



Meetings Industry PULSE Survey

NORTH AMERICAN REGION

New Data

AUGUST 2026

In partnership with
Phocuswright



Executive Summary:

Planner Optimism Persists in the Face of High Costs

PLANNERS CONTINUE TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO MEET BUDGETARY CHALLENGES, WITH FEWER GROWING THEIR TEAMS

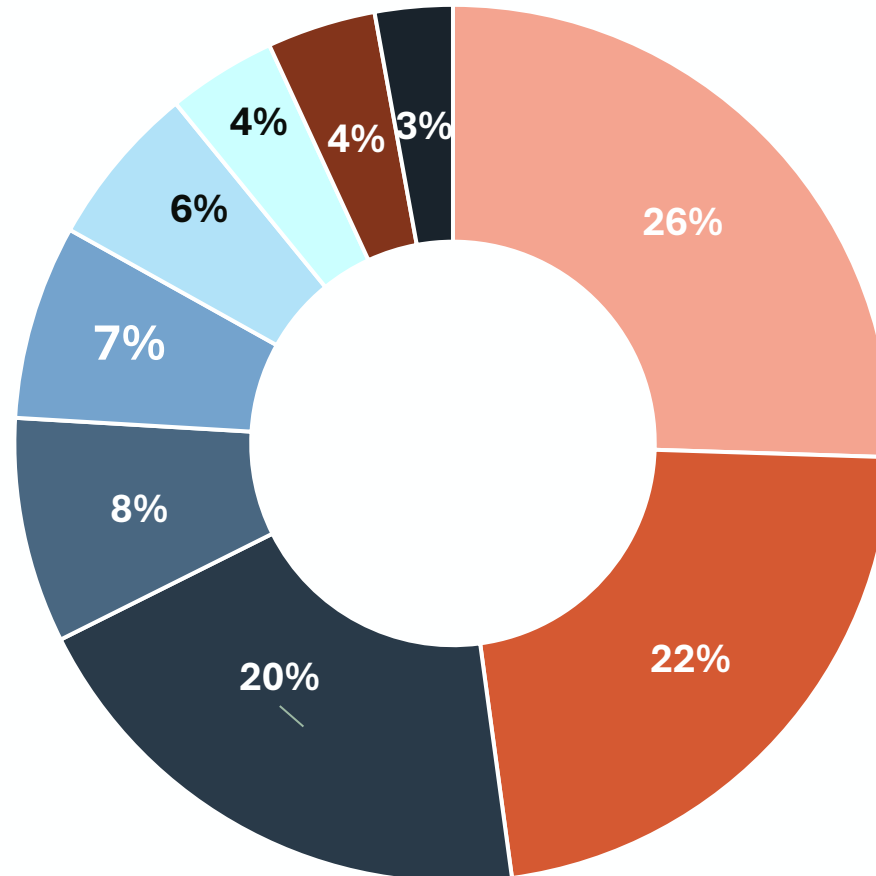
- Planners are in large part maintaining their optimistic sentiment, and new bookings and sourcing are up vs. a year ago.
- Fewer planners say the Middle East conflict is affecting the outlook, planning or execution of their events, though a significant number (37 percent) are still seeing the effects, which most frequently take the form of higher transportation costs. Thirty-one percent of those who say the conflict is affecting their meetings have had to postpone or cancel an event.
- Event teams are not growing at the clip they were a year ago. Just 23 percent say they have increased staff numbers this year, down from 33 percent a year ago, and just 23 percent plan to increase team size next year.
- Booking windows are tightening a bit. The shift is small, but a drop in meetings booked between nine and 12 months out has been offset by more bookings between one and nine months.
- Economic stressors are driving the most significant planner challenges. The higher cost of goods and services, budget constraints, rising airfares, and wariness of an economic downturn are causing the most concern.
- Virtual events are again on the rise. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of planners are using more virtual meetings tech than they were a year ago, compared to a mere 14 percent increase last year.
- International events are surging. More than six in 10 are planning events involving cross-border travel, up nearly 20 percentage points year-over year.

349 Planner Responses

July 24 – August 10, 2026

Primary Business

- Association/Nonprofit Organization or Association Management Company
- Third Party/Independent Planner
- Corporate
- Travel Agency
- Professional/Conference Organizer
- Other
- Government
- Sports
- SMERF



Question: What is your organization's primary business?

Base: Total respondents (N=349)

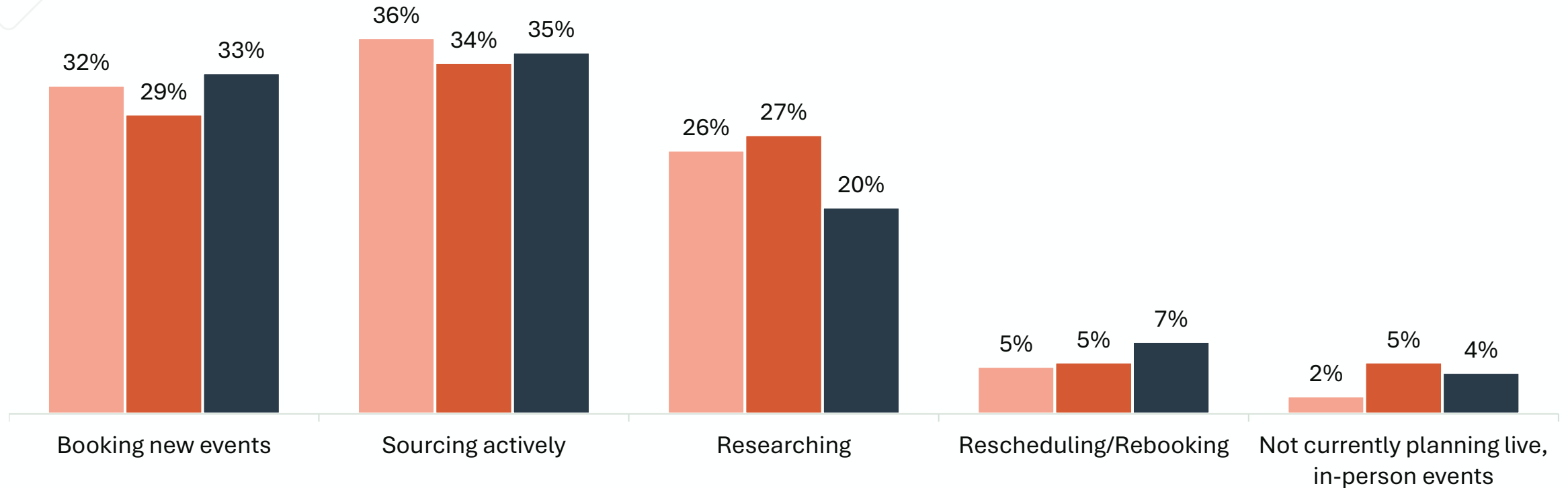
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

New Bookings Remain Strong

YEAR-OVER-YEAR BOOKING AND ACTIVE SOURCING ARE BOTH UP AND IN LINE WITH 2024 FIGURES

Primary Focus for Live, In-person Events

August '26 August '25 August '24



Question: What is your current primary focus as it pertains to your live, in-person events?

