

cvent™



2026 PLANNER SOURCING REPORT

Global Edition

2026 GLOBAL PLANNER SOURCING REPORT

INTRO & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The event industry isn't standing still. This year's data proves it.

The events industry is moving forward not despite the pressure, but because of it. In 2026, planners are navigating rising costs, persistent venue staffing gaps, and a technology landscape that's evolving faster than most organizations can track. What this year's research makes clear: the planners who pair structured processes with the right tools and venue partnerships aren't just keeping up. They're pulling ahead.

In July 2025, we partnered with Censuswide to survey 1,650 professional event planners across six regions: North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East and Africa. The findings span the full sourcing lifecycle from how planners discover and evaluate venues to how they define and measure event success.

Since 2015, the Cvent Planner Sourcing Report has documented the evolving relationship between planners, technology, and venues. In 2026, that relationship is more consequential than ever.

Key findings:

1. Event planners lower growth expectations, shift focus to engagement and value.
2. Planners are technology power users, but frustration mounts if the tools don't keep pace with industry requirements.
3. Planners search for ways to balance experience with cost realities.
4. Regimented sourcing processes drive efficiency and savings.
5. RFP tools redefine speed, savings, and decision-making.
6. Planners seek transparency, speed, and stronger venue differentiation.
7. Planners continue to flock to flexible, one-of-a-kind spaces.
8. Strong vendor and venue partnerships prove essential amid staffing and service challenges.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The industry is accelerating and shifting priorities. Rising costs and persistent venue staffing challenges haven't slowed planners down they've made planners sharper about what they spend, where they source, and which venue relationships are worth maintaining.

The 2026 data shows an industry embracing AI at pace, tightening its sourcing processes, and placing attendee experience above all else. The planners who are outperforming aren't necessarily the ones with the biggest budgets. They're the ones with the right tools, the right data, and a clear strategy for putting both to work.

The following key findings highlight the most significant trends and shifts from this year's research.

AI adoption accelerates as planners look to increase effectiveness

Three-quarters of planners now use AI as an active part of their venue sourcing process searching, comparing, and deciding with it, not just experimenting with it. Thirty-five percent believe AI will have a major impact on the meetings and events industry in 2026.

The adoption is broad and deepening fast. Thirty-six percent use AI to create and optimize RFPs. Forty percent use it to compare bids. Forty-one percent use it to analyze attendee data to improve venue fit. With 60% of planners planning to increase their use of

AI, the question isn't whether AI belongs in the sourcing workflow; it's how far ahead those who embrace it will get.

Use of a defined sourcing process improves RFP effectiveness

Process is no longer optional. It's a competitive edge. Sixty percent of planners use digital RFP tools for most or all of their meetings. Among those who follow a defined sourcing process, 97% estimate measurable cost and time savings as a direct result.

The impact is specific: 35% of planners say digital tools save time communicating with hotels and venues, 30% find it easier to compare options, and 34% say it creates a more efficient process overall. Forty-two percent say technology provides better data and analytics for sourcing decisions. For suppliers, every planner who commits to a defined process raises the bar on what a strong proposal looks like.

Attendee engagement outweighs cost pressure

Budget pressure is real. But it isn't the final word. Sixty-three percent of planners name attendee engagement as their primary success metric, outpacing cost management as the defining measure of event performance.

The sourcing choices reflect it. Nearly half (48%) of planners are actively sourcing non-hotel venues (restaurants, cultural spaces, art galleries) because the right setting shapes the attendee experience in ways a standard ballroom can't match. Sourcing of special event venues has grown by more than 30 percentage points since 2023. For planners, the investment in memorable spaces is a deliberate bet. The returns show up in the experience.

Looking ahead

The trends across all six regions point to the same conclusion: the sourcing advantage belongs to planners who combine structured processes with AI-powered insights and a deep, flexible network of venue options.

The planner-venue relationship remains the point of greatest opportunity and the area most in need of improvement. Planners consistently call for greater transparency, faster RFP responses, and more customized proposals. As one planner put it: “Hotels often lack personalization, timely responses, and clarity these improvements would streamline RFP processes and decisions.” Another offered the flip side: “The professionalism and promptness of the venue staff, along with their frequent flexibility in meeting particular event requirements, are what I find most satisfactory. The sourcing process also runs much more smoothly and effectively when there is clear communication and well-prepared proposals.”

Venues that use technology to close those gaps faster, respond with stronger proposals, and better prepare their staff will earn more of the business they’re after. Planners who source with structure, data, and the right partners will deliver the experiences that define their organizations.

The tools are here. The question is what you build with them.

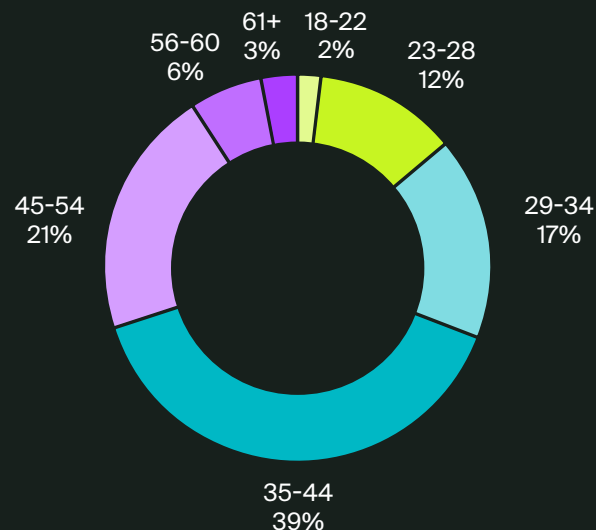


WHO WE SURVEYED

In July 2025,
Cvent partnered with
Censuswide to survey over
1,650 event planners worldwide.

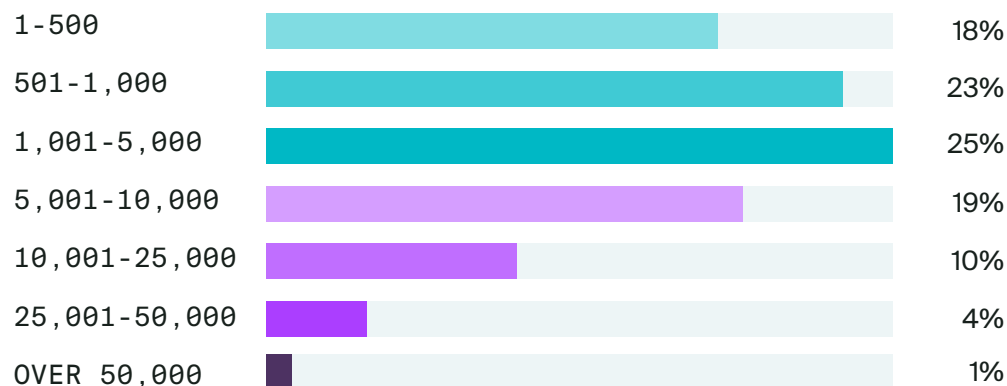
The research aimed to uncover insights into planners' expectations for the meetings and events industry and their preferences for sourcing and RFP activities in 2026. The topics covered include costs and budgets, the sourcing process, venue and booking preferences, the adoption of technology, and more. Respondents came from six regions: Asia (15%), Australia (6%), Europe (33%), the Middle East and Africa (9%), Latin America (6%), and North America (30%).

What age group are you?

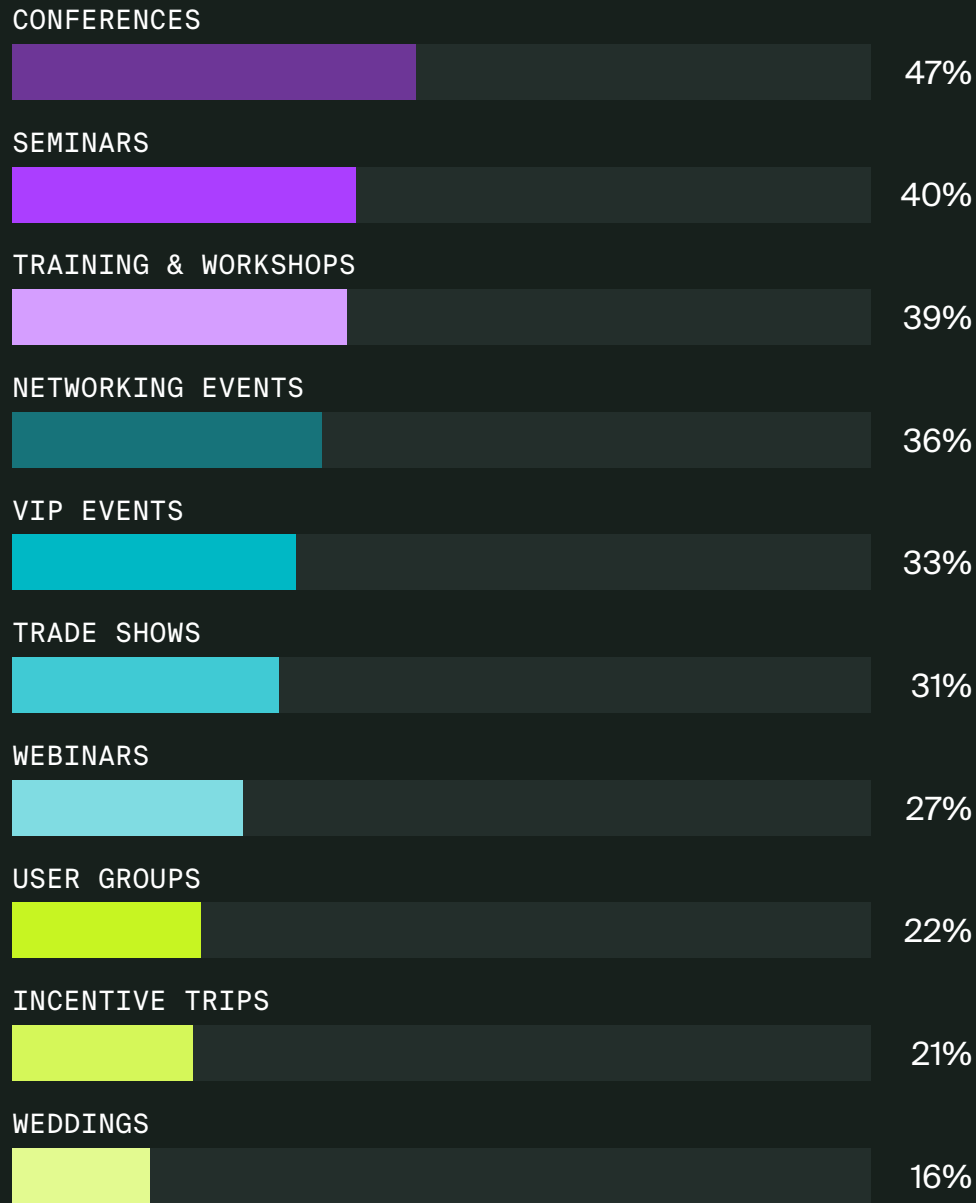


Respondents mainly were Millennials (56%), with Generation X making up 27% of respondents. Their range of experience spanned across 20 years, with 39% of respondents in mid-career, with 6-10 years of experience.

