

The state of events 2023

A global survey of 1,500+ organizers and attendees



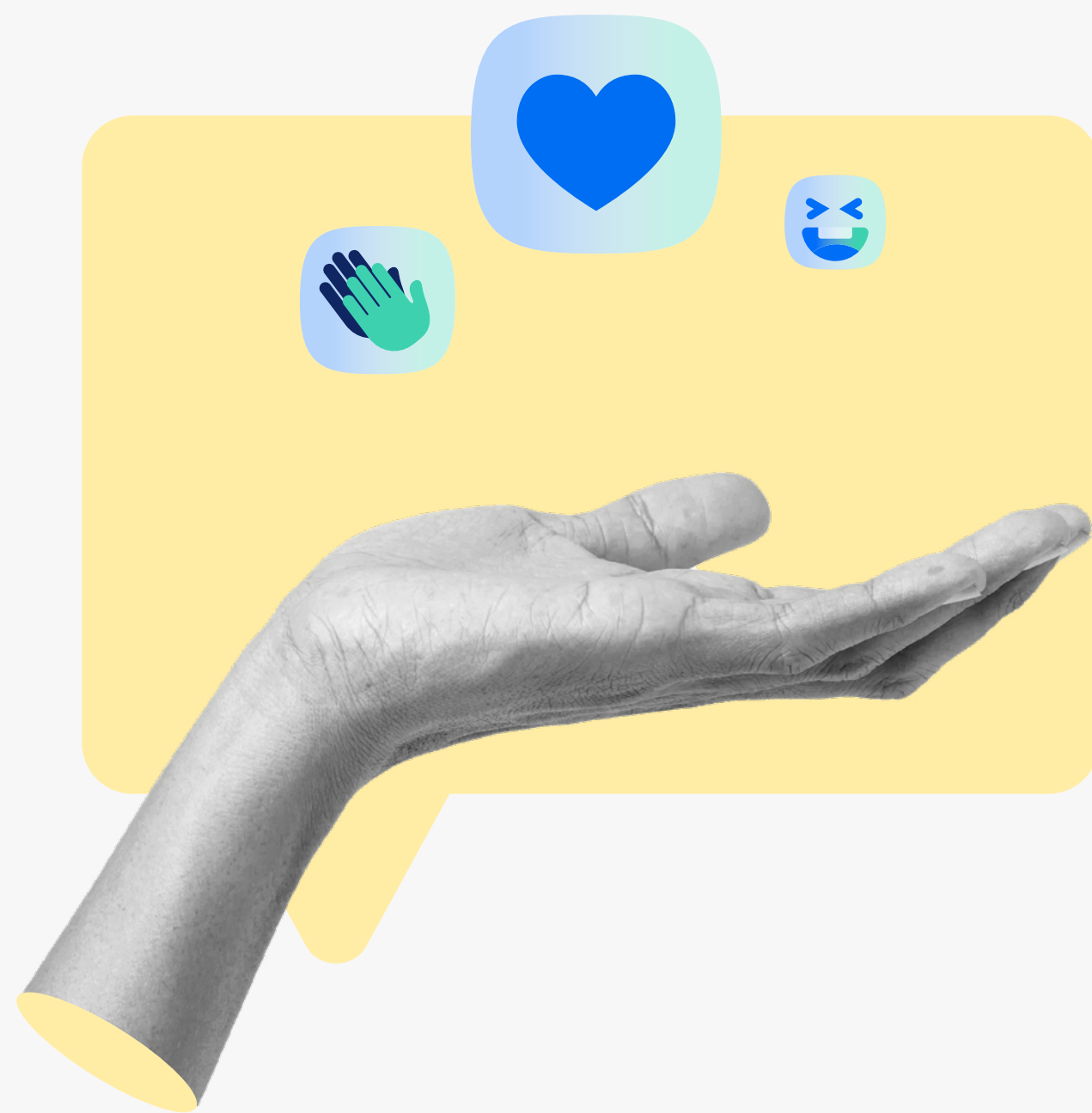


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Introduction and key findings



Introduction

We care about virtual events. A lot. Because we know that virtual events are how companies communicate with their audiences, how they share their findings, spark idea, and build on their industry's conversation. They also help people from across to world to connect, learn, engage, and feel like a part of a community. This is especially crucial as more and more businesses work remotely and many team members are dispersed. That's why we care about virtual events because they help people connect and add communal value to their professional lives.

You don't need us to tell you that the events world has changed drastically since 2020. In our past surveys, such as the state of virtual events 2022, we were curious to learn how the pandemic and global disruptions affected marketers' plans to produce events, what changes were they forced to make, and what were their predictions for the future. As we approach 2023, we wanted to focus on marketers'

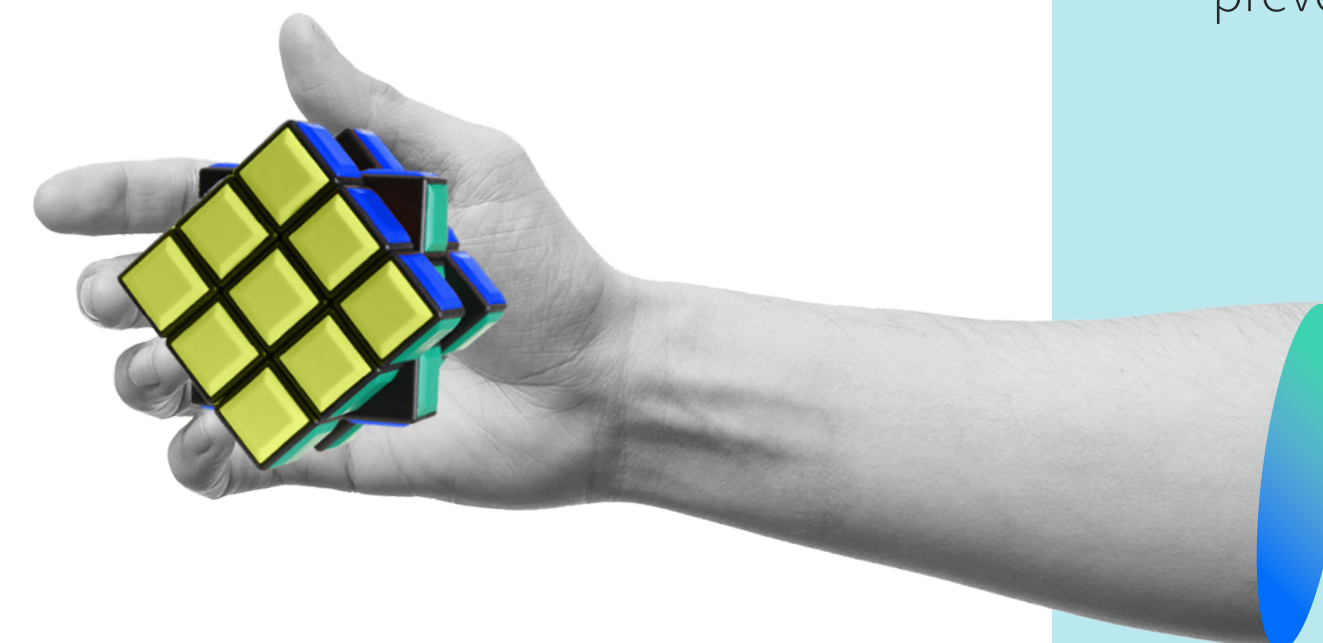
efforts to build a stable plan, while still anticipating swift changes and what attendees value and gain from attending different type of events.

We also know that despite the yearning for stability, the market is still volatile. Many marketers fear a looming recession, organizational volatility, budgetary challenges, and uncertainty with hiring and retention while facing the increased pressure of delivering results. Attendees, on the other hand, may fear to commit to travel plans or may be unwilling to devote their time to events that might hinder their day-to-day work. Both parties are looking for clear answers about what they should do in 2023. Our survey attempts to provide some clarity.

The results of this survey offer a clearer understanding on how marketers are building for the future and what attendees want and expect. It was created to give you the answers you need to build a successful events plan for 2023. For example, we

asked marketers which events formats they find most important and effective, how do their strategies differ when planning in-person vs. virtual events, and where do they project the virtual events market is headed in 2023. With attendees, we uncovered what they gain from different types of events, which formats they prefer, and what gaps are they experiencing.

Marketers are working hard, maybe harder than ever, to produce memorable and valuable events. Attendees are eager to build genuine human connections but are not willing to sacrifice their flexibility. Both are seeking to create stability and build for a future that works for business and for their employees. Virtual events have the power create that balance.



Methodology

We commissioned a survey of 500 event organizers, CMOs, VP marketing, field/regional marketing managers, and directors of events, with company size ranging from 500-10,000 employees. All respondents have hosted virtual events, such as tradeshow or conferences, over the past 18 months. In addition, we gathered data from 1044 attendees who have attended in-person, virtual, or hybrid events. All respondents originated in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy.

This report was administered online by Global Surveyz Research, a global research firm. The respondents were recruited through a global B2B research panel, invited via email to complete the survey, with all responses collected during August-September 2022. The average amount of time spent on the survey was 7 minutes and 38 seconds for organizers, and 4 minutes and 50 seconds for attendees. The answers to most of the non-numerical questions were randomized, to prevent order bias.

Key Findings

1

Marketers are counting on virtual events

All types of events - in-person, hybrid, and virtual - are on the agenda for 2023 in similar numbers to 2022. 40% of marketers are planning virtual events in 2023 and 18% included hybrid events in their plans. In terms of business priorities, virtual events take the top spot, with 74% of marketers claiming virtual events are most important for their overall strategy. As opposed to the reactive approach of the past few years, now marketers are seeking stability while maintaining agility.

4

Marketers face different challenges but need for high quality content stays constant

We asked marketers about their top challenges. These differ between event formats. Attendance is the greatest challenge for in-person events (46%) while engagement comes out on top for virtual events. The need for quality content is similar no matter the event, and at its core – high quality content remains an event's main driver.

2

Attendees preferer hybrid and virtual events for flexibility, in-person for networking

Attendees feel that networking opportunities are the most important when attending in-person events, while virtual events' educational sessions are seen as most valuable (44%). Marketers know that virtual events lack the personal touch, and they want to find more ways to help attendees network in virtual events.

5

Attendees expect different gains from different events - and marketers must adapt

Marketers must consider their audience's expectations for each event type because attendees expect to gain different value from different events. For example, 44% of in-person event attendees value networking sessions the most. While in virtual events attendees value educational sessions and learning.

3

Most marketers have a plan to switch to virtual events, just in case

Marketers are learning from their past experiences. 93% of them have a plan to shift their in-person event to a virtual event. 63% of marketers have plans to host an in-person event over the next 12 months. However, when forced to choose between canceling an in-person or a virtual event, 59% chose to cancel the in-person event and stick to a virtual event.

6

Marketers foresee continuous growth in virtual events

In 2023, marketers are expecting growth across the board: ROI, budget, and networking are expected to grow by 12%, engagement by 13%, registrations by 14%, and attendance and lead generation by 15%. These estimations nod towards a moderate but optimistic outlook for virtual events and their continuous growth and demand.

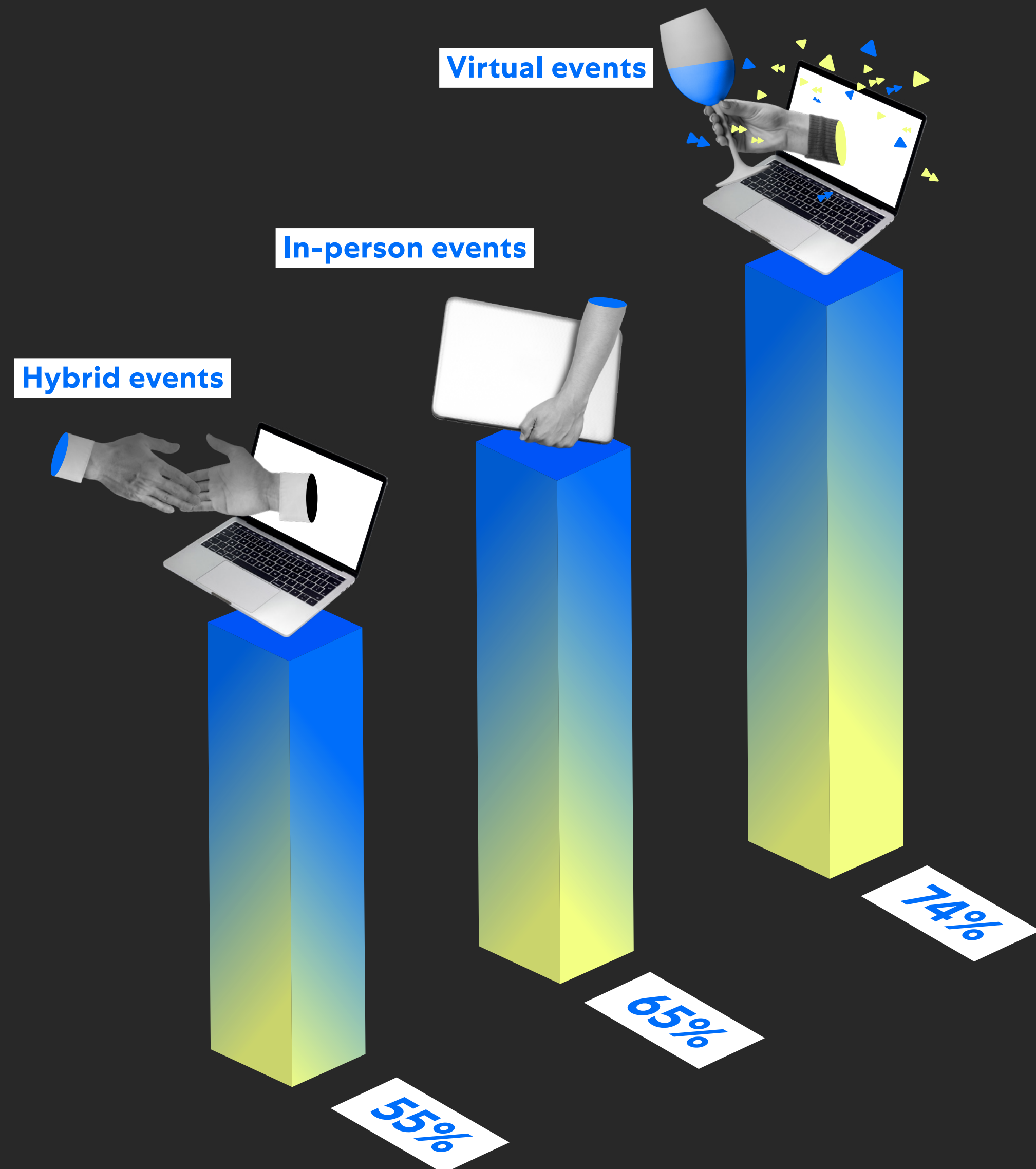
How important is each format for marketers in their event strategy?

