



Global Travel Insight

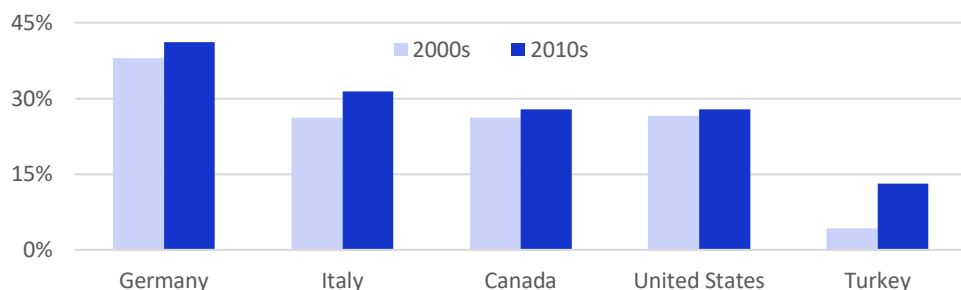
Growth in single person households is reshaping global travel

The rise of single-person households is shifting the global consumer landscape, presenting a growing challenge for the travel industry. Single-person households are projected to grow 35 percent this decade to reach 580 million by 2030, accounting for nearly one in four households globally.¹ In leading countries like Germany, single-person households already account for over 40 percent of the total and represent the most common living arrangement. The travel industry will need to adjust to the resulting shift in consumer demand—away from traditional, family-centered vacation travel and towards the less predictable, more eclectic interests of single travelers.

The changing face of traveling consumers offers the potential to accelerate demand for international travel. Cross-border travel rates are higher among consumers in markets with a higher proportion of single-person households in the population. Our analysis of depersonalized and aggregated Visa cardholder data confirms the broad-based appeal of international travel within this demographic, spanning both generations and affluence levels. If current trends hold, the demographic shift should diversify travel well beyond popular tourism destinations over the next decade.

Travel choices of singles differ from established patterns, offering three lessons on tailoring the value proposition for this segment. First, single travelers are more flexible and adventurous in their destination choices, prioritizing value and diversity of their experience over comfort and luxury. Second, while singles may prefer living alone, opportunities to socialize during the trip play a greater role in their choice of travel. Third, single consumers show an aversion to traditional sources for travel planning. Reaching them effectively will depend more on organic marketing.

Fig. 1: Single living is growing more prevalent
(Percent share of single-person households in total)



Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe


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Key Points:

 Rising prevalence of single living will require adaptation from the travel industry

 Distinct appeal of international travel for single consumers offers a key to capturing this segment

 Destination choices of single consumers reveal distinct travel preferences not reflected in existing offerings



