

Future Partners



The Future of the Meetings Industry

Opportunity powered by *Insight*

Future Partners

Shaping strategies for travel brands and
tourism leaders that capture *hearts,*
minds and *market share*

Future Partners

*Bringing the future of travel
within reach*

Future Partners

Research conducted by
Future Partners for the DMO
industry in partnership with:



informa connect

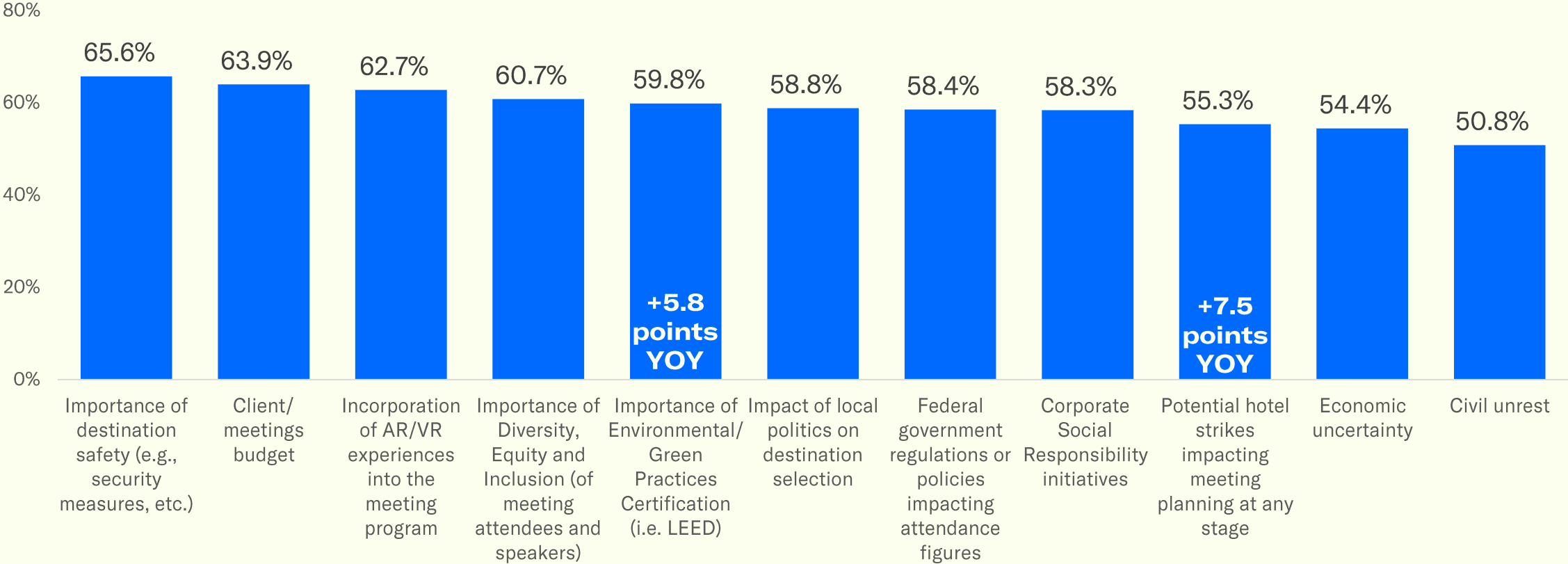
Methodology

- An invitation to take this survey was sent via email to Future Partners' meeting planner panel as well as through trusted industry partners who distributed the survey via email to their owned audiences.
- Survey respondents were screened for meeting planner responsibilities and destination decision influence.
- In total, 1,499 completed surveys were collected between September 8 and October 3, 2025.
- Additionally, 10 in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with meeting planners to dive into more detail and nuance around current trends in the industry.



Anticipated Changes to the Meetings Industry

% Expect to Increase



“We see hybrid meeting technologies, AI-driven personalization, and immersive tools like AR/VR as having the biggest impact on the meetings industry. These trends will enable more inclusive participation, improve engagement, and provide deeper insights through data analytics.”

- Third-party meeting planner

The Biggest Trends this Year Revolve Around Tech Developments and Attendee Experience

“

The focus is shifting from simply providing information to fostering genuine connection and engagement, with event planners acting more as ‘experience designers’.

