spalder MEDIA GROUP

SPALDER MEDIA GROUP

Winter sports holiday survey 2026/2027

Market: Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Results of the annual survey among winter sports travellers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, run through the German-language ski portals of Spalder Media Group.

1,000+	89%	54%
participants	going this season	already booked

ABOUT THE SURVEY

What we asked, and who we asked

Between 19 August and 14 September 2026, the German-language ski portals of Spalder Media Group researched the trends shaping the coming winter season.

We asked about booking behaviour, the use of AI and the factors that decide the choice of destination and accommodation. New are the questions on destination loyalty, on switching destination and on paying a premium.

More than 1,000 winter sports travellers took part in the surveys in total, through an online questionnaire on the websites and their social channels.

1,000+
participants in the surveys

89%
going this season

54%
have already booked

26%
use AI when planning

Please note: not every question was put to every participant. The questions about the coming season went to everyone planning a trip, the questions about the car to everyone travelling by car, the questions about the Austrian states to everyone going to Austria, and the questions about family trips to everyone travelling with school-age children. Percentages are always calculated on that group.

THE HEADLINES

Six findings from the survey

45%

head for the snow more than twice a season. The core of this audience is highly active.

50%

travel for six days at most: 36% for four to six days and 14% for just one to three.

54%

have already booked, so almost half are still deciding. 18% deliberately book late.

95%

travel by car and only 2% fly. Accessibility helps decide where they go.

52%

will pay more for highly reliable snow, and 51% for accommodation right on the piste.

39%

would switch destination for a lower total price, almost as many as for snow (42%).

FREQUENCY

Almost half go more than twice a season

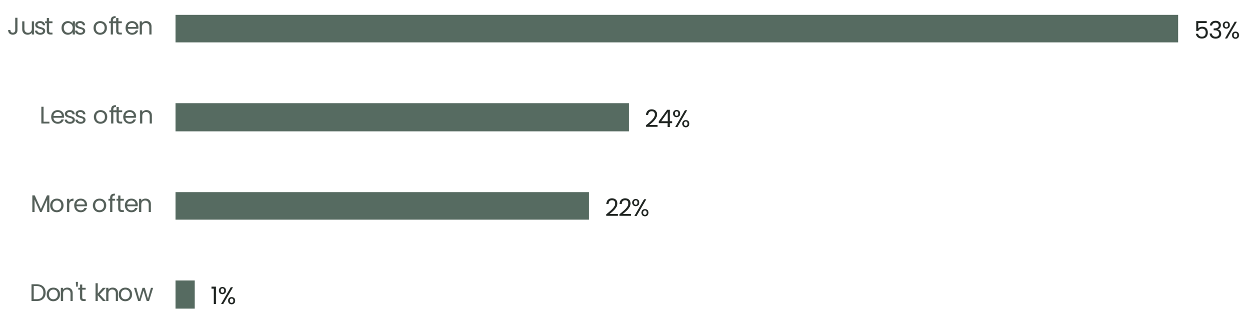
45% of participants head for the snow more than twice a season. Roughly a quarter go once (26%) or twice (25%) a year, and 4% do not go every year.

53% go as often as they used to, 22% more often and 24% less often. On balance, frequency is holding steady.

So a large share of this audience is away several times each winter. That makes them particularly interesting for destinations and brands, because one season covers several decisions.

On average, how often have you gone on a winter sports trip per season in recent years?

Has the frequency of your ski trips changed in recent years?



LENGTH AND PLANS

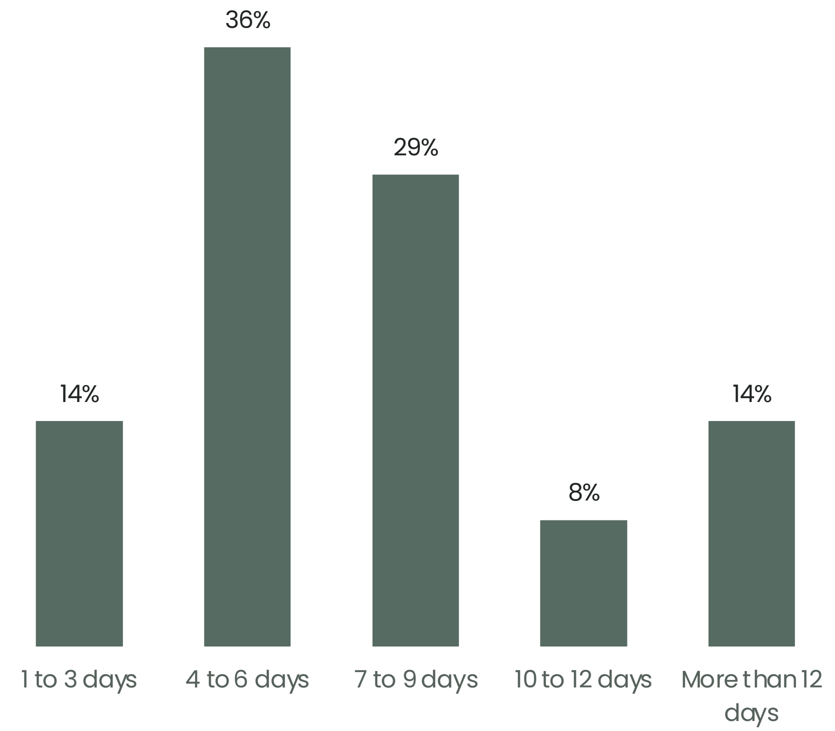
The short ski trip is the norm

36% spend 4 to 6 days on their ski trip and 29% a full week of 7 to 9 days. The very short trip stands out: 14% go for just 1 to 3 days. Exactly as many stay longer than 12 days.

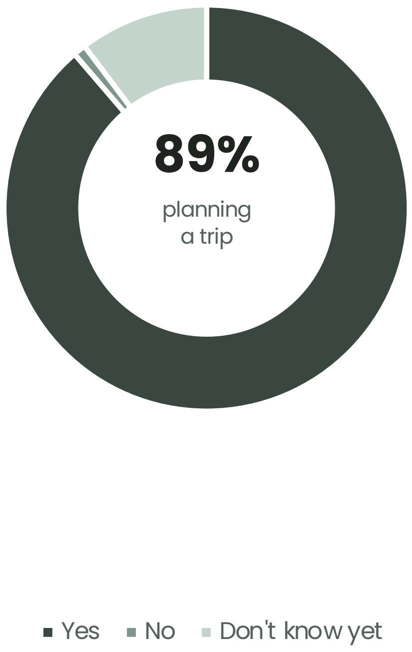
The typical trip for this audience is therefore shorter than a classic week. For destinations within driving distance that means several short stays per season rather than one long one.

89% plan a ski trip in the 2026/2027 season. 10% do not know yet and only 1% are skipping the winter altogether.

How many days do you usually spend on a ski trip?



Are you planning a ski trip in the coming 2026/2027 season?



