

INCENTIVE TRAVEL INDEX

2025 Survey Highlights

October 2025



In association with



**Incentive
Travel Index**



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Foreword

This is the seventh year of the collaboration between IRF and the SITE Foundation on the Incentive Travel Index, formerly the Incentive Travel Industry Index. With research partner Oxford Economics, the organizations have again created an indispensable annual report on the state of incentive travel, providing data on current and future evolution.

The 2025 online survey, fielded globally from May to July 2025, was customized for five distinct incentive travel professional roles:

- Corporate end user
- Destination management company (DMC)
- Destination marketing organization (DMO)
- Destination supplier
- Third-party agency (incentive travel agency)

Over 2,700 incentive travel industry professionals, representing 19 industry verticals, and 85 countries, participated in the survey.

For the latest on the Incentive Travel Index, see incentiveindex.com.

Sponsors



A blue-tinted photograph of an airport terminal. In the foreground, several red and black rolling suitcases are lined up. In the background, a large airplane is visible in flight against a bright sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle containing the title text.

1 Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

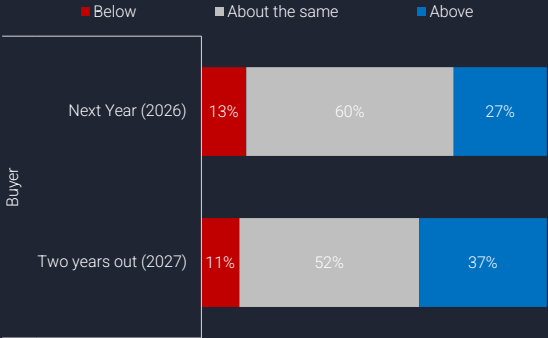
INCENTIVE TRAVEL INDEX – 2025 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



The Business of Incentive Travel

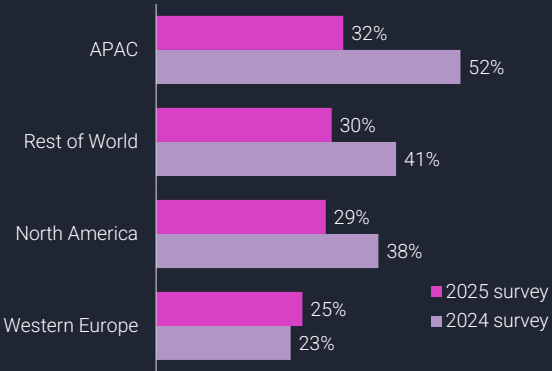
Expectations of incentive travel activity versus 2025

(Share of respondents)



Most buyers expect incentive travel activity to remain around 2025 levels

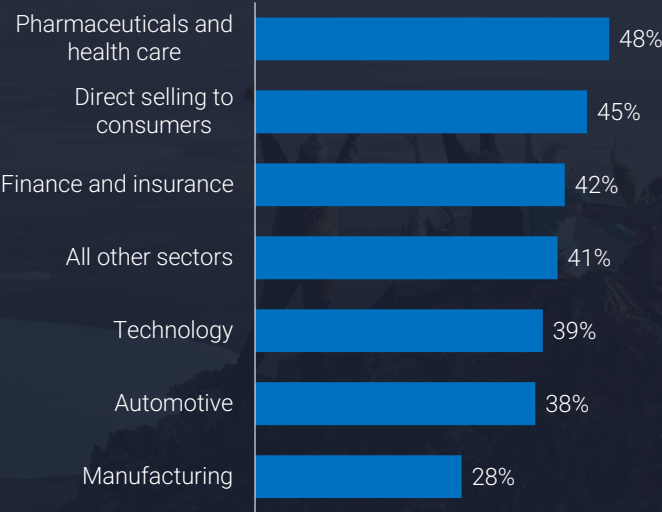
(Share of buyers reporting next year activity above survey year levels)



Further into recovery, growth optimism moderates

Expectations of incentive travel activity in two years for buyers, by industry

(Share of buyers reporting 2027 activity above or significantly above 2025 levels)



The pharmaceuticals and health care industry is most expectant of a rise in incentive travel activity versus 2025

75%

Agree the **value** of incentive travel is as strong as ever, but the **business** of incentive travel gets tougher every year

Most frequently used business pricing models

(Share of incentive travel houses)

31%
Percentage-based

20%
Open-book

19%
Hybrid



59% (all respondents)

Unsure whether the major incentive agencies in their market will transition to an open-book pricing structure over time

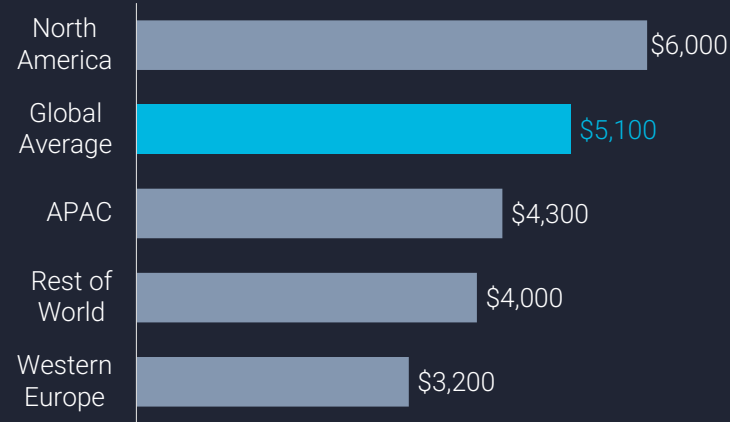
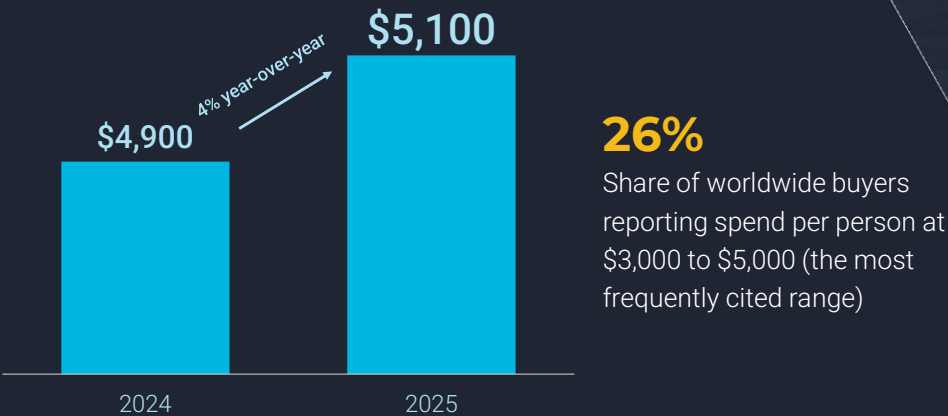
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INCENTIVE TRAVEL INDEX – 2025 SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



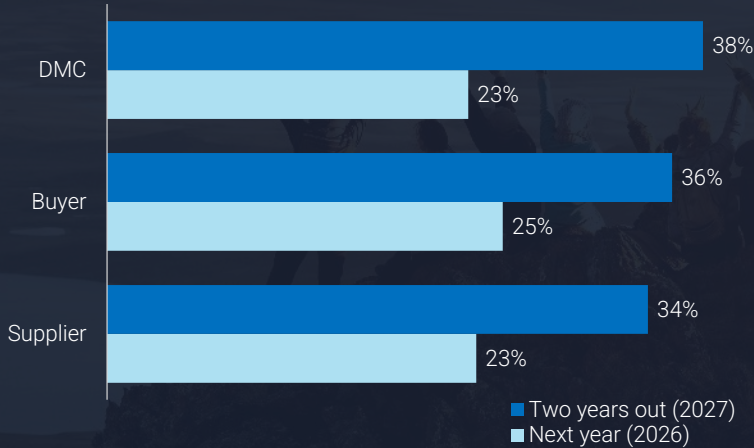
Program Costs and Budgets

Average incentive program cost per person



Expectations to increase spend per person to improve programs

(Share of respondents choosing 'improving programs')



By 2027, **more than one-third** of respondents expect program improvements will increase the level of spend per person

Changes in key budget drivers in 2026, top three

(Share of buyers expecting an increase or decrease)

Increase

- 1 **49%** Hotel
- 2 **46%** Airfare
- 3 **45%** Food & Beverage

Decrease

- 1 **28%** Gifting
- 2 **25%** Talent, décor, entertainment
- 3 **23%** Number of attendees

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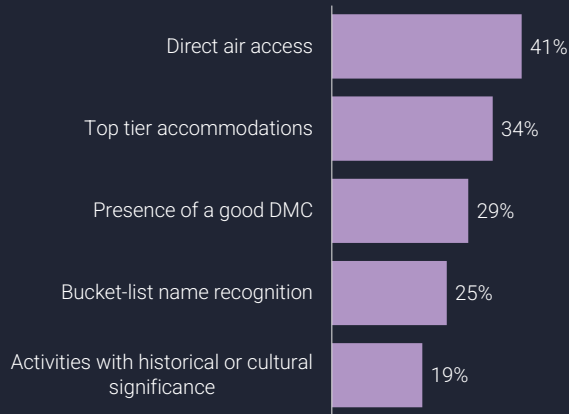
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Program Inclusion and Design

Destination must haves

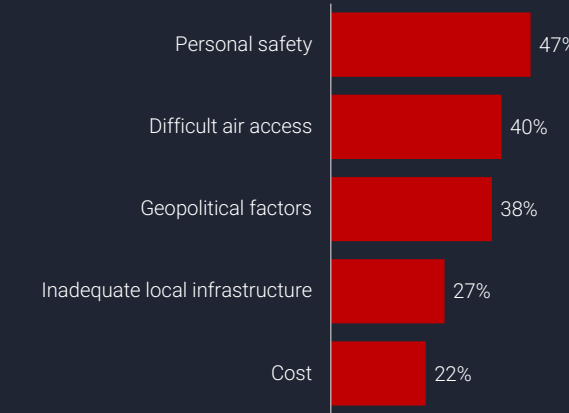
(Share of respondents)



Certain aspects of a destination are essential during the selection process

Destination disqualifiers

(Share of respondents)



There are numerous factors that can disqualify a destination from consideration

Traditional incentive programs remain popular

Traditional incentive travel is alive and well, even as many buyers do not see increased interest in broader company-wide events.

2-in-5
Agree there will be an increased use of traditional, qualification-based sales incentives

44%
Disagree that there will be more inclusive company-wide trips, without specific qualification criteria



Activities key to a successful program
(Share of respondents)

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Destination Selection

69%
Buyers seeking destinations they haven't used before

63%
Have booked a new destination not used previously for programs occurring in the next two years (2026 and 2027)

Top destinations under consideration, by region

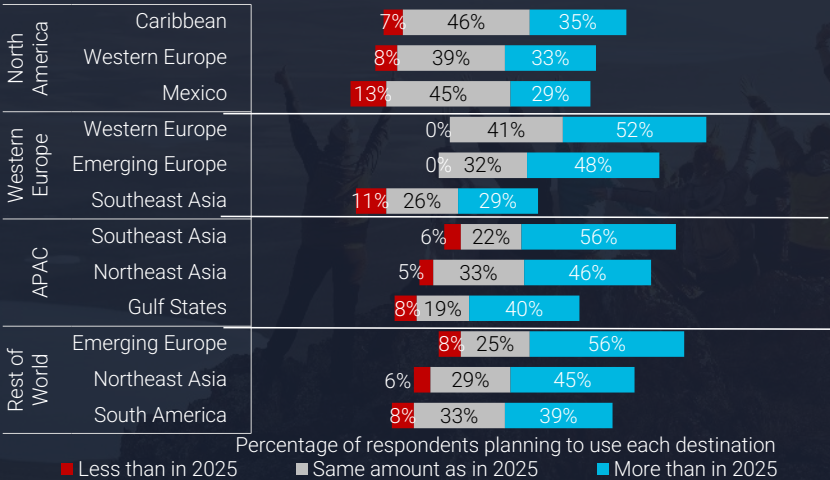
(Share of buyers not using but willing to consider)



Percentage of respondents not using each destination

Destination use planned by buyers across regions

(Share of buyers by region for top three increase usage areas)



Many buyers tend to look closer to home for destinations to increase usage

Long-haul travel remains an option for incentive programs

63%
Don't belong to a company that has a limit that prevents use of long-haul destinations

49%
Disagree that qualifiers will one day shun long-haul travel in the name of climate change

13%
See distance as a disqualifier when considering a destination for an incentive travel program

Challenges

Incentive travel professionals face short- and long-run challenges, with inflation cited the most. International instability has grown in significance as a short-run challenge, rising to 30% compared to 18% in 2024.

Top Future challenges

(Share of respondents)



Rising costs / inflation

	Short-run	Long-run
Rising costs / inflation	38%	40%



International instability

International instability	30%	23%
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49%

Agree **political considerations are first and foremost in plans for 2026 and 2027**

Recent events have diminished the US’s appeal as a destination

Concerns around political events, travel restrictions, and shifting DEI policies are making the US a less attractive destination for incentive travel.

70%

Believe recent political events will result in a decline in inbound incentive travel activity

65%

Think that the complex visa process and travel restrictions are making the US a less attractive incentive destination

46%

Believe shifting views around DEI and LGBTQ are making the US a less attractive incentive destination

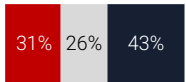
Incentive travel will need to adapt to stay relevant

(Share of respondents)

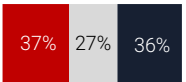
The incentive travel industry must become fully customizable or it will become obsolete



Incentive travel is competing with cash compensation



Incentive travel programs are increasingly becoming far too predictable



Disagree Unsure Agree

35%

Report that incentive travel is not at all integrated with HR initiatives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Evolution of Incentive Travel

Younger generations have different views and preferences on incentive travel; however, traditional incentive travel is not obsolete.

Perceptions of younger generations of qualifiers

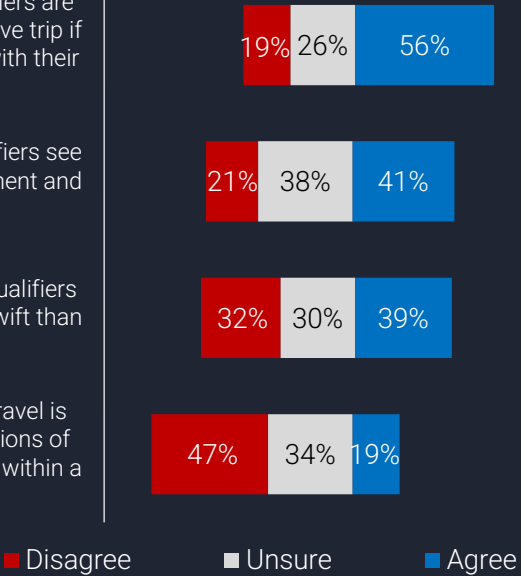
(Share of respondents)

Younger generations of qualifiers are more likely to refuse an incentive trip if the destination doesn't align with their personal values

Younger generations of qualifiers see incentive travel as an entitlement and not a reward

Younger generations of qualifiers would rather see Taylor Swift than Hawaii

Traditional group incentive travel is irrelevant to younger generations of qualifiers and will be obsolete within a decade



Most-used AI platforms for incentive travel-related tasks

(Share of respondents using AI daily, weekly monthly, or occasionally)



93%
ChatGPT



74%
Microsoft
Copilot



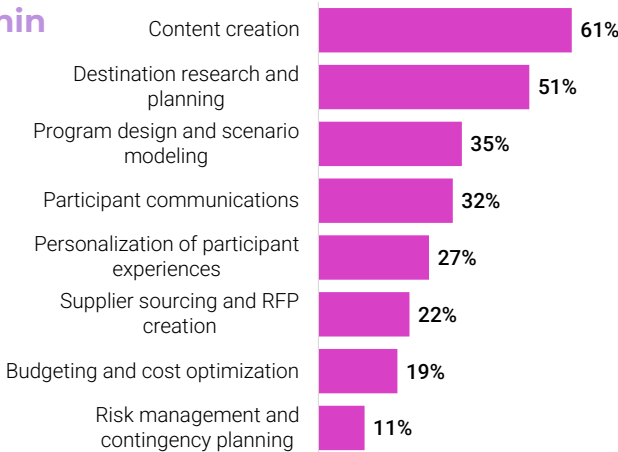
66%
Canva Magic
Studio



46%
Google
Gemini

Top uses of AI within incentive travel

(Share of respondents)



17%
Not currently
using AI

2 Introduction

The background of the slide is a blue-tinted photograph of an airport. In the foreground, there are several red and black rolling suitcases. In the background, an airplane is visible in the sky, and airport infrastructure like a terminal and a queue belt are visible.

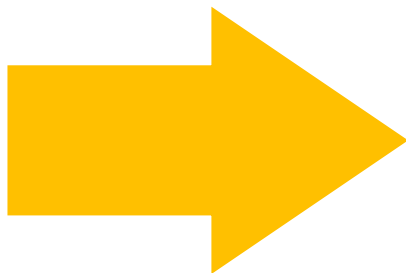
A global survey to understand incentive travel

Buyers

- Incentive travel end-users
- Incentive travel agencies

Sellers

- Destination management companies (DMCs)
- Suppliers (hotels, cruise lines, venues)
- Destination marketing organizations (DMOs)



2,708

total survey respondents



1,390

complete survey responses



1,232

buyers across 19 industries



85

countries represented by survey respondents



May to July 2025

online survey period

Terms

- Incentive travel corporate program owner (e.g., end-user)
- Incentive travel agency (e.g., incentive house, third party planner, independent planner or other intermediary)
- Destination management company (e.g., DMC coordinating local on-site implementation)
- Supplier to the incentive market (e.g., hotels, cruise lines, venues, transportation companies, AV companies, décor companies)
- Destination marketing organizations (e.g., DMO or convention & visitors bureau)

The survey reflects incentive travel buyers and sellers

A balanced, 360-degree view of incentive travel

Incentive travel comes to life through an extensive, collaborative network. The ITI is based on a balanced view of sellers (57%) and buyers (43%).

Buyers include:

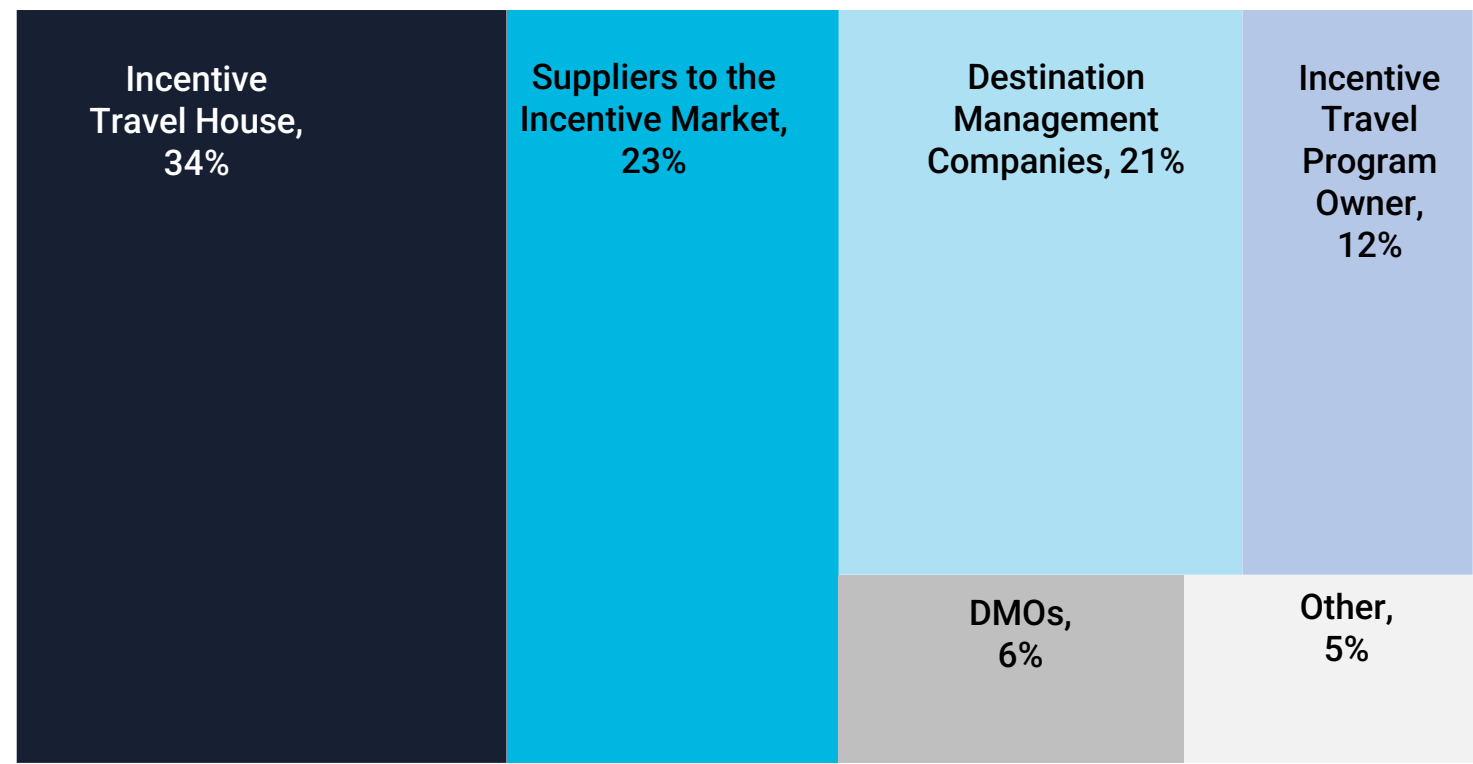
- **Incentive travel house** organizing events on behalf of client organizations
- **Incentive travel program owner** sponsoring events on behalf of their organization

Sellers include:

- **Suppliers to the incentive travel market** (e.g., hotels, cruise lines, venues, transportation companies)
- **Destination management companies** (e.g., DMC coordinating local on-site implementation)
- **Destination marketing organization** (e.g., DMO, convention and visitors bureau, national tourism office)

Respondent roles

(Share of respondents by role)



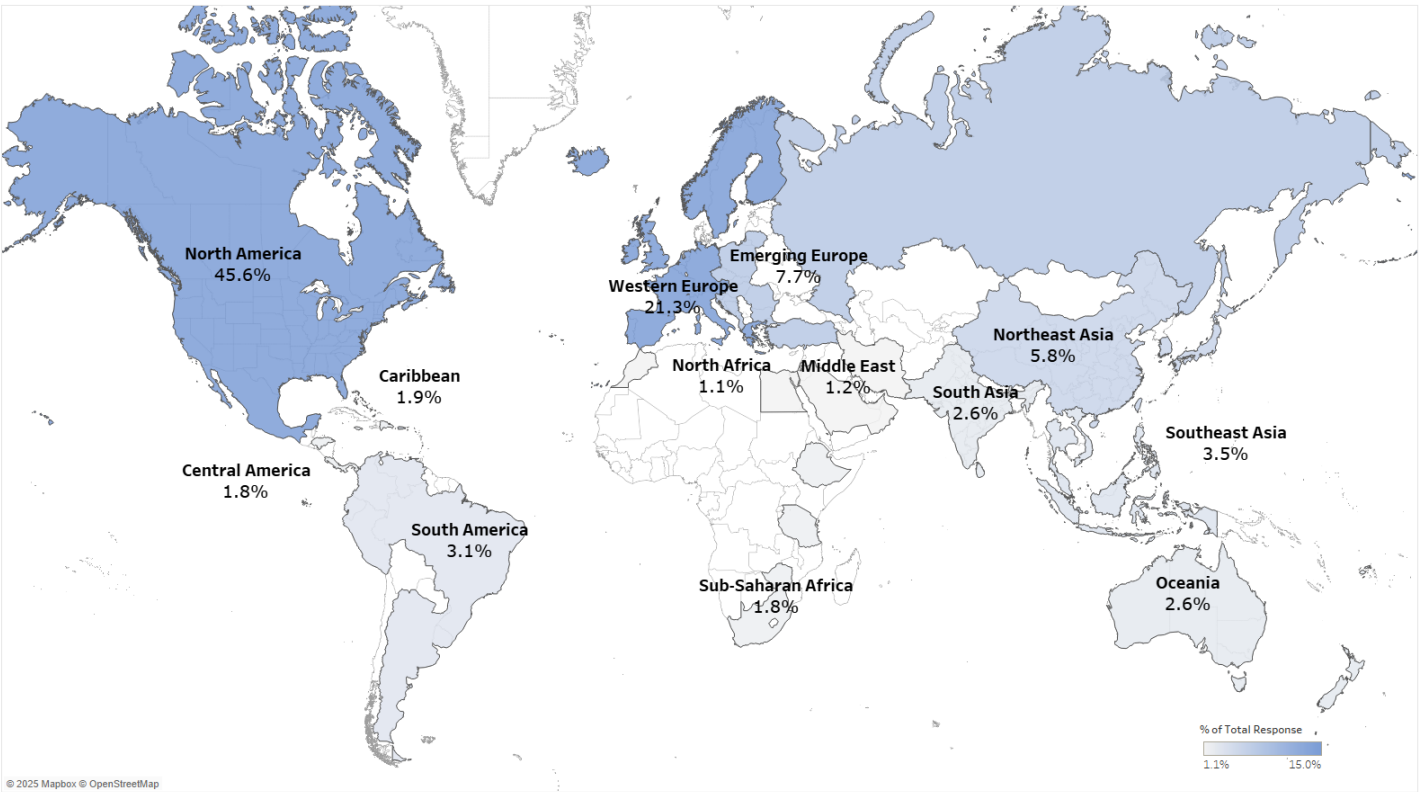
Balanced respondent base provides global perspective

Global response base with strong representation of North America

In total, 46% of respondents are based in North America. The share of respondents from Western Europe is 21%, with 15% from Asia-Pacific (APAC). The Rest of the World made up the remainder of respondents (18%).

