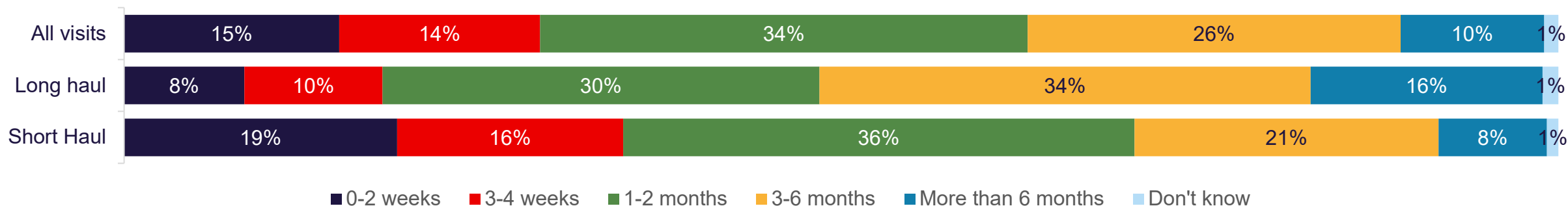
Inbound travellers can travel by air, sea or tunnel to visit Britain. Those travelling by **air** are most likely to book their trip 1-2 months in advance (36%). **Sea/ferry** visitors are most likely to book last minute with 38% booking up to 2 weeks in advance with those travelling by private vehicle over indexing whilst those travelling by coach booked further in advance. Visitors travelling via the **tunnel** are most likely to book their trip between 1-2 or 3-6 months in advance and are more likely out of all modes to book 6+ months prior to their trip (15%), particularly those arriving on foot (via the train).

Visits (000)	Air	Sea	Tunnel
0-2 weeks	4,108	1,036	385
3-4 weeks	4,234	263	407
1-2 months	10,566	528	1,053
3-6 months	7,591	546	1,045
More than 6 months	2,890	329	529
Don't know	255	13	59

# How do booking lead times vary by long haul vs short haul visits?

Long haul markets are more likely to book further in advance with short haul markets having shorter lead times, but there is lots of variation by markets on the next slide.

Booking lead times by long haul vs short haul – % of visits



Inbound visitors from **long haul** markets are more likely to book further in advance likely driven by higher travel costs and longer travel times; 34% book 3-6 months in advance with a further 16% booking more than 6 months prior to their trip. Visitors from **short haul** markets (Europe) are more likely to have shorter lead times vs long haul markets. Whilst the largest proportion book 1-2 months in advance (36%), 19% book up to 2 weeks in advance and 16% book 3-4 weeks in advance (vs 8% and 10% for long haul markets). When looking at holiday visits, both long haul and short haul had a higher propensity to book further ahead.

Visits (000)	Long Haul	Short haul
0-2 weeks	1,017	4,512
3-4 weeks	1,168	3,736
1-2 months	3,695	8,451
3-6 months	4,154	5,028
More than 6 months	1,961	1,788
Don't know	134	192

# How do holiday booking lead times vary by inbound market?

**Holidaymakers from Oceania most likely to book furthest in advance whilst those from GCC and Europe book at the shortest notice.**

Long haul holiday visitors from Brazil, China and New Zealand were most likely to book their trip 3-6 months in advance, followed by those from Hong Kong, India, Australia, Canada, Norway and the USA, with a significant proportion from New Zealand and Australia also booking more than 6 months in advance. Visitors from Switzerland, Germany, Austria and South Korea also had a high propensity to book 3-6 months ahead, with the latter 3 also seeing similar proportions for bookings 1-2 months ahead. More than 2 in 5 holiday visitors from Poland, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, GCC, Norway and France had lead times of 1-2 months, and this booking timeframe was also the most frequent for visitors from other European markets such as Irish Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Romania and Belgium. Those from GCC markets also were most likely to book 1-2 months ahead, but also had the highest propensity to book up to 2 weeks prior to their trip.

