Global DMC Partners

MEETINGS & EVENTS PULSE SURVEY

REPORT

Q3 2024

Your guide to the key forces driving decisions in the global MICE industry.

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KEY INSIGHTS

BUDGET DISPARITIES WORLDWIDE

International planners may experience greater budget challenges, with only 27% reporting budget increases compared to 44% of US/Canadian planners.

BUDGET INCREASES ARE NOT ENOUGH

Among those with budget increases this year, 57% saw a 10-20% rise, which in many cases does not even cover inflationary increases. This reduces purchasing power for planners and leaves no additional budget for creative or experiential program elements.

CONTINUED RISING COSTS

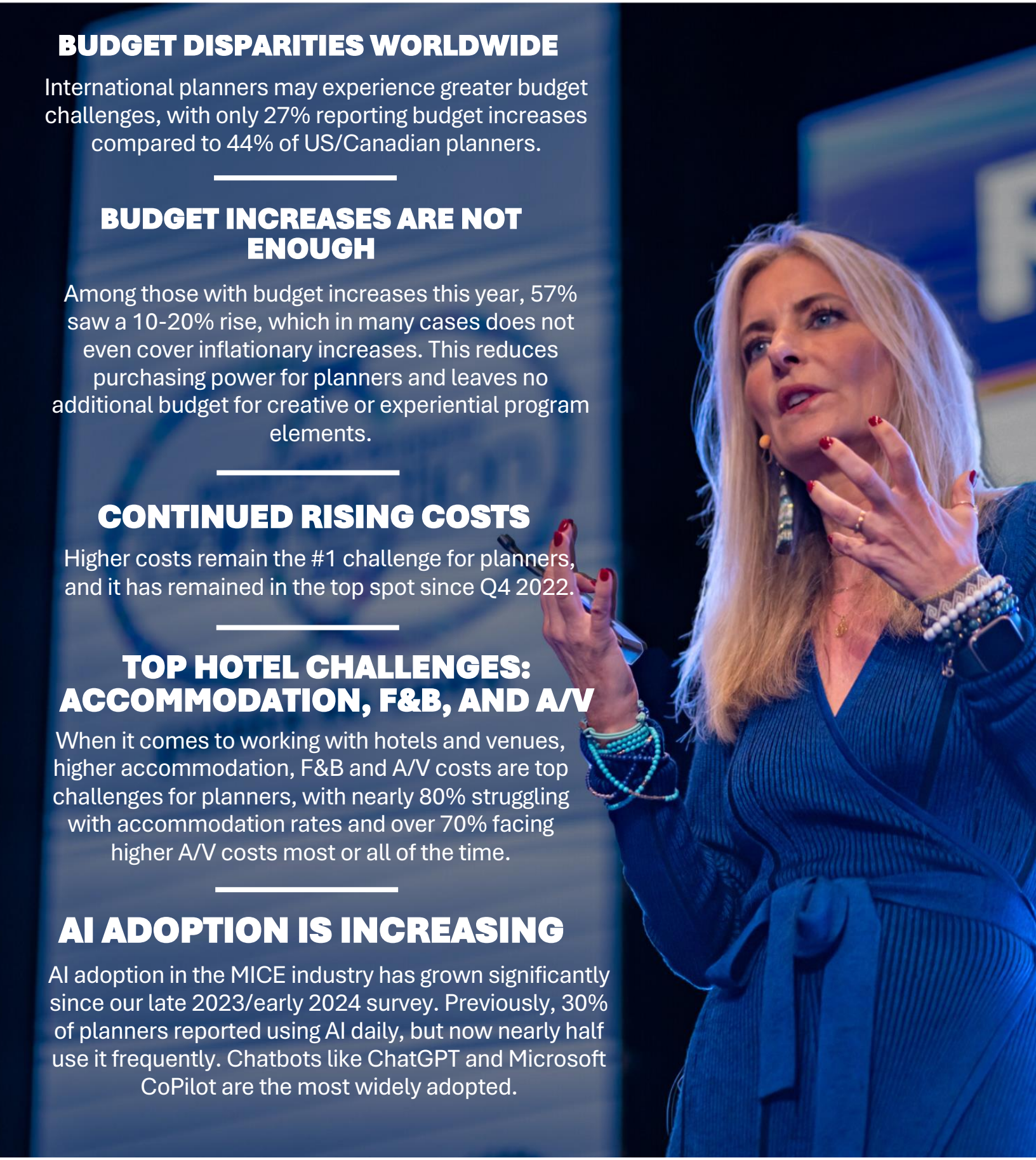
Higher costs remain the #1 challenge for planners, and it has remained in the top spot since Q4 2022.

