

MEETING PLANNER SURVEY

# 2023 State of the Meetings Industry

[knowland.com](https://knowland.com) • [info@knowland.com](mailto:info@knowland.com)

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In Partnership with

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# Introduction

Meeting volumes continue to rise, attendance is nearing 2019 levels, and COVID is no longer a concern for most. Cost leveling, the return of business travel, and budget increases will support the recovery's home stretch.

However, with the recovery also comes challenges. Staff shortages and inquiry backlogs impact planners' satisfaction with hotels and venues. Cost is expected to rise by 20-50%, which may cause planners to change their approach, including looking at different destinations.

Event attendees are more selective about how they invest their time, so planners are under more pressure to deliver higher-quality events. They also need to plan further ahead and be more flexible to get the venues they need.

Knowland and ConferenceDirect collaborated on a survey to help industry professionals understand the state of the meetings industry from planners' and event managers' perspectives. A must read for every hotelier and meeting planner, this report reveals how the meetings industry is being redefined and what to expect and prioritize in 2023.



# Attendee size is no longer a major challenge. More than 70% of 2022 events had attendance at or above 80% of 2019 levels.

## QUESTION #1

As an aggregate, what was the attendance of your actualized meetings in 2022 compared with 2019?

Answer Choices	Responses
More than 100%	14.2%
90 - 100%	29.2%
80 - 89%	27.3%
70 - 79%	16.5%
60 - 69%	5.4%
50 - 59%	5.8%
Less than 50%	1.5%

# Meeting volumes continue to rise. 75% of planners don't expect the number of events and meetings to drop.

**QUESTION #2**

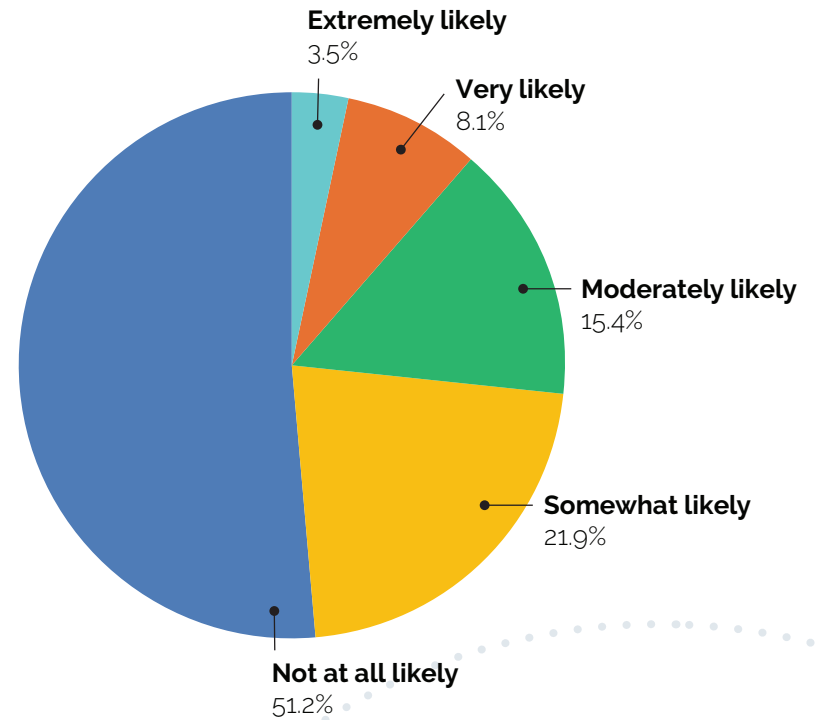
In 2023, how likely are you to plan fewer in-person meetings or events?

