



The Business of Experiential

Annual Research Report

2025

The background features a large purple area on the left, a yellow rounded rectangle on the right, and a cyan area on the far right. A black triangular shape is located at the top right, and a black trapezoidal shape is at the bottom right.

We wanted to uncover
what's top of mind for
Experiential Marketers
this year...



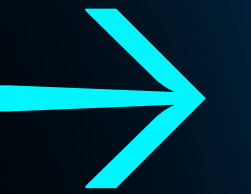
To better understand
what drives attendees to
events, and if their needs
were being met onsite...

The background features a large, vibrant blue shape that resembles a stylized letter 'C' or a thick bracket, opening towards the left. To the left of this blue shape, there is a vertical strip containing two other colors: a bright green rectangle at the top and a teal-colored shape below it, which has a rounded bottom edge. The overall composition is modern and minimalist.

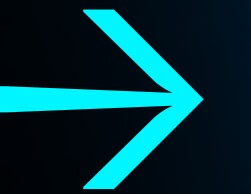
This is the Business
of Experiential.

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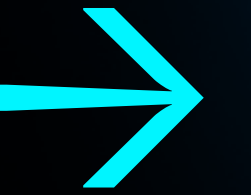
Introduction



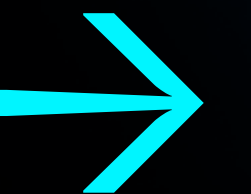
Methodology



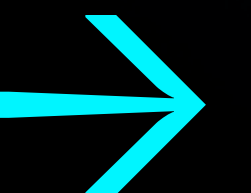
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Hello!

If you don't know us already, we're Invision. We create brand experiences for everyone, anywhere, and we believe these experiences are important moments where we help brands take charge and inspire audiences to action.

Around here, we like to say that we help brands own every moment.

But impactful moments don't happen by chance. They start with a strong, strategic foundation – one that connects brand marketers' goals with audience expectations. And *that* is why we conducted this study of more than 500 Experiential Marketers and attendees – to uncover insights from both sides. What are brands prioritizing in their experiential marketing? And what do attendees truly want from brand experiences?

The result: a clearer picture of where these perspectives align, where they diverge, and what it all means for you right now.

We hope this report proves useful. And even if some findings don't surprise you, it's always reassuring to know you're not alone. Now, let's take our data and insights and turn them into action.

Welcome to Invision's Business of Experiential. Let's dive in!



To get a clearer picture of what's happening in the experiential industry, we surveyed over 500 US-based Experiential Marketers and B2B event attendees, comparing their perspectives on key trends, challenges, and tactics. Our goal was to understand how events are evolving — from success metrics to the impact of cultural shifts, personalization, measurement, and executive involvement in planning.

Who we surveyed

We surveyed more than 500 U.S.-based Experiential Marketers and B2B event attendees. This allowed us to explore where organizer expectations align (or don't) with attendee experiences. This survey was distributed to Experiential Marketers through email and social media, and to B2B event attendees through a panel. Responses were collected between January and February 2025.

Survey design & incentives

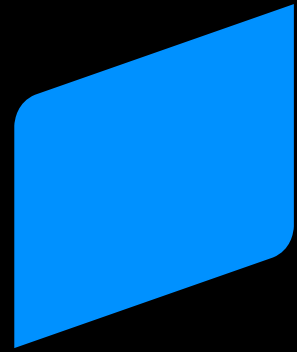
The survey covered topics including event measurement, content, innovation, inclusivity, and personalization. We used a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative data and deeper qualitative responses. To encourage participation, respondents could opt into a prize drawing with five random winners.

How we analyzed the data

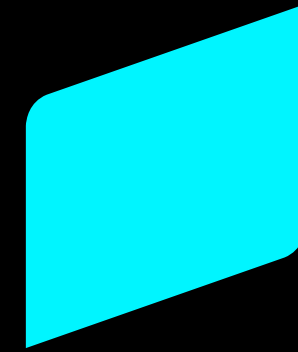
We focused on identifying trends, uncovering differences between Experiential Marketers and attendees, and finding out what drives success when it comes to event execution. We recognize that self-selection bias and industry-specific influences can shape responses. Nevertheless, this study provides valuable insights into how the events landscape is changing, and highlights some compelling implications for organizers and attendees alike.



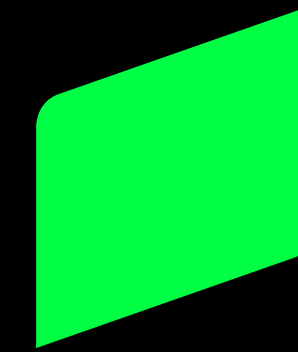
What we learned



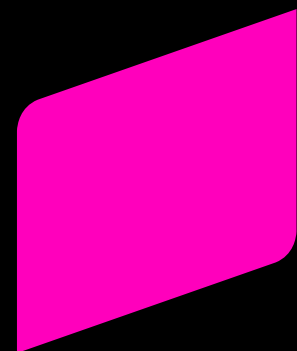
Putting executive
desires ahead of
attendee needs



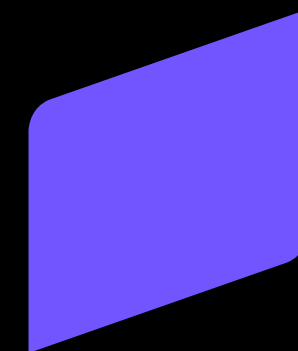
Measurement
as a competitive
advantage



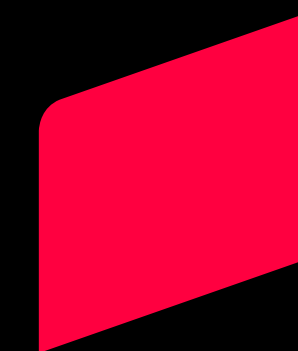
Navigating
the political
rollercoaster



Creating
experiences
for everyone



Networking
and community
reign supreme



One size
doesn't fit all

1

Putting executive desires ahead of attendee needs

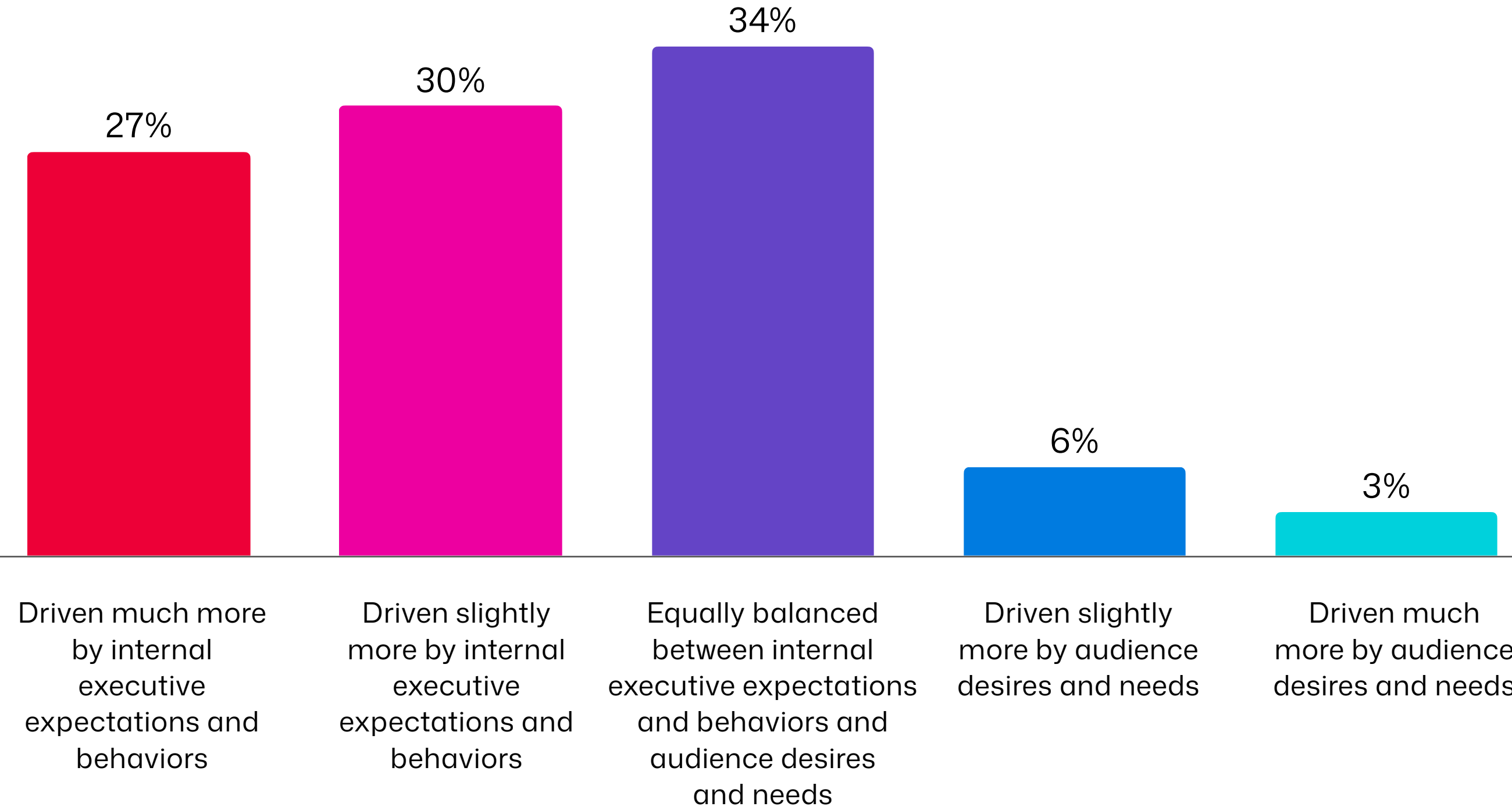


Putting executive desires ahead of attendee needs

Our study revealed a surprising insight: 57% of brand marketers admit they are designing events and experiences primarily for their own executives, rather than for the attendees themselves.

This approach may keep internal stakeholders happy, but it comes at a high cost. When experiences are shaped around executive preferences rather than audience needs, engagement suffers, impact diminishes, and the overall success of the event is at risk. While we all fall into the trap of navel-gazing from time to time, we encourage you to take an outside-in approach to your experience design.

Do you feel that the content of your event programs is driven more by internal executive expectations and behaviors or audience desires and needs?



Putting executive desires ahead of attendee needs

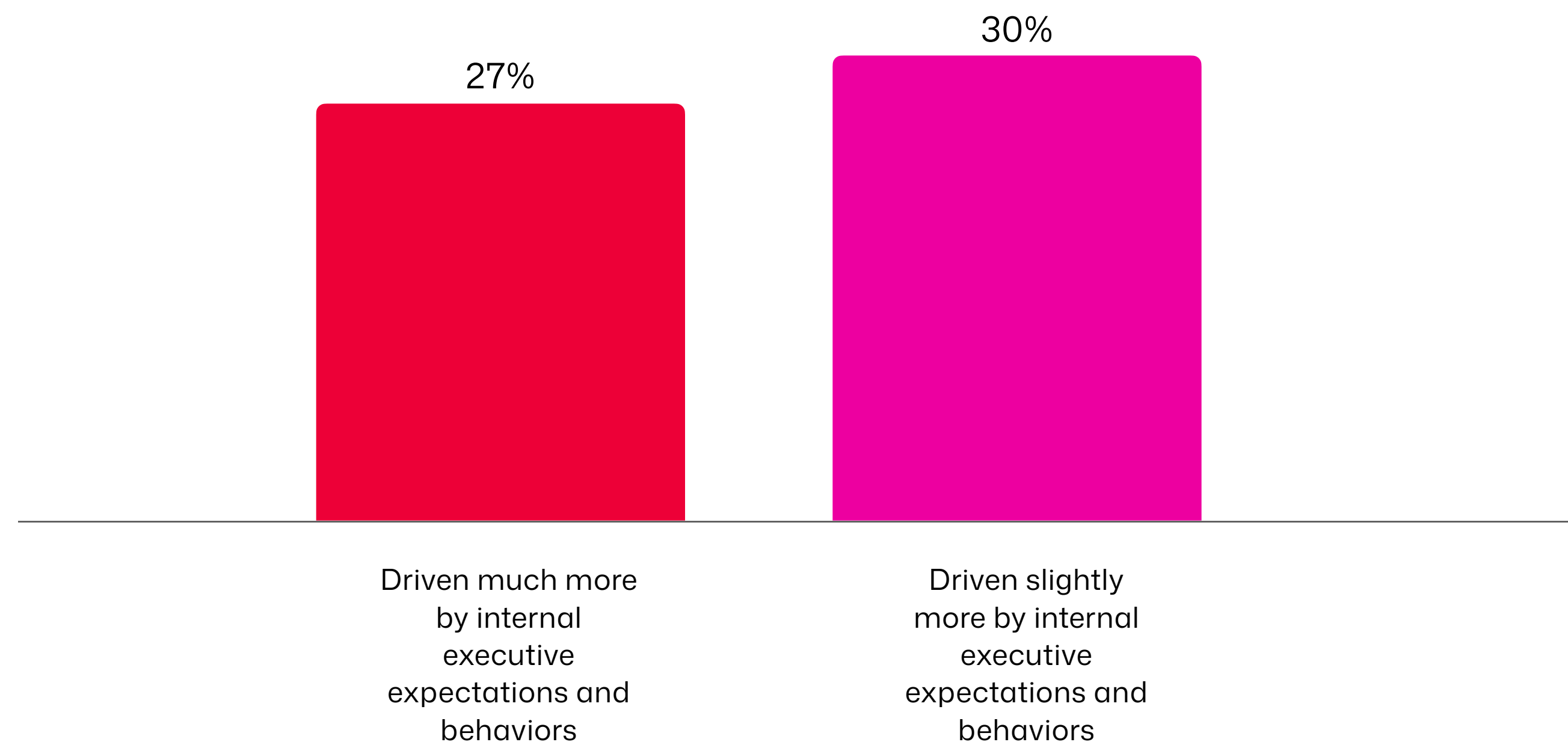
Our POV:

Audience-first design matters. The best experiences are built around what attendees find valuable, not just what internal teams want to showcase.

Executive buy-in is important, but not at the expense of audience-centricity. A balance must be struck between meeting leadership expectations and delivering real value to attendees.

Missed opportunities lead to diminished ROI. Experiences that don't resonate with attendees fail to create meaningful connections, limiting long-term brand affinity, and business outcomes.

Do you feel that the content of your event programs is driven more by internal executive expectations and behaviors or audience desires and needs?



“

Innovation takes a little bit of risk, a little bit of thoughtful risk, and we want to continue to push the boundaries of what's possible with experiential and how we tell stories onsite.

Experiential Marketer

Putting executive desires ahead of attendee needs

What to do now

The data doesn't lie... the most effective brand experiences put the audience first. When attendee needs and expectations guide the strategy, brands create more meaningful, memorable, and results-driven events. There are some benefits in having your executives involved, but if the keynote is still hours long while attendees are saying "no thanks" ... you're missing the mark.

Just like every experience we create at Invision, start with the needs and desires of the audience before anything else.



2

Measurement as a competitive advantage



Measurement as a competitive advantage

Our study found that Experiential Marketers who are confident in their ability to measure their events frequently go beyond surface metrics. They find more room for innovation, personalize their experiences at a higher level, are more attendee-centric, and as a result, drive more successful outcomes across the board.

Overall, how successful do you feel your event portfolio is at accomplishing the objectives you set out to achieve?

Answer	Measurement Confidence		
	Overall	High	Middling
Extremely successful + Very successful	81%	96% ↑	64% ↓

Do you feel that the content of your event programs is driven more by internal executive expectations and behaviors or audience desires and needs?

Answer	Measurement Confidence		
	Overall	High	Middling
Driven by internal executive expectations and desires	57%	48% ↓	69% ↑
Balanced between the two	34%	39%	26%
Driven by audience desires and needs	9%	13%	5%

To what extent does your organization allow you to innovate and take risks in your event planning and execution?

Answer	Measurement Confidence		
	Overall	High	Middling
A great deal + Quite a bit	61%	74% ↑	44% ↓

How well does your organization provide personalized or custom experiences for your in-person event attendees?

Answer	Measurement Confidence		
	Overall	High	Middling
Extremely well + Very well	24%	30%	15%

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Measurement as a competitive advantage

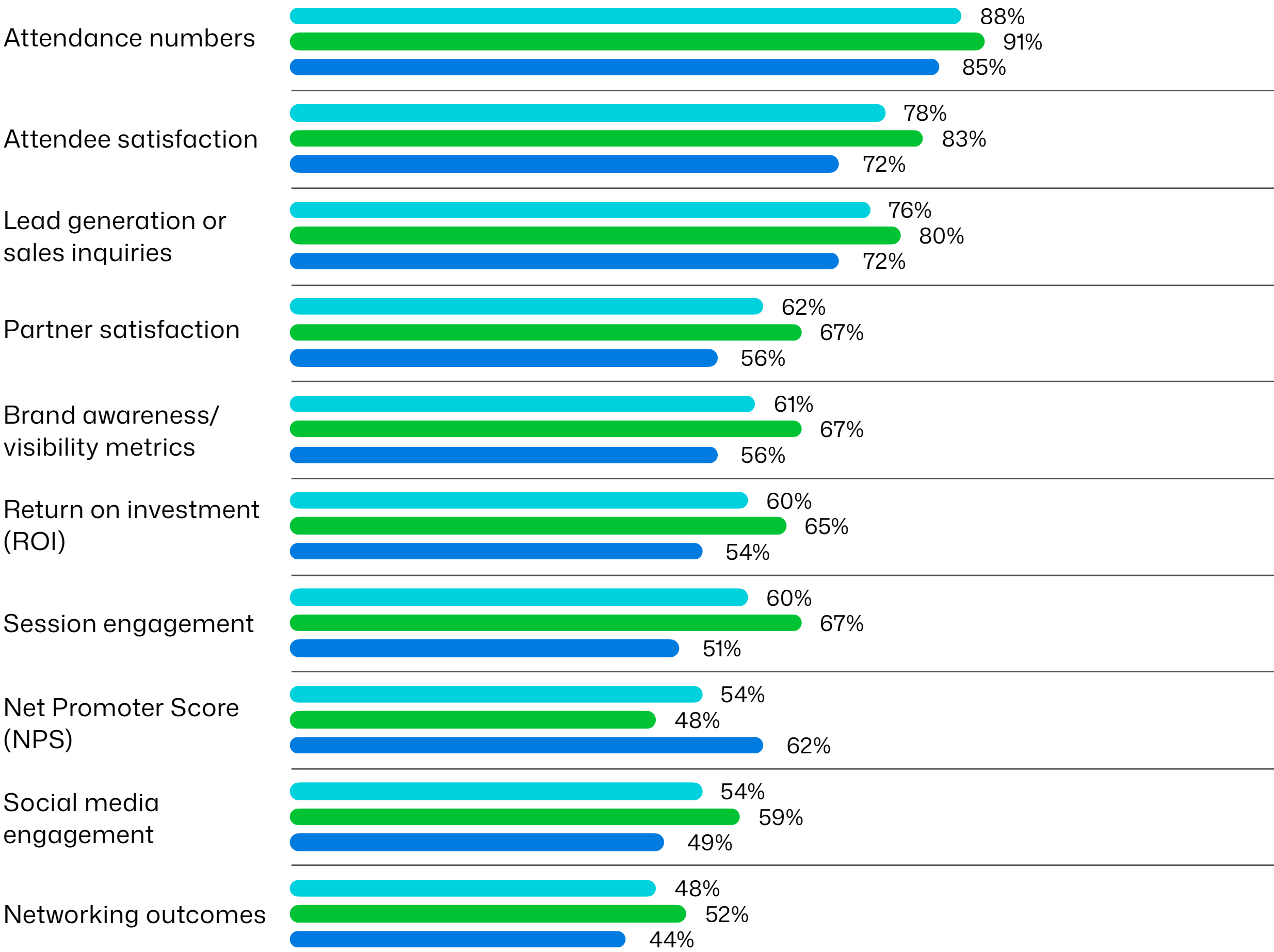
Our POV:

Confidence in measurement leads to better results. Experiential Marketers who have a strong measurement strategy rely on a diverse set of metrics beyond NPS, leads, and attendee satisfaction. These deeper insights – like brand health, awareness, advocacy, and path to purchase – help optimize future experiences and maximize impact.

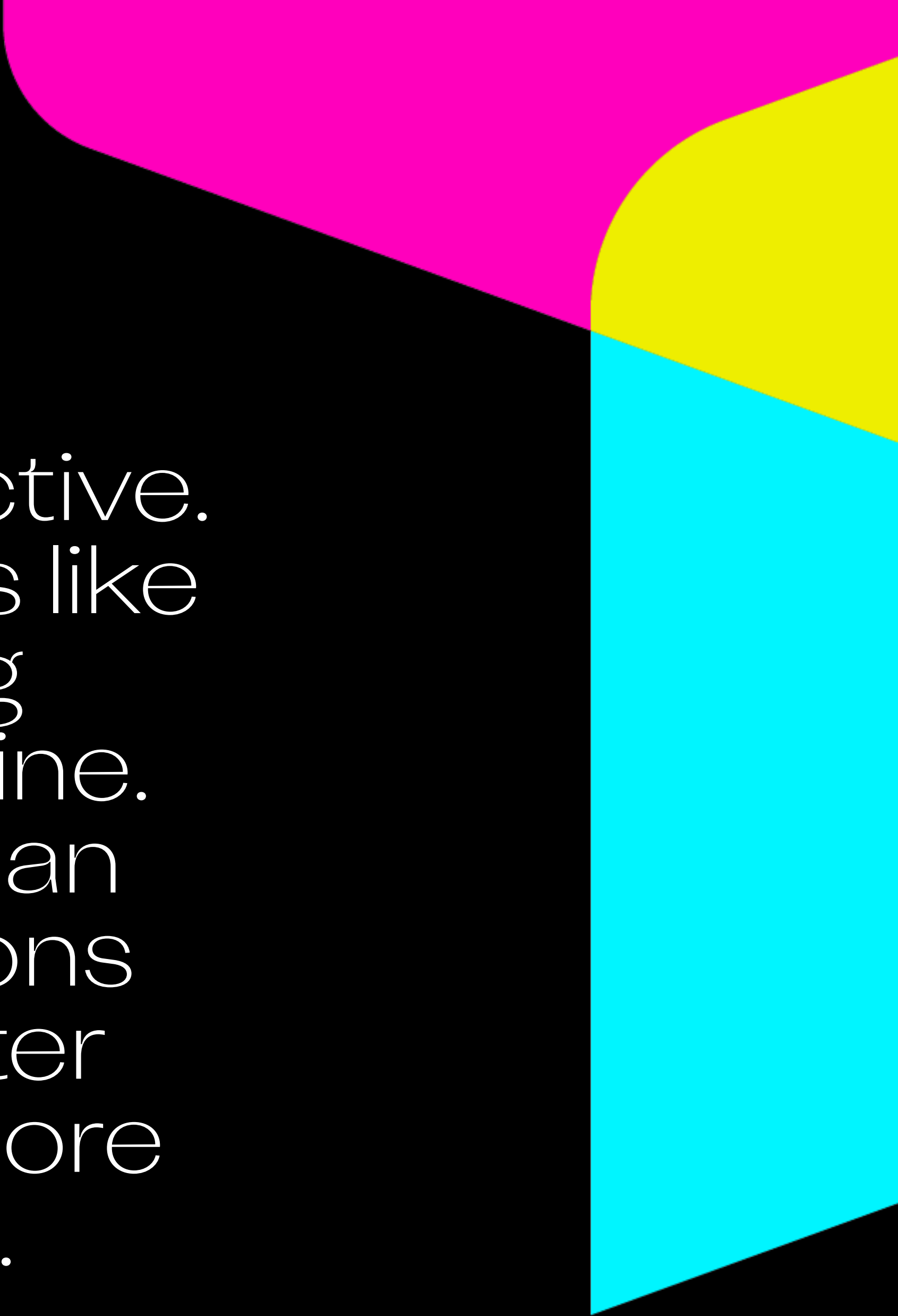
While NPS undoubtedly has its place in measurement, we found that this was the only event success metric that marketers with high measurement confidence use *less* than their middling confidence counterparts.

Measurement fuels innovation and audience-first experiences. A robust measurement framework provides the clarity needed to refine strategies, enhance engagement, and ultimately create more meaningful brand experiences.

What metrics do you use to measure the success of an event, if any?



Overall experiential marketers High measurement confidence Middling measurement confidence



“

In the past we've just used MQLs, which I don't think is the most effective. But this year we will measure things like brand awareness, reach, expanding buying teams, and influenced pipeline. We're also partnering with our human insights team to see how perceptions of our brand change before and after an event — so we will be taking a more holistic approach to measurement.

Experiential Marketer

Measurement as a competitive advantage

What to do now

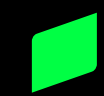
If you want to prove the real value of your events – and continuously improve them – make sure you're measuring the metrics that matter. At Invision, we call this your Experience Impact Score – a diverse set of non-traditional event metrics that can show your teams the real impact of your experiences. To do this, create a measurement framework that reflects the totality of your goals and objectives, and then execute it through a consistent survey year over year.

Not sure where to start? Let us know and we can help.



3

Navigating the political rollercoaster

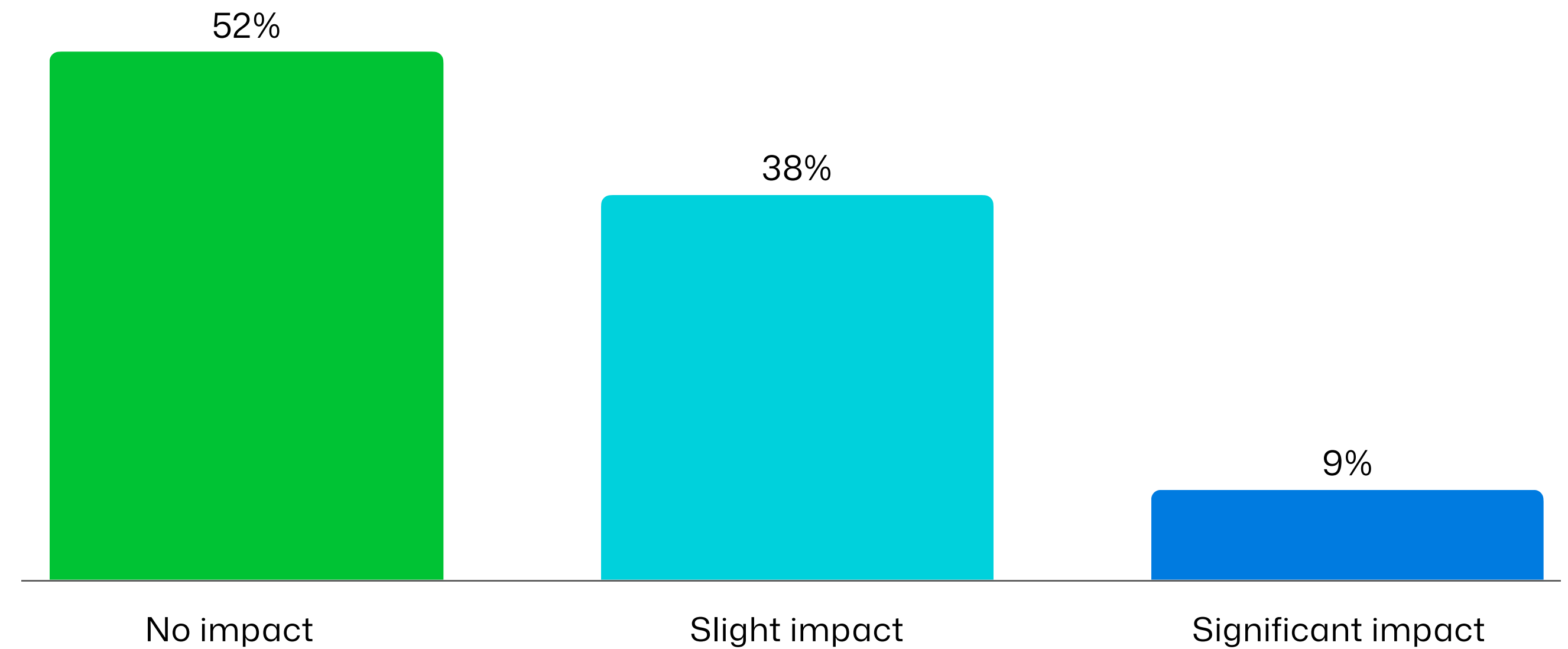


Navigating the political rollercoaster

Look, we don't need to get political here, but the fact is – every day there's a new headline that can cause headwinds for brands and change the outlook of marketers who create experiences. Nearly half of all survey respondents indicated that the recent elections and changes in leadership will have an impact on their event planning and budgets. What the impact is remains to be seen.

A key note here... this survey was administered before the recent changes in US trade and immigration policy, which have caused volatility in markets and decreased confidence in the economy. Just as these numbers mirrored similar data for the general population at the time, we can assume these numbers have changed.

How much does changeover in government administrations (like the recent US election) affect your event planning and budgets?



