



THE STATE OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE EVENT SECTOR: A RESPONSIBLE PERSPECTIVE

Exploring the current state of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors in the event sector.

November 2025



event:decision

Presented live at the Sustainable Event Show, London — Friday, 7 November 2025

Summary

The event sector stands at a pivotal moment in its sustainability journey. With Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance under increasing scrutiny, the sector must balance creativity, logistics, and financial reality with the demand for responsible practice.

The State of Sustainability in the Event Sector: A Responsible Perspective — presents the latest insights from event:decision's ongoing research and data analysis, including Impact: Responsible Event Reviews, Track Reports, and supporting datasets and reporting from AMEX Global Business Travel 2026 Global Meetings & Events Forecast, BCD M&E Global Trends Survey, Oxford Economics, and The Business of Events Annual Planner Sentiment reports 2024 & 2025.

The findings reveal a sector rich in intent but challenged in implementation. While enthusiasm remains high, measurable progress is uneven across regions and ESG pillars. The message is clear: the time for intent has passed; the next chapter must focus on execution, evidence, and leadership.

Introduction

The event industry is one of the world's most dynamic and diverse sectors, encompassing sporting, cultural, community, corporate, B2B, B2C, exhibition, congress and brand experiences. Tens of thousands of events take place every day – each unique in purpose, audience, and delivery.

This diversity creates both opportunity and complexity in the pursuit of sustainability. While planners, agencies, and suppliers demonstrate strong intent to deliver responsible events, financial pragmatism and logistical pressures based on dynamic supply chains and short lead times often temper these ambitions.

event:decision's "State of Sustainability in the Event Sector" research provides a cross-sectional analysis of how the industry is performing against ESG metrics – and what actions are required to embed sustainable thinking into every stage of event planning and delivery.



Methodology

This white paper draws from multiple, credible data sources:

- **event:decision Impact: Responsible Event Reviews** — over 5,500 event data points (Jan 2024 – Oct 2025) across US, EMEA, and APAC regions.
- **AMEX GBT M&E 2026 Forecast** — insights from 600+ meeting professionals across eight countries.
- **Oxford Economics Global Risk & Confidence Survey 2025**
- The event:decision and mice book **Power 30 Most Sustainable Agencies 2024–25**; — providing benchmark data on agency performance.
- **The Business of Events Annual Planner Sentiment Survey 2025**; providing data on planner sentiment regionally.

Figures and charts from the accompanying presentation (ED ESG Presentation, November 2025) illustrate these findings throughout.



Confidence & Sentiment

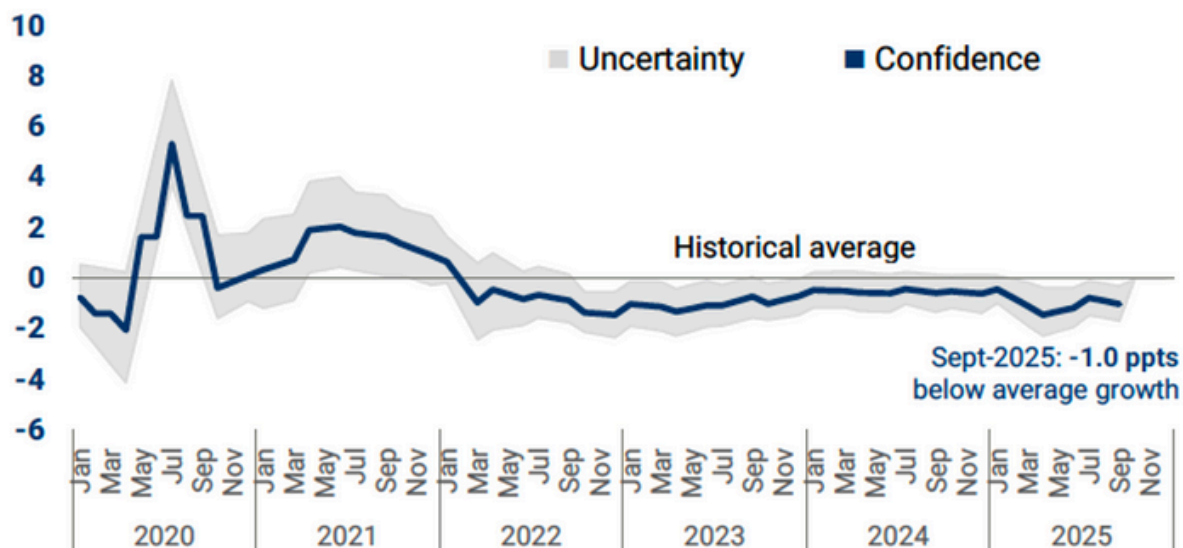


Confidence

Global business sentiment index



Expected growth relative to 10-year historical average (ppts)



(See Figure 1: Confidence & Sentiment Index – Oxford Economics 2025) Note: Index based on aggregated responses to Oxford Economics’ Global Survey.

