

Walton County Tourism

MEETING PLANNER STUDY 2024

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STRATEGIC TAKEAWAYS

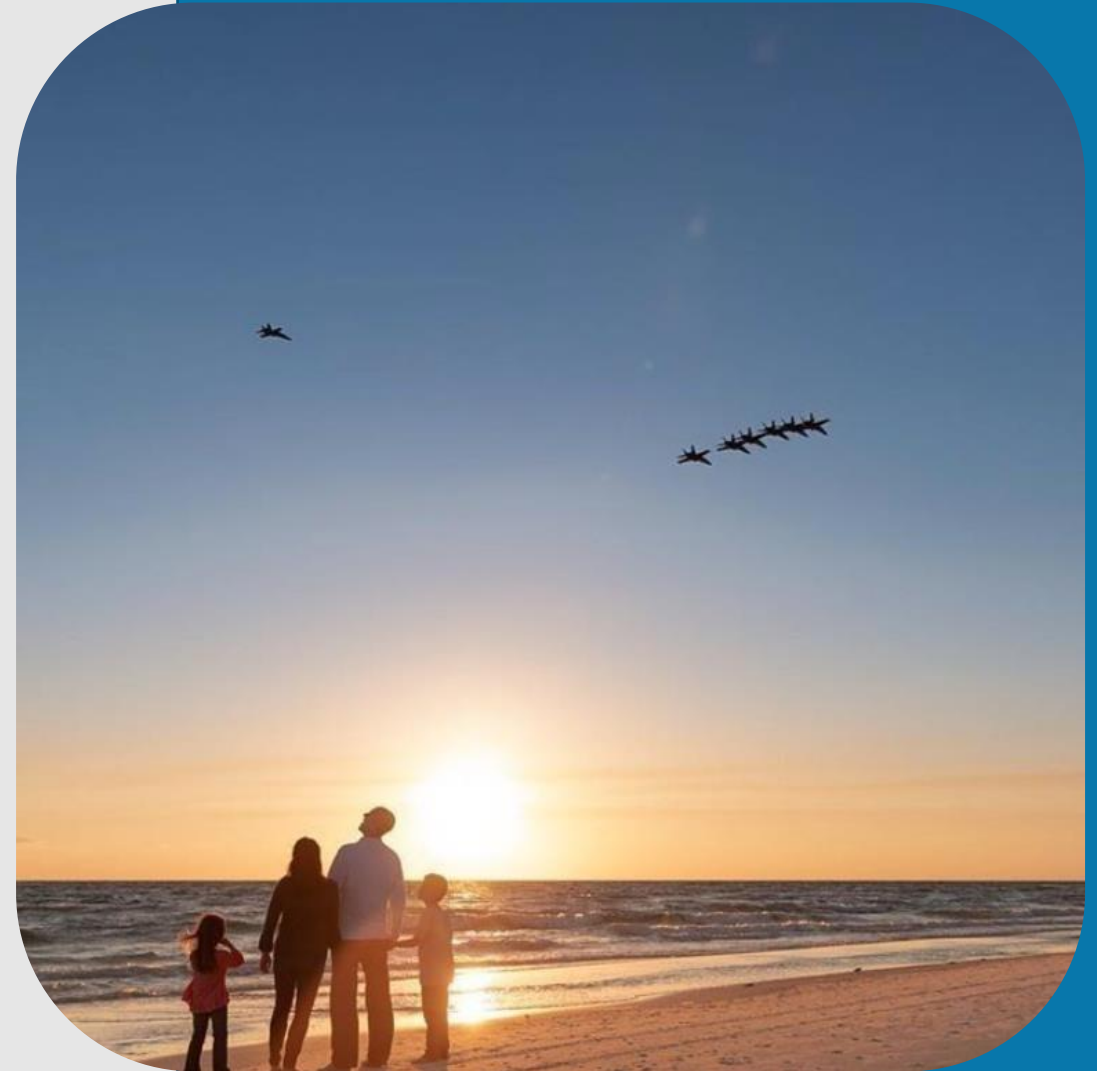
The following section provides strategic recommendations and insights for Walton County Tourism based on the results of this study

TO GET MORE MEETINGS WALTON COUNTY SHOULD

ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS

Too few flights, expensive airfare and difficulty getting from airports to meeting sites are top limitations for meeting planners.

- Address the perception of limited flights by promoting existing routes through targeted marketing to meeting planners.
- Develop and promote accessible and reliable transportation options from airports to Walton County.
- Shuttle services, partnerships with ride-share companies, or destination-branded transport packages could address logistical challenges cited by planners.
- Continue to promote Walton County's drivability throughout the Southeast and Florida



TO GET MORE MEETINGS WALTON COUNTY SHOULD

CONTINUE TO REFINE MARKETING OUTREACH

Meeting planners whose needs align with its offerings report high satisfaction and strong intent to return, presenting an opportunity to refine targeting strategies and highlight creative solutions to attract the right planners.

- Contemplators and Avoiders are not likely to hold a future meeting in Walton County (56%)
- Contemplators who ultimately did not choose the destination cited accommodation types, limited rooms under one roof, and insufficient meeting space as key limitations.
- This suggests that while there is interest, the destination may not fully align with the needs of some planners.
- There is an opportunity to refine strategies to better target planners whose meeting requirements match the destination's existing offerings.
- Additionally, highlighting creative solutions—such as multi-property meeting packages or venue partnerships—could help address some concerns and make the destination more appealing to a broader range of planners.
- However, meeting planners whose needs do align with the destination's offerings report high levels of satisfaction with their experience and express strong intent to hold future meetings in the area, indicating a loyal and repeat customer base that can be further nurtured.



TO GET MORE MEETINGS WALTON COUNTY SHOULD

DEVELOP PACKAGES THAT ACCENTUATE THE BEST OF WALTON COUNTY

The top advantages of Walton County to meeting planners include the beautiful beaches, weather and relaxing atmosphere. The top activities preferred for meeting attendees include a variety of restaurants, the beach, golf and shopping. Affordability is a high-ranking concern for many meeting planners.

- Promote packages emphasizing popular attendee activities such as beach experiences, golf, shopping, and fine dining.
- With March, April, and October as peak meeting months, there is an opportunity to promote January and February, leveraging lower ADR and mild winter weather to attract planners—especially as 40% of potential clients are open to considering these months.
- While Walton County is known for its elevated and unique leisure experiences, meeting planners emphasize the need for affordability without compromising its high-quality appeal.
- Work with hotels to create bundles and ensure room rates between \$200-\$299 when possible through incentives and reimbursements.



COMPARED TO 3 YEARS AGO¹

- Most appropriate room rate increased from \$100-\$199 to \$200-\$299
- More planners reach out to hotels directly, use CVBs/DMOs, and tradeshow when researching destinations for their meeting, fewer use sourcing sites
- More meeting planners prefer to be reached by phone, at tradeshow, and through a Destination event (sales mission)
- More planners said Walton County got on their radar after being contacted by Walton County Tourism (WCT) staff, ads by WCT, and through word of mouth
- More planners would consider hosting a meeting in Walton County in September, October, and November, fewer planners would consider May





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following section provides a summarized overview of key observations from all meeting planners in this study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Smaller meetings** have **shorter booking windows**, while **larger meetings** have **longer windows**
- Most meeting planners require **less than 100 rooms** to **101-250 rooms** on a peak night
- Meeting planners want a room rate between **\$100-\$199** or **\$200-\$299**
- Most planners will **directly reach out to hotels** and **use CVBs/DMOs** when researching meeting destinations
- Meeting planners prefer to be contacted by a CVB's sales team via **email**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Most planners think the **number of meetings** and **the number of hotels needed** will **remain stable** over the next three years
- **Nearly half** of planners think **total meeting budgets** will **increase** over the next three years
- **Half** of meeting planners expect **meeting attendance** to **remain stable**, while over **2 in 5** expect attendance to **increase**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Meetings planners list a **variety of restaurants, the beach, golf, and shopping** as top activities for their attendees
- Many planners become aware of Walton County from a **previous leisure trip**
- Walton County is **not on the radar** of nearly **1 in 5** planners
- **Advantages** of Walton County include the **white sand beaches/turquoise blue water** and the **weather**
- Meeting planners list **too few flights, lack of familiarity, and difficulty getting to and from airports** as top limitations for Walton County



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Meeting planners also considered holding their events in **Amelia Island/Jacksonville, Destin, Tampa, and Orlando**
- **Nearly all** meeting planners who have hosted their event in Walton County were **satisfied** with the location
- **After being shown promotions**, meeting planners' **likelihood of holding a future meeting** in Walton County typically **increased +1.8 points out of 10**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Meeting planners see Walton County as **mostly accessible by driving** and **fairly accessible by flying**, though the **lack of direct/frequent flight remains a limitation for meeting planners**
- Meeting planners would definitely consider meeting in Walton County in **October (56%)**, **April (53%)**, **September (47%)**, and **March (46%)**



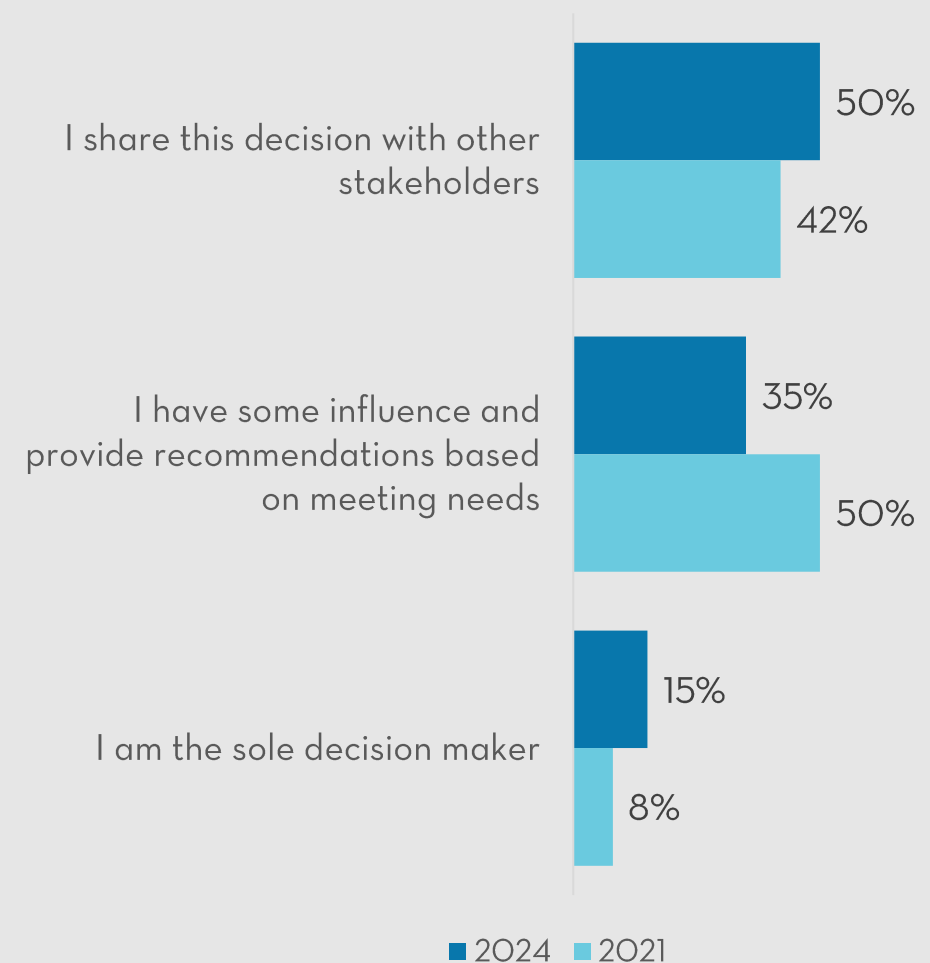


DETAILED FINDINGS: ALL PLANNERS

The following section provides the complete detailed findings for all meeting planners in this study

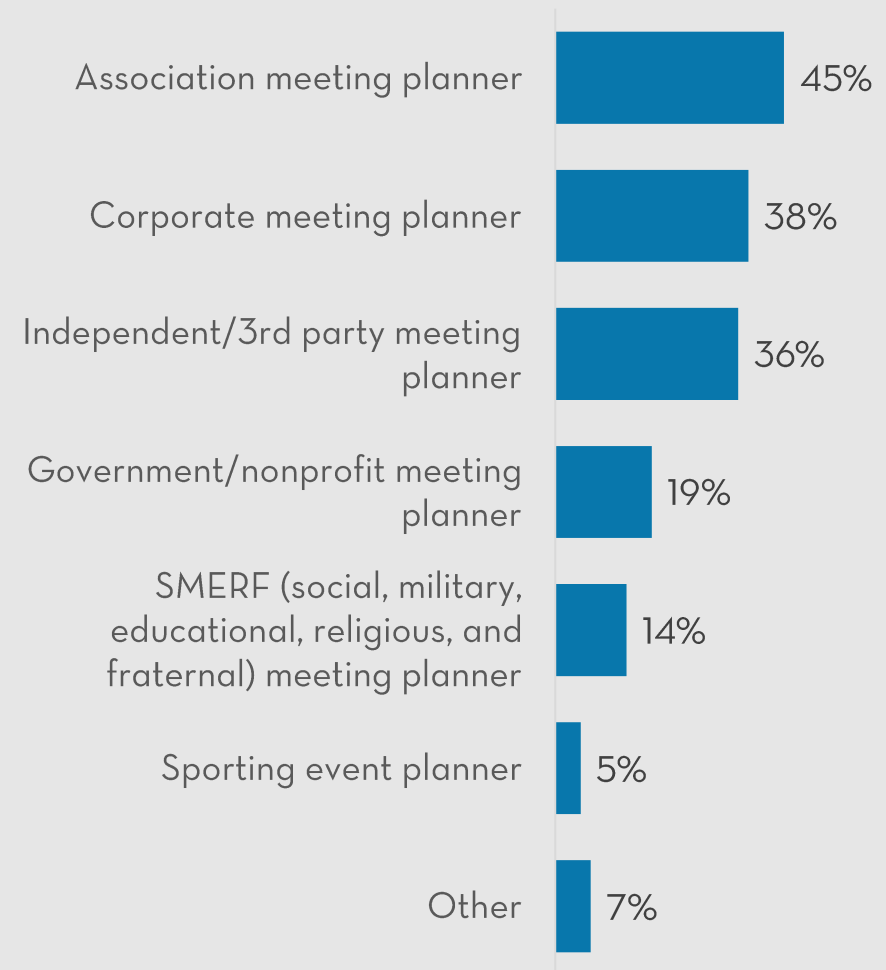
WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ROLE IN SELECTING THE LOCATION FOR MEETINGS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

- **65%** of meeting planners have at least some decision-making power
- **35%** of meeting planners have some level of influence and provide recommendations
- Meeting planners have **more** decision-making power than they did in 2021



WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOU?¹

- Over **2 in 5** meeting planners are **association meeting planners**
- Nearly **2 in 5** are **corporate meeting planners**
- Over **1 in 3** are **independent/3rd party meeting planners**
- Compared to 2021 study², there are fewer independent/3rd party planners while **corporate, government/nonprofit** and **associate planners** have increased

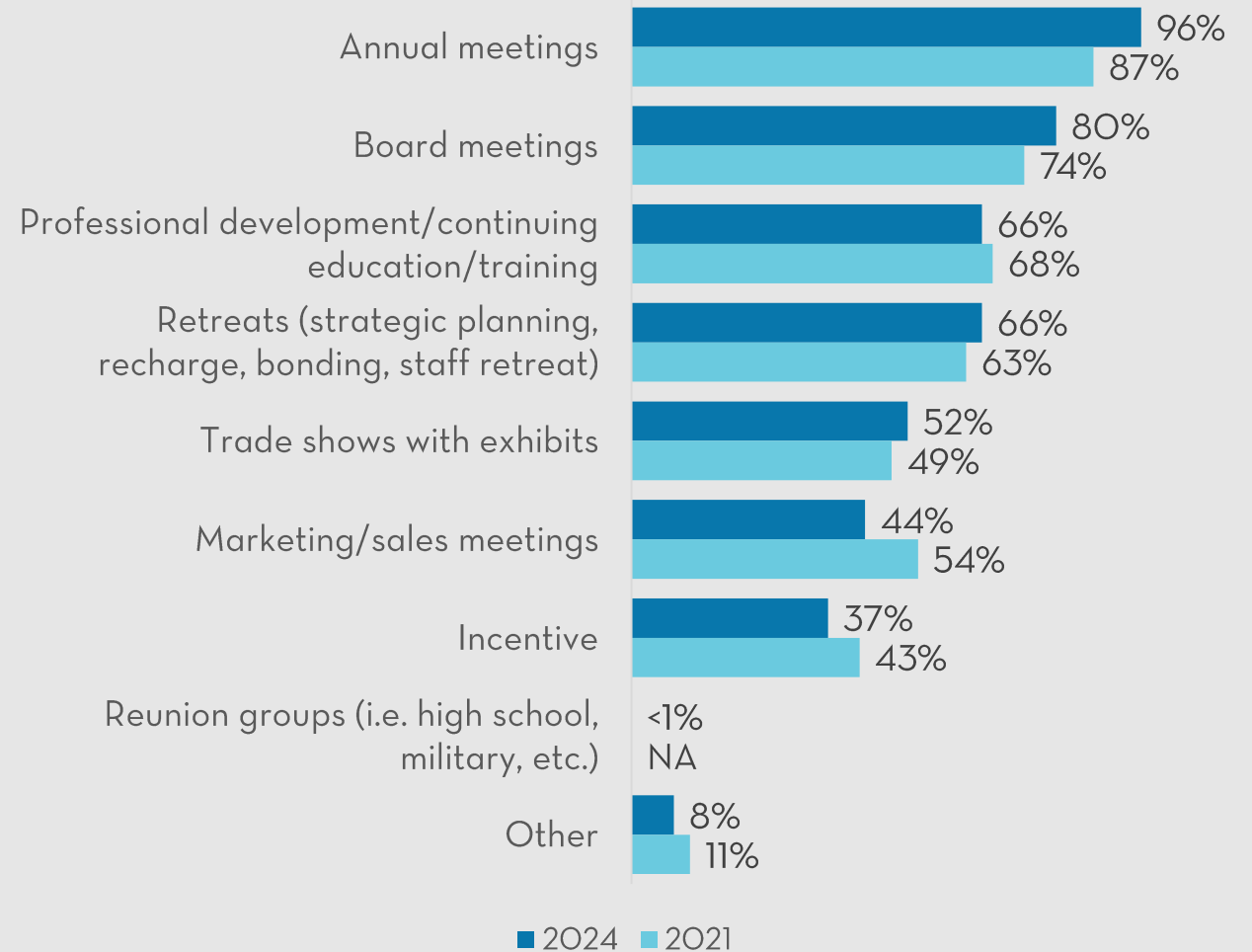


¹Multiple choice question.

²In the 2021 study this question only allowed for a single response.

WHAT TYPES OF EVENTS DO YOU HANDLE?¹

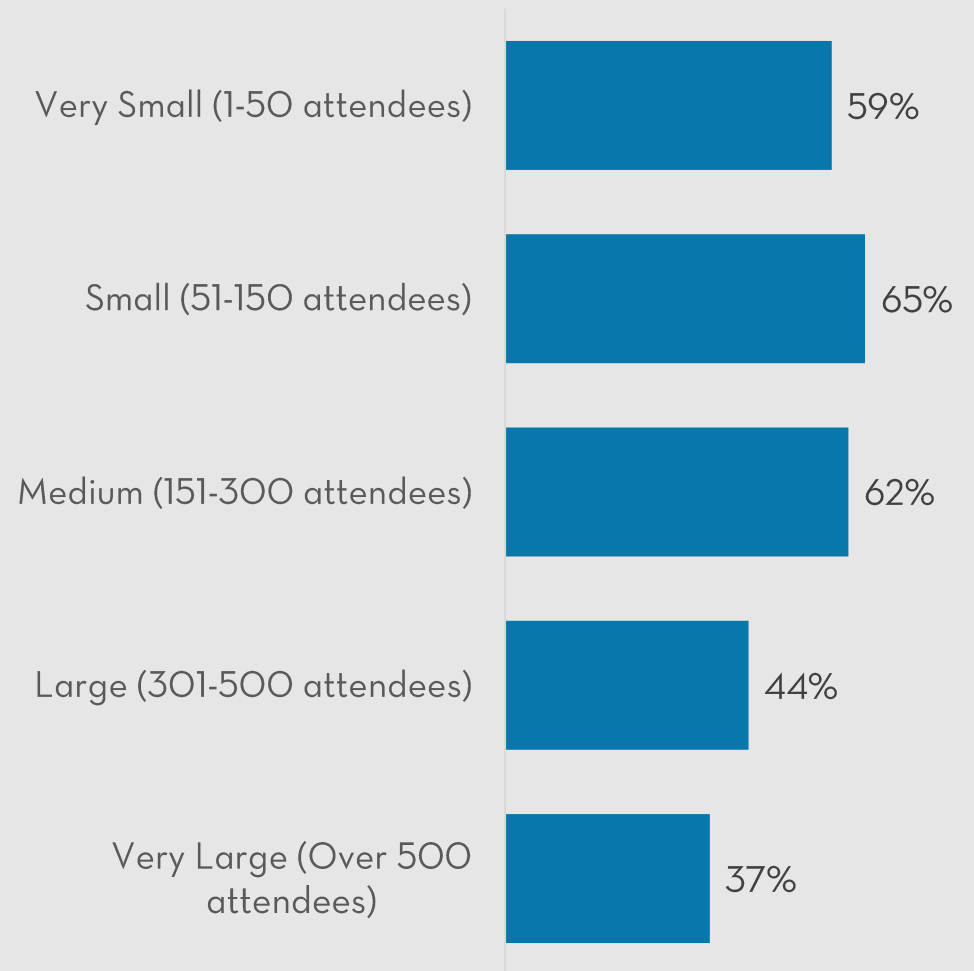
- **Nearly all** meeting planners handle **annual meetings**
- **4 in 5** meeting planners handle **board meetings**
- **2 in 3** meeting planners handle **professional development/continuing education meetings or retreats**



¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT IS THE SIZE OF A TYPICAL MEETING/EVENT YOU ORGANIZE?¹

- Around **3 in 5** meeting planners typically organize **very small, small, or medium sized** meetings
- Around **2 in 5** organize **large or very large** meetings
- Compared to 2021 study², **fewer planners are organizing medium sized meetings** compared to the other sizes

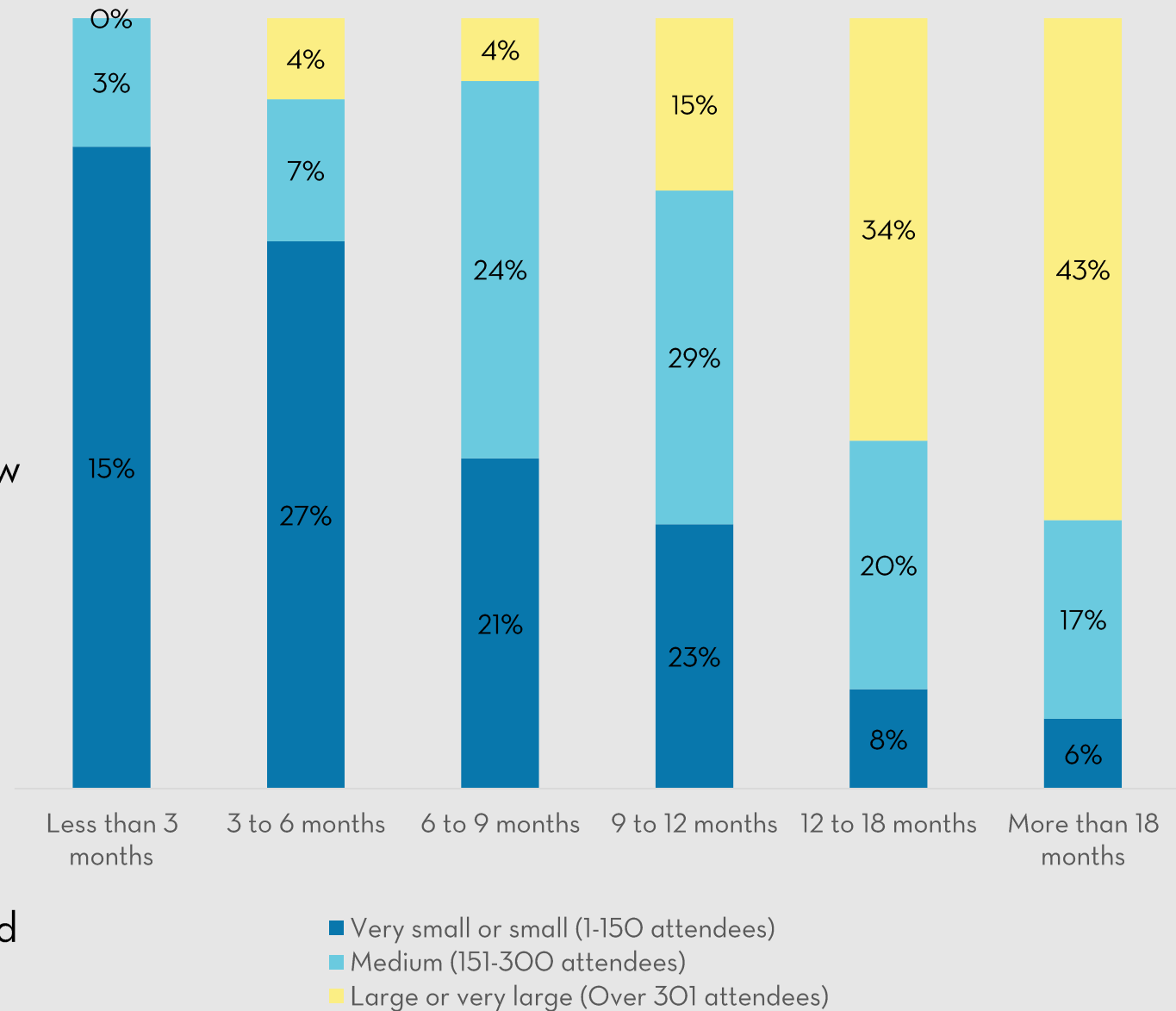


¹Multiple responses permitted.