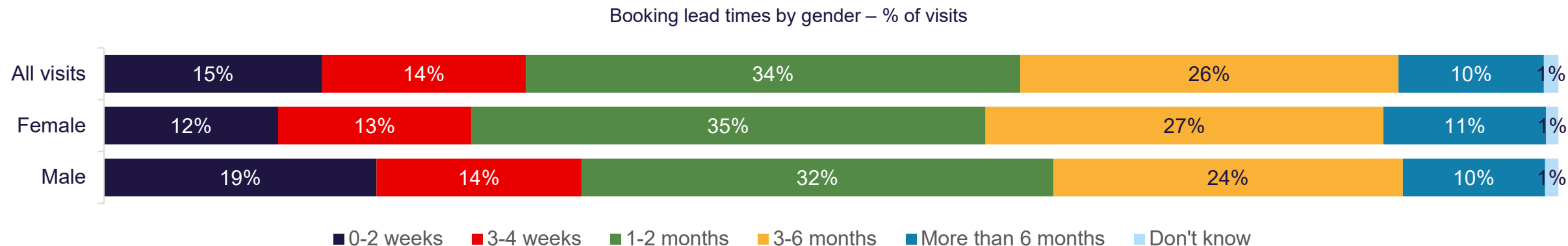
% of holiday visits	All markets	Australia	Austria	Belgium	Brazil	Canada	China	Denmark	France	GCC	Germany	Hong Kong*	India*	Irish Republic	Italy	Japan*	Netherlands	New Zealand	Norway	Poland	Romania	Saudi Arabia	South Korea	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	United Arab Emirates	USA
0-2 weeks	9%	2%	11%	11%	5%	6%	11%	12%	11%	22%	10%	7%	7%	17%	7%	9%	8%	0%	5%	15%	17%	26%	1%	8%	5%	10%	17%	4%
3-4 weeks	10%	3%	24%	10%	4%	6%	8%	9%	12%	11%	13%	9%	9%	13%	12%	4%	12%	1%	9%	6%	14%	11%	12%	10%	16%	13%	12%	6%
1-2 months	34%	23%	27%	36%	22%	28%	21%	42%	40%	42%	30%	23%	31%	38%	38%	40%	36%	13%	41%	47%	38%	44%	36%	44%	42%	30%	39%	28%
3-6 months	32%	39%	28%	31%	49%	39%	46%	24%	29%	16%	30%	40%	40%	25%	31%	35%	31%	43%	39%	24%	27%	11%	34%	26%	26%	35%	23%	39%
More than 6 months	14%	32%	10%	12%	19%	21%	12%	13%	7%	8%	15%	22%	13%	7%	12%	11%	13%	42%	5%	8%	5%	8%	18%	11%	11%	13%	8%	23%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%

International Passenger Survey 2024 by the ONS/VisitBritain analysis. Base: holiday respondents who were asked the question (14,870).

\*Sample below 100, indicative data only.

# How do booking lead times vary by gender?

Booking lead times between males and females are relatively similar although males over index for ultra short lead times due to a higher propensity to take business trips.



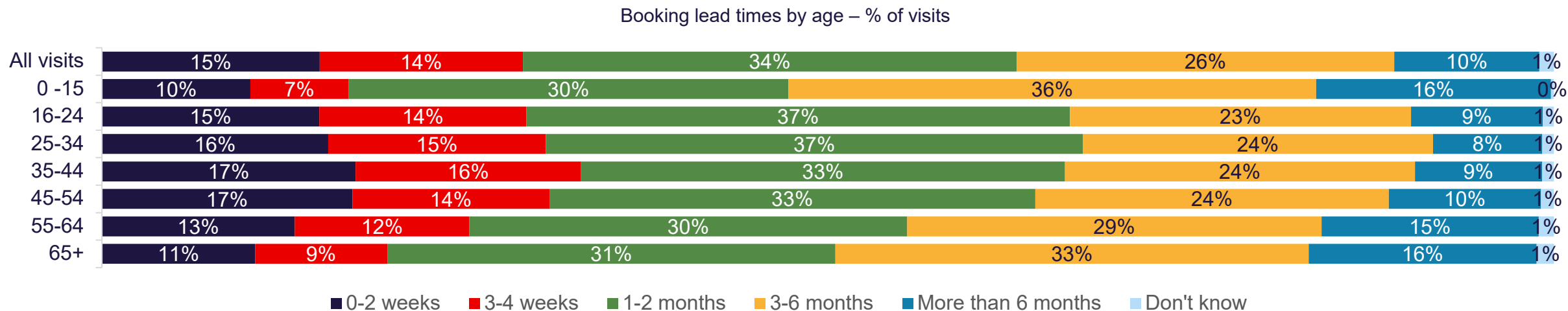
The proportion of bookings made more than 2 weeks in advance of their trip to Britain are relatively similar between **males** and **females**, with up to just 3 percentage points difference in most categories. The largest difference seen was for those who book up to 2 weeks in advance; 12% for females vs 19% for males, likely driven by males having a higher propensity to take business trips.