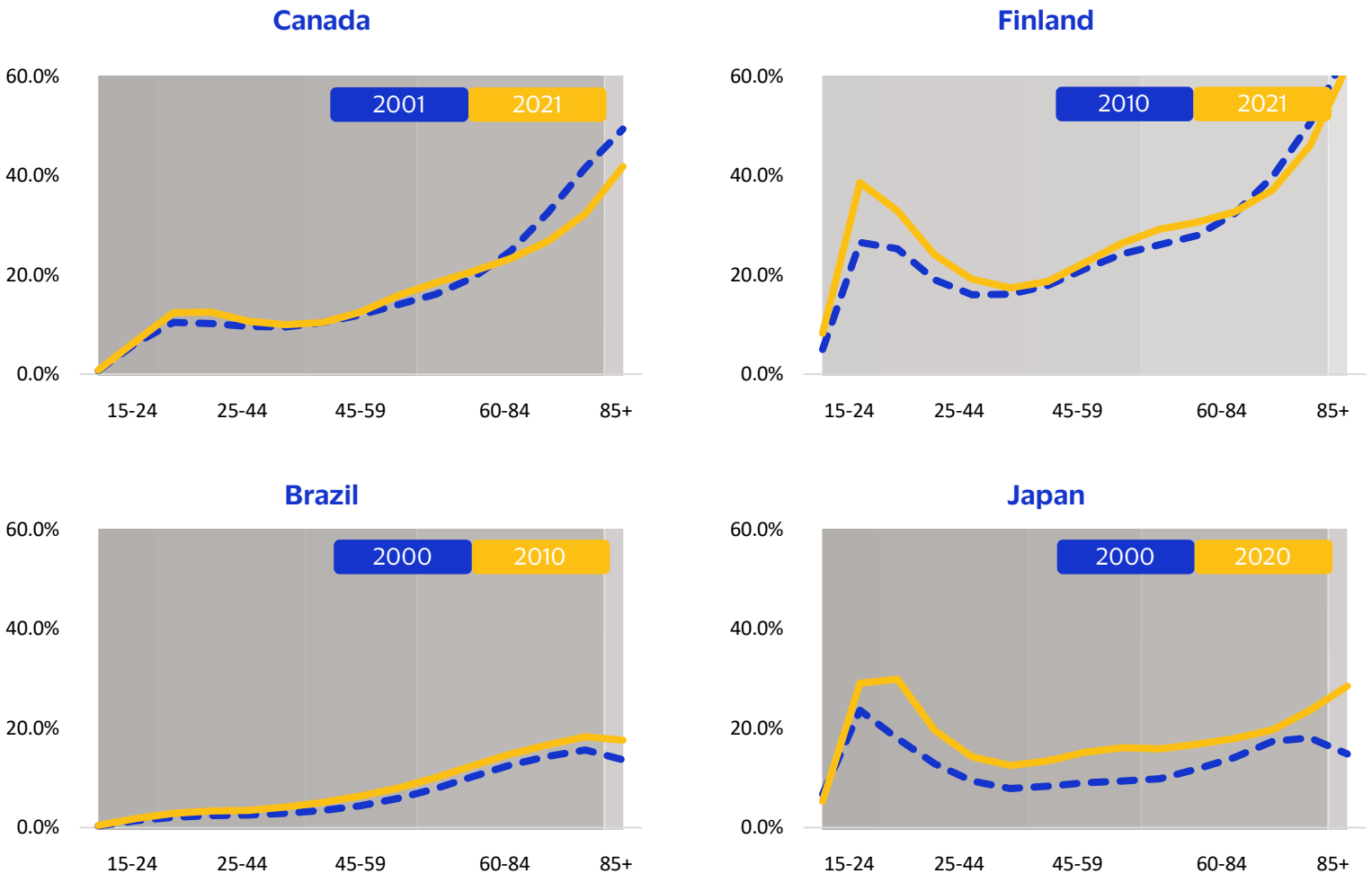


Living alone is increasingly a choice for people of all ages

Single consumers represent an important and fast-growing segment for the travel industry, expanding at nearly triple the rate of the overall population growth globally. While population ageing is a contributing factor, the share of single-person households in total has been steadily rising for consumers of all ages in countries as far ranging as Canada, Brazil or Japan. Such a broad-based increase in the prevalence of single-person households spanning multiple regions and cultures reflects increasing comfort with and acceptance of living alone among global consumers, with important ramifications for businesses catering to them.

Single-person households are single-income consumers, and their spending habits reflect that. Single consumers value autonomy and are more conservative with their finances in both their daily lives and their travel preferences.² In a depersonalized and aggregated sample of U.S. consumers, for instance, single credit cardholders were consistently less likely to engage with traditional travel providers,³ underscoring headwinds the industry could face from the continued growth of single consumers over the next decade.

Fig. 2: Single-person households are the fastest growing household type across of the world
(Share of single-person households to total households by age)



Sources: United Nations Statistics Division

International travel holds special appeal for global singles

What single consumers may lack in their propensity to travel domestically, they make up in their greater willingness to explore abroad. Populations in markets with a higher share of single-person households show much greater propensity to travel cross-border. Even factoring in the fact that living alone is much more prevalent in more affluent societies, markets with larger numbers of single consumers such as Norway also record higher rates of outbound travel, even when compared to regional peers such as France or Germany.

Across consumers with similar financial means, more of them travel internationally if they are single. In fact, each percentage-point increase in the share of single-person households on average adds about 0.8 percentage points to the propensity of consumers to travel cross-border across countries at similar levels of economic development. What this estimate suggests is that growth of single consumers is likely to compound the lift to global travel demand expected from the expanding middle class in emerging markets over the coming decades.

Fig. 3: Societies where single-living is more prevalent show greater propensity to travel abroad