TOP HOTEL CHALLENGES: ACCOMMODATION, F&B, AND A/V

When it comes to working with hotels and venues, higher accommodation, F&B and A/V costs are top challenges for planners, with nearly 80% struggling with accommodation rates and over 70% facing higher A/V costs most or all of the time.

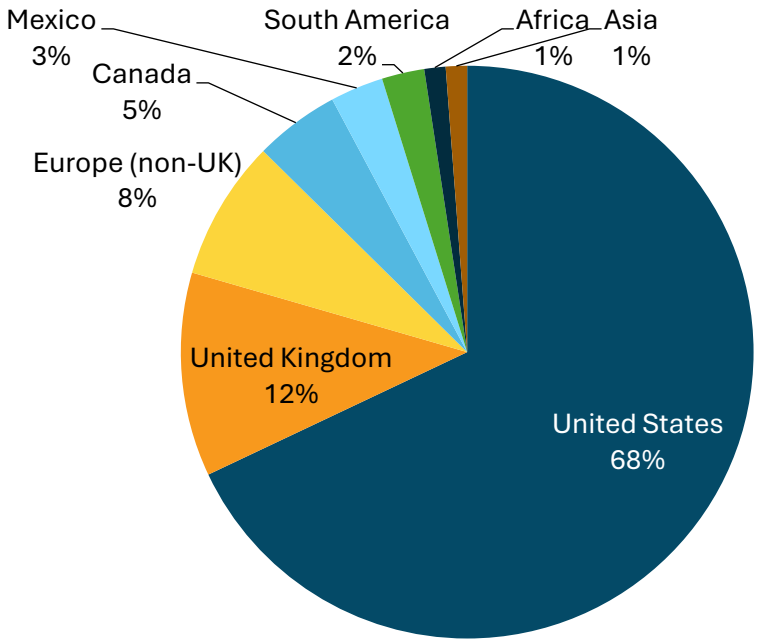
AI ADOPTION IS INCREASING

AI adoption in the MICE industry has grown significantly since our late 2023/early 2024 survey. Previously, 30% of planners reported using AI daily, but now nearly half use it frequently. Chatbots like ChatGPT and Microsoft CoPilot are the most widely adopted.