Visits (000)	Female	Male
0-2 weeks	2,086	3,427
3-4 weeks	2,311	2,582
1-2 months	6,160	5,938
3-6 months	4,765	4,394
More than 6 months	1,950	1,791
Don't know	147	169



# How do booking lead times vary by age group?

Younger travellers tend to book closer to departure whilst older travellers' book much further in advance.



Younger travellers are generally more likely to book their trip to Britain closer to their departure date (within 2 months) although 35-44s are more likely than those aged 16-34 to book their trip less than 4 weeks prior. Those aged 55+ are most likely out of all age groups to book their trip 3+ months in advance with the eldest age group (65+) most likely to book their trip 6+ months in advance (as well as children aged 0-15, where an adult would have booked a trip).

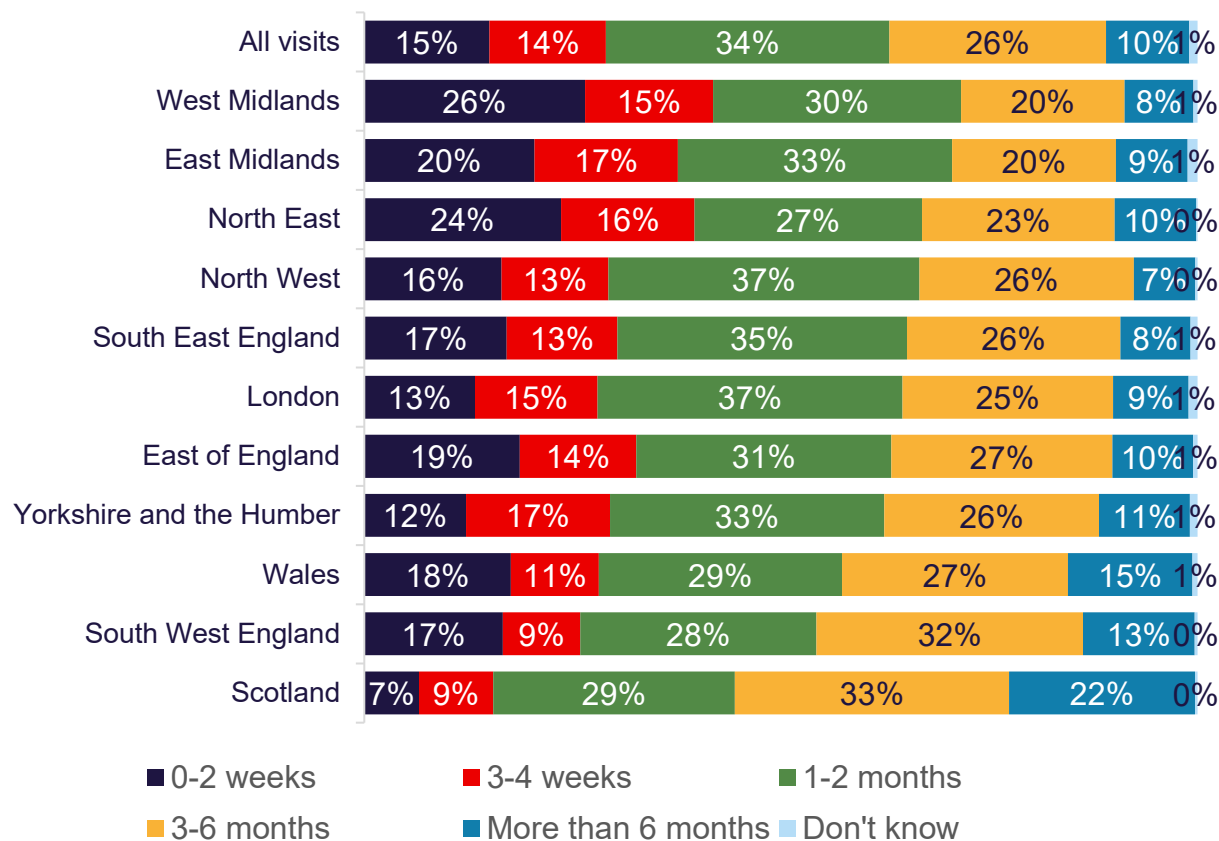
Visits (000)	0 -15	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
0-2 weeks	51	580	1,253	1,344	1,270	714	309
3-4 weeks	34	552	1,204	1,195	999	646	266
1-2 months	150	1,450	2,975	2,564	2,463	1,619	903
3-6 months	180	910	1,938	1,855	1,793	1,532	954
More than 6 months	80	352	605	673	772	803	459
Don't know	1	29	65	63	65	57	35



# How do booking lead times vary by GB region and nation visited?

Visitors to Scotland booked the furthest ahead, as did those visiting South West, Wales and Yorkshire, with the shortest booking lead times seen for those visiting the Midlands and Northern England.