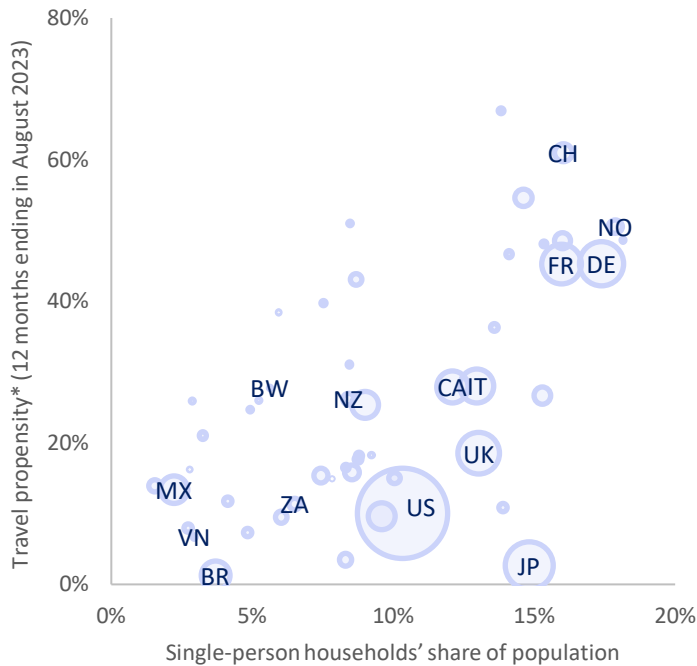
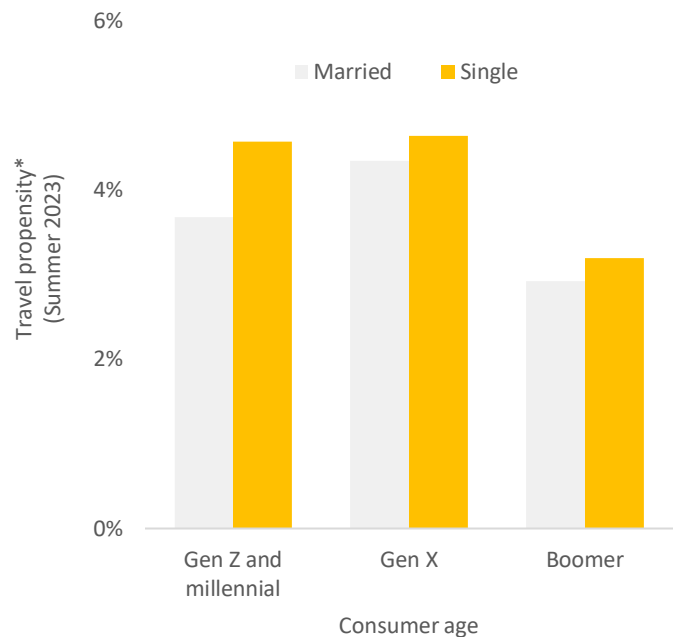


Fig. 4: Single consumers' greater taste for international travel spans generations in U.S. data



* Consumer credit cards making card-present purchases abroad as a share of total active sampled during the period. Bubbles are sized proportional to number of middle-class households.

Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights, United Nations, Oxford Economics, VisaNet

Relative appeal of international travel for single consumers is present across all generations, indicating that cross-country patterns are likely tied to varying prevalence and preference for single living instead of simple differences in the age structure of their respective populations. Depersonalized and aggregated Visa transaction data of U.S. consumer credit cardholders, for example, shows a larger share of single cardholders (compared to married) traveling abroad during the peak summer season in 2023—a pattern that is repeated across all age groups. Correspondingly, single cardholders accounted for a much larger share of U.S. consumer credit cards registering purchase transactions at merchants abroad, relative to population averages. For instance, singles accounted for two out of every three Gen Z and millennial cardholders traveling abroad last summer and just under half of Gen X and older travelers.

Methodology note: Identifying hotspots for single travelers

The rising prevalence of single travelers predicted over the next decade is not likely to change the dominant appeal of the world's top destinations, but could significantly shift established travel patterns. For cross-border travelers going to France, for example, popular tourist destinations like Paris or Nice consistently dominate the list of cities visited. According to our Visa International Travel platform, more than one in every four travelers visiting the country includes an overnight stay in the greater Paris area.⁴ But where might single travelers go beyond these traditional destinations?

To see how single travelers' preferences could reshape global tourism flows across different types of destinations, we leveraged depersonalized and aggregated Visa transaction data of U.S. consumer credit cardholders traveling in the summer of 2023. Cities where single travelers account for a much larger share of visitors relative to total arrivals to the country are more likely to experience faster growth over the next decade.

For example, 43 percent of Gen X Americans visiting Montpellier were single—five percentage points higher than the share of singles within Gen X visitors to France overall. Montpellier's relative popularity among singles is not limited to Gen X travelers, showing similarly outsized shares of singles among visitors of other generations as well.

