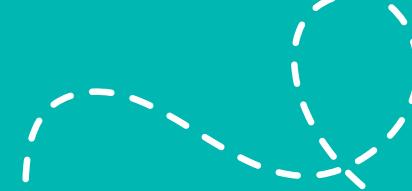




# Reinventing Workforce Travel in the Food, Drink & Hospitality sectors

A Roomex Report  
April 2025





# Executive Summary

The food, drink and hospitality sectors rely on a mobile workforce - from area managers covering multiple locations, to training, operations and support teams frequently travelling between sites. Yet the systems supporting that travel are often fragmented, inefficient, and poorly suited to the realities of shift-based, reactive operations.

**This mini-report draws on Roomex's Reinventing the Journey campaign, which surveyed over 1,500 respondents, including:**

- 105 corporate travel bookers and buyers (from all sectors)
- 1,405 frequent work travellers, including 110 from food, drink and hospitality

It reveals a sector under pressure: rising costs, lack of process, and poor visibility are leading to missed savings and a negative employee experience. In hospitality specifically, challenges such as long shifts, high turnover, and unpredictable demand only exacerbate the strain.

## Key findings:

- **58%** of corporate travel bookers say last-minute bookings are a core challenge
- **75%** of food and drink workers regularly pay travel costs out of pocket
- **34%** report poor work-life balance as a result of frequent travel
- Food, drink and hospitality workers are **more likely than in any other industry** to say they would like their employer to put more focus on their wellbeing when managing workforce travel
- **55%** have either left or considered leaving a job due to poor travel arrangements
- The estimated unclaimable daily spend for food, drink and hospitality workers averages **£61.90**

**This report outlines what is going wrong, how it's affecting staff and budgets, and what food and drink businesses can do to take back control.**

# Introduction & Industry Context



**Workforce travel in food, drink and hospitality looks very different to traditional business travel.** It is operational, not executive. It is booked by office managers, HR teams or site leads - often at short notice. And it is done by field-based staff, many of whom work irregular hours and travel between sites for training, cover or support.

Unlike pre-planned, policy-managed corporate travel, workforce travel in this sector tends to be reactive, decentralised, and lightly governed. And as this research shows, that is costing businesses - both financially and culturally.

## The challenge is magnified by sector-specific pressures:

- Staff shortages and high turnover increase the volume of travel for remaining teams
- Irregular hours and late-night shifts can leave staff tired, making travel more stressful
- Compliance and safety expectations are increasing, especially for lone workers
- Managing seasonal demand adds complexity to travel logistics

Despite all this, many businesses still lack a formal travel strategy, wellbeing policies, or systems that support scale. As the sector continues to recover and grow post-COVID, travel remains one of the most overlooked sources of cost and inefficiency.



# Key Insights: Planning and Cost

## Poor travel management impacts both workers' wallets and businesses' bottom lines

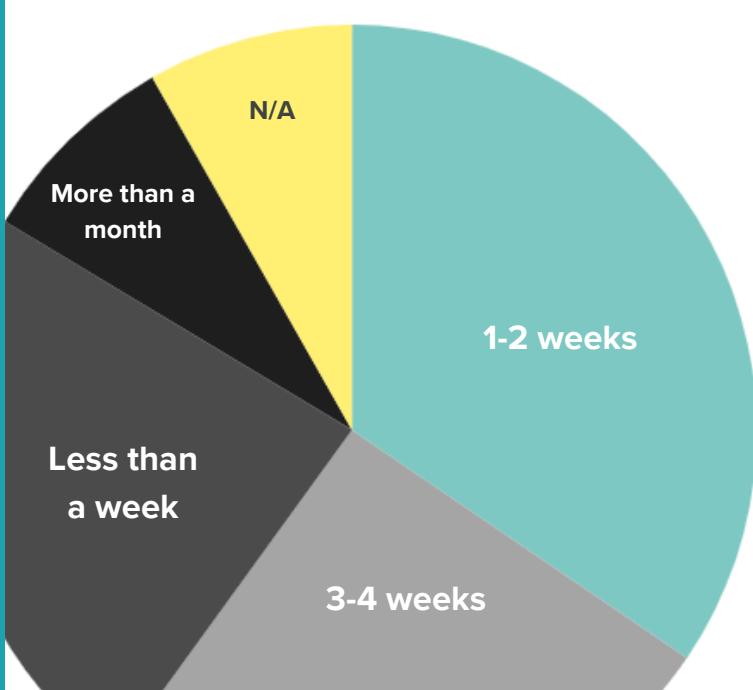
Across all sectors, 58% of travel bookers say last-minute bookings are a persistent challenge - pushing up costs and leaving limited choice of transport or accommodation. In hospitality, this is often due to rota gaps, site emergencies or rapid onboarding.