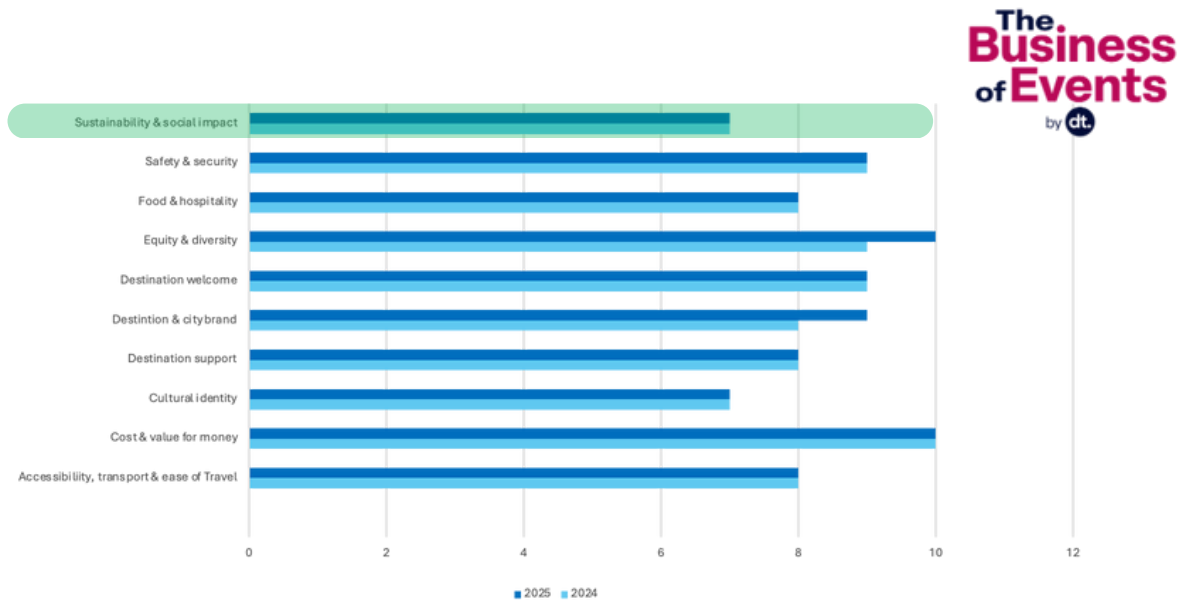
Across the UK, EU, and US, event planners share cautious optimism in sustainable practice. European professionals express stronger conviction in ESG progress, while UK sentiment reflects uncertainty amid financial pressures.

Despite these challenges, sustainability continues to feature as a top priority across 2025 sector media – above Experience & Connection, AI & Technology, Financial Constraints, and Inclusivity.

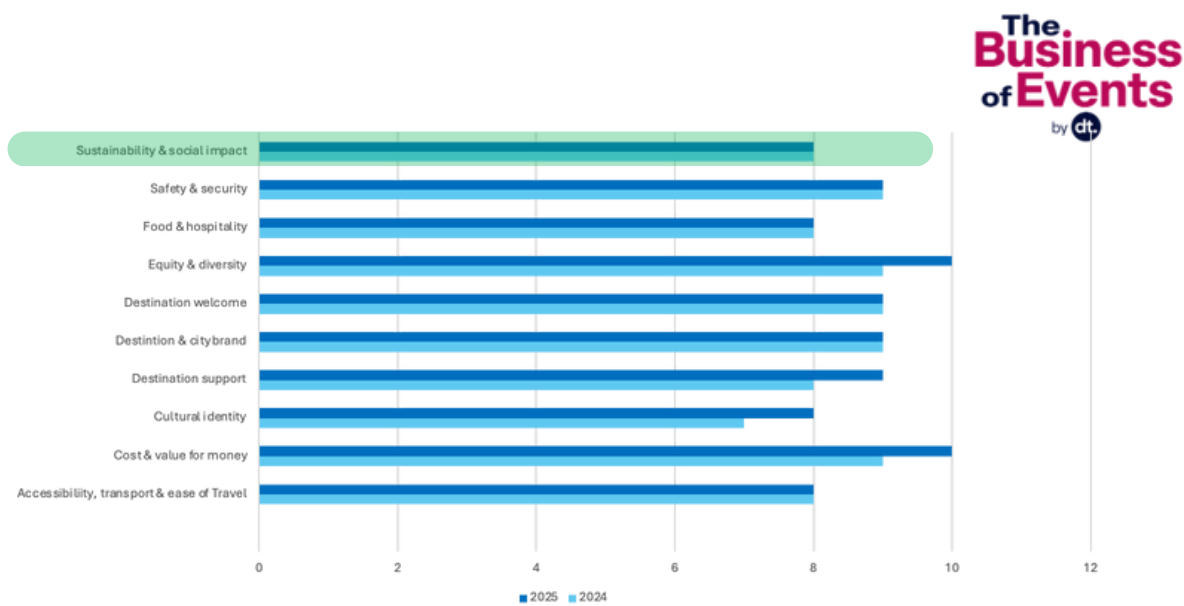
In contrast, planners in the US show a reduction in appetite for sustainable solutions from 7/10 to 5/10 – the only region to do so.

These findings depict a sector in transition: sustainability is clearly valued, yet implementation still lags ambition.

UK Sentiment

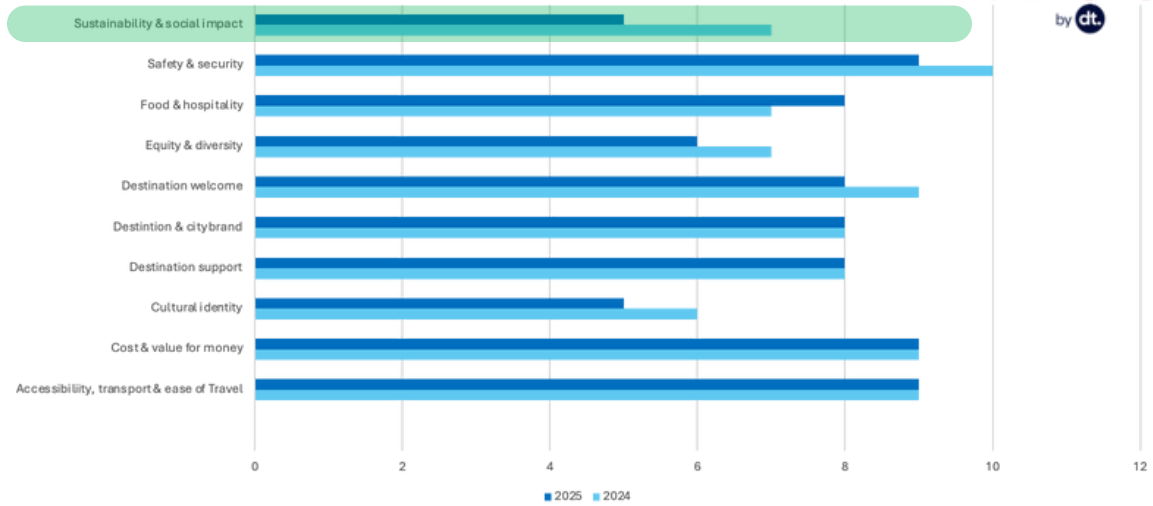


EU Sentiment



US Sentiment

The Business of Events
by dt



Media Themes

Rankings:

1. Sustainability
2. Experience & Connection
3. Cost
4. AI, Tech
5. Inclusivity

M&IT NEWS MEETINGS PEOPLE DESTINATION GUIDES EVENTS RESOURCES RESEARCH

UK planners face 'budget squeeze' in 2026, warns BCD M&E's Helen McCabe

2025 in Focus

Welcome to Cvent's annual trends guide, a descriptive opportunity and offers set to define the meetings and industry in 2025. Despite ongoing challenges, there's a sense of optimism and adaptability as teams continue to innovative ways to collaborate and create impactful experiences.