Such generation-spanning differences in the proportion of singles among U.S. visitors offers a way to gauge the relative popularity of destinations among global single travelers. In the analysis used in this report, destinations are therefore ranked high on this dimension if they satisfied the following three criteria:

1. The destination was within the top 50 most visited within region by U.S. credit cardholders in the summer of 2023.
2. Share of singles among the visitors to the destination was higher than the average share of singles among all visitors to the region.
3. The above-average propensity to visit the destination by singles was broadly present across different age groups and was not driven by any one generation.





Single travelers are more adventurous and flexible in their destination choices

Targeting single travelers may require the travel industry to adapt its offerings to their distinct needs.

For example, when planning a vacation, singles tend to be more opportunistic and price sensitive, with key differences in their motivation for travel compared to their married counterparts, according to our analysis of the destination choices of American singles traveling abroad in the summer of 2023:

1. Single travelers were more likely to prefer off-the-beaten path destination cities. For instance, married couples show much greater preference for traditional beach destinations such as Los Cabos in Mexico or the Sunshine Coast in Australia while single travelers were relatively more likely to head to cultural destinations such as Merida in Mexico or Melbourne in Australia.
2. Urban scenes of Berlin and Milan have greater appeal for single travelers over more traditionally romantic destinations like Venice or Munich.
3. Single travelers of all ages show relatively higher predilection for visiting university towns such as Oxford in the U.K. or Montpellier in France over more traditional destinations such as London or Paris
4. Single consumers were relatively more likely to explore remote destinations such as the Takasaki mountains in the Oita prefecture or the national park in Lào Cai over traditional tourism hubs such as Tokyo or Hanoi.
5. Opportunities for active travel offer more of a draw for single travelers of all ages, who show relatively greater preference for exploring the canyon in Arequipa over more leisurely stay in coastal destinations such as Callao.

Destinations with largest differences in popularity among single versus married travelers⁵

Americas	Europe	Asia Pacific	Rest of world	
Medellin	Istanbul	Chon Buri	Madinah	More popular for single travel
Santo Domingo	Berlin	Chennai	Dubai	
Tijuana	Madrid	Shanghai	Casablanca	
Rio de Janeiro	Marseille	Kuala Lumpur	Mombasa	
Lima	Porto	Jakarta	Red Sea	
Cozumel	Munich	Auckland	Fes	Less popular for single travel
Whistler	Lucerne	Hiroshima	Luxor	
Bahamas	Scottish Highlands	Sydney	Riyadh	
Virgin Islands	Tuscany	Palawan	Nairobi	
Cayman Islands	Kerry County	Cairns	Nelspruit	

Sources: Visa Business and Economic Insights, VisaNet

Serving single travelers will require adaptation

Single consumers look for a different value proposition when planning travel and are more drawn to activities beyond hotels and airports.

When it comes to spend on accommodation, Visa data shows that lodging spend per card is lower for single travelers in comparison to couples.⁶ Financial minimalism among single travelers is not a function of income constraints but more of preference. According to a survey of global travel profiles by YouGov, 23 percent of single travelers overall prefer luxury hotels versus 33 percent of couples. This holds true across geographic regions as well as generations and income segments. For instance, even among affluent consumers globally, single travelers express lower preference for staying at luxury hotels when traveling compared to couples.

Serving the single traveler segment will require adjustments to existing travel offerings to meet singles' need for frequent activity.

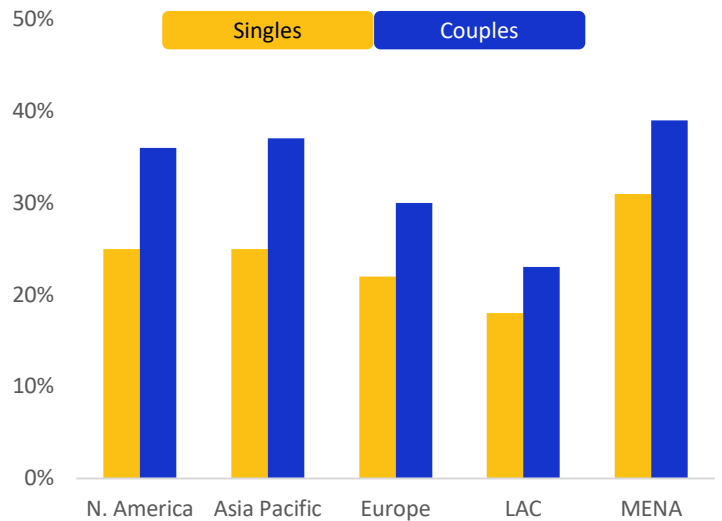
One option could be restructuring reward programs to include partnerships with a broader set of travel-catering partners such as concert venues or outdoor recreation providers across a wider set of destinations that offer single consumers the opportunity to interact with fellow travelers. Fourteen percent of single travelers from North America, for instance, indicate a preference for group organized travel compared to 10 percent for couples. The gap is even wider for affluent consumers among whom group travel is preferred by 21 percent of singles versus 11 percent for couples.