Navigating the political rollercoaster

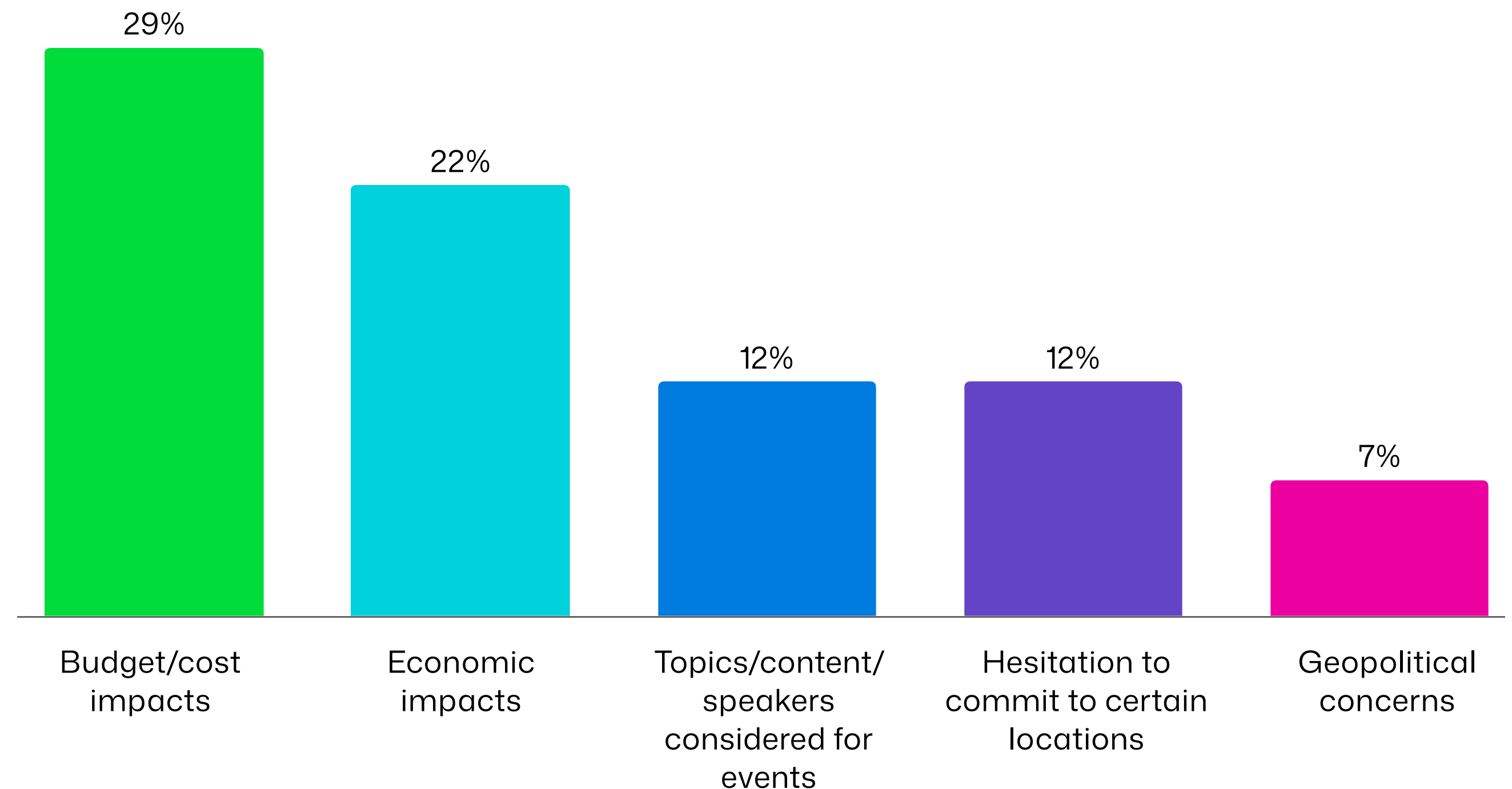
Our POV:

Budget scrutiny is expected. Changes in administration often bring shifts in economic policy, corporate priorities, and consumer sentiment – all of which can influence how brands allocate and evaluate dollars spent.

Uncertainty breeds caution. Many marketers are anticipating potential regulatory changes, economic fluctuations, or shifts in public perception that could alter their event strategies and the locations they choose.

Adaptability is key. In times of change, brands that remain agile – adjusting budgets, messaging, and formats to align with the evolving landscape – will be best positioned for success.

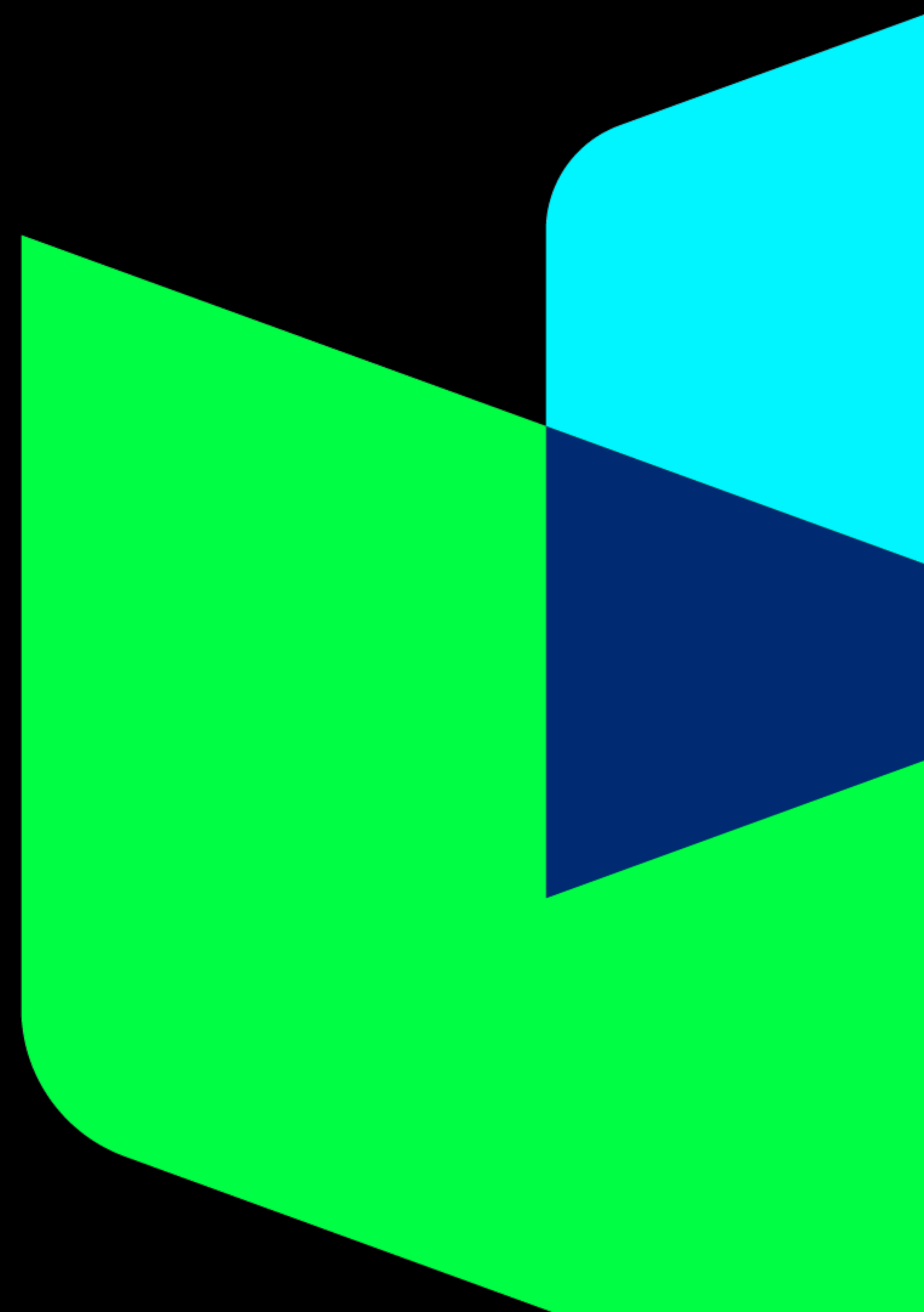
In what way(s) does changeover in government administrations affect your event planning and budgets? [Top 5]



“

No comment.
Next question.

Experiential Marketer

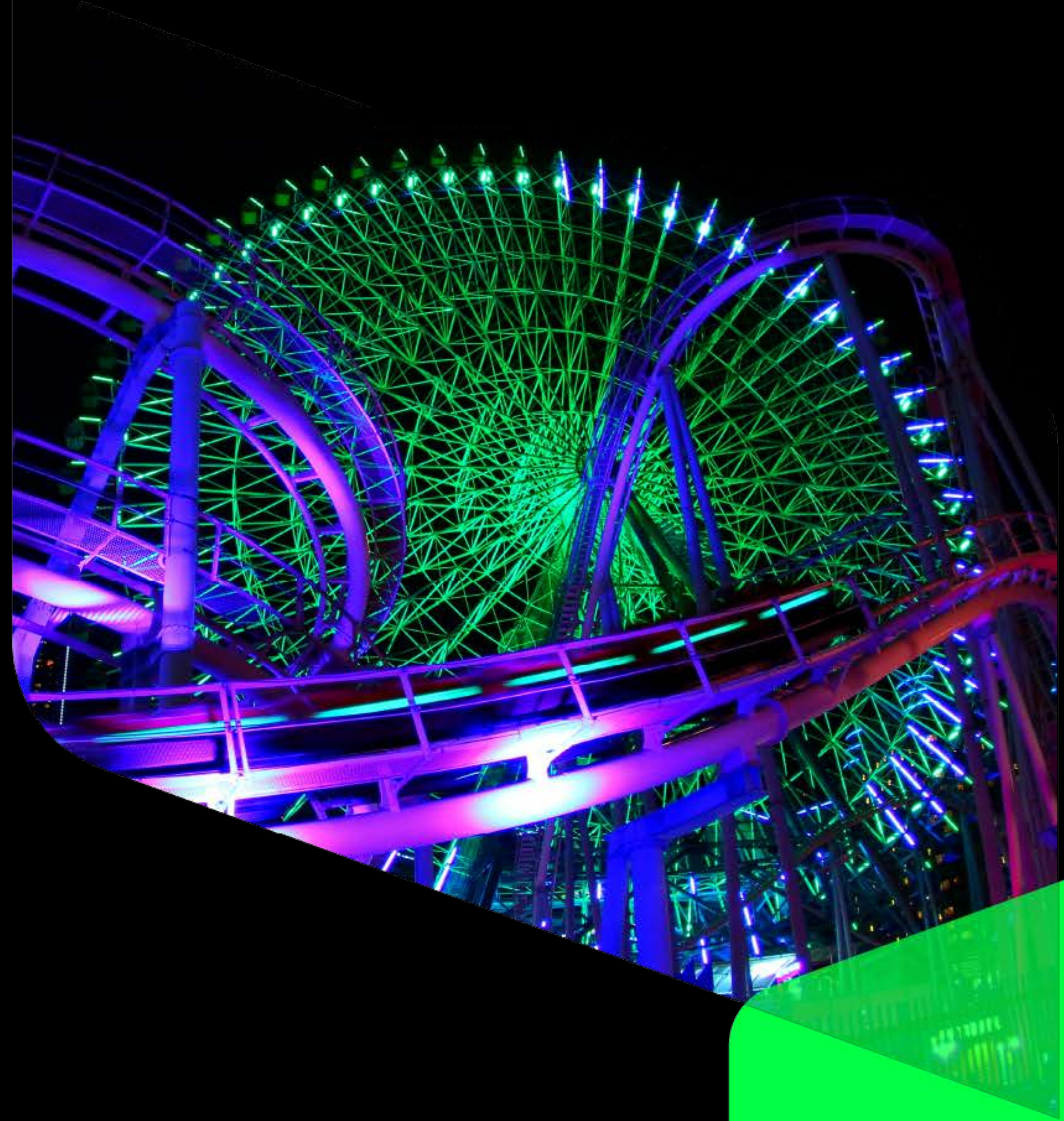


Navigating the political rollercoaster

What to do now

External factors, including politics, will always play a role in event planning. The most successful brands are those that stay ahead of the curve, build flexibility into their strategies, and make informed decisions to navigate uncertainty with confidence.

Make sure you're working with the right partner to help navigate a landscape that seems to change daily.



4

Creating experiences for everyone



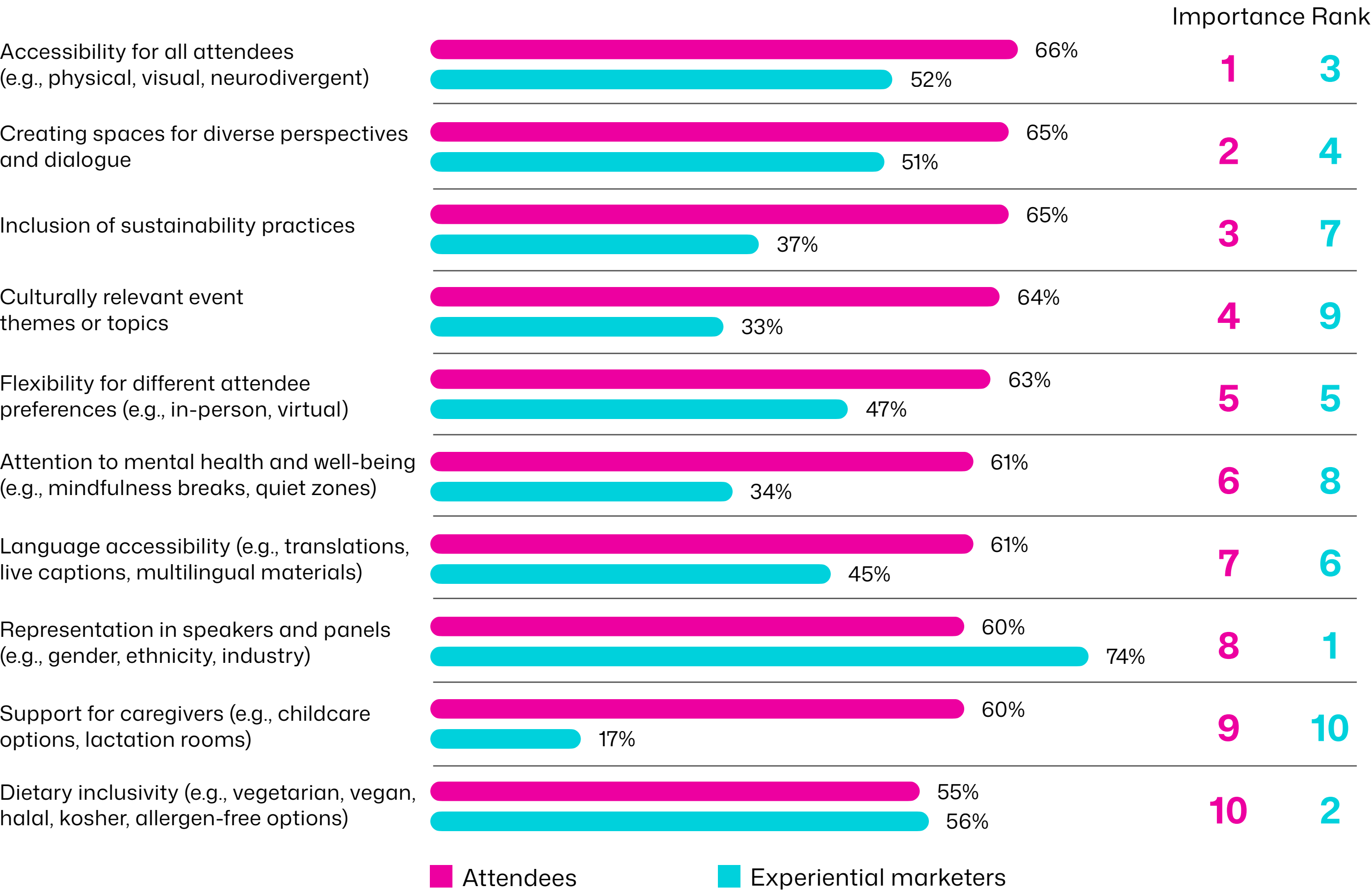
Creating experiences for everyone

Event inclusivity is no longer a checklist, it's a holistic commitment. While Experiential Marketers overwhelmingly prioritize speaker representation (74%) as the key factor in inclusivity, attendees see a much broader picture. From physical accessibility (66%) to dietary inclusivity (55%), every aspect matters. Gen Z and Millennial attendees rate all inclusive practices as more important in their attendance decision vs. older generations, and it's time to make these changes now.

NOTE: while in our survey dietary inclusivity ranked 10th in importance, that doesn't mean it's not the most important thing to some in your audience. Our key takeaway is that you should treat all of these items as important.

How important are each of the following inclusive practices in your decision to attend an in-person event? [Extremely/Very Important]

Which of the following inclusive practices do you believe are most impactful to in-person event success today?



Creating experiences for everyone

Our POV:

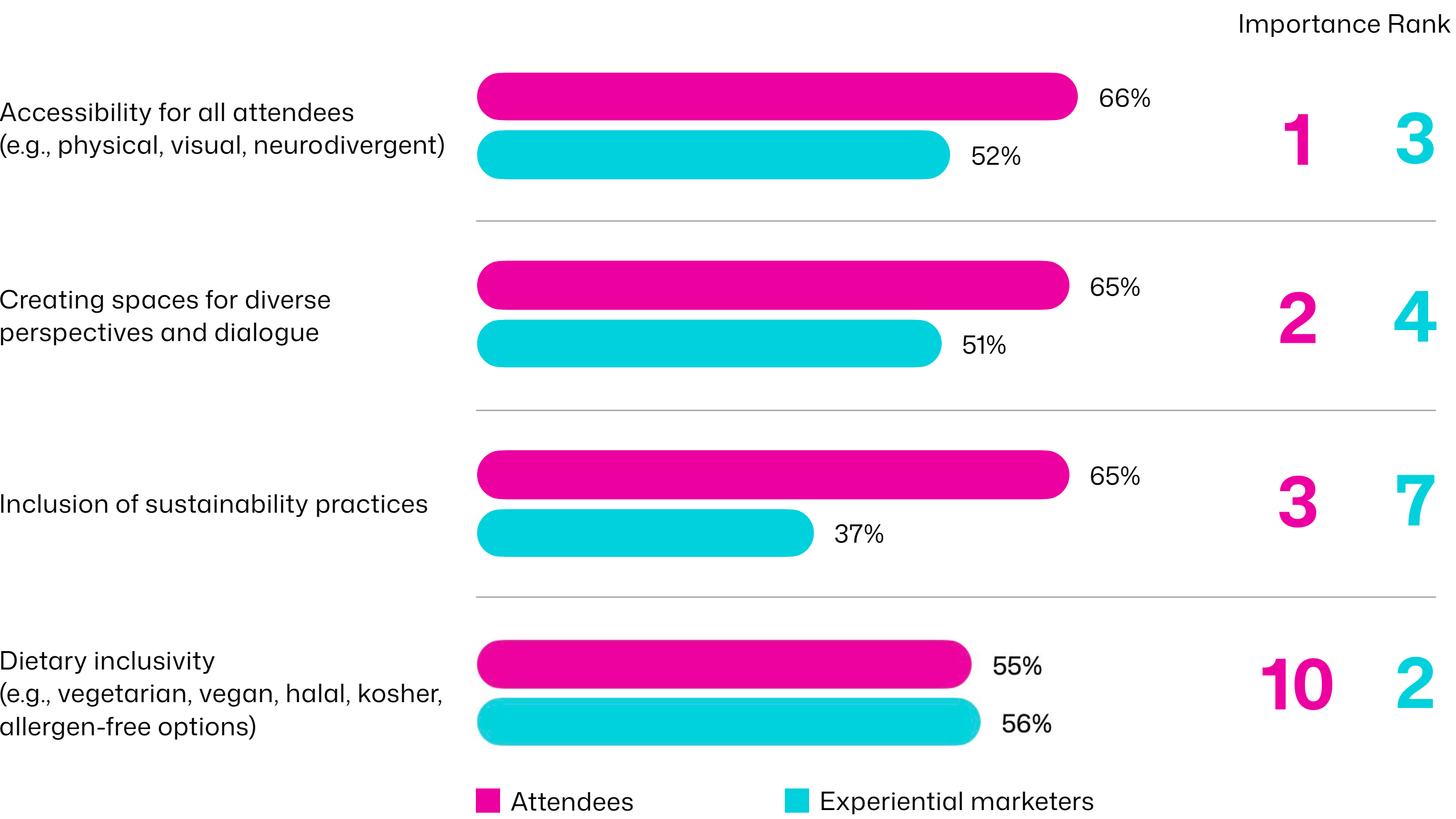
Attendees expect inclusivity at every touchpoint. Representation on the keynote stage is the least brands can do, but so is ensuring accessibility, accommodating neurodivergent attendees, and paying attention to attendee mental health and wellbeing.

Experiential Marketers may be overlooking key areas. While a strong speaker lineup is important, focusing too heavily on one aspect of inclusivity can unintentionally leave gaps in the attendee experience.

True inclusivity is comprehensive. The most impactful events make space for everyone – from who’s given a platform to speak to how all attendees navigate, engage, and feel welcomed throughout the experience.

How important are each of the following inclusive practices in your decision to attend an in-person event? [Extremely/Very Important]

Which of the following inclusive practices do you believe are most impactful to in-person event success today?



“

A massive generation is retiring. And another one's coming into the workforce. And so when we're building these events, who are we building them for?

Experiential Marketer

Creating experiences for everyone

What to do now

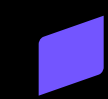
Don't hyperfocus on one aspect of inclusivity at the expense of others. A truly inclusive event ensures that every attendee—regardless of ability, background, or needs—feels seen, valued, and accommodated.

Make space, time, and investment to accommodate every attendee, including those with neurodivergence.



5

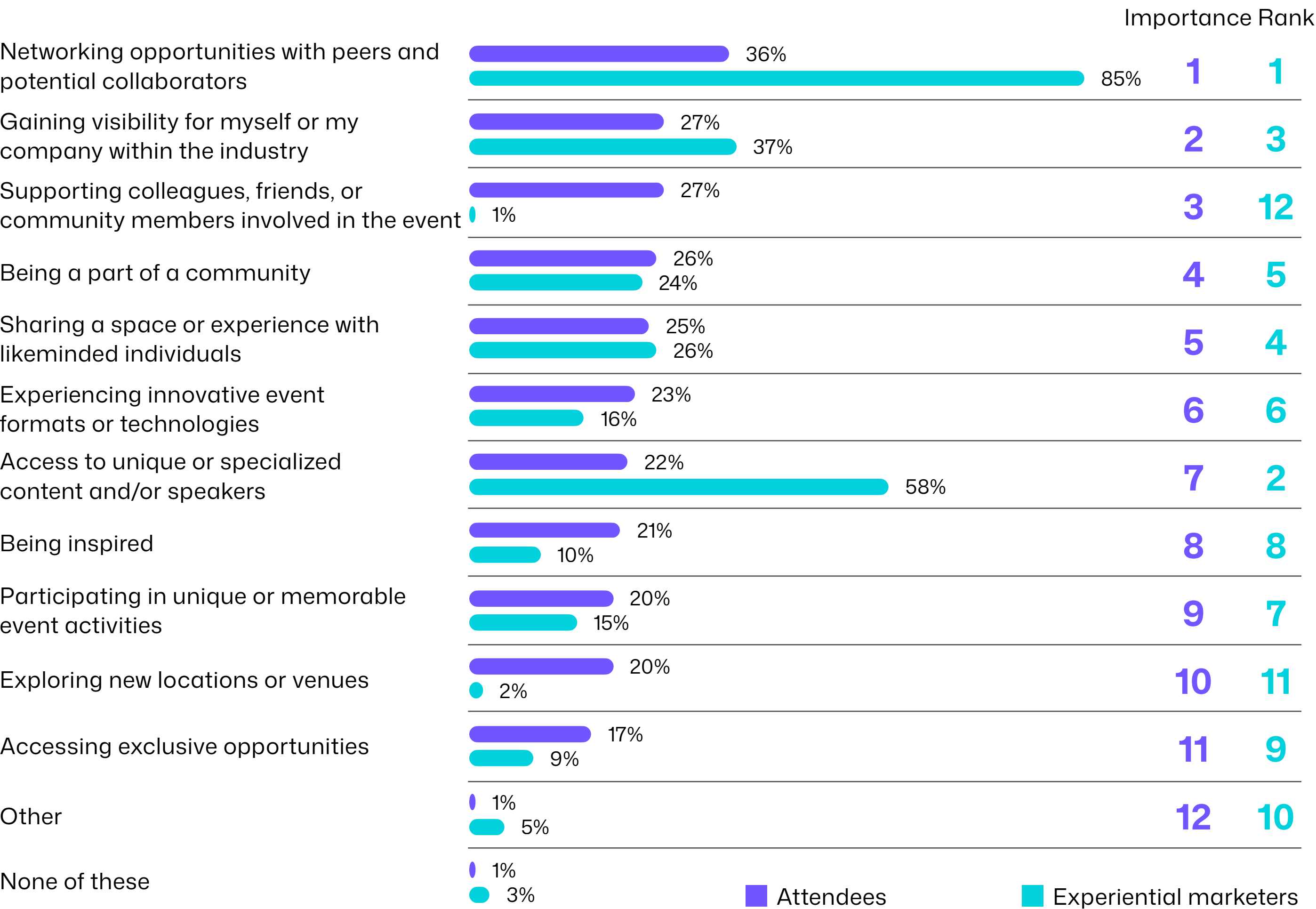
Networking and community reign supreme



Networking and community reign supreme

People show up for connections, end of story. Our study found that networking is the #1 driver of event attendance, with attendees looking to build relationships, support their peers, and feel part of a larger community.

What are the top 3 reasons you go/believe attendees go to business-to-business events in person? Select up to 3.



Networking and community reign supreme

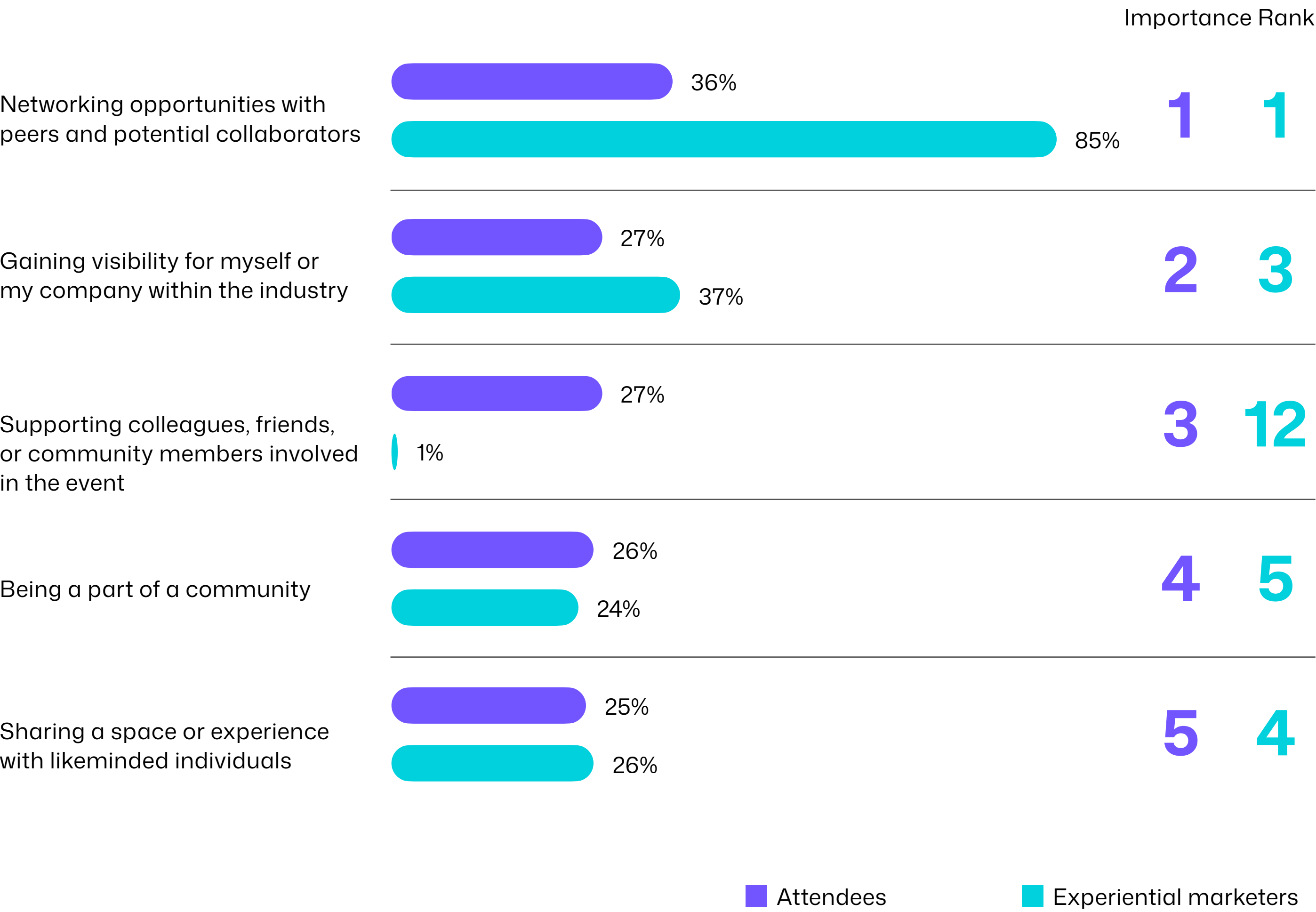
Our POV:

Events are about people, not just programming. While strong content matters, attendees prioritize opportunities to connect, collaborate, and engage with like-minded professionals.

Community is a powerful draw. Many attendees come not just for their own growth, but to support and connect with friends, colleagues, and industry peers – reinforcing the need for spaces that foster belonging.

Younger generations want structured networking. Spontaneous connections are great, but Gen Z and Millennials are looking for intentional, facilitated networking opportunities woven throughout the event experience – not just at the opening reception.

What are the top 3 reasons you go/believe attendees go to business-to-business events in person? Select up to 3.



“

Post-COVID, people want to talk. They want to network with each other, even more so than listening to content, so to speak. So I would say that should be a focus of all our event programs.

Experiential Marketer

Networking and community reign supreme

What to do now

Networking isn't a nice-to-have, it's a must. Successful events intentionally create opportunities for connection, from structured meetups to organic gathering spaces, ensuring that attendees leave with more than just insights – they leave with meaningful relationships.