The last few years have been marked by tighter budget constraints, and this year's change in 2025. Stakeholders and organizers face the familiar task of doing more with less, essential for each investment to show measurable value and hotels continue to grapple with staff shortages, on-line, independent teams remains a priority for all.

Global outlook

Optimism is at a five-year high as global meetings stabilize.

Meeting professionals feel good about the global meetings sector. 85% are "optimistic" about the sector, the highest level seen since 2021.¹

THE MOST COMMON OUTCOMES

Social outcomes are the most frequently cited category of outcome of the business events analyzed, followed by intellectual and policy outcomes.

This highlights the importance of building community connections, relationships and networks as a core value of business events, and enriches the more traditional discourse that direct economic impact is the most important benefit of business events for destinations.

While events operate within broader economic ecosystems and should be seen as contributing pieces in a much larger puzzle, these findings underscore the potential of single business events to create meaningful societal and sectoral outcomes.

Five top takeaways

Now in its 35th year, the Amex GBT Global Meetings and Events Forecast sets the agenda for the global meetings and events industry, defining the themes that'll shape our industry over the next twelve months.

- 1 Optimism at a five-year high – but rising costs cause concern**
85% meeting professionals "optimistic" for the sector in 2025.
38% say cost will be #1 challenge.
- 2 AI is going to be everywhere**
50% embrace AI throughout the meetings journey.
34% will use AI to generate creative concepts.
40% will deliver AI-powered event apps.
25% will use AI to track attendee experience.
- 3 Top priority – creating engaging experiences**
Meeting professionals #1 priority – for the second year in a row.
Improving attendee experience with more "measurable" events.
- 4 Audiences want active involvement**
Compared to five years ago, attendees want meetings to give them more:
42% said online activity for example, webinars.
40% said opportunities to socialize with other attendees.
40% said visible sustainability measures.
- 5 Smarter meetings measurement is on the way**
Meeting professionals plan to adopt AI and digital tools to explore the value of meetings.
28% use AI for pre-event evaluation.
36% use data and ROI measurement tools.

| Category | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| Social | 20.5 |
| Intellectual | 19.7 |
| Policy | 18.0 |
| Human | 14.5 |
| Financial | 11.0 |
| Cultural | 7.4 |
| Natural | 6.6 |
| Built | 3.6 |

Analysis of 75 event-media articles from Jan-25 through Oct-25, hosted across micedbook, M&IT, C&IT, GDS, IACC, PWC, Cvent, UFI, BCG, TBoE, AMEX GBT, BCD M&E, Sustainability Hospitality Alliance and Mash Media was undertaken in November 2025. Major themes were noted, collated and ranked.

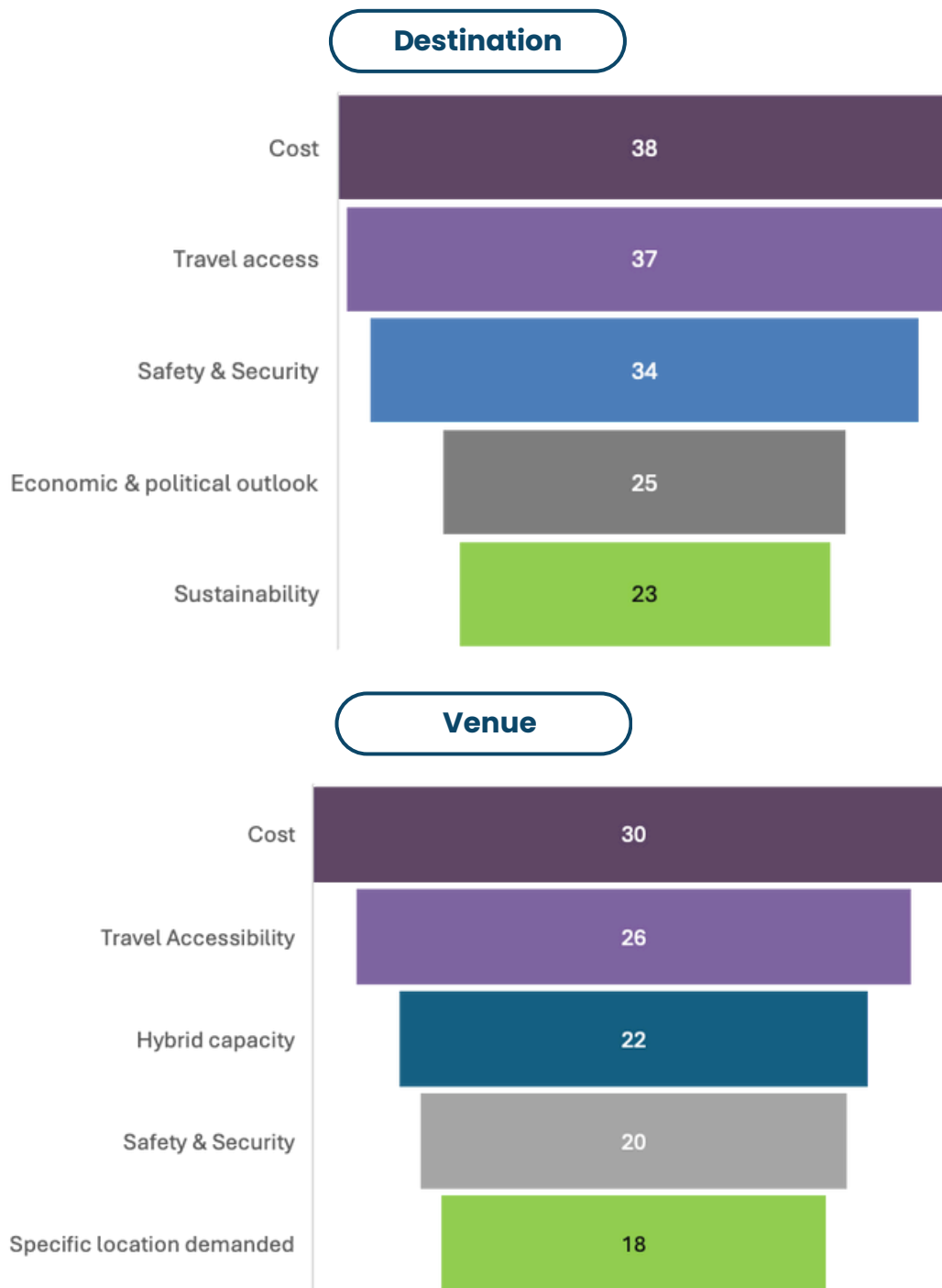
Images are illustrative only.