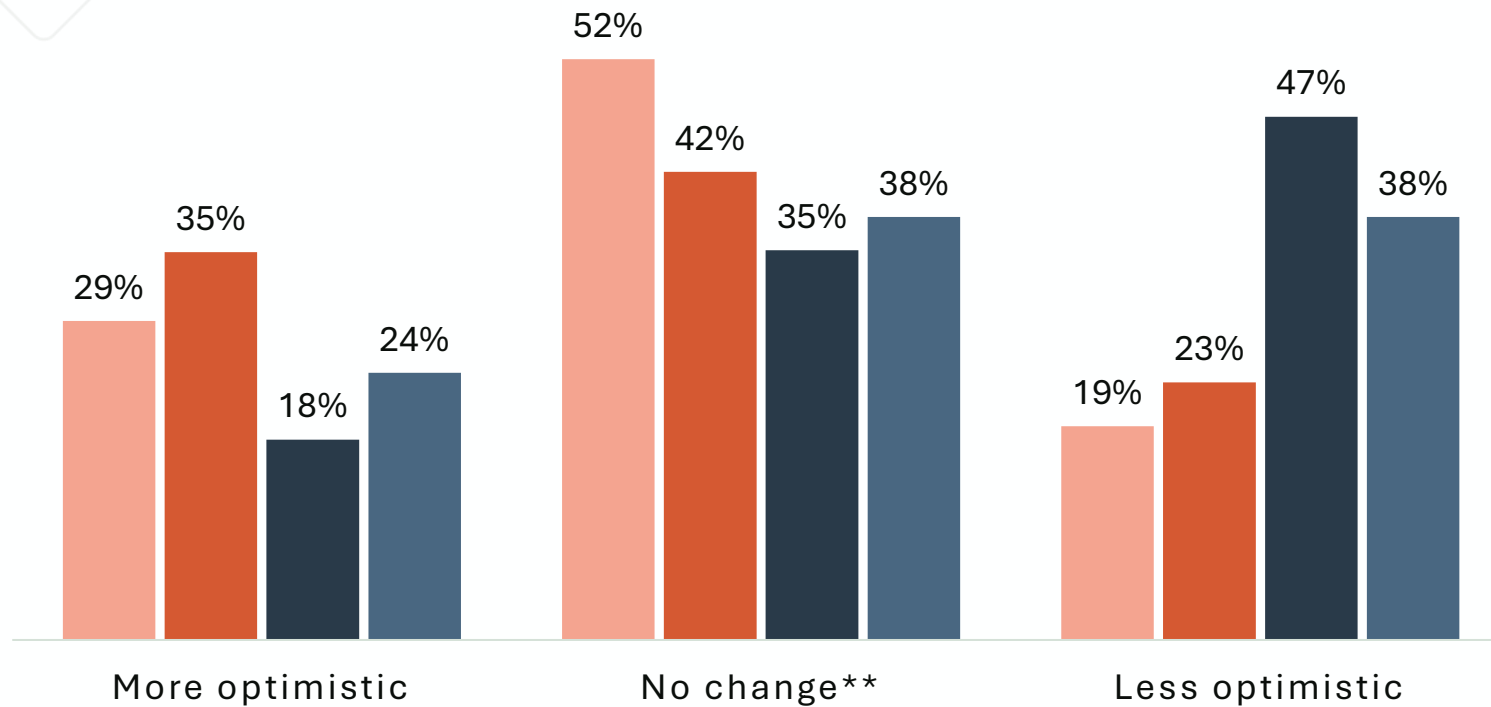
Base: Total planners (N=349)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Planner Optimism Remains High: More than two-thirds (68%) maintain a positive outlook

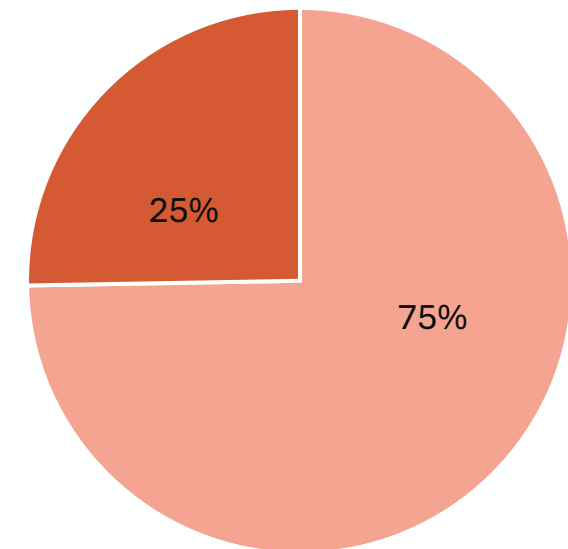
Change in Outlook for Meetings/Events Over Past Two Months

August '26 June '26 March '26 Feb. '26



**Continued Optimism vs Pessimism

Continued optimism Continued pessimism



Question: How has your outlook for the meetings and events changed over the past two months?; Has your outlook remained unchanged due to continued optimism or continued pessimism?

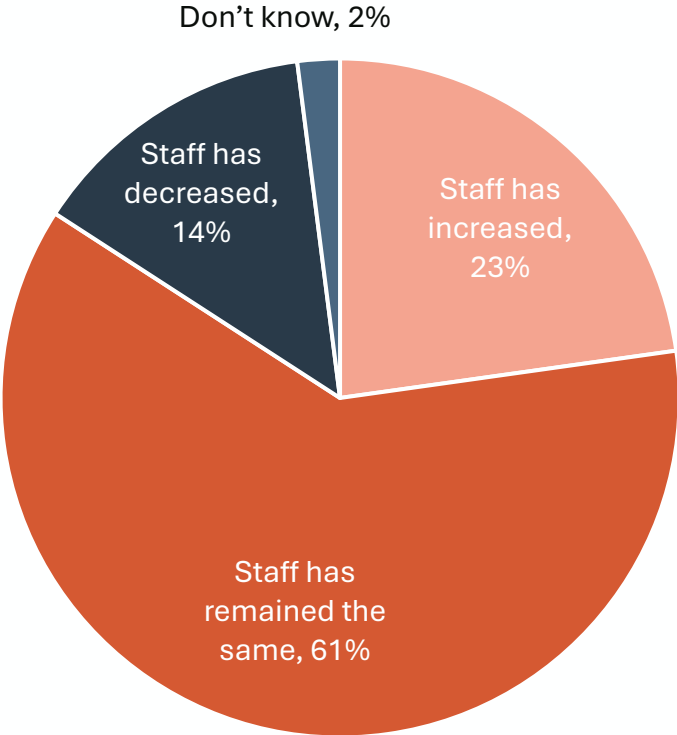
Base: Total respondents (N=349); No change in outlook (N=182)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Staff Growth Is Stagnant

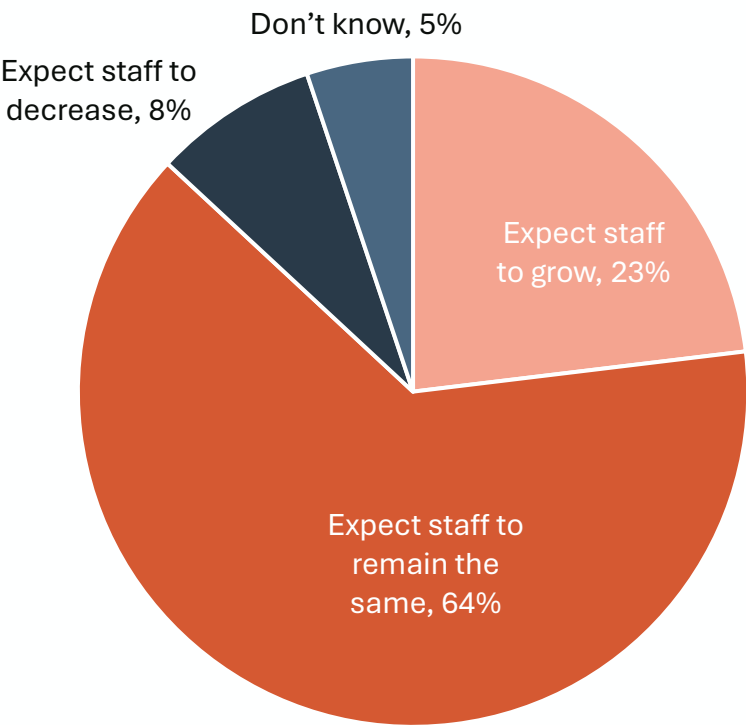
MORE THAN THREE-QUARTERS HAVEN'T ADDED TO THE TEAM THIS YEAR NOR PLAN TO ADD IN 2027