²In the 2021 study this question only allowed for a single response and options included Small, Medium, Large.

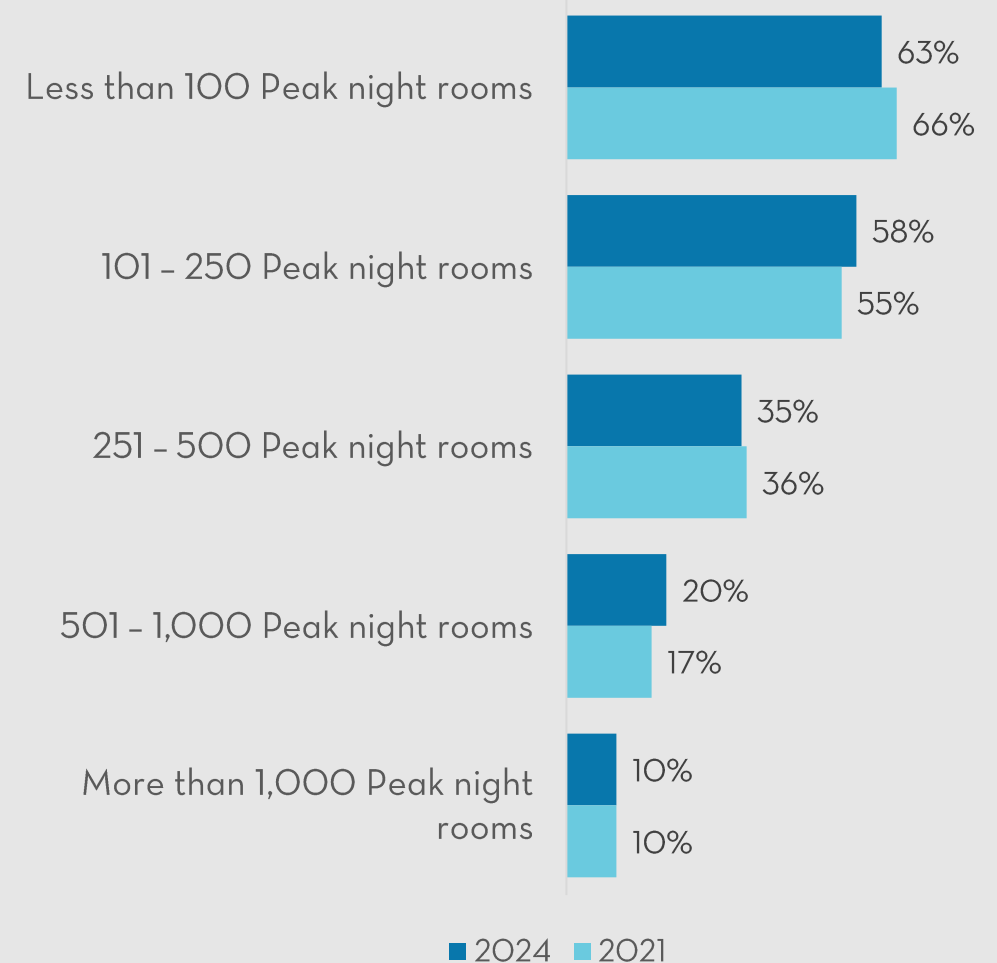
WHAT IS THE TYPICAL BOOKING WINDOW FOR MEETINGS?

- **Small** events have a shorter typical booking window of **9 months or less (63%)**
- **Medium** events have a typical booking window of **6-18 months (73%)**
- **Large** events have a typical booking window of **9-24 months (75%)**
- Compared to the 2021 study, **large to very large meetings** now have longer median booking windows, whereas the booking windows for **small and medium-sized meetings** have remained relatively unchanged



HOW MANY ROOMS ON PEAK NIGHT DO YOU TYPICALLY REQUIRE FOR MEETINGS?¹

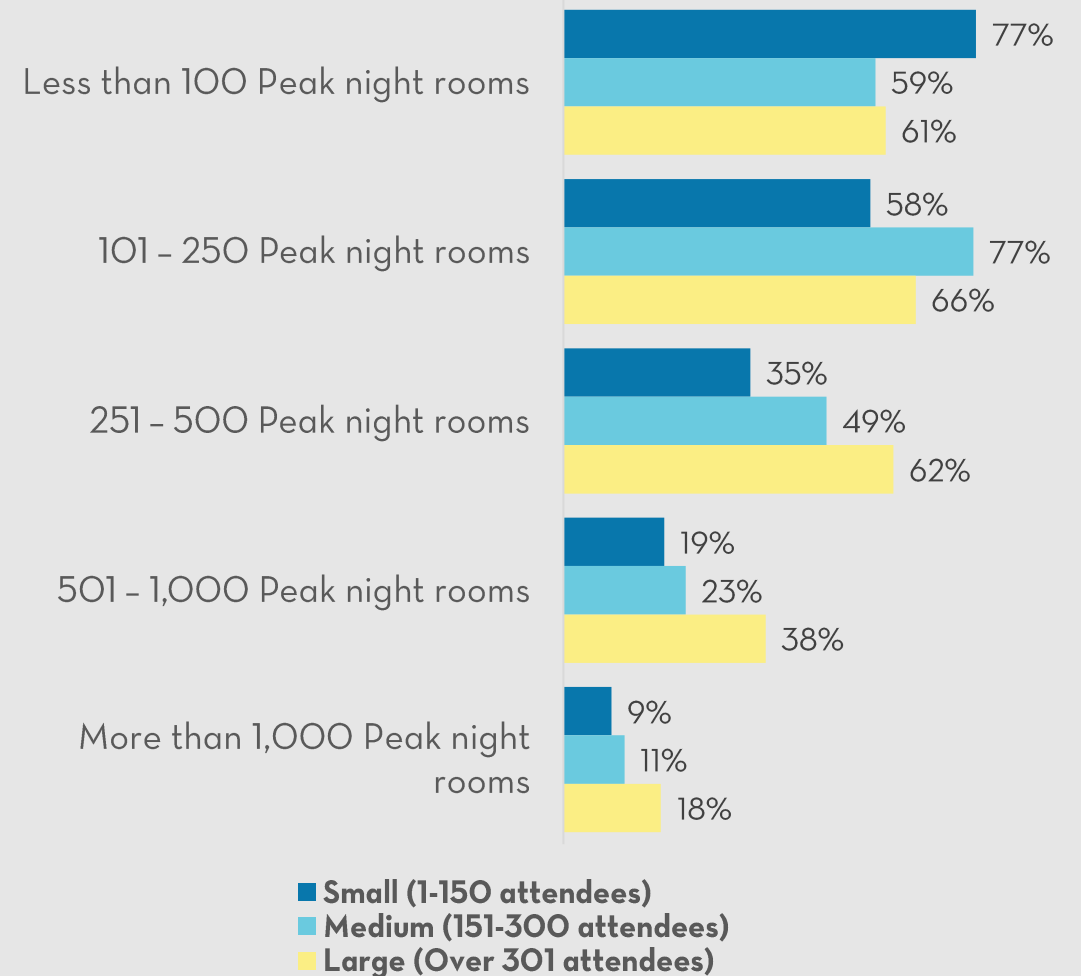
- Over **2 in 3** meeting planners typically require **fewer than 100 rooms** on a peak night
- Nearly **2 in 3** meeting planners typically require **101-250 rooms** on a peak night
- Over **1 in 3** meeting planners require **251-500 rooms** on a peak night



¹Multiple responses permitted.

HOW MANY ROOMS ON PEAK NIGHT DO YOU TYPICALLY REQUIRE FOR MEETINGS?¹

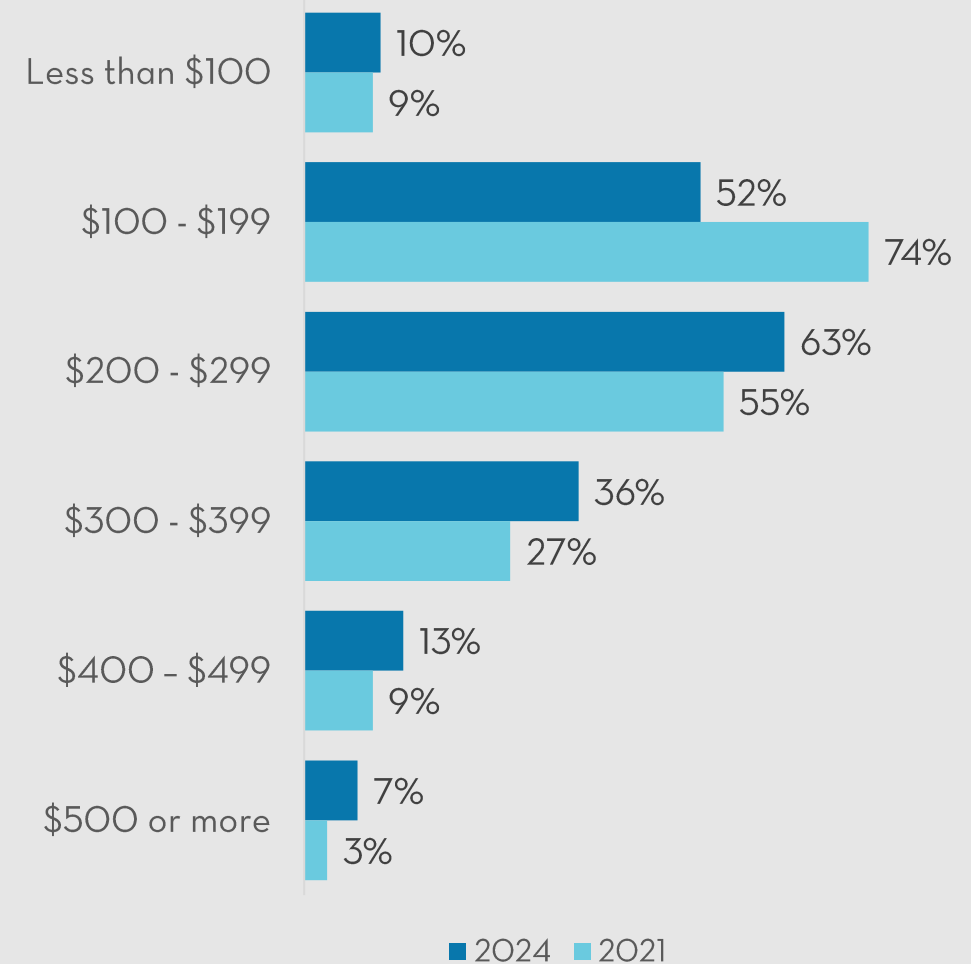
- **Small** events typically require fewer than 100 rooms on a peak night (**77%**)
- **Medium** events typically require 101-250 rooms on a peak night (**77%**)
- **Large** events typically require 101-250 rooms on a peak night (**66%**)



¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT ROOM RATE IS MOST APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR EVENTS?¹

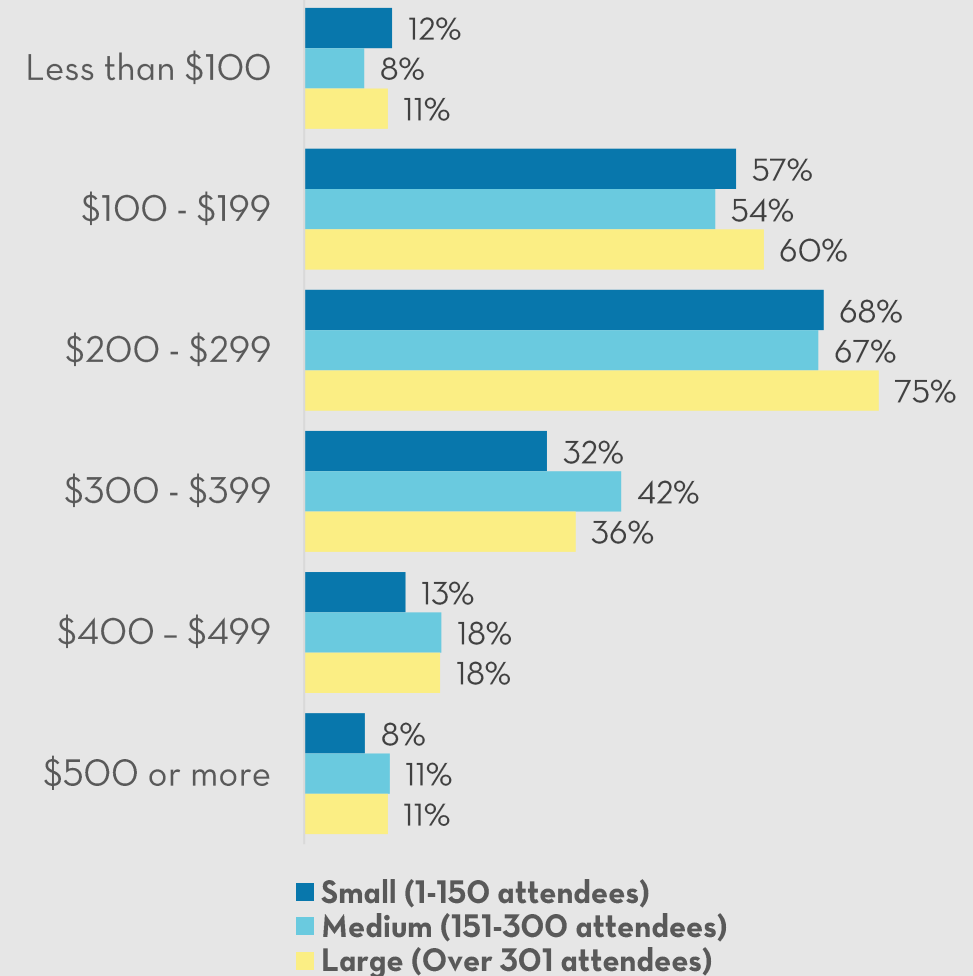
- Over **3 in 5** meeting planners find a room rate between **\$200-\$299** to be the most appropriate
- Nearly **2 in 5** also find a room rate between **\$300-\$399** to be the most appropriate
- Generally, meeting planners expect to pay more per room than in previous years



¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT ROOM RATE IS MOST APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR EVENTS?¹

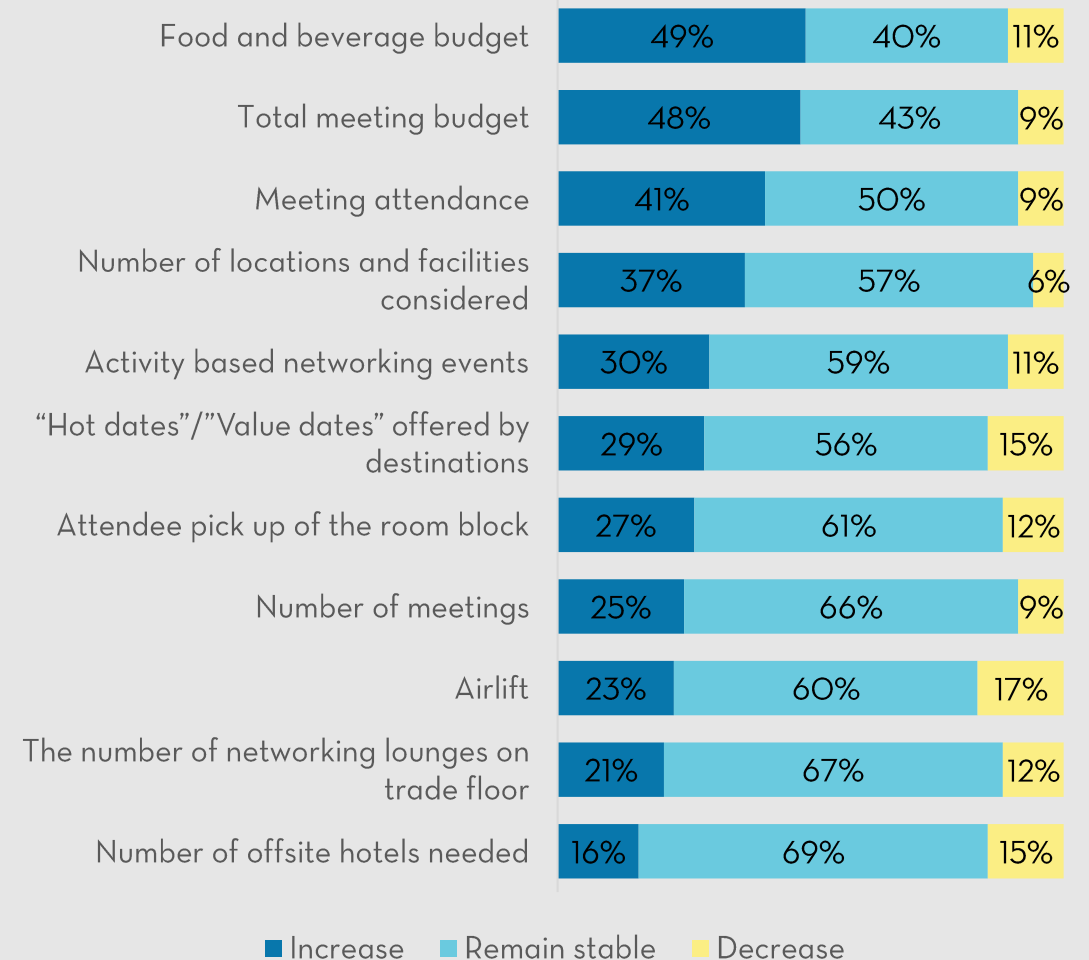
- **A majority of** meeting planners for **any sized** event find a room rate between **\$200-\$299** to be the most appropriate
- Meeting planners also find a room rate between **\$100-\$199** appropriate for **any sized** event



¹Multiple responses permitted.

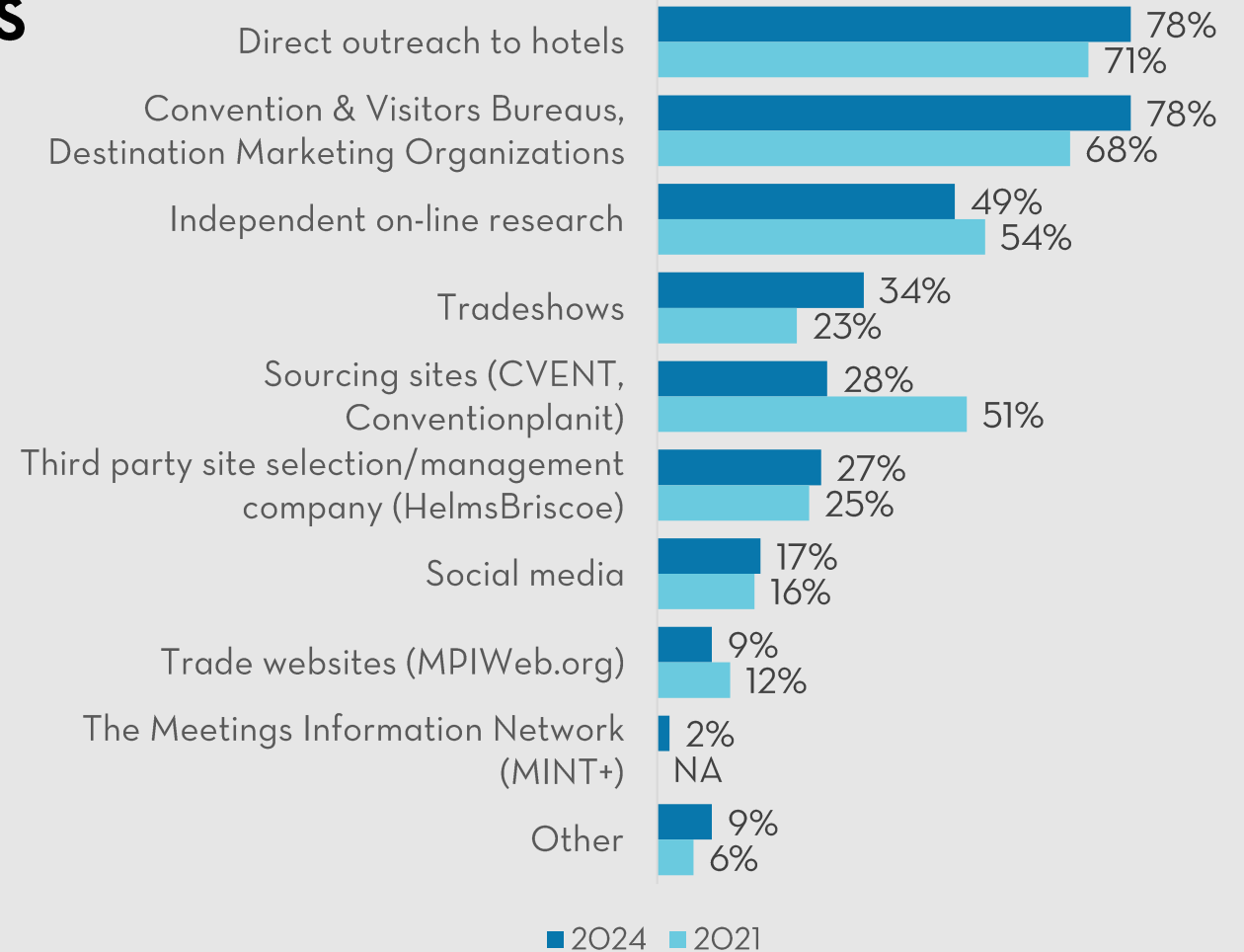
THINKING ABOUT THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS, WHAT CHANGES DO YOU FORESEE?