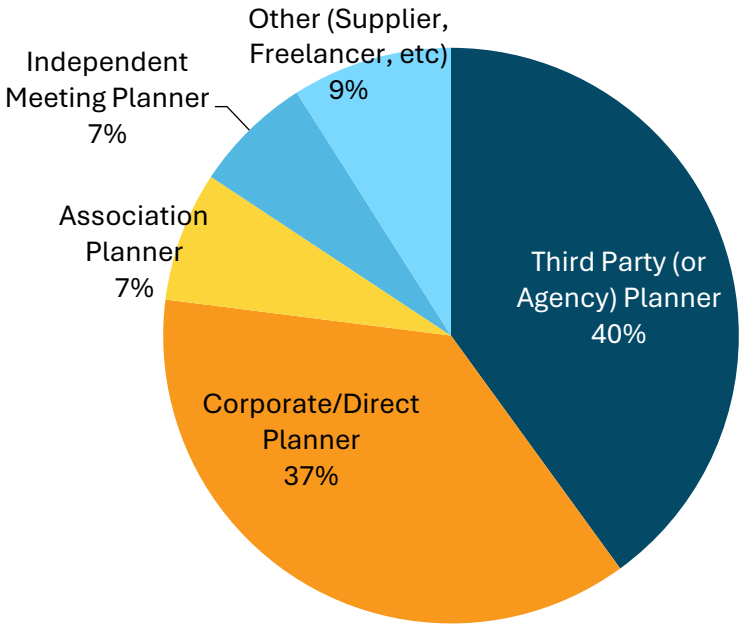


RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

LOCATION



INDUSTRY



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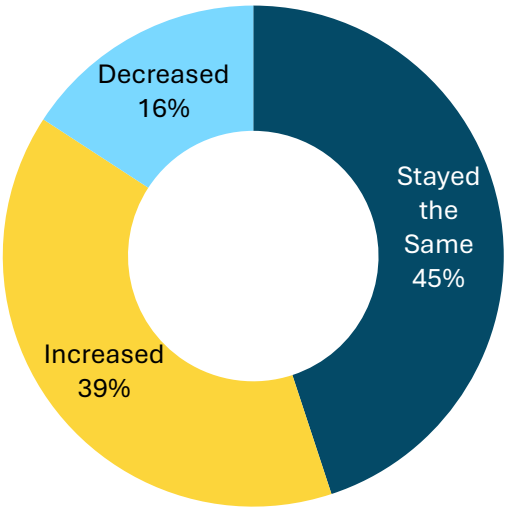
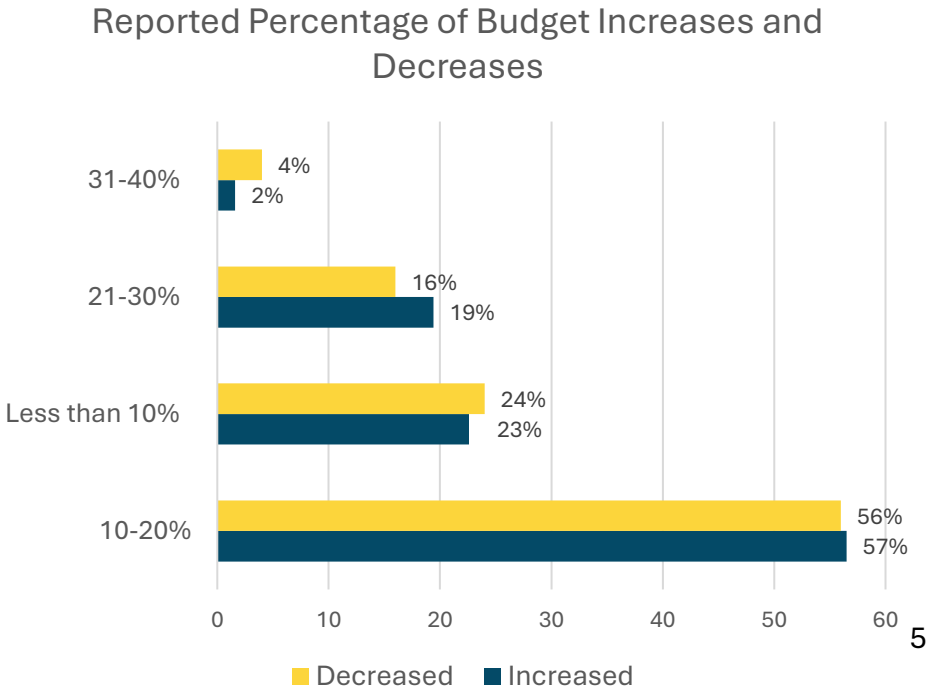
BUDGETS & COSTS

From 2023 to 2024, 39% of respondents saw budget increases, 16% saw decreases, and 45% reported no change. Notably, 44% of US/Canada respondents experienced budget increases, compared to 27% internationally. Cost increases in areas like hotels, F&B, and A/V are driving the need for higher MICE budgets. With most budgets increasing by only 10-20%, these adjustments merely cover inflationary increases rather than allowing for more creative expenditures.

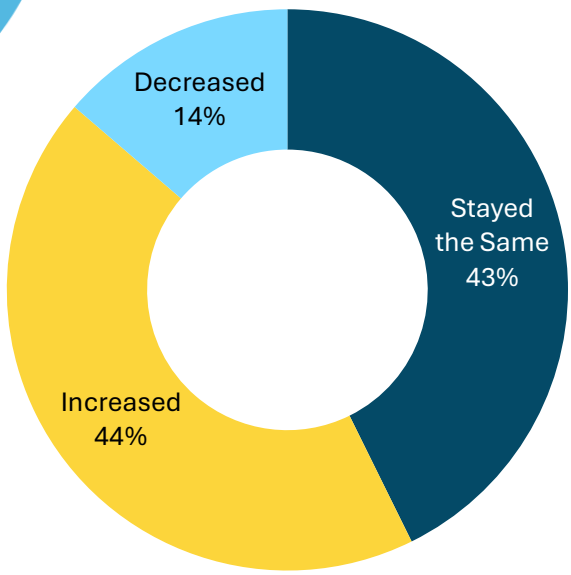
Did your (or your clients) program budgets generally increase, decrease, or stay the same from last year (2023) to this year (2024)?

ALL RESPONDENTS

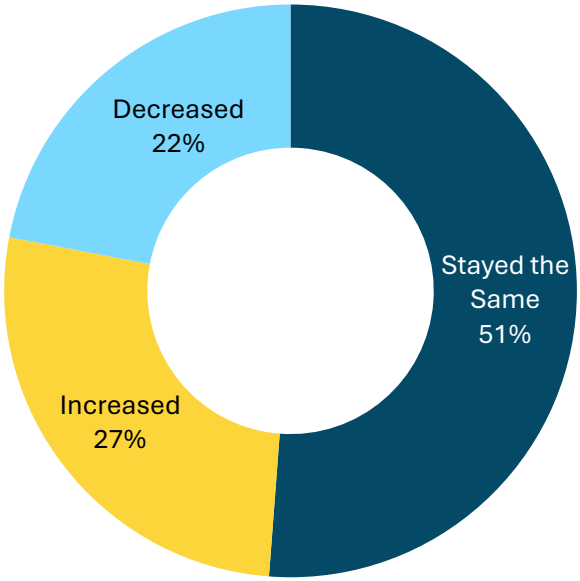




US/CANADA



INTERNATIONAL



VOICES *from* RESPONDENTS

We've seen a raise in meeting costs (hotel, F&B, AV, decor, etc.) and all budgets have had to increase to accommodate. *(Respondent 1)*