For single travelers key differentiators when purchasing travel are rewards and convenience.

According to a survey of U.S. consumers, traditional factors such as price or quality play a secondary role in the choice of a preferred airline, while factors such as its loyalty program or availability of direct flights matter relatively more to singles planning an international trip.

Traditional channels such as travel websites or paid media are not effective in reaching global singles, who are more likely to draw inspiration for their next trip from movies, podcasts and other organic content while actively avoiding direct marketing.

Fig. 5: Singles are less motivated by luxury
(Respondents who stay at luxury hotels when traveling)



Source: Visa Business and Economic Insights, YouGov

Fig. 6: Singles value rewards and convenience more
(Reasons why respondents planning international travel fly with preferred airline most often)



Source: Visa Business and Economic Insights, VBEI Quarterly U.S. Consumer Survey



Footnotes

1. Visa Business and Economics Insights estimate based on United Nations, Oxford Economics and Euromonitor projections.
2. Visa Business and Economics Insights analysis based on YouGov data
3. Based on a depersonalized and aggregated sample of U.S. consumer credit cardholders who made purchases at airline, hotel or car rental companies over the summer months of June through August of 2023.
4. Based on Visa International Travel platform estimates covering the 2019-2023 period.
5. Based on the distribution of lodging transactions made by a depersonalized and aggregated sample of U.S. consumer credit cardholders who traveled abroad during the peak travel months of June through August of 2023. The ranking is based on top 50 destinations within each region.
6. Based on lodging transactions made by a depersonalized and aggregated sample of U.S. consumer credit cardholders who traveled abroad during the peak travel months of June through August of 2023.

Accessibility notes

Fig1. Bar chart showing share of single-person households to total households. For Germany, the share of single-person households went from 38 percent in the 2000s to 41 percent in the 2010s. For Italy, the share of single-person households went from 26 percent in the 2000s to 31 percent in the 2010s. For Canada, the share of single-person households went from 26 percent in the 2000s to 28 percent in the 2010s. For the United States, the share of single-person households went from 27 percent in the 2000s to 28 percent in the 2010s. For Turkey, the share of single-person households went from 4 percent in the 2000s to 13 percent in the 2010s.

Fig2. Line charts showing the share of single-person households to total households by age for four countries. For Canada, in about two decades, the share of single-person households for age group 15-44 and age group 50-69 increased while it declined for age group 70+. For Finland, in a decade, the share of single-person households for age group 15-74 increased while it declined for age group 75+. For Brazil in a decade, the share of single-person households increased for all age groups. For Japan, in two decades, the share of single-person households for all age groups above age 20.

Fig3. Scatter plot showing single-person households' share of population against propensity to travel, 12 months ending in August 2023. For instance, countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Vietnam, their single-person households' share of population is below 5 percent and the propensity to travel abroad is below 20 percent. For countries such as Switzerland, France, Germany and Norway, their single-person households' share of population is above 15 percent and the propensity to travel abroad is above 40 percent

Fig4. Bar chart showing travel propensity for summer 2023 by generation and marital status. For Gen Z and millennials, the propensity to travel for married couples is 3.7 percent compared to 4.6 percent for singles. For Gen X, the propensity to travel for married couples is 4.3 percent compared to 4.6 percent for singles. For Boomers, the propensity to travel for married couples is 2.9 percent compared to 3.2 percent for singles.

Fig5. Bar chart showing share of respondents who stay at luxury hotels when traveling by region and marital status. In North America, the share of singles who prefer luxury hotels is at 25 percent compared to 36 percent for couples. In Asia Pacific, the share of singles who prefer luxury hotels is at 25 percent compared to 37 percent for couples. In Europe, the share of singles who prefer luxury hotels is at 22 percent compared to 30 percent for couples. In Latin America, the share of singles who prefer luxury hotels is at 18 percent compared to 23 percent for couples. In the Middle East and North Africa, the share of singles who prefer luxury hotels is 31 percent compared to 39 percent for couples.

Fig6. Bar chart showing reasons why respondents planning international travel fly with preferred airline most often. For single travelers, the most important reasons are loyalty programs, variety of flight times, co-branded cards and direct flights. Reasons such as variety of locations served, price, services and quality are less important for singles.

Forward Looking Statements

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