”

“

Technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality will be increasingly adopted in meetings. VR can build up virtual scenarios, while AR can embed digital info into the real-world meeting environment, both offering attendees immersive experiences.

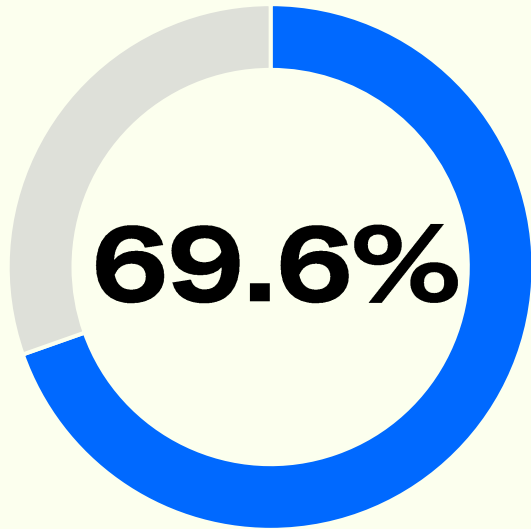
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“

Continued integration of AI and VR/AR for personalized experiences and enhanced planning, a strong emphasis on hybrid event formats to broaden reach, a rising focus on sustainability in event design.

”

AI as a Tool for Destination Inspiration



Of planners agree that they often use AI tools like ChatGPT to source meetings destinations.

Top 10 AI Use Cases for Inspiration around Meetings Destinations (unaided)

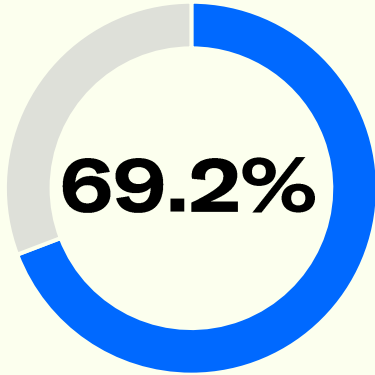


“I use AI to find cool and interesting places for events by matching what the event is about with the best destinations. It’s like having a smart helper that suggests where people would enjoy and benefit most, but I still make the final decisions.”

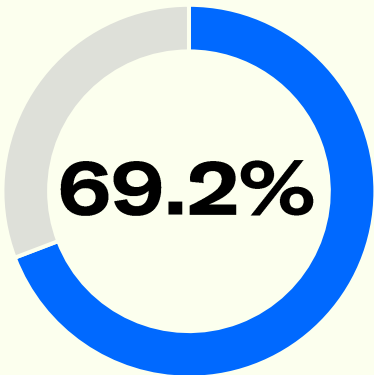
- Corporate meeting planner

Destination Attribute Importance

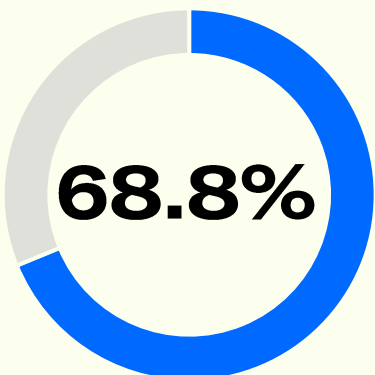
Top 5 Destination Attributes for In-Person Meetings
% High or Extremely High Importance