Approximately how many attendees do
you expect across all your off-site
in-person meetings in 2026?



What types of meetings and events do you frequently plan?



Planners who took the survey worked across a wide range of areas, with 25% in the Events, Trade shows, and Conference Management sector. These professionals plan a plethora of events, ranging from Conferences (47%) to Training and Workshops (39%), Networking Events (36%), and VIP Events (33%). A quarter of respondents expect to manage between 26 and 50 events in 2026; 35% say they will manage between 11 and 25 events.

KEY FINDING 1

Event planners lower growth expectations, shift focus to engagement and value.

Planners worldwide may be lowering expectations for growth in 2026. Fewer predict robust increases for in-person meeting volume, and more see possible volume decreases. Additionally, they are shifting their defined measures of success away from total cost, the most cited KPI in 2025, and toward attendee engagement, the most cited KPI in 2026. While making sourcing decisions, they also prioritize key attendee experience features such as proximity to activities, networking-friendly layouts, and integrated food and beverage offerings. Success is defined less by cost management and more by attendee engagement, within the usual priorities of location, availability, and dates.

Global key findings

Event volume

Fewer planners expect an increase in in-person meetings in 2026, with only 70% predicting a rise of up to 20%, down from 89% as reported in the 2025 Event Planner Sourcing Report. Nearly one in five expect meeting volume to stay the same (19%), and 9% predict a decrease.

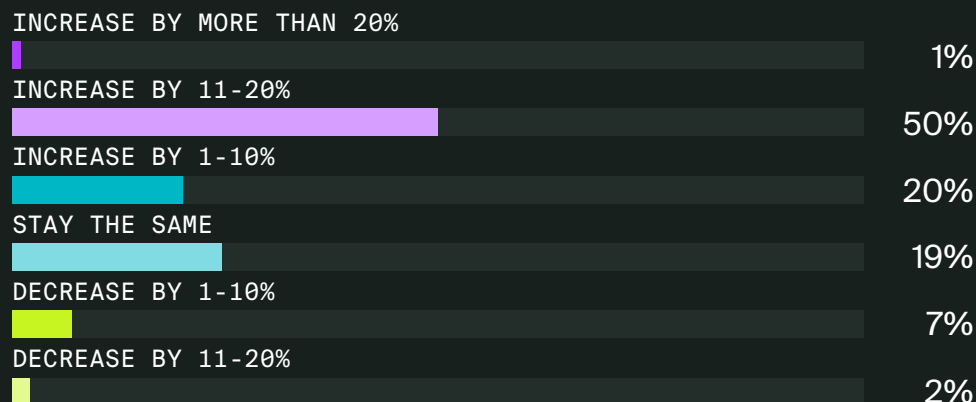
Defining success

Since 2023, the sourcing of special event venues has grown by more than 30 percentage points. With 63% of planners citing attendee engagement as their primary success metric, investments in memorable venues show that creating impactful experiences matters more than strict budget adherence.

Core features for creating an event

Planners want proximity to experiences (38%), a layout for networking (36%), integrated food and beverage (35%), customizable spaces (34%), unique locations (34%), on-site staff (34%), and a scenic setting (33%).

How will the number of in-person off-site meetings you expect to hold in 2026 compare to the number of in-person off-site meetings you held in 2025?



Key takeaway

Event professionals should recognize that value in 2026 will be measured less by frequency (though still important) and more by the quality of the attendee experience. Venues that provide experiential spaces, flexible layouts, proximity to unique activities, and integrated services will gain a competitive edge in winning planner business.

Regional insights

North America

North American event planners are more pessimistic about event volume, with 34% saying that the number of events in 2026 versus 2025 will stay the same or decrease. Like the global trend, attendee engagement is the top success metric for North American planners (32%).

Latin America (LATAM)

The most important measure of success for planners in Latin America is attendee satisfaction (39%). Regarding meeting volume expectations, a healthy majority (55%) sees growth in the 11-20% range.

Europe

Compared to planners in North America, event professionals in Europe prioritize attendee engagement more (37%, five percentage points higher). They also anticipate the least event volume growth, with 30% believing event volume will stay the same or decrease in 2026.

Asia

Planners in Asia foresee greater volume increases, with 74% of respondents citing up to a 20% increase in in-person meetings. That's a jump of 8 percentage points compared to North American planners.

Australia

As with Asia, planners surveyed in Australia expect more events in 2026. Over three-quarters (79%) say in-person meetings will grow by up to 20%, 13 percentage points higher than in North America. A substantial majority (59%) expect volume increases between 11% and 20%.

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

Planners in MEA also expect to be busier next year, with 77% expecting more meeting volume. This is 11 percentage points higher than in North America, which aligns with expectations across Asia and Australia.

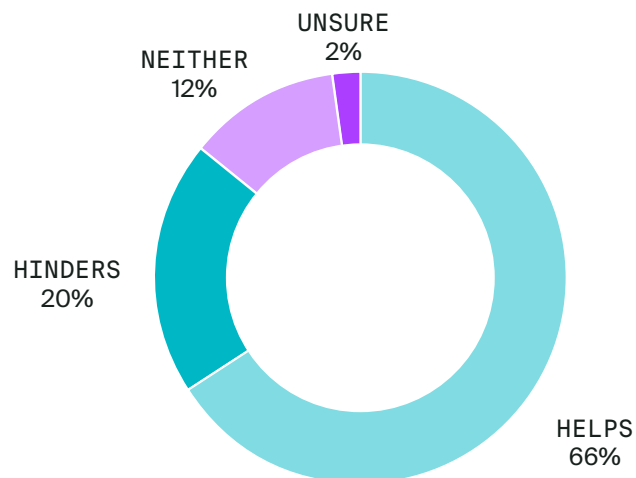


KEY FINDING 2

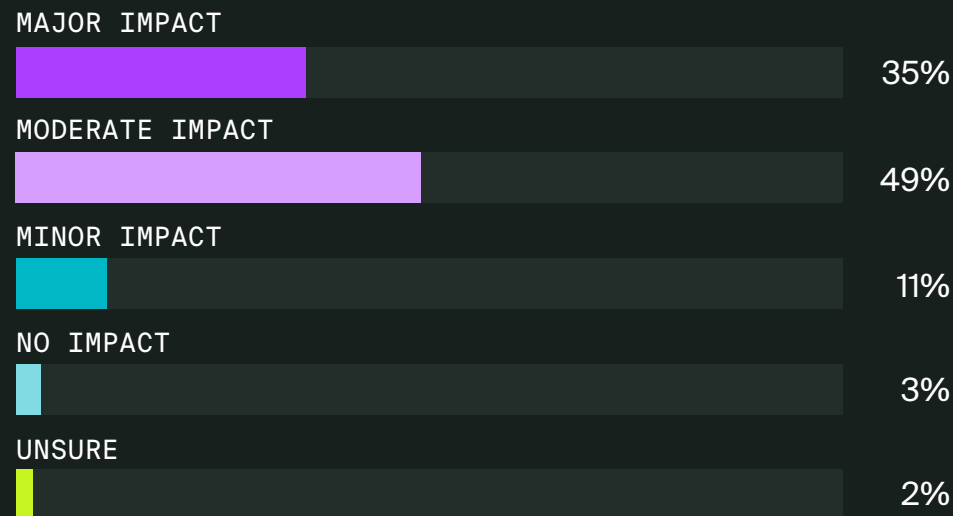
Planners are technology power users, but frustration mounts if the tools don't keep pace with industry requirements.

Planners rely heavily on technology for venue sourcing, often spending hours on platforms and websites. Yet many remain frustrated. Two-thirds are realizing the benefits of digital tools, such as faster sourcing and better options, but a third say that technology either hinders them or adds no value. This dissatisfaction reflects a gap: today's tools don't yet deliver the intelligence planners expect, and many are quickly adopting AI to achieve greater decision-making power.

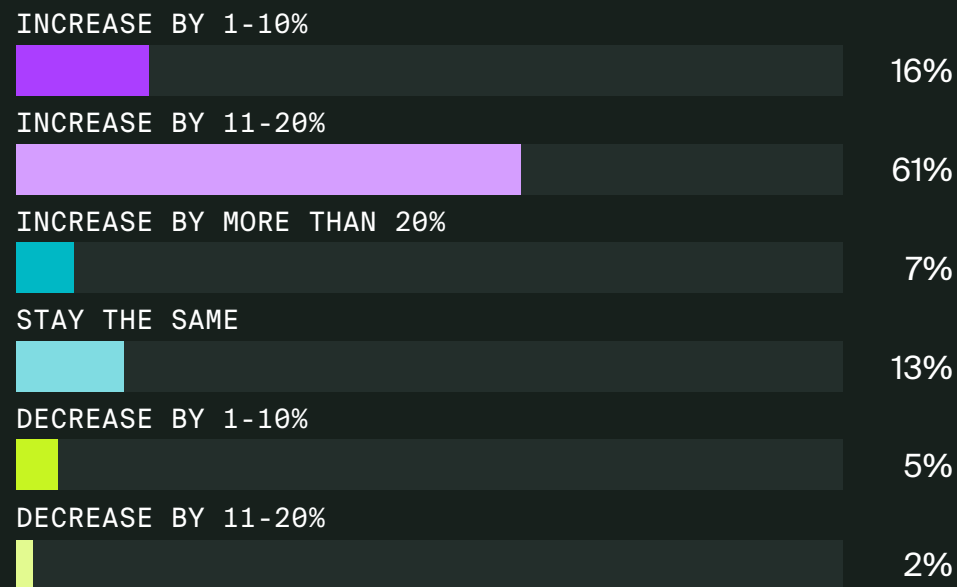
Do you believe technology helps or hinders your search for hotels and venues?