So far, they have stayed the same however we are having those serious conversations with our clients that budgets need to increase in order to deliver the same type of program as in past years. *(Respondent 2)*

RISING COSTS

The majority of planners report that costs have increased by 10-30% on average across various categories compared to two years ago. Specifically, significant cost hikes were noted in hotels/venues, food & beverage, airfare, and ground transportation. This trend highlights the growing financial pressures within the industry, impacting overall budget planning and allocation.

Average Cost Increases

On average, about how much more expensive are you finding the following costs as compared to what they were two years ago?

	0-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	No increase
Hotels/Venues	5%	22.4%	34.8%	24.2%	5.6%	3.7%	0.6%
Food & Beverage	2.5%	14.9%	40.4%	25.5%	6.8%	8.1%	0%
Airfare	2.5%	23.1%	25%	25%	10.6%	5.6%	1.9%
Staffing	13.8%	21.9%	23.1%	13.1%	3.8%	1.9%	5.6%
Ground Transportation	8.8%	25%	31.3%	15%	5%	2.5%	2.5%
A/V	6.2%	21.7%	26.7%	17.4%	9.9%	6.8%	0.6%

COST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Event planners reduce attendee numbers (40% sometimes) and use early contracting (32% most of the time) to save costs. Some respondents noted that tighter budgets boost efficiency and promote environmental awareness. They also increase virtual event revenue and encourage using more volunteers, car-share services, and simpler meals.

Rating Frequency of Strategies to Offset Costs

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
Reducing attendee numbers	23.3%	27.7%	39.6%	8.8%	0.6%
Providing meal vouchers / dining gift cards / dining credit	43.1%	25%	25%	5.6%	1.3%
★ Building in more leisure time	18.0%	22.4%	36.6%	19.9%	3.1%
★ Consolidating/reducing the number of programs per year	16.8%	19.3%	42.2%	19.9%	1.9%
Changing in-person programs to virtual programs	41.4%	29.6%	22.8%	6.2%	0%
★ Cutting back on A/V costs	12.7%	18.4%	46.8%	17.7%	4.4%
★ Reusing event decor/materials across multiple programs	15.6%	24.4%	33.1%	20.6%	6.3%
★ Reducing the # of days of the program	14.4%	20.6%	46.3%	16.9%	1.9%
Choosing to host program on a cruise	72.5%	10.6%	13.1%	2.5%	1.3%
★ Early contracting	6.2%	17.4%	36.6%	31.7%	8.1%
Leveraging sponsorships	32.9%	19%	25.9%	13.3%	8.9%
Using car-share services (ie: Uber, Lyft) for transfers	35.4%	22.4%	24.8%	14.3%	3.1%

★ Popular steps & tactics among respondents.

TOP CHALLENGES

Higher costs continue to be the #1 challenge and this has remained in the top spot since Q4 2022. Interestingly, the top five challenges are consistent across both U.S./Canadian and International respondents, indicating that these issues are universally felt, with no significant variations between the groups.

Item	Overall Rank
Higher costs	1
Finding availability	2
Budget management	3
Timely approval from decision-makers	4
Contract negotiations	5
Responsiveness	6
Service levels/quality	7
Lead times	8
Airline Travel/Schedules	9
Meeting participation/attendance	10
Vendor/supplier relationship	11

VOICES *from* RESPONDENTS

Prices have risen quite substantially so it is hard to get venues within the client's budget. Shorter lead times make it tricky when finding venues for your clients' budgets at times.

