The state of Meetings & Events in 2026

Insights from BCD Meetings & Events' 2026 Global Client Survey

What you need to know

The meetings & events market has stabilized, but it's still demanding.

Organizations are operating within tighter, more predictable constraints, while expectations around value, engagement and accountability continue to rise. The focus is now on getting more value from existing programs.

Key Takeaways

1. **Stability is now the baseline.** Budgets, event volume and event size are now largely flat year-over-year, shifting the focus to optimization.
2. **Cost remains the defining force.** Inflation and internal cost control influence nearly every program decision.
3. **Internal complexity is increasing.** Organizational change, governance and ROI scrutiny are reshaping how programs are planned and justified.
4. **Sustainability is becoming more targeted.** Focus is narrowing to practical, achievable actions rather than broad mandates.
5. **Confidence in delivery remains strong.** Client confidence, satisfaction and advocacy continue to strengthen—especially in commercial and execution-focused areas.

Why this matters now: In a more disciplined environment, success is no longer defined by scale alone, but by relevance, value and measurable outcomes.

About the Research

Who participated

This research is based on responses from 240 BCD M&E senior client-side stakeholders, responsible for meetings and events programs across Europe, North America, UK, Latin America and Asia-Pacific. The survey was conducted in January – March 2026.

Survey scope

The research examined budgets, program volume and size, key external and internal challenges, sustainability priorities, and confidence in delivery and partnership.

How to read the insights

Results reflect aggregated client sentiment and year-over-year directional shifts. For multi-select questions, totals may exceed 100%.

Key Findings & Insights

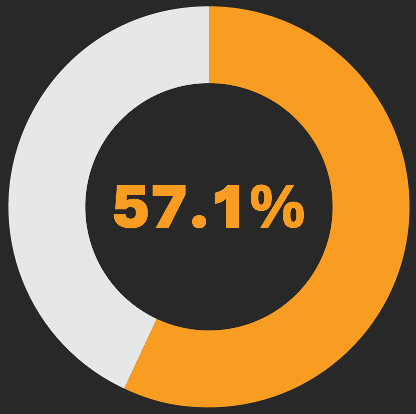
The market has stabilized—focus has shifted to value.

Insight 1

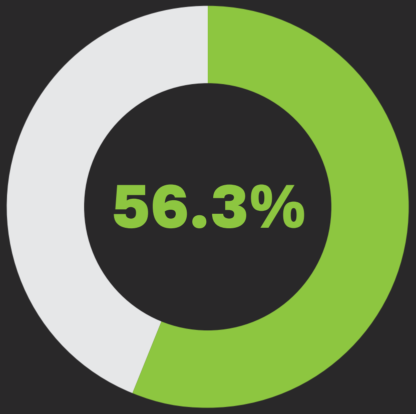
What's happening
Most organizations now expect little change in the shape of their programs.

Why this matters
Most organizations have completed post-disruption resets. The focus has shifted from resizing programs to making existing programs work harder.

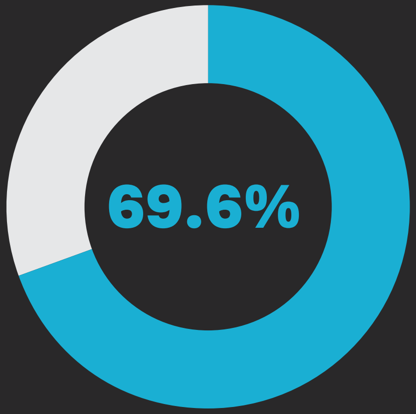
What it means for leaders
With fewer organizations expanding or reducing activity, the focus is now on prioritization, being more selective and strategic about which events you run and proving value.



expect budgets to remain flat



expect event volume to remain flat



expect event size to remain flat

> "Stability is now the baseline."

Cost pressure is intensifying, not easing.

Insight 2

What's happening
Inflation and cost increases remain the dominant external challenge, reinforced by stronger internal cost control measures.

Why this matters
Cost is no longer just a constraint—it's the primary lens through which programs are evaluated, approved and prioritized.

What it means for leaders
Success requires sharper commercial strategy, stronger supplier negotiation and clearer ROI conversations—not cost-cutting alone.