Change to Staff Size in 2026



vs. 33% that increased staff in 2025

Staff Plans for 2027



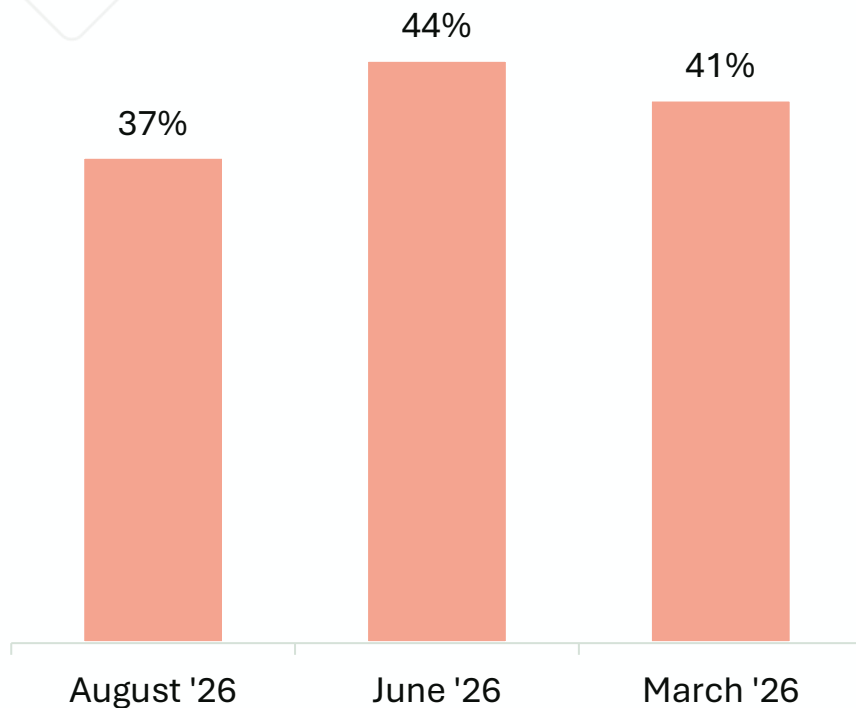
vs. 27% that expected staff to increase in 2026

Question: . Did your organization add staff to your meetings and events team in 2026? Do you anticipate your meetings and events team will grow in the next year?
Base: Total planners (N=349)
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

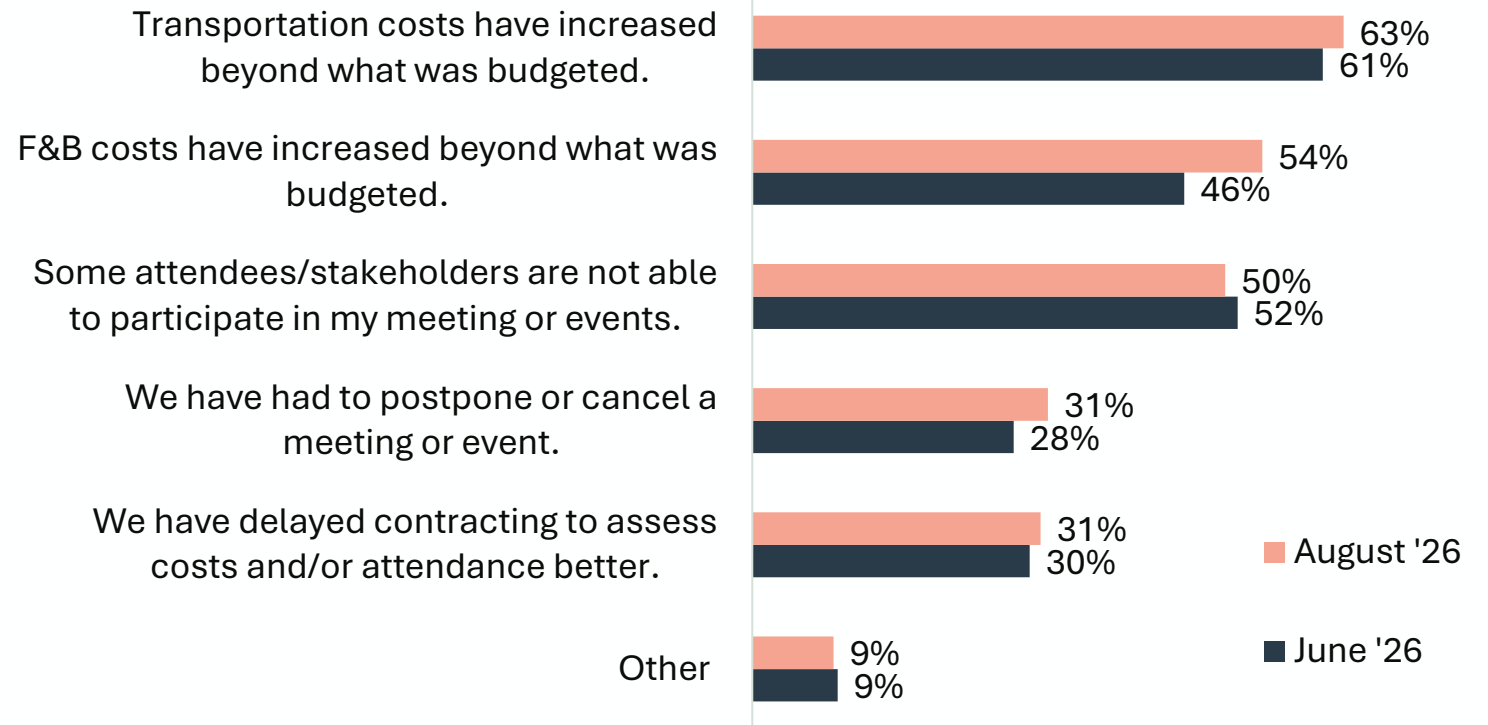
Disruption From Middle East Conflict Is Subsiding

BUT HIGHER TRANSPORTATION COSTS REMAIN THE MOST COMMON EFFECT EXPERIENCED

Fewer planners are seeing the effects



How the military conflict is affecting meetings and events



Question: Is the current military conflict in the Middle East affecting the outlook, planning or execution of your meetings or events, either for you or your event stakeholders?; In what way is the military conflict affecting your meetings and events?

Base: Total planners (N=349); Military conflict is having an impact (N=127)

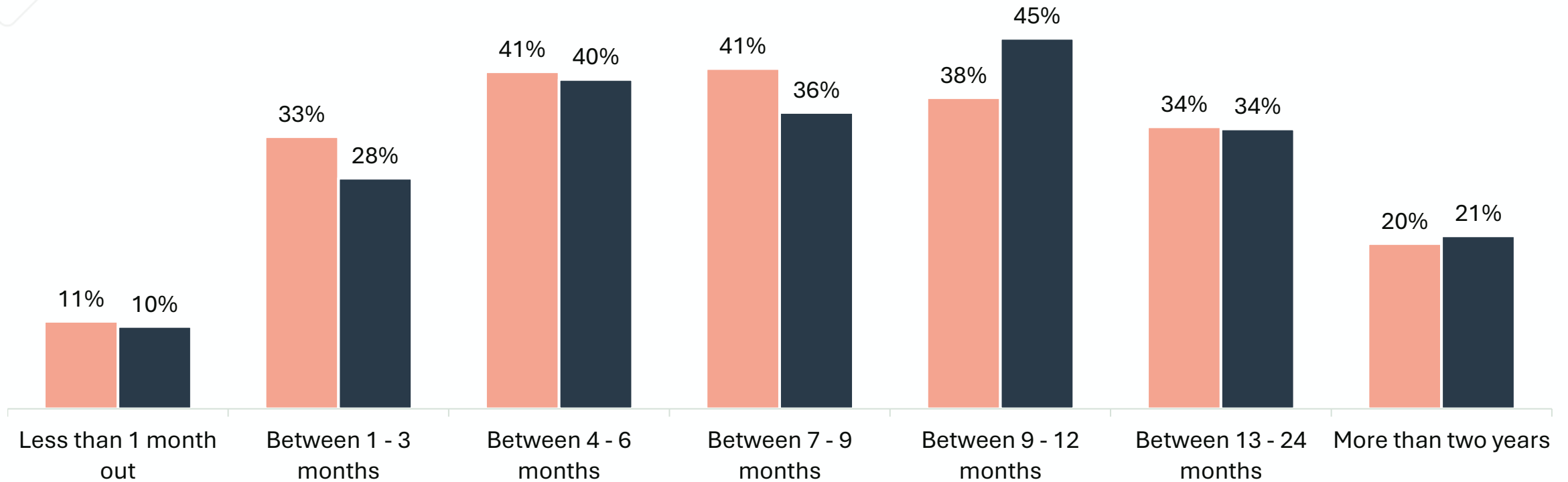
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Booking Windows Are Tightening Slightly