What
you
want



Key Factors 1

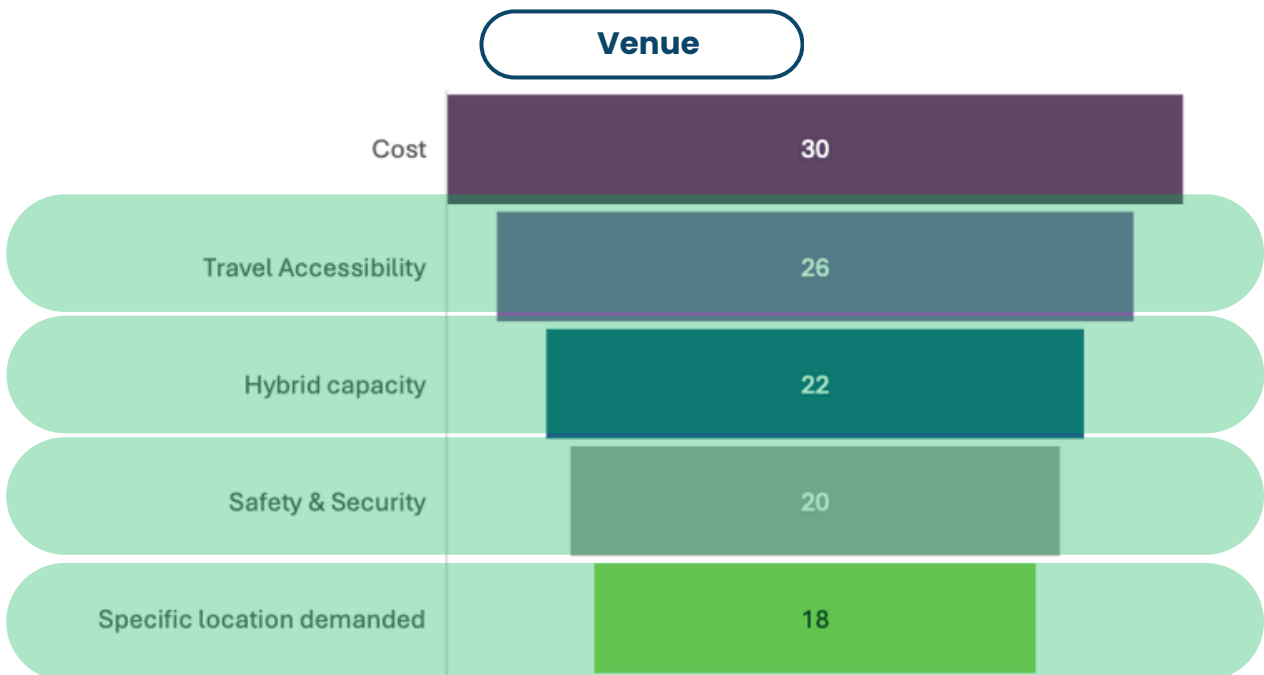
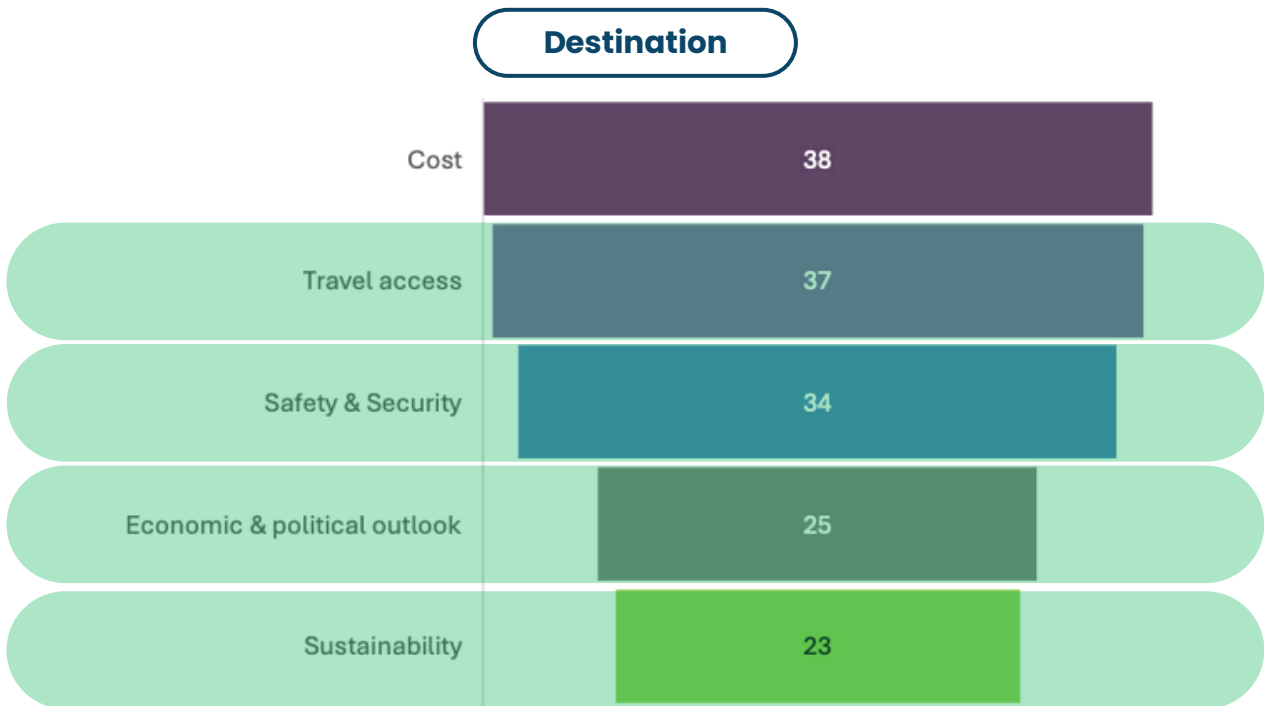
Data from the **Amex GBT M&E 2026 Forecast** identifies the factors uppermost in planners' minds when making destination and venue decisions:



Source: AMEX GBT M&E Forecast 2026, 601 meeting professionals in eight countries carried out by YouGov

Key Factors 2

But should 'sustainability' be listed separately? Highlighted in green are each of the factors directly linked to event sustainability performance...



Source: AMEX GBT M&E Forecast 2026, 601 meeting professionals in eight countries carried out by YouGov

The Priorities of Event Professionals

(See Figure 2: AMEX GBT M&E Forecast 2026 – Planner Priorities)

Data from the **AMEX GBT M&E 2026 Forecast** identifies the persistent dominance of cost and access to destination in event decision-making. While most professionals express a desire to host greener events, few achieve measurable outcomes. Sustainability is not yet “the new normal.”

However, Figure 2.a. shows readers how many decisions directly impact the sustainability of an event, when each of ESG is considered. This clearly demonstrates that sustainability should not be considered as a separate decision-making process. It is ingrained in each and every decision planners make.





Only 25% of event professionals currently track emissions. That means 3 in 4 do not.

28%

Just 28% plan to improve sustainability metrics in 2026. That means 2 in 3 do not.

38%

38% include sustainability in policy, but 28% classify it as a “pending initiative.”

This measurement gap is a major barrier. Without reliable data, planners cannot quantify progress, justify budgets, or demonstrate ROI – the language required to win executive support.

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Intent exists, but consistency and accountability remain limited.

Only two departments come into my office and ask for money with no numbers – HR and sustainability.



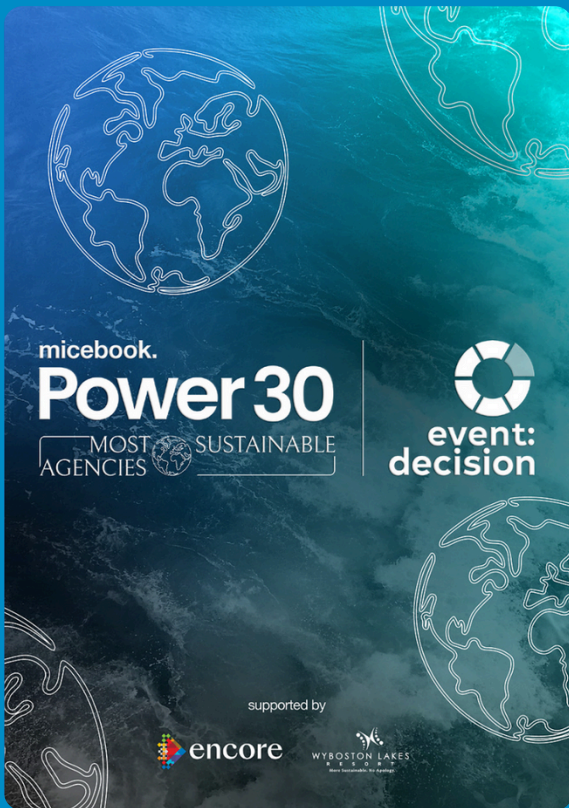
~ a global CFO

Source: Daniel Aronson “The Value of Values”

What you do



Agency Headlines

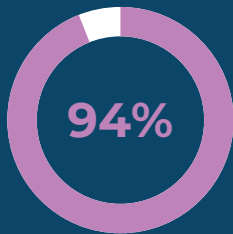


Source: event:decision and micebook Power 30 Most Sustainable Agencies 2024-5 2025-6 data will be published in Feb-26.

What the Sector Does: Agency and Event Performance

Source: Power 30 Most Sustainable Agencies 2024–25

Agency Performance – UK



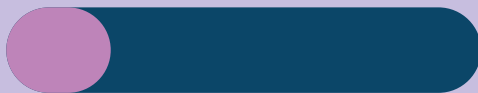
94% have a defined sustainability lead

50%

hold Ecovadis accreditation (half at Silver level)

47%

47% hold ISO 14001 accreditation



22% hold ISO 20121 (event planning process)



only
1 in **5** hold B Corp certification

Event Performance — Global

5,500 event data points across multiple sectors reveals the most and least adopted ESG factors:

Environmental Strengths

- Growing adoption of carbon reporting.
- Focus on venue certifications.
- Responsible food and beverage sourcing.

Environmental Gaps

- Limited energy efficiency initiatives.
- Inconsistent delegate travel data collection.

Social Strengths

- Focus on delegate wellbeing.
Commitment to inclusivity (“events for all”).

Social Gaps

- Limited supplier living wage audits.
- Underdeveloped legacy planning.
- Low engagement with social enterprises.

Governance Strengths

- Strong foundations in contractor insurance and codes of practice.
- Effective use of risk assessments (RAMS).

Governance Gaps

- Few link ROI to sustainability KPIs.
- Lack of event ESG leads.
- *Low rates of internal ESG certification.*

In short, frameworks exist — but full ESG integration into daily operations remains nascent.