- Nearly **half** of meeting planners foresee an **increase** in:
 - total meeting budgets** (+29% points compared to 2021)
 - food & beverage budgets** in the next 3 years
- 2 in 3** meeting planners expect the **number of meetings** held to **remain stable** (+33% pts)
- Half** of meeting planners expect **meeting attendance** to **remain stable** (+23% pts), while over **2 in 5** expect attendance to **increase** (+7% pts)



WHICH RESOURCES DO YOU USE WHEN RESEARCHING DESTINATIONS FOR YOUR MEETINGS?¹

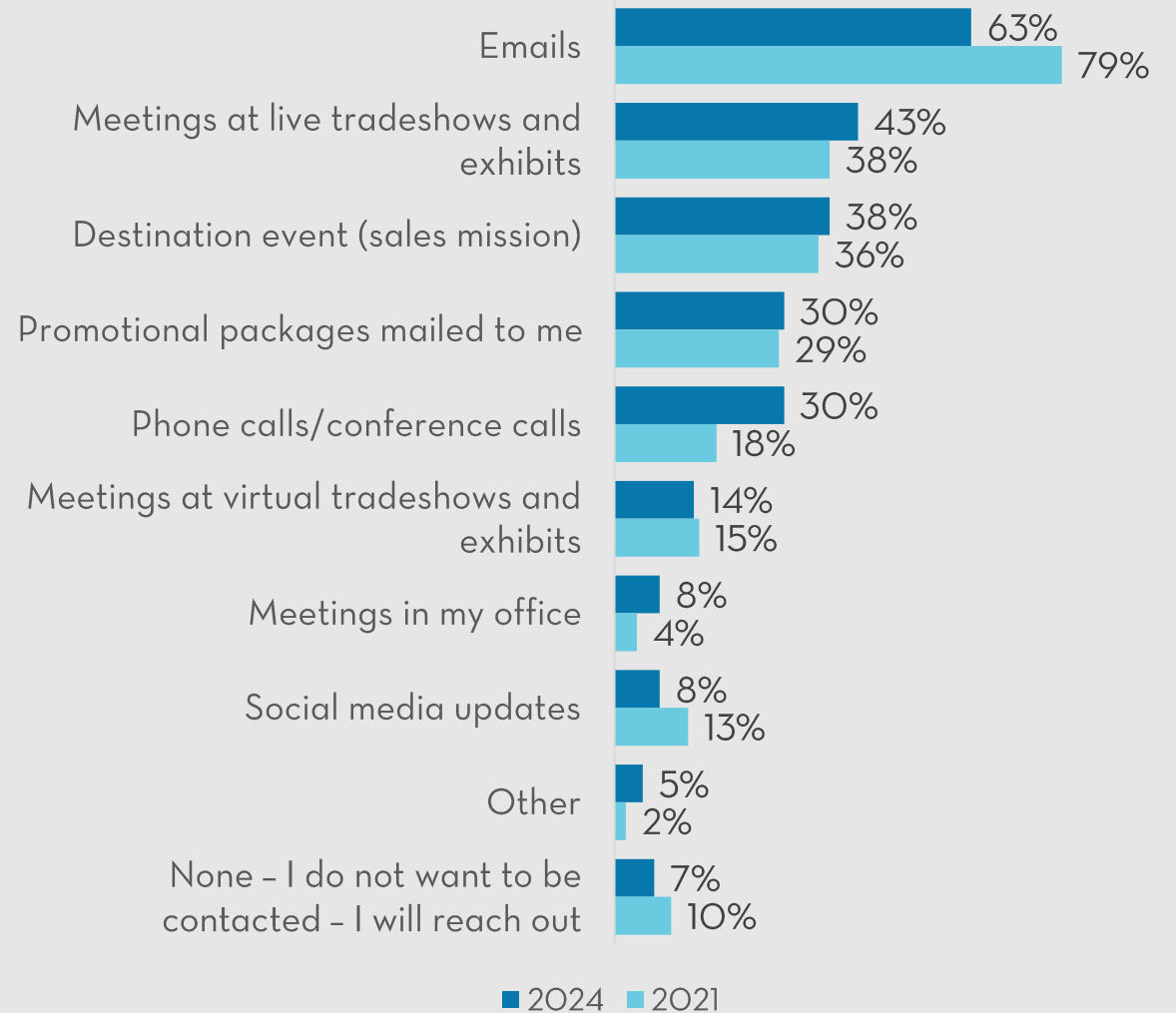
- Nearly **4 in 5** meeting planners will directly **reach out to hotels** or use **CVBs/DMOs** when researching destinations for their meeting
- Nearly **half** of meeting planners will conduct **independent on-line research**
- **Fewer** meeting planners utilize **sourcing sites** such as CVENT than in previous years
- Compared to 2021 study, meeting planners are more likely to rely on official sources such as **hotels, DMOs, and trade shows** compared to doing their own independent research



¹Multiple responses permitted.

HOW DO YOU PREFER TO BE CONTACTED BY A CVB'S SALES TEAM?¹

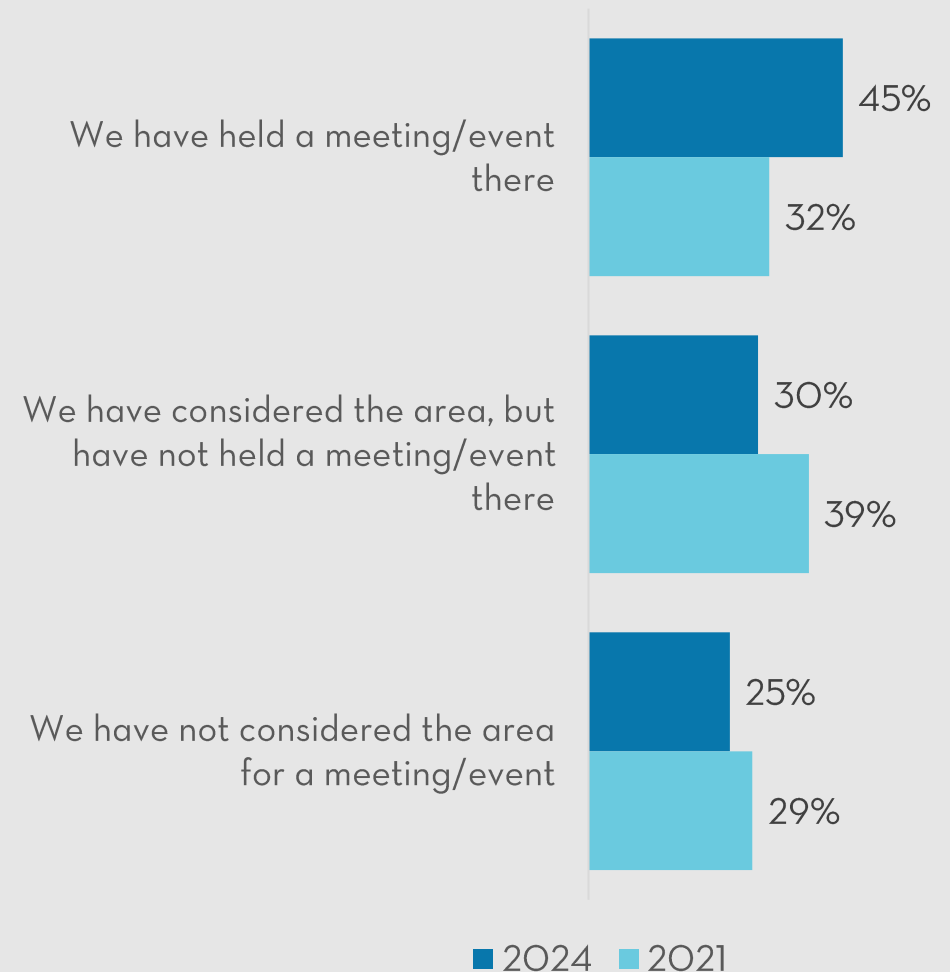
- Meeting planners prefer to be contacted by a CVB's sales team via **email (63%)**
- Over **2 in 5** prefer to have **meetings at live tradeshow and exhibits**
- Nearly **1 in 14** meeting planners **prefer to reach out to the CVB** themselves
- **More** meeting planners prefer to be reached by **phone** than in previous years



¹Multiple responses permitted.

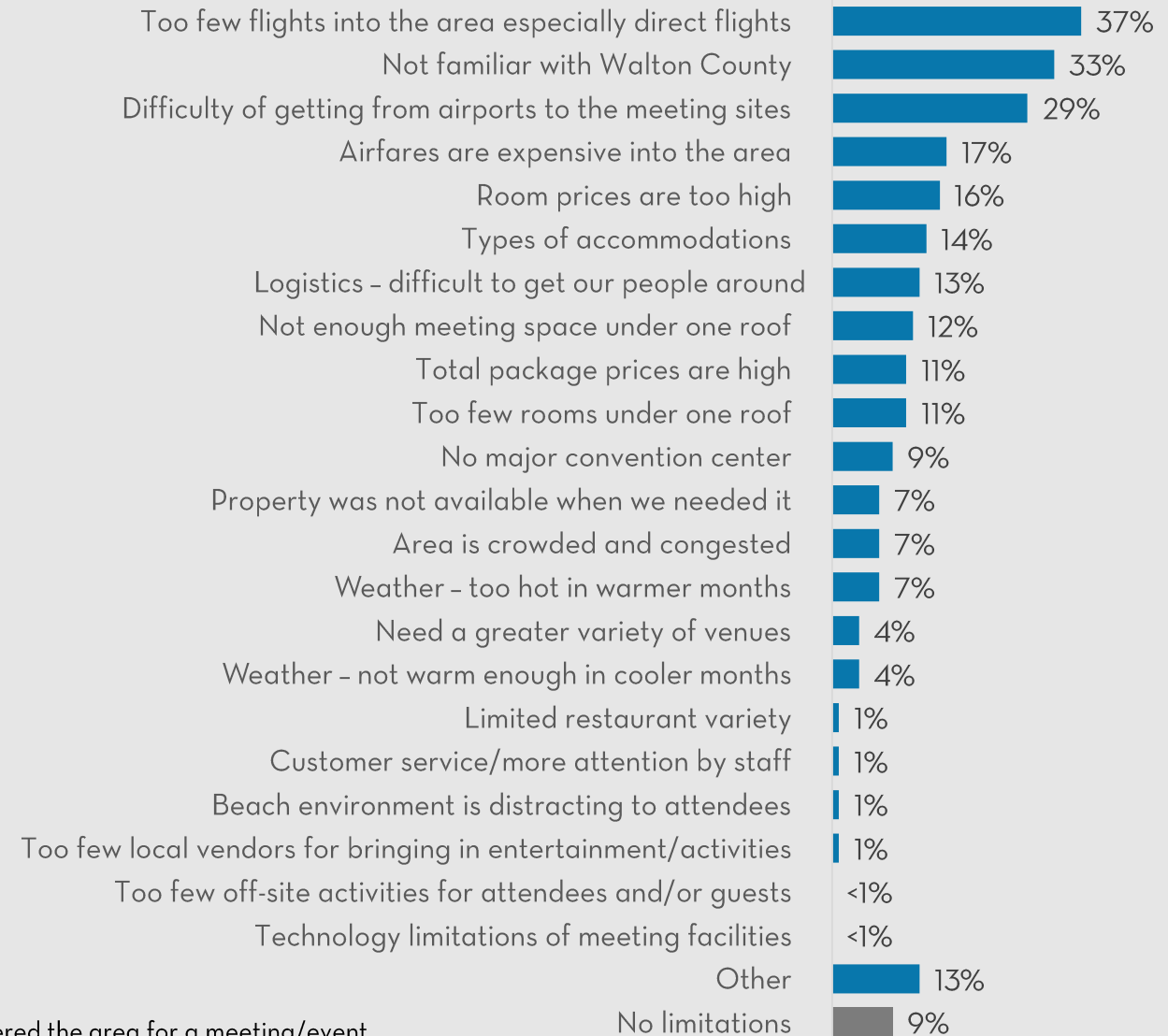
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS TRUE CONCERNING WALTON COUNTY?

- **Nearly half** of meeting planners have **held a meeting/event in Walton County**
- **3 in 10** meeting planners have **considered the area, but have not held a meeting/event in Walton County**



WHY HAVEN'T YOU HELD MEETINGS IN WALTON COUNTY [...]?¹

- Among those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting in Walton County, nearly **2 in 5** list **too few flights**
- About **3 in 10** list **lack of familiarity**, and **difficulty getting to and from airports** as top limitations
- **Air-related restrictions** account for **3 of the 4** top limitations for Walton County



¹ Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event there or have not considered the area for a meeting/event.
 Q: Why haven't you held meetings in Walton County, that is, what are the limitations of Walton County as a meeting destination?
 Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

- Among planners who have held a meeting/event in Walton County, nearly **1 in 5** say there are **no limitations** to holding a event/meeting in Walton County
- Compared to planners who have not held meetings in the county, those who have are more likely to cite limitations such as **too few flights**, difficulty getting from **airport to meeting site**, **high airfare costs**, and **congestion in the area**
- **Too few flights** and **difficulty getting from airport to meeting site** are top perceived and actual limitations



¹Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in Walton County. Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

	Have <u>not</u> held a meeting here ¹	Have held a meeting here ²	Difference
Too few flights into the area especially direct flights	37%	58%	+ 21%
Difficulty of getting from airports in the area to the meeting sites	29%	33%	+ 4%
Airfares are expensive into the area	17%	30%	+ 13%
Area is crowded and congested	7%	25%	+ 18%
Room prices are too high	16%	20%	+ 4%
Property was not available when we needed it	7%	15%	+ 8%
Logistics – difficult to get around	13%	13%	0%
Not enough meeting space under one roof	12%	13%	+ 1%
Total package prices are high	11%	10%	- 1%
No major convention center	9%	10%	+ 1%
Need a greater variety of venues	4%	8%	+ 4%
Types of accommodations	14%	7%	- 7%
Too few rooms under one roof	11%	7%	- 4%
Weather – too hot in warmer months	7%	5%	- 2%
Customer service/more attention by staff	1%	5%	+ 4%
Limited restaurant variety	1%	3%	+ 2%
Weather – not warm enough in cooler months	4%	2%	- 2%
Too few local vendors for bringing in entertainment/activities	1%	2%	+ 1%
Technology limitations of meeting facilities	0%	2%	+ 2%
Not familiar with Walton County	33%	0%	- 33%
Beach environment is distracting to attendees	1%	0%	- 1%
Too few off-site activities for attendees and/or guests	0%	0%	0%
No limitations	9%	17%	+ 8%

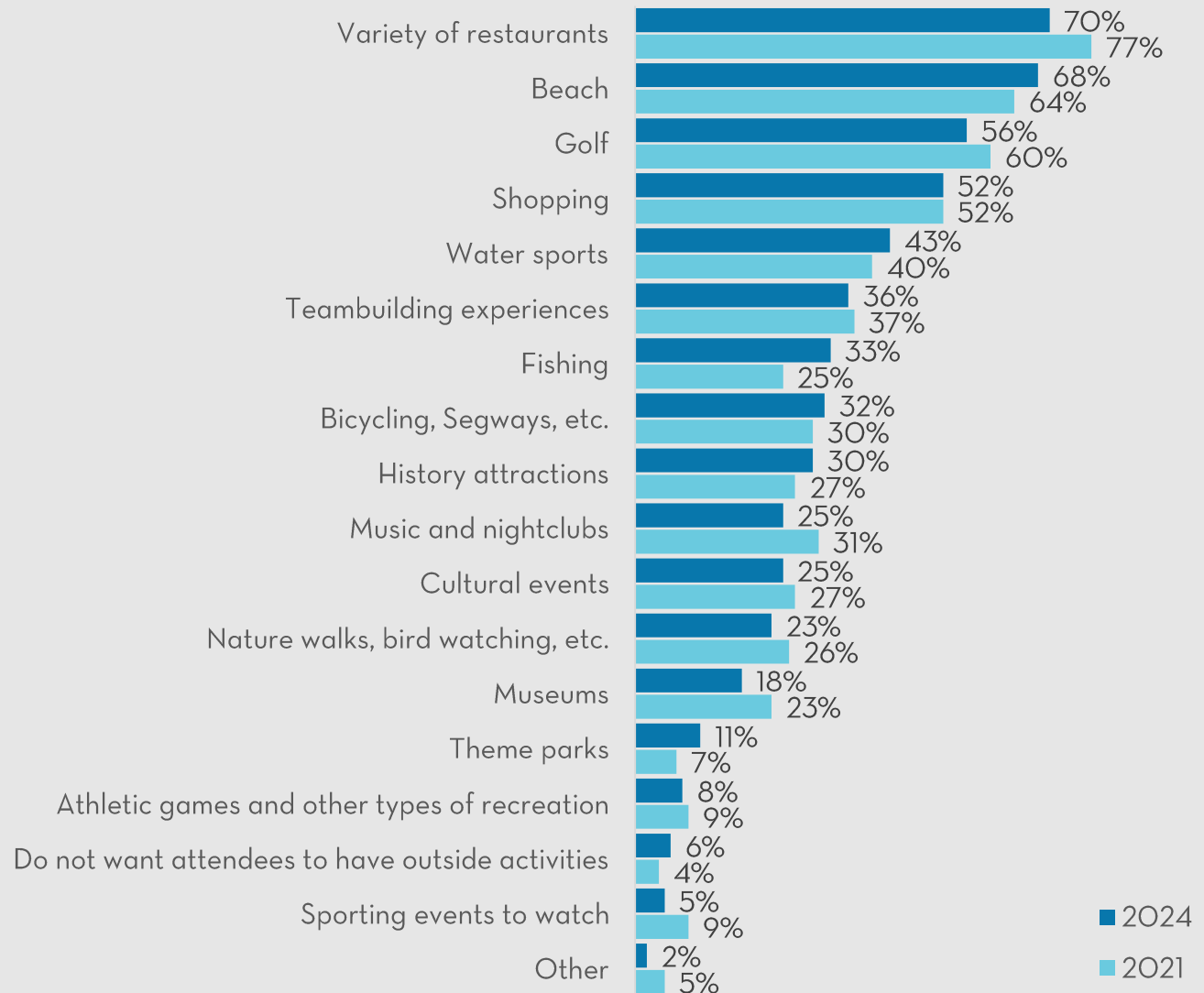
¹ Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event there or have not considered the area for a meeting/event.

² Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in Walton County.

Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU PREFER FOR YOUR ATTENDEES OUTSIDE OF MEETINGS/EVENTS?¹

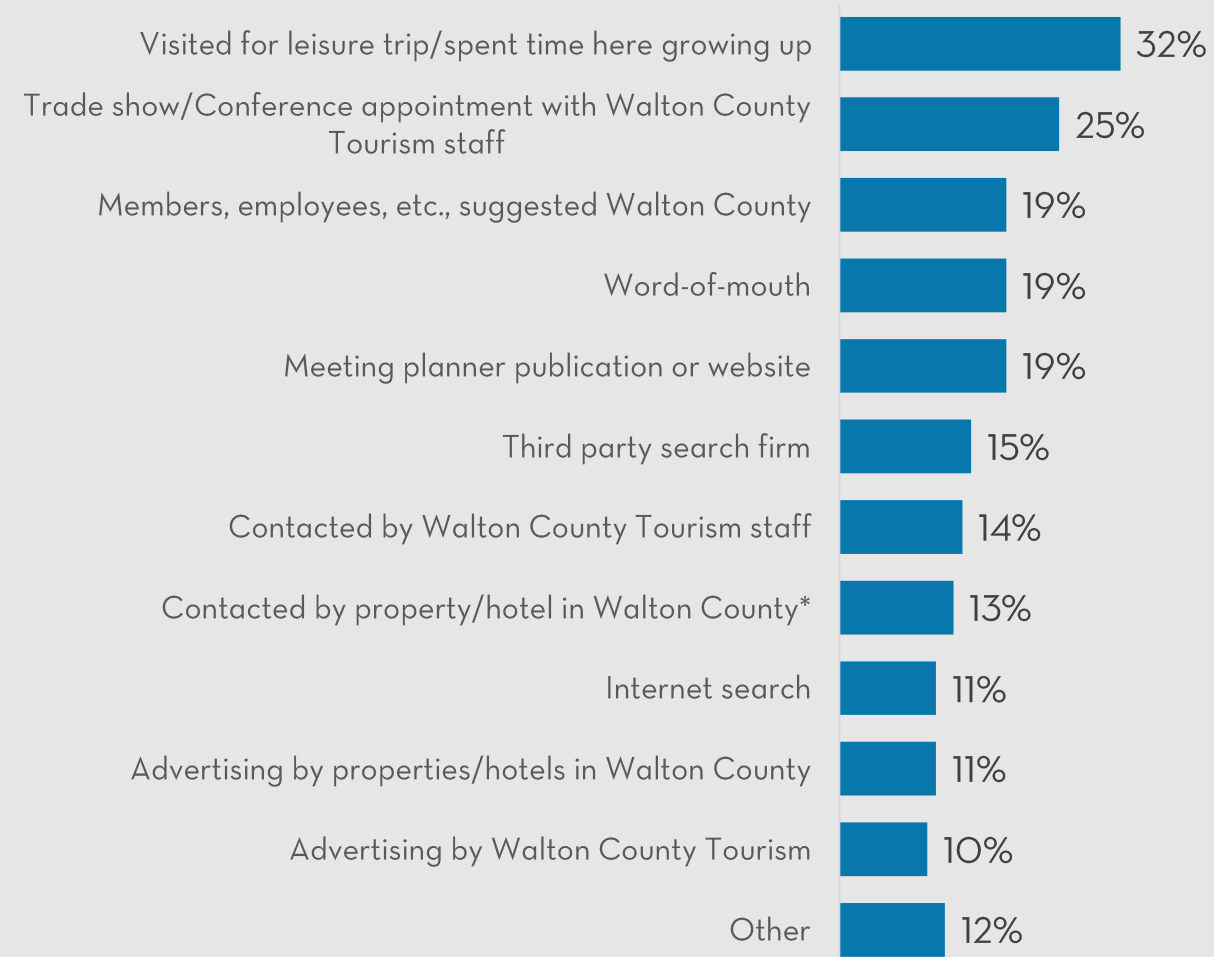
- **7 in 10** meeting planners list a **variety of restaurants** as a top activity they prefer for their attendees
- Other top activities meeting planners prefer for their attendees include the **beach, golf, and shopping**
- Preferences in **fishing, water sports, and beach**, all of which Walton County offers, have increased since the 2021 study



¹Multiple responses permitted.