ACTIVITY HAS DECREASED FOR EVENTS 9-12 MONTHS OUT AND RAMPED UP A BIT FOR THOSE WITHIN 9 MONTHS

Expected Start Date for Events Currently Booking/Sourcing

August '26 August '25



Question: For current events that you are now booking or actively sourcing, when is the expected start date (months out)? (Select all that apply.)

Base: Total planners (N=254)

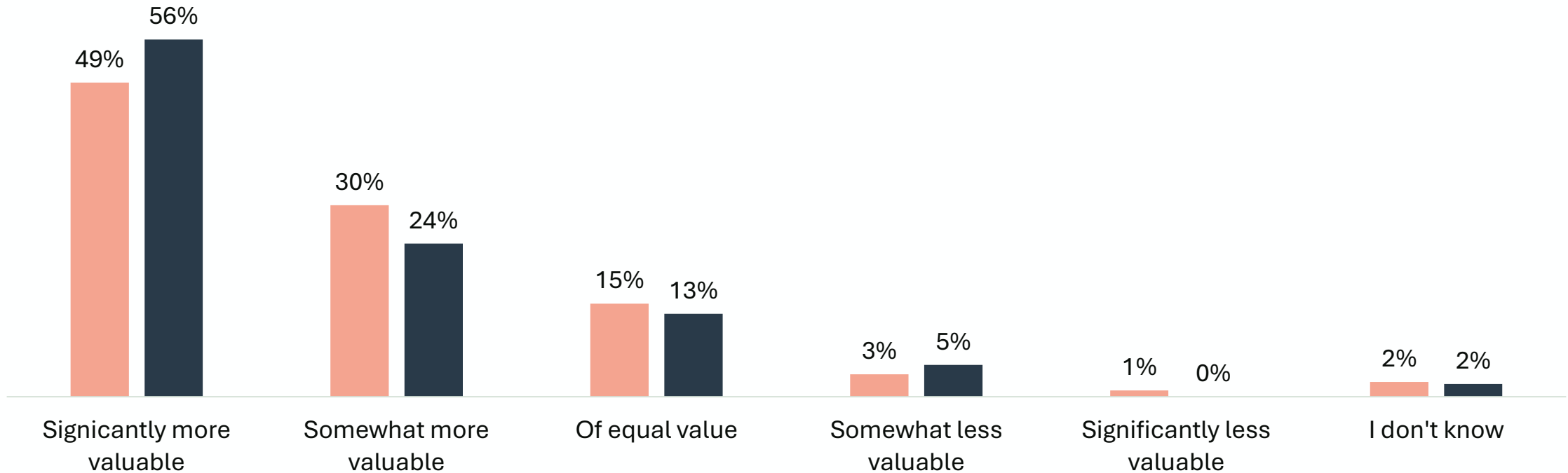
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Marginal Dip in Perceived Value of Face-to-Face Meetings

RIISING COSTS MIGHT HAVE SHIFTED SENTIMENT FROM “SIGNIFICANTLY MORE” TO “SOMEWHAT MORE” VALUABLE

Perceived Value of Face-to-Face Meetings Relative to Other Initiatives

August '26 August '25



Question: Generally, how does your organization, or your clients' organizations, perceive the value of face-to-face meetings relative to other sales, marketing and/or business development initiatives you are undertaking or considering?

Base: Total planners (N=343)

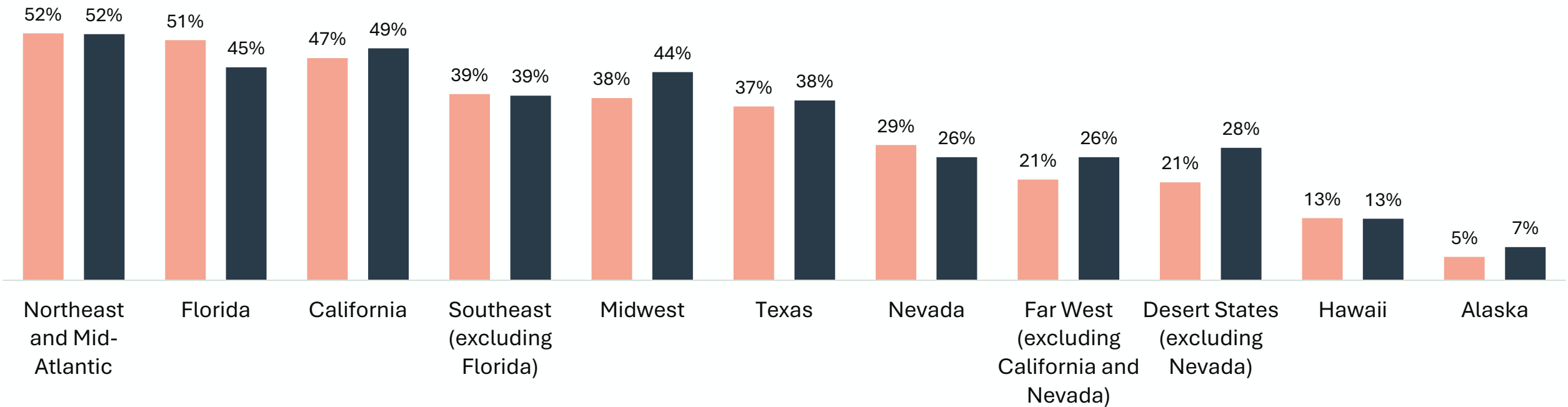
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Florida and Nevada See Increased Event Activity

YEAR-OVER-YEAR GROWTH IN THOSE STATES IS OFFSET BY DROPS IN THE MIDWEST AND OTHER DESERT STATES

U.S. Regions in Which New Events Are Being Planned

August '26 August '25



Question: . In which regions of the United States are you currently planning new events? Select all that apply.

Base: Total planners (N=343)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Events Requiring Cross-Border Travel Are Surging

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE PLANNING INTERNATIONAL EVENTS SKYROCKETED BY NEARLY 20 PERCENTAGE POINTS

Planning, Sourcing or Researching International Events

61%

2026

42%

2025

43%

2024

Question: . Where are you currently planning, sourcing or researching international meetings, events and/or incentive travel programs (requiring cross-border travel)? Select all that apply.