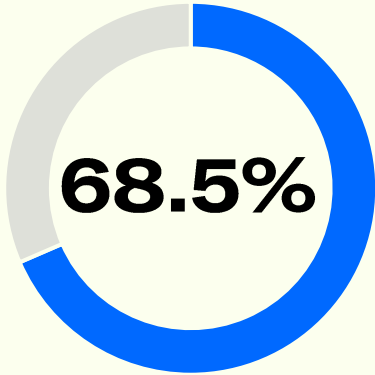
Technology Set-up



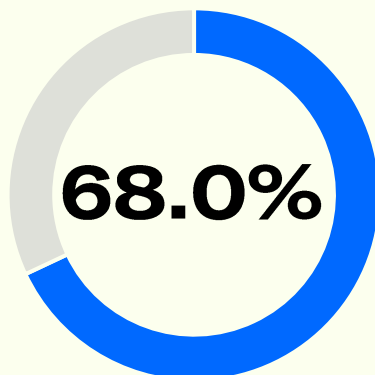
Overall Quality of Meeting Facilities



Destination Safety Certification Programs

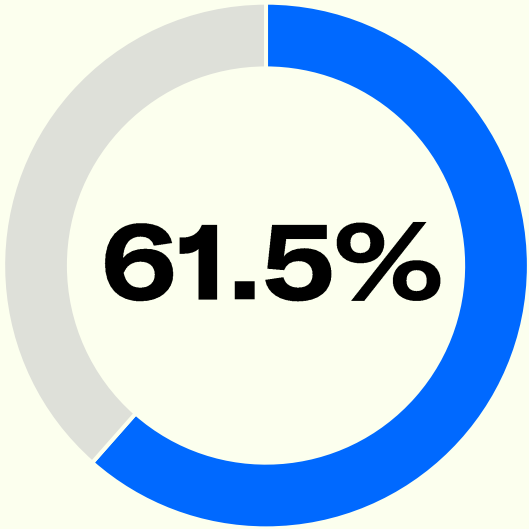


Safe Environment (Personal Safety)



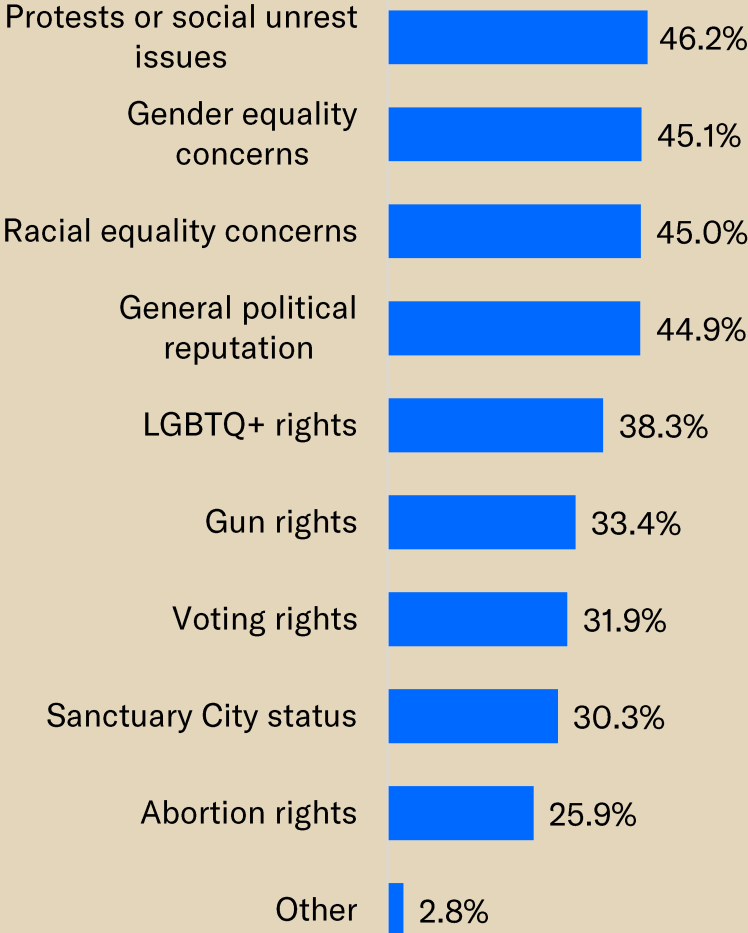
Geographic Location

The Role of Politics in Destination Sourcing

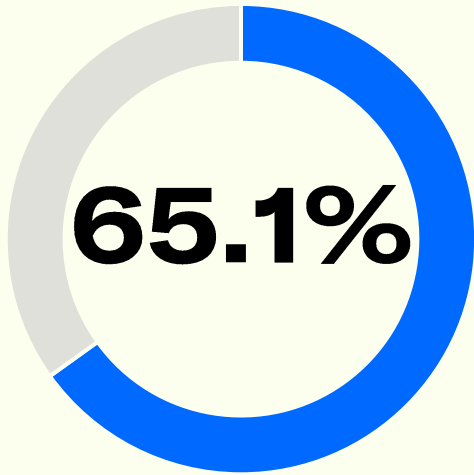


Of planners said they have reconsidered a destination for meetings due to a controversial issue in 2025.