M1. Where is the organization for which you work based?
Response base: n = 1,404 respondents

Location
(Share of respondents)

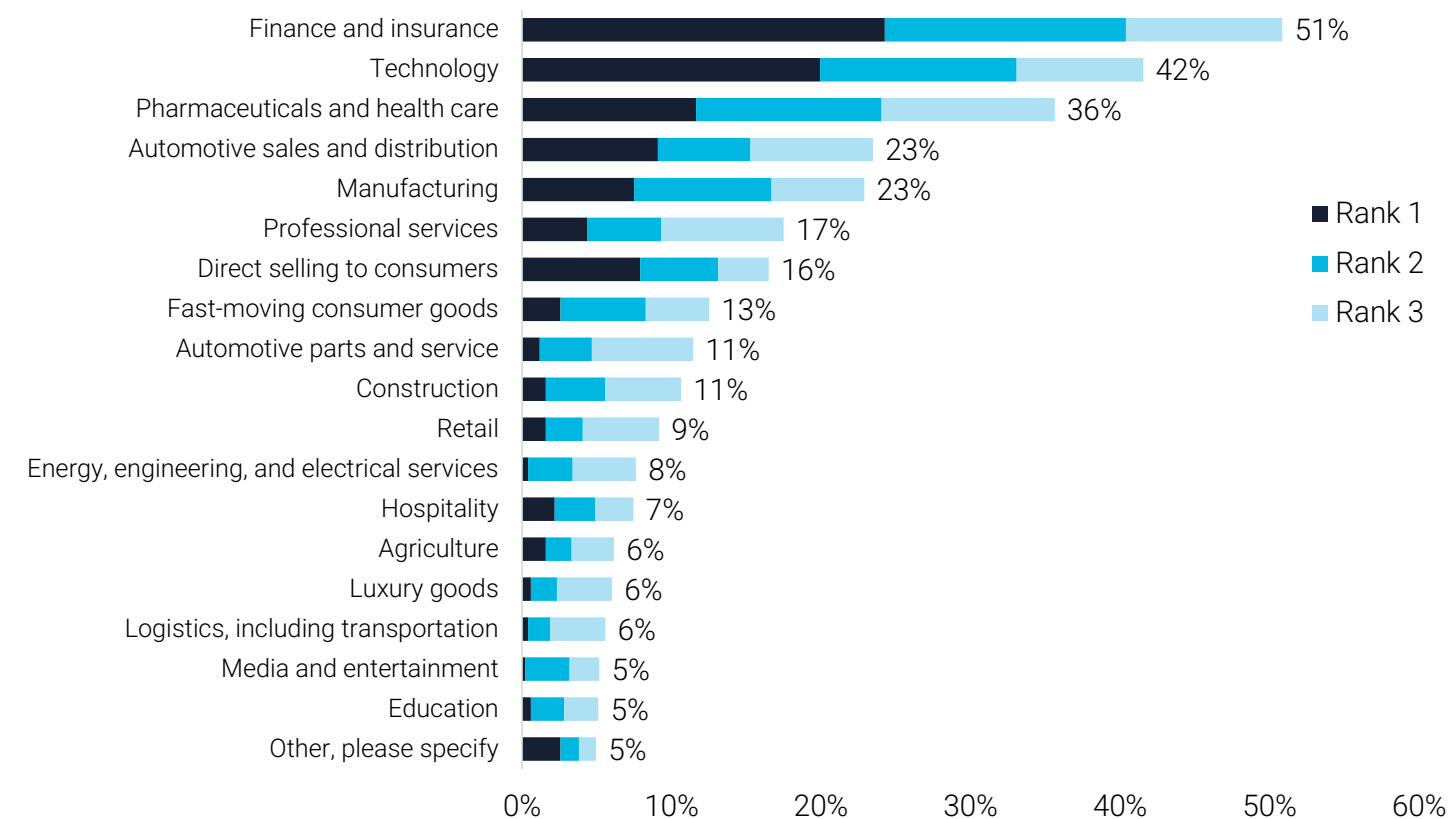


Finance, insurance, and tech top the industries served

Finance and insurance is a primary industry for incentive travel programs

Finance and insurance is the most important industry (rank 1) for 24% of buyers. Also 51% of buyers rank the industry in their top three client sectors.

Customer industries (Share of buyers indicating a top three rank)



A blue-tinted photograph of an airport terminal. In the foreground, three red and black rolling suitcases are lined up. In the background, a large airplane is visible in flight against a bright sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle containing the title text.

3 The Business of Incentive Travel

Incentive travel is a vital part of business events

Many in the sector handle classic incentive travel programs as well as broader business events

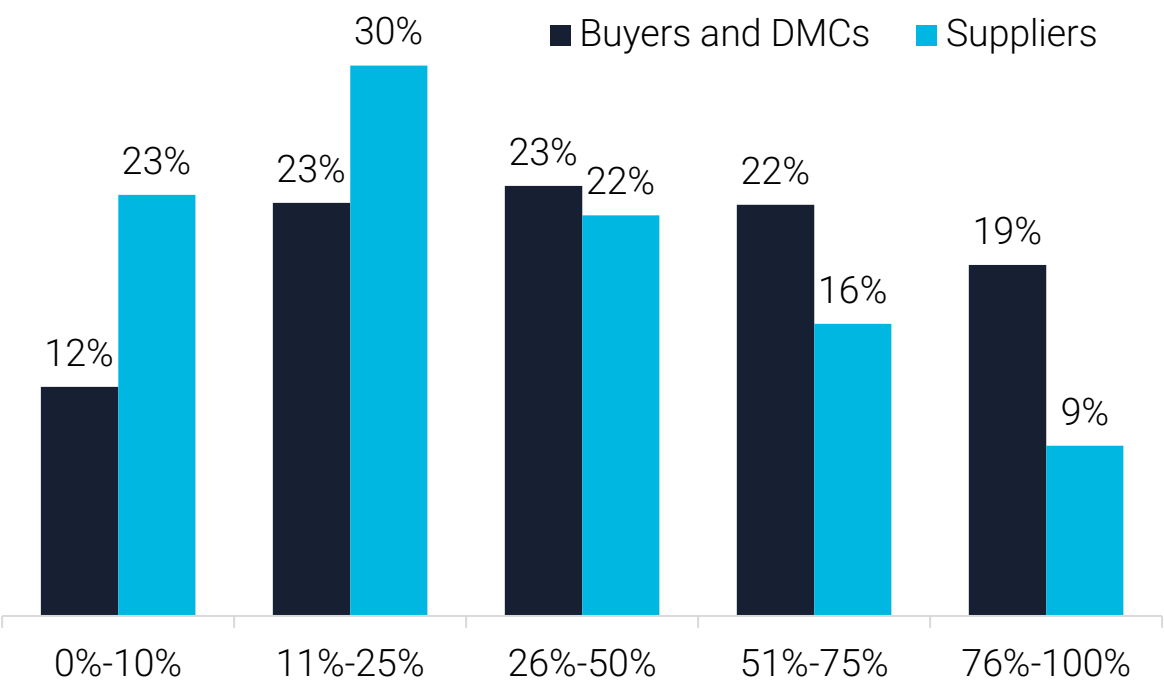
Incentive travel is a cornerstone of the business events sector, especially for buyers and DMCs. For 41% of these respondents, incentive travel accounts for most (more than 50%) business events activity, and for 19%, it exceeds 75%

While incentive travel represents a smaller share for suppliers, 25% still rely on incentive travel for the majority of business events.

41%

Share of buyers and DMCs reporting incentive travel accounts for more than 50% of business events activity.

Classic incentive travel programs as share of business events handled (Share of respondents)



I2a&b. Considering the business events activity that your team handles in a typical year, what share are classic incentive travel programs? (excluding 'don't know')

Response base (buyers and DMCs): n = 1,526 respondents; (suppliers): n = 537 respondents

When quoting clients, the percentage-based pricing model is most popular

Most incentive travel houses are uncertain over the transition to an open-book pricing structure

The most popular business/pricing model when quoting clients for an incentive travel program is the percentage-based model – utilized by 31% of respondents. This pricing model is based on management fees calculated as a percentage of the total aggregate cost of the program.

The open book approach, which is based on billable hours, is employed by 20% of incentive travel houses. However, 59% of respondents are uncertain about the wider adoption of this approach, with only 28% agreeing that the transition will take place.

The hybrid model, a combination of two or more defined models, is used by 19% of respondents.

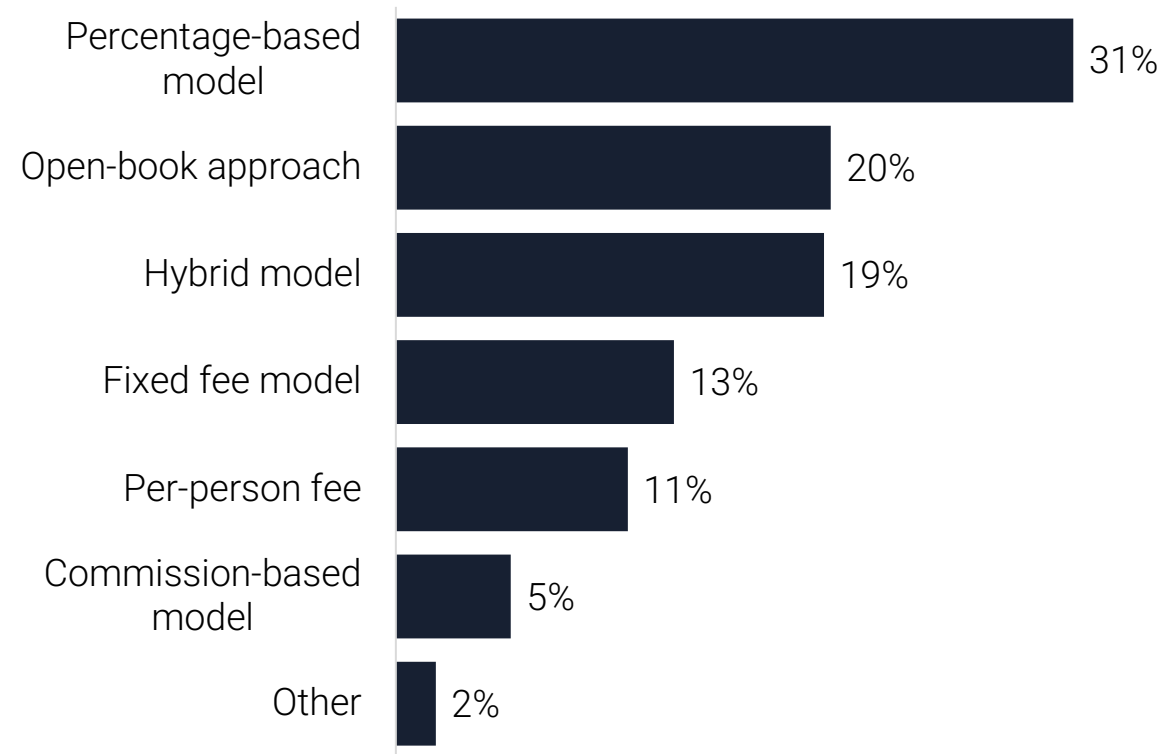
59%

Unsure whether the major incentive agencies in their market will over time transition to an open-book pricing structure.

(S5 – Response base: n = 1,446 respondents)

Incentive Travel Index

Typical business pricing model (Share of incentive travel houses)



S16a. What is your typical business/pricing model when quoting clients for their incentive travel program?
Response base (incentive travel house): n = 381 respondents

Many expect stronger activity in the coming years

Optimism is strongest among DMOs

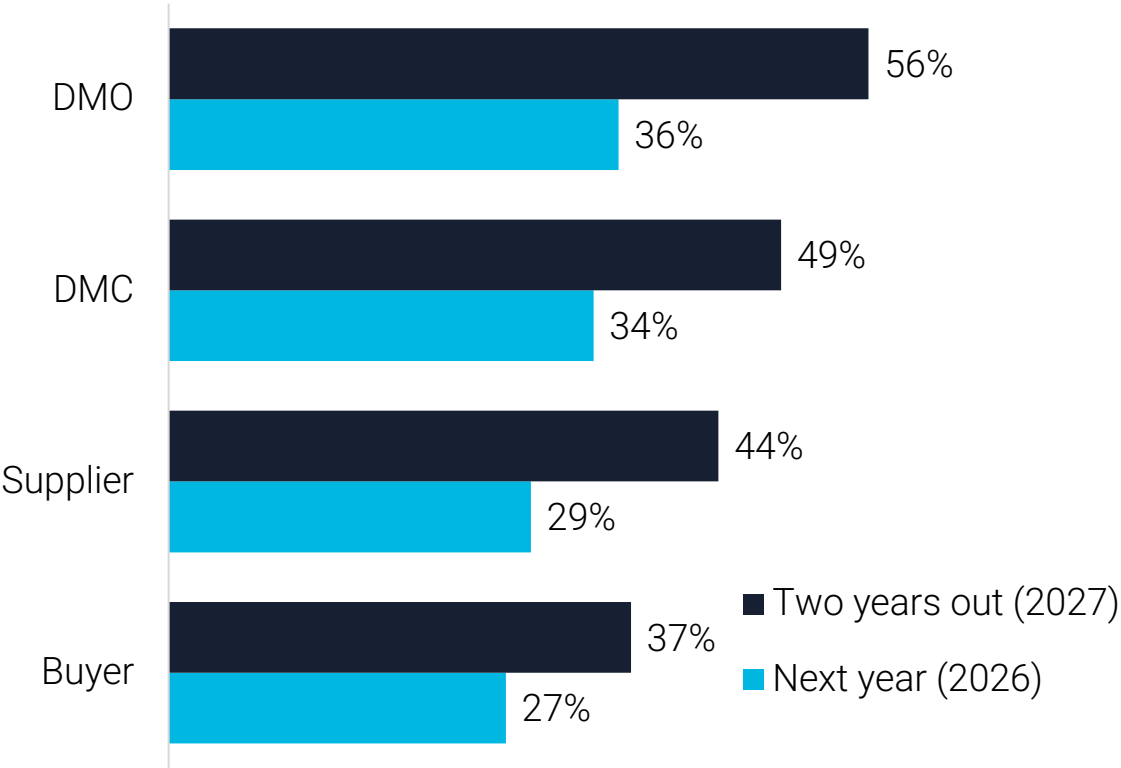
Across roles, many respondents expect incentive travel activity to be higher than 2025 levels by 2026, with a larger share expecting higher levels by 2027.

The majority of DMOs (56%) anticipate greater incentive travel activity levels in 2027 than in 2025.

In the 2024 survey, suppliers were most optimistic followed by DMCs, whereas in the 2025 survey, optimism was greatest among DMOs.

Expectations of incentive travel activity, by role

(Share of respondents reporting activity above or significantly above 2025 levels)



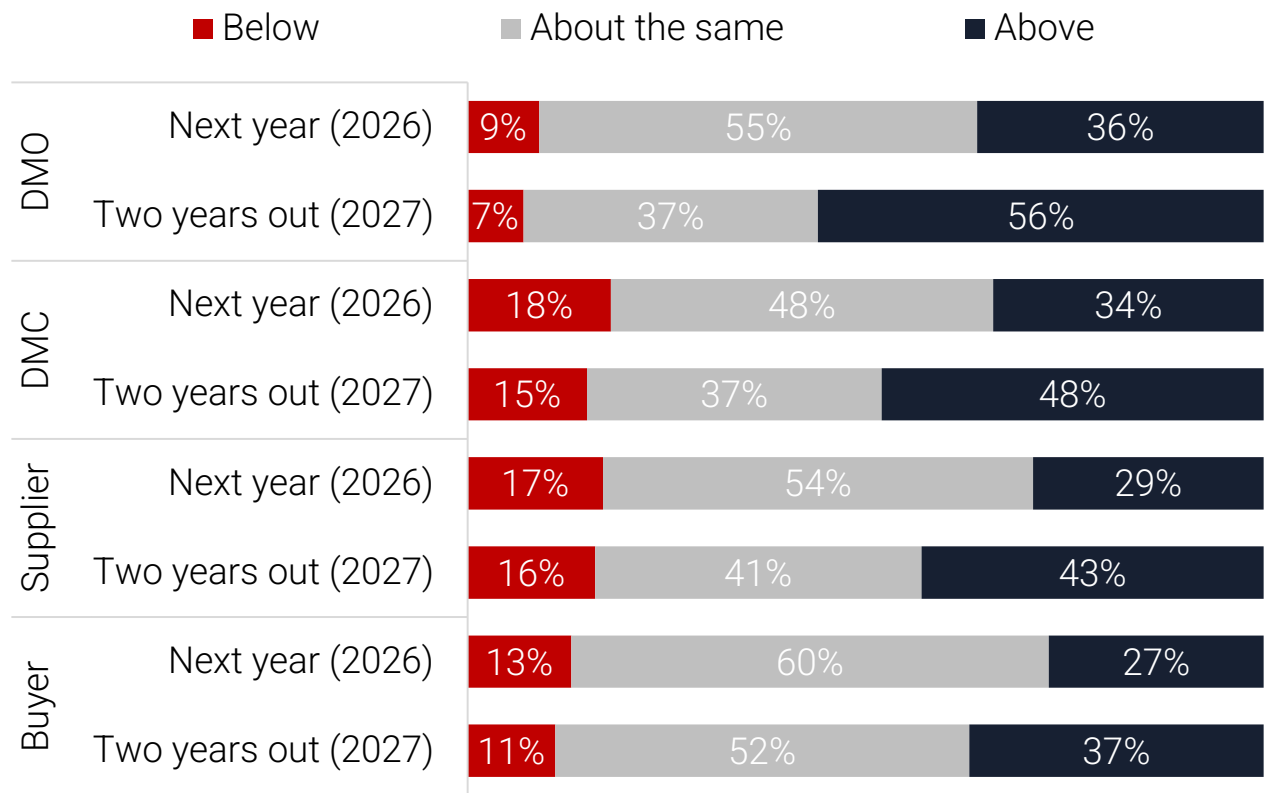
Most expect similar levels of incentive travel activity next year

In most instances, the majority (more than 50%) of respondents expect incentive travel activity to remain the same next year

Few respondents expect incentive travel activity to fall below 2025 levels, however, a significant share believe the level of activity will remain the same over the coming years.

Among buyers, the majority expect the levels of incentive travel they are involved in to remain around 2025 levels in both 2026 and 2027.

Expectations of incentive travel activity compared to 2025, by role
(Share of respondents)



APAC buyers most optimistic

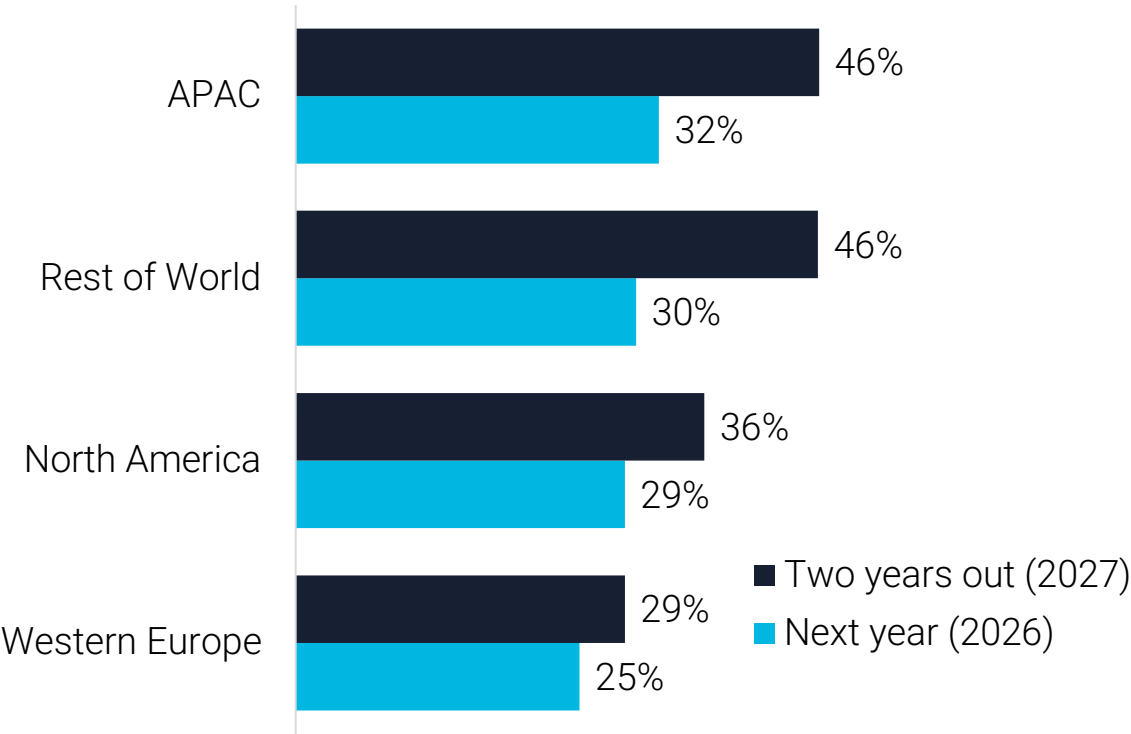
The APAC region (Asia-Pacific) is most expectant of a rise in incentive travel activity versus 2025

In APAC, 32% and 46% of buyers anticipate an increase in incentive travel activity in 2026 and 2027 compared to 2025, respectively.

Meanwhile, fewer respondents in Western Europe, expect an increase over the next two years.

Expectations of incentive travel activity for buyers, by region

(Share of buyers reporting activity above or significantly above 2025 levels)



Further into recovery, growth optimism moderates

A smaller share of respondents in 2025 expect stronger activity for the coming year, compared to the prior survey

The period of initial gains post-pandemic is passing as expectations for a pickup in future incentive travel activity (next year) have moderated across buyers in all regions, except Western Europe.

Momentum has slowed significantly in APAC as 32% of buyers in 2025 expect incentive travel activity to increase the following year, compared to 52% in 2024 who had expected an increase the following year.

Three-in-four survey respondents point to the fact that incentive travel is as strong as ever, but the business of incentive travel gets tougher every year.