Networking and community nurturing should be always-on at any experience you execute. These are Invision's keys to networking:

- Create networking opportunities that are continuous throughout an event
- Provide a mix of arranged, formal networking with more authentic and spontaneous moments
- Bring attendees together around common challenges
- Explore new technology to bring attendees together if the current tech isn't doing the job
- At the end of the day, attendees say networking is about information and idea exchange first and foremost – our job is to facilitate that information flow



6

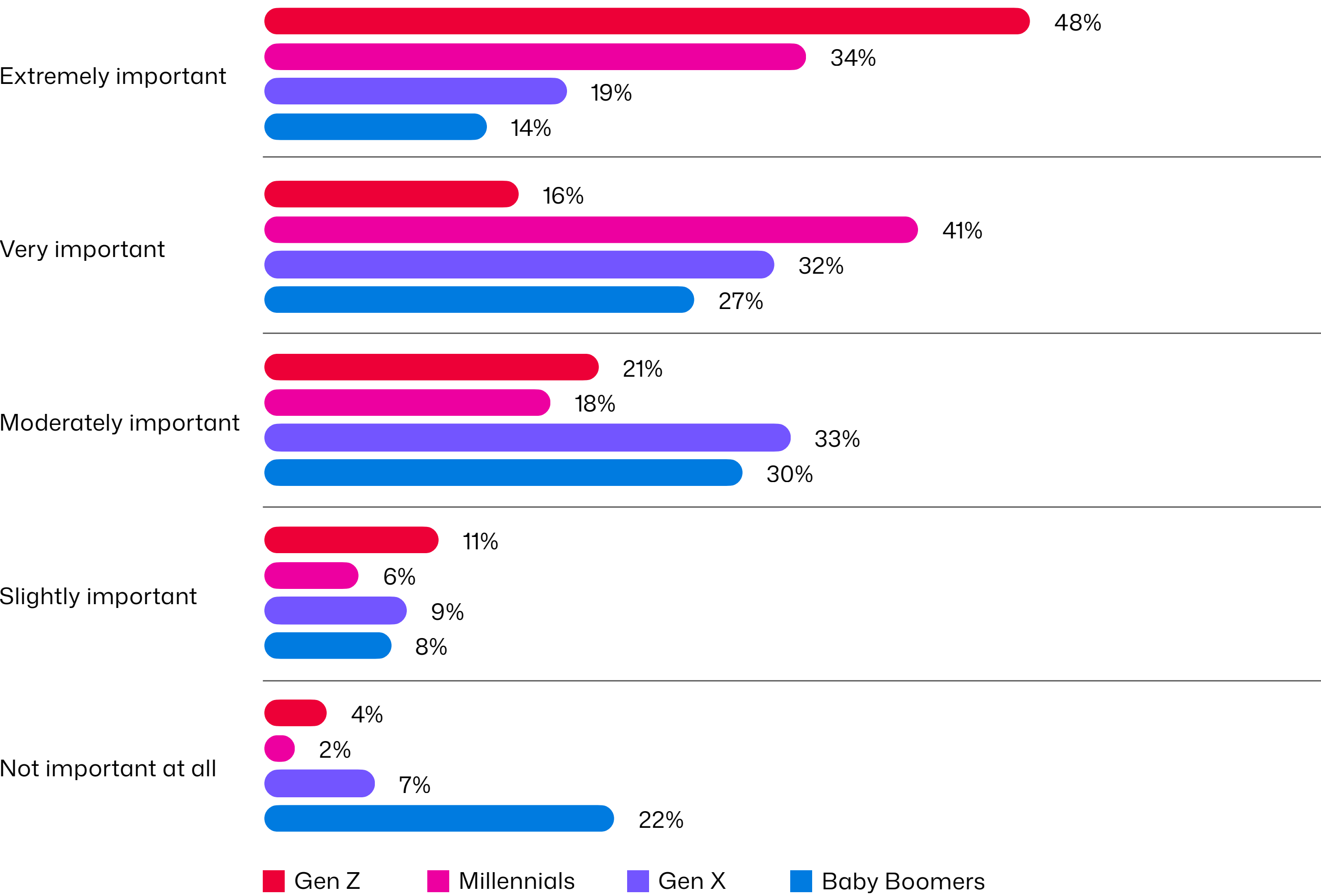
**One size
doesn't fit all**



One size doesn't fit all

For Millennials and Gen Z, personalization isn't a perk – it's an expectation. We found that younger generations see highly personalized experiences as significantly more valuable than those that take a one-size-fits-all approach. From tailored content to curated schedules, personalization makes attendees feel seen, engaged, and invested in your brand.

How important is it that your event experience is personalized or custom?



One size doesn't fit all

Our POV:

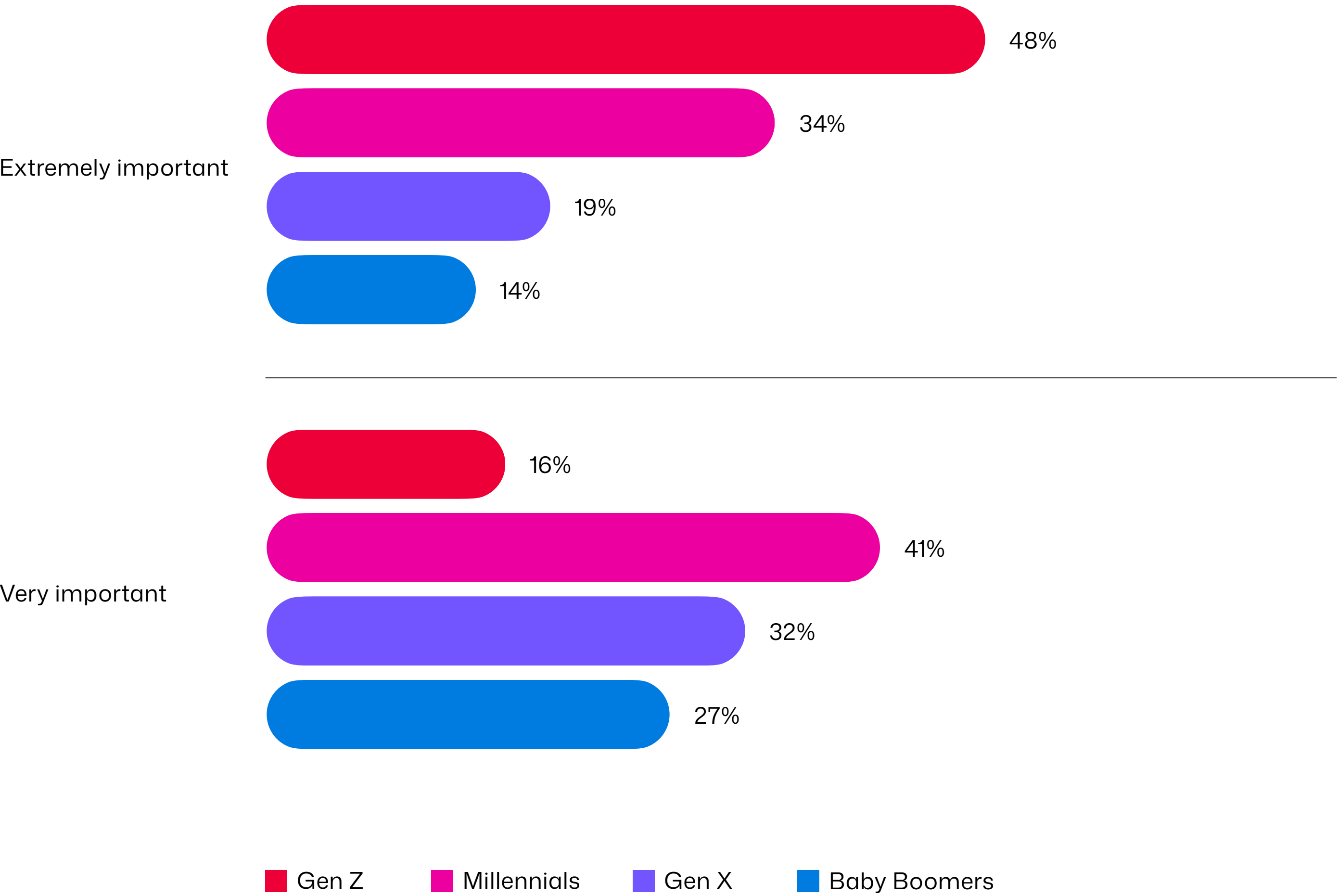
Customization drives perceived value. Attendees are more likely to engage – and walk away satisfied – when the event feels uniquely designed for them.

Personalization extends beyond content. It’s not just about recommending sessions – it’s about curating everything from communications to networking opportunities based on individual interests and preferences.

Younger audiences expect seamless, tailored experiences. Whether it’s AI-driven content suggestions, personalized agendas, or targeted engagement opportunities, Millennials and Gen Z want events that adapt to them – not the other way around.

	Gen Z	Millenials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Extremely important + Very important	64%	75%	51%	41%

How important is it that your event experience is personalized or custom?



“

[Our event] is super, hyper-personalized for thousands of people. If they're using their secure sign-on, we know a lot about who they are, where they've been, what other things that they've engaged with in the marketing funnel and can use that to personalize their experience onsite and after.

Experiential Marketer

One size doesn't fit all

What to do now

One-size-fits-all is officially outdated. The more tailored the experience, the more engaged and satisfied attendees will be. Personalization isn't just a detail – it's the key to creating events that truly resonate.

If you don't have a plan in place right now to leverage attendee data to deliver a more personalized experience, it's time to start.



Data deep dive

Event management and execution



More than 80% of Experiential Marketers feel their event portfolio is highly successful at accomplishing its objectives

Experiential Marketers that are confident in their measurement abilities as well as those who are able to demonstrate the full value of their events to stakeholders are much more likely to feel their event portfolio is succeeding against its goals. When you think about it, it makes sense – measuring your events leads to more ways to demonstrate event value as well as ways to determine if your event strategy is even working.

Over 90% of Experiential Marketers who work with agencies or third parties for most or all their external events feel their event program is highly successful, vs. just 65% of those who are using agencies for half or fewer of their external events. There is something to be said about having a trusted partner handle the nitty gritty details and the last minute hiccups so you are able to focus on making your event the best it can be!

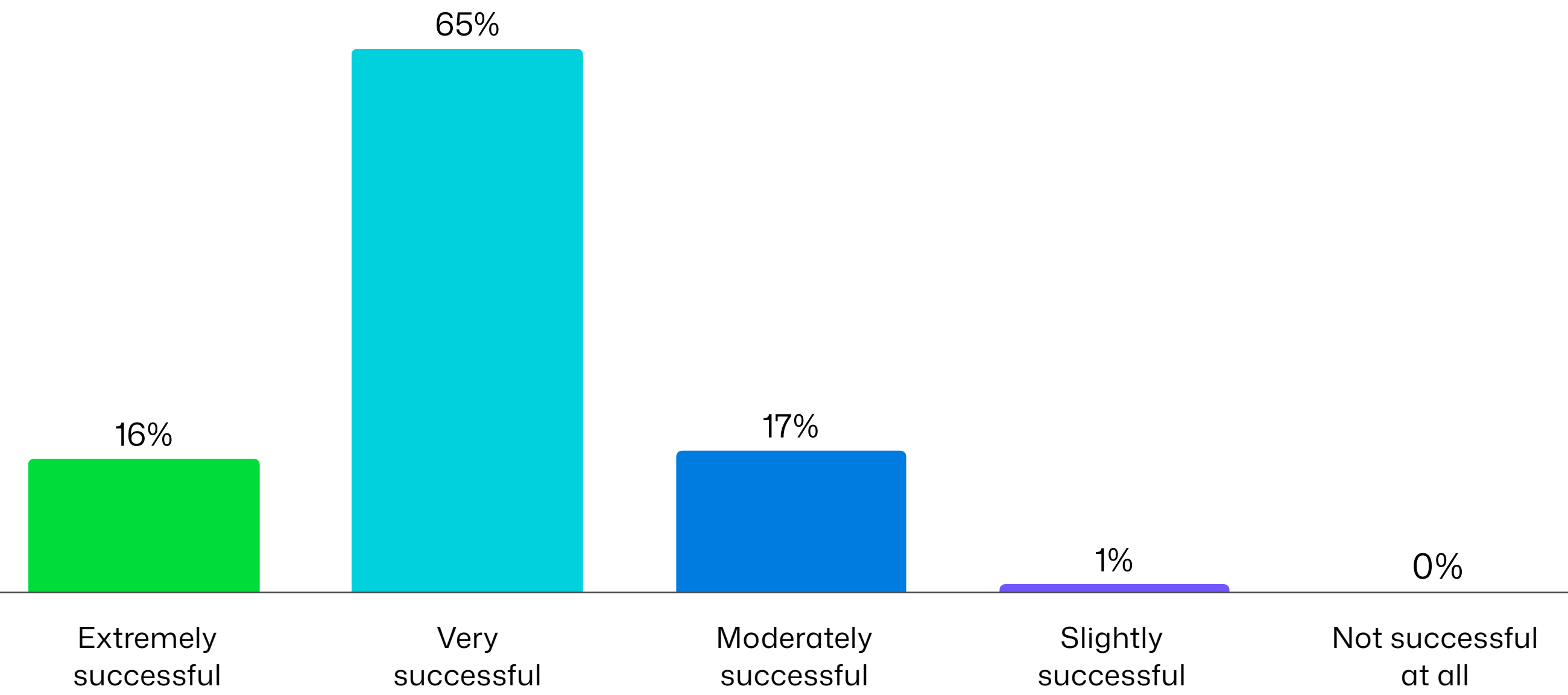
Takeaways:

If you aren’t already confidently measuring, you’re behind the curve

Being able to demonstrate event value should be a key consideration when determining what event success looks like

If you don’t already work with an agency or third partner, consider supplementing your team

Overall, how successful do you feel your event portfolio is at accomplishing the objectives you set out to achieve?



Answer	Do you use an agency or third party to help plan and execute your external events?		Able to demonstrate event value		Measurement Confidence	
	Most/All	Half or less	Yes	No	High	Middling
Extremely successful + Very successful	91% ↑	65% ↓	88% ↑	70% ↓	96% ↑	64% ↓

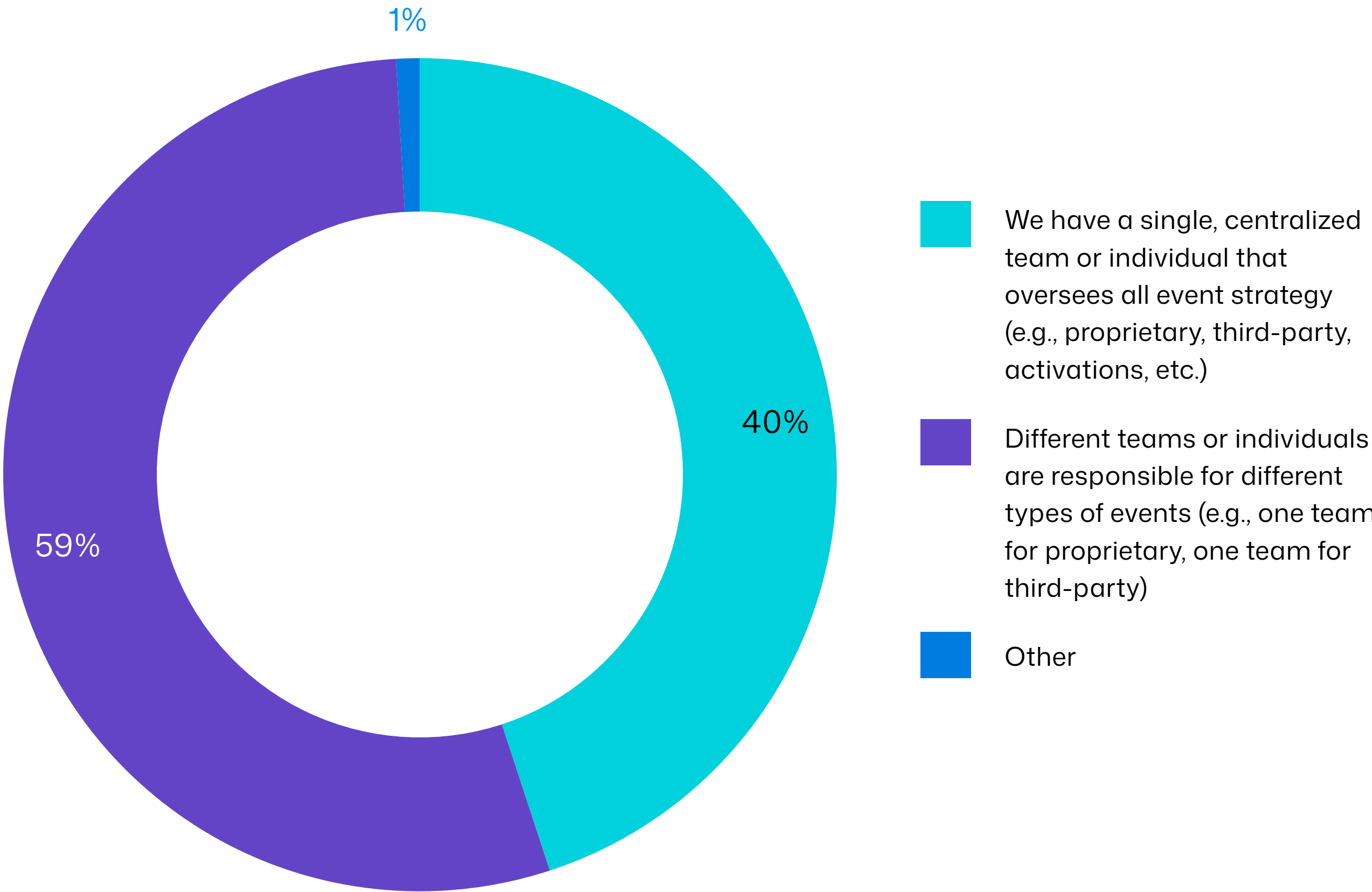
↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Experiential Marketer organizations slightly favor a distributed approach when it comes to managing events

6 out of 10 Experiential Marketers work at organizations where different teams or individuals are responsible for different types of events, while 4 out of 10 work at organizations with a single, centralized team or individual for all events.

Within your organization, how does your company organize and manage its events?



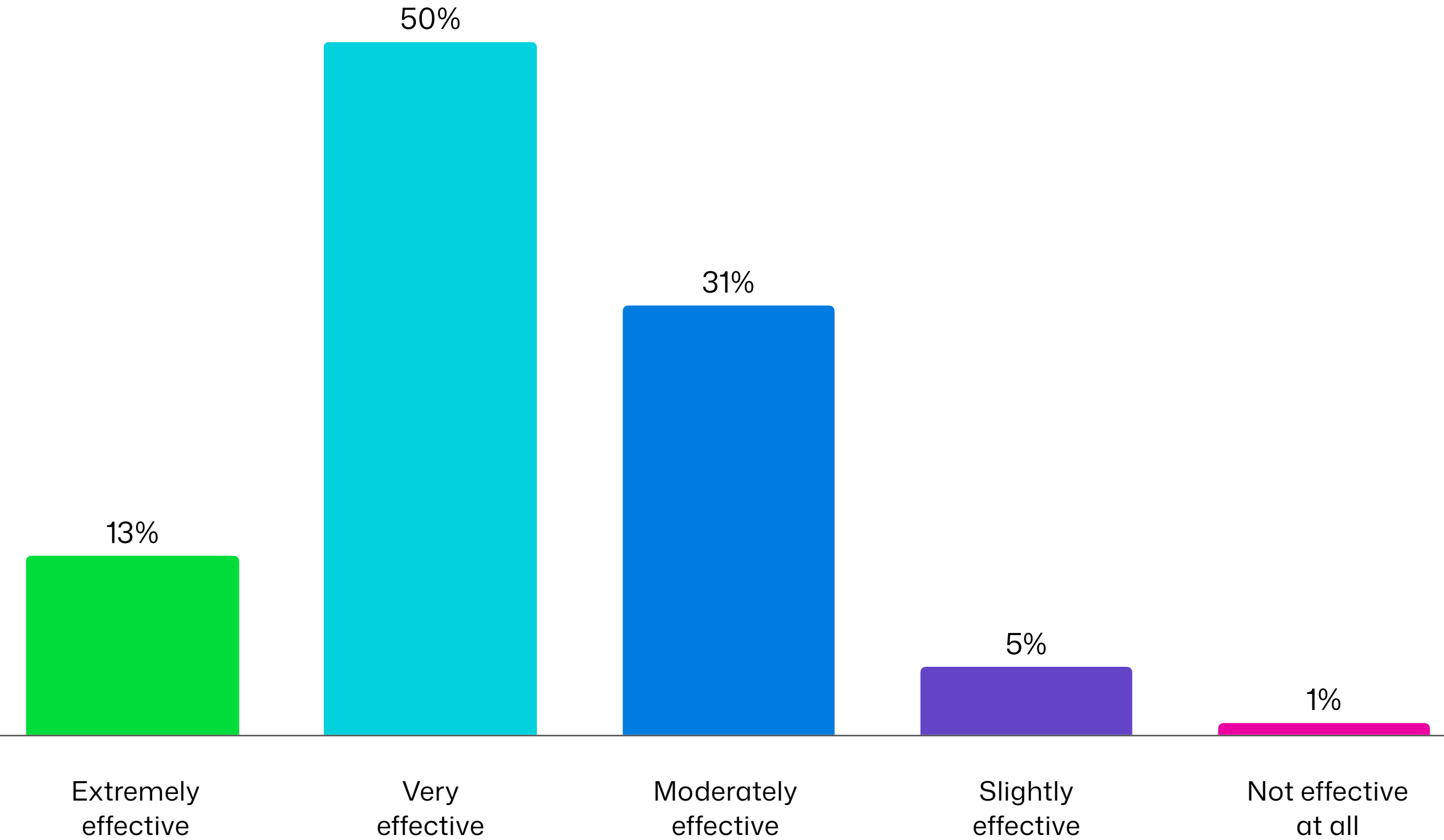
6 out of 10 Experiential Marketers perceive that their organization manages its event programs in a highly effective manner

Most Experiential Marketers (63%) perceive their company’s organization and management of its event programs as ‘Extremely effective’ or ‘Very effective’.

Experiential Marketerswho manage their events with a central team feel it is slightly more effective compared to those who use different teams for different events.

Event Management Style		
	Centralized team	Multiple teams
Extremely effective + Very effective	68%	59%

And how effective do you feel your company's organization and management of its event programs is?



Event measurement



Less than 1 in 5 event marketers are extremely confident in their ability to measure the impact of their events

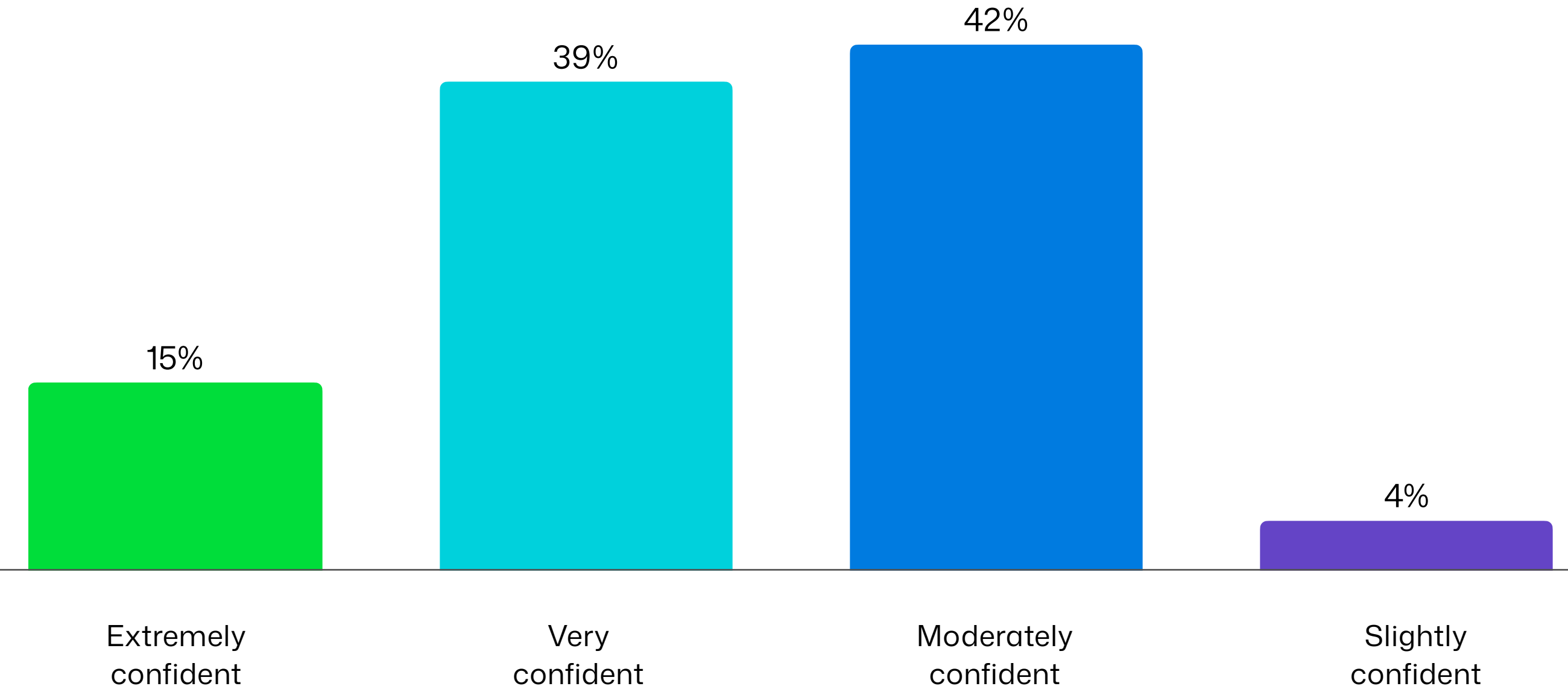
We again see individuals who are able to demonstrate event value as being much more confident in their ability to measure their events vs. those who have difficulty demonstrating that value – further reinforcing the need for effective measurement strategies.

Another interesting finding is that Experiential Marketers who report mostly having enough time to develop their event content are much more confident in their ability to measure their events vs. those who infrequently have enough time to develop their content. Our hypothesis? Getting a longer runway for content development also gets these Experiential Marketers more time to set up their measurement strategy.

Takeaways:

Unsurprisingly, having confidence in your ability to measure event impact and being able to demonstrate that impact go hand in hand. If you’re struggling to demonstrate the impact of your events to your stakeholders, a good first step is getting a solid measurement plan in place.

How confident are you in your ability to measure the success or impact of your events?



Answer	Time for Content Development		Able to demonstrate event value	
	More	Less	Yes	No
Extremely confident + Very confident	81% ↑	41% ↓	73% ↑	20% ↓

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



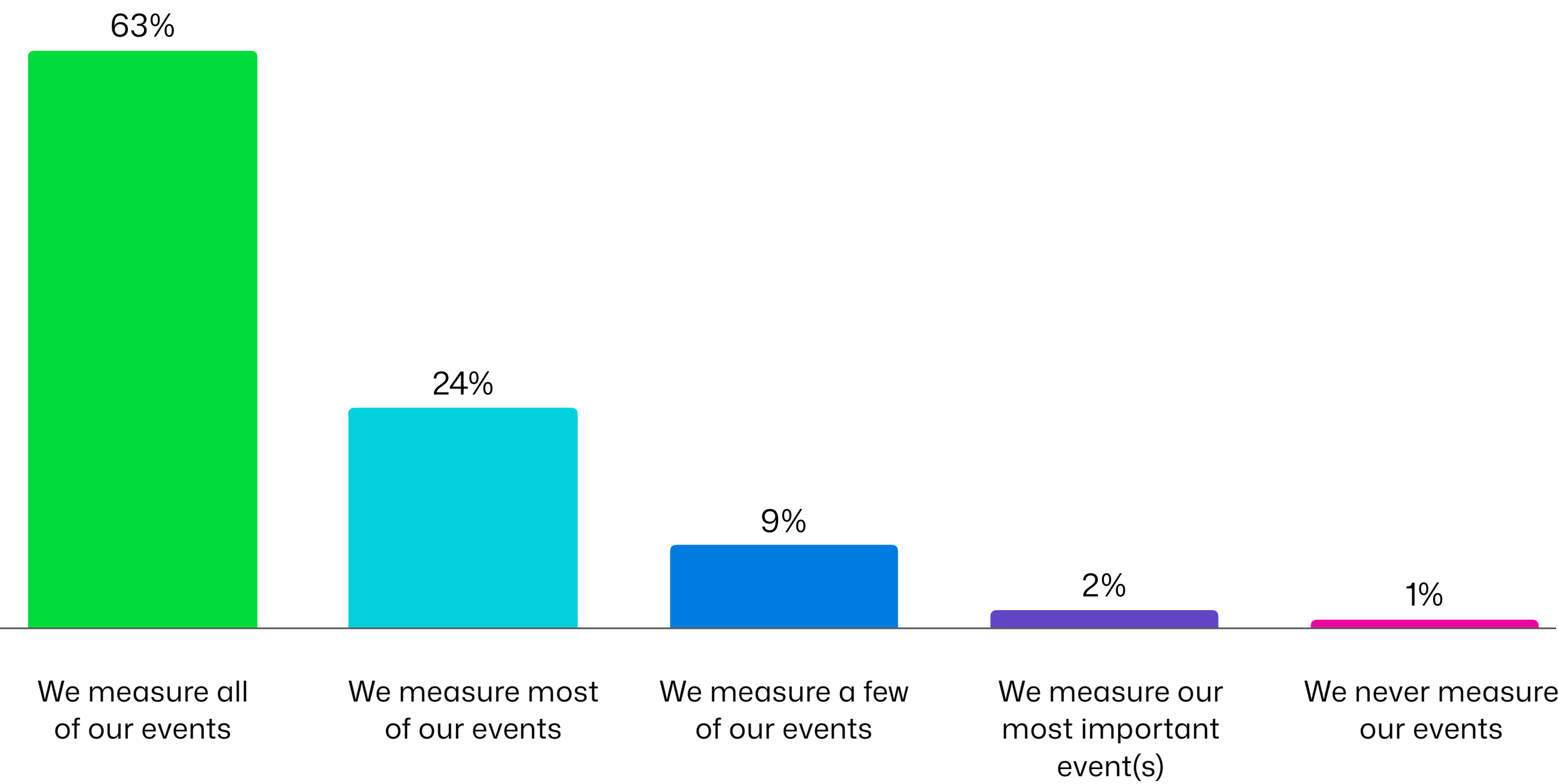
More than 80% of Experiential Marketers measure most or all their events

Experiential Marketers who are more confident in their measurement abilities are measuring significantly more of their events compared to those who are less confident.