What impact, if any, do you believe AI will have on the meetings and events industry in 2026?



Do you expect to increase or decrease how often you use AI tools in your venue sourcing process?



Global key findings

Planners' conflicted relationship with tech

Despite widespread technology use, 32% of event planners think it hinders their sourcing process (20%) or offers no benefit (12%). Among the 66% who find value, 48% cite access to more options, 47% say it reduces sourcing time, and 44% believe it improves communications. More Gen Z planners see technology as helpful: 72% find it aids sourcing, 15% see it as a hindrance, and 11% are neutral. This ambivalence may reflect the need for technology to do more or be more efficient. A significant majority (58%) spend up to 5 hours using technology to source every event, with 30% using tech for 6 to 10 hours.

AI as a sourcing tool

Three-quarters (75%) of event planners surveyed use AI tools as part of their venue sourcing process, primarily to search for and select a venue (43%), analyze attendee data for better venue alignment (41%), and compare bids (40%). Sixty-one percent expect to increase their use of AI as a sourcing tool by 11% to 20% in 2026.

Impact of and reliance on AI

AI's importance is only growing, with 84% of event planners believing it will continue to have a moderate-to-major impact on the meetings and events industry in 2026. However, planners are unsure about what that impact looks like: 57% say AI can't be a better assistant during the sourcing process or are unsure what increased assistance looks like (43%).



Key takeaway

Planners expect efficiency, communication, and insights. For meetings with 50 or fewer attendees, 51% of planners expect an RFP response within one to four days, while for 51-100 attendees, 49% expect the same, and 40% hosting 101-250 attendees also expect a response in this timeframe. Those responses must also be personalized: 20% of planners think venues can improve their customization of proposals, and 21% say that venues most need to improve answers to custom questions. Planners see technology as key, with 44% saying it assists them most by improving communication with venues, and 42% citing the use of analytics that improve decision-making as most helpful.

Regional insights

North America

Compared to the global view, North American event planners are skeptical about technology's value. About a third (29%) say it hinders their search for venues, and 13% see no value, even though 91% of North American planners actively use technology to source for up to 20 hours per meeting. When asked separately, 78% say they are using AI tools to source, and 73% plan to increase their use of AI in the sourcing process.

Latin America (LATAM)

Planners in Latin America differ from the rest of the world in their use of AI. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of planners in LATAM utilize AI during their sourcing efforts, a decrease of 12 percentage points compared to the rest of the world and 15 percentage points less than in North America. When they use AI, most (52%) use it to source venues and compare bids (46%).

Europe

Given that European planners have a sunnier disposition on the role of technology, with just 13% saying it hinders their progress, it's no surprise that more than two-thirds (68%) already use AI in their sourcing process and expect to use it even more in the future. Eighty-one percent say they plan to increase their use of AI to find venues.

Asia

Sixty percent of planners surveyed in Asia spend between 1 and 5 hours per event using technology to source hotels and venues, and 32% spend between 6 and 10 hours per event. Moreover, 84% actively use AI in their venue sourcing process, and 82% expect to increase their use of AI tools as a part of their sourcing process. Interestingly, one of the top ways they use AI during sourcing is to create and optimize RFPs (39%).

Australia

Event planners in Australia are the global power users of technology, with 96% actively using technology during sourcing to better communicate with venues (58%), streamline RFPs (48%), and reduce their overall sourcing time (47%). Their use of AI reflects the same outlook on efficiency: 85% currently use AI tools as a part of their sourcing process. Primarily use it to automate communication with venues (46%) and compare bids and proposals (45%).

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

Planners in MEA are the most positive about technology, with just 5% saying it hinders their search and 87% say technology helps, a 15 and 21-percentage-point swing compared globally, respectively. The perceived value of technology is also different, with MEA planners saying the top three most helpful ways tech assists them with sourcing are in communicating with venues (58%), data and analytics for decision-making (53%), and reducing overall time spent sourcing (48%). Most MEA planners (93%) expect AI to have a moderate-to-major impact on meetings and events in 2026, 9 percentage points more than the rest of the world (84%).



KEY FINDING 3

Planners search for ways to balance experience with cost realities.

Globally, event planners are increasingly worried that rising costs will outpace their budgets. This belief that budgets may not grow as quickly as supplier costs is already affecting their preparations for 2026. Many anticipate price hikes, making cost-control strategies a top priority. This emphasis on managing expenses isn't new; planners have been bracing for these challenges since last year. As the landscape becomes more financially precarious, planners are exploring innovative solutions to stay within budget while still delivering memorable events.

Global key findings

Costs and budgets rise

Globally, 72% believe costs will increase by up to 20% from 2025, while 69% expect their event budgets to do the same. Just 10% of planners say costs will decrease. Planners focusing on VIP events are even more certain about cost and budget increases. Seventy-seven percent say costs are rising to 20%, but budgets are keeping pace, with 78% predicting budgets would increase by a similar amount.

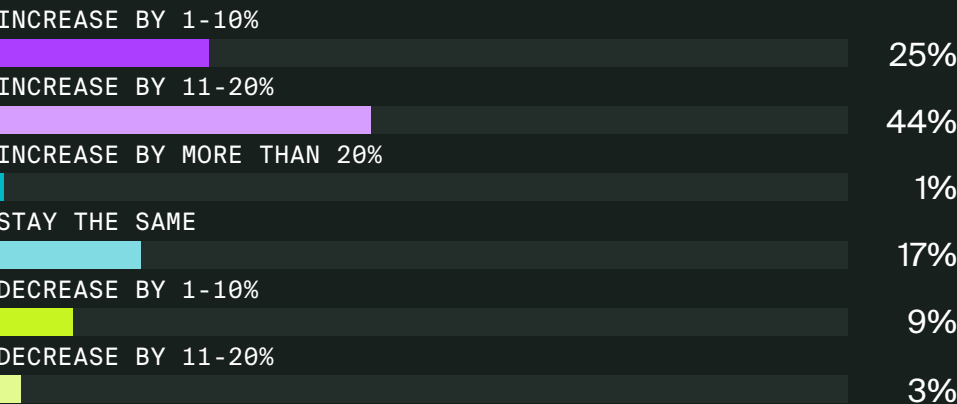
Planners continue to have budget concerns

In 2026, event planners are worried about their budgets (35%) more than the cost of events (30%). Interestingly, 24% say proving event ROI is the most important success metric, down four percentage points from the 2025 report.

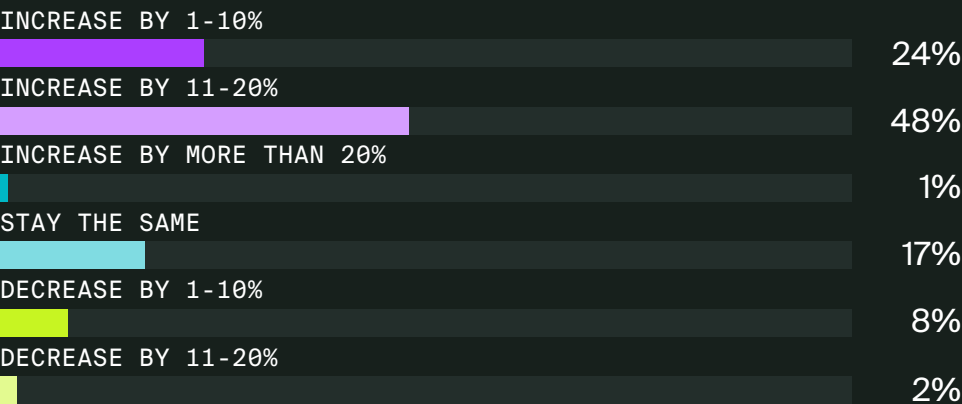
Are costs making special event venues more attractive?

The need to balance the attendee experience with rising costs may drive more planners to consider special event venues such as restaurants. Over a third of planners (34%) cite cost as one of the top three factors influencing their decision to book a special event venue.

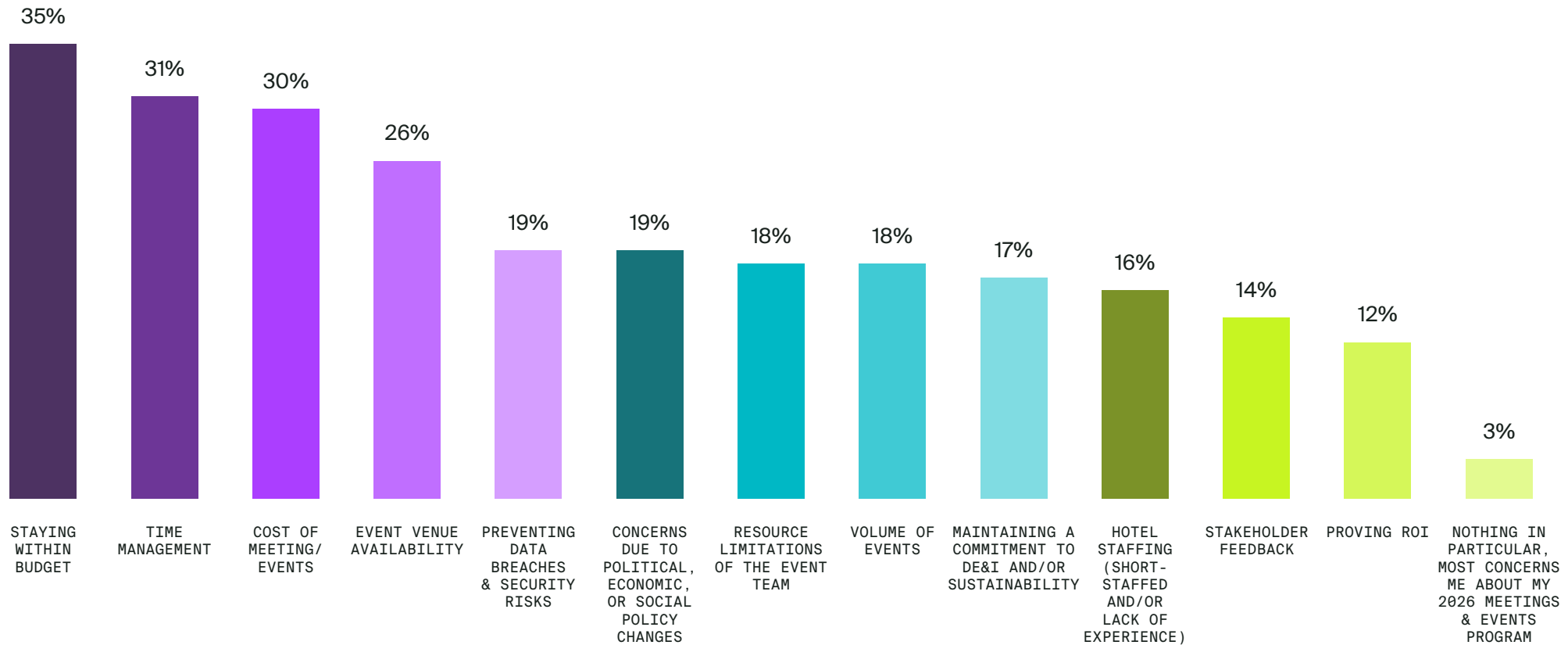
How do you expect your meetings and events budget to change from 2025 to 2026?