Although all events are strategically important for a smart events strategy, virtual events hold the top spot. Nearly three quarters of marketers (74%) state that virtual events are most important to their events strategy.

**Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%*

Figure 1*

How important is each event format in marketers' event strategy



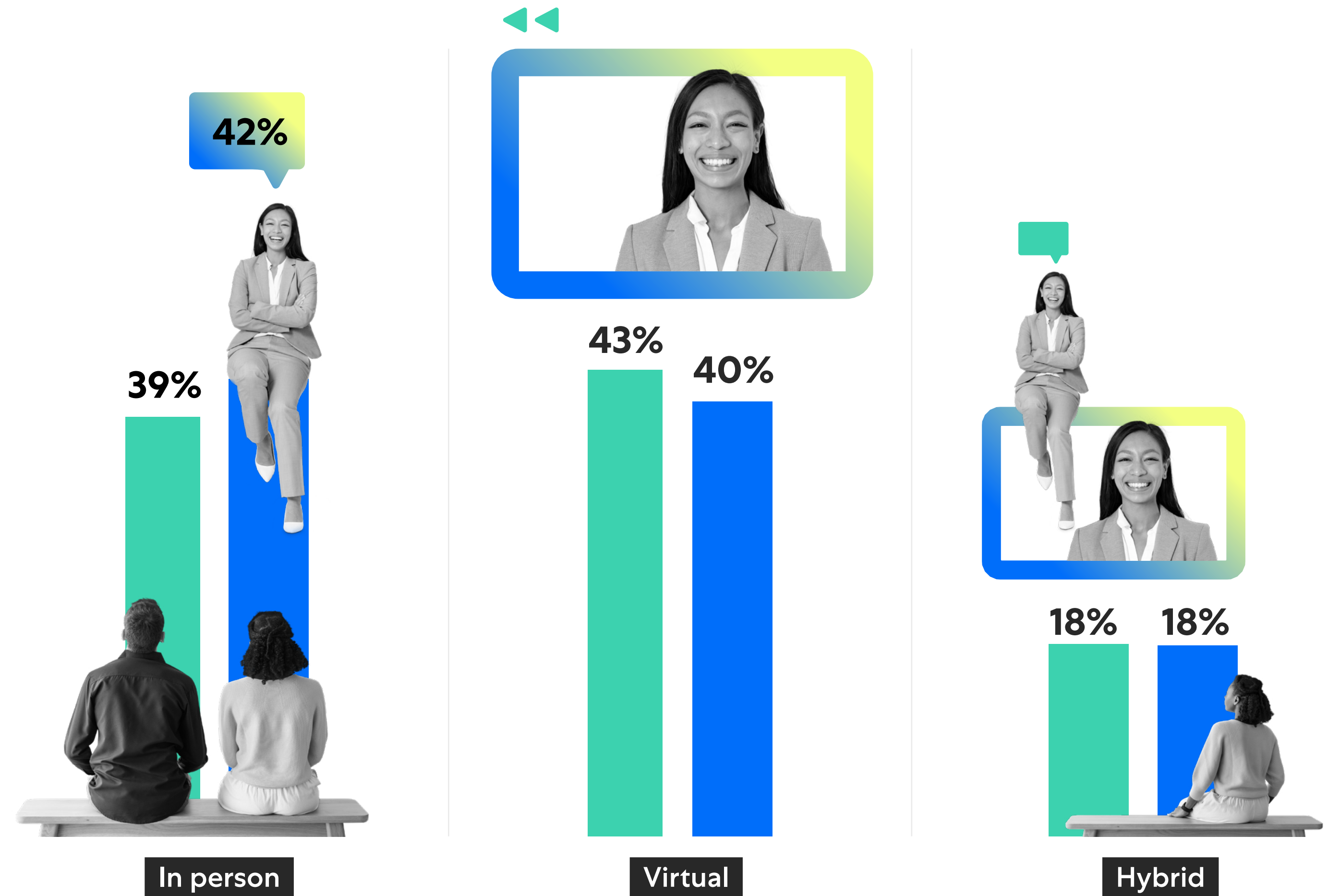
Marketers want it all

Marketers understand that a strong events strategy includes all types of events. When asked about how 2022 plan differs from to their 2023 plan the numbers didn't change much and remain at an almost even split. plan for hybrid events remain constant at 18%.

In previous years, marketers were forced to invest in virtual events as a reaction to a state of emergency. Now marketers see the value of virtual and hybrid events and are heavily investing in them.

Figure 2*

Comparison of event formats 2022-2023



*Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%

What attendees value and what they want doesn't always match

We asked attendees what event type they valued more and what event type they preferred.

40% of attendees find in-person events the most valuable format (figure 3). However, when asked which event type they want to attend, the choice to attend an in-person event dropped to 32%.

While attendees might find in-person events more valuable, we believe that limitations such as travel, scheduling conflicts, and lack of flexibility alter their preference.

Do attendees around the world feel the same about this issue?

To examine, we broke down the 50% of attendees who prefer hybrid events by location (figure 5). 49% of EU attendees prefer hybrid events, compared to 33% of the US and 29% of the UK. We can't guarantee reasons for this difference, but we can presume that this discrepancy is due to travel within the UK and the US might be easier than travel across the EU.

Figure 3

Attendees most valued event format

- Hybrid / Both
- Virtually only
- No preference
- In-person only

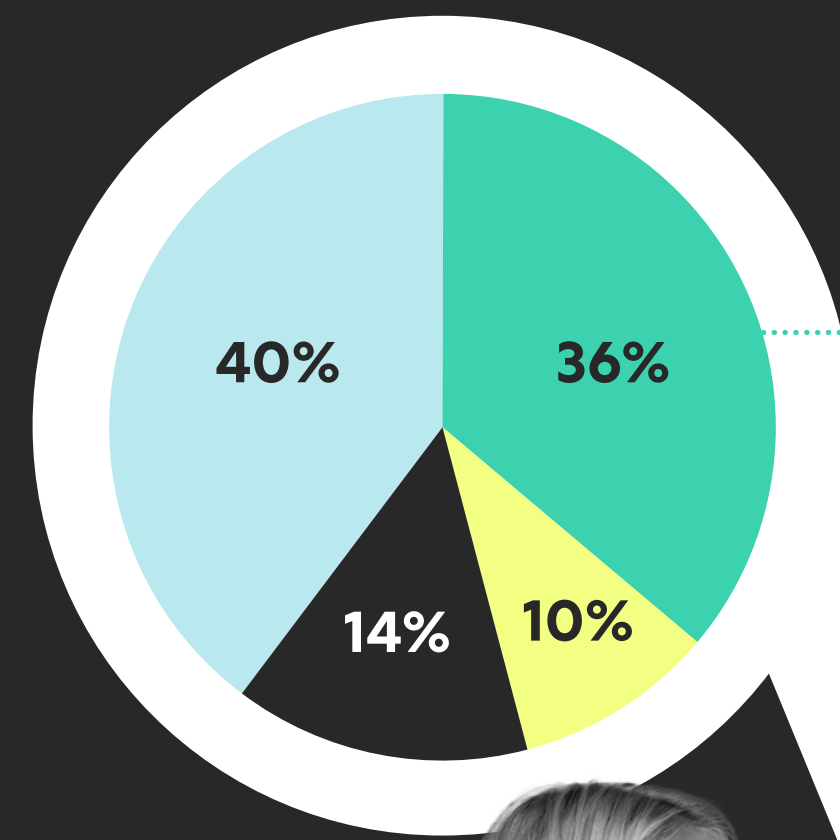


Figure 4

virtual vs. in-person - which would attendees prefer?

- Hybrid
- Virtually only
- In-person only

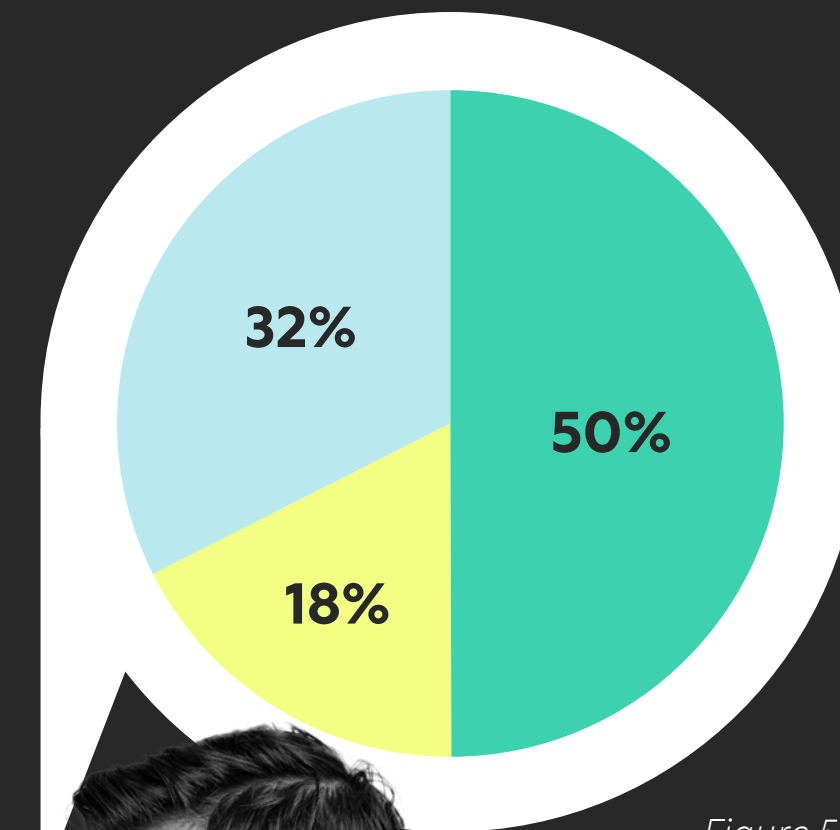
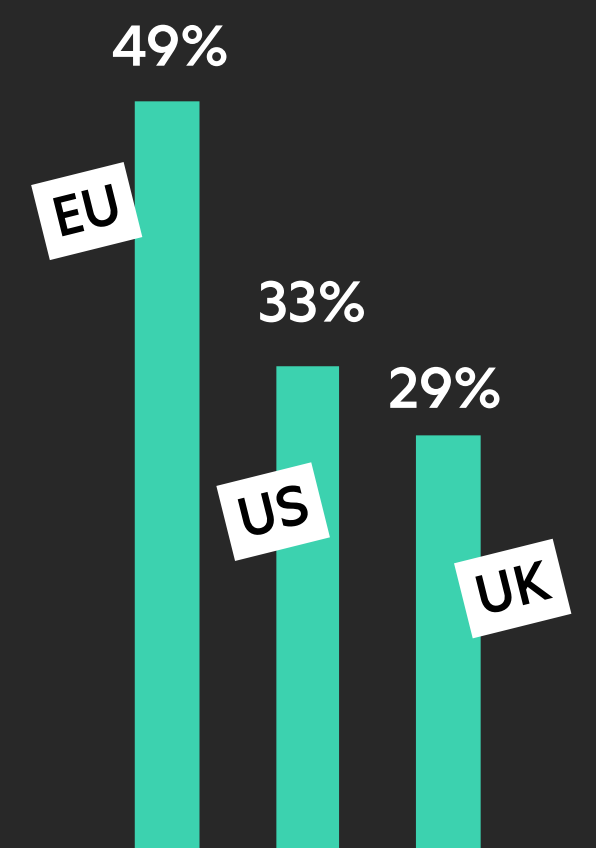


Figure 5

which countries prefer hybrid events?



Where attendees are going in 2023

Worry not! Attendees are still planning on going to events and still find them valuable. In fact, 88% of those who regularly attend events are planning to attend in 2023.

Most notably, attendees plan to attend in-person conferences (48%), virtual conferences (43%), and virtual roundtables (41%).