Controversial Issues Prompting Destination Re-evaluation in 2025



Impact of Travel Concerns on Inbound International Attendees



Of planners who source meetings with international attendees agree **attendance is being negatively impacted by inbound travelers' hesitance to come to the U.S.**

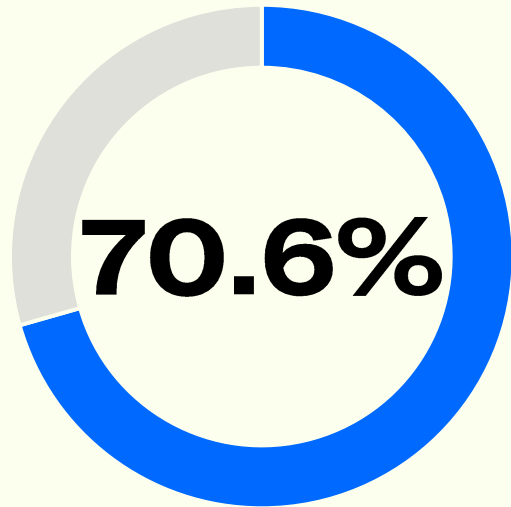
“I see international travel barriers as the biggest impact because these restrictions may reduce global attendance.”

Corporate Meeting Planner

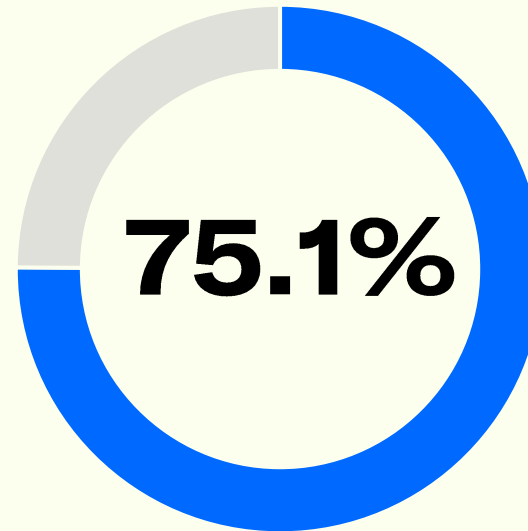
“Government regulations impacting the cost of international travelers to the U.S. -- i.e., entry fees, etc. -- and the uncertainty of the nation's political climate.”

Third-Party Meeting Planner

Impact of Recent Visa Issues on International Attendance



Of planners who source meetings with international attendees agree **the new visa integrity fee is reducing inbound travelers' willingness to attend meetings in the U.S.**



Of all planners agree **there is increased concern about holding meetings outside of the U.S. due to concerns about visa-holding attendees being able to re-enter the country.**

“It’s not great. I have many colleagues who are in other jurisdictions, other countries who don’t particularly want to come to the U.S. right now because of what's going on politically and socially. It hasn’t hit our organization as hard because our organization tends to be more local, so we haven’t had as much trouble getting our membership to participate. But I think that if I was to, for example, need experts or presenters that I normally would have been able to source from abroad, I wouldn’t have as much luck at this point.”