Base: Total planners (N=343)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

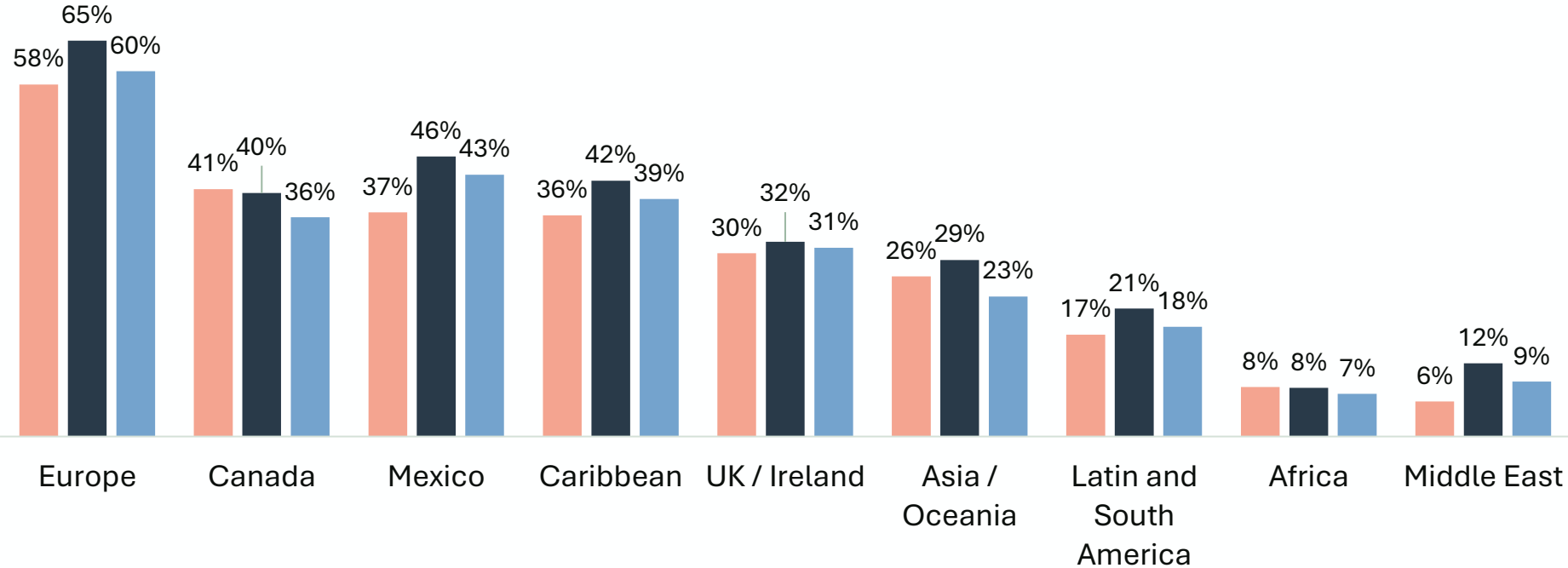
Planners Are Narrowing Down International Options

INTEREST IN CANADA IS RISING AS PLANNING FOR MEXICO AND EUROPE HAS COOLED OFF

Regions in Which International Events Are Being Planned

August '26 August '25 August '24

Average Number of Countries Researched	
2026	2.6
2025	3.0
2024	2.7

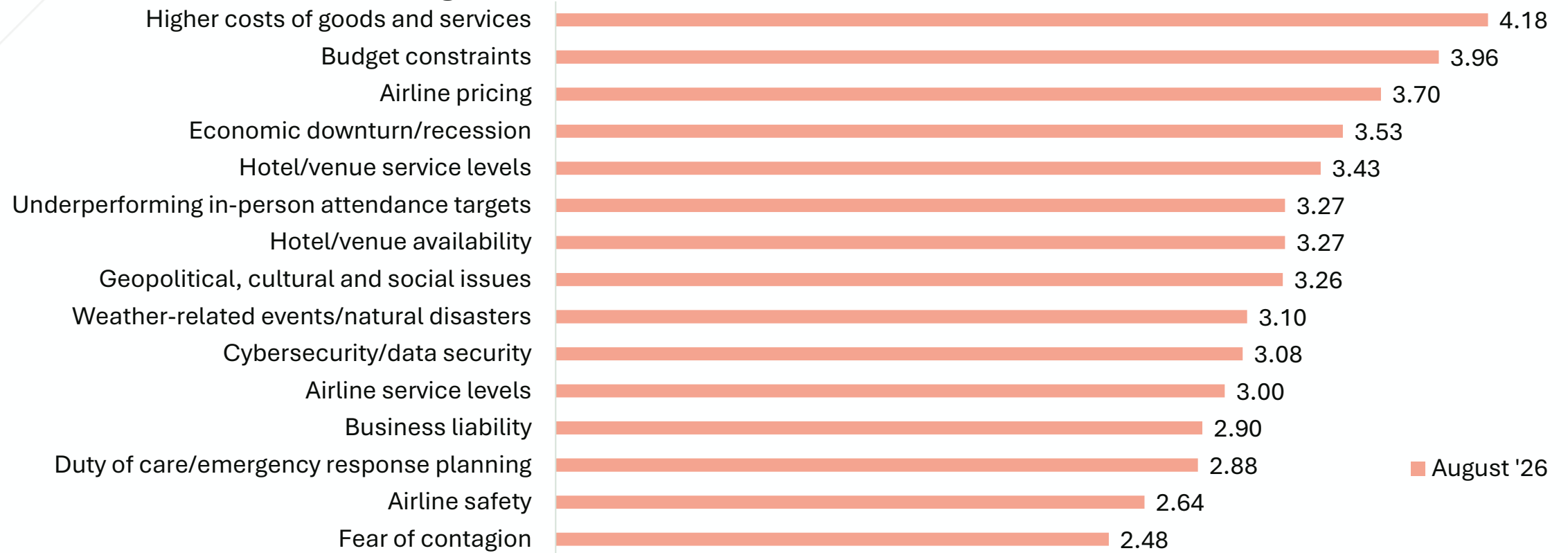


Question: . Where are you currently planning, sourcing or researching international meetings, events and/or incentive travel programs (requiring cross-border travel)? Select all that apply.
Base: Total planners (N=343)
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

High Costs Continue to Challenge Planners

ECONOMIC STRESSORS RULE THE TOP FOUR CONCERNS, FOLLOWED BY HOTEL/VENUE SERVICE LEVELS

Average Concern for Future Events on a Scale of 1 to 5



Question: For your future in-person events, how concerned are you about the following? Rate each on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being "not at all concerned" and 5 being "extremely concerned").

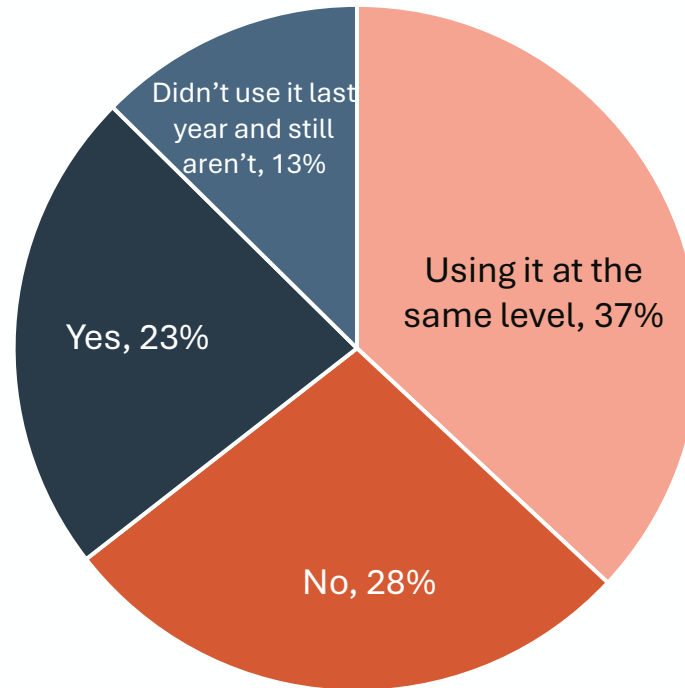
Base: Total planners (N=343)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Virtual Meetings Tech Use Is on the Rise

WHETHER DUE TO COSTS, TRAVEL DISRUPTIONS OR THE NEED FOR MORE REACH, MORE PLANNERS ARE PROVIDING THE OPTION

Are You Using Virtual Meetings Tech More Than You Did Last Year?