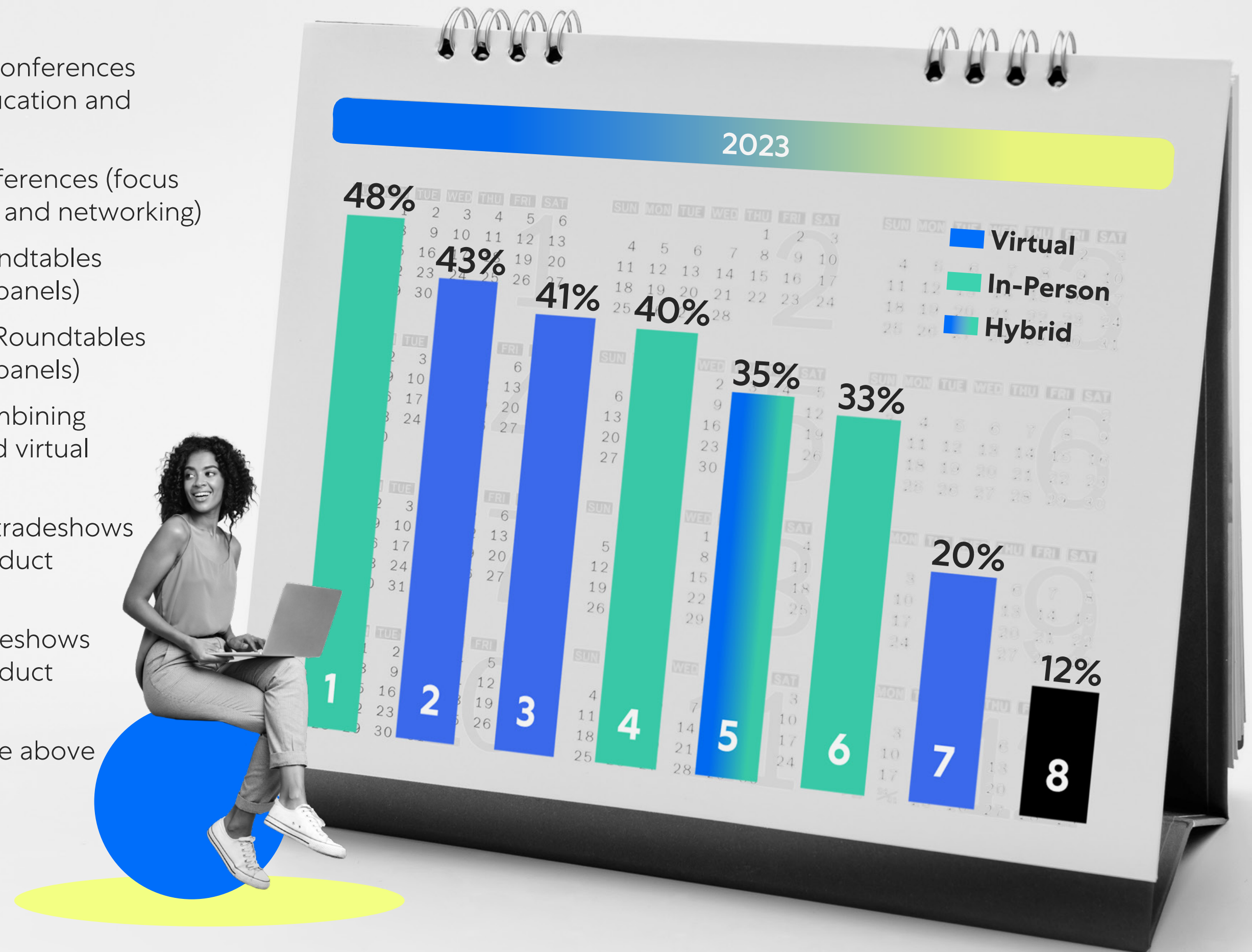
Attendees value conferences aimed at education and networking and gain similar value whether they attend them in-person or virtually.

This correlates with data stated earlier in the report . Attendees believe in-person events are more valuable, yet they prefer attending virtual events.

Figure 6*

Where are attendees going in 2023

1. In-person conferences (focus on education and networking)
2. Virtual conferences (focus on education and networking)
3. Virtual Roundtables (discussions, panels)
4. In-person Roundtables (discussions, panels)
5. Events combining in-person and virtual presence
6. In-person tradeshows (focus on product showcasing)
7. Virtual tradeshows (focus on product showcasing)
8. None of the above



*Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%

Planning ahead and planning to pivot

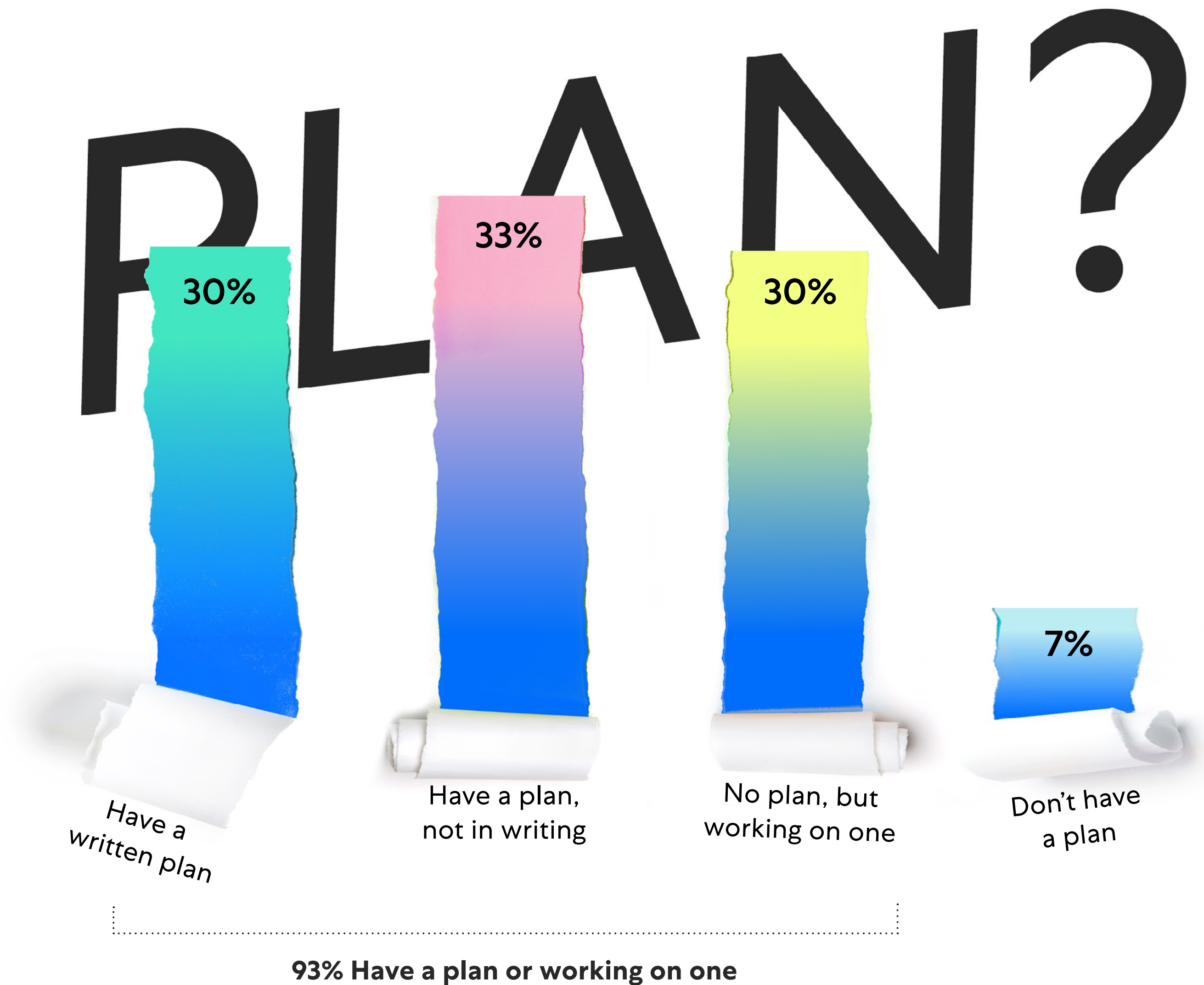
Marketers are skilled with thinking on their feet, but love having a solid plan to work with. If the need arises, 93% of marketers claim to have a plan to pivot from an in-person event into a virtual event, while 30% claim to have a plan in writing. This is good news, showing that marketers have learned from the past.

However, 7% indicate they do not have a plan at all. If you're part of the 7% who don't have a plan to pivot, it's time to reevaluate your strategy, look back at what you've done in the past, and implement lessons learned.

Less than a third of marketers have their plan written down. If the day comes when they need to put their plan into action, or if they want to shift to a hybrid event to attract more attendees – the lack of a codified plan could hold them back. In fact, they may find it harder to make that pivot without a clear strategy or roadmap.

Figure 7

Planning ahead and planning to pivot



Marketers want more in-person events, but will also cancel them first

63% of organizations have a plan to host in-person events in the next 12-24 months. This suggests that many marketers are seeking to create a “back to normal” attitude in their marketing plans, attempting to revert to the way things were pre-pandemic.

We also wanted to gauge marketers’ gut reaction. So, we asked: when forced to, what event type they would most likely cancel? When push came to shove, 59% of marketers admitted they would cancel their in-person event in favor of a virtual event.

Data collected doesn’t indicate the reason for their choice. Some assumptions can be made about the greater ease of planning virtual events, their projected ROI, or ease of making last minute decisions.

Nonetheless, marketers’ choice to cancel the in-person event highlights the importance of having a back-up plan in place for swift changes.

Figure 8

marketers plan to host in-person events in the next 12-24 months

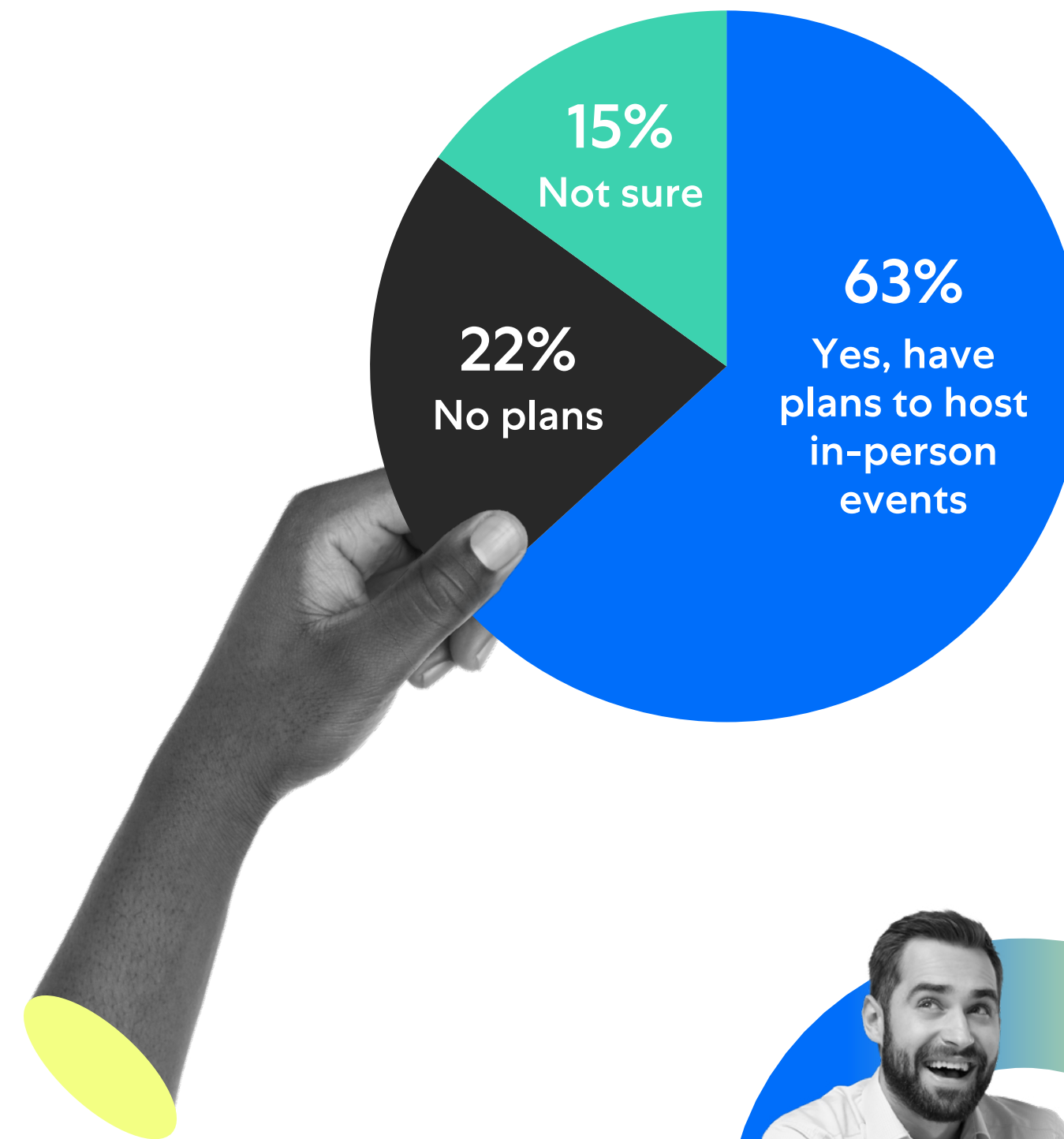
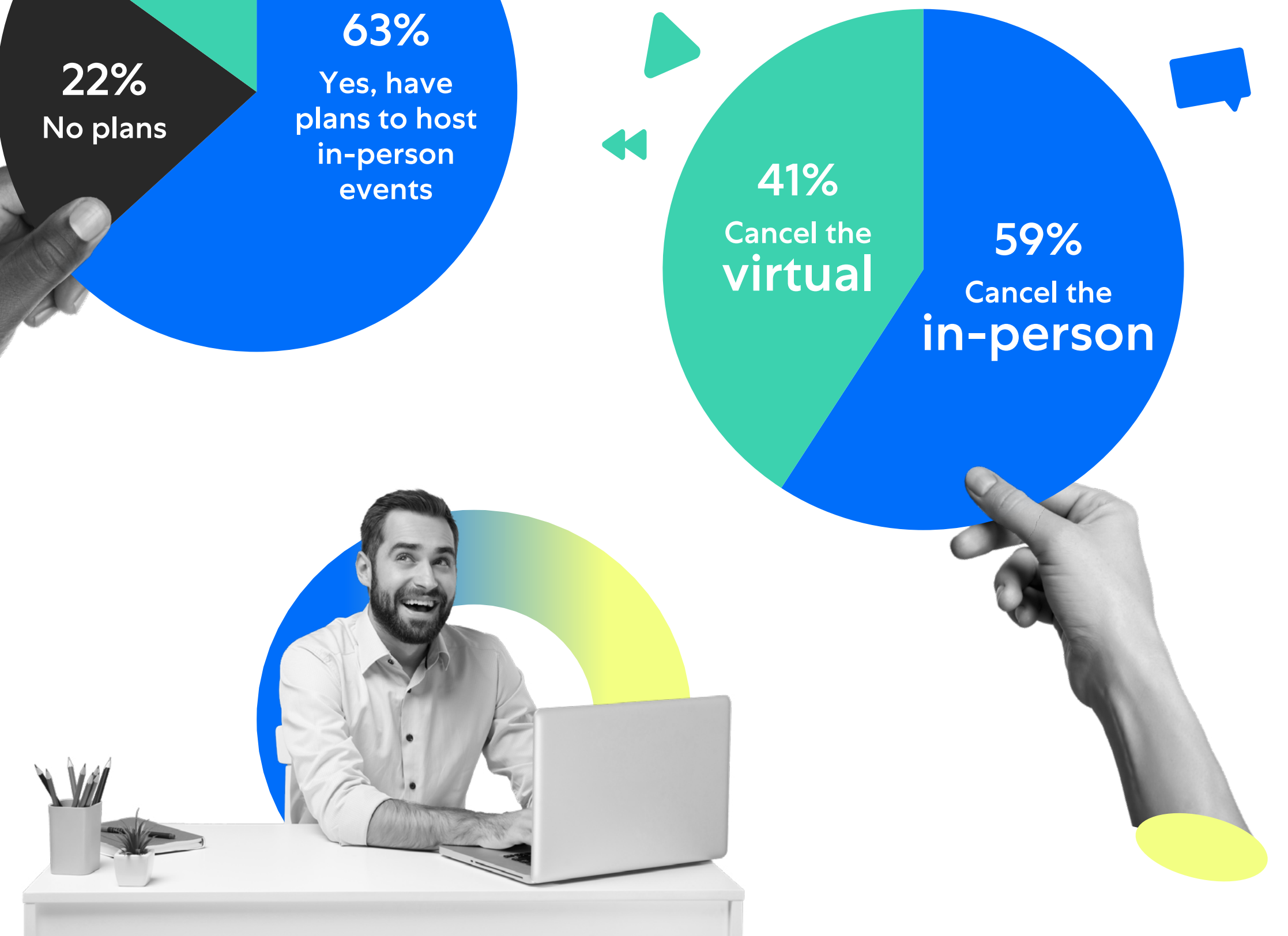