Takeaways:

It makes sense that being confident in your measurement abilities leads to measuring more events – which gives you more ways to show that your events are succeeding

How often do you measure the success or impact of your events?



Answer	Measurement Confidence	
	High	Middling
We measure all of our events	80% ↑	44% ↓

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Post-event surveys, lead capture tools, and event platform analytics reign supreme when it comes to data collection

Those who are able to demonstrate event value or who are confident in measurement show increased usage of a few data collection methods.

Multiple angles of approaching measurement gives you multiple ways to find the solutions to demonstrate to your stakeholders that your events are moving the needle and having an impact.

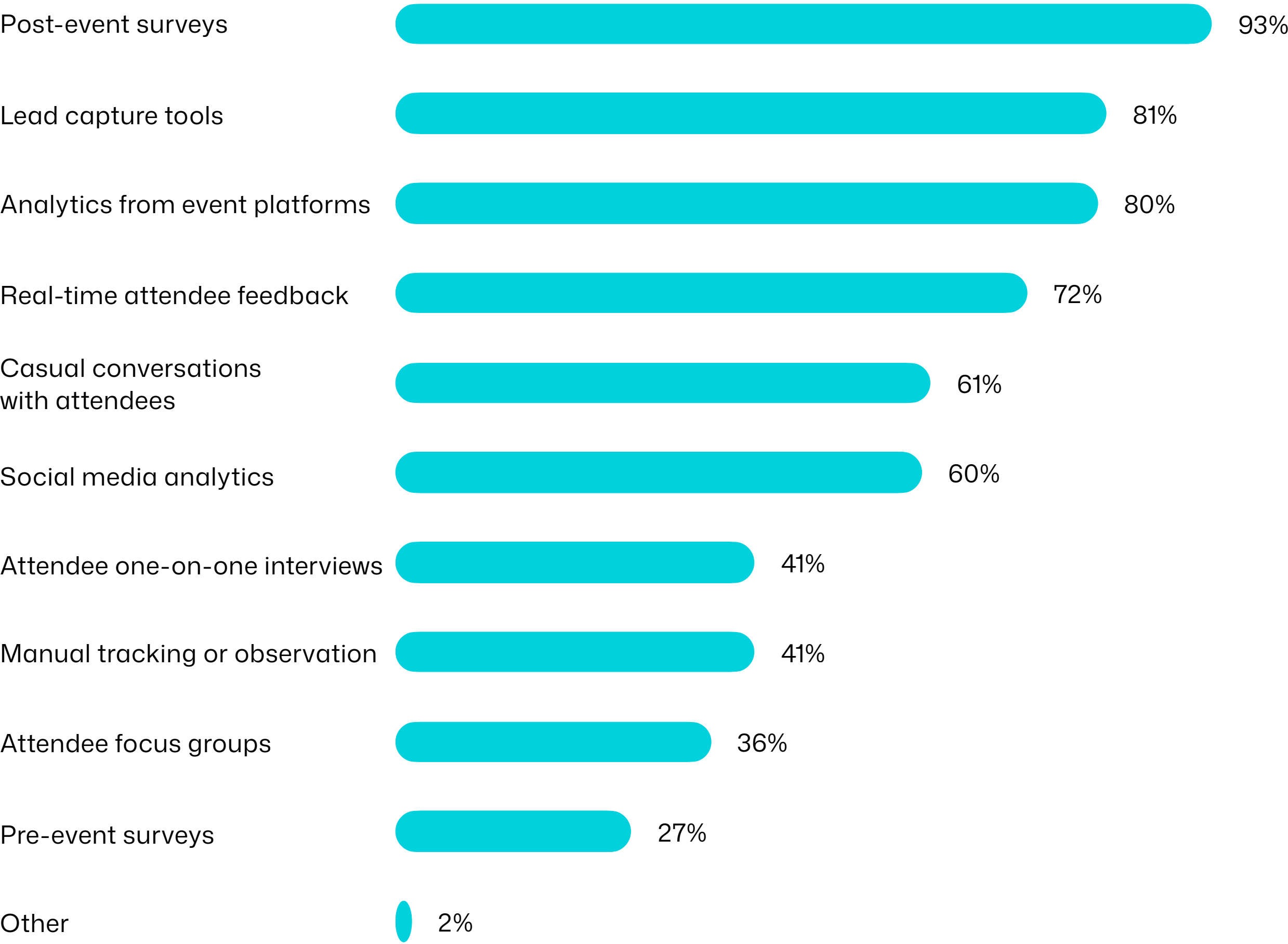
Takeaways:

While we think you should absolutely be doing post-event surveys at your events, don't just stop there – consider multiple ways to collect data so you are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of your event.

If you aren't already, consider implementing real-time feedback and/or event platform analytics.

While pre-event surveys are relatively less common, implementing one and comparing its results to a post-event survey is a surefire way to see how your event impacted attendees.

How do you collect data to measure event success?



Experiential Marketers rely on a diverse set of metrics to measure event success, with attendance, satisfaction, and leads being the most common

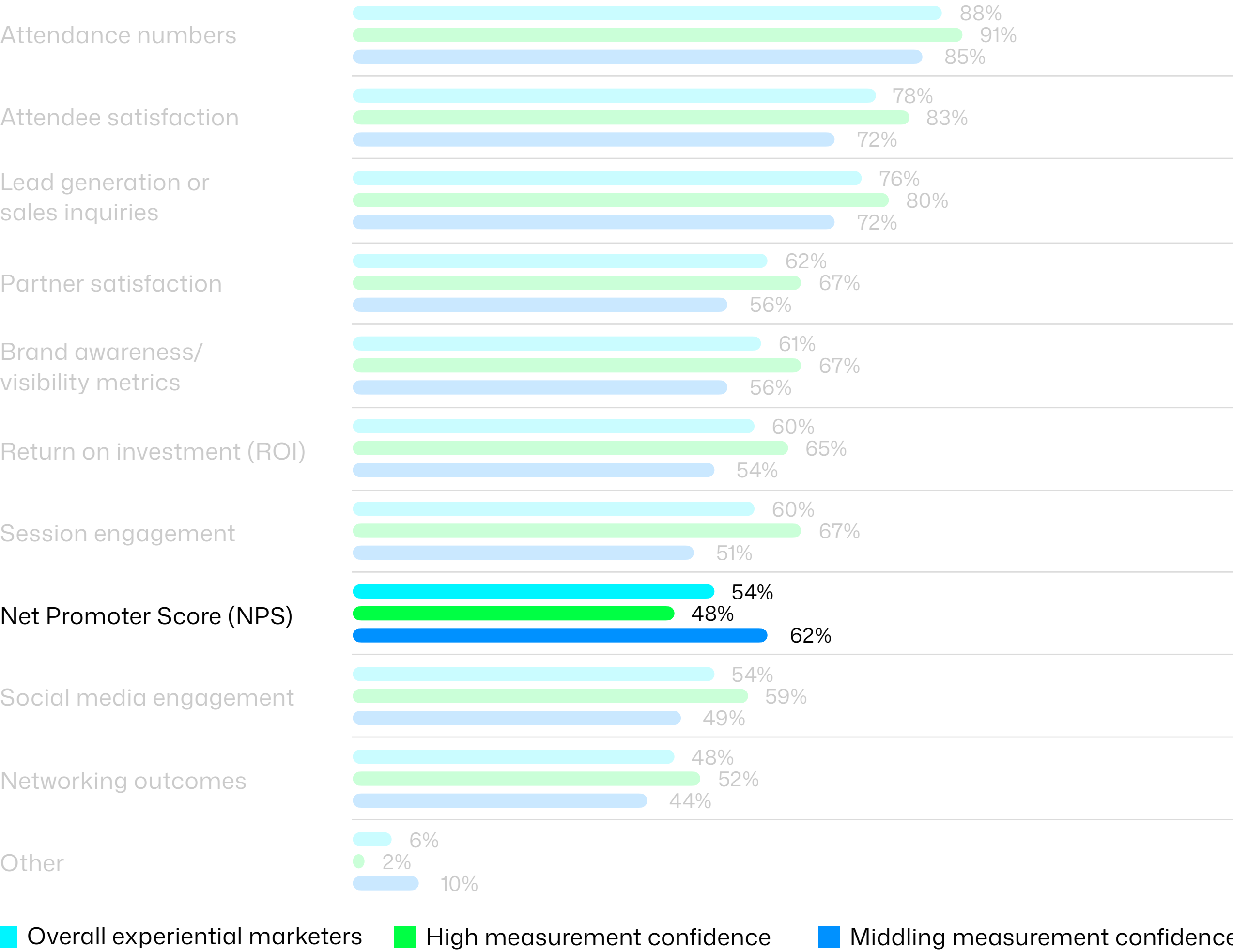
Interestingly, Experiential Marketers who are less confident when it comes to measurement are more reliant on NPS vs. those who are more confident – who exhibit increased usage of other metrics like session engagement, attendee satisfaction, partner satisfaction, ROI, and social media engagement.

Takeaways:

Don't just pick the metrics that are easiest to measure (cough, NPS, cough) as they don't provide you the full picture.

There's a reason that those who are confident in their measurement show higher usage of almost all metrics for event measurement – the more data points you have to point to when making your case for your event program, the more opportunities you have to say “here's how our event moved the needle”.

What metrics do you use to measure the success of an event, if any?



Roughly two-thirds of Experiential Marketers say they are able to demonstrate the full value and impact of their events to internal stakeholders

Those who are successful with personalizing events & those confident in their measurement abilities are significantly more likely to be demonstrating event value vs. their counterparts.

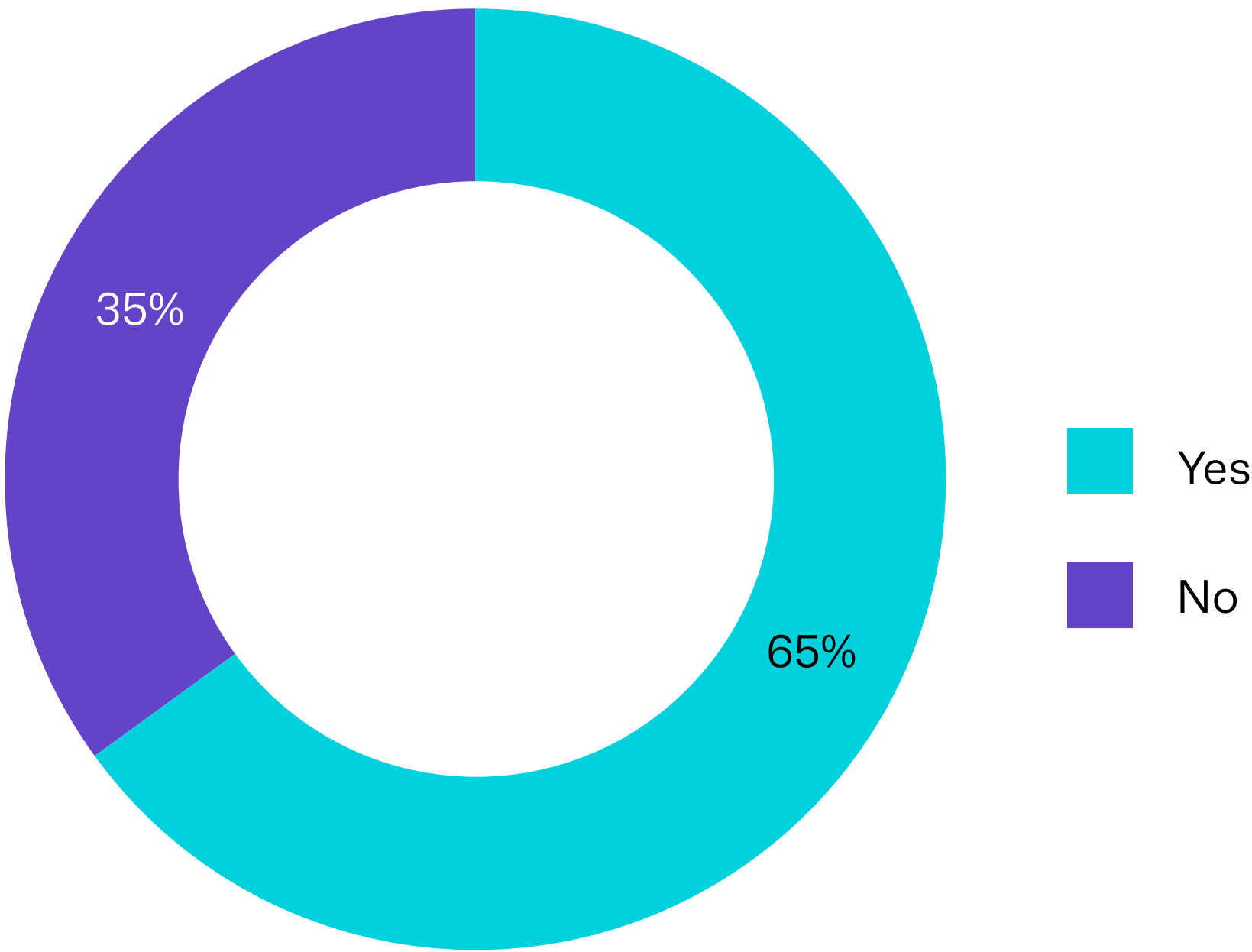
Takeaways:

There is a strong correlation between both measurement confidence & personalization success with ability to demonstrate the value of events.

If you are able to measure well, you are able to prove to your stakeholders that your events are delivering against their goals.

And if you are personalizing events successfully, you are likely putting in the little touches that help your events succeed, which feeds back into being able to demonstrate event value.

Do you feel like you are able to demonstrate the full value and impact of your events to your internal stakeholders?



Answer	Personalization Success		Measurement Confidence	
	High	Middling	High	Middling
Yes	86% ↑	56% ↓	87% ↑	38% ↓
No	14% ↓	42% ↑	13% ↓	62% ↑

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

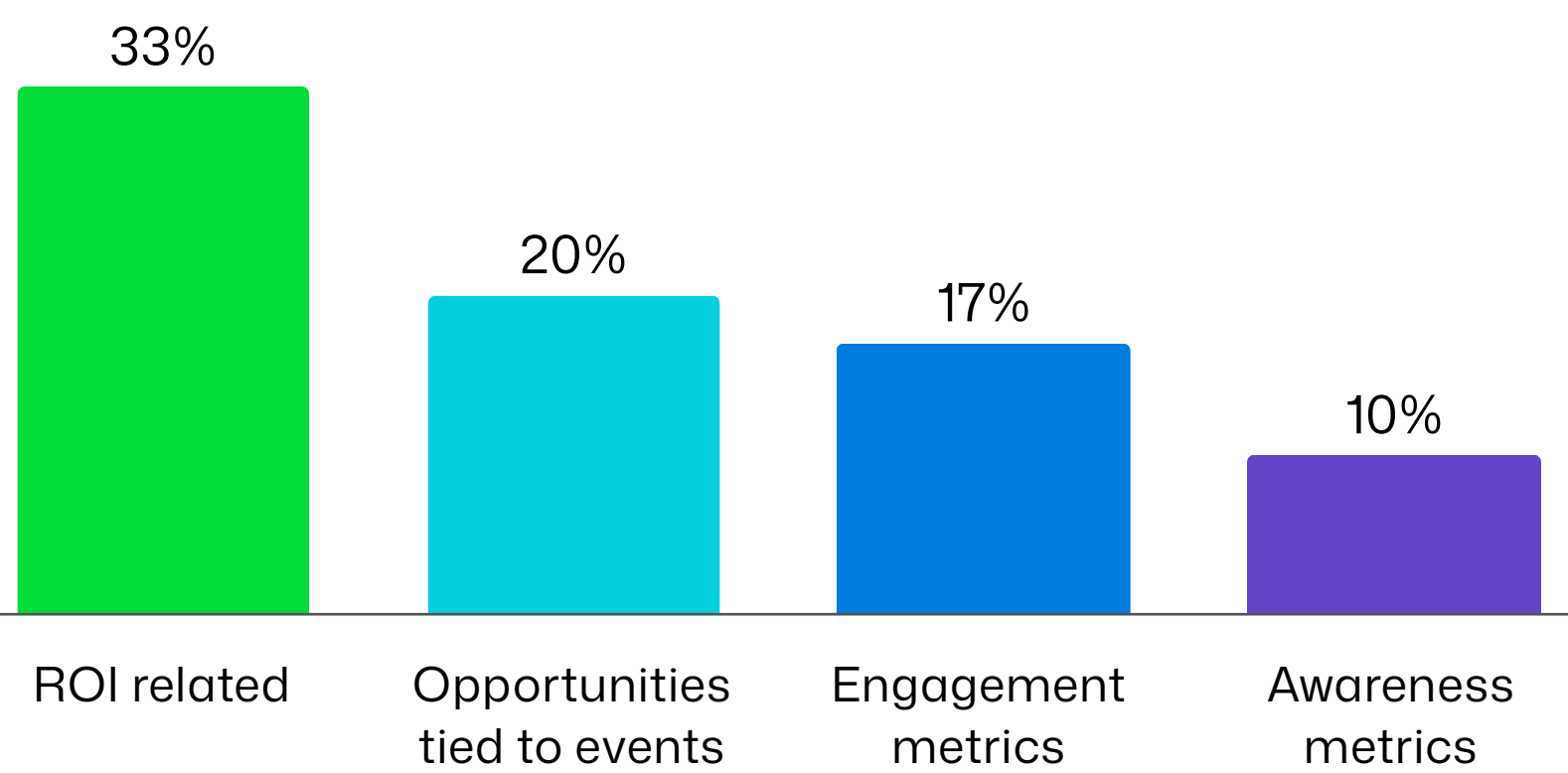


When it comes to ROI, Experiential Marketers are between a rock and a hard place

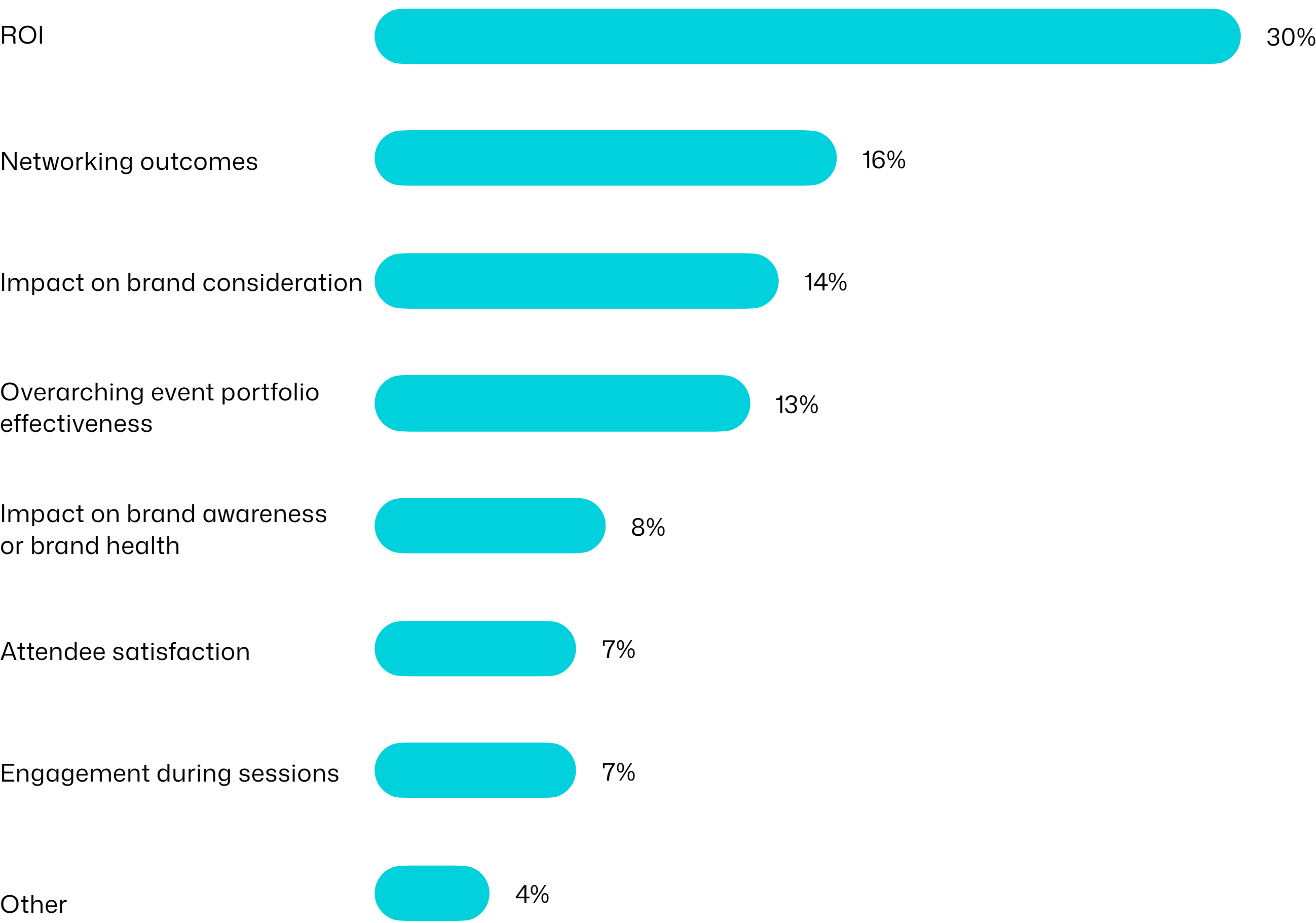
Among Experiential Marketers who are having difficulty demonstrating the impact of their events, ROI is the most difficult aspect of event success to measure and it is believed to be the leading metric that would help them show success.

As one respondent said, "Like most of marketing, it's hard to tie the investment in an event directly to increases in revenue... if someone could come up with a way to do that, it would be game changing..."

What type(s) of metrics would better help you prove the impact and value of your events to internal stakeholders? [Top 4]



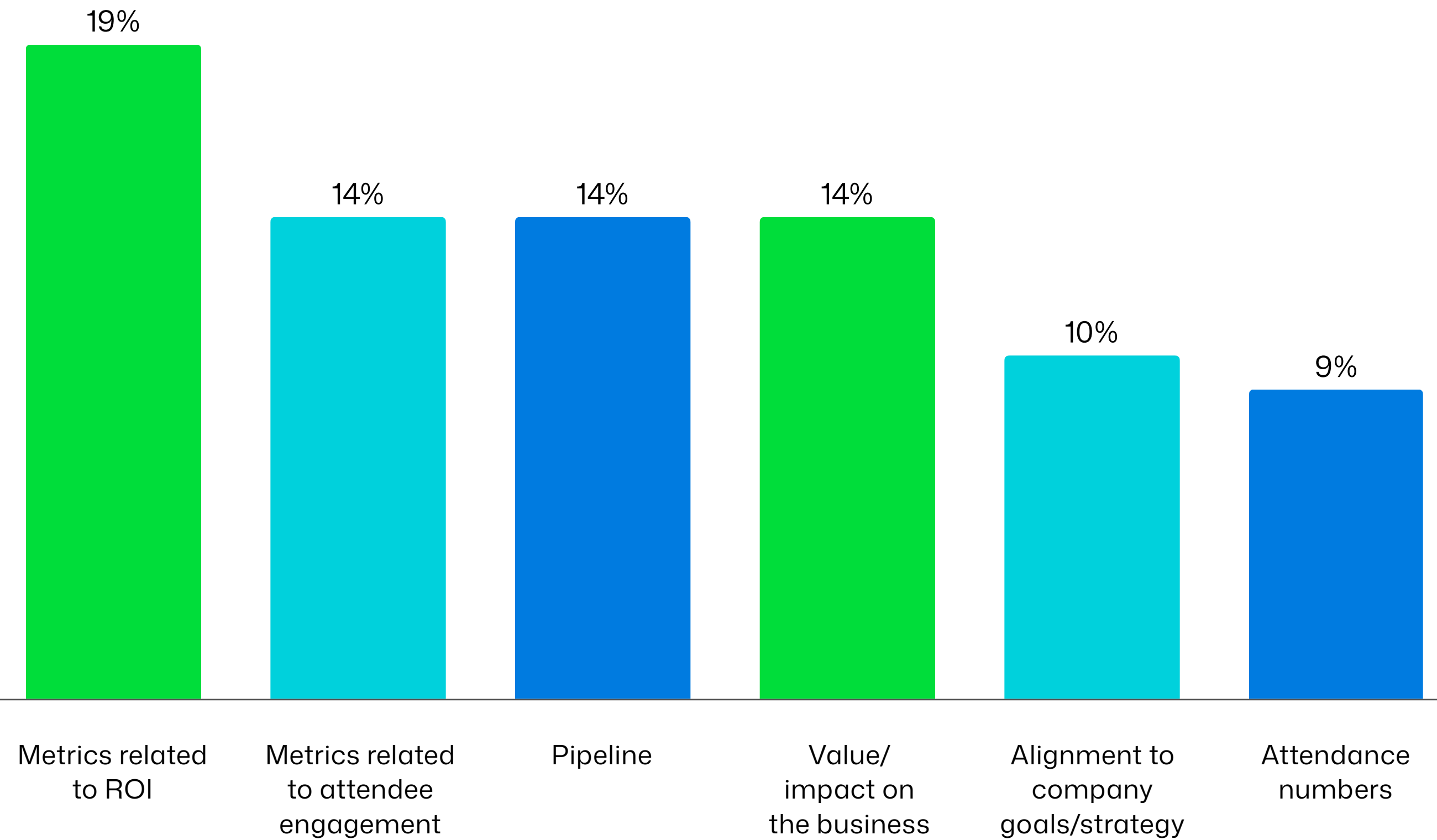
Which aspect of event success do you find most challenging to measure?



Experiential Marketers focus on showing ROI, attendee engagement, pipeline, and business impact to stakeholders to secure event budget

ROI is a serious pain point for Experiential Marketers – they need to show event ROI to secure budget, but it is the most challenging aspect of event success to measure. At the end of the day, most events are trying to generate revenue, so any way that Experiential Marketers are able to track back to that would generate a clear business case for putting on their event.

Aside from leads, what is the most important thing that you have to show to internal stakeholders to secure budget for your events? [Top 6]



Attendance drivers & event content



Attendance reasons are varied, with networking opportunities emerging as the strongest driver for attendees

Experiential Marketers underestimate the impact supporting colleagues/friends has on attendance.

The more ‘people-oriented’ aspects of in-person events appear to be more influential on attendance decisions.

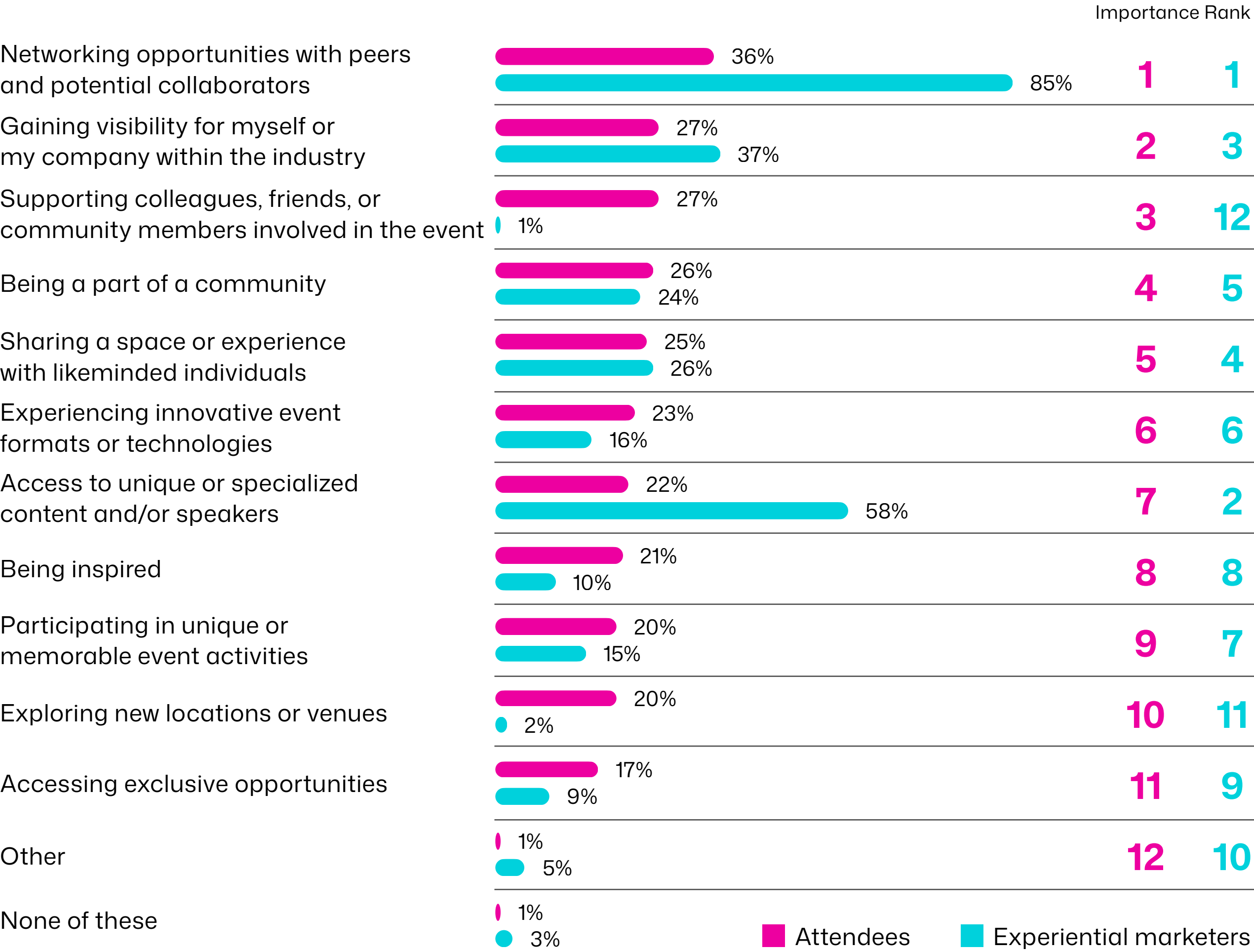
When looking at the rank order of attendance drivers, Experiential Marketers perceive supporting colleagues involved to be notably less important compared to attendees.