TOP CHALLENGES *with* HOTELS & VENUES

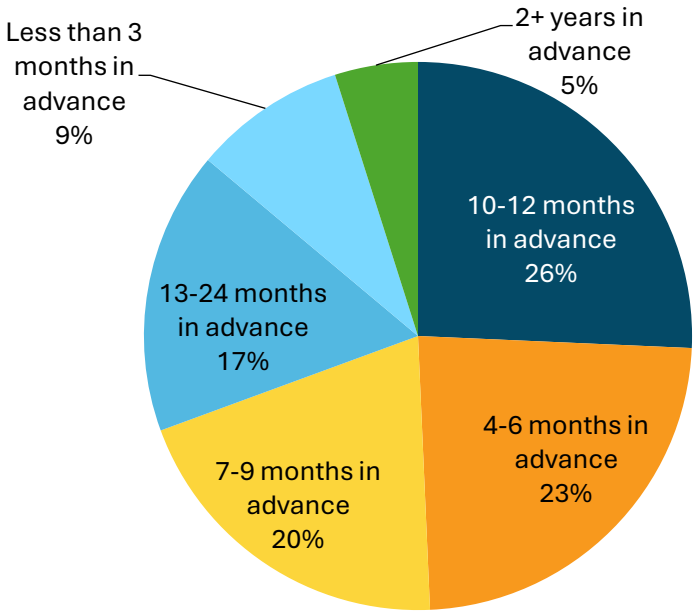
Nearly 80% of planners report that higher accommodation rates are a big challenge most of the time or all the time when working with hotels/venues. Over 70% of planners are struggling with higher-than-expected A/V costs most of the time or all the time. 42% report that availability (finding space and dates) is a common challenge most of the time.

Frequency of Challenges Faced When Working with Hotels/Venues

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
Contracts are not flexible	0.7%	10.8%	54%	30.2%	4.3%
Higher accommodation rates	0.7%	0%	19.6%	66.7%	13%
A/V costs higher than expected	0%	4.4%	24.8%	47.4%	23.4%
Staffing challenges (ie: low staff or untrained staff)	0%	10.2%	55.5%	27%	7.3%
Availability challenges (ie: space & dates)	0.7%	7.2%	42.4%	42.4%	7.2%
Slow response times	4.4%	14.6%	40.9%	30.7%	9.5%
No room for negotiation	2.2%	20.9%	50%	23.9%	3%

PLANNING & LEAD TIMES

26% of respondents reported planning events 10-12 months in advance, up from 15% in the last survey, suggesting lead times might be improving. However, 24% still plan only 4-6 months ahead, a slight drop from 29% previously. Other planning timelines can be seen below.



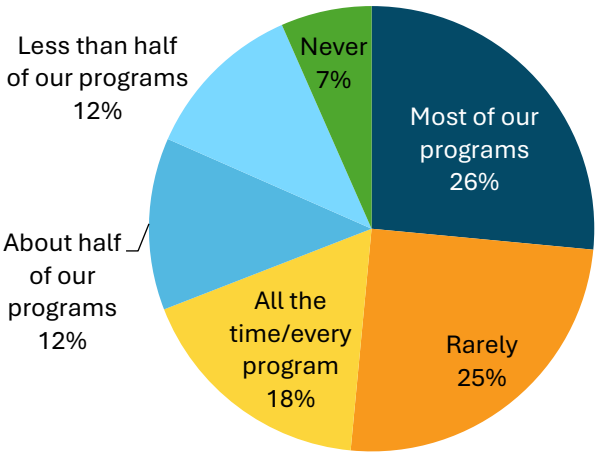
VOICES *from* RESPONDENTS

> *For internal events, the planning time is 9 months or less; for incentive trips, it's 2 years out; and for other events, the average is about a year.*

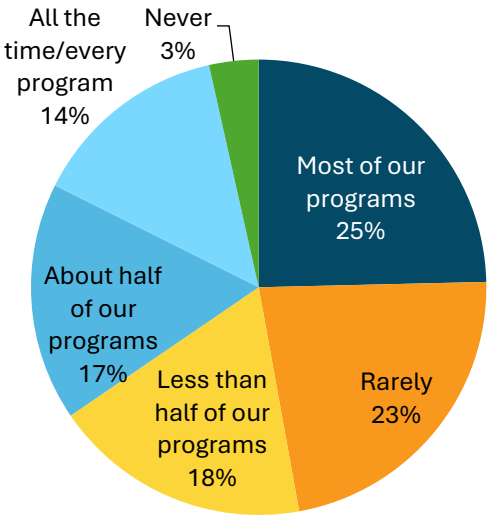
DEI, SUSTAINABILITY &WELLNESS

DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), Sustainability, and Wellness are increasingly popular focuses in event planning for some. Below are the frequencies for incorporating these elements into programs as reported by respondents.

