



Insight by Zonal, Powered by CGA by NIQ

## Why 6:12pm is the new 8pm.

Exclusive Zonal and CGA by NIQ insights  
into trends in booking times and how to  
meet consumers' changing needs

**Zonal**



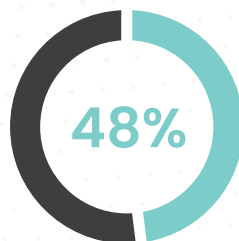
GO Technology Report, [June 2025](#)



# Consumers and bookings: Ten Key numbers

## 6.12pm

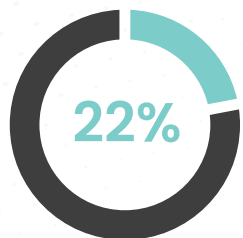
The **average preferred time** for bookings at pubs, bars and restaurants



48%

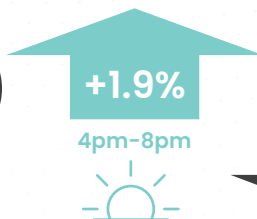


Of bookings in the first quarter of 2025 were for **tables between 12pm and 6pm**



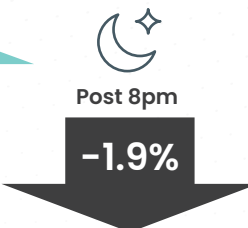
22%

Of those aged 18 to 34 are going out **earlier than they were a year ago**



+1.9%

4pm-8pm

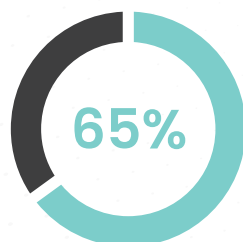


Post 8pm

-1.9%



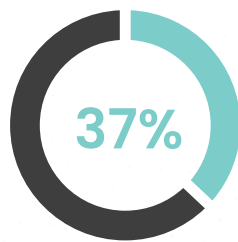
Percent of **evening trading** has been **lost post-8pm**, and **gained between 4pm-to-8pm**



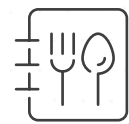
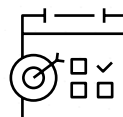
65%



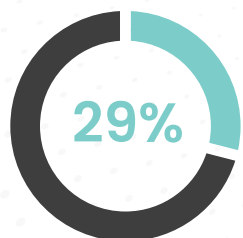
Of business leaders have seen **late-night footfall drop year-on-year**



37%



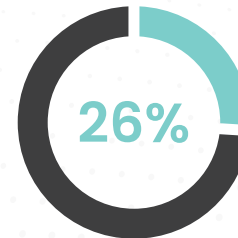
Of consumers are going out earlier for some occasions because it is **more convenient**



29%



Of consumers are going out earlier because **they feel safer**



26%



Of consumers are going out earlier because of **a change in their lifestyle**



# From night owls to early birds:

## The big bookings shift

The shift towards earlier visits has been one of the most significant changes in pubs, bars and restaurants of recent years. A trend that picked up pace during the COVID-19 pandemic is still building momentum five years on, and all the signs are that it will continue.

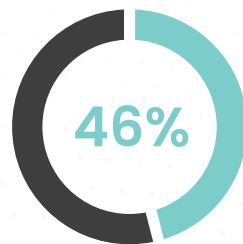
It has steadily pulled forward consumers' booking preferences, to the point where the average preferred start time for a reservation is now 6:12pm. Many venues that would once have seen few bookings before 7pm are now seeing them peak well before then, and a sharp drop-off after 8pm.

Bookings data analysed as part of this research backs up the trend. In 2024, **46%** of all bookings have been for times between 12pm and 6pm—but in the first quarter of 2025, this rose to **48%**. Just **2%** of bookings were for after 9pm.

Booking habits are partly being reshaped by the types of experiences consumers are now seeking. The boom area of competitive socialising is well suited to earlier dayparts, and more than a third (**37%**) of consumers are now going out earlier for this, while just **9%** are going out later. Themed events are being brought

forward too, and the popularity of bottomless brunches has familiarised people with earlier bookings.

With consumers' spending still under pressure, businesses have seen footfall decline across the board, but the drop has been much steeper at night. In CGA's 2025 Business Leaders' Survey, two thirds (**65%**) of leaders said they had seen late-night footfall go down year-on-year—far more than the **28%** and **34%** who had seen it slip in the afternoons and evenings. It is forcing leaders to make some difficult decisions on trading hours. More than a third (**35%**) of leaders say they are closing their venues earlier than they were a year ago, and one in eight (**12%**) is providing deals and promotions earlier.

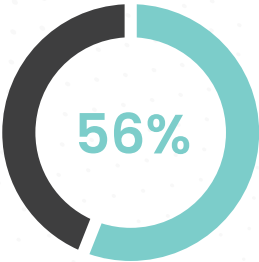


of all bookings in 2024  
have been for times  
between 12pm and 6pm



All this is having a clear and direct impact on sales patterns. CGA's transactional data shows that the 6pm-to-8pm slot now takes **1.3** percentage points more share of total post-4pm sales than it did a year ago. This has come at the direct expense of the 8pm-to-10pm period, which has lost **1.9** percentage points of sales (see box).