	Extremely Likely	Very Likely	Moderately Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not at all likely
Plan fewer in-person meetings or events	7.3%	6.2%	10.4%	12.3%	63.9%

# More than 70% of planners believe meeting length will not decrease.

## QUESTION #3

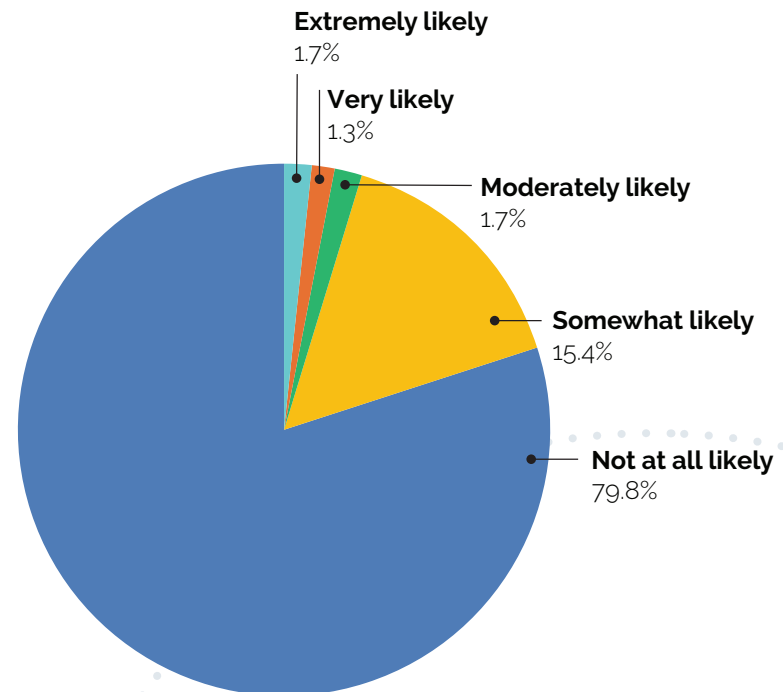
In 2023, how likely are you to plan shorter in-person meetings or events?



# There is less uncertainty about whether events will happen. ~80% of planners do not believe they will cancel or postpone meetings.

## QUESTION #4

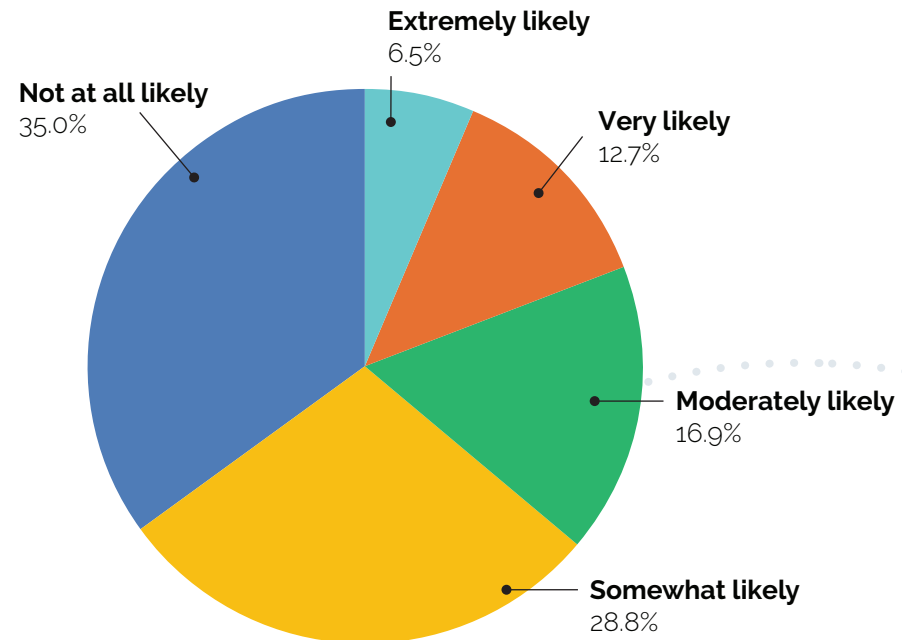
In 2023, how likely are you to cancel or postpone planned meetings or events?



# Gone are the days of “free” meeting space based on guest rooms and/or F&B guarantee. The majority of planners expect some charge for meeting space.