75%

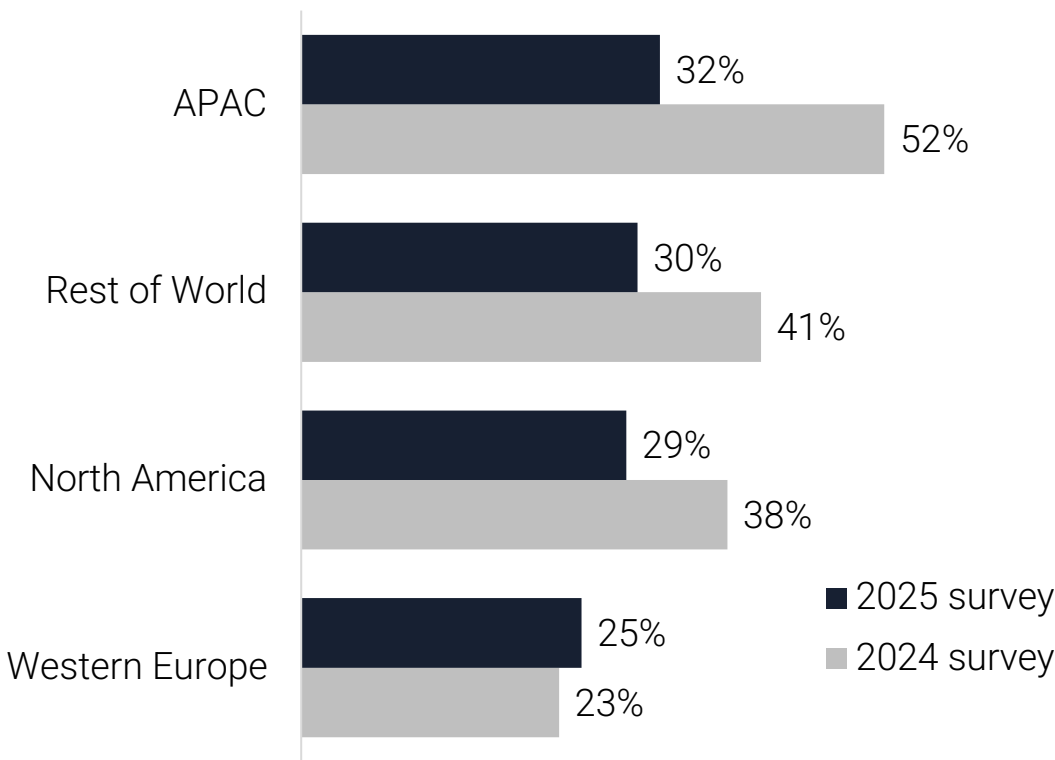
Agree the value of incentive travel is as strong as ever, but the business of incentive travel gets tougher every year.

(S5 – Response base: n = 1,446 respondents)

Incentive Travel Index

Expectations of incentive travel activity for buyers next year, by region

(Share of buyers reporting activity above or significantly above survey year levels)



G1a. Level of incentive travel activity compared to 2025, in terms of the number of people (qualifiers, guests, and other participants)?
Response base (buyers): n = 984 respondents

Pharma and health care industry most optimistic

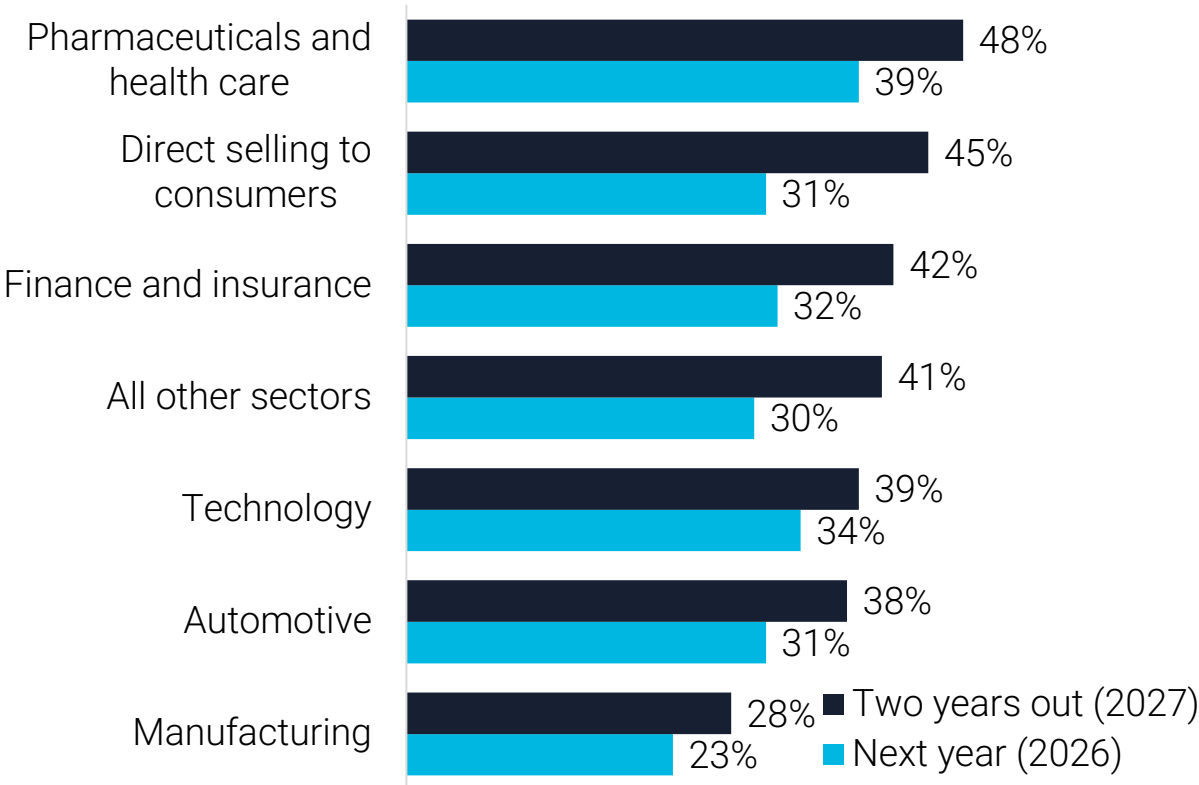
The pharmaceuticals and health care industry is most expectant of a rise in incentive travel activity versus 2025

The pharmaceuticals and health care and direct selling to consumers industries are the most optimistic, with close to half of buyers anticipating a rise in activity in the next two years.

In contrast, the manufacturing sector remains the most cautious, with fewer than three in ten expecting a rise in activity over 2025 levels.

Expectations of incentive travel activity for buyers, by industry

(Share of buyers reporting activity above or significantly above 2025 levels)



G1a. Level of incentive travel activity compared to 2025, in terms of the number of people (qualifiers, guests, and other participants)?

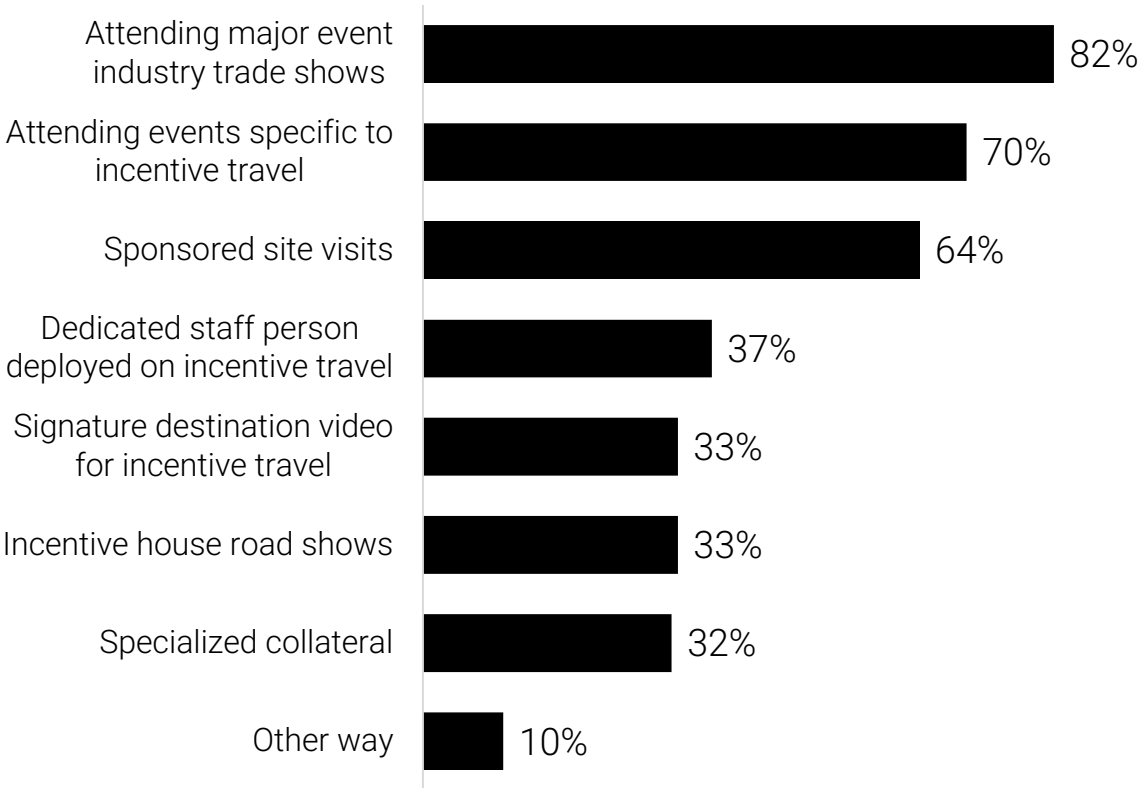
Response base (buyers): n = 984 respondents

Most DMOs market incentive travel at major trade shows

DMOs adopt different methods when marketing incentive travel

For DMOs, attending major industry trade shows is the top marketing method (82%). Other popular tactics include attending niche events for incentive travel (70%) and sponsored site visits (64%).

Method of incentive travel marketing for DMOs (Share of respondents)

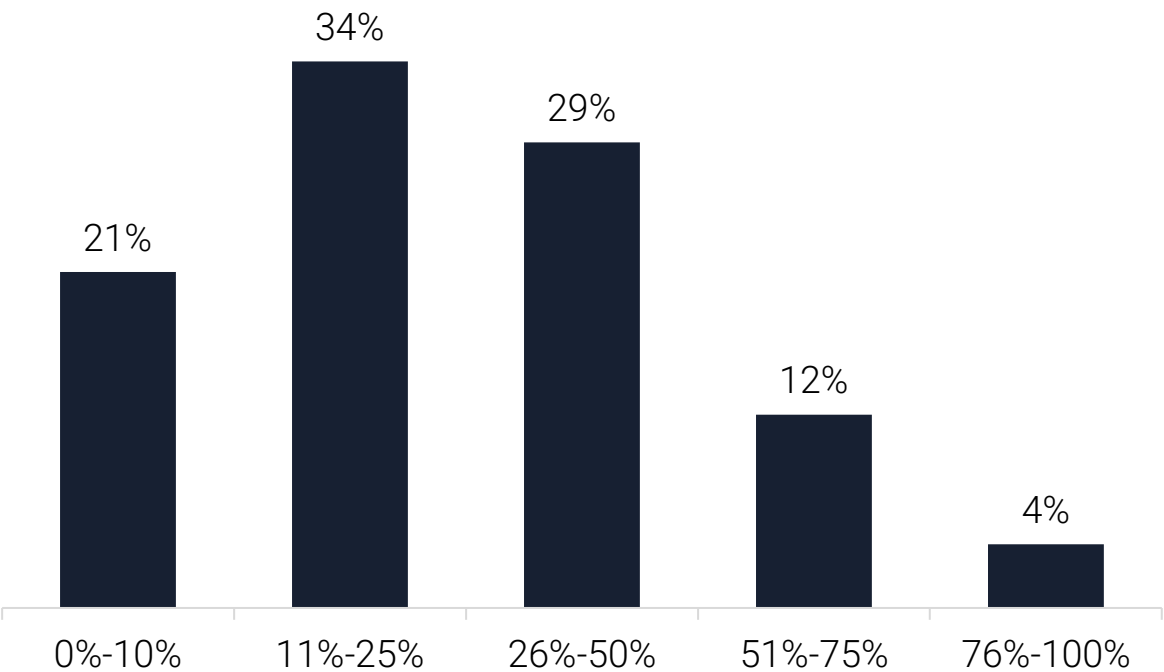


DMOs experience a range of incentive travel activity levels

Incentive travel is an important segment for many destination respondents

DMOs work to attract both leisure and business travelers, with incentive travel forming a key segment of business events. In fact, over one-third (34%) of DMOs report that 11-25% of all business events in the destination are for incentive travel.

Share of business events in a destination as classic incentive travel programs
(Share of respondents)



The background of the slide is a photograph of an airport terminal, overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. In the foreground, several red and black rolling suitcases are lined up. In the background, an airplane is visible in flight against a bright sky. The overall scene suggests travel and transportation.

4 Program Costs and Budget

Average spend per person varies across buyers

Programs demonstrate a wide range of spending levels

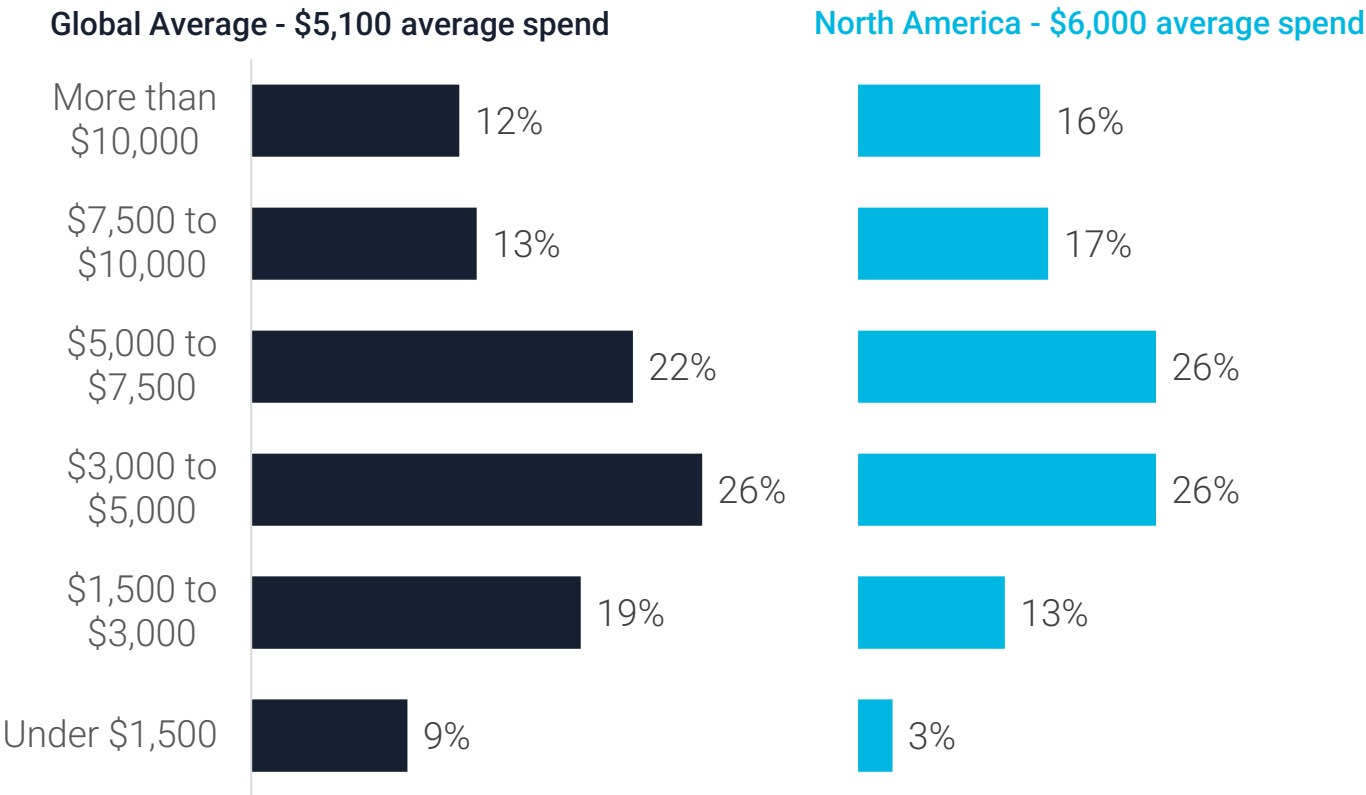
Buyers reported program spending ranging from less than \$1,500 to more than \$10,000 per person. The greatest level of activity (26%) was reported occurring in the range of \$3,000 to \$5,000 per person.

Globally, spending on incentive travel programs is increasing as the global share of programs greater than \$5,000 grew from 41% in 2024 to 47% in 2025.

North American buyers reported higher per-person spending than the global average, with 59% of programs exceeding \$5,000 per person compared to 47% globally.

Note: Spending per person is defined as total program cost in US dollars divided by the number of people, including qualifiers and guests in the count of people. Total cost includes air transportation, management fees, taxes, and other fees.

Incentive travel spend per person for buyers, by region (Average spend per person range)



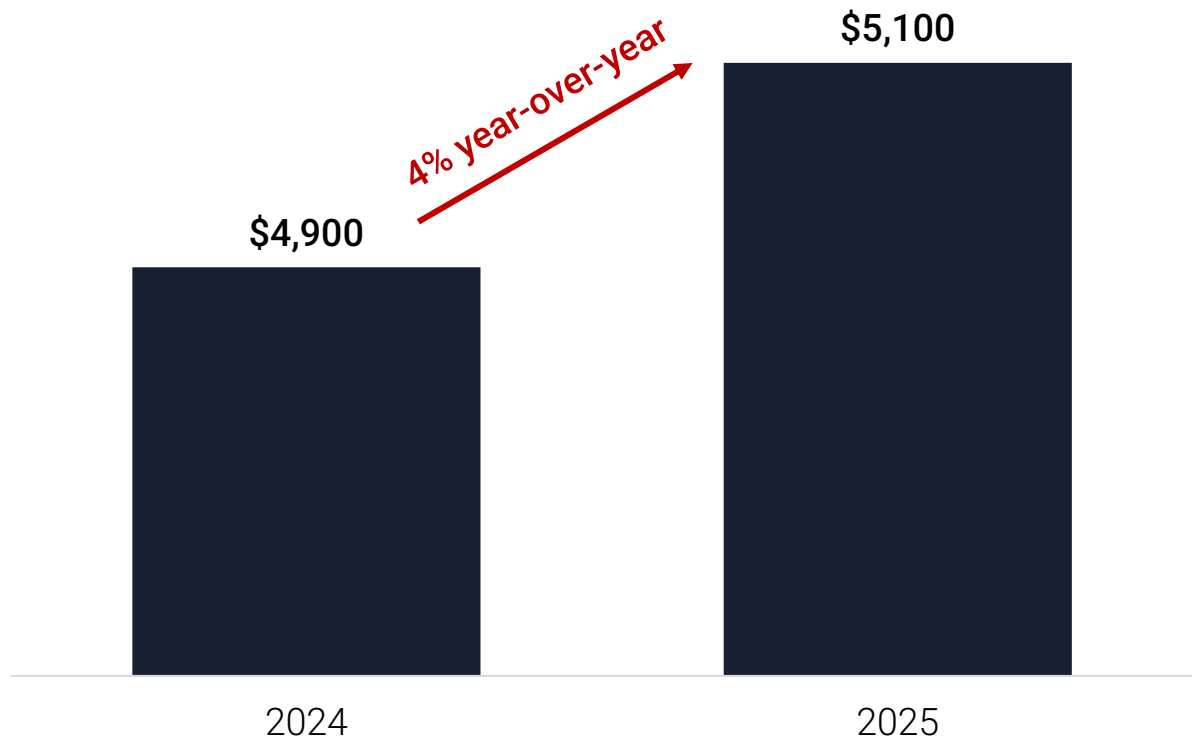
Average spend per person increased 4% to \$5,100 in 2025

Average spend per person topped \$5,100 in 2025

In 2024, the global average spend per person for an incentive travel program was \$4,900. In 2025, average spend increased 4% to \$5,100 per person.

Growth in incentive travel spend per person of 4% may be compared to the Oxford Economics 2025 forecasts of overall price inflation of 3.5% and global business travel spending of 6.4% (nominal).

Incentive travel spend per person for buyers (Average spend per person)



Average spending by North American buyers was \$6,000

Global average boosted by American buyers

North American buyers reported the highest spend per person in 2025 at \$6,000, and is the only region above the average.*

Spending on incentive travel as reported by APAC averages \$4,300. This was followed by average program cost in the Rest of World at \$4,000 and Western Europe at \$3,200.

26%

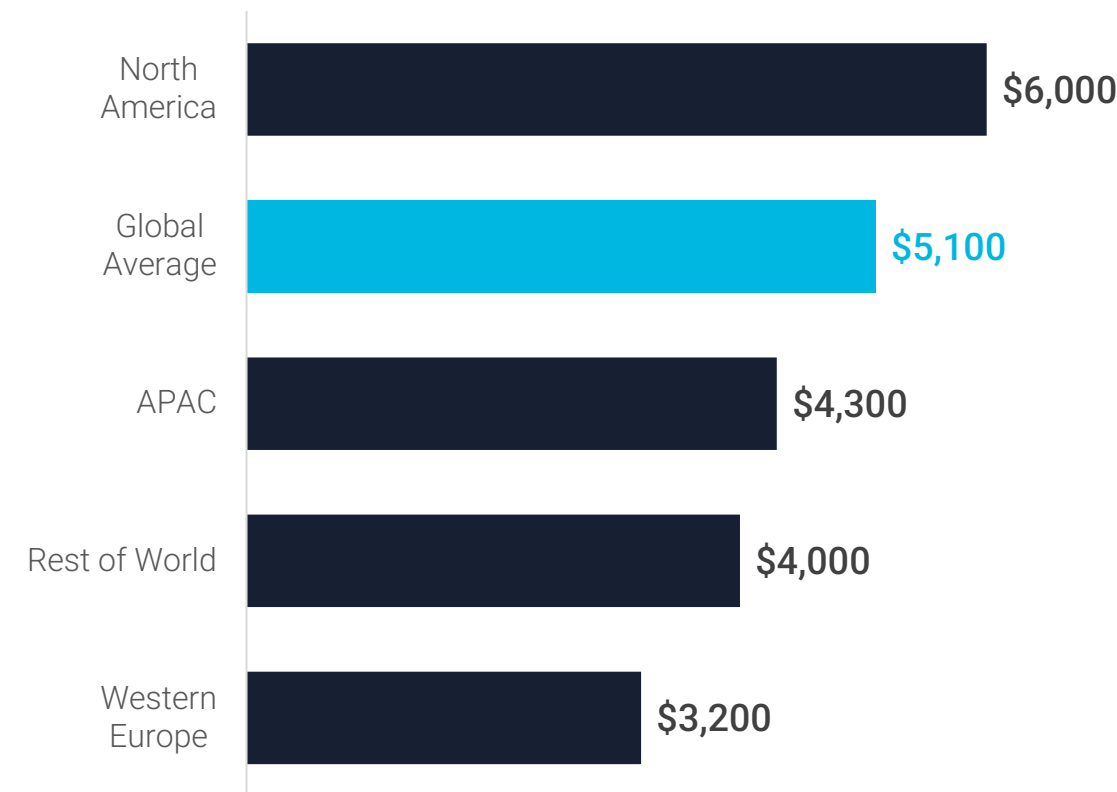
Share of worldwide buyers reporting spend per person at \$3,000 to \$5,000 (the most frequently cited range)

*North America has a strong weighting on the average as its share of the respondent base is 41%.