For a meeting of the same size/complexity, how do you expect the cost in 2026 to compare with the cost of 2025?



What most concerns you about your 2026 meetings and events program, if anything?



Key takeaway

For suppliers, the opportunity lies in demonstrating value beyond price: venues that highlight memorable experiences, engagement-focused spaces, and flexible packages will likely stand out as budgets stretch to cover rising costs. Planners must allocate budgets strategically, investing in attendee satisfaction and engagement while maintaining costs.



Regional insights

North America

North American planners expect costs (70%) and budgets (70%) to rise in lockstep, closely mirroring global averages. Still, 30% of respondents state that staying within budget is their top concern, slightly ahead of cost (27%). The top factors in booking decisions are dates (23%), proposal quality (22%), and ease of negotiations (22%), unlike in Europe or LATAM, where cost plays a more central role.

Latin America (LATAM)

Planners in Latin America show more anxiety over budgets: 36% cite cost as their top concern, while 27% worry most about staying within budget. Rates and costs are also a leading factor in venue decisions (38%), which is higher than in any other region, suggesting that financial considerations dominate sourcing decisions more than attendee experience or amenities.

Europe

European planners broadly reflect the global pattern, with 72% expecting costs to rise as much as 20%, but just 67% predict similar budget increases. Staying within budget (40%) is their top concern, higher than the global average. Cost also plays a stronger role in venue decisions (31%) than in regions like North America, by 10 percentage points.

Asia

In Asia, 73% of planners expect costs to rise as much as 20%, while budgets are increasing more slowly, with 69% projecting similar growth. VIP-focused planners are especially cost-conscious, with 88% expecting expenses to rise, but only 76% see the same with budgets. Staying within budget (35%) is the top concern, and cost ranks in the top three drivers of venue choice (26%), showing that financial discipline strongly shapes sourcing in the region.

Australia

Australian planners are more aligned on costs and budgets than most regions: 79% expect costs to rise, and 78% predict budgets will match. Networking events are projected to fare better, with 72% expecting cost growth and 79% anticipating budget growth. Staying within budget (30%) is the top concern, but cost is less influential in venue choice (25%) compared with factors like flexibility.

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

Most MEA planners forecast rising costs (75%), but only 66% say budgets will jump the same amount. Concern over staying within budget is acute, with 43% naming it their top worry. Cost is also highly influential in venue decisions (33%).



KEY FINDING 4

Regimented sourcing processes drive efficiency and savings.

Planners increasingly use a defined sourcing process to strategically identify, assess, and book venues and vendors for events. Globally, 97% of planners estimate they experience both cost and time savings through a defined RFP and sourcing process. The process may also improve communication, search, and the ability to compare options, helping planners evaluate venues more effectively. Adoption is promising: 22% of planners are required to follow a defined sourcing process for all meetings, and 38% have a process for most meetings.

Global key findings

Standardization creates efficiencies

By following a defined sourcing and RFP process to secure venue space, 42% of planners surveyed estimate that they reap 10-30% in cost savings; 40% see 10-30% in time savings.

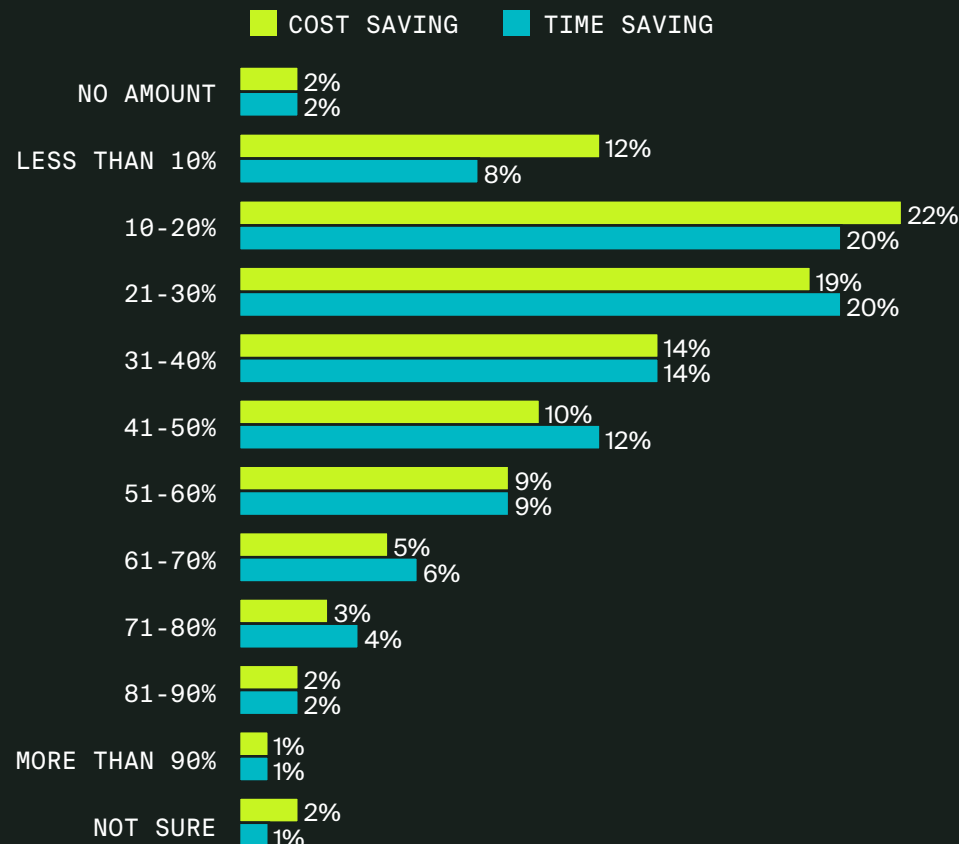
Benefits of a defined sourcing process

Overall global opinion about adopting a defined sourcing process shows that planners appreciate the efficiencies in communication (32%), venue search effectiveness (31%), and the ability to compare options (31%). Nearly a third (30%) also think they can gather more venue information through a defined process.

Growing use of defined sourcing processes

A majority of planners (88%) say they must follow a defined RFP and sourcing process for some, most, or all meetings. According to the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) [Hotel and Meeting Sourcing: The Current Landscape and the Future Report](#), 34% of companies lack any formal sourcing process.

Considering your company, how much, if anything, do you estimate it saves by following a defined sourcing/RFP process to secure venue space?



Key takeaway

For suppliers, using technology as a tool for their response process is an important way to ensure speed, transparency, and comparability, the three keys for planners. For planners, whether you have a small or large event program, setting sourcing parameters and emphasizing the adoption of centralized technology can ensure consistency at speed.

Regional insights

North America

Planners in North America report saving between 21% and 40% in cost (39%) and time (36%) by utilizing a structured RFP process. The top benefits cited are process efficiencies (34%) and venue locating (33%). Adoption is aligned with the global average, with 96% using defined sourcing for at least a few meetings.

Latin America (LATAM)

Latin American planners emphasize process efficiencies (42%) and comparability (40%) as top benefits. Most (95%) say they use defined sourcing for at least a few meetings, and report 10% and 30% in cost (45%) and time (46%) savings by utilizing a structured RFP process, the highest of any region.

Europe

In Europe, a defined process offers strong benefits: 46% report cost savings of 10-30%, and 43% say the same about time savings. Key benefits include comparing venues (30%) and process efficiencies (29%). Adoption rates are healthy, with 95% using defined sourcing for at least a few meetings.

Asia

Adoption is strong in Asia, with 98% using defined sourcing for at least a few meetings, which is tied for the strongest adoption rate of any region. The benefits are clear: 42% estimate cost savings of 10-30% due to a defined sourcing process, and 44% of planners report time savings. Planners in Asia also cite the ability to compare venues consistently (35%) and to gather more information (32%) as key advantages.

Australia

Australian planners see notable efficiency gains, with 44% citing cost savings between 10-30% and 35% estimating time savings of the same range. The top benefits include locating best-fit venues (35%) and compliance with company and procurement guidelines (34%). Adoption is solid, with 95% applying defined sourcing to at least a few meetings, but only 17% using a defined sourcing process for all.

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

MEA is tied with Asia for the highest adoption rate, with 98% applying a process to at least a few meetings. Their top benefits are information gathering (36%) and compliance with company procurement rules (34%), which is more prominent here than in other regions, perhaps reflecting the dominance of multinational and government-linked organizations.



KEY FINDING 5

RFP tools redefine speed, savings, and decision-making.

Most planners (96%) use online tools to build RFPs, and nearly a quarter (23%) rely on them for all meetings and events. The appeal lies in efficiency: saving time, simplifying data transfer, and streamlining contracting. Technology extends these benefits, with 42% citing improved analytics and 34% noting streamlined processes. AI integration also shapes decision-making, from comparing bids (40%) to analyzing attendee data (41%). The expected response time is consistent across all regions: the average planner anticipates a reply within four days.