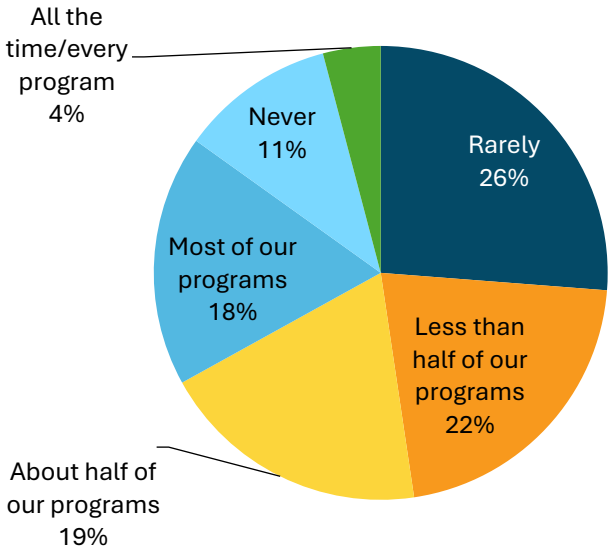
DEI AND ACCESSIBILITY



SUSTAINABILITY



WELLNESS



DEI & ACCESSIBILITY IMPLEMENTATION

Reported Frequency of Implementing DEI and Accessibility Measures

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
Initiatives that cultivate collective belonging	1.1%	11.4%	35.2%	42.0%	10.2%
Accessible venues	1.1%	2.2%	19.8%	37.4%	39.6%
Inclusive programming, agendas, and formats for all learning styles	1.1%	13.2%	34.1%	35.2%	16.5%
Closed captioning during live presentations/speeches	16.9%	33.7%	27.0%	13.5%	9%
Sign-language or other onsite language interpreters	33.0%	30.8%	19.8%	9.9%	6.6%
Asking about special accommodation needs during registration	3.3%	3.3%	11.1%	17.8%	64.4%

★ Popular steps & tactics among respondents.

VOICES *from* RESPONDENTS

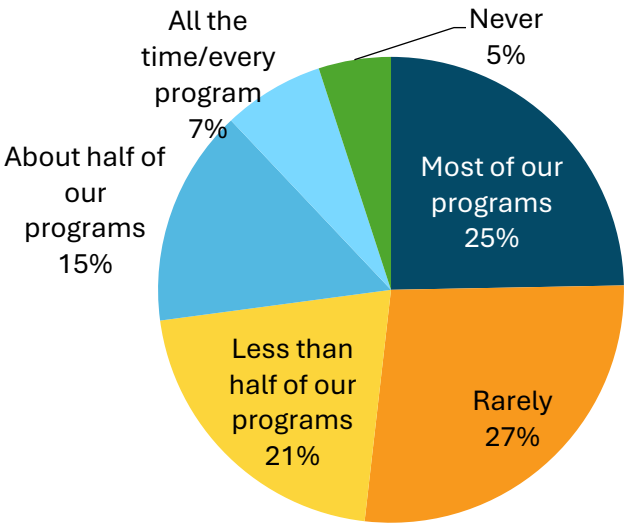
> *Understanding needs at registration help shape the program from a content and delivery perspective.*

SUSTAINABILITY *within* PROGRAMS

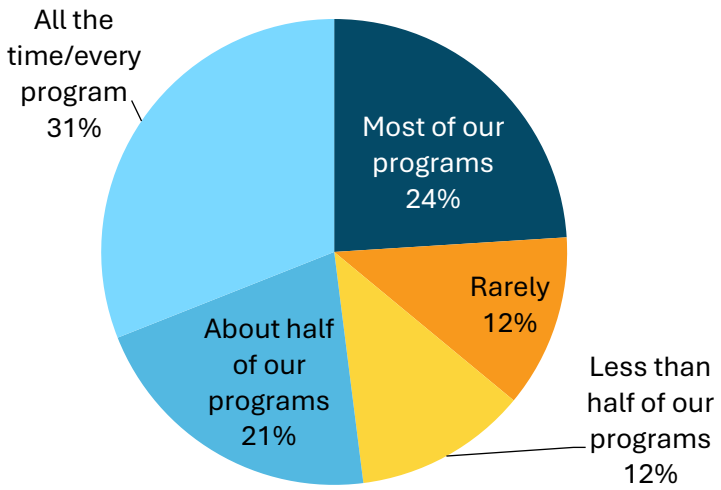
Currently, 47% of US/Canadian planners incorporate sustainability all the time or most of the time, compared to 76% of international planners. This is an increase from the last survey, where 43% of US/Canadian and 57% of international planners reported the same, suggesting a growing emphasis on sustainability, especially among international planners.

How often is your organization or your clients' organizations incorporating sustainability into programs?