Booking lead times by UK region – % of visits



Those visiting the **West Midlands**, **East Midlands**, **North East** and **North West** were most likely to have the shortest booking lead times, booking up to 2 months prior to their trip vs those visiting other GB nations and regions, with around 1 in 4 visiting the West Midlands and North East having ultra short lead times.

Amongst England regions, visitors to **South West** and **Yorkshire** were most likely to book 3+ months prior to their trip, followed by those from **East of England** and **London**.

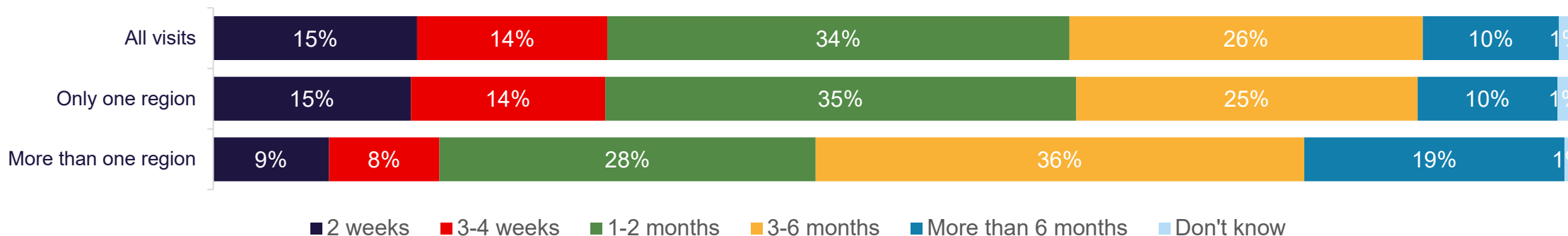
Overall, visitors to **Scotland** had the longest booking lead times with over half booking more than 3+ months in advance (with over 1 in 5 booking 6+ months ahead). For **Wales**, the distribution was more even between bookings <4 weeks, 1-2 months ahead and 3-6 months ahead, with 15% having ultra long booking times.

For holiday visits, visitors had longer lead times, particularly for trips booked 3-6 month in advance.

International Passenger Survey 2024 by the ONS/VisitBritain analysis. Base: respondents who were asked the question (38,804) and those who stayed in a GB nation or region mentioned above (34,567). Please note the nations/regions totals above are incomplete and therefore slightly lower than published totals, but are a good proxy for the distribution.

## How do booking lead times vary by GB region and nation visited? (2)

Visitors staying in more than one region had longer booking lead times vs those that only stayed in one region.