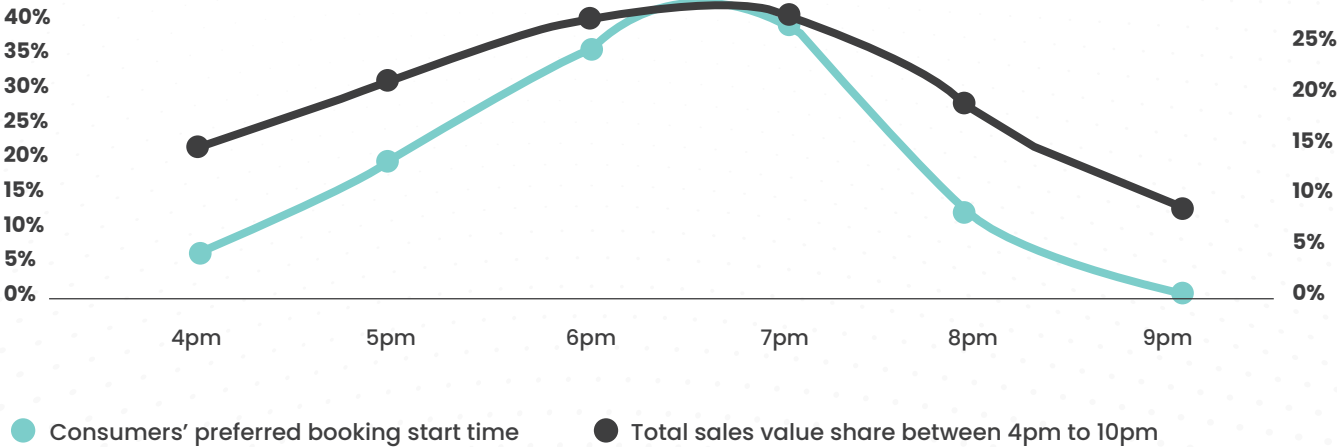
Faced with the need to reduce their spending, it appears that many consumers are choosing to go home sooner. But it's important to remember that not all of them are doing so. Among those who have chosen to go out earlier in the day, **15%** say it is because they want to make their visits shorter—but **14%** are doing so to make their visits longer. More than half (**56%**) of those who went out for a high tempo occasion earlier than usual say they would stay out as late as they typically would, and this rises to **63%** among Gen Z (those aged 18 to 29 years old in this survey sample).



of people who went out for a high tempo occasion earlier than usual say they **would stay out as late as they typically would**



Thinking specifically about when you go out for food in the evening at pubs, bars and restaurants, what time do you prefer your booking to start?



# Five reasons consumers are going out earlier

**What is motivating consumers to book their tables earlier? GO Technology research reveals it's a complex mix of lifestyle changes and concerns.**

## 1. Convenience

For many consumers, going out earlier is simply more accessible. Well over a third **(37%)** say they are doing so for some occasions because it is more convenient. This is a broad factor, but overlaps with other motivations that relate to the ease of a visit, like being easier to book in **(22%)**, shorter waiting times **(16%)** and better public transport **(18%)**. People who want seamless and hassle-free visits feel they are more likely to get them earlier in the day than late at night.

## 2. Safety

COVID-19 sped up the move towards earlier bookings, as consumers sought to avoid busy parts of the day and find space. But while fears about transmissions have eased, many remain concerned about their safety late at night, both in venues and when they go home. Well over a quarter **(29%)** say they are going out earlier because they feel safer then.

## 3. Lifestyle

The shift in booking preferences is part of a wider evolution of consumers' habits. Around a quarter **(26%)** say they are going out earlier because their lifestyle has changed. Older consumers significantly over-index for this factor, and it's also much more common outside London **(28%)** than within the capital **(18%)**.

## 4. Influence

Consumers who go out to eat and drink in groups are inevitably influenced by others. A quarter **(25%)** of those who are going out earlier say it is because their friends and family want to do so. This causes a chain reaction, as each person who is influenced to go out earlier may in turn influence others.

## 5. Relaxation

Earlier visits are part of a growing preference for relaxed and casual occasions over higher tempo times in pubs and bars. A desire for a quieter atmosphere is a driving factor for around a quarter **(24%)** of those who are going out earlier for some occasions.



## ... And five reasons why some people stay out late

While those going out to eat and drink later than previously are in the minority, it's still vital to understand their motivations. As with those going out earlier, some factors are connected to convenience and lifestyle. But others are chasing things like a livelier atmosphere **(24%)** and types of entertainment **(14%)** that are easier to get in later dayparts. Because later visits tend to be in bigger groups, the influence of friends and family **(24%)** is important too. This cohort is also more likely than earlier visitors to be motivated by the greater availability of deals **(12%)** and a desire to make visits shorter **(17%)**.