What you do...

When viewed as a **compliance cost**, the data below, from the AMEX Global Business Travel 2026 Global Meetings & Events Forecast looks bleak.

When viewed as a **competitive enabler**, the same data shows how much value can be added by even some simple objectives, reporting and improvements in sustainable event delivery.

Track emissions



Plan more reporting



Pending initiative

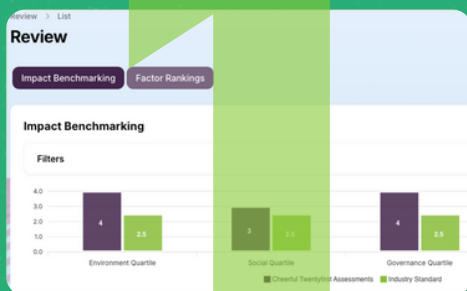


What you do...

Data on the following pages shows you which ESG factors are actioned and how frequently, across 5,500 event data points.

event:decision's Impact Reviews will help you understand impacts at three different levels...

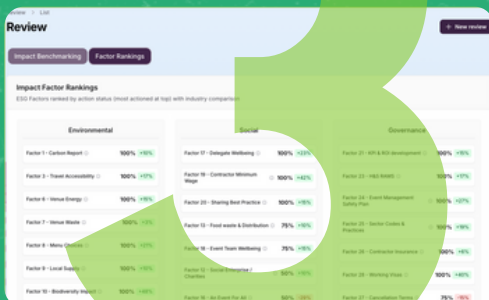
Organisation



Project

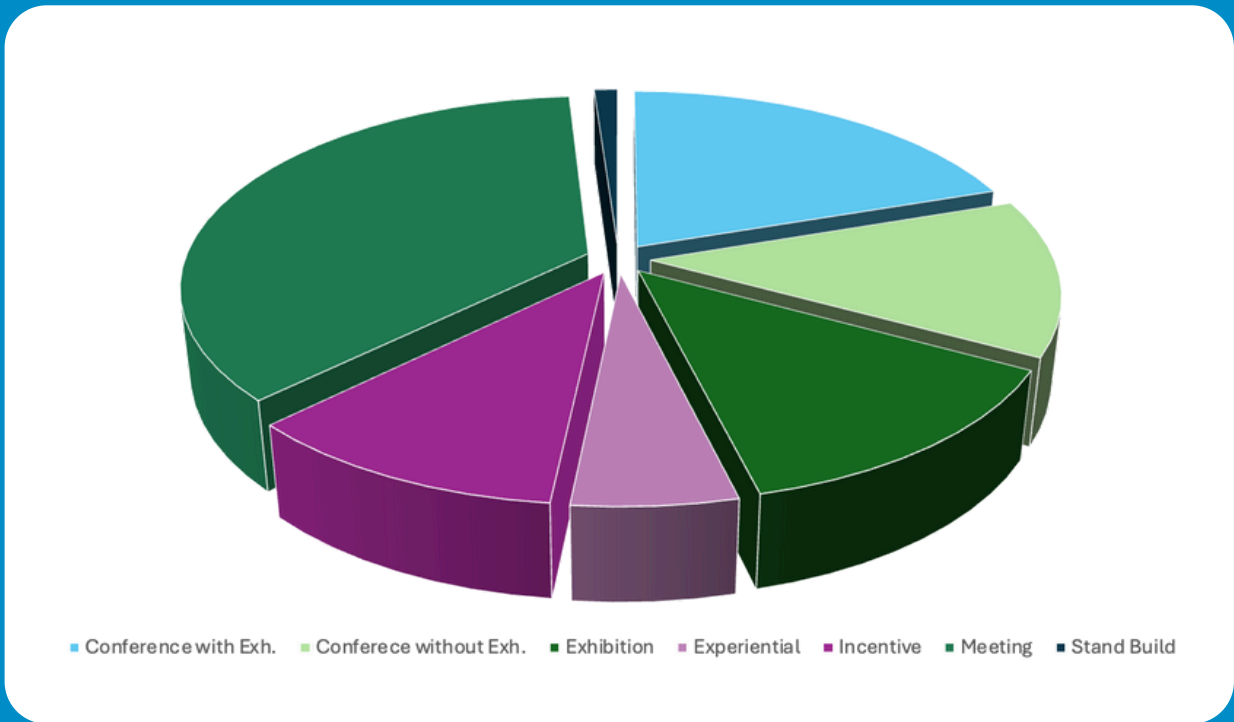


Granular

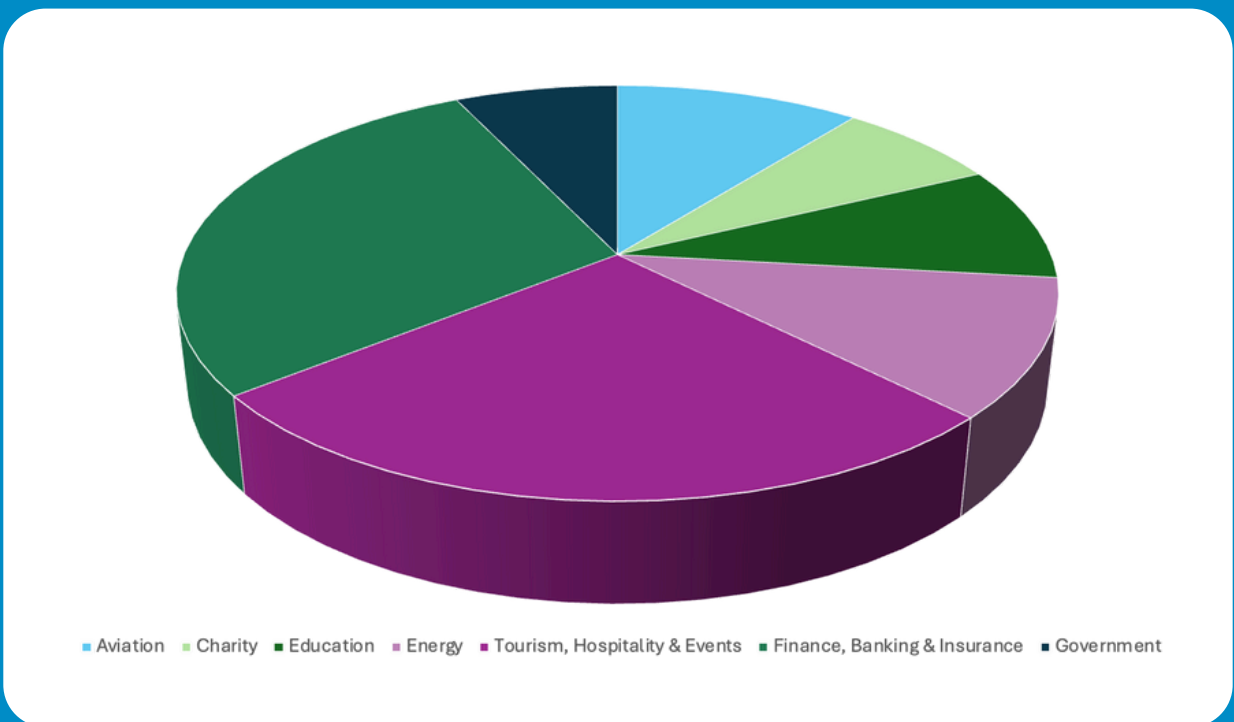


event:decision
impact

Event types



Sectors

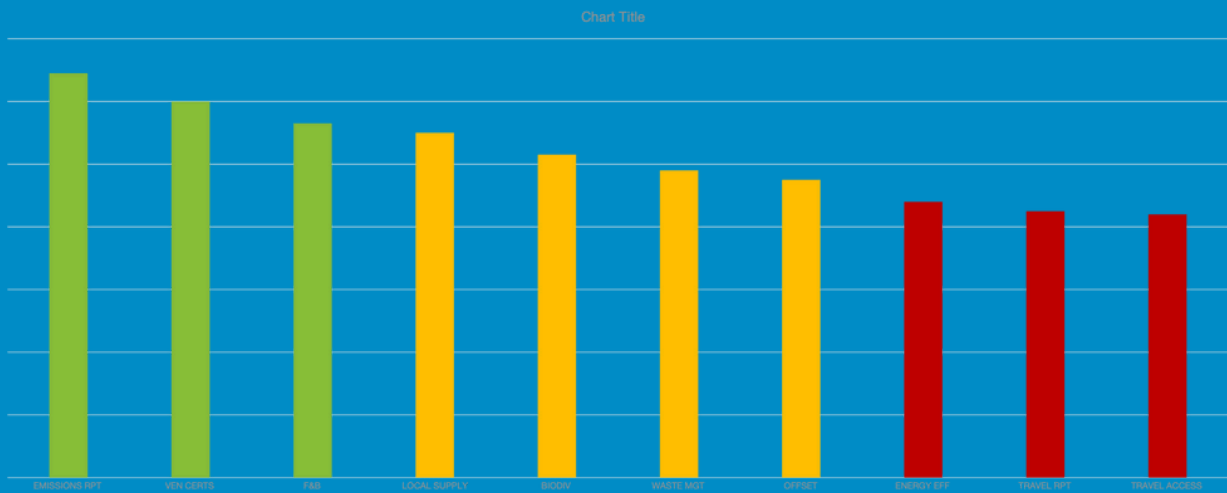


Environmental factors

Factors actioned most



Factors actioned least



- + Event carbon report
- + Venue certifications
- + F&B

- Energy efficiency
- Delegate travel data
- Travel access to venues

Social factors

Factors actioned
most



Factors actioned
least



- + Event for all
- + Delegate Wellbeing
- + F&B distribution

- Contractor living wage
- Event legacy
- Social Enterprise to deliver

Governance factors

Factors actioned
most



Factors actioned
least



- + Contractor insurance
- + Sector codes
- + RAMS

- ROI linked to KPIs
- Event sustainability lead
- Your own ESG certifications

But what **about**
carbon?



Carbon

| Category | actuals TCO2e | % |
|----------------|---------------|----|
| travel | 354.00 | 62 |
| energy | 55.00 | 10 |
| transportation | 76.00 | 13 |
| materials | 7.00 | 1 |
| accommodation | 33.50 | 6 |
| catering | 34.00 | 6 |
| waste | 10.50 | 2 |

boundaries:
 event duration (days), delegates (where applicable), staff, event site, travel, ground, sites and parking (travel by mode (car, private vehicle, public transport) and distance), accommodation (hotel nights for guests, hotel rates or stand-by/leaving by air night), catering (includes number of meals per delegate/vegetarian, meals consumed by guests, crew food and for duration of event), energy (actual consumption as estimated or measured by venue), materials (includes printed materials, signage, recyclable materials and other materials used, stand-bys, lighting, furniture, equipment, etc.), transportation (includes ground, air and other ground transport, distance and mode), accommodation (includes hotel, airport, airport transfers, etc.), catering (includes catering, refreshments, etc.), waste (includes recyclable and residual waste).

mitigation

you can use the data in this report to understand significant variables & support mitigating the emissions impact of your next event using a more sustainable event planning process.

Recommendations for future mitigation:

travel
 consider asking delegates to select a different class of flight. If all delegates flew economy class (current assumption 75% business class across all flight durations) the overall footprint would be reduced by c.36%.

consider remote attendance. In reducing the number of flights associated with the event by 50% the overall footprint would be reduced by 48%.

food
 consider offering vegetarian-only meals. If all food provided for delegates was vegetarian, the overall footprint would be reduced by 3%.

transport
 consider sourcing local suppliers, where possible. If all material & equipment supply travelled <100km the overall footprint could be reduced by 15%.

offset

you may choose to offer offset solutions via event:decision, or via a channel within your agency or client organisation. Please contact event:decision for a menu of certified projects.

we recommend using past event reporting for offset valuations, as a pre-event guide, to directly offset carbon emissions for the event as planned.