In August '25, just 14% of planners said they were using virtual technology more year-over-year.

Question: . Are you currently using virtual meeting technology more than you did last year, either as a hybrid option or instead of face-to-face meetings?

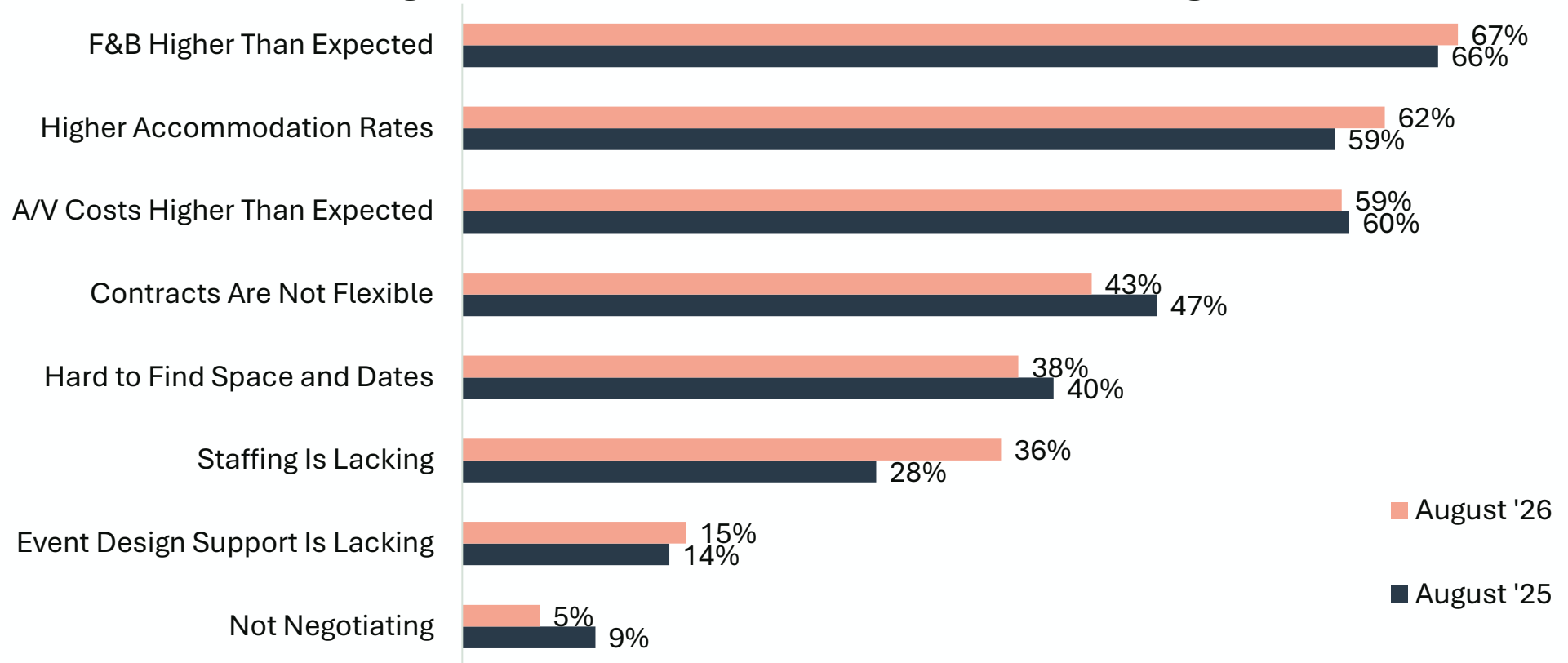
Base: Total planners (N=349)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Costs Continue to Be Biggest Challenges With Hotels

F&B EXPENSE, ROOM RATES AND A/V COSTS ARE EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Difficulties Working with Hotels and Venues for Future Meetings/Events



Question: If you are working with hotels and venues for future meetings or events, are you experiencing any of the following difficulties? Select all that apply.

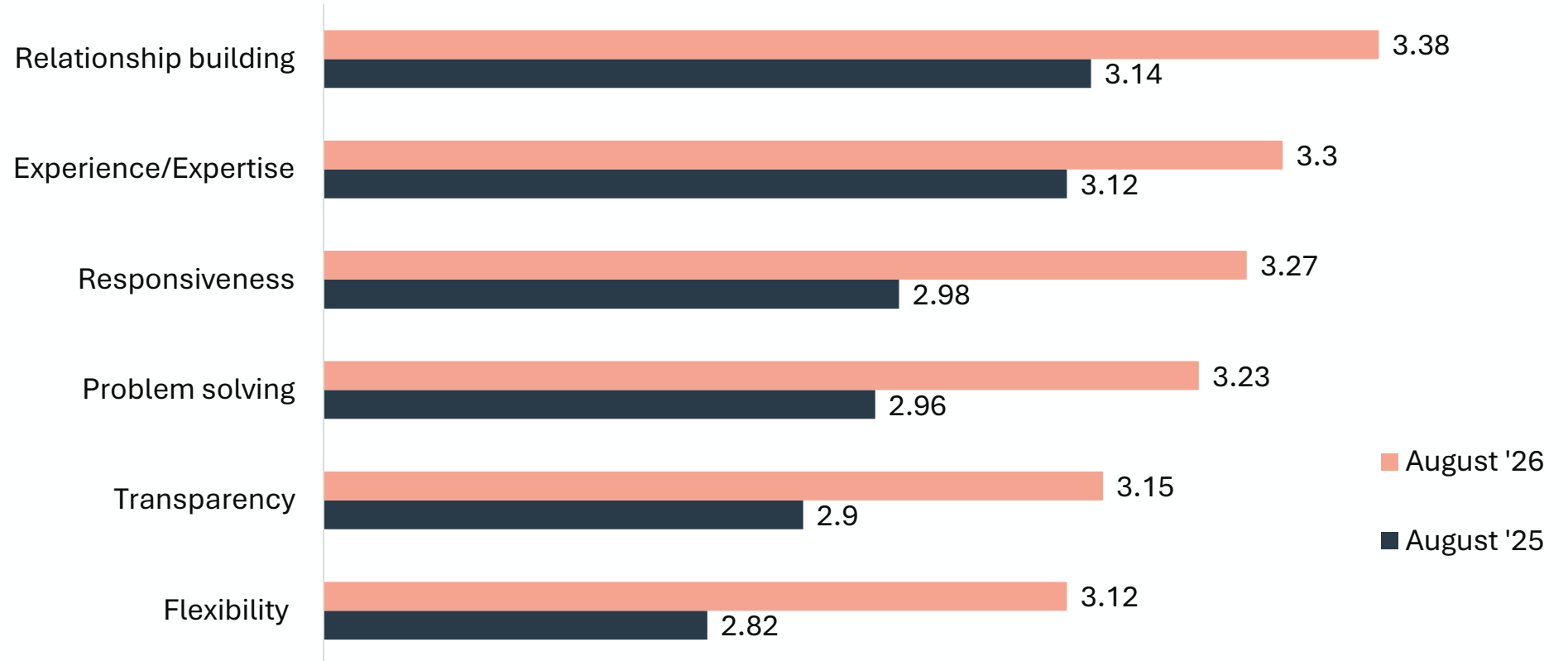
Base: Total planners (N=343)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Satisfaction With Hotel Sales and Support Is Surging

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, PLANNER SATISFACTION RATES ARE DRAMATICALLY HIGHER THAN LAST YEAR.

Satisfaction with Hotel Venue Sales and Sales Support



Question: Please evaluate your current experience with hotel venue sales and sales support staff using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is "not at all satisfied" and 5 being "extremely satisfied".