Greatest externally driven challenges

84.6%

cite inflationary or cost pressure

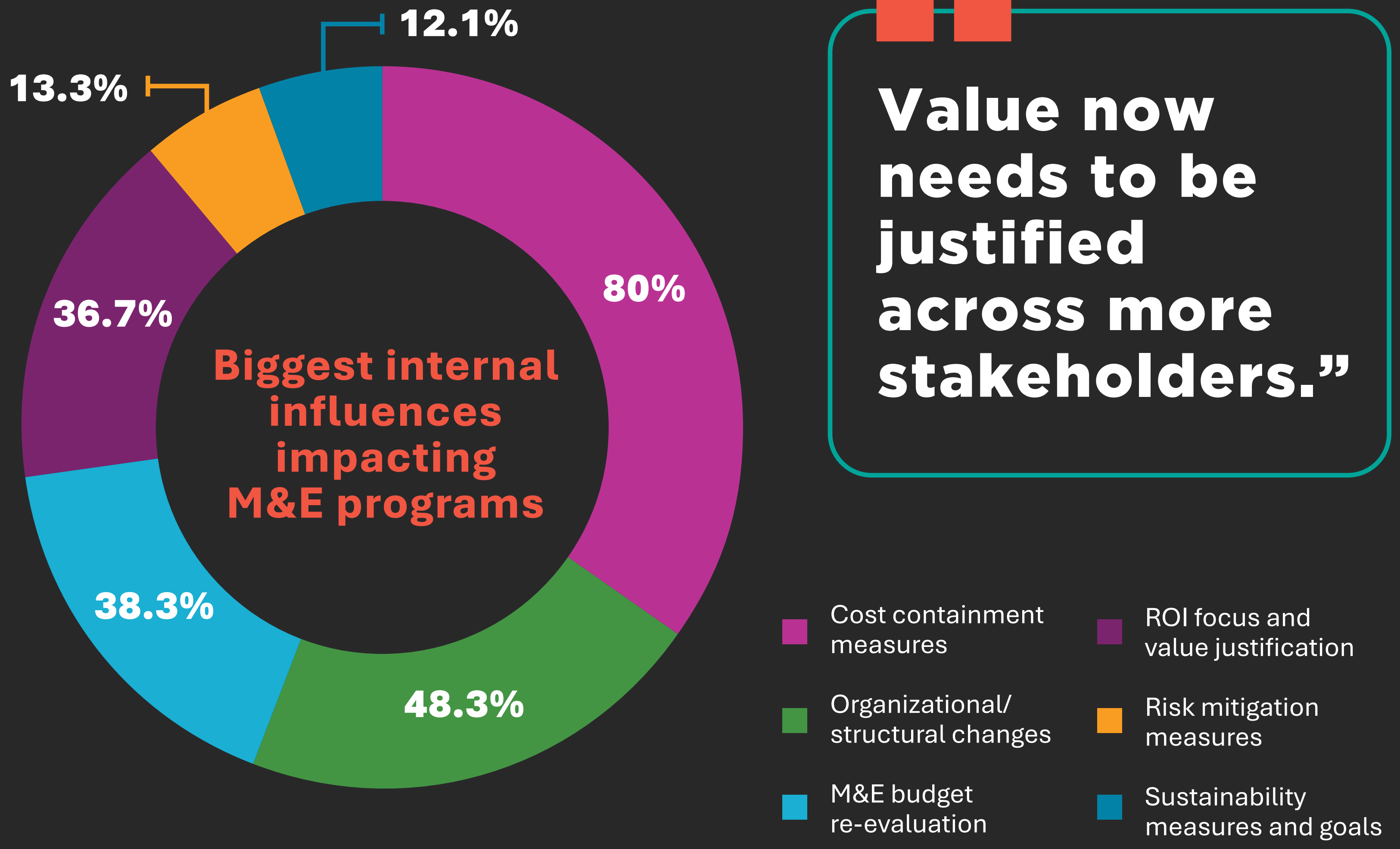
Internal complexity is changing how decisions are made.

Insight 3

What's happening
Organizational restructuring and governance requirements are increasingly influencing program design, approvals and delivery.

Why this matters
Even where budgets are stable, approval environments are becoming more layered. More stakeholders are involved, and expectations for justification are higher.

What it means for leaders
Partners who improve outcomes are becoming more valuable than those who simply execute.



> **"Value now needs to be justified across more stakeholders."**

Sustainability is becoming more selective—but not less important.

Insight 4

What's happening

Sustainability priorities are concentrating on a smaller set of practical, easier-to-implement actions, while broader or more complex initiatives are declining.