Figure 9

in-Person vs. virtual - which one would marketers choose to cancel?



What are your top challenges when planning an event?

In case you worried you were the only one facing challenges when planning an event, rest assured –you are not. In fact, 98% of marketers admit to tackling challenges when planning events.

We asked marketers which challenges they face when planning in-person vs. virtual events. The top challenge for in-person events is attendance (46% vs. 31% for virtual events) while the top challenge for virtual events is engagement (42% vs. 32% in in-person).

On the one hand, it may be easier to get attendees through a virtual door. On the other, virtual attendees are more likely to leave an event feeling disengaged.

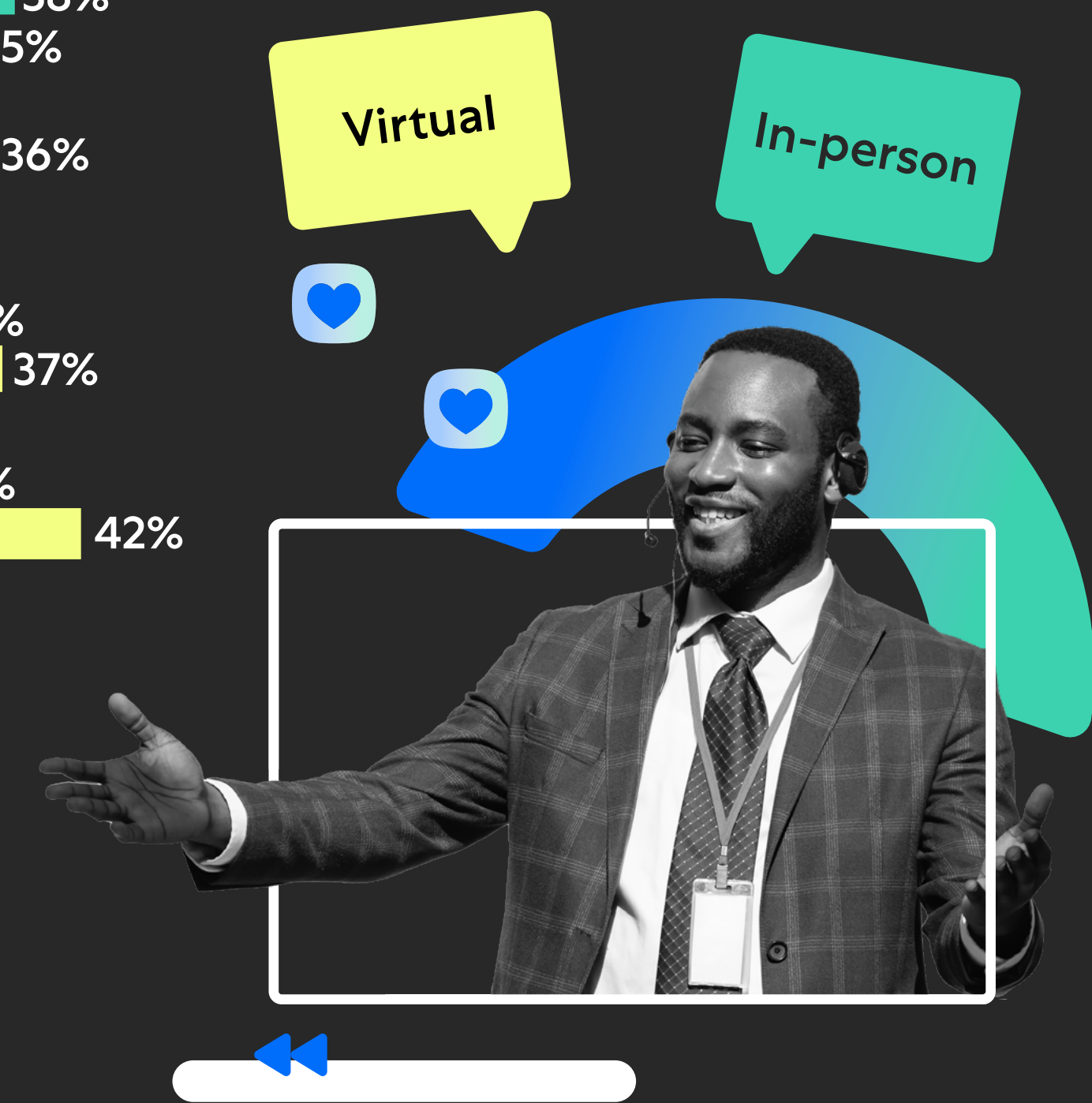
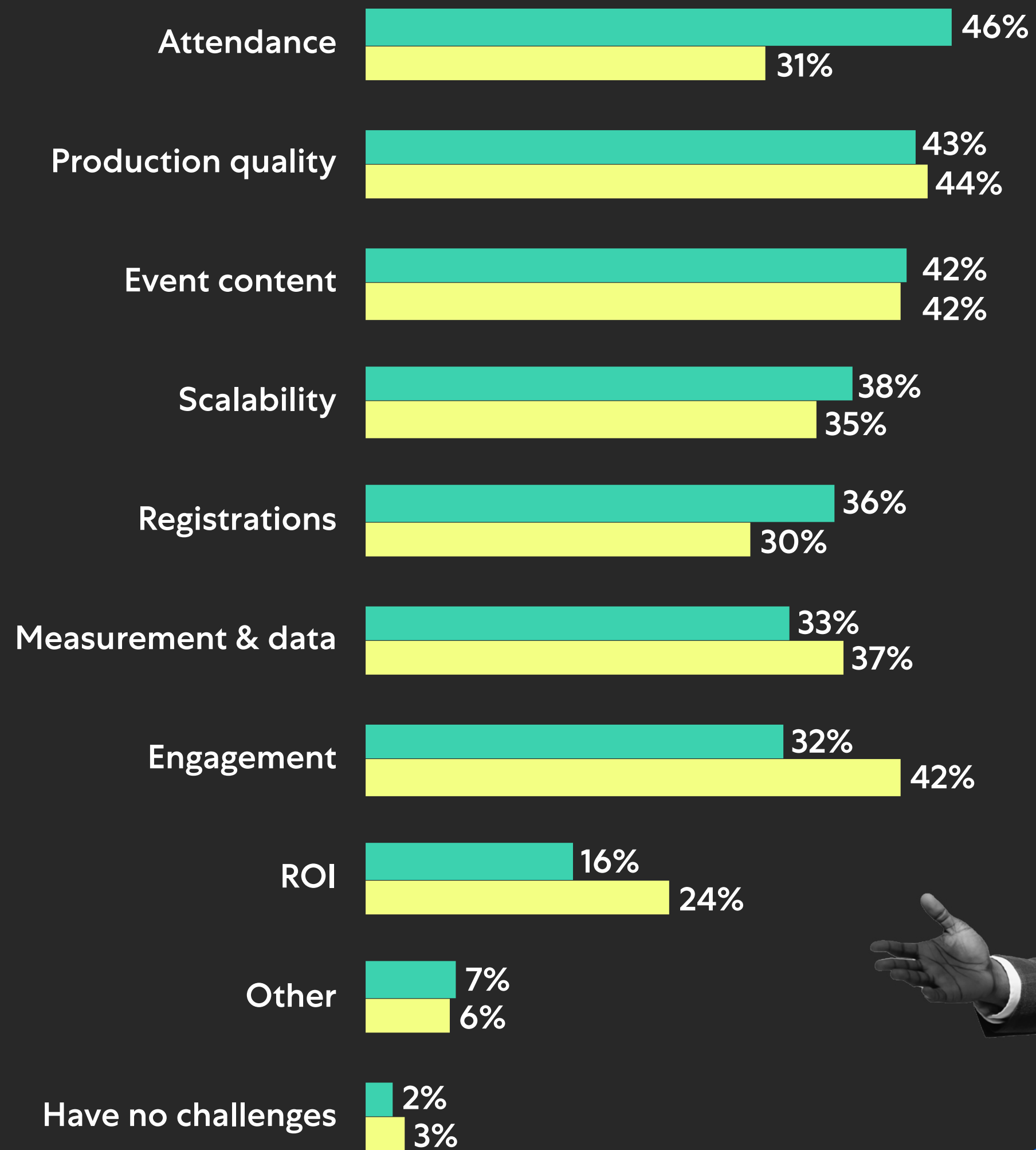
This is especially true when organizers struggle to imitate a personable engagement experience.

Interestingly, marketers consider production quality (43-44%) as the 2nd top challenge for either event type. As marketers plan ahead, they must consider how they will solve the production quality challenge of both event types.

**Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%*

Figure 10*

Top challenges when planning an event - virtual vs. in-person



How to have a plan and change it too

The constant shifts in the global market have many marketers feeling uneasy. 43% of marketers report that it has been difficult to keep plans agile in face of market changes.

From global pandemic to economic downturn – marketers are often faced with slashed budgets, reduced workforce, and redefined scope and timeline. In face of these challenges, keeping agile has proven to be harder, yet also necessary.

As we discovered earlier (figure 7), 93% of marketers have a plan to pivot between events. How does your plan hold up?