Global key findings

Planners rely on technology to craft RFPs

Globally, most (60%) planners use RFP tools to construct their requests for most or all of their meetings or use a defined sourcing process (60%).

Benefits of digital RFP tools

It's no surprise that event planners value the speed, convenience, and efficiency of online RFPs. Over a third of planners say it saves time when communicating with venues (35%), makes it easy to feed data into a registration page (34%), helps the contract process become more efficient (32%), and makes it easy to compare event venues (30%).

Sourcing becomes more strategic

These efficiency benefits extend beyond saving time and improving communication. Nearly half of planners (48%) report that technology gives them more hotel and venue options, 42% use data and analytics to make more informed decisions, and 34% say that technology simplifies the RFP process.

AI's impact on RFPs

AI assists planners in effortlessly assessing bids and finding the ideal venue. Over a third (36%) use AI to create and optimize RFPs, 40% use AI to compare bids and proposals, and 41% use it to analyze attendee data for a better venue fit.

RFP response times

Most planners want RFP responses within four business days, regardless of the number of attendees. For example, 63% of planners sourcing events for up to 50 attendees expect venue responses by day four, and more than half of planners sourcing events for 51-100 attendees want the same (55%). The expectations change slightly for larger events, where 30% of planners say that for events with 500 or more attendees, they can accept a response in more than a week or have no set time frame.

Key takeaway

For suppliers, proposals should be rapid, transparent responses. Those who reply within four business days with a thorough response will stand out. For planners, RFP tools paired with AI deliver measurable value: time savings, easier comparisons, better analysis, and smarter sourcing decisions. Together, they can elevate sourcing from transactional exchanges to strategic partnerships.

Regional insights

North America

North America's preference for automation is in line with global sentiment: a majority use online RFP tools for most or all meetings (61%), and for events with either 1-50 attendees or 51-100 attendees, most planners seek responses within four days (58% and 57%, respectively). Benefits include time savings (32%) and access to historical data about past meetings held at the same or similar venues (31%).

Latin America (LATAM)

In Latin America, speed matters most for smaller events, with 65% wanting responses within four days for events with 1-50 attendees. Latin America is behind the curve in adopting digital RFP tools, with only 51% saying they use them for most or all meetings. However, those who use them see the value: 47% cite contract efficiency, and 40% see the benefits of improved registration sites. AI adoption is robust, with 46% comparing bids and 52% using AI for venue search, higher than the global average.

Europe

Like LATAM, European planners want speedy replies for smaller events. For an event with 1-50 attendees, 63% expect RFP responses within four days. AI adoption is slightly lower in Europe, where 68% of planners use it during their hotel and venue sourcing process, seven percentage points lower than the global average. The top ways they utilize AI are to create RFPs (39%) and to analyze attendee data for a better venue fit (43%).

Asia

Planners in Asia value quick replies. Most (68%) expect responses within four days for events with 1-50 attendees, ranking second highest across all regions. More planners use RFP tools for all meetings (28%) than those who follow a defined process (19%), unlike globally, where the numbers are nearly the same (23% and 22%, respectively). AI usage shows 39% creating or optimizing RFPs and 45% analyzing attendee data with technology, which are higher than the worldwide average.

Australia

In Australia, prompt replies are not just a nice-to-have – they're crucial, especially for small meetings. 83% expect responses within four days for meetings with 1-50 attendees, the highest among all regions. Adoption of RFP tools mimics global sentiment, and the benefits are clear: 35% cite greater efficiency, and 31% highlight improved communication. Advanced AI usage is mixed, with 45% comparing bids but only 28% creating RFPs, below the global average.

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

MEA leads in usage of digital tools, with 64% of planners using RFP tools for most or all meetings, slightly above global sentiment. The desire for efficiency is a strong benefit, with 49% noting better communication and 43% citing the ability to pull consistent data from more venues. AI adoption is high, with 55% of users using the technology to compare bids. Response expectations are clear: planners hosting events with either 1-50 or 51-100 attendees desire responses within four days (66% and 61% respectively).

See chart on page 20

KEY FINDING 6

Planners seek transparency, speed, and stronger venue differentiation.

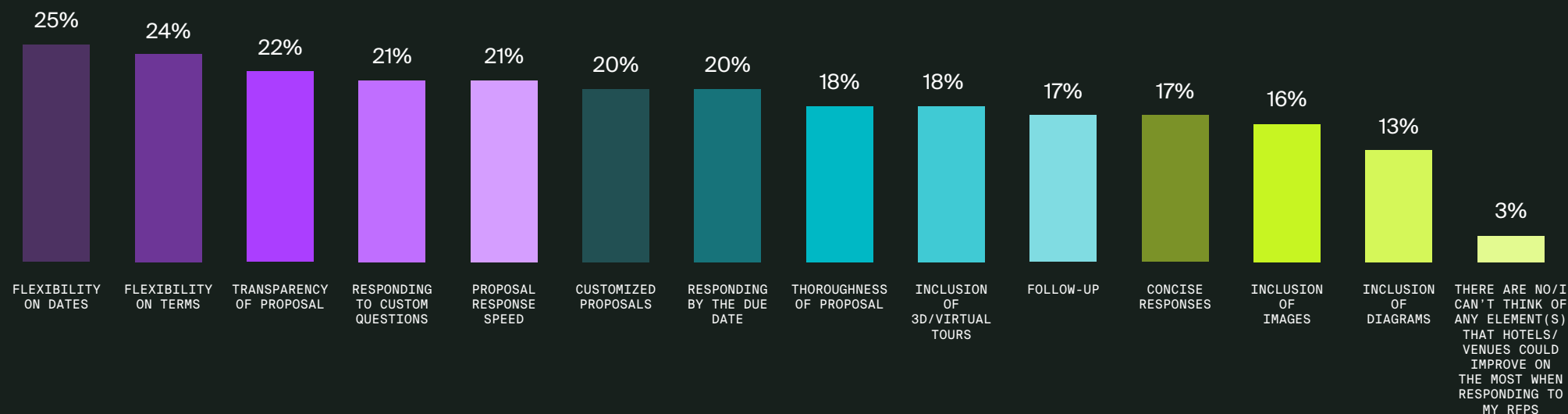
While planners are somewhat satisfied with the current venue sourcing process, they increasingly value transparent proposals, accessible venue information, and trusted relationships. This highlights a clear opportunity for technology to close the gap by streamlining the flow of information, reducing response times, and enabling more personalized communication so venues can meet rising expectations for both efficiency and service in the sourcing process. Venues should note that event planners expect high costs and stretched budgets,

but still prioritize attendee engagement. Providing an easy sourcing and RFP experience that saves time will go far in building positive relationships that drive events to your location.

Key takeaway

For suppliers, technology offers a path to deliver faster, more straightforward, and more customized responses, helping venues stand out in a competitive market. For planners, digital tools can reduce friction by providing transparent proposals, centralized and comprehensive venue data, and quicker comparisons, making the sourcing process thorough and efficient.

Which element(s), if any, do you think hotels/venues could improve on the most when responding to your RFPs?



Global key findings

Room for improvement

Overall, planners are happy but feel that there are still opportunities for further enhancements in sourcing. Over three-quarters (78%) are very or somewhat satisfied when sourcing venues. The main areas in which they would like to see improvements are the transparency of proposals (22%) and improved custom answers (21%).

Ways for venues to win

During the sourcing process, planners said that the availability of meeting room specifications (50%), images and video (48%), and floor plans/diagrams (46%) had the most influence on their decision to submit an RFP to a venue.

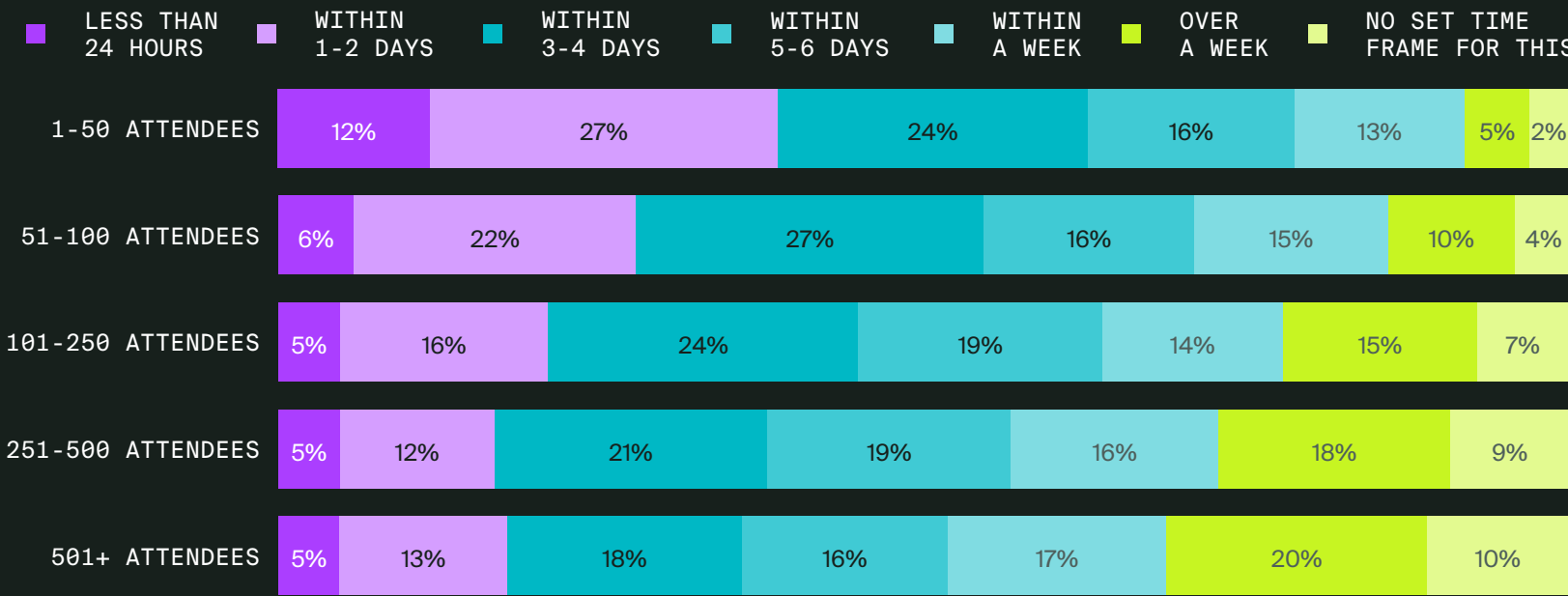
Sourcing challenges to solve

Venues that make it easy for planners to research specs and capabilities are likely to gain an advantage; 25% of planners cite this as the most challenging stage in the sourcing process. Responding quickly also helps; 24% say getting responses is among the most difficult challenges.