Incentive Travel Index

Incentive travel spend per person for buyers, by region

(Average spend per person)



G10. Distribution of incentive travel programs in 2025 by spending per person

Response base (buyers): n = 764 respondents

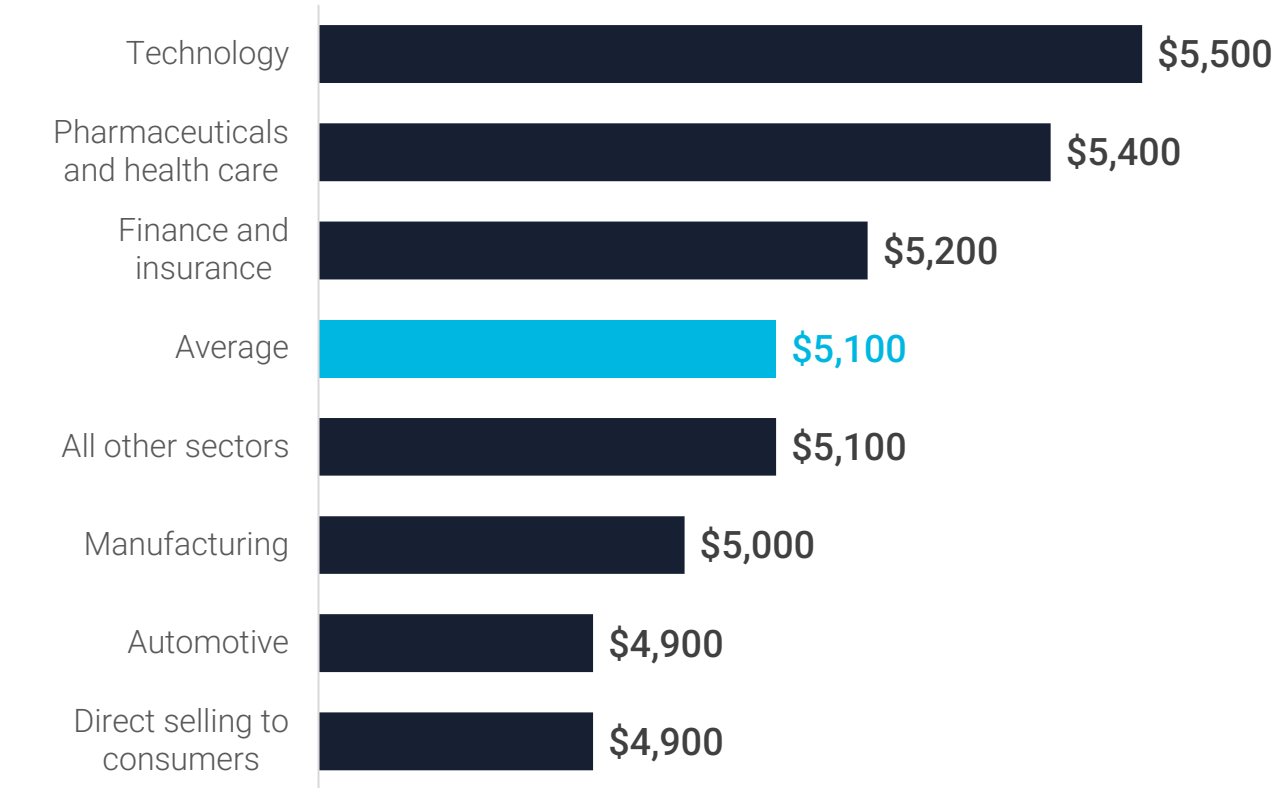
Per person spend in the tech industry was \$5,500

Spend per person for technology, pharmaceuticals and health care, and finance and insurance are higher than the overall average

Buyers in the technology sector report the highest average per person spend by industry in 2025 at \$5,500.

The pharmaceuticals and health care industry followed at \$5,400 in 2025.

Incentive travel spend per person for buyers, by industry
(Average spend per person)

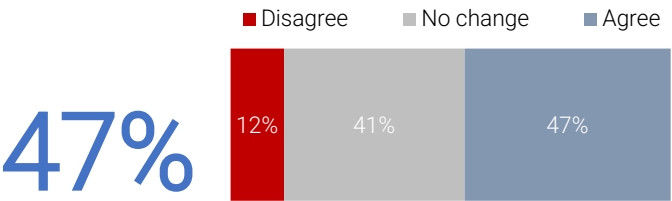


Highest tier programs are more than double the cost of others

Average spending on highest tier programs was \$9,000 in 2025

Average spend per person on the highest tier programs was \$9,000 in 2025. Other programs were less than half the average spend of the highest tier, as broad participation programs averaged \$4,300, followed by typical channel programs at \$4,100.

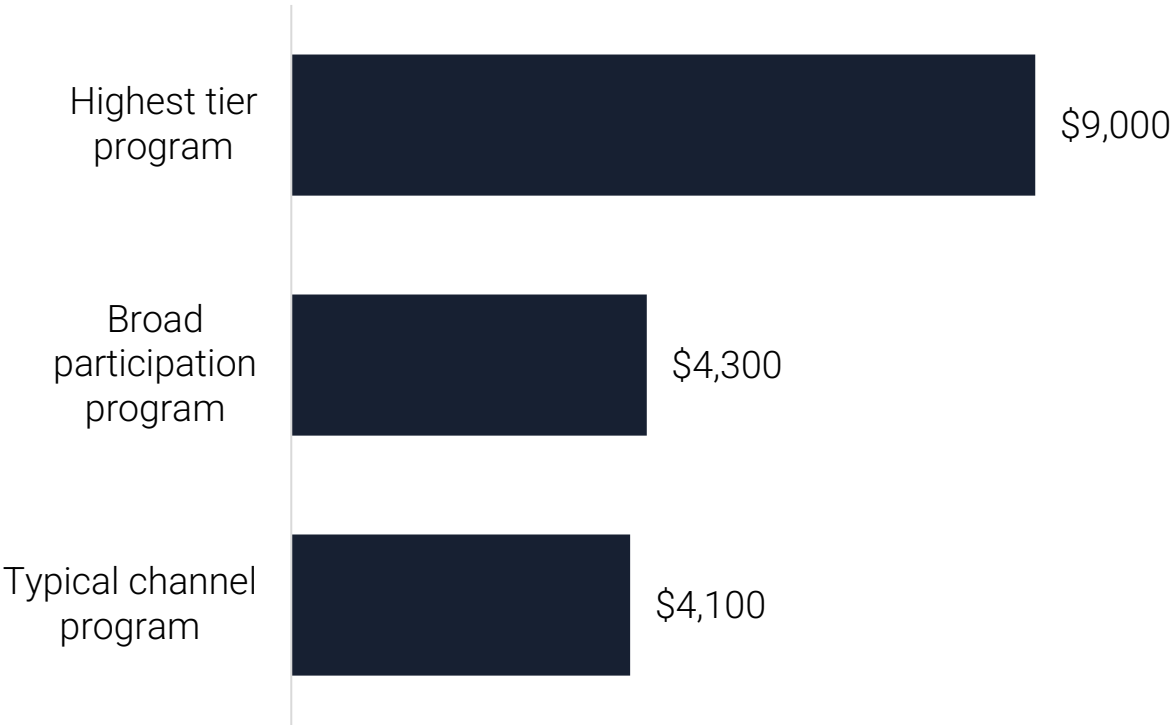
Among buyers, 47% believe that there will be more use of tiers when planning incentive travel programs in the future.



Agree there will be more use of tiers within the incentive program in the future.

(D7 – Response base: n = 555 respondents)

Incentive travel spend per person for buyers, by tiers
(Average spend per person)



G12. Please indicate the typical spending per person within your planned incentive travel programs this year (2025) by program type.

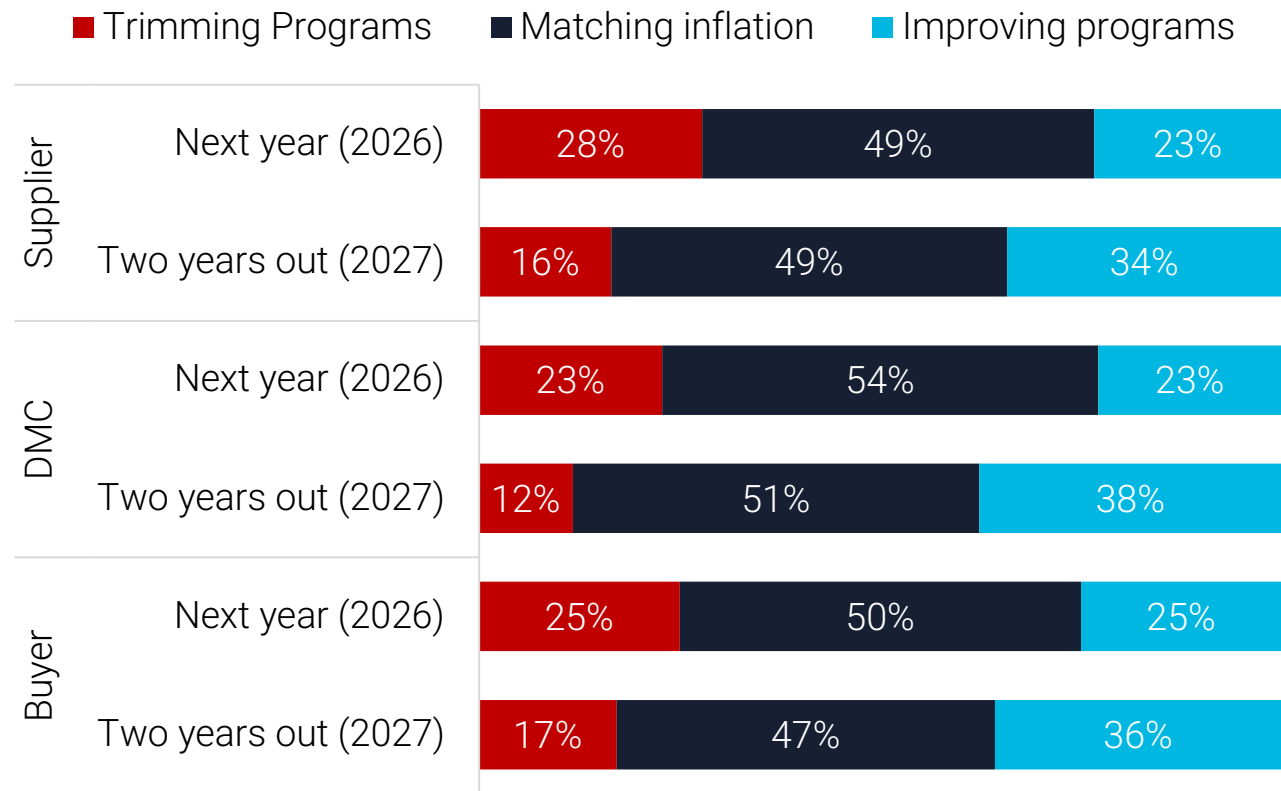
Response base (buyers): n = 514 respondents

Many expect growth in per-person spend to match inflation

Fewer respondents in 2027 expect program cuts than in 2026, as the share seeking to improve programs increase

Many respondents expect spend per person to match the rate of inflation next year and two years out.
Compared to 2026, the share of respondents expecting spending increases to match inflation in 2027 falls as more expect increases due to improving programs.

Expectations of spend per person, by role
(Share of respondents)



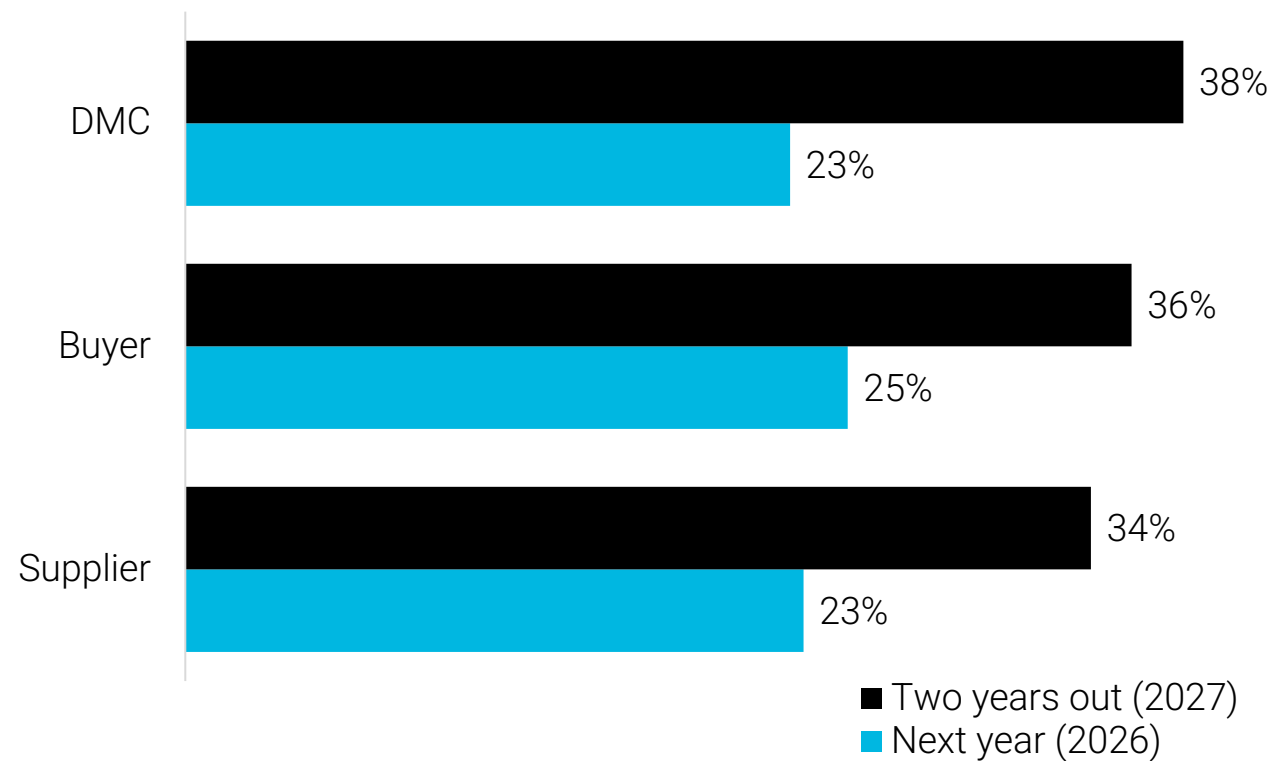
Program improvements to raise costs

By 2027, more than one-third of respondents expect program improvements will increase the level of spend per person

Over the next two years, program improvements are anticipated to play a greater part in per person spending growth.

By role in incentive travel, more DMCs believe program improvements will be the main contributor to per person spend growth.

Expectations of spend per person increasing due to improving programs, by role
(Share of respondents choosing 'improving programs')



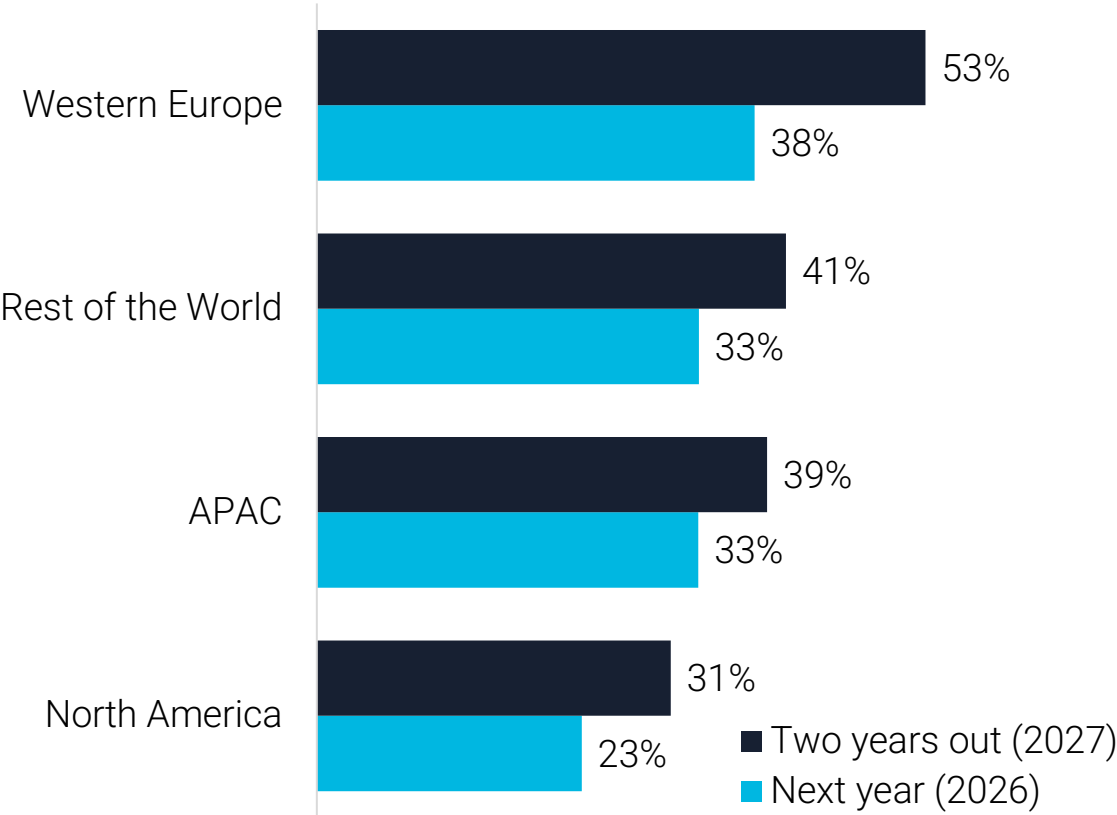
Western Europe leads, North America lags in plans to boost per-person spend

Western European buyers are most likely to increase spend per person due to improving programs in the coming years

Travel professionals around the world anticipate a rise in per-person spending for incentive travel over the next two years, led by Western Europe where the majority of respondents (53%) expect an increase within the next two years due to improving programs.

In contrast, North American planners are more conservative in outlook, showing a less pronounced readiness to raise budgets on a per-person basis, with costs already ranked highest globally.

Expectations of spend per person increasing due to improving programs, by region
(Share of buyers choosing 'improving programs')



Hotel price increases in 2026 are expected by 49% of buyers

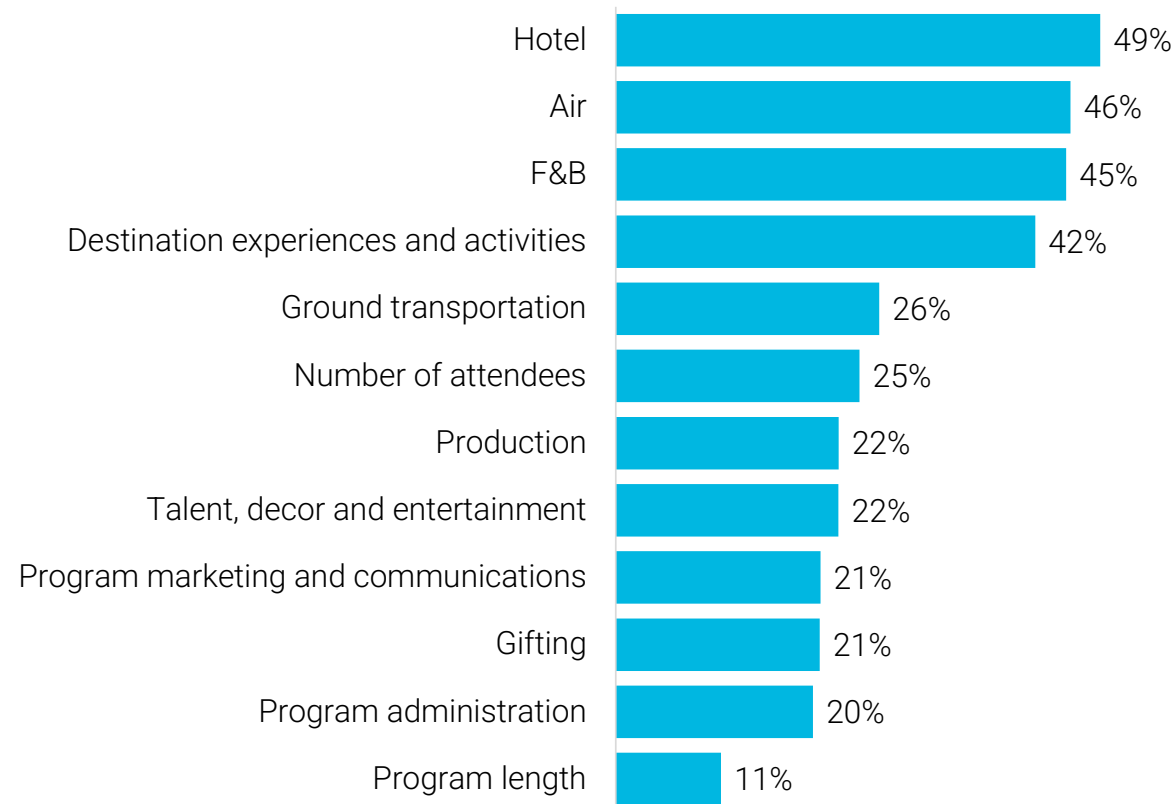
Increases expected in key budget drivers

Nealy half of all buyers expect spending on hotels to increase by 2026, followed by increases to air, food and beverages, and then activities.

An increase in the number of attendees in 2026 is expected to drive budget changes among 25% of buyers. As a result, budgets in 2026 are likely to be driven more by prices than demand.

Increases in key budget drivers

(Share of buyers who see an increase or large increase)



Less spending expected on gifting and entertainment

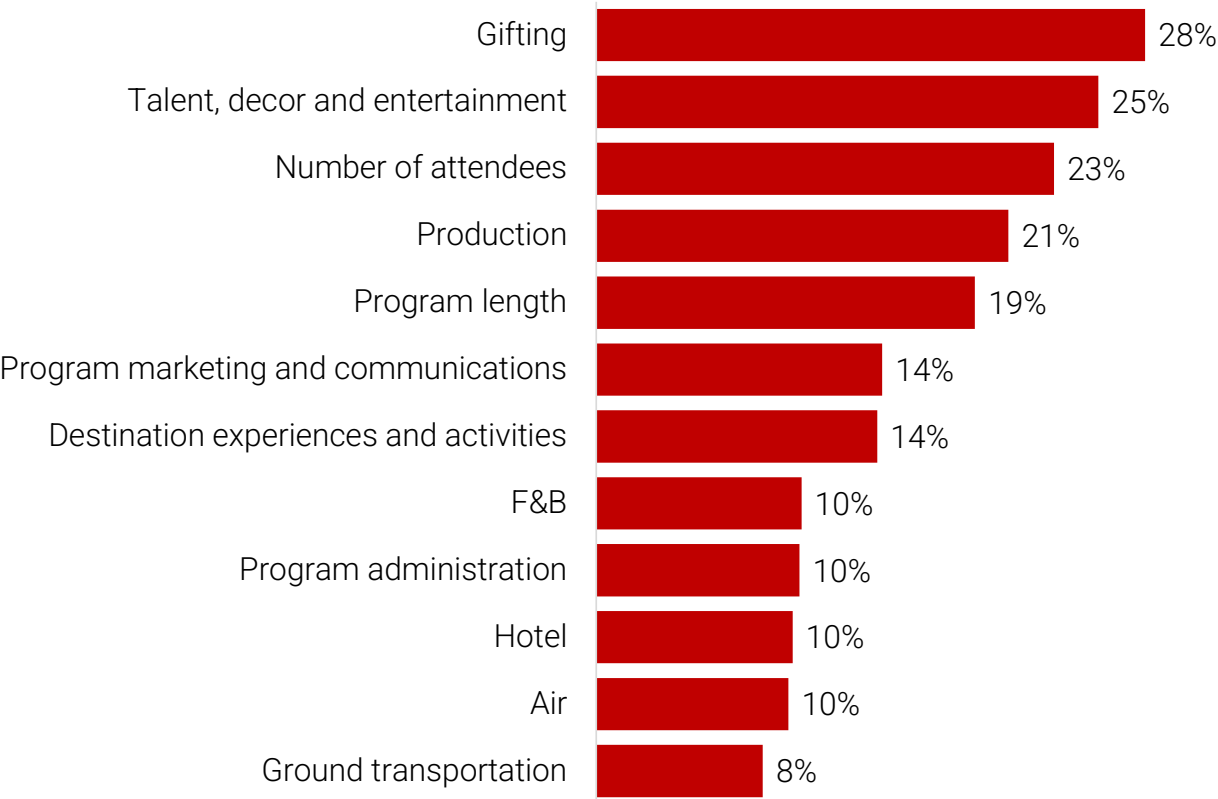
More buyers expect budgets on gifting to decline in 2026

Among respondents, gifting was cited most frequently (28%) as the budget item that is likely to decrease in 2026, followed by spending on talent, décor, and entertainment (25%).

The number of attendees is being scrutinized, with 23% of respondents expecting a cut in 2026.