Unapproved expenses and non-compliant bookings are another key issue, with 71% of travel bookers reporting that this is a common occurrence. 29.5% cite a lack of real-time visibility as a barrier to managing spend effectively.



What's more, 75% of workers pay out of pocket for travel. Many do this on personal cards, with 34.5% waiting more than a week for reimbursement and 8% waiting over a month. This not only causes financial stress but adds admin for finance teams - especially in high-churn roles.

On average, hospitality staff report spending **£61.90 per day on non-expensable extras** like food, drinks or leisure while working away. That is a significant hidden cost that can create tension if left unaddressed.



<b>Less than a week</b>	23.6%
<b>1-2 weeks</b>	34.5%
<b>3-4 weeks</b>	25.5%
<b>More than a month</b>	8.2%
<b>Not applicable</b>	8.2%

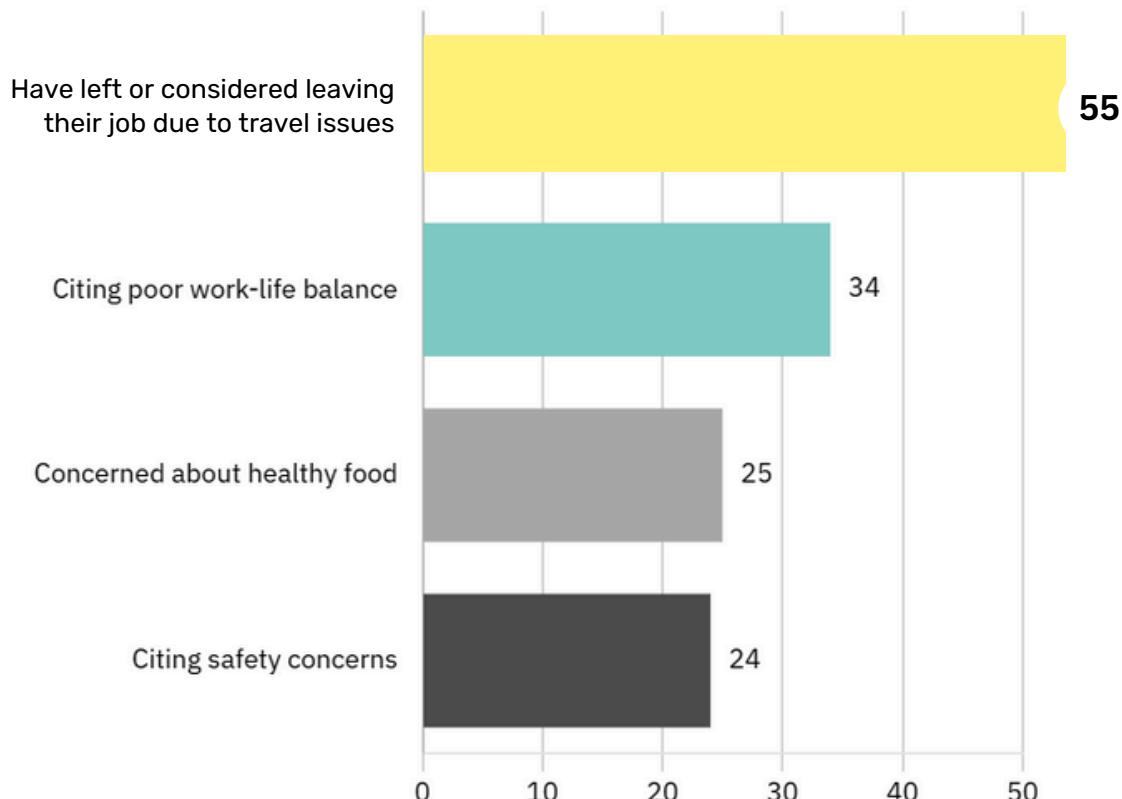
# Key Insights: Wellbeing and Retention

## Retention is critical - duty of care needs more focus

The cumulative effect of poor travel management is clear: 34% report poor work-life balance as a result of frequent travel. Additionally, food, drink and hospitality workers are more likely than those in any other industry to say they would like their employer to put more focus on their wellbeing when managing workforce travel.