US/CANADA



INTERNATIONAL



VOICES *from* RESPONDENTS

It depends on clients wishes and budget. We as a company try to encourage it. However, mostly it is down to budget. (Respondent 1)

Non-negotiable - sustainability is not 'optional' within our agency proposals. (Respondent 2)

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION

Reported Frequency of Implementing Sustainability Measures

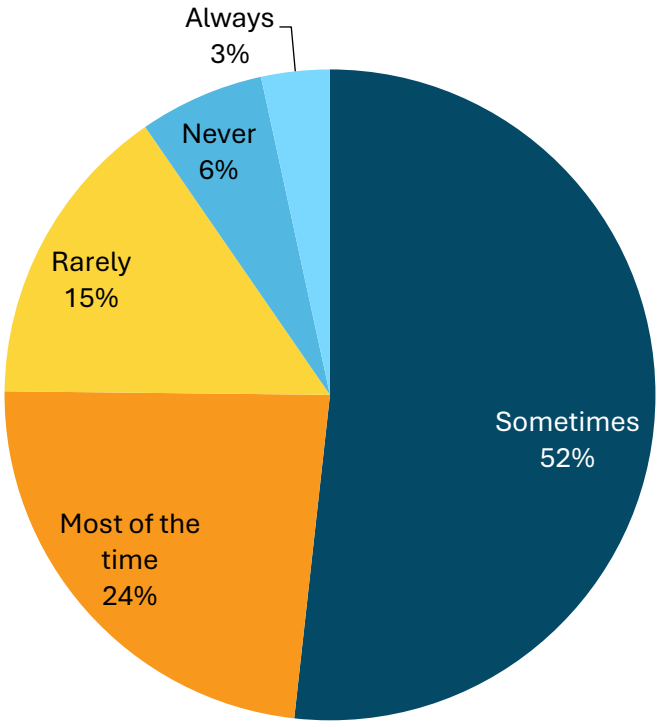
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
★ Selecting program components within walking distance	1.9%	3.9%	40.8%	46.6%	6.8%
Only working with vendors that have sustainable efforts in place (but are not certified)	8.7%	24%	41.3%	25%	1%
Only working with certified sustainable vendors	16.5%	33%	39.8%	10.7%	0%
★ Locally-sourced food options	1%	12.5%	42.3%	34.6%	9.6%
Plant-based food options	4.9%	19.4%	39.8%	18.4%	17.5%
★ Reducing plastic usage/waste	1%	7.7%	20.2%	47.1%	24%
Hybrid/electric transportation	10.9%	45.5%	26.7%	12.9%	4%
★ Donations to local organizations	6.8%	20.4%	48.5%	17.5%	6.8%
★ Finding ways to reuse/recycle event materials/goods	2.9%	7.7%	37.5%	36.5%	15.4%
★ Sustainable/CSR-focused activities/tours/experiences	7.8%	12.6%	46.6%	27.2%	5.8%

★ Popular steps & tactics among respondents.

SUSTAINABILITY
COST BARRIERS

Nearly 80% of planners find it challenging to incorporate sustainability into their programs due to costs. Specifically, 52% sometimes face difficulties, 23% encounter this issue most of the time, and 3% always struggle with sustainability-related costs.

How often have you found it difficult to incorporate sustainability into programs because of cost?



WELLNESS IMPLEMENTATION

While only about a fifth of planners commonly include wellness, it's often prioritized in incentive programs, with cost barriers potentially limiting its broader application.

Reported Frequency of Implementing Wellness Measures

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
★ Relaxing activities/experiences	2.2%	4.4%	46.7%	42.2%	4.4%
★ More purposeful periods of free-time for attendees	0%	7.8%	46.7%	36.7%	8.9%
Family-friendly activities / encouraging family to join	36.7%	30%	15.6%	14.4%	3.3%
★ Physically-active activities/experiences	3.4%	5.6%	50.6%	34.8%	5.6%

★ Popular steps & tactics among respondents.

VOICES *from* RESPONDENTS

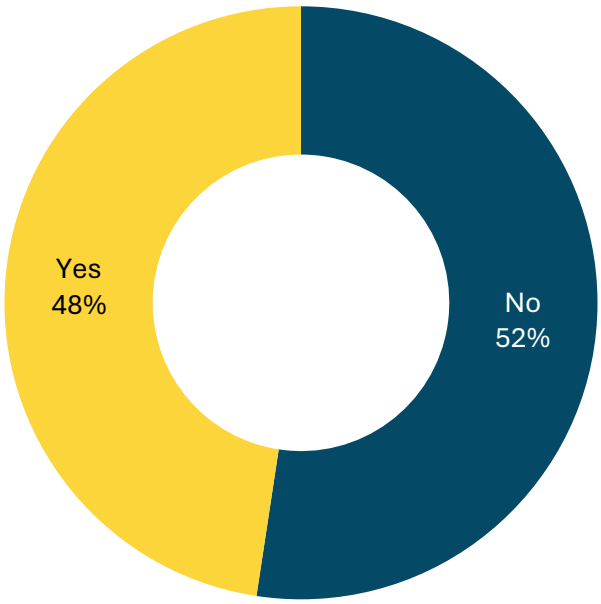
> *Wellness is critical - and that also includes really working with the chef and with the activity availability. Relaxation and free time also come into play.* *(Respondent 1)*