Reductions in key budget drivers

(Share of buyers who see a decrease or large decrease)



Hotel and airfare to account for nearly half of program budget

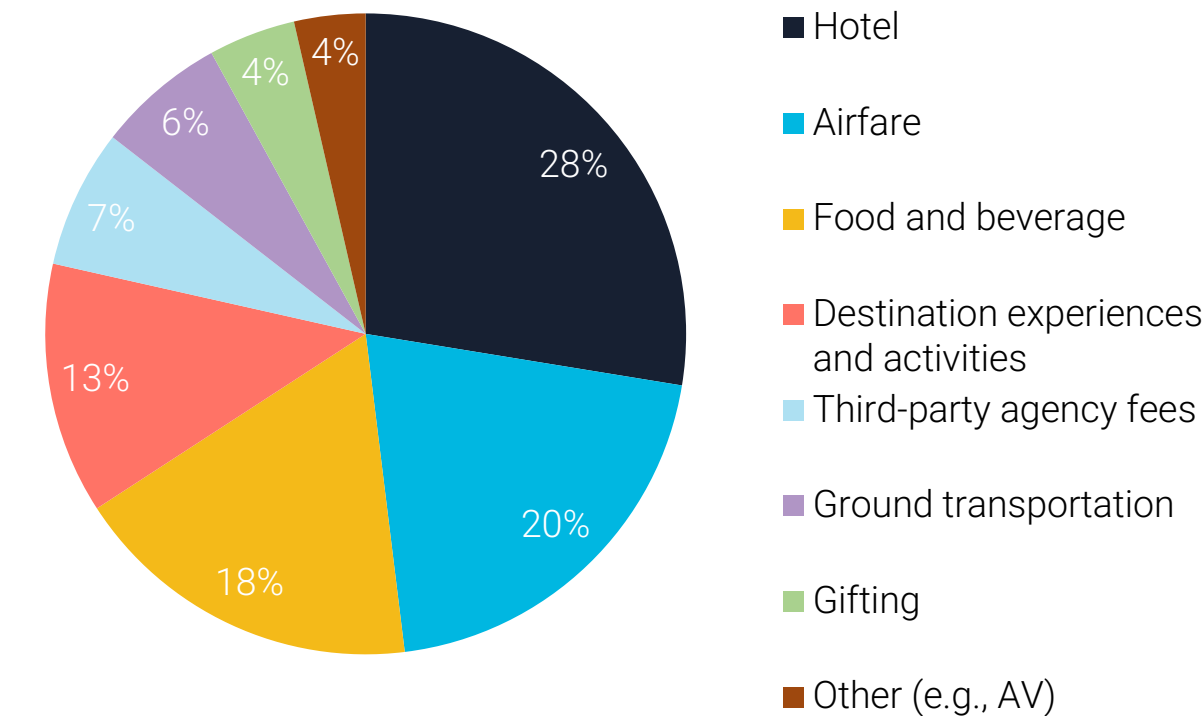
Hotel, airfare, and F&B top incentive budgets

The largest expense expected in 2026 for incentive travel programs is on hotels, which should represent 28% of total budget allocation (up from 27% in 2024). Airfare will comprise 20%, followed by food and beverage spending (18%), and activities (13%).

48%

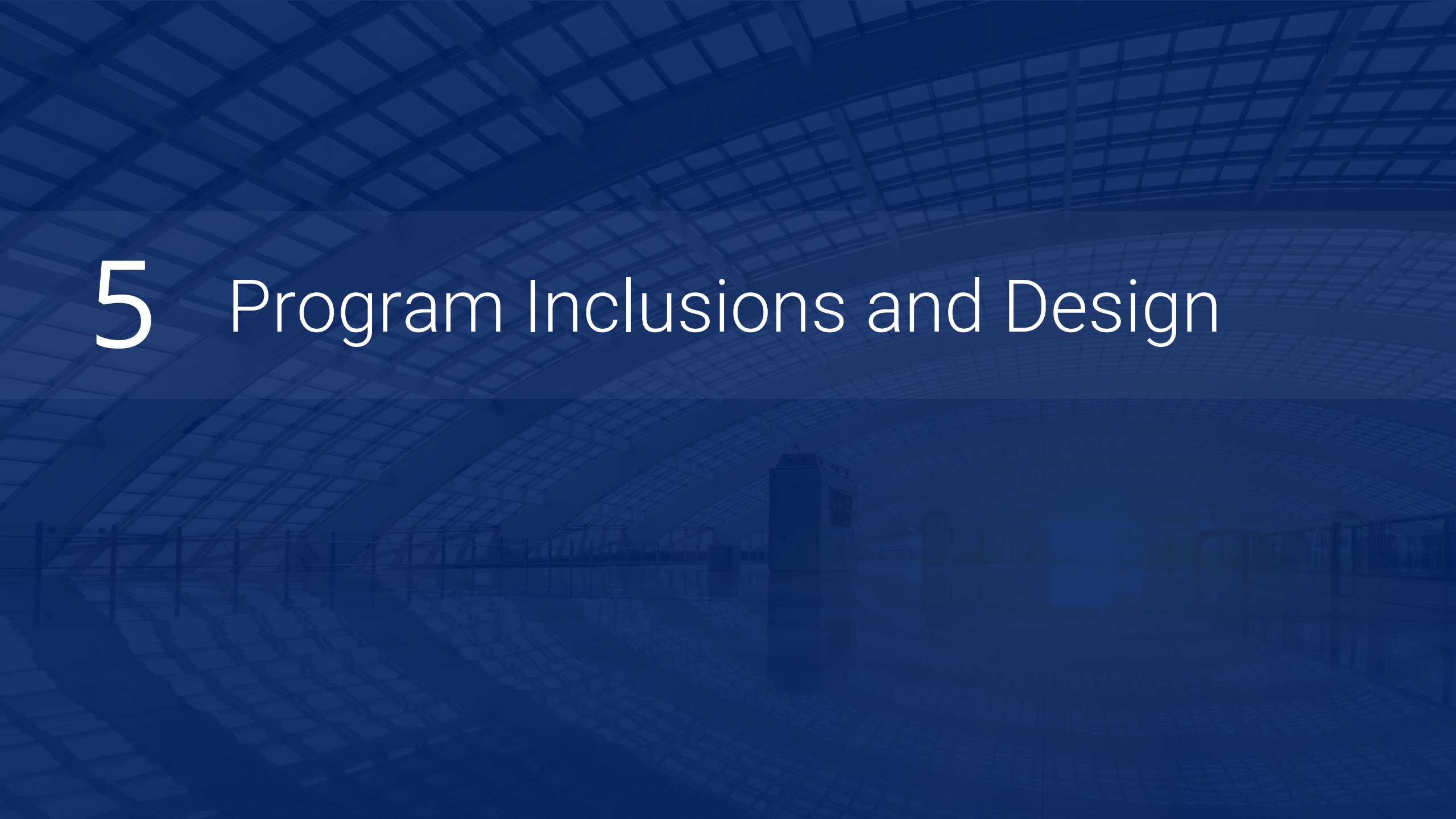
Share of budget spent on hotel accommodation and airfare

Average program budget allocation in 2026
(Spending category share of total budget allocation)



G4. What is the average program budget allocation of programs next year (2026)?
Response base (buyers): n = 541 respondents

5 Program Inclusions and Design



Traditional incentive programs remain popular

Traditional incentive travel is alive and well, even as many buyers do not see increased interest in broader company-wide events

The popularity of traditional incentive programs is demonstrated by two-in-five (40%) buyers seeing increased use of traditional qualification-based sales incentives.

Meanwhile, broader participation is less of a focus as 44% disagree that there will be more inclusive company-wide trips, without specific selection criteria.

Future of incentive travel

(Share of respondents)

2-in-5

Agree there will be an increased use of traditional, qualification-based sales incentives

44%

Disagree that there will be more inclusive company-wide trips, without specific qualification criteria

D7. How do you see incentive programs overall changing as you plan future events?

Response base (buyers): n = 555 respondents

Group experiences and relationship-building are key to success

Group cultural experiences is the most appreciated activity in an incentive travel program

Group cultural experiences (60%), group dining experiences (58%), relationship building (53%), and free time (53%) were also considered important by most respondents.

Activities key to a successful program

(Share of respondents)



P2. Which of the following program activities do you consider most important for a successful incentive travel program?

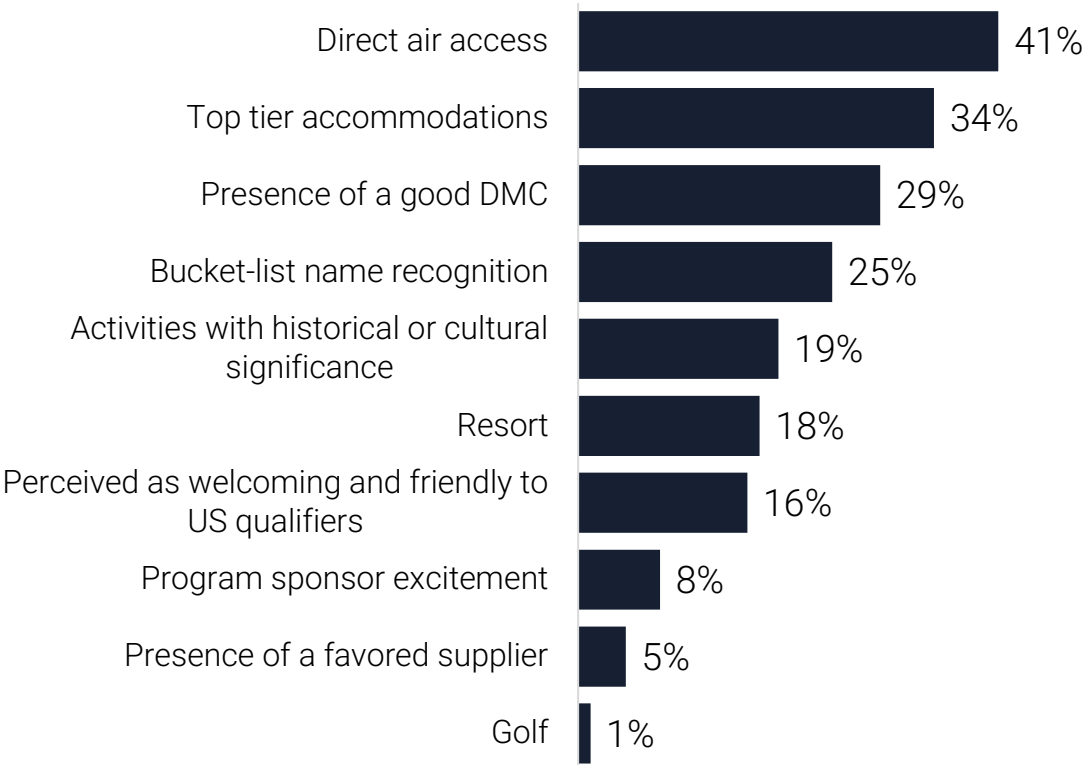
Response base (all except DMOs): n = 1,576 respondents (multiple responses allowed)

Direct air access is the most commonly cited ‘must-have’

Certain aspects of a destination are essential during the selection process

Direct air access and top-tier accommodations are the most critical factors for buyers, with 41% and 34% of respondents identifying them as “must-haves”, respectively. The presence of a good DMC is also an important requirement, cited by 29% of respondents.

Destination must haves (Share of respondents)

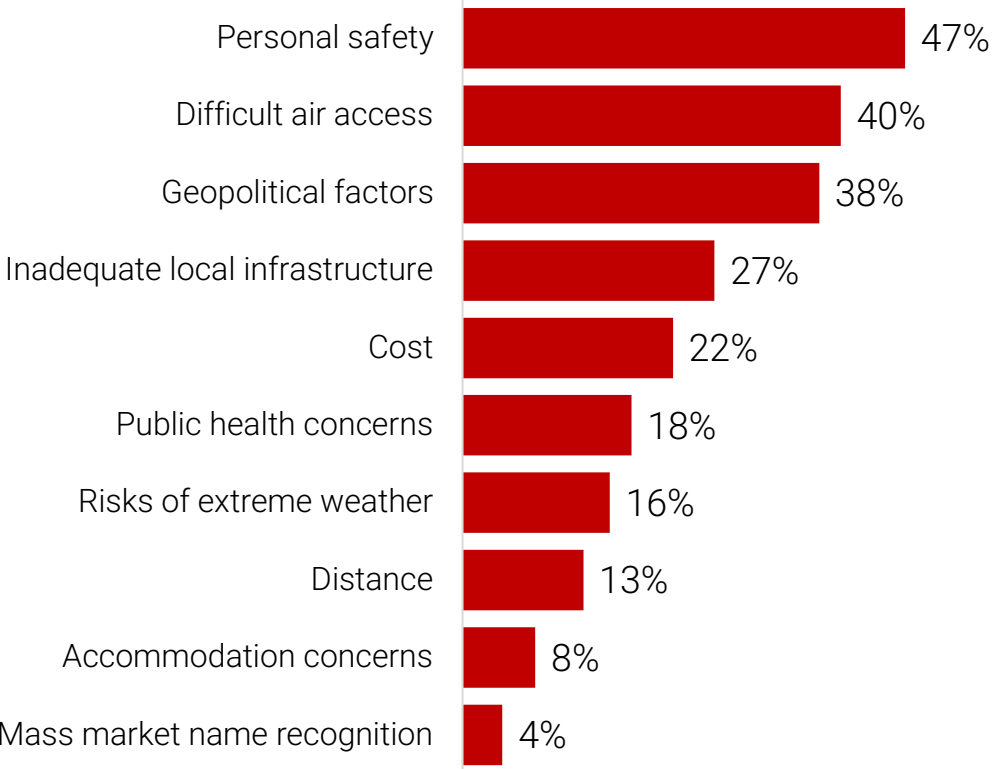


Safety concerns are the top reason to disqualify a destination

There are numerous factors that can disqualify a destination from consideration for an incentive travel program

The primary disqualifier for a travel destination is personal safety, which was cited by 47% of buyers as a top concern. Difficult air access (40%) and geopolitical factors (38%) rank as the next most significant deterrents. Inadequate local infrastructure was another concern among 27% of all buyers, underscoring that security and accessibility are the most decisive factors for travelers.

Destination disqualifiers
(Share of respondents)



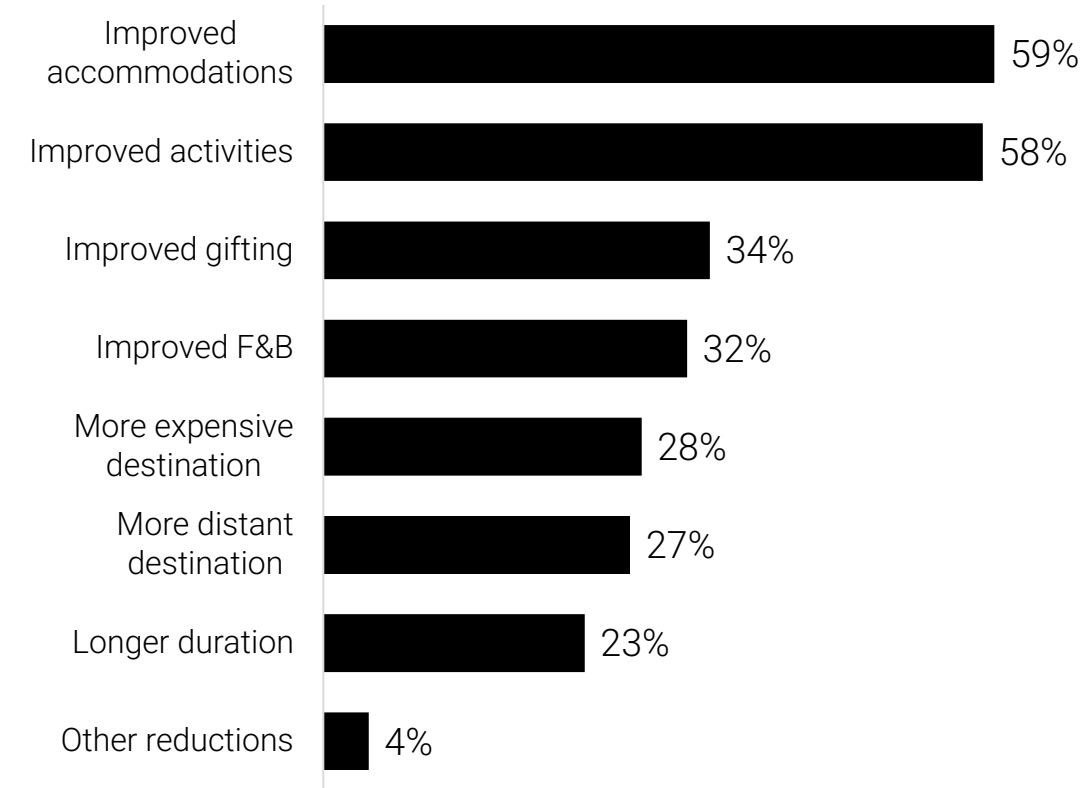
Buyers are finding ways to improve programs in 2026

The share of buyers expecting to improve programs in 2026 is 25%

The most cited way of improving programs is by improving accommodations (59%), improved activities (58%).

Ways of improving programs in 2026

(Share of buyers reporting they are “improving programs” in 2026)



Buyers are also trimming program costs in certain areas

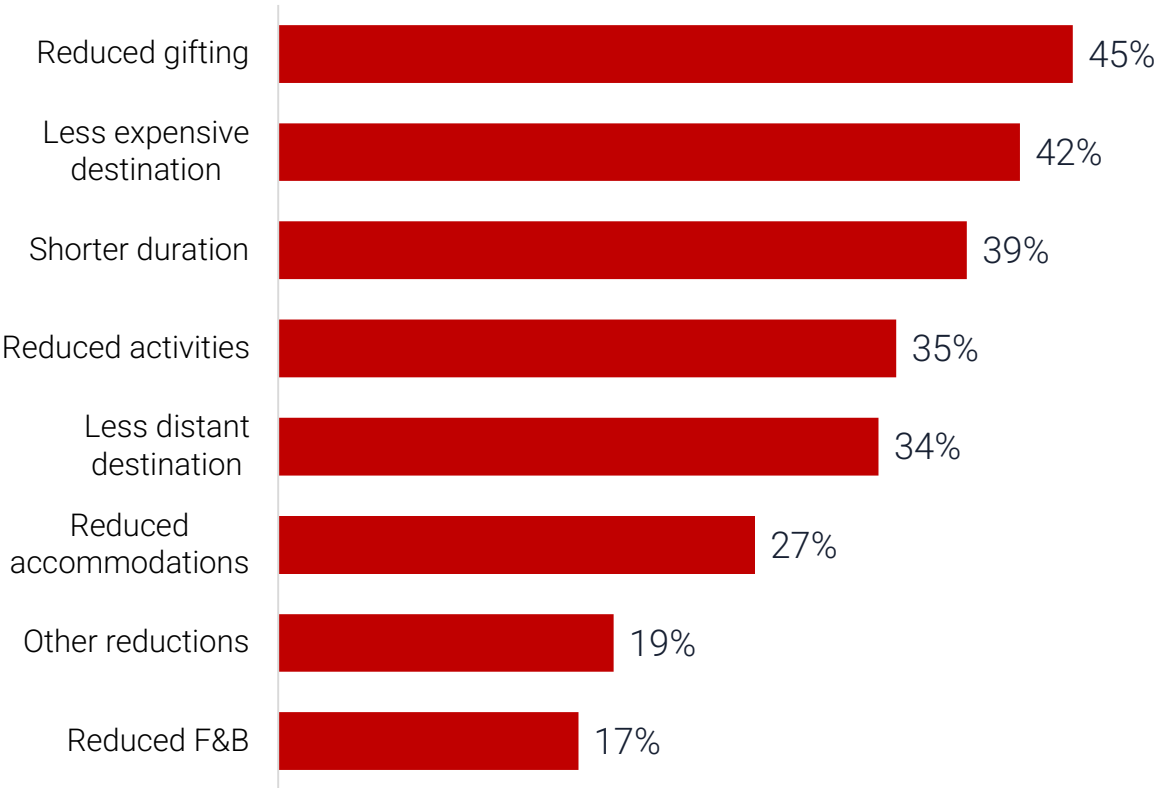
The share of buyers expecting to trim programs in 2026 is 25%

Despite expectations for budget increases, 25% of buyers expect to trim per person spending.

The most cited way of trimming program spend per person is by reducing gifting (45%), followed by a less expensive destination (42%). Shorter-duration trips are also being used as a means of “cutting back” by 42% of buyers.

Ways of trimming programs in 2026

(Share of buyers reporting they are “trimming programs” in 2026)



Ways of trimming programs differ by region

North Americans are trimming programs by reducing gifting

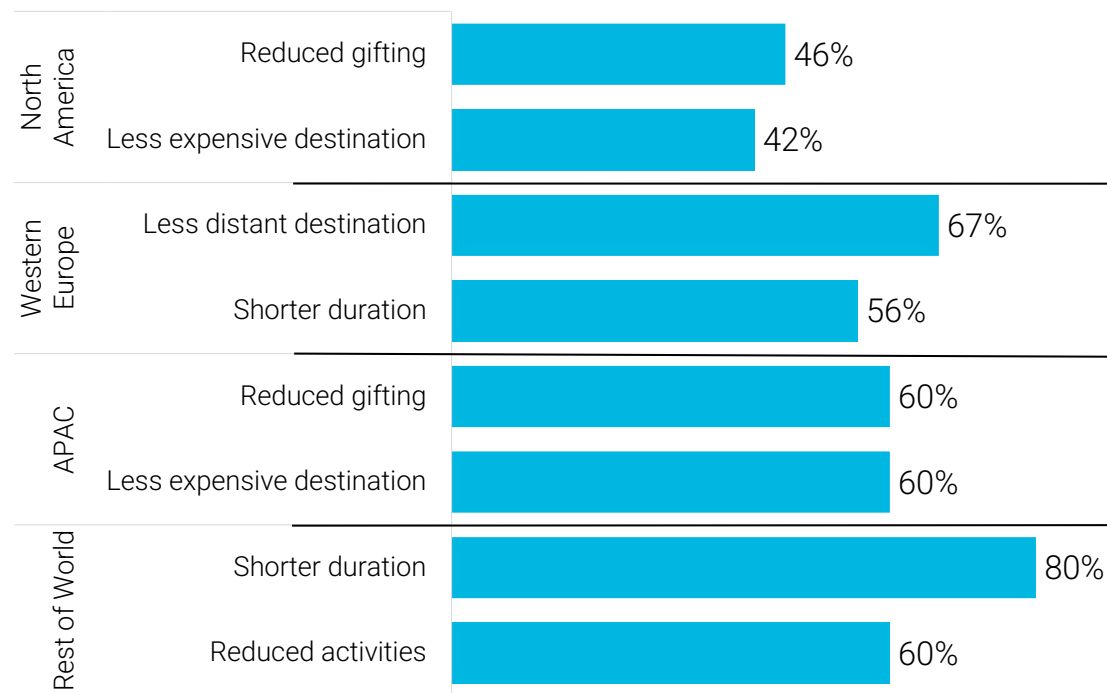
In North America, most buyers are trimming programs by reducing gifting (46%) and choosing less expensive destinations.

For Western Europe, a less distant destination (67%) and shorter durations (56%) are the most cited ways of cutting back.

Reduced gifting and a less expensive destination were most commonly cited for APAC (60%), while shorter durations (80%) and reduced activities (60%) were the main means of trimming programs for the Rest of World.

Ways of trimming spend per person in 2026, by region

(Share of buyers reporting they are “trimming programs” in 2026)



A blue-tinted photograph of an airport terminal. In the foreground, three red rolling suitcases are lined up. In the background, a large airplane is visible in flight against a bright sky. The terminal building with its glass facade is also visible.

6 Destination Selection

Buyers actively seek new destinations not used before

More buyers are looking for new destinations they haven't used before

Buyers are increasingly looking for something new and seeking destinations they haven't used before (69%). Already, 63% have booked a new destination not used previously for programs occurring in the next two years (2026 and 2027).

Destinations within shorter distances from participant origin have gained popularity (44%), while all-inclusive resorts should see increased use (42%).