Base: Total planners (N=325)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Satisfaction With Most Hotel Services Has Increased

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, AVERAGE SATISFACTION RATES ROSE CONSIDERABLY FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND EVENT DESIGN

Satisfaction with Service from Hotels and Venues



Question: How satisfied are you with the service you are receiving from the hotels and venues you are now working with for your meetings and events (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all satisfied" and 5 being "extremely satisfied")?

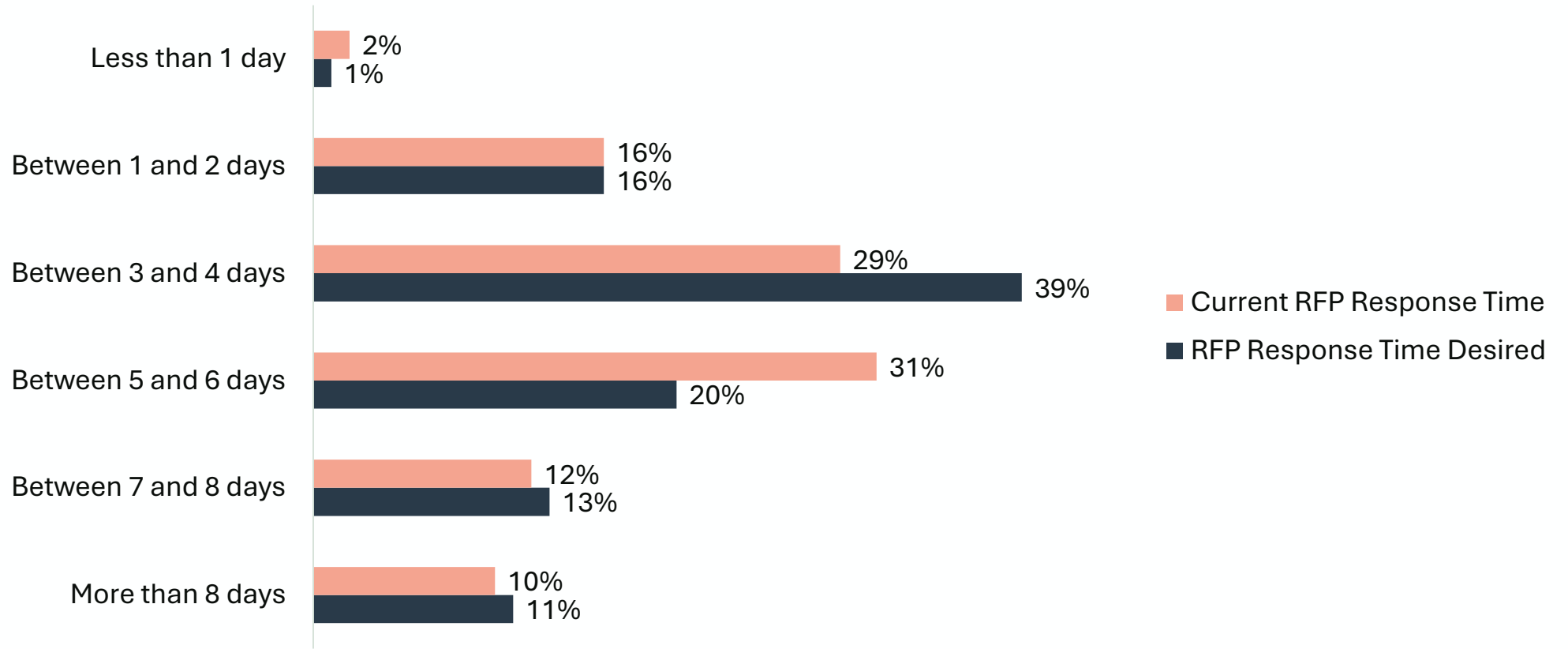
Base: Total planners (N=343)

Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

RFP Response Times Still Falling Short of Expectations

THE TWO SIDES AREN'T FAR APART: PLANNERS MOST OFTEN WISH FOR RESPONSES 1 TO 2 DAYS FASTER

RFP Response Time



Question: How quickly are hotels and venues responding to your RFPs?; Generally, how quickly do you want hotels and venues to respond to your RFPs?

Base: Total planners (N=343)

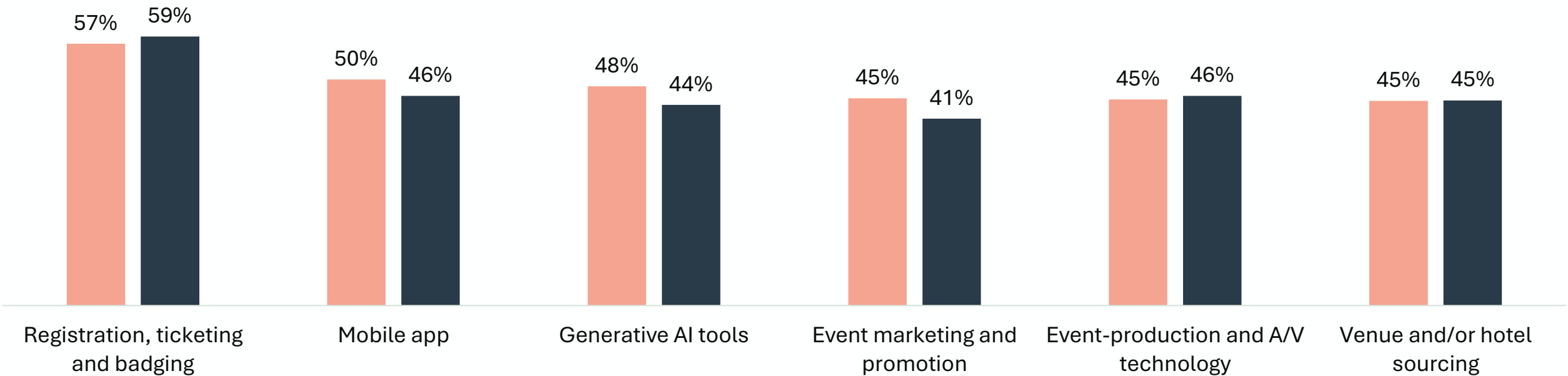
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Registration, Ticketing and Badging Tech Is Most Common

THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI IS NEARLY AS COMMON AS THE MOBILE EVENT APP

Event Technology Use to Support Meeting/Events (1 of 2)

August '26 June '26



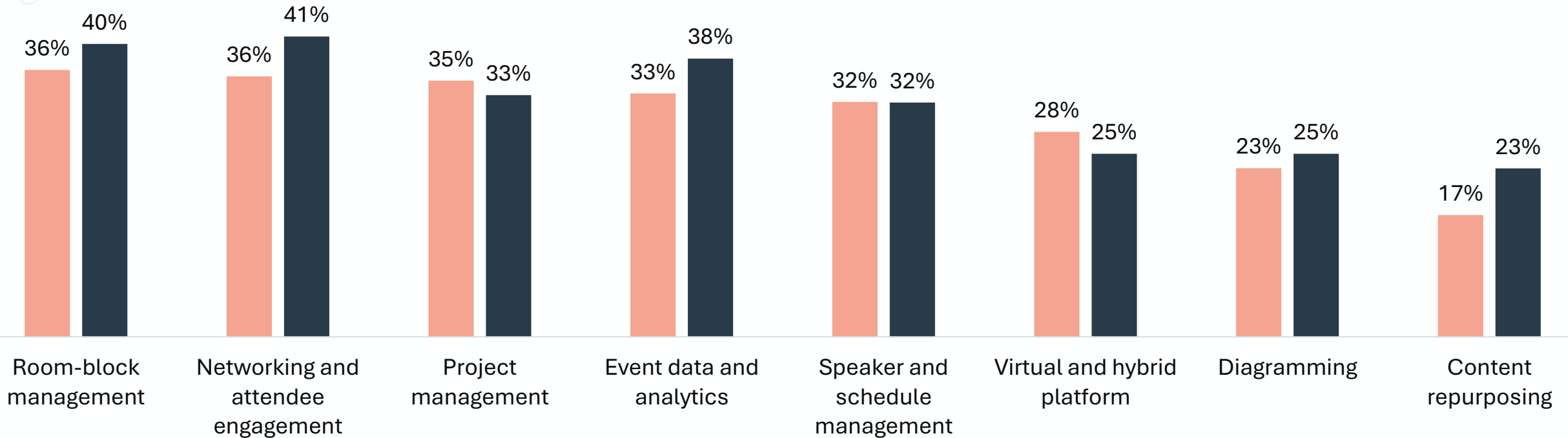
Question: Are you currently using the following event technology applications in support of your meetings and events? Select all that apply.
Base: Total planners (N=343)
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Less Than 20% Use Tech to Repurpose Event Content