HOW DID WALTON COUNTY GET ON YOUR RADAR AS A POSSIBLE MEETING SITE? ¹

- Nearly **1 in 3** meeting planners found out about Walton County as a meeting destination from previous **leisure trips**
- **1 in 4** meeting planners found out at a **tradeshow/conference appointment**
- **1 in 5** meeting planners heard of Walton County from **members, employees, etc., by word-of-mouth, or a meeting planner publication**

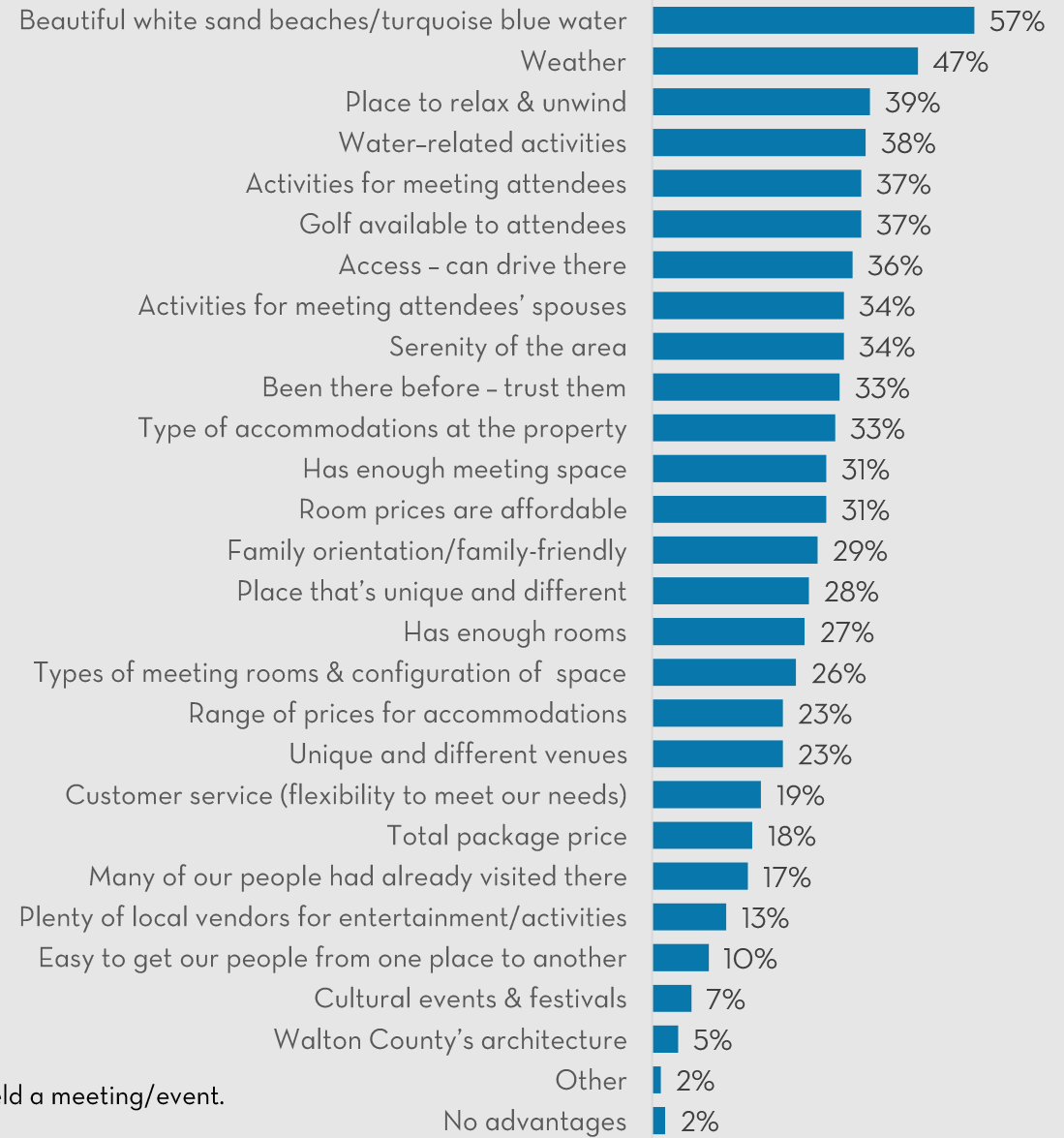


¹Only asked to those who have held an event in the area or considered it

*8% of all planners were contacted by the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa, 5% by the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, and 5% by Hotel Effie Sandestin

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

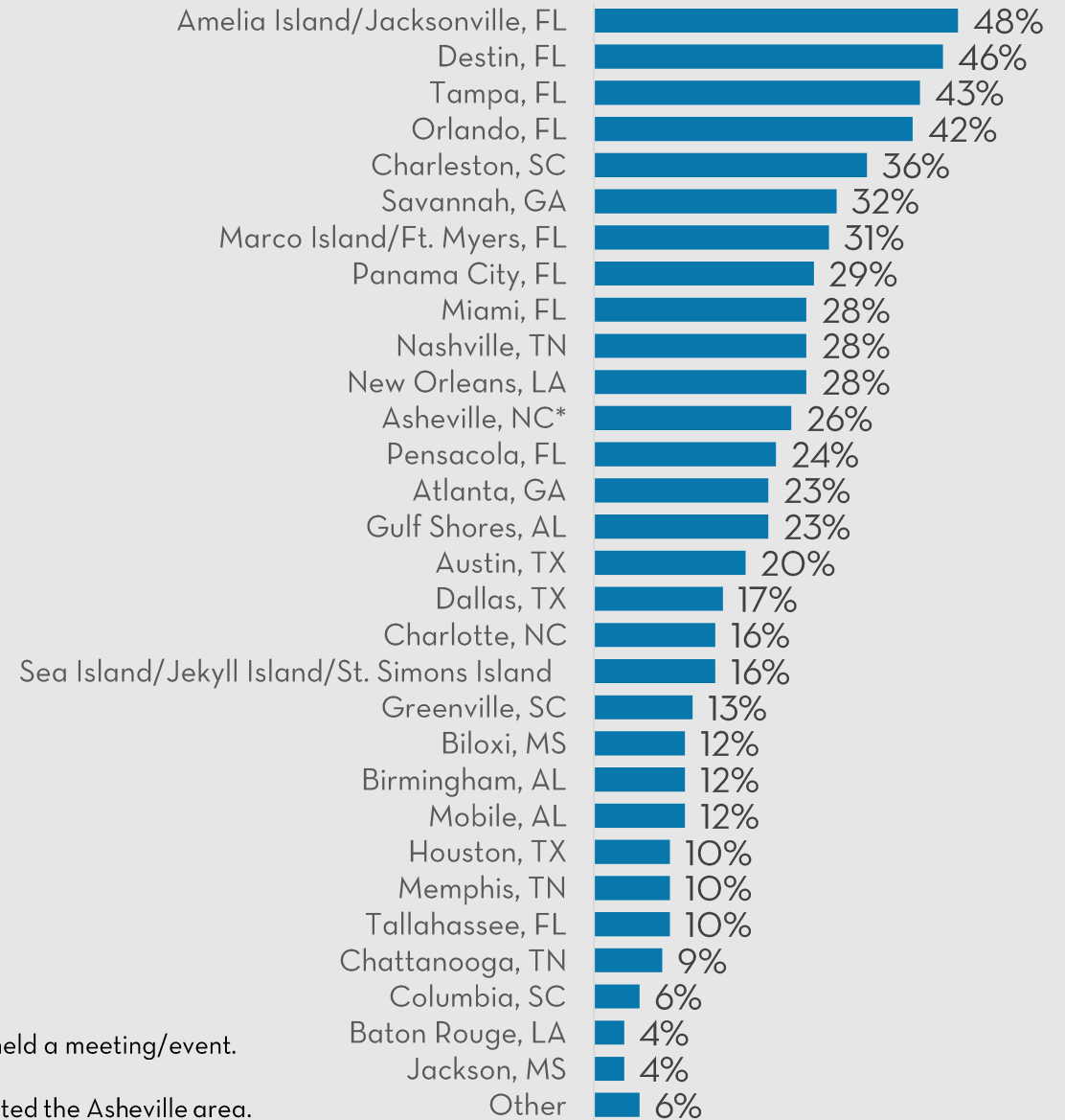
- Nearly **3 in 5** meeting planners find the **beautiful white sand beaches/turquoise blue water** of Walton County an advantage for meetings
- Nearly **half** see the **weather** of Walton County as an advantage
- Compared to 2021, more say they have **been there before and trust them, activities for meeting attendees and their spouses, and the total package price** were advantages



¹ Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in the area or have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event. Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT OTHER DESTINATIONS DID YOU CONSIDER?¹

- Nearly **half** of meeting planners considered **Amelia Island/Jacksonville** and **Destin** when deciding where to hold their event/meeting
- Over **2 in 5** considered **Tampa** and **Orlando**
- Around **1 in 3** considered **Charleston** and **Savannah**

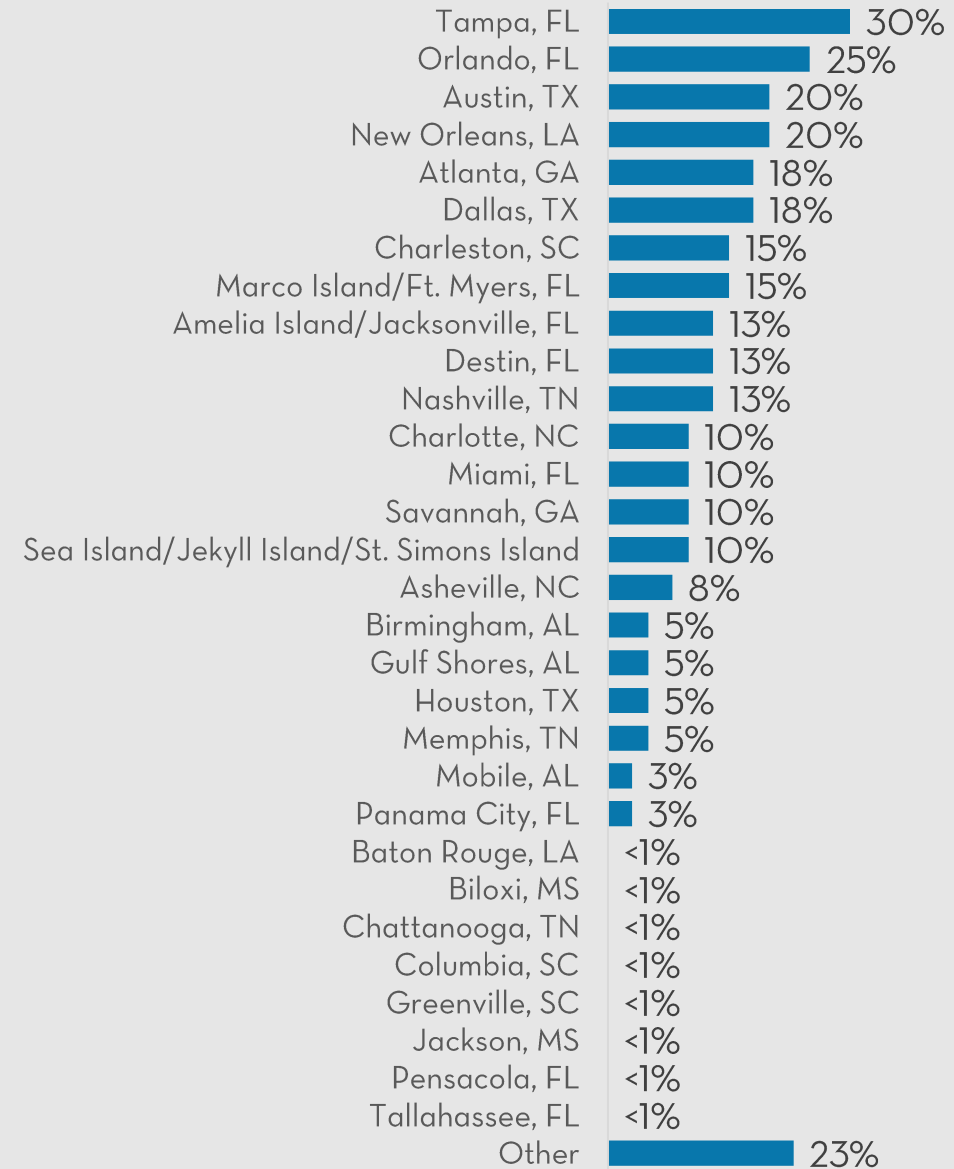


¹ Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in the area or have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event. Multiple responses permitted.

* Data collection for this study took place before and after Hurricane Helene which substantially impacted the Asheville area.

WHERE DID YOU EVENTUALLY HOLD YOUR EVENT?¹

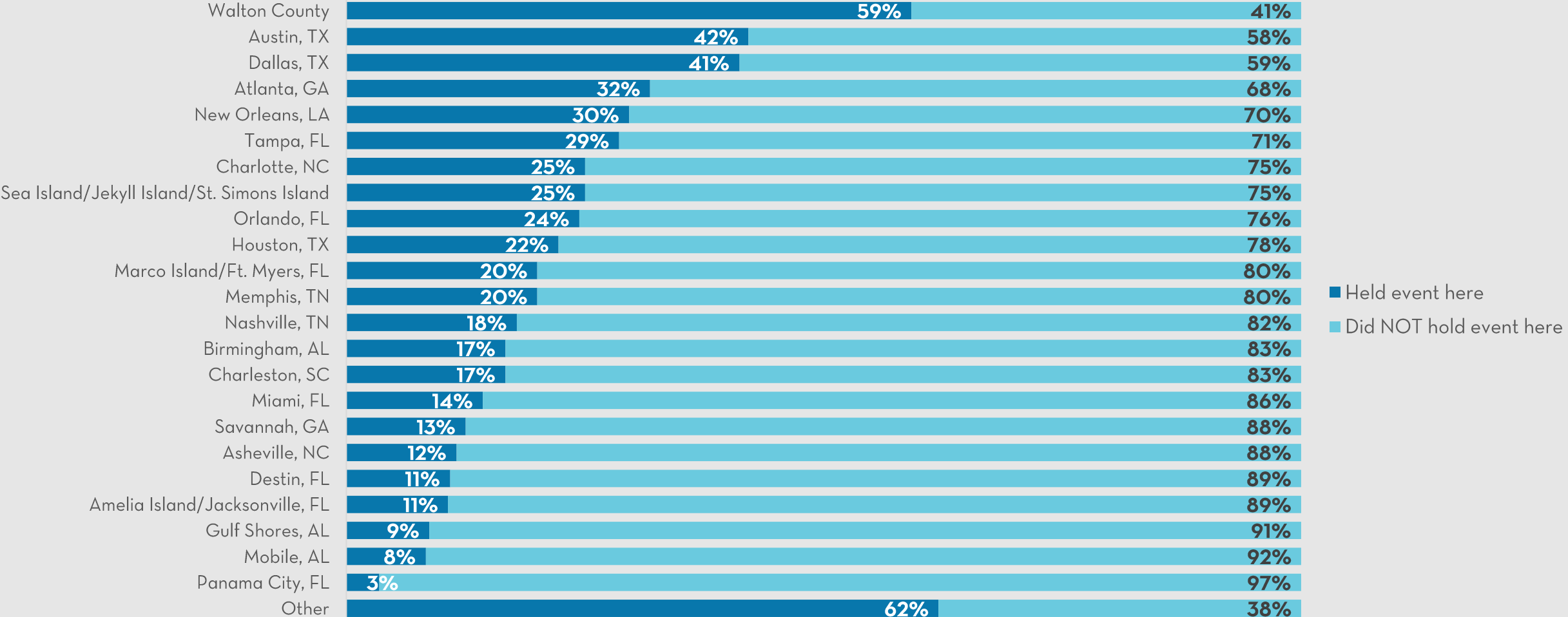
- **3 in 10** meeting planners eventually held their event in **Tampa** after considering Walton County
- **1 in 4** held their event in **Orlando**



¹ Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event. Multiple responses permitted.

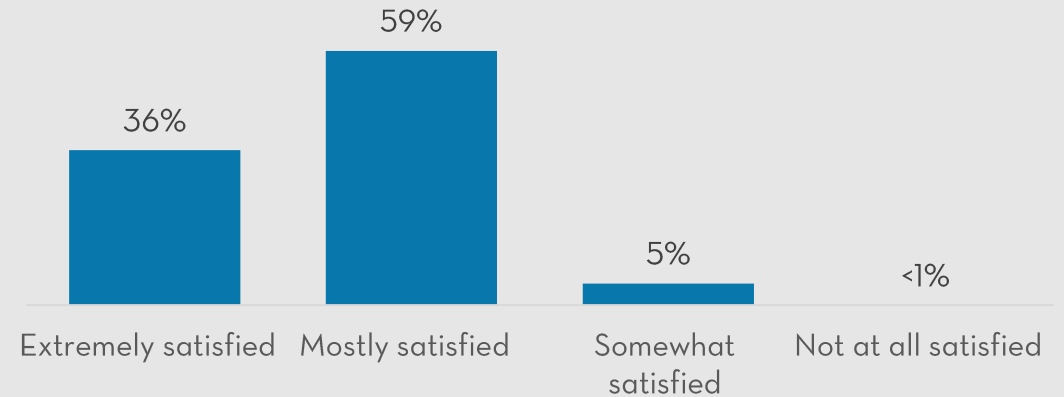
COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE MEETING DESTINATIONS TO FINAL DESTINATIONS SELECTIONS

About 2 in 5 meeting planners who considered holding an event in Austin or Walton County, chose to hold their event in Austin instead. The same is true for those who considered Dallas over Walton County.



HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE DESTINATION YOU SELECTED?¹

- Most meeting planners were satisfied with the destination they chose
- Over **1 in 3** meeting planners were **extremely satisfied**²

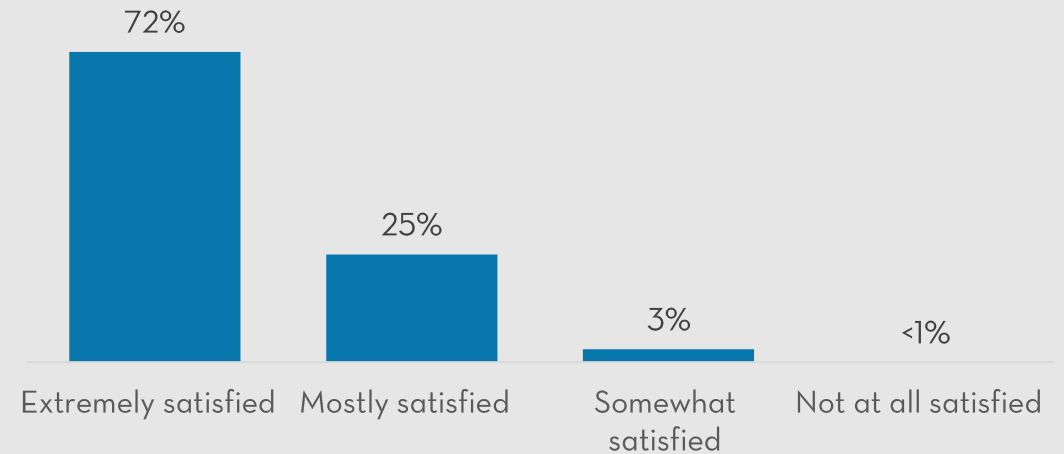


¹ Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event.

² Small sample size. Interpret results with caution.

HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH WALTON COUNTY FOR YOUR LAST MEETING/EVENT THERE?¹

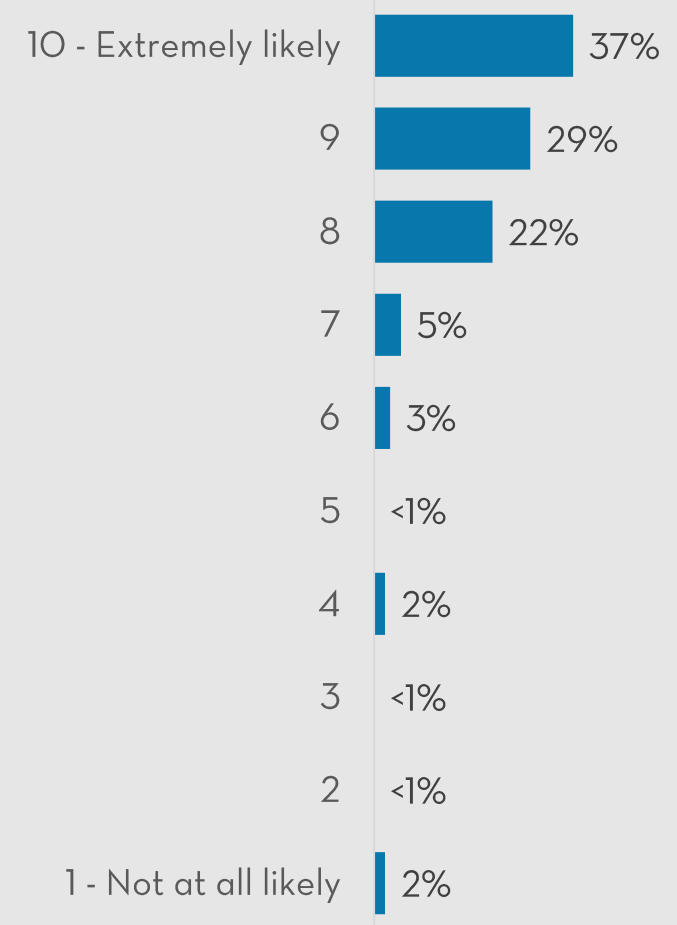
- **Nearly all** meeting planners were satisfied with Walton County hosting their events
- Nearly **3 in 4** meeting planners were **extremely satisfied**



¹Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in Walton County.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD RECOMMEND WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION? ¹

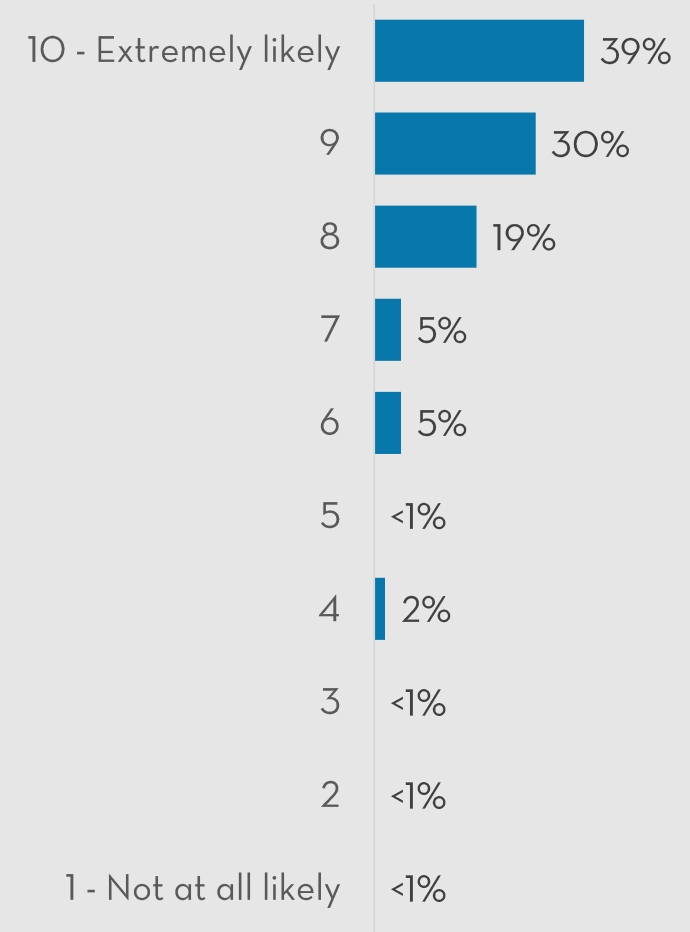
- When asked to rate how likely they are to recommend Walton County as a meeting destination, those who have held an event in Walton County gave that likelihood an average of an **8.7**
- Nearly **2 in 5** meeting planners said they were **extremely likely** to recommend Walton County
- Net Promoter Score (NPS): **+59**
 - 66% Promoters (9-10)
 - 27% Passives (7-8)
 - 7% Detractors (0-6)



¹Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in Walton County.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD RETURN TO WALTON COUNTY TO HOLD ANOTHER MEETING?¹

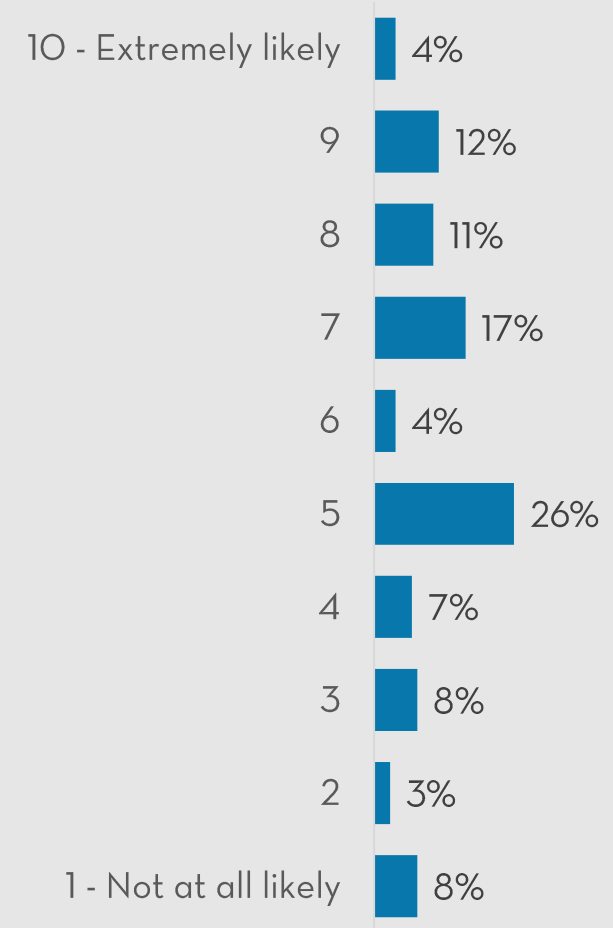
- When asked to rate how likely they are to return to Walton County to hold another meeting, those who have held an event in Walton County gave that likelihood an average of an **8.8**
 - 69% - Likely (9-10)
 - 24% - Probably (7-8)
 - 7% - Not likely (1-6)
- Nearly **2 in 5** meeting planners said they were **extremely likely** to return to Walton County



¹Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in Walton County.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD HOLD A FUTURE MEETING IN WALTON COUNTY?¹

- When asked to rate how likely they are to hold a future meeting in Walton County, those meeting planners that have considered the area but have not held a meeting there and those that have not considered the area for a meeting gave that likelihood an average of a **5.8**
 - 16% - Likely (9-10)
 - 28% - Probably (7-8)
 - 56% - Not likely (1-6)
- Over **1 in 4** meeting planners gave their likelihood to hold a meeting in Walton County a **5.0**



¹Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event there or have not considered the area for a meeting/event.