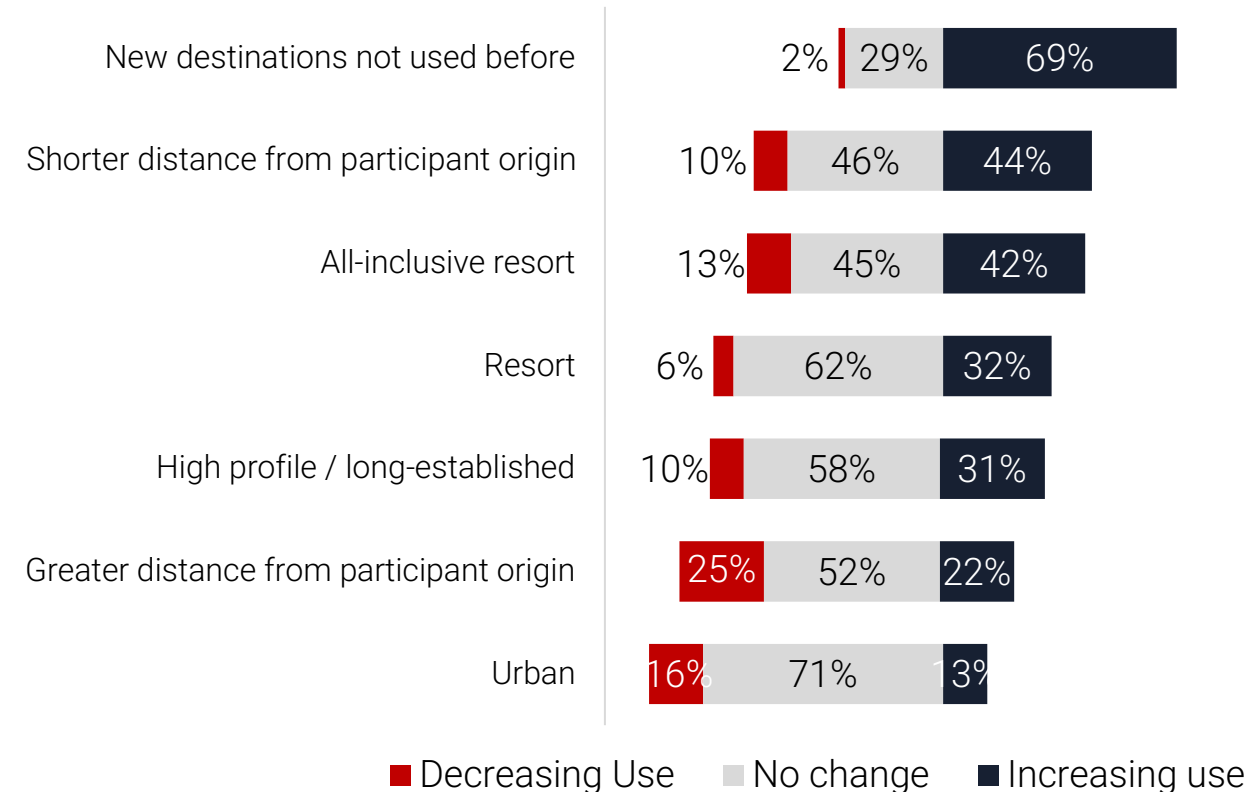
Urban locations and places that are a greater distance from participant origin see more decreasing use than increasing use.

63%

Have booked a new destination not used previously for programs occurring in the next two years (2026 and 2027).

(D9 – Response base: n = 582 respondents)

Changing destination types (Share of buyers)



D3a. Do you see destination types changing?
Response base (buyers): n = 560 respondents

Buyers across the world are considering new destinations

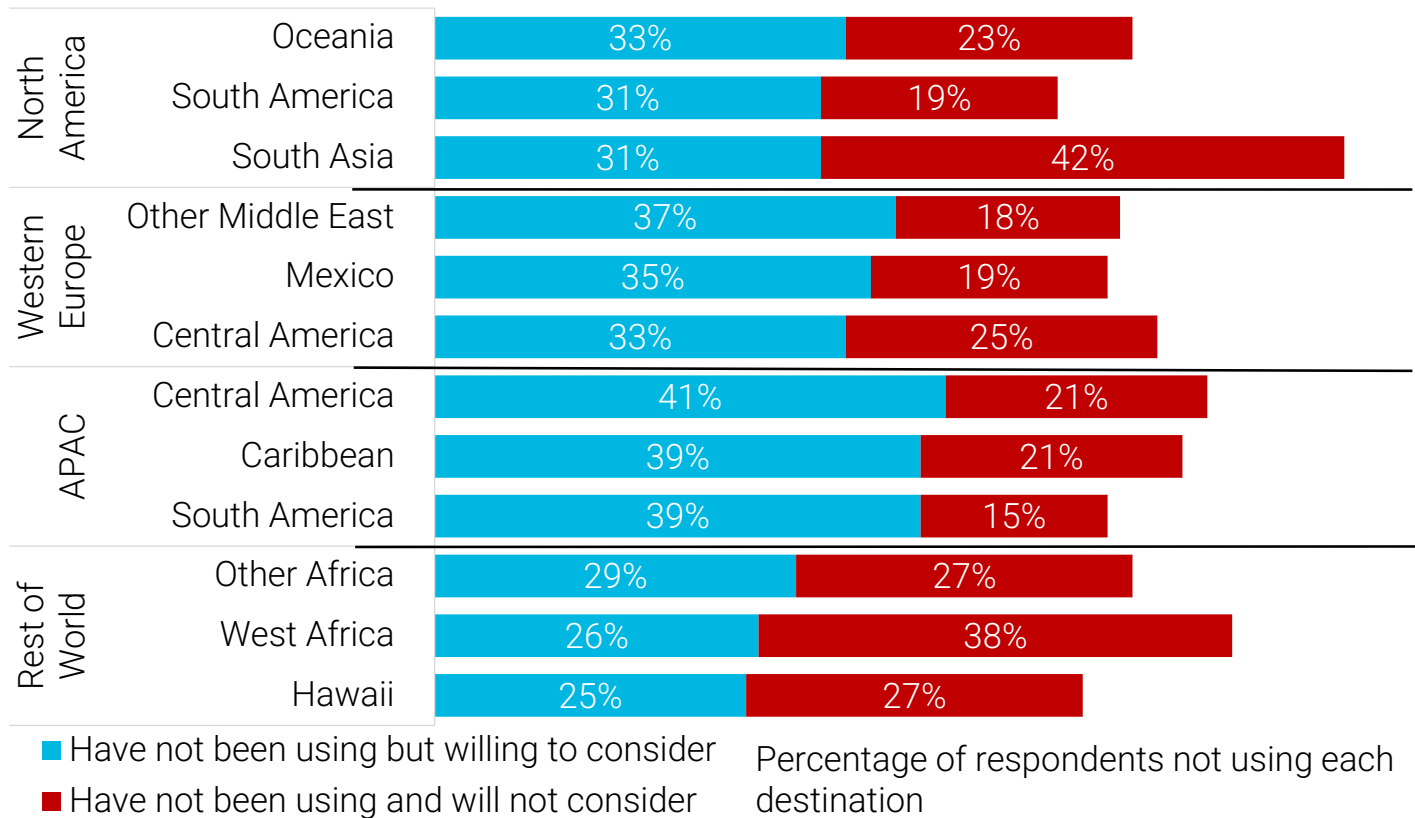
Many North American buyers report they aren't using but are willing to consider: Oceania (33%), South America (31%), and South Asia (30%)

APAC stands out as a region from which buyers would be most willing to consider new destinations; for example, with large shares willing to consider Latin America and the Caribbean.

D1. How do you expect your planned use of the following destinations for incentive travel will change as you plan future events relative to 2025?

Respondents "using" a destination excluded from chart
Response base (buyers): n = 596 respondents

Destinations not used but under consideration by buyers
(Share of buyers by region for top three areas under consideration)



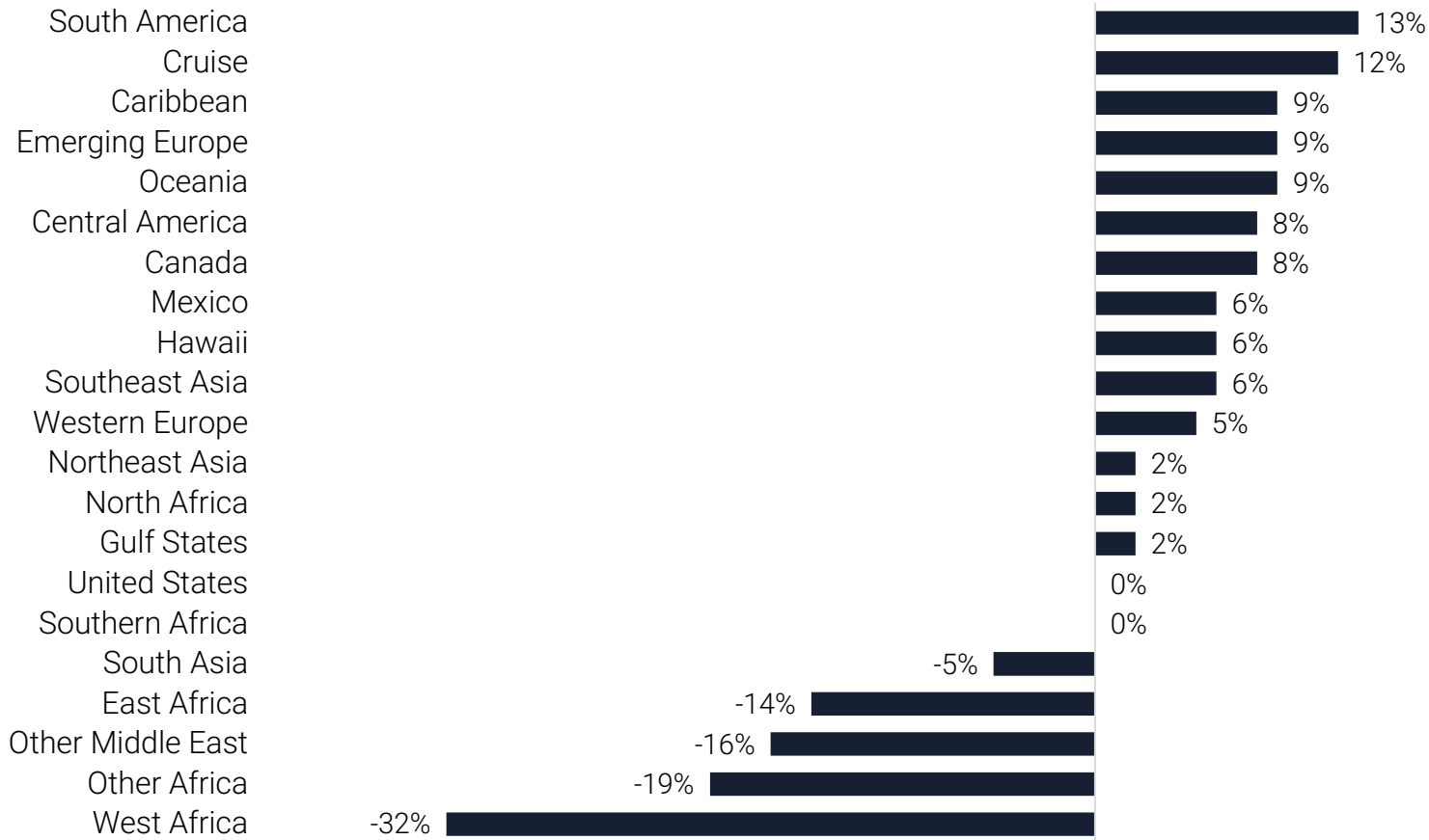
South America and cruise continue to rank highly as places many would consider as new destinations

Change in willingness to consider new destinations
(Share of buyers willing to consider minus the share not willing to consider)

The destinations that receive the greatest level of consideration as new destinations, net of those not willing to consider, are South America (13%), cruise (12%), and the Caribbean (9%).

D1. How do you expect your planned use of the following destinations for incentive travel will change as you plan future events relative to 2025?

Respondents “using” a destination excluded from chart
Response base (buyers): n = 596 respondents

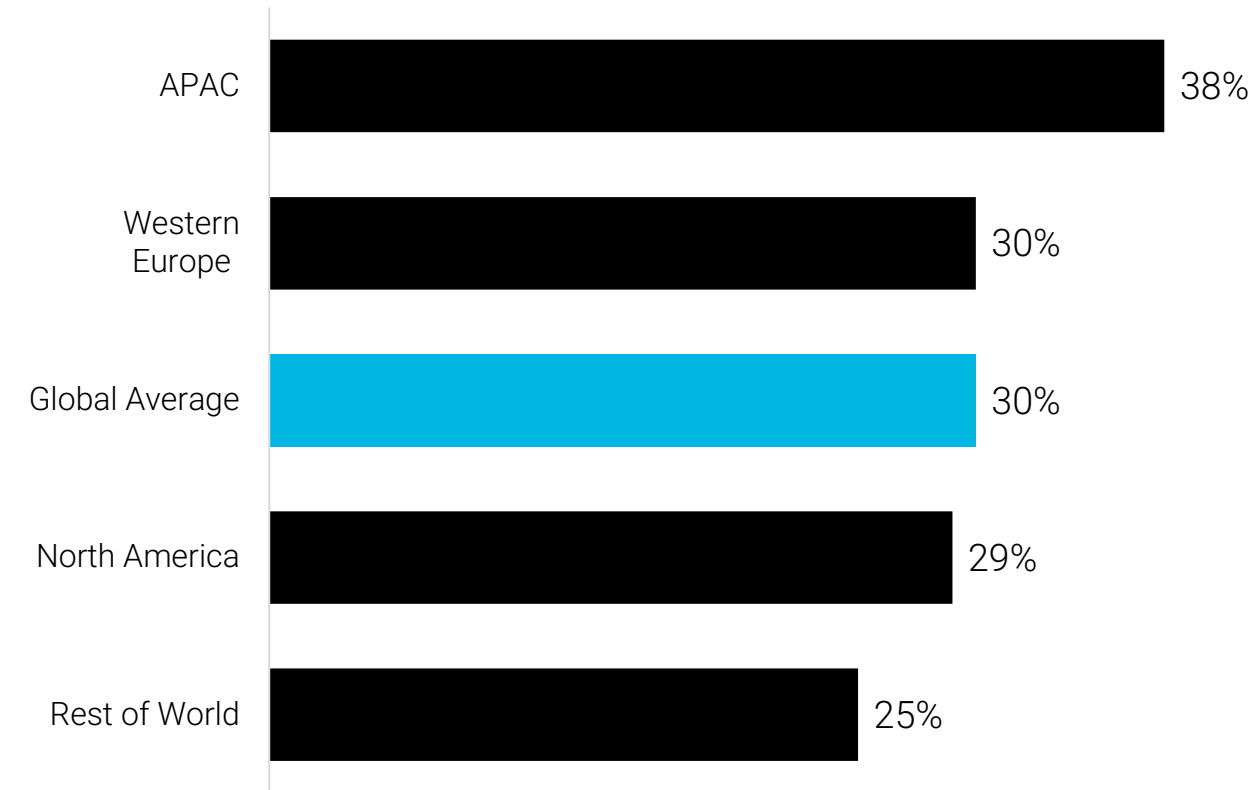


Willingness to consider cruises exists globally

Buyers in APAC are most willing to consider cruises

Globally, buyers not currently using cruises are expressing a willingness to consider them in the future (30%).

Willingness to consider cruises among buyers not using, by regions
(Share of buyers by region that are willing to consider and not currently using)



Many buyers tend to look closer to home for areas to increase usage

For example, North American buyers tend to focus on areas such as the Caribbean, Western Europe, and Mexico rather than further abroad.

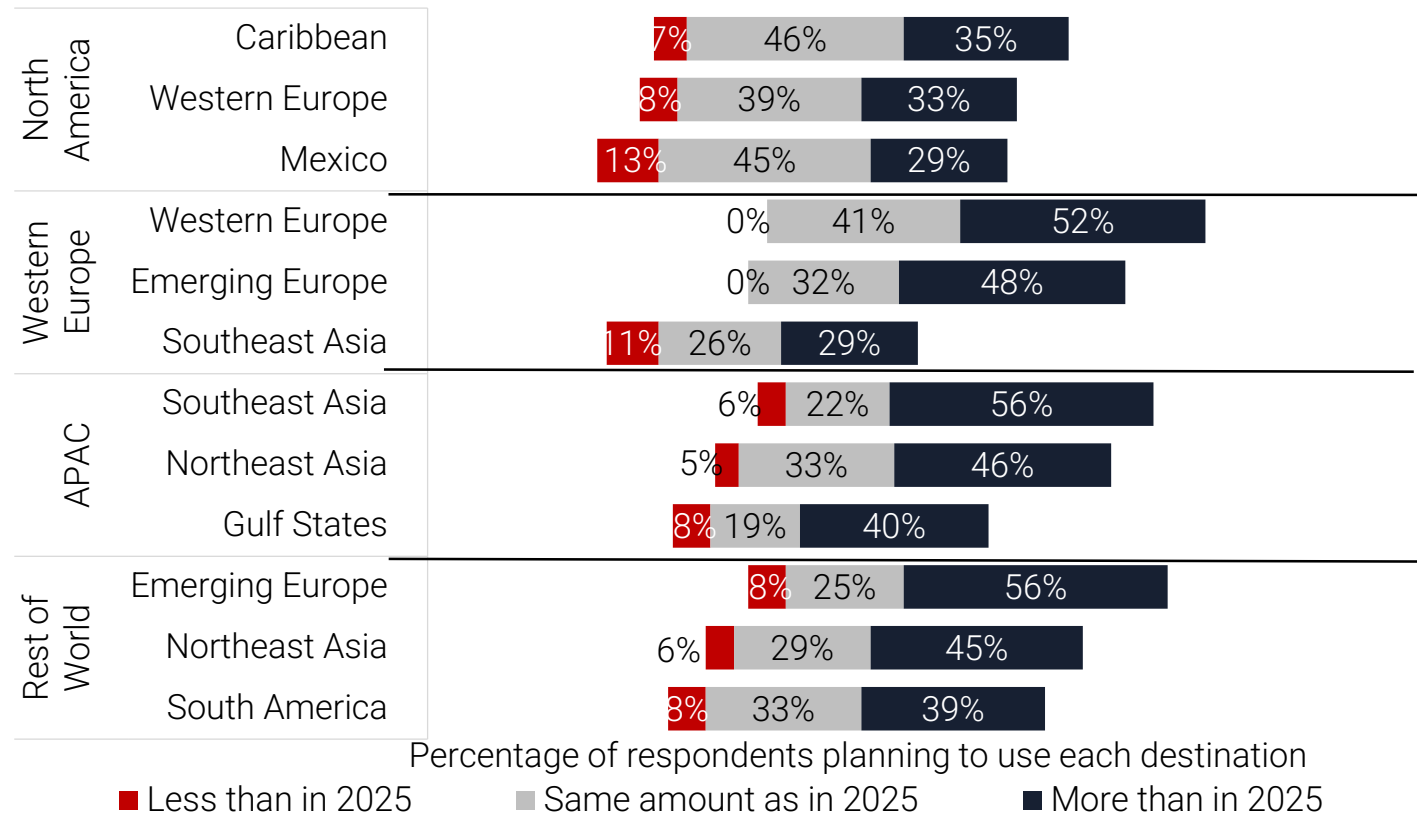
D1. How do you expect your planned use of the following destinations for incentive travel will change as you plan future events relative to 2025?

Respondents “not using” a destination excluded from chart

Response base (buyers): n = 596 respondents

Destination use planned by buyers across regions

(Share of buyers by region for top three increase usage areas)



Long-haul travel remains an option for incentive programs

Most companies do not place limitations on long-haul incentive travel

The incentive travel industry remains largely unconstrained by distance, with a majority of companies (63%) having no formal limits on long-haul travel.

Nearly half (49%) of all incentive travel professionals are not concerned about long-haul travel being abandoned due to climate change, and only a small percentage (13%) consider distance a disqualifier for destinations.

Considerations for long-haul travel

(Share of respondents)

63%

Don't belong to a company that has a limit that prevents use of long-haul destinations

S19. Does the company for which you organize incentive travel programs have a limit that prevents use of long-haul destinations?

Response base (end-users): n = 145 respondents

49%

Disagree that qualifiers will one day shun long-haul travel in the name of climate change

S5. Do you agree with the following statements?

Response base: n = 1,446 respondents

13%

See distance as a disqualifier when considering a destination for an incentive travel program

D10b. What are your most important destination “disqualifiers”?

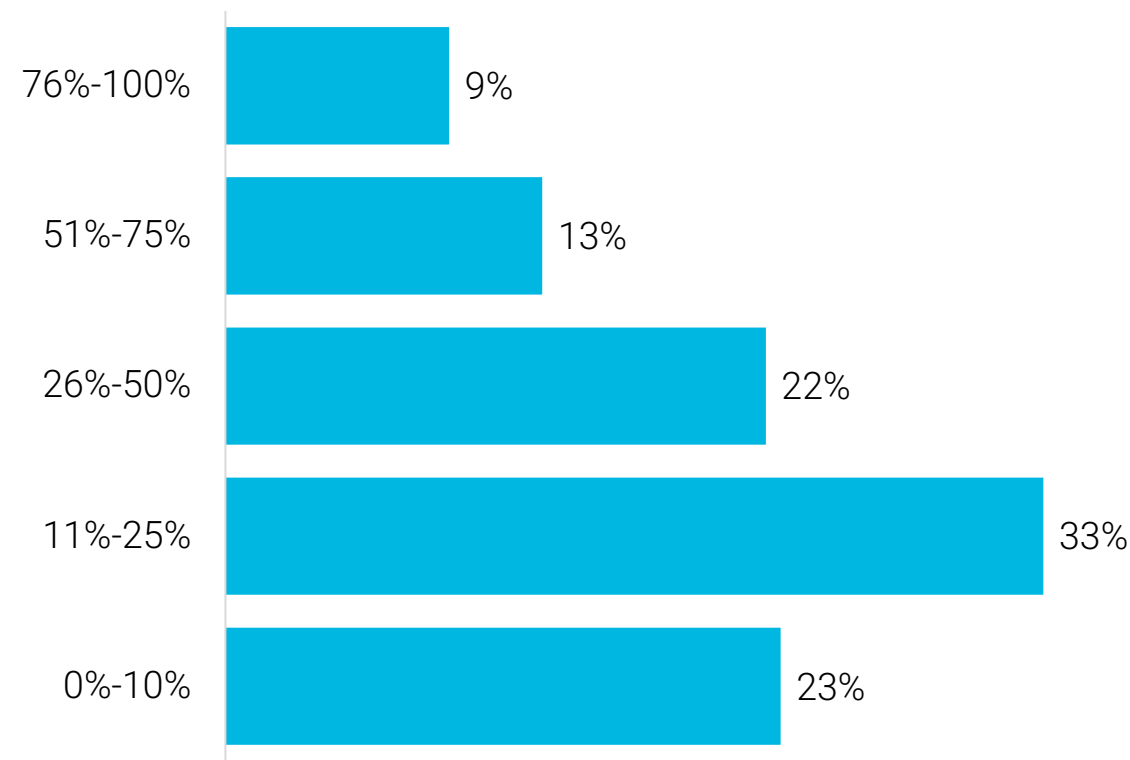
Response base (buyers): n = 569 respondents (multiple responses allowed)

Programs are a mix of new and familiar destinations

For 22% of buyers, programs in new destinations comprise more than 50% of all programs in a year

The largest share of travel buyers (33%) typically allocates 11-25% of annual programs to new destinations they have not used before. A significant majority, 78% of buyers, dedicate half or less of bookings to exploring new locations. This indicates a general preference for balancing new travel experiences with established, familiar destinations.

Allocation of booking for not previously used destinations
(Share of buyers booking new destinations)



7 Challenges

The background image is a photograph of an airport baggage claim area, overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter. In the foreground, several red and black rolling suitcases are lined up. In the background, a large commercial airplane is visible on the tarmac, and the airport terminal building is partially visible through the glass walls. The overall scene suggests a travel or transportation theme.

Rising costs are the top challenge

Incentive travel professionals face short- and long-run challenges

In the short-run, the most cited challenge faced by incentive travel professionals is rising costs / inflation (38%), followed by international instability (38%).