Takeaways:

Content is important, but not necessarily for the reasons you might think – it’s about each other more than the people on stage.

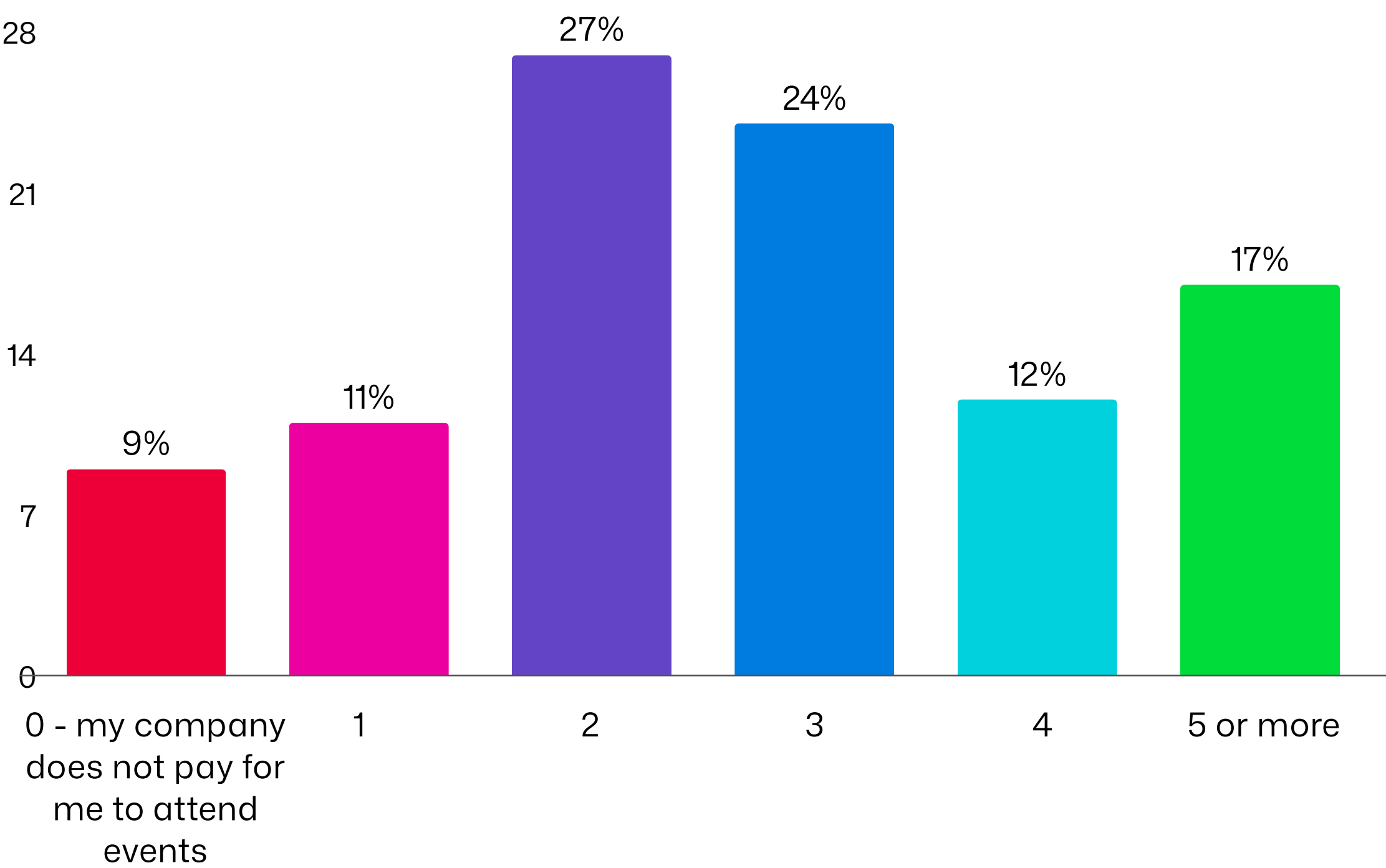
It’s important to remember that many factors play into attendance – and only focusing on one or two factors to the detriment of others is going to limit the success of your events.

What are the top 3 reasons you go/believe attendees go to business-to-business events in person? Select up to 3.



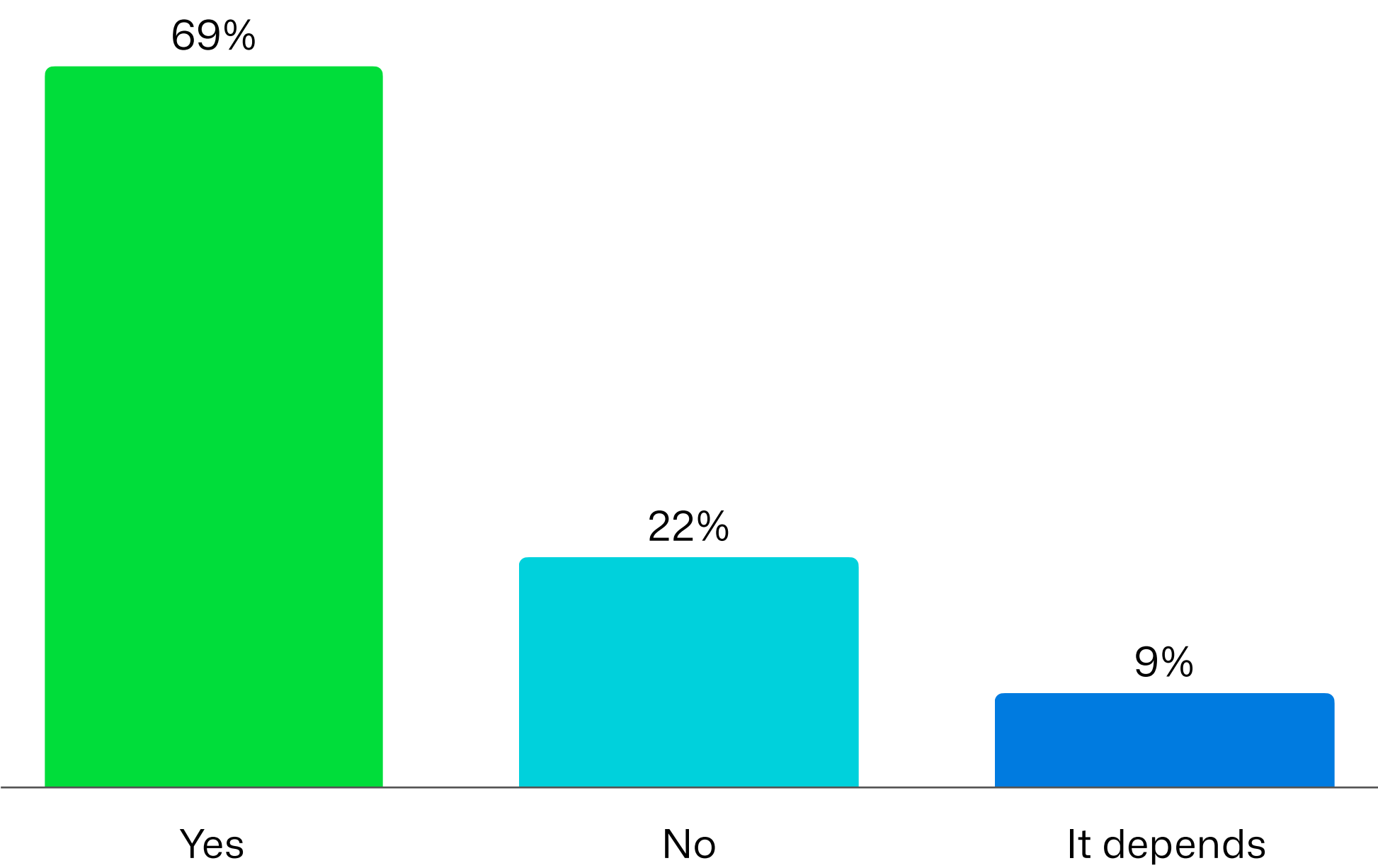
Most attendees can attend 2-3 events per year on the company's dime

When your company is paying for your ticket, how many events are you typically allowed to attend in a year?



7 out of 10 attendees require their manager's approval to attend events paid by for their company

Do you require approval from your manager in order to attend events paid for by your company?



Opportunities for event content optimization exist

Event content that attracts attendees is largely aligned to event content that their manager considers when approving their attendance, but Experiential Marketers are allocating the most share to keynotes, which are relatively less influential on attendance.

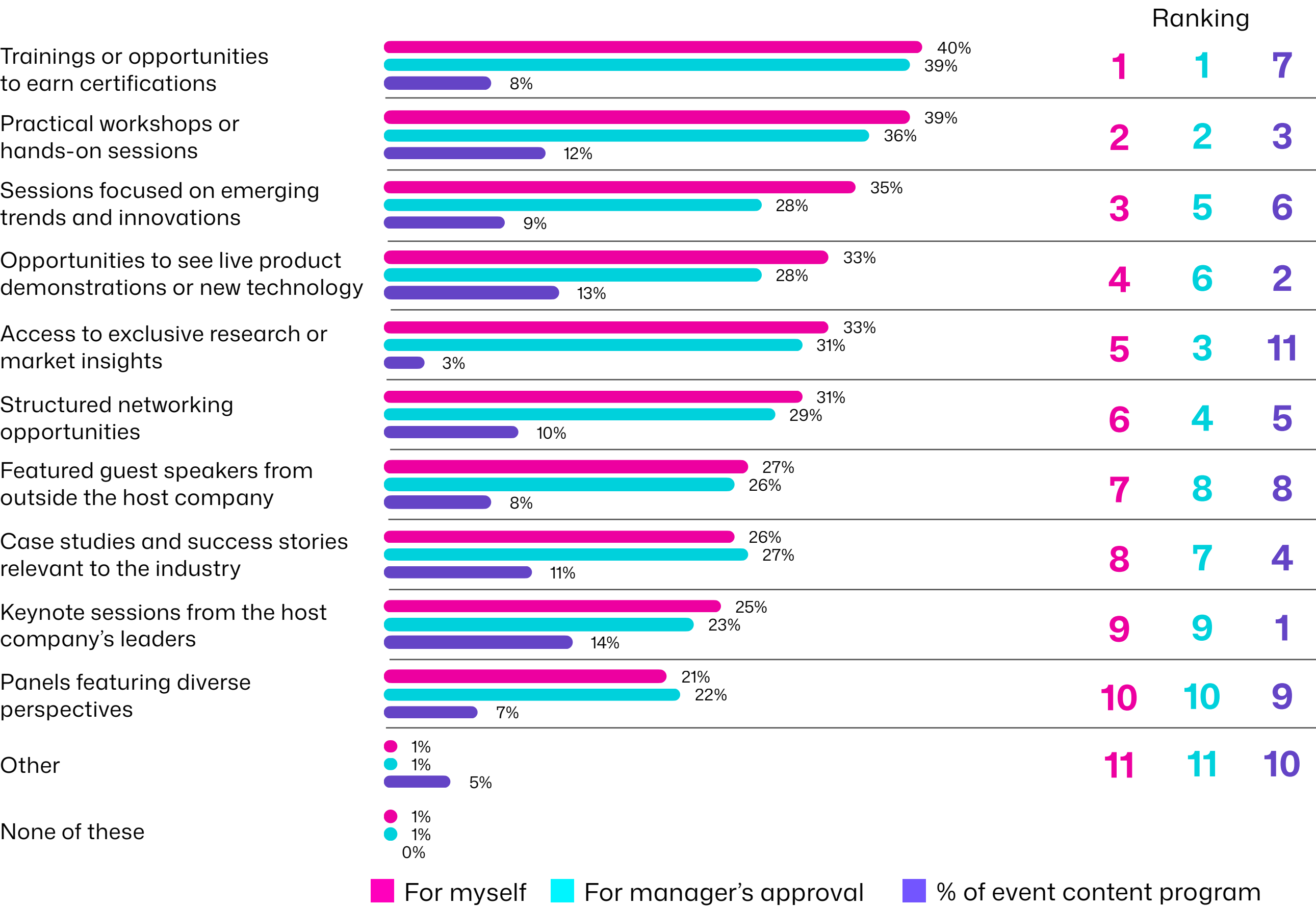
Takeaways:

Consider shifting additional focus to trainings, workshops, or sessions focused on trends and innovations, as these are most impactful to attendees’ decision to attend.

What types of content are most likely to encourage you to attend an in-person business-to-business event, personally?

What types of content are most impactful in your manager's decision to approve you attending an in-person event paid for by your company?

What percentage of your events' content program is dedicated to each of the following content types?



Events are catering to executives, rather than attendees

57% of Experiential Marketers feel their event content is driven by internal executive expectations and behaviors, while just 9% feel it is driven by audience desires/needs.

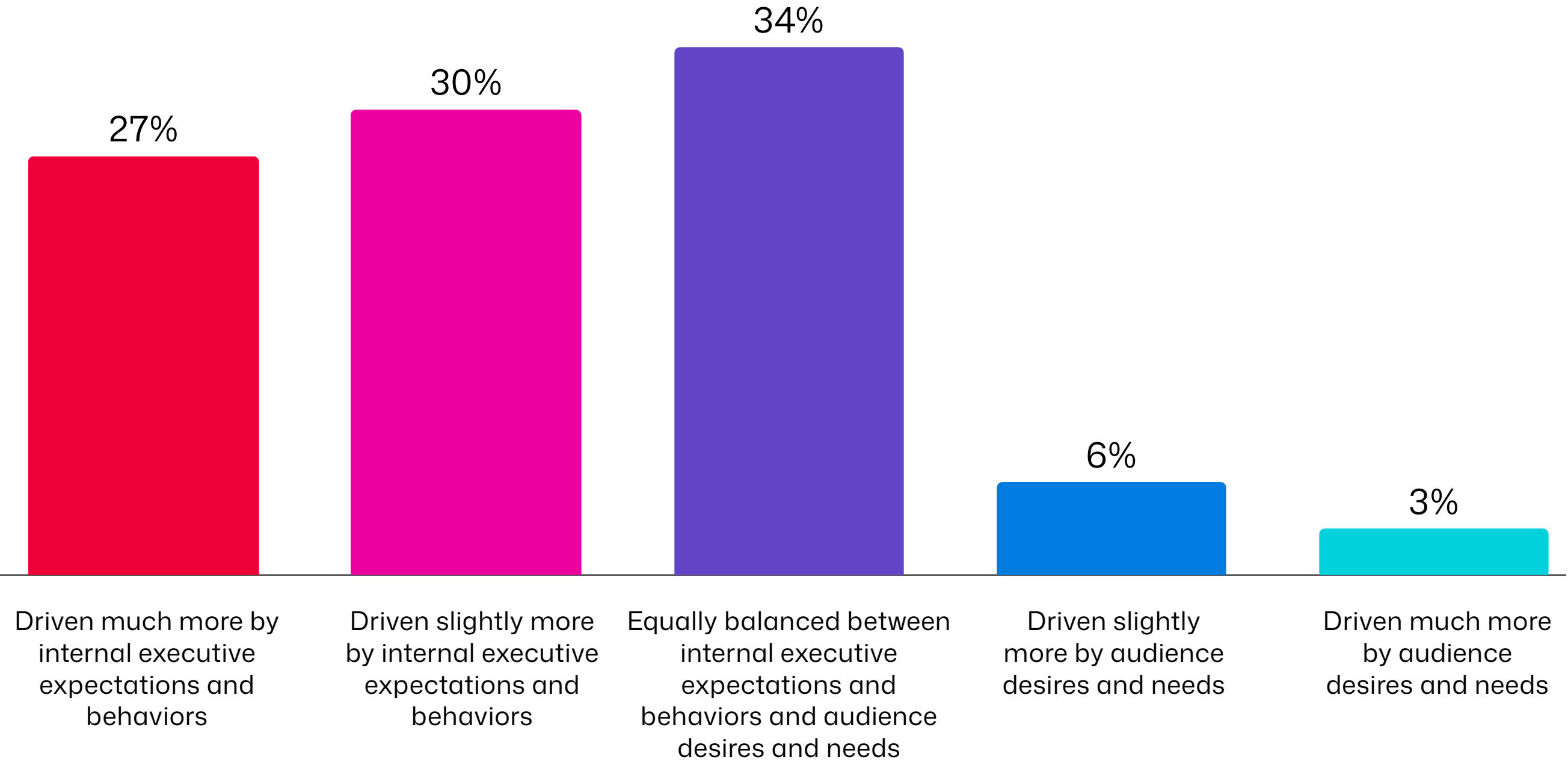
Centralized teams & those with enough time for content development are more likely to feel their programs are more driven by audience needs.

Takeaways:

It’s probably no surprise to see that Experiential Marketers who are personalizing well feel that their event content is less driven by internal executive expectations vs. those who are less successful – listen to your audience and don’t make them sit through a 2-hour keynote!

Interestingly, those who are able to demonstrate event value to stakeholders are much less likely to feel executives drive their event content compared to those who have a harder time demonstrating value, and the same storyline plays out among those confident in measurement, suggesting that programming for attendees instead of internal expectations leads to increased event success.

Do you feel that the content of your event programs is driven more by internal executive expectations and behaviors or audience desires and needs?



Answer	Event Management Style		Time for Content Development		Personalization Success		Able to demonstrate event value		Measurement Confidence	
	Centralized team	Different teams	More	Less	High	Middling	Yes	No	High	Middling
Driven by executives	44%	65%	39% ↓	66% ↑	38% ↓	63% ↑	43% ↓	83% ↑	48% ↓	69% ↑
Driven by audience	21% ↑	2% ↓	25% ↑	2% ↓	19%	6%	11%	7%	13%	5%

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Inclusion & sustainability



There’s a disconnect in what inclusion looks like

While attendees do find certain inclusive practices like accessibility for all, spaces for diverse perspectives, and sustainability efforts, to be more impactful in their attendance decision, the spread between the most and least important factors is tight.

Experiential Marketers have a different picture in mind – where representation in speakers and panels takes center stage, and most other factors fall to the wayside.

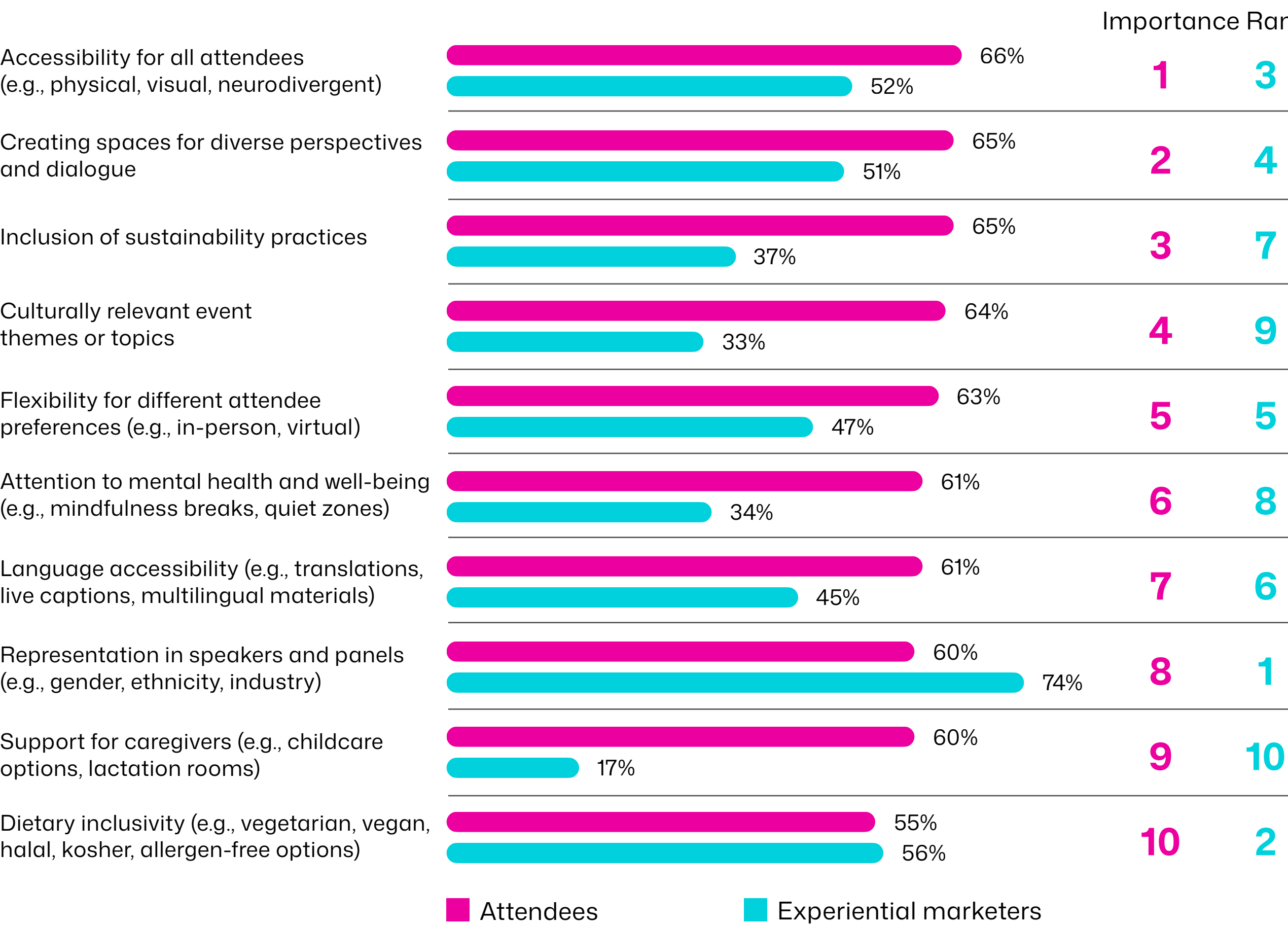
Takeaways:

Making sure your event is accessible for all attendees should be the baseline, but you have to look at the whole picture – from sustainability and cultural relevance to caregiver support and dietary inclusivity – in order to really provide an inclusive event.

While representation in speakers and panels is important, it isn't the driving force that Experiential Marketers perceive it to be... the most important inclusive practices are felt throughout the entire event experience.

How important are each of the following inclusive practices in your decision to attend an in-person event? [% Selected Extremely/Very Important]

Which of the following inclusive practices do you believe are most impactful to in-person event success today?



Inclusivity matters most to younger generations

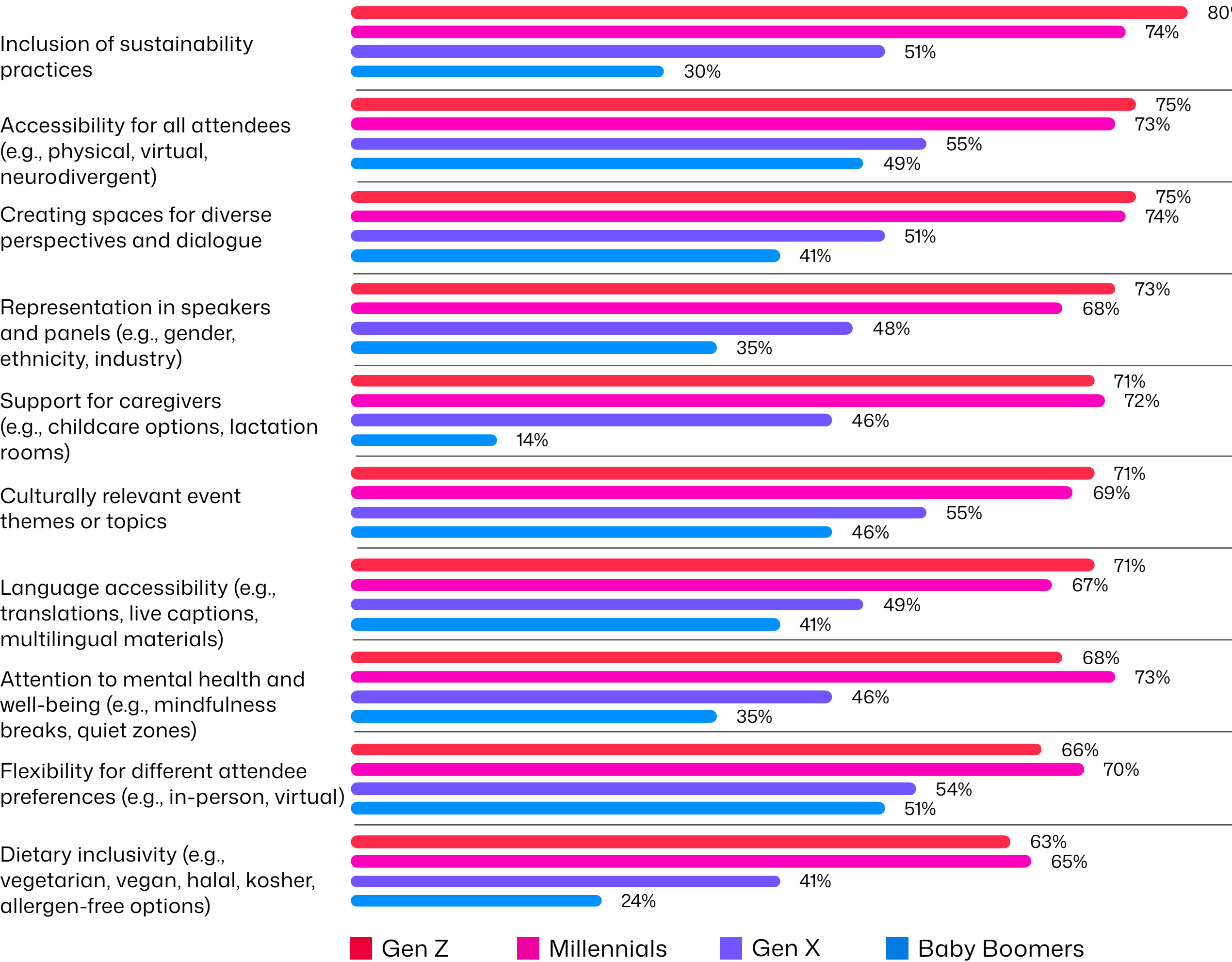
Gen Z and Millennial attendees rate all inclusive practices as more important to their attendance decision vs. older generations.

Takeaways:

If you aren’t designing with inclusivity in mind, you are alienating your younger event attendees.

As the workforce demographics continue to shift, inclusivity will become increasingly important – it’s up to you to start prioritizing these practices now and be praised as an early adopter or be left to play catch up later.

How important are each of the following inclusive practices in your decision to attend an in-person event? [% Selected Extremely/Very Important]



When it comes to inclusive practices at events, most are not being addressed all that well

Aside from dietary inclusivity, experiential marketers’ organizations are not significantly addressing most inclusive practices.

Experiential Marketers that are personalizing experiences well, on the other hand, indicate that their organizations are addressing these factors more effectively – but there is still room to improve.

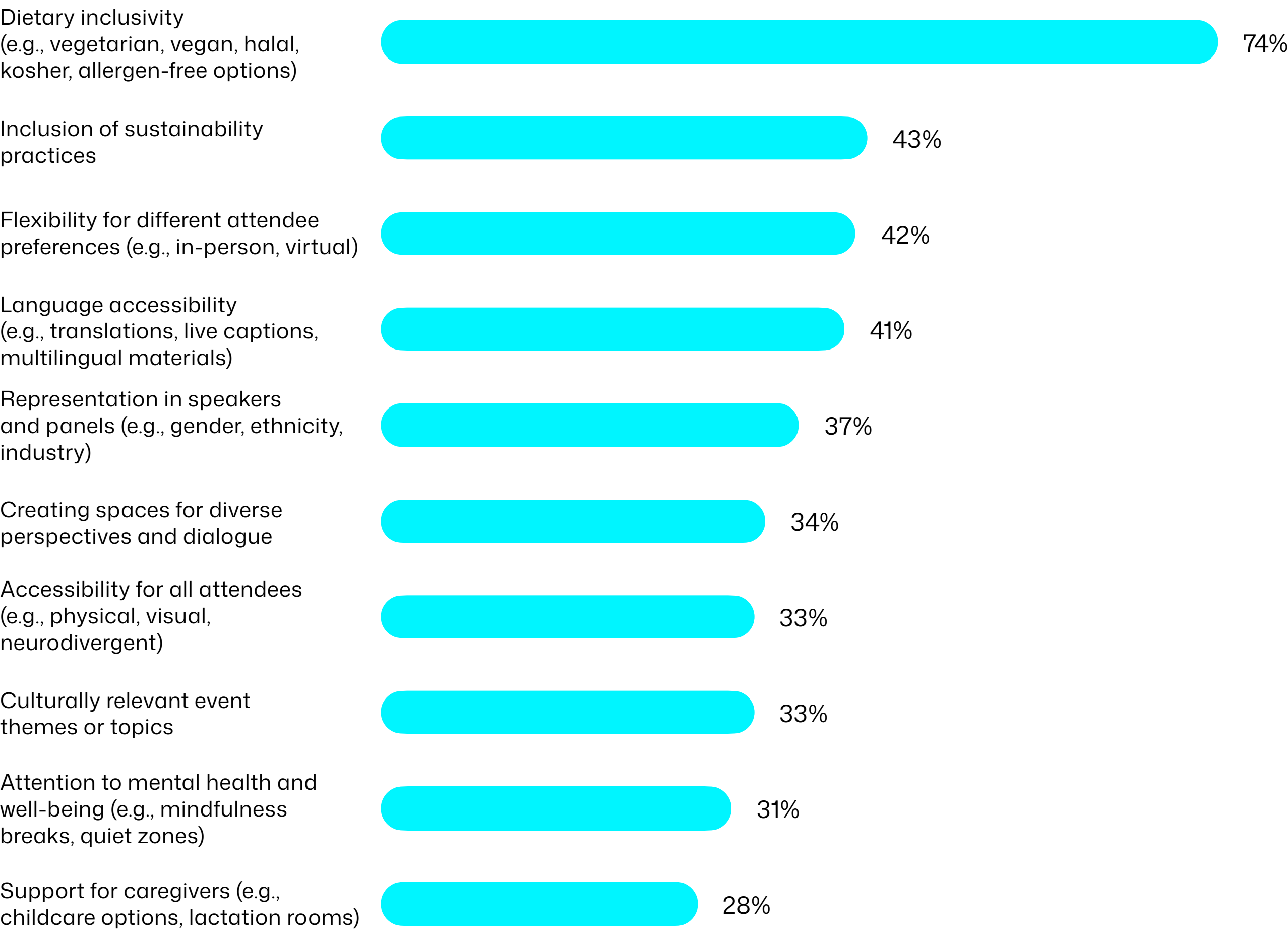
Takeaways:

These inclusive practices aren’t just requirements to be followed, but are opportunities to further personalize the attendee experience – and they contribute to the success of the whole event.