THE UNDECIDED

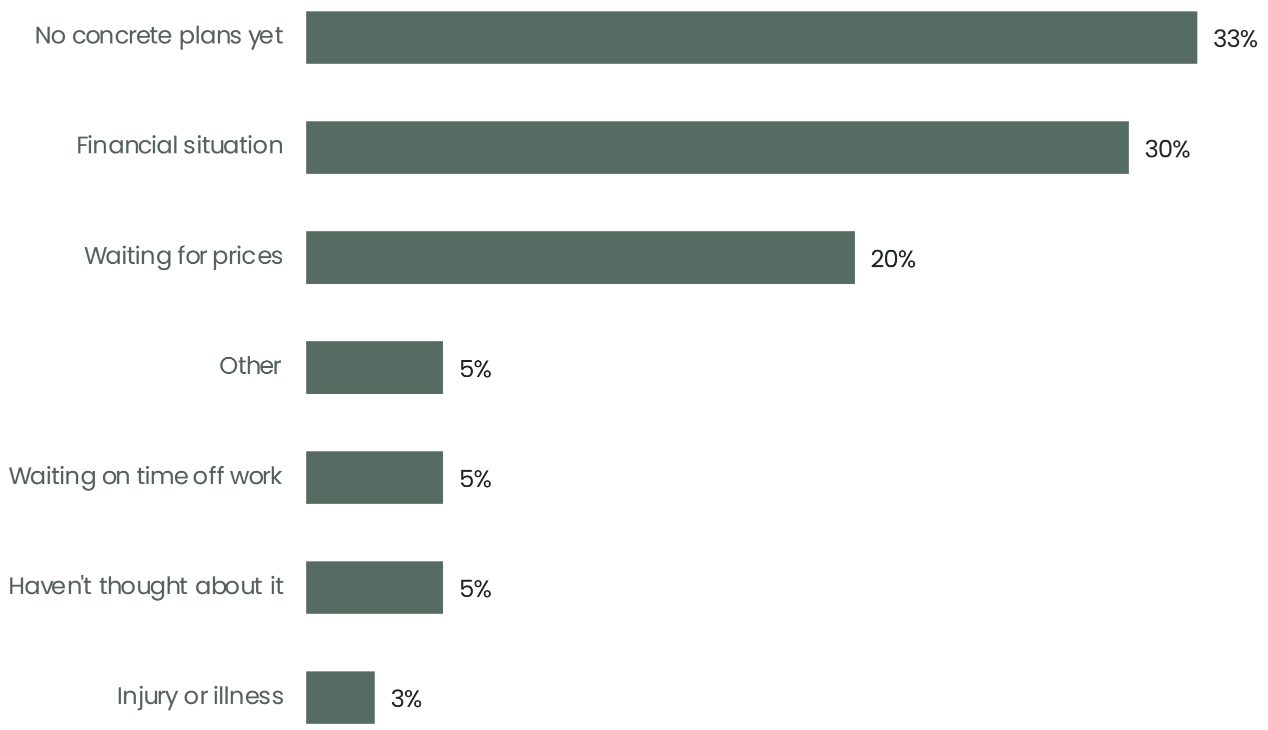
Why some are still undecided

Only 1% of participants are definitely not going on a ski trip this coming season. That group is so small that we do not show it as a chart; the only reason named is their financial situation.

10% do not know yet. Practical reasons dominate in that group: 33% have no concrete plans yet and 20% are waiting to see how prices develop. Their financial situation plays a part for 30%.

Part of this group is therefore well within reach: a concrete offer at the right moment can still influence the decision. Because both groups are small, these percentages are indicative.

What is the main reason you do not know yet whether you will go on a ski trip?



Base: those who do not know yet whether they will go on a ski trip

BUDGET AND AI

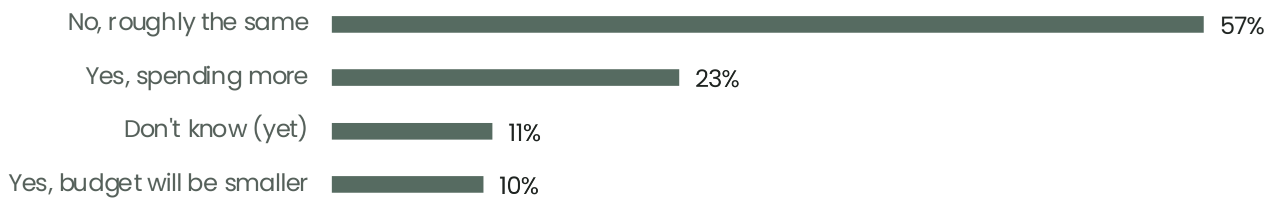
A quarter use AI for their ski trip

For 57% the budget for their ski trip stays roughly the same this season. 23% expect to spend more, 10% expect a smaller budget and 11% do not know yet.

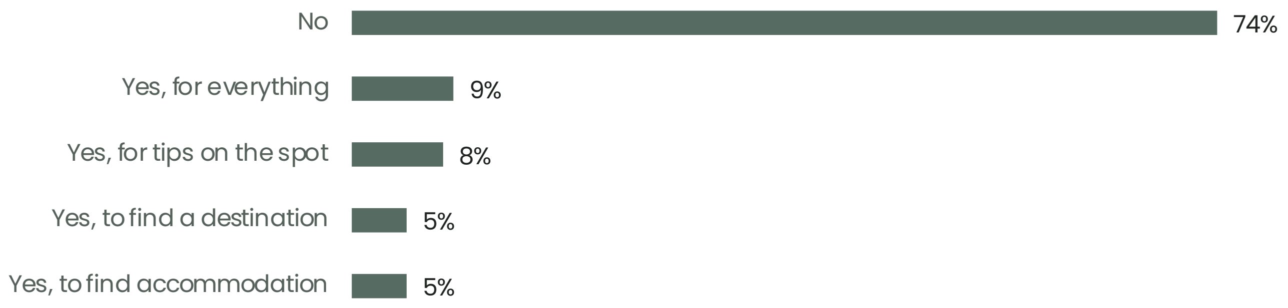
The market is therefore looking at a stable to slightly rising budget. Only a small share are actively planning with less money.

26% use AI when planning their trip: 9% for everything, 8% for tips and recommendations on the spot and 5% each for finding accommodation and choosing a destination. Three in four participants do not yet turn to AI.

Is your budget for your ski trip changing this year?



Do you use AI when planning your ski trip, and if so, what for?