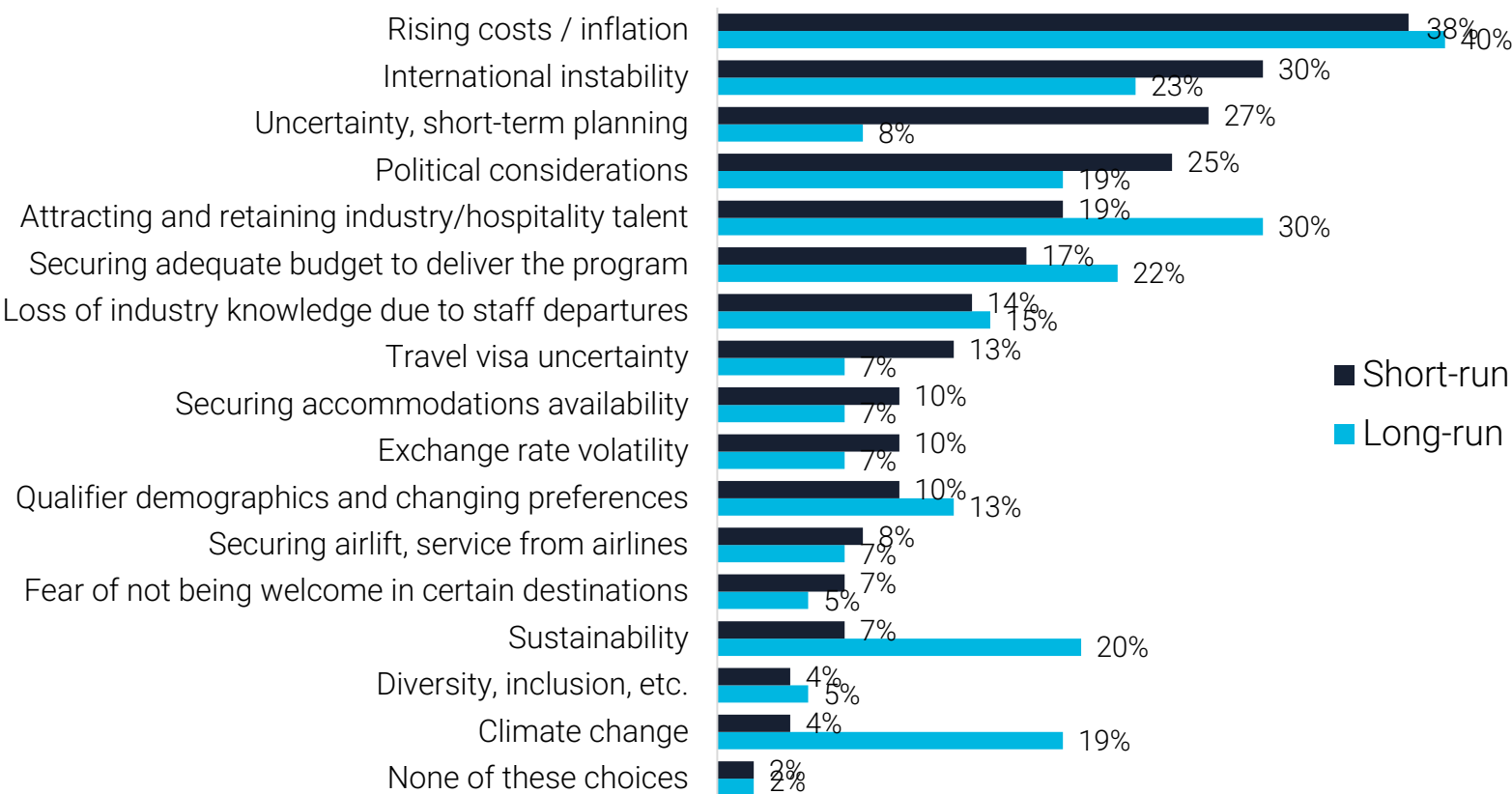
While rising costs / inflation should remain a more prevalent concern for the long-run, fears over international instability should wane.

Some challenges that are less prevalent in the short-run are expected to grow in the future. The biggest increases in relevance from short- to long-run are challenges related to attracting talent (30% in the long-run versus 19% in the short-run) and an increased focus on sustainability (20% versus 7%).

Securing adequate budget to deliver incentive programs is also a growing long-term challenge (22% versus 17%).

Future challenges facing incentive travel professionals

(Share of respondents)



S3. What important future challenges face incentive travel professionals?

Response base: n = 1,499 respondents (multiple responses allowed)

Concerns over international instability have risen

While rising costs continue to be the main challenge, international instability has risen in prominence

Rising costs and inflation continue to be the top concern among respondents (38% in the 2024 and 2025 surveys).

International instability has grown in significance, rising to 30% compared to 18% in 2024.

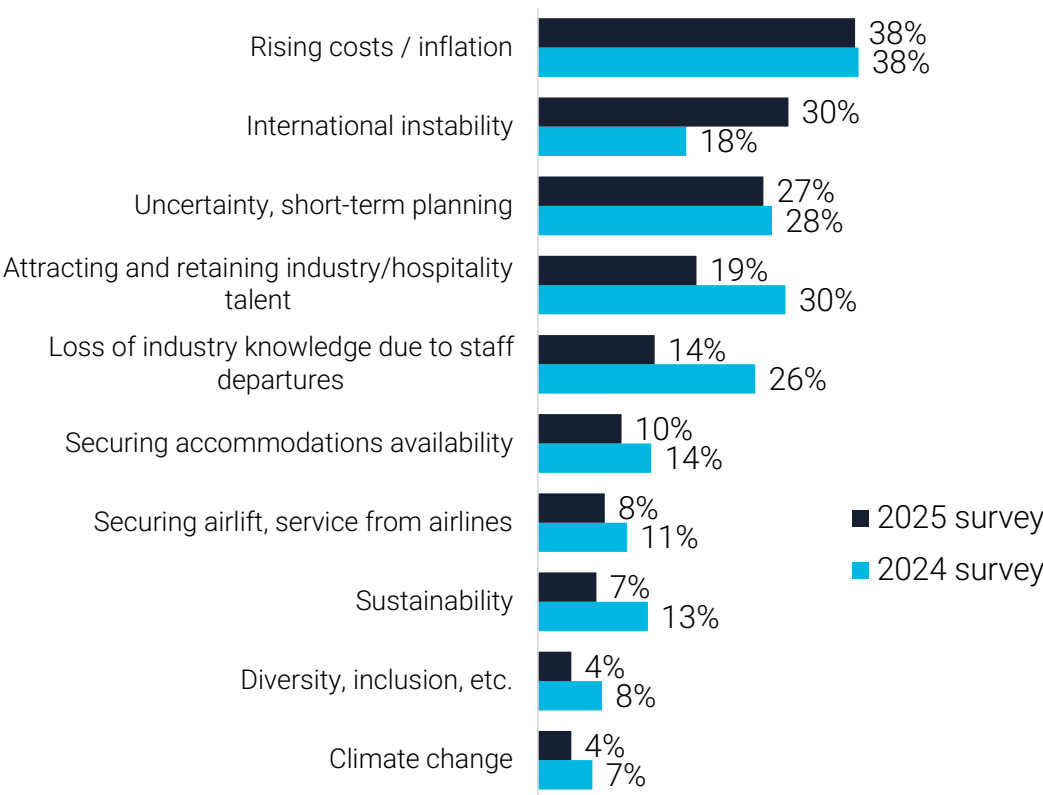
The share of respondents who believe attracting and retaining industry/hospitality talent is a short run challenge fell to 19% in the 2025 survey compared to 30% in 2024.

49%

Agree political considerations are first and foremost in their plans for 2026 and 2027.

(S5 – Response base: n = 1,446 respondents)

Future challenges facing incentive travel professionals in the short run
(Share of respondents)



S3. What important future challenges face incentive travel professionals?
Response base: n = 1,499 respondents (multiple responses allowed)

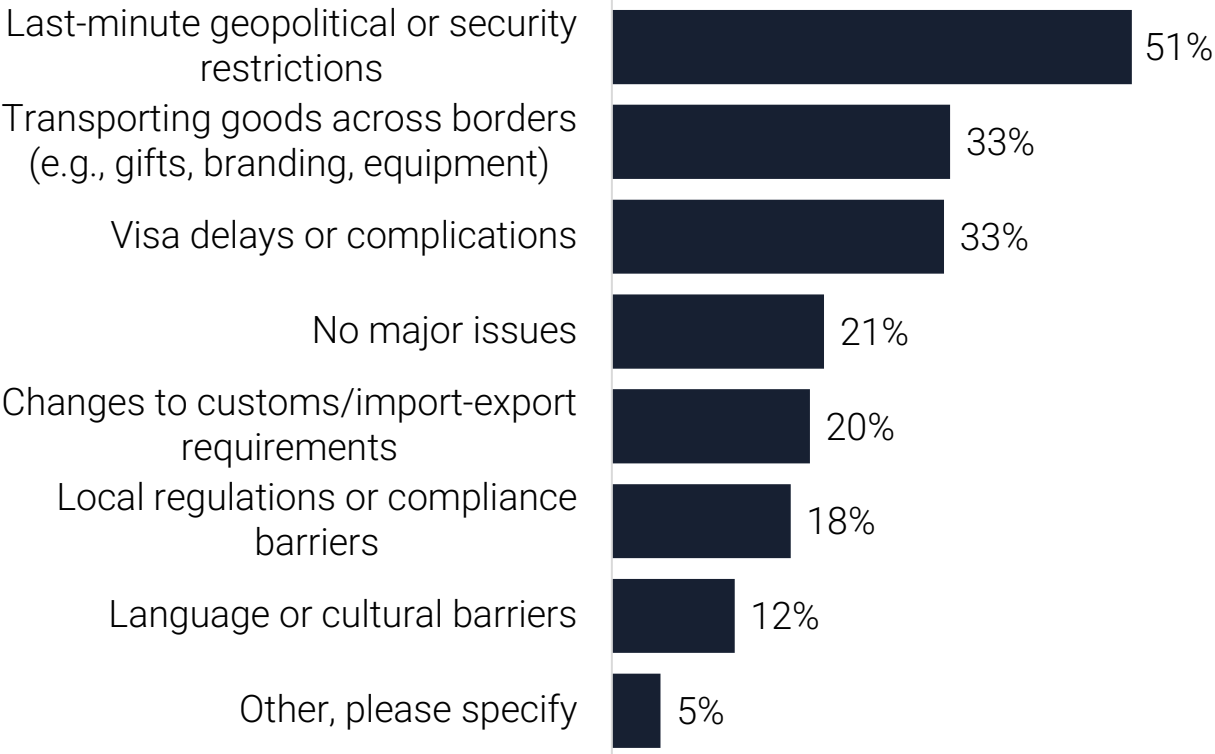
Cross-border logistical issues have impacted recent programs

More than half have been impacted by geopolitical or security restrictions

Logistical complexities are a significant challenge for incentive travel programs, with more than half of respondents (51%) citing last-minute geopolitical or security restrictions as a top concern.

While transporting goods and visa complications impact a third of professionals, respondents are less impacted by everyday customs or language barriers.

Cross-border logistical issues (Share of respondents)



Recent events have diminished the US' destination appeal

Concerns around political events, travel restrictions, and shifting DEI policies are making the US a less attractive destination for incentive travel

Many industry professionals are concerned about the future of incentive travel to the US. Seven in ten respondents believe political instability will hinder the US from being chosen as a destination for incentive travel.

Additionally, 65% highlight complex visa and travel restrictions, while 46% point to shifting views on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and LGBTQ issues—factors that could push organizations to consider alternative destinations that feel more accessible, inclusive, and welcoming.

Concerns over the US as a destination for incentive travel

(Share of respondents)

70%

Agree that the US is going to experience a decline in inbound incentive travel activity because of recent political events

65%

Agree that complex visa process and travel restrictions are making the US a less attractive incentive destination

46%

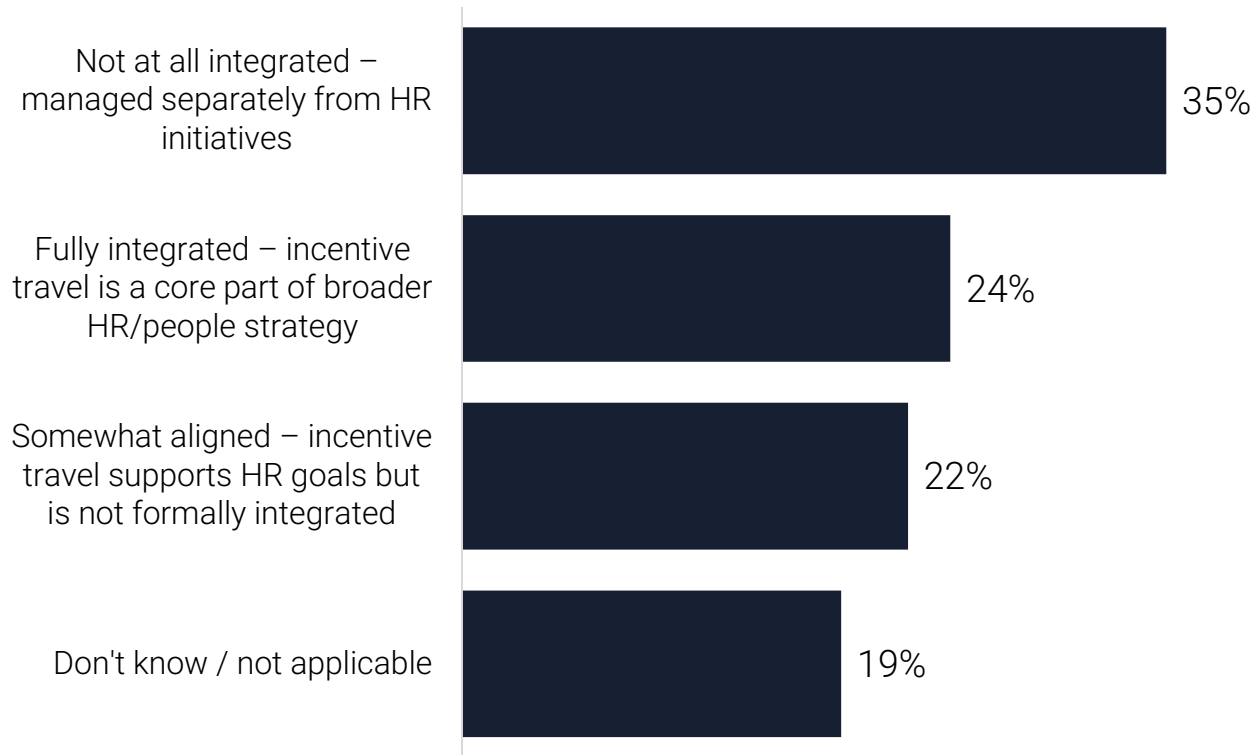
Shifting views around DEI and LGBTQ issues are making the US a less attractive incentive destination for both the companies that pay for them and the delegates that qualify for them

Incentive travel lacks integration with broader HR strategy

Nearly one-quarter of organizations believe incentive travel is fully integrated with HR strategy

There is a notable disconnect between incentive travel and broader HR strategy, with a majority of companies treating the two as separate entities. Over a third of end-users (35%) report that incentive travel is not at all integrated with HR initiatives, compared to 24% who view it as a core part of people strategy.

Integration between incentive travel and human capital (Share of end-users)



Incentive travel will need to adapt to stay relevant

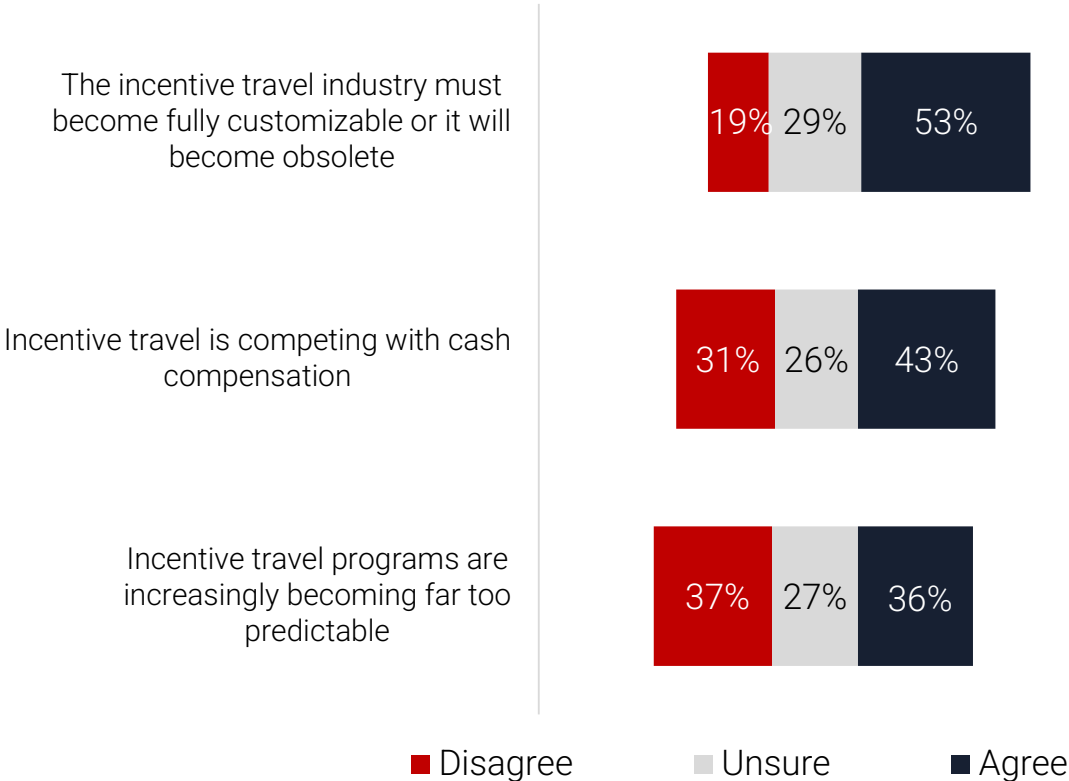
Many respondents believe the industry needs to become fully customizable or become obsolete

Most industry professionals (53%) agree that a shift to fully customizable experiences is essential to avoid obsolescence, while 43% see direct competition with cash compensation as a major challenge.

Opinions are divided on whether incentive travel programs are becoming too predictable, with 37% disagreeing and 36% agreeing with the statement.

Additional challenges facing the incentive travel industry

(Share of respondents)



8 Evolution of Incentive Travel

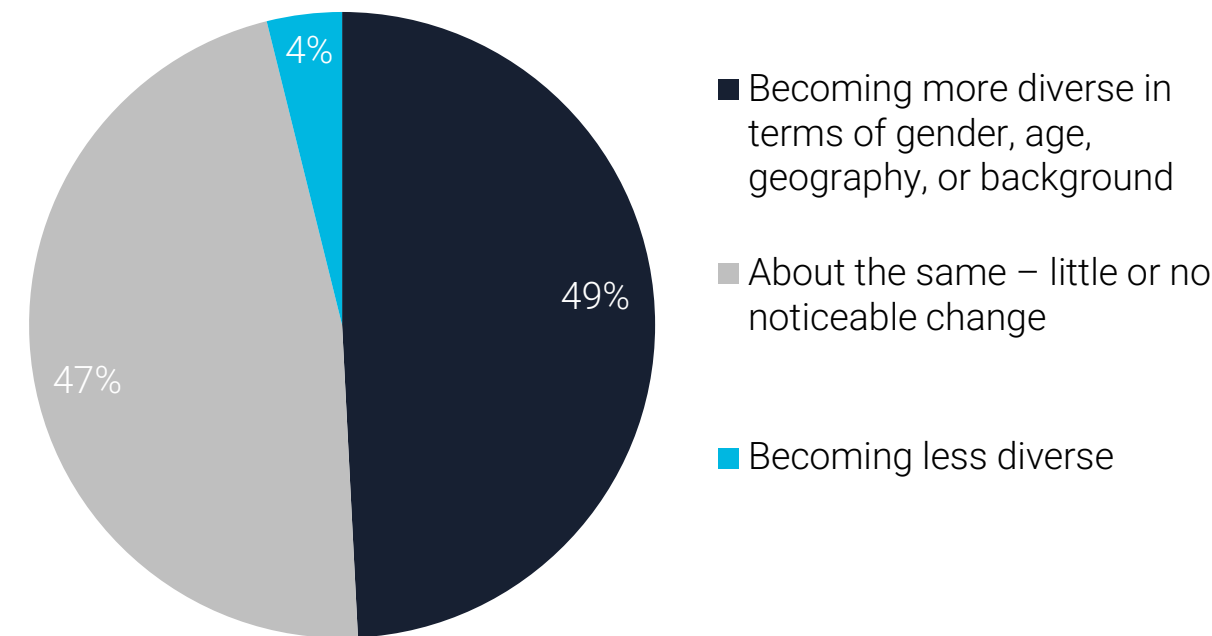


Many believe programs have become more diverse over time

Nearly half of all buyers have witnessed greater diversity amongst participants

Nearly half of all buyers, 49%, report that the demographic diversity of participants in incentive travel programs has increased over the past three years. However, a similar proportion, 47%, has seen little or no change in the diversity of groups, with only a small number of programs becoming less diverse.

Changes in demographic diversity of participants (Share of buyers)



Younger generations are reshaping incentive travel

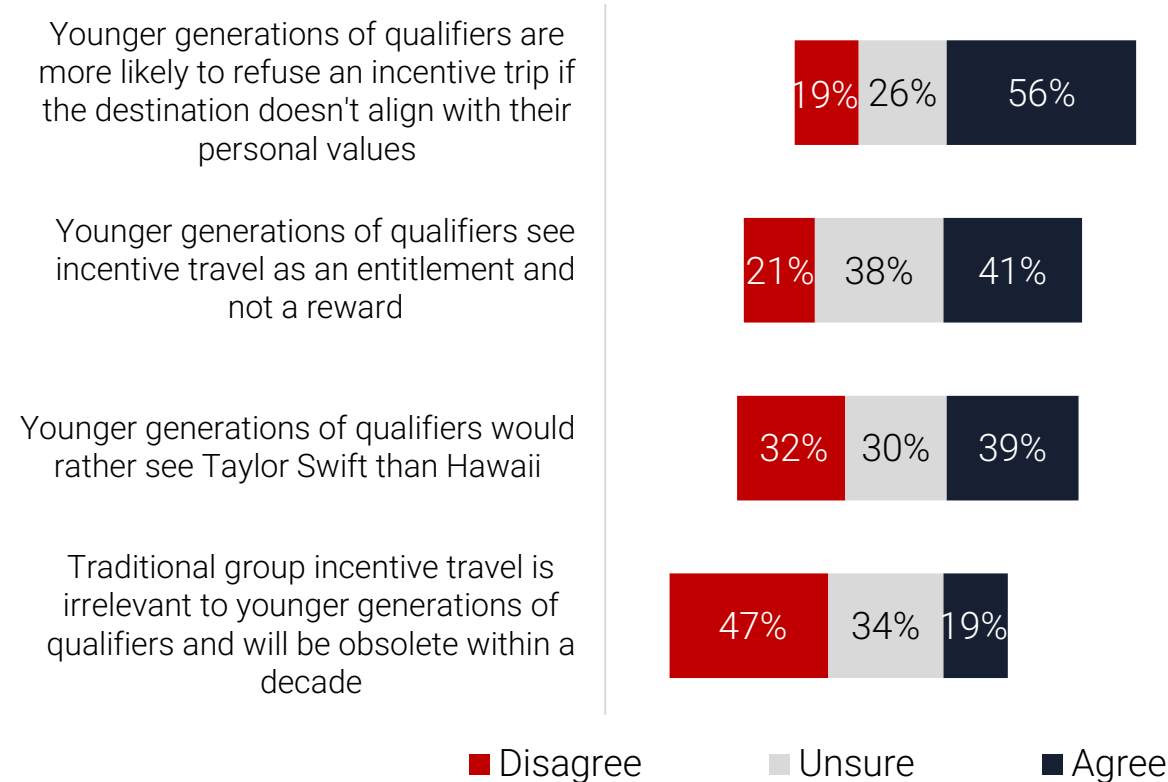
Younger generations have different views and preferences on incentive travel; however, traditional incentive travel is not obsolete

The majority of respondents, 56%, feel that today's younger qualifiers are more likely to turn down a trip if the destination doesn't align with personal values, underscoring a growing demand for purpose-driven travel.

As many as 41% of respondents believe younger generations view incentive travel more as an entitlement than a reward.

While opinions are divided on whether a unique event like a Taylor Swift concert is preferred over a traditional destination such as Hawaii (39% agree), many professionals do not believe that traditional group travel is in danger of becoming irrelevant (47%).

Perceptions of younger generations of qualifiers (Share of respondents)



S14. Do you agree with the following statements about the future of incentive travel?

Response base: n = 716 respondents

Air, hotel, and food price inflation top added costs

Incentive travel agencies have witnessed significant added costs relative to pre-pandemic

Respondents from incentive houses were asked to provide the most significant added costs relative to pre-pandemic.

The most significant added costs for incentive travel agencies since the pre-pandemic era are primarily related to airfare, hotel, food & beverage, and labor. Other notable cost increases include staffing, AV, service charges, and insurance.