## QUESTION #5

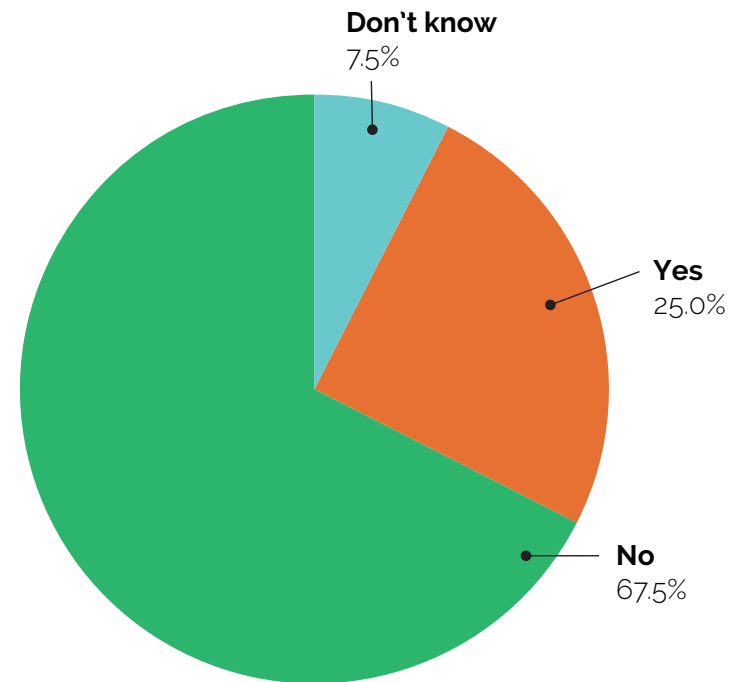
In 2023, how likely are you to pay for meeting space instead of getting it at no charge?



# While planners will continue to monitor health changes, 67% don't consider COVID issues a factor.

## QUESTION #6

As you consider an event venue, are COVID issues a factor?

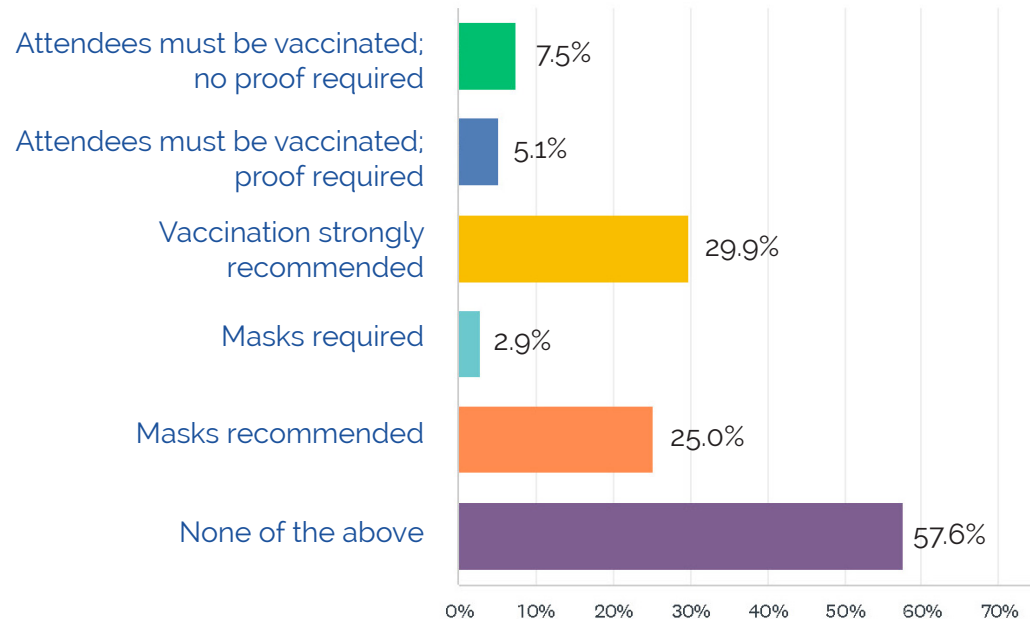




# Planners and attendees are taking more personal responsibility for protocol decisions as 57% of venues no longer have COVID protocols.