Influential sourcing factors

Aside from dates (26%) and location (25%), planners say that a venue’s brand reputation (24%) and having an existing relationship with venue staff (20%) influenced their decision to submit an RFP, a nine-percentage-point increase for both from 2025.

Generally, based on the size of the event/meeting, when must you receive a hotel or venue’s RFP response to consider booking it?



Regional insights

North America

North America's satisfaction matches the global average, but they too see potential for improvement, such as enhancing custom answers (22%) and proposal transparency (20%). Factors like specs (49%) and images (44%) are slightly less influential than the global averages. Challenges include delays in response (24%, aligned with global) and researching (23%). Venue reputation (24%) and staff relationships (20%) are influential, trending up from 2025, highlighting the importance of trust.

Latin America (LATAM)

Latin America shows solid satisfaction, with 84% very or somewhat satisfied, far above the global average. If there are any issues, they stem from negotiation, with 40% citing negotiating with venues as the toughest part of the sourcing process, 17 percentage points higher than the global average. Planners push hard for improvements here: desire for transparency (26%) and RFP response speed (26%) exceed global averages. RFP influences highlight useful data: Meeting room specifications (62%) and images and videos (59%) are valuable to LATAM planners.

Europe

Most planners (81%) are very or somewhat satisfied with the sourcing process. They're most looking for venues to improve transparency (24%) and flexibility of terms (23%), citing researching (26%), delays (22%), and comparing proposals (22%) as their top challenges. The top influences on submitting RFPs are room specs (50%) and images (47%), which align with global averages.

Asia

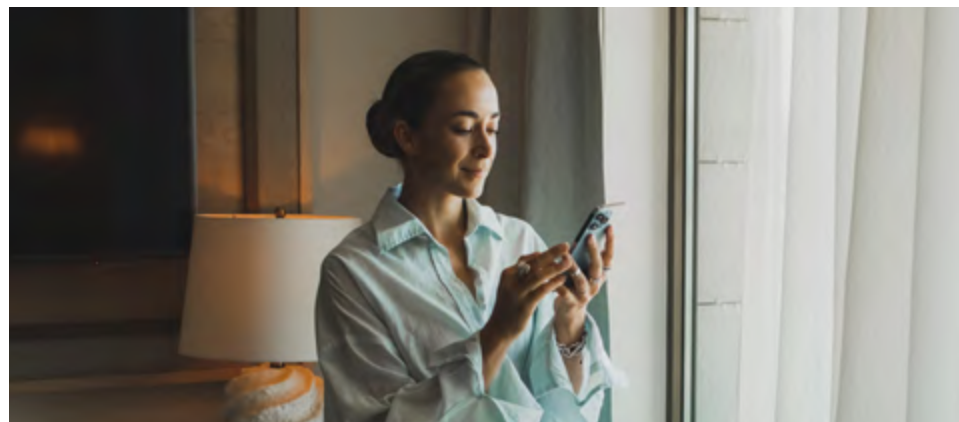
In Asia, floor plans (58%) and meeting space specs (50%) are the most influential factors for RFP submission. The key challenges include researching specifications (29%) and delays in responding to RFPs (28%), which are evident in the areas they feel most need improvement: speeding up proposal responses (23%) and ensuring responses are submitted by the due date (22%).

Australia

Australian planners are the least satisfied, with 64% very or somewhat satisfied, 14 percentage points lower than the global average. Improvement priorities emphasize flexibility of dates (29%, the highest globally) rather than transparency (19%). The biggest challenge is comparing proposals (27%).

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

MEA is the most positive, with 88% very or somewhat satisfied, significantly above the global average. Still, planners call for more flexibility on terms (29%) and dates (26%). RFP submissions are influenced by peer reviews (57%, the highest globally) and images (57%). Challenges are broad: delays (29%) and negotiation (30%) outpace global mentions.



KEY FINDING 7

Planners continue to flock to flexible, one-of-a-kind spaces.

Special event venues have solidified their position as a central part of the sourcing mix, nearly matching hotels as a primary choice for planners. What sets them apart is their ability to support the rising demand for highly engaging experiential events, with flexible spaces, distinct amenities, and integration with cultural or culinary experiences. The trend underscores that these venues are now a proven option for delivering attendee engagement, aligning directly with planners' focus on immersive and memorable experiences.

Global key findings

Special event venues are a strong option

Planners continue to source and book special event venues. Almost half (48%) say they are currently sourcing non-hotel locations like restaurants and art galleries, second only to hotels (57%) and more often than luxury hotels (43%). Since 2023, sourcing for special event venues has increased by over 30 percentage points. The most popular non-hotel venues are restaurants (45%), including bars (23%) and wineries (19%), which shows planner preference for unique and collaborative attendee experiences.

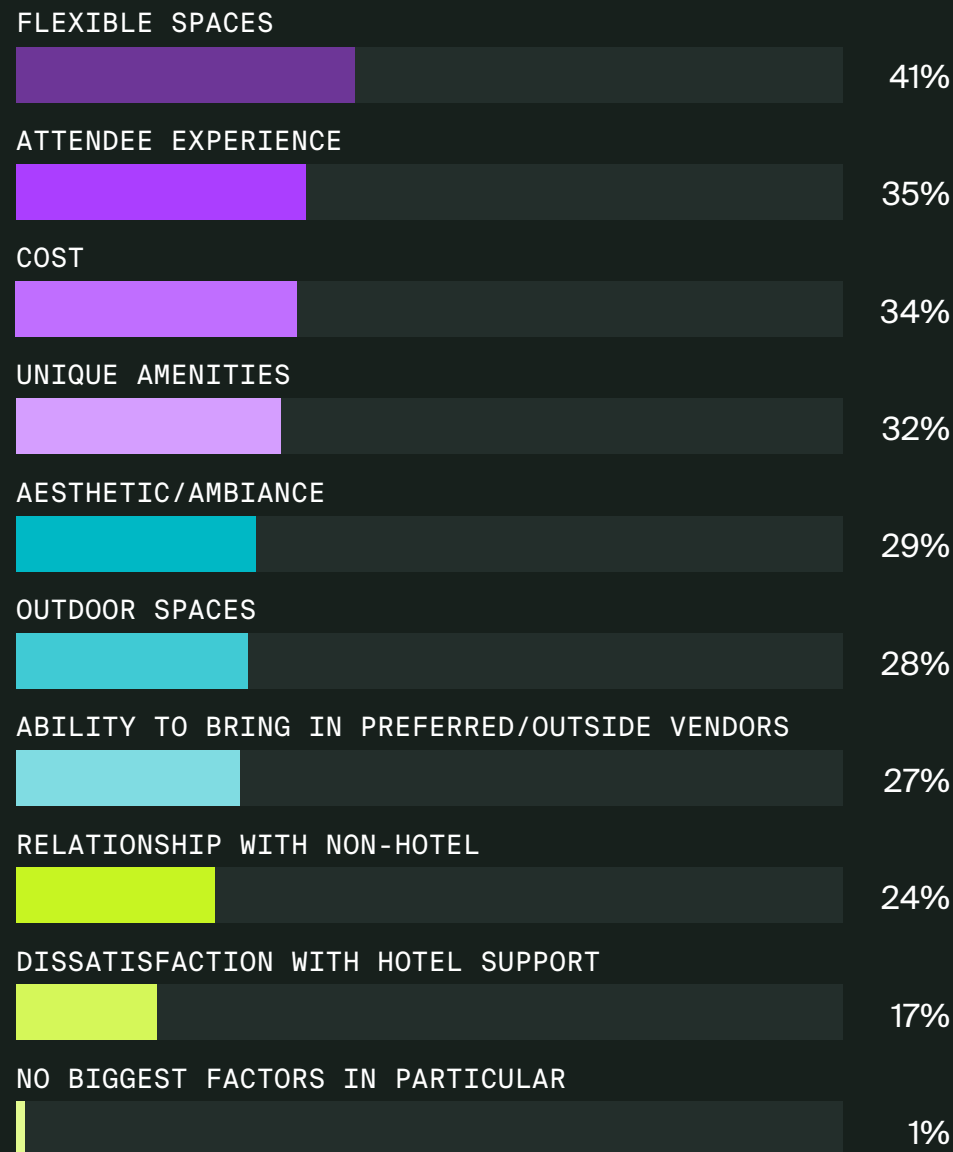
Influences include flexibility and cost

When booking a special event venue, planners are most influenced by the flexibility of the space (41%), attendee experience (35%), and cost (34%). In addition, 32% of planners book special event venues because of the unique amenities, and 29% for the aesthetics.

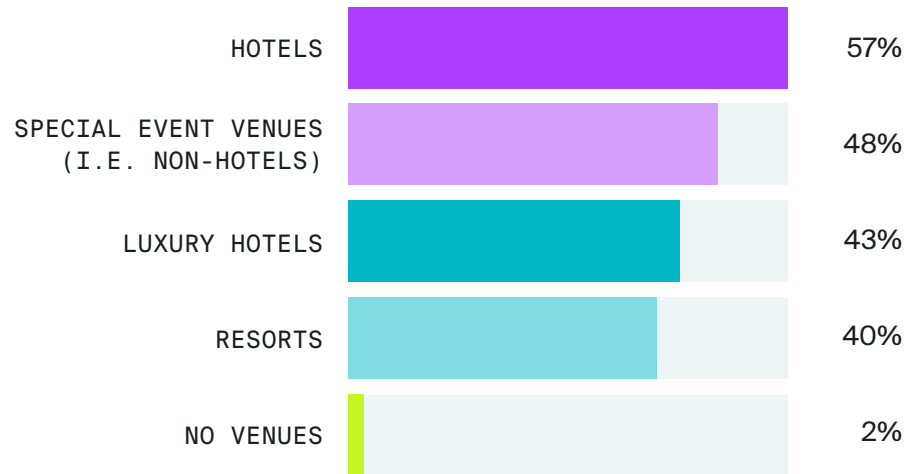
Special event venue advantages

As experiential events continue to increase, planners are prioritizing venues that offer proximity to experiences such as restaurants/culture (38%), layouts supporting networking (36%), and integrated F&B experiences (35%).