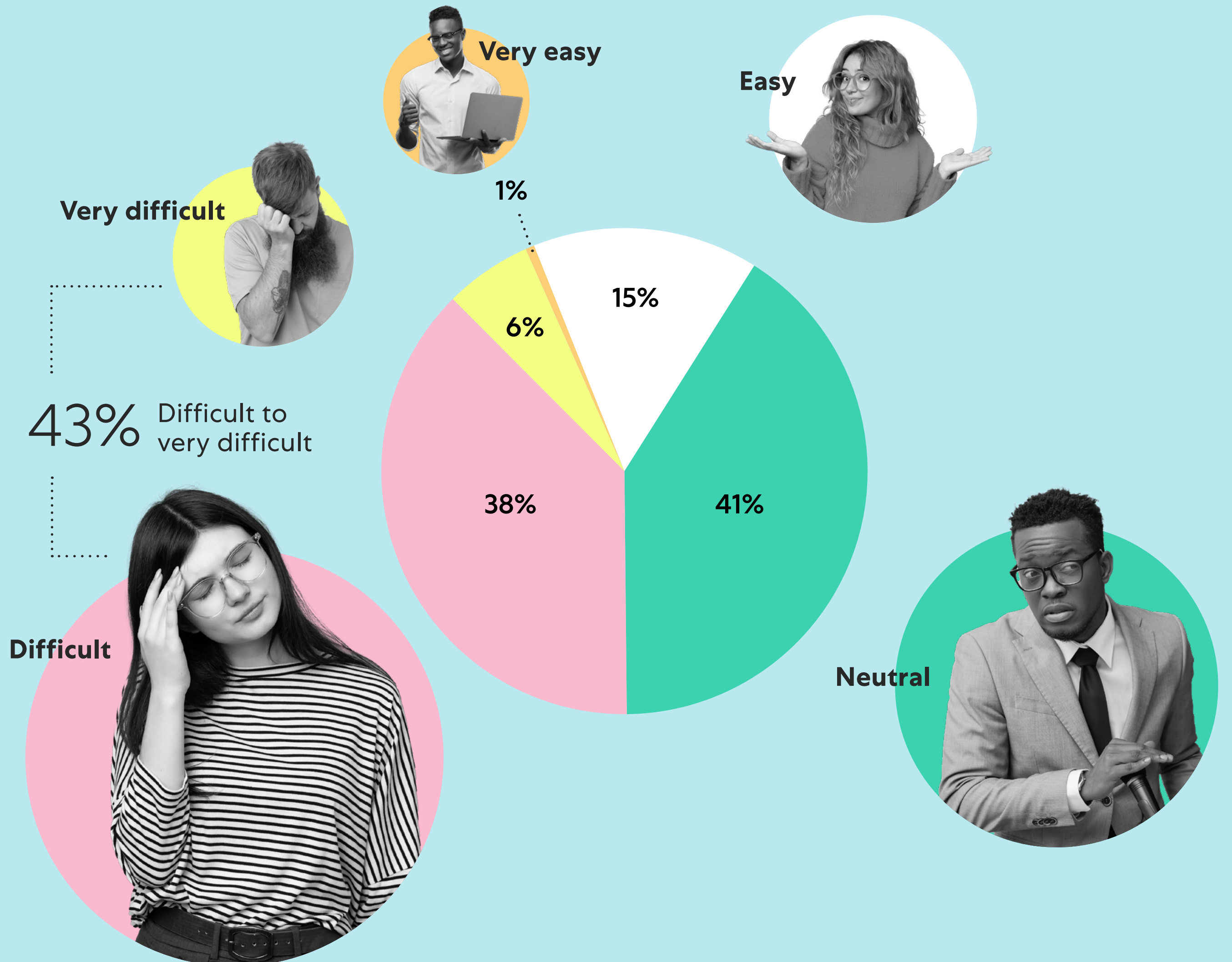
Pro tip:

The best way to keeping ahead is having a solid plan. Not sure where to start? Here's how:

- Start with an audit - go back and look at all your past year's efforts
- Note what worked what didn't
- Consider where can you add more content and value
- Look at places you can streamline and automate
- Set benchmarks

Figure 11

Has remaining agile been difficult in the face of market changes?



Steady growth on the horizon

Seeing as virtual events have become a strong marketing funnel, we asked marketers to project the growth rates of virtual events in 2023 across different areas.

All in all, marketers are cautiously optimistic when considering virtual events. They project growth across all areas starting with 12% growth for ROI up to 15% for qualified lead generation.

While these numbers are not dramatic, they indicate predictions of growth across the board. As you evaluate your own 2023 plan and goal, consider where you stand on the growth estimate.

If your estimations are more conservative, now is the time to identify the gaps and consider investing in the tools and strategies that will promote growth others are projecting in their plans.

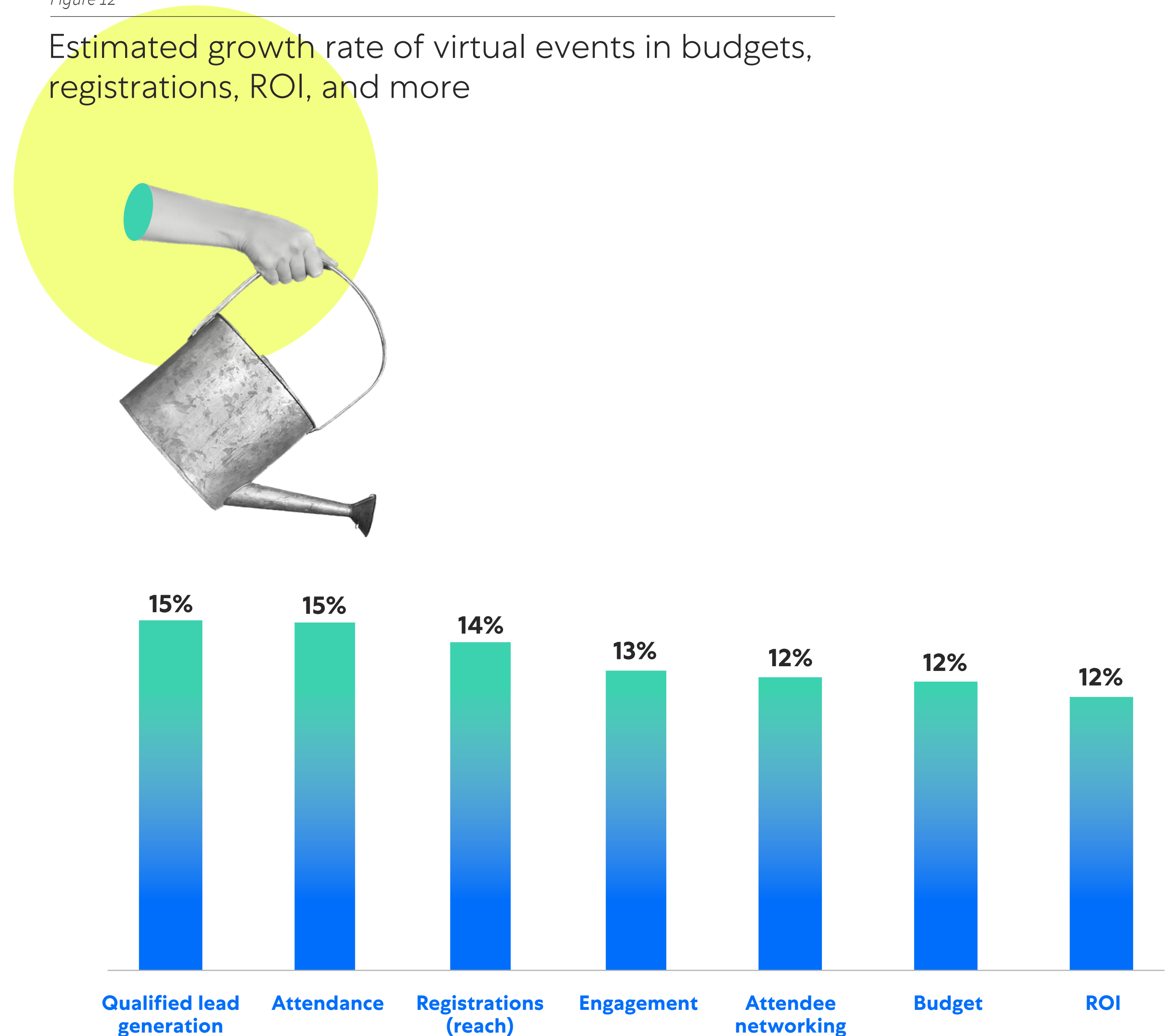
Pro tip:

If your estimations are more conservative, now is the time to identify the gaps, identify sore spots, and consider investing in the tools that will promote growth. Research gap analysis techniques and choose one that's approachable and that best benefits your marketing efforts.

**The graph shows the weighted average of each article*

Figure 12*

Estimated growth rate of virtual events in budgets, registrations, ROI, and more



What to look for in an events platform

By now, marketers understand the importance of an events platform that works for them.

They consider these 3 top key factors when choosing an events platform: engagement tools (43%), all-in-one solutions (42%), and integration capabilities (38%).

In other words, marketers want a platform that offers a personable engagement experience, with an all-in-one shop, and that already works with the systems they have. They want an events platform that makes their attendees happy and their work more efficient.

Earlier, we asked marketers whether their organization has a plan to pivot an in-person event into a virtual event (figure 7).

By cross-referencing this data with figure 13, we found that an events platform “cost-effectiveness” is a top factor for those who do not have a plan (61% vs. 38-39% for those who do have a plan).

This may indicate that those who don't have a plan might have a larger mental barrier when considering choosing an events platform. When marketers do have a plan, an events platform's overall cost is less crucial, and the platform's benefits become top priority.

*Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages add up to more than 100%.

Figure 13*

Marketers' top factors for choosing an events platform

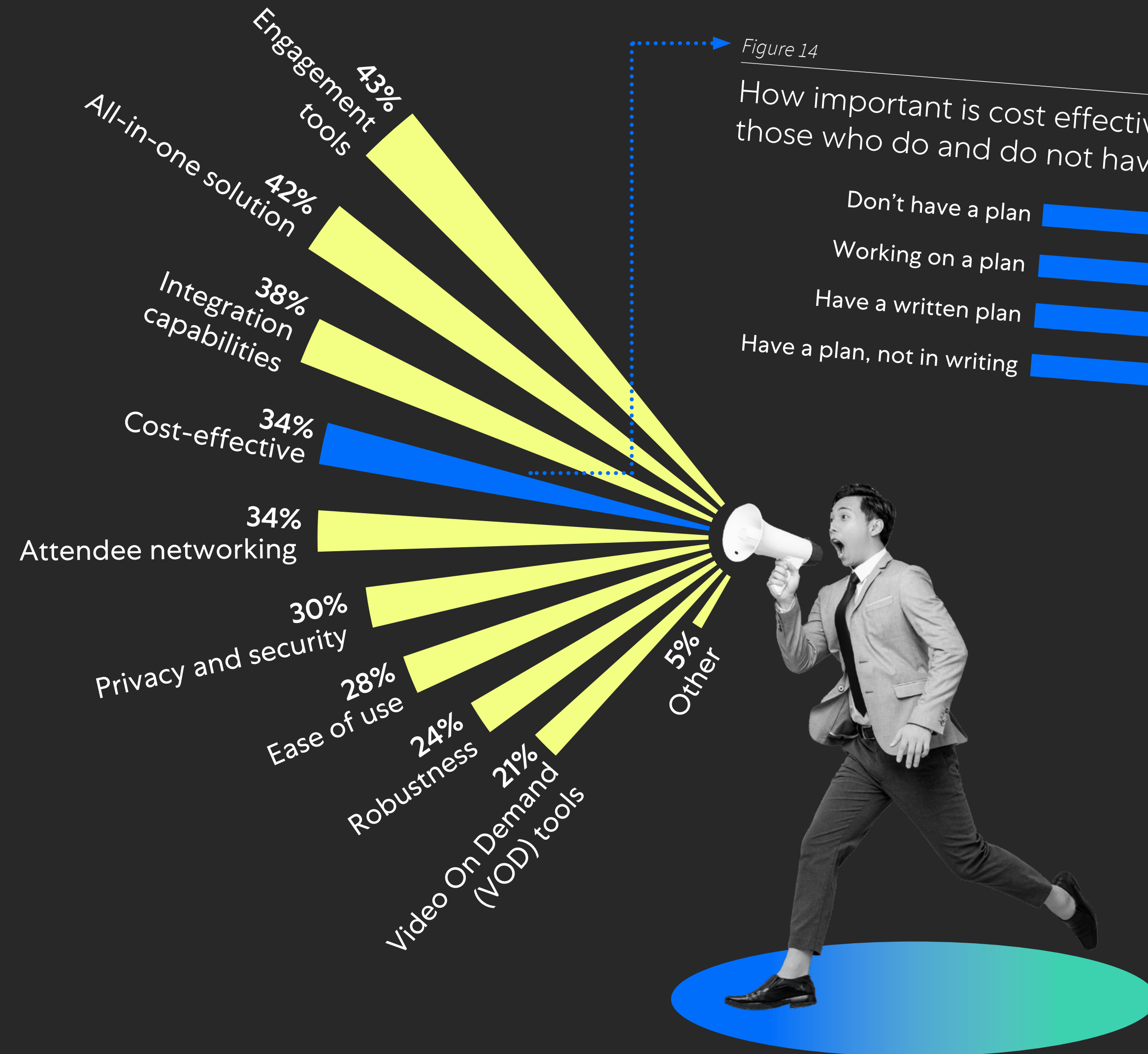
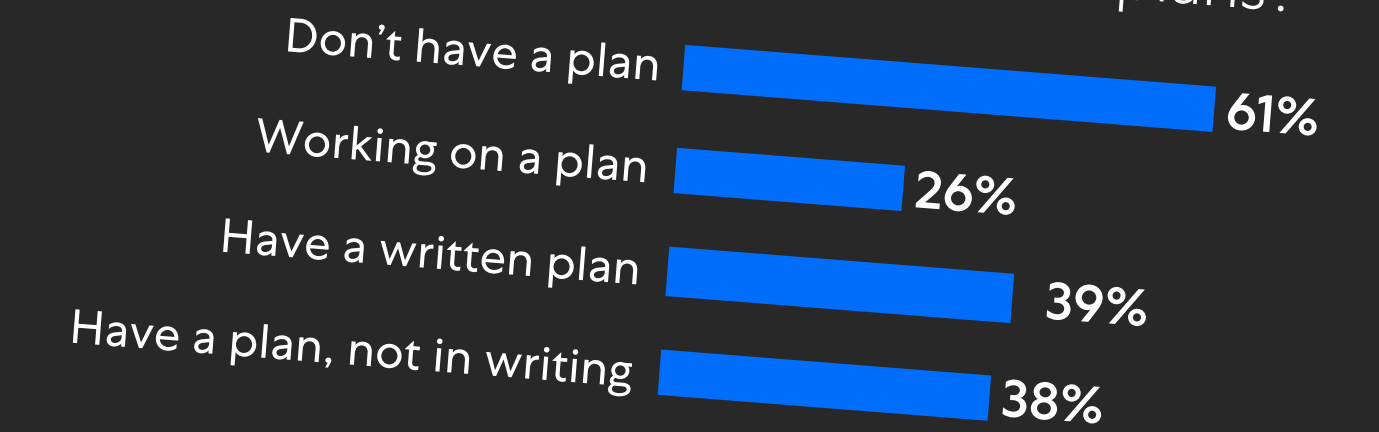


Figure 14

How important is cost effectiveness for those who do and do not have pivot plans?