## QUESTION #7

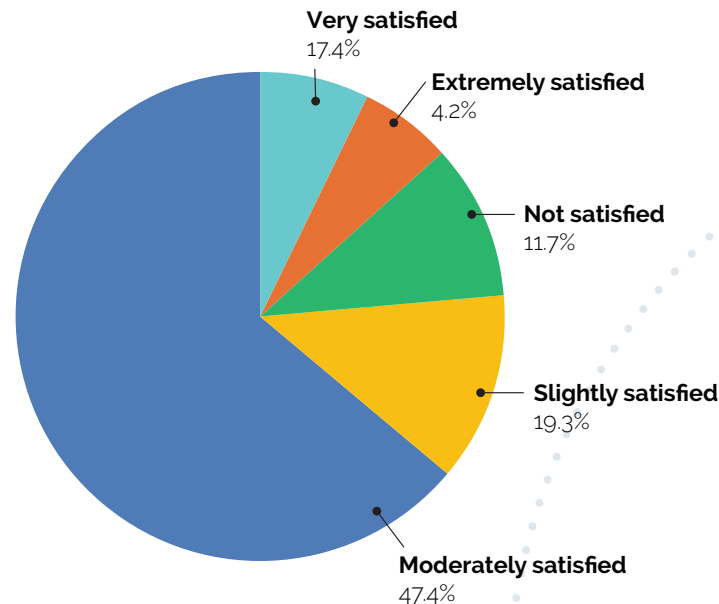
In 2023, what will your COVID protocols be for in-person meeting attendees? (Check all that apply.)



# Staff shortages and inquiry backlogs are impacting service standards. Less than 22% of planners are very or extremely satisfied with the response they get from hotels/venues.

## QUESTION #8

How satisfied are you with the response you get from hotels/venues on your meeting inquiries?



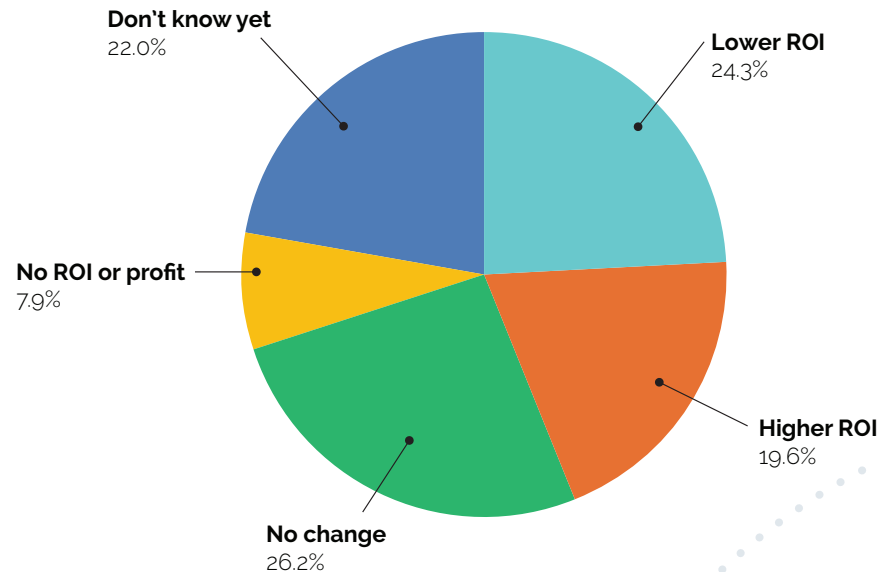
### PLANNER COMMENT

Unfortunately, hospitality is still struggling due to staffing shortages, causing issues for planners because they have to manage tasks that used to be the hotel teams' responsibilities.

# Fluctuations in the industry and rising costs are causing organizers to redefine event goals, including profitability.

## QUESTION #9

For revenue-generating events in 2023, what are your expectations for the return on investment (ROI)?