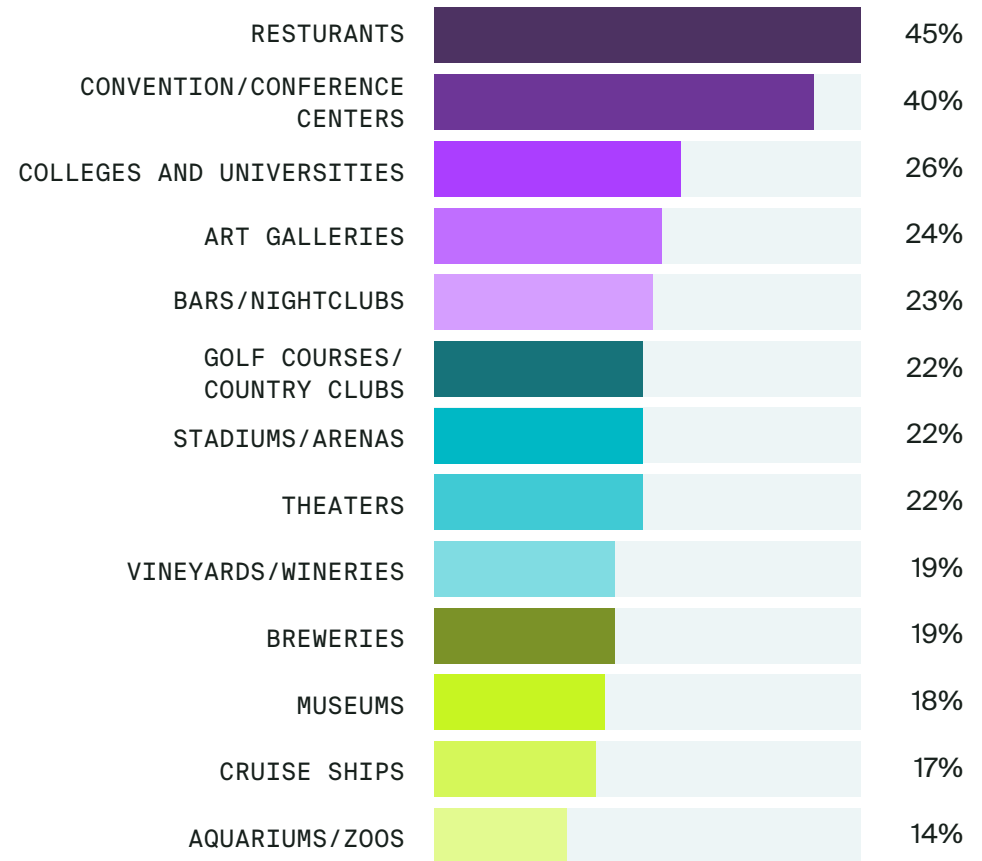
What are the biggest factors influencing your decision to book a special event venue, if any?



Which types of venues are you currently sourcing?



Which non-hotel spaces are you currently sourcing?



Key takeaway

For suppliers, differentiation now means curating a unique experience, with signature features tied to local culture and culinary experiences. For planners, balancing cost and practicality with creative, one-of-a-kind spaces pays off, enabling stronger networking and engagement while keeping event decisions grounded in transparent capabilities and easy-to-compare details.

Regional insights

North America

North America echoes global opinion, with planners currently sourcing hotels (53%), special event venues (49%), and luxury hotels (44%). The most popular non-hotel spaces to book in North America include restaurants (38%) and golf courses/country clubs (27%). When it comes to features that make for an engaging experience, there is a preference for layouts that encourage networking (32%) and integrated food and beverages (31%).

Latin America (LATAM)

Planners in Latin America prioritize sourcing hotels (65%) over special event venues (48%). Resorts also play a significant role, with 39% of planners sourcing them. Cost is a major factor when considering unique spaces: A majority (52%) think it is the top booking driver, though flexible spaces (44%) and attendee experience (42%) also matter. On features, integrated F&B (37%) and networking layouts (36%) track near global averages, pointing to a value-focused yet experience-aware approach.

Europe

Europe's sourcing mix favors hotels (56%). Of the 49% sourcing special event venues, the main factors in booking are the need for flexible spaces (43%), cost (34%), and unique amenities (34%). The draw of experiential features is steady and widespread, including proximity to culture/dining (37%) and the availability of great layouts for networking (34%).

Asia

Planners in Asia who source special event venues (48%) emphasize flexible spaces (43%), attendee experience (38%), and outdoor access (36%). Experiential features are a priority, with 40% seeking networking-supportive layouts.

Australia

Australian planners show enthusiasm for all spaces: Special event venues (56%) are equally appealing as hotels (55%), while luxury hotels (59%) are most often sourced. When they do source non-hotel spaces, breweries (38%) and restaurants (36%) are their top choice. Differentiators like unique amenities (46%), flexible spaces (38%), and aesthetics (36%) are the most important factors when it comes to booking a special event venue.

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

Planners lean decisively toward hotels (67%) in sourcing, followed by luxury hotels (51%). Out of the 45% that report sourcing special event venues, their reasoning is rooted in both the experience and practicality: attendee experience (46%), flexible spaces (40%), and cost (40%) are the most important booking factors for special event venues.



KEY FINDING 8

Strong vendor and venue partnerships prove essential amid staffing and service challenges.

Vendor relationships have always been critical to event execution. Today, however, planners rely on them even more so, thanks to the new reality of smaller venue staff. While that amplifies the pressure planners feel regarding rising vendor costs, it also highlights the value a good vendor partner can deliver. A fast pace, combined with inexperience at the venue and a greater priority on attendee engagement, can risk undermining events, which makes the vendor role and relationship a critical component. That's especially true for event tech partners.

Global key findings

The vital importance of vendors to engagement

An event planner might have an inspiring, creative vision and a detailed plan, but vendors are the experts who bring each aspect together. Nearly all (95%) planners surveyed now use on-site

event support vendors. When it comes to their most important KPI (attendee engagement), a strong majority of planners will often or always (57%) use vendors who specialize in achieving the goal, and most often or always (59%) call on vendors for event entertainment.

Frequency of use

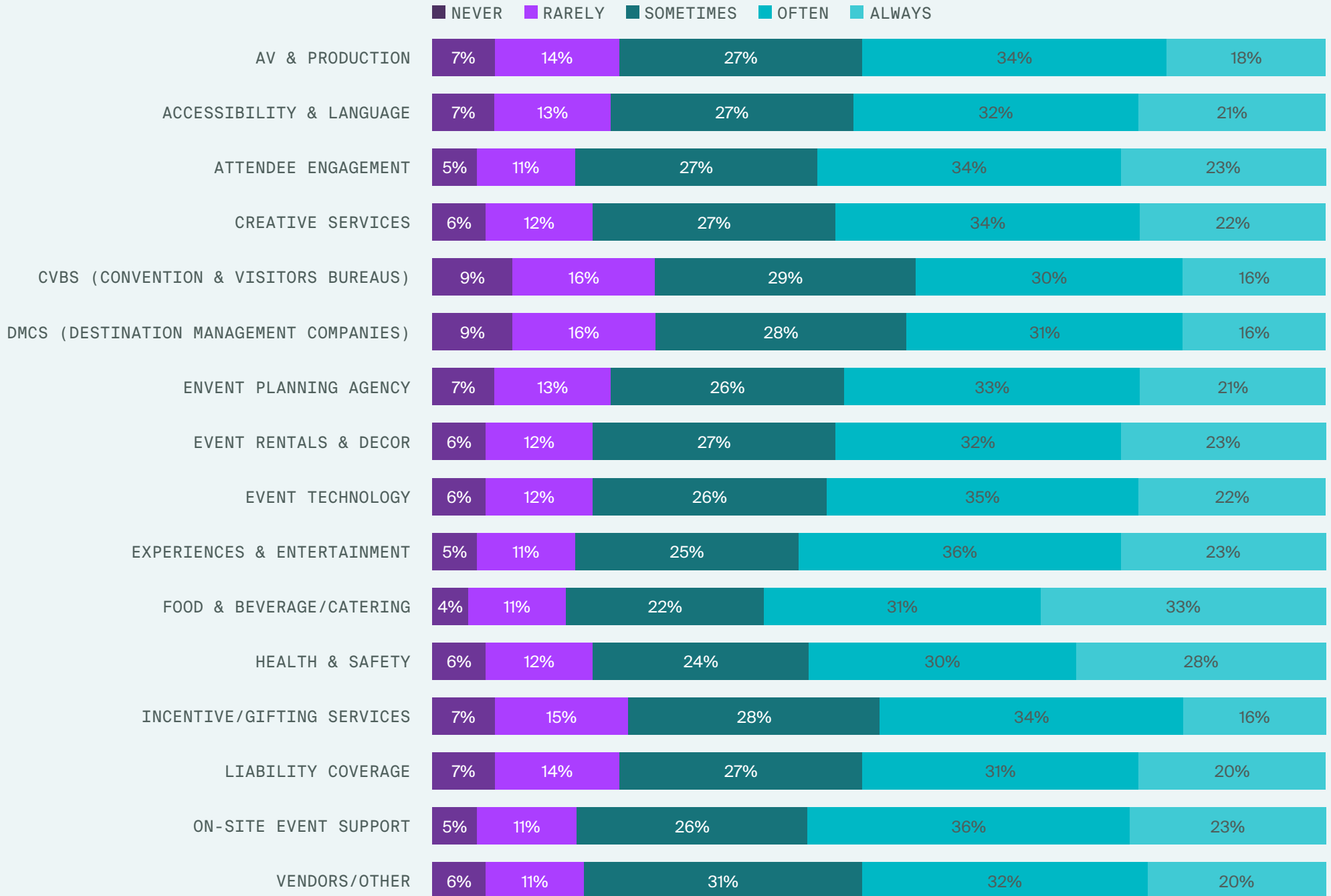
Most (57%) global planners often or always work with event tech vendors to plan meetings and events. That's more than other core functions, such as AV production (52%), and is comparable to necessities such as entertainment and experiences (59%).