> *More for incentive-style events than meetings.* *(Respondent 2)*

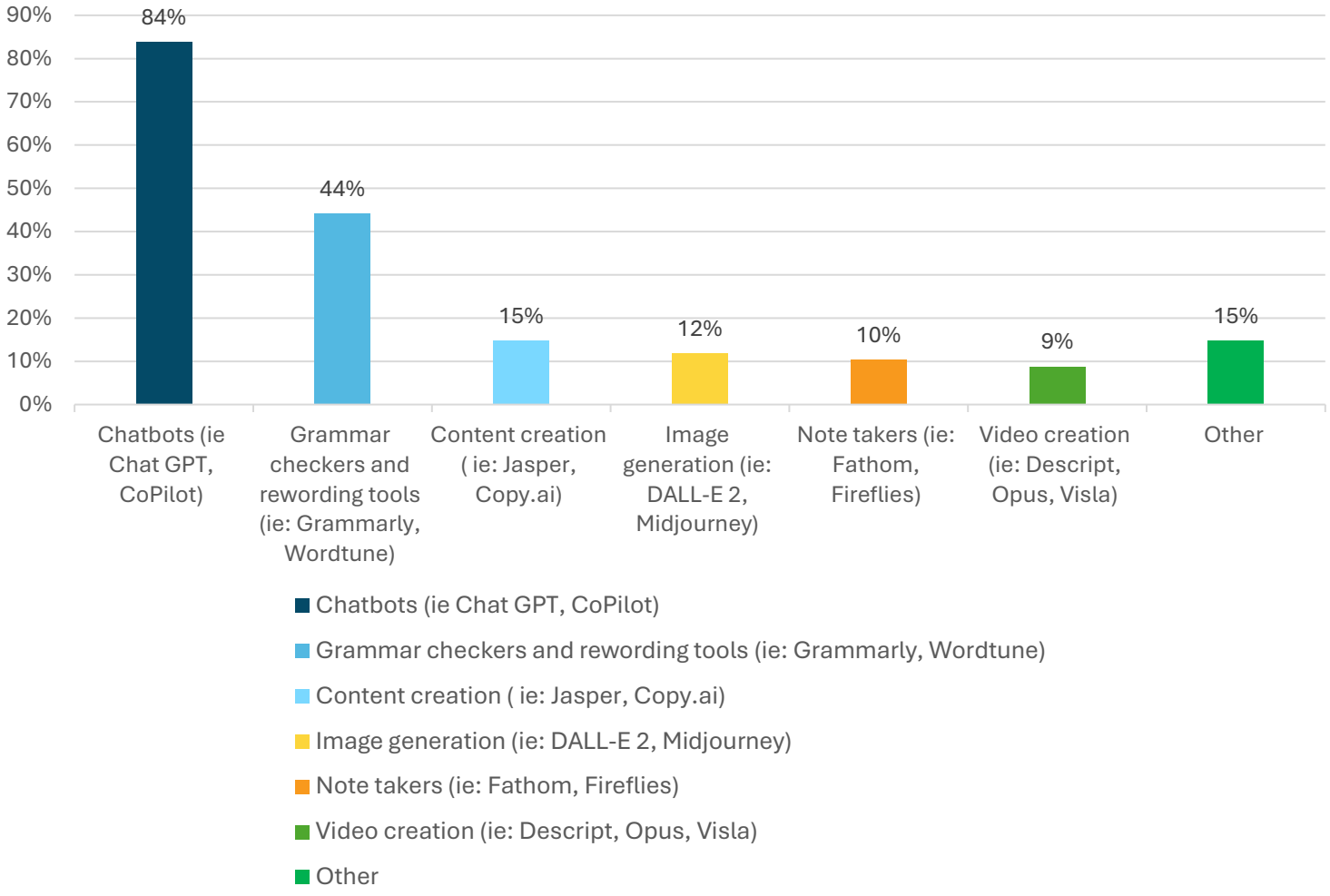
AI ADOPTION

The adoption of AI in event planning has grown, with nearly 48% of planners now using these tools frequently, up from 30% at the end of 2023. Respondents highlighted using AI for content improvement, venue selection, and marketing support. Chatbots remain the most popular use of AI, consistent with the previous survey results.

Are you using AI (ex: ChatGPT) tools in your day-to-day job?



MOST USED **AI TOOLS**



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