

MORE FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS EXPECTED NEXT YEAR



Managers responsible for meetings and events expect that in 2023 the number of conferences with face-to-face meetings will increase. This is a key finding of the 12th edition of American Express Meetings and Events' Global Meetings and Events Forecast.

The report is based on a survey of 580 meetings and events leaders from 23 countries and from all parts of the value chain, as well as interviews with industry executives.

Key Findings:

77% of respondents are optimistic about the industry's health heading into 2023 - six percentage points up from last year's survey.

67% said the number of physical presence events will return to pre-pandemic levels within one to two years. Local and smaller conferences are already surpassing 2019 levels in some regions

65% expect total spending on meetings and events to increase in 2023.

Face-to-face meetings are still more important than before the pandemic: companies see personal exchange as an important factor in improving productivity, networking, and attracting new employees. Respondents expect physical presence conferences and the number of participants to increase overall. 87% of meetings are expected to have at least some component of physical presence.

In addition, it is expected that only 32% of local meetings will take place on company premises, but 40 percent in another city and 45% abroad with overnight stays. After two years with home office and hybrid models, respondents also mentioned growing virtual exhaustion. Overall, a large majority expect that meetings and events with a physical presence will be in the foreground in the coming year. Only 33% of respondents in Europe and 29% in North America expect hybrid meetings to increase.

Also in 2023, sustainability is a priority for most meetings and events programs. Four out of five respondents (80%) state that their company pays attention to sustainability when planning events. Of these, 76% say their company has a dedicated sustainability strategy for events. The minimization of paper consumption (22%), energy saving and waste reduction (19%), and the booking of environmentally friendly facilities (18%) are mentioned as important measures.

The integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is also a high priority for those responsible for meetings and events. 87% say their company or customer aims to integrate DE&I into the meetings and events programs. They achieve this primarily through various suppliers owned by minorities (29%) and the opportunity to also participate virtually in the event (28%).

Europe had the second-highest number of respondents expecting attendee numbers for physical

presence events to be at pre-pandemic levels (69%, behind Latin America at 78%). When it comes to including sustainability issues in the planning of meetings and events, the European respondents came in third place with 78% of the four regions considered (ahead of North America). When asked about a dedicated strategy for sustainable meetings and events programs, they even came last with 66%. However, they stated most often (28%) that they calculate CO2 emissions from events.

In **North America**, where respondents reported the highest percentage of working from home, internal and small and simple meetings are already above 2019 levels. Meeting planners in the region expect the highest increase in group rates in 2023 compared to other regions, both for flights (7.8%) and for hotel accommodation (7.4%). North America is also the only region that expects a drop in hotel room and meeting room availability.

MICE leaders in **Latin America** are the most likely to expect attendee numbers to reach pre-pandemic levels in the near future (78%). When it comes to sustainability, Latin American experts are at the top: They state most frequently that their company takes sustainability into account when planning meetings and events (86%) and that they pursue a dedicated strategy for sustainable meeting programs (84%). The region also stands out in the area of DE&I: 96% of those surveyed stated that their customer or company had the goal of integrating DE&I aspects into meetings and events.

More than half (53%) of surveyed meetings and events leaders in the **Asia Pacific** cite macroeconomic changes as the primary factor affecting meetings and events spending at their organizations, more so than in other regions. **They also lag behind other regions in anticipating pre-pandemic levels for face-to-face meetings, at 61%.** That's likely because the region eased COVID-19 restrictions later than other regions. In terms of sustainability, respondents in the Asia Pacific, along with Latin America, are the most likely to include sustainability in their meetings and events planning (86%).

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