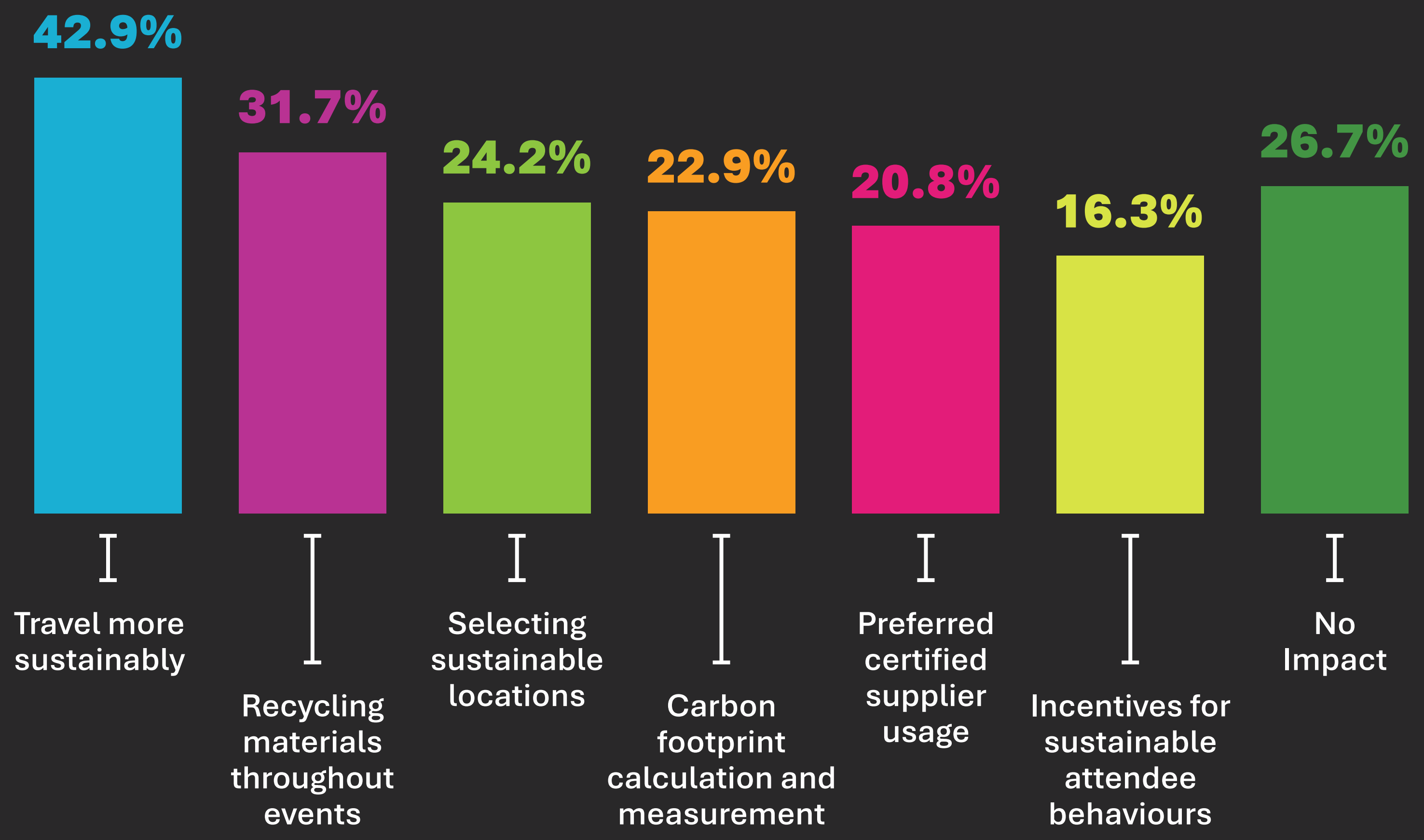
Why this matters

Sustainability is being filtered through feasibility, cost and governance realities. That is narrowing the focus, but it does not mean interest has disappeared.

What it means for leaders

Flexible, scalable approaches resonate more than one-size-fits-all mandates, particularly in constrained environments.

Sustainability priorities



What This Means for the Industry

The meetings and events space has entered a more mature phase. The market looks more stable, but client expectations are higher.

Organizations want more than event execution. They want partners who can improve results and clearly show the value of every event.

The shift is clear:

- From expansion to **portfolio optimization**
- From activity metrics to **outcome accountability**
- From broad sustainability ambition to **practical implementation**
- From delivery vendors to **strategic partners**

The organizations best positioned for success will combine operational excellence with commercial clarity and insight-led decision-making.