- Government meeting planner

What Destinations Can Do to Stand Out in the Current Climate

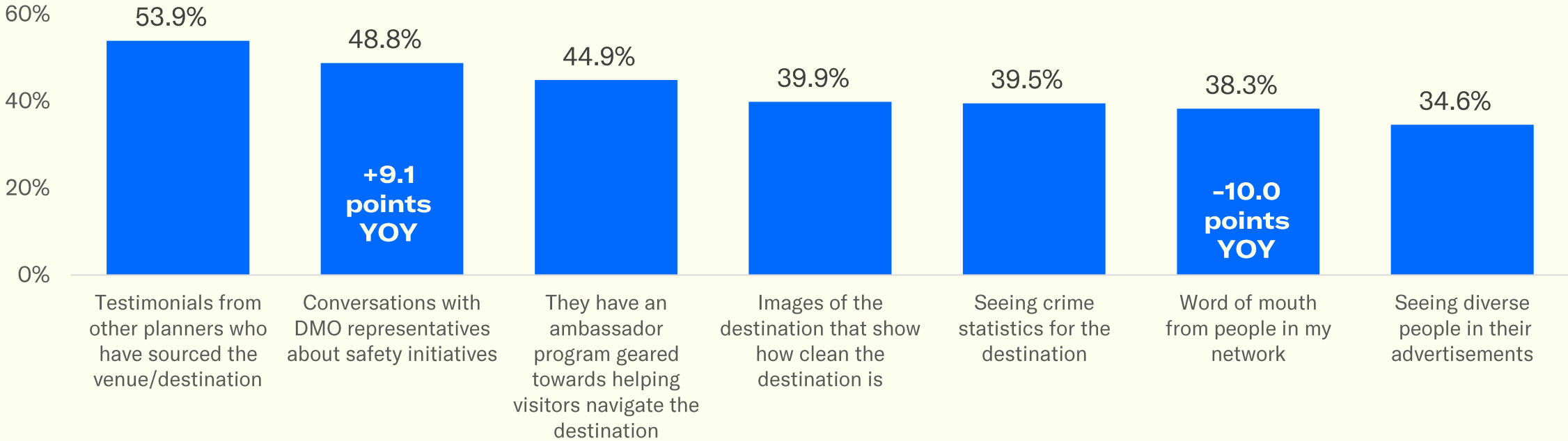
“
If I'm working with a particular convention center and they typically have maybe six security full-time staff, then I ask for additional even if it's going to cost more on the meeting planner side. Then I go to my client to tweak the budget a little bit because I want to make sure that we have adequate security for this event so that everybody feels safe and secure.”

“
I am probably more likely, from our organization's mission standpoint, to choose cities that would probably be called, for lack of a better term, sanctuary cities, ones that are going to be more friendly to various viewpoints and different people, because I want to make sure that everyone feels comfortable coming to our events.”

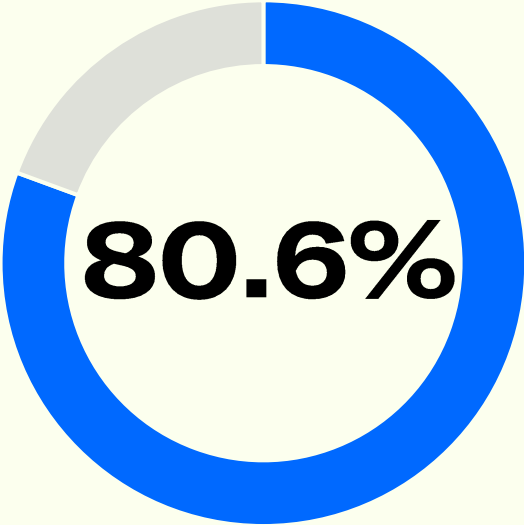
“
Whether it's offering shuttle service because some attendees may not feel safe in an Uber in a particular city, I would like to see destinations be more forthcoming and, or just more proactive about what they're doing to combat or help with some of the concerns that organizations or attendees might have.”

Communicating that a Destination is Safe

Which of the following helps communicate that a destination is a safe place for meetings? (Select your top 3)