What attendees value most about virtual vs. in-person events

We wanted to know what factors attendees value most about each type of event to understand how we can better serve them in each event. Attendees have clear differing expectations from each type of event.

When considering virtual events, attendees most value the lack of travel time (49%) (figure 15). If your market is UK based, know that UK respondents value lack of travel much more highly (61%) in comparison to respondents from the EU or the US (44-49%) (figure 16).

The most valued factor at an in-person event, and by far greater than all other factors, is networking opportunities (53%) (figure 15). When you plan your in-person event, consider how you can promote more networking opportunities.

Figure 16

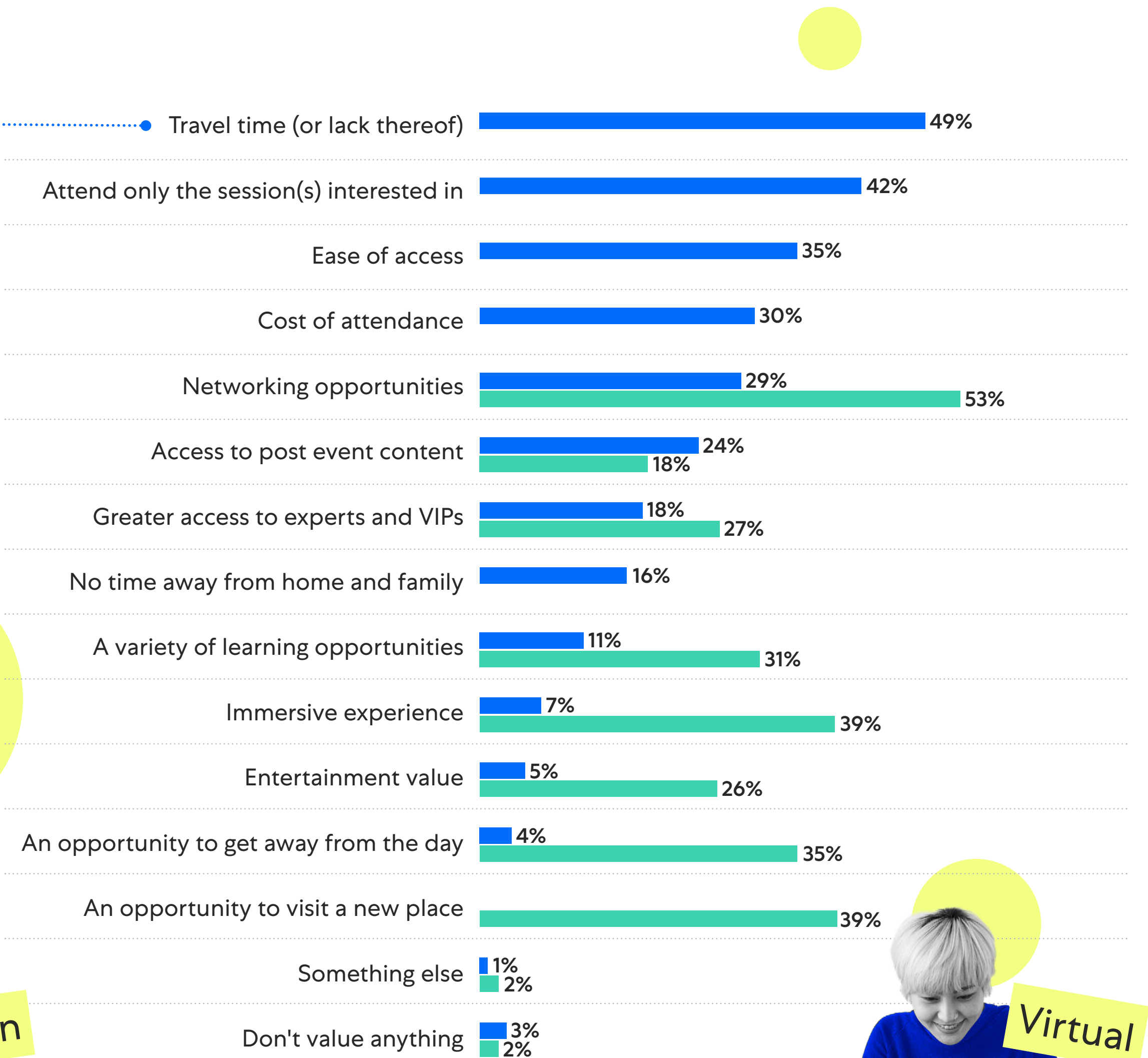
Travel time (or lack thereof) by country



*Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%

Figure 15*

Top factors valued most by attendees



In-person



Virtual

Which sessions attendees value most

We also wanted to learn what types of sessions attendees value most in different types of events. correlating with our findings in figure 15, attendees value in-person sessions that offer networking opportunities (44%).

When considering virtual events, attendees value educational sessions (44%) the most. When we broke attendees' answers down by geography, respondents from the UK found more value in educational sessions (54%) than EU (35%) or US respondents (45%).

How is this helpful to you? Using this data can help you better plan your own events and focus on different activities for different event types.

Pro tip:

This information can help you better plan your own events:

- Create more educational content and book educational speakers for virtual events
- Plan more networking opportunities during in-person events
- Promote more Q&A sessions during your event to better engage attendees

* Question allowed more than one answer and as a result, percentages will add up to more than 100%

Figure 17*

Most valued session type by attendees – virtual vs. in-person events

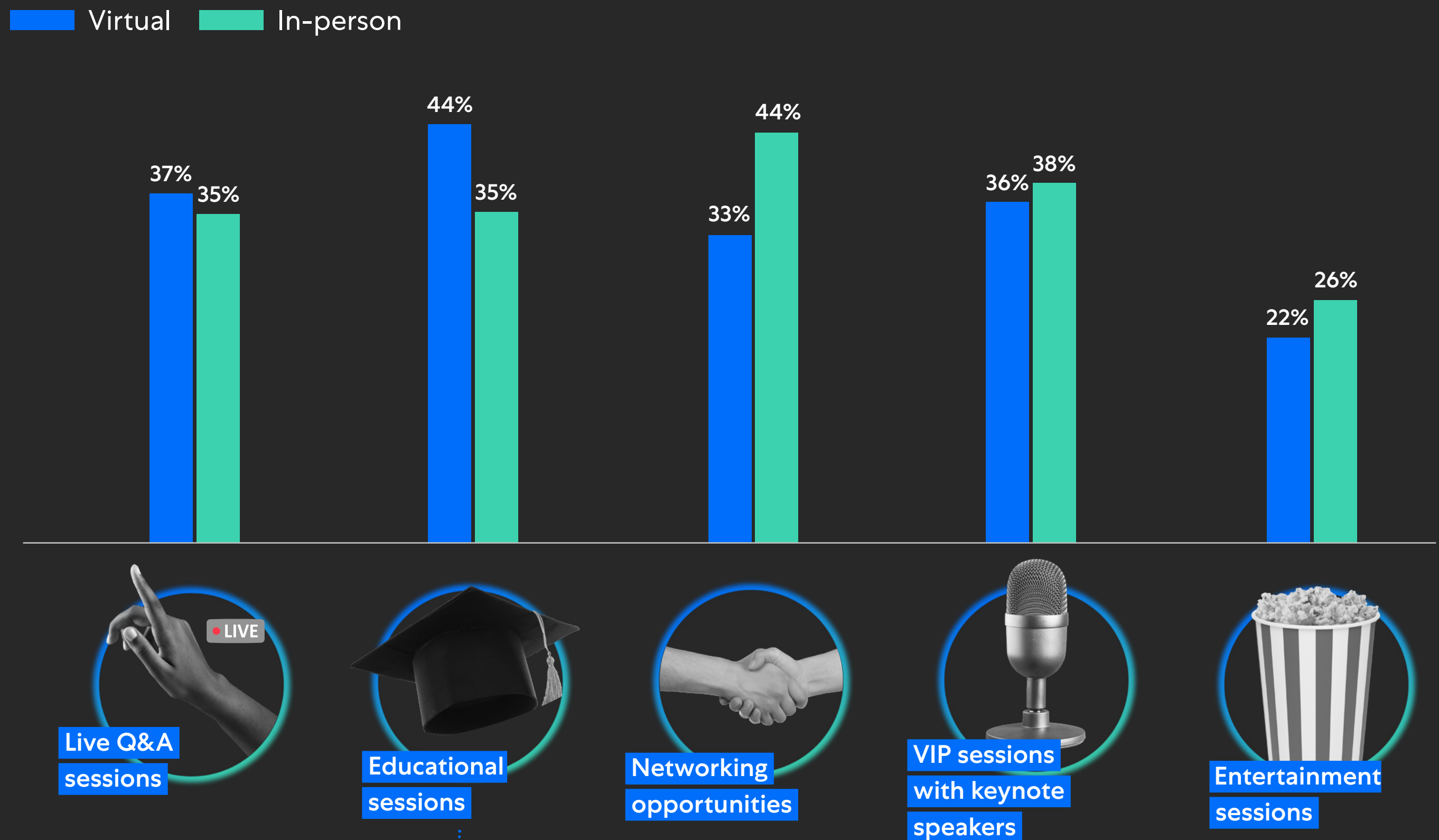


Figure 18

Virtual value of “educational sessions” by country



The impact bad quality

Attendees love the flexibility of engaging with an event remotely, but they have no tolerance for bad quality production. 88% of attendees expected no technical issues during an event and said it's important to have a seamless and high-quality technical experience during virtual events.

What would happen if attendees experienced a low-quality technical experience? 71% of attendees said they will drop out of the event when running into any technical glitches (25% after one or two problems, and 46% after 3 or more problems). Seeing as attendees expect a seamless technical experience, choosing an events platform that can run without running into trouble is a crucial factor.

Figure 19

Importance of seamless and high-quality technical experience in virtual events

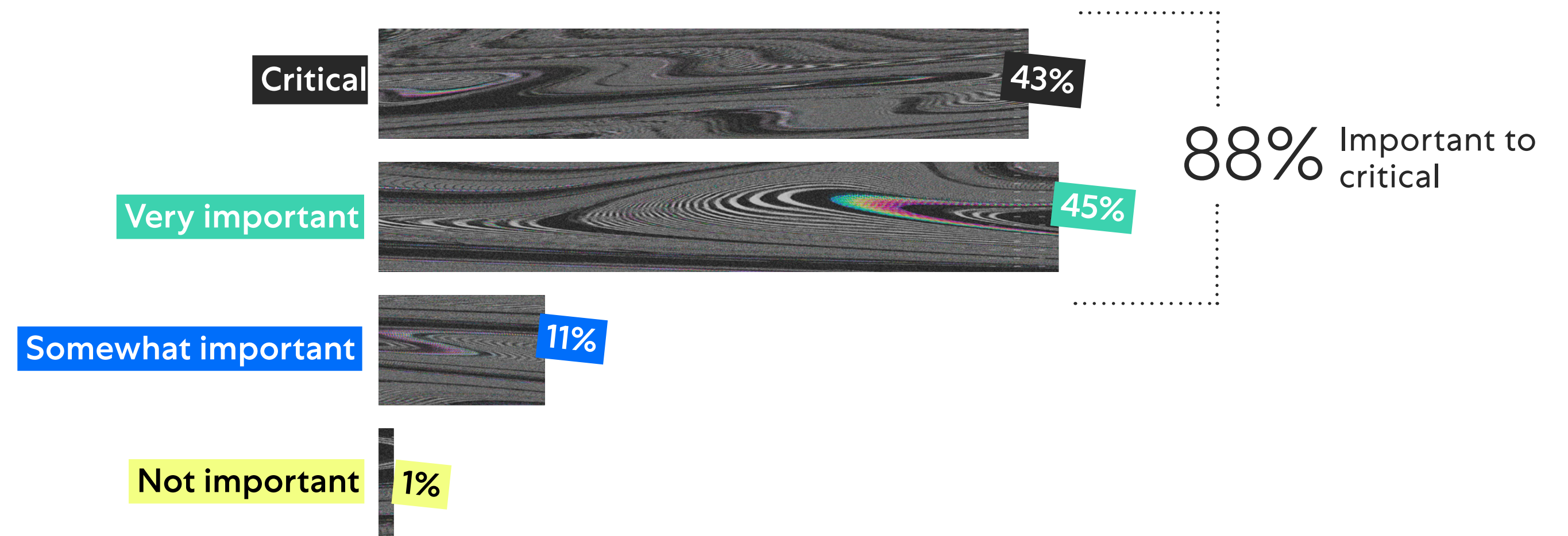
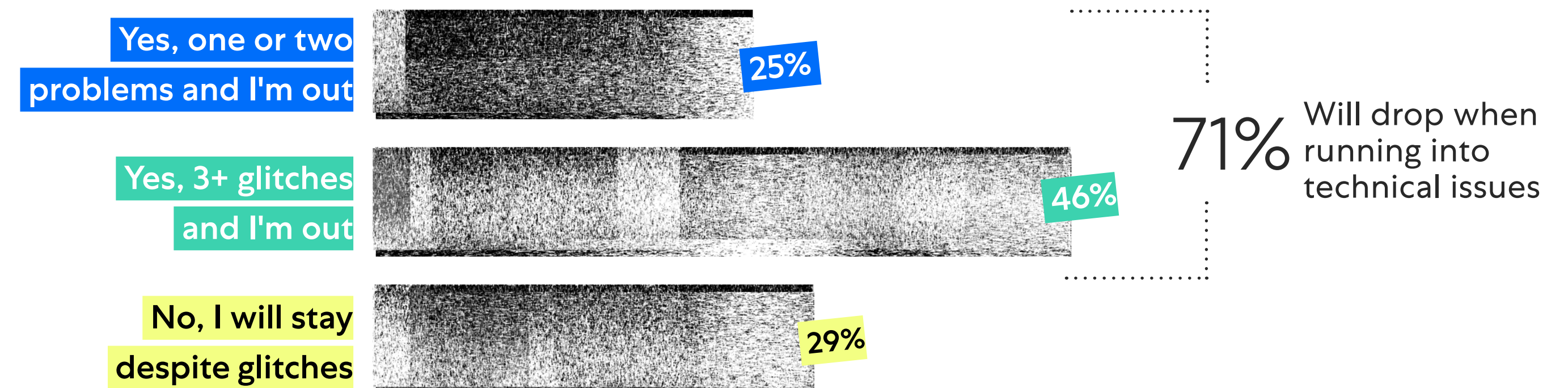


Figure 20

Impact of technical glitches on virtual events drop-outs



Event types, activities, and what marketers choose

We wanted to gauge marketers' perspective on the most effective type of events for different activities to better understand how to utilize different event types.