Most significant added cost witnessed by incentive travel agencies relative to pre-pandemic (Frequently cited open-ended answers by incentive houses)



D18. Thinking about your business as an incentive travel agency, what's been the most significant added cost relative to pre-pandemic? (open-ended question)

Response base (incentive house): n = 285 respondents

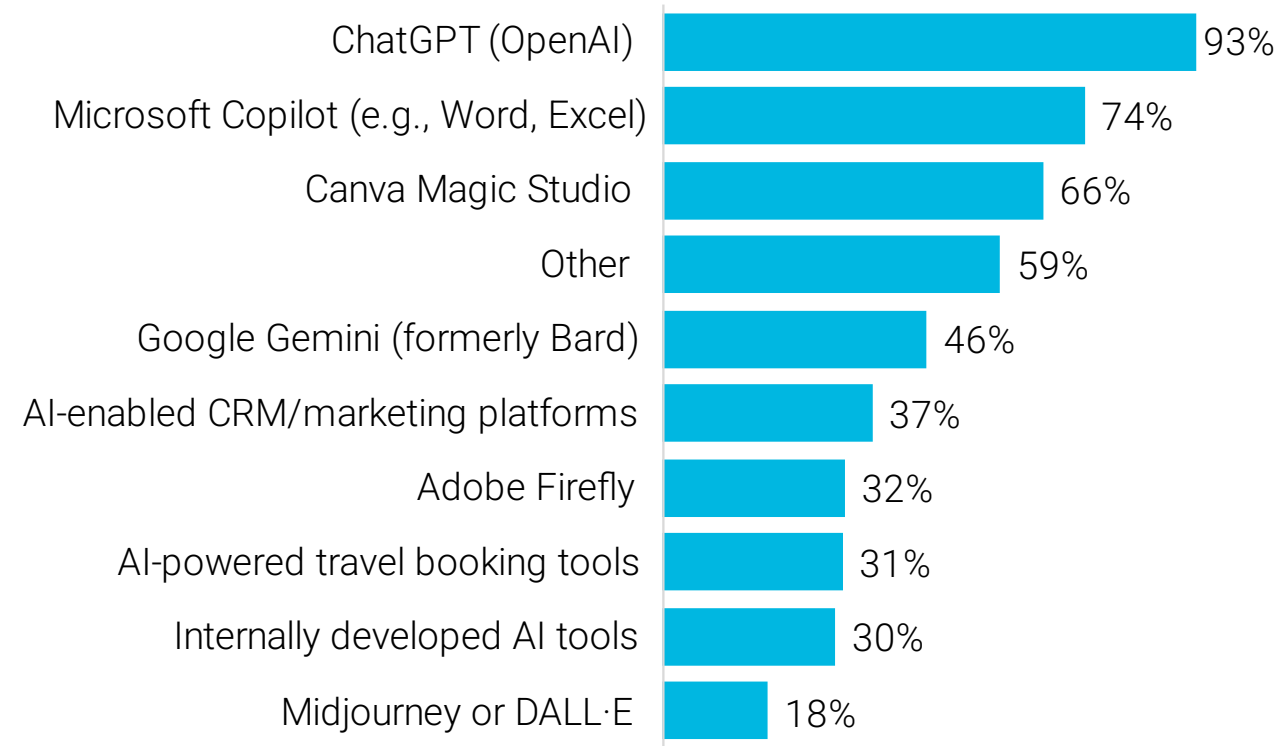
AI is widely adopted by incentive travel professionals

Multiple AI platforms are used for incentive-travel related tasks

AI is used frequently by incentive travel professionals, with 93% of respondents using ChatGPT alone. Other popular platforms include Microsoft Copilot (74%), and Canva Magic Studio (66%).

AI use, by platform

(Share of respondents using AI daily, weekly monthly, or occasionally)



AI mostly used for content creation and destination research

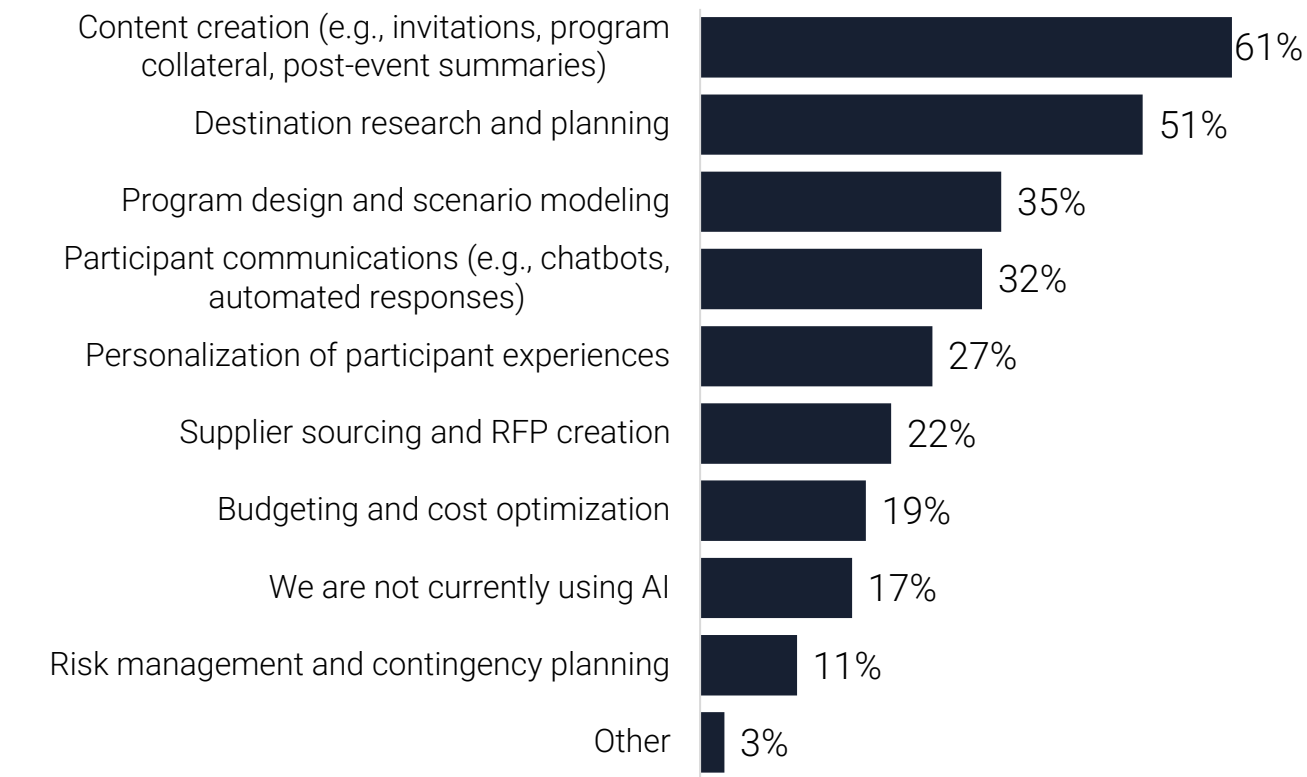
AI is being adopted within the incentive travel industry to aid a variety of tasks

Most teams are using it for content creation (61%) and destination research and planning (51%).

More than three in ten respondents highlight AI's use in program design and scenario modeling and participant communications.

Current use of AI within incentive travel

(Share of respondents)



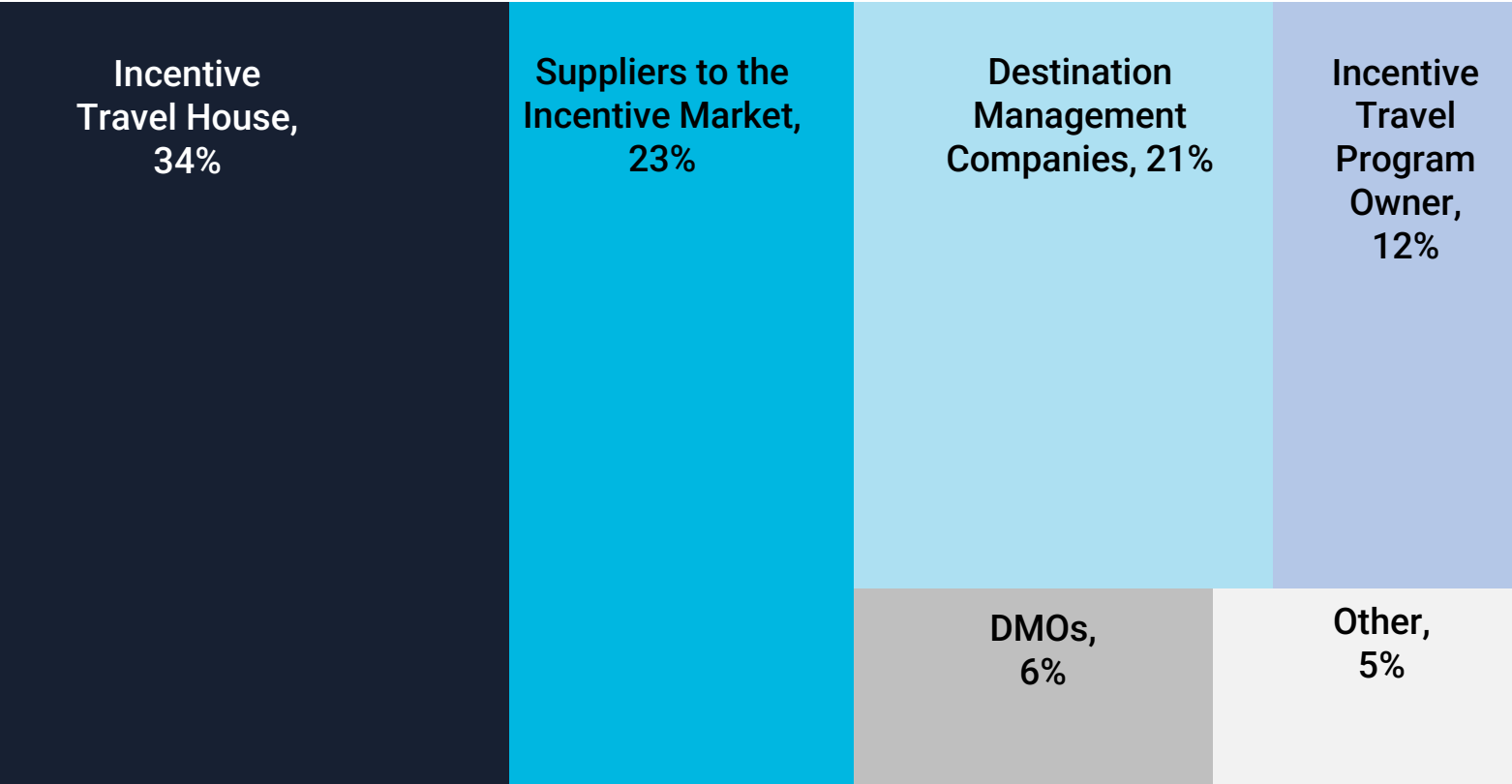
9 Appendix

The background of the slide is a photograph of an airport terminal, heavily tinted with a dark blue color. In the foreground, several red and black rolling suitcases are lined up. In the background, an airplane is visible in flight against the sky, and the glass and metal structure of the airport terminal is visible.

Demographic detail (1 of 5)

Respondent roles

(Share of respondents by role)

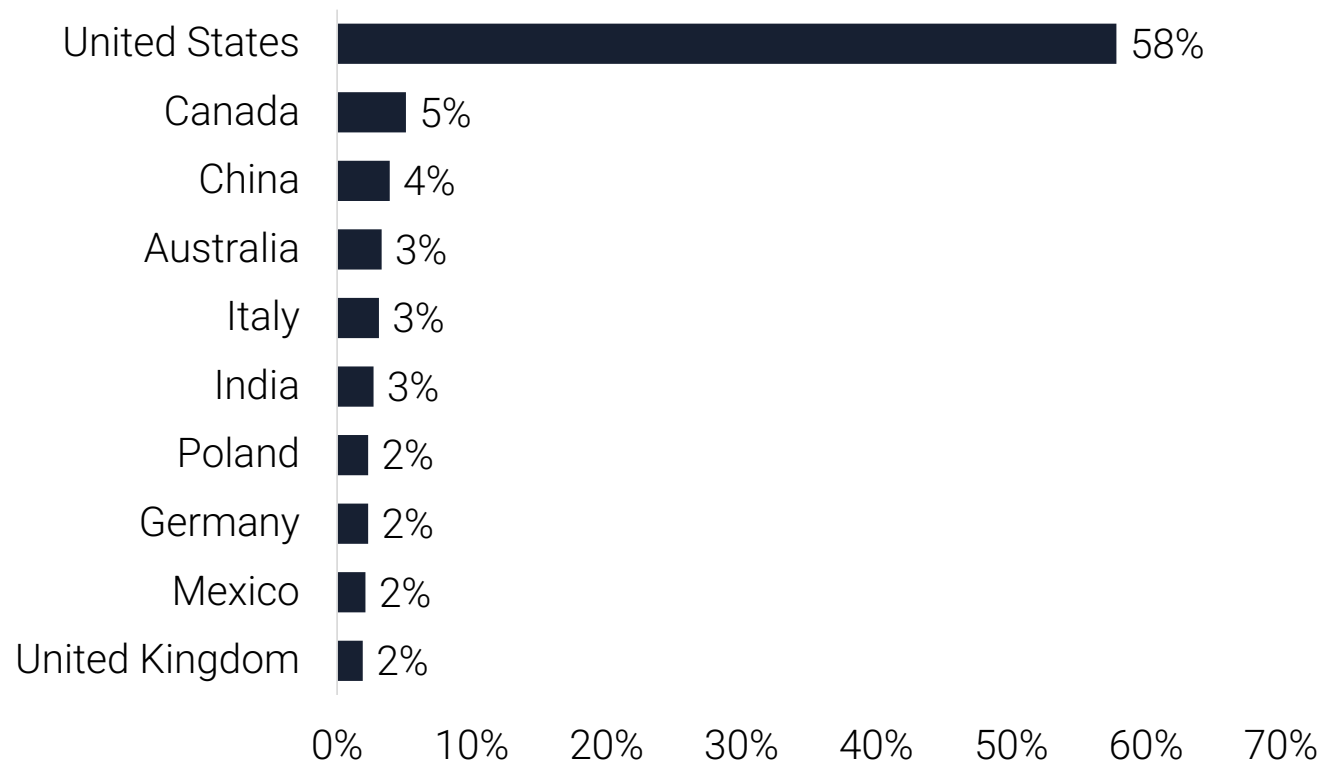


I1. Please select the role that best describes your involvement in incentive travel

Response base: n = 2,708 respondents

Demographic detail (2 of 5)

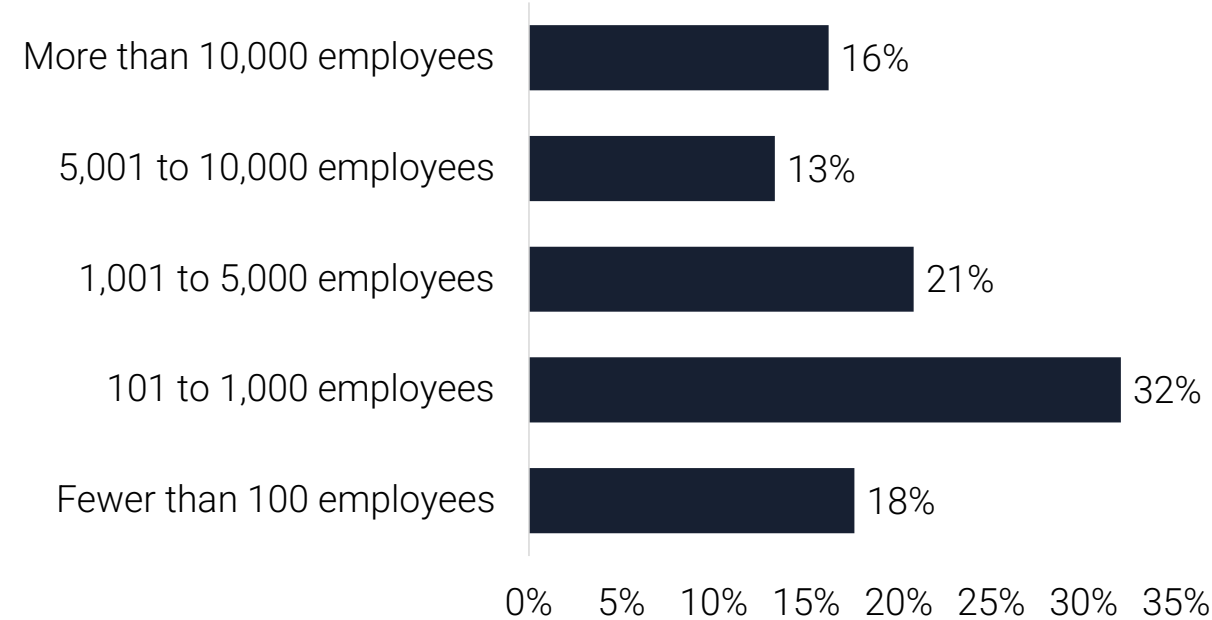
Origin of incentive travel qualifiers (top ten locations)
(Share of buyers)



M2. What is the primary origin of qualifiers in your team's incentive travel programs?
Response base (buyers): n = 514 respondents

Demographic detail (3 of 5)

Participant company size (Share of buyers)

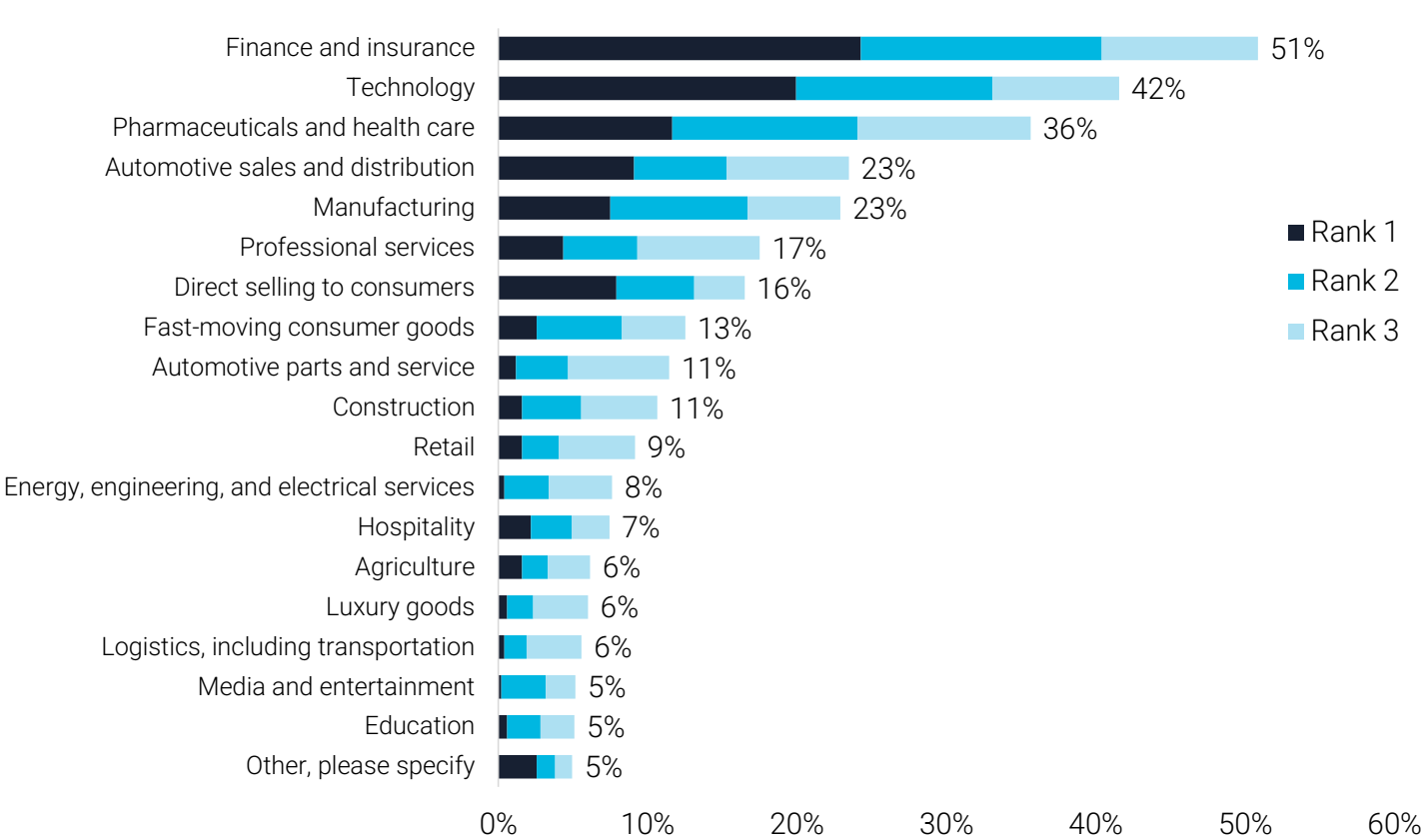


M3. Which of the following best describes the size of the company(ies) for which your team is primarily organizing incentive travel programs?
Response base (buyers): n = 518 respondents

Demographic detail (4 of 5)

Customer industries

(Share of buyers indicating a top three rank)



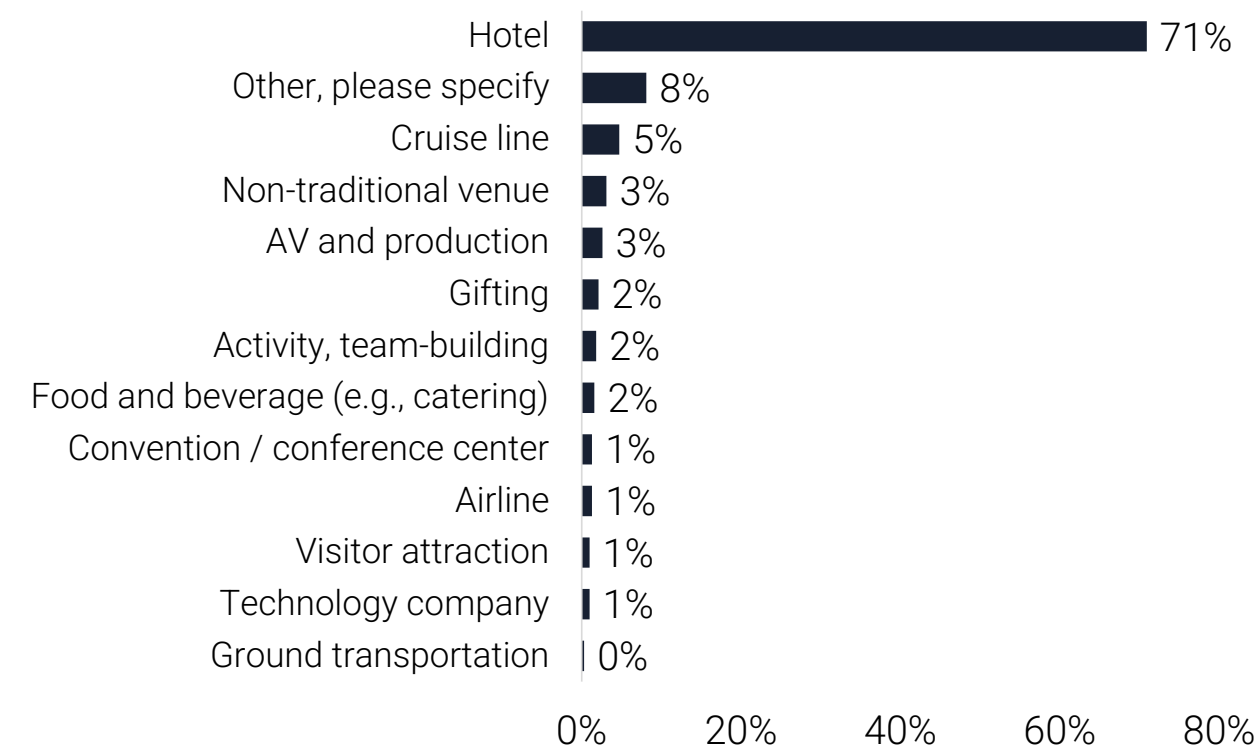
M5. For which of the following industry(ies) does your team primarily organize incentive travel programs?

Rank 1 is most important; label is % of all buyers choosing sector in top three

Response base (buyers): n = 507 respondents

Demographic detail (5 of 5)

Sellers by category
(Share of sellers)



M8. Which of the following best describes the company for which you work?
Response base (sellers): n = 382 respondents

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