Your Company Summit 2022
 570 tonnes CO2e*
 Offset for carbon neutral certification:
 -€13,908 dependant on project chosen

*this measurement includes all client Scope 3 emissions, as defined by GHG Protocol and measured in accordance with IPCC Principles.

your track report

results
 shows the total estimated carbon footprint associated with your event, by event function.

benchmark
 displays your event carbon footprint, represented by number of delegates or sqm of stand, when compared with other similar measurements delivered by event:decision.

mitigation recommendations & offset
 shows you the effect of changing variables over which you have some control and the financial liability for offset, where appropriate.

brief

- pre-event data shared via Agency, project reference 17682, from Client
- where incomplete, meaningful estimates including by extrapolation of existing data have been used
- includes clients', partners', sponsors' & investors' flights
- build materials, transportation and power draw estimated where not detailed
- crew travel, accommodation and subsistence included
- re-usable, recyclable and single use materials estimated at this stage of planning

Illustration of Your Company Forum 2022, carbon footprint:

TCO2e per delegate, based on 3,300 persons
 5,014.2 TCO2e = 1.52 TCO2e per person

at this level, Your Company Summit 2022 has produced fewer emissions per person than 34-50% of conference format events measured by event:decision, based on calculations conducted by event:decision from Mar 2021 - Aug 2022 for comparison purposes.

data above should be used for illustrative purposes only, not for ESG audit or offset reporting. Total event data includes events from 50 to 140,000 delegates in virtual, hybrid and in-person event formats at a local, regional and global level, with stand-buils from 6am to 2000pm.

Carbon Emissions Reporting

(See Figure 4: Carbon Emissions Focus – event:decision Track Reports)

Carbon measurement is the most common ESG reporting practice within events. However, the combined output of current platforms and services suggests the industry is only **scratching the surface** of comprehensive, audit-worthy measurement.

Key Observations

- **Travel:** Despite the Greenhouse Gas Protocol requiring reporting of event-related travel emissions, the sector often omits these from totals.
- **Venues:** Certification progress is positive, but planners rarely reward accredited venues in selection.
- **Food & Beverage:** Longer events still face challenges offering fully plant-based menus.
- **Materials & Freight:** Reuse and local sourcing are desirable but often deprioritized for logistical certainty.
- **Swag:** Persistent use of mass-produced, air-freighted promotional items contradicts sustainability aims.

event:decision's **Track Reports** provide a solution – delivering event carbon footprints, benchmarks, travel data capture, and mitigation recommendations.

What **about** other sectors?

(school report time...)



School report

Sustainability Approach

Mandates & Infrastructure

Key Challenge

Aviation

Holistic, systemic, data-driven

Advanced global, heavily mandated

Complex value chain integration

Energy

AI-driven, resilient infrastructure

Highly mature, policy-enforced

Technology investment, grid transition

Pharma

Regulatory transformation, digital

Mandated reforms, international focus

Innovation adoption, regulatory pace

Events

Voluntary, siloed, some certification

Growing, patchy

Non-uniform adoption, voluntary standards



The School Report: Comparing Sectors

(See Figure 5: Cross-Sector ESG Comparison – “School Report”)

When benchmarked against other industries, the event sector shows mixed performance: strong awareness but inconsistent action.

Advanced Sectors: Aviation, energy, automotive, and pharmaceuticals demonstrate more systemic ESG integration due to regulation, capital, and supply-chain maturity.

Events Sector: Progress remains voluntary, collaborative, and non-uniform – growing, but fragmented.

Conclusion of Benchmark: The event sector is moving in the right direction, but must shift from voluntary adoption to structured accountability.



**What
next ?**



Signs of life

Whilst globally a small sample size, event:decision's Impact: Responsible Event Reviews demonstrated a 3pt. increase in performance from Reviewed events (4,700 data points) from May-24 through May-25.



Source: event:decision Impact: Responsible Event Performance Reviews May-24 to May-25

What's Next: Calls to Action

(See Figure 6: "Signs of Life" — Event:Decision Impact Data 2025)

The report identifies seven key actions for event professionals, agencies, and brands:

1. **Choose consciously:** Destination and venue decisions define sustainability outcomes.
2. **Own the agenda:** Drive responsible practice and claim credit for measurable progress.
3. **Communicate authentically:** Transparent optics matter.
4. **Pursue easy wins:** Local sourcing and digital materials deliver fast impact.
5. **Leverage social value:** Partner with local and social enterprises, and align with the UN SDGs.
6. **Use available tools:** Certified venues, low-impact catering, and responsible suppliers are abundant.
7. **Start measuring:** Define an objective and take the first step — data enables change.



1 It's up to
you.

**Destination
& venue:
the crucial
choice.**

2



3 **Optics**
play a
part.

Easy wins
are
everywhere.

4

5

Responsible
choices are
everywhere.

Take the first
step. An
objective. 6

7 **Social values are underused.**

8
Start somewhere.
Ask for help.

Conclusion

The 2025 sustainability landscape is defined by **potential meeting accountability**.

A shift in mindset around responsible and sustainable event delivery from compliance cost to competitive enabler may support greater adoption of sustainable processes.

Measurement of current and planned activity using tools that provide decision-grade insight such as event:decision's Track (carbon) and Impact (ESG responsibility) will provide this insight.

The event sector has never been more aware of its responsibilities, yet it requires clear leadership to translate intent into measurable impact.

If the industry can embed sustainability into every decision; from destination selection to delegate travel, supply-chain integrity to ROI – events will not only deliver against objectives more effectively, but do so also sustainably and responsibly.



References & Data Sources

- event:decision, Impact: Responsible Event Reviews, 2024–2025
- event:decision, Track Reports (Carbon Reporting Tool)
- AMEX GBT, M&E 2026 Forecast, conducted by YouGov
- Oxford Economics, Global Risk & Confidence Survey, 2025
- micebook, Power 30 Most Sustainable Agencies 2024–25
- The Business of Events, Annual Planner Sentiment Survey, 2025
- Aronson, D., The Value of Values (2023)

The event:decision State of Sustainability 2025 was delivered live at the Sustainable Events Show 2025.



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event:decision

Prepared by: Event:Decision
www.eventdecision.com