- In-person and hybrid events are most effective for internal training (39% and 40%)
- Virtual events are most effective for launching a new product (40%)

Overall, marketers agree that virtual sessions are the most effective format for almost all activity types. Virtual events are useful engagement tool throughout the sales funnel: engaging new prospects, launching new products, sales enablement, and partner training.

Sales enablement is perceived differently depending on geography. UK marketers (57%) and EU (39%) countries overwhelmingly prefer hybrid events. However, in the US virtual (40%) events are most effective for sales enablement.

Figure 21

Most effective type of event for each activity type

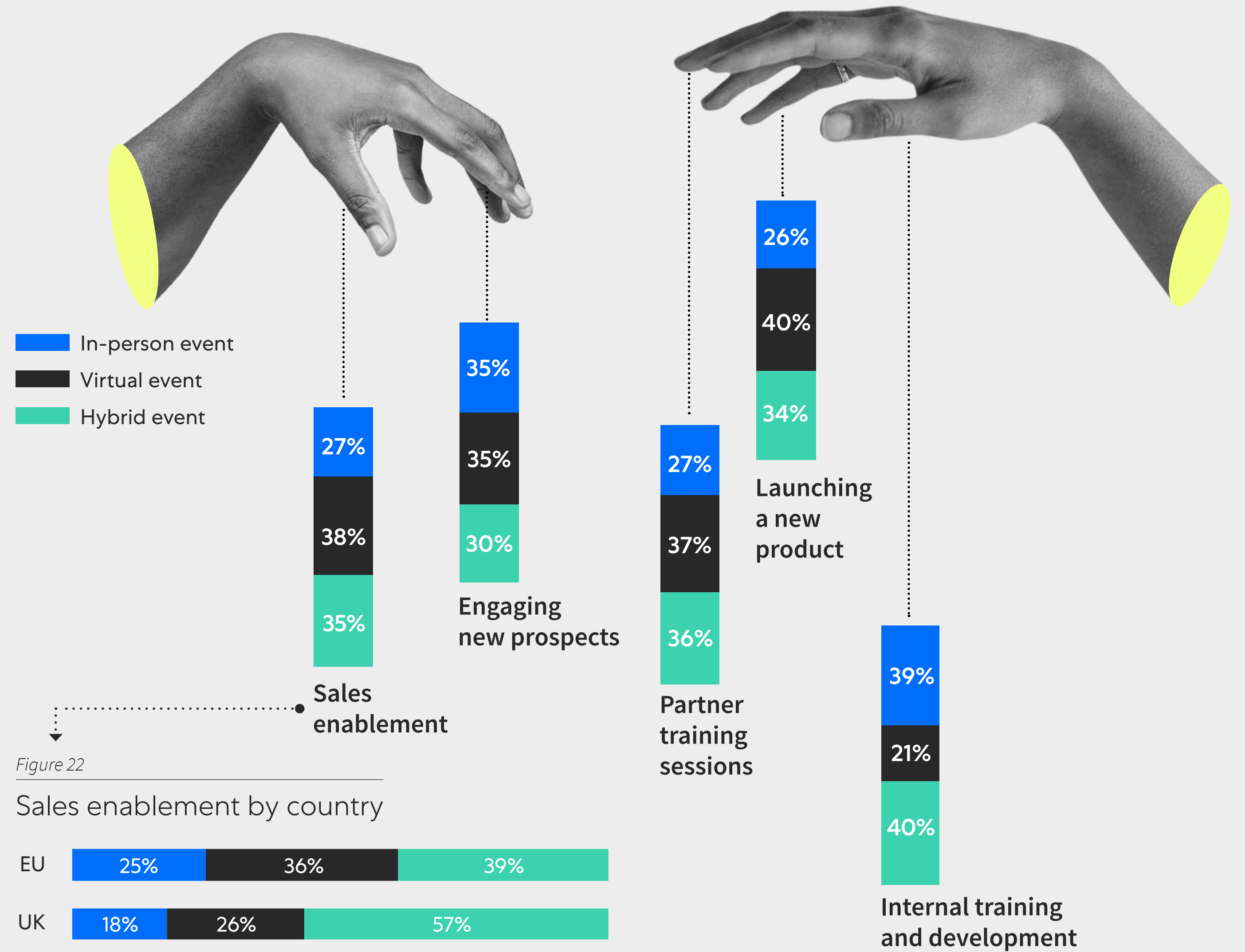
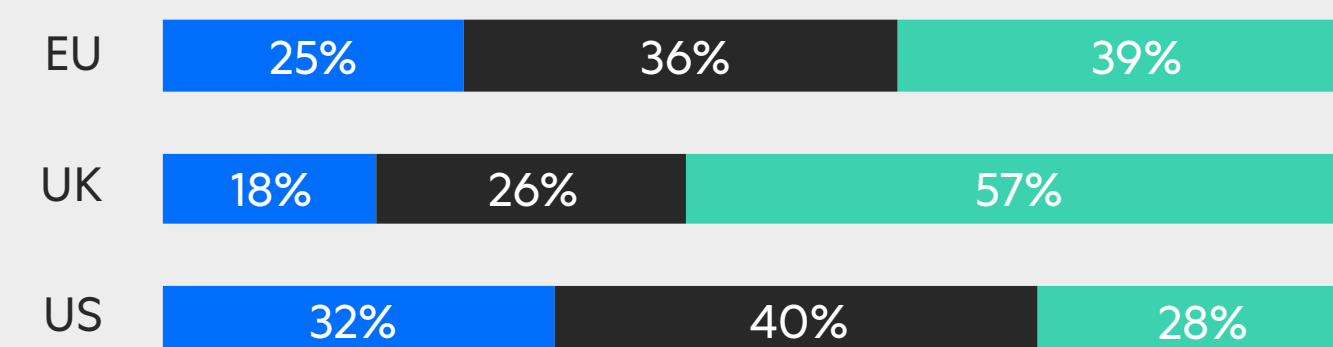


Figure 22

Sales enablement by country



Event types, activities, and what attendees choose

We were curious to learn if marketers and attendees hold similar views when considering the effectiveness of activity type. According to attendees, the most effective type of events by format are:

- In-person events are best for learning how to use a new product (37%)
- Hybrid events are best for learning about a new company (55%)

Surprisingly from the attendees' perspective, virtual-only events are less effective. For all activities, they prefer in-person only events or the choice that they can get with hybrid events.

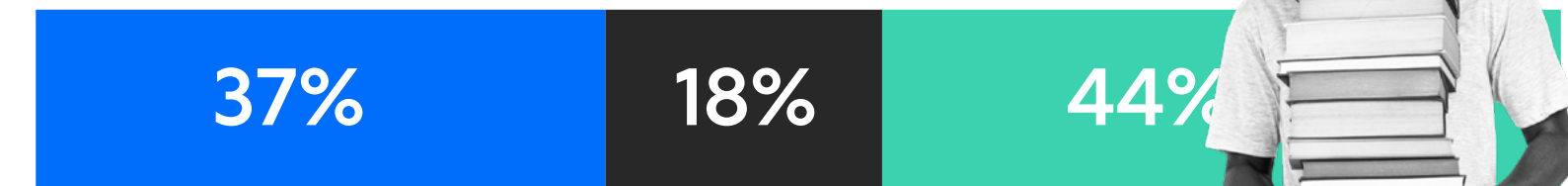
What can marketers learn from this discrepancy? For one, the marketing valuable actions that attendees perform during virtual events (signing up, filling out forms, etc.) are insignificant to attendees, but are valuable for marketers. Second, when thinking of their events plan, marketers should consider how their own preferences may be creating a bias and are not fully benefiting the attendees.

Figure 23

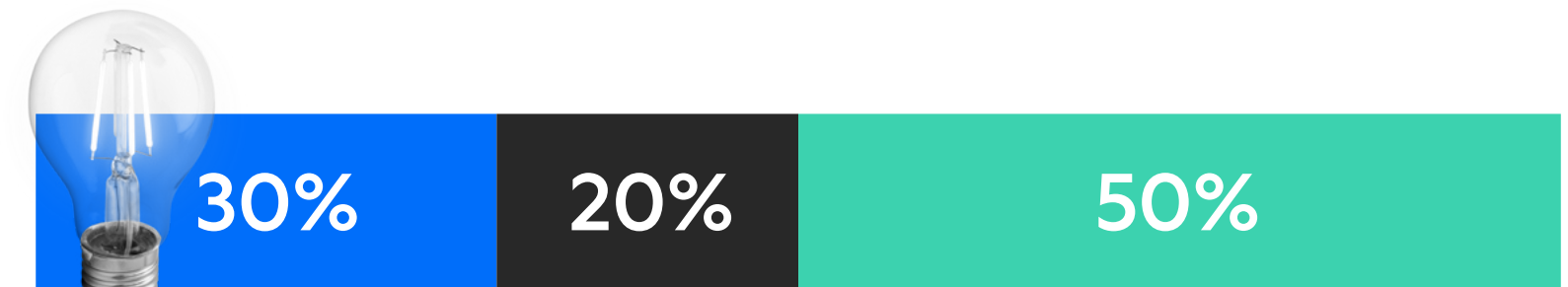
Most effective type of event for each activity type