Average % addressing extremely/very well	Personalization Success	
	High	Middling
	58% ↑	34% ↓

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level

How well is your organization addressing each of the below inclusive practices in its event program? [% Selected Extremely/Very Well]



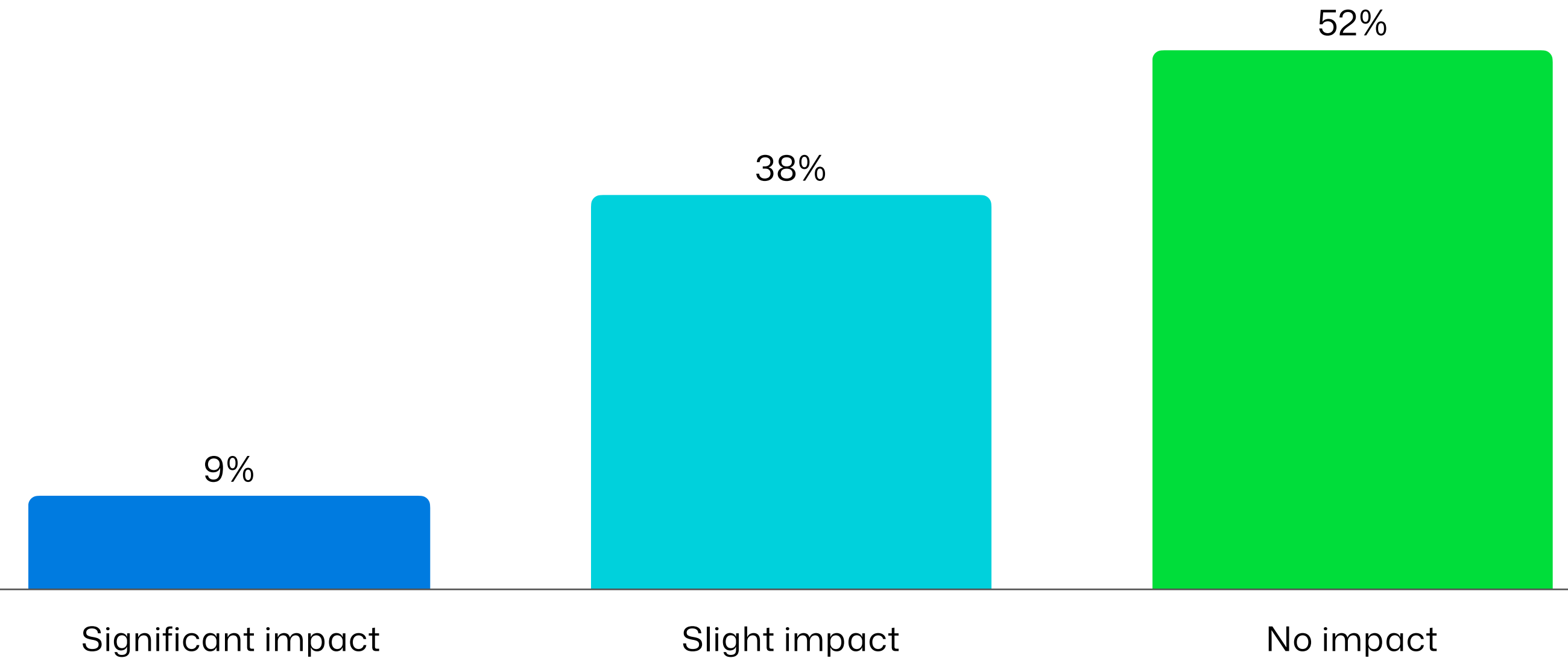
Change and innovation



Just under half of Experiential Marketers indicate changeover in government administrations has at least some impact on their event planning and budgets

Political changeover is undoubtedly going to shake things up – thinking ahead and staying flexible is key to succeeding in 2025.

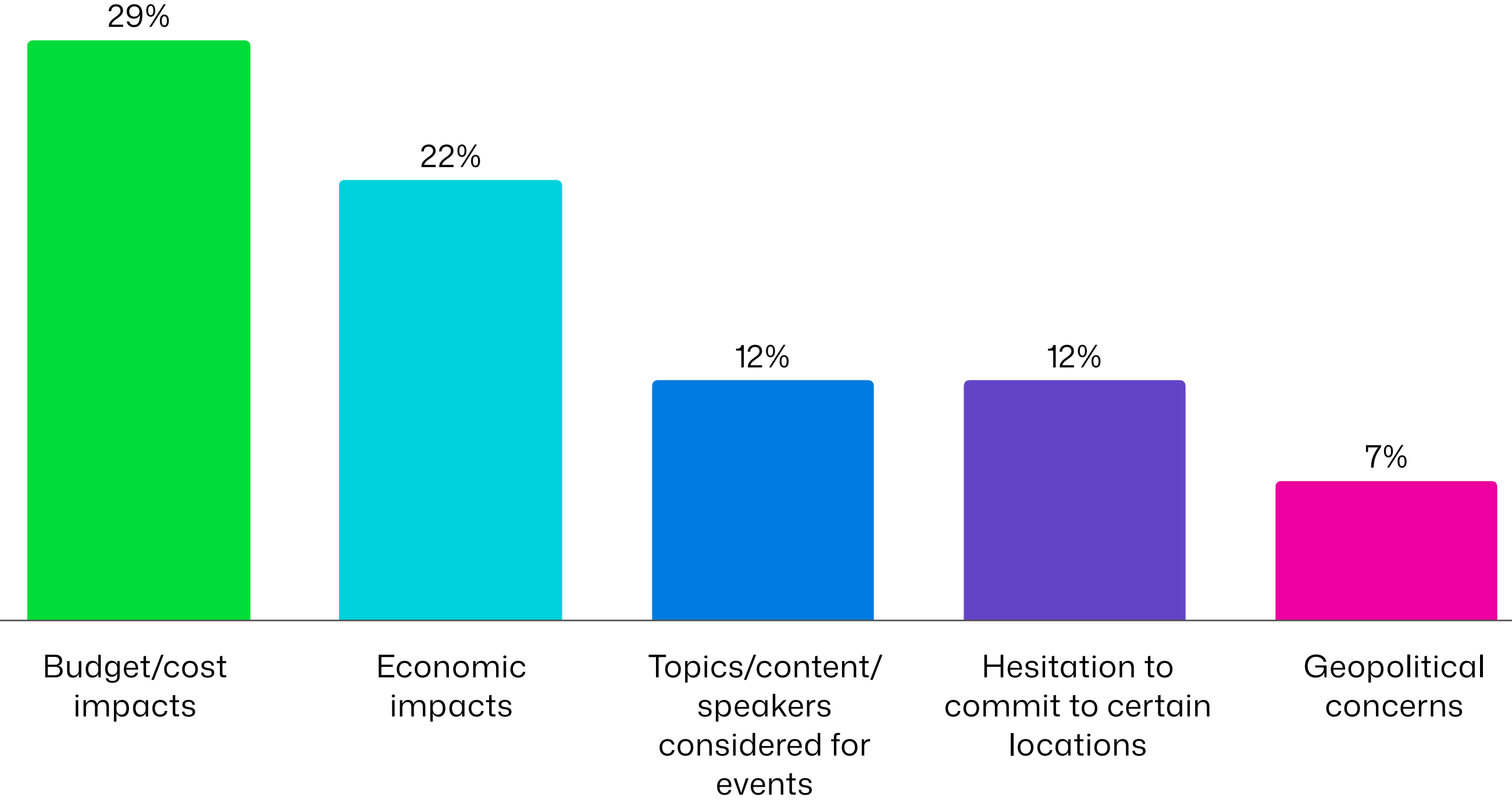
How much does changeover in government administrations (like the recent U.S. election) affect your event planning and budgets?



Experiential Marketers expect government changeover to primarily impact event budgets and costs, often driven by economic change

With the new U.S. administration signing executive orders at an unrivaled pace and aiming to reduce the size of the federal government, change is inevitable, so it is better to be prepared and stay nimble than be caught flat-footed by a new challenge or opportunity.

In what way(s) does changeover in government administrations affect your event planning and budgets? [Top 5]



6 out of 10 Experiential Marketers have a good amount of freedom to innovate

Experiential Marketers with enough time for event content development, successful in event personalization, ability to demonstrate event value to stakeholders, and/or high confidence in their measurement all report significantly higher levels of freedom to innovate in their event planning.

Each of these makes sense:

Being able to measure event impact, and demonstrate that impact to stakeholders likely results in more freedom.

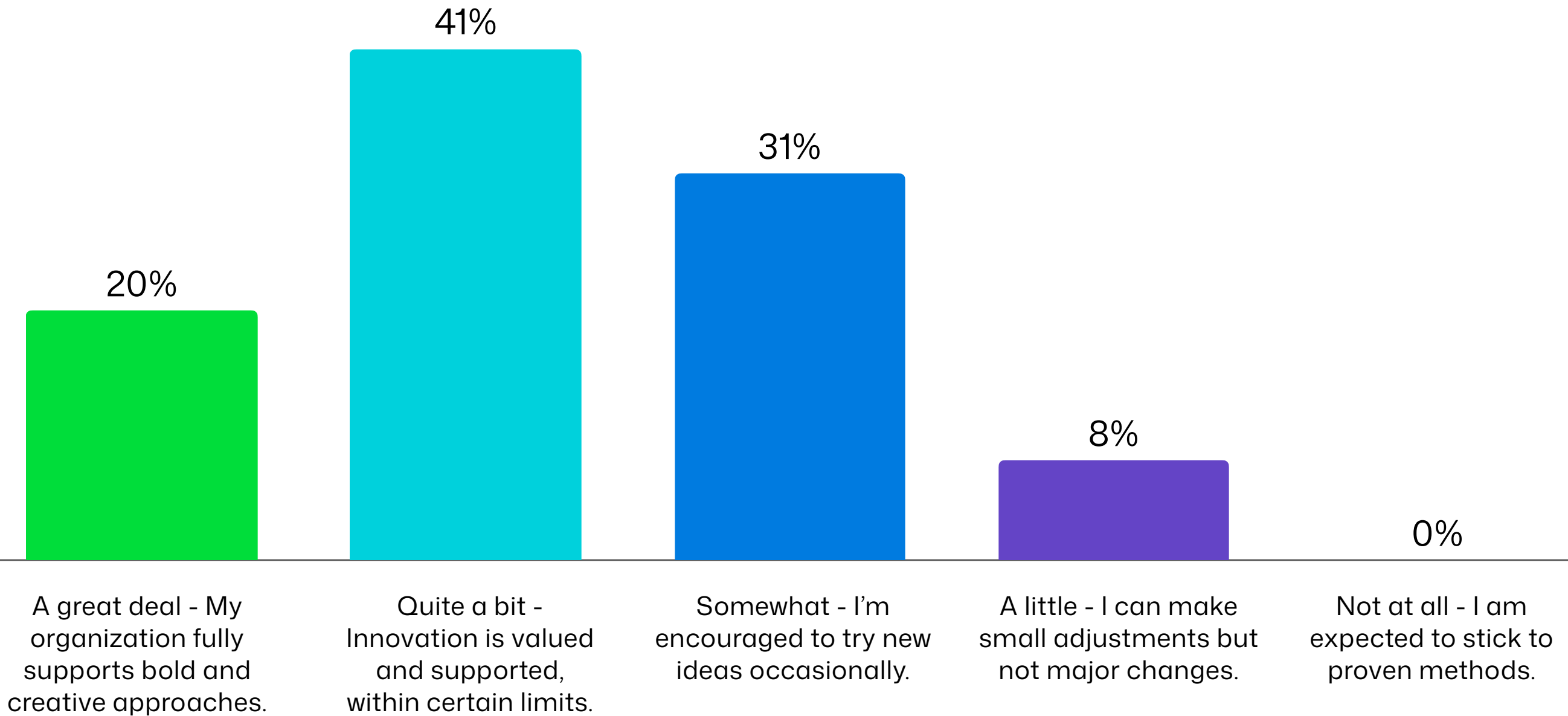
Personalizing events requires innovation.

Longer runways for event content development leave time for innovation.

Takeaways:

When you are confident in your measurement abilities, if you take a risk and it pays off, you can demonstrate that to your stakeholders-then the cycle repeats, so just another reason to dial in your measurement strategy.

To what extent does your organization allow you to innovate and take risks in your event planning and execution?



Answer	Time for Content Development		Personalization Success		Able to demonstrate event value		Measurement Confidence	
	More	Less	High	Middling	Yes	No	High	Middling
A great deal + Quite a bit	79% ↑	52% ↓	86% ↑	52% ↓	70% ↑	43% ↓	74% ↑	44% ↓

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



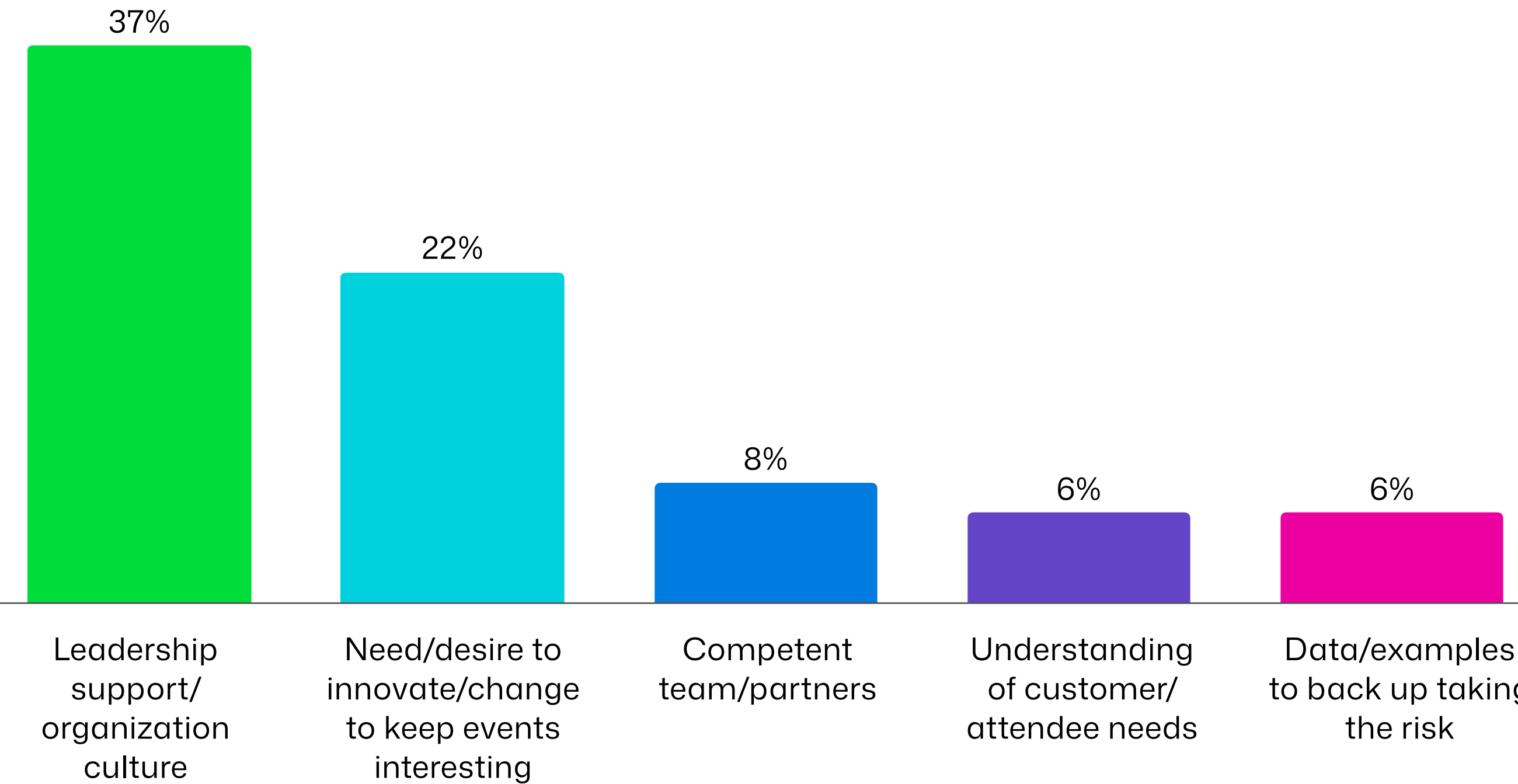
Having a supportive culture/leadership and feeling that innovation is a necessity are the top reasons Experiential Marketers feel comfortable innovating

With leadership support, taking risks in your event planning is easier and can lead to a better experience for your attendees.

Takeaways:

If you truly want to innovate, securing buy-in from leadership is crucial. Find ways to bring your leadership into the planning process so that you can take risks and innovate in your events.

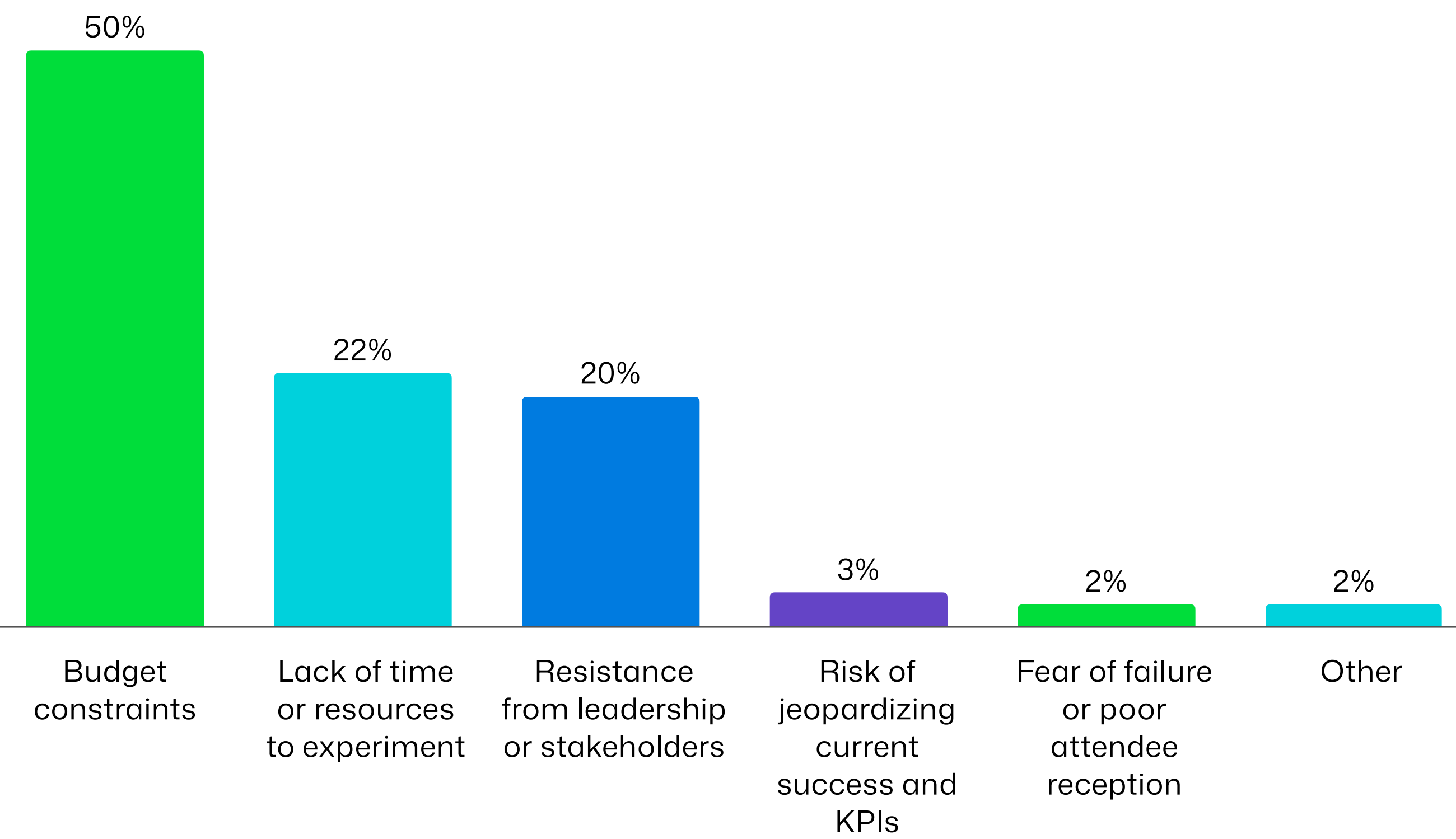
What makes you comfortable trying new things and taking risks in your event planning? [Top 5]



Budget constraints are the primary barrier to event innovation, with lack of time/resources and stakeholder resistance also playing a part

All roads lead to measurement. To secure more budget, you need to have an effective measurement framework in place so you can prove the true value of your events.

What is the biggest barrier to innovation in your event planning process?



Executive involvement & turnover



When it comes to events, executive involvement mostly helps

Over half of Experiential Marketers feel executive involvement helps their event planning, but more than one-quarter feel it is a hindrance.

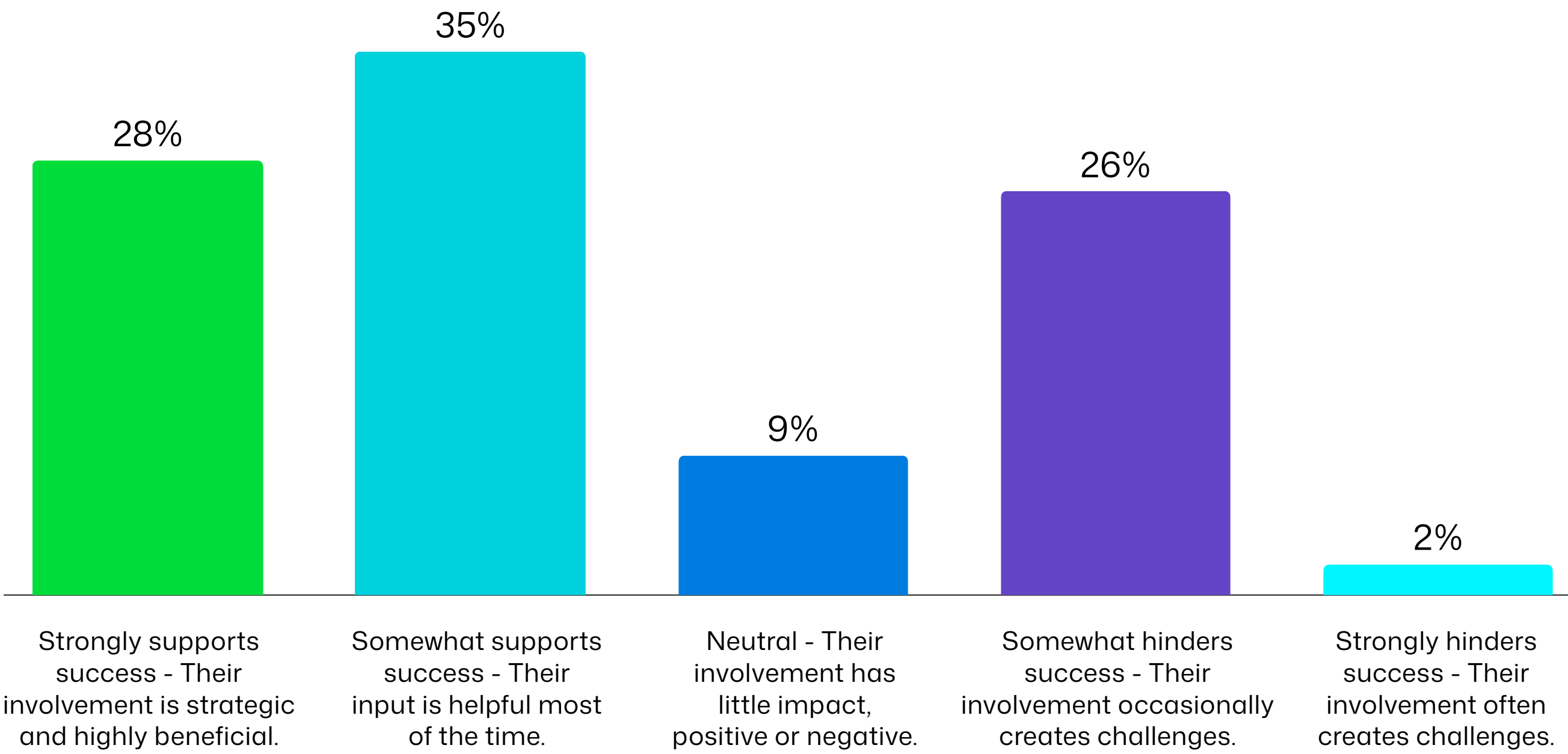
Those with enough time for content development or seeing success personalizing their events are more likely to view executive involvement as helpful.

Experiential Marketers whose measurement confidence is lacking are more likely to view executive involvement as a hindrance.

Takeaways:

Getting leadership on board with improving (or implementing) a measurement framework and/or event personalization strategy can pay dividends in the form of those leaders being able to more effectively participate in experience planning.

Does executive involvement in event experience planning help or hinder your success?



Answer	Time for Content Development		Personalization Success		Measurement Confidence	
	More	Less	High	Middling	High	Middling
Supports Success	79% ↑	55% ↓	86% ↑	55% ↓	72%	51%
Hinders Success	14%	34%	10% ↓	34% ↑	17% ↓	41% ↑

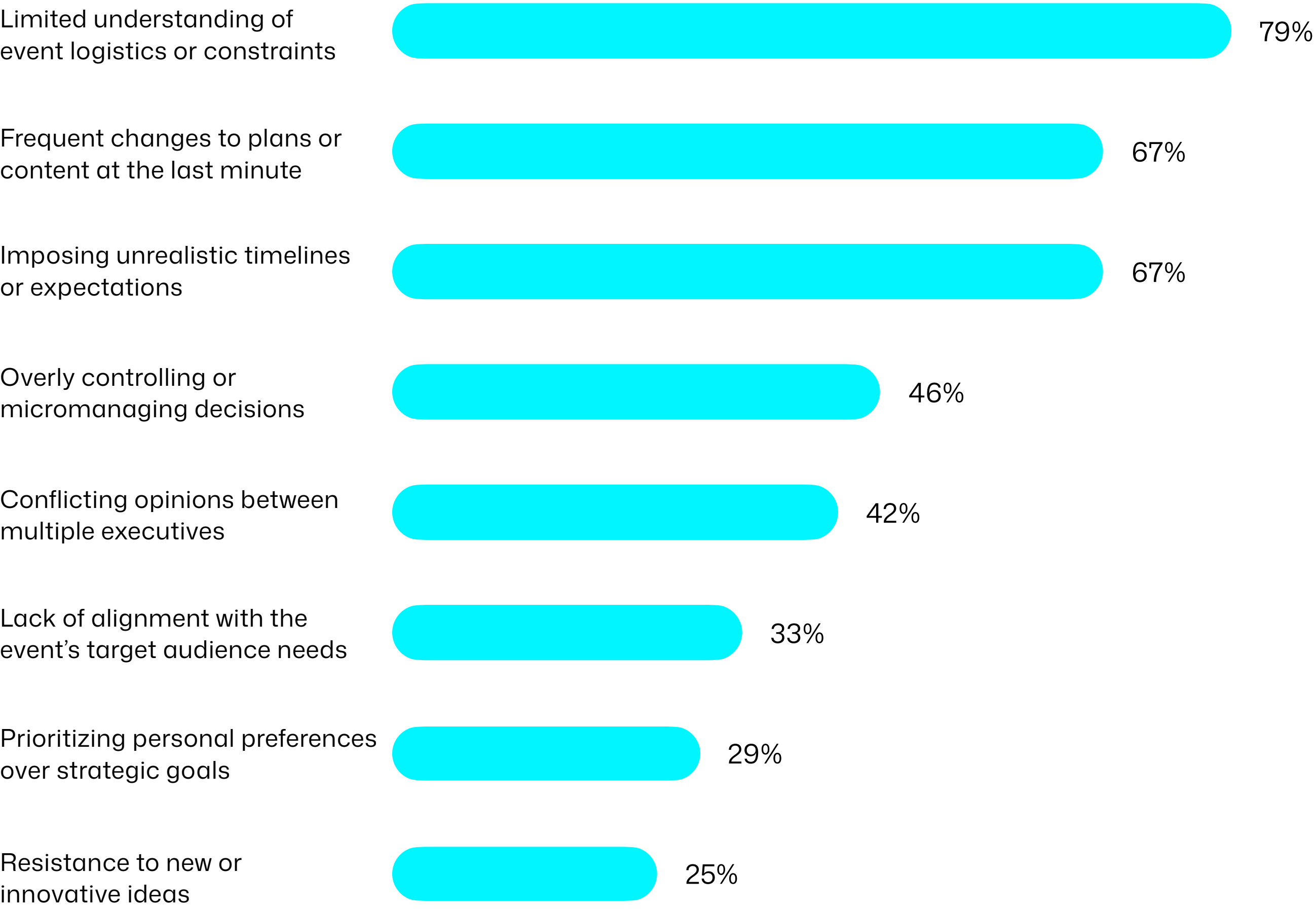
↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Lack of understanding of event logistics, frequent changes to plans and content, and unrealistic expectations or timelines are the leading ways executives hinder event planning

You're not alone! Most marketers feel the pressure from their executive teams and in some cases, it's hindering their success. Bringing your leadership along for the ride, setting clear deadlines and expectations - and sticking to them - is key to dealing with this age old issue.