RESPONDENTS WERE PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF SOUTH WALTON AS A MEETING DESTINATION AND SHOWN THE FOLLOWING VIDEO:

“Located along a 26-mile stretch of sugar-white sand beaches and turquoise water on Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast, South Walton is continually recognized as a premier meetings destination. Whether for an intimate executive retreat or a 1,500-person convention, South Walton offers charm and style through stunning architecture, fresh and creative dining options, championship golf, and unique teambuilding activities. Travel is a breeze, whether by car or by plane – South Walton is conveniently located less than 25 miles from Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) and Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS).”

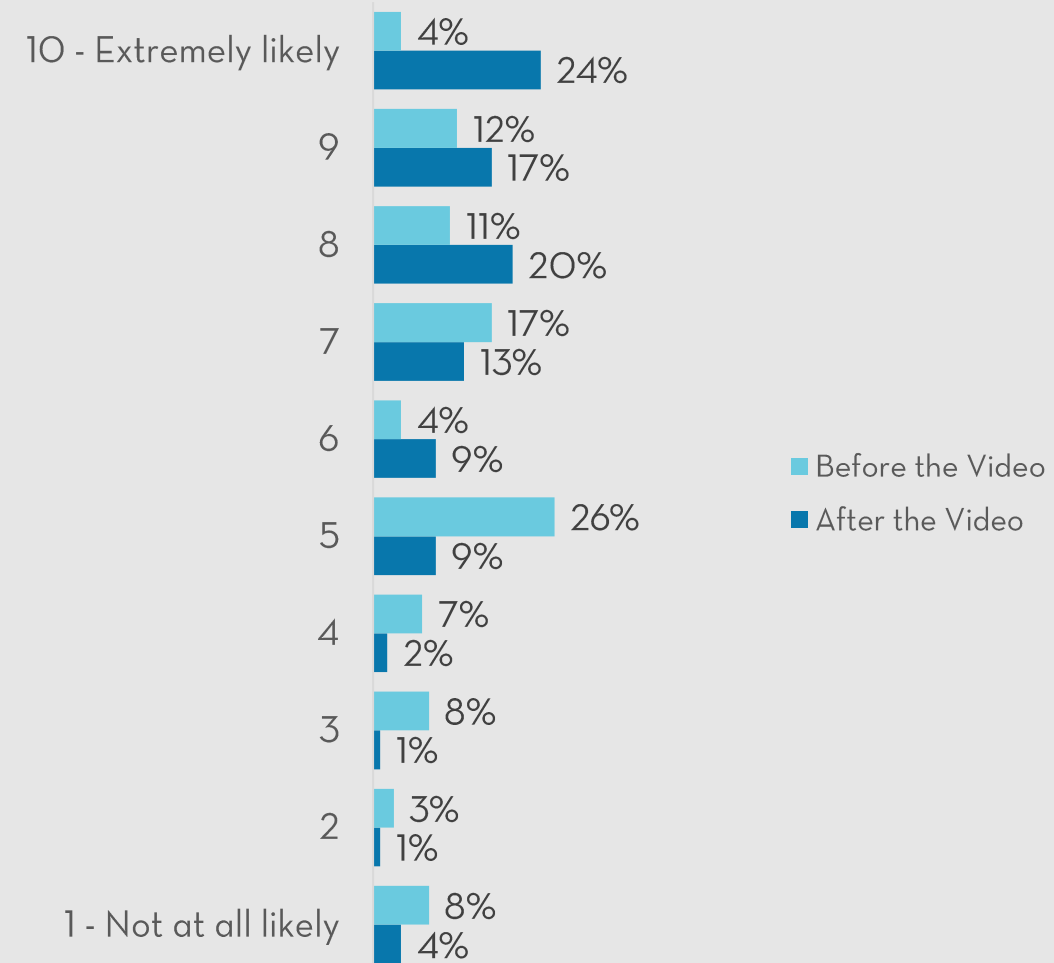


AFTER SEEING THE VIDEO AND READING THE DESCRIPTION ABOUT WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD HOLD A FUTURE MEETING IN WALTON COUNTY?¹

- After being shown promotions for Walton County as a meeting destination and then asked to rate how likely they are to hold a future meeting in Walton County, meeting planners gave that likelihood an average of a **7.6, +1.8 pts from before seeing this information**

	BEFORE VIDEO	AFTER VIDEO	% POINT CHANGE
Likely (9-10)	16%	41%	+ 25% pts
Probably (7-8)	28%	33%	+ 5% pts
Not Likely (1-6)	56%	26%	- 30% pts

- Nearly **1 in 4** meeting planners said they were **extremely likely** to hold a future meeting in Walton County

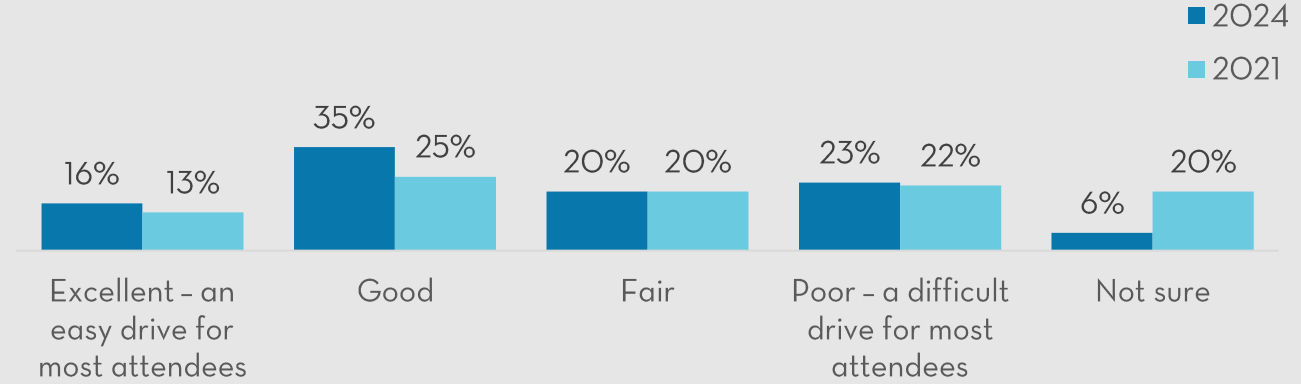


¹Asked to all respondents.

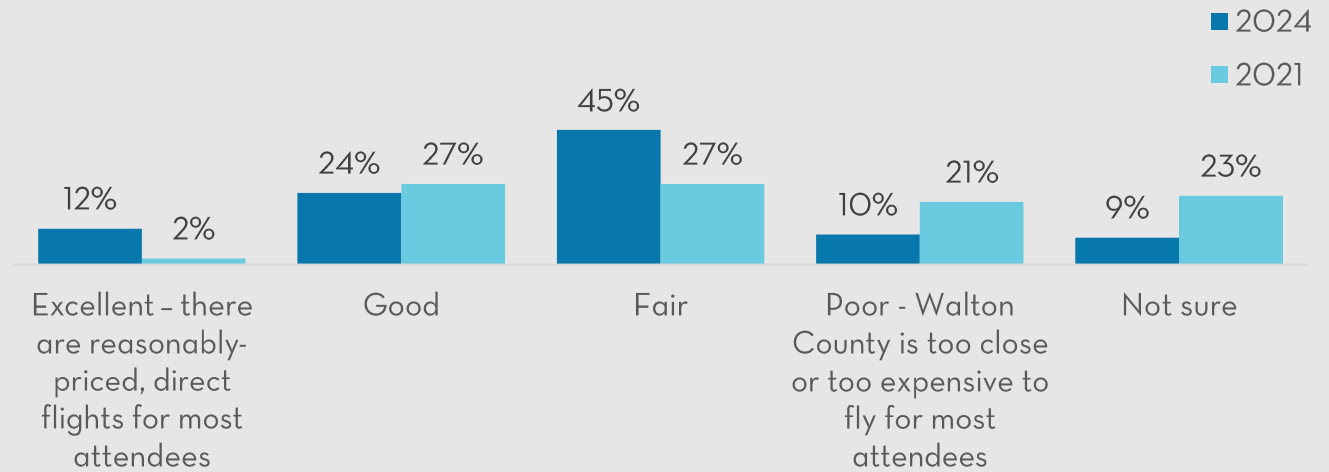
HOW WOULD YOU RATE WALTON COUNTY IN TERMS OF:

- Over **half** of meeting planners would rate the ability to drive to Walton County as **good** or **excellent**
- Over **1 in 3** meeting planners would rate the ability to fly to Walton County as **good** or **excellent**

Attendees ability to **drive** there

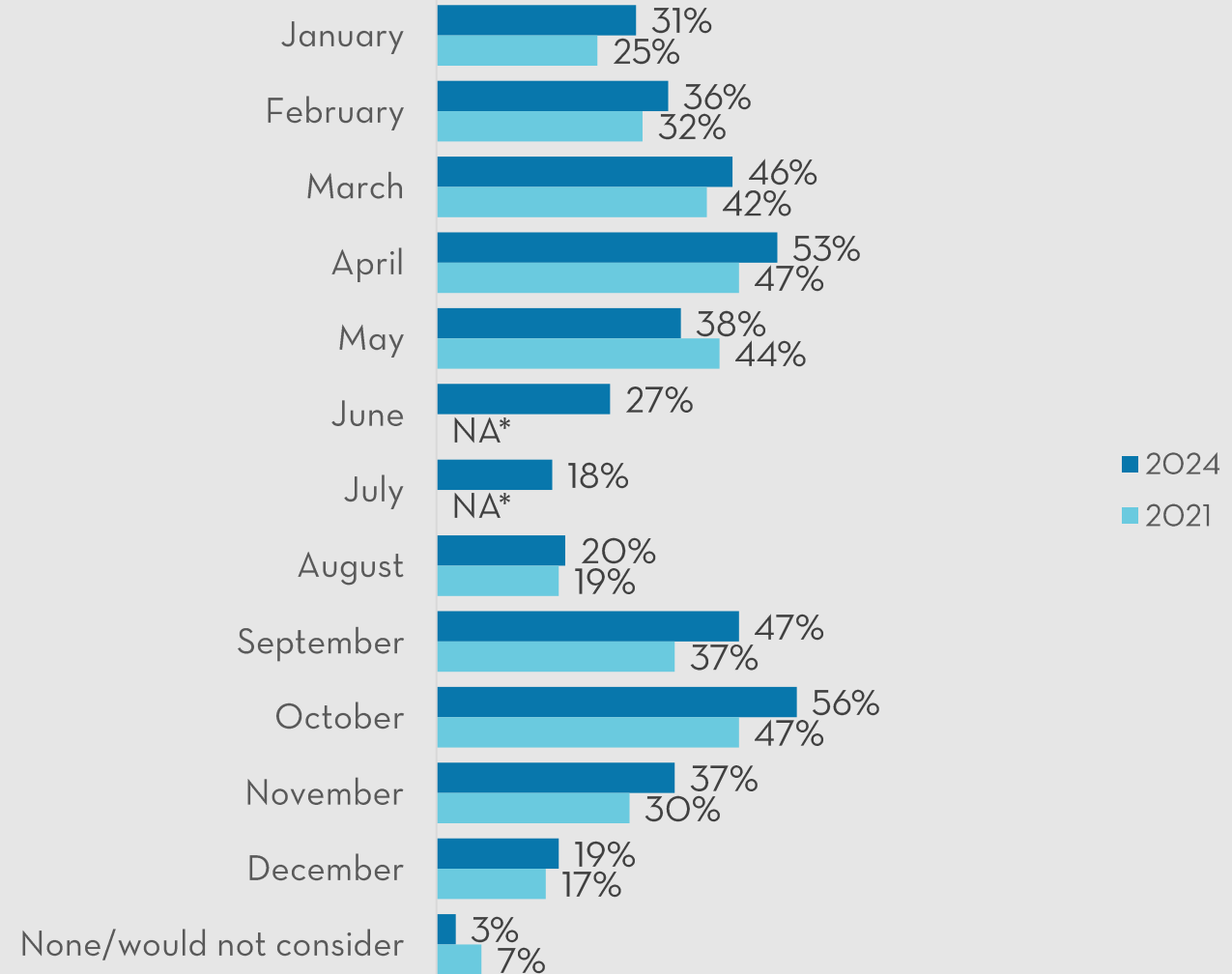


Attendees ability to **fly** there



IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MONTHS WOULD YOU DEFINITELY CONSIDER WALTON COUNTY FOR A MEETING?¹

- Peak months that meeting planners would consider Walton County for a meeting include:
 - **October (56%)**
 - **April (53%)**
 - **September (47%)**
 - **March (46%)**

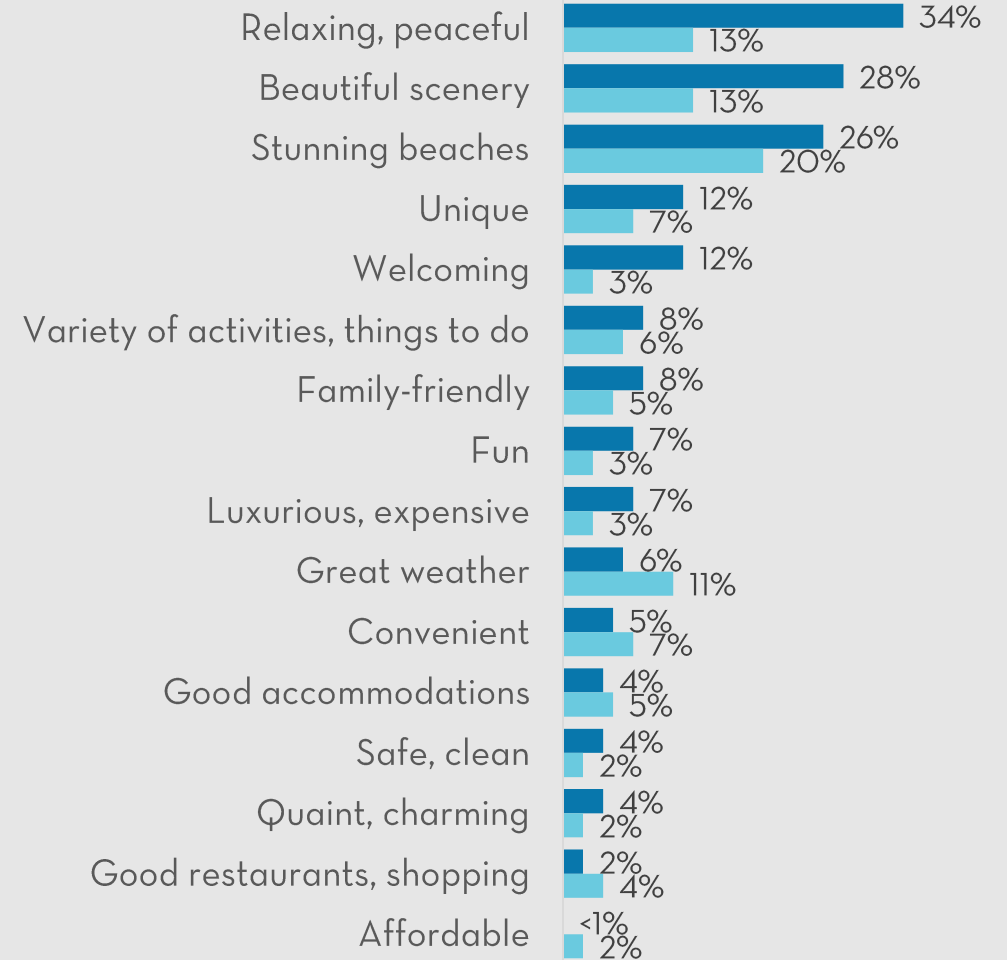


¹Multiple responses permitted.

*June and July were not presented as options in the 2021 study as it was assumed that this was high season for leisure visitors and not a focus for meetings.

WHAT WORDS OR PHRASES WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

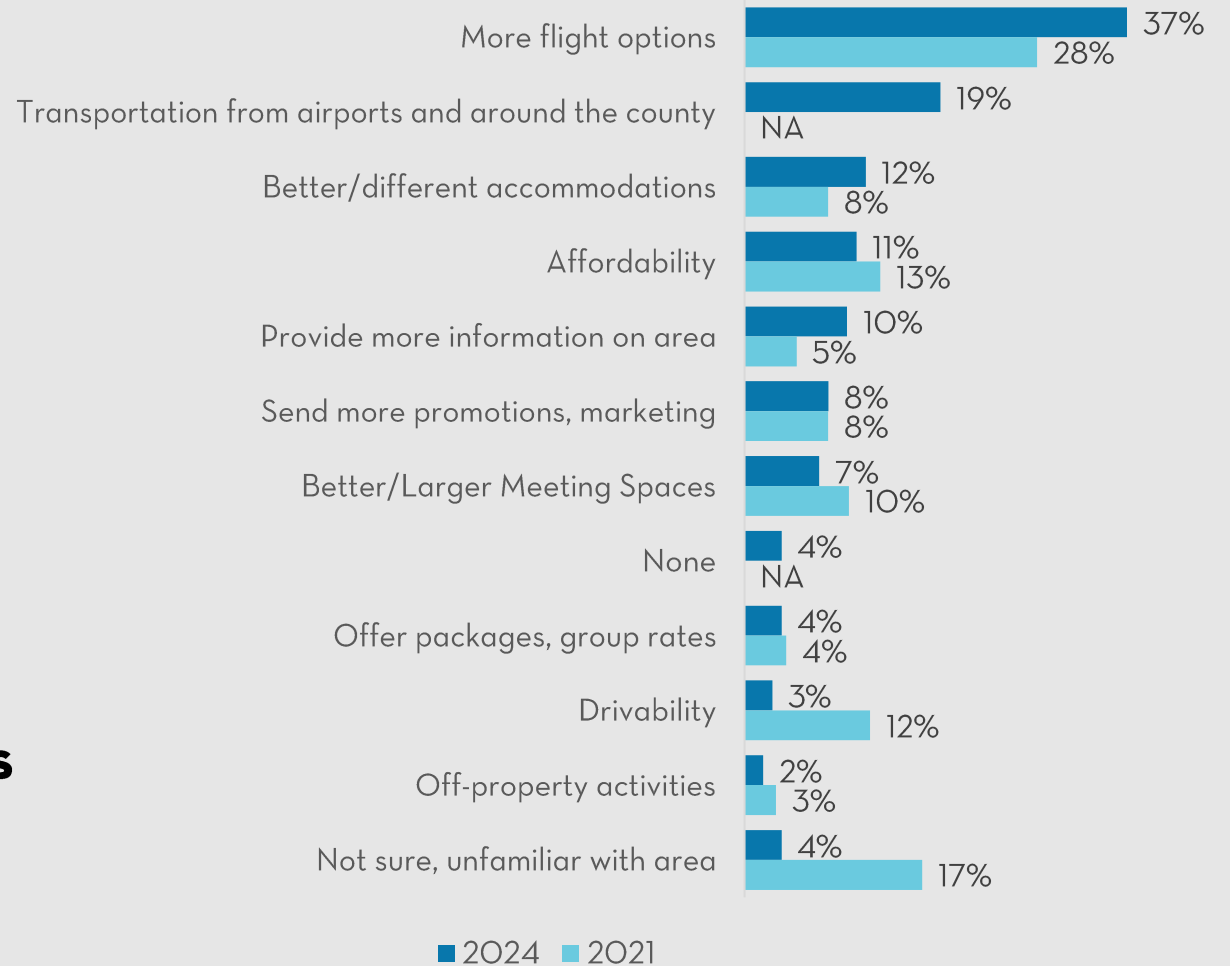
- Over **1 in 3** meeting planners would use **relaxing and peaceful** to describe Walton County as a meeting destination



¹Coded open-ended responses.
Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT ONE IMPROVEMENT WILL MAKE WALTON COUNTY MORE ATTRACTIVE AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