Questions Worth Asking

What organizations should be thinking about now:

Are our meetings and events clearly prioritized against business objectives or spread too thin?

Can we clearly articulate ROI and value beyond cost savings?

Where can optimization deliver impact without increasing scale or complexity?

Which sustainability actions deliver real value within governance constraints?

Are we using partners simply to execute or to help us navigate complexity and change?

Call to Conversation

These findings reflect what senior leaders are experiencing across the industry but every organization's reality is different.

We invite you to:

Benchmark your own programs against these insights.

Identify where optimization opportunities exist within your current constraints.

Discuss how peer organizations are navigating cost pressure, complexity and rising expectations.

Start a conversation with our team
A practical discussion—grounded in market reality.

Year-over-Year Shifts: 2025 to 2026

Budget outlook

Budget impact	2025	2026	YOY movement
Increased budgets	18.1%	16.7%	▼ 1.4 pts
Flat budgets	49.1%	57.1%	▲ 8.0 pts
Reduced budgets	32.7%	26.3%	▼ 6.4 pts

Legend: ▲ = improvement ▼ = decrease ● = broadly stable

Meetings & events volume

Volume outlook	2025	2026	YOY movement
Increased volume	28.8%	23.3%	▼ 5.5 pts
Flat volume	44.2%	56.3%	▲ 12.1 pts
Reduced volume	27.0%	20.4%	▼ 6.6 pts

Legend: ▲ = improvement ▼ = decrease ● = broadly stable

Meetings & events size

Event size outlook	2025	2026	YOY movement
Increased size	18.6%	15.4%	▼ 3.2 pts
Flat size	59.7%	69.6%	▲ 9.9 pts
Reduced size	21.7%	15.0%	▼ 6.7 pts

Legend: ▲ = improvement ▼ = decrease ● = broadly stable

Greatest externally driven challenges

Volume outlook	2025	2026	YOY movement
Inflationary & cost increases	80.0%	84.6%	▲ 4.6 pts
Attendee engagement & participation on-site	25.4%	23.8%	▼ 1.6 pts
Supplier ability to meet sustainability criteria	17.5%	11.7%	▼ 5.8 pts
Attendee reluctance to travel	10.8%	11.7%	▲ 0.9 pts
Safety & security concerns (non-health)	7.5%	17.1%	▲ 9.6 pts
Health protocols & concerns	2.5%	3.8%	▲ 1.3 pts
Geopolitical instability	—	32.5%	New

Legend: ▲ = improvement ▼ = decease ● = broadly stable

Biggest internal influences impacting M&E programs

Internal influence	2025	2026	YOY movement
Cost containment measures	73.8%	80.0%	▲ 6.2 pts
Organizational / structural changes	44.2%	48.3%	▲ 4.1 pts
M&E budget re-evaluation	42.1%	38.3%	▼ 3.8 pts
Showing return on investment	—	36.7%	New
Sustainability measures and goals	19.2%	12.1%	▼ 7.1 pts
Risk mitigation measures	13.3%	13.3%	● 0.0 pts
Supply chain re-evaluation	5.4%	5.8%	▲ 0.4 pts
Health & safety concerns	2.9%	5.4%	▲ 2.5 pts

Legend: ▲ = improvement ▼ = decrease ● = broadly stable

Sustainability priorities

Sustainability measure	2025	2026	YOY movement
Travel more sustainably	38.8%	42.9%	▲ 4.1 pts
Recycling materials throughout events	37.5%	31.7%	▼ 5.8 pts
Selecting the most sustainable locations	29.2%	24.2%	▼ 5.0 pts
Carbon footprint calculation & measurement	28.8%	22.9%	▼ 5.9 pts
Preferred certified supplier usage	25.0%	20.8%	▼ 4.2 pts
Carbon offsetting initiatives	22.5%	13.3%	▼ 9.2 pts
Zero waste policy	19.6%	12.9%	▼ 6.7 pts
Incentives for sustainable attendee behavior	17.1%	16.3%	▼ 0.8 pts
Local / regional products & plant-based diets	12.5%	10.8%	▼ 1.7 pts
Public transportation over organized transfers	11.3%	10.4%	▼ 0.9 pts
No impact	18.8%	26.7%	▲ 7.9 pts

Legend: ▲ = improvement ▼ = decrease ● = broadly stable

Thank you.

BCD meetings & events