### PLANNER COMMENT

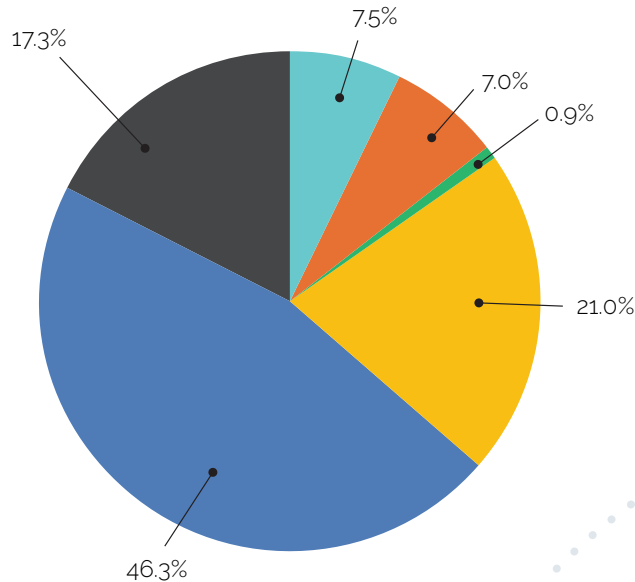
We must deliver more value to the attendees, despite the lack of labor and services compared with pre-COVID times.

# Cost continues to be a concern as planners see increased expenses as a top deterrent for the return of meetings.

## QUESTION #10

What is the biggest obstacle to a full return to pre-COVID meeting volumes?

- Attendees uncertain about virus variants
- Attendees not comfortable with business travel yet
- Attendees not comfortable with meeting venues
- Client reduced meetings and events budgets
- Increased price of planning and executing meetings
- No obstacles



### PLANNER COMMENT

We also see obstacles with education programs, especially those in science and technology fields, as attendees must secure visas to travel from countries like China and India to the U.S. The hurdle can hamper growth for hotels in gateway cities.

# 73% of planners expect costs to rise by 20-50% in 2023. F&B is expected to experience the highest increase, followed by A/V.

**QUESTION #11**

In 2023, what pricing changes do you expect to see for events and meetings by category?

	More than 50% Higher	20% - 50% Higher	Up to 19% Higher	No change	Up to 20% Lower	More than 20% Lower
<b>F&amp;B</b>	9.9%	48.1%	34.9%	2.8%	4.3%	0.0%
<b>A/V</b>	15.6%	39.8%	35.1%	5.2%	3.8%	0.5%
<b>Meeting space</b>	6.6%	20.7%	35.7%	34.3%	1.4%	1.3%
<b>Guest rooms</b>	5.2%	28.2%	51.2%	12.7%	1.9%	0.8%



PLANNER COMMENT

I have locked in contracts for 4 more years, but the side expenses are going through the roof: F&B, internet, parking, and concession stand minimums.

# Almost 50% of planners find meeting incentives very or extremely important, and close to 90% feel the same about flexible contract terms.

## QUESTION #12

In 2023, how important are these actions by venues to win more of your event business?

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Include flexible contract terms	0.0%	1.9%	8.4%	35.1%	54.6%
Offer meeting incentives	7.9%	18.2%	24.8%	29.9%	19.6%
Offer sustainability-focused options	18.2%	24.3%	39.7%	12.2%	5.6%
Provide small meeting booking online	70.1%	18.7%	5.6%	3.3%	2.3%
Offer hybrid technology packages	51.0%	23.9%	14.9%	7.9%	2.3%



### PLANNER COMMENT

We need to plan further in advance to get the cities and space we need. We expect suppliers to come to the table with their best offers, as there might not be time for back and forth. Planners must look for the best value and try new destinations to make their budget go further.

# Cost leveling, the return of business travel, and budget increases are the most important factors in the return of meetings.