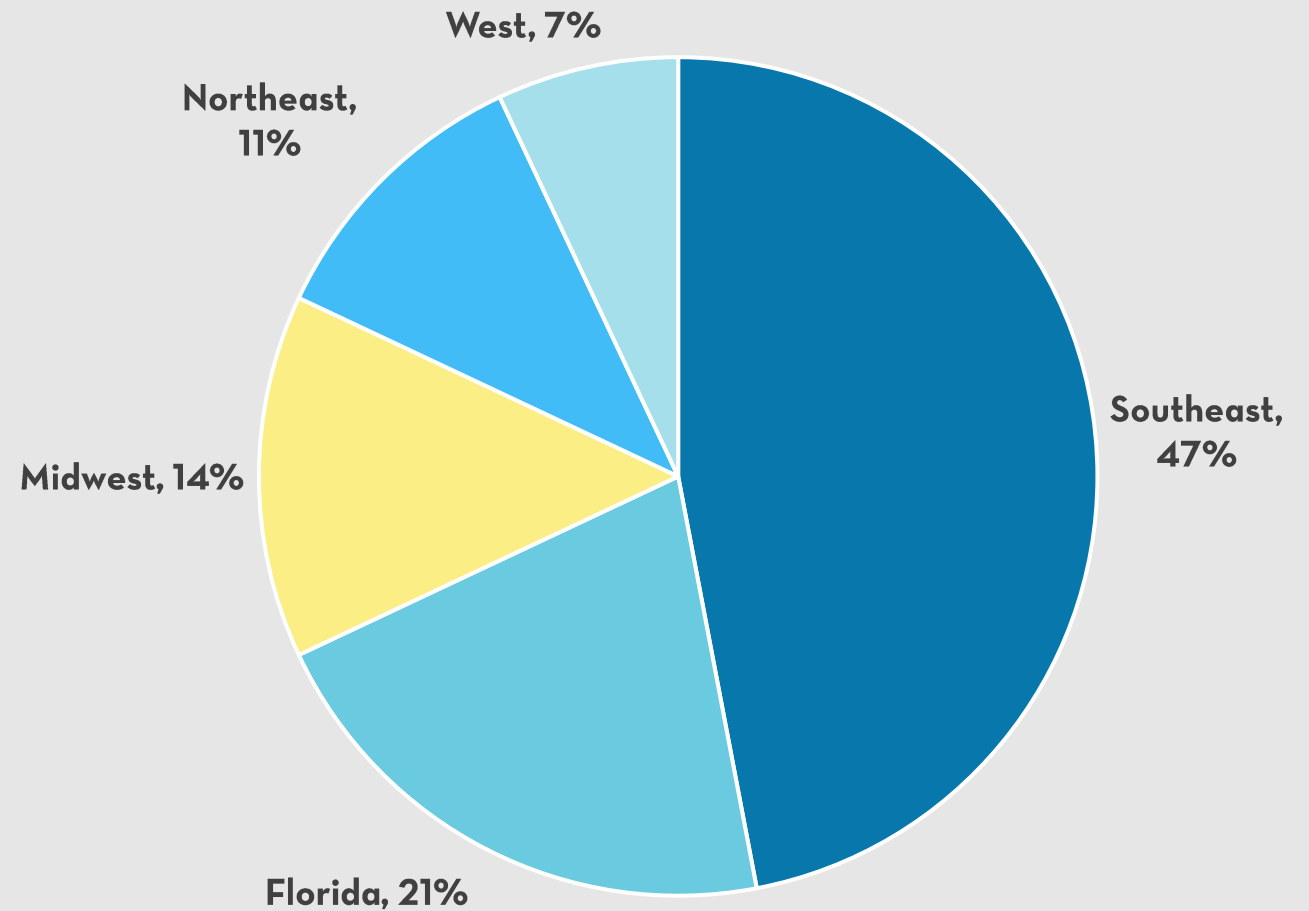
- Nearly **2 in 5** meeting planners suggest **more flights options** to make Walton County a more attractive meeting destination – this improvement is listed almost **2 times more** than any other suggestion



¹Coded open-ended responses.
Multiple responses permitted.

MEETING PLANNER REGION

- Nearly **half** meeting planners are located in the **Southeast**
- Over **1 in 5** meeting planners are located in **Florida**





MEETING PLANNER TYPES

The following section provides a comprehensive profile of the three meeting planner types in this study

MEETING PLANNER TYPES

CHOOSE - 45%

Chose Walton County for one of their meetings/events

CONTEMPLATOR - 30%

Considered Walton County as a destination for one of their meetings/events, but ultimately chose another destination

AVOIDER - 25%

Did not consider Walton County for their meeting/events





CHOOSE

CHOOSE PROFILE

- Are **association** meeting planners
- Plan **annual meetings, board meetings, retreats, and professional development meetings**
- Plan meetings with **51-300 attendees**
- Require **101-250 peak room nights** or fewer than **100 peak room nights**
- Want a room rate between **\$200-\$299** or between **\$100-\$199**
- **Directly reach out to hotels** and use **CVBs/DMOs** when researching meeting destinations



WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION FOR CHOOSERS

- Attendees at choosers' meetings want the **beach**, a **variety of restaurants**, and **golf**
- Choosers become aware of Walton County primarily from a **previous leisure trip**
- **Advantages** of Walton County include: the **white sand beaches/turquoise blue water**, they **have been there before and trust them**, and the **weather**



CHOOSEER CONSIDERATIONS

- Choosers also considered holding their events in **Amelia Island/Jacksonville** and **Destin**
- **Most** choosers were **extremely satisfied** with Walton County hosting their event
- After being shown promotions, choosers gave the likelihood of **holding a future meeting** in Walton County an average of an **8.7**
- Choosers also gave the likelihood of **recommending Walton County** as a meeting destination an **8.7**



WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION FOR CHOOSERS

- Choosers see Walton County as **accessible by driving** and **fairly accessible by flying**
- Choosers list **too few flights, especially direct flights**, as a limitation to Walton County as a meeting destination
- Choosers would definitely consider meeting in Walton County in **October, April, and September**





CONTEMPLATOR

CONTEMPLATOR PROFILE

- Are **independent/3rd party** meeting planners
- Plan **annual meetings, board meetings, retreats,** and **professional development**
- Plan meetings with **1-300 attendees**
- Require **less than 100 peak room nights**
- Want a room rate between **\$200-\$299**
- **Reach out directly to hotels** and use **CVBs/DMOs** when researching meeting destinations



WALTON COUNTY LIMITATIONS FOR CONTEMPLATORS

- Contemplators list limitations of Walton County as a meeting destinations as **too few flights, difficulty getting from the airports to the meeting sites** and **difficulty getting people around the area**



WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION FOR CONTEMPLATORS

- Attendees at contemplators' meetings want a **variety of restaurants**, the **beach**, and **golf**
- Contemplators became aware of Walton County primarily from a **previous leisure trip** or a **trade show/conference appointment with Walton County Tourism staff**
- **Advantages** of Walton County include; **beautiful white-sand beaches and turquoise blue waters** and the **weather**



CONTEMPLATOR CONSIDERATIONS

- Contemplators also considered holding their events in **Tampa** and **Orlando** (30% eventually held their event in Tampa and 25% held their event in Orlando)
- Most meeting planners were satisfied with the destination they chose
- Contemplators gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of a **6.5**
- After being shown promotions, contemplators gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of a **7.4 (+0.9)**



WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION FOR CONTEMPLATORS

- Contemplators see Walton County **mostly accessible by driving** and **fairly accessible by flying**
- Contemplators would definitely consider meeting in Walton County in **March, April,** and **October**

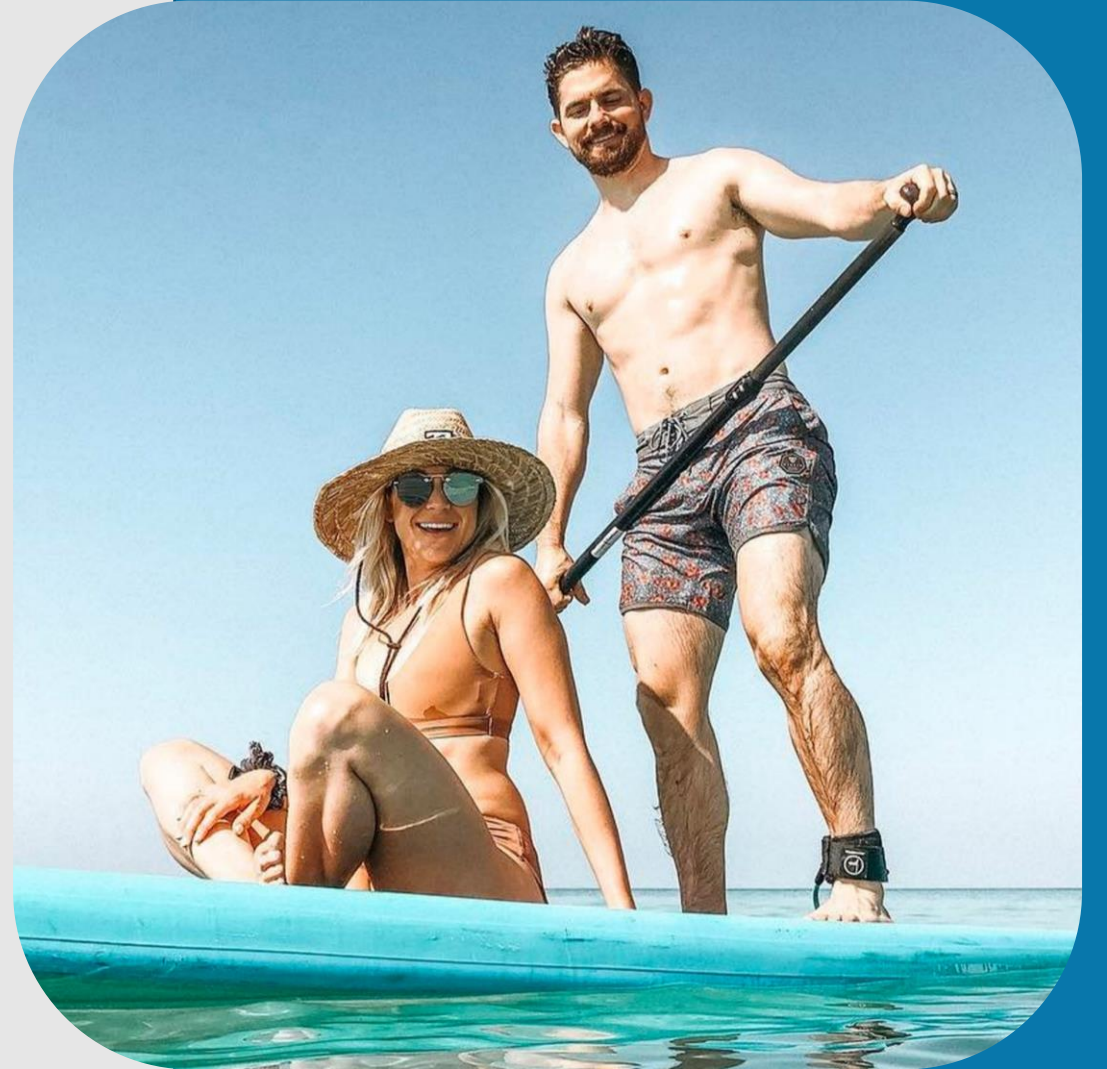




AVOIDER

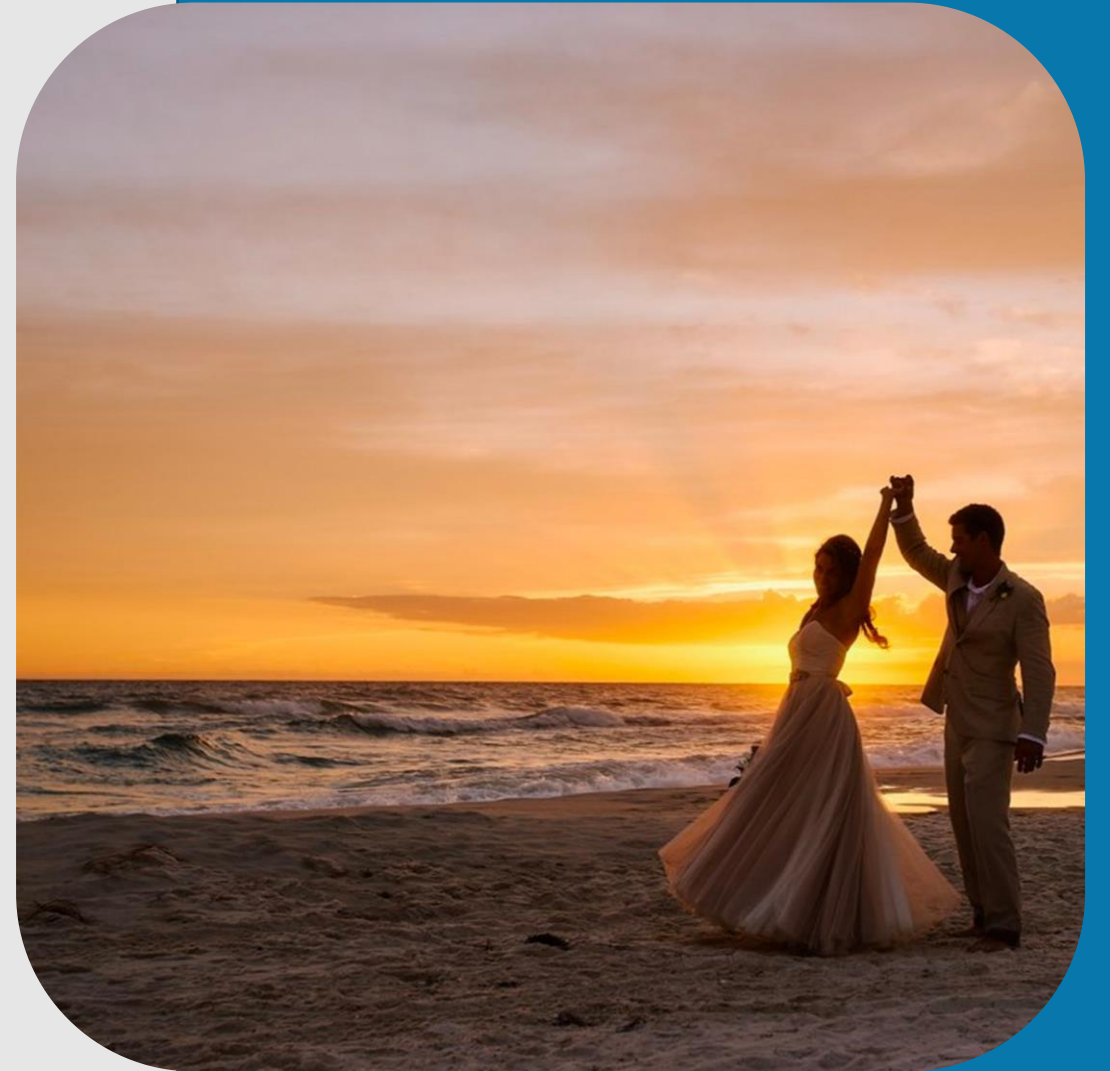
AVOIDER PROFILE

- Are **association** meeting planners
- Plan **annual meetings**
- Plan meetings with **1-150 attendees**
- Require **less than 100 peak room nights**
- Want a room rate between **\$200-\$299**
- **Directly reach out to hotels, use CVBs/DMOs, and independent online research**



WALTON COUNTY LIMITATIONS FOR AVOIDERS

- Avoiders list limitations of Walton County as a meeting destination as **lack of familiarity with the destination**



WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION FOR AVOIDER

- Attendees at avoiders' meetings want a **variety of restaurants**, the **beach**, and **shopping**
- **Half** of avoiders are **not familiar** with the Walton County area as a meeting destination



AVOIDER CONSIDERATIONS

- Avoiders gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of a **5.0**
- After being shown promotions, avoiders gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of a **5.9 (+0.9)**



WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION FOR AVOIDER

- Avoiders see Walton County as a difficult destination to get to by **driving** and fairly accessible by **flying**
- Avoiders are most likely to consider meeting in Walton County in **October** and **March**



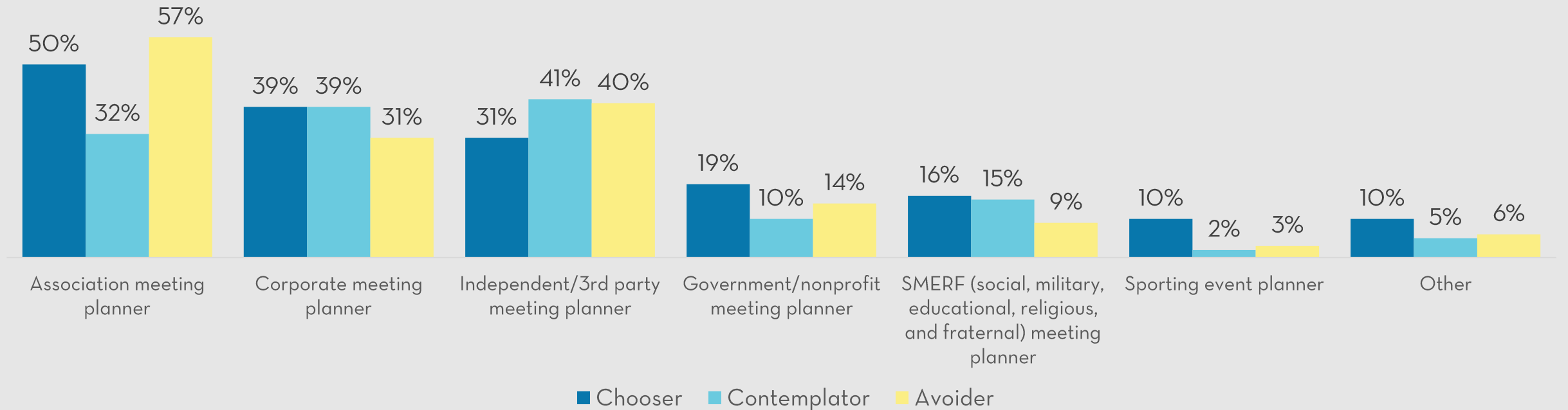


DETAILED FINDINGS: THREE PLANNER TYPES

The following section provides the complete detailed findings separated by the three meeting planner types in this study

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOU?

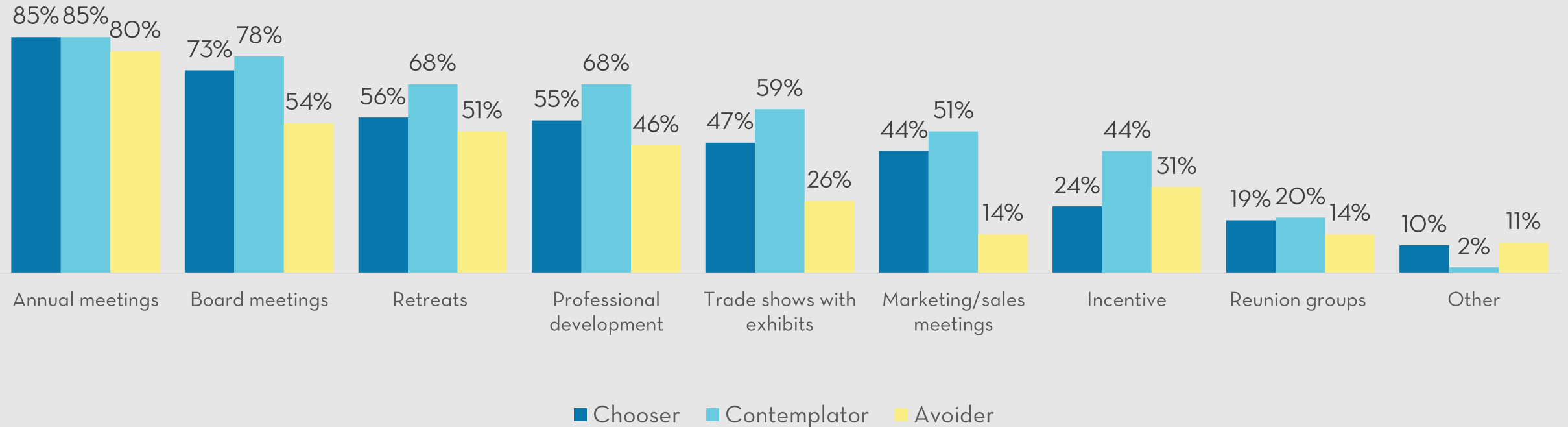
- Nearly **3 in 5** Avoiders are **association meeting planners**
- **Half** of Choosers are **association meeting planners**



¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT TYPES OF EVENTS DO YOU HANDLE?¹

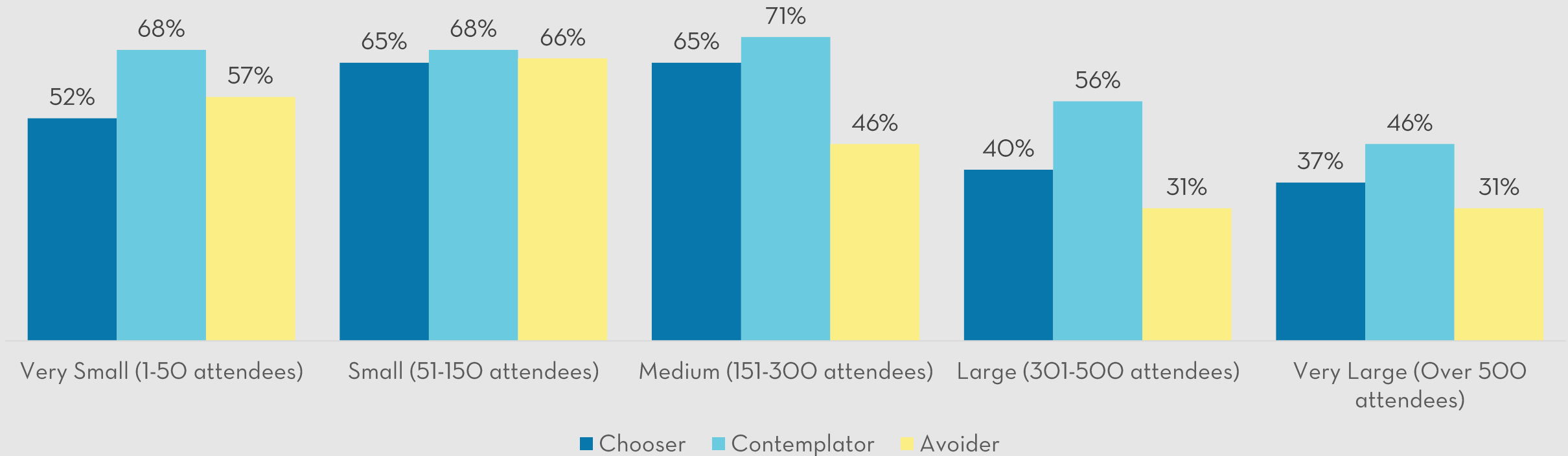
- Over **4 in 5** Choosers, Contemplators, and Avoiders plan **annual meetings**
- Contemplators plan more of a **variety of event types** compared to Choosers and Avoiders



¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT IS THE SIZE OF A TYPICAL MEETING/EVENT YOU ORGANIZE?