How does executive involvement in event experience planning hinder your success?



Content runway



Only one-third of Experiential Marketers have sufficient time to develop high-quality event content a majority of the time

Experiential Marketers who are seeing success with personalization efforts are nearly three times as likely to have enough time to develop content vs. those who are unsuccessful.

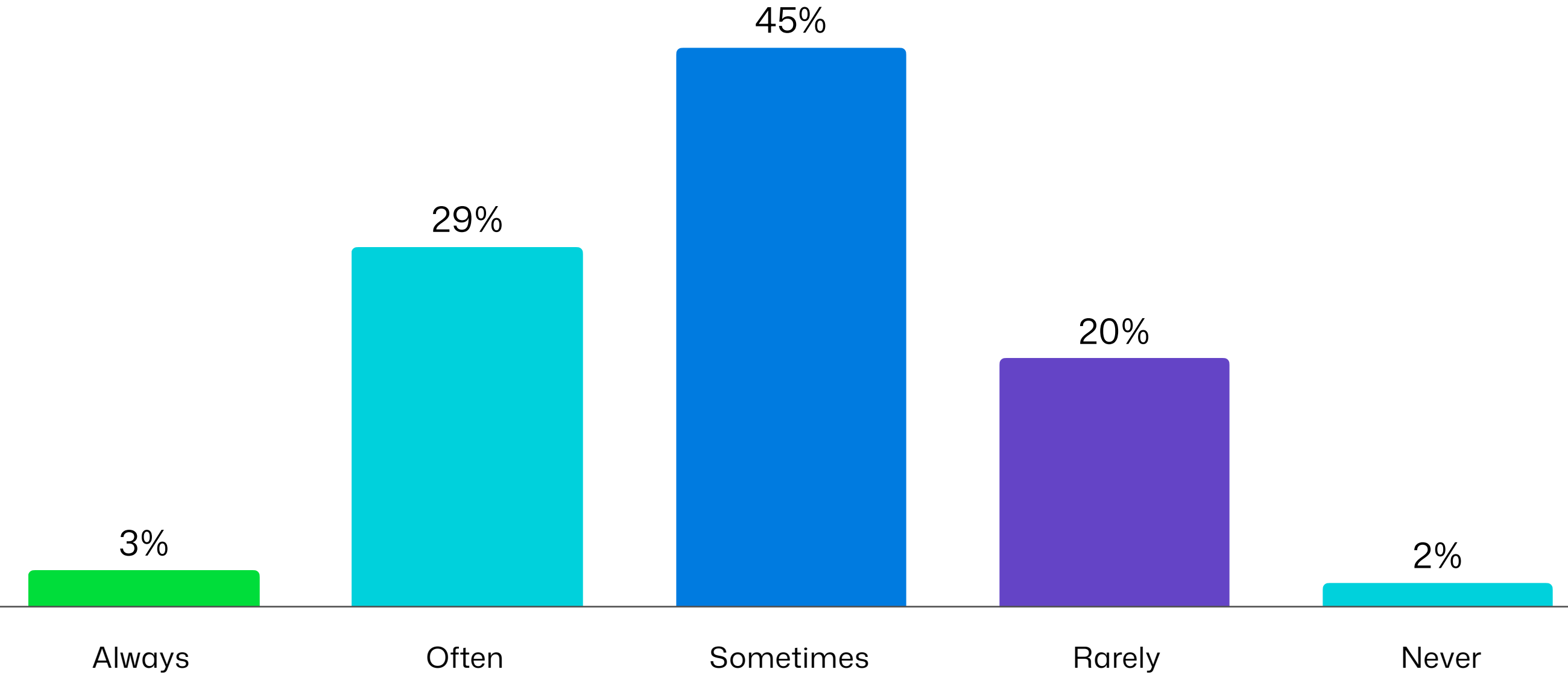
Experiential Marketers who are highly confident in their measurement abilities are more than three times as likely to have enough time to develop content vs. those who are less confident.

Those who have trouble demonstrating event impact are notably more likely to feel they have less time to develop content for their events.

Takeaways:

More time to develop content also means more time to set up your personalization and measurement strategies & being in a position to better demonstrate the full value of your events, with all these factors feeding back into each other to further improve your event portfolio's performance against its goals.

How often do you feel you have sufficient time to develop high-quality content for your events?



Answer	Able to demonstrate event value		Personalization Success		Measurement Confidence	
	Yes	No	High	Middling	High	Middling
Always + Often	36%	27%	62% ↑	23% ↓	48% ↑	13% ↓
Rarely + Never	11% ↓	43% ↑	14%	25%	4% ↓	44% ↑

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



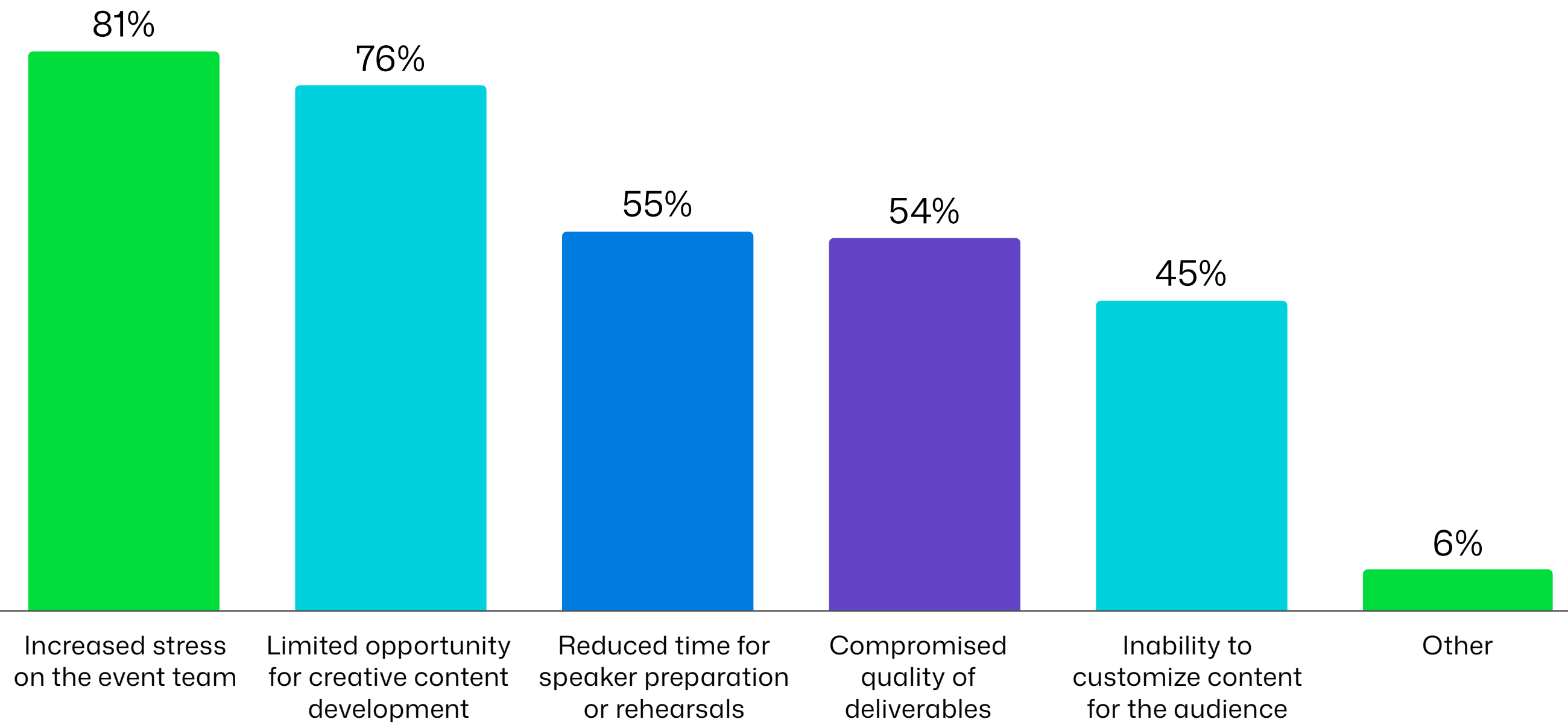
Increases in stress and limited opportunities to develop creative content are the most pressing challenges short timelines for content development present

Reduced time for speaker prep and compromised deliverable quality also pose a challenge for over half of experiential marketers.

Takeaways:

Not budgeting enough time for event content has negative impacts on both the team (hello stress!) and the attendee experience, so it’s paramount to consider when planning.

What are the biggest challenges caused by short timelines for event content?



Answer	Time for Content Development		Personalization Success	
	More	Less	High	Middling
Reduced time for speaker preparation or rehearsals	36% ↓	64% ↑	42%	59%
Inability to customize content for the audience	40%	47%	21% ↓	52% ↑

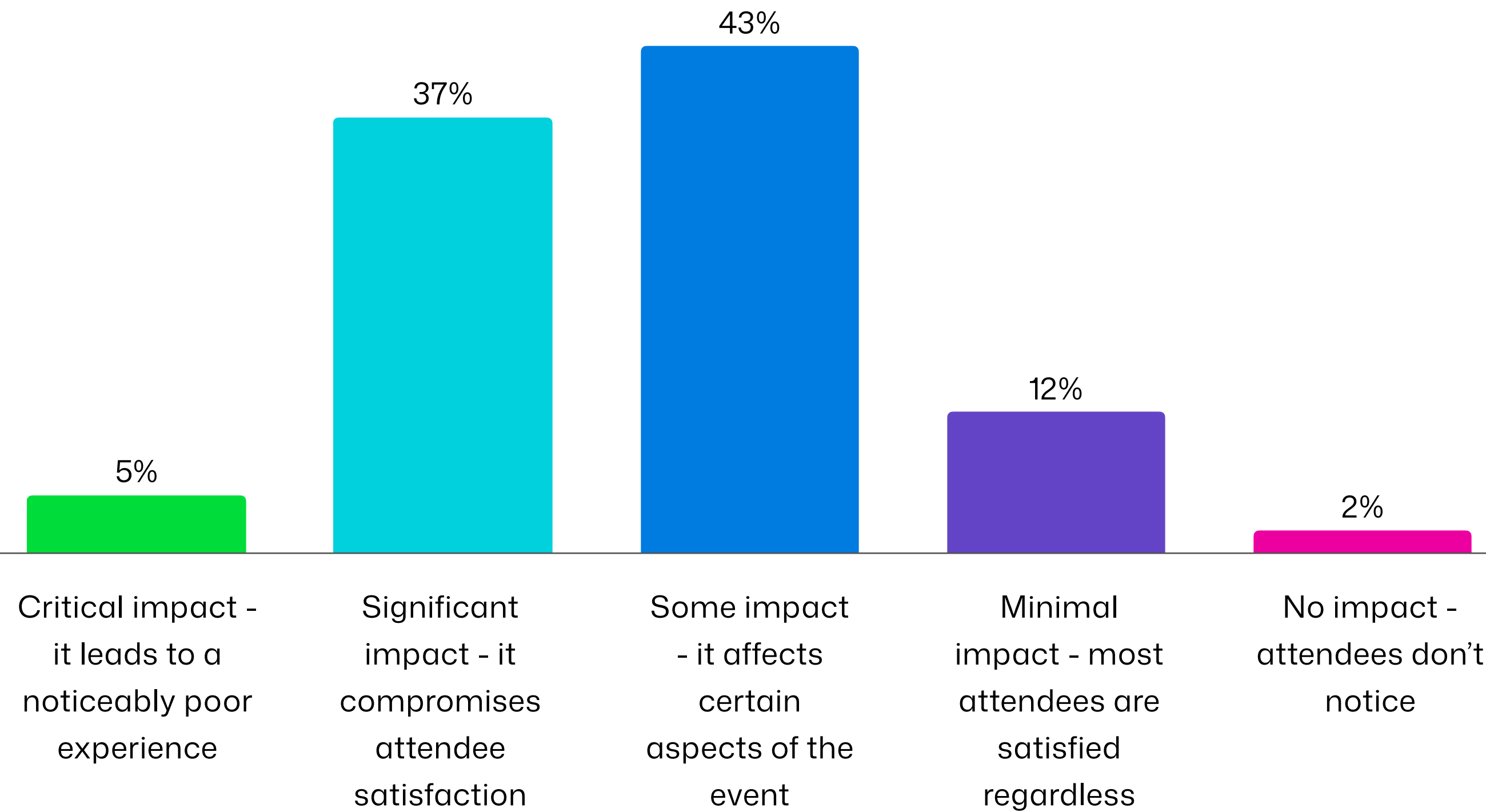
↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Over 40% of Experiential Marketers believe that short timelines for content development have a significant or critical impact on the attendee experience

With short timelines impacting both the attendee experience and the event team, it's better to ask for more time than deliver an underwhelming experience.

To what extent do you feel short timelines for content development impact the attendee experience?



Personalization



Personalized experiences should be a priority

Overall, Experiential Marketers slightly underestimate how much attendees value a personalized event experience.

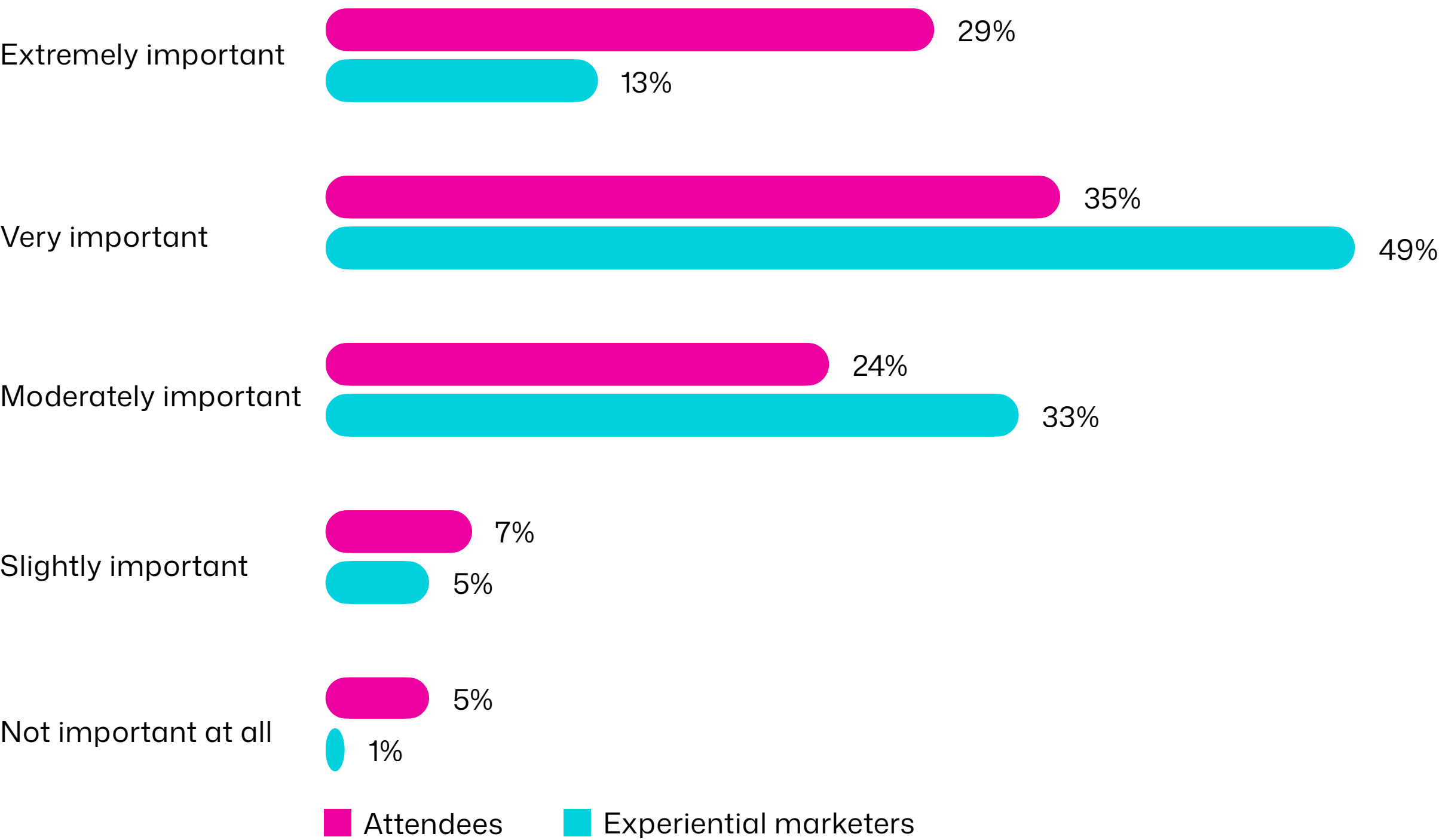
Those Experiential Marketers who are succeeding in personalization efforts unsurprisingly believe a personalized attendee experience is highly important – even more strongly than attendees.

Takeaways:

With attendees over twice as likely to say a personalized experience is extremely important to them compared to experiential marketers, the message is clear – personalization is the name of the game.

The Experiential Marketers who are succeeding with their personalization efforts are hyper-focused on that aspect, and their strategy is paying off for their event programs.

How important is it that your/the attendee event experience is personalized or custom?



Answer	Personalization Success	
	High	Middling
Extremely important + Very important	81% ↑	55% ↓

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



When it comes to Gen Z, personalization is paramount

More than 60% of Gen Z (and Millennial) attendees say that a personalized experience is highly important them, with a whopping 48% of Gen Z attendees rating it as extremely important.

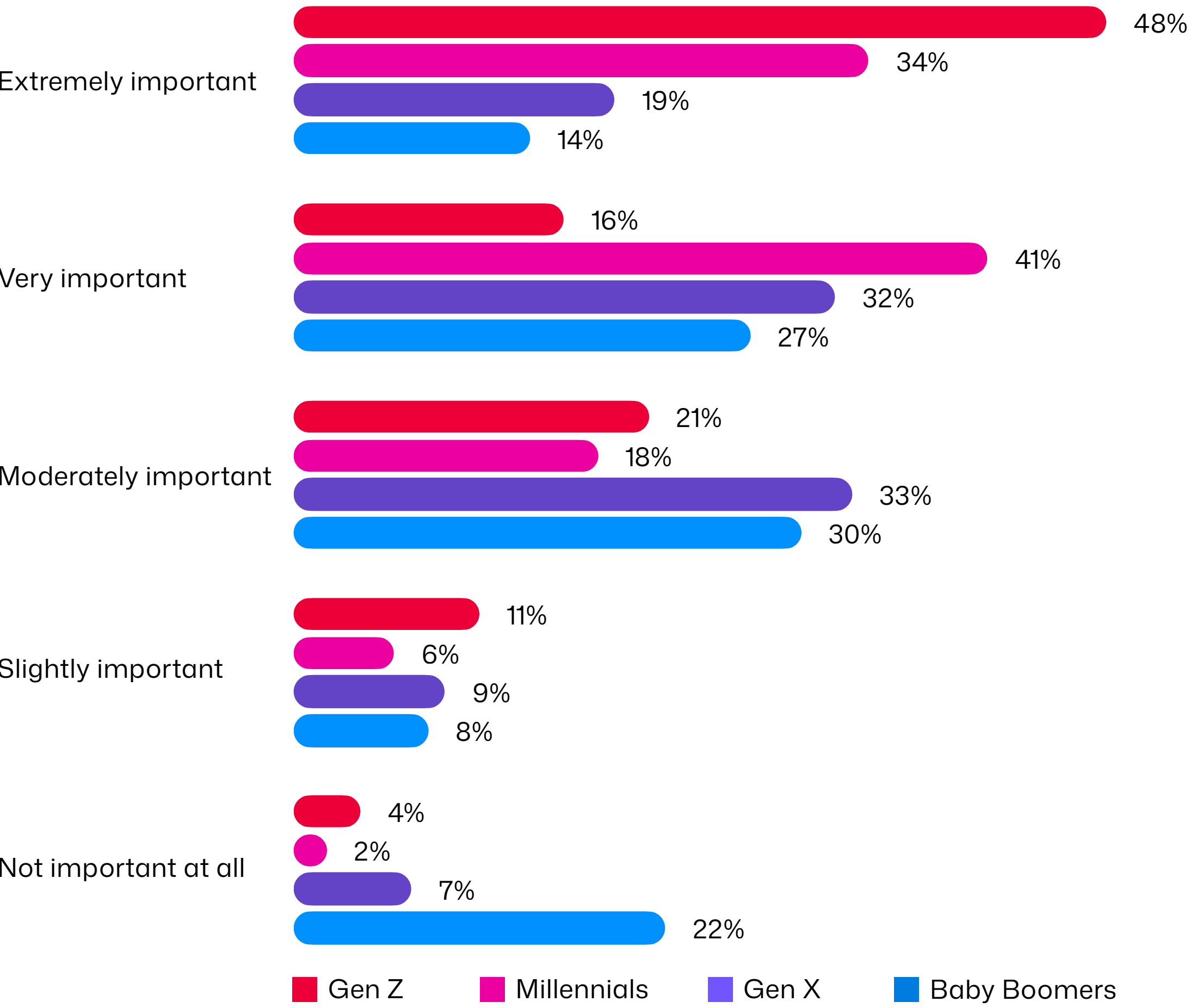
Less than 20% of Gen X or Baby Boomers respondents rate personalization as extremely important – showcasing a generational shift in what is truly important at events.

Takeaways:

Younger generations are used to a personalized experience everywhere else, so why wouldn't they expect it when it comes to events?

If you want to boost attendance, focus on personalizing the attendee experience – especially when it comes to appealing to younger generations.

How important is it that your event experience is personalized or custom?



Swag shouldn't be the personalization priority

Attendees most value interactivity, tailored content, and dynamic session formats when it comes to event personalization, while Experiential Marketers are most likely to personalize via branded or customized attendee materials.

Those Experiential Marketers who are succeeding in their personalization efforts are less focused on swag and more focused on giving attendees a dynamic, interactive event experience.

Takeaways:

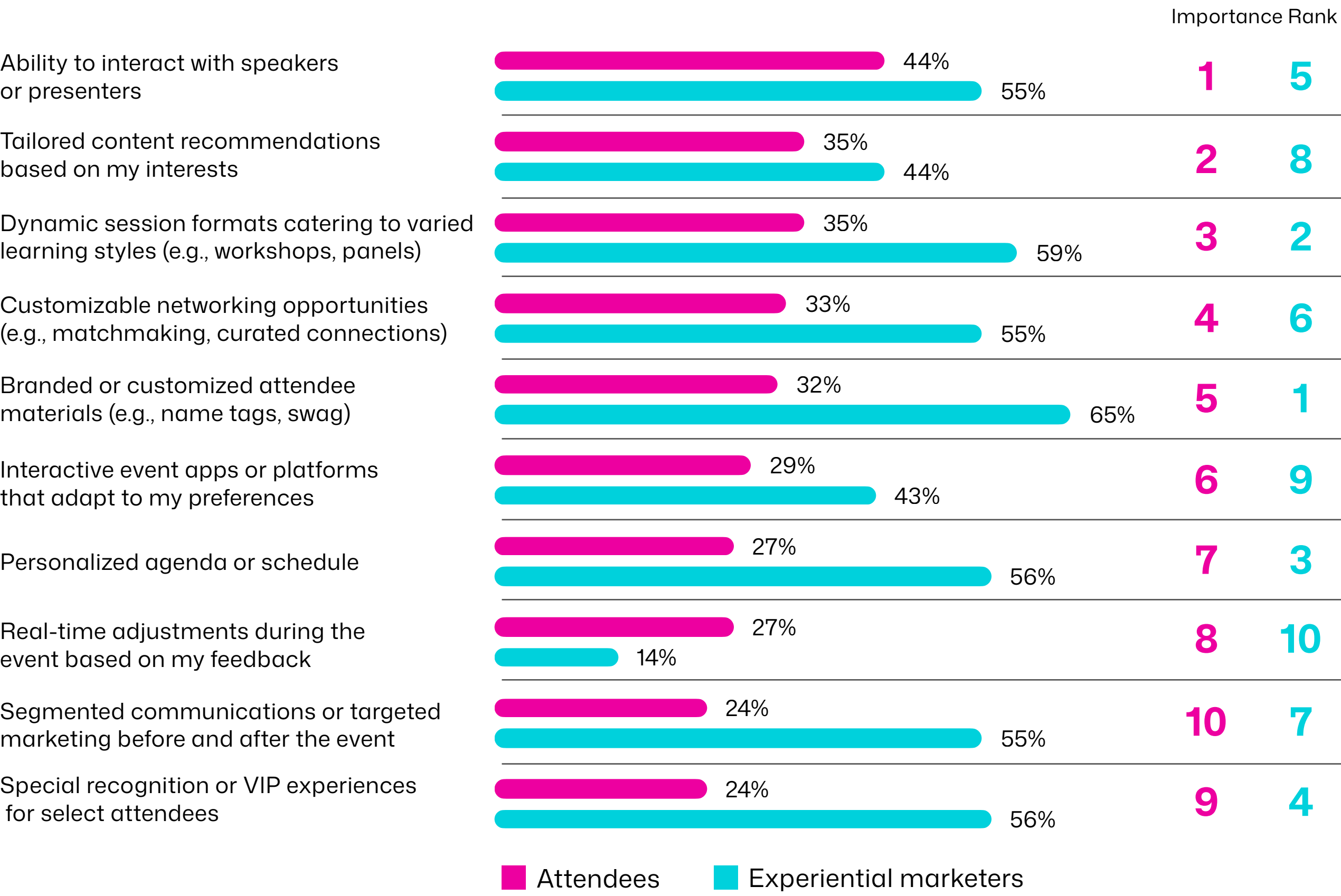
Attendees want custom experiences, not (just) custom swag.
Finding ways to tailor the experience and make attendees the main character is going to resonate with them.

Those Experiential Marketers who are succeeding in event personalization are more attuned to attendee desires in this area, which feeds back into their successful personalization efforts.

Answer	Personalization Success	
	High	Middling
Ability to interact with speakers or presenters	67%	51%
Tailored content recommendations based on my interests	57%	40%
Dynamic session formats catering to varied learning styles (e.g., workshops, panels)	76%	54%
Customizable networking opportunities (e.g., matchmaking, curated connections)	62%	52%

What types of personalized experiences do you find most valuable when attending an in-person event? [for attendees]

What strategies or tactics do you use to provide personalized or custom experiences for your attendees, if any? [for Experiential Marketers]



Fewer than 1 in 4 Experiential Marketers feel their organization is providing personalized attendee experiences very or extremely well

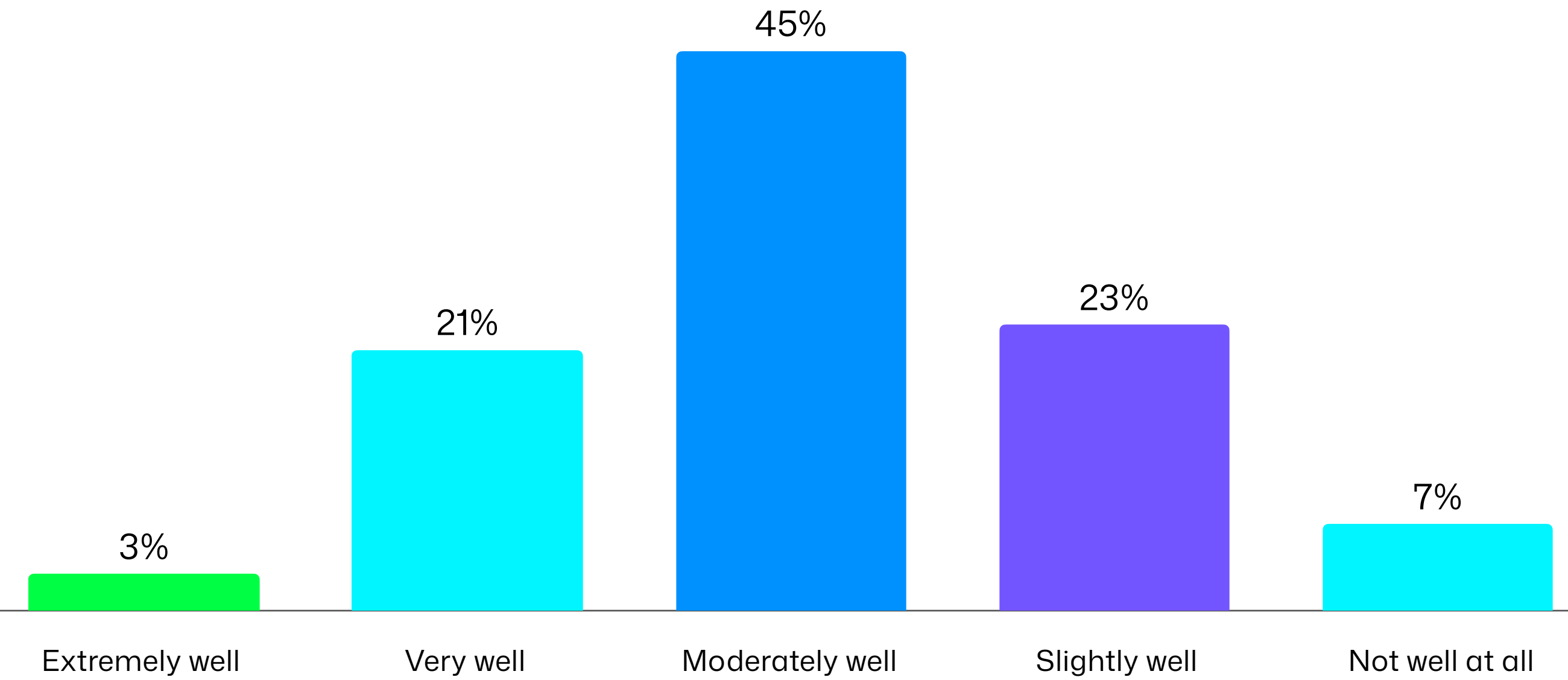
Those with enough time for content development and able to demonstrate event value are doing better when it comes to personalization. Experiential Marketers confident in their measurement are also directionally more likely to provide better personalized experiences for their attendees.