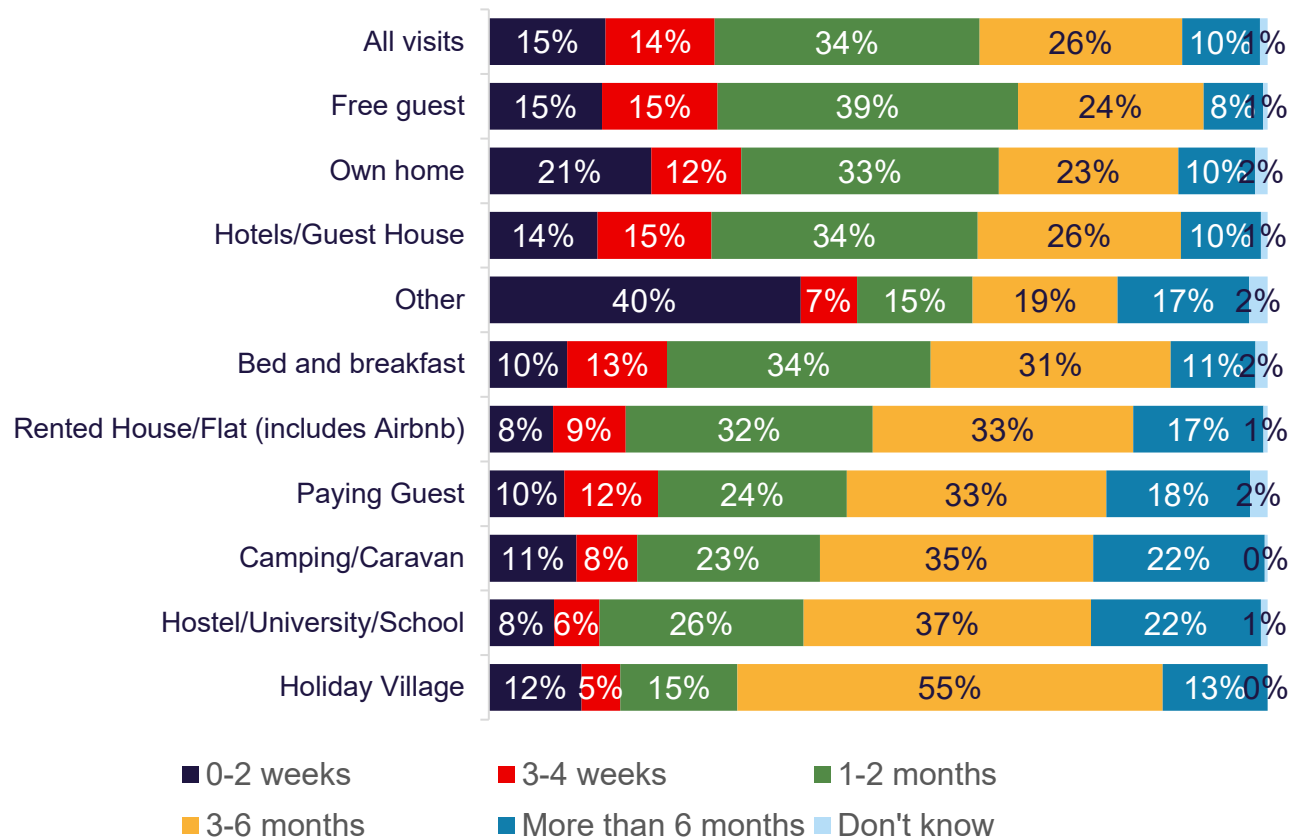


Visitors staying in more than one region had longer booking lead times overall, with over half booking more than 3 months ahead of their trip vs 35% who only stayed in one region. A significantly lower proportion (17%) booked their trip within one month of departure vs those who stayed in one region only (29%).

# How do booking lead times vary by accommodation stayed in? (1)

Visitors staying for free or in hotels tended to book at shorter notice while those staying as paid guests, in hostels/university/school, camping/caravans or holiday parks booked furthest ahead.

Booking lead times by accommodation type – % of visits



Visitors to Britain staying as a **free guest (with relatives/friends)** or in their **own home** were most likely to book their trip at the shortest notice (less than 2 months in advance), followed by those staying in a **hotel/guest house, other accommodation** and a **bed and breakfast**. Visitors staying in their own home or other accommodation had the highest propensity for ultra short lead times, although the latter was primarily made up of business visitors. Those staying in **rented accommodation** (such as Airbnb) had a more even split between longer and shorter booking lead times. Accommodation including **paying guests (with relatives/friends), hostels/university/school, camping/caravan** and **holiday village/centres** tended to attract visitors who booked further in advance. Visitors staying in camping/caravans and hostels/university/school and were most likely to book 6+ months in advance.

International Passenger Survey 2024 by the ONS/VisitBritain analysis. Base: respondents who were asked the question and those who only stayed in one UK nation or region, and one type of accommodation (31,382). Please note the nations/regions totals above are incomplete and therefore slightly lower than published totals, but are a good proxy for the distribution.

# Further information



## Other data sources

VisitBritain publish a range of different data on the website covering inbound tourism performance and data for inbound travellers to the UK:

### Tourism performance:

[UK](#) and [Nations and Regions](#) level data for 2024 inbound tourism

[State of the Nation report](#): regularly monthly update providing a high-level snapshot of tourism in Britain

[Card spending to Britain](#): data from Visa provides regular insights on visitor spending in Britain, by origin, card type, merchant category and more

[Aviation data](#): explore our flight searches and air traffic data to the UK via monthly reports and interactive dashboard

[Short-term lets](#): monthly insights on overall supply of short-term rental properties across the UK as well as performance metrics

### Additional IPS analysis for 2024 can be found below on the:

[UK webpage](#): states of residence for select inbound markets, accommodation trends

[Regional webpage](#): county and subregional trends, county and subregional accommodation trends

[Towns webpage](#): see the number of visits to UK towns

[Activities webpage](#): see the types of activities inbound visitors are taking part in within the UK

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