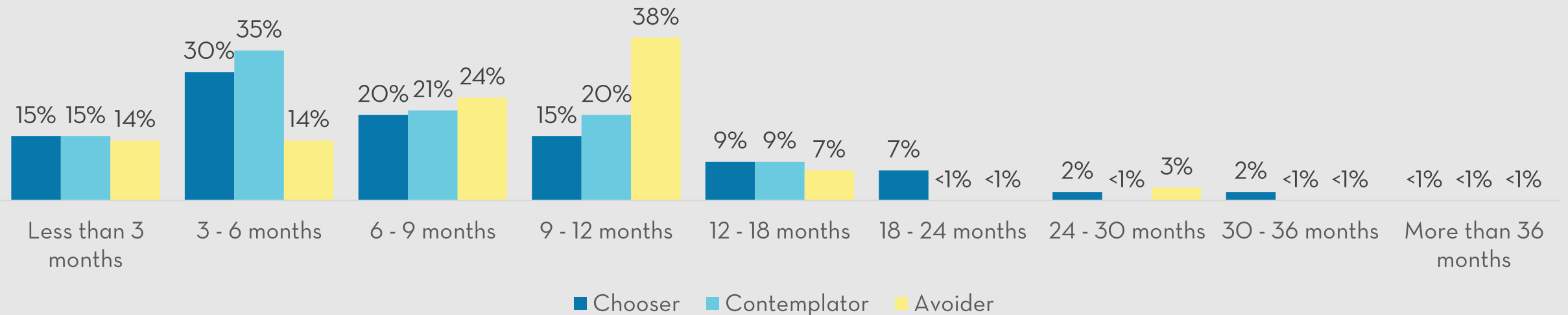
- Nearly **2 in 3** Choosers plan small and medium sized events
- Around **7 in 10** Contemplators plan very small, small, and medium sized events



¹Multiple responses permitted.

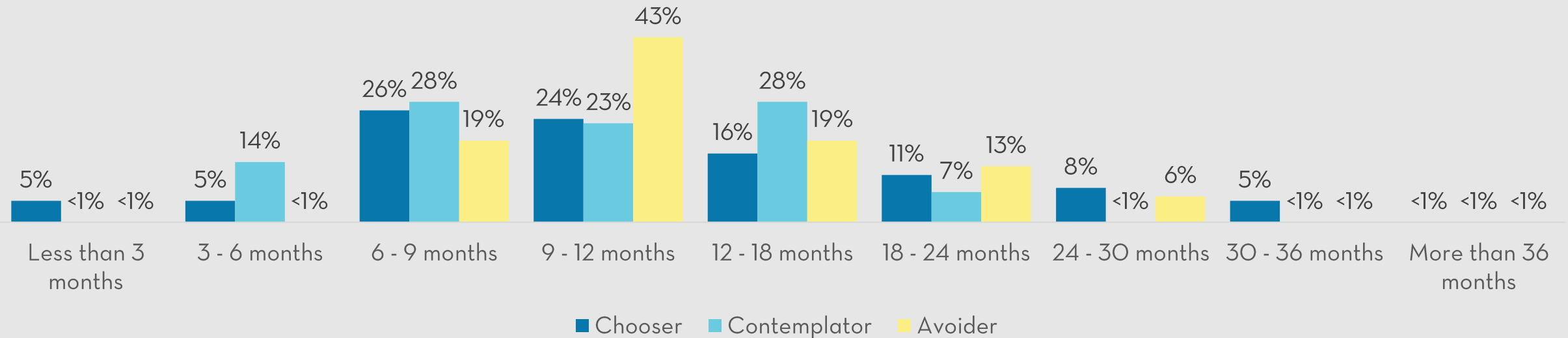
WHAT IS THE TYPICAL BOOKING WINDOW FOR SMALL OR VERY SMALL MEETINGS?¹

- **3 in 10** Choosers have a typical booking window of **3-6 months**
- Over **1 in 3** Contemplators have a typical booking window of **3-6 months**
- Nearly **2 in 5** Avoiders have a typical booking window of **9-12 months**



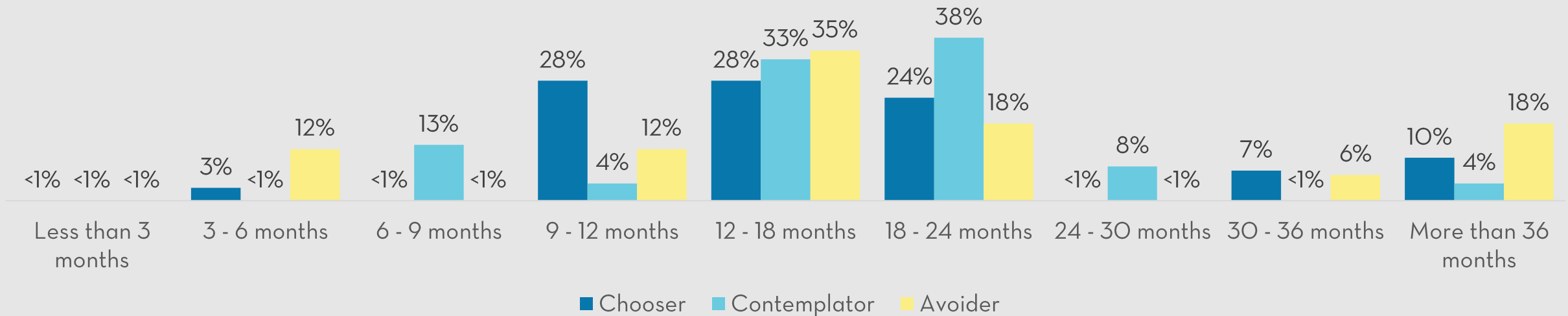
WHAT IS THE TYPICAL BOOKING WINDOW FOR MEDIUM MEETINGS?¹

- Around **1 in 4** Choosers and Contemplators have a typical booking window of **6-12 months**
- Over **2 in 5** Avoiders have a typical booking window of **9-12 months**



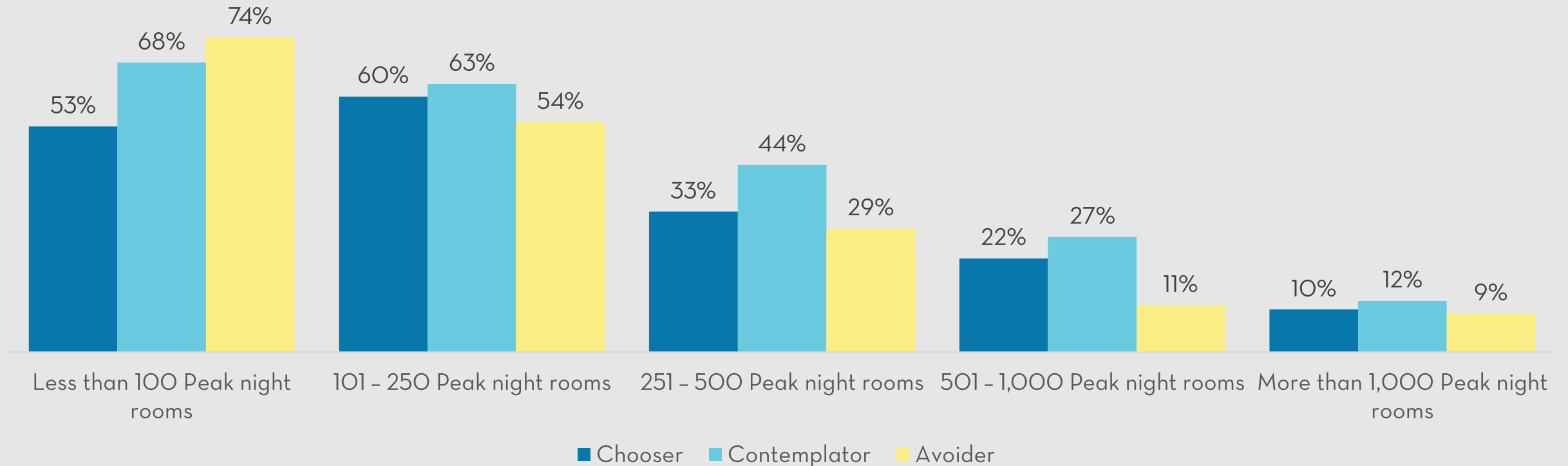
WHAT IS THE TYPICAL BOOKING WINDOW FOR LARGE OR VERY LARGE MEETINGS?¹

- **Nearly 3 in 10** Choosers have a typical booking window of **9-18 months**
- Over **1 in 3** Contemplators have a typical booking window of **12-24 months**
- Over **1 in 3** Avoiders have a typical booking window of **12-18 months**



HOW MANY ROOMS ON PEAK NIGHT DO YOU TYPICALLY REQUIRE FOR MEETINGS?¹

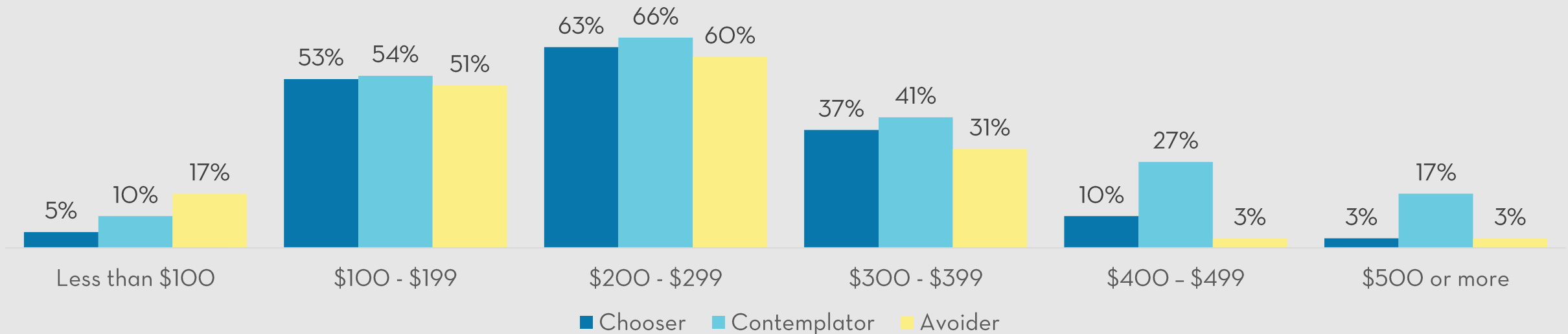
- **3 in 5** Choosers require **101-250 peak room nights**
- Nearly **7 in 10** Contemplators require **less than 100 peak room nights**
- Over **3 in 4** Avoiders also require **less than 100 peak room nights**



¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT ROOM RATE IS MOST APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR EVENTS?¹

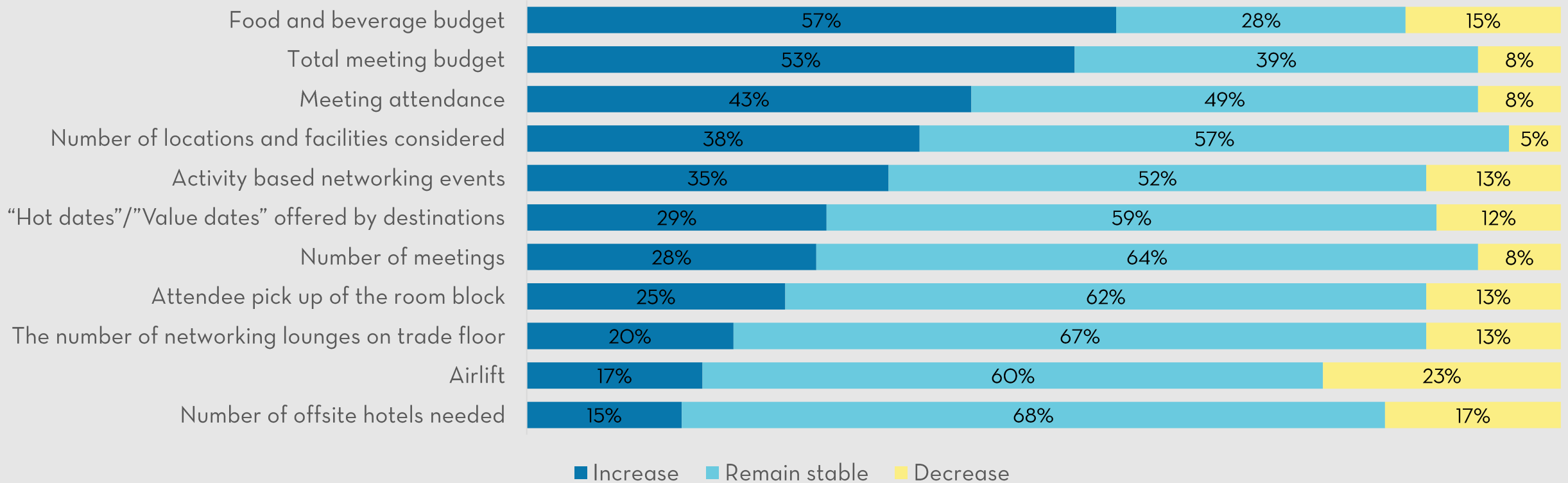
- **2 in 3** Contemplators want a room rate between **\$200-\$299**
- **Over 3 in 5** Choosers want a room rate between **\$200-\$299**
- **3 in 5** Avoiders want a room rate between **\$200-\$299**



¹Multiple responses permitted.

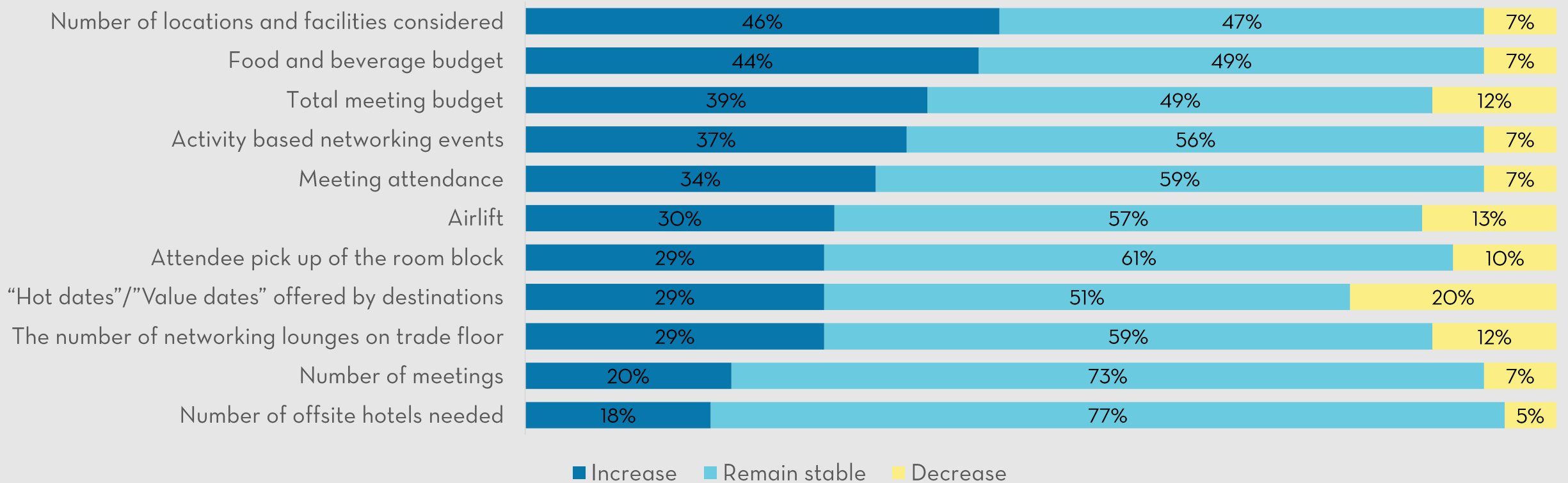
THINKING ABOUT THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS, WHAT CHANGES DO YOU FORESEE?

Choosers



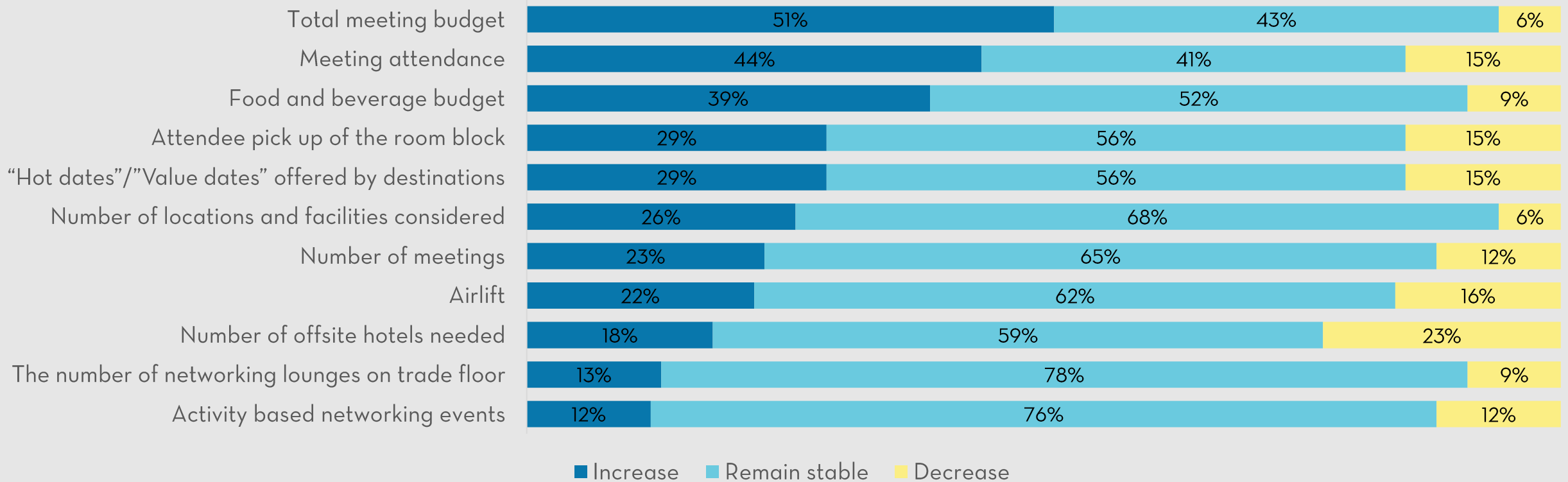
THINKING ABOUT THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS, WHAT CHANGES DO YOU FORESEE?

Contemplators



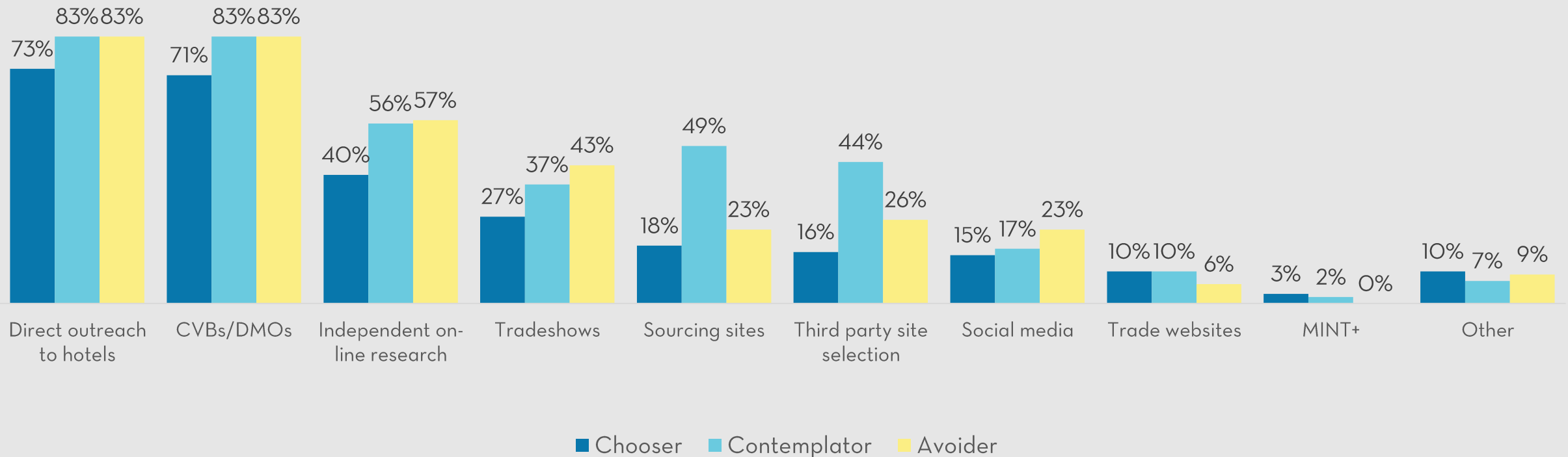
THINKING ABOUT THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS, WHAT CHANGES DO YOU FORESEE?

Avoiders



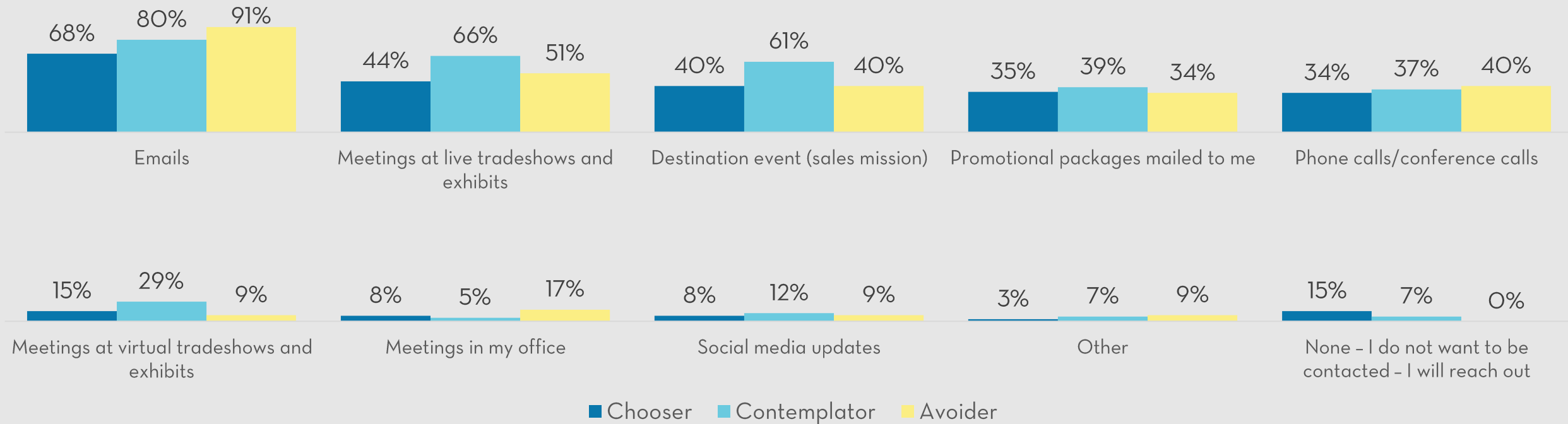
WHICH RESOURCES DO YOU USE WHEN RESEARCHING DESTINATIONS FOR YOUR MEETINGS?¹

- Nearly **3 in 4** Choosers **directly reach out to hotels**
- Over **4 in 5** Contemplators and Avoiders **directly reach out to hotels** and **use CVBs/DMOs**
- Over **7 in 10** Choosers **use CVBs/DMOs**



¹Multiple responses permitted.