**QUESTION #13**

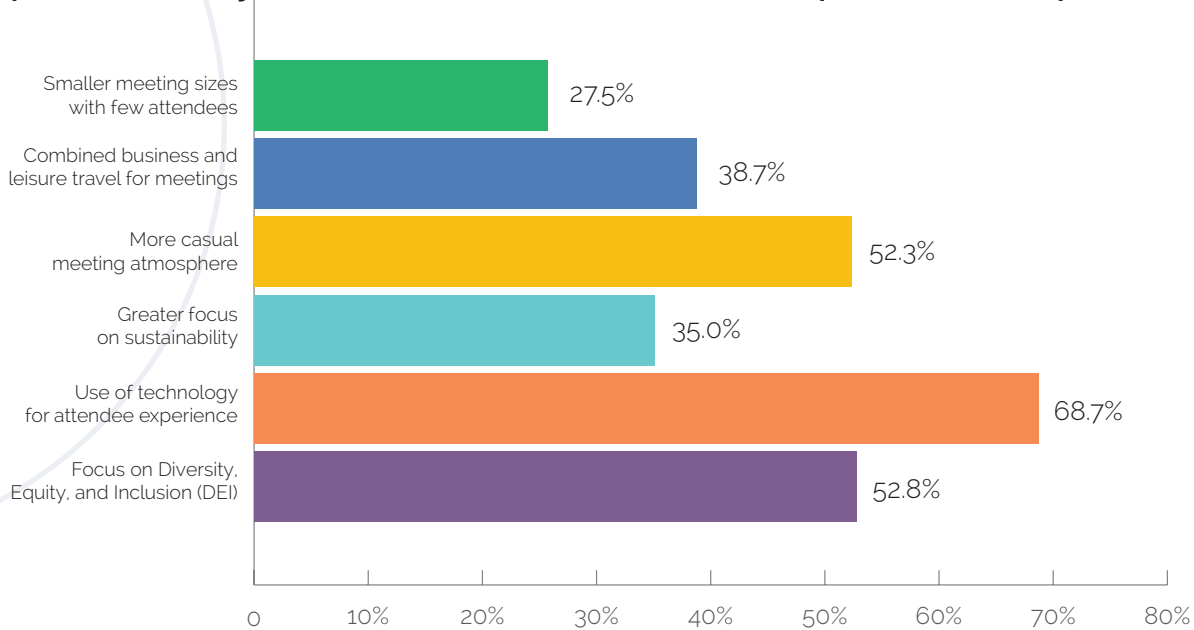
In 2023, how important are these factors to the return of meetings?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Cost leveling	2.3%	10.3%	27.6%	43.4%	16.4%
Return of business travel	8.4%	13.6%	20.6%	41.5%	15.9%
Corporate meeting budget increases	7.9%	13.1%	22.4%	40.7%	15.9%
Fear of recession	7.0%	19.2%	34.1%	27.5%	12.2%
Increase in international travel	35.9%	16.4%	20.1%	19.2%	8.4%

# Using technology to enhance the attendee experience, which is top of mind for planners, remains a key trend.

## QUESTION #14

What are the top 3 trends you expect to stay in place beyond COVID? (Check up to 3 responses.)



### PLANNER COMMENT

People are choosier about where they invest their time, which translates into lower expo floor traffic but higher quality traffic — putting more pressure on planners to deliver outstanding events.



### About Knowland

Knowland is the world's leading data-as-a-service provider of data on meetings and events for the hospitality industry. Powered by the largest database of account booking history, account preferences, past meeting dates, event size, and more, our platform enables hoteliers to target prospects that match their hotel's specific needs with actionable insights to achieve immediate results.

Industry experts from our account management and customer success teams help hotel sales teams implement a personalized and consultative approach to proactive selling so they can do more with less, increase productivity, and accelerate growth. Meanwhile, Knowland Academy offers user-friendly training modules to streamline onboarding and upskilling to help hotels make the most of the platform.

Knowland provides insights and confidence to today's hospitality sales teams so they can increase revenue quickly and support profitable growth. Learn more about Knowland at [www.knowland.com](http://www.knowland.com).

### About ConferenceDirect

ConferenceDirect is a full-service global meetings solution company whose portfolio of services includes: Virtual/Hybrid Meetings, Site Selection & Contract Negotiation, Conference Management, Housing & Registration Services, Event Technology, Strategic Meetings Management Programs, Incentive Programs, Sustainable Meeting Strategy and Planning, Cruise Services and Marketing Support. Our 400+ Associates manage over 13,000 meetings, conferences and events for more than 4,400 customers. For more information, visit [www.conferencedirect.com](http://www.conferencedirect.com).



# KNOWLAND

info@knowland.com  
(202) 312-5880

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