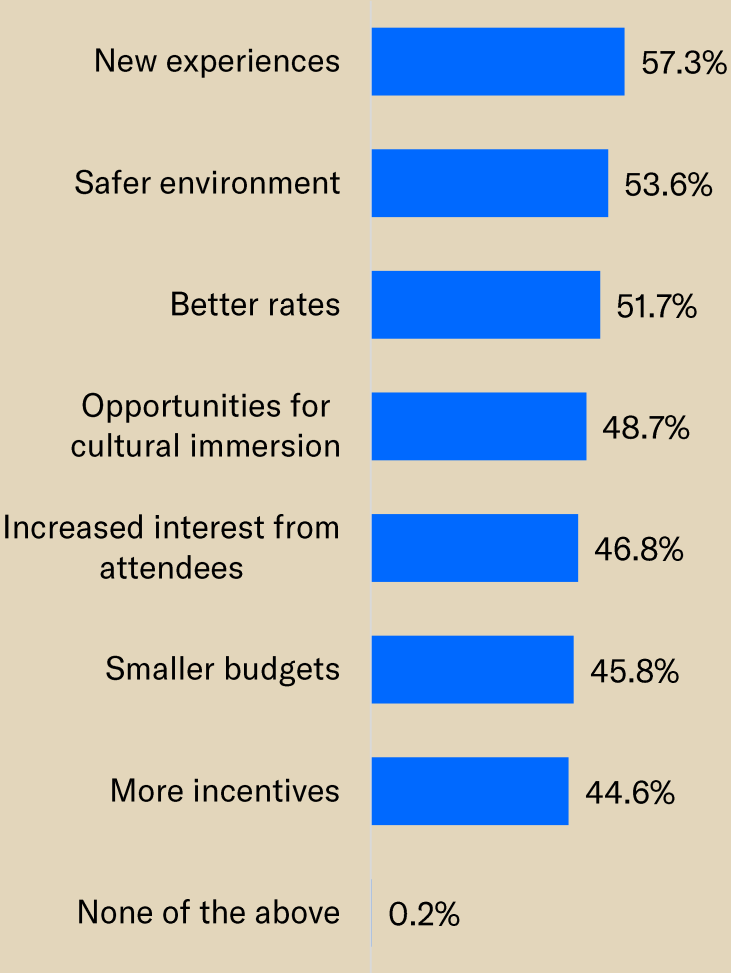


The Rise of Second- and Third-Tier Destinations

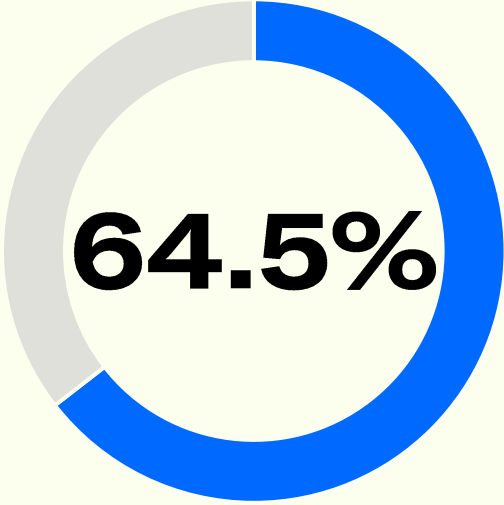


Of planners agree **second- and third-tier destinations are growing in popularity for meetings and events.**

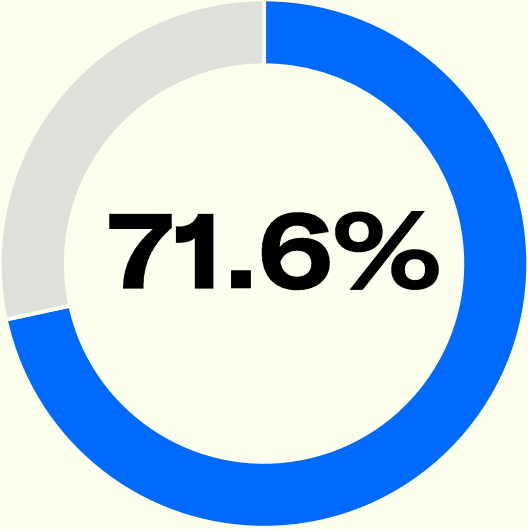
Drivers of Popularity Growth for Second- and Third-Tier Meetings Destinations



Shifting Expectations Away from Convention Centers and Traditional Food & Beverage

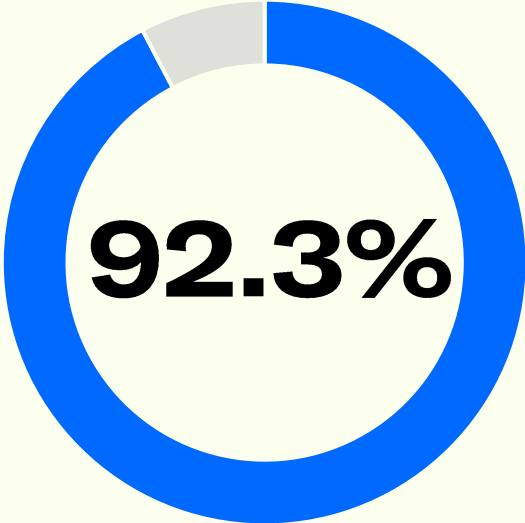


Of all planners agree **convention centers are falling out of favor** due to **attendee fatigue** with being in one building for multiple consecutive days.



Of all planners agree they are looking for **alternatives to traditional food and beverage offerings** for in-person meetings.