Supplier relationships

Persistent venue staffing shortages impact event planners in many ways. A near majority (42%) say the impact is most acutely felt through inexperienced staff, including hotel or venue employees. Thirty-nine percent say it's felt through unsatisfactory attendee experiences, and 38% experience fewer amenities or a lack of available hotel rooms. Additionally, slow response times to RFPs affect more than a quarter (28%) of planners globally. To address these issues, 40% of planners believe that focusing on technology can improve the booking experience, 39% of respondents want improved dialogue with hotels and venues, and 38% seek more transparent communication with guests.



How often, if at all, do you work with the following vendor types to plan your meetings and events?



Regional insights

North America

Nearly half (49%) of planners in North America often or always use event tech vendors, while most (91%) use vendors who specialize in attendee engagement at least sometimes. In terms of staff shortages, adopting technology to automate the booking process is seen as the top area where hotels and venues can improve the booking experience (41%), followed by better communication with planners (38%) and guests (37%).

Latin America (LATAM)

Planners in Latin America are among the most frequent users of event tech (61% often or always) and attendee engagement vendors (97% at least sometimes). Staffing issues manifest in unsatisfactory attendee experiences (38%) and a lack of available hotel rooms (35%). What distinguishes LATAM is its stronger focus on improved communication with planners. Forty-six percent say this is the area understaffed venues should focus on, seven percentage points higher than the global sentiment.

Europe

In Europe, the impact of venue staffing shortages is acute: 43% report inexperienced staff, and 40% cite unsatisfactory attendee experiences. Ninety-five percent of planners in Europe use vendors specializing in attendee engagement. Thirty-eight percent want better communication with guests, showing Europe's need for venues to boost experience in guest-facing roles.

Asia

In Asia, 98% of planners use vendors specializing in attendee engagement, more than they rely on F&B vendors (96%). Planners in Asia see communication as the overarching issue that understaffed venues must improve: 48% say they want more information on websites and sourcing platforms, 39% cite insufficient communication with planners, and 39% say the same about communication with guests.

Australia

Planners in Australia are all in on the event experience. Almost all (99%) use vendors specializing in entertainment and experiences. They also rely heavily on event technology support, with 62% using these vendors often or always. Staffing gaps are evident, with 43% citing inexperienced staff and 43% highlighting fewer amenities available. Notably, 49% of planners here most want venues to improve or implement technology to automate the booking process; 47% want more information on the website or sourcing platform.

Middle East and Africa (MEA)

MEA relies the most on event tech vendors, with 70% using them often or always, and 99% using them at any level. Regarding venue relationships, as with most regions, planners in MEA want to see better communication with planners (48%) and guests (45%). All (100%) of planners surveyed in MEA use vendors who specialize in on-site event support; 40% always do so, 17 percentage points greater than the global standard.

Key takeaway

For suppliers, building stronger vendor partnerships means using experts to fill critical roles and leveraging services for on-site support for a more engaging experience. It requires responsive communication, investment in training, and embracing technology that helps smaller staff ease planner pain points. Planners have always relied on vendor expertise and collaborative dialogue with partners; this approach is critical now more than ever.

ADDITIONAL GLOBAL FINDINGS

Battle of the planners: Gen Z vs. Millennials

Where hotels should focus... 44% of Gen Z planners say that understaffed hotels and venues should focus most on communication with event planners, while 41% of Millennials say technology to automate the booking process should be their top concern.

How technology helps in sourcing... 52% of Gen Z planners say that technology most helps them in sourcing hotels and venues by offering data and analytics for better decision-making, while 47% of Millennials say that tech most helps them by providing access to a broader range of options.

The role of AI... 72% of Gen Z planners expect to maintain their current time spent using AI for sourcing, while Millennial planners are more excited about AI as a sourcing tool: 82% say they'll increase their use.

Adoption of accessibility... 50% of Gen Z planners say that accessibility is very important when sourcing a venue, while just 42% of Millennials agree.

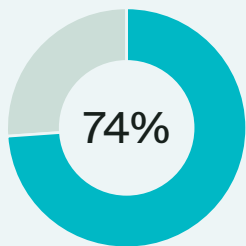
Mid-career planners (6-10 years) approach sourcing in a more curated, efficient way

29% say online venue sourcing platforms like the Cvent Supplier Network are the most essential resource to use during their venue sourcing process. Less experienced planners (1-5 years) cite hotel and venue ratings and reviews.

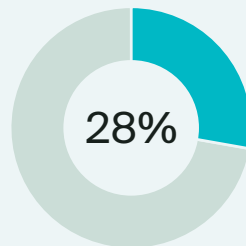
28% say the most challenging stage of the sourcing process is getting adequate responses by the due date. Less experienced planners cite understanding how the actual event space meets their needs as most challenging.

25% say that the hotel or venue's event technology support capabilities have the most influence on their decision to submit an RFP. Less experienced planners cite the hotel's brand reputation (28%) and availability of requested dates (28%) as having the most influence on their decision to submit an RFP to a hotel or venue.

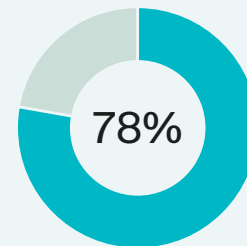
Events with purpose: accessibility, sustainability, and DEI lead the way



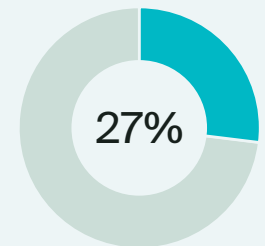
OF PLANNERS ARE PRIORITIZING ACCESSIBILITY MORE NOW THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS.



EXPECT INCREASED EMPHASIS ON SUSTAINABILITY TO SHAPE THEIR PRIORITIES.

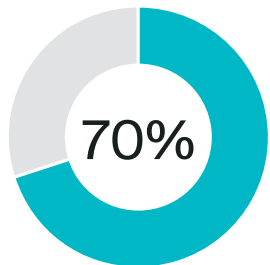


SAY THE VENUE'S SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS ARE AN IMPORTANT FACTOR.

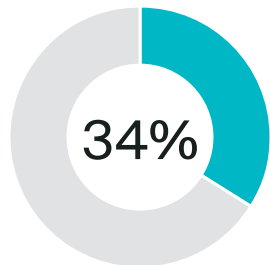


SAY DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN EVENTS WILL BE A TOP TREND.

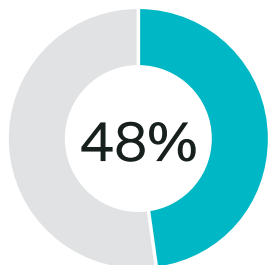
Planners do double duty as transient producers and decision makers



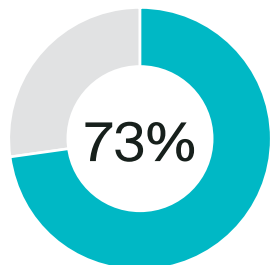
OF PLANNERS ARE INVOLVED IN THEIR COMPANY'S PREFERRED TRANSIENT HOTEL PROGRAM.



SAY THAT MORE THAN 50% OF THEIR TIME IS SPENT WORKING ON CORPORATE TRAVEL.



SAY THAT ABOUT HALF THEIR TIME IS SPENT WORKING ON CORPORATE TRAVEL.



SAY THAT THEY ARE INVOLVED AND A DECISION MAKER WHEN IT COMES TO CORPORATE TRAVEL.

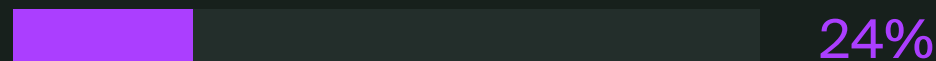
Local events are more attractive than new adventures in faraway places

40% of planners globally say that they only source within their country.

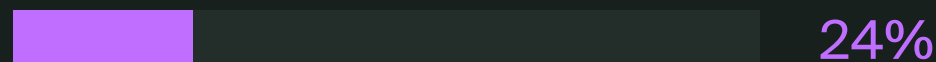
40% of planners globally say that they only source within their region.

17% of planners globally say they source internationally.

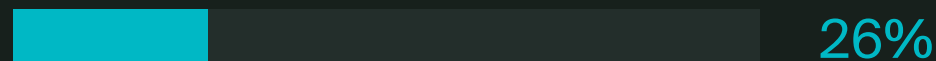
Planners value sustainability practices that support local people and communities



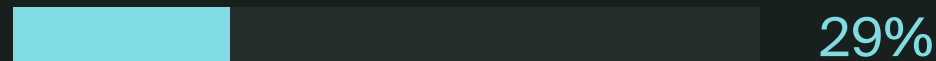
SAY THEY VALUE LOCALLY SOURCED FOOD TO SUPPORT LOCAL FARMERS.



SAY THEY VALUE SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES.



OF MILLENNIAL PLANNERS SAY THEY MOST VALUE SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES.



OF VIP EVENT PLANNERS SAY THEY MOST VALUE SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES ON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES.

Planners want online booking for their growing portfolio of simple meetings

86% say they are more likely to select a hotel or venue meeting space for simple meetings if they offer online booking.

44% of planners say that between 11%-25% of their meetings are simple meetings.

27% of planners say that between 26%-50% of their meetings are simple meetings.

GLOBAL FINDINGS BY THE NUMBERS

- 70%** of planners predict up to a 20% increase in in-person meetings and events.
- 47%** of event planners say technology reduces sourcing time.
- 72%** say costs will increase by up to 20% from 2025, while 69% expect budgets to rise equally.
- 97%** of planners estimate cost and time savings through implementing a defined RFP and sourcing process.
- 96%** of planners use RFP tools for at least a few meetings.
- 78%** of planners are very or somewhat satisfied with their experience sourcing venues.
- 48%** of planners say they are sourcing special event venues like restaurants and art galleries.
- 94%** of planners work with event technology vendors to plan meetings and events.

Additional resources

[2025 Global Cvent Travel Managers Report](#)

[Northstar/Cvent Meetings Industry PULSE Survey](#)

[Mastering AI for Events: 2025 Guide](#)

[Cvent Top List](#)



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