ORIENTATION

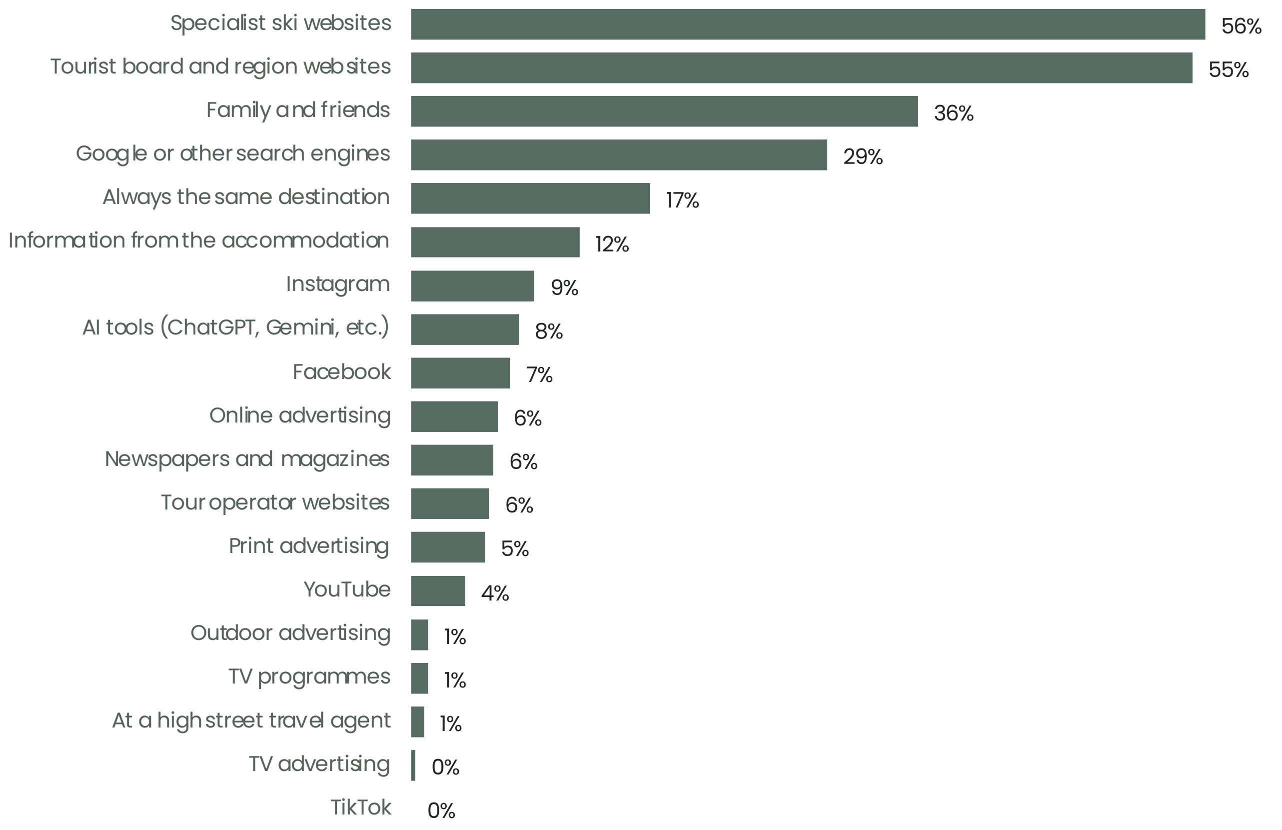
Ski websites and tourist boards are level

Multiple answers were possible for this question. Specialist ski websites are the most important source at 56%, practically level with the websites of tourist boards, ski areas and regions (55%).

Next come the experiences of family and friends (36%) and Google or other search engines (29%). AI tools are named by 8%, Instagram by 9%, YouTube by 4% and TikTok by not a single participant.

Paid channels play a small role: online advertising 6%, print advertising 5%, TV advertising 0%.

Where do you look for information or inspiration when you want to book a ski trip? (multiple answers possible)



CHOOSING A DESTINATION

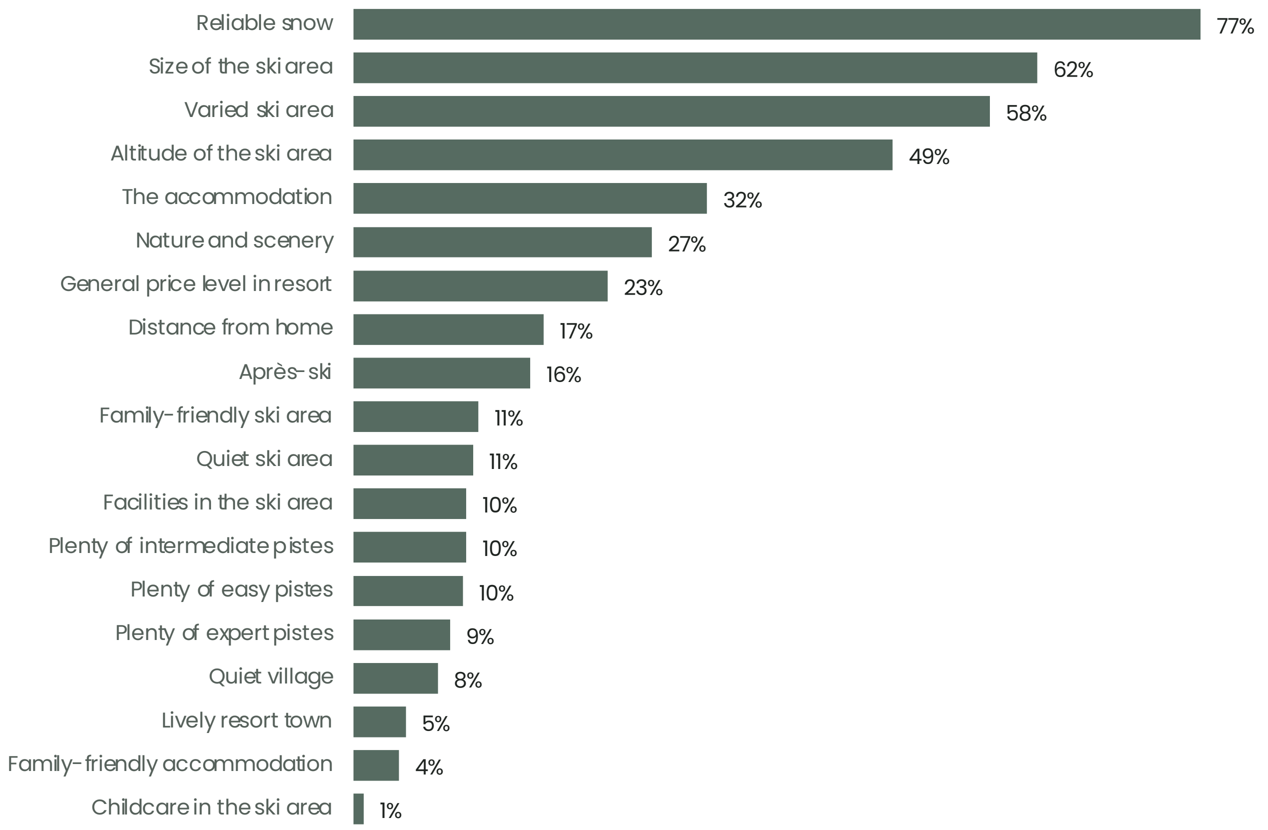
Reliable snow is the deciding factor

Multiple answers were possible here too. Reliable snow is clearly first at 77%, followed by the size of the ski area (62%), a varied ski area (58%) and altitude (49%).

The accommodation is named by 32%, nature and scenery by 27% and the general price level in resort by 23%. The distance from home plays a part for 17%.

Après-ski (16%), a lively resort town (5%) and a family-friendly ski area (11%) matter considerably less to this audience. It is first and foremost about the skiing itself.