The DMO & Meeting Planner Relationship



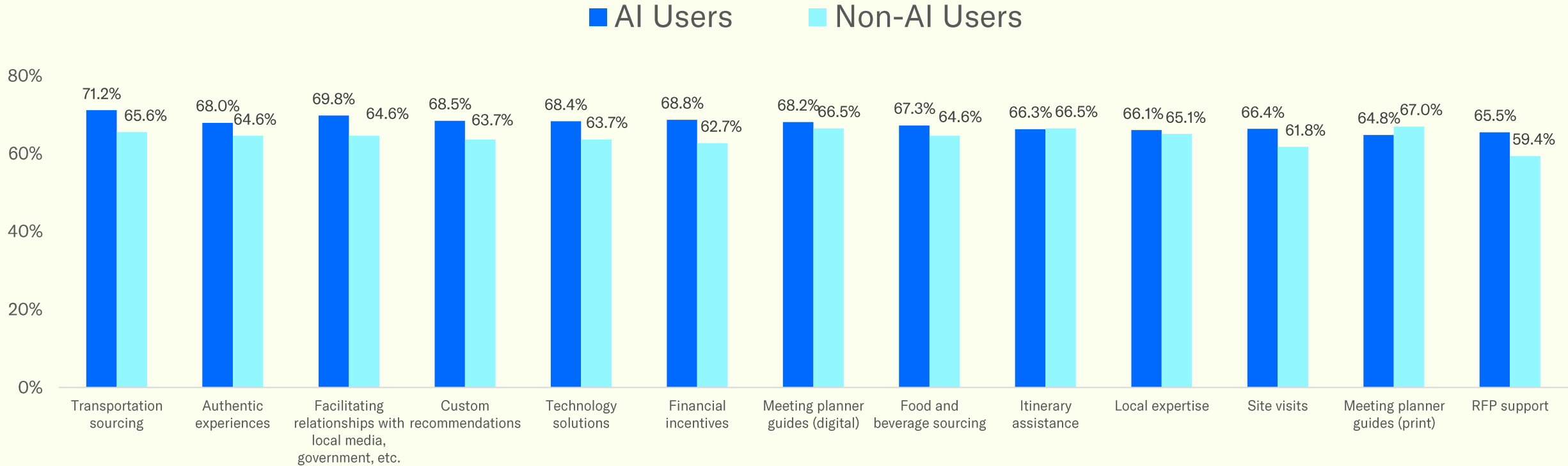
Of planners who have worked with a DMO/CVB in the past 12 months rated their experience as good or excellent.

DMO Services – % High or Extremely High Importance



Planners who are using AI tools to help with meetings inspiration are not replacing DMO services with new tech, in fact they are more likely to rate most DMO services as important to their process than non-AI users

DMO Services – % High or Extremely High Importance



Key Marketing Tools to Reach Planners

Top Channels/Media Sources/Tools for Receiving Information about Destination Updates

- 1. Presence at Industry Tradeshows or Events**
- 2. Travel/Industry Blogs**
- 3. FAM Trips**
- 4. DMO Sales & Service Reps**

Key Takeaways

1. Safety, values alignment, and a host city's ability to provide new, transformative attendee meeting experiences are non-negotiables in site selection
2. There is rising interest and opportunities for second- and third-tier destinations offering cost efficiencies and differentiated experiences
3. In an AI world, real human connection and relationships matter more than ever. Ensure your sales team are working to foster deeper connections with planners through candid conversations and showcasing your commitment to collaboration.

2026 The Future of the Meetings Industry Report Available to Purchase Now!

This syndicated report turns a large-scale survey of meeting planners into practical, DMO-ready intelligence. Inside, you'll find:

- Market Outlook
- Destination Selection Drivers
- Planner Perceptions of DMOs
- Channel & Messaging Insights
- Future-Focused Trends

Price: \$2,500

**To Purchase, Email:
Myha@FuturePartners.com**

Turn real meeting planner feedback into a winning sales strategy for your destination.

Sign up now to buy into our next Meetings Research Co-op

Cost Tiers (Early Sign-Up Pricing):

- **\$6,000** for quantitative report only which includes meeting planners rating your destination for key meetings attributes
- **\$8,500** for quantitative report AND qualitative meetings advertising testing via in-depth interviews with planners

Timing:

Survey and Creative Testing will field in Q3 2026. Results will be delivered before Year End 2026. Enrollment will close September 1st.



Scan to sign up!