WHILE VIRTUAL EVENT TECH IS ON THE RISE, IT IS CURRENTLY USED BY JUST OVER A QUARTER OF PLANNERS

Event Technology Use to Support Meeting/Events (2 of 2)

August '26 June '26



Question: Are you currently using the following event technology applications in support of your meetings and events? Select all that apply.

Base: Total planners (N=343)

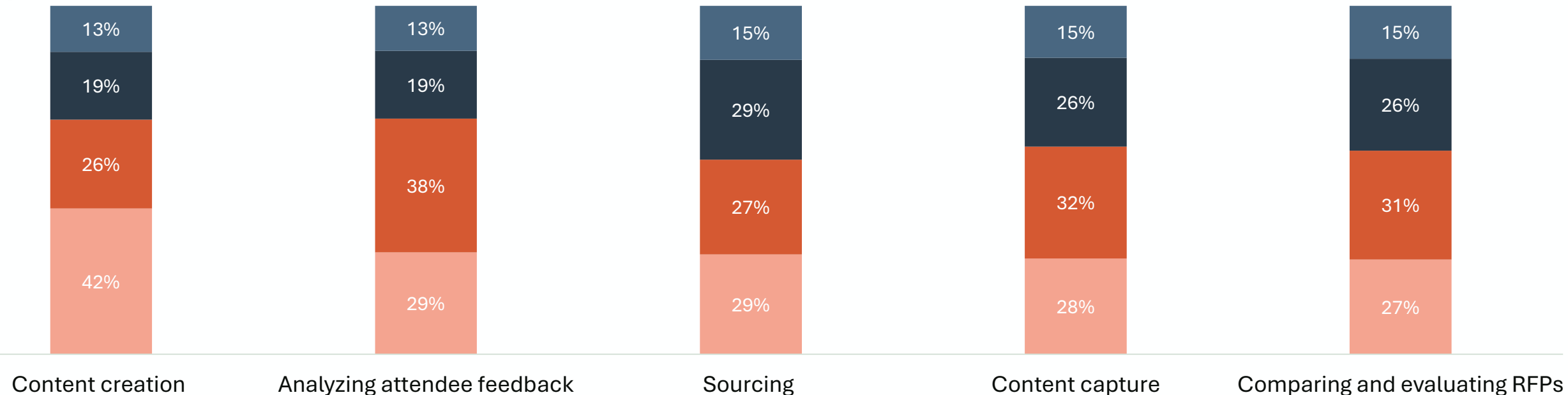
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Most Planners Using AI Are Doing So to Create Content

MORE THAN ONE-THIRD ASPIRE TO APPLY AI TO ATTENDEE FEEDBACK ANALYSIS AND TO PREDICT ATTENDANCE

AI Use (1 or 2)

Currently using Plan to use Don't plan to use Unsure



Question: In what ways are you currently using or do you plan to use AI tools to support your meetings and events?

Base: Total planners (N=349)

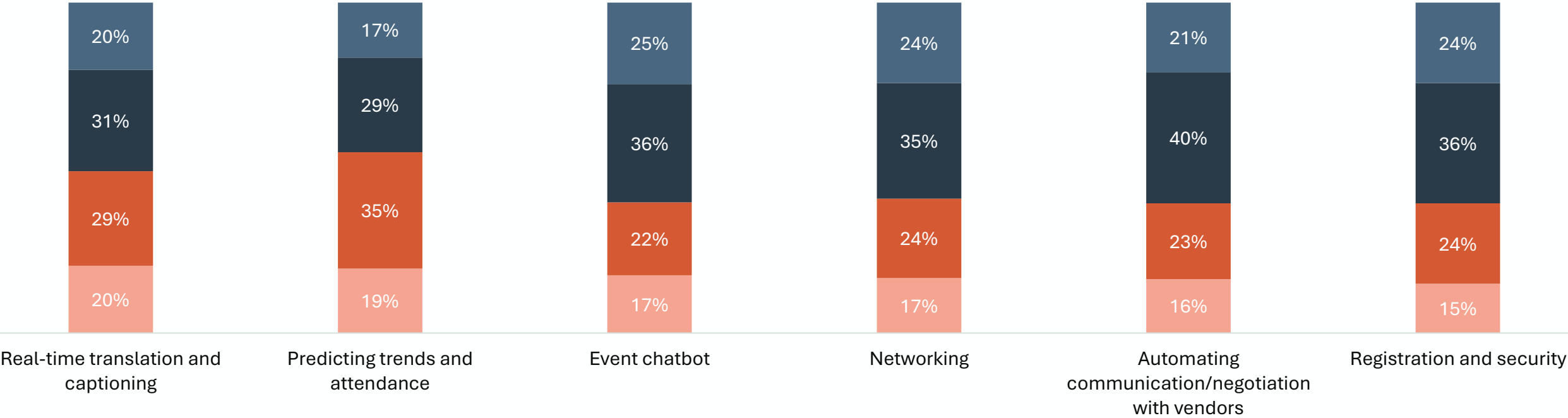
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Planners Less Inclined to Trust AI for Communication

FOUR IN 10 DON'T INTEND TO USE AI FOR AUTOMATING VENDOR COMMUNICATION AND NEGOTIATION.

AI Use (2 or 2)

Currently using Plan to use Don't plan to use Unsure



Question: In what ways are you currently using or do you plan to use AI tools to support your meetings and events?
Base: Total planners (N=349)
Source: Meetings Industry PULSE Survey North America August 2026

Select Planner Verbatim Comments

WHILE SOME COMMENTS REFLECTED STRONG DEMAND AND BUSINESS, PLANNERS ARE FEELING PRESSURE FROM HIGHER COSTS AND AN INCREASED RELIANCE ON AI

- “Our events regularly sell out. When we work with hotels, they are responsive and try their best to work within our budget; but I am seeing the budget not going as far, which is just an unfortunate sign of the times. Currently I am feeling hopeful and positive about the future!”
- “I am concerned about world instability. Things change so rapidly.”
- “It has been a weird two years. Usually in election years our attendance numbers are down, which they were in 2024. Usually the year after is better, but 2025 was just OK. In 2026, I've seen great program numbers and terrible ones, the lowest ever. There is no pattern.”
- “The political and economic instability has made this a difficult year. I have never seen price gouging as prevalent across so many functions as it is today. We are definitely paying more and getting less.”
- “We are managing the increased costs (slightly reduced profits) but focused on quality events over quantity of booked dates.”
- “Numbers are down because of the war with Iran, but not enough to invoke force majeure. I wish I had a force majeure partial performance clause this year.”
- “Working with different AI tools has been disappointing and cumbersome to date. While I appreciate the potential for the technology, my experience has been that I can rely on AI for analysis of data, but it can often miss the “big point.” For example, AI has demonstrated that it can be fairly good at analyzing key issues from client feedback surveys, but it can really be off-base drawing actionable conclusions. I find it to be more hassle than it's worth right now.”