**The top contributing factors include:**

- Poor work-life balance from frequent or long-distance travel
- Limited choice of accommodation and healthy food
- Safety concerns when travelling to unfamiliar places



**55% of workers have either left or considered leaving a job due to poor travel arrangements.**

**For a sector where retention is already a challenge, this is a wake-up call.**





# Sector-Specific Challenges

The food, drink and hospitality sectors have unique challenges when it comes to workforce travel:

- **Shift-based working** means travel often happens late at night or early in the morning, increasing fatigue
- **Multiple site management** puts pressure on area managers, trainers and compliance leads to travel frequently
- **Seasonal recruitment and events** can create sudden travel spikes with little lead time
- **Decentralised operations** often leave local managers to arrange travel without central support or oversight

In such environments, poor planning does not just mean higher costs - it also creates inconsistency. Some teams may book through preferred suppliers, while others use ad hoc methods. Some staff may be reimbursed quickly, while others wait weeks.

Roomex helps bring order to this complexity by centralising booking, pre-paying for accommodation, and automatically enforcing company policies - so that no matter where the journey starts, the experience is consistent.



# Recommendations

For food and drink businesses looking to improve their travel operations, the data suggests three areas to focus on:

1

## Prioritise forward planning and policy clarity

- Introduce shared calendars or rota integrations to reduce last-minute bookings
- Develop clear policies that are easy to follow, including approved accommodation and expense caps
- Train team leads to book in advance where possible and use preferred channels

2

## Reduce the burden on staff

- Pre-book and pre-pay for hotels so staff are not out of pocket
- Use expense platforms that allow photo receipts and mobile claims
- Set up direct billing arrangements to reduce claims altogether

3

## Invest in tools that scale

- Centralise all bookings into one platform, like Roomex
- Automate expense tracking and reporting
- Use data to monitor spend trends and adjust policies accordingly



# Conclusion & Roomex Overview

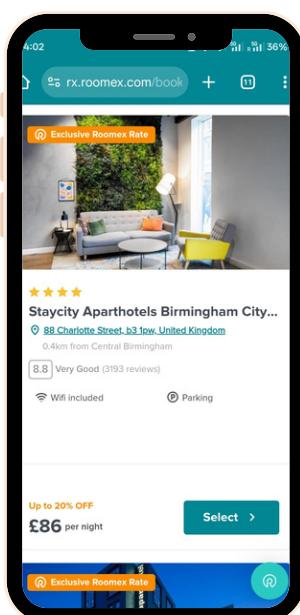
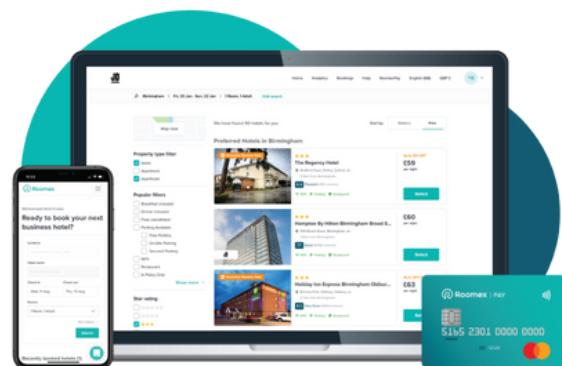
The Roomex 'Reinventing the Journey' campaign highlights what many hospitality leaders already know: workforce travel is becoming harder and costlier to manage - and it is affecting both staff morale and the bottom line.

Travel may not feel like a strategic priority, but it touches everything from cost control to retention. Businesses that continue to rely on manual processes and inconsistent policies risk losing money, time and people.

Roomex provides a scalable, easy-to-use solution to manage workforce travel more effectively - offering visibility for businesses and a smoother experience for staff.

**With Roomex, food and drink businesses can turn travel from a pain point into a point of difference.**

**Roomex is a leading platform for UK workforce travel, uniquely tailored to the needs of mobile workforces.** The free-to-use platform is designed to simplify travel booking, expenses and reporting for businesses and their teams. It offers the largest selection of workforce-suitable hotels in the world and enables companies to book, manage and analyse workforce travel in one place - saving time, money and hassle.



We enable businesses to streamline train and accommodation bookings, control spending, and enhance employee wellbeing during travel - all in one unified solution.

Roomex caters to diverse industries and delivers best-in-class workforce travel by providing real-time insights and cost-effective control over travel spend.

Exclusive benefits include VAT-compliant invoices, RoomexPay cards (which eliminate the need for employees to use personal cards for expenses), and consolidated reporting - which is why thousands of companies trust Roomex to take care of their workforce travel needs.

**Get in touch with our team today at [tryus@roomex.com](mailto:tryus@roomex.com) to find out how we can help you better manage your workforce travel.**

Get in touch with our team to start using the free travel management platform that's built for your business.

To learn more or get started, visit **roomex.com** or scan the QR code below.



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