Which factors matter to you when choosing your ski destination? (multiple answers possible)



CHOOSING ACCOMMODATION

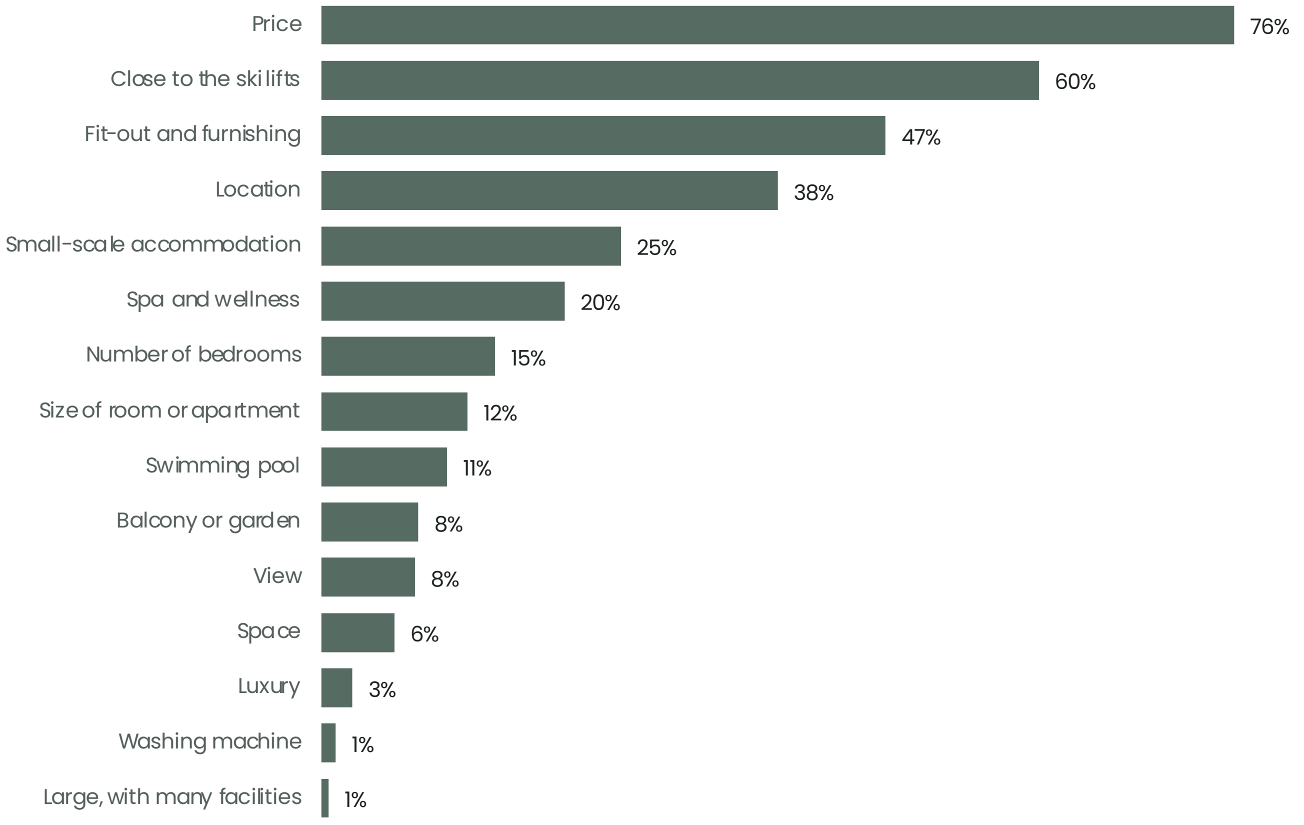
Price decides, proximity to the lift follows

Price is the most important factor when choosing accommodation at 76%, followed by proximity to the ski lifts (60%), the fit-out (47%) and the location (38%).

A small, manageable property matters to 25% and spa facilities to 20%. The number of bedrooms (15%) and the size of the room or apartment (12%) follow behind.

Large properties with many facilities (1%), a washing machine (1%) and luxury (3%) barely register. What people want is a well-placed property at the right price.

Which factors matter to you when choosing your accommodation? (multiple answers possible)



NEW THIS YEAR

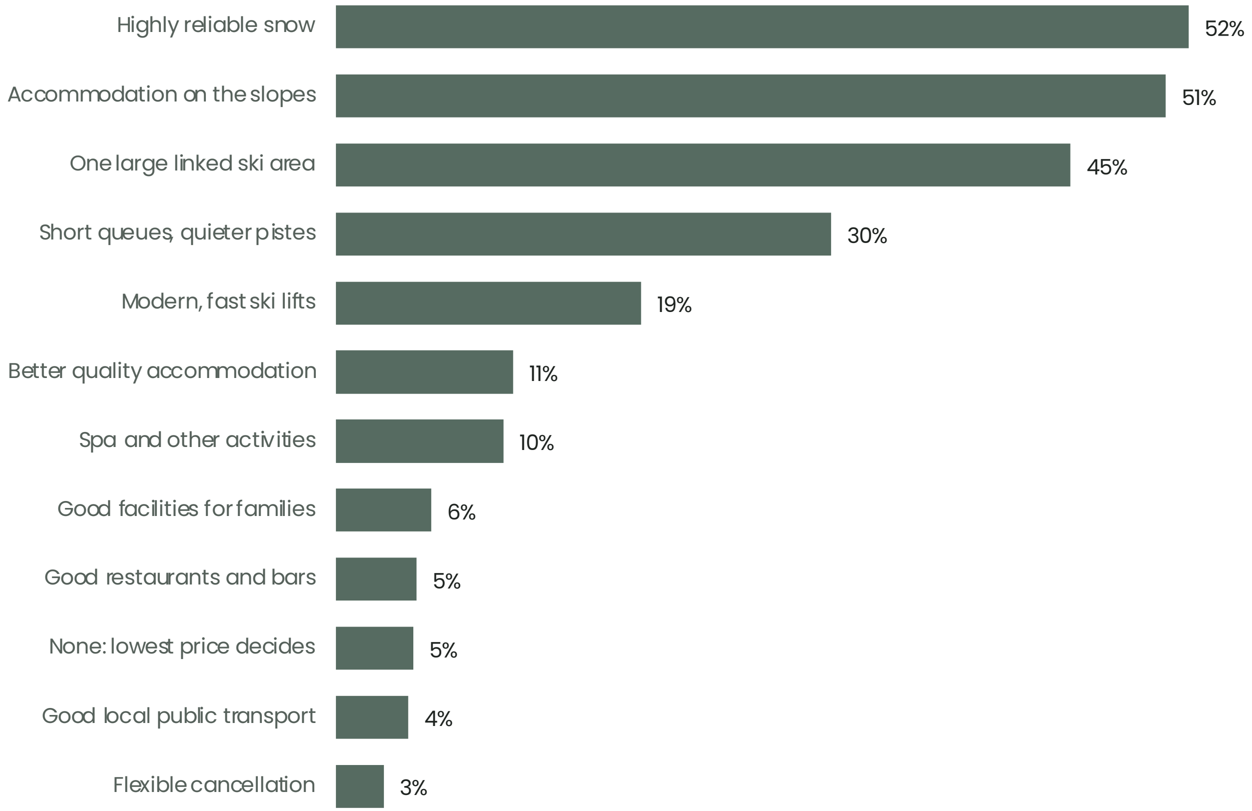
Reliable snow is worth paying more for

New in the survey is the question of what winter sports travellers are willing to pay more for. Highly reliable snow comes first at 52%, closely followed by accommodation right on the piste or at the lift (51%) and one large linked ski area (45%).

Short queues and quieter pistes are worth a premium to 30%, and modern, fast ski lifts to 19%. Comfort and extras are clearly behind: better quality accommodation 11%, spa facilities 10%, good restaurants and bars 5%.

Only 5% say the lowest price is all that counts. A premium is therefore possible, as long as it buys snow, location and ski area.