# The who and where of earlier visits

Perhaps surprisingly, the move towards earlier visits is being driven by younger consumers. More than a fifth (22%) of those aged 18 to 34 say they are going out earlier than they were a year ago—though with 19% going out later, it's not a wholesale change. The net shift is greatest in the 35 to 54 year-old group, where 11% are going out earlier and only 7% later.

This is reflected in preferred booking times. The average among 18 to 34 year-olds is 6:05pm—a few minutes ahead of 6:09pm for the 35-to-54 cohort. In the 55+ category, where habits have changed less, the average preferred time is 6:20pm.

The demographics of these earlier consumers also skew slightly towards women and lower-income households (see box). Average booking times are slightly earlier in city and town centres, perhaps because urban residents here have a wider range of options later on. Start times are a little later in suburban and rural areas, where venues are more limited and habits more entrenched.

Churn in timing is particularly significant in London, where around a fifth (19%) are going out earlier and 13% later, with both numbers much higher than in other parts of the country. With so many food and drink venues available right round the clock, Londoners have much more scope for changing their habits.

## Earlier vs later demographics

|           | Pre-6pm | Post-6pm |
|-----------|---------|----------|
| Gender    |         |          |
| Male      | 46%     | 51%      |
| Female    | 54%     | 49%      |
| Age       |         |          |
| 18 to 34  | 35%     | 26%      |
| 35 to 54  | 35%     | 32%      |
| 55+       | 31%     | 42%      |
| Residence |         |          |
| City      | 24%     | 20%      |
| Town      | 21%     | 18%      |
| Suburban  | 36%     | 38%      |
| Rural     | 19%     | 25%      |
| Income    |         |          |
|           | £37,300 | £40,100  |

## The role of tech

The latest GO Technology research makes it clear that convenience is a big driver of visits to pubs, bars and restaurants now—whatever the time of day. And as consumers seek easy experience, technology has an important role to play. But there is some nuance throughout the day, as those tending to go out earlier are more likely than average to value these benefits.

Among the general population, over a quarter of consumers say the ability to book ahead (29%) and pay quickly (28%) via tech could enhance their visit. Another notable benefit is the ability to see how busy a venue is (27%)—which could be particularly appealing for those who want to avoid crowds (see page 4). When asking those who now prefer to go out earlier, these figures rise by a few percentage points across all factors. With consumers increasingly shifting to earlier visits, operators must also be conscious of the growing demand for streamlined tech at these new visit times.

# Winning round the clock: Five priorities in the changing times

## 1. Convenience

The timing of visits is increasingly dictated by consumers' busy lives. With their leisure time and money at a premium, venues need to deliver seamless, stress-free journeys. Tech has a part to play here (see page 5).

## 2. Experience

When they go out, more and more consumers are seeking not just good food and drink but an all-round experience. From food delivery to streaming services, they have never had so many at-home options for their enjoyment, so venues must give them compelling reasons to get off the sofa, and memorable experiences to keep them coming back.

## 3. Flexibility

Morphing of times and occasions means operators need to be more adaptable than ever before. High tempo occasions can now start at brunch as well as the evening, and relaxed drinks can come late at night as well as lunchtime, so venues need to find ways to cater for all.

## 4. Safety

Regardless of the time or occasion, safety and security are top priorities for consumers. Delivering a safe and inclusive environment is a fundamental of hospitality.

## 5. Infrastructure

Some of the movement towards earlier nights out has been caused by the lack of after-dark public transport. Trade associations including UKHospitality and the Night Time Industries Association have been pushing for investment, but until there are improvements, people in many cities and towns will continue to have to head home earlier than they'd like.





### The view from CGA

"The movement towards earlier meals and drinks is reshaping the landscape of hospitality. As our GO Technology research shows, traditional daypart boundaries have blurred, and consumers are no longer rooting their occasions in set times of day. This is creating new headaches for some operators, but for those who can flex the offer there are sizeable opportunities too. There's certain to be more change in timings, and tracking the very latest needs of consumers from morning to night will be crucial."

*Karl Chessell, business unit director - hospitality operators and food, EMEA, CGA by NIQ*



### The view from Zonal

"From convenience to relaxation, our latest GO Technology research not only pinpoints the new most popular times for a night out but dives into the reasons why consumers are going out earlier as well."

"This emerging behavioural trend is having a significant impact on our industry. By understanding what's driving this change, operators will be better equipped to make the operational changes, experiences and offers needed to give consumers what they want and to make the most of the opportunity."

*Tim Chapman, Chief Commercial Officer, Zonal*



## About the report

This report is based on figures from Zonal and CGA's exclusive GO Technology survey of 5,000 nationally representative British consumers in April 2025.

For more information about the research, please contact [info@zonal.co.uk](mailto:info@zonal.co.uk)