Takeaways:

While it can be tough to do, providing personalized attendee experiences contributes to overall event success and is something attendees want – pulling this off can make your brand stand out.

What is measured can be improved – so the more effectively your measurement strategy works, the more easily you can determine if your personalization efforts are paying off.

How well does your organization provide personalized or custom experiences for your in-person event attendees?



Answer	Able to demonstrate event value		Time for Content Development		Measurement Confidence	
	Yes	No	More	Less	High	Middling
Extremely well + Very well	46% ↑	14% ↓	32% ↑	10% ↓	30%	15%

↑ ↓ Statistically significant difference at the 95% confidence level



Networking, follow-up, and memorability

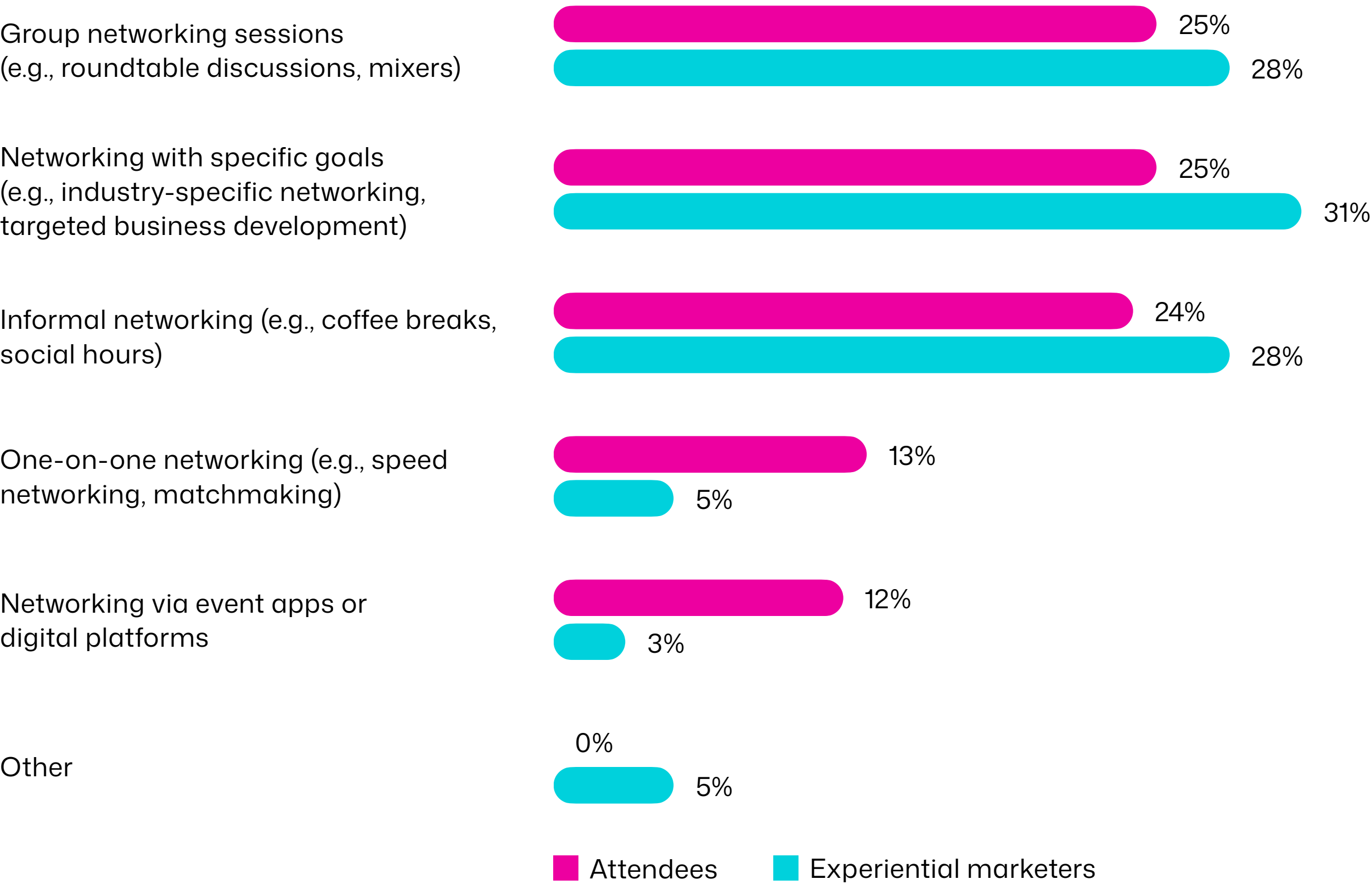


Experiential Marketers understand attendee networking preferences for the most part, but underestimate interest in one-on-one networking and networking via apps

While one-on-one networking and networking via event apps aren't the priority for attendees, there is still interest – so these areas could be worthwhile investments for your next event.

When it comes to networking at events, what type of networking opportunity do you most prefer? [for attendees]

When it comes to networking at events, what type of networking opportunity do you believe event attendees most prefer? [for Experiential Marketers]



Attendees demonstrate a clear preference for planned over spontaneous networking

Experiential Marketers actually underestimate the degree of preference attendees have for planned networking.

Those Experiential Marketers who are successfully personalizing their events show a better understanding of attendee networking preferences compared to those who are less successful.

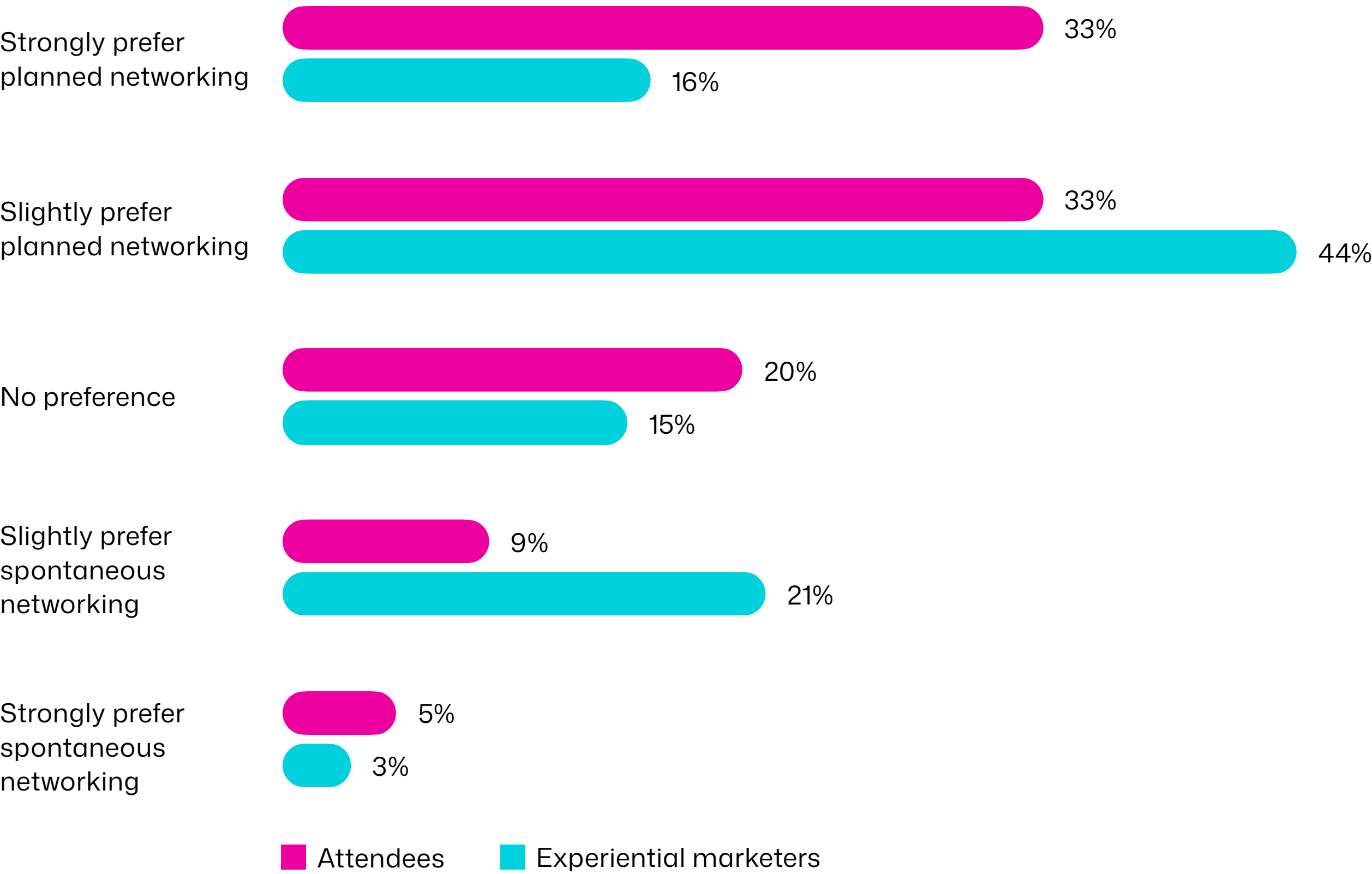
Takeaways:

While attendees prefer planned networking, it is still important for Experiential Marketers to set up opportunities where spontaneous networking can occur to make their events more organic.

Answer	Personalization Success	
	High	Middling
Strongly prefer planned networking	29%	21%
Slightly prefer planned networking	33%	48%

Do you prefer planned networking opportunities or spontaneous networking opportunities at the events you attend? [for attendees]

Do you think attendees prefer planned networking opportunities or spontaneous networking opportunities at the events they attend? [for Experiential Marketers]



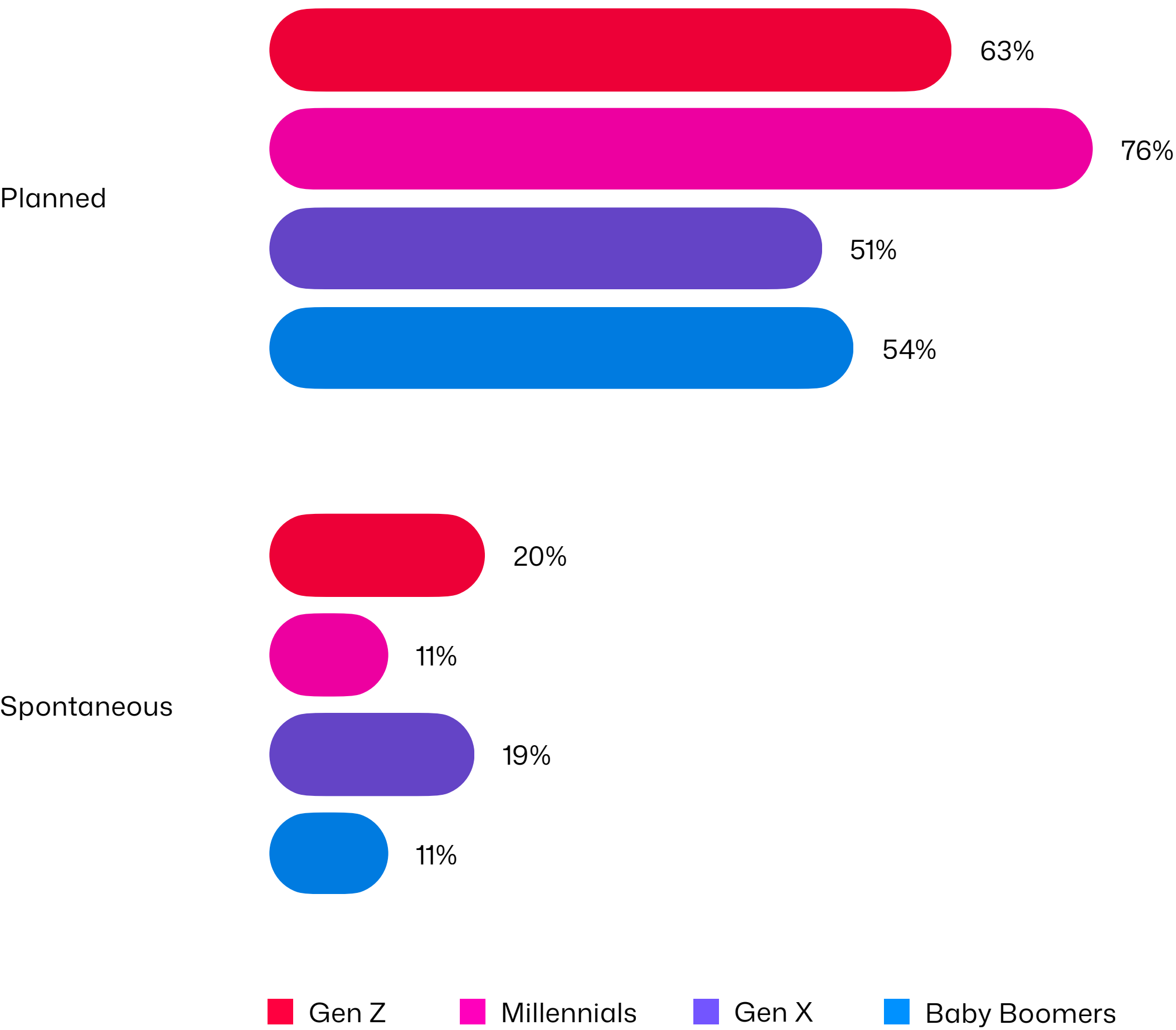
Younger generations want planned networking

More than 60% of Gen Z and Millennial attendees show a preference for planned vs. spontaneous networking.

Takeaways:

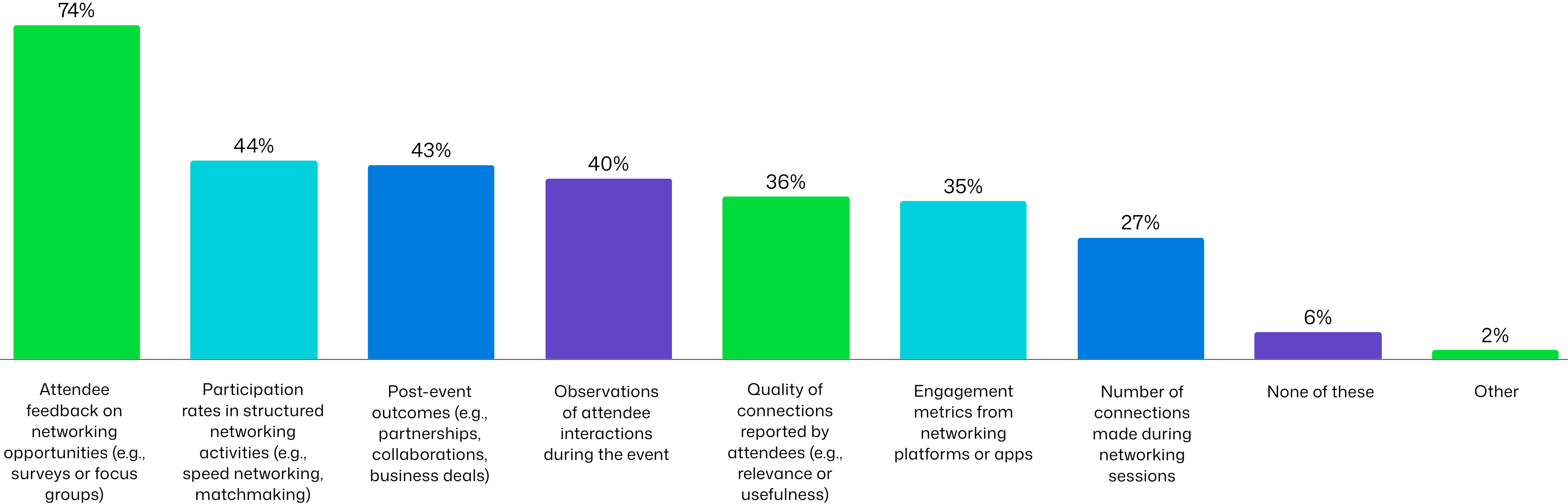
When catering to younger attendees, pay special attention to your planned networking activities and make sure they are meeting the needs of your audience.

Do you prefer planned networking opportunities or spontaneous networking opportunities at the events you attend?



Attendee feedback is the primary way
Experiential Marketers evaluate the success
of networking activities at their events

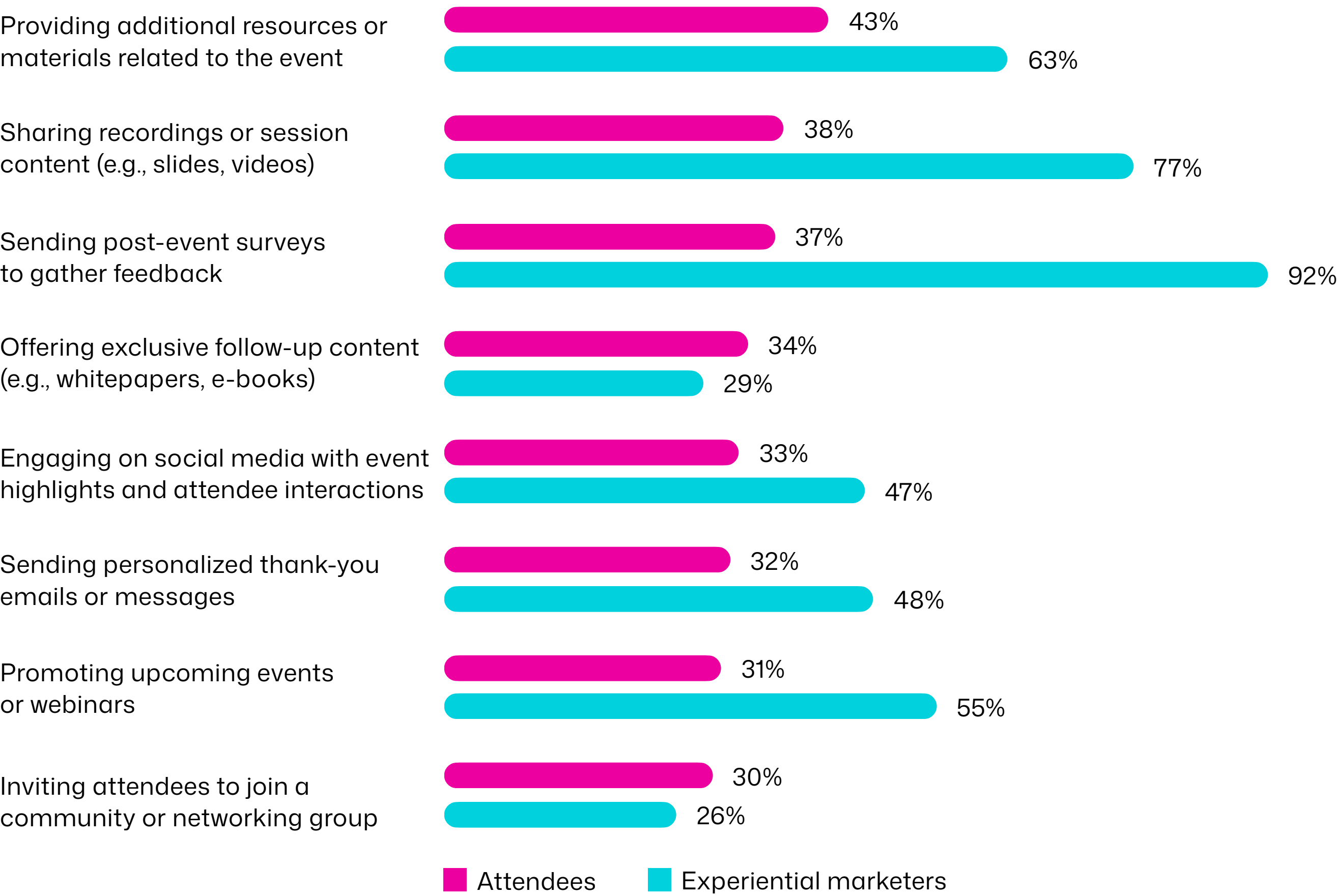
How do you evaluate the success of networking activities at your events?



The top three most-valued follow up methods for attendees are also those most commonly employed by experiential marketers

Which of the following types of follow-up from event organizers after an event do you find most valuable? [for attendees]

How do you typically follow up with attendees after an event? [for Experiential Marketers]



Experiential Marketers are largely aligned with attendees when it comes to the most memorable aspects of events, but overestimate the value of keynote speakers/presentations

Experiential Marketers rank ‘inspiring keynote speakers’ as most memorable for attendees, but it is actually the 4th-most memorable aspect for them.

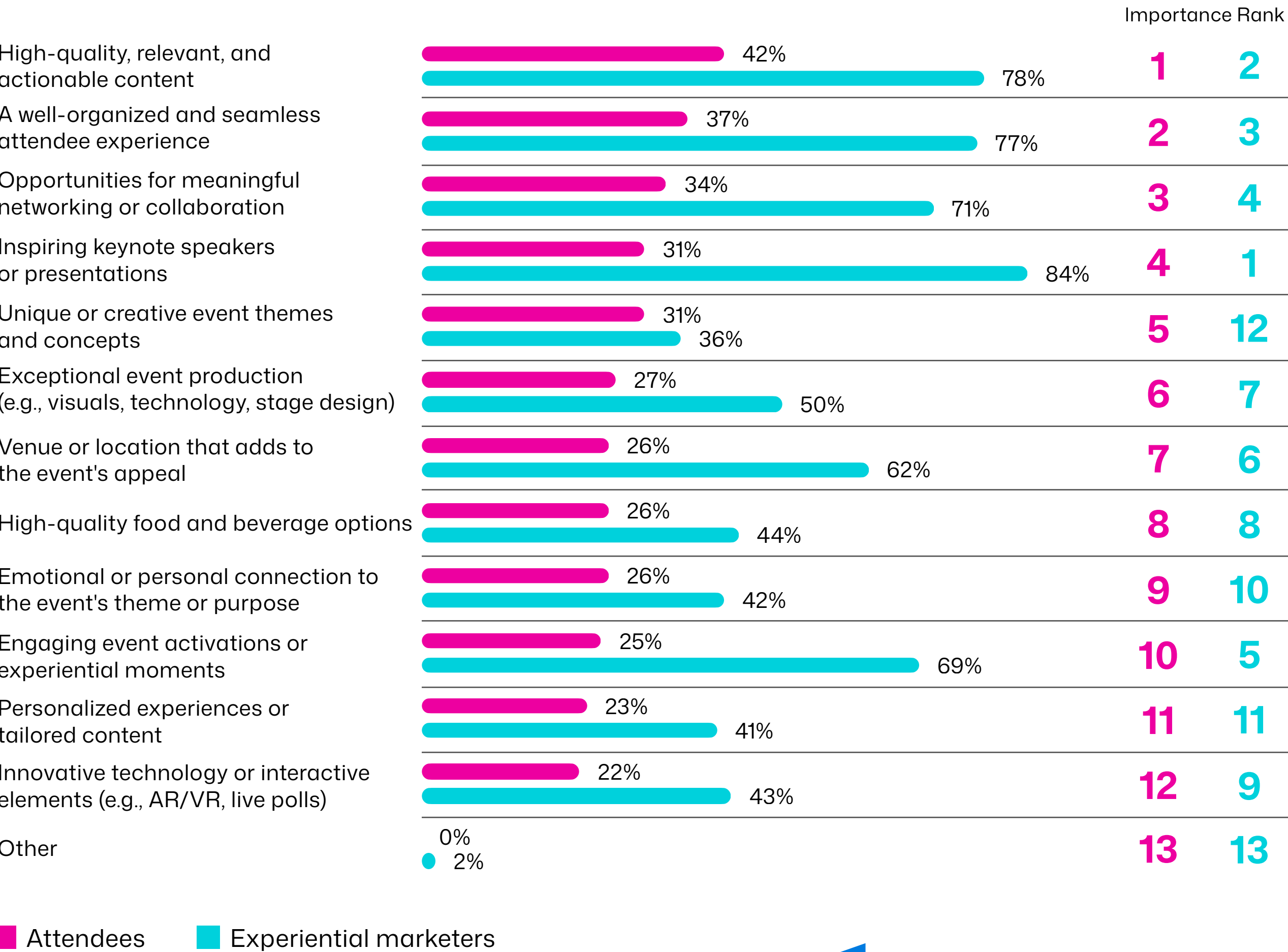
Experiential Marketers don’t realize how important a unique or creative event theme or concept is for attendees.

Takeaways:

Of course, great content and a smooth experience are highly important to attendees, but don’t shy away from trying something unique when it comes to your event theme or concepts.

What aspects of an in-person event make it the most memorable or impactful for you? [for attendees]

What aspects of an in-person event do you think make it the most memorable or impactful for attendees? [for Experiential Marketers]



Demographics



Attendee demographics

Age	
18-28 (Gen Z)	11%
29-44 (Millennials)	52%
45-60 (Gen X)	29%
61+ (Baby Boomers)	7%

Gender	
Male	51%
Female	49%
Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to answer	0%

Employment status	
Working (paid employee)	87%
Working (self-employed/freelance)	13%

State of residency (Top 10)	
New York	16%
California	14%
Florida	9%
Texas	6%
Pennsylvania	6%
Georgia	5%
New Jersey	3%
North Carolina	3%
Illinois	3%
Ohio	3%

In-person events attended in past year	
Conferences	46%
Training sessions/workshops	42%
Festivals	42%
Community events	41%
Trade shows	35%
Industry networking events	29%
Corporate celebrations (e.g., galas, award ceremonies)	28%
Consumer expos	25%
Retail activations/pop ups	24%
Concerts	24%
Product launches	20%
Sales kick-offs	9%



Attendee demographics (cont.)

Employees at organization	
1-99	19%
100-249	14%
250-499	14%
500-999	20%
1,000-4,999	15%
5,000-9,999	8%
10,000-49,999	6%
50,000-99,999	2%
100,000 or more	3%

Primary department	
Information Technology	27%
Operations or Logistics	10%
Customer Service or Support	9%
Human Resources	9%
Executive Leadership	9%
Finance or Accounting	7%
Sales	5%
Event Management or Production	4%
Product Development or Management	3%
Marketing	2%
Research and Development	2%
Other	12%

Job level	
C-suite/President	10%
Vice President/Senior Vice President/ Executive Vice President	7%
Director/Senior Director	18%
Manager/Senior Manager	38%
Individual Contributor	21%
Other	6%

Industry of employment	
Technology (e.g., Software, Hardware, IT Services)	21%
Education and Training	13%
Healthcare and Life Sciences	9%
Real Estate and Construction	8%
Industrials, Manufacturing, and Engineering	8%
Government and Public Sector	8%
Financial Services (e.g., Banking, Insurance, Investments)	6%
Retail and Consumer Goods	4%
Energy and Utilities	4%
Transportation and Logistics	4%
Hospitality and Tourism	2%
Nonprofit and Social Services	2%
Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations	1%
Media and Entertainment	1%
Other	9%



Experiential Marketer demographics

Age	
18-28 (Gen Z)	1%
29-44 (Millennials)	34%
45-60 (Gen X)	57%
61+ (Baby Boomers)	8%

Gender	
Male	22%
Female	76%
Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Employment status	
Working (paid employee)	94%
Working (self-employed/freelance)	6%

State of residency (Top 10)	
California	40%
Massachusetts	7%
New York	6%
Texas	6%
Illinois	5%
Colorado	4%
Michigan	4%
North Carolina	4%
Oregon	4%
Florida	2%

Industry of employment	
Technology (e.g., Software, Hardware, IT Services)	64%
Healthcare and Life Sciences	6%
Hospitality and Tourism	6%
Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations	6%
Financial Services (e.g., Banking, Insurance, Investments)	5%
Industrials, Manufacturing, and Engineering	5%
Energy and Utilities	2%
Retail and Consumer Goods	2%
Education and Training	1%
Media and Entertainment	1%
Nonprofit and Social Services	1%
Real Estate and Construction	1%



Experiential Marketer demographics (cont.)

Employees at organization	
1-99	10%
100-249	1%
250-499	1%
500-999	7%
1,000-4,999	15%
5,000-9,999	13%
10,000-49,999	24%
50,000-99,999	6%
100,000 or more	22%

Primary department	
Marketing	49%
Event Management or Production	37%
Operations or Logistics	2%
Sales	1%
Human Resources	1%
Research and Development	1%
Information Technology	1%
Executive Leadership	1%
Finance or Accounting	0%
Customer Service or Support	0%
Product Development or Management	0%
Other	6%

Job level	
C-suite/President	2%
Vice President/Senior Vice President/ Executive Vice President	7%
Director/Senior Director	31%
Manager/Senior Manager	31%
Individual Contributor	27%
Other	1%

Role	
Organizer of corporate events for my company	86%
Association/society/not-for-profit exhibition or event organizer	3%
For-profit exhibition or event organizer	3%
Third-party event management company	2%
Other	5%

Events in portfolio	
Internal events	87%
Industry events/trade shows	80%
Third-party sponsorships	72%
Proprietary	66%
Brand activations/pop-ups	41%
Other	5%

Number of events hosted/exhibited at annually	
1	2%
2-5	13%
6-10	13%
More than 10	72%



Final thoughts



Measurement

If your measurement framework is solid, you can take risks and see what works – ultimately creating a more attendee-centric experience AND giving you the resources to fully prove the value of your events to your internal stakeholders.

Personalization

Personalization used to be just a fancy buzzword, but with nearly half of all Gen Z attendees rating it as extremely important to their experience, if you aren't providing personalized experiences you are falling behind.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity (or lack thereof) can impact every aspect of your attendees' experience and is more than just offering vegetarian options – from on-stage representation, to support for caregivers, every touchpoint matters.



Thank you

Sam Rudelich

Research & Insights Project Manager

404-433-1222

sam.rudelich@iv.com

Evan Strange

Sr. Strategy Director

812-480-0749

evan.strange@iv.com