■ In-person only event
 ■ Virtual event
 ■ Hybrid event

Learning how to use a company's new product



Internal training & development



Learning about a new product launch



Learning about a new company



Demographics



Figure 24

Country

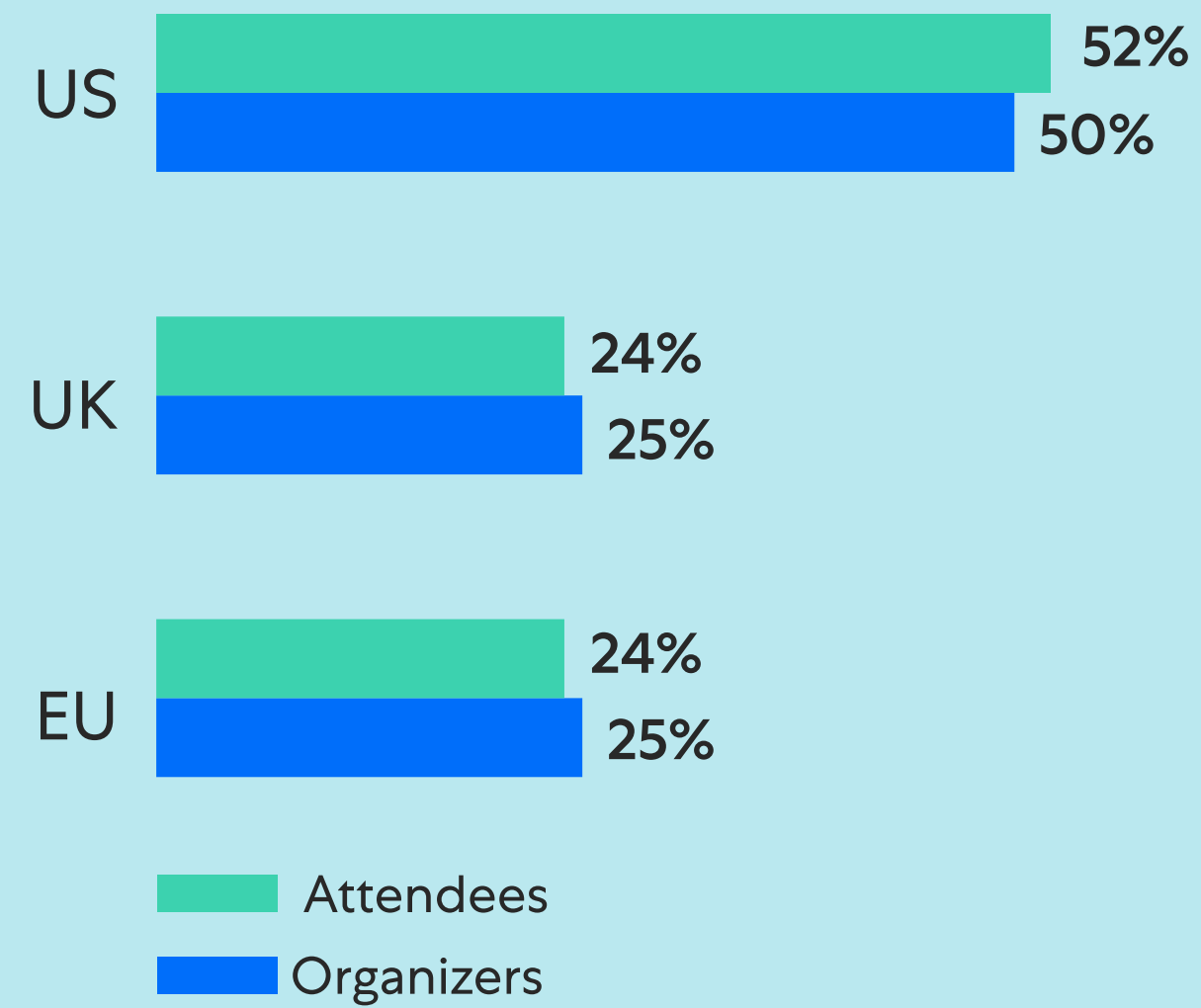


Figure 25

Industry

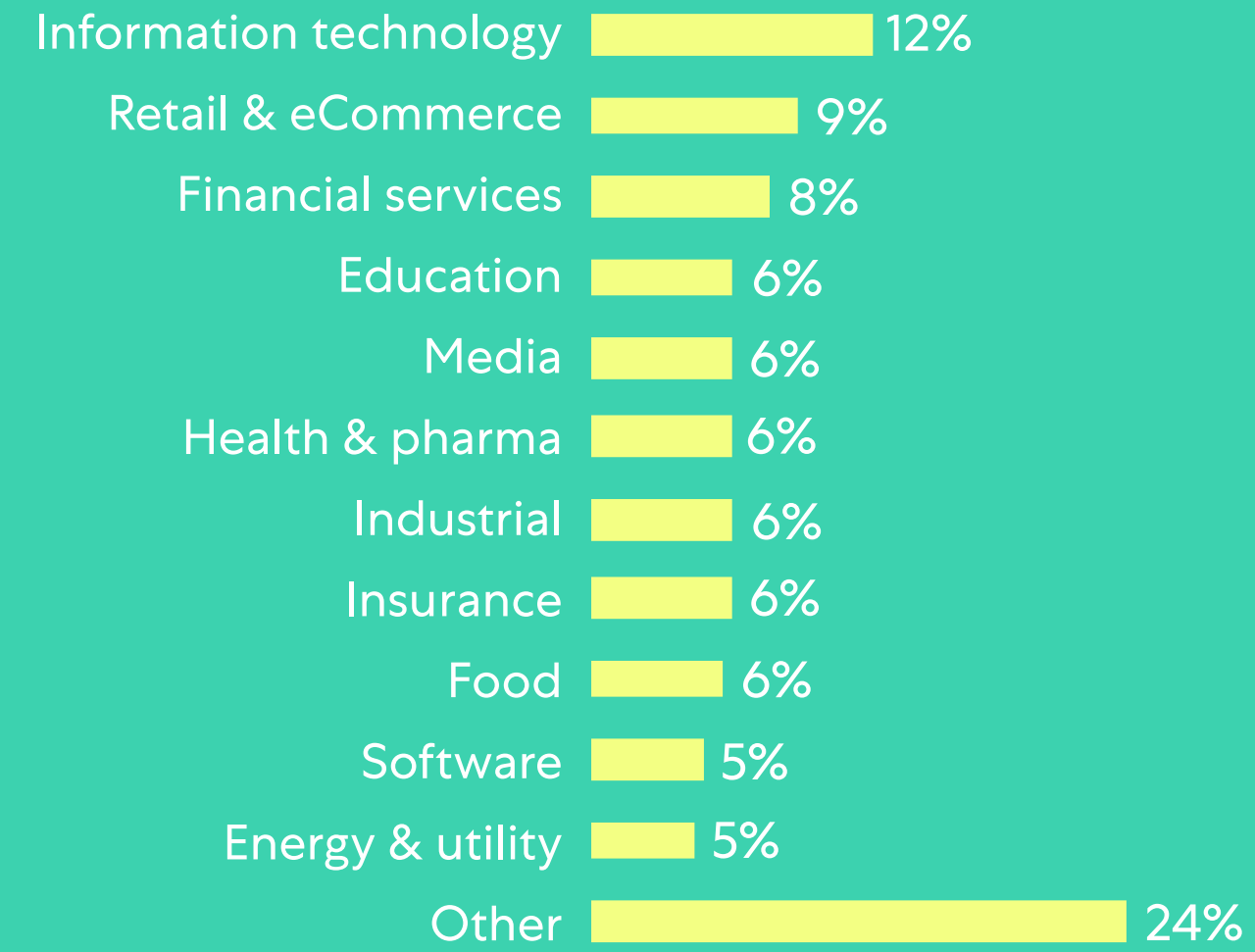


Figure 26

Job role

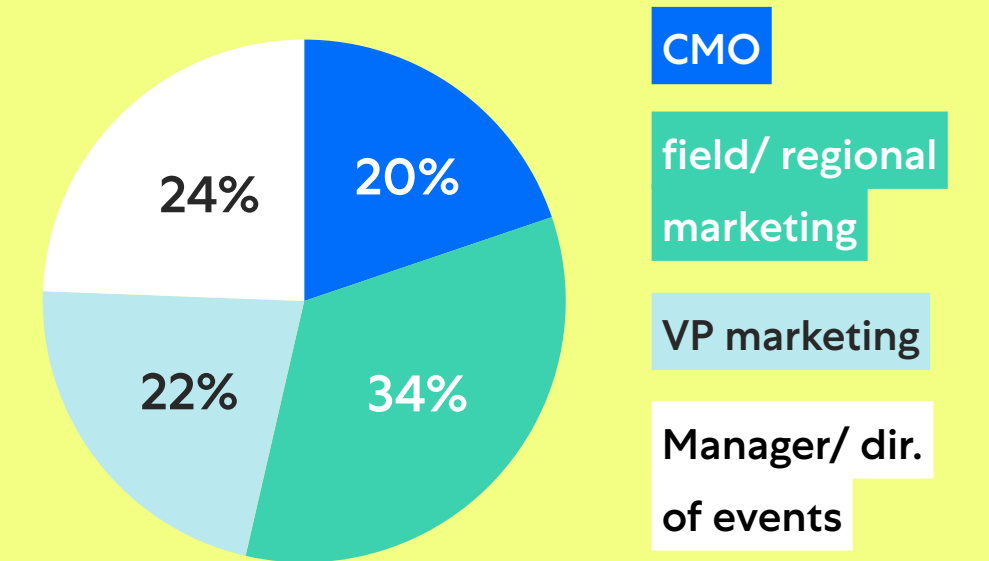


Figure 27

Job seniority

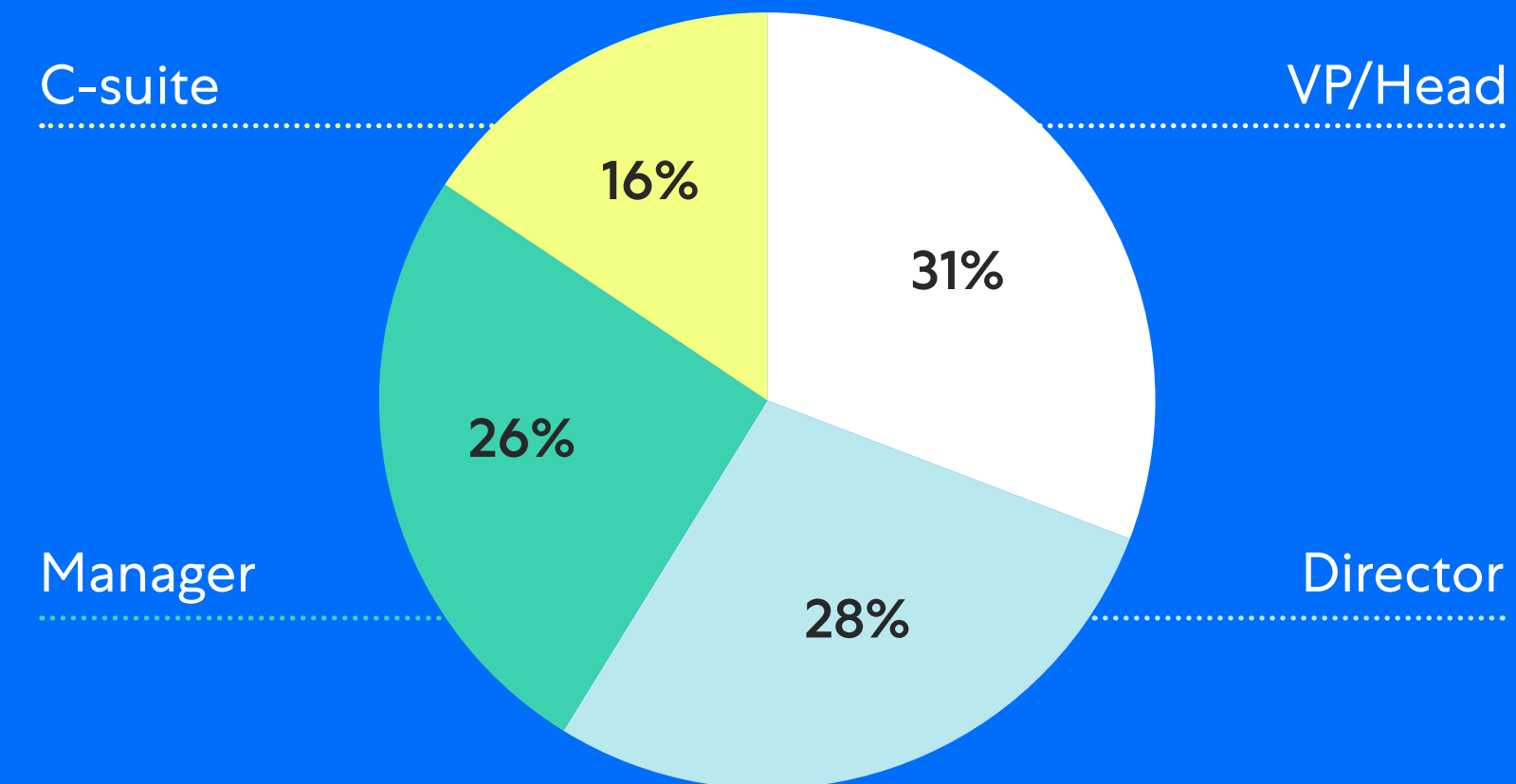
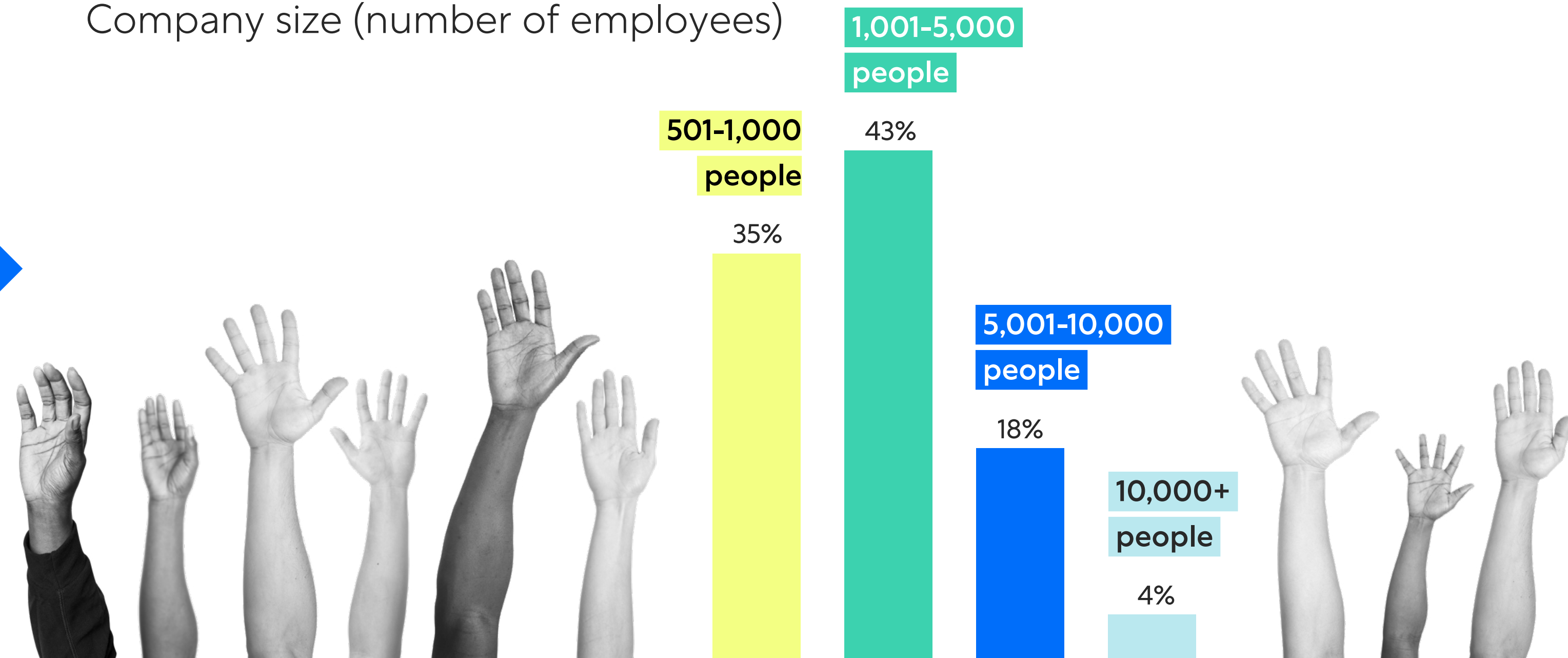


Figure 28

Company size (number of employees)



About Kaltura



Let's keep it simple. Running a great virtual event:

1. Excites and engages audiences
2. Runs smoothly and achieves all marketing goals

An events platform that's clunky or that doesn't integrate well into current software, risks disrupting audience experiences, runs into technical glitches, misses marketing goals, and is just a big headache.

Kaltura Events is here to help.

Kaltura Events' platform offers video technology to power any event, of any size, while delighting audiences and boosting engagement.

It's an easy-to-use, full-stacked event management tool that promises the peace of mind of knowing every event runs smoothly, while attendees enjoy an extraordinary virtual experience.

Check us out to experience the Kaltura difference for yourself:

