

# MEETINGS INDUSTRY PULSE SURVEY

**NEW  
DATA**

DECEMBER 2023



# Executive Summary:

## Planners Report Hotel/Venue Relations Are Much Improved

*Planner optimism is beginning to moderate, budgets are increasing (but not as much as previously hoped), yet the near-term pipeline for new business stays strong.*

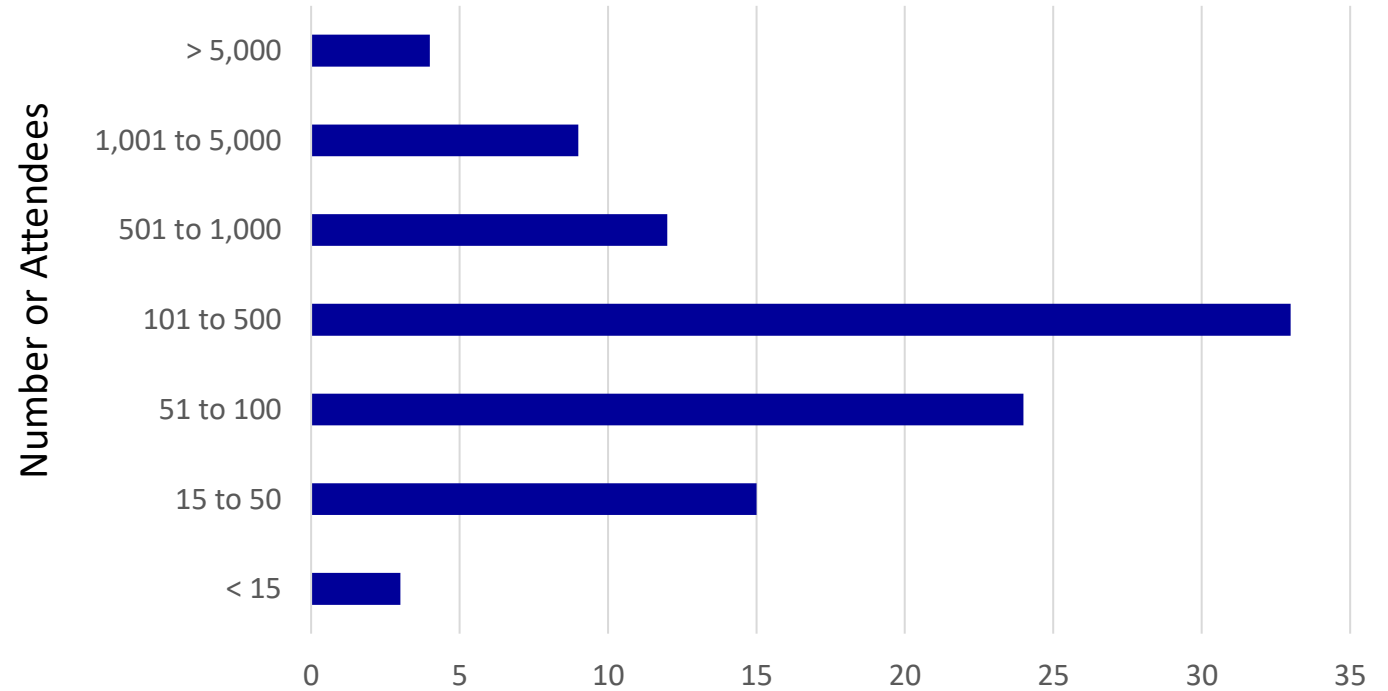
- For the first time post-Covid, **“more optimistic” doesn’t describe most planners**. Nevertheless, 70% of planners report they’re booking and/or sourcing new events right now.
- The **“rising tide continues to raise all boats,”** with meetings and events being planned across the U.S. When taken together, **Florida and the Southeast are benefitting most**.
- Budgets are increasing, but for some by less than expected when we asked the same question in August. Most are looking at **budget increases between 5-9%**.
- When it comes to artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT, **most planners don’t think they’ll impact their career or profession**, positively or negatively. Nearly 40% report they’ve used them.
- Costs aside, **planner/hotel dynamics have improved significantly** since last year. Nevertheless, nearly half of all planners report the loss of hotel/venue relationships is impacting their planning.
- Relatively, it’s all about the business. **DEI, sustainability and CSRs are not top priorities** for most planners.

## 365 Valid Planner Responses as of December 6, 2023



Planner Type

### Average Size of Meetings in 2023

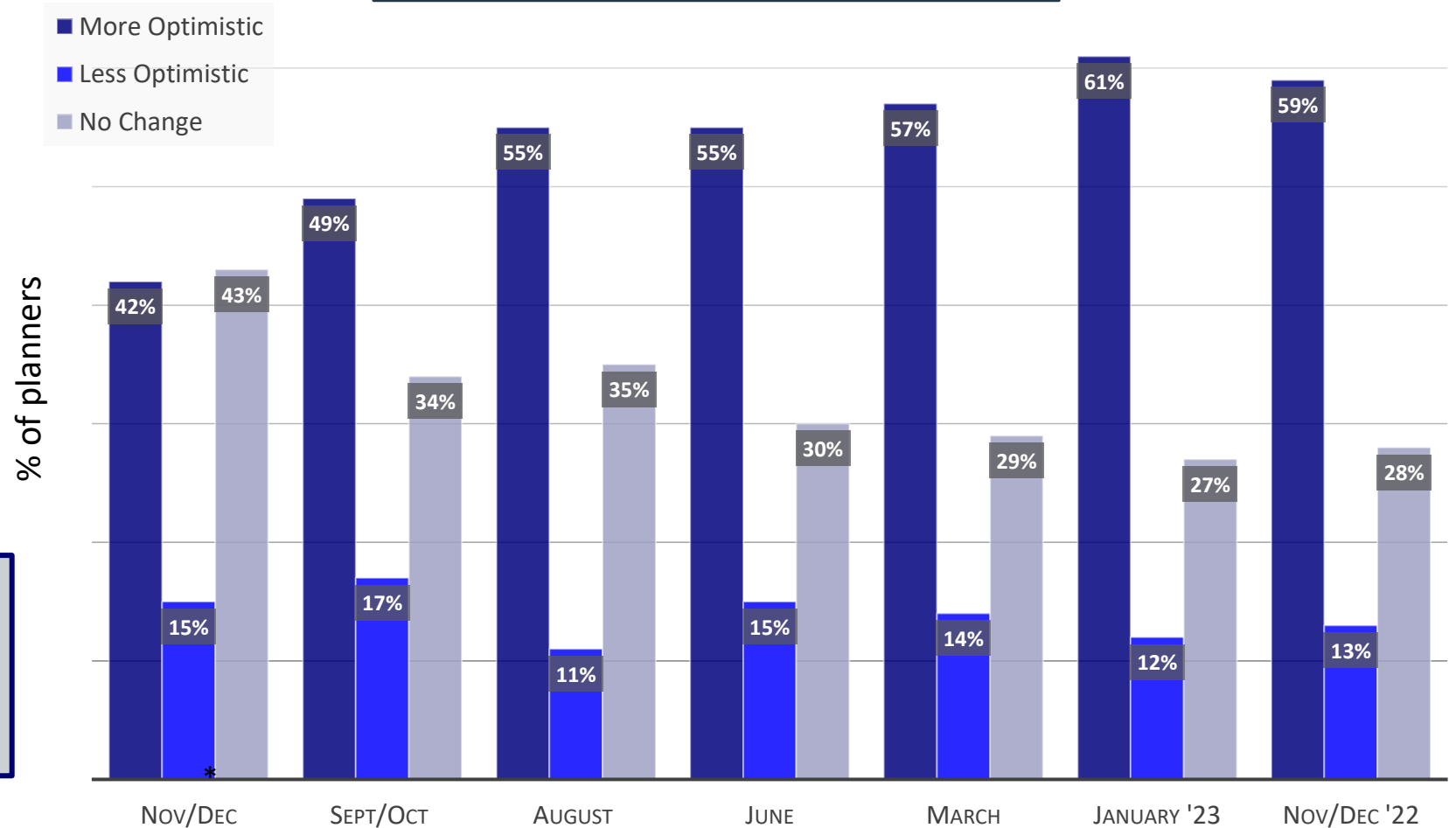


% of Total Respondents

How has your outlook for your meetings and events changed over the past six weeks?

# Planner Optimism Continues to Moderate

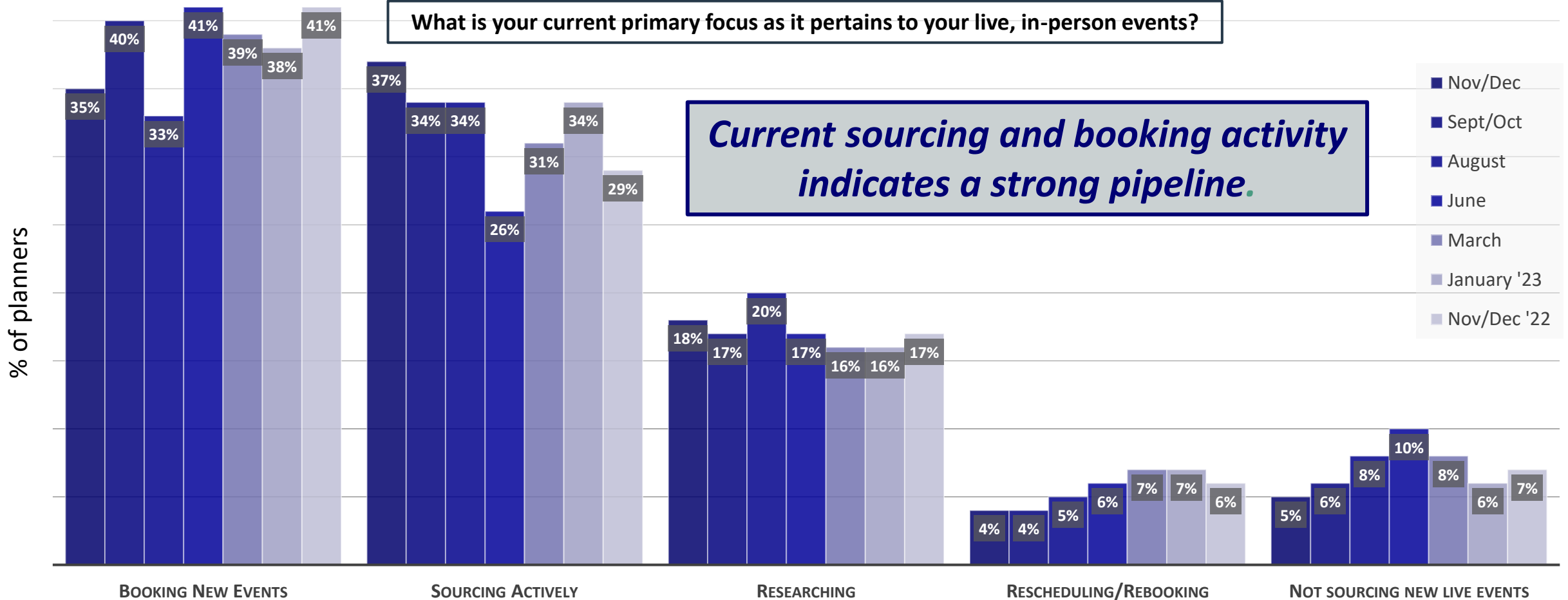
*For the first time post-Covid, "more optimistic" doesn't describe most planners.*



# Sourcing and Booking Activity Remains Robust

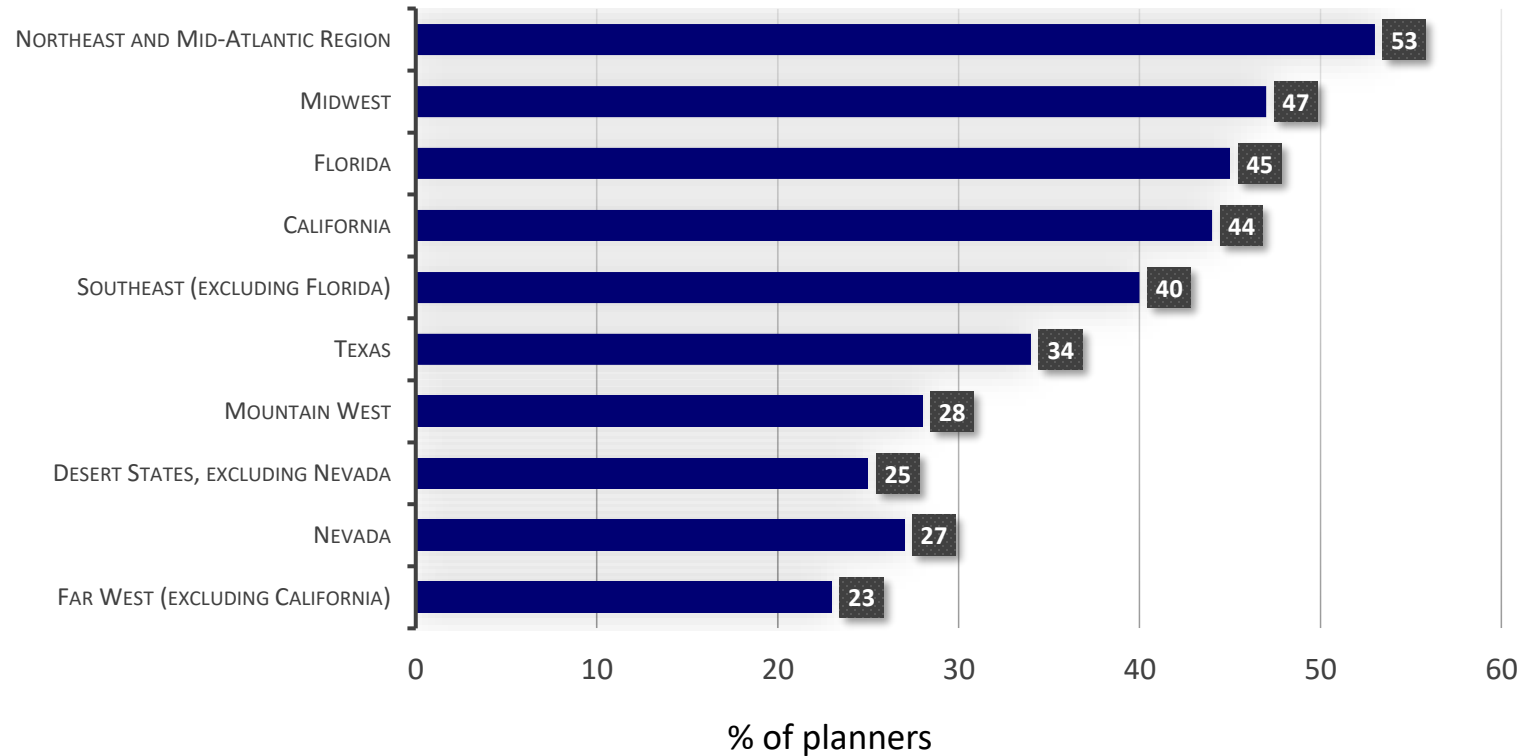
What is your current primary focus as it pertains to your live, in-person events?

*Current sourcing and booking activity indicates a strong pipeline.*



## New U.S. Business is All Over the Map

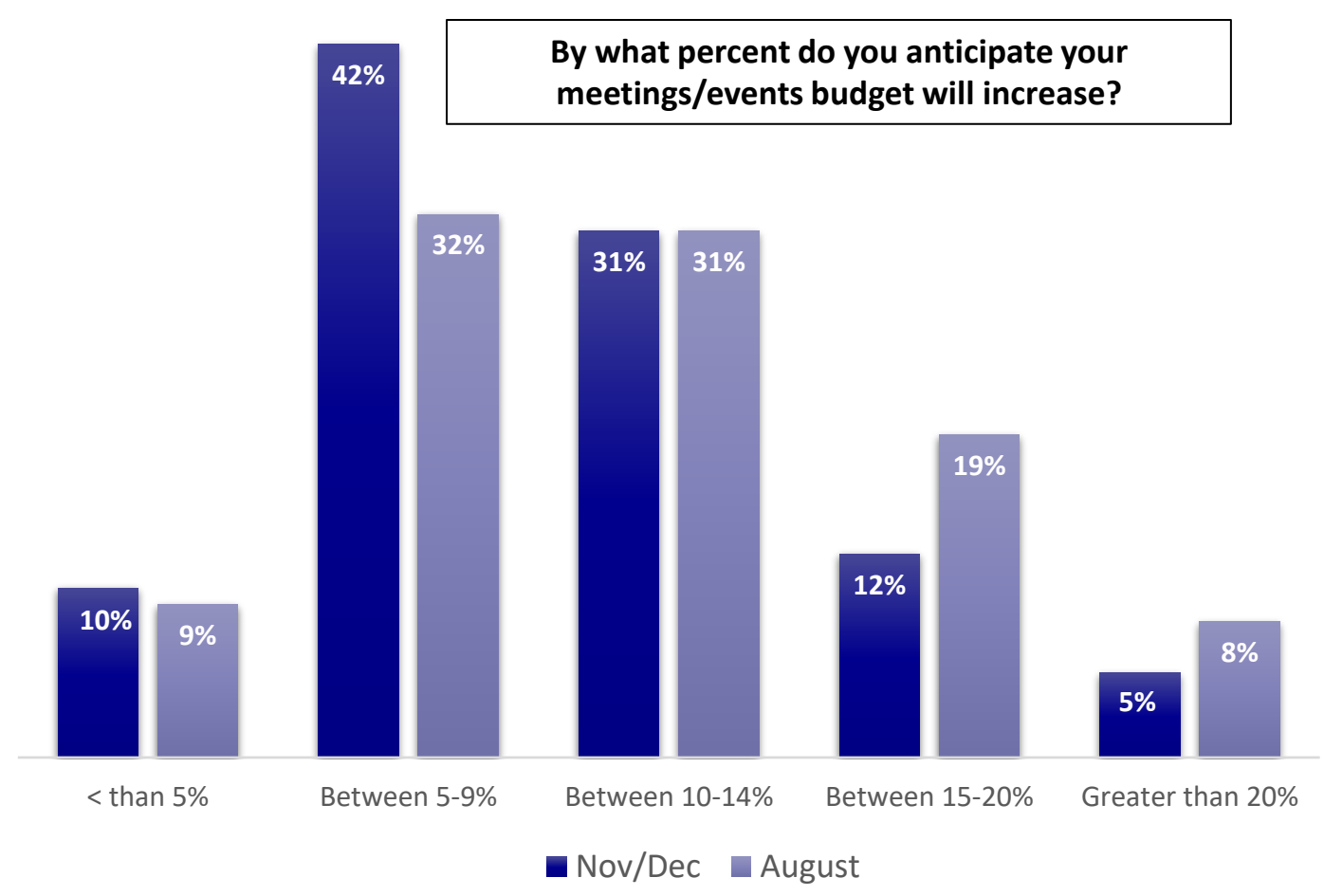
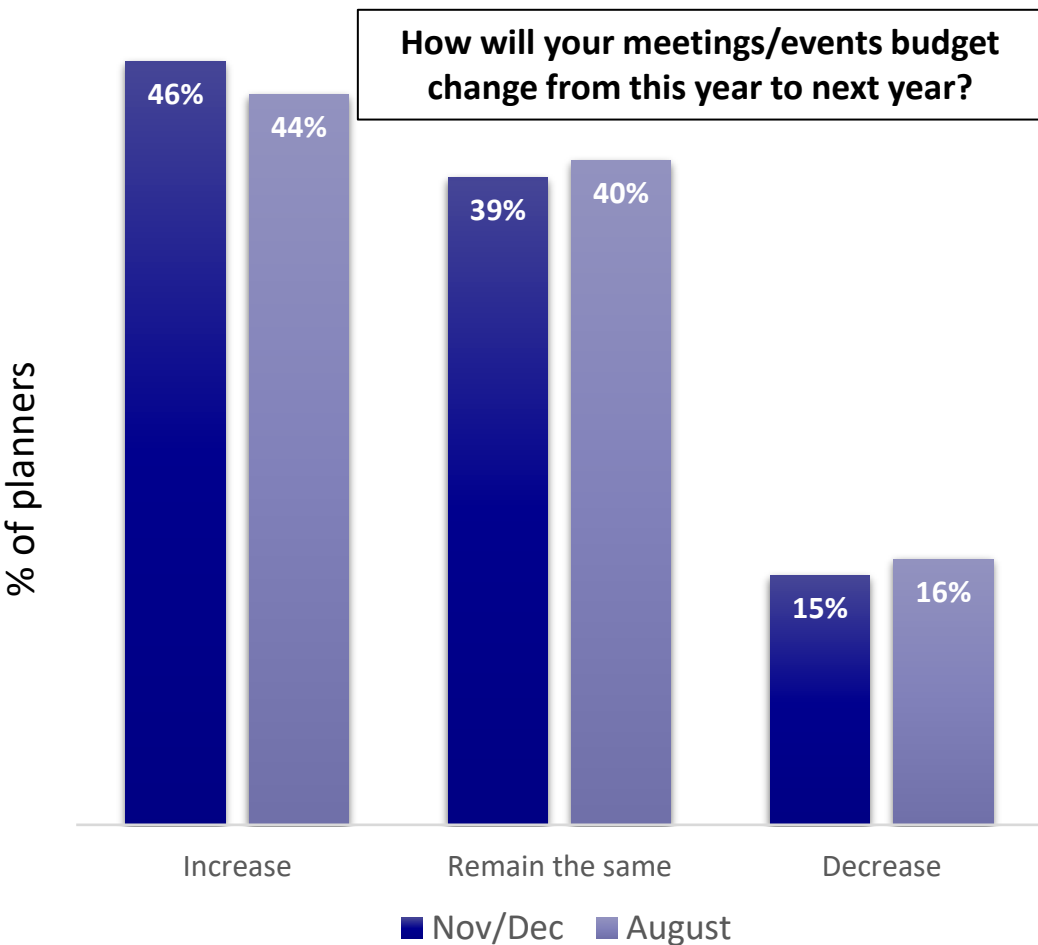
*When taken together,  
Florida and the Southeast  
are the top draws.*



**In which regions of the United States are you currently planning new events? (Please select all that apply.)**



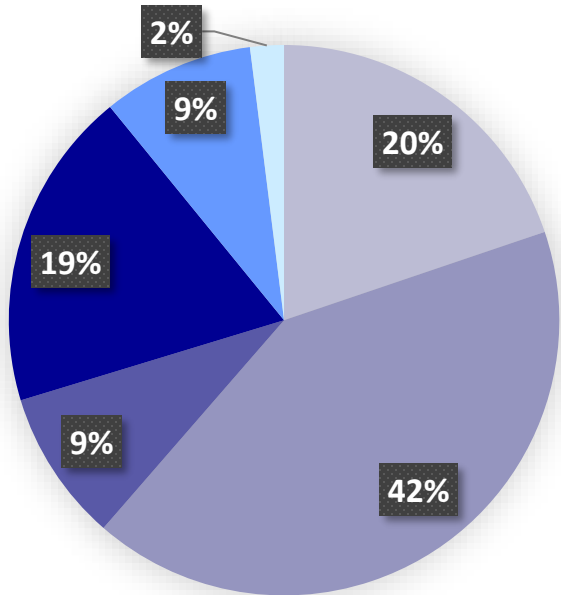
## More Budgets Are Increasing, But for Some Less Than Expected



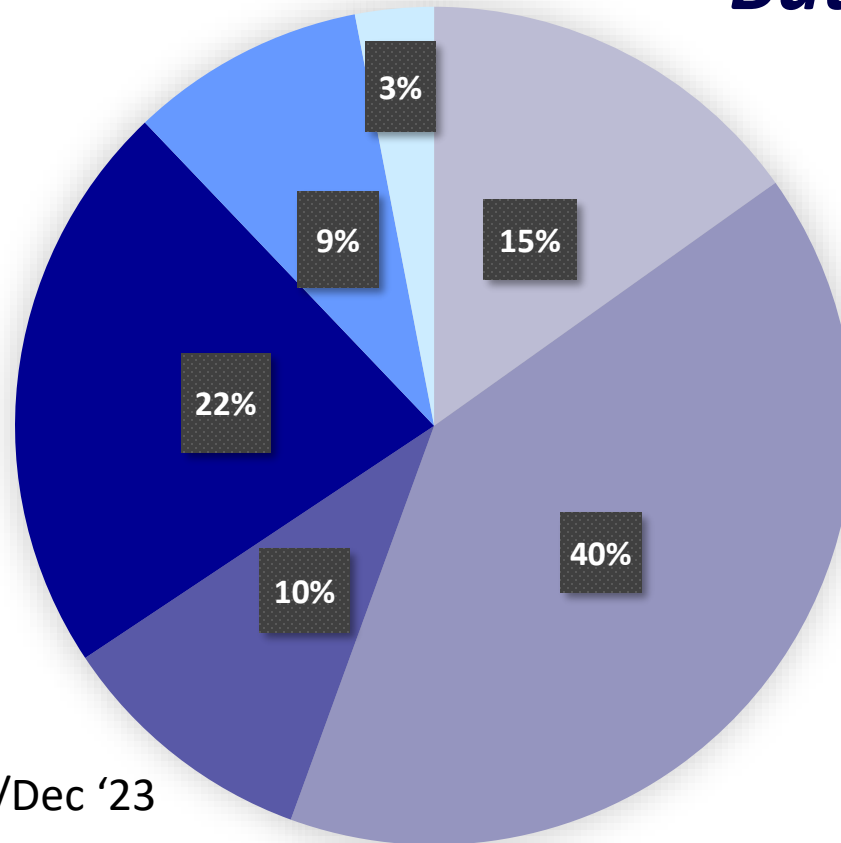
## Budgets Will Be Slightly More Conservative in 2024

*But not by much . . .*

Which of the following best describes the current status of your 2024 meeting budgets?



Nov/Dec '22

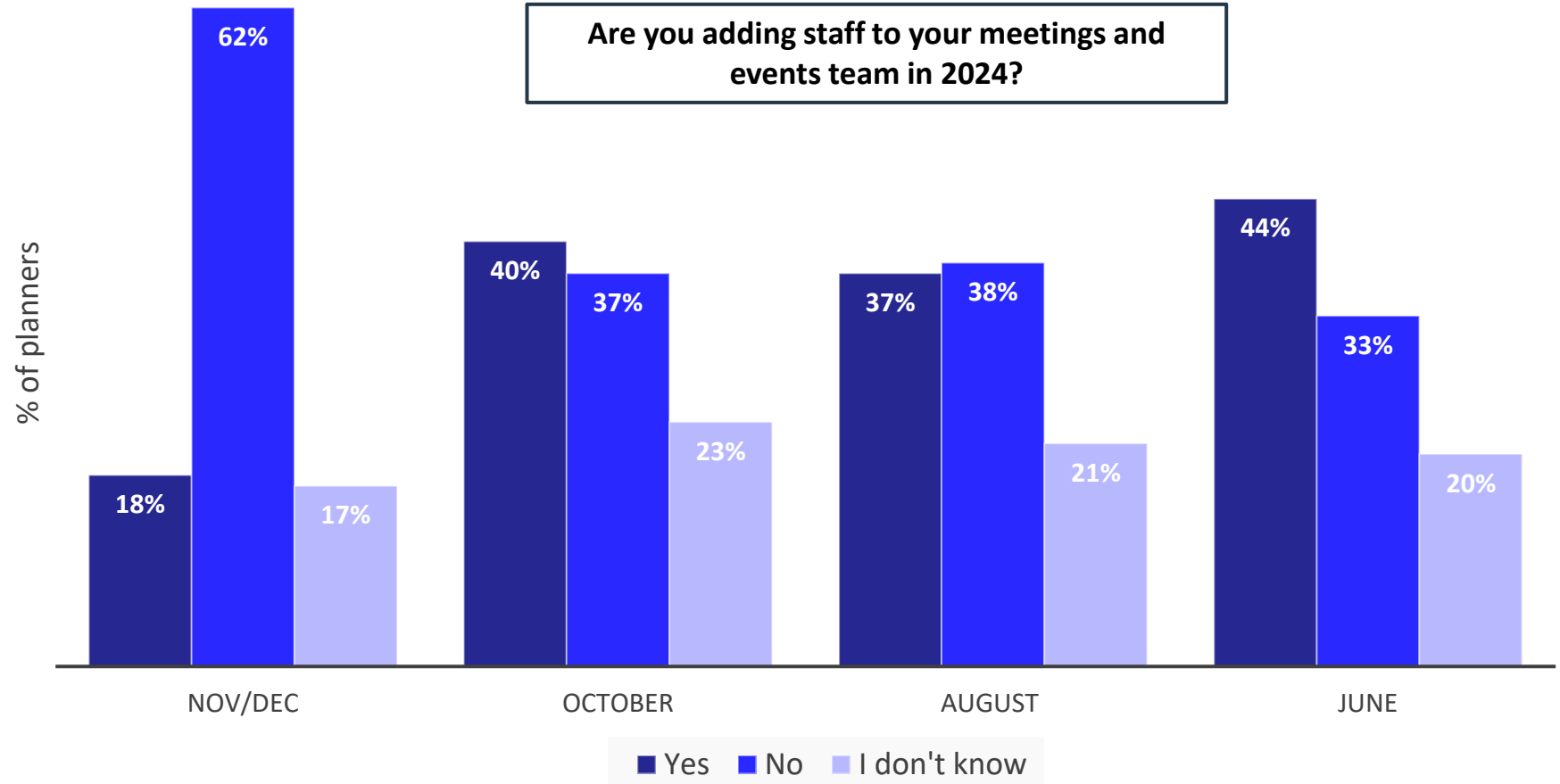


Nov/Dec '23

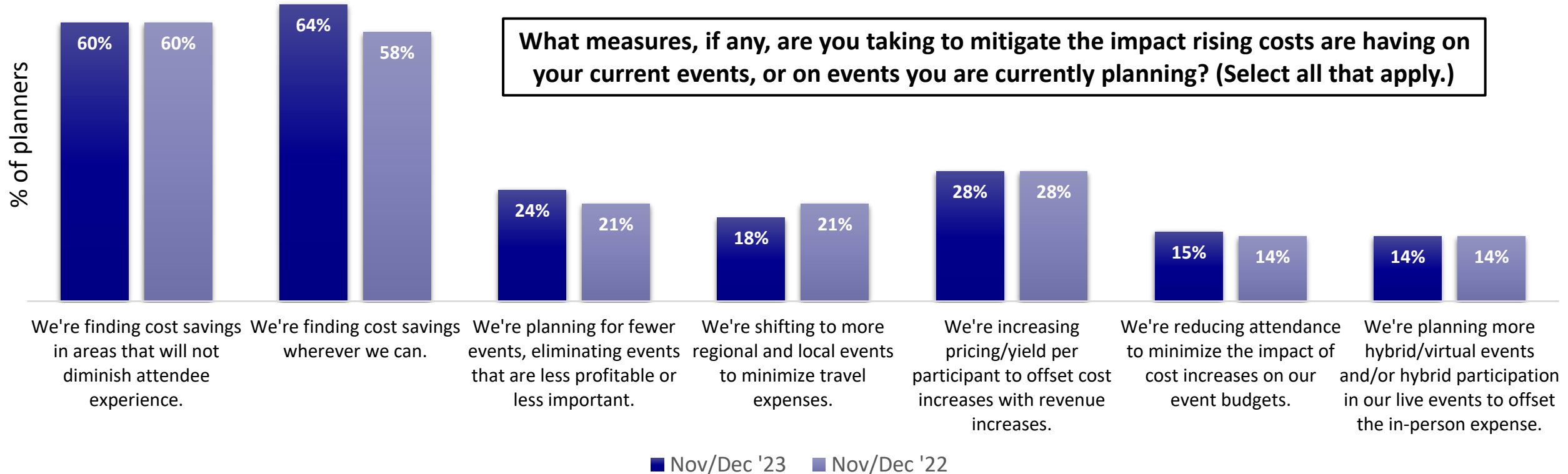
- WE ARE ESTIMATING AND INCREASING OUR COST BUDGETS BY MORE THAN WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE MARKET AS CURRENT ACTUAL COSTS.
- WE ARE INCREASING OUR COST BUDGETS TO FACTOR IN AND MATCH WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE MARKET AS CURRENT ACTUAL COSTS.
- WE ARE ESTIMATING, INCREASING AND CAPPING OUR COST BUDGETS TO A PERCENTAGE LESS THAN WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE MARKET AS ACTUAL COSTS.
- WE ARE CAPPING OUR COSTS BUDGETS TO REMAIN FLAT COMPARED WITH WHAT WE SPENT IN 2022, ON AVERAGE.
- OUR BUDGETS WILL BE LESS IN 2024 COMPARED WITH WHAT WE SPENT IN 2023, ON AVERAGE
- OTHER

# Fewer Event Organizations Are Adding Staff

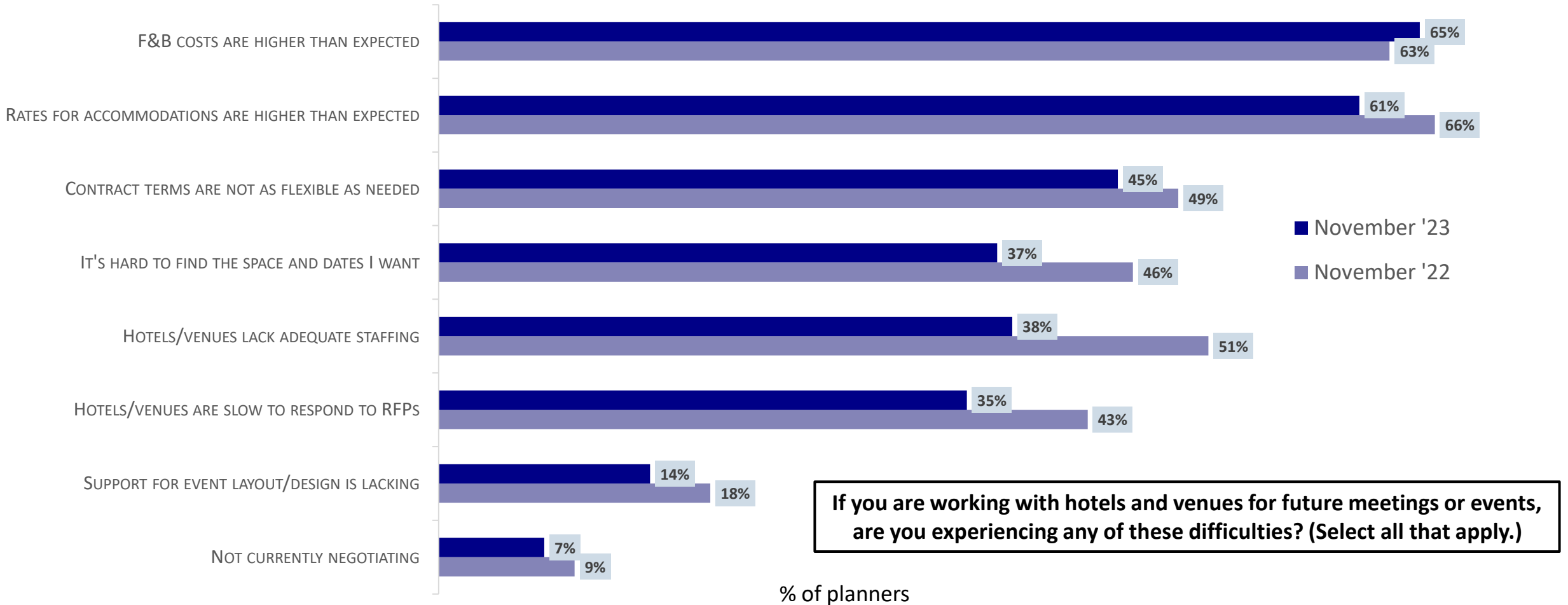
*As recently as October, planners were hopeful their organizations would be adding staff in 2024. Only 18% of respondents now say that's going to happen.*



# When it Comes to Offsetting Rising Costs, Few Planners Are Shifting to New Strategies



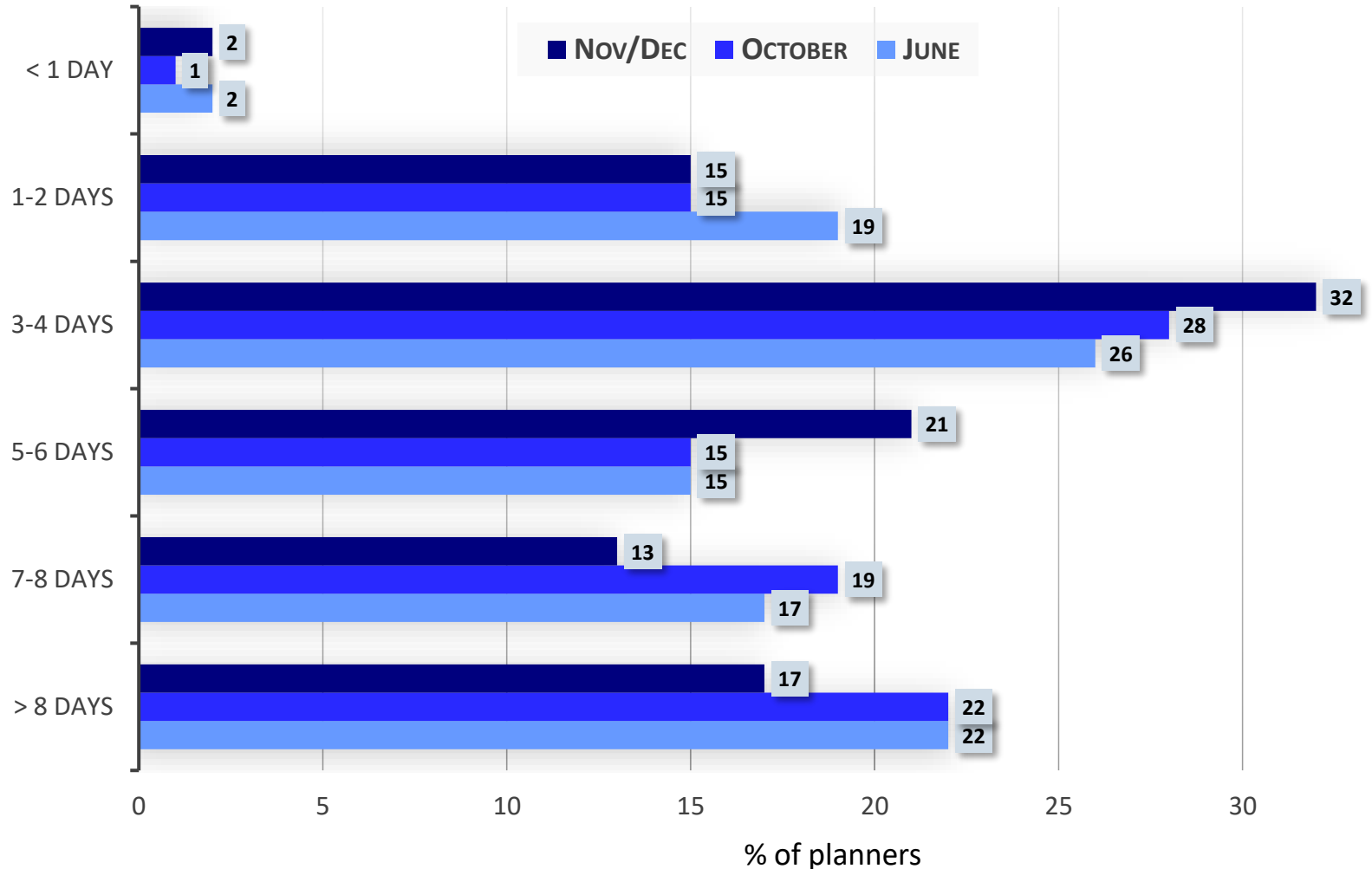
### Planner/Hotel Dynamics Improve Considerably, Costs Aside



## RFP Response Rates Improve

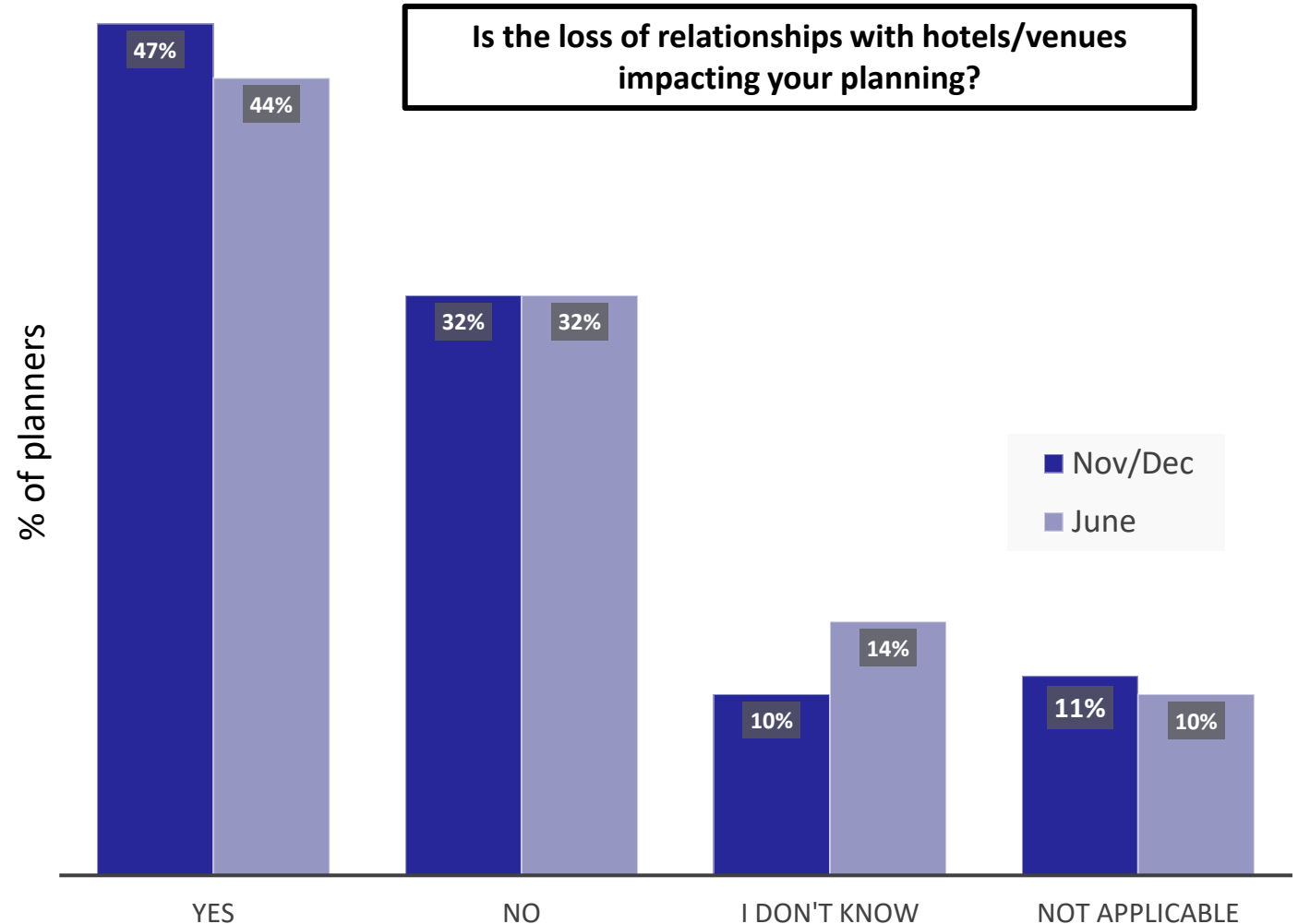
*Most planners want RFP responses within 3 to 4 days or less. More hotels are meeting that need.*

Currently, how quickly are hotels responding to your RFPs?



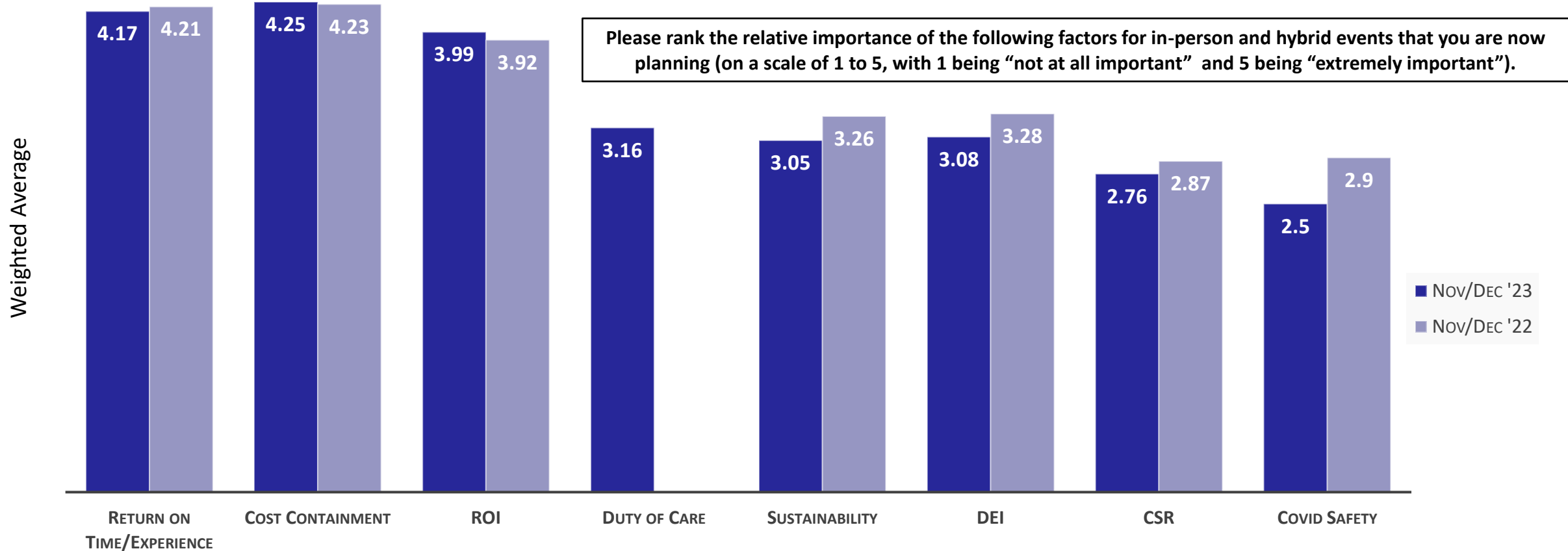
## Many Planners Are Still Lamenting Lost Relationships with Their Hotel and Venue Partners

*Nearly half of all respondents report that the loss of relationships is impacting their planning.*



# Planner Priorities Are All About the Business

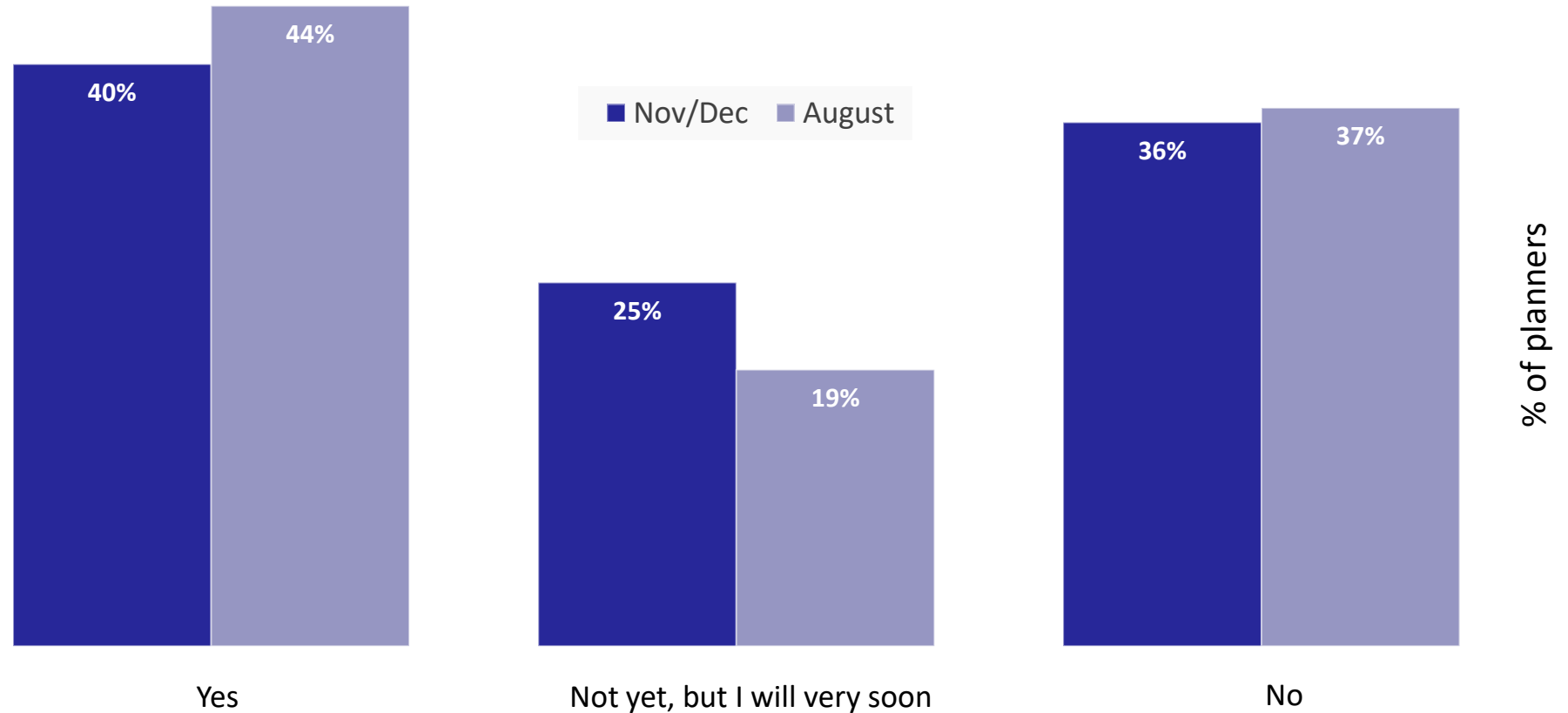
*Sustainability, DEI, CSR decline in importance.*





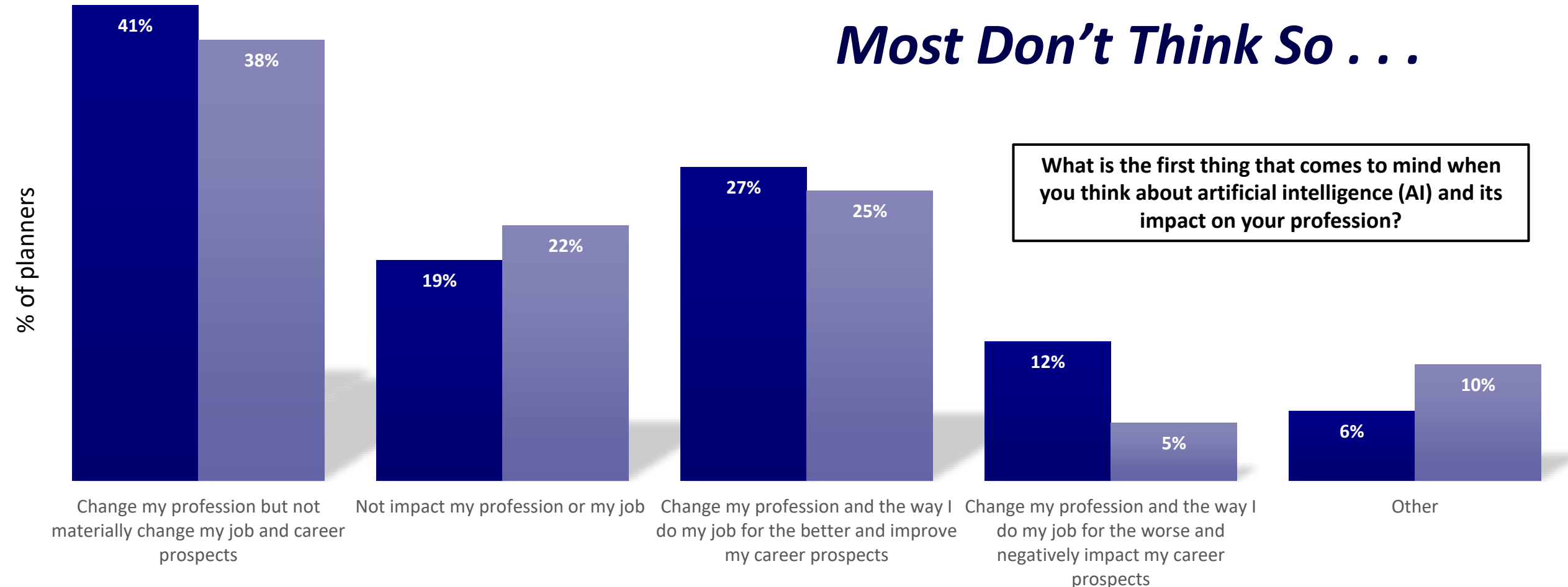
# For All the Talk, AI Isn't Taking Off . . . Yet

Have you or your organization experimented with any of the new generative AI platforms (such as ChatGPT, Bing, Bard, Azure, Claude, Project Spark, etc.)?



# Will AI Usher in Big Changes for Planners?

*Most Don't Think So . . .*



## Selected Verbatim Comments:

- “Compression is still a major problem for me as I’m sourcing meetings within the next 10 months.”
- “Not all hotels are difficult to work with. But some show zero interest in creating a long-term relationship or in helping us find a middle ground. I attribute this to either hotel sales being too overworked/overloaded to take the time to address each client's needs, or them just being too new to the industry and not knowing how important relationships are to our industry.”
- “There are so many new and innovative things in the marketplace, but that just means that expectations and needs are also changing.”
- “I appreciate the question about relationships. Our industry is all about relationships. This year I spent a lot of time attending industry tradeshows, such as Northstar events, specifically to reconnect with old contacts, find out where they are now, and make new contacts at properties I have used in the past. These events are critical! Thank you for hosting such wonderful events.”
- “I am incredibly excited and optimistic about the way AI tools will help streamline my work experience. While event planning is templated in many ways, each event/meeting is uniquely distinct with special needs. Anything to streamline the basic tasks to free up time and energy for the unique elements for each event is welcome!”
- “We are still providing a hybrid component to nearly all of our meetings/conferences, which adds another level of complexity and cost that we just do not have sufficient resources to address. We’re still at pandemic levels of staffing. It’s a struggle to get everything done in a quality manner with the resources available to us.”