Which features or facilities are you willing to pay more for? (multiple answers possible)



NEW THIS YEAR

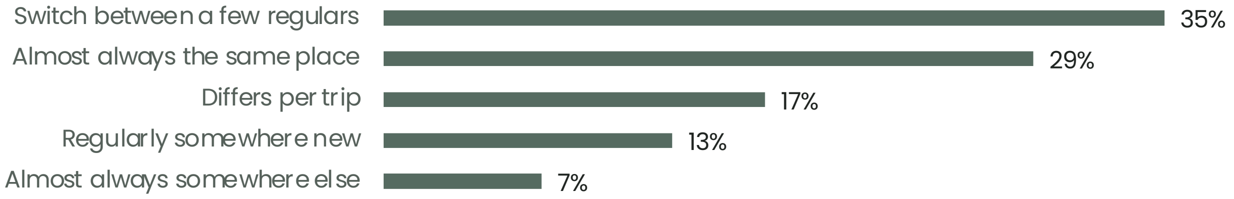
Almost two thirds stay loyal to fixed destinations

35% switch between two or more regular destinations and 29% almost always return to the same place. Almost two thirds of this audience is therefore tied to fixed destinations. 13% regularly choose somewhere new and 7% go somewhere different almost every season.

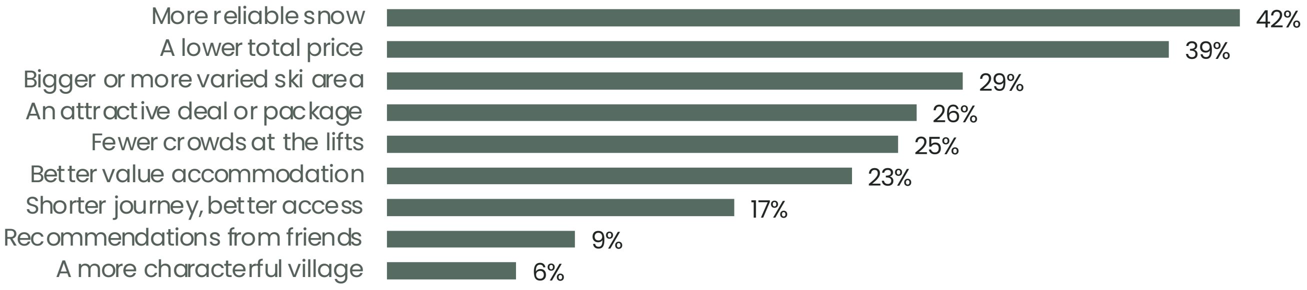
Winning these travellers over takes snow and a good price above all: 42% would switch for more reliable snow and 39% for a lower total price.

Next come a bigger or more varied ski area (29%), an attractive deal (26%) and fewer crowds at the lifts (25%). Only 6% do not want to switch at all.

Which statement best describes how you choose your ski destination?



What could persuade you to choose a different destination? (multiple answers possible)



Other: Nothing, I prefer familiar 6%, Good reviews and information 6%, Better offer for families 4%, A special event or activity 4%, More to do besides skiing 2%

FAMILIES

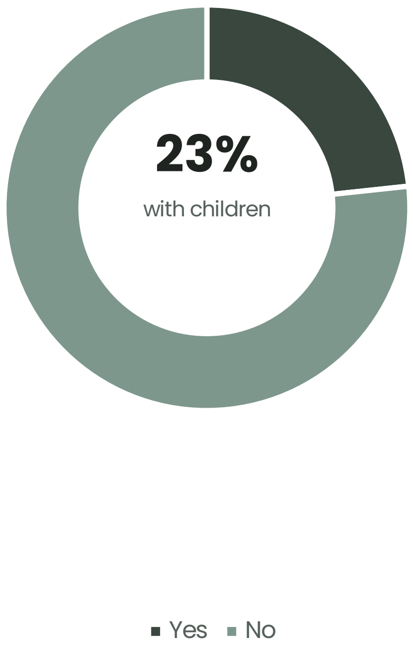
For families it is mainly about the price level

23% of participants travel with school-age children. We asked this group which factors and facilities matter when booking a family trip.

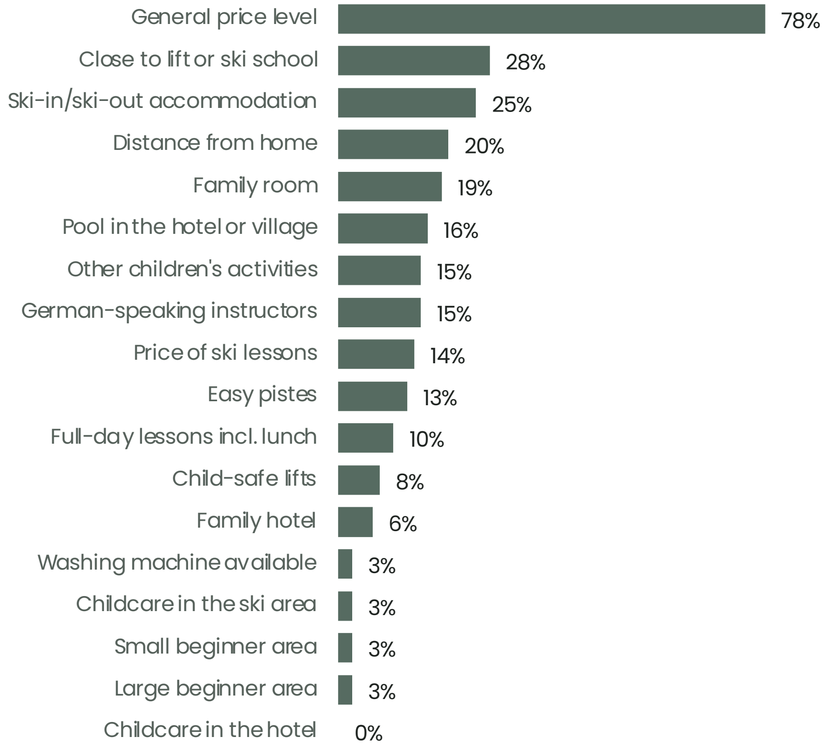
The general price level is well ahead at 78%. Next come accommodation close to the lift or ski school (28%), ski-in/ski-out accommodation (25%) and the distance from home (20%).

German-speaking ski instructors matter to 15% and a pool in the hotel or village to 16%. Childcare barely registers. Because the family group is small, these percentages should be read as indicative.

Do you travel with school-age children?



What matters when booking a family ski trip? (multiple answers possible)



Base: those travelling with school-age children

CLIMATE AND BOOKING

Almost half are still deciding

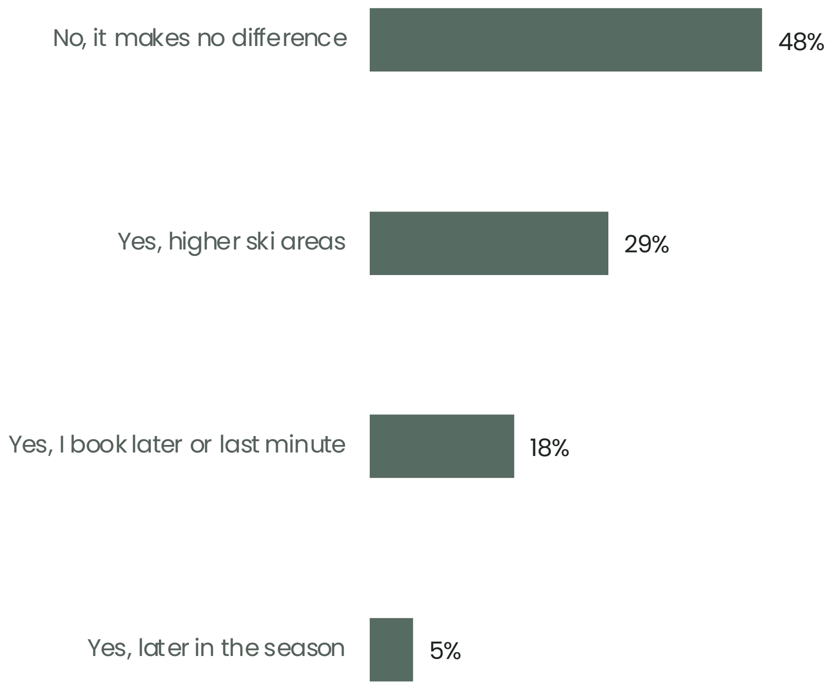
54% had already booked their 2026/2027 trip at the time of the survey. Almost half are therefore still deciding, which leaves a long window open for offers and campaigns.

48% say climate change or less reliable winters make no difference to their choice. 29% deliberately choose higher-altitude ski areas.

Notably, 18% book later or last minute and 5% go later in the season. Climate change is mainly shifting the timing of the decision here.

Have you already booked your 2026/2027 ski trip?

Have climate change or less reliable winters changed the choices you make?



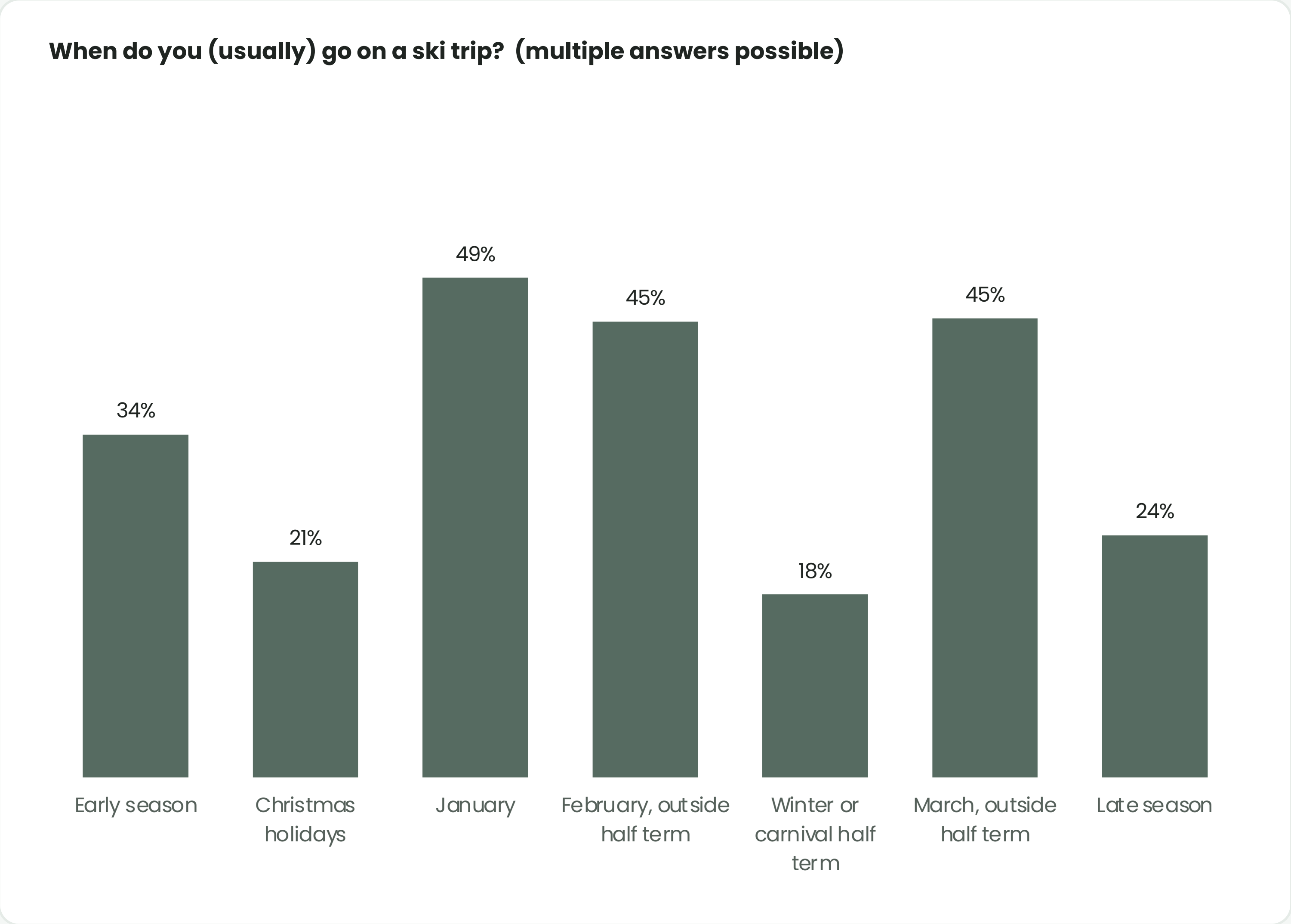
WHEN THEY TRAVEL

January leads, March and February close behind

Multiple answers were possible for the question of when people travel. January is the most popular period at 49%, closely followed by March outside the school holidays (45%) and February outside the school holidays (45%).

The early season up to the Christmas holidays stands out at 34%, as does the late season after March at 24%. This audience travels remarkably often outside the classic holiday weeks.

The school holidays themselves are less sought after: Christmas holidays 21% and winter or carnival half term 18%. That fits a group travelling mostly without school-age children.



The car dominates, the plane barely registers

The car is the way to travel at 95%. Coach (9%), train (6%), campervan (3%) and plane (2%) follow far behind. Flying plays practically no role for this audience.

Those who drive are mostly still in a petrol or diesel car: 81%. 13% drive hybrid and 10% fully electric.

A good one in five drivers therefore reaches the mountains wholly or partly on electric power. That makes charging infrastructure en route and in the ski areas a relevant part of planning the trip.

How do you (usually) travel to your ski destination? (multiple answers possible)

What kind of car do you drive to your ski destination?

Base: those travelling to their ski destination by car

PRICE RISES

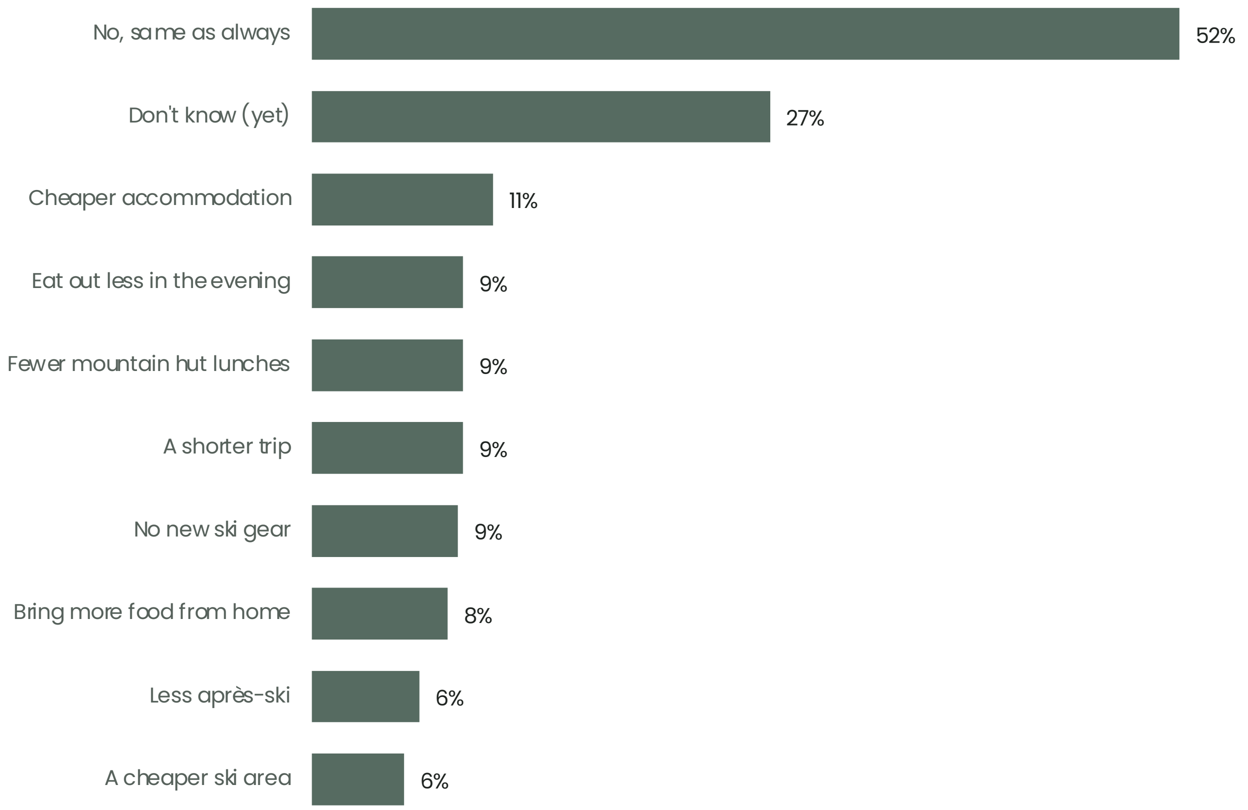
Half change nothing because of prices

52% carry on exactly as before despite higher prices and 27% do not know yet. A good fifth are therefore deliberately adjusting something.

Those who economise start with accommodation and food: 11% book cheaper accommodation, 9% take a shorter trip, 9% have fewer mountain hut lunches and 9% eat out less in the evening. 9% buy no new equipment.

So people barely economise on the trip itself, more on spending once they are there. Only 6% move to a cheaper ski area.

Are you doing anything differently this year because of price rises? (multiple answers possible)



TRAVEL COMPANY

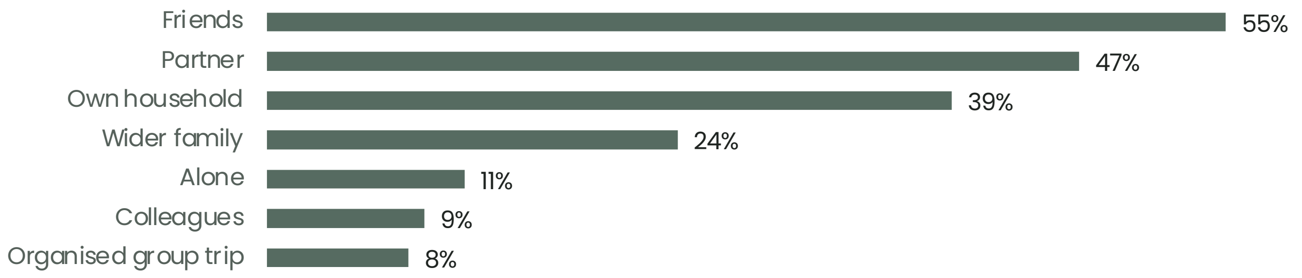
With friends, a partner or the family

Multiple answers were possible here too. Friends top the list at 55%, followed by a partner (47%) and the immediate family (39%). 24% travel with wider family and 11% sometimes alone.

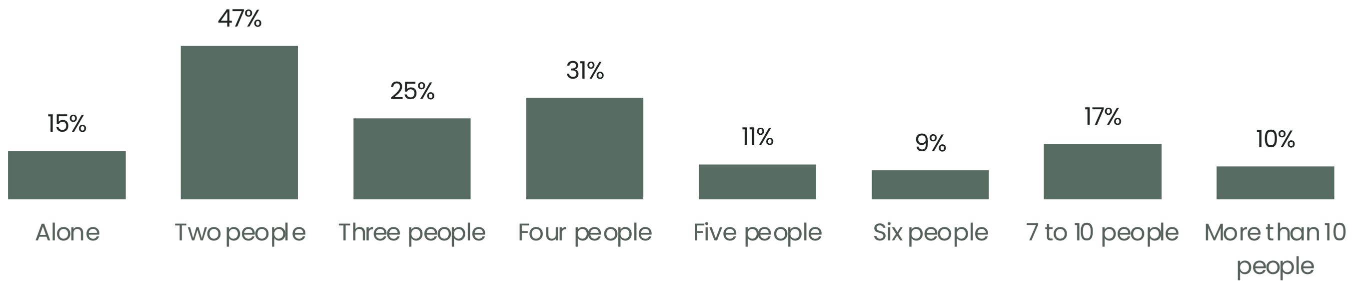
Colleagues (9%) and organised group trips (8%) are considerably rarer.

47% travel as a pair, 31% as a group of four and 25% as a group of three. Larger groups are no exception: 17% travel with 7 to 10 people and 10% with more than 10.

Who do you normally travel with? (multiple answers possible)



How many people do you usually travel with? (multiple answers possible)



ACCOMMODATION AND ACTIVITIES

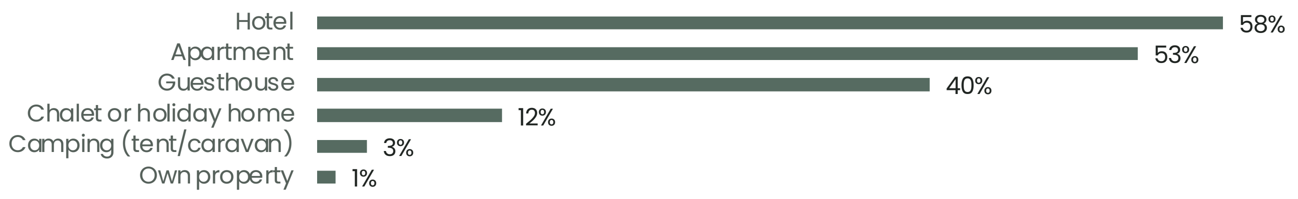
Hotels lead, and spa is the number two activity

Hotels lead at 58%, followed by apartments (53%). Guesthouses are notably strong at 40%. Chalets or holiday homes (12%), camping (3%) and own property (1%) follow behind.

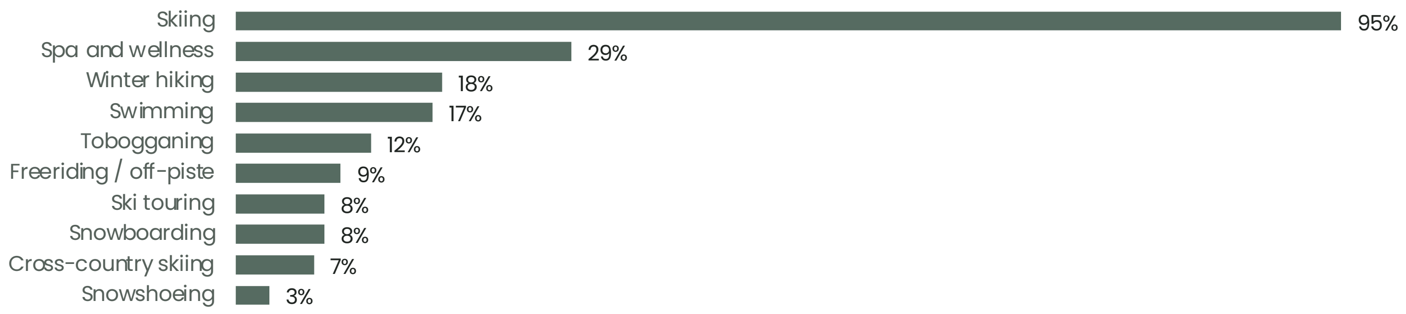
Skiing is clearly the main activity at 95%. Next, however, comes spa and wellness at 29%, well ahead of winter hiking (18%), swimming (17%) and tobogganing (12%).

Snowboarding (8%), ski touring (8%) and freeriding (9%) sit close together. Off the piste, relaxation is the most important second motive.

Where do you stay during your ski trip? (multiple answers possible)



What do you do during your ski trip? (multiple answers possible)



Other: Ice skating 3%, Horse-drawn sleigh ride 2%, Dog sledding 1%, Freestyle / snowpark <1%, Ice climbing <1%

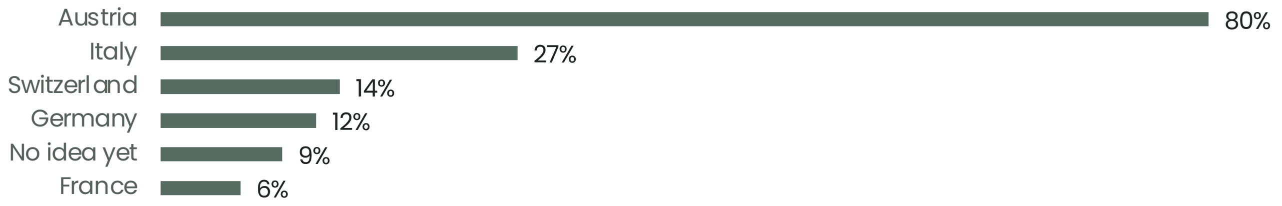
DESTINATIONS

Austria remains by far the most popular country

Multiple answers were possible for this question as well. Austria is the clear number one at 80%, followed by Italy (27%) and Switzerland (14%). Germany itself is named by 12% and France by 6%. 9% do not know their destination yet.

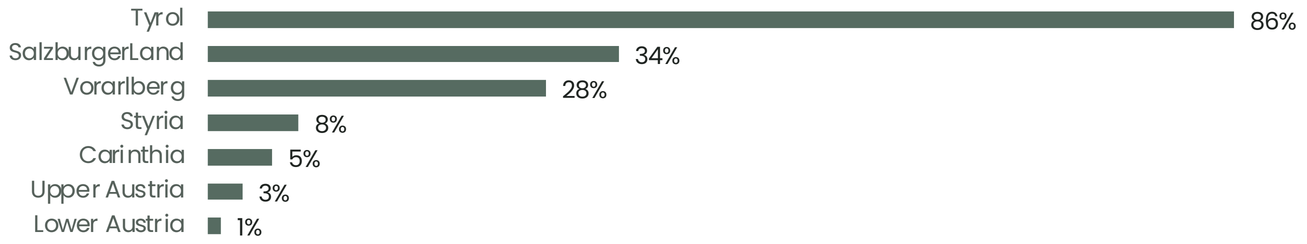
Those heading for Austria mainly go to Tyrol: 86%. Next come SalzburgerLand (34%) and Vorarlberg (28%). The other states remain clearly less sought after for a ski trip.

Do you already know where you are going in 2026/2027, or where you would like to go? (multiple answers possible)



Other: Canada 2%, Czechia 1%, Japan 1%, Norway 1%, United States 1%, Andorra <1%, Finland <1%, Slovenia <1%, Sweden <1%

And where in Austria? (multiple answers possible)



Base: those going to Austria

THE PARTICIPANTS

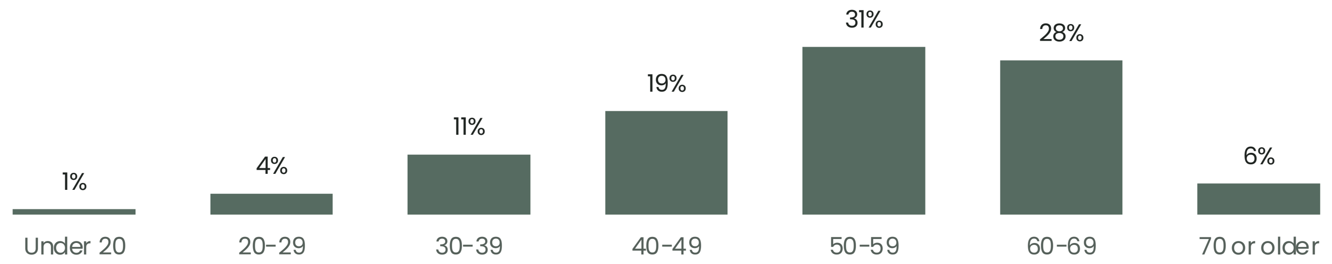
Almost eight in ten are between 40 and 69

The 50 to 59 age group is the best represented (31%), followed by 60 to 69 (28%) and 40 to 49 (19%). Almost eight in ten participants are between 40 and 69 years old.

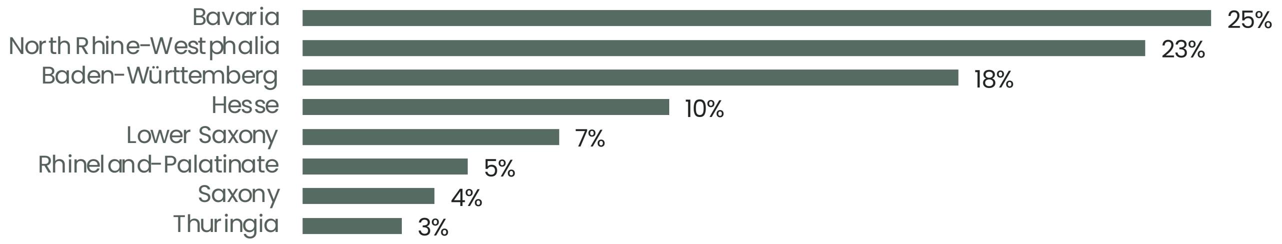
Younger winter sports travellers are clearly in the minority in the survey: 11% are between 30 and 39 and 4% between 20 and 29.

Among the participants from Germany the spread is wide. Bavaria (25%), North Rhine-Westphalia (23%) and Baden-Württemberg (18%) are the strongest represented, so roughly two thirds together. Hesse follows at 10%.

How old are you?



Which state do you live in? (base: participants living in Germany)



Other: Schleswig-Holstein 2%, Berlin 2%, Brandenburg 1%, Saarland 1%, Hamburg 1%, Bremen <1%, Saxony-Anhalt <1%, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern <1%

CONTACT

Want to know more about Spalder Media Group?

Frank and Vera are happy to tell you more about Spalder Media Group, the labels that sit under it and the reach we have in the winter sports market. From advertising to content partnerships and campaigns for destinations and brands.

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