HOW DO YOU PREFER TO BE CONTACTED BY A CVB'S SALES TEAM?¹



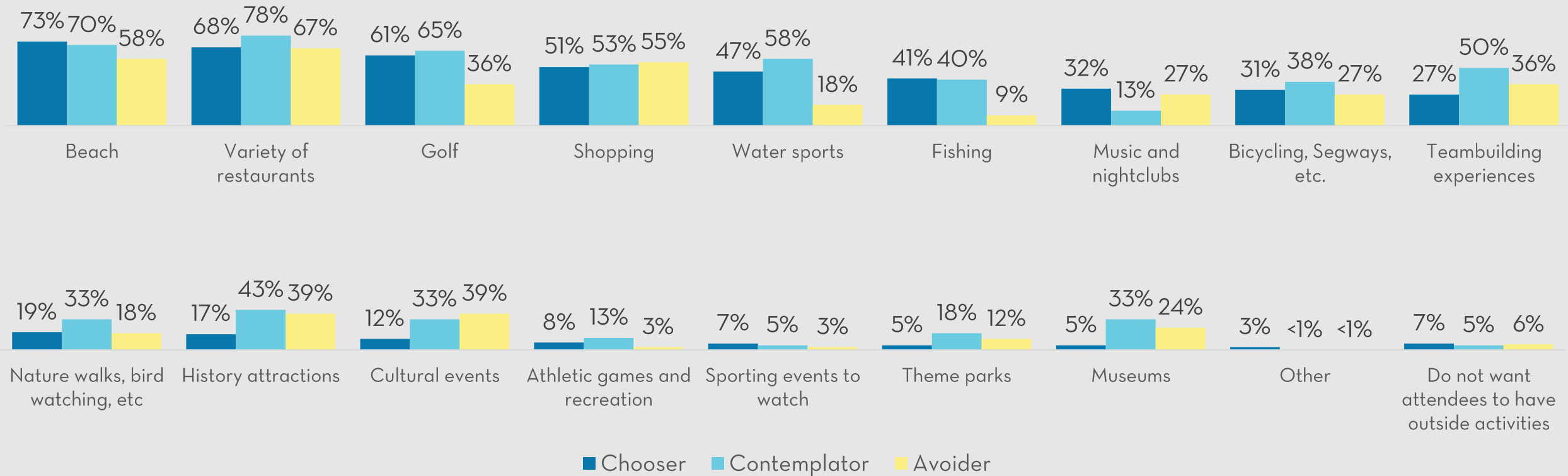
¹Multiple responses permitted.

WHY HAVEN'T YOU HELD MEETINGS IN WALTON COUNTY, THAT IS, WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

	Contemplator	Avoider
Too few flights into the area especially direct flights	46%	26%
Difficulty of getting from airports to the meeting sites	29%	29%
Logistics - difficult to get our people around	22%	3%
Not familiar with Walton County	20%	50%
Airfares are expensive into the area	20%	15%
Room prices are too high	20%	9%
Not enough meeting space under one roof	17%	6%
Total package prices are high	15%	3%
Types of accommodations	15%	12%
Property was not available when we needed it	12%	0%
Too few rooms under one roof	12%	6%
No major convention center	12%	6%
No limitations	10%	9%
Need a greater variety of venues	7%	<1%
Area is crowded and congested	7%	3%
Weather - too hot in warmer months	7%	6%
Weather - not warm enough in cooler months	5%	3%
Limited restaurant variety	2%	<1%
Customer service/more attention by staff	2%	<1%
Beach environment is distracting to attendees	2%	<1%
Too few local vendors for entertainment/activities	2%	<1%
Too few off-site activities for attendees and/or guests	<1%	<1%
Technology limitations of meeting facilities	<1%	<1%
Other	7%	21%

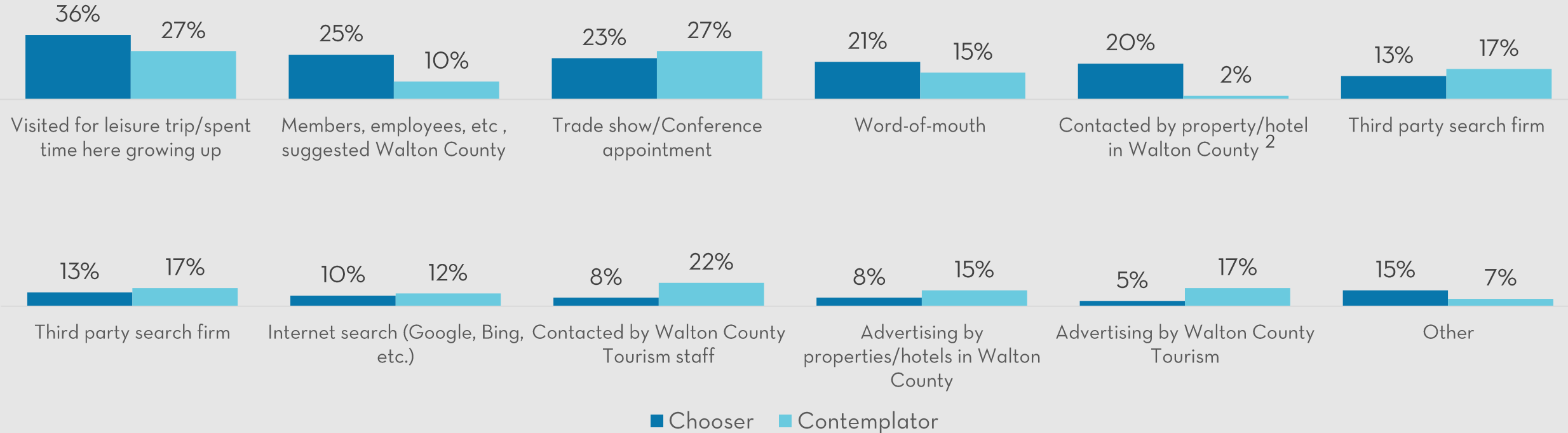
¹ Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event there or have not considered the area for a meeting/event. Multiple responses permitted.

WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU PREFER FOR YOUR ATTENDEES OUTSIDE OF MEETINGS/EVENTS?¹



¹Multiple responses permitted.

HOW DID WALTON COUNTY GET ON YOUR RADAR AS A POSSIBLE MEETING SITE?¹



¹ Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in the area or have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event.
Multiple responses permitted.

² 15% of all Choosers were contacted by Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa, 10% by the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, and 10% by Hotel Effie Sandestin.
2% of all Contemplators were contacted by Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa and 2% by the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION?¹

	Chooser	Contemplator
Beautiful white sand beaches/turquoise blue water	72%	78%
Been there before - trust them	64%	10%
Weather	62%	60%
Activities for meeting attendees	59%	30%
Has enough meeting space	57%	13%
Access - can drive there	56%	30%
Has enough rooms	54%	5%
Activities for meeting attendees' spouses	52%	30%
Golf available to attendees	52%	40%
Place to relax & unwind	51%	50%
Type of accommodations at the property	48%	33%
Room prices are affordable	48%	28%
Water-related activities	46%	53%
Family orientation/family-friendly	46%	25%
Types of meeting rooms & configuration	43%	18%
Range of prices for accommodations	39%	15%
Serenity of the area	39%	50%
Many of our people had already visited there	33%	5%
Total package price	33%	8%
Customer service	33%	13%
Place that's unique and different	31%	43%
Unique and different venues	25%	38%
Plenty of local vendors for entertainment/activities	20%	13%
Logistics - easy to get around	18%	5%
Cultural events & festivals	10%	8%
Walton County's architecture	5%	8%
No advantages	2%	5%
Other	3%	<1%

¹ Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in the area or have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event. Multiple responses permitted.

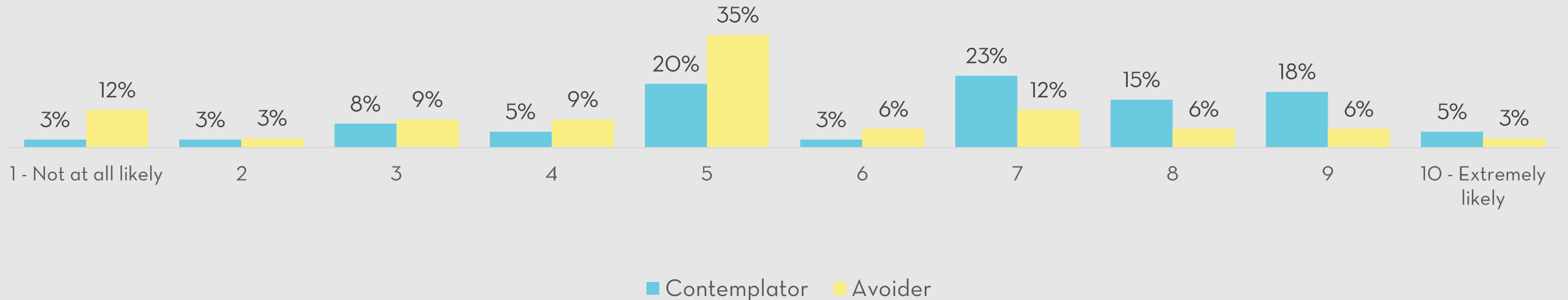
WHAT OTHER DESTINATIONS DID YOU CONSIDER?¹

	Chooser	Contemplator
Amelia Island/Jacksonville, FL	51%	45%
Destin, FL	51%	40%
Orlando, FL	36%	53%
Tampa, FL	36%	55%
Savannah, GA	34%	30%
Charleston, SC	32%	43%
Gulf Shores, AL	31%	13%
Panama City, FL	31%	28%
Marco Island/Ft. Myers, FL	24%	43%
Asheville, NC	22%	33%
New Orleans, LA	22%	38%
Miami, FL	17%	45%
Nashville, TN	17%	45%
Pensacola, FL	17%	35%
Sea Island/Jekyll Island/St. Simons Island	17%	15%
Biloxi, MS	15%	8%
Birmingham, AL	15%	8%
Atlanta, GA	14%	38%
Austin, TX	14%	30%
Greenville, SC	14%	13%
Mobile, AL	14%	10%
Chattanooga, TN	12%	5%
Charlotte, NC	8%	28%
Memphis, TN	8%	13%
Tallahassee, FL	8%	13%
Baton Rouge, LA	5%	3%
Columbia, SC	5%	8%
Dallas, TX	5%	35%
Jackson, MS	5%	3%

¹ Asked to those who have held a meeting/event in the area or have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event. Multiple responses permitted.

HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD HOLD A FUTURE MEETING IN WALTON COUNTY?¹

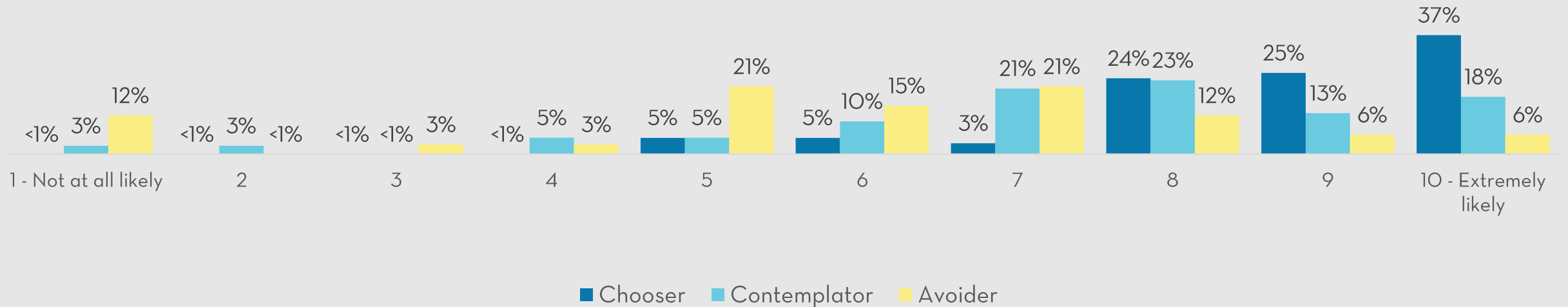
- Those meeting planners that have considered the area but have not held a meeting there gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of a **6.5**
- Those meeting planners that have not held a meeting in Walton County gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in there an average of a **5.0**



¹ Asked to those who have considered the area but have not held a meeting/event there or have not considered the area for a meeting/event.

AFTER SEEING THE VIDEO AND READING THE DESCRIPTION ABOUT WALTON COUNTY AS A MEETING DESTINATION, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD HOLD A FUTURE MEETING IN WALTON COUNTY?¹

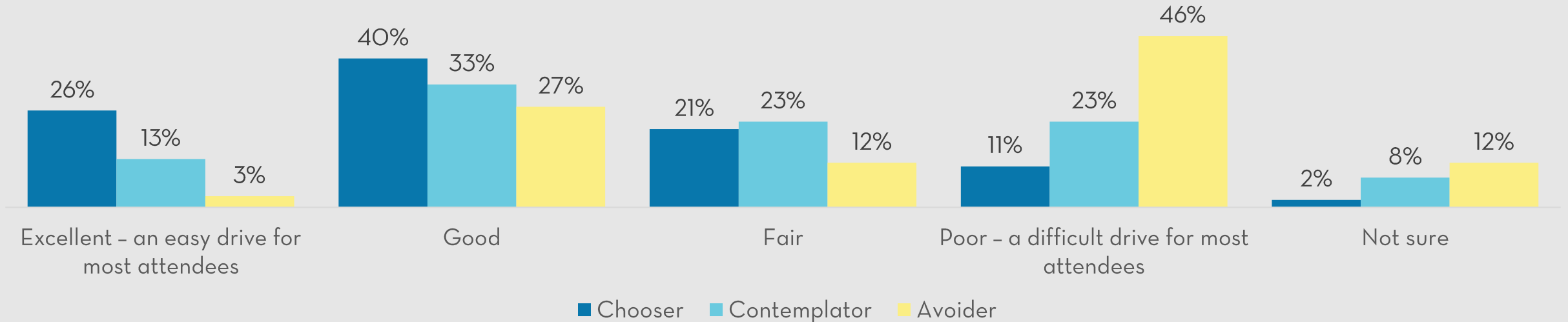
- After being shown promotions for Walton County as a meeting destination and then asked to rate how likely they are to hold a future meeting in Walton County, those meeting planners that have held a meeting there gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of **8.7**
- Those meeting planners that have considered the area but have not held a meeting there gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in Walton County an average of a **7.4** after seeing the promotions, a **+0.9 point** increase
- Those meeting planners that have not held a meeting in Walton County gave the likelihood of holding a future meeting in there an average of a **5.9** after seeing the promotions, a **+0.9 point** increase



¹Asked to all respondents.

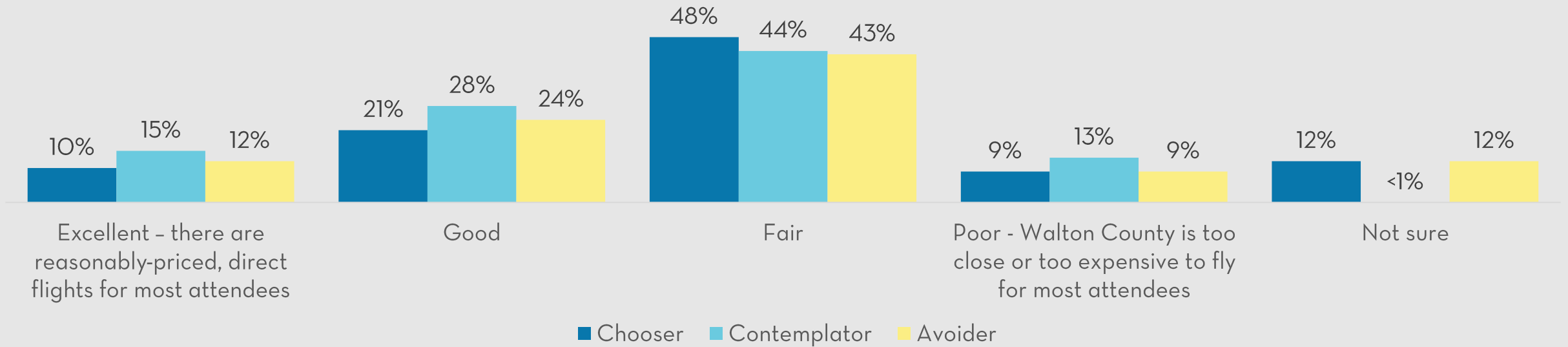
HOW WOULD YOU RATE WALTON COUNTY IN TERMS OF:

Attendees ability to drive there

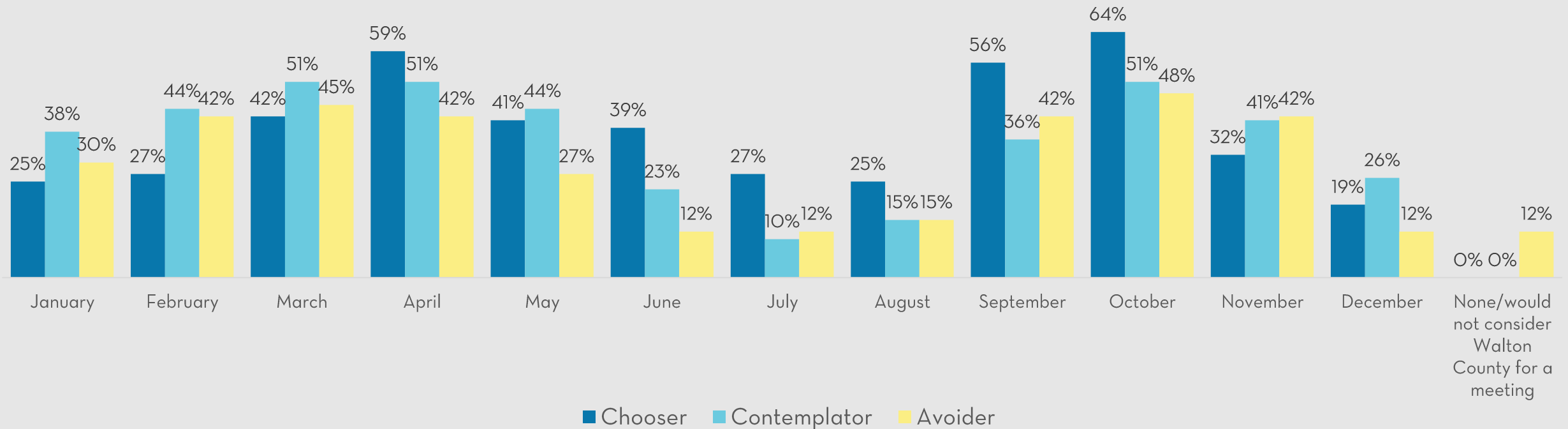


HOW WOULD YOU RATE WALTON COUNTY IN TERMS OF:

Attendees ability to fly there



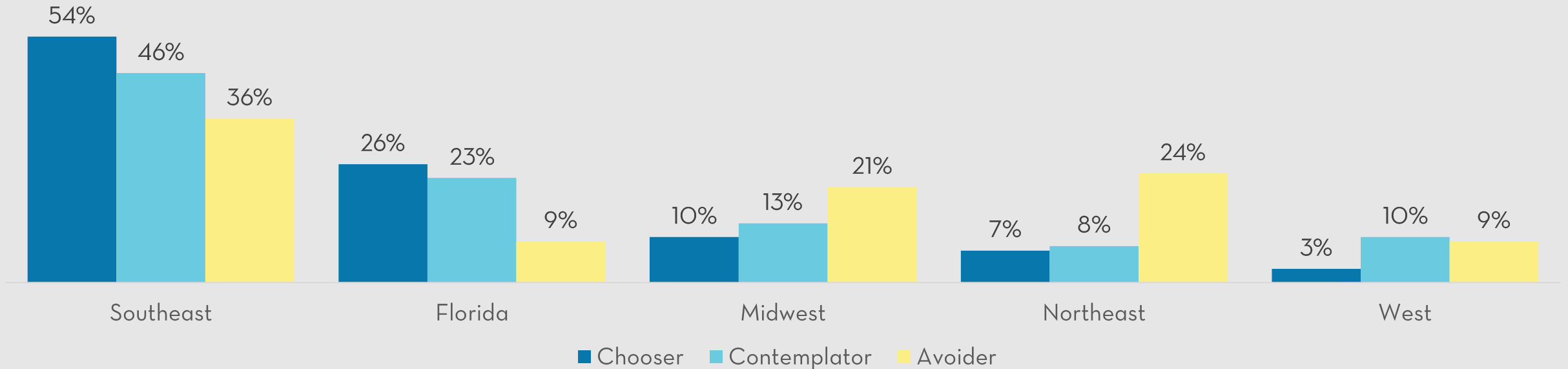
IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MONTHS WOULD YOU DEFINITELY CONSIDER WALTON COUNTY FOR A MEETING?¹

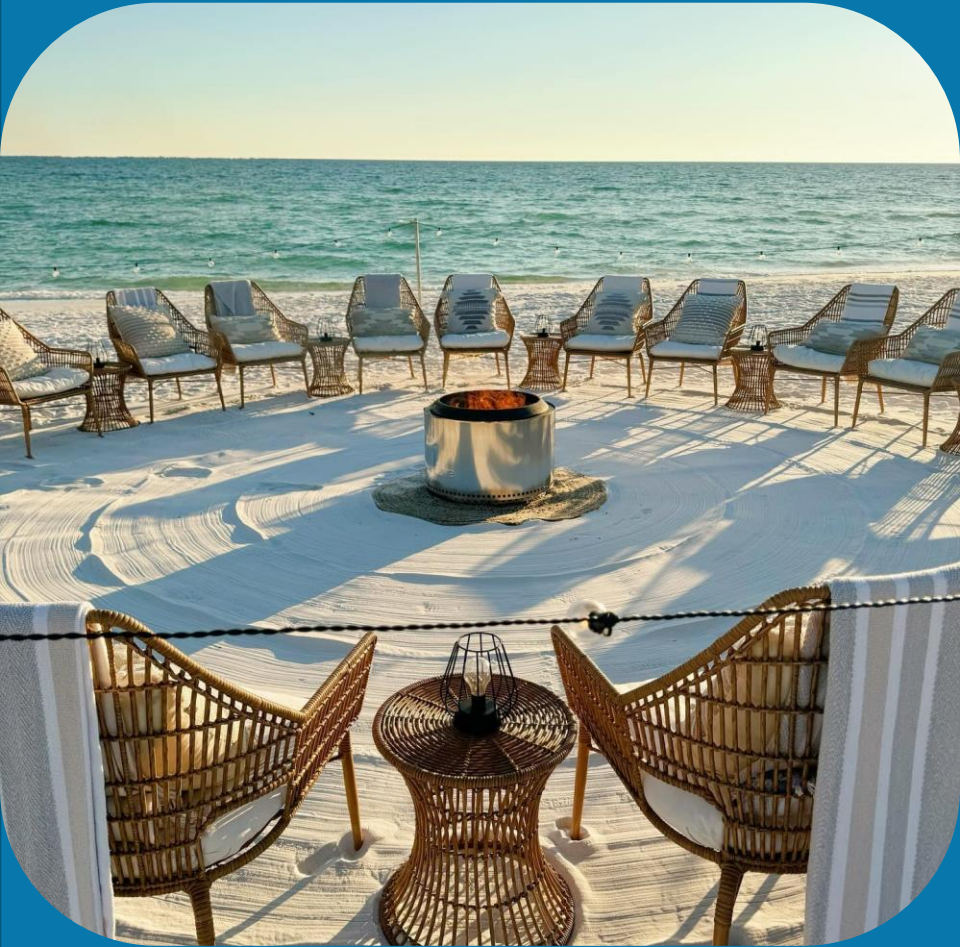


¹Multiple responses permitted.

MEETING PLANNER REGION

- **Most** of the meeting planners are located in the **Southeast**
- Nearly **1 in 4 avoiders** are located in the **Northeast** and over **1 in 5** are located in the **Midwest**





Walton County Tourism

MEETING PLANNER STUDY 2024

Downs & St. Germain Research
dsg-research.com